

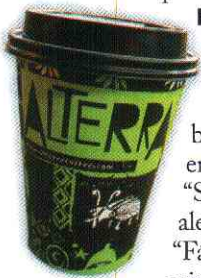


» Band of Brothers

In the mid-1990s, the Wooldridge Brothers parlayed their unique blend of jangly alt-country and rootsy, guitar-driven pop into extensive regional radio exposure and musical appearances in numerous films and TV shows. By combining tight, hooky melodies and sharp, introspective lyrics, Brian and Scott Wooldridge carved out a niche alongside fellow Milwaukee legends like the Violent Femmes and the BoDeans. Though the brothers continued writing after Scott moved to Minneapolis in 1998, **Days Went Around** is their first album in several years. The album, featuring some of the siblings' most shimmering songwriting to date, is at its best when Scott and Julie Straszewski Wooldridge team up to deliver breathtaking vocal harmonies on gems like the hopelessly optimistic "This Rain" and the road-weary "The Last Word." This taut, mature exposition of alternative pop subtlety at once evokes nostalgia for the Femmes era and adds an impressive chapter to this one. (Kevin Kosterman)

» VARIOUS GRINDS

It looks like an Alterra – exposed structural supports, orange awning, racks of baked goods. But the new kiosk outside Concourse E at Mitchell International Airport is not really an Alterra. In December, **Alterra Coffee Roasters** opened three stands (the other two are in Concourses D and C) "under the Alterra name." While they serve the company's coffee and baked goods, they're operated and staffed by SSP America, a national company that specializes in running restaurants and cafes in airports and other travel hubs. What does this mean for you? Don't expect Alterra's normal level of barista quality. The drinks I ordered (a regular latte, a strong black coffee and a mint-mocha Bull Frog) were weak and flavorless. What's in it for Alterra? Per the company's Web site, the arrangement "allows Alterra to be a key player in welcoming visitors to Milwaukee." But will it be the welcome they want? (Evan Solocheck)



» MILWAUKEE, IRELAND

A recent sojourn (week-long pub crawl) to Ireland has made me a bit of an elitist when visiting "Irish" bars back home. But I can't argue with the approach at **O'Sullivan's Public House** (12525 W. North Ave., 262-784-1656), which doesn't lay on the blarney too thick. References to Eire include "Sláinte" (the equivalent of "cheers") and "Fáilte" ("welcome") painted on the green wall, a bodhran hanging in the dining room, pictures of Guinness, Smithwick's and nine Irish whiskeys. But there's plenty that feels like the U.S. of A. – football and basketball shown on five flat-screens and background music provided by Journey. I sit on a stool at the long bar and dig into the tasty Irish lamb stew and an even better corned beef sandwich. Steve Perry's urging me to "Don't Stop Believin'." I believe I'll have another Guinness. (Dan Murphy)

» FINE FEATHERED FRIENDS

Before the advent of photography in 1839, the act of looking was a slow thing. Rendering was downright glacial. Imagine the early naturalists Mark Catesby, Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon hiking through swamps – their sketchbooks and watercolors in tow – to sight, notate and correctly render species after species of bird and beast. Without formal art training, they learned to sketch through sheer dedication to the wonders of nature in a style of the refined rebel. The **Milwaukee Art Museum** (exhibiting these artists' prints through March 22) supplies visitors with magnifying glasses to ensure that they fully share the artists' obsession with verisimilitude (as in Audubon's *Brown Pelican*, right). There is really no greater intimacy than seeing something in its essence, and that can even mean a white-bellied swallow. (Debra Brehmer)

» GLOSSY PORTRAIT

In **State by State: A Panoramic Portrait of America**, 50 writers contributed an essay about one of our states. Novelist Daphne Beal took the personal retrospective approach to our state, with points in River Hills (her childhood home), Racine (her family's roots) and Lake Owen (her family's vacation home in northern Wisconsin). But since Beal is a New York City transplant, the question is, does it truly represent Wisconsin? The answer is no, but with shades of gray. Though Beal's essay encapsulates the serenity of the northern lakes and embattled progression of our manufacturing heritage, it ignores the rural isolation of vast farmland, the bleakness of a frigid February, and the vices and crutches we use to cope. Her writing is lovely, and so is Wisconsin. But to speak only in pleasantries and innocuous anecdotes undermines the complexity of what makes our state unique and wonderful. (Erik Helin)

