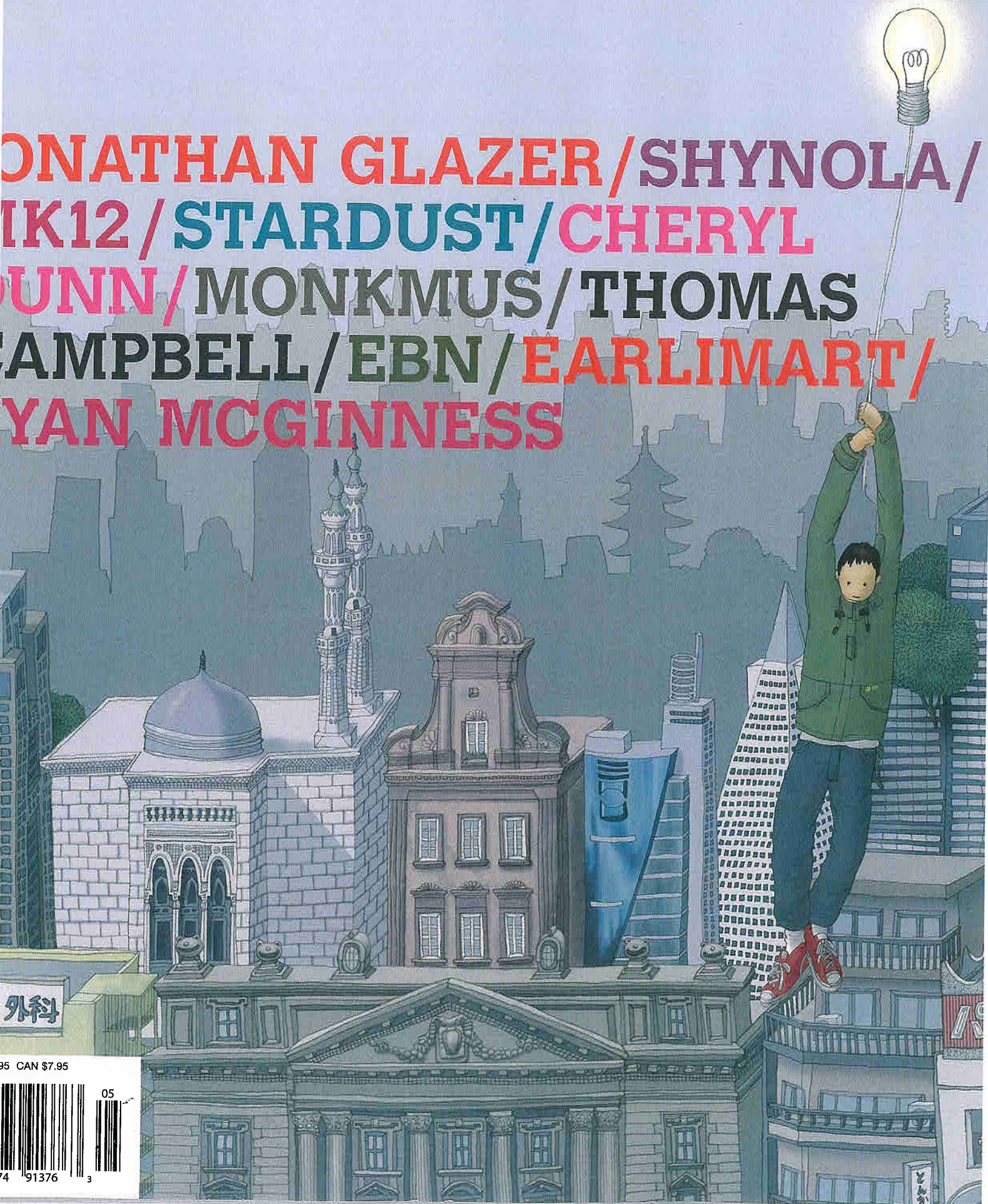


ONATHAN GLAZER / SHYNOLA /
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NICELY DRAWN BOY

MONKMUS

"I'm kind of one of those weird people who could always draw but it wasn't ever my first thing, especially in school," says Monkumus (Kenneth Wong) describing how he found himself known as the creator of three acclaimed animated music videos. "I always thought I would get a 'real' job," he continues, "and the parents pushed for it, saying, 'You're going to become a lawyer, a doctor, or something.'" Well, the legal and medical professions will just have to wait, because, at least for now, Monkumus likes putting pencil to paper and making the resulting drawings move, and, at least for now, it's a paying profession. The 30-year-old Rhode Island School of Design grad started out with the music video "Fender Bender," a quirky line animation for a Kid Koala track in 2000 that centers on a street-side argument. The mix of amusing characters, hand-made feel and slightly bizarre ending generated plenty of enthusiasm, and Koala was back with his next release, inviting Monkumus to make a video for the track titled "Basin Street Blues." Here, a lyrical funeral procession in New Orleans offered the opportunity for more organic, pencil-led surrealism, while Monkumus' latest piece, for Badly Drawn Boy's "Year of the Rat," stays just this side of sappy thanks to the artist's deft ability to meld the down-to-earth tactility of pencil with the graceful movement you can get on a computer. "A lot of the ideas come from listening to the track over and over again, finding spots that you want to hit," says Monkumus, explaining his creative process. "The Badly Drawn Boy video is so life-affirming and positive that, while I could put twists into it, they didn't feel right. For the most part it felt like it needed to be very life affirming, so it came out that way." As the video proves, life-affirming feels very good right now.

— Holly Willis, photo: Lydia Burkhalter