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Local bands... the good, bad, ugly

By Chris McCubbin and Charles Lieurance

Welcome to the First Annual Daily Nebraskan Critic's Poll. In our continuing effort to beat the codgers at Rolling Stone at their own game, the Daily Nebraskan has plodded through a thesaurus for words like "anomie" and "incendiary," taken some shots of ego they bought from Dave Marsh in a New York alley, bought some Van Halen T-shirts and put together their opinions on the local talent.

The envelope, please.
Best alternative for the phrase "alternative music" or "New Music" — "Optional Music," "Unprofitable Music," "Noise," "Pop," "Punk/New Wave/Slash/Underground/Psychedelia/avant garde..."

Best Cover Band (in an aesthetically offensive role) — *Finnsters*.

Charles: Thought about the category, "Worst Finnsters: Finnsters," so there would be no question about who loses and how much this band annoys

me in a completely singular manner. The Finnsters tell us they're just doing this to work their way through school. I worked in a Wendy's. I never smiled and I didn't even hum the Romantic's "What I Like About You." I made it through just fine.

Muffy, Buffy, Bif, Skip and Reginald (we call him Reggie down at the Yacht Club) tell us this is their favorite Lincoln band.

Chris: I'm one of the half dozen people in this town under the age of 40 who's NEVER seen the Finnsters, and I'm damn proud of it.

Best Cover Band (in a non-aesthetically offensive role) — *Psyces*.

Just as much energy as the Finnsters but they don't wear pastels, they don't smile beyond the maximum legal limit for a non-institutionalized human being, and they do Jonathan Richman covers.

Best Cover Band (in a deliberately offensive role) — *Brain Hammer*.

Brain Hammer covers the Finnsters' "All The Way" Spinal Tap and the Cramps. Obnoxiousness like this should

be sold in stores.

Best Hardcore Band — *USMC*.
Chris: They'll also probably qualify as best high school band. They show up at minors' nights a lot. With most of the older alternative (or whatever) bands plugged into either the REM thing or the Jesus and Mary Chain thing, these kids are probably the slam dance fiends' best bet around these parts.

Charles: Lyrics are unprintable. Their guidance counselor probably checks their scalps for the numbers 666 on a daily basis. A lot of times when they play, the police show up. You need a better recommendation for a hardcore band?

Silliest Haircut on a Man Over 30 — *Terry Pieper*.

Charles: Pieper, bass player for glam-stadium rockers Cockey Monroe, sports a salon-keeper's potpourri, a clever combination of waves, braids, baubles, bangles and beads that is still unnamed as of press time.

Seriously, Cockey Monroe is what's left of the Lincoln proto punk archetype, The Boys, English Professor Dave Hibler's (read Malcolm McClaren) insatiable blend of pomp, hype, Pistols, New York Dolls and narcissism that took Lincoln and nearly, were it not for Hibler's waltz off the deep end, the world by storm. Monroe doesn't have a quarter of what The Boys had, but the originals like "When Soldier's Cry" sometimes live up to the band's roots. The past is a difficult thing to overcome and these guys won't overcome it as Cockey Monroe. Pieper is a fantastic bass player and does a dynamite Bryan Ferry/Bowie style vocal. With some more originals to work with, Pieper could easily ride one English wave or another to fame and fortune.

Cockey Monroe's lead singer does the most irritating Geddy Lee impersonation on this planet.

Chris: I like these guys better than Charles. It takes guts to continue to do something well, years after it's stopped being fashionable. I do agree that the lead singer needs to lighten up onstage and that Terry has a really funny haircut.

Cleanest Alternative (or whatever) Music Band — *Playground*.

These clean-cut, well-adjusted musicians sound a little like the Smiths, only straight. They've couped a new vocalist and threaten to reemerge from a long, hopefully fruitful hiatus. Their tapes and past performances show them to be contenders for best new band category if they'd play more and plan less.

Ugliest Local Band — *Mortis Gentis*.

Charles: Of course, it doesn't help when the only time you've seen a band is in a dark basement with bayou foliage streaming from the unfinished lathe board ceiling. Jake Ryan, scary, large, scary singer and ex-Enfant Terrible of Power of the Spoken Word was lit from below by Christmas lights as he barked various spells and demonic invocations. Behind him an emaciated guitarist wired hellish guitar noise through what looked like a stack of 25 8-track tape decks recently removed from the dashboards of stranded automobiles.

Chris: The basement was the perfect place to see this band. It evoked gothic torture chambers and the caves our primal ancestors huddled in. The only place I can think of where Mortis Gentis might be more at home is hell.

We're not sure if Jake/Ikky's band is still called Mortis Gentis, but any band he's in automatically qualifies for this category.

Best Blues Band — *Table-rockers*.

Sean Benjamin who, for his talent, deserves much more from the world than he has ever received, is one of Nebraska's cultural treasures. In fact, this whole band, with Zoo Bar owner Larry Boehmer and local bandhopper Butch Berman, is as adequate a history of this city's music scene as you're likely to find. The band plays the blues, R & B and old rock 'n' roll at the Zoo every other Friday afternoon and on Mondays when nothing else has been scheduled. Benjamin's guitar work has made many a young aspiring guitarist feel unfit to kiss the hem of his blue jeans. He has combined the electric clarity of the urban blues guitar with the ominous wrenching imperfections of Delta blues. Quite a feat for a white

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See BANDS on 39