

# Music

## No training required to be critic

Douglas R. Well/Fresh Tracks and Music/Daily Nebraskan—scattered issues

It sure looks like an easy job. Put a new album on the turntable. Crank the volume control just this side of full steam ahead. Get comfortable. Lean back. Think about it a little. Glance over the liner notes. Write down what you think about the music.

A critic. Isn't everyone? Music is a difficult thing to understand. Music is both mechanical and emotional. As for the mechanical side of music my knowledge is limited. I am not what you would call a musician's critic. In fact I do not try to be a musician's critic. My only formal training as a musician came in grade school and high school under teachers who know just about as little as I do.

I do play a mean Kazoo. At best my knowledge of music is only slightly above average. But really that is not important. I am a listener's critic.

I view music's emotion as the most important thing. It is not enough to have a fired-up band, a dramatic lead singer—frontman, or a bleeding ears guitar player. Proficiency and facades can take one only so far. Without emotion music is just noise.

Still, emotionless music can pass itself off as music. It happens all the time. Look at Boston. Or Kansas, or Electric Light Orchestra. They have come forth from the bowels of the computer age. Don't get me wrong, I like this

kind of music, or noise. It is catchy and it is clever but it lacks any measure of honest emotion.

And then there is the emotional musician—the artist. These artists do not play music, they feel it. Consider Eric Clapton, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Duane Allman, the early Rolling Stones, the Band, some of Led Zeppelin's music. It is more than music, more than black notes on white paper. The innovations of these artists came naturally not through proficiency, but out of need—the need to express a certain feeling, emotion or mood. In music creativity is the child of emotion. Some of it was neither.

How do you describe music and emotion in a critical review? Looking back I realize that I was not really a critic that I wanted to be.

Sure I am a grouch but I like music and I like good noise. But it was not that I wanted to play God and say "this is good music and this isn't." More than that I wanted to share with other music lovers what I felt was good music.

The following are some of the albums I have heard in the last year I think are worthy of serious listening. Some of it is music and some of it is noise. All of it is good. You think I am going to tell you which is which? Sorry, those days are over.

One more thing, this list is in no particular order. Do not try to make more out of it than what it is—just another person's list. Barclay James Harvest/Octoberon  
Joni Mitchell/Hejira  
Peter Gabriel/Peter Gabriel  
Elton John/Blue Moves

Bob Dylan/Desire  
Weather Report/Heavy Weather  
Al Stewart/Year of the Cat  
Passport/Looking thru Washbone Ash/New England  
Genesis/Wind and Wuthering  
Bob Seger/Night Moves  
Garland Jeffreys/Ghost Writer  
Stills-Young Band/Long May You Run

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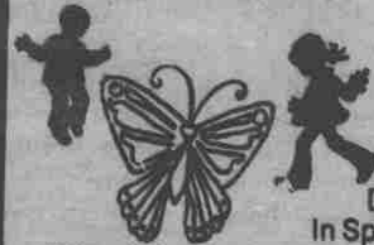
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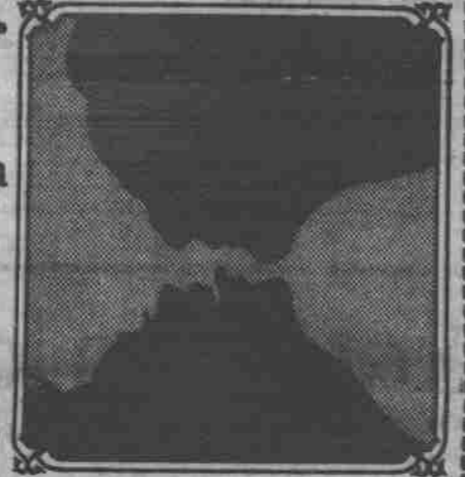
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### 3 Women

writer/producer/director Robert Altman

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