

arts & entertainment

Prominent performers show reporter humility

By Casey McCabe

This fall brought some of the country's finest talent to Lincoln and for those who were kind enough to devote time to the local press, it became my duty to evoke printable responses from them. Now that may not seem like a teeth-pulling process, but an inescapable notion runs through your head. You wonder if a nationally prominent entertainer will carry on a rational conversation with a local newspaper reporter from Lincoln, Nebraska. They're not normal people are they?

An interview with Red Skelton was conducted in a rather irregular fashion. Skelton make himself fairly available during his Lincoln stay, but was somewhat hard to pin down. A cooperative Hilton employee informed the *Daily Nebraskan* that he was at the Stuart Theatre for a particular afternoon, viewing *Star Wars*.

Duty called me to cover the theatre's exits. I could think of nothing the poor old guy would like less than to be lassoed by a reporter after coming out of a movie. Finally, I saw him with his back turned to me, signing autographs. Going up to ask him for an interview, I realized I really was nervous. This is Red Skelton. I mean, I grew up with a reverence for him. The guy is a television institution.

Sincere man

What I discovered was a sincere man. He was genuinely sorry when he explained he had no time left for interviews. Then, pausing to think, his eyes brightened and he asked the *Daily Nebraskan* photographer and myself if we'd mind walking with him back to his hotel. We couldn't think of anything better.

Thus, the interview was conducted in a casual stroll down P St. Besides his already well-known wit, I found him to be the amiable grandfatherly type, who was as comfortable off the stage as on. Celebrity shock was over.

Coming back a couple generations, I had a chance to meet and talk to Kenny Loggins during his Lincoln appearance. Now here was someone who probably did not need a great deal of publicity and because of the nature of his popularity, (the phenomenal past success of Loggins and Messina), he was probably pushed to the limit with the same questions.

(i.e. "why'd you guys break up", "where's Messina," "who cuts your hair?", etc.)

However, the soft-spoken Loggins politely answers the questions with cool deliberation that comes from a good deal of practice. He took an obvious interest in his answers though, and seemingly was concerned about how reporters felt about the show. A rock star who is polite, well adjusted and cooperative. Another myth shattered.

Sell out crowd

The matter of publicity between different musical genres provides an amusing juxtaposition. From the near prison camp security of the Fleetwood Mac Concert, the *Daily Nebraskan* sent me to Omaha's Orpheum Theatre for an already sold out performance by The Lettermen.

The photographer and I showed up late because of some misunderstanding. We had no reserved tickets or arranged interview once we arrived. Rather than the expected "tough luck fellas" response, we were given front row seats and immediately were escorted to meet the Lettermen. Leader Tony Butala was at no loss for words and answered most of the questions in one, long, non-stop sentence.

Even more informal was a meeting with blues great John Lee Hooker. But a legendary bluesman may attract no more attention on the street than a panhandler with a harmonica (which is how many got started.) We talked in his hotel room over



Montage by Steve Boerner

breakfast and Saturday morning cartoons. Towards the end of the highly enjoyable interview, his traveling companion sheepishly asked me if I would mind taking them to the airport. I humbly complied. It's not often you get to do a favor for a legendary performer in any field.

My later interactions with such people as Billy Joel, Blue Oyster Cult, Styx and

Michael Murphey have served to enforce my initial discovery; people who have climbed to a stature of national prominence, still manage to keep close ties with people they depended on, on the way up. They actually are human, despite the frequent hype they receive from this profession. Their humility has made my job a lot easier.

Finals Week bring groans and men in white coats

Q: Why is finals week like hitting yourself in the head with a hammer?

A: Because it feels so good when you stop.

There is a theory that says finals are something our otherwise-beloved university does to us because otherwise we would stay here forever. Who can argue with the charms of Alma Mater—the ivy covered wall, the vinyl-



Jim Williams
brain waifs

covered bar stools, the enticingly-covered Persons of the Alternate Gender? To knock us out of this comfy nest, Alma Mater resorts to a swat in the behind that would shatter armor—finals week.

The theory suggests that the human body has enough energy to tolerate only a certain amount of abuse during a four-year period. The university calculates this amount and divides most of it into eight final exam periods. At the end, if everything works out right, you should have just enough change coming to grasp your diploma in flac-

id fingers and totter off the stage.

Fifth year

If that is really the plan, it's no wonder I'm in bad shape. This is my fifth year here and I'm getting through dead week on borrowed karma.

I don't think it's fair. I've been good. I've gone to classes regularly except for when I missed them. I've done the outside work (I remember that clearly because I did quite a bit of it last night). I stay off bar stools because I don't drink. And I've given up chasing Persons of the Alternate Gender, although that's mostly because of the way they used to yawn in my face when I'd catch them.

So it seems like a terrible affront to my shining virtue that this has been about the liveliest Dead Week since someone terminated Count Dracula's social calendar with a stake.

Dead week

Of course, there are no tests during Dead Week, to avoid distracting students studying up for their final exams. I just had to write a paper, make a feature-length movie, finish off 250 pages of book reports the illiterates in my journalism class wrote, create four works of art and put the finishing touches on the Great American Novel I had to write for English class.

One of my teachers said once that if I'd start on my assignments earlier, I wouldn't have to rush during Dead Week. I said that if pigs had wings, we could open a factory and make cast-iron umbrellas. You were wondering why it's taking me five years to graduate?

Although the habit of Finals Week Tension gets ingrained, I found out yesterday it's possible to stop it. I was amazed to see Angie Burger sitting calmly in the waiting room of a university building thumbing through a magazine. Amazed because at one time Angie was a compulsive crammer, dedicated to keeping her 4.0 GPA for med school and fending off study distractions with a .30-06. This time last semester she would have been locked in her room with a 12-quart coffeepot.

"Hey, kick the study habit?" I asked cleverly.

She yawned in my face. "Oh, I just decided it wasn't worth all the grief and bother," she said. "I can't see why I used to worry about silly things like good grades and getting into med school. Why ruin your life with trivia like final exams?"

Then she screamed and pointed at my head. "Yaaah! Bats! Big black hairy bats, coming out of your nose! Yaaah! Get the golf shoes!"

Two muscular attendants in white coats came out and carried her away.

Gillespie to perform

With a legendary beginning, in 1935, a 19-year-old man went with his mother to Philadelphia carrying his trumpet in a brown paper bag. He stayed in the city two years, long enough to pick up the nickname of Dizzy from musicians around town.

The Lincoln Jazz Society is sponsoring a concert with *The Dizzy Gillespie Quartet* at O'Donnell Auditorium on the Nebraska Wesleyan campus Friday, 8 p.m. Tickets are available at Dirt Cheap and Brandeis Stores for \$5.

Recognized by many jazz musicians and ardent followers as the innovator of bebop music of the '40s and '50s, Gillespie, at the age of 60, still produces a warm rapport with his audiences. His colorful chatter is almost as entertaining as his music.

Gillespie personified bop more than any other musician, introducing bop fashion items, bop glasses, berets and goatees.

His compositions include jazz classics like "A Night in Tunisia," "Groovin' High" and "Woody 'n' You."

Dance concert Friday

Students in the UNL Division of Dance will perform at 7 p.m. Friday in room 304 of Mabel Lee Hall, in "First Showings—an Informal Dance Concert."

Marie Sanwick, head of the division, said 20 dancers will perform six works by students in composition classes and by Assistant Professor Barbara Ball Mason and former artist-in-residence Donald Bradburn.

"It's one of the times in which students get a chance to perform the things they do on a fairly professional level," Sanwick said. "We thought it was time we opened it (the performance) up to the public."

Works choreographed and performed by students in composition classes as final exercises include: an untitled work by

Stephen Cholka set to music by Chuck Mangione; "Mystical Fear" by Katy Derickson; "Buckaroo" by Julia Weesner; "Tomorrow" by Michele Saucier; "Gotcha" by Jolaine Kaminski; and an untitled work by Connie O'Nele.

"Temporal Matters" by Barbara Ball Mason has six sections: "Girl and Mirror," "The Couple," "Prowess Diminished," "Time Trap," "Fountain of Youth," and "Tables Turned." Dancers in the work are Taffy Wrighton, Edson Gibson, Shawn Farley, Stephen Cholka, Jolaine Kaminski and Jim Flynn.

Members of the division's Dance Ensemble will perform "Conference of the Birds," choreographed by Donald Bradburn.

Admission to the performance is free.