

arts and entertainment

'Gnomes' for those adults yet grasping childhood dreams

By Pete Mason
Entertainment Editor

Gnomes, Wil Huygen and Rien Poortvliet, \$14.95, Harry N. Abrams, Inc.

Gnomes is not a book for pragmatists or cynics. The earth-bound reader, who, by his very nature prefers more solid stuff, will find this book a mild diversion at best.

But to those of us who still have glimmering memories of childhood wonders, *Gnomes* is a reaffirmation of the existence of all things on the other side of reality. If you still hope that a Santa Claus lurks among the shadows on Christmas Eve, that Alice's rabbit is still rushing to keep an appointment or that *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* is a piece of prophecy, then *Gnomes* is for you.

Author Huygen reports, by way of a map, that gnomes have not been sighted in Nebraska. This is not to say they aren't here. Gnome sighting, like bird watching, requires two observers for confirmation. If you have a good pair of binoculars and a friend, and you handle yourself well in embarrassing situations ("Hey, what are you guys looking for?"), you have an opportunity to fill in a blank spot on the map.

Like Tolkien, Dutchmen Huygen and Poortvliet have constructed a world. *Gnomes* reads like a natural history textbook by Audubon. We learn that gnomes stand about 15 cm. high, weigh no more than 300 grams and have a life expectancy of 400 years.

They have extraordinary senses of smell, touch and hearing. They are expert craftsmen. They have extra-sensory perception, can forecast the weather and have a sense of direction as good as a homing pigeon.

We even learn that the female gnome ovulates only once in her life, always giving birth to twins and that the male retains his potency until the age of 350.

While Huygen's text is charming and informative, it is Poortvliet's wonderful illustrations which make *Gnomes* such a masterful flight of fancy. The woodland scenes are richly colorful and have so much depth one can almost smell pine needles and dry leaves.

The fanciful species are painted with originality and humor. Poortvliet's goblin, troll and snotgurgle are masterpieces of characterization.

The snotgurgle, a thoroughly repulsive denizen of the darkest corners of the Russian Urals, is so vividly portrayed that the reader may be afraid to touch the picture



for fear of getting phlegm on his fingers. It seems trolls and snotgurgles have a perpetual sinus problem and obsessively pick their noses. After seeing the picture it's easy to understand why "snotgurgle" obviously is the only possible name for this creature.

Gnomes' final pages deal with gnomes' relationship with humans. According to Huygen's history, gnomes have been intervening in the affairs of man for ages, although we rarely are aware of it. This brings us to a possible reason why books like Tolkien's *Silmarillion* and *Gnomes* currently are on everyone's best seller lists.

There seems to be an increasing interest in all things fantastic. Just look at the popularity of movies like *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters*, the growing interest in the occult and the supernatural, even the rise of fundamental

Christianity among the young. Could it be these are all symptomatic of a certain disillusionment with those cold, harsh things modern life has to offer? Perhaps we are all secretly hoping for a gnome to intervene in our lives.

There are those who will say that if this is true, it's unhealthy—a means to escape realities which must be faced.

I would disagree with them. A pressure cooker has a valve through which steam passes when pressure reaches a certain level. If we can apply this analogy to life in the 1970s, then flights of fancy are means by which to relieve the pressure.

Fantasy is a valid realm, a real world and as nice a place as any to occasionally visit. If we can find the proper balance between Terra Firma and Never Never Land, we can add a new perspective to our lives. I, for one, pity anyone who, after reading *Gnomes*, neglects to watch his step when walking through tall grass.

Local recording industry notes increasing demand

By Casey McCabe

Only a few years ago, the recording industry was the sleeping giant of the business world.

Today, the multi-billion dollar operation is a growing, changing, and profit-making business. Again this year it will surpass all combined motion picture and professional sports revenues.

Viewed from the outside, it may seem to be an industry that perpetuates itself on the sale of 10 million Fleetwood Mac or Peter Frampton albums, but actually it takes on many different aspects that influence our daily lives.

On a local level, Lincoln's W W Sound Studios Inc., 3809 Adams St., is one of the city's five recording services. It currently is expanding to meet increasing demand.

"The recording business can get a little complex at times," said recording engineer/producer Frank Green. "A project taking two hours may end up taking six as new ideas develop. Still, with most of the work we do, one person can control the entire process."

The studio is quipped for 8-track recording, record production, disc-cutting, duplicating and audio-visual production. It also contains its own music and sound-effects library. Apart from the job of producing records, W W Sound has a separate studio which handles commercial recordings. Studio personnel produce several of the familiar jingles heard daily.

"A big part of our work is with commercials and ad agencies, from low-key jingles to high-quality production numbers," Green said. "But we want to increase our work with musicians, and (we) are very conscious of the local talent. We currently are in the process of getting national exposure for them."

"It's not easy," he added. "It's important to have contacts. We have some on the West Coast that help us, but we try to get those with the best possibility for getting the most people to hear our work."

Two of the studio's hopefuls are local musicians Steve Hanson and Sally Cowan. Green currently is co-producing Hanson's album, while Cowan will be putting out her second release at W W Sound. Past successes were the *Hail to the Teeth* comedy album which brought a national contract to the Harris Brothers, and a single written by

Green and Jim Morgan, *C. B. Beaver Fever*, which was recorded by The Midwest Ramblers and pressed for national release on Monument Records.

Surge musicians come to W W Studios and take financial risk to get their music on a recording. But according to Green, the studio producers also help budget performers for their personal needs. Other times, out-of-state musicians will check out local facilities and record during their stay in Lincoln.

Another studio function is recording film soundtracks. An interesting case, Green said, was when a Baltimore man came to W W Sound to record the track for the movie *The Three Little Pigs*. With only a keyboard player and percussionist, the task required 13 different tracks and took six hours to record nine minutes of material. Eventually, the film and soundtrack premiered at Washington's Kennedy Center.

Green is especially proud of a new console control, priced at about \$22,000. The studio also has an array of multi-track units, mixers and play-back systems.

Green admitted W W Sound has come along way since its beginning 10 years ago in a garage-type building with some basic Ampex recorders.

"The advancements in the recording industry have been phenomenal," Green said. "There have been a lot of changes in the industry, and by ourselves here. Equipment, technique and the like change nearly as fast as they come out."

Looking to the future, Green indicated that the biggest advancements are yet to come, and with greater strides in the field, the current high equipment prices may decline.

"The biggest breakthrough is not quite here," he said. "Digital recording (sound transferred into digits), when it comes, will be as big of a change as the invention of recording tape—all else will become obsolete."



Recording studio engineer/producer Frank Green sits beside a control board at W W Sound Studios Inc., 3809 Adams St. Photo by Ted Kirk