

'Cruel Shoes' is disappointing new Martin effort

By Deb Shanahan

Cruel Shoes is just another Steve Martin joke. The joke may be simply that a comedian's book is able to make the New York Times' list of best-selling non-fiction.

book review

Or maybe the joke is on the person who pays \$6.95 for the book, expecting a laugh a line and the Saturday Night Live craziness, for this is Steve Martin as you have never known him.

The man who grabbed national prominence on television and has sold millions of record albums with his unique brand of humor now has branched out into the literary world, perhaps sacrificing some of the elements of his success in the process.

In *Shoes*, the rabbit ears, balloons, arrow-through-the-

head and facial contortions are absent.

Present are 52 short pieces—the book is 128 pages of large type, pictures and white space—on topics ranging from "Serious Dogs" and "How to Fold Soup," to "The Year Winter Lasted Nine Minutes."

All the pieces are unrelated and unpredictable. Some are poems. Some are written in the first person. Some have animals as the main characters. A diet, a list of Things Not to Be and excerpts from a diary also are included. But they all have one thing in common: each in the array of topics is presented in a different light than ever before.

The variety keeps the reader off guard, without a context, and searching to make sense of it all.

For example, in the title piece, the man who defined "happy feet" has Anna trying on every pair of shoes in the store. Still not satisfied, she asks for more and begs to try on the "cruel shoes:"

"... not an ordinary pair of black and white pumps; both were left feet, one had a right angle turn with separate compartments that pointed the toes in impossible directions.

"The other shoe was six inches long and was curved inward like a rocking chair with a vise and razor blades to hold the foot in place."

Anna tries them on and likes them.

Absurd, right? But maybe it is a Martin-esque way of pointing out how foolishly people endure discomfort for fashion.

That is the key to *Shoes*—reading it once to laugh at the absurdity, then re-reading it to find what it is he is satirizing.

That also is the key to why this form of Martin can be a disappointment. We have been spoiled by on-screen appearances of the man in white. We laugh as much at the props, waving arms, body contortions and calculated pauses as at the words.

Although *Shoes* is promoted as proof that "his humor more than translates to the written page: it excels there," the extra effort required to fully appreciate the book may not be worthwhile for part-time fans. But the most dedicated will be anxious to explore this new face of Steve Martin.

Willie Nelson...

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"I've worked hard with it (the guitar) to get it in the condition that it's in now," Willie said.

Willie said he had a movie, *Song For You*, coming out this month with his band and Dyan Cannon. The movie is about a traveling band, he said.

When Willie does take a few days to relax, he said he has homes in Texas, Tennessee and Colorado.

After Friday night's performance, Willie and the band headed for Colorado.

ACCORDING TO SNAKE, Willie has no problems traveling and recording albums. He explained that most of Willie's albums are recorded in a matter of hours.

"The band is good and after three practices if the song isn't right it's thrown out," Snake said.

Willie and the Family was recorded live during a show at Lake Tahoe, Snake said.

He added that *One For the Road*, with Leon Russell, was recorded in the five days at Leon's north Hollywood home. The recording session, for *One For the Road*, was video taped and Snake said the tapes made will be used on television specials.

Willie's fans can expect a new album next month. Snake said Willie recorded the album with Kris Kristofferson.

Hank Cochran, a man who has been in the music business as long as Willie, if not longer, opened the show.

Although not the main attraction, Cochran did a good job of performing songs that he wrote but received his fame with others' hits, such as "Make the World Go Away."

As in Willie's last Lincoln performance, Don Bowman also performed. They "send out the clown" to check out the sound, Bowman said, who definitely does just that.



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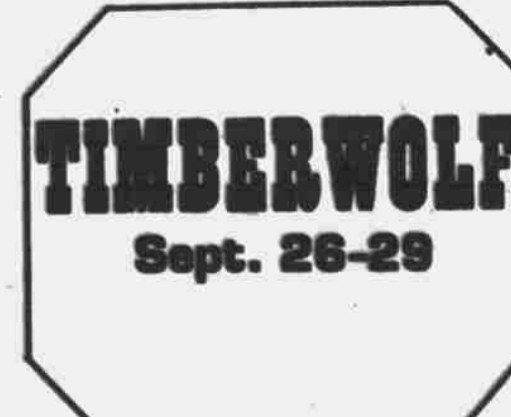
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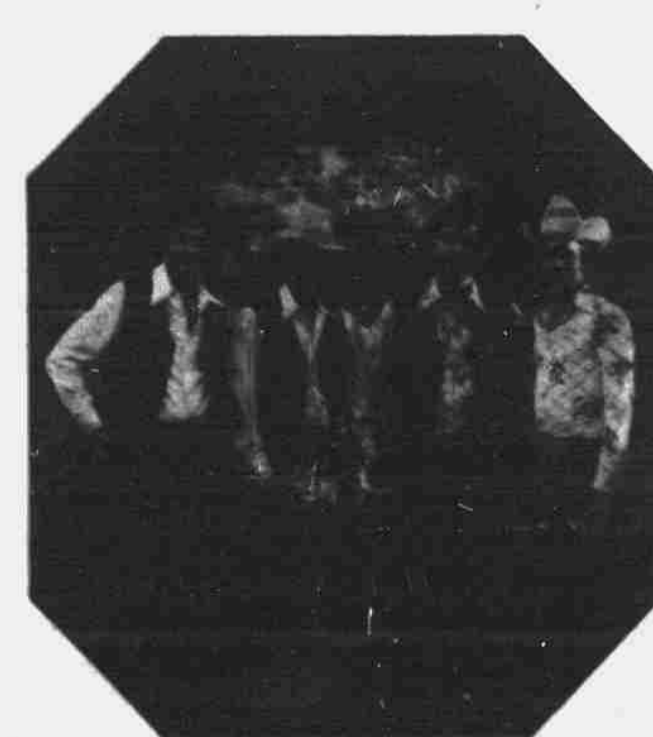
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