

# Annual music festival at UNL brings legendary artists and electric blues

By Michael Wiest

There was something in the presence of Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee on stage that went beyond the familiar pose of the blind man with his blues harp, the guitar player with his lame leg. It was a sensation that one might have viewing a famous monument, the realization that a physical reality has assumed a symbolic one as well. It is because these men have become legends.

## review

The legend still sounded good Friday evening as Terry and McGhee opened the Second Annual Great Plains Blues Festival at the Nebraska Union Centennial Ballroom. Playing to a nearly full house, the oldest and most constant duo of the blues world quickly established a warm rapport with their audience, encouraging clapping and singing along on several of their traditional acoustic blues numbers.

Terry and McGhee appeared to have fun with their performance, as did the audience, judging from its enthusiastic response. Subtle hints of one-upmanship were evident in their reactions to each other's solo performances, Terry with his harmonica style which has influenced countless blues and rock harpists during past years, and McGhee with his classic blues guitar work.

Their music was simple and elegant, very much the roots of the blues, each musician's style complementing the other's with an economy that only many years of performing together could establish.

The second half of the festival featured the electric blues by Alligator recording artist Son Seals. Following the typical format of his performances, Seals let his band warm up with several numbers before taking the stage.

Members of the audience unfamiliar with the guitarist

## Lincoln revue auditions

The Lincoln Community Playhouse will be holding auditions for the musical revue, *What's A Nice Country Like Us Doing In A State Like This?* Oct 1-2 at 7:30 p.m.

The revue, a satirical look at the United States, is scheduled to be presented in the Gallery Theater of the Playhouse Nov. 30, Dec. 1-2, and Dec. 6-8.

Bill Davis, formerly of Omaha, will direct the play. Auditioners need to sing a show tune and be prepared to learn a short dance routine.

might have mistaken this prelude for the main stuff of the show—a compliment for the competency of his band. However, once Seals made his entrance there was no question that something had been missing. He was the power and the significant talent.

An incident which occurred in the next-to-the-last number of the concert spoke powerfully of Seal's talent as a blues guitarist. He snapped a string, and as he stepped to the rear of the stage to repair it, his band covered for him with a predictably lame rendition of the Rolling Stone's "Miss You."

It seemed odd to hear a rock tune, particularly at a blues festival, but once the new string had been tied on, Seals, still tuning his guitar with his back to the audience, joined in and brought the song up to the caliber of his best blues music. You could almost forget where you had heard it first.

The acoustics of the concert left much to be desired. Lyrics were unintelligible at the rear two-thirds of the ballroom, which means that most the audience heard little more than the base and the lead guitar clearly. This flaw was less critical to the simpler, acoustic music of Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, nevertheless the concert as a whole suffered greatly for it.



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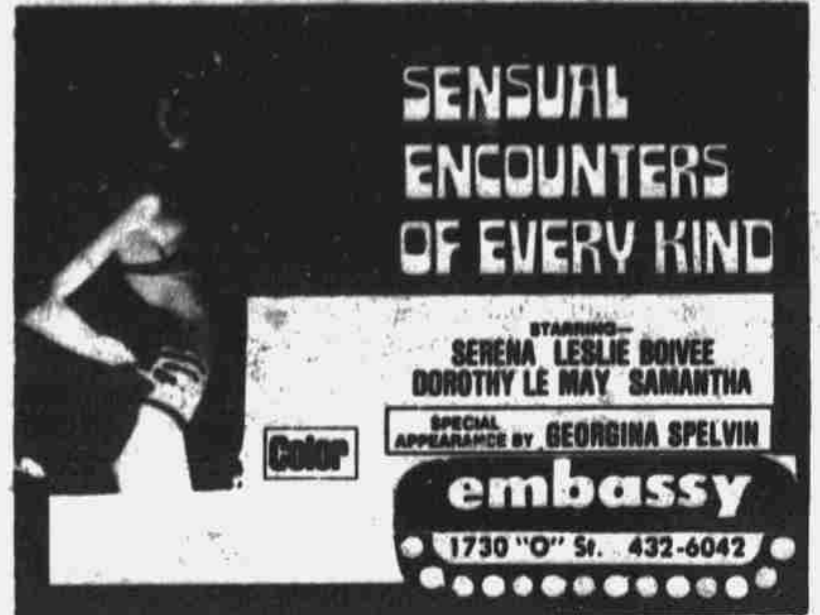
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