

Arts & Entertainment

Ever-changing store features unusual cards

By Eric Peterson

Wave after wave of new material contributes to an ever-changing selection and a successful business at Avant Card, owner Terry Hopper said. "We're always trying to find new things to get into the store," he said. "That also keeps my job more interesting. Everything is hand-picked."

"I'm not relying on one company to pick what I put in," he said. Avant Card, 115 N. 14th St., buys cards from at least 35 companies to provide an unusual selection. Some cards are from very small and specialized lines, and others are more unusual items from some of the bigger card companies — "the type of cards that no other shop in Lincoln would buy," Hopper said.

Avant Card has been in business for three years, Hopper said. Other specialized stores, like the Footlights store — which sold unusual cards in the Gunny's building — had difficulties attracting business in the past. Hopper said the Footlights store may not have done well because they were "too pricey" and used cards from only three companies.

Erotic greetings

A particularly noticeable part of Avant Card is the selection of erotic

greetings, usually picturing men. Hopper said the erotic cards are among the better sellers in the store, and haven't been too much of a problem.

"I have to be very careful in what I choose... I don't want to offend people," he said. "I never consider a nude body to be offensive." Hopper said he has never had a complaint about them while he has been in the store, although some of the people he works with have received several complaints in the past.

The Nancy Reagan items are much more controversial, he said.

"In a card shop, you see human contradiction in its purest form," Hopper said. One customer saw a card picturing Nancy Reagan snorting cocaine, and laughed at it appreciatively; when the person who was working in the store said something disparaging Nancy Reagan, the man became enraged. "I think in a sense it's the initial shock of seeing some authority figure in a deviant situation," Hopper said.

Owner designs

One of the most striking things in Avant Card is the line of specially designed clothing. The store sells sweatshirts and T-shirts with a Lin-



Terry Hooper of Avant Card.

Staff photo by John Zot

coln skyline design in blue and silver, which Hopper designed. Hopper also sells a line of boldly printed, geometric T-shirts that are hand silk-screened by Oko Bezu, an artist working in New York City.

Hopper said there is an artistic con-

sideration that should go into everything in the store.

"The thing that I have to keep reminding myself is that I'm selling greetings, things that project moods and feelings," he said. "I always have to create a sense of drama in the store."

'Lavender Moonlight': A Mannequin Romance



By Pat Clark

Last Week: April May June and Walker Treadmill, pedestrian toady of the mysterious but incredibly wealthy Dante Lavender, made a red-eye flight to Cape Town to dodge a death threat aimed at April May June. Babe Ruth and Randall Hitler were on their way to Cape Town by the overland route. April grilled Walker mercilessly with questions about her alleged assailant and Walker's employer in a tireless effort both to understand why she has been marked for death and to advance the tissue-thin storyline of this dog.

Standing outside a hotel in Cape Town, April did not know whether she was awake or asleep, seeing or dreaming, alive or dead. She guessed that she was alive, because she knew that nobody who was dead ever complained about being tired. The sun was coming up, in whatever direction it is the sun comes up, casting the same lavender haze she had seen in the Johannesburg moonlight.

On the plane she had told Walker about the lavender moonlight, and he had shrugged indifferently and said, "It's lavender, all right. Dante Lavender. Ever since the Lavender Chemical Works got those government contracts, the sky has been filled with this lavender stuff People

around here call it Dante's Inferno." He had sounded more than a little bitter when he said it. Still, all and all, April couldn't help but think that Lavender was a nice name for a chemical plant.

As the demands of trashy romance novel production would have it, the lavender sky made April think of Randall, just in time for the mandatory flashback.

It had been almost 18 hours since April had been wrapped in her beloved Randall's secure arms. She missed him so! When he first had proposed the South African vacation to her, nothing sounded more romantic: moonlit beaches, cruises, tourist traps, cows... he had talked about cows a lot, without ever explaining why they would go all the way to South Africa to see cows when there were thousands of them in Nebraska. There were a lot of things she wishes he was there to explain; she had done more thinking than she wanted to on this vacation, and thinking had never been her strong suit. Randall always told her, "You're just the dumbest little bimbo in the history of the world," he used to say playfully to her. She wished he was there to say it to her now; she would feel so much better. Things just hadn't been the same, ever since she found out she was marked for death. She could only pray that Randall and Babe Ruth were safe.

What about Babe Ruth? She had been April's neighbor for 11 years, and April had been both surprised and delighted when Babe turned up in South Africa. But April sensed something different about Babe. It just wasn't like Babe to run around brandishing a handgun. She always had been such a reserved girl, which April found a little sad because, when she wanted to, Babe could be a strikingly beautiful woman. April often had admired Babe's long, ash brown hair and the way her skin seemed to tan in the first half-hour of spring, setting off Babe's huge eyes so distinctly that she seldom used makeup.

It wasn't like that for herself, April recalled. She remembered the years of braces, followed by the years of passing up pizza, french fries and colas, sitting home instead with her cottage cheese and apricot yogurt and books on how to speak French, wishing that she had been born with Babe's casual allure. But slowly her figure had come around, and then she met Randall Hitler.

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'Smash Palace' views one life's demolition

By Eric Peterson

"Smash Palace" shows the smashup of a mechanic's marriage and — as a consequence — his life. This New Zealand film by Roger Donaldson shows tonight at the Sheldon Film Theatre at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

The main character, Al, played by Bruno Lawrence, brings to mind Huey Long's promise of "Every man a king"; he is a boor reigning over a vast acreage of junked cars. There is a long aerial shot of Smash Palace that brings out all the palace's ugliness and enormous size.



Al's wife, played by Anna Jemison, wants to sell the place and get out.

"I've never been able to stand this place," she says later in the film. "It's like a graveyard."

Although Al talks about giving in to her desire, he's not going to do it.

"I bloody like it here," he says.

Al's every gesture is threatening. He crumples a beer in rage, then finishes drinking out of it; he stops the truck in which his wife and daughter are riding when it is halfway across the train tracks, telling his unnerved wife he "always wondered what would happen if we stopped."

"I've got the manners of a pig," he volunteers, and it's true — but it goes deeper than manners.

There is a deeply shocking sequence in which Al forces his wife to have sex after they have fought bitterly; he undresses her as she weeps, and grimly finishes. They are shown from above a little later, both looking desolated and separate.

"I'm leaving you, Al," she says, with a new determination showing.

If we saw only the predominant brutish side of Al, it would be hard to feel any sympathy for him in the series of collisions that follow. However, he has great tenderness for his daughter, and this tenderness drives him further and further from society and sanity in the film. By the end, we may pity Al simply for what has happened to him — the film seems to construct the situation in terms of fate.

Al reacts with anger when his wife takes Georgia, their daughter, and moves out with his best friend. In defense against his rage, Al's estranged wife begins to withdraw herself and her daughter from his access. His tension builds uncontrollably (we see it even in the way he drives a race car to a very angry victory), and Al begins to go out of bounds.

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