

Arts & Entertainment

Traditional arts harmonize in Lincoln



Byran Bowers appeared in Lincoln last November. The event was sponsored by Lincoln Association For Traditional Artists.

By Dawn Watson

While big-name rock acts such as Styx and Pat Benatar play Lincoln annually, folk music lovers have until recently been hard-pressed to see their favorite musicians.

What started as a loose association of folk musicians has grown into an incorporated organization with more than 200 members responsible for bringing five traditional musicians to town within the last two years.

The Lincoln Association For Traditional Arts (LAFTA) was incorporated April 1, 1982, according to Gwen Meister, a LAFTA board member. LAFTA had put together several benefits before that, Meister said, but decided to get officially organized before producing a big concert.

LAFTA's first major effort was a John McCutcheon concert and square dance in May of 1982, LAFTA President Bill Behmer said. The group has since featured Bryan Bowers, Kevin Burke and Micheal O. Domhnaill, Ken Bloom, and Bill Staines.

"We want to provide opportunities for this community to see really exceptional talent," Meister said.

LAFTA also supports local artists, she said. Events called "LAFTA Presents," staged four or five times a year at the Zoo Bar, showcase local musicians, storytellers and dancers, Meister said.

A bi-monthly newsletter including articles, traditional recipes and "tidbits about traditional folk celebrations" is another LAFTA project aimed at raising community awareness of the traditional

arts. LAFTA encourages folk artists to use the newsletter to reach other artists, she said.

"We want to promote information exchange amongst traditional artists — kind of a support group," Meister said.

LAFTA would also like to work with traditional visual artists, she said, but wonders if that would be duplicating services already offered elsewhere.

One of LAFTA's goals is to establish a coffee house, Meister said. Lincoln needs one, she said, but running a coffee house is a big job. "We probably wouldn't take it on ourselves."

Lincoln boasted two coffee houses in the late 1960s and early 1970s — The Hungry Id and Crosswinds, Meister recalled. They had chessboards, she said, because "everybody had heard about Greenwich Village and you always had a chessboard there."

Another LAFTA idea-in-the-works which will probably materialize sooner than the coffee house is an all-folkdance event.

LAFTA's next concert, featuring Irish musician, singer and songwriter Andy Irvine, is Sunday, Feb. 5 at 7:30 p.m. in Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

The annual meeting April 1, a pot-luck supper, is open to the public. The meeting place isn't known yet, Meister said.

LAFTA welcomes volunteers and people interested in being on the board of directors, she said. "We'll give them a trial subscription to our newsletter."

For more information, write LAFTA at 1943 Euclid, 68502, or call 474-2275.



Asylum Records

Linda Ronstadt: an affectionate ear for big band music.

Ronstadt's oldies 'refreshing'

Linda Ronstadt
What's New
Asylum

What's New features Linda Ronstadt and the Nelson Riddle Orchestra playing hits from the Big Band Era of the '40s. Ronstadt's latest LP is definitely a nostalgic trip but that doesn't mean it's nauseating.

Records

In fact, it's beautiful, bold and clear, with the combined strength of the Nelson Riddle Orchestra underscoring Ronstadt's big booming and particularly sexy and sweet vocals.

What's New is a refreshing revival of the finely-tuned full orchestra with artistically-crafted, emotional singing.

In this effort, Ronstadt has come full circle from her typical rock 'n' roll

rhythms. The deviation is brilliant. That Ronstadt has strived to develop a very different musical style from that for which she is acclaimed confirms her talent as a vocal artist.

The songs are romantic, melancholy, whimsical and bluesy. "What's New?," "I've Got a Crush on You" and "Crazy He Calls Me" are a few of the tunes in which Ronstadt croons on themes of lost love, lust and longing, soured relationships and reminiscing.

The tone and style of the album are soothing, airy and melodious. The pure trumpet and tenor sax solos that belittle and whine of loneliness are so precise they could make anyone sigh.

Ronstadt developed an affectionate ear for Big Band music during her formative years.

The dedication of the album cover reads: "When I was growing up my father, who has an infallible ear for a great melody, taught me a lot about these songs and the people who sang them. It is to him that this album is most affectionately dedicated."

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Competition rocks Lincoln; change is 'in the air(waves)'

Some Lincoln radio stations aren't secure with a piece of the rock anymore. They want it all.

Consequently, stations in Lincoln, four in particular, moved closer to each other in sound in the past year as formats changed, wider audiences were sought and competition generally rose in the Lincoln listening area.

As Omaha stations played a game of "who's-on-first-what's-on-second?" with frequencies and formats, Lincoln's contemporary music stations played variations on a theme. They manipulated their music to appeal to the masses — conservative ball, as it were.

JoAnne Young

At least two of those stations say they are providing that theme.

"Whenever you do well at something, people try to imitate you," said Charlie Huber, KHAT general manager, talking about the increase in competition in his format.

But Tim Kelly, program director of newcomer KXSS-FM, credits his station for being the pacesetter.

"KXSS (pronounced "kiss") has changed the complexion of the market," he said. "Everybody jumps on the bandwagon. They all follow the leader. They're not innovators."

Most of the stations in this battle for the 18 to 34 year-old listeners are on the FM band. They range from the more mellow sound of KHAT to the harder pace of KFMQ. The two stations that fall in the middle, KFRX and KXSS, play varying degrees of both ends of the Contemporary Hit Radio (CHR) format.

Most of the stations point to research as the guiding factor for changes in their sounds.

Ray Farrington, general manager of KFMQ, said his station has made a long-term commitment to researching the market in order to bring Lincoln listeners the music they want. KFMQ has for many years been the traditional FM rocker in Lincoln. But as a

result of the research, Farrington said his station shifted last spring from AOR (Album Oriented Rock) to the CHR format, with more current artists and new music. But, he said, you won't hear the repetition you might hear on other stations with the same format. More changes in the music are on the way, he said.

Most station managers agree the competition is good — for the listener.

"It forces the station to analyze its format," Farrington said, "so you get better radio."

Tracey Johnson, KFRX program director, agrees that competition is good for the listener. Competition forced his station to change direction from an AOR format to one with more mass appeal, he said, and to "up the pace" of its presentation.

"We talk over intros now and keep the excitement level up," he said.

But Kelly said he thinks part of the changes in format stem from the scare of album rock dying across the country. He said AOR stations are looking for new formats.

Although most stations will hang on to what they've got, at least through the spring Arbitron rating period, there are, no doubt, changes in the air (waves) in 1984.

It is rumored that KHAT and its sister AM station, KECK, have been sold to Hanna-Barbera Corp. Already there is speculation in broadcast circles that Lincoln may be the test market for all-cartoon radio. KHAT's Huber has no comment on the sale at this time, but promises information in the near future.

At the same time, KSRD in Seward has been sold and word is the new owners have applied for new call letters. Can a format change from contemporary country be far behind?

In the meantime, keep those cards and letters coming in.

PROGRAM NOTE: For all those with MASH mania . . . who can't function without their daily dose of Alan Alda . . . KOLN-TV (Channel 10) has moved the popular sitcom from 6:30 p.m. weeknights to 5 p.m. (same nights). In its place, you should find those three zany, madcap kids of Three's Company.