

Arts & Entertainment



Tom Waits: "expanding the aural palette,"

Daily Nebraskan

Tom Waits paints musical pictures

By Peter Palermo

Some may think it unusual to refer to a songwriter as a painter or visualist, but this is precisely the kind of performance Tom Waits gives on his latest album,

Records

Swordfishtrombones (Island). With his songs, Waits creates images that are as strong and clear as any painting.

Granted it is perhaps the oddest album in recent memory. On this remarkable album, Waits has sacrificed radio air-play for creativity. Financially not a wise step, but certainly a noble one.

Waits uses any instrument, any object, any sound to form pictures in your mind. Anything from a brake drum to bagpipes can be heard here and are all used masterfully to expand Waits' aural palette.

But Waits' pictures also have words, and excellent ones at that, making his songs seem more like little

movies. Each song spins its yarn, some interrelating, all dealing with men and women from the wrong side of town—the seedy low-lives stumbling randomly through their lives.

"Shore Leave," for example, is the story of a sailor, in Hong Kong, far from the women he loves. You can almost see the neon bar signs and hazy pool halls as Waits' ravaged and gravelly voice nearly speaks the lyrics: "And I had a cold one at the Dragon/ with some Filipino floor show/and talked baseball with a lieutenant/over a Singapore Sling."

Waits' brand of sardonic humor is evident in "Frank's Wild Years," an organ/bass accompanied monologue about a guy skipping town. It is one of the most satirically cutting pieces I've heard in a long time.

Perhaps the most touching and heartfelt song on the album is "Soldier's Things". The moving lyrics accompanied by Waits' passionate vocals, blend together to form an incredibly sorrowful song.

Indeed, Waits' *Swordfishtrombones* is a brilliantly original album. Waits is taking musical and commercial risks and his ingenious work should not be allowed to slip away. It is a fascinating and marvelous break from the high-gloss artists who, unfortunately, rule the charts.

Album displays Richie's versatility

By Janet Stefanski

After seeing the Lionel Richie concert in Lincoln, one can truly appreciate the versatility and talent of this artist. But his latest album *Can't Slow Down* (Motown) is, all in all, icing on the cake.

"All Night Long" is the only song off this LP which was performed at the November concert. In general, *Can't Slow Down* consists of songs which are upbeat, mellow and a blend of both these types of songs.

Lionel Richie does not make carbon copies of his pieces. With some artists, the rule is "Once you've heard one song, you've heard 'em all." Not so with Richie. His style, which is always classy, is continuously developing.

The main theme, love, is carried throughout almost every cut of this album, with variations. Themes include love at first sight, returning to a loyal lover, you are the only one and reminiscing about a spicy love. It's not that these themes get old; they are simply apparent.

The title cut has its bad moments. The very words, "Can't Slow Down," become too repetitious. The lyrics are somewhat difficult to decipher, due to Richie's breathy singing here. Fortunately, the problem does not recur in other cuts. This is a somewhat upbeat piece with effective use of drums.

The popular "All Night Long" introduces a unique method of blending reggae and modern styles into one. It is refreshing.

With "Penny Lover," the title alone gives a new twist to a love song. This piece has a clear and crisp melody. "Stuck on You" represents an unusual twist for Richie; there is a country ballad style used sparingly here.

"The Only One" starts out as if Richie is having a conversation with his lover after a long day. The chorus picks up the beat but does not get stale with each repetition of it within the song.

"Running With the Night" is an uplifting and snappy piece which works well with Richie's voice.

My personal favorite on the album is "Hello." It is an enjoyable and mellow piece. The beautiful rhythm and lyrics blend together magically. It is more than just another sappy song about love. As the final song on the album, it leaves the listener wanting more of the artist's melodies.

His break from the Commodores was a wise move for his career. If nothing else, this album gives Richie the opportunity to branch out to various areas of music.

Lionel Richie's lyrics are captivating, as is his musical talent. The two blend to produce genuine listening pleasure.

Country music stations disappear from Lincoln

Big market radio magnates seem to be finding Lincoln an irresistible city in which to make their dreams come true. And it also seems that country music formats aren't in those dreams.

First, country formatted KBHL fell at the hands of

JoAnne Young

Chicago programmer and new owner Tim Kelly. Kelly and his father, Sam Sabean, a radio executive from Denver, came to town determined to turn this town on its ear. Basically what they did was change the call letters to KXSS and join the parade of contemporary music stations.

In about a month, we may be witnessing the end of "Super Country" KSRD. That station has been sold and new owners from Washington D.C. and Pittsburgh took over January 5. Don Cavaleri, who is originally from Omaha, is the principal stockholder and has taken over as general manager of the station that is licensed to both Seward and Lincoln.

Last Friday the station received permission from the Federal Communications Commission to change their call letters to KZKX-FM (Q's, Z's and X's seem to be the call letters of preference these days). The call letter change will become official Feb. 23 and Cavaleri said shortly thereafter substantial changes will take place in the sound of the station.

Cavaleri said the station will be programmed to reach the baby-boom audience of the 25 to 49-year-old age group.

"That age group represents the largest cell of population," he said. "The 25 to 49-year-old is more affluent and better-educated than the older audience. And in an effort to appease advertisers, we are going after the same age. Smart people have followed that trend."

Cavaleri called Lincoln an excellent radio community with a lot of undeveloped potential. The new station will go after their share of the audience in a different way, he said. The symbolism of the new call letters will be apparent after the changes are made, he assured us.

One thing that Cavaleri doesn't plan to change is the station's affiliation with Nebraska sports. He said KZKX will continue to carry UNL football and basketball games.

This trend away from country music formats prompted me to call the long-time country station in Lincoln, KECK, to find out if there is some sort of conspiracy to do in country stations. Operations manager Dale Wojtasek had really done his homework.

According to Wojtasek, country music isn't dying. In fact, it is broadening its audience. There is a trend, he said, to change the image of country stations from a rural to a more urban sound. He said KECK tries to bridge the gap between the two.

He views the demise of country formats in Lincoln as a reflection of personal tastes of the owners rather than a reflection of audience preferences.

This Thursday's episode of *Hill Street Blues* will mark the official end of Sgt. Phil Esterhaus. The character was played by Michael Conrad, who died in November. The script writers have the beloved Sgt. Esterhaus going out in style. Henry Goldblume, who has taken over the roll call duties temporarily, will explain that Esterhaus died of a heart attack while in bed with his hot-blooded companion Grace Gardner.

HOTSPOTS

Television

• Robby Benson, Glynnis O'Connor, Ned Beatty, Sada Thompson and Barbara Bel Geddes round out an all-star cast in tonight's encore presentation of *Our Town*. Originally produced in 1977, this adaptation is faithful to Thornton Wilder's original script, depicting life and death in small town America. It is scheduled to air at 8 p.m. on Channel 12.

Radio

• Daniel Barenboim is the guest conductor on tonight's edition of Chicago Symphony (8 p.m., KUCV, 90.9 FM). Pieces featured in tonight's presentation include Saint-Saen's "Symphony No. 3 in C," and a piece from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*.

At the Sheldon

• Luis Bunuel's *The Exterminating Angel* will be shown in the Film Theatre at 1, 7 and 9 p.m. Produced in Mexico in 1962, the film is typical of Bunuel's surrealist style. The story revolves around some party guests who can't bring themselves to leave a dinner party. They ultimately starve to death. Admission to the picture, which is being shown as part of a film studies class, is by donation.

Around Town

• Omaha's premiere reggae band Oasis will be appearing at the Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St., tonight and Thursday. There is a \$1.50 cover charge.
• Lincoln's own The Zones will be at the Drumstick, 547 N. 48th St. There's a \$1 cover charge.