

# Arts & Entertainment

## Disco Ranch style stirs mixed reactions

By Donna Sisson and Tish Mockler

With the advent of new technology, many controversies arise as people weigh tradition against progress. In the music world, one band challenging tradition is Disco Ranch.

Disco Ranch consists of Joe Budenholzer and Jerry Kazak and a pocketbook full of electronic equipment. Each time they step on stage, they must confront a diverse range of audience expectations and reactions.

When most people go to see a live band, they expect to see the musicians in certain places and when Disco Ranch seeks to break the mold, they are taking on a great challenge. Their courage is admirable.

The first time they played as two people was really scary, Budenholzer said. "I kept looking around for the drummer because I would get out of time with the machine," he said.

During their shows, Kazak runs the electronics while Budenholzer sings. "We put the whole show together on stage. Some of it is recorded, some of it we play live and some of it is electronically triggered by the tapes," Budenholzer said. "We bring the studio to the stage."

The audience responses they receive are mixed. "We've had some pretty dead audiences, and we've had some insulting audiences," Budenholzer said. "For some people, when they don't see a drum kit and a guitar player, you might as well not be there," he said.

"Usually, at least we get a reaction. Somebody will get mad at us or somebody will tell us that they really like us," Budenholzer said.

"In one of our most negative gigs, it was absolutely quiet as we played, everybody just listened, and then at the end of the song, there was clapping and booing at the same time," Kazak said.

"We bring out some kind of passion — whether it's good or bad. But that's the whole thing, to get a response," Kazak said.

Disco Ranch has been together for four years. One year was spent as a four-piece band, and their four song extended-play record was made with a full band. But Budenholzer and Kazak originated the band and have always been its core.

### Rock 'n' roll utopia

They coined the term "disco ranch" as a title for an imaginary place where people could go and listen to music, Budenholzer said. "There were clubs like that after disco faded out and the urban cowboy started coming in. Clubs had all this disco stuff left over and they started putting ranch stuff in too. It was such an amazing combination," he said.

They said their show will be changing in the months to come. Up to now, they have been conforming somewhat to their audiences and have a hard-electronic edge to their music, Kazak said. In the future, they said they hope to become more "discofied" and a little more funky.

Many of their songs contain a frenzy of electronic chords smoothed by clear, compelling vocals. In other songs, the attraction lies in the definite beat combination — calling all feet to dance. Their music is built of simple and familiar chord structures



Donna Sisson/Daily Nebraskan

Budenholzer (right) and Kazak of Disco Ranch.

which, when combined with their unique tempos, become distinctly Disco Ranch.

One of the beauties of their live performances is that the sound is clean and tight. "We're the closest thing to a live recording on stage," Budenholzer said.

Another advantage to working with electronics is that it puts the emphasis on the musical idea more than on having the skill to play an instrument, Budenholzer said. "We let the machines do the work and we think of the ideas."

Using electronic equipment also allows them to avoid the hassle of finding other musicians to work with, Budenholzer said.

Their interest in electronics was kindled by artists such as Brian Eno, George Clinton and Kraftwerk, as well as a discovery of the amazing machines and what they could do, Budenholzer said. The instrumental tracks in rap music spurred their interest in funk.

### New to bar audiences

"It's music come full circle. It's got the real African rhythms going with the latest technology," Budenholzer said.

The two-man format is new in this area, although it has been practiced elsewhere for a long time. Originally, dub music was produced in Jamaica. They would record the music in the studio then travel in a van with a disk jockey and a singer, Budenholzer said. "If anything we're a dub band."

The music Disco Ranch plays is easy to dance to, but the sparsely-populated stage is inhibiting. It is similar to dancing to a record or a video, which is

popular in discos, but is something a bar audience is not used to.

"Some people think we're trying to trick them," Kazak said. It will take some time before audiences feel comfortable with the idea of a two-piece band and in the meantime all it takes is a few brave souls to start dancing, and the floor fills up for most of the remaining evening.

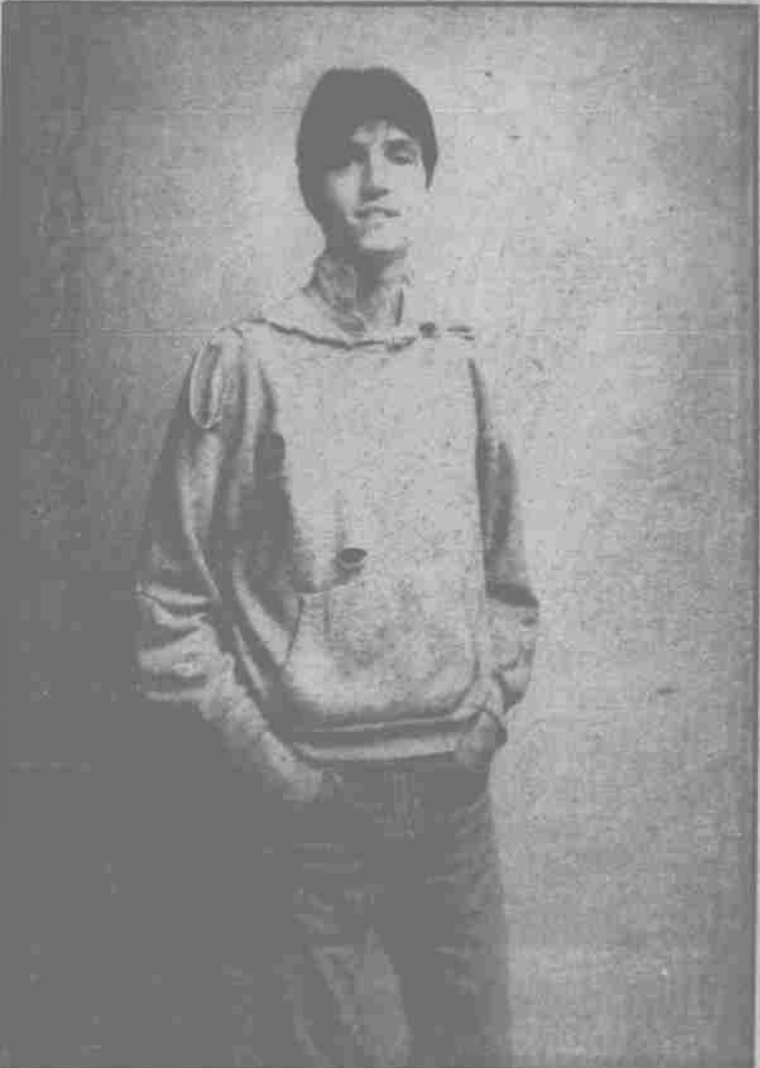
One of the drawbacks of Disco Ranch's method of musical presentation lies in the performance aspect. Because there are only two members, the entire burden of visually entertaining the audience rests on Budenholzer.

In an attempt to break up the monotony of this situation, Budenholzer dons various masks during their performances. "I've always liked to wear masks. You escape immediately from yourself. It's like dropping through a trap door — all of a sudden it's not you on the stage anymore. Sometimes when people get tired of watching me sing, if I transform before their eyes it makes a little more excitement," Budenholzer said.

"We're not really trying to compete with full bands, nor are we a performance art or drama, but more like a performance event, an appearance with stylizations," Budenholzer said.

"People should just listen, or try to dance and they would just have to come a little ways — put out a little effort to listen and not just judge at face value," Budenholzer said. "We will keep persisting."

Disco Ranch will be playing with Digital Sex Saturday night at the Drumstick, 547 N. 48th St.



Daily Nebraskan

Danny O'Kane of the Model Citizens Club:  
On the Radio. See Hotspots.

## Hotspots

### Television

• Humphrey Bogart fans note: If you can fight off symptoms of sleepiness, Channel 6 will present two of his films this weekend. *Kid Galahad* (retitled *The Battling Boy* for its television screening to avoid confusion with Elvis Presley's *Falagad*) will be on 3 a.m. Friday. *Chain Lightning* will broadcast at the comparatively early hour of 12:30 a.m. Saturday.

### Radio

• KZUM (89.5 and 99.3 FM) will broadcast a three-hour concert featuring local rock band Model Citizens Club 10 p.m. tonight. The performance was recorded earlier this week at a Citizens Club live appearance. The broadcast is part of the *Weekly Alive* in Lincoln series, which features local musicians either on record or live recordings. It's also part of a special week of programs in conjunction with the station's sixth birthday marathon to raise funds.

### On Stage

• Paula Vogel's *Meg* will be presented at the Studio Theatre, located on the third floor of the Temple Building, 12th and R streets. Ticket reservations may be obtained by calling 472-2073 between noon and 5 p.m.

### At the Sheldon

• The long-awaited *Tender Mercies* will finally be

screened this weekend in the Film Theatre. Screenings are at 7 and 9 p.m. Saturday through Monday. There are also 3 p.m. matinees on Saturday and Sunday. The film, directed by Bruce Beresford and starring Robert Duvall, has been described as a touching story of a dying country music singer.

• This is the last weekend the current displays at the Art Gallery will be available for viewing. The exhibits are Chinese tapestries by Ruth Kao, paintings by Gary Day, and *Chicago: Some Other Traditions*, which features pieces by artists from the Windy City. The exhibits are scheduled to come down on Sunday.

### At the Kimball

• The Nebraska Dance Ensemble will be appearing in the Recital Hall tonight and Saturday. Performances are set to get underway at 8 p.m. Tickets may be obtained by calling the Kimball box office at 472-3375.

### Around Town

• The Frénetics, a rock 'n' roll band featuring Omaha *World-Herald* entertainment columnist Steve Millburg will be appearing at Chesterfield, Bottomsley and Potts, 245 N. 13th St., Friday and Saturday nights. There is no cover charge.