

'50s live again

Theater department produces 'Grease'

By Bill Allen
Staff Reporter

The sock hop lives again in the bubbling musical "Grease," which opens tonight at 8 in UNL's Howell Theatre.

"Grease," written by Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey, who were greasers themselves in the '50s, recreates the fabulous era of blue suede shoes, Howdy Doody, James Dean, pegged pants, Elvis, the Mickey Mouse Club, Hula Hoops and greasers, so named for the thick pomades teen-agers slicked their hair with.

The show, a recap of life in a high school of the '50s is directed by Kevin Paul Hofeditz, assistant professor of voice and acting in the UNL theater department. He is also responsible for staging and musical direction.

Hofeditz said the musical is based on the play and people familiar with the popular movie version will notice some differences.

"A lot of the story line is the same and many of the songs are the same (as the movie)," he said, "but there are some songs added for the movie that weren't in the play to suit the stars' voices."

"I think you see more of the

whole cast in the play," he said, "where in the movie they concentrated on the two stars. The play is a little more earthy, and I think more interesting."

Danny, the class rake who boasts of conquests he has never made, is played by Brad Schluterbush. Sandy, the class madonna, is played by C. Leslie Gilreath. Joyce E. Welsch plays the archetypal dumb blond, Frenchy, while Treva Tegmeier plays the tough, streetwise leader of the school clique, Pink Ladies.

The 15-member cast includes a five-piece band that will perform live music for the song and dance routines.

"Grease" includes 15 songs, all new in the '70s, which parody the loud, often harsh, simple strains of rock'n'roll in its early days.

"Grease" started as an amateur production in Chicago and was brought to New York to an off-Broadway house and then on to a Broadway theater.

"Several of the tunes," wrote drama critic Dan Sullivan in the Los Angeles Times, "are so good that they would have been top-toppers if they'd come out in '59 instead of now."



Troy Phipps/Daily Nebraskan

The period spotlighted in the play was before the Rolling Stones and the Beatles, before moonshots and Vietnam, before Woodstock and the campus protests of the '60s.

Hofeditz said "Grease" is a comedy, and lighter than some UNL

theater productions, to add a balance in the season's offerings.

The play will run tonight through Saturday, March 12 through 16 and March 20 through 23. Matinee performances will be at 3 p.m. on March 9, 16 and 23.

To make ticket reservations for "Grease" contact the box office in the Temple Building, 12th and R streets, 472-2073. The box office hours are noon to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and from 5 to 8 p.m. on nights of performances.

Firm's debut album lacks lyrical meaning

By Marc D. Seger
Staff Reporter

The Firm has put together an enjoyable debut album, although it isn't quite Led Zeppelin. The band consists of Jimmy Page, former Yardbirds and Zeppelin guitarist; Paul Rodgers, vocalist from now-defunct Bad Company; Chris Slade on drums and Tony Franklin on bass and keyboards.

The self-titled album contains several different types of songs, all in the rock format. Hard rock songs like "Closer" and "Make or Break" contrast pleasantly with the softer sounds of "Together" and "Satisfaction Guaranteed."

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This variety allows us to hear the versatility of Page's guitar playing. Page might be the best rock'n'roll guitarist today.

One of the high points on "The Firm" is the only song not written by Page and Rodgers — a cover of the old Righteous Brothers tune, "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling." Slick production by Page and Rodgers combine with well-timed instrumental pauses and Rodgers' explosive vocals to dish out a version that really adds to the original.

"Radioactive," the first single released from the album, is selling well and is in the top 100, but it really isn't representative of The Firm's style.

Like Springsteen's "Dancing in the Dark" from his *Born in the U.S.A.* album, "Radioactive" may be the most popular song on the album, but it appears to have been written with the charts in mind. This is in marked contrast to the rest of the album, which features fine musicians playing the way they want to.

Page and Rodgers have given The Firm its supergroup status. Seemingly right after the 1980 death of Led Zeppelin's drummer, John Bonham, rumors of Page and Rodgers forming a new group sprang up. Bad Company had recorded on Led Zeppelin's own record label, Swan Song, and The Firm does represent a kind of "corporate merger" of the best of those two groups.

This takes nothing away from the vocal prowess of Robert Plant. Most Zeppelin fans still mourn the splitting of the Page/Plant songwriting duo, but

also agree that it's good to see them both recording. Plant with two solo albums and now with The Honeydrippers.

Indeed, one of the main shortcomings of *The Firm* when compared with Led Zeppelin's discs is that the lyrics aren't as interesting. Gone are the themes of death, religion and nature. It isn't all as trite as "Radioactive," but some lyrical improvement on their next album is needed.

Franklin and Slade also contribute to the disc. Franklin's unspectacular but adequate bass lines fit in well. The bass wasn't meant to be a spectacular instrument. If not for the difference between Rodgers' and Plant's voices and the lyric quality, many of the songs, like "Someone to Love," could easily pass for old Zeppelin outtakes.

The Firm is its best in all respects on the album's final track, "Midnight Moonlight." Similarities can be drawn between it and "Stairway to Heaven," since they are both quite long and contain powerful, mellow passages. Again, though, it is the lack of meaningful images brought out in the words of the song that cause it to fall short of Page's previous work.

Page's excellent solo work in the cut, as well as the best lyrics on the album, make this an excellent song, however. This is one of the songs that incorporate both acoustic and electric guitars, and they are combined well.

Rodgers helps out on guitar on a few of the songs. "Midnight Moonlight" makes this album well worth the \$6 to any Page fan and many who aren't.

The Firm will appear in Omaha Friday. Fans will be treated to guitar masterwork as well as a good new group rising out of the ashes of rock history. They are off to a fair start but have a lot of unrealized songwriting potential.

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