

# Arts & Entertainment



David Bourke/Daily Nebraskan

## Book note challenge

# Cliffs beats Barron's

By Bill Allen  
Senior Reporter

There is no finer pleasure than reading great literature. Well, maybe a couple of things are better, but it's still uplifting.

That's why the publishers of Cliffs Notes, Barron's Book Notes and I recommend book notes only as a supplement to reading the original text.

## REVIEW BOOK

It's widely assumed, however, especially as the end of the semester draws near, that many students use the notes to "get by" and not use the original text at all.

"There will always be students around who use it incorrectly," Gary Carey, editor of Cliffs Notes, said. He said it was like nutritional food compared to "fast food." There are always going to be those that skip nutritional meals for fast food.

The question is, which "fast food" book notes should you use to supplement the original text? Should you use Cliffs Notes, which have been around for 25 years, or Barron's Book Notes, which have just started and will soon have 100 titles on the market?

You might prefer Barron's notes for several reasons, one being price. Barron's cost \$2.59 each. Cliffs Notes cost more. For instance, for review purposes

I chose Hamlet. Cliffs Notes for Hamlet were \$3.50.

Of course, price is not worth a sacrifice for quality.

Grace Freedson, who is a public relations employee for Barron's Book Notes, said the new series is basically an extension of Barron's educational services. She said most high school students already are familiar with Barron's "Guide to the SATs."

As far as book notes, Freedson said, "We felt that what was available to the students now could be made better."

What is available now is the Lincoln-based Cliffs Notes, which are available nationally and internationally, with 220 published titles. Freedson said Barron's provide better book notes for several reasons.

She mentioned the lower price and said they are available nationwide.

They are written by educators, school administrators, authors and other people related to literature in some way, Freedson said.

She said Barron's contains more character profiles than are now available, more extensive term paper ideas, more analysis and criticisms, as well as notes that tell how that criticism has changed over the years.

They also contain essay questions and are longer than Cliffs Notes, she said.

Rather than tell me why he thinks Cliffs Notes are better, Carey suggested I compare the content of the two.

Barron's do have added features, such as the author's "Life and Times," but content is where Cliffs Notes are a little better.

Cliffs Notes use a straightforward, clear writing style that is consistent throughout. I found that Barron's at times wasn't as clear and took longer to gather the plot synopsis.

A clear example of this is Act I, Scene V. Barron's starts the plot summary with "Hamlet and ghost re-enter from another direction," indicating that the scene has shifted to another part of the battlements. "When Hamlet, unsure where the ghost is leading him, refuses to go on, the ghost speaks at last."

Whereas, Cliffs Notes gets right to the point with "The Ghost tells Hamlet that it is the spirit of his father, doomed for a time to walk on earth during the nights and endure purgatorial fires..."

Then Cliffs Notes provide much more commentary than Barron's. After the plot summary, Barron's gave about half a page of "notes." Cliffs Notes gave four pages of commentary.

This I think marks the biggest difference in the two, and makes it worthwhile to spend the extra dollar for Cliffs. The purpose of the notes is to expand discussion and give room for interpretation, not just regurgitate plot and give paper ideas.

Carey said he tries to get someone with a Ph.D to write Cliffs Notes, especially those that are used mainly in college.

This shows when reading Cliffs Notes. Cliffs' writer for Hamlet, English professor James Lowers of the University of Hawaii, seemed to have put much more into it than the writer of Barron's, Village Voice theater critic Michael Feingold.

Freedson said Barron's are longer, and they are, as far as pages are concerned. Barron's Hamlet was 130 pages long, while Cliffs was 107 pages, but Cliffs print was smaller and the pages bigger (and they lay flat when opened) so you actually got more from Cliffs.

So the challenger doesn't quite beat the champion in this battle of book note wars.

# Good points prevail in Jagger's attempt at first solo album

By Troy Park  
Staff Reporter

After 24 years in the forefront of the Rolling Stones, Mick Jagger, the most famous lead singer in rock 'n' roll history, has attempted a solo album.

Aided by such musicians as Jeff Beck, Herbie Hancock and Pete Townsend, Jagger's new LP on Columbia Records has both high and low points. Tracks like "Lucky in Love," "Turn the Girl Loose," "Lonely at the Top" along with single release "Just Another Night" have received constant radio airplay. It is these four songs that carry the LP slightly above mediocrity.

## REVIEW DISC

Side one begins with "Lonely at the Top." Jeff Beck, whose past musical deeds include stints with the Yardbirds, Rod Stewart and his own solo career, plays lead guitar. Beck is joined by legendary who guitarist Pete Townsend, organist Herbie Hancock and guitarist Eddi Marnez.

"Lonely at the Top" is an excellent album starter, setting the mood for more of that bouncy, bluesy rock that Jagger is so great at delivering.

But the good music momentarily fizzles while "1/2 a Loaf" and "Running Out of Luck" plod through the speakers. "1/2 a Loaf" is the worse of the two. It has a disco sound that has been heard all-too-often on Stones recordings from the past seven or eight years

(examples: "Miss You" and "Too Much Blood.") It is surprising that the same guy who howled out "Jumpin' Jack Flash" and "Street Fighting Man" is singing "1/2 a Loaf."

Mick makes up for all this with "Turn the Girl Loose." Bernard Edwards on bass, Anton Fig on drums and Nile Rodgers on guitar are featured in the song. It takes off into the chorus beautifully (. . . she's calling out . . . across the lacquered ocean).

A squawky woman's voice at the end of the song helps the tune. Her annoyed squeals add a humorous touch without spoiling the song. "Turn the Girl Loose" makes it clear Jagger can still write a good song.

But can he still sing? "Hard Woman" is a ballad that would make a far stronger impact if Jagger would sing it like he sang "Wild Horses" or "Angie." Jagger sounds like he's trying to imitate Willie Nelson. Maybe the years have finally caught up with his vocal chords.

"Just Another Night" starts off side two and again the disco sound is present. But unlike "1/2 a Loaf," Jagger's vocal direction and some interesting chord changes turn it from acceptable to good.

"Lucky in Love" is the only mentionable song left besides the title track "She's the Boss." "Lucky in Love" features a well-sung chorus by Jagger and back-up vocalist Bernard Fowler. Fowler does not attempt to harmonize with Jagger the way Stones guitarist Keith Richard does. This is good because no one can do it like Keith. "She's the Boss" is catchy, but not a milestone.

Catchy, but not a milestone describes this LP in general. It contains some great tunes, but will probably move hard-core Stones fans to eagerly await the band's next group effort. In the meantime keep listening to "Sticky Fingers" or "Exile On Mainstreet."

# 'Nostalgia' bombards viewers with images

By Mike Grant  
Staff Reporter

"Nostalgia," the latest of the foreign film series, begins with two travelers who come upon a striking view of a lush, misty valley. Eugenia says, "It's a marvelous painting."

## REVIEW MOVIE

"Yes," Andrei retorts, "but I'm sick of beautiful scenes." You as the viewer may be too, after the movie has run its lengthy course.

Andrei, a Russian poet, is in Italy to research the life of an 18th century Russian composer who committed suicide when he returned home after spending two years in Italy. Eugenia is his Italian interpreter, desperately seeking Mr. Right. The film follows both characters' search for faith in life and in others.

Birds appear throughout the movie, as do the four elements of nature. In fact, "Nostalgia" is little more than a series of paintings, which show off these images.

The camera only moves in for close-ups and backs up for wide-angle shots of these paintings. There is no soundtrack, except for a little Beethoven and Schiller music to punctuate suicide scenes.

"Nostalgia" is a multi-layered film. Andrei begins mixing his life and that of the Russian composer's with confusing results.

Andrei also befriends a madman who locked up his wife and child for five years, because he feels the man, Domenico, has an inside track on the meaning of faith.

Andrei is not long on logic, but "Nostalgia" is long on everything else. Director Andrei Tarkovsky pushes his movie at a snail's pace to show his infatuation with dark hallways, rambling soliloquies and other frustrating, irrelevant things.

"Nostalgia" is the most drawn-out film in recent memory. I would recommend "Nostalgia" for lovers of Italian sensuality and Medieval symbolism. If you're not included in these groups, "Nostalgia" will leave you with bad memories.

# H-O-T-S-P-O-T-I-S

## University Theatre

The University Theatre continues performances of The Dining Room tonight through Saturday. The play, presented by student performers, tells in a series of 20 diverse sketches about the

American upper-middle class and what has happened to it. Curtain time is 8 p.m. Tickets are on sale at the University Theatre box office, open weekdays from noon to 5 p.m. and from 5 to 8 p.m. on performance nights.

## Radio

KZUM Radio 89.3 FM presents Radio Free Lincoln every Tuesday from 10 a.m. to noon. The program features progressive music from the mid-'60s to the present.