

# Arts & Entertainment

## Despite restless crowds, lights, R.E.M. sparkles

Review By Geoff McMurtry  
Staff Reviewer

Friday night at Pershing Auditorium, REM put on one of the most provocative, upbeat shows in recent memory. The two-hour-plus set included most of the songs from "Life's Rich Pageant," as well as nearly everything else. (Though I wish they'd done "Pilgrimage.") Lead vocalist Michael Stipe came out looking sharp in a dark gray suit, top hat and a matching... um... white kitchen apron. The rest of the band wore white shirts, and guitarist Peter Buck also had on his getting-to-be ever-present vest.

### Concert Review

REM charged out of the gate and seemed genuinely glad to be there. They seemed much more spirited and personable than in last year's show in Omaha, and even introduced themselves this year. As the band walked onstage, Buck waved at the crowd. The light show illuminated their faces to a recognizable level, which contrasts with the subdued, somber darkness of the past.

The admirable quality about their previously aloof and nonchalant attitude was the feeling that nothing whatsoever mattered as much as the music — that they'd be doing this at home if they weren't paid to be onstage. The flip side, however, was the crowd, who had come to see the band perform, yet became almost of secondary importance and even ignored.

#### Too mystic?

At times, the band seems to be directly facing accusations that they are too mystic/introverted/alienated from their fans, etc., and they are more aware of the crowd these days. But this is still REM, kids, and this is still an original and self-directed band. In this case, being more aware of the crowd only means more sophisticated use of it, and not the phony crowd-pleasing so common to arena shows.

A film projector played scenes of fields, factories, trainyards, broken-down buildings and other symbols of obscure, forgotten Americana on the black wall behind them, while stage lights came through stained glass windows in the black walls on the sides.

Stipe has taken to Pattie Smith-style poetry over and between the music, even quoting from Smith's "Set Me Free" at the end of one song (Oh so young, so goddamn young, etc.). Sometimes he spoke his own lyrics, sometimes it was something else, such as the compellingly bizarre ending of the main show when he recited the Pledge of Allegiance, finishing with "... it's all a lie, and you're all a part of it." Moments like this, the background screen and the band's general intensity combine to echo the theme of America's lost promise that runs through so much of the new album. And to think Buck was once quoted as saying he didn't like "political bands, like the Clash."

#### Stipe's intensity

The new outlook is undoubtedly Stipe's doing, and the band makes it work despite its outward contradiction to much of their past. Stipe has one of the most distinctive voices in rock today, not to mention one of the most powerful and intense as well. His intensity is overwhelming — he just throws himself into the music.

At one point, Stipe continuously circled the stage, prowling the darkness, building to a peak while feedback screamed from Buck's guitar. Suddenly, it became "Feeling Gravity's Pull," and if Stipe really isn't worried about getting swallowed by the sky, he didn't show it.

It wasn't all so serious, however; the lighter moments did emerge. After a beautiful acoustic "Swan Swan H,"

bassist Mike Mills began circling Stipe, trying for his apron and Stipe ducked away. After two or three escapes, the apron was placed over the lead singer's microphone, where Mills promptly pounced on it. The crowd began to sense what was next, and already a few title shouts were coming from the floor. Stipe retrieved the apron, and removing all doubt about what was next, placed it around Buck like a cape. Mills and Stipe then took up positions at each other's microphones, and Buck, Mills and drummer Bill Berry hit the opening chords to "Superman," accompanied by an enormous roar from the crowd. Whenever newly appointed backup singer Stipe said the word "Superman," he raised his arms the way George Reeves would have wanted it.

REM is lucky to have two vocalists with the quality of Mills and Stipe. Drummer Berry also provides excellent backup vocal work. Although known more for his melodic bass, Mills clear, hauntingly resonant voice in the background (as well as lead on "Superman") is an integral part of their music. The harmony between him and Stipe is simply majestic.

#### REM does Tina?

The crowd obviously enjoyed the show. There was constant dancing by over two-thirds of the floor including the four encores. The first began with a capella version of "We Don't Need Another Hero" from, yes, "Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome." The last began with a solo verse of "The Night Could Last Forever," which exploded into "Radio Free Europe," bringing possibly the biggest cheer of the night.

It all came to a close with "Just a Touch," and the encores featured a wide, wild variety of the old, the obscure, and the unheard-of almost entirely uncharacteristic of the band, mixed with a few of their own that hadn't been played yet.

On the down side of the evening, T-shirts were a steal as usual at \$16 to 18 bucks, (victims were wearing them all night), and the show itself was nearly stolen from the fans after the first act when they pushed toward the stage and two people were injured. It also brought the house lights back on, garnered a threatened cancellation from security and promoters, and brought out Stipe himself before the show to tame the crowd.

Pershing defends its acoustics to the death, and on the front of the floor, and in the lower front seats, they are impeccable. But about two-thirds back or up, it sounds like two radios in the same room. Wonder why all those people want to be up front?

Ignoring distractions like those and concentrating on REM for the evening, one would be hard put to find disappointment. The band has always had promise, and this is one band that delivers on its promises.

#### Quirky Camper opens

Despite the odds against them, Camper Van Beethoven opened the REM show with a wild, energetic set that had to win more than a few admirers. The pushing crowd was an unrehearsed distraction, but the band took it all in stride until promoters forced them to quit after 20 to 30 minutes when the lights came on. The band never did get a chance to return.

Too bad, too, because while the band was there, it played an undeniably ecstatic style of music. Power chords with a violin? Hardcore with a steel guitar? Is this what would happen if Jethro Tull toured with the Pogues?

They don't take themselves too seriously, just enough, as evidenced by song titles like "Take the Skinheads Bowling" and "I Was So Wasted."

For what it's worth, my apologies to the band for the crowd, for the conditions, for the promoters, for whatever the hell it was that snatched them off the stage so quick.

Please come back.

## Designers pursue style

### Omaha designers present show

By Betty Ciemnoczolowski  
Staff Reporter

Liz Claiborne, watch out! Ralph Lauren, step aside. Make way for "In Active Pursuit," a group of creative Omaha designers who capture the spirit of current lifestyles.

"In Active Pursuit" includes the talents of Mark Kemper, Sherri Geerdes, Kerstin Erikson, Christina Narwicz (for "Baby Snakes"), and Ruth Ciemnoczolowski. The latest creations of these five designers were featured last week at "Art Wear '86" in Omaha at the Metro Art Building.

Geerdes designs clothing that is fun to wear and easy to take care of. Her Fall collection includes a line of full, tubular knit jumpsuits that can be belted or worn loose. Corduroy

### Fashion Review

hunting shirts, both in solids and prints, along with turtleneck sweaters can flatter and keep away the fall chills. Geerdes looks to fabric for her design inspirations. One such inspiration is the "To The Hunt" collection, featuring a skirt and jacket complete with red-jacketed hunters, horses and hunting hounds. Kemper, Geerdes' co-designer and husband, uses silk-screening to create his own fabric designs. His "Mona" sweatshirts and other clothing feature silk-screened variations of the Mona Lisa.

Inspiration for the "Toast," "Toast/Coffee" and "Coffee" prints are credited to Geerdes.

"I was home one week from work with strep throat, and I was going crazy. I had to draw something," she said. "I ended up drawing our toaster and coffee pot. Mark just took the designs, refined them for screen-



Paul Vonderlage/Daily Nebraskan

Kerstin Erikson's antique fashion collection from the "Art Wear '86" show.

ing, and there we were." The prints are featured on a variety of sweatshirts.

Erikson combines antique fabrics and laces with softly gathered material to create a romantic look with an original touch. Full balloon pants combined with antique, slightly full blouses have an aura of nostalgia. At the same time, the combina-

tion is unique and unlike anything seen before.

Ciemnoczolowski's designs give women a chance to dress like princesses. Pink and black are the primary colors for her evening wear; lace, netting and ruffles grace these provocative outfits.

See ARTWEAR on 10

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