

# Arts & Entertainment

## Notes from the Ukrainian underground

By Charles Lieurance  
Senior Editor

There's a van driving through a desert. The van is tie-dyed. It's going so fast cattle skulls on the side of the road rock as it goes by. Some mutant form of reggae/ska/Ukrainian folk music is blasting out of tinny speakers through the open windows. The driver is reading a newspaper he's taped to the steering wheel with headlines about dogs being launched into space and underage skinheads arrested in a bowling alley for trying to order liquor. The cacti are made of rubber and they go "boing" as the van passes.

III," and, if the first album emanated from another dimension, this one was given birth to by aliens. The album kicked off with a sensitive country love ballad called "The Sad Lover's Waltz" and broke down slowly into crazed dance music that might have existed earlier had San Francisco's Bill Graham been raised in an Eastern-bloc country.

Still, the music could be taken in one, or all, of three ways. Were these the new hippies dipping into punk's natural stream of eccentricities for an audience? Did Camper Van Beethoven really hate rock music enough to drive it to its knees by rewriting the Hungarian National Anthem as Black Flag might

have done it and marketing it as alternative music? Or are they the saviors of rock's sense of humor, the collectors of all of rock's weirdest impulses from Screamin' Jay Hawkins to Dickie Goodman?

The second album saw Camper changing from the usually serious-minded Independent Projects Records to the more relaxed Rough Trade Records. The band set up house in San Francisco and, along with bands like White Fronts, Bardo and the Muskrats, helped create one of the most bizarre music scenes in the world.

After having named one album and done the Chicago chronology system on the next,

Camper went for the old self-titled third album trick on the next LP.

"Camper Van Beethoven" starts out sounding like their most accessible album to date, beginning with a hippie "get stoned and relax" anthem called "Good Guys and Bad Guys" that's one of the most infectious alternative pop songs since the Split Enz's "I Got You." But somewhere during a cover of Pink Floyd's "Interstellar Overdrive" halfway through the album there's the usual Camper Van Beethoven cognitive breakdown. The innocuousness of the psychedelic barrage is even scarier than if the band had tried to be menacing. Violins swirl,

lead guitar shifts from distortion to jumpy ethnic simplicity, and the deadpan vocals start into pleasant pop songs and then just kind of go away.

Nothing is predictable, nothing stays put, the center cannot hold, why do you feel like skipping suddenly? Who's in charge here?

Camper Van Beethoven woke up in the back of their van one day and said, "We can do anything we want." And it was good.

Lincoln's New Brass Guns will open for Camper Van Beethoven. The show starts at 8 p.m. Tickets for the show are \$4.50 with student ID, \$5 without.

### Band Preview

Camper Van Beethoven has left California. They're coming here Thursday to the Nebraska Union's Centennial Ballroom.

The band's first album, "Telephone Free Landslide Victory," was hailed as the sort of desert road lysergic freak-out that can occur when too much sun dries up the gray fluid that runs through the brain's maze of canals. Like some lunatic cross between Captain Beefheart and the Red Army Balalaika Circus with all kinds of warm airy spaces sapping vital juices between every delirious note, the first LP announced the coming of a new, mad genus of bands whose eclecticism defied any logical description.

"People said our music reminded them of the desert, but we're from Redlands, Calif., and that's not a desert," said band member Jonathan Segal when Camper played Lincoln's Drumstick in 1985. "It's rich people, mountains and lots of trees. Did I mention rich people?"

After "Telephone," Camper was basically written off as left of the fringe — a band whose potential for weirdness could never be great enough to come up with another blast of eccentricity without turning into a novelty act.

Then Camper came out with "Camper Van Beethoven II &



Camper Van Beethoven

Courtesy of I.R.S. Records

## Juggle and joke, juggle and joke

*Karamazovs make their living doing exactly what they want*

By Charles Lieurance  
Senior Editor

You've got to hate people who make money doing exactly what they want to do. Jugglers take over parties. Punsters take over conversations.

The Flying Karamazov Brothers took over Kimball Hall Sunday night.

For more than a decade now, the Karamazov Brothers have been the kings of hippie vaudeville, trading verbal and visual banter at a breakneck pace, and juggling objects most people don't care to touch.

During the ritual audience-interaction part of the Karamazovs' performance, in which the audience contributes items for "The Champ" to juggle, a violin, two unpeeled bananas, one

### Theater Preview

peeled banana, a stick of margarine, a jar of peanut butter and a carton of eggs were sacrificed to the god of juggling.

The gamble here is if the Champ fails to juggle the three items the

crowd chooses, he will be punished by a cream pie in the face. If the Champ juggles the messy potpourri successfully, the audience must give a "spontaneous" standing ovation.

The Champ succeeded in juggling the carton of eggs, the unpeeled banana and the stick of butter. The crowd paid up their bet cheerfully.

The Karamazovs were shamelessly disarming. Even their bad jokes, and there were some very bad jokes, brought laughs on the sheer charisma of their delivery.

The five unrelated brothers per-

formed to a full house for about 90 minutes, interspersing short skits between displays of juggling virtuosity and punctuating each stage of the performance with an absurd attempt at haiku from each "brother," even the one who never speaks. The Karamazovs' inventive comedy manages to connect the sophisticated elements of dadaism and the low-brow concerns of the average touring circus.

The final 15 minutes of juggling and word play were dazzling.

Unlike many professional jugglers who become boring because they make things appear too simple, thus

losing the necessary suspense that keeps an audience glued to displays of physical impossibility, the Karamazovs make everything they do look spine-tinglingly difficult. Every motion is tenuous as the 15 pins are hurled through a maze of patterns, caught, bounced, hurled and caught again. The sense of tension kept the audience stunned for the duration of the juggling.

Several members of the audience commented later that it must be great to make a living doing exactly what you want to do; juggle and joke, juggle and joke.

## Theatre Arts for Youth will open its season Friday

Theatre Arts for the Youth, the Lincoln Community Playhouse Children's Theater, will present its season opener, "Wiley and the Hairy Man," Friday through Sunday and Nov. 19-22.

"Wiley and the Hairy Man" is

produced by the Lincoln Benefit Life Company and will be performed in the L. L. Coryell & Son Children's Theatre at the Playhouse, 2500 S. 56th St. The production is supported in part by the Nebraska Arts Council and is produced by special arrangement with the Anchorage Press of New Orleans.

The tale of "Wiley and the Hairy Man" was passed down from generation to generation in the backwaters of Mississippi. The play is about a small boy who learns to overcome his problems by himself. As playwright Susan Zeder explains it, "I wanted to write a play about the kinds of fears that chil-

dren face alone in the dark. I wanted to write a play about magic — good magic and bad magic — and, most importantly, the magic that all of us have somewhere deep inside of us."

"Wiley and the Hairy Man" performances are at 7:30 p.m. on Friday

through Sunday and Nov. 19-21; at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, Sunday, and Nov. 21 and 22; and at 5:30 p.m. Sunday. Saturday's 1:30 performance will be interpreted for the hearing-impaired by Gretchen Terpsma and Sandy Krueger.