

Country yodels worth a listen

Patty Loveless, "If My Heart Had Windows" (MCA)

"If My Heart Had Windows" is pretty as a picture, feisty as a filly and generally one of the freshest, most sincere, most exuberant traditional country albums I've heard in years.

Patty Loveless plays no instruments and writes none of her material. Her voice, while powerful, expressive and versatile, is nothing to make the history books. Nonetheless, on this album the material is perfectly welded to the artist's talents to create a delightful country confection.

Review Board

The only thing surprising about "If My Heart Had Windows" is its quality. Loveless unapologetically sticks to traditional country forms and themes. She uses this familiar ground as a solid base from which she uses exuberance and simplicity to carry the album into excellence.

Stand-out tracks include the almost painfully happy "So Good To Be In Love," the closest thing to a rocker on the album; the Patsy Cline-flavored tear-jerker "If My Heart Had Windows"; and "Baby's Gone Blues," which is not a blues song, but rather an atmospheric folk-tinged piece reminiscent of Suzanne Vega, and by far the album's most unconventional song.

For celebrity appeal Loveless performs Steve Earle's kinetic "A Little Bit In Love" and ably covers the Hank Williams classic "I Can't Get You Off Of My Mind."

For those who enjoy traditional country music, but can't tolerate the commercialism and complacency of the country top-40, "If My Heart Had Windows" is a practically perfect simple pleasure.

—Chris McCubbin

Randy Erwin, "Cowboy Rhythm" (Four Dots)

Yodels are funny. Literally. Hearing such a sound emitting from a full-grown human male will produce an awed giggle in almost any circle.

Look at the friendly grin that Randy Erwin, country's new but unchallenged yodel king, sports on the album's cover, and it's easy to see that he knows he's doing something amusing and doesn't mind.

Nonetheless, Erwin takes the yodel very seriously. He knows he's preserving a historically rich and almost extinct art form. And Erwin is a master of his art.

"Cowboy Rhythm" is Erwin's first full-length album and is a worthy successor to last year's lively "Till the Cows Come Home" EP.

Erwin is accompanied on one of the album's unnumbered sides by fellow Texans Brave Combo, the aggressively unconventional "nuclear polka" band that's a Zoo Bar favorite and the spearhead of the current accordion revolution in pop music.

This side has a distinctly ethnic flavor, featuring a song about Mexico, another from Mexico ("El Rancho Grande," with English lyrics by Gene Autry) and the whimsical European ditty "The Alpine Milkman." It also gives us the manic "Right Where You Want Me" and "Cannonball Yodel," one of the most frenetic train songs ever.

On the other side Erwin is backed up by a more conventional country ensemble. We're treated to the standard "Bring It On Down to My House," "Cowboy Night Herd Song" by Roy Rogers and Jimmy Rodgers' hilarious "In the Jailhouse Now."

Randy Erwin is an authentic American treasure, and his records are more fun than skinny-dipping.

This is a must-own album.

—Chris McCubbin

The Hood, "Cooler Than Thou" (Giant)

I only picked this album up because of the beautiful Howard Chaykin cover illustration, and I almost didn't play it at all, thinking it was just another piece of nouveau-disco junk.

The songs are extremely danceable and the music does seem to originate entirely from a computer chip, but "Cooler Than Thou" is an excellent album that completely transcends its superficial relationship to disco. The Hood bears comparison to Prince, Gang of Four and Was (Not Was).

What sets The Hood apart from other dance music is the atmosphere, a palpable nimbus of film-noir menace that is the antithesis of disco's clean-room emotional vacuum.

Side one is a mini-concept album that extols the vices of the criminal life. Good dirty fun, but not much substance.

But side two takes off. "Cooler Than Thou" is a tribute to a femme fatale. "The Book of the Law" is the album's highlight, an absurdist, antimetaphysical rant that leaves the listener philosophically confused but musically fulfilled. "What She Keeps" is mysterious and beautiful and almost a love song. The album ends with "Stand Apart," a sort of cool person's pledge that sums the album up nicely.

"Cooler Than Thou" comes dangerously close to being silly more than once. If the music took itself at all seriously the album would have been a flop. But as it is, "Cooler Than Thou" has all the appeal of an absurd, preachy and gorgeous gangster movie from the '40s.

—Chris McCubbin



Courtesy of MGM Pictures

The cast of "Moonstruck" includes (standing, from left) Nicolas Cage, Cher, Feodor Chaliapin and (seated from left) Julie Bovasso, Olympia Dukakis, Louis Guss, Vincent Gardenia and Danny Aiello.

Cher showcases family theme of 'Moonstruck'

By John P. Coffey
Staff Reporter

"Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. . . . It's been two months since my last confession. I took the Lord's name in vain twice, slept with my fiance's brother and bounced a check at a liquor store."

Movie Review

In the sophisticated romantic/comedy "Moonstruck," Loretta (Cher) has a slight problem. The man she's in love with isn't the one she's about to marry.

Loretta, whose first husband was killed in a freak accident, is now in her upper 30s and feels the old biological clock ticking. She wants a family. And the only man seemingly available is Johnny Cammareri (Danny Aiello). But before the two can make it to the altar, Johnny must fly back to Sicily to tend to his dying mother.

Death is a major building-block in "Moonstruck." The characters treat it as if it's something that can be avoided, something they have in their power to manipulate and detain. They believe they have control over any aspect of their lives. Call it individual self-determination.

The opening scene, set in a funeral parlor, shows a dead man lying in state. The mortician brags of his makeover abilities, how he makes 'em look better in death than they did in life. At the table, Loretta slaves over something else the mortician refuses to acknowledge as any concern — his taxes. If the death-and-taxes opening and the man's non-acceptance of them are any indication, you have a hint where the film leads.

Loretta's fiance relies on her to patch things up with his only brother, Ronnie (Nicolas Cage), to whom he hasn't spoken in five years, and invite him to the wedding.

This is Johnny's smaller effort that builds the larger theme — family. Throughout the film, everything is affiliated with the importance and cohesiveness of the family unit. It is the base from which all else flows.

Before Loretta, Ronnie is a man who has given up on life. Even after they meet he's not exactly instantly resurrected. But with the help of the film's namesake symbol — the moon — Ronnie is rejuvenated.

The moon symbolizes the emotional/irrational drive that is associated with love. Can the who, how and why of this powerful emotion be explained? Only by the light of the moon. The lunar body illuminates their love.

Passion overwhelms the two and they spend the night together. The next morning, while Loretta feels guilty, Ronnie's in love. "Snap out of it," she commands. By the morning light she demands that he do the rational thing and deny this emotion he's feeling.

He begs her, if they just go out together once, he will leave her alone (ever hear that one, ladies?). She agrees, and thus begins the film's Cinderella motif. Loretta gets "Cinderella-ed" up, complete with hair style, new gown and slippers, preparing to meet her prince at the ball. Only here the prince is Ronnie and the ball is the Metropolitan Opera. The vehicle of the night, the pumpkin that serves as the driving force, is the moon. Midnight will come when Johnny comes back from Sicily to take Loretta as his bride.

In the fleeting scene after the opera, the classical philosophical question concerning the rationality of humans is addressed. Loretta tells Ronnie she wants to take control of herself and her life, to make it better. If we can't do that, she asks, what good is this life?

But her love retorts that it's all futile. He says we're not here to make things perfect. "Love doesn't make things right. It ruins everything and breaks our hearts. We're here to love the wrong things . . . to love the wrong people . . . and die."

Don't get the wrong idea. In the end everything all comes together. Just like in Cinderella.

Cher does quite well as Loretta; Cage adds a fine performance as Ronnie. But most impressive was the supporting cast, led by Vincent Gardenia (who placed the shop owner in "Little Shop of Horrors," another movie whose supporting cast made the movie). John Mahoney is a communications professor who knows everything about communicating in theory and nothing about using those skills in real life. Wonderful performances by Olympia Dukakis as Loretta's mother and Feodor Chaliapin as the grandfather round out a solid cast of mostly stage actors and actresses.

"Moonstruck" is playing at the Stuart Theater, 13th and P streets.

Ringwald's new flick proves redundant and unrealistic to older movie-goers

By Micki Haller
Senior Reporter

"For Keeps" combines every teen love, pregnancy, marriage, birthing and skid apartment cliché in American film cinema and manages to squeeze in a few extra for good measure.

Movie Review

Molly Ringwald yet again plays a teen fluffball who gets to whine and cry without ruining her makeup. When I was a teen fluffball, I could never get away with that, and I deeply resent that she can.

Darcy (Ringwald's current incarnation) has problems: She doesn't like her mother; her mother hates Stan, her boyfriend; she's been on the Pill since she was 14 to regulate her period; and her period is two months late.

While her mother and her boyfriend's parents argue the merits

of abortion and adoption, respectively, Stan (Randall Batinkoff) and Darcy decide to keep the baby.

Needless to say, this screws up several dreams the 17-year-old seniors have. Stan has a good chance for a free ride at Cal Tech, and Darcy dreams of becoming a journalist.

The kids get married in a little white church out in the country by a recent Asian immigrant. The bride is resplendent in a floral flannel nightgown and black galoshes.

Naturally, the clichés now come out in full force, with financial difficulties, pregnancy miracles and discomforts, the toilet in the middle of the apartment, Darcy having to leave school so her pregnancy won't be contagious, water breaking at the prom, postpartum depression, a sick baby, a bitchy cheerleader howling siren songs at our hero and even a brief stint living with the mother-in-law.

In the interest of space, I won't drone on about the countless other

episodes. Most people have already seen them on television.

The movie's fatal flaw is its unreality. No one can start life as a couple on \$927, survive on it for a few months and still be optimistic. Parents drastically opposed to a marriage and a grandchild are not going to get all gushy when the darling little thing is placed in their arms. A newborn 24 inches long is not going to be born by natural childbirth. And most of all, a teen-age pregnancy and marriage is not going to have a perfect, happy ending. In fact, no marriage or pregnancy is going to have a perfect, happy ending. It's just not the nature of the beast.

The movie, with its PG-13 rating, should succeed with a younger audience. They just aren't old enough to have heard the stories over and over again. But older people are bound to be bored and maybe just a little uncomfortable with this brand of sentimentality.

Magic Theatre to present play series

The Omaha Magic Theatre will present an eight-part series featuring the "Best Plays of the 60s" and "New Playwrights of 1988."

Jo Ann Schidman, artistic director for the Magic Theatre, said, "Audiences have demonstrated an appetite for vital, new and challenging plays. They like talking together and sharing responses afterwards, and knowing that tapes of this dialogue will be sent

to the playwright, they have a part in the creative process."

The schedule begins Friday, Feb. 5 with "Why Hanna's Skirt Won't Stay Down" and "Classics." "Consequence" will be featured on Feb. 12, "The Function," Feb. 19, "Amtrak" and "The Hunter and the Bird," Feb. 26.

In March, the series switches to Tuesdays with "Kitchenette" and

"New Age Romance," featured Mar. 8, "Baby Makes Seven," Mar. 15, "The Birth of Limbo Dancing" and "The Bed was Full," Mar. 15 and "Nightclub," Mar. 22

Performances begin at 7:30 p.m. A series ticket can be purchased for \$8 or \$1 per performance. Seating is limited, reservations may be made by calling the Magic Theatre at 346-1227.

Correction

The Lincoln Arts Council's "Arts at Noon" lunch and lecture series was incorrectly identified as being on the

third Thursday of every month in the Jan. 13 Daily Nebraskan. The story should have said the third Tuesday of

every month.

The DN regrets the error.