

'The Nerd' on stage in Omaha

By William Rudolph
Staff Reporter

In the tradition of his hit comedy "The Foreigner," Larry Shue's newest work, "The Nerd," hopes to tickle your funnybone.

Described by critic William A. Raidy of The Star-Ledger as "sublimely silly . . . hilarious . . . preposterously funny," "The Nerd" details a host's nightmare: the irritating guest who stays and stays and stays.

After architect Willum Cubbert has his life saved in Vietnam by a fellow grunt he hardly knew, the chalk inspector and supreme nerd Rick Steadman shows up on his doorstep.

Rick isn't your average guest who asks to borrow your toothbrush. He's a nightmare who disrupts Willum's personal and professional life, not to mention seriously endangering Willum's sanity.

Now, Willum must find some way to tell Rick to hit the road. But it's not going to be easy, especially since Rick has printed business cards proclaiming the two of them to be best friends.

"Go ahead and laugh," says "The Nerd's" advertisements, "He's not living in your house!"

"The Nerd" will be playing until May 15 at Omaha's Firehouse Dinner Theatre.



Mark Davis/Daily Nebraskan

Baylor and Bryan

Two Irish folk singers to play at Bleu Moon

By Mick Dyer
Senior Reporter

Two performers of Irish folk music who perform regularly in Lincoln say folk music's appeal is in its distinctive sound.

Jim Bryan, a doctoral student in clinical psychology at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and John Baylor, a children's counselor at the Rivendell Children and Youth Center in Seward, perform every Thursday from noon to 1 p.m. at the Gathering Place, 15th and E streets.

The pair will play Irish folk music today at the Bleu Moon, 808 P St., where they will appear with Rover's Fancy.

Playing folk music also has meditative benefits, they said.

"It's a different mind set — it's more of a form of concentration," Bryan said. "It's an emotional and creative outlet."

It's kind of an adventure. Nobody seems to know much about those instruments, they're kind of mysteries.'

—Baylor

Bryan said he began playing folk music five years ago and has been addicted to it ever since. He plays guitar and mandolin.

"I began playing when I started grad school because I needed a diversion," Bryan said. "It's something that seems to grab you."

Baylor began playing guitar when he was 8 years old and became interested in folk music in high school.

"When I started, my parents said that I had to practice an hour a day and take lessons for a year," he said. "That's a considerable time investment, especially for a kid, so when the year was up, I didn't stop."

He also plays banjo, mandola and penny whistle.

"There are songs I could play for hours on the banjo and just love it,"

Baylor said.

Baylor built his mandola. He said he looks forward to building another instrument soon.

"It's kind of an adventure," he said. "Nobody seems to know much about these instruments, they're kind of mysteries."

Bryan said folk music's distinctive sound appeals to him.

"It's non-commercial music," he said.

Baylor said he enjoys pushing folk music as far as he can.

"The music lends itself well to variation," he said. "I used to see how strange I could get and still make it fit the music, but now I enjoy playing the music in its traditional form."

Bryan said folk music helps people who don't know each other become acquainted through a common interest.

"You can meet someone and say, 'Hey, do you know . . .?' If they know it, you can play, if they don't, you can show them," he said. "It's almost a cultural thing."

Bryan and Baylor belong to the Lincoln Association For Traditional Arts (LAFTA), an organization dedicated to preserving many folk traditions, including folk music.

A folk tradition, Nebraska folklorist Roger Welsch says, can be any common activity of anonymous historical invention that many people participate in and that is not learned formally.

A folk musician's instruments range from the unusual to the exotic.

The mandolin is shaped like a guitar, except smaller, and is tuned the same as a violin. The mandola has four pairs of strings, like a mandolin, but is tuned an octave lower. The instruments, with their distinctive and full sounds, have a relationship like the violin and viola.

The bousouki (pronounced "bazoo-key") is a Greek instrument with a lute-shaped body and a thin neck. It has a hollow sound like the cross between a guitar and a mandolin.

These, and other instruments such as the guitar, banjo and penny whistle, are folk musicians' standard tools.

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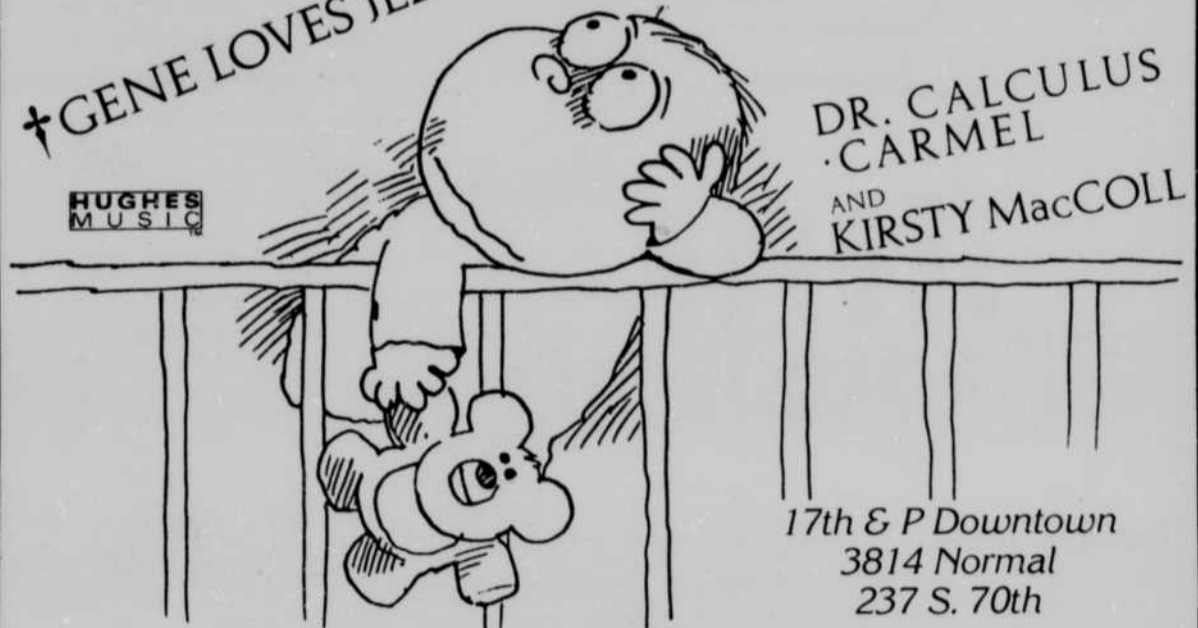
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