

Seagal fresh, makes standard flick work

By John Payne
Staff Reporter

First, Bruce Willis was "Die Hard." Now, Steven Seagal is "Hard to Kill," and although this film's script is hard to believe, it is also kind of hard to dislike.

Say all you want about underdeveloped characters or predictable story lines, but there's no getting around this fact: Seagal is really cool. He talks like Mickey Rourke, squints like Clint Eastwood and looks like a real bad-ass.

Seagal plays Los Angeles cop Mason Storm, investigating an assassination plot as the story opens in 1983. Detective Storm stakes out a

nighttime meeting between organized crime members and a young senatorial hopeful. They discuss political favors in exchange for the "accidental" death of a California senator.

Storm videotapes the conversation, as any good cop would, and when the bad guys discover his presence, car chase number one ensues. He gets away, but not for long.

The thugs find out where he lives, and in a bloody shoot out, kill his wife and leave Seagal for dead.

But, as you should know by now, he is hard to kill.

Storm lies in a coma for seven years, and all the while the incriminating video tapes are hidden away. He awakes in 1990, and the crooked

politician (Bill Sadler) is now a big senator.

And of course, after seven years of comatose, Storm is thin and pale and covered with bed sores, right? As a matter of fact, no.

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Even his suntan is hard to kill.

He quickly recuperates with the help of a kind nurse. Is she an overweight, toothless old hag? As a matter of fact, no. She is luscious supermodel Kelly LeBrock, who raised body temperatures in "The Woman in Red" and "Weird Science."

And so, after a little weight lifting, a lot of self-administered acupuncture, and some, shall we say, physical therapy from LeBrock, our man is ready to avenge the death of his wife and put away the crooked senator.

Storm has a gun. It's a really neat gun and all, but he keeps it holstered most of the time, preferring to crack fibulas and fracture spines. He does this a lot, and most of the bone breaking is filmed in slow motion, with the actual "snap" sound isolated and turned way up.

It goes without saying that "Hard to Kill" is a standard formula movie, complete with car chases and blood. But Seagal, unlike say, Stallone, still is fresh enough to make the tired old

formula work.

Things are slowed a bit when Storm is reunited with his son, whom he thought was killed in the original shoot-out. But luckily, Seagal pauses just long enough to pat the lad on his head, and then resumes snapping the bad guy's limbs like toothpicks.

The senator's men even try to kill the little boy but discover that he's nearly as hard to kill as his old man.

Maybe American cinema is ready for another Clint Eastwood. Seagal may very well be the man. He has an undeniable screen presence that many better actors lack, and that is enough to make a routine picture such as "Hard to Kill" a lot of fun.

Compelling, first-rate performance a fitting baptism for Lied Center

By Lisa Stankus
Staff Reporter

Friday's performance of "Madama Butterfly" proved to be a more than appropriate baptism for the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

"Madama Butterfly," an opera in two acts by Giacomo Puccini, is a romantic tragedy of exploitation, culture and boundless devotion.

The plotline is concise.

An American Navy Lieutenant, B.F. Pinkerton (Richard Drews) arranges "marriage" through a broker to a 14-year-old geisha girl in Nagasaki, Japan.

Cio-Cio San, (Elizabeth Hynes), known as Madama Butterfly for her delicate attributes, is this geisha-turned-American-wife, whose entire existence centers on Pinkerton and maintaining his happiness.

As the story continues, we find that Pinkerton has no plan to continue this contrived relationship with Butterfly and is merely milking the traditional norm of Japan and its expend-

bility of the marriage vows.

As is the norm of romantic tragedies, the theme of love and irrational devotion is the driving force for Butterfly. This dedication compels her to denounce her family, culture and religion for a so-called "American way of life."

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This dedication also leads her to wait three years in faithful hope that Pinkerton will return to claim his Japanese bride and the son that he has no knowledge of. She continues this vigil until he returns to claim his recently revealed legacy. Butterfly, feeling stripped of any worldly claims, is reduced to suicide.

Through the performance of the Omaha Symphony Chamber Orchestra, directed by Bruce Hangen, we are ushered through this story of misdirected faithfulness by a consistent flow of melodic presence. The com-

pany is to be applauded on their dynamic contrast. Even through the most dominant levels of orchestration, the vocals were audible and maintained the mood of the scenes.

The performances of the characters also were commendable. Individual quality melded with the composing mastery of Puccini to make for a captivating combination.

Haynes portrayed her role of the desperate Butterfly with an artistic agility. Her dramatic performance was believable and her vocal renditions were flawless.

The simplicity of scenery and costuming was a combination of elegant simplicity and contributed to the overall theme of the cultural beauty of Japan.

In spite of past allegations that "Madama Butterfly" is an unrealistic portrayal of cultural acceptances in Japan, this performance of the simple and compelling drama was first-rate and did justice to Puccini and his efforts.

Legendary harmonica player whips up blues, excitement in Bourbon Street

By Matt Burton
Senior Reporter

A packed crowd received a brush with greatness Saturday night at Bourbon Street, 200 N. 70th St., when legend James Cotton played the blues.

The crowd seemed relatively square at first. Yuppies lined the bar wall-to-wall, with no clear excitement among the audience. But once Cotton and his band whipped into such blues standards as "Sweet Home Chicago" and "Got My Mojo Working," the audience would not be the same. One by one more people started to dance and endless hoots and hollers were exchanged with pure blues aggression. Cotton and his band showed a

unique ability to make the songs come alive, bringing each number to a climax via the two guitarists' incredible intensity.

Cotton's harmonica was very clean-

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sounding, despite some obvious dissatisfaction he expressed toward the soundman. Cotton would bring the harmonica to his lips, as if kissing his instrument, creating some amazing noises.

The band was tight -- Ray "Killer" Allison on drums kept perfect time and added a few well-placed

"Yeahs" to Cotton's singing.

A class harmonica player, Cotton showed why he has achieved all the acclaim. Cotton guided his band through blistering numbers, working up an incredible sweat in the process.

A pleasant surprise for the evening was the opening act, the C Street Gypsies. Mostly, the Gypsies played Jimi Hendrix covers -- but they played them well. The band also played some free-form jazz improvisation, proving themselves to be bordering on musical virtuosity. Despite the band's solid performance, the crowd was very sedate, not giving the C Street Gypsies the recognition they clearly deserved.



Ministry
Courtesy of Sire Records

Duo Ministry to bring sonic fury to Omaha

By Michael Deeds
Senior Editor

Industrial progression force Ministry will perform Tuesday night

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at Omaha's Peony Park Ballroom, 8100 Cass St.

The Chicago-based duo currently is touring in support of their chart-busting release, "The Mind Is A Terrible Thing To Taste."

Ministry's music lends itself better to the studio than the stage,

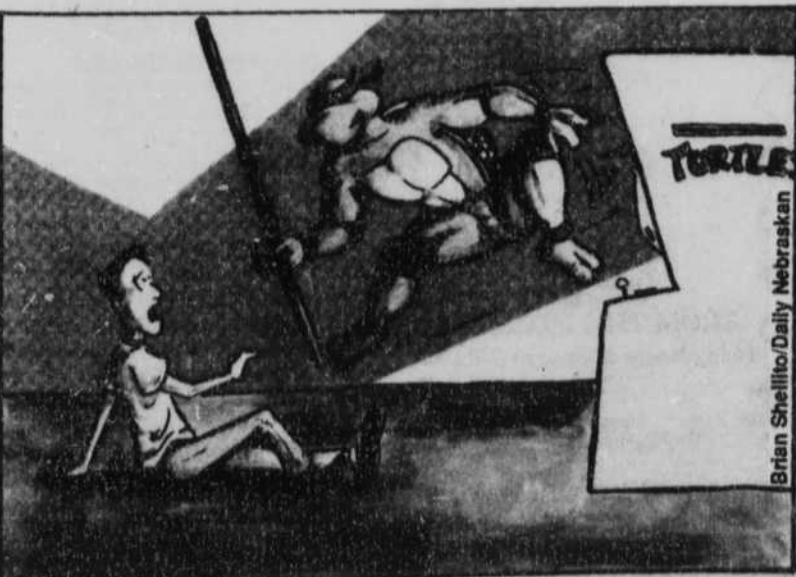
but the band has added an element to boost its live production.

Core members Alain Jourgensen and Paul Barker have assembled a virtual army of alternative musicians to enhance the live performance, including members from Skinny Puppy, Public Image Limited, Rigor Mortis and Killing Joke.

Strong on sampling, sequencing and pummeling distorted instruments, Ministry attacks its fans with a provocative, sonic fury. This tour's stage show includes a 12-foot chain link fence surrounding

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'Vidiots' spending more on mechanized habit



By Matt Burton
Senior Reporter

Video games have come a long way since the days of Pong and Space Invaders.

It seems that these eternal money wasters are experiencing a resurgence in popularity. The concepts of games haven't changed much, though. It's still your basic dodge-and-shoot, drive around the race track, etc., but it's the new technological advances that are making video games the thing to do.

Despite the recent popularity, "vidiots" still do not have very many options for places to play them.

"It doesn't seem to be real competitive," said Brian Butler, head manager at Joyce's Subs & Pizza, 1320 Q St. "There aren't many video game places. There's quite a few games

on campus, but other than that, there are maybe two video houses in Lincoln."

Two video arcades in Lincoln are Joyce's and Sluggo's, which is located at East Park Plaza. Recently, The Loft was forced to close its doors. The Loft had two games for a quarter on all pinball machines and many video games.

Inflation is starting to hit the video game industry elsewhere. For instance, pinball machines are starting to cost 50 cents, according to Rich Smith, employee at Joyce's and student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Smith said he foresees a day when players only will get three tokens for \$1.

"What's weird is how games have evolved," he said. "It's like now the games that make money, you have to

keep feeding tokens to continue. It used to be like 'Mario Brothers,' you'd try to win the game on one token. Now it's like 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles,' you die really quick and you have to spend a ton of money to get close to winning."

Despite the rise in prices and the increasing popularity of the Nintendo Entertainment System, people are playing in growing numbers.

Butler said, "They say that (Nintendo has hurt business) in the industry journals, but I haven't noticed any change. In fact, game revenue is significantly better than it was a year-and-a-half ago."

One game experiencing a large degree of popularity at Joyce's is "All-American Football" and its counter-

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