

Recession affects music in different ways

Record labels await hazards, opportunities

By John A. Skretta
Staff Reporter

The recession is having a gradual but undeniable impact on both independent and major record labels, according to representatives of several national record corporations.

Bob Merlis, Warner Bros. Records vice president and national publicity director, said the recording industry "is kind of like a train that's already on course, and it would take quite a while to slow it down."

The recession would have to extend through the next year before it would have a significant impact on Warner Bros. business plans, he said.

"A record that comes out today was maybe in process for over a year," Merlis said. "Some bands take a year to record an album, and a band that was signed yesterday may not release an album for a year."

Merlis said record companies that have the most to lose during an economic slump are "new labels that started up several years back during a boom time. Now, they've got to get a staff together, organize, and release albums, and they may be having second thoughts."

"From my vantage point," he said, "we don't have to deal with that kind of agony."

Music sales mixed in recession

By John A. Skretta
Staff Reporter

Opinions varied among local sources on whether the recession is affecting sales in the music industry.

"Sales have been quite steady," said Rod Ferguson, co-owner of Pickles Records and Tapes and Compact Discs, 1637 P St.

"We're not seeing lesser sales, first off, because we're pretty college-oriented. When college is in town, business is good," Ferguson said.

Ferguson said besides just attracting college students, music has a good entertainment value.

"It's a smaller ticket item, and it makes people happy. It's an escapist experience, where you can assume a different role," he said.

The recession in Lincoln "is 95 percent a mental state," according to Ferguson. "People aren't generally making less money than they

were a year ago unless you're working on commission. If I were selling cars, I'd probably be starving."

"I just don't think a recession applies to us in the music business, and I think, in general, music industries have emerged from recessions quite strong," Ferguson said.

On the other hand, John McCallum, owner of Twisters Music and Gifts, said the recession had a small impact on January sales.

Gauging the full impact of the recession on sales is relatively difficult in music retailing, McCallum said, because last year's sales at this time are not directly applicable to current sales.

"It's sort of like comparing apples and oranges," McCallum said, "because there are not a lot of good, big new releases this year at this time as there were last year during January."

"However," McCallum added, "I can tell you that for the month of February, sales are almost 20 per-

cent above our estimates. I think that's just a reflection, more than anything, that people are loosening up their purse strings and buying with a bit more confidence."

Although music is generally a low-ticket retail item, McCallum said he wouldn't go as far as saying the music business is recession-proof.

"Our industry likes to say that all the time," McCallum said, "and during the last recession, the music and entertainment industry overall emerged from it quite well."

But to claim that music is free from economic woes, "is a little more blue sky than I think reason and rationality would call for," McCallum said.

"I have talked to a lot of other retailers in other areas," McCallum said, "and no one had real boom sales in January. But the jury

See SALE on 10

artists like Isaak, Madonna and Paul Simon, the recording industry is anything but recession-proof.

"I don't want to rain on the industry's parade," Merlis said, "but it (music) is also something you can get for virtually nothing by turning on the TV or flipping on the radio."

"We don't ever take it for granted," Merlis said. "When it comes down to paying the heating bill or buying a tape, obviously you know which one is going to be chosen. But, records are a great value, and I don't need to convince anyone that they're a good entertainment value."

Merlis said watching costs is the only thing a record company can do to effectively combat a recession.

"There's really nothing else you can do, and besides, one album could be a sleeper that could generate millions of sales," he said. "Ten years ago, Madonna was just a singles artist."

Merlis said the only impact the recession has had on Warner Bros. to date is that "there's more at stake, because there's less in the overall pot. There are some areas in the southeast with high military personnel concentrations, and sales are down in those areas, because no one's there."

Overall, however, "the music industry is something you just can't predict," Merlis said.

The dawn of the recession means it's time for record companies to plan conservatively, said David Hayes,

See RECORD on 9

Uncommon quartet bound to improvise

By Michael Stock
Staff Reporter

Their concert programs carry the warning: Contents subject to change. Why?

"We might suddenly come across the most exciting thing we've ever played," Kronos Quartet member David Harrington said.

Saturday night will find the Kronos Quartet offering and improvising its repertoire to audiences in Kimball Hall. The show will feature works from classic composers such as Bartok and Ives, and the modern works from Terry Riley and John Zorn.

The past 12 years have found the Kronos Quartet emerging as a pioneering voice in music. Shattering the image of the string quartet, Kronos wears its leather and Lycra with pride.

The band's lineup features David Harrington and John Sherba, violin, Hank Dutt, viola and Joan Jean-

naud, cello.

Kronos' name originates from the short-tempered Titan from Greek mythology who was overthrown by his son Zeus. Founded by Harrington in Seattle in 1973, the band moved to San Francisco in 1977. Just before Kronos set out to succeed, Harrington and Dutt hired Sherba and Jeanrenaud.

The band since has attracted international attentions, touring extensively, giving more than 100 concerts a year throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, South America, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Australia.

"Our music is handmade, it's very carefully considered . . . I never liked the role of what they call a 'classical musician.' I never liked the feeling that the music I was involved in had less sex appeal than rock 'n' roll or jazz — or had less blood in it than other music,"

See KRONOS on 10

Kinison to perform signature routine of obnoxious comedy at Lied Center

By Robert Richardson
Senior Reporter

OH! OH! OHHHHHHHHH!
That infamous, painful scream of the short, loud and obnoxious Sam Kinison will ring throughout Lincoln tonight as Kinison brings his latest comedy routine to the Lied Center for Performing Arts.

In a phone interview with the Daily Nebraskan, Kinison explained his comedy and his life in general.

The heart of his comedy is topical, sort of like Headline News with a long-haired twist.

"It's very observational. I watch a lot of the news," Kinison said. "I read the papers. I don't like to pick up on the little stuff that isn't going to be news next week but (I'll pick up on) anything big. Of course like the Middle East and the gulf war."

When Kinison does something, he does it big. Until 1979, the 36-year-old Kinison was a Pentecostal preacher. He decided he wanted to make people laugh. And so he found an improvisation club in Houston that let amateurs

perform on Monday nights. He stayed for about five months and then moved to Los Angeles and waited to be discovered.

"It wasn't like I left the church and drove to a night club," Kinison said. "It was close to a year involved with working up the courage to actually start going out to nightclubs and working out."

It took about five years for Kinison to reach his peak. Then Rodney Dangerfield invited Kinison to be on his annual comedy special. For Kinison, that's when everything changed. The Illinois native skyrocketed to national attention with television comedy specials and a cameo role as a history teacher in the movie "Back to School," starring Dangerfield.

But being a national funny person is taxing. Kinison, who is no stranger to national scrutiny, frequently runs into flak from gay/lesbian and feminist groups who don't laugh at his jokes.

But Kinison said that he really does have opinions behind some his humor.

"I've found that if I really believe what I'm talking about, if I have a point of view, then it's a lot easier to maintain what I'm saying throughout the jokes," Kinison said.

Lincoln, like other cities Kinison has visited, has at least one group protesting the comedian's performance. Queer Nation Nebraska will be outside to greet Kinison with protest signs when he performs at Lied.

"I don't know what they're protesting about. They don't want people to have a good time," Kinison said. "They don't want people to see a show. Regardless of what my politics are or what they think the point of view of the show is, it's up to the people that want to be entertained."

Kinison said he doesn't want to corrupt anyone; he just wants to make people laugh.

"You can tell the citizens of Lincoln I'm no threat," Kinison said. "Come out of your homes. I will not harm you."

Kinison's show opens at the Lied Center, 12th and R streets, tonight at 8 p.m. Tickets are still available.

Academy Award picks offer some surprises

Once in a while, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences likes to throw pompous movie critics a curveball.

The 63rd annual Academy Award nominations, announced Wednesday, contained a few surprises for those of us who thought we had it all figured out.

Probably the biggest surprise of all was the nomination of 1990's biggest moneymaker, "Ghost," as Best Picture. "Ghost" was an ethereal wet weepie, a fun summer film — but Best Picture? I think not, although I really liked it.

Also nominated in the category were "Dances With Wolves," "Awakenings," "GoodFellas" and "The Godfather, Part III."

Another surprise was Julia Roberts'



Julie Naughton

nomination as Best Actress. The Academy rarely nominates comedic performances, especially in the Best Actress category. Roberts' spirited performance as a Hollywood hooker who lands an uptight East Coast businessman was a lot of fun to watch — but again, few critics, myself included, thought she'd be nominated for it.

Roberts may be thought of as an unlikely choice to win here. She's up

See AWARDS on 10

A complete list of nominees for the 63rd annual Academy Awards announced Wednesday:

- 1. PICTURE:** "Awakenings," "Dances With Wolves," "Ghost," "The Godfather Part III," "GoodFellas." **2. ACTOR:** Kevin Costner, "Dances With Wolves"; Robert De Niro, "Awakenings"; Gerard Depardieu, "Cyrano de Bergerac"; Richard Harris, "The Field"; Jeremy Irons, "Reversal of Fortune." **3. ACTRESS:** Kathy Bates, "Misery"; Anjelica Huston, "The Grifters"; Julia Roberts, "Pretty Woman"; Meryl Streep, "Postcards From the Edge"; Joanne Woodward, "Mr. & Mrs. Bridge." **4. SUPPORTING ACTOR:** Bruce Davison, "Longtime Companion"; Andy Garcia, "The Godfather Part III"; Graham Greene, "Dances With Wolves"; Al Pacino, "Dick Tracy"; Joe Pesci, "GoodFellas." **5. SUPPORTING ACTRESS:** Annette Bening, "The Grifters"; Lorraine Bracco, "GoodFellas"; Whoopi Goldberg, "Ghost"; Diane Ladd, "Wild at Heart"; Mary McDonnell, "Dances With Wolves." **6. DIRECTOR:** Kevin Costner, "Dances With Wolves"; Francis Ford Coppola, "The Godfather Part III"; Martin Scorsese, "GoodFellas"; Stephen Frears, "The Grifters"; Barbet Schroeder, "Reversal of Fortune." **7. ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY:** Woody Allen, "Alice"; Barry Levinson, "Avalon"; Bruce Joel Rubin, "Ghost"; Peter Weir, "Green Card"; Whit Stillman, "Metropolitan." **8. ADAPTED SCREENPLAY:** Steven Zaillian, "Awakenings"; Michael Blake, "Dances With Wolves"; Nicholas Pileggi and Martin Scorsese, "GoodFellas"; Donald E. Westlake, "The Grifters"; Nicholas Kazan, "Reversal of Fortune." **9. FOREIGN FILM:** "Cyrano de Bergerac," France; "Journey of Hope," Switzerland; "Ju Dou," People's Republic of China; "The Nasty Girl," Germany; "Open Doors," Italy. **10. ART DIRECTION:** "Cyrano de Bergerac," "Dances With Wolves," "Dick Tracy," "The Godfather Part III," "Hamlet." **11. CINEMATOGRAPHY:** "Avalon," "Dances With Wolves," "Dick Tracy," "The Godfather Part III," "Henry & June." **12. COSTUME DESIGN:** "Avalon," "Cyrano de Bergerac," "Dances With Wolves," "Dick Tracy," "Hamlet." **13. DOCUMENTARY FEATURE:** "American Dream," "Berkeley in the Sixties," "Building Bombs," "Forever Activists: Stories From the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade," "Waldo Salt: A Screenwriter's Journey." **14. DOCUMENTARY SHORT SUBJECT:** "Burning Down Tomorrow," "Chimps: So Like Us," "Days of Waiting," "Journey Into Life: The World of the Unborn," "Rose Kennedy: A Life to Remember." **15. FILM EDITING:** "Dances With Wolves," "Ghost," "The Godfather Part III," "GoodFellas," "The Hunt for Red October." **16. MAKEUP:** "Cyrano de Bergerac," "Dick Tracy," "Edward Scissorhands." **17. MUSIC ORIGINAL SCORE:** Randy Newman, "Avalon"; John Barry, "Dances With Wolves"; Maurice Jarre, "Ghost"; David Grusin, "Havana"; John Williams, "Home Alone." **18. MUSIC ORIGINAL SONG:** "Blaze of Glory" from "Young Guns II"; "I'm Checkin' Out" from "Postcards From the Edge"; "Promise Me You'll Remember" from "The Godfather Part III"; "Somewhere in My Memory" from "Home Alone"; "Sooner or Later (I Always Get My Man)" from "Dick Tracy." **19. ANIMATED SHORT FILM:** "Creature Comforts," "A Grand Day Out," "Grasshoppers (Cavallette)." **20. LIVE ACTION SHORT FILM:** "Bronx Cheers," "Dear Rosie," "The Lunch Date," "Senzeni Na? (What Have We Done?)," "12:01 p.m." **21. SOUND:** "Dances With Wolves," "Days of Thunder," "Dick Tracy," "The Hunt for Red October," "Total Recall." **22. SOUND EFFECTS EDITING:** "Flatliners," "The Hunt for Red October," "Total Recall."