



David Badders/Daily Nebraskan

Bill of Rights lights up Pershing

People who wanted to support one of the most deadly industries on the face of the earth had two options last week.

Folks who smoke could continue to support the Philip Morris agency by buying a pack of cigarettes — the old option.

The new option, for smokers and non-smokers alike, was to attend the Philip Morris Bill of Rights Tour that descended on Pershing Auditorium last week like so many Damn Yankees concerts.

You see, the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution (a.k.a. The Bill of Rights) were handwritten and hand delivered to each of the 13 colonies back in 1492 or 1776 or 1984, I'm not really sure. Apparently, their fax machines weren't working.

About nine of these original copies of the Bill of Rights still exist. The others were destroyed or lost. It's comforting to know that a state could actually misplace the supposed cornerstone of our democracy.

"Has anyone seen the Bill of Rights? I left it right here on the coffee table last



Jim
Hanna

night."

"Did you check your coat pockets?"

Anyway, the Philip Morris people, who make a lot of the cigarettes we smoke, got a hold of Virginia's copy of the Bill of Rights and took it on tour.

They stopped in at the Pershing Auditorium over Spring Break. No less than five semi trucks are used to haul the document and its accompanying displays around the United States. The truck that holds the document is described as airtight, moisture-proof, and fireproof — I guess in case a careless Philip Morris executive flicks a lit cigarette into the truck.

Admission was free, or rather, it didn't cost any money. The enormous lines you had to stand in and the relentless pro-U.S.

propaganda that surrounded the actual document exacted a pretty hefty toll.

Please do not misunderstand me. I don't mean to refer to the Bill of Rights as a propaganda tool. The document itself and what it stands for is a truly unique and incredible feature of our governmental system. I really like the free press thing.

But maybe the afterglow of our Desert Storm orgasm was weighing too heavily upon me. It felt awfully cheap to be herded through lines with my fellow Americans and forced to watch pro-American videos and movie clips just to get a look at the Bill of Rights.

There was a flag at every turn and triumphant music tried to stir even the most bitter anti-war liberal into humming a few bars of The Star-Spangled Banner.

The movie clips were shown on six different television screens that surrounded the long lines we were standing in. They were American classics that supposedly celebrated the truth that is the Bill of Rights.

See HANNA on 11

Rick Astley lets his hair down; latest cuts are 'smooth, soulful'

By William Rudolph
Staff Reporter

Three years ago, Rick Astley was "the little guy with the big voice," a tiny redheaded crooner from Northern England with Howdy Doody pompadour hair and a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist for high energy dance hits like "Never Gonna Give You Up," "Together Forever," "My Arms Keep Missing You" and "Whenever You Need Somebody."

Never mind acid house or Balearic beats. The British charts in the late 1980s were dominated by the booming, smoothly polished, high energy dance pop of hitmakers Stock Aitken Waterman, the production team who unleashed Kylie Minogue, Dead or Alive and Jason Donovan on the world.

Astley's big booming voice was perfect for their sound. His first two albums shot him to the top of the charts in both the United States and Europe. But after his second album, "Hold Me in Your Arms," something frightening happened.

Astley decided he was tired of



being a pop puppet and announced his plans to start writing and producing his own tracks.

Naturally, public reaction was not kind. Readers of teenybopper music magazines like the British "Smash Hits" started writing letters saying how wimpy and pathetic Rick Astley was.

But Astley was not down for the count. The aptly titled "Free," his first album in two years, is a complete departure from the disco ghetto that originally made him famous.

On "Free," Astley gets a chance to show off his strong voice on a collection of soulful songs aimed at the adult contemporary market — seven of these he wrote himself.

There are no dance beats. No drum programs. Just Astley's rich voice crooning along to one romantic song after another, like ex-Doobie Brother Michael McDonald's "In the Name of Love." Or the current single, "Cry For Help," which features lush backing by the Andrae Crouch choir.

"Free's" entire sound is perfect VH-1 material — which is not surprising, since Astley has turned up as a guest VJ recently, sporting serious long hair and a blazer.

"Free" is ideal music for thirty-somethings and those who'd like to be. Each song is smooth, soulful — the perfect accompaniment for driving along in your BMW or drinking decaffeinated gourmet coffee while discussing what you want out of life, what your parents wanted and what you'd like for your kids. Or how you're

See ASTLEY on 11

Venus vocalist ready for fame

By Robert Richardson
Senior Reporter

According to Robert Jones, he only has about three or four more years to make a name for himself — but he wants it that way.

Jones, a vocalist/guitarist for the young English band Venus Beads, says he likes being in the band but feels if the band can't make it in a couple years, they should move on to something else.

"I think that's time to do three or four albums, you know," Jones said. "I think most bands sort of tend to go off (get old) after about three or four albums. I think they tend to sort of progress in the wrong direction or water down their style or make compromises or sacrifice any ideals that they have."

As the group promotes its latest release, "Incision," which is due for release at the end of April, Jones said the Venus Beads are ready to celebrate.

Last year saw the first anniversary of the group's first single release, and the Venus Beads now have been together for almost two years.

But Jones is still skeptical. "Critically speaking, we've done really well," Jones said. "I don't think we could have done any better, in fact. And I think if we had done any better, it would have been artificial."

While Jones said he thinks the support of the press is genuine, he isn't sure of the fans' support. Part of the problem, Jones said, is that the Venus Beads haven't been touring with any really big names.

"As far as attendance for shows go, we've got a bit of work to do," Jones said. "I don't think we've been getting the breaks as far as live shows go. We haven't sort of got any major supports."

However, Jones says he thinks he knows why.

"It's just a prejudice," Jones said, "but I tend to think they're not going to be very good and I think that seems to be the thing that the Venus Beads have to get over at the moment."

Jones may sound like an experienced international rocker now but he hasn't always sounded like that. The 22-year-old didn't really know what he wanted to do, so when he graduated from high school he went to college.

During college he played in several different bands, and before he knew it, he was playing full time out of college.

Being in a band, Jones said, was at first a shocking experience.

"When I joined the band I was . . . naive," Jones said. "I thought the reason I want to be in a band is to make music I really like. And then it finally turns out that when you're actually in a band you're not sure the music you are doing is what you actually like. It's a big paradox."

He's not complaining; Jones stressed that there are positive aspects to being part of a band. One of the best, he said, is the satisfying feeling after a great show.



Rick Astley

Courtesy of RCA