

The White pays tribute on Zeppelin trip



Courtesy of Atlantic Records

Vocalist Michael White of the White says he decided to drop the props after meeting Robert Plant.

By John Skretta
Staff Reporter

As Michael White, lead singer of The White, noted before the band's Saturday night show at the M'rage, "North America was always really big on Led Zeppelin, and when you say Led Zeppelin, everybody thinks, 'bigger than God.'"

In a live tribute show to the band consisting of three sets of about 40 minutes each, The White showed Led Zeppelin's music to be an accessible influence open to new interpretations as well as imitation.

White's vocals in the falsetto range are a bit scratchier than Robert Plant's, and in some cases it sounds as if you're listening to Warrant or Great White. But on the acoustic ballads and classics like "Misty Mountain Hop," White was amazingly Plantesque. He even had Plant's trademark hand gestures down pat.

For more than a decade now, White has taken the stage several nights weekly to deliver his rendering of Plant, a role he says came naturally to him.

"Back in 1975... we always used to get compared to Led Zeppelin. Even back then," White said. "It was mostly because of my voice."

After several years of frustration, White decided in 1980 to begin a live Led Zeppelin tribute. The decision, he said, was influenced by a need to acknowledge Led Zeppelin's tremendous influence on his life and to make

some money in the process.

"I didn't want to change my musical style just to be an opportunist," White said, adding that in the early 1980s, record companies weren't signing anyone who sounded anything remotely like Led Zeppelin.

"They were signing bands like The Knack and Blondie," he said. "We just stuck with it until it became fashionable again to sound like Led Zeppelin."

The last 11 years have been an interesting journey for The White, the singer said, and the band has always found Led Zeppelin's music an inspiring, binding force.

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"I couldn't be doing it after this long if I didn't love the music," White said. "When I write my own songs now, they're written in the spirit of Led Zeppelin, not to sound like Led Zeppelin. They didn't have very many good reviews; the critics always tore them apart. But you can't criticize a feeling."

The band's shows are spiced with several original songs and the conspicuous absence of standard Led Zeppelin clothing and stage props. This is clearly not an attempt to clone Zep.

"There was a time when we were headed more in that direction," White said. "But if you start going that way,

you can never go far enough, and you start to lose any credibility. The important thing is the music, and the serious Zeppelin fans know that."

Meeting Robert Plant also prompted The White to drop the visual charades and focus on the songs, according to White.

"After we met Robert Plant, I knew this guy, so how could I go around trying to look like him?" White asked. "Once you meet somebody, and they may be a hero to you or something, it sort of shoots down the image. You realize they're just a person."

"Maybe a millionaire, though."

The White's Saturday night performance included a few of Led Zeppelin's more obscure tunes, with all of the members of The White proving themselves solid musicians as they mastered the complete Led Zeppelin dossier.

The highlight of the evening was undoubtedly the guitar sorcery of Phil Bolene, whose strumming, picking and, yes, even bowing were more than imitative of the masterful Jimmy Page. Throughout the three sets of songs including "Bring It On Home" and "The Ocean," Bolene managed to closely duplicate Page's famed "guitar army" sound, working up layered rhythms that erupted into scorching solos.

The fact that Bolene even had the courage to take out a violin bow and

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Courtesy of Paramount Pictures

Jeff Daniels and Demi Moore star in "The Butcher's Wife," a comedy from director Terry Hughes.

Cheese works Quirky characters fill romance

"The Butcher's Wife"



By Anne Steyer
Staff Reporter

Romantic comedy is often cheesy. That's a trap in filmmaking. "The Butcher's Wife" (Stuart) is no exception to this tradition. Its cheesiness even borders on corny occasionally, but it works anyway.

Demi Moore ("Ghost") is Marina, a clairvoyant who "reads" people with as little contact as the touch of their hand. With this, she can tell their

desires and futures.

Isolated on an island off the coast of North Carolina, Marina dreams of love and her "split-apart," the person she is destined to be with. After a vivid dream of her split-apart's smile, a man arrives on her island. He is a butcher named Leo (George Dzundza) and she is convinced he is her destiny.

They marry immediately and Leo takes her to his home and butcher shop in Greenwich Village. Once there, Marina affects the lives of her neighbors with her clairvoyant abilities.

The person most affected by her presence is Dr. Alex Tremor (Jeff Daniels), a psychiatrist who lives across the street. Within 24 hours Marina has talked to and inspired his girlfriend, his best friend and one of his patients.

Tremor is the opposite of Marina in every conceivable way. Uptight to a fault, he quotes textbook cases to himself while he shaves and over-

analyzes everything he encounters. The butcher's wife confounds him completely. He is powerless to control her and doesn't believe in her talent.

This leads to their inevitable romantic pairing and the madcap activities of the locals she inspires. From this point on, most of the plot devices are easily spotted before they occur and the ending is pat formula.

Despite this, "The Butcher's Wife" captures the audience with its quirky charm and off-beat characters. The neighbors touched by Marina are interesting in their own right and she allows them to be truer to themselves.

The supporting cast is an important part of the film. Mary Steenburgen ("Back to the Future III") as Tremor's patient is especially strong. Her character begins as a timid, mousy choir teacher, but after meeting Ma-

Ridiculous situations comedy's brilliance

By Carter Van Pelt
Staff Reporter

When Rudyard Kipling said, "Everyone is more or less mad on one point," he probably wasn't thinking of the characters in Noel Coward's play "Hay Fever," but he might as well have been.

"Hay Fever" (Howell Theatre, 12th and R Streets), the University Theatre's second production of 1990-91, is a bizarre and hilarious comedy set in England in the Roaring '20s. It takes place on a summer weekend at the country estate of well-known novelist David Bliss (Kevin Paul Hofeditz).

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The grasp on reality held by the eccentric members of the Bliss family is precarious at best, and this is the basis for comic situations that arise throughout the play.

By coincidence, the four members of the Bliss family, Sorel (Stephanie Beerling), Simon (Craig Holbrook), Judith (Shirley Carr Grubb) and David, all have invited various guests from London for the weekend. Each guest anticipates a relaxing weekend in the country but in turn is subjected to the Bliss' ridiculous social behavior.

The social discomfort begins when daughter Sorel's guest Richard Greatham (John Lepard) and David's guest Jackie Coryton (Sharon Bigelow) arrive at the house and are left unattended by the utterly unhelpful maid Clara (Catherine Jarobe). So they are forced to make small talk. The talk couldn't be smaller or more hilarious as they count the seconds to a rescue from their situation.

The rude and brattish behavior of the Bliss children, Simon and Sorel, is clearly explained by their mother Judith's theatrical carry-

ings-on. Judith, a recently retired stage actress, literally drives Jackie to tears when the group engages in

an after-dinner word game where the players must act "in the manner of" a given adverb. Judith's guest, Sandy (David G. Matvey), and Jackie visibly communicate their distress with the Bliss' obscure vocabulary.

The weekend's activities get completely out of hand when everyone becomes attracted to someone else's partner (not unlike Woody Allen's "A Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy"). Simon's guest, the charming Myra Arundel (Joan Henrichs), spends the weekend flirting with Mr. Bliss in order to torment the obviously jealous Simon. Then seemingly innocent actions by Sandy and Jackie toward Sorel and Simon lead to a double wedding announcement. Yes, more distress.

The highlights of the play are Judith's invocations of her past stage performances, in which her son and daughter assist. Carr Grubb takes her character to the limits of ridiculousness, leaving the audience in fits of laughter. At the end of the play, she announces to the family that she is returning to the stage, but the audience knows that she has never left.

The wonderful performance by Carr Grubb alone makes the show worth seeing, but the acting on all counts is very good. The visual experience of "Hay Fever" is notable as well. The multilevel stage design is quite effective, and the 1920s costumes are elegant and spectacular.

All things considered, "Hay Fever" makes for great entertainment and is a must for those who enjoy social satires. The play's brilliance lies in the fact that its ridiculous situations and characters are timeless and can be appreciated by anyone who has ever been in an uncomfortable social situation.

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