

ALAN PHELPS

# Shirtless Manilow gets axed

Barry Manilow has good cause to be a little hot under the collar.

Authorities in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, canceled his recently sold-out concert appearances there for fear the American singer might rip his shirt off on stage, thus violating local decorum.

It's not some off-the-wall apprehension. Apparently, the Malaysians warned both Hammer and Color Me Badd, two other U.S. acts, to remain fully clothed, but the shirts flew away anyhow. So when Manilow came rockin' into town, officials didn't want to take any chances, and they axed him.

A strange thought indeed is the picture of Manilow threatening to throw clothing to a teeming crowd. He's never been known to really break it down and get funky. But then, no one around here has heard from him in a while, and maybe his style changed while he traipsed about places like Malaysia.

Actually, I thought he disappeared in that earthquake that sucked Abba under the planet's surface. But perhaps he survived. Perhaps he's been brooding all these years, quietly humming, "I Write the Songs," slurping down kamikazes and slowly gelling into "Wildman" Manilow.

"Here I comes, Malaysia!" he screamed, buttons spinning around the yard as he pulled off his shirt. "Git ready to see some skin! Roar!"

There is a lot to be said for performing without a shirt. It seems to be all the rage in these lawless times.

A friend of mine invited me to go to Minneapolis during break to see Donny Osmond without a shirt. He's touring with a production of the musical "Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." I didn't go, but I thought about it. After all, this is

Donny Osmond — he's a little bit country. Or is he a little bit rock 'n' roll?

I suppose it doesn't matter when you're not wearing a shirt. Then you can be anything you want — say, a lot rock 'n' roll and no country or even the other way around.

I, myself, once performed without a shirt in a local production of the same musical Donny is prancing in up north. Donny, of course, snagged the part of "Joseph," the lead, whereas I was only "Egyptian Guard." The great thing was there were no shirts involved in "Egyptian Guard," just sparkling headgear and tan shorts. I also got to pretend to play a guitar shaped like an ankh when the Pharaoh sang.

Sometimes I look back on the time I spent in front of those audiences, my shirt nowhere to be found, perhaps blocks away, for all I knew. Someone could have taken it or burned it as I was on stage or hoisted it to the top of some flagpole.

All I had was that huge ankh in my hands. No shirt to weigh me down! It was summertime. The golden rays of the sun cut through the sky to my skin, and no shirt impeded them. I could've just taken off right there, run away, rambled on, a free bird.

I might have given the ankh to some trucker in exchange for a lift to the coast. Me and my sequined headgear on a walkabout. My shirt hundreds of miles away and counting.

Oh, yes, I know. I know what Barry was contemplating as he considered doing the Malaysia gig topless, with no shirt to constrict his aura.

That scenario, however, is hard for me to swallow. I feel as though I know Barry, and I can't see him being quite so bold.

In my younger days, I heard a lot of Barry because my mom used to play his albums quite a bit. After a while, it grew on me. I suppose you might call me a closet Manilow fan — but don't worry, I joined a support group

here in town.

I'm not talking about Barry's weird 1980s stuff. What I, and probably a silent majority of Americans, like is the 1970s Barry, the Barry we used to hear crooning on old AM radios. Classic Barry. Young Barry, starting out in New York City, ready to write the songs that make the whole world sing.

No one can forget tunes such as "Copacabana." I can remember picturing the story in my mind: Poor Lola, sitting in the hottest spot north of Havana, watching as Tony and Rico duked it out. And then the punches flew. Chairs were smashed in two. There was blood and a single gunshot, but just who shot who? I still wonder, to this day.

It saddens me to know that Barry has to go so far from home to have a sellout concert. There were years when Manilowmania would have filled venues across this measly country, but I guess those times are gone. It's Kuala Lumpur or nothing these days.

I would bet if Donny Osmond trekked down to Malaysia, no one would bat an eye. He could dance around in that Amazing Coat of his with no shirt at all, blowing bugles on his ice skates or whatever, and people wouldn't be so upset. But if Barry joined the cast as say, an Egyptian Guard, then all hell would break loose.

The real problem is Hammer and Color Me Badd ruined it for Barry. They are the ones who should be punished. Maybe the authorities could confiscate Color Me Badd's extra "d" or banish Hammer to Lake Edna. They shouldn't take out frustrations on Barry. He has enough frustrations of his own.

Maybe I'll invite Barry to come to our support group. I'd give that man the shirt off my back.

Phelps is a junior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan wire editor and a columnist.

KIRBY MOSS

# B-ball shows cultural differences

Finally, football season is waning, making way for the planet's true sport — basketball.

The sport is sensational in its prowess, but I have always found it difficult to watch on television.

After all, how many times can you watch Michael Jordan juke a whole team with one of his magical moves and say: "Wow! Unbelievable!"

He's done it so many times now, believe it.

I don't think I have ever watched an entire basketball game on the tube. That's because I'd rather play than watch.

So that's where this week's column lifts off.

It's about the culture of basketball and how most white dudes and black dudes see and play it differently because of cultural reasons.

I ain't kidding. I've been playing ball for years and have noticed a few things.

Don't get me wrong, I haven't traveled around the country gathering information or anything, but I've played in a lot of different cities and neighborhoods and cross-sectionally I've noticed patterns.

First off is the parlance on the court. "Dime" is a smooth pass. "He got popcorned," means an offensive player fakes a jumper and the defender jumps up like a popcorn kernel. Clever, eh?

Instead of a jumper, you can take your man "to the cup," (drive on him) and "flush on him," (dunk), if you "sky" (jump) high enough, that is.

Or if the inside is too clogged for that, shoot the paradoxical layup or long-range jumper on your man. But make sure someone is underneath to rebound "the pill" (basketball) if you miss.

Who knows, if you make enough shots your team will keep "feeding"

(passing) you the ball, but if you "brick" (miss) a lot, well . . .

From the vast sample group I have observed, I've noticed that the differences in play have little to do with physical prowess.

When I was a teen-ager, a lot of the white dudes I knew who played ball had goals in their driveways. They would hang out shooting jumpers on their shiny rims and taut nets all day. Soon they became automatic.

These were the dudes in high school who would make 25 out of 25 free throws with their eyes closed but would miss wide-open layups four out of five times.

We didn't have private basketball rims in our driveways. Actually, many of us didn't even have driveways. So by default, we were sort of forced to play with other people all the time in pick-up games at one of the neighborhood courts.

The courts were OK, but the rims never had nets. That didn't stop us, though, and when one of us shot a sweet jumper that sailed straight through the rim we'd yell, "SWISH!" for sound effects.

It wasn't until high school that I learned basketball theory, as I call it. Setting picks, screening out your man, zone defense, switching up, all those things you do without the ball.

Before then, we just ran and dribbled around until someone was open to get the pass or the shot. Pick or screen and zone defense? Those concepts were as distant to us as the twilight zone. It was man-to-man where we played, and you got open the best way you could.

What about people waiting for next game? The etiquette there was to walk on the court and yell, "I got next!"

Then you would hear someone on the other side of the gym yell, "I got next!" Then another dude would yell the same thing. After a heated debate, one of the three finally ended up having "next."

We didn't shoot for the next four or five or three or sign a "next sheet." Like Manifest Destiny, you just HAD next, and you picked your team; hopefully the best team of the day because once you sat down among the 15 or so other dudes waiting to play, that was it. Time to go home and watch basketball.

One of the last cultural differences I find most intriguing is the shirt/skin dichotomy. One team wears shirts, the other team no shirts. No doubt it's a reasonable way to decipher which guys are on your team. But, I don't dig playing without a shirt.

That's because when I grew up, we never played shirt/skins. Never. Somehow, like a sea lion knows her cubs, we knew who the five dudes were on our team even if we all had on white shirts.

The first time I did play shirts/skins and some dude told me to take off my shirt, I thought it was peculiar.

It's just a hypothesis that culture is at the root of different styles of basketball play, but it has merit.

Why aren't there more black tennis, hockey and golf players? The answer to that is rooted in economics and culture.

Ah! How refreshing to welcome hoop season. Aside from the pure beauty of the game, b-ball is a wonderful way to shoo away these academic blues we all get about this time of the school year. I enjoy playing the game.

Hey, you may see me over in the rec center one day running in and around a bunch of dudes yelling: "Feed me the pill, feed me the pill!"

And see, without the insight of this column on the cultural aspect of the sport, you probably would have thought: "Look at that dude, man. What an odd way to take medicine!"

Moss is a graduate student studying anthropology and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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