

Singer's performance enchants audience

McFerrin dazzles participating crowd

By Carter Van Pelt
Staff Reporter

On occasion, a rare and exceptional talent will grace Lincoln with a memorable performance. Such was the case at the Lied Center for Performing Arts Saturday night as 3,000 people experienced the musical genius of Bobby McFerrin.

From the moment his dreadlocks-headed, barefoot, blue jean and T-shirt-clad form took the stage and bowed deeply, until his final encore, the audience was enchanted by his magical presence.

It's probably not news to many people that Bobby McFerrin is an exceptional artist. Most people can figure that out by listening to his recorded work. But to really appreciate his genius, one has to see him alone on stage—one voice stripped of the technology of the recording studio.

What can one man do alone on stage for an hour and 45 minutes? For McFerrin, there seemed to be no limit. The key to his one-man show was that he immediately turned it into a 3,000-person show, setting new standards in audience involvement.

From the middle of his first number, he was off the stage and wandering through the crowd, even finding an empty seat in the front row in which to sit and perform. McFerrin used audience participation in almost every song, calling on standards known to all.

From the ABCs to "Itsy Bitsy Spider" to "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes," McFerrin permanently affixed smiles to audience members' faces by helping them recall those childhood sing-alongs.

For the baby boomers in the crowd, he conjured up versions of the "Beverly Hillbillies," the "Peter Gunn Theme," and "These Are a Few of My Favorite Things" from the "Sound of Music."

If there was any doubt that the Lied audience was eager to sing with McFerrin, it evaporated when he asked for 16 singers to take the stage and was instead joined by 48. He directed this impromptu chorus by singing every part to them, demonstrating the magnitude of his legendary vocal range.

McFerrin also took the audience on a magical excursion to the Land of Oz with his standard medley from the film. From "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" to "Lions and Tigers and Bears," he blazed through all the classics and then melted like the Wicked Witch after splashing water on himself from his bottle of Evian.

Perhaps the most spectacular moment of the show was the performance of Bach's "Ave Maria," in which only the best soprano voices in the audience wove their beautiful sounds through the air as McFerrin cradled them in the warmth of his silky tenor and bass. He seemed genuinely impressed and offered his applause to the angelic voices at the end of number.

McFerrin's solo moments were electrifying as well. He performed a stirring Negro spiritual, his classic "Drive," and "The Star-Spangled Banner." When the crowd just sat and listened, McFerrin seemed to take them to an intangible place.

He received an instant and wholly deserved standing ovation and came back to perform "Thus Spake Zarathustra," from "2001: A Space Odyssey," again with the help of the audience.

After the show, the smiling crowd filed out, its cars still tingling with McFerrin's inspired sound. His gift to the audience was more than just music; he gave it a greater and more precious gift. He put everyone, at least for a moment, in touch with his or her own creativity. Few performers have ever had such a rare talent.



Courtesy of Bobby McFerrin

Bobby McFerrin performed Saturday night at the Lied Center for Performing Arts.



Robin Trimarchi/DN

Left to right: Colby Starck, drummer; vocalist Shannon Dobson; guitarist Jason Merritt; James Wolcott on keyboards and bassist Jonathan Hischke are Roosevelt Franklin.

Unusual blend

Roosevelt Franklin combines different styles without attempting to 'make sense' musically

By Matt Silcock
Staff Reporter

If you want to see something different in the Lincoln music scene, go see Roosevelt Franklin at Duffy's Tavern Jan. 31. You'll hear crazed funk, cheesy '70s disco, psychotic speed metal, Frank Zappa-style progressive rock, hard-core rap and wailing Chicago blues—probably all in one song.

Throw in performance art, intense musicianship and bizarre humor, and you've got the Roosevelt recipe.

This insane musical brew originated when drummer Colby Starck approached bassist Jonathan Hischke about starting a band during a Take 6

concert at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. ("Take 6 are God," explains Hischke, an opinion the whole band shares.)

They soon hooked up with guitarist and budding artist Jason Merritt to form a trio, but their sound was beefed up by the addition of James Wolcott, an accomplished classical pianist and cellist who plays keyboards.

After a debut show with another singer, the current lineup was established with the addition of Shannon Dobson, whose impressive voice sounds like Etta James, Ella Fitzgerald and Faith No More's Mike Patton rolled into one.

Since no one else seems able to, I asked Starck and Hischke to attempt

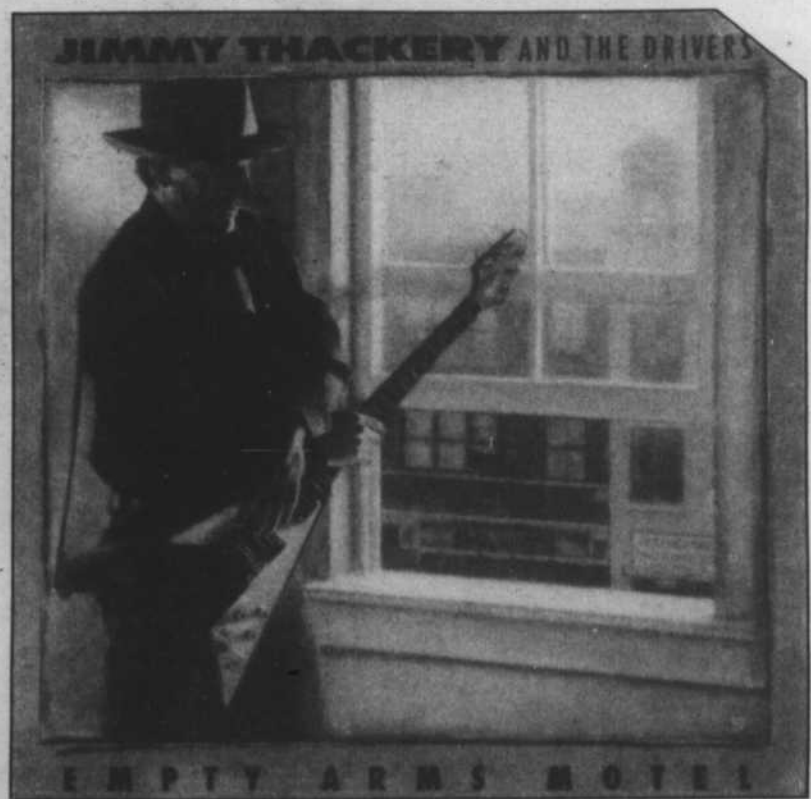
to describe the Roosevelt sound.

According to Starck, "Everybody brings in a different aspect to the group. Jason listens to classical and new age; Shannon is our soul sista; James is our techno-nerd, into Meat Beat Manifesto and stuff like that. Hischke is our Rastafarian mutt, who listens to whatever is the weirdest thing around. I guess I bring the hip-hop aspect to it."

This influence is seen when, in the middle of the show, Starck comes out from behind his drums and rocks the mike with "Five Fingers of the Hand," a full-fledged rap anthem that is one of the high points of a Roosevelt

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Blues album features frenzied guitar licks, equally powerful vocals



Courtesy of Blind Pig Records

Jim Thackery



"Jimmy Thackery and the Drivers" Jimmy Thackery Blind Pig Label

Jimmy Thackery, the lightning blues guitarist, just released his solo album, "Jimmy Thackery and the Drivers," a compilation of 12 blues tracks.

You wouldn't know it by looking at him, but the vibration of Thackery's deep, rumbling vocals can knock you backward if you're standing too close to the stage or the speakers.

The fact that he can sing as well as he can play should come as no surprise, considering the depth of his blues experience.

For 14 years, Thackery played with the Nighthawks before forming the Assassins—a rock 'n' roll and rhythm and blues six-man band. When the Assassins disbanded, Thackery teamed up with Assassins' drummer

See THACKERY on 11