

Bands jam at Rock-O-Rama; sound problems plague start

concert REVIEW

The Big Red Rock-O-Rama of '93 is over, and parts of it were pretty dry. And with bands playing only 40 minutes at a time, a lot of time was spent sitting around waiting for the band you came to see.

If you were lucky, the bands you wanted to see would play one right after the other. That way you could struggle through the adolescent crowd, spend two hours watching the shows, and then return to the bar.

Young was the word for Thursday night's audience. The Great Plains Room in the East Union was crawling with tiny skatepunks.

Many of the tykes were there to see Yellow Nut Sedge, a great band made up of Lincoln High students. I mention this only to state that Lincoln's younger musicians are coming up with some great new sounds and should be paid close attention to.

Hour Slave is another younger band to watch. The members' originality is stunning.

Bonechina played a hair-raising show as always. Noted for the large amount of hair the band somehow has accumulated, Bonechina's members have evidently decided to go their separate ways. Thursday night's show was the last one for the band, but if you missed it, don't worry. I'm sure a reunion is already scheduled.

The Yardapes, dare I say, were the

highlight of the evening. I attribute this to the fact that they were the only band that had decent sound. Thursday night's sound was off a little. Monitors were not turned up loud enough and the only thing audible for most of the bands was the bass drum. A lot of bands had potential to sound brilliant, but didn't.

Todd Grant had a few angry comments to make about the sound quality and biased treatment. His acoustic set was relaxing and insightful otherwise.

Also playing an acoustic set was Richard Schultz. That was the happiest 40 minutes of the entire weekend. Schultz ran freely about the audience while pickin' and strummin' his guitar. He skipped, he hopped and he poured his heart out. When he did stay on the stage, he had a stage prop of a huge, happy sun smiling behind him.

The sound quality was much better Friday night. Two stages were used alternately to move the music right along, and it worked well. A touch of diversity was included in Friday night's lineup. His Boy Elroy turned out to be a little heavier than I expected, leather and all. They were a loud band, with a lot of hair, a lot of riffs and a lot of energy.

Playing in their socks one more time was Urethra Franklin. They were tight and they were good. Chris Hiene's voice raged through the walls. The crowd ceremonially passed bodies overhead and had a lot of energy. Mousetrapp finished out Friday

night, and the few that remained to watch them found themselves listening to a couple of songs and a lot of chitchat. The environment was familiar and personal, and it seemed more like somebody's basement jam session than a show. Sometimes it's better that way.

Greg Markel showed up all three nights of the Rock-O-Rama. Saturday was his solo effort. Besides playing alone, Markel played with two other bands, Pullout and Urethra Franklin. His music is diverse and always impressive.

Saturday's 8:40 slot was the first performance opportunity for a band named Gregory. They're not tight yet, but time and experience can only help them. Their songs twist and turn through several different transitions before coming back to a familiar opening riff. Then the whole thing melts together.

Such Sweet Thunder's performance was hard to follow. The band hasn't played lately in Lincoln and with the long history they have of playing in this area, their fans missed them. The crowd responded to Scott Roth's intense singing and all his stomping around. The band was comfortable and on for its performance.

At least the bands were on time; the sound got progressively better with each band and by Mercy Rule's midnight appearance, the Rock-O-Rama was something like successful.

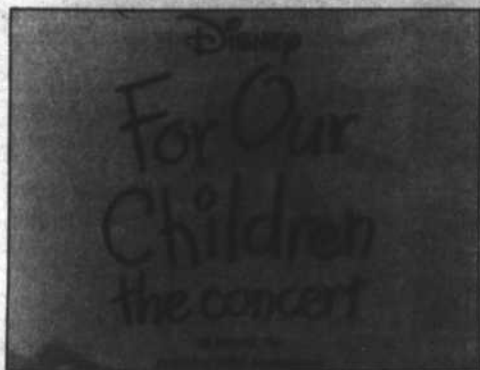
— Dana Franks



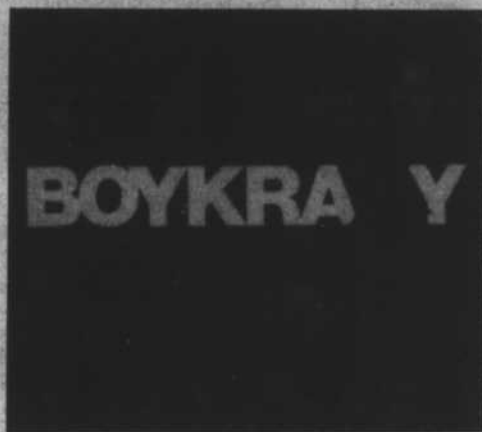
Nate Christiancy of Dishwater sits on a milk crate playing a borrowed guitar at the Big Red Rock-O-Rama Saturday.

Jeff Haller/DN

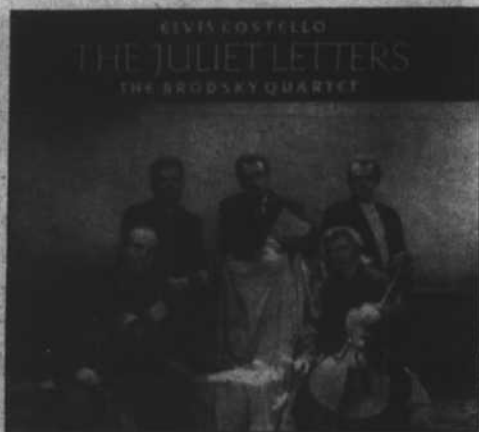
New releases range from dull to different



Courtesy of Disney Records



Courtesy of Warner Bros.



Courtesy of Next Plateau Records

"For Our Children: The Concert" Various Artists Disney

Knick, knock, paddy-wack, give this dog a bone.

"For Our Children: The Concert" is the follow-up to Disney's "For Our Children" 1991 benefit album that raised nearly \$3 million for the Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

This 17-track album, filled with new and funky renditions of traditional children's songs, isn't nearly as compelling as the first album (which featured Ziggy Marley, Dylan, Sting, Paul McCartney, Elton John and Little Richard, among others), but it does have its bright spots.

Unfortunately, it also has Paula Abdul.

But getting past that, the pick of the litter is Salt-N-Pepa's "This Old Man," with Kris Kross' "Krossed-Out Version of a Nursery Rhyme" coming in a close second.

Bobby McFerrin donates his vocal antics on various selections from "The Wizard of Oz;" powerhouse performer Melissa Etheridge leads a sing-along with the camp favorite "The Green Grass Grew All Around;" and the incomparable Patti LaBelle gives a stirring rendition of "What a Wonderful World."

The rest of the selections are an odd mix of silly kids songs (Peter Alsop doing "I Am a Pizza") and silly performers doing standards (Michael Bolton's "You Are My Sunshine").

"For Our Children: The Concert" is really a collection aimed at kids, but since all proceeds will be donated to PAF, it's a decent investment for pseudo-grown-ups, too.

— Anne Steyer

"Boy Krazy" Boy Krazy Next Plateau Records

Don't judge a book by its cover, the old adage says.

But it should be obvious from the cover of Boy Krazy's eponymous debut that there is nothing inside worth listening to.

First off, their spelling is terrible. Crazy is supposed to be spelled with a "c." Secondly, the CD sleeve features the four female members of the group, all in black, all in fish net, all giggly, all trying to be a bad En Vogue rip-off.

But the inside is much worse. Their music is not even remotely a bad En Vogue rip-off. Boy Krazy is more like a bad Exposé rip-off. And everyone knows how bad Exposé is.

Boy Krazy's claim to fame is their so-called smash single, "That's What Love Can Do." It's had some radio play, and it's a fairly harmless pop ditty about how love turns into broken promises and jealousy.

The rest of the disc is a pop music nightmare. The beat and the melody (if it could be called so) are a straight rip-off from the "pop music" button on electric organs. The lyrics offer words of wisdom on love and nothing else.

Some of the worst selections include "Love is a Freaky Thing" (an excellent observation, however) and "Good Times With Bad Boys."

"Good times with bad, bad boys/Just having fun fast and easy... Know what I want/Know where to go/No one can stop me/No, woh woh." Honestly, the lyric sheet says "No, woh woh."

Next Plateau Records previously released Salt-N-Pepa and K.W.S. Why they signed Boy Krazy is a complete mystery. And it should remain so. Go ahead, judge this CD by its cover and leave it on the shelf.

— Anne Steyer

"The Juliet Letters" Elvis Costello and the Brodsky Quartet Warner Bros.

Elvis, Elvis, where are you going?

Elvis Costello, one of the premiere lyricists of the last 15 or so years, took an erratic detour from the successful road of his past with his last album, "Mighty Like a Rose."

"Rose" was an aberration of the usual Elvis musical style. That's not to say it wasn't good, it was just a detour from traditional Costello.

"The Juliet Letters," Costello's latest release, is an even stranger departure. It represents a correspondence set to classical music. The songs range from love letters to a suicide note, an extreme version of junk mail and a soldier's letter home.

Elvis, accompanied by the excellent Brodsky Quartet, creates an odd fusion of classical music and Costello rock, but the combination doesn't always jell.

"Swine" is a particularly unappealing selection. The string arrangements are harsh and unrelenting, as are the lyrics and Costello's voice.

There are a few others that leave something to be desired on first listening, but repeated listening reveals their worth.

But "The Juliet Letters" does capture the desperation and uninhibited nature of personal correspondence.

While "Letters" is no "Blood and Chocolate," it's a successful change of direction for Costello.

Yes, it's a strange road for him to take, and is definitely not for fair-weather fans — this one takes a little listening to.

But Elvis, you'll have a following wherever you go.

— Anne Steyer

Cajun flavor spices up unique blues

Zachary Richard "Snake Bite Love" A & M Records

Zachary Richard recorded his first album in 1972 for Elektra records, but it was never released. Not until 1990 was his work released on a major label in the United States, with "Women in the Room," issued by A & M. His second release, "Snake Bite Love," continues his unique sound, a combination of blues and zydeco.

The sound comes, ironically, from that first unreleased album and the proceeds from which Richard used to buy an accordion.

An accordion? Sure, John Cougar Mellencamp got away with it a few years ago, but he was big time. How can anyone honestly expect to get away with using an accordion?

Richard picked up the squeeze box 20 years ago to get back to his musical bayou origins.

Born in Louisiana, he focused more on the rhythm and blues tradition of the south. Not until the mid-70s, when he migrated to Canada, did Richard become "militant" about his Cajun heritage. He recorded eight albums in French, one of which went gold. Returning to Louisiana 10 years later, he cut two albums for Rounder Records before being "discovered" by A & M.

Richard's sound is a world apart from Top 40 and distinctive from R & B.

For example, his ode to crawfish, half in English and half in French: "Well you boil 'em down 'til dey nice and red/You squeeze de tail an' you suck de head."

Richard gets help from New Orleans bluesman Dr. John and his piano, and the Dirty Dozen Brass Band.

This is the antidote to metal and rap burnout, and should sit well with those who have heard "Achy Breaky Heart" one too many times. Throw on "Snake Bite Love," cook up a nice heaping pot of gumbo and enjoy.

— Sam Kepfield

and more BOOKS

