

PATRICK HAMBRECHT

Hero produces 'giant' concern

Everybody ought to have a hero. Ron Kurtenbach has Karl Marx, Brother Jed Smock has Billy Graham and Sen. Bob Kerrey has Bob Kerrey. I adore John Flansburgh of They Might Be Giants.

They Might Be Giants is a polka new-wave group from Brooklyn, New York. It only has two members, John Linell and John Flansburgh. Their songs are pun-a-minute Looneytune blitzkriegs — cosmic knock-knock jokes written for God.

Some critics are annoyed by the twin troubadours' nasally crooned accordion adventures, so if you don't like them, I understand. But you're wrong.

When I heard the two Johns were coming to Kansas City, Kan., with Midnight Oil on Sept. 12, I wasted no time. First I asked the guy in charge of music for the DN if I could write a review of the show, to help pay for my ticket. Then I dropped everything and recycled my textbooks for gas money.

They were there, I was gone, and five hours later my girlfriend and I were screaming cries of hero worship in Kansas City.

The show was fabulous. Awe-soaked. Heavenly madness. No matter what one can imagine, it was better. I can say nothing else, barring a mantric repeating of "Keen" or "Zenriffic."

Imagine my disgust when the Giants were followed by Matthew Sweet, a sloppy, grunge-lite failure from Lincoln. It was like finding out KRNU would be the DJ for my wedding.

Ears in hand, my girlfriend and I fled the arena to hang out by the concession stand. And there he was, a pop prophet for our times.

Flansburgh stood before us, like a champion bowling trophy glistening in the sun. He was flanked by fans in all directions, holding out T-shirts and ticket stubs for him to sign. All at once, he seemed smarter than Becker or Prof. Munsen Honeydew, kinder than Kermit the Frog and cooler than Mr. Teeth. He was Zenriffic.

Keen.
Up to that moment, I didn't think I had a hero. I'd always enjoyed reading the exploits of Spider-Man and Josef Stalin, but for their entertain-



ment value alone. Flansburgh was different. He was real, and he was alive. I'd seen him on MTV, and I could touch him!
"Getcher T-shirt signed!" Flansburgh yelled. "Meet the thing from the freak show!"
My girlfriend sauntered through the crowd toward him to ask him to sign her T-shirt. I followed, numb with fear.
"You can sign here on my rippling bicep," she said.
Flansburgh felt her bicep.
"Oh, it's a very nice bicep," Flansburgh told her as he signed her shirt. "You look a little like that P.J. Harvey girl."
I stared at the two of them. My girlfriend was having a conversation with a demi-god, I marveled. How could she act so casual?
Then Flansburgh turned to me and asked if I wanted my shirt signed.
I nodded. My common sense screamed over my humility to say something to him.
"I'm They Might Be Giants fan club member 1990," I whispered.
"I can't hear a thing you're saying," Flansburgh said as he finished signing my T-shirt.
I turned around and shouted, "I'm fan club member 1990!"
The enormous proportions of my idiocy hit me at once like a ton of soggy oatmeal. I could have asked one of my idols anything I wanted to, but instead I had sounded off like a marine private to his drill sergeant.
"Great!" Flansburgh responded. He shook my hand and I walked away, stunned, like I'd just been hit by cosmic rays.
Then it hit me. As a columnist and reporter for the Daily Nebraskan, it

was my duty to extract information. I had to get an interview with Flansburgh.

I crept up behind him and tried to think of a question. But I couldn't, though my notebook was in hand. My mind was blank. Though I'm one of the most confrontational people I've ever met, I couldn't interrupt him while he talked to fans. It would have felt like heresy.

So I just stood there like a moron next to Flansburgh, for the second time that night while my subjectivity and objectivity duked it out across the terrain of my psyche.

A few other reporters from college newspapers began to take photos of Flansburgh, blinding him with camera flashes.

He yelled something at them, and then turned to me.

"Hey, I don't want to be mean and tell you to scram," Flansburgh said. "But if you could scram, it would really be nice."

I scrambled.
Later that night, I wrote a letter to Flansburgh. It said:

"Sorry I bothered you. I guess the obligations of a newsie require me to be pushy sometimes. But I was a fan before I ever wanted to be a reporter."

"I played with your second cousin, Nate Flansburgh, and Marvin Pratt at our high school Battle of the Bands competition."

"For some reason, I always wanted you to know that."

Being a fan can make you feel like a real geek. From now on, I'm sticking to God, cartoons and dead guys.

Hambrecht is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

Americans need this new deal

On Wednesday, President Clinton will unveil the details of his health care plan to the nation. In a televised speech, he will propose the most sweeping government program since the New Deal.

The program isn't, as some have attacked it, needless government intervention into private industry. Nor is it another liberal democratic program that could be better handled by the private sector.

Clinton's health care plan is a response to a major crisis in the United States. About 37 million Americans do not have health insurance.

That means about 37 million Americans are one major illness away from devastation.

The final details of Clinton's plan are still being worked out and won't be clear until Wednesday. Even then, the plan will go through major revision in the Congress before it comes up for a vote.

The Congressional fight over the health care plan will be long and difficult. It could be one of the most spectacular political events of our generation.

If it passes, the United States will have a new health care system. A good deal of work and effort will be required to make sure the new system works for all Americans and does not sell out to any special interests.

In many ways, the fight over health care is a test of whether the American system of government is capable of functioning in a modern world.

Health care reform is desperately needed. Although the United States has the best treatment in the world, many procedures have become outrageously expensive and are inaccessible to many Americans.

It is inexcusable for a country that



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is supposed to have the highest standard of living in the world to allow 37 million of its citizens to live in daily fear that they will be wiped out by a major illness.

Now we have a president who is determined to reform the system. The majority of the Congress that must pass the plan is made up by members of the president's party.

All the elements are in place for health care reform to go forward.

But there are many obstacles that could halt health care reform and leave the 37 million Americans without insurance with no hope for tomorrow if they come down with a major illness.

Special interest groups that are making a great deal of money in the United States' current health care arrangement will object strongly to change. Those who spend the most to voice their objections will probably have the most to lose financially.

Others who have a stake in resisting change will try to stop health care reform as well.

Considering the gridlock that has gripped our government for more than 20 years, forces opposed to the health care reform have a good chance of preventing Clinton and Congressional leaders from passing a new health

care plan.

But the chance for real reform exists as well. And reform is desperately needed. The United States cannot move forward if a significant number of its citizens are living in fear of bankruptcy caused by an illness.

Health care is not a right, but it is something the United States should provide for all its citizens. Whether we do or not will be decided in the next year as the Congress debates Clinton's proposal.

Many will argue that it is not the business of the government to provide health insurance to its citizens. But this is not an argument about political philosophy. This is not an issue of liberalism or conservatism.

This is an issue about people who are afraid to pay for the doctor because they can't go for an illness if they have one. It is about families who will lose everything if they have a major sickness.

Major health care reform is clearly needed. President Clinton's effort to pass a health care plan is a major test of our government and whether it is still capable of responding to the needs of Americans.

Fitzpatrick is a senior political science major and the editor of the Daily Nebraskan.

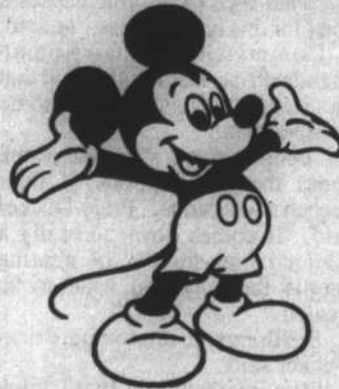
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Walt Disney World Co. representatives will be on campus to present an information session for Undergraduate Students on the Walt Disney World SPRING '94 College Program.

WHEN: Tuesday, Sept. 28 7:00 pm

WHERE: Student Union



Attendance at this presentation is required to interview for the Spring '94 College Program. Interviews will be held on Wednesday, September 29. All majors are encouraged to attend.

For more information Contact: Internship Office Phone: 472-1452

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