



Brian Curtis of the Lincoln band Straw Dog plays at FloodFest '93, last Sunday.

Damon Lee/DN

A dog's life

New band sinks teeth into local music scene

SPOTLIGHT

By Erin Conboy
Staff Reporter

When Straw Dog made its Lincoln debut at The Edge last January, it was with little fanfare and it certainly was less than glamorous.

"I think six relatives came," the band's drummer, Scott Halverson, said.

But things are improving, especially after a busy weekend playing around town, including a stint at Pinewood Bowl's FloodFest. Now, Straw Dog is preparing to hit the local music scene hard.

Halverson, bassist Mike Wells and guitarist Brian Curtis met while working at Nebraska Book Company.

They formed Straw Dog in January after discovering they had similar musical tastes but no outlet for expression.

Curtis said the band works hard to perform only original material, despite having trouble gaining a college audience with unfamiliar music.

"It's tough to get a cover (charge) if no one knows who you are," Wells said.

But the band is hanging on — practicing diligently, booking as many gigs as possible and writing more songs.

Halverson, Wells and Curtis all collaborate on the band's songs, though Curtis does most of the songwriting.

"I just write it. I start with the main music melodies, I bring it here and write the words while they are learning (the melody) to it."

Curtis — who is also the band's lead vocalist — said the band plays a wide range of music, from acoustic to Celtic, jazz to the blues.

Straw Dog recorded a four-track demo this summer, a demo Halverson said represented the band's style.

— 66 —
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—Wells
Straw Dog bassist

— 99 —
"Wedding Dress" is an acoustical piece inspired by the Celtic musical tradition, he said. Curtis described "Rachel," another Straw Dog original, as "disco-funk."

Straw Dog's will perform at the New Music Festival on Oct. 3 at Omaha's Howard Street Tavern, at The Edge with Such Sweet Thunder on Oct. 16, and October dates at both the Zoo Bar and Duffy's Tavern.

"We're getting recognition," Wells said. "It's kind of nice to say your band's name and not have people have you repeat it three times — 'What? Stray Dog?'"

Laser concerts light up night at planetarium



By Paula Lavigne
Staff Reporter

Art can be created in many mediums; paint, clay, stone — the list is endless. At Mueller Planetarium, artists use lasers to create art from darkness.

Jack Dunn, Mueller Planetarium's coordinator, brings "Laser Fantasies" to Lincoln. The shows also use graphics, fog, music and other special effects to dazzle spectators, he said.

Like most art forms, the creation of a good laser show is not easy, and it can be quite time-consuming, Dunn said.

A single, two-minute graphic can take up to two hours for an artist to program, he said.

While the planetarium does have people who design some of the shows, Dunn said, he also trades with members of the International Laser Display Association.

The association consists of 100 laser professionals who exchange ideas and designs internationally.

"We don't have a full-time artist, so we have to trade," Dunn said.

Besides the artists who create the shows, people are needed to operate the equipment during each display, he said.

The planetarium's laser operators and technicians are mostly students with no specific majors, he said. Only one professional volunteer is involved.

"I've had people who are in everything from horticulture to English to architecture," Dunn said. "I've only had one actual physics/astronomy major work for me."

Experience in electronics, optics and a familiarity with computers is helpful, but not necessary, Dunn said. A good working knowledge of music also is good.

"We try to get someone who is familiar with the music of the particular groups," he said.

The music is an important part of the show, and finding the right group is vital.

"Obviously, something like Pink Floyd is going to sell and is going to be tried and true," he said. "The music lends itself very well to the light-show medium."

Other popular bands include Led Zeppelin, The Doors, Rush and U2, Dunn said.

"The Doors are very big and an interesting one because there is such a wide audience appeal," he said.

See LASER on 10

Bad guy breaks Batman; Gotham gets new heroes

By William J. Harms
Staff Reporter

Striking fear in the hearts of criminals, operating from the shadows, a vigilante of the night, he is the Batman — but not the Batman most of us grew up with.

This summer big changes occurred in the family of Batman titles, starting with "Batman" No. 492.

Titled "Knightfall," the story laid the groundwork that would topple Bruce Wayne and bring about a new Batman.

The new caped crusader, Jean-Paul Valley — also known as Azrael — was trained to be the protector of the secret order of St. Dumas. The perfect assassin, Valley is everything Wayne is not: ruthless, unforgiving, and extremely brutal.

"He's really a reflection of our times," said Scott Peterson, editor of "Detective Comics," one of the four monthly Batman titles.

"This whole MTV generation has a very cynical view of the world, and the Batman is a reflection of this.

— 66 —
(Batman group editor) Denny O'Neill suggested that we replace Wayne as the Batman — get him out of the costume and bring in someone new.

— Peterson
editor, "Detective Comics"

— 99 —
"With the new Batman, it is also a great chance to explore the character and see what it is that makes a hero," he said.

"Both Wayne and Valley are heroes, they're just held up in different lights," Peterson said.

The storyline came about during a conference of the Batman creative teams, Peterson said.

See BATMAN on 10



James Mehling/DN