

Persuasive acting makes 'American Buffalo' shine

theater
review



Suspended brick facades hover over rusty appliances, knickknacks, golf clubs, electronics and a few rare coins in the organized mess of Donny Dubrow's junk shop.

On the stage of the Temple Building's Studio Theatre this weekend, this junk shop came to life with the characters of David Mamet's play "American Buffalo."

Proving people will bend the rules to get whatever they think they deserve, "American Buffalo" is about a conspiracy of one man and his friends to steal an American Buffalo nickel—the value of which is unknown.

This nickel is the property of Donny (Dean Houser) until a man walks into his store and buys it for \$90. Donny, figuring the man has a rare coin collection, thinks he has been swindled.

Donny and his friends, Teach (Mark Klemetsrud) and Bobby (Colby Coash), devise a twisted plan to steal the coin back. Through treachery, deceit and greed, the three botch their plan and end up in the pits of reality.

Set in the mean streets of Chicago, "American Buffalo" isn't a trip down Sesame Street. A big indicator of this is the street language all three characters use. The performance would lose intensity without it.

This intensity is always building. Tension in the characters' relationships is shown through their frantic pacing and aggravation.

Klemetsrud is excellent at portraying Teach's explosive personality. He doesn't stop moving for a nanosecond. When he sits, his foot taps ner-

vously, and the only thing that calms him is his gun, he says.

Houser seems adept and relaxed in his role as Donny. One of the most slaughtered acting feats is faking a real phone conversation—a minor technicality, but one Houser makes convincing.

Houser easily makes the transition from a yogurt-eating, health-conscious father figure to an aggravated and vindictive businessman. His father-figure role is "Do as I say, not as I do."

He encourages Bobby to eat health food so he will live longer, but then Donny schemes to send Bobby into a burglary.

The dauntless Bobby is as annoying as those bratty boys in sixth grade who pull girls' hair and trade Garbage Pail Kids cards.

Everything about him is annoying. When he is hit in the head, audience members almost cheer.

A big kudo goes to the set designers for drudging up as much junk from the attic as possible. The set is always a center of attention. It has variety and shifting intrigue.

Although the play tries many times to reach out and grab the audience, it misses.

This ambiguity, however, may be symbolic, because the characters don't know what they are doing in the first place.

When the three characters realize friendship and business don't fall into line when rules are bent, things break down.

A trip to Donny Dubrow's five-and-dime is worth a buffalo nickel. The play runs March 15-19 at 8 p.m. Regular tickets are \$9, and student tickets are \$6.

—Paula Lavigne



James Mehsling/DN



Travis Heying/DN

Dan Ostdiek, lead guitarist of Such Sweet Thunder, plays with electrifying energy Friday at Knickerbockers, 901 O St. The four-man band from Kearney performed with Ivans Hose.

Rolling Thunder Energy, power help band move



The band Such Sweet Thunder, as its name suggests, does not stand still.

"Its momentum creates a burning sound of unresting energy reflecting an untamed generation," lead guitarist Dan Ostdiek said.

Four University of Nebraska-Kearney students formed the band in 1988 and have succeeded in bringing their soulful sarcasm to life in their music.

They are fully evolved and in your face with relentless energy and raw power. They have played more than 500 live shows. Friday night at Knickerbockers, they

proved again that they are a driving musical force in Lincoln.

Andrew Fairbairn, musical director for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln station KRNU, said Such Sweet Thunder had been the most consistently requested group for at least two years.

Success is take-it-or-leave-it, Ostdiek said.

"We only take music seriously when we're playing," he said.

The attitude of the band is fresh and instinctive.

"We just like to play. We're more worried about soul than sound," Ostdiek said.

The band is focusing on short-term success, he said.

Ostdiek said he was in law school. Vocalist Scott Roth is finishing graduate school, and bassist Steve Streit is working full time.

The band is looking forward to

playing more in the near future, Streit said.

Ostdiek said the band members' geographical locations and career goals cut down the volume of music they had produced. But they have managed to bring six or seven songs to full tilt, and a new album is in the making for release sometime this summer, he said.

L. Kent Wolgamott of the Lincoln Journal described Such Sweet Thunder as "... a sound reminiscent of the Minneapolis combination of melody and hard-charging rock typified by Soul Asylum."

Once the driving melody collides with the sheer force of drums and riveting vocals, the audience is tragically inclined to love the band's sound.

—Marissa Jorgenson

MUSIC REVIEWS

"United States of Ambience"
Various Artists
Moonshine Music



Take an ancient Aztec tribal leader, place him in a virtual reality suite and let him rip. He would probably end up as the lead mixer for "United States of Ambience."

This compact disc combines the two ends of evolution—the primitive and the futuristic. This fusion of past and present takes tribal chants and vocals and synthesizes them with zingy sound effects and psychedelic, almost industrial, techno-beats.

This would be perfect traveling

music for a trip into the hidden sects of the human brain.

The tribal computer hacker in all of us will have a mind-opening for the experimental cyber-jungle "United States of Ambience" has created. The 10 "united" songs are created by different artists. They conceptualize a variety of sounds, which represent a pool of emotions.

"United States of Ambience" relays an almost subliminal message of how the environment of the past can cooperate and thrive with the technology of the future. Instead of destroying our planet, we can save and even enhance it with technology. This mixture of natural and synthetic sounds exemplifies that environmental harmony.

"Dawn" by LunaSol (D. Christo-

pher) is a spatial journey into the depths of the mind's eye. Sound psychotic? Well, it almost is. But it appeals to the pleasures of memories of trips to the beach and light spring rains at a greater depth than before.

This isn't music someone could drive to, party to or use as a background for a romantic moment. It's not music as much as it is a collection of sounds to be appreciated.

"United States of Ambience" lies somewhere between the New Age space cadet theme and those nature relaxation tapes. It brings the natural world of the past and the industrial world of the future together in mutual company.

—Paula Lavigne

Open Skyz
"Open Skyz"
RCA Records



These days rock 'n' roll likes to masquerade behind that mysterious alias known as "alternative." And "alternative" usually means "sounds like Pearl Jam."

Not so with Open Skyz. Its self-titled debut album brings us cutting-edge rock 'n' roll with roots firmly planted in '80s pop. Drawing on influences ranging from Kansas to the Beatles, Open Skyz delivers an album packed with the kind of strong melodies that brought bands like Asia, Journey and Foreigner to the top.

However, guitarist Adam Holland strives to put his own creative fingerprint on each of the arrangements, reinventing this classic-rock sound for the '90s. From the opening cut "None Of It Matters," with its catchy guitar groove and driving bass line, to the "Strawberry Fields Forever" meets "Carry On My Wayward Son" feel of "Open Skies," each song has been given its own hybrid signature.

This is a truly great rock 'n' roll album, and 10 years ago it could have been a mega-hit. Today, unfortunately, it's at best a breath of fresh air—at worst, a curiosity. But for those who miss the "good old days" of rock, Open Skyz makes a nice alternative to alternative.

—Todd Ellington