

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Thursday, March 16, 1995

Page 11

## Christian hits touch souls, not Nebraska radio

### Younger listeners left in the dark

By John Fulwider  
Staff Reporter

Christian hit music has found its way into the hearts, souls and ears of many Nebraska music lovers. But the format is having a tougher time breaking into the state's radio stations.

Its catchy tunes and inspiring lyrics have made Christian hit music hip music that sells albums and concert tickets.

"Christian music is what country music was eight years ago," said Tom Helle, station manager of KLNG-AM, an Omaha Christian-country music station.

But younger listeners hoping to hear hit Christian music on the radio are almost out of luck.

Tom Sommerville, station director of Omaha's KGBI-FM (100.7), said Christian hit music didn't suit his station's audience.

"We're going after a post-college audience," Sommerville said. KGBI is one of three Christian radio stations in the Omaha-Lincoln area.

Brad Holmes, a senior social science major, said Christians his age were being ignored because they didn't have enough money to donate to a listener-supported nonprofit station like KGBI.

"We just don't have the cash," he said, "so we're excluded from the airwaves. And nobody else can get exposed to it."

Yet Christian concerts have been successful in Nebraska, bringing in artists like Amy Grant, Steven Curtis Chapman and DC Talk, which appeal to a wide range of ages.

Larry Schweinsburg, concert coordinator for Omaha's Grace College of the Bible, said response to Grant's Pershing Auditorium show was proof that Nebraska audiences appreciated Christian music. Grant's concert sold more than 6,500 tickets. Michael Bolton drew only about 3,000 to the same venue.

"The Amy Grant show showed that the community as a whole is behind these things," Schweinsburg said.

Holmes said he liked Christian music's positive message. It offers hope for everyone, he said, despite how bad the world sometimes seems.

He can't relax while listening to other types of popular music, he said, because of the lyrics and themes.

"I can't relate to those because I don't agree with them," he said.

But he also can't relate to the kind of music offered by Christian radio stations.

"It's just not my style of music," Holmes said. "It's too slow and out of date."

See MUSIC on 12



Jay Calderon/DN

Members of the Christian Challenge Band rehearse at the Lutheran Student Center Friday.

## Music joins band to each other, God

By Joel Strauch  
Senior Reporter

Most bands have earthly goals — a hit album, devoted groupies, the cover of Rolling Stone. But a group of UNL students has formed a band with a much higher purpose.

The Christian Challenge Praise Band plays every Thursday night for the meetings of Christian Challenge, a religious group at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Kevin Schinn, director, guitarist and lead singer for the band, said the band led the group meetings with their music.

"God has enabled us to enjoy music, so when we come and lead our group meeting, we want to communicate that we can really connect with God through music," he said.

The band tries to have a different focus each night.

"One night, we might want to celebrate the love of God, and we'll play music that is celebrative and up-tempo," he said. "Or if we

want to reflect on the greatness of God, we'll play songs that are more representative of that."

Janel Womack, a junior biology major and the band's flutist, said she joined the band to musically convey her emotions.

"I figured it would be a good opportunity for me to be able to express myself and how I feel about God through my instrument," Womack said.

In addition to Schinn and Womack, the band includes two female vocalists — Jeena Storms, a junior exercise science major and Jennie Yohn, a freshman home economics major — and male vocalist Paul Steinke.

The band also includes drummer Mike Wessberg, a junior English major; bassist Ron Havlovich, a sophomore psychology major; keyboard player Rich Melcher, a junior mechanical engineering major; and percussionist Heather Kirkbold, a junior mechanical engineering major.

The band plays about 40 percent original

music, Schinn said.

"While I'm just playing around, I'll come up with a melody or a tune that I really like that would communicate a particular thought or idea."

Schinn said he would present this music to the rest of the band members and they would add their own parts.

"I write the skeleton of a song, and they'll flesh it out," he said.

Despite their songwriting ability and love of music, they aren't planning on turning their playing into any type of a career.

Womack said she didn't feel the chance to play in a band like this would be there for her after she graduated.

"The time I'm in college is so unique," she said. "There are so many activities I can do, but I don't think I'll have this opportunity after graduation."

Christian Challenge plays every Thursday at 6:30 p.m. in the University Lutheran Chapel basement.



Courtesy of Columbia Records

Toad the Wet Sprocket will play tonight in Omaha with Hootie and the Blowfish.

## Oddly-named bands to take stage tonight

From Staff Reports

Toad and Hootie. What a pair. Expect an all-around original night from two bands with (arguably) the most original names in popular music today.

Toad the Wet Sprocket and Hootie and the Blowfish will play tonight at 7:30 at the Omaha Civic Auditorium Music Hall.

The concert's 2,540 tickets sold out in three weeks. Jeff Tracy, box-office manager for Omaha Civic Auditorium, said no extra tickets would be available today unless one of the bands released extra tickets. He didn't expect that to happen.

Toad got its name from a Monty

Python skit about, appropriately enough, stupid band names. The band — vocalist Glenn Phillips, guitarist Todd Nichols, bassist Dean Dinning and drummer Randy Guss — is touring to promote its gold album, "Dulcinea," and also to support RAINN, the Rape, Abuse Incest National Network.

Opening act Hootie and the Blowfish has yet to reach total stardom, but its first single, "Hold My Hand," hit the top five on rock charts and is a favorite on both MTV and VH-1.

Stardom will not elude them for lack of effort. Hootie's Omaha stop is a step toward racking up more than 300 gigs on their tour.