

Déjà Vu
Gerry Beltz

Video games today lack challenge

Video games today have really gone down the proverbial toilet.

Sure, the graphics are great, the characters look and move realistically and there's blood and guts splattering everywhere.

Other than that ...

You need about ten pages of solutions and secret moves to make any progress in a game, and half of the memory of the game is used for secret stuff, which translates to even more gore and violence.

Video games are no longer games of skill. They are games of knowledge and memorization of super-combo moves.

Even pinball isn't a challenge anymore. With all the multiball features, super jackpots and kickbacks, gaining a free game on pinball today is as easy as dropping in the quarter in the first place.

Whatever happened to games like "Missile Command," "Star Castle" and "Crazy Climber?" Games that didn't test to see if you knew all the secret moves and combinations, but tested how good you really were at such (now outdated) concepts as accuracy and skill.

The '70s and '80s were times for strategy and reflex as the keys to survival in a video game. The closest thing we had to a secret in a game was a "bug," like that hiding place in the "Pac-Man" maze or racking up hundreds of thousands of points on "Asteroids" by "hunting" for spaceships.

These games weren't difficult to figure out, either. Games today have up to six buttons and a joystick, while a game of challenge like "Frogger" featured the lone joystick. "Donkey Kong" had one joystick and a button.

Let's also not forget pinball machines that required skill and accuracy, featuring drop targets and rollovers, and NOTHING ELSE! Pinball machines like "Eight Ball Deluxe" and "Star Trek" were for people interested in a challenge, like breaking a million points (gasp of horror)!

All over Lincoln are the new-generation games. But I try to make at least one journey to Omaha each month to visit the '80s game room at the Fun-Plex on 71st and Dodge streets.

Therein remain games such as those listed above, plus other faves from my far-and-gone days of being the (self-proclaimed) King of Video Games, such as "Battle Zone," "Phoenix," and "Robotron."

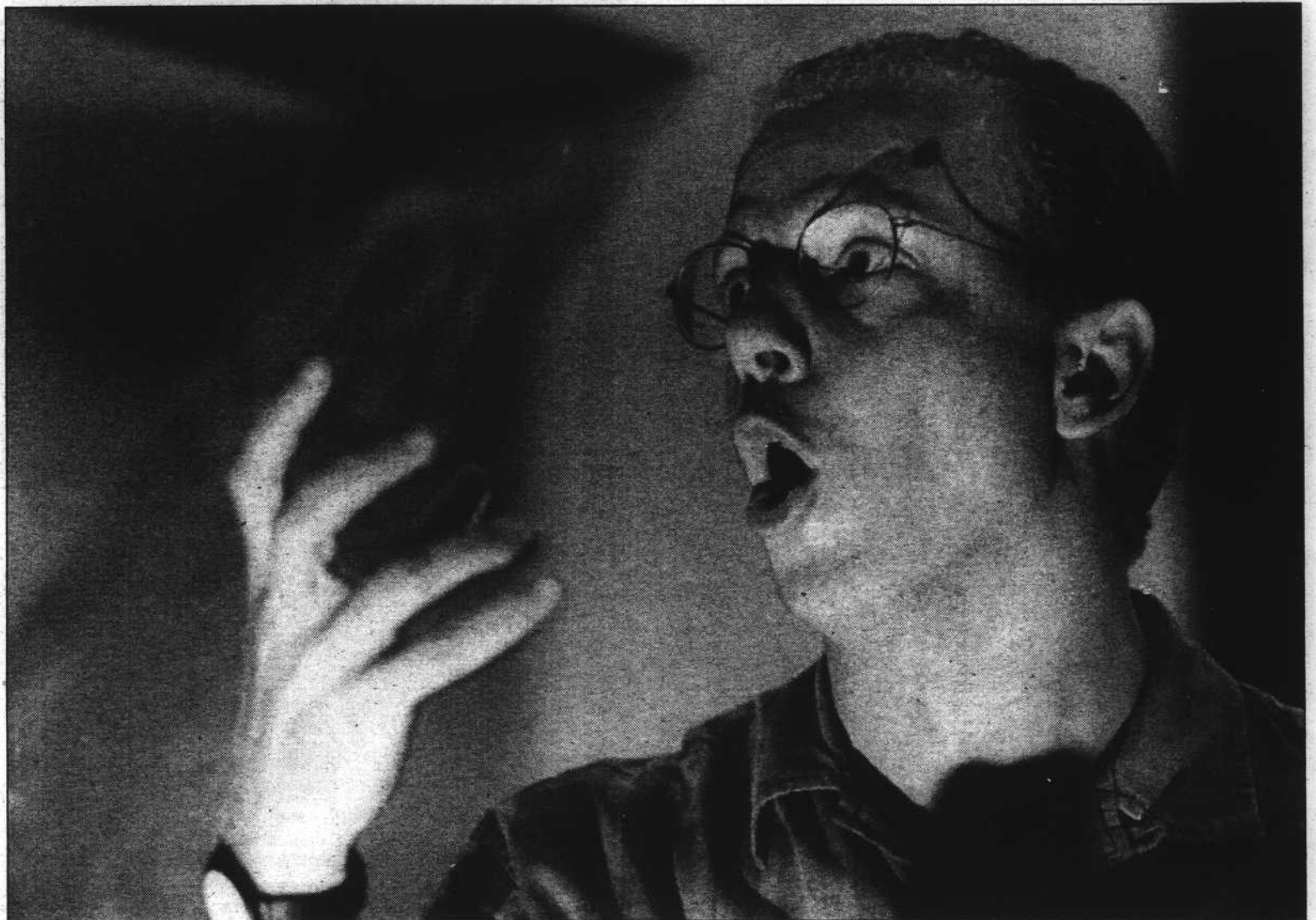
Brian, my fellow vintage video game junkie and best friend, and I already have planned an extended jaunt up to the Fun-Plex the next time he's in town, and I'm still searching for "Star Castle," "Red Baron" and "Crazy Climber" machines to eagerly pump my quarters into.

Until then, I'll keep heading out to Shoemaker's, a truck stop way out on West O Street, to catch a quick, half-hour game of "Asteroids."

Game over.

Beltz is a senior secondary education major and a Daily Nebraskan senior arts and entertainment reporter.

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Bruce Cohen speaks to a UNL students Tuesday at the Temple building

Jay Calderon/DN

'I fell in love with Loma'

Film producer glad he filmed in Nebraska

By Kathryn A. Ratliff
Staff Reporter

Bruce Cohen stepped outside his van in Loma and had a creative moment.

Cohen, the executive producer of "To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar," and his crew wanted to select the perfect location for their bold and daring film about three drag queens, he said — a place that seemed completely in the middle of nowhere. A town without a post office.

So they came to Nebraska.

"I wanted a place where you stand in the middle of town in high heels and you know there's nowhere to go," Cohen said. "I fell in love with Loma."

Cohen said he had an extraordinary time filming in Nebraska, and that after awhile, he began to feel like a native.

Cohen spoke to students and faculty yesterday afternoon at the Howell Theatre.

"To Wong Foo" is the tale of Noxeema (Wesley Snipes), Vida (Patrick Swayze) and Chi Chi (John Leguizamo), drag queens from New York heading for Hollywood in a 1967 Cadillac convertible.

"This movie's about groups expecting one thing of each other and finding out something entirely different."

BRUCE COHEN

Executive producer

vertible.

The Caddy breaks down and the trio gets stuck in small-town middle America, where their eccentricity and hair-spray indulgence give the sleepy town of Snyder'sville — a place where drag queens are considered Unidentified Freaky Objects — something to talk about.

During one weekend, the wide-eyed local folk get a course in the fabulous. And the queens learn a valuable lesson about preconceived notions from the town's kooky inhabitants.

The picture has a heart, Cohen said.

"It has an important message of tolerance," he said. "This movie's about groups expecting one thing of each other and finding out something entirely different."

The movie premiered at the Stuart Theatre last night and will be released next week.

The film's earlier versions already have been screened around the country, and they are receiving positive response, he said.

"People are getting a big kick out of it — macho, action-adventure stars like Snipes and Swayze playing homosexual drag queens," Cohen said. "And Nebraskans will see Loma as it's never been seen before."

"To Wong Foo" is due out Sept. 8 from Amblin Entertainment and Universal Pictures. Stockard Channing co-stars along with Blythe Danner, Arliss Howard and Chris Penn. Beban Kidron directed the film.

Cohen has advice for future filmmakers — which turns into advice for anyone with bright hopes and aspirations.

"There's no substitution to going for your dreams."

Musicians to reunite onstage in free show

By Jeff Randall
Senior Reporter

When Brazilian vocalist Marilia Alvares takes center stage at Westbrook Music Building Thursday, accompanist Marcos Krieger will be reuniting with his musical past.

Years ago, in Brazil, Krieger and Alvares performed together regularly. But after leaving there to study in the United States, Krieger lost contact with the woman he had accompanied onstage so many times.

Thursday afternoon's show and the rehearsals leading up to it have re-established that contact.

Krieger, who is working toward his doctorate in organ performance at UNL, said he had been apprehensive about performing with Alvares again.

"After five years, I knew we both had changed dramatically as musicians," he said. "I wondered

if we could make the interpretation and style work as well as it had before.

"But once we started to work together again in rehearsals, I realized that I had nothing to worry about."

Alvares has been singing since the age of four and has gained massive acclaim in Brazil, her native country.

That acclaim, Krieger said, was well-deserved.

"She has a very ... classy way of relaying the meaning of lyrics without compromising any of the beauty of her voice," he said. "Being able to express emotion and retain that vocal quality is a very rare talent."

That talent will be displayed, Krieger said, in Thursday's program of Spanish and South American songs by a variety of composers from the 18th through the 20th centuries.

The unique elements of Spanish and South

American music are the result of numerous cultural influences, Krieger said.

"The combination of African rhythms with English melodic structures is very complicated, but both influences work together well," he said.

The emotional qualities of the Spanish and Portuguese languages contribute to the power of the songs' lyrical content, as well, Krieger said.

The combination of these factors — an acclaimed singer and an uncommon repertoire — will make Thursday's performance a once-in-a-lifetime event for music enthusiasts, Krieger said.

The performance will be Thursday afternoon at 2:30 in Westbrook Music Building, Room 119. Admission is free.

"This type of program is very rare in this part of the country," Krieger said. "And getting the chance to hear it performed by such an outstanding singer makes it all the more worthwhile."