

# Guitar band Lir brings mellow rock to Omaha

By Patrick Hambrecht  
Music Critic

Lir — a nice Irish band with a soulful, promising album named "Nest" — stops at Omaha's Ranch Bowl tonight.

## Concert Preview



"Nest" is an album of songs that are sweet, semi-tuneful guitar rock that often splat when they should grind, dangle when they are meant to swing.

Interestingly, though, the songs get better instead of worse halfway through the album. After 15 minutes of dull alternative guitar, the album switches to a soft "lite-rock" sound.

The pleasant laid-back earnestness of Lir's "Shrine" and "More to me" bring to mind the easy-going bands of the '80s, like A-ha and Mr. Mister. There's something almost seductive these days about a band that doesn't hit you over the head with its small portfolio of clunky guitar riffs.

There's nothing wrong with being unexciting, as Lir demonstrates, as long as the band doesn't insist that its blandness assault the lis-

tener.

By accepting their boringness and learning to work with it, the members of Lir are miles ahead of bands like Fugazi and Bad Religion, who may never realize their own uniquely dull persona and continue to fight against it in vain.

"Railroad," a rollicking instrumental, is the only song that really shines on "Nest." It has a mod sense of bravado, like the theme to a good action/adventure TV show. Listening to it, one has visions of James Bond jumping from a jet fighter, or Steve McQueen drag racing through the middle of a beach party.

"Nest" is a good album, but not as great as its cover art.

On the cover, there's a big, beautiful Barbie doll floating on a lotus flower like some sort of Hindu goddess. This cosmically cute transcendence of pop culture is the best thing about "Nest."

If only Lir had thought to put words to "Railroad," they might have found their first successful radio single. Though this band's music may never be compelling, it is at least listenable, showing a talent far ahead of most guitar bands.

Tonight's show at the Ranch Bowl begins at 9. Tickets are \$4, and the show also features the Mustard Men and the Mighty Plastisols.

# Performances carry opera

By Brian Priesman  
Theater Critic

Although Aaron Copland's opera "The Tender Land," which opened Tuesday night at the Johnny Carson Theatre, doesn't



contain any inspiring music or "on the edge of your seat" plot, it does contain a simple, coming-of-age story about love.

"The Tender Land" is the story of Laurie Moss and her family on the day before her high school graduation.

Two wandering vagabonds, Martin and Top, arrive at the Moss family farm looking for work. Laurie and Martin find themselves attracted to each other and soon fall in love, much to the chagrin of Laurie's grandpa and mother.

Aaron Copland's music is

uninspiring and quickly forgotten. The lack of repetitive melodies keep the story from becoming warm and familiar, and Horace Everett's lyrics seemed unimaginative and plain.

But despite the weak libretto and score, the cast turns in some fine performances.

Dawn Doverspike's portrayal of Laurie captures the wistful spirit of a trapped teen. Her soprano voice is more than able to handle the vocal requirements of the part.

Steve Kohitz's portrayal of Martin, the innocent vagabond, is strong. His excellent tenor voice handles the music with ease, with the exception of some cracking on higher notes.

Other fine performances come from Brett Hyberger as Laurie's over-protective grandpa, Kenneth Floyd as Martin's comic compatriot, Top, and Rebecca Kouma Shane as Laurie's loving but wary mother.

"The Tender Land" continues Wednesday and Friday through Sunday. Performances are at 8 each evening, with a 3 p.m. matinee on

## The Facts

Opera: The Tender Land

Stars: Dawn Doverspike, Rebecca Kouma Shane and Steve Kohitz (Oct. 24, 27 and 29 matinee); Tamara Ensrude, Kim Harris and Robert D. Miller (Oct. 25, 28 and 29 evening)

Director: William Shomos

Company: UNL School of Music

Grade: C

Five Words: Unimaginative score but fine performances

Sunday. "The Tender Land" is double cast to provide the audience two varied interpretations of the same opera. Tickets are on sale at the Lied Center box office for \$8 or \$4 with a student I.D.

# Music Reviews

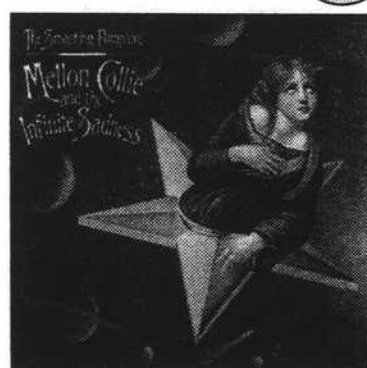
Smashing Pumpkins  
"Melon Collie and the Infinite Sadness"  
Virgin Records  
Grade: B+

Just when you think you know a band, they have to go and turn their image upside down.

Billy Corgan and the Smashing Pumpkins used to take themselves about as seriously as any band possibly could. They never smiled, they always got way too deep in interviews and they sold lots and lots of albums.

And then they had to go and release an album with the enigmatic title "Melon Collie and the Infinite Sadness." Playing with words rarely indicates a grim outlook, especially on a rock 'n' roll album.

And it seems as though Corgan and Company are perfectly happy to oblige, churning out two solid hours of new music (on two compact discs) that doesn't break much



new ground, but still manages to hold attention.

The first disc opens up with an overly lavish piano instrumental that seems to indicate that the Pumpkins may not be totally tongue-in-cheek just yet. And that track is followed with a few songs that contain similarly rich musical accompaniment.

But, by the time that disc is halfway through, the Smashing Pumpkins have reverted back to the hard-rockin' roots that they exploited so well in "Gish" and further compli-

cated with "Siamese Dream."

Songs such as "An Ode to No One" and "Bodies" drive with full force, distortion-laden guitar nuggets that sound like the '70s arena rock Corgan so proudly emulates.

And that fear seems to drive the Smashing Pumpkins more than any other band to work their creations into near-perfect gems, with flaws that are only intentional.

Corgan and guitarist James Iha form the blistering front, layering guitar line over guitar line and blending them with distortion levels that usually only occur because of a frayed speaker wire.

Bassist D'Arcy and drummer Jimmy Chamberlin provide solid backing, driving the points home with steady rhythm.

The result is two hours of music that will confuse, define and solidify the Smashing Pumpkins' musical reputation and public image for at least a little while longer.

— Jeff Randall

## Shorty

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Palmer, a Miami-based loan shark who ends up making a long distance collection trip to Los Angeles via Las Vegas.

One of his targets turns out to be Harry Zimm (played by Gene Hackman), a B-movie producer famous for his Roger Corman-like science fiction/horror films. With the help of Zimm's girlfriend/former star Karen Flores (played by Rene Russo), Chili decides to make his entry into the movie business.

But, as it turns out, Zimm also owes money to local drug kingpin Bo Catlett (played by Delroy Lindo), and Chili finds himself in deeper trouble than he had expected.

The main flaw with this film lies in the approach that director Barry Sonnenfeld seems to have taken to the characters and the action. Whereas Quentin Tarantino made "Pulp Fiction" into a dark gangster film that ended up being hilarious, Sonnenfeld tried to make "Get Shorty" into a bright comedy about gangsters.

The only problem here is that nothing in the film is really funny.

One good point is the film's visual style. Thoroughly magnificent camera work, undoubtedly monitored closely by Sonnenfeld (who worked wonders with the Coen brothers as director of photography on films such as "Raising Arizona" and "Miller's Crossing"), makes every scene jump out visually and turns otherwise drab sequences into exciting, eye-catching

## The Facts

Film: "Get Shorty"

Stars: John Travolta, Rene Russo, Gene Hackman

Director: Barry Sonnenfeld

Rating: R (language, violence)

Grade: D+

Five Words: Gangster comedy misses its target

moments. But the lack of good content to back up the visual proves to be the film's downfall. By the end of the film, a dozen loose ends are left and hardly anyone seems to care.

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