

# ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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## the glassy eye



Mark Baldridge

## Few jewels in junkyard of TV fare

TV land is a pretty bleak place sometimes — all the colors of the rainbow reduced to the red, blue and green dots of the CRT.

And the fare is equally formulaic: lifeless sitcoms follow listless daytime dramas.

A few bright spots in this drab universe can make it all worthwhile, however. A good show reminds you of the enormous potential of this underdeveloped medium.

I suspect that there can be only three really good shows on TV in any one season. I wonder what that will mean when there are 500 channels.

This season, those three shows are:

The Simpsons: I was worried about this cartoon a couple of years ago — afraid it would go the way of "Married With Children," becoming a sort of kitsch factory where senseless plots are churned out by giggling undergraduates in an endless series of blank gags.

That hasn't happened. The characters remain true to their profiles, the situations never quite exceed — or at least do not constantly exceed — the premise.

Within the context of presenting recognizable and likable characters the show has, nevertheless, gone far afield in its tendency toward the weird.

Any doubts I might have had about the show were erased when Bart got an entire church to sing all 15 minutes of "In-a-gadda-da-vida" in a recent episode.

If I could see something like that every day, I'd be a happier, healthier fella.

Beavis and Butthead: The fact that a show with such poor production values (a week's viewing reveals hundreds of recycled images repeat schtick) says a lot about the quality — or lack thereof — in contemporary programming.

This cartoon is, however, the most inventive, cutting-edge thing on TV — and likely to remain so.

If the fact that it's on MTV hasn't killed it, I doubt anything can. It's even gotten better in recent years; the addition of Beavis' bizarre alter ego "Cornholio" has revitalized the flagging premise.

The adventures of everyone's favorite bunglers have gained in complexity, the available stock characters have multiplied and the show consistently retains a self-referential commentary on media and culture that rivals anything on TV or off.

Mystery Science Theater 3000: Unavailable in the great cable backwater of Lincoln (except in a highly edited and serialized version at an ungodly hour) until, so they tell me, February.

If you have not been a part of this show for the last three years or so, you've missed out.

Three zany characters cut-up and wise-crack while forced to watch the worst movies ever made.

As postmodern fun it's hard to beat — with references at something like 20 a minute to material as dissimilar as Shakespeare and MacGyver.

When Comedy Central finally arrives, catch this program — just to find out what you've missed.

Stay tuned!

## Smashing success

### Midnight release of Pumpkins a sellout

By Jeff Randall  
Senior Reporter

At 11:59 Monday night, the tension was thick in the air at Homer's on 61st and O streets.

Under the bright fluorescent lights, a crowd of anxious consumers formed a line through the racks of shining compact discs and bright, poster-laden displays.

Then, at the stroke of midnight, the tension broke with the piercing beep of a UPC scanner.

It wasn't exactly the shot heard 'round the world, but for the dozens of high school- to college-aged music fans in attendance, it was good enough.

This was the scene at Homer's latest Midnight Release Party, this one for the Smashing Pumpkins' new release, "Melon Collie and the Infinite Sadness."

Store employee Andy Fairbairn, a senior broadcasting major at UNL, said the midnight release parties were designed to give consumers a chance to get their favorite bands' new releases before anyone else had the chance to do so.

Most record companies stipulate that their releases are not to be made available to the public until Tuesdays, even though record stores often receive the shipments on Mondays, Fairbairn said.

"This way, people are able to get these CDs at the first possible second they could get them," Fairbairn said.

And that opportunity proved to be popular Tuesday, just after midnight, as the store's entire stock of 50 Smashing Pumpkins CDs sold out within one half-hour.

Greg Paulson, an undeclared freshman, was one of the first in line. "I figured that I might as well come out and get their new CD tonight. At least it's a break from studying."

"Besides, how many people can



Bret Gottschall/DN

say they got one of the first copies of any album?"

Fairbairn said the turnout for the Smashing Pumpkins release party was one of the largest he had ever seen.

"I don't think we've ever had to turn people away like this before," he said. "We certainly didn't expect this many people."

Although no official customer counts were made, a crowd of about 200 people had probably passed in and out of the store's doors by the time it closed.

Emily Hartman, a senior at Lincoln High School, was one of the customers who was standing in line when the announcement was made that no copies of "Melon Collie and the Infinite Sadness" were left.

"I'm pretty angry about it," Hartman said. "I should be in bed right now. I've got class tomorrow. Next time, I guess I'll have to show up earlier."

Store employee Eric Ziegler, a sophomore political science major, said he felt sorry for the customers who weren't able to get copies of the

CD.

"I know I'd be mad if it happened to me," he said. "There wasn't much we could do, but I realize that some of the customers had to be pretty pissed off."

Fairbairn said previous release parties, in which the store had ordered as many as 100 copies, had not been as successful and had left the store with a large overstock.

"We try to estimate how many people will show and then order a substantial amount of copies. I guess we underestimated this time."

## Diamond Rio stompin' tonight

By John Fulwider  
Senior Reporter

If its promoters are to be believed, Diamond Rio can do anything on stage that it can do in the studio.

### Concert Preview



The band has a platinum and a gold album and three consecutive Country Music Association Vocal Group of the Year awards under its belt.

So when the six-member country band takes the stage tonight at 8 at Pershing Auditorium, the audience might be in for some boot-stompin' fun.

In 1991, Diamond Rio became the first country band to reach No. 1 on three different charts with a debut single, "Meet in the Middle."

The group's latest album, "Love a Little Stronger," has spawned three top 20 singles, including the current "Finish What We Started."

Holly Crocker, the show's event director for the University Program Council, said she hoped a lot of students would turn out for the concert.

UPC, which is co-sponsoring the show, is offering a \$3 discount with a UNL student I.D. Ticketmaster is handling ticket sales, priced at \$16.25 for students, \$19.25 for the general public, and \$25 for a limited number of Gold Circle seats.

This is this year's main event for UPC, Crocker said. She said UPC sponsored one big event a year; last year's was the Eagles concert.



Courtesy of Arista

Country group Diamond Rio is in concert tonight at Pershing Auditorium.

"We want to reach all the different groups at the university," Crocker said.

"We wanted to choose a country group for the country fans."

Crocker, who is a country music fan herself, said Diamond Rio brought an energetic act to all their performances.

"If you like country music, you'll probably like Diamond Rio."

## Sonnenfeld's 'Get Shorty' fails to amuse

By Jeff Randall  
Film Critic

Since John Travolta made the comeback of all comebacks last year in "Pulp Fiction," the buzz surrounding him has been about as loud as a buzz gets nowadays.

And although that ringing in the ears may translate into instant gold at the box office for anything in which Travolta appears, at least for a few months, it doesn't necessarily mean that those films will be particularly good.

Enter "Get Shorty." Based on Elmore Leonard's 1990 novel of the same name, this film reveals in the all-too-familiar message that Hollywood is a dark and evil place where even the most respected of producers, directors and stars are lowlives.

Granted, this depiction is probably true, but it is by no means worth another 90 minutes of screen time unless it is done perfectly.

"Get Shorty" isn't. Occasional flashes of brilliance in the dialogue and the mildly humorous setups into which the characters are thrown are hardly enough to salvage this one.

Travolta is the center of attention as Chili

See SHORTY on 10