



Mike Kluck

Old shows add spirit to holidays

Bah-humbug. The other night while I was lying awake unable to sleep because the neighbor's Christmas lights kept flashing through my window, I realized how depressing this holiday season really is.

And the worst thing is I didn't always feel this way.

I use to go around and wish people "Merry Christmas," put my family's outside Christmas lights up the day after Thanksgiving — even during a blizzard — and be in an all-around jovial spirit.

But, back in those days, I knew I had the holiday TV specials to look forward to.

I couldn't wait for those shows. I would sing along with Burl Ives as he did "Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer," I would memorize "Twas the Night Before Christmas," and cry when Frosty melted in "Frosty the Snowman."

Nowadays, ask kids under the age of 10 why Santa Claus was once called Kris Kringle and how he got his reindeer to fly, and they probably will give you a long, blank stare.

But those of us who skipped supper just to watch "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" know exactly how Kris Kringle transformed into the lovable St. Nick.

Today's Christmas specials just don't match up with the classics of old. Never mind that the only way I can see "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" is to buy the tape.

This sham of not airing holiday shows on network TV already started this year when I couldn't find "A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving." How will the youth of today learn how to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner without good ol' Chuck.

At least the holiday specials of old aren't in total shambles. "A Charlie Brown Christmas," will air this season, as always, but how much longer does it have to survive when Christmas program cuts seem to come faster than budget cuts?

How soon will the light dim out forever on Rudolph's nose? How long before Santa won't save the day and bring Frosty back to life?

Our youth of today are being cheated out of their childhood, and what's worse is I'm starting to forget some of those programs.

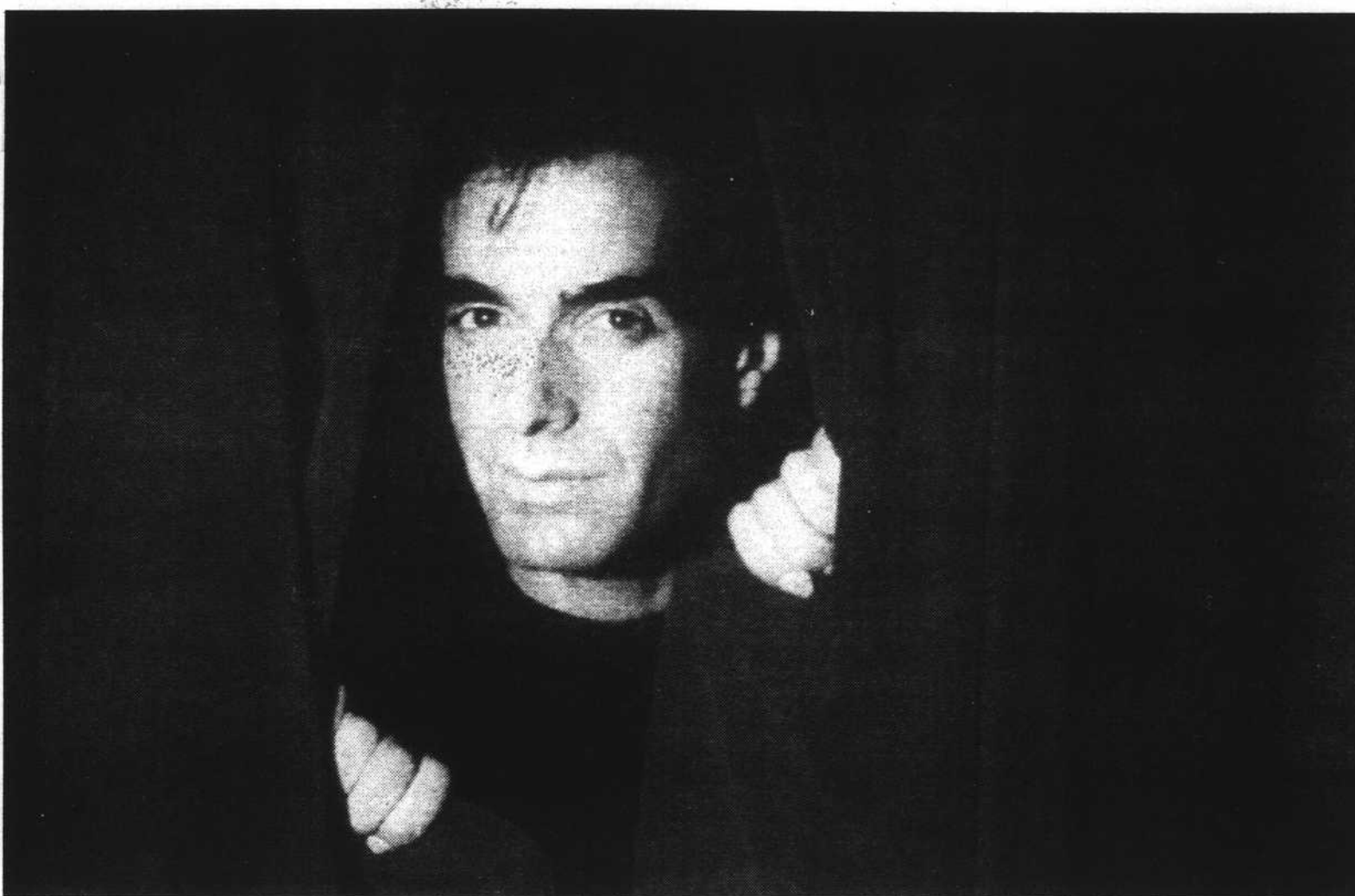
In the future I won't even be able to sit around the Christmas tree and tell my kids the story of Mr. Heatmeister and Mr. Coldmeister because I can't even remember the name of the show or the song they sang.

It's time that network producers realize these old-time holiday favorites are as much a part of Christmas as mistletoe, fruitcake and credit cards charged to the limit.

And yes, I do enjoy a good showing of "It's a Wonderful Life," but after seeing the colorized and the black and white version once, I do not need the additional 20 airings that are shown each season.

We hear so often these days about the lack of quality programs on television. Let's bring back these holiday specials and my Christmas spirit.

Kluck is a graduate news-editorial student and a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter.



Illusionist David Copperfield performs two shows Wednesday night at Pershing Auditorium. Copperfield is well-known for his large-scale illusions. Courtesy of Lobeline Communications

Magic returns

Illusions bring Copperfield out of his shell

By Cliff A. Hicks
Staff Reporter

A little magic has brought David Copperfield a long way and, Wednesday night, it will bring him to Lincoln's Pershing Auditorium.

Born David Kotkin, the world's premiere illusionist has been performing large-scale magic since 1982, when he made an airplane vanish in the middle of a ring of spectators.

Since then, the 39-year-old magician has levitated himself across the Grand Canyon, walked through the Great Wall of China, escaped from Alcatraz and flown — without wings, strings or camera tricks.

But his act didn't start that big. "I was an only child, and grew up in New Jersey with my parents," Copperfield said. "I was shy in school, and magic helped me bridge the communication gap with my peers."

"I went from just being lost in the crowd to

becoming part of it in a very positive manner with my magic. And yes, of course, it got the attention of the girls in school."

By age 16, he was teaching magic at New York University. While in college, he performed the lead in a Chicago production of "The Magic Man," where he assumed the name David Copperfield. He sang, danced, acted and created all the magic for the show.

Not long after, he was chosen to be host of "The Magic of ABC starring David Copperfield." The show was well-enough received that it merited a series of sequels. In 1994, Copperfield aired his 16th special, more than any other entertainer in history.

He has performed seven times for U.S. presidents, and he performed 16 sold-out shows in six days in Europe's Westfallehalle, breaking a 10-year-old attendance record set by Pink Floyd.

He has begun his own repository of magic ephemera, a collection started when he purchased

the Mulholland Library of Conjuring and the Allied Arts for \$2.2 million. It contained some 80,000 pieces, including 15,000 magic books — some dating as far back as to the 16th century — Houdini memorabilia and other items.

"Here was the most important testament in existence to the incredibly rich legacy of the art of magic, the art to which I have devoted my life," Copperfield said.

Copperfield, ranked by Forbes as one of the 10 highest-grossing entertainers, is engaged to supermodel Claudia Schiffer.

"We are enjoying our engagement time together," Copperfield said. "I am very fortunate that I can perform where I want to, when I want to and be closer to my fiancée."

"Copperfield: The Magic Is Back" appears at Pershing Auditorium Wednesday night at 5:30 and 8:30. Tickets for the 5:30 show are \$24.75 and \$29.75, and tickets for the 8:30 show are \$27.75 and \$32.75.

Piccolo, Heavy Juice fresh blend of talent

By Jeff Randall
Senior Reporter

Greg Piccolo is a man who defies descriptions, and his new band, Heavy Juice, defies comparisons.

At least that's the way Larry Boehmer, owner of the Zoo Bar, sees it. Those willing to take a shot at defining Piccolo and Heavy Juice will get a chance when they take the stage tonight at the Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St.

Piccolo last appeared at the Zoo Bar with Roomful of Blues, and tonight marks his first appearance there with Heavy Juice.

A master of the tenor saxophone as well as a recognized vocalist and guitarist, Piccolo has performed in a number of bands throughout his 31-year music career.

But his most prominent tour of duty came with Roomful of Blues, which was resurrected by Piccolo and guitarist Duke Robillard in 1971 after it was temporarily disbanded in 1970. The group was primarily a jump blues band in the style of 1930s and 1940s hit makers such as Count Basie.

Roomful of Blues was together for nearly a quarter of a decade after that, recording albums on its own and playing backup roles for other musicians such as Pat Benatar, The Fabulous Thunderbirds and Ronnie Earl.

Piccolo left Roomful of Blues in April 1994 for a solo career. Heavy Juice is Piccolo's new backing band.

Boehmer said Heavy Juice combined a number of musical genres — jump blues, jazz, reggae and rock among them — and combined them well.

"Everything they play sounds great," he said. "It's hard to pigeonhole their sound; it changes so much from song to song."

Piccolo's latest release is this year's solo effort, "Acid Blue," which features him on tenor, vocals and guitar on a number of blues classics, including Earl King's "Always a First Time" and Freddie King's "Someday After Awhile."

Heavy Juice and Greg Piccolo promise to offer Lincoln's music lovers a grab-bag taste of the past with some of the best talent of today.

Cover for the show is \$5, and the music starts at 9:30 p.m.

