

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

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the glassy eye



Mark Baldrige

Electric Co. better than purple fluff

When I was a child, so I'm told, I was a voracious TV watcher. I kind of remember it — I just never thought that was such a big deal.

Apparently it was. And if there'd been more people saying "TV rots your brain" I probably wouldn't have been given the chance.

But I spent a good deal of my childhood in a semi-hypnotic trance downloading a lot of nonsense that just happened to become our current culture. Don't see how that hurt me.

But kids these days ... I'm afraid it'll rot their brains.

Let's explore the differences between "The Electric Company" and "Barney the Dinosaur."

"The Electric Company," like "Sesame Street," was a product of the Children's Television Workshop and featured no less than the (then) future superstar Morgan Freeman as Easy Reader — an afroed hipster with a penchant for reading.

"The Electric Company" did a lot of that kind of joke: Easy Reader — a play on the cult classic "Easy Rider."

One stock character was a bumbling encryption specialist known as Fargo North, Decoder.

I was in my 20s before the geographical reference dawned on me.

And that's the point, sort of. Here I was, a 5-year-old glued to the set while my mom or older sister ironed or folded clothes in the room behind me.

Fargo North, Decoder (who always referred to himself that way) comes on and stumbles around trying to decode some obviously transposed sentence. I knew what the sentence was long before the pratfalling North. Every kid did. And that knowing was important.

It meant we could figure things out "for ourselves" — a much more effective pedagogical technique than mere instruction.

But in the meantime, my sister, patiently folding clothes, laughs ... at something I don't quite catch.

Fargo North, Decoder.

And not just the name, but sly, off-the-cuff references to a larger world of culture and knowledge than is available to my 5-year-old self.

The example I give is simple-minded, but effective. For those who want a fuller exploitation of the effect, may I suggest "Sesame Street's" "Me Claudius" on "Monsterpiece Theatre" with Alister Cookie as host. It's a hoot.

But back to the matter at hand. The reason that the "The Electric Company" is better than his Purpleness is that it included jokes aimed over my head.

Shows like "The Electric Company" and "Sesame Street" offer something that can be shared by parents with children — a good thing at any time.

And even more important, it offers a kid the idea that there are LEVELS of humor — or allusion or what have you.

"Barney" and all his Care Bear ilk exist entirely on the surface — and the surface is aesthetically dead.

So I'm afraid for these kids today — TV will rot their minds.

Or, maybe not.



Jay Calderon/DN

Dancers in the production "Postcards from Nebraska" perform during a dress rehearsal Tuesday evening in the Howell Theatre.

Reflections

Dance show features images of Heartland

By Paula Lavigne
Senior Reporter

The image of dance in the Heartland will be delivered on "Postcards from Nebraska" at the Howell Theatre this weekend.

"Postcards from Nebraska," the UNL dance department's fall performance, features new and experienced choreographers and dancers from Nebraska.



their collaborative piece "Whetstone" with UNL faculty and students.

Lisa Fusillo, dance director and professor, said the show would focus on the development of dance in Nebraska by bringing together about 20 students, faculty and former students who have become professional dancers.

Mark Jarecke and Cary Twomey, two UNL dance alumni who have been working in New York, will present

Visiting artist Anita Lemon, although not a Nebraska native, will present her seven-part dance "The Nebraska Waltz Project," which represents her time at UNL.

And for the first time, senior dance majors were allowed to choreograph dances for the fall performance.

A special Saturday night will move the spotlight to long-time dance professor Dee Hughs who is planning to retire.

Hughs started her career at UNL in 1954 when the dance department was part of the physical education department.

She stayed with the program as it moved through the Teachers College and to its current home in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance.

In 1994, she received the UNL 40 Year Service Award.

Tice Miller, department director, has worked with Hughs for the 23 years he's been involved with the program.

He said it was unusual for people in the arts to stay for as many years as Hughs has.

"The pioneers and people who have been a real stable force of the university have been around a long time," he said. "They've given an enormous amount to this institution."

Fusillo said Hughs introduced several non-dance majors to dance in her introductory, social and ethnic dance classes and has shown support and dedication to dance and dance education.

"She has been an incredibly stabilizing influence through all the changes in the dance program at UNL," Fusillo said.

A national search will be conducted to fill Hughs' position and another full-time position, which was temporarily filled by Lemon, who is leaving after this semester.

Performances of "Postcards from Nebraska" will be at 8 p.m. each night Thursday through Saturday and 3 p.m. on Sunday.

Tickets are \$6 for students, \$7 for faculty, staff and senior citizens and \$9 for the general public. They can be purchased at the Howell Theatre box office.

MacLeod performs tonight

By Cliff A. Hicks
Staff Reporter

Despite two years between records, filled with "stress, love and death," and a move from Georgia to Minneapolis, Marlee MacLeod found time to record her second album, "Favorite Ball and Chain."

And she brings her music to Mudslide Slims tonight.

Concert Preview



"Favorite Ball and Chain," released Oct. 10, is a large departure from her first album, "Drive Too Fast."

"We downplayed the country influence this time," MacLeod said in a release. "Making that more of a subtext than a focus."

When "Drive Too Fast" was recorded, MacLeod was living in Athens, Ga., and there she eventually hooked up with the local band Dashboard Saviors, who helped her on

"Favorite Ball and Chain."

After "Drive Too Fast" was released, she kept busy with various things.

"I had a band for a while, then I didn't have a band," MacLeod said.

"I played many shows in various places, including one in a bank last New Year's Eve. This was part of an entertainment extravaganza that also included hermit crab races.

"I spent two very enlightening weeks working in the world of food service. I almost got a real job. I was detained and almost arrested in Canada," MacLeod said.

She now lives in Minneapolis, home of her label, Medium Cool/TwinTone.

Despite all her trials and tribulations, "Favorite Ball and Chain" was eventually released.

"I'm pleased. We all worked hard, and I for one am busily preparing for whatever the coming months have to offer."

MacLeod plays tonight at Mudslide Slims, 1418 O St. The show starts at 10.

Grad students' art exhibition opens today

By Gerry Beltz
Senior Reporter

An exhibit of the works of 19 UNL students currently enrolled in the Department of Art and Art History master's program opens today, running through Jan. 28 at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

This biennial exhibition comprises 47 works of art in various forms — including photographs, paintings and ceramics — that have been selected by Sheldon Gallery Chief Curator Daphne Deeds.

Lari Gibbons, a Master's of Fine Arts student and graduate instructor in design and

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