



Cliff A. Hicks

Web offers chance to come alive

The week is dead. So am I. Running on a few hours of sleep, you need breaks to counteract the hazardous effects of studyinway-toomuchusitis, also known as "the killer of students."

So wander to your handy computer and sneak onto the Web in the wee hours of the night, between pots six and seven of your Turbo Coffee-Man Coffee and relax.

Here to satisfy your mindless cravings are some suggestions for ways to relax on the Web.

For the poetically inclined (and for those who want to take a break from all of the logical thinking of math and science), try (<http://www.shore.net/~amb/>), an Interactive Poetry site.

All you do is fill in some words and suddenly, BAM!, you have a poem. It's just that simple.

(Cliff, we the remaining functioning brain cells are trying to tell you that you're slipping into infomercial impressions. Stop it.)

Sorry, me. Sorry, readers. I'll continue.

Interactive stories inhabit the net by the dozen. There's the Interactive Novel (<http://www.2launch.com/cypher/CYPHER.html>), the Never-Ending Story (<http://136.217.50.123/story/>), the Net-Novel (<http://www.aquanet.co.il/novel/>) and countless others.

(Explain to the readers what an interactive novel is, Cliff. They probably don't get it. I know we don't.)

[I told you we shouldn't have let him do the research without us.]

(Be quiet. You're getting on his last nerve.)

An interactive novel ... well, it's exactly what the name implies. They can be anything from a series of messages left by various users that add up into a story, to a Choose-Your-Own-Adventure type thing.

[Choose-Your-Own-Adventure?] (He read those when he was little, remember?)

[Oh yeah. I remember now.]

The Web-Zork site is a prime example of the Choose-Your-Own-Adventure type of thing. It's at (<http://www.ua.com/webzork.html/>).

It's hard to tell what is at (<http://www.netfict.com/>) exactly, but it seems to be some sort of interactive fiction. I, personally, didn't have the patience to sift through the whole thing, but you know ...

[He should be wrapping up, shouldn't he?]

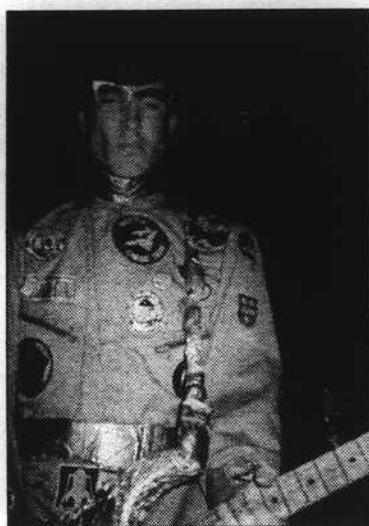
(Last reference ...)

One site that is worth looking at is (<http://www.ifnet.com/>), which is sort of a virtual resort, where you can live out a false life with hundreds of other people across the world. Yep, it's the beginning of virtual reality.

(Autonomic functions kicking in, subconscious taking over. Turn autopilot on. Give piece to editor. Go home. Sleep. That's a wrap.)

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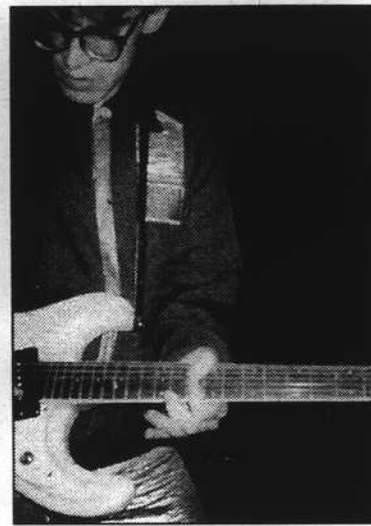
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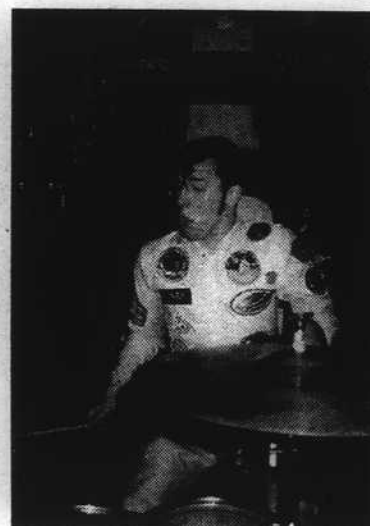
Dexter X



Coco the Electronic Monkey Wizard



Starcrunch



Birdstuff

Band presents fan with down-to-earth gift

By Brooks Hitt
Staff Reporter

Rumored to be the biggest Man or Astro-Man? fan in the tri-state area, I received the greatest gift that a fan could receive last weekend — the gift of mutual respect.

The day began with the much-awaited arrival of the Astro-Men at Drastic Plastic, an Omaha record store. I thought it was only going to be an in-store signing, but as a pleasant surprise, the signing was postponed until after the band had given a wonderful performance.

The next stop was Sokol Hall. The show had originally been scheduled for the Cog Factory, but because of higher-than-expected ticket sales, it was moved to a larger venue. Using my esteemed position as a Daily Nebraskan staff reporter, I was able to schmooze my way backstage and learn intimate details about the life and times of Man or Astro-Man?.

Some surprising facts that I learned about the Astro-Men were that bassist Coco and guitarist



Photo courtesy of Brooks Hitt

The members of Man or Astro Man? share a relaxing Sunday morning in Brooks Hitt's Omaha home.

Starcrunch had both recently graduated from Auburn University with engineering degrees. This fact helped cast a great deal of light on the band's live performance (in particular, their use of a 200,000-Volt

Tesla coil).

The show was great, but the highlight of the evening, and of my life to this point, was the band's decision to stay at my house.

We arrived at my house at 3:30

a.m., exhausted from the amazing performance that the band had just put on. Agreeing to wake the members up in the morning so they would have enough time to make it to Kansas City for their next show, I set out to do the impossible — sleep.

It felt like Christmas, and when I woke up I was sure to look out the window to see if their van was still there. Wanting to leave a lasting impression with the band, I then proceeded to make them pancakes and serve them coffee.

I never asked them for anything, but they were more than willing to give me anything that an Astro-Fan could want, a T-shirt, signed press photos, and putting up with being photographed early on a Sunday morning.

On MTV and in Rolling Stone, "rock stars" may have a certain image they have to uphold — drug use, alcoholism, and a pompous attitude. Man or Astro-Man? is reportedly from outer space, but for a bunch of aliens, they were really down to Earth.

'Kids' fail on the big screen

By Jeff Randall
Film Critic

The idea was a noble one. Take a quintet of Canadian white guys who have a penchant for dressing in drag, put them in a movie about a wonder drug that makes Bayer look like Sweet Tarts and watch the sparks of hilarity fly.

But when the Kids in the Hall (David Foley, Bruce McCulloch, Kevin McDonald, Mark McKinney, Scott Thompson) actually do hit the silver screen, the sparks prove to be few and far between. And as a result, "Brain Candy" has become just another sad reminder of television's utter lack of big-screen friendliness.

"The Kids in the Hall" was undoubtedly one of television's great comedy achievements, right up there with the early years of "Saturday Night Live" and "Monty Python's Flying Circus."

For a number of years, the Kids provided audiences in their native Canada and the United States with neatly packaged half hours of scathing satire, off-the-wall craziness and

pinpoint comedy that rarely missed its mark.

The Kids parted ways recently, heading for greener (if not quite as funny) pastures. "Brain Candy" was to be their reunion, a last-ditch effort to capture the old magic and a few more dollars.

Needless to say, just about everyone who loved the television series eagerly awaited the film.

But high hopes are often the easiest to destroy, and if "Brain Candy" does anything, it disappoints.

The film follows the meteoric rise to fame of nerdy scientist Chris Cooper (McDonald), a pharmaceutical wizard who creates a little pill that will come to be known as Gleemonex. Pressured by the money-hungry executives who control his job, Cooper hastily sends Gleemonex (a super-duper anti-depressant) to the shelves of pharmacies nationwide.

All seems to go well at first. People are happy, depression is cured and Cooper is getting rich. But when an unfortunate side effect to the drug starts to surface, Cooper's conscience gets the best of him and he is forced to fess up to his careless ways.

The scattershot satire the Kids employ — a technique well-suited to five-minute comedy sketches — simply gets too broad to be effective in the feature-length format. When the Kids do get a hit, they do

The Facts

Film: "Kids in the Hall: Brain Candy"
Stars: David Foley, Bruce McCulloch, Kevin McDonald, Mark McKinney, Scott Thompson
Director: Kelly Makin
Rating: R (language, subject matter)
Grade: D
Five Words: The Kids aren't all right

it well (Thompson's stabs at homosexual culture, McKinney's ruthless corporate giant). But more often than not, the laughs are deadened by the mess that surrounds them.

Director of Photography David Makin (who held the camera for 104 "Kids" sketches) is the exception, as he makes an outstanding transition from the small to big screen. His style expands from modest to sweeping, turning the Kids' happy-go-lucky world into a beautiful series of widely varied picture postcards.

Maybe the problem is that the Kids have grown up, and the smart-but-innocent comedy they thrived on in the past has become just plain smart — too smart to be funny anymore.



New videos chock full of romance

By Gerry Beltz
Film Critic

It's a good, solid selection of movies this week, heavy on drama and romance, light on action-adventure and a purr-fect animated release. The pick of the week is a comedy classic



from one of the masters of camp, Mel Brooks. "Waiting To Exhale" (R) — As a year passes, we see how the lives of four women drastically change.

Starring Angela Bassett and Whitney Houston, we have drama and heartache with some wry humor mixed in. When Bassett's character "burns some trash," it is particularly difficult to not crack a smile while watching.

It's heartwarming, but a lot of guys will miss the point.

"The Bridges of Madison