

Takeover dominates NWU play

By Gerry Beltz
Senior Reporter

It's about supply and demand, but it isn't Econ. 101.



Theater Preview
"Other People's Money," a play by Jerry Serner, will take the stage this Thursday at 8 p.m. at Nebraska Wesleyan University's McDonald Theatre, 51st and Huntington streets.

Director Henry Blanke, associate professor of theater at Wesleyan, said

Serner worked in the real estate business before he started writing plays.

"He was very successful and made a bundle," Blanke said. "But like a thousand other people I know, he wanted to be a playwright, so he gave up the business to write plays."

"Other People's Money" watches a Wall Street mogul execute the hostile takeover of a small wire and cable company in Rhode Island, Blanke said.

"The whole gist of it, though," he added, "is that nobody is buying wire and cable anymore because of fiber optics."

Blanke said he had been very pleased with the performances of his five cast members.

"They're all doing fine," Blanke said. "I suppose we could open tonight, but I like to keep it interesting so they don't think they're on top of me."

Bringing out such fine performances has taken some time and commitment from everyone involved, he said.

"I like to try to get in at least 30 rehearsal periods," Blanke said, "so we've been at it for about 4 1/2 weeks."

"We usually have one every night, and twice on Saturdays and Sundays."

Performances will be on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at 8, and Sunday afternoon at 2 p.m. For ticket information, contact the McDonald Theatre Box Office at 465-2303.

Music Reviews

Cracker
"The Golden Age"
Virgin Records
Grade: B+

Cracker's "The Golden Age" is probably destined to be one of 1996's best country albums. Never mind that only its rock songs will receive radio attention.

Singer David Lowery and lead guitarist Johnny Hickman have perfected a lonely southwestern tone, a mournful sound that's as perfectly regretful as Hank Williams or Chris Isaak.

Woeful artistic successes "Dixie Babylon," "Big Dipper" and "I Can't Forget You" brim over with the soulful echoes of Hickman's guitar. It's surprising how good he can make these songs sound despite Lowery's sappy lyrics, which are earnestly and embarrassingly over-sincere as 1990s Replacements.

Lowery's lyrical failure is not constant, luckily.

"How can I live without you? If it means I've got to get a job?" is the kind of bedraggled humor fans expect from the former frontman of Camper Van Beethoven. His "Take the Skinheads Bowling" and "Where the Hell is Bill?" became revolutionary trailer-park genius in the '80s, and it's nice to know he can still gush with dark maltd charm.

Similarly, "I Hate My Generation," "I'm a Little Rocket Ship" and "100 Flower Power Maximum" are first-rate catchy radio material. "Generation" probably will become as much of a radio cliché as "What the World Needs Now," but at least it's a better song.

As good as the rock anthems are on "Golden Age", they fade fast compared to Lowery's southern lamentations. His slow country songs resound with fierce nostalgia and sorrow, transforming him from a flophouse hero into a new, strange Edith Piaf of desert highways.

— Kathleen Peistrup

The Rugburns
"Taking the world by donkey"
Priority Records
Grade: B-

The Rugburns hit you over the head with humor. Mocking, wacky, but never ironic or insightful, humor. The band is sometimes good because of its sense of humor, more often in spite of it.

"The Girl with the Wandering Eye" is a pretty song that could probably get some radio play if the words weren't so intrusively dippy. Consider "Your friend with the subwoofer blew out my tweeter at that biker party downtown" inserted into your favorite poignant ballad. Obnoxious, isn't it?

Then in "Now's not the right time for love," the band is apparently trying to be touching-funny, but Soul Asylum it is not.

The humor works on "The Ballad of Tommy and Marla," a parody of "Frankie and Johnny" with gearheads acting out the fable of the ill-fated lovers.

The worst part is that the melodies are good. They have hooks and all that, but the singer won't let you enjoy the music. His sophomoric lyrics are always perfectly understandable.

The Rugburns are most compa-

rable to Mojo Nixon, but they lack his bounce. They are good musicians, but the words are like a verbal wedge, which most of us don't need.

— Kathleen Peistrup

Various Artists
"White Man's Burden"
Soundtrack
TAG Recordings
Grade: F

Yuck. You'd think the presence of seven bands that are emerging into the mainstream would make the "White Man's Burden" soundtrack somewhat good.

You'd be wrong. At a glance, it looks interesting. Blues Traveler, Hootie & The Blowfish, Dave Matthews Band, Cracker, Bush ... talent, right?

Apparently some kind of curse has infected this compilation because there is really nothing of merit on this soundtrack. Nothing.

You probably have never heard a single from this album. Now you know why.

Blues Traveler bombs with a miserable track, "Regarding Steven," a mass of music missing melody or appeal. Hootie's cover of "Dream Baby" is another big stinker.

Actually, the only track on this whole compact disc that qualifies as decent is Cracker's "How Can I Live Without You," which is the quality of a bad Cracker b-side.

Still, it's better than the rest of this album. If you pay \$1 for this, it's still ninety-nine cents more than you should have paid for it.

— Cliff Hicks

Book Review

"Orca"
Steven Brust
ACE Fantasy

If you have never read any of the books in the Vlad Taltos series, you wouldn't necessarily want to start here. But if you have read "Jherag" and its successors, you should see "Orca" as a prime return to form for Steven Brust. If you haven't, you should.

Brust is a masterful storyteller and one of the best authors in fantasy today. Most of his works have been nothing short of stupendous.

Vlad Taltos is an assassin, or rather, was. He has retired from the job, something that has upset the House of Jherag, which is basically the thieves, swindlers, assassins and general no-good of the Seventeen Houses of the Empire.

The story of Vlad Taltos has proceeded through several books before "Orca." In order of printing, they are "Jherag," "Yendi," "Teckla," "Taltos," "Phoenix" and "Athyra." All of the

names, except "Taltos," which is obviously Vlad's name, are taken from Houses.

"Athyra," the last novel before "Orca," was disappointing because for the first time, the story was not seen through Vlad's eyes.

Instead of the first-person narrative, which was the standard for Taltos novels, the story was given to us from a third-person point of view, while still trying to give a person's slant on the story. It simply didn't work.

Unfortunately, this experimental approach at point of view hurt it immensely. Even with Brust's usual story line, it was difficult and not very enjoyable reading.

The point of view in "Orca" is much more fascinating and much more successful. At times, a Morton Salt Box effect comes into play as it becomes a story within a story. The narrator for "Orca" is Kiera the Thief, a recurring character who has never been in the spotlight this long before.

Still, Kiera is relating the story to Vlad's separated wife, Cawti. So at several points in the story, Vlad resumes his role as narrator. He relates what happened during his day to Kiera, who tells it to Cawti and the reader.

The book starts to show promise in Vlad's recovery, as his sharp tongue and witty humor reappear, having been

exceedingly rare in "Athyra."

"Orca" also marks the return to the political intrigue that has made the Taltos series so engaging. Vlad, while trying to help a young boy get well, is forced to uncover one of the largest financial scandals in the history of the Empire.

As usual, Vlad keeps one step ahead of the reader, and each revelation is breathtaking to say the least. For fans of the adventures of Vlad, "Orca" contains a few surprises that are nothing short of stunning. To spoil the ending would be uncouth, but it is very much worth the reading.

If the Internet buzz is to be believed, Brust is already at work on "Dragon," the next of Vlad's adventures, and for fans of the series, it's music to the ears. Perhaps there will be a book for each of the Houses. Vlad has always seemed to be destined for bigger things, from "Jherag" all the way through "Orca."

The Taltos series is perhaps the most fascinating and intriguing series in fantasy today, and if you haven't read the series, you probably shouldn't start with "Orca." But it's definitely worth getting into, so go buy "Jherag" and join Vlad on his travels.

— Cliff Hicks

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