

GIANTS

Little

Giants take big steps on new tour with Hootie

By CLIFF HICKS
Staff Reporter

The last time They Might Be Giants were in Omaha, they had problems enjoying it. They were 2½ miles above the city.

"I flew over Omaha once, and I knew that because I was looking at a map and I looked down and the city on the ground looked exactly like [Omaha]," John Linnell said. Linnell is one of the two founding members of the group.

Even though they've seen Omaha, they've never played there. In fact, They Might Be Giants will make their first appearance in Nebraska when they open for Hootie and the Blowfish this Saturday at Omaha's Civic Auditorium.

The new tour had not yet begun two weeks ago, when Linnell first spoke about it. He said he agreed that the combination of the two bands was intriguing, to say the least.

"I know very little about their (Hootie and the Blowfish's) music," Linnell said. "Basically this is not our regular audience. It's kind of an opportunity to try and convert an enormous bucket of people or try and get them to remember us. It's kind of a shotgun effect."

The Giants themselves have a large number of solo appearances under their

belts.

In fact, they have played on Conan O'Brien's show twice, "The Tonight Show" twice, David Letterman's show three times, once on "The Today Show," once on "Good Morning America" and even twice on "Tiny Toons" — two songs from their 1991 album "Flood" were used in the cartoon series — "Particle Man" and "Istanbul (Not Constantinople)."

The Giants have just released their seventh album, "Factory Showroom," which is their second album with a full band. Originally, They Might Be Giants was simply a duo comprised of Linnell and his partner, John Flansburgh.

Linnell said that playing with a full group is quite different.

"It changed our performance and it's continuing to change the way we perform. We can improvise a lot," Linnell said.

As much as the Giants have changed, however, in many ways they still remain the same. Their Dial-A-Song program, which was started in the fall of 1983, still is in operation.

Dial-A-Song is a standard long-distance call to Brooklyn, where the Giants have a machine set up to play a new song every hour. The number is (718) 387-6962.

"It's just a phone machine you call up and get to hear songs by us," Linnell said. "They're unreleased songs or songs that haven't come out on their own yet, so that's the peg."

The Giants also have many other things to keep themselves busy: The duo recorded a track for the XTC tribute album, Flansburgh has directed music videos for bands such as Soul Coughing and Frank Black, and both of them have, in one way or another,



JOHN LINNELL, left, and John Flansburgh are the two members of They Might Be Giants.

COURTESY PHOTO

been involved with the Hello Recording Club.

The club, which is run by Flansburgh and Marjorie Galen, offers 10 CDs a year. Linnell recently recorded an EP for the club called "House of Mayors," songs about and by the mayors of New York.

As for their audience, Linnell admits that it is quite broad.

"I think normally bands play to kids who are between 18 and 25, and we certainly have that predominantly," Linnell said. "But we have a lot of really young fans and a lot of people our age."

"In other words — old."

The two Johns went to the same elementary school in the mid-'70s, then went to high school together, which is where they became friends, Linnell said.

"We both worked on the high school newspaper together and we had a bunch of friends in common. We kept in touch after that and we both ended up in New York in the early eighties. That's when we started doing this stuff," Linnell said.

Tickets for the Saturday show at the Civic Auditorium in Omaha are still available. They are \$27.50 and the show starts at 8 p.m.

'Sleepers' portrays tale of sexual terror, redemption

By BRET SCHULTE
Film Critic

Seldom are we told a shining tale of redemption through revenge and friendship despite misunderstanding, but then again, only seldomly has Hollywood relied on reality.

Based on the best-selling autobiography by Lorenzo Carcaterra, "Sleepers" is the powerful re-telling of a story of friendship, revenge and sexual terror.

Opening in New York's Hell's Kitchen 1966, an ethnic ghetto tightly woven with Puerto Ricans, Italians, Jews and other people of Eastern European descent, the four boys divide their time between attending church and petty juvenile criminal activity.

Father Bobby, wonderfully played by Robert De Niro, is the local Catholic priest. Being raised in Hell's Kitchen himself, he is a resilient, hard-nosed man who understands the pressures and escapes of growing up in the ghetto. Father Bobby serves as a mentor for the boys — Shakes, Michael, Tommy and John. The boys love Father Bobby and what he does for them, but his influence extends only so far.

One day, as the boys are roasting in the concrete-amplified New York City heat, they decide to rip off the lo-

The Facts

Film: "Sleepers"
Cast: Jason Patric, Brad Pitt, Robert De Niro, Dustin Hoffman, Kevin Bacon, Minnie Driver, Ron Eldard
Director: Barry Levinson
Rating: R (violence, profanity)
Grade: A
Five Words: Glimmering tale of revenge, pain

cal hot dog vendor. The plan meets with limited success and the boys end up rolling the concession stand down the steps of the subway. The concession stand slams into a bystander, causing a near-fatal injury.

The boys are quickly sentenced to spend at least a year in the Wilkinson reformatory school. It is at Wilkinson's that the boys experience the extreme sexual abuse which will disfigure and haunt the rest of their lives.

Kevin Bacon, as the reform school guard, plays a frightfully sick, power-hungry sexual pervert who molests the boys during their stay. It is Bacon's maniacal acts of pedophilia that successfully establishes the ambiance of sick perversion and terror roaming the school.

"Sleepers" relies heavily on the caliber of its players. Despite the all-



DUSTIN HOFFMAN, left, Ron Eldard and Billy Crudup star in Warner Bros.' new drama, "Sleepers."

COURTESY PHOTO

star cast of huge names and huge salaries, the true heroes of this movie are the young actors enduring the torture of the reform school. Of the four, young Joe Perrino is a stand-out as the lead character, Shakes.

"Sleepers" could have easily been packaged as a slick, Grisham-esque story of shallow characters and smiling endings. Instead, Levinson directed a movie cut with sharp angles, gritty

flashbacks and constant crescendos. The most powerful emotions of this film are those that are alluded to. We hear the screams of the boys echoing through still hallways, and we see Father Bobby's eyes as he hears about the terror of the reform school.

"Sleepers" is a powerful movie exuding both dark style and subtle nuances. It is a movie that successfully relays a story of friendship and pain, neither of which die easily.

Opera

UNL operas give students opportunities

By EMILY WRAY
Staff Reporter

Folk songs and seances highlight UNL's operas for the fall semester.

The operas, "Down in the Valley" and "The Medium" play today, Wednesday and Friday at 8 p.m. Sunday's performance starts at 3 p.m.

Educational opportunities abound in the two operas. Since students who don't have mature voices get to sing with piano accompaniment, more undergraduates can participate, said William Shomos, director of opera.

"We as a university are committed to giving performance opportunities to undergraduates," said William Shomos, assistant professor of voice and opera. "You don't always find this in institutions with graduate programs."

Performing two operas also gives students chances to sing, he said.

"If someone is going to be in the voice program for four years, they ought to have some operatic experience," Shomos said.

Casting two people in the same role for different performances, or double casting, adds more opportunities for education, Shomos said.

The casts alternate performances, so each cast performs two operas. Shomos chose to double cast the main characters in "Down in the Valley" but left the ensemble the same. In the "Medium," the lead character is not double cast but everyone else is.

"My mission for the first opera (of the season) is to give as many of our young students the opportunity to perform as possible," Shomos said.

"Down in the Valley," composed by Kurt Weill, shows that love endures.

The opera is about two young people named Brack and Jennie who fall in love. After Brack accidentally kills another man who's in love with Jennie, their lives take a tragic turn.

En Liang Ching and Jill Beran play Jennie while Mark McCue and Joseph Lott play Brack.

"We'll use the ensemble to narrate the story," Shomos said. "The chorus gives the frame, puts in the story from Brack's perspective and Brack has a flashback."

The two-act opera "The Medium," by Gian Carlo Menotti, also ends with death.

Baba, played by Rebecca Kouma Shane, pretends to contact the dead and swindles people out of their money by fraudulent seances. She then experiences her own connection with the other side when she hears voices and feels a hand around her neck.

The second act is Baba's effort to come to terms with what's going on, Shomos said.

"The Medium" ends in uncertainty and despair while "Down in the Valley" is a positive story of hope and faith," Shomos said.

Tickets for the four performances are \$8 and \$4 for students with ID. Tickets may be obtained by calling the Lied Center Box Office at 472-4747.