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## 'Norm' creator marks Black History Month

By **BRET SCHULTE**  
Staff Reporter

Black History Month, typically celebrated through television, forums and speakers, is now receiving attention from an unlikely medium — the cartoon strip.

Michael Jantze, cartoonist of "The Norm," is one of the few artists to feature recurring black characters. While these characters are not the focus of the strip, their involvement is significant and stems from Jantze's own past.

"There are a lot of black people in my life: college buddies, friends from New Orleans, not to mention the people here (California)," Jantze said. "(Black people) in the strip just makes sense to me."

Growing up in Normal, Ill., (the name that partially inspired the strip's title) Jantze knew few minorities. Attending college in California and later working in New Orleans affected Jantze and introduced him to a new world of color.

"In California I encountered all kinds of people. America is changing," Jantze said. "It's not going to be a white world anymore and I don't care."

He said while his characters run the risk of being seen as political, they embody his friends and influences. "The Norm" is not a political or racial statement, but rather a humorous reflection on the artist's past.

"Initially, the thing that impressed the syndicate (King) is the black guy in my strip," Jantze said. "Yet the strip doesn't focus on black

issues."

Ford (who is named after Jantze's first car) and his girlfriend, Jan, appear frequently, offering support and advice to the typically disenchanted Norm.

"Ford's a little older and wiser. He's gotten past the crap that Norm still deals with," he said. "Ford thinks he's the expert, has the girlfriend, the job, but that's not necessarily true."

In the future Jantze predicts that Ford may need some help himself as Jantze hopes to explore more racially-oriented topics.

"There have been no black-and-white issues in the past," he said. "Except Ford looking for black superheroes in a comic store once and couldn't find any."

Jantze hopes to pursue more racial issues in the future. He said it is difficult because the strip is told through Norm and doesn't focus on Ford and Jan by themselves.

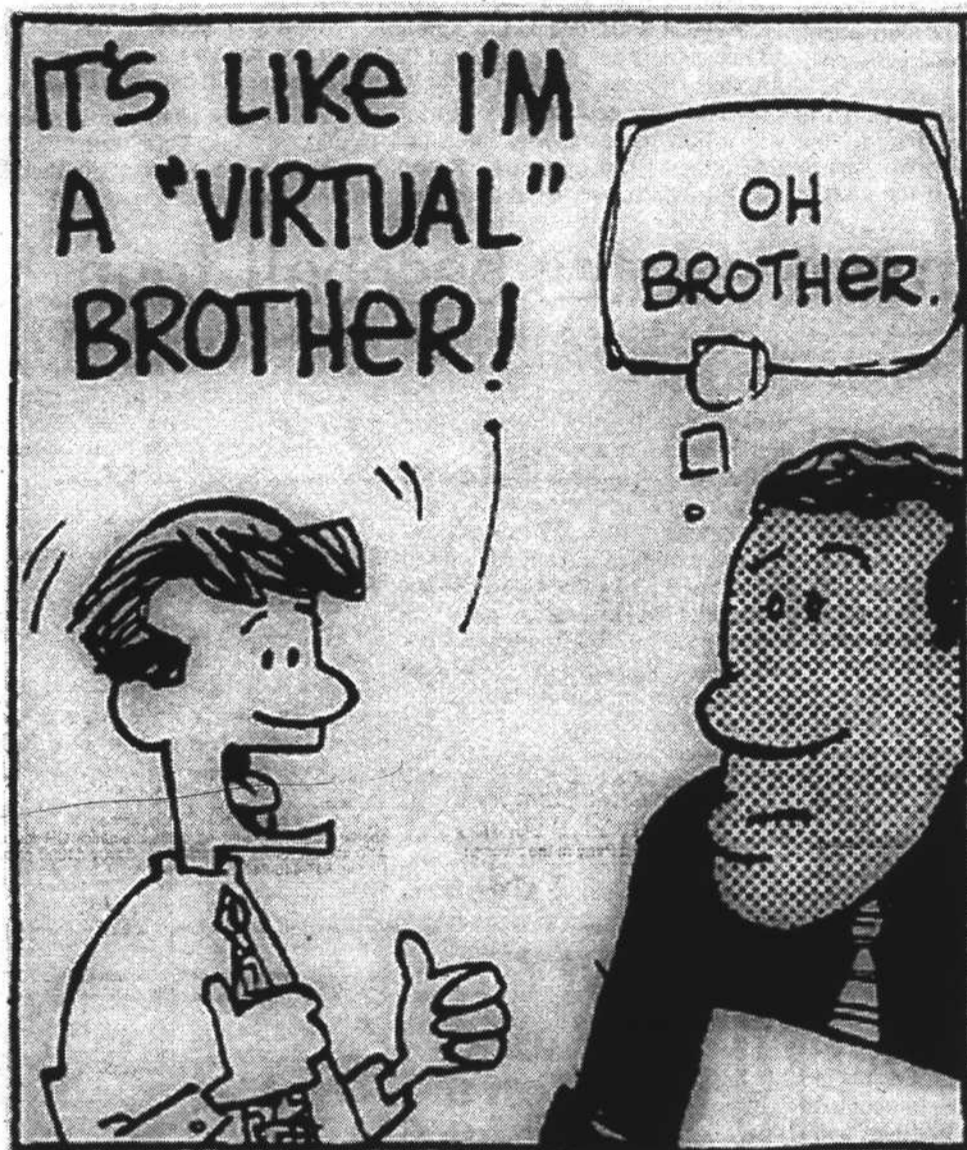
To compensate, during February, Jantze has depicted Norm delving into a variety of Black History Month web sites in his quest to understand black heritage.

"Norm goes on the Internet to check out black history," Jantze said. "It's Norm just trying to figure it out."

Included with Norm's research are the actual addresses of web sites featuring information on black history.

Jantze shrugs off praise for his promotion of Black History Month.

"I don't know why I decided to do it," Jantze said. "It sounded like a good thing to do, and I'm a good guy now."



## Physical comedy challenges cast

Moliere's spoof borders on vaudeville; trick is making it look easy

By **LIZA HOLTMEIER**  
Staff Reporter

The UNL Theatre Department opens its second semester mainstage season with a farcical look at the medical profession in "The Imaginary Invalid" by Moliere.

The play revolves around the hypochondriac Argon and his escapades as those around him offer advice on the fate of his daughters and fortune.

The show, directed by guest director John Pynchonholms, provides a variety of challenges to the cast because of its comic elements.

"There's a lot of vocal demands, but it's a very physically demanding show too," said Robert Hurst, who plays Argon. "You can tell by the way the lines are written that it deviates into almost a vaudeville script."

The actors have struggled to perfect the physical comedy.

"One of the hardest things is to get the period movement down," said Erin McLaine, who plays Toinette. "Then, you must be able to switch from this very prim, controlled place into this farce where you're leaping across the stage like a fool."

Hurst agreed. "The trick to doing physical comedy is making it look effortless," he said. "It is really like a ballet or dance; it's very timed and choreographed."

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**ROBERT HURST**  
cast member

Pynchonholms said arriving at this effortless stage is time-consuming and has been intensified by the short, four-week rehearsal period.

"When you bring a group of people together who know each other, but who haven't really worked together on any physical comedy, you're really starting from scratch," he said. "They're not bringing a sort of history to it, so you're inventing the history as you do it."

Pynchonholms also said the play contains a lot of implied comedy, which further complicates the process.

"There's a lot of comedy that is sort of unknown to us, because it was never written down," he said. "You know there was a joke there, but you don't know quite what it was. It's challenging."

Cast and crew have enjoyed the

opportunity to work with Pynchonholms as a guest director.

"He kind of works this play like a workshop," McLaine said. "The play is continuously evolving. It's wonderful to watch."

"He really lets us play," Hurst said. "I think the show really benefits from that sense of playing, not only with the language, but with the characters."

Hurst said he especially enjoyed this production.

"When you're on stage, there's a sense of being an actor and a character at the same time," he said. "For me, I guess the best analogy is the old 'Carol Burnett Show' where you really got a sense of the actors challenging each other and enjoying themselves."

Performances will be at Howell Theatre in the Temple Building.

## Trilogy brings theaters record-breaking business

By **GERRY BELTZ**  
Senior Reporter

Unpredictable. Came out of nowhere. Absolute surprise.

No, this isn't the latest Nebraska weather forecast. These are the reactions from the movie industry on the success of "Star Wars: Special Edition."

Frank Rhodes, film buyer for Douglas Theatre Co., said the business this film is doing has floored everybody.

"We didn't know," Rhodes said. "Nobody did."

Also, with the extra scenes and cleaned-up special effects, Rhodes said, this is a completely new experience for the movie industry.

"We haven't seen anything like this, ever," he said. "The closest anything has come to this was the re-release of 'Gone With the Wind.'"

In Lincoln, Rhodes said, "Star Wars" is still selling out on weekends, and he noted three main factors for the business it has been bringing in over the last three weeks.

"There's the mix of people who saw it 20 years ago," he said, "those who hadn't even been born yet, plus

the excellent digital sound."

The additional and enhanced footage were also key reasons, but the souped-up Sony Dynamic Digital Sound (SDDS) is what keeps the theaters filled.

"Mainly, it's the digital sound," he said.

Originally set for only a three-week run at the Stuart, the success of "Star Wars: Special Edition" will keep the movie in Lincoln.

To make room for the Friday premiere of "The Empire Strikes Back" at the Stuart Theatre, 13th and P streets, "Star Wars" will be moved out to the Edgewood 3 Theatre, 56th Street and Highway 2, Rhodes said.

The special edition of "Return of the Jedi" will premiere at the Stuart on March 7, with "The Empire Strikes Back" moving a block west to the Lincoln 3 Theatre, 12th and P streets.

The Stuart, Edgewood and Lincoln theaters are all equipped with SDDS systems.

The idea of extended runs of the "Star Wars" films has been around for a while, Rhodes said.

"From the start," Rhodes said, "if the movies were doing good business, we would keep them and put them in another SDDS theater."