

Bobby McFerrin includes Lied in world tour for new album

BY LANE HICKENBOTTOM
Staff Reporter

In case you forgot who Bobby McFerrin is, he's the "Don't Worry, Be Happy" guy. And he performs at the Lied Center for Performing Arts tonight.

McFerrin, the one-man vocal ensemble who topped the charts with "Don't Worry, Be Happy," has been quite busy musically since that mega-single was released from the multi-platinum album "Simple Pleasures" in 1988.

In 1990, he orchestrated "Medicine Music" with his group Voicestra, which he is now on a world tour with.

Other recent recordings included "Hush," an album he produced in 1992 with renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma. The album went gold in 1996 after spending more than two years on Billboard's Classical Crossover Chart. Also in '92, McFerrin was featured on the jazz album "Play" with pianist Chick Corea. The effort won McFerrin a Grammy, his 10th.

McFerrin released his first classical album, "Paper Music," in 1995. This album was followed by "Bang! Zoom," a jazz collaboration with members of the Yellowjackets, in 1996. That same year, McFerrin released "The Mozart Sessions," another classical album done with Corea.

McFerrin's most recent effort is "Circlesongs," which he is currently touring with Voicestra.

Through all of this work, McFerrin has continued to be one of the music industry's most entertaining artists. His powerful voice and sweet rhythms bound together to bring audiences everywhere to their feet.

McFerrin's performance starts tonight at 8. Tickets cost \$28, \$24 and \$20. They are half-price for students.



MATT HANEY/DN

Poetry survives, creativity thrives in reading group

BY BRET SCHULTE
Staff Reporter

Poetry is not dead in Lincoln, and a society of English graduate students is keeping it alive.

Out of a desire for creative expression and a need for genu-

ine support, University of Nebraska-Lincoln English graduate students and alumni meet regularly to read aloud their latest writings at the No-Name Readings every other Friday at Duffy's Tavern.

"They're called 'No-Name' because they are very low pressure and very supportive," said English graduate student and No-Name reader Dale Jacobs. "It provides a place to read that will be very friendly."

The generally casual and relatively anonymous atmosphere of the gatherings has propelled the No-

Name Readings as a forum for student talent since 1992.

Beginning with English professor Judith Slater's reading five years ago, the meetings have grown in popularity and participation partly because of a revival in literary interest.

"In the last five years there has been a resurgence of interest in poetry," Jacobs said. "You can even see it on MTV, or by going to a bar in any city."

Organizers are typically graduate students, a position currently held by Sandy Yannone, Sherrie Flick and Lisa Verigen.

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DALE JACOBS
English graduate student

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CD Review

Son Volt
"Straightaways"
Warner Bros.
B+

This album easily could have been called "Trace II." "Straightaways," the new album from Son Volt, picks up almost exactly where the band's 1995 debut left off, combining the same mixture of country rockers and slow brooding tunes as the first one did.

The album begins on a high note with "Caryatid Easy." ("Caryatid" is a supporting column sculpted in the shape of a woman; I had to look it up too. What lead singer/songwriter Jay Farrar had in mind is anyone's guess.)

This song is reminiscent of the band's radio hit "Drown" from "Trace," although it lacks the distinctive crunchy guitars "Drown" had. But it is loud, and sounds excellent blasting at top volume while cruising down an empty highway with the windows down.

The next two songs, "Back Into Your World" and "Picking Up The Signal," are both in that same vein. Rumor has it that the melodic "Back Into Your World" will be the lead single from "Straightaways."

Then come two slower numbers, the pensive but beautiful Dobro- and mandolin-soaked "Left A Slide" and "Creosote." (I had to pull out the dic-

tionary again. It means "an oily liquid obtained from coal tar and used as a wood preservative and disinfectant.")

Again, interpretation's up for grabs — but Farrar's trademark has always been, even in early Uncle Tupelo days, perceptive, above-and-beyond-the-call-of-rock-duty lyrics. Take these from "Creosote": "Born under wide-spread changes/The search for higher reason/Learnin' the ropes okay/Fate just runs you around."

Farrar is such an intelligent, gifted songwriter, and "Straightaways" highlights that to the hilt. The equally talented Bohquist brothers and former Uncle Tupelo drummer Mike Heidorn provide the perfect showcase for Farrar's crafted lyrics and deep, soulful tenor.

Some other highlights include "Last Minute Shakedown" and "No More Parades." But don't expect to find another "Windfall" or "Tear-Stained Eye" on this album. Those two are timeless classics that can't be reproduced.

The thing about "Straightaways" — and this can be taken two ways — is there's really nothing that stands out on this album. That's not saying the songs are bad. It's quite the opposite. They're all so good they could become wallpaper if you didn't listen to the parts that comprise the whole.

On the other hand, I could go for the rest of my life never hearing "Been Set Free" and "Way Down Watson" and be perfectly happy.

"Straightaways" is due out in stores Tuesday.

Matthew Sweet
"Blue Sky On Mars"
Volcano Recordings
Grade: B

The problem with Matthew Sweet is that he has this shadow under which he's been for the past few years — it's a little album called "Girlfriend."

"Girlfriend" is one of the few near-perfect albums, a must-have for any fan of pop-rock. What really gives "Girlfriend" its replay value, however, is its immense diversity of songs, from the extreme pop of "Girlfriend" to the sad blues of "Nothing Lasts." There isn't a throw-away song on the album.

Time has passed, though, and Sweet has just released his third album since "Girlfriend." "Altered Beast," his first after "Girlfriend," marked a divergence into a darker side of Sweet that was less accessible and less ear-friendly, but still had some good tunes. "100% Fun" returned to the poppier side of Sweet, but lacked the staying power of "Girlfriend."

Ultimately, Sweet's new album, "Blue Sky On Mars" is a solid collection of songs that still doesn't quite capture the magic spark of "Girlfriend."

The first thing instantly noticeable about the CD when it's popped in is its length. Falling under 40 minutes, the album lacks some of the meat of Sweet's other works.

From the beginning of the first song, the other thing that immediately pops to ear is the absence of Richard

Lloyd, Robert Quine and/or Ivan Julian on lead guitar. Sweet tries to fill in the gap, as does producer Brendan O'Brian, but while both can come up with good leads, neither is near the par of the studio geniuses Sweet has played with in the past.

Sweet's skill lies in writing songs, and "Blue Sky On Mars" does have well-written songs, albeit very short ones.

"Where You Get Love," the first single, has a strong hook and solid lyrics. "Come To California," which begins the album, carries the same dynamic rock feel.

"Until You Break" is possibly the best song on the album, however. It's a soft, little acoustic song that keeps to itself and focuses on the words. Quine's soft slide guitar would have made it perfect.

"Into Your Drug" is the other spectacular song on the album, with its biting lyrics and layered guitar. This is the kind of Sweet that there should be more of.

In the end, "Blue Sky On Mars" lacks the sticking power of "Girlfriend," but still provides proof that Sweet hasn't abandoned hope yet. It's not that "Blue Sky On Mars" isn't a good album — it's just that Sweet set an incredibly high watermark for himself to live up to.



— Ann Stack

— Cliff Hicks