

Spankers share writing in latest effort

BY SEAN MCCARTHY
Assignment Reporter

Prepared to be spanked tonight — Baby Jason is back in Lincoln.

His band, Baby Jason and the Spankers, will debut their latest compact disc, "Dreamgirl" at Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St.

Recorded in only three days at Chapman Studios in Kansas City, Mo., "Dreamgirl" was produced by Ken Paulakovitch, also the producer of Offspring's hugely successful album, "S*M*A*S*H*."

"Dreamgirl" marks the first time that each member shared writing credits, "Baby Jason" Davis said.

"We've learned how to really get and create together," he said.

Drummer Danny Lee Irvin and bassist Jeremy "Warhead" Woerner make up the rest of the blues-based trio.

Davis met Irvin and Woerner while they were attending Lincoln High School in 1994. The three began talking, but Davis already had a bassist and drummer for his band. Davis asked Irvin and Woerner to join after his original band members quit. Since then, Baby Jason and the Spankers have improved their chemistry, Davis said.

"With a trio, it's not a dictatorship," he said. "It's all for one, and one for all."

With two albums — "Crying out Loud" and "Rattle" — under their belts, Baby Jason and the Spankers have drawn crowds to bars like Duggan's Pub, the Zoo Bar and

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JASON DAVIS

Baby Jason of 'Baby Jason and the Spankers'

Duffy's Tavern. Each bar has a certain crowd that attends the shows, Davis said.

"It's like 10 percent of our fans show up to our shows, and 90 percent (of the crowd) comes from fans of the bar," Davis said.

Davis cited Zoo Bar owner Larry Boehmer and Duggan's Pub as being particularly helpful in getting the band's fan-base started in Lincoln.

"Larry set a precedent for us across the Midwest. He's gone out of his way to help us, and he holds so much weight," Davis said.

Davis said he appreciated Duggan's for its friendliness.

"With Duggan's, we're on a first-name basis with everyone. We're not just a local band to them, we're like family there."

Around the world

Aside from performing in Lincoln and Omaha, Baby Jason and the Spankers have played in Boise, Idaho, Austin, Texas, and Chicago. One highlight during this year's tour came when the band performed at Buddy Guy's Legends club in Chicago.

As they were playing, owner

Buddy Guy came into the bar, Davis said.

"This was our first time playing in Chicago, and seeing Buddy Guy there was pretty cool," he said.

All members of Baby Jason and the Spankers quit their day jobs to become full-time musicians in 1995. For a while, the band was playing shows only on weekends. Now, members may be on the road for up to three weeks before taking brief breaks in Lincoln.

Though Davis has experienced the music scene in such renowned cities as Austin, Texas, and Chicago, the Lincoln scene has a lot to offer people, he said.

"I wish a lot of people in Lincoln were more open-minded in trying out new bars and supporting bands," Davis said. "Everyone talks of other towns, but Lincoln has so much going on. With Chicago and Austin, they're great scenes because people can't get enough of the music."

Baby Jason and the Spankers' influences can be heard clearly on their album "Dreamgirl." Combining old-school blues with elements of rock a la Big Head Todd and the Monsters and even some funk, the Spankers are not

your typical paint-by-numbers blues band.

Davis cited blues legends Magic Slim and Son Seals as two influences. The frontman also shares a particular affinity for the late Stevie Ray Vaughn. Davis said he used to wear Stevie Ray Vaughn-style hats around Lincoln, but never at a gig.

"He was someone to look up to, and when he died, all that changed," Davis said. "Forever now, he is him, and I need to be me."

Hometown hero

Davis has made a name of himself in at least one other Lincoln establishment — M&N Sandwich Shop, 2643 Randolph.

The Chicago-style delicatessen named a burger after the band. Called "The Spanker Special," it consists of M&N's herald pastrami burger, smothered in chili.



Munching down a Spanker special, Davis said his band used to order chili and pastrami burgers every time they frequented M&N.

"Norm (Kusinski, the owner) just sort of combined the two and we've ordered it ever since," Davis said, "I'm honored to have that named after me."

Baby Jason and the Spankers will take the stage at Duffy's Tavern around 10 p.m. Tickets are \$3.

One-man show will inspect serious issues of Holocaust

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior Reporter

What is the Holocaust's legacy a generation or two later?

Jeff Raz will examine the answers to this question in his one-man show, "Father-Land," which opens tonight in Kimball Recital Hall.

In "Father-Land," Raz deals with serious issues like Jewish identity and anti-Semitism, but incorporates humor, acrobatics and new vaudeville techniques to make the message more believable.

"You hope to have material that is evocative," Raz explained. "The real play is going on in the audience's head. They find their own metaphors in the things you place on stage."

Raz begins the show with the main character, Jeff, in a street-show performance before an audition for "The Merchant of Venice." While performing a balancing trick with volunteers from the audience, Jeff meets Helga, a Nazi's granddaughter, who is struggling with the revelations of her family's past.

As Jeff embarks on the research for his role in "Merchant of Venice," Helga's father — an unrepentant Nazi — and Jeff's father — a soldier in World War II — share their Holocaust experiences with each other.

Raz said "Father-Land" resulted from a trip he took to Germany in 1989.

While there, he visited the concentration camp of Dachau, and viewed photographs taken by the liberating forces at the end of World War II. The shots reminded Raz of pictures his father could have taken as a photographer with the American occupation forces in the war.

Raz's father died in 1966 when Raz was 8 years old. In a desire to involve himself in the legacy of the Holocaust, and to learn more about his father, he



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEFF RAZ

JEFF RAZ EXAMINES the effects of the Holocaust in "Father-Land," which he will perform at 8 p.m. in Kimball Recital Hall. Raz will stage a second show at 7:30 p.m. Sunday at The Wagon Train Project, 512 S. Seventh St.

began to research.

His mother provided him with his father's scrapbook, which detailed the emotions the senior Raz experienced during the war. He then used the scrapbook as the basis for "Father-Land," which he first performed at the 1990 Solo Mio Festival in San Francisco.

Raz rewrote the show in 1992, performing it throughout California. In the past few years, he has presented it at various venues throughout Lincoln.

Ron Bowlin, director of Kimball Recital Hall, said the show's strength lies in its ability to give insight on the ways people view themselves and others. He explained that it exposed some of the prejudices people unknowingly harbor.

"I think that there are very poignant moments in which ... you come to a realization of something; you see something that you hadn't seen in a certain way before," Bowlin said. "Jeff creates insights into himself and insights into the way you feel about yourself and the way you see others."

This year's show is part of the Artist Diversity Residency Program, sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Fine and Performing Arts. The program brings artists from diverse cultural backgrounds for residency periods of one to three weeks, involves them in classroom discussions and gives them performance opportunities.

Raz performed in Lincoln three years ago with the Pickle Family Circus at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. He has toured the continental United States, Alaska and Europe with the groups Vaudeville Nouveau and the Dell'Arte Players Company. Raz also helped create the production of "Comedy of Errors," which became a PBS "Live From Lincoln Center" special.

Raz will perform "Father-Land" at 8 p.m. at Kimball Recital Hall and 7:30 p.m. Sunday at The Wagon Train Project, 512 S. Seventh St. Tickets for both shows are \$10 general admission and \$5 for students.

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