

Movie Review



Gerry Beltz

Movie critic discovers film classic

I have a confession to make. (No, this has nothing to do with that incident involving the Dijon mustard and the leaf blower. Besides, I was young and needed the work....)

I'm talking about professionalism and credibility here. Something that may surprise, shock or even offend certain readers.

Until this weekend, I had never seen "Casablanca."

Yep. In all this time as a film critic, I've never seen "Casablanca." Same thing goes for "The Godfather," "Bambi" and "The Wizard of Oz." Moreover, I have no desire to see the latter two (something which has, at times, caused my mother to assume I wasn't her child).

Many of my friends, family and co-workers would say, "YOU haven't seen 'Casablanca'?!? Oh, you've just GOT to see it, Gerry!" Other critics also have said the movie is a must-see, but I don't listen to critics. They're not trustworthy, have bad taste and sing Tito Puente love ballads in the wrong key. (At least, I'm told that I... well, that's another story.)

Still, some people have asked me (sarcastically) how I can consider myself a movie critic when I haven't seen classic movies like "Casablanca" and "The Godfather."

Well, I can't really come up with a decent answer to that, beyond just saying, "I haven't really wanted to see them." Actually, a large part of not seeing "The Godfather" has been intimidation; my usual schedule doesn't have open blocks of time long enough to accommodate such a monstrous undertaking. How long is that beast anyway, four hours or something like that?

To me, there are no set requirements to being a movie critic, beyond the ability to express an opinion well in a particular medium (in this case: print) and having a better-than-average knowledge of the cinema.

All of this was going through my mind as I was waiting for the beginning of "Casablanca." After what seemed like an eternity (10 minutes), the movie started. No previews, just that cheesy "gosh-we're-so-happy-you're-here" trailer, then it's off, to black and white we go, traveling to "Casablanca."

(One quick note: Colorizing movies should be considered a sin against God, right up there with ordering anchovies on pizza and defining foreplay as "the drive home.")

The movie started out a little slow, but by the time Peter Lorre slithered on-screen, I become

Please see **CRITIC** on 16

Spanning the Seas

Carnatic musician mixes style

By JIM GOODWIN
A&E Editor

Music crosses boundaries. In the case of Indian musician Kadri Gopalnath, oceans and traditions are bridged.

While Gopalnath plays the traditional Carnatic music of his southern Indian heritage, he does so with a very Western twist: He plays the alto saxophone.

The 47-year-old Indian resident, recognized globally as a master of the Carnatic style, will perform at 7 p.m. Wednesday in Westbrook Recital Hall.

For Indian residents of Lincoln, the occasion will be a tiny taste of home. For others, it will integrate Eastern and Western styles, said B. Radha, an associate professor of Russian and faculty advisor for Raag, the student group sponsoring Gopalnath.

"Because the saxophone is a Western instrument, it will act like a bridge to evoke an interest in music they've never heard before," B. Radha said.

Violinist Kanyakumari and *mridangam* player Guruvayur Durai also will perform Wednesday. The *mridangam* is a two-headed drum.

Carnatic music, the south Indian style of classical music, traces its roots to the oldest Hindu sacred texts, composed about 3,500 years ago.

Stressing melody, not harmony, and based on a scale of 22 notes rather than 12, the form widely differs from its Western classical counterpart.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KADARI GOPALNATH

ALTO SAXOPHONIST Kadri Gopalnath brings his style of southern Indian Carnatic music to Westbrook Recital Hall Wednesday at 7 p.m.

While instruments such as the *veena* — a seven-stringed instrument featuring a bowled body — are more traditional to Carnatic music, using instruments indigenous to other cultures is an acceptable variation of a musical style steeped in thousands of years of tradition, said Ramakrishna Prasad, a chemical engineering graduate student and Raag president.

The reason, Prasad said, is because Indian music is an expression of spirituality, and its musicians play the instruments best suited to a particular piece.

"It has more to do with the mood," he said.

Ragas, which are the pre-defined

Please see **MUSIC** on 16

Midwest molds artist's vision

By LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior Reporter

Theater

Tim Herwig grew up thinking nothing important ever happened in his hometown of Albert Lea, Minn. He assumed the things that did occur were not interesting enough to be told.

When Herwig attended college, his professors reinforced that idea, making him feel he never could equal the poets and authors included on the syllabi.

It was not until Herwig attended a performance art work at the age of 30 that he discovered the importance of his life experience.

"I realized that I do have something to say," Herwig said. "I found that my experiences growing up in the Midwest could provide interesting material that people wanted to listen to."

Herwig then decided to create his own performance art pieces. He enrolled in a storytelling class and

examined his life for experiences on which to base his plays.

"I came out of the closet to tell the world I was a performance artist," Herwig said. "I realized that we all have life experiences that have the possibility of being turned into performance material."

This week, Lincoln audiences can see Herwig relay a few of his life lessons on the Wagon Train Project, 504 S. Seventh St., in his one-man show, "Esker."

For almost 10 years now, Herwig has used his pieces to explore the connections between growing up in the Midwest and his interests in art.

An esker is a long, narrow ridge or bank of boulders, gravel and sand deposited by a river flowing within or beneath a stagnant glacier.

"I use the geographical formation of the esker as a metaphor for one

"We all have life experiences that have the possibility of being turned into performance material."

TIM HERWIG
performance artist

man's journey," Herwig said. "The piece deals with some really interesting poetic connections between the land and my interest in ecology that I had made as a boy."

Djola Branner, the director of

Please see **ESKER** on 16

Movie Review

Duchovny saves 'God' from ruin

By CLIFF HICKS
Film Critic

It's not high art, but it'll do.

Those of you who are frustrated because "The X-Files" doesn't start until November: Take heed. Your answer is here. David Duchovny, aka a Fox Mulder, has done a film.

"Playing God" isn't the best-written film, doesn't have the best acting and doesn't have the best cinematography, but it isn't all that bad either.

The plot is simple. Eugene Sands (Duchovny) is an ex-doctor turned drug addict down on his luck. As he stands in a club buying his next hit, he sees a man shot down right next to him. Sands, who lost his medical license for operating under the influence of narcotics, is forced to act and saves the man's life.

Seeing how a doctor on a leash could be handy, crime lord Raymond (Timothy Hutton) "befriends" Sands. Raymond's girlfriend, Claire (Angelina Jolie), saw Sands at work at the club and introduced him to Raymond by using two bodyguards/gangsters to take a drug-influenced Sands to him.

Quickly, Sands finds himself caught in the middle of a turf war between Raymond and a group of Russians over a Chinese client. He's retained by the FBI to help catch both Raymond and the client, and then things get incredibly messy.

Duchovny is the film's star — something obvious throughout the surreal underworld ride. Not only is Duchovny's acting 12 steps above everyone else's, but his presence overwhelms almost anyone with whom he's on camera. Let's face it, even though he's not playing Mulder, Duchovny still holds our eyes because of his sheer talent.

He also, thankfully, doesn't recycle Mulder's character. Where Mulder would be nervous, Sands is angry. Where Mulder carefully controls every movement, Sands is a drug addict spiraling out of control. The two bear vague similarities, but they are most certainly not alike.

Director Andy Wilson also makes a smart decision in letting Duchovny do a suave narrative overdub. While this trick has been used in both "The X-Files" and Duchovny's first series, "The Red Shoe Diaries," it is one he's mastered to perfection. Without it, the film would have been sorely lacking.

"Playing God" also has some of the most distinct music any film has had in years. A sort of western-gone-gangster-gone-noir blend litters the film, with traffic noises and twangy guitars filling the ears. It adds a strong sense of character to the film, enhancing that gangster/western-meets-morality-play feel.

The film also contains a good smattering of humor, which helps the film from taking itself too seriously in the moments where the dialogue and plot fall shallow (and the film does have them). Duchovny can crack wise with the best of them.

Whose head the blame should

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