

Back from the drawing board

Director of 'The Simpsons' to explain animation work

BY SARAH BAKER
Senior Reporter

You've watched Bart write sentences on the board. You've watched Homer try to eat the world's biggest hoagie. You've even seen Sideshow Bob turn good.

Now it's time to see what goes on behind the scenes.

"Absolute Animation," a presentation by David Silverman, supervising animation director for "The Simpsons" makes a stop at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln tonight at 9.

Silverman, who works with directors and artists on animation for "The Simpsons," said he discusses his work in more detail during the presentation.

"I worked with all the facets of the animating, including the directors, the newest artists, the do's and don'ts of the layout composition, and I also did some design and animation myself," Silverman said.

Silverman said he had worked on "The Simpsons" since the show first started.

"Animation has really benefited from the success of 'The Simpsons,'" he said. "When the show began, we knew we had some good material, but we were still surprised at the popularity."

Silverman said he gave much credit for the success of animated shows to "Who Framed Roger Rabbit?"

"Before that movie, no one would have taken a chance on an animated prime-time series," he said. "'The Simpsons' is one of the biggest successes in animation, comparable to 'The Flintstones,' and that was 25 years ago."

Silverman said he felt he had no choice other than getting involved in the animation business.

"I was going to quit animation in '87, and then I got involved with 'The Simpsons,'" he said. "I started it with the 'Tracy Ullman Show,' and it just continued from there, and there you go."

Silverman said he never thought "The Simpsons" would become what it has turned into today.

"We thought it might have a cult following, and last for maybe two years, and that would be good," he said. "What it became was an overnight success. And we were completely unprepared."

Silverman said most of the changes the show had gone through over its eight seasons were mostly evolutionary.

"We have a story retreat twice a year every year, and that's where we think of our new ideas," he said. "Let's try it" became a mantra for us."

Silverman said the creators of "The Simpsons" benefited from trying new things.

"When we came up with a cool design or a cool voice or a weird story idea, we tried it," he said. "Sometimes when the well is dry you have to give it a shot and see what happens. That's showbiz."

Adam Snyder, event director with the University Program Council, said he thought Silverman's talk would have entertainment value for almost anyone.

"Anyone who is interested in 'The Simpsons' will really enjoy the presentation," he said. "It's also interesting for people interested in animation or graphics. But if you are big into 'The Simpsons,' it will be a really fun time."

Silverman said he hoped his presentation will teach the audience more about the process behind "The Simpsons."

He also said the presentation includes video clips of old episodes of "The Simpsons," as well as some never-before-seen clips.

"It will show how the show is put together for TV and certainly about the history of 'The Simpsons,'" he said. "It also gives insight on the business itself. There is no right or wrong way to get into the business. You just never know how things are going to work out."

"Absolute Animation" with David Silverman, animation director for "The Simpsons," is tonight at 9 in the Great Plains Room of the Nebraska East Union.

A reception will be held following the presentation for anyone interested in meeting Silverman. The event is sponsored by the University Program Council and is free.



MATT HANEY/DN

Visiting bands to put the 'ska' in Nebraska

BY PATRICK MINER
Music Critic

Tonight at the Ranch Bowl, you will not see Eddie Vedder.

The venue will instead bring the positive vibes of three diverse ska bands. As it becomes more and more apparent that ska isn't the next big thing to eventually die out, it's time to just kick back and enjoy the multiple styles the genre can bring.

Three bands, Hepcat, The Slackers, and The Gadjits, from three different regions of the country, unite tonight at the Ranch Bowl. All three acts have new albums out, with Hepcat's and The Gadjits' records released Jan. 27, and The Slackers' album released late last year. The records can be found on a new label, Hellcat Records, which is a joint venture between Epitaph Records head Brett Gurewitz and Rancid's Tim Armstrong.

Hepcat has been making quite a name for itself in recent years. Formed in Southern California in 1989, the nine-member

band has developed a blend of ska, reggae and jazz that has been turning the heads of fans all over the world. The band earned a main stage on the Warped Tour last summer, with fans crowding up to catch a glimpse.

The band's latest release is titled "Right On Time" and features the dual vocals of Greg Lee and Alex Desert. The two frontmen compliment each other well, as well as complimenting the solid play of the rest of the band, especially drummer Scott Abels. Abels' versatile style is frequently remarkable, as heard on such songs as "Goodbye Street" and "Tommy's Song."

New York's The Slackers add a soul feel to ska with their latest release, "Redlight." The band seems to effortlessly flow through the 12-song album, beginning with the jazzy instrumental, "Cooking For Tommy," which is dedicated to Skatalite's saxophonist Tommy McCook.

Featuring guitarist T.J. Scanlan, trumpeter Jeremy Mushlin and saxophonist David Hillyard, The Slackers are probably the most relaxing of the three bands. However, on such songs as "Fried

Chicken/Mary Mary" and "She Wants To Be Alone," the band shows it is able to liven its sound up.

Hailing from Kansas City, The Gadjits represent the Midwestern portion of the evening. The band offers more of the pop-ska mixture that has recently been doing very well commercially. The quartet includes the brothers Phillips; with the eldest, Brandon, on guitar; middle brother Zach on bass; and the youngest of the three, Adam, on drums. The group is completed with Heidi Blobaum on keyboards.

With an average age of 17 for its members, The Gadjits don't really have the quality musicianship of Hepcat and The Slackers. However, its latest release, "At Ease," is one of the more entertaining albums this year.



COURTESY PHOTO
THE MEMBERS OF THE GADJITS, a ska band from Kansas City, have an average age of 17. They will perform with Hepcat and The Slackers tonight in an all-ages show at Omaha's Ranch Bowl.

Tracks such as "Bullet in the Mattress," "Party Girl" and "Backup" are very catchy and should convert well to the live setting.

Hepcat, The Gadjits and The Slackers will perform tonight at Omaha's Ranch Bowl, 1600 S. 72nd St. Tickets for the all-ages show are \$10. Doors open at 8 p.m., and the show begins at 9 p.m.



COURTESY PHOTO
HEPCAT, a nine-member ska outfit from Southern California, will perform at Omaha's Ranch Bowl tonight in an all-ages show.