

## Bar takes a shot at THEATRE

Brass Rail boasts performance of Sam Shepard's 'The Unseen Hand'

BY JASON HARDY  
Senior staff writer

Sometimes beer, second-hand smoke and sorority girls just don't cut it. Enter Adam DeMars and Brad Mausbach—stage right.

The two theater majors have taken it upon themselves to provide entertainment for the hordes of beer guzzling Brass Rail patrons, not to mention experience for hungry theater students.

DeMars and Mausbach are producing a performance of the Sam Shepard one act play, "The Unseen Hand." The show runs tonight through Saturday and Sept. 3 through Sept. 5.

DeMars and Mausbach, who both work at the Brass Rail, 1436 O St., figured that since live bands perform at the bar, so could actors. They checked with their boss, who gave them the go ahead.

They have since done two productions, one last summer and the other during the first two weeks of August.

"It's a good experience, and it's something new that nobody in Lincoln has ever done," DeMars said.

He said the two previous performances both went very well despite what some would consider the obvious clash between a theatrical atmosphere and that of the Brass Rail.

Ryan Johnston, the play's director, said the bar's atmosphere is a big part of what makes doing the play so cool.

"I want people to sit back and drink beer and relax," Johnston said. "It's not very often that people

can go to a play and get up and get a beer or go to the bathroom. It's a nice way to have a relationship and sense of interaction with the audience."

DeMars believes the kooky subject matters of each script were very conducive to a bar environment.

"I think the scripts that we've chosen really fit in," he said.

Of the two shows they put on before, one

took place in an alley—very similar to the Brass Rail beer garden—and the other in a bar, no stretch of the imagination for patrons. However, Johnston said "The Unseen Hand" is on an entirely different level.

"It's really wild, and there's a lot of cool music, so it should be real fun for a bar environment," he said.

Enter kooky plot—stage left. A 120-year-old man who's been living in a car on the side of a highway meets "Willie the space freak," who tells him he wants to bring the man's two brothers back to life and travel into space with six guns a-blazin'.

Aside from giving the bar crowd a taste of something different (really different), DeMars said the performances gave students a chance to get paid for real theater work.

Actors get a slice of the cut from the door, after production and copy-right costs are deducted.

"In that aspect, you could actually call it professional theater, and that's something different," DeMars said. "They can walk away with that on their resumé, and no one will know that it was done at the Brass Rail beer garden."

Despite the show's location, DeMars said, the actors all took their performances very seriously.

"All the students act real professional in what they do, and they don't want to be taken for granted because it's done in a college bar," he said.

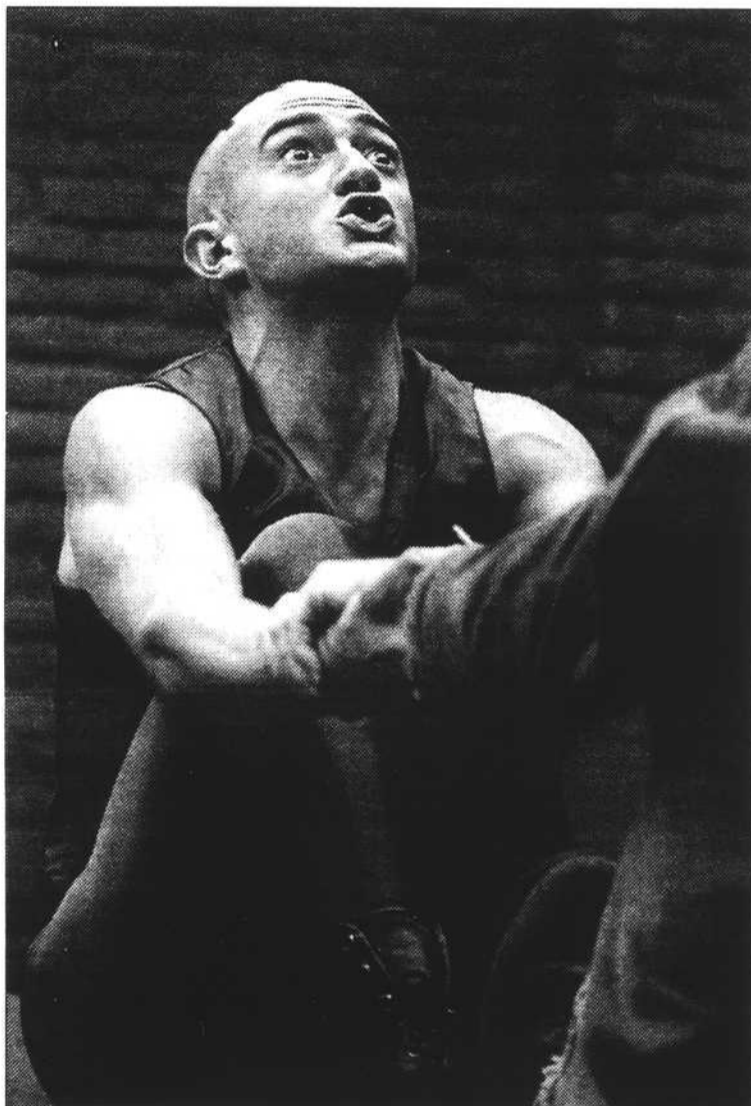
Johnston said most of the students involved with the production were excited about doing something other than university-sponsored events.

"It is nice to do something that's out of the university theater environment," Johnston said. "It's a chance to have a different kind of experience, because when you're a student, those chances don't come up very often."

Seth Swink, a member of the play's cast, said he likes gaining theatrical experience, but mainly he has fun acting in the play.

"It's been hard, but it's been a lot of fun," Swink said. "As much fun as we've been having, I think an audience can't help but have fun, too."

The all-ages show starts at 8 p.m. and costs \$6 for general admission, \$4 for students.



DAWN DIETRICH/DN

WILLIE THE SPACE FREAK, in "The Unseen Hand," played by Kyle Johnston, restores the Blue Morphan's youth. Sam Shepard's "The Unseen Hand" starts today and will continue until Sept. 5 at the Brass Rail beer garden.



COURTESY PHOTO

## Actionslacks' indie success a musical fit

BY BRET SCHULTE  
A&E editor

Already 26, Tim Scanlin works a steady stream of temp jobs, reads Stephen Crane and feels most comfortable in his favorite pair of sports pants.

He also fronts power-chord pop trio Actionslacks, a hooky, forceful and frequently clever Bay Area band making its Lincoln debut tonight at Duffy's, 1412 O St.

The show supports the group's second album, "One Word," a spelling tip on the band's name, which serves as a tribute to Levi's famous stretch slacks.

Laden with throaty rhymes and quick melodies, "One Word" marks a breakthrough for the Arena Rock Recording Company artists, whose first album, "Too Bright, Just Right goodnight" appeared on the now-defunct Minneapolis label, Skene!

"Our first record was recorded in three days in a basement, and we had no money," Scanlin recalled.

"We wanted the second album to be more than just a live studio record."

"One Word" builds on the trio's basic guitar, bass and drums collection by adding piano and even a string quintet to a few tracks.

Calling from a date in Houston, Scanlin chatted while his band mates loaded up the group's mini-van.

"We are driving the Slackswagon, known to the department of motor vehicles as a 1994 Ford Aerostar. It's got air-conditioning," he bragged.

The van has already carried them half-way around the country, starting in Los Angeles at the infamous Viper Room, owned by actor Johnny Depp.

Scanlin reports that Depp rarely visits the Viper Room, but the band hardly noticed his absence.

Actionslacks members aren't always so flippant, though. Scanlin, along with drummer Marty Kelly and bass player Mark Wijsen, knows about the pitfalls and complexities that accompany indie success.

"I'm acutely aware of the capacity for being pretentious in music," Scanlin said. "(But) as one guy said, I would rather hear a pretentious album than a bad album."

The catchy simplicity of the Actionslacks stems from an affinity for indie-pop bands like Guided By Voices and New Sweet Breath. But the band also looks toward pop masterminds Elvis Costello and The Replacements for inspiration.

The desire for pop perfection is what brings the Actionslacks back to the studio, where they tinker with guitar dubs, mixes and a variety of instrumentation.

"The studio is a palate that you can practice on," Scanlin said.

He describes the band as "wearing two different hats" to mark the distinction between the dense compositions of the record and the three-piece live rock show.

On the road, the three musicians, crammed in the van with their equipment, keep their minds sharp in other ways.

"We'd just recently taken to all nautical terms in the van," Scanlin explained. "We now say 'Lightning to the starboard bow,' and when we park it's 'Drop the anchor.'"

"And you have to say it in a pirate voice."

But the real fun starts at the shows. The band is frequently bombarded with, you guessed it, pairs upon pairs of Levi's action slacks of all shapes and sizes.

"People give us action slacks all the time," Scanlin said. "I wear two pairs, black."

For those interested, Scanlin wears a 34 or 36 waist and prefers 30 long, so they are just a little too short. He also likes shades of maroon.

Despite probable trade violations, Scanlin hopes to sell the "stretchy and comfortable" pants they collect along with the rest of the band's merchandise.

The Actionslacks open for Split Lip and Rayfield at 10 p.m. The show costs \$3, a small fee for a little action in your slacks.

### Movie Review

## 'Dead Man' is beyond resuscitation

BY PATRICK MINER  
Staff writer

A well-liked but underachieving student manipulates a low self-esteemed brain to buy into a mischievous scheme that doesn't exactly turn out as planned. Sound familiar?

Zack is back.

Mark-Paul Gosselaar, better known to the 14- to 30-year-old demographic as Zack Morris of "Saved By The Bell," has returned with a starring role in the MTV production "Dead Man on Campus." Gosselaar teams up with Tom Everett Scott, and they play roommates in college who fail to live up to their parents' expectations.

Gosselaar reprises his role as Zack, although the character's name in this movie is Cooper, a wealthy party boy who doesn't even know what classes he is

signed up for. Scott plays Josh, a pre-med freshman who hangs around with Cooper too much and begins to fail his classes also.

The premise of the film is a simple one. One night at the bar, Cooper is told a piece of classic college lore: The survivors of a dead roommate receive an automatic 4.0 GPA for the semester. After deciding not to murder Josh, the two go around campus attempting to find a suicidal maniac who would fit the bill and move in.

Randy Pearlstein, Corey Page and TV star Lochlyn Munro are three of these lunatics. Unfortunately, none of them is funny. Munro is especially pathetic as Cliff, although he does make a cool sound when he chatters his teeth.

Thankfully, there are some

### The Facts

Title: "Dead Man on Campus"  
Stars: Mark-Paul Gosselaar, Tom Everett Scott, Lochlyn Munro, Poppy Montgomery  
Director: Alan Cohn  
Rating: R  
Grade: C+  
Five Words: Zack needs a new jobby-job

one-liners that can be very funny, most of which occur when Cooper holds parties in his room. There are a few other good lines here and there, but it is a basic Adam Sandler film plot without the good fortune of starring anyone as funny as Sandler.

Most of the blame for the boring sequences falls on MTV's "The Real World" editor and promotional director Alan Cohn. Cohn has no experience above production assistant in any film,

so he might not have been the best choice as director.

For Gosselaar, this film hits a little too close to home; the "Saved By The Bell" comparisons are uncanny. He befriends, and only knows, three female students.

He uses school strictly as a means to meet people, and when everyone's looking to have fun, he's the guy they go to. While Gosselaar tries to trick the audience with a black hairdo in the film, we all know that bad ideas and worse acting are just around the corner.

In the end, there are only two certainties about "Dead Man on Campus." First, after starring in "An American Werewolf in Paris" and now "Dead Man," Tom Everett Scott needs to fire his agent. Second, "Saved By the Bell" will be known as just a slightly better career launching pad than "Diff'rent Strokes."