

Web site allows users to custom design CDs

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Manuel said the site has grown considerably in popularity since its conception.

"We are experiencing a 40 to 50 percent growth every month," he said. Manuel said the Web site is aimed at a 15- to 30-year-old demographic.

"Anyone who likes new music will like our site," he said. "We encompass people who can't shop in New York but still like good music, as well as people who have a good collection and now want to be their own DJ."

The songs are divided into two primary categories, indie rock and dance/electronic, and from there into numerous, more descriptive sub-categories such as trip-hop and illbient.

Manuel said the tracks on the site are priced competitively, and many are hard to find in a regular record store.

The site offers some free selections in each genre, but users are required to pay an initial \$4.99 for their first selection, no matter what the title is. Each

subsequent track ranges from \$.69 to \$.99 each.

A disc with an average selection of 13 to 14 songs will run about \$13, plus shipping and handling charges.

"We offer the free tracks to get people introduced to the service and also to get them to believe the deal is real," Manuel said. "From ordering to receiving, we get much closer to the customer, and then they see it's a real product, and it's great."

As another bonus, customers who have an e-mail account receive a letter from the company once their disk is shipped, usually within 24 hours of placing the order, letting them know it is on the way and encouraging feedback once it is received.

Although the site offers a unique opportunity for the musically inclined, there are a few drawbacks.

The selection of music, for those who are not fans of independent punk or dance, is relatively limited. There are no options for listeners of Top 40, country or just good old rock 'n' roll.

And the titles that are available can be a bit misleading, too. The site, which offers thousands of tracks, offers absolutely no information regarding which recording they come from.

"I Am a Scientist," by Guided By Voices, for example, is not the same track that appears on the album, "Bee Thousand" where it first appeared. Instead of the usual lo-fi fuzz of the album track, it combines some new instrumentation with a more basic rock beat.

In short, it's not what a fan of Guided By Voices would probably want to hear.

Songs from artists such as Beck and the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion are offered, but these also are different versions from what the listener may have been expecting. Unfortunately, the short clip offered on the Web is usually not enough to detect variances in the song.

As a whole, the tracks won't offer too many surprises, but the volume level will.

The sound quality of the completed CD varies from normal to sub-par and the volume jumps from track to track, forcing the listener to adjust his or her stereo throughout the disc.

Manuel blamed the sound variation on the master copies, saying that since there is no standard for digital mastering, many of the levels vary.

He added that the site is working to improve on the final sound quality of the discs.

Additions of more pop and mainstream music may be in the future for the site, but Manuel said first the site needs to cut deals with more of the larger record companies who control those artists.

The site has more improvements planned for the future, including beefing up the selections offered currently, keeping customer service at a high level and making the site more user-friendly.

The process of selecting songs for the CD can be rather time-consuming, but Manuel said he hopes people will

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ALAN MANUEL
CDuctive site founder

be patient when using the site. "The only thing that holds people back is time and just that it's something new," he said. "Once they see someone else's CD, it's brainless for them to check it out because it's cheap, and it's cool."

Junior Brown crafts own musical style

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moved to different places across the country and developed his craft by a number of different styles, including western swing, bluegrass, rock 'n' roll and surf.

He even played a few luaus while living in Hawaii.

He's done it all, and his new album displays his talent like a junior high trophy case. Songs such as "Long Walk Back to San Antone" and "The Better Half" showcase Brown's abilities as a singer and songwriter. His baritone drawl pats you on the back with tales of lost love and rough days.

"I'm halfway gone, but my better half is coming home" sings Brown in a song about his love for his wife Tanya Rae, who, conveniently, is also Brown's rhythm guitarist.

"She's a real great player and that's basically it," Brown says. "We

always like to be together so it makes it nice to be a team like that."

Another song soon to be as classic as a Cadillac is the roaring hot-rod anthem "Freedom Machine," a song rampant with high speed licks and twangy, string bends. Brown's guitar work on this song is nothing short of amazing as he combines his expertise of both steel and regular guitar playing.

Other standouts on the album are a cover of Elvis' "Rock-A-Hula Baby," the quick and quirky instrumental "Peelin' Taters," and a nine-minute blues song simply titled "Stupid Blues."

Listening to the album it becomes immediately obvious it was crafted by a man who lives by playing the music he loves. And then that man took it upon himself to create the instrument that would make it possible

That's right, Brown is the sole

inventor and user of something he calls the "Guit-Steel," an invention which fuses an electric guitar and a steel guitar all in one body. He uses it to play live shows so he can switch back and forth from steel to electric guitar.

And four albums and eight years after he produced his first release, "12 Shades of Brown," he is still pioneering his way through country music without becoming stagnant and routine, a fate befallen upon many of today's mainstream country stars.

"Everybody likes variety in music but the problem is when you start not being like everybody else," Brown says.

"You have to kind of make your own category, and that's sort of what I've done."

Tonight's 19-and-over roll in the hay starts at 9 p.m. with opening act Cactus Hill. The price is \$14.

They say Obi-Wan was wise, but he never tried this.

DN News Quiz

<http://www.unl.edu/DailyNeb>

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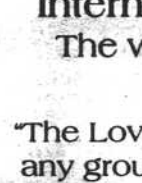
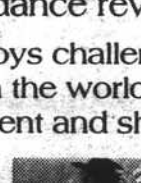

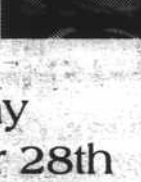
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Dropped Notes



COURTESY PHOTO

AS THE VICTIM of a violent home, actress Suzanne Somers has dedicated time and money for abused children. She appears tonight at the Lied Center for a benefit show for Lincoln's new Child Advocacy Center.

Children of Alcoholics and founded the Suzanne Somers Institute for the Effects of Addictions On Families.

Last year's fund-raiser featured the Oak Ridge Boys, and in 1996 country prodigy LeAnn Rimes

offered her young voice to help the underprivileged.

The show begins at 8 p.m., and tickets are available at the Lied Center box office. The cost is \$25 for adults and \$21 for students.

Somers to take Lied stage tonight

Thighmaster-mind Suzanne Somers makes a special appearance at the Lied Center for Performing Arts tonight for a benefit performance dedicated to local victims of child abuse.

The proceeds for BryanLGH Medical Center's eighth annual Star Night will go to the Lincoln/Lancaster County Child Advocacy Center, a shelter for abused children.

It's only fitting that this year's Star Night features Somers, who grew up the child of a violent alcoholic. Her singing and dancing talents coupled with her comedic acumen should make for a night filled with entertainment possibilities.

Her childhood experiences in a dysfunctional and abusive home were highlighted in her 1988 autobiography, "Keeping Secrets," which lasted on the New York Times' best-sellers list for 21 weeks.

Somers, famous for her role as the ditzy blonde, Chrissy, in the '70s sitcom "Three's Company," has recently come back to national attention with her moderately successful family-oriented sitcom "Step by Step."

Somers has used her regained publicity to bring national attention to the cause of children's welfare. She has served two terms as National Honorary Chairperson of the National Association for