

# Music made the way you like it

*Big band group invites audience to join in during shows at Runza*

Music

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER  
Staff writer

If you've ever desired to play in a big jazz band, now is your chance.

The Monday Night Big Band, which performs every Monday evening above Rock 'n Roll Runza, invites local musicians to play with the band during its performances.

"Lincoln doesn't have a lot to offer jazz musicians, or even musicians in general," said Cory Biggerstaff, one of the Monday Night Big Band's bass players. "This allows people to learn who you are and what you play."

The Monday Night Big Band consists of 200 musicians, professional and amateur, who perform on a rotating basis. Each week, 17 of the musicians gather at the Top of the Rock Banquet Facility to play an evening of mixed jazz.

"Since we started a year and a half ago, we've never had the same band up there twice," said Bob Krueger, one of the founding members.

The constantly changing lineup creates an atmosphere of experimentation and spontaneity conducive to sit-in musicians.

Each Monday, the band plays three sets, allowing audience members to sit in during the second and third sets.

Since the band does not rehearse outside of the performances, the musicians rely completely on their sight-reading skills. This allows audience members to jump in on whatever the band is playing.

"There's no sense of fear of messing up, because we all will," Biggerstaff said. "It actually promotes a higher level of playing and makes us better musicians."

Jarred Wilhelm, a Lincoln Southeast senior, attended the Sept. 28 performance to sit in with the band on trumpet.

He said playing with high-caliber musicians helped him define which areas of his playing needed improvement.

Because Wilhelm plans to major in music at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln next fall, he said, the performances also offered him the chance to make valuable connections with other musicians in



GENE SMITH (left), a professor of saxophone and the Monday Night Big Band's leader, plays "Out of Nowhere" with David Pearson, a sax instructor at Dietze Music, on Monday evening on the second level of Rock 'n Roll Runza, 14th and P streets. Andy Garbacz (from top left), Andy Strain and Chris Wigda are three of the four trombone players.

Lincoln.

"It gives the musicians a chance to play ... together," said Dean Haist, another founding member. "It's not necessarily geared to make the audience happy, but we hope they enjoy it."

Donna Hill, one of the band's sponsors and a regular audience member, said the mixture of faces is the band's greatest asset.

"What's fun is that you'll see the faces and think, 'Oh, I don't know about tonight.' But they always surprise you," Hill said. "It's always different. That's part of what we like about it."

The Monday Night Big Band performed at the Ramada Plaza Hotel, 141 N. Ninth St., before moving its shows to the facility above Rock 'n Roll Runza, at the corner of 14th and P streets, this year.

"We hope to draw a different audience," said Jason Keagy, assistant director of Arts Incorporated, which manages the Monday Night Big Band. "We hope the proximity to campus will make it easier for college students to attend."

Not only is the location closer to campus, it also has better acoustics, a better atmosphere and a view

of downtown Lincoln, Biggerstaff said.

"In the basement of the Ramada, it seemed like we were playing in a cave," he said.

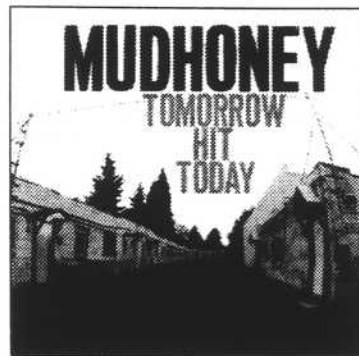
So far, Haist said, audiences have responded favorably to the new space. Average attendance for the first three weeks hovered around 75 per night.

The Monday Night Big Band is actually the first regularly performing version of an ensemble that has existed in various forms over the last 10 years. Musicians had attempted similar feats in the past, but it wasn't until Haist and Krueger joined forces with Brad Obbink, Dave Sharp and Scott Vicroy in 1997 that a more permanent group was born.

The five shared the responsibility of organizing the weekly event until Sharp moved to Iowa. Now, the four remaining founders arrange the lineup of musicians and establish a rotating series of directors.

The Monday Night Big Band performs every Monday night at the Top of the Rock Banquet Facility from 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. Admission is \$4 for adults and \$3 for students with valid ID. For more information, call Arts Incorporated (402) 477-8008.

## New Releases



Mudhoney  
"Tomorrow Hit Today"  
Reprise  
Grade: B

It's been three years since the fuzzed-up grunge rock outfit Mudhoney released an album of woes and self pity, but it's finally back.

Though you probably thought this group was dead, Mudhoney has climbed through the debris that was once known as Seattle grunge and offered up another wall of depression, redemption and a whole bunch of wah-wah guitar leads.

The title of Mudhoney's latest release, "Tomorrow Hit Today," is a direct reference to "When Tomorrow Hits," a song off of its first self-titled album. After six albums, and 10 years, the band must have awoken and whammo, tomorrow hit, and it hit hard.

The music of "Tomorrow Hit Today" proves it is possible for a band to move on without losing its roots. The sound is still grainy and rough, but there are more intricate melodies at work, and it sounds as though each musician has matured. It's a quality offering that ranges from heavy, dragging bluesy ballads to a few up-tempo rockers.

"Oblivion" and "Ghost" are probably the album's best tunes. "Oblivion" combines some of drummer Dan Peters' best work with a catchy wah-wah chorus melody. The lyrics paint a depressing picture of society, driving home Mudhoney's continuing message that everything is not OK. The song's music works well with singer Mark Arm's zombie-like chanting chorus of "Oblivion - Oblivion - Oblivion."

"Ghost" is rife with traditional 1950s rock 'n' roll elements and includes a loud and steady bass line with a catchy power chord chorus that will stick with you until your next welfare check arrives.

Aside from "Ghost" and "Oblivion," there really aren't many up-tempo tunes on "Tomorrow Hit Today." Many of the songs have a slow feel that combines a lot of little guitar ditties and vocals that spill out like a beer gut.

"Move With the Wind" is a hallowed and ominous love song that spins with emotion before slowly marching on through broken-up, reverbed guitar parts.

As a whole, the album is a good offering from a band with a sound as unique as Mudhoney's. The music is definitely going in a new direction while still retaining the elements that have drawn people to Mudhoney in the past. The only problem is that Mark Arm's vocals don't seem to be evolving in the same direction as the group's music, and at times they seem out of place.

Arm doesn't sound as natural as he did on "Superfuzz Bigmuff" or "Every Good Boy Deserves Fudge," and the album would have sounded better had the vocals been softer and more intertwined with the music rather than loud and up-front.

Despite the vocal aspects of the "Tomorrow Hit Today" and the lack of anthems like "In 'N' Out of Grace," "Hate the Police" or "Suck You Dry," this album is still a very good offering, and is much better than their 1995 release, "My Brother the Cow."

- Jason Hardy

# Plains paintings lead to new horizons

BY SARAH BAKER  
Senior staff writer

A little piece of the open plains is now indoors with the opening of "River Roads" at the Burkholder Project today.

"River Roads," the newest installment of oil and watercolor paintings by local artist Ann Burkholder, is an extension of her collection of "Prairie Horizons" paintings.

As the name of the show implies, the paintings are all of roads leading down to rivers.

She said all the roads are real, and most weave through the Nebraska plains.

"I have always been fascinated with roads that run down along rivers," she said. "This show is more focused on that theme, but still an extension of my other show."

Burkholder said the main piece is one that shows a portrayal of a road near the Platte River in eastern Nebraska.

Nebraskans will be able to relate to this show because they are surrounded by images just like those in the exhibit, Burkholder said.

"People who were raised with wide-open land spaces are going to relate to this," she said.

"The wide-open landscapes and big skies are what the paintings are all about."

Burkholder's project is one of two exhibits opening at the gallery; the second being "A New Venue," which consists of hand-made jewelry sculpted by Nancy Childs.

The collection, which consists mostly of necklaces, bracelets and earrings, encompasses a variety of jewelry-making techniques, including opaque and transparent clays and metal.



ART COURTESY OF BURKHOLDER PROJECT  
ANNE BURKHOLDER, designer and developer of the Burkholder Project in the Haymarket, opens her new exhibit, "Prairie Horizons," Thursday. The exhibit captures the silent beauty of Nebraska's thoroughfares and plains.

Both shows will run at the Burkholder Project, 719 P St., from Oct. 1 through the end of the month. There is a reception for the shows Friday from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. For more information, call the Burkholder Project at (402) 477-3305.