

New Releases



311
"Omaha Sessions"
What Have You Records
Grade: B

311
"Live"
Capricorn Records
Grade: B+

311 has always worked diligently to release new albums. Although the former Omaha act's next full-length studio album won't be in stores until May, the band has released its eighth and ninth albums of the decade, "Omaha Sessions" and "311 Live."

"Omaha Sessions" is a best-of compilation of songs from the band's out-of-print first three albums, 1990's "Dammit," and 1991's "Unity" and "Hydroponic."

The songs on "Omaha Sessions" aren't second-class tracks, though. 311's biggest early hits included "Slinky" and "Summer of Love," and "Damn," which was part of the set list for last year's Dec. 10th appearance at Pershing Auditorium.

Since the original recordings of the songs were cheaply made, 311 chose to live up the sound. Four of the songs on "Omaha Sessions" have been remixed, and all of the tracks are freshly remastered.

On the remastered tracks, there are some noticeable differences in quality. SA Martinez's harmonious vocals on "Right Now" are much clearer, as is P-Nut's rhythmic bass playing.

Three of the four remixed tracks sound much better as well. There is more vocal and guitar distortion on the chorus of "Soulsucker," and new vocals and guitar on "Slinky" improve on the classic.

The new mix of "This Too Shall Pass" is disappointing, however. Much of the comedic phrasing by vocalist Nick Hexum has been taken out, and the song is left with longer guitar sections that aren't reflective of the track's previous "Dammit" recording.

"Omaha Sessions" cannot be purchased in stores, but it can be found through the band's mailing list or its Web site at <http://www.311music.com>.

While it will be available in stores, "311 Live," won't be released until Nov. 3. Fans undoubtedly will flock to record stores to get their 311 on 11-3, a date intentionally set by the numeral-conscious fivesome.

Since its early days, 311 has been best known for live performances rather than epic records.

The first three songs on "311 Live" are singles, with straight-up rock versions of "Down," "Homebrew," and "Beautiful Disaster." The rest of the tracks on the record contrast well, from the hard and funky "Omaha Stylee" and "Feels So Good," and a better-than-original version of the "Light Years."

The improvisation that is apparent at 311's live shows has been captured here as well. There is an extended guitar solo by Tim Mahoney at the end of "Nix Hex," and Chad Sexton's drum solo on "Applied Science" itself is worth price of the album.

-Patrick Miner

LOVETT AND LIED it

Eclectic musical style expected in Lyle Lovett's show

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Staff writer

No one knows what to expect from Lyle Lovett.

The wild-haired musician defies categorization musically, slipping between genres like a wet bar of soap in a Texas shower house.

His dry, sardonic sense of humor tends to catch new listeners off-guard, and the man is just as comfortable singing about his long, lost baby as he is about the size of his ... hat.

And, to top it all off, the quirky artist was married to Julia Roberts, a match still pondered by fans of both stars.

So, the speculation surrounding Lovett's performance tonight at the Lied Center for Performing Arts comes as no surprise.

The Lied Center admits to its almost entire ignorance of the details of Lovett's performance, and his publicist doesn't seem to know, either.

Most likely, Lovett will perform selections from his new double compact disc, "Step Inside This House."

The album, composed of songs by some of Lovett's most important influences, capitalizes on Lovett's subtle, sarcastic sense of humor. With songs by Guy Clark, Steven Fromholz, Michael Martin Murphey and Walter Hyatt, the album invokes tender images of life and love in Texas.

Like Lovett's past musical endeavors, the album traverses from honky-tonk to blues to rock 'n' roll to pop.

Lovett also should perform works from his past albums, which include the Grammy-award-winning "Road to Ensenada" and "Lyle Lovett and his Large Band."

Lovett's unexpected stop in Lincoln resulted when the previously booked Chet Atkins canceled his Lied Center engagement because of illness. Atkins also canceled several of his other October performances.

Fortunately for Lincoln, Lovett is between performances in Minneapolis and Denver. His stop in Lincoln is the first since his performance at Farm Aid III in 1987.

The other act slated to appear tonight, guitarist

Leo Kottke, will still perform. Kottke has performed with Lovett before and has released more than 20 recordings. A guitar legend, Kottke also is hard to cate-

gorize. His albums can be found under country, jazz, folk and miscellaneous at record stores.

Lovett and Kottke will perform tonight at 8 at the



MATT HANEY/DN

Lied Center for Performing Arts, 301 N. 12th St. Tickets are \$32, \$28 and \$24 and half-price for students. For reservations, call the Lied Center Box Office at (402) 472-4747.

New Releases



COURTESY PHOTO

THE JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION has a new album featuring an old sound. Spencer is now rejecting the term "blues," while rediscovering the improvisational-based genre as a rock musician.

The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion
"Acme"
Matador
Grade: A

That's right ladies and gentlemen, the Blues is still number one!

If you doubt the claim, prepare to become a believer, because Jon Spencer and his band the Blues Explosion are out to declare war on your senses (and your booty) with the blues flavored, hip-hop party record of the year, "Acme."

"Acme" is a party waiting to happen, a feeling the first line of the opening track, "Calvin," asserts - "Let's have a party, come on everybody!"

The band's last effort, 1996's "Now I Got Worry," found Spencer, guitarist Judah Bauer and drummer Russell Simins attempting a more experimental, punk-influenced sound reminiscent of Spencer's former crew, Pussy Galore.

With "Acme," The JSBX returns to a groove-oriented vibe similar to that of 1994's "Orange," which included a guest appearance by hip-hop's great white hope, Beck.

Like he did for the 1995 EP "Experimental Remixes," Spencer opened up the production

of "Acme" to see how outside influences would affect the songs. The experiment paid off, as the new album travels effectively between blues and hip-hop without sounding ludicrous.

"High Gear," the choice track, and "Bernie" are fronted with the straight-forward guitar rock that frequently flows from The JSBX. And Spencer may "Talk About the Blues" on the fifth track, yet he proclaims, "I do not play no blues, I play rock 'n' roll!" So is The JSBX a blues band, or a group of rock misfits? You decide.

The most interesting aspect of "Acme" is its exploration of beats. "Lovin' Machine" borrows a sample from the Beastie Boys' epic beer drinkin' anthem, "Paul Revere," but Spencer makes it his own by adding a touch of soul.

"Acme" ends in a state of total mayhem with "Attack." Hard-core drum licks, record scratches and Spencer assaulting the mic make for a great finish to a remarkable album.

With an enigmatic personality and presence, Spencer reaffirms his position as the '90s version of a younger Elvis, a blues rocker himself. Spencer may claim that he doesn't play the blues, but he can't deny the influence.

Regardless, it's 1998, and the Blues is back!

-Jim Zavodny