

Ballet with Bite

'Dracula' haunts Lied with eerie performance

By LIZA HOLTMEIER
Staff writer

One hundred one years ago, Bram Stoker created a villain who continues to permeate our consciousness and fears: Dracula.

The chillingly evil vampire has become an embodiment of humans' attraction to the macabre and spawned the creation of movies, cults and countless texts.

Tonight, the Houston Ballet will try to bring the gothic world of Dracula to life through the art of classical ballet at the Lied Center for Performing Arts, 301 N. 12th St.

Choreographed to music by Franz Liszt, the ballet portrays Dracula as his essentially evil self and the embodiment of all that is ugly and dead in the world. Two young lovers, who fall victim to Dracula's hypnotic power, contrast his sinister nature through their undying devotion to each other and come to symbolize the beauty of life.

The Houston Ballet version takes place entirely in Dracula's home region of Transylvania. The first and third acts occur in Dracula's castle, while the second act transpires in a nearby village.

The Houston Ballet is not the first company to attempt a production

revolving around the legendary vampire. From Atlanta to Kalamazoo, Mich., various local ballet companies have mounted annual productions of the show to celebrate Halloween.

Because of the subject's popularity, the design team of the Houston Ballet version was slightly intimidated during the initial production stages.

"Our sensibility has just been saturated with images of Dracula through movies," said Thomas Boyd, the ballet's set designer. "We had so much to compete with."

However, the Houston team decided to discard previous interpretations and work to present its own vision.

Ben Stevenson, the ballet's choreographer and the company's artistic director, distilled the story to its key characters and conflicts to make it more ballet-accessible.

The design team was left to provide the proper environment for the production. Its initial reaction was fervent and somewhat bewildered.

"We often jump on a horse and take off in all directions when we're given an opportunity like this," Boyd said. "But you have to pay attention to detail. Everything has to be right and logical."

So, after a year of discussion, story boards and models, the team had a pro-

"We have equal parts of revulsion and fascination to the macabre in general. The idea of an anti-hero transcends time."

THOMAS BOYD
set designer

Please see DRACULA on 10



COURTESY PHOTO
"DRACULA" APPEARS on the dance floor this week at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. The Houston Ballet's tour of "Dracula" stops tonight and Wednesday in Lincoln to celebrate the 101st anniversary of Bram Stoker's "Dracula."

Radio King makes appearance on '33rd Street'

By JASON HARDY
Senior staff writer

This week the Nebraska ETV Network is taking one of Nebraska's premiere rockabilly bands out of the smoky and beer-laden haze of the bar scene and projecting it onto televisions everywhere.

Radio King, known for its vintage rock 'n' roll sound and on-stage craziness, is set to rule more than the radio this week with a performance on NETV's "33rd Street Sessions," a music series featuring up-and-coming local and regional acts.

While Radio King has been together for only a year and a half, its members have been playing music all their lives. But when the group recorded the "33rd Street Sessions" performance last July, it was a first for everybody.

"It was way different because it was in the day and nobody was allowed to bring booze into the building and there was no smoke," bass player and vocalist Marty Stenhausen said.

"It was pretty nerve-racking, but exciting," Sue Maryott, co-director for "33rd Street Sessions," said Radio King handled a televised atmosphere and studio like it was no different than being in the bar.

"It's hard to get a band fired up for this because you're bringing them into a pretty sterile environment," Maryott said. "But I really think their show is probably going to be the best this year."

John Helwick, Radio King's vocalist, said the show stayed true to the group's style, as well as their sound.

"The vintage instruments have a lot to do with our sound," Helwick said.



COURTESY PHOTO
ROCKABILLY ACT RADIO KING has been pleasing fans at local bars since it formed a year and a half ago. Now fans can catch Radio King's first televised concert on NETV's "33rd Street Sessions" on Friday.

"I think for the most part they kept each signal as we gave it to them. They didn't really add any effects or anything to make it sound better to them. They captured to a T what we gave them."

Following Radio King's performance this

week will be a re-showing of a concert by the American Indian blues band Indigenous, which hails from South Dakota.

The show was filmed last year and the group's live album, "Blues From the Sky," was recorded during this performance.

Maryott said getting Indigenous to be a part of the program was quite an achievement.

"I was really torn in bringing them in because the basis of the show is Nebraska bands, but I felt like they play here enough that it was okay to bring them in," Maryott said. "Also, they're still from the heartland. It's not like I got someone from New York."

The group was asked to play for an episode of MTV's "Road Rules" at the same time the "33rd Street Sessions" show was to record, but Maryott said she convinced Indigenous to opt for Nebraska public television instead.

For Radio King, joining the ranks of bands like Floating Opera, Mercy Rule and the many other talented local groups who've been on "33rd Street Sessions" was not only an honor, but an ego booster as well.

"It's a really nice thing to have as far as letting people know what you're capable of and what you've achieved," Helwick said. "We thought that was just the coolest thing. It's a really good feeling."

Stenhausen said being asked to do an episode of "33rd Street Sessions" was a sign that the members of Radio King are on the right track.

"We have very big aspirations, but they're realistic because we've all been playing for a long time and we know the reality of the situation."

"It seems like the bands that we respect aren't the big stadium bands, they're not mainstream artists but they're well-known in the circles of people who know good music. To make it to that level would be really great."

The Radio King performance on "33rd Street Sessions" airs Oct. 30 at 9 p.m. followed by Indigenous' performance at 9:30 p.m.