



SLEATER-KINNEY is (from left) Carrie Brownstein, Janet Weiss and Corin Tucker. The indie-pop group from Washington will be spending the night at Omaha's Sokol Auditorium.

Band inspired by audience, not critics

By SEAN MCCARTHY
Staff writer

Concert Preview

"Words and guitar." Sleater-Kinney's got them. That phrase, from the song of the same name, helped the trio's last album, "Dig Me Out," become one of the most critically acclaimed releases of last year. It finished just below the heralded albums from Bob Dylan and Radiohead in the Village Voice's "Pazz and Jop" poll — the Pulitzer Prize of rock-music polls.

Tonight, Sleater-Kinney brings its intense, power-pop style to the Sokol Underground, 2234 S. 13th St., in Omaha along with Glance to the Sequel and Mercy Rule.

While Sleater-Kinney has yet to break into platinum superstardom, the band had a taste of critical success last year. Drummer Janet Weiss said she was happy to see the band receive positive press but was reluctant to put all her faith in what critics say.

"We concentrate on the audience," Weiss said. "Their excitement is more rewarding than seeing us in print."

Speaking from her home in Portland, Ore., Weiss put down the phone for a bit to see if any of her utilities had been cut off. It's not that she doesn't have the cash to pay the bills; she just doesn't spend that much time at home anymore. Weiss had just returned from England, where the band finished up the final leg of its tour before the new album comes out in February 1999.

Weiss is the newest member of the band, having joined Sleater-Kinney a little more than two years ago. Co-founders Corin Tucker and Carrie Brownstein formed the band in 1994. The group got its band name from a road near Olympia, Wash., where Tucker and Brownstein currently reside. Sleater-Kinney's self-titled debut album and its follow-up, "Call the

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drummer

Doctor," generated a huge critical buzz. Mixing hard-edged melodies with confessional lyrics, the band created a sound that was as abrasive as it was sweet.

Much of the lyrical and musical power of the band comes from the chemistry between Tucker and Brownstein. Both of

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Scary tales brew with fresh coffee

By SARAH BAKER
Senior staff writer

Most people wouldn't expect to spend a cool fall night just days before Halloween with the likes of Edgar Allan Poe, Anne Rice or Stephen King.

And although they won't be there in the flesh, their macabre works will, ready to put some fear into the hearts of a few coffee-drinking college students.

Fright Night, a presentation of horror and Halloween literature readings, takes place tonight at the Coffee House, 1324 P St.

The gathering, which will include readings of both original works and those of more well-known horror writers, is sponsored by the local chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, an English honors fraternity.

Susan Serio, president of Sigma Tau Delta, said the group has held literature readings before, but this is the first one they have had with a Halloween theme.

"We decided the best holiday students could get involved with is Halloween," Serio said. "We hope to have readings ranging from 'Dracula' to things by Anne Rice, or something you did yourself."

The 15 active members of Sigma Tau Delta also sponsor an annual poetry reading to celebrate the birthday of William Shakespeare, but this year they decided to expand after the popularity of the original reading.

Joanna Findlay, also a member of Sigma Tau Delta, said the group has been promoting the reading across campus.

"We just wanted to have an open reading in a coffee house, and one of our members is a friend of the owner of the Coffee House," Findlay said. "I know students at other universities have had Halloween events, so we decided to do one here."

Since this event is the first of its kind, Serio said she wasn't sure how many people to expect, but she hoped for a good crowd.

"We have been talking to a lot of people in other groups that do readings," Serio said. "I think it will be a fairly good turnout. People can just come to listen, and we will also have stuff there to read."

She added that people can expect to hear numerous things at the event.

"Fiction, poetry, whatever," she said. Fright Night takes place tonight at the Coffee House. The readings begin at 7 p.m., and admission is free.

For more information, call the Coffee House at (402) 477-6611.

ONE SANCTUARY

Opera is dream come true for music professor

By JASON HARDY
Senior staff writer

It's taken 16 years, but this weekend Randall Snyder will finally fulfill one of his lifelong dreams.

His one-act comic opera, "Divine Madness," opens Friday at Kimball Recital Hall and plays again Sunday. Snyder, a professor of theory and composition in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Music, said seeing his personal work evolve into a full-fledged production has been a dream come true.

"When you're younger you have dreams of greatness," Snyder said. "Most people rarely achieve the goals they set when they're younger, and though the issue is still in doubt, I think ('Divine Madness') is going to work. I've been very pleased with what has happened so far."

While the act of writing and putting together an opera is an enormous achievement in itself, Snyder hopes to take his "Divine Madness" one step further.

"The real question is what the audience is going to think, and I hope they like this and maybe go away thinking that opera isn't just for older people and serious stuff — that opera can be a lot of fun," Snyder said.

"I really designed this for a general audience. When most people think of opera they think of something really boring and old-fashioned, but in a way this kind of pokes fun at those stereotypes."

"Divine Madness" combines musical elements from classical, jazz and other popular genres and incorporates creative lighting effects with occasional slapstick comedy to form a show fun for people of all ages and tastes.

The story follows a would-be composer who is at his wits end trying to create a masterpiece and realizes that, although he knows enough to appreciate great music, he simply can't write it.

From there the despairing composer finds himself in a number of zany situations, all the while attempting to fulfill his dream of creating a musical masterpiece.

While Snyder himself is a far cry from the melodramatic lead character of "Divine Madness," his quest to create the opera is an epic in itself.

It started in 1982 when Snyder first wrote the words for the piece, which eventually turned into a play. It wasn't until 1995 that a local acting group used the piece for one of its productions, and Snyder became re-intrigued by the idea of making it an



DAWN DIETRICH/DN

JAMES HARDEN, who plays the part of the impresario in the play "Divine Madness," tells the composer, played by John David DeHaan, to be quiet. "Divine Madness" will be showing Friday and Sunday at Kimball Recital Hall.

opera.

From there he contacted his first choice for the lead character, a former student and world-class vocalist, John David DeHaan. He then enlisted the help of William Shomos, associate professor of voice and opera in the School of Music, to handle stage directions.

Meanwhile, Snyder began writing the music.

While a good portion of the score was written

during the following year, Snyder said much of the composition took place in intervals, sometimes with breaks as long as six months between stints of writing.

Even this week the piece wasn't totally finished. "It's still being tweaked as we speak."

Despite these last-minute anxieties and the

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