

Dropped Notes

Neil Diamond set to shine at Omaha's Civic Auditorium

One of the premier crooners of the 40-and-over set, Neil Diamond has long been pleasing audiences as a songwriter and performer.

Tonight, he'll bring some magic to Omaha's Civic Auditorium. In the 1960s, Diamond estab-

lished himself primarily as a songwriter, penning tunes for several other artists, including the televised faux-band The Monkees. He eventually broke into his own as a singer and multi-instrumentalist, turning self-written songs such as "Shilo," "Solitary Man," "Red, Red Wine" and "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon" into instantly recognizable classics.

After the '60s, Diamond's output dropped somewhat in quality, although he did manage a second breakthrough with the soundtrack to

a remake of "The Jazz Singer," in which he also starred.

Younger music fans nowadays may consider Diamond a schmaltzy relic of pop-music flamboyance and overly glittered show business, but his early works remain as high-quality reminders of what '60s pop could be — and it could be pretty darn impressive.

Diamond will take the stage tonight at 8. Tickets for the show are \$40 and are available through TicketMaster outlets.

'Straight Outta Compton' tribute recalls N.W.A.'s key influence on hip-hop world

N.W.A. from page 9

rest of the album follows suit with instant classics such as "Dopeman," "Express Yourself," "Gangsta Gangsta" and "F--- Tha Police," the anthem-like verbal assault that earned N.W.A. notoriety exceeding their record sales.

The "Straight Outta Compton 10th Anniversary Tribute" album contains these songs and more, but is unlikely to garner praise or notoriety equal to that attained by N.W.A.

The obvious choices such as Snoop Dogg, WC and Mack 10 make their appearances. But the only times this tribute truly piques one's interest is when artists more incongruous with the West Coast sound step up to the mic.

Silkk the Shocker adds another dimension to the smooth flow of "Express Yourself." Bone Thugs 'N' Harmony do an ambitious take on "F--- Tha Police," although it never really matches the ferocity or intensity of the original. Big Punisher, Fat Joe and Cuban Link take a similarly skewed approach to "Quiet On Tha Set" — and get similar results.

But disrupting the masterful flow of "Straight Outta Compton" with a nonstop pass-the-mic festi-




COURTESY PHOTO ORIGINAL N.W.A. member Ice Cube has launched a successful solo career after his beginnings with the groundbreaking gangsta-rap group.

val is mostly annoying for purists.

Priority Records could have better served the record-buying public with a reissue of the original album, an out-takes sampler or a little of both.

It's always hard to live up to a classic. In the case of "Straight Outta Compton," it's nearly impossible.

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