

EXTREMELY COLD

Vanilla Ice brings the noise to Royal Grove

BY JEFF RANDALL
Senior staff writer

If one washed-up rapper has his way Saturday night, all of Lincoln will be forced to stop, collaborate and listen. But don't count on it.

Vanilla Ice, the king of wannabe hip-hoppers, will attempt to pump up the volume at the Royal Grove this weekend with a batch of new grooves and rehashed hits that weren't all too palatable the first time around.

It has now been nearly a decade since most people first heard of Vanilla Ice, the great, brief white hope of rap.

He burst onto the scene in late 1990 with "Ice Ice Baby." The admittedly catchy song parlayed the distinctive bass riff from David Bowie and Queen's "Under Pressure" into multimillion-dollar sales and worldwide recognition.

What most people failed to notice, however, was that Vanilla Ice's ear for a marketable bass line was his only discernible talent.

His major label debut, "To the Extreme," was filled with bogus posturing, cliched ghetto tales and sub-par rhymes. Ice only made it worse on himself by conjuring false tales of his childhood, turning suburbia into the inner city and his G.I. Joe collection into a gang of murderous street toughs.

Fortunately, this facade didn't last, and Vanilla Ice failed

to achieve career longevity. Less than a year after his debut, Ice had fallen off the star map of legitimate musicians.

He grew his hair out, found a new producer and attempted a comeback in 1994 with the laughable "Mind Blowin'," a marijuana-induced romp of rolling bass lines and half-assed funk. But the public didn't buy it, and Ice disappeared for about four more years.

He resurfaced in 1998 with "Hard to Swallow," the album for which he is currently touring.

This time around, he has reinvented himself as a hard rock/rap hybrid. Although this sound is closer to his true upbringing, the lyrical wordplay (or lack thereof) and obvious posturing are almost intolerable.

This judgment was reflected in the album's lackluster sales and the continued use of Vanilla Ice as the butt of a thousand jokes.

For now, Vanilla Ice will have to be content with his position as a novelty act. He's still getting money, he's just not getting respect.

People will still pay to see him perform. But most of them are only going so they can say they were there. They're not going for musical quality, innovation or outstanding showmanship.

Well, Vanilla can take some solace from this whole situation. At least they're paying for it.

Concert Preview The Facts

Who: Vanilla Ice
Where: Royal Grove, 340 W. Cornhusker Hwy.
When: Saturday, 8 p.m.
Cost: \$12
The Skinny: The unappreciated stepchild of rap is back again.



MATT HANEY/DN

TV, radio celebrate black history

BY JEFF RANDALL
Senior staff writer

Recognizing Black History Month and experiencing another culture doesn't have to entail sitting through countless lectures or watching amateurish video presentations.

In fact, interested parties can expand their horizons in African and African-American history by turning a dial or flipping a switch. Local media outlets have prepared several special programs in recognition of Black History Month.

Nebraska ETV has already begun in this effort, with "I'll Make Me a World," a three-part, six-hour documentary on African-American artists in the 20th century. The first segment of "I'll Make Me a World" aired Monday, and the show will continue tonight and next Wednesday at 8 p.m.

Another highlight of this month's NETV programming is "The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords," a documentary that chronicles the lives of America's black journalists, individuals who often were the only public voice for their people. This historical chronicle will air Feb. 8 at 9 p.m.

"Tuskegee, Alabama: Living Black & White" is an equally informative tale. This documentary tells the story of post-World War II Tuskegee and the countless strides in integration and voting rights that took place there. "Tuskegee" airs Feb. 15 at 9 p.m.

Of particular interest to Nebraskans will be the "Nebraska Showcase" presentation of "Ernie Chambers: Still Militant After All These Years." Chambers' early emer-

gence as a civil rights activist is traced all the way to his nearly three-decade tenure in the state Legislature in this documentary of one of Nebraska's most notorious and respected sons. The program will air Feb. 19 at 9 p.m.

While NETV has planned what should be a visually riveting lineup for black history month, KZUM-FM (89.3) will do its part to disseminate pertinent information and entertainment over radio waves of a different sort this month.

Each and every month, KZUM is a community leader in diversified programming. And Black History Month is an opportunity to increase that standard, said Tom Ineck, news and public affairs director for the station.

"We always try to recognize that our audience is made up of people from all different backgrounds," Ineck said. "We don't turn that idea off and on based on what month it is."

In addition to the station's regular lineup of ethnically and culturally diverse music programs - which include jazz, blues, R&B, reggae and hip-hop - KZUM will broadcast a pair of syndicated documentary series.

The first of these series is "One Nation, Indivisible: Dr. King's Dream Yesterday and Today." The three-hour documentary program will air in six half-hour installments at 3 p.m. Feb. 8-13. The full program will air Feb. 14 from 9 p.m. to midnight.

The second series is "Pleading Our Own Cause: The Black Press in America." This documentary will also run in six parts, beginning Feb. 22 at 6:30 p.m. and ending Feb. 27.

Broadcast Calendar for Black History Month

Nebraska ETV

Tonight
"I'll Make Me a World," 8 p.m.
"CeCe Winans, Glorious Gospel," 7 p.m.
Feb. 8
"The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords," 9 p.m.
Feb. 15
"Tuskegee, Alabama: Living Black & White," 9 p.m.
Feb. 19
"Dance in America: A Hymn for Alvin Ailey," 9 p.m.
Feb. 20
"Bill Cosby: Mr. Spolsky, With Love," 8 p.m.
Feb. 21
"The ACLU: A History," 5 p.m.
Feb. 28
"Paul Robeson: Here I Stand, An American Masters Special," 5 p.m.

KZUM (89.3 FM)

"One Nation Indivisible: Dr. King's Dream Yesterday and Today" segments air Feb. 8-13 at 3 p.m., complete program airs Feb. 14 at 9 p.m.

"Pleading Our Own Cause: The Black Press in America" segments air Feb. 22-27 at 6:30 p.m., complete program airs Feb. 28 at 9 p.m.

Locally produced profiles air daily at 10 a.m., 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.

JON FRANK/DN

The complete program will run from 9 p.m. to midnight on Feb. 28.

A 28-part series of five-minute profiles will also run on KZUM. These locally produced segments, which feature significant African-Americans in the Lincoln community past and present, run daily at 10 a.m., 5 p.m. and 10 p.m. The segments change daily.

Epic 'Aida' to make elephantine return

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior staff writer

Elephants can remember.

And Omaha audiences can remember elephants - or one in particular.

Audiences at Opera Omaha's 1983 production of "Aida" remember a spooked elephant who charged toward them on opening night before being calmed and captured.

The excitement of the event has become a tall tale around the offices of Opera Omaha.

But this weekend, the company wants audiences to forget the pachyderm's 1983 performance. When it opens its latest version of the Giuseppe Verdi opera "Aida," the company forgoes exotic menageries in favor of an intimate love story.

"Often times, the very intense love story gets lost in all that pageantry and spectacle," said Kevin Gibbs, a member of Opera Omaha's marketing staff. "This production avoids all the cliché elements."

For example, Gibbs said, the designers for this production have abandoned towering, hieroglyphic-covered columns for a single imposing set piece: a 5-ton golden falcon that rotates on a large turntable.

The production also zeroes in on the heart of the opera: the tragic love story of an Ethiopian slave girl and an Egyptian warrior.

The opera's dramatic substance is one reason why it has remained so popular, Gibbs said. Many music historians believe "Aida" to be the most-performed opera of all time.

Theatre Preview



The Facts

What: "Aida"
Where: Orpheum Theater, 409 S. 16th., Omaha
When: 7:30 p.m. Wednesday and Friday, 2 p.m. Sunday
Cost: \$12-\$62, call (402) 34-OPERA for tickets
The Skinny: Opera Omaha presents the most-performed opera of all time

The opera's setting in exotic ancient Egypt adds to the dramatic elements of the story.

"People are fascinated with Egypt. Throughout this century, we have had interest in the Egyptian tombs and their hidden treasures," Gibbs said.

The regalia of the period is fully expressed by Verdi, who was at the prime of his career when he wrote the historical love story.

"He applied every bit of knowledge he had about music and drama," he said.

In order to mount such a grand production, Opera Omaha joined a consortium of 11 other North American opera companies. The companies combined their resources to mount a production financially unfeasible for a lone company: the physical production cost more than half a million dollars.

Opera Omaha's production is also big in terms of cast size; it uses 100 on-stage performers, eight backstage band members and 52 Omaha Symphony musicians.

So although no pachyderms will actually thunder across the stage, "Aida" will remain an elephantine production.