

A FAINT NOISE

Band's style, stage presence set it apart from local scene

BY CHRISTOPHER HEINE
Staff writer

By presenting itself as if it were a rolling reel of film negatives, The Faint has made one thing perfectly vivid — it doesn't want to be like other Nebraska bands.

Piercing coldly and boldly through recent performances, the Omaha group has showcased an inventive act based on the white-noise sensory of stripped-down and sexualized 1980s new wave rock 'n' roll with the help of all-black attire and one strobe light.

This Sunday night, The Faint will headline a two-band show at Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St., with its dark, moody and danceable set.

The most attention-grabbing aspect of the band's recent shows has been the almost pitch-black atmosphere; the stage and room lights have been turned off, leaving only the strobe light to expose and interact with the band's high energy.

The band's dark clothing matches the color of the unlit room, making a dense and murky image only interrupted by the dancing ghost-like performers and the constant flashes of strobe light.

"We've been dressing in black to get some continuity," said singer Todd Bachley. "And to us the strobe light is really just a light that should set

a mood, an electric mood, if you will. We kind of look at the visual of us and the light as a filmstrip against the wall."

Bachley said the band has been slowly developing its live-show concept since 1997 when it dropped its original moniker, Norman Bailer. The singer admitted that his band in those days was a run-of-the-mill indie rock outfit born from the influential Saddle Creek music scene of Omaha.

The Faint guitarist Joel Petersen said his group's use of a strobe light and uniformed clothing represents the culmination of the band's search to improve its live act.

"Before we didn't consider the entertainment aspect of performing, we just kind of went up there and played our songs," he said. "Now we want to have some visual elements to help get the point across."

As fresh as the new visuals are, the band's evolution started with its sound. With each new song, The Faint is moving farther away from its first album, "Media," which was released on Saddle Creek Records just over a year ago.

While The Faint is still on the Saddle Creek label, Bachley said, his group has decided over the past year to start taking musical chances that would separate the band from its local peers.

The result has been the band all but completely dropping the guitar-pop sound that has

been the standard of the Saddle Creek scene since its birth earlier this decade.

Petersen said key changes started to evolve from the group's experiments with electronic sounds.

"I think we've transformed in the sense that we've become more electronic-driven and less guitar-driven," he said.

The new batch of keyboard-dominated tunes feature synthetic and bouncy melodies reminiscent of '80s groups such as The Cure.

Bachley said his band's use of keyboard has enabled The Faint to find new timbre and sounds.

One can generally create sounds similar to any number of instruments on an electric keyboard, he said, and this versatile aspect is what drew the group to use the instrument. It also saves a person from physical wear and tear.

"It's cool because you can get all these different kinds of sounds without having to haul all the equipment around," Bachley said.

Most importantly, the band, with its keyboard in tow, was finally able to define itself with songs that sounded new to its members.

Bachley said The Faint grew "tired" of making music within the confines of the Saddle Creek sound.

"I think we've rebelled against the way we started," he said.



SINGER TODD BACHLEY AND his band The Faint have ventured into the realm of art-synth rock with the aid of a strobe light and a new keyboard-driven pop sound. COURTESY PHOTO

Concert Preview The Facts

What: The Faint
Where: Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St.
When: Sunday, 10 p.m.
Cost: \$3
The Skinny: The Faint go fancy with synth-sound

However, the singer said, the path to songs with such titles as "Worked Up So Sexual," hasn't been straight and narrow for the band.

"At first we had this light-rock, 1980s-ballad thing going on that later became more rockin' and new-wave," Bachley said.

No matter how one describes the new look and sound of The Faint, it is certain that the band is gaining a larger audience.

The group played to a packed crowd earlier this month while opening up for Lincoln's Luck of Aleia. The Faint's flamboyant show drew ringing applause song after song.

Please see **FAINT** on 8

'Figaro' to take Omaha

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Senior staff writer

With its numerous love triangles, mistaken identities and romantic plotting, "The Marriage of Figaro" may seem like nothing more than a romping comedy.

But the play the opera is based on was originally banned by Viennese and Parisian authorities for its subversive themes.

The aristocracy feared the play's focus on servants outwitting their masters would create social unrest.

Tonight, Opera Omaha opens the comic, but once politically daring, production of Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro" at the Orpheum Theater.

Like most of Mozart's operas, "Figaro" dazzles audiences with its music, but the opera's original distinction was its political and social daringness.

"Although Mozart himself was not necessarily a political figure, he was dealing with a hot potato," said Steve Grupe, director of marketing and group sales for Opera Omaha. "Many of the themes in 'Figaro' predate the French Revolution."

Based on a trilogy of "Figaro plays," the opera begins on the wedding day of Figaro, a valet whose bride is sought after by his boss, the Count Almaviva.

As the Count plans to invoke the "first bedding" rights of the aristocracy, his wife and Figaro's bride make plans to reveal his infidelity.

At the same time, Marcellina, who is in love with Figaro, and Dr. Bartolo, whose own marriage was impeded by Figaro, make plans to



Please see **FIGARO** on 8

MATT HANEY/DN

Barrymore's owners buy Stuart Theater

BY JEFF RANDALL
Senior staff writer

Although most of Lincoln didn't know it, just a few months ago one of downtown's long-standing and most popular bars was on the verge of closing.

Barrymore's, which is located in the Stuart Theatre building, faced uncertainty over whether the space it had been leasing for 24 years would be available to the bar anymore.

But in mid-January, that problem was solved when Jim and Laird Haberlan, the father-and-son owners of the bar, bought the building.

Located on the corner of 13th and P streets, the building contains the Stuart Theatre, Barrymore's, the University Towers residences and the University Club. The Haberlans now own only the space occupied by the theater and Barrymore's. And, according to Laird Haberlan, now that things are back to normal, not much will change.

The Stuart Theatre is still being leased by Central Associates Theater Company and occupied by Douglas Theatre Co. That lease expires in two years, and no decision has been made as to the Stuart's future there.

"If they want to stay there, then we'll let them," Laird Haberlan said. "We don't have any radical plans to change the arrangement."

Douglas Theatre Co. is working on plans for a multiscreen megaplex in downtown Lincoln, which may affect the smaller theaters in the surrounding area. But representatives at Douglas Theatres said there were no plans yet to close the Stuart or any of the other downtown locations.

And as for Barrymore's apparent foray into the theater business, Laird Haberlan doesn't make much of it.

"We don't plan on doing anything other than leasing (the theater)," Haberlan said.

"We only bought it to save the bar. We've been here for nearly 25 years, and we didn't really feel like leaving."