

## Oil's slick sound leads to tours, recording

By Josh Krauter  
Staff writer

Chris Sommerich is a busy guy. The bass player of Omaha and Lincoln-based pop-rock band Oil is trying to balance recording his band's debut album in Omaha, playing lots of shows and planning a summer tour. Oh, and he's also a political science graduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Sommerich and his equally busy bandmates, singer-guitarist Craig Korth, drummer Mike Daeges and guitarist J. Hanson, are playing at the Zoo Bar tonight.

Oil rose from the ashes of the popular Lincoln band No Left Stone. No Left Stone played all over the Lincoln and Omaha area and opened for a number of well-known national bands but dissolved after guitarist Doug Agne got married and moved to Colorado.

Sommerich, Korth and Daeges carried on as Oil with new guitarist Hanson. And though the lineup was nearly the same, Sommerich said Oil has a much different sound than No Left Stone.

"No Left Stone was heavier, more frantic and driving," Sommerich said. "With Oil, we wanted to concentrate on songwriting. We made a conscious effort to write really good songs, not just jamming out."

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**Chris Sommerich**  
Oil bassist

is less flamboyant (than Agne's)," he said. "He's more about writing really good guitar parts. He works to find the right sound for each song."

Sommerich said the band knew Hanson was a keeper the first time they recorded together, which was also the first time they played together as a band. Oil recorded three songs for a Ranch Bowl competition even though Hanson had just joined, and they hadn't played the songs together before. Sommerich said more than 100 bands sent in tapes, and Oil was one of five bands picked from those tapes to play at the Ranch Bowl competition.

Since then, Oil has been building a repertoire of songs, and the band is recording its first full-length album in Omaha at Ware House Productions.

The album, "Dreaming with a Deadline," should hit stores in April, Sommerich said. The album is being produced by Jim Homan, who produced the last No Left Stone album.

"He's one of the top engineers to record bands," Sommerich said. "It's a real radio-quality sound."

In addition to the quartet's usual guitar, bass and drums

### PREVIEW Oil

**WHERE:** The Zoo Bar  
**WHEN:** Tonight, 7 p.m.  
**COST:** \$3  
**THE SKINNY:** Ex-members of No Left Stone bring pop-rock show to town.

sound, the album contains some unusual flourishes and guest musicians, Sommerich said.

Hanson alone plays acoustic and electric piano, Hammond organ, harmonica, Mellotron and synthesizers along with his guitar, and Omaha jazz musician Joey Gulizia plays percussion on three tracks.

"A lot of (the extra instrumentation) doesn't happen live," Sommerich said. "It's a textural thing. We're using the studio. We put a lot of effort into making these songs."

The new album will also feature cover art by nationally-recognized Omaha artist Kent Bellows.

"It's an honor to have him do it," Sommerich said.

The album is almost done, but it awaits mastering. The band hasn't decided where to master the album yet.

Oil has been building a buzz locally, but Sommerich said the band hasn't been interested in courting any record labels until recently. Instead, the band has used a grass-roots approach to get publicity, including word of mouth, lots of live shows, and a Web site, [members.aol.com/bandofoil](http://members.aol.com/bandofoil).

"Putting the CD out is going to take everything up at least one notch," he said.

Sommerich said new guitarist Hanson was key to the development of Oil's sound, which is more pop-based than No Left Stone and includes touches of '80s and '90s college radio favorites.

Sommerich said Hanson is a multi-talented musician and singer, who is capable of creating good harmonies with vocalist Korth, and a great guitarist.

"His guitar style



Delan Lonowski/DN

## 'Reindeer Games' has muddled plot, shock ending

By Samuel McKewon  
Senior editor

"Reindeer Games" is a failed action movie that goes wrong in taking itself too seriously, putting its stock in a narrative where all important developments take place elsewhere and are determined by the whims of the script, written by Ehren Kruger, who figures he can tidy any confusion at the end with a triple exposure of talking killers.

As a comedy, this movie could fly a cheeky nudge and wink to Quentin Tarantino's movies. As a thriller, it runs for a while under the capable direction of John Frankenheimer before lending itself to puppet show revelations.

During the last 20 minutes, there's enough twisteros for five serial comics, but it's the last one that puts a twist on the entire proceedings, skewering any seedy pleasure there might have been before it.

"Reindeer Games" deflates when there's more pawns on the chessboard than we first realized — that much of the movie is a side prop for a peripher-

al confidence scam.

Actually, the plot resides squarely in the land of simple conspiracy right from the get-go, with the conspirators (and who they're conspiring against) changing every so often for good measure.

It starts with Rudy (Ben Affleck), a convict with three days left of prison time before freedom. Upon freedom, he yearns for hot chocolate and pecan pie.

His cellmate, Nick (James Frain), has the same time left, though his welcome-home prize comes in the warmer and sweeter shape of Ashley (Charlize Theron), one of those lonely dreamers who writes to inmate magazines, falls in love with convicts and anxiously waits on the outside.

Nick, who never sent Ashley a picture of himself, doesn't even make it, taking a knife during, of all things, a prison food fight. And so Rudy can't resist taking his buddy's place — time to shack up with the pretty gal for some rough and poorly-photographed sex.

But the glassy-eyed Ashley isn't as

perfect as advertised — she has an evil brother who wants to employ Nick, who's really Rudy, to help take down an upstate-Michigan casino where Nick used to work, or he'll kill Nick, who's really Rudy, who took Nick's place because Nick's actually dead.

Much is made of this ludicrous irony by Affleck.

The brother's name is utterly forgettable, but he's played by Gary Sinise, who's too classy for this proceeding, yet enters the fray gamely as truck-driving trash, firing off cheap shots like a Christmas Grinch.

With him is a trio of unfriendly goons, who all want the inside casino information from Nick that Rudy can't provide.

Because this is all established in the movie's opening act, the rest of "Reindeer Games" is spent, rather humorously, exploring how many times evil brother can hit Rudy/Nick with metal darts, the different ways Theron can contort her face (required for evil Ashley and good Ashley, which come and go) and just when that water gun filled with rum will save our

hero's hide.

Directed by Frankenheimer, who once-made great movies like "The Manchurian Candidate" before he fell out of Hollywood favor, "Reindeer Games" is a bit gloomy and ponderous but reasonably intriguing for a time.

Affleck has fun with Rudy as he tiptoes through the after lie about the casino. When the heist finally goes down, carnage reigns, but the camera makes sense of it.

The same cannot be said for Kruger's script, which treads a serious misstep in the final act, the kind that takes everything we know to be true, crumples it up and opts for an alternate scheme yet untold. One character calls the plan a long shot. Agreed. It's also a shot that never should have been taken by Kruger.

He seems to enjoy this kind of ending — he employed it in both "Scream 3" and last summer in "Arlington Road". It fit well enough for the "Scream" trilogy, but "Reindeer Games," like "Arlington Road," betrays its tension for a last-second gotcha gag — the unveiling of

### PREVIEW Reindeer Games

**STARS:** Ben Affleck, Charlize Theron and Gary Sinise  
**DIRECTOR:** John Frankenheimer  
**RATING:** R (language, violence)  
**GRADE:** C  
**FIVE WORDS:** Ho, ho, ho? Not quite.

the real story that reveals the previous 90 minutes to be a detour.

Here, it was entirely unnecessary, further muddling a plot that was plenty self-confused to begin with. As capably as Affleck carries out the final scenes, and, as willfully as Theron tries to do the same, the feeling is nothing but negative.

Kruger, talented enough with his mixing of humor and pathos, needs to move on. His conspiratorial tactics have run their course, rubbing out the worth of his own story.