



Megan Cody/DN

# Time for a Takeover

BY KEN MORTON

Curtis Grubb feels comfortable in Omaha.

Compared with the relentless pace he and his band, Grasshopper Takeover, have been setting while touring, recording and promoting themselves in Los Angeles, a trip to the heartland has been nice.

"It's great to be in a place where you have so much support," said Grubb in a telephone interview from Omaha Tuesday night. "We've got so many friends, family and fans here that are willing to help us."

Grubb was checking the band's e-mail when the interview started. The band has a booking agent but prefers to do its own promoting.

"I just got an e-mail from the A&R department at Virgin Records," Grubb said calmly, seeming to take all of the attention the band has been getting completely in stride. Grubb shared the e-mail: "Most of these are the same, you know, 'I would like to request a promotional packet of the band's press. Thank you.' Short, sweet and to the point."

Grasshopper Takeover has also gotten several requests to add songs to compilation albums with artists such as Metallica and Eminem. All of this for a band who has been in Los Angeles for less than two years and has yet to sign its first record contract.

In its first full year in Los Angeles, Grasshopper Takeover has toured the country, both as a headliner and in support of 311 and Incubus.

Fans from all over the country - from California to Rhode Island - have either set up fan sites dedicated to the band or have links to the band's official Website, [www.grasshoppertakeover.com](http://www.grasshoppertakeover.com).

The move to Los Angeles proved to be the right one for the band.

Drummer Bob Boyce said the move became necessary for the band to keep growing.

"We had done everything we could in Omaha, and it was time to move on," Boyce said. "We were selling out CD

release parties and really had no where else to go but out of Omaha."

Grubb's long time friend and 311 frontman Nick Hexum has helped the band in its move in many ways. Hexum and Grubb went to high school together and Grubb has co-written songs with 311.

One song, "Right Now," showed up recently on a compilation of early 311 tunes called "Omaha Sessions."

Grubb said he doesn't really consider 311 as just friends in the "industry."

"They're just friends to me," Grubb said. "They've been great with introducing us to people and helping us with our music."

During their "catch-up" period back home, Grasshopper Takeover will play in Lincoln tonight at W.C.'s Downtown, 1228 P St.

Boyce said Lincoln wasn't very receptive to the band at first, but with the help of W.C.'s manager Sean Reagan, the group has started to draw more and more fans.

With a solid fan base and the help of a publicist and booking agent, Grasshopper Takeover has turned its attention to landing the right record deal.

Plenty of labels have been nibbling, and some have asked the band to play showcases, but Grubb said he isn't going to jump at the first deal that's thrown out.

"We've worked too hard to just sign our lives away," he said. "Too many bands are so eager to get that deal that they end up giving away publishing rights and everything else. Record companies are so eager to get that first single played and then throw the second album out and hope it sticks."

Grubb hopes the fan support Grasshopper Takeover has built up around the country will give them a little more leverage than most new bands have.

The band also has that built-in fan base that transcends regional support, as well as a mention as one of the top 100 unsigned bands in Los Angeles by both Music Connection and Rock City News.

For now, Grubb said, the band is happy touring the country and putting out their own CDs.

Their latest, "International Dance Marathon," has been selling well, according to Grubb.

Live shows still garner the most sales, but Grubb said the album is starting to make a presence in retail stores.

But, the record deal is the next logical step for Grasshopper Takeover, in a creative sense as well as a business sense.

"Music, to me," Grubb said, "is a communication of ideas. That communication shouldn't stop at just one or a few people. I want to get my message, which I communicate through my music, to as many people as possible."

Grubb's messages about love and life draw from personal experience, but he said he tries to turn the songs into something more universal.

"It's all about that wider appeal," he said. "I want everybody to relate to what I'm saying. If I write a song just for me, no one will want to listen to it but me."

Grubb's lyrics aren't always uplifting, but he said he tries to relay a message of never giving up, mirroring the struggles and triumphs of Grasshopper Takeover.

For "International Dance Marathon," Grasshopper Takeover used several producers, including Nick Hexum and 311 bandmate Chad Sexton. Grasshopper Takeover recorded two songs, "Noel" and "Purpose," at Hexum's studio, The Hive.

The band also turned to producer Gabriel Mann, who produced seven of the album's tracks, as well as two other producers in Omaha.

Grubb said the process of recording with different producers could be a little trying.

"It makes it real hard to find a cohesive sound, a cohesive vision. I loved working with all of these talented people, but it was difficult sometimes."

Grubb said Hexum wanted "three-piece, straight-ahead punk rock music," while Mann preferred to layer the songs with multiple tracks.

Grubb said he enjoyed both styles, but would have preferred to find a sound somewhere in between.

The band's Latino neighbors in Echo

Park, where the band lived in L.A., helped give the track "Esta Vida" a Caribbean flavor.

"We just kept hearing all of these mariachis and stuff, and eventually it just sunk in."

Grubb said the band will continue to try new sounds and new recording methods. He's fallen in love with digital recording and says he has a recording method he calls his "secret weapon."

He wouldn't reveal what that weapon was, but soon the whole country may be hearing the band's sound over the airwaves.

With plenty of momentum and no signs of slowing down, Grasshopper Takeover's road to success may very well be paved in platinum.

Performance Preview

**Grasshopper Takeover with Planet of the Apes**

Where:

When:

Cost:



Courtesy photo

James McMann (left), Curtis Grubb and Bob Boyce of Grasshopper Takeover will play at W.C.'s Downtown tonight. The Omaha natives have been in Los Angeles promoting their new album and doing live shows.

## Planet Butter to bring eccentric jazz, funk music to Zoo Bar stage

BY KEN MORTON

Most Lincoln bands would love to have 200 people show up for any show. Planet Butter had that many at its first performance.

Most Lincoln bands would kill to play at the world-famous Zoo Bar. Planet Butter made its debut at the renowned blues spot.

"There weren't 200 people in there at the same time," guitarist Matt Richardson said. "You wouldn't be able to move in there with that many people."

As people filtered in and out throughout the night, the total draw at the end of the night ended up being about 200.

Planet Butter, an eight-person, horn-fueled band, brings their explosive brand of jazz, funk, and R&B back to the Zoo Bar's stage tonight, and the band's draw has continued to grow.

The band can draw its roots back to Blue Tango, a blues outfit that Richardson and bassist Brian Marrow played in. Marrow, feeling confined by the inherent songwriting limitations of blues music decided he wanted to try a new kind of music.

Marrow's decision to add horns came later, as Marrow began feeling the need to continue to expand Planet Butter's sound.

In Kirstin Froeseiser, Marrow and

*"We all get a chance to be creative at different times, to put our stamp on the song."*

**Jason Carper**  
keyboardist of Planet Butter

Richardson found the perfect vocalist for the band. Froeseiser, an advertising major at the University of Nebraska, spent some time with local cover band Bossphilly. Her soulful, powerful voice gives Marrow's songs a driving force.

Froeseiser is one of only three members of Planet Butter with no formal musical training - Richardson and trumpet player Jim Dodson are the others.

Marrow, the only band member not a current or former student at the University of Nebraska, said his musical training has helped with the challenge of arranging the horn parts.

"With basic three- and four-piece bands," he said, "songwriting can be done pretty much by ear. But with this stuff, I have to actually think about what other people are playing."

However, keyboardist Jason Carper said the songs still had room

Performance Preview

**Planet Butter**

Where:

When:

Cost:

for improvisation.

"We all get a chance to be creative at different times, to put our stamp on the song," he said.

Richardson said Planet Butter, who currently has a three-song demo available, plans to head into the studio in December to record its first full-length CD. The band has about 30 songs to choose from, and Froeseiser said other songs are always forming out of practice and improv sessions.

Although Froeseiser said she would like to see some of the other band members sing, Marrow said Froeseiser will handle the bulk of the singing.

"She's got such a great voice," he said. "It would be a shame not to hear it all the time."

## Final episode of 'Survivor' draws 51 million viewers

■ The finale of the show ranks as most-watched summertime TV show since the year Nielsen began measuring its audience in 1987, and brought CBS a victory in the polls.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — The finale of "Survivor" drew 51 million viewers last week, ranking as the most-watched summertime television show since at least 1987, according to Nielsen Media Research.

It also led CBS to an easy victory in the week's ratings. Richard Hatch won \$1 million by outlasting his competitors on Pulau Tiga, but CBS won much more.

It scored a rare victory among teenage viewers last week. It had nearly as many 18-49-year-old viewers as NBC and Fox combined.

It is unclear whether a summer series before 1987 had a higher viewer ship; that's the year Nielsen began electronically measuring its audience, and records before then are considered less reliable.

"Survivor" was second only to the Super Bowl as the most-watched television show of the year.

The one-hour "Survivor" reunion

special with Bryant Gumbel as moderator attracted more than 38 million viewers.

For the week in prime time, CBS had an average of 13.6 million viewers (8.8 rating, 15 share).

ABC had 9.7 million viewers (6.7, 12), NBC had 7.6 million (5.5, 10), Fox had 5.9 million (4.0, 7), UPN had 3.5 million (2.2, 4), the WB had 2.3 million (1.6, 3) and Pax TV had 1.4 million (1.1, 2).

NBC's "Nightly News" won the evening news ratings race with 9.4 million viewers (7.0 rating, 16 share).

ABC's "World News Tonight" had 8.6 million viewers (6.5, 14).

The "CBS Evening News" had 7.8 million (5.9, 13).

A rating point represents 1,008,000 households, or 1 percent of the nation's estimated 100.8 million TV homes.

The share is the percentage of in-use televisions tuned to a given show.

For the week of Aug. 21-27, the top 10 shows, their networks and ratings:

"Survivor," CBS, 28.6; "Survivor: The Reunion," CBS, 22.5; "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" (Tuesday), ABC, 15.1; "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" (Sunday), ABC, 14.9; "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" (Thursday), ABC, 13.6; "60 Minutes," CBS, 9.7; "20/20 Downtown," ABC, 9.0; "Dateline NBC" (Tuesday), NBC, 9.0; "The Practice," ABC, 9.0; "Law and Order," NBC, 8.3.