

Art world thrives during holidays

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

If you're like many UNL students, you are leaving Lincoln this week to have a Griswold family Christmas and spend some quality time with Uncle Lenny watching him take one too many chugs of eggnog.

Aunt Martha will pinch your cheeks and tell you how much you've grown.

Like many University of Nebraska-Lincoln students, you might grow tired of such treatment. And after doing some free laundry and grubbing on some home-cooked meals, you might just wander back to Lincoln during winter break. Or some of you live here.

So what's going on in the thriving metropolis that is Lincoln during winter break? Let the merry times begin as we show you a sampling of what is happening in the arts world in Lincoln.

The Lied Center is presenting "The Nutcracker," performed by the Lincoln Midwest Ballet Company on December 16-17.

The Edlos are a group of four acapella singers that will present a holiday performance on December 20 at The Lied.

If that doesn't suit you, on December 17, St. Mark's United Methodist Church will give some holiday cheer with the "Nebraska Brass Christmas" show, performed by Nebraska Brass.

Also on the 17th, folk artist Lori McClain will be performing a house concert for the Lincoln Association for Traditional Arts at 856 N. 42nd St.

Please see LINCOLN on 9

This year's films offer the good, the bad

BY SAMUEL MCKEOWN

So much for complete lists.

The best movies of the year docket can't adequately be compiled, not without the traditionally strong holiday fare to come, which doesn't touch upon certain films - "Dancer in the Dark," "Requiem for a Dream," "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" - that won't even find their way to the Omaha/Lincoln area before the new year.

So this is, for lack of better phrasing, the best that can be done with what's out there.

It wasn't a pretty year, 2000, especially compared with the splendor of 1999, a slate of magnificent (albeit long) works that furthered the craft. What was missing from this year was "Star Wars," which, because of blockbuster power, forced other studios to stay out of its way and produce smaller, artier works.

This year was a mess, with a whole slew of teen comedies in the first half (none of them good), a less-than-satisfying summer blockbuster schedule and fall more or less devoid of richness and subtlety. Instead of "American Beauty," there was "Remember The Titans." Because of a weak fall, your leading award contender is... "Gladiator," a brutal, bloody epic with a so-so conclusion.

So the primary brunt of the list is the smaller stuff, accented with a few larger works. Following will be the five worst movies (a very hard call), along with some other awards to date.

The 10 best:

10. "The Cell" - It's rather easy to poke holes through the plot of the most inventive film of the year, but that would overlook its ambition, its daring, its sheer visual pleasure courtesy of rookie director Tarsem. A psychologist (Jennifer Lopez) enters the mind of a serial killer (Vincent D'Onofrio) to locate a final victim, and the landscape inside the human mind isn't nearly what we'd expect.

Like Luis Bunuel's art, "The Cell" reorganizes the capacity of our imagination to conceive such things, and we're better off for it.

works as a police thriller and abstract exploration of the mind.

9. "Jesus' Son" - It creeps up slowly, and then lingers, one of the more haunting tales of the year. Lifted from the short stories of Denis Johnson, "Jesus' Son" plays like a series of episodes, strung together by a feeling of searching for the main character FH, played in masterful understatement by Billy Crudup.

There's a doomed love, there's heroin, there's a stripped away 1970s Iowa, there's a hopped up small town hospital - the movie plays as life lived, quiet and absorbing for days after.

8. "Croupier" - Brit Mike Hodges returned to film noir glory with this story of a casino dealer (also known as the title) who re-enters the business to write a novel, then starts taking chances to enrich the story right in front of him.

What ensues is a cold, hard reality slicked over by the lure of money, scotch and cigarettes.

The real talent from Hodges isn't to make this lifestyle seem the slightest bit enticing. Rather, it's to make certain this sharky world isn't one worth entering, and that liars should never be trusted, even when they seem to benefit more by telling the truth.

7. "Erin Brockovich" - Norma Rae has nothing on this woman, and neither does Sally Field on Julia Roberts, whose hot-blooded performance as an ex-beauty queen looking for a place in the world is her best ever. While the real-life persona of Brockovich is closer to Roberts' personality than, say, the pretty

woman, it's still a stop-the-presses job, in more ways than one.

And the story, penned by Susannah Grant and directed by Steven Soderbergh, match up, as well. Brockovich starts small at a law office and quietly begins to angle in on a big case against a gas company, figuring out a love and parenting life in the process. It's stilted drama, to be sure - there's one too many scenes of Roberts' yelling at women - but do you care? "Brockovich" was downright cheer-worthy from start to finish.

6. "The Virgin Suicides" - Nearly 10 years ago,

Sofia Coppola turned in a performance in her father's "The Godfather Part III" that ranks among the worst ever. And her directorial debut was one of the best movies of 2000. Who knew?

It's a tale of memory, told through the boys from across the street about the Lisbon girls - all five of them - who committed mass suicide in the middle of one night and asked those boys to bear witness to it. "The Virgin Suicides" doesn't prepare a pat, obvious motive. One could almost argue it romanticizes death. It does and doesn't cheat

by doing so because of the movie's perception of memory.

5. "Love & Basketball" - A mature, honest drama of women's athletics isn't easy to find, but Gina Prince-Blythewood's first movie accurately captures the beauty of such a woman, coupled with her faults, creating the first convincing portrait of its kind. Sanaa Latham is the lead character.

Please see MOVIES on 9



Jerry Morgan/DN

Albums of the year a mix of locals, hip hop and covers

O'Connor, The Cure return with some of the year's best music

Go-Betweens earn a second chance, J5 best in hip hop

BY ANDREW SHAW

Editor's note: In a year that will most likely be remembered for the Backstreet Boys, 'N Sync, Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera, many other, more traditional musical creations need to be noticed. The following are the Daily Nebraskan's list of music categories and their winners chosen by the DN's most frequent music reviewer, Andrew Shaw.

Best Local Album: Oil, "Dreaming With A Deadline"

"Dreaming With A Deadline" is the best rock album to come from Nebraska. Craig Korth's vocals are a perfect blend of down-home wholesomeness and big-city grind.

The high-energy tunes, such as "Sundrop" and "Consequences of Love," drive the listener to bounce in their seat, whereas the low-key "Cake Doesn't Have Emotions," with its harmonica hook and acoustic foundation, capture the ease of a Sunday afternoon drive. "Dreaming With A Deadline" would make any Nebraskan musician proud.

Best Female Solo Album: Sinead O'Connor, "Faith and Courage"

A walking paradox, O'Connor is a mother, a lesbian and a priest. But above all, she is a breath-taking musician. Her musical diversity runs the gamut from angst-ridden rock to touching pop-ballads to ambient religious compositions.

O'Connor's Irish roots stand out in every track, through her gorgeous accent and the inclusion of traditional rhythms and instruments and Celtic musical traits. Unabashedly embracing her past, expressing her present and predicting her future, O'Connor has created a moving album which inspires, enrages and supports in each song.

Runner-Up: Bjork, "Selmasongs"

Best Male Solo: Elliott Smith, "Figure 8" Elliott Smith's sound has been compared to The Beatles, but Smith is a one-man supergroup, melding catchy melodies with lush orchestrations and an all-too-uncommon talent of musical restraint. On "Figure 8," Smith sticks to his original game plan, releasing an album full of laid back rock flooded with raw piano, soft guitar riffs and his velvet-soft voice effortlessly harmonizing with itself.

Lennon needed McCartney to keep him in check, and vice-versa. But Smith's touch on every track on "Figure 8" is executed with the perfect mixture of energy and control. His song writing talents, though obviously based on rock's history, are diversely original tunes free of the oppressive wall of sound so prevalent in today's music.

Everything that comes from Elliott Smith has had the musical value of fine caviar and "Figure 8" is just another chapter of expertise from this fine musician.

Best Group Album: The Cure, "Bloodflowers" The Cure's final album, "Bloodflowers," may be

their absolute best. Eight of the album's nine tracks exceed five minutes in length, but none could end a second sooner. Featuring lush arrangements of sweeping orchestration and layer upon layer of mixing, "Bloodflowers" is a romp through the realization that an era is ending.

Though the album has a sense of impending doom, it is a joy to listen to, taking in the hard rock of "Maybe Someday," soft sentimentality of "Out of This World," and epic journey of the 11-minute "Watching Me Fall."

Robert Smith, the made up, tousled-hair brains behind the operation, whines, dips and soars in typical Cure fashion. It's hard to keep track of everything going on in every song, which makes repeated listening not only enjoyable but necessary to get the full experience of "Bloodflowers."

Best Hip-Hop Album: Roni Size/Reprazent, "In The Mode"

This true supergroup of diverse musicians create a techno-hip-hop fabric without glitch or low point. Featuring guest spots from the likes of Rahzel (The Roots) and Zach de la Rocha (Rage Against the Machine), "In The Mode" is a collaboration which exhibits each individual's talents while still creating a complete and unified album.

The production from Roni Size is never overpowering, but strives to blend with whichever performer he is collaborating with on the particular track. Although each track could stand alone, "In Tune With The Sound," featuring Rahzel's jaw-dropping beatbox skills, is the must-hear track of 2000.

Best Comeback: Presidents of the United States of America, "Freaked Out and Small"

The former kings of childishly catchy rock, with hits like "Peaches" and "Lump," are back, and they brought a second bag of tricks along. The Presidents of the United States of America used to pride themselves on their three-string guitar and two-string bass, but "Freaked Out and Small" introduced all of the strings and even keyboards into the mix.

The outcome is one of the best albums of 2000. The group continues to write everyday lyrics and perform them to a pop-rock feel that could make even Al Gore's head bob along. "Tiger Bomb" is a breakthrough hit, punning off of the popular lip-balm product, showing that even has-been rockers can play like The Beatles.

Best Cover Song: Self, "What A Fool Believes" (originally by The Doobie Brothers)

Self's take on the Doobie Brothers' 1978 classic flows with newfound energy and disco drive. The entire "Gizmodgery" album was performed using only toy instruments like the Little Tykes Xylophone and Mattel's See and Say, a gimmick which turns into a valid form of high-powered, high-spirited rock music.

Staying true to the Doobie Brothers' version, Self, a virtual one-man band, recreates the high Bee Geelike harmonies by multitasking Matt Mahaffey's voice over itself. The Suzuki Q-Chord and Playschool Busy Guitar have never sounded better.

Most Over-Rated Album: Fatboy Slim, "Halfway Between the Gutter and the Stars"

Please see ALBUMS on 9



Melanie Falk/DN

Editor's note: Through his work as music director at KRNU, Neal Obermeyer has access to some of the most innovative music out there. This experience gives him a different view of the winners in each musical category. They are as follows:

Best Local Album: Pablo's Triangle, "A" Any attempt to define their sound will fail. Percussive, frantic, dark, catchy, fun... you will not forget them once you've heard them. They have horns. They have toy instruments. They have how many drummers? They must be seen to be believed. (Hint: Knickerbockers, Dec. 27)

Best Female Solo: Eleni Mandell, "Thrill" A dirtier, grittier, working-class version of P.J. Harvey, Mandell fulfilled all the expectations of her second album. Slo-core rockers Idaho lend a hand to shape the sound.

Runner up: Heidi Saperstein, "Very Special" **Best Male Solo:** Ian Brown, "Golden Greats" Where Brown's first solo album only sounded like an attempt to keep his former band the Stone Roses alive, his follow-up discards the past and results in an album just as strong as the Stone Roses' eponymous debut.

Runner Up: Mark Robinson, "Tiger Banana" **Best Group Album:** Elf Power, "The Winter Is Coming" The Elephant 6 Collective included a handful of powerhouses such as the Olivia Tremor Control and Neutral Milk Hotel with a horde of wannabe followers. Elf Power was one of the latter.

On "The Winter Is Coming," however, the band single-handedly redefines itself not only within the E6 ranks, but in the indie world as well. There were basically no expectations leading up to this release, and so support was built entirely from the ground up.

Elf Power builds on the traditional '60s Beatles / Byrds E6 sound and throws in darker elements of Pink Floyd and other '70s progressive rock to create a true standout in a year that saw numerous E6 clones.

Runners-up: Trans Am, "Red Line"; Sunny Day Real Estate, "The Rising Tide"

Best Hip-hop Album: Jurassic 5, "Quality Control" J5's first full LP represents all that was and is great in hip-hop. A Public Enemy for the '00s, they rhyme with rhythm on top of old-skool sounds reminiscent of '80s Bomb Squad production.

Please see LIST on 9