

Local group might just score

BY NEAL OBERMEYER

Grading on The Local Curve: it's when you say, "This is a local band" and your friend says, "Oh, they're pretty good then!"

Well, every band is a local band somewhere, and Drive-By Honky is one of the forerunners of Lincoln's extremely healthy music scene. If odds were placed on local bands "making it," it'd probably be one of the safer bets.

The trio, led by singer/songwriter Dan Jenkins, boasts a confident breed of up-tempo strum-on-every-eighth-note acoustic rock-pop.

Instantly familiar and sing-along friendly, Drive-By Honky is a band whose strength lies in the fact that, when you hear its album, you can rest assured that *this is what the band sounds like*. It is not a product of studio doctoring.

That being said, its new album, "Thrift Americana," does not bear the tape-hiss lo-fi brand of many local recordings. Clear and professional, the sound has been blessed by the Mogis touch.

So you listen to "Thrift Americana" and you are impressed, right? Right.

Unless you've heard the

Drive-By Honky



band before.

Around a year ago, these guys released an EP called "God Damn Berlin" that boasted some of the finest pop gems this side of the Nemaha. "Never Better" and "Not Quite Bernadette" are good enough to retire and build a legacy on.

And while several of the songs on this album are nearly as strong as their predecessors, the problem is that they are a little *too* much like those predecessors.

Is it a product of having a well-defined sonic identity that makes a band's songs sound the same? Or does the problem lie in writing songs that are the same tempo with open fifth chords and different words?

Problem or not, the attraction is still there. Even though it's a re-written karaoke version of "Never Better," "Song for Innocents" is one of the catchiest songs you will hear, local or not.

It's like Mandy Moore's "Candy" ripping off Robyn's "What It Takes" — if Mandy Moore and Robyn were the same person, would it really be such a crime? Hmm, don't

answer that.

"Engine Block Eggs (No Idea)" and "The Ways and Means" are two more insta-hits that beg you to try to dig the last album's finest moments out of your subconscious.

The latter even features the Ben Folds Remedy for Sounding Too Poppy: say naughty words. Clever Honky. If not for giving two "shits," that leadoff track could have been the driving-with-the-windows-down hit of the winter. On KRNU at least.

Other songs on the disc lack that same brain-burrowing brilliance, though, and you know you've got a problem when an 8-song album starts to drag.

Grading on The Local Curve, this would be four-star material. But giving a band an artificially high rating simply because it's an impressive local band is like affirmative action in a music review, and that's not good for the Honky.

So if disposable, catchy guitar-pop is what you crave, buy "God Damn Berlin," and you may rest assured that Lincoln music is alive and well.

Then again, the band may not rock your world outside of the local context, but smile — you're in Nebraska.



The University Ballroom Dancing Club learns how to swing Tuesday night at Mabel Lee Hall. Club members and visitors learn five dances each semester.

Dance club hopes MTV movie revives interest in ballroom

BY BILLY SMUCK

With "Save The Last Dance" topping the box office charts as the No. 1 movie this weekend, it's obvious that an interest in dancing is thriving amongst the young adult community.

Past movies like "Dirty Dancing" that jump started nationwide enthusiasm in dance created a frenzy, sending people in droves to studios so they could learn those fancy Latin steps.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln ballroom dance club is certainly hoping for a similar effect.

UNL economics junior and Vice President Gus Shoemaker said the club was established three years ago as a means to provide affordable partnership dance instruction to students.

"This semester, we're changing our approach," Shoemaker said. "We're trying to focus on being able to use and apply the dances we're taught."

Group outings are scheduled three times throughout the semester to provide social dancing opportunities. Pla Mor Ballroom, Prime Time's Night Club and Coconut Bay are some of the places the club goes to.

Shoemaker, who is working on a Web site for the club also emphasized the effort being made to get the word out about it.

Meeting Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights in Mabel Lee Hall Room 304 from 9-10 p.m., the club covers five dances per semester. There are beginning patterns on Mondays and Tuesdays, followed by an intermediate lesson on Wednesdays. Shelly Brackhan of Brackhan Dance Directive on 27th and O streets is the instructor and founder of the club.

UNL business administration sophomore and President Jill Pollard said she was hoping to get a bet-

"Ballroom dancing isn't limited to just fox-trot, tango, and waltz. It extends further than many students realize."

Lucas Sabalka
UNL mathematics major

ter showing and re-spark some interest in the club. Pollard, who has been involved with ballroom dancing for the past two years, felt the term "ballroom" is a turn-off to many students.

"Ballroom scares people off," Pollard said. "We want people to understand it's for beginners and that it's a calm and comfortable environment."

UNL math junior and club member Lucas Sabalka said that in addition to the intimidation factor of not having previous experience in ballroom dancing, there is also a misconception of what ballroom dancing actually encompasses.

"Ballroom dancing isn't limited to just fox-trot, tango, and waltz," Sabalka said. "It extends further than many students realize."

Sabalka said how the Latin dances such as cha-cha and merengue are covered as well as East Coast swing.

"We have formatted it now so that people can jump in on any week and get the dance," Sabalka said. "Newcomers are welcome any time during the semester."

Students may attend the lessons for either \$5 per week or \$50 for the entire semester. Membership does include discounts to dance clubs and clothing stores.

Civil War comes alive at state museum

CINEMA from page 5

"Misery."

Faling said "The Beguiled," showing March 4, is really a horror movie starring Eastwood as a soldier who seeks refuge from the war in an all-girls school.

On March 11, the festival ends with "The General," a 1927

film starring Buster Keaton.

Faling said NSHS chose the Civil War as the theme for its fifteenth annual film series even though "Nebraska doesn't have a substantial Civil War presence."

"It's a topic that everybody seems to be interested in," she said.

Maslowski called the Civil War an "epic event in the history of the U.S."

"Many historians argue that it made us a single nation," he said.

Douglas Theatre Co. is a major underwriter of the film series, something which surprised Faling.

She thought Douglas Theatres would see the festival as competition, but "(apparently) they're interested in people going to movies and they're interested in history."

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'Girl Thing' premieres on Showtime

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES - The title notwithstanding, is the Showtime miniseries "A Girl Thing" also a boy thing?

Sure it is, said Lee Rose, the writer and director. She figures her film, a four-story anthology performed by a stellar cast, illuminates conflicts faced by everyone.

But women definitely own center stage in "A Girl Thing," and Rose isn't apologizing for that.

"Everything is always about men — from their point of view, their feelings, their situations," said Rose. "This is one of the few times where it's all about what women think and feel."

"It's about time we have the platform, thank you very much."

In other words, consider "A Girl Thing" testosterone displacement therapy.

The film, showing in two parts on consecutive Saturdays, Jan. 20 and 27, at 8 p.m. EST, offers a quartet of dramas. Stockard Channing plays a psychiatrist who's the single link; her patients are the focus of the stories.

Elle MacPherson's Lauren has a fear of intimacy that's not helped by a really bad blind double date with Bob (Brent Spiner), Casey (Kate Capshaw) and Frank (Bruce Greenwood). An unexpected romance with Casey, however, brings a change of perspective.

In the second hour, sisters (Glenn Headly, Rebecca De Mornay, Allison Janney) find their mother playing family peacemaker from the grave: She challenges them to get along or lose their inheritance.

Lynn Whitfield, Mia Farrow, Linda Hamilton and Scott Bakula star in the tale of a wife who enlists her husband's girlfriend to make him pay for his infidelity.

The film concludes with Camryn Manheim as an angry woman who snaps after seeking counseling from Channing, putting her and other patients at risk. S. Epatha Merkerson, Peta Wilson and Margo Martindale co-star.

The tight shooting schedule — 34 days — brought out the best in everyone, said Rose, a veteran filmmaker whose recent TV projects include "The Truth About Jane" and "An Unexpected Life." She has worked repeatedly with Channing, Hamilton, Whitfield and others.

"These women who are used to being pampered and fawned over and taking their time hit the floor running and did everything I asked them to do," she said. "They left any ego they had at the door and they were team players."

Joked Whitfield: "I probably would have had my arm broken if I hadn't done the project." The actress said she was thrilled to

"Everything is always about men ... This is one of the few times where it's all about what women think and feel."

Lee Rose
writer and director

work with Farrow for the first time and reveled in improv scenes with her and Hamilton.

So what's a girl thing, in her opinion?

"Whatever a girl wants it to be is what it is," Whitfield replied. "It's the wonderful and crazy and hard and harsh and complicated things that we are. Whatever a girl thinks it should be for her."

While television has long catered to female viewers, it's still rare in Hollywood's heavily male hierarchy for women to creatively own a project both behind and in front of the camera.

"A Girl Thing" has drawn some accusations of male-bashing; Rose's voice rises to mild levels of annoyance in contemplating the criticism. To view the film that way, she said, is to misinterpret an emphasis on women as a slap at the opposite sex — an attitude she routinely finds in public discourse.

Appearing last week on Bill Maher's "Politically Incorrect," Rose was asked about the story pairing Capshaw and MacPherson as lovers.

"Maher said, 'Don't you think women became lesbians because they're quitters?' I told him, 'Why is this all about you (men)? This is not about you. People make choices not based on you.'"

Speaking of choice, will men choose to watch so blatant a chick flick?

"If they do, I think they'll be happy they did," Rose said. "We get windows into their world every other day."