

Art galleries busy with showings through month

BY CRYSTAL K. WIEBE

Nature, motherhood and architecture are themes in local art exhibitions this March.

Artist Marcia Joffe-Bouska's mixed media sculptures and drawings of nature and plant matter will be on display at the Haydon Art Gallery, 335 N. Eighth St., March 2-24.

The show is entitled "Hard Lessons/New Growth" and includes slide images of the artist's

other work.

Haydon Office Manager Alissa Defrain said Joffe-Bouska's art contained "organic forms that are based on personal experience with reference to nature."

Haydon Art Gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Noyes focus gallery, 115 S. Ninth St., will be dedicated to the artwork of Nebraska mothers in March.

Noyes artist Connie Gay said the gallery had a long-standing tradition with the Nebraska

Mothers Association.

The exhibition opens on March 2, and winning artwork will be recognized at an awards luncheon on March 17.

All Nebraska mothers age 18 and older were eligible to submit art for the show.

On March 9, Noyes will host an artist forum called "How a Designer Works with Creative Artists."

Andrew Morrow of Morrow Interiors will speak. One Noyes studio will be completely covered in

plastic on March 11 for Art Splash.

During sign-up times throughout that day, gallery patrons will have the chance to splatter paint all over the studio.

Art based in architecture is on display at The University Art Place, 2601 N. 48th St., through February and March.

The exhibition titled "Influenced by Architecture" includes watercolor and multi-dimensional images created by architects.



Abby Miller, (left), and Amber Irvin are the Lord sisters in "The Philadelphia Story," now playing at the Howell Theatre, 12 & R streets, tonight through Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

Nate Wagner/DN



Stewart no longer able to keep up

BY ANDREW SHAW

Rod Stewart used to be known for his combination of folk and rock music, and hit the big time in 1971 when "Maggie May" made it to No. 1 in the U.K. and U.S.

Thirty years later, Stewart has changed pace. Instead of leading a musical revolution and being the pace car for the pop music industry, he has the pedal to the metal, desperately trying to keep up with the latest fads in the genre.

With "Human," his latest release, Stewart is bringing up the rear in the pop music industry.

"Human" is filled with stereotypical modern pop sounds and follows the pack of teen-agers around like a lost puppy. The lyrics have no inspiration to speak of. Stewart has been singing about missing some unnamed woman since well before he recorded his version of Van Morrison's "Have I Told You Lately." Yet on "Human" he continues to perform lackluster break-up songs.

The first three tracks on the album employ the efforts of established artists from outside Stewart's realm, maybe in an attempt to lure in a new fan base. Slash, the former Guns N' Roses guitarist, appears on the title track.

The song seems to steal its basic groove from a Destiny's Child tune, with rich background harmonies, overactive electronic high-hat and overuse of synthesized strings.

The song is overproduced, using three different producers to arrive at the same sound that Rodney Jerkins replicates on every album he produces.

Macy Gray cowrote "Smitten," a blues-y groover with actual soul, but the tune continues the forced and fictitious storytelling that all of the other tracks on "Human" are plagued with.

Scottish singer/songwriter Helicopter Girl appears on "Don't Come Around Here." Her grating vocals, reminiscent of Gray's, play well with Stewart's breathy voice, but the song sounds like hundreds of other colorless Stewart tunes.

In the liner notes, on his Web site, and perhaps in bars around Hollywood, Stewart tries to pose as a man whose age is overcome by his extreme sexiness. The only man I can think of who succeeds with this facade is Sean Connery, and Stewart's effort is as pathetic as when Courtney Love tried to dress like an upstanding citizen.

Listening to music about failed relationships that was written by four different people and sung by someone else simply doesn't make good music. It's capitalistic pageantry, and, frankly, I don't like being lied to.

Rod Stewart "Human" Atlantic Records 2001

'Philadelphia' challenges classism

The play, centering on one girl's quest for the perfect romance, is propelled by comedic action.

BY CHRIS JACOBS

A humorous love saga. Impossible. Believe it or not, the UNL Department of Theatre Arts' rendition of "The Philadelphia Story" accomplishes this exact theme in its performance of Phillip Barry's 1939 piece.

Main character Tracey Lord, played by Amber Irvin, strives for the perfect romance, or what she believes is the perfect romance, and constantly finds herself lost in a world of fantasy. Watching Tracey, the audience never knows which side of her character will shine during each scene, and this keeps the plot moving at a

nice pace.

Irvin does a good job of portraying this "aristocratic" young woman whose main goal in life is to be "yare." Director Virginia Smith defines yare "as being quick, bright and easy to handle," three qualities that Irvin's character definitely struggles to grasp along with her own perceptions of herself and how she thinks she should be. Her character is in a familiar situation to most maturing adults.

Tracey's love triangle approaches the audience from a different perspective than a Shakespearean or Racinian love drama. While the intrigue of a young woman's search for love dominates the story thematically, comedy intervenes the action at the right moments of the play.

The comedy is fueled by spectacular performances from Abby Miller, who plays Tracey's younger sister Dinah, and Timothy Horner, who plays Uncle Willie.

Philadelphia Story



Dinah performs a "tap" routine in Act I that alone makes the play worth seeing. Miller really sinks herself into this character and gives the audience a laugh in every scene she's in. Horner plays to perfection the witty Uncle Willie, who is constantly womanizing and trying to keep to his own business.

The institution of marriage and classes also are criticized throughout the play. Many outsiders of the prestigious Lord family look down upon the family's lofty lifestyle.

"The most beautiful sight in this world is watching the privileged class enjoy their privileges," says Mike Connor, a reporter covering the family, and one of Tracey's potential suitors, played by Kyle Johnston.

By the end of the story, he and the audience are forced to at least question prior suppositions about the wealthy lifestyle. People within specific classes can at least try to understand and respect those who may be excluded.

Tracey says, "Why do the classes matter except for the people in them?"

It's a hard question to answer. "It's astonishing what money can do to people," says Dexter Haven, Tracy's first husband, played by Steve Barth.

"The Philadelphia Story" shows the effects. The play forces the audience to think about its own personal beliefs and stereotypes on classism, all with love in mind, with an enjoyable comedic interjection and a finale that is impossible to guess off-hand.

"The Philadelphia Story" is showing at the Howell Theatre, 12th and R streets, Feb. 20-24 at 7:30 p.m.

The Churchills surprise with mood, power pop

The group's album is reminiscent of alternative music of the early '90s.

BY NEAL OBERMEYER

There is a shortcut in reviewing music that is similar to the judging-a-book-by-its-cover routine. It's called judging a band by their promotional photo.

You learn a lot about what a band thinks is cool, such as expressions, clothing and facial hair.

Looking at The Churchills, one might think they do a lot of snowboarding. One might think that, over some margaritas, they might happen to namecheck a lot of standard '80s punk bands. One might also think that the CD they are about to listen to will make them hate music in general.

Well, color me a happy, surprised kid when I listened to this

The Churchills



CD and was instantly reminded of one of my fondest periods in recent musical history.

Back in the early- to mid-'90s, there was a surge of intelligent power-pop that hit the alternative music world. Owing a lot to the Pixies and the Boston-based Fort Apache scene, artists like the Lemonheads, the Smithereens and Matthew Sweet were writing classic power-pop melodies with lyrics that were not always quite so sunny.

Eventually, with the mass success of bands like the Gin Blossoms and the Goo Goo Dolls, the power-pop market became saturated and dull and piddled away.

Well, lately some bands seem to be intent on resurrecting, or at least continuing, that spirit. A recent album from The Black Watch and now "You Are



Here" by The Churchills would have fit better in 1993 but are extremely welcome here in musically-desolate 2001.

Look at the packaging, though, and you wonder if the band doesn't know what it has put together, or if maybe they are victims of shallow management and designers who think that this is how your album has to look if you want to make it big.

They don't need flashy photos and graphics. You can instantly sing along to these songs. Power chords and

anthem-like choruses make you long for the days when *this* was shallow pop music (as opposed to five-piece harmonic groups in glitter) and want to count down the days until summer.

Only it's not as shallow and sugary as it sounds, and if you actually pay attention to the words, you will find the perfect complement to your Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Mind you, this isn't misery with a Morrissey spin or anything particularly too clever that hasn't been done before. These are just songs about heartbreak and whatnot, but what makes them useful to your brain is that they are done without sounding trite and done in the relatively limited power-pop style without all sounding the same.

Another nice feature that The Churchills sport is the fact that they mix male and female vocals. In guitar-based pop-rock bands, this can sometimes be a bad idea.

Shelleyan Orphan, for example, was a lovely band fronted by female Caroline Crawley, but when male Jemaur Tayle started singing, it just sounded wrong. Too often the sound of a male voice when the listener is accustomed to a female can be distracting.

But wouldn't you know it, these guys pull it off very well. "Headstrong," the one song with lead vocals by Kim Henry, is actually one of their strongest songs.

I cannot emphasize enough, though, that this band and this music are not original. Sugar-sweet power-pop with depressing lyrics is no new invention. But in the same way that their music doesn't fit in with their promo photo, their music doesn't fit with what guitar-based pop-rock bands are doing today.

That is what makes it so fresh and welcome.

The Churchills "You Are Here" Abrupt / Universal