

Festival to showcase movies of Midwest filmmakers

■ Entries are now being accepted for the Great Plains Film Festival to be held this summer at the Ross Theater.

BY MATT EBERT

Hollywood hasn't set up shop in Lincoln yet, but every two years, The Great Plains Film Festival brings a bit of that flavor to the Heartland.

It isn't as well known as the Sundance Film Festival, and big Hollywood players aren't as abundant as in the Telluride Film Festival, but attendance numbers have grown more than 100 percent since the festival start-

ed, said Dan Ladely, director of the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater.

The call for entries began last week with the June 1 deadline approaching fast.

Ladely founded this small but growing biennial festival in 1992. His love for films and for Nebraska inspired him to do so, as did the Center for Great Plains Studies and all it does to bring the history of the Plains to Nebraskans.

The festival celebrates the films and videos created by individuals from Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wyoming and the Canadian provinces of Alberta,

Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The films and videos have a connection to the Plains in some way.

"The festival gets anywhere from 100 to 200 entries in the narrative, documentary, made for public television and young media artists categories," Ladely said.

These are narrowed down by a group of local judges who rate contributions from one to 10 and give written responses. Averages are used to determine the winners.

"Twenty-five to 30 submissions end up in the finals, which are judged by nationally recognized independent filmmakers," Ladely said.

In previous festivals, guests have

"The festival gets anywhere from 100 to 200 entries, in the narrative, documentary, made for public television and young media artists categories."

Dan Ladely

Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater director

included actors James Coburn for "Affliction" and Peter Fonda for "Ulee's Gold." Both received the Mary Riepma Ross Award, given to honor film artists who themselves are related to the Plains.

This is the first year the festival has included the Young Media Artists cate-

gory for high school-age filmmakers or younger. The festival also will feature Great Plains Latino media arts and culture this year.

The Great Plains Film Festival will be this summer from July 12-29 at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater, located in the Sheldon Art Gallery.

England serves Shea Seger well

BY CRYSTAL K. WIEBE

Shea Seger has been a long way from home for a while now.

A year and a half ago, the Texas native traveled to England with some friends for two weeks of music-making and fell in love with the country. As soon as she landed back on Texas soil, Seger knew England was where she needed to be.

"I was in much need of an environment change," said the 21-year-old, whose debut album, "The May Street Project," has drawn comparisons to Sheryl Crow.

Seger returned to the UK and started sinking into that new environment, where she sorted herself out emotionally and cut "The May Street Project."

Influenced by everything from early country music to Pink Floyd, Seger said people had difficulty categorizing her sound,

which is a little R&B, a little folksy, a little rock and roll.

"But England is not rock and roll country," Seger said.

She will start an American tour after "The May Street Project" is released in the U.S. on June 5. The CD goes to college radio today.

Seger said dates and places for the American tour would be determined largely by response to the album.

"Nothing is solidified yet," she said.

For the past week, she has been in New York starting the promotion process, something totally different from the life she was accustomed to in England.

While "The May Street Project" was coming together, Seger said things were laid back and unregimented until about halfway through when labels started showing interest and she signed with RCA/UK.

"Days right now are pretty full on slotted increments," she said. "I'm kind of learning how to maintain my sanity and my health. Really making myself drink however many glasses of water you're supposed to drink."

Seger said that in the midst of this whirlwind she was beginning to realize what it was like to have a job based on who she is.

"My work actually has to do with me," she said. "It's not like a record store or a grocery store - jobs I've had and that I hated."

Who she is today is due, in part, to her UK hiatus, she said.

"I think I was ready for a change from the head up," she said.

At first, Seger said she felt "culture-starved" in England, but she wanted to sink her teeth into the unknown.

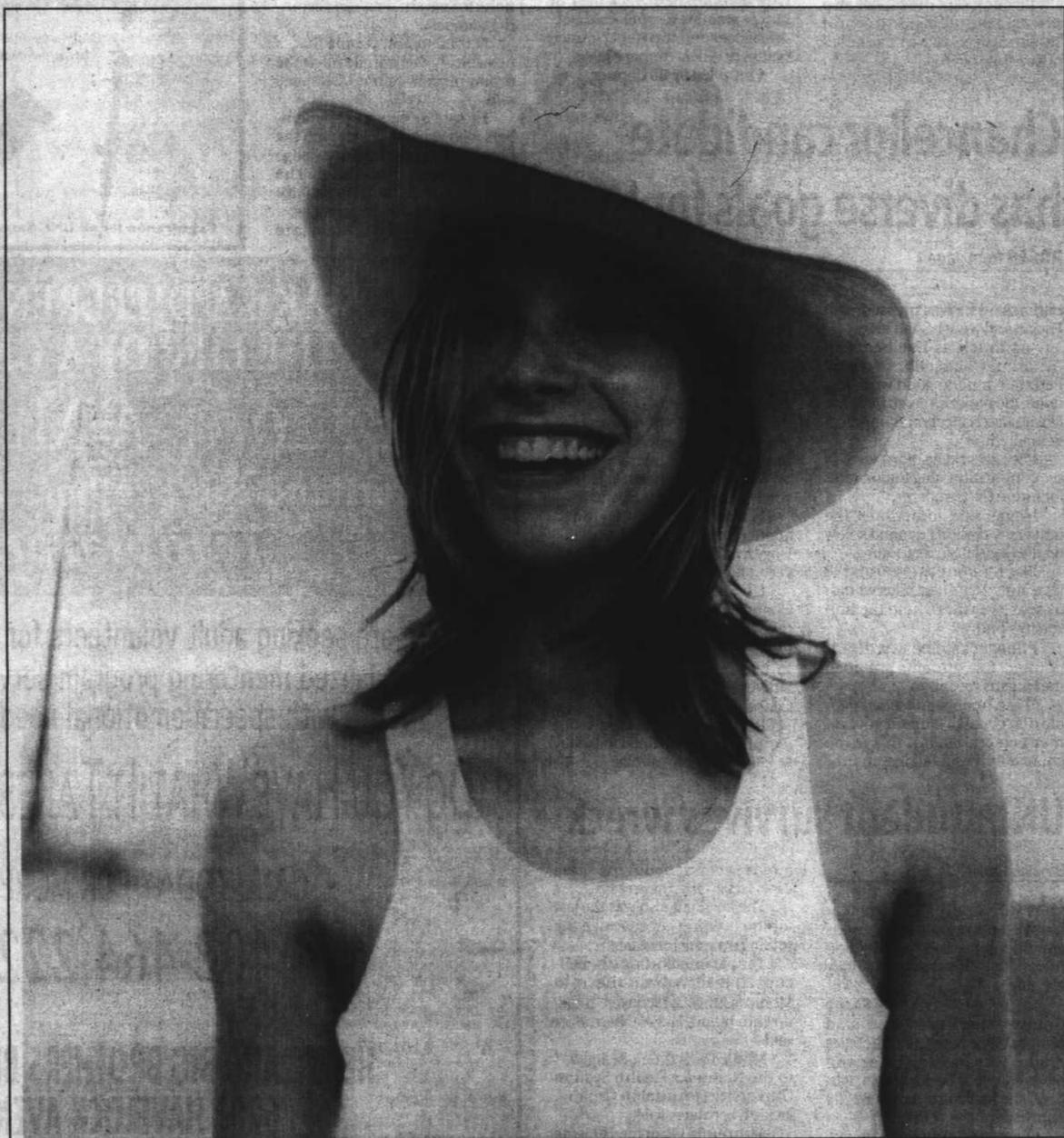
"It stretched me and added a few intricate parts of my character," she said.

Seger also got a chance to experience the UK music scene, and enjoyed watching the band Coldplay emerge and cross over to America.

She said she hoped to do the same, and things were moving so quickly right now that "nothing is solidified until it is a

"It stretched me and added a few intricate parts of my character."

Shea Seger
singer



Courtesy Art

Shea Seger's debut album "The May Street Project" doesn't hit stores until June but will be released for college radio play this month. The first expected single is "Clutch."

Seeger album mixes genres, effects to create original-sounding collection of catchy songs

■ With a mix of country, soul, rock and roll and rap, "The May Street Project" is a perfect mixture of sound.

ANDREW SHAW

Shea Seger's sound is so widely derivative that it becomes original.

Mixing country, southern soul, alternative rock and a little rap, "The May Street Project" blends together many different genres with the spinning blade of Seger's lazy, breathy voice.

Although her voice recalls memories of Fiona Apple, Sheryl Crow and Poe, its raw power and natural back-roads gravel will always sound fresh and soothing.

The songs on "The May Street Project" are filled with pop's catchiness without the Hollywood glitz associated with the majority of the music industry's latest young artists.

Before "Last Time," the album's opener, is halfway over, one feels compelled to sing along. Driven by a solid yet subtle bass track, prodded along by drums that are both sloppy and precise at the same time and switched up with a gliding string invention, it becomes a gripping starting leg for Seger's debut album.

Seger's tune "I Love You Too Much" has received rave reviews on the Internet, despite its trite lyrics, redundant chorus and general lack of emotion.

"Clutch," the album's first single, is a far superior song, progressing through dynamic levels and musical moods. The song has a disco-pop-funk quality to it, with an electronic bass drum making the beat known on every stomp, and Seger's voice trips through the tune like a lazy Sunday afternoon walk around the block.

Another standout track from "The May Street Project," "Twisted (Never Again)," seems to have stolen the sloppy drum track from House of Pain's "Jump Around," which gives the song of failed love a party-like feel. Seger's voice receives a popular makeover on "Twisted," tingling with the rough edges of distortion, but the best sounds are those that aren't entirely present.

There's a solo noise that sounds like a person speaking backward through a flute, buried record scratches, subtle harmonies that end in laughter, sporadic buzzsaw guitar and a ghostly tambourine part that, once heard, takes over the tune on subsequent listens. The layering of so many interesting and



stimulating sounds can be credited to Commissioner Gordon, whose fingerprints can also be found on Lauryn Hill's "Miseducation" album.

Seger's eclectic and ever-changing sound is exhibited on each track of "The May Street Project," while still preserving the musical concept of capturing the white Southern experience.

Shea Seger "The May Street Project" RCA/BMG Records 2000



Semisonic



A 'sonic' mixture of sounds

BY BRAD T. COX

The first tracks on Semisonic's new album "All About Chemistry" may seem like something straight out of kindergarten.

But the rest of the album backs it up with an endearing honesty that proves this band is all about vulnerability and the realizations that come when people accept their inner naiveté and humility in dealing with relationships.

In "Chemistry," the album's first track and hopeful single, the lyrics turn out to be an inner battle between wit and filler phrasing. Back to back are the honest words, "I was old enough to want it but younger than I wanted to be," followed by the cliché relationship reference, "The two things we put together had a bad tendency to explode," setting this lyrical civil war into full swing. "Chemistry" is the weakest link on the album but rivals closely the second track, "Bed."

Even in the CD's preemptive attempt to make the listener give up and look for the receipt, the third track, "Act Naturally," begins to strike those same heartstrings that fans shared with some of their earlier hits. Said bassist John Munson in press liner notes: "I think 'Act Naturally' is the best song on the record."

The band's last album, "Feeling Strangely Fine" has found its place in platinum in the U.S. with "Closing Time," and in the UK with "Secret Smile."

"I told the guys that I thought we'd done a great introspective album last time around, but that this time I wanted to make something really different," said guitarist/songwriter Dan Wilson.

Wilson was nominated at the Grammys for his lyrics in 2000, and although several of the new tracks don't seem to meet his previous standards, the album is worthy of the faithful Sonic-ite.

Said Wilson: "This time around, I envisioned a big group of friends at a great party where everyone has done a few things they'll remember forever and everyone has done a few things that they'd rather forget."

The self-produced freedom from the dictatorial role of a financial backer allows the band to cover sounds not found in its previous works. Using digital recording devices, antique sound-processing gear and some tonality on track nine, "One True Love" from Carole King, this album definitely approaches new ground musi-

Please see SONIC on 9