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ENTERTAINMENT

Comedienne fuses laughter, lessons

By Ming Rodrigues
 Emerald Contributor

Bertice Berry is either the Bill Cosby of sociology or the doctor of comedy. Or both.

Voted 1991 College and University Comedian of the Year, Berry holds a Ph.D. in sociology and is a former professor — one who just happens to be funny.

Knowing exactly what to make of her hasn't been easy for anyone. She is either a) a comedienne who happens to be scholarly, b) a gifted lecturer/speaker with a comic edge, or c) a comic with a serious message on stage. It's hard to fail this Bertice Berry Profile Quiz because there are no incorrect answers.

"She has a comedic intelligence that's hard to come by," said Frank Geltner, faculty advisor for the EMU Cultural Forum. "She's able to fuse the gap between cultures."

Near the conclusion of Berry's high school career in Wilmington, Del., a counselor told her she was not college material. Since then, she's earned her doctorate and won over the hearts and minds of audiences across this country and Canada with a comedy routine that reflects her academic background.

"All of the stuff I do is about people coming together," Berry said. "I am a spokesperson for everything I believe in." As proof of this, she spirits jokes that convey positive images about living happily together and loving each other, regardless of race or gender.

Berry's comedy comes in layers. On the top is the easy laugh. Near the bottom lies the message. During her act, she works over the stereotypes of men and women, blacks and whites, speech and action — a veritable equal opportunity comedienne.

At 11, she was a cleaning woman. At 18, she worked as



Bertice Berry has been breaking down stereotypes via comedy for years now, and she'll continue to do the same in Eugene on Sunday night.

a counselor in a shelter for battered women. Today, Berry is on the verge of a who-knows-what career. Though she isn't certain which direction her career will take, she is convinced it will not remain on the same track forever.

"I never know from one day to the next what's going to happen," she said. So far, so good.

When she decided to attend graduate school, she requested catalogs from dozens of schools. They helped, but not in the obvious way. To decide

where she would apply, she tossed the catalogs across her room. Those that landed beyond her blue throw rug would receive applications. The first to accept won.

That was Kent State. Although she said she was always funny, it was in the classroom that her comedy career took off. Mike Veneman, a friend and former Kent State counselor, met Berry at a doctoral seminar. "You," he told her, "are funny."

"That wasn't a compliment to me then as I was trying to be a scholar," Berry said. But

even her students found her funny and told her that if she could win them over by making it fun to learn, she could win over comedy audiences.

Becoming a comedienne has also earned her another bonus. "When I would go home before, my mom wouldn't let me tell jokes," Berry said. "Now when I go home, she wants me to tell jokes to everybody."

Berry will perform this Sunday, Jan. 19, at 7 p.m. in the Hult Center's Silva Concert Hall. The show is free.

'Pretty Hate Machine' addicts and Sting-gone-jazz annoys



Nine Inch Nails
Pretty Hate Machine

TVT Records
 1989
 ★ ★ ★

Though *Pretty Hate Machine*, the first and only album from Nine Inch Nails, was released in 1989, it has never been more popular than it is now. The video for "Head Like a Hole" has received heavy airplay on MTV, and the album soared to number 81 on *Billboard's* chart.

For those unaccustomed to industrial music, the first few listens may be more annoying than enjoyable. The chaotic beat and schizophrenic synthesizers will seem disjointed at best. A few more listens, however, and it becomes addictive.

For those unaccustomed to industrial music, the first few listens may be more annoying than enjoyable. The chaotic beat and schizophrenic synthesizers will seem disjointed at best.

This is one of those albums that grows on you. At first listen, it will seem more bothersome than anything, but give it time. It boasts a musical style that takes time to get used to, but once you're used to it, it becomes a favorite.

The vocals by Trent Reznor, the band's sole member, are passionate and convey a sense of rage as he lashes out at the world.

In "Terrible Lie," Reznor condemns

the contradictions he sees in religion, but in the same breath he whispers, "Don't take it away from me; I need someone to hold on to." His rage boils and he is soon screaming the same words in a frenzy of ambivalent anguish.

Pretty Hate Machine is, indeed, full of hate, but it remains disturbingly addictive.



The Bob Belden Ensemble
Straight to My Heart: The Music of Sting

Blue Note Records
 1991
 ★ 1/2

Some jazz enthusiasts might be pleased with *Straight to My Heart*, which contains jazz renditions of 10 Sting compositions, but Sting fans may actually be repulsed.

The instrumentals are brilliant at times, but Belden opted for vocals on four of the tracks and they simply do not work. It is not that the voices are poor, only that they seem conspicuous and out of place.

The version of the Police classic "Roxanne" is painfully slow and sounds more like dentist office muzak. And this isn't the only track that falls far short of its predecessor.

Pleasant surprises, however, include "Dream of The Blue Turtles," which is slightly more expansive than Sting's, and "They Dance Alone," which is emotional but lost without the saxophone of Branford Marsalis who played on the original.

The nature of this project invites comparisons, and Belden simply does not measure up.

By Eron Witzel
 Emerald Contributor

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