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Oh, the things he's seen

By Scott Simonson
Oregon Daily Emerald

Good storytelling is in short supply these days. Visual appeal, fast edits and short attention-spans reign supreme. People don't sit and listen anymore. People don't hear stories anymore.

So it may have come as a surprise that when Kevn Kinney started telling stories at his solo acoustic concert at the WOW Hall last Friday night, people listened. They listened and loved it.

Kinney told stories between songs. He told them in the middle of songs. He told them in a song. The audience listened, loved it and waited for more.

The lead singer for Atlanta's Drivin' 'N' Cryin', who is touring in support of his second solo album, took the stage before a sparse crowd in a city where he'd never played in his decade-long career. He remarked euphemistically about how "intimate" the place was. Then he gave the 50 or so listeners a show that they could tell their friends about.

Kinney finished exactly one song before he asked for requests from the audience. Kinney politely declined requests from the Lynyrd Skynyrd catalog, adding "You know, I *wrote* free bird."

Kinney decided to pick his own songs for the rest of the evening, making up his song list as he went along. He borrowed heavily from his band's catalog, augmenting the list with his solo work.

He didn't go far before stopping in the middle of "MacDougal's Blues" and asking "Is it too early in the evening for a story?" Before the evening was over, Kinney had stopped asking the audience for permission to tell stories, and the audience leaned forward in their seats each time he began another one.

He told about visiting New York and mugging a man by accident. He told about interviewing Meatloaf (the musician, not the dinner dish) while working for an underground newspaper. He told about working at Arby's for three weeks, a story that was too good to ruin by wondering whether it was true.

His songs leaned toward political, philosophical tunes and direct, honest tales of the downtrodden and outcast. It was storytelling in song, showcasing the storytellers' ability to explain our world and help us understand ourselves while entertaining all the while.

"Gotta Move On" was an ode to the homeless and a reminder that "they're not just hungry and lonely around Christmas." "Midwestern Blues" told of a young man's attempt to escape his blue collar, small town life and find a promised land. "Scarred but Smarter" promised justice for those out of work and out of hope.

His asides lightened the mood considerably. Topics included mythology about the American South ("You know, the war *did* end. They have Volvos there, too.") and the Ramones (who Kinney said have been the best band in the world for a while, but the music industry refuses to acknowledge them.)

After more than an hour and a half, the show ended. There was no show business ending, no high volume, high energy encore to bring the audience to a fever pitch. The concert ended with one more heartfelt song, one more funny story and one plea to remember the things in life that are important.

The crowd filed out into the street. A woman on the sidewalk asked if anybody could spare some change. Coins dropped into her hand. Their sound echoed the power of storytelling.

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Continued from Page 7

sional independent company jockey for the best release dates, steering clear of blockbusters and scurrying for less crowded weekends.

Similarly themed films rarely open on the same weekend, since they typically cannibalize each other's audience. The action films *Blown Away* and *Clear and Present Danger*, for instance, are separated by more than a month. And the Westerns *Maverick* and *Wyatt Earp* will open May 20 and June 24, respectively.

Release dates are changed only under extraordinary circumstances.

Keanu Reeves' *Speed* was moved up from Aug. 5 to June 10 after it tested strongly to preview audiences. Arnold Schwarzenegger's *True Lies*, on the other hand, had to be pushed back from July 1 to July 15 because it simply could not be completed on time.

With release dates drawing closer with every passing minute, directors are under enormous pressure as they finish the "post production" on their movies. For many, filming may have ended months ago — but there is so much more to a movie than cranking the cameras.

"My schedule is: When I'm awake, I'm working," says Chuck Russell, the director of *The Mask*. Due in theaters July 29, the comedy stars Jim Carrey (*Ace Ventura*) as a man whose features give new meaning to the expression eye-popping: The film includes a variety of special effects that transform Carrey's face into a three-dimensional cartoon.

"The final stages of post production are vital to my film," Russell says. "To a special-effects film, it can make or break a film. There's a lot of pressure."

Some 60 people are involved in the film's final preparation.

In addition to supervising editing, Russell is overseeing the title design, working on the soundtrack and coordinating clips for the coming attractions advertisements.

The Mask was originally scheduled for release in August until executives at New Line Cinema saw an early version of the film.

"They said, 'The good news is we love the movie. The bad news is we want it sooner,'" Russell recalls. "We're going to be finishing the opticals (effects) right up to the release."

Unlike *I Love Trouble* and *The Mask*, *Wagons East* is better off shown to audiences well before its official release date. The wagon train movie is a comedy, and Hollywood finds test screenings help tighten comic timing and cut jokes that don't work.

With a computer editing team of up to 15 with some technicians working all night, director Peter Markle has cut the film from three hours 15 minutes to two hours 30 minutes and hopes to cut some more.

"The film will play longer than a 90-minute comedy," Markle says. Just how long it plays may have something to do with the test audience reaction.

Wagons East star John Candy died on the film's Mexican set with the movie mostly completed. He had yet to finish one scene that was rewritten for other characters. Six words of Candy's dialogue will be recorded by another actor.

Jan De Bont, the director of 20th Century Fox's *Speed*, was looking at a busy but manageable post production schedule — until Fox changed the action film's release date. The change means crews must work double time on sound effects, visual effects, miniatures of the movie's speeding bus and the music.

"The earlier release date is important because it's very much a summer movie," De Bont says over the roar of explosions on a Hollywood sound dubbing stage. "We have a much longer playing time in the summer now."

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