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MUSIC

'Stones' is Carpenter's masterpiece

Kim Weiss

Oregon Daily Emerald

The talents of honored elders in the music business, such as Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline, the Judds, Clint Black, Alabama, Loretta Lynn and Hank Williams Jr., have remained in the memories of the devoted. Now, continuously flowing groups of aspiring new artists, including Patty Loveless, Tracy Lawrence, Alan Jackson, Trisha Yearwood, Lee Roy Parnell, and Mary Chapin Carpenter, have released their musical energies to the public ears.

Though Mary Chapin Carpenter has been in the business since around 1986, I put her on the list of more recently published artists. I have listened to her music for a long time, but it has not quite "struck" many people save within the last few years.

Carpenter originally presented her music to the national realm of country nine years ago. Her musical resume boasts five compact discs, including her latest one, *Stones in the Road*. Each CD demonstrates her remarkable abilities and illustrates the improvements she has made throughout her career.

Carpenter's latest CD is a great accomplishment and a long, almost-two-year wait for the anxious. I became impatient for her most recent release after hearing Carpenter perform her first single from her latest CD at a music awards show last fall.

Stones in the Road is no disappointment. In her earlier CDs, Carpenter's voice sounds young and underdeveloped. But I noticed a gradual improvement in her voice in her previous CD, *Come On, Come On*.

Since that CD and continuing on her latest one, Carpenter has developed a noticeable strength



Stones in the Road

Mary Chapin Carpenter

★★★★★

sound.

On each CD she creates, I can hear her variation of musical accompaniment. Some songs have background vocals harmonizing with Carpenter's and a full band mixing with her rhythmic acoustic guitar.

An example of this is her first single release, "Shut Up and Kiss Me," which includes everything from drums and percussion, to electric and acoustic guitars. This is one song she does not sing background vocals on, but instead Trisha Yearwood and John Jennings (Carpenter's co-just-about-everything on many of her CDs' songs) harmonize in the background.

On other songs Carpenter plays solo acoustic guitar and has piano accompaniment or has, on a rare occasion, a different accompanying instrument. "John Doe No. 24" is one of those songs where Carpenter not only shows off her fantastic solo vocals but also includes a beautiful saxophone accompaniment by Branford Marsalis.

This song is especially different, not only because of its musical makeup. Carpenter's lyrics depict a real-life situation about an unknown person who lived and died that way. The CD cover encloses a news article about the man in her song. The story and lyrics are very affect-

and maturity in her voice. She has mastered the art of enunciating every word she sings, from the beginning to the end of each word or

ing — I realized how easily lives are taken for granted and how powerful a message the song discloses.

Carpenter wrote the lyrics to every song on the CD. Her songs are not simply sappy love songs (though a few of those do appear on the CD). A majority of her songs are love songs, but the lyrics and music contain more than just a sentimental steel guitar slide. The songs have an upbeat tempo and occasionally even an offbeat verse.

Carpenter has a gift for penning exceptional lyrics that are either happy and ridiculous, or heartfelt and serious. She has in her writing what I would consider a Carpenter trademark.

Many of Carpenter's lyrics sing like a story, beginning from a young time in a person's life to a time of adulthood, often including ages of the described and referring to specific places encountered.

And of course, a musician's trademark is the song that tells a story about his or her own life. Carpenter has mentioned in a performance on the TV show, *Austin City Limits*, some of her songs are autobiographical. She has even released a "trilogy" of autobiographical love songs on a previous CD.

And after hearing *Stones in the Road*, I imagine a few of the singles describe real events for her, as well as events with which we can empathize. Which ones are true? We, the listeners, will never know. But I don't care. The CD is still pretty darn excellent to enjoy.

Check out the CD, *Stones in the Road*. I guarantee if you enjoy country music, you will like the tunes of Carpenter.

CULTURE

Continued from Page 5

Chinese red silk dance. This is a dance where seven women use long silk scarves as they dance.

According to Lu, there are 56 minority nationalities living in mainland China, including Korean, Tibetan and Mongolian. Chinese Cultural Night will give the audience a chance to see the ethnic dances of many of these groups, Lu said.

The Ballroom will be adorned with traditional New Year decorations. It is traditional to write New Year wishes for prosperity and peace on strips of red paper and hang them on either side of a doorway. These are suppose to keep out ghosts and devils, Lu said.

According to legend, each year is represented by an animal. There are 12 creatures represented. The pig is the last in the order and next year the

cycle will begin again with the mouse.

The Chinese New Year is as important as Christmas is in the West and America, explained Lu, who left mainland China five years ago.

Lu remembers looking forward to the traditions that went along with the New Year's celebration. Her family would prepare a big banquet for New Year's Eve, and she received a new dress to wear the first day of the year.

She explained that on New Year's day children receive money from their family and friends. Pot stickers are therefore a traditional New year's food because they are in the shape of Chinese money.

Lighting off fireworks is usually an important part of Chinese New Year celebrations but will not accompany cultural night. Fireworks, to scare off evil spirits, often begin at midnight of the New Year and continue for 15 days.

Tickets for Chinese cultural night will be on sale today in the EMU foyer. They are \$7 for students and general audiences, and \$3 for children.



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