

# REVIEWS

PULSE EDITOR: REBECCA WILSON

## Sharp satire hits the wits of 'Mere Mortals'

■ The Pocket Playhouse production rewards those who appreciate both vulgar and intelligent mockery



THEATER

'Mere Mortals'

Pocket Playhouse

★★★★☆

By Mason West  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The Pocket Playhouse will challenge audiences' wits this Thursday with the opening of "Mere Mortals," a play by David Ives. University sophomore Nathan Loveless directs six fellow students in the four one-acts that comprise the show.

The four vignettes have nothing in common except their absurdity and humor. Ives is a satirist and excels at sharp social commentary. In slightly less than an hour, audiences are assaulted with jokes about sex, feminine and masculine stereotypes, death and general human interaction. The viewer is as-

saulted because the play makes fun of the life that everybody leads, not just the characters in the play.

The first act, titled "Foreplay: Or the Art of Fugue," revolves around one man at three different stages in life, taking three different dates out to miniature golf. Although the three couples don't exist in the same time, they exist in the same space. The beauty of the action is brought about by the dialogue, which resembles the musical style of a fugue — a repeated theme played and bounced around by different instruments.

The second act, "Time Flies," is based around two mayflies who have just met. During their brief time together, they discover that they only have a day to live, and the audience experiences that short day in an even shorter 15 minutes. This act is the funniest of the four, which is partly because of its universal appeal.

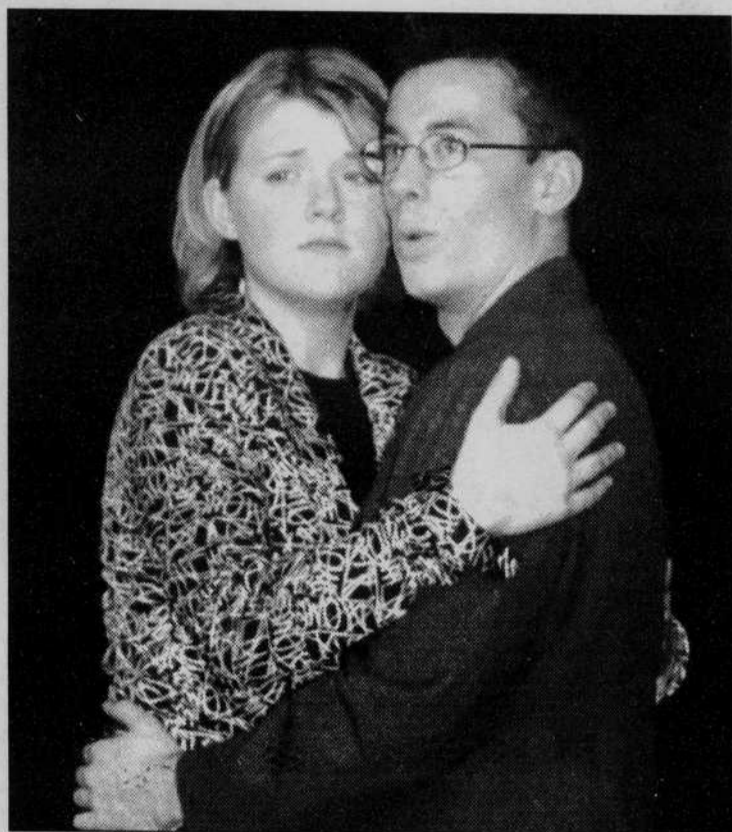
The third act, "Degas C'est Moi," requires a little knowledge about Edgar Degas. As the act unfolds, a man has decided to assume the persona of the famous painter, and he goes about his day seeing things in a new light. Freshman Eli

Levine supplies the innocence and amazement at simple things that is required for the role.

The final act, "Speed the Play," is worth much more to an audience that has an understanding of the works and style of playwright David Mamet. The act is a condensed version of five of his plays, mediated by a hilarious cross-dressed Talia Thelen. Ives mocks Mamet's male-dominated writing style by having the men talk almost exclusively about women and say "fuck" a lot. The act seems more improvised than scripted, but that only reflects Ives' mastery of the language and the caliber of the performances.

The set is minimalist, as most Pocket shows are, but the lack of defined physical references increases the focus on the text. If the audience is willing to pay enough attention to keep up, it will be a rewarding experience. All around, the actors are up to the demands that Ives requires in his plays, and Loveless does the writer honor with his production.

"Mere Mortals" runs today at 5 p.m. and Saturday at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. in the Pocket Playhouse in Villard Hall.



Chrystal McConnell Emerald

Amanda Dumler and Tyler Boehh cling together in a fleeting moment of passion. Their time is short because they are mayflies, insects whose lives start and end in one day.

## Greatest hits album looks 'Cydeways' at rap music

■ Pharcyde's best-of release highlights 'four goofballs' in a post-gangsta world



CD REVIEW

The Pharcyde 'Cydeways'

Rhino Records

★★★★☆

By Dave Depper  
For the Emerald

The year was 1992, and the rap world was going through some foundation-rattling changes. MC Hammer was about halfway down the wrong side of his 15 minutes of fame. Gangsta rap was enjoying its first taste of mainstream success, and Ol' Dirty Bastard of the Wu-Tang Clan probably had fewer than 50 arrests to his name. And significantly, a group of four goofballs from Los Angeles released their groundbreaking debut album, "Bizarre Ride II The Pharcyde." It was a truly astounding first effort, bounding with positive energy, deft wordplay and innovative beats.

It is 2001, and the rap world is post-Hammer, post-gangsta and arguably post-Wu Tang. Is there room in the new millennium for a greatest-hits album from a somewhat forgotten rap group? The answer is an emphatic YES. "Cydeways: the best of The Pharcyde" comes as a breath of fresh air to these Jay-Z-weary ears. The Pharcyde always occupied a strange spot in the rap pantheon: Their music was predominantly light-hearted, but definitely not as benignly cheerful as efforts by Vanilla Ice or Young MC, as the weed-taking anthems "Quinton's

On The Way" and "Pack the Pipe" suggest. Nor were The Pharcyde interested in becoming gritty street poets a la N.W.A. — sunny anthems such as "Drop" and "It's Jigaboo Time" were miles away from what Ice Cube was rapping about at the time.

Until last year's excellent "Plain Rap" (sadly not represented on this compilation), The Pharcyde had only released one album after "Bizarre" — the decidedly darker "LabCabinCalifornia."

Where does this leave "Cydeways?" Well, it's heavy on cuts from the first album (a whopping nine show up here); it contains a sprinkling of tracks from the second (five to be exact); and of course it includes that essential element of compilation albums, a previously unreleased track (the raunchy "Panty Raid"). Drawing material from only two sources that are so different lends "Cydeways" a somewhat schizophrenic feel, especially since the tracks are in chronological order.

However, the sequence could be a good thing — the optimistic rhymes from the first album would have sounded pretty strange if they had been mixed with the grittier subjects of the songs from the second.

Not surprisingly, it is somewhat hard to narrow down the highlights of this album — being of the greatest hits variety, the peaks are many and the valleys are few. If I had to pick out some true gems, though, I would start with the wonderfully titled "Oh Shit." This song is just awesome. Slim Kid, Booty Brown, Fat Lip and Imani each take turns describing in delicious detail the perils of 1) having sex on the 50-yard line of a football field, 2) having sex with your best

friend's mom and 3) having sex with a transvestite. You also can't go wrong with the aforementioned "Pack the Pipe" — a comic ode to the joys of smoking weed that culminates in a "charming" description of getting a 4-year-old child high. And you would be hard-pressed not to like the uplifting "Otha Fish," the simple tale of a guy that gets dumped and decides to move on.

So there you go. "Cydeways" isn't perfect (where the hell is their terrific debut single, "Soul Flower"?), but it is a stellar representation of four guys that weren't afraid to go against the current trends of hip-hop in their day. Oh yeah, the beats are smokin', too.



Courtesy Rhino Records

**BIJOU 686-2458**  
492 E. 13th Ave  
Receive our web page weekly.  
AUTOMATICALLY! Go to  
www.bijou-cinemas.com

Rent the Bijou any  
morning or afternoon  
for parties, etc.

Starts Friday  
1/26 - 2/1

Meet the Marquis de Sade. The pleasure is all his.  
5:15, 7:45  
& 10:15pm  
Sun Mat 3:00pm  
FINAL WEEK!  
Kate Winslet  
Geoffrey Rush  
*Quills*

Starting Friday, February 2/2:  
*Crouching Tiger  
Hidden Dragon*

5:00, 7:10 & 9:20pm - Sun Mat 2:45pm  
BIJOU LateNite - \$3 TH-SA/\$2 SU-WE

*Requiem For A Dream*  
Must End Soon! 11:30pm

**MOJO**  
FRIDAY  
26th  
PRODUCTIONS  
JOHN HENRYS \$4  
136 E. 11th (9pm)  
"...Eugene's most refreshingly talented band..." WOW NOTES