

Byrne-ing down the house

With a new solo album, David Byrne finds a way to rock you intelligently. **PAGE 9**

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Not a little Pixie



Courtesy Photo

■ Frank Black has transcended his roots with The Pixies, but he's still saving rock 'n' roll

By Dave Depper
Oregon Daily Emerald

He may be bald, chubby and 36 years old, but don't just dismiss Frank Black as a has-been. You owe this man a huge debt of gratitude for saving rock music.

You see, Black (real name: Charles Thompson) was once in this little band called The Pixies. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, The Pixies fought the good fight against '80s hair metal and synth pop with their twisted surf songs about UFOs and monkeys. Never a huge commercial success, the band called it quits in 1993, but not before releasing a body of material that has since had a huge influence on everyone from Nirvana to David Bowie to Weezer.

While you may know The Pixies, you might not know that Black has had quite a solo career, with six albums under his belt. He even has another band, The Catholics, who just released their third album, "Dog in the Sand."

With its twangy guitar crunch, its country pedal-steel licks and its funky Wurlitzer/piano vibe, this CD rules. You should pick up a copy immediately. Black's former Pixies cohort Joey Santiago even shows up on three songs.

Frank Black and The Catholics will grace the WOW Hall next Wednesday. It should certainly rock, and ex-Pixies drummer David Lovering will be opening the concert — with a magic show. Black describes Lovering's act — dubbed "David Lovering's Scientific Experiment" — as "weird... he blows stuff up with his powers of mentalism." Pixies fans take note: On past solo jaunts, Black has steadfastly refused to play any songs by his old band. However, on this tour, Black has taken Pixies classics such as "Where is My Mind?" and "Gouge Away" out of the mothballs.

I managed to talk with a groggy Black at his hotel in Lawrence, Kan., and immediately realized to my horror that the phone call had woken him. While polite, Black sounded pretty tired, so his answers were rather short and to the point.

Pulse: May I call you Charles?

Frank Black: You may.

P: I read in a recent interview that the WOW Hall is one of your favorite places to play. What do you like about it?

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A play on plays

■ 'Durang/Durang' consists of four short plays made to attack the pretentiousness of theater



THEATER REVIEW

'Durang / Durang'

Arena Theatre

★★★★☆

By Mason West
for the Emerald

The purpose of theater is to cure the nausea of life — or so playwright Christopher Durang would have us believe. His play "Durang/Durang," which opens in the Arena Theatre today, is a vicious assault on pretentious theater and playwrights.

Being an insider himself, Durang's blows go right for the jugular, daring playwrights to be "deep" so he can point out how shallow they really are. The show goes four rounds, with four short plays having nothing to do with one another except their abuse of the theater. The purpose of theater mentioned above starts the barrage and comes from the opening monologue, in which Mrs. Sorken,

an eccentric older woman, talks directly to the audience about her take on the performing arts. "Drama," she says, "comes from the Greek word 'dram,' meaning 'to do,' and the English word 'drain,' which means to empty totally."

If you didn't get that joke, you have not done theater. Durang wrote a play mocking his peers and his craft, and it is most appreciated by those with similar knowledge. The next two plays poke fun at "The Glass Menagerie" by Tennessee Williams, "Lie of the Mind" by Sam Shepard (who also wrote "True West," performed earlier in the Pocket) and they also get in a jab at David Mamet. In the spirit of the moment, senior actress Jackie Jacobus even throws in a reference to the University's presentation of "Electra."

It seems that along the way, Durang forgot that he was trying to *combat* pretentiousness. But these plays aren't required reading for enjoying this show. It also speaks to anyone who has been dragged to a theater and left questioning what the hell just happened. In the third play, "A Stye of the Eye," the protagonist starts by telling his mother that he killed his wife for being a pretentious actress. It only gets crazier from there and will have everybody's head spinning.

The funniest moments in the play for the non-connoisseur will be focused around jun-



Courtesy Photo

Connor Dudley, right, plays an incoherent nun being analyzed by an eccentric psychologist, played by Katie McClatchey, in 'Durang/Durang.' The play runs today through Sunday and May 17-19 at 8 p.m.

ior Connor Dudley. He brings a wonderful physical and vocal comedy to the play. His acting would be over the top, but it isn't possible to take Durang too far. However, Dudley ends the play in a more reserved role just to show that he isn't all about antics.

The cultured theater-goers will appreciate

"A Stye of the Eye," as they will pick up Durang's well-placed references. But they just as easily might fall for Dudley too.

This show was not written to be understood. Anyone who tries to think about this play will have a terrible time and then

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