

■ In my opinion



RYAN MURPHEY
MR. SOPHISTICATION

Snotty stars should be slapped with humiliation

Celebrities are the spinner hubcaps of society. They are flashy, entertaining and easily noticed, but when it comes down to it, basically useless. So why do I know more about Paris Hilton's dog, Tinkerbell, than I do about the policies of half of my elected officials? Why is it that the criminal activities, wardrobe malfunctions, and scandalous sex lives of the rich and famous draw as much, if not more, media coverage than genocide in Sudan, political upheaval in Haiti or even the measures we voted on last Tuesday to decide the future of regional and national legislation?

The argument has been made that airing the dirty laundry of the stars reminds us that they are not perfect, that they are "people just like us." Right. The truth is that most people just like me have never had a birthday party hosted by the King of Morocco. Most people just like me would not make international news for appearing in an amateur sex video. Being the particularly covetous and childish person that I am, I find that my interest in the lives of the social elite is less motivated by a desire to relate to the stars than it is by a petty hatred for people who have more than I do.

Watching a snotty musician or actor get publicly humiliated provides me with the kind of warmth and satisfaction generally reserved for a daytime television program about a former gang member trying to turn his life around. As far as I'm concerned, Ashlee Simpson's recent lip-synching mishap on Saturday Night Live is ironclad proof that there is an omnipotent God. Of all the performances at which the talentless little faux-delinquent's ruse could have been revealed, it was on one of the most well-known live television shows in America, and not long after she had denounced other performers for doing the same thing. How's that for a divine bitch-slap?

All too often the true reasons for outrage over celebrity indiscretions are overlooked in light of more conventional objections such as morality and social expectations. When I heard rumors that Britney Spears' most recent marriage may have been the result of an unexpected pregnancy, I was not in the least bit upset by the thought of the teen icon being impregnated out of wedlock. What horrified me was the realization that if the rumors were true, Britney Spears would be raising a child, and that disgusts me far more than does the violation of unrealistic social morals. During Britney's career as a talentless void, she has managed to inflict irreparable damage on an entire generation of preteen girls and yet no concerns have been raised about the results her parenting might yield.

Normal people go through messy divorces, have drinking problems, raise children, take stands on issues and develop eating disorders, but are lucky if members of their own family take much notice. For whatever reason, if these same people starred in a movie or performed a hit single, they would be hard pressed to break wind without making headlines. I suppose I should insert a little diatribe here about the dangers of celebrity worship, but I'd rather get home and watch "The Simple Life."

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Musical pokes fun at politics

'Good Morning Athens' provides comic relief while sending a serious, timely political message

BY NATASHA CHILINGERIAN
SENIOR PULSE REPORTER

Don't expect to see any togas in the musical "Good Morning Athens." The University Theatre's second production of the school year, which opens Friday, will be full of contemporary music, language, costumes and political themes.

Former University of Wyoming student Sean Keogh wrote the musical, which he based on the ancient Greek play "Lysistrata." The production tells the tale of a Greek community whose leader, General Tantalos, is up for re-election. Tantalos, who bought himself into office the first time, decides to go to war for no reason other than to increase his chances of re-election. The women in the community decide to protest the war by refusing to have sex with their husbands until the fighting stops, and their vows of celibacy become a hot topic on the local TV show, "Good Morning Athens." University Theatre Development Director Joseph Gilg said although the show sends a serious political message, it is heavily comedic.

"It's a spoof and a farce; it pokes fun at politics and war," he said. "People will read into those deeper, darker meanings, and that's fine because they'll laugh. It's like watching 'The Daily Show.'"

Gilg said he and other theater department staff members chose the production after viewing it last winter at a college theater festival at the University of Idaho. He added that it makes references to World War I and II, Adolf Hitler and the current situation with oil and the war in Iraq.

"We thought it was very

exciting and timely," Gilg said. "At this point in American history, this play has a certain resonance with everyone, we think."

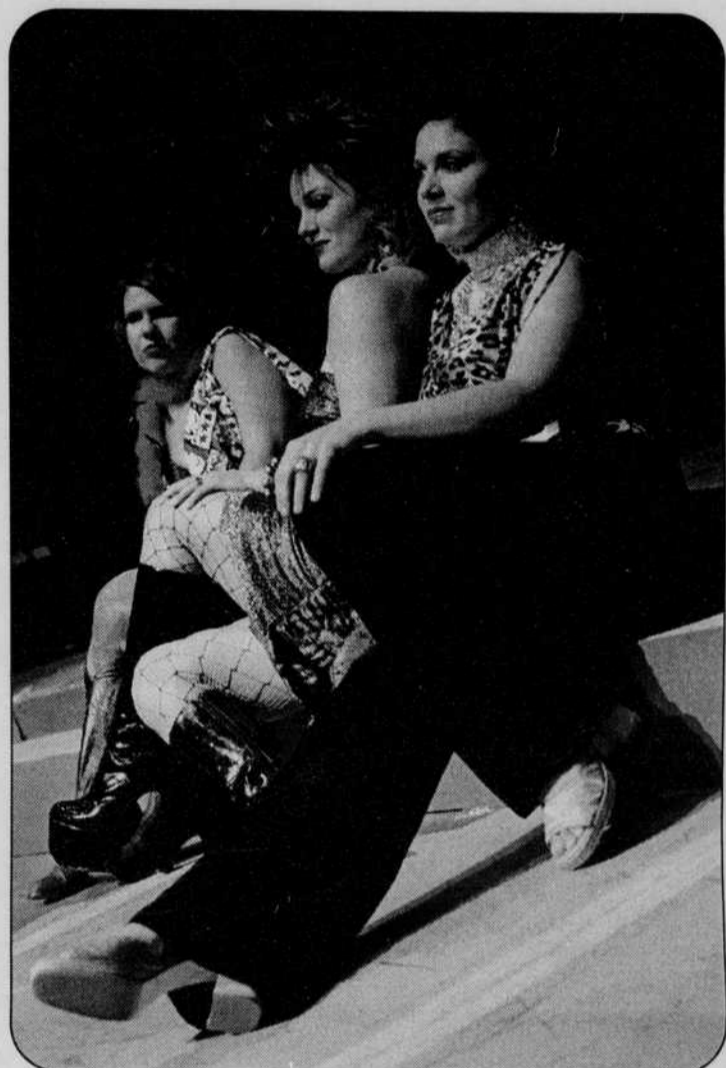
Cast members were selected last spring and reviewed the script and music over the summer, but they only began rehearsing this term. Senior theater arts student Sarah Griner, who plays Lysistrata, the wife of General Tantalos and leader of the women's peace movement against sex, said she enjoys the modern aspects of the show and working with other women.

"I love how this part allows me to reach back into my feminine side," she said. "I'm on-stage with girls most of the time, and it's like having a girls' night out. It allows for natural acting qualities. This show has a lot of contemporary characters whom people can relate to."

Today's society is reflected in the show's sets, costumes and music, which include graffiti-painted buildings, street-wear, army fatigues and a mixture of rap, hip-hop and rock tunes.

Senior theater arts student Deric Davis, who plays Herodotus, one of the husbands, said he loves that the show is hilarious yet sends out a message of peace. He added that one challenging aspect of the production was getting used to a large amount of physical contact with other actors.

"It's such a touchy-feely show; there's a lot of groping and feeling, and that was different for me," he said. "It was quite strange to jump into that and do sexual things. In one scene, the women are trying to entice the men and make them horny, and they're really touching and rubbing and dancing in



LAUREN WIMER | SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER

From left to right: Danielle Kardum (Chrysis), Sarah Griner (Lysistrata) and Juliet Strong (Thalia) perform in "Good Morning Athens."

front of them."

Although the show's message takes a stance against war, Davis said it shouldn't offend viewers who supported the war in Iraq.

"I can see how it would be controversial, and people could read into it, but I think the message is a good message," he said. "It's a message of peace."

The University Theatre will present "Good Morning Athens"

at the Robinson Theatre Friday, Saturday and Nov. 12, 13, 19 and 20 at 8 p.m.; Nov. 11 at 7:30 p.m.; and Nov. 14 at 2 p.m. Tickets cost \$6 for University students; \$11 for University staff, faculty, seniors and non-University students; and \$14 for the general public. Tickets can be purchased at the EMU Ticket Office.

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Local art collective heads to The Buzz

New Zone focuses on collaboration between students and community members to create eclectic artwork

BY AMY LICHTY
PULSE REPORTER

With all of its art galleries, artistic organizations and art classes, Eugene is a wonderful place for art lovers to live. Artwork ranges from glass-blowing to photography to murals on street walls. Today, the Eugene-based New Zone Art Collective is making its way to The Buzz coffee shop and the Aperture Gallery, located in the EMU.

According to its Web site, the New Zone Art Collective has been around for more than 20 years and is a nonprofit organization committed to presenting and encouraging the education and development of local artists and art students.

"They're all community members and do many things

for the community," UO Cultural Forum Event Coordinator Erica Rothman said. "Not only are they a nonprofit organization bringing new experimental art to Eugene and the surrounding areas, but they also have an educational side."

Although this won't be the first time the artists have displayed work at the University, it has been years since their last showing, and they're eager to reconnect with students.

"This is a wonderful experience for the collective," New Zone President Peter Herley said. "Getting the diversity of the students who will see the work every day and the interaction with the students is great. We haven't had this kind of interaction since we left our space on

Broadway, where we had a really good ongoing relationship with the students of the University. We hope to bring that back."

With a membership of about fifty Eugene-area artists, the New Zone Art Collective ranges from realistic painting to abstract art and everything in between.

"I'm amazed by the depth that their collection brings," Rothman said. "They have many media represented and I think that the show at The Buzz coffee shop will be very diverse."

One goal that both the UO Cultural Forum and the New Zone Art Collective hope to meet is for students and community members to come to the opening of the show at 5 p.m. today in The Buzz. Art-lovers are encouraged to attend the opening, where light refreshments will be provided by the Cultural Forum.

"The New Zone has a very

sizable following throughout the community," Rothman said. "But hopefully the art will draw more students so we can have a nice mingling of both community members and UO students."

The New Zone Art Collective would like to achieve another goal with the help of the community.

"Our future goal is to get our own space (to put up work)," Herley said. "Anyone who wants to help finance or be a patron is more than welcome to contact us by visiting our Web site at www.newzone.org."

New Zone's art collection will be available for viewers to enjoy in The Buzz and the Aperture Gallery throughout November.

"We're looking forward to this show," Herley said. "It's going to be fun."

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