

Famed poet shares work, humor, stories

Elisabeth Meyer
The Clackamas Print

Peter Sears brought his poems and famed good humor to campus last Wednesday. His easygoing demeanor made challenging poems from his award-winning book "The Brink" more digestible.

He opened the reading with a light-hearted comment about Clackamas. "I asked somebody the name of the (parking) lot, so I would know where I parked. 'What's the name of this lot?' I said. 'Uhh...the parking lot,' he said. 'Well, what's the name of that road?' I asked. And he said, 'It doesn't have a name.' This is a very intuitive campus."

"I write a lot about violence and the biases that are so deep in your blood," Sears continued cheerfully. Several of the poems he read dealt with recognizing children's ability to be violent. He addressed topics such as torturing a fish and harassing the neighborhood "crazy lady and her retarded son" at Halloween.

With an air that belied how much he's dwelt on the topic, Sears casually said, "I'm really trying to come in on that business of violence." He then paused and abruptly switched gears. "Okay, enough about that serious stuff. Let's talk about baseball."

Sears then read a baseball poem, but not before joking about the team's sponsor ("Precision Grinding—that's one of the great

names") and pointing out the need to collect team equipment for memorabilia.

"You need to get a hat. When you can't play baseball anymore, you don't have much left—you need a hat and t-shirts," said Sears.

Sears' mellowness softened much of his material. He read an unpublished anti-war poem with the repeated line "we'd better hurry to count the dead" thundering through it, but the harshest comment he made about the politics of the war was, "It's very weird, what's going on now."

He recalled driving a state car while working for the Arts Commission and getting offers like, "Want an owl in your gas tank?" which he merely characterized as "interesting."

Even personal worries were expressed offhandedly. In "Double Ghazal" Sears writes about being concerned for his daughter, though he's not sure why he should be.

"My daughter speaks so fast," he read, "I can't tell if she is trying to tell me something or trying not to."

Sears shared his work so affably that even the more difficult themes in his work were accessible. His good humor came through perhaps best when announced to the crowd that he had taken to pronouncing "ghazal" wrong (GAH-zull) intentionally, because he thought it sounded better.

"You can do that, you know," he said. "This isn't being investigated by the feds."

White Stripes mix punk, folk, heart in 'Elephant'



Isaiah Creel
The Clackamas Print

While The White Stripes' latest album "Elephant" lacks musical complexity, it makes up for it with a whole lot of heart.

Both punk rock and folk rock have always been genres based more on raw emotion than musical talent, but that has not inhibited the popularity of either of them. On the contrary, many listeners of modern music seem drawn to these sounds like moths to the burning passion of simplicity in form.

Although folk rock seems to have slipped by the wayside in a recent resurgence of punk, The White Stripes have found a happy medium between punk and folk rock (with a heavy dose of blues as well).

"Elephant" starts out big with the dark, edgy "Seven Nation Army," driven mostly by a very steady bass drum kick that commands attention. From there, the punk roots of The Stripes show in "Black Math," a down and dirty

track featuring that steady driving beat Meg White has adopted as the signature of The White Stripes' sound. The next track "There's No Home For You Here" is vocally reminiscent of "Magical Mystery Tour," and again utilizes the signature drum beat.

The whole album continues on in a similar fashion of folk-punk simplicity with a high point at track number 10, "Little Acorns," which goes aggressively grungy after relaying a sophisticated message of hope in the form of squirrels.

The final song on the album, "Well it's True That We Love One Another," is sappy and silly, but really outlines the heart of the album.

My favorite track on the album has to be "Girl, You Have No Faith in Medicine" due mainly to the social commentary on the outlying reliance of society upon drugs... prescription drugs, with lines like, "Don't even need a drink of water to make the headache go away." (Author's note: the majority of headaches are caused by dehydration.)

This album holds a range of sound and spirit that provides great background music for social events involving college students, but the lack of musical genius will put off any "serious" music fans.

Overall, I give this album a seven out of 10. It has spirit by the truckload, but the repetition of the same drum beat put off even me.



INTERNET PHOTO

Mitch (Eugene Levy) and Mickey (Catherine O'Hara) reflect on 'the good years' in Christopher Guest's latest film, which arrived in Portland May 9.

Guest's 'Mighty Wind' blows audience away

Shadra Beesley
Editor-in-Chief

"I feel as though I'm entering a very prolific phase now," Eugene Levy said as Mitch in "A Mighty Wind."

While "prolific" may not be a very accurate description of Christopher Guest's career in terms of the number of movies he's written/directed/starred in, it aptly describes the quantity of humor, wit, uniqueness and intelligence contained in his movies.

Guest's latest masterpiece, "A Mighty Wind," arrived in the Portland area May 9. The story begins with the death of Irving Steinbloom, a man who made folk music into the popular genre it became in the 1950s. Three folk groups, The New Main Street Singers, The Folksmen and Mitch and Mickey, collaborate at the

request of Steinbloom's son to sing a tribute concert in honor of the deceased.

As die-hard Guest fans already know, the movie was filled with dry, understated humor. Done in the classic mockumentary style Guest is known for, the film explores color-based religions, model train obsessions, PR workers' attitudes and plant phobias. Oh yeah, and folk music.

The enormity of the cast incites amazement from anyone who has seen "Spinal Tap," "Waiting for Guffman" or "Best in Show." Almost every character that played a major role (and in some cases a minor role) in any of these three movies appears in "A Mighty Wind." Eugene Levy, Catherine O'Hara, Jane Lynch, John Michael Higgins and Bob Balaban play the main characters, and there are several other characters that are given

plenty of screen time, but not much depth.

One drawback that the well-peopled cast presented was that the characters were under developed. Not much time was spent on the individual characters, straying from the pattern set in Guest's earlier movies. The extent of the character development seen in previous mockumentaries bordered on "too much information," while the characters in "A Mighty Wind" seemed somewhat thin and distant.

To call "A Mighty Wind" hilarious would be a gross understatement. Guest brings a rare and unexpected type of humor to the screen that no one else can match. Although it paled slightly in comparison to some of Guest's other films, it still can undoubtedly be considered the funniest, cleverest, most distinctive movie currently playing on the big screen.

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