

Mark the month for merry music

Shingo Izumi
THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

Looking to get into the holiday spirit a little early this year? Clackamas has a variety of musical performances designed just for such a purpose.

"They're going to be great shows; we'll play great music," said Instrumental Jazz Night conductor Tom Wakeling.

First on the list is the Instrumental Jazz Night, beginning at 7:30 p.m. tonight in the Gregory Forum. Tom Wakeling will direct CCC instrumental jazz students as they perform the music of such jazz legends as John Coltrane, Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie. Admission to the event is \$5.

Next up is the Fall Band Concert, which will be held in the Gregory Forum on Thursday, Dec. 4, beginning at 7 p.m.

"I hope everybody comes to listen to music and enjoys it," said Dave Mills, who will conduct the event. The evening will feature a selection of symphonic pieces as well as some classic Christmas standards. A \$5 donation is suggested.

On Friday, Dec. 5, the CCC Chamber Choir, Lenistius Chamber Choir and the Sinfonia Concertante Orchestra and Friends will perform the Christmas Oratorio by Camille St. Saens at St. Mary's Cathedral in Portland, starting at 7:30 p.m. Tickets range from \$10 for students to \$45 for patrons.

The Christmas by Candlelight Concert will take place on Sunday, Dec. 7 at 7:30 p.m. at St. John the Apostle Catholic Church in Oregon city. The CCC Chamber Choir and chorale, under the direction of Jolanta Szopa Tabisz and Lonnie Cline, will sing traditional Christmas favorites. The concert is free.

"It's a 25-year-old traditional event and it'll be outstanding," said Cline. "I'm happy to have it."

For more information on any of these events, call the music department at ext. 2434.

Oberst revamps decrepit ditties

Ben Maras
THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

Ever walked down the street during the holiday season wanting to strangle every joyous caroler, as the saccharine sweet songs send blood sugar levels soaring and push listeners slowly towards insanity?

"A Christmas Album" by indie poster-boy Conor Oberst, better known as "Bright Eyes," may just be what the doctor ordered.

Oberst, along with his "revolving door" (i.e., no set members) backup band and much of his all-star lineup at Omaha's Saddle Creek Records, has joined forces with others to create an album full of the old Christmas songs we all love, or love to hate. These versions are not the typical holiday standards, though; they've all been rewritten and rerecorded Saddle-Creek style, featuring artists from bands such as Azure Ray, Cursive, and Now It's Overhead.

One might ask the question: what could one possibly do with Christmas songs to make them a little bit more interesting? If anything is possible, Oberst and company do it on this album with techniques ranging from stripping it down to a bare acoustic guitar and vocals, such as on "White Christmas," to spicing it up with more instruments than one could easily count.

The first track, "Away in a Manger," begins with a single drum keeping a serene, half-time beat, before Orenda Fink and Maria Taylor (Azure Ray) harmonize their angelic voices with the piano, while the sounds of the hustling and bustling of a family at Christmas play in the background. Layered

with the chilling breeze of an arctic wind, it creates possibly only "warm fuzzy" moment on the album.

To liven things up, the next song, "Blue Christmas," has a more up-tempo, bluesy tone, without being overbearingly cheerful, it instantly

Another superlative song, "Little Drummer Boy" contains enough lo-fi and electronic drum beats to make Trent Reznor giddy. The synthesized beat is done artistically, accenting moments in the song, while a bass, piano and trumpet drift through the fuzz,

cally planned his revenge, with images of Whoville in flames dancing in his head.

Wise ones will skip over track nine, "Silver Bells," for no other reason than it seems almost unmistakably cliché... a happy choir sings with bells tolling in the background.

The following song, however, is another story. There is nothing merry about this rendition of "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas," so much so that

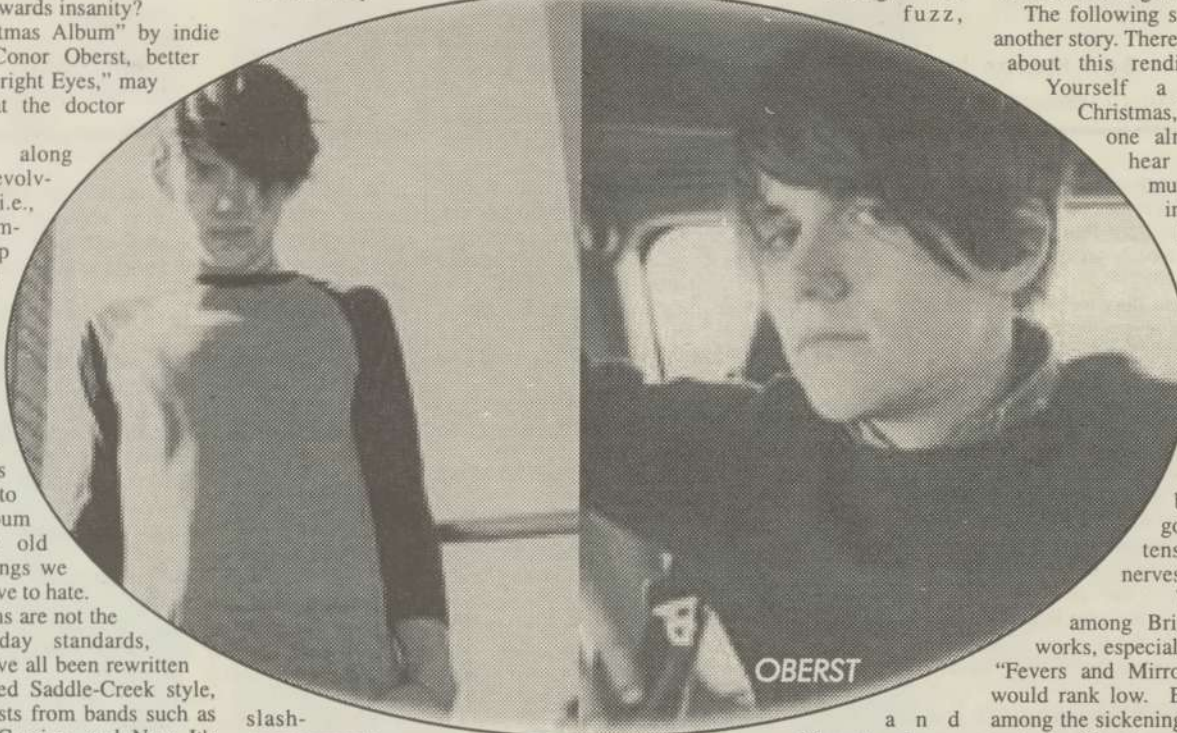
one almost expects to hear Oberst drop a much harsher word in place of "little."

Despite the melancholia, or maybe because of it, the track is another exceptional work. The pristine fragility seems almost a lullaby, doing much good to calm the tense holiday nerves.

When placed among Bright Eyes' other works, especially the influential "Fevers and Mirrors," this album would rank low. But when placed among the sickening mass of stereotypical Christmas albums, "A Christmas Album" creates a shining star that is the light at the end of the tunnel for anyone having a dismal holiday season.

In the spirit of holiday giving, all proceeds from the album are donated to the Nebraska AIDS Project, an organization which aims to beat the spread of HIV and AIDS by educating those at risk and providing free testing, as well as offering counseling for those diagnosed and their families.

Due to this, Saddle Creek has denied retail outlets the capacity to sell the album, knowing they would mark the album up and keep the remainder of the profit for themselves. "A Christmas Album" is only available for purchase for just \$11 online at: saddlecreekrecords.com.



slashes any expectation for the entirety of the album to sound alike.

"God Rest Ye, Merry Gentlemen"

is a definite stand-out track. As the cello of Gretta Cohn (Cursive) slithers underneath, the guitars, drums, mandolins, flutes and other such assorted instruments wrap around listeners' ears with an amazingly rich texture. After breaking down and giving way to a flute solo, the song ends after only one minute and 40 seconds, leaving the listener feeling not quite satisfied.

and Oberst's signature voice sings through yet another AM-radio filter, molding the most unique track on the album.

Showing that

Oberst is willing to try anything, "Silent Night" contains sitars and Indian drums, giving an Eastern flair to this longtime classic. The slide guitars and strings give the song a creepy feel, making it the eeriest version since Simon and Garfunkel mixed in samples from the 7 p.m. news. Without

a doubt, this is the song the Grinch would be listening to as he methodi-

"The Little Drummer Boy" contains enough lo-fi and electronic drum beats to make Trent Reznor giddy.

Back-to-back plays plus comedy improv equals tons of fun

Michael Cooper
THE CLACKAMAS PRINT

The theatre department sets the bar in this week's comedic one-act performances.

Twelve talented drama students bring on the laughs through two one-act plays and a series of comedic improvisational skits in the McLoughlin Hall Theatre.

Their performance yesterday was a treat, and only an hour long. To make it better, it's free.

Even before the first show started, the cast put on a believable "bar scene," complete with patrons, bar tender, waitress and music. The actors slid easily into their roles on the stage as the lights and music faded. The highlight of their acting was the execution of jokes, creating scenes where the timing of the lines had to be perfect—very well done.

The only weak point was when the actors swore: the crude words didn't flow like the rest of their lines.

First in the line-up is a play called "Big Mistake," directed by Bekah Finch with assistant director Annie Rimmer. When two ex-lovers meet in a bar, both in the company of a friend, hilarity ensues. Tension rises as the man insists on buying the woman a drink, and her friend keeps saying, rather hopelessly, "I have a bad feeling about this."

The climax is a fight between the two ex-lovers. The man rants about women and the woman rants about men. The friends, who at first appear to just be along for the ride, have their own fight about pick-up lines or the lack thereof, executed at exactly the same time as the fight between the ex-couple. The cues from start to finish, are laugh-out-loud funny.

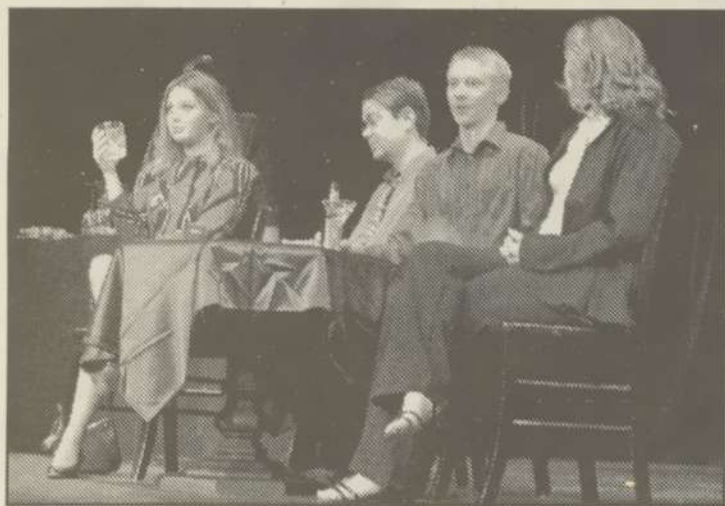
The second play, "Beautiful like a Brick," written and directed by Matt Morrison, is slightly less funny than its predecessor, but still worth seeing. Two friends play a drinking game with 20+ shots of vodka and a hammer. This play is mostly full of visual humor as we see the characters get drunker and drunker downing one shot after another. It lacks plot but is somewhat like "Saturday

Night Live" in flavor, so it's excusable.

After the one-acts, some of the actors come back on with other drama students to do a series of improvisational skits. Morrison describes the sketches as akin to "Whose Line is it Anyway?" The skits are directed by Michael Gerber and include some creative input from the audience. For example,

when asked to provide something for the actors to return to a department store help desk, people shout things like "chastity belt" and "a blender that's a cannibal."

All in all, the one-acts are a must-see for anyone with an hour to spare. Additional performances are scheduled today and Thursday at noon, as well as a 4 p.m. performance on Thursday.



From left: Kelsey Bales, Michael Gerber, Colton Ruscheinsky and Crystal Elder star in 'Big Mistake.'

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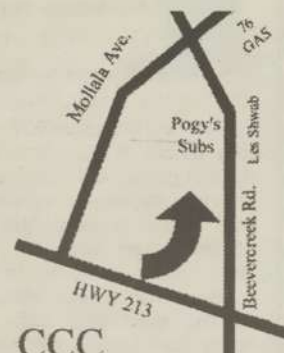
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