

Quilters' tells of pioneer women's lives

By Jess Sheppard

Clackamas Print

Ever think a story could be told in quilts? Well, the theatrical production getting ready to open at Clackamas does just that. "Quilters" is a women's show, written by women and performed by women. "It's a woman's life in quilts," said Jayne Stevens, Clackamas's resident in Residence and an actress in the production. The performance opens with a mother on her deathbed, surfered by her daughters, and goes on to tell the tale of life—not the mother's life or those of the daughters, but life itself. The songs and musical numbers help to convey a story that Theatre Director David Smith-English describes as "very episodic." The show "uses quilts as a metaphor for the social structure of pioneer women," Smith-English said. "Quilting wasn't just a hobby done for fun in the pioneer

days. "You were born, and you were wrapped in a quilt," Smith-English said. "You would quilt with your mother. Quilts would be part of your dowry. This was something that women did as a community that would hold them together."

While the plot is set such a long time ago, the issues and hardships faced by the characters in "Quilters" have changed very little over time.

"We've got marriage. We've got a fire," Smith-English said. "We have a hilarious scene where four women are about to get their periods."

Stevens said, "That would be different if a man wrote it. It's definitely a female perspective."

The music of "Quilters" proved to be a challenge for both Smith-English and the actresses, who play nearly a dozen parts each.

"It's very demanding stuff," Smith-English said.

Musical rehearsals had to begin three days before the scheduled acting rehearsals for fear that the production wouldn't be ready in time for the first showing.

The music in "Quilters" is different than that of many other musicals.

The orchestra is on stage with the actresses, in costume. Orchestra members even have lines of their own.

The band includes a violin, cello and bass, as well as a guitar played by Dean of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Bill Briare. The music director and keyboardist for the show is Mike Van Liew.

"The music is sophisticated and interesting," Smith-English said. "This is not a typical musical."

The cast features Clackamas veterans such as Stevens, Heather Ovalle, Brianne Shewbert and Theatre Instructor Cyndy Smith-English. It also includes the acting talents of Shannon McBride, Hannah Munsy, Kristina Poul and Beth Hungerford.

"It's a serious damn show," Smith-English said.

"Quilters" runs Feb. 28 through March 9. Curtain is at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Sunday showings start at 2:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$12 general admission and staff, \$10 for students, as well as seniors who are at least 62 years of age, and \$8 for children ages six to 12.

To purchase tickets, call 503-657-6958, ext. 2356, or e-mail Theatre Department Secretary Jennifer Schwartzman at Jens@clackamas.edu.



Mistymarie Wilks-Salguero Clackamas Print

LEFT: The all-women cast of "Quilters" sings about a corn-cob doll and shakes their pointer fingers toward the audience at a special show for the board of education.

RIGHT: The teacher of the schoolhouse in "Quilters" lectures one of her students.



Former pro-surfer shows more mature side after 'Curious George'

By Andrea Simpson

Clackamas Print

The highly anticipated fourth album from singer-songwriter Jack Johnson, titled "Sleep Through The Static," was released Feb. 5 and soon met with mediocre reviews from music magazines such as *Rolling Stone*, *Spin*, and online shopping sites like Amazon.com. Johnson's first two CDs had been underground, but it was his third release, "In Between Dreams," that pushed him to widely-celebrated fame. Johnson's fourth album, "Sleep Through The Static," produced by folk rock artist Tim Harper's producer, JP Ferrell, who backed Johnson's debut, "Brushfire Tales." The album has been credited as having departed from Johnson's normally beach-trip-wave-riding, mellow-yellow sound. In some ways, this album is true with the addition of a jazzier tone to the music. In other ways, I feel that the recording should have been

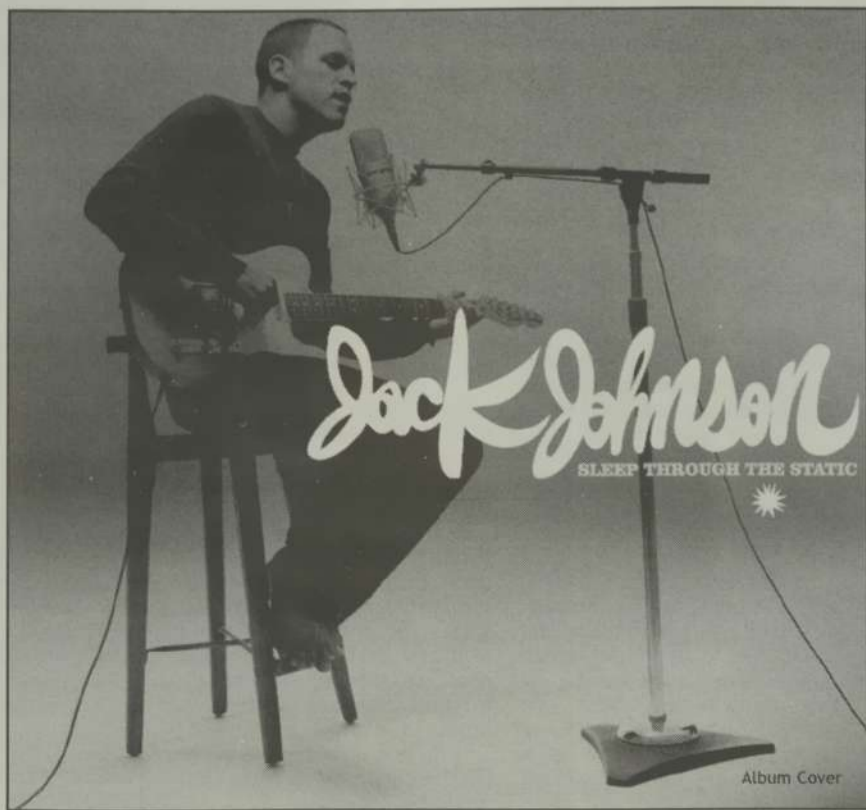
called "In Between Dreams: the Zoloft Years." Many of the songs have a sound that is similar to Johnson's previous work but merely slowed down and combined with more mature lyrics. The CD is ideal for listening while staring at the rain and contemplating life and relationships.

It starts out with "All at Once" — an unusual way to open since the song begins with the extremely depressing lyrics, "All at once/ The world can overwhelm me/ There's almost nothing that you could tell me/ That could ease my mind." These words set the undertone for the rest of the track list.

The title track speaks of the Iraq War but

comes out seeming like a jumble of metaphors and, overall, a bit overdone. It resembles a bunch of anti-war sentiments that were

simply mashed together and set to a go-with-the-flow beat. I can, however, appreciate the political theme.



"If I Had Eyes," "What You Thought You Need" and "Go On" are more buoyant in nature. The drums and bongos stand out on the stripped-down acoustic record. It was nice, after a couple of downer songs, to hear a slightly quickened tempo.

The ballad "Angel," which consists of some of the CD's most beautiful moments, speaks of the amazing transforming power of a smile or a kiss. This message is magnified by Johnson's soothing voice.

"Same Girl" has the same sentimental meaning. It starts off, "If you could read my mind/ You'd say, baby, you're right/ And I don't wanna fight anymore/ You're usually rightier than I am/ And I'm not a very good fighter/ And my, neither are you."

The other songs on the release tend to blend together with their low-key pace and forgettable lyrics.

This album will be a favorite for true-blue Johnson groupies, but I don't foresee it resulting in a ton of hits for pop radio. Although it lacks the feel-good Hawaiian rhythm that made "In Between Dreams" a favorite on the charts, it has the same unique formula to which fans are accustomed.