

Brownie Mary goes Naked

by Dakota Dinnen
staff writer

It doesn't matter how much money you've got. It doesn't matter if you're broke or not. It doesn't matter how much you can shell out ... you'll buy it; once you've heard Brownie Mary's *Naked*. Brownie Mary and their long-awaited album come out of the Pittsburgh alternative scene. Since the release of *Naked*, the entire nation has been able to take a bite out of this Brownie.

The lead singer, Kelsey Barber sings that once you've seen her naked, nothing will matter anymore. She sings you will see right through her, but her voice and lyrics (all of which she had a hand in writing except for one song: Memphis) are more likely to turn your head. With the fierceness of the feral screams of Gwen Stefani and the smoothness of Jewel's lullaby singing, Kelsey sings about would-be romances, self-reflections, America's

collapse under the superficial pressure of the media, and inspirational changes that people sometimes have to force themselves through.

The guitar-centered mix of pop, folk, and hard-core rock that back Kelsey up is created by her three band mates Rich Jacques (guitars, e-bow, backup vocals), Mark Rajakovic (drums, percussion) and Ron Bissell (bass).

Most of Brownie Mary's songs start out like a quiet mouse; and while some stay rather content, others rage out like they have just mutated into a rabid rat, like "Butterfly." This track starts out gentle like its light-winged, harmless namesake, but morphs into a hard-hitting, louder creature: more like a yellow jacket searching for an arm to sting. The man that the band describes in the song goes through a general metamorphosis of his own, and breaks out of the "cocoon" that his family has smothered him in.

"Say You Want Me" opens with a

bagpipe that gives a Celtic tinge to the ballad about self-struggle. "Memphis" begins with the scratching sound of vinyl as if the song were being played on a record, and then proceeds with a calm, folksy acoustic guitar.

While these tracks with guitar strikes floating across dreamy echoes are quiet, they are also mixed with songs like "I'll Be the One" that make abrupt jumps into some hard-core rock from the get-go. Perhaps none of Brownie Mary's work has exploded into the forefront of the national alternative scene, but they have definitely slid quietly into some well-deserved national recognition.

I enthusiastically recommend the album *Naked* by Brownie Mary. It is available at local record stores. If you would like more information on Brownie Mary, look them up on The Blackbird Recording Company's web page at www.blackbirdusa.com.



Brownie Mary's latest release, *Naked*, is available on Blackbird CDs and cassettes.

Tim O'Brien speaks at Behrend

by Jon Stubbs
features editor

Renowned author Tim O'Brien spoke to a crowd of students in the Reed Lecture Hall at Penn State Behrend last Thursday. He read a few selections from his book *The Things They Carried* which is a collection of stories about the author's own experiences in the Vietnam War. O'Brien admits that some of the stories contained in *The Things They Carried* are true while others are "true lies." O'Brien chose to read one particular section from the book titled "Ambush," which he confessed he doesn't do too often because it is somewhat difficult for him to read.

Mr. O'Brien went on to discuss the inspiration for the first chapter of his latest book, *Tomcat In Love*. The story he told about he and his buddy, Herbie, was almost word for word with the first chapter. *Tomcat In Love* marks a departure from his past works, which are primarily about Vietnam. After about an hour of reading his works and explaining his approach to his writing, O'Brien opened the floor to questions. One Behrend student asked, "Would you give up your writing to have never gone to Vietnam?"

"Yes, absolutely," O'Brien answered. "But I think I would have been a writer anyway." Afterwards, the author signed copies of his new

book, as well as his older works, outside of Reed 117.

Corresponding opinions seemed to be held by most of the students who attended: "I enjoyed it very much; he's funny and he is a good story teller," Dakota Dinnen, 01, English.

"This reading has capsulated such a range of emotions... I'm completely amazed and entirely impressed with his sophisticated story telling ability," Kristi McKim, 07, English.

"I was pleasantly surprised. I really enjoyed it," Tracie Abbott, 05, English.

"He seemed real down to earth. He didn't have his head up his ass like most writers do," Steven Marroni, 08, English.



photo by Andrea Zaffino

Tim O'Brien with Professor of Women's Studies and English Diana Hume George

Happy Holidays

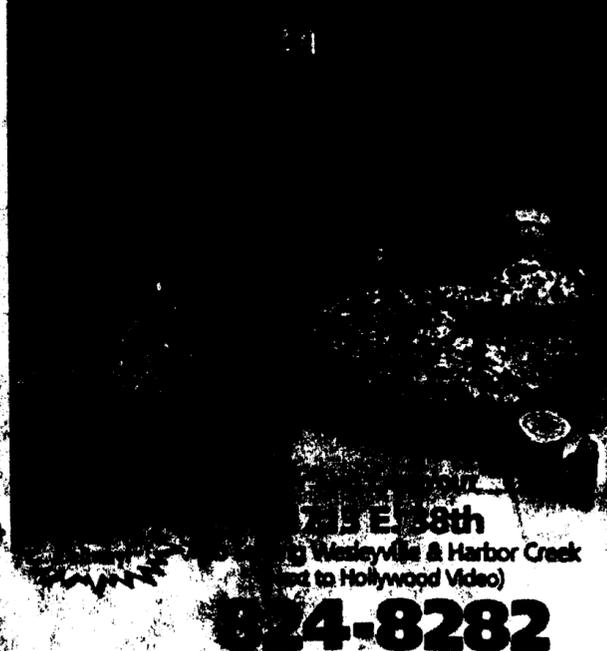


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