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Diamond is a girl's best friend

by Erin McCarty
news editor

"If it's true, as they say, that music can heal, let the healing begin."

With this sentiment at heart, Neil Diamond graced a 10,000 plus audience with an electrifying two-hour performance on Tuesday at University Park's Bryce Jordan Center. Diamond played without intermission, covering songs from all stages of his career.

In light of the events of Sept. 11, Diamond's 2001-2002 tour is decidedly patriotic in nature. The show began with a large flag hanging down in front of the stage. As the flag was raised, Diamond burst into "America," a hit which has enjoyed renewed popularity since Sept. 11. The audience gave roaring approval to the song, and when the lyrics demanded "Stand up for America...today!" everyone complied.

Next, Diamond dug deep in his repertoire to sing "Solitary Man" and "Cherry, Cherry." He made a few comments about college life along the way and slyly suggested that the administrators in attendance might see to it that the attending students would be exempt from morning classes the following day. His wit and charm kept his rapport with the audience going when the music was silent. And while his stage presence magnified the impact of his more energetic tunes, the slower songs such as "Play Me" and "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon" flourished under his silky presentation.

The latter, in fact, turned out to be one of the show's greatest moments. Halfway through the song, Diamond urged a young woman in the front row of the audience to "come take my hand," as the song says.

For the remainder of the song, he stretched out over the stage, clutching her hand, as she turned varying shades of red and fanned herself with one hand to keep from fainting. As the song ended, Diamond separated himself with an embrace and flopped down on the stage as though he'd just gotten the wind knocked out of him. Another woman in the front row offered him her handkerchief, which he gratefully accepted before singing two songs from his new album, "Three Chord Opera," to "cool down." This complete lack of a barrier between performer and audience thrilled the observers, and the unwitting participant in the song got a nice round of applause.

"I'm a Believer" was another big winner. The song that he wrote for the Monkees a generation ago hit the top of the airwaves again last year with Smash Mouth's version, which was featured in the movie "Shrek." Middle-agers and college students alike knew all the words. Some songs required more audience participation than others. Diamond introduced "Forever in Blue Jeans" as an old familiar favorite and encouraged the audience to stand and sing along and even go solo in a few places.

Likewise, "Sweet Caroline" was a stand-up-and-sing-along song, although when it ended, he quipped, "Beautiful job, that was lovely...but...why are you still standing? Don't you know the song is...over? You mean you expect me to go out there and do it again? I was just checking to see if I had any choice in the matter..." He then took up the chorus yet again, this time with great accentuation on each note and hand gestures to match.

"Beautiful Noise" was one of the, well, noisiest songs of the night, making full use of Diamond's extensive backing band. Each section had a portion of the song to itself, and by the time the song was over the audience members felt like they had been transported to New York City, Diamond's hometown. Yet another highlight was "You Don't Bring Me Flowers," a soulful duet in which Diamond shared the stage with Linda Press.

One of the show's most poignant moments was the singing of "Captain Sunshine," which was dedicated to Vince Charles, a member of Diamond's band since 1977 who died last year. The other was the singing of "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother" to honor the nation's true heroes, firefighters, policemen and servicemen. The show ended with "I Am, I Said," one of Diamond's defining hits. He was not gone long, however, before returning for an encore. A raucous "Cracklin' Rosie" preceded an electrifying "Brother Love's Traveling Salvation Show," and the show officially ended with the lowering of the flag over the chorus of "America."

"It's a good feeling to know that I've been able to bridge generations and still entertain such a varied audience," noted Diamond in his tour book. That certainly proved true on Tuesday night, and audience members young and old left the show assured that good music never goes out of style.

'E! True Hollywood Story' brings out the truth once again in 'Diff'rent Strokes'



'Diff'rent Strokes' is about the misadventures of a rich Manhattan family, who adopted the children of their late African American maid.

by Autumn Brown
staff writer

The cameras, the glitz, the glamour, and the celebrities now have a place where they all can come together in a show focused on exposing the truth from behind the scenes. The cast members and celebrities tell what really happened both on and off camera as they present the flip side of fame in "E! True Hollywood Story."

This show features the life stories

of people who made a great impact on American society and popular culture. Every weeknight at 8 p.m. for at least one hour, different people, shows, and movies shed light on Hollywood's elite.

"E! True Hollywood Story" often tells the stories about "the demise of child stars" and their bittersweet stories. In the late '70s the comedy "Diff'rent Strokes" was an instant hit and ruled television.

"Kids identified with these kids. It was fun for everyone," Ray Rich-

mond TV critic said.

However, what the public did not know the cast was filled with angry childhood stars, Gary Coleman, Todd Bridges, and Dana Plato, who had stories to tell. "Diff'rent Strokes" found itself in the "E! True Hollywood Story" spotlight in a show entitled "After Diff'rent Strokes: When the Laughter Stopped".

As viewers found out the young actors on "Diff'rent Strokes" were pushed to keep the show on schedule. They worked non-stop with weekends off while also attending school on the set.

They were like a real family who had real family problems that surfaced both on and off the air. While Coleman dealt with his alter ego, his two other co-stars constantly battled with drugs. It's ironic that former First Lady Nancy Reagan made a guest cameo to promote her famous "Just Say No!" campaign and the same stars that appeared with her secretly did drugs.

In 1999, Plato's battle with drugs ultimately killed her. With the help of archival video footage, reenactments and interviews with celebrities "E! True Hollywood Story" brought out the truth to all the fans of the show.

Finally, here's an Emmy nominated documentary that puts all the rumors aside and tells the story of the show. Learn the inside stuff about your favorite shows that will make viewers see reruns in a new light. After all, as the show says, "the best stories in Hollywood aren't necessarily the ones that make it on the big screen."

Sadness is 'In the Bedroom'

by Daniel J. Stasiewski
staff writer

Some movies are just written for actors. Such is the case with writer/director Todd Field's debut feature, "In the Bedroom." Sissy Spacek and Tom Wilkinson star as grieving parents in a performance-powered movie surging with the rawest of human emotions. Though formulaic in structure, the film is hardly your normal melodrama.

After their son Frank (Nick Stahl) is brutally murdered by his girlfriend's (Marisa Tomei) ex-husband (William Mapother), Matt and Ruth Fowler (Tom Wilkinson and Sissy Spacek) go through very different periods of

mourning.

Ruth sees Matt as apathetic, while Matt thinks Ruth is too bitter for her own good. The clashing of grief processes nearly destroys their marriage, and Matt will do anything to save it.

Upon leaving the theatre I couldn't help but feeling a little cheated. "In the Bedroom," in structure only, is like a long Lifetime original movie. Right down to the death of a child, the film moves in the same direction as those artificial tearjerkers. However, the simple twists and turns grab enough attention to force the powerful performances right in your face.

"In the Bedroom's" reputation will be now and forever based on its tremendous performances. The an-

guished couple, Spacek and Wilkinson, is a duo to beat come Oscar time. Their performances drive the film the same way Henry Fonda and Katharine Hepburn fueled "On Golden Pond."

Spacek is hauntingly realistic as the bitter and inexorable mother. For anyone who has ever been close to a grief stricken parent in their own life, Spacek's performance only seems more spectacular. The other performance just as notable as Spacek's is that of her on-screen husband, Wilkinson. While Spacek plays the bitter one, Wilkinson grieves more quietly. His silent suffering translates into one of the loudest performances of the year.

By comparison, other performers had short screen time. Tomei's battered wife and struggling mother, however, is a standout performance from the featured cast. Her husband on the other hand is quite disappointing.

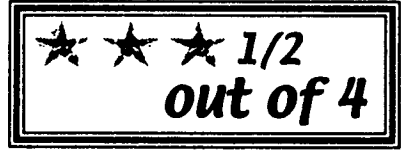
Mapother, the abusive husband, can't even break out of the thug role in independent film. His performance isn't as mindless as his other roles (mostly henchmen and cronies), but

this chance to break out was just the usual typecasting mess.

While "In the Bedroom" is mostly an actor's movie, Field's directorial achievements don't go unnoticed. When the actors aren't expressing emotions through gestures or words, Field's camera takes over. Subtle movements and short silent scenes make the sentiment eerily authentic.

"In the Bedroom" is a movie that seems like nothing special in the be-

ginning, but quickly gets under your skin. Any film flooded with so much pure emotion is something extraordinary. The grief shown "In the Bedroom" could only be more genuine if someone really died.



'Harvey' hops onto Playhouse stage

On Nov. 1, 1944, the play "Harvey" by Mary Chase opened on Broadway. It went on to run an unbelievable 1,775 performances, making it one of the most successful plays in Broadway history. "Harvey" also gained further fame with the release of the 1950 movie version starring James Stewart (who had played the role on Broadway during the run).

Along with Bugs Bunny and Roger Rabbit, Harvey ranks as one of the best-known show business bunnies. Unlike those, Harvey was six feet tall, wore a hat and was invisible.

Harvey is the friend of Elwood P. Dowd played by Ray Flynt. Elwood enjoys drinking, has spent his life fighting reality and has obviously won the battle, for his best friend is an invisible rabbit. Elwood's dot-

ing and loving sister Veta, played by Tracey Harris Hall) decides it is time to have Elwood committed to a local sanitarium and through comedic events finds herself the recipient of that commitment and from there the play spins out of control.

Flynt is making a return visit to Erie from Washington D.C. to play Elwood P. Dowd. Hall has been seen in "Nonsense" and in "Bye Bye Birdie."

"Harvey" is the longest-running Pulitzer Prize play of all time. An interesting fact is that "Harvey" premiered during World War II and Antoinette Perry directed the original production. She died during the run of the show and her fame in the theatre community was shown when the Broadway awards were renamed "Tony" after her.

Over the years, many great actors

have brought Elwood to life. The original was Frank Fay, then Jimmy Stewart, Art Carney, Donald O'Connor and many more.

Show dates and Times:
March 1-3, 7-9
Thurs. 7:30 p.m. - Fri. and Sat. 8 p.m. - Sun. 2 p.m.
Sat., March 9 - 5 p.m.

Ticket Prices:
Thurs. and Sun. - \$17 adults, \$16 seniors, \$9 students
Fri. and Sat. - \$19 adults, \$18 seniors, \$9 students

Location:
The Erie Playhouse, 13 West 10th St., Erie

Box Office:
454-2852 x 41

Website:
www.erieplayhouse.org

New Releases

<p>Movies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'We Were Soldiers' - '40 Days and 40 Nights' 	<p>Video*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Jay and Silent Bob Strike back' - 'Bones' - 'The Musketeer' 	<p>Music*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Roswell' soundtrack - Montell Jordan - 2 Live Crew - Tool (tribute) 	<p>DVD*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back' - 'Bones' - 'The Musketeer' - 'Madame Butterfly'
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*Release Date: 3/1

Watch Michael Jackson: 30th Anniversary Celebration tomorrow at 8 pm on VH1