

## ARTS &amp; ENTERTAINMENT

## The Playlist

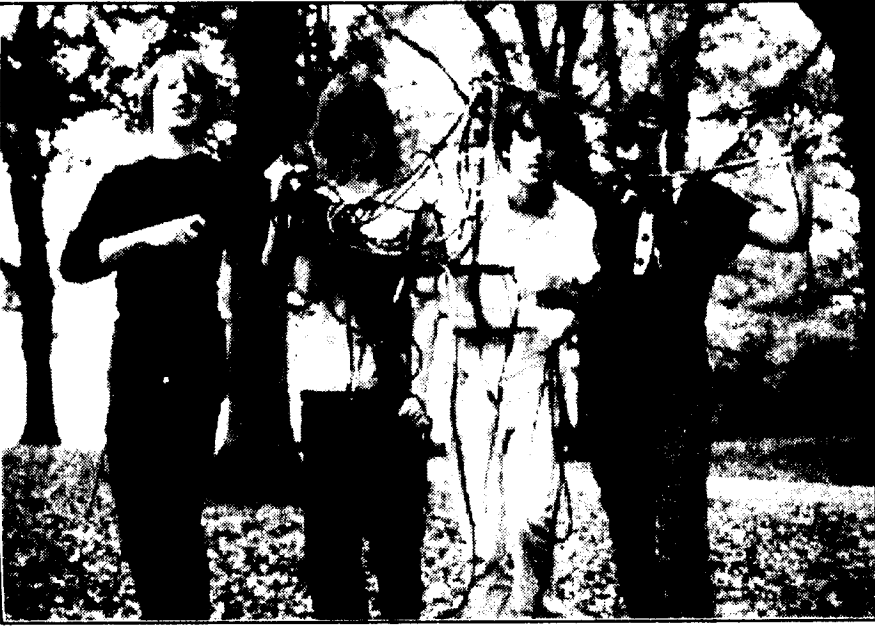
A look at the world of music, from the obscure to the obscure, the new and the old.

## Late of the Pier is late on the scene

By Justin Peckular  
contributing writer  
jpp5085@psu.edu

An album starts off with a dramatic rise and fall of notes; you wonder if it's going to be another 80s pop ballad. It has that certain nostalgic radio feel that you can swear you've heard before. In the last 13 seconds, it takes a turn for the unexpected. It's got a modern rock feel to it, and the crazy guitar rock intro drags into the second song. The first two tracks are designed for gapless playback, which makes it sound really cool.

What I'm describing are the first two tracks off *Fantasy Black Channel* by Late of the Pier. Their U.S. debut album was released on Jan. 13, but has enjoyed success in the U.K. since August, reaching #28 on the charts. They have a huge teen fanbase established by frequently playing in all-ages dance clubs. Late of the Pier has an 80s pop feel with a more modern style. Fans typically describe them as "Synth Pop," "Electronica," and "Dance-Punk." In an ever genre-conscious musical world, you have to wonder what it really is.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Late of the Pier really has no true genre. With their 80s synth melody and electric dance beats, it's impossible to determine when they would ultimately fit within today's music scene.

The third track has a certain jamming of synthesizer chords that make you want to bob your head. As the verse ends, it turns into a screaming chorus of electronics, obviously making it a dance song. After listening to it, I can surely say these guys fall into the "Dance-Punk" genre. Listening to it, I couldn't help but tap my fingers and toes to the beat. There's also an experimental side to their music while the album moves on as they continue to play around with odd percussion, strange sounds, and even stranger singing styles.

Almost every song starts out extremely danceable and moves into a standard verse-chorus-verse song style. Somehow, they make it work. I'd really suggest checking these guys out for a blast from the past that rocks. Late of the Pier has been critically acclaimed by many magazines in the U.S., including *Filter* and *Blender*.

**UPCOMING AUDITION**  
Come between January 26 and 27 from 7:30 to 10:30 pm with a prepared piece of ANY musical theatre song! Sign-ups are outside of 153 Kochel.

Audition will be no more than half an hour in length and WILL include some dancing.

Rehearsals take place every Tues, Wed, Thurs, and Sat or Sun.

## Food For Thought

What is life without words to tell its story?

— Author unknown

## A look at *Gran Torino*, Eastwood's own commentary

By Nick Kniseley  
contributing writer  
nik5006@psu.edu

Beware: the following outlines a majority of the film's plot.

Though not intentionally a comedy, Clint Eastwood's performance will make you laugh throughout *Gran Torino*. Halfway through the movie, I had to look over to my friends to make sure this wasn't a comedy, as it seemed I was laughing every five minutes from something Eastwood's character (Walt Kowalski) said or did. However, this is merely one side of Walt. His gripping past is full of haunting memories of his duties in the Korean War, which still plague him throughout the movie. His young Hmong neighbor, Thao, asks of Walt what it was like to kill a man. Walt, stone-faced, replies, "You don't want to know..." And later in the film, Walt again speaks of his memories of Korea: "We shot people, we stabbed them, we chopped up 17 year olds with shovels." Beware: the following outlines a majority of the film's plot.

The film begins at a funeral for Walt's wife, with the eulogy being presented by Father Janovich (Christopher Carley). Walt's two sons and their families show seemingly no respect during the funeral nor at the gathering afterwards. Obviously, Walt is a man of respect, and having grown up in the military, he has become a very old-fashioned, hard-nosed American. He served in the military and worked in a Ford factory for fifty years. The days after the funeral focus on Walt's changing neighborhood. The majority of residents that have moved into the neighborhood are Hmong, which angers Walt, who not only is racist, but not afraid to let you know about it to your face.

Thao, a young Hmong boy who lives next door to Walt, is confronted by a local racist Hispanic gang. A car full of Hmong gang members pull up, protecting Thao, flashing their guns, and eventually chasing the Hispanic gang away. We learn that one of the gang members that saved Thao is actually Thao's cousin, Spyd. Spyd and his friends try to convince Thao to join their gang, as it will make him tougher and change him from a shy, quiet boy to a man. Reluctantly, Thao accepts and as initiation, must steal Walt's prized 1972 Ford Gran Torino. Walt sees Thao in his garage in the middle of the night, sneaks in with his rifle, threatening Thao. Walt trips over something on the floor, and Thao dashes out.

A few days later, the gang arrives again at Thao's house, saying they want to give him another chance to join. He refuses, but the gang won't let him decline, so a brawl ensues between Thao's family and the gang members, eventually spilling onto Walt's lawn. Walt, armed with his M1 Garand, points at one of the gang members, and tells them to get off his lawn (along with some other choice words). Warning Walt

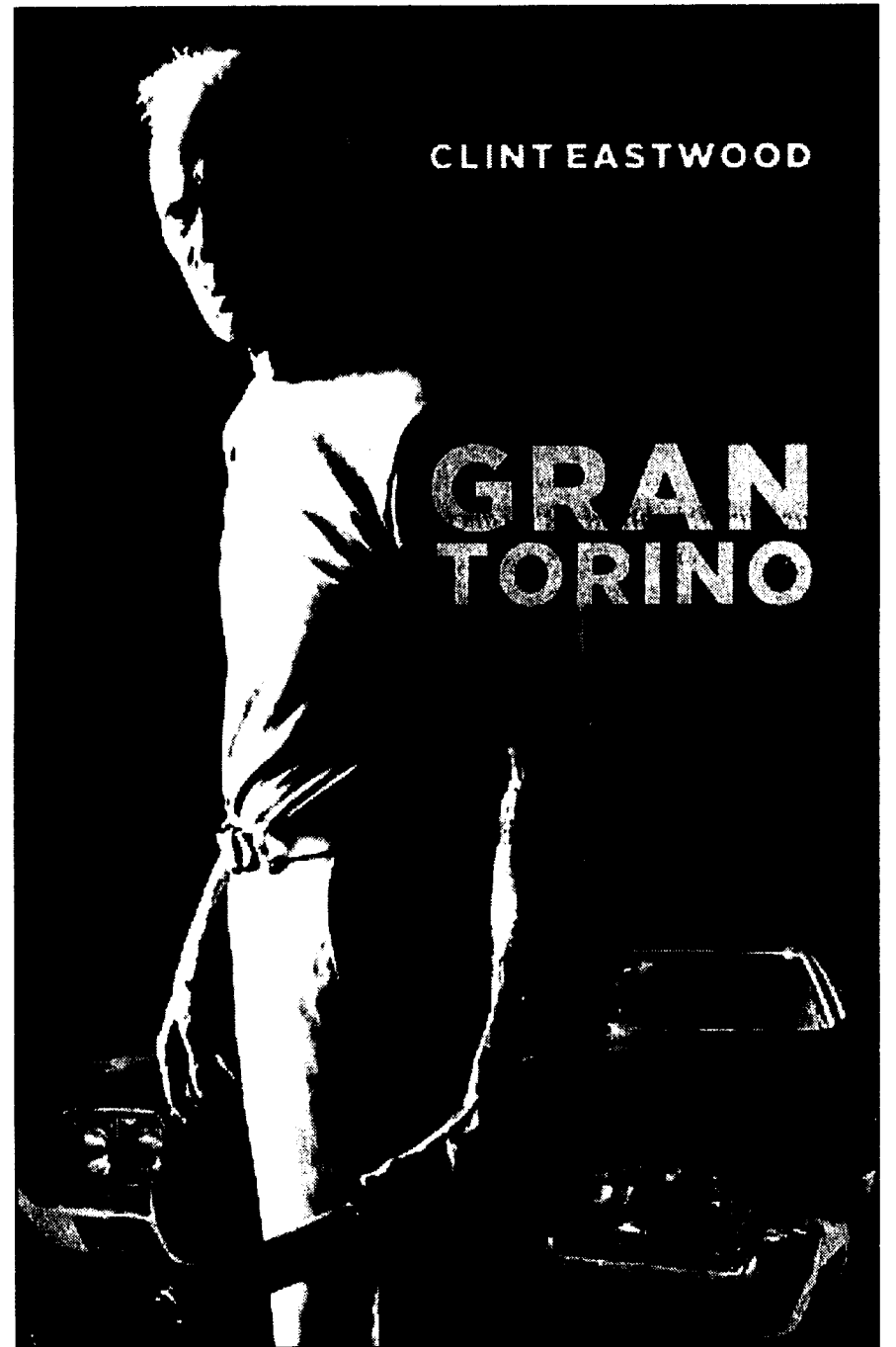
to watch his back, the gang leaves. Hearing of the event from the previous night, the Hmong residents in the neighborhood decorate Walt's porch with plants and Hmong food. Walt throws out all the gifts, repeatedly claiming he didn't save Thao, he just wanted everyone off his lawn.

Driving along the road, Walt notices Thao's sister Sue being harassed by three teens and pulls up. Stepping out of his Ford truck, he approaches the men, and a la *Dirty Harry*, wishes for the kids to try to mess with him. I almost expected him to come out and say, "Go ahead, make my day." Walt gives Sue a ride home, which allows her an opportunity to try and connect with Walt. The next day, Thao is told by his mother he must repay his debt to Walt for attempting to steal his Gran Torino. Walt instructs Thao to do various random jobs to clean up the neighborhood. This is when we get to see a change in Walt, as he takes Thao under his wing, turning him into a man and helping him get his life on track. He becomes closer with Sue and her whole family, even joining them for a party one afternoon.

Throughout the film, Father Janovich visits Walt many times, eager to convince Walt to go to confession, some-

thing Walt's wife entrusted Father Janovich to do for her. Repeatedly, Walt declines and refuses to go through with his wife's wishes. One of the deepest moments of the movie is the conversation about life and death between the two. Father asks Walt what he knows about death, to which Walt recounts his past, having to kill men to survive and in order to serve his country. Father Janovich then asks Walt what he knows about life. Walt has to take a moment to actually think of his response. Father Janovich expresses his opinion that Walt knows more about death than about living.

Walt's inner battle comes to terms at the end of the movie, where Eastwood's real acting genius comes out into the open. His character is heart-wrenching and simply amazing. Even at the age of 78, Eastwood still has the intensity he demonstrated in movies decades prior to this. *Gran Torino* is a roller coaster of emotions that will keep you on the edge of your seat, keeping you almost afraid of what the ending will bring. I strongly recommend this to everyone, as it shows Eastwood's vast acting skills and is not just a plain drama; rather, it tells the story of a man broken from his past, and his efforts to cope with it.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Clint Eastwood even composed and performed the song in the ending credits.

## This week in art history

By Dave Stull  
contributing writer  
das5122@psu.edu

**January 23, 1977:** *Roots*, a television miniseries, premieres on ABC. The miniseries is modeled after Alex Haley's novel *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*. The miniseries, which gave Americans a look into the slave trade of the 1700s, won multiple awards and was viewed by millions throughout its eight-day run.

**January 24, 1927:** Filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock premiered his first film, *The Pleasure Garden*. The film centers around two chorus girls who work at the Pleasure Garden Theater. It was actually filmed in 1925 but due to budget problems its debut was delayed two years.

**January 25, 1949:** The first annual Emmy Awards were held at the Hollywood Athletic club. The show was hosted by Walter O'Keefe and served as a public relations event to boost the image of the industry. Winners that

night included Shirley Dinsdale, who won for best TV personality, and the best program went to *Pantomime Quiz*.

**January 26, 1940:** Former president and actor, Ronald Reagan and Academy Award-winning actress Jane Wyman marry. The two met on the set of *Bother Ra* in 1938 and were married two years later. Their marriage lasted only eight years, and it produced three children. Reagan would soon leave acting and enter politics, eventually becoming President of the United States, while Wyman continued acting, landing one of her most notable roles as Angela Channing in *Falcon Crest*.

**January 27, 1302:** Dante Alighieri, author of *The Divine Comedy*, is exiled from Florence. Dante is known throughout the world as one of the greatest poets to ever live, and his *magnum opus*, or "great work," *The Divine Comedy*, is considered by many to be one of the most influential pieces of literature in history. Dante came from a well known family. He was eventually

elevated to a governing position in the city of Florence, and because of certain political activities he was banished from the city for two years. He never returned to Florence and passed away at the age of 56 in Ravenna, Italy.

**January 28, 1956:** Elvis Presley, the king of rock and roll, makes his first appearance on television. The program was *Stage Show*, a music variety show. While on stage, Elvis sang "Heartbreak Hotel," which was a hit. After his performance, Elvis went on to sing in other more popular variety shows such as the *Ed Sullivan Show*, and would quickly become one of the most popular singers of all time.

**January 29, 1980:** Jimmy Durante dies at the age of 89. Born in Brooklyn, Durante started his career as a Vaudeville star which later led to his work on Broadway. He ventured into movies with success and starred in many films including: *The Wet Parade*, *The Man who Came to Dinner*, *Ziegfeld Follies*, and *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*.