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A&E

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A&E

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Music From Above:

Spreading the Word through song,
Christian musicians return to Ames.

by Hayley Cox and Amanda Fier

They started as four friends who wrote a song and recorded it for a class project, but they ended up as Jars of Clay.

In 1992, Charlie Lowell, Dan Haseltine, and Matt Odmark were students at Greenville College in Greenville, Ill., majoring in contemporary Christian music. In their spare time, the three guys jammed in various bands, meanwhile producing their own studio projects. A year later, Steve Mason came into the scene. Because of the similar musical interests the four fellows shared, it was inevitable a friendship would form.

The four musicians decided to concentrate their efforts on composing a song for a class project. The musical endeavor produced the techno-oriented piece, "Fade to Grey." Since many people enjoyed the song, the group decided to play it in the local Underground Cafe in an attempt to raise money for the homeless.

They were a hit.

The guys continued with classwork but still managed to make time for their band. During the 1993-94 winter, they wrote additional songs to fulfill class requirements and for themselves.

The four-man gig had come up with songs, grades and an unexpected local audience. It was still missing one thing—a name.

Jars of Clay is rooted in II Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-star passing power is from God and not from us." The musicians believed having a name based on biblical verse would help keep them humble and remind them that their blessings are from God.

So it was in January 1994 that Jars of Clay came to life.

The following summer, Jars of Clay met

with several record companies with hopes to negotiate a record contract. The following winter, they signed with Essential Records, a division of Brentwood Music. The family-like atmosphere of Essential Records made the Jars of Clay feel more comfortable.

Jars of Clay might not be where they are today without the musical and spiritual influences the members have had throughout their lives. A variety of music makers that have impacted them include Sarah McLachlan, Rich Mullins, Pray for Rain, Seal, Toad the Wet Sprocket and, of course, the unforgettable Beatles. Everyone from their youth pastor, family members, and writers like Max Lucado and C.S. Lewis seem to have a spiritual effect on the



Jars of clay

band. And it is the spiritual influence that is the undercurrent of the band's material. Almost all of Jars of Clay's songs are based on Bible passages.

On May 17, Jars of Clay brings its musical talent to the stage of Stephens Auditorium. It is the fourth time the group has been to the central Iowa area since 1996. Although the band's foundation is religion, its fan foundation is more secular. The hit "Flood" brought Jars into mainstream audiences in 1995.

"Flood" splashed through the radio waves, picking up a diverse audience. Essential Records drowned the market with extensive promotion and distribution to produce listeners. The self-titled album made Billboard's Top 200 and led to a slot in MTV's "120 Minutes" rotation and VH1's "Crossroads" program. In addition, it made its way to the ears of Christian radio listeners in the Des Moines area.

Des Moines's KZZQ, 99.5, was one of the first ten radio stations in the country to feature Jars of Clay in its mix.

KZZQ Program Director David Saint John said, "Their success had been one of the keys to helping KZZQ become a top ten station in the 18-34 year-old demographic in the Des Moines market during the last year."

He said the popularity of the group has been encouraging for Christian music.

It certainly has been encouraging for Wellspring, a Christian bookstore in Des Moines which opened two years ago. Since the release of the group's latest album, "Much Afraid," sales of the group's music have boomed.

Wellspring employee Randy Ross said he's moved a lot of freight for the band as the album has sold more than 700 copies since the mid-September release.

"I've never moved that much of any one CD," he said.

The bookstore, whose music section is the most popular section of the store, has also sold 500 copies of the first Jars of Clay album.

"The [Christian music] industry has been showing that if you combine the sales of new age, jazz and classical, it is still less than what Christian music is [selling]," he said.

The band whose name was intended to keep them humble has, according to KZZQ's Saint John, remained true to their roots.

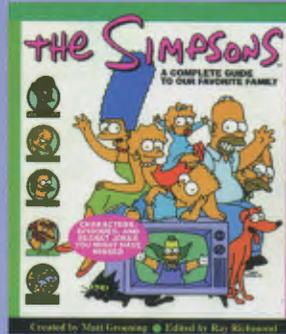
"Even after all the reviews, record sales, touring and success, they've stayed humble and are a cool bunch of guys," he said. ■

FINE PRINTS

The Simpsons: A Complete Guide to Our Favorite Family

Created by Matt Groening

HarperPerennial, \$15.95
review by Anne Rosso



"You couldn't fool your mother on the foolingest day of your life if you had an electrified fooling machine."

I wish I could take the credit for the

preceding statement. However, I must concede that it was uttered by the man who won a Grammy for "Outstanding Soul, Spoken Word, or Barbershop Album of the Year," founded the Mr. Plow snowplowing service *and* lost the Springfield Power Plant Worker of the Week award to an inanimate carbon rod.

That man, of course, is Homer J. Simpson.

Homer's various witty remarks, as well as the various witty remarks of his family and friends, have been fastidiously compiled into what my friend, Brett, once called "an incredibly dense book of stuff."

The Simpsons: A Complete Guide to Our Favorite Family is 239 pages of solid, fanatical information about the inhabitants of Springfield. It boasts vital statistics of every character who has ever appeared in an episode, memorable lines and a complete break-down of each episode from the first eight seasons. For true *Simpsons* devotees, it even notes each episode's blackboard sign as well as "stuff you may have missed," such as background details or freeze-frame jokes.

If you have evolved from Bart's overly-catchy, "Don't have a cow, man" and instead seek solace in other, more interesting *Simpsons'* quotes, this book is for you. It's got everything you've ever wanted to know about America's beloved television cartoon family.

As Krusty the Clown opines solemnly in episode #3F08: "Would it really be worth living in a world without television? I think the survivors would envy the dead."

Without the *Simpsons*, they would, Krusty. Yes, they would. ■

The Next Voice You Hear

Jackson Browne

Jackson Browne's latest CD, *The Next Voice You Hear*, is a greatest hits collection recapping ten albums of work. Browne's song writing skill and vocal



talents have kept him at the forefront of the singer-songwriter genre for more than 25 years.

Browne's songs address real life subjects: romantic relationships, friendships and daily life changes. His

strength is in taking these subjects and prompting the listener to reflect upon his or her own life.

In the touching "Fountain of Sorrow," the listener is introduced to an obstacle-ridden relationship. The song details how two people in a relationship can slowly become very different. In the 1973 song "These Days," Browne writes about the search for the perfect mate and the difficulties incurred with new relationships. In the introspective "Sky Blue and Black," we see both sides of a romantic relationship—how it can be full of both happy and tragic moments.

While the theme of relationships is explored on this CD, Browne also spends a good deal of tune time examining his youth. Browne gives the listener several reflection-oriented songs. In the track "Barricade of Heaven," he shows the mistakes teenagers can make and what can be learned from unfortunate events.

Probably the most chilling song on the record is the mid-tempo "Pretender." In this song, Browne creates an everyday character dealing with the day-to-day grind of life. The character pretends the world and his situation are all right, when they really aren't. Secretly, he longs for more.

Because of the authenticity of his new works, Browne's talents seem to stand the test of time. ■

review by David Small

Sound of Lies

The Jayhawks



Holding true to their style, the Minnesota-based band, the Jayhawks, delivers its fifth CD, *Sound of Lies*. Not straying far from their original sound, the Jayhawks seem to be doing quite well without their lead

singer, Mark Olson. Olson quit the band in November of 1995, and on *Sound of Lies*, guitarist Gary Louris takes over lead vocals.

With the essential elements that define the Jayhawks' style come pop and folk mixed with a bit of twang. One can always count on them to please the listener. Most of the songs are mellow, but Louris can bellow sad songs and love songs like no other. The weighted lyrics seem to reflect on the everyday lives of people.

In the title track, a mellotron is used along with an acoustic guitar, violin, viola and cello to create a sort of melancholy feel. A Wurlitzer and organ are used in "Haywire," and the variety of instruments proves just how talented the Jayhawks really are. There is even a special appearance by singer Matthew Sweet on "Sixteen Down."

I have but one complaint—the solarized cover is *awful*. ■

review by Sara Weber

Jude

This film adaptation of the Thomas Hardy novel is a necessary item in the catharsis section of your home collection...

While some critics may claim *Jude* doesn't come close to the psychological and social complexities that Thomas Hardy's novel, *Jude the Obscure*, masters, this 1996 adaptation could make a stoic sailor wrench his face with tears and anger. This film is a necessary item in the catharsis section of your home collection.

Jude exposes the fears of young people in love; the fear of being rejected, the fear of being replaced, the fear of doubt and the fear of being cursed with a loveless fate.

But just as it tears love apart, this film and the convincing roles Kate Winslet and Christopher Eccleston play, depict how strong love can be. *Jude* shows that often people are not strong enough to handle the emotions inside of them.

The film opens with beautifully gray images of a rural English pre-turn-of-the-century landscape. This black-and-white scene shows Jude Fawley (Eccleston) having his eyes opened to the life an education might bring.

Later, Jude finds himself being seduced by Arabella (Rachel Griffiths), the daughter of a pig farmer. Arabella reels Jude in by giving him love's pleasures in a pig pen. Insisting she is pregnant, Jude marries Arabella even though his bitter aunt (June Whitfield) grunts that the Fawley's are not cut out for marriage.

Discovering that he doesn't love Arabella, their short-lived marriage is captured in a scene where the couple cuts the throat of a pig. Arabella then leaves Jude, claiming she is no longer pregnant.

Jude immediately falls in love with his cousin, Sue Bridehead (Winslet). Jude finds Sue an apprenticeship with his home town role model, Richard Phillotson (Liam Cunningham), who had actually given up on his dreams at Christminster and become a schoolmaster.

Eventually, Jude runs home and only ventures out again when he hears of Sue's marriage to Richard.

Unhappy with her decision before she made it, Sue gives up her marriage to be with Jude. The two finally admit their love for each other, and Phillotson doesn't stand in the way. "I always thought there was something extraordinary between the two of you. Sometimes I think you're one person split in two," Richard says.

Although there are brief periods of sheer happiness and carelessness, Jude and Sue mostly find hardship because they are not married.

They adopt Little Jude, Jude's son by Arabella (yes, she lied twice) and have two children of their own. Sticking to their beliefs, they keep moving around when society won't let them be who they are. "We'll just move on again, and again, and again, and again. As long as it takes the world to change. We've done nothing wrong. You're the one who taught me that," Jude tells Sue.

This film touches on contrasting and intermingling ideas of superstition and religion. In the beginning, Sue claims she is superstitious and that is why she is religious. Yet the couple defy religion and superstition by not getting married, claiming God has nothing to do with them or love.

Sue's superstitions come back after the haunting events that occur when the family is turned away for lodgings. She blames herself and thinks the lovers should be punished. She turns to prayer and God to explain away the modern ideas she used to have about love and marriage.

Whenever a film is based on a novel, there is always a comparison between the two mediums, and *Jude* delivers a powerful message of its own right. ■

by Kathleen Carlson