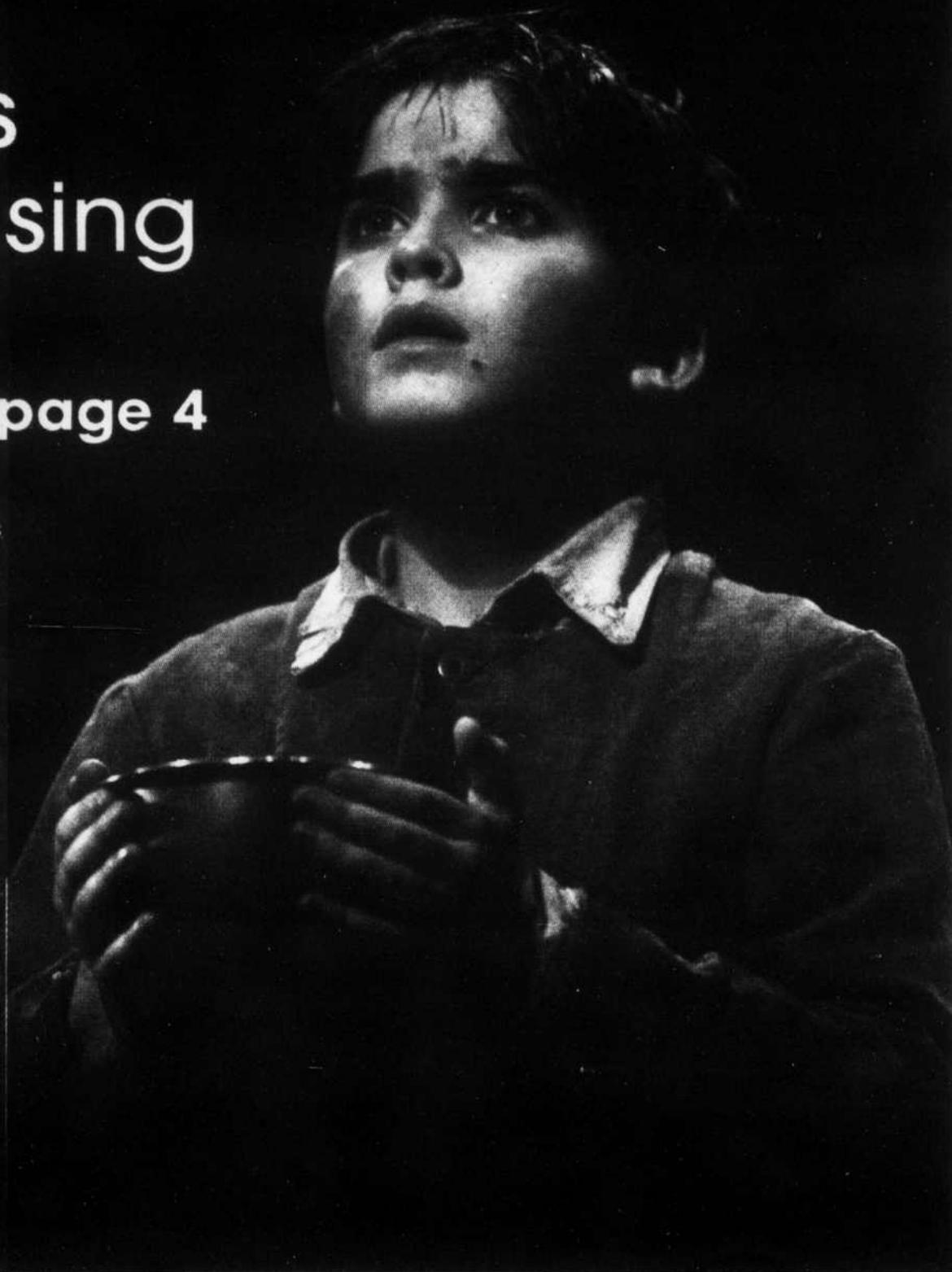


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October 21, 2004

Adorable
Ragamuffins
dance and sing

page 4



second annual the 'boro's best 2004 ballot

Please nominate as few national chains as possible

Start your engines, Pedro. Once again, it's time to highlight your favorite bars, clubs, bands, video stores, restaurants and whatever else passes for culture in this decaying college burg we affectionately call Murfreesboro.

Below is democracy in action. Our beautiful Quark-made ballot now includes: Best Place to Shop for

Under \$5, Best Local DeeJay, Best Tattoo Parlor and Best Bookstore.

Ballots should be turned in to the *Sidelines* office, in the James Union Building, Room 310, by Nov. 11. You can also mail us at Post Office Box 8, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. And if you're a Webhead, fill out your ballot online at www.mtsusidelines.com. Whew.★

Music

Best Murfreesboro Band

Best Murfreesboro Musician

Best Place to Hear Live Music

Best Place to Play Live Music

Best Local DeeJay

Food & Drink

Bar With the Best Bartenders

Best Cup of Coffee

Best Mixed Drinks

Best Happy Hour

Best Beer

Best Atmosphere (Restaurant)

Best Atmosphere (Bar)

Best Breakfast

Best Mexican Food

Best Oriental Food

Best Soul Food

Best Sit-Down Meal in Town

food and drink continued

Best Service (Restaurant)

Best Service (Bar)

Best Drunk/Stoned Food Place

Best Grab-and-Go Lunch Place

Arts & Entertainment

Best Place to Spend a Friday/Saturday Night

Best Place to Spend a Weeknight

Best Place to Pick Up a Date

Best Place to Take Your Date

Best Place to Cheat on Your Date

Best Place to Shop for Under \$5

Best Place to Dance

Best Place to Rent Videos

Best Local Tattoo Parlor

Best Bookstore

Best Place to Experience Local Culture

Best Place to See Local Art

Best Place to Sit, Chill Out and Read

'Team America' provokes gut-busting laughs

By Forrest Sanders

Team America is an elite squadron of square-jawed covert specialists, daily putting their life on the line in their ongoing fight against terrorism. Oh, and they're also puppets.

After a gut-busting opening sequence (in which the team obviously topples the Eiffel Tower and blows up the Louvre in their attempt to thwart a group of terrorists), *Team America's* Chief Spottswode heads to New York's theater district.

It turns out that Spottswode is enlisting the services of renowned Broadway performer Gary Johnston to use his impeccable acting skills as a means of infiltrating terrorist cells. Following a soul-searching song interlude, Gary decides to join the gung-ho do-gooders of Team America. Soon he's being shipped off to gather terrorist information in some country named Derkaderkastan.

Team America creators Trey Parker and Matt Stone are masters in the art of primitive film making.

'Team America: World Police'

Director Trey Parker
Rated R
Paramount Pictures
Released Oct. 15

Rating ★★☆☆ stars
(out of four stars)

Though their latest is a take-off on the marionette starring British series "Thunderbirds," the puppeteering is only stilted when used to hilarious effect.

In all reality, there's quite a bit of craftsmanship that's gone into *Team America*. New York architect David Rockwell's puppet-size sets are lush and incredibly detailed and it's all skillfully photographed by Matrix cinematographer Bill Pope.

With that said, perhaps it comes as no surprise that Parker and Stone use the same digital technology that brought us *Jurassic Park* to bring us the construction paper world of



Photo provided by imdb.org

With Trey Parker's and Matt Stone's *Team America*, Asian dictators like Kim Jong II reign supreme, in puppet-form nonetheless. *Team America* is currently playing in the 'Boro.

South Park.

For the record, despite what the "World Police" part of the title may imply, *Team America* is in no way an attack on the Bush administration and neither the president or Sen. John Kerry are featured in puppet form.

Instead, Parker and Stone's targets are set on skewering the big budgeted Michael Bay-brand of action movie and having a little fun at the expense of Hollywood's most outspoken political activists.

Though Alec Baldwin, Tim Robbins and Susan Sarandon all get the puppet treatment, *Team America's*

unlikely scene stealer is North Korean dictator Kim Jong II. Sitting atop a throne overlooking a village constructed of Chinese food take-out cartons, he woefully sings melancholic ditties of how lonely it is being intellectually superior to everyone else in the human race.

As any *South Park* connoisseur can tell you, much of *Team America* is borrowed from Parker and Stone's Comedy Central series. A song dedicated to the movie montage is recycled from their long-running show and *Team America's* overall message may sound a bit familiar to anyone who

caught *South Park's* 100th episode. However, *Team America's* primary problem is that it simply doesn't measure up to 1999's more edgy, incisive and generally funny *South Park* movie.

That film was universally acclaimed by major critics, earned an Oscar nomination for the Canuck-bashing anthem "Blame Canada," and was even hailed by Stephen Sondheim as the best musical of the '90s (though it didn't have much competition in that arena, did it?).

Parker and Stone have yet to create a film that matches *South Park* in wit, but nevertheless, *Team America* is a solid effort with just enough sly movie references and hearty laughs to cover the price of admission. ★

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Adorably tattered ragamuffins dance and sing in TPAC's 'Oliver'

By Collin Winter

Over its 170-year lifespan, Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* has seen countless dramatic adaptations, yet none has been more successful than *Oliver!*, the latest production to hit Nashville's Tennessee Performing Arts Center. *Oliver!* runs from Oct. 26 to Oct. 31.

Despite many stage versions of Dickens' novel, *Oliver!*, first performed in 1960, was the first musical adaptation of this literary classic. Set against the bleak backdrop of an orphanage in early 19th century Britain, both the novel and musical tell the story of Oliver, a young orphan boy who escapes from life as a servant at a bleak workhouse. After displeasing his latest master, Oliver runs away to London, rather than be sent back to the dreary workhouse. Once there, he falls in with a gang of apprentice pickpockets, a group with a penchant for breaking into song. After numerous twists and turns, Oliver is identified as the son of the wealthy Mr. Brownlow, with whom, after a few more twists, Oliver comes to live happily ever after.

Oliver! was an instant hit at its 1960 London debut. After transferring to Broadway, it became the longest-running British musical at the time, playing at Broadway's Imperial Theatre for 18 months. To date, *Oliver!* is still the longest running show in the history of the London Palladium, one of Britain's largest and well-known theaters; the production's run included 1,366 performances at the Palladium alone (2,618 in total), grossing more than \$70 million.

Ironically, when *Oliver!* was being shopped around to various theaters in the late 1950s, writer Lionel Bart was rejected a dozen times: his musical was dismissed as being too dark and too morbid for audiences at the time. Rather than a straight translation of Dickens' gritty social criticism into musical theater, however, Bart's is a loose, heavily cleaned-up adaptation, focusing more on lavish production numbers than stinging commentary. TPAC bills *Oliver!* as an excellent introduction for children to musical theater.

The original production run was nominated for 10 Tony Awards (musical theater's equivalent to the Oscar), winning three: Best Composer and Lyricist, Best Conductor and Musical Director and Best Scenic Designer. The movie version of the Broadway musical, released in 1968, scored 11 Oscar nominations with five wins, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Score.

More recently, Robert Lindsay won the 1997 British Olivier Award for Best Actor in a Musical for his portrayal of *Oliver!*'s Fagin.

The current nationally-touring production is based on Cameron Mackintosh's wildly successful 1994 revival, which features an all-new set design and additional dialogue and lyrics. Mackintosh has a long history with *Oliver!*: He attended its opening in 1960, landing a job as assistant stage manager on the production's first tour. He has directed three revivals of the musical, one in the 1970s, the 1980s and the most recent 1994 production.

Mackintosh is also responsible for such world-famous productions as *Cats*, *Les Miserables*, *Miss Saigon*, *My Fair Lady* and *Phantom of the Opera*. Mackintosh's *Miss Saigon* will be coming to TPAC in November.

Fun fact: Both Phil Collins and Davy Jones (of The Monkees fame) have played the role of The Artful Dodger during various productions.

'Oliver'

Starring Mark McCracken,
Renata Wilson, Shane Tanner
TPAC

Performances Oct. 26-31

Tickets \$18-\$66

Oliver! has eight scheduled performances at TPAC: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 7:30 p.m., Saturday at 2 and 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 and 7:30 p.m. Tickets may be purchased before the show or by calling the box office at (615) 255-ARTS. Prices range from \$18- \$66, but student discounts are available. Find more information on the official *Oliver!* Web site, www.oliverontour.com. ★



Photo provided by TPAC

The Tennessee Performing Arts Center's production of 'Oliver' runs through Nov. 2. For more information about 'Oliver' and other events, visit www.tpac.org.

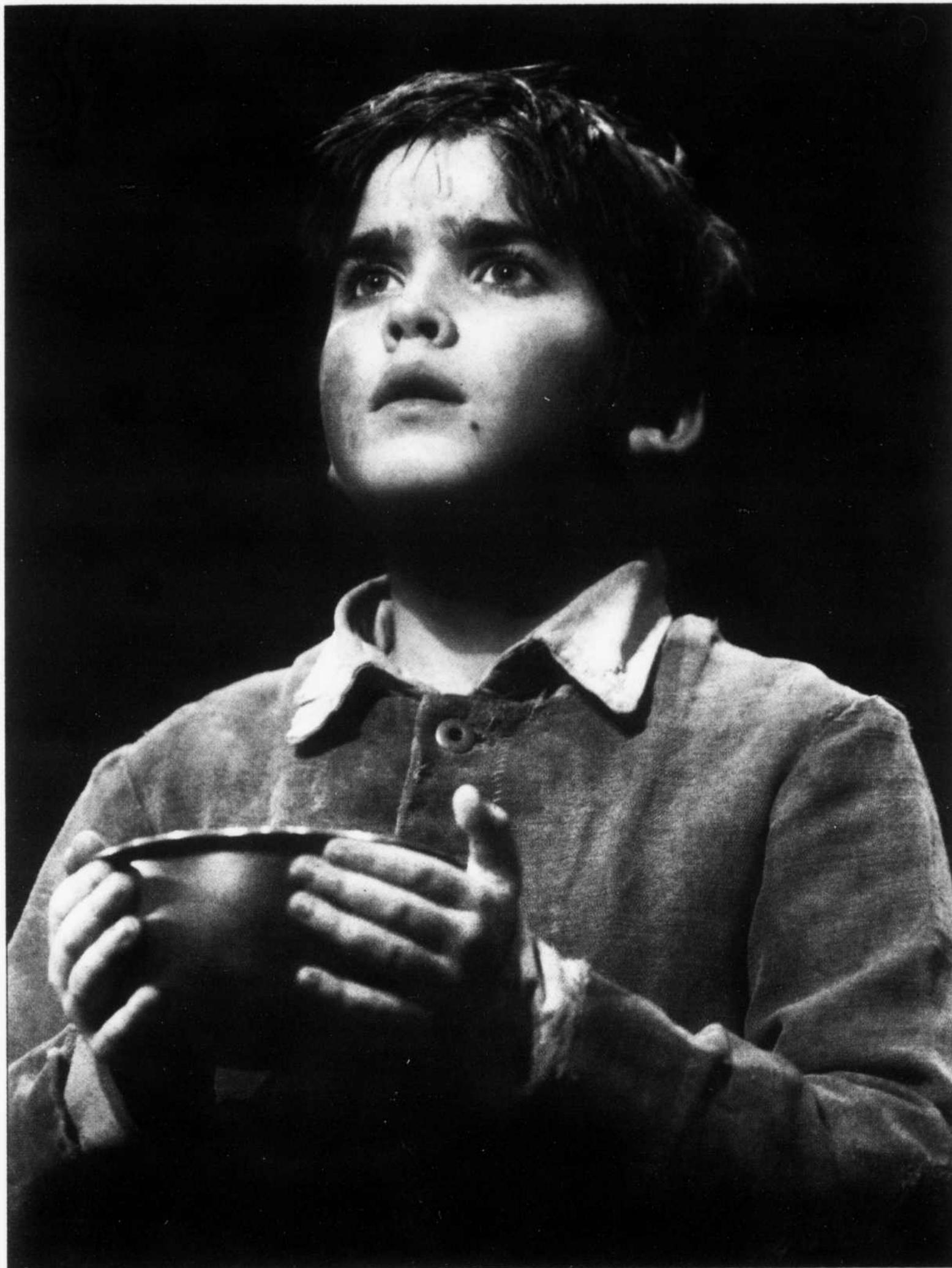


Photo provided by TPAC
Justin S. Pereira stars in
TPAC's production of
'Oliver.'

R.E.M. moves in a new direction with recent release 'Around the Sun'

By T.J. Green

Released Oct. 5, R.E.M.'s 13th studio album and first release since *Reveal* (2001), *Around the Sun* shows that the Athens, Ga., natives have had a lot to think about in the last three years.

War and terror have influenced frontman Michael Stipe's songwriting greatly, which is evident in songs such as "Final Straw," in which he sings, "There's a hurt down deep that has not been corrected. There's a voice in me that says you will not win." Stipe's lyrics have been mostly cryptic throughout the band's 24-year history, but the songs of *Around the Sun* have a clearer, bleaker message.

For instance, Stipe sings, "We can't approach the allies 'cause they seem a little peeved and speak a language we don't understand" in "I Wanted to be Wrong." And while the highly polished sound of *Reveal* makes a return on *Around the Sun*, none of the songs share the blissful tone of "All the Way to Reno" or "Imitation of Life" from the band's 2001 release.

Yet, although this album is a departure from what R.E.M. has released in recent years, it does borrow something from the band's 1991 album *Out of Time*. That album's first song, "Radio Song," featured a guest appearance by hip-hop artist KRS-One. In a similar fashion, *Around the Sun*'s "The Outsiders" ends with a rap by artist Q-Tip. The difference here is that Q-Tip's rap is poignant, while KRS-One's appear-

ance was full of satire.

Around the Sun may not be the next musical breakthrough for R.E.M., but it does show that the band is moving in a new direction. This should please fans who were disappointed with the band's last two releases, *Reveal* and *Up*.

On Oct. 13 in Los Angeles, R.E.M. began its North American concert tour in support of *Around the Sun*. At 8 p.m. Oct. 22 the band will perform at the historic Ryman Auditorium in Nashville.

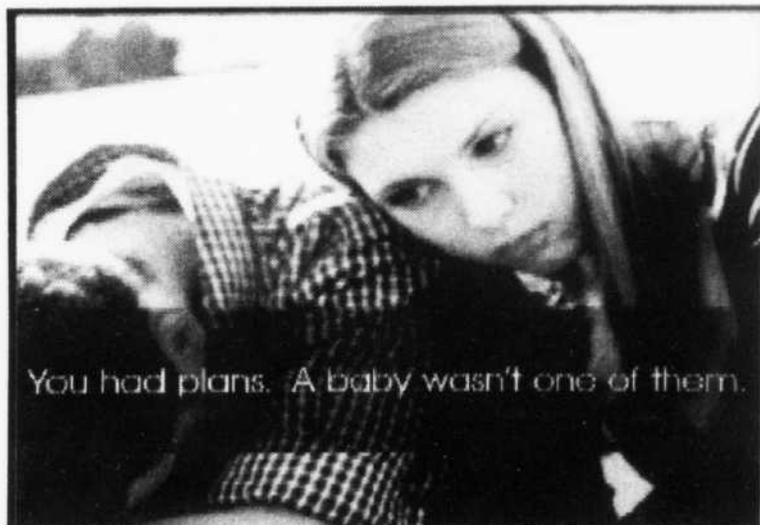
Tickets for the Nashville show went on sale at 10 a.m. Aug. 21 and sold out in eight minutes, according to TicketMaster records. Because of this, many fans may be out of luck this time around.

But, for those willing to pay a little extra, tickets can still be found online from Web sites such as eBay, www.ebay.com. Tickets are selling at an average of

R.E.M.
'Around the Sun'
Warner Brothers
Records
Released Oct. 5
Playing The Ryman
Auditorium Aug. 21

\$150 per ticket for the Nashville show on the popular auction site.

Tickets for other shows on the tour are even more expensive. Front-row tickets for New York's Madison Square Garden on Nov. 4 are selling for more than \$1,500 per ticket. While this may be too much for casual fans, it will definitely be worth the money for fans that have waited years to see R.E.M. live. ★



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'Villages' pretty but not too hospitable

By Lindsey Turner

For many of us college kids, the nuances of casual, middle-age suburban sex in generic New England towns are completely unknown. Good thing. John Updike, at 72, has spun a practical manual of upper-middle class love and betrayal — one that leaves the reader with a sour taste in the mouth at times, but also with appreciation for Updike's incredible knack for creating a beautiful sentence.

Villages follows the life of Owen Mackenzie, 70-something and retired in the village of Haskel's Crossing, Conn. Owen lives with his second wife, Julia,

Villages

John Updike
Published Knopf
Released Oct. 19

Rating ★★1/2
(out of four stars)

in a disingenuous haze of age and boredom. He spends much time thinking back on his life and the women in it: those he's bedded but has never really known, and the others, whom he's never really known.

When Updike isn't describing the landscape in

excruciatingly wordy — but lovely — detail, he focuses on Owen's transition from one lover to the next. First, in his teenage years, there is Elsie, nubile but curious, who reveals her womanly secrets to an ignorant but eager Owen. Then, in college, Owen finds his idol and the future mother of his children, Phyllis. She's sharp and politely sardonic, and one of the few women at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

A courtship, a marriage and some kids later, Owen and Phyllis decide to head for the suburbs. As Owen is assimilated into sunny, plastic suburban life, he meets horny socialites, a sexy Southern belle (mar-

ried to his business partner, Ed, no less), and more free-wheelin' gals willing to drop trou to have a piece of his action. Owen, unable to fight his attraction to women, indulges in these clandestine affairs, falling in love with each woman as he is making sweet, adulterous love to her. Meanwhile his wife Phyllis takes care of their kids. Well, no one ever said a protagonist had to be likeable, for pete's sake.

Owen's life, here on display, seems charmed enough, but it also seems empty and, at times, ugly. His infatuation with women takes him to a strange but all-too-familiar place where in he is both a misogynist

and woman-worshipper. "Women's natures are very large, he early sensed, to seek sex amid the world's perils," Updike writes, "in the face of so many wise societal discouragements. The force that parts their legs overrules modesty and prudence and common sense."

Updike writes beautifully if not meanderingly at times. Ultimately, though, he has crafted characters we don't really care about and placed them in stories that aren't terribly engrossing. This kind of writing, for most readers, receives a reluctant shrug of praise and admiration for the writer, but not much appreciation for the story itself. ★

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