

# Reviews

## Reba gives Aggies an evening of great music

By Keith Spera

REVIEWER

In the interests of ethical journalism, it must be stated that this reviewer is writing with two sizeable biases, one positive and one negative.

On the negative side, I am not a fan of country and western music. The sound of the quintessential C&W instrument, the steel guitar, can be found nowhere in my music collection. Quite honestly, I went into last Friday's Reba McEntire and Ricky Van Shelton concert not expecting to enjoy it.

On the positive side, I was able to spend some time talking to Reba McEntire both before and after the concert. She is, without a doubt, one of the most friendly, sincere people I've met in a long time, performer or otherwise. Writing something negative about her show would not be easy.

Having made this disclaimer, I feel no qualms whatsoever about making the following statement: Reba McEntire put on a show that was nothing short of stunning. For an hour and a half, she mesmerized a crowd of 7,000, including a few who are not big fans of country music.

Reba's show was not, by any means, a typical country show, musically or otherwise. The songs she performed reflected her growing interest in expanding her repertoire into other musical areas, including pop, jazz, and the blues.

Her musicians, four of which are

new to her band, are not exactly your standard C&W musicians (keyboardist Kirk Cappello, dressed in black and wearing his hair slicked back into a ponytail, said after the show that he was brought up on "everything but country").

Reba obviously put a good deal of money and effort into the design of her stage set. Her multi-level stage and sophisticated light show (which included several dozen high-tech robotic lights) enhanced the stellar performances of Reba and her band, and did not in any way overshadow them. It was, quite simply, a musical extravaganza.

The event kicked off with rising star Ricky Van Shelton. He and his four-piece band delivered a set built around Shelton's voice and his songs about love and its loss, a potent combination that has propelled both his albums to gold status.

Shelton's set, while not characterized by a whole lot of on-stage action, provided accurate renditions of his hits, which seemed to be just what the crowd wanted.

Reba McEntire was not content to let her amazing voice be the only attraction. She not only sang; she put on a show. Spotlights panned over the crowd and then converged on the highest point on the stage, where McEntire appeared in a cloud of mist to kick off the evening with "Let the Music Lift You Up." She then moved to center stage and proceeded to justify all those awards she's received in the last few years.

After allowing the thunderous applause that followed the second song to wash over her for a while, Reba

introduced herself to the crowd. That may have seemed a bit unnecessary, but Reba was about to spend an intimate evening with a group of people she was meeting for the first time. It was only appropriate that she introduce herself.

She then began to endear herself to the A&M crowd. An Aggie softball jersey was tossed onstage; she picked it up, displayed it to the crowd, and asked, "Does this make me an Aggie?" Judging from the audience's response, she could start taking classes tomorrow.

Throughout the show, McEntire's costume changes reflected the mood of the music. Her first outfit, a burnt-orange pantsuit complete with silver fringe, matched the more traditional country sound of the set's first numbers. Following a sweet, bluey sax solo by Joe McGlowhon, during which he was silhouetted against a blue-lit backdrop and shrouded in mist at the top of the stage, Reba strolled onstage in an elegant, blue-sequined dress. She then performed the jazz-flavored "Sunday Kind of Love." She was now the diva, and gave the very personal lyrics of "New Fool at an Old Game" added poignancy with her emotional performance of the tune.

The gospel-sounding "Somebody Up There Loves You" served as a vehicle for backing vocalist Susie Wills to take a turn at centerstage, giving Reba an opportunity for one more change of clothes. After a fun little fiddle solo by Glen Duncan, Reba emerged in casual attire of boots, blue-jeans, and an A&M sweatshirt. She was now among friends and

could get a little more laid-back. Sitting on a stool, she launched a tribute to some of her favorite vocalists. She spoke to the crowd about her days growing up listening to a host of singers, saying she was going to repay some of them for the joy they brought her and her family.

She sang one for Merle Haggard; at the song's end, she gently pleaded "Sing me back home/ before I die" as the piano cradled her voice. A story about her early adoration for Ray Price and his blues led into a fine blues performance of her own.

The last three songs McEntire performed were tributes to some of the female vocalists she admires. Dolly Parton's "Jolene" was followed by a stunning a capello performance of Patsy Cline's "Sweet Dreams" that brought the crowd to its feet for a richly deserved standing ovation.

Aply enough, Reba closed the show with Aretha Franklin's "Respect." Reba's show gave pure enjoyment; it showcased the awesome vocal abilities of a lady who, in her own words, considers herself a singer first, a songwriter second.

Apparently, the audience members weren't the only ones who had fun. After the show, Reba, quite excited and happy, told me with all sincerity, "Tell the A&M folks that I loved this crowd. I felt a lot of love out there. It was a great place to start the tour."

Her most telling statement had been spoken a few moments earlier. As McEntire left the stage at show's end, she was heard to exclaim to one of her managers, "That was great!" Reba, it certainly was.

### A conversation with Reba

By Keith Spera

REVIEWER

If all performers were like Reba McEntire, journalists' jobs would be a lot more pleasant.

McEntire's Feb. 10 concert was the first of her latest tour. She was about to debut for the general public a new stage show, a new set list, and some new musicians. During the

sound check, she had problems with some of the instruments. She must have had a lot on her mind.

Despite all that was happening, she made time in her busy schedule to sit down with me a couple of hours before she went onstage.

She and I sat in her dressing room and talked for about 20 minutes. She came to the interview dressed casually, in a Hard Rock Cafe sweat shirt and black sweatpants. See Reba/Page 18



Battalion reviewer Keith Spera talks with Reba McEntire before her performance Friday at G. Rollie White.

## 'Liaisons,' 'Fly II' share similar themes, packaged in superb stories, plots, acting

"The Fly II"

Starring Eric Stoltz and Daphne Zuniga

Directed by Chris Walas

Rated R

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By Shane Hall

REVIEWER

I'll be honest with you: when I sat down to watch "The Fly II" at Cinema Three, I really was not expecting much.

However, I was pleasantly surprised because "The Fly II" is a well-made work of sci-fi/horror and a respectable sequel to David Cronenberg's grisly 1986 remake of the 1958 horror film.

Eric Stoltz stars as Martin Brundle, the son of scientist Seth Brundle (Jeff Goldblum in "The Fly"). Born with the mutant insect traits of his father, Martin grows up at an enormously accelerated rate (by age 5, he looks full-grown) in the clinical surroundings of Bartok Industries.

Recognizing Martin's scientific brilliance, Anton Bartok (Lee Richardson) assigns Martin to solve the mysteries of the teleportation devices Seth invented. Bartok, however, is also aware of Martin's mutant genes and has sinister plans for him.

Slowly, Martin begins his metamorphosis into the fly creature he is destined to become and realizes Bartok's betrayal and manipulation of him. This leads to a bloody revenge against the people who have done him wrong.

That brings us to the main difference in theme between "The Fly" and its sequel. The 1986 remake showed Seth Brundle to be a victim of his own scientific ambitions rather

than of anyone else. In this movie, however, Martin is a victim of other people's evil, rather than anything within.

This approach provides "The Fly II" with a more defined conflict between good and evil, but, on the negative side, the sequel lacks the depth of its predecessor.

"The Fly II" is directed by Chris Walas, the man behind the special effects of 1986's "The Fly," for which he won an Academy Award. This film marks Walas' directing debut, and he shows promise. Considering Walas' background in special effects, it is not surprising that this film has its share of grotesque scenes that make for some honestly scary moments.

The fly creature itself is gruesome and terrifying. The filmmakers made a first-rate effort at creating such a monstrous creature.

Not surprisingly, "The Fly II," like its predecessor, is a film with gore aplenty. From the grisly birth scene at the beginning to the fly mutant's violent rampage, the movie is filled with scenes that are long on scare and shock value and low on subtlety. In fact, the movie often rivals its predecessor in terms of the number of scenes requiring a sick bag. In other words, this is not a movie for the squeamish.

Stoltz's performance as Martin is one that shows us a young man who has been lied to and betrayed by others all his life and who must find the truth about himself on his own. Daphne Zuniga plays Beth Logan, an employee of Bartok Industries who becomes Martin's girlfriend and, by her love, gives Martin his first real desire to live.

"The Fly II," with its gruesome special effects and violent action, is

sure to find favor with fans of the 1986 film. In fact, if you have not seen "The Fly," the sequel is not likely to make a great deal of sense. But despite frequent sequel failures, "The Fly II" demonstrates that sometimes there can be good sequels.

"Dangerous Liaisons"

Starring Glenn Close, John Malkovich and Michelle Pfeiffer

Directed by Stephen Frears

Rated R

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By Shane Hall

REVIEWER

"Dangerous Liaisons," a spectacular film, can fairly be considered an 18th century version of "Fatal Attraction." This movie is two hours of decadence and seduction set in 18th century France, and it is no less than a work of art.

In an attempt at revenge on a former lover who has left her to marry a virgin, the Marquise de Merteuil (Glenn Close) asks the Vicomte de Valmont (John Malkovich), a man known for his skills at seduction, to sleep with the young woman before she gets married. Laughing off the idea as too easy for someone of his reputation, Valmont sets his sights on a woman who is married and faithful, the virtuous Madame de Tourvel (Michelle Pfeiffer).

The young virgin, through Merteuil's arrangement, is staying at the same villa as Valmont and Tourvel. Here, the stage is set for Valmont's seductive activities.

Valmont, with the help of the servants, discovers that the virgin's

mother has been sending letters to Tourvel warning her about Valmont. To get back at the mother, Valmont beds her daughter, the virgin, with little trouble. The seduction is as easy as he boasts it would be. Thus, Merteuil has gotten her revenge.

While pursuing Tourvel, however, Valmont trips up by falling in love with her, which he hadn't planned on. Here, the seductive Valmont's weakness is revealed: he is capable of falling in love after all. Malkovich plays the role with conviction.

Glenn Close, who terrified moviegoers in "Fatal Attraction" as the menacing Alex Forrest, is equally malevolent in this film as the treacherous Merteuil. Trapped in an inferior social standing because of her gender, Merteuil is driven by the need to dominate others and has over the years become, in her words, "a virtuoso of deceit." Close's performance alone makes "Dangerous Liaisons" worth seeing. She lost a bid for the best actress Oscar last year to Cher, but definitely deserves to win this year.

Directed by Stephen Frears ("My Beautiful Laundrette," "Sammy and Rosie Get Laid"), "Dangerous Liaisons" features lavish set designs and equally impressive costuming, both of which give the film an authentic look. The film also features catchy dialogue that reinforces the primary themes of sex and revenge (and shows us how related the two can be).

Adding to this the casting of stars with the talents of Close and Pfeiffer (two perfect specimens of their gender), "Dangerous Liaisons" is Frears' most commercially accessible film to date and one that is highly recommended.

## Metallica does 'Justice' to trademark speed metal, leaving Dallas arena rocking, stomping for more

By Chuck Squatriglia

CORRESPONDENT

Metallica's popularity spread primarily through word-of-mouth, and the performance in Dallas' Reunion Arena will keep both fans and critics talking for a long time.

Almost 13,000 people braved ice-cold weather to see Metallica's "Damaged Justice" concert Feb. 5. The audience got its money's worth; Metallica rocked through Dallas with a beat that will be felt throughout Texas and the rest of the nation.

Metallica hit the stage with both barrels blazing and assaulted the audience's senses for almost two-and-a-half hours.

Metallica's stage presentation and musical skill made the concert a feast for both ears and eyes, presented with all the grace and subtlety of a Blitzkrieg attack and the unrestrained energy of a nuclear explosion.

Metallica opened the set with a majestic, brassy-sounding keyboard introduction to "Blackened." Oddly

enough, the keyboard texture didn't sound the least bit out of place in a Metallica song — it was used to accent the introduction to the song.

Included in the performance was a barrage of classic Metallica songs, including "For Whom the Bell Tolls," "Welcome Home (Sanitarium)," "Leper Messiah" and "Harvester of Sorrow."

No expense was spared in design and construction of the set. It resembled a delapidated courthouse, complete with broken columns and a giant copy of the Lady Justice statue. She was tied and bound, her scales tipped to one side, overflowing with cash. The set reflected the theme of "...And Justice For All."

Vocalist/guitarist James Hetfield stopped the attack long enough to greet the zealous crowd and introduce bassist Jason Newsted.

Newsted played a bass solo that was more noise than music, but did manage to showcase his talents. Bass solos are generally boring, but his skill and energy made the solo exciting.

One of Newsted's best qualities is his never-ending supply of energy. While on stage, he did not stand still

for a second — he was constantly running around, shaking his head like a banshee, his long hair obscuring any view of his face.

As the final booming notes of Newsted's solo were echoing through the arena, the other members began playing a rather sedate introduction to "Master of Puppets." However, the slow melodic guitar passages were merely the calm before the storm; the song received the best response of the evening.

At one point, Hetfield's vocals could not even be heard during the chorus — the audience was singing along so loudly, his voice was completely dominated.

However, the frantic mood calmed down quickly. The spotlights were shut off and the arena became pitch black. Through the darkness came a scream, then another, louder. Suddenly there was a huge explosion and flashes of light, followed by more explosions and the sound of machine gun fire accompanied by strobe lights. It was a perfect Metallica-esque introduction to "One."

Never ones to remain too serious for any length of time, the band

lightened the mood a little for the next song.

"You guys thirsty?" Hetfield asked the audience. "I am — it's time for a beer," he said. "I've only got one, so you'll have to share it."

Hetfield then handed a beer to a fan in the front row, asking him, "Hey! You got an ID? You look too young!"

Continuing with the joke, he told the crowd, "You guys take small sips, 'cause everyone's gotta get some."

Hetfield then led the crowd through a rousing rendition of their speed-metal anthem, "Seek and Destroy."

"...And Justice For All" served as the zenith of the madness. Near the song's end, the entire stage began to fall apart. Lady Justice was "blown up," columns fell over and crumbled, the courthouse backdrop fell to the ground and parts of the lighting rigging fell apart. It was the perfect image to complement the theme of the record.

Metallica's first encore featured "Creeping Death" and "Fade to Black," both from *Ride the Light-*

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## Previews

### Plots entwine in 'Diva'

By Shane Hall

REVIEWER

"Diva," a 1981 French film, is this week's feature in MSC Aggie Cinema's International Series. The movie will be shown Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. Admission is \$2.50.

Set in Paris, "Diva" has two stories that dive into one another.

Jules, a young postman secretly records a concert by Catherine Hawkins, a beautiful American opera singer whom he adores. It seems Hawkins refuses to record albums.

The second situation in this suspense plot involves a prostitute who makes a tape naming a Paris police inspector as one of the men in charge of an international prostitution and white slavery ring. Before she is gunned down in the streets, she manages to slip the tape into Jules' delivery bag.

Her last action sets the stage for the rest of the film, which is mainly a

chase with gangsters and police after the prostitute's tape and Taiwanese men who make pirate recordings in order to get the recording of Hawkins' concert.

While on the run from all of the men, Jules has a semi-romance with Hawkins and an odd relationship with a young Oriental girl. One of the film's most romantic scenes comes when Jules gently touches Hawkins' shoulder while she sits under a large umbrella.

Several other scenes in the film reinforce the idea of Paris as the ultimate romantic city.

However, this film has its dark side as well, particularly in the chase scenes. A chase through a Paris subway station involving Jules and a punky-looking gangster is especially effective.

The film's dialogue is in French with English subtitles. Overall, "Diva" is a good movie and a worthwhile way to spend your Tuesday evening

## Pianist plays New Age

By Shane Hall

REVIEWER

An evening of solo piano music will grace the interior of Rudder Theater on Valentine's Day, courtesy of RCA/Novus recording artist Liz Story.

Story is touring in support of her fourth album, *Speechless*.

The concert, at 8 p.m. Tuesday, is a presentation of MSC Town Hall.

Like pianist George Winston and guitarist William Ackerman, Story is often categorized as a New Age artist, but the vagueness of the tag reveals little, if anything, about the music. Most of her works are solo piano compositions, although other instruments such as percussion and synthesizer have been featured on two of her previous recordings.

Story's music draws upon a diverse array of influences, including classical, pop, jazz, folk and a century's worth of popular keyboard literature. In her words, she likes Elton John as much as she likes Vladimir Horowitz. Considering such a range of influences, her music often is difficult to categorize.

Although the music itself may be hard to label, Story's playing has

won the raves of fans and critics. Stephen Holden of *The New York Times* wrote that "Harmonically and rhythmically, her pieces suggest a austere, formal flavor of flamenco music and its keyboard extensions — the classical jazz of Chick Corea."

Ron Welburn of *Jazz Times* said Story "has the breadth of imagination that distinguishes many of today's pianists/keyboardists who classical pedagogy has been filtered through light pop and jazz."

Story studied piano at New York's prestigious Juilliard Music School and at Hunter College, also in New York.

She recorded two albums of piano compositions on the Windham record label, *Solid Colors* and *Uncountable Effect*. In 1986, she signed with Novus and recorded her third album, *Part of Fortune*, an eclectic selection of music that features other instruments as well as piano.

Story returned to solo piano works in 1988 on most recent album *Speechless*, an exploration of the piano's tonal, dynamic and expressive capabilities.

Tickets for Liz Story's Town Hall concert are on sale for \$8 at the MSC Box Office.

## BVSO to feature solos

The Brazos Valley Symphony Orchestra will perform "First Chair Encores" at 8 p.m. Tuesday in Rudder Auditorium.

Penny Zandt, principal flutist, will play Andante for Flute in C major by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Oboe principal Philip Alexander will perform Concerto for Oboe in C major by Franz Joseph Haydn.

Claude Debussy's Sacred and Profane Dance will be performed by harpist Shana Norton. Principal trumpet player John McSpadden will be featured on Concerto for

Trumpet in D major by Giuseppe Tartini.

Conductor Franz Anton Kraus also will lead the group in performing Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 in F major. The orchestra's associate conductor, George Calvin Adams, will conduct Mozart's Overture to *Clemenza di Tito*.

Tickets are on sale in Rudder Box Office. Prices are \$8 for children, \$10 for students and \$12 for general public. Texas A&M students may purchase seats in the upper balcony at a special rate of \$5.