

Guitarist Eric Johnson perfects his music

By RHONDA REINHART
Staff writer

Eric Johnson is a poet, but his pen is a guitar. The lofty language and flowery similes are replaced with the passionate electrical sounds of a guitar hero.

Johnson has been Guitar Player magazine's "Best Overall" guitarist for four years in a row, and Musician magazine included him in its February 1993 issue as one of the "100 Greatest Guitarists of the 20th century."

Johnson said these titles are not taken for granted. The Austin musician strives for perfection in the recording studio and onstage.

"Sometimes when you do a project, gravity is with you, and sometimes it's not," he said. "If the magic comes, and it's happening, I don't have to be as much of a perfectionist."

Johnson first decided he wanted to be a musician when he was about 15. He joined a band that wrote its own music, and he realized that he could make this creative outlet a career.

"If I could do this for a living, it would be kind of a blessing," he said.

And that is exactly what he did. Johnson's guitar-playing career

has spanned three decades. He has toured with B.B. King and recorded with Dweezil Zappa and Chet Atkins.

Johnson has been on the road for a year, and when the final leg of this tour wraps up, he will head back to the studio to start working on a new album.

He said he has a lot of new songs and some blues pieces that he plans to include on the album. He said he would also like to intersperse some live tracks on the recording.

Johnson said he is constantly working on new songs in his head.

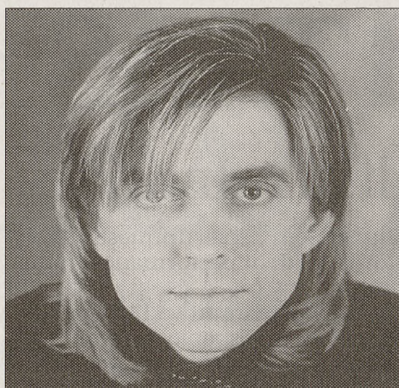
"I always have a working satchel of ideas, and I work on them until they become mature," he said.

Aside from being a creative outlet, Johnson also believes that music has a healing power.

He said music is like a great movie, and it gives audiences a chance to experience something they might never experience.

"If it's (the movie) powerful and has a positive vibe, it can pull you up and take you somewhere," he said. "Music can do the same thing. Any kind of art has the potential to make us aware of the deeper important things, and that there's a thread within us all."

Johnson's favorite part of being a



Johnson

musician is performing.

He said playing for an audience can be a lot of fun.

"If people enjoy it, it makes you more into it," he said. "You respond off each other."

Johnson includes a variety of styles in his music, including pop, jazz and blues. He is working on developing his vocal abilities, and he also plays the piano.

Johnson's musical diversity is also evident in the guitarists he considers influences. The Texas musician has found influences in musicians from Jerry Reed to Jimi Hendrix, and he said he likes to keep an open mind about different styles of music.

Johnson said being from Texas has affected his outlook on music.

"Texas music incorporates a lot of different styles," he said. "And I feel like I'm a part of it."

Johnson will be performing Wednesday night at Hurricane Harry's.

Kiss receives the Kiss of Death

Movie Review

Kiss the Girls
Starring Morgan Freeman and Ashley Judd
Directed by Gary Fleder
Rated R
Playing at Hollywood 16
★★ 1/2 (out of five)

After seeing the thriller *Kiss the Girls*, I have one question to ask: how many psychopathic killers are in this country?

While the addiction this country has to such movies is considerable (see films such as *Seven*, *Copycat*, and the grand daddy of all killer thrillers, *Silence of the Lambs*), there is not

a whole lot of new stuff under the sun since Kevin Spacey gave Brad Pitt that nice little present at the end of *Seven*.

Girls opens with Morgan Freeman playing Dr. Alex Cross, a forensic psychologist for the Washington D.C. Police Department. Cross is the typical "Clarise Starling" character, nothing more, nothing less. Cross' niece is mysteriously abducted and he decides he is going to help investigate.

Enter our heroine, Ashley Judd, playing med student Kate McTiernan. McTiernan is another kidnapping victim of the mysterious psycho who calls himself "Casanova." She escapes from this Don Juan gone bad and helps Cross' search.

Girls is an attempt to cash in on the thrill kill genre, just without the kill. Based on a novel by James Patterson, the film is indicative of Patterson's typical style. He starts with a great premise and then drags it

on for 300 pages.

For some reason, Cross and McTiernan travel to California to find a killer in North Carolina. After this part of the film, the rest of the realism in the story is totally obliterated.

Quite often I have heard of victims accompanying the police. Yeah right.

The cast of *Girls* is terribly wasted on such drivel.

Freeman, one of the most subtly powerful actors to grace the screen, continues to prostitute his talent. After bombs such as *Moll Flanders* and *Chain Reaction*, Freeman needs to get back to roles such as in *The Shawshank Redemption*.

Judd however has made a wise career move with her turn in *Girls*. Judd proves to be on a track for stardom. This stepping stone role proves that with every film she makes, she is on the verge of greatness. Director Gary Fleder seems to be trying to mix a motif of *Dracula* meets *Cape Fear*. First there is the dungeon — yes that's right, I said dungeon — Casanova keeps his victims in is complete with Gothic pillar candles with old wax layering the scene.

Then there is the little matter of McTiernan's house. Very few med students I know can afford to live in a huge house complete with designer couches and a complete kitchen, all without a roommate.

In the end, *Girls* seems to be a little more than a bad R.L. Stine Goosebump's version of *Silence of the Lambs*. Somehow I don't picture Casanova, "having an old friend for dinner."

—Aaron Meier



Ashley Judd and Morgan Freeman try to find a psychopathic kidnapper named Casanova in the new film, *Kiss the Girls*

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Was it Murder or Justice?

Produced by Mountain Top Productions
Written by Celeste Bedford Walker
Presented by MSC Black Awareness Comm. & Texas A&M Univ. Corps of Cadets

Date: October 15
Time: 7 PM
Place: Rudder Theater

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Byron L. Howell 1997