



Don't play it again, Grammy

Some of best music is never nominated

By DAVID SEGAL
The Washington Post

Tonight, the music industry's elite will gather for the 42nd annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, where golden gramophones will be handed to artists and producers behind the finest music of 1999.

That, anyway, is the theory. The reality isn't as promising. In fact, based on the evidence provided by "Grammy Nominees 2000," a collection of Grammy-nominated songs, the show could be a memorable howler. Worst-case scenario: The evening rivals the inadvertently comic and entirely baffling debacle of 1980, when easy-listening wheezer Christopher Cross ("Sailing") beat Frank Sinatra for Record of the Year.

The album — featuring songs by Britney Spears, Christina Aguilera and Sting — neatly summarizes the Grammys' on-going and only sporadically successful struggle to separate the trifles from the keepers. If anything, the disc suggests that no matter how hard they try, the roughly 15,000 musicians and recording professionals who cast ballots in this particular election can't help but embrace any trend that lodges long enough atop the Billboard charts.

This year, that means plenty of teen-pop. "Grammy Nominees 2000" kicks off with "I Want It That Way," a glazed doughnut by the Backstreet Boys, a darling of the pre-puberty set. Being tailed by adoring hordes of 12-year-olds never disqualifies a band from critical acclaim, but the Boys' brand of soul harmony is as heartfelt as a strip mall. Nonetheless, the song is up for Record of the Year, an accolade that somehow eluded Simon & Garfunkel's "The Sound of Silence" and Led Zepplin's "Stairway to Heaven," just two examples of radio staples that were never even nominated for a Grammy. Go figure.

Meanwhile, the interchangeable Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears are up for Best New Artist, which makes this a terrific year for Mouseketeer alums. The songs offered here (Aguilera's "Genie in a Bottle" and Spears' "...Baby One More Time") showcase the pair of teen-agers at their most overtly and inappropriately sexual.

SHOW AT A GLANCE

- **WHAT:** 42nd annual Grammy Awards, hosted by Rosie O'Donnell
- **WHEN:** 8-11 tonight
- **CHANNEL:** CBS, Channel 6

GRAMMY/ please see E2



COSI ALFASI/The Associated Press
A legitimate contender: Grammy Award nominee Macy Gray.

Water Resources Education Center gives new meaning to mixed use with sewage treatment next door to wedding receptions and proms

Flush with possibilities



Photos by TROY WAYRYMEN/The Columbian

Public palace: The \$2.6 million Water Resources Education Center, overlooking the Columbia River, offers a large meeting room, exhibit hall, laboratory, gift shop and a computer center, with grounds adjacent to Marine Park and acres of wetlands. Admission is free to the center, which opened four years ago this month.

By BRETT OPPEGAARD
Columbian staff writer

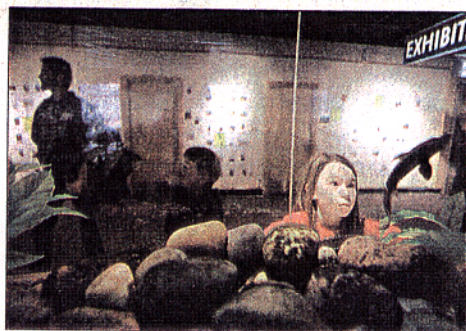
After moving from Russia to Vancouver a few years ago, Aleksey Kalenichenko spent much of his leisure time in his new city enjoying the Columbia River waterfront. He walked along the trail on the north bank. He explored the acres of wetlands and marveled about the city's Water Resources Education Center and the adjoining Marine Park.

So when his girlfriend, Ludmila, followed him here in early 1998 and they decided to marry, the couple chose the most beautiful place they could think of as the spot for their wedding ceremony and reception, the water center. "We just saw how nice it is and picked it together," Kalenichenko said. What the couple didn't know until recently was that this palatial compound primarily functions as a sewage treatment plant.

But that's intentionally an easy part to miss.

This riverfront estate, which some just call "The Poop Palace," is a place like no other in the world, according to city staff members who helped conceptualize and build it. Water and sewage treatment takes place inconspicuously and virtually without odor in glorious brick buildings under teal roofs. Those who notice the massive complex from the freeway — on the south side of Highway 14 between the Columbia River's two local interstate bridges — have mistakenly thought it was an industrial park, a business center and a shopping mall, said Tami Kihis, manager of the water center, who gained two of her best volunteers when they came to the place to "go shopping."

What it doesn't look like is the image most people have of a water and sewage treatment plant. Its pleasing, nonintru-



Fish tank of distinction: Jessica Arlich, 8, of Battle Ground watches a sturgeon swim inside the showcase aquarium at the Water Resources Education Center. This custom-made, 350-gallon aquarium cost about \$30,000 to build.

sive nature has attracted dignitaries, scientists and specialists from throughout the world to look at what Vancouver has done.

Breaking new ground

Four years ago this month, the city opened the enigma known as the Water Resources Education Center. The 16,000-square-foot facility was an unprecedented achievement in the world of water reclamation, offering a public attraction — including a community room, exhibit hall, laboratory, multimedia theater, art gallery and gift shop — right next to wastewater treatment.

Several weddings, scores of business and government meetings, a couple of



funerals and even some high school proms proved the concept can work. "I don't think anyone had any idea how much this building would be used," Kihis said, "or how cool it would be." **WATER/ please see E2**

IF YOU GO

- **WHAT:** Water Resources Education Center
- **WHERE:** 4600 S.E. Columbia Way
- **WHEN:** Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday
- **ADMISSION:** Free
- **TELEPHONE:** For more information, call 360-696-8478 or visit www.ci.vancouver.wa.us/watercenter/index.html

Anniversary celebration set March 9

The Water Resources Education Center's free anniversary celebration, Splash 2000, will be 5 to 8 p.m. March 9. The event features food from nearby restaurants (\$2 per entree), Northwest beers and wines, coffees and soft drinks. Jazz musicians and vocalists will perform in the atrium. Art-related activities will be in the exhibit hall. There will be drawings for prizes every 30 minutes.

Internet site helps voters sort out the candidates for president

By MIKE BAILEY
Columbian staff writer

Can't decide whether Al Gore or Bill Bradley should be President Clinton's successor?

Wondering whether John McCain or George Bush deserves to spend the next four years in the White House?

For those who don't have a bumper sticker yet, there's a Web site ready to help narrow the choices. At www.personal.allyou.com, visitors can answer questions and, based on the answers, find out how they match up with the opinions of



We see something

the presidential candidates in the Democratic and Republican parties. The questions cover almost every hot

topic in this year's election, ranging from abortion issues such as should doctors be required to notify parents before performing abortions for 18-year-olds and younger, to exactly what role America should play in international conflicts.

Other questions deal with dog burning, gun control, school prayer, affirmative action, gay rights, Medicare, welfare, capital gains tax, campaign reform and a flat tax.

And if voting along party lines is more important than matching up with a candidate based on issues, you can ask the computer to show only how you match

with Democrat or Republican positions.

Those choosing to see the whole picture will get results that show by percentage how compatible they are with the five candidates still competing for the two major parties' nominations: Bill Bradley and Al Gore for the Democrats, and John McCain, George Bush and Alan Keyes among the Republicans. The comparison is based on responses by each candidate to the same questions. The Web site is a joint venture of America Online and CBS News. It also offers tips on important issues other than

polls.

Wondering what breed of cat or dog will match your family? The site has a series of questions that presents the best candidates among man's best friends and fancy felines.

Other categories include automobiles, recreational items and electronics. There's even a category for careers and colleges.

Sorry. You won't be able to compare whether a household pet would be the better alternative than any of the presidential candidates.

Children learn early how to drive the driver crazy

When my wife was pregnant for the first time, we enrolled in a Lamaze class. I found the experience quite helpful when we went into labor. But why do the parent preparation classes begin and end there?

I agree that the whole birthing process is confusing, but so is surviving in the car. Shouldn't there be a class for that, too?

I'm not referring to defensive driving or winter car maintenance, but rather, "How to prevent hearing loss at 60 mph while children in the back seat belt out the windows to 'I love you, you love me, let's chase Barney up a tree.' Other course work in car sur-



KEN SWARNER
Family Man

vival should include: "How to explain to children for the 40th time why the driver can't look back to see their funny faces," "Breaking up sibling fights with things

found in the glove compartment"; "Effective threats to curb arguments over who picks the radio station"; and, my favorite, "Identifying valuable household possessions as they are thrown from the car window."

I wish these courses were available when we were expecting our first child.

The first indication I had that my car, which once brought me great joy and happiness, had been transformed into a chamber of horrors was when my wife and I were 30 miles from home with a hungry infant ... and no bottle.

Did you know babies can sustain a piercing scream for five minutes without a breath?

Police officers don't believe it. "OK sir, can I see your driver's license?"

I wiped the drool from my mouth and tried to focus my eyes: "My child is screaming ... no bottle ... he's starving ... must get home."

"Your baby isn't crying sir," the officer noticed.

"I know," I explained. "So why were you speeding?"

"Because I put my finger in my son's mouth a half-hour ago so he'd stop crying, and now I've lost all feeling on my right side."

Little did I know then that torturing parents in the car was a favorite American pastime for children. Or how bad it can get. Like

the time I received rapid-fire karate chops from the back seat to my neck after my son ate a pound of cake frosting while watching Chuck Norris movies all day with his grandpa.

There was the time I listened to my daughter, with the bladder the size of a pistachio, tell me I had five minutes to find her a bathroom or the levee would break ... only, my car was at a standstill in rush-hour gridlock.

And then, there's my favorite: the time I accidentally ran a red light and then for the next 30 minutes answered questions from my kids like "Why did you do it?" "Will you get arrested?" "Will we go to an orphanage if you do?"

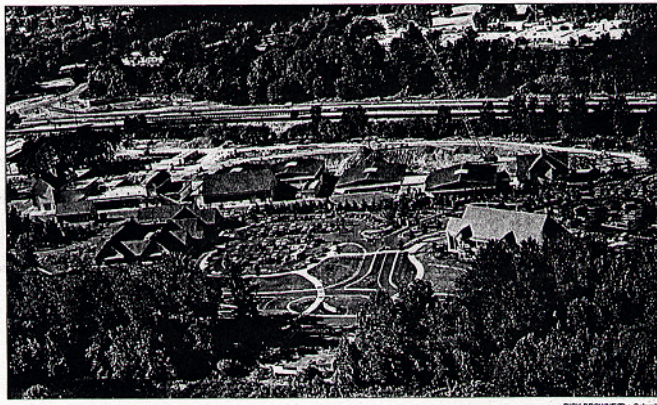
and "Is this why Mom says you're absent-minded and would lose us if we weren't so loud?"

Hopefully, I can convince the Maternity Nurses Association to take a hard look at this problem before more parents bring back-seat drivers into the world.

As for me, it's too late. I am, however, considering an early middle crisis — the kind satisfied by buying a two-seat sports car and telling the children to take the bus.

KEN SWARNER is a syndicated columnist who lives in Dupont. His column, *Family Man*, appears Wednesdays in *The Columbian*. He can be e-mailed at KSWARNER@netnet.com.

Vancouver's enigmatic estates: From the sky or highway, it's difficult to tell what this mysterious, yet majestic, compound contains. The secret: water treatment facilities and a public center.



BOB BROWN/The Columbian

Water

Many people here know little about facility

From Page E1

the center's remote location, small marketing budget and issues with perception, she says, have kept many from knowing about the place or giving it a chance.

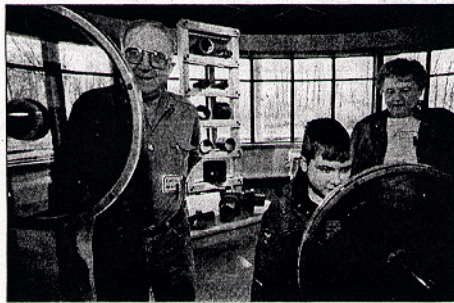
When Vancouver originally determined it would need more water and sewage capacity, in the late 1980s, various plans were considered before two proposals were floated. City residents wanted the smaller sewage plant at Marine Park removed, with wastewater pumped to an expanded west-side plant off Lower River Road. In its place, they wanted a large public park.

Engineer Victor Ehrlich was among city officials who convinced concerned residents that a new plant in the Marine Park area could be different than anything they had seen. "We wanted to make it look nice," he said in an interview at the time. "We were basically trying to expand the plant along the waterfront where nobody wanted it."

Costs

It was simply a matter of economics to build the plant there, Ehrlich said. The treatment facility was going to cost about \$43.4 million, with an additional \$25 million to \$30 million needed to pump the sewage to the west side. Replacing and expanding the old plant and adding the \$3.6 million Water Resources Education Center was much cheaper. "We spent a mere fraction plus we gained access to the wetlands area and (river) side pathway," he said.

The center was built for about \$200 per square foot and features an outdoor fountain, slide trip, imported from India, multimedia room, community room and a



Water Ed 101: Al Fischer, left, and Marge Fischer of Vancouver explore Water Resources Education Center exhibits with their grandson Nick McKee, 9.

"Once people get here, they forget where they are. If we don't tell them about the treatment plant, people have no idea it's there."

Tami Kihl, manager of the Water Resources Education Center

350-gallon aquarium. Its \$800,000 annual operating budget is paid mostly by the city's water and sewer utility, with money coming from customer's fees. The center initially was designed to be operated by a manager, a couple of educators and a group of volunteers. The city later added a facilities assistant, a programs assistant and a third educator to help run the building, which is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Public attraction

About 50,000 people annually have used the facility since it opened, including those renting the community room, attending events such as art exhibits, and school children on field trips. But the center only averaged 27 walk-in visitors per day in 1999, or

roughly three people per hour exploring the facility. C-Trans recently canceled its bus route to the center because of lack of use.

While the number of walk-in visitors is about double the 1987 and 1998 totals, and center manager Kihl says she hopes to attract new visitors. She expects huge increases in patrons after work begins this summer on the adjacent Tylevater Cove, a 37-acre project with about 300 town homes and 70,000 square feet of office space.

Meanwhile, Kihl and her staff are trying various tactics to attract people, including sand-trail boards near the riverfront trail advertising the center's restrooms, drinking fountains and public telephone. There also have been billboard advertisements on Highway 14. But the

center's remote location and relatively primitive marketing strategies, with no one on staff specifically oriented toward attracting visitors, have made it difficult for the center to bring in new faces. Even the structure's splendor might work against it, Kihl said.

"It looks like some kind of palace," she said. "It seems so ominous that some people won't come in."

Even the name, Water Resources Education Center, has been a hindrance, Kihl said, because of its bureaucratic feel. That name accurately conveys the facility's prime intent: to teach people about water and how to better care for water. But it's not particularly inviting. Even the center's acronym, WREC, sounds like either a "wreck" of a place or causes confusion with "rec" as in parks and recreation, Kihl said. Instead, staff members prefer to call it the water center.

For most, though, they just see the place as a wonderful community asset and wonder why more people don't use it. "Once people get here, they forget where they are," Kihl said. "If we don't tell

them about the treatment plant, people have no idea it's there."

Reactions

During the past four years, there's been overwhelmingly positive response to the water center from users.

Janell Jures, the local coordinator of the Shri Ram Chandra Mission yoga and meditation group, returned the facility for a weekend about five months ago. The event drew more than 50 people from throughout the Northwest. She said her group had a "marvelous experience," and she was impressed with the design of the complex and its synthesis with nature.

Cheri Phillips recently brought together a national bridge organization for a three-day competition. She said the approximately 200 people playing didn't even realize there was a treatment plant nearby. "We loved it there," she said. "The fountain, the views. We could go out on the patio and look at the river. I think it's a great building."

Anne Boswell of Portland attended a wedding reception at the center before she planned her own reception there. She and her husband, Dominic, even made their dramatic entrance to the party by landing in a helicopter in a clearing adjacent to the water center. "When I first went there, I was surprised," Boswell said. "It sounds like it would be a grungy old Army building or something. ... We loved the deck. The scenery. The setting. The openness. It's secluded, and the facility is great."

The family of Terry Berdiner, a longtime city mechanic, chose the center as the place to hold his memorial service in 1997. Fred Jackson, a fellow mechanic, reserved the building and said it meshed with Berdiner's passion for the outdoors and his enjoyment of the facility and wildlife there.

Bob Hill, a teacher and prom adviser at La Center High School, reserved the water center for the school's 1997 prom and said the kids loved the place. "At first, when we brought it up, some of the kids snickered and said it was down by the sewage plant," Hill said. "But once they were there, they found it doesn't look like one, and it doesn't smell like one. It's a very nice facility."

Cranes and other construction machinery have been rumbling around the north side of the plant for months as workers expand the compound's capacity to treat wastewater from 8 million gallons to 16 million gallons a day. That \$25 million expansion is expected to be completed in February 2001.

Kihl, the center manager, said she often has colleagues from around the state and country call and ask her about the water center near a burgeoning reclamation facility. "They won't buy that we have this place next to a treatment plant," she said. So she even has them pictures and invites them to visit. She usually adds a line like this to her correspondence: "You've really got to see this place to believe it."

Grammy

Soul singer Macy Gray is running for Best New Artist

From Page E1

More hearteningly, soul diva Macy Gray is also nominated in this category, and her "Do Something," which appears here, rented the facility for a weekend about five months ago. The event drew more than 50 people from throughout the Northwest. She said her group had a "marvelous experience," and she was impressed with the design of the complex and its synthesis with nature.

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Spring accessories sparkly, full of flair

The Associated Press

Spring will soon arrive in full bloom. Over-the-top accessories take the cake this spring as adornment is the key to success, according to the March issue of *W* magazine.

As reported in *W*, March's hottest accessories are bright, sparkly, vibrant and full of flair: **Polka dots:** If spring is all about the return of the girlish classic, nothing can be more fashionable than polka dots. Polka dots make their debut this year all over sandals, stilettoes and Sabrina heels.

Floral fantasy: Nothing says spring more than flowers. This year, floral patterns bloom on shoes, bags and purses to keep you feeling lovely and natural all

season.

Cocktail rings: If glamour suits you, don't forget to don your most exquisite jewels. Cocktail rings are available in warm and soothing colors such as pink, magenta and baby blue.

Touch of gold: Taking its cue from the decked-out disco days of the '70s, designers have added a touch of gold to everything, from strappy sandals to sling backs.

Purple haze: This season's fresh feeling can be seen and reflected in shades of bright pastels, pumped up to the extreme on all kinds of accessories. One of the best colors to capture the look is violet. Somewhere between pastels and purple, vibrant violet can be seen on shoes and handbags.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Biking
Helmets required on all rides

Saturday: Vancouver Bicycle Club Fairgrounds and Back Ride, 10 a.m., Chain Reaction Cycles, 6503 A.E. Mill Plain Blvd.; 35 to 40 miles, intermediate ride, moderate pace. Contact: Jon Kraft, 360-573-7119.

Sunday: VBC Two Bridge Loop, 10 a.m., Sunrise Bagels, 7635 MacArthur Blvd.; 20 miles, casual pace. Contact: Clay Kind, 360-256-1595.

Sunday: The Bike Gallery (the park is 4.2 miles west of the Port and Expo Center on North Marine Drive); 10-kilometer run, 15-kilometer bike. Overall and age group awards will be presented. Pick up an entry form at area running stores, bike shops and health clubs or register in person at Beckwith Bicycles, located on 43rd Avenue and Southeast Woodstock in Portland or

Mike Bingle, 360-576-0330.

Running

March 4: Clark County Running Club Burnt Bridge Creek Run, 10 a.m., 3.9 miles. Post-meeting location call Bryan Chapman, 360-263-4156.

Multisport

March 4: Kelly Point Duathlon, 8 a.m., meet at Kelly Point Park (the park is 4.2 miles west of the Port and Expo Center on North Marine Drive); 10-kilometer run, 15-kilometer bike. Overall and age group awards will be presented. Pick up an entry form at area running stores, bike shops and health clubs or register in person at Beckwith Bicycles, located on 43rd Avenue and Southeast Woodstock in Portland or

online at www.ActiveUSA.com. Cost is \$35 per person. Contact: 503-671-0202

Lectures

March 1: "Climbing the Cassin Ridge of Denali," 7 p.m., Portland REI, 1798 Jantzen Beach Center. Daniel Haghighi and Scott Williams will share a slide show of the challenges of climbing Denali. Contact: 360-693-0209.

CALENDAR ITEMS

To have your recreation sports event listed in this calendar, please send an announcement at least 10 days in advance to Recreation sports, The Columbian, P.O. Box 160, Vancouver, 98666. Fax it to 360-622-3232 or send e-mail to grahm@co.columbia.com.