

Success story adds to glory



Lisette Metz Grulke
Assistant Photo Editor

When a fan screams that she has driven to Lawrence, Kan., from Ohio to see Andrew McMahon play the piano, McMahon honestly can tell her that he came farther.

After starting a tour with his most recent musical endeavor, Jack's Mannequin, in March 2005, McMahon, 23, was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia, a type of cancer that is common and treatable in young children yet usually terminal in adults.

After chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant in August, McMahon is back on the road, finally finishing the tour to promote Jack's Mannequin's album "Everything in Transit." He will be stopping at the Blue Note in Columbia, Mo., on April 18.

And as McMahon said, "It feels damn good."

After recording two major albums with Something Corporate, the Drive-Thru Records ensemble that originated the classical instrumental trend that bands such as Yellowcard have made famous, McMahon struck out and discovered his own popularity. In his first post-chemo show outside of the Los Angeles area on March 20 in Lawrence, McMahon played to a sold-out crowd.

Fans of Something Corporate will not be disappointed by "Everything in Transit" – the "piano rock" sound for which they were famous is very evident.

However, the lyrical drive of Jack's Mannequin is very different than that of its frontman's former group.

The album is obviously a cathartic exercise in talking about yourself for Mc-



Andrew McMahon plays the piano with Jack's Mannequin on March 20 in Lawrence, Kan.

Lisette Metz Grulke/Index

Mahon, but he does it ever so eloquently.

McMahon's obvious maturation in lyrical content – there are no songs about Something Corporate's high school classmates on this album – is matched and often exceeded by his musical prowess, a fact that many others in the music community have picked up on.

The piano-playing Orange County punk who was gracing Warped Tour stages only a few years ago now has Tommy Lee drumming for him. If that doesn't say something, I don't know what does.

Another first for McMahon is "The Mixed Tape," his first radio single. "A song on the radio is a new thing for me," he told the crowd in Kansas, joking in the kind of way that is funny because it is true.

Although Something Corporate was big in certain circles (those circles containing a disproportionately large number of teenage girls), Jack's Mannequin is all over radio and television airwaves.

But seeing McMahon play live is an experience all its own, and one most certainly not to be missed.

McMahon deftly wins over the dense female crowd with his emotive control of the piano. He lavishes the microphone like he does the keys, in such a tantalizing manner that makes every girl in the room tingle. His darkly personal lyrics are matched by his performance style – he will switch microphones to sing to his many adoring fans, his eyes closed while he tickles the ivories.

His passion is mirrored by the crowd,

many members of which have adored the cute Californian since middle school.

They have every word to every song memorized, and they always sing along.

Despite the fact that he played "Everything in Transit" back to front, no alterations, as his first set list on tour, he elicited eager and delighted screams for every song.

Although McMahon has taken quite a mental and physical beating in the last year, he has not lost a bit of his rock-star spark.

When he covered Tom Petty's "American Girl" as an encore, he became more a rock star than Petty himself.

Tickets for McMahon's April 18 show in Columbia are \$18. For more information or to order tickets, go to www.thebluenote.com.

Immersive world sweeps players into game

Andrew Seal
Copy Editor

Imagine a world where the player can literally do or be almost anything: become an assassin-for-hire with expert services available to the highest bidder; a valiant knight; a strong and brave protector of the people; or a dark mage, raining destruction and slaughter upon those that oppose your iron will.

Welcome to the world of "The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion," created by Bethesda Softworks and published by 2K Games. Simultaneously released for PC and Xbox 360, "Oblivion" might be the year's most anticipated game.

"Oblivion" is an RPG, or role playing game, where you take on the role of a character. In most traditional RPGs, the character is already made for you. In "Oblivion," you get to create your character right down to the tiniest detail, such as thickness of the eyebrows, color of the lips and so forth.

If you have the time and patience, you can even make your character resemble you!

As most good RPGs start out, you are in jail. The emperor of Tamriel, the continent "Oblivion" takes place in, is the target of a high-level assassination attempt and has to escape the castle. As luck and fate would have it, the hidden escape route begins in your cell.

Before the emperor (voiced by Patrick Stewart of Star Trek and X-Men fame) dies, he gives you his amulet and tells you to seek out his only remaining son, give it to him and then politely inform him that he is the new ruler of Tamriel.

There begins the main story line, but you are by no means strictly limited to

that.

The Elder Scrolls series has long been touted as being one of the most immersive, open-ended role-playing experiences around, and "Oblivion" lives up to that standard.

By the time I was writing this review, I had found myself playing "Oblivion" for more than 15 hours – and I hadn't even started in on the main quest yet! Oh, I could have – right at the beginning, "Oblivion" can throw you into the thick of things, if you so choose, I didn't. Instead I spent some time traveling the beautifully-rendered countryside.

And what a beautiful render it is. The country of Cyrodiil (which is on the continent of Tamriel) is a huge, seamless world.

No long loading times here, ladies and gentlemen.

Luckily, you get a horse early on so you don't have to trek across the vast countryside all by your slow, lonesome self.

"Oblivion" also has simplified travel: Once you've heard of a place, a marker shows up on your map, and you can travel there instantly instead of riding or walking to it; though admittedly, you'll miss a lot by doing that. All across the countryside are massive eldritch ruins ripe for exploring, wayside inns at which you might just find

a new quest, or tall stone monoliths ready to reveal their powerful spells to the inquisitive visitor.

Technologically speaking, "Oblivion" sets the bar very high. With absolutely breathtaking graphics and immersive sound effects, those of you with low-end graphics cards might have to upgrade just to run the game.

To give an example, at the highest setting, each blade of grass is individually rendered by the game engine – talk about wow!

You'll find yourself staring off into the distance more than once, just to admire the view. What's even better is the independent weather system.

One morning in Cyrodiil, it could be foggy and overcast. The next, it could begin raining at three in the morning and stop at noon when the sun comes out from behind the clouds. The amount of realism in the game is mind-boggling.

No review of "Oblivion" would be complete without the mention of Bethesda's "Radiant AI" system. The system is a new and unique way of looking at interactions with non-player characters, or NPCs.

Instead of seeing the same person standing at the same spot doing the same thing every day, these NPCs actu-

ally have lives.

They will go and visit each other, go to work out in the field (or stay home if they feel like being lazy) and even bicker and gossip. I stumbled across a wayside inn in the wee hours of the morning and had to rouse the innkeeper (who did not appreciate it, I might add) in order to purchase a room for the night. She charged me double as well!

Sadly, no game is ever perfect. "Oblivion" has its fair share of cringe-worthy moments, though never enough of them to make the game unplayable. A few bugs in the lighting system could have been worked out, and more spell and weapon hotkeys could have been implemented.

It's also very annoying to have to effectually pause the game in order to open your map and see where you're going – some kind of on-screen overlay or mini-map would have been ideal, and it seems very odd that such an important thing was omitted. Also, no zoom-out function on the map is a very glaring omission. Despite those small things, "Oblivion" is a truly massive game with something to offer everyone.

Whether it's the rich, immersive storyline, the down-and-dirty dungeon crawling, or even fighting as a gladiator in the Imperial Arena, you'll be sure to find something that piques your interest. Naturally, I could go on for pages delving into all that "Oblivion" has to offer.

I have a limited space for this review however, but if you take the time to delve into this sure-fire blockbuster, it's guaranteed you'll find something that will draw you back into "Oblivion" again and again.

Game Review

"The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion"
Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Bethesda Softworks
Released: March 21
System: PC



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AROUND THE VILLE

Campus

Jewish Dinner

There will be a free, traditional Jewish Seder Supper at 8 tonight in the SUB Georgian Room.

Taco Extravaganza

The Society of Dance Arts will have an all-you-can-eat taco dinner from 5 to 8 p.m. April 21 at the Newman Center. Cost is \$5.

Blood Drive

Alpha Phi Omega will sponsor a blood drive from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. April 26 and April 27 in the Student Union Building. Identification required.

Hunger Relief

Sodexo is working to fight hunger by collecting donations for the Kirksville Local Food Bank. Cashiers will accept donations of meal blocks and dining dollars through May 12.

Local

Easter Egg Hunt

Kirksville Parks and Recreation and the YMCA will have an Easter egg hunt for children ages 2 to 10 Saturday on the Quad. Age groups will be separated prior to the event.

Art Show

The Arts Environmental Gallery Show will be April 17 to 22 at the Kirksville Art Center. For additional information contact the Art Center at 665-0500.

Relay for Life

The American Cancer Society Relay for Life will be April 21 and 22 at the Northeast Missouri Fairgrounds.

Concerts

South African Medical Mission

The concert, featuring Steve Robinson and The Foundation, and The Still Technique will be at 7 p.m. Friday at the Dukum Upp. Cost is \$8 in advance. All ages are allowed until 10 p.m. Only those older than 21 are allowed after 10 p.m.

Battle of the Bands

Featured bands include Texas Flood, Grass Withers, Dance Commanders, Condor and Please Please Please at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Kimball's Place. Cost is \$1 to benefit Holden Comprehensive Care Center.

Bandfest

The Dance Commanders, Tear-gassed by Hookers and His Moist-eyed Mothers and more will perform at 7:15 p.m. Friday, April 21 at the Alpha Tau Omega house. Cost is \$3.

CD Release Show

Featured bands The Foundary Field Recordings, Stop, Thief! and Ellie Come Home will perform at 9 p.m. April 22 at the Dukum Upp. Cost is \$4 in advance, \$5 at the door and an additional \$2 for those younger than 21.



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