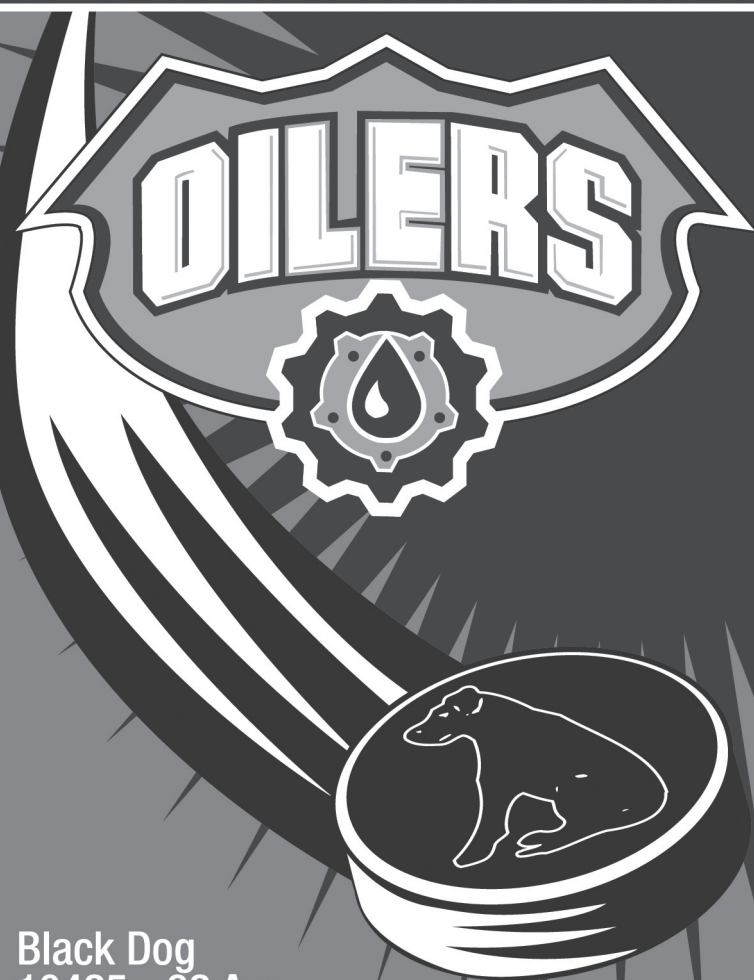


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Music And Lyrics opens in theaters on 14 February.

Every Five Minutes counts

Barry Westerlund's new album is what gets him out of bed in the morning

Barry Westerlund CD Release

With Karla Anderson and Nathan Carroll
Friday, 2 February at 9pm
Sidetrack Café

BRYAN SAUNDERS
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Since the Doomsday clock is just minutes away from midnight, time is even more precious. While some might panic and waste their last few moments on Earth distraught and unhappy, others, like local singer-songwriter Barry Westerlund, look ahead optimistically.

"Time is a gift. Definitely. Everyday is a gift," Westerlund says. "You don't have any guarantees. Every morning [that] you wake up, and you start [your] day, no matter what you're doing, it's a gift. And to be able to play music along with that, even more so. It makes life a lot more fun. It's worth getting up in the morning for."

For the past little while, Westerlund had been getting up in the morning to work on his latest CD, entitled *Every Five Minutes*, which is a masterfully recorded compilation of songs with honest, emotionally driven lyrics. The tracks jump through all eras of musical history: from rock to country to blues to everything else under the sun.

Upon hearing Barry's music, one wastes no time in asking how the man behind the guitar got his musical start. And Barry wastes no time in obliging.

"I've always had a guitar around," Westerlund explains. "My dad was musical; my mother was as well. But my musical pursuits weren't really encouraged. My older brother was probably the biggest influence on me, as far as pursuing music. He was a big encourager, as well as my best friend."

Living in small-town Alberta for most



of his life, Westerlund moved out on his own at 17 and came to Edmonton. That was in '86.

"That move affected my music in the foundations. It gave me a foundation in myself, because at the time I was here on my own, I was here to graduate, to finish high school, and basically conquer the world," Westerlund relates. "And I found out quickly that you can't conquer planets unless you have a job, and I've basically adopted a very solid work ethic out of that. It's given me a very simple, very direct approach to my music."

According to Westerlund, there often come times when re-evaluating one's aspirations is the best course of

action one can take.

"[When] I recorded the album it was a time in my life where I was redefining my goals," Westerlund says. "So 'Every Five Minutes' is a song about sitting there and re-analyzing what's going on in your life, in the world, what's happening at that point and what you're going to do from that point on."

And what is he going to do from this point on?

"I think collaborations are the next step," Westerlund says. "I've played a lot on my own, and I've enjoyed it. There's a lot of comfort there. But I think to challenge myself I have to get involved with other artists and see what we can come up with as well."

Better than Microsoft Paint

Okami

Playstation 2
Developed by Clover
Published by Capcom
ESRB T for Teen
On Sale Now

REID BUCKMASTER
Arts & Entertainment Writer

Face it: the Playstation 2 is dead and buried. Ok, well, maybe not entirely, but the PS2 has definitely entered its swan song era—which is the greatest part of any ending. Because Sony wants us to remember how much we loved their first far-and-away success story in gaming, the PS2 is having some of its most memorable titles see it out. If only one title could do the honours, I'd want it to be *Okami*.

At the beginning of *Okami*, you'll learn how to play as a Goddess wolf and you'll also find out that 100 years ago, you were implicated in a battle against a meanie named Orochi that had shattered the peace in Nippon. Orochi was defeated, your presence was no longer needed and you became little more than legend. As usual in these sorts of things, the bad-guy-from-before has returned and is looking to see through what he started last time he popped up: to encompass all of Nippon in his evil energy. Not wanting to miss your cue, you are reanimated, as your spirit has been preserved in the form of a wolf statue.



Okami, at the core, is very similar to the *Legend of Zelda* series. This means that the majority of the time you spend in *Okami*'s universe you'll be interacting with hundreds of characters, exploring massive amounts of terrain and performing tasks ranging from helping with the gardening to saving the entire island. The result of all this business is a very layered game.

But the absolute stand-out aspect of this title is its visuals. Everything is designed to look like a Japanese watercolour. The bright colours outlined thick with black "paint" make the game look like a living canvas, and make it seem that much more like you're playing through the Japanese legend. The main drive of *Okami* is to bring life back to a deadened land and this artistic style is the fit for the job.

The developers use this painted backdrop to their advantage. By holding down R1, the world is drained of colour and only the black lines of the painting will remain. A brush will

swoop in from off screen, and by holding down the X button and gliding the brush around with the analogues, you'll be able to grow trees, slice enemies in half, paint bombs into existence, conjure up lily pads to jump on and bridges to cross—any number of things.

Every angle of this title has been treated with the utmost in terms of polish and respect. Characters exist plausibly in the game world, and they exist in relation to each other and you. The trees and flowers in any given area can be altered and will change throughout the course of the game. Animals can be fed and befriended. The gameplay is fun, and the puzzles are tough but satisfying. Having a run through the countryside is an experience in itself just to hear the fluted orchestral soundtrack.

Okami is humble and beautiful. If any title could make the claim that video games can be regarded as art, this one is it. Clover has a classic on its hands, no bones about it.