ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

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SECTION C

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Bankruptcy Cloud Threatens E. St. Louis

By Patrick E. Gauen
and H.J. Jackson
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Underfinanced by $2 million a year, protected by police officers sometimes using their own cars, littered with uncollected trash, hounded by creditors owed millions, East St. Louis is near financial calamity.

Rumors of impending bankruptcy have been fueled by nearly daily revelations recently of unpaid insurance premiums, complicated schemes to get the trash picked up and ill-equipped police.

City officials say they are managing to get by, waiting for partial financial salvation from a plan for the redevelopment of the riverfront; that project would cost nearly $500 million.

But there is the matter of a judgment worth more than $4 million. That amount was awarded to a man who had been arrested on a minor traffic charge, jailed and beaten by a violent cellmate until he suffered brain damage.

Its appeals exhausted, East St. Louis is "completely defenseless" against the claim, said Clyde L. Kuehn, the former St. Clair County state's attorney who represented the victim, Walter DeBow, and his wife.

Kuehn lacks only a simple court order that he says would be no problem to get. Then he could begin seizing city assets — police cars, fire engines, desks and even City Hall itself.

"The most extraordinary thing we could do would be to go to every known city bank account and put a nut on it," Kuehn said in an interview last week. But he added, "It would be the last thing we'd try to do."

Still Kuehn said, that action would not be impossible if plans to refinance existing bonds to generate a settlement fell through.



Odell Mitchell Jr./Post-Dispatch

Trash lying in piles recently near a row of abandoned houses at 21st and Lynch streets in East St. Louis.

Kuehn said his client probably would fare relatively well in the event of a bankruptcy in East St. Louis.

"I'm sure a man with the kind of injuries he suffered would be looked upon favorably as a creditor," he said.

The word bankruptcy comes up in such conversations, but many officials say they do not know if a city can go bankrupt — or what would happen if one did.

"It rarely happens, but it can; there is a statutory provision for it," said Kenneth Meyers, U.S. bankruptcy judge for the Southern District of Illinois. His office is in East St. Louis.

He said the law on municipal bankruptcy resembles the more familiar Chapter 11 reorganization bankruptcy, which is used frequently by businesses to escape overwhelming debt.

But the law varies in at least one major way, Meyers said. It does not provide for a separate trustee to take over a city's affairs.

"The municipality comes up with a plan for repayment of debts, and if that is agreeable to the judge, it is

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REVIEWS

An Arresting Evening With Sting

Rock

By Louise King

By now even those fans still hanging onto the last hope of a Police reunion must surely concede that Sting is serious about his musical identity apart from his former rock band. The talented singer and songwriter struck out on his own several years ago to dip into the pool of musical experiences previously untouched by the Police. Based on his performance Friday night at the Fox Theatre, Sting is in no danger of finding the well run dry any time soon.

Touring behind his second "solo" album, "Nothing Like The Sun," and backed by session players even more versatile than those he brought on the road with him two years ago, Sting continues to improve as an all-around entertainer. He not only writes intelligently and sings expressively, but he puts a little more of his personality into every show. That was no more evident than when the singer-turned-movie star acted out the lyrics to a whimsical tale called "Englishman In New York."

On the other hand, the new album's more sobering, introspective moods were equally enticing; one in particular could have been the highlight of the show had it not been for its unfortunate placement in the set. The message behind the hauntingly beautiful "They Dance Alone (Gueca Solo)" — a song about the practice of Chilean women dancing with the photographs of their missing relatives as a symbolic protest against political imprisonment — was lost on many returning late from intermission. Still, the tune was a memorable one, and with the addition of an upbeat ending to soften the lyrical sadness, a popular one as well.

On the whole, the concert was a masterful arrangement of moods, from the seductively subtle "Sister Moon" to the rock-intensive cover of the Jimi Hendrix tune, "Little Wing." The latter song, capped by a daring guitar solo, was such a departure from the show's reggae, jazz and Latin overtones, the audience seemed stunned, unable to rise from its chairs.

For most of the evening, however, the audience had no difficulty expressing appreciation for the music by dancing, clapping and singing along to songs like "Roxanne" and "Message In A Bottle." In fact, in almost every case it was the older material — "King of Pain" and "Don't Stand (So Close To Me)," for example — that emerged the biggest crowd pleasers.



Sting
Building upon his bridges

It's obvious that Sting's not burning any of his bridges; he's merely building upon them.

Guitarist Holmquist Performs At The Ethical Society

Classical Music

By James Wierzbicki
Post-Dispatch Music Critic

Guitarist John Holmquist, recitalist at the Ethical Society over the weekend, played on Friday evening as though he were distracted.

It's very likely he *was* distracted. His single encore was a piece of his own titled "Misha's Lullaby"; it had been written some time ago for friends, but on this occasion it was dedicated to his daughter, born — he told the audience — just three days before.

Had Holmquist not passed on that bit of information, it would be less easy to forgive the generally noncommittal phrasing and sometimes labored execution that characterized his performance.

The only serious breakdown occurred in the second movement fugue of his transcription of Bach's violin sonata in A Minor; it was a moment of hesitation followed by stumbling and groping, the sort of thing that causes hearts to stop in the chests of empathic listeners.

There were many instances, however, in which the music seemed to be on the verge of derailment. There is a big difference between playing that is secure and playing that is merely accurate; Holmquist has a reputation for virtuosity, but his playing on Friday evening — for whatever reasons — fell into the latter category.

Holmquist's phrasing was more bothersome than his technical flaws (but not nearly so bothersome as the guy in the back row who seemed to time his loud, unmuted sneezes to coincide precisely with the recital's quietest passages).

Along with the Bach transcription, the program included a "Suite in Popular Style" by Minneapolis composer James Maguire, an "Elegy" by the 19th-century Hungarian composer J.K. Mertz, a set of Preludes by the Greek-Armenian composer Gilbert Biberian and a pair of dance-flavored pieces by the Argentine composer Jorge Morel. All of them deserved animated treatment, especially the Maguire and Morel offerings. But they came across as flat, two-dimensional, or at least more so than they should have been.

Holmquist's recitals Friday and Saturday evening at the Ethical Society were sponsored by the St. Louis Classical Guitar Society. At 3 p.m. Sunday, at the Center of Contemporary Arts in University City, Holmquist will assist the St. Louis Chamber Chorus in a program of music for guitar and voices.

Laine Shines In Powell Concert After Dazzling Warm-up Act

Pops

By John Burnes

loose and scatted a duet with her husband (he was on sax). In a medley of Hoagy Carmichael songs, she sang with emotional depth, and the encore

McNary Bl
Over Free

By Margaret Gillerman
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

County Executive Gene McNary says a federal judge has made "highly improper" remarks about a suit regarding the metropolitan Board of Freeholders.

McNary was referring to comments this month by U.S. District Judge Scott O. Wright, chief judge for the federal court of western Missouri.

The judge has yet to rule in the suit. But Wright has left little doubt that he will rule that the board was unconstitutionally appointed.

The suit was filed by state Rep. Robert J. Quinn Jr., D-Ferguson, and Patricia J. Kampsen.

In a hearing Feb. 17, Wright said it was "unbelievable" that the Board of Freeholders, early on, had not filed suit on its own to clear up any potential legal questions about its selection.

"I can't believe you didn't do that," Wright said. "It ought to have been resolved before you spent taxpayers' money."

Wright said the Board of Freeholders and its lawyers should congratulate those who raised the constitutional question by filing the suit. The board plans to appeal any ruling that it should dissolve.

At issue in the suit is whether property ownership can be made a prerequisite for membership on the board. The requirements for the board are contained in the Missouri Constitution, but the plaintiffs say that violates the U.S. Constitution.

McNary, a defendant in the suit, said he found the judge's "extra-judicial remarks ... highly improper." McNary made his criticism Thursday

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Who Else Has The 4 Top

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