

Living

Gay former umpire
Dave Pallone wants
his job back.
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Pop Rocker Is No Trend

Juliana Hatfield's voice almost disappears on the telephone. She is quiet, almost shy, when it comes to discussing her musical career. The pop rocker is building a reputation as a forceful singer-songwriter.

"I know that I am soft-spoken, but music is where I get to be aggressive," Miss Hatfield said on the road from Hartford, Conn. "Sometimes I can be real loud and obnoxious."

Miss Hatfield, who once said interviews "make me feel dirty," wasn't obnoxious this time around. But she did come across loud and clear when the discussion turned to the so-called new breed of women in rock. Those who are young, marketable and talented. Alanis Morissette, the Breeders and Liz Phair come to mind.

"It doesn't please me to think that chicks are a trend," Miss Hatfield said, her tone raising a few decibels. "It depresses me in the fact that people are making an issue of it. I'll be happy when gender isn't mentioned. Just like it's not mentioned with Green Day and Nirvana, male music."

Miss Hatfield just wants to make music, period. Being a woman isn't something she thinks should matter to critics, who often rub her the wrong way with reviews of her work, including her new CD, "Only Everything" (Mammoth).

Miss Hatfield will bring that CD to life Saturday at the Ranch Bowl. Tickets for the all-ages concert, which starts at 9 p.m., are \$9.75 in advance and \$11.75 the day of the show.

In a recent interview with Huh magazine, Miss Hatfield lashed out at her critics: "(One reviewer's) statement was (that) I'm trying to be a man. I'm denying my femaleness. I'm not talking about womanhood in my songs, supposedly, and that's wrong. ... I'm mad because they think a woman should have a certain attitude."

The only attitude Miss Hatfield seems to carry is one of positive energy, even in the most trying situations. Listen to her hit "Universal Heartbeat," which sounds as if it's from the Matthew Sweet school of songwriting. It's a jumpy, guitar-driven melody carrying some downright uphappy lyrics.

The song starts with a driving drum solo and kicks into a steadily rising melody.

"Beauty can be sad, you're proof of that/When the damage is done, you're damaged goods/That's not to say it's not OK. I wouldn't have it any other way/A heart that hurts is a heart that works."

Ouch.

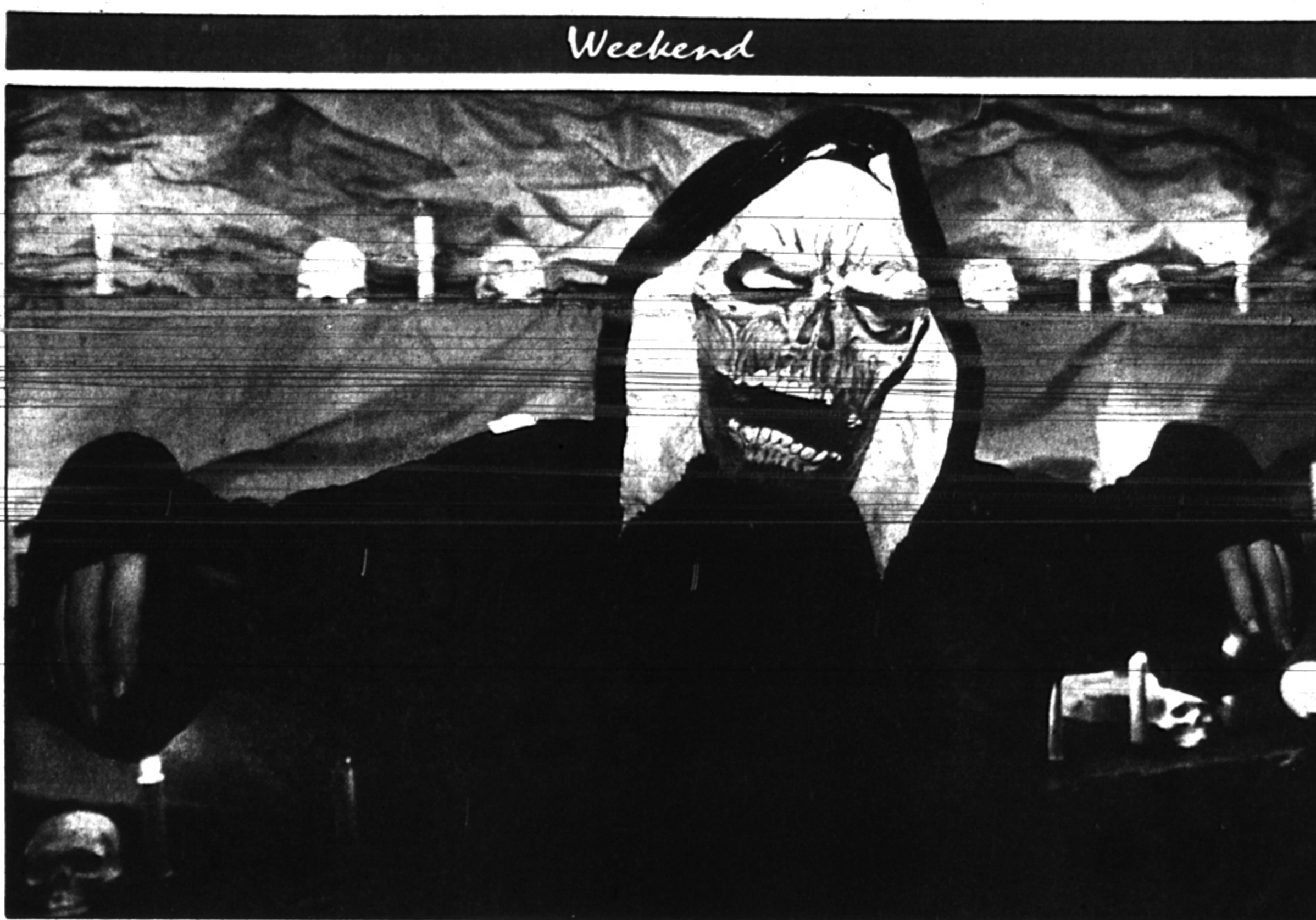
"The opening was quite by accident," said Miss Hatfield, a 28-year-old Massachusetts native. "At first it was boring, then I said, 'Let's have a Keith Moon-style drum solo.' You never hear a drum solo at the beginning of a song. But it's a depressing song with happy music and dark lyrics. It's a weird combination."

A combination that works, just like most of the songs from her new album and her two previous releases, "Hey Babe" and "Become What You Are."

Her forte is making subtle statements about the human condition, covering things like battles with eating disorders, self-mutilation and low self-esteem.

"I really don't have a conscious process to making music," Miss Hatfield said. "I'm not a real political type of artist. I'm more into underground, subversive politics. I don't want to be so obnoxious about it."

IF YOU THINK SUNDAY is a weak night in Omaha, think again. Halloween will come a few days early when Marilyn Manson (who happens to be a guy) hits the Ranch Bowl this Sunday night. Manson formerly opened for Nine Inch Nails. His new EP, "Smells Like Children," is a study in gothic musicology. Manson will be joined by psycho-driven bandmates Twiggy Ramirez, Daisy Berkowitz, Madonna Wayne Gacy and Ginger Fish. Tickets for the all-ages concert, which opens with Clutch at 9 p.m., are \$7 in advance and \$13 the day of the show. ... Johnny Ray Gomez and his band will be the featured entertainment at the Sunday night singles dances in the New Tower Inn's Lady Leopard Lounge.



TEMPLE OF DOOM: An Indiana Jones theme, complete with rolling boulders and masked characters, keeps visitors on their toes at the Stone Castle of Terror, 885 S. 72nd St.

Weekend

Drop In, If You Dare

Haunts' Tricks Are Treat

BY ROBERT NELSON
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Creating a great haunted house isn't about money or technology or who has the biggest cauldron of eyeball soup. It's about people — really, really twisted people. In that category, Omaha's top haunted houses all get a five-star straight jacket.

Who are these loonies? Mostly, they're volunteers who have been slaving for months building gallows and electric chairs and mausoleums for charity. Now it's time to vent.

Following is a list of haunted houses in Omaha and the Midlands. Included are reviews of several of Omaha's most elaborate haunts.

A few tips for those who dare: The best companions are young kids who aren't your children. You get the joy of watching someone get genuinely terrorized without having to deal with the inevitable nightmares.

The worst companions probably are groups of teen-age boys, who tend to taunt the spooks and comment on each fright with more volume than humor.

Several haunted house operators suggested that visitors come on weekend nights. As one manager said, "the place really gets rockin' when you get lots of people in there being scared."

STONE CASTLE OF TERROR. The ghouls here are genuinely scary, probably a product of quality actors from the Omaha Community Playhouse. One ghoul during a recent visit made an 8-year-old child scream: "I want to leave! I want to leave!" which is a great compliment to the organizers. An Indiana Jones theme also elevates the Stone Castle above the cliché of mad doctors-mad killers-mad zombies, etc. Best scare: The massive rolling boulder, a dead-ringer for the one in the movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark."



IN FOR SURPRISES: Ray Jones, 6, grabs the hand of his father, Walter Jones, as the evil pirate lunges toward them at the Stone Castle of Terror.

Address: 885 S. 72nd St., across from Nebraska Furniture Mart.
Hours: 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays; 6:30 p.m. to midnight Fridays and Saturdays through Oct. 31.
Admission: \$7. Coupons available from the Thrifty Nickel shopper and the playhouse box office.
Information: 392-1119.
Sponsor: Omaha Community Playhouse.

THE FRIGHT ZONE: A cut above the rest in terms of virtual surreality, the funeral home and mausoleum are set design marvels with white marble, cellar-like lighting and that dank, catacomb kind of mustiness. Same with the cemetery and not-so-fun fun house. Fright Zone has a genuine kicker at the end, a \$10,000 device that looks like a very insane and energetic mass murderer being electrocuted. A few of the undead were slightly uninspired, but that probably goes with being undead. A must see, but definitely not for young children.

Address: 5335 S. 139th Plaza in Millard Plaza.
Hours: 6:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays; 6:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays through Oct. 31.
Admission: \$7.
Information: 894-2469.
Sponsor: Benefit for Special Olympics.

ALIEN HARVEST: The most improved of Omaha's houses. The production, in its second year, has magnified its shock value by squeezing patrons through a long, dark and meticulously booby-trapped maze. The "Alien" "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" "X-Files"-type scenes play well in the eerie Gothic expanse of the old Burlington Station. Some great amoral alien scientists (humans are their lab mice) and possibly the most hideously cute of all haunted house characters. Snickers the Disappearing Alien. There's a certain White Zombie psycho-hi-pness to the show, so it's probably the most Generation X-savvy of the

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Thrills Make Fear Fun

BY ROBERT NELSON
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

What an odd concept: Paying people to scare you. But every October, haunted houses come to life in the Midlands. And at the best of them, people scream bloody murder. Then they laugh and praise the house for being "a good scare."

But what is "a good scare?" Clinical psychologist Debra Hope said it's something scary you know isn't life-threatening.

In other words, it's something that trips your instinctual fight-or-flight mechanism before you can realize you don't need to fight or flee.

In still other words, it's a rush. "Fear shows up pretty early in evolution," said Ms. Hope, a psychology professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln who specializes in the treatment of phobias and anxiety. "When someone goes 'boo,' it kicks in the adrenaline, and it's pretty obvious some people really enjoy that surge of adrenaline."

Fear is a response to a potentially dangerous situation. The body responds to danger by preparing itself for an intense expenditure of energy — fighting or running.

Many of our fears have been passed down from eons of experience, she said. To understand some of them, you must think like a cave dweller.

Darkness probably triggers the fear response because it limits our ability to perceive danger in our surroundings, she said. You can't see the predator in the woods.

Certain colors trigger a response, too. Red, for example, is the color of fresh blood.

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DARK AND SERIOUS: Ralph Fiennes and Angela Bassett find themselves caught in a maze of betrayal and murder in "Strange Days."

Movie Review

'Strange Days' Thrills Viewers With Inventive, Apocalyptic Tale

BY JIM MINGE
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Brutal. Thrilling. Demented. Visionary. Erotic.

Say hello to "Strange Days," a futuristic action movie that uses the premise of virtual reality in an aggressive — and chilling — new arena.

This apocalyptic film will be championed by those who get stoked on the videos of such hard-core rock bands as Nine Inch Nails and White Zombie. If you liked "Natural Born Killers" and "Pulp Fiction," then get in line. On the other hand, "Strange Days" will make Bob Dole's skin crawl.

It's New Year's Eve 1999, and Los Angeles is preparing for this century's biggest bash. Guess what? There's a lot

of crime: Riots, burning cars, thugs and militaristic police are commonplace on the streets.

The camera focuses on Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes), an ex-cop who deals in illegal virtual-reality discs — called "clips" — that let viewers look at sexual and violent fragments of people's lives.

When a viewer plays a clip, using a device wired directly to the cerebral cortex, he experiences a temporary illusion of being the person in the clip, doing whatever he or she was doing while being recorded: sex, murder, etc.

Nero calls himself the "Santa Claus of the subconscious." He peddles the clips like drugs. He even lets potential customers sample before buying.

Director Kathryn Bigelow has picked up where other virtual-reality-based films such as "Johnny Mnemonic" and "Virtuality" left off. The virtual-reality segments are unsettling, blunt, shocking and loud, and they might make you dizzy.

But the effect is fantastically inventive. "Strange Days" becomes stranger when a prostitute is murdered. Nero fears that Faith, his ex-girlfriend (Juliette Lewis, as fierce as she was in "Natural Born Killers"), will be next.

Did I mention that a massively popular rap artist named Jerico One recently has been murdered, too, and that Los Angeles is up in arms about it? That gives the film its political and race-relations angles, reminiscent of real-life Rodney King and controversial rapper Ice-T.

Tension fills the air in this movie. Angela Bassett ("What's Love Got to Do With It?") turns in a choice performance as Mace, a single mother who works as a security agent and chauffeur. She

'Letter' Music Sets Mood

BY JIM MINGE
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Omaha native Peter Buffett said that when he composed the opening music to the new movie "The Scarlet Letter," he was trying to put moviegoers in an atmospheric state of mind.

"It's dark and kind of scary — more of a mood setter," he said. "At the beginning you aren't sure, I don't think, what the movie is about or where you are, which is what was intended."

Buffett teamed with Oscar-winning composer John Barry to create the score for the movie, which is based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1850 novel of the same title.

Demi Moore stars in the film as Hester Prynne, a headstrong young woman who is condemned by her community as an adulteress and forced to wear a red letter A on her clothing as a brand of her sin. Gary Oldman plays Arthur Dimmesdale, the young minister who has the affair with Hester.

Buffett — who owns a Milwaukee-based commercial music-production company — and Barry have worked together before. The two contributed music to Kevin Costner's "Dances With Wolves." Barry won an Academy Award for best original score. On "The Scarlet Letter," the two combined their efforts.

"He is such a master of the orchestral element of the score, and he relied on me to bring in colors that the orchestra couldn't do," Buffett said from his Milwaukee office. "There's this element in the film — because it takes place in colonial America — that has an Indian element to it."

The two put the score together at the famed Abbey Road Studios in London.

"Like for any Beatles fan, to go there was great, and the studio that they worked in is still just as it was, which is fantastic," Buffett said. "You go in there and you're immediately hit with a blast of history."

"And the studio, regardless, is fantastic. They have this phenomenal microphone collection, really probably the best in the world."

About 90 musicians gathered to perform Barry and Buffett's work as scenes from the movie ran on a large screen that was brought into the massive studio.

"To be in a room the size of a small building and watch 90 pieces play to this wonderful film is amazing," Buffett said. "You never get that again. You can capture a lot of the orchestra, but it's never quite like being there."

So Buffett enjoyed the movie?

"Obviously it's hard for me to be totally objective at this point. But from the very first, I was pleasantly surprised," he said.

"Demi Moore I've always thought of as more of a pop actress, but I think she does a great job in it. And Gary Oldman is great. And Robert Duvall is incredible. I wouldn't be surprised if he won an Academy Award."

Buffett, son of Omaha investor Warren Buffett, said he will be in Omaha Nov. 19 to perform at the grand opening of the Rose Blumkin Performing Arts Center, new home of the Omaha Theater Company for Young People.

A 19-piece band will accompany Buffett. He will play selections from his four New Age-flavored albums, as well as selections from his work on "500 Nations," a CBS miniseries on American Indians.

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Buffett