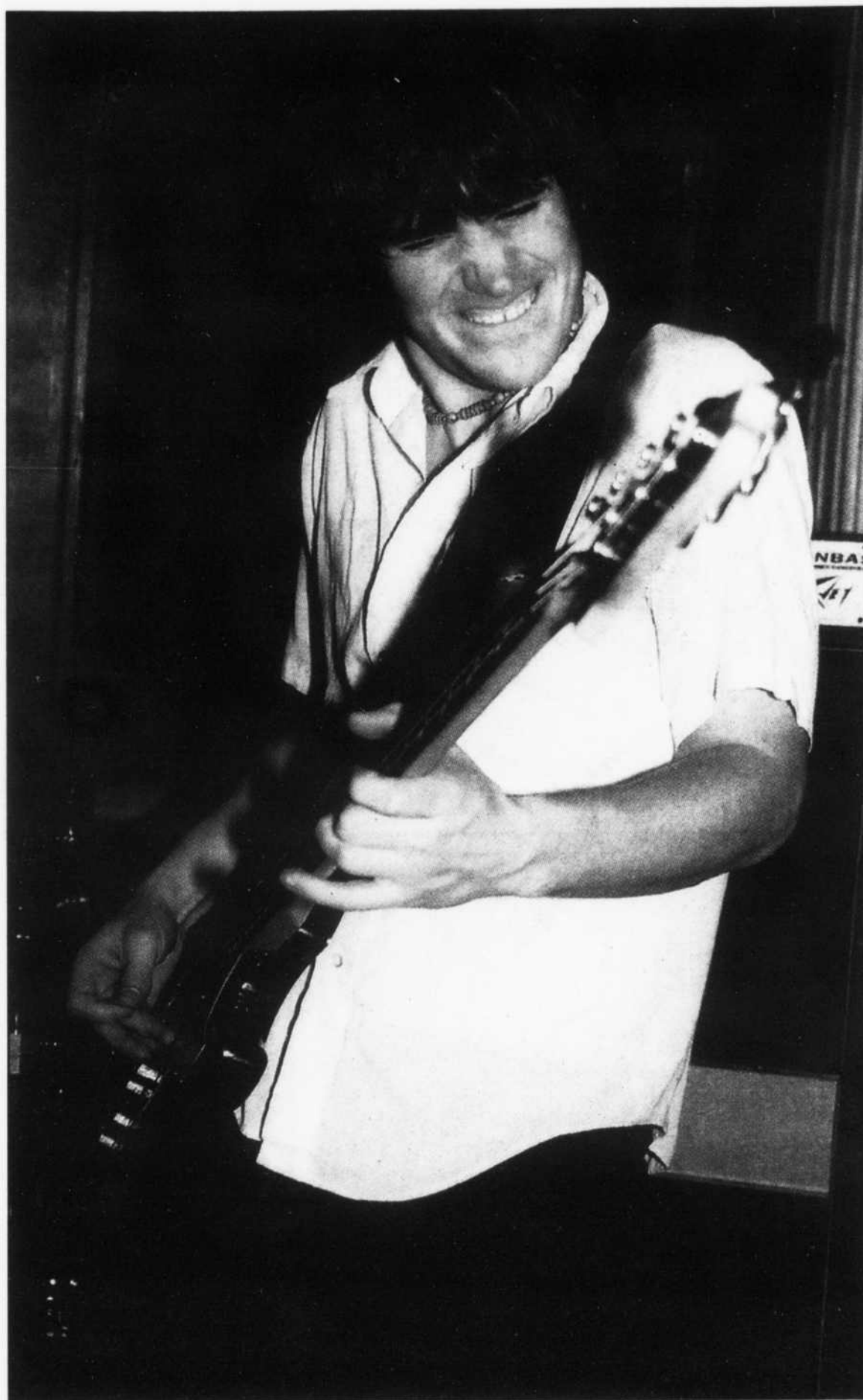


[flash]

Oct. 9, 2003



Dance up to the Loft

Nashville band of 6 tells tales
of road hijinks, page 6

FOR THE 'BORO'S
BEST AWARDS



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[flash] is the weekly entertainment tabloid produced by *Sidelines*, MTSU's editorially independent student newspaper. *Sidelines* is published each Thursday and seeks to highlight local arts and entertainment. For information regarding [flash], call (615) 898-2917. To apply to work for [flash], e-mail us at slflash@mtsu.edu or apply in the James Union Building, Room 310.

the 'boro's best 2003 ballot

★ Please nominate as few national chains as possible ★

MUSIC

Best Murfreesboro band

Best Murfreesboro musician

Best place to hear live music

Best place to play live music

Food and drink continued

Best service (restaurant)

Best service (bar)

Best drunk/stoned food

Best grab-and-go lunch place

FOOD & DRINK

Bar with the best bartenders

Best cup of coffee

Best mixed drinks

Best happy hour

Best beer

Best atmosphere (restaurant)

Best atmosphere (bar)

Best breakfast

Best Mexican food

Best oriental food

Best sit-down meal in town

ART & ENTERTAINMENT

Best place to spend a Friday night

Best place to spend a Saturday night

Best place to spend a weeknight

Best place to pick up a date

Best place to take your date

Best place to cheat on your date

Best place to dance

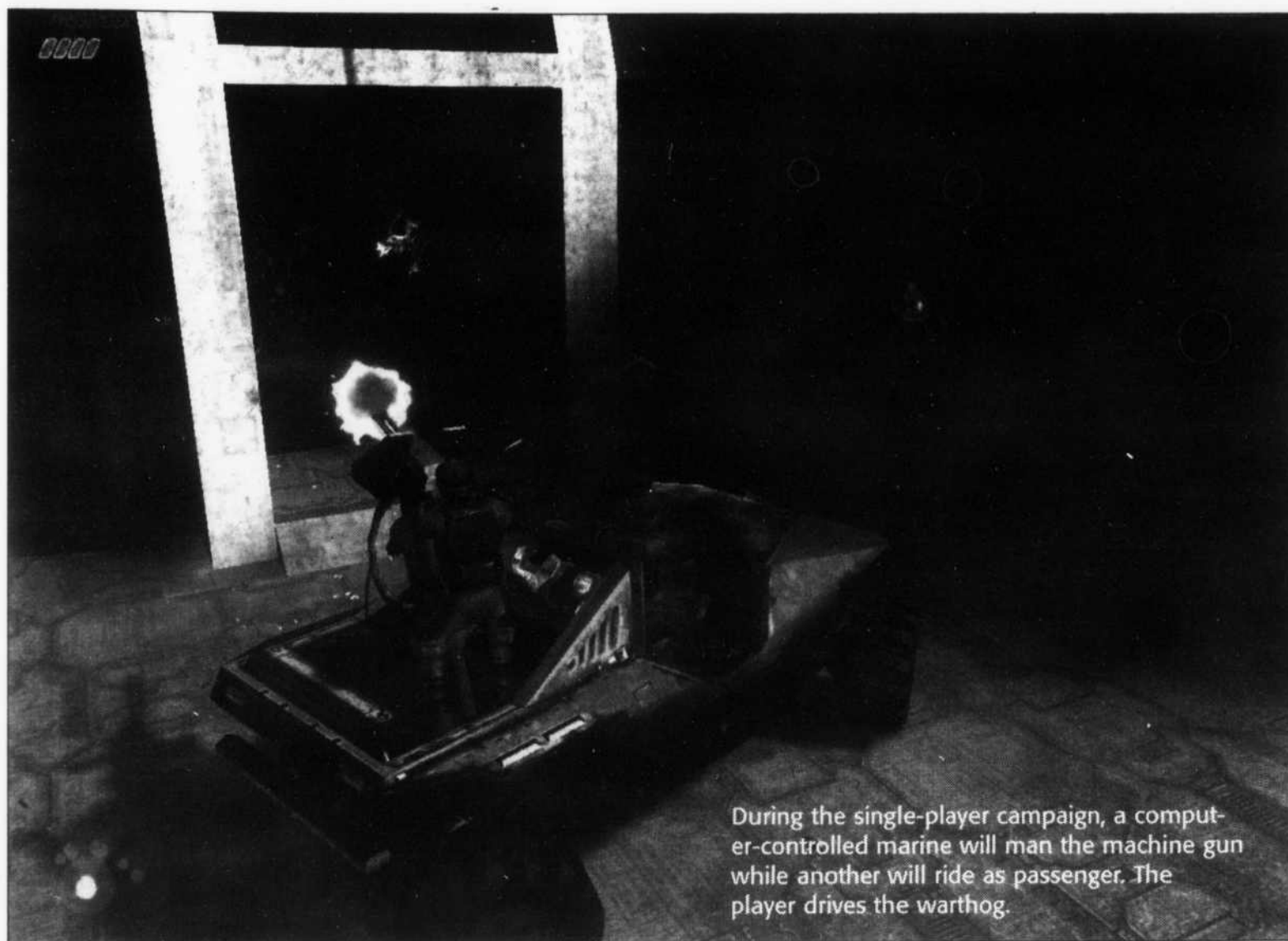
Best place to rent videos

Best place to experience local culture

Best place to see local art

Best place to sit, chill out and read

You can submit your ballot to [flash] several ways. Drop it off at the *Sidelines* office in the James Union Building, Room 310. Mail it to Sidelines at 1301 E. Main St. MTSU Box 8, Murfreesboro, TN 37132. Fax it to (615) 904.8193. Download the ballot online at www.mtsusidelines.com. Just whatever you do, send in your ballot. Call (615) 898.2917 if you have any questions.



During the single-player campaign, a computer-controlled marine will man the machine gun while another will ride as passenger. The player drives the warthog.

'Halo' finds a home on the PC

By Nick Fowler

Halo: Combat Evolved is finally available for play on the PC – the platform for which it was originally developed.

I've been waiting to play this game on a PC for four years. When I was a freshman, *Halo's* developer, Bungie Studios, released a few promotional videos of the game. Naturally, I was eager to play the game as soon as possible. Then, Microsoft announced its Xbox video game console and bought Bungie so it could have what was the most talked-about game in development by any studio at the time.

Bungie retooled the game for the Xbox. Now, two years after the Xbox's release, *Halo* has been untooled for the PC by Gearbox Software.

That's right, untooled, because first-person shooters are better with a mouse and keyboard. While Bungie designed a great control scheme to work with the Xbox controller, a first-person shooter with a controller and not a mouse and keyboard is bastardization. Deep down in your heart you know it. With the release of *Halo* for PC, it is confirmed.

'Halo: Combat Evolved'

☆☆☆1/2
(out of four stars)
Bungie Studios
Released Sept. 30

Headshots come easier, now, and you can now turn around about 10 times as fast.

The game is further untooled by having a proper multi-player setup. No more split screens for me, no more hauling television sets to friends' apartments to string together four Xboxes just to get some 16 player action.

Internet and LAN play is available for up to 16 players. A few new maps were thrown in as well. Also added to multi-player is the ability to fly the Banshee, formerly only available in the single player campaign. Two weapons were added, including a flamethrower and a plasma rod gun.

However, while porting *Halo* to the PC, Gearbox decided that cooperative play in the single-player campaign was too much of a challenge. That sucks a considerable amount.

The single-player campaign is among the best in any first-person shooter ever. The weapons look and sound great. The physics are great. The combat and level design are better than anything else. The enemies act smarter than enemies in just about any first-person shooter out there.

The graphics still look good, even though they are two years old. The use of specular highlighting on just about every surface makes everything look shiny and clean.

The game takes quite a machine to run smoothly. I played the game on a Pentium 4 1.8 GHz processor with a GeForce 4 video card. With all settings maxed, I was only able to play at 800x600. Still, the game still looks better than the Xbox version at that resolution.

The game is a must-have for any PC gamer. If *Halo* had come out two years ago, it would have been perfect. Now, it gets 3 1/2 out of four stars. ★



Photo provided by Sean McConnell

Local crooner Sean McConnell has plans to record his third studio album later this year. He performs tomorrow night at Liquid Smoke.

The 'Faces' of Sean McConnell

By Melissa Coker

"All you've got to do is hang out with me or break my heart and it becomes a song," joked sophomore singer-songwriter Sean McConnell to his attentive audience last Wednesday night at the Square's Liquid Smoke.

Don't be fooled by his (somewhat) average appearance. Lurking beneath the medium-length brown hair, glasses and brown-eyed surface is a spirited, soaring voice that's anything but typical.

"I don't see myself as any different when I'm performing," he said. "But a lot of people tell me I am because, offstage in conversation, I'm always kidding around or the loudmouth. Once I get in front of the audience, I'll be deep and emotional in trying to convey my thoughts. It's not so much a different personality as it is being in a musical zone."

Adding fuel to the fire of his two-hour Smoke set was fellow student Will Cleveland, whose harmonica skills combined with McConnell's guitar work sent a collective double take coursing through the crowd. The two met at one of the Woodmore Cyber Café's Open Mic nights.

Also in the evening's lineup and worth mentioning was freshman Leslie Dudney, with whom McConnell performed in a high school talent competition as a result of his first place and her second place wins there. He didn't even find out she was here until a few short weeks ago.

Hailing originally from Massachusetts and then

See **McConnell**, 10

Punk rock and bad TV

The Lawrence Arms' Brendan Kelly spills the pop culture beans

By Lindsey Turner

Chicago has labored over the past few years and given birth to a lot of bands that question authority and the world around them with the morbid, alienated desperation of an addled, latchkey kid.

The Lawrence Arms is among the pick of Chicago's proverbial musical litter. They play gritty, honest punk rock and sing about environmentalism, education, politics and Martha Plimpton. OK, so Martha only got that one song, but social and political issues flood the rest of the musical landscape in Lawrence Arms-land.

And, while a Google search might tell you that the band peddles straight up "midwestern beer belly despair rock," bassist/part-time vocalist Brendan Kelly speaks (well, types) as eloquently as any well-read artist with a head full of purpose and sobriety. Perhaps punk rockers aren't as dim (and trashed) as they would have you believe.

With the Sept. 23 release of their latest full-length album, *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, the band is set to conquer the road yet again for the next few months. They'll make a stop tomorrow at The Muse



Photo courtesy of Fat Wreck Chords

Brendan Kelly, Neil Hennessey and Chris McCaughan will kick off their tour this weekend in support of their latest album *The Greatest Story Ever Told*.

in Nashville at 7 p.m. for a mere \$7.

From his home in Chicago, on his wife's computer, Kelly was kind enough to answer some silly e-mail questions over the weekend from a fumbling college journalist.

Q: Congratulations on the new album and your recent marriage. It sounds like you have a lot going on right now, so the important question is — how much fun are you having?

A: This has been one of the best years in recent memory. We've all had a great time getting this record together, from the writing to the recording, to the touring — it's just been fun and exciting. Obviously, getting married is exciting, and the actual big day was great. Things are extremely fun right

Q: You guys get pretty political in your songs. What are a few of the biggest political or social issues the band is passionate about?

A: Hmmm ... right now I think that our foreign policy and lack of diplomacy is the most important issue facing America. I also have pretty strong feelings about unregulated corporations and the globalization of American towns, workers rights, homelessness and cops.

Q: On your Web site, you say you're influenced by leftist literature. Let me pick your brain a little: Are we talking Chomsky, Marx, Guevara?

A: Well, political theory is good, but it's really kind of an

See **Arms**, 10

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The Weiners are back in town



Photo by Whoever

In all their quirky glory, the lads of Feable Weiner will return to Murfreesboro this weekend to celebrate the upcoming re-release *Dear Hot Chick* on Doghouse Records.

Feable Weiner re-releases 'Dear Hot Chick'

By Leslie Carol Boehms

Murfreesboro has been known to spawn some interesting musical concoctions. This little town is, after all, home to a Mecca of extraordinary objects – the World's Largest Cedar Bucket, for instance.

But one radical musical mayhem of a band has made it past their somewhat goofy hijinks and into a nationwide onset of Weinerdom. It's now time for the Return of the Weiners.

Feable Weiner will be returning to the area this weekend for two – count that, two – album release shows. Their signing to Doghouse Records garnered them the chance to re-release their album, *Dear Hot Chick*. And this time, you can count on a few extra surprises.

"The record is different from the Heinous Records version in that it is remixed and remastered and includes the addition of four new songs," said Feable Weiner front man Atom Anderson.

But diehard Weiners never fear: Doghouse even allowed the release to maintain its awe-inspiring Trapper Keeper packaging.

The first album release show will be held tomorrow night at the Boro Bar and Grill. Opening bands will be Fizzgig, The Carter Administration and Sunday Driver. Cover

charge is \$8 and includes a copy of the re-released *Dear Hot Chick*.

"We had to route our tour home because it just wouldn't be the same if we didn't release our CD with the scene that raised us," Anderson said. "There's absolutely no place like Murfreesboro for us!"

The second show will take place this Saturday at The Muse in Nashville. Opening bands for this show will be Pink Spiders, Waterproof Blond and Sunday Driver.

This show will admit all ages, thus catering to the high school crowd that drools a bit at the sight of the band on stage – like their recent experience in Tallahassee, Fla.

"The girls [in Tallahassee] were actually mobbing us in our tuxedos after the show," Anderson said. "It was no 'Hey, I want you to sign my FW poster' reaction. It was more like, 'I want to rip your clothes off right this instant' reaction."

For more ripping of clothes reactions, check out www.feableweiner.com or www.doghouse-records.com.

There, you can read up on the Feable Weiner tour journal, stalk the boys via a sundry collection of pictures and, of course, order the album, which will be released nationwide on Oct. 14. ♦

Tragic truth told on Wainwright's latest

By Joey Hood

Drug/sex induced self-loathing and earnest ass-kissing valentines to the societal masses dominate Rufus Wainwright's third studio release, *Want One*, the songwriter's syrupy paean to his own American tragedies.

Penned after Wainwright's Betty Ford bender, *Want One* poignantly illustrates the ghettoized plight of the "gay man" after incessant one-nighters and shifty morning-afters. It's Nancy Reagan's worst nightmare, set to music.

After his critically lauded operatic opuses (1998's sonic *Rufus Wainwright* and 2001's breathy, VH-1-ready *Poses*), Wainwright clumsily jabs for mainstream acceptance in these *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* times.

The singular hindrance behind Wainwright's doggedness is that, while *Queer Eye* chugs along with flamboyant aplomb, *Want One* congeals untapped homosexual edginess.

Want One's album cover features the boyish musician in full knight regalia, the précis of *Poses*' campy splendor and Wainwright's newfound reflective mode. Yes, in *Want One*'s case, you should judge an album by its cover.

Enter "Oh What a World," Wainwright's markedly melodramatic take on the heady issue of straight men "reading fashion magazines." That being said, the track's musicality polishes Wainwright's kooky sensibilities. In due time, "Oh What a World" turns into Bolero on steroids.

Want One sustains its recurring idleness with moody lyrics toasted over terse musicianship.

The cyclic irritability works itself into a fevered pitch with "Dinner at Eight," a lithely underscored hormone-fest that frames Wainwright's father/gay son relationship with scruffy neediness.

But, despite the track's austere neediness, Wainwright seems to be showing himself, sans his infamous wit.

In "Pretty Things," Wainwright reaches his happy medium. "I really don't want / To be John Lennon or Leonard Cohen," Wainwright croons. "I just want to be my dad / With a slight sprinkling of my mother." Ah.

On *Want One*, Rufus Wainwright has unquestionably come full circle. His transition(s) may seem awkward, but give him some time.

After all, he's certainly deserving of your attention. ★

Rufus Wainwright
'Want One'

DreamWorks Records
Released Sept. 23

★★ 1/2
(out of four stars)



Photos from www.lovetheft.com. Used with permission.

The Loft's bass guitarist Phil Banzhoff grits his teeth and rocks out during a show. The Nashville-based band has, for the past three years, performed more than 100 gigs each year. They've played at Riverstages, Buzzfest, and have opened up for Lynyrd Skynyrd.

Dance up

Nashville band of 6 tells tales of road hijinks

By Leslie Carol Boehms

The Loft gives one of the best live shows in the Middle Tennessee area.

That's really all there is to it. I mean sure, there's their energetic brand of toe-tapping songs, but really — what is music without the inspirational jive a band brings to a live performance?

"I guess [we're] soulful rock 'n' roll," said lead guitarist John Burke. "It's a high-energy live show — pretty heartfelt and honest. I think people connect with that."

Often likened to the Black Crowes, The Loft manages to infuse some Crowes musicality while still maintaining an originally composed musical overture. This six-piece definitely knows how to play some fancy rock 'n' roll music.

The Nashville-based band is composed of six members. There's Burke, John Banzhoff (lead vocals), Nathan Johnson (piano), Chris White (acoustic guitar), Phil Banzhoff (bass, backing vocals) and Jon Biggs (drums). They mastered this line-up in 2000 and have, in the past three years, managed to perform almost 100 gigs each year.

"We played Riverstages this year and it was great to be on a big stage playing with some of our favorite bands," Burke said. "Our bus was next to Gov't Mules' and we are all big fans of theirs ... that's all it takes to get us acting like little kids."

The Loft has also opened for artists such as Rich Robinson's group Hookah Brown and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

"Playing AmSouth opening for Lynyrd Skynyrd and again at Buzzfest was cool," Burke said. "And Exit/In with Col. Bruce Hampton — Exit/In was something we'd all dreamed about for years."

When you're playing around 100 shows a year, you can bet there are some pretty interesting stories to tell.

to The Loft

And boy, does this band have a barrel full of stories.

"We actually have a fresh bad story," Burke said. "We were on the way to Memphis last Friday and blew a tire on the bus. We thought we could make it on one tire if we kept the weight off that side of the bus. Well, it turns out we couldn't. So, we spent the night at a truck stop and threw a little party for ourselves."

But wait — the stories get better.

"Another story was getting to Tuscaloosa and there was some miscommunication about the details," Burke said. "We basically drove four hours to lose a lot of money and play for no one — but we did however get free booze all night. I guess both of those had happy endings, actually."

You could say, however, that the inception of The Loft happened far before 2000. Brothers John and Phil Banzhoff grew up with rock music in their veins — or at least a rock band name.

"Well, the two brothers John and Phil had a loft in their room and that's kind of where we started doing creative stuff — like rapping when we were really young, before we could even play any instruments, just a place to hang out, really," Chris White said.

Musical influences for The Loft range from Stevie Wonder to Motown and the Stones to newer bands like Lucero and Drive By Truckers and, of course, the Black Crowes. Locally, Burke cites friends in Common Ground as having "had a big effect on us, too."

And then you bring in the concept of songwriting. With a group of six, this could be a complicated matter. However, The Loft has quite the "family" mentality when dealing with this topic.

"[Songwriting] is definitely a group effort between the six of us — it wouldn't be the same if one were taken out of the equation," Burke said. "Everyone is capable of bringing a song to the band and I think that's pretty special."

As for their ever-elusive debut full-length album, well, it's still in the works.

"We kind of got caught up in a lot of business stuff for a while and put things on hold we shouldn't have," Burke said. "I think we just decided it was best to get an album out to people that really represented us and good things would come if people just had access to the music."

So, the day after Christmas, the band embarks on a two-week recording retreat of sorts at Omnisound studios in Nashville — finally completing something they've had in the works for a couple of years now.

The Loft is one of the hardest working big-time local bands I've ever known. Their willingness to perform on an almost constant basis truly shows their commitment to the music they're making.

Their immense fan base across the Southeast is a tribute to all of the hard work this band has endured.

With that, I leave you with a band whose music is tumultuous, spirited and quintessentially rock 'n' roll.

For more information on The Loft, check out their Web site at www.lovetheft.com. There, you'll find show dates, free live music tracks and tons of pictures. ★



(Top) Nathan Johnson watches his fellow Loft members during a show.

(Middle) Chris White, Phil Banzhoff, John Banzhoff, John Burke, John Biggs and Johnson are The Loft.

(Bottom) Biggs provides rhythm for the band.

Getting down on The Farm

Summertown settlement gears up for annual Unity Celebration

By Brittany Gearheart

As fall emerges with subtle breezes and transforming trees, we're led into a time of reflection.

Who are we, what do we want and what's going on in the world around us? At this weekend's Unity Fall Celebration, Full Moon on the Farm, in Summertown, Tenn., there'll be a chance to embrace ourselves with education correlated with art and dance to appreciate who we are and what we can do for our world.

Life is a central part of the Farm community. The Unity Celebration enforces this concept with the theme "Collective Creativity," which is based on taking care of ourselves and the world, not to mention protecting the ideals of sustainability. Eco-village tours, creek walks, hikes in the woods, bonfires, arts and crafts, a unity parade, camping and music will grace the 1,000-acre farm in honor of all walks of life.

"A lot of people have heard about the Farm and are curious about what we do here," said Douglas Stevenson, a coordinator of the Unity Celebration.

"They have also wondered about life — theirs and the lives around them. The Unity Celebration is an opportunity to explore the possibilities of what they are, what they can do for themselves and, most importantly, what they can do for the world. What they do not realize is that, by changing themselves, they change the world around them, and therefore, they can change the world and shape it to what they want it to be. You won't be disappointed by attending the celebration."

An induction tomorrow evening will kick off the festival. A man native to the Farm who has been studying with a shaman in Mexico will host a bonfire. Here, guests will be able to voice their opinions on various topics, meet

the people conducting workshops held throughout the weekend and socialize with others attending the festival and the locals living on the Farm. There will also be mystical drumming and creative dances to unfold the spirit of the weekend.

A myriad of multi-colored artists will perform Saturday, with local Murfreesboro band Sky High inaugurating the stage. Homegrown on the farm are the artists THB, the current resident band, and Strut, based in North Carolina. Strut are a nationally touring band promoting songs from their new album, *About Time*. Baraka Mundi, a belly dancing troupe from Asheville, N.C., promises to be a visual phenomenon. Other types of funk, hip-hop, house, trance, rock, jazz, bluegrass and reggae music will balance the festival.

Rounding out the weekend, Sunday will be packed with excitement. SpaceCraft, known for their trance music, and renowned Nashville singer-songwriter Claire Small will astound audiences with her folk aura, accompanied by a full band.

The majority of the nature hikes and walks will carry on until the closure of the festival at 3 p.m. Be sure to bring the proper camping gear and other essentials to have a majestic weekend.

Tickets to the event are \$25 per person. Buy four tickets and the fifth person gets in free. This includes camping for the weekend, so make sure to bring your tent and gear. Limited dorm space is available. For more information or to pre-register tickets online, visit www.thefarmcommunity.com/unity.

For additional information, contact Vickie at The Farm Welcoming Center via e-mail at Vickie@thefarmcommunity.com, or call (931) 964-3574, or Thomas Hupp at Thomas@vilagemedia.com and (931) 964-2590. ★



[upcoming events on The Farm]

Oct. 20-23: Dome Building with Mr. Dome
Nov. 8: Shiitake Mushroom Growing Basics
Nov. 15: Wild Mushrooms of the Farm
Dec. 6: The Farm School Holiday Bazaar
Dec. 19: Kids to the Country "Winter Program"

The Farm is closed to the public on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve and Day and New Year's Eve and Day.

For more information, visit www.thefarmcommunity.com

Trust us, you'll rush to see 'Out of Time'

By Forrest Sanders

In *Out of Time*, Denzel Washington is in a heap of trouble.

Washington plays Matt Whitlock, a police chief currently holding the papers to divorce his wife, Alex (Eva Mendez), while engaging in an affair with his high school sweetheart, Ann. Just before Matt and Ann can rekindle their romance, however, Ann becomes terminally ill with cancer with her only hope being an experimental treatment in Sweden. Putting his obligations to the law aside, Matt "borrows" \$485,000 in drug money from the police department safe to afford the costly treatment.

No sooner does he take the money, though, than Ann's Florida Keys home ignites in flames and two charred bodies are found inside. Now, Matt's in a bind, knowing that if he and Ann's secret affair is revealed, he'll be the No. 1 suspect. Besides this, the case's prime investigator turns out to be none other than Alex, the woman Matt is currently divorcing, and the Drug Enforcement Agency has just requested to have back the drug money that's currently missing from the police

'Out of Time'

Starring Denzel Washington, Eva Mendez, Sanaa Lathan

Rated R

Directed by Carl Franklin

Released Oct. 2

Rating ★★★
(out of four stars)

department's safe (and \$485,000 is a pretty hefty IOU).

Up until now, director Carl Franklin has simply introduced a group of characters and a scenario. Now, it's time for the roller coaster to begin. *Out of Time* is a surprisingly solid effort in the "wrong man accused" little genre of thrillers.

If there are two things at which director Carl Franklin excels, they are visuals and suspense. Franklin is an atmospheric director, whisking his audience away to the Florida Keys through his kinetic filming of exotic locations accompanied by a lively Caribbean-flavored soundtrack. But don't assume that Franklin's all style and no substance. There's a fairly engrossing story at play here, and Franklin relishes in ratcheting up the suspense at every available opportunity. It's a well-designed thriller such as this that questions how close can you bring an audience to

edge of their seats before they fall off.

Denzel Washington puts on a determined show playing the Roadrunner to the police investigators' Wiley Coyote. As the police follow in hot pursuit, Matt is able to stay just one step ahead. He's a smart guy, there's no doubt, but Eva Mendez certainly proves to be a worthy pursuer, making Washington sweat a bit in his cover-ups. Other highlights in the cast include former Superman Dean Cain playing against type in an effectively nasty role and John Billingsly adding some much-appreciated humor to the proceedings.

However, for all the impact that Franklin delivers in the middle section, the ending is disappointingly predictable, and lacks the knockout finale that this film deserves.

In all, *Out of Time* is a pleasant surprise. It's a rare case in which a generic trailer leads to a film that far exceeds expect-



Photo courtesy of MGM

Matt Whitlock, played by Denzel Washington, runs from the police for once in *Out of Time*.

tations. It's distinctly different from Franklin and Washington's last pairing, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, but it still manages to become what every thriller should aspire to be: a brisk exercise in atmosphere and suspense. ★

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[shouldn't you send your band's news to us?]

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Continued from **Arms**, page 4

academic exercise to me. And often, the theories are exciting to think about, but pretty dull to actually read about. So, short answer, not really. I have a great amount of respect for Chomsky and Guevara and for completely different reasons, Marx, but the leftist literature that inspires me is more of the allegorical, really incendiary fables that kind of snuck under the noses of the censors in repressive societies and really shook shit up. Stuff like Bulgakov, and Zoshehenko from the former USSR. Currently, Rushdie is a big favorite of mine. As for straight up leftist nonfiction, I think the most important American author right now is Eric Schlosser. He's such an exhaustive researcher that he can't help but be extremely dangerous.

Q: You also say on your site that you're influenced by bad TV (well, it says something like that). For me, this means the *Real World* and *Blind Date* (not to mention *Crank Yankers* and *Most Extreme Elimination Challenge*). What bad TV are you addicted to?

A: I don't have a TV right now. My wife and I were stealing cable for the last year and a half and they recently caught on, and in Chicago if you don't have cable, you pretty much get no reception at all. I'm just addicted to pop culture in general ... well, not addicted so much as morbidly fascinated. It's pretty disgusting, and I soak it up for some reason ... our new record features sections inspired from such disparate sources as *American Idol*, *Three's Company*, *The Maury Povich Show* and *Starsky and Hutch*. I don't like any of those shows, but I watch 'em, and they stick in my mind, just destroying my gray matter.

Q: Now what about bad political television – like those crazy pundit-riddled talk shows on the networks? Do you find yourself getting caught up in those? Or do you, like me, scream in frustration and throw things at the screen when Bill O'Reilly pretends to know anything other than his own shoe size?

A: I can't even watch that shit. It's too frustrating. That whole facet of entertainment seems like the

biggest waste of energy ever.

Q: Who's crazier – Ann Coulter or Rush Limbaugh?

A: Rush is a smart and charismatic guy. I don't agree with anything that he supports, but he is funny and kind of with it (again, I would like to stress that this does not mean that I support his political views). Ann Coulter, on the other hand, is fucking insane. She's rude, shrill and completely out of her fucking mind. In a world that's so fucking phallocentric, I find it fascinating that a woman can be that juiced in to the views and theories of the old boys network. It's bizarre. Also, (or maybe I should say, "to switch gears a little bit") I think that Ann Coulter is pretty attractive, just by the way.

Q: OK, enough of the politi-speak. Back to the music. In 1999 you got your start at Asian Man Records. How was that experience, and is Mike Park truly the saint and genius he seems to be?

A: He is one of the best people that I have ever met. A great, fun guy who doesn't have a bad word to say about anyone. I've worked with Mike for the past 11 years in various bands, and I haven't had a job besides music in about seven years. This is all because of the support and friendship of Mike Park.

Q: What prompted the move to Fat Wreck Chords?

A: The opportunity was there and we've always been a huge fan of the label, and of [NOFX bassist Fat] Mike in general as a musician and kind of an outspoken public figure. When he called me, I was so starstruck that he could have offered us pretty much anything and we would have gone to Fat.

Q: What was it like playing in Slapstick and the Broadways?

A: Really fun and really frustrating for different reasons. In Slapstick, we were having a great time (we were so young, when we broke up, the average age in the band was 19) but hating that "ska punk" scene as it developed so fast. So many kids, and terrible bands. It forced us to sort of start questioning if the music that we played was really any good. Ultimately, that led to the break-up. In the Broadways, we were just always too wasted to play well, or drive anywhere. And our van broke just about every day on tour.

Q: What's your favorite thing about *The Greatest Story Ever Told*?

A: I like the whole thing as one giant piece. That's my favorite thing, that the art and all the songs come together to form one giant thing, not just a collection of the newest batch of songs. It's one big, cohesive thing.

Q: You guys included lots of little footnotes in your lyrics that correspond in the liner notes to obscure references that you fully explain for the listener. I think it's fascinating – all the little inside jokes. Whose idea was it to do that, and why?

A: It just spiraled into that when we decided to put in one note, explaining that Chris does this amazing Margaret Cho impersonation (which is

not true, I just think that if you say the name Margaret Cho, it's funny). From there, we kind of went nuts ... We could have put in tons more, we just kind of made an arbitrary decision to stop where we did.

Q: You guys tour a lot. I'm sure there's one notorious tour story that beats them all. Perhaps it is *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. Can I hear it?

A: Oh no. What happens out there stays out there. Sorry. ★

The Lawrence Arms will play at The Muse tomorrow at 7 p.m. with Communique, Oliver's Army and Julius Seizure. It'll cost you \$7. For more information on the band, visit www.thelawrencearms.net.

Continued from **McConnell**, page 4

moving to Marietta, Ga., before attending MTSU in 2001, McConnell began playing guitar at the age of seven and writing songs at 11. He expresses he has a very close-knit family and is grateful for the encouragement of both his parents (who themselves have singing and writing roots) and three siblings. By the age of 15, he would play publicly in cafes, coffeehouses and the like. Some song subjects deal with a

family theme, such as the hard-working father making ends meet. Others are observations of friends, situations or self.

"I'd say my songs are 50/50 written about either myself or others," McConnell mused.

With his first album, *Faces*, released in 2001 and the follow-up *Here in the Lost and Found* not far behind, McConnell's rich folk style of pop/rock music addresses a relatable range of material

from heartbreak to war to just good plain fun. There's also a definite spark of spirituality.

"I'm a Christian," he said, "so that definitely plays into some of my music. I wouldn't really describe myself as a Christian artist. I work in a secular venue but, because of the Christian influence, I at least like to work an encouraging message into my songs."

With that, he emphasizes that he wants anyone who hears him to walk away hopeful.

"I try to create a positive

place where they can deal with questions, whether it be love, spirituality, whatever," he said. "What I sing about isn't always positive, but I try to always carry a theme of hope with it."

Independent influences make up the majority of McConnell's inspirations. He names off such artists as Martin Sexton and David Wilcox, while his more popular leanings include Harry Chapin and Shawn Colvin. But, he said, he's drawn to good music, pure and simple.

With plans to step into the

studio again this winter to record a third project, tentatively titled *Soul to Soul*, McConnell is well on his way to achieving a goal of gathering others into his stories of sound.

Be drawn in yourself tomorrow night at Liquid Smoke during Octoberfest or at the French Quarter Cafe Saturday at 7 p.m., when he will open for Kixesysd.

For sound samples, albums or more information, visit www.seanmcconnell.com. ★

[club listings]

Thursday, Oct. 9

3rd & Lindsley: Bill Cerveny, 9:30 p.m., \$6.

12th & Porter: Soul Hitch, 9:30 p.m.

Blue Sky Court: Fran's Mantra, 4Fourty, Love Over Gravity, 9 p.m., \$5.

Boro Bar & Grill: The Duncan May Band, 9:30 p.m., \$5-7.

The End: Laws Rushing, The High Strung, Brian Jonestown Massacre, 9 p.m., \$7.

Exit/In: Taylor, Tyler James, Riki Michele, 8 p.m., \$5.

Mercy Lounge: Green Rode Shotgun, Common Ground, 8 p.m.

The Muse: The Falling, Tora Tora Torrance, Monday in London, 7 p.m., \$5.

Friday, Oct. 10

3rd & Lindsley: 3AM, 10 p.m., \$5.

12th & Porter: Angie Aparo, Teitur, Gus Black, 9:30 p.m.

All American Sports Grill: Krosstown Traffic, 10 p.m., \$4.

Boro Bar & Grill: Feable Weiner CD Release Party, 9:30 p.m., \$8-10.

The End: Big Jim Slade, Joe Pagetta, 9 p.m., \$5.

Exit/In: BR549, Shannon Lawson, The Pine Hill Haints, 10 p.m., \$15.

The Muse: The Lawrence Arms, Communique, Oliver's Army, Julius Seizure, 7 p.m., \$7.

The Sutler: Juan Profit Organization, Vivid Lemon, Dr. Dook, 8:30 p.m.

Vanderbilt University: Bustah Rhymes, 9 p.m., \$20.

Wall Street: Finna, Ervin Stellar, 9 p.m., \$5.

Windows on the Cumberland: Guy Smiley Blues Exchange, 10 p.m., \$5.

Saturday, Oct. 11

3rd & Lindsley: Jimmy Hall & the Prisoners of Love, 10 p.m., \$8.

12th & Porter: Beulah, John Vanderslice, 10 p.m.

All American Sports Grill: Krosstown Traffic, 10 p.m., \$4.

Boro Bar & Grill: Juan Profit Organization, Character, Et Cetera, 9:30 p.m., \$5-7.

The End: Buzz & Click Night, 9 p.m., \$5.

Exit/In: Maroon 5, Marc Broussard, Gavin DeGraw, 10 p.m., \$14.

Mercy Lounge: Flesh Vehicle, September Glory, 10 p.m., \$7.

The Muse: Feable Weiner, Sunday Driver, The Pink Spiders, 7 p.m., \$5.

Red Rose: Green Rode Shotgun, The Apparition, Go Machine, Something about Vampires & Sluts, 10 p.m., \$5.

Wall Street: El Buho, Doug Hough, 9 p.m., \$5.

Windows on the Cumberland: Spooky

Johnson's Original Rock 'n' Roll Band, 10 p.m., \$5.

Sunday, Oct. 12

3rd & Lindsley: Bob Schneider & Jeff Klein, 8 p.m., \$10.

Boro Bar & Grill: The McClary Brother, Jack Pearson, 9 p.m., \$3-4.

The End: Forget Cassettes, The Sincerity Guild, The Go Machines, 9 p.m., \$5.

Red Rose: Lick Golden Sky, Breather Resist, Killing Jane, The Tony Danza Tap Dance Extravaganza, 8 p.m., \$5.

The Muse: Zolof the Rock 'n' Roll Destroyer, The Actual, Swingset, 7 p.m., \$5.

Windows on the Cumberland: Stout, 9 p.m., \$5.

[slflash@mtsu.edu]

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