

[flash]

Dec. 4, 2003

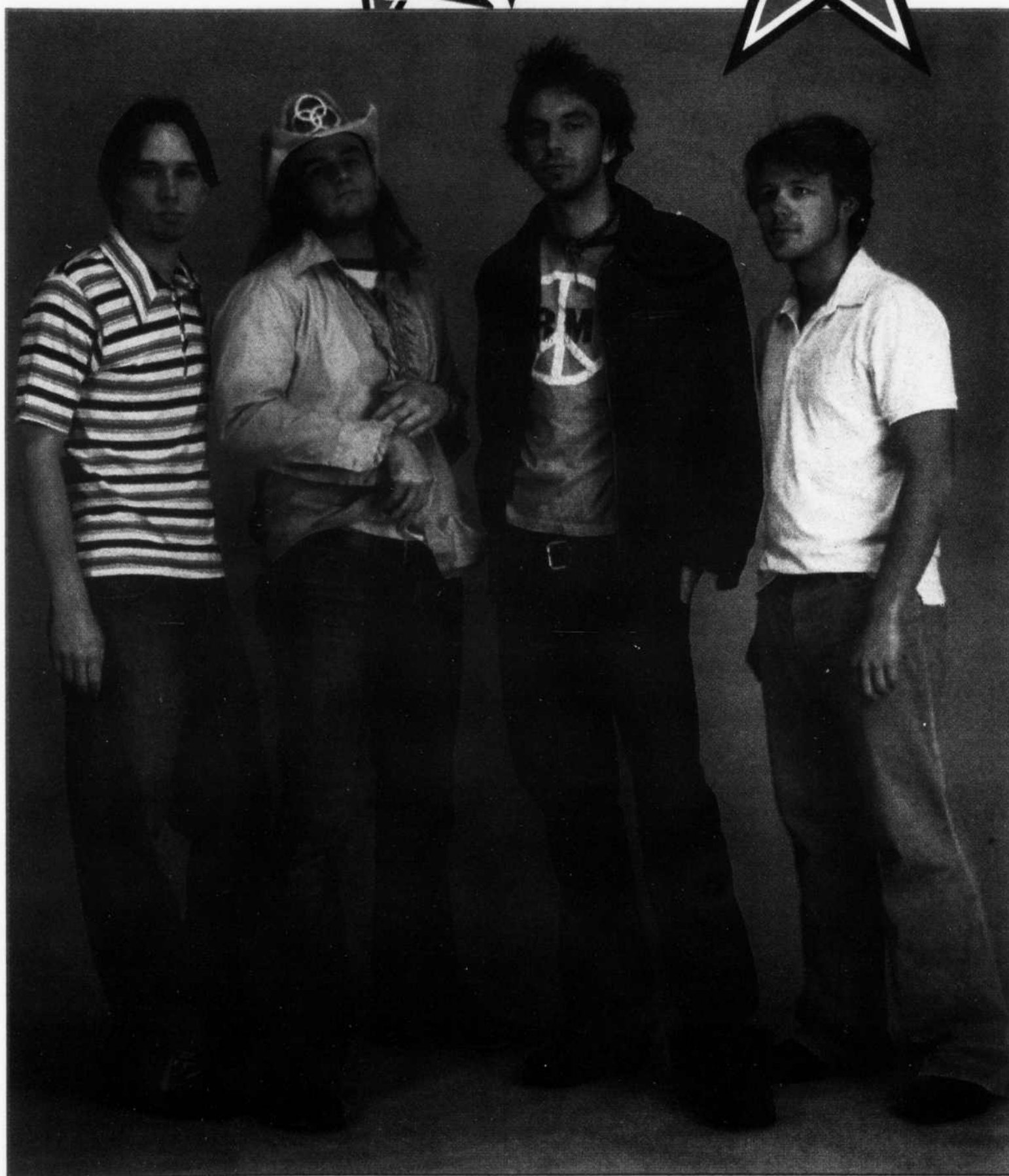
**'Boro's Best
results**

page 2

**Voted
'Boro's
best band**

Intrinsic

See page 6 for story



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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 sflash@mtsu.edu or apply in the James Union Building, Room 310.

**Letting you on staff
seemed like a good
idea at the time.**



I'll miss you, Amber!
Good luck in the real world.
Love, Linnery

☆ the 'boro's best ☆ RESULTS

MUSIC

Best Murfreesboro band
Intrinsic

Best Murfreesboro musician
Roland Gresham

Best place to hear live music
The Boro

Best place to play live music
The Boro

Food and drink continued

Best service (restaurant)
Demos'

Best service (bar)
The Boro

Best drunk/stoned food
Krystal

Best grab-and-go lunch place
Roly Poly and Slick Pig

FOOD & DRINK

Bar with the best bartenders
The Boro

Best cup of coffee
Red Rose Coffee House and Bistro

Best mixed drinks
Wall Street

Best happy hour
Chili's

Best beer
The Boro

Best atmosphere (restaurant)
Marina's and La Siesta

Best atmosphere (bar)
The Boro

Best breakfast
Waffle House

Best Mexican food
Camino Real

Best oriental food
Daily Buffet

Best sit-down meal in town
Demos'

ART & ENTERTAINMENT

Best place to spend a Friday night
Judo Moody's

Best place to spend a Saturday night
Judo Moody's

Best place to spend a weeknight
Home

Best place to pick up a date
Class

Best place to take your date
Red Rose, Judo Moody's, Marina's

Best place to cheat on your date
InfernoBar

Best place to dance
InfernoBar

Best place to rent videos
Video Culture

Best place to experience local culture
MTSU campus

Best place to see local art
Red Rose

Best place to sit, chill out and read
Red Rose

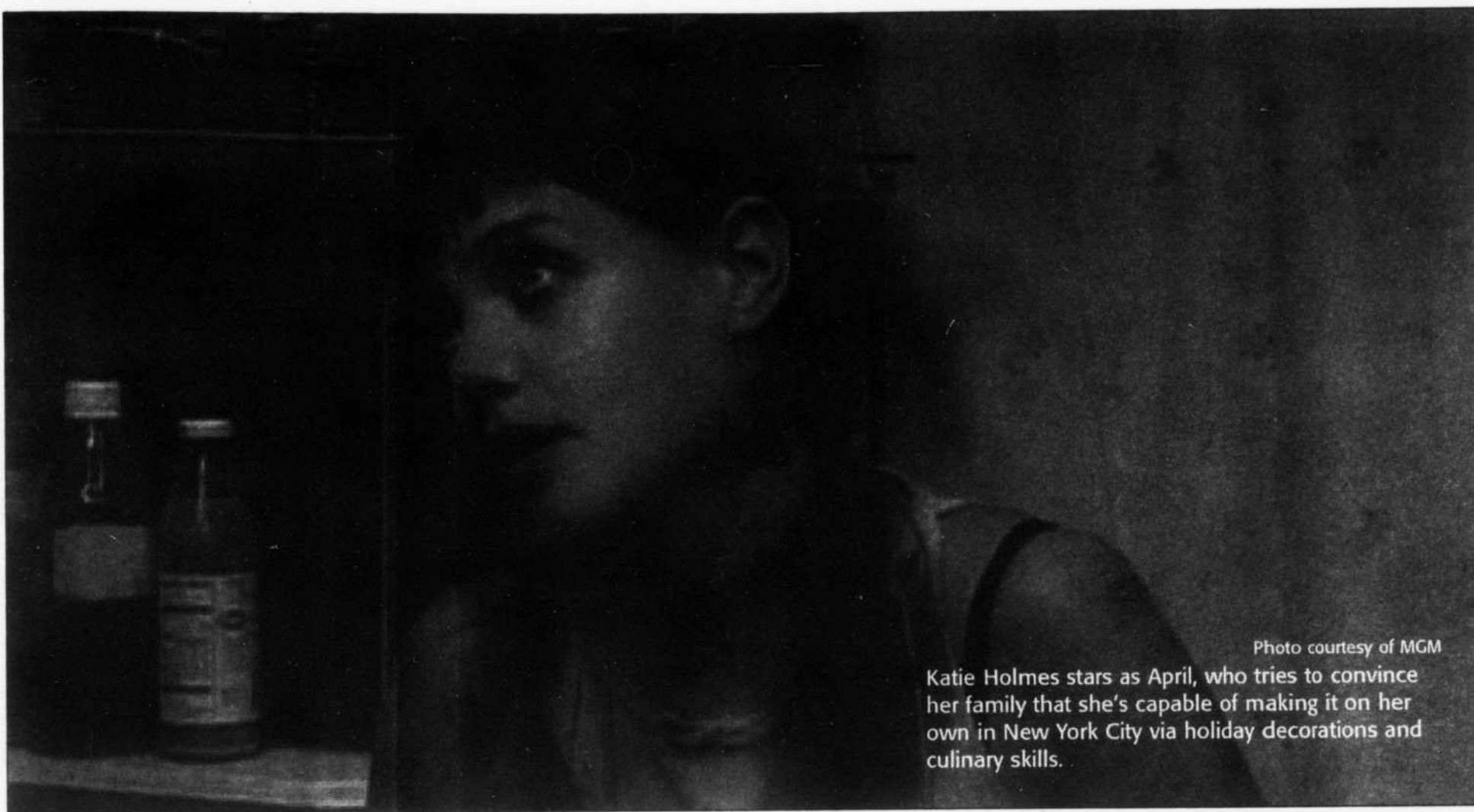


Photo courtesy of MGM

Katie Holmes stars as April, who tries to convince her family that she's capable of making it on her own in New York City via holiday decorations and culinary skills.

'April' just might make it after all

By Melissa Coker

Much of *Pieces of April* flies around a young woman's quest not to fowl up a Thanksgiving turkey.

Artfully acted by Katie Holmes (who melts quite nicely into her character), April Burns has a lot to prove to her family, although she may not want to admit it.

Having flown the coop from her family's suburban setting so she can carve a life of her own in ways she was never allowed to there, April sets off to show herself as responsible and mature — through decorations and cooking.

The story unfolds in April's tiny apartment in New York's lower east side and from there pans to various happenings — other apartment inhabitants, her boyfriend Bobby's (Derek Luke) travels on an electric-powered scooter, and, of course, her family's

road trip to reach her.

Screen time with other residents runs the gamut from serious to sweet to silly as April encounters a helpful couple, an Asian family and an over-protective oven owner (Sean Hayes) in her food preparation quest.

Patricia Clarkson, who won an award at the Sundance 2003 Film Festival for playing the part of April's ironically named mother "Joy," spends time with struggles of her own. She's stricken with cancer and sometimes stops along her journey to relieve her bouts with nausea.

Distanced from her eldest daughter in more than the literal sense, she struggles to find one good memory shared with her as the carfull continues on.

Joy actually seems to share the most with son Timmy, whose understated sensitivity shows up just when it's needed most.

Plus, Timmy's passion for photography paints the picture's story with art-

'Pieces of April'

Starring Katie Holmes,

Derek Luke,

Oliver Platt Jr.

Rated PG-13

Directed by

Peter Hedges

Rating ★★☆☆

(out of four stars)

fully placed snapshots, perhaps providing the "pieces" of April.

Jim, the husband, as acted by Oliver Platt Jr., provides a quiet shoulder to lean on with attempts to hold the family together and optimism over April.

He reassures them about her choice of Bobby as a boyfriend by say-

ing that she told him they were just like each other.

Youngest and somewhat spoiled daughter Beth mixes with the oft-introverted (but stingingly sharp when she speaks) character of Grandma Dottie to yield an interesting family dish for viewer consumption.

The not-so-sweet sides of this movie? Well, the film quality makes for a possible loss in appetite.

The director didn't have a large budget, which shows in the home-video look here.

But, some viewers may give thanks for this, as it lends a much more realistic feel.

Also, the focus on the mother's battle with illness is illustrated a bit too often with restroom pit stops. Regardless, this is a good movie, a perfect fit for the holiday gap. Its tagline describes it well:

"She's the one in every family." ★



Photo by Tiffany Evetts

The Red Rose Coffee House and Bistro, according to readers, is the best place in town to go and sit, chill out and read. The Red Rose also boasts the best coffee.

Sip some culture at the Red Rose

The Red Rose Coffee House and Bistro offers a deli and beer selection not found together anywhere else in town, as well as shows highlighting the best in local music.

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Vacant Cage Records brings back a community scene

By Leslie Carol Boehms

In September of this year, a record label emerged out of what was initially a mere drunken idea.

Yet, already, Vacant Cage Records, right here out of Murfreesboro, Tenn., is stirring up talk of a becoming the next Spongebath (hopefully, however, without the messy demise).

But Vacant Cage is not another Spongebath Records. The threesome that runs the company (Brock Sharp, Erik Nather and Kelly Kerr) is open to many types of music from many different scenes around the country. And though they do carry one former Spongebath band (Fluid Ounces), the Vacant Cage persona is less about the bands and more about how to facilitate them into making a more vibrant and cooperative music scene.

When I met the boys for an interview, they brought me their first release from local rock outfit Fall With Me. The 7-inch release is on the sexiest piece of see-through green vinyl. That alone will be enough to get these boys and their label some deserved attention. But it takes more than sexy vinyl and lofty ideas to really create a successful indie record label.

"It was a drunken idea but at the same point it had been in the back of our minds," Nather said. "Every single week has been going a step higher than the last. Everybody's been wanting to

help out."

Vacant Cage was able to get their Web site www.vacantcagerecords.com designed cheaply by a friend at www.everythingburns.com. The "scene" this threesome so often refers to was more than willing to step up and give tracks for the Vacant Cage compilation. All in all, the ideas were solidifying and the label was and is coming together as a whole.

Now, why would three super intelligent, young, ambitious guys just want to up and start a record label — knowing full well the work and grit and stress it will endure?

"The industry is down, trying to get a job is so hard. I only know one or two people that I graduated with that have a real industry job and they don't like it," Nather said. "So, we started this and it was a reason to stay [in Murfreesboro]. It is stressful at times. But it's better than watching TV all the time ... and it makes my parents happy."

Aside from the immense support Vacant Cage has gotten from friends, family, even other indie labels, there is a full fledged attempt between these three men to really up the ante when it comes to the Middle Tennessee music scene.

"Bands, labels, venues — everyone's against each other these days," Kerr said. We're doing this to show people



Photos used with permission

The members of Flesh Machine check for blemishes in a restroom. The band joins other notable musicians on the Vacant Cage Records roster.

It is stressful at times. But it's better than **watching TV** all the time ... and it makes my **parents happy**.

— Erik Nather

that if everyone comes together you can do something great."

Vacant Cage currently has quite the diversified roster that includes Fall With Me, Flesh Machine and Fluid Ounces. However, the first release off of the label will be a compilation of not only bands on the label, but also bands that offered to help out with a song or two. This truly is a musical compilation. None of that bullshit about publicity or who makes more money or only releasing a song because the band has "made it." The Vacant Cage compilation features anyone who wanted to be involved, including 'Boro locals Juan Profit Organization and Casio Casanova, and Nashville based bands like emo-rockers Character and The Ups and Downs of Industry.

The label has several releases pending including the latest Fluid Ounces release, *The Whole Shebang*, which is slated for a mid-winter release. The album is the first from the piano rock group that has its origins in Murfreesboro. *The Whole Shebang* was produced by Brian Carter (of The Features) and mixed by the one and

only Matt Mahaffey (of Self).

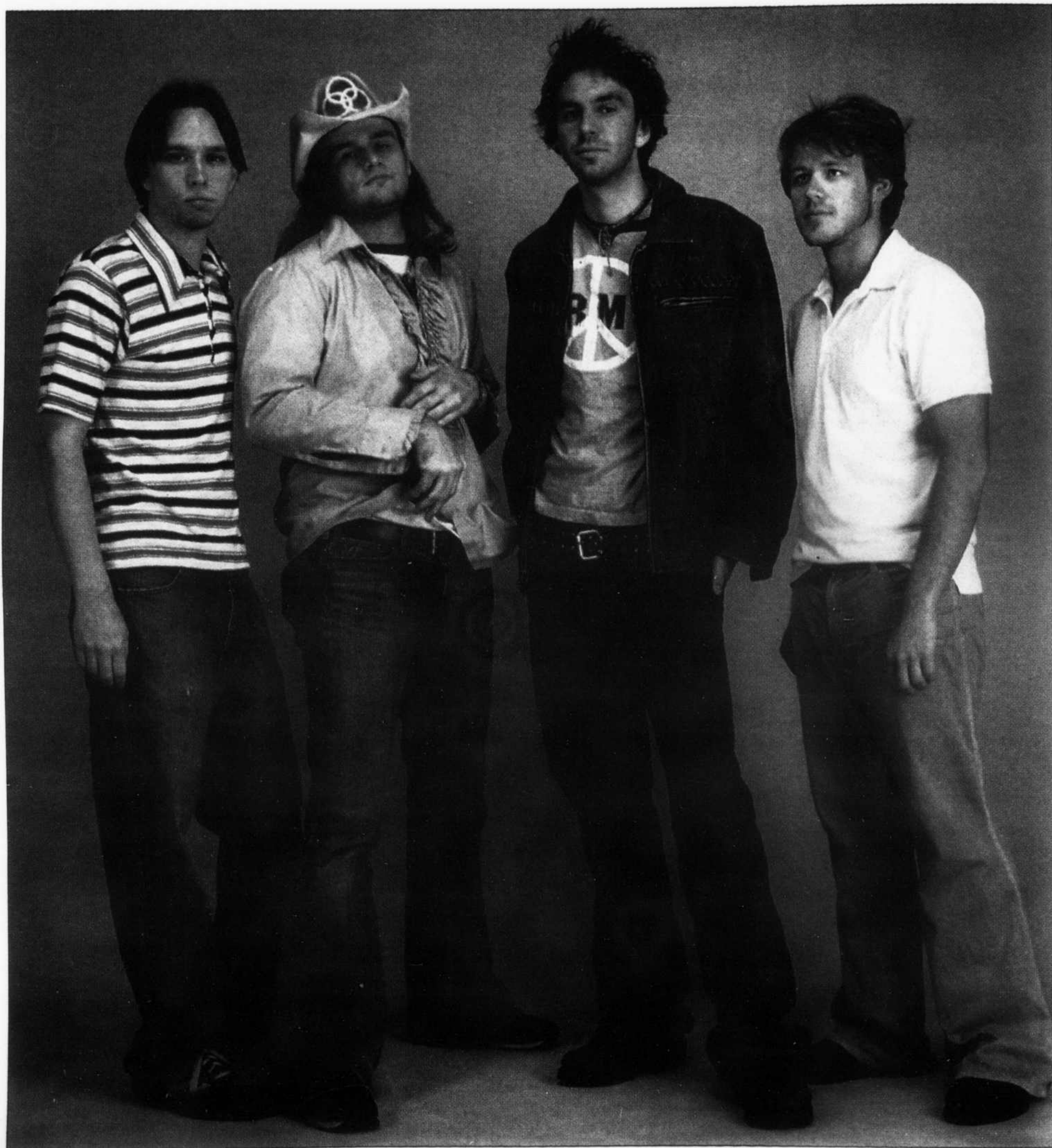
I asked each of the guys to write down their goal for the label, as well as their business philosophy for the company. Each response was relatively close in nature but, at the same time, showed the connectivity and diversity of each partner. For Kerr, his goal was in part "to facilitate a music scene with good music and provide a sense of community to the scene." Kerr's philosophy: "I value music over money. As long as the world gets to hear a great record, money does not matter."

Sharp's goals were almost one in the same. "I want to bring us together as a community so we can show everyone on the outside how great of a scene we really are. I think that we could work really hard to do this. I would like this label to survive so we can show everyone the great music that comes from Middle Tennessee."

Note: For more information on Vacant Cage Records visit their Web site at www.vacantcagerecords.com. Also, the label will be holding its first showcase Dec. 19 at The End in Nashville. ★



The Vacant Cage Records compilation features talent such as the emo-rock band January Taxi, along with Character and The Ups and Downs of Industry.

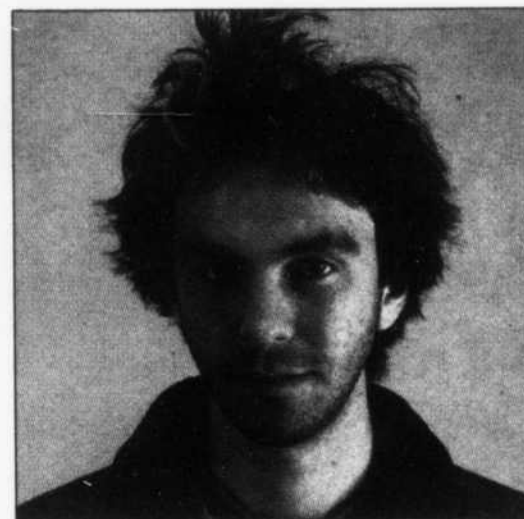


The 'Boro's Best Band

The 'Energetic' sound of Intrinsic

Mainstream rockers flaunt karaoke skills, Cali-rock stylings

By Joey Hood



As far as pseudo-commercial rock bands go, Murfreesboro upstarts Intrinsic waft in their pre-approved *Behind the Music* prologue.

There's the archetypal Lennon/McCartney songwriting chumminess of founding members Sage Kreutter and Chad Hannah. There's the grafting tooth-and-nail self-promotion, their indie battle scars. And yes, there's the swift indignation at binding comparisons to wall-of-sound predecessors.

"I don't like that question," Sage bristles when asked about possible influences. "Put down [that] we sound kind of like Weezer or Third Eye Blind."

In fact, Intrinsic's full-length debut *Energy* splices crunchy indie spunk with glossy alterna-Clear Channel palpability. It's the striking equivalent of beaming post-emo songwriting and prudent catering to industry trends that gives *Energy* its bite.

Recorded among the rungs of Franklin's burgeoning Christian version of Music Row, *Energy* has garnered attention from major players including monolithic powerhouses Sony/Columbia and Geffen Records.

By another token, *Energy*'s earnest pop crafting also bodes well with anti-industry downloaders. *Energy* standouts "Don't Turn Away" and "Shine" regularly best other unsigned acts on numerous indie-footed Web sites.

Add to that Intrinsic's powerhouse live performances, strident exercises in Rock Star 101, and you have yourself a capable Cali-rock quartet worthy of Murfreesboro's smug art-rock connoisseurs.

"We are strong believers in the power of a great song," Sage beams through off-key karaoke singers.

It's 11 p.m. on a Wednesday, and the boys of Intrinsic suggest conducting an interview over the toneless love children of Billy Ray Cyrus at Holiday Inn's karaoke bar in Murfreesboro. If Hell truly exists, these *Nashville Star* rejects would provide the background music.

The Intrinsic boys seem somewhat oblivious to the grating twang of shoddy "Harper Valley PTA" renditions, unpolished caterwauling in search of elusive codas.

"They probably came here in search of a record deal," notes Jason Hees, Intrinsic's newly appointed drummer. Hees is the off-kilter, beer-swilling component of Intrinsic, a by-product from the lost generation of '80s hair metal. Before the night closes, Hees will join the mulleted masses in a rousing by-the-numbers Confederate Railroad cover.

Three drinks in, Hees lubricantly rhapsodizes on Clay Aiken's ambiguous sexuality and a certain [flash] reporter's thoughtless underappreciation of Led Zeppelin's backing drummer.

In contrast, bassist Chris Seymour seems painfully subdued, the antithesis of Hees' bullhorn snap.

And at Intrinsic's center are Sage and Chad, ambitious singer/songwriters who formed Intrinsic after working in the Sound Kitchen, a producing hub for Christian pop acts. With Sage's upbringing in East Africa and Chad's in the Bible Belt, Intrinsic began with incredibly divergent, leftist styles.

"I only recently discovered 1980s American pop culture," Sage remarks. "Having not been exposed to [American culture] has really helped our music."

Sage's unenlightened VH-1 Classic-less state is evident when the frontman cuts through a cheesy Rod Stewart number with sonorous conviction.

As the Intrinsic karaoke session draws to a close, the band members clamor over the emcee's midnight curfew.

"You didn't get to sing Bruce Springsteen's 'Born in the USA,'" Sage dejectedly complains to me. "We could always do this again sometime," Chad adds.

More "Harper Valley PTA" and substandard hotel alcohol?

Oh Intrinsic, some things are just too good to pass up. ★



Photos by Jamie Lorange

(Opposite page) Intrinsic, voted 'Boro's best band, recorded their debut album, *Energy*, in Franklin, Tenn.

(Top left) Intrinsic guitarist Chad Hannah, left, was raised in the heart of the Bible Belt. Drummer Jason Hees, right, recently joined the band.

(Top) Lead singer and guitarist Sage Kreutter grew up in South Africa. He says his lack of exposure to American pop culture has helped Intrinsic's musical efforts.

(Above) Bassist Chris Seymour is the quiet George Harrison of the group.



Photo by Micah Miller

Bartenders at The Boro Bar and Grill were deemed the best in town by readers who voted for The 'Boro's Best Awards. The Boro was also voted best place to hear and play live music, as well as the bar with the best atmosphere.

The Boro gulps down bar awards

By Amber Bryant

A chunk of *Sidelines* editors and I spent Sunday night crammed in a booth over beer and burgers at the Boro Bar and Grill. We celebrated a birthday to the tune of live bluegrass music, followed by a series of classic Phil Collins tunes, including the ever-screamable "Easy Lover." We were comfortable enough to stay and hang out for at least two hours, which isn't typical of a bunch of couch-clinging anti-socialites.

"We're a second home to many, I guess," manager Marianne Dedmon told me, referring to the notable amount of regulars who come into the bar to hang out and relax the day away.

"We get anyone from college professors to college students ... we really have a diverse crowd."

The crowd isn't the only diversity they can claim, either. The Boro has been home to all sorts of musical expression, from Open Mic Night every Sunday to birthday bluegrass to heavy metal to rap.

"We're willing to give a lot of bands a chance. Once they've played here, it's easier to go to a lot of other local venues," veteran bartender Stephanie Harmon said. "We try and stay involved with the local music scene."

Wannabe bands take a stage once graced by Jane's

Addiction and Porno for Pyros drummer Stephen Perkins and comedic icon Wesley Willis, who has since passed.

When you're not in the mood for yelling over bass guitars, drums or the occasional angry vocalist, Monday and Tuesday nights are excellent for conversation over two-for-one beers and jiving jukebox joints. Add a side of onion rings while you're at it, 'cause the kitchen doesn't close until 1 a.m.

Drop by any day of the week for happy hour (or hours, I should say), which starts at 11 a.m. for the anxious lush and ends at 7 p.m., right at prime time.

The Boro serves wine and more than 200 brands of beer, including exotic Belgian ales and frothy favorites like Pabst Blue Ribbon and Guinness. Unfortunately, the list leaves little room for liquor, but that hasn't put a damper on their notoriety.

"Why change a good thing?" Dedmon said.

If music and beer aren't your niche, you elitist scoundrel, play some pool by the fireplace and let the bar scene be your background.

Whatever you decide to do, the Boro is the perfect mix of small town bar and classy beer dive, from the regulars to the tasteful tapsters.

"We're all really friendly and outgoing. We try and focus on good service and being sensitive to customer needs," Dedmon said. ★

The Boro racks up

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Best place to play live music

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Best service

Best bar atmosphere

Best beer

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Photo by Rick Kersmarki

Camino Real, named Murfreesboro's best Mexican restaurant, has several locations in town.

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[wmts top 10]

- 1 HER SPACE HOLIDAY
The Young Machines
- 2 DENALI
The Instinct
- 3 DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE
Transatlanticism
- 4 ELBOW
Cast Of Thousands
- 5 BETH GIBBONS AND RUSTIN MAN
Out Of Season
- 6 VARIOUS ARTISTS
NEW WAVE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION
- 7 VARIOUS ARTISTS
A SANTA CAUSE: IT'S A PUNK ROCK CHRISTMAS
- 8 VARIOUS ARTISTS
WIG IN A BOX: SONGS FROM AND INSPIRED BY HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH
- 9 DEATH COMESTO MATTESON
If I'm Going Down, You're Coming With Me
- 10 AGAINST ME!
As The Eternal Cowboy

★Compiled by WMTS Music
Director Jozeph Ash★

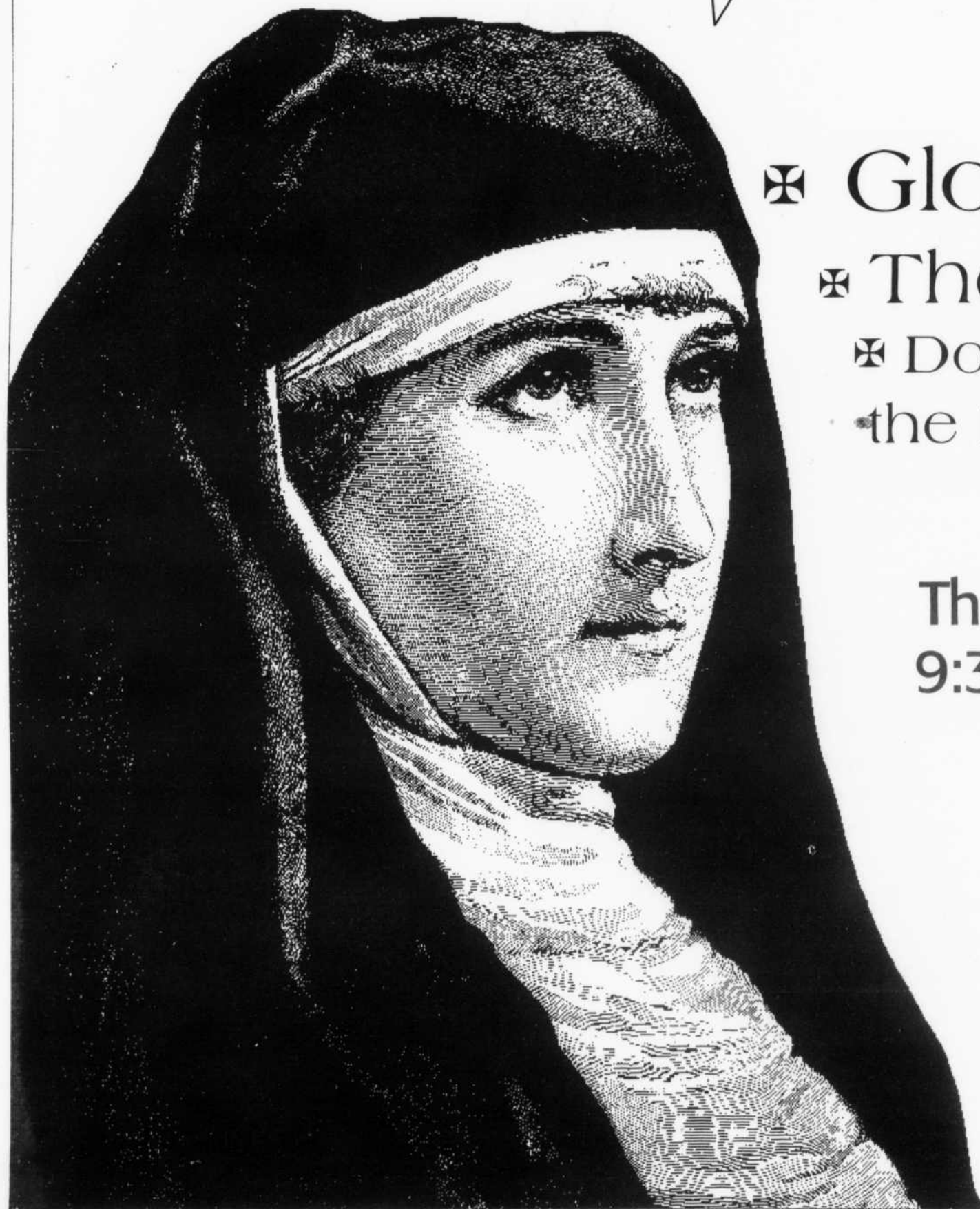
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✠ Glossary ✠

✠ The Loft ✠

✠ Don't Trust
the Radio ✠

The Boro
9:30 p.m.
\$5

[club listings]

Thursday, Dec. 4

Boro Bar and Grill: Flash Showcase featuring Glossary, The Loft, Don't Trust the Radio, 9:30 p.m., \$5-7.

Mercy Lounge: Luna Halo, Crash Into June, 9 p.m., \$5.

Rocketown: Bill Mallonee, Unforsaken, The Bubblegum Complex, 3 Run Lead, Split-Ticket, 8 p.m., \$8-10.

Sutler: Josh Kear, Mark Irwin, 9 p.m., \$5.

3rd & Lindsley: Scott Miller & the Commonwealth, Patrick Davis, 9 p.m., \$10.

The 5 Spot: Royanne, Heather Horton, My Brother, 9 p.m.

Exit/In: Del Giovanni Clique, Thaxton Ward, Up with the Joneses, Folk Medicine, 8 p.m., \$7.

Guido's Pizzeria: From Ashes Rise, Kylesa, 9 p.m.

The End: Michael Logen, Wichita Stallions, Someday Company, 9 p.m., \$5.

12th & Porter: Jeb,

Mammoth Jack, 9 p.m.
Windows on the Cumberland: Big Bad Wooly, 9 p.m., \$5.

Friday, Dec. 5

Boro Bar & Grill: Derailed, Lopan, Hinder, Chump Change, 9:30 p.m., \$5-7.

12th & Porter: Alive II - A Tribute to Kiss, 10 p.m.

Red Rose: Not Before Noon, A Suburban Blood Drive, Death Comesto Matteson, The Grabass Charlestons, 9 p.m., \$5.

3rd & Lindsley: Mel & the Party Hats, 10 p.m., \$8.

Windows on the Cumberland: Dirt Farm's Christmas Festival, 10 p.m.

Rocketown: Nappy Roots & Friends, 8 p.m., \$23.

Exit/In: Imagine no Handguns Benefit show featuring Steve Allen, Baby Stout, Old Crow Medicine Show, 8 p.m., \$10.

The End: WMTS 88.3

benefit show featuring Lume, The Mattoid, Modera, 9 p.m., \$5.

The Sutler: Trey Lee, Kendall's Overflown, the 8th Grade, Costar, 8 p.m., \$5.

Mercy Lounge: Old Union, Mile 8, 9:30 p.m., \$7.

The 5 Spot: Tim Carroll, 10 p.m., free.

Saturday, Dec. 6

The Sutler: The Coal Men, 9 p.m., \$5.

Windows on the Cumberland: AKA Rudie, 10 p.m.

Blue Sky Court: Second Saturday, Jetpack, Fizgig, The Hot Pipes, 9 p.m., \$5.

3rd & Lindsley: The Jack Pearson Band, 10 p.m., \$7.

The 5 Spot: Metropolitan MC's, My Wind is a Radio Wave, Life in the Sky, 9 p.m., \$5.

Boro Bar & Grill: Tony Danza Tapdance Extravaganza, 9:30 p.m., \$5-7.

Exit/In: DJ Rap, DJ Spoon, 9 p.m., \$15.50 -20.

Red Rose: Knifefight, Bad Citizen Void, Embers Contract & Angels, 9 p.m., \$5.

The End: Lone Official, All

Tomorrow's Parties, 9 p.m., \$5.

Gentleman Jim's: The Passport Again, Michael Acree, The Glass, 9 p.m., \$5.

Sunday, Dec. 7

The Sutler: Wayne Kee, Girl on Boy, The Cry Room, 9 p.m.

3rd & Lindsley: Darrell

Scott, Wischild, 8 p.m., \$10.

Rocketown: Matchbook Romance, Acceptance & Maxeen, 7 p.m., \$6.

Windows on the Cumberland: Golden Squid Entertainment Christmas Party 8 p.m., free.

The End: Little Wings, Rising Shotgun, Spiritual Family Reunion, 9 p.m., \$5.

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S

The Writer's Loft 2003 Contest Winner

"Shirt Factory" by Peggy Smith Duke

Goldenrod grows
And spirits of laughter
Course the emptied bays.
Women were here--
Women who left high school to get married,
Have babies, and live deliberate lonely lives
When their husbands left them, or worse, stayed.
Except to come here and waddle the stacks
In blue-jeans, boots and sleeveless shirts
With two-ways swinging from hips
That undulate like the movement of a fine Elgin watch;
Commanding oily Hysters, choreographing boxes
And bolts of vanity to and from
Long rows of whirling machines,
Turning wrists and elbows into sleepless nights.

But, oh, those potluck dinners when Christmas came,
Or birthdays, or when production goals were met.
Red velvet cakes
And cheese-fed casseroles waiting for the microwave
On paper-covered tables.
Recipes from grandmothers, aunts and cook-offs--
Home made grief counselors.

And managers, all men, affirm them.
In ninety days the goldenrod will grow
And the laughter will leave in tracted shells
To float on deep bobbing hulls;
Going to make shirts for poor women
Who, now, will only buy them
And sell them.

Maybe the deli has a job or two
And McDonald's needs a biscuit maker starting Monday at four.
Mama's got to keep the kids now, for when they get up for school.
The women see each other at church
And the drug store and laugh at times together,
Still feeling the sharp burn of shirt making in their shoulders,
Watching the kids play baseball in the park
Named for the shaman now spinning his yarns
In another small town,
In a country where women laugh
And make casseroles
Of fish and rice,
Turning wrists and elbows into sleepless nights.

The Writer's Loft 2003 Contest Winner

"Bridges" by Perry Price

Ellie had gone through life pretty much like the autumn breeze blowing through her hair. Shifting direction. Changing speeds. Leaving things in a mess. Unpredictable. Uncontrollable. Unstoppable. The afternoon sun was retiring for another day and she knew she had to be somewhere else, anywhere else but here after darkness arrived. She picked up her canvas grocery bag, took one final look off of the bridge at the river below, closed her eyes for just a brief moment, exhaled and then turned and headed toward the market. The wind was coming up off of the river and she pulled her jacket more tightly around her neck. She quickened her pace to get away from the water. How is it that you can be incredibly drawn toward those things by which you are repelled at the same time? She had visited this bridge almost every day for the past two years hoping each time it would be her last, but it never was. Ellie passed by a café where warm light and fragrances blended with a little Cole Porter and poured out onto the sidewalk to envelope her. Without pausing she reached for the door and went in. A slender woman about her own age came from what appeared to be the kitchen of the small restaurant, balancing plates of steaming pasta. She carried a rotary cheese grater in her apron and a wooden pepper mill under her left arm. Without breaking stride, she smiled and instructed, "Buonasera! Sit wherever you like. I'll be there in a sec." Ellie had other things to do and the market would close pretty soon. She ought to go. Yet she stood and watched the waitress deftly deliver the plates to a couple of obviously delighted diners. Fluidly, the server whipped out the grater and proceeded to rain parmigiano-reggiano down onto each dish. In a flash, the grater disappeared and the sound of the mill and the smell of pepper filled the air. Ellie was mesmerized by the culinary slight of hand. She found a table and took a seat.

The waitress put the grinder and the mill on a cart and wiped her hands on a towel and came over, order pad and pen in hand. "Meeting anyone?" "Ah...no, just me." "Well, 'just me,' I'm Marti and I'll be your server." She placed a neatly printed paper on the table. "Here are the specials and everything is fresh. Can I get you something to drink? We have a really great house Sangiovese." "Yes, that sounds nice..." Where did those words come from? Ellie wasn't even a wine drinker. "Buono. I'll let you look over today's selections while I bring the wine and also some water. Do you live around here? I don't remember seeing you before." "Um, yes, actually." She hesitated but Marti's smile somehow put her at ease. "I'm uh...a couple of blocks over on Third Avenue." "Great. Welcome to 'Marti's!' I'll be back in a second with your water and your wine." The waitress, who also appeared to be the owner, turned and retreated to the kitchen, checking on diners as she went. Rain. Damn. She tossed, moving toward the side of the bed farthest from the window, facing away. It was a steady rain, persistently falling, consistently covering all beneath it. Ellie couldn't catch a break today, or was it even still 'today?' She fumbled for her glasses on the bedside table and held them just high enough to read the digital display. It was 2:17 a.m. The replacement 'today' wasn't going to be any better. She turned and faced the ceiling and sighed. How long had it been since she had been happy? Two years? Five? Surely she had been happy five years ago, but for the life of her she couldn't be sure. Had she ever been happy, really happy? Maybe that sort of happiness was relegated to old black and white films and people who didn't know better. Then she remembered. Her memories were contained in scalloped edged, black and white images, the ones with the date in the margin, the ones with names and descriptions, written with cursive script in pencil on

It was her eighth birthday and she had been sick and her birthday party had to be postponed. All of that anticipation, all of that excitement, gone because of a stomach bug, or something she ate. Ellie had waited so long for this day and now she would have to spend it in bed, alone. She remembered a knock at her bedroom door. Why wouldn't they leave her alone? She didn't want any more Coke and crackers. She didn't want her temperature taken again. She didn't want to be bothered. They came in anyway. But they didn't say anything. What were they doing just standing there? Ellie turned toward the bedroom door and there was her dad holding a beautiful purple bicycle at the foot of her bed. "I know you can't ride this today, but I just couldn't wait. Let me roll it up closer so you can get a look. Do you like it?" Ellie had wanted a bike for so long. She loved it. She loved him. Thunder rumbled and rattled the loose panes in her window. The rain came down harder and the purple bicycle faded into a dark gray, faded into the distant past. It was the last birthday she would ever spend with her father. A tapestry of wet autumn leaves covered the cold earth. The moisture saturated everything, she thought, adding that much more weight to life. She walked as if she had no place to go. She thought of a thousand things she could do, but dismissed each one in succession. It all seemed so pointless. Surely there was some rock in life she had neglected to turn over, some rainbow she had forgotten to chase. And now she was back at the bridge. Ellie shook her head, partially in disgust, mostly in disbelief. She honestly believed she could let go of the bridge, but it wouldn't let go of her. Wooden and worn and covered with moss it seemed inviting enough. It kept you out of the waters below, kept you safe. Ellie lightly slid her hand along the smooth rail as she ascended the arch to the apex. As she must have done a thousand times, she turned and looked

The cold water rushing beneath her made the air feel cooler here than anywhere else. The low roar of the currents was lulling her, comforting her, pulling her as if she was caught in a whirlpool. But there was only one direction anyone could be pulled in a whirlpool. She couldn't breathe and instinctively pushed back from the railing nearly tripping over a woman jogging behind her across the bridge. Her pulse was racing and her mind couldn't keep up. Must get away. She had to talk with someone, anyone. Her eyes started to warm and water and she headed in any direction the railing would allow, headed away from the water, rather than into it. Her hands were clinched in her pockets as if trying to hold on to something, but her palms were empty. Ellie strode away from the river, away from the bridge to the sidewalk. Her retreat ended. A pain shot through her left cheek, a dull thud caught her left side spinning her and throwing her at the same time. The sound of a cry, a glimpse of the sky, the feel of rough concrete against her hands and the jolt of a sudden stop all collided in her consciousness. As she tried to raise up, Ellie felt something warm and soft covering her hand. She instinctively attempted to pull away but her fragile balance wouldn't let her. A hand squeezed hers and she gave in and squeezed back. She laid her head back down not caring where she was or what might happen to her. "Are you all right?" The voice was familiar, or was it just helpful? Ellie opened her eyes and tried to orient herself. "No, I think I'm okay. What happened?" "I'm not sure. I just stepped out to sweep off the sidewalk and we must have collided. Looks like you got the worst end of the deal. I'm terribly sorry." "No, it's my fault. I should have been looking where I was going." "Can you get up or do you need any help?" "Let me see." Ellie righted herself using the woman and a post for support.

Ellie looked directly into the soft eyes and recognition set in. It was as if she had run into last night's date at this morning's market. Once again she felt trapped, felt completely off balance. "Are you sure you're okay?" And with that, Ellie released and sobbed in spasms, wailing as if demons were being unleashed. Marti caught her and held her tight, shushing her like her mother used to do, smoothing her hair. "I'm sorry...sorry, so, so sorry. I've got to get myself together, got to get something together. I'm Ellie, Ellie Hayes." She inhaled raggedly. "What are you going through, Ellie?" "What?" "What's wrong Ellie Hayes?" Ellie didn't know where to start, didn't know how to start, didn't want to start. She just didn't want to talk about it. Why couldn't she just get some simple sympathy and let it go at that? "You're a mess. Here, wipe your eyes, blow your nose and come inside." Her legs didn't welcome her weight yet yielded to Marti's lead as she helped her through the metal and glass door. Together they walked across the plain, tile floor, clean but unremarkable. Scents of garlic and basil and tomato greeted her, welcomed her. The tables were dark and worn, scarred by years of plates and glasses and knives, by the scores of wanderers, of friends and strangers who took nourishment at them. Marti worked Ellie to a round corner table and took a seat next to her, both with backs to walls. Ellie wiped her nose and dabbed at her eyes. Marti reached across and smoothed Ellie's hair then put her hands together bringing her index fingers up to her lips as if she was trying to decide where to begin, or if she should begin. "Marissa," Marti was looking through Ellie rather than at her. There was more and Ellie kept quiet. "She would have been eleven this year, eleven in November." Ellie took Marti's hand and held it in both of her own.