

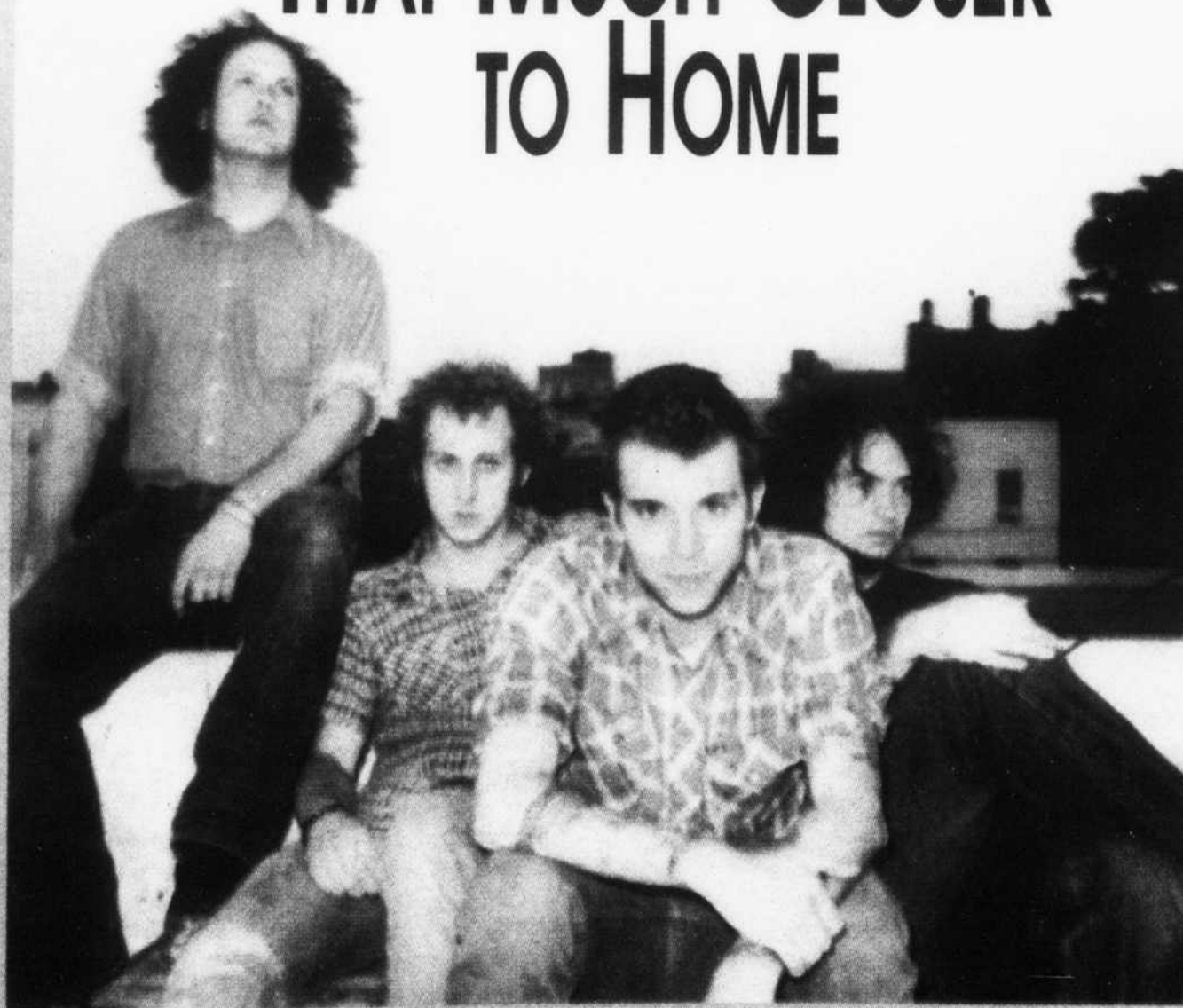
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Nov. 13, 2003

Williams won't drown in the 'Creek'
page 5



THAT MUCH CLOSER TO HOME



Lucero's Ben Nichols gets serious, page 6

'Ghosts' boasts acoustic love songs

By Andrew Young

Sun Kil Moon is the new band of Mark Kozelek, formerly of Red House Painters. As anyone familiar with Red House Painters knows, Kozelek composes some of the most gorgeous and melancholy songs out there. *Ghosts of the Great Highway* contains some of the best material that Kozelek has written in years, and can easily hold a candle to his best work with Red House Painters.

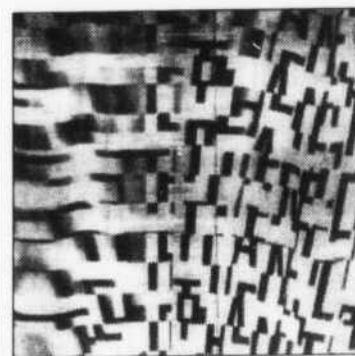
"Last Tide," with its string accompaniment, is the only song on the album strongly reminiscent of RHP. That song segues into "Floating," a heart-breakingly beautiful love song. The country-folk flavor of Sun Kil Moon, combined with Kozelek's vocal delivery, is most evocative of Harvest-era Neil Young. "Salvador Sanchez" and "Lily with Parrots" feature some Crazy Horse-style fuzz-guitar. "Si Paloma" is a flighty instrumental number composed of some deft acoustic guitar with Spanish flamenco flourishes.

Ghosts of the Great Highway is a uniformly gorgeous work with nary a bad song on the whole album. It is one of those rare albums consistent and accomplished enough to deserve a perfect rating (and this is the first one I've given to any album I've reviewed). ★



Sun Kil Moon
'Ghosts of the Great Highway'
Jetset Records
Released Nov. 4

★★★★★
(out of four stars)



The Planet The
'Physical Angel'
54°40' or Fight Records
Released Oct. 7
★★ 1/2
(out of four stars)

Post-rock wank makes The Planet The's latest reek of conformity

By Andrew Young

The Planet The combines prog-rock, post-rock, processed vocals and some vaguely dance-y grooves to make some of the most unique music you've ever heard come out of Portland, Ore.

Songs like "Physical Angel" and "Arty Movie" focus on vocoded vocals and synthesizer grooves that sound like a zanier version of Styx's "Mr. Roboto." Much of the rest of

the album is instrumental, built around prog-rock guitar flights and synths that would make Yes proud.

While the first half of the album is entertaining, even engaging, the second half wallows in post-rock wank that is typical of most genre-defying instrumentalists.

Nevertheless, The Planet The might appeal to fans of bands such as Trans Am or Braniac. ★

Dufus rocks smart, anti-folk sound on '1:3:1'

By Andrew Young

The 20-odd members of Dufus perform a gleefully anarchic brand of music often compared to Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention, Captain Beefheart, the Fugs, Mr. Bungle, Ween and other similarly like-minded musical misfits.

A ragtag band of bohemians led by hippie svengali Seth Faergolzia, Dufus is the latest sensation from New York City's anti-folk scene. The Strokes are reportedly big Dufus fans.

But enough name-dropping. What the hell is anti-folk anyway?

There is no clear definition as to exactly what "anti-folk" is, but it's been said that anti-folk is to folk what punk is to rock.

The epicenter of the anti-folk scene resides at the Sidewalk Café in New York's East Village.

Artists such as Beck, King Missile and Ani DiFranco have been nurtured by the anti-folk scene, which has percolated quietly in the underground, unnoticed by the world.

Anti-folksters The Moldy Peaches are the scene's current superstars, who routinely sell out New York clubs.

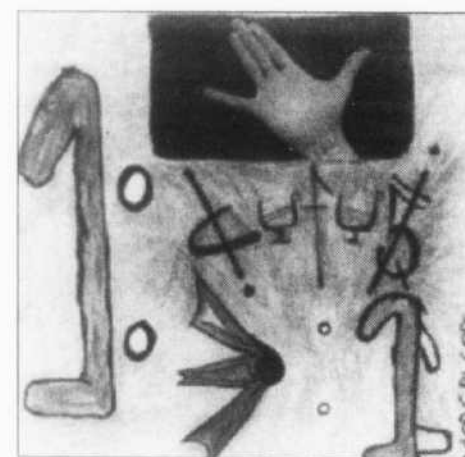
Dufus' first widely available album, *1:3:1*, should bring the anti-folk scene a little more attention. The influence of multiple members is apparent, as *1:3:1* is a maelstrom of sound from start to finish.

Dufus is as goofy, chaotic and experimental as they are structured and melodic. While most of the songs consist of oddball abstractness ("jah-

Dufus
'1:3:1'

ROIR Records
Released Sept. 29

★★★★★
(out of four stars)



flooey," "jox carrying dildos"). Dufus can also be pissed off ("mor girl cops") and heartbreakingly romantic ("deep in luv").

1:3:1 is a staggeringly complex and melodic work that gets better the more you listen to it.

Dufus has been getting raves from all corners of the underground press, and if you love any of the bands listed in the first paragraph of this review, you'll definitely like Dufus. ★

Memphis' Ingram Hill pursues music passion

By Josh Orendorf

"If I could give it all up and be a professional basketball player, I would," Justin Moore, lead vocalist and guitar player of folksy alternative rockers Ingram Hill, laughs. The group, originally established in Memphis, has been causing quite a stir with their latest disc, *June's Picture Show*, which hit stores early last month.

Influenced early in life by Elvis Presley and Elton John, Moore has always valued the importance of being an entertainer and it shows — the band played a gruesome 230 shows last year alone. But for them, it's simply pursuing a passion.

"My whole life I've enjoyed just being an entertainer, and I think that is why I get off on playing live so much, and why we all do — because of the immediate gratification of crowd response just being able to perform," Moore says.

As one can imagine, the band has their fair share of arguments; however, they handle the lengthy tour schedule professionally.

"Seeing the same three people for 24 hours everyday when you can't get away from them, you'll get sick of it. We pretty much treat each other like we're all married women, but at the same time we're all in this together," Moore chuckles.

And together they will be, for a long time, if they ever hope to achieve their ultimate purpose of world domination.

"We don't plan on quitting any time soon," Moore says. "Hopefully, we'll take over the world. We're still babies in the game and in our opinion we haven't come close to maxing out our potential."

Despite their big dreams, the band is absolutely giddy about being able to play music as a career, but more currently the release of their sophomore disc, *June's Picture Show*, which hoped to capture much of that same energy.

"I think the whole thing is a personal highlight for me. If you've heard anything else we've put out before, you'd hear how much better it is," Moore adds.

According to Moore, the album, produced by Rick Beato (Billionaire, Flickerstick), is a "much more mature record." The

Tidbits o' info

★ Moore's favorite song to play live is "To Your Grave."

★ The other band members are Phil Bogard (guitar), Shea Sowell (bass/vocals) and Matt Chambless (drums).

★ Passions, other than music, include sports (basketball in particular). Moore wants to be like Larry Bird, but "came up 9 inches too short and not all that good."

★ Moore's most embarrassing moment on stage happened when the band was playing a long show in Knoxville. By the end, there were lots of people getting drunk and spilling beer all over the

stage. Moore was trying to be funny when he slipped and fell directly on his back. "I think I took some cymbals with me," he remembers. The show stopped for 10 minutes because the band and Moore were laughing too hard.

★ Moore is a supporter of President George W. Bush and believes he hasn't gotten the respect he deserves.

"Sometimes you have to go over there and whip some tail to get your point across," he says.

★ Moore is against online music downloads and compares it to stealing shirts from Gap. However, he agrees that it can help and should be legal.

disc takes great gaits from their debut release, *Until Now*, and strives to create an attractive musical atmosphere that attempts to envelop the limitless power of four rising musicians trying to break out of the trite college-band mold.

Ingram Hill will be playing at the Exit/In tonight, Nov. 13, with 7 Mary 3. Tickets are \$16 and are on sale via Ticketmaster. Doors open at 8 P.M. 18 and over. ★

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★ Special thanks to 88.3 WMTS for their generosity with new albums. ★

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Next to the Rocking Horse

Nashville-based Annie Sellick jazzes up her act

By Joey Hood

In an empty-calorie, popular music landscape where Norah Jones holds her own against your Pinks and Avril Lavignes, the music of Annie Sellick might stand a fighting chance.

A transplanted Midwesterner, Sellick was nursed under the watchful eyes of Murfreesboro guitar phenom Roland Gresham and distinguished local piano player Beegie Adair.

And after years of carefully honing her musical chops under respected musicians, Sellick's natural stage presence and sultry scatting are gradually garnering attention on a much larger scale.

Currently, Nashville's homegrown jazz chanteuse resides in the Big Apple, hoping to capitalize on the success of her second release, *No Greater Thrill*.

Ever the amicable musician, Sellick decided to take time out of her hectic schedule for a little Q&A session.

Joey Hood: At what age did you consider becoming a jazz singer?

Annie Sellick: I decided to become a jazz singer at the age of 20. That was the year that I first discovered jazz music and the first time I had ever sung in front of a band. I was always comfortable on stage, even as a

kid when I studied dance. I grew up dancing and did some theatre in high school, but singing was my weak point. I believe my stage presence got me the jazz gig. Then I just decided that's what I was going to develop.

JH: Tell me about your first gigs with Roland Gresham. Was it daunting working with him?

AS: I remember at first crouching down on the bathroom floor at the Boro Bar & Grill, praying to God that things would go OK. I was nervous but very excited. I felt like I had discovered something that people thought I was really good at and it became real important to me. I was lucky that Roland believed in me and wanted to help me. Also, we had a natural rapport together ... especially on stage when we'd sing lover-battle songs. Ha! A 20-year-old white girl with dreads and a 60-something old-school black man. I loved him. His playing made me love jazz.

JH: Do you still keep in touch with Roland?

AS: Some, not much. I called him for some song lyrics the other day. It was fun re-hashing the old songs.

JH: What has been the best piece of advice Beegie Adair, Roland Gresham or anyone has ever given you?



Photo provided by Annie Sellick

On her sophomore album, *No Greater Thrill*, Sellick hones her sultry scatting skills.

AS: I dunno. I'd have to see how things work out to know if anyone's advice worked. When I was deciding what to do with my future, go with my degree in gerontology or sing jazz, my dad said, "What do you do naturally better than others?" I thought "performing," and he said that's what I should do. Beegie told me that I should pursue it and that has carried me on through harder days.

JH: Music purists tend to classify jazz as a more "male-dominated" genre. Do you think that this form of musical bigotry has affected your career?

AS: I don't feel it's worked against me in Nashville. I'm pretty down to earth and don't demand a lot. Certainly being a girl has worked for me in some cases. Who knows, maybe Roland thought having someone in a dress on stage would help his draw. Who cares? There I was and I loved it.

JH: Speaking of challenges, what do you think about the current state of the record industry and your role as an independent artist?

AS: Honestly, I have no idea. It is definitely harder to get a deal these days. The labels aren't doing much signing. I believe I have what it takes, but that doesn't mean it will work out for me. I am afraid being an independent artist will only get me so far. You gotta have a team and/or a lot of business sense. I'd rather focus on the music and performance aspect. I'm not great at the business side.

JH: Your latest album has garnered tremendous attention from the local media. But was there ever a distinct marketing strategy or was it more of a "word of mouth" campaign?

AS: The press I got from the first album, *Stardust on My Sleeve*, was unsolicited word of mouth. With the second one, I had the confidence to send press releases to the people who had written about me before. No money really went into it. It helps when people know you.

JH: Are you worried that some people might see your local coverage and

See Sellick, 11

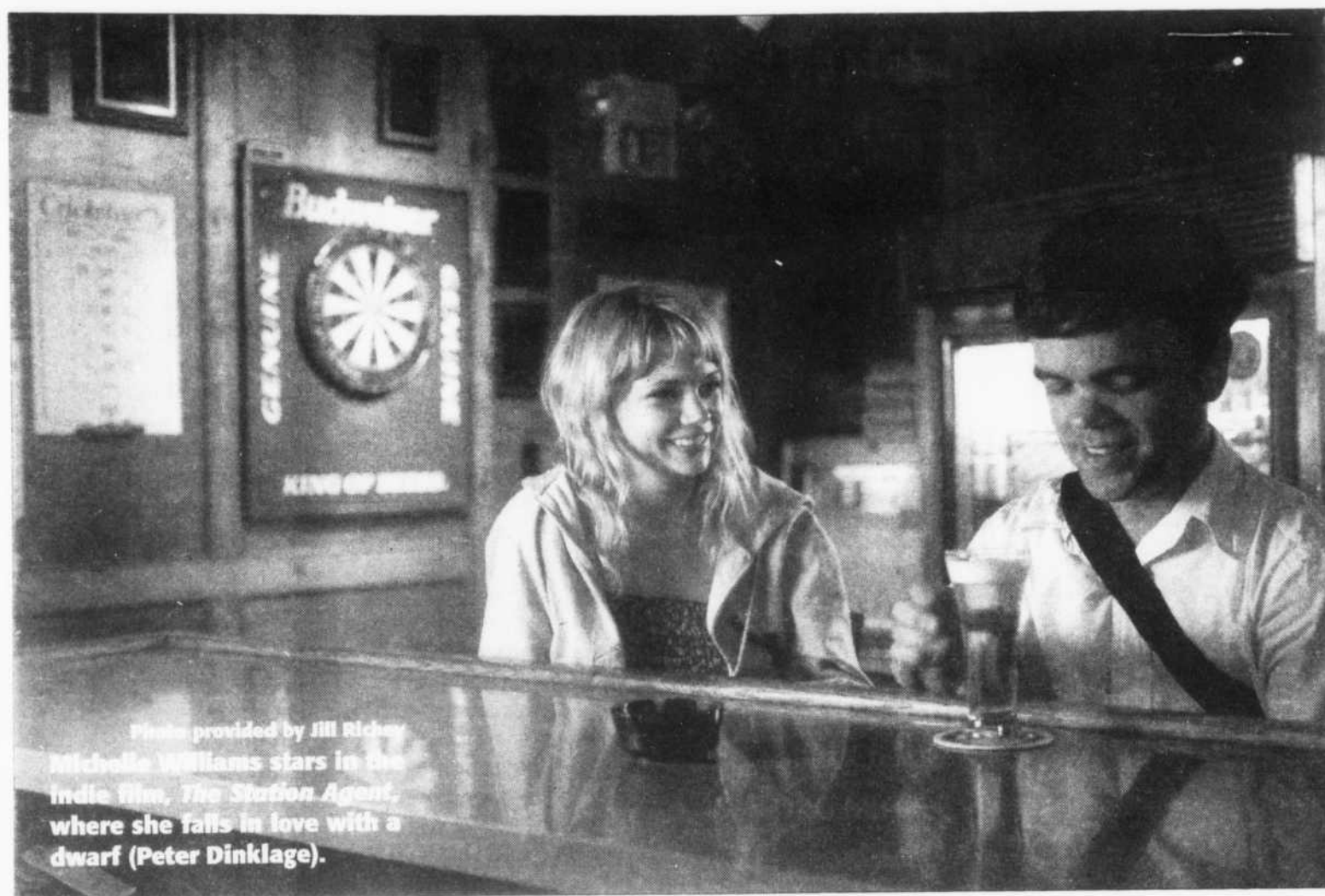


Photo provided by Jill Richer
Michelle Williams stars in the indie film, *The Station Agent*, where she falls in love with a dwarf (Peter Dinklage).

Williams won't drown in the 'Creek'

By Forrest Sanders

CHANCES ARE, you'll recognize Michelle Williams as the young actress who ducked knives and displayed her lungs' power in *Halloween H20* and unwittingly drove Richard Nixon to his impeachment in the political satire, *Dick*.

However, Williams is best known as the semi-reformed bad girl Jennifer Lindley on the WB's definitive teen-targeted drama, *Dawson's Creek*.

After five years of trials, tribulations and teen angst on *Dawson*, the 23-year-old actress is ready for a change.

Michelle Williams is laid-back and cheerful on the other end of the phone from New York as she talks about her foray into the independent movie scene, her new film, *The Station Agent*, and a career after *Dawson's Creek*.

"I haven't stopped working for my first seven years," Williams explains, though she admits that her past projects weren't always fulfilling.

"I did *Halloween* and *Dick*, and it's not that I didn't enjoy those films, but

they weren't indicative of the films I wanted to do."

Williams isn't the only *Dawson's Creek* alumni to pursue roles in less commercial, more ambitious projects. In 2002, James Van Der Beek starred in *Rules of Attraction*, Joshua Jackson struck out into the independent film territory with *The Safety of Objects* and Katie Holmes just recently headlined the Sundance Film Festival hit, *Pieces of April*.

"It could well be a reaction to *Dawson's Creek*," Williams says, "That felt like a big silly movie. We're ready for something different."

Williams admits that she initially faced much skepticism over her starring roles in independent films, but her credibility seemed to be most strengthened after a critically acclaimed turn in the coming-of-age film, *Me Without You* (she played the role

with a particularly convincing English accent).

"It really has to do with taste," she says of working in independent films. "It's what I respond to. This is what I would want to see."

Her latest film, *The Station Agent*, follows a young dwarf (played by Peter Dinklage) who moves into an abandoned train station in New Jersey to live as a hermit.

His life of solitude is consistently interrupted, however, by a slew of quirky characters, including a local librarian (Williams) who finds herself romantically attracted to him.

Though you won't find Williams in another television series any time soon, she's quite grateful for her experience and even takes some time to reminisce about her days shooting *Dawson's Creek*, paying special attention to the final episode in which her single

mother character died of a rare heart condition.

"My feelings were really hurt. I took it as if they didn't like me," she says, speaking of the first time she read the series finale script.

"But then I got excited. It was really appropriate for the show."

Blossoming from one of the 1990s' foremost teen actresses into a frequenter of independent cinema, Williams remains modest about her aspirations (she ranks the amount of time she thinks about winning an Oscar a "two" on a scale from one to 10).

In the year to come, she'll appear in such independent fare as *Prozac Nation* (starring Christina Ricci), *Hole in One* and *The United States of Leland*.

"I feel like I'm just starting to experience success in the way it means anything. Success, I haven't felt until now," she says. ★

THAT MUCH CLOSER TO HOME



Lucero's Ben Nichols gets serious

By Leslie Carol Boehms



Photo by Timothy Hing

UCERO started out of Memphis, and played their first show in 1998. The original line-up has changed, the sound has evolved and their audiences have grown in droves.

However, with the new release of their third LP, *That Much Further West*, this "Southern indie-rock" foursome has seen a new level of appreciation for their music. Here, lead singer, songwriter and guitarist Ben Nichols answers to the crowd.

Leslie Carol Boehms: Based on where Lucero started off musically, where would you say your music has evolved?

Ben Nichols: We started off wanting to write slow pretty country songs. There's a song on Tom Wait's *Rain Dogs* album called "Blind Love." I wanted to write songs like that. So, it was a deliberate experiment to write the kinds of songs that I wasn't used to writing. Since then, it's come into its own. Rock 'n' roll has been creeping back into the music since the beginning and now, I would say we're more of a rock 'n' roll band than an alternative country one, although I hope we've kept all of the sincerity and emotion that was in those old songs. People always ask me what kind of music we play and I think the closest I can get to naming it would be Southern indie-rock.

LCB: In relation to the previous question, were there bands that influenced you at the onset (who were they) and what are those influences now for the new record?

BN: Other than Tom Waits, I've always been a huge fan of Shane MacGowan as a songwriter and the Pogues are one of my favorite bands. We ended up being more Southern rock – naturally – than the Pogues, but that kind of heart and energy was what I always wanted from a band. The Band is another big influence on the songwriting. And I've been real into Bruce Springsteen lately. All the guys have their own personal favorites and it's all over the board.

LCB: Your new album seems to be more filled out and composed than *Tennessee*. Would you agree? Or what do you think has changed in *That Much Further West* compared to your last two LPs?

BN: Songwriting – I'm getting used to. Putting an album together that makes sense is still beyond my capabilities, I think. So far, it's been pretty much whatever is written is what ends up on the records. Putting together a consistent, well-thought album is a goal I've got. Hopefully, I'm getting closer, but to tell you the truth, I'm not sure if *Further West* is any better than the first two as far as that goes. We did engineer it ourselves and I think some of the sounds on the record are closer to what we want to end up with. We got to turn more knobs ourselves. Hell ... I don't know.

LCB: Lucero albums tend to be thematic to me – *Tennessee* just has this feeling, this raw emotion strung throughout it. Would you agree and do you think that the new album contains the same sort of connectivity?

BN: I think most of the songs we've

According to Nichols, Lucero's sophomore album, *That Much Further West*, better accomplishes the sound the band is going for than the previous album, *Tennessee*.

written could have that same feeling. There is kind of a nostalgia and longing and wandering quality to it all.

LCB: Overall, what would you consider as a top three list of personal favorite Lucero songs?

BN: That's a tough one for me. "Hold Fast" is up there off of the first record. On the new record, I think "When You Decided to Leave" has the most simple and best lyrics. Then I think the "Darby Song" on *Tennessee* is possibly the best song we've got, but we can't play it live because it's too true and too heartbreaking.

LCB: In the same vein as the last question, what would you consider the grandest or proudest accomplishment for the band thus far?

BN: We just got a little spot in *Rolling Stone* magazine. Back page on the "Hot List." We were number three and P. Diddy was number five [on the list]. But really, just having folks show up at the shows and sing along and go crazy – you can't beat that. And we've been having more and more shows like that. If that keeps up, then I think we can do this for a while.

LCB: How has it differed touring for the recent album in comparison to past tours? Have you found that you have a much

Photo used with permission from www.lucerofamily.net
Lucero plays Saturday at 9:30 with Glossary at the Boro Bar and Grill.

See **Lucero**, 8

Sexy African rhythms dominate 'Gold Coast'

By Joey Hood

Rhian Benson, a Ghana-bred new world revivalist, blankets African rhythms over motivational poetry in the engaging American release, *Gold Coast*.

Considering the inundation of blatantly oversexualized rhythm and blues divas (here's looking at you, Ashanti), Benson's smoldering vocals and unruffled posturing are welcome additions in today's bootylicious landscape.

Gold Coast is Benson's amazingly lucid American debut, a charily crafted bid to usurp Beyonce Knowles' soulless version of Clairi-soul music.

Needless to say, *Gold Coast* is also the smooth operator of industry-attuned marketing research groups.

Much of *Gold Coast*'s neo-soul pioneer preening smells of a *Love Deluxe*-era Sade.

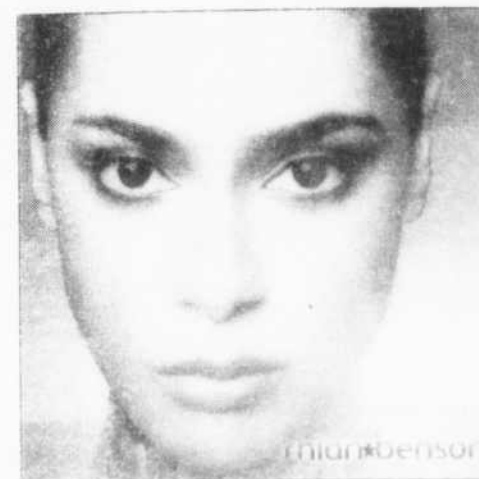
You see, when record execs snag unorthodox artists, dunderheaded throwbacks are inevitable. Chalk one up for the "afraid to take risks" syndrome.

On her first single, "Say How I Feel," Benson butters Sade-like seasonings over lush post-John Tesh cosmic soul. The current urban-lite sleeper alludes to the much-studied rhythm and blues paradigm of a wanton soul-seductress harboring feelings for her stoic suitor. "I'm gonna say how I feel," Benson croons over emboldened polyphony. Recycled R&B pulp-fiction romance aside, Benson does prove to be a laudable student of said paradigm.

Benson demonstrates her penchant for acerbic, vulnerable lyrics on the more salient "Stealing My Piece of Mind." Over pensive Oprah-worthy reflections, Benson cushions snug vocals alongside post-Sept. 11, 2001, stream of social consciousness. "I turned on the news just yesterday / I didn't believe that all sense had gone astray," Benson sings.

By far, *Gold Coast*'s signature track is "Spirit," an African backwoods staccato of Ghanaian vocalables and self-inspirational undertones in the India Arie ilk. "Let's find a way / Don't give up," Benson chants through leftover *Lion King* torrents.

Despite its overarching arrangement, "Spirit" truly sets Benson apart from the cookie-cutter R&B of her peers. It's the moment where Sade's shadow is left behind, as Benson untaps her own unique vessel. ★



Rhian Benson

'Gold Coast'

DKG Music

Released Oct. 7

☆☆☆

(out of four stars)



Photo provided

American debut Rhian Benson blows Beyonce Knowles' bootylicious soul out of the water on *Gold Coast*.

Continued from **Lucero**, page 7

larger fan base?

BN: It's getting there. Each town, each night you're trying to prove yourself to somebody. It's a long, slow process coming from the ground up like we've been trying to do. But yeah, a lot of towns are getting better and it's always nice to be surprised by a really enthusiastic crowd in a town you've never been to before.

LCB: Has this rise in attendance and attention

surprised you at all?

BN: We'd be doing exactly what we're doing now, no matter what was going on around us. We're gonna be doing what we're doing now for a lot longer, too — as long as the van is running and people let us sleep on their floors. But being a working band is further than I ever thought we'd get anyway.

LCB: How does the songwriting process happen for you lyrically and musically?

BN: Music first. Usually, I'll get a song written and arranged but with no lyrics, just a vocal pattern, and then bring it to the band. Depending on what they play, maybe some things change, maybe not. Then, I battle it out with the lyrics for months and months until I can come up with something that doesn't sound too bad. Easy as that.

Catch Lucero Saturday at 9:30 p.m. with Glossary at The Boro. The cover charge is \$5. ★



'Matrix: Revolutions'

Starring Keanu Reeves,
Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugo Weaving

Rated R

Directed by Andy and
Larry Wachowski

Released Nov. 5

Rating ★★☆☆1/2
(out of four stars)

Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

Keanu Reeves tries to make sense of the plot in which he plays a major part. Reeves is the mysterious Neo in *Matrix: Revolutions*, which has great visual effects and superior fighting scenes, but leaves more disgruntled questions than satisfying answers.

Last 'Matrix' might make you go 'Wha?'

By David Lawrence

After sitting for two hours and 15 minutes watching this film, I'm not really sure if I can write a review on it.

The plot goes as follows: The war between the last remaining humans and the machines is picking up. Neo (Keanu Reeves) is still "the one" and Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving) is busy downloading copies of himself into whatever programs he can. The rest all comes down to these two, I think.

From a purely visual standpoint, this was quite possibly the best film of 2003. The fight scenes between Smith and Neo are breathtaking and near poetic as they pound the sense out of each other.

But from a story standpoint, I have no idea what I witnessed. Characters will often disappear for long stretches and there will be long talks about life and its place in the world followed up with people blasting away at each other with handguns (which nobody ever bothers to reload).

The battle scenes are fantastic. Imagine giant metal squids attacking heavily armed Legos and you might have a vague idea on just what the scenes are like. The shots of the machines as they rally against the humans are both awe-inspiring and downright creepy.

Weaving, as Agent Smith, steals the show. As the bad guy Smith is supposed to be, Weaving simply walks away the champ in every scene.

Much has been said on Reeves and his "wooden" performance, but here that works in his favor. Carrie-Anne Moss's role as Trinity lacks the bite she had previously. Laurence Fishburne is almost totally wasted as Morpheus — but, in a way, it makes sense. Neo is the star of the show — not anyone else.

The only failings I could find were the characters themselves. While Neo's actions have a great impact on the story, we just don't see him as much. There are many, many new faces and the time we spend with them does take away from what we see of the heroes from the first two films.

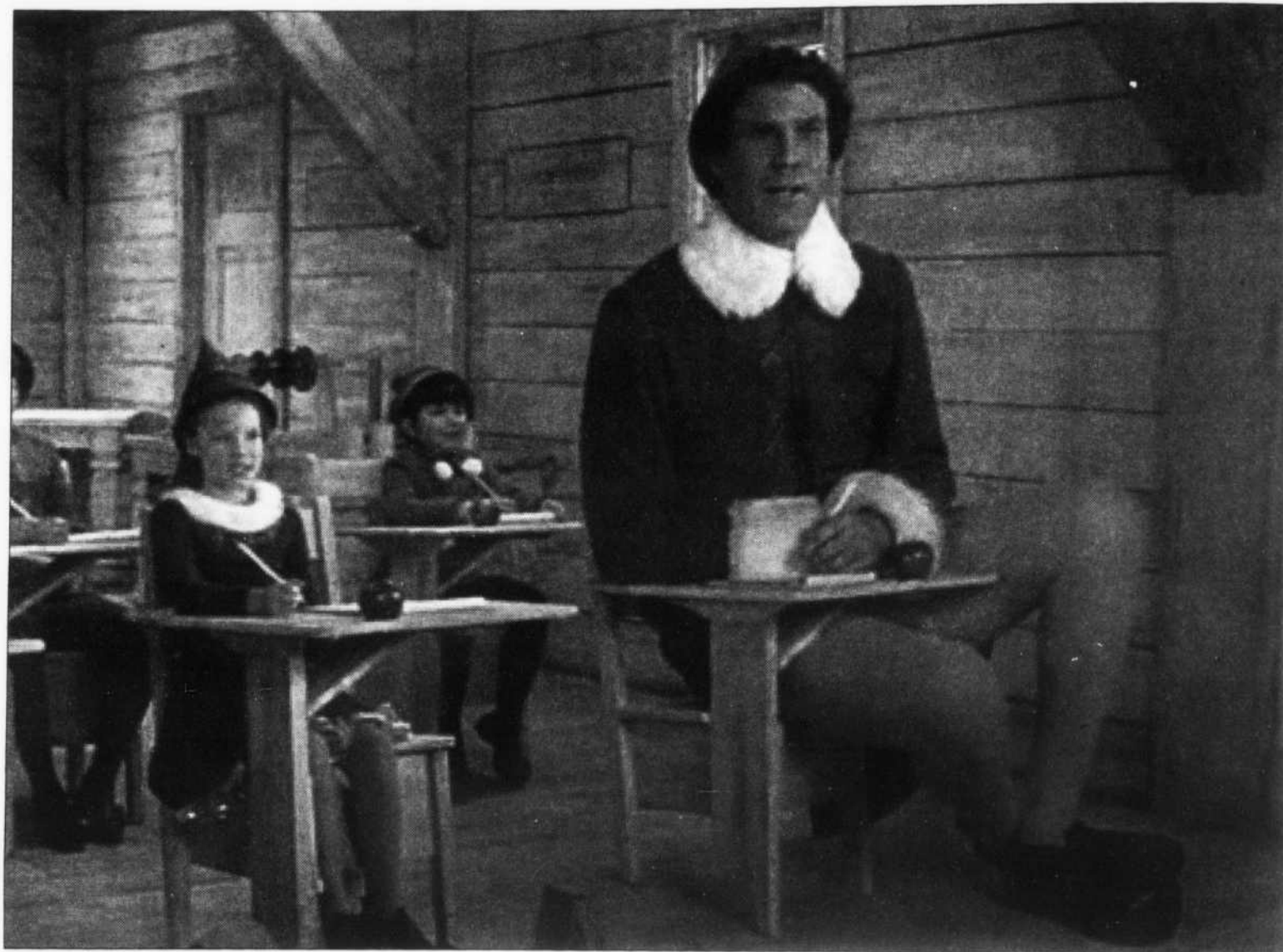
Because this is the third and final film, does it answer all of the questions? Since I barely had a grasp on just what questions were being asked, I have no idea. The film feels like the final chapter in a very large book, and unless you've read every single word, you are going to be totally lost.

If you're a fan of the series, then watching this movie is a must. If you want to see some genuinely impressive special effects, then this film is a must.

If you want a story that doesn't take multiple viewings to understand, then maybe you just wait for *The Matrix* and *Matrix: Reloaded* to come out on video and just do your own commentary on it. ★

'Elf' is good—who knew?

By William Cleveland



Will Ferrell is a Christmas elf and James Caan is his long-lost dad, and they run around New York for an hour and a half.

Ed Asner plays Santa and the guy from *Swingers* is directing it. Who wants to see it?

Sure, every movie would sound bad described like that, but it doesn't change the fact that *Elf*, directed by Jon Favreau, sounds like a terrible movie. It isn't, though. It's better than it sounds, and much better than the commercials would have you believe. It isn't perfect, of course. *Elf* is 90 minutes long, and 70 minutes of it is a wonderful Christmas movie.

Will Ferrell plays Buddy, a human who, when he was a baby, accidentally hitched a ride in Santa's bag up to the North Pole and was raised as an elf. Most of the movie's best moments are beginning North Pole scenes, which were made more for the grown-ups watching.

From the casting of comedy legends Bob Newhart as Buddy's elf father and

'Elf'

Starring Will Ferrell, James Caan, Ed Asner

Rated PG

Directed by Jon Favreau

Released Nov. 7

Rating ★★★
(out of four stars)

Asner as a gruff St. Nick, to the stop-motion animated animals straight out of old Rankin/Bass Christmas TV specials like *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, it's a postmodern take on Christmas not unlike what *Shrek* did with fairy tales.

Like Steve Martin in *The Jerk*, who had to be told he wasn't black, Buddy doesn't realize why he's 3 feet taller than everyone else until he overhears two elves badmouthing him.

Papa Elf tells him the truth about where he came from and who his real parents are. His mother died when he

Photo courtesy of New Line Cinema
The always funny Will Ferrell plays Buddy, a human accidentally abducted by Santa and raised as an elf in the North Pole in *Elf*. *Elf*, despite the propensity holiday movies have for being cheesy, is actually good.

was a baby, but his father lives in New York City. Dad, played by one-time resident (that's right, resident) of the Playboy mansion James Caan, is a children's book publisher who, to Buddy's horror, is on Santa's naughty list. Buddy sets off for the Big Apple to find his new family and saves Christmas along the way.

The beginning of *Elf* is a loving wink at Christmas movie clichés, and the end is a warm and fuzzy reaffirmation of those same clichés.

The middle, however, which mostly concerns Buddy being a fish out of water, flounders a bit. There are some great scenes, such as when Buddy exposes a department store Santa as a fraud. "You sit on a throne of lies!?" Buddy hisses at him.

The romance between Buddy and a department store elf played by Zooey

Deschanel thankfully hits the right note. Its sweetness distracts from some of the creepier implications of a guy who thinks he's an elf. The movie falls short in the scenes with Buddy trying to win his dad's approval. After the initial joke of watching Sonny Corleone wrangle a 6-foot man-elf, the movie seems unsure of what to do with their relationship until the end, when Dad learns his Christmas lesson.

The movie's faults are not drastic, and they're certainly no fault of the actors. Ferrell is possibly the only actor who could have made Buddy work as well as he does.

The movie laughs with him, not at him. It's a kid's movie, but it gives adults a good time and is confident enough not to pander (well, it panders a little). All in all, *Elf* is the first good Christmas movie of the 21st century. ★

[club listings]

Thursday, Nov. 13

3rd & Lindsley: Old Union CD Release Party, 9 p.m., \$5.

Belcourt Theatre: Badly Drawn Boy, Leona Naess, 8 p.m., \$15.

Blue Sky Court: Common Ground, Ever Vigilant, Fellow, The Ease, 8 p.m., \$5.

Boro Bar & Grill: Satchel, Rock City, Machine, Doc Hollywood, 9:30 p.m., \$5-7.

Exit/In: Seven Mary Three, Ingram Hill, 9:30 p.m., \$16.

Mercy Lounge: Rage's Birthday Bash featuring - Trent Summar and the New Row Mob, Apollo Up, The Privates, 8:30 p.m.

The Muse: Stuck Lucky, The Pigs, 7 p.m., \$10.

The Sutler: Mark Selby, Sean Locke, 8:30 p.m., \$5.

Wall Street: Sam & Eddie, 9:30 p.m.

Windows on the Cumberland: The Motivational Speakers, Invisible Downtown, Sheila Marshall, 9 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 14

12th & Porter: Fairfax, The Luxury Liners, 10 p.m.

All American Sports Grill: Radio Theory, 10 p.m., \$3.

Boro Bar & Grill: SkyHi, Secret Gossip, 9:30 p.m., \$5-7.

The End: Vaux, Fall With Me, The Letters Organize, Waving at Strangers, 9 p.m., \$6.

Exit/In: Cory Morrow,

Shannon Lawson, 10 p.m., \$10.

Guido's: Not Before Noon, Chimpan-A, 9 p.m., \$4.

Mercy Lounge: Denny Diamond, 9:30 p.m., \$8.

The Muse: Northstar, Everest, Plaster, Shepherd of Fools, 7 p.m., \$5.

Red Rose: Rich Creamy Paint, My Brother, Disappointed by Candy, 9 p.m., \$5.

The Sutler: Cheryl Hill, 8:30 p.m., \$5.

Wall Street: Ervin Stellar, 9:30 p.m., \$5.

Windows on the Cumberland: Andy Beckey Band, Big Bad Wooly, Hands Up, 9 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 15

12th & Porter: Lucky Guns, Jetpack, Chuck Carrier, 10 p.m.

All American Sports Grill: Built For Comfort, 10 p.m., \$3.

Blue Sky Court: Lume, The Ups & Downs of Industry, II Libertina, 9 p.m., \$5.

Boro Bar & Grill: Glossary, Lucero, 9:30 p.m., \$5-7.

The End: I am the World Trade Center, De Novo Dahl, Aspera, 9 p.m., \$7.

Exit/In: Shelby Lynne, 10 p.m., \$26.

Mercy Lounge: Patterson Hood, Phil Lee, Duane Jarvis, 10 p.m.

Municipal Auditorium: A Perfect Circle, 8 p.m., \$28.50.

The Muse: Feable Weiner,

Red Hot Valentines, The Pink Spiders, 7 p.m., \$5.

Red Rose: Ultimate Driving Experience, Stateside, Mercator, 9 p.m., \$5.

Rocketown: Broken, Nebula Theory, Lose Even Now, 10:30 p.m.

Tower Records (Downtown Nashville): Humdrum Sampler with - The Ups & Downs of Industry, Imaginary Baseball League, Lume, Death Comesto Matteson, 4 p.m., free.

Wall Street: Juan Profit Organization, 9:30 p.m., \$5.

Windows on the Cumberland: Guy Smiley Blues Exchange, 10 p.m., \$6.

Sunday, Nov. 16

3rd & Lindsley: Poco, The Cash Brothers, 8 p.m., \$15.

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

The Muse: Nemo DNA, Fateful Depart, 7 p.m., \$5.

The End: Comedy Nite featuring Neil Hamburger, Canned Hamm, Craig Smith, 9 p.m., \$7.

Exit/In: Brian Auger & the Oblivion Express, 7:30 p.m., \$15.

Rocketown: The Ataris, Hopesfall, Planes Mistaken for Stars, Squirt Gun, 6:45 p.m., \$16.

Wall Street: Restaurant Appreciation with Avent, 9:30 p.m., \$3

A boy and his banjo

By Leslie Carol Boehms

"Cold and Dead," the opening track on William Elliott Whitmore's album *Hymns for the Hopeless*, is alarmingly reminiscent of the legendary Johnny Cash, and it's rare a vocalist is comparable to Cash.

Whitmore, however, holds the groggy, wavering, rattling and feverish voice similar to the accomplished country singer. "Cold and Dead" is a completely vocal track wherein Whitmore's lone voice is chillingly bare.

Let me now explain why the comparison to Cash is so stunning. When listening to *Hymns for the Hopeless* and hearing the voice of Whitmore sans a pictorial marker, I assumed this man has probably set back a few too many bottles of bourbon, smoked a few too many cigars and is over the hump of middle-age.

However, after a little research, I found a picture of Whitmore. The man is probably just now touching 30.

Aside from the astounding vocal capabilities of Whitmore, the musical composition on *Hymns for the Hopeless* is also gapingly unique. Though the record is definitely in the country/folk category, his tunes explode with rockabilly and Americana influences.

Track three, "Does me no good," is another perfect example of Whitmore's talents. The track, though ladled with the drunken lyrics of a heartbroken man, is simply Whitmore and a banjo. Simplicity is, after all, the summation of this man's music. There is no need for fanciful recordings or additions. Whitmore strips down the process of music — taking *Hymns for the Hopeless* back to original country music origins.

You won't want to miss Whitmore's performance at the Red Rose Coffee House and Bistro on Nov. 19. Additional artists on the bill are The Falling and Michael Acree, who are currently on tour for their 7-inch release, "Music for Christmas." Doors open at 8 p.m.; cover charge is \$5. ★

William Elliott Whitmore
'Hymns for the Hopeless'

Southern Records

Released Oct. 7

☆☆ 1/2
(out of four stars)

Continued from Sellick, page 4

write you off as media hype?

AS: No. It might get on some people's nerves, though.

JH: Also on your new album, you co-wrote "Cafe 123," your first co-write, if I'm not mistaken. Has songwriting always been a goal for you as a musician?

AS: Yeah, I wrote the melody and lyrics. Jack Jezzro was over at my house

and I ran a tape recorder while he was just messing around. He was playing stuff he thought sounded like "me." I isolated one of the jam streams and made a song out of it. Most of the years that I've been in jazz, I have thought of myself as a student of it. Writing is scary when your initiation to music is through jazz. It's not like writing pop or country. I really want to

get better at it. It's hit or miss with me. Sometimes I write something I adore, like "Cafe 123."

JH: What are you working on currently? I guess the big news is your presence in New York City, right?

AS: Yeah, I'm home a lot too, though for private gigs. When I come home, I work on demos for my new record. It's a little more acoustic — similar on

some songs to when I worked with the Gypsy Hombres. I'm finding great tunes and trying to write something worthy of the new album. I would like to add that so much of what I do is about playing live. It is a challenge to capture on CD what I feel that I can communicate with an audience and other players, live. That, for me, is where the real magic happens. ★

[WMTS
top 10]

- 1 The Shins
'Chutes Too Narrow'
- 2 Lucero
'That Much Further West'
- 3 Feable Weiner
'Dear Hot Chick'
- 4 Outkast
'Speakerboxxx/The Love Below'
- 5 Yo La Tengo
'Today Is The Day [EP]'
- 6 Various artists
'Orange Twin Sampler'
- 7 Belle and Sebastian
'Dear Catastrophe Waitress'
- 8 Death Cab For Cutie
'Transatlanticism'
- 9 Ladybug Transistor
'Ladybug Transistor'
- 10 Pretty Girls
Make Graves
'The New Romance'

★Compiled by
WMTS Music Director
Jozeph Ash★



Photo provided
by Shawn Whitsell

The *Cultural Millennium* cast hopes to present thought-provoking, true depictions of the black experience in America in their production, playing now at the Darkhorse Theater in Nashville.

Playwright puts experience on stage

'Cultural Millennium' celebrates black history

By Amber Bryant

Michael Walker, like many Americans, remembers a time when blacks weren't allowed to use the same water fountain as whites.

"I grew up in South Central [Los Angeles], but my parents are from two different parts of the South, so I spent a lot of summers in the South, and I actually remember not being able to use the restroom because I was black," he tells me.

While the bad times might overshadow the joyous ones a bit, Walker remembers and accounts for both in his play *Cultural Millennium*, a "poetry theater" production celebrating black culture and history.

"It chronicles African-

American history and some of the current issues in the African-American community through poetry and dance and music," he says. Although Walker won't be performing in the play ("I don't have Spike Lee syndrome," he jokes), he founded the performing troupe, Dream 7.

As an African-American theater company, Dream 7 adds the play to their list of credentials, which includes a one-act play, *Glimpses of Choice*, and at least one upcoming performance, *Advising Uncles*, Walker's 11th piece tentatively scheduled to be performed in May.

This weekend marks the third and final Nashville performance of *Cultural Millennium*, which is mapped out in two movements instead of acts, from the dark days of slavery to today.

"In the first movement, there's poetry that deals with the marches in the '50s, and the disco era celebrates how we party, if you will," Walker

says.

The second movement continues to flesh out the cultural nuances of the Million Man March and being a black woman in the millennium, up through recent issues like drug and gang epidemics. The play's soundtrack samples music from the movie *Amistad*, India.Arie and the Harlem Shuffle.

"I think that anybody of any age can benefit, because, although it's Afro-centric, it's still an American story," Walker says. "It's a piece of American history. Every culture in America has their piece of history, good and bad."

Shawn Whitsell, a second-year member of Dream 7 (and [flash] writer), touches on how the troupe handles subject matter that might be foreign or threatening to some.

"We've all adopted the mission to not only entertain audiences, but to inform them of the black experience in America," he says. "Some of it's good, some of it's bad, and we

present it in a way that's not criticizing other people or criticizing ourselves. We just try to present the truth."

The 20-member company has been practicing for six weeks, reciting a mantra together before each rehearsal and performance: "Rhythm equals timing equals being on your mark equals getting that rush." The group also holds a universal prayer session before and after the hard work is done.

Cultural Millennium is showing Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 4 p.m. at the Darkhorse Theater in West Nashville at 4610 Charlotte Pike.

The cost is \$10 in advance and at the door. Because last year's performance packed a full house (*Sidelines* reporter Heidi Ward gave it rave reviews), Walker recommends reserving tickets by calling 474-0161 or 300-1576.

"My mama will be sittin' in the front row, or I won't be there, for real," Walker jokes. ★