

SIDELINES

FLASH!

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 16

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

FEBRUARY 16, 2000



Nashville kicks it



NEXT FEST 2000



INSIDE



MOVIE REVIEW

No shrieks in
'Scream 3'

QUESTION
OF THE WEEK
'Boro Hot Spots'

MUSIC REVIEW

P.O.D. doesn't
deliver





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INSIDE

here's to you... Growing Up

noise from the knoll... Where is your favorite place to hang out in the 'Boro?

he said/ she said... The Man's Man and Atypical Woman find romance lacking

featuring... Next Fest showcases industry

film... If sex sells, why didn't 'Romance?'

film... 'Scream 3' recycles old shrieks

music... P.O.D. doesn't really deliver

music... 'Bluebloods' full of beat

the score

theater... 'Special Occasions' play out the pain of divorce

theater... 'Piano' brings family and song together

horoscope
special events

On the cover:

(Clockwise from top right)

Dave Berg, fair verona,

All-Star-United, and The Katies

SIDELINES

STUDENT BALLOT

Nomination for Outstanding Teacher Award 1999-2000

I Nominate _____
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(Nominees must be full-time faculty members to be eligible)

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Here's to you...

Looking back and stepping forward

Growing

Isn't it interesting how as we were growing up we couldn't wait to be a "big kid" because they were so cool or to be a "grown-up" because they knew everything.

So now we're adults — living on our own and in a world constructed by the decisions we make in lifestyle, career, academia and relationships. It's everything that we always wanted — complete independence.

And yet, as soon as and as often as possible we rush go back home where we spent so many years yearning to break free. But why on earth do we act this way? Why do we find ourselves going back to the very people and places we shrugged off as we grew up because we didn't need them anyway?

Perhaps, the answer lies in what Dorothy, (Judy Garland), said in *The Wizard of Oz*, "There's no place like home..." So despite the good and the bad aspects of our homelife and childhood, nothing can ever reinact or take the place of those memories. While some of us may try the impossible of replacing those memories, the rest of us will continue attempting the impossible of keeping those idealistic childhood memories alive in our responsibility-driven, time-regimented, stress-riddled adult world. If only we all had a bit of pixie dust...

Robin Wallace
Flash! Editor

NOISE FROM THE KNOLL

WHERE IS YOUR
FAVORITE
PLACE TO HANG
OUT IN THE
'BORO?

"Main Street because
they play the music
I want to hear."

Brent Lippincott
Junior, RIM
Kansas City, MO



"Assuming there was a
place to hang out, it would
be a quiet, coffee-house
type jazz club."

Erika Pryor
Freshman, Photography
Memphis, TN



"Faces because
of pool tables and dancing.
Monday nights are the best!"

Audrey Dunkle
Sophomore, English
Nashville, TN



"The 'Boro cause of the
dingy rock 'n roll."

Gieves Anderson
Junior, Photography
Nashville, TN



"Tiger Mart. French Vanilla
Cappuccinos and 40's!"

Josh Hood
Junior, RIM
Johnson City, TN



"My room because there is
nothing to do!"

Mia Patterson
Freshman, Human Science
Memphis, TN



"Computer Lab. I like to
keep in touch with my
cousin in California and pass
the time."

Lashawn Lester
Sophomore, Math Education
Memphis, TN



"The Red Rose -- I have
some friends that work
there."

Lynn Hearn
Sophomore, Special Ed.
Nashville, TN



he said...

A Man's Man
by Josh Ezzell

Relationships often start out magical
ly, but eventually fizzle out. There are
various reasons why that happens. People
fight, cheat and have differences they are
unable to overcome. Another problem is
that men and women see things differ-
ently.

Women think that men need to be
romantic in order to keep the magic
going. Men believe that women should be
happy with the way things are going.

Romance needs to be defined. Being
romantic means going on romantic din-
ners, buying flowers and being a
Casanova. Women call it "spending qual-
ity time with each other."

I am against romantic things, but
they're a necessary evil for a certain peri-
od of time.

Men need to be romantic in the
beginning. If we aren't nice, women won't
enjoy our company, and they'll find a
man who is more compassionate.

If we don't shower them with "love
and affection," then they will begin to
feel neglected and unwanted.

Consequently, if women don't feel
important, they get unhappy and start
nagging. As a result, men have to have
serious talks with women, and these
always suck.

As a result of these talks, men either
get dumped, or they are told to change
the way they are, which both suck.

Romance is always great for women,
but in the beginning of a relationship it
also benefits men.

If you are romantic, women are more
likely to cut you some slack when you do
something stupid. This is crucial, because
all men do stupid things — it's in our
genes.

Plus, men want action. In order to get
women to give it up, men have to be
charming.

Eventually, when people get comfort-
able in relationships, the romance stops
because there's no need to be mushy any-
more when everybody's happy.

Women often say that they need to
know that men care. Well, if men didn't
care they would get out — it's that sim-
ple.

You don't hear men saying I don't feel
loved, I don't feel needed. Men under-
stand that women care, and that's enough
for them.

Of course women don't see things as
men do. Therefore, men have to bite the
bullet and continue to be romantic.
Otherwise, men will be single. And as
much as men like hanging out with each
other, we still need women.

she said...

Atypical Woman
by Angela White

Chivalry is dead. At least it should
be. In today's supposedly "equal" world,
there should be no discrimination based
on sex, negative or otherwise. The "perks
of ladyhood" — doors opened, chairs
pulled, free meals — do nothing but hold
women back in achieving equal rights.

So with this in mind, one question
must be asked. Is romance dead?
Depends on your definition.

Romance has traditionally been about
the man winning over the woman. It
doesn't matter whether they haven't
started dating yet or if they have been
together for 50 years.

The typical woman insists that her
man keep her happy. She does not allow
herself to have any control over how she
feels. If he neglects to bring her flowers
or tell her what she wants to hear, she
become fixated on being unhappy, and on
him being the cause of that unhappiness.

Romance has been poisoned by these
expectations. Men despise the term, see-
ing it as meaning endless work and frus-
tration that ultimately always leads to a
conclusion totally unlike the one for
which they had hoped or imagined.

We can do only one thing to save
romance — completely redefine the term
and how it pertains to both women and
men in our society. Romance should be
about the love between two equal part-
ners, and nothing more.

Of course I'm not so insane as to actu-
ally believe that's going to happen.

Romance may be unsalvageable. We
may have come to a point where nothing
short of a nuclear winter is going to
change the relationship between men
and women where they can be treated
the same and both be happy.

The reason for this, unfortunately, is
that neither women nor men as a whole
want anything to change.

Women like to be treated as objects.
They like the idea that men have to
work to get what they want. Women are
willing to sacrifice such ideologies as
equal pay and proper medical care in
turn for being bought with flowers and
jewelry [did I mention the free meals?].

As for men, as much as they may
bitch about having to keep women
happy, they do not want to treat women
equally. Those little "perks" men give
the opposite sex may seem harmless
enough, but they are in fact a weapon.
After all, why would women want to be
treated equally when they are treated so
much better?

It's obvious that romance isn't dead.
Romance as it should be, however, is.

Next Fest showcases industry

by ROB EVANS
STAFF WRITER

Imagine a perfect world for rock music. One where musicians, managers, label executives and the people who support the music, people like you and me who buy the music, come together to mingle and listen to some of the coolest bands around.

Next Fest 2000 provided such an atmosphere last Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. In fact, it was such a large atmosphere it was impossible to take it all in. At least 30 bands played at seven venues each night. In many cases I had to flip a coin to decide where I was going, and who I was going to listen to.

Early each night, one could say, the crowd turnout was less than expected. Maybe it was because of some confusion this would be a local talent showcase. However, many of the bands routinely tour the entire country and Europe. All-Star United, who had just flown in from Los Angeles Thursday morning, played and then turned around and flew out to Vail, Colo.

Lead singer Ian Eskelin began ASU's set by telling the crowd, "I just woke up from a nap, but I still plan on rocking this place out."

Which he did. At one point, during the song "Superstar," there were three guitars and one bass on stage, all forming to create a punkish sound but with complicated melodies.

Surprisingly, All-Star United is a band that follows some Christian values. They could have fooled me, as did Honeyfarm, another band that played Thursday night that has the same beliefs. The lead singer described the difficulties Christian bands face.

"Most Christian bands sound like actual mainstream bands," he said. "If they don't, Christian labels won't sign them. But if they proclaim to be Christian, regular mainstream labels won't sign them. So it's a catch 22."

Honeyfarm had a sound that was familiar, but I was never able to place it. It was much like a mix between '80s pop and '70s Southern rock. The band had great energy and presence, and their deeply Southern accents provided some comedy.

Catherine White, operating coordinator for sponsor Emerald Records, explained why Next Fest is such an important function.



"We are trying to support the community's rock scene by bringing in national acts. We are trying to look toward the future with potential talent," she said.

Many of the bands that left Next Fest may become the next big thing. Hundreds of industry executives were in attendance, and deals were made all night with unsigned bands looking for a break. One band that is well known locally and regionally was at the Exit/In Thursday night looking to play to the crowd and have a good time. The Katies already have a deal with Spongebath/Elektra Records, so they acted as the headline act to bring the crowd out. One problem. The crowd came to see them.

The Katies are well known for their energetic shows and the feeling of their songs. The lyrics they sing are heavy with play on words, and their ballads sing about love and spirituality. The Katies played favorites like "Noggin' Poundin'" and "Shisiedo," and they played some new songs called "Outerspace" and "Sideways."

When asked if they were putting out a new album soon, bassist Gary Welch replied, "No, we want to sit on our current album a while longer. We want to go out and tour some more."

Some other bands also looking to increase their visibility were the Gas Giants – the current incarnation of the Gin Blossoms. The band is back and with a harder, more visible sound than in the past. They played Friday night at the Exit/In. The Gas Giants played several of their new songs, including "Now the Change," which lead singer/songwriter/guitarist Robin Wilson described as "full of rock and roll clichés." But don't get him wrong. The song is heavy, a drastic change from the Gin Blossoms of old.

Saturday night had more of a local flavor, as artists like Ruby Amanfu and Will Hume took the stage to show they were just as good as anybody else.

Ruby Amanfu used her incredible voice which silenced the talkative crowd the minute she began singing. Playing back-up for Amanfu were two MTSU students, Kelby Caldwell and Jaren Johnston.

As well as the music, there were workshops, meetings and parties for industry people that covered a variety of topics and issues in the recording industry, which were sponsored by ASCAP and BMI.

Saturday's festivities closed with a late night breakfast at Cafe 123 where artists, producers, media and executives alike let their hair down and mingled. Of course I could have sworn I saw several popular artists at the party [such as members of the bands Live and Fuel], but then again I was too chicken to ask.

Top Right: All-Star-United
Bottom Left: fair verona
All photos by: Robin Wallace



Coming soon to a venue near you -- More Music

by Robin Wallace, *FLASH!* Editor

Whether you're a musician or just into indie bands, the festival scene is where you need to be. While Next Fest is only a yearly showcase, Festival Management, LLC will be presenting other similar events in the months to follow, yet there are many other festivals featuring unsigned groups.

Most festivals focus on a particular genre, like the Mid-America Bluegrass Festival of Cookeville, Tenn., [July 14-16, 2000] and yet at larger, more national festivals like the Atlantis Music Conference of Atlanta, GA [August 9-12, 2000], the genre ranges.

Still, festivals aren't the only location to showcase music. The Internet is a gold mine of sites and information and tools to expand your band's horizons and your listening collection. So whatever you do, check out these useful sites, including those of the festivals.

- iuma.com – listen to, download or buy indie tracks.
- llamalinks.com – provides links to cutting edge of alternative rock, grunge, indie labels, punk, industrial, avant garde and lolapalooza.
- rockband.com – a guide to indie and unsigned bands.
- festivalfinder.com – searches and lists information on local, national and international festivals.
- Mid-America Bluegrass Festival – for more information, call [931] 258-4185.
- Atlantis Music Conference – artist application deadlines: March 1, April 1, April 15. Call [770] 499-8600 or e-mail atlantis@atlantismusic.com.

by ROBIN WALLACE
FLASH! EDITOR

If sex sells, why didn't 'Romance?'

"Romance" shocked me almost in every scene of the film, not because of what was shown, but how it was shown. Sex and nudity came in and out of scenes without either an apparent explanation or purpose. Unlike most who saw the film last week, I knew a lot about the plot, the characters and the director's intent, yet, I still was not able to connect all the dots.

The plot is horribly disjointed - saturated

with freezing-cold emotions and tediously drawn-out scenes. These two elements were the basis of the whole film, which made me frustrated and detached. This was the exact intention of Catherine Breillat, playwright/director. She wanted the audience to feel as Marie, the main character, was feeling - perplexed and isolated.

However, this strategy definitely backfired as displayed by a number of people who left in the middle of the film throughout the few days it ran in the Keathley University Center theater. It is hard to say whether they walked out in disgust of the nudity or the stupidity in the plot of "Romance."

On the other hand, I managed to link the coldness of the film's plot to the coldness that often grows in intimate relationships. While Marie constantly sent mixed signals about her wants and desires, I found her to be supposedly depicting "every woman's" quest to find the meaning in her relationship and her subsequent role within it.

Generally, men and women do not go to such extremes to find themselves as Marie did, yet our emotions and thoughts certainly do. This tragedy of being torn between the heart and mind was the second point I was able to decipher. Nevertheless, such parallels are no excuse for a half-baked plot, where music is the only indication to an epiphany, since the rest of the film had no musical background.

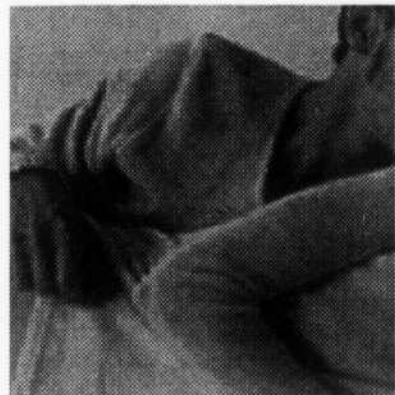
As ironic as it may be, the ending is the best part of "Romance." It is no mistake that the final three scenes showed more emotion than all the film's scenes put together. A sudden explosion of passion marks the decision that Marie makes between her heart and mind, which



allows her to be "alive" again. Multiplying the symbolism, Marie is giving birth and along with all the other graphic content of the film, two glorious shots take a walk down memory lane - to the health and sex-ed classes of grade school.

Naturally, the film ends with the same abstractness nearing absurdity in which it began, without the plot ever moving past stage one. So, I guess not all sex sells.

My Grade: D



by Jared Wilson
Staff Writer

'Scream 3' recycles old shrieks

Last year, I wrote an essay titled "Scream" and the Death of Irony," in which I analyzed how the first two films in the horror series reflect the new irony, which, ironically enough, is not irony at all, but pop-culture anecdotes and self-reference delivered with an internal smirk.

I may have jumped the gun. "Scream 3" promises to bring the series full-circle. This new film is the third in the trilogy, not just another installment in a franchise, and I had high hopes for what I assumed would be high art masquerading in pop-culture clothing.

This time, all I got was a killer in a ghost mask. "Scream 3" tells the story of the making of "Stab 3," the third film in a trilogy based on the lives of the kids in the Woodsboro murders of the first

"Scream." The kids are all grown-up now. Neve Campbell, the series protagonist and eternal victim, lives in hiding under an assumed name, counseling women in crisis from a hotline set up in her ranch house. The other returning "Scream"ers are David Arquette as Dewey and Courtney

Cox-Arquette as Gale Weathers. The two have separated since their "Scream 2" romance, which allows "Scream 3" to rehash their courtship for a third time.

Of course, someone begins murdering people on the set of "Stab 3," only in the order they are offed in the script. But, according to the director [Scott Foley of "Felicity" fame], there are three scripts floating around to prevent the posting of the ending on the Internet. No problem. The killer starts faxing his own script pages. Don't say he [or she] didn't warn you.

When I heard months ago that "Scream 3" would not be written by Kevin Williamson, the mind behind the first two, I was worried. Williamson had envisioned the "Scream" story as a trilogy all along. The story was his story, and the first two were great accomplishments. "Scream 3" screenwriter Ehren Kruger was given Williamson's outline for the film, but according to "Entertainment Weekly," he veered widely from its plot points. It shows. Kruger, who wrote "Arlington Road"

with its million-to-one coincidence ending that riddled the preceding narrative with holes aplenty, falters nearly every step of the way in "Scream 3." This time, clichés are neither celebrated with style nor parodied, they are simply wallowed in. Few references are made to the incidents in "Scream 2," except for one character's return via video to explain the "rules" of a trilogy. This scene is one of the few moments in the film that seems to evoke the same magic as the first two.

The actors are stripped of their identities in "Scream 3," and just become cut-outs moved around to advance the story. The Dewey-Gale romance is less convincing than before, and Campbell's Sydney, supposedly the protagonist, is more an afterthought than a leading lady. She essentially occupies a subplot in her own film. The one personality who brings some freshness to the film is indie queen Parker Posey as an actress portraying Gale Weathers. She appears to relish her contribution, perhaps knowing she's the film's strongest performer this time around,



and she perfectly mimics Courtney Cox-Arquette, the woman within the woman Gale Weathers.

Apart from Posey's brave offering, there are only a handful of things to like. The scares in the film are plenty and, most, genuine. There are real moments of fright, but this critic has come to expect more from a "Scream" and more from director Wes Craven, whose touch is all-but-absent. Another bonus lies in the revelation of the killer [or killers]. Like the first two, it is surprising. The problem is, by the time the ghost mask comes off and the face is seen, I barely cared.

"Scream 3" is supposed to tell us something new about the story in the first film [or so one character says], but its revelation makes little sense. Instead, we are given the ghostly hallucinations [or are they?], a killer [or killers] more akin to Jason and Freddy than the sly villain[s] of "Scream's" past, and a slight disregard for a sense of "story." The "Scream" films deserved triumphant closure. This bang and a whimper won't do. As the credits rolled, I pictured Kevin Williamson somewhere, scribbling new existential blather for Dawson,

Pacey and the Capeside gang, and wondered why he couldn't take a time-out to give us one last "Scream."

As straight-up horror, "Scream 3" is better than most, but as a "Scream," it's barely adequate.

My grade: C+

by DANIEL ROSS
STAFF WRITER

P.O.D doesn't really 'deliver'

In today's music scene, there are a few kinds of rock. The lightweight rock of Matchbox 20 and Third Eye Blind, the power rock of Metallica and Creed, and the sometimes-unlistenable noise of bands like Korn, Godsmack and Sevendust. Many of these bands get substantial airplay while others flourish on the touring circuit. One such band thriving on the road is P.O.D. [Payable on Death].

Receiving virtually no radio air time, P.O.D. has built a groundswell following out of their San Diego home base. Their debut release for Atlantic Records, "The Fundamental Elements of Southtown," reveals a band firmly rooted in the rap-core genre while showing signs of a reggae influence.

Featuring vocalist Sonny, bassist Traa, drummer Wuv and guitarist Marcos, P.O.D. has a message that is non-existent in the world of "Break Stuff"

Limp Bizkit. Anyone familiar with P.O.D. knows of the band's faith, but it is the music that makes people love them.

Unfortunately for the band, the album is too firmly rooted in the rap-core genre to appeal to the mass audience it deserves. Too often vocalist Sonny resolves to scream rather than sing and guitarist Marcos grinds out bone-crushing riffs that are all too familiar. Eleven tracks of hard-hitting crunch can be too much for an average listener.

The reggae influence mentioned earlier is present only detectable a few tracks with the exception of Sonny's call to "Jah-Jah" people on the track "Set Your Eyes to Zion."

The lyrical element of the album is one of making it through hard times and the bleakness of today's society. "Southtown" recalls the band's early days of hard living and growing up on the streets

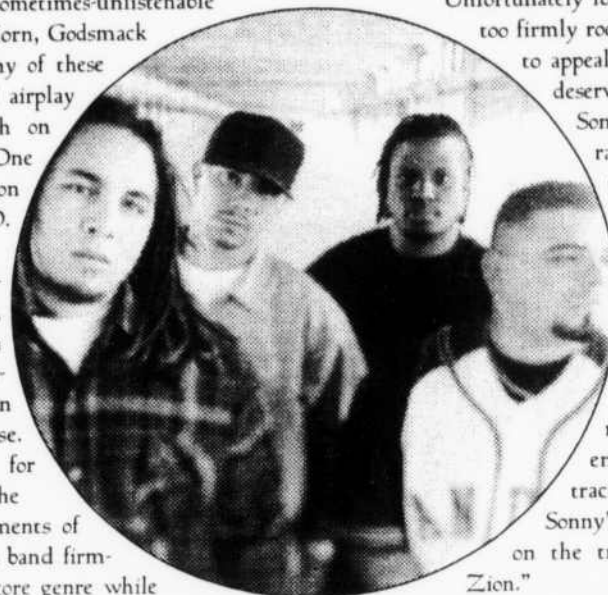
while "Hollywood" tells a tale of a friend who leaves to become a star only to lose himself along the way.

Perhaps the best moment of the album is the blistering cover of U2's "Bullet the Blue Sky." P.O.D. brings a dimension to the song never imagined by Bono. Although the track is a little too reminiscent of Rage Against the Machine's cover of Bruce Springsteen's "The Ghost of Tom Joad" in its spoken-word style. However, the track is a fitting centerpiece on the album.

The album is filled with nothing new, save the spiritual element, and it delivers the same punch of its contemporaries such as Korn. What it is not, however, is just "a Christian version of Rage Against the Machine." P.O.D. is in the same league with their secular counterparts and, in many instances, surpasses most of them. While it is not diverse in the least, it does surge through your ears like a freight train.

If your forte is hard rap-core rock, then this album is for you. If the mere thought of a de-tuned guitar mixed with a turntable scares you then stay away at all costs. Subtle it is not but it is an album suited to today's youth culture with a message their parents can appreciate.

My Grade: C.



Music
review

by Kevin McNulty
Staff Writer

'Bluebloods' full of beat

I've always known Nashville to be the country music capital of the world. However, on this crisp, cool night, I'm about to undergo a paradigm shift - as I enter The Bluebird Cafe. I know nothing of this band that I'm going to see and hear, but from the moment I walk through the door, I know I'm in for a night of great music.

As I stand just inside the entrance and scan the audience, all I see are heads bobbin' totally moving in sync to the rhythm and blues of "The Bluebloods."

It's early in the night, but the band is already in the "zone," that phenomenon where the mind and body come together and create this kind of focused energy, and it's affecting the audience who is stimulated and fixated on their hypnotic groove.

"The Bluebloods" is a four-piece band that plays the blues ... plus. They seem to have a range that will cover any type of blues lover. If you're a purist, you'll like them, because they've obviously been influenced by the legendary Muddy Waters. For the high-energy blues fan, you'll appreciate the electric charged boogie

blues, such as the likes of the late and great Stevie Ray Vaughn. I also hear a tinge of swing and a sophisticated jazz flavor as well. But, what I think I like the best, is how they are not afraid to "stretch" with unorthodox musical beats and styles. This seemingly incidental integration of progressive musical styles into their blues separates them from the rest - particularly bassist Glen Worf and keyboardist John Jarvis.

Worf, a co-writer on many of "The Bluebloods" songs, is a tough bass player with lots of good moves and variations. He's steady and stays tight with the drummer, but also adds really nice touches. In fact at times I notice that he abandons that needed solid baseline, slips a really cool fusion style groove, and then falls back into his baseline. Jarvis, with many accolades to his name, like touring with Rod Stewart and recording with the likes of John Mellancamp and Diana Ross, is obviously an accomplished pianist with lots of technique, he sits up properly and all that - did I mention he has won two Grammy Awards? But when it's time to jam, he abandons his "prop-

er" technique and lays it all on the line - sometimes literally slapping on the piano while never missing a note. Both Worf and Jarvis are excellent soloists receiving applause repeatedly for really kicking solos.

Drummer John Gardner is an accomplished drummer who plays for the Grand Ole Opry, and has recorded with the great Johnny Cash and Al Kooper. Gardner is solid! Drummers often sit in the background unnoticed, but not this one, despite his quiet demeanor. He sets a serious and up-front beat for the band, one that all good music listeners appreciate. He has wonderful syncopations and drum hits. I think he's the source of the head bobbin' - the excellent groove the audience is in.

Vocalist, guitarist, harmonica player, songwriter and lead man Mike Henderson does it all. He's an excellent vocalist - with a clear, but slight edge to his voice. He plays a mean harp and slide guitar; and he's definitely a showman who connects with and appreciates his audience. He's also a serious songwriter in whose songs, along with Worf's, can be heard

continued on page 8



Robbie Fulks

is an artist that has the same notorious spirit, that once ruled and now has abandoned Nashville, through his sounds of stomping rock & roll, honky-tonk, pure guitar pop and a smattering of contemplative folk. His fret-frying guitar work, song writing chops and tenor twang are his remarkable trademarks. Appearing at 12th & Porter on Thursday, February 17th, 10 p.m. Call: [615]254-7236.

Snake Oil Medicine

is a quirky mix of mostly acoustic instruments and off-the-wall lyrics that gives this band its renown musical eccentricity. In wild costumes, SOMS exudes youthful energy through their outrageous antics of a "visual-musical-dance blast." Appearing at Jack Legs' on Friday, February 18th, 10 p.m. Call: [615]255-1933.

Bluegrass Underground

is an Atlanta based band, fronted by Reverend Mosier, that uses a unique blend of the pedal steel, African gourd banjo, Dobro, fiddle, electric and acoustic guitar to create an original in the traditions of bluegrass, blues, country, folk, swing, jazz and rock. Appearing at Jack Legs' on Friday, February 18th, 11:15 p.m. Call: [615]255-1933.

by DANIEL ROSS
STAFF WRITER

'Special Occasions' plays out the pain of divorce

"Special Occasions," a comedy now showing at the Chaffin's Barn Dinner Theatre, delights the audience Thursday night in the small, intimate Backstage Theater, which is situated behind the Mainstage Theater.

Seventeen spectators sat in twos and threes at tables clustered on the edge of the tiny stage. Tulip shaped lamps cast flickering yellow shadows on the wall. Light reflected off empty tables at the rear of the room. Ceiling fans rocked back and forth. Their slow rotation drove some of the audience back to the lobby for the coats they had foolishly left behind.

Both theaters shared the same wonderful buffet dinner. We filled our plates with salads, desserts and entrees such as roast beef, Cajun catfish and a delicious homemade chicken pot pie. These main dishes were complimented by appetizing home-cooked vegetables and cornbread. Drinks were served at our tables by the performers, stage manager and director of the play.

Jenny Rainwater, as Amy Ruskin and Derek Whittaker, as Michael Ruskin, invited us into the lives of a couple who, immediately after their 15th wedding anniversary party, begin the proceedings leading to their divorce.

From that evening on, they met only on special occasions, such as family funerals, graduations and weddings. The audience shared their triumphs and their failures as each dealt with the loss of the

marriage and the new lives they were building for themselves.

Although only the two characters appear on the stage, there were three other characters whom the audience came to know almost as well as Amy and Michael. These characters are the couple's three children. Steven was an athlete who eventually

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followed his playwright father into the world of writing. Jennifer grew from a amateur pianist into a fine concert musician. Kelly, who was only 11 at the time of the breakup of her parent's marriage, had the most trouble adjusting. She spent time in a religious cult and became a single mother. Much of the interaction between the parents centered around the ways that they dealt with their children.

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allowing me to feel as they did.

This is Rainwater's debut at Chaffin's Barn. She is a Murfreesboro native who graduated from MTSU with a degree in theater arts. In the past, she has played Anne in "The Diary of Anne Frank," Sandy in "Grease" and Sibyl in "Private Lives."

Whittaker graduated from both MTSU and University of Tennessee-Knoxville. He is from Nashville and first appeared at Chaffin's Barn in 1991. He returned in 1999 and has appeared in many performances there in the past year, such as "Any Wednesday," "Lend Me a Tenor," "Sugar Babies," "Luck, Love, and the Lottery" and "Don't Dress for Dinner." This is his second performance on the Backstage. He played a variety of roles in "Another Evening with Sherlock Holmes" on the Backstage last fall.

The stage manager is Brandon Hodge, an MTSU freshman majoring in theater arts with minors in dance and technical direction. Hodge has done technical work at Circle Theater, Hume-Fogg Academic High School and Bellevue Middle School. This is the third show he has acted as stage manager at the Chaffin's Barn.

"Special Occasions" is the first play that Evelyn Blythe has directed in Nashville. She is originally from Kentucky, where she worked with the

continued on page 8

by TURNER HUTCHENS
STAFF WRITER

'Piano' brings family and song together

The emotions of another time come to town when the Murfreesboro Ensemble Theatre puts on "The Piano Lesson."

The magnificently written play, by August Wilson, puts the feel of real people into every word spoken, and makes the problems of changing times come to life. The plot pulls together the conflicting elements of the culture of the period. The pull of black migration North against staying in the country they have always known, the superstitions and mysticisms tempered with the spiritual and the need to reconcile with the past and to cope with the future all play heavily in this intricate script. The dialog is rich, using dialect and slang, but not for humorous effect, but rather to recreate a true vision of the time.

Though the cast obviously struggled somewhat with opening-night jitters, they did an admirable job putting on the superb play. The play gains momentum as the show goes on, and leaves the audience thoughtful, and stirred.

The lead role of Boy Willie is played by the experienced actor Maurice Bullard. This fact comes across on stage almost as well as his booming voice and strong motions. Playing an under-educated character, who never the less has aspirations for the future, Bullard takes control of the stage, especially during his emotional monologs.

Candy Robins does a praiseworthy job in the role of Berniece, a hard working young widow who is

continued on page 8

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Special Events This Week

February 17-19th

Six Pass While Lentils Boil, Press Cuttings and The Potboiler will be presented by the Lipscomb University drama department in Arena Theater on Thursday-Saturday at 7:30 p.m. Cost: free. Call: [615] 279-5715.

February 19th

A stress management workshop will be held at Sports Com from 11-12 a.m. Cost: \$10. Call: [615] 895-5040.

Ongoing

Prevent Child Abuse Tennessee is a non-profit child abuse prevention agency serving families across Tennessee. They are seeking volunteers to answer the statewide Parent Helpline/Domestic Violence Hotline, to work with families of newborns, to facilitate parenting classes, to assist with childcare during the parenting classes. Training begins Saturday, March 18. For more information, please call Jennifer Watsen at [615] 868-4468 ext 12.

Continued from page 6

'Special Occasions'

Lexington Children's Theater. She acted in the play "Moon Over Buffalo," at Chaffin's Barn in 1998 and has also appeared in several plays at the Nashville Children's Theatre.

Chaffin's Barn Dinner Theatre has a devoted clientele, many of them return for every play that they offer.

Frances McKelvey said that she and her husband received season passes as a Christmas present several years ago, and they have continued to come regularly ever since.

"We have almost always have

enjoyed it," she said. "The shows are usually comedies and laughter is good for the soul."

Her husband, Charles McKelvey, added that while attending might be good for his soul, he was not sure it was good for his stomach, since he always ate "way too much."

Backstage at Chaffin's Barn, located at 8204 Highway 100 in Nashville, will continue to present "Special Occasions" through March 26. They begin seating for dinner at 6 p.m. and the play begins at 8 p.m. The cost is \$35. Call 646-0077 for reservations.

'Piano Lesson'

struggling with her past, her brother and with her own desire to free herself. Her first priority is to protect her 11-year-old daughter Maretha, played by sixth-grader Kelli Patton, from the family's rocky past, which makes it impossible for her to move on herself. The weary woman, who

still has heart, can do nothing to break herself from the past. The roles of Berniece and Boy Willie's two uncles Doaker [Max Johns] and Wining Boy [Carlyle Johnson] help add color, humor and synchronicity to the play. Wining Boy, a life-long rolling stone who gambles and chases women all around the country, and Doaker, a man who has worked the same job at the railroad for 27 years, balance each other beautifully. The two uncles are the peacemakers, the conscious and the family historians all at once.

The supporting characters, Lyman [Shawn Whitsell], Boy Willie's "country" friend and Avery [Frank Harp], the preacher who wants to marry Berniece, each have their own moments to shine, bringing emotion from joy to shock with

their performances.

Music is the binding glue for "The Piano Lesson," and is well done in this performance. The play is centered around an old piano that had been Boy Willie and Berniece's only inheritance from their father. The family's history was etched into the wood of the instrument, and it was polished "with mamma's tears and blood." When the piano is played, actors' faces show exactly what that piano, that music and their family's past means to each of them.

The play achieves the fullest unity of mind when they sing together. As the men sing a deep, spiritual song about the railroad, it gives the feeling of a human soul filling the theater. Music is used throughout the play to pull the characters together. No matter how much strife is among them, they can almost never help but pull together for a song.

"The Piano Lesson" is being performed again this weekend, Feb. 17-19, at the Murfreesboro Center for the Arts. Showtime is 8 p.m. Tickets are \$10, \$5 for students and may be purchased by calling 904-ARTS.

Horoscopes

[February 16 - February 23]

Aries [March 21-April 19]

On Monday, be prepared for a quality control inspection. On Tuesday and Wednesday, you focus on another person and how to get along. If you need a partner, find one then. On Thursday and Friday, you may feel agitated. Don't be critical; others will be easily upset. On Saturday and Sunday, complications could arise while traveling. Check the gas and oil levels before you set out.

Taurus [April 20-May 20]

You should be in a good mood Monday. Love looks good, but a package you're expecting could be delayed. On Tuesday and Wednesday, pay attention to details. Try not to get distracted. Work with a partner on Thursday and Friday; you can't do it all by yourself. Over the weekend, watch out for a risky proposition. If it looks too good to be true, it is.

Gemini [May 21-June 21]

This week you're focusing on your career. A great opportunity is coming on Monday. Watch out, however. Mercury's going retrograde, so there could be a setback. Tuesday and Wednesday should be good for romance, but don't go far from home. Thursday and Friday could be intense workdays. Pay dues, and the money will come later. Heed your partner or mate's advice over the weekend. Cancer

[June 22-July 22]

Stretch out and try something new this week. On Monday, a neighbor can help with a difficult assignment. On Tuesday and Wednesday, whip your place into shape with the splash of a new color. You should be in a romantic mood by Thursday or Friday. You'll be ready to entertain by then. Travel should be OK late Friday, but don't stay away long. You'll want to get a household project finished this weekend.

Leo [July 23-Aug. 22]

Money might come in on Monday. Unfortunately, you may have to send it out quickly for an item that's past due. Catch up on your reading on Tuesday and Wednesday. Stay home and snuggle as much as possible on Thursday and Friday. You'll also enjoy fixing up your place then. Romance and travel could both go well over the weekend, but take care when discussing an emotional subject.

Virgo [Aug. 23-Sept. 22]

Mercury is retrograde in Pisces this week. So, clean up old misunderstandings with a partner. Financial issues may be a top priority from Monday through Wednesday. Make a few phone calls and get what's owed to you. Study on Thursday and Friday and have people over to your house this weekend.

Libra [Sept. 23-Oct. 23]

Finish old business on Monday so you can launch a new enterprise on Tuesday or Wednesday. This has to be something you've been planning for a long time, however. Completion's OK this week; innovation's risky. Look for ways to make more money on Thursday and Friday. This weekend could be hectic. Better draw up a plan and stick to it.

Scorpio [Oct. 24-Nov. 21]

You'll do best this week if you hang out in familiar places, with people you've known for years. Connect with friends on Monday but save some time for yourself, too. Answer all those old messages on Tuesday and Wednesday and bring yourself up-to-date. You're powerful and attractive on Thursday and Friday. You'll get most of what you want. Get out there and find the bargains over the weekend. A treasure could be your reward.

Sagittarius [Nov. 22-Dec. 21]

You're concerned with home and family matters this week. Throw out the stuff you don't use anymore. Misunderstandings could come to the surface on Monday. Have friends over on Tuesday and Wednesday. You may be pressed to make some decisions on Thursday and Friday. Get rid of stuff! Expect complications if you travel this weekend. Stay home with a favorite person instead.

Capricorn [Dec. 22-Jan. 19]

You could learn a lot this week. Review what you already know and upgrade your skills. Travel could help you achieve goals on Monday. Rake in the money on Tuesday and Wednesday by taking on more responsibility. Play with friends on Thursday and Friday. Finish up an old project over the weekend and drop a bad habit.

Aquarius [Jan. 20-Feb. 18]

Gather up your money on Monday so you can make a down payment on a trip on Tuesday or Wednesday. Mental trips count, too, by the way. Don't be dismayed by a setback on Thursday or Friday. Keep at it. Try not to spend too much with friends over the weekend - even for a really good reason.

Pisces [Feb. 19-March 20]

You have the advantage this week. Mercury's going retrograde in your sign though, so you'll be most successful polishing old skills and using your experience. Monday's good for planning with a partner. Get what you need on Tuesday and Wednesday, including something nice for yourself. Travel looks good on Thursday and Friday. Technical difficulties can be overcome. Look for ways to increase your income over the weekend.

Continued from page 5

'Bluebloods'

on the Mike Henderson and "The Bluebloods" CD's, three to be exact. I checked out the CD, "Thicker Than Water" [Deaf Reckoning Records], and it's filled with one great blues tune after another.

Collectively they are all seasoned musicians. They're at a level of performance and musicianship that they make it all look so easy. It was a happy time at The Bluebird Cafe - great music, great

service and a fantastic atmosphere. I'll be back and I definitely recommend that if you're looking for some serious blues, being played by serious artists, check out "The Bluebloods."

They'll be performing at The Bluebird Cafe in Nashville - starting at 9:30 p.m. every Monday throughout February. For more information call [615] 383-1461.