

Stop what you're doin', 'cause they're about to ruin the image and sound of what you're used to.

The Humpty? Nah, not this time.

Then who?

The Veldt.

Says *who*?

Says *Spin Magazine*, among others.

Picture that!

Yeah...and while ya at it, picture this.

Four young men, Daniel and Danny Chavis, Joe Boyle, and Marvin Levi, make up a band that is neither White nor Black. Four guys in a band that play music that is neither Black nor White but, as *Spin* magazine writer Steven Daly put it, "a biz-zare musical hybrid." Sound like a cross-cultural ideal? Well it is—for people outside of North Carolina.

Unfortunately this young, Triangle band that has national record labels chasing them and is receiving incredible audience and media support away from home gets little or no respect in Chapel Hill.

Why?

Well, it seems that the Veldt's music is a bit too nouveau for the average African-American in this area and a bit too boogie down to daze Chapel Hill's white fraternity circuit. Because they don't play typical R&B or rap, Black students don't frequent their concert dates and because they aren't a heavy rock or dance music band, White kids often ignore them.

Sad situation for the Veldt? Well, not really.

Although this band is caught in a racially polarized community that insists upon forcing groups into prefabricated genres of music based on their race, the Veldt is simply not havin' it. They keep on playing their own brand of music, keep on attracting national attention and keep on offering Chapel Hill citizens a chance to experience the new directions that the music industry is taking.

In a take from Bell Biv DeVoe's own personal anthem, the Veldt describes their own music as being "Hip hop spiced up on the punk-soul tip with a Brit appeal." *Independent* magazine's Jim Desmond also notes that the Veldt has a mixture of rock, soul, hip hop and other types of music. "[the

Veldt's music] is like the Cure meets the Jungle Brothers" Desmond said.

However, because these brothers wear dreds, dress with a punky British style and carry electric guitars, few African-Americans in this area will give them a chance. Due to their looks and the fact that their music is not pure R&B, many young African-Americans immediately associate them with Living Colour, label their music rock or heavy metal and ignore them altogether.

Although the Veldt plays white fraternity parties, they often do not go over well with the crowd because of their looks and their approach to music. Their music lacks what Desmond calls a "frivolous" quality that most fraternity types like. So the Veldt ends up getting the short end of both sticks.

While this can be upsetting and frustrating, it is not enough to make the band conform. "It hurts me when I don't see any brothers and sisters in the audience" lead singer Daniel Chavis said. Marvin Levi, the band's drummer, says that he is also upset by not only the fact that some people are close minded about the Veldt's music, but also because of the implications of this close mindedness.

"People should be open," said Levi. "Everybody has to be open minded. It kinda bothers me because this leads to a lot of different things. If you're close minded to that, you must have the same stereotypes about what goes with it. And then you start

getting prejudiced 'cause you're not actually there."

The band is not totally concerned with dealing with the racial prejudice that makes life in Chapel Hill an unpleasant one. They are far more concerned with leaving this area and receiving a major-label deal.

"We as a band want to evolve and get out of Chapel Hill," said Daniel. "This town is kind of stifling. We don't want to be a band that stays around forever and plays the same kind of music."

So, leaving this "stifling" area has been one thing the Veldt has been working quite diligently on. Aside from playing the frat circuit and smaller clubs, the band has had some pretty prestigious concert dates. When they played New York's Ritz Theatre, not only was the audience enthralled, but so were three record company presidents and 24 major label executives. The band opened for African-American rock sensation, Living Colour, in both Norfolk and Philadelphia and was quite pleased with the audience participation.

"We got an unbelievable response" Daniel said. "Yeah, the crowd was so loud it sounded like the audience was completely in tune with us," chimed his identical twin brother Danny.

By playing such dates, the band has generated quite a bit of media coverage. In its November 21 issue, the Triangle's entertainment magazine, *Independent* featured

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the Veldt in an article called 'Young, Gifted and Pissed' and gave the band rave reviews. "The buzz within the music industry on the Veldt is so loud it can be heard blowing in from New York and LA on a still Carolina Day," article writer Jim Desmond said.

He's right. In addition to local coverage the band has been on MTV and was recently featured in the January 1990 issue of *Spin* magazine. The article said the Veldt was "intriguing," among other things, and predicted a good deal of success for the band.

With the coverage and the concert dates, one would think that the Veldt's path to the top is an easy one, right?

Yeah, right. Success is never easy and when race prejudice is involved it's twice as hard.

Unfortunately the Veldt, despite media hype, is involved in a rather grounding experience which revolves around the producing of a record. Although the band had signed with Capitol Records, a change of staff at Capitol left the band with new label head, Simon Potts. Potts decided that he didn't like the band sound, and paid the Veldt a large sum of money to let them out of the deal.

After the Veldt left Capitol, the band began fighting with then manager, Jay Faires, over how to divide the cancellation fee. The fight is still going on today. To add to the complex situation, Faires wants the band to record their first albums on Mammoth Records, his own independent record company. Because the band was desperate to make a record and disappointed with the incident with Capitol, they signed a contract for seven record deal despite their problems with Faires. Now, due in part to a growing distrust of Faires, they want out of the contract. They have become frustrated with the situation, but refuse to give up.

"We're planning on making a record. If we have any problems, we will go into litigation," Levi said. "Our side will obviously prove to the defense that they are cheating us out of a lot of money."

In the meantime, the Veldt, who takes their name from an African grassland, plans to keep waiting and working towards the break that will establish them in the

record industry as a successful band. They will keep on playing the concert dates, the small Chapel Hill clubs and even the fraternity circuit. Their next concert date is December 15 and if you're smart, you'll check them out then, 'cause it doesn't look like they are going to be around these parts for long.

Interview and article by Erika F. Campbell and Akinwale N'Gai Wright

The Veldt
December 15
Cat's Cradle