

WQFS Profile: Muzak Theory

◆ Not just a radio show, it's a way of life. A review and interview with the masterminds of Muzak Theory

Part I: the review

BY JESSE LAPLANTE
Staff Writer

If there is one thing to be said about the DJ's of *Muzak Theory*, it is that they are not slaves to the radio waves. Instead they are cross-genre pirates sailing the seven seas of music, stopping to raid at every port.

Airing twice a week, Tuesday from 9:00 p.m. to midnight and Thursdays from midnight to 2:00 a.m., *Muzak Theory* dares to push the envelope of musical experimentation. The result is a unique sound that is fun to listen to, as well as being obscure and hard to figure out. But, the idea of *Muzak Theory* is not to "figure it out"; the point is to enjoy a great program. After all, it's radio, not homework.

The sonic potpourri is the product of four minds, with different musical tastes, that blend together in a tasty soup of aural excitement. Between Marc, Doug, Kevin and John, one who tunes in might be treated to anything from Stereolab and Steve Reich to The Velvet Underground and Dick Hyman.

The sounds that fill in the middle are a pleasant mix of early electronic music to jazz to blues to punk. No matter what you hear, though, within a few minutes, it should become obvious that these guys love music, all music, and that they are not afraid to cross styles in

pursuit of the perfect sound.

The point is, *Muzak Theory* is not about radio conformity. The DJ's have taken the freedom of the airwaves, and their love of different musical styles, and melded them into a massive collage of sound, meaning at any given moment they may overlap elements of different songs or sounds creating a new one.

Once exposed, your ears will be floating in a trance-like realm between pure bliss and total exhaustion.

So, twice a week let four strangers guide you, and your ears, down the highway of musical history. Even if you have a bad ride, there is no denying that it was, at least, different, fresh and always wild.

Part II: the interview

BY ADAM PALMER
Staff Writer

Last Tuesday, September 16, three of the four members of *Muzak Theory* gave an interview to share their insight as to what they really did. Doug Grigsby, John Clinton, and Marc Bernstein spoke about the mystery and myth behind *Muzak Theory* at Guilford College.

According to Grigsby, "*Muzak Theory* is performance radio. A col-

lage of sounds if you will." Essentially what these three, and Kevin Holmes, the missing member, do is combine anywhere between two and four pieces at once in a way that creates new "candy for the ear."



The Muzak Theorists: licking the palm of the stallion

Stated Bernstein, "What we are doing is remaking music." John Clinton said, "Treat this like a class. Study it."

When asked what purpose *Muzak Theory* had hidden deep within its bowels, Bernstein said, "This is not about what you want to hear, but what you need to hear." *Muzak Theory* attempts to show the listener how different overlays of varied musical pieces, when played in unison, can create a new, and just as interesting, if not moreso, sound.

All of the DJ's on the show promise there is no chance for monotony. After hearing their show the evening of the interview I would be inclined to agree. The musical choices vary from Tom Waits with overlays of electrical instrumental versions of the Beatles or Simon and Garfunkel.

Muzak Theory originated in London. An ex-Guilford student, Steven Rhodes, carried the torch to North Carolina. Last year, his final year at Guilford he brought the show to WQFS and the tradition lives on.

When asked how the response to the show has been thus far, Grigsby said, "During the summer there were more listeners. We appeal to the high school kids as well as adults. For some reason though, we miss the college-age bracket."

Clinton expanded on that, saying, "It's heard by many in their post-acid phase. Those that have gone past their psychedelic experimental modes and now reminisce and bathe in our music."

There are plans to expand the *Muzak Theory* movement at Guilford College in the not-so-distant future. The same DJ's on WQFS will be playing live music and will post flyers and make announcements over the radio as to where and when you can catch them.

There is more in the works, and as the information becomes available, it will be passed on to the legions of loyal fans.

When the interview ended, I asked the guys who they thought they were.

Grigsby replied, "Hey man, we're workers. We just work. And we play music. If you like our music, cool, call us, and if you don't that's okay too, because this is as much for us as much as for you. Oh, and we are also narcissistic."

Ska Core, the Devil, and Zack

BY ZACK HAMPLE
Staff Writer

Frustration is now defined as four Guilford College students driving two hours to Charlotte to see The Mighty Mighty Bosstones in concert on September 11, only to get there and learn that the show had sold out the hour before.

And as if that wasn't a big enough slap in the face, some black-beret-wearing, earphone-bearing, shaved-head-having, loopy earring-sporting, cigarette-smoking, bottoms of his jeans into army boots-tucking, wannabe tough guy-looking parking lot attendant insisted that we a) not ask for tickets on the property, and b)

not stand in the ticket line.

After cursing the fates and begging hopelessly for tickets elsewhere, we heard that more tickets had been released, so we got in line.

Herded like cattle up a narrow, wooden ramp, we passed through the "Under 21" line and each handed over \$15. They gave us delightful yellow bracelets in exchange.

The building looked more like a warehouse than a concert hall, and it was more crowded than a rush hour train in Times Square.

I would've thought it was Halloween had I not known that we were in September. If I had the metal from all the eyebrow and

nipple rings, I could mint enough quarters for everyone in Milner to do laundry for an entire semester.

My friends loved the show. "Having seen them three times, I found this one to be the best," said Mather Preston. "It was a small venue, and they were able to be more intimate with the crowd."

Said Valerie Beard, "I thought it was fantastic. When they first came out, they played 'Noise Brigade.' It's a very good song."

Heather Owens added, "They kick a--, because they'll relate to their fans. They bring people up on stage, and they're really down to earth. Seeing them in concert made me like them even more."

Now don't get me wrong, I

loved the overall experience - the costumes, the reckless dancing of the drunk audience members, the pretzels at the snack bar, the crowd surfing, and the 6'7" woman walking around.

But as for the savage, relentless ska/punk "music" (and I use the term lightly), I was deafened and thoroughly unimpressed. I kept thinking of my English teacher who tells us that writing is organized language, art is organized color, and music is organized sound.

If that's true, then The Mighty Mighty Bosstones, in my opinion, need to combine a tad of structure with their noise.