

Polished Dave Matthews Band grooves in Raleigh

Friday's concert at Walnut Creek Amphitheatre may have been just another stop along the long road to superstardom for the Dave Matthews Band, but to die-hard fans of the Virginia-rooted band, the concert was just another night with the boys.

True, the venues, they are achangin'. Seeing Dave (as we Southerners may affectionately call him) jamming at Walnut Creek amidst thousands of swooning pre-teens — parents in tow — put into perspective the magnitude of the band's fame. However, when the five casually dressed musicians took the stage, the collective roar of the crowd seemed to startle Matthews, and he confessed after the first song that he was a little out of practice and a tad bit nervous.

Obviously, nerves were a good thing. The band played with uncanny precision and synchronicity, following each others' improvisations as if they were rehearsed. (This, of course, could be a result of being, well, rehearsed.) But combining a mindful mix of new material, old favorites and Top 40 hits, the band managed to satisfy both the scenester and the post-Gen Xer.

The most stirring moments of the concert were the solos traded between the

multi-instrumental Leroi More and funky violinist Boyd Tinsley. These emotional outbursts shook up the mellow flow of the concert and provided a welcome chance for some hard-core dancing, if you can imagine that at a Dave concert. Most memorable was Tinsley's climactic (in every sense of the word) finale to "Dancing Nancies," wherein his electric violin lost a string or two from the intensity.

Other concert highlights included the ironically named "Crash," the soothing title cut from the band's most recent album. "Ants Marching" was also a crowd pleaser, with the band cranking out CD-quality music as Matthews indulgently let the crowd shout the chorus: "We all do it the same, we all do it the same way."

After the obligatory brief departure from the stage, Matthews returned alone for an encore, singing a nondescript ballad not quite as intense as the blue lights spotlighting him.

The rest of the band redeemed the encore, however, when they came back to cover Bob Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower." Hendrix and U2 are tough acts to follow, but the Matthews Band transformed the song into a fresh, jazzy masterpiece, proving the band has moved up from the realm of regional collegiate bands into the realm of national headliners.

MELISSA MILIOS
Concert Review
Dave Matthews Band



IN THE NEWS

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Seven drown at memorial for Susan Smith's children

UNION, S.C. — Tears welled in Tommy Vinson's eyes as he talked about John D. Long Lake, where Susan Smith drowned her two little boys in 1994 and seven people drowned over the weekend.

"It's like it's haunted or something," said Vinson, who knew one of the latest victims. "It keeps taking lives."

This small textile town is again dealing with tragedy after three adults and four children drowned Saturday night when their vehicle rolled into the lake. Five of the victims were from one family — a couple and their three children.

Foul play was not suspected, but autopsies were expected to be conducted on Monday, Union County Sheriff Howard Wells said Sunday.

A group of 10 had driven out to the lake and parked next to the boat ramp where Ms. Smith killed her children. Their Chevrolet Suburban's headlights were shining on two memorials to the Smith boys, 3-year-old Michael and 14-month-old Alex.

Shortly after five members of the group got out to look at the memorials, the vehicle started to roll, Wells said.

It passed between the memorial markers and knocked over a young tree planted in the Smith boys' memory as it slid down a steep grassy embankment into about 20 feet of water.

Two adults, including the mother of three of the children, dove into the lake to help. They drowned along with everyone in the vehicle. The father of the children was behind the wheel and the gear shift was found in park, Wells said.

There were no skid marks or tire tracks to indicate the driver did anything to keep the vehicle from going into the water, Wells said.

"We have no indication of what could have caused this," said Wells, who spoke at a news conference in the same spot where he announced nearly two years ago that Smith had confessed to drowning her boys.

The accident killed an entire family from Union: Tim Phillips, 26; his wife, Angela, 22; and Courtney, 4; Meleana, 1, and 4-month-old Kinsleigh, Wells said.

Also killed were Carl White, 29, of Campobello and 3-year-old Austin Roodvoets of Inman. Both towns are about 40 miles northwest of Union.

Angela Phillips and White died trying to save those in the truck. Some bodies were found outside the truck, indicating that some children were pulled out only to perish before they could be brought to the surface, Wells said.

On Oct. 25, 1994, Smith, distraught over a love affair, released the safety brake on her car and let it roll down a boat ramp with her sons still strapped inside in the back seat. Ms. Smith was sentenced in July 1995 to life in prison. She will be eligible for parole in 2025.

Tobacco companies say no settlement ahead

WASHINGTON — Mississippi's attorney general says states suing tobacco companies are working on a possible settlement that would give the manufacturers immunity from liability in exchange for covering tobacco-related health expenses. But two tobacco industry executives say it's news to them.

"I don't know who he's talking to,"

Steve Parrish, senior vice president of Philip Morris Co., said of Attorney General Mike Moore. Both appeared Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Mississippi was the first state to sue to recover government expenditures to treat patients made ill by tobacco, and 15 states now are involved. Moore said the state attorneys general have appointed seven of their number to negotiate a proposed settlement.

"We'll settle, but only if it makes good sense for everybody — good public sense," Moore said. "I'm not sure the tobacco companies are willing to pay the kind of price that we're going to ask."

But Moore said his main emphasis is the courtroom. "I expect to meet them in court, and I expect to beat them in court" when the case reaches trial next March.

"Our goals have been pretty simple. We want to collect the taxpayers' money back, the hundreds of billions of dollars that have been spent treating poor people in this country who died from tobacco-related disease," he said.

Philip Morris' Parrish and Charles Blixt, senior vice president of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., said their companies are not negotiating a settlement.

"I don't know who he's talking to. He's not talking to us. We're not negotiating with him," Parrish said. "I think, frankly, what you've got here with Attorney General Moore is he knows that this lawsuit ... is not popular among his constituents, it's a weak case from a legal standpoint and it's a bit of a desperation move in his part."

Iraqi troops pull out of Irbil after offensive

SALAH AD-DIN, Iraq — As Iraqi troops pulled back from the northern Kurdish city of Irbil on Monday, refugees who fled to a nearby town described the biggest offensive by Saddam Hussein's army since the Persian Gulf War.

"It was very frightening. Boom here, boom there. Taka-taka-taka. We were scared to death," said Sabira Hamid Hursid, who fled with her four children to Salah ad-Din, 20 miles northeast of Irbil. Iraqi troops did not allow reporters to approach Irbil, where they were pulling out on Monday, leaving their Kurdish allies in control.

But U.N. workers there told The Associated Press that there were still Iraqi tanks in fields three to six miles outside the city. A Clinton administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the withdrawal was not significant. White House press secretary Mike McCurry said Saddam must not go unchallenged. The 20,000 U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf region were on high alert, and Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, traveled to Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Saudi Arabia agreed to cooperate in any U.S. retaliatory action, Saudi sources said on condition of anonymity.

The offensive also prompted the United Nations to delay its plan to let Iraq resume limited oil sales despite sanctions. Saddam's troops stormed Irbil, the main city in the U.S.-protected Kurdish "safe haven" in northern Iraq, on Saturday. The Kurdistan Democratic Party had asked Iraq for help in dislodging the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Both groups want an independent Kurdish area that would include northern Iraq, but the KDP is willing to work with Saddam's government in exchange for greater autonomy, while the PUK will accept only independence and has allied itself with Iraq's archrival, Iran.

PUK leader Jalal Talabani called on Western nations to retaliate against Iraq for the offensive in Irbil.

"Saddam Hussein must be punished and must pay the price of the crimes which he committed inside Irbil," Talabani told the AP by satellite telephone from northern Iraq.

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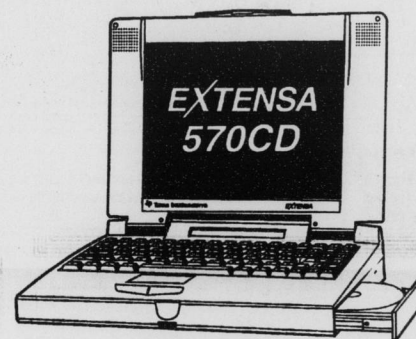
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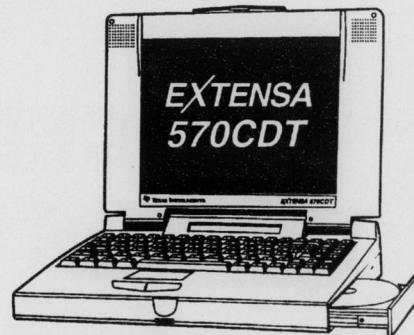
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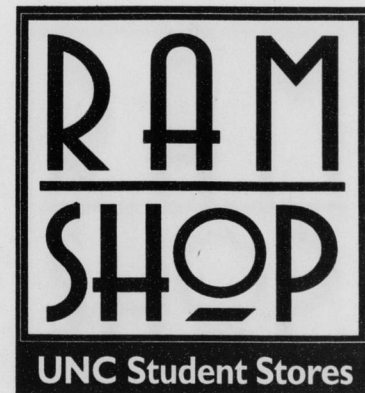
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