

- In concert next Monday -

# Christmas, Angels to play; no carols, though

By KATE HAUSER

Staff Writer

Ho, ho, ho. Christmas is coming to Cat's Cradle Monday, and opening for it are the Angels of Epistemology. Don't expect any carols from either.

The band Christmas' name provides for plenty of stupid puns.

Christmas, a "demented pop" band out of the Boston music scene (see Throwing Muses, Pixies, Big Dipper) is on tour promoting its second album, *Ultraprophets of Thee Psykick Revolution*.

Christmas is an ambitious band. Guitarist Michael Cudahy gave me an interview from a pay phone outside a club somewhere in Alabama Tuesday night. A career-minded man is he.

Early this year, *Ultraprophets* was released. The album has been selling out in Chapel Hill. Christmas' first album, *In Excelsior Dayglo* from the now-defunct Big Time label, came out in 1986, five years after Liz Cox, Cudahy and his brother Nicholas left Boston University to form the band.

There are some notable differences between the band's earlier material and this second album. Somewhere along the road, Christmas opened a deeper, political vein — a move Michael Cudahy calls unconscious.

The first album was considered fun and humorous. When asked about being called a "joke band," Cudahy plainly said it was not. More often, it displays "heavy-handed irony" than humor, he said.

The title of the new album is no joke either, Cudahy said. He said he thrived on the big, fast and loud American culture, but often felt this country is a spiritually bankrupt place; the whole "psykick revolution" idea is what America needs. A number of the band's songs revolve around a political core (see AIDS, war and corrupt government).

Charmed by Cox's ultra-feminine pop-star voice, one might overlook the group's cutting lyrics. "Richard Nixon sees you/Richard Nixon sees through you..." she will sing. Pay attention.

Cudahy said the band got its name when someone slipped an envelope under its practice room door. They opened the envelope, and the word "Christmas" was printed on a piece of paper. The band has never known where the mystery mail came from, but it took the name anyway.

Christmas used the five "unvinyl" years to develop a visible confidence onstage. Michael Cudahy's gymnastic energy level during a performance is unrivaled.

And not to add to the sticky novelty she must be subjected to, it will be enthralling to see Cox on drums. Cudahy called her "the axis of the band."

"We act on every stupid impulse we have," Cudahy said about the

band's recent move to Las Vegas from Boston. The Big Dipper album *Craps* is a vague account of Christmas' move, he said.

When the word "alternative" came up, Cudahy asked, "Alternative to what?" He said the term was often just an exclusive label bands give themselves, usually giving them a "permit to suck." Cudahy said he viewed the alter-

native label, if not the movement, as a dead end.

The band has been to Chapel Hill on two occasions, once with Husker Du and another time on its own.

Angels of Epistemology, a band from Raleigh, will open for Christmas in its first Chapel Hill appearance since last May. Band member Sara Bell said the band's recent

material appeared to contain less thrash than it did a few years ago.

The band has not released an album, although a number of songs were included in the boxed singles set *Evil I Do Not Tonot I Live*, which was produced a few years ago.

Claire Ashby is the group's drummer. Bell, Jebb Bishop and Mike Carter make up the rest of

the band, which has been together for three years.

Monday night's concert offers a local thrash band that may have smoothed out, a goofball band that may have added some (political) thrash, and the beat of women drummers. If it's not enough to come and listen, come and watch. Tickets are \$4. Joy to the world.

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