

Sirens of the Ditch a strong debut

by Zack Harding
Arts & Life Editor

This has been a dynamic year for Jason Isbell; he split from a six plus year relationship with the Drive by Truckers and then released his solo debut, *Sirens of the Ditch*. And it's great.

Much of *Sirens* sounds similar to Isbell's work with the Truckers, with several of the eleven tracks being country-rock ballads. There are also the up tempo rock numbers, such as "Brand New Kind of Actress," which harkens back to his old songs like "The Day John Henry Died." Given that, there is a definite split between *Sirens* and the records he put out with the Truckers.

First of all, Jason is clearly approaching a more pop-oriented sound, with catchy hooks and lyrics woven into almost every song. Overall, the tone is more mass market friendly and less dark than a Truckers record. Also, there is



a little bit more genre variety with *Sirens*, such as the bar blues piano ballad "Hurricanes and Hand Grenades," and the bluegrass tinged "Magician".

One high point of the album is "Dress Blues," a heart-wrenching tribute to a soldier killed in Iraq who was from Jason's home town. The song

is mostly devoid of political commentary, which is a pretty smart move, as it makes the death of the soldier the primary focus.

Other highlights include the grungy rocker "Try", the swampy "Down in a hole" and the lyrically clever "Grown" which rhymes "hurricane" with

"Purple Rain". How could you not like that?

Sirens ends with "The Devil is My Running Mate," a seething political commentary that pulls no punches. It is a very sparse track leaving much space for the gloomy lyrics to end the album with a strong and somewhat bitter taste. It is an excellent song but doesn't seem to fit the mood of the rest of the songs, given that, it's still so good that it helps the album overall.

Ultimately, *Sirens* is missing those rock solid one-liners that made his work on Truckers albums like *Decoration Day* so very good. Also, since Jason is such a talented slide guitarist and lead player, it is a shame that *Sirens* has such a lack of both. Still, there is no doubt that he is a talented songwriter with great things to come.

Second City not second rate

by Karen Love
Staff Writer

When I first heard that the Second City Comedy Tour was coming to Brevard College, I almost peed in my pants. No, really. I was expecting to experience a night chock full of hilarious sketches witty one-liners and snappy improvisations. I was not disappointed.

The first act opened rather slowly with a hard-to-follow club sketch but quickly picked up with the singing of a song entitled, "Why does everyone hate the white guy?" The shining stars of that act were the hilarious hit-and-run one

liners, dealing with everything from abortion to what a human bagpipe would sound like. Yes, I said a human bagpipe.

After a 20 minute intermission the cast returned to the stage with some fresh material, most of which was in the form of some pretty intricate sketches. Now I must say that the best sketch of the night also made its appearance during this act. The sketch I am (reverently) speaking of was a blend between the classic movie "Dirty Dancing" and, you should sit for this, the war on terror. Yes, it's true. This sketch was complete with women in head dresses, men with guns and, to top it all off, a dance

number that was true to the movie.

Once the audience had calmed down a little, it was then announced that there was going to be a surprise third act. Those silly comedians with their surprise third acts, I mean really, is it necessary? The entire act was improvised and a little hard to follow, but funny nonetheless.

Overall, the evening was incredible. I enjoyed every minute of it, and judging by the chuckling of the people around me, most everyone else there did too. The Second City did an amazing job, and if we are lucky they will be back next year.

Upcoming events at the Porter Center:

Sunday, Sept. 23 – John Weaver - Organist

Saturday, October 6- Allen Toussaint – New Orleans R&B

Wednesday, October 17 – Ecco – Classical

Monday October 22- Edgar Meyer, Jerry Douglas & Sam Bush - Bluegrass