



The Hidden Cameras graced the stage at Cat's Cradle this past October.

Photo by
Garrett Hall

Come All Ye Faithful

Toronto-based, queer-identified band, the Hidden Cameras, rocks Cat's Cradle

By Brice McGowen

"The man that I am with my man/ pulled poked and probed/ His tongue licks my armpits and chest/ Warm, red, salt and wet." The Hidden Cameras are anything but squeamish, and they've left their mark on Chapel Hill after performing at Cat's Cradle in late October.

The Toronto-based group, which has evolved around singer songwriter Joel Gibb, has earned a reputation in part for its theatrical live shows boasting tales of scantily clad blindfolded dancers and rolls of toilet paper flying.

The band continues to develop its unlikely aesthetic with a recently released third album "Mississauga Goddam." The

songs skitter into life and build up tempo to finally explode into take-off upon Gibb's shimmering, nasal voice. You'll discover your body bouncing in time to handclaps and your arms pumping away go-go-style before you realize what hit you.

Meanwhile, lurking beneath the upbeat sheen and theatrical flourish of the Hidden Camera's music are lyrics that are always queer, and often aggressively explicit. This contrast between light and dark, innocence and underbelly has earned the group the title of the Canadian Belle & Sebastian.

The first track of the 2003's critically acclaimed album, *The Smell of Our Own*, is an elegant ode to sexual fetish. "Golden Streams" soars with angelic vocals projected atop layers of tinkling harmony and organ.

The overall aesthetic is strikingly religious. Indeed, the group makes frequent reference to religious ritual and develops its own child-like iconography. Songs like "In the Union of Wine" reach feverish climaxes of gay pop gospel energy. "That's When the Ceremony Starts" is a barrage of sensual imagery, narrating a tale of male homosexual body worship with the reverence of a sacred rite.

Critics have accused the Hidden Cameras of peddling shock value; some say the use of gay sexual (and scatological) imagery is gimmicky. Gibb retorts that being specifically gay doesn't reduce his music to gimmick. He contends that people simply aren't used to queer music.

Whatever the opinion, the Hidden Cameras are certainly one of the most intriguing new bands to pass through Chapel Hill.