



Martha Schwendener and Lawrence Chandler compose the Manhattan-based drone rock outfit Bowery Electric.

## Bowery Electric Duo Provides Pleasant, Mediocre Trip Hop

By CARL JACOBS  
Staff Writer

Manhattan-based drone rock duo Bowery Electric accomplishes two feats with the release of its third album, *Lushlife*.

No. 1: The band successfully moves trip hop across the Atlantic Ocean.

A m b i e n t sound, a genre that originated with bands such as Massive Attack and Portishead in Bristol, England, has been reluctant to leave its European roots.

No. 2: It establishes a precedent of mediocrity for the relatively new genre.

Mediocre doesn't mean bad, or even boring in this case. *Lushlife* is enjoyable from start to finish.

Two years in the making, the album

features consistently seductive vocals in ever-present, ever-pleasant atmospheric sounds. It just needs more layers, more varied beats and vocal styles.

Without variety, the music fails to fully involve the listener, and involvement and escape is what trip hop is all about.

Massive Attack, for example, uses extremely complex layers to evoke virtual reality. In contrast, Bowery Electric relaxes the listener to sleep.

Perhaps Bowery Electric simply needs more members to create complex sound. Lawrence Chandler and Martha Schwendener show promise, even if this album did not quite reach its potential.

With Chandler's catchy mixes and Schwendener's mesmerizing voice, *Lushlife* could be the blueprint for great music. For now though, it's better left as a background for conversation.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).

By FERRIS MORRISON  
Staff Writer

I know it's tough for some of you Northerners to admit it, but there are some Yankees who wish they were from the South.

Frog Holler, a band that hails from Shoemakersville, Pa., is among the wannabes. Beginning as a bluegrass band in 1996, Frog Holler has since evolved its sound to please the more mainstream listener.

The band's second release, *Adams Hotel Road*, contains an interesting mix

of bluegrass, country and alternative rock. Even a Hank Williams-hater could swallow this band's sound because Frog Holler carefully blends its bluegrass with rock and alternative undertones.

Lead singer Darren Schlappich sounds like a good ol' boy from a small N.C. town as he croons thoughtful, dreamy lyrics over a mellow acoustic guitar in songs like "Least Most Wanted." His powerful yet wispy voice sounds like a cross between The Wallflowers' Jakob Dylan and country music star Travis Tritt.

Frog Holler is anything but run-of-the-mill honky-tonk. Tunes like "Lindy" and "One in Traffic" sound like the soft vocals and mellow guitar of artists like Simon and Garfunkel. But tunes like

"Anytime Soon" and "Overtime" display the band's love of bluegrass.

Other bluegrass songs like "Monorail" bring you back to the woods of the infamous movie "Deliverance." Unfortunately, monotonous lyrics plague the song, making it difficult to listen to.

"Knee High by July" offers toe-tap-pin' fun. It's about corn liquor - a Southern favorite, particularly in the nearby Appalachian Mountains.

In addition to songs fit for square dancing, *Adams Hotel Road* contains softer songs about lost love. Sad, dreamy songs like "Couldn't Get Along" make you think about the love that got away.

Although a talented group of musicians, Frog Holler needs to stick to the

rules of blending genres and create a sound that flows rather than one that jars. "The Easy Way" is an example of a failed attempt at genre blending, beginning with an awkward electric guitar solo that seems out of place with regard to the rest of the album.

Frog Holler's overall sound is a good blend of country, bluegrass and alternative rock, but they still need to work on some of their more extreme blending. Note to band: Electric guitar and sleepy heartfelt lyrics don't mix. Let's face it - would Slash of Guns 'n' Roses sing a song like "I Just Called to Say 'I Love You'"? I don't think so.

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## MUSIC BRIEFS

### The Unband: *Retarder*

Even more so than hard rockers Limp Bizkit and Korn, the Unband's balls-to-the-wall mentality holds the secret to dumbed-down rock nirvana.

Specifically, the success of an album like the aptly-monikered *Retarder* is inversely proportional to the presence of melody, harmony and even coherence but directly proportional to the volume and the amount of beer consumed by the listener.

The snotty sneer of "Geez Louise" and the repetitive profanity of "Piece of Shit" lead me to conclude that *Retarder* should be packaged with six-packs of Milwaukee's Best.

Sure enough, a sober listen to *Retarder* exposes every last repetitive, nonmemorable pratfall that relegated

Poison to "Behind the Music."

Thankfully, few of these deficiencies seem to matter, as the Unband resoundingly succeeds in its mission to entertainingly lower rock's collective IQ.

### Jucifer: *Calling All Cars* ...

On the subject of rock for rock's sake, Jucifer proves that the fairer sex can just as convincingly rock out, Sabbath-style. Singer/guitarist Amber Valentine is the duo's true star.

Forget the girl-power-in-numbers mentality of female-dominated outfits like Veruca Salt. Valentine serves as a posse of one, double-tracking her vocals to achieve that good-girl-gone-bad aura that has fueled defiant girl groups from the Supremes to Babes in Toyland.

Valentine kicks her punk persona into high gear with the riot grl-worthy "Long Live the King." From there she finds her groove, alternating gut-busting riffs and creepily angelic harmonies and even tossing in the occasional ballad.

Most bizarre moment: the anti-self esteem fantasy "Hero Worship," in which Valentine inexplicably professes to envy former MTV talking head Tabitha Soren, of all people.

So there's the lesson to teenage girls who wish to escape the boy-band cycle and assert their gender independence: record some punishing hard rock, and throw in a tribute to Serena Altschul.

-Compiled by Josh Love

## ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT CALENDAR

### MUSIC

Cat's Cradle, 300 E. Main St., Carboro. 967-9053.  
Go! Rehearsals Room 4, 100 Brewer Lane, Carboro. 969-1400.  
Local 506, 506 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill. 942-5506.  
Skylight Exchange, 405 1/2 W. Rosemary St., Chapel Hill. 933-5550.

### Thursday, March 23

■ Jupiter Coyote at Cat's Cradle.  
■ Koester w/ Balance Affect at Local 506.

### Friday, March 24

■ Yo La Tengo at Cat's Cradle.  
■ The Accelerators at Local 506.  
■ The Haw River Festival Hootenany Kick-off at Skylight Exchange.  
■ Black Mountain and Choose Your Own Adventure at Go!

### Saturday, March 25

■ Hipbone w/ Andy Kunc at Cat's Cradle.  
■ Analogarhythm at Local 506.  
■ N.C. Songwriters' Coop Mini-Tour Showcase at Skylight Exchange.  
■ Richard Buckner at Go!

### Sunday, March 26

■ The Seldom Scene at Cat's Cradle.  
■ Black Halos at Local 506.  
■ Miguel Algarin at Skylight Exchange.

■ Tara Jane O'Neill w/ Naysayers at Go! Monday, March 27  
■ Boy Sets Fire at Cat's Cradle.  
■ Open Mic Night at Skylight Exchange. Tuesday, March 28  
■ Ten Foot Pole at Cat's Cradle.  
■ Poster Children at Go! Wednesday, March 29  
■ Robert Earl Keen at Cat's Cradle.  
■ Open Mic Night at Skylight Exchange.  
■ Pilfers at Go!

### ART

■ "New Century Artist: Young African-Americans from North Carolina." Through Wednesday. Horace Williams House. 942-7818.  
■ "From the Molecular to the Galactic." Through May 21. Ackland Art Museum, UNC campus. 966-5763.

### THEATER

■ "The Ring." Studio 2. Friday through Tuesday. Playmaker's Theatre, UNC campus.  
■ "Pericles." Company Carolina. Through March 31. Swain Hall Studio 6. UNC campus.  
■ "Wit." PlayMakers Repertory Company. Through April 2. Paul Green Theatre, UNC campus. 962-PLAY.

### FILM

■ "Do the Right Thing." 9 p.m. today. Carolina Union Auditorium.  
■ "Summer of Sam." 7 p.m. Friday and 10 p.m. Saturday. Carolina Union Auditorium.  
■ "Fight Club." 10 p.m. Friday and 7 p.m. Saturday. Carolina Union Auditorium.  
■ "Skittles" and "A Lighter Shade of Crimson." Independent films. 8 p.m. Monday. Carolina Union Auditorium.

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