



Shadowboxers, a band composed entirely of UNC students, makes its debut with *The Break*. From left to right: Ben Vincent, Nathan Mayberry and Brian Rouse.

MUSIC BRIEFS

Shadowboxers: *The Break*
It was probably too ambitious to record an album, even a short one, after playing together for less than a semester.

On the positive side, Shadowboxers displays potential with the band's first album, *The Break*. It does, after all, sound like music, and it does express a sort of emotional involvement that a lot of bands never really reach.

But the album also indicates an immature band. Composed of three UNC students, Shadowboxers utilizes a funky off-beat pop rock sound that sounds, well, like every other funky off-beat pop rock college band.

MUSIC BRIEFS

Shadowboxers
The Break

Jennyanykind
I Need You

The structure of the album further highlights the band's generic nature. Song 1: funky, off-beat rock (but probably the best in the album). Song 2: Funky, off-beat rock (pretty catchy). Continue this pattern until song six, where we get the token love song that at least one girl thinks is kind of sweet.

On the whole, the music sounds a little hollow and not very well thought out. But maybe after a few more rounds on the frat party circuit and some time at Go! Studios and the band will be ready to take another stab at becoming the next big thing on the music scene.

Jennyanykind: *I Need You*
Jennyanykind's *I Need You* is a rarity, with a depth in musical arrangement and mood that has already drawn numerous comparisons to Lou Reed.

The Chapel Hill-based band has been playing together for six years, but

the album evokes the feel that they've been together much longer, maybe since the 1960s.

The band's sound has changed over the years, and the emergent result is what the group calls a mixture of light-hearted pop and Southern gothic psychedelia.

Repeating simple lyrics like "We could be happy," and somehow making an interesting song out of it, provides for a quirky, light-hearted album.

On another note, the song "It's a Wicked World" has an ambient, hypnotizing sound, earning the band accolades and the mysterious "Southern gothic" label.

I Need You maintains an almost surreal feel throughout, with surprising musical moments at every turn. Meanwhile, the album keeps a sense of purpose, driving ahead as if it has a definite destination.

Maybe with *I Need You* the band will get a taste of national fame. And if not, it doesn't change the fact that this is a band with real vision, real talent and a damn good album to add to your collection.

Compiled by Carl Jacobs



On Elliot Smith's latest outing, *Figure 8*, the oft-praised pop craftsman ditches melodic subtlety in favor of symphony.

Elliot Smith Mimics Beatles' Pop Style, Loses Substance

By JOSH LOVE
Staff Writer

With his bittersweet juxtaposition of cynicism and melodic sublimity, Elliot Smith often evokes that legendary yin-and-yang between John Lennon and Paul McCartney of the Beatles.

As rock lore dictates, McCartney needed Lennon's caustic, impassioned intellect to complement his masterful pop sense, and thus without Lennon his solo albums, as well as those with his band Wings, sound closer to Billy Joel than *Rubber Soul*.

Note the crucial give-and-take within that unparalleled Beatles duo, because on *Figure 8*, Elliot Smith veers dangerously close to an overdose on style-over-substance melodic sheen that could only be termed McCartneyesque.

Granted, Smith's observation that "the spin of the earth impaled a silhouette of the sun on the steeple" resonates far longer than McCartneyisms such as "I know a tiny waterfall/A magic little place/Where we can play together/And watch the fishes race."

Lyrical dissections aside, Smith truly combines a sophisticated knack for pop craft with thumbnail-sketched introspection. When he seeks to capture the shades of gray within and between the particular emotions of heartache, loneliness and loss, Smith has few peers.

The confessionals "Somebody That I Used to Know" and "I Better Be Quiet Now" showcase Smith's softly plaintive voice with the most beautifully intricate guitar lines this side of Nick Drake.

The former serves as a spiritual off-

spring of Bob Dylan's indifferent kiss-offs, while the latter captures the thoughts of the brokenhearted in perfect miniature, with offhandedly pointed lines like "a lot of hours to occupy, it was easy when I didn't know you yet."

With acoustic balladry mastered to a science, Smith invests much of *Figure 8* in the marriage of this fragile folk aesthetic to his ornate pop sensibilities. Unfortunately, the pained whispers that resound above equally delicate guitar work evaporate underneath layers of strings, guitars, and psychedelic drums.

Even worse, this symphonic maelstrom often renders Smith insincere or inadequate in his vocal pleas, a fate that also befalls the post-Beatle McCartney.

The sly smirk of a spare number like "Somebody That I Used to Know" comes through loud and clear, but on the sonically complex "Wouldn't Mama Be Proud" Smith wastes a terrifically bitter line like "there's a silver lining in the corporate cloud" with a half-interested vocal delivery. Just imagine what Lennon could have done with that one.

However, when Smith drops the perpetual-gloom act and indulges in flights of lyrical whimsy, the gleeful strangeness of his music perfectly follows suit.

An after-hours feel pervades the playful "In the Lost and Found," which ironically near-nicks a line ("day breaks and every morning when he wakes he thinks of you") from McCartney's Beatle-era classic "For No One."

Forgive Smith for his occasional Beatle thievery, but if he ever bites from Wings' "Silly Love Songs," be afraid.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Chapel Hill Quartet Gives Jazz a Unique Twist

By MATT MANSFIELD
Staff Writer

Louis Matza, a man who was trying to create jazz-punk music around the time Nirvana was in full bloom, can turn a three-chord rock song into a 40-chord jazz melody with Cobain-esque insight.

"I really wanted to get back to jazz because that's what challenges me," Matza said, talking about the music of his locally based jazz quartet, The Foolish Things.

When Matza's old trio, Glass, broke up, The Foolish Things materialized as a jazz quartet.

The sultry singing of Dottie Bea and talented drumming of Ian Schreiber join Matza's guitar and Glass member David Abbott's unconventional viola di gamba.

"It looks like a cello," Matza said, referring to the viola di gamba. With seven strings, it has versatility where the cello cannot deliver. "You can play three strings at a time," Matza said. "You can't do that on a cello."

Chapel Hill is the viola di gamba capital of the country, Matza claimed. UNC music Professor Brent Wissick puts on a viola di gamba concert every spring, with Abbott second in command.

The event may not attract people from miles around, but it does give Abbott the chance to show off his talents. On May 4, The Foolish Things will close the concert, proving that Abbott's position has its perks.

Besides the use of the viola di gamba, Matza confessed what makes the band unique from other local jazz bands: "We're not as good." None of the members are jazz virtuosos - Abbott's expertise lies in classical music. Matza learned the guitar at the tired age of 20, and Bea just started singing jazz this year.

But despite Matza's modesty, the band proves talented as it turns rock tunes into nearly unrecognizable jazz songs.

Take guitar icon Jimi Hendrix's "Fire," for example. The immortal song courses with electric energy, but the group's rendition metamorphosizes it into a smooth jazz number that one might hear in smoky clubs on the seedy side of town.

"To me, a chord gets interesting when you have that fourth or fifth note," he explained, his eyes lighting up as he talked of playing beyond a three-note chord.

The Foolish Things' penchant for



The Foolish Things, a local jazz quartet with a penchant for transforming rock songs into complex jazz compositions, will perform Friday at Café Triade on East Franklin Street.

transforming any rock song into a complex jazz composition could make Pink Floyd's "Comfortably Numb" sound upbeat and groovy.

"So, even if we can't be virtuosos at it, we can write songs that bring something different to the music world," Matza said.

But this is not only a band that makes rock songs roll with a jazzy tune; it also plays original songs and straight jazz numbers. "We tend to swing in a laughable way," Matza said.

The band prides itself on its foolishness and its members don't take themselves too seriously, hence the quartet's name.

"Humor is something most popular music has lost," he said.

However, Matza believes the band's music can evoke a myriad of emotions, including serious ones.

"I think the purpose of using jazzy chord progressions is not for the sake of complexity, but I think you just communicate different kinds of moods," he said.

Matza even philosophized for a moment on the notion of time as ephemeral, and how The Foolish Things can portray that in music.

"You can't look at music and hold it because as soon as you do, that beat is gone," Matza said.

In addition to the quartet's May 4 performance, The Foolish Things will play Friday at Café Triade, a coffee shop on East Franklin Street.

The Arts & Entertainment Editor can be reached at artsdesk@unc.edu.

CD REVIEW

Elliot Smith
Figure 8



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