

## Damnells Greet Fans as Friends in Almost Empty De La Luz

By TOM PREVITE  
Staff Writer

Who says you need a huge venue with a throng of listeners to put on a good show?

The Damnells performed Thursday at De La Luz in Carrboro before a group whose numbers could be counted on two hands.

But that didn't phase the band from Brooklyn, N.Y. In fact, the musicians preferred it that way.

They played without caring about who was watching or really if anyone was watching at all. It was almost as if

they were practicing in their garage and a few friends happened to stumble in on the jam session in progress.

The anonymity one usually feels at a concert was dissolved as The Damnells took the time between songs to get to know each audience member by name.

Ted, Dave, Steven and Alex, as the band members liked to be called, offered the crowd touring anecdotes, jokes and even beers.

They showed genuine gratitude to those who braved the miserable weather.

The appearance of the band members helped establish a relaxed and intimate atmosphere.

Each of the musicians sported clothing more suited for a Thursday evening

spent chilling with buddies than a public performance.

In fact, The Damnells easily could have been a group of your friends. The band's music shed light on life lessons — concerning everything from love to religion — that everyone must learn. Lyrics were like advice given over a beer instead of preaching or wailing about unapproachable pain.

The group's style was a blend of multiple rock genres with a melancholic undertone.

Some tunes featured soft rock rhythms with a hint of blues guitar. Other songs were harder, taking bits and pieces from grunge.

But all of the music was full of the passion of experience.

Vocalist Alex Dezen's voice was clear

and crisp with a slightly raspy tone to it, which was well-suited to the emotional atmosphere the band was trying to establish.

The singer took extra care in delivering his vocals, for they contained a degree of angst that stirred the blood rather than raised eyebrows and sighs of disgust.

The lyrics flowed smoothly enough: "I've got a bright idea/Give me your money and I'll take all your pain/Come here every Sunday and I'll keep Satan away/If you go away, go astray, there will be darkness for you."

Dezen pronounced this passage with all the emotion and intensity of Kurt Cobain on "All Apologies."

While the performance was entertaining, The Damnells exhibited some

irritating quirks.

During some songs, the guitarists would turn around, walk to the drummer and face him. With the small space taken up by De La Luz's stage, this caused the band to crowd together and look awkward.

Also, the vocals drowned out when a couple of the louder songs reached the peaks of their intensity. But these small-scale flaws took little away from an otherwise strong concert.

The next time the Damnells come into town, try to catch their show. After it ends, you just might find yourself sitting in the back room and sipping drinks with four new friends.

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

dive  
recommends

By Philip McFee

■ **Anthony Burgess, "A Clockwork Orange"** All right, malchecks and devotchkas (boys and girls) — you've probably seen the sinny (movie) and think it's all horrorshow ultraviolence (good but senseless filth). Not so, my brothers — the book will razrez your malenky rassoodocks (rip your little minds).

■ **"Mr. Vampire"** Hong Kong cinema at its worst is entertainment at its best. Be on the lookout for terrible dubbing, unexplained dancing and, above all, those bunny-hopping vampires.

■ **Bad Religion** It's the smartest punk band out there, headed for more than 20 years by Ph.D.-holder Greg Graffin. Listen to the lyrics, and come to know the true meaning of "thesaurus rock."

■ **Yoshitaka Amano** He's a legendary Japanese artist whose résumé goes far beyond the character design for "Vampire Hunter D." Rich, dark color and themes are present in all of his surreal fantasy paintings.

■ **"Fight Club" soundtrack** The only full release from the Dust Brothers, their electronic score has enough atmosphere to stand alone. Songs are divided into sections — almost movements — giving the album around 30 different riffs.

Philip McFee can be reached at [pip@email.unc.edu](mailto:pip@email.unc.edu).

## Pulitzer-Prize Winning Author Captures Darkness, Visits Durham

By PHILIP MCFEE  
Staff Writer

In his introduction to Viking Press' 1992 book "The Granta Book of the American Short Story," Richard Ford confesses, "I don't know why people write stories."

Then why read them? Ford presents a fine reason to do so in his latest collection of short fiction, "A Multitude of Sins."

A former UNC Morgan Writer in Residence, Ford was awarded the 1995 Pulitzer Prize for his novel "Independence Day." "A Multitude of Sins," a New York Times Notable Book,

is Ford's third short story compilation.

The book delivers what it advertises — plenty of sin. All 10 pieces (nine shorts and the novella-length "Abyss") center on wrongdoing.

But don't come looking for a variety of transgressions — adultery is the insidious act of choice, and Ford explores it in depth.

In "Quality Time," secret lovers discover the distance between each other and the remoteness within themselves in a frigid Chicago setting.

As a man watches a stranger undress across a wintry cityscape in "Privacy," he begins to understand desire and loneliness.

Throughout "A Multitude of Sins," cold settings are overshadowed by the frigidity of the characters' thoughts.

Ford's work is full of sadness and weight. When it comes to describing the bleakness of modern American life, he's one of the best there is.

Many authors struggle to capture the apathy of an urban setting or the emptiness of an open road.

Ford is a master of setting and emotion, establishing both with concise but lyrical descriptions. His style keeps his stories from ballooning, a problem that plagues many writers.

A reporter in one story states, "Deception (is) very American." This notion is echoed constantly in Ford's writing. "A Multitude of Sins" is all about the sting of life in both thought and action.

The pain is total, regardless of the source. None of Ford's characters

emerge from their respective situations unscathed.

Sexual alienation and isolation are portrayed without the type of excess that has marked the work of John Irving or Rick Moody (known for his graphic 1994 adultery fest "The Ice Storm"). Ford's handling of social decay also is done simply and clearly, without the pretensions of Jonathan Franzen.

Ford wastes no words, and his final product is sad, insightful, clean and entertaining.

Understated but skillfully written, Ford's descriptions include such gems as, "so picturesque and clear and pristine as to be painful," coming from a man lamenting a tourist-gear Maine.

Many of the author's sentences are long and complex, but the reader never

is distracted from the core of each story. In all of the pieces, Ford's prose is as clear as his cautionary message.

Accomplishing so much in so little space, Ford's stories are strong examples of efficient, powerful prose.

The market of mega-novels frequently falls victim to excessive emotional ramble. Ford's tales of sin forgive that trespass, delivering readers from evil in the process.

Ford will be reading from his novel at 7 p.m. Friday at the Regulator Book Shop in Durham. There will be a brief question-and-answer session afterwards. Admission is free, and the reading is open to the public.

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

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