

# Aged Trans Am fails to change

BY LAUREN STREIB  
STAFF WRITER

Reinvention can prove an artist's versatility and talent. It even made Madonna legendary.

But sometimes, it just makes you wonder if there was something missing from the start. Changes in a band's sound might signal growth, but stylistic overhauls hint at a weak foundation.

Though Trans Am clearly had much to celebrate Friday night with its 10-year anniversary and the completion of its new album, it was unclear if the concert was really a celebration or a huge sigh of relief.

After so many years, the band seemed distantly appreciative to the audience's sparse support. Onstage, Trans Am looked much like it played: inconsistent and desperately adolescent.

But the audience at Cat's Cradle got everything they could want: the half-naked drummer, the self-impressed techno hippie, the laid-back guitarist and some songs that matched each.

Trans Am started with cuts from their as-yet-unreleased album, tunes that referred slightly to its burgeoning punk rock style with thick guitar, bass overlaps and vocals — a territory not always covered by Trans Am's inventive and evasive style.

The group was having fun with something new to both its mem-

## CONCERT REVIEW

TRANSAM  
CAT'S CRADLE  
FRIDAY, SEPT 19  
★★★

bers and the audience.

As the set progressed, keyboards replaced strings and the vocals became robotic. While the screams of drummer Sebastian Thomson echoed more like pleas for a reaction than a reflection of the mood, the band remained comfortable.

Maybe too comfortable. As the songs struggled between muddled rock and promising techno riffs, it was hard to decide if Trans Am had a character of its own.

However, with the performance of songs from *The Red Line*, the band finally showed some of its roots: a sound with styling reminiscent of hair bands and Atari tunes.

Gone were the indecisive vocal attempts and distracting stage antics. The pervading techno spirit made these three D.C. natives seem like they knew their territory.

Even in the relative glory of the latter half of the concert, the drum work shone as the strongest aspect of the band's sound. Throughout the night, the layered beats, with the help of triggered rhythms, kept the adrenaline pumping in the otherwise wavering atmosphere.

The band finished with "Play in the Summer," the most successful song and the clear audience favorite. It infused Trans Am's retro originality with the genuine rock capability that has allowed the band to survive for 10 years.

But after a decade, shouldn't it be able to do that for a whole set?

Contact the A&E Editor at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).

# 'Cold Creek' drowns horror

BY LEAH KONEN  
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"Cold Creek Manor" is more lukewarm than chilling.

Mike Figgis, director of 1995's Oscar-winning "Leaving Las Vegas," understands how to portray emotion through drama. But he fails in his attempt at suspense.

The action centers on an elementary and dim-witted plot. A New York City couple packs up their two children and moves to the country to escape the chaos of city life. The couple hopes to save their suffering marriage in the process.

During its house hunt, the Tilson family comes across a deserted mansion in the country. Despite the warnings of a classless gas station clerk, they purchase Cold Creek Manor — complete with ancient torture devices and obscene photos in the office.

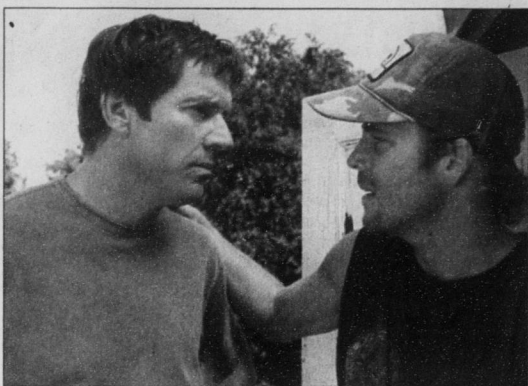
The Tilsons meet the former owner, the neurotic ex-convict Dale Massie (Stephen Dorff), whom they hire as their new handyman. Terror ensues.

But the film is so poorly written that you would probably be more scared during a campfire ghost story. "Cold Creek Manor" truly takes the cliché horror flick to a new low.

The narrative pace is incredibly humdrum. The acting is forced and unnatural. The writing is not based in reality.

But the primary downfall of this film is the unbelievably implausible plot.

Massie makes for a ridiculous murderer. He passes up countless



COURTESY OF BUENA VISTA PICTURES

Dennis Quaid buys the unholy 'Cold Creek Manor' from its former occupant, Stephen Dorff, who repays him by trying to kill him and his family.

## MOVIE REVIEW

### "COLD CREEK MANOR"

★ opportunities to kill the new owners, leading them to a well named "The Devil's Throat," marked by a sign reading "EVIL."

This draws parallels to the climactic scenes of "The Ring," but is devoid of any affect or fright.

Even when Massie has the Tilsons where he wants them, he randomly disappears, giving the Tilsons a chance to get their bearings. This alone makes the movie impossible to believe.

Since viewers won't buy this plot, shock is added to save the

audience from utter boredom. Random outbursts from Leah Tilson (Sharon Stone) and grisly images are flashed to keep viewers on the edge of their seats.

But the film just isn't scary. Instead, viewers will feel bored and, at the same time, slightly amused at the absurdity of the story.

It would be more appropriate if examined as a horror film spoof.

However, since the film is meant to be taken as serious and suspenseful, the result is a failure.

Figgis should stick to directing dramas. Any self-respecting movie-goer should just stay home.

Contact the A&E Editor at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).

## DIVERECOMMENDS

**Mogwai Young Team** The still-warm post-rockers from bonny old Scotland cut their best tracks for 1997's *Young Team*.

Who says you need words to be emotive? Well, they don't, obviously. Stellar tracks abound, leading up to the expansive coda "Mogwai Fear Satan." No need to fear.

**Richard Brautigan** The common conception: Vonnegut and Heller comprise the entire batch of '60s lyrical visionaries.

Well, Brautigan shouldn't be counted out of the group. If the title "The Abortion: An Historical Romance 1966" isn't enough of a signpost, his prose is markedly unconventional. Go ahead, play with the language.

**Akira Kurosawa's Shakespeare Adaptations** Picture "Out, out, damn spot!" with swords and samurai — and that's just the surface of Akira Kurosawa's masterfully directed and adapted Shakespearean films.

"Macbeth" and "King Lear" become "Throne of Blood" and "Ran," respectively.

And yes, shoguns can deliver soliloquies.

**"Jimmy Corrigan, The Smartest Kid on Earth"** Chris Ware has produced something only a rare handful could before — a graphic novel that both merits literary praise and elicits a genuine emotional response.

The somber graphic style and melancholic tones make for a "Maus"-like experience not to be missed.

Contact Philip McFee at [pip@email.unc.edu](mailto:pip@email.unc.edu).

## STAR SYSTEM

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- ★★ FAIR
- ★★★ GOOD
- ★★★★ EXCELLENT
- ★★★★★ CLASSIC

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