

# Def Jux hip-hop roster delivers definitive show

BY KEMP BALDWIN  
STAFF WRITER

Definitive Jux doesn't mean much to most hip-hop fans.

But for the swarms of ticketless hipsters kicking it outside the sold-out Aesop Rock show, the label means pure hip hop.

It's a stamp of verbal dexterity that attacks listeners with poignancy backed by beats that spark gyrations with the same frequency as the Neptunes.

What separates those making up the bill — Aesop, Mr. Lif, C-Rayz Walz and DJ Fakts One — from acts such as Jay-Z is that they can't rely on pop culture to spoon-feed an audience for them.

Independent hip hop is somewhat comparable to the jam band scene, where grassroots is the way to stardom and the only way to gain support from fans is to rock a show with consistency.

These days, hip-hop shows are notorious for their quality, often staid by either the arrogance of the MC or the constant holler to turn the beats up — in turn drowning out the MC's lyrics, which usually aren't even articulate.

So Saturday night, it was refreshing to see the little-known C-Rayz Walz bounce on stage

## CONCERT REVIEW

**AESOP ROCK  
CAT'S CRADLE  
SATURDAY, NOV. 15  
★★★★**

spitting clear verses and getting the crowd pumped for the headliners.

He stopped suddenly at the end of a freestyle, smiled deep into the crowd and explained that he was getting drunk off North Kakalak's energy.

Humbled, Walz took a step back into the darkness to compose himself as the crowd roared for more.

After Walz, Aesop and Lif stepped on stage as a duo despite the fact that the show was billed as the *Bazooka Tooth* tour, for Aesop's new joint.

Neither rapper took center stage for too long. They swapped songs, playing off both of their catalogs to create a dynamic and cohesive set list.

The two rocked the mic like CNN with spine, informing the crowd of the injustices that abound today. With Aesop's help, Lif stormed the war on terror with "Home of the Brave."

Concise and effective, Lif need-

ed only three minutes to tackle the subject to the point that his incendiary last words, "You can wave that piece of s--- flag if you dare/But they killed us because we've been killing them for years," sounded like a headline.

It's sad that songs like this will never get airplay where they can make a change.

The show's only downfall was Aesop's breakneck speed. His analogies don't slow down for the feeble-minded.

If you haven't spun his records a few times, his linguistic acrobatics will leave you sitting on the bench. But at least an eighth of the crowd was mouthing the words to all the songs — all things considered, a few lost souls isn't really a problem.

After bombing the stage all night, Aesop and his four Juxers sweetly laid the crowd to rest with "Daylight."

The entire crowd joined in to sing the chorus with such familiarity and pitch that it almost sounded rehearsed.

This is the bench mark for definitive hip hop.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

# Wolff goes 'Old School' with novel

BY PHILIP MCFEE  
ASSISTANT ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

Tobias Wolff has taken care of all the small things.

An esteemed short fiction writer and editor of numerous short story collections, Wolff's name is synonymous with the form thanks to often-anthologized stories like the darkly humorous, surreal "Bullet in the Brain."

Factor in the excellent Vietnam retrospective "In Pharaoh's Army" and the big screen-adapted memoir "This Boy's Life," and Wolff's authoritative reputation is almost complete — almost.

This year's "Old School" sees the former UNC Morgan Family Writer-in-Residence making his first attempt at the final logical step in his compositional canon: the novel.

This brief work — at times dark, at others hysterical — packs all the enjoyment of Wolff's short stories, sculpting it around a more protracted story line.

Continuing a stylistic line from his short stories, Wolff offers up fiction with heavy emphasis on characterization, as locales take the back seat to odd human subjects.

As a tip of the hat to contemporary heavyweights such as Rick Moody's "The Ice Storm" and John Irving's "The World According to Garp," Wolff stages his narrative in a New England boarding school, described through the sardonic eyes of a teenage boy.

The nameless narrator funnels his literary ambition into school writing contests. The prize? An audience with a visiting author.

## BOOKREVIEW

**TOBIAS WOLFF  
OLD SCHOOL  
★★★★**



(keeping) his arms folded across his chest like a Civil War general in a daguerreotype."

Wolff's sharp, observational humor avoids the schlock route of sloppy young academia tales such as "Dead Poets Society." His wit shines through in his pleasantly detached characters.

A large, quirky supporting cast, running the gamut from teachers to Robert Frost, gives the narrator a multitude of possibilities for both stabs and sincere sentiment.

Notable problems only occur in the novel's final third, which falls upon problems with transition.

Although the passage of time and the events within are a bitter-sweet portrayal of lost youthful ambition, the narrative line seems somewhat disjointed.

Wolff, taking the chopiness into account, is known for short stories, and "Old School" is ultimately about creating a satisfactory opus.

"In some murky way I recognized my own impatience to tear off the mask, and it spooked me," the narrator claims, reflecting on his own fledgling stories.

Although the entire work might leave something to be desired in continuity, Wolff is effectively taking a step forward in his craft.

A longer work allows him to show more about both himself and the characters he creates.

"Old School" might not merit any teary rounds of "O Captain! My Captain!" But it deserves a read. Class is in session.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

# Boss's classics shine on hits album

BY MICHAEL PUCCI  
ASSISTANT ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

In 1995, Bruce Springsteen released a gravely disappointing, poorly constructed greatest hits album.

Since then, some noteworthy chapters have been added to the Book of Springsteen. A No. 1 album with *The Rising* and two mammoth tours with the E Street Band later, Bruce is once again a hot commodity.

So just in time for the holiday crush, Springsteen adds his name to the popular "Essential" series with this far more satisfying compilation.

You can argue about the omission of some tracks ("I'm on Fire," "Growin' Up," "Prove It All Night") and the curious inclusion of others

## MUSIC REVIEW

**BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN  
THE ESSENTIAL BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN  
★★★★★**

("Nebraska" and "Mary's Place").

But you can't argue with the results — this is Springsteen 101 for those unfamiliar with his truly towering body of work and is just about a perfect representation of it for those who are.

It's fascinating to hear the various stages of Springsteen's career emerge across *Essentials*' two discs — from the timeless innocence of "Thunder Road" to the pure pop bombast of "Dancing in the Dark" to the social commentary of the

controversial "American Skin (41 Shots)" and everything in between.

Included in the package (and the principal lure for diehard fans) is a third disc of previously unreleased songs. But buyer beware on this front — there's a reason most of it was previously unreleased.

*The Essential Bruce Springsteen* is no substitute for the albums it draws from — *Born to Run* and *Darkness of the Edge of Town* should be in every aspiring rock fan's collection.

But if ever you doubt Springsteen's importance in rock 'n' roll, one need not look any further than this.

Contact the A&E Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

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