BLACK FILMS

During this time, black actors typically were relegated to stock roles such as maids and servants.

Other characters tended to be either comedic, meant only to add lightness to the film or musical. Jazz greats Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong made appear-ances in movies, often as themselves

At the same time, there was an underground network of movies, many of which starred Lena Horne,

being made by black directors and shown in black neighborhoods. "The person responsible for bringing dignity to these roles was Sidney Poitier," said Ken Wlaschin, director of creative affairs at the American Film Institute. "He made the difference.

Poitier was undeniably the pre-eminent black actor of his time. appearing in landmark films such as "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner," "In the Heat of the Night" and "Lilies of the Field," the last of which earned him an Academy Award. His work, in effect, legit-

imized black actors. Then, in 1971, black director Melvin Van Peebles almost singlehandedly ushered in a new style of filmmaking.

"Sweet Sweetback's Baad Ass Song," generally considered the first "blaxploitation" movie ever made, concerned a womanizing black man on the run after beating two white cops. As an extension of the black

power movements of the late 1960s, blaxploitation films provid-ed many African-Americans with a long-suppressed voice. "To show black male characters

standing up for themselves, not looking downcast when they came in the presence of a white authority figure ... beating "The Man," Van Deburg said. "All of this was psychologically empowering. It did really take on the spirit of black power."

For several years, these movies proved successful at the box office and at record stores. Isaac Hayes and Curtis Mayfield's soundtracks to the films "Shaft" and "Superfly," respectively, have long been regarded as classics.

But critics of blaxploitation movies didn't always echo those sentiments, pointing to the street talk, rampant drug use, overt sex-uality and vigilante justice prominently featured in the films.

They seemed to endorse values that perpetuated the negative stereotypes that advocates of black

culture were trying to deflect. "They had a good run for their money for about 10 years with great soundtracks, but they got cheaper and started to run out of steam," Wlaschin said.

Indeed, by the late '70s, the blaxploitation era had ended. Black cinema wouldn't have quite the same impact again on popular culture for more than a decade.

Parodies of blaxploitation films sprang up through the '80s, includ-ing Keenen Ivory Wayans' "I'm Gonna Git You Sucka!" and Robert Townsend's "Hollywood Shuffle."

Around the same time, a crop of films that some dubbed "gangsploitation" was released that dealt uncompromisingly with racism and ghetto strife.

Two films in particular, Lee's "Do the Right Thing" and John Singleton's "Boyz N the Hood," were incendiary portraits of urban life that challenged mainstream sudiances audiences

Since then, no black filmmaker has achieved the stature, influence and freedom that Lee enjoys

"There are probably half a dozen directors that can be recog-

Welsh rockers juxtapose fur, vegetables, feedback

stream of images are projected on a screen behind them.

track on their all-Welsh release

Mwng, a bouncy round creature pranced around on the screen while the band pumped out the song's pop-punk riff.

ubilant refrain. But that was just

"Receptacle for the Respectable"

climaxed with Rhys, bassist Guto

Pryce and guitarist Huw Bunford bringing all three guitars together

For "Calimero," a buried album

FRIDAY, FEB. 13

the beginning.

ished.

BY MICHAEL PUCCI ASSISTANT ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR CAT'S CRADLE

There were any number of signs that the Super Furry Animals' concert Friday wouldn't be a typical night out on the town.

The first clue might have come when lead singer Gruff Rhys left the stage midway through the first A song and re-emerged singing through a Power Rangers mask with his microphone held up to his forehead.

During the course of SFA's 90minute set, carrots were eaten and thrown into the well-populated audience and, for the coup de grace, the band stormed the stage in Bigfoot costumes, looking like,

The show didn't begin reaching its peak until halfway through "The well, super-furry animals. Contrasting the almost unbear-Contrasting the almost unbear-able sensitivity of opening band Papa M, the Welsh wonders opened up their show with a potent mix of up-tempo material, culminating with the irresistible sing-along "Rings Around the World." Piccolo Snare," which opened up from its haunting start to an oddly Not letting up, SFA engaged the entire audience with the irre-sistible lounge disco of "Juxtapozed With U," featuring the charming chorus, "Let's get juxtaposed, jux-taposed, just suppose I juxtapose with you." But they weren't fin-iched

The remainder of the set list emphasized songs from the band's latest releases, 2003's Phantom Power and 2001's Rings Around the World.

Performances of tracks such as "Hello Sunshine" and "Bleed Forever" were inspired but slowed the momentum down consider-

at the necks to bring the song to an absurdly transcendent close. CONCERTREVIEW **SUPER FURRY ANIMALS** But it wasn't until the show's final song that the concert reached

its dizzying zenith when the band launched into their epic "The Man Don't Give a Fuck." On the screen, a litany of politi-Adding to their shows' unorthodox nature, Super Furry Animals performed while a continuous

cal figures streamed repeatedly while the band — and everyone in attendance — repeated "You know they don't give a fuck about anyone else" like a mantra. Just when you thought the song

was over, the band left, excepting a guy with a laptop who pro-grammed a series of pulsatingdance beats that had the entire Cradle moving.

Finally, almost 10 minutes after their departure, the band made its triumphant return with the aforementioned shaggy costumes and picked the song back up, leaving the crowd salivating for more. With a catalog as exhilerating-

varied and eccentric as SFA's, no doubt certain fan favorites were unfortunately omitted (namely, the masterful "Presidential Suite"), but complaining about that would be nitp cking.

This was theatrical rock at its most ridiculous and excessive best.

Contact the ASE Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

Geeky Goats frontman shows storytelling skills

BY ROBBIE MACKEY STAFF WRITER Live, there's a certain innocence to John Darnielle's world-weary romanticism that just doesn't make it through recording.

Under the lights his eyes blaze, filling with boyish wonder as he excitedly strums his acoustic guitar, the fourth-grade bowl cut atop his head swinging back and forth.

Dignified but at ease, he wells with joy, delivering lighthearted anecdotes from his past, recount-ing time spent with old friends and lovers

And the roar of the crowd, which you'd think he would have used to by now, still catchgrown es him by surprise every time. It's almost tangible, the unique

level of appreciation and comfort, for both performer and audience, at your average Mountain Goats

Monday night, Darnielle stopped in at Go! Room 4 in Carrboro, where the atmosphere was no different.

After a capo-crazed opening set of hackneyed alt-country from Cub Country — a side project of Jets To Brazil bassist Jeremy Chatelain and a block of bouncy Bungles-infused pop from the Rosebuds, Darnielle took the stage with bassist Peter Hughes, a wooden stool and his trusty steel-string.

Not moving from that spot until the set came to a close, he assuredly delivered gems from his entire

CONCERTREVIE THE MOUNTAIN GOATS GO! ROOM 4 MONDAY, FEB. 16 ****

catalog. The delightful "No, I Can't," which saw release on Transmissions To Horace, stretched all the way back to

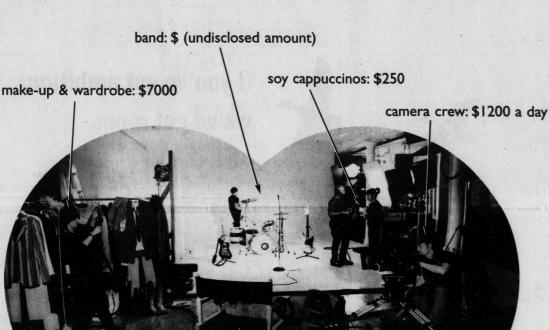
Darnielle's no-fi cassette-only days. Elsewhere, he offered up "International Small Arms Traffic Blues" from 2002's Tallahassee, a quaint number in which he likens his love to the "border between Greece and Albania."

Throughout the night, Darnielle's lyrical potency sat at the fore. His strength as a storyteller, the truest neo-Dylan-viain Daniel-Johnston sense of the word, was showcased at its strongest in his chilling rendition of "No Children," a messy story of

marriage gone entirely wrong. Like an old friend hosting a slightly drunken dinner party, Darnielle skipped from conversa-tion to lyrical conversation, keeping everyone abreast with his life, his loves and his new favorite

country songs. And like the consummate host he always has been, Darnielle did-n't say good night until everyone was satisfied.

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Diversions

Wlaschin said. "Like a Hitchcock or Spielberg - he's one of them."

Lee's films tore away at decades of cinematic stereotyping and ele-vated the careers of many now-prominent black actors, including Denzel Washington, Samuel L. Jackson and Wesley Snipes. "He was able to take over a

'Malcolm X' project from white control when he saw it being potentially corrupted and make a marvelous documentary," Van DeBurg said.

Thanks to the efforts of filmmakers such as Lee, the black voice is louder today than it ever has been in cinema.

Filmmakers continue to push boundaries, actors are receiving more substantial roles and mainstream America has come to embrace them.

At the 2002 Academy Awards, Halle Berry became the first black woman to win an Oscar for best actress in a leading role, celebrating alongside fellow victor Denzel Washington, the first black man to take the Oscar for best leading actor since Poitier. "There was a lot of criticism

that a lot of black actors would get rewarded for only certain kinds of roles," Van Deburg said. "But (the Oscars) were definitely validation that this isn't so anymore."

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