#### The Daily Tar Heel

### Diversions

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2004

'Rock' in golden years



NICK PARKER T CAUGHT UP IN IT

### T.V. news drops ball with poor coverage

t's no big secret — Tucker Carlson is a dick.

The right wing co-host of "Crossfire" screams when his points aren't strong enough to stand on their own, treats educated liberals like a gang of roving idiots and bla-tantly ignores the basic failings of President Bush's administration.

Plus, he expects America to take him seriously even though he sports a bow tie. No one ever respected Pee Wee Herman's politi-cal views — the same should hold true for Carlson.

But when Jon Stewart, host of the Emmy award-winning "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart," called Carlson a dick on Friday during an appearance on "Crossfire," he wasn't criticizing Carlson's political leaning.

He was pointing out a much graver problem in "Crossfire," CNN and broadcast media at large: They're failing in their sacred democratic duty to protect the American public. Instead of providing a context

Instead of providing a context for the news, acting as a watchdog over the government or putting politicians' feet to the fire, the media are lobbing up softballs. It all plays right into the political game. Shows like "Crossfire" could

address serious, contentious and important issues, but they don't. They throw hot-headed pundits what Stewart called "hacks" - in

front of the camera for what boils down to a partisan dogfight. The end result is more of a

mouthpiece for the politicians than a forum for criticism, debate or gasp! — the truth. And the American public is the

victim. We lose expert analysis, hard-hitting news and pertinent information. But despite what Stone Phillips' apocalyptic proph-esies would have you believe, we aren't helpless. The New York Times gives us

hope; The Washington Post is our savior; Newsweek brings sweet salvation. When broadcast news organizations rush blindly through complex issues, the print media are there to pick up the pieces and make some sense of the mess. News analysis and op-ed pieces

- whether investigating the crucial arguments during a presidential debate or highlighting some connection between pop culture and politics (ahem) – provide an infi-nitely greater context for the infor-mation they contain.

Broadcast media have their place. There's no quicker or cleaner way to cover breaking news. Just look at the scandal in Florida dur-ing the 2000 presidential election.

But to frame and fully explore the intricacies of an issue, there's no substitute for the written word. No matter how many talking heads CNN fits on the screen, it can't

compete with the competence cohesion, completeness and clarity of a strong print article. MUSICREVIEW

R.E.M. **AROUND THE SUN** 

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cally sappy for the politically and socially outspoken band. "The Outsiders" features the

group's trademark tambourine ackbeat but is awkward in that every line seems to have one too many syllables in it.

The track also features Q-Tip, former MC for A Tribe Called est. Q-Tip is a talented musician in his own right but an out-of-place addition to this album.

It's an indication of dwindling musical mojo when a band recruits a rapper to guest on its alternative-rock album. And didn't they learn from "Radio Song"? "Wanderlust" utilizes a bizarre

Christmas-like jingle; as with most of the songs on the album, it lacks the deep lyrical introspection and metaphorical musings R.E.M. usually provides.

By simply reading its title, the song "The Worst Joke Ever" might seem on the surface like an exten-sion of R.E.M.'s Andy Kaufman deification, but with *Around the* Sun, it's more likely referring to

the album itself.

On a positive note, it provides the first song on the CD where the chorus is actually worthy of a sin-

galong. In "The Ascent of Man," Stipe repeatedly wails and howls in an off-key voice that makes even the most hardcore R.E.M. fan cringe and yearn for the days of Automatic for the People.

Maybe it's Stipe's all-too-familiar cadence that's holding back R.E.M. from astounding listeners with this latest release

Maybe it's the pervasive absence of gifted drummer Bill Berry, who has been missing from the band's last three albums

Maybe it's the simple fact that R.E.M. just can't top themselves. Regardless, Around the Sun falls sadly short of the traditional suc-

But hey, they can always cut *In Time 2: The Best of R.E.M.* The first one was missing "Shiny Happy People."

Existential film ultimately flawed

#### BY SALEM NEFF

**BY NICOLE BOBITSKI** 

block quite a few times cally speaking, at least.

R.E.M. has been around the

That said, the band's newest

release, Around the Sun, hardly

conveys its experience or talent,

and instead jumps on the band-wagon of groups that follow up greatest hits CDs with poorly done comeback albums.

of bands that should've thought

longer and harder before trying

to cash in on their dedicated fan

- say, a Carolina alumni who used to play for the Chicago Bulls

returning from retirement only to wish that he had just remained

a weil-missed icon. The album opens with "Leaving New York," a weak, piano-saturated ballad lead singer Michael Stipe described as a love song to New

York written shortly after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

That's about as far as R.E.M.'s

usual brand of social commen-

tary goes on this album, the rest of which seems uncharacteristi-

a well-missed icon.

It's sort of like the sports hero

While bands such as the Cure, have managed to avoid this fate, R.E.M. follows the longer list

- musi-

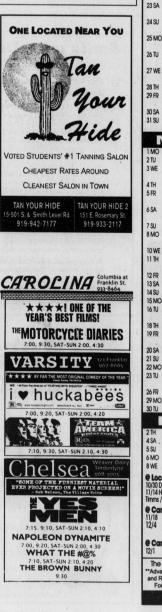
WRITER It begins with a coincidence A Sudanese doorman, very tall, about 18, collects publicity shots of celebrities. Albert Markovski (Jason Schwartzman) runs into Sam that's his name - three times

Why? Thus begins our mystery: David O. Russell's existential comedy "I Heart Huckabees." Except the mystery is no psychological thriller; instead, we'll call it a philosophical quest. And our detectives are no ordi-nary Sherlock Holmes. Vivian and

Bernard Jaffe (Lily Tomlin, Dustin Hoffman) uncover the clues to the meaning of life. In short, they believe in existentialism and the "blanket," symbolic of the reduction in importance of absolutely everything.

Albert, our primary quest-seeker, presides over an environmental charter and writes heartfelt but sim-ply awful poetry with lines including "You rock, rock." The Jaffes attempt to center his focus, and in order to solve the case, they must follow him wherever he goes, including the bathroom. Clues can be found any-

The tension between Albert and Brad (Jude Law) attracts the detectives to the workplace. Although Brad, a Huckabees Corporation climber, excuses Albert's resentment as an attraction to Dawn (Naomi Watts), his girlfriend and Huckabees spokeswoman, the anger lies deeper. Brad wants to take over the environmental charter to promote his self-hearted outer self and hardball



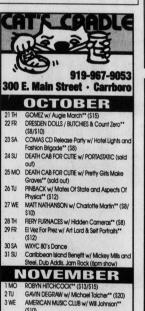
MOVIEREVIEW "I HEART HUCKABEES" \*\*

inner style to the Huckabees executive board. In the moment of conflict appears

Albert's new sidekick, Tommy Corn (Mark Wahlberg). In the funniest role of Wahlberg's career, the petro-leum activist firefighter shows Albert the "other side": nihilism under Caterine Vauban (Isabelle Huppert), an old student of the Jaffe's.

Thus appears the conflict of inter-est: Will the Jaffes or Vautan give up his or her philosophy for the sake of their clients? Perhaps the deci-sion is no longer up to the detectives any longer. Albert and Tommy take matters into their own hands and handlebars, as they search for equilibrium between their two teachers. Russell directs "I Heart

Huckabees," an existential comedy and a sidestep from his 1999 Gulf War film "Three Kings," which also starred Wahlberg. Hoffman and Tomlin are the odd couple, yet per-



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APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION\*\* (\$8/\$10)

'Sun' sets on R.E.M.'s reign Legendary punks still

Orange County, Calif., by some accounts America's most Republican county, does not come to mind when one considers the roots of punk music, but it should. This affluent slice of the Golden

BY JIM WALSH

ANT ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT EDITOR

American culture wars, follow-

As relevant today as it was

refreshing departure from

more than two decades ago, lead singer Mike Ness' brazen sound

State was the birthplace of Social Distortion, an early front-runner in the West Coast punk scene of the 1980s After eight years of relative inactivity, sprinkled lightly with

solo albums and cover songs, the band's release of a full-length LP, Sex, Love and Rock 'n' Roll, signals its return to the front lines of the

ing the death of guitarist Dennis Danell, who died of natural causes

cess of an R.E.M. recording. The tracks all sound the same, and it lacks the oomph that fans have come to expect from the

> the pseudo-punk trash pandered by current MTV outfits such as Yellowcard and Good Charlotte. His album, at times a tribute to Contact the ASE Editor at artsdesk@unc.edu.

a late bandmate, balances the raw ferocity of the punk genre with a seasoned maturity that comes with more than 20 years' experience. That's not to say Ness doesn't

in 2000.

serve up a fair share of the youthful idealism - and sometimes cynicism — upon which his band, and punk music, was built. On "Don't Take Me for Granted,"

written for Danell, Ness eulogizes disenfranchised youth, conjuring images of cigarettes and six-pack and the magic of going to live rock shows. The kids are all right, he

says, so just let 'em have their fun. Ness leaves behind this confident optimism on "Nickels and Dimes," which lauds the benefits of wasting time. The "jailhouse poet" returns to familiar themes in this punchy mantra touting the benefits subsistence.

The album as a whole, generally upbeat and thoughtful, is built on a

UISTORTION MUSICREVIEW

SOCIAL DISTORTION SEX, LOVE AND ROCK 'N' ROLL \*\*\*\*

solid foundation of driving guitars and unshy percussion. However, Sex, Love and Rock

'n' Roll does sometimes digress from typical West Coast decibels. 'Winners and Losers" stands out for its slow-tempo and deliberate chorus, which Ness uses as a sounding board for his guttural vocals sung over passionate chords.

The band has come a long way since it formed in the midst of one of America's most establishmentarian locales

Social Distortion, like the prospectors of 1849, brought to California, and eventually the world, something that was severely lacking — a lust for life and an affinity for sex, love and rock 'n' roll.

This album, long overdue, is pure gold.

CAROLINA UNION STORY BOAR

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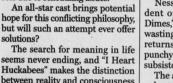


ARMADILLO

fect for this contemporary salute to society. No new comedic territory is explored by Watts' aloof character, although she fits the A-list, blonde bombshell type Russell seemed to be searching for. Both Gwyneth Paltrow and Nicole Kidman had to drop the role due to scheduling issues.

solutions?

seems never ending, and "I Heart Huckabees" makes the distinction between reality and consciousness none the simpler.



If you really want to know what's going on and what it really means, you have to read. Find the writers with whom you agree. Read what they on the other side of the fence. Read all of it and any of it. The point is to read - a lot.

Ferrell Guillory, one of my pro-fessors and probably the smartest guy I know (honestly, this is in no way brown nosing — nothing I could say could salvage my grade), was working out on a treadmill at his fitness club last week.

He was watching several news-casts on a group of televisions that were muted with the closed captioning turned on. As Guillory was reading the white text scroll under the broadcasts, he realized the shal-

lowness of what it was saying. When you have to listen to Wolf Blitzer speaking with flair and passion, pouring profundity into his every word, it sounds good, it looks good and it sells well – but the words coming out of his mouth don't really mean anything.

That's why citizens have to seek out good written analysis. That's 'Crossfire" is poison to the uninformed. That's why "The Daily Show" anchor called Carlson a dick. Stewart said it best: "Stop, stop, stop, stop hurting America.

> Contact Nick Parker, a senior journalism and English major, at panic@email.unc.edu.

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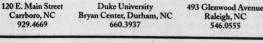
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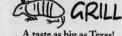
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