



NICK PARKER
BORN AND BRED

UNC rap the next big thing in music

Sunday's game against Duke was a protracted heart attack. You already know the stats, so I won't rehash them. But it was probably the single most stressful and satisfying event of my young adult life. Given, I don't get out much, but the energy circulating in the Dean Dome after Marvin Williams' awkward attempt dropped through the bottom of the net can't be overstated or emulated. I've never felt more like a Tar Heel.

But the afterparty was a bit of a bummer. Not the team cutting down the nets or our seniors' fond farewells (I almost cried when Melvin Scott walked off the court). I'm talking about our alma mater. It's a bit stale and dated. Yeah, it's nice linking arms with friends and classmates to sway and sing off-key, but pounding on our seats during "radiant shine" just doesn't carry the same oomph as a one-handed Jackie Manuel jam. Thank God for Julian Bickford. Bickford, clearly a raging Tar Heel fan and apparently a burgeoning rap god, has reinvented our alma mater and what it truly means to be a Tar Heel. His masterpiece, "Tar Heel Hip-Hop" — available at www.tarheelhiphop.com (track 12) for free sampling or paid download at the low, low price of \$2.99 — is the voice of a new generation.

It's the evolution of our aged theme song. It's shamelessly spirited. It's exactly what we've all been waiting for. Across three verses and almost five minutes of track, Bickford praises the Tar Heel basketball team, trash talks our ACC competition and takes a nostalgic, drunken stroll down Franklin Street that ends like any good night on the town should: with a random hookup.

It's a work of pure deconstructive genius. "Tar Heel Hip-Hop" is so brash and bad, it's instantly endearing. Bickford isn't going to be challenging Jay-Z or Mos Def for the hip-hop crown any time soon, but he's won a place in the heart of any Tar Heel fan lucky enough to stumble on his work.

Bickford lays down his hypnotic lines over a slow, smooth beat that I think he made on a pirated copy of Frooty Loops or maybe his sweet Apple iBook. There's no real "melody" or "bass line" or "consistent rhythm," but who cares. The Neptunes are huge, and they aren't good producers either. Besides, we're here for the lyrics. We want something we can sway and sing along to, and that's exactly where Bickford sets himself head and shoulders above all other independent, Chapel Hill-based, basketball-themed, Tar Heel-praising rap artists. It's a bigger genre than you might think — Black Thought and Common both started out that way.

A few of the more priceless gems: "Jackie Man-u-el/You be doin' it well ... son/Everybody love Mister Raymond Fel ... ton," "We shinin' up a steel-toed boot for Duke/Be careful not to slip in any Dookie poo," and "Let's hook up at Playas/Drink some Holy Grayals/A couple Pale Ales/She'll be shaking her tail."

This is everything that's right in the world wrapped in one song. Top it all off with guest appearances by an echo effect, a soulful female singer and the Bell Tower (that's right), and this is an instant Carolina classic. Back off, Petey Pablo.

With the upcoming ACC Tournament and a run straight through to St. Louis, we need something to get us jazzed, something to inspire greatness, something to light a fire under our school spirit.

This is that fire. But be warned — once Bickford has captured your ear, there's no going back to "the brightest star of all." You can't escape. After hearing it the first time, I wanted to listen to it again and again. So I did.

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

Mars Volta's prog-rock works on many levels

BY ARLEY WOLBER
STAFF WRITER

"All we need is just a little patience."

Bear this Guns 'n' Roses adage in mind when venturing through *Frances the Mute*, the latest by prog-rockers The Mars Volta.

This is space rock at its most grandiose and pretentious finery. And it's a long, delirious trip.

In fact, it's hard to characterize a large part of the first half of the album as "rock" in the traditional sense of the word.

You might say it's more of a nightmarish waltz in and out of echoing, Robert Plant-esque vocals by lead singer Cedric Bixler-Zavala, moaning guitar carnage and bombastic, anguished percussion.

The first half of the album fully tests the listener, sputtering out many times only to shock itself back to life moments later. You'll have to deal with oblique, bilingual lyrics to boot.

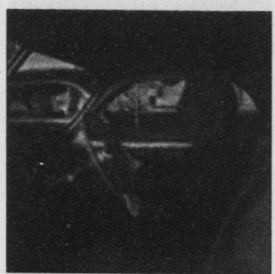
But as the album dips in and out

of consciousness, there remains a compelling electricity — a continuous, desperate gasp for air that keeps you coming back for more.

Eventually the album settles into the more consistent "Cassandra Gemini," a boundless eight-track soundscape oscillating through Latin rhythms, punk beats, crying saxophones and what sounds a lot like an malfunctioning respirator.

Perhaps lead guitarist/producer Omar Rodriguez-Lopez is trying to bring something back to life, as much of the album draws from a diary of the band's late sound technician, Jeremy Michael Ward, who died of a drug overdose in 2003.

Convoluted agony and suffering ooze out of every pore of *Frances the Mute*, but this doesn't detract from the album's vivacity — there isn't a hint of self-pity or sentimentality. You get more the impression of a group of mad scientists tirelessly experimenting in an attempt to resuscitate something they slayed on their last album, *De-Loused in*



MUSICREVIEW

THE MARS VOLTA
FRANCES THE MUTE

★★★★

the Comatorium.

Although The Mars Volta are convinced that "No, there's not light/In the darkness of your furthest reaches," they easily succeed in raising hell and raising the dead.

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

Diesel stalls in family flick

Campy plot has been done before

BY MIKE SULLIVAN
STAFF WRITER

Through his tight white T-shirt, we notice a pair of bulging pecs and a hint of a six-pack. His sculpted arms swing around his waist, buckling a belt fully loaded with baby bottles. With a baby backpack strapped over his shoulders, this lieutenant is ready for war.

Pan up to see our hero, Lieutenant Shane Wolf (Vin Diesel), as he opens the garage door. As the door slowly inches upward, the audience is introduced to Red Company: five kids ranging from baby Tyler to 16-year-old Zoe.

Confused at what lies before him, our warrior asks Red-One (Zoe) for assistance. "What is that?"

"A minivan." Yes, a minivan — a vehicle so secret that even a 30-year-old Navy SEAL specialist would fail to recognize it.

Welcome to "The Pacifier," Disney's attempt to provide versatility in Diesel's one-dimensional career.

Instead of portraying a tough-guy soldier ("Saving Private Ryan") or a tough-guy super-spy ("XXX"), Diesel plays a tough-guy super-soldier. Go figure.

This time around, the action hero takes on unconquered terri-

tory — suburbia — to watch over the children of an assassinated government scientist, who left a secret invention hidden somewhere on his property.

The plot focuses primarily on the relationship between Lieutenant Wolf and the children.

During his two-week stint as baby-sitter, Wolf evolves into a father figure by teaching Zoe how to drive, directing 14-year-old Seth's play, instructing self-defense tactics to 8-year-old girl scout Lulu, performing the "panda dance" for 3-year-old Peter and changing baby Tyler's diapers.

Toilet humor is ever-present, ranging from the first diaper change to Wolf rummaging through a waste sewer to locate one of the children's tracking devices.

Yes, the children have tracking devices.

Like many family films, "The Pacifier" exaggerates adults while stereotyping children in an attempt to hit the target fan base. The film then focuses on how the main character learns just as much from his disciples as they learn from him.

"The Pacifier" bears strong resemblance to 1995's "Major Payne," in which Damon Wayans plays the killing-machine-turned-mentor of juvenile delinquents at a military school. Parallels include war-themed bedtime stories, wake-up drills and crude toilet humor. "Payne" hits more laugh bases,

MOVIEREVIEW

"THE PACIFIER"

★★

but "The Pacifier" provides more adequate family entertainment.

The only drastic problem with "The Pacifier" — other than the child-pleasing toilet humor — is its title. Why name the film after a useless wrestling move that Wolf deems his "favorite"? Why not make the title relevant to concepts actually important to the film?

After walking out of the theater, the audience might think that titles like "The Panda Dance," or "Diaper Adventures" would be more pertinent.

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

Hipsters flock to Castanets show

BY STANTON KIDD
STAFF WRITER

There is something about the back walls of a stage being bookshelves that just naturally makes an event homier.

So it was Friday night at Nightlight, where Lazarus, Tigersaw, Castanets and The Strugglers played a varied set.

The night started off slowly with Lazarus, whose most distinguishing characteristics were the lead singer/guitarist's gigantic hands and an interesting spiel on situationism that roused of the crowd's attention more than the actual music.

Following a brief break, Tigersaw occupied the space between the bookshelves. With the singer from Lazarus holding down bass duties, the group's singer dispensed with the microphone and sang simple, heartfelt songs in a warbling voice with an out-of-tune guitar. It was easily the most affecting part of the evening, especially when they asked for the audience help sing along at the end.

Following this was the headliner of the show, Castanets, though it was actually only Raymond Raposa, the band's lead singer/songwriter/guitarist, who played. The album, *Cathedral*, was easily one of the best releases of 2004, though a great deal of its glory came from its cavernous production and kitchen-sink instrumentation.

Surprisingly, the band's songs proved to be just as strong with only an acoustic guitar and voice, though the guitar did get some help from vibrato effects and an odd device that made the strings

CONCERTREVIEW

THE CASTANETS
NIGHTLIGHT
FRIDAY, MARCH 4
★★★★

hum in a beautifully wavy way. After his achingly gorgeous set, only made slightly less wonderful by the clinking of bottles and the rolling static of conversation from the bar, came local band The Strugglers.

While not awful, after the brilliant avant-country of Castanets and the joyously openhearted singalongs of Tigersaw, it certainly ended the show with more of a yawn than a yelp.

The Strugglers deal mainly in traditional, straight-ahead roots rock, with plinky pianos, tired riffs and a voice eerily reminiscent of Travis Morrison's of the Dismemberment Plan.

What was an admittedly uneven show saved itself from monotony when the artists took advantage of the intimate settings. Raposa and Tigersaw, for example, dispensed with microphones and let their voices float out into the tight space.

The other bands couldn't capitalize on the peculiar environment, so it's not surprising they made the biggest missteps. Those who succeeded did so by taking the hip crowd out of the normal performer/audience dichotomy, and watching this was really the show's appeal.

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

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- 19 SA ATMOSPHERE / SAGE FRANCIS** (\$20)
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- 23 WE CROOKED FINGERS w/ Liz Durrett** (\$10/\$12)
- 24 TH KING SUNNY ADE** (\$17/\$20)
- 25 FR APPETITE FOR DESTRUCTION** (\$8/\$10)
- 26 SA REGGAE JAM: Rolly Gray and Sunfire, Crucial Fya, & more
- 29 TU RADIO 4 w/ Supersystem** (\$8)
- 30 WE JEDI MIND TRICKS, LIVING LEGENDS, Pigeon John** (\$12/\$14)
- 31 TH TODD SNIDER** (\$10/\$12)

APRIL

- 1 FR BLUEGROUND UNDERGRASS** (\$10/\$12)
- 2 SA WHO'S BAD (Michael Jackson Tribute)** (\$8/\$10)
- 6 WE And You Will Know Us By The Trail of Dead**
- 7 TH M WARD
- 8 FR FANTOMAS, The Locust, Trevor Dunn** (\$15/\$17)
- 9 SA MASON JENNINGS** (\$12)
- 12 TU DON DIXON**
- 13 WE AMY RAY** (\$12/\$14)
- 14 TH Jump, little children** (\$10)
- 15 FR SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS** (\$10)
- 16 SA AGNOSTIC FRONT w/ Marfy AD, Love Is Red & All Shall Perish**
- 18 MO FLICKER (Local short films)
- 21 TH DIZEE RASCAL** (\$15)
- 22 FR EDWIN MCCAIN BAND** (\$16)
- 30 SA WXYC 80's dance

MAY

- 7 SA NEIL DIAMOND ALL-STAR'S w/ Mary Frankster** (\$8)
- 11 WE BRITISH SEA POWER**
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