

Side project spells success for 'Born Again' musicians

BY MORGAN ELLIS
STAFF WRITER

"Side project" — in many cases that's code for experimental. And often, the quality of the music does not live up to the artists' regular offerings.

Composed of former Sonic Youth member Jim O'Rourke and Jeff Tweedy and Glenn Kotche of Wilco, Loose Fur does experiment, but the music's caliber isn't diminished on *Born Again in the U.S.A.*

The band's second offering, *Born Again*, shies away from the noise rock culled in Loose Fur's self-titled debut in 2003, and instead it presents listeners with a more straightforward rock album.

Where the 2003 release exhibits an easygoing sound that seems to float gently through listeners' ears, the latest release at times assaults audiences with crunchy guitars and furious drumming.

The band truly appears born again on the album's opener, "Hey Chicken," where searing guitars leave past material behind and drive the new work to a much heavier sound.

And as expected with this group of musicians, "Hey Chicken" relies upon technicality as Kotche makes use of his entire drum kit and the bass proves just as dynamic.

"Apostolic" continues the rocking trend with guitars somewhat similar to those on the album's opening track. But what makes the track so impressive comes from the

MUSICREVIEW

**LOOSE FUR
BORN AGAIN IN THE U.S.A.**

★★★★

interplay of guitar and bass, swirling together to grab the audience's attention.

But the track also harkens intermittently back to the more placid sounds of Loose Fur and the feel of O'Rourke's 2001 *Insignificance*.

The best track on the album, especially if you're a sucker for a good instrumental, comes in the form of "An Ecumenical Matter."

The cut's marked by ticking drums, a laid-back bass line, dreamlike piano and guitar, which aptly doesn't go crazy like it could have.

Born Again is anchored by three guys who know how to produce some off-the-wall sounds, but they restrain themselves here. And it's for the better. Album tracks don't sprawl out over six or seven minutes as they did on the band's previous album.

This album is tighter, but still retains the best elements from Loose Fur's first effort. Tweedy and O'Rourke get better with every release.

And Loose Fur has again composed a worthy album — even if it is just a side project.

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

COMEDY

FROM PAGE 7

to New York City to join Castrone. They launched their Web site in September.

ThePostShow.com features two new episodes a week, airing on Mondays and Thursdays.

The relative speed with which new episodes can be created allows them to poke fun at current pop culture: The breakup of Nick Lachey and Jessica Simpson and Larry the Cable Guy's antics are just a few of the topics tackled on the Web site.

Castrone said the site has garnered more than 1 million hits in six months, which he says indicates the popularity of the skits.

As if that wasn't good enough for a fledgling Web site, CollegeHumor.com began featuring ThePostShow.com in January.

"We had seen their videos a while ago, before we were hosting skits, and we didn't think anything of it," Rubin said. "A few of them were submitted to our 'Hotlinks' section."

Once editors took a closer look, they were impressed by the amateur Internet skits.

"We loved them and got in contact with the guys," Rubin said. "I think we were attracted to their consistency and high production values."

Castrone and Levin agreed that the deal with CollegeHumor.com is a great one. They said that they get more exposure and that they don't have to independently shoulder the extra bandwidth cost of new users.

"We like having an audience for what we do," Castrone said. "We have a medium, and we're able to get immediate results from it."

Castrone and Levin said they use "Final Cut" video-editing software on an Apple G4 computer.

"Usually it takes one day to shoot and one to edit," Levin said. "The quickest shoot was two hours, and

the longest was multiple hours."

The pair has 39 skits available online for viewing and will round out the end of the second season with 40.

"It's a lot of work to get two productions done in a week," Levin said.

Castrone said that they hope to use their work on "The Post Show" for future careers in television. Castrone is working as a head writer on VH1's "Best Week Ever."

Monday's episode, "Model Home," spoofed the concept of models living together as on MTV's latest reality show "8th & Ocean." The parody features a variety of stereotypically unsexy models played by the site's creators and their friend, Jason Zumwalt, a "Post Show" regular.

Today's skit is slated to focus on Stewart Clifford Andrews, an inexplicably famous singer/songwriter who croons about pedophilia. The character was introduced in the first season in the skit "Sing Along."

"He's the first reoccurring character in 'Post Show' history," Castrone said.

The episode April 3 will be the season finale, after which Castrone and Levin plan to take a short break and return in late April.

"We're gonna take a little time to regroup, slap together a season two DVD and get right back to writing for season three," Castrone said.

Both men expressed gratitude to their fans for the support they've shown in such a short time period.

"I got recognized at a Strokes concert by a wide-eyed high school kid," Levin said. "I'm just happy he chose to come over to me to say he liked my stuff instead of going up to Jimmy Fallon."

Another young entertainer using the Internet to make a name for herself on the New York City comedy circuit is Mindy Raf.

The multitalented Raf's resume speaks for itself — published col-

umns, stand-up comedy and acting, including frequent appearances on episodes of "The Post Show."

Raf graduated from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in 2002 and spent time developing her comedic craft there, especially with an improvisational group called Comedy Company.

Raf said she met Castrone and Zumwalt while doing stand-up comedy, and they began collaborating.

To showcase her work and get her name out, Raf has established a triple presence on the Internet: a personal Web site, a blog and a MySpace account.

"The Internet is great for (public relations)," Raf said. "It's accessible now to everyone, even people who aren't too computer savvy."

"Yet, most performers still use fliers and postcards too. When you're at a show and talking with people you want to be able to give them something to take home."

"What's funny to me, is that a lot of comics — myself included — are using traditional advertising methods — post cards, stickers, fliers, even T-shirts — to advertise their Web sites, MySpace pages and blogs."

Castrone echoed the usefulness of the Internet as a networking tool for rising entertainers.

"If you're in comedy and you're not on MySpace, you're screwed."

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

THE QUICK AND DIRTY

MOVIES

'WHY WE FIGHT'
Michael Moore without the sensationalism. **page 9**

'INSIDE MAN'
Spike Lee shows his subtle side on his latest film. **page 10**

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Johnny Depp writes plays and contracts STDs. **page 12**

'SHE'S THE MAN'
Gender-bending teen movie bumbles the Bard. **page 12**

ALBUMS

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Side project turns out better than expected. **page 8**

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Steely Dan gets brushed down on latest release. **page 9**

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Hillbillies rock lively. **page 9**

HARD-FI
Brit-rock kids ride the hype ship to America. **page 10**

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There's bad, and there's really bad. E-40 is both. **page 10**

MEN, WOMEN & CHILDREN
Ex-Glassjaw members form bad dance-punk act. **page 12**

PRINCE
He's back, and he's talking about sex, religion. **page 12**

CONCERTS

JENNY LEWIS WITH THE WATSON TWINS
Well worth the ticket. **page 9**

dive recommends

['WEEDS']

As addictive as its namesake implies, this Showtime original series explores the world of a drug-dealing single mother and her escapades as the self-proclaimed "suburban baroness of bud."

Starring Mary-Louise Parker, this hit fires on all comedic cylinders — in the vernacular, it's dank.

Contact Harry Kaplowitz at hk@unc.edu.

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