

## Songstress delivers impressive show

BY ALEXANDRIA SHEALY  
STAFF WRITER

Jenny Lewis proved she can hold her own Friday in her first solo tour.

The lead singer of famed Rilo Kiley recently released her first album, *Rabbit Fur Coat*, a blue-grassy parade of songs. Accompanied by the Watson Twins (two sultry Kentucky-born songstresses), Lewis did not disappoint the sold-out audience at Cat's Cradle.

Opening bands Whispertown 2000 and Dan Sartain were moderately successful in gaining the crowd's attention.

Morgan Nagler, lead singer and guitar strummer of Whispertown 2000, was the most disappointing element of the evening.

Her band's short set was so similar to Lewis' style that the band set unnecessarily high expectations for itself in attempt to match Lewis' experienced sound. Nagler's voice proved too weak, and unfortunately, her group faltered behind it.

Luckily, Dan Sartain was able to use silly energy to revive the crowd after Whispertown's set. Sartain's deep voice and penetrating guitar was a much more effective crowd-pleaser, perfectly original, yet in the

## Rowdy LP a rousing success for rockabilly

MUSICREVIEW

SOUTHERN CULTURE ON THE SKIDS  
DOUBLEWIDE & LIVE  
★★★★★

BY BRYAN REED  
STAFF WRITER

Going to a Southern Culture on the Skids show is a lot like going to a carnival: It's kind of sticky. It's a little sleazy. It reaffirms every stereotype imaginable. But it's inevitably a damn good time.

The band — famous for ruckus, fried chicken and an energetic blend of roots-rock style — shows that same grit on its live album, *Doublewide & Live*.

The songs are built around hot-rod guitars and double entendres, both of which would make Chuck Berry proud.

On the set, recorded at the Local 506, frontman Rick Miller howls his way through 16 tracks, all while tearing out blazing guitar licks.

Bassist Mary Huff does more than her fair share in filling out the sound with a driving, thumping low end. She also handles her vocal parts with finesse. On drums, Dave Hartman supplies a steady back beat and is everything the band needs and then some.

Unfortunately, the audio recording is nothing but a tease of what a Southern Culture show is really like. But, honestly, it couldn't hope to be anything better.

Other than letting certain bands shine, live albums often do one of two things: break an artist into the mainstream or revitalize a career. See Cheap Trick with *At Budokan* and Johnny Cash with *At Folsom Prison* for examples.

In other cases, a live album is nothing more than filler made to exploit overly loyal fans who will buy anything with the band's name on it — I'm looking at you, Green Day and My Chemical Romance.

Southern Culture, on the other hand, made a veritable greatest-hits album and showcased the band's talent as a live act all at the same time. The songs are recorded clearly and played flawlessly.

While there are no new tracks on the record, the set list spans the band's career instead of playing like a rehash of the latest album.

The smorgasbord of fan favorites also doubles as a sampler dish for listeners new to the band.

From the Dick Dale-esque surf of "Meximelt" and "The Wet Spot" to the rockabilly riot of "Whole Lotta Things" and the electrified country of "Just How Lonely," the band offers listeners an array of rocking options for their listening pleasure.

Singing about topics such as mobile homes, muscle cars and banana pudding, Southern Culture also shows a knack for clever songwriting that is apparent in the humorous innuendo that is thrust into every line.

And despite all the fun and games, the band is rarely over the top to the point of being obnoxious. Instead it comes across as good-natured fun.

And Southern Culture recognizes that good-natured fun is a delicacy — just like fried Twinkies.

Contact the A&E Editor at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).

CONCERTREVIEW

JENNY LEWIS WITH THE WATSON TWINS  
CAT'S CRADLE  
FRIDAY  
★★★★★

same vein of the other performers.

After almost an hour of set-up, Lewis with the Watson Twins finally took the stage. With them came the dusty California charm of Lewis' image and the sophistication of the Watson Twins who, in perfect harmony, aided her scratchy, Laura Nyro-esque voice.

It's no surprise that the most successful songs of the hourlong performance were the intimate, vocally focused tunes such as "Melt Your Heart" and "Rabbit Fur Coat."

Throughout the set, the band evoked Neko Case's country twang with the confessional-style lyrics of *Rabbit Fur Coat*, but Lewis' experience with the indie beats of Rilo Kiley allowed the songs to display their own spiciness.

Still her voice doesn't pack the punch of competitors Emmylou Harris and Allison Krauss.

After getting off to a rough and ragged start with Whispertown 2000, the moody and atmospheric repertoire of Lewis with the Watson Twins allowed the indie star to prove her worth outside of the shadow of Rilo Kiley's popularity.

Lewis brings something new to the genre, but her first outing leaves room for improvement.

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## Jarecki's latest a moving triumph

BY RACHEL BRODY  
STAFF WRITER

In 1961, President Eisenhower warned America, "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex."

In 2006, Eugene Jarecki's documentary "Why We Fight" takes aim at America's choice to ignore the President's farewell address.

The film explores what Jarecki presents as the U.S. government's manipulation of public opinion to justify increased government spending, wars, and most recently the invasion of Iraq.

"Why We Fight" won the documentary competition's Grand Jury Prize at last year's Sundance Film

MOVIE REVIEW

'WHY WE FIGHT'  
★★★★

Festival.

Its title is inspired by a series of military propaganda films, "Why We Fight," that were shown to soldiers in World War II.

Jarecki critically reviews the link between the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the Iraq war without the blatant partisan bias of Michael Moore's 2004 "Fahrenheit 9/11."

The filmmaker's concern is not with who is in office, but rather with how any person in office invariably will contribute to America's growing military industrial complex.

War, as depicted in the film, is a clear business.

There is a surreal tone surrounding scenes of army contractors selling bombs and weapons as if they were car salesmen.

The commentary is a collection of varied interviews. Politicians, Army and ex-Army officials, Eisenhower's family and Iraqis all discuss America's emphasis on military power and what it will lead to.

One interview follows a man whose son was killed Sept. 11.

He describes his need to avenge the death of his son, and the betrayal he felt when the rationale to attack Iraq revealed no connection to the terrorist attacks.

The exploitation of the father's

emotions is heartbreaking, but perhaps even more so, it is haunting.

It reveals the vulnerability in every citizen to be convinced of actions as strong and irrevocable as war.

While the film tackles different aspects of the business of war in America, the information is clear and fascinating.

The presentation can at times be dry, but the message conveyed needs no frosting to keep the audience's attention.

"Why We Fight" provides a thoughtful, powerful, and frightening look at a pressing national issue.

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## Steely Dan member releases mediocre disc

BY JACKY BRAMMER  
STAFF WRITER

It has been 13 years since Donald Fagen's last release and three years since the last Steely Dan album (although it's been 30 years since the band's best material).

But even with all that down time, the material on Fagen's *Morph the Cat* sounds tired.

As one half of the seminal jazz-rock band Steely Dan, Fagen has a wealth of experience in song crafting and arrangements.

But it's hard to shake the notion that he sounds like an artist who needs a break.

With piano, guitar, drums and tenor sax present on most tracks, the album stays at home within the jazz-rock genre.

MUSICREVIEW

DONALD FAGEN  
MORPH THE CAT  
★★★

But with age, Fagen's classic sound has drifted away from his strong suit and more into the adult contemporary vein.

As an artist, that puts Fagen at a paradox.

Whereas his older style would have been more equipped for improvisational solos and extended codas, the neutered twang of Fagen's current work is more suited for airport cocktail bars than for jazz epics.

But the musician in him is not willing to concede the higher

ground to the limits of his style.

With only one track at less than five and a half minutes, the songs tend to extend well past the necessary conclusion into what could be loosely called "jam sessions." And what should come off as righteous crescendoes and climaxes instead becomes tired and trite.

All is not lost, though. Fagen excels as a songwriter where he weaves empathic tales of lost love and lust at first sight.

Particularly moving is "What I Do."

On the track, Fagen imagines a beyond-the-grave conversation between himself and Ray Charles in which the Georgia icon explains his purpose on Earth and in Heaven: "Yes, I come to play, and I bring

big soul/Well I could rock long before they named it/Rock 'n' roll/It's what I do."

While the lyrics succeed as stand-alone narratives, the notes fail to complement adequately the stories.

And that adds to the larger problem with the incompatibility of the song length to the musical style — at least to younger ears.

Perhaps this is a sign of a move toward adult contemporary greatness for Fagen. If that's the case, then maybe it's a kind of a step forward, but for more information on that, you'll have to ask your parents.

Contact the A&E Editor at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).

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