

Triangle country: here today, gone tomorrow?

Stupid me. I thought when John Howie Jr. sang "Never thought I'd live to see the day when it was over" on the first track of Two Dollar Pistols' amazing last album *Here Tomorrow, Gone Today*, he was talking about a failed relationship.

It made sense. The Pistols are a country band, after all.

But in light of last week's announcement that the band would be calling it quits after a few more shows, it now sounds like foreshadowing; a look forward rather than a look back.

Bands hang it up all the time — it's the nature of the game.

But with this announcement, the Triangle is losing a staple; a group deserving of inclusion in the legacy of the state's great tradition of Americana and country music.

Two Dollar Pistols' announcement, paired with the closing of Raleigh's Hideaway BBQ — an establishment heralded in this very publication a few months ago — calls the present state of a scene rich in history into question.

Where does country music in the Carolinas go from here?

I will admit to being a huge proponent of the genre as it existed in the days of the outlaws Waylon and Willie, before it



JAMIE WILLIAMS
BANJOS ARE NEAT

morphed into the strange offspring of '70s pop that populates contemporary country radio.

In speaking to Howie Jr. earlier this year for the piece on Hideaway — a restaurant/venue that booked country acts exclusively — we discussed the future of country music, agreeing that it was vital for young listeners to be exposed to what I call the most honest and emotional form of American music.

What scares me most about both of the recent announcements is that I can't think of anyone in the Triangle that's making that type of music, the type of music Two Dollar Pistols made.

They were good; they were honest; they were country music in a pure sense. With that gone from stages in the area, it begs the question, "Who's left?"

Both Thad Cockrell and Tift Merritt will release albums in the

coming months, but neither are living here anymore.

Merritt made like fellow Tar Heel country music expatriate Ryan Adams and headed for New York City, while Cockrell decided to go to Nashville.

I've been racking my brain in the past few days trying to think of a young country act from the Triangle that really excites me, and the truth is that I've come up empty.

I couldn't help thinking the same on Monday night, sitting in complete awe of Emmylou Harris.

There weren't many students in the crowd, a trend that I hope isn't a sign that country music is on a path toward irrelevance.

I don't think it is, but it definitely needs a kick to get moving again, something these finales aren't helping.

But, here's hoping I'm wrong, that this music I love so much isn't losing its hold.

And, seriously, get out and see the Two Dollar Pistols in the next few months. My hope is that there will be someone in the crowd that likes what he or she hears and wants to emulate it. We need it.

Contact Jamie Williams at jamesw@email.unc.edu.

'Blood' mixes oil with horror

BY RACHAEL OEHRING
STAFF WRITER

Let's be honest, a movie about oil prospectors at the turn of the 20th century is not gonna pack 'em in the seats.

But "There Will Be Blood," the latest offering from Paul Thomas Anderson ("Boogie Nights," "Magnolia"), manages to craft a rich characterization of the greed that motivated the trailblazers of American industry and how lonely it was at the front of the pack.

The movie, based loosely on Upton Sinclair's novel, "Oil!," follows oil prospector Daniel Plainview (Daniel Day-Lewis) as he drills for black gold in a remote California town and tries to deal with the religious locals and their crazy preacher/leader, Eli Sunday (Paul Dano).

The nearly three-hour running time is daunting, but the plot unfolds exactly as it should.

Events just happen, snaking their way slowly but surely to a terrifying conclusion and a darkly humorous last frame. There are no huge events that crash down, no sudden revelations. Anderson takes his time telling this story and every second is worth it.

The score, provided by Radiohead guitarist Jonny Greenwood, is simultaneously angry and panic-stricken.

The detuned horror strings that

make up most of the soundtrack are nothing short of terrifying.

The movie opens to a vast, desolate plain with the creepy orchestra coming to such an overwhelming swell that it seems as if some cannibal zombie holding Daniel Day-Lewis' severed head is going to pop up out of nowhere.

The horror-like soundtrack appropriately reflects a real kind of horror — not that of ghosts and serial killers, but the kind of atrocities that people commit on each other through lies and manipulation and a sheer hatred for humanity.

Those are the real monsters who in effect eat each other alive, and the film masterfully depicts the depths that one will plumb in order to get what he wants.

In his drive for greatness, Plainview is that monster, bent on destroying the world and getting a few bucks along the way.

His contempt for humanity is so vehement that he doesn't care whose life he ruins, including his own. That type of contempt is especially significant today, in a time when we are faced with, and trying to reconcile, the type of person who hates someone else so much that he will kill himself in order to see his enemy destroyed.

Daniel's loathing drips from every word he utters and culmi-

MOVIE REVIEW
THERE WILL BE BLOOD



nates in a heartbreaking exchange with his son, H.W., perhaps the only person he loves. That is, until he too crosses him.

Day-Lewis acts with such an intensity and well-constructed hatred for those around him, it's hard not to think that he routinely comments on how much he loathes "these people."

He has the most perfect old-timey accent, and the care that he took in preparing this role is evident right down to the limp that Daniel (sometimes) sports.

Dano, while screechy at times, plays Eli Sunday with the same kind of unrelenting earnestness and vulnerability that made his performance in "Little Miss Sunshine" so surprising.

Neither actor holds back in his performance, and the way they play off of each other, especially in the final scene, is manipulative, dark and powerful.

"There Will Be Blood" is a visceral, yet restrained, look at how greed ruins people, and Anderson does a wonderful job of illustrating this.

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu.

Raleigh metal act bangs out Colossal fun

BY BRYAN REED
DIVERSIONS EDITOR

Critiquing acts whose primary purpose is to faithfully resurrect a particular (and largely dead) style brings with it its own particular challenges.

Colossus, Raleigh's troupe of New-Wave-of-British-Heavy-Metal revivalists, creates all these sorts of critical challenges with its debut LP, *...And The Rift of the Pan-Dimensional Underdogs*.

Since the band's primary mission is to recreate the sound of the NWOBHM, we can say outright that the effort isn't pushing into any new musical territory.

We've got all the dueling, wailing guitar solos, driving rhythm sections and soaring vocals of bands like Judas Priest and Iron Maiden, and, well, not a whole lot else.

But, if you're a fan of bands that sound like Priest and Maiden, then that's not a bad thing.

Determining whether or not this is a "good" album then begs the question, "How faithful is the band to its source material?"

And the answer there is, "Very."

The band plays a tight meleé of fretboard acrobatics, with appropriately dramatic vocals (not far at all removed from Rob Halford or Bruce Dickinson), and it's all done with skill and finesse.

But despite the band's reverent (to say the least) re-creation of the established sound, Colossus does take one small-but-important step toward establishing its own identity.

The band employs a sense of humor that manifests in the

MUSIC REVIEW
COLOSSUS

... AND THE RIFT OF THE PAN-DIMENSIONAL UNDERDOGS

HEAVY METAL



playfully absurdist fantasies of songs such as the self-explanatory "Ghostf-ker" or the triumphant "Limit Break."

Colossus takes every power-metal cliché, sets it out note-for-note and adds a wink and a nod to the listener.

The band knows exactly what it's doing, and for all the shredding, there's not a sliver of self-aggrandizement or pretentiousness — just headbanging, beer-guzzling, Flying-V-playing good times.

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu.

Rings' isolated sweetness thrills

BY JORDAN LAWRENCE
STAFF WRITER

Black Habit — the debut outing from New York experimental pop trio Rings — seems to come at the listener from far away.

The three women's voices compete for attention as they layer together in washed-out desolation.

Interweaving pop melodies and abrasive noise elements then are piled on top, creating the impression that the singers are struggling against an onslaught just to be heard.

On a record that sets its sights on isolation and overcoming personal conflicts, the aesthetic works well.

The middle section of opener "All Right Peace" finds the voices fighting through a wave of what should be complementary piano and guitar melodies, proclaiming, "My insides have outsized our

lives."

In this song, melodies that should create peaceful serenity clash and explode like an aerial dogfight, creating a sonic tumult the singer strives to overcome.

The rest of *Black Habit* follows a similar pattern. Soft pop melodies are piled up to become insular and caustic. The singers seek to triumph and grow while the music continues to beat them down again and again. Though it works most of the time, Rings' approach can become annoying.

The overly repetitive piano and shrill vocals of "Tone Poem" grate on the listener too heavily to be excused as soul searching.

And though the propulsive, distorted guitar overload of "Scape Aside" is the closest the album gets to catchy, at six minutes the song drags on too long to take full advantage of its engaging rhythm.

MUSIC REVIEW
RINGS

BLACK HABIT

EXPERIMENTAL POP



But it's easy to overlook such faults once the listener gets swept away in the record's all-consuming impressions of isolated desperation brought to their full height by closer "Teepee."

In frail harmonies set over lonely piano, the lyrics bemoan the plight of trying to find a close connection with anyone in this world, until the singer concludes, "Letting go of a life of two/This world's too big for me and you."

After experiencing the struggle and isolation Rings' music creates, it's hard not to agree.

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu.

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- 26 SA PERPETUAL GROOVE** (\$15)
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MARCH

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- 7 FR CHATHAM COUNTY LINE CD Release Party w/ special guest EVERYBODYFIELDS (\$12/\$15)
- 16 SU BOB MOULD has been cancelled
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