

A fond farewell to Schoolkids

I can remember the exact moment. It was the summer after my junior year in high school.

Waking up on a Friday morning with nothing to do, I logged onto the Web site for Rolling Stone magazine — as was often my custom in the morning.

I was intrigued by an article ranking the nation's top 10 college towns based on their musical diversions.

Lo and behold, No. 2 was Chapel Hill/Raleigh/Durham, N.C., the home of my mother's alma mater, UNC.

The crux of the writer's reasoning for the choice lay with the line-up of shows at Cat's Cradle and the reputation of a great little record store by the name of Schoolkids Records.

It was at that moment I decided I wanted to go to Carolina.

A couple of days after arriving on campus as a freshman, I walked up to Franklin Street and went to Schoolkids for the first time.

I was blown away by the store. They had CDs by every band I liked and many more by ones I'd



JORDAN LAWRENCE
A FUNERAL DIRGE WRITTEN SO LONG AGO

never heard of — but wanted to.

I left that day carrying away three used discs and feeling a lot cooler.

Sadly, no incoming UNC freshman will be able to repeat my experience next fall.

The Chapel Hill store, which has endured since 1975, will close its doors at the end of March.

It's not that I didn't see it coming.

The store's selection of CDs had been running thin lately, and there never seemed to be many people in there when I went.

And it's not like I won't be able to get on without the store. I'll still be able to pick up my CDs a couple blocks down the road at CD Alley.

But it's still a big loss to me.

It's the loss of a place to blissfully kill extra time (and money) looking at records while waiting on friends.

It's the loss of a store where I recognized all the salespeople and got to buy CDs from Sweater Weather bassist Jon Mackey.

It's the loss of a store that consigns records, giving local artists a chance to get their music out.

It's the loss of one of the few, at least symbolic, connections between the University and the local music community.

And, most importantly to me, it's the loss of the place where I made my first baby steps towards getting to know that community.

Because while I know now that there's much more to this area than Schoolkids and Cat's Cradle, it still hurts to think that, very soon, I'll never be able to walk into the store again and reminisce about the excitement and wonder of that first time.

Thanks for the start Schoolkids. I'll miss you.

Contact Jordan Lawrence at bjordan@email.unc.edu

MUSICSHORTS

APES GHOST GAMES ROCK



It's all bass-driven rock with shrieking lyrics or nothing on the Apes' *Ghost Games*.

After *Ghost Games* ends you might never feel the need for six-strings again. With Amanda Kleinman's Ray Manzarek-esque organ protruding through the songs, the 21st Century psychedelic sensation is as heavy as the bass lines emitting from Erick Jackson's amp that provide the rhythm.

When it's not Kleinman dominating a track like she does on "Which Witch Wuz," it's brand new vocalist Breck Brunson who creates the perfect narrative voice for the D.C. group's esoteric tales.

On their fourth studio album, the Apes offer up an energetic sound as refreshing as electric Kool-Aid.

-Benn Wineka

MISSY HIGGINS ON A CLEAR NIGHT POP



On Australian singer Missy Higgins' stateside debut, pop sensibilities abound. Combining piano and acoustic guitar with Higgins' strong voice, *On a Clear Night* features plenty of songs that would fit perfectly on Top-40 radio.

And that's fine. She makes the familiar sound fresh.

Maybe it's the songwriting, which is much stronger than her pop contemporaries'. Maybe it's the subtle hint of a Melbourne accent that adds a distinct flavor to her vocals.

But above any of those elements, it's the way that Higgins presents herself through her songs.

She's strong, she's confident and she proves from the onset that she will be a force to be reckoned with.

There is a deceptive intensity behind Higgins' sweet vocals and the tight production.

It's the type of record that tempts with its sugary presentation, but leaves enough of a kick to ensure that it won't soon be forgotten in the pile of disposable pop stars.

-Jamie Williams

AMERICAN MUSIC CLUB THE GOLDEN AGE POP



Uncoincidentally, the weather decided to revert from unseasonable warmth to dreary February weather the day American Music Club released *The Golden Age*.

But the chill ain't so bad.

TGA is the perfect companion to stay at home with and enjoy a bowl of Campbell's. With its highly melodic, almost sedative qualities, and despite song titles like "All the Lost Souls Welcome You to San Francisco," the Club rightfully refutes the label of "emo pioneers."

It's made apparent that these aren't the same whiny bastards you'd find in chemical love affairs when each track pulls you in as if Mark Eitzel's lyrics were spelled out in your cup of Alphabet soup.

Defined by the balance of acoustic and electric guitar with a remarkable horn section on "I Know That's Not Really You," *The Golden Age* brings with it a serene bliss that will tide you over until spring.

-Benn Wineka

DANAVA UNONOU HARD ROCK



Long live the hard-rock guitar solo!

Danava's lead shredder Dusty Sparkles lets his instrument do plenty of talking, rarely stopping to rest on a chord throughout the

band's second release, *Unonou*. Spread over nearly invisible drums and a steady bass thump, his electric skills are the clear showcase.

He should let them do all the talking.

Sparkles' whiny vocals are mismatched and far overpowered by his true talent, which has the potential to single-handedly carry an entire album — and back up some decent pipes.

On the few occasions when the guitar is absent, Sparkles switches to keyboards and synths that successfully emulate the arpeggiated wanderings of his six-string. It's a beastly one man show ironically plagued by the mastermind's inability to do it all.

-Edwin Arnaudin

GARY LOURIS VAGABONDS ALT. COUNTRY



For his solo debut, Gary Louris, former frontman of alt-country pioneers The Jayhawks, takes an introspective approach, opting for finger-picked ballads that progress into soaring harmonies.

For a while it seems like *Vagabonds* is going to be an enjoyable listen — But then Louris' overused formula becomes glaringly apparent.

Building off of Louris' road-weary vocals and even more weary songwriting, he and producer Chris Robinson (Black Crowes), use pedal steel and plenty of backing from a gospel choir to try to lift the songs from their rather minimal roots into something more. But the fatal flaw of *Vagabonds* is that no matter how sweet the harmonies are, they can't cloak boring songwriting and horribly trite themes of road-born self-discovery.

-Jamie Williams

Merritt's 'Country' full of charm

BY JORDAN LAWRENCE
STAFF WRITER

There's a certain feeling that comes from seeing the dawn.

Watching the sun rise over the horizon brings with it an invigorating feeling of wonder and possibility.

Full of crisp, clean steel guitar, soft, propulsive strumming and a voice that's still full of hope despite the fact that it's also full of painful experience, "Something To Me," the first song on Tift Merritt's *Another Country*, captures this feeling.

"But you take tomorrow/So long as you know/It's something to me," Merritt sings with a knowing smile and wink that comes right through the headphones.

It's a song with enough charm that the listener wishes he could be anything to her.

MUSICREVIEW

TIFT MERRITT ANOTHER COUNTRY COUNTRY



When taken one at a time, that's the effect of many of the songs on the record.

For the majority of *Another Country*, Merritt blends country and pop into warm balladry that's easy on the ears and bittersweet on the heart.

But as Merritt repeats the trick almost verbatim for the first eight songs, the album feels white-washed.

Luckily, Merritt finishes the record with a barrage of creativity. First, Merritt breaks out a horn

section and bounces along with the irresistible pop joy of "Tell Me Something True."

Then she borrows the amphetamine-driven midnight fury of Bob Dylan's psych-rock for the fist-pumping, runaway anthem "My Heart Is Free."

The rest of the album could have done with more of the creative spice contained in these two songs.

But despite *Another Country's* tendency for repetition, Merritt's delivery has more than enough heart-warming charm.

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A TALK BY ANDREW NEAL, OWNER OF CHAPEL HILL COMICS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28

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In recent years, graphic novels have shown up in the news, on best-seller lists, and in stores, libraries, and bookshelves. Andrew Neal will define the graphic novel, discuss its history, and give examples of great graphic novels for all ages.

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