

Experimental act pushes buttons

BY BRYAN REED
DIVERSIONS EDITOR

I find it interesting how our pop-trained ears (and brains) crave melody to such a degree that when deprived of it, listening can become a challenging, even painful endeavor.

When familiar concepts of melody are manipulated or exploited — even altogether abandoned — we consider the music to be avant-garde, inaccessible, unmusical.

But only through challenges and explorations can our ideas be solidified, and the concept of melody truly defined with any degree even approaching adequacy.

The UK noise duo of Andrew Hung and Benjamin John Power, better known as F-k Buttons, has, with its debut LP, *Street Horrrsing*, created a remarkably melodic effort — though it doesn't seem that way at first.

The album's opener, "Sweet Love For Planet Earth," begins with a slow crescendo of gently sprinkled keys eventually churning itself up into more voluminous, but still

downtempo, waves of feedback.

But it's in the approaching and receding tones the feedback creates that melodic ideas begin to take shape.

Vocals don't enter the picture until five-and-a-half minutes in, and even then, it's a distorted wail — just another texture in the bubbling stew of sounds.

And F-k Buttons don't shy away from abrasive timbres at all.

The beauty is that they don't shy away from moments of gorgeous serenity, either, creating a sense of tension and release that keeps the listener entangled in the music, listening eagerly for the next passage of melodic comfort.

The opening seconds of the 10-minute "Okay, Let's Talk About Magic" provide a syncopated groove that becomes infectious with its repetition.

"Bright Tomorrow" (the closest to pop F-k Buttons get) drops the bottom out for an ecstatic bout of dance-pop rhythms and creeping synthesizer melody. It's a moment of respite and triumph as the lis-

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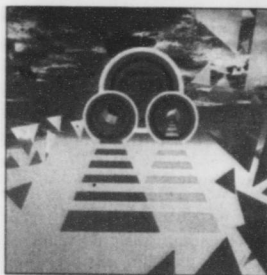
Time: 9:30 p.m. Tuesday
Location: Cat's Cradle, 300 E. Main St., Carrboro
Info: www.catscradle.com

tener enters the album's home stretch.

Street Horrrsing's sixth and final track, "Colours Move," lets a heavy drone climb into pounding rhythms that give way to upper-register melody (even harmony) before retreating back to the very same keyboard twinkles that opened the record.

In its completeness, the LP comes full circle, finding its way through scathing atonality and melodic comfort with equal aplomb, stringing us, the listeners, along and showing us the common ground between what we know as pop music and what we often dismiss as unmusical.

Here is an entirely musical effort. Its manipulations of melodic expectations provide challenges, but they're challenges that are ulti-



MUSICREVIEW

F-K BUTTONS
STREET HORRRSING

NOISE



mately satisfying when they wind up resolved.

We still crave melody, but our notions of what that concept entails have developed.

And that's the record's true reward.

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu.

PARTY'S OVER



DTH/ALLIE MULLIN

New Jersey singer/songwriter Nicole Atkins left a Local 506 audience spellbound with her lush, cinematic pop songs Saturday. Atkins brought her band, The Sea, on tour to promote its stellar 2007 album, *Neptune City*, which is named after her New Jersey hometown.

Adam Green's solo LP is just peachy

BY JAMIE WILLIAMS
ASSISTANT DIVERSIONS EDITOR

Sixes & Sevens is the type of infectious pop that slowly makes its way into the subconscious without any effort.

It only takes one listen, but that would never be enough to catch all of Adam Green's quirky lyrics and eclectic pop sensibilities that make his latest an insanelly charming trip.

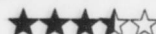
Green — who is probably best known these days as one half of the now-defunct (but more popular than ever) duo The Moldy Peaches — playing Michael Cera to Kimya Dawson's Ellen Page — delivers solo acoustic arrangements with a wink, a smile and an eye for life's awkwardly painful situations.

He brings his twee influences from that group, while also combining anti-folk and a bit more rock than one might expect.

Delivered in a wry baritone, "I know what you're thinking/Cause I'm thinking it too/You're loving his body/But what else is not new?" comes off as humorous on "Cannot Get Sicker."

MUSICREVIEW

ADAM GREEN
SIXES & SEVENS
FOLK/TWEE



And when delivered later in the song with the backing of a gospel choir, it recalls an exchange in a musical comedy — where our scorned hero meets a former flame with a song of heartbreak backed by a gang of heavenly-voiced supporters.

That's an indication of *Sixes & Sevens'* best feature and possibly most glaring flaw: nothing really fits together.

As a collection of songs, the LP is strong, but it lacks the flow of a classic.

The one minute "That Sounds Like a Pony" features free-associating internal rhyme that ends just as it begins to make sense, giving way to the album highlight, the Elvis and R&B-influenced, "Morning After Midnight."

And while both songs stand well on their own and showcase different aspects of Green's eclectic songwriting personality, it's liable to leave the listener shaking his head and wondering exactly how Green got from point A to point B.

It isn't too much to detract from the overall appeal of the album, but there are a few throw-away tracks that could have been avoided with a bit more economy in his songwriting.

Or maybe those swing-and-miss moments just further Green's image of an awkward-in-love protagonist who is just charming enough to merit complete and repeated listens for the opportunity to see exactly what situation he'll put his quirky kaleidoscopic lens on next.

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu.

STARSYSTEM

- ★ POOR
- ★★ FAIR
- ★★★ GOOD
- ★★★★ EXCELLENT
- ★★★★★ CLASSIC

DIVESTAFF

Bryan Reed, Editor
843-4529 | dive@unc.edu
Jamie Williams, Assistant Editor
Edwin Arnaudin, David Bergart, Rachel Brody, Melissa Brown, Jordan Lawrence, Rachael Oehring, Benn Wineka, Catherine Williams, staff writers
Abby Jeffers, Design Editor
Cover Design: Courtney Dean, Melissa Withom

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