

Heathens recall Miller never forsakes melody, heart

BY JAMIE WILLIAMS
SENIOR WRITER

Rock 'n' roll as an art is built on the concept of musical mobilization, the idea that with one simple, three-minute call to arms, legions of kids can be transformed from apathetic slackers into a fist-pumping army capable of affecting change in their increasingly large world.

Or, at the very least, capable of scaring the hell out of their parents.

Durham's own punk savants, The Dry Heathens, are here to lead the march on their debut, *First Contact With the Ground*.

Combining all the energy and stick-it-to-the-man defiance of youth with the incredibly deft songwriting of a group grizzled by the reality of life, The Dry Heathens craft massive songs of raucous energy — air-strike epics that inspire equal parts emotion and movement.

The most obvious comparison is to The Replacements. The same exuberance is here; the same love and passion for the music they are making.

And more importantly, Darren Sink brings the same anthemic quality to both his lyrics and vocal performance that made Paul Westerberg a voice for a generation of kids who thought they didn't have a voice.

First Contact With the Ground certainly starts off with a bang. "Lose It" opens with a pounding drum beat that gives way to Sink's powerful vocals. The chorus of "I think I'm gonna lose it" is just the type of fist-pumping sing-along that happens on just about every song.

And it just takes off from there, with the near-perfection of "Sociopath," to draw listener with its pounding beat and lyrics about a guy who, let's just say, is a little bit socially maladjusted.

"Sociopath/What a sociopath/How could I say that more politely?" is the way that Sink drives his point home.

Although there are plenty of sonic touchstones and the influence is apparent, it would be incredibly short-sighted to peg this record as



MUSICREVIEW
THE DRY HEATHENS
FIRST CONTACT WITH THE GROUND
PUNK

★★★★★

a simple rehash of the great '80s Midwestern punk.

On the contrary, The Dry Heathens operate with a palpable sense of place and time — it is modern, and it is the type of record that stands up on its own.

You don't need to be intimately familiar with bands such as The Replacements or Hüsker Dü to appreciate The Dry Heathens.

It certainly helps, but by no means would it be considered a prerequisite.

This isn't some tribute act, hoping to quench the thirst of those who would like the 'Mats to get hammered and stumble on stage one last time and have a go at it.

No, The Dry Heathens are plenty good at that in their own right.

And that is where the true brilliance of the band's songs is found. It lies in the fact that the group was able to take the template laid out by those bands and adopt it for its own sound, for its own concerns and for its own time.

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu

STARSYSTEM

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

BY JAMIE WILLIAMS

Jenks Miller is the type of musician who inspires anticipation.

A pure artist with such versatile creativity and talent that each of his releases is met with curiosity, immediately followed by awe upon first listen.

On his latest, and the first under his own name, *Approaching the Invisible Mountain*, Miller grabs his electric guitar, builds it up and tears it back down, stretching it further than most would consider, drawing tones from across the sonic map.

And while a record made up entirely of electric guitar improvisation seems as though it could be a bit too much to swallow, Miller never forsakes listen-ability and always keeps melody at the forefront.

He makes sure that all aspects of the record are fit perfectly into place, even as he improvises, something that is readily obvious.

It would not be a stretch to call Miller one of the area's most talented musicians. And those versatile

talents are on display in all of his musical endeavors. He drums with Un Deux Trois, a pop band, records drone-based noise as Horseback, contributes to numerous other projects and now improvises guitar under his own name.

And although these three efforts seem incredibly different, Miller uses his melodic sensibilities to make each approachable and appealing to music fans of all persuasions.

While one might not be a fan of all three projects, it is certainly possible to like at least one.

Therein lies his greatest strength as a musician, the ability to draw from across the board without forsaking the accessibility of his music.

Granted, it sometimes takes an open mind and a willingness to experiment, but listeners able to leave their comfort zones will immediately find that buried under sounds that might first be classified as experimental and unknown, there is an abundance of melody and beauty.

As Miller told the Daily Tar Heel, his music is approachable, so long

MUSICREVIEW

JENKS MILLER
APPROACHING THE INVISIBLE MOUNTAIN
AVANT-GARDE

★★★★★

as people are willing to drop their preconceived notions of "experimental" music and simply give it a chance.

"Music means different things to different people; I believe there are great rewards to be found in music that challenges my preconceptions, but the process of appreciating difficult music, learning its vocabulary, and finding a way "in" can be very involved and time-consuming.

"Some people would rather not spend their energy in this way, and I understand that," he said.

But that's the easy way out, not to mention an approach that forsakes talent such as Miller's.

On *Approaching the Invisible Mountain*, the seemingly avant-garde is drawn back toward the center on the type of record that features such distinct and different

sounds that each of its six tracks could serve as the soundtrack to all of your dreams.

Seriously, close your eyes when you listen.

It is the type of immediately meditative music that will draw thoughts and images from corners of your imagination that you previously had no concept of.

You get lost inside of the record, it is impossible not to, as Miller shapes epics made entirely of guitarcraft.

The true strength of the record, though, is easily its cohesion.

All six tracks fit together perfectly. One does not exist without the others, and, as they build throughout the record, it becomes impossible to skip around. As it continues to the end, the six tracks function as one extended piece of beautiful music.

Approaching the Invisible Mountain is to be appreciated as a whole, as a cohesive piece of incredibly creative art.

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Recycling Tips for Move-In

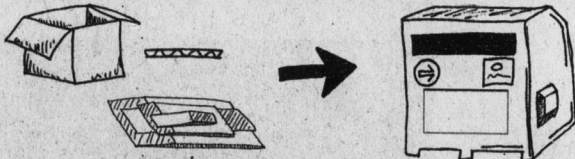
Reduce and recycle the material you would normally dispose of during move-in:

- Pack in reusable crates and bags, save them for move-out.
- Remove tubes from carpet rolls before arriving on campus.
- Remove appliances from boxes before arrival (especially fans).
- Empty and flatten cardboard boxes used for packing.
- Be sure all packing material has been removed from boxes. Please do not put plastic wrap or foam packing material in the cardboard recycling dumpsters.



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- There are also recycling sites for used batteries, inkjet cartridges and cell phones in your residence hall lobby.
- Look for recycling stations inside academic and medical buildings on campus too! At these stations you can recycle office paper, bottles/cans and newspapers/magazines.

Purchasing Energy Star Products



The annual energy bill at Carolina totals \$45 million. Purchasing energy-efficient lights and appliances for use in campus residence halls can help reduce those charges. Compact fluorescent light bulbs last longer than incandescent bulbs. They use only one quarter of the power, and they save up to five times as much in energy charges as they cost to purchase. Many sound systems, alarm clocks, computers, and televisions are certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as Energy Star compliant, meaning they use less energy than traditional models. So when buying for your room on campus, look for the Energy Star logo. A listing of Energy Star products and the stores that feature them is available at <http://www.energystar.gov>.

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