

Embarrassing Fruits recall their heroes

BY JONATHAN PATTISHALL
STAFF WRITER

The night before the release of their latest effort, the *First Time EP*, three-piece Chapel Hill rock outfit Embarrassing Fruits had a bit of a crisis. Singer and guitarist Joe Norkus likes to remember it primarily as "a funny incident." "The ceiling in our screen printing room caved in," Norkus said in an e-mail, recalling how water flooded the room. "It's funny because I believe this is the third time Trekkly's offices have flooded. We had high-powered fans and dehumidifiers going while screening CDs into the wee hours of the night before our EP release show at Local 506." The Trekkly he's referring to is Chapel Hill-based Trekkly Records, who put out the record, and the experience is emblematic of residing in a town that's not exactly known for show-biz and recording for a small independent label.

"This sure ain't Brooklyn, but it's not some hick town either," he said. Norkus said that is a good thing as Chapel Hill's laid back nature is one of the reasons his band likes it so much. "We feel a great freedom to just play and have fun in this environment because there's not a ton of expectations," he said. "We like the Chapel Hill scene for the most part, past and present." But for Embarrassing Fruits, identification with Chapel Hill runs deeper than just where they make base camp. Much of the press they've gotten has focused on defining their sound, which many identify as "slacker rock," or, more immediately relevant, as a return to the "Chapel Hill sound." "It is flattering to be compared to some of our heroes such as Archers of Loaf," Norkus said. But he is quick to qualify such comparisons.

"The way in which we're different is that we're young, and experiencing a world much different than those bands were," he adds. "I think anyone in their mid twenties feels some of the same things they were feeling in a way; growing up in this area which is somewhat progressive, yet sometimes gets a little big for their britches in that respect." In the end, Norkus says his band is just trying to write the best songs it can and perform them with passion, not really focusing on what people will think.

"For me, I try to write songs based around very basic concepts from what I observe of the world or scene that surrounds me. "We listen to a variety of music, and I like to think that we aren't just rehashing the past."

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu.

MUSICSHORTS

TRANSPORTATION DAYDREAMS

★★★★☆
ROCK

There are two things that Chapel Hill's Transportation knows very well: what it's like to live in a college town and how to play classic rock.

On *Daydreams*, the band's debut full-length, the trio harnesses these strengths to poignantly ring the bell tower of undergraduate nostalgia.

The greatest example of the band's success is "Graduation," a moving tribute to four years that go by far too quickly.

As his band pumps out roots-influenced college rock that finds the middle ground between Lynyrd Skynyrd and Superchunk, Robert Scruggs delivers the all-too-true declaration, "And we would always say, 'See you at graduation/But by the time we learned to bend all the rules, they were calling it an education.'"

Then the bands fades to elegaic guitar and recordings from UNC's 2006 commencement ceremony.

It's a poignant moment that makes you miss your college years, even if they've yet to leave you behind.

On the rest of the album, Transportation fuse traditional '90s indie rock and sounds of the '70s to explore the feelings of growing up.

And though the band trips up a bit with songs such as "Young Man," an overly pretentious, Roger Waters-aping expression of religious frustration, for the most part, *Daydreams* is a bittersweet tribute to the youthful years we all wish lasted just a bit longer.

- Jordan Lawrence

CHOP CHOP SCREENS

★★★★☆
TWEED

Chop Chop's latest, *Screens*, undoes the creases forming on the listener's forehead with a quirky and inventive sound. Developing throughout the

album rather than becoming stale, it gives listeners a full view of the diverse talents of Chop Chop's creative force, Catherine Cavanagh.

The record has both pop jams and acoustic ballads, all featuring Cavanagh's dainty voice which covers the tracks like icing distributed to a cupcake.

Her voice is like a calming whisper surrounded by the melodic electronic sounds and keyboards of her bandmates.

Chop Chop's talent is highlighted on "Serial Killer." Mixing the spoons and metal garbage lids of street performers with acoustic guitar and violin, the song comes to life, powered by the hypnotizing voice of Cavanagh.

As experimental and intriguing as Chop Chop's release is, it's enjoyable only in short increments. Though Cavanagh's subdued voice is comfortably relaxing at first, the listener might find herself restless by the end.

After a while, the album seems to have no end in sight. But taken a few songs at a time, Cavanagh's voice and the rest of the group's harmonious instrumentals are calming and comforting.

- Rachel Arnett

ANATHALLO CANOPY GLOW

★★★★☆
POP/ROCK

There is a meandering softness to Anathallo's sound on *Canopy Glow*.

While not necessarily mellow, even the more fast-paced and energetic songs are melodic and gentle.

Anathallo's sound is vaguely similar to Belle & Sebastian, albeit more low-key and ethereal. The combination of male and female vocals adds to the tenderness that surrounds the album. Erica Froman's voice is sweet and pure and has an earnestness that lends a sense of innocence to the songs.

When listening, one can almost picture a light golden glow, as suggested by the album title.

The use of horns seems to be an attempt to create a harsher edge on songs such as "Sleeping Torpor," but even the songs that sound faintly sinister still retain a gentle quality, and the mixture only heightens the song's sense of foreboding.

In contrast, the song "Bells" sounds quirky and whimsical, as a glockenspiel offsets bleak lyrics such

as, "I'm not brave enough to say that I am not afraid/ Should I return to confused bits of blindness."

While none of the songs stand out from the rest at first, the album eventually grows on the listener becoming a forgettable but enjoyable listen.

-Cassie Perez

RYAN ADAMS AND THE CARDINALS CARDINOLOGY

★★★★☆
POP/ROCK

In an interview with NPR in advance of his 2002 album *Demolition*, Ryan Adams said that his goal when making records was to write diverse songs that sounded like a rock radio playlist composed of songs by acts as diverse as The Rolling Stones and The Temptations.

And for a long time he was successful.

But, lately, and especially on his latest, *Cardinology* — once again with band The Cardinals — Adams has become a one-trick-pony.

Writing formulaic songs revolving around "Chicken Soup for the Soul" lyrics and basic guitar melodies, Adams has gone from tortured genius to a rehabilitated voice for the Whole Foods set.

"For everyone alone I wish you faith and hope/And all the strength to cope/To be your own best friend/Have confidence and keep the faith," he sings on album opener "Born Into a Light," which comes off as more note-to-self than anything else.

And it's a shame, too, because his voice sounds clearer and more powerful than ever before.

But the saccharine themes of the record leave the listener wondering what happened to Adams' edge.

There's no doubt that the ambition is still there.

But *Cardinology* and its predecessor *Easy Tiger* show a man who has settled into a niche that is a bit too safe, contradicting his bad boy past to disappointing results.

- Jamie Williams

STARSYSTEM

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

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TEENAGE DRAMA



DTH/JAMIE WILLIAMS

Beth Murphy, singer-keyboardist of Times New Viking, blasts through one of the band's songs Sunday night at Cat's Cradle. The critical darlings played through blown-out amps and reverb-drenched mics to rock the ears of a packed house. The band was opening for Deerhunter.

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