

# CAT'S CRADLE: Rock'n'Roll's Home on The Hill

## Rave-Ups rave about ...

By Amanda Graves  
Staff Writer

Doing the best that I can," lyrics from the Rave-Ups' opening song at the Cat's Cradle Monday night, aptly described the evening.

The show opened with the Chickasaw Mud Puppies, and the first thing apparent about this Athens, Ga., group was its unusual stage set-up. Props for the show consisted of four harmonicas, a washboard with bells attached, a stick with bells attached, and a rocking chair on a raised wooden platform where the lead singer sat and pounded out a pseudo-bass-drum beat with his metal-reinforced hiking boots.

It's almost hard to believe how much noise the two people in the group created. Looking something like a moonshiner who just descended from his mountain, the lead singer stomped out time while rocking, singing and playing harmonica. Meanwhile, the guitar player did his part in creating some of the loudest, most raucous rock'n'roll the Cradle has seen in a while. In all, it made for a foot-stompin' good time.

As soon as the Rave-Ups took the stage it was apparent that all was not well — at least, lead singer Jimmer Podrasky wasn't. The opening song, "The Best That I Can," was appropriate enough given that Podrasky and two of the other three members of the group were sick with the flu. But regardless of their illnesses, the Rave-Ups presented a one-and-a-half-hour show which spanned material from four releases and was adamantly received by an enthusiastic, if somewhat smaller than expected, audience.

It was clear that Podrasky was in bad shape, but bassist Tom Blatnik and lead guitarist Terry Wilson were determined to have fun, jokingly assuming "rock star" poses for the crowd. Songs that struck a chord with the audience included "Class Tramp" and "My Gremlin" from *Town and Country* and "If It Was (A Matter Of Mind)" and "She Says, Come Around" from

### PROFILE

**Chance.** Throughout the show, Podrasky and his fellow bandmates joked openly with the crowd about their condition, threatening to leave the flu in Chapel Hill, if nothing else. Given the response of the audience to the music and the verbal battery, it's likely that the Rave-Ups won more than a few new fans with this performance.

Before the show Monday, Wilson and Blatnik presented the following thoughts regarding *Chance* and their general progression in the music business:

**Q: Describe your current tour.**  
Tom Blatnik: Well, this is a six-week tour of "major markets" that will most likely be extended after the last day, which is May 10th. This is day eight of the tour. We started in Phoenix, then Albuquerque, Dallas, Austin, Houston, Columbia, and now here (we) are — Chapel Hill. What they'll probably do (after May 10th) is put us out doing more headlining things or get us an opening with someone.

**Q: Have you considered touring with a larger band?**  
Terry Wilson: We'd love to, but so far we've been turned down by some of the best.  
TB: It's almost just as well, because the record is doing really well, and people will be coming to see us instead of someone else.

**Q: Do you have any plans for a record going AOR instead of college radio?**  
TB: Well, actually, "Respectfully King of Rain" was shipped out to AOR last week and this week, I think, is the big reporting week. They're doing the major push with it now, and out of New York they are doing the really big push. It looks like there is going to be a follow up single on college radio and I

think that's going to be "She Says, Come Around."

**Q: Will the band stay with an alternative sound or go more mainstream?**

TB: It's nice being alternative because it's a little smarter than some of the more mainstream stuff. But ultimately, you want people to hear your music. If you are just on college stations, there's only a certain group of people that are going to hear it. So yeah, I mean, we'd like to be a household word.

**TW:** You want to do it all. You want to appeal at the college level but also you want to appeal across the boards into mainstream.

**TB:** There's no reason why you can't do what you want and not compromise yourself.

**TW:** The biggest problem is college radio types give up on you after you start doing anything that might not be cool in their books, and I think that's snobbish.

**Q: Has touring been what you expected?**

TB: It's actually kind of going over my expectations.

**TW:** It's amazing to note how many people know all the words to all the songs. It's one thing to play something from *Town and Country* and see people singing "You lost a lot when you lost me ..." it's another to see people singing "Respectfully King of Rain" or "If It Was a Matter of Mind."

**TB:** Last time we played in this area we played in Raleigh. We had a great show at the Brewery — it was small, hot, sweaty, and the people were fabulous. I'm hoping tonight will be the same here in Chapel Hill.

**Q: Do you have any future predictions?**

TB: Gold records, number-one hits, major merchandising ...

**TW:** and the Dodgers will win this year ...



When the Chills (above) heat up the Cradle Saturday night, they'll have Boston's Blake Babies along to help get the crowd started

## Band of many members

### The Chills

Submarine Bells

Slash/Warner Bros.  
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Cat's Cradle  
Saturday, April 14

Although the Chills have been around since 1980, the U.S. didn't get a taste of them until 1987, when they appeared at the New York City New Music Seminar. Since then, this New Zealand pop band has earned its place on the American music scene with its albums *Brave Words* and *Kaleidoscope World* and with its latest LP, *Submarine Bells*.

The Chills are best described as a blend of technopop (no sampling), alternative (very smooth, no edges) and folk (good lyrics, no twang). For those who find pop hard to swallow, the group's music has smoothed edges and a special coating to help it go down easy. From the interwoven lyrics to the seamless flow of music, the Chills are hypnotizing. The Omnibus WXYC Top Ten describes them as "perfect pop: neither airy and derivative, nor sappy or trite."

Had the Chills been well-known prior to 1987, it would have been hard to keep up with them — in ten years the group has had ten line-ups. The

### AMANDA GRAVES

### Concert

original Chills consisted of Martin Phillips — the only original member still with the group — his sister Rachel, and Jane Dodd, later of the Verlaines. This line-up cut the 1982 release *Dunedin Double* and broke up.

Phillips continued the group, adding member after member over the next few years. During this time they released several new singles — "Rolling Moon" (1982), "Pink Frost" and "Dol-drum" (1984) — and the six-song LP *The Lost EP* (1985).

In 1985, the Chills attempted to put aside their membership problems and went on a debut tour of the U.K. The tour was a success, but it wasn't enough to keep the band together. The group's final single that year, "I Love My Leather Jacket," hit number 5 on the New Zealand charts, but without a band to tour, the group couldn't reap the benefits of the song's success. *Kaleidoscope World*, which came out in 1986, was the last LP of this cast's singles.

Phillips spent the remainder of 1986 piecing together the band's tenth line-up. Caroline Easter, a former member of the Verlaines and a longtime friend of Phillips, was chosen to play drums. Classically-trained pianist Andrew Todd was selected from classified ads to play keyboards and Justin

Harwood was tapped for bass.

In 1987, they recorded the LP *Brave Words* and the non-LP single, "House Of A Hundred Rooms." Unfortunately, trouble struck the group again — Caroline Easter was forced to leave, due to tinnitus (acute ringing in the ear).

The group interviewed 25 drummers before finding a replacement for Easter — 17-year-old James Stephenson, who joined only three weeks before the tour that brought them to New York, Los Angeles, and stops in between. It was this tour that attracted the attention of Slash/Warner Brothers Records, which later signed the group.

The band spent most of 1989 writing and rehearsing in London, working with producer Gary Smith (Pixies, Throwing Muses), laying down tracks for *Submarine Bells*. This LP, their first on a major label, is similar to their early albums, but with a few changes. In a word, *Submarine Bells* is smooth. If angered, Martin Phillips would still coo. The tracks "Familiarity Breeds Contempt" and "The Oncoming Day" exemplify this. The tempo is more upbeat and the lyrics imply strong feelings but, as with the rest of the album, Phillips' vocals "chill" the flames.

Phillips says, "The theme in all my songs are very real, I don't want to fake it. The audience sees the Chills as experiencing real emotion." Emotion or not, the Chills' Cat's Cradle appearance on Saturday will no doubt be as cool and smooth as a cherry slushie on a hot summer day.

## From intense punk to hardcore tunes, they'll run the gamut

### FIREHOSE

Cat's Cradle  
Monday, April 16

When FIREHOSE plays for fans at the Cat's Cradle Monday, you can expect to see a band about as unorthodox as they come. From their reverse-capitalization spelling to their "fast break" style jam sessions, the L.A. trio runs the gamut of intense punk and hardcore tunes ... and then some. As for tradition, FIREHOSE has none. Their music is undefinable and quite chaotic. But their latest album, if'n, has been categorized as having more personal and direct intentions behind the songs, while still maintaining a restless punk fever in Mike Watt's bass lines and George Hurley's ragged, tough, drum licks.

The band's formation, like its music, has been considered a baphazard accident. Watt and Hurley made up 2/3 of California's hardcore/punk icons, The Minutemen, who were noted for their simplistic musical minimalism. The Minutemen (so named for their

### CHARLES MARSHALL

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short songs) established no boundaries in their music, constantly mixing lead and rhythm sections into frenzied, un-styled and untextured electric a la carte servings. They substituted their instinctive, unpredictable punk sound for their lack of basic musical knowledge. But in 1985, after touring as part of R.E.M.'s Reconstruction of the Fables tour, the Minutemen's lead man, D. Boon, was killed in a van accident. For the remaining two isolated musicians, music was dead. There wouldn't be another band for them until an ambitious, but inexperienced, youngster named Ed Crawford left his Ohio home to try to form a new band with the ex-Minutemen. It wasn't his musical ability that won them over, but his unique enthusiasm. It would still take time for Crawford to feel confident and seasoned on the guitar. FIREHOSE's debut, *Ragin' Full On*, reinforced Watt's and Hurley's furious outpourings of complicated, disparaging bass and percussion, adding

Crawford's (now re-named FROMOHIO) simple and brisk guitars and his steady but searching vocals. Their newest album, if'n, marks the emergence of a more confident and stable performance by FROMOHIO. His voice stays in a more narrow and appropriate range, and he supplies simple but more timely patterns in contrast to the incessant thunderings of Watt and Hurley. Though Crawford's performance is more directed and substance oriented, if'n retains the band's non-linear lyrics and lack of any sort of musical clarity.

Watt is more of a spectacle than traditional bass players normally are. He is an avid basketball fan who worships L.A. Laker James Worthy. He likes music the way he likes basketball — fast and furious. Unlike the Minutemen, who often performed twisted versions of their favorite covers, FIREHOSE has little interest in covers, opting for a more individualistic attitude toward developing a character and a statement distinctly its own.

Monday night, FIREHOSE will be contained in the misty and mythical room in the Cradle where the energy can escape only into the crowd.



FIREHOSE, a band from LOS ANGELES, will be in CHAPEL HILL on MONDAY

### Cradle Update

Cat's Cradle patrons sweating at the brow over the Cradle's imminent eviction from its West Franklin Street location can rest easy, at least 'till the end of summer.

That's when the Chapel Hill nightclub's latest six-month lease will run out. Since the Cradle's relocation to the old Southern Bell building at 206 W. Franklin St., owner Frank Heath knew the club's time there was limited. And after plans for a multi-million dollar Pavilion on the same site were announced last November, it didn't appear the Cradle would see another summer there.

But according to Debbie Dibbert, co-chairwoman of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Downtown Commission, the Chapel Hill Town Council probably won't vote on the project until sometime this fall.

Heath said he hadn't been given any word on when the project might be started, but he did say he was assured a sixty-day notice before he would have to vacate the premises. "As far as I know, they're the same place as they were a year and a half ago."

What this means for Heath is that he will simply have to wait and see if he's offered another lease in August. Heath said that although he had been looking for another place, he hadn't found one that was as suitable to the club's needs as the present building. "As far as it goes, this is pretty well a perfect location and size for a club, so I'm not going to leave unless I'm sure it's (a new location) reasonably likely to succeed."

—Thomas Healy

Fresh from the release of their major-label debut LP, 'Procedure,' Raleigh's blackgirls bring their unique sound to Cat's Cradle tonight at 10 p.m.