

Arts & Entertainment

Dambuilders gains national recognition with new album

Band shows it is having fun and enjoying success during local concert

By Matt Harrington
Old Gold and Black Reviewer

With a newly released album and a video for the first single getting rotation on MTV, the Dam-builders are definitely a band on the rise. They played an energetic show last Thursday at the Cat's Cradle in Carrboro.

The band, consisting of singer-bassist Dave Derby, violinist-keyboardist-guitarist Joan Wasser, guitarist Eric Masunaga and drummer Kevin March, seemed eager and happy to be performing, and it showed in the music and in their interaction with the crowd.

The show primarily spotlighted songs off *Against the Stars*, as they played eight songs from the new album. The show started

with a hint of the Dambuilders experimental side, as they played "Discopolis," a song which is a departure from the Dambuilders previous works, and inspires memories of the disco days of America. However, Joan Wasser's electric violin adds a completely nineties alternative-rock element to the song.

Other highlights from *Against the Stars* included "Digitize," "Herstory," "You Might Want Me Around," "Break up with Your Boyfriend," "On the Slide," and "Burn this Bridge," the first single from the new album. This single has been getting some airplay on local radio stations, and the video for it recently premiered on MTV's "120 Minutes." The Dambuilders also performed this song on "Oddville MTV" recently.

The Dambuilders also made sure the audience received a broad selection of their previous works as well, including several songs from their previous albums, *Encendedor* and *Ruby Red*. Among these were the songs "Smooth Control," and

"Shrine," which received some press when it was first released in 1994. The energy the Dambuilders put into the show was an example that after some rough times, the Dambuilders are having fun again and are ready to promote this new album.

After releasing albums in 1994 and 1995, then touring incessantly across the globe, the band was having a rough time figuring out where it fit in to the music scene.

This all changed, however, during its last tour of Australia in support of *Ruby Red*. The reception to *Ruby Red* was considerably better there than in America, and this encouraged, leading it to start enjoying the music again. Most of *Against the Stars* was written in a 5-day jam session in March's basement, and the catchy hooks and underlying rhythms represent a big step in the band's career. Derby says this: "We're completely not afraid of being at a turning point. It's a new direction and we're happy with it."



The Dambuilders have found success with their new album *Against the Stars*. The band's first single is currently receiving national radio and MTV air play.

Hoodlum wastes talents of cast

By David McGlinchey
Contributing Reporter

One thing that director Bill Duke can do, if nothing else, is direct a good gunfight scene. Fitting a cogent movie in between these shoot-em-ups, however, seemed to be too large a task.

Hoodlum, Duke's latest effort, is a story about a 1930s gang war in Harlem over control of the lucrative illegal lottery system known as the "numbers." The movie deals with the forgotten black pioneers in the field of organized crime as well as the white gangsters whom folklore has embraced. It's an interesting time and an interesting topic.

This could be a good story, but the director gives us a movie that seems to be going through an identity crisis. At one moment it's a gangland thriller, the next moment it's a romantic struggle. After dabbling in comedy throughout the movie, Duke tries to slip in some flimsy moral messages at the end to improve the movie's socially redeeming value. If a director could tie these different aspects in and put the film together right it could have been quite a show. Duke can't pull this off.

Despite Duke's apparent ineptitude the movie doesn't flop. A movie can't flop when it has a cast like this. Laurence Fishburne is great as the dark and mysterious Ellsworth "Bumpy" Thompson.

Andy Garcia and Vanessa Williams add class to the movie with their depictions of "Lucky" Luciano and Francene, Bumpy's girlfriend. Chi McBride is Illinois, Bumpy's best friend and cousin. Illinois provides one of the more meaningful moments in the movie when he tells Bumpy that "there ain't no lovin' like the lovin' you can

It must have been difficult to waste the considerable acting ability that Duke had at his disposal, but he somehow found a way.

get from a big woman."

The star of the show is undoubtedly Tim Roth as "Dutch" Schultz. The one word to summarize Roth's performance would be charismatic. He displays his impressive acting ability and showed that he definitely deserves bigger roles in better movies.

It must have been difficult to waste the considerable acting ability that Duke had at his disposal, but he somehow found a way. Too many characters remain undeveloped. It's difficult to get sentimental when someone dies if you don't know anything about that character.

As the movie goes on it gets more and more choppy. One gets the impression that someone in the editing room was overzealous and chopped out some integral parts of the movie. There are several situations where it seems as if there are several minutes missing at the end of the scene which would explain everything if they could only be recovered.

Hoodlum is sometimes morbid and almost always violent. If you're trying to ignore the sloppy editing, a fun game to play would be to count how many people buy the farm in the course of the movie. The variety of deaths which characters encounter is also impressive. We see everything from razor slashings to people dying from eating rat poison. If you like a high mortality rate in your movies, then this is a must-see.

The movie is disjointed and lacks a sense of flow. There's a chance that Bill Duke did this on purpose to show the chaotic life of gangsters in the thirties, but I wouldn't give him that much credit.



Tim Roth plays a gangster in Bill Duke's new film, *Hoodlum*. The film also stars Laurence Fishburne and Andy Garcia.

Film offers wit, male bonding

By John Stanford
Old Gold and Black Reporter

I have seen this movie twice. Once with my girlfriend (a mistake) and once in the correct environment—sitting around drinking beer with four of my closest buddies. This isn't to say that I don't enjoy watching flicks with my girlfriend, but *Swingers* is not a date movie.

In fact, I'm not even sure girls would even like this movie. That's OK—this is a movie for guys just like

Thelma & Louise was a movie celebrating women's independence. Except, of course, that *Swingers* is not nearly as serious, and at times it even parodies itself.

Swingers is a small independent film that was probably made for less money than the catering budget on a typical Hollywood production. Fortunately, the fresh dialogue and invigorating characters that we have come to associate with independent films are in abundance here.

The premise of the film is simple: An comedian/actor (basically jobless) mopes around Los Angeles with his buddies hoping to find a new girl after his six year marathon relationship ended back East.

Again, we are not looking for complicated plot twists and extravagant special effects here; this is a fresh comedy ripe with innovative dialogue that isn't afraid to offend anyone.

There's not much else to this film, but story line is not the point—the thing that makes this comedy so appealing is that it hits so close to home. Practically every humorous situation in this film has been experienced by a high percentage of the male population on this campus.

Anyone familiar with Segal Hockey? The scenes revolving around intense matches are perfectly recreated, complete with trash talking and fights. I thought was in the middle of my Taylor House (all male at that point) suite all over again.

The infamous callback also makes a comic appearance in this film that could be one of the best single dialogues of all time.

This movie has everything associated with guys and going out at night—dead parties, heavy drinking, fruitless gambling, the art of the hook-up, late-night breakfasts, fights and of course the all important acquisition of a woman's phone number. To go into detail about any one of these facets would be an injustice to the film; the essence of this comedy lies in its surprises and simple ingenuity.

Perhaps the best feature of this film is its dialogue. The conversations between the friends are so fragmented and innovative that you would believe that the actors were doing it ad-lib. But these choppy line sequences are what makes *Swingers* so realistic; the pop culture lingo that these guys use are complete with catchy mannerisms and senseless (but hilarious) metaphors. I will not discredit them by trying to present them on paper—they only make sense in their own distorted contexts. I'll just say that after the film, I kept hearing ourselves repeating the lines and imitating

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Wyclef creates new sound with help from other artists

By Chuck Murphy
Contributing Reporter

In a summer of long awaited hip hop releases, Wyclef Jean presents *The Carnival* featuring the *Refugee All-Stars* gives music fans of all flavors something to get happy about.

In an astoundingly eclectic and creative effort, Wyclef blends hip hop, disco, latin, creole, classical, rhythm and blues, folk and reggae styles with a good sense of humor.

Guest appearances include the *Refugee Camp All-stars* (Lauryn Hill, Pras, John Forte and Melky Sedeck), Celia Cruz, The Neville Brothers, Rugged Out Come and members of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.

The Carnival has been dubbed a "Hip Hopera" (a deliberately ridiculous name coined by Wyclef's critics) because of the numerous skits and interludes surrounding the music.

Most of the skits are devoted to a fictitious court room drama in which Wyclef is the defendant.

The colorful cast of caricatures in-

cludes two useless witnesses—Pablo Diablo and Down Lo Ho—and a "Killer M.C." who doesn't measure up to the hype. The interlude entitled "Down Lo Ho" is both legal drama and Jackie Chan kung-fu epic.

I've heard people dismiss Wyclef's skill as an MC on *The Score* (Fugees), saying that he's sloppy or simply abandons the rhythm. *The Carnival* affords



Wyclef Jean
The Carnival—featuring the
Refugee All-Stars
Columbia Records

such critics an opportunity to reconsider.

Although Wyclef is not as vocally agile as some MCs, his style is unique and proves pleasing to the ears and hips. He tightens it up on tracks like "Fresh Interlude," which also showcases DJ Skribble.

The album's first single, "We Trying To Stay Alive," samples the biggest, corniest disco hit of all time—"Stayin' Alive" by the Bee Gees.

Although the bass line and some vocal elements of the original are left intact, Wyclef experiments with the format and feel to fuse hip hop party anthems (like "Top Billin'" and "Let Me Clear My Throat") into the mix.

This injects some spontaneous energy into an old track. Prakazrel's baritone and John Forte's smooth rhymes also help make this revision as irresistible as the original.

Creole and latin influences are evident on "Anything Can Happen," the theme song of *The Carnival*. On this track Wyclef takes us on a surreal journey with quirky, humorous twists that are shrugged off in the hypnotic chorus: "what, what / say what / say what / anything can happen." This might be his way of dropping postmodern philosophy on the listener, but I doubt it.

In "To All the Girls," Wyclef puts a

new twist on the classic "To All The Girls I've Loved Before" by Hammond/David: "to all the girls I've cheated on before / I tip my hat like Willie Nelson."

A tribute to Wyclef's ability to skillfully blend styles, this track combines elements of a 1960s Top 40 hit and "Rapper's Delight," a hip hop classic.

"Mona Lisa" is a straight R&B love ballad with an organic sound and phat beat.

On "Gone Till November," Wyclef directs the New York Philharmonic to add a classical element to this folk inspired hip hop track.

"Guantanamera" is an old latin folk song that Wyclef adapts successfully to the present tense. This track features beautiful vocals by Celia Cruz.

The darkest and most message oriented cut on the album is entitled "Year of the Dragon." This track features Lauryn Hill, who helps Wyclef convey the many pitfalls of crack use.

The Carnival is an album for true fans of hip hop who aren't too cool or pretentious to enjoy it, and it is converting new fans of hip hop on an international scale. Whatever your tastes, this album gives you the culture you crave and will probably broaden your musical horizons in the process.