

# Arts & Entertainment

## Flecktones bring a hybrid sound

These four immensely talented musicians are getting set to bring their one-of-a-kind sound to the university for an April 10 performance in Wait Chapel.

By Travis Langdon  
Arts and Entertainment Editor

In today's music world, it seems that the only acts that stand the test of time are ones that are able to forge beyond the realm of the formulaic technique used by so many mainstream artists, and create something truly unique and innovative.

Although many of these musicians never achieve the media overexposure of the countless one-hit-wonders that dominate radio waves, the mastery of their art elevates them to a level above this; allowing them to gain the respect of their peers, acclaim from critics and admiration of a broad range of fans.

Béla Fleck and the Flecktones have accomplished just this, and on April 10 students will get the opportunity to see how.

Organized by Student Union, the university is hosting the Flecktones for a performance that is sure to be a testament to the technical expertise of these four musicians and, with any luck, pack Wait Chapel with music lovers of all kinds.

The diversity of the Flecktones' fan base reflects quite accurately the hybrid that is the band's sound. Mixing pop, funk, bluegrass, jazz, tribal beats and folk with a lot of its own flavor, the Flecktones defy category and will generally fill a hall with everyone from music aficionados to tourheads.

The backbone of the band is Fleck himself, whose roots are in bluegrass. An accomplished banjo player, Fleck became interested in the instrument after hearing the "Beverly Hillbillies" theme song as a child. A student of the guitar at the time, Fleck abruptly made the switch to banjo, and, in doing so, changed music from an interest to a passion in his life.

Fleck made a name for himself as a solo artist in the '80s, but this was only the natal stage of his distinguished career. The Flecktones formed in 1989, with a self-financed album, *Béla Fleck and the Flecktones*, that quickly attracted the attention of Warner Bros. Records.

Alongside Fleck was award-winning bass master Victor Lemonte Wooten and eccentric percussionist Futureman.

Wooten is widely regarded as one of today's premier bassists, and his funky precision gave the band an added sense of cohesion. Wooten has consistently been voted "Bass Player of the Year" by *Bass Player Magazine*, and has proved himself to be one of the most vibrant musicians around today both with the Flecktones and in solo pursuits.

Claiming to be from the year 2050, Futureman brings something altogether unique to the band. In addition to regular percussion instruments,



Jeff Coffin, Victor Wooten, Béla Fleck and Futureman, also known as the Flecktones, will perform their innovative style of music April 10 in Wait Chapel.

Futureman's main onstage tool is his own invention, the synth-axe Drumitar. The device is held like a guitar, but uses synthesized keys and drum pads to create a variety of rhythmic sounds. He also provides spoken word for the Flecktones' music under the pseudonym Royel. Confused? Don't be; just hear the music.

Once the trio teamed up under Warner Bros. Records, the Flecktones released *Flight of the Cosmic Hippo* (1991), *UFO TOFU* (1992) and *Three Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1993). Three years later the band put out a double CD set called *Live Art* in an attempt to capture their onstage energy.

Around this time, the Flecktones began performing with Jeff Coffin, a Maine native who plays saxophones, clarinet, flute and a variety of other wind instruments. After establishing himself on the road, Coffin became an official Flecktone, and his contributions are heard on the band's 1998 release, *Left of Cool*.

In addition to countless accolades from critics and

in readers' polls, the band has been nominated for a number of Grammy Awards in a variety of categories.

The band's fanbase has also grown, due in part to collaborations that the group has done with such acts as Phish, Sting, Bruce Hornsby, Chick Corea and Dave Matthews. Fleck recognizes that these factors have affected the group's commercial appeal, but emphasizes the fact that the band is playing (and has always played) for anyone who appreciates music.

"I'm still amazed when we fill 1,000 seats, because we're so esoteric. I'm happy to be playing good music for whoever is there, whether it's a folk club with 50 people who are really into it or 20,000 people with Dave Matthews," Fleck said in a recent interview with the *Buffalo News*.

The Flecktones are scheduled to take the stage at 7:30 p.m. April 10 in Wait Chapel. Tickets are \$18 and are still available in Benson 335 and at all TicketMaster outlets.

## Book explores rift between parents, teens

By Erik Hovmiller  
Contributing Reviewer



"America's own adolescents have become strangers. They are a tribe apart, remote, mysterious, vaguely threatening. ... Our nation's children slip into a netherworld of adolescence that too often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of estrangement. The individual child feels lost to a world of teens, viewed mostly in aggregate, notorious for what they do wrong, judged for their inadequacies, known by labels and statistics that frighten and put off adults."

*A Tribe Apart* is written under the presumption that there is a lack of effective understanding between adults and adolescents. This unfamiliarity on the part of parents, and adults in general, assumes that the two generations are a tribe apart. It is this ignorance that is at the heart of familial breakdown and places adolescents in a nihilistic world fraught with contradictions, indeterminate limits and vacillating boundaries. In sum, Patricia Hersch attempts to shed light on the difficult yet formative years of adolescence in aspirations of elucidating the unknown lives of America's youth.

Adolescence, as Hersch explains, is more than a period of vicissitude for the developing body. In the modern world, it is not simply a stage of flux — of transition between childhood and adulthood. Adolescents have to travel a road that is riddled with a legion of potholes while navigating one-way streets and the inevitable gridlock of the adolescent world. The load they haul is often overbearing and any road signs are muddled. Yet they persist on through unmapped streets with minimal support from family. The only crutches they have are their friends (obtained through a snarled social climate).

The teens of today want to be understood and need to be embraced if they are to develop into functioning members of society. This understanding forms the basis for Hersch's goal — to venture into the brave yet reclusive hearts of adolescents in aspirations of forging a healthy and essential connection between adults and children.

This book does not expose the life of the social outcast, the dead-end teen or those bound in juvenile hall. Rather, Hersch acquaints us with the commoners (in the relative sense). Granted, these teens are not all angels nor are they all out to live the American dream. Yet some are. The fact is that the adolescents presented in this book are all different, in every form of the word. Yet they are all relatively normal, constituting the

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Kelly Murdoch-Kitt/Old Gold and Black

### All aboard!

The chorus aboard the H.M.S. Pinafore, after which the current Mainstage production is named, help move along the story with one of the 14 songs in the play. The comic opera, which will be the final directorial effort of James Dodding, a visiting professor of theater, opened last weekend to rave reviews. The play can be seen tonight through April 8 at 8 p.m. and April 9 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for students.

## Anonymous 4 concludes Secret season

By Bethany Dulis  
Contributing Reviewer

The early music ensemble Anonymous 4 drew a sizeable crowd to Wait Chapel March 30 for the final Secret Artist Series performance: "1000: A Mass for the End of Time." The concert combined sacred music of the first millennium with readings from Ovid, Yeats, and Blake to evoke the atmosphere of speculation surrounding the religious significance of the year 1000.

The name "Anonymous 4" is a reference to the general anonymity of early composers and performers — particularly the women who sang the chants and polyphony written for higher voices. The group formed in 1986 to research medieval music's composition and performance. Consequently, members Marsha Genensky, Susan Hellauer, Jacqueline Horner and Johanna Rose may be some of the most academically, as well as musically, accomplished performers to take the stage at the university. They not only perform with breathtaking technical skill, but they also must research and reconstruct the medieval music that they sing.

"1000: A Mass for the End of Time" created an atmosphere of sacred intimacy in the imposing space of the chapel. Throughout the program, group members took turns reading selections of poetry and legends, which dealt with the themes of creation, apocalypse and rebirth on a cosmic scale. The program's content made for a mysterious and sol-



Courtesy of News Services

In the group's March 30 Wait Chapel performance, Anonymous 4 sang the kind of early polyphonic chant that it has perfected since forming in 1986.

emn atmosphere as it recreated the trepidation and anticipation surrounding the year 1000 in medieval Europe.

Restricting the musical selections to such a specific time period had both benefits and drawbacks. Anonymous 4 is known for its ability to blend four voices in seamless unison, and the March 30 concert provided ample opportunity for the performers to exhibit this talent. Many of the selections were strictly chant, and the four voices seemed to be one. Their unity and control were flawless.

I noted the general absence of polyphonic selections that would have allowed the performers to demonstrate the beauty of their voices in harmony more

often. However, the lack of variety simply reflected the limitations of musical innovation in A.D. 1000. A program featuring some of their repertoire taken from 13th and 14th century literature might have been more interesting to the modern ear.

The music of the first millennium was a beautiful counterpoint to the hoopla surrounding the advent of the year 2000, and the intimate, exquisite expression of four unaccompanied voices was the perfect complement to the high-energy, high-decibel enthusiasm of February's Mandinka Epic. Anonymous 4 offered its audience music that transcends the passage of time.