## **ENTERTAINMENT**

Technique • Friday, July 14, 2000

### Technique withdrawal

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#### The next Jim Jones?

Do it your self cult workshop. See Two Bits for complete information Page 14

# Great advances in musical navigation



Drifting Through (L to R: Randall Kirsch, Everett Bolton, Paul Madigan, Jay Doyle, Brian Werner) will bring their blend of rock and refined jam back to Atlanta on July 27, performing at Smith's Olde Bar.

By Alan Back Notepad, camera, sledgehammer...

In the world of popular music, few innovations have had more effect than the jam session. Some bands fool around after hours to let off all their excess energy, while others prefer to do it in front of audiences and take a chance on sounding like boneheads. And there are some, like the Raleigh outfit Drifting Through, that have learned to channel that enthusiasm and create a sound that appeals to fans of disciplined playing and free-spirited improvisation alike.

The current began to move in 1993, when lead singer Randall Kirsch and bassist Everett Bolton started playing together during

their freshman year at Wake Forest University. Guitarist Jay Doyle fetched up on shore two years later, and Drifting Through was born as a trio.

In late 1997, having graduated and moved to Raleigh, they met keyboardist Brian Werner and drummer Paul Madigan. These two transplanted New Yorkers, who were playing in the band Mojo at the time, would soon find themselves recruited for emergency duty. The drummer who had been working with Kirsch's group got a pink slip just before they were to enter a competition to find a local band to play on the side stage at the 1998 H.O.R.D.E. tour.

'We were totally in between when we had to play this thing, so we called them because we knew they were really good. We did, I guess, four or five rehearsals before that show. It just clicked and felt great," Kirsch commented. Drifting Through expanded to a quintet after Mojo broke up; they now have an EP, Extended Play (1998), and a fulllength album, Spell (2000), to their credit.

Spell neatly reflects the influences and perspectives of the five players, while still blending them into a coherent whole and presenting them in a more radio-friendly manner than was done on Extended Play. The EP drew considerable media attention, but more than a few critics pigeonholed the band as just another group of noodlers a response that prompted them to reconsider what they wanted to do with their next effort.

"There's sort of a stigma to the jam genre—it's been done so well by one or two bands, but done very badly by 1,000 others," Kirsch said. "We really wanted to make [Spell] an album and focus more on the songs being what they were, rather than on the jam." He added that they set out to find the best way to separate live performance from studio work and determine how to deal with each.

This year's effort showcases the band's new approach to the latter, venturing into several areas of pop and rock. "Twilight" carries overtones of Blues Traveler's mellower work, while the acoustic vibe of "Stained Glass Window" recalls the early Dave Matthews Band recordings. The juice flows freely for the Allman Brothers/Black Crowes guitar harmonies of "Centerline," and "Shade" feels as if it could break into an open jam at any moment thanks to Werner's organ romping.

Concerning this eclectic mix and his contributions to it, Kirsch explained, "I don't necessarily think I have to shut those doors; I'd rather keep them open and write from a bunch of different standpoints and styles. The great thing about Drifting Through is that I can take these songs to them and they can play in all the styles, and there's a good feel in all of them. We really enjoy the variety, and it makes for a much more exciting live show to keep changing things

See Drifting Through, page 14

# B.B. King and Eric Clapton sing the blues

By Michael Epstein Perfect Dark addict

Artist: B.B. King & Eric Clapton Album: Riding With the King Studio: Reprise Tracks: 12 Running Time: 61:13 Genre: Rock/Blues Rating: ★★★

On Riding With the King, two of the greatest guitarists in history, Eric Clapton and B.B. King team up to produce an album that is good but not the exceptional piece of work that might be expected from men of their reputation.

King has been a legend since the fifties, while Clapton has, over time, become a legend in his own right. Both seem to have a way with the blues.

This album takes a "go with what you know" approach and is more blues experience than rock and roll experience. Most of the world's good blues songs have already been written. Therefore, there is not one original on the album, which is somewhat of a shame as it seems a full collaboration between King and Clapton would have produced some excellent results. Instead the album is merely a collection of their takes on these

First of all, it should be noted that, while Riding With the King is a musical collaboration between King and Clapton, Clapton might as well have not sung on the album. Basically, as far vocals go, King easily steals the show. Indeed Clapton is a good singer in his own right, but he just cannot keep up with King's distinctive sound. On the other hand, King and Clapton seem to match each other's talents on the guitar, and it could be suspected that only those with excellent ears for the music of King, Clapton or both could tell the difference.

As for the album, King and Clapton work some real magic on Riding With the King. They do things with guitars seldom heard in music. Their blues make you feel like you are sitting in a smoky, hole-in-the-wall dive listening to some poor soul play out his heart, and that is a large part of the appeal of this album. It is also the main reason to recommend the purchase of this album. Collaborations like this do not come around every day. Be warned, though: not every track is worthy. Track four," Marry you," just has too much of a pop edge to fit on the album.

There really are two main rea-



By Craig Mathew / REPRISE RECORDS

Eric Clapton and B.B. King love to sing the Blues. Their project, "Riding with the King," is a collaboration of mellow blues remakes.

sons to purchase this album, and many people will not fit under either category. Primarily, fans of King, Clapton, or both will definitely want to add this disc to their collection. The second reason is how much one enjoys

mellow music.

This album is excellent study or relaxation music. Other than that, there is no major reason to buy this album, and one would be better suited to purchasing classic King.

#### Feature The Matrix DVD

### 'The Matrix' DVD offers quality entertainment

By Jayson Wehrend Entertainment staff

If you never saw *The Matrix*, where were you during 1999? Tons of people saw it, and (most shocking of all) almost everyone loved it. Quite an impressive feat, considering the main character is Keanu Reeves. In the movie, Neo (Keanu Reeves) is a brilliant computer hacker who discovers our world is not what it seems. With the aid of Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) and Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), Neo attempts to destroy the system that controls humanity. Combining an interesting story with an innovative use of special effects, The Matrix holds plenty of replay value.

Video: For a \$200 million blockbuster, I expected the video quality to be as close to the theater as possible. Having seen the movie 6 times in the theaters (liking a movie isn't a crime) I was fully prepared to detect any discrepancies in quality. Happily, I report no such problem. The picture is crystal clear; nary a scratch or pixel in sight. The black level was dead on; it was never too dark, and the image never looked washed out. A number of times during the movie, a green filter was placed over the lens. That muted green color comes out beautifully on DVD. The movie is presented in it's original 2.35:1 aspect ratio, so you don't miss out on anything happening on the

Audio: The Matrix really stands out from other eye-candy action flicks because of its dynamic use of sound. The DVD jumps right into the task of proving it's as good as its theatrical predecessor. The front sound stage has very nice sound separation. When characters move across the screen the sound follows them through the speakers. Guns fire from one speaker and bullets sweep across the center, impacting in the right speaker. The rear surrounds join in to pump out music, even more gunshots, and echoes of some of the larger sets. Many of the slow motion shots of guns firing put the sub to good use. The sound delay on the slow motion shots, coupled with the subwoofer's boom, makes the shots seem all the more

Extras: After the wonderful video and audio treatments, how do the extras stack up? Starting it all off is a feature-length, audio commentary with Moss, the editor, and the special effects supervisor. Moss was mostly quiet, but she did talk about the parts in the film she especially liked. The commentary offered good insight into how the movie was put together. I was particularly pleased to see that the film is automatically subtitled during the commentary.

Also included was a "making of" documentary. Running about 25 minutes long, it offered a look at the extensive work that went into making the martial arts fights

The next extra is titled "Follow the White Rabbit." When you select this, at nine different points in the film a white rabbit will pop up on the screen. If you hit enter on your remote, it will take you to a minidocumentary that explains how the scene was shot. You can access two hidden documentaries by clicking on the red pills in the menus. One of them goes to a five minute documentary called "What is Bullet-Time?" The second pill takes you to a feature called "What is Concept?" I would have really loved the original movie trailers and a commentary by the Wachowski brothers, but I can live with the extras I got.

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Do you ever find that life at Tech gets too stressful? Do you ever have that sinking feeling that your major might not satisfy you when you get out of school? If you answered yes to either one of those questions, then you need to use the simple Two Bits Approach to Profit from Alternative Religion.

If you're at all like the Two Bits man, you probably spend hours each day in awe of how truly charismatic you really are. You probably scoff at people when they tell you that you're crazy or that you should put some shorts on before fighting crime. Well, odds are that if people tell you that, then you probably are insane. Congratulations! You see, unlike those gauche rational people, you have a huge earning potential. How, you might ask, can you use your nuttiness to

make extra dough? Simple: Start a

Over the years, cults have caught a good deal of flack, because many of the most famous cult leaders got all greedy and tried to convince their members that they should commit suicide. Let me first start by saying that this is a bad idea. Not only is it mean to tell people to kill themselves, but it also cuts their productivity. What kind of inefficient cult leader would do something so idiotic? If I were to start a cult, I would want my followers alive so that they could worship me, thus increasing the size of my already megalomaniacal ego while doing useful things like washing my car. Perhaps I try too hard to apply order to things, but it seems to me that dead followers aren't as good at removing hubcap

By now, I'd imagine you're

hooked. If you've made it this far and don't want to start your own cult, perhaps you should put down the paper, because you're clearly tainting the suggestive powers of the mighty Two Bits Man. The first thing you should do is to choose a goal for your cult. Some popular ones want to go home. This is to say that they believe that they live on another astrological plane, and need to find a speedy path to get there. Nonsense. If I led a cult, there would be one simple goal: make my life good. For that reason, I would make my cult attractive to five-star chefs, supermodels, and multibillionaires, so I could say stuff like, "Give me three million dollars and a creme brulee, now!"

Once you pick a goal, you need to have a convenient deity. Some cult leaders will choose silly names like Doh for their leaders, but the Two Bits Man is far too shrewd for such folly, so I will choose a strong name for my deity. We will worship Ed. That name just gushes with spiritual depth, and it will afford me the benefit of enlightened preachings like Ed commands you to wash my car, and he wants you to be sure to get the bugs off the air dam."

After you have a goal and a deity, you need a good compound. Most cult leaders make the huge mistake of choosing a distant hut in the middle of the wilderness. The Two Bits Man cares not for distant huts, because Webvan doesn't serve distant huts. As I see it, we should choose a more convenient compound like the Hyatt. That way, we would have a dandy central location and an indoor pool. David Koresh, on the other hand, didn't have such luxuries. You will also need good music, because if there's one thing you can count on as a cult leader,

it's that unstylish FBI agents will show up at your door playing "These Boots" by Nancy Sinatra. While the maladroit cult leader might start screaming after the third day of that song and defenestrate himself, the Two Bits Approach to Profit from Alternative Religion will have nothing of that. Instead, we encourage our cult leaders to have a copy of the radio remix of the Hampsterdance song. After three days of square-dance music remixed into techno-rave, the agents will be the ones running for cover.

So folks, there you have it. With just a few simple steps, you can be on your way to profiting from alternative religion the Two Bits way. Of course, if that doesn't work, you could always win the lottery. Until next issue, I am the Two Bits Man, and these are my thoughts.

### **Drifting Through**

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Last month in Raleigh, Drifting Through tried out that live show in a support slot for Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir and his band, Ratdog. The experience was a definite first for them, Kirsch recalled. "It was our first legend…a guy who's been touring his whole life. He was—burned, you know, you could tell he'd spent his time with the drugs. Really nice guy, though his band was great, and the crowd was awesome."

Until another legend calls, road life is business as usual—headlining some shows and teaming with fellow up-and-coming groups for others. Atlanta's Ode to Abbey and Winston-Salem's Emma Gibbs Band are two acts that have turned out to be good matches for Kirsch and company, in his view, and everybody benefits from such a pairing.

"You want them to come out and play for

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your fans because you know your fans will like them, and they want you to play for yours—it's a great trade," he noted. "Being the opening band or the headlining band, it really depends on the market whether one is really better or not. People may get the impression that the second band is the better one, and that's not necessarily the case all the time."

While they work hard to expand their fan base, their motivation differs from that of most other new artists who see a major-label deal as a trip to the Promised Land. Kirsch described the music business as a disgusting one, pointing to the abundance of acts in nearly every city as a factor that labels can use to their advantage when they look for new blood. "They don't have to do any work. They just wait for you to already have your own fan base, to have done everything on

your own, then they come in, sign you, and take all the profits."

He continued, "We want to go out, sell records, and have a community of fans on our own. If that works, and we're making money and having a good time playing shows, then we're not sure we want to change that. We'll stick with that plan and grow Drifting Through as our own thing." Getting the music out and allowing listeners to make their own decisions are top priorities for the band.

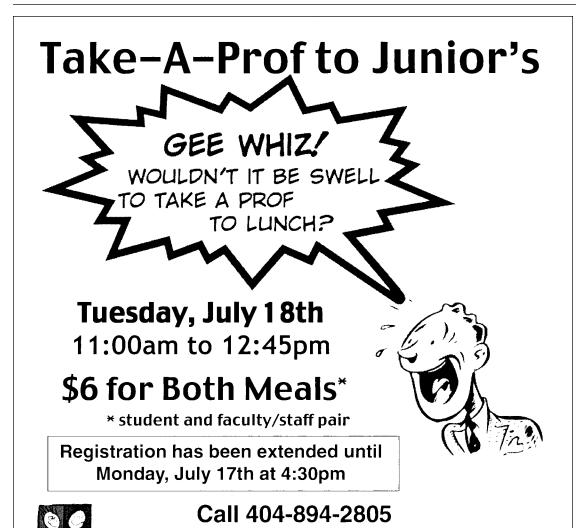
College radio stations around the South have been showing interest and adding *Spell* to their playlists, and the commercial airwaves may open up as well. Surf 107 (WSFM—107.5 FM) in Wilmington, N.C., is set to put the album into rotation in the near future.

No one in Drifting Through will complain if fan support grows strong enough to draw arena-size crowds; for now, though, their hope is to be able to move up to the smaller largescale venues. Kirsch's perspective is that such locations allow more people to get in the door while preserving intimacy between the performer and the audience.

"You can still sing to the guy in the back row or the people up in the balcony. When you get above that, you start to lose it a little bit. You just wonder how much you're really connecting to a guy who's 5,000 seats away from you...But you go into the Variety Playhouse, or even the Roxy, and everyone there is part of the show."

When these five players make their way to one of their favorite haunts, whoever happens to be in the place at the time can get drawn into the music. Their course lies somewhere between the twin shores of tight arranging and complete freewheeling, and listeners are welcome to travel along for a while.

Drifting Through will be performing at Smith's Olde Bar on July 27. Call (404) 875-1522 for more information. Visit the band on the Web at www.driftingthrough.com.



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# This past Monday was Neil Tennant's birthday. Happy birthday, Neil!

### RESEARCH PARTICIPATION PROGRAM CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION NATIONAL CENTER FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASE

(Located in Atlanta-Temporary up to 1 year, renewable up to an additional 2 years).

A research position is available in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Infectious Disease, Influenza Branch, Epidemiology Section. The Influenza Branch collects and analyzes a large amount of surveillance data that are used by public health groups to plan and implement strategies for the control and prevention of influenza. Influenza surveillance system data also are used by the FDA and the World Health Organization to help select each year's influenza vaccine strains. The primary duties will include development and maintenance of programs for analysis of U.S. influenza surveillance data. A Masters Degree is preferred and a Bachelor's Degree will be considered with appropriate prior experience. Must have strong programming skills and be proficient in MS Access, SQL and FrontPage. Familiarity with using SAS is also desirable.

The Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education administers the Research Participation Program for CDC. The program is open to all qualified U.S. and non-U.S. citizens without regard to race, color, age, religion, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran or disabled veteran.

It is anticipated that this position will be filled by the end of August 2000 so applicants are encouraged to apply immediately.

For an application contact (please reference #CDC 00-1 when inquiring about this position): Research Program/CDC-NCID,

Attention: Mona Carrasco, Science and Engineering Education – MS 36, Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education, P.O. Box 117, Oak Ridge, TN 37831-0117. Phone (865) 576-3383, Fax (865) 241-5219, email carraser@orau.gov.