

Do in

THE Dishes

in College Station

Story and photo by
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If you saw the members of the Dishes away from the stage, you might think they were nutty bunch of neighbors. It's hard to imagine that this group of four people, who look nice but seem a little strange, play some of the best rock 'n' roll that has ever been written with an emphasis on fun.

Jimmy Raycraft, 34, looks like your typical high school physics teacher — short and balding and probably not unfamiliar with hearing the term "dork" used behind his back. Actually, Raycraft is a guitar wiz and lead vocalist with a stage presence that borrows from Pete Townshend, Jeff Beck and Jerry Lewis. On stage, Raycraft is like a standup comic with a guitar as he jokes about his hair, music, Lou Reed, Elvis Presley, mayonnaise pizzas and fellow band members Dickie Malone, Barbara Donaho and Pete Falcone.

Malone, 37, seems like he would be more at home driving a Mack truck and drinking beer than playing bass. He strikes a

John Entwistlesque "bored with it all" pose with his 1957 Fender Precision bass resting on his oversized belly. He stares straight ahead through his shades and never opens his mouth except for an occasional background or lead vocal.

Years ago, Raycraft and Malone formed an art rock band called Mr. Moraz that later became Spatz. Spatz played a hybrid of early King Crimson, Gentle Giant, Yes and David Bowie styles that Raycraft called "Megazoid Music." Malone says Spatz recorded an album in 1974 that was never released. The album, an experiment in acoustics produced by a man Malone refers to as a "mad scientist" type, was recorded outdoors in a field near Dripping Springs. The only interest the album generated was when a local game warden came out to the recording site to see if the band was using their music to kill animals.

When Spatz broke up in 1976, Raycraft and Malone went their separate ways. Raycraft joined a band with Michael Marcoulier that played country and reggae. Malone and his brothers formed the Malone Brothers Band. When both groups broke up in 1982, Raycraft and Malone decided to start another band together. A mutual friend, Barbara Donaho, was recruited to sing, play keyboards and occasionally, rhythm guitar.

Donaho, 34, would not look out of place driving the kids to

school or doing the grocery shopping. She would look out of place playing keyboards for any band except the Dishes. In these times of superelectronic-computerized Emulators and Fairlights and Synclaviers, Donaho plays a red vintage Farfisa organ and one of those tiny Casio keyboards that you find on sale at Radio Shack for \$19.95.

Donaho says she knew Raycraft and Malone because her brother, a member of Shake Russell's band, used to hang out at the same music store where Raycraft and Malone had met 10 years earlier. Donaho quit her job at an insurance office and joined the band.

Then Raycraft, Malone and Donaho began playing together at various small clubs. Since they had no steady drummer, Raycraft says they sponsored "dial-a-drummer" nights where they asked audience members to sit in on drums. That was until a waitress at one of the clubs introduced the band to her husband, Pete Falcone.

Falcone, 31, looks like he plays basketball for the Houston Rockets. Actually, Falcone plays a drum kit that is comprised of both acoustic and electric drums with a sky blue bowling ball used to weigh

down the bass drum. Falcone's head bounces from side to side in time with the beat in true Ringo Starr fashion.

In Houston, Falcone earned a living drumming for several local bands until he saw Raycraft, Malone and Donaho playing at a club one night. He says that he knew right then that he had found the band for him.

The four of them began playing together at local clubs under the name Neato Mosquito. Malone says that when he overheard a club manager say he had to run home and do the dishes, he insisted the band change their name. The new name, which gave rise to the phrase "Do the Dishes," was much more commercial, Malone says.

A Dishes performance is almost like a live version of a Ronco album — all the greatest hits and golden oldies. The band will start off with Tex-Mex classic "96 Tears," go into the McCoy's "Hang on Sloopy," play a couple of verses of Stephenwolf's "Born to be Wild," then play some of Henry Mancini's "Baby Elephant Walk," and end up with a rousing version of Tommy James and the Shondell's "Hanky Panky." Raycraft throws in a few bars of the themes from "The Brady Bunch," "The Andy Griffith Show" and "The Match Game" for good measure.

The Beatles provide the