State and Local

Dishes: Applying 'let's see what happens' theory

By Andrea Halbert Reporter

crowd gathers at a nightclub in an. Fans, mostly Texas A&M stuts, are coming to hear the Dishes, ock 'n' roll band from Houston. er all the seats are full, people nd around on the dance floor ting for the show to start.

few fans chant, "Di-shes, Di-' and before long, an unlikely king group of four musicians olls onto the bandstand.

They are: Jimmy Raycraft (lead tar and band leader), Dickie Ma-(bass guitar and band manr), Barbara Donaho (keyboards) Pete Falcone (drums).

aycraft, the wildest looking one he group, comes complete with a rt-sleeved print shirt, wild-patned Bermuda shorts, unmatched ks, and hand-painted canvas es called Wackies.

After the applause dies down, ycraft responds with a reserved, y — thanks a whole lot.

This was a familiar scene for deed Dishes fans, but now the band

But Raycraft will be here this sumwith his new project. Jimmy craft and the Thin Men, a rocklly trio, with a different sound n the Dishes.

The trio will play at Brazos Land-Saturday.

aycraft has a style all his own. wild appearance is not a product flamboyance, but rather a conus effort not to be a "typical rock If such a creature exists, then s succeeded.

Raycraft is an example of some-e who just wants to play his music d entertain people. Drawing at-tion to himself is the by-product his performance, not the objec-

In fact, he said, he's really very et in everyday life. Raycraft described himself as "the

nd of guy who's invisible walking wn the aisles of Kroger." He said a lot of his stage personal-

came from being nervous Wherever it came from, his style is

Raycraft said he likes being un-



Photo by Jay Janner

The Dishes are on summer vacation and won't be performing together for the next three or four

months, but band leader Jimmy Raycraft (and the Thin Men) will be playing in town on Saturday.

serious about what he does without taking himself too seriously while he does it. Part of his charm is his ability

Raycraft is a talented musician, but he doesn't let music get in the way of entertainment. If people like when he breaks into the Flintstones theme in the middle of a serious song, he'll do it. If that doesn't work, he'll try something

One thing that's certain about Raycraft: he's not afraid to "try something else." He has his fingers in a lot of pies.

He writes most of the music for the Dishes; he paints (the style is abstract, of course); he runs a business

mostly just likes to entertain. He is with Falcone's wife, Jannelle, mak-serious about what he does without ing and selling the hand-painted shoes he wears; and now he's playing with Jimmy Raycraft and the Thin

> Raycraft said he focuses most of his creative energy on music because music gets an immediate response from people. This has been true in his personal life as well as on stage. The response he got at home, how-ever, was not always favorable.

He comes from a non-musical family and he said he had to fight to be a professional musician. Raycraft said his parents are supportive now, but they weren't always in favor of his career choice.

said, "It's still kinda weird to tell people I play electric guitar for a living. When he started out, he didn't

think he'd still be doing that at 35. "When I was 19, I thought 27year-old musicians who played nightclubs were grandpas," he said. "I never thought I'd be in music af-

At 35, Raycraft subscribes to the "let's see what happens" theory of career planning.

"I'll always want to play guitar, but I may not want to play nightclubs at 45 — I don't know, maybe if it's still fun," he said.

The "let's see what happens" atti-

tude has also been adopted by the rest of the Dishes. The band doesn't Although he's been a professional rest of the Dishes. The band doesn't musician all his adult life, Raycraft lose any sleep the night before a

show trying to decide how to approach an audience, Malone said.

Malone said they look for a common denominator in the audience once they're on stage and try to ap-

"When we're playing for a bunch of grandmothers," he said, "we may play a swing version of a rock 'n' roll song, or whatever else.

Malone said the band never plans their shows ahead of time, and they don't write comedy.

We do things on stage that we think are funny and it usually gets a good response from people," he

But not always. There have been some failures. Trial and error just

naturally seem to go together.
Raycraft said the Dishes had a particularly bad experience playing at a high school reunion in Galves-

He said it was "real weird" to have a room full of people just stare at the stage for three hours. Wedding receptions can be "weird" like that,

too, he said. On the whole, the band seems unscathed by these traumatic experiences. The members seem comfortable with their audience and with each other. There can be no doubt that the Dishes have fun perform-

'We try not to be political, social, sexual or serious in our music," Malone said, "but we're serious about what we do.

"We used to call it 'polite rock,' but then we gave up trying to label

The Dishes are indeed polite. They don't play anything you couldn't bring Mom to hear. For example, the Dishes' version of Eric Clapton's rock 'n' roll classic, "Cocaine," is called "Spokane," as in Washington.

Malone said the Dishes like their

"G-rated, white toast" image and don't want to push ideas on their au-

Avoiding controversy has helped the Dishes appeal to a diverse audience. They play for virtually every type of crowd all over Texas.

Raycraft's favorite audience is "college kids" because it's easy to win them over. College crowds come into the show thinking, "Yeah," while a lot of other crowds come in thinking, No," he said, and then it's up to the

band to turn them around. Getting audiences to respond, even one of the "no" crowds, is something the Dishes do remarkably well. They've had a lot of time to refine their ad lib style since the band formed in 1982.

It all started when Raycraft and Donaho met backstage at a concert. Donaho was there to see the Shake Russell Band. Raycraft was playing with the Michael Marcoulier Group, another band performing that night.

Before long, they talked about

Raycraft and Donaho got in touch with Malone, who had played with Raycraft in the 70s in a band called

And the Dishes were born. On June 4, 1982, the Dishes opened at a college hangout in Huntsville called Touch of Texas. Raycraft said it went pretty well for a first show.

They didn't have a drummer so they hired on the spot until they found Falcone in July.

The Dishes have performed three or four times a week ever since they ing. In fact, fun is the only underlying theme that is evident in Dishes music and they said they'll keep it and Rockefeller's in Houston,

They released their first album, "Hot Diggety Dog," in 1985. In 1986, they recorded another album, 'Midnight Pizza Party," but it has yet to be released. Malone said the album is tied up in legal problems, but hopefully may be released "someti-

Raycraft said the band has changed its sound during the last six

"We started off with a kind of 'garage surf' sound," he said. "We've kept that garage kind of sound but we've gotten slicker. Now it's sort of 'techno-billy.

Whatever you call it, the Dishes have a sound that people like. They may not be the next Fab Four, but you can bet A&M students will flock to see the Dishes when they're in town to hear Raycraft say, "Hey -thanks a whole lot.'



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