

State and Local

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

By Andrea Halbert
Reporter



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.

mostly just likes to entertain. He is serious about what he does without taking himself too seriously while he does it. Part of his charm is his ability to be silly.

Raycraft is a talented musician, but he doesn't let music get in the way of entertainment. If people like it 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 else.

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

with Falcone's wife, Janelle, making and selling the hand-painted shoes he wears; and now he's playing with Jimmy Raycraft and the Thin Men.

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, however, 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.

Although he's been a professional musician all his adult life, Raycraft

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 27-year-old musicians who played nightclubs were grandpas," he said. "I never thought I'd be in music after 30."

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" attitude has also been adopted by the rest of the Dishes. The band doesn't 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 appeal to that.

"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 said.

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 Galveston.

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 performing. In fact, fun is the only underlying theme that is evident in Dishes music and they said they'll keep it that way.

"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 it."

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 audience.

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 starting a new project.

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

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 started. Raycraft said it took a while to get jobs at places like Fitzgerald's 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 "sometime."

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

"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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1.51	3,875	1,695	3,200	335	600	1,295	2,400	985	1,800	1,575	3,000	4,850	8,900
1.18	2,325	1,395	2,700	335	600	795	1,500	1,395	2,780	1,395	2,600	825	1,600
1.17	2,750	1,395	2,700	335	600	325	600	985	1,800	1,395	2,600	825	1,600
1.15	2,995	1,095	2,000	275	500	95	200	1,195	2,390	895	1,600	895	1,600
1.11	2,350	1,050	2,100	335	600			995	1,800	995	1,800	1,225	1,400
1.11	3,950	1,395	2,700	210	400			1,225	2,400	1,225	1,400	1,095	2,200
1.09	2,195	795	1,400	165	300			312	600	312	600	105	200
1.09	2,750	995	1,800	185	400			895	1,600	895	1,600		
1.09	3,850	895	1,800	215	400			995	1,800	995	1,800		
1.04	2,150	795	1,500	165	300			1,225	1,400	1,225	1,400		
1.03	3,595	795	1,500	155	300			1,095	2,200	1,095	2,200		
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.93	1,595	795	1,500	55	110								
.92	1,850	895	1,700	48	90	1.56	\$4,775	\$6,500					
.92	1,650	795	1,500	45	90	1.10	3,275	5,300					
.91	3,195	595	1,400	41	80	1.05	2,675	4,900					
.90	1,595	695	1,500	35	70	1.02	2,850	5,200					
.90	1,750	795	1,500	30	60	1.02	2,275	3,900					
.89	1,350	795	1,500	14.95	30	1.01	2,275	2,200					
.89	895	795	1,500	10.95	30	.89	1,750	3,300					
.88	1,340	695	1,300			.89	1,795	3,590					
.83	1,595	695	1,300			.82	1,575	2,900					
.80	1,025	795	1,500			.79	1,895	3,600					
.77	985	695	1,400	1.67		.74	795	1,500					
.77	1,075	695	1,400	1.21		.72	1,650	3,300					
.75	950	695	1,400	1.13		.70	1,795	3,300					
.75	1,135	650	1,200	1.04		.61	975	1,800					
.75	1,395	595	1,100	1.01		.55	850	1,700					
.74	1,480	595	1,100	.68		.55	850	1,700					
.73	1,495	495	1,000	.65		.55	895	1,800					
.73	1,125	575	1,200	.62		.50	950	1,800	2.16	\$6,795	\$13,000		
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