

Reviews

Coffeehouse features free fun, food; just remember to snap

By Chuck Lovejoy

ENTERTAINMENT WRITER

Because of the constantly nasty weather and the inevitable beginning of the spring semester, I wasn't in any kind of decent mood by the end of last week — until MSC Town Hall's Coffeehouse on Friday evening saved me from the depths of gloom.

Coffeehouse is the best thing to happen to the College Station entertainment scene in quite some time. It's relaxed, it's friendly, and it's free. Nothing else around can match that combination.

You know what you're in for the minute you walk into the Rumours snack bar, the biweekly home of Coffeehouse.

People are lounging on the floor amidst scattered milk crates holding candles and bowls of popcorn, sitting on seats near the refreshment table (the free refreshment table) in the back or peering down on the rest from Rumours' balcony.

Granted, it can get a little cramped in the small snack bar, but it doesn't seem to bother anyone. The murmur of friendly conversation continues whether those attending are elbow-to-elbow or have enough room to stretch out and relax.

Rumours wasn't exactly packed on Friday, but an ample crowd showed up to witness the third installment of Town Hall's amateur talent revue. Those who did attend were not disappointed.

Stevven Wall, a sophomore recreation and parks major and director of Coffeehouse, welcomed the audience with a recitation of Jackson Matthews' poem, "The Gladly Dead." He really scared me with the poem he chose, because it was about worms crawling through decaying flesh. He read half-jokingly, but it was too late.

After that introduction, I was kind of wondering what the rest of the evening was going to prove to be like. First Wall read the poem, and then he announced that the Neo-Classical Post-Modern Destructionists, the mixed-media group I was looking forward to seeing, weren't going to appear due to Salvador Dali's death.

Up to that point my week was

continuing its downward path. But at last the show started, and I knew everything would be all right.

Sean Oakley, a junior psychology major, took the stage following the poem and sat down on the stool with his guitar in hand. He wasn't wearing any shoes.

"My dog ate my shoelaces," he explained.

A strong vocalist and musician, Oakley performed a set of songs he penned himself, which proved him to be an adept songwriter.

Oakley's songs, from the driving "Little Circles" to the playful "Goin' Down," were enjoyable. He even proved to be aware of current affairs with a song called "Take Me Home," which referred to Ted Bundy, the confessed serial killer who was electrocuted under the death penalty this past week.

I especially appreciated the way he handled the Bundy song, telling the audience, "It's not about right or wrong — it's just a perspective." After his "perspective," Oakley paid homage to his obvious musical heritage with a song he called "a tribute to '60s songs that rallied the public to the causes they supported."

The result was the sentimental ballad "Take the Skies."

Evidently, someone else especially appreciated his efforts. He was thrown a rose before he left the stage.

Following Oakley was Carl DeCuir, another talented guitarist/vocalist/songwriter.

DeCuir took a different approach to his performance, adding bits of comedy throughout his material. He was amazingly relaxed, considering, as I found out after the show, he never before had performed in front of anyone other than his friends.

He even opened his act with an

Aggie joke.

"It's the only one I like," he said. The audience liked it, too, because it concerned an Aggie who actually won something — a happening almost never occurring in one of those infernal jokes.

DeCuir displayed a diverse songwriting style, playing pieces having a folk ("So Song Sing Me a Smile"), country ("All My Blue") and even Spanish flair ("Even an Outlaw Can Change"). He carried his messages across with a clean, energetic picking style, especially on the Spanish "Outlaw," which contained only three words of Spanish.

His comic touch added a personable air to his songs, as DeCuir told the audience when important sections were coming up and even told the listeners to make up their own words as he sang "la, la, la, la, la..."

Poet and senior psychology major Julie Minerbo was next up to bat with two original poems written during bizarre situations. Actually, she entered Rumours during a bizarre situation, because she was in the bathroom when Wall called her to the stage. Of course, she couldn't come out, so Wall had to ad-lib for a few minutes until she finished her

At the beginning of their show, the guys explained that their music was a little different than what had been heard earlier.

"Our music is downright happy — and we apologize for that," they joked. They weren't kidding, either. After Class is the best barbershop quartet I have ever seen. Their intonation was flawless; their voices were clear. And they managed to show case their personalities at the same time.

It was easy to tell that these guys are good friends. Their onstage antics and anecdotes also showed them to have mutual respect, for throughout their show no one vocalist hogged the stage, vocally or otherwise. They gave an impression of teamwork, which also added true class.

Other highlights of their set were a version of "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do" that was dedicated to George Bush and a peppy rendition of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot."

The loudest audience applause, that's right — applause, came for their last number, in which they each impersonated an instrument, including a trumpet, trombone, bass and

fore reciting the poem.

Her next revelation was called "In the Midst of a Classroom Coma."

Again she explained the origin of the work, saying she was sitting in a particularly boring English literature class last semester listening to the professor drone on and on about nothing.

In her poem, she said she couldn't wait to get out of the room "to leave the class as empty as the words of hollowness floating there before."

After Class, a barbershop quartet, performed after Minerbo. But before they appeared, Wall was at the microphone again, telling the audience members to snap or else.

You see, at Coffeehouse, you're supposed to snap, not clap, to show you like something. (It has never been said what you're supposed to do if you don't.)

Bobby McFerrin would be proud of After Class, which is composed of Jon Gardner, a junior electrical engineering major; Gregg Gorman, a senior microbiology major; Keith Richbourg, a senior marketing major; and Ritchie Thompson, a junior electrical engineering major.

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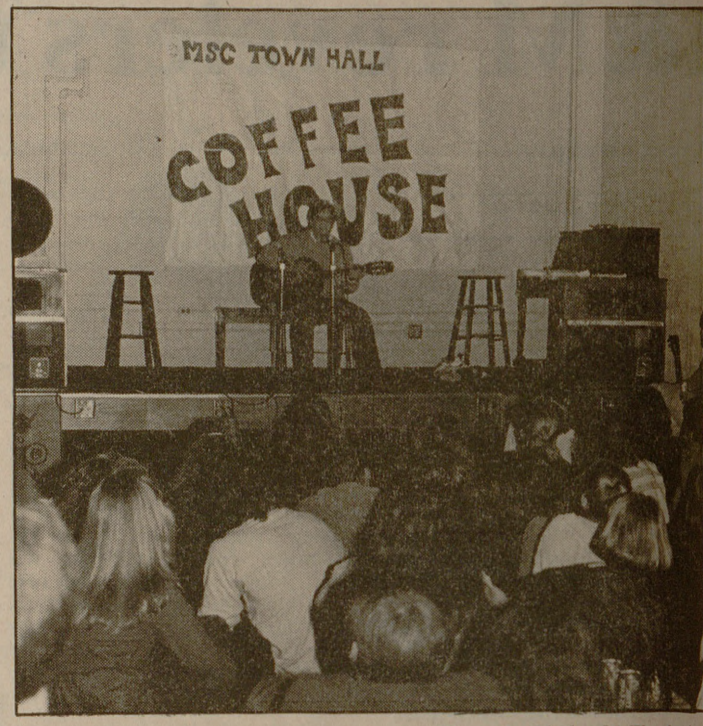


Photo By Phelan M. Ebenbach

Carl DeCuir performs at MSC Town Hall's Coffeehouse Friday.

drum and cymbal. The sounds were amazingly realistic and a novel end to their show.

Following After Class' performance, Oakley returned by request, shoeless again, to perform two of his funnier songs, songs he said really were meant to be jokes.

The first, called "The Puppy," was described by Sean as being "acoustic punk" music and was evidently written

"Oakley and DeCuir were exchanging names and phone numbers and talking about writing songs together in the future. With their combined talents, I'm sure they could make a name for themselves. I heard DeCuir tell Oakley, 'Let's play something in A.' I looked across the room, and they were sitting, guitars in hand and obviously preparing for a jam session."

I guess they couldn't wait, and I can't wait to see what the result will be.

The next Coffeehouse will be about three weeks, according to Wall. Anyone interested in performing should contact him through the MSC Town Hall office.

And for those of you who will take my advice and attend the next Coffeehouse, remember to snap.

New punk LP soars, slasher flick bombs

Figures On a Beach
Sire Records

By S. Hoehstetter

REVIEWER

If you want to listen to one of the most refreshing underground bands around, get your hands on a copy of Figures On a Beach self-titled album.

This band does everything — songs that are humorous, songs that are socially conscious, songs that are good for dancing, songs with little or no meaning and love songs. You name it and chances are Figures On a Beach does it.

The music on the album is crude but it complements lead singer and keyboard player Anthony Kaczynski's raw vocals. In places his voice sounds like a matured Adam Ant.

Other members of the band include John Richard Rolski on guitar, Perry Tell on bass, and drummer Michael J.F. Smith.

The first song on the album, "Accidentally 4th St. (Gloria)" starts out with quiet chords and then surprises the listener by bursting into an energetic song. This is the kind of song all bands should have as their opener because it wakes the listener up and makes him curious enough to really listen to the rest of the album.

"Flex" is the next song on the album. It has a heavier, slower sound that matches the lyrics about a strange dream in which the president of the United States calls a strange man and asks him to come to Washington, D.C. to help solve some of the nation's problems.

As in other songs on the album, references are made to practicing safe sex.

The next song, "(Don't Make Me) Nervous" explodes almost before "Flex" has even finished fading out. Powerful lyrics about a man who looks like he has everything but actually has an inferiority complex make this one of the best songs on the album.

The chorus of "(Don't Make Me) Nervous" lists the attributes the character hares with stars like Marlon Brando and James Dean, but warns, "don't make me nervous" or else who knows what will happen.

"Clandiggin'" slows things down again with lyrics similar to Otis Red-



ding's "Sitin' on the Dock of the Bay". The song is about a rich man who spends all his time on the world's most beautiful beaches and doesn't do much else.

"The Wheel" is a somewhat depressing song, as shown by lyrics like, "No one wants to hear your hard luck story/They don't want to hear how you wasted your life/No one wants to live with a faded glory/I can't believe you're still under the wheel."

In the lively "You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet," the band tells of a man who got a little more than just a good time from the girl he had been in love with. This particular story has a happy ending, however, because the man's doctor is able to cure his disease.

Figures On a Beach changes their pace and style constantly, so so the listener never gets bored with the songs.

"Mystified" is an interesting song. The music is fast, but it drags in places as though played on the wrong speed. The effect adds to the lyrics, which correlate being in love with a ride on an emotional roller coaster, as shown by the lyrics, "Seems that others will remember every time that I forget/Well, if it seems I've lost the art of conversation/Well, it seems you go straight to my head/I fall over and over again."

"Get Serious" is a silly song that sounds like something Oingo Boingo would sing.

The song is not really about anything in particular — it just conjures up images of mobile homes being swept away by tornadoes and of pink

flamingo statuettes in the front yard. The last two songs on the album are loaded with meaning. "Welfare" speaks out against the injustices and suffering the poor endure.

The line, "If you're thinkin' bout my welfare then why do you abuse me so?" captures the song's theme. It's depressing but socially conscious. "Green" has some of the best lyrics on the album. The song is about friendship and love that have gone sour and how difficult it is to end a relationship. The color imagery suggests the continuum of a rainbow and therefore the continuing process of living.

The image is reinforced by the closing line, "Broken hearts can mend/It's a long way back from nowhere/Willows don't break, they bend/And some dreams they never end."

Figures On a Beach is exciting to listen to because it contains a little bit of everything. It's fun, it's sad, it's silly and it's melancholy, but that's what makes it such a good listening experience.

"Night of the Demons" Starring Linnea Quigley Directed by Kevin S. Tenney Rated R

By Shane Hall

REVIEWER

If the horror movie genre were to be given an enemy, the tube should be stuck in "Night of the Demons." This movie is an hour and a half of bad makeup effects, bad special ef-

fects, bad acting and sex jokes that even the lowest mentality wouldn't find amusing.

The last thing the world needs is a film that combines the 7th grade bathroom humor of "Porky's" with a mash of cliches culled from many of today's horror flicks: horny teens, horny teens killed while engaged in intimate activity, and so on.

The plot itself is nothing terribly original. A group of rowdy teens decides to hold a Halloween party at an abandoned funeral parlor that turns out to be possessed by demons. You can probably guess the rest.

The demons take over the bodies of the kids, turning them one by one into slimy-looking ghouls with sharp teeth. However, the makeup is so badly done that these demons look more like someone who slept in the sewer after a three-day drunk than something from the depths of hell.

According to the film, the demons must disappear and return to hell by dawn. That brings up one question: was that sunlight that was beaming through the windows during the scenes in the house? I thought this was supposed to be taking place at night. Did I miss something somewhere?

Linnea Quigley, also known as "the Scream Queen," stars in the movie. What she does can hardly be described as acting. She goes through most of the movie with the same open-mouth facial expression. Also, she speaks in the whiney, irritating voice of the spoiled brat you knew in high school. None of the other members of the cast make new advances in method acting in this movie, either.

Many horror films today have humorous and comic elements to relieve the tension and suspense. The jokes in "Night of the Demons," however, are not funny. In fact, the humor is moronic and at times borders on offensive.

As if the bad effects and bad jokes weren't enough, director Kevin Tenney tosses in gratuitous shots of bare breasts for no apparent reason than for the sake of bare breasts. You'd think the "boobs" they hired as actors would have been enough.

Despite its many classics such as the original "Halloween," "The Hills Have Eyes," "Night of the Living Dead," and the original "A Nightmare On Elm Street," the horror genre will never gain any respectability as long as movies like "Night of the Demons" continue to be made.

Complex twists in plot, comedy of errors make 'Forum' a great film

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" Starring Zero Mostel Directed by Richard Lester not rated

By S. Hoehstetter

REVIEWER

This movie's plot may sound like an expose on the worst of Washington politics — it revolves around deception, corruption, sex scandals, incompetence and other assorted versions of debauchery. Actually, the film is director Richard Lester's 1966 version of "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum."

This comedy of errors is showing in Rudder Theater Wednesday at 7:30 p.m. as part of the MSC Aggie Cinema Classic Film Series. Seeing the movie would make a great study break.

The film is nonstop farce and physical humor from the opening scene in the streets of ancient Rome to the last scene in the streets of ancient Rome.

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" has something for everyone. Zero Mostel says as the film begins. He plays Pseudolus, a conniving but endearing slave who just wants to be free.

True to Pseudolus' word, this film certainly does have something for everyone. It includes pirates, beautiful maidens, beautiful courtesans (prostitutes), eunuchs, young people in love, men dressed up as beautiful maidens and acrobats, chariot chases and more.

The plot goes something like this: Hero (Michael Crawford) is a rich, innocent, klutzy, gangly kid who lives next door to the local brothel. He sees a beautiful girl in the window facing him and decides he is in love and that he must have her. When his parents leave town, he promises Pseudolus his freedom if the slave will take him to meet the girl.

After being tempted and refusing all the other courtesans, Hero sees his true love, the virgin Phyllia. But

alas, she has been sold to a pirate who is coming for her that very day. The quick-thinking Pseudolus takes the keeper of courtesans, Maro Lycus (Phil Silvers), that because Phyllia is from Crete she has been exposed to the Smiling Plague and will die a horrible, smiling death within a few days.

He offers to take Phyllia from Lycus to prevent the other girls from being exposed to this deadly plague. Lycus falls for the ploy and Her takes Phyllia home for the afternoon. End of story, right? Wrong. It hasn't even started.

Phyllia says she loves Hero but can't marry him because she has a contractual obligation to the pirate who purchased her, to which Pseudolus replies, "An honest word. What a terrible combination!"

Meanwhile, Hero's father returns early. Phyllia thinks he is the pirate so she says, "Take me!" Pseudolus tells him she is the new maid. Then he likes the new help a lot and breaks into a humorous song called "Everybody Ought to Have a Husband." At the same time, Hero is still in the Roman Baths with a horse. He's trying to get some mare's sweat that is called for in a recipe for sleeping potion he needs to make her can take Phyllia away before the pirate comes.

Buster Keaton plays an old man on a worldwide search for his lost children who wear identical rings. Although it might not seem like a plot here, it really does fit into this complex plot.

The story takes some really complex twists and turns that are complicated to explain here. It's a comedy of the absurd with all the wrong people drinking the wrong potions containing mare's sweat. There's a wild toga party in the wrong house for the wrong reason with the wrong person acting as host.

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" is a lot funnier than it's presented here. It's a much more pleasant way to study history than staying home and reading textbooks.