

Tempers, heat flare in short FIREHOSE show

By JOHN RIGNER
Of The Battalion Staff

HOUSTON — Blending the aggression of its post-punk roots with the passion of the more traditional FROMOHIO, FIREHOSE blistered through a short, interrupted set Saturday night that left the audience sweating for more — literally sweating for more.

The small, poorly ventilated Showbar On Washington, in Houston, seemed a blessing with its cozy confines and FIREHOSE's extra adrenalin of playing the final show of a 55-night consecutive tour.

Opening the night's activities were a promising local band, Peglegaus, and Agitpop, a hard-edged east coast band that altered between psychedelia and hardcore. But it was apparent by the end of Agitpop's set that the night was to be a scorcher, with tempers ready to flare.

After a short interlude, FIREHOSE hit the tiny Showbar stage around midnight and casually worked into "Another Theory Shot To Shit" from their groundbreaking debut (and best of three LPs), *Ragin' Full-On*. Watt proceeded to snap away on bass, leading the group into a ripping duo of "Honey, Please" and "What Gets Heard," with Ed Crawford (alias Ed FROMOHIO — get it, from Ohio) lending vocals.

The group intermixed new material from their forthcoming fall material ("First Cuss," "Down With The Bass" and "Steady As She Goes") are a few to look forward to) with standouts such as "Chemical Wire," "Me and You, Remembering" and "For The Singer Of R.E.M."

But about thirty minutes into their set, problems began to arise between the band and the audience.



From left to right, George Hurley, Ed FROMOHIO and Mike Watt are cruising the music scene with their group, FIREHOSE.

First off, it was hot as sin inside the Showbar with a suffocating level of humidity and smoke lying in the air. The heat and cramped confines were made worse by a small group of punks in front of the stage that were determined to slam through the set.

Now I can handle slamming at a Suicidal Tendencies or D.R.I. show, but slamming to FIREHOSE, regardless of their Minutemen ties (which are no longer relevant), bears no logic at all. Unfortunately, with underground music a familiar say-

ing rings true too often — "You'll Slam To Anything." Apparently, the members of FIREHOSE were in agreement, because they abruptly stopped the set midway through a song and asked certain audience members to leave,

offering a refund for their departure. Watt was especially ticked, having his microphone knocked over and then run into by an audience member, breaking a bass string. "You think this is the army or being like a marine," Watt screamed.

"This is no TV, my teeth really you asshole." Moments later, several audience members did leave. After the five-minute tirade, they started again. But it was obvious many were lost in the incident.

Just as obvious was the problem FIREHOSE was having with the heat and humidity. Watt was sweating so hard that he could barely open his eyes while playing, and he had trouble finding the microphone in the dark. Finally, Watt got fed up and laid down his bass.

"We'll never treat Houston this way again," Watt said. "It's ridiculous. You pay \$10, you get no air conditioning. I can't even see the dashboard (bass). It's not right."

Having spoken with the group before the show, I realized how the set had been shortened. After 10 songs were cut out, and for an encore, FIREHOSE rushed through a two-minute version of "Roads."

But Crawford came back on an acoustic solo of "In Memoriam Elizabeth Cotton," before apologizing again and quickly escaping behind the curtain.

It was extremely unfortunate that the heat derailed the moment that boiled during the set's first hour. The contrast of Crawford's country twang with Watt's spiels worked great behind the quick snaps and heavy thumps, drummer George Hurley's concentrated pummels that idled the energy at high throttle.

I can sympathize with the band's discomfort, especially being accustomed to the extreme humidity. But sometimes you got to suck it up. As it turned out a ruckus hour was unforgivingly left to fester on the ceiling with all that heat and hot air.

Third 'Back To The Future' film offers same fun, thrills of original

Back To The Future III
Starring Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd and Mary Steenburgen
Directed By Robert Zemeckis
Rated PG

By DON ATKINSON JR.
Of The Battalion Staff

"Back To The Future" fans who loved the original film and were disappointed by part two will be pleased with "Back To The Future III." In fact, most anybody will be pleased with this latest and final installment of the popular series.

"Back To The Future III" marks a return to the same elements that made the original film so enjoyable. Director Robert Zemeckis does a masterful job of combining suspense-filled action with comedy and romance.

More importantly, "Back To The Future III" is a complete film in the sense that it has a beginning, middle and end. One of the biggest problems with the second film was it had no beginning or end, just one big middle.

"Back To The Future II" started exactly where the original film left off and ended right where "Back To The Future III" begins, leaving the audience with a hollow feeling. "Back To The Future III" works well not only as another chapter in the series, but as an independent story, able to be enjoyed whether you've seen the first two films.

In "Back To The Future III,"



Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) must go back in time to the old west to rescue Emmett "Doc" Brown (Christopher Lloyd), who is stranded there following an accident involving the infamous time-traveling DeLorean.

Shortly after his arrival, Marty discovers that he has to contend not only with a malfunctioning time-machine and an old-west version of Biff Tannen (Thomas F. Wilson) known as Buford "Mad Dog" Tannen, but also with Dr. Brown falling head over heels for the local schoolmarm, Clara Clayton (Mary Steenburgen).

Marty also stumbles across an early ancestor of his, played by Michael J. Fox with a "Lucky Charms" Irish accent.

Once the basic plot threads are established, "Back To The Future III" takes off at warp speed and doesn't stop until the film is over.

However, the movie not only features good directing and a clever story line, but good acting as well. Fox and Lloyd have done an incredible job of maintaining the integrity of their characters throughout the trilogy.

Wilson, as the evil bully Biff, has added a whole new dimension to his character. In fact, some of the best moments in "Back To The Future III" involve him and his gang of wild west ruffians.

Mary Steenburgen, the only newcomer to the series, does a credible job as Doc Brown's love interest. Steenburgen brings a certain amount of innocence and strong will to her character. It's easy to see why someone could fall in love with her at first sight.

The only problem with "Back To The Future III" comes at the end. I can't say much without giving the ending away, but I can tell you there is a minor jump in logic in the last few moments. Even so, it does not take away from the film and probably won't bother many audience members.

One final note: during the town dance scene, watch for a cameo appearance by ZZ Top.

"Back To The Future III" is an enjoyable film and will probably be the first hit of the summer movie season.

Watt extinguishes pain with FIREHOSE project

Mike Watt, bass extraordinaire from the Minutemen, Dos and currently FIREHOSE, knows a little something about long tours, tough setbacks and creative indecision. I spoke with the talented writer and musician about his views and opinions on FIREHOSE, underground music and the tragic death of former Minutemen, D. Boon.

It's been a long tour for FIREHOSE. Your 55th night in a row. Are you ready to see it end?

"This is the last night, and it's a very happy day. But I got to tell you, I'm very grateful to have 55 shows to do in a row. I don't want to make it sound like a burden or something. It's really neat to know there are people in 55 towns that want to see us this bad and have us work for two months straight."

You've been working with your wife Kira (former bass player for Black Flag) with Dos. Are there plans for another release?

"Kira and I will be going into the studio in about two weeks to work on a full-length album (the first two were EPs). I bought a tuba in Champaign that I want to learn, so maybe there will be some tuba on it (the previous albums have been all bass)."

From what I understand, you and George (Hurley, FIREHOSE and Minutemen drummer) weren't planning on another project after the tragic end of Minutemen. What changed your mind?

"After D. Boon died it was like a whole part of me was gone. Ed (Crawford, guitarist and lead singer of FIREHOSE) heard that I was auditioning for guitarists — which I wasn't. But he called me up, and I told him to come out. It was very difficult. We'd tried something with Elliott Sharp (SST alternative artist), but it was terrible. There was no communication between George and I."

Was FIREHOSE then orthopedic, a way to play and put the past behind you?

"Not orthopedic, because I wasn't planning on doing FIREHOSE. I had already done the Madonna single (Ciccone Youth's single of 'Into The Groovy') and had also worked with Kira on Dos before D. Boon's death. The first two years (with FIREHOSE) I was paranoid. Very paranoid. I stayed back by the drums. It will be four years that we've been playing together in June, but the first two years were fearful."

I understand that Sonic Youth had a great part in helping you return to music.

"If it wasn't for those guys, I don't know if I would have ever, ever played again. I thought it was over for me. I know music is a very private thing, like the cover on the front of 'if'n' (FIREHOSE's second album) with a picture on my wall of me dreaming. But on the other hand, without other people ... I don't think I would have had the nerve."

How did Sonic Youth help you get involved again?

"Ciccone Youth was the way I got back into music. It was after (D. Boon) got killed. The Madonna single was the first thing I did. Kira had to do an internship at Yale and I stopped in New York and saw my friends Thurston and Kim (Moore and Gordon, husband/wife team of Sonic Youth). They had come into the studio and record on their album 'Evol.' I told them I wanted to do a Madonna record, to laugh again ... I was very depressed. It was a bad time."

Tell me something about 'Ragin' Full-On,' your first album with FIREHOSE. It's the most aggressive bass playing I've heard you do.

"I didn't really know Ed, and what I tried to do was to play as intense as possible. I learned to play the bass and be in a band with D. Boon. I hadn't played with any other people. Ed had only been in my house for five months. I had to buy him his first amp. It was very intense ... but that should be inspiring to kids to start bands and not to think that we're some select group of gods ... it's for everybody."

What do you make of the punk scene nowadays? How does it compare to the early days when you and Kira were active with the Minutemen and Black Flag?

"Well, that lady was at the beginning of punk rock. She was just 16-years old in '76. She ran the mask. I wish the spirit won't die. I hope kids still make bands that do things that haven't been tried. To me that's what it's all about. I'm counting on them, 'cause I'm getting older."

Do you see the same level of energy today? What level of spirit do you think exists?

"Yeah I do, but you have to work to find something that is happening. That's what's so great about watching someone like Sonic Youth stick a screwdriver in their guitar and play. It's real. That's the spirit. That's what music needs."

• JOHN RIGNER

New Fleetwood Mac release features solid pop-rock

Fleetwood Mac
Behind The Mask
Warner Bros.

By TODD STONE
Of The Battalion Staff

Personnel changes are a fact of life for the pop group Fleetwood Mac. But when innovative guitarist, producer and musical leader, Lindsey Buckingham, left the group, Mac's musical future seemed in doubt.

But the group's latest release, *Behind The Mask*, proves that Mac's future is bright with 13 songs of diverse and inventive pop-rock.

Original members Mick Fleetwood and John McVie return with long time members, Stevie Nicks and Christine McVie. But it's the addition of guitarist Billy Burnette, and lead guitarist, Rick Vito, that will keep Fleetwood Mac musically dynamic.

Burnette and Vito are more than just studio stand-bys. They wrote or co-wrote many of the tracks, and their harmonies can be heard on every song. The entire album is more guitar, and less keyboard oriented than past Mac efforts such as *Tango In The Night*.

However, the album begins in a traditional Fleetwood Mac manner with a Christine McVie tune entitled, "Skies The Limit." The song is typical Christine McVie optimism — "The ski is the limit now, we can hit it on the nail, and when we do, I'll think about you." Musically, it's common McVie — up-tempo beat, heavy keyboards and mushy harmonies.

However, McVie isn't all mush. On "Behind The Mask," her tone is cautious and untrusting — "It's a devil's disguise, Angel in black, and I recognize the face behind the mask." The "dark" undertones are also felt with a gothic chorus arrangement.

The surprises begin with the second song, "Love Is Dangerous" — a clever little-rocker written by Vito and Nicks, featuring some slick guitar licks and harmony by Vito. This is also one of the rare moments where a song sounds better with Nicks singing.

Another surprise is "When The Sun Goes Down" by Burnette and Vito. This is a snappy country-pop tune with fun, laid-back vocals by Vito and Burnette.

"In The Back Of My Mind," a McVie-Burnette duet, is a slow-rocking gem, featuring quality harmonies and strong leads from Vito at the

end of the tune. Stevie Nicks gets "the weak sister" award for the most forgettable song on the album, "Affairs Of The Heart." This song fails to distinguish itself because of weak chord progressions and melodies.

Her song "Freedom," written with Mike Campbell, guitarist for Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, is a stronger, up-tempo effort with quality harmonies.

Still, Nick's lead vocals often sound like she's been gargling battery acid. Of course, that's nothing new.

But critics of Stevie Nicks will have to accept that her harmonies mix well with the other Mac singers on this album. Most of the tracks have solid backing vocals from McVie, Nicks, Burnette and Vito. The strong harmonies show off Mac's greatest musical strength: memorable melodies.

Drummer and percussionist, Mick Fleetwood, anchored *Behind The Mask*, and he was especially supportive on Burnette's "In The Back Of My Mind." Fleetwood's tight, snappy beat, and subtle percussion, using cymbals, gongs, chimes and congas, highlight the song.

John McVie's bass-lines were

equally as strong as Fleetwood's percussive efforts, but his bass playing was occasionally drowned out by over-mixed synthesizers.

Unfortunately, Fleetwood Mac's pop-rock style puts Fleetwood and McVie's rhythm section role in the background.

It wasn't always like that. Mac was founded by McVie and Fleetwood with blues guitarist Peter Green in 1967. To say that McVie and Fleetwood could thrash the blues is an understatement.

McVie can slap out bass lines with the best, and Fleetwood is one of the tightest and most reliable drummers around.

I would love to see Fleetwood Mac return to some of their blues roots. They have the personnel. Christine McVie use to play with The Spencer Davis group, and if you ever heard Burnette and Vito re-perform old Fleetwood Mac blues, you know they are perfectly capable as well.

But Fleetwood Mac seems content to continue with pop, and although they do not have Buckingham leading the way, Mac remains creatively strong with *Behind The Mask*.

