



Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

## Retarded Elf funks up College Station

By Rob Newberry

The Front Porch Cafe rocked College Station audiences back into school with two of Austin's hottest funk acts. Retarded Elf and Joe Rockhead brought their contribution to Texas' crowded funk scene to town on Saturday night.

Retarded Elf opened the show around 9:45, marching on stage to the heavy beat of their drum machine. They quickly jumped into the sound that made them famous in Austin, but caught College Station audiences off-guard.

The Elf sports four of their own dancers: Fuflex, Stork, Pickles, and Madame Scorpio. They try to help get the audience off their feet with their choreographed moves in front of the stage, but actually only intimidated the B-CS crowd. Local audiences have been pretty good about getting into the funk groove on their own; when they saw these guys dance, they decided to stay seated awhile and catch the show.

Eventually, the crowd made it onto the floor, but only after some prodding by Elf rappers Wubba Dis and Twink. Retarded Elf's sound also features Wonderbred on guitar and Sleestak on bass, and possesses a hot horn duo with Ricky Dis on trumpet and Dave Savage on sax. The horns are good, supposedly some of the best in Austin, but they didn't stand out as much as some others I've heard, namely Houston's Sprawl.

The Elf threw in songs from their lat-

est tape, *Respec*, including "House of Funk," "Thunder Pimp," and "Will to Power." They mix metal and rap into their blend of funk, and the result recalls black dance music more than most of the "white-boy" funk College Station usually gets. But College Station is used to the funk it normally sees at the Front Porch, and Retarded Elf didn't get the audience reaction they normally see.

Next up was Joe Rockhead, another of Austin's funk leaders. Their music was a little more suited to the College Station taste, or maybe the audience was finally ready to really dance. Nevertheless, as soon as the band kicked off their set just after 11, the floor was packed.

Rockhead had played a show here a few months ago which was plagued with problems. "Everything that could go wrong did," vocalist MC Bobby Rock said. The last show lasted only 22 minutes before the band had to call it quits. They made up for it this time, playing for a solid hour and 45 minutes.

Rock is joined on the stage by R.T. Sinister the Keyboard Minister, Stevie B. on bass, Brewski Salmidio on guitar and Mark Salmonella on drums. When possible, Rockhead is joined by John Nelson who is a member of Poi Dog Pondering on percussion, and Nelson managed to make it to Saturday night's show.

"We wanted to have music with a good groove so we could have fun,"



Photo by Phelan M. Ebenhack

Top: Twink and Wubba Dis of Retarded Elf show off to the audience. Above: Joe Rockhead's guitarist and singer also performed Saturday.

Rock said. "So that we could have some seriously fine babes come up and dance."

"We like the positive vibes," Sinister added, "not all the violence and aggression associated with hard-core and punk shows."

And for the most part, Rockhead got what they wanted. The audience bounced around the floor for "Space is the Place," "Sister Twister" and on through Rockhead's funk-up "Hokey Pokey" just fine. But by the time they cranked through "Don't F... k With Me," the crowd had decided

they wanted to slam a little. And slam they did.

The audience seemed to enjoy Rockhead's set a little more than Retarded Elf's, and frankly I did, too. With the funk scene in Texas as crowded as it is, it's hard to find acts that really stand out. Retarded Elf's humorous antics show lots of potential, and Joe Rockhead has some serious musicianship to contend with. The show was definitely a good night at the Front Porch, but the bands themselves need a little more maturity to really be successful and rise above the clutter in the regional funk junkyard.



Dr. Sayer (Robin Williams) tries to understand why one of his patients, Lucy (Alice Drummond), is unable to take one more step in "Awakenings."

## Movie awakens audiences

By Julia Spencer

With her newest project, "Awakenings," the actress-turned-director Penny Marshall has again successfully managed to bring an incredible story to the screen, making it real and believable, while infusing it with warmth, humor and touching humanity.

This astonishing film is based on neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks' 1973 book recounting his experiences with post-encephalitic patients in a chronic care hospital in the Bronx.

Adapted for the screen by Stephen Zaillian, it tells the story of reclusive medical researcher Dr. Malcolm Sayer (Robin Williams). Sayer is a man more comfortable with invertebrates than with people who applies for a job in the neurology lab of the Bronx Bainbridge Hospital and ends up with a clinical position in charge of chronic care patients.

He is baffled by a number of these patients' statue-like demeanor, unchanged for 30 to 50 years, and confronted with an apathetic system. Nevertheless he insists on trying to unlock the secret to their long imprisonment.

He discovers that they were all survivors of the encephalitis epidemic of the '20s. Although an elderly scientist (Max von Sydow) is convinced that they are not "alive inside," Sayer disagrees because the alternative is unthinkable.

In an incredibly moving sequence, he is able to communicate with one patient, Leonard Lowe (Robert DeNiro), via Ouija board and becomes determined to help them. Noting that the

symptoms are similar to those of Parkinson's disease, he petitions to use L-DOPA, an experimental new drug, on Leonard, and finally receives permission from the sceptical director (John Heard).

Miraculously, Leonard awakens from his long sleep and begins to enjoy the simple pleasures of life he has

**Awakenings**  
starring: Robin Williams,  
Robert DeNiro  
now playing at Post Oak 3  
rated PG-13

been missing for the past 30 years, and even pursues a friendship with a young woman (Penelope Ann Miller) who is visiting her father in the same hospital.

Encouraged by this success, Sayers and his sympathetic assistant Eleanor Costello (Julie Kavner) administer the drug to the other sufferers, and one night, these patients too, come alive. Their re-entry into the world is more exhilarating and spellbinding and especially more touching than any slick time-travel fantasy simply because it is true.

Fictional elements were added for the movie - such as the tentative relationship between Sayers and Costello, but the film never resorts to pat solutions for the dramatic situations it establishes. Everyone involved also showed admirable restraint in handling the story, which was extremely af-

fecting, but largely due to Williams' and DeNiro's masterful, carefully controlled performances, never becomes maudlin or pathetic.

Too, the film honestly addresses the down side of the miracle: the drug's side effects, and the limits which the disease continues to place on its victims. The contrast between the close, imprisoning atmosphere of the hospital and the open freedom of the outdoors is beautifully underlined by noted cinematographer Miroslav Ondricek's carefully composed images, and by the director's many shots of barred windows and caged rooms, which Sayers continually makes a point of opening.

This film reminds me of the preciousness of life and health, and of the importance of living it to the fullest and being thankful for the many blessings we do have instead of always coveting what we do not have. It also emphasizes that the essence of a person is on the inside, not in the face that they present to the world.

It refuses to compromise its integrity as an inspirational life lesson, while retaining its impact and value as entertainment. I highly recommend this film; despite its PG-13 rating, I found nothing offensive about it. On the contrary, I believe its gentle message makes it appropriate for everyone from children to grandparents. It is perfect for anyone who is tired of mindless violence and ready for a poignant, thought-provoking experience.

"Awakenings" is now playing at Post Oak Three in College Station

## Godfather III worth seeing

By Kevin Robinson

You know, you almost have to feel sorry for Francis Ford Coppola. In 1972, he created what would become a movie blockbuster, the original "Godfather." He followed it two years later with a

**The Godfather III**  
starring: Al Pacino, Diane Keaton,  
Andy Garcia, Talia Shire  
now playing at Cinema 3  
rated R

sequel that many people (including myself) believe to be better than the original.

After this, however, Coppola never again received the same mixture of critical and public acclaim. The filming of "Apocalypse Now" threw Coppola into bankruptcy, and he was forced to turn his attention to a handful of small films — many of them failures.

Not once did he give in to the temptation to exploit the Godfather saga. He claimed he could never find the right script or the proper reason to bring the Corleone family back to the screen. That is, until now.

Unfortunately, in the lag between the second and third installments, the previous two films have grown into movie classics in the manner of "Casablanca" and "Gone With the Wind." Any attempt, no matter how good, to do a follow-up was bound to be overshadowed. And judging from the critical reception to the film since its Christmas opening date, that is exactly what's happened.

In its own right, the third installment of the Godfather saga is an excellent film. It doesn't live up to the grandeur of the first two, but what it lacks in epic scale, it more

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