

Austin band brings 'true groove' to B-CS tonight

Soul Hat returns with 'roots rock' blend of musical styles

By WILLIAM HARRISON
Staff Writer of THE BATTALION

Splicing funk, folk, country, classic rock, blues and groove, Austin band Soul Hat will perform their own unique concoction of music at the Stafford Opera House Thursday night at 9 p.m.

"We've coined the phrase 'true groove' for the music," said Soul Hat manager Peter Raspler.

Psychedelic, retrospective yet eclectic and progressive, Soul Hat offers promise for all sorts of tastes.

"It's roots rock, up to date with funk-groove rhythm," Raspler said.

Soul Hat recently finished a two-month tour and arrives at Stafford to support their latest release "OUTDEBOX."

The band gained regional acclaim on the Austin music scene and their first release "Live at the Black Cat," recorded at their regular Thursday night gigs at the local Austin night club, was named Cassette of the Year at the 1991 Austin Music Awards.

The cassette captures the band's free-flowing live musical chemistry which has made it a crowd favorite and cult attraction.

Although the music is highly creative and improvisational, Raspler emphasizes that it all comes together.

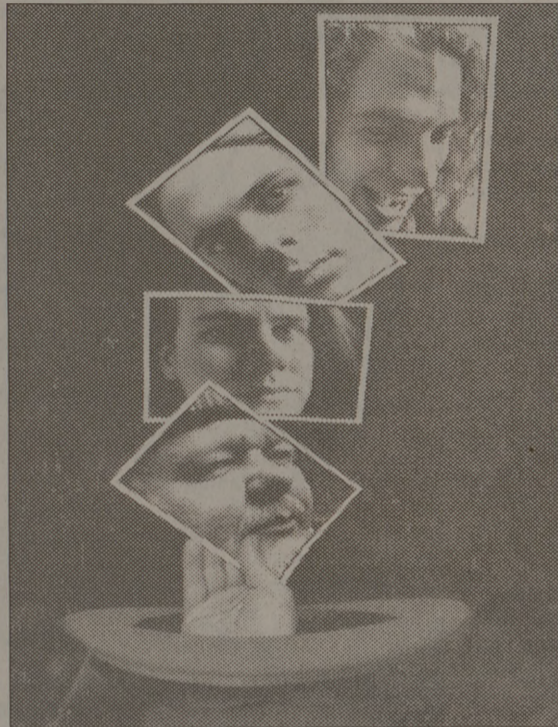
"It's based on improv, but not entirely free-form," Raspler said.

The group was formed two and a half years ago by singers/guitarists Bill Cassis and Kevin McKinney while attending Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas.

After getting started backing up Austin R&B artist E.R. Shorts, the two went out on their own, adding Brian Walsh, a fellow Southwesterner, on bass and landing Barry "Frosty" Smith, a veteran percussionist, to form the current unit.

Before hooking up with Soul Hat, Smith played as a Motown session drummer, and recorded and/or performed with Rare Earth, Sly and the Family Stone, Delbert McClinton and a host of others.

The band will visit Marooned Records at 5 p.m. for a record release party.



Soul Hat plays at Stafford Opera House tonight.

Bob Dobbles, a worker at Marooned and Stafford, saw Soul Hat when they opened up for the Neville Brothers in Rudder Auditorium last Spring, and compares their style to Global Village and Retarded Elf.

"They've got good stage presence; it's an entertaining show," said Dobbles. "They've been waiting to come to Stafford and this is the first time they've had a chance to."

Beside opening for the Neville Brothers last Spring, Soul Hat has toured with John Lee Hooker, Blues Traveller and Wide Spread Panic.

Gingerbread Man and the Levis will open the show. Stafford's doors will open at 8 p.m.

New Columbus film triumphs

1492: CONQUEST of PARADISE



Gerard Depardieu stars in the new Christopher Columbus movie, "1492."

By ANAS BEN-MUSA

Reviewer of THE BATTALION

"1492: Conquest of Paradise" Starring Gerard Depardieu, Sigourney Weaver Directed by Ridley Scott Rated PG-13 Playing at Manor East III

"1492: Conquest of Paradise" is a grand voyage through Christopher Columbus' accomplishments and tribulations.

"1492" exhibits wonderful acting, majestic cinematography and a fabulous musical score. Yet, like the recent "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery," the film deals lightly with the political and economic implications of Columbus' voyage.

The film never mentions the Spanish persecution of the Jews at the time and only briefly describes the fall of the last Muslim kingdom, Granada, in southern Spain.

However, the detailed costume designs and sets overshadowed the lack of some important historical details by creating a very realistic look.

In addition to the fine costumes and sets, the actors lent authenticity to their characters.

Gerard Depardieu's performance as Columbus is fascinating to see. Although Depardieu's French accent can be heard, it does not lessen the commanding presence he is able to display on the screen.

His portrayal shows Columbus' fiery passion for exploration. Depardieu paints a picture of a man who is ready to risk his life in pursuit of the truth.

Columbus was also a deeply religious man. Depardieu depicts the sincerity of Columbus trying to peacefully convert the natives.

Unfortunately, Columbus becomes obsessed trying to find gold and the special relationship with the native population deteriorates.

The film depicts the vast cultural differences and prejudices between the native population and Europeans as the main reason for what happened, not Columbus' inability to govern.

Sigourney Weaver turns in another wonderful performance with her portrayal of Queen Isabella. It was a royal treat to see such a graceful, soft spoken depiction of a monarch.

Weaver presents an intelligent businesswoman with a determined personality and inner strength.

But the most breathtaking scenes are those in which director Ridley Scott captures the innocent and untouched characteristics of the New World.

An example is the scene in which Columbus and his crew sight land. The mist rises and slowly the audience sees through Columbus' eyes the immensity of the New World.

With lush foliage, towering landscapes and foamy waves as a backdrop, composer Vangelis' diverse score captures the Catholic chants of the Old World and the rhythmic songs of the New World.

It is not surprising to hear such a marvelous score from Vangelis, who won an Academy Award for his score of "Chariots of Fire."

Go see "1492: Conquest of Paradise." You will be amazed by the colorful tapestry of scenery, acting, and music.

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