Pictured: A scene from the original production of **Dein Perry's** *Tap Dogs*, directed and designed by **Nigel Triffitt.**

Shoe-stomping show sparkles at Rudder Auditorium

BY AARON MEIER
Night news editor

This isn't your sister's dance recital. *Tap Dogs* is the wildly entertaining experience that ends traditional tap dancing, modern industrial percussion and gallons of sweat.

With tonight's 8 p.m. performance concluding the OPAS presentation of *Tap Dogs*, it would be a crime not to see this kinetic experience.

Six men lead the audience through a spectacle that exceeds tap dancing's normal limits and travels into the realm of percussion and industrial rock.

If Herb Ritts would put together a Broadway show, *Tap Dogs* would be the product.

To call the show a "gravity-defying experience" would be no exaggeration. In last night's performance, Tap Dog David Covington strapped on a construction harness and with the help of his castmates and some rope, was suspended upside down while he sent Sammi Davis, Jr. spinning in his grave.

It would also be no hyperbole to label the *Tap Dogs* as a "show that produces tons of sparks."

In another segment of last night's show, four cast members grabbed electric metal grinders and ground metal pipes which threw sparks into the air while cast member Garon Michalitsis pounded out rhythms with his feet.

Recent productions such as *Rent, Bring in da Noise, Bring in da Funk* and the *Blue Man Group* have paid homage to industrial sets and urban music. *Tap Dogs* follows this vein of production values.

The set of *Tap Dogs* starts off small and limited to a simple raised platform. After several smooth flowing permutations, the set concludes with a six-tiered scaffolding and a construction that defies logic.

One of the real strengths of the show is its utilization of different materials. Aside from Covington kicking it on the ceiling, the Tap Dogs bring out rhythms using their feet on ladders, metal poles and in a Thunder Dome-esque set of metal ramps that turns the show into as much of an athletic challenge as a musical marvel.

The cast is a motley crew of charm. As opposed to being a simple showcase of shoe shuffling, the Tap Dogs bring their personalities to the performance.

Humor, pantomime and macho chest-beating elevates the show from six dancers to six men genuinely having fun on stage.

The performers are accompanied by two versatile musicians who help keep the show's energy flowing but have the task of timing their music to the stomping of the cast members' feet.

Tap Dogs is a blending of traditional elements with a new generation of theater. This is a rare treat in Bryan-College Station, so enjoy it.

Dave Matthews clears a path on Before These Crowded Streets

CALEB MCDANIEL
staff writer

Attention all avid Dave Matthews Band fans. If you were worried by the sound of the new DMB single, "Don't Drink the Water," rest easy.

Despite the different texture of the band's latest release, *Before These Crowded Streets*, the album still delivers all of the same soaring melodies, fantastic drum rips, incredible bass lines and unique vocal variations that you have come to expect from the most innovative band in rock 'n' roll today.

Matthews and company carry new musical influences into the recording studio for their third major label release, but they bring the same instrumental mastery to the table for *Before These Crowded Streets*.

Carter Beauford still puts together percussion sequences that make the listener doubt that the drummer has only two hands. The talent of bassist Stefan Lessard is finally given the showcase it deserves on *Crowded Streets*.

Leroi Moore and Boyd Tinsley add layers of sax and violin to the band's sound that make DMB unique among contemporary musicians. And Dave Matthews — well, the band is named after him. Enough said.

The guys try some new things on their new album, and they succeed in a big way. Bela Fleck joins the band on the banjo. (That's right, a banjo.)

And do not be surprised if you recognize the forceful female vocalist on "Spoon" and "Don't Drink the Water." It is none other than Alanis Morissette giving the band some help on background vocals.

Dave Matthews Band

Before These Crowded Streets

BMG/RCA Records

Critique: A

"The Last Stop" is built around the same Far Eastern chords that made "Minarets" such a delight on *Remember Two Things*, the band's very first Bama Rags release. Not coincidentally, the two songs share the same haunting lyrical theme, musing profoundly about the foolishness of violence and war.

"Stay (Wasting Time)" mixes a catchy pop melody with touches of R&B and a fun guitar progression.

Sit in awe while Beauford and Matthews trade drum and guitar licks as if they were born to play together. This track is closer to the old, raw honesty of the DMB sound than "Don't Drink the Water."

"The Dreaming Tree," "Pig," "Crush" and "Spoon" offer quiet, moody beauty to the closing half of the album.

Over an hour after starting the first track, the last track draws to a close, just in time for you to start the album again. Listening the second time is even better than the first. The album is the band's most challenging yet, but it will grow on you.

The record has its weaknesses, if only to remind us that the quintet are mortals after all.

PLEASE SEE **BAND** ON PAGE 4.

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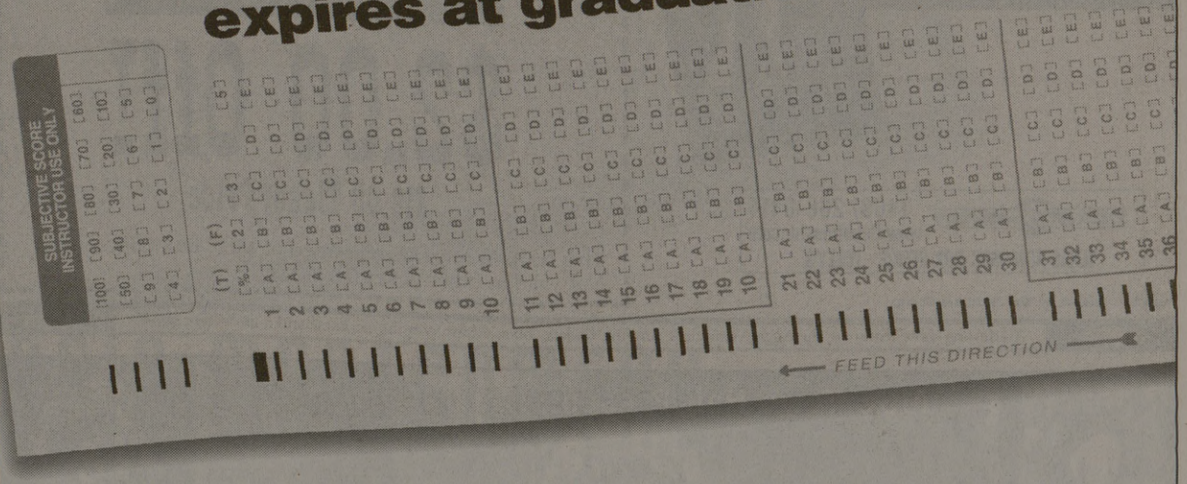

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