



Michelle Paulman/DN

Jason D. Williams puts his foot down on barroom rhythm 'n' blues Sunday night at the Zoo Bar.

High-energy musician attacks Zoo piano

By Robert Richardson
Senior Reporter

As soon as the opening band cleared off the Zoo Bar stage Sunday night, Jason D. Williams, cowboy boots and all, attacked the piano with pure Southern honky-tonk style.

Many in the standing-room-only audience had seen Williams' high-flying routine before. Williams was straight-forward with the description of his music.

"It's a combination of boogie-woogie, classical, ragtime and jazz, and influences from all," he said.

But as Williams played with enough energy to move a locomotive, the show took on a fresh

light. His style, Southern drawl and bouncy blonde curls were unmistakably Williams, but the real attraction, he said, was his spontaneity.

concert REVIEW

"I think people enjoy seeing me because there's nothing up there that's calculated," Williams said. "It's all freestyle. It's just like I'm like playing the piano and I'm up there hearing it for the first time myself. And when a musician or entertainer can do that they're really good."

Hailing from Memphis, Tenn., Williams has been playing for as long as he can remem-

ber. He hasn't had a music lesson since age 7, but he's always known what he's wanted to do with his talent, and he'd gladly pay to see himself.

"I wish many times that I could sit back and see that same show," Williams said. "High energy, jumping on the piano, playing everything, just rocking the house. I tell you, I really love entertaining and that's what I'm going to do the rest of my life."

Don't mistake Williams' attitude for arrogance.

"It's just confidence," Williams said.

See WILLIAMS on 10

Band reflects personal touch

By Carter Van Pelt
Staff Reporter

In a world full of contrived images and contrived music, it's nice to discover artists who are truly down to earth and real. If you're looking for such a band, look to Vancouver, Canada's Grapes of Wrath.

The band, who chose its name out of a movie book two weeks before its first gig, has just released its fourth album, "These Days." The LP, and the band's music in general, has an extremely personal and noticeable apolitical feel. According to singer/guitarist Kevin Kane, this is a reflection of his own philosophy about songwriting.

"When I write songs, I write about things that affect me personally. Political issues are not personal."

Kane said he uses his songs to communicate "feelings to people I don't know." He sees the world as revolving around human interaction.

"All the world is relationships . . . people relating to one another, and that's what I write about."

One of the best examples of this kind of song is the touching "No Reason," in which Kane apologizes to a woman with whom he has broken ties.

"It's a very personal song, and it really affected the person for whom it was written."

Kane says his favorite song on "These Days," is the first track, "Away."

"I like the weird elements (within the song)." Each band member has their own favorite, but according to Kane, "we like all the songs," and they agree that "These Days" is their best album.

Musically, The Grapes' sound is a combination of The Beatles, R.E.M. and XTC, but according to Kane, the band's biggest influences "really have nothing to do with the bands we get compared to."

The obvious exception, however, is the Beatles. Kane admits that, along with The Monkeys, they are one of the bands that the Grapes grew up with.

SOUNDS

The Beatle connection is evident on "These Days." Not only does the album contain harmonies and chord progressions reminiscent of the Fab Four's, but the final mix was done at London's famous Abbey Road Studios — where the Beatles worked in the late '60s.

The XTCish sound of "These Days" is probably because of influence from producer John Leckie (XTC, Stone Roses), who even took a Dukes of Stratosphere tape out of the Abbey Road vaults to be sampled onto "A Fishing Tale." However, Kane is quick to note that "contrary to rumor, Andy Partridge (XTC singer) wasn't in the studio (when we mixed)."

He describes the band's audience as primarily a college crowd, especially in the United States, but he adds that "in Canada, (in addition to the college audience) we're a band that people in their 30s listen to."

Kane feels that the current music scene in Canada is "pretty healthy." He says he appreci-



Courtesy of Capital Records

Kevin Kane of the Grapes of Wrath said he avoids political issues when he writes songs.

ates the fact that Canadian bands get a good share of the airtime on Canadian radio and the Canadian video station, Much Music.

"There's more variety on Much Music . . . they show more independent artists (than MTV)." As for their future plans, The Grapes of

Tear-jerker has moments



"Paradise"



By Anne Steyer
Staff Reporter

Forget "Miami Vice," with its pastel jackets and no-socks look. Don Johnson has left Sonny Crockett behind with his performance in "Paradise." (The Lincoln)

Johnson is Ben Reed, one-half of a failing marriage, in the small town of Paradise. His wife Lily is played by Johnson's real-life spouse Melanie Griffith ("Working Girl"). They lost their infant son two years before in an accident and their marriage has been on the road to destruction ever since.

Enter young Willard (Elijah Wood), the 10-year-old son of Lily's old friend. Willard's family is experiencing a crisis and he needs a place to stay for the summer. Lily agrees to take him in, despite Ben's objections about entertaining Willard all summer.

Willard is an unusual little boy, wise beyond his years, but naive where his own family is concerned. He is on scholarship to a private boys' school and is constantly picked on by other kids. He needs some friends and some answers from his parents.

There are two main stories here, although the film is full of subplot. Of primary concern are the troubled marriage and Willard coming to terms with his family crisis.

The boy's presence and interference is pivotal in the Reed's reconciliation.

Screenwriter Mary Agnes Donoghue ("Beaches") directs here in addition to carrying the screenplay credit. She doesn't waste too much time sweeping the beautiful countryside, which is a pitfall new directors often fall into.

She gives a good effort, although her

See PARADISE on 10



Wrath will be embarking on a fall tour of the United States and Europe in support of "These Days" and writing more songs.

Although none of the band's previous tours have made it to Nebraska, Kane said he hopes to include a stop in Lincoln or Omaha this time around.