

# It's not Shakespeare

Musician works to put his past behind him

BY CHAD LORENZ  
Senior editor

Don't come to a Matt Wilson show looking for an extension of Trip Shakespeare.

And don't expect a sibling sound of Semisonic. You won't find it.

Different man. Different band. Matt Wilson will be traveling with music of his own — not baggage of the past — to Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St., on Wednesday night.

Wilson was the singer and main songwriter for Trip Shakespeare, a Minneapolis band that inspired family-like fan loyalty.

Before the band's 1994 breakup, Wilson was known for crafting quirky rock songs with jam-style guitar lines and falsetto vocals. Songs were laden with Wilson's silly lyrics and stories: bicycling ice cream vendors, a magic pair of dancing pants or the guitar master from the dairy plant up north.

"It took me about three years to hit the brakes from Trip Shakespeare and get going in the other direction," he said from his home in Minneapolis.

As his former band mates regrouped to form Semisonic, Wilson rethought his life, his art and his future.

"I see the jokier, goofier tone as something very valid. It's something very seductive to me," Wilson said. "I just got to the point where it was time to make a serious record."

His recent album, "Burnt, White and Blue," takes on that somber tone through slower tempos and softer guitars, usually with a dominant acoustic blend. The low-fi recording made mostly in Wilson's basement adds a stillness to the album.

Its songs whisper more emotion and introspection than Trip Shakespeare yelps — a result of a depressing time he faced after the breakup.

"Everything in my life had gone perfect. Then I had a giant meltdown." Dissatisfied with his previous work, he began thinking intensely about the flippancy of his past endeavors. He felt he had wasted his musical talent on his signature joking style. "I didn't want to go down like that."

It's sobering, he said, to listen to fans' deeply personal interpretation of songs, though he may have thought little of them.

Wilson sought new inspiration, much of which stems from environmental concerns. He reflected about the emptiness that people in white, suburban America feel.

"I grew up in this plastic world of McDonald's and QTs. And I have this fear that if you look inside me, you will see that I have no soul."

Now, he uses his music to prove

that he does have a soul — and it is not carved in plastic.

His intensely personal songs transcend Trip Shakespeare's bar-roaming adventures and late-night banter. And they diverge from the sound of Semisonic, with its goddess worship of delicious ladies and relationship frustrations.

Although Semisonic musicians, including Wilson's brother Dan, play rhythm on many of the "Burnt, White and Blue" songs, it's Wilson's lyrics, vocals and songwriting that put his hand print on the work.

"It's unique to me — something deeply resonant in my mind."

For instance, "Deep All the Way Down" exposes Wilson's sagging artistic heart: *I should want to deliver my sound, but I fear there is nothing in my deep all the way down. Half the song I stole from a stranger. Half I made in my head.*

At the live shows, however, Wilson cranks up the sound more than on the record. The guitars get louder, the solos get longer and pitches get higher.

Perhaps the band's most unusual feature is its electrically distorted vibraphones, juiced-up xylophones that replace the ominous synthesizers from the record. Wilson feels the untraditional rock instrument layers thickness to the band's two guitars.

Wilson said he is hoping for a crowd like the one at Duffy's when he played in July: enthusiastic and somewhat sober.

Most of his touring covers an L-shaped pattern from

Minneapolis to Chicago to Kansas City.

His goal is to establish himself as a "regional phenomenon" before promoting the self-released album nationally.

He'd like to release on a major label, and part of that strategy means keeping it a local secret. Then when an interested record company can sell it nationwide, it will be fresh to

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Midwesterners. Ultimately, Wilson's musical master plan reflects his desire to make his music more enriching and moving to fans of the past and future.

"What I believe is to get in touch with people who are true and reflect true feelings."

Tickets for the 10 p.m. show will be around \$5.



## UNL dance club lets students step light, lively

BY SARAH BAKER  
Senior staff writer

Finally, the perfect opportunity for students who still do the electric slide to update their moves.

The UNL College Dance Club, which enters its second year, gives students the chance to learn such current favorites as swing, salsa and rumba.

Shelley Brackhan, director of the club, said an organization like this is nothing new.

"There are tons of universities that have a ballroom dancing club as an extracurricular activity," Brackhan said. "It's just never been offered here." Last semester was the first semester for the club, and Brackhan said about 120 students attended, 65 of whom eventually became members.

Students who attend the classes receive the opportunity to learn about six dances. The first lesson is free, but subsequent

instruction runs for \$12.50 a session.

Brackhan said the price is reasonable compared to professional studios.

"It ends up being about a dollar a class," she said. Brackhan is expecting the club to become even more popular because of the recently renewed swing craze.

"I don't know what is in the heads of kids, or why they like this kind of dancing, but it is obvious

they do, which thrills me," she said.

Johnna Hargens, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln junior who is a member of the club, said she first joined because she wanted to learn more about dancing.

"I love to dance. I always have," Hargens said. "I was interested in ballroom dancing but I had no idea how to do it, so I decided to try it, and I loved it. I've stayed with it ever since."

Hargens was one of a few members of the club who took what they learned to the next level; that of competition.

"I didn't even know I could compete," Hargens said. "When we saw the more experienced dancers at the competition, it made us self-conscious, but it was also very exciting. We wanted to work twice as hard to get twice as better."

Brackhan hopes to add a third night of dancing to the club this semester, one specifically for more advanced, competitive dancers.



SHELLEY BRACKHAN, owner of the Brackhan Dance Directive, shows her Friday night singles dance club how to do the mambo. Brackhan will be starting a UNL dance club that meets on Monday and Tuesday nights.

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Hargens says she hopes perspective new dancers aren't scared off by the competition aspect of the club.

"This is a class for beginners," she said. "It's a really fun social activity, and it also teaches social graces and respect."

And if you can't find anyone else interested, a partner is not a necessary prerequisite.

"You never know who is going to ask you to

dance," she said. "It's a lot of fun, and a great way to meet people. I'm all for it."

The first meetings of the UNL College Dance Club take place tonight and tomorrow night from 8:15 to 10 p.m.

The lessons take place in Mabel Lee Hall Room 304, 14th and Vine St.

For more information, call Shelley Brackhan at (402) 435-3344.