

ERNIE EVOLUTION



FORMER SKA BAND The Ernies makes a stop at Knickerbockers tonight to support its new album, "Meson Ray."

COURTESY PHOTO

Virginia band takes its blend of ska, rap, techno and rock to Knickerbockers

BY SHELLEY MIKA
Staff writer

Ska, hip hop, metal, mixing. These are the sounds of Richmond, Va.'s, The Ernies.

Their goal? To make music that ties together the influences of five members and turn out a sound that is original and danceable.

To find out if they succeed, catch their show at Knickerbockers tonight.

In 1994, The Ernies started out with three members: Will Hummel as the frontman on guitar and vocals, Matt Goves on drums and Hayes Smith on saxophone.

It wasn't until 1996 that they added a bass player, Mike Hughes, and later, in 1997, Chris Bondi on turntables and theremin.

The Ernies began as a ska band, but now that their sound has evolved, they don't warm up to the idea of being labeled.

But their influences tell the tale. Goves and Smith have formal training in classical and jazz. The group is also influenced by heavy rock, alternative and hip hop. You can see their interests not only in their style, but also in their lyrics.

At one point, the band refers to Q-Tip of A Tribe Called Quest, revealing its rap roots.

But Will Hummel's lyrics don't stop there. The band's publicist, Mike Cubillos, said Hummel is "really into science, Buddhism and English; he's very well read."

One song, titled "The Hitman Tommy Stearns," refers to poet T.S. Eliot.

"I had a dream that T.S. Eliot came down and

was trying to tell me how to write poetry, and he was sort of this gangster type - the hit man Tommy Stearns," Hummel said in a press release.

But the band members aren't all brains and music school. They value humor as well. A certain lighthearted element appears even in their name. In fact, it isn't inspired by any modernist poet or science class factoid. It's actually a reference to the seldom heard name of a character on the popular sitcom "Cheers."

The Ernies' most recent album, "Meson Ray" (note the science reference), is their third album and first national release. "Meson Ray" is on the MOJO label, which has also released the soundtrack to "BASEketball," on which The Ernies have a track.

Like the latter two films, "Outside Providence" had some stunning cinematography that artistically captured the beauty of autumn in New England. "Providence" also doesn't rely too heavily on its time period. The danger in making a film set in the past is that the focus shifts from the plight of the characters to pop culture. While the film scantily refers to Watergate, disco and 8-tracks, it focuses more on relationships.

Concert Preview

The Facts

Who: The Ernies
Where: Knickerbockers, 901 O Street
When: Tonight
The Skinny: Ernies play a danceable mix of metal, hip hop and rock.

Lax crowd mars Semisonic show

Too-large venue fails to ignite, inspire audience at Minneapolis rock band's State Fair performance.

BY DIANE BRODERICK
Staff writer

Good things come in small packages, and in no way, shape or form is the Bob Devaney Sports Center a small package.

That's not to say that sometimes bigger isn't better, but there's a fine line between the two.

When power-pop trio Semisonic took the stage Saturday at the Nebraska State Fair, one thing was perfectly clear: The band's sound and popularity aren't the quality that make quintessential arena rockers.

Semisonic is much more suited to smaller venues where a sense of familiarity and friendliness is exuded through its music, with a tinge of Minnesota-style funk (including the delicious tendency the band has of playing Prince covers) thrown in for

good measure.

Luckily, Semisonic - frontman Dan Wilson, bassist John Munson and drummer/keyboardist Jake Slichter - packed enough style and surprise to save the concert from complete failure.

"Falling," which had its beginnings at the Minnesota State Fair, according to the band, kicked off the set. With imagery of midway lights, a ride in a Ferris wheel and the light of constellations, the song was a low-key, but fitting, beginning.

Unfortunately, crowd members seemed to take that a little too much to heart, and they kept their seats for "Falling" and much of the radio hits "Singing in my Sleep" and "Secret Smile."

The trend continued through most of the concert, until Wilson, wearing what could be called a fireman ensemble, threw out a command of sorts for more lively participation. A more animated crowd was quick to follow for "fnt" and "Delicious," songs from the band's first full-length album, "Across the Great Divide."

But what really salvaged the con-

Please see SEMISONIC on 16

'Providence' smart teen film

PATRICK KELLY
Staff Writer

Sophomoric humor, an impossible romance and a hopeless social reject mean only one thing: the return of the Farrelly brothers.

The makers of "Dumb and Dumber," "Kingpin" and "There's Something About Mary" certainly have not mellowed with age.

However, the two take a unique approach to the coming-of-age/period piece comedy genre with "Outside Providence."

The film follows the exploits of Timothy Dunphy (Shawn Hatosy), a 17-year-old whose carefree lifestyle catches up with him.

In a marijuana-induced haze, Dunphy crashes into a parked police car. Instead of reform school, Dunphy is sent to a prestigious Rhode Island prep school where his antics make him the savior of the student body and the scourge of the faculty.

Unfortunately, this adds an element of predictability to the film.

As in all fish-out-of-water movies, Dunphy falls in love with the prettiest girl in school and overcomes the prejudice of others.

What separates this film from others like it is that it efficiently combines dramatic and comedic elements, crossing the bridge between films such as "Dazed and Confused," "Dead Poets Society" and "School Ties."

Like the latter two films, "Outside Providence" had some stunning cinematography that artistically captured the beauty of autumn in New England.

"Providence" also doesn't rely too heavily on its time period. The danger in making a film set in the past is that the focus shifts from the plight of the characters to pop culture. While the film scantily refers to Watergate, disco and 8-tracks, it focuses more on relationships.

Of course, numerous masturbation jokes and hemp-related incidents abound, but the film has some truly heartfelt moments as well.

Other Farrelly trademarks in "Outside Providence" include a classic rock soundtrack and a questionable depiction of the handicapped.

Hatosy's performance as Dunphy was a refreshing change from the generic pretty-boy image that usually dominates. Instead, Hatosy brought a genuine sense of

Film Review

The Facts

Title: "Outside Providence"
Stars: Alec Baldwin, Shawn Hatosy, Amy Smart
Director: Michael Corrente
Rating: R (Language, sex and adult situations)
Grade: B+
Five Words: Farrelly brothers' twisted 70's flashback.

awkwardness to this 17-year-old, which is rarely seen.

Unlike previous work from the Farrelly brothers, this film does not have a strong supporting cast. However, a sweet sense of romance exists between Amy Smart and Dunphy.

The best supporting actor in the film was Alec Baldwin, who affectionately refers to his son as "Dildo." Baldwin shed his often overly slick persona to play the blue collar Pat Dunphy.

We can hope "Outside Providence" is an indication of the direction the Farrelly Brothers will take their films. This film brings an irreverent yet insightful look at adolescence, which needs to be encouraged.