

Dual-language plan criticized by parents

School board members say they need a magnet school for the program.

By Jasmin Singh
Staff Writer

Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Board of Education members are likely to approve the conversion of Frank Porter Graham Elementary School to a magnet school, despite parent outcry against the transition.

A large majority of the more than 100 concerned residents who spoke at last week's board meeting were against the plan — which includes a proposal to convert Frank Porter Graham Elementary into a magnet school, in order to accommodate the expansion of the Spanish dual-language program.

And though residents filled the council chambers and two overflow rooms at the Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools Board of Education meeting one week

ago, many felt as though it was a wasted effort.

Board member Jamezetta Bedford said the transition to a magnet school was necessary in order to give all students in the district equal access to the dual-language program.

"Everybody would have the same chance and opportunity if there was a centralized magnet," Bedford said.

But parents said they were frustrated with the board's response to their concerns.

Sean Stockton, father of a Frank Porter Graham dual-language student, said it felt as though the board had already made a decision.

"I think the dual-language magnet school program is going to happen," Stockton said. "They need a miracle to keep it from happening."

"If they didn't ask for our opinion, it would have been an easier pill to swallow."

Stockton said some board members were disrespectful and dismissive of parents who spoke at the meeting.

Bedford said she had to make the decision for the almost 12,000 students in the district, not just those who spoke last week.

"That might be the majority that spoke up, but that's not the majority," she said. "I have to consider all the children in the district."

Board member James Barrett said he supported the magnet school option because he believes it is the best way to expand access to the program, but the transition would have to be done carefully.

"There really isn't another school that is a better choice," he said.

Families of Frank Porter Graham plan on talking to board members at the next meeting to try to get them to rethink their decision on the plan.

"I want to hear the justification of the board for why the board is doing what they are doing," Stockton said. "They have tip-toed around it."

The plan will be voted on June 7 at the next board meeting.

Contact the City Editor at city@dailytarheel.com.



DTH/MELISSA KEY

Concerned residents wait in line to speak at the school board meeting on May 17, where more than 100 spoke.

The Pinkerton Raid releases a polished debut

The self-titled album exhibits masterful storytelling.

By Maddy Baldwin
Staff Writer

In their self-titled debut album, The Pinkerton Raid presents a collection of songs that reach a level of mastery in communication between band members that is unusual in debut albums.

The songs on the album are well produced and polished, unlike the work some folk bands produce that lean towards low-fi recording techniques.

From the full, drawn-out notes that make up the rhythm to the crisp, short notes that make up the more pronounced riffs, every instrument can be heard clearly.

The bass and drum combo that becomes almost jazzy at times is accentuated well by the insertion of simple yet powerful rock guitar riffs and piano. These simple riffs and the rhythm sections come together perfectly in "Those Curves," a spacey rock song with jazz undertones.

MUSIC REVIEW

"The Pinkerton Raid"
The Pinkerton Raid

Indie rock



The Pinkerton Raid successfully "hugs the curves" of the road between a lack and an excess of sound.

Lyrical, songwriter Jesse James DeConto spends time developing stories with his lyrics and avoids the pitfall of getting lost in philosophy.

In the middle of these stories, songs like "Piano Queen" become fully entertaining and it is easy for the listener to become completely involved.

In "Piano Queen" DeConto tells the story of his strange interaction with a pianist. He doesn't get lost in why the interaction was so strange, but instead tells an entertaining story full of all the details that a listener wants to know.

"Piano Queen" is one of most well put together songs on the album. Thought-provoking lyrics and melodic music meet in the

middle of the song to create one of the most enjoyable fusions on the album.

Music and lyrics also come together well in the songs, "Like a Brother" and "Santa Rosa."

However, the power of the music on this album often outweighs the value of the lyrics. At times, it seems like the lyrics are attempting to impress a meaning on songs that just isn't there.

The symbolism in "The Bullfrog" and "Those Curves" is a little too obvious at times and is so easily deciphered that the songs start to seem shallow.

In a few songs, emphasis is taken off a song's story and placed on its symbolism, and more time is spent trying to enforce the validity of the symbolism.

The Pinkerton Raid proves a level of creativity with this debut album that could easily spill over into future albums.

Attempts at inserting artificial meaning take away from the value of songs such as "The Bullfrog" and "Those Curves," but as a whole this album is both lyrically and musically entertaining.

Contact the Arts Editor at arts@dailytarheel.com.

Q&A with Jesse James DeConto

Experience in reporting fuels songwriting for Jesse James DeConto.

By Alex Dixon
Arts Editor



Jesse James DeConto attempts to capture the sound of pop and folk rock from the 1960s and 1970s with his band, The Pinkerton Raid.

ALBUM RELEASE SHOW

Band: The Pinkerton Raid with Birds and Arrows

Time: 9 p.m. Saturday

Location: Casbah, Durham

Info: casbahdurham.com

Jesse James DeConto, a UNC alumnus, uses his experiences reporting for papers and magazines across the U.S. to fuel his songwriting. DeConto is the lead singer and bassist for Durham-based band The Pinkerton Raid. The band just released its first album and is playing an album release show Saturday at the Casbah in Durham. Arts Editor Alex Dixon talked to DeConto about reporting on a tornado, sharing his name with an outlaw, and his journalistic style of songwriting.

Daily Tar Heel: How did you decide on The Pinkerton Raid as a band name?

Jesse James DeConto: Well, my mom named me Jesse James and I've had a tempestuous relationship with that. The weird part is she didn't even think about the outlaw when she named me; she just liked the way the names sounded together. The connection between Jesse James and the name Pinkerton Raid is that the Pinkertons were violent mercenary police that were always chasing the James' gang around. The Pinkerton Raid is when they firebombed the James' ranch in Missouri. They ended up killing one of Frank and Jesse's little brothers. The name

was compelling to me because I liked the sound of the name linguistically, but when I think about that story I wonder who the real hero is. No question, we resonate with Jesse James. I never really knew why. I guess we like outlaws. But there's this myth about Jesse James, kind of like Robin Hood. He was fighting the man. Sometimes in my own life I don't know who's the good guy and who's the bad guy. Sometimes I'm the bad guy and I don't want to admit it.

DTH: What has been your most memorable experience as a reporter?

JJD: When I was at my first job at the Xenia (Ohio) Daily Gazette, a tornado hit. About 30 years earlier, a tornado hit the same town and it made national news because a few people died, so it's always in the memory of Xenia. I drove around with the police, seeing things like the entire top floors of houses in the front yard. The most powerful thing I saw or heard that night was when I went into this elderly couple's house. They talked about hearing this sound like a rushing train and they recognized it from the tornado 30 years before. They were out on their porch when they heard it and the husband grabbed his wife and pulled her towards the basement. The storm knocked the porch off the house and he could feel her being pulled out of the door as they were going into the basement. To hear about this human resilience and be able to bear witness to it and write about it was really a privilege.

DTH: How have events in your reporting experience influenced your songwriting?

JJD: You hope that it helps you pay attention to details and

helps you tell a story. I think a lot of the songs are journalistic. There's a song called "Santa Rosa" and it's just telling a story about an experience of being panhandled a couple of times in Santa Rosa, Calif., and being struck by how you can have this really beautiful place with all this wealth and see that people are still hungry and don't have a place to live. It was a metaphor for something bigger. I don't like songs that try to write about some big theme because they end up sounding preachy. So when I see a real specific experience, that's what I try to write about and I hope people can engage it in a bigger way, but I want the story to be intact. So it's like a mix of journalism but there's something at stake for me personally. In a way, I try to turn a journalistic lens on my own experiences.

DTH: You said you were inspired by folk rock from the 1960s and 1970s. Is this reflected in The Pinkerton Raid's music?

JJD: Definitely. I try to build the songs around vocal harmonies. I believe that the two- to four-minute pop song is still something that resonates with people. The way that they wrote pop hooks in that era is something I really try to emulate. I'm not a big jam band fan. The musicians are getting lost in the music. That's fun as a player, but I don't know how fun it is for listeners. I think we've learned some things about song structure that grabs people's attention and keeps it. I don't know how well we're able to do that, but that's what I'm trying to do.

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