



Chuck Dean/The Gamecock

Manic Michelle Malone rocks with an uncanny flair.

## Drag the River plays Thursday

# Band's music has kamikaze style

By CHUCK DEAN

Staff writer

Often, Arista records recording artist Michelle Malone is compared to greats like Joan Baez, Judy Collins and Joni Mitchell; this doesn't mean that she must agree with the comparisons.

The outspoken Malone once told a newspaper, "I can't stand them. They play wimpy music. I do have a lot of respect for Joni Mitchell, but those others are fraudulent. They don't feel anything for what they play. I could be wrong about that, I guess, but I don't like real whiny music."

The lady doesn't lie. Malone and her band, Drag The River, are miles from wimpy, whiny or fraudulent. This Atlanta-based foursome has gained a reputation for their kamikaze live shows chock-full of original songs, elongated musical melt-downs, and often hilarious impromptu raps with the audience.

These performances seemingly skip, hop and glide over one main goal, that is to provide an evening of no-holds-barred rock'n'roll that stays with you long after the concert is over. Seldom do Michelle Malone and Drag The River fail in their attempts.

Malone is a small woman who, while off stage, looks as if she'd be quiet in some corner watching everyone else have a good time. She seems withdrawn, shy and low-keyed. Yet, once in front of the microphone, all myths are dispelled. One quickly finds that her size isn't any indication of the power of her voice.

At times, she can be painfully honest when singing the imagery-enriched songs she wrote herself. While singing "Into The Night", her face often becomes twisted; her lips will curl and quiver over her words as she sings, "...Give me back my secrets/ And I'll give you back your lies/ Ever since the day you said hello/ I've waited for goodbye."

Inevitably, the intensity explodes as she continues, "Into the night, into the night/ I will wander into the night/ You've shattered my dreams, and strangled my will/ Now I'll wander into the night." As with this song, conviction is an appropriate word in describing Malone's delivery. You see the singer wandering into the night, and

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Lead singer, Michelle Malone

you want to hunt down the bastard who took liberties with her dreams. This is only one of Malone's qualities that add to her appeal.

In Michelle Malone's case, it's true: behind every good singer there is a terrific band. Drag the River consists of Billy "Deuce" Pitts on the drums, Phil Zone on the bass, and Johnny Dee aiding Malone with his lead guitar.

They all fit well in the manic scheme of Malone's personality in that they can hang with doing a song straight-forwardly, but quickly adapt to the extended all-hell-breaking-loose mood Malone often slips into.

For instance, once at the Royal Peacock, a legendary club in Atlanta where the likes of James Brown and Aretha Franklin have performed, Malone was being heckled by a drunk audience member. She had just finished a song and the man yelled, "Get tough!"

Attitude in tact, Malone edged up to the microphone. Looking straight at the man she said, "What if I did?" The audience supported her with loud applause.

Malone nodded to her band, who quickly shifted gears to perform "New Experience", a fast paced rock number—perfect ventilation for Malone's anger.

In this case, she kept her eye on the heckler and performed the tune in a sarcastic, sexually-exaggerated manner, complete with her guitar

nested like a weapon between her legs. She sang, "I'll do anything for a new experience/ I'll give you my left wing for a new experience/ Give you 15 bucks for a new experience/ I'd give you all my lust for a new experience." When the song climaxed, Malone, soaked in sweat, cocked her head and asked the drunk man, "It was good for me, what about you?" He remained silent for the rest of her show.

Along with their original material, Michelle Malone and Drag The River perform some cover material including songs by The Rolling Stones, Randy Newman, Sly and The Family Stone and occasionally, The Jefferson Airplane.

Although the band's strength lies in their original material, they handle the unoriginal just as effectively. When Malone sings Randy Newman's confessional "Guilty", she adds so much atmosphere that one envisions some lonesome ex-junkie walking down railroad tracks thinking about his life and what went wrong.

She sings, "Got some cocaine, from the barman/ Got some cocaine, from my friends/ I've got to keep moving baby, till I'm back in your arms again/ I'm guilty..."

Also, Drag The River have been known to perform a hard-rock, hand clapping version of The Jeffersons theme song that prompts all the band to let loose as Malone wails, "...beans don't burn in the kitchen/ fish don't cook on the grill/ took a whole lot of pushing/ just to get up this hill." This song beckons practically everyone to the dance floor.

You can have the chance to experience the music and madness for yourself Thursday night when Michelle Malone and Drag the River take the stage at Rockafellas'.

What can you expect? You can expect no whiny, wimpy or fraudulent music. Instead, expect a night of loud, abrasive, quality music, some unpredictable madness, and a heck of a good time...so come out and get hooked. It'll be a new and satisfying experience. For additional information, call Rockafellas' at 252-7625.

## Between The Covers



### Novel carries reader to eighth-century China

By PAMME EADES

Staff writer

*Silk Road: A Novel of Eighth-Century China*, Jeanne Larsen, 1989. Holt and Company, New York, N.Y. 434 pages.

As the government executes more and more students and the effects of the cultural revolution linger on, it is hard to imagine the eighth-century China of Jeanne Larsen's *Silk Road*.

During the rule of the Brilliant Emperor of the Tang Dynasty, poetry flourishes, courtesans cultivate their musical skills, and women have their own written language forbidden to men. Life intertwines with karmic destiny and the humor of the gods.

*Silk Road* focuses on the adventures of Greenpearl along the famous Chinese trade route. The young daughter of a great Tang general, she is kidnapped after Tibetan raiders kill her nanny.

She is bought and sold and finally winds up as the apprentice courtesan, Dragonfly. But this is just the beginning of her journeys.

In a celestial palace the Jade Emperor finds a green, odd-shaped pearl in his new Go game. The bauble speaks, begging the god to send it to the human realm, so it may learn their tongues.

The Jade Emperor consents and

sends the bauble to earth as Greenpearl. The Assistant Undersecretary of Baubles to the Emperor is then reassigned to monitor Greenpearl's progress.

In the meantime, Greenpearl's mother, Seagem, has been kidnapped and betrothed to the son of the Dragon Monarch. Now living under Cavegarden Lake, she has appealed to the Moon Lady, Lady Gang-yin, and the Motherqueen, herself, to guide Greenpearl to her.

Greenpearl's quest to find her mother takes her across China from the Great Wall to the sacred mountain Mothbrow.

A translator of Chinese verse, Larsen weaves an intricate tale sprinkled with poems, historical narratives and even an ancient Taoist sexological text. She combines mythology and history, creating a mystical world with her playful prose.

Her prose is at times delicate but straight forward as when Greenpearl narrates. The style then turns flamboyant as the 16th-century storyteller continues a tale for the marketplace crowd.

A powerful, magical work, *Silk Road* will not give the reader a new insight into China, give moral advice, or affect your life. The purpose of *Silk Road* is to delight and fascinate with its glimpse of the great civilization of antiquity.



People line up to get their tickets to the long-awaited movie *Batman*.

Les Alverson/The Gamecock

## 'Batman' delivers on special effects

By PAUL CATALA

Staff writer

It started Friday. . . theaters around the nation and in Columbia premiered the long-awaited, and for some, anticipated screen debut of D.C. Comic superhero "Batman."

The movie, starring Michael Keaton as Bruce Wayne, a.k.a. Batman, is arranged and put together in a set and production designer's vision of a megalopolis gone mad.

From the opening camera shots that slowly zero in on Gotham City, the immensity of the movie's sets isn't fully comprehended until the bustling streets of people and traffic in the city come into view.

The movie's plot and somewhat mundane development are really strung together by the intricate exactness of Anton Furst's set production design (the new, improved Batmobile, for example, is a marvel compared to the old modified T-top driven in the television series).

The premise for the plot, that Gotham City has become so outrageously corrupt that it has run out of money to celebrate its bicentennial, is at times no more than filler between the elaborate sets.

However, director Tim Burton does such an excellent job of manipulating the stars' interactions during their lines that the plot is feebly feasible.

Jack Nicholson, the perfect Joker, is allowed the freedom an actor of his caliber needs to almost violently grab the audience into his realm.

His maniacal delivery throughout the movie conjures up surrealistic images usually reserved for worst

nightmares gone sour. The Joker's Cheshire cat grin, the result of falling into a vat of chemicals, only adds to his bizarre nature.

Nicholson who provides the basic source of conflict for the movie, also provides for one of the movie's most entertaining scenes. He and his henchmen make a festival of vandalism at the Gotham City Museum of Art to the tune of Prince's "Party Man" which plays on a boombox.

After *Batman* has a flashback (thanks "Kung Fu") of witnessing his parents' murder when he was young, he recognizes the Joker as their killer. At this point, the movie should have stuck to a more typical good guy versus bad guy theme rather than wading through city corruption, which barely works as a subplot.

Kim Basinger and Billy Dee Williams offer the movie much-needed supporting roles. Basinger plays Vicki Vale, a newspaper photographer and Bruce Wayne's love interest, with barely enough heat and stubbornness to give the impression that she was, in fact, in the movie.

Williams, somewhat dryly, plays the district attorney fairly convincingly.

Since many of *Batman*'s viewers are probably old enough to recall the T.V. series' self-mocking humor, the movie could have used a little more wit or sarcasm than the few one-liners that are used. The movie's humor (with the exception of the Joker's bizarre quips) stagnates. The characters will deliver a line, anticipating a pun that never quite arrives. Besides, with Keaton cast as

*Batman*, humor should be a prerequisite.

Although the plot and most of the casting aren't of any real merit, the production efforts are. In addition to Burton's and Furst's work, Roger

Pratt's cinematography, Ray Lovejoy's editing, and the enveloping richness of Danny Elfman's musical score make "Batman" entertaining with no real threat to anyone's intellect.

## Batman means big bucks for Columbia merchants

By J.R. WILLIAMS

Staff writer

For the last two weeks, it has been almost impossible to walk in a shopping mall without seeing hundreds of people wearing two or three items of *Batman* paraphernalia.

So much so that if *Batman* himself were to come to Columbia, he would think he was still in Gotham City.

Well, he did come to town Friday (but not in person) as the movie opened in main release in four Columbia-area theaters.

"I'm very surprised that a small city like this would have this much enthusiasm," said Gene Wadford, 20, a Columbia native who was at the main premiere of the movie at Dutch Square Mall.

But the *Batman* shirts, hats, posters, clocks and other bat items have been selling for two weeks since the *Batman* hype was put into full throttle.

"People buy things they think they can make money off of," said Kim Mitchell, an assistant manager

at Spencer's novelty store in Columbia mall, "and *Batman* will definitely be a collector's item in 10 years."

Mitchell said when the sneak previews began Thursday up until Saturday the store sold 50 *Batman* T-shirts at \$13.99 each, nine *Batman* dolls at \$40 each, 50 buttons for \$7.99 each and eight *Batman* auto sun shields at \$5.99 a piece.

"Friday, people were in here buying \$20 to \$30 worth of *Batman* stuff," Mitchell added. The store also sold 72 *Batman* posters at \$2.99 each.

Even non-licensed sellers are making money off the *Caped Crusader*.

An illegal merchant said he sold \$200 worth of *Batman* shirts Friday.

"They are bigger than Coca-Cola was when it first came out," said the merchant, who asked not to be identified.

Shirts, legal or not, were worn by masses of people to see the film over the weekend.

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