

**DAN QUAYLE:** "Illegitimacy is something we should talk about in terms of not having it."

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## THE MIX

# Not a typical troubadour

BY MEG MOORE  
THE GAMECOCK

Dimly lit tables rustle with coffee talk, sentences tossed between sips of chai tea and cappuccino. The growing crowd converses, its interest vested in the stage, where a lone performer is setting up his keyboard and assembling his notes. And as he finally takes a seat at the ivory keys, silence unfolds, faces focus and the coffee crowd converges into a mass of rapt listeners, entranced and enthralled.

From the moment he takes the stage and begins to play, it is obvious that Adam Cullum is proud to be a songwriter. An honors music student at USC, Cullum said he always had a passion for music. During a recent show at the Lettuce Lounge, he demonstrated his enthusiasm toward performing by extending his set past curfew for the sake of getting in

few more songs."

Unlike a typical troubadour, Cullum is primarily a piano player. "I took lessons in elementary school, but I didn't like to practice or be told what to do, so I quit," he said. He picked it up again in seventh grade, he said, and figured out songs from the radio and tapes.

He also taught himself the basics of music theory by analyzing an Elton John songbook. The lesson has paid off, judging by the intricate melodies within his songs.

Cullum said the keyboard affords him more options as a writer than the guitar would: "I can play multiple parts on the piano, simulate bass and drums and everything. ... It's just bigger and stronger, but it can be smaller and weaker when necessary."

During his live shows, he performs on other instruments; he can also play the guitar, drums, bass, organ, harmonica and flute.

Like any aspiring songwriter, Cullum has his own list of artists he views as exemplary in their craft. He enjoys the work of such bands as Eels, Radiohead and Counting Crows and cites the writings of Pedro the Lion's David Bazan and Barenaked Ladies' Ed Robertson as particularly in-

fluential.

In his own songs, Cullum said he draws on personal experiences and observations for inspiration. "Songwriting is like creating little worlds where things can be like you want them," he said.

"I do tend to write about more negative experiences than positive ones," he said. "When something sad happens, it usually leaves you a lot of time to sit and think and obsess over it."

Cullum said he often uses his songs to resolve situations that seem to be hopeless. "I write about situations that are like mine, but I tend to change details to be like I want them to be," he said.

Cullum has been performing live only for the past few years. Before January 2000, he said, he had written only "about four crappy songs." But after spending some time poring over Weezer tunes at the piano, he was inspired to write, and "it just took off from there."

In 2001, Cullum fronted the band Timmy

Orangeburg, which gave him his first real taste of performing his own songs. After the band broke up, Cullum performed as a solo artist. He played his first solo show this January as the opening act for Columbia band Courage Riley, "and I kept on from there," he said.

He shies away from an electric sound, preferring to let the energy in his voice carry his songs. "I think when you have to scream over distorted guitars and drums, you lose a bit of expression in the voice," he said. "I like the sound of a voice that really means it."

Ultimately, Cullum hopes his honest approach will secure his music a place on radio playlists. Yet he said he gains fulfillment from simply performing.

"I want to make a career out of it," Cullum said. "I want my songs to be on the radio. If they ever will be, I don't know. What's important to me is that I can do this and it touches people."

Comments on this story? E-mail [gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com](mailto:gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com)

Adam Cullum plays the piano, guitar, drums, harmonica and flute. He also writes and performs his own songs.

PHOTO BY CHARLES TOMLINSON/THE GAMECOCK



## A shot at the big time

BY TITAN BARKSDALE  
THE GAMECOCK

South Carolina's recording artists could get their big shot at the music business without traveling to New York or Atlanta, if the staff at Columbia's WHXT-FM Hot 103.9 has its way.

The South Carolina Music and Entertainment Conference is the first step in achieving that goal. The conference, which is a one-day music and entertainment seminar, is Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Embassy Suites Hotel on Stoneridge Drive.

Erick Sermon, formerly of pioneering hip-hop duo EPMD; Big Gipp, of Atlanta's Goodie Mob; Swizz Beats, a multiplatinum-selling producer based in New York; and Jazzy Pha, a surging Atlanta-based producer are scheduled to appear and give their stories about the business.

Managers, talent scouts and other representatives from a variety of national record labels are scheduled to appear and accept demos from attendees. Seminar topics will include information about getting material copyrighted, record deals and publishing.

Constant phone calls to the station from aspiring recording artists requesting advice about breaking into the music business prompted the idea of a conference, said Candy Harrison, marketing and promotions director of Hot 103.9 FM.

"We want everyone in South Carolina who has dreams of getting into this business to have the opportunity to get their questions

answered, make contacts and possibly get to the next level," Harrison said.

But Chris Connors, the radio station's program coordinator, said there's much more that will come from this conference.

"This conference will let national A&Rs (talent scouts) know that there's talent in South Carolina," Connors said.

Although South Carolina has many independent artists, it doesn't have major record labels in-state, which provide artists with the resources to gain national exposure.

Connors, whose more familiar radio moniker is C Diddy, said it's extremely difficult for an artist to make it big without connections at a major label.

"What South Carolina needs is for one person to hit or make it big, and then that person usually ends up creating their own record label under the major label's imprint, like Ludacris did," Connors said. "Artists and owners of independent companies around the state now have the opportunity to get their foot in the door and start a path to do the same thing."

Wade Dean, a fifth-year music student at USC and former intern at the station, is one of those independent upstarts. Between studying, he works along with others to manage an urban independent label called Diamond Skies Entertainment.

He said it's mandatory that people serious about music attend the conference because it's a great opportunity.

"South Carolina has never had

a music seminar of this magnitude," Dean said. You've got to come to this because the label representatives are looking for the next big thing in genres from rhythm and blues to hip-hop, even alternative."

Taking the initiative to come to the conference is half the battle for up-and-coming artists, but it doesn't stop there, Dean said.

"Just making that step to come out is doing a lot," he said. "But networking and talking face to face with these guys is a doing a lot more."

But up-and-coming recording artists aren't the only people the conference is geared toward, Connors said.

"There will also be representatives who will come out and talk about behind-the-scenes jobs in the business," Connors said. He said the director of artist relations and management at Universal Records and a writer for industry magazine Black Radio Exclusive are scheduled to appear.

Connors said 350 seats are available for the seminar and he expects them to sell out by Saturday. Advance tickets can be purchased at Hot 103.9 until Friday at 5:30 p.m. and at the door for \$35.

"This conference is the biggest step a person can make other than going to New York, so if we can do this every year, it'll become the main conference everyone must attend, which gets exposure for Columbia and its artists," Connors said.

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## Punk gets silly in Columbia

BY WILLIAM MILLS  
THE GAMECOCK

Sunday will be a night of black-rimmed glasses, Converse All-Star shoes and straight-ahead rock at the New Brookland Tavern. Starting at 8 p.m., Columbia's music scene will be overrun with the punky silliness of Santa Barbara, Calif.'s Nerf Herder, along with Initial Records' Ultimate Fakebook, Fairview and Columbia's own Love Apple.

Sunday night will be the first of Nerf Herder's headlining tour. After playing some dates with Guttermouth on the Punk-O-Rama tour, the band is coming back to Columbia to see some old friends; promote its latest album, "American Cheese"; and show the Bible Belt how to let loose and rock out.

"We'll play a selection of songs that'll all be pretty rockin', we'll try to make some jokes, and we always try to encourage public nudity and stuff like that," said Nerf Herder singer and guitarist Perry Gripp.

Nerf Herder is no stranger to Columbia; it has toured with Columbia's Southern-rock powerhouse Isabelle's Gift.

Over the years, Nerf Herder has poked fun at a wide range of public figures and musical icons from Courtney Love to Elton John. Gripp said Nerf Herder's sound has not changed over the years

and that the new album sounds much like their self-titled debut.

"We tried to make this record sound like our first," Gripp said. "I think our first record is our best."

The band mixes the lightheart-

"Most of our songs are coming from a pretty positive outlook. It's usually music that's kind of fun and more like a party vibe, rather than the deep, dark, personal kind of vibe," said Ultimate Fakebook singer and guitarist Bill McShane.

According to McShane, the band is looking to expand its newfound quartet sound into fresher territories and enhance its live show.

"We've always really focused on the live show being exciting and raw," McShane said.

Love Apple, part of Columbia's budding rock squadron, comes equipped with some new songs that it will more than likely whip

out at the show. Jason Sposa, lead singer and guitarist for Love Apple, wrote many of these songs years ago, but the band intends to spice up the sound with the addition of keyboards.

Love Apple is also playing a free show Friday, at the Amphitheatre in Clemson with Stretch Armstrong. Sposa and Love Apple are looking forward to this Sunday's show.

"You sit in your room and listen to these records and blast them, and then you're sharing a stage with them," Sposa said about the Sunday show.

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## MOVIE REVIEW

## Third time just isn't a charm for 'Friday'

"FRIDAY AFTER NEXT"

Starring Ice Cube, Mike Epps  
★★ out of ★★★★★

BY WILL MISCHNER  
THE GAMECOCK

It was 10:30 in the morning on the day of the show, and tickets to the Russell House sneak preview of "Friday After Next" were already sold out. Does that mean the movie is sure to be an Oscar winner? I wouldn't count on it.

By 8, it was clear the massive gathering in the lobby was not there for Taco Bell. Hundreds of students had raucously piled around the door of the theater among a restless Carolina Productions staff.

By the reactions of the mob, one might have thought they were waiting to catch the live Broadway production. But it was not until the USC Police Department came that the rambunctious horde was allowed to file into its seats to preview the latest installment of the "Friday" series.

Back to the movie. The opening scene unfolded the basic plot. A burglar dressed up as Santa Claus robs Craig and Day-Day's apartment, and the rest of Friday is spent trying to catch him: The characters smoke a few blunts, get their money back, pay the rent, smoke a few more blunts, have a party, save the day. You know the drill.

The absurdly long credits, displayed in a cartoon sequence that received a round of applause at its conclusion, reveal that many of the same characters have returned for the third go-round. Ice Cube, of course, stars as Craig Jones, who lives with his cousin Day-Day, played by Mike Epps.

John Witherspoon and Anna Maria Horsford also resurface as Craig's loving parents. There are a few fresh faces,



Mike Epps, John Witherspoon and Ice Cube star in the movie 'Friday After Next.' This is the third movie in the 'Friday' series.

PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

Nerf Herder will perform its headlining tour this Sunday at 8 p.m. at the New Brookland Tavern.