

The Behrend Beacon

Friday, October 31, 2003

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Gov't Mule finds peace with 'The Deepest End'



Gov't Mule rocks their "Deep End" studio.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MULE.NET

by Greg Smith
contributing writer

After the August 2000 death of their beloved bassist Allen Woody, Warren Haynes and Matt Abts of the rock trio, Gov't Mule, had a decision to make. Who would fill Woody's shoes in the studio and on tour?

Instead of choosing a permanent replacement for Woody in their darkest hour, Haynes and Abts cooked up the idea of recording and touring with a number of the world's finest bassists to honor Woody's memory. And so, "The Deep End" project was born.

After Woody's passing, Gov't Mule brought in an incredibly talented and diverse cast of low-end masters to record enough material for two full studio albums. The albums, dubbed "The Deep End, Volumes 1 & 2," hit stores in 2001 and 2002 respectively, and featured the bass stylings of Phil Lesh (Grateful Dead), Mike Gordon (Phish), Stefan Lessard (Dave Matthews Band), Dave Schools (Widespread Panic), and Less Claypool, just to name a few. The Mule has also toured with a number of different bassists since Woody's death.

The band's latest album, "The Deepest End," is the culmination of the two-and-a-half year Deep End project in Woody's honor.

The concert dubbed "The Deepest End" took place on May 3 at New Orleans' Saenger Theatre. The concert was recorded and was recently released in a raw, eclectic package featuring two audio discs and a bonus full-length DVD, totaling more than six hours of Mule goodness.

The concert features 13 different bassists as well as eight other guests who join Haynes, Abts, and newly christened keyboardist Danny Louis for a show that guitarist and vocalist Haynes called,

"one of the most magical nights I've ever been a part of."

The pure talent of Haynes and drummer Abts shines through on this album, as they masterfully weave their own styles with those of each and every different bassist to an ear-pleasing success. Mule showcases its diversity throughout the album, as Haynes' displays his soaring solos on rockers such as "Bad Little Doggie" and "Blindman In The Dark." They also cool things down with country and bluegrass flavored tunes such as "Patchwork Quilt" and "Lay Of The Sunflower," each featuring great banjo work from the world-renowned Bela Fleck. The standout track of the album may be the Grammy-nominated instrumental "Sco-Mule," a track that is nine minutes chock-full of funky, jammy guitar licks from Haynes and the incredible bass styles of guest Victor Wooten.

The DVD certainly does not disappoint (being 3 hours long itself), as it is just as much fun to see the talent and fun that Mule brings to the stage as it is to hear it. The DVD features some tracks that are not on the audio discs, such as the hard-rocking jam song "Mule" and a mind-blowing drum solo by Abts that flows nicely into two back-to-back Black Sabbath covers, "Sweat Leaf" and "War Pigs," featuring former Metallica bassist Jason Newstead.

Gov't Mule has since forged ahead, naming former Black Crowes bassist Andy Hess as their new permanent 4-string man, and are currently on their "Rebirth of the Mule" tour of the U.S. But "The Deepest End" is and will remain a splendid end to an interesting and musically amazing project and a proper salute to the memory of Allen Woody. And at \$23, it's a great deal for a ton of high quality music.

NBC offers 'Average Joes' a shot at a cheerleader

by Richard Huff
New York Daily News

Tired of TV dating shows that give good-looking women the run of the house with 16 hunks? The producers of NBC's "Average Joe" were, and decided to turn the genre on end.

They found a girl -- attractive former NFL cheerleader Melana Scantlin -- put her in a fancy house, and then introduced her to 16 average-to-not-so-great-looking guys.

"The casting was a little complicated," said executive producer Stuart Krasnow. "Part of our show was wanting to find guys who didn't look like -- how do I say this politically correct? -- who weren't hot guys."

The cast includes men who are fat, short, bald or tall.

"These are not the guys who got the cheerleaders in high school," Krasnow said. "But to call them average is unfair."

Scantlin didn't know she would be faced with regular guys.

Indeed, in the first episode, airing Nov. 3 at 10 p.m. EST, her visible glow fades as the Average Joes emerge from a bus to say hello. At one point, Scantlin turns off camera and suggests she's being duped -- which she was, as part

of the latest evolution in the reality genre: to add a twist.

"Joe Millionaire," for example, lies about the net worth of its bachelor. Here, the bachelorette was misled by omission.

Realizing there was a chance that Scantlin would quit, the producers had a backup girl ready to walk in to meet the guys.

"Was she happy with us right after? No," Krasnow said. "I think she understood that when you fill out an application, and you want to meet a guy who's funny and smart, and put 'looks' fifth or sixth, that's what can happen."

Likewise, the men didn't know they were being cast as a group of average guys either.

"It's 25 percent gimmick and 75 percent story," he said. "It's a lot of emotion, it's a lot of people getting upset, it's a lot of people having a great time."

The six-episode series was shot over five weeks. In each installment, some of the men get kicked off, leading to the end, when Scantlin will pick one.

And then, if all goes well, NBC will air a second edition, which has already been shot.

Said Krasnow, "I think we're the anti-Bachelor."

Meg Ryan's latest role requires emotional and actual nudity

by Terry Lawson
Knight Ridder Newspapers

The last time we checked in with Meg Ryan, she was jokingly begging for an intervention: She had just finished "Kate & Leopold," her umpteenth romantic comedy, and expressed some fear, seriously or not, that those cute little crinkly laugh lines around her eyes might be beginning to lose their appeal. "Stop me before I kiss again," joked Ryan.

As it happens, Ryan is still kissing -- with what appears to be an enhanced pair of lips -- in her new movie "In the Cut," which opens Friday in New York and Los Angeles, and elsewhere on Oct. 31. But there's little crinkly or cute about the kissing in "In the Cut." Adapted from a novel by Susanna Moore, "In the Cut" is an erotic thriller, a murder mystery that has been remodeled by "The Piano" director Jane Campion as a kind of contemporary and kinky sexual questionnaire: Do you like it like this?

For fans of "Sleepless in Seattle" and "When Harry Met Sally," "In the Cut" might seem like the last thing Meg Ryan was cut out for. Ryan doesn't see it that way.

"I read the script and it was beautiful and poetic and the idea of doing it scared me a little -- which are all reasons for an actor to make a movie. Then you put Jane directing on top of that, and it seems like a pretty obvious choice."

Ryan was not the first choice to play Frannie, a college English teacher who resides in the Lower East Side of New York without letting much of it rub off on her, or so it seems. She lives in a self-styled shell that is penetrated after she secretly witnesses a sex act in the basement of a neighborhood bar and discovers that the woman involved has been murdered. Investigating the case is a crude cop, played by Mark Ruffalo, to whom she finds herself oddly attracted, and with whom she eventually becomes involved in a way she had not considered possible.

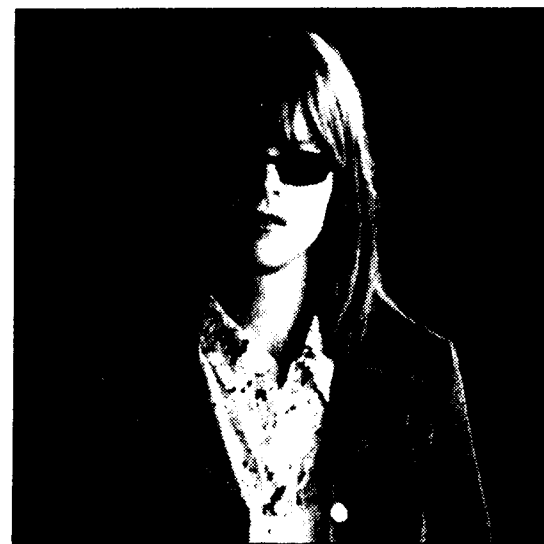
"Nicole (Kidman) and Jane worked on it a long time," says Ryan, "but then Nicole chose to do another film instead, so I got the call. I never asked anyone why Nicole ended up leaving it. I just felt extremely lucky to inherit it."

Campion is more forthcoming, explaining that following Kidman's divorce from Tom Cruise, she did not feel comfortable "going that raw on screen." Kidman is referring not to the nudity, which is extensive and explicit in movie star terms, but of the emotional nakedness the part requires. Frannie is a woman who is liberated by her sexuality, even though, or perhaps because, it is so clearly equated with danger.

"I wanted to work with Jane so much on this that I did something I haven't done in a long time," says Ryan. "I auditioned. I think I wanted to know if I was really right for this as much as Jane did. And I guess we were both pleased with the results. We connected not only on a professional and artistic level, but on a personal one as well. It was like we were taking this wild vacation together."

Ryan says she did not specifically take the role of Frannie to change her image: "That would be stupid," she says matter-of-factly. "Whenever an actor does that, it's so transparent. I do believe, though, that it's easy to get complacent, in your job and in your life, especially if everything seems to be going well. And that alone is a good reason to shake things up."

It's hardly the first time. Ryan has long reigned as America's Sweetheart. ("Am I?" she says. "Hmmm, I guess I always thought Julia had that tiara. I must have stolen it while she wasn't looking.") But she first earned serious attention in an independent drama, 1987's "Promised Land." She then earned critical acclaim for her portrayals of an alcoholic wife in "When a Man Loves a Woman" and an Army officer accused of cowardice in "Courage Under Fire." But huge hits like "Harry," "Sleepless" and "You've



SCREEN GEMS

Meg Ryan gives an edgy performance in "In the Cut."

Got Mail" tend to overpower less-seen films like "Hurlyburly."

"Meg is so good in those roles because there's a lot of Meg in those roles," her frequent costar Tom Hanks has said. "But that's only one part of who Meg is."

If her audience didn't understand there was more to Ryan than perk and crinkles, they certainly found out when her marriage to Dennis Quaid, an unabashed bad boy she was said to have straightened out, fell apart after she allegedly fell in love with Russell Crowe while making "Proof of Life." Though Quaid appeared to be the aggrieved party, friends of Ryan always said things were more complex, and Ryan refuses to talk about what happened. But she will allow that "In the Cut" came along at a "very interesting time in my life."

"I don't want to be specific about this because it is personal, and there are obviously other people to think about," says Ryan. "But this was a healing experience for me in a lot of ways. The issues that Frannie were dealing with seemed especially ripe at the time I was picking at them. The feelings of isolation, of being closed off and that free-floating grief."

Ryan says that being literally stripped naked in "In the Cut" was not "the biggest of deals." She's been naked in previous films, including "Promised Land" and "The Doors." But she has also invoked no-nudity clauses in her contracts, and says she's not "interested in being anyone's cheap thrill or marketing gimmick."

"I absolutely knew Jane would never be part of that. I mean, the films she makes are erotic and sexy, and being naked is naturally part of that. But being emotionally naked is the hardest thing any of us do in our lives. Some people get physically naked and have empty sex to avoid going there, you know? But real intimacy, that requires bravery, especially when it's getting put out there for the world to see. That scene in the film where Mark is talking about how he learned to make love to a woman? Man, that's putting it out there. Jane would make me brave. She'd go, 'Meg, you can do this, you can do anything, you're an Amazon.'"

Ryan says making "In the Cut" gave her such satisfaction, as an actor and "just as a human being," that she has had no desire to race into another project. She already has one movie, "Against the Ropes," in the can and currently set for release on Feb. 6. It's an account of the life of Jackie Kallen, who became involved in the careers of professional boxers James (Lights Out) Toney and Thomas Hearns. The film is so heavily fictionalized that Hearns and Toney have been combined in a character played by Omar Epps.

"Jackie's a pretty inspiring person herself," says Ryan. "I've had plenty of tough women passing through my life for the past couple of years. Has to be a reason. Or maybe I've finally got tuned in."

A&E Event Spotlight

Monday through Nov. 9



SCREEN VISIONS FILM SERIES

featuring "681-0638" with
director Ari Grief

Erie isn't a thriving film community, but the Screen Visions Film Series is Behrend's attempt to bring a diverse selection of film to both the campus and the community.

"681-0638" is the second film in the fall series. Directed by Ari Grief, the film follows the intersecting lives of several New Yorkers as they attempt to share a phone booth. On this particular day, the booth is witness to a struggle to find love, the birth of a child, a fight over a sandwich, and a homeless man's attempt to increase his stock portfolio's value.

Immediately following the film screening, director Ari Grief will talk about his film and answer audience questions.

"681-0638" will be screened Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in Reed 117

The Screen Visions Film Series continues on Nov. 11 and 18 with screenings of "The American Astronaut" and "Rhythms of the Saints," respectively. The first screening featured "The Snowflake Crusade" with director Megan Holley on Tuesday.

"It's great to be included in the company of three other films and filmmakers of whom I now greatly admire," said Grief.

For more information visit www.thefilmchair.com/vision.

Want to spotlight an event? Send suggestions for Nov. 10-16 to djs395@psu.edu.