

Saturday night dive

The XFL's "not quite ready for primetime players" are tackling everything but ratings



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by Kristi S. Holliday
and Deanna Symoski
staff writer and a&e editor

Touchdown? More like a fumble. WWF superpower Vince McMahon's XFL isn't doing as well as he expected. The x-treme football league's ratings are down 75% since it aired the first week.

Bad luck or beginner's flaw? McMahon seems hopeful for a second season, citing that he, along with the Peacock, need to take a long range approach. Although he is disappointed with the new ratings, McMahon believes that after a second season the XFL will be as successful as the NFL.

NBC isn't so sure. The league has inadvertently tackled "Saturday Night Live" by pushing the show to after midnight when XFL games run long. The much-anticipated Jennifer Lopez episode didn't begin until well after midnight, and by then, few night owls were left to watch. NBC reran the show only weeks later.

In addition, local news casts are also starting much later when games run over, creating a problem in the lead-in ability of the league. To counter, NBC has started shopping around for programming to fill the ratings black hole that is devouring viewers on Saturday's primetime

schedule. The network would like to find tentative shows to fill in gaps created by the XFL next season. Yes, next season. Despite the trouble the league has created, NBC, at this point, is still dedicated to running games. Whether they remain in primetime may be an

issue advertisers have to contend with. So why are the ratings down for a football league created by the owner of billion-dollar wrestling empire? Some may say that despite the slim, sexy cheerleaders and foaming-at-the-mouth extreme players, the league

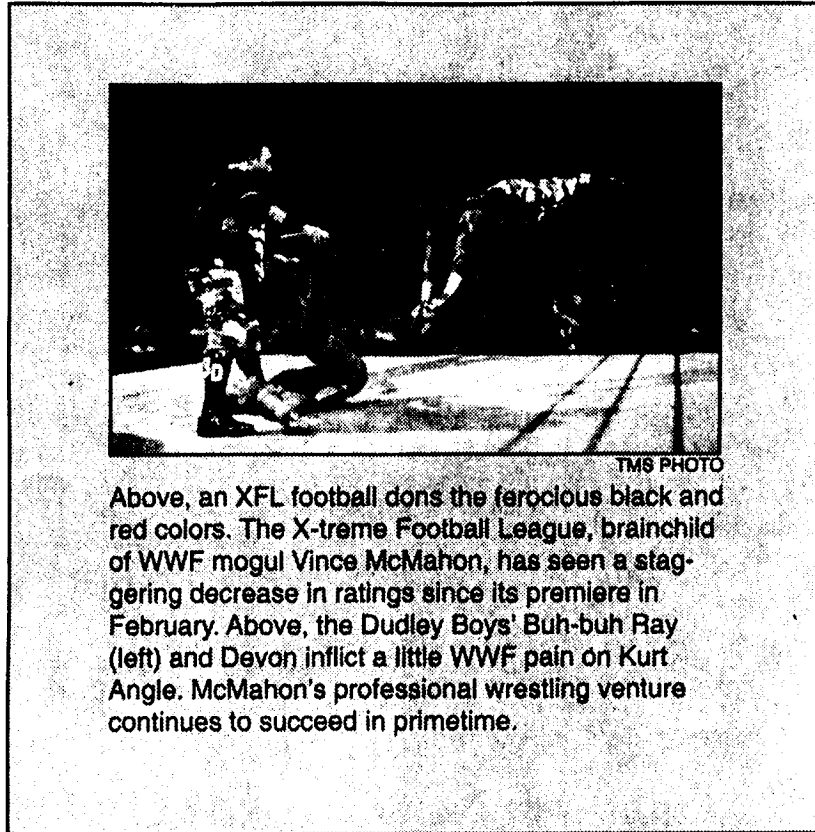
provides no real feel of athletics, especially when compared to the competitiveness that the NFL and other professional sports provide. Others say that it is because the so-called sport provides no memories, no spunk. And of course, part of the problem is that it was created by the owner of a billion dollar wrestling empire.

The same stigmas that abound in professional wrestling have cast doubt over the legitimacy of the football enterprise. Critics are skeptical of plot tampering, making the football as fake as the wrestling. While it is widely accepted in the realm of professional wrestling, NFL fans may not be accustomed to watching predetermined football.

From the McMahon standpoint, a risk has been taken in even starting the XFL. According to the WWF millionaire, money will be spent, and more risks taken in order to throw the XFL into the winning end zone.

The push continues on Monday and Thursday nights during WWF RAW and Smackdown, as well as blatant advertising that solicits ratings. New promos actually admit they know no one is watching, and that they will do anything to get viewers, including using the cheerleaders.

The football doesn't fall far from the goal post.



Above, an XFL football dons the ferocious black and red colors. The X-treme Football League, brainchild of WWF mogul Vince McMahon, has seen a staggering decrease in ratings since its premiere in February. Above, the Dudley Boys' Buh-buh Ray (left) and Devon inflict a little WWF pain on Kurt Angle. McMahon's professional wrestling venture continues to succeed in primetime.

Busting down Billboard's door

Shaggy takes 'Hotshot' up the charts

by Paige Miles
copy editor

He claims it wasn't him, but 32-year-old Orville Richard Burrell, a.k.a. Shaggy, has found his place on the Billboard charts in recent months. His album "Hotshot" has four times gone platinum with a voice and tunes comparable to reggae star Bob Marley.

Shaggy might not sport the bright threads that Marley did, but his fame and list of accomplishments is no less remarkable. At age 18, Shaggy arrived in Brooklyn, New York, with a desire to perform. His fame, however, didn't skyrocket at that point. He released a few songs to make waves in local dancehalls, but then took a break from the recording business to join the ranks of the Marines. After being in active duty during the Gulf War, he came back to find an offer from Virgin Records waiting in



Shaggy

FILE PHOTO

the wings.

Shaggy's 1993 album "Pure Pleasure" produced the single "Oh Carolina," to be followed two years later with "Boombastic," the single and the album, which hit the top by winning a Grammy for Best Reggae Album. After the rush of success, Shaggy hit a rut. He was dropped from Virgin Records, possibly because of his failed third album "Midnite Lover." Executives at Virgin Records likely regret their decision.

The film "How Stella Got Her Groove Back" provided a ray of light for the artist. MCA Records offered Shaggy a chance to record the single "Luv Me, Luv Me" with Janet Jackson for the soundtrack. The song became a hit on pop radio. Shaggy's next and current album "Hotshot" has driven him to even higher popularity. The first single "It Wasn't Me," the tale of a man caught by his girlfriend

having an affair with the "girl next door" flew up the charts. "Angel," the second single released off the album, has had the same fortune. "Angel" is a remake of Merrilee Rush's 1968 song "Angel of the Morning," which has been covered many times by artists such as Olivia Newton John and The Pretenders' Chrissy Hynde. The song includes basslines from the Steve Miller Band hit "The Joker."

Shaggy and his associates are lavishing in their massive success and fame. Shaggy himself has started his

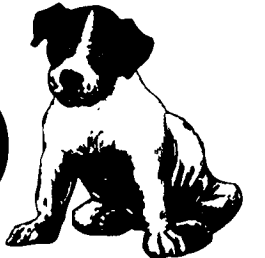
own record label, Big Yard, while the lead vocalist on "Angel," Bruce Brewster, is looking into a solo career. But anyone who rises to great success is bound to have his critics. Shaggy and company have been criticized for not holding true reggae style. Instead of the stereotypical reggae dreadlocks, Shaggy sports crownrows, and as for being a Rasta, he claims to turn down any joints that pass his way.

Whether or not Shaggy is true to pure reggae style, his songs have proved to be successful on the charts with a mix of Jamaican and Latin beat. This "Hotshot" expects his album be on top for months to come.

Shaggy will appear at Behrend on April 19 at 8 p.m. in the ARC. Student tickets are \$15 with a limit of four. Tickets go on sale Thursday, March 29, at 7 a.m. Baby Sham will open for Shaggy.

Sic' Em FIDO

by Deanna Symoski



Listener Supported?

How radio is killing the authenticity of music

I can remember nearly passing out in the 95-degree sun one afternoon two summers ago. The other stage at Woodstock '99 had to be shut down because Dave Matthews was about to play for 250,000 people, and I think I was the only one who didn't care. I was bored that afternoon. His songs took foreverveerr. I just wanted to hear "Ants Marching" and go find some water and a place to sit down.

I wasn't a fan.

Fast forward to the moment I really listened to "Lie in Our Graves." I heard the genius in his lyrics, a poetic approach to the mundane and the innocently beautiful. I took the journey in his music, sweeping me and those devoted enough to listen carefully to some other place by the end of it—no matter how long it took. I could feel summer in his images, walkin' along the water. I could hear the desperation of chances passed, what we might have...

Dave Matthews. The name to me now encapsulates a world of music based on impressive talent and an instinct about the human experience only those with the patience to notice can ever really explain. His songs are long, and sometimes he mumbles. But that's Dave, and you either like him or you don't. If you do, you find ways to hear him, actively seeking out the opportunity to engage his music. If you don't like him, you probably don't know the words to any of his songs, and have only a vague idea of the names of one or two.

That is, until this newest CD, *Everyday*. With "I Did It" now in heavy rotation, everyone knows the words—fan or not.

But this isn't a review of *Everyday*; there's been enough of that. This isn't even an homage to a great musician, though it may seem so up to here. This is about radio, the great thief of music majesty.

If video killed the radio star, radio stars are killing music. Not everyone likes Dave Matthews, I know that. But until now, those who didn't weren't forced to listen to him. Matthews was embraced by those who appreciated him and ignored by everyone else. Thanks to airplay, however, his music is being whored out for mainstream popularity, and cheapening the experience of what used to be art. A three minute song on the radio is not Dave Matthews. It is the dumbing down of his music so that it's fit for airplay—and any listener.

But it isn't just the Dave situation that's brought this epidemic to light. Phish pulled the same 180 when it released "Heavy Things." The lack of a linear musical form made everyone except a true Phish head nervous prior to any mainstream exposure, but one shot on the radio and suddenly heads everywhere were bobbing. Newsflash: that's not what Phish really sounds like! That's the version radio finds fit for air. You want to experience the real sound of the band, you go to the show, because like Dave Matthews, some things can only really be experienced live.

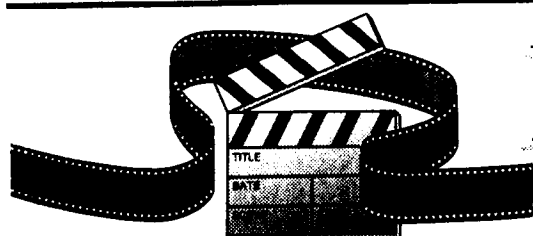
The same goes for other, less prolific bands, such as Matchbox Twenty. I am a big fan of the band, but not because I know all the words to "If You're Gone." Any 14-year-old could rattle them off, but I dare her to come up with a full verse of "Kody." The problem is that music stops being music—an artform—and becomes little more than background noise while you're driving to the grocery store, thinking about your rotten day. Meaningful songs don't have the chance to make the impact they were meant to when they are cut down or played six times every hour on every station.

Perhaps radio thinks it is doing some sort of philanthropic service to those bands that may not have mainstream recognition. What it is actually doing, however, is picking away at a fan base the strength of which mainstream bands don't have. There is almost something elite about knowing a band before everyone else does, or loving a kind of music that others simply don't get. It forges a bond that makes the live performance intimate among thousands of people.

Maybe this is why I am so bitter about the fact that the majority of people with floor seats at that Matchbox Twenty show were under the age of 18. They don't get the soul in the music, and neither do people like me at Phish shows, but that's why I don't go. Who would want these kinds of pseudo-fans, these people who consider themselves an authority on the act because they know the words to that one song. Airwaves may take music to a broader audience, but the people who like a band for what they hear on the radio are the people who only go to wedding receptions for the free booze.

And so I'll flip through stations when the CD player isn't readily at hand, and I'll remember the good ol' days. Days when Dave Matthews' first priority was filling concert venues not air time, and when no one but angry kids with a good ear knew who Limp Bizkit was. I'll think of a time when the Goo Goo Dolls played in garages, not elevators, and when music meant something to the people who listened to it.

Be a fan.



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*Release Date: 3/27