

# Entertainment

## Billy Joel catches a flame

*"Storm Front" revitalizes Joel's career*

by Robb Frederick  
Entertainment Editor

Throughout his 1983 courtship of supermodel Christie Brinkley, singer/songwriter Billy Joel focused his musical abilities toward life's more enjoyable facets. The resulting work, *An Innocent Man*, illustrated Joel's honest, youthful jubilation through songs like "Uptown Girl" and "Tell Her About It."

This carefree musicianship continued on the acclaimed *The Bridge* and a coolly received live release, but Joel's eyes have once again begun to notice the bitter injustices of modern life.

On *Storm Front*, his twelfth release for Columbia Records, Joel returns to the rebellious spirit of the angry young man. His reputable lyrics brim with images of frustration and dependency, but his subdued piano technics cushion the forcefulness of his message.

The clearest example of Joel's reborn vitality is "We Didn't Start the Fire," the single which has propelled *Storm Front* onto the music charts. This song, recalling significant political and social events from Joel's forty years, showcases the singer's lyrical mastery. Joel's blitzkrieg vocals appear in couplets representing the annual impact of political, athletic, and social occurrences.

The topics and events Joel refers to are often unpleasant, as his verse for 1963 demonstrates. "Pope Paul, Malcolm X, British politician sex / J.F.K. blown away, what else do I have to say," he bitterly shouts.

The song's chorus unites these diverse incidents and uncovers the track's underlying theme. In Joel's words: "We didn't start the fire / It was always burning since the world's been turning." These lines infer that no generation can be held

responsible for the current state of world affairs.

This biting commentary is immediately followed by "The Downeaster 'Alexa,'" which brings Joel's frustration to a more personalized level. The track describes the challenges faced by a poor fisherman who can no longer earn enough to support his family. Modernization and government regulation has destroyed the man's business, and he can do nothing but watch his family's legacy come to an end.

*"Storm Front" revitalizes the piano man's technique, returning a tempestuous edge to his sound.*

The images of despair and discontent continue on *Storm Front's* title track, which returns to the lonesome sorrow of those at sea. As the title suggests, the song's central theme revolves around a situation which has been plunged into turmoil.

The central character of "Storm Front" reflects upon his inability to appreciate the many enjoyable aspects of his life, while he awaits the arrival of a gale symbolizes his future troubles.

On the track *Leninograd*, Joel uses the cold war as an outlet for his anger. The song explains the plight of a Soviet soldier who does not understand the need for his services.

Joel's current fixation with life's negative aspects may dominate portions of *Storm Front*, but the release also accommodates an apologetic,

lovestruck aspect of his persona.

On "I Go To Extremes," Joel shows remorse for a moodiness which almost reaches the degree of schizophrenia.

The song "Shameless" continues this search for forgiveness as Joel humbly begs for another chance. Through lines like "I'd do anything you want me to / I'd do anything at all," the track evolves into an unrestricted profession of love.

"And so it Goes," the track which closes *Storm Front*, returns Joel to his romantic best, as he dismisses his back-up band and utilizes his piano ability to create an intimate work which leaves listeners with a slight feeling of uncertainty.

Joel's attempt to return to his classic rebellious spirit was greatly assisted by his enlistment of Foreigner guitarist Mick Jones, who replaces Joel's longtime partner Phil Ramone behind the production boards.

The collaboration between Joel and Jones has revitalized the piano man's technique, returning a tempestuous edge to his sound. The difference is notable from the opening bars of "That's Not Her Style," the track which opens *Storm Front*.

The song begins with a blues-influenced harmonica which is joined by a slide guitar and Joel's keyboards. The subtle traces of blues remain throughout the track, but the tempo converts the piece into a rousing extract of rock and roll.

This energetic opening sets the tone for the remainder of *Storm Front*. Throughout the release, Joel details the unpleasantness which accompany ordinary life, and his frustration fuels the bitterly narrated products of his reborn vitality.

## Chevy Chase stays home for the holidays

by Michael Gettleman  
Collegian Staff Writer

As the holiday season moves into full swing, the new Christmas movies are working their way into local theaters. The most hype thus far has come with *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*.

Stars Chevy Chase and Beverly D'Angelo return as Clark and Ellen Griswald, the goofy parents trying at all costs to give their children the all-American everything, as they did in their previous two films. This time, they tackle Christmas.

The film opens with the Griswalds going into the woods in an attempt to find the perfect family Christmas tree. While out trudging through the snow, they finally set sight upon their evergreen. It is at this point that they discover that they have neither an ax nor a saw. So they uproot the thing and load it upon their family truckster. As it turns out, this sapling was about twenty feet tall and a bit too huge for their modest one-story family room. Eventually, they do trim it down.

Clark's dream of the perfect Christmas includes, of course, lots of relatives, no matter how much chaos they may cause.

Both sets of grandparents converge upon the Griswald home and wreak havoc. They argue and fuss and fight throughout their week-long stay.

Even Clark's second cousin, played by Randy Quaid, comes to town with his wife and two kids in their lovely mobile home. Quaid returns to play the same disgusting character that he portrayed in the first film.

The family gathering is completed when an old, deaf, senile great-aunt arrives with her husband. She is celebrating her 80th Christmas and adds a nice touch by letting her patriotism shine through at not-so-opportune moments.

Another aspect of this film deals with Clark's work life. With

his development of a time-released coating for cereals to keep them crunchy, he's counting on a nice Christmas bonus. The money from this has already been spent on a swimming pool, a life-long dream of Clark's.

Clark's boss, played by Brian Doyle Murray, is the typical hard-nosed penny pincher who had decided to cut out bonuses this year in favor of a membership in the Jelly of the Month club. This twist provides an interesting sequence of events for the film's finale.

Another subplot involves the neighbors of the Griswalds. They are the stereotypical yuppie couple who are very anti-Christmas, pro-self. They catch some of the Griswald's yuletide spirit, quite unwillingly. They are humorously overpowered by Clark's Christmas light display, a surprise found in the second Griswald family tree, and a visit by some officers of the Chicago police department.

This movie is filled with many very funny scenes which are written in the familiar style of *National Lampoon* magazine. Cat explosions, wildlife in trees, and the effects of pine sap on your hands are just a few of the wonderful gags that have appeared in some form on the pages of the magazine.

Chevy Chase succeeds in providing the family with a wonderful Christmas, and he also provides a nice performance. He frequently returns to his oldest trick, the pratfall which is reminiscent of his days with *Saturday Night Live*. Anyone who enjoys seeing Chase perform will enjoy his antics in this movie.

*Christmas Vacation* isn't a classic, but there are some hysterical moments which are worth seeing, such as Clark's adventures while trapped in the attic, or his attempt at putting up a light display. Once again, the folks at *National Lampoon* have succeeded in making fun of some of the more enjoyable aspects of life.

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- 8 Bad English, Syria Mosque, Pittsburgh
- 9 Blue Oyster Cult, Agora Theater, Cleveland
- 10 The Psychedelic Furs, Shea's Theater, Buffalo
- 19 Motley Crue, Memorial Auditorium, Buffalo
- 20 Motley Crue, Civic Arena, Pittsburgh
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