

# Shattered Paradise rebuilt

by Christi Luden  
*The Collegian*

Seeing life through a child's eyes is often the remedy for deep and complex problems. When Ben and Lilley Reed (Don Johnson and Melanie Griffith) decide to take a little boy into their home for the summer, they don't know how much he will change their lives. Once happy and now torn apart, their relationship is slowly mended in *Paradise*.

Willard (Elijah Wood) is a 10-year-old boy whose mother is pregnant and whose father, unknowingly to Willard, has left the family for another woman. Too much for his mom to handle, Willard is taken to live with the Reeds until she gives birth to her child.

A lonely and scared little boy who makes up stories to be accepted, Willard finds a friend on his first day with the Reeds. Nine-year-old Billie (Thora Birch) is a tomboy who lives next door to the Reeds and has also had a rough life with her single, flirty

**Children can make significant differences in all the lives they touch.**

mother and teenage sister Darlene.

Being a loner, Willard tries not to accept Billie's invitations for friendship until she makes him an offer that's too good to refuse: perching in a treehouse to watch a naked Darlene iron her clothes.

This scene is one of many that illustrates the curiosity and shocking comments that boys of this age are known for. It also marks the beginning of an innocent, cute and extremely close friendship that develops between the two.

After Willard's confrontation with his new found friend, we begin to get a picture of the family he will be living with. Lilley (Griffith) is a country woman who spends her time hanging the wash on the clothesline and sewing her own clothes. She is quiet and seems

excited about having Willard stay with them.

On the other hand, Ben Reed (Johnson) is a hard-nosed, grumpy fisherman that is more than disgusted about Willard's presence. He makes it clear that he will not be responsible for keeping the boy entertained.

Through a series of adorable scenes, Willard manages to touch Ben and becomes his little buddy instead of just a nuisance. Ben helps Willard to take control of his life and ask the right people the right questions, while Willard helps bring the best out of Ben.

Willard also manages to get closer to Lilley. She begins to show him the caring and love only a mother could, and Willard is eager to accept this compassion to replace what he's missing from his own mother.

This may seem like a happy and joyful scenario, but instead it is tainted by the distant relationship that Ben and Lilley share. We find out that the two had lost their 3-year-old son just two and a half years ago, and neither has really dealt with their loss. Instead of binding together in a life-shattering situation, Ben and Lilley grew apart due to feelings left hidden and words left unsaid.

Don Johnson is the perfect actor to play this part. Ben needs to be gruff, but soft-looking and hard-nosed, but loving. Johnson does a spectacular job combining these characteristics into a character that we can first hate and then, by the end, feel deep compassion for.

Melanie Griffith also portrays Lilley to a tee. A beautiful, soft-spoken country woman who you feel remorse for throughout the film for different reasons. She is the perfect contrast to Johnson.

Elijah Wood contains all the characteristics needed to portray Willard as a sweet, young loner who is looking for someone to love and share his life with. He not only enters the hearts of the Reeds and Billie, but also every audience member in the theater.

Director, Mary Agnes Donoghue does a great job combining a very serious adult theme with the anecdotes and innocence of children. *Paradise* is yet another example of how children, although seemingly immature and unexperienced, can make a significant difference in the lives of all they touch.

# Toad *Fears* nothing

## New release deals with social problems

by Sean Dougherty  
*The Collegian*

The group Toad the Wet Sprocket got its name from a Monty Python skit they were in. Since this group doesn't have a name that sounds anything like the name of a band, one might expect this music to be punk, new age or something relatively extreme.

However, Toad the Wet Sprocket's style is a mix of progressive rock and pop. It is progressive rock because the rock songs are sounds that generally would not have much success aired on a rock station.

Their latest release, *Fear*, contains songs that deal with current social problems.

Their songs are serious and moving and confront such topics as rape, death, lack of religion and parental abandonment.

Their lead single, "Is It For Me" is a unique song about teenage boys and their vandalous escapades. The sound is rock with powerful electric guitar, strong vocals and guitar soloing.

"Hold Her Down," a song about rape is of course serious and unusually moving. It forces the listener to deal with feelings like that of a rape victim. The song is typical rock with much variation and the vocals of an angry youth.

A slower song, "Pray Your God," is about growing away from religion written from God's point of view. "I feel my body weakened by the years as people turn to gods of cruel design. Is it that they fear the pain of death or

***This album is depressing in a good way.***

could it be they fear the joy of life." It is a sarcastic view of religious faith.

A song that could have been their lead single is "Walking On The Ocean." It is about missing the dead. It is slower and includes cellos, violins and a mandolin which provides a skeleton of sorts for the music. The vocals

are strong, yet sensitive and the music plays smoothly.

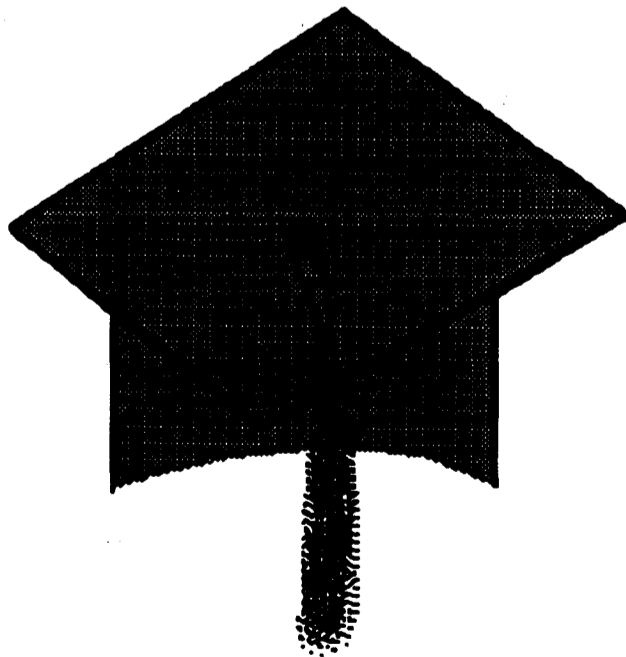
Toad's lyrics are about obscure topics. One of their songs deals with the feelings of an abandoned child. This song is entitled "Before You Were Born." It is sung in a moving way from an adult to an abandoned child.

"God damn the people who left you in pain/God damn the father without face and God damn the lovers who never showed up and God damn the wounds that show how deep a word can cut."

Once again, there is an emotional appeal. The song is slow and soft. Six-string chords are allowed to subtly ring on in the background. A bass guitar and synthesizer are left to give the song its full sound.

Although this album is frankly depressing, it's depressing in a good way. It causes you to think (kind of like U2), and also brings out your compassion. And besides the obvious moving quality of the lyrics, the feel of the music perfectly reflects the lyrics. *Fear* is an excellent addition to any music collection.

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