

Hard effort and talent promise to make "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" a powerful performance

JARED BEZZANT
Co-A&E Editor

Maggie Chapin is no amateur when it comes to acting. After performing five shows at CCC, she has some valuable experience. That's just what Theater Director David Smith-English needed to put on Tennessee Williams' "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof."

"I've wanted to do Williams for a long time," said Smith-English. "I finally felt I had a group of people with experience, commitment and the talent needed. I am very pleased at how it is developing."

Smith-English has been working with a cast of 13 for over a month to prepare for what could be his biggest challenge, but also his greatest accomplishment.

"It has been a satisfying experience for actors and directors," said Smith-English. "The depth goes on and on with Williams."

Smith-English explained that "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" deals with serious issues—issues that are often evident in Williams' works, from "A Street Car Named Desire" to "The Rose Tattoo."

"Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" is set in the Mississippi Delta in 1954. It revolves around the conflicts of a Southern family struggling with death, inheritances and addictions. Throughout the play characters develop, as their weaknesses prevail in very emotional moments and stirring lines.

Williams could be called one of the most famous American playwrights, Smith-English said. To many Ameri-

cans, Williams is considered a literary genius, who brought the South to the stage, just as William Faulkner did to the page.

"Williams' plays are poetry," Smith-English said.

In the 1950's Williams' plays became mainstream through cinematic production. Great actors such as Marlin Brando and Vivian Leigh turned in award winning performances of Williams' roles.

Paul Newman and Elizabeth Taylor led the production of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," with Burl Ives playing a memorable role as Big Daddy.

Anyone who knows Williams probably would tell you it's required to be a great actor in order to conquer some of Williams' characters, who are deep with complexities and a prevalent eerie realism.

Actress Maggie Chapin, who is playing Big Mama in the Clackamas production, said most people don't even remember her character in the movie.

"She must not have done a very good job," said Chapin.

She refuses to watch the movie until after the production is done. "I want to be my own Big Mama. She has a very important part. I want her to be memorable."

Chapin said her role as Big Mama is powerful, and feels like magic on the stage.

"I have a hard time not carrying it offstage," said Chapin.

One thing she will not be carrying offstage though is the "fat suit" she is required to wear in order to make her

character more believable. Chapin explained the difficulty in adjusting to the suit and the role, where she must act many years older and out of shape.

The play has required a lot of work and focus for the entire cast. To make the play as "true South" as possible, History Instructor and native Southerner Jackie Flowers was brought in to teach them a proper Southern accent.

"I think it will be one of the best the Drama Department has ever done," said Chapin.

The cast is confident of this drama, though it is much more serious than the fall production of "Flea in Her Ear."

"People have a hard time going to dramas," said Smith-English.

"They have a hard time seeing plays."

Smith-English promises humorous moments in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," which is not too serious. Smith-English is confident in the magic of Williams—his ability to make audiences laugh, cry and feel.

"I feel it will be a powerful experience for the audience," said Smith-English. "The audience should leave feeling something inside."

Danielle Turley, Jayson Shanafelt, V. Joseph Erickson and Chapin will lead the cast. The play will open Feb. 26 at 8 p.m. Other nights include Feb. 27-28 at 8 p.m. and March 6-7 at 8 p.m. March 8 at 2:30 p.m. in the McLoughlin Hall Theater. Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$3 for students and free for seniors who make reservations. Make reservations by calling 657-6958, ext. 2356.

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Five Iron Frenzy delivers ska at its skankin' best



JOEL P. SHEMPERT / Clackamas Print

Saxophonist Leonor Ortega prepares to scream some hardcore during Friday's concert.

JOEL P. SHEMPERT
Feature Editor

A common difficulty any group faces is that whenever they produce an album which broadens their horizons, which progresses musically, which builds in a creative way on their previous foundation—which, in short, sounds different from their last album—the fanbase reacts negatively, accusing them of anything from simply sounding bad to "selling out."

Ska-punk ensemble Five Iron Frenzy, with their sophomore release, *Our Newest Album Ever*, has faced this tide and hopefully stemmed it. While many seemed to think

Spacefighter—ska-swing group the Ws were superb—but it was obvious the bulk of Friday's concertgoers were really there for their long-overdue dose of the Frenzy. The six lads and a girl from Denver did not disappoint.

Five Iron Frenzy is enjoyable on recording, but nothing equals their live show. If it's energy you want, this is the team to beat. The hordes of skankers and even, uncouth though it may be, moshers, bore witness to this, and the only ones more fired up were the crowd were the band—all of whom, particularly frontman Reese Roper, kept up the on-stage acrobatics for the entire show.

The enjoyable selections in Five Iron Frenzy's set were too numerous to mention. They played a good mix of new and old tunes, so faithful fans were treated to such memorable oldies as "Beautiful America," a spoof on materialism and other moral decay, and the insane ditty "Third World

that their new CD, which features cleaner recording, more distinct lyrics, and a greater variety than their debut, *Upbeats and Beatdowns*, was somehow "too slow," and lacks their previous energy, their Lake Oswego concert on Friday the 13th at Rolling Hills Community Church amply dispelled that notion.

Opening acts Zak Attack and

Think Tank," as well as newer hits like "Superpowers," an offbeat look at fame, and that ever-popular ode to Junior High, "Suckerpunch." Leanon "Jeff the Girl" Ortega, the group's sax player, even sang the hardcore bridge to "A Fistful of Sand." She claimed later to have been practicing in the shower, and it seems to have paid off!

For all their volume, this time around Five Iron didn't sacrifice a shred of clarity. The horns were clean and the vocals were clear—something of a rarity at rock concerts. With the exception of the classic "Combat Chuck," which was pretty distorted, a new listener could have gone away from the show with a good idea of what the songs were saying.

And what the songs say is important indeed. Roper, the band's lyricist, has always claimed that humor comes second in importance to the message he hopes to convey. Five Iron Frenzy is a Christian band, and while they tend to be lauded as "less preachy" than their colleagues the Supertones, their faith comes through on stage as well as in the lyric sheet. Roper isn't afraid to say onstage, reiterating the punchline of the song "Anthem," that "freedom is only found in Jesus Christ."

It was the end of the set which really brought home this facet of the group. They played "Every New Day," in itself a song of devotion to God, and segued into a common praise chorus, "As the Deer."

The temptation at most concerts is to end with a big finish, guitars blaring and amps pushed to the limit. Five Iron didn't succumb to this. They chose instead to make a statement of faith, and to considerable effect. Groups of fans were seen when the dust settled to be praying, both singly and in groups. It is refreshing to see a group that knows how to have fun, and push it to the limit, yet in the end has a higher goal.

Five Iron Frenzy was indeed in rare form, and the entire ensemble has been more polished each time this reporter has heard them. May they continue to excel.