



MAKING THE SCENE

Where were you in '82? *Live from . . . the Hook* documentary hails local rock heroes

By Steve Evans

The party begins at high noon July 26 inside the Paramount Theatre with the world premiere of *Live from . . . the Hook*, a documentary highlighting 20 years of Charlottesville rock and roll. This hotly-anticipated film is a love letter to the local music scene—the smoky C-ville nightclubs of yesteryear, the beer-drenched dance floors, and especially the musicians who got people on their feet and dancing in long-gone clubs where college women stomped and swayed and licked their bright-red lips—flavored often enough with the sweet taste of bourbon & Coke. The guys on stage knew how to please as their audience whirled in a nocturnal mating dance set to an R&B backbeat. If anything, the musicians just smiled and jammed harder. As the film unspools, the message plays as pure and true as

a simple G-C-D chord progression: here is a community built on the mutual understanding between musicians and their fans, who know a steady diet of amped-up rock and roll can feed the soul and improve your life. *Live from . . . the Hook* shows what that scene was like.

Co-producer Deke Ealy says the picture tells a universal story of passion, of indie musicians and their way of life. The title comes from Charlottesville's nickname, "The Hook," describing how people are so often drawn back to the rich offerings of this little college town. A seven-hour concert by the bands featured in the rockumentary will go down at the Charlottesville Pavilion following the Paramount screening.

"My primary motivation for this project is it's just a great story," Ealy says. "I lived through this era and it's really important to me personally. It's a time that should be chronicled. There are so many people who poured so much love and energy into making this

scene happen. We're hoping it will appeal to that group who lived through that era and that it will be financially feasible. Beyond that, the film industry is a crazy thing, and it will be a roll of the dice. We hope to put it up at film festivals and see if the broader public will take a look at it." Ealy spent much of his free time as a UVA student in the early 1980s listening to live music around the Hook, as did most of his colleagues and co-producers. They've spent years and untold hours gathering and assembling rare and never-seen footage of the bands, interspersed with interviews and the reminiscences of

week. And they did it on Monday nights. Pastorfield and Girard are local legends, still gigging, still kicking out the jams for adoring crowds.

"When a lot of bands start, you try out a lot of different things," says Girard of his formative years. "We went after that post-punk English sound, Elvis (Costello), Graham Parker, Nick Lowe, but at the same time we were working on a lot of swing, a lot of R&B, looking for that connection with the audience. Once we settled on that groove that was working for us, it was just a matter of months for it to take off. We were a pretty good band, tight,

just because we haven't made it. That applies to every musician out there night after night, doing what he loves." Girard's voice fades and suddenly Johnny Sportcoat appears to wrap up the interview: "To me, when you look back on your life, on your dying day, you don't want any regrets: you don't wanna hear any bad music. And when that day comes I hope I don't hear 'Brandy (You're a Fine Girl),' 'cause I've heard it enough."

Pastorfield promises the Skip Castro Band will fire up many of the old favorites during their one-off show July 26 after the film's premiere.



Bob Girard of Johnny Sportcoat and the Casuals



The Skip Castro Band



Bo Randall and Charlie Pastorfield jamming at Easters

the musicians who saw it all go down front and center.

Much of the picture focuses on the early to mid-1980s music scene, when the Skip Castro Band and The Casuals featuring Johnny Sportcoat pounded out a steady barrage of rave-up rock into the wee hours of a C-ville morning. *Live from . . . the Hook* zeroes in on the memories of two men who were there—Skip Castro bassist Charlie Pastorfield and vocalist Bob Girard, aka Johnny Sportcoat, the bearded hipster in the dark suit who fronted The Casuals behind his Ray-Ban shades. In their heyday, these bands packed local clubs like The Mineshaft with 300 people, easy, week after

We were in our 20s and just in an incredible hurry, but it sounded pretty good." Girard met his future wife when he was in a band called Captain Tunes in 1974. "Her brother was a UVA student who'd call her up and say roll over to Charlottesville and check out this band, Captain Tunes," Girard says. "So there was romance in that old music." He laughs, then ponders a question about what the documentary means to him.

"I guess the least I could hope for is validation," he says. "People like me and Charlie do it because we love it, but we're always laboring in the shadows. We're good at what we do and we haven't quit

"I never get tired of playing 'I Don't Wanna Work' because it reminds me of what it was like when I didn't have to work," he says. "It was the first song we did that was one of our originals that sounded moderately commercial. It had a hook. And you're not gonna believe me, but I never get tired of playing (the band's signature song) 'Boogie at Midnight.'"

The bassist has seen it all through the years from his vantage point anchoring stage right. He recalls a delicate situation decades ago when gigging in Guantanamo Bay with a group featuring future members of Skip Castro and the Casuals. "They sent us over to the Marine base for the second week of

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our stay," he says. "The curtain opens, and we're ready to start into an Allman Brothers tune and we see the audience is heavily African American and our drummer—the only song he could think of to play was 'Lady Marmalade.' So we look at him like, you're kidding, right? He wasn't, so we hit into this old tune by Patti LaBelle and we're singing, 'Gitchi Gitchi Ya Ya Di-Da/voulez-vous coucher avec moi, ce soir?'" (The French lyric famously translates into "Do you want to sleep with me tonight?")

"And the Marines came toward the stage to show us that they weren't very happy with the band," Pastorfield recalls. "So a

Live From . . . the Hook

www.livefromthehook.com

July 26 Schedule

Noon: Paramount Theater:
Live From . . . the Hook

The premiere of the completed documentary film celebrating the history and passion of the Charlottesville music scene.

Movie Premiere Tickets: \$19 General Admission/\$50 Producer's Club
Producer's Club Members will sit with the musicians and production team in a preferred seating area.

2-9pm: Charlottesville Pavilion:
Really Live From the Hook

The reunion concert and DVD release party featuring the biggest names in Charlottesville music from the 1970s and 1980s.

Concert Tickets: \$25 General Admission

Tickets available at these locations:

On the web: www.livefromthehook.com;
www.charlottesvillepavilion.com; and
www.theparamount.net

By Phone: Pavilion Box Office
(877-272-8849) and Paramount Box Office
(434-979-1333)

In Person: Paramount Box Office,
Pavilion Box Office, Plan 9 Records, and
The Charlottesville/Albemarle Visitors
Centers.

group of them collided with a set of MPs in the front row and we took off running. Ah, memories you'll cherish for a lifetime."

It seems the musician cherishes all his memories, especially a fateful encounter in high school that set him on the road to Charlottesville.

"My counselor gave me a bad recommendation to Brown, so I came down to UVA," Pastorfield says. "He hated my ass, and I owe that guy a lot. Had I gone to Brown I think I would have spent my life in a very different way. I feel very fortunate to have spent my life in this town, doing what I'm doing. The people who are living in this town, who went to school during

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that time, this is a movie about them. It's an amazing window into a world of music and yes, sometimes debauchery, and some really good times. It's a cool celebration of this community."

Most of the people who worked on the film are UVA graduates. The budget, Ealy says, has been a moving target. "As they say, the film is done when you run out of money. What I have been told by people in the industry is that the quality of the film suggests a much larger budget than what we've put into it, and that's because it's a labor of love."

A working cut of the film was screened to "a very positive response" at the 2006 Virginia Film Festival, Ealy says (he's being modest: people were dancing in the aisles). Now the picture is finally ready. *Live from . . . the Hook* will be immediately available for sale on DVD at the premiere, and the producers plan to support the project with screenings in additional cities along the East Coast—"cities that have concentrations of people connected to this scene," Ealy says.

Pastorfield and Girard, who met in the early 1970s at UVA and have jammed together for thousands of shows through the years, are gifted musicians who took the regional touring-band scene as far as it could go—right to the edge of stardom. They were Almost Famous. They did it for the love of music. They still do, a quarter-century later, while raising families, holding down jobs, and paying mortgages right here in Albemarle.

The one constant in their lives is the music. They made a decent living playing rock and roll at nightclubs and fraternity houses up and down the East Coast. They inspired other home-grown musicians who eventually made it over the top (read: Dave Matthews). Pastorfield's band even got one of their music videos on the air in the early days of MTV as part of a national competition. But they never cracked the Billboard Charts. Most musicians can relate. As the film makes clear, artists create because they are passionate about their work; making a buck is ancillary to the need to play, to get onstage in front of an audience and hear them roar.

We're looking at folks who have followed that passion in their lives," Ealy says. "That's what it's all about. It's all you need."

Steve Evans is an Albemarle-based writer and semi-retired hellraiser whose beer-hazed memories of the local music scene circa 1982 include partying with The Casuals and the Skip Castro Band right up to closing time at the Mineshaft; yes, and that defunct UVA bacchanal once known as Easters. His enduring collection of vinyl includes The Casuals' Statewide Joyride.