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Here & Now



COMING FRIDAY
Broadway, bluegrass
and fall CDs. Go:
The Music Issue.
Friday

TECHNOLOGY TRENDS



Keeping cool while the video game action gets hot

When video gameplay gets intense, sweaty hands can turn a high score into a wet mess. Enter the Logitech ChillStream controller for PCs.

This device, which looks like an Xbox controller with gills, contains a small fan that blows cool air onto your palms while you play.

A button turns the fan on full blast or sets it to an interval mode that gives you puffs of air every few minutes.

The ChillStream also has all of the necessary game controls, including two analog joysticks, a directional pad, shoulder fire buttons and four colorful function buttons.

The controller connects to any PC running Windows XP through a USB port and is compatible with most games.

The ChillStream will be available for about \$40 this month online and in stores.

Video editing tool can animate home movies

Stop-motion animation — shooting a movie one frame at a time, making subtle adjustments between each shot to simulate movement — has inspired plenty of quirky productions, from the "Robot Chicken" series on the Cartoon Network to the "Wallace & Gromit" films from Britain. Aspiring animators on a budget may want to take a look at the latest version of Adobe's video editing program, Adobe Premiere Elements 3.0.

The software, announced this week and arriving in stores soon, includes a stop-motion video capture function that lets you flow a series of single shots together into one big moving picture. When snapping individual frames from a connected Webcam, for example, the program provides you with a somewhat transparent image of your last shot on the screen so you can better judge the movements of the action figure, clay model or whatever else you're animating.

If you hear Ravel's 'Bolero,' this must be the treadmill

With their small size and skip-proof music playback, portable MP3 devices have become part of many people's regular exercise routines. But fiddling with the controls to find the right kind of music for different workout activities is a bother. Sony's new S2 Sports Walkman players include a sensor that can determine your pace and automatically switch to your favorite play lists for running or walking.

The players, available this month from major retailers, come in two models: the NW-S203F (about \$120), which can store one gigabyte of music, and the NW-S205F (about \$150), which can hold two gigabytes. The water-resistant players are about the size of a lipstick tube and include headphones and an armband.

The S2 Sports Walkman has a stopwatch as well as a counter for steps, distance and calories burned, and an FM tuner for live radio listening. The player can also tune into the gym's television sets.

— The New York Times



Destined for success



Tom Petty, who grew up in Gainesville, will be performing with the Heartbreakers at a sold-out concert Thursday in Gainesville. The Strokes will open and Stevie Nicks may also perform, according to her Web site.



Tom Petty performed in various bars and venues around Gainesville before landing a record deal in Los Angeles.

Before he was a rock star, Tom Petty was just a quiet, driven kid from Gainesville

By ALICE WALLACE

Rumors abound when it comes to the specifics of Tom Petty's days as a fledgling rocker in Gainesville.

Did he drop out of high school to focus on music? Where exactly was the infamous "Mudcrutch farm"? Petty's friends and former bandmates know the answers, and Petty himself offered many of those details in his recent book, "Conversations with Tom Petty." Yet friends say the most vivid memories they have of "Tommy" are of a mostly quiet Southern boy with a quirky sense of humor and a serious run for music.

"The thing about Tom, musically, is that he is as big a fan as he is an artist," says former Gainesville musician Marty Jourard, who recalls Petty sitting down to listen to Bob Dylan's album "Slow Train Coming" from beginning to end without saying a word when it was first released.

Petty was born in Gainesville in 1950, and his classmate and fellow Gainesville musician Mike Boulware says he can recall standing next to Petty in chorus class at Howard Bishop Middle School in ninth grade.

"To be honest, he was pretty quiet," Boulware says. "We all sort of didn't know what to make of him. But he was one of the first guys I knew who had a black turtle-neck and Beatles boots."

Boulware says Petty also didn't seem to get much of a thrill out of the class. "He dropped out," Boulware says. "I think because he didn't want to do sight-reading or something. And his voice was too different — that was the thing. That's really his best selling-point these days. When he opens his mouth, you know right away who it is."

Petty's first official band in high school was called the Sundowners. When the Sundowners broke up, Petty briefly had a band called The Establishment with two of the former Sundowners, but he eventually left them to join The Epics — with band members Rick and Rodie Rucker, Duke Underwood and Tom Leadon, the brother of the Eagles' guitarist Bernie Leadon.

■ **Band's continues:** Petty skipped his high school graduation to perform at a show in South Florida. 5C

HEAR THE CONCERT

Listen to the concert yourself beginning at 10 p.m. Thursday 95.5 Wnd-FM.

TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS SONGS THAT MADE THE BILLBOARD TOP 40

- "Breakdown," 1977
- "Don't Do Me Like That," 1975
- "Refugee," 1979
- "The Waiting," 1981
- "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around (Stevie Nicks duet with Petty's solo album), 1981
- "You Got Lucky," 1982
- "Change of Heart," 1983
- "Don't Come Around Here No More," 1985
- "Needles and Pins" (with Stevie Nicks), 1986
- "Jammin' Me," 1987
- "Runnin' Down a Dream," 1987
- "I Won't Back Down," 1989
- "Free Fallin'," 1989
- "Learning to Fly," 1991
- "Mary Jane's Last Dance," 1993
- "Mary Don't Know How It Feels," 1994



Stephanie Olney, 16, right, and Jacob Titterington, 16, rehearse a scene for the "Latte and Laughter" improv show at West Port High School in Ocala. The comedy opens Friday and runs through Sunday.

Students' improv show perks with 'Latte and Laughter'

By JESSICA GREENE

Too many class clowns? No problem. Well, as far as Janet Shelley is concerned, anyway.

As acting director of the Marion County Center for the Arts at West Port High School, class clowns are exactly what Shelley needs for "Latte and Laughter," the improvisational comedy her students are producing.

It's along the lines of "Who's Line Is It Anyway," she said. Improvisational comedy is unscripted and relies on spontaneity and quick wit.

The production will run Friday through Sunday. A \$5 admission fee includes a beverage and dessert.

But coffee and desserts aren't the only treats in store for attendees. The design is "kind-of in reverse," said technical director Eric Ketchum. The audience will be seated on the stage at tables in a cafe-style set-up, and the performers will entertain on a stage-extension, he said.

■ **Improv continues:** Production is a way for students to raise funds for fall musical. 5C

3 Things You Can Do Today

1 You can download "Don't Download This Song" at www.dontdownloadthissong.com. On the track, from Wi Ai Yankovic's upcoming new album, he implores music fans to "buy the CD like you know you should."

2 Cindy Marks speaks tonight on "Florida Bats" from 7-8 p.m. at Chinesegut Nature Center 23212 Lake Lindsey Road, Brooksville. (352) 754-672; www.myfwc.com.



3 Everyone's talking about "Dancing with the Stars." Tucker Carlson was eliminated last week. Find out who is to go tonight at 8 on ABC.



From left: Mike Campbell, Tom Petty, Steve Ferrone and Ron Blair of the rock group Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. They will be performing at the Stephen C. O'Connell Center on the UF campus Thursday to a sold-out crowd.

Band's roots extend to 'Mudcrutch Farm'

CONTINUED FROM 1C

"We realized Tom was the real musician of the band," Rick Rucker says. "But it took him a while to figure it out."

To dispel the famous myth that Petty dropped out of school to pursue music, Rucker says he can specifically remember when The Epics were down in South Florida playing a show while Petty's Gainesville High School classmates were walking across the stage.

"He skipped graduation to play with us," Ricky says. "There's a lot of information out there that is totally false."

Rick also says Tom took a brief hiatus from The Epics after high school and followed a girlfriend to Tampa, where he spent time working in her family's funeral home.

"He used to tell us funeral-home stories," Ricky says with a laugh.

The Epics eventually renamed themselves Mudcrutch.

"Petty came up with the name, because we figured that would be the only way we'd ever agree on anything," Underwood says.

After about a year as Mudcrutch, all of the members except Petty and Leadon left for various reasons.

So Petty reinvented Mudcrutch and formed the band that most locals now remember — which included future Heartbreakers Mike Campbell on

guitar and Benmont Tench on keyboards, as well as drummer Randall Marsh.

The band's stomping grounds — a house where Boulware says the walls were lined in leather, the rooms were illuminated by blacklights and thumped dancers were never hard to come by — was located on Northwest 45th Avenue, near where Northwest Sixth Street curves around to meet Northwest 13th Street.

The "Mudcrutch farm," as it came to be known, was where several of the band members lived. Tom Holtz, a Gainesville musician who says he filled in with Mudcrutch for a two-week stint at one point, said he remembers the area was wooded at the time.

"All I remember is that there was a house and a bunch of land," he says. "There was a clearing and woods all the way around it. Now it's all subdivisions and everything else is long gone."

Jourard says it was common for Mudcrutch, or any one of the bands in town, to hold impromptu concerts on Mudcrutch farm or other prime chunks of land.

"There was a huge hippie movement in Gainesville, and

they all knew what was going on musically," Jourard says. "Someone would say 'So-and-so is playing a free gig on their lawn Tuesday,' and everyone would show up."

Mudcrutch played at various bars and venues around town, with their most regular gig at Dub's Steer Room.

"Petty's band used to get fired from Dub's on a fairly regular basis for refusing to play covers," Boulware says.

In 1970, Mudcrutch headed to Los Angeles — door to door, tapes in hand — to seek a

record deal. There were detours, and the Mudcrutch of Mudcrutch Farm days fell apart. But Petty and Campbell remained close, and both kept tabs on the soft-spoken keyboard player Tench, whose father was a judge in Gainesville.

Petty's journey West was a rough road, one that required him to send his first wife, Jane, and their first daughter back to Gainesville while he continued to seek a record deal.

Petty had to ponder a solo project or find a new band. He wanted to stay with

guitarist Campbell and, still armed with a record deal, convinced Tench's Gainesville band The Heartbreakers to join them. Petty, Campbell, Lynch, Tench and bassist Ron Blair recorded their self-titled album (with "Breakdown" and "American Girl") in 1976.

And there it is: 30 years later with hits and solo/side projects (Petty arrives in Gainesville this week behind his recent — and third — solo CD, "Highway Companion"). They are members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and Petty is widely considered one of the best songwriters of his generation.

For the Gainesville musicians who watched Petty grow from a lanky, tow-headed kid with a dream of greatness into one of the country's most recognizable pop musicians, it seemed as though it was destined — but nobody knew it at the time.

"It was not a sure thing," Jourard says. "He didn't leave Gainesville as this conquering hero. He knew he had to go to L.A., because that's where the record companies were."

Boulware agrees that no one knew where Petty would eventually end up.

"There were plenty of other talented musicians around town," Boulware says. "But I have to credit him for his ability to stick with it, and for his writing. He immediately jumped into the higher level as far as writing a hit song, and they were good songs despite being hit songs."

"Petty's band used to get fired from Dub's on a fairly regular basis for refusing to play covers."

Mike Boulware
Tom Petty's former classmate

The tax man cometh with a new look

There's nothing like a letter in the mail from the IRS to send chills down your spine. Just seeing that envelope, even if you are certain you don't owe a dime, can cause an otherwise calm taxpayer to panic.



MARY HUNT EVERYDAY CHEAPSKATE

Recently, the IRS announced it has contracted with three private debt-collection agencies to go after deadbeat U.S. taxpayers who owe back federal taxes. This poses a potential problem for all of us — even those of us who do not owe a dime in back taxes. That's because such a move opens up all kinds of potential for abuse at the hands of scam artists posing as collectors commissioned by the IRS.

Your best defense, whether you owe or not, is to be knowledgeable about the program, to know your rights as a taxpayer and to be keenly aware how to identify a scam artist.

1. The IRS does not communicate with taxpayers through e-mail, and it will not e-mail taxpayers about debts turned over to private collectors. If you get an e-mail message that appears to be from the IRS, do not respond. Dismiss it as malicious spam.

2. The IRS will never ask you for any passwords or PIN numbers that would give the agency access to your bank or credit-card accounts. If you are asked to give this information, dismiss it as fraudulent.

3. You will know the contact is legitimate when you get a letter from the IRS that names the company handling your debts. This letter will also include information advising you of your rights as a taxpayer. It

will be followed by another letter from the collection agency telling you that you will specify the amount you owe. 4. Taxpayers chosen for debt collection through one of these private collectors will make their checks payable to the IRS, not to a private company if you are directed to make your check payable to any entity other than the IRS. 5. If you are found to owe taxes by one of these authorized collection agencies, you can set up an agreement to pay your debt in installments over a three-year period.

6. If you are one of the taxpayers turned over to one of these private companies collection, you can opt out and demand that the IRS handle your case. However, you need to do this in writing and then be prepared to cooperate fully with the IRS.

Need help with your tax situation? Contact the Taxpayer Advocate Service, an office that helps people resolve their problems with the IRS, (877) 275-8271.

Mary Hunt is the author of books. *Everyday Cheap skate* readers will find her recently revised book, *Debt-Proof Living*, available at www.debtproofliving.com/tu

CFCC hosts college and career expo Thursday

By JESSICA GREENE

Students, get your bags ready. For more than three hours Thursday, the Central Florida Community College Klein Center will turn into an academic candy store.

In conjunction with Marion County Public Schools, Central Florida Community College will host a Careers and Colleges Expo, open to all ninth- through 12th-grade students, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the CFCC Klein Conference Center, 3001 S.W. College Road.

As part of the State University Tour, representatives from more than 70 institutes including colleges, universities, vocational schools and businesses will host information booths, said Jamie Schofield, CFCC school relations coordinator.

It's a great opportunity for students to learn about many

different institutions at time and to actually be able to speak with a representative one-on-one, said Schofield.

The event is a large one; 13,000 people, said Schofield. She suggests that students write down a list of important questions and have them ready to ask representative

"They always have freebies of like Halloween candy," said West Port High School guidance counselor Gracie Smith. Bags to carry all the collected literature are usually provided, but it's not a bad idea to bring one with you from home just in case it runs out, Schofield said.

Smith said teachers have been encouraged to offer students extra credit attending.

Contact Jessica Greene at 7159 or jessica.greene@starbanner.com.



Derek Galarza, 16, left, and Kiara Feliciano, 17, rehearse an improv scene during rehearsal of "Latte and Laughter" at West Port High School in Ocala. Audience members will be seated on stage during the show, giving the students an opportunity to learn how lighting affects mood and how to set up alternative sound systems.

Improv style teaches actors to think fast

CONTINUED FROM 1C

The production is a full-service experience. Refreshments will be served to audience members by waiters and waitresses, but don't be fooled — these servers aren't just working. They are performers, too, and will have background stories to share.

The cool-jazz ambience is the work of the program's technical students. Because the setting is reversed, students have the opportunity to learn about how lighting affects mood, Ketchum said. Because actors will be roaming about, the reversal allows Ketchum to teach his students how to set up alternative sound systems.

"It's just so much fun," said Ketchum.

As for the funny-factor, 11th grader Lauren Oxner is not concerned for a second that the audience won't laugh.

"I laugh every day with these people. I know it will be funny," she said.

"Mrs. Shelley's trained us so well, and we know what we're doing," added Jen Coply, a senior.

Part of the program curriculum, improvisation is really an acting exercise that has turned into entertainment, Shelly said. The technique teaches actors to think fast while in the moment. It also helps students prepare for future auditions, she said.

Improv shows are one-of-a-kind, she added. And for audience members, the show is an adventure.

"There will never be another show that's the same," she said.

Behind the curtain of entertainment, the production is really a fundraiser in disguise.

"It's a way to raise money by doing what we do best instead of selling candy bars or catalogue items," said Shelley. Although last year the program used a different avenue for fundraising, it wasn't as successful as "Latte and Laughter" had been in the past. This year will be the third production of the show.

"We really missed doing it last year," Shelley said.

This year's production will provide funding for the program's fall musical "Into the Woods," which will run Nov. 10-12.

LATTE AND LAUGHTER

WHEN: Friday and Saturday, 7 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m.

TICKETS: \$5

WHERE: West Port High School Performing Arts Center, 3733 S.W. 80th Ave.

RESERVATIONS: 291-4000, ext. 59830

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7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

9:00 PM - 11:00 PM

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