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## Dispatch: Zimbabwe: Revered band reunites to send out an SOS about African nation

By **Christopher Blagg**/ Music  
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The semidefunct jam-rock group Dispatch has made a habit of exceeding expectations. Ten thousand people were expected for its 2004 "farewell" show at the Hatch Shell. Instead, 110,000 came.

Dispatch has returned, surprising the music industry yet again, selling out this weekend's three-night benefit concert at Madison Square Garden in New York City to raise money and awareness for Zimbabwe - a country suffering from economic collapse, drought and the HIV/AIDS crisis. Dispatch is bigger than ever.

At their rehearsal space in Sherborn a few months ago, the trio seemed just as surprised as everyone else. "I was nervous about playing even one show at the Garden," said bassist/guitarist Pete Heimbold, "I mean, it's one thing to play at the Hatch Shell for a free concert . . ." Added drummer Brad Corrigan, "Our last show (at the Hatch Shell) was such a good one, such a wild one, that we were just wondering if there was any more pixie dust left."

The magic is indeed back, considering the band managed to sell out Madison Square Garden without the help of radio singles, MTV or other mainstream media outlets. Three years out of the spotlight didn't lessen the band's momentum from that Esplanade concert.

"After the Hatch Shell, everyone, including people from the music industry were saying, 'You have to get back together. Look at your fan base now!' For me it was more like, 'What a great way to go!'" said guitarist Chad Urmston.

Their reunion comes not out of boredom or desperation (all three enjoy solo careers, Urmston fronts the popular State Radio), but out of conscience. "If we were getting together just to play music and eke out a paycheck I don't think it would have

worked. So to have an opportunity to get everyone together and then to not just be entertainers, but to give voice to a story, that's a huge deal," said Corrigan.

So why Zimbabwe? Urmston lived in Zimbabwe for six months when he was 18, and the troubled nation and its people have had a grip on him since. One of Dispatch's most popular songs, "Elias," came out of his experiences there.

"In the past 15 years, Zimbabwe's become a story of tragic proportions," said Urmston. "We wanted to do something that had a connection to the three of us, that wasn't necessarily all over the press, and something that we could bring some awareness to."

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A little help: The Dispatch's Chad Urmston, Pete Heimbold and Brad Corrigan team up this weekend for a benefit gig.

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