



Roland L. Freeman

Internationally Acclaimed Group To Sing At UNC

Sweet Honey In The Rock to perform as a part of the UNC Jazz Festival

From Staff Reports

These days, the voice is an instrument that has found new favor among music lovers. A group that has been central to this development within the contemporary music scene is Sweet Honey In The Rock, a Washington, D.C. quintet of vocalists.

Performing a cappella and accompanied by body and hand instruments, this ensemble of black women singers is well into its second decade of building a solid international reputation. A Sweet Honey In The Rock concert is a transforming experience, drenching its audiences with harmonies charged with changing rhythms, switching leads, leaping and dancing — all combining to create a breathtaking musical performance.

The strength of Sweet Honey In The Rock lies within its sound and repertoire, both of which are based on a style rooted in the African-American tradition of the unaccompanied congregation and branches out to embrace its many extensions. One hears in the moan of the blues the power of early

20th Century gospel, echoes of countless community a cappella quartet and more.

These women sing fiercely of being fighters. They sing tenderly of being in love and knowingly of being women while taking their ever-growing audiences through an astonishing and complex journey of celebration and struggle that is a continuation of the history of the African-American legacy with a love and respect for life.

The concept of Sweet Honey In The Rock rests primarily with Bernice Reagon Johnson, who, as vocal director of the D.C. Black Repertory Theatre, founded the group in 1973. Reagon began her work as a socially conscious artist in 1961 during the Albany, Ga., civil rights movements campaign. She continued her work as a solo performer, lecturer and scholar of cultural life and history in the African-American community.

The musical and political groundwork laid by Reagon has expanded constantly over the years due to the efforts of other singers who joined her on Sweet Honey's stages. Since 1973, 20 women have lent their voices to Sweet Honey

In The Rock. In 1980 Shirley Childress, a sign language inter-

preter, joined the group as they moved to expand their audience by making their concerts accessible to the deaf community.

In 1989 Sweet Honey In The Rock toured Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom and Europe. The following year, they toured Africa. Sweet Honey has also performed for sell-out crowds all over the U.S., Europe and Japan. In 1985 the ensemble organized the production of a cultural festival that closed the United Nations' Decade for Women conference in Nairobi, Kenya. That year, they also participated in events sponsored by the New Song Movement in Mexico City and Ecuador, and took part in the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland.

Sweet Honey In The Rock's most recent release, *Live at Carnegie Hall*, on Flying Fish Records, includes *Emergency*, which received a Grammy nomination in

1988. Other releases include *The Other Side* and *Feel Something Drawing Me On*, a collection of sacred songs that was named Best Gospel Recording by the National Association of Independent Record Distributors (NAIRD); *We All ... Everyone of Us*, released in conjunction with their 10th anniversary celebration and *Good News*, a live recording released in 1976. Sweet Honey's second album, *B'lieve I'll Run On ... See What The End's Gonna Be* (Redwood Records) was named Best Woman's Album of 1979 by NAIRD. Sweet Honey's performance of *Sylvie* is the opening selection on the Grammy Award-winning anthology *A Vision Shared: A Tribute to Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly* on Columbia Records. The group's newest release, *All For Freedom*, is the first project developed for younger audiences. It is available on cassette and compact disc from the Music for Little People Catalog.

People, Arts

UNC Jazz Festival



SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK

Wednesday, February 20
\$14.00 UNC Student \$10.00

DIAL AND OATTS

Friday, February 22
\$6.00 UNC Student Free w/ticket

AHMAD JAMAL TRIO

Saturday, February 23
\$12.00 Student \$8.00

DON CHERRY AND MULTIKULTI

Sunday, February 24
\$10.00 UNC Student \$6.00



ALL CONCERTS AT 8:00 PM
MEMORIAL HALL - UNC CAMPUS
TICKETS ON SALE FEB. 1
Carolina Union Box Office 962-1449
Mon.-Thurs. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm
WUNC Radio 966-5454

Presented by UNC Department of Music, Carolina Union Performing Arts Committee, and WUNC in association with the Chapel Hill Herald.

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