

ROCK ON!

Music historian visits Wake Forest

BY LAYLA FARMER
THE CHRONICLE

Rock music blasted through the darkness at Wake Forest University's Pugh Auditorium.

The students chattered among themselves as they waited for the program to begin.

Moments later, when Music Historian Barry Drake jogged onto the stage, their crash course in 1960's rock n' roll began in earnest.

Drake's presentation, titled "60s Rock: When the Music Mattered," chronicles what he characterizes as "one of the most exciting, turbulent, confusing and still misunderstood decades in rock n' roll."

Formerly a recording artist himself, Drake signed with Columbia Records in 1970. But his love affair with rock music began long before then. Drake, who has been hailed as a "walking rock n' roll encyclopedia" bought his first rock album at age 10 and hasn't stopped since. He has amassed more than 20,000 albums to date.

Seemingly, Drake has committed every one to memory, as he made his 75-minute multimedia presentation without the aid of notes, citing hundreds of names, dates and events from memory without so much as a pause.

His musical prowess has not gone unnoticed. Drake has been voted "Campus Lecturer of the Year" five times by the National Association for Campus Activities; and "Campus Lecturer of the Year" three times by Campus Activities Magazine.

His talk centered around the music of the day and how it related to the events that were occurring alongside it. In times when many young people felt they had no voices, rock n' roll spoke for them, he said.

Though much of the rock n' roll movement of the 1960s was populated by Caucasians from America and Great Britain, African Americans played an important role as well, Drake said.

He credits early black artists with building the foundation for the genre.

"Leading the way were many of the great black artists who created the rock n' roll movement in the 1950's," he said. "And there wasn't anyone around doing it better than The Drifters."

With the help of photo montages, personal stories and, of course, music, Drake carried the audience through the many transitions of the rock n' roll movement of the 1960's, stopping along the way to pay homage to household names like Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and The Rolling Stones.

He spoke at length about The Beatles' meteoric rise to unimaginable fame in the United States, where they held five Top Five singles simultaneously on the charts in 1964. The popularity of the group opened the door for many other British acts that quickly followed suit, Drake says, creating what he calls the "British Invasion."

"The British Invasion had a devastating impact on the American music scene," he reported. "...The only genre of American rock music that was not affected by the British invasion was soul music. No matter how good the British guys were, they couldn't compete with soul."

Singing sensations like The Supremes and Aretha Franklin also topped Drake's list of great 1960's music.

The era crash landed with two events, one musical, and one not, Drake says.

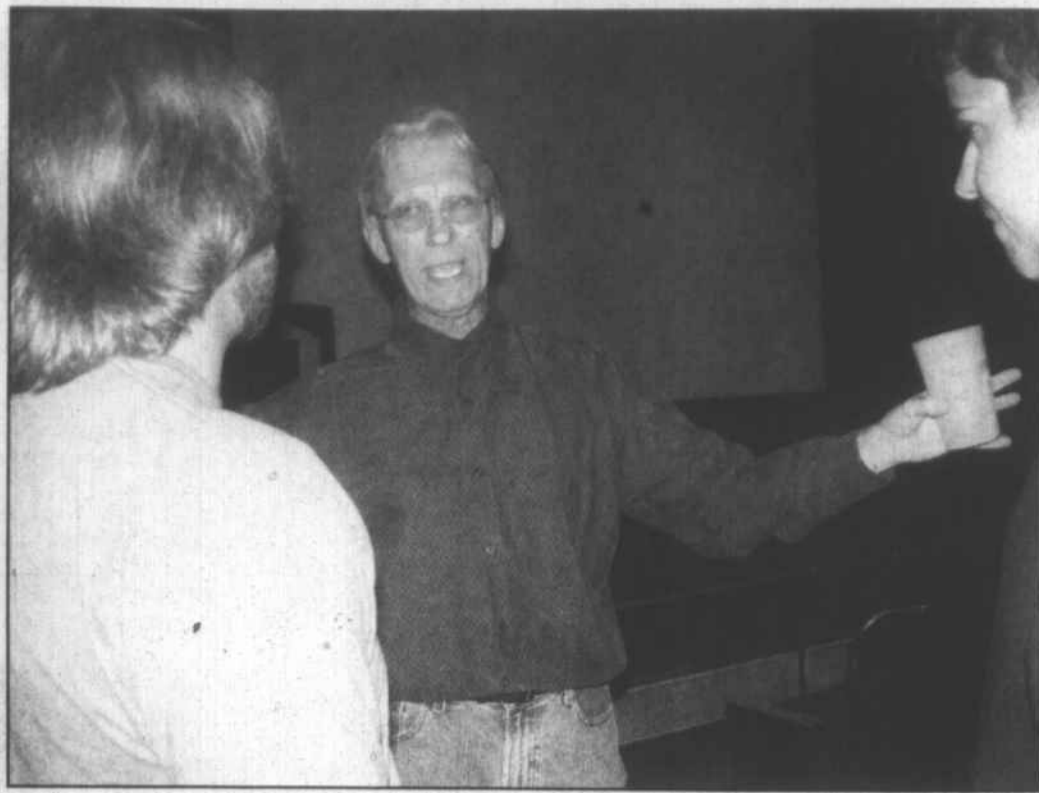
"If ever there was a sign that the 1960's was almost over, it was the breakup of The Beatles," he declared. "The final blow to 60s idealism was the election of (Richard) 'Tricky Dick' Nixon."

Nevertheless, the 1960s made its indelible mark on American history, Drake says, and gave way to some of the most important strides in American history.

"Musically and socially, this was one of the most open times we've ever had in America," he said.



Jimi Hendrix



Barry Drake talks to students Tuesday evening.

Photo by Layla Farmer



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