

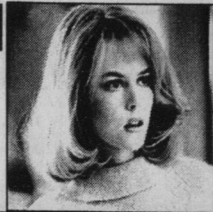
DIVERSIONS

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A Begggar at the DOOR

Mark Williams, a junior from Raleigh, created his own record label, Bruised Reed Records, and released his first eight-song compact disc, entitled ...

BY KACEY KINARD
STAFF WRITER

For nine years, his dream has been to produce an album consisting of his best songs. Since the seventh grade, Mark Williams has been writing songs, playing guitar and dreaming of one day making a career of his music. His dream has begun to become a reality with the release of his first compact disc, *a beggar at the door*.

Williams, a junior sociology major at Carolina, released an eight-song CD in August that consists of alternative/acoustic rock songs. This 20-year-old from Raleigh is intriguing to listen to when he talks of his music. His love for what he's doing is evident in his speech. His whole life has been touched by music in some way, and he incorporates his everyday experiences into his music. Williams has captivated audiences with his music, and his views on life are refreshing and are reflected in his songs.

THE DAILY TAR HEEL: What made you decide to produce an album?

MARK WILLIAMS: I had played at different places, and people asked me if I had an album. About a year ago, people began consistently asking for a CD. I realized I had enough support to do it. The people made my decision to finally produce an album.

DTH: How long have you been involved in music?
WILLIAMS: As long as I can remember I've done something. In seventh grade I was in chorus, and we put on a show. I sang a solo, which was "Stand By Me." I remember being in front of the whole school, and I knew that's what I wanted to do with my life. I started playing guitar and singing in seventh grade.

DTH: How would you describe your music?
WILLIAMS: Being an artist, my first inclination would be to not classify it. I would call it alternative/acoustic rock. I don't write songs from a folk standpoint, but more like a rock song. The songs come from a period of a year of my life. The songs are mostly from my own experience, or from experiences I can identify with. The songs are written in first person because they are either about me or I can identify with them. "Trust You" was not about an experience I had, but it could be about me and about anybody else at any given time. I like all the songs for different reasons, and I chose each one to be on the album. Each song says a different thing and says different things to people.

DTH: What do you hope to achieve through your music?
WILLIAMS: One thing I want to accomplish is to make people think about what I'm saying. I want them to think about their own experiences and relate to my songs. Oswald Chambers said if you can't express yourself on any given subject, you must struggle with yourself until you can. These songs are my struggle to express myself.

DTH: Who has influenced your music the most and how?
WILLIAMS: The Beatles have influenced me and the rest of the world. They started everything, especially in music. During middle school and high school they had a great influence on my music. A bigger influence to me has been Rich Mullins, as an artist because of his music. His integrity as a human and an artist is awe-inspiring. He gave me inspiration to play new instruments that you don't hear a lot but fit well in the music—dulcimers, mandolins, bagpipes. He affects songwriting by being completely honest. If you feel despair, sing about despair; if you feel joy about joy. Don't be afraid to be who you've been created to be. I have taken all the influences and synthesized them, by making something new and artistic. Everything

I listen to affects what I do musically.

DTH: What did you learn about yourself while producing an album?

WILLIAMS: I learned that producing and making music isn't an easy thing. It's a business that has a demand. Plato said that laws aren't going to change people; music and poetry changes people. I would love to devote myself to my music, even though the business side of it isn't appealing.

DTH: Where did you get the title, *a beggar at the door*, and your record label, Bruised Reed Records?

WILLIAMS: The title alludes to one of Emily Dickinson's poems that says, "a beggar at the door of God." During the photo shoot for the album, the photographer Robb Hamilton and I found a man laying at the door of a church. Robb took the picture, and it confirmed the title of the album for me. I created the record label for this album and for my music. A bruised reed is someone who has been beaten down by life, and I think this is me and everyone who listens to the album.

DTH: Why do you write music?

WILLIAMS: I write to express myself. Songwriting is an extension of who I am. A painter has to paint, and it's not so much that I want to write but that I have to write. Writing songs is a release, a hard discipline. It's a talent, but a talent that must be practiced. I write to abandon oversimple answers. C.S. Lewis said, "The problem is not simple, and the answer is not going to be simple either." I write music to express answers to problems. I try to find answers and articulate them through my music.

DTH: What are your short-term and long-term goals for your music?

WILLIAMS: For short-term, I hope to express myself, have people listen to my music and make them think about it. Long-term, I would love to do this for the rest of my life, assuming I still have something to say. I want that to be for life. Music will play a role in anything I do. I have been given talent, and I have a responsibility to use that talent. I have plans for a new CD, and I have some new stuff. My long, long-term goal is to be signed to a label, to be able to sell to people I don't know personally. Signing a label isn't the answer, but it facilitates my goal to get music to people. If I were on a label, this thing would be a whole lot easier. I want to be a professional artist who wants to be taken seriously. I want to reach everyone, not just friends, family and the people I know. I have trouble selling myself, but in music you are the product. It's not my primary duty to sell myself.

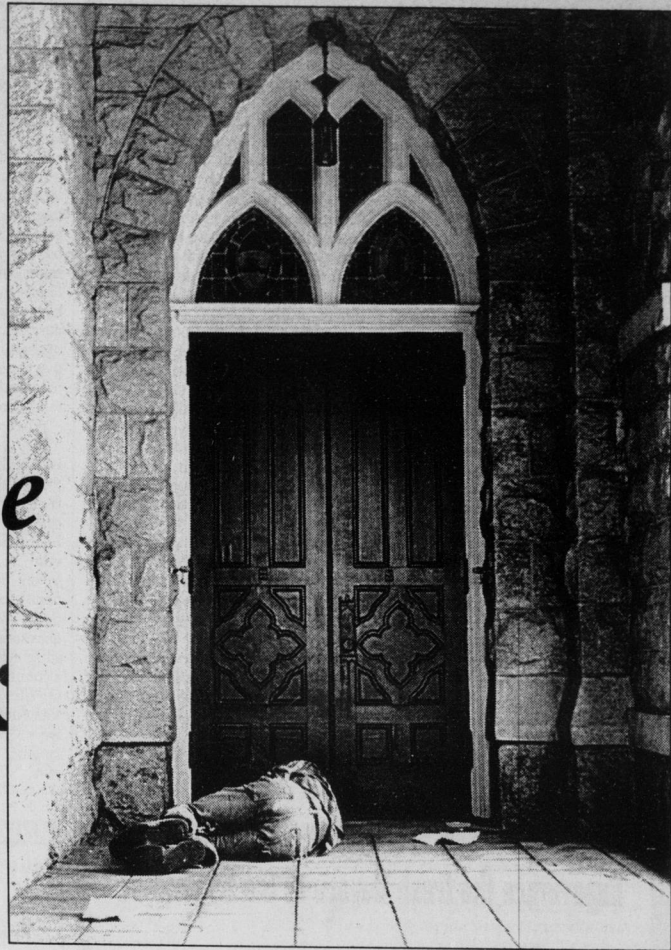
DTH: Who is your main audience that you're trying to reach?

WILLIAMS: My primary audience is college students because that's who I am. I can relate to students and they can relate to my music. I want to reach people who will listen to the album and relate to the words. Younger and older people listen to my music, but most of my audience is college-age.

Williams already has the fall semester almost booked by playing at nearby universities, coffeehouses and camps. On Oct. 27, he is playing with a few other local musicians on the porch of his house, 206 W. Cameron Ave., at 8 p.m. His CD can be found at School Kids and Record Exchange on Franklin Street in Chapel Hill.

REVIEW

Williams blends acoustic rock with electric guitar lines and thoughtful lyrics to produce a mature sound for his album. He



incorporates different kinds of instruments into his songs that give a unique sound to them. His myriad of talents lets him explore new sounds for his songs. He uses common instruments, such as guitars, flute, drums and piano for most of his songs. To add spice, Williams plays a lap dulcimer and mandolin, giving a folk sound to his music.

In "Living a Lie," the music is only piano which makes the song ballad-like. It speaks of the different masks people wear and how they learn to take them off and show who they truly are to people. In "Trust You," he begins with bagpipes and acoustic guitar. These instruments mirror the words of pain within the song. It talks of wanting to trust a person but being scared to open up because of past failures. These songs are ones that are easy to relate to. They speak of relationships, and of feeling alone at times with no one to run to. The first song, "Light of Day," is upbeat and catchy. It brings pictures of a new day with a new beginning and refreshes the listener. Mark's voice is low and melodic, one which soothes the listener and brings relaxation.

Williams combines his musical influences over past years to create an album of songs that synthesizes his feelings about life. A person can relate to every song on the album and empathize with the lyrics of the songs. "Where to Run" speaks of how, sometimes in life, we all feel alone and have nowhere to run to. A slow song is "The Ugliest Word," which is just the words and an acoustic guitar.

Probably the most upbeat and fun song on the album is "Wandering in the Wilderness." This is most like a rock song, with an electric guitar line and background vocals that highlight the lead singing. The song itself speaks of how people may wander away from time to time, but in the end they come back to what's right. The song is upbeat because it has a happy ending and doesn't need to be slow and upsetting.

The album as a whole seems like a progression for the songs. The first song shows the outer beauty of a person, and the last song reveals the inner soul of a person. "Light of Day," the first song, talks about sun shining on a person and on a person's life. The middle songs slowly open up a person from the inside and reach a person's innermost being, so that by the last song the gut of a person is revealed. "Living a Lie," the last song, tears apart at the soul of a person by removing the masks that one wears. Yet there is a happy ending to the story held within the CD. One minute and 11 seconds after the last song ends, the first song, "Light of Day," comes back. There is a hidden song on the album that secretly spells the happiness of fully realizing one's inner and outer beauty. This album is worth buying, borrowing and listening to, and not just because the artist is a college student. Williams' music and lyrics relate to many aspects of life in and out of college, and the album as a whole has a lot to teach the listener. This CD definitely merits a listen, for there are things to be learned and pleasurable times to be enjoyed.

