

—Chapel Thrill Friday—

Sister Sledge

By JAMES ALEXANDER JR.

Sister Sledge will step on stage amidst thundering music and flashing colored lights Friday night in UNC's Carmichael Auditorium, as the headline act for the first of two Chapel Thrill '80 weekend concerts, co-sponsored by the Carolina Union and the Student Government.

The singing and dancing female foursome from Philadelphia—all sisters—will make its first North Carolina appearance since June 1979, when it made a couple of Tar Heel-state stops on a national tour with the Jacksons.

At that time, its debut album, *We Are Family*, and single by the same name were just breaking the platinum mark, and the band ended the year on a red-hot note by receiving a Grammy for that single. The group was named the best new group of 1979 by several record industry publications.

The single "We Are Family" not only sold more than a million copies and captured a Grammy, but became internationally famous during the 1979

World Series. It was heard round the world as the theme song of the baseball world champion Pittsburgh Pirates.

Since then, their follow-up album, *Love Somebody Today*, has catapulted on the soul and pop charts with "Reach Your Peak" as the hottest single on the album. "Let's Go On Vacation" and "Got To Love Somebody Today" also have garnered respectable airplay.

Joni, Kathy, Kim and Debbie Sledge, ranging in age from 21 to 25, have been singing together since their early childhood days. And like many quality black vocal groups, they got their start in a church choir.

But it wasn't until a little more than a year ago that Sister Sledge became a household word among disco and rhythm and blues lovers, after being discovered and produced by disco magnates Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers of Chic fame.

Edwards and Rodgers have since produced both of the group's albums, and their direction has guided the girls to superstar status in the disco market. They probably are one of the most successful crossover vocal groups today.



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With a classy and daring stage act that features dynamic choreography and "house-rocking" upbeat harmony along with the usual smoke-and-light stage effects, Sister Sledge and their band perform with the highest professionalism. An encore (or several) following their shows is about as common to them as water is to fish.

Whether on the road touring, in the studio recording or back home relaxing with its large family in Philadelphia, Sister Sledge lives up to the lyrics of its platinum hit "We Are Family." Their mother, Flo, is their business manager and travels with

her daughters on the road. And their aunt, Marion Williams, runs the group's home office. Their grandmother even travels with the group sometimes.

The band recently was featured on a segment of ABC's *American Bandstand* and NBC's *Midnight Special* as well as other television appearances.

Tickets for the concert will be on sale at the Carolina Union box office for \$6 in advance until Friday, when they will be upped to \$7.

James Alexander Jr. is assistant editor of *Weekender*.

Mass Production

By JAMES ALEXANDER JR.

Say the words "Mass Production" and the first thing that probably comes to mind is an automobile assembly line somewhere in Detroit. But say the same words to hard-core rhythm and blues lovers and the first thing that will come to their minds is uncut, innovative backroom get-down danceable rhythms.

Mass Production's appearance at the Friday night Chapel Thrill '80 concert is a timely one indeed. Since the recent release of its fifth and fast-selling album, *Massterpiece*, the nine-member band has been one of the hottest rhythm and blues acts in the nation.

Just last year, the group sold more than 1 million copies of its single release "Firecracker," from the album *In The Purest Form*. Although "Firecracker" didn't reach the charts until long after the album had been released, it camped out on the R & B and pop charts for more than 30 weeks and finished up at number one.

The band's album discography includes *Welcome To Our World*, *Believe*, *Three Miles High*, *In The Purest Form* and the latest release *Massterpiece*.

The Cotillion Records artists haven't reached superstar status yet, but with the improvements they are making with each album and on each concert tour, such a label doesn't seem too far off. Mass Production has developed its own sound and is one of the few young groups with a musical style all its own, not imitative of the basic funk rhythm patterns present in a lot of today's R & B soul.

The group's stage show characterizes the basic R & B band show, with all the usual effects and high stepping necessary to build and maintain a high-energy party atmosphere.

But what sets it apart from other acts probably is its two-man soulful horn section, bolstered by the wailing voice of lead vocalist Agnes "Tiny" Kelly.

Besides lead singer Kelly, Mass Production musicians are Larry "Rockstarr" Marshall, vocals; Lecoy

Bryant, guitar and vocals; Kevin Douglas, bass guitar, vocals and keyboards; and Tyrone Williams, all keyboards and keyboard solos. Ricardo "Ricky" Williams is the group's drummer and Emmanuel Eugene Redding plays congas, cowbells and various other percussion instruments. Gregory McCoy—on tenor and soprano saxophones—and James "Otiste" Drumgole—on trumpet and flugelhorn—make up the horn section.

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Mass Production

Skyy

By JAMES ALEXANDER JR.

To say the least, Skyy is one of the most interesting groups to come on the rhythm and blues-disco scene within the last year and a half.

Possessing a sound that's almost as unique as its name and a vocabulary not found in anything put out by



Skyy

Webster, the eight-member band is the product of Brass Construction leader Randy Muller.

The group hit the big time with its self-titled Salsoul Records debut album, which met with stunning success after its early 1979 release. That album produced three smash disco singles: "Disco Dancin'," "Let's Turn It Out" and "Let's Get Up." And unlike most new groups who come and go like fly-by-night operators, Skyy let it be known that its intentions of staying in the music business are serious with a rather successful follow-up album, *Skyway*.

Two singles from the album—"High" and "Skyy Zoo"—have gotten top airplay. "High" has had the greatest impact though, and has spent considerable time in the top half of *Billboard* soul singles. Another song now getting valuable attention is "Dance, Dance, Dance."

The group's energetic stage performance and space-age costumes have earned it the label as an exciting hard-rocking opening act. And in time, it's expected to become a headline attraction under Muller's consistent direction.

Skyy flight control comes from Muller and group member Solomon Roberts, who both produce and write all of the band's material under the name of (get this) Alligator Bit Him Productions.

Crew members (musicians) are Roberts, Anibal Siera, Larry Greenberg, Tommy McConnell, Gerald Lebon and the sister singing trio of Bonny Dunning, Delores Dunning Milligan and Denise Dunning Crawford.

James Alexander Jr. is assistant editor of *Weekender*.