



DITH/Suzanne Conventano

Popular, though illegal, they perform nightly

By DAVID ROME

The musician is ready to perform. His mind blocks out the outside noises and concentrates on capturing the attention and sympathy of a mobile audience with an average attention span of about 20 seconds. He fears changing weather conditions, stray bees, the I.R.S., merchants without rhythm and, maybe, law officers.

He plays, not in Memorial Hall, the Station, or even in the Pit, but on Franklin Street at 12:30 on a Friday afternoon.

For as long as there has been music, there have probably been struggling musicians supplementing their incomes by finding a busy street, putting an open case, hat or box (usually pre-sweetened with the musician's own personal marks, "bubbles or dollars") in plain view, and playing music.

Street musicians are generally found in large cities like New York, where the odds are high on finding at least a few beneficent music lovers in every crowd. But talented street musicians also have gravitated to Chapel Hill and found an outlet for their various musical experiences on Franklin Street's sidewalks. Why Chapel Hill? As street fiddler Barney Pilgrim said, "The whole town is a street scene."

The professional musicians found on Franklin Street play a variety of instruments, play with others or alone and unanimously enjoy playing on the street, and have a number of different reasons for giving 'free' concerts to pedestrians.

All of the musicians downplayed the role of money in their decision to play on the street. "The money is real variable," Pilgrim said. When asked his main reason for playing, he responded, "I like to play."

John Root, who plays saxophone, flute or piccolo on the street, listed his non-financial reasons for playing. "I see it as providing a service. . . . I'm able to meet people."

He likes also the role of "a catalyst for budding musicians." He has met prospective students on the street and given others exposure to jazz. He said he believed he was doing something to eradicate the man on the street's "misconception of jazz."

Dave Holt, plays fiddle with his wife and brother, or by himself, playing bluegrass or Irish tunes on an ancient forerunner of the piano called a hammered dulcimer. He said he played, "half for money, half for fun."

Holt is the most frequent performer on Franklin Street, and in his three years of playing there, he has not had any trouble with the police or any storeowners. He said Franklin Street audiences were real nice, and when he played the unusual looking dulcimer, "Everybody comes up and asks what it is."

Root has had a few memorable experiences. UNC students may remember him as the versatile musician with the sign at Union Day, Sept. 11, who played piccolo as Jon Tsung Hwa of the Tai Chi Center in Carrboro demonstrated the Chinese martial art and exercise form of Tai Chi.

Root has had his right to play in the street questioned by the police and mayor's office. The first confrontation

was with one of the mayor's associates who told him there was an ordinance against what he was doing.

Root had previously called police headquarters and was told that playing and accepting money on the street was acceptable and no license was required.

But, one day, the police chief sat next to Root while he was playing outside the NCNB building. Root said, "Chief Stone let me know he was displeased (and Stone said) he wanted me off the streets. He said it looked like begging."

Despite the disapproval of the authorities, Root has "continued to play (and from everyone else, he has) gotten nothing but positive feedback," he said.

Even on Franklin Street there is a science to street-playing for money. All of the performers mentioned follow the theory that the best time to play is Friday, payday, between 11:00 and 1:00 or on Saturdays after football games.

The preferred location is on the northern side of Franklin Street outside of the Oasis Health Food Store. The spot outside Oasis is not accidental, however. Holt said the store's staff was real supportive.

Oasis employee and UNC student Ester Cruikshank attested to the general approval of the store, its customers and neighboring stores to the music coming from the sidewalk. "(It) adds to the atmosphere," she said.

What does a street-musician do when he is not playing on the street? All of the regulars on Franklin Street perform somewhere else and/or teach music full-time. Holt plays full-time with the Red Rose Flyers who play at the Station every Tuesday night. He teaches also at Oxbow Music on West Franklin Street.

Root teaches at the St. Thomas More School, performs, gives private lessons, and "sits in at the Station." Pilgrim does club work and teaches at Oxbow Music.

Jerry Brown, who works also at Oxbow, summarized the relationship between street music and Chapel Hill when he said, "It adds character to the town." S

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TOM WESTRUP
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think that show and one gets to see about

if's and imagine what could happen. I usually, in the past 3-4 years, take a story idea, write the story and then set it to music. The story, the anecdote, is the most important part. I try to create things that please me and records are an after thought."

As far as the future is concerned, Cross wants to learn more about music and to improve on what he already knows. When he has a break from touring he likes to learn songs that he has never played before.

"I try to play a tune that I can whistle but that I've never played before, so I can learn and not constantly play what I play in concert."

For those who missed Cross's concert at Duke University last Friday, his future shows in North Carolina are The Pier in Raleigh, Sept. 29-30, at Ovens Auditorium in Charlotte, Oct. 16, Cumberland County Memorial Auditorium in Fayetteville on Oct. 17, Asheville Civic Center on Oct. 24 and at UNC-Wilmington on Oct. 30. Also a possible concert at Memorial Hall, on the UNC campus is being discussed for Jan. 1982.

ity for local performers

cost. An advantage to the consumer is that an EP costs less than an average album, maybe \$3.99 vs. \$8.99 or more.

TGS Studio is located off Highway 54 West. There is a country atmosphere that Gronback claims many musicians prefer to the plush studios of L.A. or Nashville. The recording studio is located in the basement of Gronback's home, a log house designed by him and built by himself and friends. The control room is separated from the recording area by a large glass window. The musician can settle down at the beautiful grand piano which is surrounded by oriental rugs hanging on the walls. And there is a fireplace for use on cold days. The relaxed atmosphere is something Gronback feels is beneficial to the musician's peace of mind.

"I like to maintain a comfortable, creative atmosphere for the musicians. I think it helps them to work better."

Gronback is a self-taught engineer. He was assistant manager at Stereo Sound in Chapel Hill and learned a lot about record-

ing equipment while working there. He was also in a band in New York about 10 years ago.

One of Gronback's goals is to have a 24 track tape machine and this goal is now a reality. The machine was delivered to Gronback last weekend and makes him the only recording studio in the Chapel Hill area to record on 24 tracks. He ultimately wants to get into video and believes it will be "an important media aspect in the future."

Once a band records it needs a label for its album. The label is the name on the album itself, located on the disc. The label is the name that the band wants to use for promotional purposes. Two local label companies are Moonlight Records and Collettown Records. Moonlight records is located in the Chapel Hill area on Highway 54-bypass in Carrboro. Anna Tuttle, Moonlight's vice president, said that they start a promotional campaign by sending newly released album to college radio stations.

See STUDIO page 8

Making music

Steve Gronback, TGS Studio owner, works the sound board. TGS is a local recording studio located in Gronback's home.



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