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Art School showcases the Arts

By LEAH TALLEY
Arts Editor

Jacques and Amy Menache had simpler goals in mind in 1974.

"They started across the street in a loft room," Marla Evans said, sitting in her small, cluttered Carr Mill Mall office — actually, it's only a desk against the wall. Evans is assistant director of the Carrboro Art School.

Six years ago, the Menaches began the Art School, offering two classes, drawing and painting, with 36 students. "Then various artists came by and asked to do their thing when they weren't teaching classes," Evans said. For example, Touch, the mime trio, was an early Art School contributor.

"It started snowballing after a couple of years until it was bursting at the seams," Evans said. Then the Art School relocated in the Old Alberta Mill. Since 1974, the school has grown — the current curriculum offers 49 courses, taught by 30 teachers to more than 500 students. And the occasional mime or poet who would use the Menaches' loft for his or her performances has grown into a diversified group of artists.

"What we are is an overall umbrella organization for many other small programs," Evans said. The Art School is an aspiring artist's dream, offering exposure to the public. This situation works for the public also.

"You can imagine when you have a reggae film, poetry reading or a fund-raising event, the different audiences you have for each," Evans said. "We try to reach everyone. It's a real mixed bag of entertainment but the goal is the same: exposure of the arts."

"In one given year, probably 60,000 people come in and out of here," Evans added. That includes artists and teachers as well as patrons of the Art School's services.

The Art School offers 10 different programs to the community: the Gallery Theatre, Touch, the mime trio, the Poet's Exchange, the Gallery, the Children's Theatre Fund, the Community Dance Theatre, the Actors Co-Op, the Committee for Arts and the Handicapped, the Photo Co-Op, and the Senior Citizens Meet Your Neighbor Club. In addition to these established programs, the Art School has various concert, film and theater series as well as outdoor festivals.

While maintaining this diversity, the school manages to keep prices at a reasonable level to remain accessible to



Members of the Milk Duds sing at Hot Summer Open Mike Night

... act is part of Carrboro Art's School weekly smorgasbord of local talent

DTH/AI Steele

everyone. For example, open poetry readings are free to the public. The poet's exchange will offer readings of poetry at 8 p.m. on Sept. 19, Oct. 24 and Nov. 28.

Reduced prices to all paid events are offered to Art School members. Annual memberships are now available at \$10 for children, students and senior citizens, \$20 for adults and \$25 for families. Reduced prices are available for Carrboro residents. Membership includes a 25 percent discount on all classes, and inclusion on the mailing list.

"We keep prices down because our seats are not soft," Evans said. "We don't have plush luxuries."

"We are a grass roots organization, a place where things begin. The same space is used for many things," Evans said. "It's total juxtaposition of the arts." One fairly large room serves nearly all of the school's functions. Prints from the current Gallery exhibit hang on the simple white walls of the main hall. Against the left wall are a refrigerator that looks like your grandmother's antique model and beer taps for the Draught House Cinema. A stage for theatre and concerts is to the

right, as is a screen for films. The film projector is at the back of the room. But the atmosphere is not a crowded, junky one.

"It's a vibrant place," Evans said. "It never stops."

Evans hopes the Art School will never be forced to close. But there are only two paid staff members, Executive Director Jacques Menache and Evans, and two volunteers, full-time aide Joy Metelits and accountant Hugh Claudy, to run the gamut of the school's services.

But the fact remains that it takes money to keep any organization running.

"People see a full house and think we're making money," Evans said. "But a case of toilet paper is \$30. And how are we going to pay for that? And rent is \$1,200 per week to keep these doors open."

In addition to earned income, which accounted for 45 percent of the total 1980 income, the Art School relies on individuals, the town of Carrboro, the National Endowment for the Arts and the N.C. Arts Council for contributions and grants, Evans said.

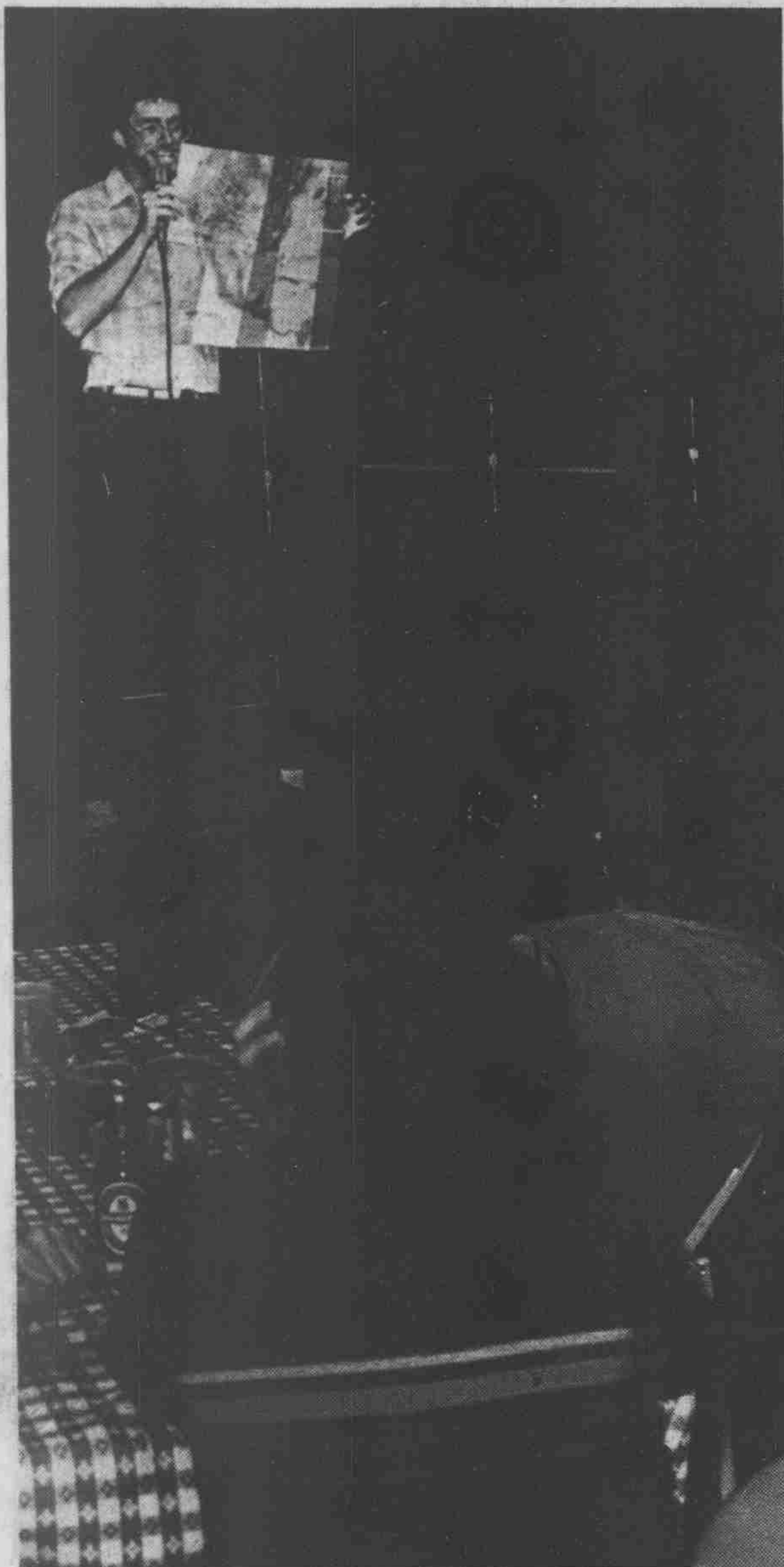
The Art School recently received financial aid from the Monsanto Fund and Central Carolina Bank. But in the last year, Evans said that the Art School has relied more heavily on scheduling its own fund-raising events.

"It's working well. A lot of our events are cabaret style," Evans said. For example, the Art School serves beer at the Draught House Cinema hoping to attract larger audiences in this notorious beer-drinking area.

"We're also starting to get a lot of support from the community with mutual sponsorship of programs," Evans said.

Hot Summer Open Mike Nights is one successful co-sponsored program, with the aid of WQDR radio. This Monday night affair offers a showcase for local talent. Any entertainment—from musicians to stand-up comics to harmonica players—can perform by simply signing up beforehand with the Art School.

See ARTS on page 5



Larry Cannon uses a map to draw laughs ... he executed his comic skills at Carrboro's Art School

DTH/AI Steele

Young, new bands lead Village scene

By D.F. WILSON
and
RANDY WALKER
Staff Writers

A short, pudgy-checked character with bouffant curls pushed above his forehead crept meekly onto the stage at the Cat's Cradle.

"We'll, uh, pay for all, uh, of this stuff," he mumbled into the microphone, pointing at crumbled pieces of ceiling tiles.

Could this be the madman that only moments before had trashed the ceiling with his guitar before trashing it as well? As unlikely as it seems, it was. His name is John Romweber, lead singer/guitarist for the KAMIKAZEES.

The Kamikazees have recently been enjoying local acclaim for their unique, high-energy, rock-a-billy sound. That, and the fact that they are all so young bring them notice. Romweber is only 16.

Besides Romweber's quirky, hic-up vocals, the band also features the reverb-twang guitar sound of Eric West Peterson, 17, the stand-up bass of Tone Mayer, 15, and the drumming of Michael Krauc, 18.

Even though it seems that their youth would be an advantage, some of the band members claim it has its drawbacks as well.

"After we finish playing at a club, we have to leave," said Romweber. "We're too young to hang around."

Though the Kamikazees have been together for two years, they have only played four times with the present line-up. Their musical style has also changed since the beginning.

"We used to play 60s R&B and instrumentals like the Ventures," said Mayer. "We also used to be really into Kiss."

"We don't like the Police or



The Kamikazees perform at the Cat's Cradle ... the group has been growing in popularity with its innovative style

DTH/Scott Sharpe

AC/DC and we got real psyched about rock-a-billy," Mayer continued. "If the kids we go to school with would listen to the music we listen to, they'd like it too."

The Kamikazees have a single coming out in the fall including a cover of a Benny Joy song, "Steady with Betty," and an as-yet-unnamed

original. The band also plans to move on to other areas, such as Atlanta and New York City.

So catch them while you can, and if you can. They spend almost as much time running among the audience as they do whooping and amp-jumping on stage.

Another young band enjoying ac-

claim as well as commercial success is the PRESSURE BOYS. Comprised of John Plymale, 18, on vocals and trombone, Greg Stafford, 18, on saxophone, Rob Ladd, 18, on drums, Neil Barry, 18, on keyboards and trumpet, David Blythe, 19, on bass and Bryon Settle, 23, on guitar, the Pressure Boys have been playing

professionally since November of 1981.

When they began, most of their material was ska cover tunes by groups like Madness and the English Beat. How they began, though, is the more interesting aspect of their career.

Though the nucleus of the band

had been in the works for more than a year, the band didn't get a gig until Mondo Combo cancelled a weekend at the Cat's Cradle. Mondo's drummer at the time, Sara Romweber, had heard the band and asked them to fill in for them.

"The folks at the Cradle went entirely on Sara's word," said Plymale. "We owe Mondo Combo a lot."

After that, the word spread and their next two consecutive jobs were at the Station and at the Pier, opening for the Fabulous Knobs.

"We really owe a lot to several area bands," said Plymale. "Debra DeMillo has done us favors on many occasions."

"We know we got a lucky break," Plymale continued. "We've had breaks that bands who have been playing for years haven't had."

Besides their local jobs, the Pressure Boys have done quite a few gigs in Charlotte and Greenville and other towns on the 'I-85 circuit."

The Pressure Boys' material now includes a wealth of original songs in the ska tradition — half written by Settle, and the other half by Plymale and Ladd.

Besides an EP on their own label which should be out in six to eight months, the Pressure Boys are also planning a video that should be shot within the next month or so.

Although all the band members except Settle are presently enrolled at UNC, Plymale says that they are all willing to put their education on hold.

"We're all real confident," he said. "We're not sure exactly what we have to do, but the big push is coming this spring."

Plymale also said they might move from the area.

See BANDS on page 6