

Synth-pop band O-Boy entertains

By LOUIS CORRIGAN
Staff Writer

O-Boy, a three-female synth-pop band from Richmond, Va., performed two delightfully entertaining 50-minute sets at Rhythm Alley Thursday night before a receptive crowd of more than 120 people.

In a lot of ways O-Boy doesn't seem to add up. Three girls, three synthesizers, and no guitars or drum kit has seldom (if ever) formed a listenable pop band. Yet band members Fiona, Zoe Shebelskie and Julie Jumper produce appealing originals and curious covers from the machine that was the tool of the British New Wave invasion.

Thursday night the band performed with flair and confidence, mixing music similar to that of The Human League with lyrics reminiscent of the B-52's.

Like the Boy George school of new music bands, O-Boy also stimulates an audience visually.

Dressed in a potpourri of multi-colored garb that they designed themselves, and with hair recently dyed and styled in the Cyndi Lauper look by the group's "Beauty Shop Robot" (a computerized hairstylist and also the subject of an O-Boy song), the band members bounced around the stage backdropped by two white sheets decorated with colorful day-glo graffiti.

The first song of the evening was a Caribbean tune called "I Don't Speak the Language." Like many O-Boy songs, it was accompanied by jungle sounds from the synthesizers that, with the help of a TR808 drum machine, also reproduced the sounds of a real drum from a computerized memory. The group doesn't use sequencers but controls the drum beats from the three keyboards. The synths produced trumpet and bass sounds as well, all of which was fed through the board man who distorted or echoed the sounds before they were heard through the P.A.

With her huge black mane of hair and her girls-just-want-to-have-fun showmanship, lead singer Julie Jumper displayed an enormous stage presence. Encouraging the audience to get off the back benches and dance, Julie herself danced around the front of the stage, her bared belly-button shaking, singing such dance originals as "Goo Goo Ga Ga," "Too Perfect," "Don't Lose Your Body in a Vacuum Chamber" and the rapping "Beat the Rap."

The other members also contributed lead vocals on a couple of songs. Fiona's hard soul voice rang strong on a cover of Aretha Franklin's "Respect."

Zoe sang lead on a funky, synth-ed-up version of Lou Reed's classic "Walk on the Wild Side," which included a riff in the instrumental bridge straight out of "Hava Nagilla."

The highlight of the first set came near the end, when Julie introduced the futuristic mock-striptease "Va Va Voom" as "a song about sexual discrimination on MTV." An O-Boy classic complete with falsetto backing vocals, this song featured Julie's breathy vocals, which laughed at their own sensual humor.

The second set included a version of The English Beat's fast-paced "Ranking Full Stop," "Beauty Shop Robot," and a disco version of The Yardbirds' "Under Over Sideways Down."

As introduction to "Dance to the End of the Universe," Julie said, "This is an American song: apple pie, Chevrolet and apocalypse." Urgent backing vocals of

See O-BOY on page 2



O-Boy, a female synth-pop trio, performs at the Sigma Chi house.

Rockin' the Heels

Diverse WXYC pumps out the unexpected

By LOUIS CORRIGAN
Staff Writer

"WXYC. What can I do for you? Sure, what do you want to hear?"

Deb Trevor, a six-month veteran disc jockey for UNC campus radio station WXYC, scribbles a song title on a piece of scratch paper.

"This guy just called up and said, 'I just got laid off from my job. Can you play me a song?'"

Although many UNC students are unaware of it, campus radio station WXYC, at 89.3 on the FM dial, is considered by radio and record people to be one of the top three college radio stations and top 25 stations of any type in the country, Station Manager Bill Burton said.

"We're generally considered to be better than other college stations," Burton said.

Whereas most college stations may have block programming of jazz for four hours followed by four hours of mainstream rock followed by four hours of something else, WXYC mixes it all up 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, with the emphasis on playing the new without forgetting the old — "Whatever's good," Burton said.

The disc jockeys also have a surprising amount of freedom. At commercial stations, jockeys routinely have no choice of what to play. WXYC, however, has simple and flexible rules.

Out of roughly 15 songs of commercial-free music an hour, only five need come from the albums in the playbox, and the jockey may select any track from these albums. Also, of the 15 songs, three need to be considered hits, seven must be "standards" or familiar rock songs, and the last five are designated as "others," songs that may never have received airplay.

"We change all the time," Burton said. "You're never going to hear the same thing twice. If you want to learn a lot about music, we're the one to listen to."

WXYC's stature in the industry is amazing, considering that the station is financed completely by student activities fees. Last year the Campus Governing Council allocated roughly \$16,000 to the station, just about one-third of what Duke University's station received.

Thanks largely to its quality programming and selling potential — it serves three universities — WXYC

See WXYC on page 4

The day the music died

By KATHRYN HOPPER
Staff Writer

Midnight, Christmas Eve, 1973. At 94.5 on the radio dial, Brenda Leigh was singing "Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree." An announcer came on and told the audience that, after 30 seconds of silence, a new station would join the Triangle's airwaves.

The station was WQDR, and their first song was "Bitch" by the Rolling Stones.

WQDR was one of the first stations in the nation to have a format called album-oriented, playing all the songs from an album, not just singles.

While Richard Nixon was in the White House and American troops were fighting in the jungles of Vietnam, WQDR was playing Creedence Clearwater Revival, the Doors and the Who.

But this week, it will all change.

Next week, instead of Bruce Springsteen's "Born to Run," WQDR will be playing Conway Twitty singing "I'm Looking out the Window trying to get through the pain."

WQDR is going country. After years of jokes and rumors that the station would change its format, it really has come to pass. The announcement came two days after the station received the highest ratings in its history.

Station officials still won't say exactly when the changeover will take place, but it is expected to come over Labor Day weekend. A rumored date is midnight, Aug. 29.

David Berry, WQDR's former station manager, said the threat of a switch to a country format had hung like a vulture over the station's staff since the beginning.

But it took more than a decade before the senior management of Durham Life Broadcasting Co. decided that WQDR would be more successful if it aimed for an older, more consumer-oriented audience. Rock 'n' roll was too young.

Berry said that top company officials supported the change in part because, well, they liked country music better.

"They thought rock 'n' roll had peaked out," he said. "They never believed in it."

Tom Guild, a former WQDR disc jockey, said the change came as a surprise. He said that for April Fools' Day the station announced it was going country. "Nobody took it seriously," he said. "But when we jokingly asked the main office if it was true, there was no denial."

For Berry, the announcement came as relief — after years of uncertainty, the

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managers finally decided to make it official. Then the sadness came.

"Format changes happen all the time, but not to a station as successful as 'QDR,'" he said.

Listeners were shocked by the announcement, Guild said. "I got 300 calls the first week after the announcement. They were all the same. 'Is it true? Why?' But there was nothing I could do. A radio station should be responsible to the public, but it is a business. The owners can do what they want."

Guild said the change was "incredibly stupid."

"It usually takes six months to build an audience after a format change, but this will take much longer and the audience won't be nearly as big," he said.

But Charlie Marcus, the new WQDR program director, said their research had shown that a country station would hit it big in the Triangle. "The top stations in the Greensboro and Charlotte markets are country," he said. "Today, country and rock have equal appeal — six years ago there was no contest."

Berry, however, said that the Charlotte and Greensboro markets include more

blue-collar workers. "This area (the Triangle) has college students and more white-collar executives."

This week, WQDR disc jockeys are playing obscure oldies and off-the-wall album cuts. Guild said that this playlist would probably reduce the audience to one-half of last spring's. "People tune in and hear a weird song and some may be turned off," he said. "The totally loose format hurts ratings."

Rock fans won't be left in the cold, though. A new station, WRDU at FM 106, will sign on Friday at 6 p.m. and play 106 — yes, 106 — straight hours of continuous rock music.

The new station was started by 'QDR originators.

Berry, the man who helped WQDR through its growing pains, is vice president of the Voyager Communications, the owners of the new station.

The station is located in Middlesex, 20 miles east of Raleigh. It will have 100,000 watts of power, the maximum allowed by the Federal Communication Commission.

"Experts have told us we'll have 65 percent of WQDR's old audience in two months," Berry said. Although 75 percent of WRDU's staff are old WQDR staffers, the station would be different, he said.

"We'll play more mainstream rock with oldies," Berry said. "In a typical hour you might hear Van Halen, Lionel Richie, and an old Beatles tune."

The new station is aiming for an older audience than the teen-oriented G-105. Berry said WRDU will play 60 percent new and 40 percent old in contrast to G-105's 80 percent new and 20 percent old.

"The problem with 'QDR' is it never got out of its early-'70s roots," Berry said.

Berry said he tried to buy the 3-4,000 records in WQDR's library. "The management got nervous," he said. "They decided to put them (the records) in storage in case the company buys a rock station."

Berry said he was looking forward to starting another station and using his experience from WQDR. But he added he was sad to leave.

"QDR has been part of the life and culture of Eastern North Carolina for over 10 years," Berry said. "We've lasted through the hippies, the preppies and now the yuppies. It's sad to see it all replaced by a bunch of cowboys."



Keith Weston, a disc jockey for WXYC, gives listeners a "Blast from the Past" on Saturdays.

Triangle area offers avid theatregoers many choices

By STEVE MURRAY
Staff Writer

In the Triangle area, curtains are forever ringing up, and "break a leg" is as common as "hello." This year is no exception. Theatregoers have the chance to pick and choose among student, amateur and professional productions as close as the Paul Green Theatre or as distant as N.C. State.

On campus, the PlayMakers Repertory Company warms up for its regular season with the world premiere of a musical arrestingly titled *Three Guys Naked From the Waist Down*. Following the careers of three rising comics, the production is described in press releases as "off-beat" and "off-the-wall," and offers a roll call of impressive company members.

Producer James Freyberg comes to the production following his successful work as co-producer of *Baby*, which was nominated this year for seven Tony Awards and six Drama Desk Awards.

Michael Rupert debuts as a theatrical composer with *Three Guys*. He's best known as a Tony-nominee performer in *The Happy Time* on Broadway and as Marvin in *March of the Falsettos*.

This will also be a first for Jerry Colker, trying his hand as lyricist and author of the book. Previously he has acted on Broadway in *West Side Story*, *A Chorus Line* and *Pippin*.

Director Andrew Cadiff recently directed the off-Broadway musical *Brownstone*, winner of the Richard Rodgers Production Award.

Musical Director Michael Starobin received a Drama Desk Award for his recent orchestration of Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*.

Performances of *Three Guys Naked From the Waist Down* will begin with a preview Sept. 8 and will run through Sept. 23.

PRC's regular season begins with *Ring Round the Moon* Oct. 12-28. Written by France's prolific Jean Anouilh, the play promises romance, music and satire in a Gallic vein.

Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, a loving tribute to life, death, small-town dreams and universal bonds in Grover's Corners (a.k.a. Everytown, U.S.A.), plays Nov. 16-Dec. 9.

PRC's PlayFest, Feb. 1-March 3, offers three distinct plays from three distinct playwrights.

Curse of the Starving Class is a look at American values, filtered through Sam Shepard's unique vision of the modern Midwest.

Caryl Churchill with *Cloud 9* comically examines sexual identity crises and haphazard immorality among members of a British family living first in Victorian Africa, then in contemporary London.

The third play in rotation proves that a voice from the past can be welcome indeed. Shakespeare's dark comedy *Measure for Measure* explores the limits of love entangled by society, law and religion. As usual, magnificent language meets with convenient disguises and mishaps for a mixture patently Shakespearean.

April 5-21 the owner of the theatre's best-loved proboisic, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, treads the boards with his white plume and unrequited love for Roxanne, ending the PRC season.

An original, one-man show by Red Clay Ramblers member Tommy Thompson, *The Last Song of John Proffit*, premieres Sept. 28 and runs through Oct. 21.

For ticket information, call the PRC box office at 962-1122. Of special interest is the Incredible Student Pass, a subscription package offering a 70 percent discount on PRC tickets.

Elsewhere on campus, UNC's Broadway on Tour season, sponsored by the Carolina Union, includes a showcase for Mercedes McCambridge, perhaps best known for her uncredited role as the demon's voice in *The Exorcist*. McCambridge's role in *night, Mother* Nov. 30 and Dec. 1 requires no head swiveling or levitation. But Marsha Norman's emotional, Pulitzer Prize-winning depiction of a woman's attempt to talk her daughter out of suicide does demand exceptional acting.

Brighton Beach Memoirs provides comic relief Feb. 15 and 16. Neil Simon's semi-autobiographical comedy has won acclaim from critics and laughter from audiences.

The final known quantity of the series is *Sophisticated Ladies*, a Duke Ellington revue full of singing, dancing and wonderful music, March 15 and 16.

A fourth Broadway on Tour production is still in negotiation and has not been announced yet. Linda Wright, assistant director of the Carolina Union, said this production might be Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, a sparkling reflection on art, reality, infatuation and genuine love.

Another Tony-winner being considered as an off-season presentation is Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy*, a chronicle of the romantically turbulent life of a drag show queen, his confused bisexual lover and his domineering mother. No dates for this show have been confirmed.

Finally, spring — and the departments of dramatic art and English — bring the Royal Shakespeare Company to campus for a series of performances. "They're coming at a good time, with all the recent celebration of the three-year British colonization (of North Carolina)," Wright said.

For more Broadway on Tour information, call the Carolina Union box office at 962-1449.

Sharing a similar bill of fare is Broadway at Duke, presenting *night, Mother* Nov. 29, and possibly *Torch Song Trilogy* Dec. 3 and 4. The Duke schedule is going through last-minute confirmations.

Unique to Duke's series is the April 2 production of *Little Shop of Horrors*, the off-Broadway hit about young love and a bloodthirsty plant named Audrey II. For more Broadway at Duke information, call 684-4059.

In Raleigh, the NCSU Center Stage Series offers two separate programs of touring theatre.

Heading the Critic's Choice Series Oct. 7 is Thornton Wilder's Pulitzer Prize winner *The Skin of Our Teeth*, a comic visit with the Antrobus family (creators of the wheel, and survivors of both the Ice Age and latter-day holocausts). The play will be performed by John Houseman's professional repertory troupe, The Acting Company.

On Jan. 26 comes 1980's Tony winner for Best Play, Mark Medoff's *Children of a Lesser God*. The drama explores the relationship between a speech therapist and the deaf, proud student he falls in love with.

A familiar name, *Torch Song Trilogy*, is slated for March 13.

The last of this series is *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men*, performed by the Negro Ensemble Company, a group frequently seen on Broadway. Actors Douglas Turner Ward and Robert Hooks appear in this drama about ghetto life April 20.

The second series offered by Center Stage is the Signature Series, beginning with *Pieces of 8* Oct. 5. The evening comprises eight short plays by Edward Albee, Tom Stoppard and Jules Feiffer, among others.

Dec. 2, *night, Mother* completes its local circuit, leaving audiences emotionally devastated in all three Triangle cities.

Billed as an evening for children and adults alike, *Genty* brings the French puppetmaster of that name to Raleigh, accompanied by a troupe of mimes, dancers and life-size marionettes Feb. 22.

The Signature Series ends with a one-man, 12-character appearance by Edward Dukes in *Jeeves Takes Charge*, based on works by P.G. Wodehouse, centering on the impeccable butler of the title. The performance is scheduled for March 22.

For information on either NCSU Center Stage series, call 737-3104.

Also in Raleigh, Carolina Regional Theatre is ending its 1984 Professional Showcase Season with *West Side Story*, Sept. 6-9. This Broadway classic reroutes *Romeo and Juliet* through the fire escapes and alleys of New York City, changing their names to Tony and Maria and causing them to sing songs by Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim. And *Juliet/Maria* doesn't die this time around.

For information on the production, call 755-6916.

Professional theatre is only part of the Triangle's dramatic stronghold. Non-professional productions also thrive in the area, including student performances on the UNC campus.

Two department of dramatic art productions are already slated. Dec. 5-9 Michael Weller's *Loose Ends* charts the love life of a couple reeling from the '60s into the "me generation" lacking the emotional armor needed to face commitment and their own success.

A second DDA production, not yet announced, will be presented April 17-21.

March 21-31, the MFA production will be Christopher Durang's *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You*, a one-act visit with a parochial school nun, her best-indoctrinated student, and four alumni whose psyches have been shredded by her thorough instruction. The play is outrageously sacrilegious — which, according to one's tastes, should be taken either as warning or enticement.

In addition, Lab Theatre productions by undergraduate students surface throughout the year. Announcements for these are often short-notice and limited but are well worth looking for. The students' hard work and dedication lift their projects above the cramped playing space and limited resources.

Just a few blocks away in Carr Mill Mall, the ArtSchool is gearing up for its season, starting with its own Sam Shepard play, *True West*. Thrown together to keep their mother's house while she vacations, two estranged brothers get drunk, trash the living room and juggle one another's identities in their attempt

See THEATHE on page 3