

Here beats one true rock 'n' roll heart

By ALAN MASON
Staff Writer

With the advent of technology in popular music today and many bands trading in their guitars and drums for synthesizers and computer keyboards, it's nice to hear a band with a fundamental, direct approach to rock 'n' roll. Tim Krekel and the Sluggers, who will perform at Cat's Cradle this weekend, get closer to the heart of rock 'n' roll than Huey Lewis will ever dream about, and Krekel's grass-roots approach to rock 'n' roll has kept audiences raving across the South.

Krekel, who grew up in Louisville, Ky., has ties with the very beginnings of rock 'n' roll. He has played with Carl Perkins (one of the original Sun recording artists, along with Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis) and Billy Swan, who played rave-up rockabilly in the mid-70s, long before it was the "in" thing to do. Most prominently he was Jimmy Buffett's lead guitarist during that singer's heyday, and he played on Buffett's laid-back, seabreeze hit, "Margaritaville."

Krekel's music has run the gamut as well. In 1979 he put out an album, *Crazy Me*, on Capricorn Records. It won critical acclaim, but the record label folded soon after the album was released, so it is out of print. Last year Crystal Gayle recorded Krekel's "Turning Away," and it ended up as a number-one hit on the country charts. Dr. Feelgood, a British rhythm and blues outfit of the mid-70s, recorded Krekel's "No More Dough, Yakamo," which was produced by Nick Lowe. Most recently, "I Can't Help Myself" was covered by Jason and the Scorchers, a Nashville band that rides the crest of the "new wave" of country-influenced rock 'n' roll.

Anne Atwell, publicist for Cat's Cradle, attests to Krekel's talent. "A lot of bands come in here with a lot of publicity," she said, "but these guys are terrific." Indeed, not much

word precedes this band, and they continue to please crowd after crowd, packed house or not. On a previous date at Cat's Cradle, Atwell said Krekel played before a crowd of about 20 people, and he had them dancing until the last song.

Krekel's music evades classification. It's hard-driving rock 'n' roll with a pop edge, a little country sprinkled in, and lined with ample doses of rhythm and blues and classic '60s rock. His music sounds like that of such contemporary American artists as Marshall Crenshaw as well as classic rockers like Creedence Clearwater Revival. The basic truth about it all is that it's honest, energetic, powerful music, upbeat and made to dance to.

From the rockabilly rave up of "I Can't Help Myself" to the smooth country harmonies of "Transcendental Meditation" to a rock 'n' roll screamer like "Gotta Getta Way," Krekel never ceases to run out of original ideas. Each song is a fresh approach to a genre that has had its share of rip-off artists.

Krekel writes songs filled with lush romanticism — basic songs about basic human issues. They are honest songs about human relationships and the joy of life, written with devotion and played with fervor. The Sluggers are a trio, with Krekel on lead and rhythm guitar, Tom Comet on bass and Willis Bailey on drums, yet their sound comes out sounding like a larger, stronger band, which is a testament to their devotion to performing well.

In an age when the norm is to pop and rock to the latest electronic bleeps and swooshes, Tim Krekel and the Sluggers stand out as serious devotees to the cause of honest, devoted rock 'n' roll.

Tim Krekel and the Sluggers will perform Friday and Saturday at Cat's Cradle. Call 967-9053 for more information.

Hectic repertory schedule keeps actor busy

By FRANK BRUNI
Staff Writer

John Felch is the patriarch of an outpost family in British colonial Africa. He is also an effeminate London homosexual, an executioner, a foolish gentleman, and a vengeful creditor named Slater. With five roles spread across the three plays that compose PlayMakers Repertory Company's month-long PlayFest '85, John Felch is just about everything but the person he is in his normal day-to-day life: doting husband, avid moviegoer, amateur chef. "It's crazy," he said, "but it's exhilarating."

For the 26-year-old graduate student and second-year PRC member, the month of February has been like no other. Appearing in all three of the festival's productions, Felch is on stage six days a week, twice on Saturdays and Sundays. He is one of only two actors appearing in all three of the festivals' productions, and no actor is playing a greater number of roles. As the plays in the festival rotate on a daily basis, John Felch slips in and out of his roles more frequently than the average person changes his clothes.

"You get into really idiotic habits when you're running like this," he said. "When I go home, I'm like Mr. Middle America. I turn on the TV and watch any idiotic thing I see. It takes me a long time to unwind. I find myself going to bed at 2 or 3 in the morning and getting up the next day and trying to remember what show we're doing."

If he's very lucky, the show is *Curse of the Starving Class*, in which he appears only in the third act, to do a brief, menacing turn as Slater. If he's moderately lucky, the show is *Measure for Measure*, in which his two roles — as Froth and Abhorson — are small ones. If the show is *Cloud 9*, however, Felch is in for a workout, playing British frontiersman Clive in the first act and love-lorn homosexual Edward in the second.

"The problem with this kind of circling repertory is that you only get to do a certain show every three or four days," he said. "In between, you're doing another one or two other shows and you kind of lose contact with it."

"The scary thing is that it's so automatic that sometimes you find yourself on stage and you're running through the lines and they come almost without your thinking about them because it's by rote. So you have to go over the script before the show just to refresh the motivation of it, whatever the feeling is that's behind the lines."

On this particular day, Felch was looking forward to two performances

of *Curse*. He had just weathered two *Cloud* shows on the previous day, and the only time he had been able to find for an interview was during the first act of the first performance of *Curse*. Sitting in a remote room backstage at the Paul Green Theatre, the tall, lean, dark-haired actor traced the route he traveled to this busiest, most productive moment in his acting career. The voices of the actors onstage could be heard through a closed door.

"In high school, I was rabid about theatre too," he said. Felch attended a Jesuit school on the outskirts of Boston, where he was born and raised. "It was a jock school and since I wasn't particularly athletic, I would hang out in the theatre. We had three different teachers there who did theatre all the time. We just did theatre non-stop, and that was a kind of haven from the emotional brutality of the school."

Felch continued acting as a dramatic art major at Williams College. While at Williams, he worked extensively with Greg Boyd, then an assistant professor at the college, now artistic director at PRC. Although he almost lost contact with both Boyd and acting after his graduation from Williams, he caught up with both here at UNC.

"After I graduated, I was waiting tables in Boston for three years," Felch said. "I did classes and auditions, most of which didn't work out. I gave up the theatre for a year. I was just busy making money and enjoying myself. Then Greg called."

Boyd had set up PRC, and he wanted Felch to be a part of it. Felch liked the idea. He had enjoyed working with Boyd before. He missed the theatre and didn't want to do what many of his friends had done: move to New York and compete with the thousands of actors there for bit parts. So he packed his bags and headed south.

"It worked out beautifully," Felch said. "I'm living well down here and I'm working all the time." In his first year with PRC, Felch appeared in *As You Like It*, *The Hostage*, and *Dracula: A Musical Nightmare*. Last semester, he had major roles in both *Ring Around the Moon* and *Our Town*.

Moroever, Felch loves Chapel Hill and the life he leads here. He lives at the Oaks with his wife, Mitzi Jokich, a professional artist he met and married in Boston. In less hectic times, they frequent films, experiment in the kitchen and lead what Felch described as a fairly social life. Concerned at first about living in an area less cosmopolitan than their native Boston, they now wonder whether they would ever return.

"It's so peaceful here and so easy-living, economically and otherwise."



John Felch will be performing in five roles in three PRC plays.

Felch said, "I've gotten used to it. Now when I go to New York I'm just completely freaked out."

In fact, Felch's immediate ambitions are not those usually voiced by a young actor — Broadway shows, Hollywood films — but rather involve a preservation of his current lifestyle. "I'd love to

do film work someday but I think theatre is a terrific base," Felch said. "I hope when I get out of here I work in a similar setup — a smallish, regional repertory theatre where you can do a variety of roles, where you're living in a community, where you have a decent life. It's a much more civilized way of doing it."



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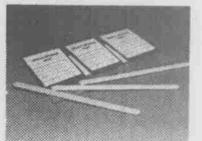
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