

-feature-

HEGE V: Turning heartbreak into a collection of top hits

By JAMES BURRUS
Staff Writer

In July of 1986, George Hamilton of the Chapel Hill rock band HEGE V was in Estes Park, Col. coping with his heartbreak by writing a song called "Burial Ground of the Broken Hearted." A year later, the song would be receiving rave reviews across the country as the band's first single off their debut album on MTM Records, *House of Tears*.

Traveling 10,000 miles up and down the country in a broken down '65 hearse with no air conditioning, HEGE V introduced the rest of America to their original country-flavored rock 'n' roll. It was called "The Hearse of Tears Tour."

People who came out to see the band included Peter Buck of R.E.M. and members of The Plasmatics and Duran Duran.

The Boston Globe said, "Hege V emerges as bright new voice from the South."

All the ruckus was capped off by a show at New York City's Manhattan Brewery for the New Music Seminar. The band partied around a coffin full of beer while being interviewed by the Cable News Network.

"In a way you wanted to become a success, but at the same time all you wanted was to get the girlfriend back or maybe just let the world know you were sad," Hamilton said.

HEGE V (it comes from Hamilton's nickname), has been together as a band for about a year and a half. Band members include: Hamilton, lead vocals, guitar, harmonica; David Thrower, lead guitar; Tim Harper, bass; and Rob Ragsdale, drums. The band was stuck, though, to just playing local gigs until it recorded

House of Tears last February with Mitch Easter.

"The whole album I dedicated to one person who broke my heart about 10 times," Hamilton said. "I thought if I wrote songs that maybe she would get the impression of what really happened. Then by the time I finished writing the songs I realized most of the songs should be aimed at myself."

"It was a fun record to write because it was sort of like how to get over a heartbreak. You can either be angry like 'Matter of Fact' or 'Gone, Gone, Gone' or sort of happy, angry, bluesy like 'House of Tears.' " "House of Tears" is the band's latest single release.

Hamilton wrote the band's first single, "Burial Ground of the Broken Hearted," at a UNC School of Social Work conference in Colorado. This was still during the time when he was trying to get over his girlfriend, he said. Elephants and whales have places where they go to die, so Hamilton figured he had found his grave, he said.

"Maybe the burial ground for me is right here with all these Indian spirits and I'll just drive my car off the side of the cliff," he said.

Instead, he wrote a song. While Hamilton may be a sad person he deals with it by writing songs or having a sense of humor.

"My whole idea is why not be slightly humorous . . ." he said. "If you just sit there and stay depressed for a long, long time and don't think of funny ways to spend your time or ironic things that happen out of broken hearts, I guess you just put a gun to your head and kill yourself."

"Some people say that you can laugh so hard that you cry, so I say



HEGE V: David Thrower, George Hamilton, Rob Ragsdale and Tim Harper

why can't you cry so hard that you laugh."

Hamilton, in fact, did not want to make the band's video for "Burial Ground of the Broken Hearted" a sad and serious thing as the directors of the video did. Instead, Hamilton said he wanted to make it more humorous. It did not come out that way

though, he said. The band only had one day to shoot the video. (It was shot in Nashville, Tenn., home of MTM Records and Hamilton's birthplace.) Anyway, the video is getting good airplay on MTV's "120 Minutes" and the music video network of Canada, Much Music. Hamilton was co-host for the Canadian television station as he showed them around Nashville.

The band's next single may be "Ghost Town." WRDU is adding it to its playlist next week, Hamilton said.

"Ghost Town" is a depressing country song. Hamilton calls it "a country version of The Smiths."

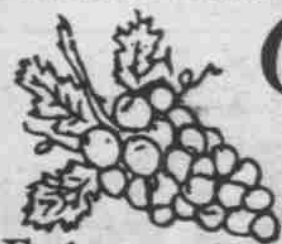
"My favorite songs on the album are songs like "Ghost Town" and "My Decline," Hamilton said. "I really like the more folkier type side of it (the album)."

"My Decline" and "She Says," another song from the LP, first

appeared on *The Cradle Tapes*, a collection of local artists playing at a WXYC benefit at Cat's Cradle. Other bands on the LP include The Connells, Flat Duo Jets and Snatches of Pink.

The band will be opening for Easter's band, Let's Active, this fall when the Winston-Salem band does a college tour, Hamilton said.

The band will also begin work on their next album. In October, the band members will begin to record demo tapes gearing up to record the album at the beginning of next year. The new LP will not be released, however, until next fall. The band, though, is playing two new songs — "Midnight at a Red Light" and "Black Coffee" — in its live sets. Hamilton described "Midnight" as an epic adventure song and "Black Coffee" as an epic adventure song into the depths of depression that goes beyond "Ghost Town" in depression.



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