

— Up front —

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DTH/Julie Stovall

Members of Amnesty International Group 84, one of the largest chapters of the organization, hold their monthly meeting at the Newman Center



DTH/Gretchen Hock

Members of Desperate Remedy

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S CONCERT OF HOPE

By ALLISON PIKE
Staff Writer

Amnesty International's local chapter, Group 84, brought an array of local talent to Cat's Cradle Sunday in a benefit concert to aid political prisoners. In some countries, you could have been arrested for attending the show.

In 1961, two Portuguese students were imprisoned simply for making a toast to freedom. This event spurred a British lawyer, Peter Benenson, to start a campaign to release them, and that led to the creation of Amnesty International.

Amnesty International is a non-partisan, worldwide organization of more than 500,000 members and supporters working to protect human rights. Thousands of men, women and children around the world are imprisoned for the non-violent expression of their beliefs. Amnesty International supports these individuals, known as prisoners of conscience, and petitions governments for their release via letters, postcards and telegrams. In addition, the organization asks governments to end torture and all executions.

Chapel Hill's Group 84 is one of the largest local groups in the country. Group leader Tom Rudin says most Amnesty groups around the country have 10 to 20 people in attendance at their meetings. Group 84 has 80 to 100 active members. "Group 84 is a cross section of people from all walks of life who share the common goal of improving human rights situations," Rudin said.

Two years ago, Amnesty International sponsored a worldwide Conspiracy of Hope Tour featuring U2, the Police and Peter Gabriel; it reportedly doubled Amnesty's membership. It also created problems because Amnesty's staff was not large enough to handle the extra load. But Group 84 has not suffered from its large membership. Says Rudin: "We feel fortunate in having around 100 dedicated people who write letters and participate in planning programs like this concert."

The Conspiracy of Hope Tour was one factor that prompted Group 84 to sponsor Sunday's benefit. Rudin said, "We saw how successful the Conspiracy concerts were, and we thought a concert would be one way to attract interest through music."

Sunday's concert featured performances by Desperate Remedy, the Wallabouts, the Swamis, and the Woods; it drew a crowd of about 125 to 150 people. The money generated from the concert — about \$750 — will go to Amnesty International's Ivan Morris fund, which will match the amount raised by Group 84.

Rudin said all of the money will go to human rights work: "It won't go to our newsletter, or to paying staff workers." He added that generating money is important because Amnesty's funds depend solely on contributions from members and supporters.

All of the bands involved in the show were dedicated and cooperative, said concert organizer Debbie Rzasa. Rzasa initially contacted the bands through letters; the Woods and

the Swamis responded the day they received theirs.

Woods bassist Jack Cornell said he thought performing at the show was a great idea. He said supporting Amnesty International is important because "living in America, we have the luxury of not being held as prisoners of conscience."

Swamis' guitarist/songwriter Holden Richards said he couldn't resist doing the concert. He supports Amnesty International because it "fights for peace on a basic humanity level and gets tangible results."

Guitarist/songwriter Paul Price, also of the Swamis, added: "It is enough now just to say a country is violating human rights. Amnesty International has had everything to do with that. We owe them a big debt."

The benefit opened Sunday with a new band, Desperate Remedy. Members of the band, two of whom are students at UNC, were interested in doing the show because one of their former musicians was a member of Amnesty and they all agreed it was for a good cause.

Desperate Remedy started the Cradle's enthusiastic crowd dancing with original songs as well as covers of the Clash's "Should I Stay or Should I Go" and the Police's "On Any Other Day."

Guitarist Stefan Rogers and bassist Alex Kort were very pleased with the performance. "I was on a high when the people started dancing," Rogers noted. "The audience action was superb," Kort said.

The Wallabouts, a Cleveland band

that moved to Chapel Hill recently, was also well received. Bassist Jim Ford noted, "The crowd was great — more than great." He also said the Wallabouts were very eager to do the concert. "We love Amnesty International. We think they're doing a good job."

Suffering only one delay when guitarist Doug Francis broke a guitar string, the Wallabouts played an almost nonstop 45-minute set that included originals like "Answers Made in Clay" and "Murder of Crows," plus a version of the Beatles' "Paperback Writer."

Freshman Ethan Clotfelter said, "They looked like they had a lot of fun. They were great to watch."

Following the Wallabouts were the Swamis, whose powerful set was cut short by about five songs due to shortage of time.

In the spirit of Amnesty International, guitarist Price, sporting a Greenpeace T-shirt, energetically sang "How Do You Know," a song about political persecution. Guitarist Richards followed up with "Sign of the Times," a song not about being politically aware, he said, but "about not giving a damn."

The Swamis also did their local favorite, "Another World," and Richards ended the set with a manic flight around the stage that included a couple of jumps from the drum platform.

Although disappointed about being cut off early, keyboardist Bob Cook said, "We got in everything we really wanted to play."

The Woods closed the show, play-

ing songs like "Next Rain" and "Girlfriends" from their new LP, *It's Like This*. The audience was given a treat after the first three songs, when drummer Terry Anderson abandoned his drums for an acoustic guitar and joined Cornell (playing an acoustic bass) and guitarist David Enloe in an acoustic set that included "Nice," "Chain My Heart," and Anderson's "Battleship Chains," all from the new LP. This was the first time the Woods have tried an acoustic set, and the crowd responded enthusiastically by dancing and clapping along to the Woods' well-blended harmonies. But, Anderson pointed out, "You'll have to buy the record to hear what it really sounds like."

Concert organizers said they were pleased with Sunday's turnout. Around 100 letters were signed at

the show on behalf of prisoners of conscience, Rudin said. He also thought that the show generated a lot of awareness about Amnesty International.

"More than anything, the show was further evidence that Group 84 is committed to ideals like putting together a program of quality," he said.

Group 84 already has plans for a spring benefit. "Debbie Rzasa and I have already begun to lay the groundwork for the next one," Rudin said. "We are starting to plan now about how to get an even bigger turnout next time."

Rudin said he thought everyone at the show, including the bands, had a good time. "All in all, it was a good night."



DTH/David Minton

David Enloe, guitarist for the Woods



DTH/David Minton

The audience enjoyed performances by four bands at the benefit concert