

Bands

The members of Scrapyard are into literate rock 'n' roll

By **BETH TRIPP**
Staff Writer

One can always hear many comments to be heard about local bands, but how often does one hear "Oh my God, that's my English teacher!?" Headed by UNC English professor Joe Viscomi and English graduate student Michael Schaefer, the band Scrapyard has heard this statement plenty. Fans and curious students will get a chance to hear some literate rock Saturday night at Cat's Cradle.

Scrapyard plays a high intensity collection of classic R&B, blues and rock songs. The band composes their own arrangements of classic songs, adding improvisational touches and solo riffs. A Top 40

cover band they're not. Their repertoire includes Lou Reed, Albert King, Chuck Berry, the Stones and a wide range of blues and R&B.

The band started in the fall of 1984 as a jam session at Viscomi's house for people in the English department. In 1985 drummer Viscomi and guitarist Schaefer decided to play in some area clubs and invited fellow professor Thomas Stumpf to sing vocals.

Along with guitarist Ted Johnson, they opened at Cat's Cradle under the name Scrapyard. Viscomi said they picked the name Scrapyard because 'scrapyard dog' was an old blues term. "We thought it suggested our rough

and ready R&B sound with a lot of energy."

Since then the band has attracted a large local following. Joined by bassist Charly Glidden and saxophonist Larry Scotchie, Scrapyard gets people moving. "When we're on, people dance," Stumpf says. Two weeks ago at La Terraza, they were called back for five encores. Listeners didn't want the music to stop.

Scrapyard is a band based on fun and music and expects to really "blow things out" Saturday night. As Viscomi says, "We're not in this to make a living. We're in this for the sheer pleasure of it. As soon as we stop having fun, we'll stop playing."



DTH/Julie Stovall

English professor Thomas Stumpf, vocalist for Scrapyard

Local singer tempers her message with a good dose of musical humor

By **RHYS WILLIAMS**
Staff Writer

Many UNC graduates have problems leaving Chapel Hill after earning their degrees. The weather is pleasant, employment is not too difficult to find, and the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the town is obviously attractive.

Tracy Drach has been here for 10 years now, and the 29-year-old native of upstate New York shows no signs of getting ready to leave.

Drach originally came to Chapel Hill to study psychology, but for the past four years she has been singing and playing guitar by herself, or with David "Bug" Bennett on cello, in local clubs in the Triangle region. Tonight she'll be performing in the Coker Arboretum as part of the Campus Y's "Take Back The Night" rally against rape and sexual assault.

Little about Drach's music — "Drach and Roll" she calls it — is standard fare. Musically, the combination of Drach's acoustic guitar, playing basic folk progressions, and Bennett's classically-trained cello weaving melody lines in and out of the overall piece, creates a surprisingly deep and rich canvas for her voice to sing over.

Lyrical, the duo take a distinctly political stance, singing songs that are often strongly feminist in tone while maintaining plenty of humor in their presentation. While much of this is evident on the tape *Female Blues* that Drach released last year, it is in the live setting that her message is voiced most effectively.

Drach has been playing by her-

self for four years; Bennett has only been with her for the last year. "It adds a very different flavor," she says of his cello playing. "We had some mutual friends, and he introduced himself and offered to put down some cello lines to one of my songs. He originally sat in for one song, and stayed for the whole set!"

For the moment, although she talks of wanting to add piano to the line-up, Drach appears happy "keeping it small," which is probably a good idea, because the barrenness of the music emphasizes the lyrics all the more.

The obvious problem of singing such openly political lyrics is that they might alienate certain factions of the audience and leave Drach preaching to the already converted. This is definitely not the aim of her songs. "Some listen, and some don't," she admits of her audience, "but most people seem to appreciate it (the lyrical content)."

The message Drach relays is serious, but her shows are also full of a sense of humor that constantly resurfaces during the evening and which helps her audience to maintain a certain perspective on the show. One example is Memphis Slim's blues classic, "Beer Drinking Woman," during which Drach puts down her guitar and just sings, and Bennett wears dark glasses and plays his cello as if it were a guitar, sitting on his lap. "That was David's idea," Drach says of the humorous yet sincere tribute.

Sadly, this combination of visual

and aural humor does not translate completely onto cassette, although much of the essential message of her lyrics does. Still available in local record stores, and at gigs, the tape is a good example of the original songs that Drach mixes with covers of songs by the likes of Joan Armatrading and Nancy Griffiths, when she plays live. "It's slow but it's steady," she says of sales of the cassette. "I sell most of them at gigs, and only a few in the stores."

As many local bands have found, Chapel Hill is not an ideal place to begin a career in music, and Drach is experiencing many of the common problems at the moment. "I'm real comfortable here," she admits, "but there's only a certain number of places to play and tapes to sell. I wish there were more laces to play in this town, but I don't have an agent or a manager, so I tend to play only around here."

One break that came recently was a bit part in the new Kevin Costner movie, "Bull Durham," which was filmed in Durham. "I'm the one with the guitar in the prostitute scene," she laughs. "It was fun for two days' work, and I earned \$1,000!" The movie will be coming out in May or June, she says, and should provide at least some free publicity.

In the meantime, Drach will continue to play her "Drach and Roll" throughout the Triangle, and Bennett will continue his Ray Charles impersonations while paying tribute to his blues heroes. Such irreverence deserves to succeed.



DTH/Matthew Plyler

Singer Tracy Drach performs at the Columbia Street Bakery