From theater to concerts, this band's ramblin' on

By KAREN ZIMMER Staff Writer

each took a leave of absence for a month to tour their musical "Diamond Studs." The show was a hit; it went to New York ... and one month became 13 years.

said, 'Look, we're not coming back." veteran band member Tommy Thompson says. "That's how we became a full-time band, through theater."

Now they've come to Chapel Hill to perform at ArtsCenter this because of its small size. Saturday night.

The influence of drama remains in the group's performances. "We like treating a concert as theater," Thompson says. "A singer is like an actor. The audience has to be convinced that the voice it hears as a revivalist band, imitating a means what it says."

For Thompson, theatricality also lies in just moving around on stage, changing instruments (of which the band has 12), talking to the public and exposing songs in a humorous way.

Ramblers' art; it's inherent in the "old timey" roots of the band's In 1975 the Red Clay Ramblers songs. Their style is inspired from traditional American music. "What makes this music unique is its combination of African and European culture," Thompson says.

The Ramblers' loose-jointed fun "We called home at the time and is largely due to the "Afro-genes," which it inherited. The Euro-African blend is exemplified by the use of the banjo, originally an African instrument, in harmony with the European fiddle, which settlers could easily carry around

The band does not only blend geographical styles. It also picks up tunes from different periods and throws them together to form a new whole.

Although the Ramblers started 1930s style, the band soon changed its course. "In the mid-70s, we realized that the revivalist label was a prison," Thompson says. "We began to swap things around and mix kinds of music, being irreverent to the sacred Humor is the key to the past." They blend country, blues,

jazz and rock. They use classic instruments such as acoustic guitar and mandolin along with a synthesizer and a digital piano.

Although they have been called "the nation's premier whatzit band," the Ramblers have always kept a definite personality by holding on to their old-time flavor throughout their innovations.

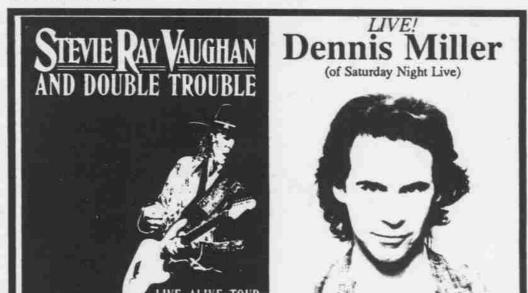
Actor/director/playwright Sam Shepard was attracted to the Ramblers' purely American backbone. Shepard asked them to compose and perform for his theater production, "A Lie of the Mind," and his upcoming movie, "Far North," after he heard them on the radio.

Shepard must have been lucky, because the Ramblers are rarely on the air. "Our music is not of the type you hear on commercial radio," Thompson says.

it may be of the type you want to get better acquainted with, though: according to Thompson, his group's music just makes you feel good. "We're entertaining, we're fun. And that is not just an

illusion in my head. Wherever we go and there is a crowd, people like us," he says.

Maybe because, as he puts it, a good performance is "like the best conversation you've ever had."



The Red Clay Ramblers will perform at ArtsCenter Saturday night

It's a rerun on 'Miami Vice' but don't miss Sean as James Bond

By JENNY LIVINGSTON Assistant Omnibus Editor

Okay you guys, it's time to get out of that damaging sun. Stop tiring yourself out with all that Frisbee golf. Co home. Go inside.

Spring is a very lonely time for your poor TV. All day long it waits for you, sitting silently in your living room while you're out there giving yourself skin cancer and leg cramps. Give your tube a break this week. Give back some of what it gives to you. Appreciate your television!



with its news special "Drugs: A Plague Upon the Land." A plague, they say? At least it's not frogs. Monday

Oscar night! The suspense is killing people. The question on everyone's lips is: "How long will the ordeal last this year?" Tune in and see if you can figure out why the winners for Best Editing of an

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Thursday

Big shakeup at NBC. "My Two Dads" leaves its Sunday slot to take the place of the the fashion show-slash-comedy "A Different World" at 8:30 p.m. on Thursday. Once again, the networks show us that a man trying to run a household is funny, and two men trying to run one - well, you have to see it to believe it.

Friday

And they said it couldn't be done. After five sequels to "Friday the 13th," Fox turned that bloodand-breasts extravaganza into a weekly event on the small screen. Don't worry, though, it's nothing like the movie.

If unshaven men who wear white pants all year round are more your style, you can tune to "Miami Vice" on NBC. It's a repeat

ube trade of the episode in which Don Johnson marries Sheena Easton. She just hasn't been herself since she started hanging around Prince.

And he hasn't been himself since he started hanging around Barbra Streisand.

Saturday

I'm sick and tired of everybody saying, "Cartoons today (sigh) what ever happened to Bugs Bunny and the Roadrunner and Tom and Jerry?" Come off it! Today we have Smurfs, Pound Puppies, baby Muppets, even "Disney's Adventures of the Gummi Bears." When else were there ever Saturday morning cartoons modeled after food? We should all just count our blessings.

Sunday

Never say never again. "From Russia with Love" airs for the eighth time on ABC. But with Sean Connery as Bond plus the car chases plus all the groovy 1963 fashions, it's a classic that never (excuse me - hardly ever) grows old.

Following the movie, ABC jumps on the Just Say No bandwagon

Animated Foreign Short Film always give longer speeches than the Best Actor.

To gear up for the awards, watch "European Vacation" on CBS. After watching Chevy Chase and his goony family for an hour or so, you'll be ready for anything. Tuesday

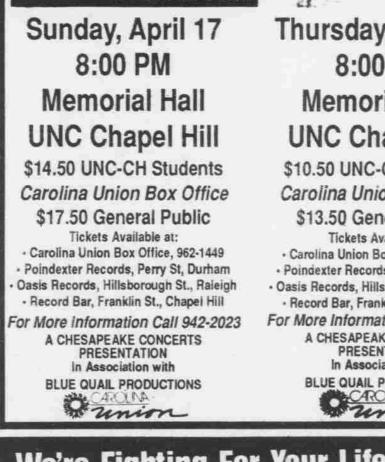
Ever since "Happy Days" and "Laverne and Shirley" went off the air, Tuesday's been a real bore. So get your viewing hours in early by watching as many game shows as you can. For fun, try rating the hosts, models and quests on attractiveness and personality. Then try to answer the following questions: Who's a better dresser, Bob Barker or Alex Trebek? Where

do they get these contestants? And whatever happened to Monty

Wednesday

Hall?

ABC airs its own new Yuppie fest, "Heartbeat," in which women doctors who look like fashion models treat (sensitively, of course) patients who look like character actors. Sounds dull, but there should be a lot of Yuppie sex in it. Like I said, it sounds dull.



Thursday, April 21 8:00 PM Memorial Hall **UNC Chapel Hill** \$10.50 UNC-CH Students Carolina Union Box Office \$13.50 General Public Tickets Available at: Carolina Union Box Office, 962-1449 Poindexter Records, Perry St, Durham · Oasis Records, Hillsborough St., Raleigh Record Bar, Franklin St., Chapel Hill For More Information Call 942-2023 A CHESAPEAKE CONCERTS PRESENTATION In Association with **BLUE QUAIL PRODUCTIONS** Union

