

ArtsCenter offers unique musical attractions

By **GUINEVERE ROSS**
Staff Writer

Yeah, I know R.E.M. is almost sold out. And even if you could afford scalped tickets, you know you really shouldn't go because you have two papers due Monday, and exams are so close — but you need some cheap musical entertainment to get you through until Reading Day. So what's a poor student to do?

Use some of your short study breaks to tap into the wide range of musical and performing talent available at the ArtsCenter over the next two weeks, that's what.

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at the center, plays written by local playwrights will be showcased in a performance called "Festival of One-Acts."

A continuance from last week, four plays will be performed — "Wooden Horses" by Derrick Ivey and "Return To Eden" by Karyn Traut will both be featured Thursday, Friday and Saturday, you can find out about Isabella Davis' "A Young Man Of Promise" and Doris Garlich's "Change of Heart."

But on Sunday, the stage will be set for the talent of blues and jazz artist Bus Brown. ArtsCenter Communications Director Bett Wilson said the 80-year-old blues giant has been playing jazz for 60 years and has played with artists like Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday. Sunday, he will perform with Al Neese on trumpet, Al Doctor on sax, Steve Wing on piano and others.

As far as music goes, Wilson said next week will be a good week to spend at the center. Starting Tuesday night and running until Sunday, several local and national bands will perform for the public.

If bluegrass is your thing, April 25 would be a chance to check out the New Grass Revival. And since Music City News calls what these four men do as "brilliant, breathtaking, and gutsy," maybe even die-hard rockers should allow their tastes to perhaps be altered.

And if you're really in the open-minded mood on Wednesday, April 26, go to hear the sounds of Queen Ida & Her Bon Temps Zydeco Band. Yes, zydeco is a word — a black-Cajun corruption of the French word for snap beans. And zydeco is also a legitimate style of music, the kind of spicy music you can hear at the Mardi Gras. The style

is a cross between the folksy bounce of Cajun music and the energy of rhythm and blues.

Wilson said, "Queen Ida is truly the queen of zydeco." She has been nominated three times for Grammy awards and won the award in 1987 for her "Queen Ida On Tour" album, Wilson said.

Wilson said Queen Ida usually only plays large concerts with seating around 1,000, but the ArtsCenter only seats 450.

"We have been able to get large acts such as hers because we've developed good relations with agents."

Wilson added that the location of the center between Georgia and Washington was favorable for bands that need places to fill in their tours. Besides, musicians love to perform in the intimate setting of the center and take advantage of the new sound system.

Wilson added, "We usually have good crowds, and musicians appreciate that."

Another musician who is taking advantage of the ArtsCenter's intimate stage is multi-award winning Bruce Cockburn. Cockburn who has released his 18th album, "Big Circumstance," is returning from a three-year hiatus in Mozambique, Nepal and Central America to play at the center April 27.

So, what does he sound like? Well, he sings songs about environmental concerns, and he should appeal to those who like the acoustic sound.

The ArtsCenter should be a good place for those who like the appealing sound of bagpipe jazz-funk fusion, the music of none other than the Canadian band Rare Air, who will be performing at the center April 29. Their music is a fusion of bagpipes, whistles, a synthesizer, drums, bells and guitars. It sounds like jazz with rock elements.

Wilson said it is Rare Air's third time here and its appeal has caused its audience to double each time. She said that during one visit, chairs were set up to account for the extra crowd, but were pushed out of the way to make room for dancing.

After that rare sound, get ready for the day sure to be heaven for the jazz lover. From 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. April 30, the N.C. Arts Council,

the ArtsCenter and the N.C. Jazz Network will present the N.C. Jazz Showcase, a performance of 14 jazz bands from North Carolina. "The event is a chance to sample North Carolina's top jazz acts," said Wilson.

The showcase will also be a chance for lesser-known performers to audition for recording agents and club owners from all over the state. Each band will play from 20 to 30 minutes, and there

will be an intermission for a dinner break.

Bands that will perform include the N.C. Jazz Ensemble, a big band that originates from central North Carolina; vocalist Melva Houston, who has worked with Al Green and Otis Redding; and the Matt Kendrick Unit, featuring the award-winning bassist from Winston-Salem.

So if you love music, you can get your fill at the ArtsCenter. If you

cannot make it next week, the center will still be there after exams at 300-G East Main Street in Carrboro and has an average of seven to 15 concerts a week.

For information on these and other shows, call the center at 942-2787, or for tickets, 929-ARTS. Turn off the canned music on your stereo, call them up and experience the sounds of the traditional, the rock 'n' roll and the international.

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