

Pure and healthy Rasta reggae be jammin'

The Itals

with David Isaacs

Sunday, Oct. 1, 10:30 p.m.
Cat's Cradle

Tickets \$7

Nighthawk recording artists The Itals, backed by their own Vital Band from Jamaica, will make an appearance at the Cat's Cradle on Sunday, Oct. 1. During their national tour this autumn, the band will be performing material from their new nine-track *Cool and Dread*

DAVIS TURNER

concert

album.

The reunion of Lloyd Ricketts with The Itals after a three-year separation has now been firmly established. Ricketts was the original third member of the Itals and sang on the group's first four albums. David Isaacs, who sang during Ricketts' absence, will be the featured opener for the *Cool and Dread* tour.

With Ziggy Marley's acceptance and success in America, interest in real-roots reggae is on the rise during

the post-Wailers era. The Itals have been a consistently popular reggae act since 1982, when they released their first album on Nighthawk, *Brutal Out Deh*. The harmonious blend of the voices of Keith Porter, Ronnie Davis and Lloyd Ricketts was a perfect example of the spirituality that has made reggae such a big hit in America.

Early 1984 saw the release of the second Itals album, *Give Me Power*, which made it to No. 1 on the College Media Journal's reggae charts. The Jah Children Band supported them on this tour, which began with a feature concert at the Montreal Jazz Festival.

In 1986 The Itals released their

third album, *Rasta Philosophy*, with David Isaacs temporarily standing in for Lloyd Ricketts. *Rasta Philosophy* was one of the final nominees for reggae album of the year in the 1986 Grammy Awards. Although The Itals did not win the award, the nomination exposed them to a wider audience through the national coverage of the event.

Their from-the-heart lyrics include smatterings of Jamaican speech, which originated from the languages of exiled Africans. Because Rastafarians perceive the word 'me' as an expression of subservience, they substitute the 'I-word,' an expression of the individualism that characterizes them and the unity they see among themselves. The word 'ital' means pure and healthy: natural, unprocessed and unpolluted.

Lead singer Keith Porter, who is based in the countryside of Jamaica's Westmoreland parish, has said, "...we really not like the environment of the city. We like to live in the country and come into the city and do my work and go back. You get more better food fe eat out there, you know. More fresher food and fresh air and t'ing like that."

Porter, Davis and Ricketts first formed The Itals in 1976. Their first release, *In A Dis A Time*, reached No. 1 on Jamaica's charts. In 1981, a spot in the Jamaica Sunsplash Festival gave them the exposure they needed, and resulted in their signing with U.S.-based Nighthawk Records.

On their first U.S. tour in 1983, the group proved that their sound was not merely a studio creation. Their album performance is surpassed in the excitement of their live performances. The *Cool and Dread* tour will be the group's fourth North American tour. In previous tours, The Itals have been supported by their



David Isaacs

fine Jamaican bands such as the Roots Radics and Jah Children.

The Vital Reggae Band has an impressive background with exceptional experience in reggae music. Linford Anthony Allan, on bass guitar, has been playing professionally for ten years, and played with the group Umoja for four years. Charlton Locksville Williams on guitar, began playing in 1976, at the age of 17. Williams played with a group called Black Heat before joining Umoja. Patrick Murray, keyboardist, was one of the founding members of Umoja, along with Allan and Williams. Drummer Paul Nathaniel Francis has backed many top Jamaican artists. "Bongo Herman" Davis, on percussion, has been recording and performing in Jamaica since the early '70s. He has many releases under his own name, in addition to his lengthy studio history.

David Isaacs began his professional career as a vocalist with the Lynn Taitt Band. He recorded for the Merritone and Dynamic label in 1968 and has recorded well over 50 singles under his own name.



'Heathen, Rastafari call!' The Itals play the Cradle Sunday

'Thrash acoustic' Berryhill an antifolk heroine

Cindy Lee Berryhill

Tonight, 10:30 p.m.
Cat's Cradle

Tickets \$7

Somewhere, beyond folk, beyond rock, beyond punk, there is antifolk. For us, that somewhere will be Chapel Hill tonight as Cindy Lee Berryhill brings her unique "thrash acoustic" straight from the Village to the Cat's Cradle.

Berryhill is described by *Rolling Stone* as having "harsh vocal phrasing that sounds more like a crow with an attitude than a girl with an eye on the charts." Nevertheless, her second album, *Naked Movie Star* (Rhino), is bringing her positive reviews and a growing audience. A new

KELLY THOMPSON

concert

video for her single "Indirectly Yours" should also bring her more national attention.

A native of the Turkey Capitol of California (otherwise known as Ramona, a suburb of San Diego), Berryhill cites artists like Woody Guthrie, Lou Reed and Johnny Rotten as her influences but says that her music is hard to classify.

"I'm folk-influenced, but my influences really come from the Partridge Family, from rock and pop. But it's hard for me to think of my music in terms of is it this or is it that, 'cause I feel I kill it then. I just like to think of myself as a writer, using acoustic instruments to paint the scenery," she said in an interview with *L.A. Style*.

Her roots are in the surf and punk communities of Southern California. Berryhill started out in San Diego as a teenage vaudeville performer and later migrated to Hollywood, started a punk-rock band called the Stoopuds and studied acting at the Lee Stasberg Institute, but gradually, she focused on her solo singing career.

In 1987, while still in Los Angeles, she recorded her debut *Who's Gonna Save the World* on the Rhino label. The album received positive reviews from the likes of *Billboard* Magazine, the *L.A. Times* and the *Boston Globe*. Berryhill was praised for her fresh lyrics and her unusual style, which, according to the *L.A. Times*, resembled "Patti Smith meets Olive Oyl and they get together in Joni Mitchell's bedroom to write songs for Bob Dylan."

After going on the road with Billy Bragg, The Smithereens, and Marti Jones and Don Dixon, Berryhill went to New York City to record *Naked*

Movie Star, again on the Rhino label, which was released this spring. It was a striking departure from her debut, and displayed a sophistication absent from the acoustic antifolk that made the first album popular.

Berryhill experimented with a variety of styles on this album, ranging from a Springsteen-like "Old Trombone Routine" to what the

'Harsh vocal phrasing that sounds more like a crow with an attitude than a girl with an eye on the charts'

L.A. Times described as a "half-Rocky Horror Picture Show, half-Ethel Merman" style on the satirical "Trump."

Another change from the first album was Berryhill's choice of musical accompaniment. On her debut, she used only her own guitar, bassist

Waygone Rex Wilson and drummer Irene Liberatore to create that "thrash acoustic" sound. In contrast, *Naked Movie Star* features a three-piece jazz bebop-bred rhythm section and drummer Debbie "Fluffy" Spinelli to flesh out the many musical styles.

A factor in these style changes is Berryhill's new producer, Lenny Kaye. Kaye has also worked with Suzanne Vega and Patti Smith and balances Berryhill's poetic lyrics with an insistence on solid, if sparse, accompaniment. *Rolling Stone* credits him with keeping the album away from pretension by providing "a streamlined yet muscular sensibility."

To promote the new album, Berryhill is doing what she calls the "backpack-and-guitar routine." She is appearing in art galleries, bookstores and fashion boutiques (as well as the more traditional places) to promote *Naked Movie Star*. As she put it, "I may do a tune, read a poem, or kiss babies."