

## ON STAGE

# B-52's put up their 'love shack' in Raleigh

## B-52's

Friday, Oct. 27, 8 p.m.  
Raleigh Civic Center  
755-6060

Tickets \$17.50

Warner Brothers bio: "As a group we enjoy science facts, thrift shopping, tick jokes, fat food diets, geometric exercising, discovering the essence from within."

What the . . . Better turn your watch back.

The B-52's, that kooky band from Athens, Ga., are on the road again after a four-year absence. Promoting *Cosmic Thing*, their first release in three years, The B-52's will be jiving it up on Friday, Oct. 27, in Raleigh at the Civic Center.

There is not a group anywhere that

## DAVIS TURNER concert

this band can be compared to. The B-52's have been around for a long time and have never compromised their taste in zany clothes and devil-may-care antics. Their first album, *The B-52's*, came out in the summer of 1979 with the legendary "Rock Lobster." They followed with six other albums, always in the B-52's style of light-hearted lyrics and energetic music. With past album names such as *Wild Planet*, *Mesopotamia*, *Whammy!* and *Bouncing Off Of Satellites*, *Cosmic Thing* seems like a natural progression.

For the *Cosmic* tour, the ladies may be a bit heftier than in their earlier days, but they can still shimmy, pony and jerk better than anyone in the business; and they always look like they're having a fantastic time doing it. The band is keeping fit and the



The Bizarre B-52's — Fred Schneider, Kate Pierson, Cindy Wilson, and Keith Strickland — are in Raleigh Friday night

show will still have the same energy as past tours. Band member Jeff Schneider said they have expanded on the jamming and that it promises to be a wild show. On the tour, they will be backed by Zack Albert, Pat Irwin and Sara (Gang of Four) Lee.

In a recent issue of *Reel to Real*, Kate Pierson insisted that the group

did not take the last four years off, although they did quit working for a while. After Cindy Wilson's brother, founding band member Ricky Wilson, died of cancer in 1985, the remaining members went through a mourning process, she said.

The foursome of Pierson, Jeff Schneider, Keith Strickland and Wilson thought it would be a natural end to the band but found their friendship keeping them together. They started writing again, which instigated a healing process.

"Aside from that time off, we've been working on the record, writing stuff. We did promotions for *Bouncing Off of Satellites*, though we didn't tour because of Ricky," says Pierson.

The death of Wilson hasn't caused a serious tone to creep into their music, however. People don't expect a serious B-52's tune. That's not what they're about. In fact, critics have often accused The B-52's of goofiness and silliness, but the band disagrees. They prefer to see it as wit. There is definitely an inherent humor to their songs, especially with the early work: "Why don't you dance with me? I'm not no limburger!"

Schneider explained the group's approach. "Silly" really implies that there's no intelligence behind something. I would say that we were humorous. Esoteric. We're eso-hysterical . . . There are so many different types of songs on this album, you just can't label it."

Not all of the B-52's songs are as silly as they may seem. Over the years, they have included the group's environmental concerns in such songs as "Private Idaho," "Juicy Jungle" and most recently with, "Channel Z." Schneider has referred to their composition process as "stream of consciousness writing, where we let the door to collective unconscious open, and things just run out."

Strickland jams on a musical idea while Pierson, Schneider and Wilson improvise on lyrics. They just go with whatever comes to mind. Because the band composes together in a team effort, with no one leader taking control, there are no power struggles and the egos don't get out of hand.

Some people doubt Schneider has ever really sung a single word to any of the songs. Wilson and Pierson still

sound as sultry as ever and don't seem to be doing as much screeching as in the first albums. Their harmonies are more prominent on *Cosmic* than the Schneider monotone.

The B-52's got their start in Athens, where they met at street parties. One evening, after a few drinks, the five original members were playing around with instruments at a friend's house and came up with a song they called "Killer B's." They began playing at parties and practicing in a blood-letting room of an old funeral parlor, which was behind a restaurant where Schneider worked.

And what about the name? In a *Rolling Stone* interview in 1980, Ricky Wilson said that it had come to Strickland in a dream. It is also the Southern slang for bouffant hairdos, which the two ladies of the group sported during the band's early days.

The B-52's never dreamed that their music would become popular beyond a group of friends in Athens. With no expectations, they tried their luck in New York City. They were so scared after their first gig in a club there that they ran out without even checking to see if the audience had liked them. The audience liked them all right. By the winter of 1978, the B-52's were the hottest club band in New York, romping around on stage at such places as Max's, CBGB's and Club 57. The Talking Heads, also from Athens, helped them get their business and management off to a strong start. From there, the band's popularity grew steadily until the recent three-year silence.

It may have been a long gap between tours, but the B-52's are eager to show off their new work and perform *Cosmic* live.

"We've always toured with all our records, except for *Satellites*, because Ricky died," said Schneider. "We just couldn't do it. We're not going to sacrifice our sanity to do anything. Well, for this record, we'll sacrifice some of it . . . We'll just do it."

## The only thing he doesn't play is reggae

### Kenny Rankin

Saturday, Oct. 28, 9 p.m.  
ArtsCenter  
929-ARTS

Tickets \$12.50 public,  
\$10 Friends of the ArtsCenter

Chapel Hill jazz fans may remember singer/songwriter/guitarist Kenny Rankin from last year when he opened for Shadowfax in Carrboro and stole the show. Rankin will bring his unique mix of musical styles to the ArtsCenter once again Saturday at 9 p.m.

Rankin's latest tour is to promote his latest release, *Hiding in Myself*, his first on the Cypress label. It is his first effort at producing and arranging an album as well as an eclectic vehicle for his distinctive melody and scat vocals.

Rankin admits that his style of music is very hard to classify. He starts from a jazz base, but combines strains of rock, folk and salsa to create something truly unique. As Rankin puts it, "I'm as comfortable with Irving Berlin as I am with the Beatles . . . the labels make me uncomfortable. It's the music that I love."

This broad musical base has allowed him to work with a variety of artists. From playing rhythm guitar for Bob Dylan's *Bringin' It All Back Home* album to singing with the New American Orchestra and touring with Manhattan Transfer, Rankin has developed a wide following.

The musician grew up in New York City, where he received no formal musical training whatsoever. Rankin explains, "I was politely asked to leave five high schools, so my training had to come from the streets. I just started hanging out, singing in hallways and playing congas on all the corners my mother told me to avoid."

To begin with, Rankin was solely a singer. He recorded his first album at 17 and was sent on a European tour. Altogether, he recorded in six languages for Columbia Records.

When he returned, he picked up the guitar and was soon launched in a whole new direction. Six months later, he was playing backup for Bob Dylan. Other highlights of Rankin's instrumental career include playing classical guitar with Jimi Hendrix and getting his first set of La Bella classical strings from Don Costa.

Songwriting is yet another part of Rankin's music. His compositions, like "Haven't We Met," "In the Name of Love," and "Peaceful," were recorded by several artists and became chart hits. Rankin's own albums, especially those on the Little David/Atlantic label in the late '70s, were critically acclaimed as well.

As the new decade began, Rankin pushed himself to get out of the studio and on to the stage. His performances include playing the Lincoln Center, opening solo for Bruce Springsteen at Red Rocks, singing with community symphonies and appearing in clubs across the nation.

As Rankin puts it, "I've dragged my guitar just about everywhere, I sing for nothing . . . I get paid to travel." — from staff reports



Kenny Rankin

Die Happy.

OMNIBUS