

ON STAGE

Rock's sons of the South are back home

R.E.M.

with Pylon

Friday, Nov. 10
Greensboro Coliseum

Tickets \$18.50

R.E.M., the underground sensation-turned-superband of the '80s will bring their unique fusion of folk/rock/progressive music to the Greensboro Coliseum Friday night.

The fab four of the decade is in the middle of the second leg of their Green tour. Last April the Group visited the 20,000-plus seat arenas of Chapel Hill and Charlotte, but somehow it seems fitting that R.E.M. should opt for the smaller arena of Greensboro this time around to give something back to a city that has long supported the group's efforts in nightclub gigs as an underground band.

As is inevitable with all coming-

THOMAS HEALY concert

of-age rock groups, questions have arisen in the wake of R.E.M.'s recent Top 40 success. Long-time fans question the band's integrity in producing an album with such inane singles as "Stand" and "Pop Song '89."

Further, the band's decision to play in arenas 20 times the size of clubs that witnessed their first successes worries some fans that the band will lose their passion and spontaneity and resort to near-perfect playing and crowd-pleasing that has never been R.E.M.'s style.

A quick glance at R.E.M.'s history as a band that does things its own way should reassure any dubious fan that the R.E.M. of old is not gone—just more mature.

R.E.M. has been acclaimed as the consummate college band, the leader of an anti-pop revolt and America's best rock and roll band, but all of these accolades are irrelevant if one

takes away the single factor underlying the groups achievements; R.E.M. is the model for any band that wants to follow its own path to success and deflect all outside interference.

As a fledgling quartet with a skill for producing songs of passionate intensity coupled with a dreamlike imagery, R.E.M. sparked a fire in the imagination of college students of the early '80s. Avoiding the clear-cut party music of peer bands such as the Clash and the B-52s, R.E.M. created a reputation for eccentric, jangling guitar sounds that skirted popular notions of what rock music should be.

R.E.M. took this ability and entrusted it to fresh young producers who left the band's work unspoiled and unique.

Mitch Easter, a little known producer directed the band's first efforts. At the group's insistence, instead of using a larger Boston studio, they recorded in a small studio in Charlotte whose main client was the P.T.I. ministry. The result was *Murmur*, an album that *Rolling Stone* named the eighth greatest rock album of the '80s.

R.E.M.'s reputation for achieving success on its own has been reinforced by later career moves. The group turned down early offers to tour with such big names as the Clash, U2, and the Go Go's. And their

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choice of opening bands in recent tours has reflected the group's own musical ideology.

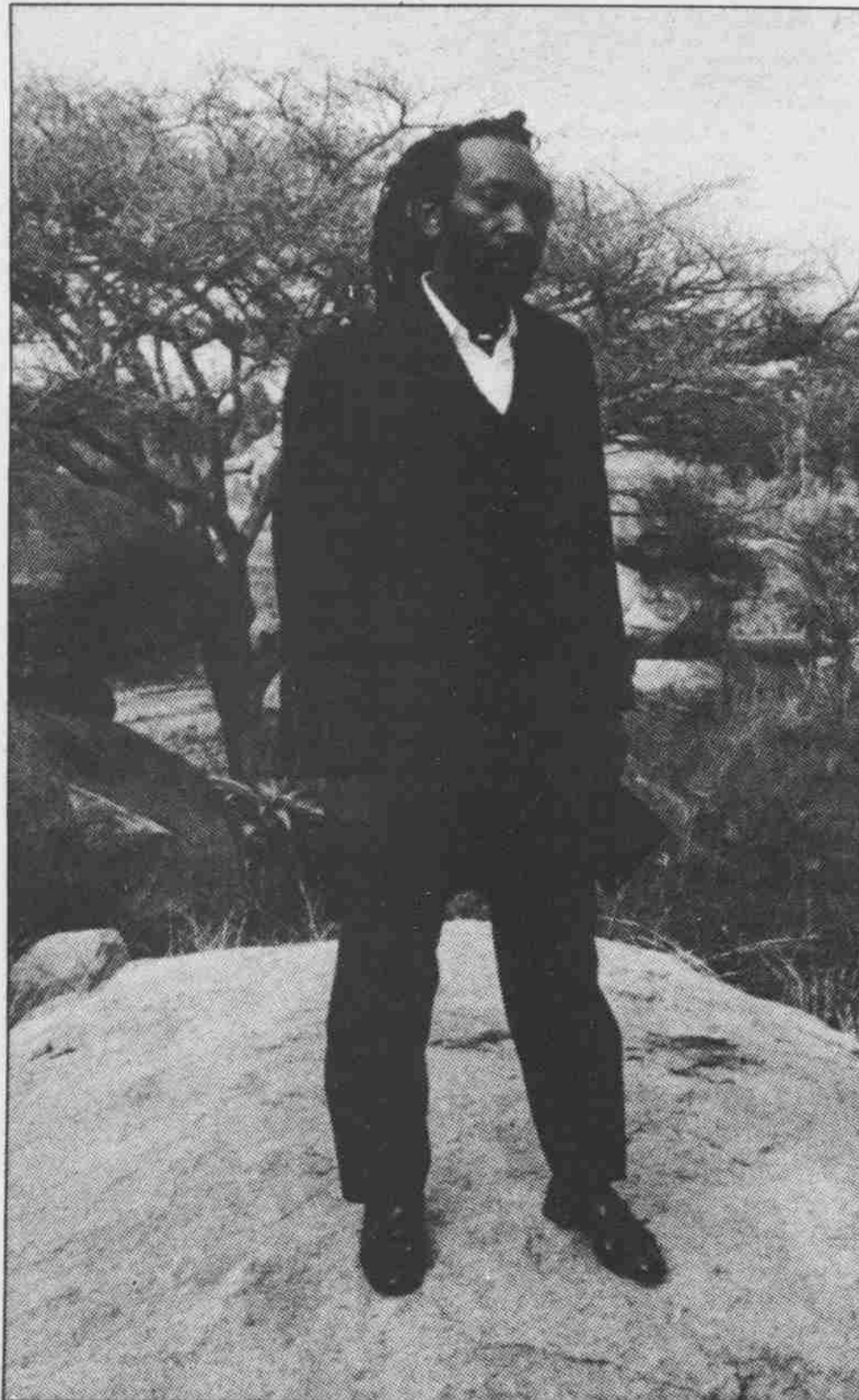
Now R.E.M. is in the middle of the most successful tour to date. The band's latest album *Green* has gone platinum, and singles such as "Stand" and "Orange Crush" have made it higher on the charts than any previous singles.

But for all intents and purposes

the R.E.M. of *Green* is as strange as ever. With such doleful and evocative tunes as "Hairshirt," "The Wrong Child" and "You Are the Everything," the group has simply added another chapter to the continuing saga. The jangling guitars of classics such as "Harborcoat" have been replaced by the mandolin strumming of "You Are the Everything." Things are different but just as uniquely R.E.M. as they have ever been.

The on-stage passion that has characterized the group is also still present in post-underground R.E.M. The April show in Chapel Hill proved that fans can still expect weird antics from rock's most enigmatic vocalist, Michael Stipe. Stipe was intriguing last spring, going from episodes of spasmodic dancing to mournful poses that sent the crowd through a series of emotions.

While fans can always expect the unexpected at an R.E.M. concert, they should not expect to find a band that has sold out to pop charts and dancing teens. R.E.M. is a group that, no matter what they do, will always be doing their own thing.



The Lion of Zimbabwe is the conscience of his country

The politics of music in Africa

Thomas Mapfumo

and The Blacks Unlimited

Friday, Nov. 10
ArtsCenter

Tickets \$12.50 public, \$10 friends

Music and politics are a powerful combination, but while groups such as R.E.M. and U2 struggle to raise awareness in America and Europe, few if any Western bands will get a chance to have the direct effect on the politics of their country that Thomas Mapfumo and The Blacks Unlimited have had on the struggle for independence in Zimbabwe over the past two decades.

"The Lion of Zimbabwe" will bring a sample of the biting political satire that inspired the independence movement in Zimbabwe to the ArtsCenter Friday night in what promises to be a unique opportunity to sample the political and cultural life of southern Africa.

Starting with "Murembo," a traditional song of the Shona people that he released in 1973, Mapfumo kept up a steady stream of works that criticized the social and political conditions in his country. After Ian Smith and his fellow white settlers broke free of the British Empire to create an independent apartheid state, Mapfumo became even more active.

Using metaphor, personal stories and parables in singles like "Pamuro Chete" ("Mere Big Mouth"), Mapfumo cut the racist

KELLY THOMPSON

concert

regime to shreds. During the struggle for independence from Smith, he released "Hokoyo!" ("Look out!"), "Pfumvu Paruzeva" ("Trouble in the Rural Areas") and "Tozvireva Kupiko?" ("Where Shall We Tell It?") to name a few. They are now contained in the powerful *Chumurenga Singles, 1976-1980*.

Because his music provided a rallying point for the fighters and gave biting commentaries of the government, Mapfumo was arrested several times for what the Smith government called "subversive songs." The authorities were unable to prove the charges and had to release him.

It was during this period that Mapfumo gathered a permanent accompaniment, The Blacks Unlimited. One of its most distinguished members is Jonah Sithole, who is renowned as the first to transpose the music of the *mbira*, the thumb piano that is Zimbabwe's national instrument, to the guitar. This combination fused into what is known as *chimurenga*, one of the most dominant musical forms in Zimbabwe made popular by its swinging, pulsating sound.

After Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, Mapfumo continued to sing of the problems of Zimbabwe and of the southern Africa region. He came into international prominence and by 1985 had completed tours in England, Holland, Germany, France and Italy. At this time, the band again altered their sound with

the addition of keyboards and more emphasis on the bass line. Mapfumo also removed the extra-light guitar.

Mapfumo's latest effort, *Corruption*, is his first release on Mango Records, an American label. He continues his political barbs, this time aimed at the new ruling elite in Zimbabwe and throughout Africa.

In Zimbabwe, Mapfumo and The Blacks Unlimited often play for up to seven hours at a time in beer-gardens. Here in America, however, they are appearing in mostly large auditoriums in several major cities, including Washington, D.C. and Miami. For Chapel Hill residents, this concert will be a unique chance to view the band in an intimate setting. With guitar, percussion, bass, horns, singers and dancers to back Mapfumo up, it promises to be a wild show.

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