

Rockers help ailing friend



DTH/JORDAN LAWRENCE

Raleigh's Colossus and Durham bands Tooth and Grappling Hook show off their metal chops at Local 506. The show was one of several benefits which have already taken place to raise money for local music enthusiast Cy Rawls, who was diagnosed with a brain tumor earlier this summer.

BY JORDAN LAWRENCE
ASSISTANT DIVERSIONS EDITOR

It would be hard to imagine a more dedicated fan than Raleigh's Cy Rawls.

For about the last 20 years, the former Merge Records intern and one-time WXYC DJ has gone to great lengths to see local bands.

"He goes to a show in D.C., and he'll drive back in time to come back and see the last band play here," said local drummer James Hepler, a long-time friend of Rawls.

In addition to such displays of musical commitment, his dedication also extends to UNC football: He hasn't missed a home game since 1982.

"I've always enjoyed being in Kenan stadium," the 33-year-old said. "They're not that inconvenient for me to get to."

This year, the local music community got its chance to give back to one of its most frequent audience members, though it came under the most unfortunate of circumstances.

On July 12, doctors found a tumor in Rawls' brain after he suffered a seizure. After running tests for about a week, doctors realized it was too risky to operate and decided to treat him with radiation and chemotherapy.

But Rawls, who has no health insurance, would be unable to pay for the expensive treatment on his own.

"It could easily hit a half a million dollars," Hepler said of the cost. "To not have insurance and to have to deal with that is pretty ridiculous."

When the news of the diagnosis spread throughout the local music community, Hepler rallied bands and venue owners to come to Rawls' aid.

"There were so many bands and so many people who wanted to help out," Hepler said, explaining why he stepped in to coordinate. "We were finding it very difficult to figure out how to distribute all these bands to different venues and stuff."

Once organization was in place, a series of shows began to formulate, the most prominent of which will be held Friday with Chapel Hill legends Superchunk, the Rosebuds and Birds of Avalon taking the Cat's Cradle stage in support of Rawls.

All money raised by the \$25 tickets will go toward Rawls' treatment.

"Cy is such a fixture in the local music scene, I think it would have been more peculiar had we not gotten involved," said Derek Powers, director of operations at the Cradle.

Cat's Cradle, which hosted a benefit for Rawls earlier this month featuring newly reunited Chapel Hill stalwarts Polvo, will also donate all of Friday's bar profits. Between the \$15 tickets and bar money, Powers said the venue was able to raise almost \$5000 from the last show.

Paul Siler of Raleigh's Birds of Avalon said that his band jumped at the opportunity to help

IF YOU GO

Time: 9:00 p.m., Saturday
Location: Cat's Cradle, 300 E. Main
St. Carrboro, NC
Info: www.catscradle.com

such a devoted follower of local music.

"There couldn't be a better cause than a guy like that just out of the blue getting sick and needing help," said Siler who has known Rawls since 1995. "It's good to do a benefit for a person who likes music so much."

But charity shows are not the only means planned to be used in easing Rawls' plight.

Hepler, with the help of local producers, is organizing a Web-based music store to raise money.

The site, dubbed CyTunes, is planned to launch in the next two or three weeks and will feature songs by local and some national bands. Songs donated will be exclusively available for one year and will cost a dollar each.

Hepler said that the store will be a way to raise even more substantial sums for Rawls.

"It's not like we're raising money for a cause like the Red Cross where a \$100 donation's really nice," he said.

"But getting an exclusive song from a band like Superchunk can raise real money. They can sell 50,000 records without even thinking about it, and if they can download 50,000 songs at a dollar a song, that's real money."

In addition to donated songs, CyTunes will feature live recordings made at the benefits.

Glenn Boothe, owner and operator of the

Local 506 which has already hosted two Rawls benefit shows and a dance party, said that the push to help Rawls has helped bring the music community together in a way that it hasn't in some time.

"Every once in a while the music scene needs a wake-up call," he said. "This is an unfortunate way to get our priorities straight, but now there's a greater purpose. And that just kind of helps every one realign and commune and come together."

Hepler emphasized that this is a movement he plans to continue.

"I think that the need for raising money is not going to go away any time soon," he said. "This is going to be kind of ongoing."

Despite his condition, Rawls doesn't want to miss the chance to hear some of his favorite bands perform.

"I felt pretty confident that I could be at the shows because I'd be getting better each day," he said. "I was definitely planning on being at these shows."

And though Rawls said it is odd to go to shows in his honor, he tries to not let that alter the experience.

"I'm quite flattered by it," he said. "But once the music starts I'm just enjoying it. It doesn't feel any different. I just enjoy it as usual."

Contact the Diversions Editor at dive@unc.edu

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The jagged edge of Renee Mendoza's gorgeous voice launches Filthybird to the Cat's Cradle stage Saturday night.

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