

Swinging pirates and outlaws

From the folks that brought you 'Hot Grog'

by Bob Brueckner
DTH Contributor

This article is the third in a series of articles on local musicians.

Jim Wann, Cass Morgan and Bland Simpson are gathered with friends in a living room lit only by a Yankees-Reds game on the TV and a blazing fire in the fireplace.

Except for the Yankees-Reds game, the scene is one that could have taken place sometime last spring. The people and the situation are the same, but now they aren't the cast of *Hot Grog*, relaxing after a performance, but the members of a local easy-rock-and-roll band having a few beers after rehearsal.

The band, Gravy Boat, grew out of the musical *Hot Grog*, which was written by Simpson and Wann and performed at the Ranch House last February and March. Wann calls their music "good-time rock-and-roll as opposed to heavy metal."

In addition to Wann, Morgan and Simpson, the members include Joe "Duke" DeLuca, bass; Michael Sacks, drums; and Rodney Underwood, lead guitar. As they did during the play, Wann, Morgan and Simpson do most of the vocals. They are veterans of not only *Hot Grog* but *Diamond Studs* (also written by Simpson and Wann) which ran off-Broadway for the first half of

1975.

Gravy Boat's music is formed basically around the ballad.

"In a kind of broad way all our music is essentially a story," says Wann. "The person in each of the songs is a person, not an amorphous modern man," says Wann.

Although they incorporate historical references as in *Diamond Studs* (the life of Jesse James), some inspiration comes from personal experience. "Probably

The adventurous spirit of the people involved in the stories is the essence of Gravy Boat's style of music. *Hot Grog* and *Diamond Studs* translated this spirit into story form.

Their material is almost totally original, although they use some old ballads or songs like "Six Days on the Road"—a truck driver's song that has been around for ten years. The group believes that variety is good because other musicians that they respect—the Beatles, Van Morrison and Bob Dylan—are capable of "a lot of subtle moods in their music," says Simpson.

So far Gravy Boat does not have any records on the market. They had a chance to put one out, but were not satisfied that it would be what they wanted. Simpson says that it is virtually impossible to get beyond the Triangle area without a record. "A known record," he adds.

They play locally at the Cat's Cradle in Chapel Hill and the Pier and Cafe Deja Vu in Raleigh. The band also took *Hot Grog* to Greenville, N.C. last spring. This winter they plan to take it to the Big Apple.

Gravy Boat will be appearing with the Red Clay Ramblers at 8 p.m. today in Memorial Hall in a program which will include a *Diamond Studs* reunion. Admission is \$1.



The crew of "Gravy Boat" following a rehearsal.

who is taking some kind of risk."

Each song represents the viewpoint of a particular character, such as an outlaw or pirate.

"The songs come from an actual

the better known portion is just stuff we've made up about riding around in buses and cars," says Simpson, "a lot of more or less small town, rural references."

Sex discrimination

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"When I first came here (in 1956) I was idealistic enough to think that men and women would be treated equally as far as employment opportunities in terms of salary and promotion. Out of my own experience, I've found this not to be so," Lane said.

She agreed with Smith that women faculty as a whole have never organized as a pressure group.

"You can say women really haven't coalesced as an organized group on this campus," she said. "I guess you could say many feel very satisfied with their situations or that they feel they can't change it. It's a sort of apathy on their parts."

Connie Eble, associate professor of English, is satisfied with the progress her department has made over the past five years. In that time, five women have been either hired at or promoted to the professorial ranks.

"We have increased 500 per cent in five years. So, definitely things are better; there

are no two ways about it," she said.

Because of the improved climate, Eble said, women are now able to have special kind of professional friendship.

"We know each other, we help each other. That's what's changed," she said.

"In the past, we couldn't have an 'ole-girl' network because we didn't have enough 'old-girls'. The thing is we don't want to have an 'old-girl' network that will exclude the 'old boys,'" she said.

"That would be just as bad as the 'old-boy' network. I certainly would hate to think that the women in our department would form some kind of a close-knit circle and that we don't go outside of our circle," she explained.

Eble said her department now needs a woman scholar at the rank of full professor, but such a woman is hard to find.

"Usually a woman of that type has a very good job right now and is not free to move," she said.

Another reason, she explained, is the lack

of availability.

"There was a generation of women scholars who went into graduate school in the 30s or early 40s. They have now come to the age when most of them are nearing retirement. They're not interested in moving," she said.

"Then we came to the age of the feminine mystique (the 1950s). We simply do not have a generation of top-notch women ready to take the place (of these scholars)."

She added that with the better male-female balance of graduate students today, future generations will not have to face this situation.

Elizabeth Eddy, hired as an assistant professor of English in 1973, said that she has noted improvements since she has been here, especially in the department's hiring patterns.

Just look at the junior professors hired in the four years since I've been here—two women, one black male and one white male.

I think that's very different from any four assistant professor hirings you might have looked at ten years ago," she said.

Eddy said she saw no conflict between the fact that many department chairpersons in charge of hiring and promotion decisions, are also departmental Equal Employment Opportunity Officers (EEOO), in charge of enforcing the plan's guidelines.

"On the surface it seems unsound, but it always comes down to a matter of personality, the personal style of the people involved," she said.

Eddy said she felt she was lucky to come to UNC when she did.

"By the time I got here I really benefited from the fact that I was not the first woman professor in this department," she said.

She said she believes UNC has made an effort to successfully implement Affirmative Action.

The goal of Affirmative Action is to insure equal employment opportunities for all faculty members. Since its implementation in 1973, the percentage of faculty women has increased from 10.3 per cent to 13.8 per cent. But as the recent report by the EEOC states, problems remain with a salary discrepancies and in the hiring, promotion and tenure practices at UNC.



Carrboro's alternative theatre

Carrboro may be UNC's answer to off-Broadway.

Although tried and true productions are performed here on campus, there is another kind of theatre thriving on the outskirts of town.

The Gallery Theatre in Carrboro provides an opportunity for persons bored with traditional techniques and messages to expand their concept of drama.


Creativity and energy are what the founder and director of the theatre, Martin Holtz, talks about most. Citing the stagnation of the dramatic arts in much of the South, he declares that we are ready for a "cultural revolution." He wants to explore what it takes to make every show vital and important to both actors and audience.

Holtz's ultimate aim may be a unified theory of theatre, but right now he's working on technique, environmental theatre, and audience participation. For example, his new production, *Dutchman*, will be staged, not with the traditional separation between actors and audience, but in a room converted to resemble the subway in which the action of the play occurs. By using this technique, Holtz hopes to make the story more immediate, more real to the audience and to give them a chance to confront the issues raised.

Dutchman, which won an Obie for its author, LeRoi Jones, is itself the story of a confrontation, superficially between a black man and a white woman. However, the work is more than an investigation of racial conflict.

The two parts will be played by Peter-James Thomas and Norma Dunkelberger. Performances are at 7:00 and 8:00 p.m. on Oct. 29, 30, 31 and November 5, 6 at the Art School, 150 E. Main Street in Carrboro. For tickets or information, call 942-2041.

—Marianne Hansen



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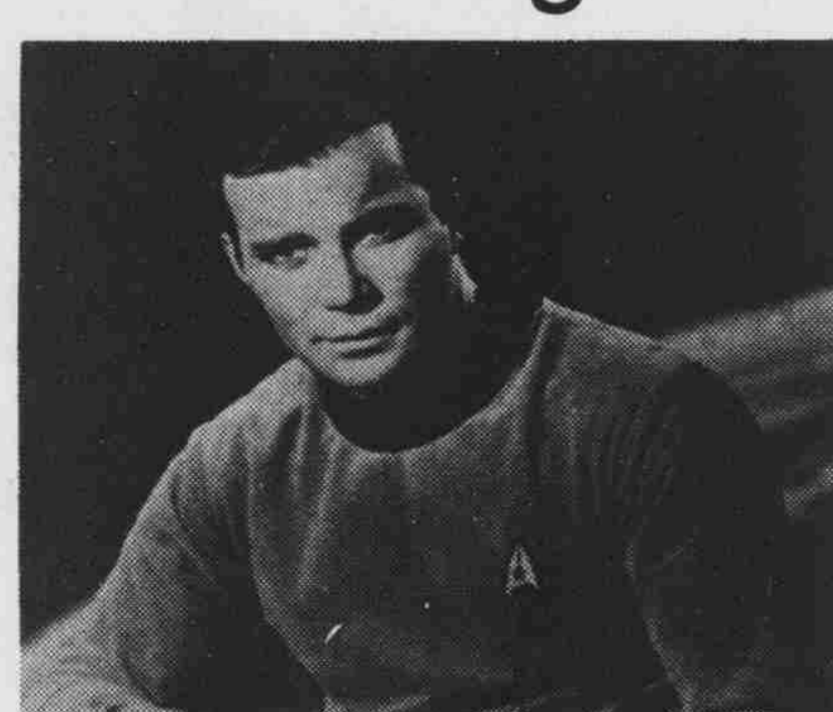
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