



photo courtesy of Carolina Union

Mickey Mills performs reggae music ... he plays in Great Hall Nov. 16

Reggae with everything

Mills hopes to give the audience what it wants

By DAVID SCHMIDT

When Chapel Hill's reggae band Mickey Mills and Steel plays before a Great Hall audience on Tuesday night, Nov. 16, the group's founder hopes to give the people what they want.

"I've got reggae with rock, I've got reggae with jazz, I've got reggae with everything," Mickey Mills said. "I just call it music."

"People want something different," he said. "They want something to hold onto. They can dance with it, sit with it, sleep with it."

Mills, however, gives his audience more than just reggae. Along with percussionist Beverly Botsford, Mills said he organized the members of Steel (Brian Banifield, Otto

Brooks and Welch Walker) last year to play calypso, Latin funk and soca.

Rolly Gray and Sunfire, another local reggae band, introduced soca as calypso with a little bit of funk in it before the recent Bobbi Humphrey concert in Memorial Hall. Mills, a former guest percussionist and steel drum soloist with Sunfire, said he helped introduce soca to the East Coast from his native home of Trinidad in the West Indies.

Mills said his reggae is different. He not only composes music but said he also stretches the songs of reggae artists like the late Bob Marley by adding lyrics and creating his own renditions.

"I've got to do more than what he (Marley) did," Mills said. "I'm in tune to what he was doing. Not anybody can change it."

Mills began his professional career at the age of 15, when he toured Surinam, Barbados and Africa with the Solo Harmonite Steel Orchestra. During his 1981 appearances with Rolly Gray and Sunfire, Mills performed in concerts with reggae singer Peter Tosh at Duke University and with Spyro Gyra in Memorial Hall.

"It's been a lot of fun," Mills said. "I never get tired because I never do enough."

His educational program, Steel-A-Rama, teaches children in regional school districts the Trinidadian culture which surrounds steel drum performances.

"A kid can hear it without (it) being disrespectful," Mills said, explaining the special attraction of reggae music. "It's something anyone can relate to in the lines of clean. It talks about love."

Mills said he wants to reach even more people and gain more respect. Reggae, as its popularity continues to spread, seems to be doing just that. Although his concert receptions have all been good, Mills said a negative reaction would not bother him because it would only show that the audience does not understand the message in his music.

"I already know that I'm good," he said. "They have the problem, and I hope they get help."

But, he added, if 100 related and the next 400 don't, that is enough."

Admission to the Mickey Mills and Steel performance presented by the Carolina Union Tuesday at 9 p.m., will be free and for UNC students only.

David Schmidt is a staff writer for The Daily Tar Heel.

Merchandise astounds the unwary

By CLINTON WEAVER

If you have ever been to a UNC football game, you know that football is not the only attraction, nor the only source of revenue for the school at home games.

Enterprising, pre-pubescent youths first corner you about a mile from the stadium to sell you programs for the game. These multi-colored Tar Heel propaganda pamphlets give you a history of UNC football, the names of the players, and the sagacious pre-game comments of the head coach. They also come in handy if it rains.

Once safely inside the stadium, the abundance of UNC merchandise astounds the unwary. More paraphernalia pushers yell at you to make a purchase. The offerings are replete with UNC pennants, bumperstickers, fingernail stickers, horns, hats, mugs, No. 1 fingers ... and so on. If you bought one of each, you would have to back your car in to haul it all away.

The most ardent fans fall prey to this alumni gimmickry. But the less loyal followers can be hooked by more primitive means. Hot dogs, hamburgers, Coke, popcorn — you do not have to be a UNC fan to want these necessities. No matter that you just ate a bucket of fried chicken in the parking lot; these hot dog proceeds to go the local high school. And at \$1 a crack, who can resist? The hamburgers come with a pickle, for the true connoisseur of American food.

Probably the most commonplace status symbol at a UNC football game is the prized plastic cup. The more cups stacked together at the game's end, the greater the measure of your true Tar Heel spirit. Now they are emblazoned with the bowl record of the last three years (three victories, of course).

But once the game begins, your attention is riveted to the aisles as often as to the field, looking for another entrepreneur to give your last few dollars to. "Peanuts!" comes

the cry from above. "Coke!" another hustling youth yells. One boy, who looks about age five, stops to sell you his last drink. Dollars spill from his pocket as he fishes out your change. "Gads! where did he get all that MONEY?" you wonder.

Later, with your UNC cups in one hand and your hot dog wrappers in the other, you head for the exits. Fortunately, UNC won, and all your souvenirs became permanent keepsakes.

Clinton Weaver is a staff writer for The Daily Tar Heel.

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