

Reggae

Mickey Mills reaches out

By REBEKAH WRIGHT
Tar Heel Staff Writer

"I just reach out," Mickey Mills says about his music, though it's not just his music which reaches out to the people.

He wears a Caribbean hand-knitted hat, one which he claims started a trend in this area. His music and his message seems to be what compose the man, and he talks about it gravely. "I'm serious about my music," Mills said. "It's my first preference before anything else."

Mills, a native of Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, is the founder of Mickey Mills and Steel, a reggae, soca, calypso and latin funk band which plays in North Carolina.

He began to teach himself to play the steel drums at the age of five, and he describes the steel drums as part of the everyday life in the Caribbean.

"I used to go into the Steel Drum Yard where they'd practice and I used to watch. And then I started to play and everybody found I was good, so I kept on playing," Mills said. He makes his own drums out of steel oil drums.

At the age of 12 he began playing with The Solo Harmonite Steel Orchestra of Trinidad and Tobago. "In the Caribbean you might play in a band for two or three years then you move to another band," Mills said.

In 1969 Mills moved to Brooklyn, New York.

"It was my first instinct, I had encouragement to come here," Mills said. "I could do things here I couldn't do in the Caribbean, like work at a bank and stuff like that."

While Mills worked at a bank he formed the band Mickey Mills and The Birds with some musicians he had worked with in the Caribbean.

"The Birds was a name just because we wanted to do something different," Mills said. "The name would mean that we were doing our music from a high level."

Mickey Mills and the Birds performed alongside such names as Mick Jagger and Johnny Mathis. They appeared in various hotels, nightclubs, Madison Square Garden, and The Village Gate in New York. In 1977 the group recorded an album, *Enjoy Let's Have a Good Time/Loving You is so Lovely*, with Charlie Records.

Eventually the group broke up and Mills went into a



The reggae band Mickey Mills and Steel in a relaxed moment
... the group will perform at the Carrboro ArtSchool at 9:30 on May 27 and 28

period of rest for three years. "After the group had split up I decided to cool out for a while," Mills stated. "You know, like, I was still writing my music and doing freelance work with different bands, but I lost so much energy then that it took me three years before I decided to open up another band."

He was guest artist with the reggae group Rolly Gray and Sunfire, whose gigs brought him to North Carolina. It was then that he decided to form his own band in this area.

Mickey Mills and Steel formed in December 1981. The group consists of Mickey Mills, Bryan Banfield, Beverly Botsford, Otto Brooks and Greg Rogers and it performs in both North Carolina and New York. Their act travels to community programs, nightclubs, and school systems. Mills tries to convey the origin and construction of the steel drum in his visits to local New York and North Carolina schools in program called Steel-O-Rama.

Besides performing, the band also works with a non-profit

program it organized called Steel Productions. Steel Productions tries to bring different Caribbean acts to area universities and community programs.

Mills said he is considering putting together a revue. "We want something the people can enjoy, a whole package from the Caribbean; like people who eat fire, and limbo dancers." The program is still in the beginning stages while Mills looks for sponsors.

There is a Mickey Mills and Steel Fan Club whose members receive cut-rates at performances, a membership card and a T-shirt, Mills said.

Mill's philosophy behind his music is being natural. "I think everybody would understand if they take time to listen and feel the music," Mills said. "It's being yourself, being natural, no 'ism-skism,' I just reach out."

Mickey Mills and Steel will be performing at the ArtSchool in Carrboro on May 27 and 28 at 9:30, and on June 14 in Great Hall.

A review

'Local Hero': Subtle, suprising humor

By KATHY HOPPER

Tar Heel Staff Writer

There are few things more refreshing than ducking into a cool, dark theater on a hot summer day, leaving the reality of everyday life to enter a world of magic created by an entertaining film. This summer, moviegoers searching for a movie that creates such delightful pleasure should see *Local Hero*, a Scottish film written and directed by Bill Forsyth.

The film uses a subtle, off-beat form of seduction that captivates the viewer and transports him from the fast-paced business world of Houston to a delightfully quirky coastal village in Scotland.

The story basically revolves around Mac MacIntyre, a young executive at Knox Oil and Gas, and his efforts to buy the village and the surrounding area for a future refinery site. MacIntyre was chosen because of his supposed Scottish ancestry; ironically, he is really Hungarian. His parents changed their name because they thought MacIntyre sounded American.

Although the plot is rather thin at times, an impressive array of unique and often off-the-wall characters provides a more-than-ample amount of entertainment. Christopher Asante plays an African minister who is as "discreet as the next man" in a town where word travels fast. Christopher Rezycki plays the romantic Russian sailor who is the hit of the party when he sings, "Yes, I was born to be a lover. I guess I'll always be a rolling stone." Forsyth blends the bizarre combination of Russia and Nashville with amazing ease, and sweetens the movie with such memorable bits of zaniness.

Unlike Forsyth's other critical success *Gregory's Girl*, *Local Hero* has a big name actor. Burt Lancaster is Happer, a delightfully eccentric oil tycoon who falls asleep at corporate meetings and works in an office that converts to a plane-



tarium at the press of the button. Lancaster plays his character with a convincing control that makes him remarkably sincere. Although his character appears mostly at the beginning and end, he remains a powerful figure throughout the film.

Norman Chancer is wonderful as the over-zealous analyst who will go to any length to rid Harper of his inflated ego. He calls him on the phone to tell him what a worthless piece of crud he is.

Peter Riegert admirably plays MacIntyre. He skillfully shows the gradual character shift Mac undergoes during his stay in Scotland. At the beginning he protectively clutches his briefcase, but by the end, he is willing to give up his well-paying job, a luxury apartment, and even his Porsche and stay in the village.

The most memorable lines of the movie are not really spoken. Forsyth fills the film with quaint images and meaningful pauses. There is the old fisherman perpetually painting his boat with painstaking care. And Mac's query of the parentage of a local child is answered by an uneasy silence that says more than words. The viewer is caught off guard by subtle details that provide large insight.

There are far too many humorous incidents to mention and the joy for the viewer is in discovering them. Forsyth has undoubtedly created a marvelously out-of-whack film that repeatedly surprises the viewer with its mock reserve. It is a most refreshing change that will delight anyone willing to spend two hours seeing life through Forsyth's wonderfully off-balance view.

Local Hero will be playing at the Varsity at least until next Thursday and possibly after that.