

They rock, but can they do the blues?

By **EDDIE HUFFMAN**
Staff Writer

A persistent question has nagged rock 'n' rollers from the beginning: Can white men sing the blues? The Heartfixers, an all-white blues band from Georgia, will attempt to put the question to rest Sunday and Monday at Cat's Cradle.

The Heartfixers started singing the blues in 1980. They have since played all over the South, including several successful Chapel Hill appearances. After the Cradle shows, the band hopes to carry its success farther north with stops in Washington and several New England cities.

Admittedly a blues band, the Heartfixers refuse to be limited strictly to blues material. Lead guitarist Tinsley Ellis emphasized his band's diversity in a telephone interview.

"We play blues, rock 'n' roll, and blues, Texas blues. We do more of our own thing, our own style." Ellis said they even throw in a little Chuck Berry-style rockabilly.

In addition to lead guitar, Ellis handles singing duties as the Heartfixers search for a lead singer to replace departed "Chicago" Bob Nelson. Wayne Burdette, the bass player, backs Ellis on vocals.

Drummer **MIKE McCauley** rounds out the trio.

According to Ellis, the band's influences are blues performers and blues-based rockers like Freddie King, Buddy Guy, and Bo Diddley. Their live material ranges from country blues to '50s-style rock 'n' roll.

The band's spontaneous excitement in concert led to its second album, *Live at the Moonshadow*, recorded at a Georgia club in 1983.

The Heartfixers will go it alone Sunday and Monday; no opening band is scheduled. Music starts around 10 p.m. at the Cradle.

Hold on! That was no old lady!

By **STEVE MURRAY**
Staff Writer

Twice this year audiences at the Paul Green Theatre have been deceived. Last season's Lady Bracknell in *The Importance of Being Earnest* was not an elderly Victorian. And in the PlayMakers Repertory Company's current

production of Jean Anouilh's *Ring Round the Moon*, Madame Desmortes is no wheelchair-bound dowager: She's an energetic young actress who teaches karate in New York.

For guest artist Karen Ingenthron, getting used to a wheelchair was hard. "During rehearsals I would jump up and

run around a little bit, then get back in my wheelchair," she said. "But one day I was feeling really stiff," she recalled with a laugh. "I think I had a little poetic arthritis."

Old ladies are not the only parts Ingenthron has tackled. A veteran of more than 50 plays with the Berkeley Repertory Theatre, she includes Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Elvira, the ghost in *Blithe Spirit*, among her favorite roles.

She has also played Anouilh's *Antigone*, so this is not her first encounter with the playwright's work.

Comparing *Ring Round the Moon* to a prism refracting light, she said, "The characters keep changing. Anouilh really liked to entertain people, but he also liked to show them about life. You don't really know who people are completely."

In this way, the play ties in with Ingenthron's own acting goals. "I feel my path in the theatre is to be able in a moment to tell the truth," she said. "I can't do that all the time. . . . In those moments that you can tell the truth, they might be awkward or ugly, but because they're passing on some information about life, they're extremely beautiful."

Ingenthron's favorite roles are new ones never before performed. "There's a lot of pressure on you," she said, "because it was never done before, to really delve in and find the essential core of the character."

"But there's even more pressure on you if you do an old favorite, because it's either going to be completely different from what anybody else has done before, or must be at least as good."

Ingenthron knows pressure. She described her experience in several episodes of *Lou Grant* as "very, very fast work."

"The analogy for me," she said, "is to be able to do a really fine watercolor, a production like *Ring Round the Moon* when you have weeks to work and a lot of guidance, or you have to do a fantastic pencil sketch in three minutes."

Sticking to the same imagery in describing PRC's production, Ingenthron said, "Doug Johnson (the play's director) has been really careful with it. When you think you've got a handle on it, it rolls and turns into something else, and then it turns again. It's very, very beautiful."

As much praise as Ingenthron has for the play, she has even more for her co-stars. "I have rarely seen a company of young actors as strong as this one," she said.

"Not only that, but they're also very kind, they're helpful and considerate of each other," she added. "That helps to create an ensemble. I've been in companies where people were very strong, but they weren't giving."

In short, Ingenthron has found working with PRC to be worth the gray wig, the aches of a wheelchair, even the egg whites applied to tighten her face like a real old lady's. In *Ring Round the Moon*, Ingenthron's wonderful deception goes on even as the play unfolds in its search for truth.



It's all a facade: actress Karen Ingenthron is not really wheelchair bound

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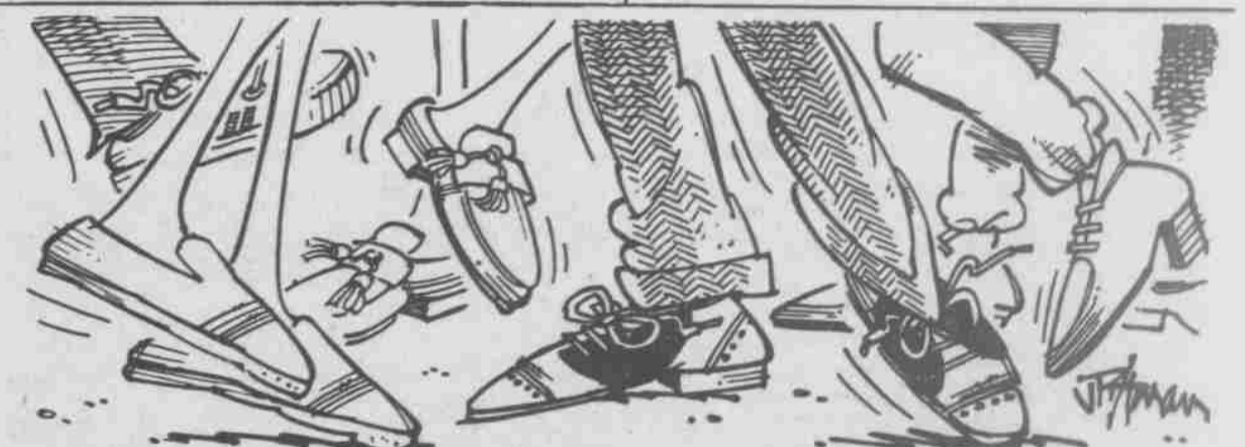
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