

Benetton's finds a home on Franklin

By JENNIFER KELLER
Staff Writer

When Marty Okun's daughter walked into a Benetton shop in New York five years ago and said, "This is my kind of store," she had no idea what those words would mean. Okun is now the owner of Chapel Hill's new Italian sportswear shop, Benetton's, at 153 E. Franklin St.

Inspired when his daughter dragged him shopping for hours for her birthday to Bloomingdale's and Sak's Fifth Avenue only to find everything she wanted in Benetton, Okun investigated the possibilities of opening a store in Chapel Hill. After years of struggling to get the Franklin Street location, Okun joined the 2,600 other worldwide Benetton shop owners in offering colorful, quality sportswear at moderate prices.

Benetton's was founded in Italy in 1966 by Luciano Benetton and owes much of its success to its computerized inventory system. According to *The New York Times*, Benetton clothes are created on state-of-the-art, computerized design terminals and woven on microprocessor-controlled looms.

Benetton started with knitwear, made of wool and wool-angora blends. It later expanded to jeans, cotton tops and accessories. Much of the merchandise is produced in neutral gray so that it can be dyed quickly according to customer demand. Benetton "follows fashion rather than creating it," said the Times.

Carrboro residents disagree about extension

By RICHARD BOYCE
Staff Writer

Supporters and opponents of the proposed Franklin Street extension addressed complex issues about Carrboro's future on cable television Tuesday night.

Voters will decide whether to fund the extension and if the town will make other road improvements in two bond referendums Nov. 6. If the bonds are approved, the town will build new bike lanes along several Carrboro roads, but student housing costs will probably increase in the near future, said Roy Williford, a member of the Carrboro Planning Board.

Williford said that if the referendums are approved then a \$25,000 home in Carrboro will pay \$37 more in taxes next year. Carrboro Mayor Jim Porto



From Italy to your town: Benetton's quality sportswear is displayed here by store manager Sally Burns

Okun chose Chapel Hill because he loved the area and its cosmopolitan air.

"Students come from all over the U.S. and are generally well-traveled and shopping wise," he said. "Plus, there's Research Triangle, where everyone is well-educated and pretty sophisticated. I'm not trying to sound snobbish, but that's what we look for. This is not a K-Mart operation."

Okun describes the clothes as "preppy, trendy, with some European styling." Prices range from \$9 for a belt to \$109 for a wool-angora sweater dress.

Response so far has been positive. "There's still a lot of lookers," Okun said. "They may not buy today, but a lot will come back."

The construction of the Chapel Hill store itself is unique. The entire store was produced in Italy, sent over by plane and put together in less than two weeks by Italian workmen who spoke no English. All Okun had to do was send blueprints of his location and pick one of three store styles.

The simple bright-green facade and shelves that hold the folded merchan-

dise are familiar throughout Europe. In an attempt to familiarize America with the Benetton name, the company is undertaking a \$4 million advertising campaign to help sales in the 180 North American stores. Raleigh's Crabtree Valley Mall just opened a Benetton and there are plans for one in Charlotte.

Okun said he enjoys being away from New York.

"I'm a North Carolinian now," he said. "I have a house, pay taxes, my kids go to school here. I'm very happy about it all."

said that many landowners would then probably raise rent.

Porto added, however, that as more people continue to move to Carrboro the town will have more taxpayers, thus reducing the tax rate.

Last week, Porto explained how short-term residents in Carrboro, including students, will be affected. "If you are a long-term resident your taxes may go down. I see it as an investment. If you are a short-term resident it (the tax rate) does go up," he said.

Williford showed a map of the streets in Carrboro where new bike lanes will be built.

Opponents of the extension prepared a statement saying that the plan was too vague, that it would raise property taxes, that it would bring more people into Carrboro and only make traffic

worse and that instead of building the extension the town should first try improving existing roads such as the N.C. 54 bypass and Merritt Mill Road.

Porto said, however, that the extension would help revitalize businesses downtown and make space for new businesses to come into town.

Puppets are real rockers

Not many rock 'n' roll bands look the part anymore. Much of the music has gotten milder in the past few years, and rock 'n' rollers have accordingly become more and more clean-cut. Very few bands now carry the banner of the trashy, long-haired rocker that was common for so many years. The Meat Puppets, a band from Phoenix, proved a great exception to the new norms Tuesday at Cat's Cradle.

The Meat Puppets aren't self-conscious about their appearance, and that's the point: They concentrate on playing rock 'n' roll and leave fashion behind. Their image represents a whole vision of commitment and an exciting, deeply rooted but highly original approach to music with no regard for trends.

This in no way indicates that the band has no regard for its audience. They were fun and genuinely committed, eschewing art for basic rock 'n' roll. A few fans seemed disappointed that the band wasn't strictly hardcore (a reputation they earned from their first records) but overall a surprisingly large Tuesday night crowd enjoyed the show.

N.C. native Curt Kirkwood leads the Meat Puppets, handling guitar and lead singing duties. His brother Cris plays bass and backs Curt on vocals. Derrick Bostrom rounds out the trio on drums.

A weird country-flavored sound prevails on most of the Meat Puppets' recorded work. Live, the band took an entirely different approach. They were harder-rocking and more involved vocally, less structured and a good deal less psychotic than their records would indicate.

Trios often sound thin live, but the Meat Puppets were surprisingly powerful. Much of the credit for that power goes to Cris Kirkwood. He used a pick and played his bass like a second guitar rather than providing mere rhythmic support.

Guitarist Curt Kirkwood needed the sonic boost: The band makes extensive use of guitar overdubs on its records.

Eddie Huffman

Review

so Kirkwood's sound was considerably diminished. With his brother's help and some heavy metal chording, however, he came across very effectively.

Cris Kirkwood's harmonies were another highlight. He provided excellent support for Curt's whining, twisted lead vocals and the pair achieved very successful Byrds-style country harmony on "Swimming Ground," "Up On the Sun" and "Away."

Bostrum's drumming also showed Byrds similarities. He shares Mike Clarke's shuffling style with heavy emphasis on cymbals and snare.

The Meat Puppets played a diverse range of material, from a hardcore cover of Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog" to the demented country of their own "Lake of Fire." Curt Kirkwood's lyrics were too frequently lost in the mix, but those that came through were gems. His songs speak of distinctly American disillusionment and spiritual dislocation. The band works in familiar territory.

The hardest rock 'n' roll of the night came with the band's last three songs. "Walking Bus," the most requested song of the night, "Hound Dog," and "Split Myself in Two" were solid, fast rockers combining hardcore, a touch of heavy metal, and '60s-style psychedelic rock. Curt Kirkwood cut loose with his guitar on these songs, proving himself a convincing rocker not limited to the slower country-style material on the albums.

Rock 'n' roll as good as the Meat Puppets' is hard to find. Their records and their live show exhibit a true concern for craft balanced off with an overriding sense of excitement. Tuesday's show displayed a rare commodity in America: rock 'n' roll on the cutting edge.

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