

Local music fiesta — 30 bands in three days

A crash course in North Carolina popular music will be presented this Thursday through Sunday at various bars and nightclubs in Raleigh and Chapel Hill. It's the second annual North Carolina Music Showcase — thirty bands, three days; come early, stay late.

The North Carolina Music Showcase was started by Jay Faires, the president of Raleigh-based Mammoth Records. The weekend gives Tar Heel musicians the opportunity to strut their stuff in front of record company executives. This year about 20 label representatives and miscellaneous other folk from the music biz are expected to attend. Contrary to rumor, this is not a contest; at the end of the weekend no trophy or contract will be presented. However, the Showcase does provide valuable exposure: one of last year's bands has since signed a contract with a major label.

For the average fan, the weekend is a chance to sample the best bands in the ever-growing Tar Heel music scene. Three years ago a British record label released a compilation of North Carolina music called *Welcome to Comboland*. That title is becoming more and more appropriate. One hundred seventy-five bands submitted audition tapes to this year's Showcase. The tapes were reviewed by an impartial panel of judges from across the state so that no region would be overrepresented.

All sorts of styles and genres will be on tap — rap, funk, folk, metal, roots rock, jangly stuff, trashy stuff

Artie Sparrow Concert

and stuff that labels haven't been invented for yet. The cliché "something for everyone" genuinely applies here, except for people who only like their music in giant arenas where you pay \$25 and you spend most of the show watching the video monitors, since you're too far away to see the stage. All the Showcase venues are small and the admission price is \$3 to \$4 — the approximate price of a T-shirt sleeve at one of those big arena shows. There's also a decent chance that sooner or later some of these bands will be so popular that they'll be playing in an arena near you.

The following, much less than comprehensive, guide to various bands performing at the Showcase is based on non-scientific research compiled over the past five years or so in various North Carolina taverns and other music venues. These bands aren't necessarily the best, they're just the ones that have captured my attention for various reasons. Typical journalistic biases definitely apply: bands from Carrboro or my hometown were more likely to get noticed; bands I'm friends with definitely got noticed. Bands who play music that you can dance to also got noticed. (WXYC has material from a lot of these bands on tape or vinyl. If you want to know what a band sounds like, call up the

station and request to hear them. Better yet, go see them. It could change your life.)

Majosha (The Fallout Shelter, Raleigh, Thursday, 11:00 p.m.) — Majosha refutes several unfortunate myths of our society: most notably, that smart white guys have no sense of humor or rhythm. They're from Greensboro and they've been together about a year. (Their singer used to be in Kicking the Bucket, and bassist and songwriter Ben Folds got in big trouble at a high school talent show for saying the word "poopie".) They're very skilled musicians who still manage to laugh at themselves.

Satellite Boyfriend (Thursday, The Fallout Shelter, midnight) — These guys are led by UNC alumnus Phil Collins, a 6-foot-4 master of the "boy meets girl and suddenly wants to stand on her shoulder" song. They've been wowing local crowds for a few years and are worth seeing just for the one-liners Phil provides between songs. Expect a couple of goofy covers, they've been known to cover Suzanne Vega, Kiss and the worst Rolling Stones song ever, but not in a row.

The Bad Checks (The Brewery, Raleigh, Thursday, 12:30 a.m.) — These guys are from the Triangle and they've been together for a few years. They're sort of a hillbilly version of the Cramps; definitely not for the kiddies. Bodies tend to fly at their shows.

The Heydays (La Terraza, Friday, 10:30 p.m.) — This is a new

band from Wilmington, led by the original Snatches of Pink bass player. They play rock 'n' roll the way it was played 35 years ago. Grease is the word.

Southern Culture on the Skids (La Terraza, Friday, 12:30 a.m.) — They're a trio from Chapel Hill and it seems like they've always been in existence. They sound like their name, and the not-so-lofty aspects of life below the Mason-Dixon line are explored in their rootsy material: the loss of a lover's attention when she bought a dog, an exploration into the psyche of the dead possum on the road and a rollicking spiritual number about the nuclear apocalypse.

The Carnies (The Brewery, Saturday, 11:00 p.m.) — For reasons unknown this is the current name the remaining members of the Right Profile are using. Bassist Tim Fleming and guitarist/songwriter Jeff Foster have been playing together since they met at Appalachian State University in the early 1980s. Drummer Jon Wurster joined the band in 1986. The Woods' guitarist David Enloe is performing at this show with them. Straightforward rock 'n' roll played by skilled musicians. Their live shows have received rave reviews from audiences up and down the East Coast.

Dillon Fence (The Brewery, Saturday, midnight) — The Fence has existed in various forms since 1983 when guitarist Greg Humpherys and bassist Chris Goode formed a band called the Trash that performed U2 and Clash covers at a high school talent show. They've evolved a lot since then and the only remnant of those days is a song about a very fat

rich girl they went to high school with. Drummer Trent Pitts and guitarist Kent Alphin joined the band while Humpherys and Goode were going to school at UNC and Wake Forest. Regular readers of this publication have seen Humpherys' sense of humor in the form of the editorial cartoons he's been writing for this paper the past couple of years. His satiric observations of society are put to a beat in songs like "Preppie Dead Head." They enjoy playing and are one of the least pretentious bands around.

Johnny Quest (The Brewery, Saturday, 1:00 a.m.) — A Triangle band that's been around for a few years, a fusion of punk and funk: two great tastes that taste great together. No one sits still at their shows, their grooves are just irresistible.

Randy Burke (La Terraza, Sunday, 3:00 p.m.) — Randy was the lead singer for the Naked Ramblers, a Winston-Salem combo known for its frequent lineup changes and Randy's quirky stage antics. He ripped apart a copy of the Woodstock LP during a song about the end of idealism, he wore old pilot's goggles and ran through the crowd with a megaphone singing "Somewhere in the world there's a party going on. Somewhere in the world, there are people having fun. I wish I was there, I wish I was not alone." His songs are about the darker side of life: aunts that go crazy after getting kicked in the head by a mule, hypocritical high school principals, unhappy marriages. No one has been able to figure out when Randy's joking and when he's being serious — a great challenge for a Sunday afternoon.



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