

ARTS

N.C. bands join forces in Winston-Salem to boost Gantt campaign

By CHARLES MARSHALL
Staff Writer

A fusion of music and politics is proving a successful campaign tool in North Carolina, home of a hotly contested U.S. Senate race as well as one of the most active college-music scenes growing in the South.

With incumbent Sen. Jesse Helms' (R-N.C.) assault on the National En-

dowment for the Arts, Democratic nominee Harvey Gantt is using college music to speak out. Last Saturday night in Winston-Salem's Benton Convention Center, three of North Carolina's hottest pop and rock bands collaborated in a benefit concert for Gantt, headlined by The Connells. The \$12 cover charge was donated to the Gantt campaign treasury.

Upstairs in the Cat's Cradle Tuesday afternoon, The Connells' Doug MacMillan gave some hearty reactions to the benefit as well as to the group's role in the November election. He had considered the benefit idea earlier and was interested in organizing one himself had he not been approached by the Gantt campaign, he said. He was very pleased with the Gantt staff's enthusi-

asm and effort toward the concert, and said he hoped the benefit helped to remove some voter apathy and to motivate extra support, he said.

MacMillan also discussed the importance of awareness of the election and the impact it may have on the whole nation. The Connells are starting another leg of a tour in September, which will take them well outside North Carolina.

MacMillan stressed the importance of getting their message across before they leave.

In response to the show itself, MacMillan described the crowd as "comfortably" large, though he had anticipated a slightly larger one. He was also very pleased with having a voter registration booth outside but was disappointed that they couldn't arrange

one for The Connells' show Tuesday night at the Cradle, he said.

Saturday night's benefit concert was a statement by North Carolina's progressive music scene as well as a political statement. Featuring Raleigh rockers Satellite Boyfriend and melodic craftsmen Eight Or Nine Feet, as well as former dB's Peter Holsapple and Chris Stamey, the concert represented in full form the distinct local sound of North Carolina bands and their growing impact on the Southern-alternative and college-music circuits.

A crowd of all ages fit comfortably into the convention center, whose open floor space created an atmosphere larger than normal club shows but smaller than the college arenas bands like The Connells will probably be breaking into when their newly completed album, *One Simple Word*, scheduled for a late September release, hits the college pop market.

Satellite Boyfriend opened the show with lead vocalist/guitarist Phillip Collins asserting his aggressive stage presence. Collins bounced excitedly back and forth across the stage, ripping out tunes like "Scared at 19" and others from their debut LP, *Yes Ma'am*.

Eight Or Nine Feet took the stage next, playing an assortment of new material and hitting home later in their set with tracks off of *Resolution*, the band's debut LP on Reverie records. "Step Into the Light" and "Laugh Within You," the most dynamic songs of the set, exposed the band's knack for blending flowing harmonies with grinding guitars and driving rhythms.

Peter Holsapple, a North Carolina native who played backing guitars and keyboards with R.E.M. on the *Green* tour, performed almost a full hour in an acoustic set with fellow dB's founder Chris Stamey. Despite a tight, well-rehearsed performance, the acoustic set didn't fit well between the opening rock acts and The Connells' headlining show. The slower delivery seemed to drain energy out of the crowd, which became noticeably less enthusiastic.

But when the Triangle's favorite pop heroes took the stage at 11:30, the crowd was rejuvenated quickly, dancing excitedly through The Connells' opening number, the hard-driving "Upside Down," off the group's last album, *Fun 'n' Games*.

While The Connells integrated many of their new songs into the set, they continued to focus on their last two albums, calling up favorites like "Try," "Over There" and "Ten Pins." George Huntley, whose songwriting and lead vocals were asserted more noticeably on *Fun 'n' Games* than in the past, shone brightly on some of the lighter, upbeat melodies like "Sal," "Inside My Head," and the soothing "Home Today," from their second LP, *Boylan Heights*.

Throwing lots of energy into their performance, guitarist Mike Connell and bassist brother Dave floated around stage, guitars hanging low, sporting the conservative attire (neatly knit shirts, jeans and sneakers) that has become their trademark. The show reached its climax on "Sat Nite USA" when lead vocalist MacMillan, balancing and dancing with his ever-present mike stand (as he had all night), threw himself with intense abandon, sweating fiercely, into the rousing choruses of what has proven to be their most potent concert song.

For a rousing conclusion, the band advanced into a slew of their biggest hits, including "Something to Say," "Fun 'n' Games," and the roaring live favorite, "Scotty's Lament," in which the colorful MacMillan gave a hilariously lengthy arm-weaving and leg-pumping solo dance during the introduction.

The three-song encore included a new song and ended with two old favorites from their debut LP *Darker Days*: "1934" and a quieter, less forceful version of the soaring anthem "Hats Off," whose performance was a bit muted, probably through exhaustion.

The benefit "series" for Harvey Gantt will continue this fall. Chapel Hill is scheduled to host one on Sept. 19. Dillon Fence, the Veldt and funksters Johnny Quest are lined up to perform at the Cat's Cradle.

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the Tar Heels, led by sophomore Watson Jennison from Toronto. Jennison started 15 games last year and recorded 62 saves and a 1.55 goals against average with five shutouts.

"We have to focus on our defensive play," Bolowich said. "If you don't score a lot of goals during a tough match, you at least have to make sure you don't get a lot of goals scored on you."

The schedule will again be difficult for the Tar Heels, as the ACC has put five teams in the preseason top 20. Besides UNC, Wake Forest, N.C. State, Duke and Virginia all received rankings. Bolowich was also cautious to pick out a main strength for his team before the season begins.

"I don't know if you really can have a strength in the respect that I can point it out. I cannot say we have experience, because we don't. I cannot say that we are very strong or consistent, because I don't know how they are going to handle it. So I can't really pinpoint a strength."

"What I'm looking for is that the team really picks up from the first game and continues to improve."

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