

Front Porch Cafe serves customers menus of music

By ROB NEWBERRY

"My theory has always been to try to bring stuff from the outside into College Station, because College Station tends to be isolated," Hugh Stearns, owner of the Front Porch Cafe, says.

The Front Porch Cafe, with its long history of music and entertainment, has become the premier venue for live music in College Station since it opened last fall.

Already scheduled for the fall semester are two "Funk Fests" with three regional acts: House in Orbit and Joe Rockhead from Austin and Beat Temple out of Houston.

Then there's an upcoming anti-censorship benefit with the Rhythmatics on Halloween. "It's called 'Nasty As We Wanna Be' and we're giving all the money to whoever is running against Jesse Helms," Stearns says.

Stearns has scheduled sarcastic rock kings Trout Fishing in America for a few dates this semester, as well as bringing in guitar whiz Preston Reed and Robert Earl Keen Jr., an old Ag who played with Lyle Lovett when they went to school together in the early '80s.

Already, Jr. Medlow, Panjandrum, and Trout Fishing have told Stearns that the Front Porch is

their favorite venue in College Station. Dallas independents Ten Hands recently sold out the Front Porch, and Stearns hopes to bring them in for two shows next time.

The schedule at the Front Porch has gotten pretty regular, according to Stearns. "We have local bands on Wednesday, then funk or reggae on Thursday. We try to reserve the weekends for blues and folk."

"Tuesday is open-stage acoustic night, and the turnouts have been pretty good. They have dropped just a little since we added the \$1 cover," he explains.

"On Monday, we try to get our hands on some foreign films or cult films to show, but our choices have been limited," Stearns says. "We'd like to get more stuff that you can't see in the theaters around here."

Scheduled for October 3 is Poetry in Traction, the Front Porch Cafe's poetry reading night. If all goes well, Stearns wants to do Poetry in Traction every Sunday.

Stearns says he enjoys getting students involved with the Front Porch. Already, every Thursday is a benefit for the student radio station KANM. In the works is a benefit for Pro-

Choice Aggies, and Stearns says he would like to pursue some kind of event with MSC Town Hall.

The newest part of the Front Porch is The Bug Zapper. Selling imported goods from Guatemala, Mexico, and Turkey, as well as handmade jewelry, A&M student Mark "Bingo" Barnes set up shop with former student Deb Crowe and Sally Freeman in the front porch of the Front Porch.

"I really want more stuff like that to go on," Stearns says. "I hope to get some regional artists to do an exhibit here for some of the shows, like we've had in the past."

Stearns says, perhaps a little sarcastically, that the history of the Front Porch is his favorite story. "Originally, this building was outside town where it was the Shiloh Baptist Church, a little get-down gospel type of place. Then in 1978 it moved here as Grins."

"After changing hands once, it opened up as Dr. G's around 1984, which lasted about two and a half years, then it became Morgensterns."

Stearns came here last year when the now-defunct Brazos Landing, a live music venue and

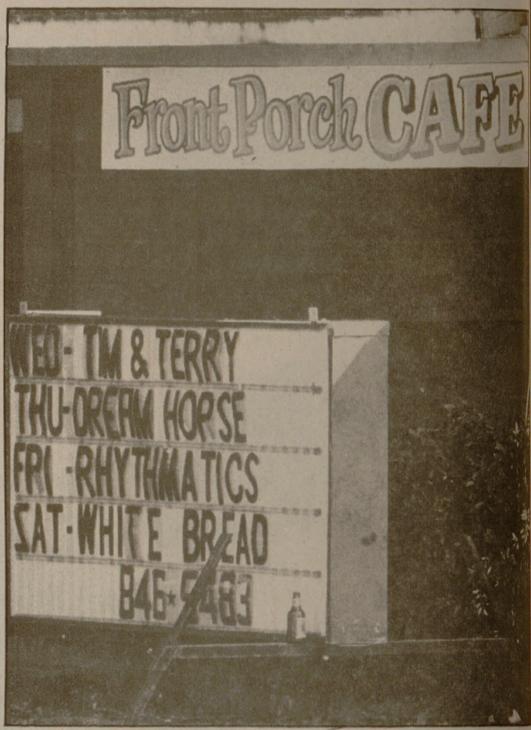


Photo by Eric Roalson

The many names out front hasn't kept success from the Front Porch Cafe.

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Reed's finger-pickin' playing leaves audience feeling good

By TIMM DOOLEN

MATT MCBURNETT

Preston Reed performed an almost impossible task Saturday night - he played an acoustic guitar version of James Brown's "I Got You (I Feel Good)." The 200 people at Front Porch Cafe obviously felt good after hearing Reed's fingers work acoustical magic in a virtually flawless two-hour performance.

Reed, a Wisconsin native now based in Minneapolis, said in an interview after the show that as early as age 17 he got serious about playing guitar and developing his trademark finger-picking style.

In 1979, at age 24 he released his first album, *Acoustic Guitar*, which he produced

and made on his own. About three years later he signed with the Flying Fish label, and put out three more records. He has since released two more on Capitol, including his recent *Blue Vertigo*.

Reed said his abilities are mostly self-taught, but credits several guitarists as personal influences, including John Fahey, Jimi Hendrix, Duane Allman and Pat Metheny.

The musical connection between these artists and Reed is not readily apparent when listening to his music because his style is unique.

At times during the concert you could hear bits of rock 'n' roll, jazz, blues, reggae and even country, which combined to make incredible music.

The guitar virtuoso himself describes his

music as "a mish-mash of different styles. I call it progressive finger-style guitar."

Reed was alluding to finger-picking, similar to banjo playing, in which he wears picks on all five fingers and strums the strings rapidly.

He demonstrated his versatility on many of the songs by simulating the sounds of other instruments with his six- and 12-string guitars. On almost all the songs he played bass line (or at least rhythm lines) on the lower strings while simultaneously playing the lead on the higher strings.

Reed has played over a dozen times at the Front Porch Cafe, under the Cafe's various names over the past years. Saturday night, his show was simulcast on KAMU radio from 10

p.m. to midnight.

He played most of the tunes off his *Vertigo* album, but the 23 songs he played, including two encores, spanned his 11-year, seven-album recording life.

Injecting witticisms between every number, Reed said he decided to name a song after a Texas town, and chose Flatonia, between San Antonio and Houston. To give an idea of his sound, certain riffs of "Flatonia" are similar to Yes' "The Clap" from *The Yes Album*.

"Hammerhead" featured the hammer-on style of playing, in which Reed tapped the frets on the neck to produce sound, instead of

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