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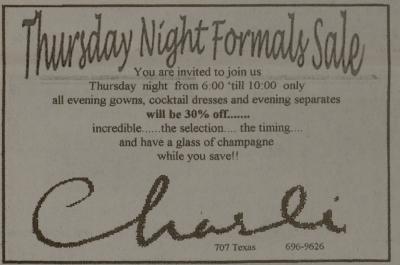
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# The Connells hope for a hit

North Carolina band aims for success with roots-rock soun

By Michael Schaub The Battalion

The members of the Connells have been together 12 years, released six albums and seen a recent single become an international smash hit.

So it comes as no surprise that drummer Peele Wimberley is a little tired of being compared to a certain band from Athens, Ga.

"Certainly we get tired of it," he said, "but we all understand. People have to have some perception of the sound."

Comparisons to R.E.M., as well as to Minnesota rockers The Replacements, have followed the band since it originated in 1984.

"I hate to describe our sound," Wimberley said, "but I would say it's like R.E.M. with a little more British flavor and maybe a little more of the rootsy stuff.

The band, based in Raleigh, N.C., plays at the Dixie Theatre in downtown Bryan at 10 p.m. Thursday. Rock band Tonic will open.

"It's a pretty strong package," Wimberley said. Tonic is a strong band.'

The Connells' tour follows the release of the band's latest album, Weird Food & Devastation, a raw, slightly acerbic collection of guitar-driven pop tunes.

'I think the album's darker, more solemn," Wimberley said. "We didn't do a lot of overdubs or processing, and that made it sound a little more raw.

The title of the album refers to the band's impressions of touring Europe, where it has encountered immense popularity following a 1993 single.

The song "'74-'75," from their 1993 album Ringwas a top-20 hit in 13 countries. Americans may have missed the buzz surrounding the song, although it was featured in the recent movie Heavy.

Wimberley said the members of the band say they still hope for increased popularity in the

We want to reach as many people as possible," he said. "Aside from the European success, we're all just scraping by.

The Connells' relative obscurity in their native country is not because of lack of experience. The band formed at the University of North Carolina after brothers Mike and David Connell hired vocalist Doug MacMillan and drummer John Schultz to play at local venues.

Schultz was replaced by Wimberley shortly thereafter, and the band hired George Huntley be-



The Connells, a rock band from North Carolina, is playing tonight at the Dixie Theater in By

fore recording their debut album, Darker Days. The Connells released three more albums before the breakthrough album *Ring*, the best-selling independent rock album of 1993. Wim-

future release. "When we get to work on the next record, we're going to concentrate on making a solid pop record like Fun & Games or One Simple Word," he said.

berley said the band members are planning a

The loose sound of Weird Food & Devastation is a departure from the more polished pop tunes of the band's previous albums.

"Most fans say that when they spend time with it, they like it a lot," Wimberley said.

The album includes hints of alternative counry in such songs as "Smoke" and "Back to Blue," but the influence of rockers like Neil Young is still evident in "Friendly Time," he said.

Wimberley said the band is progressing both lyrically and musically.

"The lyrics are a little more direct, more pointed," he said.

The band's familiar sense of irony is somewhat less cloaked on Weird Food & Devastation. In "Back to Blue," MacMillan sings, "Ain't it fun-

ny / How it really ain't funny at all?" Each of the band members contribu to the album. Wimberley wrote "Any," a song with a slight blues influence.

"I always go back to old Stevie Wonder, I Wind & Fire, be-bop stuff," Wimberley said If the album fails to bring the band the

tle for radio airplay.

"On radio, you've got to get to the chonsing seconds," Wimberley said. "It's kind of imital This could be the year the band's wist come true. One single, "Fifth Fret," has been leased, and the band's "Bitter Pill" is featured. the horror movie Scream. The Connells' tour has also been going

Wimberley said. The show in Bryan wil Connells' first in the area, coming on the of a stint at Austin's Liberty Lunch. "I'm excited about coming down to

Wimberley said. The band members still wish for a small tour, but the band also has other desires

"Most of our songs have really good ho

Wimberley said. "We'd like to have a hit

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## Thursday January 30

Steve O'Neill, a rock singer from Albuquerque, N.M., is playing at Chelsea Street Pub and Grill at 9 p.m.

Sneaky Pete, a sing-a-long artist from Bryan-College Station, is performing at the Cow Hop at 9 p.m.

Ty & the Semiautomatics, a rock band from Houston, is playing at Fitzwilly's at 9:30 p.m.

## Friday January 31

MSC Town Hall is sponsoring a lunch box concert, "Hot Bands, Hot Chocolate," featuring Fysher, a rock band from Bryan-College Station, at Rudder Fountain at 12 p.m.

Freudian Slip, an improvisational comedy act, is performing at the Dixie Theatre at 10 p.m.

Fysher, a rock band from Bryan-College Station, is playing with Vertical Horizon, a folk band from Washington, D.C., at 3rd Floor Cantina at 8 p.m.

Steve O'Neill, a rock singer from Albuquerque, N.M., is playing at Chelsea Street Pub and Grill at 9 p.m.

Thread, an alternative rock band from Bryan-College Station, is playing with Half-Life, an alternative rock band from Bryan-College Station, at the Cow Hop at 9:30 p.m.

Vertical Horizon, a folk band from Washington, D.C., is releasing its latest album at Marooned Records at



The Voodudes, a rock band from Bryan-College Station, is playing at Fitzwilly's at 9:30 p.m.

Brian Whitaker, a classic rock musician, is performing at Sweet Eugene's House of Java at 9:30 p.m.

### Saturday February 1

W.C. Clark, a blues musician from Austin, is playing at 3rd Floor Cantina

Freudian Slip, an improvisational comedy act, is performing at the Dixie Theatre at 10 p.m.

Infinite Record Convention will be held at the College Station Ramada from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Steve O'Neill**, a rock singer from Albuquerque, N.M., is playing at Chelsea Street Pub and Grill at 9 p.m.

Reckless Kelly, a rock band from Austin, is playing with **David's Gate**, a rock band from Bryan-College Station, and **Inspector 12**, a rock band from Bryan-College Station, at the Cow Hop

**Sneaky Pete**, a sing-a-long artist from Bryan-College Station, is performing at Burton Creek at 8 p.m.

Texas Twisters, a rock band from Bryan-College Station, is playing at Fitzwilly's at 9:30 p.m.

Tv & the Semiautomatics, a rock band from Houston, is playing at Sweet Eugene's House of Java at

## Dean's legacy lives Ashland Ch on at StageCenter Becker CPA

BY MELANIE BENSON THE BATTALION

StageCenter live theater, ed at 701 N. Main in Bryan, is ing the revised TV producti Come Back To The Five and l Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean, wi by Ed Grazsyk.

The setting for the product McCarthy, a small West Texas where time has stood still.

women, once known as The ples of James Dean, who pron come back to honor his death While celebrating the 20 niversary of the death of the in a five and dime store, the

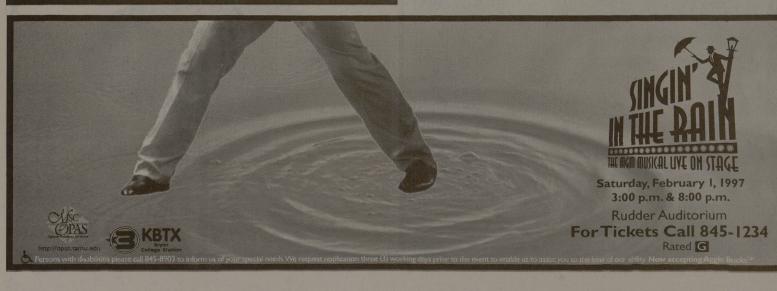
The story concerns a reu

gins to get a little too thicka truth is revealed. Before long, the beerisiced tongues run loose and the ladie all hang out, says the plays di

Cathy McWhorter. "In 20 years, lives change changes and history change

the friends they made stay the — or do they?" McWhorter sai The show will be running 31 and Feb. 6-8. Tickets are \$7 dents and senior citizens,

adults and \$4 for children.



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