

entertainment

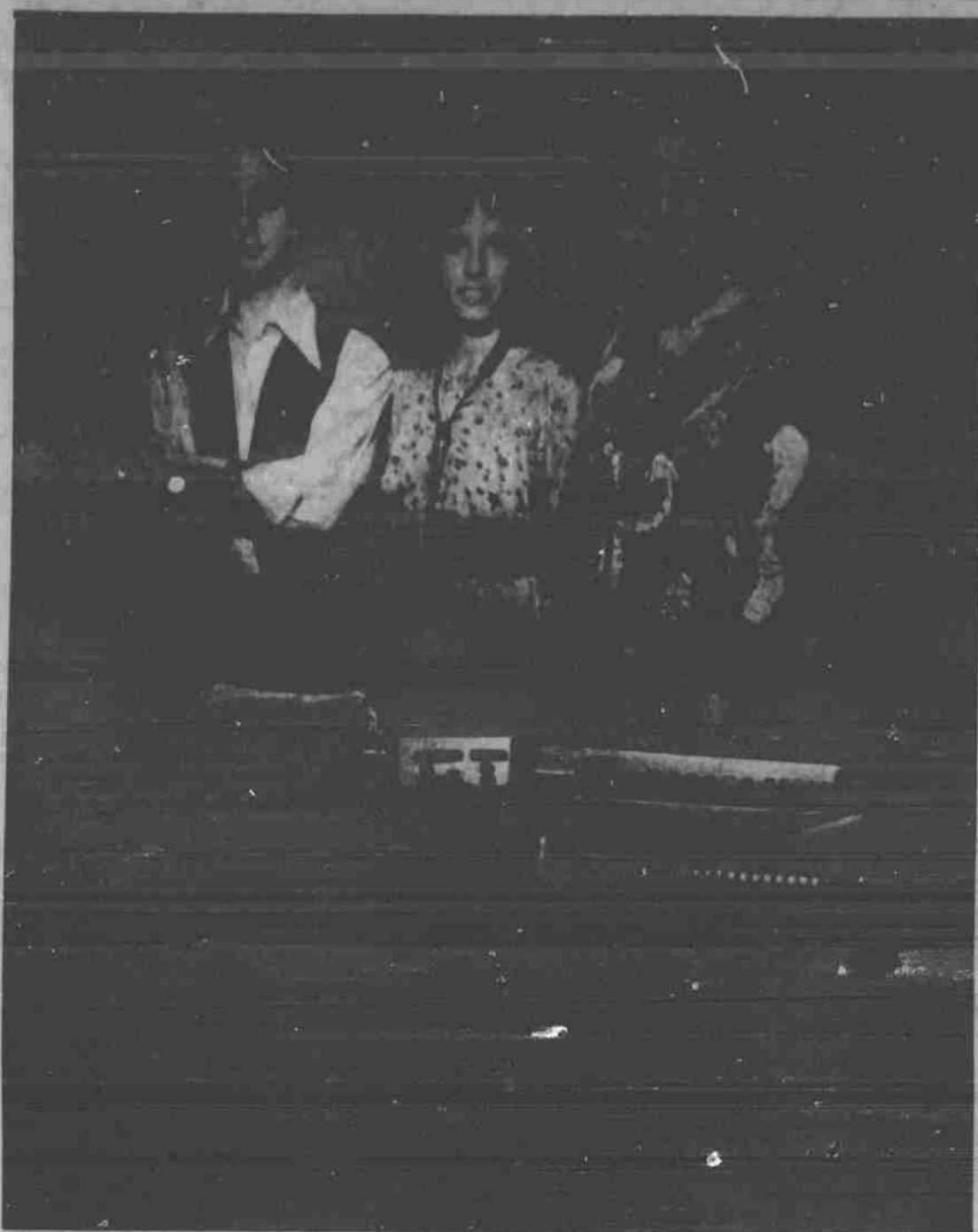
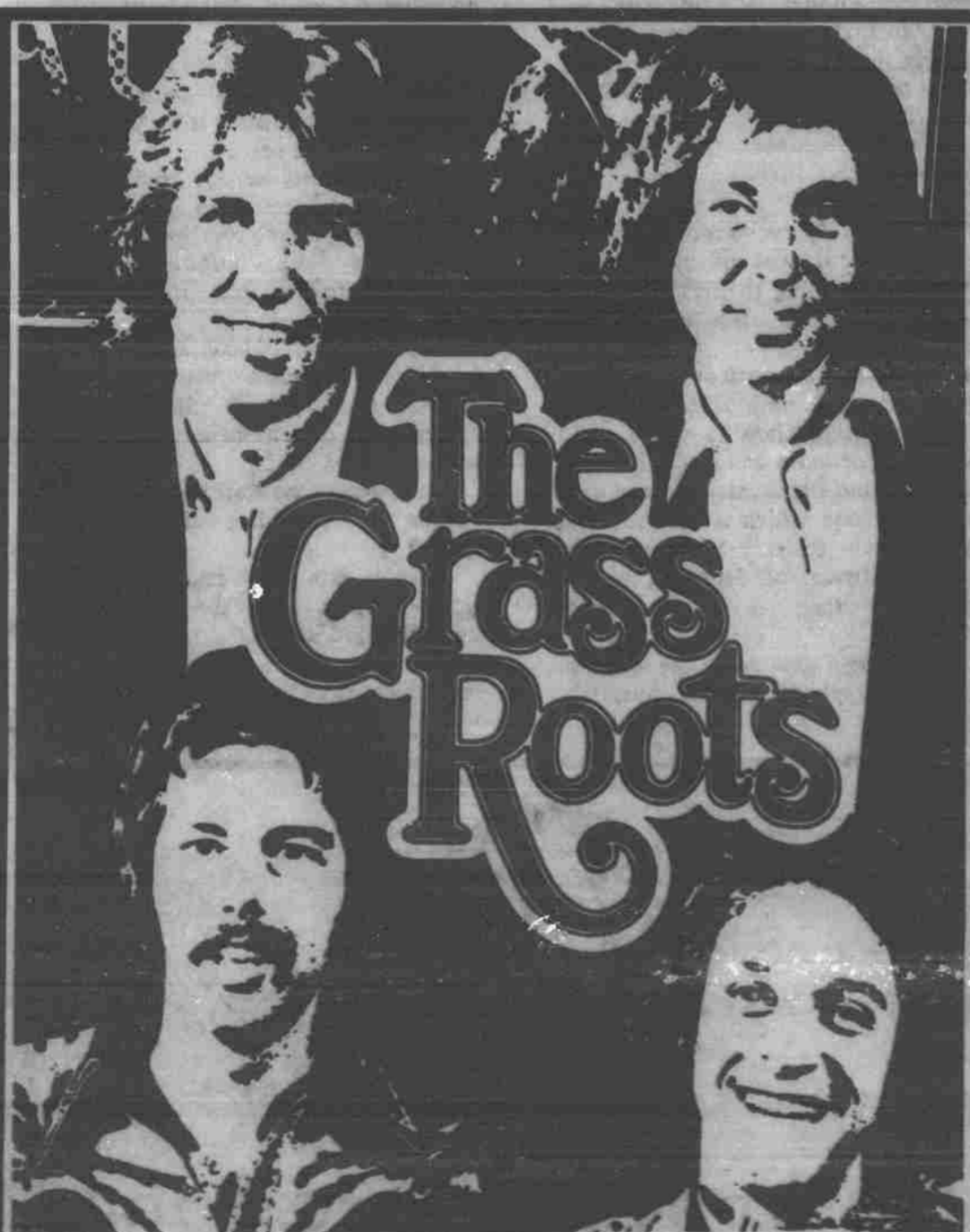


Photo by Steve Boerner

The Night Train trio: Stu Gerson, Beverly Spaulding and George Neidorf.



Appearing at
UNCLE SAM'S

July 18 8:30 p.m.

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Jazz group specializes in original arrangements

Review by Carla Engstrom

There is an alternative to AM music and the top-40 disco scene when performers like the Los Angeles-based group Night Train come to town.

Their music isn't a copy of existing artists. Instead they entertain through an effectual mode they've labeled as improvised music.

Night Train, playing at the Clayton House (10th and O Streets), performs improvised versions of such artists' music as Billy Holliday and Jerry Jeff Walker and their own songs.

Beverly Spaulding plays piano, guitar, flute, saxophone and sings. Probably the most impressive aspect of her talent is her versatility, along with a tight back-up from percussion player George Neidorf and bass guitarist Stu Gerson.

An untrained ear might classify their music as progressive jazz, but anyone interested in originally arranged music should enjoy Night Train. They seem to bring with them a touch of personalized performing that shows they're more interested in music than smashing guitars or wearing outlandish make-up.

Regardless of talent, their competition is top-40 music. The trio's consensus is that recording companies are conservative and controlled by what will make the charts.

Yet Neidorf says that the disco scene is dying out and that underground music and New York-type clubs are growing.

"If all that's going on, it eventually has to rise, but it virtually hasn't hit the general public," Neidorf said.

Musicians don't have to go commercial if they want to survive, he said. "But if you want to be popular you have to."

"But you can eat and pay your rent and do what you want to do," Spaulding said. "I believe what you do can appeal to people and not compromise."

Recording companies can make any music sell if they give it prime advertising, Neidorf said. "The trick is to sell something that's positive. The company has to believe in it a bit."

Night Train began when Spaulding and Neidorf met at the musicians union in Los Angeles about two years ago and they've been touring since. Gerson has been with them for about six months. Before that he was working in a disco band in Portland and according to the guitarist it was "making me physically sick."

Their backgrounds show dedication to their art. Neidorf studied music privately and has been playing professionally for about 22 years. He's played in Canada, Europe, Asia, Australia and the United States. He said he enjoyed playing in Europe and Asia because it's "still a treat

for them to hear jazz, they're educated about it in school and taught that artists are a major contribution to their culture."

Gerson said he was mostly self-taught, but had some college instruction since he began playing 10 years ago.

Spaulding has been performing for 16 years, and that breaks down to playing the saxophone for three, the flute in a symphony for two years and classical piano for "a long time." But she has played improvised music for about six years.

Their last engagement was in a small Iowa town. "To put it politely, we played in a cow pasture," Gerson said. They worked there a week and quit.

Other places they've played many requests were for top-40 songs. Lincoln is an exception, Neidorf said.

"The dance floor here is not expected to be filled," Spaulding said.

Even though they do play such requests, commercialism doesn't affect them much. "I don't do what I do in order to entertain people, but I am an entertainer. Many people come in because we're interesting to watch," Neidorf said.

"People come for different reasons, to impress a lady, get drunk or maybe it's a hip place to come," he added.

"I'm a musician, not an entertainer first. I perform for my own needs," Gerson said.

As for composing, Spaulding said when she writes she tries to explain music with lyrics. "I've found as clear as I can be about something lyrically, the more precise I can be musically."

She said a lot of her material comes from music in the 30's that she improvises on.

After their Lincoln engagement, Night Train plans to pursue their goal of recording music in Los Angeles and concert touring. "We want to get out of bars," Spaulding said.

They plan to either be with a label or produce independently to sell to a label, Neidorf said.

But the group doesn't take much time off. "Vacation time is when you're out of work" he said.

"Once we took a month off and we got bored. We need to work for our health," Spaulding said.

Yet they've decided to break-up. Gerson won't be going to L.A. to record. He said he'll either go back to Portland or New York to work.

The reason for the split, Neidorf said was "we'd like to maintain an acoustic sound." They want to get a bass fiddle player to do that.

Night Train will perform at the Clayton House until July 30, Monday through Saturday from 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m.

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