

Arts and Entertainment

King, The Crowns rock against Reagan

By Mona Z. Koppelman
Daily Nebraskan Senior Reporter

If Ronald Reagan gets re-elected president this November, Joe "King" Carrasco will cross the Rio Grande into Mexico never to return — except on tours and weekends.

"That's why our stuff is getting more Tex-Mex," said Carrasco. "If I can figure out a way to get down there and stay, I'll move. Reagan's foreign policy is unbelievable. He's going to get us blown up."

Carrasco and his band, The Crowns, relaxed Monday afternoon at a small party before playing that evening at the Royal Grove. The 30-year-old Texas rocker promised two trends in the band's newest releases: more Latin influences and more political lyrics.

Carrasco said he has always been a political person. He reads up to four newspapers a day, particularly when he's not on tour. But he gets a lot of his information first-hand in Central and South America.

"I spend a lot of time traveling and talking to people, and I can

in Central American politics more than ten years ago. While living and working in Austin, Carrasco became sympathetic to the problems of Salvadoran refugees. He said it's a criminal offense to harbor refugees there because the U.S. government doesn't recognize them as political refugees, but economic refugees.

Since then, Carrasco has visited El Salvador.

He said the easiest way to imagine what life is like in El Salvador is to picture two identical duplexes next door to each other. In the U.S. duplex, 60 people live there. Fifteen people get the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, and 45 people are stuck in the living room.

Two hundred people live in the Salvadoran duplex. Four people get the whole house, and the rest live in the back yard.

"If you look at the people per square mile here compared to there, and the way the wealth is distributed, that's a good analogy," Carrasco said. "People in Central America have been held down too long. They want what

'"Federales" is political in a way. It's about taking mushrooms and hanging around the pyramids. If everybody did that, all the world's problems would be solved.'

see our foreign policy is totally wrong," he said. "Anti-American sentiment is running really high. But no one here gives a fuck, and that blows my mind."

Carrasco said that since Reagan's reign began, the United States has fought wars that Americans know nothing about. He said he thinks that if Reagan wins another term, the United States will invade Nicaragua.

After watching the president on television deliver speeches to Republican conventioners Carrasco said, he decided the present administration is run "like a cowboy movie, with John Wayne as president."

His new album, *Bordertown*, will come out in Europe in two weeks. The new lyrics indicate his sympathy with Central and South American problems and his uneasiness with U.S. stands. One song, "Current Events Are Making Me Tense" was written after Carrasco had a nightmare about nuclear war.

"I dreamed we were on tour in California and I heard on the radio that missiles had been launched," he said. "Everybody was hauling ass and all I could think of was, 'I'll never see Texas again.'"

Other songs on *Bordertown*, which will be available in the United States as an import, include "Who Bought the Guns That Killed the Nuns" and "We don't Speak Ingle's."

The first verse of "Who Bought the Guns . . ." gives Carrasco's perception of Reagan's Latin American policies:

"Who gave the order to cross the border?"

Who gave the order for all this torture?

It was a man, a man, a man with a plan

For murder and aggression across this land."

Later in the song we find out the man is "Ronny, and he is not funny."

Carrasco said he got interested

we have here, and I don't blame them."

Early political interests gave some of his old songs a "semi" political bent. "Federales," from his album *For the Hottest Mouth in Town*, has a tongue-in-cheek political message.

"Federales" is political in a way," he said. "It's about taking mushrooms and hanging around the pyramids. If everybody did that, all the world's problems would be solved, if you know what I mean."

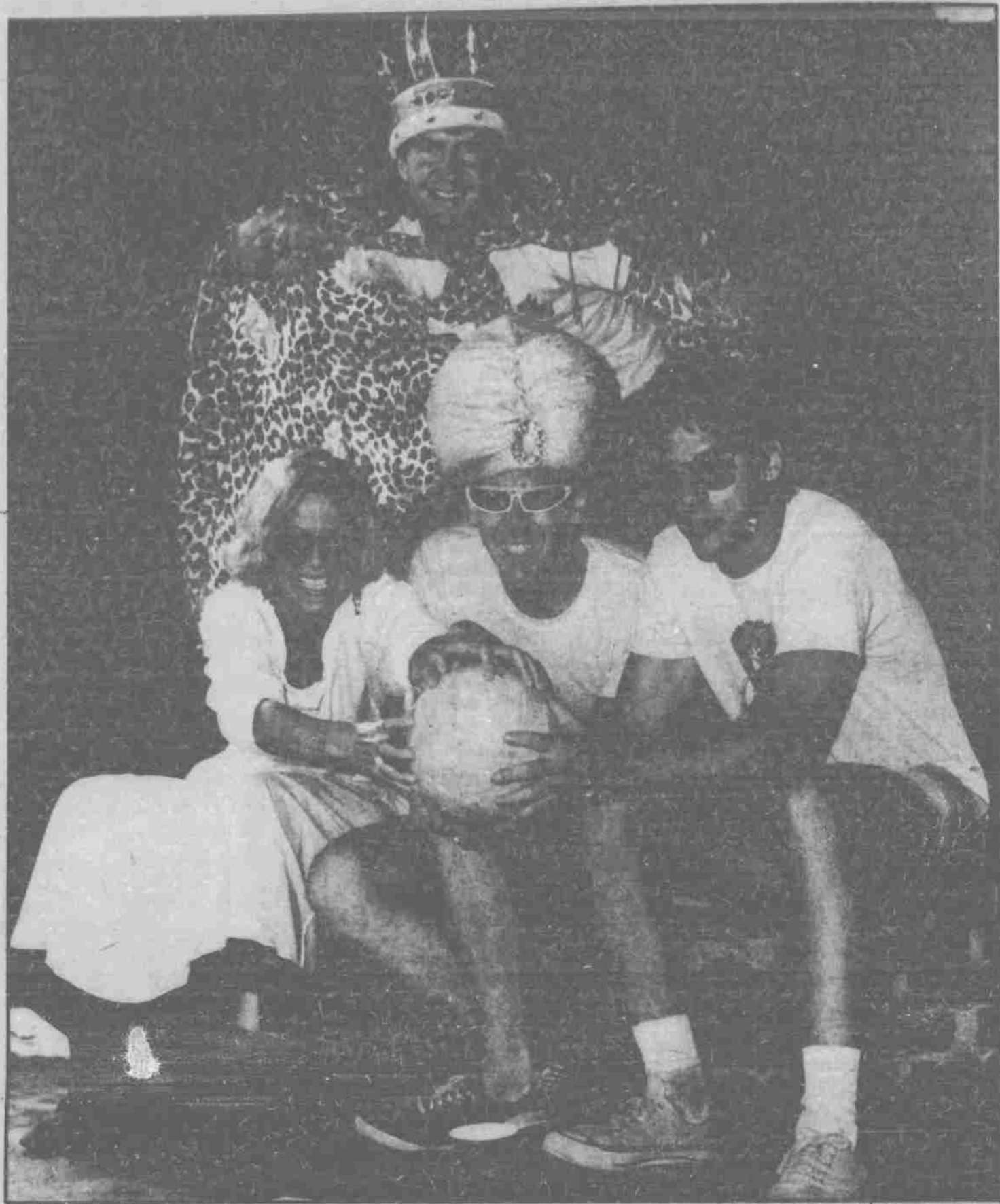
"It's good to make people think while they listen to your music, but the important thing is to have fun," he said. "I just want to make people happy and maintain my lifestyle, which is loose."

Grove revellers trampled on any allusions to foreign policy, Reagan and the Central American strife as they hoped, bopped and stomped through the King's nearly two-hour set. King's real pull lies in the Latin-Mexican beat of drummer Dick Ross and the bass guitar of George Reiff. The showmanship of Kris Cummings and her trademark farfisa organ — as well as The King's acrobatics — keep feet glued to the dance floor and eyes focused on stage.

The King's finale was a precarious climb over stage and speakers to the second floor of the Grove. He somersaulted into the waiting arms of the crowd who passed him hand-over-hand back on stage. Sweat poured fast and furious as Carrasco boogied to "Party Weekend" and "Don't Bug Me Baby," both from his most recent American release.

"My roots are Tex-Mex, so that's what we play," Carrasco said. "The fact that I play Tex-Mex music is rebellious and subversive in itself. It goes totally against the grain of American music."

"What's held Latin music back so long is the language. I played with a lot of Mexican bands, and I try to put English lyrics to some Mexican polkas. My Chicano friends said I was crazy, but sometimes it worked."



Dave Wesely/Daily Nebraskan

Joe "King" Carrasco and The Crowns play court jester at a pre-show party Monday afternoon. Carrasco, behind, and The Crowns are Kris Cummings, left, George Reiff and Dick Ross.

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