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GIVE & TAKE
June 2nd & 3rd

WEFT

IS HOSTING A

**"PAY-YOUR-PLEDGE
PICK-UP-YOUR-PREMIUM PARTY"**

FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 2 - 6 P.M. AND SATURDAY, JUNE 3, 9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

T-shirts and WEFT coffee mugs will be in by then.
We hope to see you then, if not before.



	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	
6 AM						COUNTRY BLUEGRASS GOSPEL	GOSPEL	6 AM
7 AM	MORNING MENU MIXED MUSIC AND INFORMATION					GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO		7 AM
8 AM						LOCAL AFRICAN AMERICAN ISSUES		8 AM
9 AM						NEWS/COMMENTARY	TALK	9 AM
10 AM	JAZZ JAM					SONG OF THE SOUL WOMYN'S MUSIC	ENVIRONMENTAL	10 AM
11 AM							MUSIC OF INDIA	11 AM
12 PM						KIDS	WOMYN'S	12 PM
1 PM	THE BLUES							1 PM
2 PM						LATINO MUSIC/ISSUES	GREEK	2 PM
3 PM	THE BEAT BLENDER World Beat and Other Rhythms						JEWISH	3 PM
4 PM							NEWS, VIEWS	4 PM
5 PM	5:00-5:30 PACIFICA RADIO NEWS / 5:30-6:00 "100 DAYS OF CONGRESS"							5 PM
6 PM	NEWS / ISSUES				THE CRITICAL LIST	OLD TIME COUNTRY	IRISH	6 PM
7 PM	RADIO THEATRE	BLUEGRASS	FOLK	ALTERNATIVE COUNTRY	THE VAULT: LIVE MUSIC GRATEFUL DEAD			7 PM
8 PM							SPACE	8 PM
9 PM	JAZZ PLUS	PARTY OF TWO GAY MUSIC AND ISSUES		REGGAE	ALTERNATIVE ROCK	PROGRESSIVE ROCK/AMBIENT		9 PM
10 PM	LIVE LOCAL MUSIC			INDUSTRIAL ROCK		HIP HOP, RAP	CHRISTIAN ROCK	10 PM
11 PM	LOCAL MUSIC	ALTERNATIVE ROCK	WOMEN IN ROCK	HOUR OF SLACK				11 PM
12 AM					HIP HOP, RAP	AMBIENT TECHNO EXPERIMENTAL	ECLECTICA	12 AM
1 AM	ALTERNATIVE ROCK NEW RELEASES	METAL	R&B	INDUSTRIAL/ DANCE				1 AM
2 AM	FREE FORM FREE FORM FREE FORM FREE FORM							2 AM
3 AM								3 AM
4 AM								4 AM
5 AM								5 AM
6 AM								6 AM

❖ The WEFT Revue ❖

Volume 3 Issue 3

May-June 1995

WE DON'T MEAN TO BOAST, BUT ...

IT'S OFFICIAL: WEFT IS THE 'BEST'

WEFT-FM (90.1) was honored recently by the Community Media Coalition, a locally based organization that assists nonprofit agencies in gaining access to Champaign County media.

WEFT was recognized for "outstanding local media coverage" in the Best Overall Radio cate-

gory at the group's first annual awards program.

Of course, none of the station's volunteers and staff do what they do for fame or fortune, but, what the heck - it's nice to get a little recognition from the community. Congratulations to all involved!

Shop till you drop

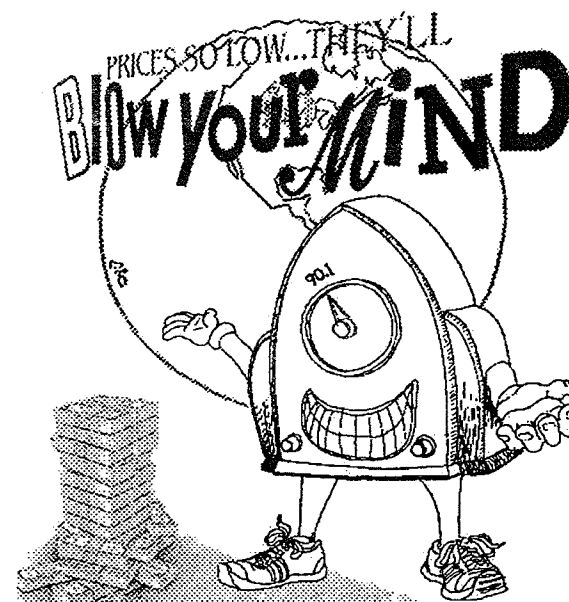
GARAGE SALE

Saturday, June 3

Put on your saling shoes and direct your little feet on over to the annual WEFT garage sale. (But please don't trip over the bad puns along the way)

This year's sale takes place Saturday, June 3 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 1205 S. Randolph, Champaign. As always, this is the sale where you'll find the area's very coolest of cast-offs - including records, tapes, CDs, ham-radio equipment and the usual assortment of livers and gizzards, knick-knacks, gimcracks, bric-a-brac and other funky stuff. Naturally, all proceeds benefit your favorite little radio station.

If you'd like to donate items for the sale, call Melissa at 328-5542.



WEFT PUBLIC AFFAIRS LISTENING SESSIONS

CHECK OUT SOME EXCELLENT ALTERNATIVE RADIO PROGRAMS

WEFT is currently airing some of the best of what Pacifica and community radio stations around the country are producing. However, there is a wide range of material available free or at low cost that could be added to our programming schedule. Interested WEFT listeners who would like to sample some of these offerings are welcome to attend an alternative listening session and give us some input on which programs you would like to hear on your community radio station. Sessions will be held at the WEFT production studio, 113 N. Market St., Champaign at 7 p.m. June 7 and 21.

Other information-programming concerns will be addressed at periodic discussion sessions open to anyone with an interest. Among the proposals currently under consideration is one that would result in a repeat of Pacifica Radio news at a later evening time slot, which would make the news available to a larger audience. The next session is scheduled for 7 p.m. May 23 at the station. The meeting will be facilitated by Bill Thomas, former WEFT station manager and veteran of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters and Pacifica Program Service.

For more information, call Paul Mueth at WEFT (359-9338) on Saturdays at 11 a.m.; Sundays at 6 p.m.; or Tuesdays from 3 to 5 p.m. You also may call WEFT from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays and leave a message. Or, send e-mail to pamueth@uiuc.edu.

STATION MANAGER'S CORNER

By Mick Woolf

We thank you and all the other WEFT supporters for making this past Spring '95 Pledge Drive our most successful to date. With more than \$22,000 pledged, your support is a great source of encouragement to us as we continue our efforts to keep community radio alive and well in our area. The outcome of this drive reflects the essence of community building in that it does make a difference when supporters do their part.

We'd like to share some of the comments made by our listeners during this last drive by beginning with a brief note we received from a contributor:

"Just wanted to let everyone at WEFT know that I really enjoy WEFT. I love the variety, I like that it's community-based, I like the non-DJ's (can't remember what you call them). The donation process is also very painless - a big THANK YOU for all."

Other comments we received were short but just as sweet to our ears: "I love it. I refer WEFT to a lot of friends"; "I'm grateful that we have WEFT"; "Don't change anything! I like the outlandish and wildish! WEFT can't be too bizarre for me!"; "All other radio is like TV"; "I enjoy the whole program schedule"; "I have enjoyed WEFT for many years"; "Pacifica is a good option"; "Like the WEFT Courier"; "You can hear any kind of music in the world"; "I like the diversity and the element of surprise"; "I never had money to pledge before and thought I should since public broadcasting funding is being cut"; "I'm just returning to the area - WEFT is the best thing"; "I'm from Britain and I think this is the best community radio I've ever heard"; "I don't know what I'd do without it"; "WEFT is the only reason I can live in East Central Illinois"; "WEFT is the only radio station in Champaign-Urbana worth listening to."

Others were even more direct and to-the-point in their approvals: "Cool!"; "Good!"; "Awesome"; "Right on!"; "It kicks ass!"

Still others offered focused advice and words of encouragement: "Keep crankin' out the new music"; "Keep up the courage"; "Keep up the great work"; "Keep on keepin' on!"; "Don't change or sell out"; "Don't let Newt run you off the air."

While comments for each program were generally very positive, some listeners shared specific critiques and told us what they wanted to hear more or less of: "Nothing else like it [bluegrass] and there should be more, more, more!"; "More melodic music [space]"; "Enjoy the Indian music - wish there was more"; "Love the industrial dance techno - more of it prime time!"; "I dislike your 'hard rock' programming"; "Want more indie rock during the day"; "Like the programs - except religious shows"; "The gospel programs are fine and productive"; "Outstanding, but weekends are a little weak"; "Like rap/hip hop - wish it was on every time"; "Play more Celtic music"; "Always on except for jazz programs - like older jazz better"; "Blues is too limited to Chicago style guitar"; "More blues and news"; "Would like

to see more news and info programming - sick of jazz and blues ... like 'News from Neptune' and Pacifica"; "Jazz - play more"; "Love the music - excellent on music ... less news ... Monitor News preferred ... focus on music"; "More morning news between 8 and 10 am"; "More alternative news."

Other comments confirmed that WEFT supporters have diverse listening habits: "Usually listen Monday mornings and Sunday nights"; "Like Mondays - late nights"; "Tuesday and Wednesday religious listener"; "Listen to WEFT Wednesday nights and mornings"; "Listen to WEFT 6 to 8 p.m. every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday"; "Listen to jazz every morning"; "Try to listen to the blues every day"; "Listen especially in the afternoons"; "Work at post office graveyard ... like overnights - they keep me awake"; "Listen on the way to work"; "Love it - listen at work"; "Tune all the radios at work to WEFT"; "Listen 9 to 10 hours a day"; "Listen all the time"; "I enjoy it so much I listen every day - can't imagine life without it."

Another listener reminded us that interference problems caused by WKIO's power increase continue to be a problem for some folks: "Oldies 92 interferes. I can't receive WEFT in downtown Champaign during the day." We will update our listeners on this situation again in the near future.

Finally, I came across a letter written with a sense of humor and regret. The author makes the case that WEFT requires an active commitment from the listeners, for what would the airwaves be like without this type of radio station? Read on:

"I have - at great personal risk - had this letter smuggled out of the not-so-great beyond to warn your listeners while there's still time for them: There's a special place in hell for people who listen but don't contribute to community radio. Once, I, too, ignored the call to do my share, but now I and everyone else here in the Radio Moocher Zone would give anything to hear one more pledge drive and have a chance to avoid our present torment.

"When I was alive I spent thousands of dollars on state-of-the-art stereo equipment for my home and car just so I could soak up every drop of the great blues, jazz and alternative music on WEFT. But somehow I never found it in my greedy little heart to spare a few bucks to support the station that brought me all the best tunes and no commercials.

"So now I'm stuck down here with a tiny little San Sewage radio with a single one-inch speaker made of used Kleenex. There's no community radio and the only station I do get plays nothing but screaming used-car commercials and cuts from the album 'Muzak All-Stars Do Disco'.

"So tell all the listeners of WEFT - while you're still alive, while you still have a CHANCE - give to community radio and avoid my fate!

Just call me One Sorry Guy"

If you have not yet sent in your contribution, or if you can afford to send in a little more, please do so soon. Thank you again for your support.

WEFT thanks Lox, Stock & Bagel, Grog's Pizza and Walnut Street Tea Co. for their support during our Spring pledge drive.

Sign up now!

Airshifter training courses planned in June and July

The first step toward getting your own show on WEFT is to successfully complete one of the single-session airshifter training courses offered periodically at the station. The courses will be offered next on June 24, and again on July 29 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the WEFT studios, 113 N. Market St., Champaign.

The course covers everything from the history and current structure of the station to rules and licensing require-

ments. To enroll, you must be a member of the station (a contribution of \$30 or more in the past year qualifies you). If you're not already a member, you can join at the training session (cash, checks and VISA/Mastercard accepted).

After this course, you'll have the opportunity to train in-studio with three of our current airshifters. Then, you can propose your very own show. To sign up, just call the station, 359-9338.



STOLEN MOMENTS *Continued from page three*

do is hang in there and listen," he says. "Well, by the time we got in the car that night to drive home, I was feverish, and there was no way I could get out of bed the next day."

Under her husband's tutelage, Gloria has come over the years to appreciate even the "out there" music (which she used to compare unfavorably to the sound of a junior high school band warming up, he said). And last year for the first time, the Wienkes' son Keith joined them at the jazz festival. "He had a

great time! He's already asking me if we're going back this year," Wienke said, with obvious pleasure.

Maybe that's what hooks people into "Stolen Moments" each Thursday morning on WEFT - picking up on that enthusiasm, that unabashed enjoyment Wienke takes in turning others onto jazz.

"Stolen Moments" airs Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon.

WEFT-FM (90.1) is grateful for the ongoing support of the many local businesses that underwrite programming on the station. In turn, we encourage our listeners to support these underwriters - and tell them that you appreciate their role in keeping community radio on the airwaves in East Central Illinois.

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| BERMUDA ONION | TONY NOVAK |
| CAMPUS COPIES | ROBERT PALECZNY |
| CANDLEWOOD ESTATES | PAWN SHOP |
| CHAMPAIGN-URBANA | PERISCOPE |
| JAZZ & BLUES ASSOCIATION | CD'S & TAPES |
| DAILY ILLINI | JIM PENNING |
| FEDERAL-BRYANT | PRAIRIE BOATWORKS |
| G COM | THRIFTY NICKEL |
| HEEL TO TOE | ELIZABETH SCOTT |
| THE KIRKWOOD FAMILY | LAUREN SENOFF |
| LIL' PORGY'S | CHRIS THURSTON |
| MEDLOCK BROTHERS | JANE WARREN |
| CONSTRUCTION | ZORBA'S |

If your business is interested in underwriting a program on WEFT, call 359-9338 for information on how you can get an announcement on the air.

WEFT is a non-commercial radio station locally owned by Prairie Air, Inc. a not-for-profit organization. WEFT is an accessible, responsible and responsive radio alternative, serving the diverse communities of radio listeners in East central Illinois. We are located at 113 N. Market St., Champaign, Illinois. We broadcast at a power of 10,000 watts at 90.1 FM. Questions, comments or suggestions should be addressed to:

General Manager, WEFT
113 N. Market Street, Champaign, IL 61820

THE
ALTERNATIVE

The Champaign-Urbana
OPTIMIST

Look for it every month
at over 100 locations throughout
Champaign-Urbana

"BOYS ON THE SIDE" SOUNDTRACK

By Tracey Rose,
host of *Womyn Makin' Waves*, 1 to 3 p.m. Sundays

Hail the folks at Arista for putting together an all-female soundtrack! Some of the best women in mainstream music appear here, delivering a great mix of covers, new and original music.

New songs are heard by Melissa Etheridge, Sheryl Crow, Stevie Nicks and Sara McLaughlan. The lyrics of

most songs are particularly pertinent to the plot, creating a cohesiveness throughout not found in many films. Although Bonnie Raitt's cover of Roy Orbison's "You Got It" is the big single, the gem of the CD is Whoopi Goldberg's slower, sweeter version of the same song.

For a good introduction to some strong womyn's music (albeit mainstream), check out "Boys on the Side."

ALERT! WEFTIES

WATCH THE PAPERS FOR DATES OF UPCOMING BENEFIT CONCERTS!

DEMENT

Continued from page five

nal world has the luxury to put life on hold just to grieve? DeMent expresses our collective frustration with this insane pace so eloquently when she sings:

*"I've got no time to look back, I've got no time to see
The pieces of my heart that have been ripped away from me
And if the feelin' starts to comin', I've learned to stop 'em fast
'Cause I don't know, if I let them go, they might not wanna pass
And there's just so many people tryin' to get me on the phone
And there's bills to pay and songs to play and a house to make a home
I guess I'm older now and I've got no time to cry."*

Even though I've heard this song many times, I'm still stopped dead in my tracks by its opening chords whenever and wherever I am when I hear it again. If I'm in at home in the kitchen, I usually have to stop mopping, chopping, stirring or whatever and pause for yet another moment of pure, unadulterated listening. If I'm at work - writing - I usually have to let the keyboard sit idle for a few minutes.

It quite simply boggles my brain to think of the incredible power and ability songwriters have to affect everyday people like me in small, yet appreciable ways. In most cases, the artists will never meet or speak directly to the people who buy their CDs, who attend their concerts, who share their music on radio

stations like WEFT. Yet, they are able to use their extraordinary gifts to bring us all together to create a shared culture and sense of community that we might not otherwise recognize. For instance, several months ago, one of DeMent's CDs was playing while the plumbing-and-heating guy was at my house installing a new thermostat. I'd never met him before, and while he seemed like a regular kind of guy, I never would have guessed that he'd necessarily appreciate the music he was being subjected to. Not only did he like it, he made me write down what he was listening to so he could look for it at the record store. (Of course, I told him he could find DeMent's music on 90.1 FM, as well!)

Anyway, in the liner notes to "Infamous Angel," DeMent indicates her "hope that songs that make me feel good will affect someone else in a good way."

Well, she got me good. She snagged the heating-and-cooling guy, too. And I'm sure there have been others. A year ago in April when I returned to the MerleFest, DeMent herself was up there on stage. No doubt, she touched more than a few previously uninitiated souls who had at first looked at the program and wondered, "Iris who?"

The music of Iris Dement can be heard on several WEFT programs, including "From the Joshua Tree Inn," 6-8 p.m. Tuesdays; "Ridin' the Rails," 6-8 p.m. Wednesdays; "Another Country," 6-8 p.m. Thursdays; and "Song of the Soul," 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturdays.

Off the Air... with Paul Wienke, host of "Stolen Moments"

By Anna Flanagan

When Paul Wienke was a teenager, he spent a lot of time in his bedroom listening to music. The room was in the basement of his family home in Madison, Wis., where his father also kept a Seburg jukebox loaded with big band 78s. "I'd have music wars with my dad," Wienke recalled recently. "I'd be in my room listening to John Mayall, and my dad and his buddies would be listening to the Dorseys, Count Basie, Duke Ellington. We'd see who could 'out-loud' the other."

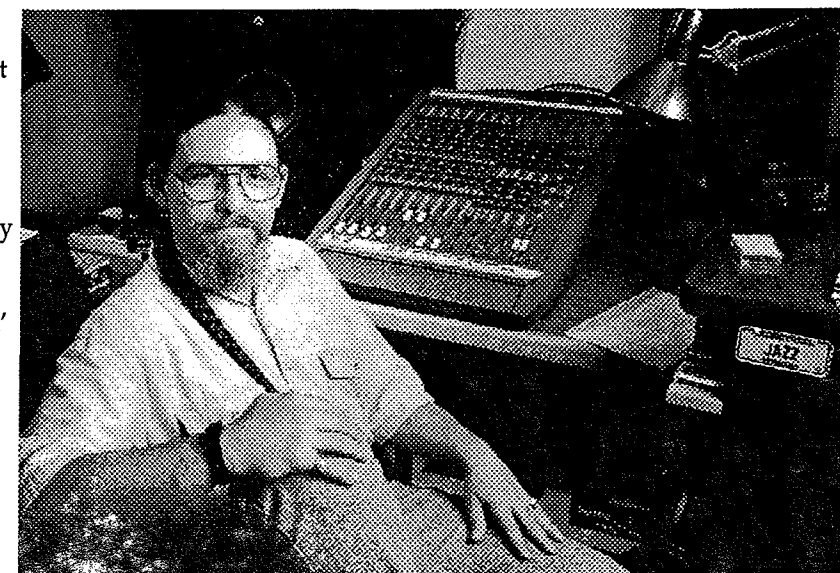
At the time, he didn't much care for his father's music. But as Wienke got older, he found that the tunes that would drift into his head at unguarded moments were tunes like "Satin Doll," "Swing, Swing, Swing" and "String of Pearls." The seeds of Wienke's love of jazz were planted during those music wars of the 1960s, and they've grown to include a wide variety of jazz styles and artists. This isn't news to those who catch his eclectic Thursday morning jazz show on WEFT, "Stolen Moments." Wienke named his show for a tune he says he's always loved. "And that's what I'm doing, really," he said. "I'm stealing a few moments of the listeners' time to share my love of jazz with them."

Wienke's gig at WEFT began about four years ago, when he substituted for Mick Woolf on "The Medicine Wheel." The station manager at the time heard Wienke and asked him to fill an open jazz spot on the broadcast schedule. This was before WEFT had developed its jazz block each weekday morning between 9 a.m. and noon. That came about, in Wienke's recollection, somewhere between six months to a year after he started his show.

"At that time, Jeff [Machota] and I were really the only jazz announcers WEFT had, so for a while, we were doing all the jazz shows," he said. Machota did Monday and Wednesday every week, Wienke handled Tuesday and Thursday, and they traded off Fridays. Slowly, the two began to recruit other jazz announcers, often through the Champaign-Urbana Jazz and Blues Association, for which Wienke serves as vice president and which has, in his words, a symbiotic relationship with WEFT.

Not only was there a dearth of jazz announcers in the early days of WEFT's block programming, the station's music library was limited. So Wienke drew from his own extensive collection, which has a little bit of everything, but is high in avant-garde and be-bop content. While some might find it difficult to accommodate both Dixieland and avant-garde jazz within their musical tastes, Wienke sees many connections between these ends of the jazz spectrum.

"Dixieland jazz was all about ensemble improvisation, and



included instruments like the clarinet and the tuba, which tend to be left out of straight-ahead combos," he said. "Avant-garde jazz also emphasizes ensemble improvisation and includes a lot of experimentation with the older instruments, and some new or 'found' instruments like conch shells." Wienke has educated himself widely about jazz, through formal and informal channels. He studied jazz history at the University of Wisconsin with Richard Davis, who played bass with John Coltrane, Miles Davis, and others. He subscribes to such magazines as *DownBeat*, *Jazziz* and *Cadence*, and has built up a large collection of books about jazz. The WEFT jazz announcers also educate each other, Wienke said, getting together on a regular basis to share old favorites and new discoveries. His full-time gig at WILL, which involves recording live jazz performances, keeps him on top of the local scene. And in a part-time gig at Record Service, Wienke stays in touch with all the new jazz releases. Such a demanding schedule sometimes leads him to think about giving up his shift at WEFT. But he said he would miss the outlet it gives him for his creative impulses.

"Even though I enjoy my work for WILL, which really serves an important function of sharing with the community the great wealth of jazz talent here, it is a little confining musically," he said. "WEFT gives me the chance to showcase different styles of music that otherwise don't get much exposure."

Wienke will take a break from his hectic schedule at the end of the summer, taking his annual vacation to, where else? The Chicago Jazz Festival. Wienke and his wife Gloria have missed just one day of the festival since it began in 1985, even when they commuted back and forth to the festival from Champaign. As he tells the story, that one missed day resulted from sitting outside in a driving rainstorm to listen to a group of jazz masters play. "I figured, 'Hey! if a bunch of 70 year-old guys are willing to tough out the storm to play, the least I can

More Stolen Moments on page seven

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TAPES

END HOMOPHOBIA AND RACISM LISTEN TO WEFT

WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT?

Tuesdays 12-2 a.m. Hosted by Don "Buddy" Bishop

An indie rock, new release program to piss off the neighbors (scientifically, of course) with more brain-splitting feedback, yelling and screaming, laffs, and astounding assorted feats per square inch than any other radio program of equal size and oration.

ALIENATION STATION [MUSIC FOR THE MARGINALIZED]

Wednesdays 2 a.m. - 6 a.m. Hosted by Ann Knutson

Free form radio trip takes you through the lyrical byways of our global village, punk rock, country, blues, dancehall, rap, new wave, jazz. If they're sayin' it, Ann's playin' it, and she means it when she asks for listener requests. Stay up, tune in, call up and share your own bit of music with the community on community radio.

EVERY THURSDAY I GET THE BLUES

Thursdays noon-3 p.m. Hosted by Blue Lou

Classic Blues as good as Mom's home cooking every Thursday afternoon - now sit up straight and at your vegetables or no chicken heads for dessert!

THE CRITICAL LIST

Fridays 5:30-6 p.m. Hosted by P. Gregory Springer, with co-hosts Buddy and Chuck Koplinski

Movies, theater, dance and dada. The Critical List is your weekly survey of area performance and media events, presented with a variety of interviews, sound clips, and raw/wry observation. Free movie ticket giveaways to listeners almost every week. Remember, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but irony is in your ear. Start your weekend on ... The Critical List.

LIVE AT CBGBs

Fridays 8-10 p.m. Hosted by Chad Maier

An alternative radio show that plays underground independent music with an emphasis on bands that have or should have played at CBGBs, the famous New York underground club. Plays a bit of local music, some alternative classics and the latest indie rock.

THE PRAIRIE MONK

Sundays 11:30 a.m.-noon Hosted by Dave Monk

Natural and cultural landscapes with emphasis on the local scene, interspersed with music with an environmental theme.

SAVE THOSE RECEIPTS

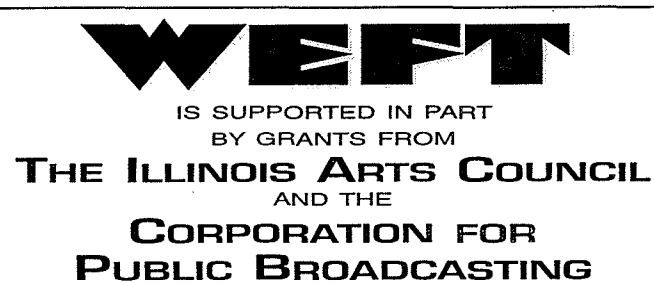
Two area stores are offering opportunities for WEFT and other local non-profit groups to earn some additional cash to support operations. Sponsored by Meijer and County Market stores, the programs operate in slightly different ways, but both involve redeeming register receipts for profit.

With the Meijer program, friends of WEFT are encouraged to save all receipts issued between April 4 and July 2, and turn them in to the station. At the end of the collection period, Meijer will donate 5 percent of the total dollar amount of the receipts - up to \$5,000 - to WEFT.

WEFT also will participate in County Market's continuous "Community Dollars" program, which distributes a total of \$2,000 each month to local non-profits. At the end of each month, WEFT will turn in all receipts received at the station. In return, WEFT will receive a check for the station's proportional

share of the \$2,000.

By participating in these programs, WEFT is not encouraging you to shop at either store. But if you do anyway, just save your receipts and encourage your friends to do the same. It's an easy, painless way to help support audio diversity in Champaign-Urbana and surrounding communities.



Our bonsai absolutely GROOVE
to the multi-faceted tunes on

WEFT
90.1 FM
Champaign, Illinois

Music is a
breath of life,
support your
local musicians

THE PAWN SHOP • Rantoul, Ill. • 893-3280

IT'S DE-LIGHTFUL, IT'S DE-LOVELY ... IT'S DEMENT

By Melissa Mitchell

"... listen to this music, this Iris DeMent. It's good for you."

- John Prine

The first time I ever heard of Iris DeMent, I was packed - cheek to jowl to lawn chair - onto a shuttle bus with a happy crowd of bluegrass and acoustic music enthusiasts. We were on the last leg of our journeys from all compass points to the 1993 Merle Watson Festival in Wilksboro, N.C.

The trip from the Holiday Inn parking lot to the festival site couldn't have taken more than three or four minutes, but in that short time, I swapped recent-concert-experience stories with a woman seated beside me. I gushed about a Laurie Lewis/Tom Rozum show I'd attended the previous month at the Cactus Cafe in Austin. She traded her praise for this amazing new singer/songwriter she had just heard - Iris DeMent.

Iris who? I knew if I didn't write the name down immediately, I'd have a tough time extricating it from the gray matter at a later date. Two years later, I couldn't forget it if I tried. Shortly after returning from MerleFest, I stumbled upon DeMent's "Infamous Angel" at a local used-record store. Since I'm inclined to live dangerously when it comes to feeding my music habit, I laid my cash down and didn't look back.

The first thing that struck me about DeMent was her inimitable voice and original vocal styling. It's fresh. It's honest. It's homegrown and unpretentious. And although the music has a definite country/gospel/old-timey accent, it just wasn't like anything I'd ever heard before. In interviews, DeMent freely admits that she's never considered herself to be a particularly talented singer. Not that she hasn't always loved to sing. She grew up in a religious - and musical - family that placed a higher premium on becoming a preacher or a singer than it did on earning a college degree. Some of her fondest girlhood memories are of her mother allowing her to crank up the phonograph so the pair could sing along with tunes by Jimmie Rogers and the Carter Family.

When she eventually moved to Nashville and began to seriously pursue a career in music, DeMent wasn't particularly interested in becoming a recording artist. In fact, she regarded

herself as way too shy to make it as a performer. She also didn't put much stock in her guitar-playing ability. Her main concern was writing songs and figuring out how to get them recorded. But, as fortune would have it, audiences and producers responded not only to her songwriting - which can hold its own with the likes of John Prine or Nanci Griffith - but were drawn to her unique vocal style as well.

While I'm certainly no expert on songwriting, I know what I like. And I like much of what DeMent has produced so far on her two Warner Brothers releases ("Infamous Angel," 1992, and "My Life," 1994). My favorite songs - by any artist - are musically simple and uncluttered by unnecessary instrumentation and superfluous noise, songs that allow the emotions and the meaning to come through in soft and subtle ways. Sometimes, they're the kind of songs that - through some magical combination of music and lyrics - speak to something very deep within one's soul and elicit the chill-down-the-spine effect. Other times, they're the songs that you may hear 19 times, and on the 20th listening, something new jumps out and trips you.

Iris DeMent's songs can do both. I'd listened to "Sweet is the Memory," the opening song on "My Life," a number of times, before the understated elegance of one particular line grabbed my attention: "An arm's just an arm till it's wrapped round the shoulder." Maybe it's just the way she phrases it, or maybe it's just me, but, geez, what a simple, yet poignant, observation. Similar treasures are tucked away throughout her work.

The best song on the album - for my money, anyway, is a different species of song altogether. No sneaker, "No Time To Cry," belongs to that other category of hits-you-where-you-live, goose-bumpers. If you've read your liner notes - and you should; DeMent's autobiographical, storybook-style notes are as moving as her songs - you already know that this song refers to the death of her father. So, it comes as no surprise that she's going to be tugging at everybody's heartstrings with this one. But this song transcends unabashed mush-raking by offering some solid observations about life at the end of the 20th century. Who among us in this fast-paced, info-intensive, telecommu-

More DeMent on page six

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