

Cultural Forum arranges a variety of events for students

By Sarah Kitchen
Of the Emerald

In the past year the Cultural Forum has brought a variety of concerts, lectures and films to the University, each event under the direction of seven student directors.

The forum has presented or co-sponsored events like the Schlafly/Weddington debate on women's issues, the Northwest Film and Video Festival, the Willamette Valley Folk Festival, Kenny Rogers, The Violent Femmes, REM and the Crazy 8's.

Bill Ullman, Heritage music director, brings music to campus that has an ethnic or folk background. The most well-known event was the annual Willamette Valley Folk Festival.

Ullman presents bands ranging from local groups to large, well-known performers such as Robert Cray, who will be playing at the EMU Ballroom on Sunday, and the Neville Brothers, who performed at the folk festival last year, Ullman said.

When deciding which groups to bring to the University, Ullman said he tries to look for an element of quality in the group.

"I look for top-notch folk music players who have been doing it for a long time and who are a part of the folk background and know a lot about it," Ullman said. "I try to stay away from imitators."

Ullman said he believes part of his responsibility as Heritage music director is to bring bands to the University that will not only entertain but also educate students.

"The Cultural Forum is given money by the school to educate the students, so I try to make sure the groups I bring are educational, beneficial and entertaining at the same time," Ullman said.

The festival, which started in 1971, was never intended to be a large event, and when it began, performers would often play for free. However, over the years the festival grew and became more expensive to present.

"Back then, folk music was cheap, but now you have to pay

Forum crew works to give students quality concerts, films and lectures

more for a performer. Some charge between \$5,000 and \$6,000 per performance," Ullman said.

Chris Metzler, one of the contemporary music directors along with Hildy Casey, said his program is experiencing financial trouble after the cancellation of the General Public concert due to lack of ticket sales, which was scheduled at the Lane County Fairgrounds.

General Public was booked in Eugene because Metzler believed it would be the type of band that students at the University would want to see, he said.

"When the English Beat played here five years ago, they sold out; however, we only sold about 160 tickets before the show for General Public, so we had to cancel the show. We had to pay them half of their performance fees, but if we had gone through with the show, we would have lost \$10,000," Metzler said.

Although REM sold out when they played in the Ballroom fall term, the concert ended up losing money, he said. The fact the show lost money is not as important as the fact that students were able to see a band they had expressed an interest in seeing, he said.

Metzler said he chooses bands for the University by looking at the college music charts and by a poll that the forum took last year asking students which bands they would like to hear.

Options for places where the forum can hold concerts are decreasing, Metzler said.

"We can't afford to do concerts at Mac Court anymore because they charge too much. Also, they will not allow us to bring some groups there," Metzler said.

"We were looking into bringing U2 to campus in the spring, but Mac Court said they didn't want that type of band playing there, so when we do use Mac Court, we are limited to a certain type of music, such as a country group," he said.

The newly remodeled Ballroom is too fragile for some shows, Metzler said. Also, the new acoustics are not meant for amplified music.

Because of the fragile condition of the furniture, the EMU dining room is also off-limits to concerts that involve the furniture being moved. As a result, lesser-known groups may not be brought to the school as often as they had been in the past.

The forum is an EMU program, which receives Incidental Fee Committee money each year. The money received by the forum is divided between the seven program directors, who cover six areas. The areas are film/video, contemporary issues, performing arts, heritage music, contemporary music and the events crew.

Jim Carlton, the events crew coordinator, oversees the security, the loading crew, the film crew and the poster crew.

Although each concert presents its own unique problems, students at the University are generally cooperative with security, Carlton said.

"We had 25 people working at REM, and 7,000 fans, so we really relied on the cooperation of the audience to help our the security crew, since realistically, if the fans had wanted to get up on the stage there would have been nothing 25 people could do to prevent that," Carlton said.

Sean Axmaker, film/video director, puts together the film schedule for the forum as well as arranging filmmakers and authors to come to campus to

talk about their films.

This term, Axmaker is working on a film/video show that will be held in May where students are given a chance to present the films they have made.

Axmaker said it usually takes three months to put a schedule together.

Another project Axmaker hopes to have started by spring term is a film journal, to be published quarterly by the forum.

"This would be a serious journal which will be written by students at the University, although it will not be limited only to student writers," Axmaker said.

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