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Cockstock organizers to improve tradition

LARRY WILLIAMS Staff Writer

Some people remember the Cockstocks of years past. Most don't.

In the past, the annual event, which was organized by the Carolina Program Union, drew a passing thought.

However, because of some large amounts of work and determination by the new Carolina Productions, Friday's Cockstock promises to be the best yet.

Featuring Capricorn recording artist Widespread Panic and local talents Sourwood Honey, Shades of Grey and Mountain Express, this event at the Carolina Coliseum could prove to spawn bigger and better acts in the future.

Vance McNabb, concert commissioner for CP, said the sacrifices to put this year's version of Cockstock together were made with the future in mind.

"We wanted to get a foothold in the Coliseum for the possibilities of future major acts," McNabb said. "USC students have never been able to put on a big show because it's extremely hard unless you get a six-month jump on planning for it."

McNabb said this year's Cockstock is unique because it will be run almost exclusively by USC students.

"Everything from the stage hands, security, ticket takers, hospitality was done by USC students," he said. "All of the publicity was done by CP. We even cut the commercials (which run on Fox 102 and Rock 93.5) ourselves ... even down to the bands, most of them are students as well."

McNabb said he believes the best is yet to come.

"We're getting a foothold, so to speak," he said. "The same agent that's with Widespread is the agent who handles REM as well, so that could turn out even better."

Widespread Panic hits Columbia!

Tirelessly touring the United States for the tenth consecutive year, the six-piece band known as Widespread Panic will roll into Frank McGuire Arena Friday to headline 1996's Cockstock.

Mixing a rich form of rock, blues and country, Panic is on the first leg of their Spring Tour, which began March 22 in Little Rock, Ark.

Panic has developed a loyal fan base throughout the nation, and even more so in the Southeast.

Formed in 1986, Panic originally consisted of David Schools on bass, Michael Houser on lead guitar, John Bell on rhythm and lead vocals, and Todd Nance on drums.

The four-member band, who attended the University of Georgia, began playing at local clubs around Athens, including the 40-Watt Club and the now-famous Georgia Theatre.

Those lucky enough to own tapes from the early days of Panic's metamorphosis are able to hear the birth of the classics that are now Panic staples.

By 1988, Panic had enjoyed enough success to record their first CD, which was later entitled "Space Wrangler." The CD, containing such songs as "Traveling Light" and "Driving Song," sold well, and Panic is now touring the Southeast, as well as performing a few stints in the Midwest.

Those from Columbia might remember when Panic played at the old Greenstreets or the Cock Pit to crowds of about 50 people.

In 1991, Panic picked up the fifth member of the band,

percussionist Domingo Ortiz, in time to record their second CD, "Mom's Kitchen." The CD contained such tracks as "Rock," "Love Tractor" and "I'm Not Alone."

In "Mom's Kitchen," Panic explored a more aggressive approach, as their songs became more stylistic in sound and texture.

By this time, Panic had earned the reputation of being a non-stop, tirelessly touring group. Often playing for 7 to 10 days straight, the band was paying their dues—and people were beginning to notice.

In 1992, Panic added keyboardist John Hermann to their lineup, and the puzzle was complete.

Hermann, with his ragtime style of playing, had toured with the band before, but became an official member in 1993 when Panic recorded their third CD, "Everyday." "Everyday" was a step up in production from the prior two releases, as

the sound quality and the attention to detail was shown like never before.

Containing songs ranging from the blues number "Papa's Home" to the experimental "Diner," "Everyday" sold in record numbers, allowing Panic's sound to receive some radio airplay.

In 1994, the band returned to its home turf of Athens to record its latest CD, "Ain't Life Grand," on which they

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By Larry Williams,
Staff Writer



Photo special The Gamecock

David Schools, Michael Houser, John Hermann, John Bell, Todd Nance and Domingo Ortiz make up the Athens based band, Widespread Panic, who will be headlining Cockstock this Friday night.

reunited with producer John Keane, who worked on Panic's debut.

"Ain't Life Grand" combined the most fully realized songwriting in Panic's history with the trademark improvisations fans had come to cherish.

All the tracks on "Ain't Life Grand" were recorded live with no splices and virtually no sampling. The band was so well focused going into the project that three of the songs—"Raise the Roof," "Fishwater" and "Jack"—all came from the original demos.

Panic is planning on releasing a live

CD in hopes of conveying the live experience to their fans, or in many cases, future fans.

Pondering the past 10 years, Bell said the work done in the studio has been a reflection of the progressing maturity of the band.

"I feel good about the progression of our albums because every one has been more of a group effort," Bell said. "More of the 'bandness' is coming out. It's another year; we're a little older. What we do—improvisation in a rock-and-roll, R&B format—we've been doing a lot, and we're

getting better."

As for life on the road, Bell said living many people's dreams isn't all fun and games.

"There's such a mystery to being in a band, playing on the road and making albums," Bell said.

"To maintain that mystery is to sustain the source of power. For a lot of people, that mystery isn't comfortable; it's good to keep the freedom that comes with the mystery, because you never know what's going to happen next," Bell said.

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