



Winter 1-28-1997

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Recommended Citation

Field, Kim, "Ain't Helen Female Jazz, Folk, Blues, Pop, and Rock Group to Play Illinois Wesleyan's Blue" (1997). *News and Events*. 6742.
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January 28, 1997

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Local

Ain't Helen

Female Jazz, Folk, Blues, Pop, and Rock Group to Play Illinois Wesleyan's Blue Moon Coffeehouse, Jan. 31

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--Jazz, blues, folk, pop, and rock group Ain't Helen will perform at IWU on Jan. 31.

Ain't Helen, named after singer/guitarist K. C. Phelps's Aunt Helen, will perform at 8 p.m. at the Blue Moon Coffeehouse at the Main Lounge of IWU's Memorial Student Center, 104 E. University St., Bloomington. Admission free is and open to the public. Doors open at 7 p.m..

This trio of women has been together for less than two years, but already has a large following, according to the Cincinnati City Beat newspaper. Phelps and Tracy Walker, the other singer/guitarist, met at an arts festival and performed together for two years before Aimee R. Huber hired them for a party. The group soon became a trio with Huber as the new drummer.

Ain't Helen is not the typical women's folk band. "People see us and they are like, 'You're women and you have guitars,' and they automatically assume that it's a folk thing," Walker said.

The group's first compact disc, *30 Hours* has eight original songs including one by the original Aunt Helen. *30 Hours* made it to the Cincinnati City Beat's top 40 CD releases of 1996. Ain't Helen has played at various venues from coffeehouses and colleges to festivals and parties through out the Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky area.

The group likes to get the audience involved in the show. During one of their songs, "I Hear You Knock," they pass out about 25 percussion instruments to the audience.

Ain't Helen's songs offer something different. Some have a drum beat which carries the melody, while others only use guitar and bass. On occasions, Phelps will add the sweet sound of her guitar. Walker accounts for these differences by saying, "In bands, if you have one writer and one producer things tend to have the same kind of

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Ain't Helen to Perform at IWU's Blue Moon Cofeehouse/2

sounds because it's coming from the same source. We're all three coming from totally different backgrounds. And this being our first project, we don't have a lot of influence necessarily from any particular community or group.

Even though the group is based in Cincinnati, Phelps is the only one to call it home. Walker and Huber live in nearby areas. All of them grew up studying music. Walker and Phelps have been playing in different types of bands ever since junior high school, while Huber didn't have a drum set until a few years ago. They also have full time jobs: Walker works at a marketing organization, Phelps works at a deli and grocery and Huber tends bar in Cincinnati.

IWU founded in 1850, enrolls 1,900 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The \$4.6 million Center for the Liberal Arts--a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities, business and economics, and interdisciplinary studie's faculty--is slated to open next August. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, classification that places it among 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News and World Report* rankings. *Barron's Profiles of American Colleges*, another respected college guide, rated IWU "highly competitive(+)" in its latest edition.