



# THE SWEET TOOTH THEATER

presents

## *MAMBO GRIS GRIS*

Performing Zudeco, Cha Cha, Merengue, Salsa & more.

Dessert & Beverage

Door Prizes

Cowan Center for the Arts

Saturday February 11, 2006

7:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M.

Tickets \$15.00 A Person

A Franklin County Arts Guild Fund Raiser

For Tickets, Reservations, or

Information Call Pat Underwood 962-2356

Mambo Gris Gris. The concept might seem far-fetched – a six-piece band with accordion, congas and saxophone playing music from New Orleans and old Mexico – but the execution is genuine and enthusiastic.

Mark Torstenson had wanted to put this band together for more than ten years, ever since stumbling into the Maple Leaf during Mardi Gras in 1991. The Iguanas were playing a lot of Nortena covers, so he requested some Flaco Jimenez, "Ay Te Dejo in San Antonio." And they played it. Years later, at a family gathering, Mark and his younger brother Eric were cajoled into playing together. What song did these Norwegian white boys play? "Ay Te Dejo in San Antonio" in perfect Spanish.

When Eric and his wife, Amy, settled in Huntsville a few years ago, the door was opened for Mark to build his dream band around Eric's vocal, accordion and keyboard talents (he also plays the flute). Mark had already found his conga player, José Matienzo, years earlier. They've played together since 1997 in Latin Rhythms, a local band specializing in salsa and merenge. Funky Curtis Barkley, an instructor at Mark's store (The Fret Shop), bounced in as the bassist, and veteran Huntsville drummer Mike Dendy signed on behind the kit. Things went well the first couple of weeks, but if you know anything about The Iguanas or Los Lobos, you can immediately see what's missing from this line up: The horns! Enter Steve Motz, sax instructor at UAH. The band was complete.

After forming the band, and before getting that first gig, the group had to decide on a name. The choice sums up the blend of influences, provides a little mysticism and doesn't cause too many pronunciation problems: "Mambo" for the Latin dance style and "Gris Gris" for the New Orleans influence (gris gris is a voodoo charm and the title of a Dr. John album). While the musical styles might seem incongruous to the uninitiated, there are historic similarities in the rhythm and instrumentation of New Orleans piano music and Latin folk songs.

"If you listen to Professor Longhair, he was one of the first guys to incorporate the rhumba beat into a stride piano style, and that became the New Orleans sound," Mark explains. "The rhumba is 3-plus-2 or a 2-plus-3 beat, rather than the straight 4 beat of most American music." Oooo-kay. ...

The explanation José gives is a little more user-friendly: "Mambo Gris Gris plays certain songs from various artists that capture the essence of the Latino heritage mixed with American influence. Having the sounds of the accordion, flute, classic guitar, bass and

congas gives it the Latin feel. You throw in a good, smooth saxoph  
one from the jazzy side and a great drummer adding a little bit of  
rock & roll - you got yourself a great sounding band."

The Franklin County Arts Guild thanks Dr. Jere Creed for making a dream come true, the Cowan Center For The Arts.

Thank You Dr. Creed

#### Donations

Mitchell's Florist & Gifts..... the beautiful flowers

#### Door Prizes

Pancho's Mexican Restaurant.....gift certificate

Marlyne Davison - In Home Art.....wall hanging

Shear Class Hair Design.....gift certificate

City Limits Roadhouse.....gift certificates

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