

UCSD presents the "Copasetics," tap dance at its best

October 28, 1985

UCSD PRESENTS THE COPASETICS, TAP DANCE AT ITS BEST

The Copasetics, a group of five tap dancers with credentials from the Cotton Club and Casino de Paris, will appear at 8 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 17, in the Mandeville Auditorium at the University of California, San Diego.

The members of this group trace their careers back to Harlem in the 1930s where they brought this Black-American art form to its peak.

The Copasetic dancers have worked in the United States and Europe with such stars as Ethel Waters, Lena Horne, Sammy Davis and Josephine Baker. They have danced to the music of legendary greats such as Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong.

The Copasetics are the Harlem Globetrotters of tap. It's just them and the music. Honi Coles, tall and elegant, does a rapid-fire rhythm dance. Buster Brown snaps out of a spin into a crashing split to the floor. Bubba Gaines jumps rope up-tempo in a storm of taps. Then, joined by Phace Roberts and Charles Cook, they swing into a routine of classic steps like the "buck and wing," "over the top," and "through the trenches."

Tap is dance, tap is history, according to hoofers who call it "story dancing," a nod to its origins of more than 200 years ago. African drums were outlawed in this country in 1793 after their use to relay messages started a slave revolt. Slaves then added a patting and rhythmic slapping of the body to their circle dances. This movement mingled with the Irish jig, Lancashire waltz clog and Virginia folk dances, to become tap.

During the twenties and thirties, speakeasys and night clubs across the country played host to these dancers. After World War II, the clubs all but vanished, and the popularity of tap gave way to swing. Groups like The Copasetics have kept their art form alive, and are appearing with increasing frequency on collegiate and festival circuits.

Tickets to this performance are: general admission, \$12; senior citizens, \$10; all students, \$8, and are available from the UCSD Box Office and Ticketmaster.

(October 28, 1985) Media Contact: Ruth Baily, 452-4090

Public Information: Alixandra Williams, 452-3120