

At UT-Austin, a New Center for American Music

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IT'S ONLY ROCK 'N' ROLL: A new Center for American Music at the University of Texas at Austin will be more blues than Bach, more rock 'n' roll than Ravel. The university will hire at least a half-dozen new professors for the center, which will also have its own record label.

The center is part of an effort by the School of Music to catapult itself into the ranks of the country's top programs.

American music hasn't gotten much respect in the academic music world. "It is easier to find recordings of music from 15th-century Europe than it is to find recordings from 19th-century America," says **Elizabeth B.**

Crist, an assistant professor of musicology at Texas. "There has been this emphasis on great composers, and the feeling is that you can't be great unless you've been dead for a long time -- or unless you were German."

Ms. Crist, associate chair of the center, says more graduate students around the country are specializing in American music. The center has a course this academic year on the history of music in Texas, and Delta blues will be taught this spring. Many other musical genres also will be part of the curriculum.

The center will encourage the school's music ensembles to perform American music, and then record and distribute it under a university label. "Despite the fact that in standard

textbooks an instructor can go to Page 155 and there are three pages on some American master from mid-19th century, there is no recorded performance," explains **David P. Neumeier**, a professor of music theory and chair of the center.

B. Glenn Chandler, director of the music school, says he hopes to hire the first two new faculty members by this fall: a specialist in popular music, and an expert in recording technology. Five or six other hires will be made the following year.

The music school has also raised \$4.1-million toward a \$6-million endowment to support a string quartet in residence. About 15 quartets have expressed interest so far, and the school hopes to select a group by this spring.