

T *SAN DIEGO*
ROUBADOOR
 Alternative country, Americana, roots,
 folk, gospel, and bluegrass music news



February 2004

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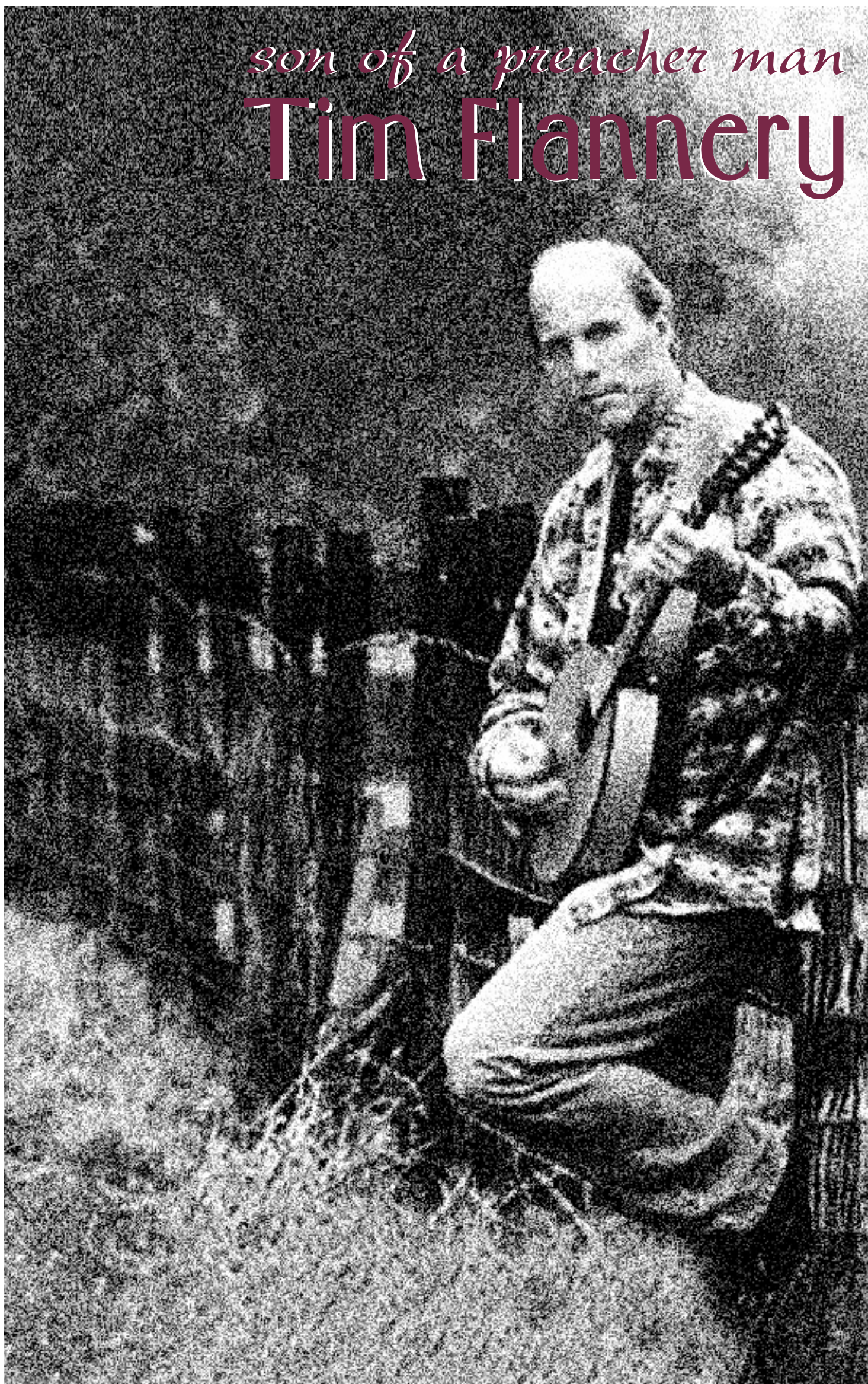
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PHIL HARMONIC SEZ:

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To promote, encourage, and provide an alternative voice for the great local music that is generally overlooked by the mass media; namely the genres of folk, country, roots, Americana, gospel, and bluegrass. To entertain, educate, and bring together players, writers, and lovers of these forms; to explore their foundations; and to expand the audience for these types of music.

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Dear Troubadour,

WHAT AN AMAZING ARTICLE ON DAVID MALDONADO!!!

I was so pleased to open the latest issue of the *San Diego Troubadour* and read your review of our local flamenco phenom.

I was hoping to obtain permission to reproduce and distribute your write up on David, as well as feature the article on flamenco web sites.

Timm J. Dietschak

Hey Folks,

I just picked up January's issue of the very cool *San Diego Troubadour* music newspaper. Had to send an e-note to say thanks for a little blues news . . . we really do appreciate that out here on the street!

You may remember my contacting you in mid-December singing praise for your paper and the work you are doing out there, but requesting a little more on the San Diego blues scene. Wow, talk about some amazing response time!

We absolutely loved the cover article by Robert Woerheide on a cat who is truly one of San Diego's most talented singer/songwriter/

performers . . . Earl Thomas (if you haven't seen him in concert yet, do it soon — you'll be glad you did!).

Commentary in regards to the Skip James *Rare and Unreleased* CD review by Mr. Lou Curtiss also gives us all something else to look forward to. Leave it to Lou to know the inside scoop when it comes to the obscure . . . great record store too.

Thanks again. Live more in 2004. Chet Cannon

Dear SD Troubadour,

Just wanted to thank you for featuring my friends Earl Thomas on your cover this month, and for the story on Dave Maldonado. Earl sang duets with me on several of my CDs in addition to being a wonderful family friend. Dave and I went to college together. They are both so talented and deserve every success.

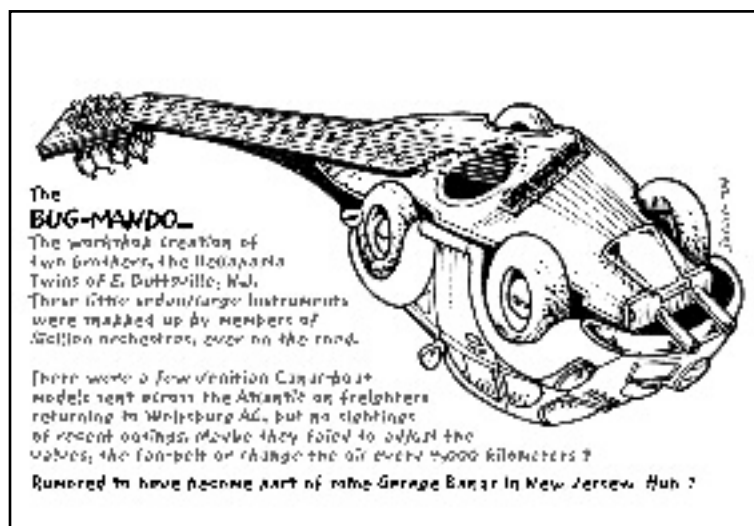
I also wanted to thank you for your article about The Liggins Brothers by Bart Mendoza. I met Joe Liggins in 1981 when he played at a friends wedding in Malibu. He let me sit in that day with the Honeydrippers. We sang the duet he wrote "Daddy on my mind." He was impressed when I knew that the girl who sang with him on the song was also named Candy (Candy Rivers). He also played a song that I wrote called "Club of the Foolish Hearts." I sang it in his ear and he played it

perfectly the very first time.

Joe lived in Compton then, and he gave me his home phone number. I called him semi frequently over the next few years and he invited me to a few weddings that the Honeydrippers were playing in the L.A. area, always quick to invite me to sing a few songs with him. He was a kind hearted, humble man and he always had a big, friendly smile. I was very sad when he passed away in 1987, but I feel honored to have met and actually sang with him. When I became a stripper from 1983 - 1986, I only danced to Joe Liggins songs. "Got a Right to Cry" and "Pink Champagne" were big crowd pleasers and Joe seemed tickled at my choice of material. Other dancers were using Donna Summers' "Love to Love you Baby," but for me, Joe Liggins' music was as swingin' and sensual as you could get.

Congratulations on a great article and a fine newspaper.

Sincerely,
Candy Kane



Artwork sent in by veteran folk musician Jon Adams. Catch him at the Adams Avenue Roots Festival, May 1-2.

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Welcome, Sven-Erik Seaholm



The *San Diego Troubadour* is happy to welcome Sven-Erik Seaholm as a technical writer

who will grace our pages with a regular column, beginning with this issue.

In case you hadn't noticed, Sven's name appears in the credits of dozens of locally produced CDs, having contributed his expertise in the areas of production, recording, mastering, composing, arranging, performing, and/or writing. As a producer, he has won several San Diego Music Awards in the categories of Best Local Recording, Best Blues Album, and Best Acoustic Album. If that's not enough, he is also a talented graphic artist who provides design services for print and for the Web.

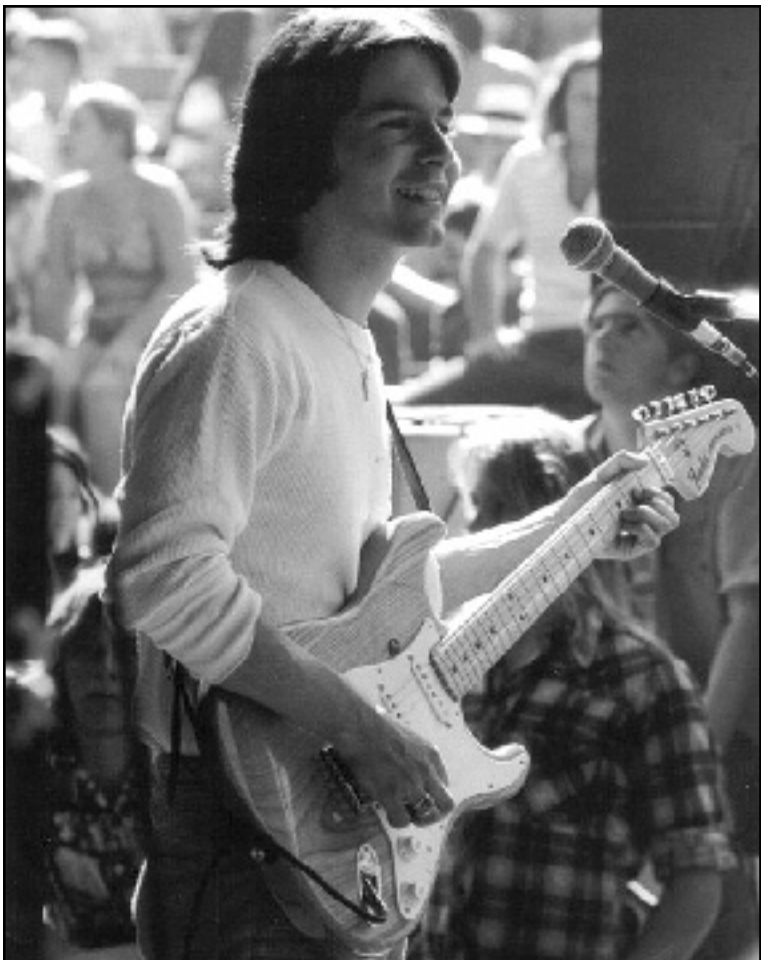
See page 10.

WRITE TO US!

We want to hear from you! Send your comments, feedback, and suggestions to: sdtroubadour@yahoo.com or to San Diego Troubadour, P.O. Box 164, La Jolla, CA 92038-0164.



full circle



Mark Intravaia in the '70s

by Bart Mendoza

Fans of local road-house rocker Eve Selis have likely been impressed by her guitarist and song-writing partner, Marc Twang, aka Marc Intravaia. One of the most gifted players to emerge from San Diego's music community, his craft is a mix of understated playing and virtuoso picking, all meant to elevate the song, the singer, and the melody, something that seems to be a lost art these days.

"I was raised around music," says Intravaia from his North County home. "My dad was a jazz musician, Jack Teagarden. He played with Louis Armstrong and all these wonderful people back in the '40s and '50s. I had a very musical, artsy family. I originally tried playing trumpet like him, when I was in the fourth grade, but before that, as soon as I saw the Beatles at age seven or eight, I had to have a guitar. I started playing professionally by the time I was 13."

In 1970, the teenaged Intravaia already had his own group, Head County, which featured Rick "That Thing You Do" Elias on bass. The members of the group who would become Listen had already come together. "We all attended Kearney High, [but] I think the group was formed in the late '60s by Dennis Bales (keys, guitar), Rick Telli (bass), and Tom Boyd (drums), and was (originally) called The Friends of Melvin," says Intravaia. "Gary Pluchino (sax) joined them a year later."

Intravaia actually met the band members through an unusual family connection. "It's interesting to note that they were all music students of my dad at Taft Junior High and I met them through him one day in 1970," he remembers. "My dad would let them practice in his music room on the weekends. I was invited to bring my group down [and] we had a little battle of the bands that day. They would play a song and then we would and so on." Though they were a bit older than Intravaia, their musical camaraderie was instant. "They were the class of '72 and I was '74. When their lead guitarist, Tom Costa, quit, I was invited to join them in the summer of '73 at the age of 17."

"We definitely weren't bluesy," notes Intravaia. "We started out as a progressive rock band. When I joined them, we were listening to Yes, Emerson Lake and

Palmer, and so on. Those were the cover songs we were doing and then we were writing our own songs along the same lines. There was another band called Horsefeathers, and we were kind of along that line. We were doing the art rock thing and kind of just transformed more into pop rock, although we were never a hard rock band. We had a sax player, so it always remained heavily on the pop side of things." Later on, the band would branch out to play the hits of the day, from rock to disco. "Early on, it was about originals and later it became whatever the hits were. What we were doing musically toward the end was specifically America, Loggins and Messina, Springsteen, and the Beach Boys. It was a lot of pop stuff."

Almost as soon as he had left high school, the group began to experience major local success, beginning a string of appearances on the much missed *Homegrown* local artist compilations produced by KGB radio. "The first [was] in '74 with a song called 'Where is San Diego?'" recalls Intravaia. "I can't remember how we came about the idea to enter, but we cut the song on my 18th birthday at Studio West, and Bill Blue was the engineer. I felt so big time. The first time we heard it on the radio I felt like I was ten feet off the ground, and my mom was very proud. She passed away the following year so that memory is very precious to me." They also had local television exposure from the song. "We were on a TV show called *Homegrown and Greene*, (hosted by local TV personality Harold Greene) in '74. It was shot in Presidio Park. They did it all at Presidio Park and we were right in front of the mission. We did 'Where is San Diego?' Denny Bales was wearing a cape, and Tom Boyd had a big afro. My hair was down to my waist," Intravaia says, laughing at the memories. "We were on subsequent *Homegrown* television shows followed through 1978 on channel 10." "Where Is San Diego?" also appeared on the 1978 *Homegrown* "Best Of."

1975 saw the group's "City of Love" included on that year's *Homegrown* album, while "Never Walk Away" was chosen in 1976. Notably that same year the group decided to release their own record, which resulted in the highly col-

Listen: It's Mark Intravaia

lectible 45 "Melanie"/"Little Black Book." Intravaia wrote the flip. "I was more into three-minute pop songs, while Dennis, the group's other writer, was more into ballads and still kind of influenced by Yes and all those kinds of people. He was more into songs with many parts, like a suite or something like that, but in a good way not a bad way." An off-the-cuff reference to Yes' *Tales From a Topographic Ocean* jars a memory. In a scene right out of television's *That 70's Show*, we had that Yes album cover on the wall at our band house in Serra Mesa. We had somebody paint that album cover in black-light paint."

A bemused Intravaia returns to the single. "We were having lots of success with the *Homegrown* albums, we were doing lots of concerts at the Balboa Bowl and various clubs around San Diego like the Halcyon and Park Place. And it was suggested that we record up in L.A. and do our own single as a way to make the major labels take notice," he says. "It was a bare bones thing with a tiny budget, but it was our first single so we were thrilled." Considered by many to be a classic of Beatles-esque pop, albeit with impressive keyboard flourishes, the tune was bootlegged in 2002. The band's best known work however was of a more anonymous nature. "While we wrote and recorded lots of [original music], mainly thru '77, we [also] did all of the musical KGB logos, courtesy of Rick Liebert. Local response to the single was great, though. KGB was playing it and so was KPRI. We did better with the *Homegrown* stuff, but my memory of that was that we always sold them well at shows [but] we didn't get any national airplay that I know of; it was all just local." Besides the group's appearances on *Homegrown*, the single was the only other item released by the band, though they were prolific studio pros. "We would do cassette tapes that we would either give to fans or sell at shows."

1977 was the year that members of Listen placed three cuts on a *Homegrown* album. They backed Brad Cahill on the classic "San Diego Smiles," Rick Telli's synth classic "City in Motion," and the amazing soft pop "Can't Go Back to Cardiff" with Intravaia, Boyd, Bales, and Telli joining Gary Hyde. They had built up a huge local fan base and had major radio support.

Unfortunately the group never toured or even shared the bill with a major act. "We never opened for anyone of note though we headlined or co-headlined a few big concerts at Balboa Bowl. The farthest we ever went was Yuma, Arizona. Maybe that's what kept the band from doing anything. We had a local following but never developed it outside of San Diego." Almost as an afterthought Intravaia notes, "We did have a few run-ins. In '74 we had a band house where we rehearsed and recorded, and one day we took a break and wandered into the living room. Dennis had a grand piano there. I could hear this amazing voice and beautiful playing. We turned the corner and there was Gary Puckett at Denny's piano. It turned out that he was a friend of a friend and was just hanging out waiting for his pal to come by. Our place was a meeting place/hangout for lots of people back then. We also jammed with Chester Thompson in '78 when he was with Tower of Power. He stopped in at the club where we were playing and we did a few tunes together. [We] jammed with Warren Haynes of the Allman Brothers around the same time."

Intravaia also reveals how Listen neatly dovetails into one of San Diego's

greatest, and true, urban legends — that of Beach Boy Brian Wilson roaming the streets of San Diego in the late seventies. "Our drummer Tom met and jammed with Brian Wilson the same year," Intravaia explains. "A mutual friend named Frank Niska spotted Brian in Mission Beach wandering down the street and gave him a lift to the Siers Brothers house. He tried to contact me but I was in Catalina. But he did get in touch with Tom [and] they all met and played 'Little Deuce Coupe' and 'Darlin.' Brian cleared up our confusion about the words in the chorus . . . 'O, keep dreamin' it darlin'." We were doing the song in Listen around that time and couldn't quite make them out."

Around this time the band had an audition with Curb Records in Los



Angeles as well as a coveted spot at the Troubadour in Hollywood, arranged by KGB. "Both KGB and KPRI gave us a few shows with interviews and music features," he says. "Local radio was so great back then, I can't imagine getting the same treatment nowadays, although the current KPRI is probably the closest thing to that." Despite a strong fan base and major radio support, the group's days were numbered. "The band just ran its course. We were all pretty young and did a lot of growing up together. We sort of transformed from an original music band as teenagers and started turning more into a cover band and just making a living at it, which is kind of what broke the band up. I think there was some frustration within the group because we weren't really progressing. We tried to crack L.A. and then Dennis moved to L.A., and that's specifically what broke the band up. Listen was together through the '70s and we were all very tight, but as you know . . . all good things . . . I still see a few of the guys once in a while."

Leaving Listen, he soon hooked up with his former bassist. "I joined the Rick Elias Band in '79 after the group broke up and stayed for two years. We opened for Bob Marley and it was only our third gig

together. Bob Sale was the drummer and I still work with him." Notably, the pair performs on the group's sole release, the "Man Alone"/"I Break Down" single. Next he put together a new group with former Listen drummer Tom Boyd, but the eighties would prove to be a tumultuous time for Intravaia. "Tom and I formed the Heroes in '81, [but I] left that band a few years later and took over the guitar player slot in the Monroes for about a year. Then I moved to L.A. and rejoined Rick for a while. We recorded a record for the Frontline label in '89 called *Rick Elias and the Confessions*." He was soon on the move again. "In 1990 I joined a band in LA fronted by Brian Ray [Etta James' former band leader who is now with Paul McCartney], but I got tired of starving and rejoined the Heroes in '91. It would prove to be a fortuitous move. "The Heroes played an important part of my life in that Eve and I started writing together in '91 when we were both in the group and have been working together ever since."

These days Intravaia focuses squarely on original music, but over the past few years he has also played guitar for a number of touring acts, not only taking great care to reproduce the sounds as recorded but also performing them with a real passion. His solo during B.J. Thomas' "Hooked on a Feeling" at last December's Carols By Candlelight concert deservedly earned an ovation from the crowd. And it all goes back to those early days with Listen. "One of the first songs I learned at the band house in '73 was America's 'Ventura Highway.' For some reason I learned both the guitar intro parts in harmony, so that's the way our band played it, not realizing that it was two guitars. I was only 17! Thirty years later I was playing it with America at the Carols show and Gerry (Beckly) was very surprised and happy that I could continue to play both parts after he dropped out in the first verse and played rhythm. He told me I was the first guitarist they worked with that could play the song all the way through like the record."

Sadly during last October's fires, Listen's extensive archives were lost, including hundreds of photos, flyers, log books, diaries, all master tapes, and, saddest of all, those Channel 10 TV shows. If you have copies of any of these items, especially those TV broadcasts, please contact us through the *San Diego Troubadour* and we'll let the band know. Any help is greatly appreciated.



Intravaia today (third from left) with the Eve Selis band

full circle



Photo: Bill Richardson



Recordially, Lou Curtiss

I Have a Dream, Too!!!

I'm sitting here on Martin Luther King's birthday, thinking about dreams that are far less noble than the one he had, but considering what I've been up to, and into, for most of these past 40 years or so, I think perhaps they are worth talking about.

I've been putting together the music for festivals in San Diego since 1967. Some of them have gotten a fair amount of acclaim (he said with pride), but none of them have had the kind of budget to afford all of the kinds of music that I'd like to bring and share with you. Just once, I'd like to do a festival with the kind of backing and budget that Street Scene has or, even better, like the big music festivals in other cities, like the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival or the Philadelphia Folk Festival. Friends, I'd do a festival that would flat-out set this city on its ass. I mean, you'd be talking about it for the next five years. I'm not bragging here (well, yes I am, a bit) but I know I could do it and just once before I give up the ghost on these festivals, I'd like to do that. People keep telling me I need a grant. Well then, help me get one. You won't be sorry.

A book about San Diego's musical history. Lots of people are working on this idea, and I'll admit I've been toying with aspects of it my whole musical life. I can't tell you who played in what band during the '60s or '70s, but I've been poking around with roots music in this town since I got here in 1951. I've been in and out of the folk music, country music, rhythm & blues scene, and, to a lesser extent, rock 'n' roll and jazz (mostly as a collector of records). I've interviewed old-time San Diego bluesmen like Thomas Shaw (who came here from Texas in 1934) and Robert Jeffrey and jazz men like Fro Brigham, all of whom go back in this town a lot further

than I do. I've talked to Smokey Rogers, Buck Wayne, Cactus Soldi, and other veterans of the San Diego and Southern California country music scene. Having a record shop that deals in roots music and having done one kind of roots music radio show or another for the past 33 years (*Jazz Roots* on Sunday nights, 8-10pm for the past 18 years on KSDS-FM88.3), I've talked to a pretty wide variety of musical people and fans of musical people. I've talked to many who aren't around any more. Slim Gaillard once told me a story about how Fats Waller wanted to come to San Diego and be recorded playing the world's

San Diego. The San Diego-Tijuana area (especially south of the border) became a hot bed of black jazz and blues artists during the Prohibition Era. Nearly every important black jazz artist, from Jelly Roll Morton to Blind Lemon Jefferson, played in clubs and on the streets of Tijuana. Various watering holes like Agua Caliente and Rosarito Beach became playgrounds for the Hollywood crowd, the rich and well-born crowd, and those who wanted to drink legally. Yet almost nothing has been written about the scene on either side of the border. In fact, when they talk about Mexican influences on jazz (Jelly Roll called it "the Spanish Tinge") and blues, they talk like it all happened in Texas, even though Jelly Roll Morton wrote his "Kansas City Stomp" about the Kansas City Cantina in Tijuana where he played in the early '20s, and Smokey



putting people in touch with their roots. I want to keep doing that right here at 3611 Adams Avenue. The property is for sale and if it sells, I hope whoever ends up buying it will let me stay here. I don't want to move and, even worse, I don't want to go out of business. I'm not bragging, but I think this town needs me to keep doing what I do right where I'm doing it. I want to keep Folk Arts Rare Records. I want to keep doing the music for the Adams Avenue Roots Festival (we just booked the great Cumberland Gap fiddler

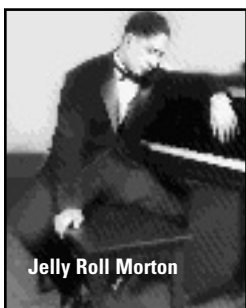
even start my own CD label (a long-time dream of mine). If you have any ideas or would like to become a member of the down trodden landlord class, drop me a line c/o the *San Diego Troubadour* or at Folk Arts. Hopefully you won't raise my rent and I'll help keep your city's musical head in the right place.

Lots of bragging and lots of dreams to contemplate this time around. Dr. King's dream is taking some time coming true, but we've made some progress. My dream takes a lot less work, so hopefully it won't take as long.

Recordially,
Lou Curtiss



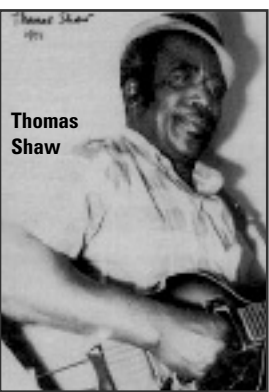
Blind Lemon Jefferson



Jelly Roll Morton



Fats Waller



Thomas Shaw



Slim Gaillard



Buck Wayne

largest outdoor organ, but some of our more Neanderthalic city fathers decided that they didn't want a black man's fingers touching their precious Spreckels organ, so Fats went to France and was recorded playing the world's second largest outdoor organ. On the record, he is listed as playing "the world's largest outdoor organ in Louvre, France." It could have been

Rogers wrote his "Spanish Fandango" about a lady in Rosarito Beach, bringing the Spanish Tinge to country music many years before Freddy Fender and Johnny Rodriguez. At any rate, I could go on and on about bits and pieces I could contribute to a San Diego musical history. I just want to be sure that such a comprehensive musical history includes items from the frontier era through the beginnings of the recorded era and to the modern era, and that it includes roots music from all these eras too.

I've been doing what I do (running Folk Arts Rare Records and the Lou Curtiss Sound Library) for going on 37 years now and for the last 26 of those years, I've been at 3611 Adams Avenue. Most of what I do is put people in touch with their roots. I might sell someone an old record that has special memories or take old home recordings — maybe of a wedding or children long-since grown up or grandparents and friends who are no longer with us — from disc or reel-to-reel tape and putting them on cassette (cleaning them up in the process). I've made special tapes of everything, from songs about trains and automobiles to songs about chickens and guys named Joe. I've found that special song for people, which reminds them of some important event. I enjoy what I do, which is

Clyde Davenport, Hawks and Eagles, Ray Bierl, Kenny Hall, Larry Hanks, and lots, lots more for this year's festival on May 1-2) and the Adams Avenue Street Fair (the last weekend in September). I want to keep doing *Jazz Roots* on KSDS and liner notes for CDs on the Country Routes label. I want to maybe

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The Granger Music Hall: National City's Historic Musical Gem

by Paul Hormick

Right under the National City Mile of Cars sign sits one of San Diego County's little-known musical landmarks. In the shadow of the monument to Ford, General Motors, and the Interstate Highway System sits the Granger Music Hall, an auditorium that hosted the most celebrated musicians of a hundred years ago, and still today, from time to time, reverberates with great music.

Between 1898 and 1906 nearly every eminent musician who toured the West Coast played at the Granger Music Hall, including violinists Fritz Kreisler, Eugène Vsaye, and Alexandre Petschnikoff. Among the pianists to perform in the hall were Mark Hombourg and Ignacy Paderewsky.

This plum red and green shingled structure was built by Ralph Granger, a self-taught violinist who loved music so much that as a young man he spent all his savings on a violin. This former grocer later amassed a fortune so great that, besides building the hall, he could afford

the expense of hiring a great musician, such as Vsaye, for an audience of just three or four persons.



Ralph Granger (4th from left, back row) and friends, National City, 1899.

"This is the only violin recital hall in San Diego," says Mary Karo, a classical violinist who serves as a leading member of the National City Historical Society. "It's too bad it's not better known." She explains that, as a violin lover, Granger was very specific about what he wanted in the hall design, one that would enhance the voice of a violin. He was also very insistent on certain aspects of the hall's appearance — the large oval windows, for instance, were part of his design specifications.

Don Gibson: The Man Who Put Pain to Pen

by Lyle Duplessie

Don Gibson, another of Nashville's old guard singer/songwriters, passed away last November. Like the late Johnny Cash, Gibson's songs epitomized the best of what country music once represented. "Sweet Dreams," "I Can't Stop Loving You," and "Oh, Lonesome Me" were just three of his 23 top ten country hits. He was 75.

Gibson was born in 1928 in Shelby, North Carolina. His parents were impoverished sharecroppers. He quit school in second grade, reasoning, "The only thing I was any good at was music." His first foray into country music came in 1948, when as a teen he helped form a band covering the Sons of the Soil, cowboy songs made popular by the Sons of the Pioneers.

Gibson was first spotted as a singer/songwriter in his own right by famed music publisher Wesley Rose, performing his song "Sweet Dreams." In 1956 "Sweet Dreams" became his first top ten national hit. The song was later recorded by Faron Young, whose rendition rose to number two. Shortly thereafter, Patsy Cline would immortalize the song with her own heart-wrenching treatment.

Then, as now, recording a chart-topper doesn't guarantee financial or personal well-being. In June 1957, Gibson was living alone in a trailer on the outskirts of Knoxville. As legend has it, two of his most recognizable and timeless classics — "I Can't Stop Loving You" and "Oh, Lonesome Me" were written on the same day that his television and vacuum cleaner were repossessed. Regarding that day, Gibson had been quoted as saying, "I couldn't have been any closer to the bottom."

Heartbroken, abandoned, down and out, conflicted, tempted, conscience riddled — these were the themes of his songs. There was none of the macho-bravado-narcissism so common in today's male-dominated country music. Unfortunately for Gibson, however, the themes of his songs emanated from his own



Don Gibson 1928-2003

painful experiences — episodes of despondency and struggles with alcoholism and drug abuse. He knew of what he wrote, which made for powerful music, but left in its wake a broken and reclusive man.

Gibson penned over 350 songs. Over the years numerous artists and performers have reinterpreted his music for most every genre. Gibson's tunes have been recorded by some very un-country type characters, including Count Basie, Frank Sinatra, Ike and Tina Turner, Van Morrison, and even Marilyn Manson. In 1983 Gibson was inducted into the Nashville Songwriters' Hall of Fame and in 2001, he was elected to the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Don Gibson left a legacy of timeless country music for those who will listen. Besides the aforementioned songs, such price-less musical gems like "Blue, Blue Day," "Sea of Heartbreak," and "Lonesome Number One" helped to set a standard for great country music. It's unfortunate, however, that those who sing, market, and produce today's country music have forsaken that standard. But being forsaken was an experience that Gibson knew only too well.

Granger enlisted the expertise of architect Irving Gill — who had just left the Chicago office of Louis H. Sullivan to start his own career in Southern California — to design his dream hall. With an interior of polished Port Oxford cedar, the original music room was constructed in 1896. Because no supports were built in the ceiling and the floor was constructed without girders under the joists, the room was allowed to vibrate with the music, functioning in essence as a large natural amplifier.

Having designed the larger auditorium, which was added in 1898, Gill used wall studs sheathed on both sides to create an unusual construction that insulates the hall from outside noise.

Additionally, the walls are slightly bowed and do not run parallel to each other; the floor is also cantered. All this results in ideal acoustics, particularly for the violin.

The current kitchen and office spaces once served as a vault that held Granger's impressive collection of musical instruments. The Hawley Collection, as it became known, contained masterpieces built by Steiner, Guarnerius, and Stradivarius. When the vault developed problems with dampness, Granger sold the collection to the city of New York.

Although the Granger Music Hall is modest by most standards, the original decorations were considered quite lavish, especially the large ceiling painting of allegorical figures that took the painter David Samaan a full year to complete. Painted in the French Rococo style, the mural depicts Euterpe, the muse of music, in an idyllic setting with rosy-cheeked cherubs amid mandolins, tambourines, and other musical instruments.

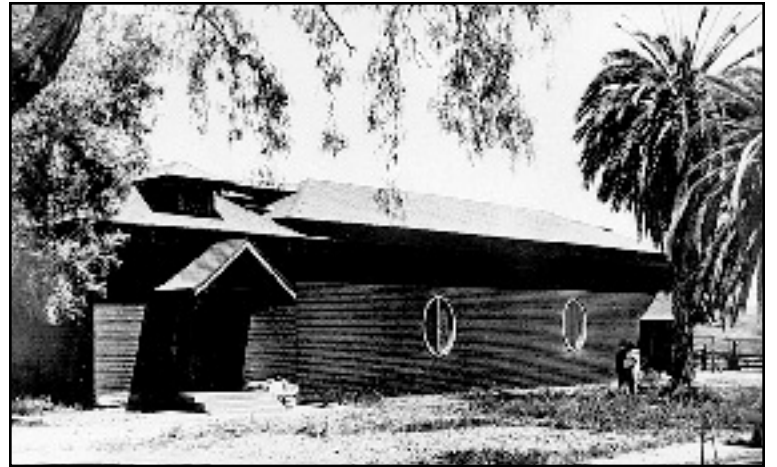
Steve O'Connor, whose "Suite for Jazz Piano, Bass, and Violin" received its 1993 premier in the hall, thinks its appearance enhances the concert experience for the listener. He says, "The hall has a nice colloquial, homespun feel, [yet] has a certain sophistication and elegance. There's no problem going into the performance visually as an audience member." He loves the acoustics, adding, "That night [of the premier], the violin just sang." He thinks, however, the hall is disadvantaged by its close proximity to the freeway. Despite the thick walls, noise from passing cars can interfere with the music.



Music hall interior, 1898

The hall once boasted an elaborate organ with 21,000 pipes and 32 ranks. Today, behind the small and worn wooden stage you can see the organ's original grillwork. Fluted wooden columns frame the ornately carved wood.

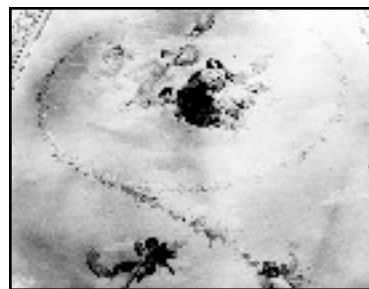
The life of Ralph Granger reads like a cross between the American legends of Horatio Alger and Dickens' stories of luck



Granger Music Hall as it looked in 1898

and fortune. Growing up in Connecticut in a family of ten children, Granger later used the \$10,000 inheritance from his parents to buy a livery stable in Springfield, Massachusetts. In time, aware of the opportunities opening up in the West, he sold the livery and headed for Colorado, where he spent 12 years wielding a pickaxe as he prospected for gold.

Tiring of the backbreaking work, Granger gave up prospecting and worked for a cattle ranch as a fence mender. He saved his money and soon bought a grocery store with a partner, Erl von Buddenbock, in Creed, Colorado. Around the time of his marriage to Jesse Hastings in 1890, he and his partner were approached by two miners who were down on their luck.



Ceiling detail

With a handful of silver ore to establish their credibility, the two miners proposed to the grocers a grub stake, a type of loan that gave the lender rights to future earnings of the mine. Buying the grub stake with his partner in the Last Chance Mine, Granger was back in the mining business. With the mine's first success, the miners and Buddenbock sold their interests to Granger, leaving him as sole owner of the mine. He later sold the mine for an estimated \$1,000,000.

During a stay at the Hotel Del Coronado, Granger fell in love with Southern California. He moved here with his wife the next year and established himself as a banker. They settled in National City, finding the tree-lined streets preferable to the boom bust atmosphere of San Diego to the north.

His good luck continued to hold. In the financial panic of 1893, three San Diego banks went under. Only Granger's bank, the Merchant National Bank, remained intact. (Coincidentally, the panic and resultant economic depression was caused when the price of silver, the metal that made Granger's fortune, plummeted in value. Prices fell because the Sherman Act was repealed and India stopped buying silver.)

Granger's income at this point is estimated to have been around \$5,000 a day; that's back when \$5,000 a year was considered a healthy income and before there was an income tax. With this Bill Gates-sized wealth he was able to indulge his lifelong love of music by

building his hall and hiring the greatest musicians of the time to perform there.



Restored interior, showing stage and organ grillwork, 1975.

A 1906 fire that destroyed Granger's house and severely damaged the music hall forced him and his family to move, settling on Laurel Street. After the fire, Granger never took an interest in his great music hall again, allowing it to sit derelict. After he died in 1938, time and vandals added to its deterioration.

In 1953, Granger's grandson, Lester Wegeforth, restored the building although it remained unused until 1969, when it was facing demolition. A community group was organized to save the hall, and in November of that year it was moved from 8th and Euclid to Palm and 4th, where it remains today. In 1975 the Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Once it was saved from the wrecking ball, the hall was used for wedding receptions and as a meeting hall. Starting with a concert in April of 1986 by the Allegro String Quartet, the Granger Hall has once again become a place for great music.

Mike Wofford and Holly Hoffman will perform at the hall, March 14, 2 p.m. For information on this and other events at the Granger Music Hall call 619-660-8184.



Ralph Granger, 1936, two years before his death



Saba Follows her Heart

by John Philip Wyllie

After earning a degree in political science at UCLA, Rancho Bernardo's Saba Berenji initially intended to enter law school. Those plans, however, took a 180-degree turn a year ago when the strikingly attractive 24-year-old singer/songwriter first stepped on to the stage at Twiggs coffee house in University Heights. A little voice inside of her had been nudging her in a different direction for some time. Finally, in the winter of 2002, she decided to take the plunge.

"I've been playing seriously for about a year, but I started doing open mics a few months before that," Berenji said following her most recent Twiggs engagement on December 26. "I feel a lot more comfortable now than I did when I started. At first I was literally ill to the point where I was almost ready to vomit. Like anything else, with practice you become a lot more comfortable." With her stage fright jitters now a thing of the past, Saba, as she is known professionally, is carrying on the family tradition.

"My parents emigrated from Iran in 1976," she explained. "My dad played the guitar and my mom sang with him in a band. That's how they met. I was born in Connecticut, but we moved to San Diego about six months later. Inheriting her mother's beautiful voice and her father's guitar-playing ability, Saba developed her own musical style. While a full-time job as an administrative assistant in an appraisal firm limits her musical endeavors, Saba never ventures too far from her guitar.

"When I get 10 or 15 minutes, I just sit with my guitar and start strumming some chords," she explained. "I'll come up with a progression that I like and then I'll start babbling over the chords. Slowly, verses will come out with words that make sense. For me, the music always comes first and then the lyrics. Sometimes it takes months to complete a song. I'll start one and then I'll set it aside. Other times a song will just pop out in five minutes, but those are more rare. [The process] usually takes about a week."

Saba released her first collection of songs last March, a five-song EP titled *Letters to Doe*, as in John Doe. In it, she sings about love, pain, and relationships using thoughtfully constructed melodies and a voice that projects vulnerability, sadness, and longing. Having a virtually non-existent budget, she was somehow able to put together a quality product with the help and generosity of some friends. In the process, she created Spinster Records, her own record label.

"We recorded it in someone's room and used everything in sight to make it work. In fact, we used a pair of purple pantyhose for a vocal mic filter at one point. It was interesting and fun, and it took about three months to record. Calling it both

rewarding and challenging, Saba said that establishing your own record label, "is like building something from nothing."



Saba and Angela Correa perform at Lestats

Heavily influenced by Ani DiFranco as well as local stars Lisa Sanders, Gregory Page, and Steve Poltz, Saba borrows nuances from each and incorporates them into her music.

"It is hard to come up with something that you feel is completely original. On the local scene there are a lot of different musicians. By watching them, you can draw something from each one. You can take a particular characteristic or the way in which someone plays and then turn it into something that is yours," Saba said. "What makes me different is my guitar style. I don't play like most

female guitarists. Their strumming tends to be smoother. At some point I picked up the percussive style of playing from one of the musicians that I had been hanging out with."

Having worked herself into the regular rotation at Twiggs, Saba now performs at Lestats as well. Her next appearance there is February 20. She also ventures north to play in L.A. on occasion, usually about once a month. She has an interesting perspective on both cities.

"L.A. is, of course, a much bigger city and there are about five million people trying to get a show. It is very cut-throat and very much about how many people you can bring in. If you can't bring in at least 30 people, most venues won't ask you back."

L.A. may be the entertainment capital of the world, but Saba prefers playing here in America's finest city.

"San Diego is very open to new musicians. Here, you can get a regular show even if you don't pull in 30 people every time. The focus in L.A. is on the whole package, including the look. Down here it is more about the music than it is about looking or acting like a rock star."

Whether performing close to



home or up in L.A., Saba never appears on stage without her Princess Leia Pez dispenser.

"Somebody handed that to me when I was doing a show up in L.A.," she revealed. "I was losing my voice, but after they gave that to me I managed to regain it. I was able to sing throughout the whole set. It has

become my good luck charm. Since then, I have taken it everywhere." With Saba's journey just beginning, there is no telling where she and Princess Leia may eventually end up.



by Paul Hormick

"We want to be known as bluesy rootsified white singers," says Luisa Corredor, as she describes the duo she has formed with Jeffrey Joe Morin, calling themselves Louie and Morin. These two veterans of the San Diego music scene have joined forces to put a new spin on the classic songs of country, Broadway, and Tin Pan Alley – all the songs you know, and even your parents know, by heart.

In a process he calls degenrefication, Morin says he and Corredor try to bring freshness to these old songs. "I want to extricate a song from its place in history. I want to do Hank Williams

as blues and Ernest Tubbs as jazz," he says. He cites Ray Charles' album, *The Modern Sounds of Country Music*, as an example of the jazz and blues interpretations he and Corredor want to try on the songs of Hoagy Carmichael, Hank Williams, and Patsy Cline.

Corredor and Morin met up when they both sang in Dr. Gabe Weiss' Millennium Big Band. With the passing of the millennium and the passing of the swing fad, they went their separate ways. On occasion, however, they would see each other by way of some of the local folk circles and found that their voices worked well together.

Morin's love affair with music began with his parents' record collection. "My father was a blues and rocka-

LOUIE AND MORIN:

A New Spin on Classic Tunes

billy fan. He had a pretty strange record collection, at least for a white guy," says Morin. "Mom listened to orchestral music. She had 33s and 16s of Tchaikovsky and other classical composers."

As for those who have influenced his vocal styling, Morin names Johnny Mercer and Hoagy Carmichael. "Everything that Carmichael sang seemed so effortless," he explains. He also admires Dean Martin for the strength of the Rat Packer's voice. Morin has performed ever since high school, when he joined a pop/rock band. He then did his part to keep tikis and cocktails with little umbrellas on America's patios by playing ukulele with Pete Auclair and his Polynesian Serenaders. And somehow or other he found himself playing Dobro with the ever youthful Merry Prankster Gypsy Boots in a band named Sherwin Williams and the Chemtones.

Corredor started performing semiprofessionally at the age of seven, when she sang songs of the British Isles and madrigals with her family in Los Angeles at folk cafes and renaissance fairs. She cites an important part of her musical development when, as a result of moving with her family when she was in sixth grade, she wound up being the only white kid in her new school. The next year, when she was 13, Corredor sang in the choir of a black church. "There is more expression in the African-American culture,

especially in their churches," she says. She was also influenced by the Latino children in her school and began singing Ranchera music.

The musical masala of her upbringing comes through in her voice today, a voice that can range from big full-tilt boogie to soft, lilting ballads. As a featured vocalist, her versatility shines on Steve White's *Better Days* CD, going from the tender, haunting vocals of "La Sirena Negra" to her rap Español on "Kung Fu Chopper Pilot." Through a large part of the nineties she teamed up with singer/songwriter Paul Henry, performing his songs in San Diego's cafes and coffeehouses. She plans on continuing to perform some of Henry's songs with Morin.

Louie and Morin will be at the Golden Goose in Lakeside on February 6; at Twiggs, sharing the bill with Joe Rathburn, on February 20; and opening for the film *Where Is Clem?* at Lestats on March 7.





parlor showcase

by John Philip Wyllie

Being a well-known sports celebrity can open a lot of doors long after the last touchdown has been scored, the last slap shot has been fired, and the last pitch has been thrown. In every major American city there are former athletes serving as sportscasters, opening restaurants, and hawking everything from soup to nuts as they carry the respect earned on the field into their post-career endeavors. While Tim Flannery, former Major League infielder, remains one of the most popular San Diego Padres of all time, Tim Flannery, the singer/songwriter, sees his hard-earned reputation as more of a double-edged sword.

"Having been a baseball player will help you to get into a local bar to play, but to take our music to the levels we have had to forge our way through, it doesn't. When people [in the music world] hear that you were once a baseball player, they often cringe," Flannery said while putting the finishing touches on his sixth and latest CD titled *Kentucky Towns*.

No longer encumbered with concerns about who is on first, Flannery has devoted much of the past year to his music. His single-minded focus has been in capturing the down home bluegrass sound that has always been a part of his life.

"I wanted to record an album exactly as I hear it in my head," he explained. "This is both a traditional and a contemporary bluegrass album about faith and hope. It's a spiritual record that tells it the way my family lived it in the back hills of Kentucky."

Determined to distill the essential elements of the high lonesome sound on to disk, Flannery recruited his multi-talented "Medicine Show" bandmate, Dennis Caplinger, to produce the project. Caplinger, a virtuoso fiddle, mandolin, banjo, dobro, and guitar player, also has an impressive resume of recording experience to his credit. He can navigate his way through the complexities of a recording studio as effortlessly as he glides up and down an instrument's fingerboard. And few people understand the interplay and interaction that takes place among the various bluegrass instruments as well as Caplinger. On *Kentucky Towns* Flannery takes full advantage of Caplinger's versatility, and this one-man Bluegrass band shines at every turn.

Caplinger heads a stellar lineup that includes highly regarded bass player, Bill Bryson from Caplinger's own Bluegrass Etc. (as well as the Desert Rose Band) and Flannery Band regulars Jeff Berkley (Berkley Hart), Doug Pettibone (Lucinda Williams), Sharon Whyte (Eve Selis Band), and Tom Flannery (Tim's younger brother). Together, they have recorded a collection of 13 songs divided among 10 tracks, seven of which were penned by Flannery.

"From the first note to the last, I have never been more proud of what I have done," Flannery said. "It probably won't get a lot of airplay other than on bluegrass stations and it's not going to be for the mainstream, but I don't care. This is the music I want to be remembered for."

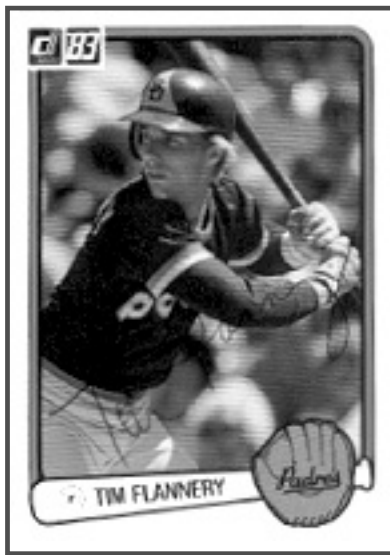
Seeking total control over this record, Flannery decided to forgo the often stressful environment of a big recording studio where time is money and the clock is always ticking. He opted instead to use the comfortable surrounds of Caplinger's in-home mini-studio. And while he admits to nearly driving Caplinger crazy with his perfectionism, the additional studio time he gained allowed him to capture exactly what he was looking for.

"My last CD (Highway Song) cost my record company a lot of money to produce," Flannery explained. "This time around we wanted to do it in an affordable way. I wanted it exactly how I hear it, not the way that a record label might want it, or a radio station might want it to fit their format. I wanted to make this one for our fans, the people who come out and listen to our music and know where we are coming from. There is equipment out there now that levels the playing field. You don't need a giant budget and a big record label to make good records anymore."

While Flannery's 2001 Highway Song had a strong bluegrass influence, it was more eclectic in nature. His "Baseball Song" drove home the disillusionment many feel toward modern-day baseball. "Island Song," a Hawaiian slack-key inspired number, spoke of the simpler life enjoyed while surfing on Tavarua. This time around, Flannery narrows his focus to the bluegrass music his Kentucky ancestors have enjoyed for centuries.

"Bluegrass music isn't the flavor of the month," Flannery said. "The shelf life of this music is forever. Somebody will be able to pick this up 100 years from now and say that is the way this music is supposed to be played. For the most part, it's just stand-up bass, banjo, fiddle, mandolin, accordion, and some family hillbilly harmonies. There is a common thread from the first note to the last of what we are trying to capture. I've got tons of other songs I could have recorded, but this time I only wanted to include the songs that would fit into this album."

Having his brother and lifelong singing companion available makes it a lot easier to sing the family harmonies Flannery so enjoys. Whyte handles the third-part harmonies that Flannery's older sister once sang. She also embellishes the overall sound with her accordion.



Flannery during his Padre days.



Flannery with Steve Poltz and Jeff Berkley



Flannery and his van, which reads "Kids Rule"

son of a preacher man Tim Flannery

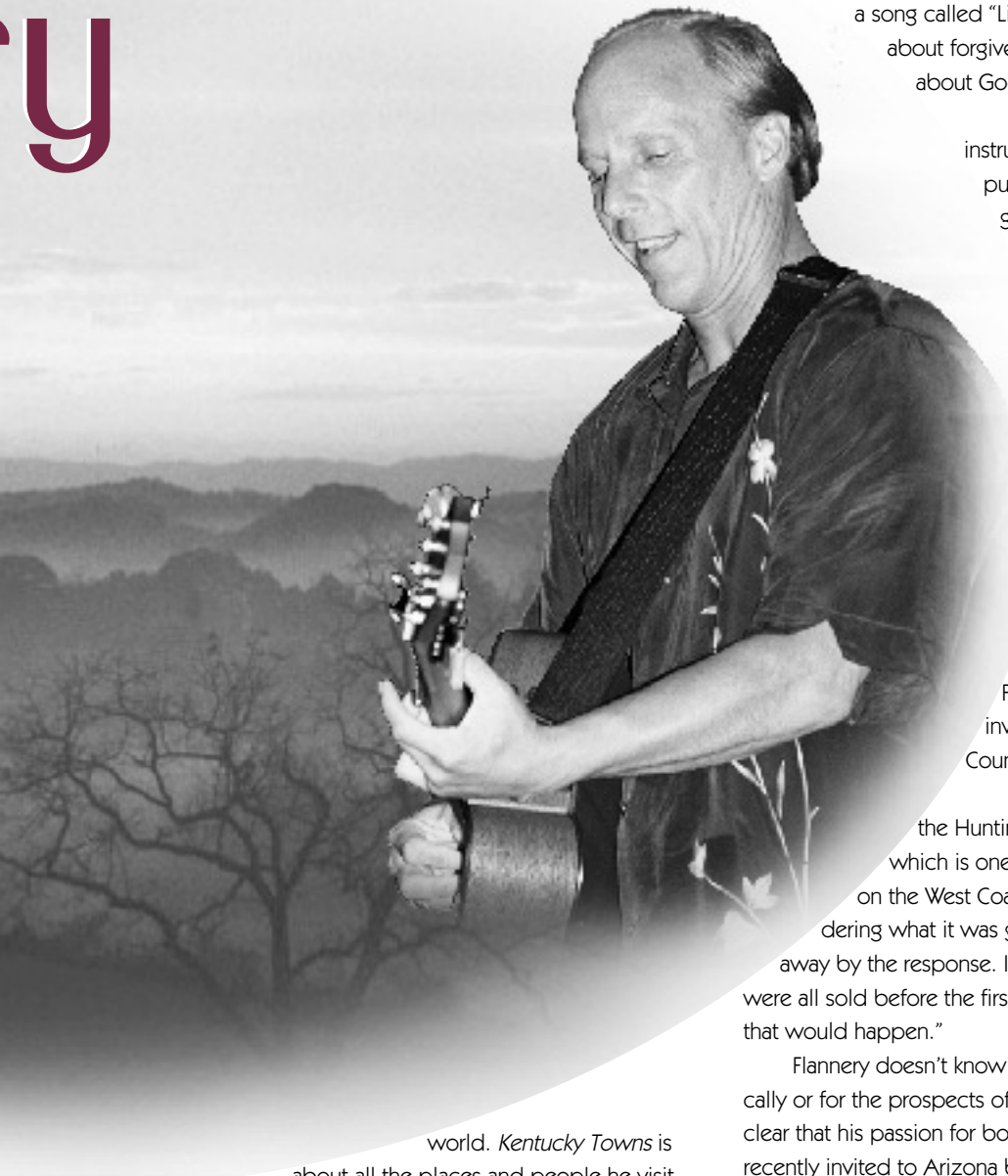
The title track, "Kentucky Towns," provided the early impetus for the project when it was penned about a year ago. It came about when Flannery, after several years, opened the Bible that had been given to him following the death of his father in 1999. Ragon Flannery was a well-known Christian minister who preached initially in rural Athens, Kentucky and then later in Anaheim, California.

"At the time (of his death after a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease), I didn't want to look at it, I was on the other side of the grieving process," Flannery explained. "I'd been through it all, but a while back, I pulled it out and looked through it. In the back were 15 pages of names. They were the names of the people my dad had baptized. I was moved by the fact that this hillbilly from the mountains of Kentucky had made it out to the West Coast to become one of the great Christian ministers and a well-known figure in that

parlor showcase



an
y



world. *Kentucky Towns* is about all the places and people he visited and how he changed their lives."

Sometime later, Flannery decided to do an entire album of songs dealing with the Appalachian culture his father was born into and that he himself was familiar with through family stories and childhood visits.

Several of the songs included will be familiar to "Medicine Show" regulars of the last few years. The updated versions transform the songs utilizing different arrangements, different keys and different musical elements.

"Foot of the Cross," originally recorded for 1999's *Pieces of the Past*, features Molly Andrews from the cast of *Fire on the Mountain*, using her incredible voice to do an a cappella lead in. She then brings the song to a moving end by playing a mountain dulcimer solo.

"Molly Graham," Flannery's "traditional" Irish song, which was previously only available only as a live version on 2000's *Tim Flannery and Friends*, has also been redone for this CD. And Flannery fans will recognize Gillian Welch's "By the Mark" and Flannery's own "He Ain't Coming Down the Mountain" as recent staples from his popular *Medicine Show* concerts.

Having long interpreted other people's music while at the same time writing his own, Flannery tips his hat this time around to the father of modern bluegrass music, Bill Monroe, with an inspired version of Monroe's classic "Kentucky Waltz." He also covers a song by Del Mar singer/songwriter Chris Stuart called "Road Into Town."

"When I first heard it, I thought it sounded like something I might have written. I love [Stuart's] music," Flannery said.

The traditional "Bury Me Beneath the Willows" gives the

Flannery brothers an opportunity to explore the vocal harmonies they have been cultivating for more than three decades with a unique arrangement.

Heard for the first time are songs like "Judas Kiss," written the day after Flannery was released by the Padres and a song called "Living Stream." The former is a song about forgiveness while in the latter he sings about God's grace.

Included also are a couple of instrumental tracks. On one Caplinger pulls out his fiddle and bow and goes to town. "Dennis smokes on that one," Flannery said.

While it isn't accurate to pigeon hole Flannery as a Christian performer — he thinks of himself as more of a spiritual than a religious person — his music remains popular within the Christian community.

"A lot of bluegrass music has spiritual ties. This is a very spiritual record and it has been very healing for me," Flannery said. In November he was invited to perform at several Orange County churches.

"A few weeks ago we played at the Huntington Beach First Christian Church, which is one of the biggest Christian churches on the West Coast. Driving up there, I was wondering what it was going to be like, but I was blown away by the response. I brought along 200 CDs and they were all sold before the first service was over. I had no idea that would happen."

Flannery doesn't know what the future holds, either musically or for the prospects of rekindling his baseball career. It is clear that his passion for both has never waned. He was recently invited to Arizona by the Padres to help out with spring training and he intends to go. But his future in baseball beyond that is less certain.

"The Padres asked me to come to camp so that I can work with some of their young kids. I am anxious to see how that will work out. And while I'm there, I'll do shows in Phoenix and Cave Creek."

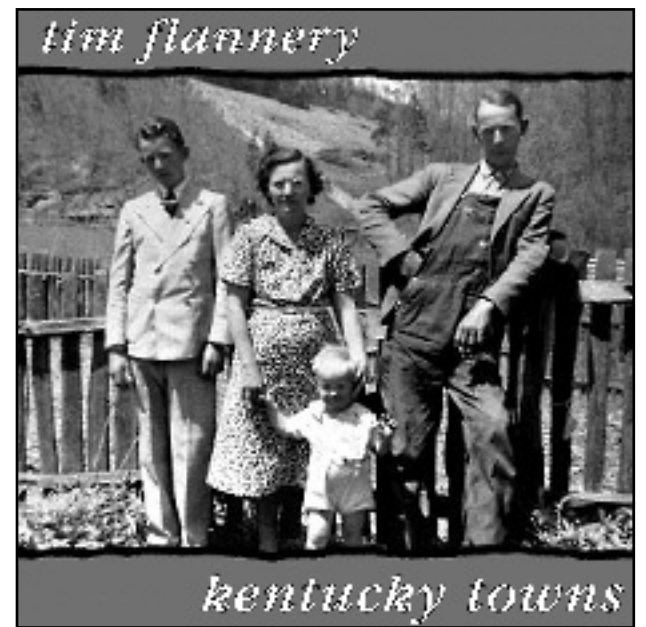
Flannery takes life as it comes, remains full of enthusiasm and optimism, and lives very much in the present.

"It's been great to be able to play music year-round and it has been fun to evolve (as a band). Being able to do that has taken us to new levels. I've also enjoyed baseball more during the last season because it was no longer affecting my life. I hated losing and getting beat in game after game. I couldn't have gone through another season of losing 98 games. It was getting really unhealthy."

Flannery will turn his annual El Cajon East County Performing Arts Show (on Feb. 7) into a *Kentucky Towns* CD release party. His magnetic personality will once again attract some of the area's best singing/songwriters to appear with him. Performers such as Randi Driscoll, Steve Poltz, Berkley Hart, and Eve Selis are sure to be invited along with his aforementioned regular crew. Chuck Brodsky and the legendary Jack Tempchin, who wrote several of the Eagles' best-known hits, will round out what should be an exciting evening of entertainment.

From there, Flannery will hit the promotional trail performing at least 18 shows in rapid succession in support of the new album. While he knows that will be taxing, he is excited to begin.

"I'd play every night if I could," Flannery said. "There is nothing that brings me so much joy at this point in my life other than my family."



Flannery's father baptizing in Kentucky



Flannery with Dennis Caplinger, brother Tom Flannery, and Sharon Whyte





ramblin'

Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden

BLUEGRASS FESTIVALS

Believe it or not, the bluegrass festival is a relatively recent phenomenon. Bluegrass music, while popular in the 1940s and into the 1950s, began to suffer financially in the late 1950s and 1960s. Record sales and concert attendance dropped due to the new electrified music called rock 'n' roll, which was becoming popular. Concert attendance and record sales for bluegrass bands was in trouble as the 1960s came to a close, although as a true American form of music, it remained strong on the porches and in the living rooms of the people. In the early 1970s the bluegrass festival was born. This was a new idea that brought several bands together for a multi-day festival of concerts, camping, and related activities. Following the success of the first few festivals, others sprang up across the country and proved to be so popular that bluegrass festivals are now considered the preeminent place for the presentation of bluegrass music and the festival circuit has become the mainstay of its financial success. Folks like the outdoor atmosphere, the camping and food, the picnic atmosphere, and the



Byron Berline at Summergrass

chance to hear lots of great acoustic music. It's not an understatement to say that the festival movement rescued bluegrass financially.

So, what's the big attraction? What happens at a typical bluegrass festival? First, most are family oriented—like large outdoor picnics for the whole family. Second, the music is acoustic. Typically alcohol is not sold, but beer might be sold in a beer garden area.

Most festivals, in addition to featuring a number of bluegrass bands, provide workshops for musicians with instructional seminars for festival attendees conducted by the performers. These usually cover the core bluegrass instruments—banjo, guitar, bass, fiddle, mandolin, and sometimes dobro—and often cover singing as well. The workshops are usually conducted by some of the top musicians performing at that festival. Access to the workshops is usually included in the cost of admission.

There is likely to be a "slow jam" or introductory workshop for beginners interested in learning how to play and how to jam in a group. Some festivals provide children's activities, such as magicians or other entertainment. And some, like Summergrass 2004, have a music academy for kids with several hours of instruction each day and an opportunity for the kids to perform on stage with their instructors at the end of class. I'll tell you more about this summergrass Kid's Camp activity in a future column.

A major festival attraction is the jamming and camping. Festivals large and small see large groups of RVs and tent campers circle their wagons and pick informally into the wee hours. There is nothing quite like wandering around the camping area of a festival in the evening after listening to a great stage performance and listening, or joining in, with the many informal jam sessions. Many festi-



val attendees play in these informal jams throughout the whole festival and never visit the main stage! These pickers consider jamming to be the main festival attraction. Even if you're not a player but enjoy listening, be sure to visit the jams.

There are three prominent festivals within easy access to San Diego.



Summergrass festival grounds

Summergrass San Diego, August 20-22, at the Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum, Vista. Summergrass has on-site camping, lots of vendors, a great lineup of bands for 2004 (see www.summergrass.net), music workshops, great food, jamming, a raffle, and a kids music camp this year. Admission is \$13 per day in advance, \$15 at the gate. All this in a beautiful and interesting setting within an easy hour's drive from most anywhere in the county.

Julian Bluegrass Festival, September 18-19. Julian also has a great lineup of bands this year (see www.julianbluegrassfestival.com) and includes workshops for musicians and a raffle. Last year they had a fiddle, guitar, mandolin, and banjo contest which we hope will be repeated this year. Admission is also \$13 in advance and \$15 at the gate. There is no camping on site, but there is camping in the Julian area. The festival site is about an hour and a half from downtown San Diego.

Temecula Festival, March 20-21. The Temecula festival has an excellent band lineup as well as camping [www.temeculaocalifornia.com].

For those willing to drive a little farther, the **Huck Finn Jubilee Festival** in Victorville is about three hours from San Diego by car and is generally considered one of the premier national bluegrass festivals. In 2003 it was voted "best national festival" by the International Bluegrass Music Association. Held this year June 18-20 at the Mojave Regional Park, the festival includes camping, vendors, kids activities, and top-of-the-line music [www.huckfinn.com]. Advance tickets are \$55. It can be hot in Victorville in June, but Mojave Regional Park is a nice setting with good shade.

Think you might enjoy a bluegrass festival? Try one and I'll bet you'll be hooked. Bring the family, bring your instrument for some jamming, or bring your ears for some listening. If you're not sure how the family will like it, come for the day to a local festival like Summergrass and try it out. I'll bet you'll be back!



Raffle prizes at Summergrass 2003



The Zen of Recording

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

Smell the Revolution

I was watching a DVD the other night called *A Decade Under The Influence*. It's a documentary about filmmaking in the '70s, detailing the zenith and subsequent commercial fall of independent American cinema in the span of just 10 years.

The film shows us an America doubled over from the growing pains of social activism. Freshly arrived from the front lines of the civil rights movement and encouraged by the "Summer of Love" and its emphasis on free thinking, our country's people had begun to ask questions of its leaders. These questions covered everything from our involvement in Vietnam to women's rights, and of course there was a whole sexual revolution to deal with.

This dialogue manifested itself in the works of maverick directors and producers of that era. This was the first time we were hearing names like Cassavetes, Scorsese, Ashby, Altman, and Coppola. The passage of time makes it easy to forget that such classics as *Easy Rider*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *The French Connection*, *Deliverance*, *Taxi Driver*, *The Godfather*, *Apocalypse Now*, and *Being There* were once considered the groundbreaking, taboo-busting work of artistic rebels.

As people began to get their fill of all these "reality"-based themes, escapism once again reared its empty head, and things subsequently began to take a nasty turn in the latter part of the decade with the mega-success of Spielberg's *Jaws* and Lucas' *Star Wars*. The staggering amounts of moneys generated from these kinds of film "franchises" and their accompanying merchandising revenues brought a much larger corporate involvement to bear. Suddenly, the smallest courtesies once extended by producers and studio heads were now the domain of corporate boardrooms and accounting firms, and final cuts were left to the mercy of test audience opinions. Hello financial success...bye, bye artistic freedom.



Sound familiar? Maybe it would if you substituted your favorite musical artists and producer's names for those of the directors listed above, and your favorite albums instead of movies. How about now? Here are some more questions: Why do you make music? Is it artistic expression and contribution toward the furthering of your chosen craft, or is it your main objective to "get signed"?

Oh yes, there it is: the S-word. Look, don't get me wrong. I want to be able to deliver my work to the largest audience possible, and I'd like to be paid big piles of money for doing what I love. But at what cost?

Let's say you're a diehard blues artist and The Record Company offers you all these things with the caveat that you'll be making your music their way. Let's further suppose that their way is in the form of some sort of techno-dance music, and that you will have very little input as to how the end product will sound. Don't forget that solid two years of touring where you get to recreate that unintended vision night after grueling night, just so you can make enough money to pay back the production and promotional expenses of music you don't care about anymore.

Sound like a cynical over-exaggeration? Could be, I suppose. There are certainly a few artists who can be pointed out as being in command of their own artistic destiny, but for each one of them, there are undoubtedly hundreds of thousands of equally talented but, as yet, undiscovered artists toiling away in seedy dives and apartment studios everywhere. The real difference is in the cost of these pursuits



and the ability to nurture and explore them far from the calculated eye of The Man. Movies are prohibitively expensive ventures compared to music and it seems like each day, more tools of our trade our made available to us even more inexpensively. What this means is that we now have more control over our art than those who have come before us, and that our decisions regarding our work can come from a place of love and unique expression.

This column will endeavor to empower you with knowledge of the tools and techniques available to aspiring songwriters, recording artists, engineers, and producers. The title *The Zen of Recording* comes from a book I'm working on, which deals with these very things and should not be confused with excellent former technical columnist Paul Abbott's company, Zen Mastering.

There is indeed a whole new movement afoot. Send me an email and let me know what you'd like to see covered. As we like to say in the Gandhi Method, "Wake up and smell the revolution."

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an award-winning recording artist and producer who writes and performs with the Gandhi Method and the Wild Truth when he isn't working with other artists through his company, Kitsch & Sync Production (www.kaspro.com).

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Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

What comes around goes around. Tune in, turn on, drop out. I could care less.

Wake up, people! Stop murdering these perfectly valid sentiments with your careless, lazy, stupid revisions!

For the record, ladies and gentlemen, the real deals are, and should remain, as follow: What goes around comes around.

Turn on, tune in, drop out. I couldn't care less.

Oh, yeah, and there's a pronounced "axe" in the word "accessories." Amen for now.

There's another old maxim that's usually correctly stated but is rarely examined, and that's a pity, since its fallibility is so easily exposed. It has to do with putting away childish things as one matures. Now, call me a loon, but I've found that the childish game of playing "Doctor" only improves with age. So, in at least one respect, I'm quite determined to never grow up. And I'm loathe to "adapt" to certain adjustments to the game.

Surgical gloves? Give me a break. That's like wearing a raincoat in a thunderstorm. Or something like that . . .

Anyway, who am I to curtail my need for anatomical knowledge as it concerns the female of my own species? If this is childish, *mon frère*, let me remain an eternal youth, playing the game of life, where both participants are sure to be winners.

Ah, but in life, there are sure to be losers as well. Too many celebrities seem too anxious to grow up too quickly. Britney Spears recently felt it necessary to actually get *married* for a few hours, ending up divorced and pathetically alone.

A few sessions with Dr. Hose could have surely saved her from this indignity. Perhaps there is still hope; I'll go on record today to offer my services to put a spark of direction . . . of joy . . . of youth back into her life. If she accepts my offer, I'll promise her a big gig right here in San Diego as early as — oh, let's say March 2nd or so. After that, Honeybuns, the sky's the limit.

Why do I do this? Because of my youthful urge to help those in trouble, especially if they meet certain criteria — what I call the three Ws: well-known, womanly, and washed. That's all. Now, it's well-known that I once stated that if I could help just one person, it's all worthwhile. Note,



Photo: Toots von Weston

The debonair Mr. Sinatra

however, that I didn't define what "it" was. Perhaps it was simply forgoing one of my daily pedicures. I've always found that a bit of mysterious ambivalence adds luster to my celebrity patina. Yes, today I raise the ante substantially . . . a reflection, if you will, of my expanding bounty, my urgent need to help in any way I can. I fully realize that this largess will not be without pitfalls, but the entire world knows that I am nothing if not courageous. And my office hours are quite liberal. Feel free to contact me through this paper. Just think of Dr. Hose, hum the Young Rascals' "Good Loving" and allow your fingers to do the walking.

Speaking of Fingers (and the Speedsters and the Beat Farmers and Powerthud), I received a call from the very awesome Joey Harris, who asked the Hose to join him as his first celebrity guest at Tio Leos for The Joey Show on February 27. Be there or be very childish. Or, if you're still legally a child and can't cop a fake I.D., you have a lot of growing up to do. If your name is Britney Spears, I'll get you in free. And you can all be my guests the following night, February 28, when José Sinatra and the Troy Dante Inferno bring our love-sharing to Claire de Lune in North Park. The opportunity of allowing yourself to be touched in a very special way at each of these soirees will, I'm sure, be exactly what the doctor ordered.

And a very happy 18th birthday to my beloved muse, Elaina Sword. The gloves will remain off.



RADIO DAZE

by Jim McInnes

MEET THE STARS!

STORIES FROM RADIO, THE BOTTOM RUNG OF THE SHOW BUSINESS LADDER

Because I've been a broadcaster for so long, I'm often asked whether I've met a certain celebrity or "What is so-and-so really like?" That's why, beginning this month, I'm dropping names and telling it like it was!

B.B. King Between 1986 and 1991 I hosted a syndicated radio comedy show, *Live from the Improvisation*, produced by Larry Harris. Harris was the co-founder (with Neil Bogart) of Casablanca Records, the label responsible for Donna Summer and Kiss. Larry was also a huge blues fan and had signed B.B. King to host the syndicated *B.B. King Blues Hour*. One week in 1991, Harris' regular engineer was unavailable to record King's voice parts, so I was asked to do the job. I agreed immediately! Who wouldn't? I asked Harris what to do. He replied, "B.B. is staying at the Hilton. I'll fax you the script. You're on your own." Great! I was supposed to do some recording with one of the giants of American music and all I knew was that he was at the Hilton. I had no secret password. He wasn't registered under a pseudonym. There was no manager nor a representative for me to contact.

I went to the registration desk at the Hilton. On a whim I asked, "Which room is Mr. King in?" I was astonished when the woman replied, "Do you mean B.B. King?" I said, "Yes, the B.B. KING!" Without hesitation, she said, "He's in room 224...second floor, to the right." As I walked to room 224, I thought, "No forkin' way! Can you imagine any other superstar being THAT EASY TO FIND?" After a couple "shave-and-a-haircut" knocks on 224, the door opened and I was face to face with a refrigerator-sized guy who had reading glasses on his nose,

a walkie-talkie in his hand, and a huge gold ring with the letters "B.B." spelled out in diamonds on his right hand. Oh my God! B.B. King!

He was very gracious and down to earth. When he flubbed some lines I chided him, reminding him that he was once a disk jockey, too. B.B. then pulled his glasses down the slope of his nose, looked me straight in the eyes and, as if to deny that part of his past, said, "THAT was a long time ago!"

John Hammond A college friend turned me onto the blues when he put John Hammond's version of "So Many Roads" on his turntable and told me to "listen to this guitar player!" That guitarist was Robbie Robertson. That album changed my life.

I met John Hammond in 1972, when I emceed one of his solo shows at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. I had expected a cocky and confident rich guy (I think he's an heir to a piece of the Vanderbilt fortune), but Hammond was very shy, stuttered, and tended to avoid eye contact. He's for real.

Now, when I hear John Hammond sing, I really believe him.

Bob Seger I met Seger and his Silver Bullet Band backstage at the Sports Arena. It was late in 1976 and Seger was on tour, opening for Ozzy/Black Sabbath while promoting his *Night Moves* album. My friend Randy, a.k.a. Dark Fader, and I walked into Bob's dressing room before the concert (security was more relaxed 28 years ago). We began chatting with the band. Seger and I talked for quite a while about being from Michigan (I was born in Detroit), the Midwest music scene (which was terrific but unappreciated beyond Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan), and the rigors of touring. The band complained of being burned out from the many months they'd been on the road, adding that they were glad that the San Diego show was the last of the tour. Since it WAS the 1970s, we introduced everyone in the band to our



Jim McInnes

pal, Lawrence of Bolivia. Seger and his band gave us that knowing look as they went onstage and did what they later thought of as the best set they'd done on the entire tour.

Bob Seger remains one of the most down-to-earth, hardest-working musicians I've ever met.

Ian Anderson The leader of Jethro Tull is one of the most articulate pop stars I have had the pleasure to meet. I interviewed Anderson via telephone a few times before meeting him in person. Those early phone chats were an interviewer's dream because Anderson chatted comfortably about any subject that came up (unlike many rockers whose vocabularies consisted of grunts, profanities, and monosyllabic answers). When I was offered an opportunity to have Ian Anderson as my in-studio guest, I was thrilled. He came to the studio on a Sunday afternoon, his flute and a



Rubbing elbows with Ian Anderson

portable CD player in hand. I stuck a microphone in front of him and ran a cord from his CD player to the console. Anderson had a CD of full-band backing tracks, over which he'd play the flute and sing. It was like a 90-minute Jethro Tull concert right there in our cramped little radio studio!

Last September, Ian Anderson appeared at the East County Performing Arts Center in El Cajon. I was selected to be on stage with him for his entire show, called "Rubbing Elbows with Ian Anderson," and played "Ed McMahon" to his "Johnny Carson." It was a memorable night for a rock star wannabe like myself to be a part of the real thing!

To be continued. Next month: Ray Manzarek, Iggy Pop, and more celebrities who wouldn't know me if they tripped over me.

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Soiree for Steel String Guitar Lovers

by Sandy Beesley

This month acoustic steel string guitar lovers are in for a real treat. On February 13 the Carlsbad Village Theatre in North County will come alive with a dazzling display of musicianship, courtesy of the Men of Steel. This is a power ensemble that brings together four of the most dynamic guitar artists in the world, each player a master of the acoustic guitar, who combine their talents into one amazing band. Dan Crary from the U.S., Beppe Gambetta from Italy, Tony McManus from Scotland, and Don Ross from Canada play music as diverse as their cultures, taking their audiences on a spellbinding journey into a world of Celtic, blues, folk, traditional, and original music. An evening with the Men of Steel is charming, dazzling, funny, and unforgettable, with vocals and instrumentals that hint at their diverse cultural backgrounds. It promises to be a truly unique experience.

Critics have applauded both their live performances and their first CD. The *Edinburgh News* pronounced them "impeccable..." Brian Miller of Celtic Roots (BBC online) declared that "all four players are virtuosi, with characteristic and individual styles ... unfolding seemingly endless combinations of instrument and style ...and an obvious love of music making to produce an unforgettable listening experience." Of their CD, *Live: Men of Steel*, Dave Higgs of Nashville Public Radio's Bluegrass Breakdown wrote, "...the music is simply mouth-wateringly sublime" and "...the performances are hard-hitting and powerful." Brian Miller summed it all up by describing it as "such exciting, varied, satisfying and downright musi-



Men of Steel (standing, left to right) Tony McManus, Don Ross, Beppe Gambetta, and (seated) Dan Crary

cal music that I wanted more...I just wanted more of the whole thing."

The Players

Beppe Gambetta's distinctive sound is a multi-cultural tapestry of traditional, original and classical music reflecting a colorful mosaic of musical influences. . . from his native Genova, Italy to central European dance tunes, Celtic music, American bluegrass and more. Gambetta, who plays both flat-picking and classical fingerstyle guitar, is acknowledged as Europe's premier guitar stylist.

Dan Crary is a musical legend. Now in his 50th year of performing internationally, Kansas-born

Crary is recognized as one of the founders of the flat-picking guitar technique. Crary weaves jazz, blues, Celtic, classical, and folk together with memorable stories that audiences love. Still blazing new musical trails, he blends traditional material from a variety of American sources with original compositions, vocals with powerful instrumental showcases. Dan Crary makes the possibilities of the guitar come alive in every dazzling performance.

Tony McManus has long been applauded for his uncanny ability to transpose the delicate, complex ornamentation characteristics of traditional bagpipe or fiddle tunes onto guitar strings. Born near Glasgow, Scotland, Tony's fiendishly dexterous and dazzlingly original playing draws from the entire Celtic world — Scotland, Ireland, Brittany, Cape Breton, Quebec — along with jazz and east European music. Ranked alongside the guitar world's greats, McManus has been increasingly acknowledged for bridging the realms of Celtic music and other guitar genres.

Montreal born **Don Ross'** remarkable fingerpicking style is hall-marked by amazing technical ability combined with great emotional intensity. Born to a Scottish immigrant father and a Mikm'aq

Aboriginal mother, Ross grew up around a diversity of music. He was already experimenting with alternate tunings and writing original music at age 10. He won the U.S. National Fingerstyle Guitar Championship in Winfield an unprecedented two times. Whether he's singing a tender Acadian ballad or playing a blazing instrumental, it is clear that Ross' unclassifiable musical style is his own, borrowing from jazz, folk, rock, and classical. As one of the most respected musicians in Canada, Ross usually pigeon-holes his music as "heavy wood"!

Beginnings

The idea behind the Men of Steel was Beppe Gambetta's. In late 2001, while blasting down the autobahn and carrying on

a conversation with tour partner Dan Crary, Beppe suggested that a touring panel of steel-string guitarist-flatpickers would make for a dynamic and interesting concert. Further, Beppe allowed, it should be different from just a panel of players who pass around soloing duties, each looking bored on stage except when it's his or her chance to play a solo. No, Beppe said, each member should be from a different country, bringing diverse traditions together, performing vocals and instrumentals in a carefully

rehearsed and planned ensemble.

So Gambetta and Crary went to work to recruit co-conspirators in this guitar (so they hoped) extravaganza. An obvious choice from the celtic world was Tony McManus, renowned as the leading international guitarist of the genre. Tony said yes and the search continued. Initially they wanted to focus on flat-picking because of its dynamics and adaptability to ensemble playing. But when Canadian Don Ross was suggested, it was no great leap that this fingerpicker was as powerful and adaptable as they come and would be a great asset. Don said yes and the group was complete.

Last February, Beppe, Tony, Don, and Dan flew to Oregon and gathered in the little coastal town of Depoe Bay, for what Crary describes as a "boot camp" style rehearsal that lasted several days, followed by a concert delivered twice in one night, and recorded live for a CD release. In this way, the Men of Steel were forged out of a deep love of the guitar and a little chaos. By April of 2003 they had completed a European tour, garnered rave reviews and established themselves as one of the most interesting, varied, and dynamic guitar ensembles of the world.

Photo: Steve Covatta



The charming Carlsbad Village Theatre

Guitar Workshops with the Men of Steel Saturday, February 14, 11am-4pm

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Tom Freund North American Long Weekend

by Frederick Leonard

I've sat down three times now to write about Tom Freund's CD, *North American Long Weekend*. The first time I tried, I wanted to talk about how it equates somewhat to the Tom Waits thing in that it's got that urban streetlamp corner in the middle of the desolate night kinda sound. The poetry and cool/smart changes sort of has that beatness to it, too. Then, while entertaining the *Hits* magazine remark about how it reminded that reviewer of Springsteen's "Nebraska," I sat down again and listened to it that way. It does, at times, have that "boss on the prairie" vibe. So, then I thought it might be a good angle to discuss the juxtaposition of those two attitudes. But, that wouldn't work because there's more. While I was considering writing about all that other stuff, it occurred to me that the whole thing sounds like Daniel Lanois was on the scene. I was gonna write about how it carries a similar attitude to "For the Beauty of Wynona" (which is one of my top three all time favorite productions) — how it's every bit as graceful, articulate, heartfelt, and inventive. Classy.

That didn't work out. So I began writing about the weariness in his introspective and believable accountings in the form of his own poetry. Of course, if the chops are good I always talk about that. All I could come up with was that it is pristine from head to toe.

And today is deadline day for me to furnish this review. My third go at it. I pop the disc in. Puff my pipe — relax and take it in. And now I know what to say: This is a fantastic must-have great record. It's a crime Tom Freund isn't a household name. I dunno. Maybe he is and I'm the last to know.

And if Tom reads this — Dude, please send an autographed copy!



Tubby Unpredictable Jiggle

by Frederick Leonard

Grooves, grooves, grooves. Take your shoes off and start jumpin' on the couches. Call your people. Make yourself one of those nouveau drinks with Red Bull in it. Squeeze into your hot party duds. Call your people.

Here's "wubby" on Tubby: The band hails ("hail" is the right word) from San Diego and features Dane Scott on guitar and vocals, Neil MacPherson on keyboards, Matt Hanafin on bass, and Brendan Concannon on drums. It's recorded and engineered by Nico Gutierrez.

Unpredictable Jiggle is a dance record perfectly suited to the Ocean Beach jam band thing, with a little more concern for "song" than most groups from that ecosystem. All in, all they got it down. As I listen, I imagine this all goes over incredibly well live. Yeah, that's it. This is meant to be heard live. This is the California party music sound.

Nevertheless, the music is chops damn good. Dane Scott gets better and better every time I hear him. The guitar solos are impressive. He's always been a good, ballsy, spirited singer, who picks it up a notch here on this work. He also writes most of the material with a little help here and there. I think the writing is pretty good, but the playing seems to be the focus and better executed. It's a feast of the outdoor party sound vibe, with blues moves, a subtle 'deadness,' some reggae/ska moves, '70's funk/soul moves, and a heavy rock by which they like to roll.

The band rocks, kicks butt, and is always up, up, UP! So throw a kegger at the beach, somebody. Invite all the chicks you know, put on Tubby, turn it up, and uh... lemme know when that happens. I know what to do.



Joel Rafael Band Woodeye

by Phil Harmonic

Want to hear Woody Guthrie live? Well, you can't today. The closest you could get would be to hear Joel Rafael singing Woody. The songs of Woody Guthrie come alive again under the guise of the Joel Rafael Band's CD *Woodeye*. To me, this is truly an award-winning work—authentic, well researched, and genuine in the way it comes across. Add the tone and timbre of Rafael's voice, undeniably one of the best pure folk singers today, and they fuse into a work that is abundant with flavor, transporting you back in time. After listening to this CD, I feel that if Rafael did Bob Dylan, it would sound better than if Dylan did it himself.

This merited revival makes an important contribution to preserving a part of American history and folk music, namely the songs of Woody Guthrie. Today, original songs are as many as there are mosquitoes in Minnesota in July. In the words of Lou Curtiss, "so many great songs have already been written; why write any more?" Well, of course, he was only kidding but his point was well taken.

How many of us, as teenagers, would tell our parents that our new favorite song was "Deep Purple," or whatever, only to learn that it was originally done by Les Paul and Mary Ford or whomever? And we probably never even heard the original version. Therefore, remakes, well, *good* remakes, are absolutely necessary for the preservation of good songs.

The Joel Rafael Band consists of Joel on acoustic guitar and vocals; Carl Johnson on acoustic lead guitar; Jeff Berkley on percussion, backing vocals, and invention; and Jamaica Rafael on viola, violin, backing vocals, and string arrangements on "Dance a Little Longer," which Joel wrote the music for to accompany Woody's lyrics. The album was produced by Dan Rothchild.

For more information, go to www.joelrafael.com and www.woodyguthrie.org.



Chris Stuart & Backcountry Saints and Strangers

by Phil Harmonic

At last year's Adams Avenue Roots Festival, as I was setting up the *San Diego Troubadour* booth next to the Park Stage, the first group to perform was warming up with a three-part harmony song. As I listened, the goose bumps rose and when they finished, I shouted out with an exhilarating cry, "Hey, you're giving me goose bumps here!" They graciously said thanks and took the stage at 10:45 a.m. Saturday morning.

That group was Chris Stuart and Backcountry. Their new CD *Saints and Strangers* is a tour de force. Mostly original songs with some traditional bluegrass and Americana, this CD will move you and take you on one emotional ride. If this were figure skating, I would see the judges all holding up 10 cards. Chris Stuart (guitar and lead vocals) and Janet Beazley (banjo, tin-whistles, and lead vocals) produced and recorded a gem. Add Ivan Rosenberg (resonator guitar and clawhammer banjo) and Dean Knight (upright bass and vocals) to complete the quartet and result is vocal harmonies that mesh and blend like a choir, along with inspirational instrumentation that drives either slow or fast. This infectious music causes you to slip into that void of sound that makes life worthwhile.

I lost count of the number of times I listened to this CD during my Christmas vacation. Every day, early in the morning, for about two weeks, I popped it in. What a way to start the day.



Mark O'Connor Thirty-Year Retrospective

by Phil Harmonic

Every once in a while, a work of art surfaces, whether it be a painting, architectural structure, sculpture, written piece, or musical composition that rises above to influence our culture and the world we live in. Van Gogh, Michelangelo, Frank Lloyd Wright, Melville, and Mozart are some of the contributors and now, Mark O'Connor has blessed us, with the help of fellow instrumental virtuosi Chris Thile, Bryan Sutton, and Byron House, with his *30-Year Retrospective*. This double CD is one such work of art and is evidence that there is still some good in the world and that the human race doesn't have to continue toward the destruction and demise of the planet.

Recorded live (no over dubbing) over three concert nights in July, 2002, from music written over a 30-year span going back to 1974, this flawless work manifests itself into a language all humans understand naturally. If listened to directly or indirectly—like when you're cleaning the house—you will experience the gamut of human emotion and feel what all of us feel: sadness, happiness, frustration, exhilaration, elation, etc. This is truly what music is intended to do. This is pure instrumental music at its best. Even though there are no vocals or lyrics, you feel that O'Connor's violin, Thile's mandolin, Sutton's guitar, and House's bass all speak to you in the universal language of feeling. You'll be taken on a ride with tempos that range from bebop jazz to a slow, melancholy *lump in your throat*, but the message heard and felt always leaves you feeling positive. The listeners, if they allow themselves, will experience a transformation or self-realization through this musical form of prayer. As all great musicians do, these guys *disappear into the music* and translate the voice of the divine to you.

You'll want to get this CD.

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the local seen



Photo: Ellen Duplessie



Modern Rhythm at Fire Victim's Benefit in Poway

Photo: Paul Grupp



Joanie Mendenhall at Lestats

Photo: Paul Grupp



Gregory Page at Lestats



Charlie Loach



The Gandhi Method at Fire Victim's Benefit

Photo: Jeanne Longa



Mighty Joe Longa, Tomcat Courtney

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



D.R. Auten at Fire Victim's Benefit

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



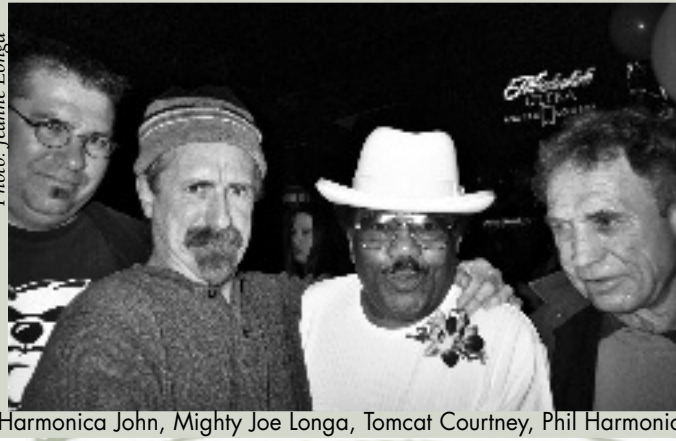
Rarities at Fire Victim's Benefit, Poway

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



Tom Boyer at Fire Victim's Benefit

Photo: Jeanne Longa



Harmonica John, Mighty Joe Longa, Tomcat Courtney, Phil Harmonic



Dave Ybarra

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



KEV at Fire Victim's Benefit



Sven-Erik Seaholm, Earl Thomas, Chuck Schiele at the Coaster



Steve White performing in Frankfurt

Photo: Paul Grupp



Matthew Knapp of Dehra Dun, Dizzy's

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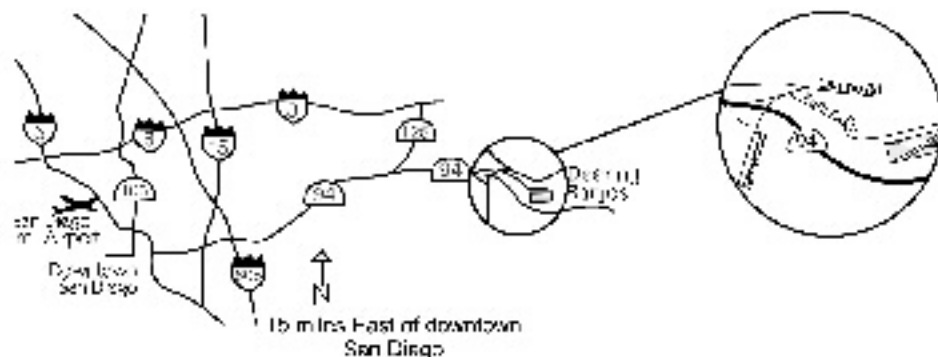
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