

T SAN DIEGO TROUBADOUR

Alternative country, Americana, roots, folk, blues, gospel, jazz, and bluegrass music news



October 2006

www.sandiegotroubadour.com

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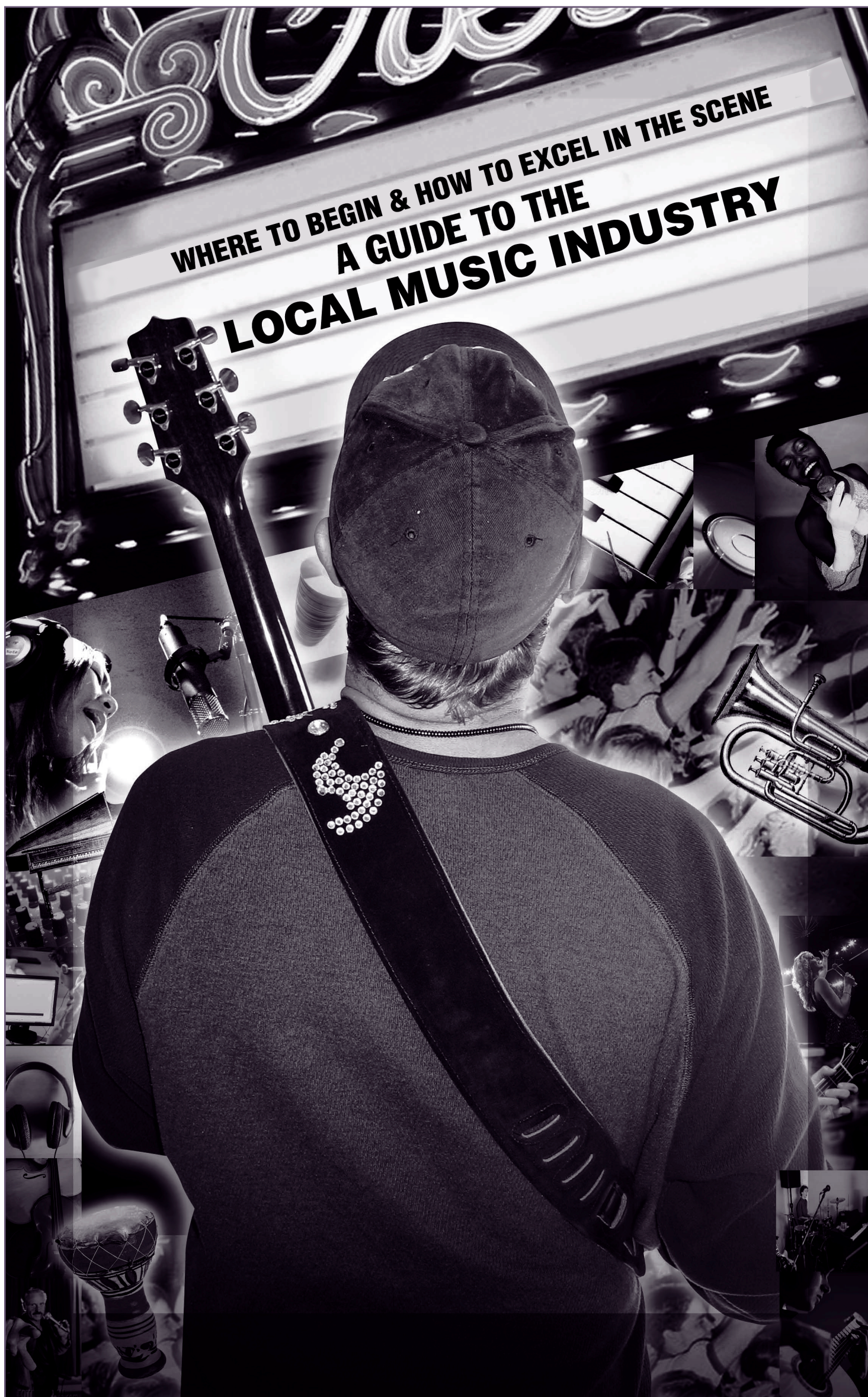
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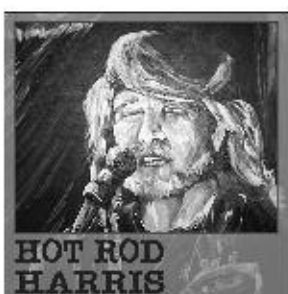
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Alternative country, Americana, roots, folk, blues, gospel, jazz, and bluegrass music news

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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 alternative country, Americana, roots, folk, blues, gospel, jazz, 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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The San Diego Troubadour is dedicated to the memory of **Ellen and Lyle Duplessie**, whose vision inspired the creation of this newspaper.

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From the Publishers

As we enter our sixth year of publication, we here at the *San Diego Troubadour* would like to thank all of our supporters and readers who are responsible for making this paper successful. Thanks also to those of you who attended our benefit at the Portugalia restaurant in Ocean Beach last July. We are especially grateful to those who contribute their time and effort so that the *Troubadour* can continue to serve the local music community.

This month we are publishing an October issue for the first time. Earlier in the year, the *Troubadour* staff decided to expand from 11 issues per year to 12 with the publication of separate issues in September and October rather than combining the two months into a double issue as we have over the previous five years.

The *San Diego Troubadour* is proud to remain a modest, mom-and-pop venture committed to bringing our readers a newspaper devoted entirely to local music. In addition to covering the history of San Diego music, the *Troubadour* brings you news of up-and-coming singer-songwriters and bands that perform at the many great music venues that San Diego has to offer.

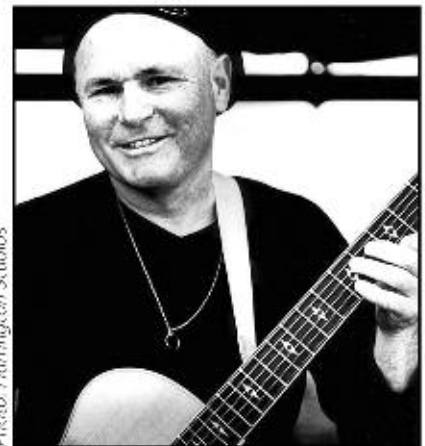
The *Troubadour* will continue to give ink to all the many deserving and creative artists who make San Diego their home. The local music scene is flourishing and shows no sign of slowing down. As long as there's music playing, the *San Diego Troubadour* will be there with interesting articles and information.

Liz Abbott and Kent Johnson, Publishers
San Diego Troubadour

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Hollis Gentry III

by Bart Mendoza

San Diego's music community was dealt yet another major blow on September 5 with the passing of jazz icon Hollis Gentry, 51. Saxophonist Gentry had survived a roll over car accident in 2004 on September 2, which fractured his jaw and caused serious facial damage, preventing him from playing his instrument; he was hospitalized for nearly three months. Sadly, he never fully recovered and could no longer play, but things took an even worse

turn when he was diagnosed with cancer just two months before his passing.

A true local music icon, Gentry had an illustrious career, although he managed to stay just under the radar. He already had a formidable rep as a sax player during his high school years. In 1969 he helped found local funk band Power —alongside Nathan East, Carl Evans, and Skipper Ragsdale — going on to tour with Barry White, Nancy Wilson, Al Jarreau, Joe Sample, David Benoit, and Larry Carlton among others.

Hollis Gentry III

1954-2006

Evans would continue to be a major force in Gentry's life. In the early 1980s, the pair helped found jazz quintet Fattburger, and although Gentry's full-time role with the group was relatively short, the connection remained strong. He appears on nearly all of the band's 14 albums to date, including the 2004 album *Work to Do*. It's a testament to the band's affection for Gentry that even though he had long ceased to be a full-time band member, his picture still appears on the bio page of Fattburger's web site. By the end of the decade he was helming his own band, Neon, which would release a self titled album on the Nova label in 1989.

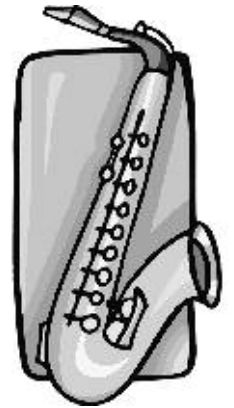
While Gentry kept a slightly lower profile during his post-Neon years, until the time of his accident he was a perennial presence at numerous clubs and festivals, as well as at the occasional recording session and tour. A re-teaming with Carlton in 1990 can be seen on the video release of *Larry Carlton Live at the Montreal Jazz Festival*.

Neon would eventually fade, but Gentry released a pair of solo albums, including *For the Record* in 2001. Gentry took home a San Diego Music Award in 1996 for Best Jazz Artist and contributed to many local recordings. Anyone looking for a

complete set of his recordings will need copies of albums by Patrick Yandall, Gomango Invasion, Planet Groove, Doug Robinson, and Robin Henkel, to name just a few. There are enough guest appearances out there for a good sized box set. Dizzy's owner Chuck Perrin has the distinction of having Gentry's last recorded performance as part of the 2005 album, *:44 of Love*.

It's hard to put into words just how important Gentry was to the local music community or even how much talent he had. But it was in a live setting that his music thrived and that's what I'll miss most. At home with ensembles of all sizes, anyone who saw him perform will recall the anticipation of music fans

whenever Gentry walked into the room. We knew we were about to hear something special.



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WHAT IS FOLK MUSIC?

The debate about the definition of folk music is an argument that stopped me from using the term back in 1987 when the last San Diego Folk Festival was held. At that time the *San Diego Union* (Don Freeman in particular) had the idea that folk music was "Joanie and Bobby and Pete. Oh, my!" and probably subversive to boot. At any rate, the word "folk" didn't get me a lot of press, so I quit using it. My definition of a folk song was one that had been passed on and changed some. In fact, that's still my definition of a folk song and the festival I wanted to do included folk songs, but it also included some other stuff that wasn't necessarily folk music — like jazz, blues, swing, and even some contemporary first-generation stuff. Some of the folks I book write songs that sound like they ought to be folk songs and my guess is that they will probably become so. Other kinds of music, such as bluegrass, Cajun, or Irish music, have their own ladder between what is contemporary and what is folk. When I started doing festivals again, I picked the term "roots" to describe the kind of festival I was doing. That lasted for another 13 years or so until it was decided to tag the word "folk" back on to the Roots Festival's name, which started the whole debate up again. Just look at blogs on www.sugarinthegourd.com, where dis-

Recordially, Lou Curtiss



Photo: Bill Richardson
Lou Curtiss

cussions about the terms "folk" and "old-timey" can cause major riffs in the firmament. If it wasn't destroyed by photograph records, radio, TV, and the like, the Great Folk Scare of the late 1950s and early 1960s sure finished it off. Others say, "Naw! that just added more folk songs to the list." My problem is that there are types of music that I would have to add to my "what is a folk song?" list (like rap, which is related to old talking blues and country recitations as well as Afro-American toasts and the dozens) that probably wouldn't work and the Roots and Folk Festival. But that doesn't mean it isn't a folk song. One of the types of song that has kept its purity, form, and longevity is the bawdy song, which is surely a folk song but you aren't going to find it at a family oriented festival like our Roots Festivals, except perhaps at a late night unofficial pick session

Now comes the singer-songwriter and there have been quite a few of them at the various Folk and Roots Festivals. Deciding whose music is appropriate for these festivals has always been more complicated. I think it has to do with the structure of the

lyrics and the accompaniment. If the song sounds like it could be an old song or if it rustles up nostalgic issues, that's a given. Songs that have a message — à la Woody Guthrie or Pete Seeger — also have a long tradition, which implies roots. A pop song is a pop song and, for the most part, that isn't roots. So much of what I hear from singer-songwriters isn't what I want to hear at the Roots Festivals. Not that some of it isn't good music. It just belongs at the Adams Avenue Street Fair, not the Roots Festival. Over the years I've booked singer-songwriters like Mary McCaslin, U. Utah Phillips, Ken Greydon, Lou and Peter Berryman, John Bosley, Patty Hall, Jim Ringer, Jody Guthrie, Ross Altman, Bodie Wagner, and Gregory Page, who all fall into my idea of what constitutes roots music. Some grew up with it; some were from second and third generation families; others just had that unique and original quality that I define as roots music.

So many people write good songs and then just destroy them with poor accompaniment. I've never understood meaningless banging on a guitar when subtle flat-picking or fingerpicking would do so much more for a song. If you can't accompany a song, don't expect to get it across as well as you'd like to. I know it's a sacrilege to say this, but I've never been a big fan of Richie Havens, mostly because he bangs the hell out of a guitar. I know he has a fine voice but just rapping or brushing a guitar with your thumb is not playing a guitar. I grew up with real guitarists like Merle Travis, Mississippi John Hurt, Joe Maphis, Memphis Minnie, and Doc Watson. I've heard tasteful accompaniment to original songs from Mary McCaslin,

Hank Snow, Gregory Page, Patty Hall, Carol McComb, and a host of others but so often it's the accompaniment that finds a performer wanting.

The 36th Adams Avenue Roots (and maybe Folk) Festival comes along the weekend of April 21 next year and already performers' packages are coming in. I've heard from Sparky and Rhonda Rucker, who will be out this way. Guy and Candie Carawan, who haven't been out to San Diego in several years, want to come out and show us a new film made by their daughter Heather that showcases their work with the civil rights movement and various other causes as well as play some music. Hopefully we can get some of the festival regulars from years past back here, like Mary McCaslin, Hank Bradley, Cathie Whitesides, Larry Hanks, Frannie Leopold, and Ray Bierl, as well as first timers Carol Elizabeth Jones and Laurel Bliss, Rick Lee, and others.

The reel to reel library at the Lou Curtiss Sound Library grows every day thanks to people who put stuff on tape over the years and are donating their reels to our digitization efforts. The Sound Library project, cosponsored by the Library of Congress and UCLA's Department of Ethnomusicology, includes tapes of concerts and festivals in San Diego that date back to the early 1960s — all the San Diego Folk Festivals, Roots Festivals, and a variety of concerts from all over the area. The unsung folks who manned the old real-to-real decks, which captured all that great music from artists like Richard Schurch, Bob Pillow, Ted Theodore, Jack Van Olst, Dennis Squier, and others I'm not remembering, deserve an extra special

thanks from all of us. Over the next year, check out the FolkArtsRareRecords.com website for selections from those years past.

I just heard that the folk music community lost one of its biggest supporters this week with the passing of Ted Theodore. Active for years in the San Diego Folk Song Society, Ted was always there behind the scenes with his ever-present tape machines in tow. All the folkies he talked to around the world on his Citizens Band radio are going to miss his promotion of San Diego folk happenings; local folkies will miss his enthusiasm and good will.

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NEW ACOUSTIC GENERATION

A Field of Dreams for Acoustic Musicians

by Craig Yerkes

Few things in life are more difficult than convincing people to come out to a local acoustic music show. Ask any San Diego music promoter and they will tell you that sometimes it seems to take an act of Congress just to get 20 people through the door. So, what made local singer-songwriter Michael Tiernan think he could get hundreds of people to come out for an acoustic show on a week night . . . in North County??!! Maybe he watched the movie *Field of Dreams* a few too many times ("If you build it, they will come."). Lucky for all of us, Tiernan

acted on his idea and launched the New Acoustic Generation, a series of shows at none other than the legendary Belly Up Tavern in Solana Beach.

I asked Tiernan recently about the genesis of NAG. As he recalls, "The Belly Up had come to me and asked me to put a show together at the last minute after something fell through. . . they dug my idea for the kind of show we could do and we decided not just to do it last minute, but let's really do this!" The fact that Tiernan was able to secure such a prestigious venue turned more than a few heads in the San Diego music scene and it's not

something he approached lightly. "With this venue, it's a risk if you come up short, but I really like the people at the Belly Up. The crew that's in there now is phenomenal," he explains.

The first show last January, which featured such notables as Renata Youngblood, Tiernan himself, and Paige Aufhammer, brought in roughly 250 (paid) people, sending a strong statement that NAG was for real. Since that first show, other San Diego heavies, such as Steph Johnson, Lindsey Yung, and Carlos Olmeda, have performed at NAG, and attendance has continued to be truly impressive, if not shocking, considering that all of the shows have been on weeknights.

Clearly, to have that kind of success, you have to pick the right people to play. Tiernan states, "I try to book people who have some kind of buzz surrounding their music and I like to give spots to up and coming artists who maybe haven't had a chance to play at a larger venue. It's also important that the artist shows excitement for the show and a willingness to really promote it." While it's one thing to get the right acts to fill the roster, the next challenge becomes structuring a show in such a way that people will come and stay for all or most of the night. As Tiernan points out, "The trick is to get people to come and not just stay for the artist they came to see, but to stay for the others as well. We do the song circle at the beginning to give everyone a taste of what the artists will be doing. We make an effort to move fast between performers as well."

The next NAG showcase will be held on October 4, featuring locals Lee

Coulter, Simeon Flick (who will be using this forum as his CD Release), Kim Divine (her CD is reviewed this issue, page 13), and the Cathryn Beeks Ordeal. I asked these performers to share their thoughts about the New Acoustic Generation and what it means to San Diego music. Cathryn Beeks (local champion of live acoustic showcases, including the highly successful Acoustic Alliance) said, "Michael's NAG nights at the Belly Up are an amazing opportunity for San Diego's acoustic artists and fans alike." Simeon Flick concurs, "Mike is opening doors for so many of the overlooked artists here in San Diego, giving them a chance to exhibit at a prominent local venue." Kim Divine loves the fact that Tiernan has "taken some of Southern California's best songwriters and created an event that takes them out of the coffee shop vibe . . . and welcomes them into the prestigious Belly Up Tavern." Aussie transplant, Lee Coulter adds, "It's a common misconception that if you're acoustic and you're not huge, playing anything bigger than a coffee shop would be a waste of a sound system. After seeing an NAG show, folks would agree that a lot of the local acoustic acts deserve to share that stage with the national and international acts who come through." In addition to the above-mentioned performers Tiernan let it slip that there will be a "surprise guest performer" on the October 4 bill, but you'll have to come see for yourself because he won't say who it is!

Looking forward, Tiernan sees an indefinite future for NAG. He explains, "We'll probably stick to the idea of doing the shows every couple of months to make sure it's always an event. We'll look to include more and more out-of-town [indie] acts as well as some of the more established acoustic acts in San Diego." As a broader goal, Tiernan sees NAG growing into something that will have "brand name recognition beyond its individual performers." Tiernan sees the entire San



Michael Tiernan

Diego music scene as having the ability to continually enhance and re-define the image of our entire town (think Austin and Seattle).

NAG represents a promising point of light for all of the acoustic performers in our fine city. "I am trying to create a really good karmic thing, personally and for the entire San Diego music community, with these shows." Tiernan built it, they came, and it looks like they're going to keep on coming.

For more info on the New Acoustic Generation and the performers involved, go to www.tiernantunes.com/sdnag.html or www.bellyup.com



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O' Berkley, Where Hart Thou? A Joyous Celebration of American Roots Music

by Peter Bolland

Beauty and truth are timeless; they never go out of style. Great art seems to break the bounds placed on lesser creations. Tidy classifications of genre and style fade in the bright light cast by masterpieces. Out of the unique American musical vernacular came the tap roots of blues, jazz, gospel, folk, country, and rock. *O' Berkley, Where Hart Thou?* celebrates those roots. Who knew that eternal transcendence could pour forth from a five string banjo, a flat-picked guitar, a low-slung fiddle, and a slapping upright bass?

San Diego folk icons Jeff Berkley and Calman Hart are once again gathering together some of their talented friends for a second installment of their sold out 2005 tribute to old time American music, *O Berkley, Where Hart Thou?* Riffing on

the Coen brother's film, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, Berkley Hart will take center stage along with the 7th Day Buskers, Eve Selis and Marc Twang, Gregory Page, Lisa Sanders, Randi Driscoll, Cindy Lee Berryhill, Robin Adler, Tim Flannery, and others to render songs from the film's best-selling soundtrack as well as other songs of the period. But what sets this show apart from other tribute shows is the seamless integration of original material. Folk music is, after all, alive and well here in San Diego. And whether you call it folk, bluegrass, Americana, or roots, one thing is clear. It's damn good stuff.

On Friday, October 13 at 7:30 the Seaside Church Auditorium in Encinitas will be transformed into an Appalachian back porch. Also on hand will be the just released DVD/CDs of the original *O Berkley, Where Hart Thou?*, recorded

before a packed house in February of last year.

In the late 1990s, Ethan and Joel Coen began conceiving a film project around an unusual idea. They wanted to film a new version of Homer's *Odyssey*, set in the American South of the 1930s. An unusual melding of two classic eras — ancient Greece and the Depression-era South — called for an unusual approach. Typically, music is added to a film at the end of the process. But before the Coen brothers wrote or shot one scene, they hired T-Bone Burnett to record the soundtrack. Using field recordings and a core group of musicians to create new material, Burnett created a powerfully moving musical experience. With Burnett's soundtrack playing in their headphones, the Coen brothers set out to write and shoot the film. The soundtrack became a surprise best seller with the single "Man of Constant Sorrow," even garnering extensive radio play on top-40 country stations, including local station KSON. Some even credit the success of the soundtrack with paving the way for a resurgence in alt-country and Americana artists like Allison Krauss and Union Station, Gillian Welch, and a host of others. But one thing is sure. The success of this music proves that there is a hunger out there for heart-felt, simple, true American music, something Nashville stopped providing decades ago.

Serving as "house band" for the evening, the 7th Day Buskers (Shawn Rohlf, Robin Henkel, Dan Broder, Beth Mosko, and Jim Austin) bring the authentic roots feel and masterful chops that the material so dearly requires.



Photo: CeCe Cantone
Jeff Berkley and Calman Hart

According to Rohlf, this music matters because "it seems to go deeper than my ears. I can feel it in my bones. I hear my ancestor's pain and struggles as they crossed an ocean and braved the elements to find a new life. I feel the excitement and joy of dancing on the front porch to the banjo and fiddle after working from dawn till dusk. There was no Hollywood glamour, no MTV, no CD sales or Grammy awards to complicate, sterilize, and exploit this music. It was simply played to entertain, comfort, and pass along some history to the next generation. We are so far removed from that today."

Although the show is the brain child of Jeff Berkley and Calman Hart, the endless details of management and production are handled by Berkley's long-time collaborator and partner, Lizzie Wann. When she isn't booking her highly successful and long-running Meeting Grace house concert series, or pursuing her own career as a poet, Wann pours hundreds of hours into arranging rehearsals, working the phones, booking the facility, stage managing, handling the financials, and, in short, doing everything but sing and play guitar. For Wann, it's a labor of love. "When I hear this music," she says, "I am transported to another time and yet I can easily relate to the words and music. They are spiritual without being preachy; they make me feel lifted up. They are easy on the ear without being simplistic. They are funny without being ridiculous. I don't grow tired of these songs because they feel more real than so much of what you hear on the mainstream radio these days."

"It's so much fun to be a part of these shows," says singer-songwriter, folk musician and voice of the Padres, Tim Flannery. "It's just a sure night of feel-good music on the ears." For long-time friends and collaborators Berkley and Flannery, the real strength of the show is the camaraderie the musicians share. Gathering around one or two microphones, just like they used to do in the 1930s, keeping it lo-tech and hi-warmth, makes the magic happen. "Getting everyone together is the real prize for me," says Berkley. "It's a party and a half. The audience feels it, we feel it, and it goes with us when we leave." And if, between songs, you see them passing around a Mason jar full of clear liquid, chances are it isn't water. Flannery still has deep roots in the hills of Kentucky where he's from, and maybe, just maybe, he might have slipped a jar or two of genuine Moonshine past customs on the last Padres road trip. It's possible. For *O Berkley, Where Hart Thou?*, no detail is left to chance.

Flannery, Berkley, and everyone involved feels the same way about the music and its timeless relevance. And that's what sets this show apart from the flurry of other tribute shows that have come along in recent years. For these artists, this music has been the heart and soul of the inspiration for their own

songwriting. "It's meant everything to me to go to school on this music," says Berkley. "It's infused in everything I do." Listen to any of the original recordings of Berkley Hart, Eve Selis, the 7th Day Buskers, Tim Flannery, Gregory Page, and the rest of them, and you'll hear the ghosts of American music brought to life. This show is so much more than just a cover band party. There is an almost religious reverence to this show. Maybe it's the innate spirituality of the material itself and the way it illuminates the darkest corners of the soul with the possibility of redemption and salvation.

What strikes you first when you listen to this music is its naked intimacy, honesty, and fearlessness. Willing to grab the devil by the horns, these songs spread a healing balm over the existential wounds of loneliness, poverty, death, and despair. Hear Ralph Stanley's "O Death" and feel the hair stand up on the back of your neck. Feel the cold darkness slide through your veins when the Cox Family sings "I Am Weary (Let Me Rest)," a mournful lament sung by a dying child to her grieving mother. Feel the relief of the belly laughs as you hear the classic hobo fantasy "Big Rock Candy Mountain," with its cigarette trees, lakes of stew, and chickens that lay soft boiled eggs. Weaving sorrow and joy together in a life-like tapestry that wraps around an audience like a warm embrace, music like this, performed by artists like this, make you remember why you fell in love with music in the first place.

If you had the misfortune of missing the first production of *O Berkley, Where Hart Thou?* last year, here's your chance for redemption. For tickets and further information, visit www.berkleyhart.com



Calman Hart's Top Ten Reasons Why He Loved Doing *O Berkley, Where Hart Thou?*

1. Got to yodel
2. Got to play music with my daughter
3. Got to hear Jeff Berkley play banjo
4. Got to hear Gregory Page play the kazoo
5. Got to hear Lisa Sanders sing the blues
6. Got to watch Robin Henkel shred in suspenders
7. Got to hear Eve Selis sing like Ralph Stanley
8. Got to hear the audience sing "I Went Down to the River to Pray"
9. Got to shout, "How 'bout some fiddle!" and "Take it away dobro!" in the middle of our songs
10. Got to see the 7th Day Buskers dressed like they just stepped out of a 1920s' southern speakeasy



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by Will Edwards

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

On September 14, I woke up with an idea in my head for an awards program that would celebrate and promote the talented members of the acoustic music community in San Diego. Perhaps it was the lunar eclipse this month or maybe my brain was subject to some kind of gravitational anomaly during the solstice, but it seemed clear that a time had come for the legions of singer-songwriters in San Diego to stand and be recognized for their accomplishments. I call it the H.A.T. Awards which stands for "Honoring Acoustic Talent."

In recent months many people have come up to me and started talking about the growing sense of community that exists among acoustic musicians here. I decided to begin collecting video "testimony" as well as nominations. My hope was to find out what people would say about their individual experiences. Over the next two weeks, I found myself wandering further and further afield as I

attempted to traverse the wide range of acoustic music events now co-existing in San Diego. I felt like a gypsy with a video camera and sometimes I'd be at three events in one night! What I found out has changed the way I think about San Diego and all the musicians I know.

THE POWER OF SILENCE

"What are you going to ask me?" That was commonly the first question out of the mouth of each new interviewee. I had a set of basic questions about the scene, their experiences, etc. and found people to be hesitant at first talking on camera. Some of them couldn't decide whether they were talking to the camera or to me and their eyes would dart back and forth like they were watching a NASCAR race. I found a valuable ally in my search for honest answers: silence! First I'd ask, "Tell me about your experiences as a musician in San Diego." Then I'd wait; they would answer briefly and there would be silence. I'd look at my guest with an earnest sense of interest and patiently wait. The silence always seemed to break

COMMUNITY VIBE

their hesitation and after a couple of "get-up-to-speed" sentences, they'd be off like a jet, talking about all their interests and sincere hopes for the future.

I landed upon this most interesting discovery: many of my comrades were indeed hopeful about the future of their music and their hometown's scene. This was in contrast to the usual open mic banter about how someone played a great gig on Saturday night and hardly anyone showed. We all know that music is a tough gig (no pun intended) but we also tend to complain a little when given the opportunity. But, there was more than hope or sympathy present in these interviews. What emerged was a clearer picture of how all the people and places that constitute our acoustic music community play their part and contribute in unique but very important ways. Some provide our inspiration, while others do the groundwork. Some of us are the ears of the scene and others are the voices. I was amazed what I could learn from a little bit of silence!

HONORING ACOUSTIC TALENT

I've done roughly 20 or 30 interviews to date. I'm going to do more. But, in the interim, I'm focusing on ways to take what people have told me and try to weave the H.A.T. Awards into the existing fabric of the community so that it,

too, can play its role. Perhaps it will be all things to all people but I doubt it. Instead, I hope that it will be one more patch of stick and mortar that helps to join the artistic and logistic characters and components of the acoustic music scene together.

I said earlier that my recent experiences have changed the way I think about San Diego and all the musicians I know. I'd say that my introduction to performing as an independent artist was a bit lonely. For a long time there was, in my eyes, a competitive current that flowed beneath the surface. This was never my preference, but I resigned myself to it. The voices I've been hearing recently seem to

be singing a different tune. Musicians have become more integrated with those around them. One word that was used frequently throughout my interviews was the word "community." Some people were looking for more of it and others seemed to have found it. But, everyone wanted to see it grow, recognizing that community is an integral part of moving everyone forward.

The San Diego H.A.T. Awards will commence on October 8. More information is available online at <http://www.sandiegohatawards.com>.

Will Edwards can also be found online at and <http://www.willedwards.net>. You can email him at will@willedwards.net.

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Oftentimes, the most difficult aspect of any undertaking is facing the challenge of knowing where to begin. It's one thing to be inspired about music. It's another to be inspired about the business of music. This is what separates the hobbyists from the professionals. After all, when you're talking about the "music business," unfortunately the emphasis falls on the word "business."

We asked a number of San Diego's foremost professionals to share their insights with regard to where to begin and how to survive the music industry. Although there are many topics to cover, in this issue we'll focus on recording and promotion.

Producers and Engineers



Analog vs. digital?

There's an entire segment of the music industry built around selling the "magic" of each of these platforms. In the end, it's all marketing hype. What anyone really needs to know is that they both do the same thing, but in different ways. It's the person turning the knobs (and his/her knowledge of what to turn and when) that matters. Analog and digital are format tools to record and manipulate sound. If you don't know how to use them, the "magic" of either one is useless.

— Paul Abbott, Zen Mastering

This one question could spark hours of debate between

the two schools of audio thinking and hearing. What I've found is that high-resolution digital will record whatever you plug into it exactly as it sounds. It all starts with the player, instrument, and recording environment. But, if an engineer has a decent microphone, a decent pre-amp, and a great A-D converter for converting the signal from analog to digital, then digital is the way to go. However, every one of those things costs money. It is the fusing of both worlds within the same signal chain that seems to work the best at Miracle Recording.

— Jeff Berkley, Miracle Recording

The cost effectiveness of digital systems translates into the most important feature of all: anyone can create music independently. With this in mind, the advent of digital audio has opened the recording landscape and enabled creative output that wouldn't have happened 15 or 20 years ago.

— Will Edwards, Tangled Records

Digital editing is a powerful weapon in the modern recording era, but many people feel that they are somehow cheating if they compile multiple takes into one brilliant performance. Purist views aside, it isn't cheating if your record kicks ass in the end.

Conversely it is easy to overcorrect things to the point where they don't feel as good as a live take, especially in the rock and folk genres. This is where a person's experience and musicality come into play — knowing when not to touch something is equally as important as any other editing skills.

Track count comes into play when you have many little parts to add. Conventionally speaking, having more than 40 parts with only 24 tracks to commit them to means doing a great deal of submixing. You can give each part independent EQ and effects to remain editable. The flipside is known as "optionitis," where you hold off deciding which tracks to use until the mix stage.

— Sven-Erik Seaholm, Kitsch & Sync Production

Saving time in the studio

Be prepared! Be prepared! Be prepared!

— Jeff Berkley, Aaron Bowen, Sven-Erik Seaholm

You can't really. Get yourself prepared and the recording will go as quickly as it can go. The truth is that your record deserves your full attention while you're in session. Sometimes that takes some time. Get someone with a lot of recording experience to help.

— Jeff Berkley

I'd suggest that you get a \$150 four-track and make the best recording you can. When you're done, go to a studio and make a recording. With this approach, you'll lose your hair, shatter your nerves, and learn everything you need to know. When you enter the studio, you'll be sharp and aware, and you won't spend a penny that isn't necessary. Guaranteed!

— Will Edwards

Save in the studio by being PREPARED! I know that sounds like some sort of cop out, but don't let your excitement influence your "readiness." Are you sure you're happy with the lyrics? Is the song structure right? Can you and the other musicians perform it well? Don't rely on the engineer to fix it for you. That should only be the very last resort.

— Christopher Hoffee, CHAOS Recording

Be prepared. Your music is the result of you and your preparedness. Strive for no excuses.

— Chuck Schiele, StudioB

Before going into the studio, rehearse like crazy. Have a strong idea of the overall production or feel of each individual tune. Try to work on the orchestration beforehand and possibly musicians that you are going to be inviting.

— Jason Turtle

What should I know before I get started?

Find a producer/engineer you trust. Run down all your ideas and make a rough map of what you have in mind. That way you'll have a good foundation before you even push the recording, in essence saving time. Most important of all, get what YOU want. Do not let your engineer make you sound like them!!

— Aaron Bowen

Pre-production is often the most overlooked aspect of making an album. As I said before, readiness will save you time, money, and headaches. Pre-production is the process of going through your songs and finding out their strengths and weaknesses and what kind of sound treatment to give them or what instrumentation is needed.

— Christopher Hoffee

I'm big on pre-production. By the time I make a CD for myself, I've already recorded my ideas a number of times. Sometimes what is fun to play isn't exactly the same fun when listening back. This is a good place to be honest with your artistic self in terms of writing and arranging, which allows you to walk into the studio with confidence, because you know you've taken the time and effort to heighten your music. Pre-production also helps the producer understand your vision more clearly and where his or her contributions might be more worthwhile.

— Chuck Schiele

What about instrumentation?

The denser your instrumentation, the more time (and money) your album will consume, be it rock, jazz, or classical music. Many artists think that they should just add more instruments to "fill out" their sound. Without a clear vision, it will just be sonic clutter.

— Paul Abbott



Compiled and written by Will Edwards, Chuck Schiele, Liz Abbott, and Marcia Claire

As far as choosing instrumentation, just make sure you choose instruments that complement each other sonically. Don't overload on one sonic color or another. Have balance wherever possible.

— Jeff Berkley

Imagine writing your song with red, yellow, and blue — the limited choice of colors you have. Once you're in the studio with a producer who has unlimited colors at their disposal, your little song can all of a sudden become huge and gorgeous. What was once guitar and vocal can grow to include a full rhythm section, plus strings, horns, or percussion, and background vocals if the song calls for it.

— Alicia Champion & Danielle LoPresti, Durga Sound Studio

Instrumentation is your palette. On the economic side of things, the more instruments you have, the more time and cost. Recording will take longer but so will mixing and mastering.

— Will Edwards

I don't think that instrumentation and genre *impact* the process, but rather they *become* the process. Acoustic instruments and country songs will flow one way. Electric guitars and punk songs will go another and so on.

What I will say is that those choices set the course of everything to come.

— Christopher Hoffee

Instruments all have timbres and harmonic ranges that might be difficult to mix with each other of like qualities, hence making an album sound too busy. Be sure to cover all ranges if you're going to do your mixing with a large group of instruments.

— Jason Turtle

Influential producers

George Martin is the prototype. Jimmy Page was one of the first great crossover successes as musician and producer. Rick Ruben is a modern day high-water mark.

— Paul Abbott

It depends on who you ask. I like T-Bone Burnett, Rick Rubin, Daniel Lanois, Mark Howard, Ethan Johns, Glyn Johns, Paul Dieter, Sven Eric-Seaholm, George Martin, Ben Moore, Cindy Lee Berryhill, Marti Amado, John Katchur, Steve Lillywhite, Gregory Page, and myself because I can produce one hell of a turkey freakin' sandwich. That's an old joke: "You're the producer, right? Why don't you produce me a turkey f##kin' sandwich!" I love that one.

— Jeff Berkley

Phil Spector, Barry Gordy, Trina Shoemaker, Butch Vig, Ani DiFranco, Glenn Ballard, Quincy Jones, Linda Perry.

— Alicia Champion & Danielle LoPresti

Daniel Lanois and T-Bone Burnett both adhere to a sense of authenticity that I relate to. This attachment isn't rational but more connected with my emotional response to their music. Daniel Lanois' work on Bob Dylan's *Time Out of Mind* (1997) stands out. My favorite is Brian Eno. His work with U2 and James were both very influential to me.

— Will Edwards

In no specific order Tom Dowd, Tony Visconti, Glyn Johns, Phil Spector, Steve Albini, and George Martin.

— Christopher Hoffee

Assuming you're asking for one who does both at the same time, there are surprisingly few high-profile examples. Many producers started out as engineers. Phil Ramone was

the engineer for a great many Sinatra and big band records and later produced many of Paul Simon and Billy Joel's albums. The same can be said for Alan Parsons, whose engineering credits included the Beatles, Pink Floyd, and the Hollies, which eventually led to producing Al Stewart, Pilot, and a string of solo project records. Tom Dowd is also a great example of someone who did both. His discography includes Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, the Allman Brothers, Otis Redding, and Eric Clapton. More recently, you've got someone like Daniel Lanois, who produced and engineered for U2, Bob Dylan, and Emmylou Harris.

— Sven-Erik Seaholm

Will pitch correction save me?

Cher is the exception, not the rule. Learn to sing and play your instrument.

— Paul Abbott

I think it's an instrument. To say it's wrong or right is like saying Dylan shouldn't have gone electric. Music is whatever you put on tape. If pitch correction is the vehicle for expression, then so be it. However, the sound of a clear, crisp, and natural voice is difficult to beat.

— Will Edwards

NEVER use them. I want to hear "people" and their emotions. It is not about being perfect; it's about being honest and emotional. The "perfection of imperfection" is what I look for.

— Christopher Hoffee

I have a noose hanging from the ceiling of my studio for this very purpose. Works great! No problems with pitch as of yet.

— Chuck Schiele

I always say it's not the plow, it's the farmer. All the plug-ins and effects currently available to us are just tools. If you rely on them to make music for you, it's going to sound like it. If you always remember that you're making music and you apply these tools judiciously in service of that, then whatever helps you attain the best musical result is the right thing.

— Sven-Erik Seaholm

What are the common challenges for you when you record first-timers?

The recording process is weird and a little unnatural, so bridging that gap can be difficult sometimes. The main thing is to just make them feel at ease so they can deliver the performance that both of you want.

— Jeff Berkley

Helping the artist to articulate what that they want and getting all these strange misconceptions out of their heads about how things are supposed to work.

— Aaron Bowen

Lack of preparation, lack of vision, unrealistic expectations. For example, someone who wants to sound like Joss Stone, but has a voice like Gwen Stefani's, or someone who wants a radio-ready product, recorded, mixed, and mastered in three hours.

— Alicia Champion & Danielle LoPresti

Experience helps, but confidence is the key. Try recording the first song that is the easiest. Use it to build the confidence to relax.

— Christopher Hoffee

Many times, whether it's their first time in the studio or their hundredth, it comes down to one word: trust. A rookie recording artist may be afraid of the unknown, i.e., *what's*

he going to think of my playing or what's he going to do to my music? On the other hand, a veteran could be carrying around memories of bad recording experiences and need some reassurance that things are going to be better this time around.

— Sven-Erik Seaholm

How do you help nervous artists get over their nerves?

Just talk it all out and then play it all out before you roll the tape. Prepare them for the weirdness to come.

— Jeff Berkley

I try to make the artist as comfortable as possible. I let them know everything's okay and we will get it right.

— Aaron Bowen

I shoulder the technical burden; I let the music and process take its course and show support by encouraging them to try, try again.

— Will Edwards

No challenges, really. If anything, I might spend a little extra time acquainting newcomers with the process and the options, and answering their questions. To loosen things up, I listen to the artist and let them know I understand where their heart is on the matter. And then I embrace it with the same enthusiasm. From there I like to keep things fun, which it should be, and kick in my smartassness to lighten things up a bit. While building my studio I had a great concern for *mojo*. I wanted to create a space where everyone could forget the day and feel comfortable and musical.

— Chuck Schiele

It's essential to remember that this is a service industry. Your number one job is to make the artist comfortable. Whether it's getting their headphones to sound right or getting them a bottle of water. Everyone deserves to be treated like a welcome guest in your studio, period. Your needs should always be secondary to theirs.

— Sven-Erik Seaholm

What's the most important advice you'd give a recording artist with regard to production and choice of studio?

Get what YOU want and make sure you trust this person to do just that. It's your music!!!

— Aaron Bowen

Nothing beats working with someone you feel respected by, someone who is eager and excited to work with you and your music, someone who wants to help you manifest YOUR vision. Finding the person you click with is a wonderful thing. Finding a studio you feel comfy in is, to us, more important than finding one with all the latest gear, because at the end of the day so much of the success of your recording will be in the product YOU deliver. If you're comfortable, you're going to play and sing your best. Nothing can beat that.

— Alicia Champion & Danielle LoPresti

I think the best thing an artist can do is to educate themselves about what happens in the studio. Learn about EQ, compressors, and acoustics. You'll save time, sweat, and money if you learn the talk and you'll be able to better render your creative idea if you understand the tools.

— Will Edwards

I've always made my personal choices based on the instinct of *mojo* (art starts turning into science without it). I recommend the same for others. Trust is part of it — you

should feel embraced. Musical vision is part of it — it should feel shared. When reviewing options for recording, ask yourself this: "Who wants to hear the same result as I do?" If you choose well by that logic, you'll probably enjoy listening to your work longer.

— Chuck Schiele

Pick someone you trust. Nothing speaks more about a producer's ability to fulfill your needs than the work that they've done and whether you feel comfortable with them. Talk with some of their past clients. How was their experience?

— Sven-Erik Seaholm

Know what it is that you want before going in. Send them a CD of what you love and what you perceive your music sounding similar to; and ask for some of their portfolio.

— Jason Turtle

Promoters



What single most important piece of advice would you give a recording artist with regard to promoters?

In the term "music business," the emphasis falls on the word "business." As musicians we hate to say this and wish it weren't this way. Clubs view entertainment as a way of making people thirsty. Lesser bands that pack the place will get gigs before better bands who can bring in the people on their guest list. Even the Beatles had to recognize this at the beginning. One can't blame the scene or the city's lack of cultural interest. It is what it is, and it's been that way for everyone throughout all time. Accept it, get smart, and go for it. Therefore, you should be as enthusiastic about promoting yourself as you are about your music. It matters. It's what separates the hobbyist from the truly serious. And promoters are pretty serious about this reality.

We would also say that you need to "be the scene." Go to your peers' shows, talk to people about what's happening, and do things that foster a better scene. Pretty soon you'll find yourself in one.

We also like to tell artists, "You are your own product, so you need to sell it. Whether or not you know it, you're selling yourself every day — your services, your product. If you can't find the practical/entrepreneurial side of yourself, ally with someone who really likes what you do and will work with you to handle these aspects." And always, always be reciprocal. If a promoter takes a chance on you, they're going to give you their time and attention because they're investing in your ability. Be honest about your draw, get the word out, and be sure to ask people to come to your show.

— Chuck and Joanna Schiele, Beach Music Mafia

Whether you're working with a promoter, a venue owner, or another band organizing the show, always make sure you have all the details before you agree to do a show, i.e., what time you'll play, what you get for playing, what you expect from each other, such as comps for drinks, how many people you are allowed to put on the guest list, etc. Most shows these days are run on a handshake, not a contract, however, and are also negotiated via email so you have it all in writing.

— Cathryn Beeks, Listen Local

You've got to keep remembering that promoters, bookers, and club managers, as much as they love music, are all making their living doing this. Make sure you know what's expected of you before the gig. Try and define what a successful gig is at that particular club for that promoter (20 people? 50 people? 100 people?).

— Big Fellas



Where should an artist or band spend their money in the promotion arena?

Every success boils down to hard work. Most musicians I know expect more promotion from someone else than they're willing to do themselves. The point is that you promote and take responsibility for yourself as well as for your success.

How you promote yourself is more important than where, although where you promote is also crucial. A little creativity allows you to do it with a small budget. With a bigger budget, you can expand a few possibilities. Remember that for every musician who's made it and says they shunned the whole promotional thing for the sake of purity in their art, there is a paid PR agent drinking champagne backstage. Everybody who hits the big time is a big fan of advertising. We're also big fans of advertising.

The first thing you need to figure out is what kind of budget you've got and work toward that. Come up with realistic goals and create a focused plan to help you set your goals. Thanks to the Internet you can promote yourself for pennies. That's the up side, the down side is that since the costs are minimal, many people are doing the same thing, so standing out from the crowd becomes the challenge. Local coverage is easier than regional, regional easier than national, etc. Print is easier than radio, which is easier than television. Ask your friends to help you as well. Word of mouth is powerful. Being proactive and creative will get you great results.

— Beach Music Mafia

Artists should NEVER pay a promoter or a venue owner to play — EVER. Never ever. After your show the venue will have made more than enough on bar sales to pay their staff and make a profit. A promoter makes their money on the door and only books bands they know will draw enough to cover expenses, pay bands, and provide a profit. Make certain that when a promoter or venue owner is taking money at the door, YOU GET PART OF IT!

You also need to attract strangers, not just friends, to your shows. So any way that you can beg, borrow, or steal print, radio, or TV attention, you take a big leap from being another flyer/MySpace band.

— Big Fellas

What can an artist or band realistically expect when working with a promoter?

To match your own effort in fostering a better scene.

— Beach Music Mafia

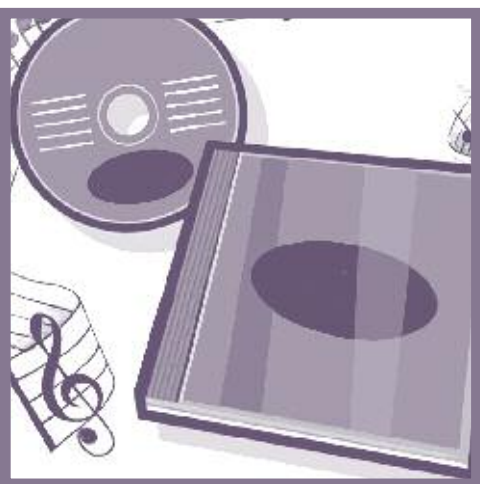
If the club doesn't sell drinks when you play, your odds of being booked for future shows changes. That's the cardinal rule of live music, especially at bars. Make sure you know what's expected of you — if you get 20 people to come to your show at a small bar, you're doing fine. If 20 people show up at Canes, good luck getting asked back.

— Big Fellas

Reputation is key. Before working with anyone, ask other bands who have played a particular venue or worked with particular promoter what their experience was like. Did the show start on time? Were the bands paid? Was there a crowd? Were the fans treated well?

— Listen Local

Packaging and Graphics



After your CD has been professionally mastered, you'll want your hard work manufactured. Here are a few things to consider going into the process.

Replication vs. duplication: BIG difference

Even if you can't afford to have your CDs made in an ISO-9002 certified facility, at the very least make sure they're manufactured using a true replication process, as opposed

to the duplication process used by people who make CD "one-offs." While CD one-offs are handy when you're in a rush and only need a small number of CDs, replicated CDs are significantly more reliable and durable than do-it-yourself one-offs — which are literally burned rather than injection-molded like the replicated CDs that major-label releases use.

CD packaging choices. Looks do matter!

With the traditional jewel case, you can choose from single-page to eight plus pages of inserts that include lyrics, liner notes, photos, etc. You can choose how many colors you want as well. The more intricate the package, the more you pay. Many people also like the eco-friendly soft pack, although they tend to be a tad pricier.

Remember to get a UPC bar code. You'll need that if you want retailers to carry your product.

Most manufacturers have an in-house design team if you haven't hired someone to create your CD package. I suggest hiring a graphic designer with experience creating effective CD packages, because there are certain parameters that must be observed. You'll want the best artwork and photos you can afford. If you're thinking to yourself, "It's about the music, man," I can't stress enough how important it is to have a visually appealing product! This is the first impression many people will have of you (way before they listen to the CD), so be sure to put some effort into creating a professional looking package that retailers can put on their shelves and people will want to listen to.

You can shop online for the best prices. Many of the larger manufacturers have negotiated packages with music distributors like CD Baby and music promotion agencies like Sonicbids, so that if you use their services, you're automatically enrolled with their business partners. If you have a few dollars to spend and lack the time or manpower to set up accounts with these various service providers, this is a pretty good option. If budget is your main concern, you can leave the frills and shop a little more as there are many manufacturers offering excellent deals in this competitive market.

If you're in a rush, consider manufacturing locally. You won't have to wait for shipping and you'll save money if you can pick up your product yourself. This just might offset the difference in the replication and printing charges.

Either way, always ask the manufacturer for references and, if possible, samples of their work. Now that you've got a bona fide product in your hot little hands, it's time to move onto the next step: distribution.

— Beach Music Mafia

Online Distribution



Independent musicians have extremely powerful distribution channels available to them. When the time comes to sell a CD, artists can use the Internet to pawn their wares on very well-reputed online storefronts like Amazon.com and CDBaby.com. All the artist needs to do is make a CD and setup an account. On the other hand, if an artist has a MySpace page or a website, they can start a PayPal account and get busy selling their CDs online for free!

Pros

Online distribution through vendors like iTunes and Amazon comes with a certain reputation for reliability. Some still feel uncomfortable typing their credit card number onto a website. Sites like Amazon and iTunes carry corporate assurance that the online transactions are secure and reliable.

These online stores also have significant audiences and, in the game of numbers, the numbers don't get any bigger. Amazon and iTunes have literally tens of millions of visitors, which gives you a better chance of being noticed.

Cons

With their reputation comes a surcharge. iTunes keeps a percentage of your sales and so does CDBaby.com and Amazon. Sometimes this charge is almost 50 percent, so read the fine print before you start selling. You may find that when selling a \$10 CD, you only get a check for \$5!

Don't be fooled into thinking that having a website or a CD for sale online will guarantee success. It is an important step, but it isn't a replacement for live shows and good music. Keep a realistic mindframe and take advantage of every avenue open to you.

— Will Edwards, Tangled Records

Labels



Best advice from indie labels

No one will work as hard for your music as you will. Do your very best and at the end of the day, don't take yourself too seriously. Working the beat is hard, but it is the only way to learn what it takes to succeed. Having a balanced and reasonable attitude toward the pace of your success will make you more attractive to labels, venues, and everyone in between.

— Will Edwards

Ask yourself the question, "What am I doing this for?" There are many artists out there who should have started their own label and sold their own product. Before I started TatarBoy Records, I thought of pitching my album to a label, and, indeed, had one definitive offer. But it just didn't make financial sense to go with the offer unless I could sell 50,000 or more copies of my record. In addition, I had the ability to do my own art with my own label, which would only be limited by the amount of funds spent, and it was a no brainer. I asked myself, "What am I doing this for?" and the answer was, "Everything else is not expedient."

— Mike Tatar Jr., Tatarboy Records

Where should you spend your money?

Nothing can compare with the word-of-mouth enthusiasm of your fans. Nevertheless, here are several lessons I've

learned.

1. Never underestimate flyers that have great graphic design. It can define you, your music, and may even bring folks to see you play.
2. Having a website that helps people learn about your music or even buy your music has to be good.
3. If you can afford to take out an ad in a newspaper or magazine, do your best to make sure it's reaching your existing fans or someone quite like them. Sometimes the web version of a magazine can be a great deal less expensive than the printed version and may reach as many people or even more.
4. PR firms are probably the most effective as well as the most expensive way to promote your music. There are no guarantees that the firm you hire will actually accomplish anything. The firm has to love your music to work hard for you, and their enthusiasm will show when they speak with journalists. Being so warned, there is hardly any other way to get your music reviewed by the *New York Times*, *MOJO*, or to be invited to perform on the *Tonight Show*. Good PR can make you an overnight celebrity (if that's your idea of fun) or a footnote to be ridiculed.

— A.J. Croce

Currently, TatarBoy Records works mainly with touring musicians who are able sell a lot of product, so we don't rely on store front sales very much. Our money is best spent on getting the record to the deejays who will play it, an impressive media kit, follow-up, and other ways to build relationships with deejays. We also buy ads in the trade media. All along the way, TatarBoy Records is working on building our good reputation within the industry.

— Mike Tatar Jr.

What to expect realistically

Publicity is the responsibility of the label. That is to say the publicity related to the artist's album and not the artist's live performance, unless the artist is performing to a very large audience in which case they might in certain circumstances take out an ad with a local retailer (such as Tower, Borders, etc.).

— A.J. Croce

The question, "What is a record label?" is becoming increasingly hard to answer. Record labels used to be the interface between bringing a worthy product to market (the artist's music) and the technology available to do that (the recording process, sending copies to deejays, interfacing with the press). Nowadays, an individual can go out and buy a full digital recording interface for \$500, record an album, call up a duplication service and have it duplicated, then search the Internet and get contact info for every radio station playing your style of music. So it is possible to do it all yourself. However, as an artist, all this effort takes time away from other aspects of your career that need attention and are equally important in building and maintaining your career.

— Mike Tatar Jr.

continued on next page.

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continued from page 11.

Contributing Professionals

Paul Abbott, Zen Mastering



Paul Abbott is owner and chief mastering engineer at Zen Mastering. A former columnist for the *San Diego Troubadour* and a musician himself, Abbott found that when recording his music, he was never satisfied with the results he got on a limited budget. Determined to make a difference, he founded Zen Mastering in 2000 for independent artists. With more than 10 years' experience as an engineer, Abbott is able to keep his fees down by running the operation in a zen-like manner: simple and efficient. His long list of past clients includes Chuck Schiele, Steve Denyes, Mark Jackson, and the 7th Day Buskers.

Cathryn Beeks, Listen Local



Listen Local was formed in 2004 by singer/songwriter/entertainment coordinator Cathryn Beeks in order to get music lovers out and listening to the amazing music being created in San Diego. The mission is to promote interest

from the public as well as offer exposure and networking opportunities for artists and to help perpetuate the music scene.

Jeff Berkley, Miracle Recording



Jeff Berkley has been involved in the process of recording for nearly 20 years. His studio, Miracle Recording, established in 2003, has produced many local artists, including Lisa Sanders, the Grams, Tim Flannery, Eve Selis, the Shambles, and A.J. Croce. As half of the popular duo Berkley Hart, Berkley produced their third album, *Twelve*, which was awarded Best Americana Album at the 2003 San Diego Music Awards.

Aaron Bowen



Having grown up around music, Aaron Bowen was introduced to the recording studio at a very young age. As a result, he has an unusually sensitive ear for tone quality and has had a great deal of experience working with musicians throughout the recording process. Bowen uses a wide range of recording techniques by utilizing analog and digital recording equipment in his approach. He has produced independent releases for local artists, including Jane Lui and Tim Mudd.

Alicia Champion & Danielle LoPresti, Durga Sound



Alicia Champion and Danielle LoPresti have been active in the local music scene and have many years of experience playing and producing music. As mem-

bers of Danielle LoPresti and the Masses and promoters of the San Diego Indie Music Fest, they bring their extensive expertise to their new studio, Durga Sound.

A.J. Croce, Seedling Records



Seedling Records was founded in December of 2003 to promote eclectic music of all genres. Because major record labels rarely take a chance outside the mainstream market, many great musicians and composers have no outlet for their art.

Seedling Records aims to give these artists International distribution and a chance to be heard.

Will Edwards, Tangled Records



Will Edwards is a singer-songwriter who, motivated by a fascination and frustration while recording his first two studio albums, began studying sound. After completing a degree in electronics he established

Tangled Records in 2003 to help independent musicians realize their professional goals through promotion, touring, and recording. Operating as a cooperative organization, Tangled Records believes that the traditional recording industry model is no longer effective in today's market. Tangled Records begins by supporting artists with such resources as a recording studio, touring contacts, professional design services, and next-generation website analytics and strategies. Tangled Records believes that music begins and ends with the heart.

Christopher Hoffee, CHAOS Recording



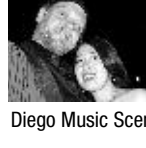
Christopher Hoffee is engineer, producer, and owner of CHAOS Recording. He fell into recording simply by being an artist himself and producing his own albums.

Other artists began asking him to record their albums as well. Years later, he is fortunate that so many talented artists have wanted to record with him, including Cindy Lee Berryhill, Matt Curreri and the ExFriends, Frank Lee Drennen, Robin Henkel, LOAM, Steph Johnson, and the Truckee Brothers.

Chuck Schiele, StudiOB

Chuck Schiele, member of the award-winning band the Grams, founder of Beach Music Mafia and Charles Schiele Creative, also owns and operates StudiOB Recording Studio. He has been active in the local music scene since 1984.

Chuck and Joanna Schiele, Beach Music Mafia



Chuck and Joanna Schiele own and operate Beach Music Mafia, an organization whose sole mission is to foster the betterment of the San

Diego Music Scene.

Sven-Erik Seaholm, Kitsch & Sync Production



Sven-Erik Seaholm is owner of Kitsch & Sync Production, a full-service company, specializing in all facets of music recording and production, graphic design, CD replication, and website design and maintenance. Seaholm has more than 20 years' experience writing, recording, and arranging original music and is a contributing columnist to the *San Diego Troubadour*. His production work has earned him recognition from both the San Diego and L.A. Music Awards with best producer and best recording for several albums in the past five years.

Mike Tatar Jr., TatarBoy Records



Mike Tatar Jr. established TatarBoy Records in early 2006 to support his self-titled solo CD, which was released in April 2006. His CD is currently receiving national and international airplay on radio and webcasts across the globe. Tatar has been active in

the bluegrass scene since attending South Plains College

in Texas, where he spent two years studying bluegrass performance. He grew up playing music with his parents, Mike Sr. and Yvonne, who remain active in the San Diego bluegrass scene. He has also played with Lost Highway, the Laurel Canyon Ramblers, and the David Grisman Bluegrass Experience.

J Turtle



With a degree in music from SDSU, J Turtle has applied his extensive knowledge of compositional and arrangement techniques to help independent artists produce full, lush, professional recordings in his home-based studio since

2003. As a writer and touring artist, Turtle has developed a reputation up and down the California coast and is very familiar with the needs and concerns of local artists. He has produced records for local talents such as Saba and Kyle Phelan.



Points to Ponder

A dozen things to consider on your rise through the music business

by Bart Mendoza

- Go for it. Why *not* you?**
Everybody has a chance to get their music heard. Definitely take a look at the second part of that equation though.
- Set your sights realistically and in increments**
Dream big, aim high. But be prepared to pay your dues. Sure, it's possible to hit it big right off the start and play stadiums, but that's harder to do than getting hit by lightning. Most artists will have to settle for the tried and true parties/clubs/halls route. Setting goals, i.e. an album within eight months, out-of-state touring within six months, whatever, can help keep a good focus.
- Thank everyone who helps you.**
There's an old saying that you'll meet the same people on the way down as you met on the way up. It's true.
- Don't pander.**
If you have ideals, stick to them. The lowest common denominator in popular culture is not having something to aspire to.
- You ALWAYS need a spare.**
Here's a story. A guitarist once told me in all seriousness at a showcase gig that he never brought a spare instrument because it didn't look cool to have extra guitars up there with him. He relied on a fresh set of strings each night. Of course, then he went up to play his opening song and broke a string on the first strum. You'll also want to check that the gear/strings/sticks/whatever are in the van before you leave the driveway. Anybody else ever have a drummer who forgot to bring his cymbals on a tour?
- Yes, you do need a back up.**
It doesn't matter how long it takes to run off an extra copy of an important tape or recording, it needs to be done. The stories are plentiful about computer crashes that have forced a group to start over again from scratch. Also consider where you keep things. One local artist left her masters in a locked car, but the vehicle was stolen. I recommend making two copies and keeping them in different locations. Several artists lost their entire archives during the Cedar fires. The two-location premise helps take care of any situation short of a meteor strike.
- Be prepared. Do your homework.**
Seems simple, but you'd be surprised how many people don't fully investigate projects, labels, directions, or the like before they dive into situations. Ask questions, look things up. It's your career. Pay attention.
- Know your market.**
It's no secret that most indie artists don't sell a lot of CDs. There's a reason why the industry term for self-released CDs is "landfill." How many artists do you know with boxes of unsold product? If you're only drawing 10 people to your gigs, that order of 5,000 copies of your new rock opera may be a bit premature. True, you'll save money by ordering in bulk, but remember it's *your* money. Smaller pressings of more frequent titles get the best results, and you can always repress. And then there's the storage....
- Send notices out to the media and allow plenty of time.**
You'd be surprised how many bands and promoters send out important press releases a day or two before the event. For best results, send stuff in a couple of weeks (at least) before your performance and take into account whether your target publishes daily, weekly, or monthly.
- Don't argue with your girlfriend/boyfriend before you go on tour.**
It's not worth it. It will make everyone miserable at home and on the road if there's a drama going on. Whatever the problem is, it'll keep till you get home. You can argue then.
- Major label industry people are not your friends.**
That great guy who thinks you're the greatest whatever in the world, is the same guy who won't take your calls in a few months if things don't pan out. If you have to pay to play, pay to have your music reviewed online or in print, or pay to have industry people see your band, there is a problem.
- The fine print ALWAYS matters later on.**
Spend a little time investigating any fine print or clauses in contracts. You can rest assured that should anything ever end up in court, that is where the problem will be found.

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Coming Into Her Own Marie Haddad Finds her Future Between the Piano Keys

Photo: Steve Covault



Marie Haddad

by Kate Kowsh

In the three years since San Diego singer-songwriter Marie Haddad first wrestled stage fright to debut at Lestat's, she's had the chance to scratch a few things off her musical to-do list.

Having recently released her first full-length album, *A Beautiful Road*, Haddad couldn't be happier about the fruition of a musical dream, long held in the shadows of her mind. Full of soft piano arpeggios, minor chords, and Haddad's crystal clear voice, the album suggests the same clarity that artists like Tori Amos and Kate Bush have, but with a voice and lyrical landscape all Haddad's own.

As she sits, nestled in her vibrant red, voluptuously comfy couch in her South Park apartment, Haddad reflects on the state of her present surroundings — both musically and physically — as they currently seem to share similar attributes. Her apartment, like her music, is welcoming and comfortable, sporting interesting little trinkets everywhere. Hand-designed music posters, constructed during bouts of insomnia, hang from the walls, and instruments are strategically scattered throughout. Along the perimeter, shelves are stocked with neatly alphabetized 78 albums — a habit she still harbors from her days as a record store clerk — and photo albums, each tabbed with sticky notes to remind her where the snapshots were created.

A bright spirit, Haddad has welcoming eyes and shows a true concern for the well-being of those around her, even if she doesn't know them very well.

A widely self-taught pianist, she first began taking lessons at the age of five,

however due to her self-proclaimed "short attention span" she ditched classical training at 11 and hasn't looked back.

Although she first took a crack at songwriting on her Casio keyboard in high school, it wasn't until about eight years ago that she upgraded to a real piano and became serious.

While Haddad had always dreamed of attending music school after high school — and was even accepted to one in Seattle — she said that, on the advice of her parents, she acquiesced to teaching instead.

It wasn't until she sold her piano while in college that she realized how big a part of her life music really was.

As the culmination of a dream, which had been years in the making, Haddad celebrated her CD release at Humphrey's Backstage Lounge last June. "The show represented so much for me: overcoming fears, growing musically, setting a goal, and getting there," she reflected. "It was like I had waited my whole life for that one night."

A big part of what fuels her is the feedback she receives from fans who have connected with her songs. "Getting e-mails from people in other parts of the country and around the world, or having someone come up to me after a show to let me know that they think a certain song is beautiful or meaningful to them makes all of the work and effort even more beautiful."

Haddad will appear at Borders Books and Music, 159 Fletcher Pkwy. in El Cajon, Friday, October 6 at 7 p.m. For more information, go to www.mariehaddad.com.

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Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden

SINGING DUOS

Bluegrass music is a highly vocal art form, characterized by its "high lonesome" sound, which is often produced by three-part harmony singing. Another highly regarded aspect of bluegrass singing throughout the years is the duet, the most illustrious of which have been sung by some of the pioneers of the art form as well as by some of today's standout singing duos. Let's take a look at some of these notable duos — who they were, what they did, and how they did it.



Bill and Charlie Monroe. Bill Monroe and his older brother Charlie Monroe pioneered early duet singing in the 1930s and early

1940s. Although Bill and Charlie only recorded together for two years (1936-1938), their work continues to be a major influence today. The Monroe boys were raised on a family farm in Kentucky and, as was typical of the time and place, they learned to sing and appreciate music in church. After playing in a family band in the 1920s and performing as a trio with brother Birch in the 1930s, Bill and Charlie garnered some radio success. In February of 1936 they made their first recording in North Carolina for the Bluebird label. This and the recording to follow set the standard for bluegrass music, characterized by high harmony vocals, strong bass guitar runs, and fast mandolin work.

In 1938, however, the brothers went their own ways as Bill became more and more frustrated with Charlie's desire to sing lead on every song. Charlie, after a short hiatus, went on to a solo career, and, as we all know, Bill went on to become the Father of Bluegrass in the 1940s with his seminal Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys band, featuring Earl Scruggs, Lester Flatt, Bill Monroe, Chubby Wise, and Cedric Rainwater.



Jim and Jesse McReynolds. Jim and Jesse, born and raised in Carfax, Virginia, were another influential duet team of brothers. Growing up in a family

steeped in the mountain music of the area, these siblings produced some of the greatest bluegrass duets ever heard. Jim's high tenor voice combined with Jesse's deep lead voice and a unique mandolin style set them apart right from the beginning. Because the brothers produced such beautiful duet blends, many say, probably correctly, that only brothers can achieve this level of harmony greatness as a result of having grown up together.

Jim and Jesse made their debut in 1952 on Capitol Records and have recorded for many other labels since that time. Backed by an outstanding band, the Virginia Boys, Jim and Jesse have had success on radio and television as well as in record sales. Sadly, both brothers were diagnosed with cancer in 2002. Jesse's battle with the disease appears to have been successful; Jim's was not and he passed away December 31, 2002.



The Everly Brothers family came from the coal mining area of Muhlenberg County, Tennessee. In 1945 the family

moved to Shenandoah, Iowa, and father Isaac, a musician himself, introduced "little Donnie and Phil" on radio station KMA, highlighted by their unique blood harmonies. In 1957 the Everly Brothers released their first single, garnering a lifelong fan in Chet Atkins, who greatly admired the talent of these brothers. While the Everlys did not



sing bluegrass per se, but rather tending more toward rock and roll and country, their popularity and top notch duet singing was so superior that it influenced all who followed.

There are other great bluegrass duets of the past, of course, including the Stanley Brothers and others, but let's turn to some of the current greats.



Tim and Mollie O'Brien are a brother and sister duo of remarkable breadth and skill. Tim, a Colorado boy who

made good playing with Hotrise, a great band from the 1970s and 1980s, and going on to a stellar solo career, grew up singing in church with his sister Mollie, a collaboration that continued through the years. Mollie has one of the purest, most beautiful voices you will ever hear, and when she and Tim sing together, the magic chills the spine.



The Gibson Brothers are another outstanding brother duo currently producing great bluegrass music. Eric and Leigh

Gibson recorded three great albums in just three years, two of which were recent chart toppers — *Bona Fide* and *Long Way Back Home*. These two brothers are so "in sync" it is uncanny; the power of their music is reminiscent of the great duos of the past.

Okay, so now you know who some of the greats were and are, and you know what to listen to so you can appreciate this great music. But, how do they do it? Well, here are some clues.

First, while there are some distinguished unrelated duos singing bluegrass style music (Chris Hillman and Herb Pedersen come to mind), the greats are overwhelmingly siblings. So, clue number one is it sure helps to grow up together and know each other in the way only siblings do. Talking and singing together from the get go means that each sibling learns the subtleties of the other sibling and can use that to advantage when singing duets.

Second, the greats have all been masters at singing interesting and powerful harmony lines. One sibling takes a strong lead, while the other blends a perfect high tenor, high baritone, or regular baritone. Often the harmony singing sibling will vary the harmony "stack" during the song for effect, jumping from high tenor to high baritone. Taking this liberty gives the harmony singer a great degree of freedom not allowed in three-part singing where each singer must stick to his or her part. In addition, it is in creating and varying this duet "stack" and in delivering emphasis, intonation, and phrasing that the special sibling knowledge seems to make a difference — they know what their partner will do before it's done and can anticipate and react appropriately.

Third, it sure doesn't hurt to have a lot of natural talent! All of the individuals who sing in a duo have good voices, even great solo voices like Mollie O'Brien. But, without exception, there is something special added when they sing with their sibling. The two are greater and better than the sum of their parts individually and this is what makes listening to great duos so special. Don't get me wrong, there are many brothers and sisters who can't sing worth a darn together — ever been to a family reunion? However, the overwhelming number of notable duos throughout the years seem to have that sibling magic.

I hope you have learned something about duet singing in bluegrass music and that maybe that you'll have the courage to give it a try yourself. Get that brother or sister off the couch, and let her fly!

The Zen of Recording

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

... AND FURTHERMORE:

This month's cover story focuses on the local music industry. In preparation for this story, several promoters, booking agents, producers, and other folks "in the trenches" were sent a few questions from the story's authors in an effort to glean a variety of insights and opinions. As I'm sure they could only use a fraction of the wealth of information they received, I decided to dedicate this column's space to further alliterate my personal answers.

Thanks go to the editors and the authors, as well as my fellow producers for their kind indulgence.

What should I know about digital vs. analog studios? Pros and Cons?

Traditionally, the differences between analog and digital have been sound, feel, speed, and track count.

Sound-wise, analog used to be a consistent "blind taste test" winner over digital, due to the characteristic things that each format can impart to the signal. Magnetic tape can smear transients and slightly compress things, resulting in a smother, silkier sound. With digital, the ideal is that it reproduces things exactly as they went in, but there are a lot of variables — things like analog-to-digital conversion hardware, sample rate, bit depth, etc. At this point, technological advances have made the sonic differences somewhat negligible, but one more thing to keep in mind is the repeatability of your mix. In the computer environment, every time you open a song you've been working on in your program, all of your settings will be exactly the way you they were when you last saved them.

The speed of one's workflow, as well as the feel, are sort of inter-related. If you're tracking to tape with a band, a difficult punch-in may force you to keep re-tracking the entire performance, as opposed to the infinitely more edit-friendly digital domain. This can really drag a session out, resulting in a loss of vibe. One might also find that they like an earlier take a lot more than the twentieth, but at that point you may have already erased over it.

Digital editing is a powerful weapon in the modern recording era, but many people feel that they're somehow "cheating" if they compile multiple takes into one brilliant performance. Purist views aside, it isn't cheating if your record kicks ass in the end.

Conversely, it is easy to over-correct things to the point that they don't feel as good as a "live" take, especially in the rock and folk genres. This is where a person's experience and musicality come into play, i.e., knowing when not to touch something is equally as important as any other editing skills someone may possess.

Track count comes into play when you have a lot of different, little parts to add in. Conventionally speaking, having more than 40 parts with only(!) 24 tracks to commit them to means doing a great deal of sub-mixing, even if many of them aren't played simultaneously. Now, you can give each part independent EQ and effects and they'll remain editable. The flipside is a problem known as "option-itis," where you hold off making decisions about which

takes and tracks to use until the mix stage, at which point you have potentially thousands of little decisions to make, and that can bring a project to a crawl.

How can I save time in the studio without compromising my record?

Be prepared. Know every chord, every lyric, and every melodic inflection in your songs. If each time you're asked what a particular chord or note is, a quick, concise, correct answer saves time. If you know what you're looking for in a take and you don't feel that you got it, don't listen to the playback yet. Just do it again. You can listen to the different takes all in one sitting.

Playing to a click while recording can also be helpful, provided you can groove with it, and your tempos don't vary with the structure. This can make compiling multiple takes much easier, which in turn saves valuable time.

Band meetings and/or infighting are not things one should do in the studio, nor is this a good time to start writing the bridge or engaging in a total lyrical rewrite. These are things that can be addressed in pre-production.

What is pre-production and what should I know before I get started?

Like production, pre-production can mean different things to each project, as each one is unique. Mostly, it's knowing the band has taken the song and its arrangement as far as they can without a producer. This often involves some rudimentary demos or live recordings of the material involved, but can include a producer's involvement in tightening up the song structures, making subtle lyrical changes, or picking which songs will be recorded.

Historically, who has been influential in the producer/engineer role?

Assuming you're asking for one who does both at the same time, there are surprisingly few high-profile examples. Mostly due to the constructs of the recording business. There are a great many producers who started out as engineers. Phil Ramone was the engineer for a great many Sinatra and big band records and later produced many of Paul Simon and Billy Joel's albums. The same can be said for Alan Parsons, whose engineering credits include the Beatles, Pink Floyd, and the Hollies, eventually leading him to produce Al Stewart, Pilot, and a string of solo project records. Tom Dowd is a great example of someone who did both. His discography includes Ray Charles, Aretha Franklin, the Allman Brothers, Otis Redding and Eric Clapton. More recently, you've got someone like Daniel Lanois, who produced and engineered for U2, Bob Dylan, and Emmylou Harris. He's also mentored



Sven-Erik Seaholm

other producer/engineers like Malcolm Burn (Lisa Germano) and Mark Howard (Lucinda Williams).

What is your philosophy on using pitch correction for instruments and/or voice?

I always say "It's not the plow, it's the farmer." All the plug-ins and effects currently available are just tools. If you rely on them to make music for you, it's going to sound like it. If you always remember that you're making music and you apply these tools judiciously in service of that, then whatever helps you to attain the most musical result is the right thing. To wildly paraphrase Malcom X, I make records by any means necessary.

How do you help nervous artists get over their nerves?

The best thing to do is show them a great result quickly. The sooner they hear something that sounds like you know what the hell you're doing, the sooner they'll relax and fall into the flow.

It's also essential to remember that this is a service industry. Your number one job is to make the artist comfortable, whether it's getting their headphones to sound right or getting them a bottle of water. Everyone deserves to be treated like a welcome guest in your studio, period. Your needs should always be secondary to theirs.

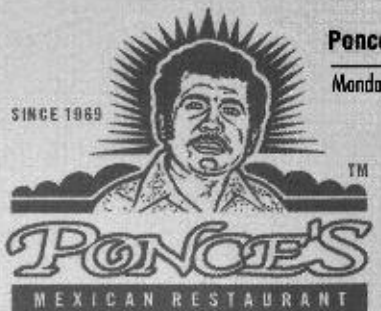
What single most important piece of advice would you give a recording artist with regard to production and choice of studio?

Pick someone you trust. Nothing speaks more about a producer's ability to fulfill your needs than the work they've done and whether you feel comfortable with them.

Talk with some of their past clients. How was their experience? Why?

Meet with the producer and listen to his/her work. Listen to a lot of things they've done, not just the stuff that's closest to your genre or their most recent recordings. Does it all sound the same? Maybe that's what you want. If you hear that they've recorded everything from jazz to country, is an overall musicality evident? How many recordings have they done? What does their studio smell like? Are they a good communicator? What is the price and why? What does their price include? How long will it take? If it's very affordable but will take four months or more, is that worth the savings? If it's more expensive, is that extra cost justifiable?

The bottom line is that you need to make the best recording you can. Doesn't that sound simple? If only it were...



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PONCE'S



Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

COMMERCIAL KISSES

The wicked wad of summer is shot; fall's arms open expectantly, but there's something important that I've neglected. So, please — one actual product endorsement (my first?) before I dive headfirst into the autumnal embrace.

I could kick myself for not mentioning this singular treasure earlier. But being no masochist, I'd rather kick back and settle for a tongue-lashing from the first female reader who purchases this item, falls in love with it, and becomes angry that it wasn't a part of her life sooner. Okay, I'll accept the same from the second, third, even a few more as well, until my guilt is thoroughly spent.

Beyond the Valley of the Dolls finally came out on DVD this summer. Now all of humanity and humomanity has access to an inexpensive audio/visual textbook on the nature of celebrity and the music business. This movie has it all: the highs at the bottom, the lows at the top. All the possibilities, truths, anguish, and exaltations that confront the modern artist are addressed, and with an exaggerated candor that is breathtaking.

Russ Meyer (rest his soul) directed this for 20th Century Fox in 1970 from a story he and Roger Ebert concocted, primarily, right here in town at the Mission Bay Hilton. I caught it on opening night at the Aspen Hill Twin in Maryland, two days before outraged citizens ran it out of town, and two days after I had fallen in love with it.

We reunited again in 1974 at the Cabrillo here at Horton Plaza (RIP) when I was accompanied by a Troubadour publisher who will remain anonymous and who had previously enjoyed Beyond overseas.

In 1975 I gathered a group of underground comic artists to pool some money, rent a print of the film ourselves, and run it at the Comic Con. And so we did. Later that year on my birthday, two dear friends each presented me with a copy of the elusive soundtrack album. Years later a well-known L.A. music critic talked me out of one of them during an evening spent with Russ Meyer himself in Westwood. Even in 1982, Meyer knew it was his best work, and that no one (himself included) would ever top it. (By the way, the soundtrack CD, now available, is missing a remarkable song — a vocal one even — that was on the original album.)

One particular portion of the DVD's commentary track rather inflamed a great part of my geezer side. Still makes me cranky now. Two of the lead actresses recall the shooting of their girl/girl scenes with a sort of studied, embarrassed distaste — quite a contrast to the nervous, near disgust they related in contemporary interviews so long ago. But, of course, today the "two chicks" stuff has a criminally easy c*** factor. Neither actress needed to be disingenuous, having pioneered some of it; each already had more than enough, naturally, in spades.

The "girl/girl" enticement thing just seems to be getting bigger and increasingly clichéd as time passes; I can't be the only one, can I, to see it for what is now? Little more than transparent idiocy, knowmsayne?

In the film, both physically stunning actresses are unable to hide their awkwardness — their kisses come off like some kind of mandatory artificial resuscitation exercises that they're compelled to complete before they're allowed to go after something else. Like a paycheck, maybe.

These days it's groovy even when you don't need the money. More than titillation, it's a manipulative means to an end. Consider the additional c***ness that Madonna and Britney assumed with their conjoined pie holes on television a while back. It's what the modern male seems to want these days,



The gently twisted Mr. Sinatra

along with silicone and close shaves.) The less natural, the more c***. Disgusting. How c*** would Madonna and Britney have been if the brainless masses knew the truth: that the two divas were merely exchanging fur balls that they'd simultaneously coughed up. Now I don't know about you, but feeding others with the contents of one's own stomach is, to me, for the birds.

The girl/girl thing has, of course, infiltrated the clubs too, and it can be dangerous in its power.

A nephew of mine, who turned 21 a few months ago, noticed that the girls in bars who seemed to score most successfully came in pairs and deliberately flirted with each other on the dance floor (touching, caressing, kissing). This seemed to immediately steal the focus, attention, and intent of every available male within view. So the ever resourceful Keanu Sinatra (not his real name) took a buddy one Friday evening to one of downtown's many "happening" night spots. What's good for the goose, he thought . . .

While on the dance floor with his buddy Spike, no sooner had they started making out with each other (to entice the chicks, of course) than they were on their backs, getting pummeled by a number of energetic dudes.

When Keanu told me about this, he still assumed that they were attacked because of seething jealousy. "I mean, we had the moves, man! Another minute and the chicks would've mobbed us. Dudes in Dago can't stand competition, man," he said to me with serious regret, then left town before I had the chance to introduce him to reality.

Then yesterday I received a letter from him. He had discovered a movie that had changed his life. It was called Beyond the Valley of the Dolls and I should buy it and see it immediately. He would never again be an idiot, he assured me, as long as he kept in his heart the following words that Roger Ebert had written for the film's closing narration:

"You must each decide what your life will be. You must realize that a hand outstretched to your fellow man is a gesture of love — love that asks nothing, expects nothing, yet is simply there. And if love is in you, then gentle will be all your steps as you walk beyond this valley."

That Keanu, what a freaking moron. I'm beginning to get choked up, and there's not a fur ball in sight.

It's fall again, all right.



*** ool

This completes a word Jose refuses to utter or write. Its consideration here is necessarily related to the modern mind-set.

RADIO DAZE



by Jim McInnes

D.J. JAZZY JIM

The 25th of October marks the first anniversary of my last full time radio job (meaning one year without enough dough to pay the mortgage) with the CBS-owned KPLN, 1037 The Planet, now known as KSCF, 1037 Free FM.

Nevertheless, I'm growing a "jazz beard" because I'm really enjoying my new part-time gig on KSDS Jazz 88.3.

Many of my friends in commercial radio cite KSDS Jazz 88.3 as their favorite radio station. That's because Jazz 88.3 is one of the few remaining radio stations where the deejay gets to put his or her own show together, a concept that was pretty much abandoned by commercial radio at least 30 years ago. That allows each jock to develop a personal style (I am into the blues, old big bands, guitarists, vibraphonists, Hammond B3 organists, and Latin pianists, but it changes weekly) and prevents the station from becoming like most commercial stations: sonic oatmeal. The toughest thing for me is the daunting task of familiarizing myself with each of the estimated 23,000 CDs and LPs in the station's library! Most of the KSDS air staff are well ahead of me in that respect, having been there for years and, in many cases, decades. Most are true aficionados of the art form.

Fortunately, I wasn't jazz-ignorant when I signed on at 88.3. I grew up in the 1960s, an era when any style of music could produce a Top 40 radio hit. Many giants of jazz, like Dave Brubeck, Frank Sinatra, Vince Guaraldi, Mongo Santamaria, and Stan Getz and Astrud Gilberto, to name a few, had big commercial radio hit singles that have been stuck in my memory bank for years. Although I hadn't listened to the music very much in 25 years, I had been reading about jazz. I even had a long term subscription to *Downbeat*.

The Jazz 88.3 airstaff is home to many characters with names like Vince Outlaw (yes, it's his real name), Miff Mole (not his real name, but pretty cool), Dhanifu (his African name, meaning *wisdom*. I call him "Fu," he calls me "Big Jim McInnes," as if I were a Chicago mob boss in the 1930s), T. (the blues guru), Q. (apparently on leave from the James Bond films), and J. Otis Williams, whom I call "O" in keeping with the alphabet theme. Leo Cates has probably forgotten more about jazz than I'll ever know. The Troubadour's own Lou Curtiss does a show called "Jazz Roots," where he's been known to play recordings from as far back as 1909. Lou, I didn't know you could still find an Edison cylinder player in 2006! Check out Chris Springer's "Latin Grooves," Ida Garcia's "Rug Cutter's Swing," and all the other terrific specialty programming. The KSDS staff also includes fine musicians like David Mosby, who has a singing and speaking voice to live for, and drummer Barry Farrar, Jr., of Blue Rockit and the Jazz 88 Allstars, who hosts "Percussive Profiles." (Note to my fellow staffers: if I haven't mentioned you, don't take it personally. I have only so much space here in the Troubadour.)

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Tossing the Voice Salad — The Bobs Keep It Tongue and Cheek

by Raul Sandelin

Admit it! There was that time, alone in your room, boombox blaring, when you sucked in some air, wetted your lips, and proceeded to lay down the grooviest of air drum tracks: paboomp-boomp-Paboomp-boomp-boomp. As the groove came together, you felt the moment right to add some high hat: pafiss-ta-ta-fiss. But, you're not a drum monkey, you say? Then, what about that time, replete with Pete Townsend arm windmills, you wadded up those aforementioned lips to let fly the improvised "Wa-wa-wa-wow" of some 1970's solo riff while bending the fantastical strings of pure air guitar?

If cornered, isn't it the truth? Haven't we all pushed some air around a room from time to time? Or, let me rephrase that: Haven't we all placed ourselves on some invisible stage, and, with invisible instruments in hand, proceeded to mouth the ridiculous yet charming noises that those invisible instruments would produce . . . if they were real of course?

Making music with only the voice, and without what we'd think of as traditional instrumentation, must be an ancient art since we still use the Italian term *a cappella*. (If it were a newer art we'd probably call it something more contemporary like *voice slammin'*.) From barbershop quartets to the Mills Brothers, American music has held open a place for voice-only performance. Ushered in with the rest of the innovations bebop brought, Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross might be considered the first modernist *a cappella* group, although they actually used backup bands to lay down a rhythm section behind their vocal near-cacophonies. Later, by adding pop finesse the Manhattan Transfer brought the art of vocal gymnastics into the

mainstream. There have been others to be sure. Just listen to Peter, Paul, and Mary's horn-honking on their rendition of Woody Guthrie's "Riding in my Car."

However, it'd be a stretch to say that anybody's taken *a cappella*, or *voice slammin'*, or *jugular jumping jacks*, or whatever you wish to call this art form, to the plateaus that the Bobs have. Formed some 25 years ago in the Bay Area, the Bobs were "refugees from a market collapse in the singing telegram industry" after corporate powerhouse Western Onion had gone belly up. With no jingles to jingle nor birthday revelers to revel, Matthew Stull slowly forged, over a six-month period, the original core of the Bobs, featuring Richard Bob Greene, who along with Stull is still with the group. After that, it was the open mic circuit for a while as the Bobs gained a San Francisco fan base with their more traditional covers of such songs as the teeny bopper classic "A White Sport Coat" juxtaposed alongside definitively quirky renditions of "Purple Haze" and "Ring of Fire" (yes, *that* "Purple Haze" and *that* "Ring of Fire").

In 1984, the Bobs hit tonsilectomized pay dirt when they were nominated for a Grammy for their techno-version of the Beatles' (or was that the Manson Family's) "Helter Skelter." Since then, the group or its music has appeared in illustrious company: on *the Tonight Show*, with Jason Alexander at the 1995 Emmy Awards, in the movie *Man in the Moon* featuring Jim Carey, and Dick Cavett's syndicated radio show, not to mention TV and radio spots for Levi's, the Gap, Apple computer, and CBS-TV. Their portfolio reads like a who's who of not just Hollywood but Fortune 500. I've simply included an abbreviated list to save space and avoid accusations of product placement in my articles. But, as I refill

my mug with new-and-improved Maxwell House European Blended, Crystalized Columbian, Fresh Brewed, Instant-But-Just-like-Slow-Brewed-Coffee-House Coffee, let me continue . . .

These last advertising credits testify that despite being extremely *avant garde* on one hand, on the other, the Bobs are very commercially appealing. (Those singing telegrams and jingles must have served them well.) As I inferred in the beginning, this *a cappella* cum air band stuff seems to harness those Ur-winds, which fill the sails of our souls and psyches. Instead of being brand new, the Bobs actually lean their nods back to Vaudeville and the Golden Age of American Entertainment. If they're part Broadway, there also part Borsht Belt. If they're part Beatles, they're part Borsht Belt. If they're part Bon Jovi, they're still part Borsht Belt. Their material is often contemporary. Their delivery is impeccable. Yet, sometimes we get the idea that this has to be a gag and somebody has to get hit upside the head by a rubber chicken before the night is over, just like Milton and Red and Harpo and Jerry did in the good ol' days.

The Bobs have done more than quirky covers of rock songs. Over the course of 15 albums since 1981, they have written their own material as well as explored more *serious* territory such as Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue," which lushly appears on their latest CD, *Rhapsody in Bob* (See? I told you they can't quite follow through with a straight face.), while writing a musical score called "The Laundry Cycle" for the Oberlin Dance Collective.

Yet, they certainly have a knack for taking contemporary pop music, especially music an audience would never suspect could be performed *a cappella*, and feeding that music through no other filter than the group's four sets of vocal chords. A perfect example of this is their interpretation of the Led



The Bobs

Zeppelin classic "Whole Lotta Love," which appears on the album *The Bobs Sing the Songs of . . .* and finds the Bobs at their heavy metalmouth best.

Now, think back to your own primordial air band debut alone, or with a small coterie of buds. You're in your room, listening to some jams. Now, all you need is some parental figure to yell from downstairs, "Beavis! Butthead!" Someone in the room puckers up and plows into the staccato: da-Da-da-Da-Dunt-da-da-Dunt-da-da-Dunt. (The Bobs do this in three-part harmony while a fourth voice mimics muted cymbal taps à la John Bonham.) Then, the second guitar riff enters. The effects-laden slide guitar part—NAAAaaooow—is emitted from someone's nasal cavity while the three-part continues to carry the chugging main riff forward. Then, the vocals come in. It's part Robert Plant, part androgynous doo-wop, part Annie Ross of the ancestors of all things oral and modernist Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross.

It's three stoners with a scratched Zep II album dubbed over the Four Seasons on a Jersey street corner

dubbed over a quartet of music industry pros with a real wicked sense of humor. The obligatory Zeppelin interlude is handled with its own surprises, including an *a cappella* version of Jimmy Page's quintessential guitar solo.

It is said that listeners of music always see *something* while listening. It's not enough to simply have sound waves bounce through the ears and into the brain. The human mind is compelled to form those sound waves into physical shapes, shapes with angles and edges and even colors. Many times, what we see is a collage of images that we've seen before. What I see, when I close my eyes and listen to the Bobs are vegetables. Yes, it couldn't get any simpler: one voice is shredded lettuce, one voice is diced cucumber, one voice is sliced tomatoes, and so on. The best metaphor, or vision, I can place on this music is that of a tossed salad. And, given the fact that I love salads, that's a good thing.

The art of *vocalese* (come to think of it, Jon Hendricks did coin a term for this sort of thing) will always have a tinge of comedy no matter how serious the performer or the piece. And, it's a shame really, since the mouth is arguably one of the more beautiful of human orifices. If the eyes are the windows to the soul, I expect the mouth to be listed as at least the electric garage door to our alter egos and, therefore, part of the human house's if not regality, then at least its "curb appeal."

The Bobs, 25 years and 15 albums later, would probably agree even if they don't quite understand what I'm trying to say. Their current lineup, including original members Matthew Bob Stull and Richard Bob Greene, also features Amy Bob Engelhardt and Dan Bob Schumacher. But, please don't ask who is the G-string, who is the bass guitar, or who is the high hat. Just close your eyes and let your mind form its own images.

Don't miss the Bobs performing live at Dizzy's on October 12, 8pm. Their latest CD, *Rhapsody in Bob*, is reviewed on the next page.



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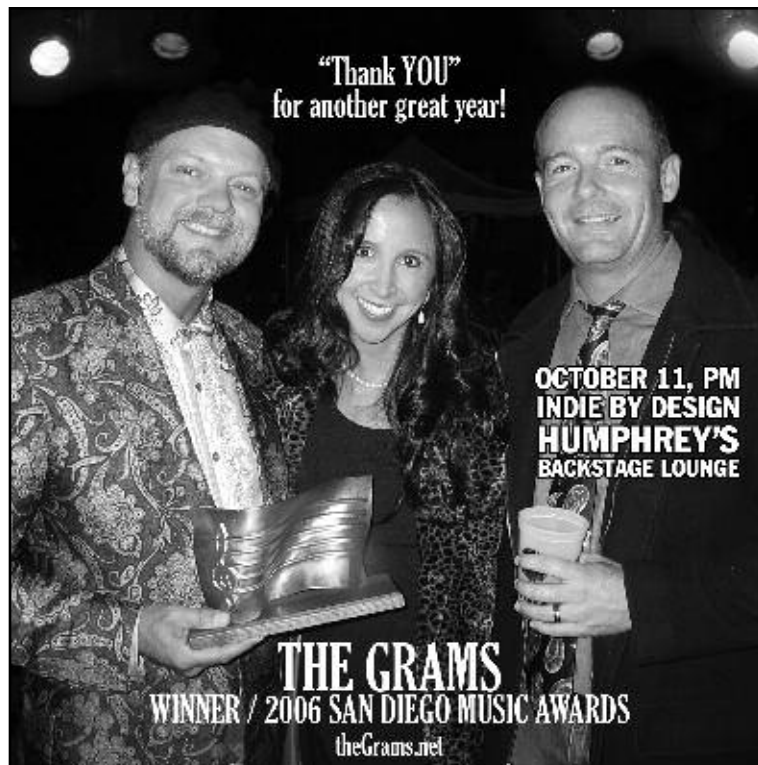
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Kim DiVincenzo Hummingbird

by Craig Yerkes

Upon hearing "Home," the first track on Kim DiVincenzo's (now Divine) new CD, *Hummingbird*, my first reaction was that this is the most radio ready tune I have heard come out of San Diego since, well...maybe ever. DiVincenzo and her producer Keith Orfanides have managed to produce an album that sounds as if it was done on a major label budget. To be more accurate, they have managed to create a six-song disc on which most tracks rise to that level.

"Home" is pure, ethereal pop magic with soaring vocals (layered to biblical proportions), evocative lyrics, and an astounding instrumental backdrop, which incorporates a bewildering mix of vintage sounds (love the guitar and organ tones!) and masterfully applied effects. This is home run stuff here. "Trouble," another tune that sounds ready for radio play, also falls squarely into the category of "pop music for the discriminating listener." Its vocals and instrumental tracks crackle with just the right amount of angst to complement the romantic tension and aggression in the lyrics, plus the chorus delivers an enormous, can't miss hook. The other tracks veer off the pop highway, but are all solid offerings that fall more into the indie/ singer-songwriter world. Jane Lui lends her formidable piano skills to the pleasingly melancholy "Far Away," and "Broken" is an intriguingly dark and aggressive track that reminded me a bit of Kate Bush. "A Noble Prince" provides some nice depth to the disc with its poetic lyrics, complex melodic structure (nicely complimented with Tori Amos-esque background vocals), and lead vocals that show Divine's impressive range. "What's It Gonna Be," a longing, yet cleverly playful love song, wisely strips the format down to just vocal and guitar, somehow avoiding sounding flat compared to the more "produced" tracks.

While the engine that drives this music is the artist's songwriting and performing skills, I can't say enough about the amazing production of this recording. Listening through headphones, it becomes even more impressive as you hear all the added subtle touches, all at the right times and in the right doses. For instance, on "Broken" and "Trouble," the instruments and vocals build with such subtle intensity that you don't realize how high everything has notched up until the tracks suddenly switch to a single voice and guitar. Brilliant! I loved how well recorded and well played the violin tracks are and if you can find a guitar track on this disc that isn't world class, you have a better ear than I do.

The DiVincenzo/Orfanides pairing has proved to be a musical match made in heaven and my guess is that this recording will successfully garner attention far beyond the local level.



The Bobs Rhapsody in Bob

by Raul Sandelin

The sublime is not only about genius and mastery, it's about proportion and context. For example, a single anchovy emulsified, disguised, and folded into a Caesar salad dressing is, well, sublime. An entire tube of anchovy paste slathered upon the targeted leaves of Romaine is not recommended until at least 20 dates into the relationship.

With this in mind, I've been trying to figure out in which context and in what proportions the Bobs peak on the ol' "sublime index." I think I've found the quotient: their ironic use of a *cappella* to re-interpret almost everything under the musical sun works best at the level of the 60-second commercial.

Do you have a dish soap to which you wish to ascribe human qualities? The Bobs could take a quartet of singing soap bubbles and let those bubbles harmonize until they're clean. How about an anthropomorphized car motor? Who better to give voice to the pistons and carburetor than those lovable San Franciscans who have been vocalizing walls of sound for 25 years?

The Bobs are the greatest jingle and sound-effects band ever. With sheer virtuosity, they can stretch a sound bite into an equally worthy three-minute-long operetta. It's a great concept but how long can this gimmick sustain itself?

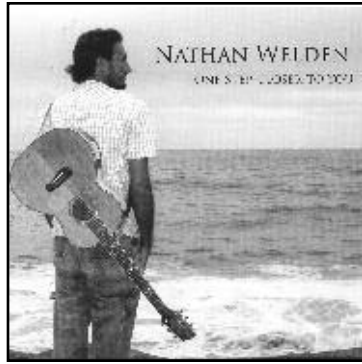
Rhapsody in Bob asks this question again (despite a new lineup, every member's middle name is coincidentally "Bob") — are we disproportionately mixing our guffaws with serious art? Are we slathering on the comedio-a cappella schtick a little too rich, leaving us unsure as to how to categorize their music, even when the "uncategorizable" is certainly a legitimate category in its own right?

The Bobs hit the ground running as they tackle a difficult set of tunes. From Tin Pan Alley we get "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens" and Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." From the Woodstock/MTV generations, we are dosed with Cream's "White Room" and Tom Petty's "Free Falling." Such nuggets as Spike Jones' "Teenage Brain Surgeon" and Bertold Brecht's "Alabama Song" get the usual Bob treatment while de-constructing 20th century pop music history. Every song here is indelibly transformed into the Bobs' own post-vocal dreamscape.

With unrestrained irony, the album's title suggests more clown juggling although their rendition of "Rhapsody in Blue" is quite beautiful, almost solemn at times. The Bobs, along with pianist Bob Malone do an outstanding job of stretching George and Ira's whisperings out to a stunning 17 minutes!

With more Bobs than an apple bobbing contest and a sense of humor that keeps it all fun, this group not only keeps it quirky, it rounds it off with a spectacular rendering of one of America's finest pieces.

The Bobs will be at Dizzy's on October 12 at 8pm.



Nathan Welden One Step Closer to You

by Dave Sawyer

One Step Closer to You is San Diego native Nathan Welden's first full-length CD. Produced by local legend, John Katchur, it features top local talents Jeff Berkley, Ron Franklin, Christiane Lucas, and Katchur himself on bass and lead guitar.

This is a beautiful collection of easy-on-the-ears acoustic-pop/folk music with Welden's smooth, honey-sweet vocals and laid-back, Southern California sun, surf, and sand style.

John Katchur's deft work on guitar and bass — and recording — along with Christiane Lucas' unique style of harmony vocals, provides beautiful support without overshadowing Welden's finest instrument, his voice.

As fine a songwriter as Welden is, he chose to use only three of his own compositions in this collection for some reason. I've always believed that, when recording your own album (especially a first full-length album), you should avoid covering other songwriters.

To his credit, Welden chose very good songwriters to cover, including David Wilcox, John Denver, and one fine and under-appreciated local gentleman by the name of Ron Franklin, who also plays guitar on those covers, bringing an interesting and effective twist to them.

Overall, this is a very satisfying and even touching collection of music. Listeners will fall in love with Welden's voice, which has an honest, sincere, maybe even naive quality that one can't help but accept as true, without question.

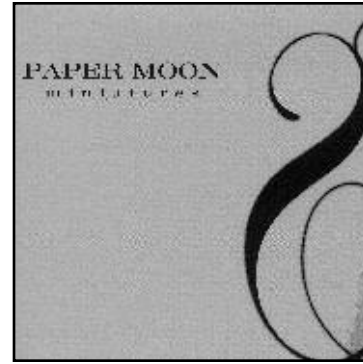
The final cut, "Living on Love," seems a little weak in the harmony area for me. I can't tell if it's the recording of the vocal or simply Lucas' style. I might be a bit nit-picky, but that's my job! Regardless, the song still meets the high standard set by the rest of the album.

From performance, recording, and mastering to cover and case design and packaging, this is a quality professional effort. It is well thought out and implemented, with beautiful photos and just the right amount of liner notes and thank yous.

I don't know whether Welden is set-up to sell CDs from his website or any of the popular online methods as of this writing. However, you can visit his MySpace and find out where he's playing next. I'm sure he'll have a few discs on hand.

Part of my goal here is to get you, the reader, interested in going to hear the music, see the artist at a show, and decide whether you like the music or not. I also want to offer *constructive* feedback to the artist and others who might be in the process of putting a CD together.

I'll be posting this review, along with my other reviews, on my MySpace blog. This will allow you to respond and tell me if you agree or disagree with me. All I ask is that you keep it real and avoid "colorful" remarks. Thanks for reading and happy listening!



Paper Moon Miniatures

by Craig Yerkes

Miniatures, the new CD from guitar duo Paper Moon, is a sly and utterly entertaining piece of work. The approach is delightfully eclectic with nods to such diverse influences as Al DiMeola and the Helecasters with some Django, Metheny, Paco DeLucia, and Wes Montgomery thrown in along the way. Paper Moon has managed to merge these different styles into a truly original sound and approach all their own.

Track one, "Rayuela," (a straight ahead, up-tempo, acoustic/Spanish-style crowd pleaser) is actually the weakest offering on the disc due to how little it does to forecast how fresh the rest of the recording will be. Paper Moon's two players, Scot Taber and Daniel Dever, move seamlessly between acoustic and electric on the following tracks, bringing all kinds of funky surprises along the way. There is an almost giddy approach dripping off this music, as if they just couldn't wait to add that next guitar part to see what it would sound like. Much to duo's credit, though, it never becomes a guitar orgy thanks to an over-riding sense of doing what's right for the song. Track three, the 7/8 offering called "The Freneticist," reminded me of DiMeola's early stuff with a great mix of muted electric licks driving the rhythm and Spanish/nylon-string lead lines adding a Latin fire. "While She Sleeps" features a wonderful waltz melody and should bring a smile to fans of the super-smooth, octave-style/Montgomery-esque electric jazz sound. This disc really launches into the stratosphere starting with track five, "Swing Sets." Its intro features an effect that makes it sound like it's being played through some kind of cheap record player in a café somewhere in Europe. To me, this clever intro signals that the rest of the disc is designed to take the listener on a trip through the limitless musical world of these artists. From the super tasty gypsy solos on "Swing Set" and the funky backwards guitar intro on "Café Antiguo" to the delightful handling of the melody on "Vals - Tema De Strauss" and the beautifully breezy leads on "Emily," this is music that keeps bringing smiles. My favorite is track ten, "Epilogue," which features a stunningly beautiful, almost otherworldly melody and an equally amazing counterpart of fretless bass, strings, and perfectly complementary sound effects.

This CD should appeal to a broad spectrum of music lovers, especially those with an ear toward world music. There is musical invention here to be sure, but everything is done within the context of making music that is just plain fun to listen to. If some of this material doesn't make it into some kind of soundtrack, it will only be because the right people didn't hear it. The Paper Moon guys have pulled off quite a trick with *Miniatures*, creating an artistically uncompromised musical kaleidoscope that is a blast for the rest of us to listen to. Bravo!



The Cat Mary Postbellum Neighborhood

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

This latest release from the Cat Mary begins with the sound of a toy or music box being wound up and let go. It is in many ways an appropriate metaphor, with regard to the unleashing of virtuosity that ensues.

Singer/songwriter/guitarist Andrew Markham and company take us on a rollicking, careening excursion through a multitude of lyrical images and musical influences, ultimately arriving at a singularly original, if faintly familiar, destination.

Markham (on record at least) seems not unlike the character Jim Williams from John Berendt's *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* — earthy, educated, cultured, funny, and smarter than you. This is perhaps best evidenced by the ingredients of his latest offering, in which we find various elements of mountain music (fiddle, slide dobro, upright bass) wrapped in light gossamer jazz shadings, courtesy of the Stephen "Hoops" Snyder's alternately nimble and dynamic piano and organ playing, as well as percussionist Kevin Dow's intricately creative, at times Keltner-esque approach. Bassist Ken Dow displays an especially light touch for such a big sounding instrument, like a dainty sumo wrestler or a ballet dancing elephant. Violinist Melissa Hartley once again exhibits huge strides in her playing, taking on an even larger, more central role in the band's arrangements, sometimes resulting in too much of a good thing. How can we miss the fiddle if it won't go away?

This is largely a nitpicking observation from a listener spoiled by the rich and fertile loam of Markham's songwriting. Titles like "A River, A Dead Mule, A Train..." "Old Slewfoot," "The Fleshspots of the Orient," and "Anniversaries" invoke an anticipation of excellence that is ultimately delivered in spades far more often than not.

What is most evident beyond the wonderful musicality of the playing and the arrangements is just how wonderful a singer Markham really is, especially on the sweet and deliberate "The Big, Dumb Way," where his voice and the song's melody become one lonely, longing sound, like the distant whistle of a midnight train bound for nowhere in particular.

Engineer Peter Sprague shows that he's more than just a guitar genius by capturing the beautiful essence of every instrument and its accompanying ambience with a open, crisp, and focused sound that allows the listener to hear every meticulously rendered layer, while retaining a unified band sound throughout. Kudos to him for making a purely amazing sounding record.

With a Tony-award winning rhythm section, a heartfelt collection of songs, and an all-around A-team of supporting players, perhaps winding it all up and letting it run wild was the exact right thing for Markham and the Cat Mary to do.



PRIMAL TWANG



Andrew York

Photo: Steve Parr



Albert Lee



Beppe Gambetta

Photo: Steve Parr



Peter Sprague

Photo: Erin Fitzgerald

Photo: Steve Parr



Dan Crary

Photo: Erin Fitzgerald



Eric Johnson



Doyle Dykes

Photo: Steve Parr



Doc Watson

Photo: Steve Parr



Primal Twang Final Curtain

Photo: Erin Fitzgerald



Mason Williams

Photo: Erin Fitzgerald



John Doan

Photo: Steve Parr

ACOUSTIC ALLIANCE @ BRICK BY BRICK



Joe Rathburn



Hargo



Kellis David



Ephraim Sommers



Angela Patua



Citizen Band's Jeff Berkley @ Twiggs



Marcia Claire & Danny Cress of the Citizen Band @ Twiggs



Shea Stratton



Julia Othmer



Howard

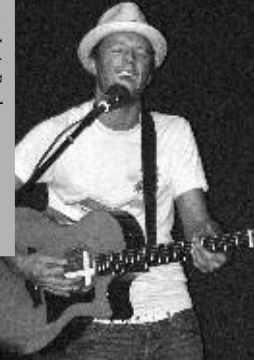


Josh Damigo



Robin Henkel serenades Maggie @ Terra

Photo: Lois Bach



Jason Mraz @ Twiggs



Steve Roche @ Wood 'n' Lips Open Mic

Photo: Tim Woods

SD MUSIC AWARDS WEEK



Greg Laswell



The Grams win



Ray Bonneville @ Jimmy Duke's

Photo: Liz Abbo



The Zombies @ the Belly Up



Dave Alvin @ Belly Up



Earl Thomas



Jim McInnes



Arabella Harrison



A.J. Croce



Carlos Olmeda @ Twiggs



Bass Clef Experiment @ Rebecca's

Photo: Lois Bach



Gregory Page w/ his award



Jimmie & Jeannie Cheatham



Lindsey Yung



Kyle Phelan



Sharon Whyte



Mark Twang & Jim Soldi



Hector Maldonado



Annie Bethancourt



Matt Silvia & Christopher Dale



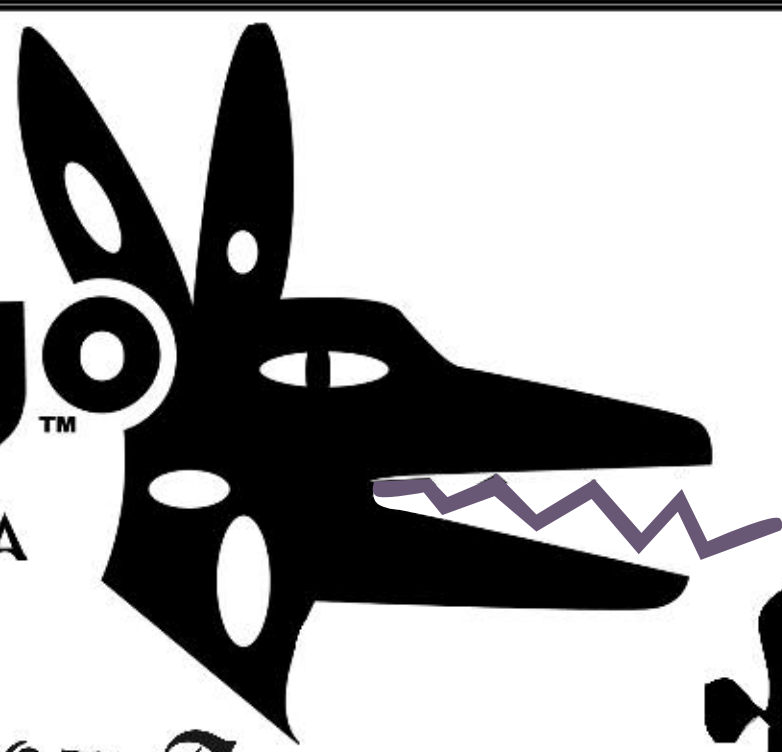
Eve Selis

Photos by Steve Covault unless otherwise noted

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