

T SAN DIEGO ROUBADOOR

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



February 2006

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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.

SAN DIEGO TROUBADOUR, the local source for alternative country, Americana, roots, folk, blues, gospel, jazz, and bluegrass music news, is published monthly and is free of charge. Letters to the editor must be signed and may be edited for content. It is not, however, guaranteed that they will appear.

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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.

CONTRIBUTORS

FOUNDERS

Ellen and Lyle Duplessie
Liz Abbott
Kent Johnson

PUBLISHERS

Liz Abbott
Kent Johnson

EDITORIAL/GRAPHICS

Liz Abbott
Chuck Schiele

ADVERTISING

Liz Abbott
Joanna Schiele

DISTRIBUTION

Lois Bach
Peter Bolland
Greg Gohde
Kevin Irvin
Mark Jackson
Jenna Duplessie Pabalate
Bill Richardson
Dave Sawyer
Chuck Schiele
Indian Joe Stewart

PHOTOGRAPHY

Steve Covault
Lois Bach
Tim Woods

WEB MASTER

Will Edwards

WRITERS

Jeremy Browne
Lou Curtiss
Will Edwards
Simeon Flick
Kate Kowsh
Jim McInnes
Tom Paine
Raul Sandelin
Sven-Erik Seaholm
José Sinatra
Tina Stone
D. Dwight Worden
John Philip Wylie

Where to Go to Hear Acoustic Music in San Diego

The E Street Café

A Cozy Place to Hang Out in Coastal North County

by Dwight Worden

Located at 130 West E Street about a block from the Coast Highway in downtown old Encinitas, the E Street Café is a great little place to hang out, drink coffee, eat yummy snacks, chat with friends, go on line at computer work stations, or, in the evenings, enjoy listening to live music. The Café bills itself as a "full service cyber café," featuring Dell work stations connected to the Internet via high speed fiber optics. If you prefer, you can bring your own wireless computer and connect to the Internet that way, free with a purchase. The Café offers a wide selection of beverages, featuring organic fair trade coffees and a broad selection of loose leaf teas. Both vegan alternatives and the standard café fare are here to tempt you. The Café is open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday and from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Thursday through Saturday.

The Café has a nice, clean and bright atmosphere, with an interesting "parlor" in the corner, decorated in turn of the century style. Local owners Bob Nanninga and Keith Shillington first opened the E Street Café in September of 2004 with an arts theme as a place for locals to hang and enjoy music, poetry, and art. Attractive paintings by local artists adorn the walls and are for sale. The art is rotated about every four months.

Music has been part of the Café's agenda since its founding. There is an attractive, if small, stage in the corner with good access to the room. On this stage the Café presents music, poetry, and other live events. Their calendar of events can be accessed on their website: <http://www.estreetcafe.com/>. By way of example, January's calendar included Anna Troy, Michael Tiernan and friends, Melissa Page, and others, along with an Open Mic Night on Tuesdays and a soon to come Bluegrass Social on Sunday evenings, starting this month. Most live performances begin at 7 p.m., but some take place during the day, running through the noon hour, so make sure and check the calendar.

The food and beverages are delicious and affordable. The menu includes all kinds of coffees and teas (eat your heart out, Starbucks!), muffins, scones, pastries, panini sandwiches, salads, and a broad range of desserts, all nicely prepared.

For the listener, this is a friendly and intimate place to hear music, although —



E Street Cafe interior



FACTS AND FIGURES

WHERE: 130 E Street in old downtown Encinitas, one block west of N. Coast Highway 101

HOURS: Sunday through Wednesday, 7 a.m.-10 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday, 7 a.m.-11 p.m. Music most evenings. Check their on line calendar for details: www.estreetcafe.com

MUSIC: All types of acoustic music; some electric; jazz, blues, pop, folk, bluegrass, Celtic, poetry, and other. No rock or heavy metal. Open Mic Nights on Tuesdays. Bluegrass Evening Socials beginning Sunday, February 5.

LEVEL: Varies — mostly mid-level local musicians; occasional touring musicians

PRICE: Admission is free; tips for musicians

INFO: www.estreetcafe.com. 760 230 2038

RATING: Great place to hang, good listening, fun to play. Not the "big time" for music, but overall a great little place.

City which, once obtained, will allow them to install a permanent sound system and to otherwise notch up the program. At the moment temporary sound is set up by musicians on an "as needed" basis.

Performing musicians who want to play at the Café need to send an email to: music@estreetcafe.com. They will contact you about an audition, which is usually an unamplified appearance during the week at a Tuesday open mic to be "checked out." Musicians can also send in a demo CD or other recording they can provide. The owners promise that they respond to every inquiry. Those accepted are then given weekend slots to perform with amplification if needed. Although the E Street Café doesn't pay its musicians, tips are collected in a large, conspicuously labeled tip jar for that purpose. This may change once the Café obtains its entertainment permit.

The Café hosts an open mic on Tuesday nights from 7-9:30 p.m. or so. Solos, duets, and ensembles are welcome as are all kinds of music with the exception of hard rock, heavy metal, and other music that is heavy on the electrics. Open mic musicians are typically allowed 15 minutes to perform two or three songs.

Parking is available on the street and it is usually not hard to find a spot within a block or so in the evening. Overall, this a great little place that offers ambiance, computer access, good chow and drinks, and a nice variety of music for listeners. North County has needed a great place to hang out and build community through art, music, and poetry. This may just be the spot. Next time you are in Encinitas, stop by the E Street Café. You won't regret it.



E Street Cafe owners and management: (l. to r.) Bob, Nancy, Keith, Barbara



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Lily May is a young woman

by Lou Curtiss

In 1977 Lily May Ledford came to San Diego for the Folk Festival as part of a Folklife package of performers put together by the National Endowment for the Arts. I had a chance to spend some time with her and recently came across an unpublished article that I wrote during the weeks following that tenth festival. I'd like to share some of those memories with you.

A tall, confident performer, Lily May carried a touch of mountain shyness with her on stage. She was a strong performer whose banjo and fiddle playing and story telling drew audiences to her, and she warmed to them like new friends. She was often called the "Banjo Pickin' Girl" and was founder of the Coon Creek Girls, the first all-female string band to play on the radio.

Lily May's shyness may have come from a certain amount of insecurity due to some huge changes during her lifetime, beginning with her early years in Pinch-em-tight Holler in Kentucky's Red River Gorge.

Her childhood in the gorge, her brother's home-made banjo, the fiddle she got by swapping a box of crayons and some worn-out toys, her mother's insistence on work over music and her father's insistence on music over work, on play parties and dances, and the stories of a rural youth in Kentucky became the bedrock of her performances at festivals and concerts throughout the 1970s. She told me that the rough edges had worn down a bit to become the warmth of a childhood spent

Lily May Ledford: The Banjo Pickin' Girl

in a mountain cabin. She talked about swapping for that fiddle, remembering that it looked like some "live thing" to her when she saw that little boy swinging it and batting weeds with it. She traded her treasured crayons for the fiddle, but she was still sure she got the best of the bargain. The fiddle was nothing but a shell, so she had to carve the pegs and the saddle and even had to steal some hair from a horse's tail to make the bow. She said, "I breathed life into that old fiddle, and it made a life for me."

I guess many of the people she played music for never got past her shy offhandedness. She became for them the stories she told. In their minds she remained a mountain girl, awed by the city. In her own mind, she knew she had to become a polished performer and she did.

As a girl walking across the ridges with her fiddle in a flower sack, Lily May played for excursion trains that brought tourists from Louisville and Cincinnati down to see the natural bridge. Sometimes she played solo, sometimes she would play with her brother Cayen, her sister Rosa Charlotte, and eventually the whole family band, which by then were calling themselves the Red River Ramblers. Soon the Red River Ramblers were playing square dances and talent contests.

"We'd pass the hat," she told me. "Sometimes it'd come back with as much as 50 cents or a dollar. Sometimes we'd lose the hat."

In 1936, when Lily May was 19, the Red River Ramblers played at an amateur talent contest in Mount Vernon, Kentucky. John Lair, the music librarian at radio station WLS in Chicago, had heard Lily May and brought the station's program director, Harold Safford, with him to hear her. He told her not to sign with Safford, taking her aside and whispering that he had plans for her.

Safford offered her a contract but she did what Lair told her to do and politely turned his offer down. He was a northerner and spoke with a funny accent. Lily May didn't trust him. Later she grew to like him.

Lair, who was from Kentucky, "talked like us," she said. "I signed a contract for him to manage me." He sent her \$5 to seal the deal and to help with the cost of coming to Chicago, where he had landed her a regular spot on the popular show *National Barn Dance*.

To help pay for her trip to Chicago, Lily May's father sold a hog, and she took a job digging ditches in the gorge. The

men wanted to sign her on as a water boy but digging ditches paid more. It's a shame she didn't have the same kind of business sense when it came to her music.

Before leaving and in need of strings for her banjo, she walked from sunup to sunset to the Pine Ridge General Store because she was afraid she wouldn't be able to buy strings in Chicago.

Even after she arrived in Chicago, Lily May would walk. One day she missed the train and rather than take a taxi, she walked to work. Now, she could afford to ride taxis. With the station paying her \$60 per week, she had money for the first time in her life. She sent some of it home



The Coon Creek Girls

to help the family. She also sent gifts, the most treasured of which was a radio.

She delighted audiences with tales of getting from one place to another, and she fooled them a little along the way with stories of walking out into the Chicago Loop and causing a traffic jam.

She said, "Cars were honking at me, and I just didn't know which way to go. I just yelled 'Hush!' and the cars all stopped honking." It's no wonder that she could stop traffic. The early photos show her to be a strikingly beautiful young woman. All that walking must have been healthy for her.

When Lily May first arrived in 1936, the members of the WLS company poked good-natured fun at her because she was shy and spoke with a strange mountain accent. Her performances on the radio quickly became so popular that she inspired a comic strip in the station's magazine called *Silly May, the Mountain Gal*. She was genuine, however, and took to performing on the radio right away.

Following the success of *National Barn Dance* in Chicago, Lair moved the show to Cincinnati and then to Renfro Valley, where he created *Renfro Valley Barn Dance* in 1939. It was there that the Coon Creek

Girls were formed. Comprised of Lily May, her sister Rosie, Evelyn "Daisy" Lange, and Ester "Violet" Koehler, the Coon Creek Girls began singing on the radio show where they'd stay for the next 15 years.

When the Coon Creek Girls were invited to play at the White House for King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, who were visiting President and Mrs. Roosevelt, Lair carried the bass fiddle behind her because it was the only way the security guards would let him in. She delighted in telling that story.

With the *National Barn Dance* in Chicago followed by the Clear Channel radio station WLW in Cincinnati, Lily May gained a national following, but it was the *Renfro Valley Barn Dance* that started a national CBS hookup through WHAS radio on November 5, 1939 that gave her the greatest fame.

Lair dominated her career from 1936 to 1957 except for a short period when she followed her second husband to Columbia, South Carolina, to try and start a radio show. She told me, "I guess I had the feeling, prevalent in the mountains at that time, that men managed things and women just went along."

Oddly Lair discouraged recording contracts and it wasn't until 1938 that Lily May and her sisters made recordings for Vocalion under the direction of Uncle Art Satherly. Lily May and her sisters originally wanted to be called the Wildwood Flowers (calling themselves Rosy, Violet, and Daisy). Lair, however, wanted a name that reflected the kind of music he wanted them to play so he called them the Coon Creek Girls. He said, "A wildwood flower is a delicate thing," and the music he wanted them to play was not.

He froze them in time, dressing them in calico and old-fashioned high-topped, pointed-toe shoes. They became hillbilly music stars who appeared on shows with Gene Autry, Lulubelle and Scotty, Wade Mainer, and Homer and Jethro. She was a star of the 1930s and 1940s who stumbled into obscurity in the 1950s although remaining active in music. She even learned to play Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis tunes on the piano.

When her old records were reissued in the 1970s she was sought out again during the folk and old-timey revival to record again. She and her sister Rosy and a still younger sister, Black-eyed Susan played festivals and recorded some.

In 1968 Lily May, along with her sister Rosy, played at the Newport Folk Festival where she began a career as a folk musi-



Lily May in her later years.

cian. Away from the constraints of live radio she learned how to take her time and develop her stories. She talked about growing up in Red River Gorge and playing music with the Coon Creek Girls. She used stories to introduce her songs. She became a concert artist. Her performance moved from the one or two-song format of her Renfro Valley days to a full-length concert. During her later years she suffered from diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis, but she continued to perform. She was a trooper and when she felt well, she could go on for hours, singing and telling stories about working with Woody Guthrie, Bess and Alan Lomax, Orson Welles, and Burl Ives when she went to New York during World War II to perform in a show called the Martins and the Coys and later in a show called *The Chisholm Trail*.

Lily May always took time to be with her fans and the folks who came to her shows. Even when she was ill, she took the time. It was part of being a performer and she did it with grace and dignity.

A record issued in the early 1980s, which was recorded by Phil and Vivian Williams for Voyager records in Seattle, presents Lily May the way she sounded when she visited San Diego. In fact, I think it was recorded on that same trip West that included San Diego. She does a lot of her early songs like "Banjo Pickin' Girl," "Pretty Polly," and others and tells a story or two.

Someone told me that when Lily May died in the mid-1980s, they brought one of the Oak Ridge Boys in from Nashville to sing at her funeral. The preacher announced that he was going to sing Lily May's favorite song, "Amazing Grace" and I guess he did. Lots of the folks in attendance knew that Lily May's favorite song was "John Henry."

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Photo: Bill Richardson

Lou Curtiss

Recordially, Lou Curtiss

CONVERSATIONS I REMEMBER

I like to talk with people, relate one on one, mostly about music but also about all the other things that come with it. Doing the music for festivals and running an old time record shop for 38 years or so has put me in touch with many people who also enjoy talking. Many times when you see someone for just a short while at a festival or a concert, you don't get to spend the quality time that a good gab fest can bring. So many of the people with whom I've torn apart the music scene have moved on and we just don't come in contact as much any more (and when we do, there's never enough time). Here are a few very memorable people with whom I've had the fortune to sit around and talk. I know I'm leaving quite a few of them out and I'm listing them in no particular order, just a few quality conversations.

"The quality of time you spend with people far outweighs the quantity," says Tom Waits, but it applies to most all of the guys listed here. Starting with Waits, it was during those late evenings after the Heritage coffeehouse closed and we'd put away the instruments that Waits, Ray Bierl, and I would wander down Mission Blvd. a



Tom Waits

block or so to Saska's Steakhouse for one of their steakburgers, coffee, and some conversation. It was often about music (that's what we all did on one level or another), but we also talked about other things. Like how Tom's Monday night pilgrimages to L.A. were going at the Troubadour Club Hoot where he showed off his wares so that he could get some kind of a record deal, or maybe we'd talk about a new song or a book one of us read, always accompanied by a joke or two. We always had a good time. Our get togethers lasted just a couple of years until Tom moved on. The music is still good but what I remember is the conversation and the burgers. Saska's is still there but the conversations are only echoes.

George Winston used to come down and play boogie woogie and stride piano while people were filing into the concert hall at the folk festivals at SDSU. George also played at a couple of the concert series I did at the Folk Arts store and at

Orango's restaurant in the 1970s. He'd come down early and hang around the store. We'd play old records and talk about music. He turned me on to such great pianists as Cleo Brown and James Booker and related which of Fats Waller's greatest sides were from a technical standpoint. George is a walking encyclopedia when it comes to pianos and how they are played. He wants to know everything he can about all things related (some of which I was able to fill in). Of course, he's gone on to become one of New Age music's pariahs, although I

think he still has a boogie and stride album in him somewhere. I attended one of his concerts a few years ago and, between musical interludes, George talked about such great old time blues and jazz piano people as Mary Lou Williams, James P. Johnson, and Fats Waller, and his audience laughed like he was telling a joke and that these people didn't exist. I remember feeling sorry for those very un-hip people and hope that some of them checked out those great old timers. About George: I feel sad that he doesn't have the time to come and hang around Folk Arts and spin those old sides.

Nat Jacobs has been gone awhile but I still cherish the times I spent with him talking about old records and the folks who made them and also what it means to run a shop. Nat's stories about the Duke Ellington Band, Clarence Williams, and others who he knew always



George Winston

filled me with wonder. He'd tell me stories about visiting Clarence Williams at his second hand store and talking him out of hanging on to the rare records he had stashed away. Nat was a wheeler dealer as most every worthwhile 78 rpm collector is, but he dropped by my store regularly and let me tape some of his rarest sides. I still play Nat's copy of Emmett Miller's Georgia Crackers' song "The Ghost of the St. Louis Blues" on my Jazz Roots Halloween show every year. His copy is cleaner than the one Columbia eventually issued on CD. When Nat died, he left his many and varied live Duke Ellington recordings to the Lou Curtiss

Sound Library, which has enabled me to share a lot of rare stuff with the folks who listen to Jazz Roots on KSDS. I try to evoke Nat's memory when I can.

Mark Wilson was a philosophy and logic professor at UCSD during the 1970s and also one of those folks who has done a pile of field recordings of old timey music from Cape Breton to Appalachia, much of which has been issued on the Rounder label. Mark also had a remarkable collection of LPs and tapes of music that I'd never ever had the opportunity to acquire. He let me tape hundreds of hours of old timey, blues, jazz, ragtime, Irish and Scottish traditional songs, and quite a bit of rare stuff from remote places like the Isle of Tonga and Tibet.

Mark also got me into the business of writing liner notes, producing records, and researching things that I'd only had a smattering of experience in. In the mid to late 1970s, Mark and I did a bunch of LPs for Rounder (I mentioned them all in an earlier column) and we talked a whole lot about music and what's good and what's not so good. We didn't always agree but most often we did. I think the mark of a good conversation is that you remember it years later and the knowledge imparted becomes part of who you are. There's a lot of Mark Wilson hanging around in my head.

I first met Curtis Carlisle Bouterse in an African history class at SDSU sometime in the very early 1960s. For a short time I was a member of the San Diego State Campus Organized

Folksingers, playing old timey music at noon every Thursday in the Rose Arbor behind Scripps cottage and talking about old time and traditional music

with Curt. Now Curt and I don't always come together in musical tastes but when we do cross it's pretty solid. Much of what I know and spout about old timey music has its roots in something I heard Curt say. When we started the Folk Festivals in 1967 Curt was part of them and has been part of every one since that time up to and including last April's Roots Festival. I've always enjoyed Curt's music but the knowledge he has, both formal and informal, has been invaluable.

I started bringing Mary McCaslin down to San Diego around 1970 when she opened for Lightnin' Hopkins at the old Bifrost Bridge in La Mesa. After the concert we went out for something to eat, which became something of a tradition. This is an interesting lady who has been playing the folk music circuit for awhile. She knows a lot about what's going on in the music business and I learn a lot from her and have a nice time doing it.

Conversation, work or play. My world thrives on it every day. I meet music collectors from all over the world and performers who have a lot to say. I learn from all of them and hopefully I throw out an idea or two that sticks. Folk Arts Rare Records is no Algonquin Roundtable, but it's left a lot of nice echoes over the years.

Recordially,
Lou Curtiss



Mary McCaslin



Curt Carlisle Bouterse

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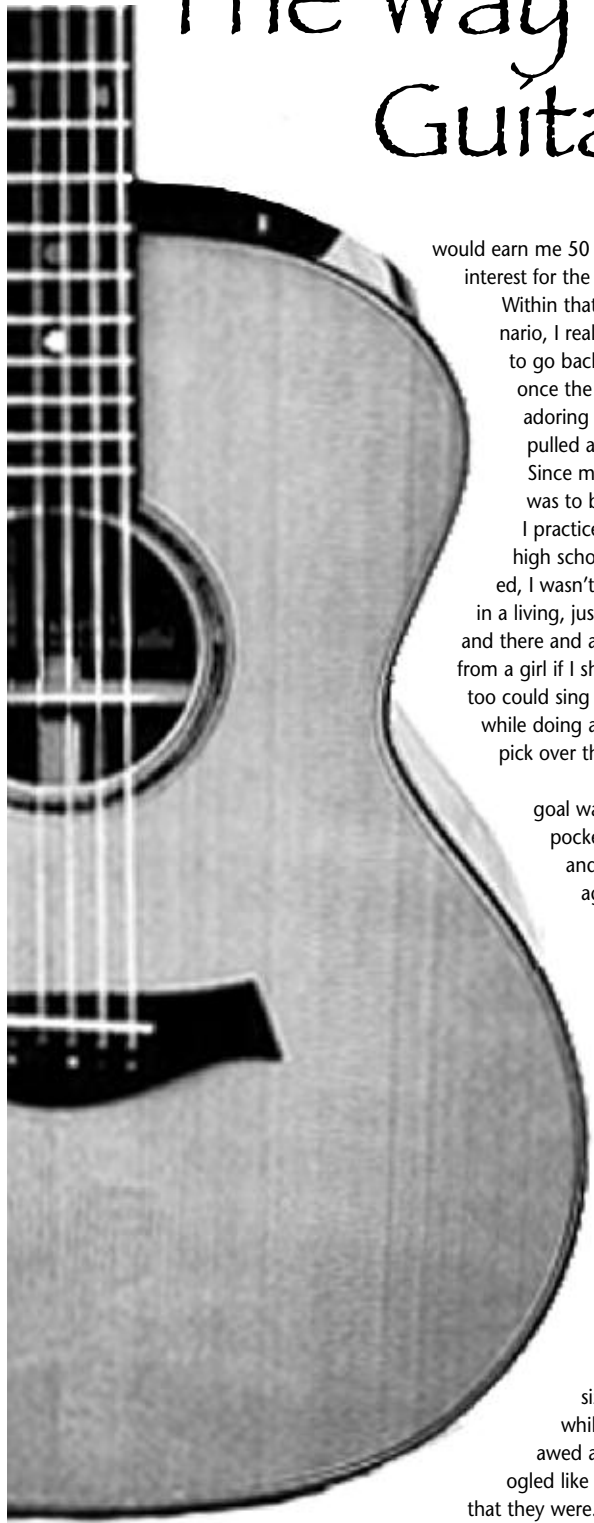
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would earn me 50 thou in annual interest for the rest of my life.

Within that "realistic" scenario, I realized I would need to go back out and work, once the limos filled with adoring groupies finally pulled away from the curb. Since my long-range goal was to be a guitar teacher, I practiced the craft a lot in high school. But, as I indicated, I wasn't necessarily reeling in a living, just a bong hit here and there and at times a quick kiss from a girl if I showed her that she too could sing "Dust in the Wind" while doing a poor man's Travis pick over those pretty chords.

At that time my goal was to hit it big, pocket some quick coin, and semi-retire at the age of 25 or so, the elder-statesman of El Cajon's rock 'n' roll jet set. And, in this capacity, I would build a clientele of younger guitar pickers, who would actually pay me to sit in a small room behind a local guitar shop and listen to me pontificate about the six-stringed universe while they ood and awed and ogled and ogled like the devoted fans that they were. The bottom line was I wanted to teach guitar because in its own little way, it seemed almost glamorous. And, when you're a zit-pocked teenager riding your 20-inch bike around the Cajon Zone in your obligatory hand-me-down Levis and flannel shirt, something glamorous, *anything*, sure sounds good right about then.

As I grew older, teaching guitar became more than some condensed version of rock glory attained while sitting in a six-foot square practice cubical.

I actually got serious about it.

Perhaps, it was on my twenty-sixth birthday that I realized I wouldn't be retiring from the road at 25, returning to my hometown roots, the journeyman six-slinger who thereafter roamed the East County like a mysterious silhouette in a Spaghetti Western. Around this time, I really started to see teaching guitar as something more spiritual, as a means of connecting with other human beings who floated through these same absurd slices of space and time. At the same time, I decided to turn the potpourri of classes I was taking at Grossmont College into a plan for earning an actual degree so that I could turn my growing love of teaching into a stable career.

It wasn't long before I wasn't only teaching guitar but English as well. And, suddenly I was something quite different than the irreverent kid who rode his bike down the alleys of El Cajon. I actually cared about people; I cared about my students. Call it that latent maternal instinct that all men have.

Now, a healthy decade and a half after

that first epiphany, I'm still teaching both guitar and English. And, ironically, I rode my mountain bike down an El Cajon back-alley just last week. To shake up a nice mixed-metaphor cocktail: No, acorns don't crawl too far the nest!

But, even though I'm still involved in something I've been doing since I was 14, my motivations for doing it are completely different. And, for that, the act itself is completely different. Looking back, I realize that I wasn't truly teaching in my younger years — I was showing off. However, now that I'm older, I'm not really teaching either. I'm actually learning from people who happen to call themselves my students.

With this in mind, I wanted to hear some of the teaching philosophies of the more revered teachers here in town. Four local teachers who have certainly honed their craft share some sage advice.

Indian Joe Stewart, Blue Horse Music, Ramona

Do you think it's necessary to teach sight reading?

IJ: Blind musicians obviously cannot read, but Ray Charles, Ronnie Milsap, Stevie Wonder, and others have made monumental contributions. I find it boring to watch a live performer who must read their music — plus their delivery usually lacks passion. Reading is no substitute for knowing the piece.

It is necessary to understand how music creates mood, how phrasing builds song parts, to develop the skills of listening with the other players, and responding appropriately. Otherwise you cannot improvise, which is essential, whether extending a solo, or keeping the tune going when a dancer trips over the floor monitor and careens into the drum kit. In my band experience this occurs all too regularly, even in the finest of settings, like posh weddings.

Here is a true story that illustrates using such musicianship skills when performing: I was a mercenary lead guitarist for a bandleader/singer/ rhythm guitarist who relied solely on reading instead of learning the songs. At an outdoor show he prefaced our next number with a grandiose soliloquy, then during the eight-bar intro a gust of wind blew his sheet music up onto the roof of a building. He was lost, dumbfounded, and deflated! I knew the tune, stepped up to the mic, and led the other players through it with musical cues, hand signals, and some verbal communication [calling out chords and parts]. The audience was elated; the bandleader was incensed!

Indian Joe and the Chiefs are notorious for playing song requests we have never done together, but one of us knows enough of the lyrics and chords to attempt it. We often are the most amazed at how well the tunes come out! Many moons of playing VFW halls and Moose Lodges in pick-up bands creates the opportunity to hone these skills, and you can't survive without 'em!

Anna Troy, El Rayo GuitarWorks, San Diego

We all know the old adage "if you can't do, teach," but you do both: you perform professionally as well as teach. Would you elaborate your own thoughts on this?

AT: Everyone is a teacher. We all teach

each other things every time we encounter another human being. Most of the time you just don't get paid for it, I guess. Being a performing musician is the same thing. I would still perform even if I didn't get paid. So for me, teaching and playing professionally are both things that I would do anyway regardless of how much money I make doing them.

The great thing about my life is that I get to do what I am naturally built to do and make a living doing it.

I teach my students to become the best musicians possible. I give them the advice they need to be able to become performers if that is what they would like, however, the rest is up to them. Being a performer can't really be taught in a classroom, it has to be learned while one is on stage. The thing I can give them, however, is the confidence and emotional support needed to perform their music live if that is what they would like to do. Performing is all about being yourself on stage, expressing the most outgoing, energetic, and fun aspects of yourself to entertain others. You can't be taught to be who you are, you just have to learn to let the performer inside you emerge.

Simeon Flick, Private Instruction

Isn't being a teacher much more than just being a person who passes on knowledge?

SF: I found that I became somewhat of a counselor as well, aware of the teacher-student subtext of their giving me a certain amount of power and control and that it is my responsibility to make them as comfortable as possible during the lessons. Being a teacher, I found, was just as much about looking after their psychological well-being as their musical pedagogy. There has to be a complete communicative flow back and forth if the lessons are to be successful, and it helps immensely if the teacher and student can open up beforehand if they're having a bad day or are otherwise in a weird space. Because of that I always make a point of asking after their general welfare before the lesson starts. Music teachers and psychologists are not that different ... they're both there to help the client work through roadblocks of growth and, in the end, to become better people, whether it's becoming a better musician or a more evolved person.

I found that by approaching the teacher-student relationship in this way, the students, and to a certain extent their families, who were often the parental guardians of many of my students, became a kind of extended family for me. The wonderful side effect of this was that I often got referrals for new students from then-cur-

rent students who had given me a glowing recommendation. That is an insanely gratifying feeling: to have your reputation precede you, to be well recommended by the parents of young students, and to have the parents feel comfortable and safe enough with you to wholeheartedly recommend you to a stranger.

I found that the lessons were also a place where I could learn and grow. The things I was encouraging my students to do were also pushing me to learn by applying those same concepts to the larger scale of what I already knew, and many of the experiments I conducted during lesson time with the students gave birth to new material for my own musical endeavors.

Alan Vincent, Moze Guitars, La Mesa

Why should people learn to play an instrument or even study music in the first place?

AV: First, I'm flattered that you've chosen me to respond to this very difficult question. Why should people learn to play an instrument? In my opinion, people shouldn't unless they want to. It seems to sour the experience if some desire isn't involved. But if you do want to, you are in for joy beyond your wildest dreams. Perhaps playing music allows you to express yourself without the use of words, which sometimes just don't, or can't, do the job. Also, as a side benefit, I think that you learn rapid decision making, as the consequences of a questionable decision are immediately apparent.

Now, why study music? This is very tricky. I'm a guitar player so my answer is slanted that way. It's possible to play the heck out of a piece of music without knowing a lick [pun intended] of what you are technically doing. I've heard it said more than twice that knowing about music, especially the kind that you enjoy, will somehow decrease your appreciation. My experience and that of others is exactly the opposite. It's possible that you may appreciate less what was once a seminal musical experience, but your appreciation of that which is beyond you [temporarily] might inspire you to make art that is timeless.




by Raul Sandelin

I think it was Aristotle who stated that an act is defined by the motivation behind it. So, conceivably, the same outward act— say running into a burning building, performed by two people with differing motives— say personal ambition versus true humanitarianism— would not be the same act at all.

This forces me to think for a moment because there is one thing that I thought had been a constant in my life since I was a teenager: teaching guitar. But, since my motives for teaching guitar were different than they are now, perhaps, if Aristotle is right, I really haven't been teaching guitar for 25 years. Maybe what I did then is not what I am doing now. Or, perhaps, this is making absolutely no sense and I'm waxing too philosophical for a subject better adorned with gaudy spandex, smoke pots, and tabloid tableaux.


That said, allow me to wax away: When I first started teaching guitar, which mostly involved showing my friends a G-chord in exchange for any combination of mind-altering chemicals, I admit that I was in it for the glory. I wanted to be a rock star, but a practical rock star at that. I figured it was a long shot to be the next John Lennon or Jimmy Page. (I was quite the level-headed lad.) I thought I could at least become a one-hit wonder, go out on tour, sell a few records, and horde a cool mil that



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Photo: Erik Goldring

by John Philip Wylie

Pettibone Steps Out of the Shadows and Into the Spotlight

also demonstrates his versatility by playing various guitars, bass, mandolin, banjo, harmonica, and even assorted kitchen utensils on the cut "Original Originator." Especially surprising is Pettibone's vocal ability as a front man and his refined songwriting skill.

"I'd been a co-writer on a handful of things throughout the years, but I had never really written a song all the way through by myself. I knew I could do it, but I just got so busy playing with other people that I never did. Lately, I've been writing quite a bit and it feels good."

Bolstered by the success and satisfaction of having completed his first solo album, Pettibone is preparing to do a follow-up. Finding the time could be the biggest obstacle to the sought-after session player and touring veteran. Pettibone found recording his own album to be quite a departure from his previous studio experience.

"It's been different. [In the past] when I came in [the artist] usually had a pretty good idea of what they wanted. The direction is usually pretty much there once the skeleton of each song is laid out. Having to draw out the skeleton myself, I had to step back a little bit and come at it from a different angle. But it is not an overly produced record. I really enjoy live radio broadcasts and I wanted to capture that live feeling."

To do that, Pettibone recorded all of the vocals and most of the guitar work in a single take. There was no punching in. As a result, there are spots that are imperfect, but that is by design. "That was the sound I was going for. I didn't want to use electric instruments or make it ultra-slick," he said.

Happy with the overall product, Pettibone is particularly pleased with three

cuts from *The West Gate*.

"I think I am most proud of "My Little Man." That was a deeply heartfelt song that came out easily. I've been getting a lot of good feedback on that one. People think that "Honey Biscuit" is an old Robert Johnson song, so that is a huge compliment. And "Original Originator" is another one that people didn't realize I had written."

Due to prior commitments, Pettibone is not really in a position where he can tour in support of his newly released CD, but he hopes to play a couple songs from it at the next Tim Flannery and Friends performance on February 4 at the California Center for the Performing Arts in Escondido. He is also hoping to open for Lucinda Williams on some of her upcoming tour dates.

Asked if his new CD might signal a tran-

sition from supporting player to headliner Pettibone said, "If they call me up to do it that would be great. You never know what is going to happen with a CD when you throw it out there. So I am just putting it out there, getting it up on the website (www.dougpettibone.com), linking up with a few people, and trying to get it into other people's hands. I have been selling quite a few of them. So we will see what happens."

For local music fans, Doug Pettibone is the talented pedal steel guitar player who sits unobtrusively stage left for the Tim Flannery Band. Tracy Chapman fans have seen him perform in the same capacity and heard his backing vocals. So have the fans of Lucinda Williams. And he has played behind Jewel and Mark Knopfler. But now, with the release of his superb new CD, *The West Gate*, Pettibone moves out of the shadows and onto center stage.

"I was working with this producer named Ned Albright on a number of other projects and he suggested that I make my own record," Pettibone said in a recent phone interview. "He told me to get a little tape recorder and a pad of paper and just write down a bunch of ideas, throw them together, and see what I came up with."

What Pettibone has come up with is an impressive 10-song album. Seven of the selections are either his own compositions or were co-written with Flannery or Albright. The remaining three are covers of Van Morrison's "Into the Mystic," Bob Dylan's "She Belongs to Me," and Lennon and McCartney's "Two of Us." Williams, with her distinctive vocal style, joins Pettibone on the latter two.

Not surprisingly, Pettibone's trademark pedal steel brilliance is displayed, but he



by Will Edwards

Paige Aufhammer Is on a Musical Mission

son before but you can't remember who it is. It is a clear and optimistic voice that Paige doesn't have to gloss up at all — there is no need. It is perfect just the way it is.

I recently spoke to Paige over the phone about her experience in Ireland. I wanted to know how her music had been received there, and I was curious about how such an experience might have influenced a talented musician who is still finding her place in the music world. "I'd never gone anywhere to play music before," says Paige. "It's a part of their culture... they appreciate music." I found that our interview focused on a special connection that Paige felt she had established with her new Irish audience. Specifically, there were fewer barriers between folks in the pubs and the musicians. What she described reminded me of the old idea of a traveling minstrel who gathered up stories and songs and wandered

from town to town, carrying with them news and good will from one town to the next. Speaking from my own experience, I would say that artists become more intimate with their audience over time. In that intimacy there is also vulnerability. Most people can imagine why it is important for a musician to feel appreciated and Paige described the audience in Ireland as curious and very supportive.

The tour was booked and coordinated by long-term friend, AJ Degrasse and supported largely by local churches — a kind of musical mission. Paige recalled the first weekend of the tour for me. They arrived in Wexford on the East coast of Ireland and played two nights at a local pub called The Sky and the Ground (a moniker describing the two places in Ireland where one will find rain). Not only was the show

continued on page 12.


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BRICK BY BRICK - FEB. 21



by Simeon Flick

The Grams Weigh In

It is still many hours before his band's gig later that night as Chuck Schiele saunters somnolently down the stairs in search of a cup of joe. His wife Joanna had just let me in moments before, greeting me with a warm hug and a smile, and trailing the scent of many enticing culinary delights in from the kitchen behind her. I have entered nothing if not the cozy HQ of Charles Schiele Creative, Beach Music Mafia, and a number of other joint and singular ventures on which the still somewhat recently married Mr. and Mrs. Schiele collaborate.



The Grams: Craig Yerkes, Elise Ohki, Chuck Schiele

It is also ground zero for the Grams, Schiele's latest musical project. Everything about the Grams (as in the movie 21 Grams, which is the supposed weight of the soul leaving the body upon death) begins and ends here in this halcyon two-story house and accompanying back yard garage. These edifices both literally and figuratively bespeak the anatomy of a modern working band.

(Now, by "working" I mean to imply two things: one; the Grams "work" in that there is a symbiotic synergy between them, that each band member has his or her own complementary function, ergo it works in a way that won't find them disintegrating anytime soon, and two;



Chuck Schiele & Craig Yerkes at Kenny's Castaways in NYC

they seem to be working like mad these days, gigging frequently, taking advantage of every available opportunity that comes their way, and building a successful career in music outside the confluence of the flagging major label system.)

Schiele picks up a snack-laden tray that Joanna has prepared and leads me out through the small back yard, past a congenial sea of deck chairs and barbecue grilles (where much colloquial revelry has obviously transpired) and into the converted garage. Here is where his growing collection of instruments, eclectic trinkets, eccentric furnishings, band posters, memorabilia, and recording equipment is housed. This is the creative womb where Schiele conducts rehearsals for the Grams and other local bands as an ancillary service provided by his Beach Music Mafia or, simply, the Mob.

This tapestry and rug-laden room is the principal—if not always literal—birthplace of Schiele's music and the locus where it usually passes through sundry bits of recording equipment to find quasi-physical form. He is the chief songwriter and lead vocalist for the Grams and a veteran of the San Diego music scene.

Schiele's formative years transpired in upstate New York, but you would hardly know it from the laid-back bohemian air he now emanates. It's necessary to wait for the brusque New York frankness to spill out of his Sagittarian mouth to confirm his East Coast origins. When he was four or five he matter-of-factly informed his parents he would be heading out West when he came of age. Perhaps the shock of his leaving was more due to the realization that the time had finally arrived than to any disbelief of the child he had been when he'd made the promise. Even at such an early age, Chuck Schiele already had a supple grip on his destiny like Babe Ruth's hands on a baseball bat.

While the time-biding child languished in Syracuse, he vainly set about trying to get his elementary school music teacher to learn him the drums. Schiele was diverted to at least three other less enchanting instruments before quitting music altogether. It wasn't until college that he picked up the trail again, inspired by the Beatles, Queen, Aerosmith's "Sweet Emotion," and his dad, who was a professional jazz bass player in San Diego at the height of the '70's club scene.

"There was a guitar in the corner, so I asked him to show me how to play it," Schiele reminisces. "He explained music theory to me and I



was off and running. I never really had any formal music training, but I took a lot of classes in college, went to recording school, and then learned mostly by jumping in. I could write songs before I could play guitar and have written them all through my life. Early on I often wrote stuff I couldn't play, so my lesson became the act of learning how to play the music I heard in my head."

"Before I knew it I was in a band," Schiele continues, "and have been in a band ever since. My favorites include The And (rock and groove band), Modern Peasants (rock/groove/world), Mysterious Ways (rock/acoustic), the Gandhi Method (folk rock/acoustic), and now the Grams."

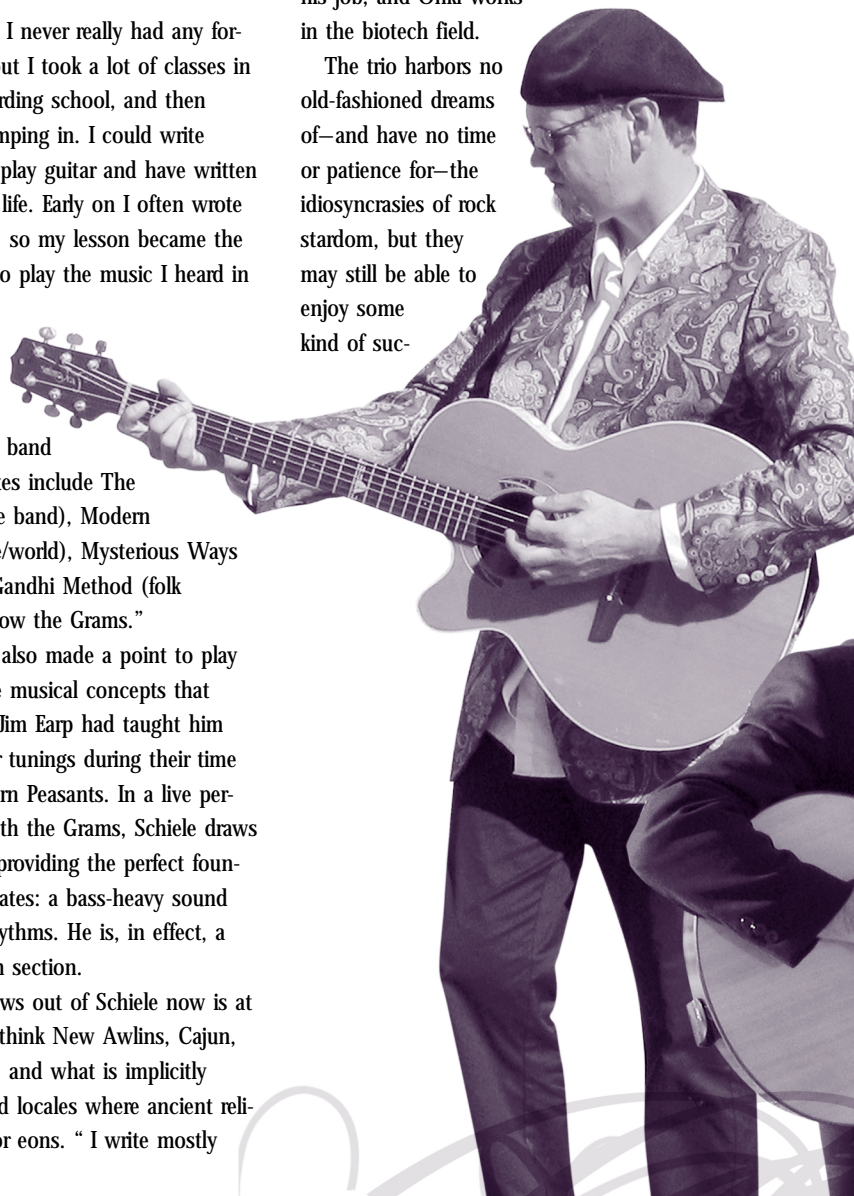
Along the way he also made a point to play solo, fleshing out the musical concepts that stemmed from what Jim Earp had taught him about alternate guitar tunings during their time together in the Modern Peasants. In a live performance scenario with the Grams, Schiele draws on this erudition by providing the perfect foundation for his bandmates: a bass-heavy sound with solid, driving rhythms. He is, in effect, a self-contained rhythm section.

The music that flows out of Schiele now is at once Southern sass (think New Awlins, Cajun, Zydeco), classic rock, and what is implicitly evocative of old world locales where ancient religions have roosted for eons. "I write mostly

from spiritual motivations, often associated with travels," Schiele relates. "I also write from explorations in my personal music learning. I learn something new to do everyday...something to pick on my own skills about...and I'll always be in that school."

We're conversing over the hors d'oeuvres in the darkened garage studio when the husband and wife team of Craig Yerkes and Elise Ohki finally arrives. They've left their gig clothes and instruments up front in the living room and have joined us in the studio. "Craigness" and "Sweet Elise," as they are familiarly known, are usually late for Grams-related events because they have to commute all the way from North County. The married musicians also have full-time careers — Yerkes commutes to Orange County five days a week for his job, and Ohki works in the biotech field.

The trio harbors no old-fashioned dreams of—and have no time or patience for—the idiosyncrasies of rock stardom, but they may still be able to enjoy some kind of suc-





cess and notoriety due to the growing number of resources and marketing avenues now available to independent artists. Their recent inclusion on a Japanese radio playlist, Schiele's recording session at the legendary Sun Studio in Memphis, his solo appearance at New York's renowned CBGB, and the Grams' San Diego Music Award nomination this past September are all evidence of such emerging possibilities.

Elise Ohki grew up in the greater Buffalo area of upstate New York and discovered the piano and the violin while still in single digits. She played the latter in school and county orchestras, including the Buffalo Suzuki Strings, and found her way to Oberlin College, where she would arrive at the crucial musical crossroad of her life. Ohki felt too much pressure to be perfect on the path to becoming a professional classical violinist, so she made the decision to pursue a career in science and keep her musical activity free on the side. She was determined to obtain a degree in a field that would enable her to provide for herself financially, since the classical music profession seemed to be a glorified crapshoot for even the most proficient of players. Nevertheless, she continued to play violin through graduate school at SUNY Buffalo, as well as with the Amherst Community Orchestra, and finally moved to San Diego to pursue employment opportunities in 2002. Ohki now works in the gene regulation division at the Invitrogen Corporation.

By the time she met and befriended Schiele through a mutual acquaintance at an Ocean Beach bar, Ohki had all but abandoned the violin. The plot gradually thickened, however, as Schiele discovered and slowly drew out Ohki's musicality. They began their collaboration in 2003, and the result was a creative detour for Ohki's classically trained hands, which, although still well regimented, were liberated by their first foray into contemporary music.

The two outspoken, yet also somehow reserved, upstate New Yorkers fell into (and still enjoy) an older-brother/younger-sister kind of rapport, full of acerbic yet lighthearted jabs, quips, and jovial razzing. The male Grams will be the first to tell you that Ohki is the band's barometer of relative goodness, as she is blunt in her views and deft with the power of veto when it comes to such things as new song choices, stage volume, and the length of her husband's solos. The sardonic twist to the "Sweet Elise" nickname is that she is decidedly curt and brusque with her opinions and judgments, though not maliciously so. The fact that she is more



The Grams rock out at the Adams Ave. Street Fair

often astute in these observations and conclusions than not lends a paradoxically endearing puerility to her general countenance.

Ohki and her violin provide the group with a connection to both old and new musical idioms. The lyricism of her neoclassical violin melodies provide a traditionally fresh counterpoint to Schiele's lead vocals, and the modern "fiddle" context of the instrument itself connects the Grams with a more contemporary folk and bluegrass tradition. When she's not recapitulating vocal melodies or introducing new motifs, she's adding staccato and sustained pedal tone textures underneath Schiele's vocal expositions. The occasional addition of her own mezzo-soprano voice at the top of three-part group harmonies rounds out her contributions to the Grams' sound.

Ohki was eventually drawn into the overlapping spheres of Schiele's myriad musical connections, and it didn't take long for her own circle to expand and create the perfect conditions for a fateful meeting with Craig Yerkes. Brother to fellow San Diego musician Marcia Claire of the Citizen Band and the Cathryn Beeks Ordeal, Yerkes had known Schiele for some time and traveled in the same circles. The pieces slowly fell into place and by the end of 2003 the Grams had become a band. Yerkes and Ohki would eventually marry in July of 2004, and it is a point of pride for Schiele that he not only got them together but also brought them both out of semi-retirement.

Yerkes is the only California native of the three, having spent most of his life in San Diego County. He got an early start and was playing guitar in a touring teenybopper group with his sister by age 12. He also played in his high school and college jazz bands until he realized he was "a rock guitarist doing a bad imitation of a jazz guitarist," as he self-deprecatingly put it. "I was really into the chops thing to a fault when I was younger," Yerkes

continues. "I just wanted to keep getting faster due to influences like Al DiMeola and Steve Morse. Now it's all about the solo singing its own song, whether I'm playing one note or 100."

After a brief, failed stint as a guitarist with two Grammy-winning gospel artists, Yerkes decided to downgrade his musical pursuits to hobby status. He had only occasionally picked up the guitar during the previous 12 years when Schiele came calling.

Yerkes is a lead guitarist in the old tradition of axe men who don't always double the rhythm part under the vocals but add another complimentary texture or melody to the underlying work. Yerkes' leads are concise, rich in tone, and wildly entertaining. When the gig is long and space needs filling, Yerkes is the Gram who is most ready, willing, and able to step in and fill it. He has the chops and exploratory mindset to improvise lengthy, interesting solos within the live milieu, and the restraint to compose ingenious countermelodies and instrumental harmonies for him and Ohki live and in the studio. His curtailed jazz aspirations led him to an ideal grotto where the wild, histrionic waterfall of technique met the pool of mature melodic restraint.

Yerkes adds his clear, crisp tenor to the Grams' vocal palette, performing close harmonies with Schiele and even singing lead on "Poor Little Rich Girl" from the recently completed, eponymous debut album (reviewed on page 13). The general gist is that Yerkes may be singing more songs in the future. For now, though, he is content with his predominantly supportive role in the band.

While we've been talking in the studio, Joanna has been occasionally popping in and out with updates on the sumptuous meal she is preparing. A few minutes pass after one such visit when we collectively realize that Joanna is as much a part of what goes on behind the scenes at Grams Central as her husband. Yerkes and Ohki are as anxious to hear our new pertinent subject's story as I am, for they are equally as uneducated as to exactly what it is she does on behalf of the Grams.

Joanna also grew up in New York and cut her music, marketing, and networking teeth at Manhattan Design, the same company that was responsible for the MTV logo among many other pertinent icons of pop culture and music. She brings these years of big-city marketing experience (not to mention her own history of singing in bands—she lent background vocals to some of the songs on the record)

to what she does administratively for the Grams. Her understanding of both sides of the commercialization of art sums up her contribution to the trio's behind-the-scenes machine.

Schiele had already become quite proficient at executing the administrative functions that most musicians bemoan and are poorly suited for when Joanna came into his life. Now they are virtually as unstoppable as they are thorough in their combination of complementary attributes. They work together in the conjoined pair of bedrooms on the house's second floor, unearthing predominantly Internet-based marketing opportunities for the Grams, and shouting updates back



Yerkes at Humphrey's Backstage Lounge

and forth to streamline their efforts.

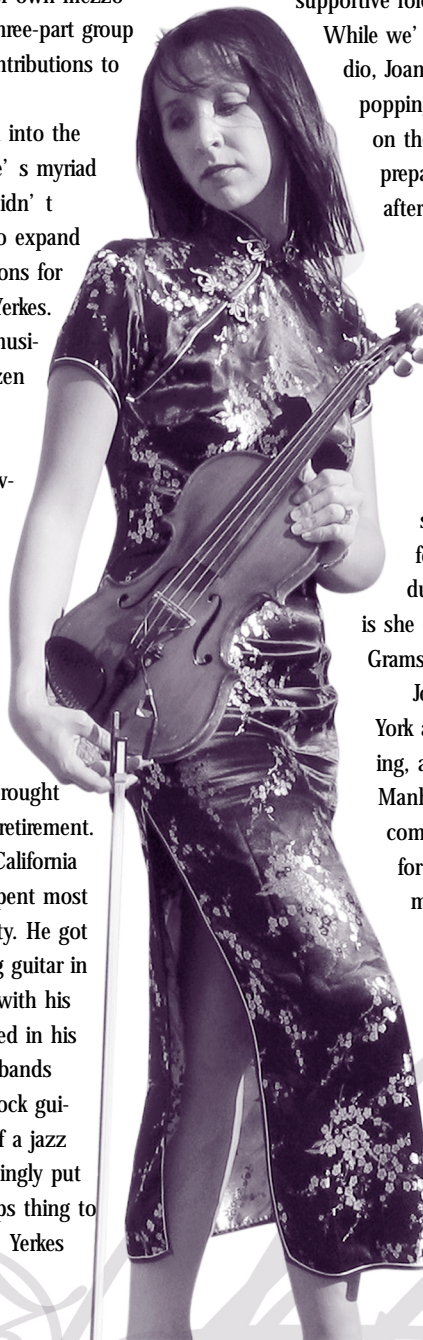
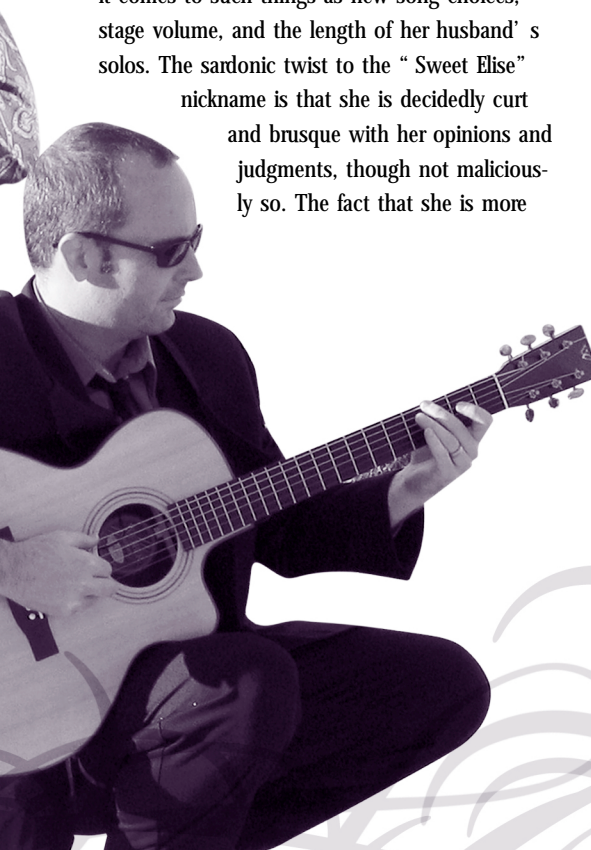
"With Joanna coming into my life, things have only gotten better and healthier, including music matters," Schiele says. "We work together very closely, and I am astonished by what happens when we combine our strengths to fix on and obtain our goal. We are furthering our involvements to include the movie industry as well as alternative markets and distribution. We're also big on serving our community and go so far as to get them involved. We've grown so fast that we're in the process of reorganizing and building our team."

We wrap up the interview and head inside, where Joanna's delectable dinner awaits us. We watch something about the end of days on the History channel while we eat and drink wine and revel in the sense of unity and nourishment we've established throughout the day. Then the time comes for them to do the fun part of their work and, after changing into their performance attire, the Grams disappear into the inviting night to show a new audience the weight of the soul.

Catch the Grams' CD release on March 15, 8 p.m., at the Belly Up in Solana Beach.



Joanna & Chuck Schiele, Elise Ohki, Craig Yerkes



modern womanizing Band



Bluegrass CORNER



by Dwight Worden

Last year the bluegrass community lost two greats: Jimmy Martin, the King of Bluegrass, and Vassar Clements, the most influential fiddle player of his time. Let's take a look at these two standouts who, in very different ways, left an indelible mark on bluegrass music.

JIMMY MARTIN

Jimmy Martin passed away on May 14, 2005. The self-styled "King of Bluegrass," he was definitely one of the orneriest, most colorful



Jimmy Martin

characters the bluegrass community has ever known. Jimmy's voice was powerful and aggressive, making other bluegrass music sound a little tame. While Bill Monroe, the Stanleys, Flatt and Scruggs, and other greats among the bluegrass pioneers always had at least one eye on the commercial success of their music and were willing to mold their music and personae to that end, Jimmy Martin never did. He simply wasn't able to. Jimmy remained what he always was: an outspoken, prickly individualist. His signature tune, a crystal clear blues number called "I'm a Freeborn Man" declared that he had made his choices and he'd stick to them.

*You may not like my appearance,
And you may not like my song,
You may not like the way I talk
But you'll like the way I'm gone
I'm a freeborn man,
My home is on my back,
I know every inch of highway,
Every foot of back road,
Every mile of railroad track.*

While throughout his career Jimmy coveted admission to the Grand Ole Opry, he never received that honor, no doubt because of his inability or unwillingness to "fit in." No matter. His songwriting and recordings are among the best ever made in the bluegrass genre and they will keep him well remembered for a long time. Jimmy wrote and sang about himself and his life — what he knew and what he loved. Never a whiner, and with little patience for those perceived as whiners, Jimmy sang about life, women, and love.

*You sit here a-crying
Right in your beer
You say you got troubles,
My friend, listen here
Don't tell me your troubles
I've enough of my own
Be thankful you're living
Drink up and go home.*

He loved women all right, and his hopes were high.

*On the hit parade of love,
You know I'll never stop,
I've got a long long way to climb
Before I reach the top,
But if I do get there soon I'd really have it made
Then I'll know I'm number one in your lover's hit parade.*

Jimmy was born in Hancock County, Sneedville, Tennessee, and joined Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys in 1949 as lead singer and emcee. He performed with Bill Monroe for five years before moving on to join Bobby and Sonny Osborne. He later formed the Sunny Mountain Boys. We will miss this true character and enormous talent.

VASSAR CLEMENTS

Vassar Clements passed away on August 16 of last year at the age of 77. With an incredible career that began at age seven, he played bluegrass, jazz, rock, and pop music at the highest and most innovative levels over the years. Not bad for a self-taught man who couldn't read music. Sometimes called the

Isaac Stern of bluegrass, Vassar's career spanned 50 years, beginning with joining Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys in 1949 at the age of 14 while he was still in school. Vassar stayed with Bill Monroe though 1956 and then took up with Jim and Jesse McReynolds. Throughout his career Vassar played with, and formed a friendship bond with, John Hartford, the man who gave Vassar his famous Duifopprugger violin with the carved head.

Vassar also played for a while with Earl Scruggs and the Earl Scruggs Revue, which led to his fiddle contribution on the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's *Will the Circle Be UnBroken* album, which was released in 1972 and has become one of the most influential bluegrass records of all time. From there, Vassar recorded



Vassar Clements

with Dicky Betts, Jerry Garcia, the Grateful Dead, the Allman Brothers, Linda Ronstadt, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, David Grisman, Paul McCartney, and others. In May of 1973, the classic *Old and in the Way* album was recorded in San Francisco during a live performance, enriched by some of the best and most creative live fiddling ever recorded, thanks to Vassar. Sales from that project has exceeded other albums of like kind and has formed staunch cults that still exist after more than 20 years. It is also said that one of the prime reasons Jerry Garcia put together *Old and in the Way* was for the opportunity to play with Vassar Clements.

Vassar's personal discography totals 27 albums ranging from country music and waltzes to swing and jazz. Ironically, in 1992 he recorded his only straight bluegrass recording for Rounder Records titled *Grass Routes*.

Vassar's unique style has influenced virtually every fiddle player who has followed him. One need only hear a few notes of a fiddle line to know whether the player is Vassar, as his style is that distinctive. The world of music will truly miss this talented and influential man.

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

Supergrass will be happening in Bakersfield on February 2, 3, 4, and 5. Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver, the Nashville Bluegrass Band, the Cherryholmes, and many other greats will be appearing, so consider driving on up.

Claire Lynch and the Claire Lynch Band will be giving a special concert in Del Mar at the Del Mar Powerhouse on Sunday, April 23, so mark your calendars early for this rare local appearance by one of the greats. Her band includes Jim Hurst (multiple time IBMA guitar player of the year) and Missy Raines (multiple time IBMA bass player of the year).

The San Diego Bluegrass Society will be holding its regular jam sessions on:

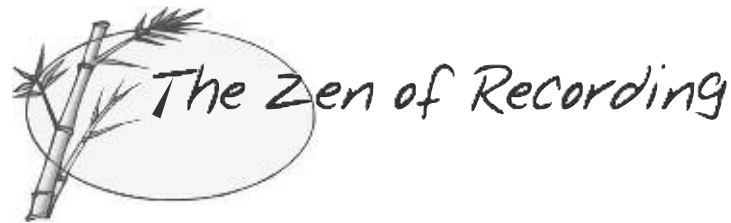
Second Tuesday of every month at Fuddrucker's in Grossmont center, 7-9 pm

Third Tuesday of every month at Fuddrucker's in Chula Vista, 7-10 pm

Fourth Tuesday of every month at Boll Weevil on Miramar Road, 69 pm

The North County Bluegrass and Folk Club holds its event on the first Tuesday of every month at Round Table Pizza in Escondido 7-10 pm. So stop on by one or more of these events to hear some great local bands, and bring your instrument for some fun jamming.

Hope to see you out there picking!



by Sven-Erik Seaholm

STEALING NAMM



Thursday, January 19, 2006 8:58 p.m.

I am standing in the main lobby of the Anaheim Convention Center at the 104th NAMM Show, and I am on a mission. Technically speaking (and I think that pun may actually someday kill me), I'm on two missions: The first is to shake as many hands belonging to representatives of musically related product manufacturers and distributors as is humanly possible over the next two days. The nearly obvious purpose of said glad-handing will be to secure products for review or, in plainer English, talk folks into sending me stuff that I can use for a few weeks free of charge, in exchange for my honest (that's almost a pun too, as you'll see) critique and (hopefully) recommendation. At the end of this "evaluation period" I may elect to return the product or purchase it at a slightly discounted rate. The results will be printed here. The second quest I am about to embark upon is far simpler: Grab as much free stuff as I possibly can.

Now before some of you "highly principled" types begin wagging your righteous index fingers in my particular direction, let's not kid ourselves. Everyone packed into these several halls has an angle. Everyone here hopes to come away with something they didn't have when they arrived, whether it's an order for 10,000 widgets, a new Chinese manufacturing deal, or just a picture of themselves standing next to *Playboy's* Miss November, 2005. The fact is, I'm not *officially* stealing anything, I'm just carefully removing the bait from the hook like a clever largemouth bass at Lake Murray. Judging from the record turnout at this year's show, I doubt anyone will mind. There are plenty of fish in this NAMM Show sea.

At previous shows, I had always hit the main hall first. Many of the products I'm most interested in are here, so it's always seemed the logical primary destination. This hall is about the size of oh, say...Egypt. Covering this amount of acreage in one day has consistently resulted in my missing some of the exhibitors in neighboring halls, so my wife/photographer Gail and I have decided to stay two days and start at Hall D, which is, in the parlance of Oliver Stone's *JFK*, "down, and to the left."

I've always figured the main hall to be the largest, but this one is actually bigger. Using the previously employed African geographical metaphor, this

would be Libya (go ahead and get a map, I'll wait). Consequently, it takes us exactly six hours to cover the whole thing. Granted there's a lot of "business-related" conversation and a brief stop to ingest perhaps the worst hamburger ever served (Gail has a fishburger, which slows us down even more a little bit later). Regardless, we've sprung into action.

The first issue to address is how to hold all of our acquired booty. There are lots of free bags available. Many exhibitors' booths have easily accessible racks holding tons of these things, emblazoned with their respective logos. Judging from the abundance of them, Roland and KORG seem to be the most popular. I attribute this to their size, which is roughly twice that of the average bag. But they're made out of paper, and the weight eventually causes the handles to tear. No, it's cloth for us, baby. The red cotton Musicorp (musicorp.com) bags have always been my fave, but this year two new contenders made their debut. The first was Dickies Guitar Straps (dickies.com). Their cotton/nylon blend was a basic black (the official NAMM musician's uniform color), smartly accented by little white peace signs. Coincidentally, Peace Drums (peacedrum.com) offered the clear winner: a really heavy duty canvas bag with a metal snap at the top!

So what goes into these things? Well, you don't want to put product demo CDs and DVDs in there, because you'll never watch them. That said, I did take and view an excellent one from Electro-Harmonix (ehx.com). You also don't want the whole press kit in there. Those often include a product catalog, etc. Stick with the one-sheets of stuff you like. It has all the info you need, and you can visit the web site for more info. Almost everybody offers candy in some form or another. Taylor Guitars (taylorguitars.com) has red vines and M&Ms in big jars. Hard candies and miniature Snickers bars abound. I avoid most of this, as a sugar crash in this environment is like running out of water at the Coachella Music Festival. Unless they have Bit o' Honey. It's frightening to imagine what I would be capable of doing to procure just one of those fine confections.

Guitar picks are the second most plentiful thing on offer here. This is where it seems the most like shoplifting. I'm standing there, cheerfully conversing with the attending person and all the while, I am sorting all of the medium gauges out and surreptitiously putting them in my pocket. Granted, they can see that I'm doing this and they are offering them for free, but still...it feels like I'm thieving heavily. Case in point: 4 db, inc has these things called Stash Picks



Sven-Erik Seaholm

(stashpicks.com). Each of their five designs have unique features — some have multiple gauges on the same pick, others do special effects. As the guy shows and explains each one, I'm still holding onto the previous model. I walk away with five free, very cool picks! Things went really crazy when I visited the PickCard booth (pickcard.com). The pick card is a credit card sized plastic card that houses a few die-cut guitar picks. At an open mic and forgot your pick? Pull out the card, punch out a pick, and you're good to go! I featured these last year, and I excitedly relayed this to the nice girl working there. "Wow! Well, we have all kinds of new designs this year. Take whatever you'd like." This was of course like dropping a lamb chop into a tank full of hungry piranhas. I was determined to grab as many of the dozens of new designs as I could. Not for *me* mind you, but for all the folks that I had showed them to that wanted a set. Let's just say the company president wasn't amused when I said, "Pardon me, sir" and then reached around him to grab a handful of these bad boys. Time to split.

After leaving that hall, we stop at the magazine section. They have every conceivable musician-oriented magazine in big stacks all along the wall. We go through and grab 30 or so of these, and now our canvas bags are at brick-like capacity. We've planned well for this contingency: we've parked as close to the hall as possible. We just haul this stuff to the car, empty our bags, and head back in.

This process continues for the rest of this and all of the next day. Gather, dump, repeat. In the process, we obtain earplugs from the House Ear Institute (hei.org), revolutionary new drum dampeners called Drum Drops (drumdropsinc.com), a cure for sweaty palms called Palm Dry (travelwellness.com), a cord strap that stays attached to the cable (wrapnstrap.com), a Frisbee from our friends at PSP (pspsaudioware.com), a T-shirt from Shure Microphones (shure.com), 347 guitar picks, and some really cool buttons that say stuff like "I believe in goin' to 11." I also lined up some great products to review that will make your recording life easier in the very near future, so stay tuned (okay, that will be the absolute last pun for this particular column).

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an award-winning independent artist and producer. He likes to hear from you. You can send him email at info@kaspro.com

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Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

LESSONS IN TOLERANCE

Why is it that to this day, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln continue to exert such important influence on the lives of hundreds (if not thousands) of Americans? Scholars will often mention a national obsession with nostalgia, but I think it goes deeper than that.

As my lifelong friend, physician Vynell Okimba once wrote, "The speculum of the mind must be warm and gentle in opening the precious veils of truth." Although he was actually obliquely referring to horse racing in Ecuador, the maxim can certainly be of value in our own understanding of Presidents Day.

Why this holiday occurs in February nearly every year is another mystery, but one of little importance to any but the psychotastic astrologer.

No, what's immediately remarkable about the Washington-Lincoln saga is how extraordinarily similar yet remarkably different the two men really were. Or as the French like to say, "Plus ça change, voulez-vous coucher avec moi?" Gitzi gitzi ya-ya indeed.

Each of those charismatic fellows spent the most important years of his life in the Washington D.C. area, in similar jobs, and within a stone's throw of each other, and yet no one has ever been able to document that the two men ever even met! Complicating this dilemma are the known personal characteristics as documented by more than a few of their reliable contemporaries. Abe (which I'll hereafter utilize as an accepted contraction of Abraham, although the "e" is of questionable origin and silent) was, when off the basketball court, modest, almost dour in his dress. George, who was also of above-average height, preferred delicately flamboyant styles of the western European psychedelic trends, which would be so successfully resurrected in the 1960s by Mary Quant. Powdered wigs and laces at the wrists and throat were seen in those days as badges of fearlessly rugged masculinity by the mentally challenged. In contrast, Abe was considered somewhat of a fruit.

George had wooden teeth, Abe a wooden disposition when it came to biting comments directed his way.

George's personal secretary was named Orenthal Mills, while Abe's had once been a miller in Orenthal, Alaska.

Oh, it gets better . . .

A childhood illness rendered impotent the facial-hair follicles above Abe's mouth. George also suffered occasional impotency but

was usually able to maintain a stiff upper lip, a trait that pleased the ladies no end and that became legend at all the belt-way watering holes.

Both men were known to have submitted to a painful early form of electrolysis, having found the process of daily leg-shaving boring and embarrassing.

Both were similarly bored and embarrassed by their wives, who feared razors and were anything but sharp upstairs, where it counts.

George was known to carry himself proudly on his horse. If Abe had known about the horseless carriage, he would have been proud.

George appears on the one dollar bill. At the age of one, the infant George was weened.

Abe's devil-may-care attitude is, of course, gracing the five dollar bill. He was known to drink five glasses of milk every day even before he was weened.

While Washington lived in a place that, coincidentally, bore his own surname, Lincoln was known to vacation in Lincoln, Nebraska before finally settling in Washington, where his home, the White House, had a private area called the Lincoln bedroom!

There are at least two more examples of the strange, cosmic bond these two American icons possessed, but they really start getting creepy and seem more fit for a TV program like *One Step Beyond* than in a swinger's column of a paper devoted to music. Even though Washington and Lincoln, in a long-distance collaboration similar to the early years of Bernie Taupin and Elton John, composed "The Battle Hymn of America the Beautiful," which topped the charts for six weeks and nearly became our national anthem, they were trumped when Francis Scott, key plagiarist of his time, ripped them off, literally sic sempering their tyranus. They would never issue another song, save that which they inspire in our hearts and the hearts of all free men and many women of the world.

Do I hear an Amen, my G's?

Interestingly, I was in the audience at Disneyland's opening week of the fantastic direct-from-Broadway one-man show, *Great Moments with Mr. Lincoln* in the mid-sixties. I immediately recognized the actor portraying Lincoln. It was Royal Dano, who had previously impressed me with his Lincolnesque performance as Peter No-Last-Name in the glorious film *King of Kings*. What a mesmerizing performance was this Abe! So enthralled was I that the



The allegedly stable Mr. Sinatra at left

Photo: Jesse Feagin

show seemed to fly by in a matter of minutes. I recall being a bit annoyed by Dano's rather stiff, robotic movements but in hindsight, I understand their necessity in achieving a connection with the culturally challenged, youthful hip-hop members of the audience. The triumphant show ran for decades when it could have merely walked; such is the athletic American seed whence it whelped.

I once took in the show with two friends, the brother and sister of the aforementioned Dr. Vynell Okimba. LeVelcro and LaTswana knew personally the tragic reality of prejudice, having been immigrants from Scotland during a period when, for some insane reason, Americans detested the Scottish (this was, needless to say, pre Bay City Rollers America). I had been falling secretly in love with LaTswana, but years earlier she had stolen my bicycle and I detest thieves. A solution to my emotional dilemma came naturally when, in the darkened Main Street Opera House, she removed her hands from my lap, tapped my shoulder, and opened her blouse to flash me.

What would Lincoln do? Or Washington, for that matter?

I screamed; she was arrested for indecent exposure and has been a registered sex offender ever since.

I don't think the Scots or any other kind of foreigner can ever understand how much it hurts any real American when the temples of our forefathers are besmirched.

So I lost my LaTswana.

But this month I'll welcome back to town a long-absent friend who means more to me than all the LaTswandas of the world, I delude myself enough to believe.

This person has been missed by many, and it's only appropriate he comes back to us in February, month of the truly great who once toiled in amber waves of grain and forged a nation. Let us pray.

Oh. And happy Valentine's Day, LaTswana Okimba, thief of my bike and my heart. And to all of you, especially my returning partner in Time. May our history become a song.



RADIO DAZE

by Jim McInnes

WORKING STIFF

The Modern Rhythm Band ("my" band) has played the annual OMBAC (Old Mission Beach Athletic Club) Coming Out Party for the past six years. We consider it an honor to play this gig because it's for a great cause and because there's always enough free beer and grub to put us into the proper "operating condition." Unlike some musicians, we do our best performances when we're stumbling over our foot pedals, slurring words, and drooling down our shirts...except it's always been so cold at Mariner's Point in June that our shirts were always covered by our jackets, so we'd drool on them instead. It's precisely because of the c-c-cold June weather that OMBAC officials moved last year's party to September, and it was actually above 70 degrees! It was really wonderful to play the World's Biggest Beach Party and not have to wear a parka and mittens for once!

I know what you're thinking, "How cold was it in 2004, Jim?" It was so cold that my tongue stuck to my guitar strings (I have an unorthodox playing style). It was so cold that the fire we started backstage, using another band's equipment, only served to piss them off for some reason. It was so cold that when I took a leak I had to snap it



Jim McInnes

off when I finished. It was so cold even the politicians at the party had their hands in their own pockets. Why, it was so cold we were feeding hot sauce to the seagulls! It was so cold on that Saturday that even the Lotto balls retracted into the machine. Lemme tell ya, it was cold!

Then I had a brilliant idea.

One of the guys in the band is a doctor, with an actual M.D. degree, a private practice, hot nurses, white lab coats, and everything. The Doc had brought to the gig a small package of value that I had requested in anticipation of the freezing conditions...a five-pack of Viagra! I'd asked him, "Hey, Doc, isn't Viagra a vaso-dilator?" "Yep, it increases blood flow." "That would help us stay warmer, wouldn't it?" I queried.

"Maybe."

So I popped a blue pill and talked three of the other guys into doing the same. One of them got a raging headache, I turned beet red, and I'm not sure about the other two guys but I think they liked it.

Nevertheless, despite my best intentions, we hit the stage an hour later, frozen stiff. (Rimshot!)

Thanks, I'm here all month. Try the linguini.

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Phil Harmonic Sez:



"If I know what love is, it is because of you."

— Herman Hesse



by Kate Kowsh

Song for Scotland: Dougie MacLean Comes to Town

to be: a group activity.

MacLean's heritage is built into his songs like an inexorable iron framework. On it rests his sense of duty to sustain and respect the land that has sustained his family for generations.

An advocate of Scottish independence, it is this love for his homeland that provided the inspiration for "Caledonia," his most famous song. A Gaelic word for Scotland, MacLean wrote it in his 20s, while homesick and traveling around Europe. Sung by Frankie Miller, the song reached number one in the Scottish charts in 1992 and has since assumed its throne as the unofficial Scottish anthem.

As part of a 10-date U.S. tour, MacLean will be in San Diego on February 12 for a performance at La Jolla's 498-seat Sherwood Auditorium at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

Performing since he was 16 years old, MacLean's comfort and joy in the spotlight is contagious. His concerts have been described by Edinburgh's Festival Fringe writer Iain Gilmour as "meeting an old friend, rather than attending a concert."

MacLean was born in Perthshire, Scotland. His father, a gardener, played the fiddle, while his mother played the mandolin. Before music became his life's work, MacLean worked as a gardener, like his father, and a pipeline worker. He also attended college, where he was an engineering major.

Since then his music has earned him scores of diverse fans and taken him all over the world. He's toured the U.K., Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Canada, the U.S., and Cape Breton.

MacLean's music has also felt its fair share of warmth from the Hollywood spotlight. He scored music for *Last of the Mohicans*, starring Daniel Day-Lewis and wrote "Turning Away," sung by Mary Black, for the movie *Angel Eyes*, starring Jennifer Lopez.

As is the case with most prolific

singer-songwriters who are driven by a love of music, MacLean felt the confining noose of the record company around his neck early in his career. In an effort to maintain an unfiltered integrity in his music's, he and his wife, Jennifer, started the Dunkeld label over 20 years ago. All of his subsequent recordings have been released on his label.

Coming full circle is a recurring motif in MacLean's life and career. As a base for his label, MacLean bought the 200 year-old structure that was once the primary (elementary) school that he and his father attended as children. He converted it into a home and recording studio. With his son Jamie producing his tracks and his wife's watercolor artwork gracing the covers of many of his albums, MacLean is keeping music what it has always been for him: a family affair.

The couple also used to own the Real Music Pub, where they still offer fiddle and guitar classes every Thursday and host an open mic on Friday nights.

Although his studio is armed with the most up-to date, high-tech music tweaking mumbo jumbo one could shake a guitar at, he told *Billboard USA* in 2002, "There's nothing like filling this place [the pub] with local musicians; we'll pack in 50 people and play our fiddles and swap tunes. It's full of music, not business. You don't have to be the best to contribute something. The pub is great for that. It's really magic."

For more information on Dougie MacLean, go to: www.dougiemaclean.com. For tickets and information about MacLean's San Diego concert, go to: www.eticketsNOW.com or call (619) 224-1297.



Paige Aufhammer, continued from page 7.

a big hit the first night but most everyone came back for the second night too. Talk about feeling appreciated!

The power went out during the show and, as Paige tells it, there was a momentary lapse, but they eventually decided to keep the music going using the good old sound hole (built into most modern guitars). Hours later everyone in the pub was joining together in rowdy renderings of "Eleanor Rigby" and "Redemption Song." The beer tap was finally shut down at 3 a.m. and everyone had to head home for the night. But they were right back there the next night singing and sharing music. I got the impression that the musical mission was really about just that: sharing and connecting people together based on their common love of music.

So where did Paige's love of music come from? She says that she has been heavily influenced by female singer-songwriters like Patty Griffin, Mindy Smith, and Allison Krauss. I could especially hear elements of Allison Krauss in Paige's singing style, whose music and performance skills have also been heavily influenced by the church. "Most of my presence on stage started in church," she says. Her faith is extremely important to her and her compositions are definitely grounded in a sense of spiritual confidence. Her songwriting is melancholy but also resonates with an honest sense of hope. I found myself feeling reflective by her songs, which provoked thoughts and feelings that I would definitely describe as inspiring.

Another major influence for Paige is collaboration. While in Ireland Paige had the opportunity to jam with fellow touring artists Frank Lenz (drums), Aimee Nelson (violin), and Bjorn (bass). Frank and Aimee played with Paige at each performance and Bjorn was a member of Degrasse's band. When I recently saw them perform together at the Belly Up, they were so in synch that I expected them to have a more extensive history as a group. Paige says she doesn't really have a band per se, but she especially enjoys getting together to play with other musicians. "Performing is a passion of mine [and] I'm inspired by performing with others." She's found a number of opportunities to play around town in the past few months and she's making new friends... and fans.

"My job, I feel like, is music. I'm so passionate about it." It is clear from her



composure on stage that Paige has a very strong and innate talent for music. She's very confident and uncompromising. However, becoming a successful artist also requires good business sense. She is currently backed by Lee Chestnut, founder of Del Mar-based LMC Records. Over the course of the last year, he has put together a marketing and promotion team to help Paige develop her audience and promote her upcoming full-length CD. Although the album should be ready this month, it won't be officially released until later in spring. For now, Paige is sticking to the local scene and working to reach new audiences anywhere she can. Paige is also currently finishing a two-year degree in fine arts although she fully intends to follow the direction of her musical career.

During the tour, a film crew was also in attendance and will be combining interviews (with both the artists and the audience) and performance footage together in a documentary style film directed and produced by Charlie Matz (a founder of a film group called The Veracity Project). The documentary will be appropriately titled *Pub* and will premier at Coast Hills Community Church (in Aliso Viejo) on March 8. Other details about the film can be found online at <http://www.theveracityproject.com>.

As both a participant in, and a fan of, the independent music community, I hope to see much more of Paige Aufhammer because I believe that her music is honest and vulnerable. Both of these important attributes are, I feel, sadly missing in much of the music released by the standard media outlets currently available to people. To hear for yourself what Paige sounds like, she will be performing at Acoustic Alliance XI on February 21 at Brick by Brick. I advise that you don't miss it! You can learn more about Paige Aufhammer at <http://www.paigeaufhammer.com>.

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MICHAEL PETER SMITH
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Michael Smith's songs have been recorded by dozens of artists in the folk, country, and pop music genres. Having spent four decades writing songs, some of his better known ones include "The Dutchman," "Spoon River," and "I Brought My Father with Me." In addition, Smith received national acclaim for his original music composed for the Steppenwolf Theater's production of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

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The Grams

by Simeon Flick

This music drifts in like a nag champa haze over the Appalachian range, leaving a rarified mist of *joi de vivre* in its wake. The Grams start with a compelling admixture of east-meets-west aesthetics; then they add superlative old-school songwriting and vocal harmonies, and pound in the final nail with a prodigious lineup of multifaceted musicians.

Chuck Schiele (vocals, guitar, and chief songwriter) has corralled ten songs that combine old-world eastern sounds and western musical forms into an aurally inspiring pastiche of intermingling cultures and textures. "Sixteen Seconds," "Joujouka," and "21g" practically throb with Indian and Asian modality and groove as exotic percussions blend together with an often alternately tuned guitar, dobro, e-bow, occasional bass, and violin. "Crabbuckitt" blows it wide open with Cajun rhythmic attack and a group-sung chorus punctuated by Schiele's animated yelps, which help cultivate a spontaneous vibe on other songs as well. "You" might initially seem like just another love song, but you'll be amazed at how this tune actually makes you feel like you're in love. And the acoustic folk-pop melodies of "Secret," "Perfect World," and "Poor Little Rich Girl" will stay in your head for days.

The husband and wife team of Craig Yerkes (lead guitars, vocals) and Elise Ohki (violin, vocals) put the meat on these songs' bones. When not trading virtuosic leads and filling space with sublime melodies on their respective instruments, they're adding their vocals to Schiele's for tight two- and three-part harmonies. Yerkes' leads are crisp and wonderfully restrained; the dobro on "Joujouka" is akin to the outstandingly nuanced, sitar-esque solo on Steely Dan's "Do It Again." And Yerkes' lucid tenor is the yin to Schiele's raw yang, especially during his lead vocal turn on "Poor Little Rich Girl."

Although some songs beg further instrumentation, the Grams still managed to strike a good balance between embellishment and restraint with the help of co-producer/multi-instrumentalist Jeff Berkley, whose percussion prowess did unobtrusive service to the music.

Whether they're pumping you up or chilling you out, the Grams will no doubt leave you with the impression that they have made a life-affirming acoustic record worthy of your attention.

Get uplifted soon at <http://TheGrams.net/>, cdbaby.com, Tower Records, and at the official CD release party on March 15 at the Belly Up.



The Wild Truth This Golden Era

by Tom Paine

Pop music often seems like a banal pack of lies too contrived to rise above its own mediocrity. Hair extensions, focus groups, product placement, and music by marketing departments have all but replaced the gritty, back-alley primordial ooze from which rock first emerged decades ago. Then along comes the Wild Truth. Running through the suburbs like a hybrid on triple espresso, the Wild Truth takes your father's rock and roll deep into the future.

San Diego journeyman rockers Sven-Erik Seaholm, Charlie Loach, David Ybarra, and Bill Ray have been performing and recording as the Wild Truth since the early nineties, in between myriad other projects, and their new album *This Golden Era* makes one thing perfectly clear: this is where they really belong.

Besides sporting the best scream this side of Dave Grohl, singer, guitarist, and principal songwriter Seaholm brings a producer's ear to this marvel of recording excellence. Keeping it simple and in your face, Seaholm's production creates a three dimensional soundscape of pure rock muscle. Sounding like Garbage, Matthew Sweet, and the Kinks on steroids, the Wild Truth makes great melodic rock.

When lead guitarist Charlie Loach launches into a solo, it puts you right back in your big brother's Camaro with the eight-track blaring some Tom Johnson-era Doobies. And when drummer Bill Ray and bassist David Ybarra really dig in, like on the R&B scorcher "Set Fire," they cut a groove so fat even George Bush would fall in. What's also clear is that this is a band effort. The wise decision to tackle many of the writing, arranging, and producing chores collaboratively created a truly cohesive work. This album really is greater than the sum of its parts.

Spanning themes of love, anger, redemption, forgiveness, and sixties' idealism, *This Golden Era* never sells itself short. It never pretends to be something it's not, and it never overreaches its bounds. It's a nearly perfect balance of intelligence and emotion. Who says you can't philosophize in bed? Who says rage has no place in compassion? Bridging paradoxes is the task of any artist, and the Wild Truth does it with authority and humility. Master craftsmen know the past. Artists know the past but build the future. *This Golden Era* distills the best from the past, present, and future. And that's the wild truth!

This Golden Era is available at www.thewildtruth.com



Sligo Rags The Night Before the Morning After

by Kate Kowsh

After mulling over what a peculiar name Sligo Rags is, I popped their new release into my discman, and started flipping through the liner notes and track listings. As I was scanning the song titles and production credits, the fiddle-riden musical concoction I had ordered up started pouring into my ears.

Hailing from Long Beach Sligo Rags is Michael Kelly, David Burns, and Gordon Rustvold and they seem to really know their Celtic music.

This band can lighten up an atmosphere as dim as the Guinness stout you just ordered at the bar. Candles on the tables, mahogany booths, and these guys sitting in the back, hooting, stamping, and slapping their knees, while their instruments and great harmonies struggle to keep up with the melodies.

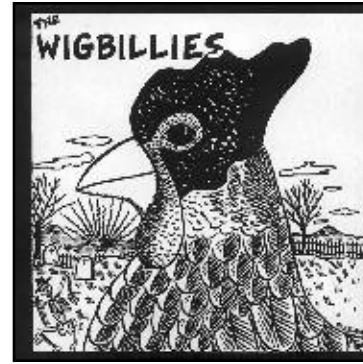
According to Rob Williams of the Fenians, "The arrangements are interestingly different and yet sensible. Music choices are made in favor of artistry not gimmick of happenstance."

How refreshing! With some songs topping five minutes, it's clear that commercialism is not welcome in their music. But they also remember that music is for fun. Take "The Irish Rover" for example. It's an uptempo, smokin' fast track about a ship full of workers, sailing over to build New York's City Hall. Over Burns' vocals, Kelly adds humorous sound effects and harmony vocals.

The true gem of the album is the shining, relaxed love song "Dirty Old Town," which tells the story of a town where a man met the woman he loves. The chorus may sing, "It's a dirty old town," but the way the you are taken through the song, it's evident that the man loves the town as much the girl he met there.

The most telling piece of information I garnered from the album booklet was on the back: the seemingly nonsensical phrase, "CeltHick Music." I disregarded it, but looking back now after two full listens, I'm back to the "aha" moment that slipped through my fingers. This album, a blend of Celtic and country music, with just as much of an old Irish jig as there are Johnny Cash-esque alternating baselines. I always knew the two genres shared common musical instruments like the fiddle and the banjo, but I had never grasped just how similar they are.

This album proves that the musical experience is one and the same regardless of whether you slap your galloping knee or tug on your 10-gallon hat, while doing the two-step.



The Wigbillies Going Up the Mountain

by Jeremy Browne

At the Adams Avenue Street Fair last year I slipped into Lestat's at a good friend's recommendation and went to catch the Wigbillies for a great set of music and a fun time. Here was a band of musicians who blended humor and flair with assorted instrumentation and vocals into a fine, old-timey, bluegrass, country-rock, blues vibe. Fronted by Cindy Lee Berryhill, Mary Fleener, Paul Therio, and Patrick Dennis and Chris Hoffee from the Truckee Brothers played a very impressive set utilizing vocals, bass, guitars (acoustic, electric, bottleneck), mandolin, dulcimer, and drums.

Their new release, *Going Up the Mountain*, is stylistically all over the map music-wise, as would be expected. There are lots of good originals and covers here.

The keyword for this CD is eclectic, which can be a doubled-edged sword as we shall see. The Wigbillies are proficient and comfortable in all the styles listed above, however it doesn't translate to this CD unfortunately and I'm bummed. In an effort to display their versatile sensibilities, the tempo and continuity of *Going Up the Mountain* suffers due to mediocre production and poor song sequencing. Great versions of "Long Black Veil," "Out in California," and their own fantastic "Native Oak" are standouts. The almost zydeco "Party Time" and the clever "Bob Marley Is Dead" get lost in the shuffle of the order. The sound quality is muffled and muddy and the drum sound could be improved.

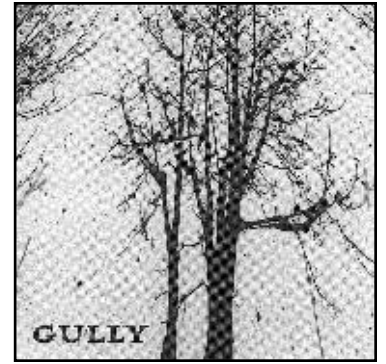
The band line-up seems to be a work in progress. Cindy Lee Berryhill only appears on background vocals here. Hopefully she will continue with the Wigbillies. Mary Fleener does a great job on bass, vocals, and lead dulcimer. Paul Therio is right on the money with his vocals, fine guitar solos, and fills.

Recommendation: Dear Wigbillies, please FOCUS and concentrate on your strengths, for you have many. Resequence the song order, lose a couple of the clinkers, and we'll have a better idea of how talented and capable you are.

Try this order and see what you think:

1. Single Girl
2. Long Black Veil
3. Out in California
4. Native Oak
5. Big Rock
6. Party Time
7. The Dentist
8. Bob Marley is Dead
9. Cuckoo's Hollerin'

If this sounds good to you, I'll produce your next album and sit in on mandolin.



Gully

by Tina Stone

Gully, the a self-titled EP produced by (7th Day Busker boss) Shawn Rohlf is a five-song ride through Americana themes that ring familiar right from the get go. *Gully* opens up with a drivin' number called "Lead Filled Kites." This is the kind of tune you roll down the top for and turn it up and sing along to some lost interstate Kansas sky. "See Ya Swinger" is an ironic little ballad slow dancing its way through another tequila sunrise. Such a sweet song. Such an apathetic and bitter lyrical irony. The outro boasts an uncredited horn, but, nonetheless, my ears perked up at what an oddly cool decision it was to put it there. I like a risk that works.

In fact, irony seems to be the common thread throughout, both musically and lyrically. On one hand these fairly traditional arrangements are full of the moves we know as American roots-oriented rock and roll. On the other hand there is a certain gusto from Shawn, who sings lead and plays guitars, mandolin, and harmonica; and his buddies Peter Bolland on guitar, lapslide, and vocals; Bryan Spevak on bass; and Chris Conner on drums and backing vocals. "Katydid" is the twisted, quirky, nasty little riot in the bunch. Turn it up, start dancing, break some furniture. It's okay. The irony in this pulsating rocker comes from the cool slide guitar lines butting their way into the mix with a Klezmer touch or two. Oy! Fun things happen here in this song. It's rowdy. Audacious. Stupidgood. Absolutely nuts. It would make a great Hatchet Brothers song in that after anyone's third beer, a shot, and a few extended choruses screaming along with the boys, the party would become its own show. (Speaking of appearances, guest appearances on the EP include Jeff Berkley, Steve White, Cady Truckee, Dan Broder, Gregg Carpenter, Par Andreasson, Ben Moore, and Steve Denyes.

Gully finishes with "Cisco," a tune that evokes the lazy river quality of the mandolin. Beautiful instrumental weaves and patterns flow for five folk minutes, bringing the energetic EP to its natural center.





FEBRUARY CALENDAR

wednesday • 1

Tommy Emmanuel, Bonita Country Club, 5540 Sweetwater Rd., 7pm.
Mark DeCervo & Four Eyes/Jigsaw Seen/The Shambles/Rachael Gordon & Frankie Fiction, Humphrey's Backstage Lounge, Shelter Island, 8pm.
Acoustic Blues w/ Robin Henkel/Billy Watson/Ben Hernandez/Nathan James/Anna Troy, Lestat's, 9pm.
Chet & the Committee, Patrick's II, 428 F St., 9pm.

thursday • 2

Joe Rathburn/Dan Connor, Hot Monkey Love Cafe, 5960 El Cajon Blvd., 7pm.
The Cherryholmes, Hilltop Center, 331 E. Elder, Fallbrook, 7:30pm.
Bernie Maupin Ensemble, Athenaeum, 1008 Wall St., La Jolla, 7:30pm.
Stevie Harris/Byron Hudson/The Gooses, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
Pete Thurston, Lestat's, 9pm.

friday • 3

Chamber Music Concert Series, Athenaeum, 1008 Wall St., La Jolla, 7:30pm.
Steve White, Artists Colony, 90 N. Coast Hwy 101, Encinitas, 8pm.
Bob Malone/Sue Palmer, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 8pm.
Crash Carter, La Playa Cantina, 1020 W. San Marcos Blvd. #110, 8pm.
Stasia Conger/Christopher Dallman/ Jon & Noah, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
A.J. Croce, Lestat's, 9pm.
Crosswinds CD Release/Robin Henkel, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 9pm.

saturday • 4

Carl Janelli Sax Quartet, Museum of Making Music, 5790 Armada Dr., Carlsbad, 1pm.
Just Add Water, Wynola Pizza Express, 4355 Hwy 78, Julian, 6pm.
Blues Party, Downtown Cafe, 182 E. Main St., El Cajon, 6:30pm.
Patty Hall, Borders Books, 668 Sixth Ave., 7:30pm.
Marie Haddad, Twigg's El Cortez, 702 Ash St., 7:30pm.
Molly's Revenge, San Dieguito United Methodist Church, 170 Calle Magdalena, Encinitas, 7:30pm. 858/566-4040.
Rasa CD Release, Yoga Fusion, 5632 La Jolla Blvd., 8pm.
Calima, Artists Colony, 90 N. Coast Hwy 101, Encinitas, 8pm.
Tim Flannery & Friends, California Ctr. for the Performing Arts, 340 N. Escondido Blvd., 8pm.
Elise Levi/Brett Vogel/Erik Janson/ Andrea Reschke/New Dadists, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
Lindsey Troy/Audrye Session/Push to Talk, Lestat's, 9pm.

sunday • 5

Dave Howard, Lestat's, 9pm.

monday • 6

Bob Marley B-Day Celebration w/ Peter Sprague/Josh Nelson/Jack Miller/Duncan Moore/Leonard Patton/Eric Lige/Rebecca Curtis, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 7pm.
Marta Topferova, Acoustic Music S.D., 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. 619/303-8176.
Adrienne Nims/Calima, Calypso Cafe, 576 N. Coast Hwy 101, Leucadia, 7:30pm.
North County Cowboys, SDNCBFC mtg., Round Table Pizza, 1161 Washington Ave., Escondido, 8pm.

wednesday • 8

Danny Daniels/Randy Rigby, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 7:30pm.
Chris Trapper/Exfriends, Lestat's, 9pm.

thursday • 9

Joe Rathburn/Steve White, Hot Monkey Love Cafe, 5960 El Cajon Blvd., 7pm.
Alex de Grassi, Acoustic Music S.D., 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. 619/303-8176.
Willy Nelson, Pala Events Center, 7:30pm.

The Gooses/Adam Lopez/Tim Mudd, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
The Autumn Defense, Lestat's, 9pm.
Wild Truth CD Release/Deadline Friday/Michael Tiernan, Humphrey's Backstage Lounge, Shelter Island, 9pm.

friday • 10

Randy Phillips & Friends, Rebecca's Coffeehouse, 3015 Juniper St., 7:30pm.
Still on the Hill, House Concert, North Park, 7:30pm. kelly@acousticpie.com.
Bryan Bowers, Acoustic Music S.D., 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. 619/303-8176.
Jack Tempchin & Rocket Science, Artists Colony, 90 N. Coast Hwy 101, Encinitas, 8pm.
Cowboy Jack, Del Dios Country Store, 20154 Lake Dr., Escondido, 8pm.
Sue Palmer Trio, Ki's, 2591 S. Coast Hwy 101, 8pm.
Caballero Latin Jazz Quintet, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 8:30pm.
Laura Kuebel/Tiamo/Derren Raser/ Dave Boodakian/Christopher Cash, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
Jaime Robb/Ali Handal/Jenn Grinels, Lestat's, 9pm.

saturday • 11

S.D. Chamber Music Society, Museum of Making Music, 5790 Armada Dr., Carlsbad, 3pm.
KeV, Wynola Pizza Express, 4355 Hwy 78, Julian, 6pm.
Middle Earth Ensemble & Belly Dance Showcase, Acoustic Expressions, 2852 University Ave., 7pm.
Tom Chapin, San Dieguito United Methodist Church, 170 Calle Magdalena, Encinitas, 7:30pm. 858/566-4040.
Kokopelli World Jazz Ensemble, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 8pm.
Len Rainey's Blues Allstars w/ Sue Palmer/Lady Star/Deeja Marie/Fuzzy, Humphrey's Backstage Lounge, Shelter Island, 8pm.
Adrienne Nims/Spirit Wind, La Playa Cantina, 1020 W. San Marcos Blvd. #110, 8pm.
Jamie Crawford/Roy Ruiz Clayton/ Kethro/Kristina Bennett/Jamie Robb, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
Michelle Shipp CD Release/John Hull, Lestat's, 9pm.
Gully/Truckee Brothers, Casbah, 9pm.

sunday • 12

Dougie MacLean, Sherwood Auditorium, Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, 7:30pm.
Darvak, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 8:30pm.
Gregory Page, Lestat's, 9pm.

monday • 13

Athenaeum Mini-Concert Series, Lyceum Theatre, Horton Plaza, noon.
Bonnie Raitt, Copley Symphony Hall, 1245 7th Ave., 8pm.
Blue Monday Pro Jam, Humphrey's Backstage Lounge, Shelter Island, 7pm.
Chuck Perrin CD Release w/ Bob Magnusson/Rob Whitlock/Brian Price/Gary Nieves/Arthur Fisher/Dave Curtis, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 8pm.

wednesday • 15

Stripped Acoustic Showcase, House of Blues, 1055 5th Ave., 8:30pm.

thursday • 16

Joe Rathburn/Suzanne Reed, Hot Monkey Love Cafe, 5960 El Cajon Blvd., 7pm.
Crash Carter, Calypso Cafe, 576 N. Hwy. 101, Encinitas, 7:30pm.
Benny Green Trio, Athenaeum, 1008 Wall St., La Jolla, 7:30pm.
Dennis Quaid & the Sharks, Belly Up, Solana Beach, 8pm.
Abigail Nolte/Lee Coulter/The Gooses, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
Acoustic Underground w/ Laurence Juber, Lestat's, 9pm.

friday • 17

Baja Blues Boys, The Boulevard, 925 W. San Marcos Blvd., 6pm.
Patty Hall, Borders Books, 159 Fletcher Pkwy., 7pm.
Mary Gauthier, Acoustic Music S.D., 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. 619/303-8176.

Keltic Karma CD Release, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 8pm.

Steve White, Artists Colony, 90 N. Coast Hwy, Encinitas, 8pm.
Bass/Shannon St. John/Evyn Lopez/ Aaron Bowen/Derek Evans, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
Emersen/J. Turtle/Megan LaRoque, Lestat's, 9pm.

saturday • 18

Howling Coyotes, Wynola Pizza Express, 4355 Hwy 78, Julian, 6pm.
Ralph Stanley & the Clinch Mountain Boys, La Paloma Theater, 471 S. Coast Hwy 101, Encinitas, 6 & 9pm.
Wigbillies/Stereotypes, A St. Stage, 90 A St., Encinitas, 7pm.
Cheryl Wheeler, San Dieguito United Methodist Church, 170 Calle Magdalena, Encinitas, 7:30pm. 858/566-4040.
Tom Rush, Acoustic Music S.D., 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. 619/303-8176.
Beyond the Pale, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 8pm.
Waldo Bliss/Dawn Mitschele/Afterglow/Dan Tedesco/Jen Knight, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
Allison Lonsdale/Greg Laswell, Lestat's, 9pm.
David Lindley w/ Buddy Blue/Jerry Rainey, Belly Up Tavern, Solana Beach, 8pm.

sunday • 19

Bobby Gordon Quintet, Elks Lodge, 1400 E. Washington Ave., El Cajon, 1pm. 619/297-5277.
The Earl Brothers, Acoustic Expressions, 2852 University Ave., 7pm.
Michael Peter Smith, Dark Thirty House Concert, Lakeside, 7:30pm. Reservations: 619/443-9622.
Winard Harper Quintet, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 8pm.
Edie Carey, Lestat's, 9pm.

monday • 20

Chamber Concert Series, Athenaeum, 1008 Wall St., La Jolla, 7:30pm.

tuesday • 21

Le Choeur de Clarinettes, Museum of Making Music, 5790 Armada Dr., Carlsbad, 7pm.
Acoustic Alliance XI w/ Lisa Sanders/ Kevin Danzig/Paige Aufhammer/Patti Zlaket/Sven-Erik Seaholm/Alyssa Jacey/Christopher Dale/Rusty Jones/ Simeon Flick, Brick by Brick, 1130 Buenos Ave., 7:30pm.
Lecture: Music in American Cinema, Athenaeum, 1008 Wall St., La Jolla, 7:30pm.
Brad Steinwehe Jazz Orchestra, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 8:30pm.

thursday • 23

Joe Rathburn/Joel Rafael, Hot Monkey Love Cafe, 5960 El Cajon Blvd., 7pm.
Acoustic Music Showcase w/ Jack the Original, M-Theory, 3004 Juniper St., 7pm.
The Syn, Acoustic Music S.D., 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. 619/303-8176.
Crash Carter, Canes, 3105 Ocean Front Walk, 8pm.
Indie Limelight, Humphrey's Backstage Lounge, Shelter Island, 8pm.
Johnsmith, Meeting Grace House Concert, Normal Heights, 8pm. lizzie@meetinggrace.com
Robin Hitchcock, Belly Up Tavern, Solana Beach, 8pm.
Brian Benham/The Gooses/Josh Hall, Twigg's, 8:30pm.
Cash Only (Johnny Cash Tribute) w/ Jim Soldi/Joey Harris/Whiskey Tango/Citizen Band/The Grams/Cash'd Out/7th Day Buskers/Mark Jackson Band/Clay Colton Band/Band in Black/Nevery Brothers, Winston's, 1921 Bacon St., 9pm.

friday • 24

Patty Hall, Borders Books, 71800 Hwy 111, Rancho Mirage, 7:30pm.
Sue Palmer Trio, L'Auberge, 1540 Camino Del Mar, 7:30pm.
The Syn, Acoustic Music S.D., 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. 619/303-8176.
Peter Sprague, Artists Colony, 90 N. Coast Hwy 101, Encinitas, 8pm.

W E E K L Y

every sunday

7th Day Buskers (Gully plays every other week), Farmers Market, DMV parking lot, Hillcrest, 10am.
Connie Allen, Old Town Trolley Stage, Twigg St. & San Diego Ave., 12:30-4:30pm.
Celtic Ensemble, Twigg's, 4pm.
Traditional Irish Music & Dance, The Field, 544 5th Ave., 5:30pm.
Hot Fudge Sunday Open Mic, O'Connell's, 1310 Morena Blvd., 9pm.
Jazz Roots w/ Lou Curtiss, 8-10pm, KSDS (88.3 FM).
José Sinatra's OB-oke, Winston's, 1921 Bacon St., 9:30pm.
The Bluegrass Special w/ Wayne Rice, 10-midnight, KSON (97.3 FM).

every monday

Blue Monday Pro Jam, Humphrey's Backstage Lounge, Shelter Island, 6pm.
Open Mic Night, Lestat's, 7:30pm.
Tango Dancing, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 8pm.

every tuesday

Blues Jam, Blind Melons, 710 Garnet, 7pm.
Open Mic Night, E St. Cafe, 130 W. E. St., Encinitas, 7pm.
Zydeco Tuesdays, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa, 7pm.
Open Mic Night, Cosmos Cafe, 8278 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa, 7pm.
Irish Music Jam, The Ould Sod, 7pm.
The Sidewinders, Turquoise Cafe Bar Europa, 873 Turquoise St., 7:30pm.
Jack Tempchin, Calypso Cafe, 576 N. Hwy 101, Encinitas, 8pm.
Hot Club of San Diego, Prado Restaurant, Balboa Park, 8pm.
Comedy Night w/ Mark Serritella, Lestat's, 9pm.

every wednesday

Music at Ocean Beach Farmer's Market, Newport Ave., 4-7pm.

Marcia Forman Band, Twigg's at the El Cortez, 6pm.

Old Timey Night, Folk Arts Rare Records, 2881 Adams Ave., 7pm.
High Society Jazz Band, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 7pm.
Tomcat Courtney, Turquoise Cafe Bar Europa, 873 Turquoise St., 8pm.
Open Mic Night, Twigg's, 8:30pm.

every thursday

Open Blues Jam, Downtown Cafe, 182 E. Main, El Cajon, 6pm. (no jam Feb. 16)
Joe Rathburn, Folkey Monkey Thursdays, Hot Monkey Love Cafe, 5960 El Cajon Blvd., 7pm.
Sue Palmer, Martini's, 3940 Fourth Ave., 7pm.
Moonlight Serenade Orchestra, Lucky Star Restaurant, 3893 54th St., 7pm.
Wood 'n' Lips Open Mic, Borders Books & Music, 159 Fletcher Pkwy, El Cajon, 7-10pm.
Amelia Browning & David Owen (Jazz), Turquoise Cafe-Bar Europa, 873 Turquoise St., 8:30pm.

Singing in the Shower Karaoke w/ José Sinatra, O'Connell's, 1310 Morena Blvd., 8:30pm.

Swing Thursdays, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 9pm.

every friday

California Rangers, McCabe's, Oceanside, 4:30-9pm.
Basin Street Band, Lucky Star Restaurant, 3893 54th St., 7pm.
Jazilla, Turquoise Cafe Bar Europa, 873 Turquoise St., 8pm.
Open Mic Night, Egyptian Tea Room & Smoking Parlour, 4644 College Ave., 9pm.

every saturday

Connie Allen, Old Town Trolley Stage, Twigg St. & San Diego Ave., 12:30-4:30pm.
Christian/Gospel Open Mic, El Cajon. Info: J.D., 619/246-7060.

sunday • 26

Big Mo Band CD Release, Dizzy's, 344 7th Ave., 7pm.
Tom Russell, Acoustic Music SD, 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. 619/303-8176.
Mundell Lowe/Peter Sprague/Bob Magnusson/Jim Plank, Athenaeum Studio, 4441 Park Blvd., 8pm.
Lucinda Williams, House of Blues, 1055 5th Ave., 8pm.

monday • 27

Athenaeum Mini-Concert Series, Lyceum Theatre, Horton Plaza, noon.
Blue Monday Pro Jam, Humphrey's Backstage Lounge, Shelter Island, 7pm.

tuesday • 28

Lecture: Music in American Cinema, Athenaeum, 1008 Wall St., La Jolla, 7:30pm.
Gone Tomorrow, SDBS mtg., Boll Weevil, 7080 Miramar Rd., 7:30pm.





NAMM Show 2006



Photo: Lois Bach

Remo All-Industry Drum Circle



Photo: Lois Bach

Buckethead and Bootsy Collins



Photo: Lois Bach

The Amazing Steve White



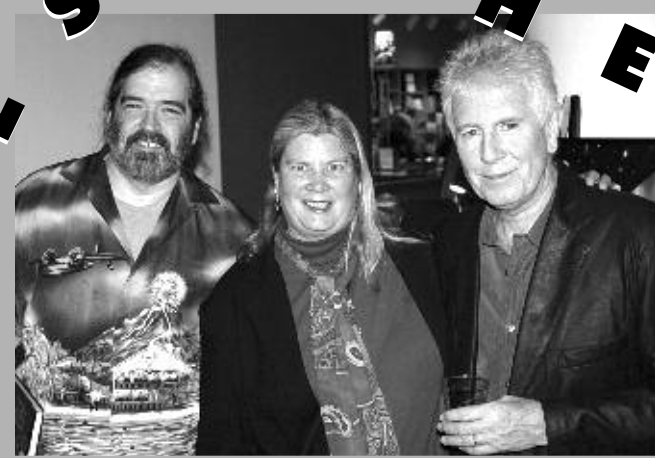
Photo: Lois Bach

Jerry Marotta (left) and Tom Griesgraber



Photo: Lois Bach

Think, daisy-shaped guitars for your teenage daughter?



Staff photographer Steve Covault (l.) with friend Justine and Graham Nash at MOPA



Photo: Steve Covault

Steve Rathburn at Spanish Village, Balboa Park



Photo: Tim Woods

The Steves



Photo: Tim Woods

EZ Mark



Photo: Tim Woods

Karen Rodgers



Photo: Steve Covault

Happy Ron Hill at Blind Melon's Blues Night



Photo: Tim Woods

Ben Henry



Photo: Tim Woods

Peppertree



Photo: Tim Woods

Outback Jack



Photo: Tim Woods

Clifford

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