

# T SAN DIEGO ROUBADOOR

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



November 2007

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## what's inside

**Welcome Mat.....3**

Contributors  
Banjo Bob

**Full Circle.....4**

Merle Travis, Part 2  
Recordially, Lou Curtiss

**Front Porch... ..6**

Indian Music  
Dixieland Jazz Festival  
Matt Silvia

**Parlor Showcase ...8**

Cathryn Beeks

**Ramblin' .....10**

Bluegrass Corner  
Zen of Recording  
Hosing Down  
Radio Daze  
Stages

**Highway's Song. ...12**

Ian McFeron  
Iron and Wine

**Of Note.....13**

The Flimz  
Beldock & Watson  
Brooklyn  
Cindy Lee Berryhill  
Holiday & the Adventure Pop  
Collective

**'Round About .....14**

November Music Calendar

**The Local Seen.....15**

Photo Page



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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.

# Banjo Bob Cox's 30-Year Run Comes to an End

by Dwight Worden

Banjo Bob gives the command to "duck and cover" by tilting his head, and the heads of 30 or so musicians in attendance at his weekly bluegrass jam drop their heads to a protective position just as they start the tune "Boil Them Cabbages Down." No, it's not a nuclear attack, but it could be explosive. You see, Bull Dog, a barrel chested dobro player with a foghorn of a voice and an "interesting" approach to life is in attendance tonight with a new girl friend. Banjo Bob, who faces the crowd, can see out the back window of the pizza place and can see that the old girl friend is on the prowl outside. This is how "Boil Them Cabbages Down" came to be known as the duck and cover song at the weekly bluegrass jam, hosted by Bob and Karen Cox for more than 30 years, the last 20 of which have taken place in North San Diego County. Alas, all things must end, and while the now famous Thursday night jams will continue under the capable leadership of banjo player Jason Weiss, it won't be quite the same: Banjo Bob and wife Karen have retired.

And what a 30 years it's been! There was the night that some kids from a little league team played baseball with a pool cue and hit the 8-ball across the room and sent it crashing through the top of a jammer's brand new Martin guitar. When the kid's parent's thought it was funny, one of the other jammers started to set them straight and words got heavy. The evening ended when the police arrived. Then there was the night when Larry Himmel came and filmed the evening's session and did a lengthy interview with Bob and Karen, and ended up running the show on channel 8 for several days.

Oh, and there was the court ruling that Banjo Bob's jam sessions are not "music" and

therefore not in violation of the city's "no live entertainment" rules. How many musicians have a court ruling confirming that what they do is not "music," therefore guaranteeing that they can continue to play their "non-music"? You see, while the Banjo Bob sessions were held at Sam's Pizza in Carmel Valley, neighbors complained, and the city tried to shut the event down by claiming live music was not allowed at the pizza parlor. Well, one of the long time supporters of Banjo Bob's sessions (Vic Wintress) took the city to court over the issue, with the attorney husband of one of the other jammers doing the representation. They showed a video of the jam sessions in court, which ruled it was an "educational" session, not "music," and therefore not in violation of zoning rules.

In case the "it's not music" ruling makes you question Banjo Bob's chops, take note that he is the only person in the more than 40-year history of the Topanga Banjo and Fiddle contest to win first place in the banjo competition five times, after which the event organizers declined to let him enter anymore, presumably to give some other banjo picker a chance.

Bob started out in Orange County teaching a course called Bluegrass Music for Fun, which he later brought to North San Diego County, first to the adult education program at San Dieguito High School and then to a series of Pizza parlors, first in Best-a-Wan in Cardiff, then at Sam's Pizza in Carmel Valley, and for the last eight years or so at what is now called Today's Pizza and More, located off Santa Fe Drive in Encinitas. Every Thursday night, with only a few missed Thursdays, Bob and his wife Karen have led a free bluegrass jam and instructional session. But now, with neck and shoulder problems having significantly cut back Banjo Bob's ability to play banjo, he has passed the mantle to



Banjo Bob Cox



North County Times article from 2001

Jason Weiss.

When asked, Banjo Bob says it has been a rewarding experience for him and Karen to introduce and nurture so many people over the years in the joys of bluegrass, and to provide a place for folks to "play out," who might not otherwise get out of their living room to pick. He carries with him many memories of people who have told him privately that his sessions "saved" them during bad times in their life. He remembers the many children who discovered the joy of bluegrass through his sessions, some of whom have now gone on to great musical success. There is little Dahlia who started attending Banjo Bob's sessions on beginner fiddle when she was about eight and now, at 14, she is an important member of the San Diego Youth Symphony. There is John Mailander who began attending as a young teen and now plays in several top local bluegrass bands. The list goes on and on.

When asked why he did it for all those years, Banjo Bob, simply said in his characteristic way, "If I can, through the joy of music, prevent one person from jumping off the Coronado bridge, it's worth it."

Bob and Karen, the community thanks you for your 30 years, and hey, some of us are here to give thanks only because your music kept us from jumping!

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# MEMORIES OF MERLE

by Lou Curtiss

## PART TWO

There was that fateful day at a certain Tex Ritter recording session when Merle Travis and Cliffie Stone (real name Clifford Snyder) met. Merle was waiting his probation time (three months) while he transferred his membership in the American Federation of Musicians from Local 1 in Cincinnati to Local 47 in Los Angeles.

Merle Travis: Tex Ritter gave me \$100 to see me through these hard times and I promised him I'd give him some gig time in the studio or on the road or wherever. During that time I was workin' in the honky tonks, mostly with Charlie and Margie Linville, and sometimes with Texas Jim Lewis and his brother Jack Rivers. The first thing I did when the probation ended was a dance date with the "Pistol Packin' Mama" man Al Dexter and did some radio stuff with Tuttle [Wesley Tuttle]. On September 20, 1944, I did that first Capitol session to pay back Tex, and that's where I met Cliffie. He was calling himself Cliffie Stonehead in those days and he was all over the Los Angeles radio scene as an emcee, comedian, and long-time studio bassist. He and his Dad, a long-haired, bearded comic who called himself "Herman the Hermit," had joined the Stuart



Cliffie Stone

Hamblen radio show group in the early to mid-1930s. By the time I met Cliffie he had his own show with a gal named Dixie Darling and he invited me on that show along with a fellow Kentuckian named Tex Atchison who could play one

heck of a fiddle. Tex had been with the old Prairie Ramblers for most of the 1930s, and when I met him, he'd just left the Riders of the Purple Sage. Tex was from Bill Monroe country — Rosine down in Ohio County — and he learned his jazz swing stuff and Smith-Clayton Macmichen style of fiddle from Arnold Schultz, the same guy who influenced Bill. That long-bow fiddlin' stuff. I think Tex was one of the best musicians I ever worked with. He played on nearly all my Capitol recordings in the 1940s and I did a lot of club and barn dance and radio work with him too.

What other bands were you working and recording with in those early years in LA?

MT: Well, about the same time as I was playin' on Cliffie's radio show, ol' Smiley Burnette introduced me to Ray Whitley [the guy who wrote "Back in the Saddle Again" and lots of other

songs for Gene Autry] and I became a part of his Rhythm Wranglers. At that time they were one of the top western swing groups on the L.A. ballroom circuit. There were lots of good folks in that band. While I was with them Joaquin Murphy, Herb Remington [pre Bob Wills], and Noel Boggs all played steel; fiddlers included Tex Atchison and Jesse Ashlock, and a co-lead guitar man by the name of Charlie Morgan. [I might mention here that I heard from Cliffie Stone that the bass player in that group was Sydna "Tex Ann" Nation who later married and recorded with Merle. Merle was always reluctant to talk about the more personal side of his life with a young squirt like me. Cliffie and Hank Penny told me an awful lot and while I don't want to dwell on it, I'll include factoids where relevant.] The hours this band worked were incredible. It was wartime and everyone was working and musicians had to entertain around the clock. We worked for Foreman Phillips who operated a chain of ballrooms and night clubs in the L.A. area. We'd play from 7pm to midnight at a ballroom in Baldwin Park, then we'd move to the Plantation in Culver City and pick 'til dawn. I stayed with Ray for a year or so til I went back to Cincinnati for a bit in 1945.

Now as for the recording, I did a couple of sessions with Wesley Tuttle in late 1944 and one with Shug Fisher in early 1945. Both of those were at Capitol. I did my first single with a vocal in California on the small Atlas label. The tune was "That's All." Cliffie recorded me singing Smiley Burnette's "Hominy Grits" for the Beltone label. I recorded with Porky Freeman for ARA. That was the boogie woogie number. They tell me that was the first boogie woogie on a guitar, but I don't know if that's true. It seems some of those black fellers were doing stuff with a guitar that sounded a lot like boogie woogie. Then it was back to Cliffie for those Tin Ear Tanner and his Backroom Boys sides. [Four sides were issued under that name with Merle on guitar, Tex Atchison on fiddle and vocal, Art Wenzel on accordion, Frank Marvin on steel, and Cliffie on bass and vocal.] The success of those sides got Cliffie hired by Capitol as that labels country talent coordinator and chief assistant to country A&R man Lee Gillette. He brought me, Tex Atchison, and others on board as salaried session men and recording artists

You said you went back to Cincinnati for a time in 1945.

MT: Mostly it was to visit family, check in with some old friends at the jamboree, and meet this new young talent they were talkin' about named

Chester Atkins. I asked him how he came to get that style, which involved using the thumb and two fingers and he said he thought that's what I was doing. [Merle's son Tom Bresh, who's one hell of a picker in his own right, explains the difference between Travis' and Atkins' picking: "Merle played straight bass notes and alternated the notes only on chords. Merle liked the drive of that tonic on the bottom. He thought in four beats instead of two. Chet would boom chuck and Merle would four beat. He loved the four beat rhythm player with the Count Basie Orchestra Freddie Green."]

I also checked in with Syd Nathan at King Records. I was a sort of A&R man for King Records on the West Coast and I put about everyone out here who could pick, and wasn't affiliated with anyone else on the King label. I put the Linvilles [Margie and Charlie], Curt Barrett, Jack Rogers, Jimmy Widener, Leon Rusk, Tex Atchison, and Jimmy Thomason all on King and we used side men like Noel Boggs, Harold Hensley, and Jimmy Wyble. Didn't have a whole lot of hit records but there was some good pickin' on a lot of them.

What did you do when you got back to L.A.?

MT: Well it was mostly more of the same. I got some work in some of those Western pictures, mostly a song or two and maybe a couple of lines in each one, I started to make some of those Soundies, you know a song on film that played in a coin-operated machine. Did a couple more sides for small record labels like Globe [issued as Dusty Ward and his Arizona Waddies. Those small labels almost never used his real name] and I did a lot of radio, sometimes as many as four or five shows a day. Finally I got signed by Capitol Records on March 18, 1946, and we kinda all got together to decide on how the Travis package was gonna work. That was the time, you know, when each country artist had a pre-packaged sound, so you'd know who the performer was going to be. Gene Autry, Ernest Tubbs, and all the rest had a backup sound. Cliffie and Lee sort of decided on a sound for me that was kind of like Gene's sound but a little bit peppier. The band would have a sharp muted trumpet, along with accordion, fiddle, steel guitar, and my guitar to keep the beat and take a break or two. I guess it worked okay as we kept that beat for the next five years or so. The first session I did used Joaquin Murphy and Pedro de Paul from Spade Cooley's band [on steel and accordion], this trumpet guy Jack McTaggart who had worked with Stuart Hamblen, and Tex Atchison on the fiddle. We did four songs. Two of them, "No Vacancy" and "Cincinnati Lou,"



Merle Travis

became my first singles. The first got up to number two on the country charts [Billboard] and the second got up to number three. On the second session we did "Divorce Me COD," which got to number one and "Missouri" which got to number five. I guess we had arrived.

How did you come to record folksongs like "Dark as a Dungeon" and "Nine Pound Hammer"?

MT: Well, there was a bit of a folk music boom that was going on in 1946, particularly in the big cities like New York, and Capitol wanted in on it. Cliffie Stone called me and he said, "I want you to do an album of folk songs; this guy Burl Ives is killin' 'em over at Decca." I told him that every folk song I know has been recorded by Ives or some of the old country guys like Bradley Kincaid. Cliffie said, "well, write some." I told him, "Cliffie you don't write folksongs," and he said, "Well, write some songs that sound like folk songs." I told him I'd have some ready the next day. He said "Good, I'll need eight."

The next day I had one traditional number "Nine Pound Hammer" and three songs I wrote: "Sixteen Tons," "Dark as a Dungeon," and "Over by Number Nine." I wrote the last two with a pencil on the back of an envelope while sitting on my motorcycle under a street light in Redondo Beach. Also on that album was "Muskrat," which I got from Harold Hensley on the beach at Santa Monica; "I am a Pilgrim," which I remembered from Mose Rager, whose brother got it from a black prisoner at the state prison; the old gospel standard "This World Is not My Home." We did "John Henry, the Steel Drivin' Man" and I redid "That's All" to finish up the eight. Then Capitol let them sit for two years before they issued them and by that time the folk fad had passed and the album went nowhere. Tennessee Ernie Ford discovered "Sixteen Tons" in 1955 and I was real glad about my fling as a folksinger. During the 1960s folk revival lots of folks rediscovered some of the other tunes on that set, so I've come to like those songs a whole lot.

How did you get into TV?

MT: Well, that would be with Cliffie too. We'd done a whole lot of radio shows together like "Hollywood Barn Dance," "Western Stars," "Dinner Bell Roundup," "Radio Ranch," and finally "Hometown Jamboree," which graduated to Television in 1949, and I stayed with it for a couple of years between going on the road with Gene Autry, who I recorded with, and Hank Thompson, who I also recorded with. In the early 1950s I started to work with Foreman Phillips on a show

he called the "B-K Jamboree." It ran six hours every day in two three hour shifts [on Channel 7 in L.A.]. Also on the show were Wes and Marilyn Tuttle, Johnny Bond, Eddie Cletro, Betsy Gay, Andy Parker and the Plainsmen, Jenks "Tex" Carmen, and Jimmy Widener. Phillips was always looking for new talent and I suggested Joe and Rose Lee Maphis, who came out and joined the show. So I was doing the "B-K Ranch" and also Cliffie's "Hometown Jamboree." It got so I was more on TV than off. I also did a show for a short time called "The All American Jamboree." I sang and did comedy as a character called Rodney Dangerfield [this was long before Jack Roy used that name as a comedian]. In 1952 a new barn-dance opened in Compton, called "Town Hall Party" and it picked up a good part of the cast of the old "B-K Jamboree," including myself, Joe and Rose Lee, Wes & Marilyn, Tex Carmen, Judy Hayden, Johnny Bond, and added Les "Carrot Top" Anderson, Tex Ritter, and Eddie Dean [and over the years a whole lot more]. I stayed with that show thru out the 1950s until it came to an end in the early 1960s. Along the way I did several daytime programs [one with Cliffie and his gang, one with Johnny Bond and Wes Tuttle, and one with Judy Hayden, who was his then wife]. None of my own shows went over too well although people always said good things about them. It was always a better time on those barn-dance shows, although I always felt more comfortable and at home in the studio shows on radio in the 1940s. I always felt I did my best work on those shows. In the studio I always felt someone else was in control of what I picked. On those old shows I always felt I was mostly my own boss in terms of what and how I decided to play. If I felt in a clownish mood I'd play clownish, if I was kind of down I could play a blues lick or two. So many times in those days I wouldn't know what I was going to pick until I got up to the mic and that was kind of exciting, waiting to find out.

What about the folk revival? How did that affect you?

MT: Well so many of you guys know my music and the things I've done better than I do. I get in front of a folk audience like those at the Ash Grove [L.A.'s most famous folk club during the late 1950s and 1960s] and people either want to hear the same old same old well-known stuff or they are calling for stuff I've forgotten and didn't think that much of in the first place. I really am honored that people are as well acquainted with my music as they are, but sometimes I wish they'd let me pick what I want to.

Thank you for letting me talk to you as much as you have.

MT: Well, Lou, without long-time fans like you, it'd be a whole lot harder for an old Kentucky picker like me to get through this world.

I'd like to thank several people for helping out with this interview (or rather series of interviews). My father, George Curtiss, who hauled me to all those "Town Hall Party" and other country shows and may have suggested a question or two; Hank Penny and Cliffie Stone, who pointed me in the right direction; Hedy West; and the UCLA folklore students, who were there and asked some questions that I forgot to ask. A lot more has been written about Merle by both folklorist and fan. He was a tremendously complex man who did not always have a happy time getting through this world, but that boy could pick like no one before or since. — Lou Curtiss

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# Recordially, Lou Curtiss

## GRAMMY PROJECT UPDATE

Within the short space of a couple of months we have moved reel-to-reel tapes going back to a series of great concerts at the old Sign of the Sun bookstore from 1962 through to the beginnings of tapes from the first five San Diego Folk Festivals (1967-1971). I am getting to hear material from artists that I had only heard bits of, mostly due to the operations factor in putting one of these events on the first time around. I had always planned to listen to those reels and then more music came along and I never really got to. In the case of the Sign of the Sun shows, I was around to see some of them but I just didn't have the bucks to go to all of those shows. The Georgia Sea Islands music of Bessie Jones is captured with a hip audience of friends and fans, as are those of Rev. Gary Davis, Kentucky traditional singer Jean Ritchie, Scotland's Jean Redpath, and Georgia's Hedy West. There's a set by the Shady Canyon Boys featuring a 16-year-old Chris Hillman and a not much older Kenny Wertz and Gary Carr (maybe San Diego's first bluegrass band), and also a set by the Chambers Brothers in their days as a gospel group. Others represented include folksinger Guy Carawan, banjo picker and folklorist Stu Jamieson, Jack and Marilyn Powell, who were mainstays of the San Diego coffeehouse scene in those days. There are so many other tapes of Sign of the Sun shows I just haven't been able to run down. Among the artists I remember seeing there were Mississippi John Hurt, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Rosalie Sorrells, the New Lost City Ramblers, Skip James, a memorable solo concert by Mike Seeger, cowboy singer Slim Critchlow, ballad singer Rita Weill, and traditional German folk songster Günter Schmitz. I wonder if any of those concerts were taped. It'd be nice to include them in this project.

Another series of tapes that has been donated is from the Sam Hinton collection, which includes tapes going back to the mid-'50s, featuring a lot of Sam's radio and TV appearances (he had his own show on two or three occasions) and also tapes that Sam col-

lected of various concerts featuring artists ranging from Doc Watson and Jimmie Driftwood to Canadian folksinger Alan Mills, East Coast singsters Sandy and Carolyn Paton, Pete Seeger (including Sam and Pete playing together), more Hedy West, some Michael Cooney, Merritt Herring, folklorist Gene Bluestein, some folk tales by Ray Hicks and Richard Chase, and a whole lot more that I haven't had a chance to listen to. Thanks to Sam and his daughter Leanne for getting us access to this collection.

There are other tapes out there that will also be a part of the project including a bunch from the collection of the late Ed Cormier, who contributed so much to the local folk scene over the years, but it's those tapes from the San Diego Folk Festivals and the series of concerts at Folk Arts Rare Records, Oranges, the Heritage, and other venues that I was directly involved with that take first place (particularly the festivals and festival caberets that took place around the festivals that this digital documentary is mostly about). I'm in the process of taking the DVD-ROM discs that Russ Hamm (my associate in this project) is making from the original reel-to-reel tapes, and taking individual songs to make wav files and mp3 files from them so that they can be downloaded online and copied onto CDs. And that's about as technical as I'm going to get. For me, it's mostly about the music. Those early festivals were smaller and it was always a bear getting someone to do the taping. Often I had to do a good part of it myself. I'm still surprised at how well the tapes have held up over the last 40 years or so.

I'm also surprised at the quality of the music at those early festivals. The Possum Hunters String Band made up of a bunch of UCLA folklore students were as good an old timey band as any of the ones that appeared at later festivals. Good musicians and really good vocals and really knowledgeable about the music, where it came from, and everything you needed to know about it. I could say the same about Byron Berline and Scott Hambly of the Bluegrass California group. They knew their stuff and they could pick (I always thought of Byron Berline as a fiddler until I heard him

take part in a mandolin workshop. That boy can pick a mandolin). Sometimes things got kind of confusing during the blues workshops (in later years, I got blues scholars like Frank Scott or Steve LaVere to run things) but the music was good and even if the tuning between guitar and piano went on too long, the result was usually worth it. There are also important finds like when a tape labeled country dance is actually a pick session with mandolinist extraordinaire Kenny Hall and Hollendale Mississippi blues man Sam Chatmon (here's an old timey musician and a blues singer doing mostly old pop songs. Sam's version of Bing Crosby's "Please" has to be heard to be believed). Kenny's set with Dr Humbeads New Tranquility String Band and Medicine Show from the third festival is an old timey masterpiece as is all the work from the second and third festivals by one of my all time favorite old time musicians (no matter what kind of music he's playing) Hank Bradley (the original "Poison Cayote Kid"). Hank's version of "How I Got Started" ("... Had an old buzzard and his name was Paul...") through his bands like the Cleanliness and Godliness Skiffle Band, Jose's Appliances, the Diesel Ducks, the Gypsy Gyppo String Band, duets with Jody Stecher and Frannie Leopold and up to the Balkan Cafe Orchestra always make for a treat with good music and good humor. He even sneaks in some stuff that might be termed educational. At any rate, the stuff Hank played at those early festivals is delightful and so are the later ones, but I'm not up to those yet. Right now I'm listening to Ray Bierl and Mayne

Smith teaming up on some fine old country music, Jack Tempchin singing a song about eating food and watching TV, Bob LeBeau singing about the cloudkeepers daughter, and the original incarnation of the Sweets Mill String Band when it was only Kenny Hall, Jim Ringer, and Ron Tinkler (who seemed to do a little more singing and less picking). There was the fine Scottish singing and humor of Jean Redpath in two of those early festivals, and Ray and Ina Patterson, who first played at the fourth festival. Down from half way up Pikes Peak in Colorado they did country duet singing with mandolin and guitar like the late '30s groups (the Blue Sky Boys, the Monroe Brothers, the Delmore Brothers). They would be a part of many festivals to come. Stu Jamieson, veteran folklorist, singer, and old time banjo player, played the first few festivals, sailed with his family around the world, and then returned to us many years later. Guy Carawan was another picker who played a number of festivals over the years. During those early years blues was represented by Louisiana's Robert Pete Williams and Houston's Weldon "Juke Boy" Bonner at a festival that also included the first appearance of Mississippi blues singer Sam Chatmon, who would become a festival regular over the next several years. That same festival (I think it was the fourth) marked the first appearance of Texas blues singer-guitarist Thomas E. Shaw, who learned to play from Blind Lemon Jefferson in the late '20s. Tom moved out to San Diego in 1934 and went into the junk business (keeping blues as a hobby). One day



Photo: Bill Richardson

Lou Curtiss

he came into Folk Arts Rare Records looking for guitar strings (I didn't carry them) and we got into a discussion about the blues. This led to his being asked to play at the Folk Festival, so he brought Robert Jeffery with him who was from Oklahoma and played piano.

One of the things I miss about the current series of festivals is the workshops. It seems like so many of the musicians are really up for those. The format is relaxing and people can ask questions as well as learn something about the music they are hearing in a more formal context in the concerts. It'd be nice if we could do some of that at the Roots Festivals. At any rate, as this Grammy digitization project continues, I will report here from time to time on its progress. Check out Folk Arts Rare Records.com to listen to some of this stuff. You won't be sorry.

Recordially,  
Lou Curtiss

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# San Diego's Musical Passage to India

by Steve Thorn

The lecture hall at the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center in Torrey Pines — normally a locale for a dedicated medical community to discuss diseases that continue to bedevil humanity — was the location for a decidedly different summit on a recent autumn evening. Members of San Diego's Indian community were part of standing room only audience who came to hear a concert by famed vocalist Madurai T.N. Seshagopalan.

In the audience, an elderly Indian woman in a brilliantly colored Sari removed her sandals and and gently swayed her bare feet to the rhythm of the music. She later abandoned her seat, preferring to sit on the soft carpet floor of her aisle. Like all in attendance, the music was taking her to a different place.

The man responsible for this unique musical "passage" to a different place was Dr. Shekar Viswanathan, professor and chair in the School of Engineering and

Technology at National University. When he isn't in the classroom, Viswanathan is a passionate promoter of Indian music. A native of the the southern Indian city of Chennai (formerly called Madras), Viswanathan said he grew up listening to classical, jazz, and Western music. He attended many concerts almost weekly and also listened to music every evening.

Viswanathan said his goal is to "create an awareness among Westerners and Americans of Indian origin for the rich classical Indian music. Also, I would like to create an institution in San Diego that will promote Indian music and its rich legacy."

The professor is also part of Indian Fine Arts Academy, a non-profit cultural organization formed to provide an environment of learning and appreciation of music, dance, and arts; organize world-class music concerts, dance, and arts programs in meeting the needs of San Diego Indian and American Communities; foster Indian culture among the younger generation of Indian Americans living in the county; dis-

Photo: Steve Covault



Sri Tanjore Murugabhupathy on mridangam, vocalist Madurai T.N. Seshagopalan, and Sri Chandramouli on violin

seminate Indian culture among the Americans through music, dance, and arts; and participate in charitable activities related to health, cultural, and artistic purposes.

Outside of enrolling in a crash course in Indian music appreciation, what should Western audiences be looking for in the music? "The raga (melody) and the tala (rhythm) are the basic building blocks of any classical Indian music," Viswanathan explained. "Unlike most Western classical music, most Indian classical music is improvisational. The musician chooses a raga and a tala. These provide a basis for the musician to improvise a solo. To a larger extent, the Indian classical music is devotional. Those who attend these concerts will find the experience educational, relaxing, and therapeutic."

Those last three adjectives are apt descriptions for the recent performance by Seshagopalan, one of India's most famous vocalists in the category of Carnatic music. Emphasizing melody and improvisation, Carnatic music has its historical roots dating back to the 15th century CE and perhaps earlier.

Seshagopalan was joined on stage at the Kimmel Center by violinist Sri Chandramouli and percussionist Sri Tanjore Murugabhupathy, the latter keeping rhythm on a drum called the Mridangam. It was particularly intriguing to see Chandramouli match note-for-note the improvisational vocalizing of Seshagopalan.

One audience member seated next to this writer compared it to jazz "scat" singing in Western music. "It reminds me of the trading off, which used to go on between Ella Fitzgerald and her lead saxophonist or trumpet player," said the patron.

Another outlet for hearing Indian Music locally has been National University's Center for Cultural and Ethnic Studies. "I join hands with the director of this center, Dr. Lorna Zukas, in organizing unique music events," said Viswanathan. "The purpose is to showcase the cultural heritage of various ethnic groups. Music events fall under this category."

Last September, National University sponsored a concert featuring santoor virtuoso Pt. Taryn Bhattacharya and the accomplished Arup Chatterjee on tabla. Resembling an elaborate dulcimer, the

Santoor (meaning 100 strings in English) requires painstaking tuning prior to each performance. After the nearly two-hour concert, staged in the auditorium at the Neurosciences Institute in Torrey Pines, Bhattacharya explained the musical sequence of his performance.

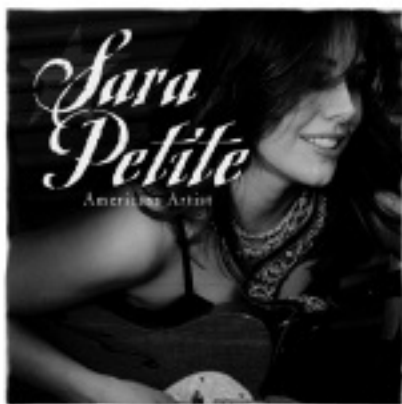
"I started with alap, which is the introduction of the raga," said Bhattacharya. "In this part, I unfolded the raga very slowly. The alap is followed by the jod, which is the rhythmic portion of alap. After that, I played two compositions set to *japtal*, which is a cycle of 10 beats and *teental*, which is a cycle of 16 beats."

Bhattacharya has performed with sitarist (and North County resident) Ravi Shankar, the name behind an extraordinary number of recordings and concerts, including the famous Concert for Bangladesh he coordinated with the late George Harrison. Among the CDs available at the reception table following Bhattacharya's concert in Torrey Pines were *Dusk*, meditative music to enjoy before a good night's sleep, and the surprisingly moving *Christmas in Calcutta*, a charity disc for the Children's Hunger Fund, featuring Bhattacharya and several major Indian musicians (including San Diego State University graduate Alope Dasgupta on sitar) performing songs of yuletide cheer on Indian instruments! (The harried shopper in the mall will view "Do You Hear What I Hear" in an entirely different light upon hearing the CD.)

A major Indian cultural fair, featuring music, art, and culinary delights is in the planning stages for next March. It is one of many projects that the indefatigable Viswanathan has planned for 2008.

"The concerts give me an opportunity to bring people of like-minded interests, namely those who enjoy and appreciate Indian classical music together. I also feel a sense of pride and satisfaction in being able to showcase India's rich cultural heritage to a large, diverse audience."

Updated concert listings are available at [www.indianfinearts.org](http://www.indianfinearts.org)



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## Ragtime to Roots Music at Dixieland Festival

The San Diego Thanksgiving Dixieland Jazz Festival is best known for presenting top traditional jazz bands. The 28th annual festival, held November 21-25 at the Town & Country Resort in Hotel Circle, features jazz bands from across the U.S. and Canada with musicians from Europe and Australia, too. In addition to the excellent bands, this year's festival includes the following special events.



Wally's Warehouse Waifs

Wednesday night pre-festival concert dance, with

Wally's Warehouse Waifs of Michigan and the High Society Jazz Band of La Jolla.

Town & Country Thanksgiving Buffet on Thursday afternoon with music!

Ragtime Extravaganza – the Heliotrope Ragtime Orchestra, with ragtime era dance steps performed by local vintage dancers, in period costume, on Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon.



The Hayriders with Sue Palmer

American Roots – the music of Johnny Cash, Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkin – played and sung by the Hayriders featuring well known artists Sue Palmer, Gino Meregillano, Johnny D'Artenay, and Hal Smith of San Diego plus John Gill and Katie Cavera.



Swing dancing

Jazz Sea Jams led by cornetist Dick Williams. Bring your instrument. Have

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Anita Thomas & Chloe Feoranzo

The Mission Bay High School Dixieland Band – talented young musicians who put on a terrific show.

The Butch Thompson Trio, led by the featured performer on broadcasts of "A Prairie Home Companion." The Carl Sonny Leyland Trio, led by the internationally acclaimed boogie woogie pianist. Plus, our pianorama with numerous top pianists.



Side Street Strutters

Sunday morning gospel music with the Night Blooming Jazzmen of Claremont.

Sunday evening wind-down concert-dance, with the Side Street Strutters known for their exceptional concerts at Disneyland and Buck Creek Jazz Band from Springfield, Virginia.

All of these events – except the Thanksgiving Buffet – are included in the price of a five-day, all-events badge (\$85). Daily Badges: Wednesday 7-11pm (\$15); Thursday 7-11pm (\$20); Friday 10am-11pm (\$30); Saturday 9am-11pm (\$30); Sunday 8am-10pm (\$25). Multi-day and Youth Badges are also available. Children 12 and under are free when accompanied by an adult. Active duty military personnel are admitted free with government-issued ID. To order badges, or for more information, contact AFCDJS at (619) 297-5277. Website: [www.dixielandjazzfestival.org](http://www.dixielandjazzfestival.org); e-mail: [jazzinfo@dixielandjazzfestival.org](mailto:jazzinfo@dixielandjazzfestival.org).

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# Matt Silvia: Driven to Play

by Craig Yerkes

A high school teacher of mine once said, "Where I come from, we would rather build a wall than sit around talking about building a wall." That teacher was from New England. I was reminded of that sound bite as I began researching another New Englander (turned San Diego music hero), Matt Silvia, for this story. Mr. Silvia takes a very no-nonsense approach toward music and would much rather grab a guitar and get to it than talk about himself. Luckily for San Diego music fans, Silvia gets to it quite often. For those of you not familiar with him, his musical exploits take slightly different forms (depending on which group he is playing

with), but you will almost always find him strumming the holy hell out of his guitar, stomping around to the beat, swinging his hair around like a man possessed, and electrifying the room with his powerful vocals. Behind the scenes, Silvia writes music and plays the role of band leader. Nobody who has ever walked into a bar and seen Silvia on stage is likely to forget him...he is one of the more colorful, dynamic forces in the San Diego music scene.

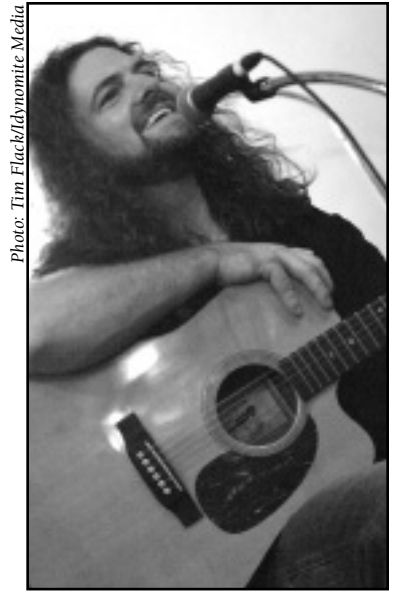
Born in New Bedford Massachusetts, our subject first cut his musical teeth playing with his brothers, Kevin and Mike. Silvia's father was also a big part of getting his guitar playing off the ground. As he was getting his education at the University of New Hampshire, Silvia played in various

bands and then began gigging around the Boston area after school. A profound revelation came to Silvia at this point: he decided he wanted sunshine. After taking a job with San Diego's burgeoning MP3.com in 1999 (as a programmer), Silvia eventually crossed paths with a San Diego artist who was active on the MP3.com page: Cathryn Beeks. The Beeks-Silvia musical combination started in 2000, when the duo first began writing and performing together. The band, Eight Ball Rack, was born out of the Beeks-Silvia partnership and although the band only lasted a year and a half, the CD they made still seems to have a life of it's own around town. After Eight Ball Rack hit the skids, Silvia and Beeks decided to keep playing and writing together and the band, now known as the Cathryn Beeks Ordeal, has been forming and re-forming over the last four to five years, with Silvia as the one constant force in the group. Of his partnership with Beeks, Silvia says, "...I have been proud to be Cathryn's right hand man...over the years...I've watched her become a brilliant songwriter." On a personal note, I can remember back in 2003-2004 when Beeks was putting on shows at the Coaster Saloon (what great days those were!) and so many great bands were playing there on a regular basis. The first night I ever went to the Coaster, Silvia was there to play with Cathryn and one other artist. His enthusiasm and talent were obvious, and, damn...that hair! After that first Silvia sighting, it seemed like he was everywhere I went, playing like a crazy man and always ready with a smile. Two particularly memorable Silvia performances that I can remember include an incredible rendition of "American Pie" at the Coaster (I'd never heard that place go more crazy) and also when he and Beeks played at a Neil Young tribute (at Dizzy's) and stole the show.

Mr. Silvia's abilities and attitude have inspired many local artists to grab for a piece of the man, but with a full-time day job (still programming), he only has so much time and energy to spread around. These days, in addition to his gig with Beeks, Silvia plays with local pop icon

Christopher Dale, his new band (featuring Dave Howard) the Shamey Jays, and the rockin' project known as SweetTooth. The "almost done" CD that SweetTooth will soon release seems to be the project that's currently taking the front and center position for Mr. Silvia, but he's loving every minute of all the music he's got himself into these days. I asked some of the folks he has worked with to comment on what it's like to work with the man. His partner in the Christopher Dale band, Bill Coomes, says Silvia "knows every song known to man" and that "he's the Maestro." Bassist Marcia Claire says Silvia "brings the funk to folk" and that he is "the consummate multi-tasker" plus an "amazing band leader." Christopher Dale calls him "easy going, helpful, and sweet" and Cathryn Beeks says he's "really humble...I don't think he realizes how awesome he is." To be sure, there are plenty of musicians in San Diego who are glad Matt Silvia decided that he wanted some sunshine.

As for the future, Silvia expects next year to be "even busier" and he continues to be very happy making music in San Diego, describing the music scene here as the "best I have ever seen." Silvia continues, "I've never seen so many bands, in one town, that all know each other. We don't all get along all of the time, but it's still pretty cool knowing so many musicians". While this is a man who found what he was looking for in our fair city, don't expect Silvia to be all sweetness and light when it comes to San Diego vs. New England sports teams. The Red Sox and the Patriots will always be number one in this rocker's heart, so don't even think of trying to convert Silvia on that score. New England's loss was our gain when it comes to Silvia and the music he dishes out so generously. If you have never seen Silvia do his thing, not to worry. You can be sure that he'll be playing with at least one of his bands within the next few days. Look for the guy with lots of hair, punishing his guitar like David Ortiz punishes the baseball, and stomping around in perfect time.



Matt Silvia

Photo: Tim Flack/dynamite Media

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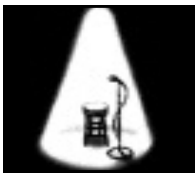
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by Simeon Flick  
photos: Tim Flack/Idynomite Media

Once again you're itching to catch some live local music and are delighted to find the calendar less exiguous than in the past. And you are impressed to see that the little promotional company you first read about in this publication a few years ago — Listen Local SD — has grown exponentially in activity and reputation. In fact, since attending your first Listen Local show and joining the mailing list, you've been to scores of such gigs all over the county, featuring not only some of San Diego's hottest acts but also superlative regional and touring bands from all over the lower 48. Like many others in this town, you now have an acute awareness of such branded Listen Local events as Band Camp (occurring every September), The Game (a periodic songwriting showcase), and the one-off cookbook-sale/gig/benefit for the San Diego Rescue Mission, *Listen Local Cooks* (the book is a collection of recipes submitted by the likes of Lisa Sanders and Steph Johnson, some of which are extremely entertaining).

This particular night finds you returning to Brick by Brick, the hallowed live music venue that has previously hosted the still running and progressively successful Acoustic Alliance series. You're expecting the same un-apropos, grizzled bouncer and liquor-soaked décor, but everything has changed; the façade has been painted a brighter color, there's a restaurant and outside smoking area, some windows were installed, and, notwithstanding, the extant mélange of band stickers in the toilets, there's been some class-upgrading modifications to the inside, including candle-lit tables and hardwood floors in the back where all that gross carpeting used to be.

On the way in you are warmly greeted by one or two female Listen Local representatives who give you a flyer with the night's artist lineup and gently but firmly point to several displays of their CDs, mailing lists, flyers for other upcoming shows, miscellaneous artists and Listen Local schwag, and other sundries lining the counter and a nearby table.

There are more people attending the event now, too, but the smiling and between-song fervor are the same. You're one of a growing list of new and unsuspecting concertgoers who have been reached and drawn into the Listen Local swoon during the past few years.

The ever-entertaining mixture of colorful veterans and vivaciously green up-and-comers share the stage four at a time, playing their best songs in the popular "round" acoustic format, which originated in places like Nashville as an extremely enjoyable way to mitigate burgeoning showcase bills. The last of the three rounds features the members of a new supergroup called Allied Gardens (multiple San Diego Music Award winners Peter Bolland and Sven-Erik Seaholm, and multiple SDMA nominee Michael Tiernan) alongside Frank Zappa alum Mike Keneally. Again, you're completely flabbergasted at the amount of talent assembled on this stage during this night in this town.

And then something flashes across your field of vision, a gypsy tornado of Corona-toting good-

will dressed predominantly in black; it's Cathryn Beeks, the lynchpin of the whole montage. She floats and flits between the stage, the bar, and many diverse factions of like-minded aficionados before sauntering over to the mixing booth to share a discreet smooch with her man Johnny, who is masterfully dialing in the professional quality sound you're enjoying.

After a brief announcement as MC, Cathryn puts the set-up music back on; it could be any one of a number of local artist's songs, throbbing out of the PA from one album or compilation, or another, or it could be a track from 2006's *Desert Music*, the debut disc from her band the Cathryn Beeks Ordeal, which is the fruition of years of professional songwriting experience and collaboration with the likes of Matt Silvia and others. If it is indeed her music, you'll be treated to a wanderlust-laden Americana groove, uplifting and catchy tales of joyfully living with — and painfully coping without — love, all cherry-topped by her stunningly soulful contralto that you can easily picture alongside such legends as Janis Joplin and Bonnie Raitt in the pantheon of divine female voices.

Things have definitely progressed for our Listen Local heroine, and the Troubadour recently caught up with the networking queen to find out more about her and her latest goings-on.

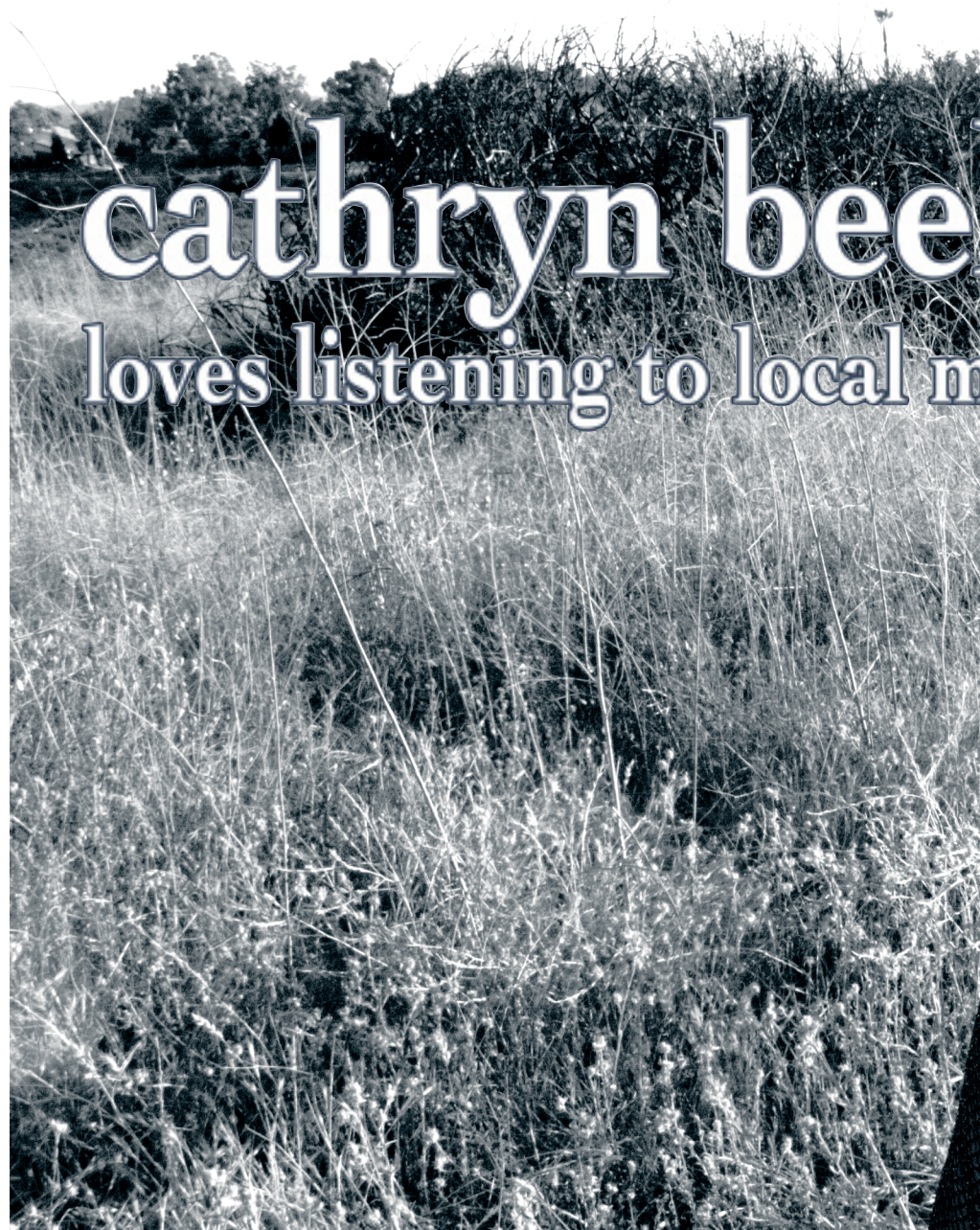
**Describe a typical day in the life of Cathryn Beeks.**

Monkey, the cat, wakes me up anywhere from 4 to 7:30 every morning by walking on me or swishing her tail in my face. If I'm unresponsive she'll work on Jonny [Edwards] because she knows he's a softy. Around 9am one of us will get up and feed both her and Jack, which officially starts our day.

Jonny makes coffee and we hang out for a bit, waking up and discussing the game plan for the day. He has his own sound company and usually works nights, but often has shows during the day, too. Our schedules normally allow us a few days off together during each week in the afternoon, which is nice. We go to Balboa Park if it's a Tuesday or meet Christopher Dale at Kirin Sushi if we have the extra dough. Today Jonny has a date with Rob to go Frisbee golfing before his gig in North County; he won't be home until around 3am.

I fully intend on heading off for my morning walk, but the computer calls to me to take a quick look at my email, just to see what the day has in store. Besides a few breaks, all too often I am stuck from that point on until around 5pm booking shows, hearing new artists, working on my own music, creating flyers, networking, putting out fires, promoting my current show, and trying to come up with new ways to get the music-loving public to hear the great acts we have here.

Around 5pm I can compute no more. I crash on the couch for a little news and some relaxation before heading off to Dublin's or Desi 'n' Friends or whatever show I have that night. I have a little dinner and leave for work around 8pm. I set up, sound check and spend the evening acting as MC for whatever acts I have booked. I get home a little after midnight, watch some



"Family Guy" or "South Park" until Jonny comes home, then we hit the sack.

**Talk about your album, *Desert Music*.**

I recorded *Desert Music* [which was released at the Belly Up Tavern and nominated this year for Best Americana/Country album at the San Diego Music Awards] with the help of my long time writing partner Matt Silvia, along with the rest of my bandmates Will Bonnar, Jeff Johnson, Rob Garbowski, Becky Flemming, and Marcia Claire. We laid it down at Miracle Recording with Jeff Berkley, who also performed on many songs, along with about 20 other San Diego musicians who made cameo performances. It was a blast to make. I'd certainly be happy if someone famous wanted to record a song or two off of it.

The Cathryn Beeks Ordeal recently received some attention from "The Jeff and Jer Show" on Star 94.1 FM, which was amazing. I had written a song dedicated to people who walk in the Breast Cancer three-day called "Keep Walking." My friend Hilary forwarded the song to the show's producer, Tommy, who is walking in the event. They played it on the air more than a few times, even using a portion of it in their promo about the event. Then I sent them *Desert Music* and a few days later got a frantic call from a friend telling me to turn on the radio. I missed the segment but later got a clip of it and was absolutely floored by what they were saying... I had goose-bumps!! It's like they said everything you'd ever want radio people to say about your music...it was ridiculously rad. My friend Tim Flack from Idynomite Media had invested in my record and

went from a sale every six weeks to selling over 100 in two weeks. I had never felt the power of radio...but dang, I'd like to again!

My experience with Star 94.1 was an eye opener. I had forgotten about all the soccer moms and professional people who can't get out to shows and aren't hip to MySpace, so the only music they know about is what the radio is playing for them. Those are our people. They want to hear new music and are especially supportive if it's from their hometown, so we just have to figure out how to get it to them.

**What's happening with Listen Local SD and where is it heading?**

I'm proud we're still kicking. After a generous donation from Hot Rod Harris in 2004, I bought the ListenLocalsd.com domain name, but I had been hosting events at the Coaster Saloon and Hennessey's since 2001. That's when I decided I'd try to make a living promoting music in San Diego and it's been an interesting journey. Besides my sponsors, I'm funded by the venues I work with, so the shows are what keep us going. Fortunately, Listen Local has acquired a nice sized following made up of musicians, journalists, photographers, and music lovers who enjoy seeing a variety of acts, sometimes who are brand new to town. We rely on word of mouth and the website to keep us going; over the past few years we've seen a lot of growth and increasing support.

With any luck and a little work, ListenLocalsd.com will continue to be a website resource for musicians and music lovers alike. We'll continue to organize shows that are easy to





Photo: Steve Coyault

ks  
music



Beeks and Matt Silva



Beeks with Jonny Edwards



Photo: Chris Lillqvist

Beeks (far right) with Not Your Mom



The Cathryn Beeks Ordeal

Cathryn Beeks is an inspiration as both an artist and promoter, someone who will continue to make a selfless habit of giving more than she often can in order to make San Diego a viable destination for touring bands — as well as an engaging home for fellow musicians — to connect with a swelling phalanx of enthusiastic word-of-mouth concert goers. This approach recently took on a buzz of think-globally-act-locally proportions when she received the following email from Paul Raia of Tempe, Arizona:

About six months ago I emailed you with a whole list of questions regarding Listen Local SD and how to start one here in Arizona...Well, time has passed and some great changes have occurred for me not only in my musical career, but also my professional career.

The stars have aligned, and I'm finally ready to begin a Listen Local AZ chapter. I have two open mics committed and am about to start hosting a Thursday night weekly showcase... I'm pursuing another venue for a Monday night Showcase and we here in Arizona last month had 36 singer/songwriters turn out for our first installment of "The Game"...it was a huge success and we even had local television and newspaper coverage... We're planning on doing another one in November and somehow turning it into a benefit to raise money and awareness for hospice care.

What I'd like with your blessing...is to call the organization of events Listen Local AZ, and model our events after yours.

After "The Game" event there has been just a sweeping of momentum of people wanting to get involved, volunteer and of course perform at showcases. I realize I cannot do this alone, nor should I, and seek your guidance as to the best path to take in setting out on this musical adventure.

So, as I said, the time is now, and I'd really like to be partners in this with you. The joy of giving to the music community that I've been experiencing is overwhelming and is a dream fulfilled. So please, any feedback and ideas are appreciated and I would truly love to have your blessing on this endeavor. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,  
Paul Raia  
Tempe, Arizona



www.cathrynbeeksordeal.com  
www.myspace.com/cathrynbeeksordeal  
www.listenlocalsd.com

book, start on time, and are enjoyable for the band and the fans and lucrative for the venues. We'll continue to produce special-event shows featuring the best that our city has to offer as well as workshops and formats for up-and-coming artists. We plan to continue to try and create opportunities for musicians to showcase their talent and network with other artists and industry

people. In short, Listen Local would like to continue to be involved as a positive entity in the San Diego area and beyond.



# Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden



## THE ANNUAL IBMA AWARDS

On October 4, the International Bluegrass Music Association Awards show was held at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. This is bluegrass music's biggest event of the year and the hall was aglitter with all the bluegrass dignitaries: Ricky Skaggs, Alison Krauss, Blue Highway, the Stringbusters, Sam Bush, and on and on. A private pre-party, sponsored by IBMA, was held backstage for the stars and other dignitaries, including live entertainment from Blue Highway, finger food, drinks, and lots of talk and chatter. It's quite something to see these stars dressed in their finest tuxes and evening gowns, hardly the "Hee Haw" image many have of bluegrass and its musicians.

Legendary mandolin player **Sam Bush** hosted the show, which presented 12 different live acts and which featured the presentation of bluegrass music's top awards. Some of the noteworthy awards winners were:

**The Infamous Stringdusters** stormed the event by taking three top awards: Emerging Artist of the Year, Song of the Year for "Fork in the Road," and a tie for first place with **JD Crowe** for Album of the Year also titled *Fork in the Road*. Those San Diegans who attended Summergrass 2006 can say they heard the Stringdusters "back when" and before they became so famous.

**Rob Ickes** of Blue Highway took his ninth award — count 'em — as Dobro Player of the Year, passing up Jerry Douglas (of Alison Krauss and Union Station featuring Jerry Douglas) who has eight. Rob Ickes has now won more instrument player of the year awards than anyone on any instrument. San Diegans at Summergrass 2006 will also remember seeing Rob perform with his great band Blue Highway.

**Sam Bush** took the honors for Mandolin Player of the Year. Sam, the host of the evening, was totally and genuinely surprised to hear his name called, as it has been years since he won the award, and he



The Infamous Stringdusters: IBMA Emerging Artist of the Year, Song of the Year, Album of the Year



Sam Bush: IBMA Mandolin Player of the Year

made a moving and spontaneous acceptance speech.

**Dale Ann Bradley** received the award for Female Vocalist of the Year, surprising many by winning over perennial favorite **Rhonda Vincent**. Dale Ann made a tearful, heartfelt acceptance speech reflective of how she approaches her music — with soul and from the heart.

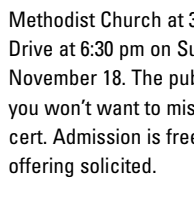
**Bradley Walker**, wheelchair bound by muscular dystrophy, took the Male Vocalist of the Year award. This man has a stellar voice, as smooth as butter and as authentic as the south itself.

**Doyle Lawson and Quicksilver**, who practically own the Gospel Award category again took home honors in that classification. This year Doyle and his great band also won the Entertainer of the Year award, surprising some by winning over **Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder** who came up dry in awards this year as did **Rhonda Vincent and the Rage**.

IBMA does a great job in its award show and this year's event was a great success in every respect. Congratulations to all the winners and to the IBMA members and fans who voted for them. They all do us proud!

**DAVID PARMLEY AND CONTINENTAL DIVIDE COME TO SAN DIEGO**

The San Diego Bluegrass Society, fresh from its presentation of the **James King Band** last month, will bring nationally recognized David Parmley and Continental Divide to San Diego for a special concert at St. Marks' United Methodist Church at 3502 Clairemont Drive at 6:30 pm on Sunday evening November 18. The public is welcome, so you won't want to miss this great concert. Admission is free, with a good will offering solicited.



David Parmley

# The Zen of Recording

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

## SIFTING THROUGH . . .

As my wife and I, along with our half-full plane of anxious passengers, descended through the thick golden haze of burnt brush and asbestos into San Diego's Lindbergh Field, my mind was (and still is, somewhat) reeling. What insights could I possibly offer that would carry any resonance for the readers of this column? What lexis could comprehensively communicate the overwhelming empathy we are feeling for our friends and associates; those who have been much less fortunate than ourselves? How can the ink-soaked paper of seemingly unrelated subject matter help to soothe the wounds of such tremendous loss?

A large portion of the content of these contributions has often been devoted to what one can do with the things they acquire, but there is still the unwavering underlying message that great tools do not create art, only that great art is often rendered with these tools and the knowledgeable use of them.

These tools are not always of the tangible variety. They are not specifically hardware or software, or even skill sets. They are often based in wisdom, perspective, and what one hears when they listen to their heart. These are things that cannot be destroyed by fire, flood, drought, or famine. They are what we carry with us, even in the absence of the things we own.

I recently spent a small amount of time dealing with a viewpoint-related situation of my own, as a result of a review rendered in these very pages. It wasn't so much because the assessment of my contributions in particular was a fairly negative one (everyone is entitled to their opinion) or even the somewhat aggressive tone of the piece, but that it struck to the heart of a challenge common to anyone who makes records for a living: the balance of art and commerce.

It is my considered opinion that just about anyone can make a pretty cool record with an unlimited amount of time, knowl-

edge, skill, patience, and, yes, money at their disposal. Talent makes things run at a faster clip, of course, as does focus and a deeply rooted work ethic, but by and large, anybody can do just about anything with unlimited resources and a clear vision of the ultimate goal.

My credo has always been a simple one: my name goes on the back of the album, and the artist's goes on the front. I don't want either of us to regret that fact.

As a producer, it's my job to work very hard to ensure that's how things go. Not just through physical effort, but in how sessions are scheduled, what recording methods are utilized, what songs are selected (more on this later) and myriad other minutiae that influence a project's path from start to finish.

I generally start out with a timeline based upon five-day work weeks with six-hour sessions. Yes, I know that many of you prefer longer sessions spread out over fewer days, and that is certainly your prerogative. However, my experience is that shorter days are less fatiguing and therefore more productive. Listening to what was accomplished in a 12-hour session alongside the results of two six-hour sessions may well afford you the same perspective.

The artist and I are then able to define a realistic schedule to work by, given their budgetary, personal and professional goals. Sometimes, this means I have one day to record and mix a five-song EP. Other times, it's a 10-week album project with tons of session players and special guest performers. Most of the time, it's somewhere in-between.

That's the commerce side. The non-artistic, left-brained part of the equation that no music listener really hears or cares to outside of "Wow, this really sounds great."

Then there's the creative, fun right-brained side, the part where all the cool ideas come in. The spontaneous, creative contributions that make all the planning and tweaking and rehearsing worthwhile.

During the course of a recording project, part of a producer's job is also to allow the artist to revel in that part, to let the essence of their expression flower without boundaries, constant correction, or reprimand.

This brings me to a very important point



Sven-Erik Seaholm

I wish to make, in reference to the previously mentioned review, which specifically took me to task over not getting overly involved in the process of writing or performing on all the records I produce: If every song sounds as if I wrote it or performed it, then why even put the artist's name on the front? Sure, there's lots of producers making a hell of a lot more money than I am, who are paid to deliver their patented "sound," but what happens to them when that sound isn't fashionable anymore? I suppose they could retire on their earnings at that point, but I make records because I love to. I charge money because I have to. Even if I did want to get that deeply involved in those aspects, could the average artist really afford that? Could I?

The six hour days I mentioned before are generally the collaborative time that both the artist and I are present for. The endless hours I spend ensuring that the artist and I are both happy with the result is usually uncredited (and mostly, unpaid) overtime. That's where the kudos and the awards live, and that's where one finds the confidence in knowing that the recording is as good as it can possibly be. But even that time is finite in its availability.

Balancing ideals with realities is never easy, and sometimes true perspective comes from observing others overcoming the harshness of those extremes. Please know that even as many of you have lost your possessions, you will always have what you carry in your hearts.

I will keep a song in mine for you.

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an award-winning independent record producer (www.kaspro.com), as well as an accomplished singer and songwriter (www.svensongs.com). He will soon begin private instruction on recording techniques. Please send him an email to learn more: info@kaspro.com

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# Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

## CERTIFIABLE INTEGRITY

Just why the majority of Charles Manson's love songs sound as fresh today as they did nearly 40 years ago, while almost everything Bruce Springsteen has released since the mid-1980s now seems cloying, calculated, and utterly banal might be attributed to the fact that I happen to be a world-class idiot.

And what if I didn't mean what I just wrote? Then I'd be a liar. I still could be an idiot as well. And if I am an idiot, does everything I write become a lie? It might, but only if I mean it when I write it.

What if, in reality, I consider Charles Manson's music just slightly more interesting than hip hop and slightly less interesting than skunk vomit, and Springsteen's *oeuvre* the finest in the modern world? There would still be a slight problem: regrettably, it could be a disservice to a man who (before he made an unfortunate career move) was quite serious about his music, spending long hours crafting songs from his tormented heart — music he fervently wished to someday be able to share with us all. Regardless of the quirky behavioral deficiencies of the composer, can the Manson ballads, taken as a whole, be so easily dismissed?

Of course they can. They suck.

It's fun playing Idiot in a world that contains such a large number of real ones — at least 68% of the planet's population, according to figures I arrived at when inspired by the last two digits of a particularly important year in our nation's history. Only an idiot would consider the figure unreasonable, if he were totally honest, which, of course, would be impossible, since he's an idiot.

The Roman Emperor Claudius shared my fascination with playing Idiot and it literally saved his life and led to the throne. I could live with that, but on second thought I was never too keen on Italy. It's too hot, the people talk funny, and there are all those gangsters.

Of course, we've got enough gangsters of our own right here in San Diego, who all think they're really hot and who've always talked funny. In the past several years they've been perfecting a new method of antagonism that requires an absolute minimum of physical engagement. Let's say you're going one way along a sidewalk, and a handful of local Gs is walking the other way, meaning toward you. In a few moments you'll be passing each other, you sincerely hope. Just play Idiot. eyes unfocused and downcast as if you're dreaming of making mud pies or eating some brand new crayons . . .

Just as you come abreast, one of the bigger members of the group yells, "Boo!" right in your nearest ear with all the intensity he'd been able to collect and imprison until that very moment. And they all laugh loudly, just as they've already done the other 10 or 20 times they've pulled off the same stunt earlier today.

Only this time the laughter is brief, hollow, then stilled. "Muhfug mus' be deaf," the wisest



José Sinatra, two days before losing it

among them concludes. "S'all good, they'se two more comin' round the corner. Man, I love doin' dis [activity]. C'mon!" And, chuckling, they move along, rejoicing in their supreme badness.

Maybe later, if the miracle of contemplation were to enter their lives, one of them might recall that idiot whom their hilarious little game didn't work on . . . certainly wouldn't understand that that same idiot has been onto that vicious little trick since the only time ever worked on him . . . that very first time, nearly three years earlier . . . with all the piercing laughter lasting for blocks, it seemed, and the eventual silence allowing the sound of a heartbeat to be heard as it worked to slow itself back toward normal, if the anger would just let it . . .

That anger and its noteworthy dispensation are important elements of the primary theme of a new book, *The Complete Idiot*, which I'm pretty determined to sit down and actually write some day. More than a mere autobiography, it will include an exhaustive appendix that will reveal all the songs, books, movies, performances, world events that most influenced my character, my ideas, emotions, actions — an authoritative document citing the real reasons for everything that's gone wrong with my life. Rightly and finally, I'll be revealed as a blameless victim to be pitied — yes, and to be held and soothed . . . to be loved. When you read it . . . oh, but that's so long from now . . . we shouldn't waste time . . . please, love me.

Don't be afraid. Just once, just now, right now, do what's right. Just love me. Thank you. That wasn't so difficult, was it?

Practically anyone can be an idiot these days. Just put some Charlie Manson on your iPod and head out to the Boulevard and try out some startling kind of mischief with a few homies you've never met before. They've never played Idiot in their lives; they live it and breathe it, a fact you'll understand almost as quickly as you can say "Boo!"



# RADIO DAZE



by Jim McInnes

## FAME

My wife and I flew to San Francisco on October 6. She passed through the metal detector at Lindbergh unscathed. On my trip through, I set off the beepers. "Oh, my belt!" I thought. I removed my belt, stepped forward, and again set off the machine. A TSA guy ordered me to step forward and into the plexiglass cubicle just past the end of the conveyor belt. As I did so, another TSA dude opened the cubicle's front door and escorted me to the extreme search area with the footprints embedded in the carpet, the metal table and the fiberglass chair. "Don't I know you from somewhere?" asked the TSA guy, waving the magic wand around my body's contour. I replied, "Well, I've been on TV a few dozen times and done some radio." "I know! You're Jim McInnes. . . . In the PM. I grew up listening to you. Been listening to you since I was a little kid! (Beep-beep-beep) What's in your pocket?" I reached into my cargo pants and pulled out a flattened tube of Clearasil. "That's the culprit, man!" exclaimed Mr. Safety. Then, "Yeah I remember Jim and Linda McInnes Digby Welch, The Cruiser. . . ." "Larry Himmel was the Cruiser," I mentioned. "Yeah, I've run him through here a few times, too," he replied. "Well, you're free to go, Jim. Have a great trip!"

My wife heard him exclaim to his co-workers "Hey, that was Jim McInnes I just searched!"

I was embarrassed because I was carrying a tube of Clearasil 40 years after I should have no longer needed one.

## BAND NAMES

And now it's time for another of my stupid band name lists.

I've noticed a trend among new bands to use longer names like And You Will Know Us by the Trail of Dead and *Clap Your Hands Say Yeah!*

In that spirit I submit the following.

1. Do Not Wear Shirt While Ironing It
2. Mmmmm...Bear Whiz
3. The Scaffolding Was Delicious
4. We Don't Really Play Any Good Yeah
5. Real Gas Music from Jupiter!
6. I Have a Wide Stance
7. F\*# You People. You Wouldn't Know Good Music If It Bit You on the Ass
8. We're All Like Real Happy to Be Here and Like Play and Everything
9. Wow. Those People Down There Look Like Ants. They ARE Ants. You Idiot. We Haven't Taken Off Yet!
10. Brenda Took Off Her Bra and Said, "These Are Yours." I Dropped to My Knees

I think that last one has real potential.

Happy Thanksgiving!



# Philosophy, Art, Culture, & Music STAGES

by Peter Bolland

## GIVING BLOOD

Making music is a lot like giving blood. When you give away something absolutely essential to your own survival, unexpected and unintended gifts begin to pour forth. At least that's what I was thinking as the nurse plunged the endless needle into the tender skin of my inner elbow.

*Why do nurses insist on wearing those garish jungle foliage scrubs with tigers, toucans, orchids, and waterfalls screaming out at you in Technicolor? Is that supposed to make us feel better, or is it to hide the blood splatter?*

All the great wisdom traditions of the world teach that it is only through giving that we receive — and not in a quid pro quo, this-for-that exchange. It seems that the very act of giving is its own reward. Mysterious, I know. In "Comes a Time," Neil Young said it best: "...that's how we kept what we gave away." When I first heard that line 30 years ago it meant nothing to me. Just another example of Neil's obscure way with words, I thought. But as the years flew by with their ephemeral victories and lingering losses, I began to understand. Nothing lasts. The only reality is love. And love is an action, not a possession. Love is only what you do. It's not a thing you can hold. At least that's what I thought I heard John Lennon saying.

In India's most beloved sacred text, the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna teaches Arjuna the wisdom of selfless service. He says, "You have the right to work, but you do not have the right to the fruits of work." In other words, it is our sacred duty to do the work that is ours to do. But we do not own or control the outcome. When we give ourselves in selfless service, we are doing the work of the universe, not of our own ego. Like any living thing, we yearn to grow, to move forward, to fully engage with the creative energy of the cosmos that courses through us. But we must never grasp or cling to the results of our work. When we pollute our creations with ego-demands and expectations, we destroy the beauty that has effortlessly emerged from our union with the creative impulse of the universe. Buddha calls this destructive ego-clinging "attachment," and in Buddhism attachment is the root of all suffering. Drawing the line clearly between creative intention and destructive attachment is the day to day work of every wise person.

In the Christian tradition, St. Francis calls it "dying to self." In his famous prayer he says, "...it is by self-forgetting that one finds. It is by forgiving that one is forgiven. It is through the death of selfishness that one awakens to eternal spirit." Living from our fear-based, selfish nature yields few rewards. But when we

live from our higher, sacred nature, we become a conduit for greater creativity. When Jesus said, "It is not I who do these things but the Father who is in me," perhaps he was saying the same thing. When we work from ego, we gain nothing. When we work from our God-consciousness, we tap into something far more rewarding. In a recent talk given by the Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, he put it simply but powerfully. "Compassionate action is the ultimate act of self interest." When you selfishly seek pleasure or happiness, it is short-lived and shallow. When you put the needs of the other first, only then do you enter into a bliss the egoist will never feel. When we seek first the well being of the other, our kindness gives rise to inner joy. That's how we keep what we give away.

Musicians who take the stage with deep, profound humility become channels of immense creative power. They relax back into the wave of energy that's propelling them. They are flush with confidence because they can feel their roots running deep into the ground of Being from which we and all things emerge. We are mesmerized by their artistry because we are witnessing, in a way, the creative power of the universe itself. Great artists move in accord with deep currents beyond the ken of ego. On the other hand, musicians who perform solely for ego gratification barely skim the surface. Their art seems a shallow mimicry of greatness — close, but no tamale. You can feel the difference. Needy, egocentric, please-like-me performers ring false.

It only took nine minutes. My pint bag was full. The nurse unhooked me and I ambled out into the lounge to claim my donut and cup of juice. The words of the nurse kept ringing in my ear, "Thank you for saving three lives." Three lives? With one lousy pint of blood? That seems hard to believe. Then again, few of us ever realize the profound impact of the small gifts we bring to each other. When we open up in a spirit of gratitude and enter into the nameless presence of this moment, we become available to each other in a way previously unimagined. When we release those things that are most precious to us into the safe keeping of the hearts of others, when we allow the currents and streams of sacred energy to flow into and out of us unhindered, then we taste a sweetness in the water that stagnant streams never offer. Giving is the natural condition of the universe. We live forever in an unending flow of bounty and beauty and creative energy. Like giving blood.

*Peter Bolland is a professor of philosophy and humanities at Southwestern College and singer-songwriter-guitarist of the Coyote Problem. You can complain to him about what you read here at peterbolland@cox.net. www.thecoyoteproblem.com is the ethereal home of the Coyote Problem.*

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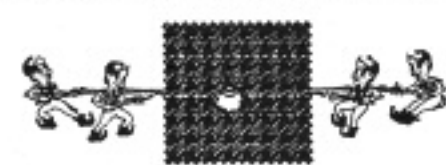
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## Going the Indie Route

by Tim Mudd

On October 2, Will Edwards and I set out for a two week West Coast tour, which would take us from our fine city of San Diego into the Bay Area, through the Pacific Northwest, across the Canadian border, over to Vancouver Island, and back again. It was a similar journey to the tour we did six months ago in the spring, except this time we had better connections, which meant better gigs and more friends to visit (which would hopefully mean more floors/couches to crash on).

This was a valiant attempt at touring, with a real "beat" feel to it; two guys with guitars in a Honda Civic whose engine is rapidly approaching the 200,000 mile mark, loaded with food, sleeping bags, and a tent. Oh, and did I mention the car had no stereo? It took about 1,400 miles for me to buy myself a Rubik's cube.

As with the spring tour, Will pretty much booked everything and for a man who is spread so thin with his various endeavors, it's pretty amazing how much coverage we got through the press, radio, and the strength of the bookings for our performances.

I believe, however, there was a moment of clarity for both Will and me when we got to Seattle and stayed with Ian McFeron, whom I'd met about six months previously at Mueller College while he was on his own West Coast tour.

While we stayed with Ian, he was himself preparing to leave on another tour of his own. The difference was this, though: Ian was taking with him three additional band mates, a merchandise person, a 23-foot travel trailer, and was to be on the road for just over five weeks with 33 consecutive dates. Not too shabby for a band with no industry contacts or outside sponsorship.

One thing was very clear to me – Ian eats, sleeps, and breathes his dream because no one else is going to do it for him. He's hell-bent on reaching out with his music and finding as much success as he can before the labels, management, and booking agencies begin crawling in to take their respective percentages of his blood, sweat, and tears.

I caught up with Ian just a few days ago as he was preparing for a show in Oklahoma City.

So how have the first couple of weeks been?

Going well so far; this first stretch of states is new territory for us. We're trying new things such as different venues, Italian bistros instead of bars. We like to get a sense of the community in each place we go and where our music works best which in turn helps with future promotional efforts. It's been fun

And you guys are still on decent terms off-stage?

Yeah, we actually have a really good group of people and everyone gets along pretty well. We're all positive, which makes being in cramped quarters a little easier. I feel very fortunate with this group of personalities because it seems that if tension arises we're able to address it quickly. You definitely get to know people real fast in situations like these!

Any revelations or new ideas on touring since you've been out there?

As usual, the main thing I've been thinking about is how to do this full time; how we can pull 250 shows per year. The main challenges I've found are lowering my personal overhead off the road and also how to decrease the band's overhead on the road so that we can plow new ground and new markets without going into the red.

The two biggest main costs/issues here are fuel and lodging. I've spent the past three years researching bio-fuels and have already been talking to some pretty cool businesses that share and entuse our existing views. Energy is the biggest issue facing our generation, I mean, we're fighting wars over it! My biggest hope is that through our efforts as a band we can demonstrate to people that there are options and we can have transportation that isn't the most expensive and most polluting available. The main thing for us is finding the right vehicle that we could also use for accommodation, thus solving problem number two. We were hoping to have our own diesel RV by this trip, but unfortunately we couldn't quite afford it so we went with the travel trailer and hopefully we'll save enough to move onward and upward next time out.

It sounds as if you're tackling the entire picture



Ian McFeron

of touring rather than just the musical aspect of it, especially focusing on your environmental responsibility as a touring artist. What are the next logical steps?

To me, this is all about trying to free ourselves up to perform, travel, and connect people around the country with our music. This is a unique business. You can't just set up a storefront in a town, get a buzz going through friends and family, then hopefully find success with it. You have to be able to make it portable; therein lies artistic gratification but most indie bands can't do that at \$3 per gallon. We've got our artistic goals, business goals, and environmental goals. Fossil fuels are the big hurdle we'd really like to free ourselves from. Most people wouldn't want to root around behind some Chinese restaurant for fuel, but as musicians we live an unconventional life anyway so this seems to me the way to go while affording the opportunities which provide these joys an independent artist.

Before Ian and I finished our conversation, he asked me if I'd mention his bands involvement with Bands Without Borders. Each show on his band's current tour will be hosted as an awareness event to aid in the launch of the Bands Without Borders' GIVE BACK Campaign. The goal of Bands Without Borders is to incite music fans to action with non-profit humanitarian groups, encouraging them to volunteer, to get involved, and to travel. At the show, the GIVE BACK Campaign will be collecting donated school backpacks and supplies to go to children in Honduras via Water 1st.

You will have your opportunity to connect with Ian McFeron, his band, their music and ideals at Lestat's on November 8 at 8:30pm. Some locally transplanted English singer-songwriter will also be performing at this unique event :-)

## Iron and Wine bring The Shepherd's Dog to San Diego

by Tim Mudd and Jonathan Poneman

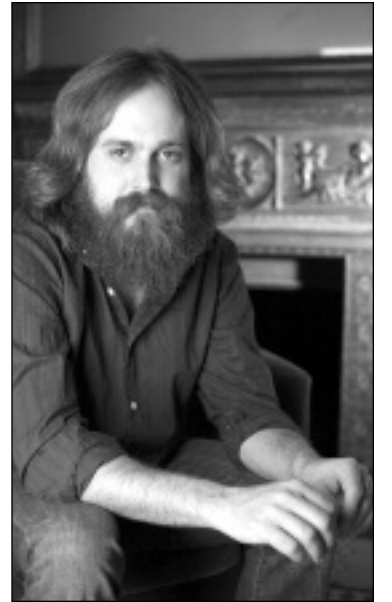
Although it's been over three years since *Our Endless Numbered Days*, Sam Beam's last full-length record under his Iron and Wine pseudonym, this eclectic acoustic songwriter and native Floridian has been anything but quiet.

In 2005 Beam released the stellar six-song EP *Woman King* as well as his contribution to the collaborative *In the Reins* EP in 2006, containing seven songs that showcased songwriting and performances by Iron and Wine and Calexico together. What distinguished *Woman King* from its predecessors was the deepening integration of spiraling, dense opuses ("Gray Stables," "Evening on the Ground (Lilith's Song)") with intimate confessionals ("Jezebel," "My Lady's House"). On Beam's third full-length release, *The Shepherd's Dog*, this integration is complete. Compositionally, it is Iron and Wine's most ambitious and accomplished recording to date, while possibly being the most satisfying.

Many of us learned of Iron and Wine by way of Sam Beam's tender and spare rendering of the Postal Service's "Such Great Heights" on the soundtrack of the movie *Garden State*. Those who dug deeper, however, discovered a classic American tunesmith with a precocious musical signature. Songs like "Lion's Mane," "Jesus, the Mexican Boy" and "Naked as We Came" are remarkable demonstrations of craft; musically memorable, lyrically evocative, and casually atmospheric.

In conversations with Sam while mixing *The Shepherd's Dog*, he confessed to finding spiritual inspiration in Tom Waits' piece de résistance, *Swordfishtrombones*, an album in which Waits openly upended his previous strategies and forged a new musical language for himself. While sounding nothing like Waits' 1983 release, *The Shepherd's Dog* succeeds in accomplishing a similar cathartic recasting of the artist's intentions. The arrangements are kaleidoscopic and rich. "White Tooth Man" rocks with a desperate, menacing intensity while "Boy with a Coin," the album's first single, is darkly playful with a handclap hook tumbling under its cascading melody.

The whole album breathes. Its seductive rhythms percolate and undulate, from the Psych-Bhangra-redux of "Pagan Angel and a Borrowed Car" to the album's last dance – a



Sam Beam of Iron and Wine

waltz – "Flightless Bird, American Mouth." And there's nary a trapkit on the whole album! "Resurrection Fern," a staple of Iron and Wine's live performances, is given a somber, elegant treatment here while "Wolves (Song of the Shepherd's Dog)" and "Carousel" summon, in their respective ways, a vivid otherworldliness. Taken as a whole, *The Shepherd's Dog* is informed by a sensuality that brings a dreamscape to life.

It has been written that Sam Beam's live performances with Iron and Wine evoke "the real heart and soul of American roots and folk music. Southern, gothic murder ballads, delta blues boogies, and countrified waltzes and weepers are no pilfered and purloined pieces but heartfelt transcriptions of the whisper, buzz, and howl of the human comedy, divine or damaged." Strong praise for the fragility you may initially count as a first impression to this music; however the beauty herein is the depth to which your persisted exploration of Iron and Wine takes you. So, for the unfamiliar, wander off and introduce yourself to Iron and Wine (I'd recommend any one of *Our Endless Numbered Days*, *Woman King*, and *The Shepherd's Dog* as a good start) then treat yourself to a rare San Diego performance by Beam and his cohorts on Tuesday, November 27 at 4th & B, 325 B Street in downtown San Diego. Doors open at 8pm.

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## The Flimz

by Phil Harmonic

Every once in a while an album comes along that has a different sound than anything you've heard before. A few that come to mind are Simon & Garfunkel's *Sounds of Silence* and Cat Stevens' *Tea for the Tillamans*, which are rich with harmonies and songs that are so different, you can't get them out of your head and you play them over and over. There is nothing better as a musician and music lover than having that experience.

When I first heard the Flimz, a delightful duo consisting of Annie Dru and Amy Mayer, I had that same feeling — unique songs with wonderfully lush harmonies that you want to hear again and again. The sound of their voices together is the first thing that grabs you — charming, melodic, and sweet — then you start listening to the lyrics, which take you inside even more. This is what listening to music is all about. The major contributor is Annie Dru, who produced, wrote or co-wrote, and performed these incredible songs along with a stellar cast of musicians and vocal partner Amy Mayer.

Assisted by arranger Steve Forman and engineer Cady Truckee, along with Brian "Nucci" Cantrell on drums, Boston Barnett on bass, Joe Rollinson on cello, Beverly Heising on viola, Gerald Nolan on clarinet and sax, Steve Forman on percussion, Lisa Sanders on guitar and vocals (track 3 only), Chris Hoffee on pump organ, and Billy Watson on megaphone, the Flimz will transport you through the emotional spectrum of laughter, tears, happiness, and feeling melancholy.

Ten songs in a perfect order begin with "After the Ball," the only song Dru didn't write. Written by Charles Harris, it is a short, beautiful intro that sets you up for what's ahead. "Big Kids" is a ditty about adults who remain kids all their lives, only with bigger toys. "In My Mind," co-written by Lisa Sanders and Amy Mayer, showcases the lilting, uplifting, and charming qualities of Mayer's soprano voice which is a perfect complement to Dru's clear alto. "Everybody Wonders" is a great example of Dru's writing skills in its astute insight into a deep-feeling female mind. "The Bottom" laments the fact that "I'm gonna miss the chance to do the dance I always do," which makes a powerful statement about missed chances. "Blow her Away" is a lovely waltz that was co-written with Steve Peavey. "Whoopie Pie" is a delightful romp that reminded me of a few songs from the late fifties, namely the Chordettes' song "Lollipop" and the Bobettes' "Mr. Lee," which were played on the radio all the time.

"My absolute favorite has to be "Final Note," one of the most moving, gut-wrenching songs I've ever heard. It's so sweet, yet it breaks my heart. My only complaint is at the very end of the song, when I'd rather be left alone in my puddle of tears to reflect on what I've just heard.

I really can't say enough about how effective and touching these songs are, especially about how the two voices reach inside and take your heart for a delicious, emotional ride on the roller coaster of life.

*The Flimz' CD release will be held at Lestat's, 3343 Adams Avenue, on Saturday, November 17, 8pm. Lisa Sanders and Sara Petite will open.*



## Beldock & Watson Just Like You & Me

by Mike Alvarez

David Beldock and Peggy Watson have recorded a charming CD of acoustic tunes that run the gamut from jazz and blues to folk. They have chosen a simple, straightforward approach to production and arrangement that really showcases their songwriting. Instrumentation is sparse, sometimes just voices and acoustic guitar as on the opening song "Feel the Wind." At other times they spice up the proceedings with light percussion and acoustic bass, courtesy of Jeff Berkley and Pete Harrison, respectively. A good demonstration of this is the Watson-penned and sung "Running Away." The additional players serve to create a more energetic sound, but they leave plenty of space for the song to breathe. "Running Away" can still be played by an acoustic duo without losing any of its essence.

Beldock is a multi-instrumentalist, playing guitars, banjo, electric bass, and keyboards. Watson plays guitar in addition to singing. Both of them have pleasing voices that sound good individually as well as when blended in harmonies. They take a roughly equal share of lead vocal duties, which doesn't necessarily correspond to the person getting the songwriting credit. "Jesus on the Radio" is a gentle ballad by Beldock, but it is Watson's sweet voice that sings the melody while his warm baritone takes a supporting role. The jazzy "Second Chance" is his opportunity to shine as he croons a plea for forgiveness over a rhythmic track of strummed guitar chords and tasteful keyboard soloing.

They show a real feel for acoustic blues on "Leave Her Baby Behind" and "Downtown by the River," breathing freshness into a tried and true genre. The album takes a humorous turn with the whimsical upbeat "Clone," which superbly poses a sci-fi theme over an old-time feel. Sure, it's played strictly for laughs, but it's also a neat song. Then things turn a little wistful with "Tom's Song," a colorful tune that is a Rockwell-like reminiscence of days gone by sparked by an old friend's postcard. The album ends with "Everything You Do," a return to the blues written and sung by Watson. It's got a great last-call, smoky mood that makes for a perfect closer.

The overall feel is relaxed and casual, which belies the obvious craftsmanship that went into the compositions and arrangements. Their lyrics depict a wide spectrum of human experiences that just about anybody can relate to. Instrumental performances are tasteful and flawlessly executed, never getting in the way of the songs. There is a truly natural sound to this recording. You can tell it was made in a great room! The songs themselves are comprised of well-chosen chords with vocal melodies that sit perfectly on top of them. One gets the sense that this music was created by seasoned artists who have perfected the craft of saying a lot without talking too much.

*Beldock and Watson's CD will be released on Saturday, November 17, 8pm, at the Swedenborgian Church, 4144 Campus Avenue in the University Heights area.*



## Brooklyn Blue Skies Await

by Scott Zensen

The long-awaited CD from Brooklyn, titled *Blue Skies Await*, is an appropriate title for a very talented young lady who has an innocence to her songwriting and her singing that I like very much. I once said that, "Brooklyn's voice quavers softly, then ignites with a quiet fire, roaring with soulful power." That quote still holds true as you listen to the new CD.

Produced by Sven-Erik Seaholm at Kitsch & Sync Production, my first take was that I didn't like it as much I do when I hear her in a live performance. However, after I listened to it several times, I changed my mind and realized that I love all the songs, which sound pretty much like they do when she does them in person. All except one song. The second track, "Believe," is a complete departure from the concept and sound of the original arrangement, which is one of my favorite songs. After listening to the CD over and over, I realized that this song was influencing me about how I felt about the rest of the album, which is excellent. Once I figured that out, I listened to the CD a different way. Each song has the innocence and power of good songwriting and a beautiful delivery from Brooklyn's very beautiful voice, which I've come to appreciate from following her around from venue to venue. I also realized that the song "Believe" really was very good on its own, as long as I accepted the new arrangement. Most of Brooklyn's songs are about love and relationships and their tribulations. The songs are sometimes sad, but not depressing in any way. They are really great to listen to when you are in a melancholy mood but not melancholy. "Believe" is a similar type of song but on the CD the attempt seems to be to put a faster spin on it. My other favorites on this disc are "Clipped Wing," "Carnival Ride," and "Change My Mind," which, in my opinion, is the best song she has written to date. There are two versions of this song on the CD. One is a new, soulful arrangement, but it's basically the same song; the other is the original acoustic version of the song. The acoustic version is my favorite because in my mind Brooklyn is an acoustic artist.

Accompanying Brooklyn on the CD is the amazing Alicia Ruggerio on violin and Robert Garbowski on various tracks as well as Charlie Loach on electric guitar, Sven-Erik Seaholm doing some percussion techniques, and David Ybarra on bass. The CD cover photo by Tim Flack captures the innocence I spoke of earlier in the review. Brooklyn's CD is fresh and promises more from an excellent singer/songwriter.



## Cindy Lee Berryhill Beloved Stranger

by Mike Alvarez

*Beloved Stranger* is an album that heralds Cindy Lee Berryhill's re-invention as an "anti-country" artist. While there is a heavy country influence throughout, long-time fans will find many familiar touches that harken to her previous work. She thoughtfully starts the CD with "Unexpected Packages," a catchy tune that showcases her classic Brian Wilson-influenced "garage orchestra" arrangements. It seamlessly merges a twangy country verse with a gorgeously lush pop chorus. The multi-layered vocals at the coda are reminiscent of the Beach Boys at their best. It's a very clever way to ease the listener into her new sound.

But hang on! Immediately after that, she and her band show us exactly what "anti-country" means. "When Did Jesus Become a Republican?" is a rocking country song with a straight-shootin' arrangement. It sounds as if they just stuck a microphone in a room full of people jamming, and it's very effective. Berryhill takes on the role of a social critic with an acid wit, staking out her positions on numerous issues with a vengeance. It doesn't let up on the next track, "Forty Cent Raise," a duet with X's John Doe, which bears witness to the plight of everyday working people trying to make ends meet. Let's face it, these songs have little in common with Lee Greenwood's feel-good country anthem.

Her exploration of country music takes her in a number of directions, from the bittersweet but upbeat "Cry Me a Jordan," the cajun blues of "Feel Like I Owe Somebody Something," the spirited hoe-down of "Bars, Booze and Boys Clubs" and the earnestly Neil Young-influenced album closer "Plenty Enough." Most affecting is the title track, a ballad that springs from a source close to Berryhill's heart. Listen closely to the lyrics of "Beloved Stranger." While she always injects a lot of herself into the words she writes, these are particularly autobiographical.

There are also a number of tracks that step outside the anti-country box. "Make Way for the Handicapped" is a fun acoustic surf song with its own biting message. The verse of "Where Are They Now?" is nothing less than a sassy urban rap set to an irresistible guitar, bass, and drum rhythm. When it gets to the chorus, the song blossoms into a really cool pop melody with classic harmonies. "Hugs and Kisses" might find a home on country radio, but when I first heard it, an image of a jukebox in an early '60s diner immediately sprang to mind. While listening to this CD, I initially wondered if such an eclectic mix might be somewhat disorienting to a new listener. After all, it's not purely country but neither is it purely pop. But like any work of substance, it might take a number of spins to fully grasp the intent behind it.

Berryhill's singing is as expressive as ever, convincingly "going country" when called for, and sometimes even daring to be a little goofy. She is joined by long-time collaborator, drummer Randy Hoffman as well as a host of musical stalwarts like Marcia Claire and Mary Fleener. The relaxed feel to much of the record shows that the right vibe was more important than technical perfection. Having opted for this musical direction, she and her co-producers, the Truckee Brothers, demonstrate much comfort and fluency in the genre, successfully merging Berryhill's unique sound and idiosyncratic pop sensibilities with country music, resulting in *Beloved Stranger*, the world's first anti-country recording.



## Holiday & the Adventure Pop Collective Songs for Feeling Strong

by Mike Alvarez

Comparing an artist's work to another's is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it's a great compliment, and the comparison gives potential listeners a point of reference. On the flip side is every artist's desire to be appreciated for originality and uniqueness. So that's the dilemma I have when reviewing this CD: its overall feeling is that I'm taking a trip down memory lane, yet none of the original songs are directly reminiscent of anything in particular. Case in point for some reason I kept flashing back to the old Kenny Loggins radio staple "Danny's Song" (you know, it's the one that goes "Even though we ain't got money, I'm so in love with you honey..."), even though nothing on this album really resembles it. There is just this intangible thing called "vibe" that calls up the memory.

Let me say this and have done with it: lead vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Deric Oliver sounds uncannily like the late Harry Nilsson, and many of the songs are very much in Nilsson's whimsical and melodic style. If you're a Nilsson fan, I can just about guarantee that you will like this album very much. It took a while for this impression to sink in, but when it did I slapped myself on the forehead hard enough to leave a red mark.

Luckily that's not the end-all and be-all of *Songs for Feeling Strong*. There's a classic prog number with a Jethro Tull feel called "Athena and The Dogs", a whimsical old-timey version of "Tim Changes Everything," which calls to mind groups like the Small Faces and the Kinks. "Bastards" with its martial beat and social conscience, is a classic protest song. Since the basic tracks of this album were recorded live at Al Jardine's Red Barn studio in Big Sur, it's only fitting that they included a charming cover of the Beach Boys' classic "Surfer Girl," except this version sounds like it was recorded by the Traveling Wilburys. Here, Oliver does a pretty credible job of channeling the late Roy Orbison. Whether or not this was his intention, it's pretty spine-tling.

The instrumental choices are interesting. Tuba, trumpet, and violin join the usual guitars, drums, and keyboards. Oliver handles the guitars, wind instruments, and keyboards with a confident hand. Louis Caverly is an agile and tasteful violinist who also helps with vocals and keys. Drummer Michael Taylor Hahn propels things along nicely with his steady and articulate beats. The one thing I noticed almost immediately is that there's no bass! At first this was disconcerting, but it creates a unique space in their overall sound. The songwriting and arrangements are robust enough to compensate for its absence. It didn't take long at all to get used to it. This may even turn out to be their sonic signature.

For all of the comparisons I've made, I must emphasize that this CD is not merely a sentimental sojourn to a bygone era. That it evokes so much from the past means that they've taken the best from their influences and updated them for a modern audience of discriminating listeners. Their original songs are truly original and they have crafted a sound that is recognizably theirs. Holiday and the Adventure Pop Collective brought me back to a time when radio didn't suck.





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