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ROUBADOOR

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



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

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

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The San Diego Troubadour is dedicated to the memory of Ellen and Lyle Duplessie, whose vision inspired the creation of this newspaper.

"O Berkley, Where Hart Thou?" Rounds Up the Talent a Third Time

by Dwight Worden

It began with the Coen brothers movie *O' Brother Where Art Thou?*, starring George Clooney (backed by the voice of Dan Tyminski of Alison Krauss and Union Station). The film showcased wonderful roots musicians and their music bringing this great American art form out of the shadows and introducing it to a mainstream audience, which, it turns out, loved the film and the music. The hugely popular movie was followed by the equally successful *Down From the Mountain* Tour, which brought many of the film's musicians live to cities around the U.S., including a stop in San Diego for a show at the Coors Amphitheater. Prominent local musicians Jeff Berkley and Calman Hart of Berkley Hart fame followed with their own version of a folksy roots show presented in North County, which showcased some of San Diego's top roots talent, and cleverly titled it *O' Berkley Where Hart Thou?*

O' Berkley Where Hart Thou? was so successful its first year that it had a repeat last year and is now back for its third incarnation on February 9 at the Seaside Church in Encinitas. Last year's show was a sell out and the audience loved it. Pre-show unamplified entertainment was provided by Shawn Rohlf and his 7th Day Buskers as snacks were served in the entry hall, contributing to the ambiance and anticipation that one was attending an old style musical community gathering. The show itself featured, of course, Jeff Berkley and Calman Hart, supported by a spectacular group of musicians that included Gregory Page, Lisa Sanders, Tim Flannery, the 7th Day Buskers, Eve Selis, and more. The show was nominated for a San Diego Music Award in the Best Americana category as were the 7th Day Buskers who appear in the show.

This year Berkley and Hart plan another outstanding show. You can expect to experience the same great community spirit that prevailed at the first two shows, and you will see and hear some of the best that San Diego has to offer including Gregory Page, the 7th Day Buskers, Lisa Sanders and, we are promised, some new faces as well.

Look for a fast paced show featuring a variety of artists performing hits from the movie *O' Brother Where Art Thou?* such as "I Am a Man of Constant Sorrow" and the Ralph Stanley classic "O Death," along with other similar fare and original material as well.

For tickets and info visit the Berkley Hart web site at www.berkleyhart.com. Tickets are \$20 and the show starts at 8 pm. You can also listen to portions of the CD release of last year's show through a link on the Berkley Hart web site to get yourself in the mood.



Jeff Berkley & Calman Hart

THE EARL BROTHERS REVIVE OLD TIMEY TRADITION THEIR OWN WAY

by Larry Rose

Musicologist and local roots music legend Lou Curtiss seems to find the best of the new bands that carry on the old time string band tradition before anyone else. He brought the Earl Brothers to the Adams Avenue Roots Festival a few years ago and they were an instant hit with traditional music lovers. Traditional, yes, but there was so much more to this group to the point that they can't be easily categorized. They are not bluegrass but they play banjo, mandolin, guitar, and dog house bass. They are not a traditional mountain music string band as they do nothing but original material. So what are they?

The only thing this reviewer has heard that was similar to their sound was the tight harmonies of the Stanley Brothers before 1966. When Carter Stanley passed away that year, Ralph soldiered on but his sound was never the same again. It took 40 years for me to hear the kind of old time harmony singing that was at all similar to that high-harmony mountain sound that ended with the loss of Carter Stanley. The Earl Brothers have that old time magic but there is something more that is unique to them.

To me, it seems difficult to get something new and fresh from traditional bluegrass instruments. The Earls have managed to do that and those in the music business have had trouble finding the right pigeon hole for this band. The banjo is the signature instrument of bluegrass music but this band has managed to get around that. These four guys wear all black outfits when they play, and the title of their first CD *Whisky, Women and Death* hints at what they might be about. Some have called their sound "Gothic Honky-Grass." They have an instrumental sound that is more like mountain music was before the invention of electric instruments. Even that does not describe



The Earl Brothers at a Clarke House Concert last year

this band adequately. The roots to the dim past are there but the rest is totally original.

The driving force behind this outfit is Bobby Earl Davis, the banjo player. The writer of many of the songs, his bouncing banjo style is similar to the late Don Reno but, again, different. Mandolin picker Larry Hughes built the classic F-5 style instrument he plays and has a sort of "punch and flutter" playing style. James Touzel and Danny Morris round out the band on guitar and bass. Everyone helps out with the harmony singing. Their second CD, *Troubles to Blame*, proved that the first edition of their sound was no fluke. Although not really brothers, that does not matter. Their music harps on drinking and cheating in the honky tonk tradition, yet they can take an old time tune like "Cluck Old Hen" and give it new words to make it into something nobody has ever heard before. I love this band!

The Earl Brothers will play a San Diego Folk Heritage concert on Saturday, February 23, at the San Dieguito United Methodist Church, 170 Calle Magdalena in Encinitas. Check them out at www.earlbrothers.com and go to www.sdfolkheritage.org for directions and details. Local hillbilly band Tanya Rose and the Buffalo Chip Kickers will perform a short opening set.

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A Conversation with JIMMY WEBB

by Steve Thorn

A contemporary of Acoustic Music San Diego's most prestigious entertainers—Woodstock icon Richie Havens and veteran session ace Al Kooper—will be adding his name this month to the list of the greats to have performed at the Normal Heights venue. The buzz has been growing since the announcement was made last fall that Jimmy Webb would be making a rare San Diego appearance.

One of the most successful American songwriters of the twentieth century, Webb is the 61-year-old native of Elk City, Oklahoma, who composed "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," "Wichita Lineman," and "MacArthur Park." In reality, there have been two Jimmy Webbs in the public persona since the '60s: the songwriter whose consistent body of work resulted in gold records for the Fifth Dimension ("Up, Up, and Away"), Glen Campbell ("By the Time I Get to Phoenix"), and Art Garfunkel ("All I Know"); and the enigmatic artist whose solo albums (1977's *El Mirage*, produced by Sir George Martin, is a particularly compelling disc) have been critically praised for their depth and sophistication.

Even in his best known work, Webb has been able to balance on the difficult tightrope between the literal and the abstract. In "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," one of the best "breakup" songs from the '60s, the song's narrator surprises the listener at the conclusion: there is no reunion, no happy ending. "And she'll cry just to think I'd really leave her/Tho' time and time I try to tell her so/ She just didn't know I would really go."

In contrast to the realism of "Phoenix," there is the image of a cake left out in the rain in Webb's "MacArthur Park." Along with the mystery of vandals taking the handles in Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues" and the disturbing thought of kids kicking Edgar Allan Poe in John Lennon's "I Am the Walrus," will we ever find the recipe for the cake again?

No less a musical authority than Jools Holland posed the question when Webb performed on Holland's British TV show:

Jools: What's the song about, really?

Jimmy Webb: (Laughs) SEARCH ME!

And that apparently ended the speculation. Currently in Martha's Vineyard working on a recording project with Carly Simon, Webb took time out to discuss a number of topics with the *San Diego Troubadour*, including his current one-man concert tour in support of his latest album, *Live and at Large: Jimmy Webb in the UK*.

San Diego Troubadour: You performed last November in the Oklahoma Centennial. How did it feel to go home?

Jimmy Webb: It was a tremendous experience. It involved writing a song, a bit of a pep rally anthem for the state called "Oklahoma Rising." I co-wrote it with Vince Gill. I think it turned out to be a pretty darned good song...very rhythmic, very up tempo. There are a lot of good people out there. I told my father, "You're 83 years old, only 17 years younger [laughs] than a state!"

SDT: You originally left the Midwest when you moved to Southern California with your family when you were in your teens. Please describe the L.A. music scene of the '60s.

JW: I arrived during the summer of 1963. It was warm but not boiling hot. There were lots of flowers and everything was still quite green. I remember the great scent of night-blooming jasmine floating over the neighborhoods of San Bernardino and Colton. The music of the Beach Boys was emanating from every house on the block. Songs like "In my Room" and "Surfer Girl" represented the prototypical sound of that summer. I took to Southern California like a fish to water. It was a combination of good luck and the blessings of the good lord that I was able to experience the California dream. People talk about the Southern California myth. To me, it wasn't a myth but an eminent reality.

I was a pretty typical kid. I fell in love with the prettiest girl in school and got beat up [laughs] for doing so! I took Susan Horton to Grad Night my senior year. She later married into the Ronstadt clan. After high school, I attended San Bernardino Valley College but I wasn't much of a student. Russell C. Baldwin

[the head of the music program] brought me into his office and said, "Mr. Webb, I'm giving you an A-plus for your composition and a F for your semester grade. Mr. Webb, we don't want to have you at the college and you don't want to be at the college. If you want to become a songwriter, why don't you get the hell out of here and become one!" So I realized it was put up or shut up time.

SDT: One of your earliest songwriting assignments was with Motown.

JW: I was working for Jobete Music at Motown's West Coast office. I wasn't back in Detroit. The Supremes recorded one of my songs, "My Christmas Tree." It appeared on their Christmas album. I was very lucky. Glen Campbell once gave me some advice; he said, "Luck is when preparation meets opportunity." I enjoyed my time at Motown and had the opportunity to meet people like Brenda Holloway and Billy Eckstine. I heard "My Girl" [by the Temptations] on a reel-to-reel tape before it came out as a single.

SDT: Johnny Rivers was the artist-in-residence at the Whisky a Go Go nightclub on the Sunset Strip. He turned out to be an important contact for you.

JW: Johnny was starting up a burgeoning record label called Soul City. He had an intense closed-door meeting with an employer I was working for at the time. An hour later, he walked out of the office, looked at me, and said, "You are going to be working with me." One of the groups [Johnny] signed was called the Versatiles. They later became the 5th Dimension. They recorded "Up, Up, and Away." After that, things started taking off for me in a big way.

SDT: John Lennon had Paul McCartney to bounce ideas back and forth. Burt Bacharach wrote the music and Hal David provided the lyrics. What are the challenges in your case, as a songwriter who is responsible for words and music?

JW: I'm not working alone. There is inspiration, the role of inspiration taking part in the songwriting process. Richard Rogers didn't believe in it but Oscar Hammerstein did. I



Jimmy Webb

believe that most successful songwriters will admit to a higher power taking a part in the creative process, inspiration, or this higher power having a role to play in songwriting.

My mother was the power behind me. You know the old saying, "Behind every successful man...?" Well, that was my mother. When I was a kid, she had a strict rule: I was to practice the piano 30 minutes a day, and there were severe repercussions when I didn't practice. No baseball, nothing! I fulfilled her earthly dream when I became good enough to play at my father's Baptist Church service. She was radiating this wonderful glow when I would play. Unfortunately, she died [shortly after the family moved to California]. So, she never saw any of this.... there have been many, many times I've thought about her. In 1968, I took home three Grammys—for "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," "Wichita Lineman," and "MacArthur Park." I was in the spotlight, all the flash bulbs going off. And I remember thinking about my mother. What would she have thought about it? Would she have been proud?

SDT: Frank Sinatra's best TV special was "Sinatra: A Man and his Music." Is your current tour and live album similar in concept? Is this a look back at more than 40 years of your contributions to popular music?

JW: My life has been blessed by meetings with some of the most interesting characters. I

remember I was in the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas having a conversation in a dimly lit room with this black guy. After talking with him for three minutes, I realized he was Louis Armstrong! Going out on the road and performing has given me the chance to reflect on 40 years. In between songs, I've been sharing stories about people I've met, stories that I believe have become more interesting over time. There are some I've never shared before. I talk about Frank Sinatra—Mister Sinatra—who I knew fairly well. And I also get to talk about my friendship with Harry Nilsson.

SDT: Over the last 40 years, your music was released on vinyl, eight-track tapes, cassettes, and CDs. What do you think of the iPod age and music downloading?

JW: I miss the brick-and-mortar record stores. I remember telling my kids ten years ago that Tower Records wouldn't be around in another ten years...and now they're gone. I blame the record companies for a lot of the problems with illegal downloading. They had the opportunity to address the problems years ago but they chose not to. I can't imagine there are people out there depriving artists the right to make a living. Will this be the first generation of creative artists to not be able to make a living?

A limited number of tickets remain for the February 9th concert featuring Jimmy Webb. Visit www.acousticmusicsandiego.com.

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Recordially, Lou Curtiss

MY BLUE PERIOD

I guess it all started with Sam Chatmon. It was in 1966 and I'd seen quite a bit of blues — Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Mississippi John Hurt, Son House, Skip James, Gary Davis, Bukka White, and even obscure artists like Willie Thomas and Butch Cage, but that was always



Sam Chatmon

as an audience member. I went to concerts and festivals and even worked on a few but never got to know anyone really well. It was different with Sam. Record collector Ken Swerilas had been in Mississippi looking for Bo Carter (Sam's brother) a few years prior and ran into Sam at his home in Hollendale, Mississippi. He invited Sam out to San Diego and when Sam took him up on it, Ken got ahold of me about finding Sam some places to play. I recommended the Heritage Coffeehouse in Mission Beach and that's where Sam played when he came here for the first time in 1967. Sam returned to San Diego every year after that to play a little but it wasn't until he played the San Diego Folk Festival (I think it was the third festival in 1969) that I got to know Sam well and became the closest thing he had to a manager here on the West Coast. For the next 10 years or so Sam would spend six months of every year here, becoming our own resident Mississippi Bluesman and a living connection to the Golden Age of the Blues in the 1920s and 1930s. He was an original member of the Mississippi Sheiks band with his brothers Lonnie, Bo, Edgar, Harry, family friend Walter Vincent, and others. His half brother, Charlie Patton, called "Father of the Delta Blues," was a cousin of Charlie and Joe McCoy.

As the lyric writer of the family Sam was responsible for the lyrics to blues standards like "Sittin' on Top of the World," "Stop and

Listen," "Corrine Corrina," and so many others. I learned so much about Mississippi blues from Sam and a lot about living and survival in the rural South. I thought this is as close as I'm going to get.

One day Thomas E. Shaw walked into my store (Folk Arts Rare Records) looking for guitar strings. I'm a record shop and didn't have any. But I do have an inquiring mind, so I asked him what kind of music he played. It turned out that Shaw



Thomas E. Shaw

was from Brennen, Texas, out in the country near Austin and had originally learned his brand of Texas country blues from Blind Lemon Jefferson (the king of Texas blues in the 1920s). He also played music with a who's who of old time Texas blues artists including Willard "Ramblin'" Thomas, J.T. "Funny Paper" Smith, Texas Alexander, and others. As Sam was to Southern Mississippi blues, Shaw was to East Texas blues. And he had been living right here in San Diego since 1934. He ran a series of blues clubs in the late 1930s and 1940s, which he called "after hours joints," where top West Coast blues artists often played (Little Willie Littlefield, Joe and Jimmy Liggins, Pee Wee Crayton, Smokey Hogg, and others).

Off and on Shaw would get a touch of religion in his life. His daddy was a preacher who wrote songs and performed with the great Texas street singer Blind Willie Johnson who passed that legacy on to his son. By the time I met Shaw, I already had two or three festivals under my belt and it was sure a major coup to get Thomas E. Shaw, who *Blues Unlimited* magazine had called the greatest country blues discoverer since Mance Lipscomb and Fred MacDowell. And he was right here in San Diego! Shaw, who was willing to draw out the

old and early stuff and talk about his childhood in Texas, was the hit of the fourth festival and started a career again that included several fine recordings and a European tour. But that wasn't the end of it.

Shaw was involved with a group of people who played in the older blues style. When Shaw played his second year at the festival, he brought a friend to play with him. Robert Jefferey was a blues piano man (although he played a pretty mean guitar too) from Oklahoma, who had moved out to San Diego to work as a mechanic for the Marine Corp in the 1940s. He soon became pals with Shaw and played regularly at house parties and blues jam sessions. Bob was the first cousin of blues great T. Bone Walker although his blues style was a lot earlier than T. Bone's.

Using the contacts I had made in publicizing Sam and Shaw I was able to get the Smithsonian Folk Life Festival in Washington D.C., who were doing a centennial celebration in 1976, to invite Bob to represent San Diego and the state of California at their 13-week festival.

A year after Bob played at our Folk Festival, he put me in touch with Bonnie Jefferson. Bonnie was from Arkansas country or, as she put it, "out in the sticks between Little Rock and Fort Smith." She was perhaps the most rural of the country blues artists I had run into, doing old songs like "Take Me Back" and "Real Black Mare." She was also shy and fearful that her welfare money would be cut off if, since it was thought she was making lots of money singing the blues. Often, when I'd get a date for her to play, she'd insist on working under a different name (many times we called her Lu Lewis). We did get her a National Endowment for the Arts grant to buy her a new guitar, but she never did much with it. Bonnie appeared at several festivals as well as concerts at my store and made a handful of recordings (most of them never issued).

Quite a few people were involved in recording these artists. Chris Strachwitz had recorded Sam long before Ken Swerilas found him. One of the first things I did when Sam came out here was to contact Nick Perls at Yazoo/BlueGoose about recording Sam. An LP on Blue Goose was cut in Ken Swerilas's living room by John Fahey and myself. With Shaw I

contacted Frank Scott to record Shaw playing electric guitar and Nick Perls to record him on acoustic. These LPs appeared on Scott's Advent Records and Perls' Blue Goose. I didn't have as much luck with Bob and Bonnie though. Nick recorded both of them but never released anything. (I wonder now since Perls' death whether his enterprises have been taken over by Richard Nevens and if any of those tapes exist.) He also recorded a second Sam Chatmon album with mandolinist Kenny Hall, which never came out. Frank Scott put out an LP called *San Diego Blues Jam* that featured Sam Chatmon, Robert Jefferey, Bonnie Jefferson, and Thomas Shaw. It also featured the first recordings of Tomcat Courtney and his then partner Henry Ford Thompson, and West Indian singer guitarist Louis Majors. Shaw also recorded an LP in Holland during his European trip; Sam Chatmon has LPs on Flying Fish, Rounder, Flyright (which includes some live stuff recorded at my store), an Italian label, and a German label that pressed material recorded at his home in Hollendale. Both were LPs.

Sam, Shaw, Bob, and Bonnie got me really involved with the blues and organizing people who play it. In the years since I've come to be close friends with Tomcat, whom I have worked with, and booked several other local and national blues acts, but I didn't become as involved with the personalities of these four remarkable people except for Bonnie (who doesn't play music anymore). They are all gone. I only wish I knew then what I've come to know now. There are so many questions I didn't ask them (particularly Sam and Shaw). Right now I'm in the process of going through a lot of old tapes of the festivals and concerts I recorded, preparing them for delivery to the Library of Congress and the UCLA Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology. I'm hearing again and in some cases for the first time these voices singing and playing and talking about musical days and people I only wish I'd been there to see. We were fortunate to have such a vital slice of early Afro-American musical life right here with us in San Diego and I was honored and fortunate to be there right in the middle of things.

Recordially,
Lou Curtiss



Lou Curtiss

THE MEADOWLARK OF THE BORDER



We first brought Lydia Mendoza out to the ninth San Diego Folk Festival in 1975 and she played in San Diego only one time after that (also at one of our festivals). The first time was special though. She had never worked at a college festival before and I had only heard her recordings from the 1930s and was a bit worried about how she would be received.

I shouldn't have worried though. As a show biz veteran who knew her music, I was willing to showcase music from the earlier part of her career. She brought down the house, which set the stage for norteño musicians who would become a regular part of the festivals. The second time she performed at the festival she had the "playing music for us gringos" thing down pat. She was a master musician and singer. I was always fascinated by her 12-string guitar playing. Sometimes I'd hear her play a run on the guitar that was awfully close to what I'd hear on a Leadbelly, Willie McTell, or other blues 12-string guitar piece, and I'd wonder about the connection.

We lost Lydia Mendoza in December. I'll always be grateful that we had the opportunity to see this remarkable performer in her prime. She was an important part of a revival of interest in the older forms of norteño music and an awareness among us gringos that there is another subculture of musical virtuosity in this country. She will be missed.

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Remembering 15 Years of Gypsy Jazz in San Diego

by Raul Sandelin

THE REVIVAL THAT WON'T QUIT

The name Django Reinhardt seems to always skirt popular consciousness, rounding the corners from time to time, elevated by mentions in such films as Woody Allen's *Sweet and Low Down* and the more recent *Head in the Clouds* starring Penelope Cruz. Django's name will orbit around the tongues of the coffeehouse cognoscenti for a while before escaping back into a netherworld of partial recognition—most people think they've heard of Django but somehow can't quite place him.

Certainly, this is perpetuated by those pop cultural moments in which his name is borrowed without full explanation about its source—the Stevie Nicks song, a cartoon cameo in the movie *Ratatouille*, David Crosby's son.

Among musicians, of course, Django's name has always been recognized as the moniker of one of jazz's finest musicians and the standard bearer of the Gypsy jazz genre he propelled. The Modern Jazz Quartet wrote its famous "Django," which bore strong Gypsy jazz motifs. Wes Montgomery and many others cited Django as a major influence. Jimi Hendrix even named his later group—Band of Gypsies—in his honor.

In his lifetime, he was not only a musician's musician but a pop superstar, especially in England and his native France. Yet, his popularity has certainly faded with his death, now, 55 years ago. Even the continuing legacy of his musical partner—Stéphane Grappelli—for years afterward couldn't sustain the popularity that Django enjoyed during his lifetime.

In the past 15 years, however, there has been a Gypsy jazz revival of sorts. And, rather than fading away like many passing fads, this revival is consistently growing year after year.

Alain Cola, who helped spearhead not only San Diego's Gypsy jazz revival but the international revival as well, remembers that there just weren't any musicians performing Gypsy jazz in 1993. There had been offerings in the 1980s from Dave Grisman, Mark O'Connor, Larry Coryell, and John Jorgenson. And Paul Mehling had formed his Hot Club of San Francisco around



Django Reinhardt

1990. But, nobody at the local level, in the clubs and local festivals, was even talking about it.

For those seeking a Gypsy jazz fix, there was really only one retailer in the U.S.—Paul Hostetter—a luthier in Santa Cruz who was importing French Duponts and some CDs. Other than that, one was lucky to happen upon some old Selmer-Maccaferri guitar copy that had been brought back from Europe in the '50s.

Not even Django's people, the French gypsies, were able to acquire the correct equipment. Photos of the first Django festival held in Samois-sur-Seine show many playing dreadnoughts and electric guitars. Why? Because no one was producing Selmer-style guitars with any affordable frequency.

In 1993, Cola formed San Diego's first Gypsy jazz group, simply named Gypsy Jazz, a name that would seem trite today. But, at the time, no one knew of the term.

"Here's how funny things work," Cola remembers. "I made a New Year's resolution to learn blues guitar, the fingerpicking, Piedmont style. Robin Henkel was all booked up. So, someone recommended Roger Belloni for lessons."

During one of those lessons, Cola noticed that Belloni had a Selmer copy in his studio. Born in France, where Django was all booked up, he went into the 1960s, Cola recognized the Gypsy jazz guitar immediately. Soon, the Piedmont blues lessons were suspended and Cola and Belloni started

gigging along with bassist Winfred Stewart.

It was still very piecemeal as the three taught themselves Gypsy jazz while emerging as the music's number one proponents in town. Cola remembers he would usually play the melody but then switch immediately to rhythm so that Belloni could solo. Stewart played a solid bass and could sing, but not at the same time. Little by little, the three already-competent jazzmen taught themselves the new genre and developed a sizeable repertoire. From 1993 to 1997, they gigged locally, appearing on KSDS and at various outdoor events including the Adams Avenue Roots Festival.

In 1995 Art Johnson, another longtime, local jazz guitarist, picked up the Gypsy bug, starting the Cool Club Quartet, an effort given extra credibility when local pro and Joe Pass bassist Bob Magnusson joined the band. The quartet further spread the word about Gypsy jazz while holding down a long-running gig at the Horton Grand.

Pearl Django, a Gypsy jazz outfit that has enjoyed widespread popularity, soon formed in Seattle. And, a revival was picking up steam in Europe.

"The gypsies were all returning to this music," Cola recalls. Many had stopped playing Gypsy jazz regularly in order to pursue more popular and profitable endeavors. For example, Bireli Lagrene, a child prodigy once considered Django's musical heir, was playing fusion with the likes of Jaco Pastorius. Angelo Debarre, another gypsy guitar virtuoso, was playing drums in a rock band.

By 1997, the floodgates opened locally, nationally, and internationally. Unfortunately, the trio of Alain Cola, Roger Belloni, and Winfred Stewart had run its course. So, Cola disbanded the group and quickly put together the Hot Club of San Diego. Joining forces with then-smooth jazz guitarist Patrick Berrogain, Cola solidified the guitar duo that would create the Hot Club's sound for nearly 10 years. Kevin Hennessy performed bass duties on many recordings. More recently, Paul Hormick, who had played with Cola since 1993, often subbing for Winfred Stewart, became the group's gigging bassist.

Hormick himself had been a fan of the music since first buying a Django record back in the



The Hot Club of San Diego at the 2008 NAMM Show. Left to right: Ludovic Beier (accordion), Daniele Spadavecchia (guitar), Paul Hormick (bass), Alain Cola (guitar)

'70s. Hormick's solid jazz, pop, and folk resume, which included gigs with Steve White, the Moonlighters, Joe Marillo, and the Triple Happiness String Band, ensured that the Hot Club's sound was both snappy and audience friendly while layered and richly nuanced, a contrast of opposites that has made the best Gypsy jazz so mysterious and appealing.

At this same time, Cola launched Dell'Arte Instruments as an answer to the still-sputtering supply of Selmer-style guitars. Cola had grown up listening to Django's music in France and had actually played some Gypsy jazz as part of his larger jazz vocabulary long before his work with the trio. So, he was certain he could replicate the Selmer sound. He first collaborated with Tijuana guitar builder Luis Sevillano. A year later Cola teamed up with local luthier John Kinnard and the two opened up their own shop in Santee.

Cola would spend the next two years building his own company while becoming one of Gypsy jazz's principal ambassadors. From 1998 through 2000, he took Dell'Arte to every major music show as well as to the annual Django festival in Samois, France.

In 2000, the revival was finally entering the mainstream. First the Django Reinhardt New York Festival was held, which featured many of the music's French stars including Django's son Babik. Luminaries in the audience included George Benson, Les Paul, and Al Di Meola. The concert was later issued on CD by Atlantic Records.

As a follow up, Cola, who had helped organize the New York festival, brought an array of talent west to Seattle for the first Djangofest Northwest. Similar Djangofests soon sprouted in Chicago, San Francisco, Austin, Texas, Madison, Wisconsin, Taos, and Laguna Beach. A similar Django in June has fast become a tradition at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts.

The guitar team of Cola and Berrogain spread the music both in San Diego and at the various Djangofests until Berrogain went on to form his own Hot Club Combo last year. In the meantime, Cola has reformed the Hot Club of San Diego while showcasing a variety of younger guitarists, including Beston Barnett and Daniele Spadavecchia.

Barnett pulls multiple musical duties in town and also leads his own Gypsy jazz-cum-swing combo the Zyznyzy (formerly Speakeasy) Quartet.

Daniele Spadavecchia, a recent transplant from New Orleans, applies a number of variations to the genre. While staying true to Django's sound on the Gypsy jazz numbers, he also packs a repertoire that includes many Mediterranean and Italian pop songs. When not playing with the Hot Club, Spadavecchia performs his solo variation, which he calls Sicilian swing, at Zia's in Little Italy.

The new Hot Club's bass duties continue to be held down by Paul Hormick.

DJANGO: ROCK GUITAR'S MISSING LINK

So, why should today's guitarists rediscover Gypsy jazz?

Just as anthropologists search for the missing link that hooks human ancestry to the chimps, pop musicologists need to fully trace back the roots of hard rock and shred guitar. To say that post-1960's rock is simply the evolution of the blues, with, perhaps, some classical ornamentation is just too simple. Something truly radical seems to have hit the guitar world that goes far beyond the Delta, Chicago, Memphis triangulation, which renders the hillbilly/barrelhouse concoction that birthed early rock 'n' roll. But, mak-

ing a connection between "Johnny B. Goode" and Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir" is a long stretch. So, something else must be added to the rock lineage. Enter Django Reinhardt.

Actually the missing link is Denny Wright, the 1950s guitarist for British skiffle king Lonnie Donegan. While American suburbia was transfixed by Elvis, British youth, were going ape for skiffle. John Lennon's original Quarrymen were a skiffle outfit. A teenage Jimmy Page appeared on the BBC after winning a national skiffle contest.

The who's-who of British rock were in fact listening to skiffle and to Denny Wright's ferocious guitar as much if not more than Elvis' guitar slinger Scotty Moore.

And who was Denny Wright? None other than a Gypsy jazz apprentice.

After the skiffle craze, Wright would return to his jazz roots, playing frequently with Stéphane Grappelli and opening a bebop club.

For kids like Wright, who came of age in England during the post-war era, Django was synonymous with single-note, flat-picked, lead guitar due to his extensive touring of England after World War II and the many recording dates that also resulted. While Django remained a niche curiosity in the States, he became well known in England by the 1950s. And, guitarists there readily looked at his ferocious attack as an inspiration for guitar picking across genres. This included the young generation that came of age in the 1960s, who would invent the guitar-driven, post-blues sound of hard rock, a generation that included the likes of Jeff Beck, who began weaving Django's so-called "exotic" scales into the Yardbirds' otherwise pop-blues blend.

In England this heightened awareness of Django's legacy led to other serendipitous yet momentous transformations. There is the story of Black Sabbath's guitarist Tony Iommi listening to Django while recovering from the loss of two, fret-hand finger tips. Realizing that Django had created his incredible repertoire with just two functioning fingers on his left hand, Iommi decided to stick with the guitar (he had contemplated quitting) and went on to develop the Sabbath/proto-metal guitar sound.

Another thing to note is that whereas the advent of rock 'n' roll in the States signaled an abrupt rift between youth culture and that of older generations; rock 'n' roll in Britain emerged alongside older pop music forms. In America, young people created a clean break from the culture of their parents, dividing emotionally and psychologically along age lines, e.g., the Generation Gap. In England, especially in working class cities like Liverpool, there was still a class consciousness that segregated rich and poor while bonding the young and the old to a greater degree. So, while rock music broke freely from jazz in America, rock and jazz lived side by side in the U.K. In fact, the early Beatles included many traditional numbers—"Ain't She Sweet," "Besame Mucho," "The Saints Come Marching In"—in their repertoire.

Two standards recorded by the Beatles—"Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Sheik of Araby"—were also part of Django's song list and still are prominent members of the Gypsy jazz songbook. Combine this with the fact that Django posthumously continued to register on the European music charts right up until the British Invasion. (Cola remembers French dancehall bands playing "Nuages" and "Minor Swing" as songs for teenagers to dance to.) Django was a pop superstar in Europe, akin perhaps to a Louis Armstrong and possibly Frank Sinatra. He even became quite

continued on next page

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by Simeon Flick

You're not expecting anything on this particular Wednesday afternoon other than a reprieve from your workaday malaise. Before you even round the corner the aroma hits you, a piquant mélange of meditative incense, savory barbecue, delectable kettle corn, pungent pony dung, and a veritable cornucopia of fresh herbs, fruits, vegetables, fish, and flowers. A faint waft of music accompanies it, fading in and out as it tends to at a distance, giving progressively more clues as to its true sound as you draw closer. You stroll the quaint gauntlet of vendors, wading through the phalanx of fascinating faces as you become increasingly excited about the music taking shape in your ears. Soon you'll have a visual to accompany the amazing sounds that are coalescing like magic as you anxiously approach.

Suddenly you find yourself standing in front of the band, taking the full brunt of their convivial brilliance. You're agog at the synergistic, poly-ethnic groove they create, their well-employed individual and collective virtuosity, their genre-hopping élan, their three and four-part vocal harmonies, their ease with the all-ages crowd cutting a mean rug in front of them, and their memorable, heartwarming, sometimes whimsical mix of originals and covers. In your resuscitated spirit you have a vague awareness that this scenario will eventually take on life altering proportions, a catalytic epiphany that will reverberate far into the now eagerly awaiting future.

It's the summer of 2004, the place is the Ocean Beach Farmer's Market, your name is Anne Tropeano, and you've just seen Tapwater for the first time.

INTRODUCTIONS

Anne took over management of Tapwater almost eight months after that fateful Wednesday in 2004. She describes such kismet in terms of what Italians call the "Thunderbolt," and her passion for and subsequent hard work on behalf of Tapwater have been inspiring to the band and audiences in turn. At the live shows, the majority of which are booked by her, she's easy to spot and most likely the first of the entourage you'll meet; tawny, svelte, raven-haired, sparkly-eyed, and probably smiling, you can usually find her dancing wantonly amidst the crowds (if she's not passing the email list or handing out coconut chunks from a tray or lollipops from a small pail, that is). She makes the face-to-face connection with Tapwater's audiences, gets you out of your shell, draws you in, seals the deal.

Ravi Laird (guitar, vocals, percussion, songwriting/arranging) is Tapwater's gruff, jolly guru/spiritual leader, coming off very much like a Gen X Jerry Garcia or Wavy Gravy. His life has been all about music from the get-go (what with both parents having been professional musicians), and Ravi recalls improvising vocal harmonies with them and younger brother Paavo around age five. Viola was Ravi's main axe in grade school before switching focus back to vocals at Grossmont High School, joining the choir and barbershop ensembles, wherein he learned the rudiments of music theory (and threw down against the Vienna Boys Choir), and was lead tenor respectively. Of course, the guitar was never far away, and after music major and recording

studies at college, he found himself immersed in a dual life, producing music festivals with Keeth Mahoogan Productions and working on film sets to support whatever band endeavor he was involved in at the time. Ravi is as likely to rip out a guitar solo as Steve Moore, and sometimes they do killer dual leads like the Allman Brothers.

Steve Moore (vocals, guitar, banjo, percussion, sampler, songwriting/arranging) remembers his grandfather and sister playing piano when he was a child and had started guitar by age 11, branching out to other instruments over time. Steve is Tapwater's "band monkey," or the member most likely to be playing more than one instrument over the course of a gig, often while singing lead (which he fell into by default roughly 10 years ago), and often within a single song. He's the guy who is usually taking instruments to their limits, is infinitely curious about music in general, and loves to jam with other people merely for his own edification and enjoyment. His early influences are vast in scope and quantity and include the Police, Slayer, Weather Report, the Meters, and the Grateful Dead, among myriad others. Steve's been in many bands since 15 and although Tapwater is his main focus, he likes to spread his excess musicality by sitting in with other groups on different instruments.

Wes Elliott (electric and upright basses, vocals, songwriting) is the gentle, self-proclaimed tree-hugging hippie of the bunch. From his general appearance and demeanor you can easily picture him working in a white-collar yuppie day job scenario, although he's probably the one who would least enjoy it. Wes found his way to the bass via the cello, which he started learning at age 10. By 15 he'd found his four-string axe of rebellion and the groups that would inspire him in adolescent iconoclasm, including Pink Floyd, the Dead, Phish, Dave Matthews Band, and some grunge. As time went along he also began writing things on guitar, and picked up some mature Afro-Cuban influences in the form of Tito Puente, Mongo Santamaria, Cachao, and Poncho Sanchez. Wes brings impeccable intonation to his upright, which any bassist will tell you is no small feat (uprights are not precision-fretted like electrics), and if Tapwater were a barbershop quartet (which they basically could be and occasionally are!) he would probably be the guy singing the low notes (although he can sing the high ones too).

Tim Jones (vocals, keyboards, accordion) grew up in Indio, summered in Solana Beach, and moved to San Diego full time in 2004. Tim's keyboard chops were honed by formative years of classical study, a stint at Musician's Institute in L.A., and through the emulation of influences like the Doors, Muddy Waters, Allman Brothers, the Dead, and, later on, Phish. His groove came out as a teen tasting his first live band experiences in Chocolate Phis (Piss intentionally misspelled), and the professional restaurant gig that had him doing covers five nights a week. Tim is one of those scant keyboardists who can play a groove and not have it sound "white" (read square or cheesy) and has the kind of chops and feel that would do Dr. John proud. He's been at vocals just as long as keys, if not longer; he used to do talent shows as a youngster, and sang in Disney-oriented musicals (like *Mary Poppins* and *Peter Pan*) as part of a group called the Incredible Comedy Kids. Tim's the reserved one in the band until you get to know him better,

mainly to keep his big heart safe until you gain his trust.

HISTORY

Steve Moore was at the heart of the earliest incarnation of Tapwater, A Little Moore Ware, which was an amalgamation of the three members' last names (with Brad Little and Eric Ware). They performed at the first Keeth Mahoogan Spring Jubilee festival that Ravi produced in 1994 (a mainstay in the set called Spring Jubilee came out of that experience).

Many members and band names came and went, and by 2003 Ravi and Wes had joined and they'd decided on Tapwater. They were pleased with the name's implied ubiquity (since tap water can be found virtually anywhere) and with the name in place, Ravi's aforementioned brother Paavo came in on keys. Anne had become manager by this time and she brought in her brother Mark Tropeano to take over on drums.

Sometime in 2005, Crystal Rose Tay came on board as assistant manager and boosted the collective energy with her combustible spirit, clutch stage-tech/roadie assistance, and boundless enthusiasm for the group and their music (you could usually see her gracefully, ebulliently flailing about on the dance floor with Anne when not needed by the group).

Hemming-and-hawing ambivalence over dismissing Paavo humorously delayed Tim Jones's entry into the band (Tapwater had, after all, placed that keyboardist wanted ad in the *Reader*), but once the commitment was made it was obvious that the permanent keyboardist had been found.

In 2006, frustrated with San Diego's chronically distracted populace and general lack of enthusiasm for their genre, Tapwater embarked on their first U.S. tour, covering both coasts and a few interior states in a recently acquired Winnebago. Anne had the band going above and beyond on the road, busking as much as they could between the club shows on their "official" itinerary. That was when what they call "Traveling Tapwater" developed, the highly mobile all-acoustic format that allows them to set up, perform, and tear down like guerrilla gypsies (in case the law—or anyone else disapproving—takes umbrage). The promising reception of both live formats while on tour reinvigorated the group and made it emphatically evident that Tapwater was a live band destined for the road.

After the 2006 tour, Crystal Rose was let go (you can still see her dancing ebulliently at local shows), and Mark Tropeano was dismissed on the eve of a months-long 2007 tour, which raised a dilemma: how were they going to swing it without the rhythmic presence that

Tapwater 101: Evolution of a Live Road Band



Tapwater

is so crucial to their sound? With insufficient time to break in a new drummer before hitting the road, they turned to "Traveling Tapwater" for the solution: they would do the tour on acoustic instruments, with each member incorporating a strong rhythmic element into their playing whenever possible. After an initial adjustment period, this modified approach came through with flying colors. It also did something positive to their group dynamic, both on and off-stage; it unified them as a tighter entertaining unit by fostering their onstage banter, presence and enthusiasm, thereby increasing their success on the road.

PRESENT

Tapwater just recorded and released their third album, *Dirt Road Rendezvous* (reviewed this issue), a priceless souvenir of this recent "Traveling Tapwater" period. They came off the road early this winter with more than they bargained for: The impetus to cut this momentous live record in 13 hours, and, during the Northern California leg of the tour, they had met the dual rhythm section of Simon (drums, percussion) and Rudy (percussion), who as of this writing have just arrived in San Diego to begin their new lives in Tapwater. The band

will be hard at work integrating the new recruits and redefining their sound once again, getting Simon and Rudy up to speed via local shows until around May when they hit the road for their summer/fall U.S. tour.

DESTINY

Tapwater just wants to be able to do what they love—comfortably and sustainably touring the world—for a living, while simultaneously making a positive difference in the communities they visit. In Anne's own words, Tapwater sees themselves "as part band, part business, part nonprofit...Because our sound is so diverse, we attract people of all ages and backgrounds. Our goal is to harness this ability to build and empower a kind, motivated community to make a big difference in our country. We donate free shows to groups who we think really need it; we have played women's shelters, convalescent homes, and nonprofits for the mentally and physically challenged...Our vision is for Tapwater to be a premier community resource, just like what comes out of your sink. We aim to connect every household together, lift up their spirits, and work to create the world that we all know is possible."

Gypsy jazz, continued.

wealthy. And, at the forefront, was his flamboyant, rapid-fire guitar work and exotic arpeggios. Nevertheless, few, even within the guitar community, have ever heard of Boulou Ferré, Stochelo Rosenberg, Robin Nolan, or scores of other Gypsy jazz virtuosos playing today. This is surprising, especially since the European Gypsy jazz community probably contains the highest concentration of flat-picking, shred guitar talent in the world, a fact that John McLaughlin observed 30 years ago.

GYPSY JAZZ AT NAMM 2008

If the NAMM show is any indication, the Gypsy jazz revival is sticking. There were no less than 10 guitar manufacturers producing Selmer copies, from beginners' models from Stagg and Cigano, to mid-level players from Gitane and Music Link Dell'Arte (Dell'Arte's off-shore line), to handcrafted professional models from Dell'Arte and Michael Dunn. This is in contrast to 15 years ago when, as stated earlier, it was nearly impossible, even for the gypsies, to find actual Selmer-style guitars.

Another encouraging sign was the presence of 20-year-old guitarist Tommy Davy, who, clad in a

surplus army jacket, looked ready to audition for a punk band. Yet, Davy is a Gypsy jazz guitarist from Laguna Beach, who is ready to take Django's legacy to a new generation. Davy even stepped on stage to play a song or two during one of the sets performed by Cola's new Hot Club.

Other players such as Fabrice and Tracy Vignati, who lead L.A.'s Hot Fab Djazz Club, have incorporated the Gypsy jazz repertoire into their broader swing show.

The ever gracious John Jorgenson was also spotted offering onlookers several songs at both the Dell'Arte and Saga/Gitane booths.

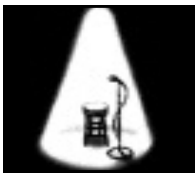
Needless to say, the Gypsy jazz revival is here to stay, even if it has yet to break into the public consciousness. But, little by little, whether it be Allan Holdsworth or the Gypsy Kings recording "Nuages" or Ry Cooder popping into the Dell'Arte shop to buy four Selmer replicas, or Brian Setzer's flirtations with Paris swing and the Django sound, Gypsy jazz continues to brush the sidewalls of pop culture. Even the Chet Atkins Appreciation Society has invited Gypsy jazz picker-extraordinaire Romane to perform in Nashville. So, who knows? Perhaps as the world "goes country," country might be going Gypsy jazz.

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LIVING A LIFE IN MUSIC

When you hear them sing, it's obvious and clear that Walt Richards and Paula Strong have spent a great deal of time playing music together. Walt and Paula are regular people, not a creation of some corporate music machine or momentary taste sensation. Both have that special gift of engaging people through their music. For them, life is a journey of musical discovery through entertaining and teaching others. Walt has been at the forefront of traditional and acoustic music in San Diego since the early 1960s. He has reincarnated himself many times over through his students who play a variety of instruments and musical styles. His teaching continues to enrich the San Diego community and serves as a lasting tribute to his work. Paula is like the North Star, a guiding light and compass for all of us who know her. She's also a fine singer and swinging musician.

JUST WALT

Walt Richards is a native San Diegan. He was bitten by the folk music bug back in the mid 1950s when he first heard Sam Hinton perform in his school. He was also influenced by a church youth leader who loved and collected folk music and introduced him to it. In 1957, the youth leader took Walt and his friends to see Pete Seeger perform on his long-neck Vega banjo at Hoover High School. Just getting in to hear the concert was a new experience for Walt. He had to walk through protesters who opposed Seeger's politics and who objected to Seeger's right to sing in a public school. It was an eye-opening experience both musically and politically. As Walt recounted this story, I felt the excitement of this early experience and how Walt sat in the front row looking up at the stage and watching Seeger playing this amazing instrument. It was the banjo and Seeger that changed Walt and shaped the course of his musical direction.

Walt has been a part of the San Diego folk music scene since the late 1950s when he put together his first group, the Kensington 3. As a student at SDSU in the 1960s, Walt was involved in folk music on campus as well as in the local coffeehouses. After leaving SDSU, he formed the New Expressions Music School in 1974, which he originally established as a cooperative with Vickie Cottle. He also briefly owned the House of Strings in North Park before it was sold. About four years ago, Walt moved his music school to Acoustic Expressions, the store that bought out House of Strings. Last year, Acoustic Expressions was sold again and is now called Old Time Music, a sister store of Buffalo Brothers in Carlsbad. Each week Walt spends three long, 12-hour days there as a master teacher, teaching banjo, guitar, and mandolin to students of all ages and backgrounds. He has taught many of the people who participate in the local folk music community and beyond. Whether playing or teaching old-time traditional, folk, western, or bluegrass, Walt continues to leave his stamp on the local music scene.

Over the years, Walt and his groups have performed for shut-ins as a kind of musical community service. In addition to his vast knowledge of many songs, folk music history, and musical styles, he is also skilled in playing a variety of stringed instruments. Teaching has clearly given Walt the focus to perfect his skills and transfer them to his many students over the years. In his role as a teacher, he spends a lot of time designing lessons based on each student's skill and temperament. However, the best teachers are often performers who understand what it takes to learn and enjoy their instruments. Walt has infused his students with his gifts and talents, and the students, in turn, continue to play, perform, and share their music within the community. Some of his students are now professional musicians, but all are better musicians for having studied with Walt.

I spent a lot of time with Walt discussing his teaching philosophy, his life, his beliefs, and his need to connect with his audiences and other musicians. Walt is on a quest, a journey to validate himself and others through his music and life experiences. As he talked about his life-long interest in history and all things spiritual, he said that he loves the art of telling stories through songs. He said, "Sometimes as you look out at the audience, you see people reacting, opening up, and letting go of their outside worldly issues, and then you see yourself more clearly." It's such moments that Walt feels are the most rewarding

and enriching. The connections he makes through performance validate each of us, both audience and musician.

Over the years, Walt has had many opportunities to go commercial, but he chose to walk away. Following his own musical path, Walt has sung in many groups, traveled many musical roads, won banjo contests, and even received an Emmy together with Vickie Cottle for the musical arrangement in a TV show. Hollywood music corporate types once suggested that the women in one of Walt's groups sex it up. That didn't happen. When offered a position with the New Christy Minstrels, Walt turned it down, because he felt they were looking for indentured musicians. Looking back, Walt laughs at all these offers. You realize when talking to him how much he's always enjoyed his life as an entertainer and teacher, but it's clear he has a spiritual streak in him. He's on a musical journey of continuous discovery to satisfy the need to give back.

Multiple wins at the Topanga Banjo and Fiddle Contest helped send Walt off onto national tours with the Eddystone Singers and the Appalachians in the 1960s. He toured with the Eddystone Singers throughout the Southwest on the Hootenanny Tour (connected to the show of the same name). Walt becomes truly animated when discussing playing in these groups, which also included Bow Willow, Mandolin Madness, the Soft Touch Banjo Ensemble, and Trails and Rails. A bluegrass enthusiast and among the first to play bluegrass in San Diego, he helped create the San Diego Bluegrass Club, later renamed the San Diego Bluegrass Society, and was also a founding member the annual Julian Bluegrass Festival. His efforts contributed to the formation of a vibrant bluegrass community in town. Although Walt doesn't consider himself a solo performer, he has often taken gigs as a guitarist, playing chord melody as background music at events or parties. He is interested in the give-and-take experience of expectation and chance that is only found when sharing musical performance with other musicians and audiences. He encourages members of his group to keep an eye on each other as well as on the audience. According to Walt, connection, interaction, encouragement, practiced playing, and equality of purpose are all needed for a group to succeed. Walt sees himself as an entertainer who does something spiritual and uplifting by touching people's emotions and opening them up to the experience of new sounds and musical tales. He's a renaissance musical man but very approachable. He really believes musicians have a special gift as troubadours, shamans, and healers.

Walt's current band, Trails and Rails, is deeply committed to education and learning. After playing a concert at a public school in Arizona last year, the students eagerly lined up, thanked each band member, shook each band member's hand, and asked real musical questions. This was an experience that touched Walt deeply, and he treasured the children's curiosity, gratitude, and wonder. Trails and Rails always includes stops at schools when they're doing concerts and festivals in Arizona and New Mexico. Currently performing at the San Diego County public libraries, the band hopes to bring their programs into San Diego public schools as well. After each show, Trails and Rails answers questions from the audience and stick around until everybody has had a chance to talk with them.

More than 25 years ago Walt started Slo-Jam, a jam session for musicians at the San Carlos Recreation Center every third Friday of the month. He created Slo-Jam after noticing that many talented musicians were sitting it out on the sidelines at the local Bluegrass Society meetings, where the regulars dominated the musical sessions. Today, Slo-Jam continues to be a noncompetitive jam where four leaders bring in a song and lead their groups to develop a musical arrangement. Everyone participates, with finished arrangements that include vocal parts and instrumental solos performed at the end of the evening for the whole Slo-Jam group. Members come with a variety of instrumental skills, chord knowledge, stage fright, singing fears, and the usual performer's jitters. Some very

Sweethearts OF THE Rodeo

Walt Richards & Paula Strong

accomplished musicians participate at Slo-Jam and are willing to help others learn to gain confidence and enrich their skills. It offers a safe place to learn, to test out musical ideas, and to develop at one's own pace. After each song the group makes suggestions and praises the quality of the musicianship. Walt feels that some of the greatest music he's ever heard has come out of these evenings. Best of all, each jam session is free, all inclusive, and friendly; the evening winds up at Round Table for pizza and a social get-together.



JUST PAULA

Paula Strong was probably destined to be involved in music from the moment a big band drummer swept her mother off her feet in Hot Springs, Arkansas, and brought her to Los Angeles where his band was playing at the Biltmore. Life on tour, however, was not the family life Paula's mom envisioned, so another musician, Ray, became the dad who raised her. Growing up in northern California, Ray staged Paula's first solo singing performance at a community holiday program, a rendition of "White Christmas," complete with a six-year-old lisp that comes from two missing front teeth. Distracted from her fear of forgetting the words by the Ivory Flake snow falling behind her from the stage rafters, Paula remembers feeling the audience pulling for her even though she couldn't see them. As a much more grown-up sixth grader, she would sing an occasional duet with her dad when his swing band played at a little resort in the area. Paula still performs "Don't Fence Me In" with Trails and Rails, one of the songs she and her dad sang together. Paula spent her childhood dreaming of Palomino horses, cowboys, and trains. She also liked to dance to swing band and early rock 'n' roll music. From fourth grade through junior college, she played clarinet in school and community bands and orchestras and also played in her high school Dixieland band. She was always singing in school, church, and community choirs, where she often sang tenor, because there usually weren't enough men who could (or

would) commit the time to cover that part. "Growing up in small towns seems to give one all sorts of unexpected opportunities," Paula remembered, laughing. When in high school, Paula also spent two years as the organist at her small church "not," as she says, "because I really knew how to do that, but because no one else would commit to the schedule of weekly practices and services. My technique was full stop with pedals when I could manage. There certainly are a lot of sharps and flats in church music!" In the meantime, when she was at home, the radio or the record player was always playing. Little did Paula realize that all this experience was excellent training for the lead and harmony singing, arranging, and guitar playing that she'd later perform with Trails and Rails.

Paula graduated from college with a minor in music, but the coursework was geared toward elementary education majors and not very useful for a professional musician. And, without intercession from another teacher, she would have failed her required voice class, because she refused to sing above "A." This was undoubtedly due to the aftereffects of too many years singing tenor parts with no one to show her how to transition between low and high voice. The teacher's winning argument with her voice teacher was, "What difference does it make. She's never going to be a singer, anyway!" Throughout her diverse life, Paula has been a teacher, a school nurse, a musician and singer, and has also raised a family. When she returned to singing and playing music 25 years ago, she discovered that a whole new repertoire of songs called folk music had come on the scene. It was with a living room group called Saturday Night Music, a wonderful adult garage band that never played in public, that Paula learned to play guitar chords and sing at the same time, "a skill not to be underestimated," she remarks. At one point the group's leader suggested that she might enjoy taking guitar lessons from Walt Richards. Following up on his suggestion, Paula changed her life yet again, resulting in a musical legacy for both Walt and Paula. For the past 20 years, Walt and Paula have performed together in various groups. Now she plays guitar and mandolin with Trails and Rails and even drums in a local 15-member swing band, the Brass, Key and Wind, in which Walt also plays. Her musical journey with Walt also included a nine-year stint in the group Mandolin Madness.

As a member of Trails and Rails, Paula honed her computer skills and learned Photoshop so that she could help design Trails and Rails CD covers. She also handles the band's business and scheduling. But in the end, Paula's passion is her love of singing, harmonizing, and encouraging others to sing and play music.

Paula reminds me of the famous Dorothea Lange Depression Era photo of a woman and her child, which was taken in a 1930s California labor camp. The woman was a dust bowl refugee whose eyes looked strong, focused on some distant dream, her intense gaze looking past the tent city toward a new life. The photo really captured the woman's strengths and her wish to move ahead. Like the woman in this photo, Paula seems to have been touched by our soil. She has an earthy accent when she sings and seems fearless.



A FINAL WORD

Last June, I stage managed and performed at the Wieghorst Western Heritage Days at the Olaf Wieghorst Museum in El Cajon, where I had a chance to experience Trails and Rails and other western performers up close, in concert, and in my first jam with musicians who play western music. All the old stereotypes evaporated as the music expunged my doubts and prejudices. Yes, the dress was boots and cowboy hats, but the music was southwestern folk music and western swing, and there was even some cowboy poetry. Trails and Rails fit right in. There was intensity to the music and wonderful instrumental ability that I had somehow missed before. As the music filled the stage, I experienced the depth of storytelling that covered the full human experience as seen through a southwestern musical lens. By playing with the performers in a jam and sharing my music with them, I understood what Walt and Paula had found on their new musical journey. Walt spoke of the friendliness and warmth they experienced with these western performers and how you were invited into their homes where you were fed and treated like old friends while on tour. Walt and Paula have become invigorated by being a part of the western music community. Western musicians are always mindful of their audience. Trails and Rails is an urban band, but their cowboy dreams have found common ground with their western audiences. As a storytelling band, Trails and Rails has many facets. The band can play western music one day and show up the next day to do train songs at the Train Song Festival in Old Poway Park. The band has appeared at the San Diego Folk Heritage/Sam Hinton Festival and can play the American folk song book with the best of the folk singers.

So what's next for Walt and Paula? Most likely there will be more touring, more students, more CDs, and more new audiences waiting to be touched by Walt and Paula's magic. The band recently went into the studio and recorded a new CD titled *Ghosts of Tombstone*. Walt described the recording sessions as difficult but worth the intensity. Our gift is their new CD, recorded live and analog.

Walt and Paula have found their own voice without gimmicks and manufactured lyrics. Their music is like a handshake, a hug, an eye opener, and a spiritual tale through life's many journeys. So get on board and take a ride on the trails and rails with Walt and Paula. You'll enjoy yourself, because that's what they want you to do.



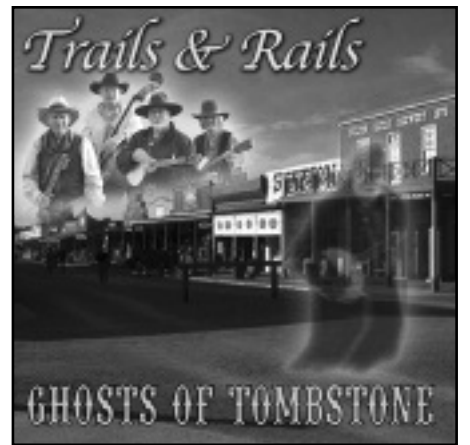
derful, there are also places to play it!" Ken and Phee's musical gift to Walt and Paula would bring about their next group: Trails and Rails. But regardless of the material, Walt and Paula's performances reveal the depth of practice and research that go into each song and show.

In 2004, Trails and Rails evolved from a duo to become a quartet or Quatro, as they call it. A few years ago bassist Bruce Huntington magically appeared at a Slo-Jam. Walt and Paula needed a bass player who could stand in for a couple of performances of a play they were providing music for and immediately recognized that Bruce had the ability to do that. When he came over to rehearse the music, they were even more impressed with his versatility on stand-up bass, which he was switching over to after years of playing electric rock 'n' roll.

At about the same time, guitarist and autoharpist Ken Wilcox expressed an interest in the western repertoire, especially the old tunes, and his autoharp became a wonderful addition to the Quatro. "Little did we know, at the beginning, what a fortuitous meld this was to be," says Paula. Bruce turned out to be an amazing songwriter as well as a great bass player, and Ken has the instrumental wizardry and vocal talents that are a perfect complement to Walt and Paula's sound. Although they still perform as a duo at times, the Quatro has become their preferred format for performances. Trails and Rails, the Quatro, released their first CD, *From Way Out West*, in 2006. Their song "Night Train Down the Yellowstone" by Les Buffham and Mike Ley from that album was voted number three of the 2006 Top Ten Single Western releases as chosen by the Heartland Public Radio Panel at the Tombstone Western Music Festival in November 2007.

At that same festival, the Quatro introduced its second CD, *Ghosts of Tombstone*, by singing the title track to open both the Friday and Saturday night shows in the famous Schieffelin Hall in Tombstone. In 2006 and again in 2007, Trails and Rails placed on the Top Ten Ballot for the Western Music Association Awards in the following categories: Traditional Duo/Group, Instrumentalist of the Year (Walt Richards), and the Crescendo Award.

CD REVIEW



Trails & Rails Ghosts of Tombstone

by Allen Singer

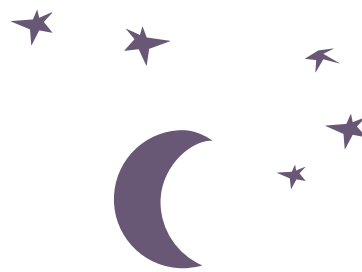
Back when you could ride the range through your radio, in the days when there were old, scratchy black and white movies, and a new invention called television, all kinds of cowboys were galloping and singing all over the dial. Tex Ritter, Rex Allen, Hopalong Cassidy, Gene Autry, and Roy Rogers rode into your hearts while shooting it up, picking a guitar, and singing, "I'm back in the saddle again." They shot bad guys in black hats, saved cowgirls, and, at the end of the trail, gathered their saddle buddies together around a campfire to sing together as coyotes howled down in some dusty draw.

Ghosts of Tombstone is a terrific CD that reminds us of those wonderful times. It sounds like the new, old western music that's been around as long as cowboys rode the range, rustled cattle, homesteaded, drank strong, bad chuck wagon coffee, and longed for the cowgirl back home. This is a musical genre that used to be called cowboy, but has taken on a new life now as western music. Trails and Rails are Walt Richards, Paula Strong, Bruce Huntington, and Ken Wilcox. The CD was recorded in analog format and sounds real, live, and at the moment. No overdubs, no tricks, no compressed layered sounds, just four fine musicians singing in harmony and playing their collective hearts out.

Richard's ability to play guitar and banjo in many different musical styles creates the musical heart of a really talented band. The use of a banjo on a western CD is an inventive addition to the musical genre. Richards sings in a vocal style that fits the group's music well without sounding artificially "cowboy." Strong's lead vocals are heartfelt and enriching. She also plays rhythm guitar and contributes to the band's vocal harmonies. Ken Wilcox is a vocalist with hints of cowboy style and one heck of a cowboy autoharp player. He also an excellent guitarist.

Six of the CD's songs were written by Bruce Huntington, the group's bass player and an inventive songwriter whose songs sound like he could have written them ducking the sage brush during a lonely night riding down the canyon many years ago. Les Buffham, a noted cowboy poet and sly guy, joins Richards in a song they co-wrote called "Thinkin' about Montana," a tune that hits you right in the heart of what this music is all about. It's a musical gem that should be a standard some day. Marvin O'Dell's "This God Forsaken Town" is a song about a cowboy fantasy, complete with a longhorn herd of steers, which rings especially true. Ken Graydon, who used to break horses back in his younger days, is a noted folksinger, cowboy poet, and songwriter. He joins the band on his song "Windmill," a gift of music that puts some fine musical icing on this CD.

The songs on *Ghosts of Tombstone* may be classified as western music, but they're actually much more than that. Trails and Rail's warm, rich harmonies and lively singing are a joy to hear. As you listen to this disc, you'll experience life's journey sung through western landscape. Tex, Rex, Hopalong, Gene, and Roy would be proud!



Trails and Rails performing at Acoustic Expressions last year



Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden



EARL SCRUGGS: THE GREATEST BANJO PLAYER



Earl Scruggs

Earl Scruggs is undoubtedly the most influential banjo player to have ever picked up the banjo. This member of the Country Music Hall of Fame

and the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame, as well as one of the few to claim a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame is still going strong at 82 years old. Let's take a look at the early years and how he developed the unique banjo style that made him so famous and influential.

Earl Scruggs was born and grew up in Cleveland County, North Carolina. His father was a fiddle and banjo player and a book-keeper by trade, and his brothers and sisters all played the banjo, while his mother played the organ. They lived and worked on a rural farm where music was a key aspect of family activities when they weren't working the farm. So, one might say Earl was destined to music and to the banjo. He began playing banjo when he was only four years old, just after his father passed away. Earl says he remembers his father but never heard him play banjo as a long illness preceded the elder Scruggs death. Earl reports that most of what he learned was self taught as a youngster; his family didn't even have a radio down on the farm until he was well into his teens!

It was when Earl was 10 years old that he first experimented with the three-finger style of banjo playing that he later made famous as "Scruggs-style picking." Earl was obsessed with the banjo during these early years, first playing his father's and his sister's banjo until he acquired his own banjo from Montgomery Ward's mail order catalog for \$10.95. Earl later purchased a Gibson RB-11 when he began playing professionally, and during much of his career he played a Gibson Granada formerly owned by Snuffy Jenkins, which he purchased in a South Carolina pawn shop for \$37.50.

Earl tells the following story about how he developed his now famous three-finger banjo style: After he and his brother had been arguing, Earl retreated to his room where he began playing the tune "Ruben," subconsciously picking while his mind roiled, until he realized he was doing a three-finger pick that, up to that point, he had been working on but unable to master. His brother reports that Earl came running out of the room yelling "I've got it, I've got it!" and banjo music was forever changed. Earl soon smoothed out the technique, added syncopation, and developed the ability to play melody lines with the three-finger style.

Earl Scruggs went on to be a key member of Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys during the seminal years in the 1940s when that band created what is considered the "gold standard" of bluegrass music and recording. As if that weren't enough, Earl soon left Bill Monroe's band with fellow Bluegrass Boy Lester Flatt and went on to form Flatt and Scruggs and the Foggy Mountain Boys, which eclipsed even Bill Monroe's band in prominence and popularity. From that time on, there were TV shows, accolades, key appearances on the seminal *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* album in the 1970s, and recordings and performances with virtually everybody who is anybody in music. In a future column we will take a look at Earl's middle years and at what he is currently doing.

INFAMOUS STRINGDUSTERS COMING TO DEL MAR



The Infamous Stringdusters

The San Diego Bluegrass Society and the Del Mar foundation are bringing IBMA's reigning winners of Album of the Year, Song of the Year, and Instrumental Group of the Year awards to the Del Mar Powerhouse for a concert on Friday evening March 21. The Del Mar Powerhouse is a beautiful venue overlooking the beach with about 100 seats, so every seat gets a great view and up close chance to hear this great band. Tickets are \$20 while they last. For tickets, visit www.summergrass.net and click on "Del Mar Foundation/SDBS Concert Tickets" on the menu bar on the left to order tickets on line with a credit card; you can also order by mail. The Infamous Stringdusters will also be making an appearance at this year's Summergrass Festival in August, so be sure to get out and hear this top band!

SPRING BLUEGRASS CAMP OUT

The annual Spring Bluegrass Camp Out is set for the weekend of April 18-20 at the KOA campground in Chula Vista. The public is welcome, pickers and listeners, kids and adults. This camp out has a great history of good times. So, come on down with your motor home, or rent a cabin from KOA. Or, you can come for a day fee and go home at night if you wish. For reservations and information, contact Phil Levy at (619) 440-7028. Reservations are due by April 10. To take a peek at the campground, visit: <http://www.koa.com/where/ca/05112/>. Hope to see you there!

The Zen of Recording

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

IN THE MOOG

I still remember the very first time I saw it. It was around 1980, during a rhythm tracking session at the now sadly defunct Circle Sound Studios, which was located near 30th and El Cajon Blvd. in San Diego. The building housed a wonderfully appointed 24-track studio facility, as well as a huge ballroom, where I imagine quite a few orchestras and big bands would have performed and/or been recorded.

On this day, I'm sure I was bouncing around the place in a manner that probably would have inspired the engineer to ask to have me restrained; if only because killing me would make for an even larger distraction.

At some point during the session I was trolling through the studio hallways in search of a soda, when I noticed a shaft of light spilling out of a slowly opening door. As I approached, I observed an obviously flustered individual who appeared to have consumed somewhere between 18 and 20 cups of strong coffee, wildly flailing his arms around in a bizarre combination of total concentration and utter confusion. In front of him, in this tiny room (which was only slightly larger than the average maintenance closet), was what looked to be a very elaborate telephone switchboard, with complex jack fields that lined the room and rose to the ceiling. The cords that were connected into it were chaotically strewn around as haphazardly as that poor bastard's Einsteinian hairdo. Suddenly, the door quickly closed, as if I had just witnessed closely guarded state secrets; a studio employee quickly led me back to where I belonged.

As we walked, I said, "You guys must really get a lot of calls here!" He simply replied with a chuckle and what can only be described as a genuine air of mystery, "No, no...that's the Moog Room."

Thankfully, the size of Robert Moog's synthesizers became a bit more portable over time, even as the quality and quantity of their signature sounds increased.

Even more fortunately, **IK Multimedia** has introduced **SampleMoog: the Moog Synth Anthology** (\$299), a Mac/PC virtual instrument that includes over 1,700 (!) sounds from 16 Moog synths, including the previously described early modular models made famous by Wendy Carlos and Emerson, Lake & Palmer. There are also



Seaholm with Robert Moog

newer ones like the Minimoog Voyager® and Little Phatty®, as well as classics like the Memorymoog®, Polymoog, Concertmate MG-1, and the famed Taurus 1 bass pedals. They've even included the Etherwave® Theremin!

The sounds are easily addressable through your DAW as an RTAS/VST/AU plug-in, and the inclusion of a stand-alone application is undoubtedly great news for the legions of "keyboard and a laptop" performers looking to add some of that rich, gooey Moog magic to their arsenal of sounds and textures.

Installing the program was painless, but it did take awhile for it to install the two discs worth of sounds, so a little patience was required initially. Once the software was installed, registered, and activated, I dove in head first without even looking at the manual.

I was immediately impressed with how intuitively the interface was laid out. Whether you're a "presets only" person or the type that likes to lift up the hood and get your hands dirty, everything you need to do so is at your virtual fingertips.

The upper right hand portion of the screen shows all the presets in a very logical fashion, listing each instrument in its historical chronological order, i.e. 1970 Minimoog, 1972 Modular Moog, 1975 Polymoog, etc. Clicking on the triangles next to the instrument names opens up file trees that display the various patches derived from these. That in itself was a whole sonic wonderland to explore and for hours on end, that's exactly what I did.

On the screen's upper left is the "Combi" section, where all of these patches can be mixed and matched to create huge virtual synth stacks. Listed here is another amazing array of ready-to-use sounds! More hours were spent gazing into the veritable looking glass that is SampleMoog. In addition, the components that make up a "combi" patch



Sven-Erik Seaholm

enable users to come up with complex midi and audio routing configurations that go well beyond the scope of what can be covered here.

Below these is a knob twaker's bonanza, with total control over each patch's myriad parameters, from basic AHDSR envelopes to crazy filtering and LFO modulations. Sections that address portamento, mono/polyphonic modes and legato auto phrasing lie just to the right of that section.

The section below that and just above the virtual keyboard display is dedicated to editing the parameters of the 32 included effects. This is where you can really make a patch come to life: Panning chorus effects, sweet spring reverb, more filters, Lo-Fi burnishing, and slippery delays are all available to take even the most identifiable of these sounds and create one unique to each user's creative whims.

Needless to say, the SampleMoog has so much more to offer than a large set of great sounding presets, but for the sake of comprehensiveness, I'll tell you that I loved the deep basses like the "Dizzy Bass" and those of you who need to check your subwoofer's performance need look no further than the Source's "Pizz Bass/Dream B." The Theremin was used immediately on a recording I was finishing, such was its obvious usability, and the Little Phatty's "Fat Saw" soon made for a Prog-ish but utilitarian go-to synth sound.

There are TONS of flanged, sweeping analog leads and other buzz saw textures, along with subtle bell-like ones, but for me, the all-time favorite get-lost-in-the-moment-and-end-up-so-inspired-as-to-have-written-three-more-songs patch has to be "Far Stars," a lovely electric piano-styled texture with a very gentle attack that just makes me go all woozy when I play a chord into it. Just outstanding.

Of course, describing just how cool SampleMoog sounds is about as easy as describing how good dinner smells, especially when you're really hungry. For now, I'll just say that I'm going to sell some of the keyboards I no longer need.

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an award-winning independent producer, singer and songwriter. Contact him at info@kaspro.com

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FEBRUARY HIGHLIGHTS

- Feb. 6 Chip Conrad • the Concrete Feat and friends
- Feb. 9 The Silvia Brothers SweetTooth Skunk Apes
- Feb. 15 Beach Music Mafia presents Playground Slop The Shamey Jays Johnny Different Bad Science Fiction
- Feb. 23 EMERGENZA MUSIC FESTIVAL Rock/Funk/Punk/Pop/Alt
- Feb. 24 EMERGENZA MUSIC FESTIVAL Rock/Funk/Punk/Pop/Blues

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Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND ITS EFFECT ON THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

When I wake up and realize several days later that all of a sudden it's February again, I feel more than the customary sense of déjà vu (French, I believe, for ostentatious verbosity). I sense the delicate throbbing, budding of something around the area of my chest and suddenly I'm feeling like a 12-year-old school girl all over again. Could this once more be an invitation to immerse myself in the languid longing for love? With Valentine's Day approaching, shall I allow my pen to transfer my heart to this page? Am I even capable? Heck, I never even tried to pee standing up until I was 22 (actually, I was forced to—they needed someone for a couple of short films in Germany when I was in desperate need of money, but that's another story...) and here I am at 55, challenging myself to publicly discharge my personal, pent-up feelings about *amour* because suddenly it seems so important? Would you? If I tell you the truth, would you be my valentine?

This month we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of the world's first real troubadour, Saintien Cosmos de Valentine, whom we've come to refer to (in our usual dumb-it-down mode) as Saint Valentine.

There have been literally thousands of other people who were born in February throughout history, but to find another who left as lasting an impact on our world, one would need to find someone born earlier than de Valentine. That would in itself be entirely impossible, since historians have never agreed on the precise date of his exit from the womb of the woman who was likely his mother. Forensic evidence has long since degraded, all known photographs have mysteriously disappeared, and the few contemporary written accounts (birth certificate, congratulatory cards, tabloid reports) were written in the ambiguous and indecipherable language of the period. Estimates have placed the year as recently as the 17th century and as distant as the Pleocene era, but everyone agrees that it was in February and that the elusive language of the period was the language of Love.

Thus, we continue to celebrate February as the month of Love—in France, *Le Mois d'Amour*; in Italy, *Chilatto Tempiri* (Golly, It's Cold!); in Nepal, *B'ahako Bhammha* (Need Me, Sweet Thang!); in Canada, *Month of Love* (The Month of Love), and several others of unfortunate indelicacy or essential worthlessness. Love's tender caress is never as palpable as it seems to be in February. The apocryphal St. Valentine's Day Massacre certainly featured no participation of de Valentine himself and is likely a mere legend, inspired by an old song by Arlo Guthrie.

Commercialization has come to taint the true essence of de Valentine's message; every Valentine's Day card you purchase kills a tree and without trees, there can be no purchase. De Valentine was certainly not a rich man, and the recent Supreme Court decision upholding the



José Sinatra

barring of royalties to de Valentine's heirs only confirms what we've long suspected: our chief justices wouldn't know love if it stuck its tongue down their miserable throats and dry humped them into decency.

"If one hates," said de Valentine as he was tortured by his inquisitors, "one does not love." I would go further and posit that if even more—say, two three, 20—hate, then they, too, do not love. I'm not implying that de Valentine was wrong, merely a bit shortsighted. Today, of course, we have the benefit of glasses, contact lenses, bifocals, faith healing, lasik surgery, none of which might exist were it not for de Valentine's painfully innocent myopia.

The popular image of the baby de Valentine, with its delicate wings, shapely naked buttocks, and poised bow and arrow skewering a dripping human heart is not only ludicrous, but to me veritably impossible (though somehow strangely arousing). There is absolutely no evidence that he or any of his family ever had wings—or at least ones that actually worked. He was certainly no fairy (rumors about his older brother Theo needn't concern us here), and he abhorred all weapons of violence, resorting only to water-boarding when his heart demanded answers to the most vexing questions of life. True, his "twin globes of precious pearl" (Virgil), upon which he sat aroused everyone from the lowliest seamstress to KC and the Sunshine Band ("Shake Your Booty"), but he was always much more than an ass. It is up to each of us to interpret the whole man—to understand his legacy as something more than simple romance or boiling lasciviousness, to see the passion fused to his own heart, the care in his eyes, the hairs on his nipples, and the saliva of his song—and to finally put a face on that ass.

Now will you be my valentine?

José Sinatra sings with SUPABAD in a tribute to James Brown, Friday, February 1, at Winston's.



RADIO DAZE



by Jim McInnes

THE NEW GEORGE CARLIN

I just watched a Lewis Black special on Comedy Central. I laughed. I love great satire!

Black, who's a baby-boomer like many of us, did a great riff on the fact that today's presidential candidates (*Giuliani*) love to scare voters by claiming that turban-and-sandal wearing dudes who live in caves are going to come to North America and kill us.

Why are politicians preaching this crap to middle-aged adults who grew up in the '50s and '60s, watching anti-Soviet propaganda?

School administrators where I grew up (Chicagoland) used to show black-and-white movies about *nuclear* (sic) destruction *all the time*. We practiced the "duck and cover" maneuver at least once a week when the sirens blew! Now, *that* was FEAR!

In his act Black pointed out that 9/11 was indeed horrible, and, yes, 2,800 lives were lost, but during the German blitz of London in 1940, 2,800 Brits were killed *every day* for two weeks!

Black also did a funny bit about America's obsession with bottled water. He said that almost every municipality had clean, fresh drinking water until the 1990s, when somebody decided it was a good idea to send a much smaller amount of quality drinking water to residents so that a much larger amount could be sent to bottlers who could dump it into petroleum-based containers, charge ten times what it was worth, and sell it at gas stations and mini-marts across the land. Spot on, Blackie!

He also did some funny stuff about the 22-hour flight from New York to New Zealand and about the travesty that is health care in the U.S. You should watch it!

NEW WORLD RECORDS

I am writing this on the evening of January 20, having just watched the Packers get beaten by the friggin' Giants and our Chargers, sunk by New England. Cry eye, my two favorite teams both lost! Who'd a-think it? At least we can say we saw the Patriots set a new record for consecutive wins.

Speaking of records, I'm not sure, but I think I may set one tomorrow when I work for three different radio stations on the same day! I will do the wake up show from 6-9am tomorrow morning on KSDS Jazz 88.3, take a nap, and then report on traffic for Jack FM (100.7) from 3:50-6:10pm, while also doing the news for "Talk Radio" on 760 KFMB from 5pm-midnight.

Got to get me some ZZZZs now.



Philosophy, Art, Culture, & Music STAGES

by Peter Bolland

THE WINTER COLD

It's a dark, drizzly winter's day and I'm nursing a bad cold. My lungs barely work, my head feels like it got hit by a train, and my body aches in places I didn't even know I had. There are no comfortable chairs in the whole house. Lying down even hurts. I'm too groggy to be productive, too jangly to sit still. TV is intolerably tedious. I can't focus my eyes on a book. I'm grumpy and I don't want to talk. Nothing holds my interest. Nothing feels right. There is nothing left to do but drift in and out of the moment, vaguely aware of two opposing truths: being sick sucks and maybe, just maybe, this is exactly what I need.

On the grand scale of human disease, a cold has to rank as one of the lowliest, least significant ailments, right down there with a stubbed toe or a paper cut. We know it's not deadly, we know it's not permanent, we know we have no real right to complain, but the fact remains—a good cold knocks you so completely off track that you simply have to retreat from the day-to-day demands of life and hide out whimpering in some dark corner until the damn thing passes.

Upon reflection, sickness, like winter itself, is a time of turning inward. All one's energies have sunk down into the soil and the outer leaves have withered away. Our skin is sallow and our eyes lifeless. Our hair is dull and flat. We shuffle like zombies between tea kettles and Kleenex boxes. We have no gifts to give. For the earth, of course, winter is a necessary time of rest and regeneration. No longer outward-turned, nature settles into its roots and restores its energies. Soon enough there will be new branches to clothe with leaves, but for now, we slumber deep within our cool, grey tombs, dead to the world.

In the archetypal hero's journey, the hero must always descend into the abyss, the underworld, to confront the monster. In the quest to be reborn into one's higher nature, one must die to old, limiting notions of self. One must leave the known—the world of competence and familiarity—and enter a darkening realm of incompetence and unfamiliarity. Then, when we are at our weakest, the monster appears. With courage, integrity, humility, and honor we summon the last of our strength and stand before it. Then, as we confront the monster without fear, a magical alchemy of transformation occurs. Through a grace beyond our understanding we are carried over the threshold on the very back of the monster we thought

was our enemy. The mysteries never end. Our enemy becomes our ally. Without this necessary journey through the underworld we would never realize our deeper nature. In other words, winter and its counterpart, sickness, are absolutely essential passages on the way to a fully realized life. Without these seasons of decay and decline there could be no bursting forth, no miraculous creation. Can a baby be born without nausea and blood-letting? We owe our very lives to pain.

It is our suffering that shapes us, that burns away our egocentric childishness. Tears and loss clarify for us three essential truths: one, that nothing is permanent; two, that our essential nature is untouched by these surface sufferings; and three, that the endless beauty of the world is only possible because of so-called "suffering." Hence suffering is really only a surface of a deep and profound birthing. When one realizes these three truths, not just intellectually but in the ground of one's being, one is awash in wave after wave of endless gratitude, even, and perhaps especially, for the things that have brought us pain.

How can we learn to recognize that our enemies, our adversaries, our sufferings are all conspiring together to help us give birth to our deeper, more authentic selves? The answer to that question is something each of us must uncover for ourselves. A good starting point would be acceptance—to learn to accept the actual conditions of our lives. To let other people be who they are. To say yes to reality. Buddha called it non-attachment or acceptance. There is great peace in the realization that all the apparent contradictions of life are actually in concert with one another. And that when we stop struggling against the universe, it begins to respond in harmonious ways. If we learned to see the enemy as a co-conspirator for our good, fear would turn into love.

In an old Hasidic story a lumberjack goes into the forest to cut down trees. Instead of cowering in fear the trees see the long wooden handle of the ax and say, "Look, one of us."

How can I learn to recognize that my enemy and I are one, my disease and I are one, and that together we are bringing forth a wonder that neither of us could do alone? How can I learn to say yes to the truth that the roots of all our future bounty lie deep within this winter cold?

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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Gabriel Sundy Brings Eclectic Style to the Applebrown Jazz Ensemble

by Paul Hormick

Here's a word for you, a word that you may hear a lot. The word is Eclectic, which might be the best way to describe the Applebrown Jazz Ensemble.

The ensemble is the brainchild of Gabriel Sundy, who plays saxophone in the band. He says, "When I'm doing a concert or putting together some music, I try to make it as interesting as possible for me, the other musicians working with me, and the audience, without getting extreme. Basically, when I make music, I make the music that I would want to listen to if I were going to a concert or show."

The music that Sundy likes to listen to is a cornucopia for the ears. When he talks about his influences, Sundy first mentions two of the greatest jazz iconoclasts: Charles Mingus and the jazz spaceman Sun Ra. But he is also influenced by the music of Duke Ellington, the Mahavishnu Orchestra, and They Might Be Giants. The result is sometimes funky, sometimes spacey, sometimes funny, and always intriguing. Like I said, it's eclectic. All the music that Applebrown performs is either Sundy's new compositions or new arrangements of material he has written before.

A look at the titles to some of the music that Sundy and Applebrown perform, such as "Ziffy Womper" and "Super Mega Ultra Deluxe," belies a seriousness that Sundy has for his music. Having earned a degree in jazz studies from San Diego State, he plans on returning there this year to pursue a master's degree in music. He is also a busy guy. The Applebrown Jazz Ensemble is just one of his musical projects. He has a musical ensemble called Bunky and another that he describes as "instrumental psychedelic progressive fusion rock band," which goes by the name of



Gabriel Sundy

Followers. His personal project, Mutantspaceboy, a collection of improvised instrumentals, will see a CD release in the summer.

Regardless of the musical configuration or setting, Sundy is continually testing new waters. "I've written a lot of music in the last few years and I'm always trying out new things in my compositions," he says. "And I guess that I have to put my ideas to the test; get out there, take a chance, book a show, see if my tunes work, challenge my own ideas, and see if I can learn something from the whole experience and grow as a musician, a composer, and as a person."

The Applebrown Jazz Ensemble will perform on Sunday, February 17, 7pm, at Dizzy's new location in the San Diego Wine and Culinary Center, 200 Harbor Drive.

John Batdorf Comes to the Canyon

by Paul Hormick

Thirty-five years ago when gas was cheap John Batdorf thought that his life as a singer songwriter was off to a great start. After auditioning with Ahmet Ertegun, the genius who made Atlantic one of the most exciting record labels, Batdorf and his partner, Mark Rodney, released three LPs in the early seventies. Almost any big name band from back then — Fleetwood Mac, the Doobie Brothers, Pure Prairie League — Batdorf and his partner opened for or performed with in some fashion.

But when the counts from the record sales came in, the results were disappointing. Despite their talents, the spotlight never stayed on the duo for very long. Batdorf and his partner split up and ceased performing.

Nonetheless Batdorf spent his career in music. He sang for movies, television, jingles, and backup vocals for Dwight Yoakum, Donna Summers, Jefferson Starship, and other notables. He also wrote songs for prominent performers and recording artists. About ten years ago he was chosen as the composer for the television series "The Promised Land," writing all the music for the show during its three-year run. He also wrote music for the series "Touched by an Angel."

Then someone asked him to go back on a stage. "I got an e-mail from someone who asked me if I would do a house concert for him and some of his friends and family. [It] seems I played at his high school back in the seventies and must have made quite an impression," Batdorf says on his website. "As nervous as I was, I did the show and suddenly realized just how great it was to perform again."

Besides a return to performing, he has recorded a couple CDs of his own. *Home Again*, his solo disk, is filled with uplifting and

heartfelt songs that feature pristine harmonies and arrangements. Batdorf sings in a high tenor. Not a crooner; his voice might be described as a strong whisper that can nonetheless reach to a full forté. At times the notes are clear, at others he sings with a bit of rock 'n' roll raspiness. Batdorf teamed up with James Lee Stanley for *All Wood and Stone*, a complete disk of Rolling Stone covers performed with acoustic guitars, bass, and percussion. Some of the interpretations are quite refreshing, particularly the song "Satisfaction," which is done in a bluesy minor key. Vocal harmonies, really good vocal harmonies — not the forte of Mick and Keith — abound. And this is the disk to listen to if you finally want to understand the words.

Okay, so gas is more than \$3.00 these days, but Batdorf's life as a singer-songwriter is finally off to a great start.



John Batdorf

John Batdorf will perform at Canyonfolk House Concerts on Saturday, February 2, 8pm. For reservations and more information, email canyonfolk@cox.net.

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Tapwater Dirt Road Rendezvous

by Simeon Flick

Phish left a huge void in the musical continuum when they disbanded in August of 2004. They had after all been the only jam band to truly step up and fill the vacuum left by the Grateful Dead after Jerry Garcia died in 1995. No acts before or since — including superlative, genre-blending, clandestinely drug-touting, improvisation-oriented groups such as Leftover Salmon, Widespread Panic, Little Feat, or even Blues Traveler — have been able to duplicate the same kind of sustained commercial success that the aforementioned bands enjoyed. As with any widely embraced group, it takes more than a galvanizing live show and the usual pervading instrumental virtuosity for a jam band to break through: you have to have good songwriting and lots of charismatic synergy. If *Dirt Road Rendezvous* is any indication, San Diego's Tapwater could easily pick up where Phish left off and carry that torch into the new millennium.

Two albums in and a drummer short, Tapwater have gone back to basics on their third disc. They managed to cut their own version of *Workingman's Dead*, only completely live and on the fly between tours at Sven-Erik Seaholm's Kitsch & Sync Production. It's astounding to think these songs were recorded live by four men on acoustic instruments in one room, but Tapwater knows how to fill their space; everyone is singing, with lead vocals passed between Tim Jones (accordion and electric piano), Steve Moore (banjo and percussion), and Ravi Laird (guitar), with Wes Elliott on upright bass and vocal harmonies. After a while you won't miss the dearth of percussion, especially not with the versatile Moore transforming his banjo into a drum with hands and wire brushes.

Intensely catchy positive energy emanates from every track, whether they're pining for spurned love over a gypsy groove on "Backburner," "Come Undone," and "Love Please Come Home," or surreptitiously rejoicing in the Beatles-esque "Naughty Girlfriend," or cracking up with the Didley zydeco of "Nonsense Song." This CD magically manages to bottle the distilled communal energy of a summer Saturday into ten smile-inducing gems with a wide appeal.

It is refreshing to hear a talented ensemble taking a risk and recording live; *Dirt Road Rendezvous* makes Tapwater the jam band to watch, reacquainting the listener with how music was — and should be — enjoyed before technology took over.
www.tapwater.net
www.myspace.com/tapwatermusic



D.A. & the Hitmen Lucky Dog

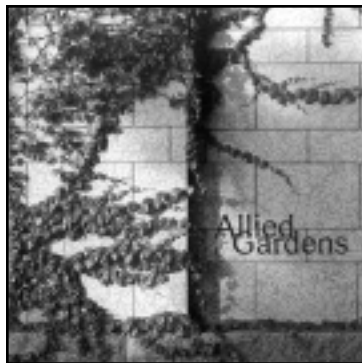
by Mike Alvarez

It is readily apparent from the get-go that anyone listening to this CD will have a really good time. The funky opener "It's a Beautiful Day" is a blast of James Brown-style R&B that sets the tone for the rest of the album. Full of confident bravura and attitude, it lays down an irresistible groove complemented by horns and harmonica. And it never lets up from here. The title track that follows is a boisterous exercise in rhythm punctuated by Lance Dieckmann's aggressive vocals and Paul Alvarado's soulful guitars. All throughout, Dieckmann throws down some mean harmonica lines that go down well with Alvarado's articulate and muscular ax-manship.

On a technical level, I'd have to say that these guys are top-notch musicians. The entire band displays a tight looseness that can only have been achieved through relentless gigging. The rhythm section is right on the money, creating a seamless backdrop that makes the soloists sound even better. Everything is tastefully arranged and performed, from the guitar and harmonica solos to the horn blasts. Yet while *Lucky Dog* is a professionally produced recording, there is a rawness to the music that lends it weight and credibility. There's a live feel to this effort that's hard to capture in the studio. These guys really nailed it.

The album never gets stale; the energy level is consistently up and the songs are refreshingly varied. These guys really know their way around the blues and it shows. They'll take a turn doing rockabilly on a tune like "Bring It On," then switch gears to walking blues on "Mrs. Sunshine." "Empty Lives" is a classic example of slow blues in a minor key. For me, the most memorable songs are the falling-down funny "Hohner for You Baby" with its bawdy double entendres, and the swaggering "Single Life," a tune that lets you know "that's just the way it is" in downtown San Diego's bachelor scene. They have really gone to great lengths to write interesting lyrics. There are no throw-away clichés.

On occasion, flashes of Stevie Ray Vaughan, Leslie West, or Government Mule might surface in their sound, and that's definitely a good thing. With the blues, one's influences are expected to show, and they have obviously been listening to some real masters of the form. This is as fine an example of electric blues-rock as you could ever hope to find. It's got energy, variety, tons of attitude, and it's even a little scary at times. When D.A. and the Hit Men roll into town to party, either join them or get out of their way.



Allied Gardens

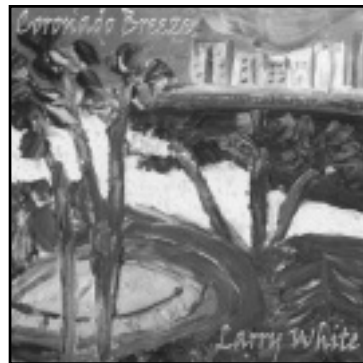
by Craig Yerkes

Allied Gardens is an acoustic trio comprised of San Diego musical mainstays Peter Bolland, Sven-Erik Seaholm, and Michael Tiernan. This mix of talent works very well here because the three members achieve a nice mix of individuality and complementary teamwork. Listening to their new self-titled CD, you can sense the musical chemistry and camaraderie, and it sure sounds like these guys had a great time laying down these tracks.

Bolland takes on the role of country storyteller and balladeer, Seaholm is the hippie rocker getting in touch with his acoustic mojo, and Tiernan brings his trademark folksy, feel-good, spiritual pop to the party. Peter Bolland's lovely "Home in These Hills" is first up, and my only warning is that this tune might make you think that this disc will lead you into some seriously countrified territory. This track has so much backwoods country flava' that after I listened, I looked in the mirror to find that my beard had grown out and my business casual attire had been replaced by denim overalls (a tractor also appeared in my driveway and my dog was transfigured into Old Yeller). While the Bolland tracks certainly do dish out the country twang (very effectively, I might add), don't think that the whole album will follow the template of the opener. The clear single of the disc is track two, Tiernan's breezy and awesomely infectious surf folk joint, "Easy." It sounds to me like the recording technique employed here (and on the rest of the record) was to simply sit around a mic or two and do the thing live. "Easy" suits that laid-back, no frills recording style just right, and this feel-good tune might just find itself quite a large audience if given the chance.

Next up is my personal favorite track, "Red Shoulders" by Sven-Erik Seaholm. I was a bit annoyed at myself when my first reaction to hearing this song was to get a bit weepy. Then I went back and listened again and again and this song positively hypnotizes me every time. Seaholm's haunting lyrics, melody, and vocal delivery, paired with Bolland's gut-wrenchingly passionate guitar solos (the way he slides up to those notes...!), make for a powerful cocktail of heartache and longing. I absolutely love this track and how effectively it conveys the idea of coming to grips with the fact that while past glories can never be fully recaptured, you have to push on and look for new passions. "Carry Me On" is my favorite Bolland track and is reminiscent of vintage Eagles and/or Jackson Browne. Nobody does this stuff better than Peter Bolland. On the entire disc, the harmony vocals are tight and the voices blend very well. I loved the guitar solos (handled mostly by the ever tasteful and robustly gritty Bolland with Tiernan chipping in a bit too) and the rhythm guitar playing is also excellent.

A beautifully confident rendition of Dylan's "I Shall Be Released" is the perfect choice for the closer and features all three on lead vocals, plus a stereo panned right/left solo guitar trade-off. I expected this disc to be stellar, considering the collective talent of this band, and I was anything but disappointed. The musical mosaic created by these three artists is sure to appeal to a wide variety of listeners. This is one of those discs that you will keep coming back to.



Larry White Coronado Breeze

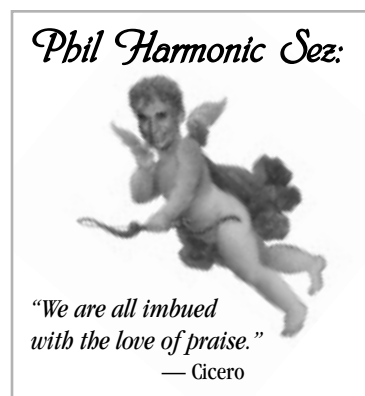
by Mike Alvarez

The genre of music known as "smooth jazz" is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it's very pleasant to the ears with its well-considered arrangements and melodic tendencies. It is always impeccably produced and performed, resulting in a generally soothing effect on the psyche. It usually calls up the imagery and emotions of idyllic environments and good times. On the other hand, it is also regarded as somewhat generic and bland, as it presents no real challenge to listeners. It can very easily be relegated to the background without losing too much of its musical value, rather like sonic wallpaper. Jazz purists have been known to treat it with some measure of disdain.

Larry White's *Coronado Breeze* makes no pretense about being anything other than what it is. As the liner notes say, "Relieve the stress of the day, relax and enjoy!" and on that score it succeeds admirably. It is a textbook example of a smooth jazz album, hitting all the right notes. He and co-writer Margaret White have created songs that contain classic smooth jazz chord progressions, rhythms, and instrumental licks that slide into place with no muss or fuss. They just feel right, as if they were predestined to follow one another. There is a nice mix of bouncy, fast-paced numbers along with more leisurely pieces and beautiful ballads.

The players exhibit a very high level of musicianship. Every note is executed expertly and cleanly. Every instrument is crisply recorded and intelligently placed in the mix, resulting in a well-balanced and multi-dimensional ensemble sound. Bass and drums are punchy, underscoring the sparkling guitars and keyboards. The album's production is immaculate and the arrangements are well-considered.

A really nice touch is the amount of local color that informs the song titles. Many a San Diegan would break into a smile at songs called "Lazy Day in La Jolla," "Dog Beach," "Coronado Breeze," and "A Night in Old Town." *Coronado Breeze* would probably make a very nice soundtrack for a drive around our fair city. "Dog Beach" is particularly charming, with its light funk groove and the only vocal performance on the album (a dog barking excitedly after being asked "Who wants to go to Dog Beach?"). The other purely instrumental tracks in this collection do an excellent job of evoking images of the more touristy spots in San Diego. Anyone craving a pleasant musical tour of America's Finest City would do well to kick off their shoes and spin *Coronado Breeze*.



Justin James Sun Drenched

by Tim Mudd

As a lad growing up in Europe and having never visited California, all I had was an ideal: eternal sunshine glistening golden drops over a mysterious blue ocean, palm trees swaying to a silent melody in the breeze, long sandy beaches, and perfectly tanned individuals who appeared to float freely a few inches from the ground when they weren't laughing in their convertibles. The endless re-runs of "Baywatch" every Saturday afternoon that had London hooked during my youth probably didn't help in deterring this fantasy.

After a decade on the West Coast, I've discovered the day-to-day reality but still get a glimpse every now and again. Canadian born singer-songwriter Justin James, on the other hand, appears to have done a sterling job in keeping the dream alive. Sun, sand, palm trees; it's all here and it's all so utterly *American*. When I slipped *Sun Drenched* into the CD player in my vintage red Corvette, adjusted my Aviators, and cruised down the Coast Highway (hey, I have my own ways of keeping the dream alive), all that imagery came flooding back like a perfect curl on Venice Beach.

If you're searching for deeper meaning in James' transplanted soul through his lyrics, you'll likely be disappointed; the visions he invokes are highly visceral, however this carefree consciousness needs little extra depth when placed in front of this disc's clean and orchestrated grooves, expertly produced, engineered and mixed by Tim Feehan who also appears to deserve considerable songwriting credit on the disc.

Stylistically, the CD's ten tracks draw strong comparisons to those of America's misplaced Golden Boy, John Mayer. James' compositions such as "Right Here, Right Now" and "We Can Do Anything" could be Mayer originals from the days of his smash-debut *Room for Squares*. There are, however, flourishes of West Coast funk on "Dance Alone" and Fleetwood Mac vibes of 1970s' Los Angeles on "Summertime," which do well to divert James' intentions from "wannabe" status. "Seven Days" is prime time-ready for the scene when boy looks wistfully into the horizon, while girl sheds a tear over the one picture captured during their week-long love story in the OC. "California" is similarly suited to the end of the episode when they both forget about their faux heartbreak and jump into the convertible with their laughing friends as the credits roll.

Now I'm staring wistfully at the lowering sun and thinking about what it means to be a pasty-white Englishman surrounded by Southern Californian contradictions. *Sun Drenched* does move me a little closer to an innocent ideal which, although unattainable for many, can certainly manifest a nostalgic, static-free moment and an easy smile, which, lord knows, we could all use. Many have built entire careers on a lot less than this CD has to offer and if this is all Justin James brings to the table, he can have his California as long as he doesn't mind me dropping in on his wave once in a while.

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NAMM SHOW 2008



Photo: Liz Abbott

Brian Wilson signing autographs @ the Gibson booth



Photo: Lois Bach

Edgar Winter



Photo: Lois Bach

Original Scottville Squirrel Barker members Tommy Presley, Larry Murrar, Ed Douglas, Chris Hillman



Photo: Lois Bach

John Jorgenson



Photo: Steve Covault

Cool ukes



Photo: Liz Abbott

Steve White @ the AER booth



Photo: Lois Bach

Greg & Janet Deering



Photo: Liz Abbott

David Page



Photo: Lois Bach

Guitars for girls at the Daisy Guitar booth

ELSEWHERE AROUND TOWN

SVENSONGS TRIBUTE



Photo: Dennis Anderson

Kenny Newberry @ Sin City Revue



Photo: Liz Abbott

Second Delivery @ Urban Solace's bluegrass brunch



Photo: John Hancock

Marcia Claire performs with her family



Photo: John Hancock

Honoree Sven-Erik Seaholm



Photo: Steve Covault

Rod Worth @ Bella Nova



Photo: Steve Covault

James Martin St. Laurent @ Bella Nova



Photo: John Hancock

Nisha Rose



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Brooklyn



Photo: John Hancock

Christopher Dale



Photo: Dennis Anderson

Barbara Nesbit w/ Mike Hayter & Bill Coomes @ Handlery



Photo: John Hancock

Simeon Flick



Photo: John Hancock

Marie Haddad



Photo: John Hancock

ButterFace



Photo: Steve Covault

Jack Davidson & Dan Strum @ Bella Nova



Photo: Steve Covault

Sweet Joyce Ann



Photo: John Hancock

The Flimz



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