

T SAN DIEGO ROUBADOOR

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



September 2008

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Steve Kader, Adams Avenue Street Fair Talent Buyer



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

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Email your gig date, including location, address, and time to info@sandiegotroubadour.com by the 23rd of the month prior to publication.

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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.

EDGAR MEYER & CHRIS THILE: Hitting the Highs and Lows

by Paul Hormick

The mandolin is a small instrument. It produces high bright notes, which are often part of the "high" in the high lonesome sound of bluegrass. On the other hand, the double bass is large, with a deep resonate voice. Its warm sound anchors the symphony orchestra. It is also the center of a jazz ensemble, providing the pulse and beat.

So what do you get when you pair these two very different instruments, large and small, high and low, together? In the hands of bassist Edgar Meyer and mandolinist Chris Thile the possibilities are endless. The duo is currently touring their two-man concert show and plan on releasing a CD this month.

Meyer, one of the finest virtuoso bassists in the world, first came to prominence back in the eighties as a member of the progressive bluegrass band Strength in Numbers. Classically trained on the bass since the age of five, Meyer performs and records the great works of Bottesini, Dragonetti, and Koussevitzky, as well as his own classical compositions. In 2000 he released a recording of Bach cello suites that he transcribed for the bass.

A natural collaborator, Meyer formed a successful classical/Appalachia trio with Yo-Yo Ma and Mark O'Connor in 2000. More recently he has performed with Mike Marshall, Joshua Bell, and Sam Bush as a quartet, which fuses bluegrass and classical music. In his current project with Thile, Meyer appreciates the differences between the bass and mandolin. "I like to play with the bow, and the mandolin gives a good contrast to what I'm doing, both that it's an instrument that is plucked and strummed, as well as it's in a much higher register," he says.

Working as a duo also gives the musicians the opportunity to stretch themselves

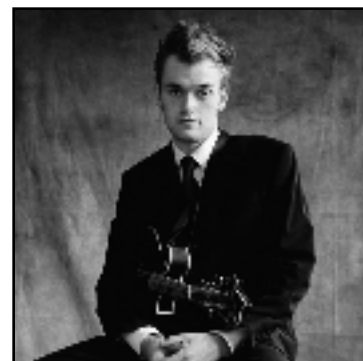
and play as much as they please. "What's nice about this, both Chris and I like to get a little frantic when we play, playing a lot of notes," says Meyer. "In a duo you can do that. It's almost like a solo performance. The larger the ensemble, the fewer notes you get to play. It also presents a difficulty. With only two instruments you really have to work hard to keep things interesting, but Chris and I enjoy the challenge."

San Diegans know Chris Thile as the North County native who wowed bluegrass audiences as a teen with his band Nickel Creek. At the age of 16 he won the IBMA award for Album of the Year. He has recorded and performed with Nickel Creek until their disbandment last year and has released several his own solo recordings. Last year the BBC awarded him the honor of Folk Musician of the Year. Besides his work with Meyer, his current project is the Punch Brothers, a group that the *New York Times* describes as "American country-classical chamber music."

For Thile, his work with Meyer is a mix of the familiar and new territory to explore. "It all feels incredibly natural for me. My father is a bassist and I grew up playing with him," he says. "It's also one of the most promising combos I've worked with. Both the mandolin and bass can get covered up by other instruments and that doesn't happen here. We're not in each other's way. We can explore the full range of our instruments."

Thile's relationship with Meyer goes back several years. The two met at the Rockygrass music festival in Colorado when Thile was still a teen and struck up a friendship. Later, when Thile was choosing which college he wanted to attend, he and his parents talked to Meyer to see which school would be best for nurturing his musical talents. They first tried performing as a duo about five years ago.

The two musicians co-wrote several



Edgar Meyer (above) and Chris Thile

compositions for this project and will also perform a few pieces previously penned by Meyer. Besides the compositions, Meyer and Thile plan on including improvisational sections in their concerts. Meyer says, "What we're shooting for at times is we want to reach points in the program where we aren't sure where the music is going to go." Thile adds, "We're comfortable being uncomfortable. By that I mean we give a lot of support and get a lot of support from each other. It gives us the security to go out there and push ourselves. We wind up with all sorts of musical scenarios."

Edgar Meyer and Chris Thile will perform on Sunday, September 28, 3pm, at the newly renovated Balboa Theatre, 854 4th Ave. in downtown San Diego.





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Country Joe McDonald Brings the American Journey of Woody Guthrie to San Diego

by Terry Roland

Of the many symbolic moments of the late '60s, arguably none captured the frustration, anger, and absurdity of the times more than when Country Joe McDonald stood before 500,000 people in Bethel, New York, in 1969 and in an attempt to get the attention of the large crowd, led a pep rally-call and response to, "Gimme an F . . .," and you know the rest. That moment, neatly segued into a solo version of his controversial song of protest, humor, and irony, "Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-to-Die Rag." Later, immortalized in the classic epic documentary *Woodstock*, it would become a defining moment of the times with the typical sharp wit and tragic insight from this one-of-a-kind folksinger. This is an insight the singer-writer can still convey in the current national political and cultural scene.

Today, Country Joe McDonald has remained true to his political and musical convictions. Like activists and ground breakers of any era, this has come with a price. Although his musical career began simply enough, playing folk, country, and ragtime music, Joe soon found himself in the middle of the controversial Vietnam era. As a veteran of the navy, he took personally what the troops of 1969 were going through in a war where so many young Americans were dying . . . and with no end in sight. With his band Country Joe and the Fish, their concerts and music would become symbols of the protest movement of that day. Although other than "Fixin' to Die Rag," the band's music was not politically themed, they became a rally point for the antiwar movement. Joe became friends with Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, which then linked him to the radical political left, which was under investigation. During the late '60s and early '70s, Joe was unjustly censored, banned from concert venues, and, at one point, even under FBI investigation.

Nowadays Country Joe McDonald's journey has not changed from his roots. Like his contemporary Neil Young, he is serving to remind younger singer-songwriters that folk music is about social action and songs relevant to the day, especially when it's time to protest a war many view as unnecessary.

Country Joe is not a veteran of a past era; he is still in the struggle he fought four decades ago. Still, he's come a long way. He offers a website chock full of spiritual wisdom, resources for veterans, anti-war information, music, and stories of the '60s. Based on this site, his continued involvement with music and the way he has engaged with some of the most important and compassionate causes of our times, he has followed through on the ideals he helped to symbolize back in the Woodstock days. (www.countryjoe.com)

The Country Joe website suggests that is a man of true diversity and many dimensions. He's like a tree with many branches, but firmly rooted in the earth.

Joe has put together a tour paying tribute to another folk-singing activist: Woody Guthrie. This is not the first time he has paid musical tribute to Woody. In 1968, he became the first folk singer of his generation to release a tribute album of Woody's songs titled *Thinking of Woody Guthrie*. Since that time multiple tributes to Woody have been released. However, it's worthwhile to note, these projects were completed while it was safe to do so, now that Woody has emerged with a sense of folklore and legend as the man who wrote, "This Land Is Your Land." But few know that Country Joe McDonald was the first to ignore the commercial and political ramifications of 1968, showing admiration for a folksinger who was uncelebrated during his lifetime and who, during the McCarthy era, was regarded a Communist. Indeed, Woody's conviction and passion seems a missing key in today's public arena. So, Country Joe has chosen to set his ego aside



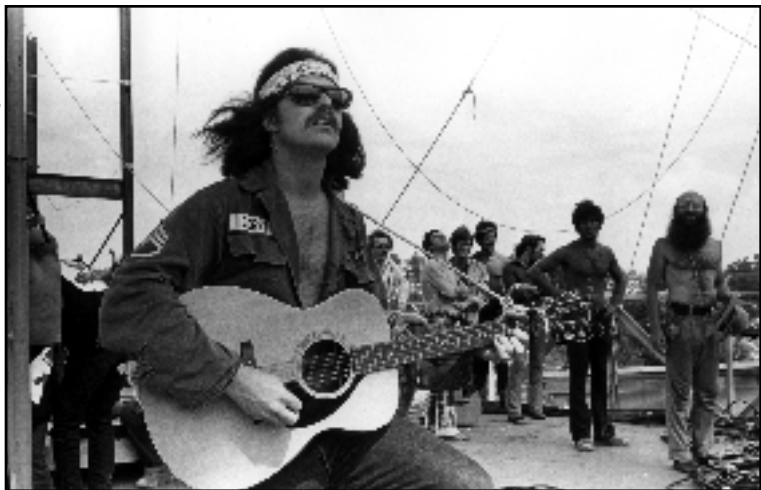
Country Joe McDonald

and give the real Woody Guthrie time back in front of an audience, which is really where both folk singers belong.

With this current tour, Country Joe returns full circle to one of his major influences. Initially, he was asked by the Steinbeck Center in Salinas, California, to do a live show to support the Woody Guthrie exhibit coming to the museum. Rather than just getting up and performing a series of familiar Guthrie songs, he put together a rich, story-driven show full of known and lesser known songs covering the diversity of the music of Woody Guthrie. The show has been released as a live CD called simply *A Tribute to Woody Guthrie*. This CD, like the show, covers stories from *Bound for Glory* and *Woody Sez*, along with seldom heard songs like "Vigilante Man"

Since his beginnings Country Joe's legacy has been the fusion of many various forms of art, philosophy, spirituality, and social activism. It's easy to see how his love for Woody Guthrie has inspired his compassion

Photo: Jim Marshall



Country Joe at Woodstock, 1969

for others, his continued peaceful dissension, and his fascination with the history of our times.

Country Joe McDonald's A Tribute to Woody Guthrie will perform on Saturday, September

27, 7:30pm at the San Dieguito United Methodist Church, 170 Calle Magdalena, Encinitas. For further information, call (858) 566-4040 or visit <http://www.sdfolkheritage.org>

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Recordially, Lou Curtiss

LET'S PUT ON A SHOW!

Up until about 1972, a Lou Curtiss concert meant that I'd talk Bill Nunn at the Heritage or the guys at In the Alley to let me use the facility for someone I was bringing into town who wasn't going to be able to make it to one of the Folk Festivals. Sometimes I'd use a hall or a church facility; I even used the Puppet Theater in Balboa Park for concerts. In the late '60s and early '70s we brought people like Mance Lipscomb, Big Joe Williams, Johnny Shines, Bukka White, the Scragg Family, Sam Chatmon, and co-sponsored Howlin' Wolf, B.B. King, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, T Bone Walker, Jesse Fuller, and Lightnin' Hopkins. We also did a fair amount of then-San Diego artists like Sam Hinton, Curt Bouterse, Kathy Larisch and Carol McComb, the Blue String Grass Boys, and others.

Along about 1972 was a bad time for acoustic music in San Diego. That year saw the Heritage (in Mission Beach), Bifrost Bridge (in La Mesa), In the Alley (in Escondido), and the Candy Company (on El Cajon Blvd. on the San Diego-La Mesa border) all close their doors. I had just moved Folk Arts Rare Records from our first location for five years at 3753 India Street to our second five-year location at 3743 5th Ave. I had tried a house concert where Virginia and I lived during the India Street years with bluesmen Sam Chatmon and Thomas E. Shaw and it went all right with folks sitting on the floor, so I figured that with all these places closing, I could do concerts in the store for awhile and keep things going until some new coffeehouses opened up. It'd also give me a chance to listen to people who might be of use in the series of Folk Festivals we were then doing at SDSU. So that first weekend I had Fiddlin' Red Simpson and the Old Scratch Band doing vintage fiddle and old time banjo tunes from the 19th century and about 20 people in to see them on a Friday and Saturday night. During the weeks that followed I had Jim Ringer and Mary McCaslin, Martin Henry, Guy Carawan, Ray and Ina Patterson, Sam Chatmon, Phil Gross, Thomas E. Shaw, Robert Jeffery, Curt Bouterse, and others. We started Wednesday night hoots to get some new faces in the mix and that brought us W.B. (Bruce) Reid, John Bosley, and lots more. Because we were an old timey record shop, we didn't really have to depend on a big crowd and that allowed us to take chances with booking. We could book an unaccompanied ballad singer like Katie Waldon, or a duo who played along with a reel-to-reel tape

recorder called Rick and Joe, obscure old timey string bands like the Fern Street Irregulars, the Official Banglestein Memorial String Band, or a group just getting its start like the soon to be famous Normal Heights Lounge Lizards.

The concert years at Folk Arts Rare Records also had its share of people just traveling through like blues guitar picker Gordon Piper, L.A. folks like Ken Shaw and the Korn Family, and long-time San Diego residents like our own resident Yorkshireman Johnny Walker, singer of Australian songs Reed Moran, Irish piper and accordion player Dave Page (grandfather of Gregory), and, of course, Sam Hinton. I remember a hot lady guitar picker at one of our hoots and I asked her if she'd like to do a weekend. She said, "Well, yes, but those are the only five songs I know." I offered to make her a tape of some similar bluesy stuff (i.e., some Memphis Minnie and others) and within a month she came by and told me she was ready. That was Lani Kurnik's first appearance on stage. I've lost count of the number of festivals and concerts she's done for me since (for the last 20 years or so, she's gone by the handle of Del Rey). Tom Waits did a couple of concerts for me in late 1973 and early 1974 (and was just getting his second LP out around that time). Tom was joined by Bob Webb, another fine musician with roots in Southern California and on one song by Jack Tempchin. Jack also played some solo dates at the shop. He even wrote a song called "Folk Arts Baby," which I still have a copy of. Why he's never recorded it is beyond me. It's surely one of his very best. Right up there with "Peaceful Easy Feeling."

Those years were good for old time musicians to pass along tunes to the younger guys. Vintage bluesmen like Sam Chatmon and Robert Jeffery passed along tunes, picking styles, and old songs to young musicians like Lani "Del Rey" Kurnik, W.B. Reid, Joe Gwaltney, and Andy Gallaher. Old time Irish musician Dave Page taught a younger generation of Irish music pickers like John Tuohy, Ian Law, Judy Lipnik, and others a lot of good old tunes. When ever Fresno's Kenny Hall was in town he'd play at Folk Arts and always pass along a lot of old time tunes to the likes of the Lounge Lizards (Mark Poschman, Sara Kerr, Mike Schway, Carlos Calabi), the Banglesteins (Dennis Squier, Stan Smith, Terry Huston), Fern Street (Sue Halgedahl, Alan Glasscoe), and Kenny's own group, which often included Joe Gwaltney, Brian Steeger, Pam Ostergren, and all of the above (sometimes there were more musicians in the shop than audience. That was all right

though, since during those times it was about picking not making money. We could always pass the hat for beer and there was Oscar, the big Folk Arts Coffee Pot – always full and free.

The Folk Arts Rare Records concerts went on until 1976 when my son Ben was born and we needed some space for him at the store. We moved the concerts to Orango's vegetarian restaurant on Washington Street in Mission Hills. The last concert at the store was cowboy singer Glenn Ohrlin from Mountain View, Arkansas, who came out for the 1976 Folk Festival. The first concert at Orango's was ragtime guitar picker William Kidd and we had quite a lineup there over the next three or four years, including master old time banjo man Art Rosenbaum, singer and melodeon player from England Dave Surman, Hawaiian slack key player Tom McClellan, protest songster Ruthie Gorton, the Rhythm Rascals (W.B. Reid, Agi Ban, and Jay Waelder), folk songster Bill Staines, stride piano man George Winston, and a whole lot more up until shortly after Folk Arts Rare Records move to Adams Ave in late 1977. By that time some new coffee houses were opening up (The Old Time Cafe in North County and Drowsy Maggie's in North Park).

Others who played the Folk Arts or Orango's shows included Ray Bierl, Bonnie Jefferson, Tom "Tomcat" Courtney and Henry Ford Thompson, Bill Herman, Joe Gwaltney, the La Jolla Civic Country Dance Orchestra, the New Honky Tonk Band, Andy Gallaher, Patty Hall, Louis Major, Karen Nyzeli, groups like Old Town, Graham and Ginnie Wickham, David Evans, and the notorious Oak Farts Ramblers.

I took about six months off from concerts got situated in Normal Heights and the pastor of the Methodist Church asked if I wanted to do concerts there. Well, I sort of liked the idea of being able to book people who deserved exposure (maybe those a bit more traditional than those getting work) so I said, "Yup, I'm your man," and we started a concert series at the church (with coffee and home baked cookies) and some real good music. We did a concert with England's Frankie Armstrong, with old

timey cowboy topical songwriter Red River Dave McEnery (author of topical tunes like "Amelia Earhart's Last Flight" and "When Old Bing Crosby Said Goodbye"). We did a whole lot of other stuff there (including a Sea Chantey Festival). Along about 1979 Steve Lavere came to me with the idea of a San Diego Blues and Black Music Heritage Festival to be held at the Church, featuring only San Diego artists. We got Rufus and Martha to cater it with their wonderful barbeque and artists to play, including Tomcat Courtney, Curry Lee Pigg, Ervin "Big Daddy" Rucker, Thomas E. Shaw, Robert "Rock Me" Jeffery, Bonnie Jefferson, Henry Ford Thompson, Winifred Stewart, Les Gumbs, Joe Murphy, Roger Belloni, Brother Jerome Lee and his Sanctified Saxophone, the Beams of Faith, Sister Helen Sanders and Family, Nat Dove, Minor "T-Bone" Terrell, Sister Charlie Mae Ralph and Family, Lois Still, Lani Kurnik, Sam Smart, Andy Gallaher, James Earl Wilkins, Jesse Wilkins Jr., Fro Brigham's Preservation Band, and a lot more. It was quite a weekend, which I think could have been a continuing event if it weren't for certain members of the church congregation that didn't want black folk in their church (this was 1979). At any rate, they fired their minister for letting this show happen and the concerts in the church came to an end, too. I always felt bad about losing that guy his job. I remember he said, "Well, at least I got to eat some really good barbecue and hear some great music."

So that was the end of the concerts for



Photo: Bill Richardson
Lou Curtiss

awhile. I still had the folk festivals going at SDSU and we tried a second Blues and Black Music Heritage Festival the next year at SDSU with most of the local guys and headliners Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Lowell Fulson, and Roy "Good Rockin' Tonight" Brown. Almost nobody came to this fabulous show. It's always been one of the big mysteries of my "let's put on a show" career. If you were around then and were a blues fan you missed everyone at the top of their form, but nobody came, so SDSU gave up on the idea of a San Diego Blues Festival. After that I did an occasional house concert and after the first 20 San Diego Folk Festivals ran out in 1987, I did a series of concerts on Robinson Street that included dates by Sam Hinton, Texas Lil, Fred Heath, Kenny Hall, and others. It wasn't until 1994 that Scott Kessler came to me with the idea of booking the Adams Ave Street Fair and I came up with The Adams Ave Roots Festival. And that's a tale for another time.

Recordially,
Lou Curtiss

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BIG TIME OPERATOR: A Blast from the Past

by John Philip Wylie

I have always felt fortunate to have grown up in the 1960s at the same time the Beatles and the British Invasion groups were revolutionizing popular music and culture. If I had a dollar for every hour that I spent glued to my transistor radio between 1964 and the early 1970s, I would now be a very rich man. While my parents somewhat appreciated the talents of the Beatles, they, like me, never lost their enthusiasm for the music of their youth.

It was, after all, music that initially brought them together. They first laid eyes upon each other in a random 1938 meeting inside a Newark, New Jersey, music store that featured music at 78rpm. The music that sparked that chance meeting was the swing music of the Big Band Era.

Growing up, my brother and sister and I couldn't help but hear the sounds of Glenn Miller, Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Cole Porter, and Frank Sinatra. If you had asked me then what I thought of it, I would have probably told you, not much. But age has mellowed this baby boomer to the point where I have come to appreciate both my parents and the Big Band Era music, which I will forever associate with them.

In the 1930s and 1940s for just a few dollars, it was possible to head out to a local

theater or dance hall on weekends and hear the leading bands of the day performing live. My parents enjoyed dance concert performances of all of the aforementioned bands on many occasions along with lots of others.

In July, when I learned that San Diego's own award-winning big band, Big Time Operator was performing in La Jolla, I thought this might be the perfect opportunity to recreate what my parents' weekends must have been like during those carefree years just before the war.

Arriving at La Jolla Cove, we encountered a colorful sea of umbrellas and blankets surrounding the stage and more than a thousand music lovers assembled on a warm and humid Sunday afternoon. A few of them no doubt were alive during the heyday of the big bands, but most were decades younger.

Big Time Operator, a ten-piece band consisting of three saxophones, two trumpets, a trombone, a stand-up bass, a keyboard, drums, and vocalist Warren Lovell proceeded to fill the air with the vibrant and melodic hits of yesteryear. Timeless classics like "In the Mood," "Moonlight Serenade," "Fly Me to the Moon," and "Come Rain or Come Shine" were faithfully recreated to the delight of BTO's enthusiastic audience. Lovell particularly impressed with the way

he nailed the unique phrasing and rich tenor of Frank Sinatra's voice on songs like "I Thought About You" and "South of the Border."

Progressing through their set list, many of the songs spotlighted individual members of this highly polished ensemble and gave them the opportunity to shine during their solos. The oppressive humidity didn't dampen the spirits of the 20 or so couples who used the occasion to display their best jitterbugging moves on an improvised dance floor.

The band concluded their second of two generous sets with a rousing rendition of "Sing, Sing, Sing," complete with a magnificent extended Mike Holguin drum solo. Incredibly, as the song was drawing to a close, there was a coincidental flyover of two WWII era aircraft. The timing couldn't have been more perfect. Afterward, I spoke with Lovell who, I was surprised to learn, is a member of the San Diego Police Department when he is not making beautiful music.

Lovell was not yet born when the big bands were all the rage, but he was attracted to the music early on.

"I think I first heard it as a result of my interest in WWII history. I remember my first album had Glenn Miller in his Army Air Corps outfit. After listening to that, I really



Big Time Operator

started getting into Swing. [Years later] I was trying to find a job as a big band singer and I found that there are almost no big bands to pick from. I tried out for one and was hired as their back-up singer, but that wasn't good enough. I wanted to sing more than just back-ups." Lovell said.

Undaunted, he formed his own band and for more than a decade they have been entertaining outdoor audiences (Pacific Beach Summer Concerts on the Green, La Jolla Concerts by the Sea, Carlsbad Concerts), benefit audiences (Rancho Bernardo H.S. Music Boosters, Museum of Music Making, Autism Foundation), and music lovers at numerous corporate events.

BTO performs a cross section of musical styles from the 1930s to the present day, including a few originals, but their bread and butter remains the timeless classics of the Big Band Era.

"We do mostly covers because that is what our audience and clientele prefer, but we have done some originals," Lovell said. "I think it is pretty difficult to surpass what some of the best writers have already provided us. This timeless music spans all generations. I have met some really nice people through it. One of them that I met right here four or five years ago is WWII veteran Warren Engleman. He really enjoys the music as do my young friends that have been dancing to it. It's got a really good beat and it is well written."

The practical considerations for main-

taining a ten-piece band can be a challenge.

"You need a big venue to house us. There are not a lot of venues that can support more than four or five pieces," Lovell said. "It has taken many years for us to build up our band's reputation but at this point through word of mouth, our name is out there. If people want us for a show, we are available. Most of our work is corporate, but the public shows are a lot of fun too. Those introduce our music to a whole new crowd and I think that is important."

With a payroll that includes ten musicians plus support personnel, BTO is naturally forced to focus on the more lucrative corporate events. As a result, their appearances before the general public are fairly limited and tend to be clustered in the summer. They do however have three CDs to their credit and they are beginning to work on a fourth. It is still months away from completion, but once it is finished Lovell hopes to have its CD release party at Tio Leo's in Linda Vista.

Lovell performs with his vocal coach and sans orchestra frequently on Wednesday through Saturday nights at Chula Vista's Butcher Shop when his SDPD job permits.

"My two careers are completely different and completely separate. It's the same adrenaline rush, just a different venue," he quipped.

For additional information on Big Time Operator, visit www.bigtimeoperator.com



Phil Harmonic Sez:

"The object of education is to prepare the young to educate them selves throughout their lives."

— Robert M aynard Hutchins

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ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST

by Derek Shaw

At the turn of the century, San Diego's alternative music was hardly progressing; instead, the indie circuit was bogged down with screamo hacks, surf punkers, and emo trios. It was lethargic, stratified, and stagnant – complacent to reside comfortably in Hollywood's shadow.

But by 2005, the tide was rising and anew wave crashed down, drowning the faux-metal heads and leaving a mascara smeared trail in its wake. Ironically, the refreshing swell came in the form of a dusty tornado. The Vision of a Dying World made its way from Las Vegas and swept down the coast, forcibly compelling this surf town to embrace its cowboy roots.

As opposed to L.A. where bands are so cutthroat and competitive, San Diego's scene is now very cohesive and collaborative as many bands swap members and book shows for each other. Vision helped sparked that sense of community and continuity.

"For being a relatively small city compared to L.A. or New York, San Diego has more talented bands than anywhere in the country, and they're all friends," Jackson Milgaten believes. "Audiences are respectful and interested here, and the local press continuously surprises me with their level of support to artists."

Vision started out humbly with the type of tunes you'd raise your kids to... at least if you're a hippy at heart. It was folksy mountain music from the bowels of the desert with acoustic anthems, soulful melodies and olde-tyme merriment. Their first album, *Feeling Alive*, was quirky, whimsical, soft, and airy – endearing innocence they've never fully abandoned.

Vision's next full-length CD, *The Grammar Lamb*, received even greater critical praise, receiving a third San Diego Music Award nomination. No longer satisfied to be

a chill folk band, its cabaret playfulness, western nuance, and reverberated guitar work elevated these visionaries to the top of the totem pole.

There were still remnants of Sufjan and Wilco, but the presentation was becoming more raw and in your face. Their vaudeville tendencies were all the more apparent while the songs became increasingly upbeat, merely foreshadowing things to come. ...

"We started listening to a lot of old music like Tom Waits and T-Rex, and all the while we've played with loud rock and roll bands," Jeremy Scott reveals. "I think all the different influences have made us a better band."

The voices of Milgaten and Scott have developed over the years, transforming from an indie delivery with country drawl to a more dynamic range of gritty intuition and falsetto theatrics. The compositions are riper as well, offering instantly infectious rock 'n' roll songs with a hint of tradition and a whole lot of innovation.

Their newest EP, *Skelephone Call from the Eastern Side*, takes their evolving sound to a whole new level. It's probably the furthest they've strayed from conventional sounds; consequently, it's their most exciting work to date. It lacks the acoustic accompaniment and lighter textures of their previous work, but this album is effective, not in spite of, but perhaps because of that unabashed divergence.

It's as light hearted and satirical as ever, but the tracks are that much stronger and cohesive. It's still rootsy, but the rollicking beats, three-part harmonies and psychedelic undertones are more tasteful, mature, and thoughtful. It charges straight ahead like a runaway locomotive, boasting the boldness of punk with the unpredictability of indie.

Skelephone Call is the most dynamic and volatile record in their extensive catalog, venturing into uncharted territory by incorporating unexpected styles and time

changes. It's very fast paced and aggressive compared to the tender lullabies of albums past, but the melodies are so catchy that it's hard to miss the old Vision, especially when you witness the new songs on stage.

Their live show has changed dramatically since the days of mandolin noodling fifth member Matt Davidson, who left the band two years ago for school, solo projects, and soul searching. Although he was the most versatile musician in Vision, he also held the band back from really cutting loose on stage because they were always conscious of drowning each other out.

"We always had to keep it pretty contained and chill," admits lead guitarist Keith Milgaten. "It's been fun to turn up the amps and put more energy into the performances."

The traditional instruments have disappeared along with the acoustic guitars and brushes. The Vision of a Dying World is officially rock 'n' roll as their string-breaking, sweat-inducing sideshow gains momentum. Loyal fans of the sweet and sultry Vision have stayed true while the band's exploration of heavier, more danceable material has earned an entirely new fan base.

"I had never even heard of them," admits 23-year-old Britney Snow. "I was at the Casbah just to chill, and normally I'm not too into the bands, but I was immediately fascinated by The Vision."

Look out for these formidable frontiersmen. They are on a roll, and they don't plan on slowing down. Having started both his own promotion and record company, Jackson Milgaten is poised to propel Vision's gospel around the world.

"I started Single Screen (Records) because I wanted an outlet for The Vision, Sess, Red Feathers, and other bands I really believe in," Milgaten admits. "It's grown much faster than anticipated, and we just want to keep developing."

To step into the land of grammar lambs and medicine shows, visit myspace.com/the-visionofadyingworld



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by Steve Thorn
photos by Steve Covault

Bart Mendoza may be San Diego's best known insomniac.

E-mails posted to my web account, which were dated "Tuesday, 4am, Pacific Standard Time," provide evidence to this fact. The indefatigable singer-guitarist for the Shambles not only owns up to his reputation as a sleep-deprived individual but wears his endurance like a coat of honor.

"I HATE to sleep," says Mendoza on his MySpace page. "I might miss something."

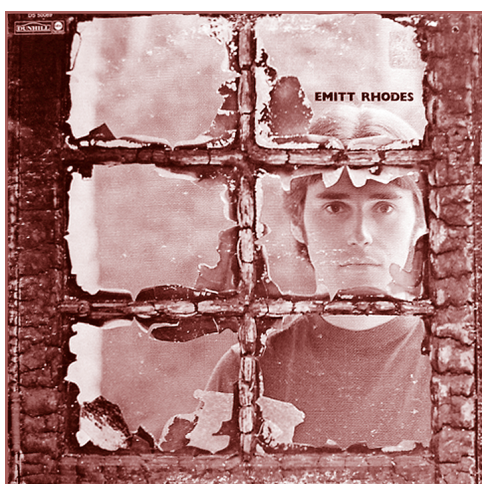
Bart missing something? Being out of the loop? That's as likely as a GOP landslide in San Francisco. If there is a developing story in the San Diego music scene, Mendoza is not only aware of it, he's probably the guy breaking the news.

These days, the big news surrounds the Shambles, San Diego's musical ambassadors of power pop, the genre devoted to the perfect (three minutes or less) pop single. Mendoza joined the group 16 years ago with Kevin Donaker-Ring. Although other members have entered or departed in revolving door fashion, Mendoza and Donaker-Ring have remained true to their mission: providing the musical excitement of the '60s (circa 1964-67) through a contemporary perspective.

This fall, three Shambles CDs will be available for perusal. *20 Explosive Hits!* is a tribute album, the band covering everyone from the Beatles to San Diego's Cascades. (An early test run of copies sold out over the Internet this summer.) Musical tables are turned on the second release, *Forty one Sixty: The Songs of Manual Scan and the Shambles*, where the global pop community turned out en masse to perform songs associated with Mendoza and Donaker-Ring. The third disc, *Los Shambles Desde Ayer*, will be a limited release album available in November on the JAM label out of Michigan.

Mendoza and Donaker-Ring embraced early the DIY (Do It Yourself) ethos identifiable with independent artists. Childhood allowed them the opportunity to absorb different musical avenues. Eventually, they both found the creative spark to write original compositions.

"I guess I wanted to play music since I was a toddler," said Mendoza. "There are pictures of me at a couple of years old



Emitt Rhodes' debut solo LP enjoys a place of honor in the Mendoza record collection.



The Shambles

with a little play guitar and it's grown exponentially from here. I remember we had a pile of 45s that we loved as kids – Chuck Berry, Elvis, the Four Seasons, Bobby Rydell's "I've Got Bonnie," and so on. I remember a copy of [the Beatles'] *Revolver* that my aunt played a lot in Tijuana."

Mendoza said that music "didn't become my main concern until Muirlands Jr. High, where I played drums in band ... badly. The transition to guitar came with graduation to La Jolla High School and its music department. Between that and Mr. McCann's English classes, I had music and lyrics covered. Suffice it to say, much of my time at La Jolla High was spent in the pursuit of making music and we played daily in some form with musicians from our group of friends. The idea that I wanted to be in a band came from a 1972 viewing of the Bob Dale TV movie show, which one afternoon screened *A Hard Day's Night*. It all clicked, particularly the concert scene at the end, and from that moment on, it's been music over all else."

In addition to the Beatles, Mendoza was greatly influenced by Los Angeles singer-songwriter Emitt Rhodes, an reclusive artist Bart serendipitously met between interview sessions for this article. It occurred only a month ago, and Mendoza still speaks of it in "flights of fancy" terms.

"They say you shouldn't meet your heroes, that they'll only disappoint you. Not true, at least in my case. As one might surmise, I met mine unexpectedly at one of my own shows. He wasn't there to see my group, but it still floored me when someone casually pointed and tossed off the words, 'Oh yeah, there's Emitt Rhodes sit-

ting there.' No Way! But yes, there he was, seemingly holding court with friends. To me, he looked pretty much the same, though his hair is gray. He's heavy set these days, but there was no mistaking it. An extremely rare Emitt Rhodes sighting, right in front of me. I'm not much for the gushing fanboy stuff, but I have to admit I was tempted."

Mendoza says that Rhodes has been part of "my life since my teen years when the neighbor of a friend sold me his [Rhodes] first 1970 solo album at a garage sale with the words, 'you're going to love it.' You see, prior to to this I had just begun to learn to play guitar. I had a great teacher at La Jolla High School who encouraged us with pop music, which is what we all wanted to be playing anyway. So the very first song I learned to play was a favorite I remembered from scattered KCBQ-AM play: the Merry-Go-Round's 'You're a Very Lovely Woman.' I still have the mimeographed, hand-written chord sheet given out in class. And it was written by a teenage Emitt Rhodes for his band, the Merry-Go-Round.

"I did love that solo album and still do. It's an amazing collection of pop-rock songs, but what really struck me was the idea that Emitt had essentially constructed the album himself. Sure, McCartney had recorded solo this way at pretty much the same time, but this was far less sparse and way closer to home to boot. I was fascinated that he played all the instruments him-

self and the way it was constructed and the songs were arranged. There is not a note out of place. It is a masterpiece."

Mendoza said he didn't know what to expect when he finally met Rhodes, nearly 40 years after the solo album. "Recent press pictures paint him as a hermit type, reclusive and withdrawn, so I was more than surprised when he motioned for me to take a seat at the table with him. And I did. He was charming. Did we talk music? Not really. He wanted to talk about the laws of physics and specifically Albert Einstein. He explained $E=MC^2$. It was difficult to hear with a band playing just a few feet away, but it is a conversation I will treasure the rest of my life. Friends in the crowd said we looked animated and it's an image I can agree with."

An image Donaker-Ring recalled from his childhood was his family encouraging music. "There was always music around my house. My dad played piano, and I'm pretty sure he played almost every night when I was a child. I remember taking piano lessons from a lady who lived across the street. My mom also played to a lesser extent. I got my first turntable when I was four, and four albums to go with it. At this point, I'm only certain of two: *A Hard Day's Night* and Beethoven's Sixth Symphony.

Donaker-Ring said his "grandmother's guitar was always around the house, and I recall taking lessons pretty early on, but I don't think of myself as really taking up gui-



Bart Mendoza

tar until I was ten. I had a class in summer school that included guitar lessons and I just continued from there.”

When did these two musically precocious kids meet? Neither Donaker-Ring or Mendoza are exactly sure. Kevin believes it was at the Comic Con in 1976; Bart thinks it was earlier at a 1975 beach party at La Jolla Shores. What is certain is that the duo eventually formed a quartet called Manual Scan, a band that captured the '80s Mod revival of Vespas and parkas as well as any group in San Diego. As would be the case in later lineups of the Shambles, Manual Scan's roster was subject to change. Perhaps the most consistent version featured Mendoza, Donaker-Ring, bassist Dave Fleminger, and drummer Paul Brewin. Bart recalled the mod years when Manual Scan were, as the Kinks once sang, “dedicated follower(s) of fashion.”

“It was great – a fun time with lots of shows and great bands roaming the land. Early on, San Diego had the biggest North American mod scene, and events, like the New Sounds Festival, which brought different scenes together from around the world. The scooter clubs, particularly Secret Society, were responsible for a lot of cool happenings. It's not by coincidence that when a couple of generations of European rock fans think of San Diego music, it's not Blink-182 or Ratt, it's us or the Gravedigger V, the Tell Tale Hearts, Crowdaddys, and the like.”

Kevin has a different take on the mod years. “From here, some 27-28 years later, it is just a total blur. I remember having lots of fun, but I'm fairly sketchy on the details. Maybe I blocked it out for some reason!”

Many of Manual Scan's best songs (“Nothing Can Be Everything,” “Of Heart and Soul”) found their way into future Shambles live sets. At first, there didn't seem to be a major distinction between Manual Scan and the Shambles. Oh sure, Kevin eventually grew his hair to its present shoulder length and Bart no longer showed up at every gig in his trademark black suit. But the music still seemed connected to the '80s mod revival.

But then the *Clouds All Day* CD (1996) was released. Acoustic guitars blended in nicely with their electric counterparts. Mendoza's talents as a songwriter improved, and Donaker-Ring pulled out the stops with “Change,” a song that captured the spirit of the '60s through a modern rock backdrop. The album's best track, “I Believe,” featured an invigorating Middle Eastern fusion reminiscent of the Byrds' “Why” and “Eight Miles High.” *Clouds All Day* is a milestone in the Shambles' catalog and fulfilled the criteria for what a great power pop record should be.

Over the years, an impressive array of musicians have contributed greatly to the Shambles' sound, in the studio or from a club stage. Original members were Ray Brandes, Bill Calhoun, and Dave Klowden (all from the Tell Tale Hearts); others heeding the call were Ron Silva (Crowdaddies), Victor Penalosa (the Quarter After), and



Manual Scan in the mid-1980s

Joel Valder (Sparkle*jetsUK). A logical choice for the Shambles' MVP would be Mark Z (Crowdaddys), the band's long time bassist who stepped down from doing live shows a few years back.

Today, the Shambles are Mendoza, Donaker-Ring, Kenny Howes (Kenny Howes and the Yeah) on guitar, Orrick Smith (Manual Scan/Pike Bishops) on bass, and Todd Woolsey (Static Halo, Tommy Tutone) on drums. But the Shambles are also Bart and Kevin performing acoustically at Lestat's or Bart playing solo at one of the Adams Avenue music festivals.

Appearing on anthology discs and tribute recordings top the band's pet projects. “Not only do the Shambles play out a lot, they are on more compilations than every other band combined!” writes David Bash in the official program guide to Bash's festival, International Pop Overthrow.

And make no mistake about it, the Shambles have an international following. In Spain, they are affectionately called Los Shambles, and the Japanese have also taken the band to heart.

In keeping with the DIY spirit from the old Manual Scan days, Mendoza operates Blindspot Records (see accompanying article), which features many artists who have a San Diego connection. Between his forays into journalism, record distribution, artist promotions, archival research, songwriting, and live performances, when does he have time to sleep?

WEBSITES TO VISIT

THE SHAMBLES

www.myspace.com/shambles/
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THE BLINDSPOT LABEL

Blindspot Records was created in 1991 as a means to showcase San Diego's exploding music scene. Over the past 17 years the label has released a number of albums featuring music from across the spectrum, on both vinyl and CD. *Staring at the Sun* is a compilation series, featuring music in all genres, with an emphasis on song hooks. Volume VII is due out in early 2009, with Volume VI having been released this year.

Contributors include Echo Revolution, the Modlins, Secret Apollo, the Anna Troy Band, the Grams, Lee Coulter, Action Andy & His Haunted Honky Tonkers, Mark DeCerbo & Four Eyes, and that's just the tip of the iceberg! The label has released albums from the Shambles and the Spring Collection in the past and issued the fourth album from Dave Humphries in March 2008. The CD features stellar guitar work from former Beatles compatriot Tony Sheridan. Many more surprises are ahead as 2008 (including the release of Skelpin's album) appears to be the busiest year in the label's history!”

— from Blindspot's MySpace page

HERE ARE SOME OF THE AUDIO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LABEL'S PAST 17 YEARS:

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(Volumes I through VII) This series has filled the void left by the end of the KGB-FM Homegrown albums. These discs contain San Diego artists performing a wide variety of musical genres. Vol. VII will feature the Modlins, Steve Poltz, Anna Troy Band, Wendy Bailey, Echo Revolution, Skelpin, the Grams, Brooklyn, the Spring Collection, Dave Humphries, Revolution 89, and more. These fascinating recordings should be placed in a time capsule and opened 100 years from now.

Manual Scan 1979-1989: The pre-Shambles in all their raw glory — essential.

The Spring Collection: Bart's brother Joe Mendoza creates a magical world in which the ghosts of Buddy Holly and Bobby Fuller live. Great rock from the Americana camp. Eric Clapton's fairly wimpy “Wonderful Tonight” is turned into a life-affirming power pop anthem.

Anna Troy, Wait Another Day: After an acclaimed set at this year's International Pop Overthrow in Los Angeles, Ms. Troy and band will be hitting the club circuit hard to promote her eagerly awaited disc.

— Steve Thorn



Kevin Donaker-Ring



Orrick Smith



Todd Woolsey



The Shambles @ the House of Blues



Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden



RUSSELL MOORE AND IIRLD TYME OUT



Russell Moore and IIRld Tyme Out, IBMA's seven-time winning Vocal Group of the Year, will be appearing in San Diego at the new Dizzy's on Wednesday, September 10. The show starts at 7pm with a 30-minute opening set by Scott Gates and Pacific Ocean Bluegrass. Tickets are \$20. For more information, go to: www.dizysandiego.com or call 858.270.7467.

Speaking of the "new" Dizzy's, if you haven't been there you are in for a treat. While the "old" Dizzy's had great music, it was small, parking was a challenge, and it wasn't the easiest place to find. The new Dizzy's is located in the beautiful San Diego Wine and Culinary Center on the ground floor of the Harbor Towers at 2nd Ave. and J St. right across from the Convention Center. This venue is easily two to three times as big, is easy to find, and parking is plentiful. So, come and help Dizzy's present its first bluegrass performance at its new location.

As for the band, Russell Moore and IIRld Tyme Out is comprised of founding band member Russell Moore (guitar), along with Steve Dilling (banjo), Justen Haynes (fiddle), Wayne Benson (mandolin), and Edgar Loudermilk (bass). Among them these bluegrass stars have garnered more than 50 industry awards, including an unprecedented seven consecutive Vocal Group of the Year awards from the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA). To top it off, Russell Moore has twice been honored as Male Vocalist of the Year. If you've never heard Russell Moore sing and if you love bluegrass, you simply can't miss this concert. Russell Moore has the most stunning bluegrass voice you will ever hear. Combine that with the talent of the rest of the band and you have one great mixture.

But where did the odd name IIRld Tyme Out originate? The name winkingly references that this was the "third time out" for founding member Russell Moore and consequently the third professional bluegrass band association for him. No doubt, the third time proved to be a charm. From 1995 through 2001, IIRld Tyme Out released a string of acclaimed albums for Rounder Records, representing the band's finest efforts to date.

Released in January of this year, *Footprints: A IIRld Tyme Out Collection* documents the soaring heights the band reached during the Rounder years, with the added bonus of two newly recorded performances. Songs like "John and Mary," "Giving My Soul Back to Him," and their crowd-pleasing a capella take on "Only You" remain staples of their repertoire to this day and number among the very best bluegrass performances of any other era.

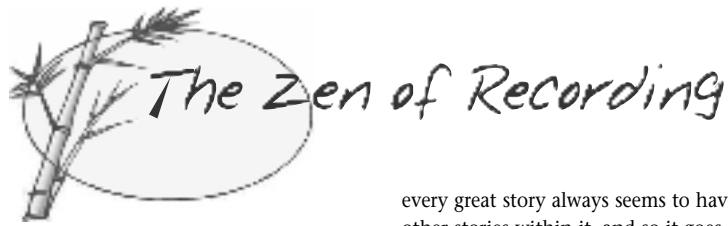
OTHER BLUEGRASS NEWS

Bearfoot has canceled their September show at Dizzy's. The word is that Bearfoot's lead singer, Analisa Tornfelt has just left the band, forcing Bearfoot to cancel or postpone a number of their engagements, including the one scheduled for September 5. Hopefully, Bearfoot will be able to pull the band together and reschedule so that San Diego fans can hear this great Alaskan band, which was a hit at the very first Summergrass in 2003.

Speaking of Summergrass, did you all have as much fun at Summergrass this year as I did? I hope you were able to attend at least part of this great annual festival.

Emma and Dee Dee Radcliffe, the queen and princess of San Diego bluegrass who have hosted weekly bluegrass jams in their home for more than 30 years are moving to Minnesota to be close to family. We wish them all the best, as they will be sorely missed. The SDBS will hold a special session at its second Tuesday get together in September (September 9) at Fuddrucker's in Grossmont Center, 8pm, to honor Emma and Dee Dee, so please stop by.

As a result of the Radcliffe's departure, the San Diego Bluegrass Society is looking for a few good people to take over some of the tasks that SDBS Board member Dee Dee will be giving up. If you are interested in helping to staff the SDBS table at the regular second and fourth SDBS Tuesday jam sessions, or if you are interested in doing some simple bookkeeping, contact me, SDBS President Dwight Worden at: dworden@roadrunner.com or call (858) 481-2609. I will fill you on the details. If you think you might like to serve on the Board of SDBS to fill Dee Dee's seat, let us know that as well. Not a member of SDBS? No problem. I will help you join. Remember, bluegrass in San Diego is only as good as we make it, so volunteering to get involved is something we depend on and that you will enjoy.



by Sven-Erik Seaholm

"RECORDING THE BEATLES"

"She's so ... hevaaaaaaaay" is the Beatles' refrain that is currently cycling endlessly through my head. It's the hot, humid summer evening of July 18 and I've been at the beautiful Museum of Music in Carlsbad for about 15 minutes. Already my arms are beginning to feel the way they did when I would show guests to their top floor suites during my tenure as a bellman some years ago. I mean, I'm not carrying 7 to 12 pieces of overstuffed Samsonite luggage or a couple of innocuous looking, but anchor-like hardshell cases filled to the brim with ceramic tile samples, but still for a book, this is pretty freakin' heavy. By my best estimate it's approximately 12 pounds, but once you've opened and read even a couple of pages of it, you too will see that it's actually really quite ... heavy.

With a weighty title like *Recording the Beatles: The Studio Equipment and Techniques Used to Create Their Classic Albums*, it's hefty is obviously no accident. What I've been shamelessly lugging around in hopes of procuring it's authors' inscriptions is simply the single greatest book ever to investigate and document the making of each and every Beatles recording at EMI's famed Abbey Road studios and elsewhere.

The product of over a decade's worth of research by authors Kevin Ryan and Brian Kehew, the 540-page tome not only comprehensively covers everything from gear to personnel but does so with the same exacting and exhaustive attention to detail that was so stringently required of the Abbey Road staff. Despite all of the (over 500!) great pictures of gear, studios, and sessions, it is the people who were there to help bring all those wonderful records into being, which lies at the beautifully beating heart of this labor of love.

For those intrepid Beatles scholars (myself included) that have felt that most of this sort of knowledge has already been covered *ad nauseum*, there's a justifiable amount of skepticism. Hadn't the excellent *The Complete Beatles Recording Sessions* by Mark Lewisohn already covered most or all of this material? Is there really all that much more that needs to be said? Well,

every great story always seems to have other stories within it, and so it goes with this project as well.

Lewisohn's book was essentially the result of Abbey Road granting him unlimited access to the hundreds of tapes and thousands of studio documents located within the Abbey Road vaults. Lewisohn, recognized as the world's foremost authority on all things Beatle, diligently combed through all of this material and had woven together an unprecedented glimpse into the making of the Beatles records from 1962 to 1970. While the author's work featured quite a few interviews with personnel who had worked on these sessions, there were also a few discrepancies that arose, for which only foggy recollections or suppositions derived from session notes would suffice.

It was these questions as well as a desire to go further in depth with regard to the actual technical workings of different pieces of equipment and reasons for their use that set authors Ryan and Kehew to work on their own projects, concurrently but without knowledge of each other. Each of them had a list of questions they desired to ask of the various Abbey Road engineers and assistants, past and present. In a grand twist of irony, it was Lewisohn himself who put the two in touch with one another and an epic research project was born.

Not that they knew it at the time. As the two began to interview various personnel, they began to run into situations where one person was listed as working on a session, only to discover that they were sick that day and someone else had filled in for them, uncredited. Subsequently locating the actual person might then reveal other sessions where this had occurred, or at very least had put them in touch with someone who hadn't really been interviewed before ... and down the proverbial rabbit hole they went.

What results is an even more in-depth behind the scenes look than was ever even *known* to be possible.

Chapter 1 focuses on EMI Abbey Road Studios, its history, design, and in depth looks at its layout and facilities, including the screens (or baffles, as we know them) and acoustic treatments.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the personnel, including tape ops, balance engineers, producers, vinyl cutters amp room and lab staff, and studio atten-



Sven-Erik Seaholm

dants.

Chapters 3 through 7 correspond to mixers, outboard gear, microphones, tape machines, and speakers and amplifiers.

Chapter 8 focuses exclusively on effects, including an in-depth description on ADT (or artificial double-tracking), which was a Beatles inspired innovation previously described in only the vaguest terms, making it a holy grail-type bit of info for those of us hungry for this type of invaluable information.

"ADT is a good example of how the pieces of the puzzle come together in little bits," said Kehew. "A lot of these guys have these stories edited down to a form that's easily told a million times. Then you have to say 'Yeah, I've heard that before, but that can't be, because of this...' and that person thinks about it for a while, or checks his diary, and then a more fleshed-out story emerges."

And so it goes for all these several hundred pages, with Chapter 9 focusing on all those great instruments whose inventive uses are heard throughout the Beatle catalog. Chapter 10 looks at the other studios the Beatles recorded at and Chapter 11 is devoted to production, essentially the closest in form to Lewisohn's book.

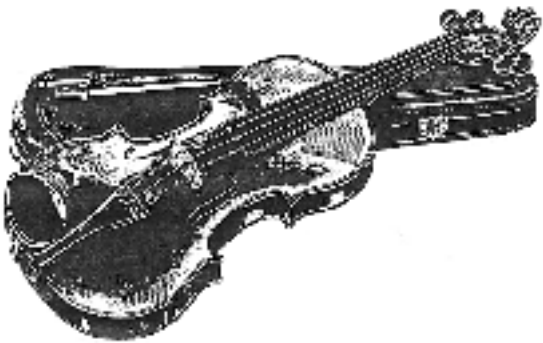
When I say they look at *anything* herein, I mean *everything*. For example, every single microphone *ever used*. In cases where the original mics could not be found, collectors would loan one for photos. Speakers? They even cover those used in the intercom!

Along with all the fabulous photos included and the sheer volume of first-hand insight, you will find this to be a very entertaining read. Gear-heads will geek out until they drool. Beatle-philes will gush over the rare visuals and anyone who has even a passing interest in recording will simply be blown away by this incredible accomplishment.

Recording The Beatles: The Studio Equipment and Techniques Used to Create Their Classic Albums is available for \$100 at curvebender.com

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an independent record producer, singer, songwriter, and recording artist. His son Drew Andrews will release *Only Mirrors*, an album they produced together, worldwide on Minty Fresh in October.

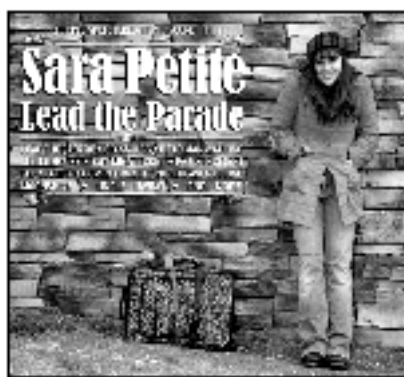
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Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

THE MODERN CRITICS

"Standing on the corner, watching all the girls go by..." It must have been in the early half of the sixties that I heard that enviable sentiment along with its irresistible melody and its chorus whose quirky time change was a brilliant, deceptive joke. At the time, the very title seemed like a good thing to do when I'd grown up, and eventually when puberty belatedly made my acquaintance, I was wise enough to understand the foundational inertia of the act itself, the ugly odds of achieving satisfying results were I to pursue it, and the distasteful, repressed homoerotic aspects of its musical presentation (sung by a barbershop-like male chorus — gang grope, anyone?).

In the mid-seventies, Georges Alvina's evocative poem "Little Horton Plaza" exposed the tragedy of the "silent watchers, occupying petty lives/absorbing filth from grass, from words, from hearts" and it seemed to resonate as a call-to-arms for all the hellbound watchers to turn their lives around, to see the Error of their Ways, to finally (in the modern vernacular) get a life.

And so it was that in San Diego, those silent watchers reinvented themselves in a massive baptism, drenching each other in the fouled waters of audacity. They would speak in tongues now and be silent no more.

Oh sure, they still watched the girls go by. And they're still in groups of two or more. But they've become critics. And the only thing they like better than verbally appraising the passing girls is verbally intimidating the lone passing guy.

Queries ("Spare change? Gotta smoke?") have become critiques (Faggot!) or challenges ("Faggot").

"Elton John!" God, if I had a penny for every time I've heard that, or "Richard Harris, dude!" or "Hey, Denzell!" or, on July 4th, sporting my red-white-and-blue styrofoam top hat, "Uncle Sam!" That last one is usually at the beach on the boardwalk and I'm on my bicycle. My patented retort, "Auntie Em!" shuts up the bastards long enough for distance to guarantee my safety.

But they're out there, all right. Huge numbers of little groups of talking turds who don't like silent, single beings passing through what they consider their private sewer line. Not so different from those territorial surfers who think they own the ocean, really — equally retarded, equally evil, perhaps a bit more civilly dressed.

"Forgot yer shoes, dude!" This sounded less like an advisement than a chastisement from a little bunch of military turds hanging outside a local convenience store as I exited and headed home (a half block away).

"No, I didn't," I corrected them, smiling as I silently cursed their mothers for giving them birth.

"You callin' me a liar?" This voice was right behind me now, and I turned to face



José Sinatra

one bubba, his other bubbas still back at the corner, 20 feet away, all looking our way, all their senses erect.

"No," I said nervously. "I'm not calling you a liar. Why are you trying to start something? I don't know you; I haven't done anything to you..."

"You ain't wearin' no shoes. You should wear shoes!"

"I'll wear what I want to. You should mind your own business. And I'm not going to fight you."

"Oh, you ain't, huh? Where yo shoes, dude? Up yo mama's [insert epithet here]?"

I'd like to say that I invited all these gentlemen soldiers-at-leave up to my place and was able to enthrall them with my well-stocked racks of enviable brands and styles during our frenzied love-play, but I would be lying and insulting my ladies-man nature. I'm just glad I had my tear gas with me. They weren't, and that's the fundamental difference between us.

Somehow this "group critique" down at the beach along the boardwalk is a rarer occurrence these days, I notice as I glide along. For some reason, there are fewer groups of stationary turds ready to vent their noxious gasses. Must be the beach booze ban...

But the bars have taken up the slack, especially since the smokers-outside edict; they're always there at the front of watering holes from 30th Street in North Park to Newport Avenue in Ocean Beach and everywhere in between.

And so it happened to me again this morning, August 20, 2008, at the corner of Oregon Street and El Cajon Blvd. As I walked to pick up this week's *CityBeat* (a Decker week!), three homies at the corner, just standing around, told me in an unmistakably challenging tone that I wasn't wearing any shoes.

The epiphany hit. Our families, our schools, are turning out geniuses. This is America's Finest City.



RADIO DAZE



by Jim McInnes

DA OLYMPIX

My wife Sandi and I purchased a 37-inch high definition television receiver with our "economic stimulus" check. And we sure are glad! Wow! It's almost like being there! (I think that last sentence was a color TV advertising slogan back in the sixties.) The Olympics was our first real test of the HD experience. It worked. I'm addicted.

The opening ceremonies on August 8 melted my mind. Whoever conceived of that show is a GENIUS! If you didn't see it, buy the DVD from NBC and store it in a cool, dry place, because you'll want to show it to future generations! Two weeks after that broadcast, our almost two-year-old grandson kept talking about the "flying man" and the "flying woman."

Two days later, on the first Sunday of the games, I sat in front of the tube for TWELVE HOURS of Olympic competition, including swimming. After about five days, it was almost ALL swimming ("O ooh! Michael Phelps just farted, let's look at the size of the bubbles!") on NBC, and almost ALL boxing and soccer on a couple of the network's cable-only channels.

Ah, boxing. Just what I wanted to see...a second-round match between two guys, each half my weight, one from Andorra, the other from Carjackistan.

Oh, soccer. Ninety minutes featuring a bunch of players kicking a ball back and forth, occasionally pausing to attempt to score. The final is often 1-0. And soccer fans say baseball is boring?

Race walking? Who walks like that? It should be called *waddling*, not?

Did anyone but me notice that the letter "P" on Japan's gold medal-winning women's softball team jerseys look like it was being circled by a pair of electrons, thus mimicking the universal symbol for the atom? This from the country we nuked in 1945? Odd.

And why did one of the silver medal-winning U.S. women's softball team look and sound like a fat Hispanic man?

It looks like the Chinese will get busted for using sub-16-year-old girl gymnasts. One was alleged to be 14 but I thought she looked more like 12!

But women's beach volleyball is my new favorite spectator sport!

Whatever. I love the Olympics... despite how truly meaningless they've become...but only in high definition!

RADIO NEWS

I'll get plenty of practice disc-jockeying again this month. I will be on KSDS Jazz 88.3 every weekday morning, starting at the crack of dark, (6-9am), beginning September 8 and running through September 26. Joe Kocherhans, for whom I'll be sitting in, must use his annual five months of vacation or lose it! Glad to help, Joe. Have a great trip.

Of course, I will continue my work on both KFMB and Jack FM, as well. Three stations a day for three weeks!

God, I need a vacation.



by Peter Bolland

MUSIC VS. THE MUSIC BUSINESS

"Music is spiritual — the music business is not." — Van Morrison

In the music world, as in any artistic arena, there is an uneasy relationship between creativity and commerce. For music to reach an audience both sides of the equation need to be vibrant and effective. You need musicians to write and perform music of singular power. You also need businessmen and women to deliver it to the public. In the indie world, these two opposites must often reside in the same person. It's a problem.

Mastering music and mastering business are two very different things. But to succeed in music, you must do both. Like so many other important growth processes, it's an inside job. The left hemisphere of the brain with its penchant for details, facts, logic, language, strategy and planning is naturally in conflict with the right hemisphere of the brain with its penchant for feelings, symbols, images, big-picture thinking, imagination, fantasy and meaning. The trick is to get these two halves of the brain to shake hands and start working together. Separately they're strong. Together they can take over the world.

I know a lot of brilliant musicians who are terrible at business, and a lot of masters of business who can't hum a tune. Integrating these two energies is vitally important. The skill needed to wrest a melody from the ether and adorn it with lyrics is entirely different from the skill needed to balance a budget. The skill needed to stand on stage and take the room over the rainbow is utterly incompatible with the skill needed to juggle dozens of schedules, artists, vendors and city, county, state and federal regulations while running a successful event.

Sometimes a band's lack of business acumen manifests itself as resentment against other acts who've mastered some of the subtler sides of business management. It's always easier to bitterly envy another's success than take a long hard look at your own self-sabotage. San Diego has an unbelievably vibrant music scene, but it's a tough town too. It's often said there are more bands than people. Competition can be fierce. Hard feelings are unavoidable. Hopefully they'll heal. Sometimes they don't.

When you're just a kid coming up with a guitar in your hands and stars in your eyes, you really don't see all of this coming. You're just caught by the spell music casts and you want to stir up as much magic as possible. You write songs, hone your craft, start bands, nurture relationships, build fans bases and knock on every door you can find. Everywhere you go you meet allies and angels who spur you on your way. And the occasional adversary.

You play so many free gigs you lose count. You give it all away. You say yes to this benefit concert and that benefit concert, afraid that if you say no they'll stop calling. You say yes to unpaid festival gigs year after year hoping they'll lead to something bigger. Paying yourself last becomes a habit. You're just grateful someone's paying any attention to you at all. Then one day you look around at everyone else working the festival. The sound guy is getting paid. The caterer is getting paid. The vendors are getting paid. The security guards are getting paid. The graphics designers are getting paid. The printer is getting paid. The radio station is getting paid. The guy picking up the trash is getting paid. Everybody is getting paid except you. *Everybody knows that musicians just want to play, right? They'll do it for nothing, or so the prevailing wisdom goes.* When is it going to be your turn? It might be time to shake that left brain awake. Don't be afraid to contend that your contribution to

the event is worth a couple of bucks too.

On the other hand, club owners, concert promoters, record companies, the media and the countless business interests that surround them are, in most cases, hanging by a thread. These are tough times. Bands aren't the only ones struggling. In the consciousness of desperation the finer points of our humanity wither. If business needs to be more sensitive to the needs of musicians, then musicians need to be more aware of the brutal realities businesses operate in every day.

The caustic truths of the music business corrode the delicate web that music spins, a web that connects us all together in one vibrant whole. The necessary competition for attention pits friends against each other and erodes the natural, inherent camaraderie that all musicians have. Miscommunications and misunderstandings pit artists and businesses against each other. On the worst days you want to give up. But the joy of music always pulls you back and heals all wounds. Everything is forgiven. Don't blame the players, blame the game.

All of us on both sides of the equation, the musicians (the people who create music) and the promoters and club owners and talent buyers and radio people and print journalists and vendors have one thing in common. We all love and believe in the power of music to change lives for the better. Each of us brings our heart and talent and commitment to the job every day, the job of spreading the unparalleled soul-quenching power of music to a thirsty world. We all want the same thing. We want great music to flourish. And we want to feel like we're a part of that never-ending beautiful parade. But can we make a profit and still remain mindful of each other? Can we find a way to create events that honor and respect the unique contributions each of us bring? We need each other. None of us can do this alone. Music and business do not have to exist in conflict with one another. We don't need to reform the system or write any new laws. We simply need to remember who we really are. We are spiritual beings having a human experience. Let's make music the right way. Let's prove Van Morrison wrong.

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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Churgilchin

Throat Singers Bring Stark Beauty from a Far Away Land



by Paul Hormick

Tucked between Russia and Mongolia lies the country of Tuva. Once part of the Soviet Union, this small republic has a rich history that includes Genghis Khan, the dynasties of China, and Russian tsars. Its rugged terrain of snow-capped mountains would present a challenge for the most adventurous explorers; even Indiana Jones might lose his cool and his fedora while trying to traverse this small independent nation. Besides all the color of its history, culture, and people, this bewitching land is the home of the astounding musical tradition of throat singing. Transplanted from Tuva to the Bay Area is Churgilchin, a quartet of throat singers who are expanding its audience for this unique music to the rest of the world.

New to our ears, throat singing is actually one of the oldest ways of making music. Here in the West, and for most of the world over, if you want to sing more than one note, you need more than one singer. Two notes: two singers; three notes: three singers. The Tuvan throat singers use the natural resonance of the throat to produce two and sometimes three notes at the same time. This effect is enhanced by the way the singers manipulate their tongues and lips.

Further, the Tuva singers use a technique known as circular breathing, a difficult process by which the singers bring air into their lungs while they are singing, enabling them to hold notes for a long time without being interrupted to take a breath. Once all these effects are added together – singing three notes, circular breathing, etc. – unbelievable music results. Perhaps the easiest way to describe the Tuvan throat singers is to say that they are like human didgeridoos. And once people attend a concert by Churgilchin, they describe the experience as otherworldly and hypnotic. The people of Tuva believe that their exotic music reflects the strange beauty of their native land. Alexander Bapa, who is a Tuvan musician and now works as Churgilchin's manager says, "When we first started concerts here in the United States the reaction was one of 'oh, wow!' People were so surprised by the music that we made. Now, many of the people who come to see us are familiar with our music. They know our songs. Now these people are starting to discern the quality of our music." Bapa recommends that if you're completely new to throat singing, you might go to YouTube for the videos of Churgilchin and other throat singers.

Churgilchin – their name translates as "air dancing," the playful way the Tuvan people

describe a mirage – have been performing as an ensemble for 12 years. The quartet includes Igor Koshkendey, who sings several styles of Tuvan music and was the winner of the Grand Prix of International Competition of Throat Singing in 1998, 2000, and 2002. Mongoun-Ool Ondar won the international throat singing prize in 1992, when he was only 16, and is credited with inventing his own style of throat singing. Besides performing with Churgilchin, Aldar Tamdyn directs the National Tuvan Orchestra of Traditional Instruments. In Tuva throat singing is restricted to the men of that country, as it is believed to cause infertility in women; so unusually Churgilchin includes Aidysmaa Koshkendey, who also plays bells in the ensemble.

The ensemble performs in native dress, silks, and fine threads of red, gold, and blue. They also perform on instruments that are used in traditional Tuvan music, all of which are hand made by Tamdyn. As they sing, the members of Churgilchin will play *igils*, a two-stringed instrument that is bowed like a violin. It consists of a pine box with a skin stretched over it from which a long neck protrudes. The strings are not pressed to a fingerboard; rather they are gently touched with the fingers and nails to change pitch. The *doshpuluur* is another two-stringed instrument, but it is plucked or strummed like a guitar or lute. The *byzanchy* is bowed like the *igil*, but the bow is intertwined with the strings of the instrument.

Churgilchin's touring takes them all over the United States and Europe. This year they performed in New York, Albuquerque, Santa Cruz, and Portugal. The group also sponsors camps outside the Bay Area for those interested in learning how to throat sing. Interest has been so great that, starting last year, for a select group of 14 dedicated students Churgilchin began a two-week camp in Tuva, in which the students were immersed in the food, customs, and landscape of Tuva as well as the music that they are learning.

The music may be ancient, but the performers of Churgilchin are open to new ideas and new music for their throat singing. They have performed with a didgeridoo performer, and two years ago they performed with the first lady of the avant garde, Laurie Anderson. Bapa says, "We like to perform our traditional music, but you need to be open, open to new things, even rock. You need to make some experiments. And you can pick the different colors from everything."

Churgilchin performs on Wednesday, September 24, at Dizzy's in downtown San Diego. For more information, visit dizzysandiego.com.

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Brindl Acoustic Heart

by Tim Mudd

Here in the bright-white dawn of the twenty-first century – and the twilight of the traditional studio era – recording artists are armed with such an arsenal of digital technology that those effects that once took days to create can be achieved in seconds with the click of a mouse. A “wall of sound,” which once evoked the image of a tight group of creative individuals led into the wee hours by a sleep-deprived production genius, as they build an impenetrable fortress for the masses to admire, has been replaced by simple drag-and-drop functionality. When I hear records these days that sound as though a battalion of perfectly synchronized musicians are crusading through sound waves and inspiring all to support their quest, I am often surprised, usually impressed, and possibly even a little disappointed to learn that behind such a behemoth lies just one person and a computer. It’s almost too easy. It’s almost as though the *opposite* is true; one person who lacks both the strength and confidence to stand tall in his or her own merits without the manufactured safety of many. And then the magic starts to leave. But then an artist or record comes along which makes me realize the true beauty that will always exist to overcome this almost scientific process. Usually this disruption to my expectations is an artist who swims upstream from overly described flow – with strength and confidence. Today, this artist is Brindl.

From the opening second of *Acoustic Heart* your whole world is enveloped by one of *those* voices. Laying so comfortably beside your ears she promises you’re the only audience who really matters. Tender in strength, sweet with experience, and always compelling you to actually *listen*. While so many singers develop their voices to disperse ideas through melody as a second – or sometimes third – language, it’s as though singing is Brindl’s native tongue.

The musical arrangement of the 12 songs that sit behind Brindl’s very prominent voice is sparse to the point where there are times you almost forget there is anything else. Whether this is a testament to the tasteful production of *Acoustic Heart* or the melodic strength in her songwriting are purely semantics. Any collection of songs from one artist which could be as satisfying performed as a capella as they are with accompaniment is a rare feat which she achieves with natural panache.

Equally as noticeable is the diversity of influence. “Love’s Great Fan” could be well placed among Joni Mitchell’s finer moments, “Time on My Hands” is the Golden Delicious next to Fiona Apple’s Granny Smith, “Light of Love” beckons you toward the stage of Diana Krall’s sultry late-night jazz... The imagery in mood with which each song swings from one to the other is also fascinating; while “Nice Girl” sidles up to the bar and offers some cold comfort, “Serenade” will place you aboard the sea shanty of H.M.S. Love Sick.

My only sadness overall comes in the tone of Brindl’s accompanying instrumentation. Although barely noticeable in

continued adjacent



Derek Papa I Will Get to You

by Julia Bemiss

Derek Papa’s first solo album, *I Will Get to You*, certainly does just that – it unobtrusively weaves its way into your subconscious like the slow, deliberate unfolding of a road map. It’s romantic, lonesome, and highly cinematic. An apt comparison is to imagine hearing a David Lynch or a Cohen Brothers film set in the gothic Southwest but with brighter tones or a less whispery Sufjan Stevens, but without the orchestral accompaniment.

The album’s title track is an old-fashioned love song with lyrics suggesting the chivalrous nature of medieval times mixed with the Old West: “I will get to you/when the river’s fast and rushin’ head high/with bullets flying by/I will get to you/If I was a king/I would send for you/a coach with petals floating around/you at all times.”

Papa sings with a plain, soft-spoken poetry, but oftentimes his phrasing is not succinct. The songs are full of atmosphere but some of the words are almost entirely lost on the listener. It’s frustrating to have a song with intriguing lyrics like those in “Radioactive Waste” (“I can feel upon my shoulders a pacing devil/I can feel upon my feet a passed out saint”) and not be able to decipher much else of the song. On one hand, the muffled singing creates added mystery; on the other hand, it dampens the moods Papa so effortlessly creates.

Despite this drawback, Papa’s voice has a wonderful ease to it, one that reclines into its melodic soundscape like cumulus clouds across a desert sky. There is a quietness, a beautiful simplicity that floats above the fluttering guitar strings on “Don’t Get Sad” and within the ambling, dreamy pensiveness of “Oh, Lady Bug,” “Mountain 1” and “Mountain 2” are variations on a woody theme, complete with crisp banjo and the natural warmth of a light rainfall.

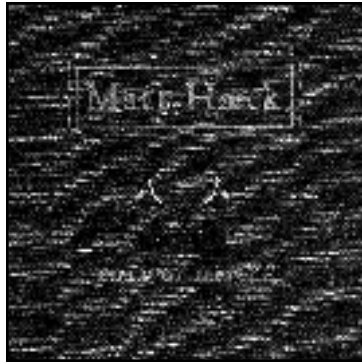
One other disappointment is the album’s length. It’s more of an EP than a full album, with only seven tracks running just barely over 22 minutes. In a sense, it’s a compliment that the record is so short. With all of its assets, you want to hear more of these emotive, sonic landscapes and the stories they tell of Derek Papa’s musical journey, whether they are on two-lane highways cutting through desert or nestled in the cool, dark hills of Appalachia. I’m certainly not ready to fold up my map quite yet. I’m still enjoying the ride.

Brindl, continued

the car, the headphones told a slightly different story. Whether due to the quality of instruments used, an engineer overly zealous with compression, or rushed decisions over microphones and their placement during the sessions, Brindl’s talent truly deserves technical guidance as strong and open as her voice; where reverb could be used more sparingly.

Despite this, *Acoustic Heart* is still a joy to listen to. Kind, funny, sassy, and understanding, Brindl’s heart truly beats through acoustic music.

Brindle opens for Will Edwards on Saturday, September 6, 8pm, at YI Studio, 1150 7th Ave. in downtown San Diego.



Matt Haeck Pair of Sirens

by Paul Hormick

Of all the musical instruments, the human voice remains the most idiosyncratic. The natural timbre and range of a singer, along with the singer’s delivery, are almost the entire sum total of how a tune comes across. This rule runs the gamut from old jazz standards, to country, to emo.

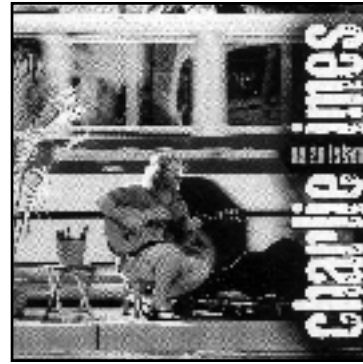
For pop music there was a time when it was good enough to simply sing. Glen Campbell sang of the phone lines in Wichita; for better or worse, Ringo Starr sang about life on a yellow submarine; and the greatest voice of all, Johnny Cash, let us know what it was like when he “shot a man in Reno, just to watch him die.” These were voices plain and simple, no gimmicks or funny techniques.

About 30 or 40 years ago things changed. No longer content to just sing, pop vocalists started to embellish their tunes with touches of rock ‘n’ roll roughness, even when they were singing a ballad. R&B and soul performers began to stylize their singing in such an ornate way that it became unusual to hear a note sung sustained for more than the heartbeat of a craven record executive.

With this in mind, *Pair of Sirens* by Matt Haeck is a welcome breath of fresh air. With an open, free style, Haeck sings in a clear tenor, using the power of his voice and the lyrics of his songs to convey the thought or emotion that he’s shooting for, instead of relying on the overwrought – and by this point trivializing – pop singer styling. Audra Franz sings backup harmony on a couple tunes, but otherwise it is Haeck’s voice, and his alone, that carry this recording. Believe me, this disk has no embarrassing Don Henley moments. There is not a hint of Michael Bolton faux drama or excess. It’s just singing as the Good Lord intended.

While not sparse, the instrumentation remains simple, with the pleasant timbres of mandolin, guitar, fiddle, banjo, and cello filling in behind Haeck. The cello is featured quite prominently and quite well from time to time. The instrument comes across so strongly that I started looking around for the rosin by the time the disk was over.

Haeck falls into the tradition of the singer-songwriter from the time when that moniker meant that the writer was shooting for a profound statement, that the person strumming the guitar in the coffee shop had something important to say. The overall mood of all the songs on *Pair of Sirens* is ponderous, not downer sort of stuff like early post-Beatles John Lennon Plastic Ono depression, but Haeck has a few things on his mind – sometimes these thoughts are about relationships, sometimes about himself, or sometimes about the great country that we live in – and wants to be taken seriously. If this disk were to be played in one of *Downbeat*’s blindfold listener tests, no one would mistake it for the soundtrack to *Mama Mia* or *Hello Dolly*.



Charlie Imes On an Island

by Paul Hormick

Americans have always loved their flip flops, but 30 years ago Jimmy Buffet single handedly took the item of footwear and made it not just a fashion statement, but an emblem of a pop music style.

Aimed at adults who were chagrined to keep their Led Zep LPs on the platter, Buffet’s pleasant melodies and easy rhythms supported themes of middle-aged irresponsibility and appealed to the inner beach bum and slacker in all of us. It’s clear, even from the funny “island” scene on the cover of *On an Island* that Charlie Imes casts himself in the mold of a latter day Buffet. He sings like the Chief of the Parrot Heads too, with a breezy and easy baritone. With a tip o’ the hat to the master, he even covers one of Buffet’s better tunes, “Stranded on a Sandbar,” which has Buffet’s characteristic understated self reflection and sadness.

Imes praises the simple pleasures of life for what they are: the simple pleasures of life. His songs and lyrics are uncluttered by irony or attempts at cleverness and are as straightforward as any of the old Beach Boys hits about cars and girls. Imes has different priorities than these adolescent fixations, but he is still enchanted by the easily accessible treasures of the good life. When he repeats the line “It’s 75 degrees outside” in one of the disk’s songs “Summer Days,” he is saying precisely that it is 75 degrees outside and suggests nothing more than putting on a tee shirt a pair of shorts and basking in the sunshine. This is a great disk for cracking a couple of Coronas with friends after a few hours of boogie boarding.

In the music business you have to always make sure that you work with the best. Imes follows this dictum from beginning to end. Exceptional performances from bassist Rob Thorsen, multi-instrumentalist Dennis Caplinger, guitarist Laurence Juber, Chris Klich, and a number of others make this disk shine. We even get Gilbert Castellanos adding his trumpet a time or two. Imes also shows his smarts by sharing the production with Jeff Berkley and handing over to Berkley the recording and mixing duties. Berkley’s a total pro.

And speaking of working with the best, Imes covers two tunes, “Second Chance” and “Clone,” penned by Bordertown alumnus Dave Beldock, who has established himself as the ninth greatest songwriter in the history of western civilization. In particular, “Clone” is wry, clever, and funny. The icing on the cake is Cindy Berryhill, who plays to a fare-thee-well the part of self-centered wife who is more than happy with the attentions of her husband multiplied twice over. It’s a crack up.

“Worst Presnaden Ever,” the final cut, is the most pleasant protest song possible. The one tune that gets political, calling out Bush for his misdeeds, remains in the same breezy style of the rest of *On an Island*. We’re treated to voice-overs by James Adomian in character as Cheney and Bush. Like the earlier work by Berryhill, these jabs at the veep and his sidekick will bring a laugh or at least a grin even from the staunchest right-wing neocons.



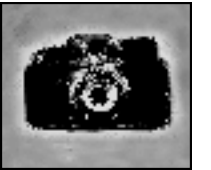
Christopher Burgan Breakfast in the Sunroom

by Mike Alvarez

Eclecticism is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it can be a source of great variety that can challenge listeners and keep their interest. On the other, it can create the impression that an artist is unfocused. On his new album, *Breakfast in the Sunroom*, multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Christopher Burgan skillfully manages to sidestep that latter pitfall. He presents a wide palette of sounds and styles while keeping things unified with his singular vision. The opening number, “Intimate Encounter,” is an acoustic workout for guitar that might give one the impression that this will be a Celtic folk instrumental album, but it simply sets the stage for a very satisfying collection of songs. The track that follows is an enthusiastic cover of the Yes radio classic “Your Move/All Good People” that puts an interesting spin on this well-known prog-rock chestnut. It’s stays true enough to the source material to be recognizable, but Burgan introduces interesting differences that turn it into a unique statement.

Listeners can identify numerous points of reference. In addition to Yes, one can easily come to the conclusion that Burgan is an admirer of many diverse artists and musical styles. “India Rising” features an exotic melody and world percussion. It could very well be one of Led Zeppelin’s acoustic explorations into ethnic folk music. “Running Water” is a percussive guitar exercise whose sharp rhythms and melodic recursions are reminiscent of the late Michael Hedges’ best works. In all honesty, I didn’t recognize the album’s second cover tune at first. It’s John Waite’s song “Missing You”, a number one hit in 1984. Burgan chooses to interpret it in a looser acoustic style, and he sometimes sounds like Neil Diamond when singing it. With its light percussion and summery arrangement, it takes on a rather tropical mood. It’s an interesting contrast to the original’s more straight ahead pop/rock style. A peek at the liner notes reveals that guitar virtuoso Laurence Juber (a highly respected acoustic player and a veteran of Paul McCartney’s Wings) contributes his signature licks to the track.

While primarily a guitar album, the songs are anchored throughout with the fretless bass, mostly played by Burgan himself. His touch and sensibility are greatly influenced by the great practitioners of the instrument like Michael Manning. It gives the songs a very organic foundation that is wholly appropriate for the acoustic instrumentation. Other guest musicians contribute cello, alto flute, piano, and backing vocals to various tracks. These are incorporated into the arrangements with great sensitivity and taste. The sound is well-balanced and clear, allowing each instrument and voice to interact with the other elements of the mix. As one listens to the album, the ebb and flow of moods becomes somewhat hypnotic. *Breakfast in the Sunroom* is smartly produced with strong and varied songwriting. The performances are crafted to perfection, giving Burgan a great opportunity to fluently express his artistic vision through music.



AROUND TOWN



Photo: John Hancock

Aaron Bowen



Photo: John Hancock



Photo: John Hancock

Jordan Reimer



Photo: Joel Siegfried

Mark O'Connor @ Fiddle Camp



Photo: Joel Siegfried

Arash Amini @ Mark O'Connor's Fiddle Camp



Photo: Joel Siegfried

Rachel Barton Fine @ Fiddle Camp



Kornflower @ Rebecca's



Photo: Liz Abbott

Charlie Imes' CD Release

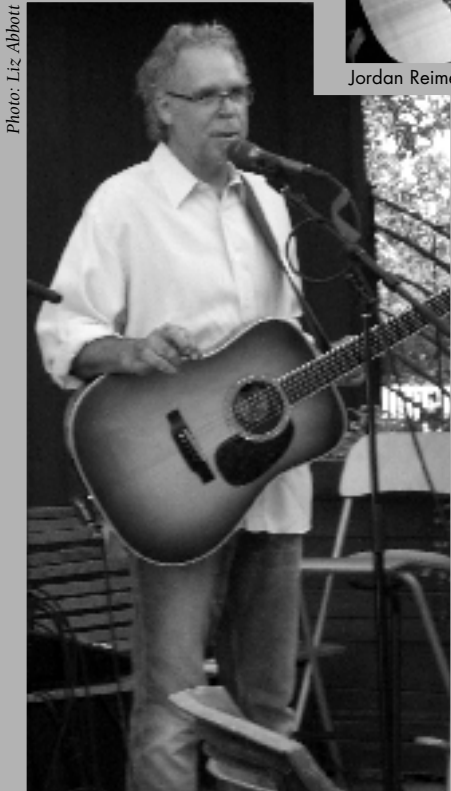


Photo: Liz Abbott

Kenny Edwards @ Wynola Pizza



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Britta Lee Shain @ Wynola Pizza



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Rich Phillips @ Wynola Pizza



Photo: Lois Bach

Gatos Papacitos @ Bird Park

INDIAN JOE'S 60TH BIRTHDAY



Photo: Richard Pollard

Indian Joe



Photo: Richard Pollard



Photo: Lois Bach

Bass Clef Experiment @ Balboa Park



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Photo: Steve Covault

Marcia Claire @ Yerkes Tribute



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The Flower Thief @ Acoustic Alliance



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