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SAN DIEGO

ROUBADOOR

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



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

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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.

## DOING GOD'S WORK WITH MUSIC

by Frank Kocher

**S**ongwriters with a Purpose: MJM Records and Friends is the name of the benefit concert being held in Oceanside on August 22 at the Sunshine Brooks Theatre at 7 pm. The songwriters include Bob Bennett, Todd and Katy, and Michael James Moore playing a variety of contemporary Christian music. The worthwhile purpose is to raise funds to help homeless people with substance abuse problems obtain help at a Vista rehab facility.

Moore founded MJM Records in 2001 after his personal experiences with alcoholism and subsequent sobriety. He then began working with the Bread of Life rescue mission in Oceanside, handing out home-burned CDs of his own music, shirts, and other gifts to the homeless and getting people with alcohol and drug problems into rehab at Green Oaks Ranch in Vista (all proceeds from this year's concert will be donated to Green Oaks, which is an IRS-designated religious non-profit organization).

"The music label is just a vehicle to help others," said Moore. After starting his label, he said that helping the homeless and addicted became a personal ministry for him. A watercolor artist, Moore also sells packages of painting prints and his CDs online at his label website to raise funds to sponsor memberships for people who need help at the rehab facility. Another way that MJM has raised funds to help the down-and-out who find themselves at the home-

less mission is with fundraising concerts. This year's will be the second.

"The first was in 2007," said Moore. "We're trying to make it a tradition and hope to do it every year." The proceeds from the last concert were earmarked for the Bread of Life Mission. There will be a \$10 donation cover charge at this year's concert, which Moore hopes will draw a large turnout at the 200-seat venue at 217 North Coast Highway. Tickets are available at MJM Records, and also available at North Coast Church in Vista.

Headliner Bob Bennett has been playing his deeply personal folk music, featuring deft guitar finger-picking and soulful vocals since 1979 and has been a favorite of contemporary Christian audiences as both a songwriter and performer. His 1982 album *Matters of the Heart* is a classic of the genre, and Bennett has toured nationally several times and placed several of his songs at the top of the Christian music charts, including "Yours Alone" and "Lord of the Past." Though an excellent guitarist himself, he teamed up with guitarist John Standefer for a recent CD, *Six String Prayers*. He will perform solo, with acoustic guitar at the Oceanside show.

"Bob Bennett is huge," said Moore. "He's a fantastic performer. If you've ever heard James Taylor, you've heard Bob Bennett."

Todd and Katy are a North County area contemporary Christian folk duo. The pair have released two CDs together, *On Borrowed Time* in 2006 and the more recent



Michael Moore, benefit organizer



Bob Bennett, benefit headliner

*Sailin' Away*, as well as a CD of Christmas music. They play often at the Country Gospel venue at Vista's North Coast Church. Katy Steidl is a globe-trotting realty executive whose love of singing comes through in the music. Todd Bingham is the songwriter, having written music since the 1960s. The duo also plays other popular Christian songs with their own roots-bluegrass flavor. They will be joined by mandolinist Dave Garcia at the show.

Moore himself is a former burned-out musician who rediscovered his muse. In 2001 he founded MJM Records after five years of sobriety with a self-produced CD of Christian music, *Five Years Ago Today* featuring a mix of folk and jazzy pop styles, that is very well produced, especially considering that Moore played the instruments and recorded it himself in his home studio. He has produced two CDs since: *The Rapture* in 2006 and *Living a Dream* last year, all featuring an earnest mixture of guitars, keyboards, and harmonies that recalls '70s artists like Seals and Crofts, America, and others. He will be joined by Andy Powers on guitar and mandolin at the show.

At the concert, MJM will be selling CDs, pictures, and shirts-all as means to raise funds for helping lost souls who find themselves at the bottom.

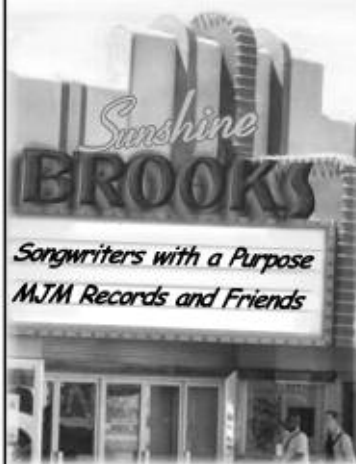
"It's everything I do," said Moore. "I am just sowing seeds." He views his label as a way of making it possible for him to help people, and plows profits into providing for the less fortunate.

He began by regularly visiting the Bread of Life rescue mission, bringing the people there sushi, coffee, hoodies to keep warm, and copies of his music after producing his first CD. This personal ministry then grew to sponsoring people (who he originally found at the mission) to conquer their substance abuse problems at the Green Oaks Ranch rehab facility. The sponsorships are not inexpensive, and the fallout rate is daunting, but that doesn't dissuade Moore. He also sells sponsorship packages online that cover one month of rehab for a candidate and nearly always has one to as many as five people at a time at the facility, depending on his ability to raise funds and their ability to stay with the program.

"I want people to understand that no matter how much you wrecked your life, you can still do something to help others," said Moore. "Take what talent you have and make the most of it. God can work with anybody."

The *Songwriters with a Purpose* benefit will take place on Saturday, August 22, 7pm, at the Sunshine Brooks Theater in Oceanside

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# BILL MAGEE

## EVERY NIGHT YOU GOTTA BE ON

by Mary Mann

I asked to interview Bill Magee in a place he feels comfortable, ideally his home, but he balked at the idea and suggested a location that is neutral and between our two neighborhoods, a Starbucks in La Jolla. I show up a few minutes early, and he arrives up soon afterward. It's a cloudy day, but he wears aviator sunglasses, which he will keep on throughout the interview. I can see myself in them, which is somewhat disarming.

"You want some coffee?" he asks me quickly in his rumbling baritone. I say no, and he walks away to get himself some, standing in line behind a group of fit and coiffed power-mothers. He looks out of place, like Janis Joplin in a Wal-Mart.

Magee is a gruff and barrel-chested man, with white stubble that is more of a midnight shadow than a 5 o'clock. He has a bald patch in the back of his head, though with his short cut it's not too noticeable, and he wears a gray sweatshirt with jeans. He has the aura of a legend even while he stirs sugar in his coffee.

It's only appropriate. Since his music career began with college parties in 1957, Magee has played with the likes of Jimmy Hendrix, B.B. King, James Brown, and Muddy Waters, among numerous others. He has played all over this country and Europe, including the famous difficult Apollo Theater in Harlem.

"In the Apollo you get three notes," says Magee, "One, two, and if by the third note you're not on, they run you out of there."

At 21, Magee played the Apollo in 1964 with B.B. King, King was, and continues to be, one of Magee's favorite blues artists of all time, someone he grew up admiring.

"I was 21 years old and had grown up listening to him on the radio," says Magee, "It was a dream come true."

They made it past the first three notes, and Magee went on to play the Apollo several more times, opening for Etta James and playing with his own band, the Kansas City Playboys.

The Apollo has an iconic place in Magee's music. Located in the center of Harlem, the Apollo was billed as a "place where stars are born and legends are made." For all performers, but especially for African-American performers, the Apollo had and still has an almost mystic appeal. They say that if you can play the Apollo, you can play anywhere in the world. When he graduated high school, the only one of his 11 siblings to do so, Magee moved to Harlem, across the street from the Apollo, and set his sights on the place. He was determined to play the Apollo or die trying.

Rewind about ten years to Collins, Mississippi, where Magee grew up. He was raised on a farm where work was hard, school was secondary, and "devil music" (i.e., the blues) was prohibited. Despite the threat of fire and brimstone, Magee and his siblings would sneak upstairs on Saturday nights and listen to a blues show that sometimes came through on a station from Memphis.

"On a good day we could get that station all the way down in Mississippi," Magee says, remembering those muggy Mississippi summer nights, the blues just as humid, coming through clear from an alien land.

It was here that Magee acquired his love for the blues – on a farm where blues was strictly prohibited.

His parents both passed away, several years apart, and at the age of 13 he was sent to New York, where his brother Deloy, 15 at the time, supported him through high school. Free from parental oversight, Magee saved up money and bought his first guitar, much to Deloy's chagrin.

"I was self taught, so I was just makin' a lot of noise," says Magee. "I would play until one or two in the morning, just makin' noise and pissin' him off. I said, 'One day

my name's gonna be in lights and you are gonna see me at the Apollo Theater, you just wait and see.'"

And years later Deloy was there, watching. From that point on, Magee's career blossomed. On the road with the Kansas City Playboys in Europe, in clubs in New York, touring the United States, and playing with names so big they make me nervous – all through the '60s and '70s, an undeniable era of musical renaissance, Magee was in the thick of things, that is, until the arrival of disco.

"I survived disco," says Magee, "I survived disco, and then after disco was hip-hop." He says this like he is talking about pandemics, as if he survived bird flu, and then swine flu came along.

All of the sudden, people wanted DJs to play Abba, and then to spin Run DMC. Magee decided to get out of the business in 1984 when his son was born. After more than two decades in the music business, he was burned out. He got a real estate license and eventually moved the family to San Diego, a city he'd played in on a tour. He was sure he would never play again.

One day in 1993 Magee woke up and changed his mind.

"I'd been out here for nine years," Magee rumbles, "and you don't forget how to play, but you get rusty."

So he honed his skills again, playing at jam sessions downtown. Magee didn't know any musicians in San Diego. He rarely went to see music, feeling done with the whole scene after so many years in clubs every night. Musicians, Magee notes, do not generally go to clubs for fun – they go to work. As he says that he received a knowing nod from his friend Zach Cole, a renowned San Diego harmonica player who showed up near the beginning of the interview and sat and watched the entire thing, almost like protection. Cole sat shyly hidden by a black fedora, and interjected only to assent or to prod Magee into slightly more detail.

Cole is one of many musicians that Magee now knows in San Diego. Magee never forgot how to work the music business, and before long he had found a group of musicians that he felt comfortable with. With a group of them he formed the Bill Magee Blues Band (Cole is not a member, just a friend), and they've been playing ever since. The roster has changed over the years, but Magee has remained constant, being touted by those who've worked with

him as the best employer of musicians in San Diego. He was able to quit his day job a few years after the formation of the band, and is back to making a living on music alone. This is no mean feat, especially in the world of blues, where millionaires are rarely made.

"I take it seriously," says Magee, letting me in on the secret of his success. "To be successful, you've got to take it seriously and show up all the time. It's that simple."

Magee is deadly serious. He laughs only twice during the interview. The rest of the time he is all business, poker faced behind his sunglasses. Music is his life and his livelihood, and he is not messing around.

He brings this intensity to every show. Magee has fun and loves what he does, but he is fierce about giving high quality performances exactly tuned to his audience. He explains that a musician gets about one song, or one chance, to read the audience and figure out what's really going to get them going. It's his job to make people dance.

"Every night you've gotta be on," Magee says vehemently. "Somebody done heard of Bill Magee, but they ain't never seen you, you've got a reputation. They come to see what you're made of, and you've got to perform."

It all sounds very exhausting, and I have to wonder if it's really worth the hassle. Magee is 66 years old, officially in the retirement years, and he is playing an average of 15-25 shows a month. He spends his life in clubs and at festivals, a tiring task for someone who doesn't drink. He's been in the music business for about 40 combined years. I ask, what makes it worth it? Magee doesn't hesitate, but rumbles away in his bulldozer voice:

"You get in a zone, it's like magic," Magee says, his brow crinkling as he searches for the right way to explain how he feels. "It's when something takes over your body and it's just magical; it just happens, and you're in it. And you see the big smiles on people's faces and you know that they enjoy what you do. It is very seldom that a person gets to do what they love, and get paid for it, and make a living. I've been blessed."

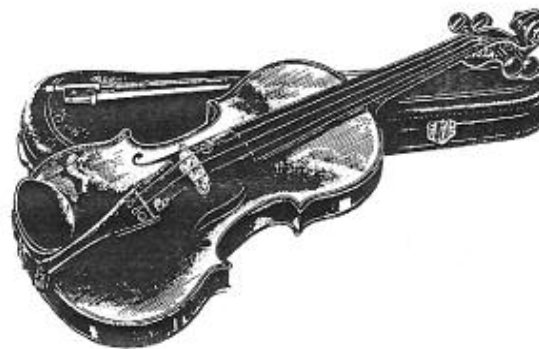
*The Bill Magee Blues Band has just released a new CD, Good Morning Mississippi, Thank You for Being My Home. For more information about the CD or upcoming concerts, check out his website, www.billmageeblues.com, or email him directly at billmagees@aol.com.*



Bill Magee

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# Recordially, Lou Curtiss

**PLAYING YOU SOME GOOD OLD TUNES THAT'LL MAKE YOU MIGHTY GLAD YOU TUNED IN**

Well, this summer it'll be 40 years since I started a series of regular programs on the radio. I guess I first got hooked on the idea when I was encouraged by Jeff Clark (then at Channel 10 and KOGO radio) sometime in the mid to early '60s. He had heard me do "The Talking Atomic Blues" on a daytime TV show and told me I had a voice suited for radio. I took that as a compliment, but aside from appearing on a few hootenanny-type radio shows (on KPRI during their easy listening days), it was 1969 before I

started doing any kind of regular radio. In 1969 KPRI had started a series they called at first "Underground Radio" with a guy who called himself O.B. Jetty. He was soon joined by a number of other underground names and they were playing mostly rock music and other sounds of that day. It was a guy who called himself Bigsby P. Naughton who first invited me down to the station to his after midnight show to play some vintage blues on the air (I may have been the first guy to play a Robert Johnson 78 on live San Diego radio). I also played "Take a Whiff on Me" by the Memphis Jug Band and "Reefer Man" by Cab Calloway. The station started to get some mail and it wasn't long until a guy named Ralph Phillips and I

had a Sunday night blues show, playing stuff from the early '20s right up to date for 1969 and 1970. Ralph and I lasted for awhile and were eventually replaced by Joe Chandler who continued with the blues on Sunday nights for a time. I often took records from Folk Arts and from my own collection to play on the air with Joe. I tried another show with Ralph out at KDEO, but that one didn't last long either. It was about a year later (Folk Arts had moved up to Fifth Avenue and I was doing concerts in the store) that the folks at KGB (then down on Pacific Highway) approached me about doing a public service program. They had the Hare Khrishnas chanting for an hour every Sunday morning but they wanted some real old-time gospel too. So I said I'd do an old timey and bluegrass gospel show if they'd let me do a crazy Dr. Demento type novelty song show called "The Folk Arts Radio Show." They said sure, and I was off on another five or six-year run (this time solo). The gospel show ran the gamut from straight-out Stanley Brothers and Lewis Family bluegrass to live local bands like Stuart Duncan's Pendleton Pickers and vintage gospel bluesman Thomas E. Shaw and, occasionally, a trip into vintage sanctified music like Blind Willie Johnson, Rev. J.M. Gates, and even pop gospel like the Blind Boys, Dixie Hummingbirds, and Swan Silvertones. The other show would range from funny stuff like Spike Jones and dope songs from Cab Calloway. I remember one time we were cutting the show at the station and we couldn't use the production room for some reason, so we had to use the main studio. Somehow, we got tapped into the main air feed and my show, usually heard after midnight went out on AM radio at 3 pm with Cab Calloway's "Kicking the Gong Around." Well, the switchboard lit up immediately with calls pro and con. They told me it was more pro than con but the con folks were louder and they always watched when my show was cut after that). After five years the laws about public service shows had been repealed and I think both KGB and I realized that we were just going thru the motions. "The Folk Arts Show" was now heard about three in the morning. I had a couple of fisherman on a boat off the Coronado Islands who always

called the shop to see what I was going to play that week. I started using live concerts from my series at Folk Arts and then Orangos Restaurant, and it was one of those that brought my dealings with KGB to an end. The concert in question was one that featured Jimmy Borsdorf, Jon Wilcox, and A.J. Soares; the song was one written by Bodie Wagner titled "I'm F---- Up Again (on the Wine and the Beer and the Sin)." It seems that at that time the FCC kept track of radio stations by taking 10 second clips of on air from time to time to see if any of those words George Carlin talked about was used. Guess what they got at three in the morning? It was my last show at KGB. You know, it was funny because I didn't even know that song was there. Oh, well.

In July of 1987 Kim Cox invited me down to the KSDS studios to do a portion of his radio show on Sunday nights. That soon expanded to an hour of my own, then 90 minutes, and, for the last several years, two hours. The show is called "Jazz Roots," and it's now on Sunday (it always was) from 8-10pm (that's 88.3 FM or on the internet at jazz88.org). "Jazz Roots" has been on the air now for about 22 years and I'm willing to venture that I've played a lot of blues, jazz, old timey, cajun, vaudeville, show, and hot dance music not heard on San Diego radio before and I turned a fair amount of local revival musicians on to things worth reviving. Being on the web I get emails from places like Finland and Saudi Arabia and all over North America and even Australia. It's a real trip for me to have gone in 40 years on the radio in San Diego from sharing my music with a largely local audience to sharing it with the world.

**REMEMBERING**

There is a new CD out and about in San Diego titled *Goldmine: The Songs of Buddy Blue*. Now, someone has already written a review (see the June 2009 issue of the S.D. Troubadour) and how good it is and how good Buddy's songs were, and how it's a fundraiser for Buddy's daughter Lulu and that's all worth going on to some great extent about. But the things I shared with Buddy aren't so much about the great music he wrote but rather the great music and causes and ideas we'd get together (mostly



Photo: Steve Covault  
Lou Curtiss

at my store) and talk about. A vintage blues or jump music record on some auction list and whether it was worth bidding on or even listening to. I often got to help him decide. I don't know how many times we discussed the shortcomings of the music business - here in San Diego and around most everywhere. Both Buddy and I liked to complain about that and we were apt targets for each other's complaints. Buddy always stuck up for me and I tried to return the favor when I could. This is a CD that you have to go out and buy. There's a lot of love in it from a bunch of folks who knew Buddy well and a lot of respect from some folks who only knew his music. In both cases the light and the quality comes shining through.

Recordially,  
Lou Curtiss

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by Paul Hormick

Over two years ago, as John DeMarco battled cancer, his physicians told him he didn't have much longer to live. Despite their proclamation, he carried on, finally succumbing to the disease at the end of June.

DeMarco lived his life as an artist. He loved music, particularly the blues, and chose musicians as the subjects of many of his paintings. Focusing on individuals rather than ensembles, he filled his canvases with the likenesses of T-Bone Walker, Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson, and other performers. Music was not only the subject, but also often the object of his artistic expression; on the backsides of guitars he painted the images of men who had mastered that instrument, such as Stevie Ray Vaughn and Jimi Hendrix. He claimed that certain musical sounds and notes reminded him of colors. For example, the keys of E or G brought to his mind hues of deep saturated green. He also said that for him there was no line between music and art.

Years ago Chuck Perrin, the owner and manager of San Diego's best jazz center, Dizzy's, would visit with DeMarco as the artist painted in his studio in Little Italy. Perrin recalls that music was a part of DeMarco's artistic process. He says, "John had a boom box and he would play a musician's music on the box all the while he was working on a picture of that musician." At one point DeMarco said that he knew he had done a good job if a painting gave him the same sensation as listening to the music that inspired the piece of art.

Since the late forties, when photographer Herman Leonard first created his near perfect images of Sinatra, Dexter Gordon, Dizzy Gillespie, and other musical giants, the iconography of jazz and blues musicians has been and remains the black and white photograph. Leonard's use of composition and framing can be seen in DeMarco's musician paintings. Black dominates his canvases, just as it does for most of Leonard's photos, giving the artwork an austere and sometimes mysterious atmosphere. The relation of DeMarco to his subjects, like that of Leonard, is almost reverential, each rendering a paean to the performer. The painter also created the crisp lines of a photograph from time to time, although he also used rough textures and edgings as well as fluid lines in his artwork.

Amid the black and darker hues,

## JOHN DEMARCO A LIFETIME OF ART AND MUSIC



DeMarco's portrait of Miles Davis

DeMarco used color as a force upon the canvas. In his rendition of John Lee Hooker, the guitarist and the smoke of a freight train push themselves up into a sky of red, implying that the bluesman shared with the train the strength and power of its locomotive. This image is reinforced by Hooker's gaze, as it parallels the direction of the tracks that the train will soon travel. Red hues, this time like that of a fire, glow behind DeMarco's portrait of Margarita Paige, a singer who made her home here in San Diego for several years. Light strikes from the front and side of her face, while the hues of red behind Paige flow through and illuminate her image with warmth, as though the fire were a part of her. The painting is interrupted by a sense of trouble and unease, however, which comes from Paige's eyes. A glint of light brightens a corner of one eye, but the rest of her eyes and brow are shadowed, neither in the light or brightened with the glow that comes to the rest of her face.

In his portrait of Miles Davis, DeMarco hides the trumpeter's eyes behind dark sunglasses; yet reflected in the lenses, replacing Davis' eyes, is a piano keyboard. Almost brilliant white, the piano keys light up the canvass, which is dominated by black and other dark hues. The lenses distort the keys, and they roil and swirl in the lenses, giving us an image of the dynamo of music within

Davis.

In some of his paintings of musicians DeMarco incorporated elements of surrealism, the style that dominated most of his other work, which brings some cleverness and whimsy to the images. Playing off his name, DeMarco transforms John Coltrane's saxophone into a train, complete with steam and smoke, as Coltrane cradles his instrument in his hands. Perhaps the musician's portrait with the most sense of fun is "Hey Charley, Compute This in B Flat." Parker was nicknamed Yardbird or simply Bird, and DeMarco shows a bird flying out of Parker's alto. Parker is in characteristic sharp concentration, and the bird is a picture of grace, its brilliant white feathers serving as the source of illumination for the picture. The image of the bird is rendered in squares, as though it were computer pixelated. The pop era meets the digital age.

During the first incarnation of Dizzy's, when Perrin ran the concert venue in an old warehouse in East Village, a slide show that featured more than 40 of DeMarco's art pieces was projected on a screen above the stage as patrons settled in for an evening's concert. Perrin considered the art an important part of the musical experience. "The visual has always been important to me. I think it's important for other people as well," he says. "I grew up in the time of record albums. And it was all part of the music to get an album and get into the visuals of the album cover while you had the music going. John's art was perfect to help people get into the mood, the mindset for the music."

When DeMarco came of age – he entered the Coinard Art Institute in 1955 right after graduating high school – abstract expressionism was the vogue. Jackson Pollack strewn pigments higgledy-piggledy in his studio, and other artists were haphazardly committing paints to their canvases. DeMarco didn't follow this trend and painted most of his work in the surrealist style, a genre that had reached its heyday around the time he was born. Because they tapped into the psyche, many of his illustrations



John DeMarco

appeared in *Psychology Today*, as well as other national magazines.

DeMarco lived and worked in Spain for three years, with successful exhibits in El Escorial, Torrelodones, and Madrid. Many of his canvases show the influence of Dali, containing images of extreme, almost painfully acute detail. As with Dali, horizons stretch away, objects burst into flame but do not burn, and shadows lie in inexplicable angles. His paintings also share in Dali's Catholicism. Jesus and the Apostles are absent from "The Last Supper Could Play Your Town Next." Instead the bread and wine of Holy Thursday rise above a clothed table, which rises above the sea. In this manner DeMarco depicts the Last Supper as continuing sacrament, rather than a biblical sacrifice. "Apple and Eve" substitutes the crucifix for the Edenic Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and plays off the central Catholic beliefs that cosmically connect the events of Old and New Testaments.

"Art Meets Science," which shows a dog at a beach standing above a mermaid lying in a kelp polyp, is subtler than DeMarco's other surrealist output. All three subjects – dog, kelp, and mermaid – could be found along the beach or are associated with the ocean. This painting, as with some of his other canvases, are less prodding of the subconscious, less self consciously evocative. The result is that they are more inviting, and the sense of discovery remains with repeated viewing.

At different times in his life DeMarco was an art director and creative director for several studios. He taught art to primary school students in Montana and lectured at the Art Institute in Chicago. In the early seventies he worked as a counselor and art teacher in the psychiatry department at UCSD, developing the Creative Alternatives to Drug Addiction program. Ironically, DeMarco himself struggled for years with alcohol and drugs, finally finding sobriety

in the mid-eighties. Later he was to credit his sobriety with increasing both the quality and quantity of his artistic output.

Though his output increased, his pay grade didn't. DeMarco truly lived the life of a starving artist, often down to his last few dollars by the time he sold a painting. Perrin says, "He was a real artist, one of those persons who doesn't paint for money. They do it because they have to; it's part of them." For years DeMarco both lived and worked in his Barking Blue Studio. Despite a very low rental agreement, he often did not have the few hundred dollars at the end of the month and relied on the generous spirit of a landlord who understood his artistic spirit and income. Guitarist Billy Thompson knew DeMarco for years, and his album *Tangerine Sky* included some of DeMarco's artwork. He recalls that many a month DeMarco made the trip to the pawnshop with a guitar and amplifier to get some cash until his next painting sold.

Scott Myers shared a loft space with DeMarco when Myers was first starting his design business and remembers DeMarco's impoverishment. He says, "Trying to make a living from his art was never easy. Back then we'd talk about his work and how he might increase sales and demand for his paintings. He'd be working on a piece, sometimes quite a large canvas, and have a tiny little brush finessing some detail. I'd tease him about this, telling him, 'John, you need to pick up the pace, I'm going to take all those little brushes away from you. Paint big and fast; you'll get more done and sell more.' So one morning I come in and there he was with a paintbrush in his hand, the kind that you'd use to paint a house. He said, 'Scottie, I'm really cranking 'em out, big brushes are the way to go!' He fell on the floor laughing, and from then on that was our little joke."

Thompson says that despite all of his troubles – fighting his drug problems, being perennially short of cash – DeMarco remained "a tower of strength" and faced cancer and death with peace and resolve. Myers agrees, adding that DeMarco was undaunted by his challenges. "He was committed to his art and his life, and all those around him. John lived the life of a true artist, working hard and following his vision. He was such an upbeat joyful spirit; the challenges of his lifestyle never seemed to really get him down. To me, I'll always remember John as a joyful, talented, creative, and passionate friend."

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by Steve Thorn

Oh, we're going to a hukilau  
A huki, huki, huki, huki, hukilau  
Everybody loves a hukilau  
Where the laulau is the kau kau at the big luau

Written in 1948 by Jack Owens, the "Cruising Crooner" of Don McNeill's "Breakfast Club" radio show, *The Hukilau Song* was recorded by Bing Crosby, Alfred Apaka, and – when he wasn't watching tiny bubbles – the late Don Ho. It was just part of post-war America's infatuation with island culture.

Before the arrival of the skateboard, children in suburbs across America gave their hula hoops a backyard whirl. Mom and Dad would snuggle in the living room with some mai tais and listen to the soundtrack of Roger and Hammerstein's *South Pacific* on their hi-fi. The musical was based on author James Michener's novel, *Tales of the South Pacific*.

In Southern California, the influence of the enchanted Tiki world was evident. Disneyland created an Adventureland attraction called, naturally, the Enchanted Tiki Room. On the 605 freeway, LA motorists still zoom past a suburb called Hawaiian Gardens, actually named after a 1920s roadside food stand. From coffee shops to bowling alleys to dark nightclubs, the island fever was incurable.

San Diego, one of the seminal areas of Pacific Islander imagery, annually hosts a global gathering of the tribal faithful. Tiki Oasis 09 will take place over the four-day period of August 13 through 16 at two local landmarks which embody the spirit of the tropics: Shelter Island's Bali Hai restaurant (Thursday night only) and Mission Valley's Crowne Plaza Hotel, still referred to sentimentally by locals as the Hanalei.

Tiki Oasis is the creation of San Francisco couple Otto and Baby Doe von Stroheim. Otto is the publisher of *Tiki News* magazine and Baby Doe is an acclaimed choreographer whose expertise is in historic dance trends; her specialties include '60s go-go and retro-burlesque.

So, why not have the festival in the "Baghdad by the Bay" instead of San Diego? Well, for a start, San Francisco's climate would never be confused for Maui or Fiji. Otto provided more substantial reasons. "San Diego has a rich Tiki history," said von Stroheim. "A lot of San Diego was developed in the prime Tiki era of 1959-1965, so naturally Tiki style was used. A lot of stuff is gone but some remains, especially Shelter Island, which is mostly preserved, with the best examples being Bali Hai, Humphrey's, and Trader Mort's.

"I've known of the Hanalei Hotel for

decades and had always wanted to host an event there," von Stroheim revealed. "When the Palm Springs Tiki Oasis event outgrew its original location (88 rooms), it was a no-brainer to move the event to San Diego. The first San Diego Tiki Oasis was in 2006 and we occupied one third of the hotel. Now we sell out the entire hotel (almost 400 rooms) two months prior to the event."

Born in Encino during the '60s, von Stroheim spent his youth living in different parts of LA: Van Nuys/Reseda ("Where *Boogie Nights* was filmed!" he exclaimed with an air of civic pride) and in Torrance/Redondo Beach.

"When I lived in Torrance I went to Disneyland every summer and Knotts Berry Farm was a common outing on a weekend, as well as the Torrance Pier and Redondo Beach. Used to drive by Beachbum Bert's on the way to church. There were Tiki restaurants everywhere when I was a kid. I went to high school in San Clemente where I became a surfer and learned to love surf music. I spent my adult life in Santa Monica/Venice/Culver City where I hosted an annual backyard Tiki party for nine years. Each year we had two to four bands play. We had Possum Dixon, All Star garage/surf band (with members of the 5, 6, 7, 8s, Jackie and the Cedrics, and the Phantom Surfers), the Insect Surfers, and the Neptunas."

Von Stroheim said one prominent feature about all of Southern California is that "a lot of it was built in the late '50 to late '60s and there is a lot of tropical landscaping. It never really dawned on me until I was cruising around LA with a British friend and he commented that "every house is Tiki style." I guess it's like that saying, "You can take the boy out of the country . . . "I grew up surrounded by Tiki style and Google architecture."

There are official and "unofficial" mission statements behind Tiki Oasis. Von Stroheim said the original purpose of Tiki Oasis was "to save a Tiki hotel in Palm Springs from getting a facelift to Southwestern adobe style. We succeeded in saving the Tropics Hotel. We continue to be committed to the preservation of Tiki landmarks. On one level, merely hosting a large event at Tiki sites should encourage them to maintain their Tiki style and should allow them to stay in business. We also contribute to the local architecture preservation organization SOHO and we'll host a seminar by one of their leaders (Alex Bevel) focusing on San Diego landmarks.

"But the unofficial mission statement of Tiki Oasis," said von Stroheim, "would be something like 'Get away to the islands without leaving your own town. Take a

vacation where you can relax with a Mai Tai in your hand 24/7."

"Tiki Oasis is really the gathering of the tribe of Tiki. We have guests from all over the country and all over the world. But the vibe is like a fun backyard barbeque with live bands. Everyone is friendly. Everyone dresses in Aloha shirts, sun dresses, shorts, and flip flops all weekend. When bands are not playing they are usually in the audience checking out the other bands or just having fun being part of the party."

By day, Nick Camara of Clairemont is employed as a high school social sciences teacher. But a good portion of his remaining waking hours is devoted to putting together the finishing touches on the latest issue of *Tiki*, a San Diego-based magazine enjoyed by an international readership of lei-wearing devotees.

"I started the magazine in July of 2004 with our first issue coming out in April of 2005," Camara explained. "The reason I launched the magazine is because I thought Tiki was very interesting and fun and thought it should be represented by its own magazine."

To say it caught on would be an understatement: all back issues are completely sold out. "Honestly, I'm very surprised," said Camara. "The magazine is in all 50 states and more than 30 foreign countries. I really didn't think that many people would care."

Will the great Tiki spirit continue to shine down on us mortals?

"Absolutely," said an optimistic Camara. "There are many Tiki celebrations popping up throughout the United States and in some foreign countries [a very good thing] but Tiki Oasis is the Tiki celebration."

The local publisher believes the jewel of the San Diego Tiki scene is the Bali Hai restaurant in Shelter Island. "We also have Mister Tiki's Mai Tai Lounge in the Gaslamp Quarter and the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Humphrey's Half Moon Inn, Bar Pink, and the Catamaran. We have the only Tiki themed liquor store anywhere with Trader Mort's in Shelter Island. We also have a number of excellent Tiki-themed stores throughout San Diego. Some of them are Tiki Land, Mainlanders, Freaky Boutiki, Bamboo 2 U, and Tikis Too, and Bamboo Source. San Diego is one of the top Tiki cities in the world."

Camara will be part of a large merchant showcase at Tiki Oasis. His latest issue of *Tiki* will be available and he'll be selling the related t-shirts, stickers, and cocktail glasses.

Every prior Tiki Oasis festival has had a theme. This summer, it's "Tiki Surf City," a celebration of the impact that longboard and shortboard riders have made in the water and on the beach. Highly anticipated at Saturday's symposium will be a lecture titled, "Bohemian Surf: A Slideshow from Hawaiian Antiquity to Surfing's Pop Explosion." The presenters will be authors Domenic Priore and Brian Chidester, the team behind the critically acclaimed book, *Pop Surf Culture*.

A former resident of Carlsbad, Priore first gained notice with *Dumb Angel Gazette*, a "fanzine" devoted to Brian Wilson, and a sounding board for Beach Boys fans to express hope that Capitol Records would one day release Wilson's legendary *Smile* recordings from the '60s. (The dream became a reality; the *Smile* sessions appeared on the 1993 *Good Vibrations* box set.) In 2007, Priore made a detour from the overexposed Haight-Ashbury and the Summer of Love era and instead described the LA '60s music explosion in his book, *Riot on the Sunset Strip*.

Priore provided the Troubadour with an outline of his presentation at Tiki Oasis: "Basically, the theory is that there was a time when the design of surfing really came from an organic connection to the rocks, the sand, the colors of the water, and all that surrounded it," he said. "Sand is kind of yellow, the water is kind of blue/green, the sky is light blue, the rocks are tan or reddish or brown with some black, the guano is white like a T-shirt... then during the rise

SAN DIEGO'S ADVENTURE IN PARADISE

TIKI OASIS

of surfing as something more common, and something more than strongmen could handle (thanks to the invention of lighter boards that took place during the '50s), the coolest thing at the beach were the beatnik joints like Venice West and the Gas House in Venice Beach, Cafe Positano in Malibu, Cafe Frankenstein in Laguna, the Lighthouse [for West Coast jazz] and the Insomniac (for books and folk music) in Hermosa Beach... even the Pour House in San Diego, right?

"Boho, surf, it all went together and that is how this great art style emerged during the late '50s and early '60s, best represented by the first few years of *Surfer* magazine featuring art and design by John Severson, Rick Griffin, Mike Salisbury, and John Van Hamersveld... all of whom cobbled together a surf version of those oceanic elements, the beatnik elements, and also the modernist elements to create this thing that best became known, or defined, as bitchen."

No beach party would be complete without West Coast surf music, and this year's Tiki Oasis will feature two pioneers of the genre: Davie Allan and Jim Masoner. The early Davie Allan and the Arrows recordings ("Moon Dawg '65," "Apache '65") followed the instrumental rock path that was indicative of the whole surf music (vocal groups like the Beach Boys were the exception rather than the rule) scene and provided a direction for the popular bands of the day: Dick Dale and his Del-Tones, Eddie and the Showmen, the Belairs, the Surfaris, and the Sentinels. Allan found his own sound when he teamed up with his old Grant High School (Van Nuys) classmate (and future Lt. Governor) Mike Curb for a series of successful soundtrack albums for American International Picture biker films. "Blues Theme" from the movie *The Wild Angels* was a top 40 smash and for the remainder of the '60s, the name Davie Allan was associated with AIP movies and the film studio's reigning artistic light, director Roger Corman.

Allan is considered the father of "fuzz" guitar, and perhaps it is best appreciated when actually heard (for a sample, visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=YswkF-d2VZ8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YswkF-d2VZ8)) rather than reading a lengthy dissertation on the subject. Followers of Allan on the internet point to three major influences:

Henry Mancini (who composed many a fine film score in his own remarkable career), '50s guitarist Link Wray (famous for the foreboding single "Rumble"), and the guitar pyrotechnics of Jimi Hendrix. Masoner is the lead guitarist of the Lively Ones, best remembered for their 1963 version of "Surf Rider" (originally written by the Ventures), a track that found its way into Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*. In their heyday, the Lively Ones were part of Bob Keene's strong surf group stable at Del-Fi Records, the label best known as the home of Ritchie Valens. While Allan will be launching into solos featuring his trademark fuzz sound, expect a lot of reverberation from Masoner and the Lively Ones.

An all-points bulletin to *Troubadour* readers who double as ukulele players (and there are a lot of you): bring your tropical "axe" (well, maybe it is too small to be called an axe) down to the Crowne Plaza for



a ukulele jam session with Luka Grogg on Sunday afternoon. There will be the sharing of songs and ukulele maintenance tips.

Allan, Masoner and Priore's appearances are only a mere sampling of the many musical acts, dance troupes, guest DJs, and jam sessions that can be enjoyed over the four days. Best advice: come early and stay late! Visit [www.tikioasis.com](http://www.tikioasis.com) for the complete schedule.

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by Mike Alvarez



**M**y early arrival at Twigg's Coffeehouse in University Heights, coupled with my interview subject's fashionable tardiness, makes for a rare opportunity to just sit and observe on one of the first glorious afternoons of the summer. Two men play chess at a table in the building's shade. A faint odor of tobacco smoke wafts in the slight breeze, mixing with fragments of conversation. A dreadlocked and bejeweled gentleman sits silently, contentedly absorbed in his own thoughts. As I soak up the sunshine and atmosphere outside one of the city's epicenters of cool, I gaze upon the closed and locked door of the room that housed thousands of musical performances over the years. It's with a sense of melancholy that I reflect upon the demise of Twigg's local music showcase, but that emotion is short-lived. One of the establishment's baristas, a cool cat in a smart hat and shades, assembles a clarinet and begins playing woodwind runs on the sidewalk. Two ladies sitting nearby smile and chuckle with him. Leaning against the wall next to them is a battered acoustic guitar. While it is never played, it stands in mute testimony to the place's unwillingness to completely relinquish its musical legacy.

It's at this point that a living ghost from Twigg's past comes roaring up on a motorcycle, clad in black leather and dark glasses with a steel helmet perched upon his head. Only it's not a ghost. It's a very alive and very well Carlos Olmeda, one of the city's most celebrated songwriters and performers. Arriving as he does, he cuts an intimidating figure but immediately dispels that impression with a big grin and a wave before extending his hand for a warm handshake. As we walk inside, I immediately engage him about a term he has coined to describe his art: Tricultural Acoustic Pop. Naively, I speculate that it's a combination of American and Latin influences along with something else that I have yet to identify. He tactfully corrects me, stating that it's not as simple as that. His own native Puerto Rican culture can be described as the confluence of three cultures: Spanish, Indigenous, and African. Yet, when he brings its influence to a song, it comes as a single element to be fused with other ideas. He cites his song "Mi Lelolai A Mi Yaweh," which features English verses and a chorus in Spanish that's sung with an African inflection as an example of this concept. So it appears that the term is somewhat elastic in its definition, subject to the whims of its inventor's muse. He proudly asserts, "I refuse to choose a musical camp and raise the flag for it."

Listening to a selection of his songs, one is hard-pressed to pigeonhole it into a single genre, and that makes Carlos Olmeda extremely happy. Hints of his favorite artists can be found in the music, be it in the way he phrases a lyric, the timbre of his voice, or the arrangement of a song. He lists Paul Simon; Cat Stevens; the Beatles; Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young; and Johnny Cash among his influences. Producer and friend Sven-Erik Seaholm once quipped, "An artist's style comes from limitations in the attempt to imitate one's heroes," and that is a quote Olmeda finds particularly memorable. He notes with amusement that many

Photo: MASEN





listeners tend to credit modern musicians with "inventing" their performance styles without being aware of the lineage of the techniques and sounds they employ. By way of demonstration, he breaks into a snippet of song that might be at home in the Cat Stevens songbook were it not sung in Spanish. It is actually a much older song by an early 20th-century tango musician named Carlos Gardel whose tremulous vibrato and emotive delivery certainly left their mark on artists like Stevens. He enthusiastically shares that while Gardel's songs have been known to contain numerous chord changes, many of which are surprising choices, the melodies are so strong that the music itself tells a story.

Similarly, he cites the influence of Nigerian artist King Sunny Ade on Paul Simon's landmark *Graceland* album, stating that while Simon adopts a conversational style with his lyrics and vocal delivery, the roots of the music are African. Olmeda modestly refers to himself as a "dime store musicologist," but in reality he displays a deep and intimate knowledge of music. It goes beyond mere fascination; music is profoundly meaningful to him. With complete frankness, he laments, "I tire of young artists who can't play a show without four or five cover songs." When all is said and done, he champions originality and integrity in songwriting. As an early touring colleague of Jason Mraz, he recounts how they learned a lot about striving for this integrity. Most important, they discovered how crucial it is for artists to be themselves rather than parroting what they think will be popular.



Originally from San Juan, Puerto Rico, he became an Oceanside resident at a young age. His musical education began immediately, as he recalls being captivated by his mother's scratchy copy of an LP called *Music from Around the Globe*. The diversity of the selections made a huge impact upon his young ears. It was also around this time that he acquired an inexpensive guitar. Following his natural affinity for music, he learned how to play it then started writing original songs that he would perform at high school and in restaurants. At early gigs in North County, with his brother Toca Rivera, he notes that

their set list did include a few popular acoustic cover tunes, although it was mostly made up of their originals (music fans will undoubtedly recognize Rivera as the percussionist and vocalist who frequently accompanies Jason Mraz).

Olmeda creates bits of songs every day using a portable digital recorder. Some songs develop from those fragments – he estimates about a hundred per year – and maybe 12 will be deemed worthy to play at gigs. He is very particular about the process

**"I refuse to choose a musical camp and raise the flag for it."**

—Carlos Olmeda

of songwriting, always asking the question "what makes this song special?" even to the point of scrutinizing its degree of divine inspiration. "Good songs take root. I can't get them out of my head." He continues, "You know people who always change stations on the radio? That's me with songwriting. My mind is always changing stations." He

states with no visible sense of regret that "variety has worked to my advantage with critical ears but not necessarily with commercial ears," estimating that "about 20 percent of listeners tire of hearing the same song on an album." Interestingly, he characterizes himself as "lazy," even given his prolific output and exacting standards. Such self-professed laziness even extends to his performance schedule. Citing the law of diminishing returns, it is his belief that it does more good for him to play once or twice a month rather than four shows with 40-50 attendees.

Yet, his true work ethic is revealed at these live performances. "When people come to my shows, they just don't see a guy doing a song and dance. I'm not there to impress. They will walk away thinking they spent time in my living room!" It is vital to Olmeda that he establishes a connection between himself and the members of his audience regardless of the crowd's size. In fact he considers it far more important when playing to a large group because the potential loss of intimacy in a bigger venue is an obstacle that must be overcome. He candidly asserts that at live concerts "we're not selling music. We're selling entertainment. Even the most hard core Shoegazer Emo band is doing that. Art happens in the living room but on stage it's entertainment. If a show is flawless but it isn't fun, what's the point? If people don't enjoy hanging out with you, you won't get called back!"

Interestingly, he notes that some people don't want to feel as if they are hanging out with their favorite artists. He observes that "there is a large part of the listening audience that actually wants to feel inferior to you. But just because a person can write songs that you enjoy – that doesn't make them some kind of mystic. They're just good at it. They were gifted with this skill and practiced at it." To illustrate, he recounts an occurrence during a trip to Ireland. "I was getting off the bus from Dublin to Belfast and was asked to help judge a community parade. A gentleman with a deep voice extended his hand and said, 'Hi, I'm Gerry.' It turned out to be none other than Gerry Adams, you know, the president of the Sinn Fein political party. So it just goes to show you that no matter how famous you get, there'll always be a place where you're just another guy in the neighborhood!"

Olmeda is a veteran of just about every



Olmeda with brother Toca Rivera (left)

stage in San Diego, from coffeehouses like Twiggs and Lestat's to higher profile venues like the Belly Up and Anthology. He singles out Swedenborg Hall in University Heights as one of the best places to play and intimates that house concerts are also among his favorite gigs. Outside of the local area, he has performed in Ireland, New York, Puerto Rico, Northern California, and Los Angeles, but one gets the distinct impression that his heart belongs in San Diego. He often performs solo, preferring to reach as many people as possible as a one-person act. He can't help but smile as he reveals that "girl friends prefer my solo performances. They say that adding more waters it down." However he has also been a member of groups like Supermice and now Brothahs by Choice, his current project. Originally a trio, comprised of himself, his brother Toca and Jason Mraz, it's now a duo consisting of himself and his longtime creative partner Jason Ford. At present it's an acoustic act in the conceptual stage. They are looking to add a third member who plays bass in a variety of styles and can sing with a voice that blends. Olmeda states that they are open to considering female "brothers." Their goal is to play colleges, so applicants must be available for touring. "We're accepting demos, and if I answer your e-mail we're interested in auditioning you." He can be contacted via his websites: [www.carlosolmedamusic.com](http://www.carlosolmedamusic.com) and [www.myspace.com/carlosolmeda](http://www.myspace.com/carlosolmeda).

Although mostly a solo acoustic performer onstage, in the recording studio

Olmeda enjoys the freedom to create whatever arrangement he feels is most suitable for a song. "I love producing with Jason Ford. He has no qualms about doing the same song ten times until it feels good." An early release, "Learning to Walk" is an acoustic recording showcasing his vocal and guitar skills. While this will always remain the foundation of his art, subsequent albums like 1999's SDMA winning *Sensitive Groove* find him utilizing other instruments and sounds to more fully realize his artistic visions. Ford's recording facility, StepsTone Studios provides them with an ideal haven for creating their own music as well as producing a growing number of local artists. He reveals that their next release will be titled *The StepsTone Sessions*.

Carlos Olmeda has made a career out of the thing he loves most. While he is not always enamored of the music scene, he has made it his life's work to create songs and bring them to the public. "Life is good. As long as I'm alive and my brain sings songs to me, I might as well write them down. Sometimes I love it and sometimes it's cause for depression, but I am driven to do it." When asked what message he's trying to send to the world through his music, he pauses for the tiniest moment before declaring, "The universe loves you. Act accordingly!"

Olmeda will be appearing live at Anthology on September 3 with Gregory Page and Lisa Sanders.





# Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden



## SUMMERGRASS IS HERE!

August is the best of bluegrass months in San Diego as we anticipate the return of the annual Summergrass Festival. Held over the weekend of August 21 – 23 (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) at the Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum in Vista, we look forward to great national touring bands, top local bands, camping and jamming until the wee hours, vendors, music workshops, kids activities, and the stellar Bluegrass Kids Camp for youngsters. Let's take a look at the entertainment planned for this year.

Two-time IBMA guitar player of the year **Kenny Smith**, previously with the **Lonesome River Band**, performs with wife Amanda. Winners of IBMA's prestigious Emerging Artist of the Year award in 2003, you can expect top-notch gospel and bluegrass vocals, punctuated by stunning instrumentation from this outstanding duo.

**NewFound Road** is making its first appearance at Summergrass this year, and they are sure to delight the fans. Here is what the press is saying about NewFound road:

"...NewFound Road is a revelation, an innovative template of how bluegrass can remain thrilling and relevant by fusing the best of the past to a clear vision of what is essential today." Raleigh News & Observer.

"The secret weapon of NewFound Road is Tim Shelton, who comes powerfully out of the gate on the bands fifth recording with his trademark rich, chesty baritone roar. There are a lot of instrumentally virtuosic bands out there, a lot of bands with fine singers, but very few who combine technique with taste the way that NewFound Road does." Rick Anderson, All Music Guide.

**Sawmill Road** is making a repeat appearance at Summergrass after their successful debut last August. This is an amazing collection of seasoned players who perform at a level that always brings a powerful mixture of bluegrass styles to any stage. Summergrass welcomes back Sawmill Road, whose members include Steve Spurgin on bass, Charlie Edsel on guitar, Dick Brown on banjo, Mark Miracle on mandolin, and Doug Bartlett on fiddle.

Summergrass also brings the **Bluegrass Patriots** out of Colorado to this year's festival, a band that brings great music to those who like their bluegrass traditional. Fresh from a tour of Ireland, this band is sure to please. As one of the longest running bands in bluegrass (28 years) and with a top hit on the Bluegrass Unlimited Chart in 1991 ("When You and I Were Young, Maggie"), this is a fine band. Also appearing are the **Brombies**, featuring talented songwriters and performers, original-

ly hailing from Escondido, and the **Bluegrass Brethren**, who will present top-notch bluegrass gospel. Rounding out the touring band program will be the **Bladerunners**, who virtually burned the house down with talent as the San Diego Bluegrass Society's featured band a few months back, and the **Burnett Family** out of Flagstaff, Arizona, winners of the prestigious Telluride Bluegrass Festival band competition a few years ago. The Burnett family will also be the lead faculty for the **Summergrass Kids Camp**. Local San Diego bluegrass bands will also be well represented by **Gone Tomorrow** and **Highway 76**.

Summergrass has aged well as it enters its seventh year. On-site camping is available, with lots of jamming and socializing. One can also eat well for a reasonable price at the variety of food stands provided by the Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum. Look for BBQ, pulled pork, Mexican food, and even some veggie food this year. And, Summergrass is recognized for its outstanding efforts at education in providing top quality workshops (free) on bluegrass instruments and on singing, presented by top stars, to complement its acclaimed Kids Music Camp, which offers children age 6 to 16 an intensive two and half day instructional session capped by a Sunday performance on the main stage.

By all means bring your instrument and join in the workshops and jamming. If you are relatively new to bluegrass music and jamming, be sure to attend one or both of the two Summergrass **Bluegrass Jamming 101** workshops, led by Sid Lewis from Northern California. Two workshops will be offered – one Friday night and one Saturday night – both from 6 to 7 p.m. during the dinner breaks. He has traveled to most of the big festivals around the country and does a terrific jam workshop. Inclusive of all levels of ability, informative, inspiring, and amusing – a great experience for any Summergrass attendee. And it's all included in the admission price.

Stir all this in with the interesting grounds of the **Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum**, which specializes in antique farm equipment dating back from 1850 to 1950, the fact that the weather is almost always perfect, the nice mellow vibe of a smaller festival with great entertainment, all within an hour by car from most areas of San Diego. You just can't go wrong stopping by this year's Summergrass. Tickets are reasonable at \$15 for Friday and Sunday (advance sale) and \$18 for Saturday. Or buy an advance three-day pass for \$48. Kids under 10 are free with an adult, so bring the whole family. For info and tickets visit: [www.summergrass.net](http://www.summergrass.net)

Hope to see you there!



## The Zen of Recording

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

### TRANCE PHATS

Surviving this new economic state won't be easy for very many people and already, the signs are everywhere. Unemployment numbers are steadily rising, while sales earnings are just as progressively plummeting. Once spendthrift consumers are now tightly clutching their proverbial pocketbooks and scrambling retailers are shifting their advertising focus to value and the easing of financial hardship. Difficult times to be sure, especially for those of us who work in a such a "non-practical" profession as the entertainment industry.

The folks at **Camel Audio** ([www.camelaudio.com](http://www.camelaudio.com)) seem to have always understood this, as they have several products that fall well under the \$100 price point and have even offered a free product (The highly respected **CamelCrusher** distortion/filter plug-in) for several years now.

I recently had the opportunity to work with another of their very cool and useful products, the **CamelPhat 3** (\$85) and came away feeling as if I had added yet another true arrow to my sonic quiver.

The **CamelPhat** is in the words of the manufacturer "a 'powerful colouring' multi-effect that's been specially engineered to work wonders on guitar, bass, and drums, adding warmth, punch, and presence wherever they're required." In practice, I found it to be exactly that, but also so much more.

The **CamelPhat's** interface is very intuitively laid out for such a unique product. The upper right sports a tunable bandpass filter that allows you to dynamically set the incoming signal's hi and lo cutoff points and even move them around simultaneously to find the most musical "sweet spot." A mix knob allows you keep as much or little of the original signal in the path as well.

There is also a "Flanger" module with "Amount" and "Rate" knobs enabling you to insert this effect to taste.

Magic EQ, is a tunable frequency booster. Just set the "Tune" knob to the frequency you want more of and turn the

"Amount" knob accordingly. This module also includes a "Phat" button. When engaged, it adds the slightest bit of distortion (such as the kind you get from over-driving analog tube gear), bringing an aggressive edge to the signal.

The "Compressor," with its "Amount" and "Release" knobs and another "Phat" button helps put things a little more in your face and the release helps to keep your compression as transparent or apparent as you'd like. For instance, lots of compression with a fast release makes drums pump in a cool way, while a longer release might work better for guitar or bass.

The upper right hand portion of the **CamelPhat** interface is where you'll find the "Distortion" section. There are four types available: "BIT CRUSHER" is a lo-fi type, "MECH" is a beautifully ugly digital style, while "TUBE" imparts more of an analog "warmth" and "XCTIA" performs like an aural exciter, adding in more glassy highs and upper harmonics.

The "Multi-Mode (MM) Filter" section is a bit more mysterious. This section allows you to not only select an additional filtering stage employing one of several types (LowPass, BandPass, HighPass, LowPass Fat, BandPass Fat, HighPass Fat, Peaking, Notch, Comb & Ring Mod), but also gives you the ability to apply it to the signal using an attack and release envelope similar to those employed by many synthesizers, etc. What this does in effect (pardon the pun) is add some motion to the sound, turning a static pad into an animated, evolving texture. The closest thing in practice that I can point to is a *Moogerfooger*.

An additional volume and mix stage is located at the lower right-hand corner of the interface and labeled appropriately enough as "Master." This and all of the previously mentioned modules can be turned on or off easily for A/B comparison.

The real stars of the **CamelPhat** though, are located in the center of the interface. At the top is a large button that reads RANDOMIZE. This may well be the best place to start for beginners and experienced users alike. To again quote the manual: "Clicking Randomize instantly



Sven-Erik Seaholm

assigns a new value to every parameter in every active module (modules that are switched off aren't affected). In short, it's a great way to make interesting things happen quickly! Randomize is actually not completely random; it's designed to be 'intelligent' so that it won't produce settings that make no sound, or sounds that aren't any use." In short, one needs only to keep pushing this button until they stumble upon something useful! There are also 128 presets provided (separated into two 64 preset banks) and you can save your own presets as well. Additionally, there are tons of presets available for download at the company's website.

There's also a very cool X/Y pad that allows you to dynamically (and drastically) manipulate the sound in real time, just by moving your mouse around. Think Korg's KAOSS pad, for a hardware example. It should be noted that this controller can be manipulated via MIDI, along with most of the other parameters. A "MIDI Learn" function also allows you to assign various parameters to whatever MIDI controller numbers you wish.

Also MIDI addressable (though not required) is the LFO section, which allows you to even further manipulate the sound by assigning each of the two available LFOs to any module's parameter, adding even more animation to otherwise static signals.

It should be obvious just by reading this that the possibilities, from subtle sweetening to drastic deconstruction of your audio, are truly endless with **CamelPhat 3**. After a few weeks using it, I still feel like I've barely scratched the surface of it's potential and I can't wait to see what I can do with it next!

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an award-winning independent record producer, performer and recording artist. Find him on the web at [SvenSongs.com](http://SvenSongs.com), [KaSPRO.com](http://KaSPRO.com), [Lynda.com](http://Lynda.com), [MySpace.com/SvenSeaholm](http://MySpace.com/SvenSeaholm) and [FaceBook](http://FaceBook).

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# Hosing Down

by José Sinatra



José Sinatra completes a self-portrait

## THE ANSWERS LIE, SOMEWHERE

Michael Jackson is still dead. That's no less a surprise for his acolytes than it must be to himself, the entire lot of them having expected a third-day resurrection.

But something's awry here. I don't recall a single news item on a printed page reporting the anguished suicide of even one die-hard fan whose own life was suddenly no longer worth living; whose only solution was to begin sharing eternity in Hell with Michael as quickly as is humanly possible.

Maybe people are getting smarter. More likely, they've become wimps to their own convictions.

Which would explain the public reticence to quickly move forward with the overdue coronation of "his oldest child," Prince Michael Jackson I, as the new King of Pop. Once accomplished, the stage will be set for a kind of modern Shakespearean history whose dramas will allow some enterprising scribe like myself to give the Bard of Avon a run for his money. Prince Michael II (Blanketus) connives to usurp the throne with the aid of his shattered, media-adored older sister:

*Aloft was I held o'er the smitten crowd  
Not dropped, but saved as sweet Jove  
allowed.*

And so on, i.e., destined to the throne himself, Blanketus demands a comprehensive series of DVD tests in order to irrefutably establish the true parentage of all three of the royal orphans.

"Who would have thought the old man to have had so much ivory in him" is the line setting the scene for what we now stupidly call the Big Reveal (the word "revelation" is as difficult for modern society as the correct pronunciation of "accessories" when dealing with fashion or home improvement).

The biological father of all three turns out to be: Paul McCartney! If people thought Ringo was sort of the Claudius of the Beatles, appearing stupid but secretly a very wise ol' git (he married Barbara Bach, didn't he?), now they'd be compelled to admire the Columbo-like brilliance of another Liverpoolian King, whose legacy had been plundered by a modern Caligula and who sought out the most decent way to retrieve it. It's all in the blood, in it?

If time proves me serendipitous, I'll blame it on Shakespeare and Robert Graves, and walk away clean. But dammit, PBS could use this stuff.

Buried among so much celebrity death in June is one particular miscreant who spent all of his professional life trying to get on the cover of *US Weekly*, *Rolling Stone*, and similar scholarly periodicals, with little result other than the occasional mention in squib-like columns of the "Can You Believe?" and "What Was He Thinking?" bent, generally.

Three days after both Farah and Michael went to their divergent destinations, legendary rock/death metal/house/toilet promoter Basil Mounds was found dead in his L.A. mansion. He had been trussed up in his kitchen; his head had been removed and was baking in the oven. Obviously a suicide. But over Michael Jackson? Unlikely.

Born Almond J. Mounds (the "J," of course, standing for Jedidiah), the womanizing sociopath quit school halfway

through kindergarten and focused his attention on becoming the most famous music guru since Phil Spector and whoever that guy married to Celine Dion is.

What he constructed was an empire of also-ran bands, such as Snot Pillow and Hot Snot Necklace, who have filled the top A-minus and B clubs in Los Angeles and New York for nearly 40 years. When asked by *Newsweek* in 1975 what it was that made his increasing success and growing fortune seem to flow like so much gravy, Mounds vapidly replied, "Oh, it looks like gravy, but it's not." At least that's how *Newsweek* printed it at the time, but he once confirmed to me they'd left out an "S."

That was the occasion in 1987 when my fiancée and I were invited to one of his infamous New Year's Eve parties. I had warned Deborah of his incessant womanizing and she had poo-pooed the very idea that anything short of a crowbar could ever pry us apart.

"Mounds, you crowbar!" I kept calling him, screaming that accursed name at my dashboard as I drove back home alone the next afternoon.

He married Deborah (the love of my life) the following month, and in my shame I prayed for that certain day to swiftly arrive, when she'd run back to me crying, begging my forgiveness, admitting her beautiful stupidity.

Instead, a few months later, someone "broke in" to the mansion and poured acid on Deborah's face while she was asleep. Her husband had allegedly flown to New York on business the day before. Later he claimed to have missed the plane and had fallen asleep in a bar at LAX for 32 hours. Three employees of the bar later backed him up on this, and shortly afterward all three began driving identical new Mercedes Benzes to work.

People actually did run a story about home life at the Mounds mansion during Deborah's convalescence after the tragedy, noting Basil's ingratiating habit of calling her "dimples" and quoting him as confessing, "Nothing's really changed. I love her as much as I ever have, from her shoulders down. Her heart hasn't changed a bit."

Deborah's only letter to me gave me pause. "He seems to have a personality problem," she wrote. "It sort of goes back and forth between Hitler and Charles Manson, only with an attitude."

After Deborah's "suicide," Mounds was married another six times, the latest to another male during California's sweet window of opportunity last year. That's the last occasion I noticed any press on him, although he was quoted paraphrasing the absurd mantra from the very early seventies. "I'm not gay, I'm bisexual, if anything, just like everyone is. Everyone can respond to actions of the same sex."

In the dark, maybe, unknowingly, just as to those of a squirrel named Rocky or a monkey named something like Bubbles. Especially if they're really, really rich.

Rest in pieces, freaks. Ka-ching!

*Dr. Sinatra spent several days in Los Angeles following the departure of Michael Jackson in order to better understand the effects of celebrity death on global warming.*



# RADIO DAZE



by Jim McInnes

## FUNNY PAPERS RULE!

After I was fired from 103.7 The Planet in late 2005, I spent much of my time reading. I should have been out of the house, pounding the pavement looking for a job, but I just sat in my big leather chair and read for about eight hours a day. I read the *Complete Sherlock Holmes*, a book I'd had for 20 years but never even opened. I re-read dozens of books I'd already read. I even read Motley Crue's autobiography (had to take a shower after that one.) I tried to read David McCullough's biography of Harry Truman, but quit after 832 pages (*Truman is one of those books that nobody reads but looks good on your bookshelf.*) I also read the *Union-Tribune* every day. Read, read, read; take a leak; read, read; eat lunch; read, read; take a leak; get a beer; read read; eat dinner; watch TV; go to bed. Day after day for six months, that was my routine.

Occasionally I'd apply for a radio gig in some far off place, only to be greeted with indifference, except for the GM of a rock station in Lansing, Michigan, who actually seemed interested in hiring me. Phew, that was close! What was I thinking?

So I read some more. When I got the job doing the news on KFMB in January of 2007, I cut back on my reading, especially the paper. I was telling all the major news stories on the air, so reading the U-T the next day was an exercise in redundancy. Yet I continue to have the paper delivered because I love to read my favorite comic strips every day!

I used to think the funny papers, as Grandma used to call them, were really dumb. Strips like "Dennis the Menace" and "Garfield" left me cold. "Mary Worth" and "Rex Morgan" are long-running soap operas that I never tuned into. But there are quite a few cleverly written strips with that hip, modern twist we all love.

We're all "Dilbert" to a certain extent, aren't we? I worked for both Clear Channel and CBS. I can relate. I'm also a huge fan of Lars, Rolf, Lance and Al, "The Fusco Brothers," and their wolverine, Axel. The *Fuscos* represent every neurotic male I've ever known, myself included.

I love following the adventures of teenaged siblings Brad and Luann in "Luann." Brad's girlfriend Toni Daytona is one hot cartoon babe. I still get a hoot out of "Blondie," which has been around for almost 79 years. The drawing style remains much as it was in the 1930s but the subject matter is fresh, contemporary and funny. Ditto for "Beetle Bailey."

For the darker stuff, I prefer "Bliss" by Harry Bliss, Dan Piraro's "Bizarro" and "La Cucaracha," the satiric Latino-themed strip by Lalo Alcazar.

And as a man who's been married for 25 years, I see more of my life every day in the hilarious "Pickles."

I even like a few of the animal-themed strips, like "Pooch Cafe" and "Get Fuzzy," both featuring dogs and cats speaking to their owners, but not in a cutesy Disney-like manner, and Stephan Pastis' "Pearls Before Swine," with its anthropomorphised pig, rat, zebra, goat, duck, and crocodile.

So that's the way it is for ol' J.M. these days. Forget about the books, gimme the funny papers!



by Peter Bolland

## BREATHE INTO IT

"Breathe into it," the yoga instructor said, her arms and legs braided like an unbaked pretzel. On rows of rubber mats students strained into the pose with varying degrees of success. The sinuous sounds of Deuter washed over the room like gentle waves of warm green tea.

Breathe into it, I thought, *what the hell does that mean?* But instead of arguing, I tried it. At the deepest point of my stretch I felt a sharp knot of tightness that told me I had reached my limit. I could go no further. Then I breathed into the tension. I inhaled as if my breath was going directly into and through the tightness. Something mysterious happened. It loosened. With the next exhalation my pose deepened all on its own, beyond where I thought I could go. What I had failed to accomplish with effort was realized effortlessly.

Like anyone else, I was accustomed to the old idea that if I was ever going to accomplish or achieve anything it would be through persistent and strenuous effort. Only a bold and willful decision followed by vigorous and assertive action could move a mountain. If I didn't do anything, nothing would get done.

Of course intention, will power, and effort all play a part. But until we allow the larger forces already at work (or is it play) to align with and buoy our efforts, no amount of straining is going to move even a molehill.

When we cut our finger the healing begins immediately and without our consent or intention. There are systems in place of which we are only observers. What if we allowed ourselves to slip gently into the realization that we are partners with larger energies around us? The ancient Indians called this energy *prana*, the life force within us and all living things. *Prana* is the Sanskrit word for "breath."

In the second creation story of Genesis (yes, there are two), God made Adam "from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the *breath of life* and the man became a living being." Like scores of other creation stories, Genesis tells us that human beings are a mysterious combination of inanimate matter and the *breath of life*, an indefinable force rooted in a vast intelligence far beyond human control let alone comprehension.

Speech and song are made of breath. It is through the power of speech that God called the universe into being when he said, "Let there be light." The Navajo don't consider a newborn baby fully human until it has taken its first breath or, better still,

PHILOSOPHY, ART, CULTURE, & MUSIC

# STAGES

made its first sound. And if you've ever heard Eve Selis sing, let alone stood on stage with her and looked into the eyes of an audience caught in the grip of her powerful voice, you would know – it is through the power of breath that the beauty of life is made manifest.

Now consider all the difficulties and challenges we face. Many of us are caught in overwhelming financial crises. There are daunting health challenges. Some of our relationships seem damaged beyond repair. Or maybe there are dreams unfulfilled, crushing burdens, towering tasks, and impossible obstacles. Perhaps it's something as simple as a general, vague sense of incompleteness, dissatisfaction, and sadness. We can't seem to fix all the things that are broken no matter how hard we try. Despite all our good intentions and best efforts we fall short. It might be time to try another way.

There is an old Chinese parable about a rice farmer who was so eager for his crop to grow that every morning he tugged on each tiny shoot. In the end, he uprooted every plant. He didn't harvest one single grain of rice that year.

"The world is ruled by letting things take their course," says Laozi in the *Daodejing*. "It cannot be ruled by interfering. In the universe the difficult things are done as if they are easy. In the universe great acts are made up of small deeds. The sage does not attempt anything very big, and thus achieves greatness." Letting things take their natural course and come to fruition in their own time is not only effective, it also creates lasting serenity and joy. If we really understood this perennial principle a deep and vibrant humility would well up in us and heal so much of our dissatisfaction and stiff-necked restlessness. We would become lithe and fluid like water. We would accomplish everything without doing anything. Paradoxically, our softness would become our strength. "A tree that is unbending," says Laozi, "is easily broken."

The only thing in the way of this new consciousness of allowance is our old pattern of thinking, the one that says life is nothing but struggle and strife. When Jesus counseled his students to be like the lilies of the field he was clearly teaching this same principle. Whether you subscribe to a personified God or prefer your Source less defined and localized, there is a common thread running through all these teachings. This has little to do with theism or atheism. Leave that debate in the college cafeteria. Our mental machinations and busy bee schemes often do little but interfere with the inherently generative course of nature. Something is always trying to grow through us. Are we interfering or allowing? Are we anxious and constricted or breathing easy?

No matter the difficulty, when all our best intentions and efforts seem ineffective, maybe it's simply time to surrender. Bring yourself into alignment with the inherent intelligence of the universe. The next time you bump up against a problem, lean forward, let go and breathe into it.

Peter Bolland is a professor at Southwestern College where he teaches eastern and western philosophy, ethics, world religions, and mythology. After work he is a poet, singer-songwriter, and author. He has a band called the Coyote Problem. He also leads an occasional satsang at the Unity Center and knows his way around a kitchen. You can write to him at [peterbolland@cox.net](mailto:peterbolland@cox.net)

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# JESSE WINCHESTER

## This Song Craftsman Has Feet Planted Firmly in American Roots Tradition

by Terry Roland

Jesse Winchester. Even his name conjures up older times, more romantic periods of the American West. It's no wonder he came to the attention of Robbie Robertson in 1970. While Dylan and the Band had created some of the best southern-influenced rock of the decade, Jesse Winchester embodied it. This must've been recognized by Robertson back then. The Band, four Canadians and an American, spent years creating a form of music that would later become known as roots and Americana. Jesse Winchester never had to work at it. Born in Virginia and raised in Mississippi, he absorbed the music of the earth where he was raised. In 1967, after receiving draft notification to report for duty with a strong possibility of being sent to Vietnam, Winchester fled to Canada. Ironically, it was then that his muse began to sing and his original songs came up from him like a natural wellspring. He was found by Robbie Robertson in time to be considered an important contributor to the singer-songwriter movement of the '70s. His songs would be recorded by Crystal Gayle ("Mississippi on My Mind"), Patti Page, Elvis Costello, the O'Kanes, and Jimmy Buffett. Over four decades his solo career has produced a steady flow of music as good as any of the best of the more well-known artists of our time. Since the '70s he has returned to the American South, now living in Virginia. His latest release, *Love Filling Station*, pays tribute to the romance of the music from the '50s. Recently, the *San Diego Troubadour* spoke with him about his music, career, Vietnam, and even what may lie behind the veil.

*San Diego Troubadour:* Well, let me first say what an honor it is to do this interview. I cherished my copy of your first album, the one with "Yankee Lady." It helped me through some of those tough teenage times.

*Jesse Winchester:* Well, thank you. Its nice to hear that.

*I wanted to start with your association with the Band. I'm unclear. Were you a member of the Band?*

No, I wasn't. I was working on a demo in the basement of a church. A friend of a friend passed a copy to Robbie Robertson. Then it went to Albert Grossman who signed me to a contract. My association with them went as far as opening a few shows for them. But, I still communicate with Levon once in awhile.

*One of the things I remember about that first album was that the Band was on it. I remember Garth Hudson and Levon.*

Yeah, Levon played mando [laughs]. But Richard and Rick weren't on it. At the time, I think the group felt kind of bad because they were being thought of as this group of guys who made this great music in the basement of Big Pink. But, really, *Music From Big Pink* was made in a New York studio. When it came to me, Robbie said, 'Let's really do it with an old fashioned sound.' They wanted to do it live with no overdubs to speak of. But I didn't go back to see how it was being done. Todd Rundgren was the engineer, so it's hard to believe they were using some kind of gizmos.

*I remember, not long after that, you recorded this song that became a hit...what was it? "First Rate Romance"?*

[laughs] No, it was "Third Rate Romance."

*Sorry, my memory is bad.*

It was written by Russell Smith. At the time my band was called the Rhythm Aces. Two of the guys took the song and they became the Amazing Rhythm Aces. They had a hit with that song.

*Tell me about how you started.*

Well, my parents gave me music lessons when I was a kid. I played organ in church, but nothing connected until I heard a Memphis radio station. I heard blues, rockabilly, and connected with that.

*What about the songwriting?*

When I got to Quebec I was mostly playing in bar bands. I had a series of jobs. A lot of the work was for solo artists in coffee houses. You were expected to write your own songs.

*What was the music scene like in Canada?*

One thing a lot people in the U.S. don't understand is there's the more English influenced part of Canada and also the French areas. The French are into a different kind of thing with a strong European influence like Edith Piaf. We had those things in Quebec. A kind of cabaret tradition. It was a lot about style. The English side had folk singers like [Ian] Tyson, but where I came from, it was a different world. I recorded a song in French and I kind of speak French [laughs].

*Tell me about your experience with the draft and moving to Canada.*

Jesse: Well, I didn't see going to a war I didn't believe was just or dying for it. At the time I didn't want to discuss it. I didn't think about it, I just said, "I'm going," and I went.

*So, was that out of courage?*

No, I can't say that.

*Conviction?*

I don't think so. At the time, it was hard to tell what was right. It's still hard to tell. One thing I learned is the choices you made in your youth don't matter as much as how you live with the consequences. God doesn't tell us who is right. So, you have to speak honestly.

*Speaking of spirituality, you mentioned something about "behind the veil." Do you have any insight about that?*

Photo: Richard Dowdy



Jesse Winchester

[laughs so hard, the phone nearly flies out of my hand] No I can't say that I have. I'm not that insightful!!

*Well, I thought I'd ask. You never know who might have the answers!*

[laughs some more]

*Okay, I knew it was a stupid question as soon as it came flying out of my mouth [we both laugh...in a hooting and hollering sort of way].*

*I'd like to review some of your essential songs for any comments or stories you may have to tell.*

Okay.

*How about "Brand New Tennessee Waltz"?*

That was the first song I wrote. The lyrics are cryptic. I don't write that way anymore. My writing is usually clear.

*How about "Black Dog"?*

It's another one that's different for me. Its about evil.

*"Denying Gravity"?*

Its a spiritual song . . . I don't really like commenting on my songs. I think the listener brings their own meaning

because of their experience. Telling my experience may get in the way of that.

*Any favorites?*

Yes. I really love "Sham-Along-Dong-Ding." Its a tribute to the '50s doo wop music. The new album, *Love Filling Station*, draws a lot from that era. I recorded "Stand By Me," which is my favorite song.

*As a songwriter, do you see yourself as a storyteller?*

Not really. I'd see myself as more of a craftsman because songwriting is more about craft.

*Like Guy Clark.*

Yeah. Guy's a craftsman. He's even got his own guitar workshop down there in Texas. I'd say I would like to say I stand in the tradition of great songwriters like Ira Gershwin and Stephen Foster rather than a storyteller.

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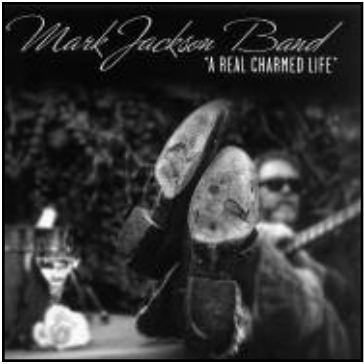
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## Mark Jackson Band A Real Charmed Life

by Raul Sandelin

It's probably preaching to the country choir to explain the differences between country-western and just plain old country in this forum. But, as a friend of mine, a guy who was a Hollywood DJ specializing in industrial and trance, once told me: "Country-western has movement to it." In his naiveté, my friend was right. Musically, country-western leans heavily into a swing beat. Thematically, it is about wide open spaces and the yearning to roam. If country is about accepting one's fate, country-western is about creating one's own fate. It's no surprise that so many CW greats invoke the creed of the Oklahoma-Texas line.

Mark Jackson also invokes the country-western creed, even sticking a little rock 'n' roll into the mix to make things really interesting. Himself a product of Oklahoma's blue-collar dust and oil rig bravado, Jackson has been holding down the country-western fort down in San Diego for the past 20 years. Much of his music explores his rambunctious youth, which consisted of playing in bar bands before a stint in the Navy found him forming the on-ship house band on an aircraft carrier. *A Real Charmed Life* is Jackson's third CD out in front of his own band.

The opening track, "Man of Misery," is a confessional of sorts as he recounts his long, sometimes guilty, journey from Oklahoma youth to middle-age family man. "Lost Time on the Old Highway," the title track "A Real Charmed Life," and "Never Come Back the Same" further capture the energy of the West, an energy that like an Oklahoma twister isn't easily tamed. With harmonicas blazing, Telecasters twanging and popping, and fiddles wailing, these songs find the Mark Jackson Band chugging along like a western-bound train. "Open Wide," written by Jackson's former musical partner Peter Bolland, and "Naked in the Rain" continue to lean into the swing beat, this time with added introspection as he goes about doing a little soul-searching. "Not Long for This World," a tune Jackson wrote for his late friend and musical collaborator Stacy Slaughter, along with "Time Knows No Healing," turn the mood to the melancholy, a necessary emotional relief on an album that would otherwise be rocking all the way through. "Stones Against the Rain," written by Rusty Jones, finds Jackson at his most political as he makes a not-so-covert pronouncement against our governments current foreign policy. "Goodnight, Sweet World," a lullaby-like waltz showcases the talents of the band's co-singer Pamela Haan. The closing number – "Out at the Edge of Town" – works to bring the entire album to close. With a gospel choir of local friends and musicians, Jackson finally finds peace, the song's title acting as a metaphor for a final resting place. Besides Jackson and Haan, the band includes Grant Kester on harmonica, David Morgan on dobro, Rob Williams on guitar, and Rick Lien on bass. A range of local talent also pitched in. Another huge part of the story is the inclusion of



## Janet Beazley 5 South

by Dwight Worden

Janet Beazley is an accomplished musician and veteran of many musical endeavors. Having earned a PhD in early music and having performed in many top bluegrass bands, she also performs regularly as a classical performer. *5 South* is one fine CD, featuring her considerable bluegrass and banjo chops, her outstanding vocals, and her considerable skill on early instruments as *5 South* tantalizes the listener with a bit of old music and some different instruments. If you like bluegrass, close harmony singing, and tasteful instrumentation, then this record is for you.

Janet penned four originals for the album, and long time musical partner Chris Stuart authored three others. Janet and Chris are the anchors in *Chris Stuart and BackCountry*, a highly acclaimed bluegrass band, having toured the U.S., Europe, and the middle east. Janet, originally from Bakersfield, is a recent transplant to San Diego where she can be found teaching at Old Time Music.

*5 South* is beautifully recorded and produced (Janet produced this recording and, with Chris Stuart, did the engineering at New Wine Sound Studio, with the mixing and mastering completed by Eric Uglum at New Wine). Along with Janet, the album is graced by the playing and singing of Chris Stuart on rhythm guitar, Mason Tuttle on bass, Eric Uglum on rhythm and lead guitar, including electric guitar, Paul Lee on fiddle, Marshall Andrews on bass, Roger Gillespie on drums, and Christian Ward on fiddle. And, you will hear Janet play not only bluegrass banjo, but also tin whistle, recorders, and viols.

The album starts with the original "Julia Belle," penned by Janet, about a Mississippi river boat once piloted by John Hartford. Janet's sparkling banjo and steady, clear voice immediately capture the listener. It only gets better as the album progresses with some of the finest modern bluegrass and acoustic music one can hear. Of special note are "Sweet Prospect and White (Long Time Travelin')," which showcase Janet's early music training. Sung a capella in the old shape-note singing style with four-harmony voices, these beautiful old tunes will captivate you.

It's hard to pick a favorite from this record. I enjoyed every cut and the way they are put together to form a beautiful overall musical experience. If I had to pick a favorite, it would be "The Silver Swan," written by the English Court and published in 1612 and beautifully presented by Janet and her team. But, hey, you don't have to choose. Get the CD and enjoy the whole experience!

Mark Jackson Band, continued  
Alan Sanderson of Strate Studios, who co-produced the album. Sanderson, a 12-year studio veteran from L.A., has recorded everyone from the Rolling Stones to Ryan Adams. Ironically, it took a Hollywood insider to capture country-western at its finest.



## Berkley Hart Las Vegas

by Frank Kocher

San Diego singer/songwriting duo Berkeley Hart have honed a winning sound on four CDs since talented Jeff Berkley and Calman Hart joined together over a decade ago. The pair can play and sing in almost any style and are both excellent songwriters and singers. Their last CD, *Pocket Change* from 2005, was acoustic, highlighted by unadorned arrangements, perfectly blended harmonies, and vivid lyrical tales as the focal points. They have paired again for a new disc, *Las Vegas*.

The sound on the new disc, produced and mixed by studio whiz Berkley, features more instrumentation than *Pocket Change* but wisely features a similar, intimate, unhurried sound. The songs are observational tales of human beings: their failings, relationships, and occasional spiritual struggles.

"Conversations with the Moon" starts off and sets the tone for what is to come, as Berkeley's soft folk song combines shimmering keyboards, finger-picked guitar, and swelling harmony choruses. Two Hart tunes follow, the lyrical storyboard "She's So Beautiful" and "Hey, Darlene." The latter is Appalachian-flavored, with a catchy hook brought home with banjo, dobro, fiddle, and plenty of twang about kinfolk coming over and putting mamma's ashes on a shelf. The title tune is a country ballad, a highlight co-written by both artists, with steel guitar sighing behind lyrics like "She was a dancer, Las Vegas show/ She moved through me like cancer, subtle and slow".

The two rock things up on "Misery," with a bluesy brew of drums and guitar. Different than the rest of the disc, the tune is memorable and fun. "Sliver" is an acoustic folk tune about Berkeley's childhood, again with strong imagery. Hart chronicles the spiritual odyssey of a flawed man with "Looking for Jesus Again," another example of combining great lyrics ("He's been reading the Bible like it was a mystery novel"), a memorable melody, and a crisp arrangement. Berkeley follows with "Scarlet," a folk tune about a girl who was named after a Grateful Dead song. A folk-style arrangement of Bob Marley's "Stir It Up" works surprisingly well as the close harmonies and uncluttered percussion convey a relaxed flavor to the original reggae classic.

This is a disc that features carefully composed songs that are personal and engaging, drawing the listener into the music for the duration of the experience. There isn't a wasted note anywhere.

Hart tells another spiritual parable with "God in a Drawer," with observations about today's brand of religious hypocrisy, without preaching. "Six More Hours" offers sweet harmonies wrapped around finger-picked figures, to quietly close things as the singer is on the road to his California home.

*Las Vegas* is a superb and engaging collection of songs by two artists who are hitting on all cylinders, and not to be missed by lovers of great roots music.



## Café Peyote

by Jennifer Carney

Prog rock. Once the staple of arena concerts, today prog is either lumped in with electronic music or perhaps accurately re-imagined as jazz fusion. But prog rock has retained a core of dedicated followers who continue to look beyond the simplistic turns-of-song that typify rock music today.

Enter local musician Ricardo Beas. He has been playing music since his teens, honing his musical skills in Tijuana cafés throughout the '70s. His own contribution to the prog genre, *Café Peyote*, is the brainchild of Beas and the talented multi-instrumentalist brothers Paco and Luis Elorza. Borne of the desire to express his thoughts on an increasingly troubled world, this debut has already gotten the attention of Baja Prog Radio mere weeks after its release.

At first blush, *Café Peyote* might appear to be little more than an album of hymns to latter-day mysticism; indeed, the songs do speak to all that lovely hippie stuff: the search for deeper meaning, lauding of the inward journey, eschewing materialism, etc. But this CD was two years – perhaps almost 40 years – in the making, and it has all the hallmarks of a carefully crafted work.

*Café Peyote* is an album deeply indebted to its influences – Yes, Pink Floyd, King Crimson, ELP – all of whom are clearly evident throughout. Beas' voice is pure, the musicianship is excellent, and the songs don't often suffer from the kind of overproduction that weighed down prog rock towards the end of its heyday.

The album opens with "Tribute to the King," which calls to mind most of those influences, followed without pause by "Why," also richly instrumented and full of sonic bombast. His Spanish-language songs are more straightforward-sounding tunes. "Ven Acá" is a mid-tempo ballad that would be at home on any Spanish-language radio station, and "En Mi Mente Siempre Están" is a soaring homage to childhood and being both a son and a father to a son.

Beas' songwriting is strongest on "Consumer Joe" and the obligatory prog suite, "You Decide," comprised of three movements: "Good and Bad," a spoken-word dirge imploring the listener to decide what they truly want out of life. "No Tolerance" feels like a '60s generation lament about how they let things "get out of hand." The final movement, "If Only I Could Draw," captures a dreamer's idealism in a wistful tune; if he could draw, he would create the perfect world – no suffering or injustice.

"They're Bombing Again" and its guitar-as-air-raid-siren rips through the utopian whimsy like a song of social outrage should. The album closer, "The Common Law" is an up-tempo tune that none-the-less rails against the loss of civil liberties – kind of like a proggy, Latin-tinged "Get Up, Stand Up."

Beas' lofty ideals and skillful musicianship make *Café Peyote* an album for any prog fan to check out. He comes across as a man who stands by his ideals and makes the music to match.



## Chuck Perrin Down 2 Bone

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

Chief among Southern California's musical hotspots is Dizzy's in San Diego's historic Gaslamp District. The much respected venue is home to some of the best jazz, pop, and folk concerts around, and its motto, "Where the Music Matters Most," has become nearly as ubiquitous a mark of quality as its founder, Chuck Perrin. Because Perrin spends much of his time supporting the work of other artists, it may be easy to simply think of him as a great club owner and promoter, not realizing that he is also a compelling artist of amazing depth and insight. *Down 2 Bone* will undoubtedly correct this oversight.

To quote the strikingly beautiful website ([www.down2bone.com](http://www.down2bone.com)) that serves as a visual companion to this very fine album, "Down 2 Bone is a concept that features: Cliff Almond: drums, instruments, arrangements; Chuck Perrin: vocals, compositions" and what wonderful songs and arrangements they are.

"Life is a chain of choices / Some are good / Some are not," Perrin sings over an ever-evolving sequence of aural settings that amble from ambient lap steel guitar to retro lounge beat-box to noisy lo-fi acoustic guitar that becomes angelically hi-fi on the closing chord. "The trick is / To keep on choosing / And make the best of what you've got."

Perrin's dusty, simultaneously aching and soothing voice suggests a time-worn wisdom won only through experience. Many of the songs are inhabited by characters who are looking forward, some back over their shoulders...but it all feels like a collectively deeper look inward. An effort to illustrate the very things we all share at the essence of who we are as people and how it all binds us together.

When Perrin sings "A piece of sky to call my own / A crust of land to build a home / Some come to love my whole life through / Tell me please / Is this too much to ask?" Perrin seems to be reciting a wish list for the American Dream, but the next verse reveals even more humanity by suggesting an almost spiritual reach: "To work each day / Do my best / To sleep each night with no regrets / To welcome change so I can grow..."

Just as Perrin's pen paints a narrative landscape for his protagonists to inhabit, so does Cliff Almond on the production side of things. This is a work of extraordinary textural and hypnotic beauty, surrounding and supporting each of these songs with a masterfully balanced mixture of gloss and grit. The incredibly high level of musicality required of Almond to actually pull this all off is matched only by the confidence and courage of Perrin, whose voice is often filtered and altered into a myriad different shapes along the way.

Throughout this fine album, there is a treasure trove of beautiful imagery and human heart soaked through every song...and at the center of every one, an essential truth.

Did I mention it's only \$5 at [www.down2bone.com](http://www.down2bone.com)?





# JAMMIN' IN THE CANYON



Photo: Dennis Andersen

Brooklyn & Phil Harmonic



Photo: Dennis Andersen

Harper Rohlf stole the show



Photo: Dennis Andersen

Bill Dempsey



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Jim Hinton

# ELSEW HERE AROUND TOWN



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Cajon builder JMan



Photo: Dennis Andersen

CJ Hutchins @ Java Joe's



Photo: Dennis Andersen

Rob Deez @ Java Joe's



Photo: Steve Covault

Sara Watkins on the Hornblower



Photo: Dennis Andersen

Happy birthday to Phil Harmonic



Photo: Dennis Andersen

Rusty Jones & Happy Ron



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Alan James & John Katchur @ Java Joe's



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