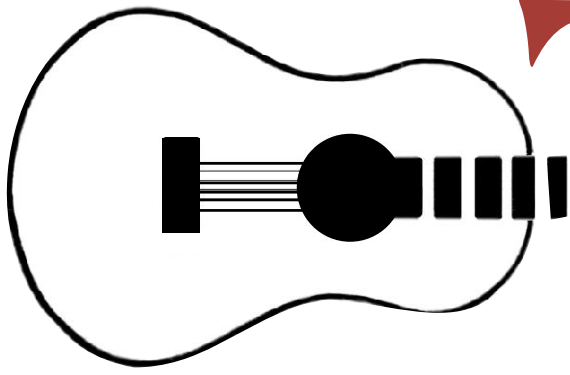


FREE



T SAN DIEGO ROUBADOOR

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



October 2010

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Vol. 10, No. 1

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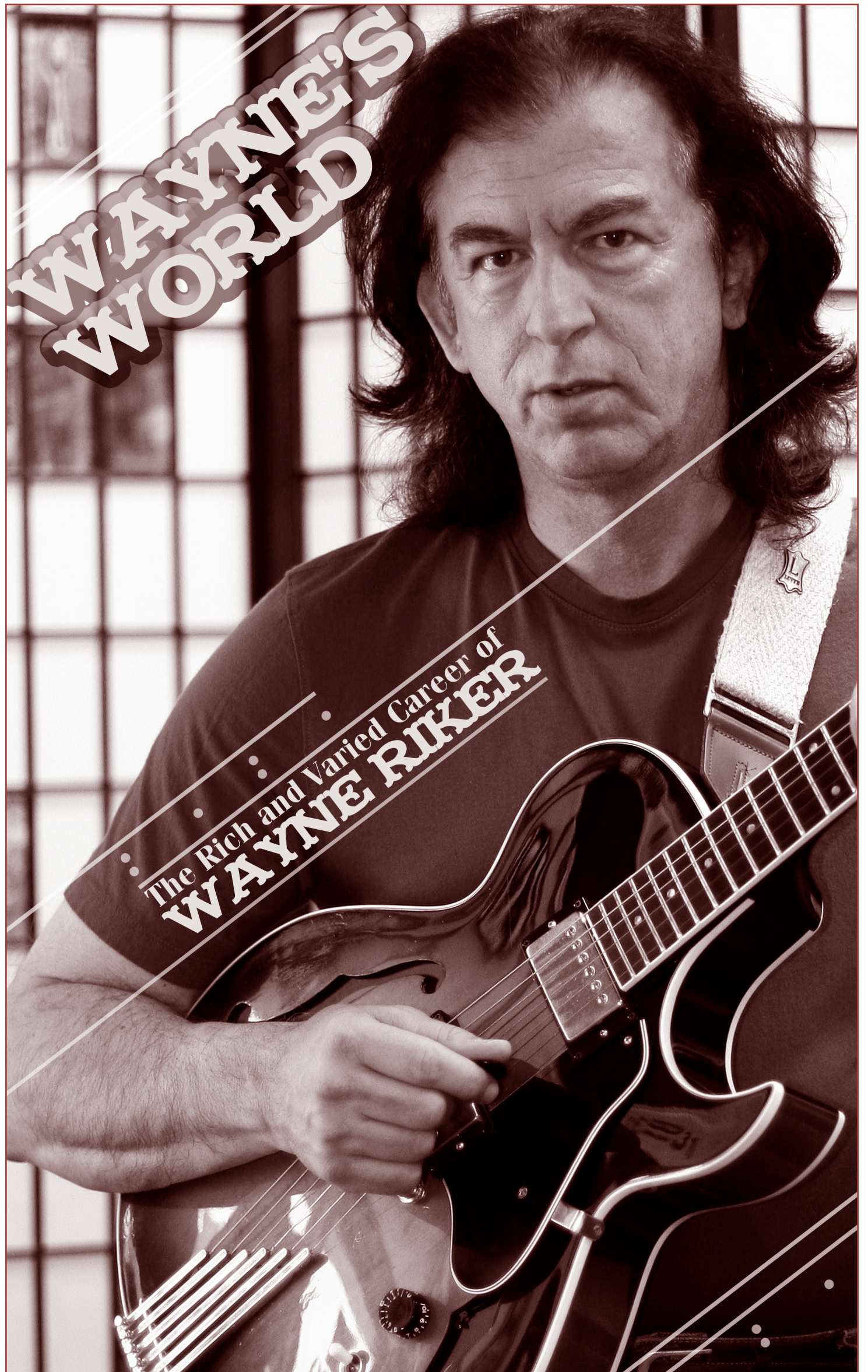
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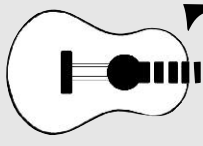
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To promote, encourage, and provide an alternative voice for the great local music that is generally overlooked by the mass media; namely the genres of alternative country, Americana, roots, folk, blues, gospel, jazz, and bluegrass. To entertain, educate,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

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

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

Hippiedom in a Navy Town (part 2 of 2)
**CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'
HITS THE AIRWAVES**



Gabriel Wisdom in the original KPRI studio at 7th and Ash c. 1972

by Raul Sandelin

FM radio was not a new invention in the 1960s. But, FM stations were mainly devoted to classical music and more staid, middle-of-the-road genres. rock 'n' roll was much more associated with the AM dial and the revolution in mobility that low-fi transistor radios provided. Rock 'n' roll was about escaping one's parents' living room, not sitting around the family hi-fi. This, however, changed rapidly.

By early 1968, San Diego's KPRI, LA's KMET, and the Bay Area's KSAN were three of the first FM radio stations to adopt a free form, progressive rock format. Stations in NY, Boston, and Cleveland balanced out an even half dozen. Within the year, the FM trend would spread across Hippie Nation. Yet, the West Coast would forever be seen as the pioneers of this new media.

KPRI's progressive rock format was started by a Navy guy named Steve Brown aka "OB Jetty," who went on to work for the Grateful Dead later on. Brown began broadcasting a midnight show while KPRI held to its MOR, "Capri by the Sea" song rotation

by day. Soon, Brown took the "free form" format to 24 hours. FM radio was now about "being real," playing a mix of music that was more mature than AM's teeny bopper Top 40. The DJs reflected this maturity. Instead of hooting and squealing and screaming like on-air cartoon characters, the FM DJ spoke frankly to the audience, often remarking on the stark realities of 1960s American society. If comedy was involved, it was more adult as well, reflecting the new horizons that 20-somethings were exploring.

In 1968, Gabriel Wisdom joined KPRI just as the station was adopting the new rock format. "I joined the station first as a sales rep," Wisdom says. "Then one night, the DJ Captain Sunshine fell asleep. I got my big break and became the "fill in" guy. The FCC had a requirement that all radio stations had to feature some form of Sunday religious programming. So, I finally got a regular Sunday slot doing the Joyful Wisdom Hour." During this hour, Wisdom would interview artists about spirituality, thus fulfilling KPRI's obligation to the FCC. In all, he interviewed many of the rock stars

and hipsters of the time, including Donovan, Jimi Hendrix, and Zen/Beat guru Alan Watts.

Since KPRI was usually the lead sponsor for most of the big concerts, Wisdom emceed many of these shows including one Doors show when he was tossed off the stage by Jim Morrison. "He was the nicest guy backstage," Wisdom recalls. "But when the lights went out and I introduced the band, this guy starts grabbing me onstage." Wisdom first thought it was an audience member, soon realizing it was Morrison trying to throw him into the audience.

Many of the bands, while on tour, would stop by the original KPRI studios at 7th and Ash during this time. "The bands would usually stay at the El Cortez," Wisdom remembers. (The El Cortez was once the crown jewel of the San Diego skyline.) "It was only a couple of blocks from the hotel over to the studios. So, bands like the Who and Ten Years After would walk over during the day to visit."

Yet, for all of the fun and high jinx, KPRI's mission had a serious aspect. "We thought what we were doing was important," Wisdom says. "America had lost its way. We were promoting individual freedom, freedom of expression, and keeping government out of our lives. Wisdom was soon promoted to the coveted evenings in 1968, a slot he held for the four years he was at KPRI. Then, in 1972, a new FM upstart named KBG brought Wisdom over as its first DJ.

At first, there was KGB-AM. "When the station went FM, the AM guys couldn't handle the new format." So, Wisdom fit the bill. "The idea was to be genuine, to be yourself. The audience wanted to hear good music, not the jock."

It should be noted that San Diegan Cameron Crowe paid homage to Wisdom, a long-time friend, in Crowe's film *Almost Famous*. In the film, the main character William ventures down to KPRI's San Diego studios at 7th and Ash to meet his idol Lester Bangs, who is also visiting the studio. The jock on duty is a woman named "Alice Wisdom." The real Wisdom – Gabe Wisdom – also provided Crowe with technical advice regarding the look and feel of the old KPRI studio so that Crowe could replicate it for the film.

The idea of the "free form" format was really that there was no format. The DJ had

continued on next page.

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As you continue down the forest path, you notice wood bees buzzing around a tree nearby. They are trying so hard to bore into the beautiful redwood, to take advantage of the moist wood inside to make a home for themselves. But the bark is far too strong and repels the insects. Then, you watch the bees fly to the forest floor where they find a limb that was torn off in a recent storm. Here they can burrow to build their nest, but not in the strong, firm, living redwoods that you see around you. The tough bark of a healthy redwood is a natural protective boundary.

Boundaries are needed in the forest, just as they are needed in our lives to keep us healthy. You need boundaries in place to protect you from others who, consciously or not, may take advantage or harm you with words or actions. But boundaries may also become overly limiting, keeping you from living your life to the fullest. Do you feel the need for adjustments to your boundaries, to benefit yourself and others in your life? Our boundaries need to be examined and balanced to keep us on a healthy life path.

Walking the path in this forest, you are examining the different elements that keep it a healthy ecosystem. The forest path in this guided meditation represents your life path. From time to time, you need to examine your path and why you are on it. It is up to you to maintain the balance that keeps you healthy and fulfilled.

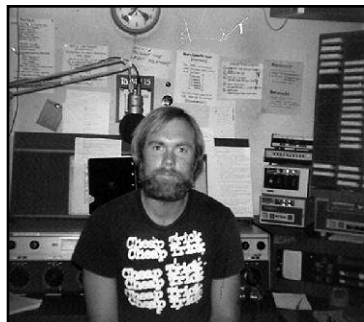
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Gabriel Wisdom (center) with Cameron Crowe and Pauley Perrette who played "Alice Wisdom" in Crowe's Almost Famous, c. 1999



The KGB Chicken



Jim McInnes in the KGB Studio, 1978, on the air from 7pm-midnight.

carte blanche to let the music happen and allow any number of surprises or on-the-spot glitches to become part of the show. For instance, Wisdom remembers bands like Longbranch Pennywhistle, future Eagle Glenn Frey's band that used to trek down to San Diego often, stopping by the studio and going on the air live. These impromptu events were what gave the early years of FM radio their magic.

But, the '60s were definitely morphing into the '70s, and FM radio was also coming of age. This was when people began putting FM radios in cars, something that was unheard of before 1973 or so.

Jim McInnes moved to San Diego and joined KPRI in 1973. Within the year, he too was working for KGB. McInnes, of course, would become the face of KGB for the next 30 years. In that time, he would organize KGB's first Skyshow in 1976. He would also co-produce KGB's famous Homegrown albums from 1974 through 1984, all of which helped cement KGB as the new FM institution of the era.

McInnes also witnessed FM radio change during this time and not always for the better. According to McInnes, the '60s ended about 1971 and everything was co-opted by the mid-'70s. He remembers the program directors at KGB "gutting the library in 1974," which cut the possible 1000 songs down to a strict 300-song rotation. This is when the "free form" format gave way to an hour-by-hour "hot clock," which dictated when songs and commercials would be aired.

Yet, Ted Giannoulas, aka the KGB or Famous Chicken, sees the '70s in a brighter light: "Nixon, to his credit, abolished the draft in '72, gave 18-year-olds the right to vote, and ultimately ended our involvement in the Vietnam War. This relaxed the country."

Giannoulas joined KGB in 1974 and, like

Gabriel Wisdom and Jim McInnes, helped develop KGB's signature brand of comedy. Smart yet wacky, the KGB Chicken was ubiquitous at rock concerts and hip events throughout San Diego in the 1970s.

For Giannoulas, the '70s were a time when "the music mattered" now that the country had settled down. As he puts it: "After times of tension, it's time to party." And, the '70s provided a much needed respite from the turmoil of the prior decade.

However, this does not mean that the music was being dumbed down. "DJs like Jim McInnes and [then KGB's] Bob Coburn were musicologists. Rock is an American art form, and it came of age in the 1970s. This is when you had real artists and every single band sounded different from every other." "Street Fighting Man" with a sunburn.

The times they were a-changin' (again!) It's difficult to say exactly when "the '60s" ended. Perhaps, it was 1969 with Altamont and the Manson murders. Perhaps it was 1971 as Jim McInnes has proffered. Perhaps it was when the Godfather or Bob Dylan's "Joey" replaced the Hippie anti-hero with the gangster anti-hero. Or, perhaps, the '60s ended at different times in different places, not to mention at different times for different people. (Let's face it. Don't we all know someone who'll swear that the '60s never ended and are still here with us today?)

Given this, the year 1972 probably marked the high-water line for "the Revolution" in San Diego. Since the mid-'60s, there had been marches, stand-offs with police, and occasional clashes over a variety of issues. Some, such as the Draft, were generic for the times. Other issues such as land development, the harassment of UCSD professor Herbert Marcuse, or the establishment of Chicano Park were specific to San Diego. But, like all of the California cities, San Diego was relatively peaceful compared to Detroit or Chicago or Kent State. Then, in 1972, local protests by a

united New Left convinced Nixon and the GOP to move that year's convention from San Diego to Miami. A year later, almost all U.S. troops were home from Vietnam.

Now, the 20-year-old from the Summer of Love was seeing 30 on the horizon with thoughts about family, career, and future. Joints, hitchhiking, and making love on the American flag had given way to bongos, shag-carpeted Ford Econolines, and waterbeds.

San Diego may not have been LA or the Haight or the Village. But, then, the vast majority of the country wasn't either. The fact remains that San Diegans were much closer to the eye of the '60s hurricane than most Americans.

Besides all of the locally generated activity, San Diego was plugged into the national circuit, experiencing everything that was taken on the road. The Beatles and Stones put San Diego on their first U.S. tour schedules. All of the major '60s stars - Hendrix, Joplin, the Doors, the Who - passed through town, often staying in San Diego long enough to do multiple shows. (In fact, one of the more famous Hendrix bootlegs comes from a 1968 concert at the Sports Arena.) Intellectuals and writers such as Allen Ginsberg were visiting SDSU and UCSD to do lectures and readings. On a smaller level, places like La Mesa's Candy Company provided tour stops for niche stars like John Lee Hooker. Bands like Paul Butterfield provided top billing at the many local festivals. And, lest we forget, San Diego gave the world the classic cult film Captain Milkshake.

Then, while the '60s met apocalyptic finishes in many of its birthplaces, San Diego seemed to enjoy a healthy dose of counter-culture until 1980 when the Reagan presidency and MTV generation introduced yet another "paradigm shift" to the country.

Throughout the '70s, rock concerts became bigger and more prevalent. The local music scene flourished. Marijuana now wafted through ever corner of San Diego County.

And, San Diego's youth, still universally clad in jeans and long hair, kept a healthy disdain for everything associated with The Man.

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In the world of poets, singer/songwriters, and even traditional entertainers, most often the young good looking guys who work a lot get a lot of the local *hoo hah*. Oftentimes it's deserved and some of those folks will go on to a deserved reward in the biz, but there are a few who have been around the scene here longer than dirt. They are still at it and don't often get the *huzzahs* but make some mighty fine music and ought to be noticed a little more.

Lets start with ROY RUIZ CLAYTON whom I've known around this town since the mid to late '70s. When I first met him he was Riverboat Roy and from the start he was one of those guys that you were aware of. He wasn't your run-of-the-mill Post Toastie transfer, he was a real genuine tattoo of the soul. His songs always said something and you had to listen to the words closely and follow the story to see where Roy was taking you. He is also an artist (in fact, he did the drawings on many of the Adams Avenue Roots Festival and Street Fair posters over the years before Jimmy the Weasel and his gang took over those events). He's also a potter and sculptor. Roy is an all around (as my Dad would say) artsy fartsy (he meant it as a compliment) guy, but most important, he's a poet and picker who everyone in San Diego ought to be aware of. Gregory Page has been helping Roy with a new CD and there's some stuff

up on YouTube. Check it out.

I've known JOHN BOSLEY since the early days at Folk Arts Rare Records when we were on Fifth Avenue in Hillcrest and were doing concerts in the store. His original stuff always had a '30s jazz feel to it without losing that touch of folk song and sometimes I'd get the feeling, when listening, that their ought to be a Busby Berkeley chorus line weaving around him. John left town for a short time in the 1970s and went to New York; when he came back the sounds and sights of the City had rubbed into a few of his songs. From then to the present John has been active and inactive on the music scene but he's never been completely out of it. From his early days at the San Diego State Folk Festival (where he did a workshop with Tom Waits and U Utah Phillips on the art of writing a song) to playing at local coffee houses with Jeffery Joe Morin more recently, or dropping into a Lou and Virginia Curtiss Old Time Singers Circle. John writes songs that make you think, occasionally laugh, and leave a show with most of your entertainment needs met.

TED STAAK has been around the scene in Southern California at least since the mid 1960s. In fact I think it was in the early 1960s that I first became aware of him at the old END coffee house in Pacific Beach and then later at the Heritage. His music always included his own songs, a touch of the blues, and stuff from popular folk music of the day (it was the era of the "Great Folk Scare"). He had a group for a while with other veterans of the San Diego folk scene -

Recordially, Lou Curtiss

Tony McCashen, a lady (whose name I'm ashamed to say I can't remember, but she was the prettiest one in the group), and bass man Russ Vuich. The name of the group was The Cloverleaf Four. For as long as there have been places to play here locally from time to time Ted would come back into my awareness. He did a concert for me at Folk Arts in the 1970s and I reunited Ted and Tony for an Adams Avenue Roots Festival. Ted lives up in the Lake Elsinore area these days but still gets club work down this way. You can either find him playing solo or with his Invisible Band (which is also solo). The gig today is a mixture of all the blues, folk, and original stuff he's been doing all these years. This guy can pick a guitar and he ain't a bad singer either. You'll enjoy what you hear.

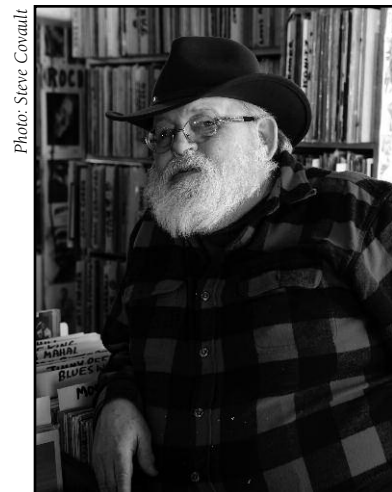
MARTIN HENRY has one of the best natural country music voices I've ever heard. He came to San Diego in the 1960s and drifted out to the Heritage in Mission Beach and became part of the scene there. With his forte being old cowboy songs, western tunes, the occasional Hank Williams song, and even some Bob Dylan, Martin was always a stalwart on stage. He became a regular at the Folk Arts Rare Records scene in the '70s and the San Diego State Folk Festivals where he appeared as leader of a country band, solo, as a backup to vintage country artists like Rose Maddox, Wilbur Ball, and Patsy Montana. For a time he was in a country band with Ray Bierl and others who had quite a following on the local scene. Today, after a time out with only an occasional appearance at an Adams Avenue Roots Festival, Martin is becoming more active in the local scene. He plays fiddle now along with that always tasteful country guitar. This is a guy who ought to be getting all the work he wants. He's a good picker but also a great showman and entertainer as well. Check him out, too.

I've known CURT BOUTERSE since about 1962 and he has always been one of those artists who I could say to myself "If I'm impressing Curt, I must be doing a good job." When I first met him (in an African history class at SDSU) we got to talking about Folk Music in San Diego and discovered that there had been a short-lived Folk Song Club at the college the previous summer (actually an excuse to put Sam Hinton on in concert). At any rate, we decided to revive it and for the next few years we ran campus hoots on Thursday afternoons and eventually started a folk festival. Curt plays southern mountain music on all those

instruments, including plucked and hammered dulcimer, fretless banjo, and auto-harp; I even saw him play a guitar once. As a music major (now graduate) Curt has expanded his repertoire to include the Vietnamese bamboo mouth harp (with which he plays American old-timey fiddle tunes) and for a time was involved with a Balinese Gamalan Group and a group called Alphonso X, which played medieval music. More recently Curt has been getting around to recording, on a series of CDs, some of his "old time southern music." The CDs have been issued by George Winston's Dancing Cat Productions. Curt doesn't play locally too much anymore. He played at every Folk and Roots Festival I ever put together but since I'm not doing them anymore, San Diego is missing out on a treat.

Tom TOMCAT Courtney is from Waco, Texas, and only came to San Diego in the early '70s, but from that time on he's managed to eke out a living by primarily playing his old time Texas style blues. Tom started in his teens as a tap dancer in one of bluesman T Bone Walker's travelling shows. (Tom, now in his 80s will still do a little soft shoe dance for you if you ask.) I met Tom shortly after he came to San Diego around 1972 and put him on in concert with his early partner Henry Ford Thompson at my store in Hillcrest and then at the San Diego State Folk Festival. Tom had a long run at the Texas Tea House in Ocean Beach, had some tracks on the original *San Diego Blues Jam* LP on Advent, and went on to play most of my festivals and lots of clubs and concerts around the area since. So many young white boys have learned the rudiment of blues from Tomcat and went on to win Music Awards and make much bigger bucks than Tom (most of them without ever acknowledging his help and support). Finally, now in his 80s TOMCAT is touring Europe (including the Montreaux Blues Festival in France, one of the world's biggest) and is recording for a major blues label (Earwig). When he's in town he's still playing three or four nights a week; you ought to check him out. This man has done about as much to put blues on the map in San Diego as anyone.

There are others who go back a ways with me, including Walt Richards, Wayne Stromberg, Patty Hall, Ken Graydon and Phee Sherline, Cliff Nimen, Fred Heath, and lots more I'm letting go by me now. They all deserve feature stories and front page SPLASH here in the Troubadour. Let's hope they all get it and become rich and famous!



Lou Curtiss

Meanwhile, go see these folks when they play and give them a little extra applause. They've all paid lots of dues but the bonus ain't in yet.

Recordially,
Lou Curtiss

“Soaked in liquor, soaked in sin,
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Ottopilot Is Ready to Take Off

by John Philip Wyllie

Writing for something like the *Troubadour* can be a mixed blessing. Getting occasional requests to write features about up and coming musicians comes with the territory. Sometimes these musicians turn out to be pretty good, other times not so much. But of all the new artist leads that I have ever been given, the best by far is the one that I received recently. It guided me to a talented alternative acoustic rock brother act called Ottopilot.

Brandon and Chad Vogt grew up in a musical family in the North County. Brandon, the eldest of the brothers at 24, was pushed into piano lessons when he was very young but didn't get really excited about music until he entered middle school. Since Brandon is the oldest of the Vogt brothers I began our interview with him and concluded it with 22-year old Chad.

"I started taking music seriously from about 14 on. From there it has just been progressing. I don't read music as well as I should, but I do have a good ear. I play everything by ear," Brandon told me.

Over the last eight years the brothers have made numerous trips to the Bahamas to work on the house that their father is building. Those trips have made a tremendous impact on their songwriting and their growth as a band.

"We shoot out there for a month at a time and we always bring our guitars. Our foundation as a band was formed when we started going to the Bahamas. I think we connected there more as brothers too. When we were younger, we used to fight a lot, but there we are always working together. Every time we go out there our minds become clear. Personally, I think we have written our best songs there. I am not sure what it is. There is a certain lifestyle there that we portray in some of our songs. Songs like "Take Me Far Away" and "Lightbox" are very influenced by the Bahamas. That is where our name comes from too. Our dad is building a hangar out there and like him, we want to become pilots one day."

Their flight plans will have to be put on hold. Having painstakingly perfected their craft, the duo is now brimming with enthusiasm. They are seeking management, looking for a label, and hoping to expand their fan base through increased exposure. Ottopilot clearly has a lot to offer.

Brandon Vogt handles most of the lead vocals and what a voice! He can reach the high notes effortlessly and owns a voice that is both warm and mellow. If you combined elements from the voices of Jack Johnson, John Mayer, and the Fray's Isaac Slade you would have a voice similar to Vogt's. He plays rhythm guitar and piano, but for recent gig at the Kensington Café he just accompanied himself with a guitar.

Chad Vogt picks out most of the guitar leads and displays a good ear for harmony and singing backup vocals. As brothers their voices naturally blend together. At times, they have been known to add a drummer and or a violinist.

Up to now they have been doing weddings and private events primarily, but they do perform on alternate Sundays from 5-9pm at Rimels in Cardiff and at Tierrasanta's Bellagio Restaurant. They have also performed at the La Costa Grille in La Costa.

There are plans for a West Coast tour after which the duo will seek out a studio to record some new music and redo some of what has already been recorded using their own in-home studio. The goal is to have a polished, professional six-song EP that they can start shopping around.

In the last couple months we have made considerable progress," Brandon said. "We just signed a contract with a music attorney who wants to handle our music. He has a couple of labels that seem interested. We also have a high school friend who works for [the Los Angeles talent management agency known as] the Firm. He heard our newest song on our MySpace page called "Streetlight." He says it's a hit and he wants to go up there and sell it to [an established] artist. So, right now we have a couple of lures out in the water and we just keep writing and keep trying to make a living. This is our only job right now and it barely

pays the rent."

The brothers Vogt have developed into a solid writing team. Their ability as songwriters is showcased on their MySpace page and soon will be displayed on their new official website: www.ottopilotmusic.com. Their success as songwriters is no accident.

"My brother and I spend about 50% of the day every day just writing new material," said Chad, the duo's younger member. "At the moment we have three new songs or at least progressions in the making. It is definitely our best work so far. We are really good at starting songs. That comes easy and natural to us. The hardest part is finishing them, by cutting out the bad parts, but keeping the heart in it and being satisfied with the final product. Sometimes it takes weeks or even months."

The process of songwriting was once a source of competition between them as each brother sought to outdo the other with a better song. At this point, it is more of a collaborative endeavor. Sometimes the songs are mostly written by one brother with a limited amount of help from the other. Other times the process is more of a true collaboration where both brothers play a major role.

"Recently, I think we have meshed really well. I think we both realize that we have to put food on the table. We need to dig down and get serious about this," Chad said.

Brandon had a different take on their collaborative efforts.

"You can't rush things. Sometimes, you have to sit back and give it a couple of days. Sometimes you do that and realize that what you wrote was nothing compared to what you thought it was initially. We have different styles both lyrically and with the progressions."

One of the common themes running through our songs is escape.

"We have always liked the idea of escaping from here. I think it is because we go to the Bahamas a lot. Our older songs tend to involve that idea of escaping. Our newer songs are more about finding what is special to you. We try to give people hope with our



Brothers Chad and Brandon Vogt perform as Ottopilot

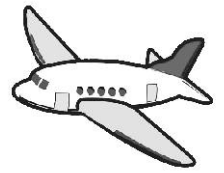
songs or sometimes provide ourselves with a little hope."

"It is hard to get away from writing love songs. I think everybody does that. Probably 30% of our songs are love songs," Brandon added.

Being in a brother band naturally has its advantages and disadvantages. Both brothers agree that, in their case, the positives far outweigh the negatives.

With the international success of San Diego performers like Blink-182, Jewel, Jason Mraz, and Switchfoot, the Vogt brothers

have seen that major success is not impossible. Whether or not their dreams of reaching a much larger audience are ever realized, Ottopilot is a band with tremendous talent and potential. It will be interesting to follow their career in the coming years and see just how far they can fly.



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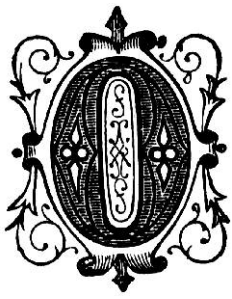
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by Paul Hormick



nce upon a time... Everyone remembers the magic of a bedtime story, when tales of princesses and witches transported you from your bedroom to a land of enchantment and happily ever after, or the camping trip when a well-told ghost story kept you quaking and sleepless with fear in your tent. From childhood onward we learn the power of stories – how they can capture our imagination and let us experience lives and even worlds beyond our everyday experience.

October is National Storytelling Month, with the National Storytelling Foundation holding their 37th annual National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee, during the first three days of this month. The festival started in 1973, when Jimmy Neil Smith, a high school journalism teacher, was driving with a carload of his students. Over the radio they heard storyteller of storytellers, Jerry Clower, spin one of his outlandish yarns about southern rural life. Smith was inspired and soon started organizing a festival of storytelling to be held in his hometown of Jonesborough.

That first festival was a small affair, with no more than 60 participants telling their tales amid the hay bales and wagons that served as stages. Over the years the festival has grown. Today it draws thousands and is described as one of the top 100 events in North America. Now, throughout the streets of Jonesborough, the foundation sets up tent after tent, each having a schedule of storytellers. The only thing attendees have to do is to find a tent, sit down, and listen.

A couple years after the first festival, Smith went on to establish the National Storytellers Association, which has worked to foster storytelling and storytelling festivals far and wide. The association believes that in this age of computer screens and instant texting we are losing our connection to stories, and hence our connection with each other. The Association believes that by fostering and encouraging story-

telling they can help bring us back from a world filled with alienation and isolation and get us back in touch with our humanity.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...

Story telling goes back to the very beginning. As soon as humans learned to speak, we were telling stories. What are called "oral traditions" were established in small communities and tribes, with myths, legends, and folktales being passed down from generation to generation. Besides the obvious entertainment value, these oral traditions helped people feel that they understood their world – why the rain fell and day followed night, why the seasons changed and why we are born, fall in love, and die. The oral tradition of a people was also a way of passing the values and world view of that group from one generation to the next.

Somewhere a long time ago paper and ink were invented; besides being used for double entry bookkeeping, they were used to record some of these traditional tales. I hope I don't get in trouble with my fundamentalist Protestant friends by saying this, but many of the stories in the Old Testament are believed to have been part of the Hebrew oral tradition. The great epics at the bedrock of western civilization, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, were told and retold by the poets of ancient Greece before being written down. The beguiling *Tales of a Thousand and One Nights* is most likely the very clever compilation of dozens of tales with origins in Europe, the Middle East, and as far as Japan.

The American version of the oral tradition is what is called a tall tale. These stories were told by cowboys and pioneers. Often having a bit of truth at their core, being based on real persons or events, the tall tale is filled with blazing exaggerations and fantastic situations. The hero of the tall tale usually possesses great strength or skill and accomplishes great deeds. The exaggerations of a tall tale are usually intended to be humorous, and at no time has the story of a tall tale been considered credulous. Tall tales give us a view and perspective on historical developments. The giant lumberjack Paul Bunyan and his companion, the giant blue ox Babe, are personifications of man's ever-increasing domination of nature. And

TELL ME A STORY A TRADITION IMMERSSED IN HISTORY

the story of John Henry illustrates the diminution of the human spirit by increasing industrialism. Despite their humor, most tall tales have a tragic element that further drives home their subtext.

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...

Scientists and researchers have investigated these most unscientific activities that make us human. One investigation shows us how essential stories are to our happiness. Prodding the pleasure centers of our brains, the parts that are highly active when we are involved in something that we enjoy, scientists have found that immersing ourselves in a story, such as reading a novel, watching a movie, or listening to a story, ranks among the highest of pleasures.

Another interesting find comes from the vast plains of China, where many people still lead lives in small farming villages as their ancestors did thousands of years ago. In Gengcun, a village of no more than 1,200 residents, a cultural inventory found 134 storytellers who told 4,300 distinct stories. Some of these storytellers could recall and tell dozens and dozens of stories, with one of the village elders being able to tell over 550 tales.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...

In 1980 a few local storytellers established Storytellers of San Diego. The organization sponsored monthly story swaps that were held at the San Diego County Office of Education. They also had regular performances at local coffeehouses. For the last 20 years the core of the storytelling scene in San Diego is an adult concert series and storytelling class at the University of San Diego, and an annual event called Tellabration has been a tradition from the beginning. For a long time the storytelling concerts were held monthly, but in recent years the concerts have been paired down to a Halloween event, an all-day storytelling stand at the annual Folk Heritage Festival in

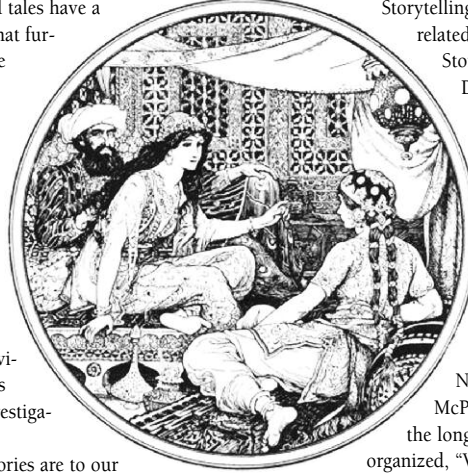
May, and a few other concerts held occasionally. In 1999 the Storytellers of San Diego hosted the National Storytelling Conference. A related group, the Black Storytellers of San Diego, performs regularly, sometimes with music and dance along with the storytelling. San Diego's liaison to the National Storytelling Network, Marilyn McPhie, says, despite the long years of being organized, "We have a loose-knit group of storytellers here. We have no organization, no

officers, no by-laws, no meetings, no guild. We're constantly reinventing ourselves and our storytelling and moving into new venues and new fields. We'll probably never be a highly efficient guild with membership dues and cards with expiration dates. We just tell stories, and that's fine with us."

McPhie started the process of becoming a full time storyteller in the mid 1980s. "I was enrolling my children in participatory preschool, and the administration said that the school really was participatory. I was expected to do something!" she says. Seeing the list of activities she could take part in, from sweeping the floors and cleaning the bathrooms, she picked being a storyteller. "That sounded easy enough," she adds.

McPhie found that she enjoyed storytelling and had a talent for presenting a tale to an audience. She now describes herself as a full-time storyteller. For decades she has presented a weekly storytelling at the Penasquitos branch library. She has performed for an audience of 5,000, yet confesses that telling stories to a room of only 20 can be more rewarding. "In small settings like that I like that I can look into their eyes," she says. Drawn to stories that feature irony and word play, her storytelling repertoire includes folk tales from the oral tradition, as well as a few personal stories, such as the day her TV hating father bought a television to watch the first manned moon landing.

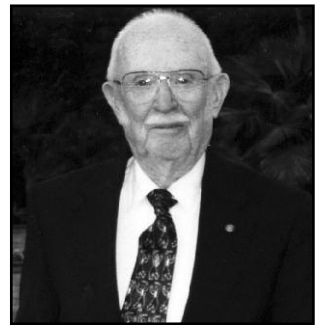
Charles Johnson, a software developer by day, came to storytelling through music. "I was at Disneyland and I passed by one of



The tale of Scheherazade and the Persian King in One Thousand and One Nights

the characters, Farley the Fiddler, and of course he's playing the fiddle, and I thought 'that looks like a really cool job.'" Johnson bought a ukulele and began to play around town. As time went by, he found that the bits of banter and stories that he told between songs were becoming more and more a part of his performance. Music still figures into what he does, but it is storytelling that makes up the main body of his concerts. He tells stories anywhere that an audience can gather, but can most often be found delivering his adaptation of the 1933 movie *King Kong* or another adventure story to a small group around a campfire. Johnson says that convincing people to attend a storytelling performance can be difficult, that most people have an image of an old lady rocking in her rocking chair and reading from a book when they think of storytelling. "That's not what you should think at all," he says. "At a storytelling concert you're going to be entertained. You don't have an actor on display for you. You're going to see and hear all of the story your head. Storytelling is highly interactive and taps your imagination. That's what makes it so great."

RIP Eugene Vacher 1909 - 2010



Eugene Vacher died on Thursday, September 16, just one month shy of his 101st birthday. For decades he was the conductor of both the San Diego Mandolin Orchestra and the City Guard Band. In addition to his immediate family, he had many friends and bandmates who, over the years, became his extended family. We will certainly miss his handshake and his smile. He was truly a modern-day gentleman.

Several years ago, the *San Diego Troubadour* published an article about the man, which can be accessed by visiting: sandiegotroubadour.com. Click on "Back Issues." Part One of the article appeared in the December 2004 issue, followed by Part Two in January 2005.

— Lois Bach

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by Paul Hormick

Wayne Riker was 15 years old in the early months of 1964, a Brooklyn kid attending his local high school, when the Beatles came to New York for their first American appearance on the "Ed Sullivan Show." The day the Fab Four landed at LaGuardia Airport, the whole of Riker's school was vacant of girls. All the boys were there, but not one female student was to be found, not in biology class, English class, homeroom, or the hallways. They all had ditched a whole day of school to scream and swoon over John, Paul, George, and Ringo at the airport and the band's other destinations around New York.

Riker doesn't remember much of what he learned in his classes that day, but the larger lesson was obvious: picking up a guitar and playing in a band could be a good career choice. You could make some money, and the female population of the western world would go crazy for you for doing so. What could be more motivation for a 15-year-old boy?

It wasn't long after the first wave of Beatlemania disrupted his high school that Riker bought his first guitar, a virtually unplayable \$10 acoustic, and set himself on the path to becoming a professional guitar player. The worldwide fame and adulation that the Beatles enjoyed never came his way, but here in San Diego he has the renown that few other local musicians achieve. Since the early 1980s, when he came to San Diego, he has performed at almost every local musical venue, and more than a dozen homegrown bands have listed him as a member. He has been a musical performer and director for local theater, most notably the San Diego Rep. Al Jarreau, Luther "Guitar" Watson, Rosemary Clooney, and other prominent nationally known performers have included Riker as part of their ensembles. And a myriad of bands and performers, running a gamut of styles from rhythm and blues, to jazz, to country, call up Riker when they need a seasoned and knowledgeable guitarist to make the gig.

By 1967 Riker had moved on from the \$10 guitar, gotten through more than one Mel Bay guitar instruction book, and landed in his first band, which was called Ferris Wheel. Part of the advantages of growing up and living in New York meant that he was in the middle of where all the action was. During the three months of 1967's Summer of Love, Ferris Wheel played the Sunday afternoon gig at a place called Cafe Bizarre in Greenwich Village. The band performed while the place still echoed from the pre-punk revolutionary sounds of the Velvet Underground, who had the Saturday night gig at the cafe. And the music that could be heard from across the street, from the club The Loft, was from a young man who had just hit the big time, Jimi Hendrix.

Riker formed his own band in 1969. At that time he was also a full-time student at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Rutherford, New Jersey. The university work earned him a degree in English literature, but he admits that avoiding the draft and the Vietnam war provided the motivation to pick up the books and hit the classes. He kept the finances flowing by driving a cab in New York City, which proved to be – along with schoolwork and running his own band – a sleep-depriving combination. With a mixture of pride and acknowledging his good luck, he says that he was only held up twice. Another adventure while he was

a cabbie was having a woman go into labor while in the backseat of his taxi.

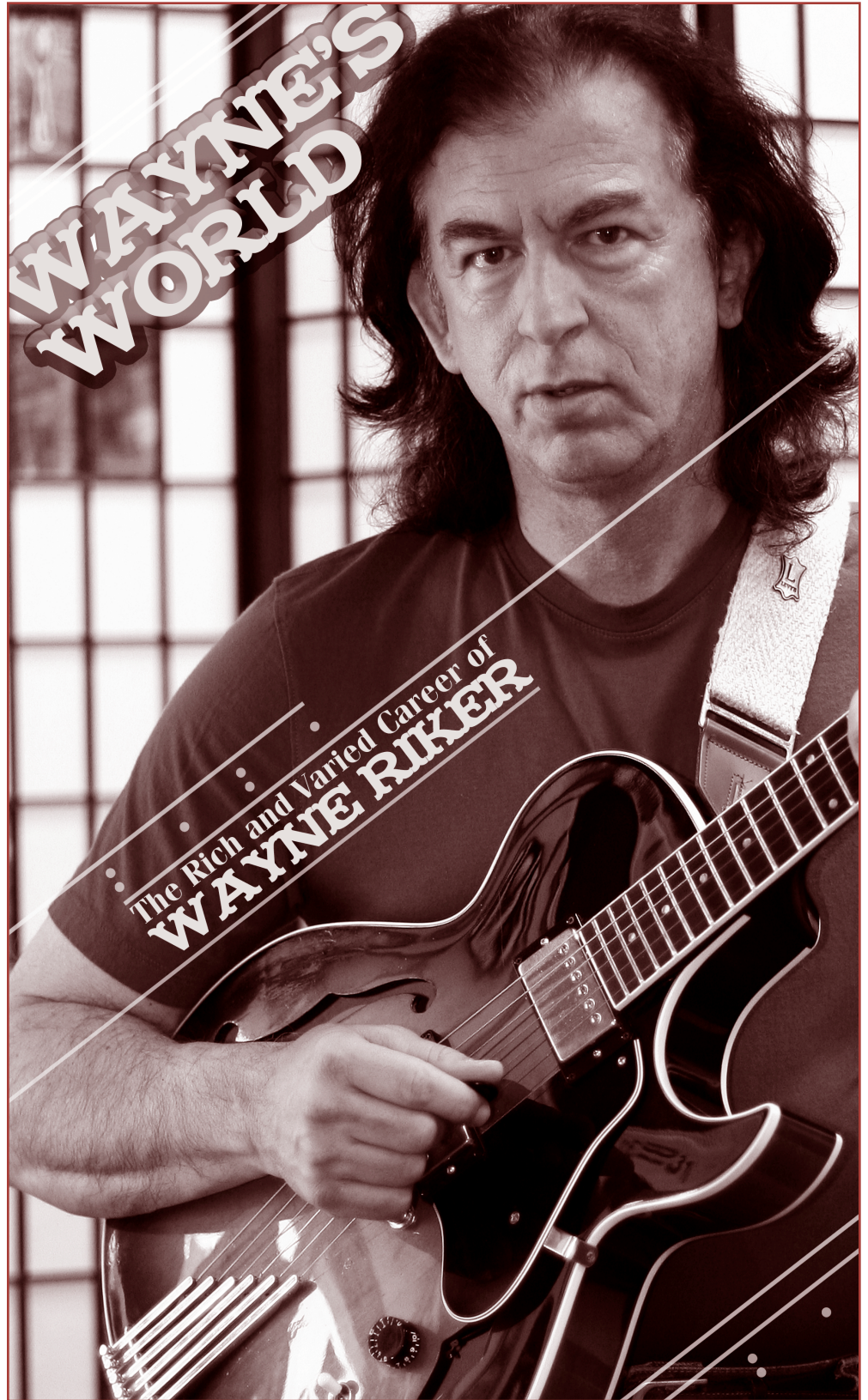
The turning point for Riker, the one that solidified his career choice to be a musician, came when he bought his first really great instrument. "It was around the time I was at the university that I bought a Hangstrom guitar. I finally had an instrument that played really well. It was then that I started to have confidence in my playing," he says. "It was at that point that I said to myself, 'OK, this is what I'm going to do for the rest of my life.'" Riker was also quite thorough with his career plan. He knew that he wanted to perform and teach music. He also determined that he would write instructional books. He also set his sights on becoming a columnist for *Guitar Player* magazine.

The inspiration for his career came from his new instrument, but the affirmation that really solidified his career decision came from his advisor at Fairleigh Dickinson. Riker remembers, "The English advisor was named Dr. Viola. I was in his office to talk to him, and he was asking about my plans, what I was leaning toward for my career. I told him that I was wanting to play music. He was really encouraging, more encouragement than I'd received from my family, and said, 'Go out and enjoy your life. Go out and enjoy playing music.'"

An associate of Riker's by the name of Al Loving, who was an artist and muralist, had started an artist colony in the early 1970s. Up until that time the arts scene of New York had centered itself around Greenwich Village. Loving wanted to move the scene to Times Square, with the intent of reinvigorating an arts community that in many ways had become both narcissistic and moribund. In the remains of what had been an old radio station Loving established a haven for a score of creative individuals of all sorts: artists, dancers, musicians, and others. Riker moved in and remembers the stimulating atmosphere. "The High School for the Performing Arts, the one that the movie *Fame* is based on, was across the street. We'd have jam sessions that went back and forth across the street. Our place also turned into a sort of after hours hang out for the New York music scene."

It is the next musical venture in Riker's life that gets the most mileage for Baby Boomer trivia. In 1974 he joined a very successful quartet that played around Times Square, sometimes six nights a week. The band somehow morphed into an iteration of Crazy Elephant, the super pop bubble gum band that scored a big hit in the late sixties with "Gimme Gimme Good Lovin'." If you go on YouTube and click on that song, you'll see a picture of the band with a very young Wayne Riker off to one side. By 1974 the Crazy Elephant was no longer churning out hits for teenagers. Riker performed with the band as they toured the beach communities in New Jersey.

After his stint with Crazy Elephant, realizing that he had performed around the New York and New Jersey areas for all of his life, Riker felt that he needed a change of scene. His brother Walt had been playing drums in a show band in Lawrence, Kansas, and invited his brother to come join the group. The Riker brothers spent the mid- to late seventies traveling and performing throughout the plains states. Living in Kansas gave the band an odd mix of inspirations to produce one of their shows, a tongue-in-cheek, 50 minute, X-rated



version of *The Wizard of Oz*.

In the late 1970s Riker was intrigued by a cover story for *Guitar Player* magazine that featured a brand new school for guitarists, the Guitar Institute of Technology, that had just gotten up and running in Los Angeles. Although he was a long-standing professional player, Riker thought that attending the institute would give him a greater professional edge. Throughout his years as a musician he was still largely self-taught, learning tunes by ear and copying solos from records. Also, for quite some time, he had wanted to move to California. Attending the institute would give him the excuse he needed to make way for the land of palm trees and movie stars. Soon after submitting an audition tape, he heard back from the school that he had been accepted. So at the age of 29, Riker packed up all his belongings and headed to LA. He took off the entire next year to study and woodshed at the new guitar school.

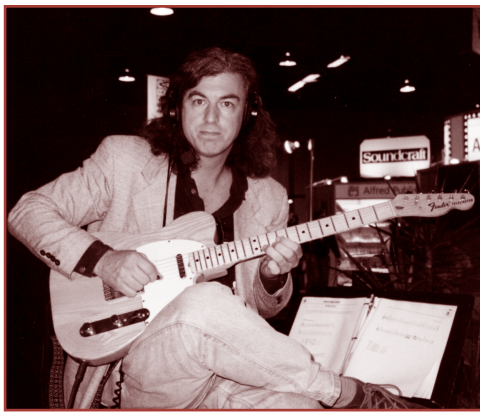
"Now the institute has thousands of students, but back then they only had a class of 90," he says. "There were close to 30 instructors, so it was almost like personal private tutoring for that entire year." The year that Riker attended the school, the rostrum of instructors included guitar heavyweights Howard Roberts, Pat Martino, Howard Alden,

Ron Eschete, Don Mock, and Joe Dorio. "I still had a lot to learn, but the institute filled in every blank in my knowledge of music and the guitar. While I was there I learned to play intelligently; I learned the proper use of the melodic minor and harmonic minor scales. I also learned all the important tricks – how to make substitutions and things like that."

Degree in hand, and years of performing under his belt, Riker moved on down to San Diego, his new wife's home town. Despite his talents, he knew no one in San Diego, not a single club owner or music agent. He didn't know of any other musicians that he could call to start gigging. Going through the phone book (remember, this is before the advent of – after the Beatles – the second most important development in western civilization: the internet.), he found 15 music stores. He started knocking on their doors to see if any of them could use a very qualified guitar instructor. One after another he was turned away, until he finally made it to New Expressions, the last on his list. "Well I couldn't find it," he remembers. "There was a Chinese laundry down on one corner and I walked in and asked where a music store was. Well, the woman there couldn't speak English, so I left. As I was leaving she called after me and said, 'Over there, over there!'"



Wayne during his Greenwich Village club days, 1967



At the NAMM Show, 1995



Wayne (far right) with Hey Fever, 1981



On the "Love Boat" with Stone's Throw, Cabo San Lucas, 1985



In the Suds band, 1995



With the Shelle Blue band, 2000



Sh-Boom, 1986



With the Electrocarpathians, 2004



Wayne (top right) in San Diego Rep's production of "Rocky Horror," 1991

If anyone remembers New Expressions, they probably understand Riker's dilemma. New Expressions was in an old house that looked more like a residence than a business, and it was tucked around the end of a corner of an intersection. "I walked in and there was a teenage girl sitting there. When I asked if they needed a guitar teacher she said that she'd go get her mom. Vicky, the owner, came out and said yes, they had a room available." Throughout their iterations and transformation into North Park's Old Time Music, Riker has remained associated with New Expressions for the last 30 years. He taught his last student there and turned in his key only a few weeks ago, having moved on to conducting seminars and pairing his students down to a select few.

Students have sought him out, ensuring that he has always had a full teaching schedule, and many of his students have studied with him for years. Riker says, "My main approach

is the opposite of what most music teachers do." Rather than requiring his students to start right off the bat with music theory, he wants the student to start playing the guitar immediately. Right from the first lesson his students have their guitars in hand, plucking and strumming and learning licks and lines. "It's like learning to speak. When you're born and growing up you learn to speak by copying your parents. You learn words and then how to put sentences together. It's later, when you're in junior high school, that you start diagramming sentences, you start to learn grammar and how the language is constructed. It's the same with my students. After six or seven months of learning licks and lines, it's then that I start in on the theory behind what the student has been learning."

For over 20 years he has written instructional columns for a number of music magazines. His first contributions were for *Acoustic Musician* magazine, spanning 1989 until 1992. He has also written for *Premier Guitar*, *Guitar Player*, and *Acoustic Guitar* magazines. In 2006 *Acoustic Guitar* published his column along with one of his compositions "The Aftermath." He has also published five instructional books, all of which concentrate on playing the blues. His books may be the endeavor

that have earned Riker the most recognition. He says that folks will tell him that they saw copies of them in music stores while they were in Europe or Australia.

In 2008, after years of gigging, teaching, and being the guy called in to make the session for somebody else's recording, Riker finally put out his own disk, a compilation of original compositions performed on acoustic guitar that he titled *Fretfull*. "The reason it took me so long to make a CD of my own is simply finances. Before 2008 I didn't have the money to produce a good recording of myself. As a musician, there are times when you're living week to week without a huge cash flow, so making the commitment to finance something like a recording was just not doable," he says. Riker's money situation began to improve about three years ago, when the royalties of his instructional books increased substantially and gave him the financial freedom to book the studio time and make a compact disk package. Later in 2008 he released *Fretology*, another acoustic CD of his own compositions.

Besides the great guitar playing on *Fretfull* and *Fretology*, the tunes evince a strong sense of composition. Riker credits what he calls his ability to "stop the tune," a sort of "less-is-more" approach to composing that kept the musical pieces under control. He says, "When you're putting a tune together, and you have a strong A section, and you've done well by putting together a good B section to follow it, it's real tempting to follow things up with a C, D, and E section. You have to work to avoid that; you can be too cute." Riker also took great care in the structure the disc itself, how the tunes follow each other and how they shift moods.

One of the greatest advantages of the guitar for those who play it is that the strings can be tuned differently than their normal pitches, easing the formation of certain chords or helping in the execution of lines and riffs. This gift of the instrument can be a curse as well. The alternate tunings can make some things so easy to play that guitarists, even some very good ones, will noodle aimlessly. Riker avoided this pitfall on disks by working out in advance the chord structures and voicing for the different tunings. He was thus able to take even greater advantage of the tunings than most guitarists have done. "I had guitar players who had heard the disk come up to me later and they were surprised to find out that I had actually used a lot of open tuning on the disks," he adds.

Riker sees himself as more of an electric guitarist than an acoustic player. His latest disk, *Full Soul Ahead*, has him plugged into an amplifier with the volume turned up. While his previous recordings featured his compositions, *Full Soul Ahead* is filled with standard blues, funk, and jazz. Establishing the core of a rhythm section with himself on guitar, Dave Curtis on Bass, and Michael McGinty on keyboards, Riker then called in a treasure trove of San Diego's best performers. With each performer, he chose a groove or style in which that performer shines, so as to spotlight that performer's talents. This formula was successful enough to earn *Full Soul Ahead* a nomination for Best Jazz CD from the San Diego Music Awards this year.

Of all the San Diego ensembles in which Riker has been a band member, the one that most locals remember is Stone's Throw. A creation of multi-instrumentalists Phil Shopoff

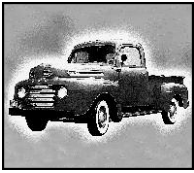
and Molly Stone, the band had been a San Diego mainstay since its inception in the mid-seventies. With a repertoire that reached back to the twenties and mined the hit parade through the forties, fifties, and even the hippie hits of the sixties, they were enormously popular with a wide variety of listeners. Just about every tune featured the band's three-part harmony. High-tech savvy also aided the band. Shopoff had an unusual instrument for the time – a computer – using it to compile a database of 7,000 music lovers who were informed of the band's performance schedule with regular mailings. Riker joined the band somewhere around 1984 and enjoyed the whirlwind of activity that the troupe generated. "Every night we were woking," he says. "We hardly stopped playing. Every week we were playing eight or nine gigs!"

Stone's Throw won the *Reader's* poll for best band every year for about a decade, and for months and months they were the house band at the now bygone jazz hot spot of Elario's, which sat atop La Jolla's Summerhouse Inn. A particular honor befell the band when they were chosen to perform at the Olympic Village during the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. The gig with possibly the most enjoyable fringe benefits, the fjords of Alaska, and inviting beaches of the Caribbean, was Riker and the rest of the band enjoyed while they performed aboard the Princess Cruise Lines.

Starting in the early 1990s Riker dropped the band routine and became a freelance musician, a musical hired gun of sorts. One night he might perform with a country band, the next with a jazz ensemble. He speaks casually about his ability to switch gears to the differing styles, saying, "All music is basically the same. The only thing that really changes is the rhythm. All the chords function the same. An E7 chord is an E7 chord no matter what kind of music you're playing." It was also in the late 1980s and early 1990s that Riker struck out to work in theatre. He has provided the guitar parts and been the musical conductor for stage productions such as *Are You Lonesome Tonight?* and *Dixie*. He also enjoyed the position of full musical directorship of the San Diego Rep's 1997 production of *Suds*.

Riker keeps a small red book, a blank journal that is, despite its untattered appearance and lack of dog ears, obviously decades old. With this book, in handwriting that would make his grammar school teachers proud, he has written down a record of every gig he has performed since 1970. The entries simply list the date, location, the band or ensemble that he performed with, and the amount of money, sometimes down to the penny, that he made for a gig. As he holds the book that provides a sum of his performance career, it would seem that he would reminisce about all the great times that he has had on stage or the big name performers that he has performed with. But it is his teaching that he wants to emphasize. "In all the years that I've been teaching, since 1973, I've never called in sick, or been late. Never. And the greatest joy for me is when I run into an old student who tells me how well he's playing now and how he's progressed musically. Nothing is better than that."

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BLUEGRASS CORNER

by Dwight Worden



IBMA ANNUAL BLUEGRASS AWARDS

It's that time of year when the International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) passes out the annual awards for the "best of the best" in bluegrass music. The big night occurred on Thursday, September 30, 2010 at the famous Ryman auditorium in Nashville. All professional members of IBMA in good standing were entitled to vote. As we go to press, the ballots are in and are being tabulated by an independent accounting firm. Here is a rundown on the contenders for some of the top awards. Next month will let you know who the winners were:

Entertainer of the Year

- Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper
- Dailey & Vincent
- The Grascals
- The Del McCoury Band
- Russell Moore & Illrd Tyme Out

Vocal Group of the Year

- Blue Highway
- Dailey & Vincent
- The Gibson Brothers
- Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver
- Russell Moore & Illrd Tyme Out

Instrumental Group of the Year

- Blue Highway
- Sam Bush Band
- Michael Cleveland & Flamekeeper
- The Infamous Stringdusters
- Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder

Male Vocalist of the Year

- Jamie Dailey
- Russell Moore
- Tim O'Brien
- Junior Sisk
- Dan Tyminski

Female Vocalist of the Year

- Dale Ann Bradley
- Sonya Isaacs
- Alison Krauss
- Patty Loveless
- Claire Lynch

Album of the Year (Recording Title, Artist(s), Producer(s), Label)

- *Circles Around Me*, Sam Bush (artist & producer), Sugar Hill
- *Dailey & Vincent Sing the Statler Brothers*, Dailey & Vincent (artists), Jamie Dailey & Darrin Vincent (producers), Cracker Barrel/Rounder
- *Russell Moore & Illrd Tyme Out*, Russell Moore & Illrd Tyme Out (artists & producers), Rural Rhythm
- *Ring the Bell*, The Gibson Brothers (artists and producers), Compass
- *The Famous Lefty Flynn's*, The Grascals (artists & producers), Rounder

Song of the Year (Song Title, Artist(s), Songwriter(s))

- "Elizabeth," Dailey & Vincent (artists), Lester James Fortune (songwriter)
- "Hard Rock Mountain Prison (Till I Die)," Russell Moore & Illrd Tyme Out (artists); Ray Edwards, Larry Cox & Terry Foust (songwriters)
- "My Florida Sunshine," Claire Lynch (artist), Bill Monroe (songwriter)
- "Ring the Bell," The Gibson Brothers (artists), Chet O'Keefe (songwriter)
- "The Ballad of Stringbean and Estelle," Sam Bush (artist); Guy Clark, Verlon Thompson & Sam Bush (songwriters)

It's always great fun to attend the awards show at the Ryman, and even for those who can't make it to Nashville, you owe it to yourself to follow the proceedings and enjoy the show. It's bluegrass' very own version of Oscar night. And, be sure to tune into the KSON "Bluegrass Special," hosted by Wayne Rice (97.3 FM and 92.1 FM in North County) every Sunday evening from 10pm until midnight. Wayne will be re-broadcasting the IBMA Awards Show on one of his radio programs.

OLD TIME MUSIC STORE.

The Old Time Music Store, located at the corner of Utah and University Ave. in North Park, is the sister store to Buffalo Brothers in Carlsbad. Old Time Music has long been a supporter of bluegrass in San Diego and a stable supporter of the San Diego Bluegrass Society. "OTM," as it is affectionately called, hosts the SDBS third Tuesday of the month get togethers, which include a structured slow jam led by Janet Beazley and an open jam for more seasoned players. In addition, OTM presents regular concerts featuring some of the top players in bluegrass. Past concerts have included Roland White, David Grier, Bill Evans and Megan Lynch, and a variety of other bluegrass stars. If you have not been in the store for a while, stop by and chat with the friendly staff, take a look at the great selection of instruments they have, and check out the great array of teachers they have for learning on all instruments.

STARTING A BLUEGRASS BAND. Have you ever had the urge to notch up your playing and join a bluegrass band? Have you never been asked to join a bluegrass band? Well, the answer for you may be to start your own band. It's not that difficult and it can be a lot of fun. Here are some tips on how to do it.

First, think through what kind of music you want to play. Do you want to be a strictly traditional bluegrass band? A new grass band? Do you want to include some swing music in your repertoire?

Do you want to feature vocals or instrumentals or both?

Second, knowing what kind of music you want to play, survey the local scene to see who you might like to recruit to join you in your new band. Do not rule out musicians already playing in other bands, as many are open to other engagements. And, don't forget that there are many great players either not in bands or in between bands.

Third, once you have a list of potential bandmates, think through the compatibility issues. Who among the musicians you desire to play with has a personality compatible with yours and with the other bandmates? Are the musical tastes compatible? Are your potential bandmates geographically desirable, i.e., are they so spread out that regular practice will be difficult?

Fourth, choose your "A list" and invite those players over for a jam session. You can tell them you are considering forming a band, but avoid making firm commitments at this point. You want your group to play together a bit first and see if things jell.

Fifth, after a practice or two, invite those players to join who you think will be musically and personality-wise compatible. Have a discussion with this group about the band's goals to make sure you are all, at least roughly, on the same page: you all want to practice regularly? How often do you want to play out? Is money or fun the main motivating factor? Will a member's commitment to your band be their "first call" (if they're in other bands) or will you get dumped when their other bands call? Do you have a rough consensus about how music will be selected for the group, i.e., can everyone bring material to be considered?

Once you get consensus on all these matters you are ready to go to the next steps - organizing a preliminary repertoire, starting the process of practice, selecting a band's name, and beginning to promote your services. We will address these stages in the band formation process in a future issue.

In the meantime, keep pickin' and get out and enjoy some of the great bluegrass music in San Diego.

The Zen of Recording

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

THE JOURNEY

The (thankfully, steel-reinforced) toe of my seldom-worn hiking boot trips over an unseen boulder, hurtling me forward through the predawn darkness. My arms stretch out in front of me instinctively, allowing the water bottle and tiny flashlight in my hands to slam into the ground with an unnerving jolt. I quickly regain my footing and compose and after checking to see if the flashlight is still functioning, continue on. The trek is a bit arduous to say the least, as this occurrence repeats itself several times over the next 30 or 40 minutes, as do the periodic "oh shit, I'm lost" moments where I find myself frantically shining a tiny beam of light around just to pick up any sign of the trail carved into the earth by the hundreds of people who traverse this cursed hill each day.

I blame my friend Robin Henkel.

I was speaking with him several years ago when he recounted this fantastic experience he'd had, wherein he climbed to the top of Cowles Mountain to watch the sunrise. The enthusiasm with which he delivered this story left such an impression that I had vowed to do it myself...one day. After tossing and turning through several fitful, sleepless hours, I looked over at the clock to see what time it was: 4:47am. The red LED display seemed to mock me.

"That's it, Henry." I curtly announced to my groggy and (most probably very disinterested) cat. "I'm doing this."

I grabbed my gear, which only consisted of clothes and the previously mentioned items and headed out like my very own Lewis & Clark, insomnia be damned!

Almost immediately after beginning my ascent, I recognized the metaphorical significance of this excursion. I've seen it literally hundreds of times with almost every recording project I've taken on, although it is equally adaptable to almost any situation that involves the quest in achieving one's vision. Once enthusiasm and determination have taken their hold, it's all

down to the doing. Sure, there will be obstacles and missteps along the way and yes, you will probably lose your way for a little bit from time to time. But you know where the top is and that's where you're headed: up.

It's an honorable way of being, in my humble opinion. Commitment and follow through with regard to one's ideals is at the heart of every story that details discovery and innovation, from Leonardo da Vinci to Henry Ford, Magellan to Ben Franklin.

One such tale chronicles the saga of a little-known inventor named Harry Chamberlin, a man who dreamed of being able to capture the sophisticated nuances of real-world instruments and human voices and make them available to musicians everywhere. He did this by inventing a recorded snippets of them being performed, one note at a time. Each of these recorded notes were then transferred to tape loops that were triggered by corresponding notes on the keyboard. In essence, he developed the first sampler. The year was 1948.

The instrument was dubbed fittingly enough, the Chamberlin and over the next decade or so, he continued to hone and refine his design, ultimately debuting his fantastic new keyboard at the 1961 NAMM show. While this may seem like a great turn in the story, it is unfortunately not the case.

A salesman hired to promote the new instrument instead took two of them to England, removed the identification labeling, and presented them as his own design. The product was eventually brought to market and known by a slightly more recognizable name to fans of vintage instruments: the Mellotron. Among the Mellotron's more notable uses are the flutes in "Strawberry Fields Forever," the orchestra in "Nights in White Satin," and a ton of prog rock bands like Yes, Genesis, and King Crimson.

Unfortunately, the story that resulted is full of lies, deceit, and endless legal wrangling, but it is now presented in a new film appropriately titled *Mellodrama: The Mellotron Movie*. Chamberlin's sad tale is touchingly



Sven-Erik Seaholm

conveyed through the anecdotes and recollections of the purveyors of its musical wonders: Brian Wilson, Patrick Warren, Michael Penn, the Moody Blues' Mike Pinder, Matthew Sweet, Mitchell Froom, Cheap Trick's Rick Nielsen, and many, many others who pay sincerely loving tribute to this rickety, temperamental, and often just plain frustrating instrument.

Director Dianna Dilworth does an incredible job of unearthing a very complex and ultimately heartbreaking story with a stunning amount of technical detail, exhaustive research, great stories, and yes, a few laughs as well. That this movie can be viewed and its story appreciated by non-musically inclined audiences as well is a tribute to Dilworth's abilities as a filmmaker and to the Chamberlin's deep, rich, and enduring legacy.

Kudos also to the Museum of Making Music in Carlsbad, which not only hosted the screening but also presented noted author/musician Brian Kehew performing a real live Mellotron in person! Seeing one close up and being able to touch it was an unbeatable experience I will never forget. Later, San Diego's own Pea Hicks demonstrated some "illegitimate cousins" to the Mellotron, namely the Optigan, Orchestron, Talentmaker, and an actual drum machine based upon similar technology called the Chamberlin Rythymate. I wish I had more space to go into each of those, but I'm sure we'll discuss it in future musings.

At the end of it all Chamberlin's story is one of triumph, as the movie's list of songs featuring the sound of his invention confirm.

As I stood alone atop Cowles Mountain, the sun rising over a fog covered San Diego I basked not in the accomplishment of actually making it to the summit, but in the fact that I knew that I would arrive there. Just as I knew that whatever was keeping me awake would also be conquered eventually, if not exactly on my schedule.

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an independent record producer (kaspro.com), singer, and songwriter (svensongs.com). Facebook him. He "likes" that.

ANGELA PATUA Afro-Brazilian Folk Artist



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Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

OPTIMISTIC TIME CAPSULE

Two recurring nightmares have recently made me their bitch. The first is set sometime in the future where Lindsay Lohan and Paris Hilton are acquitted of a hostage-taking bloodbath of a bank robbery, even as a surveillance tape clearly depicts them as guilty.

The second is set in the past, perhaps decades ago. I'm to perform at a dance recital as the headliner, following another up-and-comer named Rudolf Nureyev. By the time he's brought down the house, I'm frantically looking for a razor blade or some way to turn invisible. No luck, and I must indeed go on. My spastic performance is, astonishingly, well received, and my decapitated-chicken gyrations become an accepted and emulated style of modern "dance."

The origin of this second dream is no mystery to me. It evolved from my reacquaintance with one of the most thrilling examples of documentary film I'd ever encountered. And I'm recommending it to you with my own personal guarantee: go buy it (you'll be wasting money if you rent) and if you're not 100% happy to have it in your DVD library, I will personally question your sanity.

The movie is *T-A-M-I SHOW* (Teenage Awards Music International, or a similar explanation). It was filmed at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium in October of 1964 and doesn't look a day over 46.

Actually, it was videotaped, then transferred to film and released to theaters in 1965. Later it became a hit on the midnight movie circuit of Art Theatre Guild/Mike Getz, which had a local outlet at the Academy Theatre on University Avenue at 37th Street. It was one of the earliest of the handful of offerings that the audiences couldn't get enough of, demanding (and receiving) repeated bookings. By the time the eighties hit, the midnight movies had disappeared, and so, it seemed, had *T-A-M-I SHOW*. Portions of it were included in a VHS tape along with bits of 1966's *The Big TNT Show* (long out of print) but the public hasn't been able to grope *T-A-M-I*'s entire awesome bod until now. And this concupiscent babe is looking better than ever.

The many musical acts on display here are in superb form (except, sadly, Smokey Robinson, who has an annoyingly "pitchy" evening). Lesley Gore is a revelation as a live performer. Gerry and the Pacemakers get to dance around with Diana Ross and the Supremes. The Beach Boys are caught in an impeccable set. The Barbarians (who?) are thankfully represented by only one song, as if to challenge the viewer to note that their drummer has a hook for a left hand — Def Leppard would later take this gimmick to absurd lengths.

But the standout here is James Brown, giving his all in the performance of his life. Thank God he and his band were in the Zone that night. It's so damned thrilling, you'll thank God again for putting Soul Brother Number One on this earth, even if you're an atheist (in which case, there's even more urgency to watch this DVD now, since you're sure to be deprived of it during your eventual eternity in Hell).

What makes things rather sadistically twisted in this musical monument for the ages is that James Brown isn't even the headliner. (Maybe someone didn't like his hairstyle. What else could it possibly be?) No, after dropping a tons of sweat on the stage and a tons of jaws in the audience, he's followed by the on-the-verge-of-god-head Rolling Stones.

I imagine Jagger must have been affected by the movements of Brown — an arsenal of dignified flash that could ignite an ocean — but if he was in the least bit intimidated (as I certainly have been in my Nureyev dream), he certainly doesn't show it. He actually *seems to believe* in his own pathetic choreography. Ever since I first saw this film in 1965, I'm embarrassed for



The Hose: Soul Brother #2?

Jagger. But *he's* not, not in the least, nor is his audience, who quickly embraced this style of "dance" and proved to the world that if you believe your own BS, the others are sure to follow.

So Paris and Lindsay, with all their money and fame, continue to dance around the Law. Mick, with all his money and fame, continues to dance around Dance. I guess they're all destined to remain unwelcome intruders crashing my dreams, but it's comforting to have memories of Nureyev and performances contained on the priceless *T-A-M-I SHOW* disc to restore so much happy decency. It really does exist, and I'm on record, guaranteeing, since way back in paragraph three. See you on page 13.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Several weeks ago I posted a message on Facebook saying that I had received an email from former KGB-FM DJ Digby Welch, stating that he was alive and well, playing flamenco guitar and enjoying fine beers and vegetarian meals while living in Thailand. That post drew about two dozen comments from long-time radio listeners who remembered Digby from his stint on KGB during the '70s.

This month, I'll fill you in on the what's happening with some of the other talents with whom I worked during 101.5 KGB-FM's "golden age" (1972-1991).

Having declared that "there's no there there" anymore in radio, Bill Hergonson (aka Cap'n Billy...and later, host of "The Hergon Breakfast Club") now resides in Carlsbad and makes his living tuning and calibrating home theatre systems. Bill is one of the brightest and funniest people I know. It's a damned shame that there's nowhere he can apply his radio skills.

One of KGB's original News Brothers, Brad Messer, retired in 2007 after 47 years in radio. Brad is a member of the National Radio Hall of Fame of Texas. He was named by *Talkers Magazine* "one of the 100 most important radio talk hosts in America" several times.

KGB's longest-running News Brother was Jeff Prescott. Jeff is semi-retired and lives in La Jolla with his son. Prescott is currently the voice of Sycuan Casino on both radio and TV and can often be seen shooting pool and smoking cigars at the home of Shotgun Tom Kelly.

Prescott's former "Berger and Prescott" morning show co-host, Mike Berger, has one of the most successful radio-TV commercial voices in San Diego. His clients include Mor Furniture for Less (where he stars in some of their TV spots) and the Giant Used Car Tent Sale.

Another KGB News Brother (and, in 1968, one of California's first "underground" radio jocks) Gabriel Wisdom runs the investment firm American Money Management in Rancho Santa Fe. Gabe's still in radio and is heard daily across the nation on the Business Radio Network.

Latter-day News Brother Erik Thompson operates his own voice-over company out of his Leucadia home. Erik is the narrator on many of the documentaries on the Discovery Channel. Thompson is known for doing character voices and commercials as well as providing "imaging" for Sirius/XM Satellite Radio.

RADIO DAZE



by Jim McInnes

Weekend news anchor George Wilson quit KGB-FM in 1977 to star in the no-budget cult film *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes*. I haven't heard from George since then. Maybe a tomato killed him.

Early '70s evening jock Bob Coburn has hosted the nationally syndicated rock interview show, "Rockline" for 29 years. Bob's also been on L.A. rock station KLOS, on-and-off, since 1980.

Former weekend deejay Phil Hendrie now hosts the nationally syndicated "Phil Hendrie Show" (heard on 760 KFMB weekdays at midnight.) Hendrie's is a one-of-a-kind radio show. He often plays his own guests!

When I last spoke with midday host Ernie "Ernesto" Gladden, he was building his dream home in Dulzura and spreading the gospel every Sunday on the beach in O.B.

1980's KGB weekender, Andy Geller, is now the voice of both the ABC television network and CNN. Andy also narrates movie trailers and once announced the Oscars!

One-time KGB midday host David Good now makes a living writing. You see David's stuff every Thursday in the music section of the *Reader*, and in many other publications.

Overnight jock Dave Benson is now the program director of KMTT (The Mountain) in Seattle. Dave previously ran the show at KFOG in San Francisco and at KBCO in Denver.

One-time KGB evening deejay Pat Martin has been the midday mainstay on Sacramento rocker KRXQ for almost 20 years. Pat continues to sing with the latest incarnation of the band he started in San Diego: *Black Oyster Priest!*

Larry (the Cruiser) Himmel is the one former KGB jock almost everyone in San Diego knows. Larry has been on KFMB-TV 8 for 30 years and is the only person mentioned in this article that I still run into once a week — because we work in the same building!

Susan Hemphill, KGB's original blonde bombshell deejay, lives in the Bay Area and is married to a brain surgeon. Susan was on TV there the last time I spoke with her, in 1997.

Most of all, though, most men ask me, "Where's Sue Delany (the other blonde bombshell)?" I Googled her recently (and so can you if you spell Delany right) and it looks like she's an "executive hostess" at a ritzy L.A. area restaurant, but still trying to keep her toe in the broadcasting business. I think Sue's last radio gig was at L.A.'s Y-107 about a decade ago.

Sadly, some of my former KGB co-workers have passed away. RIP: News Brother Jim Morris, disc jockeys Greg Faulkner (aka Adrian Boulton), Bill O'Brien, John Leslie, and one of the first, and best, female rock jocks, Linda McInnes.

Next month: radio account executives I have known.

(Disclaimer: During my 28 years on KGB I worked with hundreds of people, some of whose names I can't recall. Please don't take it personally if I left you out. I've already exceeded my allotted 500 words!)



by Peter Bolland

BRING IT BACK

In 1983, at a talk called "Explorations" delivered at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur, California, Joseph Campbell revisited one of the central themes of his lifework. He claimed that the artist plays an essential role in the formation and maintenance of the psycho-spiritual health of the human race, and that artists far from being mere entertainers or decorators have a sacred duty to brave the depths of the unconscious and bring back treasures that inspire us all to realize the depth and beauty of our own lives. In other words, for Campbell, art is as important as the air we breathe. But unlike air, art does not fall out of the sky ready-made. We have to make it.

How does the artist minister to the psycho-spiritual health of humankind? By setting before us the archetypal symbols of our own awakening and drawing us into ever-deeper forms of self-knowledge.

It begins with a long apprenticeship. Every chance encounter, every tug of the heart, every starry sky, every word, sound, and moment forms a sea in which the fledgling artist swims. The artist's greatest skill is discernment — what to leave in and what to leave out. From nothing less than the entire sphere of human experience the artist begins to mold her vision of beauty. But she must first learn the techniques of her craft. She must find a teacher.

After mastering the vocabulary of her medium she reaches the first crisis. As her own unique voice begins to emerge the teacher becomes obsolete. She must break away. Art is so much more than mimicry. It is time to move on.

With her apprenticeship behind her and a growing body of high quality work taking shape, the young artist stands at a threshold. No matter her medium — paint, sculpture, dance, photography, film, poetry, prose, or music — she must brave the hero's journey into the underworld of the unconscious and face the dangers of madness, loneliness, and poverty in order to reach the transcendent goal: nothing less than the realization of unity, integration, and the resultant healing of the world.

According to Campbell, there are three main realization symbols: the *heiros gamos*, the atonement with the father, and apotheosis. The *heiros gamos* or sacred marriage is the profound healing and integration of the animus and anima, the male and female energy found within each of us. This often takes the form of boy meets girl. There's a reason there are so many love songs. On the surface they're about finding someone to love. Deeper down, they're about healing the rift between the conflicting energies of our own souls. The second realization symbol, the atonement with the father, is the satiation of the universal longing for the source. As Luke Skywalker goes searching for his father, we all want to know where we came from as a means of finally answering the primal question, *what am I?* If we knew what made us, we would know our own essence. This is why we love songs about the road and songs about home. It turns out that *take me home country roads* isn't really about West Virginia after all.

And, finally, apotheosis means realizing the divine nature of our own essence, as Buddha experienced under the bodhi tree when all his illusory mental constructs and so-called understandings faded away in the bright light of the realization that he was one with the universal consciousness from which we and all things come. All of us, whether we realize it yet or not, want what Buddha has, what Jesus called the Kingdom of Heaven, where we realize that in the depths of our own being we are one with the Father. Great art can give us these three gifts, sometimes all in one overwhelming moment.

PHILOSOPHY, ART, CULTURE, & MUSIC

STAGES

It is the challenge of every authentic artist to bring these gifts out of the depths of their own understanding and re-present them to us in new and relevant forms. "The point is that what you have to bring," said Campbell, "is something that the world lacks — that is why you went to get it. The daylight world doesn't even know that it needs this gift you are bringing." So this isn't going to be easy. In fact, at this stage of the journey, the artist faces a perilous decision. As she struggles to create works of art should she stay true to her own private invention and vision, or should she speak in the pedestrian language of mass culture? Should she be an *artiste* or a hack?

Should she stand in the corner of an art gallery in Manhattan and caterwaul like Yoko Ono or should she go to Nashville and churn out the next formulaic hit? Should she paint what her soul sees or should she paint Thomas Kinkadee fairy houses? If she's true to herself she runs the risk that no one will care. Art for an audience of one (the artist) is a lonely life. At this point she may flee to a cabin in the woods to paint the masterpieces nobody wants in the hopes that some future generation will lionize her as they did Van Gogh. Or she may utilize her extensive skill to give the people what they want, thinking to herself, *when I make enough money painting this commercial slop, then I'll paint what I want*. But that day never comes.

The third and most courageous alternative is to find a way to stay true to your depth vision and develop a vocabulary that hooks the public without pandering. Campbell calls this the pedagogical path. Here, you help your public connect with their deepest needs and initiate them into a process of realization by bringing your silent answers into alignment with their unspoken questions — the artist as teacher.

In the language of the hero's journey, the hero must go into the underworld to retrieve the boon or the prize. In the first scenario, the artist who refuses to communicate and hides in the woods is guilty of what Campbell calls "the refusal of the return." It's a common pitfall to dismissively condemn the untrained masses and blame them for your failure. In the second scenario, the artist returns but doesn't deliver anything but simply gives the public more of what they already have, which doesn't help them at all. In the third scenario the hero returns with the boon and finds a way to deliver it to the masses in correct proportion to their ability to receive. This, says Campbell, requires great sensitivity and compassion on the part of the artist. Having the patience and skill to draw your audience in is a loving, ego-less act. It's so much easier to hold your audience in contempt, take your toys, and go home. Or become a soulless panderer. But the path with heart, the sacred opportunity, is to bring the treasure right into the marketplace and integrate us all in the process. If you are an artist, do you have the patience, loving kindness, and courage to do this? When it comes to transcendent wisdom, do you have the guts to go get it and the compassion to give it away? There is so much need for healing. Develop a voice, believe that there is something worth singing about, and be that voice. Trust that you are the one we all need. Then without ego, grounded in the profound depth of humility, find the treasure and bring it back.

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 find him on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/peterbolland.page or write to him at peterbolland@cox.net.



Eric Andersen's River of Blue Flows with a Legacy of Song

by Terry Roland

Eric Andersen was there in the early dawn of the birth of the singer-songwriter movement of the 1960s. But, his story is not bound in time. His contemporaries and peers include Tim Hardin and Fred Neil, but his is a distinct voice in the rooms of the American songwriter today. He is a cosmic mentor to artists who want to stay alive in their creativity. He's a blues enthusiast who reads the Beats. He's a rocker who leans deep into his own well of poetry, distinct from those of Dylan or Cohen. At times his music calls to mind a gentle blue river while at others you may find yourself knee-deep in the rivers of the delta on a full-moon night with screaming slide guitars calling in the distance. There is no stronger example of this than his 2007 live album, *Blue Rain*. If you explore the legacy of his recorded work over the last 40 years, you'll hear him trading off lyrical licks with Lou Reed, harmonizing with The Band's Rick Danko, co-writing with Townes Van Zandt, or singing a tribute to Jack Kerouac.

There's no doubting, Eric Andersen loves the Beat writers of the '50s. He's clear about his affinity for Kerouac, Allen Ginsburg, and William Burroughs. He recently wrote an essay for the anniversary edition of Burroughs, *Naked Lunch@50*, and was the musical guest at release parties in Paris and New York. But, with his clear love for the harder-edged Beats, if Eric Andersen were one of them, he'd be the naturalist Zen poet, philosopher, Gary Snyder. There's something of the contemplative poet-mystic in him who can find visions in gentle waters and then shift into the dark chaos of the blues as he discusses Robert Palmer's classic book *Deep Blue*.

While lesser songwriters of the day pursued commercial success, Eric was the rest-

less-gypsy kind and ran alongside his own river, finding himself a witness to the deeply-rooted Americana muse of Dylan and The Band's Woodstock-Big Pink days. He chronicles this in the following interview as he describe the birth of his trance-like signature song, "Blue River," with Robbie Robertson, and Rick Danko witnesses as they gazed at the Hudson River one autumn afternoon in the early '70s. His best known songs, "Violets of Dawn," "Come to My Bedside," and "Thirsty Boots" have been recorded by Judy Collins, John Denver, Rick Nelson, and Mary Chapin Carpenter. Today, he is established as a mentor songwriter who has reached out to the generations that followed him. He has been an example of an artist who compels and draws us into his circle of song.

After a string of successful folk albums in the '60s, he was poised for success with the 1972 release of the now classic *Blue River* album. It was met with critical and commercial success. As fate would have it, the follow-up album, *Stages*, would be lost by the record company not to be resurrected for another 20 years. The release of this album led to a collaboration with old friends Norwegian singer-songwriter, Jonas Fjeld and Rick Danko of The Band. The trio turned in three successful albums that led to a deepened friendship between Danko and Andersen. Somewhere, folded into this collaboration is evidence of how songwriters become more than just entertainers, more even than just artists; the music of this trio on these three albums comes across like we've been present to the rite of passage of three true blood brothers embodied in song.

Today, Eric continues to flow along with his own blue river from his home in the Netherlands. He still writes, records, and performs with nothing less than a poetic passion for the spirit of the creative muse. It was striking during the interview, when talking about songwriting. He's still hungry, restless for some new breakthrough in his pursuit of the song. And this is what makes him a great artist. After decades, he still calls himself a seeker of the song and he invites us to join him on the exploration. *San Diego Troubadour: I noticed quite a bit of Beat influence in your projects over the years.*

Eric Andersen: The Beats were different.

Not the kind of literature we were learning in school at the time. It was the school of life. They spoke in a vernacular that was more interesting than what we read and heard in school.

SDT: You've walked some diverse paths in your art and music.

EA: These are the things that keep me alive. It keeps the wood in my fire. Like Lou Reed and I did a song together, "You Can't Relive the Past." We wrote it together and then he offered to play on it.

SDT: What's going on right now?

EA: I have a new album coming out; it's a live album from a Cologne, Germany. It's called the *Cologne Concert*. It'll be out next month. I'm also working on an album of new material.

SDT: I noticed your upcoming L.A. show at McCabe's will include Van Dyke Parks.

EA: Yeah, we met at McCabe's 50th anniversary show. He was so kind. We clicked. He's really such a transcendental talent. Around the same time, he came to a Pasadena gig and sat in on accordion. I also heard him play in the Netherlands. He did a kind of show where he talked and played piano. He was immensely impressive, a great keyboard player.

SDT: Speaking of accordion players, you played quite a bit with Rick Danko of The Band.

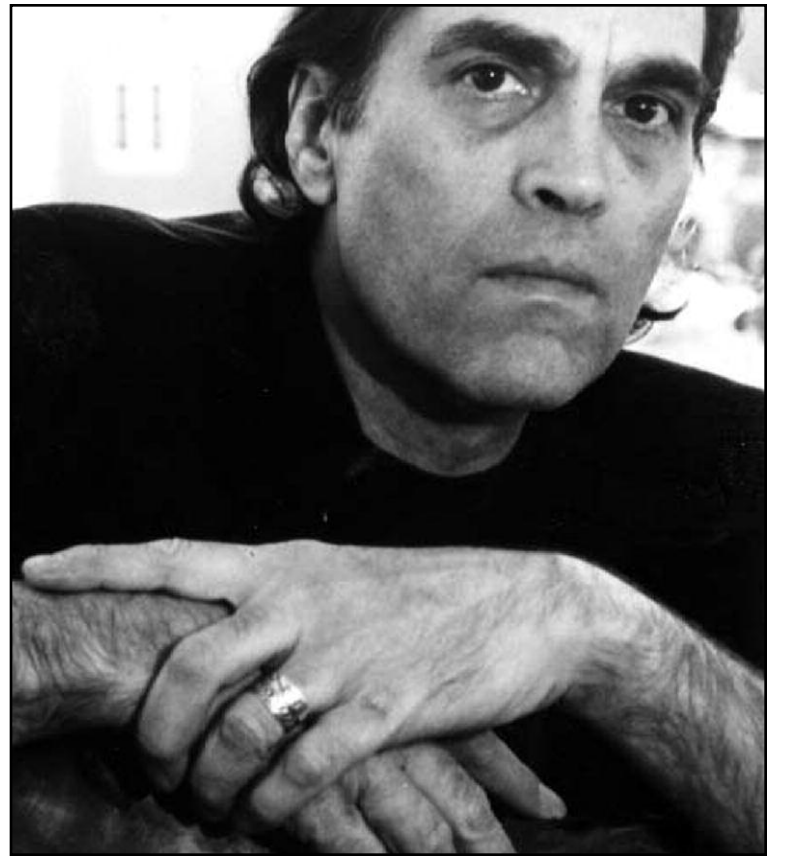
EA: I met Rick in L.A. around '67. He invited me to Woodstock. It was autumn and it was this rock and roll suburb. We went to Robbie Robertson's. He took me to the Hudson River on this long bridge. It's like the story of your life. We stopped to take a look at it. I remember I saw a train go by. I went back to L.A. and wrote "Blue River." Joni Mitchell heard the song, loved it. She started singing with it. She loved the title. She was working on the *Blue* album. She wanted me to lend her the title for the album. She liked it better than just *Blue*. But, I didn't let her have it [laughs].

SDT: The other song that resonates for me on the album is "Wind and Fire." It seems like an extension of "Blue River."

EA: Yeah...it was all connected. We were all in the same boat.

SDT: And sometimes train. Tell me about the Festival Express Canadian tour in 1970.

EA: That was a great experience. One of the greatest rock and roll parties ever. I was the only acoustic act on the show. It was good for me to be there. At one point, things were getting crazy. They put me up on a bus



Eric Andersen

and I did a song with Jerry Garcia. During that set, we stopped a riot from happening. There were so many wonderful people. We checked our ego at the hat rack. It was an amazing time.

SDT: I saw the film. There's a scene with Rick singing "Ain't No More Cane on the Brazos." Janis Joplin looked like she was going to eat him alive.

EA: [laughs] She probably did later. Those things happened out there on the road.

SDT: Blue River seemed rooted in the Woodstock experience with Dylan and The Band. The follow-up, Stages, got caught up in record label problems and was lost.

EA: Yeah. When it did come out in 1991, it received great reviews. And it was reviewed as though it had just been recorded, not something from the past. Critics gave it four stars. The reviews didn't say, 'pretty good for an old album.' It held up through time. That record proved that the cream rises to the top. It still stands today.

SDT: Working on it 20 years later led to your collaboration with Rick Danko and Jonas Fjeld.

EA: They came in to help with the bonus tracks. That's how we started. We had a harmony trio. It was quite nice. We got together, did a couple of albums. I heard it was one of Dylan's favorite albums. He got frustrated because when it was released, Tower Records didn't have it in stock. Dylan has always been supportive.

SDT: It was quite a blow when Rick passed.

EA: I loved Rick. I miss him everyday. They say, "When you were born the angels sang and Rick Danko was singing harmony." You know, you're lucky if you can create a work of art where the total is greater than the sum of the parts. Sometimes you're just lucky. We hit on it with that first trio album. Something special.

SDT: Another legendary collaboration was with Townes Van Zandt.

EA: I met Townes in 1967 at the Ohio Folk Festival. We were friends ever since. In the '80s we got close. I'd stay with him when I went south and he'd stay with me in New York. We wrote four tunes together.

SDT: Which songs?

EA: They're all on *You Can't Relive the Past*. Let's see... "Meadowlark," "The Road," "The Blue March," and "Night Train." As far as I know, it's the only time Townes ever co-wrote with anyone.

SDT: He was drinking quite a bit by that time.

EA: Yes. But, it was really for maintenance then. But, he could drink and do anything at the same time. Townes was the greatest southern songwriter since Hank Williams.

SDT: Tell me about your process of song-writing.

EA: I'd really like to get the melody together at the same time as the lyrics. But, writing is my first love. I was always musical, but it would flow through what I was expressing

in words. Sometimes, you're trying to express something and you don't even know what it is you're trying to express. It just comes through the air, like you're taking dictation and then you have to fit the music to it. I hear the rhythm, I pick a bit, but I don't seek, I find. Picasso said that. Writing for me is a form of exploration. It's like walking the sandy bank by the river; I don't know where the source is, but it becomes more about the journey than the destination. You just report the beauty of what you see as you go along. Sometimes the songs come and they're finished. It's not always like [Leonard] Cohen. He works very hard sculpting and crafting the song to get it down to the right thing, sometimes revising, sometimes not. But, the first thought is the best, sometimes. And sometimes, the first thought leads you to the best thought.

SDT: For most songwriters it's a form of storytelling.

EA: Yeah. And if you knew where the story was going to end, you wouldn't bother writing it. I try not to have a formula. It's exploratory. It's about breaking the borders, the wall, the limits of songwriting. Format is boring. If you can go against the usual verse/chorus, you try to strike out and break down the walls, rupture the borders, to come up with something different. You hope you can get songs that can do that. It's important to push it further along. When I first started writing songs, there were only a handful of people. Those who had come before were Woody Guthrie, Hank Williams, Jimmie Rodgers, the Delta and Chicago blues guys. As the years went by the singer-songwriters multiplied and it seems like the subject matter diminished. It was hard to cover new ground. People became afraid to do new things. Some touched on politics, others turned inward, songs about "me," confessional songwriting. It just got less interesting over time. So, you had to try new things, new ways.

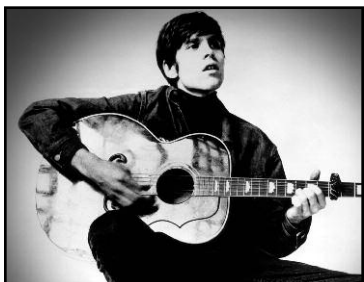
SDT: You were there from the beginning of this great era of song.

EA: Yes. I was a witness for that scene - the birth of the singer-songwriter movement. I remember when the originals came to town; they'd play for six nights in a row. You'd hear people like Mississippi John Hurt, Rev. Gary Davis. They'd just move into town. I was a very fortunate witness to the birth of it all.

SDT: One last question. Why did you move to the Netherlands?

EA: I met somebody over there and settled down. It was not such a major exile. You bring America with you. You know, I still wonder how the Yankees are doing every night before I go to sleep, even in the winter [laughs].

Right before press time, the SD Troubadour learned that Andersen's concert at SDMA-concerts had been cancelled. You can catch him at McCabe's in Santa Monica, October 15, accompanied by Van Dyke Parks.



Andersen in the 1960s

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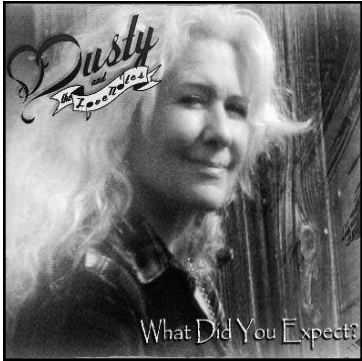
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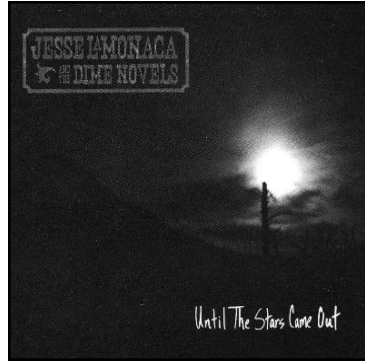


Dusty & the Love Notes What Did You Expect?

by Allen Singer

Dusty's lyrics fill this promising CD with questions, pathos, and humor. The central themes of life's ever-changing directions and expectations are reflected in her heartfelt songwriting. Dusty's "could have/might have been" moments are semi-country tunes fried with rock-Caribbean rhythms. The music is built on arrangements and guitar riffs that fill this CD with almost more than can be delivered. There's a country singer waiting in the wings, trying to get out, and lurking in the compressed tracks of this disk. Dusty's voice invites you in and tries to bust out but seems hesitant and restrained by the arrangements and modern technology of contemporary CD recording. She takes us around the proverbial musical block with songs about relationships, travel, and her love 'em and leave 'em tales. Her song-sung tales are real and the themes are universal – definitely a good thing for a performer-songwriter these days. Dusty's musical persona and expressiveness were shaped by her guitar lessons with Indian Joe, a local musician who knows his way around the guitar and America's musical songbook. Indian Joe provides most of the musical fills, rhythm, and soulful sounds for this disk. He was the catalyst for Dusty's recording and provided the impetus for getting herself out there musically. Dusty is clearly singing from where she's been in life and letting others know that the road isn't always straight and clear. She's a grown up with a heart full of experiences built on the usual rocky roads we travel and the bumps we experience the longer the journey lasts. Writing personal songs is like being a tight rope walker performing without a safety net and Dusty isn't shy about taking this risk. She writes songs with classic hooks, twists and turns, and isn't afraid to let her guard down. Her song "Recipe" lays it out, right or wrong, as she expresses all her emotions vocally. "S.P.C.A." sounds like a take on an old country number, with hints of Wanda Jackson, Brenda Lee, and 1950's rock 'n' roll. "It's Over" has a minor-key feeling with echoes of a European chanteuse, a torch singer giving someone a reality check. "Blue Satin Thong" is a parting song with sighs of what you'll be missing – the lyrics describe what men sometimes reduce relationships to after they're over. Dusty writes simply here, but she is clearly showing that life and love relationships are more than just a thong left in some former lover's drawer. Her writing is life-driven and her words and heartfelt voice tell of a journey that touches everyone.

This CD yearns to break out and get beyond the confines of the recording studio version that suppresses Dusty's natural warmth and the quality of the material. She sometimes sounds tentative, which may be because this is her first time in the recording studio, but it might also be due to modern recording techniques. This CD is a fine start and leaves us wanting more. It's filled with promise and is clearly only a beginning in her musical travels.



Jesse LaMonaca & the Dime Novels Until the Stars Come Out

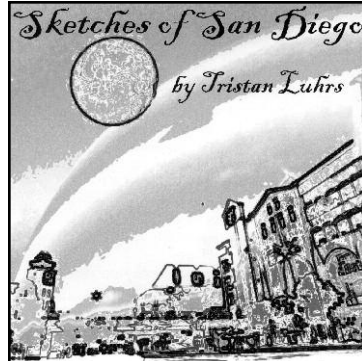
by Mike Alvarez

The debut album from Jesse LaMonaca and the Dime Novels was presented to this reviewer in an eye-popping package consisting of a cigar box containing the CD, a pine cone, a handful of postcards, a handwritten invitation to the CD release party – already a few months past – and an actual paperback novel (although at the time of its printing inflation had already boosted its price to a whole quarter).

The first thing one notices is the musical confidence of this group. They've got strong, melodic songs that they play with conviction and clear intent. The album opens with the title track, building a lot of dramatic tension before settling into its more leisurely rhythm. Whetting the appetite for what is to follow, this song lets listeners know that they are about to enjoy an album of tuneful songs with masterful arrangements and great musicianship. Things pick up on "I Awoke," an up tempo country tune with a Glen Campbell-like feel. As LaMonaca passionately belts out his lyrics, his clear tone and forceful delivery are reminiscent of singers like Kenny Loggins or the Black Crowes' Chris Robinson. He has a pleasing masculine voice and a presence that jumps out of the speakers. The Dime Novels are a terrific group of musicians themselves, creating a solid, muscular sound that brings to mind great bands like the Heartbreakers, the E Street Band, and Crazy Horse. The influences of these and many other legendary ensembles are liberally sprinkled throughout; they're tight but they've also got a lot of soul. They lend an interesting twist to the Americana/rock genre by bringing a cool R&B groove to some of their songs. A great example of this is "Left Coast Sunshine," a bouncy ode to the California lifestyle with "hit single" written all over it. It's got a catchy tune, an irresistible shuffle beat, and a chorus that simply demands that a crowd sing along with the band.

In a further show of musical versatility, they easily shift gears for the melancholy country ballad "The Rarest Form," which showcases guitarist Brandon Conway's skills on pedal steel. The song calls for a light touch and the band delivers it perfectly. The effect is dramatic and affecting. Keyboardist Ed Kornhauser really gets a chance to shine on "Cliched Broken Hearts on the Floor." Throughout the album he adds an essential mood and texture to each song.

This is a terrific debut record from a band that sounds like it has been playing far longer than the year or so that they've been together. Their sense of dynamics and space lets these well-written songs breathe with the emotion that is so evident from the first note. Although this is a studio recording, it has a very live feel to it. Based on the quality this release, Jesse LaMonaca and the Dime Novels should fast become favorites on the local scene. And beyond.



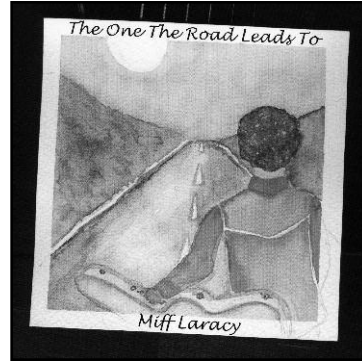
Tristan Luhrs Sketches of San Diego

by Mike Alvarez

At first glance one might expect Tristan Luhrs' first album, *Sketches of San Diego*, to be an exercise in serious jazz, inspired by Miles Davis' similarly titled classic *Sketches of Spain*. One is immediately disabused of this notion from the first notes of "Fantastic Journey." Starting with a bit of radio static, this song launches into a raunchy electric guitar-fueled song with a relentless beat and a semi-spoken vocal that hearkens back to classic rock belters. The relentless lead guitar that snakes throughout the song further reinforces its lineage to blues rock traditions. Yet that is but one of the many stylistic twists one experiences with this CD. "Life Is Too Short," features a rapid-fire lyric that is reminiscent of the Black Crowes' "Hard to Handle" in its delivery. By combining layered rock guitars with a hip-hop rhythm loop, he successfully combines two seemingly disparate musical genres.

Luhrs' hip-hop influence comes to the fore in "That's Y Eye Rhyme," an autobiographical song with a spoken confessional about why a white guy elects to express himself with a uniquely black musical form. Although it's not a genre normally reviewed in the pages of this publication, this makes for a rather compelling listen. The groove is loose and live with guitars and basses, and there is enough melody to keep hip-hop novices interested. It even ends with an acoustic interlude. "Drug Supplier – Country" continues the rap theme, but the rhythm track is comprised mostly of real instruments instead of electronic samples. An interesting turn of phrase finds him praising "real artists and real musicians created by themselves and not by beauticians," citing legends like Jimi Hendrix, Aretha Franklin, Bob Marley, and Miles Davis as examples. Another pleasant surprise comes in the second interlude, "Radio Interview with Winston Floyd Beatle," in which Luhrs confesses to reading "too many books," including those by Hunter S. Thompson, Henry Miller, and J. R. R. Tolkien before segueing into "Hit the Rhodes," an exuberant R&B flavored rap featuring a fat groove performed on the titular electric piano. Once again he uses his own personal history as subject matter, expressing pride at coming through a difficult upbringing.

A surprisingly quieter sound surfaces in the album's later songs. "Angel in the Rain" is a folk rock ballad with Luhrs returning to a melodic singing style. Numerous references to San Diego appear in the lyrics, and the local flavor gets even more intense in "Drunken Spanish California Delta Blues," an impromptu acoustic number that turns into a Spanish ode to inexpressible love. What's really interesting about Luhrs' accomplishment on this album is that he has found a way to create a unified statement via a number of disparate musical genres. His imagery is intense, not always pretty, but his points are well-made. He has a lot of ability as a musician and vocalist, and he possesses the artistic sensibility to make his risky fusions compelling.



Miff Laracy The One the Road Leads To

by Fallon Faraday (translation by Jose Sinatra)

Having known Miff for over 50 years, I should have expected he had this in him all along. Maybe I did. But I didn't expect I'd end up with my face paralyzed in a nearly-aching smile for the album's (too brief) duration and more...

Miff is an expert musician (several instruments here, including that dancing sax), a fine vocalist who just keeps on getting better and better, a writer and producer to be reckoned with. Even when we were kids, he was always able to pound me decisively when he correctly discerned that I was pretty much asking for it. Now he's touched me again, and it's really, really swell.

James Robinson and Billy Ray handle the drums, while Wolfgang Grasekamp (great name!) and Kurt Baumer offer very fine accents on accordion and violin, respectively. Dough Meyer's lovely pedal steel appears on two tracks, and the project was mastered in Nashville. The genesis was within a major, muscular talent who grew up on Burgener Boulevard in Clairemont (where, for a brief time, an older kid named Jim Morrison lived across the street.)

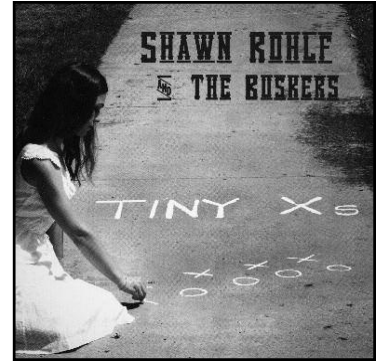
The ten songs encountered along this lovely road are delightful and endearing. Many are evocative of some long-gone master, and could have been tremendous hits when Hit Parades meant anything. Not that Miff doesn't sing and play his compositions perfectly, its just that these songs would be revered classics yesterday had certain artists grabbed them while in their primes. But Miff wasn't even alive yet, so "Lazy Bones" is Lena Horne's loss and the listeners good fortune. A good musical savvy friend of mine (who was born in the early '60s) was made real happy with this disc. "A great listening experience. When's the CD release thing?; I gotta meet this fellow. This music conjures the spirit of Red Steagull in his prime. Really fascinating."

"In Cold Blood" is an infectious (if gruesome) folk song that would certainly have been a hit for Johnny Cash. "Hey, Mom" is a tender tribute that any mother would be honored to have written for and about her. For Miff's mom, who was recently widowed, it must be a treasured, once-in-a-lifetime jewel. For me it's perfect and sublime.

The anthemic title song about a lovesick musician is so determinedly upbeat and magical (like love itself), you'll wish you could frame it or it might just nail you to the wall.

A special thanks for the twisted wisdom within the lyrics "Thanks to You," a sweet li'l thing that'll have you chuckling throughout its not uncommon tragedy. Yeah, Miff can make sadness fun, just as he makes dance.

It's great stuff, much of it marinated in sweet country wine and laid out all naked and pretty. A cactus rose at dusk, a bracing morning stream, a honky tonk to call home – whatever it so genially evokes for you – you'll want it bad, because Miff Laracy lets you taste it. Way to go, Miff...way to play those gifts!



Shawn Rohlf & the Buskers Tiny Xs

by Frank Kocher

Over the past few years followers of San Diego's Americana music scene have seen and heard a lot of Shawn Rohlf, either on his own, in productions like *O' Berkley, Where Hart Thou?*, or playing with Tim Flannery, Steve Poltz, or top local top acts. In former lives he's been a Colorado River whitewater guide and a European street busker. Both as a side man and front man (with various iterations of the 7th Day Buskers, now renamed the Buskers, fixtures at the Hillcrest farmer's market), his rootsy voice and quirky, engaging songs have continued to draw more and more fans.

His new disc is *Tiny Xs*, and the Buskers on board for this one are a strong crew; Rohlf has always surrounded himself with some of the best cats around. In addition to Rohlf's banjo and mandolin work, acoustic and electric guitars are handled here by Alex Watts, formerly with Bastard Sons of Johnny Cash, and Dave Berzansky (Hacienda Brothers) who does superb playing all over the new disc on pedal steel. A snappy rhythm section with Jef Kmak, who is Joey Harris and the Mentals' bassist, and Richard "T-Bone" Larson from Bartender's Bible on drums keeps the pace quick and tight throughout the 11 tracks.

Rohlf's songs are countrified, personal tunes that often sound like they're being sung by ... a busker. He has a way of drawing a personal connection in his songs, with an everyman vocal presence and lyrics, which tell interesting little stories that don't need any interpretation, like the opener "Lonelier Times." This toe-tapper has lyrics like "road rule number one, sleep when you die," as Rohlf longs for his old days in the Midwest, then the guitar ace step in for hot solos to complement the tune perfectly. The title tune succeeds in capturing the moment of a hot summer day in the city, while musically it is crisp, smooth country. "Ballad of Chopper and Scoop" changes the pace with a bluesy folk tune over a catchy picked guitar figure; this time the story is about an amorous encounter in the wilds, "beneath the ancient redwood trees."

Two instrumentals, "Boxcar" and "Postcard Waltz," give the band a chance to stretch out, especially the former. Berzansky is the kind of pedal steel player who can play the lead melody and solos expressively, lifting the listener's eyebrows with his picking.

One of the two covers is a Prince song, "I Could Never Take the Place of Your Man," and the arrangement here fits right in with the rest of the disc, but doesn't really have the impact of most of Rohlf's originals. His country swing tune "West Texas Dream" is a tasty example about characters from the classic song "El Paso," but with an alternate, modern plot line.

This music is both fun and easy to listen to. Shawn Rohlf and the Buskers sound right at home on *Tiny Xs*, and they make the listener feel the same way.



SAN DIEGO MUSIC AWARDS

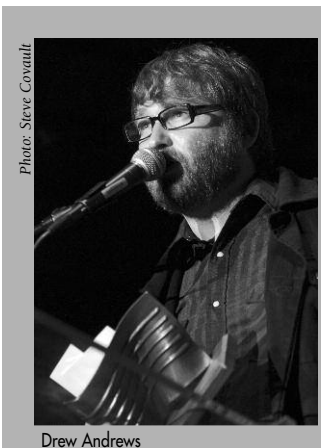


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Jim McInnes & Mayer Sanders present award to Iron Butterfly

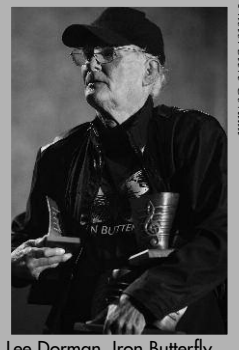


Photo: Steve Covault
Lee Dorman, Iron Butterfly



Photo: Dennis Andersen
Veronica May @ Swedenborg Hall



Photo: Dennis Andersen
Kenny Eng/John Hull @ Lestat's



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Shawn Rohlf & the Buskers CD release



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Larry Mitchell @ Swedenborg Hall



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The Taildraggers @ Julian Bluegrass Fest



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Hugh Gaskins gets married



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Lindsay White @ Swedenborg

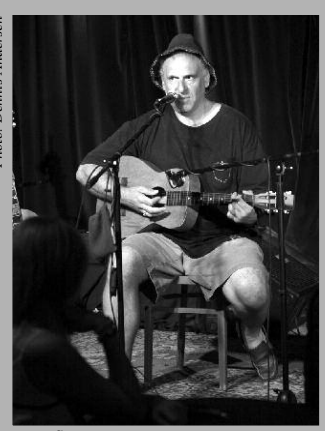


Photo: Dennis Andersen
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Steve Poltz @ Oasis

PHIL HARMONIC SEZ

"There is no religion higher than truth."
— H.P. Blavatsky



Photo: Dennis Andersen
Reggiee Ginn @ Lestat's



Photo: Dennis Andersen
Acoustic Nights @ Swedenborg Hall

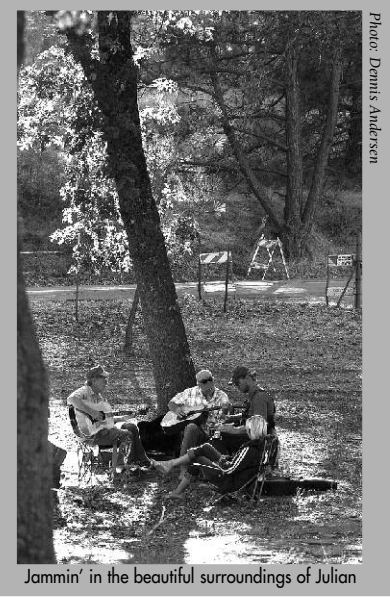


Photo: Dennis Andersen
Jammin' in the beautiful surroundings of Julian



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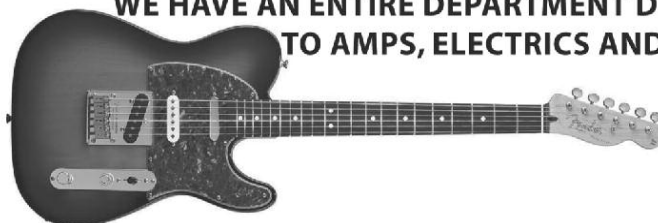
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