

# T SAN DIEGO ROUBADOUR

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



February 2010

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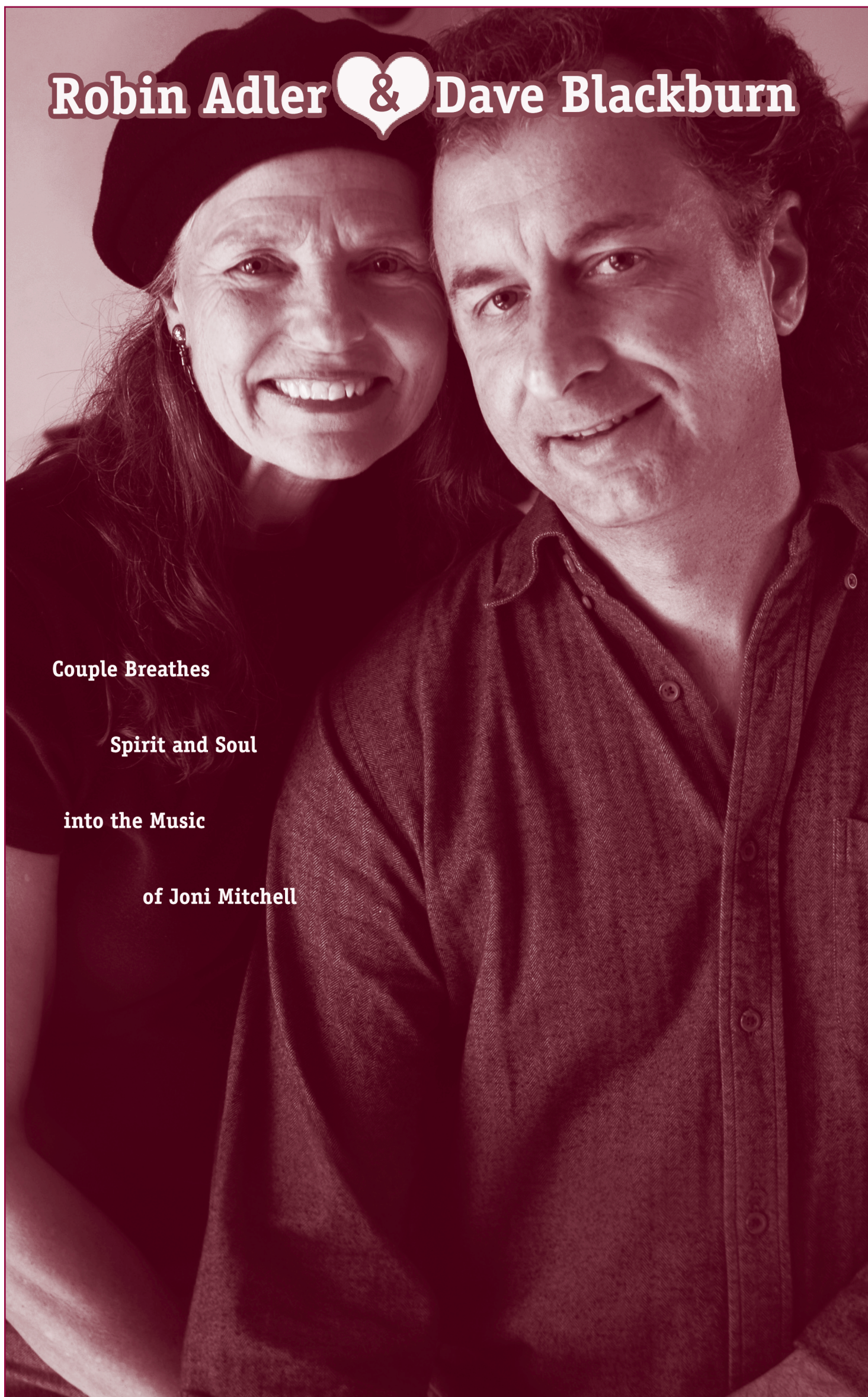
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**SAN DIEGO TROUBADOUR**, the local source for alternative country, Americana, roots, folk, blues, gospel, jazz, and bluegrass music news, is published monthly and is free of charge. Letters to the editor must be signed and may be edited for content. 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.

**Folk Concert and Workshops to Feature Judy Fjell, Peggy Watson, and Lisa Sanders**

by Frank Kocher

Acoustic folk music fans are in for a treat on February 5, when Montana singer-songwriter Judy Fjell will perform at a concert along with local favorite Peggy Watson and special guest Lisa Sanders. The show is set for Christ Lutheran Church in Pacific Beach at 4761 Cass Street, 7:30pm; admission is \$10. Parking is free and reservations can be made at 858-270-7922. In addition to the concert, Fjell will also be conducting workshops at the church on February 6 and 8, and she will lead a worship service at a Kensington church on February 7.

Judy Fjell has been performing for many years for a wide variety of audiences; her show is billed as "Songs of Heart and Power." She has a well-deserved reputation as a musical activist, having performed at folk festivals, fundraisers, women's conferences, coffeehouses, peace marches, and other events from the Northwest to New York.

"Judy was an important part of the early folk and women's music circuit and has expanded into women's music camps, founding Voice-Centered Education workshops and, in her latest phase, as a musical lay minister. Wherever she's been in her career – from blues and ballads to rock licks – Judy distills all the various pieces of life into gold," said concert organizer Masa Goetz.

Her local appearance will include two workshops. "Finding Your Musical Voice" will take place February 6, 1-3:30pm, at the Pacific Beach church, with a sliding donation of \$10 to \$30 (reservations: 858-270-7922). This experience is intended to help participants transform their feelings about their singing voices by freeing their voices in song; it will include pointers on relaxing and caring for the voice as well as increasing vocal range. No experience or talent is necessary – it is "for hesitant, terrified, out-of-practice, or curious singers."

On February 8, a second, free workshop will be held at the same facility, 1-3pm. This "Empowerment with Music for Seniors" will feature Fjell leading interested seniors in singing, music, and meditation for emotional grounding and well-being with a message: "I care about you and who you are." No reservations are needed for the free event, and there is ample free parking.

For years, Fjell has been extensively involved in a musical ministry for churches and fellowships in the Northwest. On Sunday, February 7, 10:30am, she will lead the service at Fraternal Spiritualist Church, 4720 Kensington Drive in San Diego.

San Diegan Peggy Watson will open the Friday concert. She is no stranger to the local acoustic music scene, as her singing and songwriting are known for bridging the gap from folk to pop and jazz. Her CDs, including *In the Company of Birds*, reflect this talent in her delivery of haunting contemporary folk melodies, pop ballads, and quirky jazz standards. Her treatment of some of these favorites gives them a classy touch of the past with a sound that is all her own.

Lisa Sanders will also appear as a special guest performer. Sanders started out in Philadelphia, worked writing jingles in L.A., and then moved to Poway. She found success on the local coffeehouse circuit and has been awarded two San Diego Music Awards as best acoustic artist. Her soulful vocals have appeared on five CDs, including *Isn't Life Fine* and *Hold on Tightly*.

"Lisa has an amazing range of styles," Goetz said. "She can remind you of a smooth '60s pop idol and the next minute break into a raucous, get-down, gospeling blues." Sanders has opened for B.B. King, Paul Simon, Sting, Lucinda Williams, and other performers. She has also appeared at the Lilith Fairs in San Diego and Phoenix.



Judy Fjell



Peggy Watson



Lisa Sanders

Photo: Gail Donnelly

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# Gerald McCabe (1927-2010)

## Founder of Legendary Guitar Shop in Santa Monica

by Richard Cromelin

Gerald McCabe, a furniture designer whose passion for woodworking and love of music led to the creation of the Santa Monica folk music institution McCabe's Guitar Shop, died Sunday, January 17, in Eugene, Ore., two days after suffering a heart attack. He was 82.

McCabe left his namesake operation before it became celebrated for the intimate concerts that have been held there for decades, but in its earliest days the store, on Pico Boulevard a block west of its current location, played a crucial role in the evolu-

tion of the Southern California folk music community.

The narrow storefront became a magnet for folk fans and musicians who had few other places to gather. It was a place to find song books and Folkways albums, get a guitar repaired or sample an instrument.

Guitars, banjos, mandolins and exotic hybrids hung on the walls, each bearing a printed flier with the warning, "Refrain from clutching to bosom." It was a rule that was rarely enforced, enabling patrons such as a 13-year-old Ry Cooder to access a new world.

"Musicians were in there all the time," the guitarist and record producer said this week. "I'd take the bus home from school and drop in in the afternoon and sit there and basically wait to see who'd come through the door. A lot of bluegrass players came through. That's where I first encountered the White brothers, Roland and Clarence.

"It was fascinating for me to see people sit down and play something really good that you wanted to learn. The idea that you can sit a couple of feet away from somebody who's good and watch them do it, that's a way to be imprinted in that kind of work.

"If it hadn't been for McCabe's, I don't know what I would have done. I might not have been able to learn enough soon enough, and I might have gone over to sacking groceries or delivering pizza. God only knows what."

But as McCabe's stature grew and its ambitions expanded into offering music lessons and then concerts under McCabe's partners Walter Camp and Bob Riskin, its founder kept much of his focus on a design career that became increasingly prominent.

A free spirit, he also restored and sailed a tugboat, built a home in Santa Monica Canyon, taught design at area universities and art schools, became a yoga instructor and repaired Citroen automobiles.

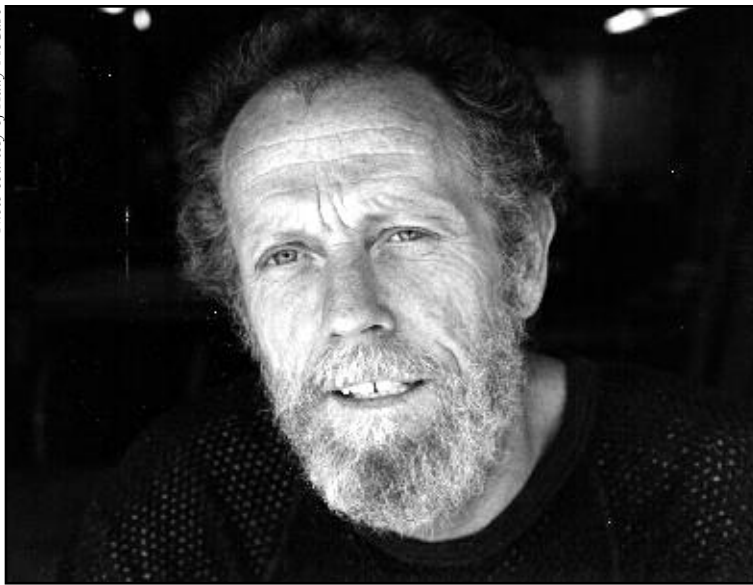
"Jerry was just a singular person," McCabe's current owner, Riskin, said this week. "He had great enthusiasms."

Gerald Lawrence McCabe was born in Long Beach on Jan. 30, 1927. After graduating from Long Beach Polytechnic High School, he served in the Navy during World War II. He earned a bachelor's degree at UCLA and a master's at Cal State Long Beach, both in fine arts.

McCabe opened a custom furniture business in Santa Monica in the mid-1950s. His first wife, Marcia Berman, was a successful folk singer, and soon her friends were bringing their instruments to McCabe and asking him to repair them.

That inspired him to open the guitar shop, at 3015 Pico Blvd. Camp became the first employee and introduced a table,

Photo courtesy of Hally McCabe



Gerald McCabe

chairs and coffee pot. An ethnomusicologist named Ed Kahn had the book and record concession.

With folk music's popularity growing, business was booming by 1963, but McCabe was concentrating on his furniture design, and eventually sold his interest in 1986.

McCabe's work was featured often in The Times' weekly Home magazine and was regularly showcased in the Pasadena Art Museum's series of California Design exhibits. A famous Julius Shulman photograph of Pierre Koenig shows the architect standing near a McCabe-designed stereo cabinet.

"Jerry was a very big personality, and he was a really great spirit who loved life," said Gerard O'Brien, owner of the Reform Gallery, a Los Angeles space that includes McCabe's work.

"He wasn't held down to one particular area. What's interesting when you look at his furniture design is what a wide swath he cut. His earlier work is much more Case Study like, very architectural. . . . And then as he went on, he became much more interested in the craft side of things and started to do a lot of solid wood furniture. . . . It was letting the wood speak for itself and just being a very functional solid thing."

McCabe's daughter Hally McCabe said that her father attributed his individualistic sensibility to a physical condition. "My dad was dyslexic, and one thing he would always say was that his dyslexia helped him see things in a different way. He always was very proud of that."

McCabe lived and worked at studios in Venice for most of his career, then moved to San Pedro in the late 1990s. He was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease in 2004, and he soon moved to Eugene to be closer to his daughters.

McCabe's four marriages all ended in divorce. In addition to his daughter Hally, he is survived by another daughter, Molly McCabe; his sister Janet Owens; and two grandchildren.

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### MCCABE'S GUITAR SHOP IS A SPECIAL PLACE

McCabe's is now a Southern California institution. Like an old friend, it's been home to touring musicians as well as supportive launchpad for aspiring local ones. It's frequently been more than just a stage, serving as a catalyst for a song, an album, a band, a friendship, not to mention a place where countless musicians recorded their live albums.

McCabe's celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2008, marked by a concert at UCLA featuring performances by a long list of well-known artists who are part of the McCabe's musical family.

Following are stories from several artists who shared their stories about their time spent at this legendary venue.

Chris Smith

There are only a handful of places in the country where I consistently walk in and feel welcomed, comfortable, and like an artist. McCabe's is at the top of the list.

Richard Thompson

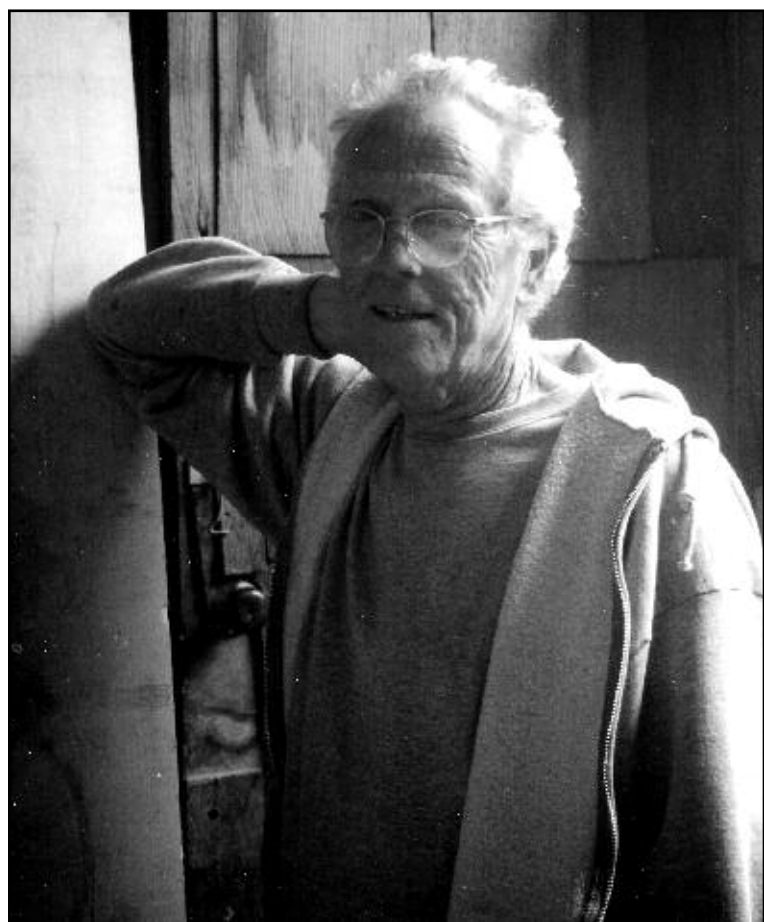
You look at the pictures on the wall, and there's Willie Dixon, Joni Mitchell, an obscenely young-looking Jackson Brown, and Ry Cooder aged about 16, and you know this place has served a special function on the history of music. This is where you buy your first instrument, take lessons, get your strings, and get your repairs done, besides watching some inspirational music. To provide this kind of focus for the community isn't easy and takes perseverance, acumen, and imagination; and while others have come and gone, McCabe's has become a fixture that's impossible to imagine living without.

Dan Navarro

McCabe's was the center of my musical universe in the mid-'70s when I was starting out. I was a spectator then, hearing my deepest core artists play the music that made them (and me) tick, all in that wood-walled back room, so rich and warm and so very real. Thirty years later, it's Eric and me on that same stage in that same back room, walking in the footsteps of giants, playing on their home court. No shows I've ever done have ever meant more.

Mort Sahl

In 55 years, I've worked everywhere. I've been there [at McCabe's] probably a dozen times. This joint, in the Jewish word, has *mashuma*, it's soul.... It's the most soulful place I've been in since the hungry i [in San Francisco].... The thing you can do there, and it's not really popular among the comedians, is not to provide escape but to confront people with the facts, and when you do that, it comes out funnier. The audience contributes a lot in that club. You [as a performer] might think of yourself as a flower, but you need rain. And the audience always provides it.



McCabe in 2000

Photo courtesy of Hally McCabe



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# Recordially, Lou Curtiss

THE LOU CURTISS SOUND LIBRARY MOVES FORWARD

In 2007 the Lou Curtiss Sound Library Digitization Project began with a grant to work on the first 420 reels (sound recordings in the old reel-to-reel format) in the library, which included material recorded at the first nine San Diego State Folk Festivals (1967-1975). Also included were concerts put together or co-sponsored by Lou Curtiss at Folk Arts Rare Records, the Heritage and other coffee-houses, field recordings done by Lou Curtiss at other festivals (Sweets Mill, Fresno, etc), plus some rare transcription recordings and miscellaneous stuff worthy of presentation. Also preserved were 50 reels of material from the late Sam Hinton's collection going back to the mid '50s and concert material from the Sign of the Sun bookstore in the early 1960s. The funds from that grant are now depleted but the work of the digitization project has only just begun. Yet to be worked on are nearly 2,000 reels and video tapes that should be in this collection.

Now, what is being done with this material? Well, copies are going to the Library of Congress to a special "Lou

Curtiss Sound Collection" that will be set up (the first 420 reels are already on their way). Copies will also go to the Department of Ethnomusicology at UCLA, which will be setting up a digital sound library downloadable to the public. Copies of the digital library will remain in San Diego for now with me and hopefully something will be done about preserving the collection locally. We have applied for a second Grammy grant for 200 more reels and we'll know sometime in March whether that is forthcoming. Meanwhile, the whole project is stalled while we wait to see if the money comes in. That's what I want to talk to you about. We need HELP!

Currently, the digitization is being done by Russ Hamm and myself and that is pretty much covered when there is grant money to take time from our jobs and do this work, but the problem is always money. The non-profit group San Diego Folk Heritage has been our money handlers and for that we are grateful but this time between grant money is time we should be spending on the project and we just can't. What we need is additional funding and someone to work on fund raising for us. Concerts could be organ-

ized and donations to San Diego Folk Heritage: Lou Curtiss Sound Library could be made. I know there are so many causes worthwhile to donate to these days, but I've spent over 40 years putting together shows for San Diego audiences and I had what I figured was the good sense to tape an awful lot of those shows along the way. I figure those shows deserve to be preserved.

So, what still needs to be copied? Well, start with the rest of the San Diego State Folk Festivals (1975-1987), the San Diego Blues Festivals in 1977, 1979, 1980, and 1995. The remaining concerts were held at Folk Arts Rare Records and their continuing series at Orango's Natural Foods, Hand of God Pottery, Normal Heights United Methodist Church, and other locations. Starting in 1994 we started video taping large portions of the Adams Avenue Roots Festival and the Adams Avenue Street Fair as well as some of the early San Diego Folk Heritage Festivals. The tapes go up through the portions of those festivals' histories that I worked on. Also, since word got out about the first grant, several people have come forward with their own tapes from some of those events that will fill significant holes in places we had not thought were covered. Particularly I'm talking about the late Ted Theodore's tapes of interviews and portions of workshops at various San Diego State Folk Festivals and the late Ed Cormier who always put up musicians for us and then taped them at late night jam sessions and informal picking (giving us a perspective we might not have had). Others have come forth with material we had thought lost forever. All of this needs to be gone over and added to the digital library where appropriate.

Other material is out there and some of it may yet show up. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could find recordings of

that mid-1940s folk festival in San Diego that Leadbelly played at or late 1930s recordings of Woody Guthrie and Lefty Lou over one of the Tijuana border stations or other significant parts of San Diego and Southern California's musical history? One of Los Madrugadores's radio shows would be wonderful, or maybe something recorded at Joe Liggins' Night Club. Not only do we need folks to work on fund raising, we also need folks to do field work, talk to people who remember the musical scene here, and discover what else is around that I haven't gotten to. Collectors have things that they often are reluctant to share. I know of a collector that has a bunch of transcriptions of Stuart Hamblen's late '30s radio broadcasts and I've never been able to get him to let me copy them. I have a 16-inch transcription turntable and I can copy this stuff. The digital copies should be part of this collection! If you have anything on transcription discs that you have questions about, drop by my store and we'll check them out. I'm at 2881 Adams Ave. and I'm usually here 9am to 5pm weekdays (10am to 5pm weekends).

I'd maybe like to start a monthly meeting where we could get together and listen to some of this stuff, talk about it, learn it (if you want), and pass it on. I've picked up a fair knowledge of things about old time music and I know other people who know a fair amount too. Most of them (including me) are more than willing to bend your ear about it. It'd be nice if someplace more or less close to my shop opened up to having a Lou Curtiss Sound Library: Musical Listening Place once a month. What do you all think? Let me know. It'd be nice if it was at a coffee-house.

One of the ideas I had for a "Lou Curtiss Sound Library" fund raiser was an ethnic band concert. I already talked to



Lou Curtiss

Yale Strom (leader of fine klezmer music in San Diego) and the San Diego Cajun Playboys in the affirmative. I talked to Claudia Russell who was going to look into getting us the hall at City College and that's as far as it's gotten. I'd love to get a good Irish Ceili (maybe Siamsa Gael), a Mexican band (maybe Los Alacranes), and another group from either Chinese, Japanese, or other far eastern origin, or maybe African (what ideas do you have?). At any rate, we really need somebody to take over the planning of these things and get going on them as soon as possible.

So that's the story. I feel like I'm part of an exciting adventure novel with the last three or four chapters missing and I want to write them myself but I just can't do it. Bless Russ Hamm for coming along when he did and, over the years, Richard Schurch, Bob Pillow, Ken Kramer, Ted Theodore, and all the others who taped stuff for me. The work goes on and San Diego's musical legacy will be organized so that coming generations can listen to it. Please help if you can.

Recordially,

Lou Curtiss

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by Paul Hormick

The time was when North Park featured only a few bright spots in an otherwise dull landscape of second hand shops and businesses that would cash your payroll check for a fee. The most exciting thing possible in one of San Diego's oldest suburbs had been making your bus transfer on time. But over the years North Park has become a vibrant community that features art and night life. Ray at Night draws hundreds to the monthly arts celebration, and an empty theater has been restored and revitalized together with the San Diego Lyric Opera. Residents and visitors now have the choice of great night life and food at the Linkery, True North, and Urban Solace, and that's only in one block. The transformation has been so complete that last year the *New York Times*, yes the great grey lady of record, published a feature describing North Park as a great travel destination.

With her Queen Bee's art and performance space, Alma Rodriguez is adding to this North Park buzz. Debuting about 14 months ago, Rodriguez and her team of enthusiasts and artists have been busy with nails, hammers, and paint, sprucing up a colonial-modern style building on Ohio Street just off of University Avenue. "It's been a lot of work," she says. "But it's also been exciting."

Rodriguez had been the proprietor of Hot Monkey Love, a behemoth of an establishment in East San Diego where dancers stepped and swayed to nights of tango, salsa, and hip-hop. "I was getting noise complaints, and I wanted to make a change for the community," Rodriguez says as she explains her move from the East San Diego to her present venue. The dancing continues at the Queen Bee's, but the mix and music has changed a bit. "I've wanted to concentrate on youth, particularly young musicians, mostly musicians from 15 to 25 years old," she says. The music, dancing, and other activities occur Wednesday through Monday, including a once-a-month Steampunk concert/dance, which combines all the best elements of Victorian industrialism with 1950s science fiction. The Zumba dance class is on Tuesday, with an open mic on Monday that includes anything from music and spoken-word performance, to train-of-thought improvisations, to comedy.

For close to ten years Rodriguez has managed some sort of coffeehouse, performance, art venue. In 2001 she opened the original Hot Monkey Love on El Cajon Boulevard in the San Diego State University area. With its various icons of chimpanzees and other primates adorning walls and filling up the nooks and crannies, the place saw many nights of won-

derfulness. A Thursday night jazz jam attracted jazz lovers as well as SDSU music majors testing out their chops alongside some greatly seasoned pros. Daniel Jackson was often there with his saxophone or playing piano. San Diego's veteran songster Joe Rathburn hosted the Folky Monkey, a weekly showcase of singer/songwriters. "Having a space like that was always in the back of my mind," says Rodriguez, who had spent years working as an event coordinator in her hometown of Miami, Florida. She saw the Hot Monkey Love as an asset to her family. "I started the Hot Monkey Love because I wanted my kids to grow up in a good environment. I also liked the idea of having a family-owned business. I wasn't interested doing anything corporate."

Rodriguez wears platform heels, but her diminutive frame is still towered over by the Queen Bee's support staff. She has dark brown eyes, and her black hair has a touch of grey. She speaks softly and in a slow, measured way. She says that San Diego's best-known free weekly inadvertently christened her new venture. "When the word got out that I was taking over the lease here, they ran a column about it in the Blurt section of the *San Diego Reader*. The headline said 'Queen Bee moves to North Park.' It sounded like a good name, so I just thought we would go with it."

Dancers have an extra incentive to visit the Queen Bee's. What had once been worn vinyl flooring is now a dance floor of new wood laminate that gives a spring to the step of any swing dancer or hip hopper. And it's a big dance floor at that, a 1,800 square foot ballroom type of expanse. And brightening up one wall of the dance hall are large color photographs of northern Italy, which swim with warm hues of ochre and azure. An area almost as large as the dance floor holds the stage, equipped with a drum set and goes-up-to-11-sized twin speaker cabinets that loom over the room. Large and fanciful drawings that flow into each other serve as the stage's backdrop. "The stage wasn't in the best shape when we got here, and we had to do a lot of work on it," says Rodriguez as she examines the structure's lip. Off to one side of the stage is another large room that musicians can use as a green room. Couches and chairs are strewn about. The fabric and canvases that fill up the corners and tables in the room reveal that it is also used as an art space. Different projects lie about in various stages of completion, and a graffiti-style mural of a female figure stretches across one wall.

Looking just like those bank vaults in the old movies with James Cagney and Edwin G. Robinson, a marine green door about a foot thick stands ajar. With all the aura of seriousness and commerce,



Alma Rodriguez in the Toyland Parade



Front of Queen Bee's Art & Cultural Center



Queen Bee's interior



Staff & volunteers at the center

Rodriguez pulls the door open, and it glides slowly and silently on its huge hinges, opening onto a small brick lined room. Back in the 1930s when North Park was the new and shining suburban jewel of San Diego, this building was home to Dixieline Lumber, and this was the vault that kept the money was kept. It's about as big as a pantry, but rolls of different colored fabric and other art supplies fill the space instead of canned goods and noodles.

The painted canvases and other artwork reflect the interests of Rodriguez, who holds a degree in graphic arts. As she points out the work that she and others have completed at the Queen Bee, artists come and go, retrieving supplies or

## ALMA RODRIGUEZ: Working with the Community at the Queen Bee

dropping off their creations. Toward the back of Queen Bee's is a room that is the workspace of Owen Burke who, going back two months ago, has become the Queen Bee's resident artist.

Burke is a self-taught luthier. Hanging on the dark and bare wooden walls of his workspace are all sorts of musical instruments that he has acquired or built. They all have strings and tuning pegs, but after that the similarities end. Most of them are small and look like guitars with curly-cues and other curious embellishments. Burke has been repairing or making musical instruments most of his life. He says, "When I was in junior high I'd go and buy broken instruments at pawn shops, ones I could get for around ten dollars, and I'd repair them. As a kid I had been good at taking things apart, so then I was getting good at taking them apart and putting them back together." With both of his parents working as interior decorators, Burke was surrounded by art and other stimulating creations. He was also drawn to the music that was a big part of the scene during the sixties when he came of age. He learned to play the drums and considered living the life of a musician, but the downside of a working performer, such as spending long periods of time on the road, convinced him that his life was better spent as a musical builder than a performer.

Rodriguez and Burke have known each other for about nine years, the two having met when Burke was part of the local band, José Sinatra and the Troy Dante Inferno, and performing at the Hot Monkey Love from time to time. A bit of serendipity led to their present collaboration. "I was painting condos downtown when I ran into Alma at the Ralph's down there," says Burke. "She told me that she'd gotten a hold of this great historic building. I had known Alma from performing at both of her previous venues. I met with her and the landlord here and I liked their commitment to the community, that they wanted a community center, not just another bar or coffee shop. They wanted it to be an asset to the community."

Among the instruments hanging on the walls are Burke's most recent enthusiasm, an instrument that he both designed and now produces. It has a long fretted neck and a body akin to a drum head, like a banjo, but its four stringed are tuned like a ukulele. He calls his creation a banjuke. They sound like ukuleles, but louder and fuller. "This hybrid of the two instruments has been around since the 1920s," he says, but adds that he has come up with innovations of his own, such as

using nylon instead of steel strings. "It's very easy to play, and it combines the best features of both instruments. It's much lighter than other instruments, and you can take it just about anywhere."

Rodriguez's community involvement is not confined to what she can do on her own. Next month she will take part in the annual the ninth annual San Diego Indie Fest, in North Park, with the Queen Bee's serving as the venue for the festival's independent film series. "It's going to be great to be a part of the festival with our new large room to show the films in," she says. She is a member of the North Park Business Association and has gotten involved with the farmers' market that North Park hosts every Thursday afternoon.

She chooses the musicians who perform for the shoppers as they stroll the aisles of fresh produce and hot dishes of Mexican and North African cuisine in the CVS Pharmacy parking lot. Burke says, "We want to feature some of the local performers. We want to turn the whole thing into a community event." Burke and Rodriguez, along with her business partner Jeff, share a booth with and provide a small PA system for the musicians. Along with the performances, shoppers can examine some of Burke's and Rodriguez's merchandise and educational material as well as take a trial strum on a banjuke. If anyone is interested in learning the ukulele, they are also able get their first lesson free of charge from Burke at the market. The lesson covers the banjuke as well as ukulele.

"Originally I started doing this with the Hot Monkey Love because I wanted to be with my young teenage kids," Rodriguez says. "They're all in college now, but the work continues, and we have a bigger mission now. From the business here, 18 percent of the profits go to Photocharity, a San Diego organization that works to help homeless children. My emphasis is always on the community, and that happens here every day. One day this lady walks in and she sits for a long time, for hours. Well, I went up and talked to her and she tells me 'I need a place to live. I have no food to eat. I have four kids.' In a situation like that you want to help. I got on the phone and called all the businesses in the area. I found someone willing to hire her part-time. I hired her part-time as well. I wasn't able to take her in, but I got her work, and that got her on her way. It's all part of the community involvement."

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# GRAND CANYON SUNDOWN BROADENS ITS HORIZONS

by Mike Alvarez

When one's musical muse comes calling, its irresistible siren song can lead an artist down many unexpected pathways. Some call it a soul-searching journey. Some call it an inevitable destiny. Whichever it turns out to be, if it's a true calling, the literal and metaphorical roads one takes lead to discoveries both profound and inspirational. Oftentimes the lessons are hard, but the corresponding pleasures can be exhilarating. Grand Canyon Sundown is the collaborative effort of two high school friends and the group of talented musicians whom they befriended along the way. Paul Cruz and Dave Farrell are these long-time friends who grew up in and around Ramona area. Both are guitarists and bassists who write songs and sing. Farrell also doubles on the mandolin. Around 1996, they encountered a kindred spirit in singing multi-instrumentalist Jason Postelnek, a native of Florida. According to Cruz, "We had all kinds of bands. Jason and I once went traveling around the country as a duo." Although having resided in a number of places, he points out that "Ramona is the common ground in which Jason, Dave, and I all played for years. Acoustic guitars, violins, mandolins, banjos, beers, and so many memories." Rounding out the lineup are keyboardist/vocalist Drew Danforth (lauded by Cruz as a "phenomenal musician and singer") and drummer David Wilkie, who recently assumed the throne previously occupied by the band's old friend Seamus Steele. Special guest musicians in the studio and on stage are pedal steel player Doug Meyer, Junior Torres on harmonica, and Kevin Kristy on sax.

The band's name was inspired by the closing lyrics of the Bob Dylan song "Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie."

*And though it's only my opinion  
I may be right or wrong  
You'll find them both  
In the Grand Canyon  
(At) sundown*

Cruz relates with some irony that this was not the original intention. "I had the idea of recording some songs one year...no plan of attack, just go in and put them on two-inch tape. And one day someone said, 'Hey, we should play a gig,' and we said, 'Okay.' Then we needed a name. We were going to call the album Grand Canyon Sundown and have a different name for us. But it came time to play and that's what came out." Considering its prestigious origin, is it an appropriate name for them? Definitely. Listen to their music. It's a beautiful confluence of their influences, which

not only include the poetry of Dylan but also the jam band ethos of the Grateful Dead, the vocal harmonies of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, the pop hooks of the Beatles, and the country-rock stylings of the Eagles, along with a host of many others.

While Cruz writes the lion's share of the group's original material, everybody takes a hand in the songwriting. With an irreverent wit that seems to be his trademark, Farrell quips, "I'm the primary donkey. Although I contribute some songwriting, I mostly contribute instrumentation, vocals, and antics." As a group, they are very prolific, as Postelnek reveals, "We try in vain to put out one percent of the material that we have collectively." He explains, "It's a creative process from the beginning. The bandmate who brings the song to the table may outline a particular groove, melody, or bassline that is essential to his interpretation of the song, but each of us is part of a collective that channels the song into existence." Their songs spring from a variety of sources. Postelnek relates that one of his best creative experiences was "writing 'Violent Seas' under a full moon at midnight on a canoe in a pond in the Blue Ridge Mountains." Interestingly, it is Farrell who confesses, "Most of my lyrics are spawned from pain and discomfort, or nonsense. I have songs about broken love. I have a song about my daughters. I'd like to have more songs that are uplifting or funny." Cruz is forthright in crediting local artists John Katchur and Jeff Berkley for inspiration. After having seen their performances at Java Joe's when it was located in Poway, he committed to becoming a better guitarist and songwriter. Reflective by nature, he easily incorporates his experiences and feelings into his music, as evidenced by an unforgettable trip to the Rogue River in Oregon, which resulted in the song "River Roll." "I have written so many songs - hundreds of them - it's like an addiction. Some I'd heard in dreams the night before. Some on the road, driving, hitchhiking, some in crazy places I've lived or been."

A live Grand Canyon Sundown show can be many things, from intimate acoustic gigs to full band performances with guest musicians. According to Farrell, "Our arrangements are always subject to the size of our band on any given gig and to the way we feel about them at any given time." Cruz agrees, saying, "We do a lot of three-piece shows. Guitar, violin, and mandolin and three-part harmonies. We have fun, and the songs never have an end result. We always change them, depending on how we feel the night is going. We definitely have a jam band feel, but with a solid core of each song." One of their most memorable performances was a full band show at last

September's Adams Avenue Street Fair. He recalls it as being "so nice to be on a real stage with real sound." In 2007, a gig in San Francisco made a big impression on all band members in that it was cut short before their second song was over. Farrell cites "volume intolerance" as the reason for that unfortunate turn of events. Although they had driven a great distance with all of their equipment in a trailer, Cruz still fondly recalls that "we had so much fun up there anyway." Postelnek leaves no doubt as to his own favorite performance with Grand Canyon Sundown, which took place at a party in Eugene, Oregon, hosted by Ken Babbs (Merry Prankster, Ken Kesey's right-hand man) and Mountain Girl (Kesey's and later Jerry Garcia's ex-wife). "That was more relevant a moment for me than anything we have ever done, even if we didn't play our best show".

As a reminder to all that this is a rock band in addition to an artistic endeavor, Farrell gleefully relates the account of a night at the Surf and Saddle in Solana Beach, which he describes as "super hot and sweaty." Much to his satisfaction, the female contingent of the crowd "ended up hooting and hollering, telling me to take off my shirt...I ended up on the dance floor with my bass, shirtless. Loved it. That's probably my most rock star moment." Yet even acoustic shows can be a stage for colorful road stories. They fondly remember performing in Julian with Sara Petite during which time Jason and Dave had a conflict of ideas. Although the band continued to play as if nothing happened, they all laugh when recalling the expression of disbelief on the lovely Ms. Petite's face. Yet Cruz is quick to point out that "Dave and Jason both can give each other a hard time, but they are close friends."

Ultimately, Grand Canyon Sundown is all about writing and performing good music. Farrell playfully declares, "I think we're just about ready to hit the big time. I think that we will be the biggest rock stars of all time!" When asked, Postelnek agreed that having a record deal and being able to tour would be great. Going a little deeper, how-



Grand Canyon Sundown 7-piece line up (left to right): Kevin Kristy, David Farrell, David Wilkie, Paul Cruz, Drew Danforth, Jason Postelnek, Doug Meyer



Paul Cruz

ever, he feels that they are creating music, not telling the world anything in particular, but for reasons that are refreshingly contrary. "I think it's more something we're trying to tell ourselves or, more accurately, something we are trying to receive ourselves." His response to a tongue-in-cheek question about world domination is equally eloquent: "Of course, world domination is more important than anything else. If the world domination business was left to the musicians, poets, and songwriters, the human race would be evolving toward a creative leisure lifestyle for all people. Instead, we have what we have." Paul Cruz

is characteristically thoughtful when asked about his ambitions for Grand Canyon Sundown. "You know, music has gotten me through so much in my life. I would just like to give whatever [I've received] back. Maybe they want it, maybe they don't. I don't need to be a rock star or anything. I would just like to leave something behind from my life here." After pausing briefly, he continues, "We just want to play. My personal goal is to keep writing and eventually have a way of recording a good portion of the songs. We are definitely a songwriting band when it all comes down to it."

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Play Guitar Naked



by Annie Dru  
photos by Gail Donnelly

**F**allbrook? They live in Fallbrook? Is that even in this county? Turns out it is. Way, way up interstate 15, past Escondido but before Temecula, you exit at a ramp leading to a four-way stop in the otherwise pristine rolling hills and drive down a winding country road several miles to a little white wooden bridge. If you're lucky enough to have someone waiting to wave you down and guide you in like I was, you'll drive a bit farther, through eucalyptus trees, across crunchy gravel, and end up parked in front of Dave Blackburn and wife Robin Adler's recording studio "whew, made it" and then "ah, this is beautiful."

The property is gorgeous, with a modern-style dwelling made of stucco sitting up on a rise where Robin's mother lives, and, down a slope, a darling and very old cottage divided into a duplex accommodating Robin and Dave on one side, and Robin's uncle on the other. This is where Robin grew up, and after years away, this is where she and Dave decided to make their home, build their recording studio, and create their music.

They greeted me warmly – Dave, in his friendly, but slightly reserved British fashion, and Robin like a long lost cousin from a mid-western memory. After the photographer, who happens to be a friend, suggested that we all pose together for some shots for her personal album, we chatted briefly to "get acquainted" then down to business we got. I let them know up front that they were being interviewed for what my editor calls "the sweetheart issue" and that I'd be wanting some straight talk about the intimacy of making music with your lover; the conflicts (raised voices, slamming doors, tears, broken guitar strings, etc.) as well as the exalted moments, when the passion that burns for one's partner intersects with one's passion for making music. I wanted the juicy stuff. They looked slightly suspicious, but nodded anyway, and we began.

Robin started "It's challenging; we definitely get into some... tiffs, if you will. But on this Joni Mitchell project, we've been doing great; it's very collaborative; he'll listen to me, I listen to him." Dave responds "We've had this band for four years now. Robin said to me 'Wouldn't it be fun to do a gig where we did just Joni Mitchell music?' because we're both life-long fans. So I thought, yeah, that would be great. The next thing I know, she's booked a gig about two months down the line, and we haven't even begun yet, haven't learned any music! Well, that lit a fire and we had to get busy. Now, four years have gone by and we've done a lot of material; done our own arrangements, traveled; we went to England last year, and we plan to go this year to England and Scandinavia to play." I asked if there are big Joni Mitchell fans in Europe, and Dave said, "Well certainly in England. We have contacts, so we'd like to do some house concerts there."

Robin continues "We're really a big part of the online Joni Mitchell fan community. Her website is maintained by fans; the JMDL, or Joni Mitchell discussion list. The way we got hooked in, is that when we did our first Joni concert in Fallbrook, somebody from the JMDL saw the notice in the Fallbrook paper [they're constantly searching the internet to see if anyone's doing anything] and that's how they discovered us and started listing our concerts on the front page. It's like belonging to AA or something; if you're in England, or wherever, there's likely to be a group of people interested in attending a Joni Mitchell tribute concert."

I asked how that first gig went, which they only had two months to prepare for. Dave said "Well, looking back it was pretty rough, but at the time it went over, and was really popular, it was packed." Robin adds, "It's the most popular musical thing we've ever done."

I asked how they decided which Joni songs to do that first show. Dave said, "We just kind of went with what we liked, and what we could pull together in a short time." Robin adds, "We decided to do a chronology of her music just to show the breadth of her artistry. It was kind of educational; in fact all of our concerts have a little bit of that because we talk about her. It's interesting because we do the early stuff, the stuff when she's going into the jazz period, and we do the obscure, unpopular jazz repertoire. Even though Joni Mitchell fans came to the concert, they really learned something, even about her music. There are people who followed her to a certain point and then didn't like the direction [she went] but at every concert people come up and say 'I heard things I've never heard.' It reignited their interest."

Dave pipes in, "A lot of people haven't listened to

that stuff in 30 years, so it's like hearing it done live in front of them again. We've had people say that they consider themselves big Joni fans, but that they hadn't heard some of those songs, and that they were going to go out and buy the record. We want a kick back!"

Knowing how complicated "some of those songs" are, and how many bad-ass players recorded on the recordings, I asked what the line-up was for that first show. Dave responded, "Well, we had a four-piece band originally, and it was a tiny room; it would only hold 90 people, and we packed in 90 people elbow to elbow. But quite quickly the line-up started to expand, and we got players that were seasoned jazz musicians that could read really well, and solo really well. It's become more of a jazz outfit, because we can stretch on the material now; songs that didn't have any improvised sections, now we bring those in and use them as platforms for taking it somewhere." [To Robin] "We could play her Woodstock maybe..." Robin volunteered a caveat, "It's a long version."

Dave sets it up: "So this arrangement came about as an idea of Robin's. It's almost like a screenplay; you're walking along the road towards the festival, and you meet a fellow traveler along the way. You're in this kind of trippy headspace and as you get closer to the festival itself, it starts to get louder and bigger, and pretty soon you're enveloped by the sound."

At this point Robin interjects, "Now, this is a live version recorded at a Joni Mitchell festival in Idyllwild." As the tape begins to roll, in one of those freakish coincidences, a very loud helicopter from outside the studio hovers in the general vicinity, precisely at the moment a beautiful, unearthly electric guitar tone begins to sound; just a few eerily sustained notes. I ask, "Who's that on guitar?" Dave responds in a humble and self-effacing tone, "I'm the guitarist." The guitar is slowly joined by the bass and then the keyboards; everything very transparent and very open, and jazzy... and then... the voice. My ears do a double take, because although their voices are clearly different, Robin's phrasing and slow, wide, and loose vibrato, her clear musical intention and command of her instrument mirror the brilliance of Joni's.

I catch my breath so I can listen without even the distraction of my own breathing, because, quite above and beyond the similarity, the quality of Robin's voice is so present, so skillful, so completely without artifice that it captivates me in an instant. I can honestly say that I wasn't in the least prepared for the "world classness" of Robin's voice before I heard it. "And we've got to get ourselves, back into the ga-ar-ar-ar-den." She pauses, and the guitar, bass and keyboards are joined by the drums, and some very tasty '70s style jazz solos ensue.

And then... what's this... "Pinball Wizard?" Yes! Dave's voice joins the fray, "Ever since I was a young boy..." The crowd cheers wildly. Robin and her back-up singer join him on "...sure plays a mean pinball!" Then she's alone again, and with a new Grace Slick-like growl, she sings, "By the time we got to Woodstock, we were a half a million strong." Switching again to Joni's angelic tone to sing the last, ethereal "...back into the garden." There's a pause, then the final chord from the band that seems to suspend itself above the crowd for an eternity before the drums crash, and, after a long moment of silence, you hear the very audible appreciation of the audience. Wow, I'm stunned.

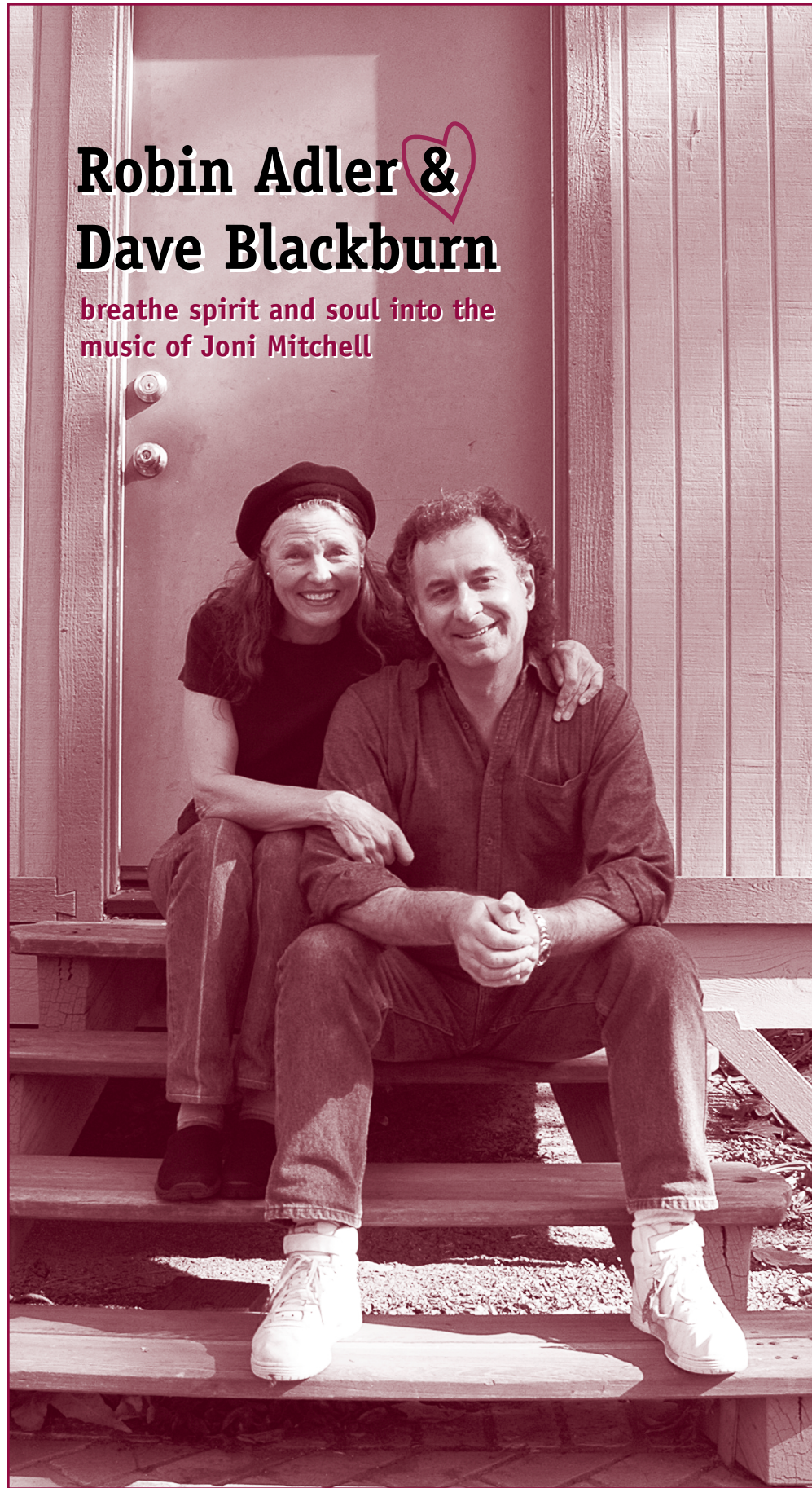
What next? They run off the stage past security and into a waiting helicopter to be airlifted out of the mob? Not quite... It's Robin's voice in the microphone again, "We're going to take a break... there's dessert... and we'll be back." "Homey touch," says Dave drolly. "Dessert for half a million of you... we'll buy." He pauses and then says, "So anyway, that's what kind of a live band it is; pretty jam-y. It's jazz people when we want to do that, or rock when we want to do that."

I then attempt to get some background information on each of them singly and as a musical unit, as I didn't come to this interview knowing much beyond their reputation for being top flight musicians in this community. "Are you both songwriters?" Dave says, "Myself more than Robin. I've actually written a book about songwriting; I used to teach at Mira Costa College. I was teaching a songwriting course, and I couldn't find a text book that I liked, so I wrote it. I thought 'well, what do I know about this' so I sat down and wrote it. I've been writing songs since I was about 14 or 15."

I ask Robin the same question "Well, I didn't even get into music until I was in my thirties. I was married before to a saxophone player, and that was my introduction to jazz. I didn't sing in school or anything, but one

## Robin Adler & Dave Blackburn

breathe spirit and soul into the music of Joni Mitchell



time I was singing along to a Joni Mitchell record, and a girlfriend heard me and said, 'You should sing.' I was doing massage therapy at the time as a career, but she really encouraged me, so I went to a community college and took some classes, and then studied with a private singer; this was up in L.A. When my first marriage ended and I moved back down here and started attending Mira Costa College..." Now I could see where this was going. "I just took music classes; theory, and while I was there, someone at the college asked me to sing on their song in a songwriting competition. That's how I met Dave; he entered one of his songs, and we met in the green room. I had a little reggae hat on, because I was singing a reggae song... I guess he thought that was cute. He had a girlfriend at the time, but years later..." Dave corrects her, "A year later." "Okay, a year later; they had split up, and that's when Dave and I got together, but to answer your question, I'm really not much of a songwriter. I've written some lyrics, but my emphasis has been voice."

I asked if she ever sang any of Dave's original material. He responds, "We've done some, but I'm more of an opportunistic songwriter; when there's a project that needs a song, I'll write it, but I don't just sort of sit down and write songs anymore; I used to when I was younger."

"When Dave and I first got together, I was working with [jazz guitarist] Peter Sprague; that wasn't Dave's genre so much, so we really didn't work together. On occasion we would; he's a drummer as well as a guitar

player, but I was really involved with that project. It was a huge undertaking for me, because I was so green, and I was in this group with the top jazz musicians in San Diego. Peter had heard me singing, and I guess he liked it, even though I was green, green! He sort of took me under his wing. Jazz isn't something you just pick up like a guitar and start; it's pretty complex instrumentally and vocally."

I asked how she and Dave came to work together as a team. Dave says, "We would do jazz gigs, usually with me playing drums; a trio or something like that." Robin adds, "Mostly, we did casuals, so we did variety music; weddings and things... covers."

Dave expounds, "My ambition in life has always been to produce, make records, and so, I've cultivated a roster of people like Peggy Watson and Joe Rathburn. That's kind of my love, being in the studio, recording." Robin interjects, "Performing is not his thing; that's one reason drums were comfortable for him, although now that he's playing guitar in this band..." Dave continues, "Well, I always played guitar. I used to have a solo gig when I was 16 back in England, at a local pub. I'd walk across a plowed field with my guitar and play unamplified, no microphone, and sing in this pub. I wasn't old enough to even be in there, and the owner paid me in beer, which still works. I'd play my own stuff, and Stevie Wonder tunes." He directs the next comment toward Robin, "I think I tried to do a Joni Mitchell song once..."





He continues, "As time went on, I made drums my performing instrument, and guitar became my arranging, writing instrument. When we got going on this project... well, the guitar responsibility when you do Joni Mitchell is pretty huge. You can't just call somebody up and say, 'Do you mind playing guitar in our Joni Mitchell band?' because you have to have about five or six guitars in different tunings, and it's a huge undertaking to learn these songs in the correct tunings. It's much easier to hire a drummer than to hire a guitar player; besides, we sometimes do this show as a duo. It was obvious that I was going to have to be playing guitar."

I ask how many guitars Dave takes on stage with him. "Well I have four, but I often borrow one or two more, just so there isn't a bunch of down time. It's really hard on the guitars to be constantly changing tuning, and I hate down time in a show; it's one thing to chat with the audience, but if you have to tune, 'duh duh duh duh duh... If you ever heard any bootlegs of early Joni from '67, '68... it's a five minute song, and then three or four minutes of tuning. It's torture to listen to."

I mention the only guitar player I've ever heard that makes the tuning process part of the show in an entertaining way. "You mean David Wilcox?" Dave asks. I said, "No, but you're right, he does, and I'm a big fan." This led to a several-minute chat about Wilcox, who happens to be a favorite, followed by a reference to another of their favorites I was unfamiliar with. "We're big Jonatha Brooke fans too; she's an equal part of that singer/songwriter, advanced guitarist, great vocal chops..."

"Are those the kinds of songs that you write Dave - folkie, storytelling songs?" I ask. "Well, yeah, when the situation calls for it. I've written a lot of instrumental jazz stuff, I've written what they call 'library music,' which is kind of like stock photography; you write cues that get used in television, and you don't necessarily know where they will be used, but you write music within a certain genre that gets key tags, so that a movie or TV producer who's looking for something suspenseful can find your stuff. I've done orchestral music for that; I've written music for plays. It's kind of what the situation calls for, but because I play guitar, I'll often get into that sort of James Taylor-y kind of mode; I love chords, I grew up with Stevie Wonder, so I'm often looking for hip chord progressions."

Robin proudly highlights her man, "Dave is just a wonderful musician, and he does know a lot of styles, which is really fun for me because a lot of jazz musicians may be very well versed in jazz, but if you say, 'Well, let's do a reggae tune, or let's do kind of like a Motown tune, or Philly soul, or something like that...' Dave just knows the grooves, and it's a lot of fun. He's not a jazz soloist, but he knows all these various 'feels.'"

Dave clarifies, "Some of that comes from playing drums; I play guitar in kind of a 'drum-istic' way, because I'm always conscious that when you're playing a certain idiom, it needs to have this pocket that's just right; it's not just playing the chords to the song, it's getting the feel right. I guess even when I'm playing live I'm producing in my mind; thinking 'okay, the bass line needs to do this, and this would be nice in the treble,' so I'm mixing it while I'm playing."

I ask Dave how many albums he's produced for other artists. "Several dozen, I've lost count. Sometimes I'll be just the mixer or the mastering engineer. Albums where I've done everything? There have been several dozen of

those, but there are dozens more that I've just done something on." "So the ones you've done everything on have been here at this studio?" I ask. "Yeah, but when I first started out I didn't really have a studio that was fully equipped yet to record drums and stuff so I would go down to commercial studios to do that, but I began assembling my studio in the late '80s, so I've had a studio of some sort for about 20 years now; it's called Beat 'n Track Recording."

I ask Dave if he's friendly with the other engineers in town. "I actually haven't met all of them, but I've often heard their work; I think we sort of check each other out. I know Jeff [Berkley] and Sven [Erik Seaholm]." He continues, "It is getting hard to get paying clients; I think most of the other guys would say that too. So many people have their own rigs now, and whether or not they're good at it, they think, 'Well, I'm not going to spend the money...' And record sales are so poor that you often can't break even, but you want to record your stuff, so the days of having to go to a studio to lay your music down are over."

He continues, "What I offer is more of a complete thing; I don't just push the 'record' button, I write the arrangements, sometimes I'll overdub guitar parts, I'll do percussion, I know who to call if you need a cellist. It's a mixture of engineering, performing, mixing, contracting, all these various hats that I can offer for 'one low price.' I teach guitar too; my main bread and butter is actually teaching these days. I keep two or three days a week open for recording; either our own or somebody else's."

I ask Robin about her day gig. "I care for my elderly mother, because somebody has to be here. With the job market... truthfully, my only real skill besides massage is singing." I comment on her spectacular voice, and how it must be in demand for session work. "Yeah, people hire me, but living out here, you kind of get forgotten. There are some people that I've known for years who call me, but I'm not really in the scene. Once a year Berkley Hart will call me and we'll do the '0' Berkley Where Hart Thou' show. I have never been that good at the self-promotion thing. I've tried, I've tried; we've made the demos and sent out the packages and everything. There are people who are good at it. They just know how to get on the phone..." "Hustlers," interjects Dave. "Hustlers, yes." Robin agrees. "But it's just not my personality."

"There's something unseemly about promoting yourself, too," says Dave. Robin continues, "It's also interesting that a lot of these really aggressive self-promoters aren't even all that great sometimes. I can do a gig, and I'll get a lot of compliments or whatever, and even pass out cards, but very rarely does it translate into getting other gigs."

I comment that we are living in San Diego after all, and not L.A. or New York. Dave disagrees. "You talk to anybody from L.A., and when they do a gig they're getting 50 bucks. Jazz musicians in New York will play for 30 bucks and have to pay cab fare to get to the gig!" He pauses, then, "Teaching has worked for me, because we're in a small enough town where you can be the guy, and I love teaching anyway. I've been able, through word of mouth, to build up a steady roster of students, and so, without having to leave home, I just have people come in here four days a week and I teach them. It's a great thing for a musician to do, because the schools

have cut all arts and music now, so there are a lot of parents looking in the phone book."

Again, Robin toots her husband's horn, "Dave is a fantastic teacher. His dad was a professor, and his dad's dad; they taught literature. Sometimes I have to come to the studio, and I hear him with his students; he's such a wonderful teacher. The fact that he likes it - there are musicians that teach who wish they didn't. Dave enjoys teaching, and I love that."

I said, "That's such a blessing, because I'm curious about the musicians in the community, and how they put the puzzle pieces together. It's not like being an accountant or a massage therapist. Being a musician is a multi-dimensional, complicated thing, a living-on-the-edge experience."

Dave concurs. "The music business is becoming worse and worse; CD sales are down, venues are closing, but if you're a musician, what are you going to do? Well, at least [you can] pass what you know onto the next generation of people who want it. I find it very gratifying, especially working with a student who 'gets' it, who understands that it's a lot of work, but if they want it and they are regular about the lessons, they'll get there. I have one student in particular who I've been working with since she was 12; She has been performing her own material at local restaurants as a solo singer/guitar player since she was 14 and she's about to turn 18. Now she sings in our band because she's so good."

I ask Robin if she teaches singing, and Dave pipes in, "I wish she did! I get asked every week if I know any voice teachers." Robin stumbles a bit, then says, "Well, I guess I don't... I think, oh, you know, I don't know how to teach. I feel like I don't have enough information." Dave picks up the ball, "A lot of people think you have to know everything to be a teacher, but that's just not the case. You have to know your craft, you have to be patient, and you have to explain things to people the way you wish somebody had explained it to you; that's the secret."

I chance a personal opinion by suggesting to Robin that she would offer a great deal to a prospective student, because not only does she have the technical ability, but she also brings such a relaxed and natural vibe to her singing. I offer that, in my experience, many vocal instructors are coming from an operatic-style background, which may not inspire or apply to a would-be folk singer. Dave pipes in, "You tell her!"

Robin listens attentively, then says, "I like that you hear that because when I sing, I want it to be natural... and sincere, and emotional. I think that if I were to teach - and I've dabbled in it with friend's kids - when I listened to somebody sing, I would be thinking, 'Now I want to hear your natural voice, not the latest pop singer, or something affected; let's just hear your voice.'"

Dave offers this opinion. "I think everybody is very style conscious these days, because of the way the media pigeon holes everything. You're under pressure to declare your affiliation. Are you a blues singer, are you a jazz singer, or are you an R&B singer? Once you say, once you fall for it and answer that question, you're expected to sing that way."

Robin agrees. "Somebody who may not have heard me will say, 'Who do you sound like?' I don't hear that I sound like Joni Mitchell; there are certain sonorities and pitches and things, but I don't try to sound like Joni.

When I do the performances, I can get into this zone, because her music is so incredible. Some people will say 'You're channeling Joni Mitchell.' Dave contributes, "It's just a good fit. This project is a very good fit."

I add, "Robin, your voice has a higher tonal quality, and it's different, but I could be fooled if I wasn't listening closely." Dave rolls the tape again on another track they recorded for the upcoming album, and we all go silent to listen to what we've been discussing. Then he says, "I didn't mean to stop the conversation!" But music trumps conversation anytime in my book. Play on, guys.

And so, what about the raised voices, the slammed doors, the tears... what about the broken guitar strings? Well, maybe, just maybe, when two hearts come together, united by love for the same thing to the point where egos become extraneous, things like that become unnecessary baggage. In the case of these two, it would seem, this project of mutual passion has bred mutual respect - for the music of course, but most of all, for one another.

*Safaris to the Heart/The Songs of Joni Mitchell* by Robin Adler and Mutts of the Planet is slated for an early spring release. Check out their website at [www.robinaadler.com](http://www.robinaadler.com) for information on an upcoming CD release party.

To contact Dave about lessons or his recording studio, go to [www.beatntrack.net](http://www.beatntrack.net).



# Bluegrass CORNER

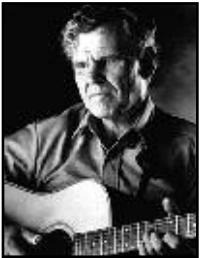
by Dwight Worden



## THE BLUEGRASS GUITAR AS A LEAD INSTRUMENT

Guitar picking of leads and melodies at breakneck speed evincing powerful technique and skill, at least in recent years, has become a key part of bluegrass music. Nearly all the top bands have strong lead pickers who shine on solos. But, it wasn't always so.

In the heyday of Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys, the founders of bluegrass music – in the 1940s and in the golden era of Flatt and Scruggs in the 1950's – the guitar primarily served as rhythm instrument. In his days as a member of the Bluegrass Boys Lester Flatt would occasionally pick the G run or some connecting bass notes, but most of the time he did not play lead, rather focusing on strong rhythm. Likewise, when Flatt broke away from Bill Monroe with Earl Scruggs and founded Flatt and Scruggs, the pyrotechnics were left to the fiddle, the banjo, and the mandolin, with the guitar filling a rhythm role. This was also true of early Stanley Brothers music as well, wherein Carter Stanley played great rhythm guitar but almost never picked a lead, while Ralph picked furious banjo leads and the other band members had at it on fiddle and sometimes mandolin.



Doc Watson

So, how did we get to the modern era where the guitar became such a dominant lead instrument in bluegrass? Well, there are a handful of early guitar pioneers who started the trend. Foremost

among them was Doc Watson who stunned the world in the early 1960s with his recordings of flat-picked guitar leads on fiddle tunes. Dan Crary, who calls himself "Deacon Dan Crary," also released some early recordings of flat-picked leads of fiddle tunes. These two pioneers showed that lead melodies from fiddle tunes could, in fact, be played on the guitar if one had the chops to do so.

The next step in the progression to the modern era was to demonstrate that not only could fiddle tunes be picked authentically on the guitar, but creative improvisation was also possible. Enter Clarence White in the early and late 1960s who had a profound influence on all bluegrass guitar pickers. Clarence was unbelievably creative, toying not only with melody lines in his leads, but also with rhythms and every other aspect of the music. He created lead solos where the fiddle tune melody was identifiable – where the listener went "wow, listen to what he did to it!" Any serious bluegrass guitar player who has never listened to Clarence White should immediately remedy that shortcoming! Sadly, a still young Clarence was killed by a drunk driver in the early 1970s, but he left behind recordings with the Kentucky Colonels, the Byrds, and others. After Clarence left us at such an early age, a young guitar player not only took up the bluegrass guitar mantle but also picked up Clarence White's Martin guitar, which is considered the most important guitar in bluegrass. This young man's name is Tony Rice. Tony takes out Clarence's Martin D-28 and



Tony Rice

plays it on special occasions. Otherwise, I am told, it is in a vault. Building on what those before him had started, Tony developed his own style of picking guitar leads that came to dominate the 1970s, the Hand of Clarence White '80s and into the '90s.

His discography of recordings is extensive, having played with virtually everyone who is anyone at some point in his career. For decades, young guitar players have cut their teeth trying to learn Tony Rice licks. Due to the longevity of his career (which continues by the way), Tony Rice may well be the most influential bluegrass guitar player of all time, but Tony would definitely acknowledge the debt he owes to Doc Watson, Clarence White, and the others.

Finally, then, we enter the modern era where a bluegrass band pretty much has to have a hot lead guitar picker to be considered serious. Witness Brian Sutton and his unbelievable talent, Tim Stafford of Blue Highway, Josh Williams, Cody Kilby, and many others who are doing Doc, Clarence, and Tony proud. Some have even taken the bluegrass guitar to its ultimate status: a solo instrument in its own right. David Grier has made a career of solo performing – no singing, no other instruments – just playing solo bluegrass style guitar; he has an extensive and popular series of recordings to demonstrate its popularity.

There are some exceptions to the "must have hot lead guitar" rule, but not many in modern bluegrass. Del McCoury of the Del McCoury Band plays guitar in the old style, limited to rhythm, the G run, connecting bass runs, and the occasional lead. But, by and large, a hot guitar lead picker is considered a "must have."



David Grier

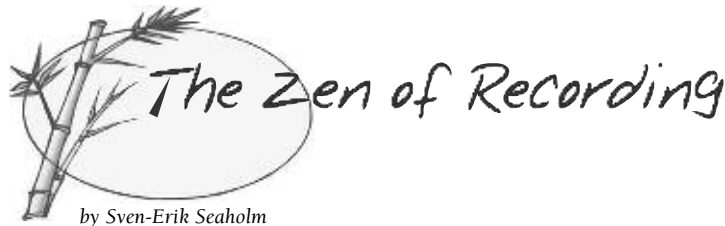
Who are some of the hot local guitar pickers? Here is my take on that question, recognizing that others may have their own favorites. My choices are based on the player's technical skill, the creativity of what they choose to play, and how well they contribute to the overall sound of their band. On that basis, my "A List" of hot local bluegrass guitar pickers includes, in no particular order: Richard Burkett, who has a subtle touch and a bluesy style (he also plays fine mandolin); Billy Frisbee, who has outstanding technical chops and can play anything in any style; Joe Pomianek, who plays first-class leads with touch and taste; Kit Birkett, who has a truly unique style of "double picking" leads and who, in my opinion, does a great job of anchoring and contributing to the sound of his band; Mike Williams of the Taildraggers; and Alex Finazzo, a young player with great skills and taste.

So, pick up that guitar, listen to some of these greats, and enjoy the fun.

### COMING IN FEBRUARY

A rare chance to see David Rawlings and Gillian Welch appearing as the David Rawlings Machine comes February 2 at the Belly up Tavern in Solana Beach. Visit [www.bellyup.com](http://www.bellyup.com) for tickets and info.

Chris Stuart and Backcountry will appear in concert February 27, 7pm, at Old Time Music, located at 2852 University Avenue in North Park. Workshops will be held before the concert, starting at 4pm. Visit [www.sdoldtimemusic.com](http://www.sdoldtimemusic.com) for tickets and info.



by Sven-Erik Seaholm

## POSITIVELY NAMM

Deep within the Anaheim Convention Center's miles of exhibitor aisles, amongst the booths and grand displays overflowing with hardware and software seemingly everywhere ... alongside salespersons, electrical engineers, company presidents, long-legged picture girls, and far-sighted innovators, merch-savvy distributors and knowledge-stuffed presentations ... there was something new. Don't get me wrong, I mean I know that new products, ideas, and philosophies for success are at the very heart of the 2010 Winter NAMM Show's chief interests; this was definitely something different. Something less "concrete," but nonetheless palpable. I can only refer to it by what Bob Marley aptly described as a "positive vibration."

2009 was a tough year to be in any business, much less one that counts artists and performers among its primary consumers. Fortunes were lost, lessons were learned, and many futures were thrown into the murky abyss of uncertainty. Still, here was this collectively upward swing in energy, a new sense of openness and appreciation ... of gratitude and generosity. It was a beguiling feeling, at once energizing and comforting, and it made the eight hours I spent there each day feel like less than three.

Diamond Guitar Pedals ([www.diamondpedals.com](http://www.diamondpedals.com)) was first to catch my eye with a clever display designed to do just that, but it was my ears that really loved the rich sounds of the company's Memory Lane 2 classic analog delay with tap tempo, modulation, and gobs of creamy vintage vibe. Also of interest were the Diamond Tremolo (also with tap tempo), offering selectable waveforms and rhythmic modes.

Another guitar-related product of note is Arobas Music's ([www.guitar-pro.com](http://www.guitar-pro.com)) Guitar pro 6 tablature editor software, including tools for tabs and chord charting, amp simulation, tuning, a deep chord library, scale analysis, speed training and more....

The iPhone certainly enjoyed its share of attention, with makers of desktop music software offering apps and app-related titles. High-end plugin maker McDSP offers one of my faves: Retro Recorder

([www.retrorecorder.com](http://www.retrorecorder.com)). The app looks and operates like an old portable cassette player, with the added benefits of their proprietary ALX technology, which essentially uses the company's great compression and eq algorithms to "master" your iPhone/iTouch recordings, making it the best recorder app for meetings, dictations, interviews, voice memos, and music recordings. Meanwhile, drum replacement wizards Drumagog ([www.drumagog.com](http://www.drumagog.com)) had two excellent small-screen offerings on hand: the beautiful sounding and incredibly velocity-sensitive iGOG drum machine app offers access to a wide array of multi-sampled kits, with a sequencer section for programming beats while waiting at the dentist's office.

VoiceBand takes things even further by allowing users to actually sing parts that can then be assigned to different sampled instruments for playback; dial up the bass sound, sing a "doo doo doo doo" line and hear it played back by a great sounding bass. Layer sax, keys, power chords, etc.... very cool! appOmotor ([www.appOmotor.com](http://www.appOmotor.com)) takes a different approach, allowing musos to actually create their own apps. This makes it possible to release your own album as an app, or have a kickass iPhone press kit!

Plenty was also happening in the software world, including the sleek-looking and sweet-sounding Alloy from iZotope software ([www.izotope.com](http://www.izotope.com)), featuring six precision tools for mixing in one integrated system (Equalizer, Dynamics, Exciter, De-Esser, Transient Shaper and Limiter). Sure, these tools may not seem so sexy on the surface, but hearing what the transient shaper alone can do for the sound of your snare drum makes this product one to watch.

Vintage keyboard sounds (particularly the Mellotron and its predecessor the Chamberlin) were strongly represented. Nord ([www.nordkeyboards.com](http://www.nordkeyboards.com)) displayed both Mellotron and Chamberlin equipped versions of its fine Electro 3 keyboard. The playing action on these keyboards is weighted and buttery, with an equally smooth sound quality that is unsurpassed by their competitors. By adding these fine sound libraries (via sample playback), Nord



Sven-Erik Seaholm

has put the Electro 3 in a class all its own. On the virtual keyboard side, things get really interesting with the ominously titled SampleTron from IK Multimedia ([www.ikmultimedia.com](http://www.ikmultimedia.com)). SampleTron starts with over 600 sounds from 17 models of Mellotron, Chamberlin, and Optigan keyboards and adds the ability to further manipulate the sound via 32 built-in DSP effects and three different synth engines. A powerhouse combo of old-school sounds and state-of-the-art tweakability!

On the "And now, for something completely different" side of things, Philomuse ([www.philomuse.com](http://www.philomuse.com)) displayed musical solutions that were definitely outside the box. Muzoracle for instance, brings the ancient art of tarot reading and music together, allowing you to actually "play" your readings via instrument or online. Musician's Dice can be used for composition, study, and improvisation, as well as vocal and ear training. Lest one feel this approach to be frivolous, keep in mind that Mozart himself often used dice as a compositional aid.

Finally, the "Coolest Thing I Was Allowed to Actually Touch at the NAMM Show" Award goes to: HAPI Drum ([www.hapidrum.com](http://www.hapidrum.com)). The unique and pleasant tone of the HAPI drum is created by a tuned vibrating tongues of steel tuned to predetermined scales, and is sort of akin to a steel drum in the way its notes are laid out. The tone is similar to singing bowls or musical bells that create multiple harmonic overtones and a deep, exotic and resonate sound. Their website actually has excellent sounding versions you can play with your mouse, so check it out ... hours of fun!

Other manufactures with new products that will be covered here in 2010 include Avantone, Celemony, Shure, SE Microphones, SONY, Fink Audio, Presonus, and Expansion.

Good things are coming ... I hope you feel it, too.

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an award-winning independent record producer, performer and recording artist. His company Kitsch & Sync Production ([kaspro.com](http://kaspro.com)) provides recording, mastering, graphic design, consultations, and CD manufacturing services. Call him at 619-287-1955 to inquire about special winter rates. Or go to [www.svensongs.com](http://www.svensongs.com) to see where he's playing.

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# Hosing Down

by José Sinatra



The piercingly incisive José Sinatra

## WHEN IGNORANCE IS BLISS

I had been feeling guilty ever since Exalted Camel (see Mark 10:25) Pat Robertson said that God's retribution was behind the Haitian earthquake, causing me to wish Robertson no further fame. Then a voice spaketh unto my heart, warning me that without fame, Pat Robertson might become even more crazy and more dangerous.

Fame seems to be more of a goal for more people now than at any time in the history of civilization except for one or two days in the autumn of 1632. Until now, the most important aspect of Fame to me was that it was the title of a pretty nifty song Irene Cara sang back in the '80s. She told me, in the song, to remember her name, and damned if I haven't. But since then, Fame's been getting ugly.

I can't recall any journalist ever taking on the fundamental evil of each season's early "audition" episodes of "American Idol"; What Teen Dream ignores, what Hustler Grannies fears, I must expose. Imagine yourself as the protagonist in the following fact-based scenario.

Thousands of fame-hungry hopefuls, most of whom are convinced of their own supreme talent, wait hour after hour in some regional stadium to show their stuff to several tiers of judges. Favorably impressing the first tier sends you on and up to the next, your goal being to make it up to the final tier where you'll be taped performing for the biggie judges; your success or failure might actually end up on network television and, if there is justice in the world, someone will address you and say, "You're going to Hollywood!"

Let's say you were born with unassailable confidence in your own vocal talent although, unknown to you, you possess absolutely none. Singing has been your life, and you look forward to saying and demonstrating that to Simon and Randy and the others when you reach that final tier, all sweaty and hungry and sleep-deprived, your nerves working in overdrive as you fulfill your destiny.

What you are ignorant of is that you are completely tone deaf, that your singing voice's only decent use would be some nefarious, secretive one down at Guantanamo Bay. Throughout your life, you simply weren't aware that all of those accolades you received from your friends and relatives were bogus. They came out of sympathy for your having been born with that extra arm jutting out between your shoulder blades and that hairy, drooling tiny extra head, which dangles like an exotic pendant over your collarbone.

You finally get to sing for the first tier of judges, who pass you on up to the next tier, with a sealed envelope containing a message for the next judges to absorb ("Keep sending this freak up! Simon might actually have a friggin' heart attack and our ratings'll go through the friggin' roof! cc: Producer/Holy Crap!")

Throughout the day, as you go from one judging group to the next, your confidence

only increases...

At last! You make it to the final phase, and you sing your song, during which Simon somehow falls out of his chair. The last words you hear in that room that day are his. And you'll be able, along with several million others, to see and hear again his assessment several months down the road when it airs in prime time: "Your voice is even worse than that of my last girlfriend. Either take up ventriloquism or terminate your own life as swiftly as possible."

The fame you eventually do achieve is great, brief, and bitter. "American Idol," somehow, has made you come off as somewhat of a freak.

After a few years and unending justifications, you find yourself hungry for that tainted attention the show had thrown in your face(s). Anything, surely, would be better than this emptiness, this unbelievable psychic poverty, after having once, briefly, been more famous than anyone at your school.

Six months later you're doing the rounds of talk shows promoting your ghost-written autobiography, which recounts in sizzling detail the horror of your upbringing, revealing the "truth" about your conveniently deceased parents. How your father ran a correspondence school for terrorists. How your mother would sexually abuse you and say you weren't half the man your pet hamster Condoleezza was. How they revealed to you, on your fifteenth birthday, that Condoleezza was your real biological mother. The public swallows it without choking, and the book is a sensation for several months. Your first fleeting comeback!

Five years later comes your next much-needed fix when you call the police and tell them that the little boy down the street (who never really existed) was whisked away up into the sky by those helium balloons you'd brought for him to play with.

Someday you can become an airline pilot and when you fake an emergency and force a "miracle" landing of your 747 in Lake Miramar, you'll be a hero.

Opportunities in modern America become endless. Reality TV will always be blissfully serving ignorance. A guaranteed career as a Celebrity Tweeter is always available, as insurance.

And you'll never be alone. In fact, you share more than you'll ever know with a truly unforgettable plaintiff, whom I marveled at on "Judge Hatchett" last week. All aglow in her imagined radiance of new-found fame, she screamed across the courtroom at the defendant (her ex-boyfriend), her words speaking volumes.

"You ignorant! You ignorant! You so ignorant!"



# RADIO DAZE



by Jim McInnes

## TWO CHEERS FOR BLUE CHEER

I meant to write this piece three months ago but the holidays and stuff got in the way.

Blue Cheer bassist-vocalist Dickie Peterson died last October at the age of 61. Tonight I pulled out my copies of the first two Blue Cheer albums and gave them a spin for the first time in years.

The San Francisco band's 1968 debut, *Vincebus Eruptum*, despite leading off with the Top 20 hit deconstruction of Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues," is a failure on almost all levels (I know the diehards will accuse me of not having "ears").

The recording sounds like it was made on a four-track tape deck, devoting one track to all the drums (panned to the right!), another to the bass (panned to the left!), one for the guitar and one for the vocals, and the occasional overdub. It was recorded in a small Bay Area studio in what sounds like a single session. In other words, it was a quickie done to capitalize on the success of "Summertime Blues." Apart from parts of the hit single and a cover of Mose Allison's "Parchman Farm," there is no trace of melody on the record. Instead, *Vincebus Eruptum* is 32 minutes of thin drums, tinny bass, and howling psychedelic guitar freak-outs. The only time this LP ever sounded psychedelic to me was when I listened to it while on acid in college. Now it just sounds like freeway pileup. Whether you play *Vincebus Eruptum* frontwards or backwards, it sounds the same!

I like it. But I don't like it nearly as much as I do its late-'68 follow-up, *Outsidelnside* (sic).

The album's title gives some insight as to why this was Blue Cheer's masterpiece. "Outside" refers to the fact that some of the tracks were recorded outdoors, in places like Muir Beach and a pier on the New York waterfront, while the rest were laid down "inside" various recording studios. The thinking was that Blue Cheer were so LOUD that their sound couldn't be adequately captured in a recording studio, so it had to be captured in the relatively echo-free air of the outdoors. Among the recording engineers was (long-time Jimi Hendrix associate) Eddie Kramer.

This album is much better recorded. The drums are more spread out, the bass is fatter, and the guitar tones and FX are crisp and clever.

This is the *real* metal rock prototype. Blue Cheer were nothing if not powerful. The special foldout cover on the original release contained a two square-foot black and white shot of the band onstage, with Peterson and guitarist Leigh Stephens each plugged into three Marshall amplifiers with 24 speakers. Drummer Paul Whaley is a blur on his full double bass drum set. (I had that picture on the wall of the trailer I rented at Southern Illinois University!)

Standout numbers include the locomotive "Just a Little Bit," which was released as a flop single, "Come and Get It," "Feathers from Your Tree," and a hilarious cover of "Satisfaction," which goes from zero to 78 rpm in just over five minutes.

When my wife hears me playing *Outsidelnside*, it's usually a matter of minutes before she lets me know how much she HATES it.

That's when I know it's *awesome!*



by Peter Bolland

## ARTIST, HEAL THYSELF

What exactly do we want from our artists? The distraction of entertainment? The clarity of hard truth? The tingle of titillation? The scouring release of deep-tissue catharsis? Maybe what we want most from our artists is risk.

Artists take risks. They don't have steady incomes. They don't have health insurance. They don't own homes. They can hardly make the rent. They hang all their fears, hopes, dreams, and fantasies out in the open for public disdain. They walk into every room naked. They're high on a tightrope without a net. Living vicariously through our favorite artists anchors us in the realization that life is dangerous – a realization that hopefully propels us to craft our own best lives. We risk little. But we ask our artists to risk it all.

The myth of the artist as noble hero is not entirely genuine. Sometimes people just fall into the arts because they're not very good at anything else. Too wounded and self-absorbed to ever stand up straight, the artist makes a business out of selling their pain. In many ways the life of the artist is a life of perpetual childhood. Beholden only to whimsy and free without a moment's notice to walk away from any and all commitments – these are the genetic traits of the artistic life. Yet despite all the potential for narcissism and havoc, artists still inspire us with their fearless commitment to themselves, their craft, and the maddening quest for beauty and meaning.

More than anyone else, Vincent van Gogh has come to represent the quintessential archetype of the modern artist.

Articulate, brilliant, visionary, and utterly mad, van Gogh captures our imagination like no other. Fluently trilingual (Dutch, English, and French), a voracious reader, deeply spiritual, and unapologetically carnal, van Gogh lived a little bit larger than the rest of us. And yet his life was a muddled fog of isolation, poverty, obscurity, and despair. Were it not for the continual financial and emotional support of his beloved brother Theo, Vincent would have accomplished little or nothing – as it is, he the most recognizable, influential and admired painter on the planet.

Van Gogh did not invent the marriage between madness and art (think Goya), but he certainly perfected it. It is from van Gogh that we get the now-trite narrative of the artist who abandons all restraint and sells every drop of sanity to buy one more inch on the road to genius. Even a cursory glance at art history reveals a long list of artists who flamed out young and died broken, and in the music business it's a particularly crowded club. This is the question: to make great art do we have to sacrifice everything else? Does it have to be either/or?

The idea of the artist as genius was born in the Renaissance with the emergence of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo da Vinci. Before then, painters enjoyed the social status of laborers. Michelangelo belonged to a trade union of house painters.

With Raphael, the idea of the artist became synonymous with genius. Along came fame, wealth, glory and the birth of something with which we are all too familiar – celebrity culture. Raphael, like a rock star, enjoyed every privilege and unlimited access to every salon, parlor and throne room. Wealthy nobles competed to be seen with the young genius. Hard living, megalomania and boundless appetite take their toll. He was dead at 37.

Vincent van Gogh died of a self-inflicted shotgun wound at 37. Jim Morrison and Jimi Hendrix died from drug and alcohol abuse at the age of 28. Kurt Cobain killed himself with a shotgun at the age of 27. John Keats was only 26. Sid Vicious, 22.

PHILOSOPHY, ART, CULTURE, & MUSIC

# STAGES

The die was cast. To this day we reward our artistic masters with infinite wealth, endless indulgence, and open-ended forgiveness. Only Michael Jackson can allegedly molest children and simultaneously enjoy near-universal adulation.

Must artists, like vampires, entirely abandon normal life to gain their heralded powers? Must they sell their souls? Does the voracious and parasitic nature of artistic genius always kill the host? Isn't there any other way?

In ancient China a different model emerged. Perhaps because of the pervasive influence of Confucianism, the idea of the individual beholden to no one never really took hold. The ideal human life was one of connection, community, humility, responsibility, and cooperation. The single biggest mistake a person could make was to not be useful and productive; the greatest shame, to be destructive to the harmony of the whole.

In ancient China then, the idea of the artist as celebrity never happened. Art is just something you do. Everyone is an artist. When the accounts are balanced, accountants paint. Housewives design living spaces. Bureaucrats play music on the weekends. Being artistic isn't reserved for the petulant few, it is the birthright of every human being – every meal a masterpiece, every conversation a poem, every garden a handmade heaven, every gesture a dance.

This vision of art is a long way away from the notion of art as self-indulgent and destructive. Instead, art, like breathing, is innate and natural. There is no need to pathologically set it apart from the rest of life, thereby relegating an entire category of people – artists – to the confusing and paradoxical binary status of masterful geniuses and bumbling knaves. Rather than art being a way to wrest beauty from nature and place it on the canvas or in a sculpture or in a song, art becomes a way of celebrating our integration with the natural world. Nothing special. Everything special.

In our culture, the iconic myth of the starving artist – someone who has given up the creature comforts to sacrifice it all for their art – is a vexing, tenacious paradigm that has long ago outlived its usefulness. Perhaps it's time to celebrate a new model – a model that combines the best of the eastern and western paradigms. Maybe you don't have to walk away from middle class comfort to make great art. Maybe it's okay to stand on your own without patronage or poverty. Setting aside some money from the tip jar for catastrophic health insurance won't compromise your artistic integrity.

We need our artists to take risks. They inspire us to test the self-imposed boundaries of our own lives. But we also need our artists to teach us how to cultivate the beauties of our own lives. As parents, as professionals, as butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers, we want to be shown how to integrate art into real life. As you weave your intoxicating spells with sound and paint and clay and words and light, please show us also how to harmonize the often conflicting energies of our own lives. Dear artists, we need you to make your own life beautiful and healthy and whole. Are you willing to take the biggest risk of all – being happy?

As is true for all of us, your life is your greatest masterpiece. If you would really serve us, you would find a way to stand strong on your own while searching fearlessly for beauty and truth. We need you to abandon the sorry notion that only through your suffering and your alienation can you create. Drugs, alcohol, poverty, and dysfunction are not the requisite elements of the creative life. It's time to let the lie die. Art, like any other form of truth-telling, is dangerous. But art, like truth, is also a healing energy. Show us our pain. But show us also our infinite capacity to grow and heal ourselves and heal those around us. It doesn't have to always end in misery. Artist, heal thyself.



# The Transcendental Blues of Chris Smither

by Terry Roland

Picture this if you will: you're walking peacefully through the serene place known as Walden's Forest by the pond made famous by Henry David Thoreau. You can smell the virgin scent of the Northern Oak Pine Trees; the deep green of the trees is stunning as they reach high toward the endless sky... Slowly you come across two country-blues musicians – Jesse Fuller and Mississippi John Hurt – exchanging acoustic blues licks, drinking Jack Daniels, and singing words that ring with meaning. But the words come from the great Transcendentalists of the 19th century and the the Zen masters. Not far beyond that, you see a man listening attentively, guitar in hand, to their music and their interaction. He listens so he can take his new insights into the world along with those beautiful blues-licks. His songs are stunning in their wisdom and just plain toe-tapping and head spinning in the guitar playing that takes the music of Mississippi John and Jesse Fuller places they never could have imagined.

You've just encountered the music of Chris Smither, a veteran of the world of singer-songwriters for the last 40 years. He was there in the beginning during the early 70's with those heady record contracts signed by the likes of James Taylor and Carol King, ushering in a new generation of artists who would often use folk and blues to point us deeper into personal experience, introspection, and appreciation in our lives.

Chris Smither was brought into national recognition with the Bonnie Raitt classic hit song "Love You Like a Man," which has been covered by many female jazz singers including Diana Krall.

During the time when Dylan was a mystery-ghost during his recovery period from his motorcycle accident, those who bore the mark of his influence began to find their own voices, which often varied far from the Dylan motif. It's significant that Chris' albums have included many adventurous Dylan covers, such as "Desolation Row," "Visions of Johanna," and, on his latest album *Time Stands Still*, "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry." Like the Big Pink/Basement Tapes days of Dylan and the Band, Chris Smithers brings a modern lyrical acoustic style to an antique form. *Time Stands Still* stands among the best of a long string of award-winning albums that have

been described by most critics as his best upon release. Such is the consistency and constant evolution of this distinctive artist. The new album is a continuation of his legacy with an engaging folk-blues based, complex finger picking and lyric-driven songs that bite with the kind of wisdom gained from a life of, what he calls "small revelations." His insightful lyrics are influenced by the Transcendentalists as well as Zen Buddhism. Like the Soto Zen tradition, he mirrors the enlightenment available to us all in those ordinary miracles he describes in these gem-like songs which, like most songs in the American tradition, deal with heartbreak, redemption, appreciation, and the irony of those happy accidents we all experience in everyday life.

In his 40 years on the road, Chris has taken a solitary path. He has rarely played with a band, serving only as an accompanist on occasion. However, his songwriting has been generous in its flow of wisdom and shared revelations. Beneath his rough bluesy voice is the same kind of light and serenity one might discover on a walk by Walden's Pond.

Early last month I had the opportunity to engage in a phone conversation with Chris. We laughed as I sat in the shade of a tree in a city park while he stayed indoors within the warm shelter of his Massachusetts home. What follows demonstrates the generosity and quiet wisdom of the man.

San Diego Troubadour: So, let's start with current events. What are you up to these days?

Chris Smither: Well, let's see...I released a new album, *Time Stands Still*, a few weeks ago. I've been touring, but I'm on hiatus right now. I'll start up again soon. I'll be in Austin [and also in San Diego] in February.

SDT: How do you like the scene there?

CS: It's great. So much music. The only problem with Austin is it's in Texas. As soon as you leave it can get pretty different.

SDT: Where else will you be touring?

CS: In March we're headed for Australia.

SDT: You have a good following there?

CS: Well, with each new album that's release, I get a good crowd. So, I keep going back after a new release, as long as they keep coming.

SDT: Is it true that Australians are really into roots music?

CS: Well, you know, there's a saying, "Australians are just Americans in training." [laughs]

SDT: Tell me about your beginnings. How you got to here

CS: [laughs] I've wondered that myself. Let's see. Well, my first instrument was a ukulele. When I got a guitar, later when I was older, I'd listen to blues records like Mississippi John Hurt. I learned from listening to them and then got a style of my own based on his style of finger picking.

SDT: Do you consider your music blues?

CS: Well, yeah, it starts there, but then I take it out where it's hard to describe or categorize. I wouldn't call it pure blues though. You'll always hear those influences coming through. I try to bring something new to the lyrics.

SDT: Yeah, your lyrics are unique.

CS: I come up with what I'm thinking about at the time. I've heard some people say [that] some of my lyrics are dark. But, really, if you listen I always try to leave things on a positive note.

SDT: I noticed you like to do unusual covers. A lot of Dylan songs but not the usual Dylan covers.

CS: Yeah, I find, if I do something by Bob, I want to be able to bring something of my own to it. So I find songs like this – I don't if anyone has ever covered "Desolation Row."

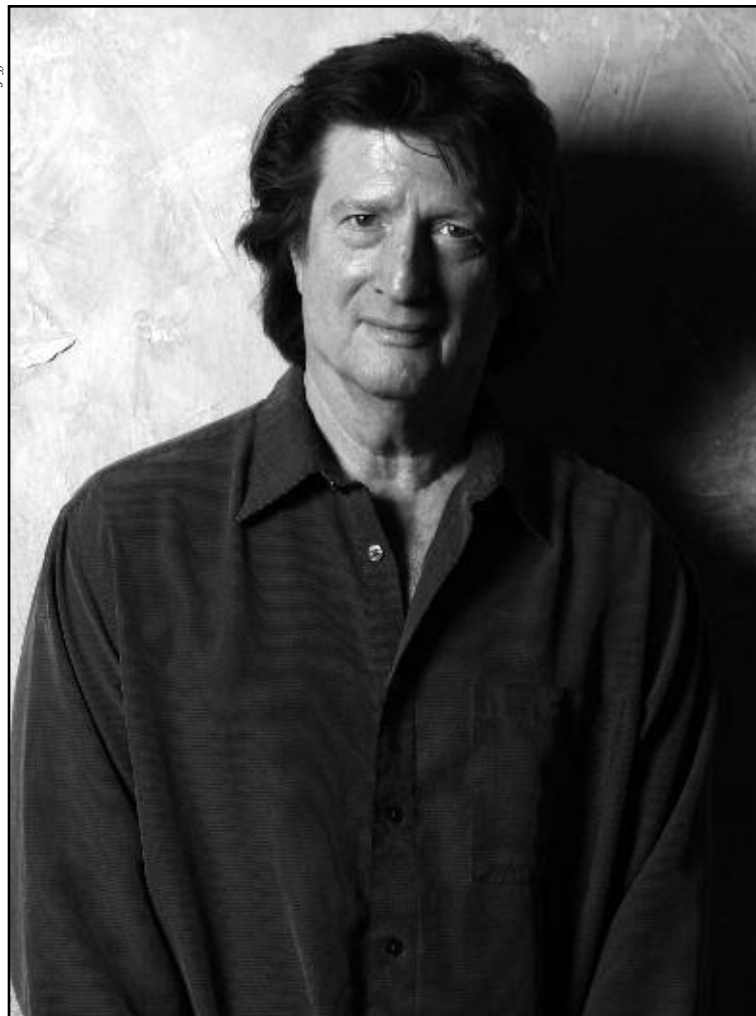
SDT: It occurred to me, as I look over your albums over the last few years, you're covering mostly Dylan songs from Highway 61 Revisited. Do you want to cover the whole album?

CS: [laughs] It seems that way. But, I also did "Visions of Johanna." The newest one on *Time Stands Still* is "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, It Takes a Train to Cry." I think I brought something new to that one. You know one thing about playing Bob's songs is they are so strong, they stand the test of time. They can take a lot of abuse – even Bob these days [laughs]. The songs even take abuse from Bob.

SDT: One of the songs you covered, which stands out for me personally, is Richie Furay's song from The Buffalo Springfield album, "Kind Woman." Richie mentions your cover in his biography. I think it pleased him.

CS: Wow. It's great to hear that about Richie. I remember I heard that song in 1968 and just thought, here's this gorgeous song. I've got to play it. I started covering it in concert and got lots of compliments on

Photo: Jeff Fasano



Chris Smither

it. What album was it on? Oh yeah, it was *This Train*. While I was recording it, I needed another song to fill out the set and I played "Kind Woman." Man, I've made more women cry with that one! [laughs]

SDT: Your lyrics really have a spiritual feel to them. Tell me your thoughts on spirituality and music.

CS: Let's see ... music is spiritual. It calls you to the moment. The moment is all we have and the music really brings you to the present. But, I'm not a theist.

SDT: A lot of what you write sounds like it's influenced by Zen.

CS: Yes. I've hung around with Zen Buddhists. I suppose I've picked up a lot from them. One thing I can say, I'm glad I didn't die 30 years ago. I would've missed so much. So many things I've learned during that time. It seems to me that everyday life has been filled with small revelations. That's really what my life has been – a series of small revelations.

SDT: It's what I call ordinary miracles.

CS: Yes.

SDT: I noticed on your website that you've done some prose writing.

CS: Yes. That's been very different than songwriting. With a song, you gotta hold its hand. You work to get it done from start to finish. But, I started writing a short story for this book called *Amplified*. The editors just have a real love of this kind of music. So they asked some songwriters to write. It's short stories from people like Mary Gauthier. The good thing was I had a deadline. Otherwise, I could've gone on and on. I don't know if I would ever started it without that deadline. But, once I started, it took on a life of its own. I felt like I was trying to keep up with it. It was really different than writing a song. I'm glad I did it.

SDT: Well, I'm looking forward seeing you at Acoustic Music San Diego. It's been a pleasure.

See Chris Smither in concert Friday, February 12, 7:30pm, Acoustic Music San Diego, 4650 Mansfield Street in Normal Heights. [www.acousticmusicsandiego.com](http://www.acousticmusicsandiego.com)



From Smither's website: Smither's song "No Love Today" was inspired by the fruit and vegetable man from his childhood in New Orleans

Tim Flannery continued


with the addition of Sharon Whyte's jaunty accordion and its bouncy beat.

"That one is a collection of about four or five stories all played in one song," Flannery said.

The famous parrots of San Francisco's Telegraph Hill are used as a metaphor in his song "Telegraph Hill." Here the highly spiritual Flannery returns to a theme found frequently throughout his albums: God's grace and salvation.

"Words Unspoken" is about the San Francisco's Depression Era speakeasies and the rum runners of Half Moon Bay. Like "Think About You," it benefits from Nesbitt's backing vocal.

"I can't pick out a favorite song, but I love this record and I am proud of it," Flannery said. "It is something I'm sure I will look back on when I remember my time in San Francisco."



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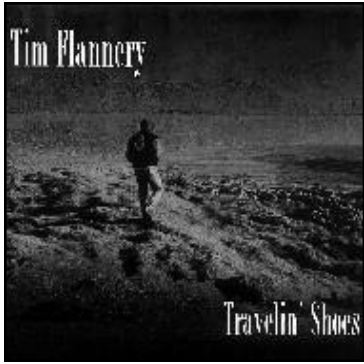
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## Tim Flannery Travelin' Shoes

by John Philip Wylie

Ask just about any musician and they will tell you that whatever project they are currently working on is the one that contains their best work. In the case of Tim Flannery and his recently released *Travelin' Shoes*, his ninth CD in a musical career that dates back some 30 years, that actually happens to be true. This 12-song collection, recorded under the watchful eye of multi-talented producer and performer Jeff Berkley, represents a high water mark for Flannery and his star-studded backing band, which he jointly refers to as the enablers.

Hearing Flannery and his mates perform makes it hard to imagine how he ever found time to enjoy a successful Major League baseball career. From February until October he remains fully engrossed as the San Francisco Giants' third base coach; fortunately, he always makes time for his music.

This new CD delights from beginning to end with its carefully crafted song writing, clever lyrics, and outstanding overall musicianship. It is enhanced by the contributions of a bevy of stellar local musicians that Flannery has attracted with his magnetic personality. The credit's lists reads like the Who's Who of San Diego acoustic music.

On his way up to Riverside to visit his older brother, Flannery spoke about some of his favorite tracks on the album.

"Each one of these songs is on this record because they mean a whole bunch to me, but I [particularly] love "All the Things We Carry." The title comes from a Tim O'Brien book about Vietnam. The song is about the accountability and responsibility that we all carry and the responsibility that I carry as a man. I think it might be my favorite song out of the ones that I have written."

During the baseball season Flannery would listen to the title and opening cut, "Travelin' Shoes," on his way to the ballpark every day. This bluegrass number is one of several on the album that benefits from the "Caplinger effect." "Enabler" Dennis Caplinger can play just about anything, but put a banjo, fiddle, or mandolin in his hands and magic occurs.

While Flannery has become an accomplished songwriter in his own right he is not opposed to covering other people's songs. Mixed among the originals there is a brilliant cover of Tom Petty's "Scare Easy" as well as a beautiful version of Karla Bonoff's "Home."

"I love the cover that we do of Eliza Gilkyson's 'Think About You.' I actually had a song called 'I'm a Half Moon Away,' but it was such a long song and it had too many words. While I was recording it I heard Eliza's song and I realized that she had done what I wanted to do in about two and a half minutes. So, I decided to record her song instead."

Barbara Nesbitt's beautiful backing harmonies on this cut blend perfectly with Flannery's earthy, warm voice, making this one of the many highlights of the album. Throughout the years the duets he has sung with artists such as Randi Driscoll, Eve Selis, and Nesbitt have ranked among his best work.

The rollicking "Don't Come Home on Account of Me" takes on a Cajon flavor

continued on page 12



## Freebo Before the Separation

by Frank Kocher

Making the rounds of local and North County venues quite a bit lately has been Freebo, a folk and blues singer/songwriter with a colorful background. The face and name will be familiar to veteran Bonnie Raitt fans, as he was her longtime bassist. After his decade-long stint with Raitt ended, Freebo (aka Daniel Freidberg) stayed busy with session work and working as a touring musician with other top artists.

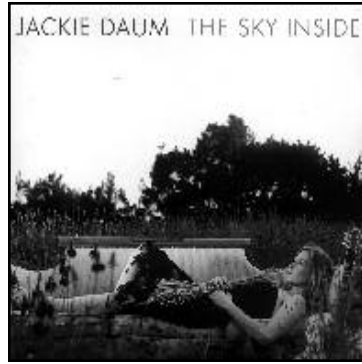
In the 1990s, he decided to give songwriting a try, honing his craft until his 1999 solo debut, *End of the Beginning*. He has since released two more, with the most recent being *Before the Separation*. His background would point to abilities playing blues, rock, and country music as his fretless bass and tuba playing have put him on album covers as far back as the late '70s, but the sound on *Separation* is mostly subdued and intimate folk, with a touch of other styles.

"It Goes By Fast" establishes the sound, a lighter-than-air tune built around an acoustic guitar lick, tight Crosby-Nash style harmonies, Freebo's sweet-sounding fretless bass, and his vocal. He has an easy folk-singing presence that evokes John Sebastian. The title tune stays in a soft folk mode with some criticism of the status quo, again effectively using harmonies to shore up the vocal, especially on the chorus. A rare step toward rock is taken in "Stand Up" as a strident beat is supplemented by electric slide guitar (not Raitt on this disc). This one clicks pretty well, though it is a step outside the box for Freebo the songwriter. "You Don't Have to Live This Way" is better, straying from folk for a mid-tempo minor chord ballad that uses sitars, drone effects, and a lead solo played on an esraj (a sitar-like Indian string instrument). This track has a memorable melody, stylistic surprises, and is also the closest that Freebo comes to country-blues music on the disc. The listener won't be able to forget the chorus lick of this standout cut.

Freebo produced himself, and the sound recalls the folk-pop of the late '60s and early '70s. The title tune and a few others might touch off reminders not only of Sebastian but also of Jon Mark of Mark-Almond and others from the era.

"The Beauty of Life" tries for a funk/R&B vibe, with horn charts and chord changes that sound like Otis Redding's "Dock of the Bay." Freebo tries hard for a style switch here, and sings it well. While the tune lyrically matches the uplift/lesson ideas elsewhere, musically it doesn't fit. Buried in the play order is the disc sleeper, "To the Light." This is an infectiously catchy, quiet folk tune needing only Freebo's voice with some background vocals and light instrumentation; another highlight, it probably works best because of its simplicity.

Freebo is rare musical personality, who completely transitioned from a successful performer to become a creator of his own interesting musical ideas and songs. *Before the Separation* is a chance to hear what he has to say.



## Jackie Daum The Sky Inside

by Frank Kocher

Local singer/songwriter Jackie Daum has been writing songs for her debut disc, and headed for Austin to record keyboard pop and alt-country songs with producer Billy Harvey, who has worked with local songsmith Steve Poltz and others. The result is *The Sky Inside*.

The music on the new disc is a collection of heart-felt love songs with good first-person lyrics and plenty of emotional delivery by Daum. The band of experienced session players gives the music an Austin-gloss sound, their letter-perfect touches catching notice only here and there. Daum has a very strong vocal presence and fills each of the songs nicely, though there aren't many big changes of pace in the ballad-heavy outing.

The album opens with "Cottonwood," a soft tune packed with expressive lyrics about memories of a past love. The tune builds up well, as Daum establishes her smooth, unaffected voice. "Going to New Mexico" pushes the beat harder but stays in the same comfortable alt-country groove, and pays off with a catchy chorus. "Landfall" is a piano-based ballad clearly intended as a highlight; it has an interesting melody but doesn't match "New Mexico" or some of the later tracks in impact. Next up, a different, bluesy vibe as a Hammond B3 leads the way on "Water Tower"; Daum gives this an aggressive vocal that draws from gospel in one of her best performances on the disc. The clear standout of the disc is "Pearl," a mid-tempo pop number that blends nifty lyrics, a great melody hook, and perfect arrangement. "Rock Stars" is full of clever verses about relationship issues and being numb; it's a good song – but not as good as "Pearl," which it follows and musically resembles. Like the earlier "Water Tower," "Always on Time" changes things up a bit with a more syn-copated, R&B-style rhythm, though the Austin crew does a lot to smooth this out.

Throughout, Daum sings with an assurance that belies the fact that this is her recording debut. She has good range, no overdone twang, and doesn't sound like some other singer. The thoughtful lyrics are provided in the disc packaging, a plus nowadays. The disc is one of those that gets better with repeat listening.

Daum puts together three of the strongest tracks on at the end of the disc, a place often reserved for filler. "Preacher's Slough" has great dynamics, a country power ballad that starts quietly and fills the room with Daum's heartbroken voice, slide guitars, and B3 in crescendos. Next up "Cry" clicks with her piano work, a locked-in catchy melody, and a B3 riff floating over the top. The closer is "You Give Me Air," co-written by Harvey, uses another simple but memorable hook with harmony vocals to bring together another standout cut.

Jackie Daum makes an impressive debut and quite a statement with 'The Sky Inside'. It shows a confident singer who has written some interesting songs, and knows her way around a ballad.



## Glancing Love Along the Enchanted Way

by Mike Alvarez

Glancing Love is a duo featuring Celtic folk harpist Theresa Rochelle-Ross and violinist Rachel Amov. These two are familiar faces in the local music scene, having both members of the Celtic Fusion group the Strange Woods as well as collaborators with a variety of artists. Each is also a multi-instrumentalist; Rochelle-Ross performs on penny whistle, recorder, bodhran, and harmonium, while Amov's musical abilities extend to viola, cello, and keyboards. All of these additional sounds complement their primary instruments, creating a richly layered depth to their arrangements. Guest musicians include guitarist/keyboardist Patrick Espinoza and Cactus Jim Soldi on bass and guitar (who also mixed and mastered the recording). Glancing Love is generous in their praise of these guests' talents and contributions, noting that they were often the source of ideas.

The CD's selections are medleys of tunes linked together and given unique titles based on the moods they create. The liner notes also list the titles of the songs that make up each medley so that listeners can identify the source material. Their performances are immaculate, with Rochelle-Ross' sparkling harp tones providing the foundation upon which much of the music is anchored. Amov's string melodies go from sublime lyricism to nimble displays of agility. The wind instruments add another color to the melodic palette, lending everything from poetic serenity to uptempo fire to a number of passages.

"The Fields of May" opens the album with the instrumental layers slowly unfolding. A penny whistle and violin are soon joined by a piano playing arpeggios underneath. Harp and violin take center stage during a fleet-fingered passage that finds the whistle returning to play the melody in unison with the fiddle. This track evolves in a very natural progression, displaying a number of styles as it does so. "Highland Boat Song" starts as a somber minor key ballad that has nice interplay between the violin and whistle. The violin then takes the lead during a more leisurely passage, which later features some lovely cello counter-melodies. Soldi's lush guitar accompaniment is notable on "Over the Sea to Skye," creating a pastoral, almost church-like mood behind the melody. There is a real sense of a journey here. "Flowers of Edinburgh" is a spirited medley, evoking visions of folk dances and period costume. The middle section of this piece is a very famous song called "Morrison's Jig" whose great energy carries through to the finale.

Things take a more reflective turn on "Dew On The Grass," with the whistle leading for quite a while until harp and fiddle come forward bringing the song to a more energetic finish. "In the Grove" is notable for its very familiar melody ("The Ashgrove"), played alternately on harp, whistle, and violin, then picks up steam as it turns into a couple of lively upbeat tunes. "Her Dark Hair" begins as a melancholy duet for whistle and fiddle before becoming an Irish standard. It ends with a jig, led by Amov's

continued next column



## Sara Petite Dog House Rose

by Steve Roche

Right off the bat, let it be known that there isn't one dog in the pack on Sara Petite's new CD *Dog House Rose*. *Dog House Rose* is a fully bloomed, seamless piece of Americana art that is sure to see Sara achieve high accolades and national attention this year.

Expertly produced in Nashville by Eddie Gore, with a fine cast of over-achieving studio cats, this disc sounds great and plays great. Well-crafted songs, heartfelt singing, great musicianship, and perfect sequencing make this a very strong work; I dare might say an "Instant classic!"

The opener, "Magnolia," twangs to life with its unison guitar and dobro licks, loping rhythm section, and very catchy chorus. The second song happens and just keeps happening with "Take What I Can Get," which moderately builds and evolves into a modern country-rock anthem that devastates the memory with its hook. Absolute timeless magic! "Baby Let Me" proceeds to burn the barn down with Kenny Vaughan channeling the ghost of the late Eddie Shaver with some ferocious guitar soloing while a boozed up Sara is busting down the front door with her sultry plea of need.

The title cut, "Dog House Rose," is a tender, acoustic, and fitting tribute to Steve Earle, one of Petite's major influences.

The only song on this CD that Petite didn't write turns out to be a rockin' cover of Harlan Howard's "He Called Me Baby." A great version! "Bootleggers" is another ultra-tempo burner about moonshine. You'll find yourself singing the fun chorus by the end of the song. Kudos to Sasha Ostrovsky on dobro. "Souvenirs" is a slower, touching acoustic tale of loved one's items and the poignant memories they hold.

The forbidden temptation of "Shouldn't Be Doing This" and the perfect title of "Beautiful Thing," with their ethereal eloquence, remind one of a chapter taken from Emmy Lou Harris' *Wrecking Ball*. Both are superb and you can hear Daniel Lanois' footprints everywhere.

Sara Petite has done her lessons thoroughly and wears her heartfelt influences on her sleeve. You'll hear nuances of many of the greats in her work; however, Sara has created her own masterpiece here. The excellence and continuity of *Dog House Rose* can't be overstated. Congratulations to Sara and the Sugar Daddies. One of the best CDs of the decade!

Glancing Love continued

articulate fiddling, bolstered by Espinoza's skilled piano playing.

The CD ends on a hopeful note with the title track, a dramatically melodic harp piece that features accompaniment by viola, cello, recorder, and penny whistle. That such an authentically Celtic sounding recording can originate in Southern California is a testament to the deep commitment these artists have to this music. Their years of immersion in this art form bring credibility to the statement they are making. The overall effect is soothing, but attentive listeners can also appreciate the musical sensibility and craftsmanship that went into the making of this recording.





Photo: Steve Covault

94-year-old Honeyboy Edwards @ AMSD



Photo: Steve Covault

John McCutcheon @ SD Folk Heritage



Photo: Steve Covault

Lou & Virginia Curtiss @ Poway Folk Circle



Photo: Steve Covault

Tom Rush @ AMSD



Photo: Steve Covault

Gregory Page @ Java Joe's



Photo: Steve Covault

Michael Tiernan @ Belly Up  
(check out the aura)



Photo: Steve Covault

Al Kooper @ AMSD



Photo: Sweet Joyce Ann

Terry Roland, Liz Abbott, Booker T. Jones, & Steve Covault @ Poway Arts



Photo: Steve Covault

Barry McGuire & John York @ AMSD



Photo: Steve Covault

Stan Ridgeway @ Belly Up

# NAMM SHOW 2010

photos by Chuck Schiele

# STEVE WHITE BENEFIT @ OLD TIME MUSIC



John Kuhlken & Sara Petite



## cool guitars



Mike Head with Seymour Duncan



Photo: Steve Covault

Chuck Perrin



Photo: Bob Page

Jim Earp



Photo: Steve Covault

Man of the Hour - Mr. Steve White



Photo: Bob Page

Suzanne Reed



Photo: Bob Page

Folding Mr. Lincoln & Friends



Photo: Bob Page

Paul Henry



Photo: Bob Page

Rusty Jones



Photo: Bob Page

Tom Gwinn, Chris Stuart, Janet Beazley



Photo: Bob Page

Steve Mendoza



Photo: Bob Page

Shawn Rohlf



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Ric Kaestner & the Hilltop Ramblers



Photo: Steve Covault

Calman Hart



Photo: Bob Page

Benefit organizer KEV

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We would like to thank everyone who attended the Steve White Benefit on January 23rd. With the support we received from the local community and from our friends in the music community we were able to surpass our fundraising goal and help make Steve's recovery from the loss of his vocal chords to cancer a little easier. Find out more about Steve's story at [www.SteveWhiteBlues.com](http://www.SteveWhiteBlues.com)



**Steve White**

**Performing artists**

Alan James, Jim Earp, Shawn Rohlf, Robin Henkel, Calman Hart, Rick Kaestner, Jeff Berkley, Vladamir Trio, Greg Page, Tom Baird, David Silva, Peggy Watson, KEV-Kevin Rones, Cici Porter, Alan Land, Allen Singer, Ray Zvetina, Dane Terry, Suzanne Reed, Paul Henry, Jeffrey Joe Morin, Rusty Jones, Chuck Perrin, Janet Beazley, Chris Stuart and Tom Gwinn, Larry Robinson, Lisa Sanders, Folding Mr. Lincoln, Schmooze Trio, Paul Hornick, Steve Mendoza, Ben Powell, Steve Piccus.



Lisa Sanders

**Bob Page and Buffalo Brothers Guitars**

**Team OTM (Old Time Music)**

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**Assistant wrangler:** Veronica Graciano

**Sound Team:** Tom Baird, David Silva

Front Room Acoustic Stage manager: Allen Singer

**Volunteers and Contributors**

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Hot Dogs: Buns on the Run  
San Diego Troubadour  
Photos by Steve Jones  
Chris Stuart, David Ybarra



Shawn Rohlf



Gregory Page

## FEBRUARY

**IT'S A STEVE KAUFMAN CONCERT/WORKSHOP WEEKEND!**

**Steve Kaufman Concert Sat. Feb. 6th 8 p.m.** Don't miss Flatpicking Champion and Steve Kaufman in concert at Old Time Music. Admission \$20.



**Mandolin Workshop**

Thursday, Feb. 4th 7-9:30 p.m. Fee: \$50

**Guitar Workshops Part I and Part II**

\$90.00 for both Friday and Saturday Workshops!

Friday, Feb. 5th: Guitar Workshop Part I • 7-9 PM.

Saturday Feb. 6th: Guitar Workshop Part II • 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.

For reservations/info call 619-280-9035.

**Chris Stuart & Backcountry concert Feb. 27 • 7 p.m.**

CHRIS STUART & BACKCOUNTRY is the West Coast's leading bluegrass band featuring the powerful vocals and songwriting skills of Chris Stuart, banjo player extraordinaire (and OTM homegirl) Janet Beazley and the mega-tasteful lead guitar of Eric Uglum. They're joined by teenage sensations Austin & Christian Ward on bass and fiddle. 7pm, \$20



**CHRIS STUART & BACKCOUNTRY 2-mini workshops**

at OTM on Saturday afternoon Feb. 27, before the evening concert.

\$20 each, \$30 for both workshops

**4pm-5pm - Bluegrass instrument breakout sessions** focusing on the essential playing techniques of each instrument and how they contribute to producing a killer band sound: **rhythm guitar** - Chris Stuart; **lead guitar** - Eric Uglum;

**banjo** - Janet Beazley; **fiddle** - Christian Ward; acoustic bass - Austin Ward

**5-6 pm - Bluegrass harmony singing:**

overview of bluegrass vocal harmony style fundamentals, how to find each part, phrasing, tone, intonation, repertoire, arrangement.

**Saturday, February 27th, 1:30-3:30 p.m.**

**KEV's- BEGINNING FINGER PICKING GUITAR WORKSHOP**

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A fun, hands-on beginning guitar workshop. This workshop is designed for beginning/intermediate players who want to expand their guitar skills.

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We'll cover basic fingerstyle techniques and arrangements. Hand-outs will be provided.

Fee: \$20. **Call to get on reserve list! 619-280-9035. The last KEV workshop was full!**

You can also register for KEV's *Altered and Open tunings for the Guitar workshop* March 27th 2-4 p.m. Cost \$30



**Friday, March 3rd. 7:00 PM. Harvey Reid in concert.**

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**Saturday, March 6 at OTM, 2-4pm. Chris Stuart Songwriting Workshop**

Join award-winning bluegrass and acoustic music songwriter in a two-hour workshop. Visit [www.sdoldtimemusic.com](http://www.sdoldtimemusic.com) for more details. Fee \$25. Don't miss this one!

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