

T SAN DIEGO ROUBADOOR

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



February 2003

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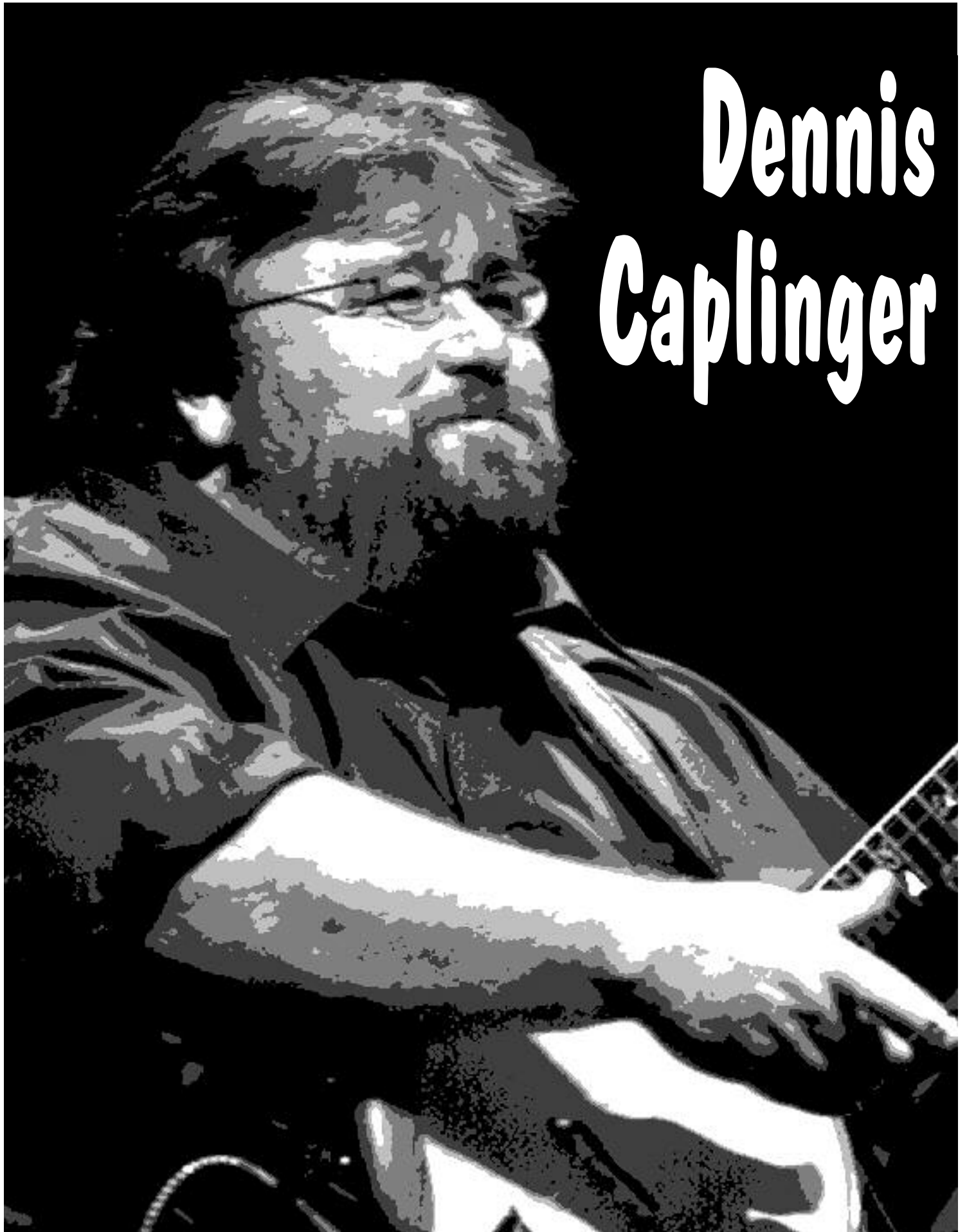
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Dennis Caplinger

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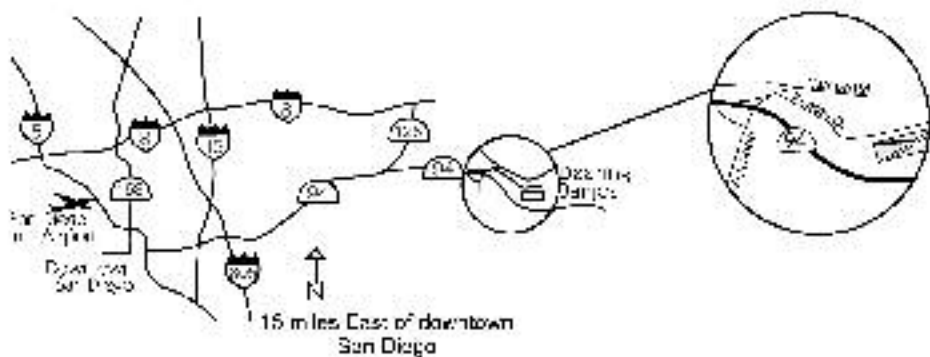
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welcome mat



MAILBOX

Dear Troubadour,

What a delight it was to pick up the *Troubadour* this last month and read your centerpiece story on San Diego's burgeoning Celtic music scene followed by an equally impressive story on Gregory Page and Tom Brosseau. I was particularly taken with the wide range of musical styles covered in your CD review section. How right you are to point out the impressive musical talent we have unnoticed on our very doorstep. As the former listings editor for the *Union-Tribune's* Night&Day tab, as well as currently being the assistant editor of the *San Diego Business Journal*, I have long believed that San Diego is bursting with too many untold stories about truly wonderful musicians.

However, curiously I noticed there was no mention of nationally renowned Irish band Skelpin' in your roundup. Unlike Kitchenfire or Celticana, fine bands that they are, Skelpin' is the only area Irish band with a steady gig in the Gaslamp, going on two years, and the band that has appeared, not once, twice or even three times, but actually four times with the Chieftains at 4th & B and Humphreys by the Bay. Skelpin' has performed at the Adams Avenue Street Fair, on KPBS, NBC, and at events ranging from Ireland to Mexico.

In addition, Skelpin' is scheduled to perform for the San Diego Folk Heritage in February, and the band's new CD *Whiskey Before Breakfast* is scheduled for release in the next two weeks.

Feel free to give me a call, and I'd be happy to set up an interview. After all, it's my band!

Cheers,

Patric Petrie, Assistant Editor
San Diego Business Journal

Dear Patric,

Thanks for the nice letter! We really felt bad about leaving out your band, Skelpin', but unfortunately we didn't learn about your band until just after we had gone to print. Since that time, we've heard of you often. Now that we've checked out the local Celtic music scene, it's like we found buried treasure... so much good music that we didn't even know that much about!

Thanks again and we'll be in touch.

The Editor

Dear Troubadour,

When I read the letter from Jens Morrison in your January 2003 issue, which asked, "Aren't there any folk places in North County?" I couldn't believe that Jens didn't know about the Fallbrook Americana Music Series and the San Diego North County Bluegrass and Folk Club.

The Fallbrook Americana Series features traditional and roots music once a month at the Hilltop Center at 331 E. Elder in Fallbrook. Just last January 11th, we had Christopher Shaw and Artie Traum in and it was great!

This February 22nd at 7:30pm is Bluegrass Night and we'll have Bill Knopf, Clearly Bluegrass and Tom Corbett. March 8th is Celtic music with Golden Bough. April 12 is Western music



with Prickly Pair and "Curly" Jim Musgrave. Tickets are \$10 at the door. For more info call John and BJ Maus at 760-723-563 or JWM94@aol.com

The San Diego North County Bluegrass and Folk Club meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. at Round Table Pizza at the corner of Washington and Ash in Escondido. Admission is free but the Pizza isn't. This is great not only for the amateur folk/bluegrass musician (there's a lot of jamming out in the parking lot) but also if you just want to come and hear some superb traditional music. On February 4th the Andy Rau Band will be there. On March 4th The Dowden Sisters will show up and on April 1st the California Bluegrass Band will be coming.

Jack C. Holt
"Character Counts"

Hello,

I really enjoy your paper. There's a lot of acoustic music going on out there that people just don't seem to hear about. Keep up the good work.

Skooter



MISSION

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

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We'd love to hear from you! Send your comments, feedback, or suggestions to:
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Down the Road with Kenny Wertz

by Lyle Duplessie

In previous issues of the *San Diego Troubadour*, much has been written about the great grand-daddy of all local bluegrass bands, the Scottsville Squirrel Barkers. The group's key players — Chris Hillman and Ed Douglas — have provided much information about this pivotal San Diego band and the circumstances surrounding its formation (see December 2001, August 2002, and September-October 2002 issues of the *San Diego Troubadour*). Recently with the help of Ed Douglas, Kenny Wertz, the Squirrel Barker banjo picker, was located. He freely shared his recollections about the band as well as his other contributions to bluegrass, both on a local and national level.

Kenny Wertz was born in Virginia, but his family moved to San Diego in 1950 when his father, a career navy man, was stationed here. Wertz remembers being bit by the music bug by the time he was in fourth grade. He began singing in the church choir and learning to play the clarinet. By 1960 and a senior at Point Loma High School, he had abandoned the clarinet and taught himself how to play guitar.



Scottsville Squirrel Barkers, l to r: Chris Hillman, Kenny Wertz, Larry Murray, Gary Carr, Ed Douglas

With a penchant for historical story songs, he easily took to the Kingston Trio. Before long, however, he started to explore the more adventurous music of the New Lost city Ramblers, Flatt and Scruggs, Don Reno, and Ralph Stanley. Upon his introduction to bluegrass he became completely infatuated with the driving sound of the banjo. Unable to find a teacher, he taught himself how to play the instrument.

With folk music in vogue in 1960-61, Wertz teamed up with

Gary Carr and John Bill (brother of actor Tony Bill) to form a folk trio, the Milestones. The boys gravitated to Frank Emig's furniture store/vintage guitar shop in North Park, where they found themselves in comfortable company with Ed Douglas, Larry Murray, and Yuris Zeltins. When Douglas, Murray, and Zeltins moved on to open The Blue Guitar in the Midway district, the Milestones followed.



Pseudo Burritos, top l to r: Kenny Wertz, Byron Berline, Allen Munde, Eric Dalton; middle: Rick Roberts; bottom: Sneaky Pete, Roger Bush

Along about that time Wertz and Carr attended a party in Del Mar. There they met a mandolin player a couple of years their junior. This young picker was Chris Hillman. With Hillman in tow, they formed a bluegrass group, calling themselves the Shady Canyon Boys. One of the gigs that Wertz remembers playing with this combo was at the Sign of the Sun bookstore on College Avenue. Of the Shady Canyon Boys, Wertz recalls that the guys all had an impressive background knowledge of music and artists, plus extensive record collections. While Wertz and Carr sang, Hillman contributed with clever musical ideas.

It was Wertz who introduced Hillman to the scene at The Blue Guitar and before long Wertz, Carr, and Hillman were playing with Douglas and Murray. Thus, the Scottsville Squirrel Barkers were born, establishing a musical legacy that lingers to this day.

In 1963 Uncle Sam came a-callin'. Rather than getting drafted into the army, Wertz joined the Air Force. Not much in the way of music happened during his stint in the service, but in 1967 he was a free man again. Upon his discharge, Wertz moved back to San Diego and began playing with friends Bill Wylie, Tommy Pressley, Ray Bierl, and Kenny Bloom. Soon Wertz was playing with his buddies at such local venues as the Candy Company on El Cajon

Bld., the White Whale and the Hungry Horse Saloon in Bird Rock, and The Heritage in Mission Beach. Old-time locals might recall Wertz and friends playing there.

Wertz related an interesting story from this period when Glen Frey and J.D. Souther, a.k.a. Longbranch Pennywhistle, had played the Candy Company. Having no place to go after the gig, the boys holed up at Wertz's Santee residence for a week. As Wertz tells it, they spent most of their waking hours writing songs and playing music. Some of these songs were heard on the first Eagles album.

In 1971, Wertz moved to Sherman Oaks. He got a call from Roger Bush, who he had met at the Ash Grove. Bush was assembling a bluegrass band and needed a high-harmony singer. Since Herb Pedersen had been tagged to play banjo, Wertz was relegated to guitar. Byron Berline, country rock's premier fiddle player of the era, was also in the line up. The group would become Country Gazette.



Country Gazette l to r: Roland White, Roger Bush, Allen Munde, Kenny Wertz

Despite the talent of the group, work didn't come easily. Except for Berline, who had plenty of studio work to do, all the other members had to take daytime jobs. Wertz and Bush worked at installing heating and air conditioning ducts while Pedersen pumped gas. When the band finally got some gigs that would take them away from home, Pedersen bowed out due to new family responsibilities. In came Alan Munde to take over banjo chores.

At about the same time Bernie Leadon had bailed out of the Burritos, Hillman, in desperate need of a guitar, banjo, and vocalist to fill the void, targeted Wertz, his old Squirrel Barker buddy. Torn between his commitment to Country Gazette and loyalty to an old friend, Wertz chose the latter and became a bona fide Burrito Brother. Though in bad stead with members of the Gazette, resulting from the decision he made, he

tried to make amends by urging Hillman to take them along for an upcoming Burrito tour. The splendid work of this Gazette-Burrito amalgam can be heard in the live album *Last of the Red Hot Burritos*.

Near the tour's end Hillman was summoned by Stephen Stills to do some recording work in Florida. Upon his return he announced that he was folding the Burritos and joining Manassas. This left Wertz in the awkward position of having no gig. With hat in hand, he asked the Gazette to take him back, and they did.

From that point until 1977, Wertz stayed busy with the Gazette, playing at venues ranging from Disneyland and colleges to honky tonks and clubs. The group's manager, Eddie Tickner, even put together a European tour for three consecutive winters between 1972 and 1975, with a line up Wertz refers to as the "pseudo Burritos." That line up was comprised of Gazette members as well as former Burritos Sneaky Pete and Rick Roberts; Michael Clarke was replaced by Eric Halton on drums.

Between 1972 and 1977 Wertz recorded three albums with the Gazette, the most notable being *A Traitor in our Midst*. Since he didn't like living in Los Angeles, he came back to San Diego and moved into an apartment in Old town. When summoned to L.A. to record, he would ride his bicycle to Lindbergh Field and catch a PSA round-trip flight for \$8!

In 1977, with the birth of his daughter, Wertz's tenure with Country Gazette ended. In fact, he made a commitment to drop out of bands entirely until his daughter turned 20. From that time to the present Wertz has worked as a mechanical design engineer and currently designs and constructs machines that assemble electronic/mechanical



Kenny Wertz

skin patches used in medical procedures.

Wertz and his lovely wife, Annette, are residents of Fallbrook. Besides being a regular at monthly bluegrass gatherings held locally, they both enjoy taking their motor home to bluegrass hoe downs throughout Southern California. In addition, Wertz is finally back playing his beloved banjo in his new bluegrass combo, *Down the Road*.



Down the Road, l to r: Roger Gagos, Kit Birkett, Becky Green, Kenny Wertz



Recordially, Lou Curtiss

A Hearts and Flowers Larry Murray-Bernie Leadon Reappearance

Talk about the country-rock movement with just about anyone interested in that stuff and you're going to hear that Gram Parsons single handedly pioneered the genre either with the Byrds' *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* or maybe with the International Submarine Band's *Safe at Home*, which predated his joining the Byrds by a few weeks.

The fact is that before Gram made the Southern California scene, others were delving into their own country and bluegrass roots and experimenting — among them former San Diego bluegrassers Larry Murray (who was, with Chris Hillman, one of the Scottsville Squirrel Barkers bluegrass band) and Bernie Leadon. Larry met up with two expatriate Hawaiians — Rick Cunha and Dave Dawson — on the L.A. club circuit. With them he found a unique vocal blend of mountain music, bluegrass, and honky tonk country that soon found a home at Capitol records with the release of *Now Is the Time for Hearts and Flowers*. The album defined the word eclectic, with pure country stuff like Merle Haggard's "I'm a Lonesome Fugitive"

to Tim Hardin's "Reason to Believe" and Donovan's "Try for the Sun," all with three-part harmonies and crazy instrumental combinations (pizzicato autoharp, sitar, cello, bowed bass, and dobro). The group played gigs around Southern California (at times featuring a young Karen Carpenter on drums), opening for Buffalo Springfield, Blue Cheer, the Doors, Canned Heat, and Arlo Guthrie, but they never seemed to make it out of those clubs.

By early 1968 Rick Cunha had left the group and was replaced by another San Diego bluegrass

"The album defined the word eclectic, with stuff from pure country to Tim Hardin, all with three-part harmonies and crazy instrumental combinations ..."

(and sometimes Squirrel Barker) Bernie Leadon, and the trio's second album, *Of Horses, Kids, and Forgotten Women*, saw them digging even deeper into traditional country music with Merle Kilgore's "Two Little Boys" and Bill Monroe's "Molly and Tenbrookes," which they rewrote a bit and called "The Legend of Old Tenbrookes." There was also a version of Leadbelly's "When I was a Cowboy." Also on this second album the group experimented with a sort of Sergeant Pepperesque Beatles' orchestration. The results were nothing short of fabulous with a masterful weave of diverse influences. Yet they continued to receive almost no commercial attention. By mid-1968 they had gone their separate ways. Leadon went on to spend time with Dillard and Clark, Linda Ronstadt, and

the Flying Burrito Brothers before being certified as a country-rock legend by being a founding member of the Eagles.

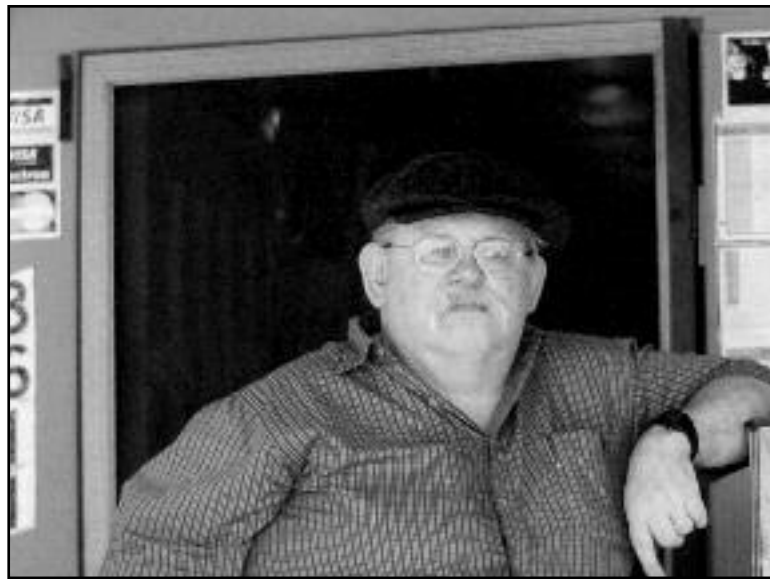
Larry Murray went on to a couple of solo efforts, some producing (including an exquisite *Barnaby* LP by Mary McCaslin that someone should get wise and reissue) and some work as a country artist in Australia. Hearts and Flowers were soon forgotten in spite of the influence they had on the whole country-rock genre.



Hearts and Flowers first line-up
l to r: Dave Dawson, Larry Murray, Rick Cunha

Now this year, a two-CD retrospective features the group's two albums in their entirety, plus 13 bonus tracks of unreleased stuff, including a cover of Fred Neil's "Everybody's Talking" that clearly served as the source for Nilsson's later hit (minus the strange sitar solo). There are also covers of Gordon Lightfoot and Phil Ochs along with some fine Larry Murray originals.

If you're looking to hear an important part of the L.A. country-rock scene that has heretofore been left out, pick up these CDs. You'll be in for a treat and also help rewrite some of those rock 'n' roll encyclopedias. [*The Complete Hearts and Flowers: Collector's Choice Music* #72435-43252-2-9]



Lou Curtiss

An Added Note

I first met Larry Murray in 1963 or so out at San Diego State where he and I were founding members of the Campus Organized Folksingers and Folksong Society. I guess I met Bernie a short time after that. Larry, along with Ed Douglas, started The Blue Guitar shop out on Midway Drive in San Diego and, with Chris Hillman, Kenny Wertz, and Gary Carr, became full-time (and others part-time) Scottsville Squirrel Barkers (Bernie was one of the part-timers). This year an effort is being made to reunite the original Squirrel Barkers either for the 30th Annual Adams Avenue Roots Festival in April or the Adams Avenue Street Fair in September.



Bernie Leadon (far right) replaces Rick Cunha in second Hearts and Flowers line-up

It was right at the peak of the Squirrel Barkers local popularity that Larry, Bernie, Jerry Houck, and I went up to the UCLA Folk Festival together in 1965. It was a fabulous line-up, including the Doc Watson Family, Reverend Gary Davis, A.L. Lloyd, the New Lost City Ramblers, Carl T. Sprague, the Stoneman Family, Almeda Riddle, Elizabeth Cotton, and Bukka White. That festival put the bug in me to start doing my own festivals, which I started doing in 1967. It took Larry Murray and Bernie Leadon in other directions (see above).

Recordially,
Lou Curtiss



Bernie Leadon



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front porch

Mike Tater, Jr. Keeps With Tradition

by Pat Chin and Ellen Duplessie

Fiddling is tough. No frets. No picks. No capo. When most of us try to play one, it's usually best to leash the dogs first. But when Mike Tatar, Jr. picks up the fiddle, the tone is full, the notes are precise, the phrasing is classic. It is bluegrass music of the highest quality. Mike has that rare blend of knowledge, skill, and creativity that allows him to evoke music of such power and beauty that it becomes clear why the fiddle has assumed its vaulted place among bluegrass instruments.

Mike was born near the Napa Valley in northern California where they know something about producing world class vintages. His parents, both fine musicians, exposed Mike to music at an early age. The choice of fiddle as his primary instrument was almost predestined since his grandfather and great grandfather were both fiddlers in the Midwest. Mike began formal violin study at the age of seven and was soon joining his parents at festivals and jams. With regard to fiddling, Mike tells us, "The mechanics of it are so hard. To get the fiddle tone out of the instrument, that's the hard thing." The Tatars moved to San Diego when Mike was in his early teens and quickly became fixtures in the local bluegrass scene. Even back then, Mike's talents were readily apparent. He relates, "Bobby Hicks was a really big influence on me. Stuart Duncan was also a big influence on me. When I was about 18, I fenagled a backstage pass at a festival and sat at the sound guy's table not five feet away from him and watched him the whole night. I

followed him around the next day and the one after that. He finally stopped and turned around and introduced himself. It was pretty cool."

Local bluegrass pro Mike Tater, Jr. plans to make a tour stop back in his hometown of Poway this month. The energetic and original bluegrass band called Ron Spears and Within Tradition, of which Tater is a member, will play on

musical genre, but has kept the emphasis on bluegrass.

On being a professional musician, Mike is philosophical. "The key I've always thought is perseverance, not giving up. Taking the bad with the good and all that. You can never tell what's going to happen in the music business. One week you may be sharing a two-room apartment with five people and eating hash browns

and top ramen 'cause that's all you can afford. The next week you could be touring all over the place with some great band. Who knows? You just gotta take the bad with the good."

Touring the western U.S., Tater says he's looking forward to playing back in San Diego where his professional musical career began. The talented local band Down the Road will open the concert with a special reunion performance. This band was voted local San Diego favorite in 2000, and won the 2000 regional band competition that sent them to the IBMA convention in Louisville, Kentucky. Members include Kenny Wertz on banjo (see story on page 4), Kit Birkett on guitar, Becky Green on bass, and Roger Gagos covering the mandolin duties. This show is definitely one not to miss!

Tickets are \$13 and are available by phone: 858-679-4854, 858-679-1225, and 619-276-1949; on the Internet: www.tricopolisrecords.com



Ron Spears and Within Tradition: l to r. Mike Tater, Jr. on fiddle, Charlie Edsall on guitar, Joe Ash on bass, and Phil Bostic on banjo.

February 7 at the Poway Auditorium in Poway Park.

Led by Ron Spears, Within Tradition features Mike Tater, Jr., on fiddle, along with Charlie Edsall on guitar, Joe Ash on bass, and Phil Bostic on banjo. Bluegrass Unlimited called Ron Spears "one of the most promising new talents to emerge on the bluegrass scene." *Bluegrass Now* said, "Warm vibrant harmonies and five stellar string wizards make this fledgling band one to keep an eye on."

The fiddle may be Tater's main instrument, but it is certainly not the only one that he excels in. Mike is also an outstanding guitarist and mandolin player. He enjoys playing jazz and is comfortable in any



Ron Spears and Within Tradition in concert



Mike Tater, Jr.

(909-678-0831); at all Tuesday evening S.D. Bluegrass Society meetings; or you can pay \$15 at the door.



Blind Boys See the Light

For over 60 years, the Blind Boys of Alabama have traversed "higher ground" together. Since forming their group at the Alabama Institute for the Negro Blind in 1939, they have kept alive the spirit and energy of pure soul gospel music. Founding members Clarence Fountain, Jimmy Carter, and George Scott, along with more recent arrivals Joey Williams, Ricky McKinnie, and Bobby Butler, have drawn upon gospel's river-deep reflections on life's trials, and mastered its haunting falsettos and vibrant, muscular harmonies. And at ages when most men have retired from life's spotlight, they continue to command the music's heart-pounding vigor as meditation erupts into foot-stomping, rollicking celebration.

Remarkably, the Blind Boys not only represent the highest standard of a charismatic American musical tradition, they also extend that tradition. Gospel has always nourished blues, rhythm-and-blues, and rock 'n' roll, so it seems only natural for the Blind Boys to have found a calling in transforming popular song back into consecrated writ.

That's been a favored aspect of the group's albums and concerts in recent years. Since first reaching toward a wider audience with their roles in the 1983 production of *The Gospel at Colonus*, Bob Telson and Lee Breuer's Obie Award-winning off-Broadway and Broadway smash, the

singers have repeatedly reinvented material associated with artists from the world beyond the church. They've transformed Bob Dylan ("I Believe in You") and Richard Thompson ("Dimming of the Day"), illuminating the spiritual message inherent in these soul-searching songs. On last year's Grammy Award-winning *Spirit of the Century* (Real World), they applied that same knack to an eclectic array of tunes drawn from the Rolling Stones, Tom Waits, and Ben Harper, with a band that boasted such potent instrumentalists as blues guitarist John Hammond, string maestro David Lindley, and harp virtuoso Charlie Musselwhite.

"Here's the deal," Blind Boy Fountain explains, "if the song is the right song, we sit down and take it apart and listen to the words and see how the words correspond to how we want to sing it. Music is music, and a song is good if you can feel the emotion to really sing it." Evidence of the Blind Boys' ability to "put the Lord in it," as Fountain phrases it, abound on their new disc, *Higher Ground*. Just check out the inspired segue from Funkadelic's "Me and My Folks" into a reading of the 23rd Psalm. The Blind Boys of Alabama will be at UCSD's Mandeville Center on Wednesday, February 5.





IRISH DANCE: A SYMBIOSIS OF MUSIC AND DANCE

by John Hyatt

San Diego is alive with music. All over the city, pubs, bars, coffee shops, and other venues are bustling with music of all styles. One burgeoning form is that of Irish. With an ever-growing Irish-American community comes not only great beer and whiskey, but also music and thus dance. The music of Ireland is as much a part of the culture as any other aspect associated with the Irish. The music sessions commonly found in most pubs in Ireland grew out of the gatherings in the kitchens of folks who would bring their instruments and sing and play to relieve the stress of daily life.

These sessions have been imported to San Diego with the rest of the Irish community and thrive about the city to this day. David Page, Sr., who, over 30 years ago began encouraging local Irish jam sessions, was a great influence in initiating these sessions locally. Cornerstone pubs such as the Blarney Stone in Clairemont and the Ould Sod in Normal Heights continue these great sessions on a regular basis and newcomers, such as The Field and Dublin Square, have adopted the tradition of pub sessions. One result of these sessions is the formation of many groups ranging in style from Irish traditional to a progressive contemporary fusion. The merging and differing styles of the bands produces a wonderful selection of music that appeals to a great number of music lovers. Some reject the modern mix of tunes, while others have no desire to visit the foundation of the arrangements. Music, as with other forms of art, is alive — it changes and reflects the experience, life, and soul of the musician wielding the instrument, making fusion an inevitable result of the “life” of music. The foundation of Irish music is never forgotten nor can it be disrespected in the growth process that brings about the great diversity of music we have today.

The San Diego music scene is a hot bed of these great local bands. As with most bands, musicians gather, jam, make friends, discover similar styles and passions, and create alliances that become the groups

we love to listen to. Our local groups cover all spectrums of the Irish-Celtic music style and include: the Brian Baynes Band (which also performs with the San Diego Symphony), Celticana, Celtic Ensemble, Cobblestone, the Boxyty Band, Kitchenfire, Skelpin, Steelin Tin, and the Westlin Weavers. Among these great bands also stand out many other musicians like Joe Byrnes, Tony Cummins, Kit Healy, and others that you will find about the local music scene.

Where there is music, there is also dance. The relationship between music and dance is a symbiotic one that is inseparable. Although music and dance can exist without each other in one form or another, the two will always coincide. To prove a point, try listening to music without tapping a foot, bobbing the head, patting the knee, or even mentally keeping in time with the rhythm. Music inspires us to move with it in some way.

Most people are familiar with Irish dance through the choreography of Michael Flatly for the musical *Riverdance*. However, Irish dance has existed long before 1994 when *Riverdance* premiered. The refined form of dance we know today began in the eighteenth century with dance masters in Ireland who went from village to village teaching dance steps to people for lodging and food. Out of these practices dance competitions, called a “feis” (fesh), among students of these dance masters began and are still held today throughout the world, culminating in a world championship feis held annually in Ireland. San Diego hosts two competitions a year in September and October. San Diego is also the home of seven schools where Irish dance is taught. Children from as young as four years old to those learning as adults (in their sixties or greater) learn this exciting form of dance expression.

Irish step and ceili (pronounced kay-lee) dancing is interwoven with the music.

Unlike modern club or interpretive dancing, Irish dance is dependent on the beat and time of the music with the steps performed by dancers. The different styles of tunes (i.e., reel, jig, hornpipe) determine the type of dance performed. In the case of Irish tunes (which also coincides with Scottish and much bluegrass or “mountain” music), the time signature is what determines whether the tune is a reel or a jig for example. Whether it is traditional or progressive, the timing of a reel or jig is constant in Irish music. The dancers can effectively complete their steps to the precision of the feis judges, so that it looks amazing to the delight of the audience.

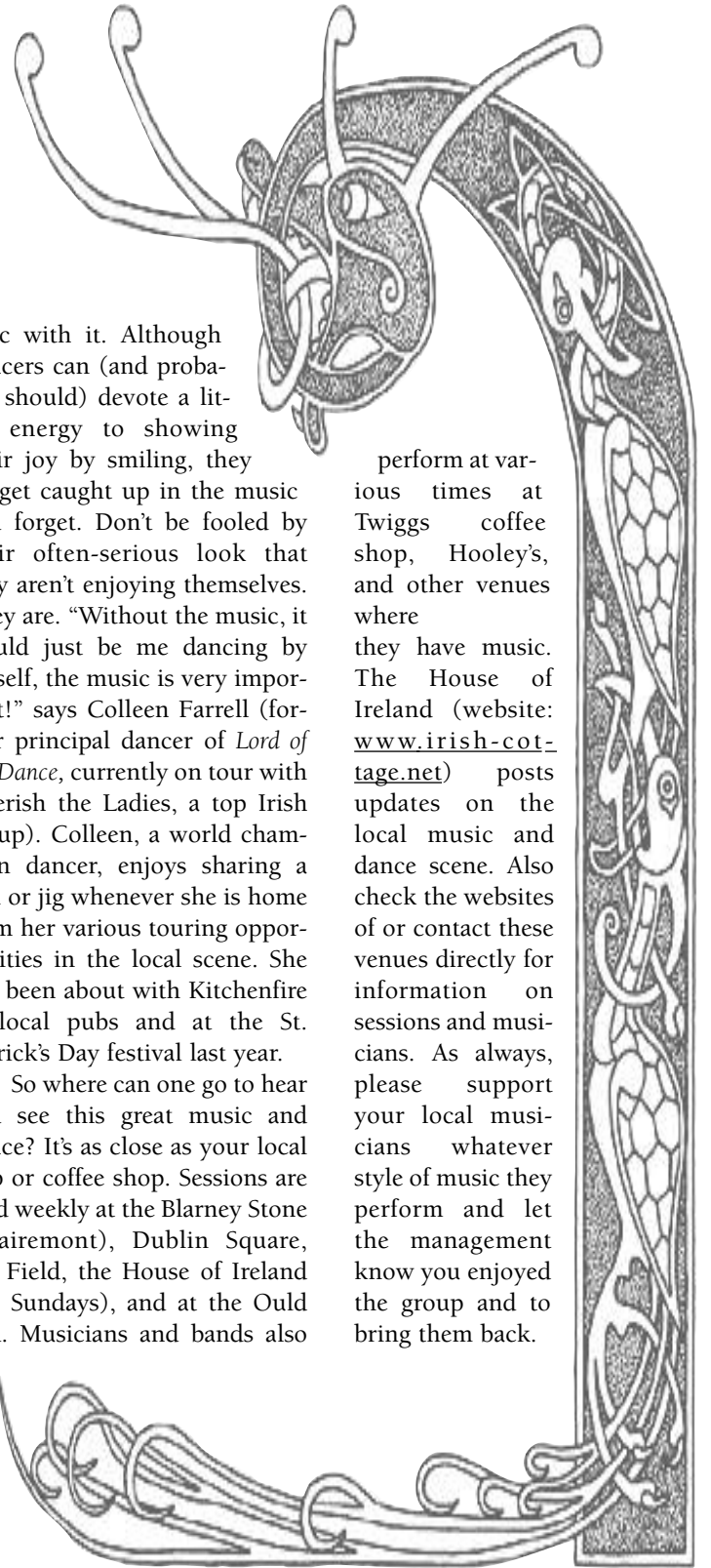
One question often asked of dancers is, “Why don’t you smile when you dance? You look so serious.” The answer to that query is in the symbiosis of the music and dance. Because the dance is dependent on the timing and rhythm of the music, the dancer must always focus on the music in order to stay in



sync with it. Although dancers can (and probably should) devote a little energy to showing their joy by smiling, they do get caught up in the music and forget. Don’t be fooled by their often-serious look that they aren’t enjoying themselves. They are. “Without the music, it would just be me dancing by myself, the music is very important!” says Colleen Farrell (former principal dancer of *Lord of the Dance*, currently on tour with Cherish the Ladies, a top Irish group). Colleen, a world champion dancer, enjoys sharing a reel or jig whenever she is home from her various touring opportunities in the local scene. She has been about with Kitchenfire at local pubs and at the St. Patrick’s Day festival last year.

So where can one go to hear and see this great music and dance? It’s as close as your local pub or coffee shop. Sessions are held weekly at the Blarney Stone (Clairemont), Dublin Square, the Field, the House of Ireland (on Sundays), and at the Ould Sod. Musicians and bands also

perform at various times at Twiggs coffee shop, Hooley’s, and other venues where they have music. The House of Ireland (website: www.irish-cottage.net) posts updates on the local music and dance scene. Also check the websites of or contact these venues directly for information on sessions and musicians. As always, please support your local musicians whatever style of music they perform and let the management know you enjoyed the group and to bring them back.



Mike Marshall, Chris Thile

Force of nature with a flatpick; to say Chris Thile is as staggering a talent as has ever come out of bluegrass would be too limiting. Few have emerged from any genre that compare with Thile’s brilliance says the *Chicago Tribune*. A 20-year old mandolinist and former child prodigy, Thile has exploded into a master musician. In a very short period of time, he has managed to make the mandolin cool to mainstream audiences as well as the national media. Today he is no

Monster Mandolin Duo Coming to La Paloma Theater

longer the fresh-faced little kid who startled the mandolin community by releasing his astounding debut CD at the tender age of 12. No, now he’s the fresh-faced young man who is startling the mandolin community with his unsurpassed technical virtuosity while simultaneously captivating the larger acoustic community with the remarkable success of his prodigy band Nickel Creek.

Joining Thile at the La Paloma Theater will be Mike Marshall, a 20-year veteran of the acoustic music scene. Master of the mandolin as well as guitar and violin, he is able to swing gracefully between jazz, classical, bluegrass, and Latin styles, which is rare in the world of American vernacular instrumentalists. With 20 years’ experience recording and touring with some of the finest acoustic musicians in the world, including Stephane Grappelli, Tony Rice, Mark O’Connor, and Darol Anger, Marshall continues to push

the boundaries of acoustic instrumental music. Today he splits his time playing in two very different groups: one is the bluegrass supergroup Psychograss, which includes Darol Anger on violin, David Grier on guitar, Tony Trischka on banjo, and Todd Phillips on bass. The other is a jazz-inspired quartet that explores the outer reaches of their collective improvisational skills in the Anger Marshall Band. Band members include Darol Anger on violin, Derek Jones on bass, and Aaron Johnston on drums.

Chris Thile and Mike Marshall
Thurs., Feb. 27, 7 p.m.

La Paloma Theater
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Reservations: 877/597-1468



parlor showcase

Story by Robert Woerheide
Photography by Thom Vollenweider

DENNIS CAPLINGER



Dennis Caplinger arrives in a clean, black pickup truck whose vast bed is loaded with instrument cases: guitars, banjos, a mandolin, a Dobro, a fiddle, a bass. As we make our introductions, he explains that these are only a handful of his fifty, or more, instruments. I'm impressed, as much by the immediacy of his friendliness as by the musical smorgasbord he has brought with him. We're at Studio West, in the Rancho Bernardo area, getting ready to talk about the stuff of music, and before I've even pulled out my writer's journal, Dennis has already set me at ease. Getting down to business, it doesn't take long to realize he's a busy man. His work as a session musician for other artists — and for advertising, movies and television shows — takes up as much time as his work with Bluegrass Etc., the band he has been a member of for well over two decades.

Dennis Caplinger grew up in a house not of musicians but of music. By the time he could sense a beat, he was banging on overturned coffee

cans. As he grew older he learned the nuances of rhythm — playing along to albums from his mother's collection. For Dennis, everything changed when he dropped the needle on the grooves of a Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs record. He recalls the memory as we share a couple of colas in the lounge of Studio West, where Dennis is well known and liked. "I put that record on and something just clicked. I couldn't believe that whole bluegrass thing. So I made my mom buy me a banjo, and I started learning to play. I just kind of locked myself away and started wearing records out. I had an old record player that would slow down to half speed, and I'd try to figure out what was actually going on as far as the banjo picking [was concerned]."

Thirty years later, after numerous contests and festivals, and after countless studio hours and plenty of musical theory training, Dennis



Caplinger is a most competent musician. His mastery over so many instruments has fostered a reputation. "When people find out about that, you become stereotyped. They think you're a multi-instrumentalist, but a master of none. [But] I've worked real hard to try to get to an industry standard, at least, level on every instrument." This is reflective not only of his playing, but also of his respect for each instrument and its voice in the musical conversation of bluegrass played properly.

"It always fascinated me how the instruments interacted, especially in a bluegrass band. I started out playing banjo — I had already played a little guitar — and from the banjo I got a Dobro, and then I wanted to learn to play the fiddle, so I got one and agonized with that . . . and then somebody said 'hey you should get a mandolin,' so I got one of those. And after a while of playing the different instruments, you learn how they interact and it helps you have a better under-

standing of how to play [any] one instrument. Like if I'm playing banjo, I'm thinking about what the fiddle player in the band would like me to be playing." This musical civic-mindedness extends to not only his work

in Bluegrass Etc. but also to his session work for other groups or artists.

"Playing sessions is all about figuring things out — it's great to have chops, but 99 percent of your chops are going to stay in the bag when you're on a session. You've got to figure out

what's that one percent of your bag that these people need. I always approach it as what's the tastiest thing I can play here — not what's the flashiest thing. And every once in a while you'll run into a session when you can really burn, and that's when you can drop some jaws."

I asked Dennis about his experiences as an engineer and producer, and about the musical benefits of working on both sides of the studio glass. "One of the things I've discovered is the best producers and engi-

"Even at this stage of accomplishment, where I'm at, you always have somebody that you admire and want to play like."



parlor showcase



neers that I've ever met in the business — they're all players. Producers who are players really know what is going to work musically. Somebody who's not a musician, who just bought the book 'how to produce a record' and is just wearing a hat, they'll throw out an idea and all the musicians in the room know . . . it's never gonna work."

Dennis has worked with many notable musicians and has plans to produce Chris Hillman's [guitarist, bassist and mandolinist from the Byrds, the Flying Burrito Brothers, and the Desert Rose Band among others] upcoming studio album. Dennis has worked closely with Nickel Creek and has played alongside banjo legend Bela Fleck. "That's like sitting next to, well it is, sitting next to probably the finest player living. And it was just neat to hang out and have him say, 'hey man, you sound good. I dig what you're doing.' Even at this stage of accomplishment, where I'm at, you always have somebody that you admire and want to play like." Dennis has also worked with San Diego-based artists such as Berkley Hart, Eve Selis, Tim Flannery, Carol Ames, and Steve Vaus, to name a few.

When Dennis told me he occasionally records instrumentals for Fox's *The Simpsons*, I had to restrain my glee. But his television and movie credits extend beyond this writer's favorite television show. Such credits include work for *Pinkie and the Brain* and *Hysteria*, in addition to numerous programs on PBS, A&E, TNN, and The

History Channel. His playing has been featured on advertising for New York Life, Supercuts, Subway Sandwiches, Discover Card, and Cingular Wireless. His movie soundtrack credits include *Back to the Future III*, *El Diablo*, *Rio Diablo*, and Stephen King's *Apt Pupil*, among others.

Bluegrass Etc. (comprised of Dennis, John Moore and Billy Bryson), has released three albums to date, and the trio is putting finishing touches on their next studio album (as yet untitled), which is scheduled for release this month. They are regular performers at the Temecula Bluegrass

Festival each spring and the Julian Bluegrass Festival each autumn. Information about their performanc-

es, album releases, and the band members themselves can be accessed via the Bluegrass Etc. website at www.tricopolisrecords.com/bluegrassetc.htm, where a link to Dennis' personal home page is also provided.

As if his musical accomplishments weren't already enough, Dennis and his bandmates organize workshops regularly for aspiring musicians. "Bluegrass Etc. normally does workshops at every festival we play. Some workshops are dedicated, week-long affairs. I find when people are trying to learn an instrument, it's like learning a language. You start out by learning little snippets of things, like letters that you put into words. And when you get a command over the vocabulary then you can actually direct it into what you want to say. Teaching people really makes you focus on 'what am I really doing?' and it improves your own playing."

Considering today's continued budget cuts for the arts in public schools, I was curious whether Dennis felt that kids were being sold short — that they would miss opportunities that might foster a desire to

make music part of their adult life. "I don't jump on the arts bandwagon like a lot of other people," he says kindly. "I think if music calls to kids, they'll find a way [to answer that call]. When I was young, I just had to have the banjo. I had to have it. I would have made one if I needed to." Listening to the confident twang of his banjo as he played, I began to believe he knows something about the power of music that surpasses contemporaneous concerns, a secret that might elude the rest of us.

It hasn't eluded his children though, who seem well on their way to making music part of their lives. He and his wife Libby have enjoyed watching their 14-year-old daughter Melissa record vocal tracks at their home studio. "She was [practicing vocals] on her own. And when we recorded her . . . I was impressed. She's got promising talent." Nine-year-old Zachary appears to have a penchant for songwriting, and who knows what their youngest — four-year-old Rachael — might have in store for the future? Apparently his children are wasting no more time than he did, banging away on those coffee cans and raiding his mother's record collection.



Some have called him the consummate sideman, ready with an enviable bag of musical tricks — ready to engineer or produce, to record, or perform. It is no wonder that this musical dynamo, who can play the banjo as skillfully as the guitar or fiddle, would be in high demand as both a live performer and a studio musician. But don't make the mistake of calling him a jack of all trades. Dennis Caplinger is so much more than that: he is a man who understands that music is about something greater than the individual instruments needed to produce sound. To be in his presence is to discover that music has touched him in a most remarkable way, and in the end, it is music that plays him. He has become its instrument.



Bluegrass Etc. Bill Bryson, John Moore, and Dennis Caplinger



the highway's song

THOUGHTS FROM A TRUCK STOP

A Highway from The Magnificent Seven

by Jimmy "Diesel" White

The rigors of trucking and being a trucker take its toll from time to time. As I have said in past articles all the mystic legends of road heroes seem to be slip-sliding away and have been for quite some time now. So there I was in another schedule nightmare. Just before we go to press I'm stuck in Banning, California. Yeah, I know, don't even ask where it is. But for those of you who do know, you bloody well know how hard the wind blows. There are those folks who say it blows so hard there because Indio, California sucks. Well, that's another mystery to be solved.

So, first let me say how sorry I am for missing the Troub's Christmas party and I, wanting to meet such a large fan base — oooops, I mean others in the fight to express themselves in their roots music and who don't allow themselves to be swallowed whole into the matrix mainstream of corporate Holy-Jeepers-we-have-all-this-money-to-spend-on-bubblegum-crap types. However, I did want to mind-meld with a couple of Berkley and Hart types. Sorry I wasn't there. I did, however, rediscover several old artists I've been missing while browsing at the Borders store in El Cajon. That would be Delbert McClinton and Solomon Burke and anyone out there starving for some good, fresh material should check them out if you like R&B and Delta blues. Nice fresh desert air stuff.

OK! Down to the heart of it. I was sitting down one day racking the brain that had been filled with nothing but brain farts. Befuddled, I gave up. There was nothing to write about, so I turned on the TV to suck the rest of any creativity that may be left in me and LOOOOOW and BEHOOOOOLD! The western movie of all western movies, *The Magnificent Seven* was on. WOW! So there I sat watching all the great actors as I had grown up to know them. There was James Coburn who just recently passed from us, Yul Brynner, Charles Bronson, and other greats who I have sadly missed. As I continued to watch, I realized how well they executed their craft, how the script of the movie flowed so well. I suddenly realized I was watching a dying breed, a part of Hollywood's little groups of actors who played well with each other in their various projects, which tells me good casting was another big factor.

It soon dawned on me this is how my beloved country rock and country music have lost their brakes and have smoked them all the way



Jimmy "Diesel" White

through hair-pin turns and switch-back cities. And without proper brake adjustment, stinky brakes will continue to happen! All I know is what I see and hear. When the movie was over I went channel surfing again to a station I wish I could (and should put) a child lock on, which is CMT's *Steam*. There she was, this recently signed bubble-headed bleached blond jumping all over the bed in men's underwear with a guitar. There were the usual close-ups and personal camera shots of her singing into the microphone, with close-up shots of a sexy female tongue that would make those out there with a tongue fetish want to be her next snack! I just wanted to vomit at the lack of quality in Nashville's writing and video production. "But Holy Jeepers, Jimmy D., we got all this money to spend unlike all them hick producers who only cared about how a voice sounded and forgot what their appearance was." No doubt I could go to Nashville and find a singing coach who (for a large fee) would force me to sound like a Tim McGraw type who probably learned it from Garth Brooks (uuugggh — that high pitched whine!). Either you have it or you don't.

Maybe I'm just angry 'cause Santa didn't give me what I wanted this year. Maybe I just haven't done the wild thing in a while, or maybe, just maybe, I too have a subliminal female tongue fetish ever since I watched Faith Hill singing the national anthem years ago and was mesmerized by the cracks on her tongue! Swallow me baby, all your... Stop it! Get a grip, Jimmy D! Maybe its all subliminal! Wow! Down, dog, down. Again I say, it's time to take this white trash on down her throat... I mean down the road dammit! This is Jimmy "D" White, sayin' Bye bye Baby.



NAMM

by Ellen Duplessie

The winter NAMM show, held this past month at the Anaheim Convention Center, was as fun, exhausting, and mind-boggling as ever. It was fun to check out the seemingly endless music related products, old and new. And to even try to see it all was exhausting, not so much that the entire day was spent walking or just standing around (which is even more tiring), but because of the effort in trying to see it all in just one day. The hardest part was just choosing where to go and which booths to be sure not to miss, requiring us to pass too quickly by others that caught our attention as well.

One of our favorite stops was, of course, Taylor



Chris Hillman and Bill Collings, owner of Collings guitars

Guitars. There we were able to not only listen to some of their talented performers and test out any one of their many fine instruments, but also to visit with many local friends from home.

We also visited Gibson, whose showroom display really couldn't compare to what was going on over at Taylor, although they too had a nice large selection of great guitars. We visited the much smaller booths of Collings' guitars, along with those made by Santa Cruz right next door. Of course our trip wouldn't have been complete without a stop by the Fender room. And we surely had to make a stop by the two pedal steel guitar makers there as well — Carter and Sierra. But being the Rickenbacker fanatics that we are, we seemed to spend the most time just hanging out at their booth.

Heading up north to the show on Friday afternoon, we had plans to catch Chris Hillman's performance (who played with Herb Pedersen and Bill Bryson) at the Acoustic Cafe. The show was great, but we were sorry to discover that we had missed Roger McGuinn, who went on just before them. We did get the chance to meet him the next day, however, while visiting with the folks from Rickenbacker.



Jon Hall, owner of Rickenbacker

Other "high-profile" artists who made an appearance at the show were Stevie Wonder, Van Halen, Will Ray, and I'm sure others whom we missed. All in all, our visit to NAMM, along with a stop at the Costa Mesa Guitar Show on the way home, made for one fun, music-filled weekend.



Rock stars Abe DeLeon and Darrel Dawson

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Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

Imitation is the flattest form of sincerity. That it is nearly bereft of substance or lasting value hasn't stopped a lot of celebrities from making oodles of money off it before their eventual arrival at the grimy gates of Hell.

But if it makes 'em happy, and the public buys it, who am I to decry the transitory pleasures they experience in this tiny life before they begin their eternity of painful, agonizing damnation?

Emulation itself can sometimes become nearly holy. Eric Carmen, perhaps the first star of note to shamelessly exhibit the powerful effects of the McCartney Complex (hereafter MC), had within him an immense amount of undeniable talent, even prior to developing his own perfectly individual style. For an admirable period Carmen greatly enriched the cultural desert, an accomplishment that did not go unnoticed by Bizet, who allegedly wrote an opera about him. Even in his early days with the Raspberries, Eric Carmen proved that he could write songs at least as good as several early Beatles classics, while sounding more like McCartney than McCartney himself on occasion.

Other sufferers of MC weren't as fortunate. Dino Martin, Jr. (Dino, Desi, and Billy) crashed and burned. Blondie's Clem Burke hid protectedly behind a drum set, the effects of MC detectable only in his bearing and demeanor. The internalized pressure must be devastating; I hope to be far away when the inevitable explosion occurs. Of course the biggest MC case of all was nearly corporately thrust upon

the English shoulders of one Billy Shears, whose true-life adventures, if ever finally revealed, will astonish the world.

Then there are those who, due to some malicious joke of genetics, are powerless in their struggle for individuality. Their physical resemblance to some other star makes it impossible to attend the same parties or events as their look-alikes, even if such occasions could alleviate the ongoing public suspicion that they are actually one and the same ... or two of a kind ... or identical cousins ... or actually the real thing after all. Think about it: do any undoctored photographs exist that show certain celebrities actually sharing the same space on this earth at the identical time? How about David Duchovny and Pete Townshend? Ellen DeGeneris and Rutger Hauer? Eric and Julia Roberts? Michael Jackson and Chaney's Phantom of the Opera?

Let me be the first to congratulate Nicholas Cage's unbilled double in the recent film *Adaptation*. Word has it that for this, his acting debut, the unknown thespian underwent years of rigorous plastic surgery in order to look exactly like the former Mr. Lisa Marie Presley. An Oscar nod would certainly seem to be within the clouds, were it not for the likelihood that he and Mr. Cage would cancel each other out in the voting.

With women, things become crueler. The imitated star is likely to vanish almost entirely after the onslaught of a canny clone. The judicial system of a perfect world would call for hearty monetary judgments in Kate Bush's favor from the dainty pockets of Tori Amos and Sheryl Crow. A



The inimitable Mr. Sinatra

recent suit filed by the disgustingly sexy Shakira against triple defendants Britney Spears, Pam Anderson Lee Rock, and Charo was thrown out of court due to "circumstantial inversion," a term I'd be happy to explain to the plaintiff in private at the first possible opportunity ... unless I'm too busy crying in my *Moët et Chandon* (another MC?!) over my inability to be more like people who have little time for comparisons but with an eager willingness to accept enjoyment in any form at any time (until they find themselves toasting in Hell, too).

May the Hose they see down there be only my double, an uncritical simulation with courtesy enough to convincingly thrash about beneath the rhythmic contortions of Shakira's clone. And may some damned soul send me pictures immediately.

Oh yeah ... before I go — I'm grateful for having been axed to help MC (\$\$) with the upcoming **Troubadour Showcase at Dizzy's on February 13**. Hard as it may be to believe, that won't be McCartney up there, just the unaffected ME. Yes, yes, yes. And I'll give you all my love. (That's all I do)



Recommended Listening

by Paul Abbott

Regular readers of this column know that I'm an advocate of minimalist recording and processing. To put my money where my mouth is, I've collected a few CDs that are done with a few mics and little or no signal processing.

Philadelphia Orchestra: Nature's Realm

Audiophile recording guru Kavichandran Alexander's Water Lily Acoustics record label has been churning out amazing stereo recordings for years. The twist is that Kavi is old school, using only analog recorders and all-tube signal path. The results are second to none. His 1999 recording of the Philadelphia Orchestra is purported to be the first analog all-tube orchestral recording in 20 years!

This is definitely one of the best recordings I've ever heard. If you're a fan of the orchestra and have a system that can handle serious dynamic range, it will quickly become one of your desert island discs. It features the music of Liszt and Dvorák.

Don Ross: Passion Sessions Acoustic guitar wizard Don Ross headed to a church in Berlin called Passionskirche for this disc, armed only with a few acoustic guitars, a stereo mic and a high-resolution digital two-track recorder. The results are fantastic. His superb acoustic guitar playing shines, and the acoustics of a great performance space are evident. This is a perfect example a modern, high-resolution digital recording done right.



Paul Abbott

Miles Davis: Kind of Blue

This musical milestone isn't just a collection of great compositions, it's also a fantastic example of how to capture a small ensemble with just three mics — a stereo mic for the band and a spot mic for the soloist.

Kind of Blue has been re-issued (and remastered) numerous times, but the latest version employing Sony's Super Bit Mapping technology is the best. It's also one of a few titles currently available on SACD in multi-channel, or "surround sound" format. So if you have a home theater system that can play these discs, this SACD version is a real treat.

So there you have it: three CDs to sink your teeth into that may just change your mind about how great recordings can be made. *Kind of Blue* is vintage, *Passion Sessions* is modern and *Nature's Realm* is a modern take on the benefits of vintage technology. Go out and pick one up, and judge the results for yourself.



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of note



The Bandits 2002 Demo

by Phil Harmonic

The Bandits have manifested a sound that is rough and raw. It's a sound that drives, kicks, and punches at you with a certain kind of intense energy, which makes it a little goofy and a whole lotta fun to listen to. Michael Archuleta on guitar, along with Daniel Archuleta on upright bass, have blended twangy surf guitar with off-melody vocals that are reminiscent of the B-52s and Devo. Michael has written six songs on this demo that are unique and, at times, very funny. An example of his humor is well shown in "Twice as Cool." On "Another Night," they sound like a Beatles contemporary '60's band. On tracks "All the Girls in Heaven" and "I Want You So," they become a rockabilly group. They can shift into sounding like a metal band, with, for example "Into the Darkness," and then play with power at warp speed. The bouncing tempos, combined with vocals that hang on the bottom of the note to create an off-key color to the timbre, make their sound refreshing and different and, most important, FUN!

I like these guys.



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Darlin' and Rose Darlin' and Rose

by Phil Harmonic

One fond memory of being raised in the Midwest during the late '50s was walking around with a transistor radio glued to my ear and listening to the Top 40 Hit Parade. Back then about half of the songs were country-western oriented. And sometimes when listening to one style of music, there are moments when it all starts to sound the same, especially country-western, to me, anyway. This is not the case with *Darlin' and Rose*, an 11-song CD from Nisha Catron and Sylvester E. Bowen.

Bowen, who may be better known as co-owner of Freedom Guitar, and Catron wrote all the songs, seven of which were cowritten. Along with producer Sven-Erik Seaholm, they have created a diverse group of selections that are different yet bonded together, and what flows out is music with a "contact-comfort" feel. Some call it "feel good music." Who doesn't like to feel good? But there are also melancholy sides. "Your Favorite Song," written by Catron, is a tribute to the memory of a friend. Catron shows her ability to broaden her vocal style on another song she wrote called "Million Dollar Smile," a torch song with a beautiful string arrangement backing a haunting melody built on jazz chordal changes. It reminded me of the wonderful k.d. lang and Ben Mink collaborations. The polished production of Seaholm captures the essence of the incredibly solid back-up playing of Dennis Caplinger, Doug Meyer, Mike Bedard, Glen Fisher, and Cecil McBee, Jr. Caplinger's fiddle work and Meyer's pedal steel guitar are sooooo good that they raise the standard of excellence and, in fact, exemplify the professionalism of all aspects of this entire CD. The final track, "My Tears Have Gone to Pain," is a bluesy, jazzy, bass-walking stroll, colored and well-enhanced by Frank Lee Drennen's wispy note bending, surreal harmonica. A nice touch, but the true feel of this CD is heard in the comfort of his voice when Darlin' sings to Rose, "I'll Be Only Yours."



Hatfield Rain Matter of Time

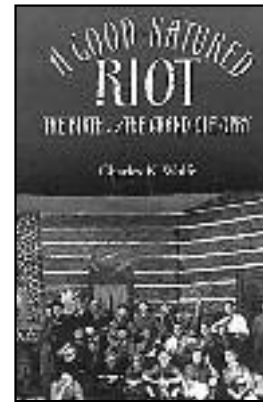
by Phil Harmonic

In 1956 Burt Lancaster starred in *The Rainmaker*. Some say the character was based on the real rainmaker, Charles Hatfield, who migrated to Southern California from the Midwest. In 1915 the city of San Diego hired him to fill the Morena Dam reservoir, offering to pay him \$10,000. But after he made good on his promise, the city reneged and refused to pay him, the courts ruling the phenomenon an act of God and not of his doing. Rather than calling himself a rainmaker, Hatfield preferred the moniker *Moisture Accelerator*. In April 2001 the group named Hatfield Rain emerged — a nice tribute to the man who wasn't paid, but I would have chosen the name Hatfield favored. Well, maybe there's a little too much *inundo* there.

Matter of Time, a new CD from the six-member group, is a blend of rock, country, blues, and jazz, with diverse musical styles inlaid with lyrics about changes, lost love, life's experiences, and dreams of what could be. The musicianship of bandmembers Robert Fedeli (organ), Kyle Ince (lead guitar), Dawn Jackson (lead vocals), Bob Sheehan (drums), Ted Stern (pedal steel), and Mark Tucker (bass) is of the highest quality. All songs were written by Ince and/or Jackson, plus three with Ince collaborator Brian Sharkey, some of which have a *rock* feel and some *country*, etc. The instrumentation and vocals are both lush and full. "Heart of Me," a slow, bluesy lament highlighted by the pedal steel guitar, showcases Jackson's vocal and writing abilities. The feel, created by an atypical chord progression, makes it a great song. Former Usual Suspects' vocalist Sharkey wrote lyrics to Ince's "Don't Surrender Today," "I Mean Well," and "Angels on the Train." A quality lyricist, indeed. The use of violin, organ, pedal steel, and guitar are highly effective. But at times, as with any production, the sound can become a little too polished, making it come across so clean that the edge becomes rounded and along with it, a bit of soul. I have a strong feeling that if you see and hear them live, you'd love them!

BOOK REVIEWS

by Lou Curtiss



A Good-Natured Riot Charles K. Wolfe

This one has been out a while but it's still around. An extremely well-written and beautifully presented book on the birth and early history of the Grand Ole Opry. Lots of photographs of early groups and musicians, many that are printed here for the first time (at least I haven't seen them before). Hardbound with 312 pages. A great read, especially for those interested in the history of country music and bluegrass on the radio.



Singing in the Saddle Douglas B. Green

This well-researched book on the movie cowboy phenomenon of the 1930s and '40s covers Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Tex Ritter, Sons of the Pioneers, and dozens of others. It outlines the artists' work on radio, in the movies, and their respective recording careers. Author Green is a member of Riders in the Sky as well as a noted country music historian. Singing cowboy fans will love the rare photos and an extensive index.



In the Country of Country Nicolas Dawidoff

This is one of the best written recent books on country music that I have seen. Dawidoff explores with keen insight the lives of some of the more interesting music personalities, such as Ira and Charlie Louvin, Doc Watson, Johnny Cash, Bill Monroe, George Jones, Ralph Stanley, and the Carter Family.



A Hot Bed of Musicians Paula Anderson

Here is a fascinating look at a bunch of old-time musicians from the Whitetop/New River Valley area of Virginia/North Carolina. Specifically, the book focuses on Ola Belle Reed, Albert Hash, Uncle Dave Sturg II, and Wayne Henderson, but the appendices list many other musicians from this area. This one is available by mail order direct from the University of Tennessee or just about anywhere. A must read for old-time music fans.

Quote

"It's hard to sing and be mean at the same time."

— Gene Autry

(Gene must have liked this line because he also used it on his radio show and I heard him say it once live at the *Town Hall Party*. It belongs in *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* — ol' brother Lou)

'round about



Local Yokels

A HAYSEED'S MUSIC PICKS FOR FEBRUARY

by Gus T. Williker

This 'billy is goin' back to the booth!

No, I didn't convince sum local crap-ass radio station that thar's life beyond **311** and **blink-182**, but I did score a gig as a live club deejay! I'll be spinnin' tunes and helpin' to book bands for a **Roots/Rockabilly/Country Nite** at In Cahoots (5373 Mission Center Road, 619/291-8635). This twang thang will be happenin' every Thursday nite, and we're gonna have some great bands rollin' thru.

Now as far as the deejay stuff goes... well, proof is in the playlist! Me 'n my co-deejay Steve will be spinnin' bands like **Deke Dickerson & the Ecco-Fonics**, **Dave Alvin**, **BR549**, the **Lucky Stars**, **Split Lip Rayfield**, the **Scotch Greens**, **Uncle Tupelo**, **Roger Wallace**, **Hillbilly Hellcats**, the **Gourds**, **Frog Holler**, the **Domino Kings**, the

Derailers, **Cowboy Nation**, **Johnny Cash**, **Rattled Roosters**, **Hayseed Dixie**...

If that sounds like good listenin' to you, come on by, and if not (as my flick hero Corkie would say) — I HATE YOU, AND I HATE YER ASS FACE!

Now let's look at some shows comin' up...

If you wanna kick off February with a bang, go see the **Barnyard Ballers** at Tio Leo's Lounge on Saturday, February 1 (No, people, no! I meant "bang" as in a firecracker, nothin' else!). The Ballers ain't no PG-13 affair, so be prepared fer some loud, naughty psychobilly.

My birthday is on Monday, February 3 (send presents to: Gus, po box 90233, San Diego, CA 92169), and it's gonna be tough decidin' where to go that nite. The **Weary Boys** are comin' to the Casbah (www.casbahmusic.com), and that's mighty temptin'. These fellars play

uptempo country that shreds like a CS499 Troy-Bilt Chipper. But, there is a heck-of-a-show at the Scene too! **Berkley Hart** and the **American Folk Singers** are playin' the Clairemont Mesa venue along with **Alice Peacock** (more info at www.hob.com). That should be dang good too...

It's right back to the Casbah on Tuesday, February 4, cuz **BR549** and **Bartender's Bible** are bringin' it to ya, my brutha. It's the perfect combination...BR is bold and catchy, and BB gritty and raw. You'll satisfy yer entire podunk palette.

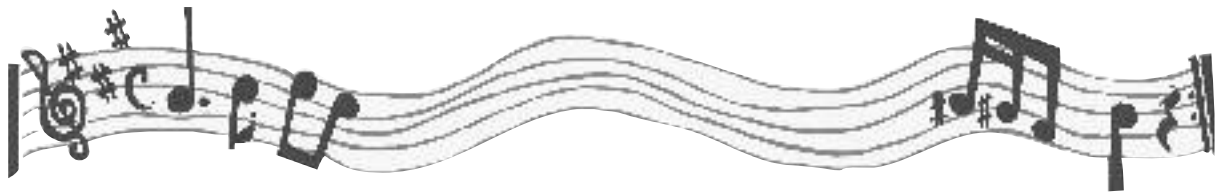
The **Insane Clown Posse** and **2 Live Crew** are gonna be at Canes Bar & Grill on Wednesday, February 12 (Didn't San Diego suffer enuff indignity hostin' Raiders' fans fer the Super-Rich-People's-CLEAR-THE-GASLAMP-OF-UNSEEMLY-BUMS-AND-ASK-FOR-200-MILLION-DOLLARS-FOR-ANOTHER-STADIUM-WHILE-CITY-WATER-

PIPES-BURST-AND-KIDS-GIT-CRAPPY-SCHOOLIN'-Bowl?!)

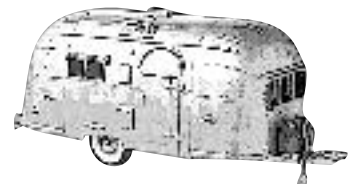
I doubt you need any convincin' about **Dwight Yoakam** comin' to 4th & B on Thursday, February 13 (www.4thandb.com). It is bein' billed as an acoustic nite, so expect a stripped down Yoakam and some good ol' tunes.

Deke Dickerson & the Ecco-Fonics and **Dick Smiley** will be at Tio Leo's Lounge on Saturday, February 15 (www.tioleos.com). Both bands are quite diverse, with Dickerson leanin' toward rockabilly and Smiley to country, but with a whole buncha styles in between.

Chris Stuart and Backcountry will be at Borders Books & Music in Mission Valley on Friday, February 21 (1072 Camino del Rio North). It's free, and Backcountry is definitely worth the look-see (and hear). xoxo, Gus



Gus Williker, the "Sexiest Man Alive," according to the media.



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 — The Boston Herald

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'round about

FEBRUARY MUSIC CALENDAR

saturday • 1

International Dance Festival, Balboa Park: workshops and dance instruction 10am-6pm in Recital Hall. Continues Sunday. Call 858/694-0424 for more info.

Jason Mraz, Spreckels Theater. Call for info.

Angela Correa/Tom Brosseau, Cafe Elysa, Carlsbad, 7-10pm.

Dan Levinson, San Dieguito United Methodist Church, 7:30pm. Reservations: 858/566-4040.

Arlo Guthrie, California Center for the Performing Arts, Escondido, 8pm.

sunday • 2

International Dance Festival, Club Room, Balboa Park, noon-5pm. Call 858/694-0424 for info.

Joe Rathburn, Dark-Thirty Productions, Lakeside, 7:30pm. Call 619/443-9622 for info.

Jason and Jane, Twiggs, 8:30pm.

monday • 3

Berkley Hart/American Folk Singers/Alice Peacock, The Scene, Clairemont. Call for info.

tuesday • 4

North County Bluegrass & Folk Club w/ Andy Rau Band, Round Table Pizza, 1161 E. Washington, Escondido, 7pm. Call 760/724-1785 for info.

Bartender's Bible/BR549, Casbah, 8:30pm.

The Enchanted, Lestats, 9pm.

wednesday • 5

Auditions for two acoustic multi-instrumentalists for San Diego Repertory Theater's production of **Fire on the Mountain** opening in May. Thru Feb. 9. Call (619) 231-3586, #650 for info.

Blind Boys of Alabama, Mandeville Auditorium, UCSD, 7:30pm.

Sue Palmer Trio, Bayou Bar & Grill, 6-8pm.

thursday • 6

Music Mart Showcase, 122 So. Solana Hills Drive, Solana Beach, 7:30pm. Call 858/354-6978 for info.

friday • 7

Ron Spears and Within Tradition/Down the Road, Poway Auditorium, Poway Park. Call 858/679-4854 for info.

Eve Selis, Humphrey's Backstage Lounge, 6-8pm.

Robin Henkel, Coyote Bar & Grill,

Want to be included in our monthly calendar?

Email the dates, locations, and times your band is playing to:

mrkentman@cox.net

Carlsbad, 6:30-10:30pm.

Brian Koehler, solo guitar, Pannikin-Del Mar, 8pm.

Peter Sprague & Blurring the Edges, Dizzy's, 8pm.

Terry Matsuoka, Twiggs, 8:30pm.

saturday • 8

Peggy Watson/Robin Adler, Benefit for Peace Concert for Activist San Diego, World Beat Center, Balboa Park. Call for info.

Tim Flannery, East County Center for the Performing Arts, El Cajon, 7:30pm.

Skelpin', Old Poway Park, 7:30pm. Reservations: 858/566-4040.

Peter Bolland, Twiggs, 8:30pm.

Bayou Brothers, Patricks II, 9pm.

sunday • 9

Deborah Liv Johnson/Peter Sprague, Christ Lutheran Church, 4761 Cass St., Pacific Beach. Call 858/483-2300 for info.

Sue Palmer/Motel Swing Orchestra, The Flame, 7pm.

wednesday • 12

Sue Palmer Trio, Bayou Bar & Grill, 6-8pm.

thursday • 13

Dwight Yoakam, 4th & B. Call for info.

Troubadour Showcase w/ Robin Henkel, Steve White, 7th Day Buskers, Kitchenfire, Fowl Play, Dizzy's, 7:30pm.

Eve Selis, Humphrey's Backstage Lounge, 9:30pm.

friday • 14

The Lettermen, Copley Symphony Hall. Call for info.

Bayou Brothers, Downtown Cafe, 182 E. Main St., El Cajon, 7pm.

Steve Gillette/Cindy Mangsen, San Dieguito United Methodist Church, 7:30pm. Reservations: 858/566-4040.

Int'l Silver Strings Submarine Band w/ Billy Watson, blues/jazz, Pannikin-Del Mar, 8pm.

Berkley Hart, Lestats Coffee House, 8pm.

Sue Palmer/Motel Swing Orchestra, Croce's Top Hat, 9pm.

saturday • 15

The Lettermen, Copley Symphony Hall. Call for info.

Kensington Avenue/Kristi Martel, Twiggs, 8:30pm.

Baja Blues Boys, Cafe Crema, Pacific Beach, 9pm.

tuesday • 18

Shawn Colvin, East County Center for the Performing Arts, El Cajon, 7:30pm.

wednesday • 19

Sue Palmer Trio, Bayou Bar & Grill, 6-8pm.

thursday • 20

Sue Palmer & Friends, Calypso Restaurant, Leucadia, 7:30pm.

Bayou Brothers, Patricks II, 9pm.

friday • 21

Eve Selis, Cannibal Bar, Catamaran Hotel. Call for info.

Chris Stuart and Backcountry, Borders Books & Music, Mission Valley. Call for info.

Calima Trio, jazz, Pannikin-Del Mar, 8pm.

Becky Hammett/Patrick Dennis/American Folk Singers, Twiggs, 8:30pm.

7th Day Buskers, Whistle Stop, 9pm.

saturday • 22

Bluegrass Night with Bill Knopf, Clearly Bluegrass, & Tom Corbett, Hilltop Center, 331 E. Elder, Fallbrook. Call 760/723-2563 for info.

Buddy Blue, Tio Leos, 5302 Napa St. Call for info.

Angela Correa/Ryan Blue/Jonathan Terrell/Joe Rathburn, Hot Monkey Love Cafe, 7pm.

Robin & Linda Williams, San Dieguito United Methodist Church, 7:30pm. Reservations: 858/566-4040.

Derek Duplessie, Claire de Lune, 8pm.

sunday • 23

Amnesty International Concert w/ Tim Flannery, Berkley Hart & Others, The Ould Sod, all day. Call 619/284-6594 for info.

tuesday • 25

Boogie Woogie Extravaganza w/ Sue Palmer & Lisa Otey, Dizzy's, 7:30pm.

thursday • 27

Sue Palmer & Friends, Calypso Restaurant, Leucadia, 7:30pm.

Mike Marshall/Chris Thile, La Paloma Theater, Encinitas, 7pm. Call 760/436-5774 for more info.

friday • 28

Hot Club of San Diego, blues, Pannikin-Del Mar, 8pm.

Chrystal Yoakum, Twiggs, 8:30pm.

WEEKLY

every sunday

7th Day Buskers, Hillcrest Farmer's Market/DMV parking lot, 10am-1pm.

Celtic Ensemble, Twiggs, 4pm.

Extreme Country, hosted by **Mike Vlack**, 7-10pm, KSON (97.3 FM).

Jazz Roots, hosted by **Lou Curtiss**, 9-10:30pm, KSDS (88.3 FM).

The Bluegrass Special, hosted by **Wayne Rice**, 10-midnight, KSON (97.3 FM).

every monday

Swing Dancing, Tio Leos, 5302 Napa St., 6-8pm.

Tango Dancing, Tio Leos, 5302 Napa St., 8pm.

Open Mic Night, Lestats. Call 619/282-0437 for info.

Open Poetry Reading, Twiggs, 8pm.

every tuesday

Comedy Experiment, Lestats, 9pm.

Zydeco Tuesdays, Tio Leos, 5302 Napa St., 6:30pm.

every wednesday

Open Mic Night, Twiggs. Sign-ups at 6:30pm.

Hatchet Brothers, The Ould Sod, 9pm.

Bayou Brothers, Sassafras Bar & Grill, 3667 India St., 6-9pm.

every thursday

Will Edwards' Music Show w/ the Bitty Bums/Tom Bowles, Twiggs, 8:30pm.

Roots/Rockabilly/Country Night w/ Gus Williker, In Cahoots, Mission Valley. Call 619/291-8635 for info.

Hot Rod Lincoln, Tio Leos, 5302 Napa St., Call for info.

NOTE: Times and dates are subject to change. Please check with venues for information.

DARK-THIRTY PRODUCTIONS www.darkthirty.com presents

JOE RATHBURN

Joe Rathburn is a veteran singer/songwriter who focuses on thoughtful, somewhat spiritual songs about the world and our place in it. His acoustic guitar-based songs are reminiscent of Croce and Henley, and other greats before him. Rathburn's broad range of sounds in his sincere storytelling to k-pop style has only gotten better with time.



**Sunday, February 2
7:30 p.m. \$15**

RESERVATIONS: (619) 443-9622

DARK-THIRTY PRODUCTIONS www.darkthirty.com presents

MICHAEL SMITH • Sunday, March 2, 7:30 p.m. \$15



Michael Smith's songs have been recorded by dozens of artists in the folk, country, and pop music genres. Having spent four decades writing songs, some of his better known ones include "The Dutchman," "Sycamore River," and "I Brought My Father With Me." In addition, Smith received national acclaim for his original music for the Steppenwolf Theater's production of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

RESERVATIONS: (619) 443-9622

the local seen

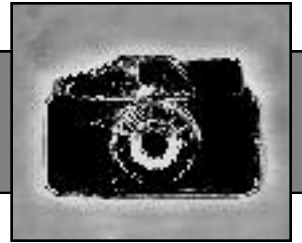


Photo: Thom Voltenweider



Shania Twain performing at Superbowl

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



Lyle Duplessie playing for Rickenbacker at NAMM Show

Photo: Thom Voltenweider



Dixie Chicks sing National anthem at Superbowl

Photo: Millie Moreno



Dead Rock West

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



Keith Wetherly at NAMM Show for Taylor Guitar

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



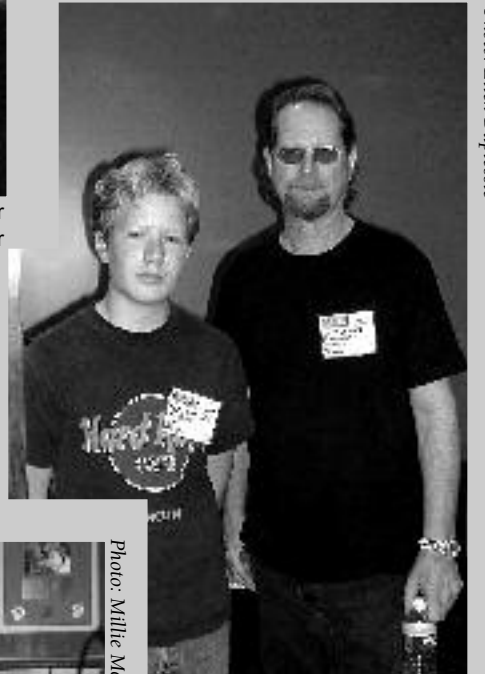
Will Ray at NAMM Show

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



Chris Hillman, Bill Bryson, Herb Pedersen at NAMM Show.

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



Derek Duplessie & Roger McGuinn at NAMM Show

Photo: Ellen Duplessie



Gregory Page w/ Millie at Millie's House Concert

Photo: Millie Moreno



CJ Hutchins at the Ould Sod



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