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SAN DIEGO
ROUBADOOR
Alternative country, Americana, roots,
folk, gospel, and bluegrass music news



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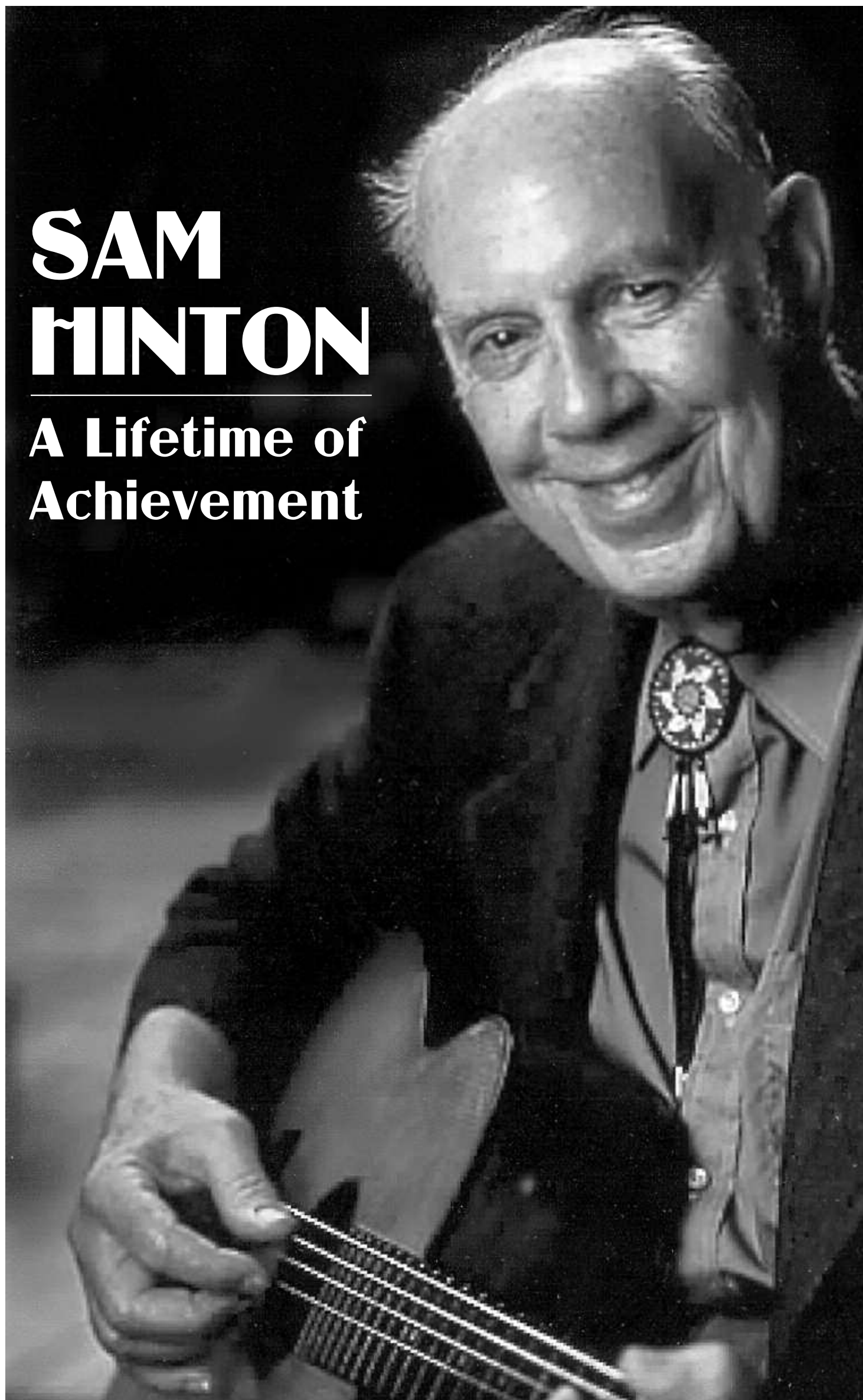
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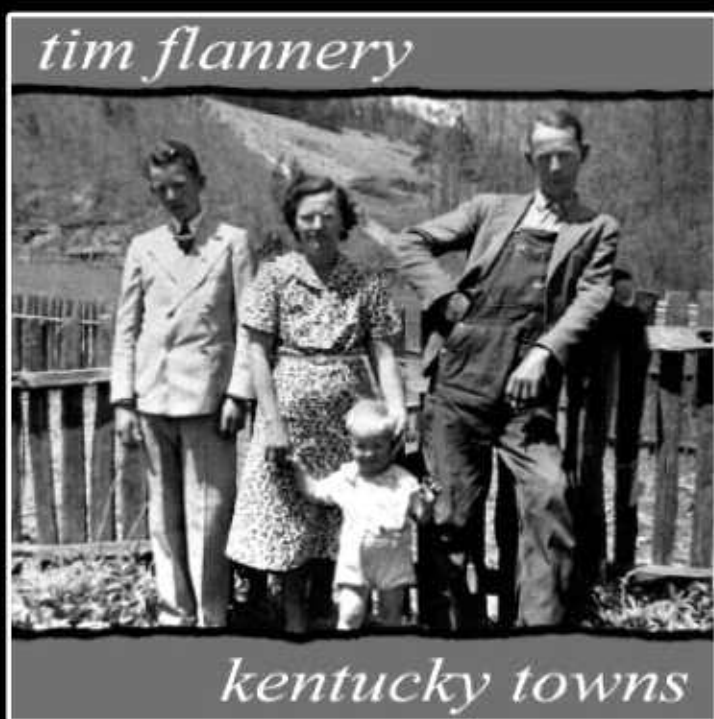
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welcome mat



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To promote, encourage, and provide an alternative voice for the great local music that is generally overlooked by the mass media; namely the genres of 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, and suggestions by email to: sdtroubadour@yahoo.com or by snail mail to: San Diego Troubadour, P.O. Box 164, La Jolla, CA 92038-0164.

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The San Diego Troubadour is dedicated to the memory of Ellen Duplessie, whose vision inspired the creation of this new paper.

Spring Harp Fest: The Best Harmonica Party in Town!

Story and photography by Millie Moreno

Last month I decided to attend the Fifth Annual Spring Harp Fest, also known as the Harmonica Festival. Located in Harry Griffen Park in La Mesa, the festival was more than I expected. What an incredible event!

I love harmonicas and the way they sound, which is what prompted me to attend. However, I must admit that as a stranger to the event and not knowing what to expect, I thought, "Okay, I'll get a few shots for the S.D. Troubadour, and then I'll get the heck out of here so I can have some real fun elsewhere and enjoy my weekend!" Two hours later I found myself on stage with a harmonica in my mouth, taking part in the long-awaited event of the day: The Unknown Players Jam ...

Although the park was very crowded, I found a parking spot and slowly made my way, camera in hand, to the festival. As I strolled toward the event, just a five-minute skip through the park, I was happy to see families and pets frolicking nearby. Everyone was so friendly, smiling, and happy; they seemed content just to be present.

I finally arrived and was surprised to find a little outdoor community amphitheater and a very large stage, not to mention quite an ample sound system. As soon as I heard the music, I thought, "Yeah, that's what I'm talkin' 'bout!" Some good old-fashioned blues music! No mainstream music, no contrived marketing, no music that oozes commercialism.

Cameron (that's what I call my camera) started clicking away and I got some great shots of the musicians there,

including Billy Watson, Johnny Mastro of the Mama's Boys, Harmonica Jack, Ted Staak, and many others. Amateur and professional blues and harmonica musicians came from far and near to watch and perform. I got the feeling I was in the company of musicians who loved to play simply because they love the music. For them, this was not just another humdrum gig they went to just to get a paycheck, but rather these musicians really felt the music. It moved them. It moved others, and before I knew it, the music moved me ... out into the parking lot because I had one too many. Just kidding. I couldn't help but notice that the musicians were cared for by a booth of women who provided home-made cookies and brownies, sodas, and bottled water — all free of charge. The Harmonical Festival is an alcohol-free event, sponsored by local businesses. Admission is free.

From 11 a.m. until 6:30 p.m., parents sat in the amphitheater under the warm California sun, while their children, visible and safe, played in the park behind the stage. While people sat in lawn chairs and had a picnic on the grass, they were entertained by some of the state's best blues harmonica players. Everyone was clapping their hands and cuttin' a rug! It was like a 1960's love-in or a mini Roots Festival that everyone, from Harp Fest virgins to Harp Fest pros, automatically felt a part of. I found here a mutual admiration society that won over every individual within ear shot.

In addition to the music, there were several booths present. One displayed and sold antique harmonicas, while another featured an old saxo-



phone, which, when disassembled, revealed a harmonica within its depths. I had such a good time while I was there. I played with the dogs, got hit in the head by a frisbee, and had bubbles blown all over my camera and lens. That's right, mut-



Founders John Frazier, Budd Willis, and Chet Cannon



Display of antique instruments



Billy Watson

lovers! Harry Griffen Park allows dogs! Founded by Chet Cannon, John Frazier, and Budd Willis, the Spring Harp Fest began as a private support group for the Blues in the Schools Program. Since 2002 the event has been a fundraiser for the Girls Club Music Program, which is aimed at teaching girls to be responsible individuals and productive members of society in addition to increasing the visibility of some very talented blues harmonica musicians. Over the last five years, their activities have morphed into an annual event, featuring talent from all over the U.S. Thanks to more than 60 sponsors,



Winner Dan McDowell



Photo of a musician playing guitar.

including KPRI, La Mesa Guitar Center, and Henry's Marketplace, the group has been able to meet its initial goal of purchasing 12 key-boards and offering beginning piano lessons for kids in the Girls Club Summer Program. They are now working toward purchasing 200 harmonicas and offering harmonica workshops at the Girls Club's 30th Street location. The group hopes to offer each child an opportunity for musical expression and perhaps generate an interest in the music we adults know as the blues. Concurrently the group hopes to help promote local harmonica musicians by increasing visibility and providing a venue.

When it was time for the event's finale, the World Famous Unknown Players Jam contest called all amateur harmonica players in the audience to take the stage. Accompanied by one of the bands featured during the show that represented an eclectic mix of blues musicians, all from other bands, I watched people of all ages, shapes, and sizes, including men, women, and children from three to 70+

years old, take a crack at winning. After each contender had a chance to strut his or her stuff, they all took center stage during the voting process. The audience served as both judge and jury. This year winner Dan McDowell was presented with a gold and green engraved trophy.

I'm grateful to everyone at the festival for their kindness and hospitality. It was such a blast, I can't wait for next year's Harp Fest! The San Diego Troubadour and I would like to sincerely thank, Chet, John, and Budd, not only for helping local music and local musicians but also for their support and dedication to the children and the community. It is the teamwork of gracious individuals such as you who keep things vital by reminding people and organizations of the importance of music in the community and in the schools. Musicians who support their fellow musicians give the local music community the strength it needs to survive.

For more information about the Spring Harp Fest, to get on the mailing list, or to become a sponsor or performer at next year's event, email Chet Cannon at Blushouter@aol.com. Spring Fest is a Big Blue World Production.



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full circle

by Lyle Duplessie

PART TWO

The war years of 1941-1945 proved to be defining ones for Rose. Her brothers Fred and Cal were drafted in early 1942. A shell of the Maddox Brothers and Rose continued with Don and, occasional band mate, brother Cliff. With Don on fiddle and Cliff on guitar, Rose played upright bass. Within a year, Don too was in the service. Cliff avoided military duty due to ongoing health problems. Mother Lula then thrust a mandolin into the hands of little brother Henry, and he was ordered to learn it.

Radio shows for the McClatchy network were put on hold, but this makeshift trio continued to find work playing the California club circuit. Rose was being forced into the forefront without the benefit and support of her regular bandmates. Nevertheless, she embraced the challenge. Rose would learn that she was a born performer, and not merely window dressing or a cute curiosity of the Maddox Brothers band. It was during this time that the increasingly eccentric Lula rushed the 16-year-old Rose into a disastrous marriage. The groom was army sergeant Enoch Byford Hale, or "E.B.," a man several years her senior. Heretofore, jealously guarded by Lula, Rose was now being thrown into the deep end of a relationship that she was not prepared for and didn't want. So protected had Rose been, that the evening before the wedding Lula and older sister Alta sat Rose down and gave her a crash course in her wifely honeymoon obligations. Rose was aghast at the idea—how could such things be! Eleven months after the marriage, Rose was with child. E.B. promptly blamed it on a neighbor and deserted his pregnant wife. Arguably, E.B. wasn't anymore prepared for matrimony than Rose. Nine months later Rose gave birth to her only child, Donnie.

A short six months after her son's birth Rose learned that Roy Acuff was in L.A. auditioning for a girl singer. She got an audition, but not the job. Soon thereafter she also tried out for Bob Wills' Texas Playboys line up. Though well known by Wills, who had relocated to the San Fernando Valley during the war years, Rose was again rejected. Though not told at the time, this rejection was not based on any lack of talent or ability on her part. Wills knew that to get Rose he would also be getting the overbearing Lula. Shunned by national headliners like Acuff and Wills, the ever plucky Rose was sought out by regional acts like Arky Stark and Dave Stogner, but more for her considerable skills as a bass player, not as a group spark plug.

As professionally frustrating and personally painful as the war years were for Rose, her purpose and goals had come into focus. She was driven to make music and she knew it. She had also developed a confidence in her own ability to perform—with or without her brothers.

1945 brought the end to the war and the return of Fred, Cal, and Don. The family band was quickly resurrected. The new addition of Henry on mandolin made the band more potent than ever. The immediate post war years also brought new amplified instruments. Soon the Maddox Brothers and Rose were known as not only the most colorful hillbilly band but also the loudest. Its musical repertoire changed too. People wanted to dance, so the band abandoned its folksy roots and adopted a hot-rodded R&B sound. They augmented this sound with a succession of "hired hands"—steel guitarist Bud Duncan, guitarists Jimmy Winkle and Gene LeMasters, and even gave 16 year old Roy Nichols his first real gig. Nichols, master of the Telecaster, went on to become the cornerstone of the

Queen of Hillbilly Swing

ROSE MADDOX

This was originally intended to be a two-part story but has managed to take on a life of its own. Rather than limit it, I have found that I'm better off letting Rose's story take me where it wants to go. Rose Maddox's life as a musical force was too far ranging, too colorful, and often too painful for a cursory overview. She helped

to define the borders of country music/Americana, and her contributions are at its roots and interwoven through its branches. So you readers who are interested in Rose Maddox as an American original and musical pioneer can look forward to another installment following this one next month.

Bakersfield sound, backing such luminaries as Lefty Frizzell, Wynn Stewart, and Merle Haggard.

In 1946 the band was signed to 4-Star Records. This label was notorious for swindling artists. Still, the Maddox Brothers and Rose managed to use it to their own advantage. Then, as now, selling records was the goal. But the band's strength rested in its ability as a LIVE act. None were stellar musicians, yet the band drew crowds in the thousands



Rose and Fred on the road, early 1950s



Promo shot of the band in their Nathan Turk finery, late 1940s



Columbia promo for Rose's solo career, mid-1950s



Rosie and Retta, mid-1950s



Rose and E.B. Hale on their wedding day, 1943



Rose and Bob Wills, mid-1950s



Cal and Rose backstage at the Opry with Hawkshaw Hawkins, 1956

Nashville. What should have been a healthy rivalry between the two regions would turn into a bitter winner-take-all war in a few short years. The West Coast had produced such stars as Gene Autry, Tex Ritter, Spade Cooley, Merle Travis, and Tex Williams. These entertainers and artists shared equal star billing with the Opry's Roy Acuff, Ernest Tubbs, and Red Foley. What gave Nashville its ultimate edge was Hank Williams' Opry debut in June, 1949. Distrust and misgivings about the band's only Opry appearance were mutual, and it was never asked back, while the band didn't care to return. It found Opry musicians snobbish and its reception less than warm by the powers that be. So much for Southern hospitality!

The band's colorful Nathan Turk duds and their showmanship proved, once again, that this was an outfit geared for live performance, not recording. In 1953 the band left 4-Star for Columbia. Although there was no marked bump in record sales with the move, the big label name did open doors. Rejected by the Opry, they nevertheless became stars on other regional live radio shows—*Louisiana Hay Ride*, *Hometown Jamboree*, and *Town Hall Party*. They blazed a trail across television, radio, and on jukeboxes nationwide. Since they were everywhere across the broadcast media, ironically they hurt their record

sales even further. Economics 101 teaches that measured scarcity of a commodity makes it more valued. The band was anything but scarce, so why buy the cow when you get the milk for free?

Rock 'n' roll and the new direction in country music also took its toll. Arguably, the band has been credited for birthing the rockabilly school of rock 'n' roll. For years they had blended country and R&B. Adding Fred Maddox's slap-styled bass and Rose's wiggling and jiggling, the band had been doing rockabilly ten years before Elvis. But popular focus was on the headliner—the Hank Williams, the Elvis, the Buddy Holly. The band concept was minimized and would remain so until the Beatles. The only person with that name recognition and star potential in the Maddox Brothers and Rose was Rose herself. In fact, she already had a solo contract with Columbia, concurrent with that of the band.

1956 marked the end of the Maddox Brothers and Rose as a band. It also marked the beginning of an uncompromised solo career for Rose. Except for Fred, all the brothers were ready to try their hand at something else. Fred, Don, and Henry would continue to find work up and down the coast for a few more years. They even made an ill-fated attempt at replacing Rose with Henry's wife Retta. But without Rose

the spark was gone. Lula would continue to shadow Rose, who would retain brother Cal on guitar. Now all eyes were on Rose.

In 1956 Rose scored a smash hit with the song "I Love a Tall Man." Momentum from the record was so substantial that Rose was invited to guest on the *Grand Ole Opry*. Dressed in a provocative cowgirl outfit to match the slightly naughty lyrics of the song, Rose worked the audience into a tizzy while the conservative Opry managers went apoplectic. Rose was an instant Opry sensation and soon became a member of the show's cast of stars. Rose, Cal, and Lula set up residence in Nashville. She was performing every Friday and Saturday night for the regional Opry T.V. show. It wasn't long, however, before she was pulled from these appearances resulting from Opry politics and jealousies centering around her newfound popularity. Rose and family jumped in their Cadillac and Cal drove them back to California.

On her return to California Rose attempted to expand her artistic parameters by recording a pop, a gospel, and even a bluegrass album with Bill Monroe. Rose was proud of the results, but rather than enlarging her audience, it appears that she only confused radio program directors. Adding further trauma to this chaotic period was her son, Donnie. Now in his teens, the boy had been raised in a succession of boarding schools and summer camps. He was ready to come home, but Rose wasn't. At this time brother Don had bought a cattle ranch in Ashland, Oregon. Donnie went to live at his uncle's spread. At least for the time being, this would provide a temporary solution in dealing with her increasingly rebellious son.

A much more difficult situation than her son was that of her mother. Without the band, Rose became the focus of all of Lula's control and eccentricities. The final painful break came in 1958. Rose had met Jimmy Brogdon, owner of the Wheel Club in Oceanside. Brogdon was well connected in the music industry and his club regularly hosted such luminaries as George Jones, Johnny Cash, Willie Nelson, Roger Miller, and the up-and-coming Merle Haggard. Brogdon would now host another star: Rose. It didn't take long before Brogdon and Rose were in love. To Lula, this was a tabu of the highest order. Despite Lula's threats, the couple married in 1959. A bitter, angry, and irreconcilable Lula was finally forced out of her daughter's life, joining Donnie on Don's cattle ranch.

1959 also brought an end to Rose's contract with Columbia. She was quickly snapped up by Capitol, a country friendly label at the time. In short order, Capitol quickly released her first single, "What Makes Me Hang Around?" with flip side "Gambler's Love." While Nashville producers like Chet Atkins were sanitizing country music with lush production, Rose's producer at Capitol, Ken Nelson, gave Rose free reign. Guys like Nelson understood that a battle was raging for the heart and soul of country music. It was the Nashville sound versus that of the West Coast, or more specifically, the Bakersfield sound, which was rowdy, with the metallic bite of a Fender Telecaster and the punch of drums and bass, accented with pedal steel guitar. Artists like Rose, Red Simpson, Wynn Stewart, Tommy Collins, Buck Owens, and Merle Haggard campaigned for this hard-scrabble sound. These folks could play a joint like Blackboard Cafe on a Friday or Saturday night to a pack of hell-raising ranch hands and roughnecks, then come Monday record the same music without reservation. Moreover, these artists were willing underdogs in this fight.

Continued on page 12.



Recordially, Lou Curtiss

Rosie and Me

I guess I first heard Rose Maddox on Town Hall Party sometime around 1953. She was calling herself the Sweetheart of Country Swing in those days and performing with brothers Cal, Henry, Fred, and Cliff as the Maddox Brothers and Rose. I was a 14-year-old kid when I went to the Town Hall with my folks for the first time. (Over a ten year period, I was probably at Town Hall more than a hundred times.) I was impressed enough to start looking for them on the radio. It didn't take long for me to find them on XERB out of Rosarito Beach, on an L.A. station (I forget which one), and live right in my own South Bay neighborhood. They would be at the 21 Club in National City where I could stand in the alley at the side of the stage and listen or even go inside if I promised not to drink since I was underage.

I got to know Rose and Fred a little, and Cal used to call me "the little bastard." Henry mostly ignored me (Fred used to call Henry "the working girls' friend" and I guess he was.) and Cliff had left by this time to form his own group, whom I saw once at Town Hall. The guitar player in the band was Roy Nichols who mostly palled around with Henry and Cal, so I never got to know him very well.

The Maddox Brothers and Rose played at other places in San Diego, including the Bostonia Ballroom east of El Cajon. I saw them twice there, once on a bill with Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys when Rose got up and sang a tune or two with Bob, and another time at an ice skating place downtown when they shared the bill with Ernest Tubbs. I think I saw them once in a parade — maybe the Mother Goose Parade in El Cajon — and once at the Del Mar Fair.

By the late 1950s the Maddox Brothers and Rose were out on the road. I remember seeing them on Doye O'Dell's Western Varieties television show around 1957 for the last time. They had sold their interest in the two 21 Clubs (the other one was in Oceanside) and by late 1958, they had quit performing altogether.

Around 1962 when Rose was starting a solo career, I saw her a couple of times at Town Hall with her brother Cal and solo with her new band at the Westerner, a club in National City. Opening for her was a young guy named Buck Owens, with whom she had recorded a duet (i.e., two-sided) hit: "Loose Talk" and "Mental Cruelty." Owens wouldn't last long as an opening act, as he was on the way up with two or three hits already under his belt (One of them, "Excuse Me, I Think I've Got a Heartache," went to number two.) and was just a year away from his incredible run of ten number one hits in a year and a half. Rose was doing alright herself during that time with a number three hit, "Sing a Little Song of Heartache," and classic LPs, such as



Rose working her magic at a dance hall, 1947

The One Rose and Rose Maddox Sings Bluegrass plus a fine gospel album, which she always called Rosie's Revival Hour. During the next few years I was going to college, playing music myself and in general widening my musical tastes, and, while Rose's records remained in my collection, I didn't get a chance to see her again for a while.

In 1975 my parents, George and Mardelle Curtiss, were on vacation, driving up the West Coast and through the little town of Medford, Oregon. My Dad always liked to take old country roads "to find out where they went." That is just what he was doing when he saw the name Rose Maddox written on a mailbox. Remembering that I was interested in Rose in the old days and that I was now doing a festival that had already featured country musicians from the same era — like Merle Travis, Cousin Emmy, Bill Monroe, and Cliff Carlisle — Dad wrote down the address and brought it back to me.

After I had written to Rose, she sent back a letter saying she had recently retired from music but she might consider it, since she had never played at a folk festival before. I called her and we talked for about an hour. I told her about the boy in his early teens who listened to her and her brothers, and she told me about being a teenager herself when she started singing on the radio in Modesto during the 1930s. She talked about doing shows with Woody Guthrie when he lived in California and how he gave the Maddox Brothers and Rose their first big hit, "The Philadelphia Lawyer." By the end of the conversation, I'd talked Rose into playing at the ninth San Diego Folk Festival. She also performed at the tenth festival and by that time had a new LP out and a revived career. That year she told me that she was grateful to me for getting her going again. I told her the credit should go to my Dad for writing down that address. She then said, "Bless the peo-

Rose appeared at folk and bluegrass festivals all over the country during the following 25 years, appearing in San Diego for the last time on May 4, 1996 at the 23rd Adams Avenue Roots Festival. (Note: San Diego Troubadour writer Paul Hormick played bass in her band that year.) I talked to her once on the phone after that festival (just a short inquiry about her health) and received a book about her life called *Ramblin' Rose* in the mail, which was inscribed "To Lou, my friend. With love, Rose Maddox."

Rose was one of the great ladies of country music. I place her right up there with Patsy Cline, Molly O'Day, Wilma Lee Cooper, and Wanda Jackson, but Rose heads that list. Woody Guthrie called the Maddox Brothers and Rose the "best hill-country string band in these 48 states of ours" back in 1949, singling out Rose and her brothers as "the only band on the musical trail today to master a range wide enough to do "Milk Cow Blues" as well as Sister Bessie Smith and "Tramp on the Street," in a way that outdoes the classic Carter Family."

In all my dealings with Rose, like the closing of her book says, "she has never



Lou Curtiss

demand, taken, or expected to be given anything. Rose always simply does what she must, and has always done that better than just about anyone else." I remember seeing her at a club where she was provided with a less than perfect backup band. She turned around and finally, in exasperation, said, "Can't none of you play hillbilly?" turning the second rate backup into the humorous part of the show.

It's kind of strange that today Rose is considered an important cog of the country sound from the Bakersfield area, since she was also an important part of our city. In fact, she made her home here during a few of the peak years of her career. This was one special lady. She won't be forgotten.

Recordially,
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Sat 5 • Anya Marina and Bushwalla

Sun 6 • Anna Troy CD Release Show
W/ Gregory Page, Angela Correa, and Chris Carpenter

Thurs 10 • Hypnotist- Chris Wilson

Fri 11 • Kevin Tinkle

Sat 12 • Comedy Rant

Sun 13 • Truckee Bros, and LOAM

Wed 16 • San Diego's Finest-TV taping

Thurs 17 • Acoustic Underground™
Presents "Monsters of Fingerstyle Guitar"
Featuring: KEV, Jim Earp, Tom Boyer

Fri 18 • Jack the Original, Befred

Sat 19 • Emerson Band and Trevor Davis

Sun 20 • The Walking, Val Emmich

Thurs 24 • Dehdra Dun, Tim & Josh

Fri 25 • Gregory Page and Tom Brosseau

Sat 26 • Saba, J Turtle, Adrienne

Sun 27 • The Shelly's

front porch

An Interview with Fred Gerlach, Part Two

Fred Gerlach, master of the 12-string guitar, is perhaps best known for his style of playing in the Leadbelly tradition. Part Two of Lou Curtiss' interview with Gerlach continues with more tales of 12-strings people he hung out with, and folk music.

I was living and breathing Leadbelly's music [in the early '50s], and the records I did for Folkways and Audio Video were Leadbelly's music, which I copied as close as I could get.

Leadbelly's music gave me my start. I tried to pick other songs and do them as if Leadbelly had done them. I tried to carry on the style on 12-string guitar and even built my own 12-strings because you couldn't get a good one in those days. I remember seeing Leadbelly's old 12-string Stella.

At that time, it was considered a big guitar. I saw it upstairs in Martha Ledbetter's apartment. I asked if I could look at it. I wouldn't play it. I revered it and thought at the time that I had no business playing it. However, I was a draftsman, you remember, and I went ahead and detail-measured it. (I still have the plans.) Eventually I built a 12-string guitar that was a lot bigger and held up better.

Now, on to the origin of the 12-string guitar. The 12-string, regardless of who plays it, even if they've never heard anyone else play it, will come up with certain similarities by themselves because the form of the instrument is there—the octave sound from the doubled strings; the heavy strings (fourth, fifth, sixth) are octave; the first, second, and third, as Leadbelly played it, are doubled. Now, I also play the third as an octave but I didn't know that he doubled the third. I played a lot of things but couldn't understand why it didn't sound right, so I eventually caught on by listening to him. I learned some tunes before I heard Leadbelly play them and they still came out sounding like him. There are other things he played that I could not come up with myself, but I studied them anyway. The three original numbers I learned—his "Gallows Pole," "Fannin' Street," and "Good Morning Blues"—are unique; they are what I used as a springboard for all my future stuff. I got some tips from watching Big Bill Broonzy.

Leadbelly played a style of two voices on a bass beat with the thumb and the other, an alternate voice on the treble with his fingers or contrapuntal. I don't want to get too technical, but this style was a plectrum "bass-plunk bass-plunk," but because he was able to do the thumb beat, it underlined all his

music and went on like a triphammer while he played melody with that bass beat or against that bass beat. This coordination takes years [to learn].

I remember driving in an old '46 Chrysler on New York City's West side and I said, "That's it." I stopped the car, got the guitar out of the trunk, and said, "That's what Leadbelly is doin'." It's a shame that the only surviving films of Leadbelly show him playing two of his simplest tunes — "Cotton Fields" and "Rock Island Line." Too bad there isn't a film of him playing "Fannin' Street" or any of the other more difficult tunes. The music Leadbelly plays leads to some common ground that comes out when you play it. The higher forms of playing are something else.

For instance, I'm Croatian. As a kid I used to play an instrument called the biserica. It's a small instrument somewhat like a four-string guitar. It's a lead instrument. The rhythm, chords, and harmonies are close to what I've heard in Mexican, German, and even Irish music. Add to that African music. I remember hearing some African music and the tune was "John Henry." I think certain things in music are universal.

In the '50s I only met a few others who played the 12-string. When I met

which is a big double bass 12-string. It has the sound that I want.

I first came across Leadbelly on an old 78 record I picked up in a shop near a movie theater I went to regularly. Up until that time, I only knew some backup chords on the guitar, but when I heard that walkin' bass, which I had played on piano but had never heard on a guitar, especially a 12-string. Three years later I recorded for Moe Asch at Folkways Records. That was in 1953 and I was really getting into Leadbelly at that point.

Now remember, I only have second-hand information about Leadbelly, which I consider good because it comes from his widow, Martha, and his niece, Tiny. Tiny was the real force behind those people who strove to keep his memory alive. Her place was full of people on a regular basis who had known Leadbelly — people like Woody Guthrie, Rev. Gary Davis, Cisco Houston, and his buddy Manny, who travelled the country with him when he wasn't with Woody.

Cisco often needed to have someone with him, especially after he went blind and that was usually Manny in those years. I'll never forget the last time I saw Cisco. It was on a New York subway, and I couldn't speak to him, even though he was a friend of mine. I just didn't know what to say.

I don't remember what year it was that I played the Newport Folk Festival but the very moment I was on stage, Neil Armstrong walked on the moon. People were watching it on a television back-stage. I was there in Newport to do a Leadbelly memorial and it was not a good gig. Too many people, too much back biting, and too much competition. The same thing happened when I was asked to do the music for the Leadbelly movie. The people who hired me knew nothin' about Leadbelly's music. They had me interview Robert Mosley and Isaac Hayes, who did the singing. They also had me interview James Earl Jones who listened to me play guitar and suggested that I teach him to do that but then decided probably not. I told him that was a good thing because it had taken me 20 years. So after I'd done all the pre-movie interviews and gotten the program of songs together, they called me one day and told me they had found a guy who played 12-string guitar better than I, so I was replaced by Dick Rosmini.

Now, about Woody Guthrie. I met Woody at Tiny's. He had just come back to New York from Florida with Anneke [Van Kirk, Woody's third wife] and he stayed for a time, like I mentioned, at my house on Jerome Avenue. We went down to Tiny's almost every night and played together. I remember we had a really big argument about this Chaplin movie *Limelight*. I don't even remember what it was about or what side I was on, but that was the only disagreement I ever had with him. We'd go on down to Tiny's and empty out the furniture, roll the bed against the wall, and then we'd



Huddie Ledbetter



Gerlach playing chess in the '50s

Jesse Fuller in the Bay Area, he played mostly slide. I sold Pete Seeger his first 12-string (a beautifully made Italian Gullio), which I bought from Pietro Carboni in [Greenwich] Village. It looked real nice but had a horrible sound. Pete used that guitar in his recording of "The Bells of Rhymney." That's how 12-strings are different from other instruments when you get those overtones going like he does on "Bells." That's a 12-string number.

Once I was doing a gig with Odetta in upstate New York at a weekend resort. I'd only seen four 12-string guitars up to this point, so I got my room, went upstairs, and there on the bed was a 12-string that didn't play well. That was a common problem. You'd get a beautiful instrument that didn't have the big sound you needed, and it wasn't durable enough to last. So I started building 12-strings. It took about 15 guitars before I developed the one that I have now,



The Villagers: (l. to r.) Gerlach, Erik Darling, Ethel (last name unknown), Guy Carawan

dance. Sometimes it was to live music, sometimes to records. Then Woody went out to California and stayed at Will Geer's ranch in Topanga Canyon where he slept in an aircraft packing crate. That's Woody. I've seen him sit down in a chair and five minutes later, he's asleep. When he wakes up half an hour later, he's ready to go. He's a real gypsy. He wrote me a big, long rambling letter from Florida

"...Woody went out to California and stayed at Will Geer's ranch in Topanga Canyon where he slept in an aircraft packing crate."

after he left New York and it's a real tribute to Leadbelly. A lot better than I could write or say.

I first came to the West Coast in 1951, then went back to New York three times to see my daughter. I love California, especially after living in New York City, where the grass is replaced by garbage cans. Back in New York, Frank Hamilton, me, a gal named Ethel, and Erik Darling formed a group called The Villagers and put on a concert in the Croatian Workers Hall. This was at a time when nobody put on concerts in New York City except People's Artists. People's Artists was Irwin Silber, who didn't like me because I stood up for seeing that Martha and Tiny and Leadbelly's memory be taken care of. In those days Tiny and Martha weren't too well off. So The Villagers put on this concert, which was an affront to People's

Artists because nobody in New York had done this but them. The folk world was small and concentrated and People's Artists had all the action. Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee were there and we packed the hall with some 700 people, which in 1954 was a sizeable crowd for a folk music concert. We put on two such events with one exception. I belonged to a group called The Jewish Young Folksingers led by Bob DeCormier. The 40-man chorus was asked to be on a People's Song program. Leon Bibb saw me at the concert and asked whether I had my 12-string with me. I said I did, so he invited me on stage to do a few numbers, which was the only time I performed at a People's Artists function. And that was my sort of Last Hurrah in New York City, because I came West soon afterward, first to Los Angeles and eventually to San Diego.

I came to San Diego during the late '50s. I lived in Pacific Beach with three other guys right on the beach — so close, you could put your big toe into the sand. We paid about 18 bucks a month each for rent. I drove a Plymouth convertible and was playing with Judy Henske at the Upper Cellar for five dollars a night and three glasses of apple cider. A guy named Hadley Bachelder would come and sit in sometimes. Every third day or so, I'd go to a smorgasbord and load up. The rest of the time it was hamburgers and Ripple.

Continued on page 12.



Fred Gerlach in San Diego, 2003



A Taste of Ireland: Music, Dance, and Culture

by John Hyatt

A vision of storytelling returns to the stage when the Aisling Troupe remounts its popular Gaelic/English production of *Aisling*. This delightful romantic tale of courtly intrigue, seasoned with music and dance, highlights the deep and rich cultural heritage of Ireland. The play is presented in Gaelic (Irish) with English translation.

Author Patricia Page, a resident of North Park, is a first-generation Irish-American whose ancestry comes from Dublin and the counties of Mayo and Leitrim. Influenced by her father, Tomas Page, and uncle, David Page, who were instrumental in shaping the early San Diego Irish music scene more than 30 years ago, she has been active in the local Irish community in dance, language, theater

and other organizations for many years.

The concept of *Aisling* began in her father's language class. "He wanted to do something that would impact San Diego with the Irish language," she says. "We looked at several existing plays, but none of them suited our purposes. So I said, 'I can write one myself.'" She decided on a nondescript, mythological, pre-Christian setting in Ireland to enhance the imagination of the audience. "A palace in a kingdom allows a wide variety of characters and lets the imagination flow unencumbered by preconceived ideas," Page adds. Since *aisling* means vision or dream, it aptly sets the stage. The bilingual Irish/English presentation is a rare way to present an Irish play, providing a showcase of Irish culture, including, language, music, dance, storytelling, and song.

The Aisling Troupe was formed two years



Author Patricia Page plays the princess

ago after the first production of the play. A non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Irish culture, the troupe emerged from the language classes held by Tomas Page at the House of Ireland. "Language is the lifeblood of a culture," says Page. "Without it, the culture will die."

This one-time performance of *Aisling* will be held Saturday, June 26, 7 p.m. at the East County Performing Arts Center in El Cajon. For ticket information, contact the box office at 619/440-2277 or visit their website at www.ecpac.com. Information on the Aisling Troupe can be found at www.aislingtroupe.com.



The cast takes a bow

WHAT'S COOKING? Twiggs Summer Barbeque Series

by Tim Mudd

Do you remember that *really* hot Santa Ana weekend we had at the end of February? There I was sitting at Twiggs in University Heights with my girlfriend, Amy, enjoying the glorious sunshine. I had a gig coming up that evening at Twiggs' Green Room and we were chatting about how nice it would be to have some friends over for a lazy barbeque and a few beers before the show.

At that moment, along walks Johnny Cicolella, the man behind the Green Room's musical greatness. After exchanging greetings, I told Johnny what we were planning and invited him along. "Sounds good," was his reply. "I'll bring some steaks. Mind if I invite some friends?" Suddenly our relaxed Saturday morning musings became a full-blown action plan. At this point we didn't even own a grill, and Amy made the fatal mistake of sending me off to purchase one ... solo.

Just over an hour later I returned with the Black Behemoth — a gleaming charcoal-fueled symbol of manhood. "Just how many

people do you think we're having over?" she inquired. I was grilling those words for her later on.

What transpired was a delightful afternoon with more than 50 people adorning the floors of our house and patio — a little more than the 20-odd we'd originally invited. Everyone brought their own meat, vegetables, and drinks while we provided the chips, dips, and salads. The grill was open and the food was good. As the sun went down, everyone decided to head over and check out the show at Twiggs and that was the best part. Johnny and I couldn't have been happier, and it gave us a great idea: Why don't we actually organize one of these shindigs once a month during the summer? Wouldn't it be a great opportunity for similar performers to hang out and share their friends and fans?

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome to the stage, the Twiggs Summer Barbeque Series. Kicking off at 2 p.m., Sunday, June 6, you're invited to bring your own meat/vegetables and drinks, and we'll do the rest. For appetizers, enjoy a few drinks and some pleasant company. As an entree, well, you'll



be bringing it, but for dessert, we'll all be heading over to the Twiggs Green Room for something sweet and an outstanding lineup of live entertainment.

For this first of three installments, Garrett Bodman will be opening the night with a short set followed by full sets from Aaron Bowen, Ted Ehr, and Tim Mudd (that's me). As with anything of this nature, you'll want to stick around for the finale, which could include an exchange of musical chops among the artists and the highly probable appearance of some very special guests. All of this will wrap up around 10 p.m., so that you'll be nicely tucked in bed for a good rest and sweet dreams of a day well spent before you have to face Monday.

The Twiggs Summer Barbeque Series is all part of a stellar week of incredible live music from some of San Diego's finest acoustic artists. Friday, June 4, sees the return of Jim Bianco to the Green Room with Action Folksinger, Lauren DeRose, and Proper Villains. Warming up on Saturday, June 5, for the BBQ Series set, Ted Ehr will be playing alongside a second night in a row for Jim Bianco, Alicia, and J. Scott Bergman.

We're already working on the line up for the second and third barbecues in July and August, so keep your eyes and ears open. For further information, email info@tim-mudd.com.

Old Home Week Prevailed at the Adams Avenue Roots Festival

by John Philip Wylie

For self-described "old folkies" Jon Adams and Larry Hanks, May's Adams Avenue Roots Festival was more than just another opportunity to perform and hear live music. It was more like a family reunion. Having known festival organizer Lou Curtiss for many years, they were both delighted to be back in San Diego once again, playing some of the same songs they shared in the 1960s.

"I first met Lou at a music camp near Fresno around 1965 or 1966," Adams explained. "And I played at his festival here in San Diego twice before, once in 1971 and again in 1987. We all owe Lou a big one for this, if for nothing else than at least to have brought all our old friends together," Adams said after delighting a sparse Hawley and Adams Stage crowd with a quirky combination of show tunes, lullabies, and early 20th-century ditties.

Influenced by artists such as Burl Ives and the Weavers in the 1950s, and later by the Kingston Trio, Adams began playing at parties, campfires, and coffeehouses in the early 1960s. Now a retired graphic artist, Adams has more time to perform the folk music he has always enjoyed. An interpreter rather than a songwriter, Adams often injects his own brand of humor into the music of artists such as Raffi, Peter Allsop, and Sam Hinton.

Adams reminisces, "The one single person who probably inspired more singalongs than everyone else combined is that Weavers' banjo-player, Pete Seeger. When I was 19, Pete Seeger himself played in the auditorium of Fresno City College, where I was attending classes (art major) only a few blocks away from my house. Not only did Pete play amazingly fine instruments, but he sang with such obvious enthusiasm and heart, that when he led a chorus, everyone sang. Bear in mind that I was acquainted with a large number in the audience—these were people who, if they'd been forewarned that they'd be singing aloud in harmony with a suspected "Communist," would have instead spent the evening in the nearest Air Raid Shelter. Nevertheless, there we all were, singing heartily along with Mr. Seeger, and we left that place as different people than when we went in."

My high school pal, who I went with to this life-polarizing event, went right out and got himself a Seeger Model Vega Banjo, along with the "How To" instruction book and records. Before you could say "Go Tell Aunt Rhody" 50 times without a mistake, we were in a trio, singing anything we could agree upon, anyplace that failed to lock the doors. Singularly, Pete Seeger managed to represent the broadest spectrum of music with ties to what America is made of—plus all the social conscience that was (and still is, basically) missing in our daily lives. Bob Zimmerman, who took Dylan Thomas' name in honorarium, developed a new kind of poetry, under which he put the "wheels" of music. Seeger sang those, as did the Byrds, the Jefferson Airplane, and many others.

While Adams was performing on one stage, Larry Hanks was entertaining from another. With his wide-brimmed hat and long graying beard he looked like a cross between Leon Redbone and ZZ Top. His deep baritone voice and understated style, however, were more reminiscent of the former than the latter.

"I lived in the Pacific Northwest for 25 years and live in the Bay Area now, but I used to come down to play at the festival many times in the 1960s and 1970s when it was at SDSU. I've played at this one for the last three years," Hanks said.

Like Adams, Hanks has written only a handful of songs and prefers performing music from various musical genres.

"I do a lot of political songs of various



Photo: Steve Covault

Jon Adams



Photo: Steve Covault

Larry Hanks

stripes. Sometimes they're very strong ones when I am moved in that direction. I also do a few old ballads, a smattering of Americana, and a lot of cowboy songs. I tend to be attracted to songs from the late 1800s through the early 1900s rather than the more ancient Appalachian tunes," Hanks said. Also similar to Adams, Hanks credited Sam Hinton as a major musical influence and has also been influenced by the many artists he has gotten to know over the years.

Having known many of the artists on hand since the 1960s, Hanks thought it was interesting to see how their music has changed.

"A lot of us folkies were pretty dogmatic in the 1960s. We spent a lot of time trying to define folk music. That no longer has anything to do with the way I choose my material. Sometimes I will put one verse from one version of a song together with another verse from a different version if it helps to tell the story better. I think everybody evolves in their taste. Some people focus more narrowly on their specific interests while others branch out. People in general, though, tend to become more tasteful and interesting."

Like Adams, Hanks has reached a point in his life where he wants to devote more time to his music, not so much for commercial purposes, but more for the enjoyment that it brings him.

"There was a stretch when I didn't play at all. Music for me at this point is a hobby, but I am trying to revive it again as a full-time or at least part-time craft or trade. I recently re-released an album I recorded in 1984, and last fall I released a second one along with an old buddy of mine from Bellingham, Washington. It's on Dandelion Records and is available mostly through me. I am back to learning new songs and reviving some of the old ones I used to do. I'm just glad there are people that still want to hear it."

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parlor showcase

SAM HINTON

A Lifetime of Achievement

by Paul Hormick

If you grew up in San Diego, chances are your classroom would have been treated to a visit by a man who played guitar and sang funny folk songs. You wouldn't have easily forgotten this engaging man, because when he sang his songs, history came alive. That man would have been Sam Hinton, probably San Diego's (and the country's) most respected and beloved folk music historians, who has delighted both young and old for more than 50 years. His stature in the folk music community reaches far and wide and goes back many years. Just go to the massive folk music website-resource Mudcat.org and type in Sam Hinton's name. You'll pull up pages and pages from their email forum, written by people who have given credit to Hinton for teaching them a song or for influencing them in some way.

As a child growing up in Oklahoma, where he was born, and Texas, where his family later moved, Hinton absorbed what was all around him: an abundance of natural beauty and wildlife and a wide-ranging diversity of musical styles, which gave shape and direction to his interests. He was drawn to the music of the common folk and soaked up all that he could. He was also a precocious instrumentalist and recalls, "Mama used to love to tell people how she took me to Jenkins Music Store in Tulsa when I was five years old and bought me a harmonica. She said I was playing 'Turkey in the Straw' before we got out of the store." Later, when he was eight years old, his grandfather bought him a button accordion.

By the time he was old enough for high school, Hinton's family moved to Crockett, Texas, but not before he decided to learn every song in the world. Around that time his sister sent him a copy of Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag*, published in 1927. In it were several songs Hinton already knew, which seemed to validate his musical pursuits. He picked up the east Texas-Louisiana music that floated around the area, learning Cajun music on his button accordion. He also grew to appreciate the musical traditions of the black people who lived there, particularly the gospels and spirituals. He says his interest in religious music may have been part of one of his early aspirations to become a preacher.

He admired his black neighbors for more than just their music. "I never felt comfortable with other boys my own age when I was in high school," says Hinton. He felt more at home with the

adult blacks who lived in and around the small town because "they took me as I was," he says. They accepted his interest in music and natural history, even encouraging him at times. Hinton says, "There was a black man, Big Jim was his name. This was when armadillos were first coming up from Mexico into Texas, and Big Jim got an armadillo for me." Because of intense racial animosity among his peers and even his family, Hinton had to socialize on the sly with the people who accepted him. The

sting of racial hatred is

something Hinton has been aware of from a very early age. His seven-year-old eyes saw the race riots that tore apart Tulsa in 1921. "I remember my parents took us up to a hilltop. I remember seeing a church burning," he says.

In 1934 Hinton headed off to Texas A&M to study zoology, supporting himself with work as a musician, sign painter, and calligrapher, and even sold snake venom to a pharmaceutical company. After two years at the agricultural college, he hitchhiked to Washington D.C., where his parents and sisters had moved. Mining the cornucopia of sheet music from the 1800s that his mother had collected (Hinton's mother was a music teacher), Hinton formed an ensemble with his sisters. Calling themselves the Texas Trio, they performed old-time and folk music.

In 1937 Hinton's father loaded his children in the family car and drove them up to New York City to appear on Major Bowes' *Original Amateur Hour*; a popular national radio talent show. They made enough of an impression that they were asked to make a return performance, the usual precursor to being hired with the review. Hinton was surprised, however, when Bowes offered the 19-year-old an opportunity to join his revue right on the air. Billed as "Texas Sam Hinton" — folk singer and novelty instrumentalist, he spent the next two years on the road with the Major Bowes' Transcontinental Revue.



"Texas Sam Hinton" — folk singer and novelty instrumentalist, 1937.



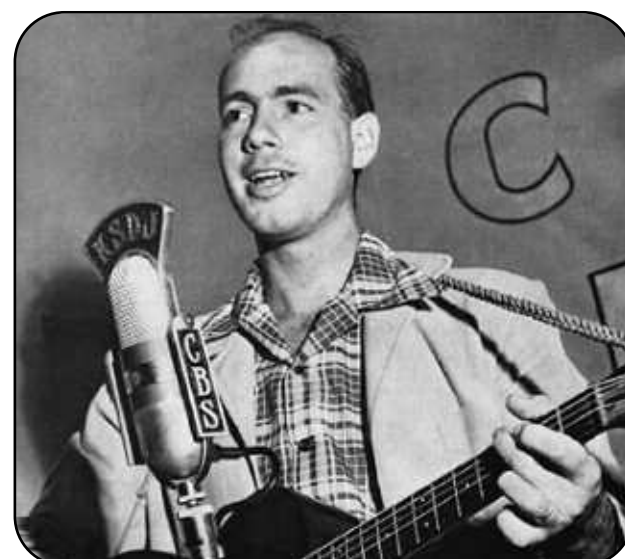
Back in 1937, 35 cents paid admission to an afternoon or evening at a movie palace. With their plush carpets and marble balustrades, these gilded, rococo theaters offered refuges of fantasy where one could escape from the hardships of life during the

Great Depression. The curtain would rise for two full-length features of love and adventure, the stage hands rolling out the electronic speakers to accommodate "talkies," the new sensation. Between the first and second movie a live vaudeville show would dazzle audiences with dancers, jugglers, and men in evening coats sawing beautiful women in half. Also sharing the stage was a young man with a pennywhistle, harmonica, and guitar, who performed in hundreds of shows and rode the rails to all but two of the 48 states.

"I sang folk music before it was popular," says Hinton about the time he spent with Major Bowes. This was long before the Kingston Trio or the names Peter, Paul, and Mary had more than biblical significance. "I would have to explain to the audiences that I was singing folk songs," he says.

After a couple of years with the vaudeville company, however,

"I would have to explain to the audiences that I was singing folk songs."



Hinton on San Diego's KSDO radio station, 1948.

parlor showcase



Major Bowes' Transcontinental Revue, Sam Hinton circled, third from left.

Hinton felt a strong calling back to his other love: the living sciences. With his parents now settled in a suburb of Los Angeles, he enrolled at UCLA to pursue a degree in zoology. Once while out in the desert studying reptiles, Hinton heard that John Steinbeck was at one of the Okie camps in the area. Being a great fan of Steinbeck's, Hinton got up his nerve and went over to meet him. He was also introduced to Woody Guthrie who also happened to be there.

Hinton continued to play music on the side while a student at UCLA, appearing in the long-running musical revue *Meet the People* and performing in the local schools. He soon realized that the kind of music he played seemed to be just right for children. Later on he began to regard folk music as an expression of history, which helped him tailor his song selection to the period of history a particular class was studying.

After graduating from UCLA in 1941, Hinton became director of the Palm Springs Desert Museum, then left to take a job as an editor/illustrator at the University of California Division of War Research in San Diego. In 1947 Hinton was named curator of the Aquarium-Museum at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla where he served for 18 years. In 1965, Hinton moved to the upper campus and became assistant director, and two years later associate director, of UCSD's Relations with Schools, which took him all over the state of California and other states as well, visiting high school classrooms to promote the university. Chris Vitas, San Diego's versatile violinist, recalls that Hinton incorporated music into his promotion of UCSD. "I remember he came to my high school to talk about the university. He had a harmonica and a little concert guitar. He sang folk songs and Pete Seeger songs," he says. A flexible work schedule allowed Hinton to work extra hours so he could take the time to perform at folk concerts and festivals.

With friendships that go back decades, the names of such American folk music icons as Gene Ritchie and Jack Elliot roll off Hinton's tongue easily. As a friend of Pete Seeger, patriarch of American folk music, since the 1940s, he credits Seeger for suggesting that he (Hinton) drop some of the novelty schtick from his performance. Today Hinton is considered a folk icon in his own right. He founded the San Diego Folk Song Society more than 50

years ago, a group comprised of music lovers who regularly gathered at the Old Time Café in Leucadia to listen and perform folk music. This group, now called the San Diego Folk Heritage, honors him, having rechristened their annual spring event The Sam Hinton Folk Heritage Festival.



Drawing of Woody Guthrie by Sam Hinton

Kent Johnson, cofounder and publisher of the *San Diego Troubadour*, loves to tell the story about an experience he had following Hinton's performance at the Adams Avenue Street Fair in 2000. Johnson wanted to introduce Derek Duplessie, already a talented singer-songwriter in his own right then at the age of 12, to Hinton. As the two of them approached the stage to say hello to Hinton, Chris Hillman, of the Byrds, Flying Burrito Brothers, and Desert Rose Band fame, was climbing the stairs to the stage for his performance. Just when Johnson and Duplessie reached the stairs, Hinton was coming down and Hillman was going up. Hillman turned to Hinton and said, "Sam, I just have to say you were one of my idols when I was growing up." Johnson felt as if he'd just witnessed a significant

moment in history.

Johnson also describes Hinton's indulgence with an audience or classroom. He says, "I first met Sam when I was taking a child development class at San Diego City College back in 1998. I offered to pick him up and bring him to the class. He was there for an hour and a half, singing songs and showing the students his different instruments. It was just amazing."

Pennywhistles, accordions, guitars, and songs can be a lot of fun, but they can sometimes cause trouble, at least for some people. In the early 1950s Hinton made a recording of "Talking Atomic Blues." "Others had already recorded the song. The Sons of the Pioneers had a version of it. But I was the first person to have a hit with that song. I recorded it on ABC Eagle and once it got popular,

Columbia bought it up," recalls Hinton. Unfortunately, this happened at a time when Joe McCarthy was in the Senate and the Un-American Activities Committee was in the House. Because of the menace from these and the Red hysteria in general, Columbia dropped Hinton's recording, and it appears that the song got its author, Vern

Partlow, fired from his job as a journalist. Hinton was listed with the California Un-American Activities Committee and believes he may have lost a few musical gigs because of the Red baiting. Notwithstanding, his recording of the tune was released in the early 1960s on the Newport Broadside label.

As though he weren't busy enough,

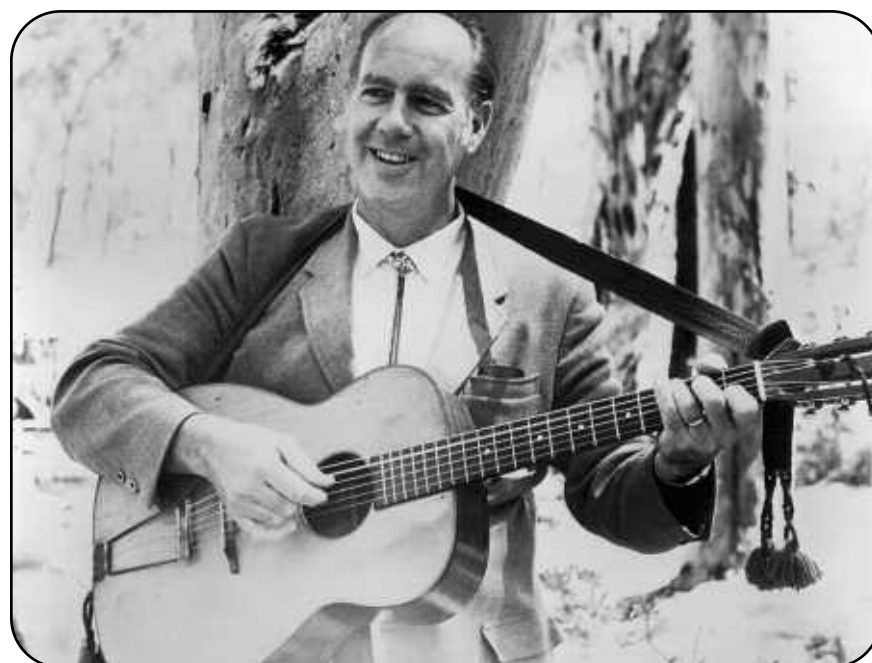


Hinton at Scripps Aquarium, 1950

Hinton has authored three books on marine biology, one of them for children. As an artist, he illustrated two of his books and two books by other authors. He has produced more than 1,200 installments of "The Ocean World," a weekly newspaper feature. He is a deft calligrapher who furnished all the calligraphy for the *RiseUp Singing* songbook. As an instructor, Hinton has taught college courses in music, folklore, art, science, and geography. In the early 1990s he spent two years on the board of directors for *Sing Out!* magazine and served as director of the Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts. He has recorded five albums of folksongs and is featured on several recordings of the now legendary Newport Folk Festivals.

In 1940 Hinton married Leslie Forster. Talented in her own right as an artist and classically trained violist, Leslie settled with Sam in La Jolla to be close to his work at the aquarium. While living in Palm Springs, the Hinton family became acquainted with Albert Frey, the famed architect who designed their spacious yet comfortable home in La Jolla Shores, where the couple still lives. Both of their children make their livelihood with words. Son Matt is a rodeo announcer and writer, and their daughter, Leanne, is chair of the linguistics department at the University of California, Berkeley.

At 87 Hinton's bright eyes and smile persist. Though he ceased to perform two years ago, Hinton is still working with his music. He has 1,650 songs committed to memory and is currently recording all of them. There is much more to learn about Hinton and his amazing life at his web site, samhinton.org.



Hinton in the 1960s, singing his way through the schools



ramblin'

Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden



Hi bluegrassers! This month's column, in response to many requests, is an instructional overview of bluegrass jamming etiquette. I hope you learn something!

BLUEGRASS JAMMING ETIQUETTE

Jamming is an essential part of bluegrass music. And, it is certainly true that jammers are the financial lifeblood of the bluegrass industry. Jammers buy most of the instruments, strings, capos, and other accessories; they also buy most concert and festival tickets.

With many musical art forms, there is a small group of professional players who perform and a large group of audience members who listen, with very little crossover. In bluegrass, however, most everyone plays at festivals and events, some on stage but mostly in the parking and camping areas. Many festival goers never even visit the main stage areas but spend their entire time either participating in or listening to a jam. And don't be surprised to see big stage stars in these jams when they're not on stage. It is part of the ethic and culture of bluegrass to jam, and even the best of the seasoned veterans join in.

A few years ago when I attended the Wintergrass Bluegrass Festival in Tacoma, Washington, the headline act, which had been sold out for weeks, was the 25-year reunion of the David Grisman Quartet with all of the original players, including David "Dawg" Grisman on mandolin, Tony Rice on guitar, Darol Anger on fiddle, and Todd Phillips on bass. It was impossible to get a ticket for this show, but the night before you could have jammed, chatted, and rubbed shoulders with David "Dawg" Grisman himself, since he was playing in a hotel lobby jamming circle well into the night!

So, what is the etiquette for jamming and how does one participate? Here are a few simple rules to ensure that you have a great time, that the music is good, and that you will be a welcome addition to a jamming circle.

1. APPROACHING A JAM

Listen to a song or two discreetly from outside the circle. Note which instruments are already present and decide whether yours will contribute or be in the way. For example, if there is a bass in the jam and you are a bass player, move on. One bass per jam is the rule. If you are a guitar, mandolin, fiddle, or dobro player, there is probably room for you even if your instrument is already represented, but if there are already three or more of your instrument, it is best to move on. If you are a banjo player, two banjos, maybe three if the players are "sensitive," is about the limit.

Listen to the style and type of music being played. Is it primarily a singing jam? An instrumental jam? Traditional bluegrass? New grass? Old time? Will your playing fit in? Make a judgment before you jump in and find you don't fit.

2. ASK TO JOIN

Asking to join is important, especially if you don't know anyone in the jam. Wait until a tune ends and then ask if you might join. This will almost always get you a yes, unless what might look like a jam circle is actually a band scheduled to go on stage warming up, in which case you will be glad you asked in advance! By asking you make sure you are welcome. If

you simply lurk around, you may never be asked to take a solo break or to call a tune.

3. BE IN TUNE

Tune your instrument before approaching the jam. Unless you have perfect pitch, use an electronic tuner. Even the best are not welcome if they're out of tune!

4. HOW THE CIRCLE WORKS

- A. **The Kick Off.** Generally, one person in the circle picks a tune, including its name and the key it's in. That person then starts the tune, setting the timing and rhythm with an intro.
- B. **Playing the first verse.** The person calling the song plays the entire tune through only once. If it's an instrumental, two A parts and two B parts are usually played. If it's a song, the leader sings the first verse and chorus, while the other jammers play rhythm if it's an instrumental and rhythm and fills if it's a song. Remember, the rest of the circle supports the person playing or singing lead. Do not play too loudly or too "fancy." Save the fancy stuff and volume for your turn to play/sing lead.
- C. **Passing the Tune.** After the first verse, the tune is passed to the next person in the circle. Pay attention to which way the circle is going so you know when your turn comes. When it does, play it through one complete cycle if the tune is instrumental, then pass it to the next person and play rhythm again. If the tune is a song, keep your eye on the person who called the tune because that person will indicate where the instrumental breaks are. Pay attention to whether breaks are being played based on the verse or the chorus and play accordingly.
- D. **The Ending.** When the tune has come full circle, the leader plays it one more time if it's an instrumental and puts an ending on it. If it's a singing song, that person sings the last chorus, or maybe the last verse and chorus, and ends it. Circle members usually join in the ending riff.
- E. **The next tune caller.** After completing one song cycle, the role of the lead song caller is passed to the next person in the circle who will call a new tune, thus starting the cycle all over again. This continues until everyone has had a chance to call a tune. *Caveat:* It doesn't always work this way. You will often find a jam with a core of two to five folks who know each other well and have worked up some material, while a handful of others sit in on the jam. Often these insiders will call the tunes or only pass the lead role to another insider. This is somewhat impolite, but it's best to just go with the flow. Many times it's more fun to play with a group that knows what they're doing. And, if you are polite and make a positive contribution to the music, you'll eventually be asked to take a turn at lead.
- F. **When to Sing.** When to sing and when not to sing are very important. If you called the tune, you are expected to sing the lead and know the words to the verses and chorus. If you call the tune and would rather sing harmony, you must say so before the tune starts and solicit someone else who is able to sing the lead. If you didn't call the tune and want to sing along, let the group know



The Zen of Recording

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

Anatomy of a Gandhi Record

In a recording project, there are many situations where you can achieve the desired result in a number of ways. Consequently, there is no "only one way" or "the best way," just whatever works for your current situation. Why not follow me "around the office," and we'll document most of what transpires along the way as best a tired mind can at the end of a long, productive day.

The assignment at hand is a "demo to album" project for a cool band I'm in called The Gandhi Method. We have two acoustic guitars, played by Chuck Schiele and myself. We also sing lead and harmonies along with Cathryn Beeks, who also plays some small hand percussion. We're in the process of recording Monday through Friday for three weeks, a total of 15 days. Our first task is to get the sound of our live set onto some discs we need for booking purposes and maybe some website-only Mp3s. Later, we'll add some other overdubs on the songs we feel need filling out. I doubt we'll finish it all in that time, but at least we'll have it all down the way we perform it live.

DAY ONE: Today was one of the coolest days I've ever had in the studio. Chuck and Cathryn showed up with all their stuff around 1 p.m. I'd been slowly setting up little stations for us all around the living room (remember, vibe is king), so that everything was comfortable and conveniently located and situated. I explained to them that I was always the one running around plugging things and checking stuff, and that I really wanted to slow down to an artistic pace just this once. For the first order of business we decided to finish a song I'd been working on called "Crawl Back Down." It had two verses and a chorus completed, so Chuck and Cathryn set about working through some chord and melody options for a bridge. Before long, they had all the music and lyrics too. Cool! Writing in the studio! How decadent! We took a break and went shopping for the week's supplies (the purchase of Nutella was involved) and returned to the studio to run through our new song a bunch more times. Then I set up mics on me and

before the tune starts that you will sing tenor, baritone, or bass. If the song starts before you get a chance to say anything, you need to listen. If no one is singing a harmony part that you can sing, then join in. If someone else is already singing that part, it is best to stay out. And, it is almost never a good idea to sing along with the lead. Remember, singing in a way that conflicts with what the tune caller is doing is as bad as stepping on someone else's instrumental break! *Tip:* Have a couple of standard tunes under your belt and be ready to go.

- G. **When to Play.** Like knowing when to sing, knowing when and when not to play is very important. On instrumental tunes led by somebody else, the rest of the circle plays rhythm. Generally, one does not play fills on someone else's instrumental break. You should also play at a low volume so the lead player can be heard easily. On a song, unless asked to do the kick-off, circle players either stay out or play simple rhythm. When singing is going on, play a quiet rhythm, never so loud that the singer can't be heard. It is also appropriate to play "fills" between singing phrases. But pay attention to who else is playing fills. If six instruments all play fills at the same time, there is no rhythm left and the fill noise will be out of control. And, don't hog all the fills. If you play a few fills and think "this is cool, I

sound great, and no one else is doing fills," get off your high horse! The others are being polite and letting you take a few fills. Reciprocate and drop back to rhythm so they can play fills too. Finally, you can play a little bit behind the singing, but be cautious — never play too loud and try to stay off the melody notes as these are likely to conflict with the singer, especially if you play fiddle or dobro, which are closer to the human voice.

Chuck's guitars, facing each other from opposite sides of the room. For both guitars, the "sweet spot" where the guitar sounds best had to first be identified by listening to the guitar as it's being played. Usually you'll find an area about the size of a large grapefruit where the optimal tone is coming off the guitar's soundboard. Chuck's was located on the lower bout (the part where the guitar's shape is widest), and mine was the on upper bout.

For Chuck, who's preferred guitar tone is snappy and bright with a slight bump at 500 hz for a percussive low mid, I set up a condenser mic, the Shure KSM44. It's very accurate but adds a slight sweetness in the highs and lows. I ran that mic into an Avalon 737sp Preamp/EQ/Compressor and the console I use, the Berringer 9000 Eurodesk. It's not pretty if you overdrive the Eurodesk's preamps, but if you work with the trim pots to get no distortion on the strongest hits, it's as clean as Denny's on health inspection day.

Back to Chuck's guitar. After setting the Avalon's compressor to a high threshold to take down the level on his hardest hits, I added some attack and sparkle at 10k, some presence at 1.9k, and a little cut at 320hz to clear out some muddiness.

For my guitar, I selected a dynamic mic, an SM57 Beta. I like to play pretty hard and prefer a darker sound, so the bottomy thump and mid-range aggression of this microphone suits my style nicely. I ran the mic into an ART TubePac Preamp/Compressor with a high threshold so that I'm only getting about 3dB of gain reduction at most, and then into the board, where I eq'd for a slightly meatier sound that blends well with the other guitar.



The studio where the master performs his magic



Sven-Erik Seaholm

Both guitars were also plugged into direct boxes (or DI's) because we always play that way live, so it would seem to be part of our sonic signature as well. I listened to the guitars as Chuck played them and layered the mic'd and DI'd signals for the guitars and got what we felt was a cool sound.

In the control room where the computer and monitors (Event 20/20 passives and Tannoy Reveal powered) are, I set up a mic for vocals, the SE Electronics se5500 tube mic, and ran it into a ProSonus Eureka Preamp/EQ/Compressor (previously reviewed in this column). I set the compressor for a slower attack to let the consonants get through untouched and again set the threshold high to compress as lightly as possible, using a 3:1 ratio. Not only will this mic probably be what we use for every vocal take, it will also double as a talkback mic so whoever's in the control room can converse with the performers in the main room without having to push a talkback mic button.

After all that was accomplished, we ran through the tune a couple more times, recorded it, and burned CDs for the three of us to listen to before returning to work for DAY TWO, which is where we'll pick it up next month.

H. **Be Ready.** Be ready when it's your turn. If you do not know the tune, if it's too fast, or you don't want to take the lead you can pass on taking a solo break, but make sure you tell the person next to you *in advance*. It is very annoying if the person next to you doesn't start when it is their turn or says "pass" after the verse as started. Likewise, when it comes your turn to call a tune, be ready. Think of one in ahead of time. Don't wait until the last minute.

- I. **Include Everyone.** When you are the tune caller, announce the name and key of the tune, note when everyone is ready (i.e., capos on, banjo strings in place), and set the pace with a kickoff. Then, "direct" the tune around the circle. My strategy, which I recommend, is to sing one verse and chorus and then pass the tune for a solo break to the next person if you think everyone knows the tune. If it appears many of the

jammers don't know the tune, maybe sing two verses and choruses and then pass it, which will give the group twice as long to hear and learn the melody before they are asked to play it. You should also decide how many solo breaks occur before you sing another verse.

Leaving a Jam. It is nice, although not required, to indicate when you are leaving and thank the group for letting you participate. If introductions haven't already happened, you are likely to find out the names of your fellow jammers and to do some handshaking at this point. This is an important part of jamming and breaks the ice for the next time. Follow these rules and you will quickly become a sought after jammer. Break them and you may wonder why you are not welcome!





Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

Before I fell asleep last night, I found myself praying to the wind. I wanted back the caution I had thrown its way so long ago.

As of this moment, I haven't seen its hide nor its hair, and the possibility of its perpetual absence is beginning to frighten me.

This lack of order in the landscape of my life tends to dull my plow. But plod on I will, and I can only hope that the innocent vines I may uproot will find their way back into worthy service.

Am I the only one who will go to his grave insisting that a certain celebrated (for more than four decades) Las Vegas icon is now and always has been a female? And: was the promising career of a truly blessed genius — in this case a gorgeous British chanteuse/composer — virtually kneecapped in this country by American record executives upon their learning the truly sleazy autobiographic nature of her magnificent debut album, over 25 years ago?

And I am momentarily appeased. Keeping secret the identities of the cultural icons noted above is proof enough that my caution is beginning to come back. Yes. What you don't know has little chance of hurting you ... but if you insist, please don't hesitate to ask me directly, and we'll both finally know just how cautious I can be.

I've started a movie program with the fine (as in finest) folks at Winston's in Ocean-Peace-Beach at 4 p.m. on Thursday afternoons. This is a *free* opportunity (but it's 21 and up) to catch some of the overlooked gems of cinematic history, presented on a (fairly) big screen and run with real film on a real projector the way movies used to be shown everywhere. No video. Really. Again, it's absolutely free (to quote Zappa's best album), and the schedule for June will focus on the musical aspects of the movies being shown. In other words, the selections will illustrate how a well-wrought musical score could often redeem what otherwise might have been a questionable enterprise. Or they may be examples of an enterprise that in itself was practically foolproof, yet the producer or director's choice of composer lifted the work itself onto the highest plane of art's own heaven.

Photo: Toots von Weston



The debonair Mr. Sinatra

But still, there's that trouble in Iraq. I hear very little music coming from those quarters these days. Only a lot of humiliation and lies and death until we finally learn that there were no good guys involved to begin with.

When Pat Robertson, earlier this month, advised his viewers that the obscenities committed by our soldiers are in no way as grave as (or even comparable to) the obscenities flowing daily on our very own Internet (where our focus should be, said he), I felt justified for never yet having invested in his "reciprocity" scam. Or even a personal computer, come to think of it. Ah, that was caution....

I'll bet it's about time for some more color-coded alerts to urge the public into another malleable state of fear (and hence, manipulation). Something is definitely going wrong within the higher levels of our government. Just like yesterday.

But caution, even now seeping slowly back into my celebrity cells, forbids any spade-calling at this proverbial juncture.

But it's something everybody must know, early. Still blowing in the wind.

And the wind, dear friends, is ready. Grace it with your heartfelt gift. I assure you, you'll get it back when you need it.

See you at Winston's on Thursdays. We'll listen to the music of the spheres, caution be damned.



RADIO DAZE

by Jim McInnes

SO YOU WANT TO BE A RADIO "STAR"?

I have been on the radio virtually all of my adult life. I did my first broadcast a few days after turning 18, and about 8,000 more since then. So I'm often asked, "How do I get into broadcasting?"

Lemme 'splain it to you...free of charge, so you won't be suckered by so-called "broadcasting schools."

You have to be obsessed!

If being an entertainer (Radio is near the bottom of the show biz ladder, but it's still a part of that ladder!) is not your driving force...your very reason for being...stop reading now.



15-year-old Jimmy as a young dweeb with his ham radio

When I was 14, my parents gave me a shortwave radio. I tuned into broadcasts from all over the world — from places I'd never heard of — cities like Sofia, Bulgaria, and Quito, Ecuador. I'd also tune in to regular people talking back and forth, like on the phone, only they were on the air. I found out those guys were called "hams," or amateur radio operators. Ooooh! I wanted to do that! So I looked into what it took to become a ham radio operator: passing a test encompassing a knowledge of basic electronics, a thorough understanding of FCC rules, and fluency in Morse code (the absolute basic mode of radio communications). So, at age 15, I got my ham radio license and officially became a geek! I spent hours every day sitting before my radios,

code key in hand, headphones on, listening to and transmitting ethereal dots and dashes worldwide. I was hooked. At 16, I got a transmitter that allowed me to actually talk on the ham frequencies, allowing me to learn to communicate. Before I turned 17, I auditioned for and won the privilege of being the morning announcer at my high school with a captive daily audience of 2,500 kids.

I began college at 17 on the strength of my mathematics abilities, but I really chose Lawrence University because it had an actual 10,000 watt FM radio station staffed by students. While at that college, I spent every waking moment, as well as many sleeping hours, at the radio station. I flunked out, but not before losing my broadcasting virginity. I ended up going to a couple of junior colleges to get my GPA up enough so that I could actually get a degree in broadcasting, which I earned from Southern Illinois University.

A college degree is a good thing to have, but with no commercial experience in your field, it's only a foot in the door.

It's who you know!

After five months of various dead-end jobs — Chrysler assembly line worker, draftsman, sheet-metal worker — and calling radio stations and begging to do anything to get started, I got a call from a former college radio chum who was running a hip FM station in Madison, Wisconsin. Their weekend deejay was fired for mainlining acid, often missing his airshift, and their salesman was clueless about the whole hippie culture. They needed someone to take on both positions. I couldn't (and still can't) sell anything to anyone but I knew all about this "underground" music and had a little on-air experience, so I got my first paying job. I made \$3.00 an hour doing two eight-hour airshifts on weekends, plus a 10 percent commission on whatever business I brought to the station. I was considered a success when my first month's pay amounted to \$360! Wow! Almost \$90 a week! I was so happy I left my efficiency apartment and moved into a real apartment with a couple other staffers who shared my love of rock and roll and cannabis. We didn't care about money because it was the music that mattered. We loved being poor and famous.

I visited San Diego that summer and fell in love with the city. I also loved what I heard on (the original) KPRI 106.5. On the day I left San



Jim McInnes

Diego to return to Madison, I took a reel-to-reel tape of one of my shows to the (original) KPRI studios at 7th and Ash. It was on a Sunday but luckily the front door was open and someone took my tape, promising that the boss would hear it. All I talked about with my girlfriend on our 2,000 mile trip home was how much I loved San Diego and how I knew I'd never get a gig there.

Expect the unexpected!

Two weeks after we got back to Wisconsin I got a call from Mike Harrison, program director of (the original) KPRI, asking whether I'd like to come to the West Coast to do the 10 a.m.-3 p.m. weekday show for the princely sum of \$550 a month — about \$3,000 a year less than I was getting at WIBA-FM. Naturally I said yes because I was gonna move to California, which was the dream of many a Midwesterner (S.D. Troubadour editor Liz Abbott, for example). I put in 10 months at (the original) KPRI before KGB called, asking me to become their new morning host the next day! I agreed but demanded a pay raise — to \$600 a month, which I obviously got — and spent the next 28 years, five months and 11 days on 101.5.

The saying in my business is: You haven't worked in radio unless you've been fired. It took almost 30 years, but as of October 11, 2002, I can say that I've worked in radio. I still love what I do. I feel both blessed and lucky and am very happy to continue to practice my craft six days a week, now on 103.7 The Planet!

I wanted to write more but this already looks like a wank-fest. The point is that if you have a dream, do everything legally possible to achieve that dream. It's gonna be hard work, but you'll do it if you really want it!

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Saturday, June 12, 7:30 p.m.
DENNIS ROGER REED
San Dieguito United Methodist Church
170 Calle Magdalena, Encinitas

Saturday, June 26, 7:30 p.m.
PEGGY WATSON
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the highway's song

Roll Out the Barrel: Brave Combo Delivers Polka with a Twist

by Paul Hornick

"Ladies and Gentlemen, The Beatles!" With those words Ed Sullivan thus unleashed the pounding pubescent hearts of millions of teenage girls and lodged himself permanently into the sonic iconography of the baby boomer generation. Unknowingly, Sullivan was also taking part in what turned out to be a dark chapter in the history of American music. The day after the four lads from Liverpool expressed the chaste desire of wanting to hold hands and related the story of a young girl's love in the triple affirmative, the guitar replaced the accordion in this country as the most popular instrument.

American music was never the same. Thereafter, during the sixties, accordion players were overrun by the Stones, the Animals, and the rest of the British invasion. Accordions did not fly with the Jefferson Airplane or Iron Butterfly. The Great Society had a place for everyone, except for accordion players. So great was the sea of change that at the megaconcert Woodstock—only five and a half years after the Beatles premiered on Ed Sullivan—there is no evidence that an accordion was anywhere to be found.

The rock

music of the sixties pushed aside jazz, ballroom dancing, and the most graceful of dances, the polka. Perhaps it's fitting, then, that the band at the forefront of polka for the last 25 years should call themselves Brave Combo. Unafraid to get down with a good mazurka, these men know that there is more to this music than beer, ill-fitting polyester, and bowling.

Formed in the late seventies and subject to several personnel changes along the way, the one constant of the band is their commitment to making fun, life-affirming music. Carl Fitch, the only remaining founding member, explains the magic of the music the band makes. He says, "The beautiful thing about polka music is its adherence, its *strict* adherence, to a tension-and-release policy. You've got the verse that kind of builds the tension, then you just slam into the chorus section, and it's like fireworks; it's fireworks you can almost see. And it's a life-supporting thing, and when you're actually at a dance and that moment happens, it's really an amazing thing."

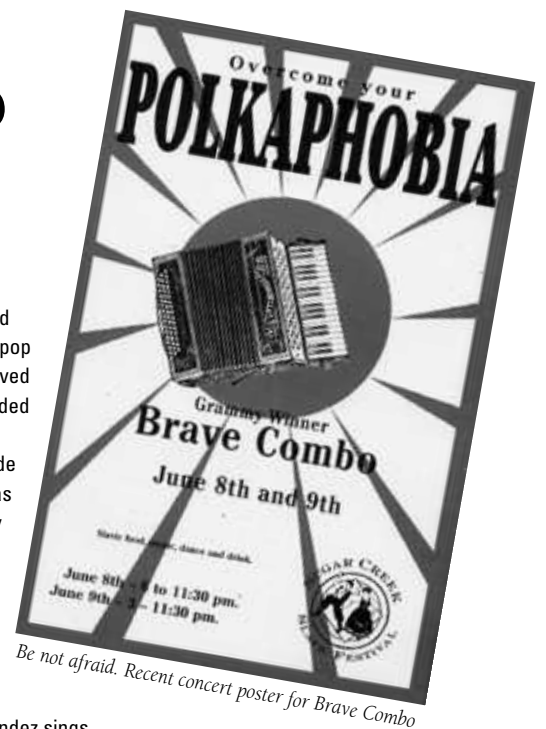
Although polkas and waltzes from both sides of the Atlantic are their mainstay, the band's repertoire includes other popular dances as well. They might remind you of wedding bands from big

cities and industrial towns back east who knew how to keep the crowd happy by playing a rumba, a cha-cha, a swing, then that new hit by the Captain and Tennille "just for the kids." As a matter of fact, among their schedule of concerts and performances, Brave Combo still plays wedding receptions.

They don't just tip their hats to these different styles. Their tangos would please any crowd in Buenos Aires. When they cha-cha, they really do go cha cha cha. If the polka they're playing is from Slovakia, it's ornate; if it's from Poland, it's sweet; and all the American polkas are high spirited and robust. Members of Brave Combo grew up with rock music, giving some of their interpretations a more driving edge than what you might get from the recordings of Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians or Frankie Yankovic and his Yanks. For example, their intro to "The Merry Wanderer" sounds like it might have come from punkers who had just found their amphetamine supply.

They sometimes shoehorn and claw-hammer standards and pop tunes into one of the styles loved by the band. They have recorded "People Are Strange," the Doors hit, as a horah and made a cha-cha out of the Christmas classic "Oh Holy Night." They even recorded a CD with Tiny Tim of obscure ditties from the 1920s and 1930s.

Definitely not wearing a uniform and playing saxophone, clarinet, and flute is Jeffrey Barnes. Bubba Hernandez sings and plays bass and tuba. Danny O'Brian plays the trumpet, and the band's drummer is Alan Emmert. Carl Finch sings and plays guitar and piano. And, oh, by the way, he also plays accordion. If you want to roll out the barrels and find out who



stole the kishke, you can find out more about the band at www.bravecombo.com. Brave Combo at Winston's, 1921 Bacon St., Ocean Beach, on June 16.



Rose Maddox, continued from page 4.

In 1963 *Cashbox* magazine named Rose Top Female Country Vocalist. All the years of hard work had paid off, but on the down side it was taking its toll. Extended time away from home and husband was destroying her marriage. Guilt over her son's increasingly rebellious activities, including going AWOL from the navy, and Lula's downward spiral into dementia following the ugly split with her mother, haunted Rose. She became increasingly difficult to work with. Rumors of pill popping, "bennies" to be exact, were wide spread. Flings with various men who she shared billings with, including Jerry Lee Lewis, were whispered about.

Understandably, years of suppression by Lula and extended time away from her husband resulted in a very wild Rose. She was afflicted with severe stomach ulcers that were too long ignored and later misdiagnosed, which eventually led to the removal of

part of her stomach. Her voice suffered from extreme over use. Her appearance reflected the unraveling of her personal, professional, physical, and emotional state.

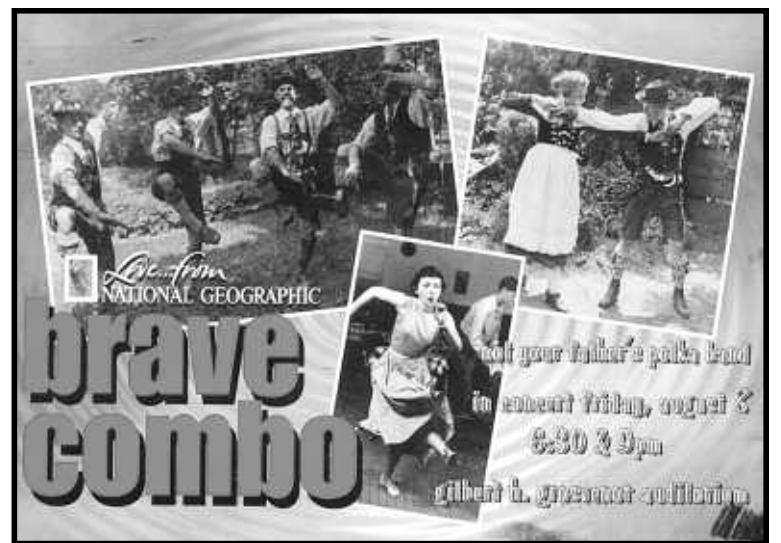
In 1964 Rose's stint at Capitol was over. Though Rose's condition played a part in this decision, the label was also changing its emphasis. Being owned by the British EMI label, which was putting the Beatles on vinyl, older country artists like Rose were deemed as dead weight. Capitol was poised to make millions off the Fab Four's American releases. The label's efforts and energy needed to focus on the Beatles and all the other band's and industry-related activities that would follow. Being supplanted by this new musical wave only exacerbated Rose's volatile state of being.

Following Donnie's disastrous stint in the navy, a bittersweet reunion and friendship blossomed between these very wounded souls. Besides being Rose's son, Donnie became her bass player, driver, companion,

and loyal friend. Despite her release from Capitol, Rose continued to tour extensively, and she needed someone to support her in this grueling task. Donnie wanted and scored the job. The two kept each other accountable to some degree, and their newly discovered love for each other healed years of neglect and misuse on the part of both mother and son.

By this time Rose was a seasoned veteran with experience stretching through four decades. Her career had predated and outdistanced the likes of Patsy Montana and Kitty Wells. Now in her early thirties she had to fend off relative newcomers like Jean Shepard, Skeeter Davis, Wanda Jackson, Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, and Tammy Wynette. Rose, like no other woman, opened the door and pioneered the way for the women who followed. Sadly, few gave her the credit she deserved, and many shunned and disparaged her.

End of Part Two. Final installment next month.



Fred Gerlach, continued from page 6.

Once I talked Judy into going up to L.A. and auditioning at the Ash Grove. Ed Pearl hated me, but I thought maybe he'd give her a chance. Well, they liked her and took her aside and said, "You can work with our house guitarist." But Judy said, "No. Fred and I are a team and we sound good together." So they had to take me too. Part of the deal we signed said that we'd do commercials — that's L.A. you know — and I wound up doing commercials for Mattel toys for this guy named Rick Allen. We called him Ra, because he was like a god to us. The commercial was for a toy called the Sidewinder. I wrote a special song and recorded it for them and everything was all right except they didn't like my voice. They said I sounded like a dirty old man. So they got someone else to sing and I had to make the commercial all over again. And I got paid all over again, which I think was \$1,400 both times. I had no idea there was that kind of money in it and now I had become corrupted. So that was my shot with Judy. I also played with Odetta.

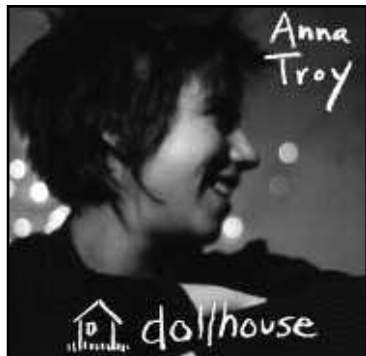
Coffee housing was always a meager living if you worked solo, so I always tried to throw in a few backup gigs like with Judy or Odetta. That would get you in the bigger clubs and the concerts where you could make some money. One time I was contacted by a guy from a folk festival up in Berkeley who sent me \$35 to cover my transportation. Unfortunately, he called later to say the festival had been cancelled. I also played several cof-

fee houses that went broke after travelling a couple hundred miles and showing up to a closed door.

Bob Stone, who owned the Upper Cellar here in San Diego, also owned or managed a place, whose name I can't remember, in Hermosa Beach. He hired me to do six shows a night, five numbers per show, which made me the house guitarist. During the six months I played there, they would bring in a headline act and I played in between, just solo on a stool about five feet from the espresso machine. One night while I was on stage playing my Martin dreadnought, [the espresso machine] was workin' and steamin'. The steam got so thick, it lifted the bridge right off the guitar right there on stage for all to see. That was before epoxy and the steam just did it in. That was the only time in all the years I've been playing that I had a secure gig. Six months, six nights a week, five shows a night, five songs per show.

I've been sort of hibernating these past few years doing just a spot here and there. My hand is awfully strong and I think I'm playing as well as I ever have.

I recorded a third LP for John Fahey's Takoma label sometime in the late '60s. He wanted an all instrumental LP, so I gave him what he wanted. I still have the masters of the audio-video record, which was recorded in my living room — and should be reissued, according to Lou [Curtiss] — and of course the Folkways material is available from Smithsonian Folkways in Washington D.C.



Anna Troy Dollhouse

by Phil Harmonic

After perusing through Anna Troy's six-song CD, it's easy to understand why a major record label was interested in The Troys. She is an excellent songwriter, with lyrics that run deep into the emotion of experience and feeling. Combine that with catchy melodies and phrasing and together they produce good songs. On "Dollhouse" she states, "...the words they reach my ears, but my mind looks to the floor." The second track, "Telephone," reveals an influence of one of the best, if not the best, local singer-songwriters: Gregory Page. On "Time Goes By," she uses a clever convention of elongating time. You can feel the seconds taking longer than "One Thousand One" as it takes a full two minutes just to sing verse one. Same with the second verse. Two verses, sung just once, and you are four minutes into the song. And it works! There are two more tracks by Troy. The sixth and last track was written by Gregory Page.

The songs on this CD are raw, with only one voice and guitar, but they pulsate with an essence and come across full and powerful as Troy's delivery ranges from gutsy to delicate with a style all her own. Watching her perform at Dizzy's BobFest was impressive and memorable.

Dollhouse CD Release will be held at Lestats June 6. Sharing the bill with Anna Troy will be Gregory Page, Angela Correa, and Chris Carpenter.



The Cat Mary ...no unwanted (or unfamiliar) passages!

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

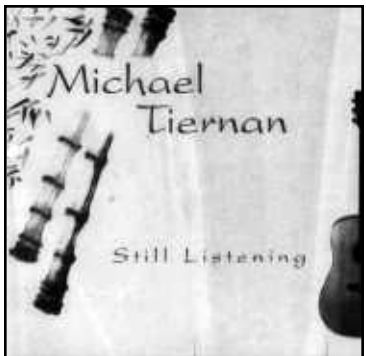
Using words to describe the music of The Cat Mary Glee Club is a bit like describing a shade of purple to a blind person. Not that you, dear readers, are unable to "see" it, only that the unique and original sound of this disc is largely due to the sum of its widely disparate (and sometimes seemingly incongruous) influences: lilting fiddles and rubbery acoustic slide guitars weave together with haunting upright bass, stabbing piano, and aggressively brushed drums into a spiraling tapestry of jazz extensions and funky, almost Cajun-like rhythms. If forced to utilize comparisons, I might suggest that it sounds a bit like Zappa and Mingus being guided through the swamps of Louisiana by a charming and refined (albeit slightly demented) southern storyteller.

Perhaps it's songwriter/guitarist/vocalist Andrew Markham's lyrics themselves that hold the truest description. Like the music that accompanies them, they're comprised of equal parts of humor, intelligence, irony, and a mischievous poetic obliqueness that continually intrigues one moment and subverts the next.

Imagery abounds, encouraging the listener to picture the "scent of dung and jasmine," "rain-grim Sabbath Sunday(s)," and the hissing of a thrown carving fork, while unerringly retaining the thread of the rich stories he unfurls. It's to the band's credit that when Markham himself abandons melody for spoken word on the verses of "Pass The Filling Station" and stops singing altogether for two instrumentals, the narratives are still vivid.

Top-tier musical talent is what is required for music this far-reaching, and you can't do much better than the brothers Dow (Ken on bass, Kevin on drums) and Steve "Hoops" Snyder on piano for a creatively fluid rhythm section. Melissa Harley helps hold things together nicely with alternately supple and wailing violin lines, and Markham shows he can converse equally well on guitar.

This is probably the best record San Diego will yield this year.



Michael Tiernan Still Listening

by Frederick Leonard

Michael Tiernan introduces himself to the local scene with an introspective heart turned inside out. Lyrically speaking, he's all about soul matters and anything aside from fashions, trends, scoping out the action, or driving too fast. *Still Listening* is an appropriate title and remains so in its own innuendo. It is the perfect title.

The songs, smart and deeply sensitive, move you. They make you think about yourself, your life, and the God that exists in the details therein. The guitar is played in wonderful balance between economical simplicity and subtle flashiness in a way that doesn't feel as though he's showing you all he knows. He plays in standard and alternate tunings with an equal dosage of modesty, maturity, and proficiency. Chord structures are beautifully constructed, with sub-melodies lacing their way through the progressions, which indicate a deeper understanding of how words and music come together to mean one ultimate thing. It is refreshing that nothing on this work reaches out to slap you with musical prowess, even though it shows up in subtle ways. He knows what not to play. He knows where it goes and dispenses exactly the right dosage in order to get the (more important) point across. The effect is one of genuine honesty from a dude who has chosen lonelier roads and simple things to make him right in his own skin and in his world.

There is a rootsy tone to the CD. I can hear Berkley Hart covering "My Own Two Legs," which harkens the Blue Ridge thing. "West Coast Life" offers a different perspective to the usual homogenous glory of sunshine paradise. The equations he renders between geographical seasons and seasons of the heart is astonishing.

It's not often you hear a CD that obviously has its own heart on the line with such obvious conviction in the good work that it is. If that matters to you, then Michael Tiernan's 14-song CD just might start talking to you, too.



Robert Spencer Memoirs of Robert Spencer

by Frederick Leonard

This self-produced 12-tune collection of solo acoustic work ain't bad. Produced at Grossmont College, Robert Spencer (a transplant from New Hampshire) teams up with Brandon Sullivan for the co-production of *Memoirs*.

One could expect to hear the typical coffeehouse sound, which has become one of the staples in the local music scene. Armed with an acoustic guitar and a distinct tenor voice, he pitches poetic accountings of things observed in his life, laying a few of his own feelings on the line as well. The songs are a little referenced, but at the same time he's stickin' his neck out a little, discovering his own originality.

You won't find a shredder here, but you'll find well-constructed songs. At the beginning of his musical journey, he's going for it with the kind of confidence that indicates his growth into a formidable writer. His introspection demonstrates that he's looking, listening, and feeling intently the worldly details that make you different from me. Some of the metaphors are good although a little precocious, obvious, and trite at times. Life will help him out there. Yet still, he's honest in his thinking and in his delivery of the things he's thinking. And that is the strength of this CD. The last line of his spoken piece, "Snapshots," especially reveals the mature insight of an important writer on the way: "every person is a poet — some just never find their poem."

The sound quality is okay. It never strays from the production value established in every song, which amounts to guitar, overdubbed guitar, voice, overdubbed voice manufactured by the same methodology. It works out fine, but a change in technique might exploit the talent a little more successfully. There is a cameo piano appearance, by exception, in "Driving Blind."

This is no landmark effort, but it's a helluva start.



Simeon Flick Soliloquy

by Frederick Leonard

Simeon Flick steps forth with an eight-song collection of exceptionally smart, well executed, and infectiously catchy pop tunes. The first thing he mentions in his credits is, "Soliloquy was spontaneously recorded with forgiving minimalism ..." Well put.

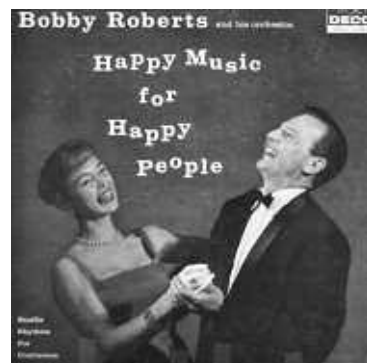
But wow! For a guy who became a singer-songwriter at a time in history when the planet is saturated with a gazillion singer-songwriters, Simeon Flick is one of the few with such distinction, it makes him one of the few flowers worth picking, by natural law, in the vast garden-meadows of music talent.

I remember introducing myself to Jason Mraz for the first time. He was still unknown at the time and starving like everybody else. I just shook his hand, introduced myself, and told him I've been trying to do what he does for about 20 years, and that he had "it." He looked at me funny when I told him, "You should be outta here by now. It shouldn't be long before the world knows you're big time."

This music is different and not written for the attention of little girls. But I have the same thing to say to Flick: "Dude, you're outta here."

"Trey Downs," the second track, took about five seconds for me to love it. It's a perfect hit.

The whole CD is brilliant; however I don't have enough space to go on about each tune. Every single track is remarkable in its originality, range of material (it kicks Jason's ass in this department), chops, maturity in arrangement and production, and most important: serious mojo.



'round about

JUNE CALENDAR



WEEKLY

every **sunday**

7th Day Buskers, Farmers Market, DM V parking lot, Hillcrest, 9am-1pm.
 Connie Allen, Old Town Trolley Stage, Twigg St & San Diego Ave., noon-5pm.
 Traditional Irish Music, Tom Giblin's Pub, 640 Grand Ave., Carlsbad, 3pm.
 Irish Dance, Dublin Square, 554 Fifth Ave., 3pm.
 Celtic Ensemble, Twiggs, 4pm.
 Traditional Irish Music & Dance w/ Cobblestone, 5-6:30pm / Boxy Band, 6:30-10pm., The Field, 544 Fifth Ave.
 Joe Rathburn, The Galley, 550 Marina Pkwy, Chula Vista, 5-9pm.
 Miff's Jam Night, Java Joe's, 6344 El Cajon Blvd., 6-9pm.
 Jazz Roots w/ Lou Curtiss, 9-10:30pm., KSDS (8.3 FM)
 The Bluegrass Special w/ Wayne Rice, 10-midnight KSON (97.3 FM).

every **monday**

Connie Allen, Old Town Trolley Stage, Twigg St & San Diego Ave., noon-5pm.
 Open Mic Night, Rosie O'Grady's, Normal Heights, 7pm.
 Open Mic Night, Lestat's, 7:30pm.

every **tuesday**

Connie Allen, Old Town Trolley Stage, Twigg St & San Diego Ave., noon-5pm.
 Open Mic Night, Casa Picante, 10757 Woodside Ave., Santee, 7:30-9:30pm.
 Traditional Irish Music, The Ould Sod, Normal Heights, 7pm.
 Comedy Night, Lestat's, 7:30pm.
 Traditional Irish Music, Blamey Stone, Clairemont, 8:30pm.
 Open Mic Night w/ Sage Gentle-Wing, Beachcomber, Mission Beach, 8:30pm.

every **wednesday**

Pride of Erin Ceili Dancers, Rm. 204, Casa del Prado, Balboa Park, 7pm.
 Sue Palmer Supper Club w/ Deejha Marie & Sharon Shufflet, Caffe Calabria, 3933 30th St., 6-8pm.
 Open Mic Night, Metaphor Cafe, Escondido, 8pm.
 Open Mic Night, The Packing House, 125 S. Main St., Fallbrook, 8pm.
 Open Mic Night, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Highland Way, Tom Giblin's Pub, 640 Grand Ave., Carlsbad, 8:30pm.
 Live Taping of San Diego's Finest TV Show, Lestat's, 9pm.
 Hatchet Brothers, The Ould Sod, 9pm.

every **thursday**

Open Mic Night, Just Java Cafe, 285 Third Ave., Chula Vista, 7-10pm.
 Tony Cummings, Blamey Stone, Clairemont, 8:30pm. (also Fri. & Sat)
 Rockabilly Thursdays w/ Hot Rod Lincoln, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 9pm.
 Brehon Law, Tom Giblin's Pub, 640 Grand Ave., Carlsbad, 9pm (also Fri. & Sat).
 Acoustic Underground, Lestat's, 9pm.
 Pat Mulvey, Egyptian Tea Room & Smoking Parlour, 4644 College Ave., 9:30pm.

every **friday**

Connie Allen, Old Town Trolley Stage, Twigg St & San Diego Ave., noon-5pm.
 California Rangers, McCabe's, Oceanside, 4:30-9pm.
 Songwriter Show case, Tabloid Coffee, 9225-27 Carlton Hills Blvd., Santee, 7pm.
 Aliah Selah & Friends, Exotic Bamboo, 1475 University Ave., 8pm.
 Irish Folk Music, The Ould Sod, 9pm.
 Open Mic Night, Egyptian Tea Room & Smoking Parlour, 4644 College Ave., 9pm.

every **saturday**

Connie Allen, Old Town Trolley Stage, Twigg St & San Diego Ave., noon-5pm.
 Open Mic Night, Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, 9015 Mira Mesa Blvd., 8pm.
 Talent Show case w/ Larry Robinson & the Train Wreck Band, The Packing House, 125 S. Main St., Fallbrook, 8pm.
 Christian Gospel Open Mic, El Cajon. Info: J.D., 619/246-7060.

tuesday • 1

Art of Guitar Making Exhibit, Geisel Library, UCSD, thru June. 858/534-8074.
 Dennis Roger Reed, Bluegrass/Folk Club Mtg., Round Table Pizza, 1161 E. Washington, Escondido, 7pm.
 High Society Jazz Band, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 7pm.

thursday • 3

The Band in Black, Jolly Roger, 1900 Harbor Dr. North, Oceanside, 6:30pm.
 Sage Gentle-Wing, Gelato Vero, 7pm.
 Dave Howard/Coyote Problem, House Concert, 8pm. Tickets and info: lizzie@meetinggrace.com
 Beezeley/Renata Youngblood/Toria, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Pete Thurston, Lestat's, 9pm.

friday • 4

Sage Gentle-Wing, People's Co-op, Ocean Beach, 5pm.
 John Bosley, Tabloid Coffee, 9225-27 Carlton Hills Blvd., Santee, 7pm.
 New City Sinfonia Concert, 1st Unitarian Church, Hillcrest, 7:30pm.
 The Two of Us, Metaphor Cafe, Escondido, 8pm.
 Jim Bianco/Lauren DeRose/Proper Villains Action Folk Singer, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Alfred Howard & K23 Orchestra/On the One, Lestat's, 9pm.

saturday • 5

International Village Celebration, University Ave. & Fairmount, 10am-5pm.
 Mark Jackson, Wynola Pizza, Julian, 6pm.
 Mark Spoelstra, Templar's Hall, Old Poway Park, 7:30pm. 858/566-4040.
 Geoff Muldaur, Acoustic Music San Diego, 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. Tickets and info: 619/303-8176.
 Jim Bianco/Kristen Axel/Alicia Lockett/Ted Ehr/J. Scott Bergman, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Baja Blues Boys, Patrick's Irish Pub, Poway, 9pm.
 Uncle Jesus CD Release, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 9pm.
 Anya Marina/Bushwalla, Lestat's, 9pm.

sunday • 6

Sage Gentle-Wing Benefit w/ Derek Duplessie/Gregory Page/Steve White/Joey Harris, Hot Monkey Love Cafe, 5960 El Cajon Blvd., noon-5pm.
 Coyote Problem/Dave Howard, Temecula Valley Balloon & Wine Festival, 3:30pm.
 John Jorgenson, gypsy jazz guitarist, Dizzy's, 7pm.
 Aaron Bowen/Ted Ehr/Tim Mudd/Garrett Bodman, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Anna Troy CD Release w/ Gregory Page/Anrea Correa/Chris Carpenter, Lestat's, 8:30pm.

wednesday • 9

Sage Gentle-Wing, Farmers Market, Ocean Beach, 4pm.
 High Society Jazz Band, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 7pm.

thursday • 10

Renata Youngblood/Chris Hobson, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Hypnotist Chris Wilson, Lestat's, 9pm.

friday • 11

Randy Sparks/New Christy Minstrels, Acoustic Music San Diego, 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. Info: 619/303-8176.

Aimee Mann, Belly Up Tavern, Solana Beach, 9:15pm.

Daniel, Metaphor Cafe, Escondido, 8pm.
 Chris Carpenter/Curtis Peoples/Ashley Mante/Nikhil Korula Band, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Kevin Tinkle, Lestat's, 9pm.
 Christopher Dale/Friday Band/Gandhi Method, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 9pm.
 Band in Black (Johnny Cash tribute), Longshots Saloon, 843 Grand Ave. San Marcos, 9:30pm.

saturday • 12

Christopher Dean, La Jolla Festival of the Arts, La Jolla Country Day School, 10:30am.
 Limelighters, Acoustic Music San Diego, 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. Tickets and info: 619/303-8176.
 Dennis Roger Reed, San Dieguito United Methodist Church, 170 Calle Magdalena, Encinitas, 7:30pm. 858/566-4040.
 Janet Rucci Band, Metaphor Cafe, Escondido, 8pm.
 Asylum Street Spankers, La Paloma Theater, Encinitas, 8pm. Tickets @ Lou's Records, www.lapalomatheater.com, 760/944-6027.
 Hugh Gaskins/Jessica Hoop/Cameron Ash/Surrey Lane/Jack the Original, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Comedy Rant, Lestat's, 9pm.
 Coyote Problem/Dave Howard, Coaster Saloon, Mission Beach, 9pm.
 The Blazers, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 9pm.

sunday • 13

Cecilio & Kapono, Humphrey's by the Bay, Shelter Island, 7pm.
 Kenny Chesney/Rascal Flatts/Uncle Kracker, Coors Amphitheatre, Chula Vista, 7:30pm.
 Velvet Gypsy, Egyptian Tea Room & Smoking Parlour, 4644 College Ave., 8:30pm.
 Truckee Brothers/LOAM, Lestat's, 9pm.

monday • 14

Jewel, Humphrey's by the Bay, Shelter Island, 7:30pm.

tuesday • 15

Gary Jules, Belly Up Tavern, Solana Beach, 8pm.

wednesday • 16

High Society Jazz Band, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 7pm.
 Mary Chapin Carpenter/Jim Lauderdale, Humphrey's by the Bay, Shelter Island, 7:30pm.
 Brave Combo, Winston's, 1921 Bacon St., Ocean Beach.

thursday • 17

Tom Russell, Acoustic Music San Diego, 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. Tickets and info: 619/303-8176.
 Renata Youngblood/Alicia Champion/Mike Willis/Jane, Twiggs, 8:30pm.

KEV/Jim Earp/Tom Boyer, Lestat's, 9pm.

friday • 18

Credence Clearwater Revisited, Del Mar Fair. Info: 858/792-4252.
 Sue Palmer, Concerts on the Green, Prescott Promenade, El Cajon, 5:30pm.
 The Darrels, Tabloid Coffee, 9225-27 Carlton Hills Blvd., Santee, 7pm.
 Winton Marsalis/Peter Cincotti, Humphrey's by the Bay, Shelter Island, 7:30pm.
 The Quimbys, Metaphor Cafe, Escondido, 8pm.
 Meghan LaRogue/Tristan Prettyman/Greg Lamboy/Annie Bethancourt/Alex Esther, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Jack the Original/Befred, Lestat's, 9pm.
 Big Daddy Orchestra, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 9pm.

saturday • 19

Mark Jackson, Weighorst Western Heritage Days, El Cajon, 6pm. Info: 619/590-3431.
 John Stewart, Dark Thirty Productions, Lakeside, 7:30pm. Info: 619/443-9622.
 Eliza Gilkyson, Acoustic Music San Diego, 4650 Mansfield St., 7:30pm. Tickets and info: 619/303-8176.
 Hossein Omoumi, Neurosciences Institute, 10640 John Jay Hopkins Dr., 8pm.
 Eve Selis CD Release, Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, 8pm.
 Rebeca Randle/Dave's Son/Alison Block, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Emerson Band/Trevor Davis, Lestat's, 9pm.
 The Fremonts/Gia's Fix, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 9pm.

sunday • 20

Jason Mraz, Copley Symphony Hall, 1245 7th Ave., 7:30pm. Info: 619/235-0804.
 Summer Solstice Dance/Multimedia Activation, 3255 Fifth Ave., 8pm.
 The Walking/Val Emmich, Lestat's, 9pm.

monday • 21

Bach Supper/Organ Concert w/ Robert Plimpton, Balboa Park. Info: 619/702-8138.

tuesday • 22

Joan Baez/Steve Earle & Bluegrass Dukes, Humphrey's by the Bay, Shelter Island, 7:30pm.

wednesday • 23

High Society Jazz Band, Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St., 7pm.

thursday • 24

Keaton Cole/Kottke, Humphrey's by the Bay, Shelter Island, 7:30pm.
 Renata Youngblood/Late Night Waiting, Twiggs, 8:30pm.
 Dehdra Dun/Tim & Josh, Lestat's, 9pm.

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Photo: Millie Moreno



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Lou & Peter Berryman

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Angela Correa & Tom Brosseau (The Shelleys)

Photo: Millie Moreno



Robin Henkel

Photo: Steve Covault



Paul Geremia



Tomcat Courtney

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Los Californios

Photo: Millie Moreno



Sage Gentle-Wing & Kent Johnson

Boy, was it hot that weekend!



Photo: Millie Moreno



Mexican Roots Trio

Photo: Daniel Ogas



Mary McCaslin



Liz Abbott & Steve Covault

Photo: Millie Moreno

Photo: Millie Moreno



Ross Altman

Photo: Millie Moreno



Siamsa Gael Cielí

Photo: Steve Covault



Mark Spoelstra



Gregory Page aka Happy Herman

Photo: Steve Covault

Photo: Virginia Curtiss



High Wide & Handsome

Photo: Virginia Curtiss



Mimi Wright

Photo: Daniel Ogas



Clyde Davenport

Photo: Daniel Ogas



Tanya Rose

Photo: Steve Covault



Photo: Steve Covault

Patty Hall

Photo: Liz Abbott



Lou Curtiss and Jon Adams

Photo: Daniel Ogas



7th Day Buskers



Millie Moreno



The **ADAMS AVENUE STREET FAIR** is coming right up! Musicians interested in being considered should send a press kit, including CDs, bio information, and photos to: Adams Avenue Business Association, 4649 Hawley Blvd., San Diego, CA 92116 Attn: Street Fair Music Committee.



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THK
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the Knuckle Bones
Prince of Piano
Soul Diego

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Counterstrike
Route 66
Electric Funeral
DJ Tipsy
Second to Last
No Parking Anytime
Emerald City
Charger Band