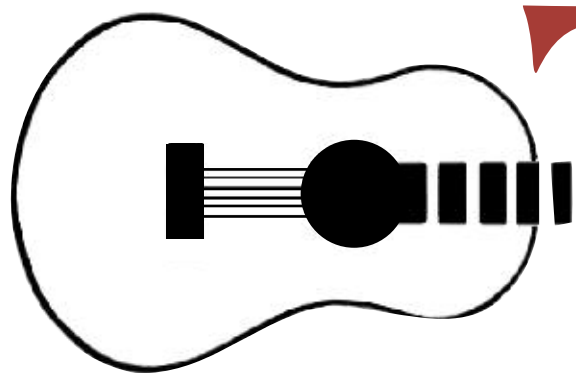


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T SAN DIEGO ROUBADOOR

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



September-October 2005

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Vol. 5, No. 1

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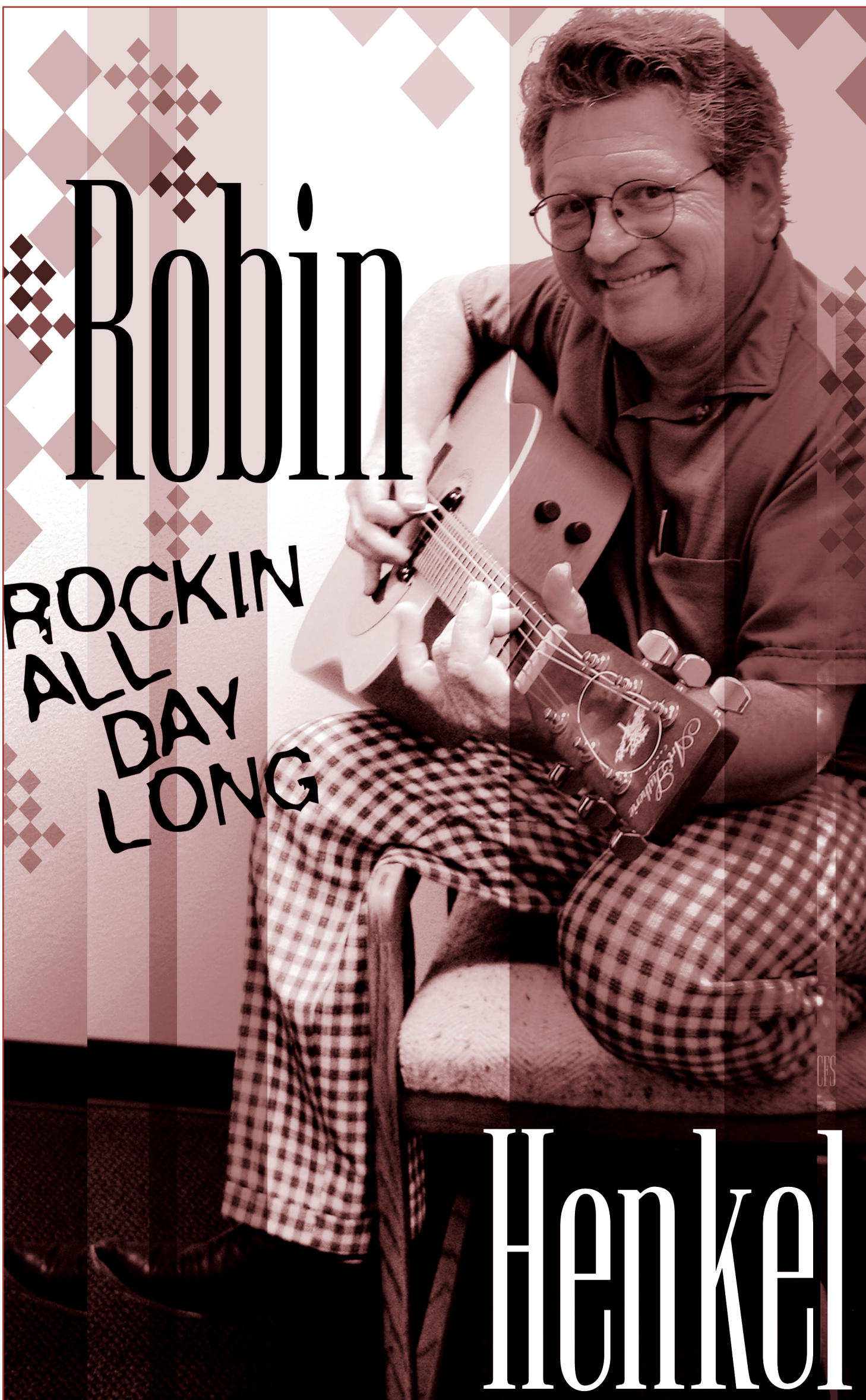
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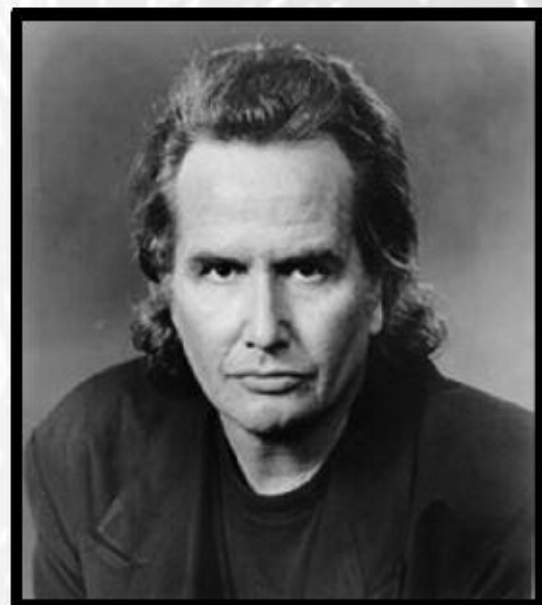
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To promote, encourage, and provide an alternative voice for the great local music that is generally overlooked by the mass media; namely the genres of alternative country, Americana, roots, folk, blues, gospel, jazz, and bluegrass. To entertain, educate,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

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

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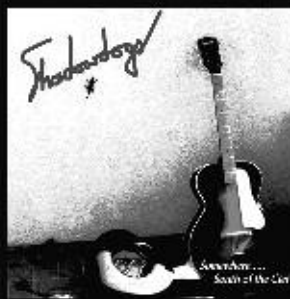
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Concert Schedule*

* check for additional concerts

- Peter Himmelman (Sept. 11)
- Andy M. Stewart & Gerry O'Beirne (Sept. 15)
- Jamie Laval (Sept. 16)
- bohola (Oct. 2)
- Country Joe McDonald (Oct. 21)
- Peter Mulvey (Oct. 22)

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The San Diego Troubadour mourns the loss of our friend

Marco Anguiano

who passed away Wednesday, August 24, 2005.
We will miss him.



Upheld, encouraged, nurtured were we all
By him whose kindness comforts in recall.

— B.R.

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Arnaz in his prime
by Bart Mendoza

Desi Arnaz

The Mambo King of Del Mar

for the couple at 1920 Ocean Front. Even after the two split and Arnaz remarried in 1963, he and his new wife, Edith, remained. Arnaz loved the local scenery and was also a major race and horse enthusiast, becoming involved in various aspects of the business. He could be found in the terrace at the race track most of the summer. But it was encounters with Arnaz and his family outside of the race track that delighted local residents the most. Natives still speak of the star-studded parties at the home with reverence, and stories of shocked customers, running into Lucy and Desi at the local grocery store or gas station abound.

Photo: San Diego Historical Society



Arnaz at the Del Mar Racetrack, 1957

San Diego played a key role in the *I Love Lucy* (1951-1957) TV show as well. It was at an early 1951 La Jolla Playhouse production of *The Voices of a Turtle* that the pair discovered Vivienne Vance, who would be immortalized on numerous TV series as Ethel Mertz, Lucy's best friend. There's even an episode of *The Lucy-Desi Show* (1957-1960) that takes place here. Episode number six in that series, which aired October 6, 1958, is titled "Lucy Goes To Mexico," with the broadcast's

premise finding Ricky heading to San Diego to rehearse for a USO show with Maurice "Thank Heaven For Little Girls" Chevalier, scheduled to take place on an aircraft carrier. Lucy and Ethel decide to go shopping in Tijuana, with Fred as chaperone. Needless to say much confusion ensues and Lucy ends up dressed as a Matador fighting a bull at the local bull ring! And let's not forget the pair's wonderful 1954 film *The Long, Long Trailer*, part of which was shot at the Anza Borrego State Park, the infamous Banner grade to be specific.

Of course Arnaz was much more than just the *I Love Lucy* show. It was while living in Del Mar that he and Lucy founded Desi-Lu Productions. Though the company would be known for such hit TV programs as *The Untouchables*, *The Dick Van Dyke Show* and *Star Trek*, it was, in fact, originally formed to manage Arnaz's band.



At home in Del Mar, 1976

There was also a pair of movies alongside his wife. An 80-minute *I Love Lucy* movie pulled from theatre distribution in

1953 when *The Long, Long Trailer's* backers wanted the pair to concentrate on that film instead and *Forever Darling*, a light romantic comedy released in 1956.

Selling his half of Desi-Lu to Lucy in 1962, he had formed Desi Arnaz Productions Inc. by 1965. While it didn't quite scale the same height of Desi-Lu, he did score a hit with *The Mothers-in-Law*, which ran for three seasons on NBC (1967-1969) and featured Arnaz, who produced as well as appeared in four episodes as Señor Raphael Delgado. Classic TV fans should also keep an eye out for a mid-1960s appearance of a slightly out-of-place Arnaz on an episode of *Bonanza*.

He also hosted his own series, *Desi Arnaz Theatre*, but by the 1970s he semi-retired to spend time with his family and, of course, his horses. He did manage to make a few prime time appearances, showing up in episodes of *Alice* (1978), *Ironsides*, and *Perry Mason*, with his final on screen appearance in the 1983 film *The Escape Artist*, although none topped his appearance as guest host on the first season of NBC-TV's *Saturday Night Live*. A perennial in reruns, it's clear from the footage, especially when he leads the band during a musical segment, that Arnaz is thrilled to be in front of an audience again. It's a shame he didn't pursue more music later in life.

Not to say that he wasn't busy. He was appointed Ambassador to Latin America under President Richard Nixon. He wrote an autobiography, *A Book*, which was published in 1976 and became a *New York Times* best seller. A second planned book never got past the outline stage. He also bred horses both at a breeding facility in Corona and a ranch in Baja California.

In 1971 Arnaz crossed over into academia. When an SDSU student working on a thesis on *The Mothers-in-Law* TV show contacted him, he decided to donate materials related to the show to the school. Those materials form the basis for SDSU's extensive Desi Arnaz Collection, with the last sizeable contribution coming from his daughter Lucie Arnaz in 1987. Available for scholarly study, the 13.5 linear feet of research materials are a pop culture treasure trove, consisting of home movies, correspondence, scripts, and behind the scenes footage of various productions among the available items. Following a reception held on the SDSU campus in 1972, Arnaz was asked to

Photo: San Diego Historical Society



Professor Desi Arnaz at SDSU, 1972

return as a professor and soon taught classes on TV production as well as acting. The school became part of the Arnaz family life with his son Desi Arnaz Jr., of the hit sixties group Dino, Desi & Billy (remember the 1965 top 20 hit "I'm A Fool"?) enrolled as a student there. It was here that the younger Arnaz met his wife, a member of the San Diego Ballet.

Sadly, Desi Sr. passed away from lung

Photo: San Diego Historical Society



Arnaz with Dr. Almy Harding, donating his films to the Malcom Love Library at SDSU, 1972

cancer at his Del Mar home on December 2, 1986. It's safe to say that Arnaz introduced Latin music to mainstream America, a world music pioneer in the pre-digital, pre-stereo age. There are many compilations of his wonderful tunes available — *Cocktail Hour* (2000) and *Desi Arnaz: The Mambo King* (1996) are particularly recommended, but he is really never farther away than the TV set. The next time you catch an episode of that classic sitcom, just remember how much Desi loved Del Mar. It'll make a great show even better.

Babaluuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!

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- Sun • 11 Jane Lui, Lindsey Young
- Wed • 14 Kim Divincenzo, Arden Kaywin, Blaine Long
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- Sun • 18 Dehra Dun
- Wed • 21 Divine MAGEes, Eddie Anthony
- Thurs • 22 Heathen Kings of Old
- Fri • 23 Satisfaction, J. Turtle, Andrew Foshee
- Sat • 24 Adams Ave. Street Fair 11am-9pm
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Recordially, Lou Curtiss

MUSIC MAKER RELIEF FOUNDATION


At the Roots Festival this year we were able to present Little Pink Anderson, who came to our attention through the Music Maker Relief Foundation, an organization that promotes old-time vintage blues, gospel, and related old-time music. They publish a catalog of CDs through which they raise money to give these old-time performers a new lease on life, helping to bring them to the attention of people who put together folk-life festivals and concerts like the Adams Avenue Roots Festival. They have recorded such artists as Etta Baker, Jerry Boogie McCain, and Guitar Gabriel as well as other deserving but lesser known artists like Algia Mae Hinton, Precious Bryant, Carl Rutherford, and Beverly Guitar Watkins. The work of this organization has been praised by B.B. King and Taj Mahal, both of whom have written liner notes for and accompanied various artists. You can reach Tim and Denise Duffy at 4052 Summer Lane, Hillsborough, North Carolina 27278 or on the web at www.musicmaker.org to request a catalog of their fine CDs and to support the work they're doing. (I've been playing some of their CDs on my Jazz Roots program, KSDS 88.3FM, Sundays, 8-10pm.) They also offer a beautiful book of photos and information about the old-time artists they promote and work with titled *Music Makers: Portraits and Songs from the Roots of America* with a foreword by B.B. King and a 22-track CD.

ROOTS MUSIC NIGHT

About two months ago we started a Roots Music Series at Creations Cafe on 30th Street. The idea was that Virginia and I would play some of our music and invite people who play one kind of roots music or another to drop by and join in. My thinking was that it could serve as a kind of audition for those people I hadn't heard whom I might want to hire for a future Roots Festival.

Karen, the owner, was willing to stay open late on Wednesday evenings and hire a waitress, thinking that perhaps she'd sell a sandwich or two and make it worth her while. We got the publicity out and posters printed, but almost no one came during the six weeks it ran — a couple of musicians and friends but no public and


**MUSIC MAKER RELIEF FOUNDATION
FEATURED BLUES ARTISTS**



Carl Rutherford




Carl Hodges




Macavine Hayes




Willa Mae Bruckner



Frank Edwards




Precious Bryant



Guitar Gabriel



Etta Baker



Mr. Q.

Photos: www.musicmaker.org

certainly no roots musicians we hadn't heard. And so it came to a quick end. We're going to try a live Roots Music Night on the front porch of Folk Arts Rare Records (2881 Adams Ave.) on Tuesday nights. Maybe if enough of you roots music fans and musicians get off your duff and drop by, someone like Karen at Creations will let us use a place where folks can sit down and have refreshments while they listen. I'm a bit disappointed with you roots music fans out there. Singer-songwriters seem to pack them in

most everywhere they play (even some who aren't very good) and that's fine, but I can't be the only one shouting the cause for old-time music. If you've been to one or more of the Adams Avenue Roots Festivals, then you know the kinds of music I'm talking about. It can range from old-time fiddle tunes to mountain ballads and songs that take a side turn into vaudeville as well as novelty songs and country blues, and things learned off old 78s or LPs or maybe from your grandmother. It's all roots

music and it's the kind of music that needs passing down from hand to hand whether you're singing and playing it or listening and supporting those who sing and play it by passing on word of its value. We've all got a part to play. I'll be here at Folk Arts Rare Records on Tuesday evenings at 7 p.m. (also 9 a.m.-5 p.m. every day). Maybe someone will volunteer to bring refreshments. Let's keep old-time roots music alive year 'round in San Diego!

MY PET PEEVE

Have you ever noticed that whenever an old-time country blues artist plays at a festival or a concert, there's usually some white guy playing harmonica who thinks he's God's gift up on stage with him, trying his best to upstage the old timer? Most often the blues artist backs off and lets the harmonica player show off. Many times over the past 37 years or so I've talked to blues artists who wish that harmonica player would go away but are just too polite to say so. I've tried to keep that from happening at the Roots Festivals, but I can't be everywhere at once. This year one of those guys got up on stage with Honey Boy Edwards and kept the public from hearing a classic blues performance the way the artist most wanted it and the way the public deserves to hear it. What we need is a Festival Harmonica Police to intercept these fat-head showoffs before they get on a stage they weren't hired to be on and ruin another performance. Maybe we could have Harmonica Police tee shirts made to get the word out that we won't put up with these guys. Any one interested can contact me at Folk Arts. I need big



Lou Curtiss

mean-looking guys able to crush a Marine Band with one hand while escorting the bad taste blow-hard off the stage.

SAN DIEGO FOLKLIFE PROJECT

The San Diego Folklife project finally got its non-profit status and is actively working on two major grants: additional funding for the Adams Avenue Roots Festival and financial backing for the digitization of material in the Lou Curtiss Sound Library that is on reel-to-reel tape. The second project is a grant application to the Grammy Foundation, which is also supported by the Library of Congress and the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archives. Future goals include establishing a San Diego Folklore Center, outreach to city and county schools, and everything and anything we can do to bring word about roots music and folk life to everyone we can.

Recordially,

Lou Curtiss





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STEVE WHITE



BROADENS HIS HORIZONS

AND SPREADS RAMBUNCTIOUS FUNK THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

by Paul Hormick

I can hear the train coming. I can hear the wheels on the track. I love to hear that diesel when she whines. . .

These are the opening lines to Steve White's train song. It's a near perfect train song, loaded with the evocative charm that all train songs should have. He sings about whistles, speed, and hauling freight. And as the tune ends he expresses the yearning that we all feel from a train's passing and promises himself that "one day I'm going to climb aboard and ride." Travel and the open road are themes that White revisits in many of his tunes. Driving the ladies mud wrestling team or sharing a bus seat with migrant workers, he's on the open road or going from here to there in some fashion.

So it's a bit ironic that White has performed mostly locally, singing his songs of sorrow, beauty, order, and piety at restaurants, clubs, and coffeehouses with little recognition from the world outside San Diego County. His horizons, however, began to open up about five years ago. First in the eastern United States then in central and eastern Europe, White has toured and churned out his signature twang, stomp, and slide. "This goes back to 1999 or 2000. Taylor Guitars invited Steve to Nashville for the NAMM show," says Alda Leal, White's life partner. The NAMM (North American Music Manufacturers) show is the annual music industry love fest in which the manufacturers promote their latest gadgets and gewgaws. Guitar and amplifier manufacturers feel the same enthusiasm for the NAMM as Trekkies feel for Star Trek conventions or fans of Spiderman and Star Wars feel about the San Diego Comicon. Taylor Guitars and other manufacturers invite musicians like White to perform as well as to show off and endorse their products.

At Taylor's suggestion White and Leal went to Nashville a few days early so White could perform for the Chet Atkins Association. This turned out to be the point at which the doors began to open. "After Steve played we went to a coffee shop, and these two guys Tommy Emanuel and Joe Wilson followed us over," says Leal. "It turns out that these two guys belong to a group of pickers. They were overjoyed at Steve's performance. Joe asked Steve if he had ever done a tour of the East Coast. He wanted to set

up a tour for that July. Well, you know how things are in the music business; only about five percent of the time people will call you back. But the guy came through and Steve did a performance tour through Virginia and Pennsylvania."

The two flew off to the East Coast thinking that it might be a one-shot deal, interesting and fun but not leading to much else. And had it not been for the equipment White used on the tour, it may have stayed that way. "Joe told us not to worry about an amp, that he would provide one. He got Steve an AER [Audio Electric Research] amp. Well, when we got back to San Diego, Steve was still crazy for this amp. He called all the music stores around here trying to find one for himself and none of them carried them," says Leal. "I searched AER on the Internet and found a store in Laguna Beach that had them."



Alda Leal and Steve White

When White called the store, he said, "I told them I wanted a demo to try out. And the guy was telling me that they don't do anything like that — no demos and no promos. In talking to him I mentioned that I play with my feet. He said, 'I know you.' The fellow knew who I was. Then it was a different story. He sent me an amp. He just sent it to me; there wasn't any endorsement contract or anything like that." Ink may have not been put to paper, but White was at the next NAMM show promoting both Taylor and AER. AER president Udo Rosner was so impressed with White and his music that he asked him to come to Germany to the European version of NAMM: the Frankfurt Music Messe.

White's connection to Rosner and the rest of AER got off to a great start both personally and professionally. Leal says, "They like Steve. They know they have somebody who can get along with them, who's willing to work with them. They recognize that he is a creative musician, and they love what he does."

Taking care of the couple's needs as they traveled and even inviting them to their homes, she adds, "These people have become like family."

It might be time to stop and mention that in hooking up with White, they knew that he was a unique talent. He's a singer-songwriter solo performer who churns out a one man funky jam band. He lays out lines on his guitar, blows harp, and backs himself up with a percussion board of his own design that he plays with his feet. He may very well be the product of a genetic experiment involving James Taylor and James Brown.

At the Messe an Italian promoter approached White and asked whether he wanted to perform in Italy later that year. So, the couple returned in November for White's first tour in Europe where he played in cabarets as well as in alpine chalets. When White and Leal were at the Messe the following year, AER asked him to help introduce their products to central Europe, setting up a tour for him throughout Hungary. "On this tour I did all different venues — concert settings, blues and jazz clubs, workshops, you name it," says White. He traveled all over the former Soviet satellite and recorded a disk Live from Budapest during their stay there. "I liked it very much. It's like a step back in time. There aren't any free-ways there," he says. "But they're starting to put them in real fast now."

While White and Leal were in Hungary they met the 16-string guitarist Chandor Szabo, who invited White to return to Hungary last May for a cultural tour. White was scheduled to promote AER once again at this year's Messe, but because of a break in the schedule, White was able to fit in a tour of Italy and Austria, his longest tour of Europe.

Although White's genre is best described as Americana, it winds up being a masala of country, blues, Tin Pan Alley, and a little bit of Broadway thrown in. Nonetheless, because his music is so funky, a lot of folks call him a bluesman. And to be honest, after hearing him, you might not be convinced that he sold his soul to the devil at the crossroads, but he most certainly rented it to him for a day or two. After this year's Messe he fit right in at a master blues fest in Velden, Austria, and at the Bluesiana in Leibnitz, Austria. He also performed at the Sixth Annual Austrian Blues Masters.

The lyrics to White's songs are a grab bag of sweet and sad to the comic. Some of them are laugh-out-loud funny. Much

of appreciating his show is in catching his lyrics. The language barrier didn't seem to be much of a problem for the European audiences. He says, "About 50 percent of the folks over there speak English, even in Hungary. The people who did understand would explain the lyrics to the person next to them. Sometimes it was funny to see how they would try to translate and then they'd interrupt themselves because they were laughing." Even during the times when the translations were difficult or interrupted, White was pleased by the audience's enjoyment his performances. "You know, a lot of the people there learn American music phonetically. They don't understand it, but they like the way it sounds. The lyrics don't matter. You know, music is a universal language."

Photo: Mike Jaworski



Steve White

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twentieth century. And there's a love and respect for certain things in life. In Göd [pronounced good] I performed in this beautiful old wooden building. It was the town's community center, a multifunctional building. When I played there they had pictures that were done by the local elementary school children. And this other place, Pecs, was a cool little town. There's just no comparison to the United States. There's an integration of day-to-day life, community life with home life — not like here. There are no bedroom communities over there, where you commute to someplace else and come five o'clock the place shuts down. Over there people walk in the towns. They stop in cafés and go home for lunch. There's more of a balance of life. Here we have malls and corporate franchises. I hate to think of it becoming like the way we have it here."

White is back in San Diego performing locally. He and Leal are planning another tour of Europe in November and are making arrangements for better accommodations this time around. Leal says, "We've stayed in hotels. It's tiring. Next time we're finding a house to base ourselves in. You know Steve will play five days and have three days off. So it's nice to have a place to stay."

White is enjoying his new-found recognition and travels. "You know, in this business after the age of 35 you're no longer considered commercially viable," he says. "I was starting to feel uncertain about the future, and I didn't know if I had it in me, after years of doing this part-time. All my life I've dreamed about doing this, and it happened when I least expected it."

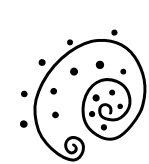
Steve White will appear at the Adams Avenue Street Fair's Acoustic Stage on Saturday, September 24, 3:45 p.m. and on Sunday, September 25, 2:45 p.m.



White walking in the Italian countryside

Although White has traveled quite a bit — through much of the U.S. and even spending some of his childhood in Laos and Cambodia while his father worked for the U.S. State Department — he'd never been to Europe. At his performances he was struck by the differences between American and European audiences. "Here people are aware of the celebrities, the gloss," he says. "Over there they take the time to sift through what's good and what's not worth bothering with. They have more of a background in the arts; they grow up with it." He also appreciated the greater camaraderie among the musicians in Europe.

The cultural tour of Hungary, which had White performing with another American, a Frenchman, and Szabo, a Hungarian, took White and Leal all over the country to little towns and hamlets. "Oh, it was beautiful," he says. "Most of Hungary is pristine, unaffected by the



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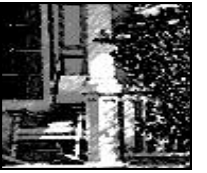
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by Raul Sandelin

elRayo Guitarworks: A Bolt of Energy from the Spirit World



Music is like ivy in a way. It can burrow under the surface and crawl long distances at root level, popping up ironically at unexpected times. Like ivy, it can also wrap itself around one specific thing and continue wrapping itself so that nothing escapes. The music of one generation, and the musicians who make it, can disappear from our cultural radar screens only to reemerge at some future date. Music can also wrap itself around a single generation, even a specific time and place, and keep those who were there from ever escaping. Where was I on Halloween night, 1974? I was listening to Dr. Hook sing "She Was Only Sixteen" on KCBQ-AM. Hey, I was only 11 at the time, so lay off. Besides, to an 11-year-old that was a mature song. But, you get the point: It was the music that tied that whole evening, and epoch, together. And it's the music that ties the following story together as well.



Ray Hagan in 1942

Throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s, Ray Hagan was a West Coast jazz drummer who played with the likes of Frank Sinatra, Johnny Mercer, Judy Garland, and Bing Crosby to name a few. As a versatile session man, he even appeared with such country music acts as the Sons of the Pioneers and Gene Autry. In a time before TV and extensive touring schedules, Hagan was mostly hired to play live radio performances, which emanated from various L.A. studios. He also appeared anonymously on countless vinyl recordings as well as with the Las Vegas house bands that entertained guests at the newly built resorts and casinos. Unfortunately, Hagan died in 1955 at the age of 40.

It would be another 20 years before the Hagan name resurfaced again. This time it was Tom Hagan, Ray's son, who penned the song "I Just Wanna Rock 'n' Roll," a song recorded and performed by Jose Feliciano, who was at the pinnacle of

his career in the mid-1970s. Soon afterward, Tom left L.A. for San Diego.

All the while, Andy Greenberg, a local boy, was playing guitar in some of the top local bands around San Diego, including Leroy Zeak and Child. Tom and Andy soon hooked up and, while not jamming together, both found jobs working at the recently founded Guitar Trader, a company that was quickly redefining how musical gear was retailed above and beyond the typical mom-and-pop music stores, which tended to treat the guitar as a side instrument while favoring band instruments and traditional sheet music. At Guitar Trader, Tom and Andy helped reposition the guitar as the main instrument for young musicians and students. And, instead of kazoos and Christmas carols, the gear they sold was directed at a rock audience.

By the late 1980s, Tom and Andy had learned the trade and decided to venture out on their own. In 1987 Daddy's Guitars opened in Mission Valley. The reference to "Daddy" was in honor of Ray Hagan (Tom was only 10 when his father died). With the industry knowledge and connections gained while working at Guitar Trader, Tom and Andy set up a shop that provided a rock 'n' roll atmosphere for both student musicians and pros alike. Carlos Santana bought a guitar there as did other touring players. But it was someone else's father who helped rekindle the daddy in Daddy's Guitars.

In the late 1980s, Fender Instruments was still in a transitional phase as it retooled following the buyout from CBS. And, product development and artist endorsements were still a ways into the future. At this time, Al Hendrix — yes, Jimi's Dad — was searching for ways to carry his son's legacy forward. After a chance meeting, Tom and

Andy were able to use their connections to hook the senior Hendrix up with Fender. Al Hendrix thanked the two by christening the shop The Official House of Hendrix.

Fast forward to 2005. After pursuing various individual ventures throughout the 1990s, Tom and Andy have reunited to open elRayo Guitarworks. This time they dedicated the shop to the after-market. At a time, when guitar retailers have become "big box" outlets and it's easy to find a Guitar Center in a local mall, Tom and Andy are filling the niche that the large stores can't provide: They carry the products that take a stock guitar and give it its unique, custom sound. So, what's the difference between one Stratocaster and another? Not much unless you change the pickups, the bridge/tremolo

system, the nut, and the wiring. But, with these revisions, yes, you can customize a Strat specifically for surf music, hard rock, punk rock, Latin, country, or blues. And, you can even give it your own signature sound within a genre à la Hendrix, SRV, or Robert Cray.

What comes out of the Big Box isn't all that different from one box to the next. But, what you do to hot rod your Strat or Gibby or Mexican Bajo or banjo is. And, it's this niche that brings back individual decisions and individual customer service that Tom and Andy specialize in.

Meeting them at the shop during a typical midday, one gets the impression that these two guys are reliving their own childhoods. While they are busy hot rodding guitars, they could very well be in a garage hot rodding an old '60s muscle car or shaving a new body design for a surf board. And, it's at this kind of moment that the whole concept of hot rodding comes to light: It is simply the act of taking something stock and making it better...or, at least, different. It's putting a personal stamp on something that has been mass-produced. Most of us recognize this when remembering the days of the hot rodded automobile. But, it can be done with the guitar too.

In fact, as Tom explained, the electric guitar evolved because of hot rodding. Certainly, it took a hot rodder to wire a pickup to an acoustic guitar. Later, Leo Fender and Les Paul would put their own designs into motion. Then, players like Hendrix, Jimmy Page, Eddie Van Halen, and Stevie Ray Vaughan would tweak their own guitars to reflect their personal tastes and to create their signature sounds. And, now, with a solid after-market of guitar accessories and "How to" books, every player from student to pro has the opportunity to give his or her guitar that unique twang, pop, and squeal.

So, how do you know which pickups (or bridge or nut or tone pots) are going to give you that sound that only you have heard in your own head? One of the innovations that Tom and Andy



Hagan and Larry Smead in 1974



Child's Greenberg (l.) and Steve Jumel, 1970s

Photo: Liz Abbott



elRayo Brothers Andy Greenberg and Tom Hagan



Al Hendrix (center) with the staff of Daddy's Guitars. Tom Hagan, back row, right; Tom's mom is standing next to Hendrix.

have put in place is the Demo Wall, a wall of generic guitars that have already been hot rodded with a large variety of pickups and accessories. So, do you want the EMGs or the Rio Grandes? The Seymour Duncan hot pickups or the vintage? Here along the Demo Wall, you'll find the guitar that will answer that question.

Tom and Andy seem like two kids who have just run home from school to get back to work on the old GTO or Gibson 335 that's been left in the garage from the night before. With an entire shop on the premises, they can also install every item they sell. And, I can't say enough about the abundance of youthful energy bouncing around their shop. These guys are 15 years older than I, yet I could grow young again just hanging out here.

I could also let them wax nostalgic and talk forever about all the bands they've been in, the bands I remember sneaking in to see when I was a kid — who made it, who didn't, who's still playing, and who got married. And, speaking

of the past, we can't forget where this tale began: with a little known jazz drummer from the '40s who banged skins with the best of them. Remember Ray Hagan? Well squint your eyes a bit, add some Tex-Mex attitude and a little Border Spanglish, and the Ray in elRayo emerges. In Spanish, el rayo means the bolt, that something you can't always see but can always feel. That bolt of energy or the duende from the spirit world that just seems to be there to make things better even when none of us knows exactly where it is. So, maybe this story should have started with an analogy about lightning instead of one about ivy. But, it's all good. Either way, I think Ray Hagan would be proud that his legacy lives on.

Oh, I forgot to mention — they have a great stable of guitar teachers also. So, yes, lessons are available.



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by Dwight Worden

Robin Henkel will make you laugh. He'll make you cry. And, most definitely, his musical grooves will make you tap your foot. Raised in San Diego from the age of five, Robin committed himself to a life of music at an early age and has never looked back. Who is this man who has played with or opened for the greats, including Dizzy Gillespie, John McLaughlin, Bonnie Raitt, Dr. John, Roy Rogers, Arlo Guthrie, Hot Tuna, Stephen Stills, Dave Mason, Nicolette Larson, Todd Rundgren, Harvey Mandel, Tim Weisberg, Don McLean, Charles Brown, John Hammond, Eddie Kirkland, the San Diego Symphony, Lowell Fulson, Johnny Almond, Buddy Miles, Big Jay McNealy, Jimmy Witherspoon, Sha Na Na, Papa John Creach, and others?

Who is this man who has won SDMA awards for his solo endeavors and as a member of the 7th Day Buskers, received several SDMA nominations, performed in a string of soul and rock bands in San Diego, and whose new band the Robin Henkel Band has been putting out arguably the best funk/blues/rock San Diego has ever heard?

YOUNG ROBIN AND EARLY MUSICAL INFLUENCES

It all began for Robin in Pensacola, Florida, when his mom, a Boston girl, met Robin's father at a roller rink. Marriage soon followed as did Robin's birth in 1951. A brief period in a Seattle trailer park was followed by a move to De Anza Cove Trailer Park on Mission Bay, back to Seattle, and back again to San Diego, finally settling in the community of Serra Mesa. Essentially an all white enclave, Robin grew up listening to the folk music revival of the early 1960s. As Robin describes it, "Pete Seeger was a big influence early on. I remember the coffee house scene during the early 1960s and my parents taking me to the Upper Cellar on El Cajon Blvd. near 63rd Street at that time. I loved it."

One day he heard the acoustic blues music of Josh White. Robin remembers, "In those days and at that time, I didn't know any black people and had certainly never heard any music like this before. It grabbed me and rocked my world. I was transfixed by Josh White's bending of strings." As his first major musical influence, White's social activism also provided an enduring inspiration for young Robin, who would later travel to a poor rural community in Alabama and work with young kids within the context of a musical project.

Robin soon found himself in a high school band trying to capture the groove sound of the era's black music that had so enamored him. A self-taught guitar player, Robin soon realized that he was in the company of some hot lead pickers, all of whom could read music except for him, so Robin decided to take up the electric bass. As the bass player of the Hilites, Robin and his high school mates performed the music of the Temptations, James Brown, Marvin Gaye, Booker T and the MGs and others. "We had a white soul band." Robin reports that he now looks back on this time period with great affection.

Through 1967-1968 the Hilites played many military venues and were quite a hit with their matching outfits, practiced step kicks, groove moves, and covers of the soul hits of the day. "The moms and dads of the kids in the band would drive us to our gigs at the local enlisted men's clubs on the navy bases at North Island, Miramar, the Naval Training Center on Rosecrans, and the Naval Hospital," recalls Robin.

Robin had his second transformative musical experience when he heard Jimi Hendrix for the first time. As he so succinctly puts it, "Jimi Hendrix blew my mind!" Jimi's was an aggressive, emotional style of guitar playing, showing great skill and technical prowess while literally thumping the listener in the chest with the power of the groove. Robin would never be the same. He dove into the music of the late 1960s and early 1970s — Jimi Hendrix, the Jefferson Airplane, and Janis Joplin. Although Robin tried to get the Hilites to learn some Jimi Hendrix tunes, one of the parents put a kibosh on that, saying, "My boy ain't playing none of that psychedelic sh**!" It was inevitable that Robin would move on.

COLLEGE AND RADICAL POLITICS SUPPLANTS MUSIC

During this time the anti Vietnam War movement was gaining momentum and the rock music of the time was inextricably intertwined with left leaning social movements that spoke to Robin's young adult sense of righteousness and of time and place. Robin, as did many of his contemporaries, decided to drop out of music, go to college, and be a lefty radical. Robin enrolled at Cal Western USIU located on the beautiful Pt. Loma campus overlooking the Pacific, where he graduated with a degree in political science. While it was his "intellectual" decision to drop out of music and be a political radical, he soon found he couldn't stay away from music. And, as he now reflects back, while there was legitimacy to his politics of the time, there was also an element of naivete and of being cool.

In college he met other musicians and formed a band called Jumbalayah. After graduation, Robin earned a living, playing with this band for three years. It was fun and impressed the young man that he might, in fact, choose a life of music and not starve to death. Jumbalayah played the music of Jimi Hendrix, Cream, ZZ Top, and other rock hits of that period, and did them well. They played Ledbetters on El Cajon Boulevard and Neutral Ground at 47th St. and University among other local venues.

ROBIN IS ASKED TO LEAVE THE BAND, COMPOUNDING FEELINGS OF INADEQUACY

Robin loved playing with Jumbalayah. But in truth the self-taught bass player was dragging. The band asked him to "get his bass playing together" because they liked him and although he worked hard to improve — and did improve — he was eventually asked to leave Jumbalayah, an experience that made Robin practice even harder. Feelings of insecurity about his chops as a musician and about his self-worth — feelings we all experience at one time or another — were strong motivators for the adolescent Robin. While the outside observer may have seen a competent, articulate musician, inside was often a jumble of emotions, painful shyness, and fears that would often motivate Robin to do better, thinking to himself, "if I can only play better, people will like me better." But that would sometimes leave him vulnerable to drugs, alcohol, and other escapist strategies.

Almost immediately after leaving Jumbalayah Robin joined a new band called Island. The bandmates lived together on Carmel Valley Road south of Del Mar. They had a blast playing and living the life of young musicians — collabo-

rating, living together, and enjoying what the times had to offer from music and "better living through chemistry" to women. Island still saw Robin playing bass, performing at many great gigs at the Albatross in downtown Del Mar, a hot spot for live music, where the band took over for the respected Nova. Then, it happened again.

JAZZ, BRAZILIAN MUSIC, AND CHICK CORREA

Robin's fire was lit and his musical horizons expanded for the third time upon hearing Chick Correa during those Del Mar days. "There was a wonderfully talented group of young musicians playing jazz around Del Mar at that time. Peter Sprague had a group with Kevyn Lettau, John Leftwich, Kelly Jocoy, and his brother Tripp Sprague called the Dance of the Universe. Peter lived next door to me then and I learned so much just overhearing their rehearsals. I also took a few guitar lessons from Peter and what I studied with him over 20 years ago is still with me today," Robin reminisces.

Another shining young talent, saxophonist Mark Lessman, became a close friend during this period, spending hours with Robin and showing him the ins and outs of jazz. In addition, Robin was introduced to the wonderful Brazilian music of Jobim from recordings that belonged to his mother. All of these new influences swirled and settled in Robin's musical world, adding to, but not displacing, his strong tendency toward the "groove" that he had learned from Josh White, soul music, Jimi Hendrix, and the rock music of the 1960s and 1970s.

ROBIN DRILLS THE GROOVE WITH HIS STUDENTS

Teaching music became an important part of Robin's life at an early age. He recalls showing guitar licks to his high school pals at home in Serra Mesa. This informal teaching became structured in 1973 when he began giving lessons out of a shack behind a friend's house in Ocean Beach as well as from an O.B. record store, where he talked his way in. When he moved to Del Mar, lessons were conducted in the communal house and in the late 1970s Robin began his affiliation with the Blue Guitar, which continues to this day. He began teaching out of the Blue Guitar's satellite store, called Blue Ridge Music, in Encinitas, transitioning later to the mother ship Blue Guitar downtown, following the store from its early Old Town location to Pacific Beach, back to Old Town, and to its current location on Mission Gorge Road.

Robin currently gives private lessons to approximately 35 students on acoustic, electric, and bass guitar at the Blue Guitar. He restricts the number of students he takes on to make time for other activities and to keep his perspective fresh. Enjoying his role as teacher, he describes his style: "I always play with my students, talking only as needed. I think the most important thing I pass on is an appreciation for, and ability to capture, the groove, rhythm, and timing of blues music that is at the heart of what makes this music great."

Buzz and Johnny from Hot Rod Lincoln were two of his many students. During one lesson Robin remembers having Buzz count out loud to a metronome for 25 minutes — one and two and Buzz, who now plays with Sha Na Na, related to Robin a year later that he had thought it a complete waste of time, but that the gig he played that same evening had felt different somehow. In a flash of insight while playing, he recognized the value of rhythm, timing, and the groove that Robin was teaching.

BACK TO THE MUSIC AND ROBIN'S PROGRESSION

Cindy and Breeze was Robin's next band, which was in keeping with the late 1970s' disco movement. As Robin describes it Cindy could hit all those high disco vocal notes, with the band backing her with the thumping disco rhythm characteristic of the style. Respected drummer Jack Flannery, in particular, worked with and taught the somewhat wild Robin how to control his groove on bass. Jack told Robin after their first few gigs, "Man, I'm making you sound good and you're making me sound bad. We gotta fix this! Listen to the kick drum and play with that," Jack said. And so, under Jack's patient tutelage that year, Robin learned to play and master the groove, producing a solid disco groove like a pro.

Breeze played at the Fogcutter in Carlsbad and other disco-heavy venues, with Jack and Robin holding the groove, which included Jack's tendency to stick his drumstick in the portable fan he always set up for himself to punctuate the rhythms with a rat-tat-tat-tat the fan blade made hitting the stick. Robin maintains that his teaching techniques and his new CD *Bad Bongos*, all heavy on the groove, owe a debt of gratitude to Jack Flannery.

Some time during the late 1970s, Robin's girlfriend at the time took him to the Bacchanal in Kearny Mesa to see acoustic blues master John Hammond Jr., who impressed Robin and rekindled his interest in acoustic blues, similar to the way Josh White had started him on his musical journey more than a decade earlier. Between his band gigs and teaching, Robin started playing solo blues again.

The next step in his musical odyssey was with his old roommate Ron Bolton in a cover band called The Ron Bolton Group. This was a prosperous period for Robin and the band as well as a fun time. They were young, talented, and out to experience it all in the days before AIDS, when the baby boomers were ready to party. The popular band played Halligans in Pacific Beach and the Triton Pub on the beach in Cardiff — Jimmy Buffet even sat in with them once. They played Kenny Loggins, whom Ron Bolton greatly admired, along with other soft rock tunes, with hard rock mixed in. The band had a lot going for it.

SELF DOUBT, DRUGS, AND ALCOHOL

Regardless of the public acclaim, Robin still wrestled with his ever lurking shyness and feelings of inadequacy as a person and as a musician. Looking back now with considerable insight from the perspective that many years of sobriety can provide, he understands how he went through a period of going home alone every night and drinking to the point of passing out. He sees now how he — and so many of his contemporaries — used drugs and alcohol to compensate for feelings of inadequacy and insecurity to get that quick "feel good" when in reality the chemical "feel good" was only masking his ability to interact with the real world and impeding his development of real world coping skills. As he now notes, "You know, instead of learning how to deal with the ups and downs of life, how to talk to women, how to get along with others, and how to respect myself and to mature, I threw drugs and alcohol at my problems and never really faced them."

Then Robin read the book *The Artist's Way*, which, coincidentally, had been given to him by a friend on the same day he had bought the audiotape. It had a profound effect on him. He took a trip to the desert and sat on a rock to

Robin



A JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY

meditate on his problems and his life. What he had read opened his eyes and allowed him to let go of his fear of inadequacy, to be himself both musically and as a person, and to back away from the drive to always please others as the highest of priorities. Ten days after finishing the book Robin quit alcohol and drugs. Six months later he quit cigarettes. Robin remains sober to this day.

Quitting cigarettes, in particular, was torture, but Robin realized that when he was feeling the worst, he was really "winning" because his body and spirit were changing for the better.

As he weaned his body and spirit of chemicals, Robin went through a life change that was critical for getting back to his music — only this time in a healthier way. The "new" Robin finished a blues recording project that had been languishing since 1995. Titled *Highway*, it received the San Diego Music Award for Best Blues CD in 2000. Looking back, Robin says he finally was able to "get off trying to be perfect" and, instead, to be himself. In 2004 he won another SDMA award for his solo project titled *Acoustic Blues*.

Robin learned some tough, but important lessons through these escapades. When asked what can he pass on to today's young musicians, he says, "Remember, your thoughts are not you. Just like you would throw something nasty out of your house if you found it lying around, throw those nasty thoughts out that otherwise lie around in your head, causing all sorts of avoidable problems. It really is OK to be you, to be imperfect and to accept that."

"Remember, your thoughts are not you. Just like you would throw something nasty out of your house if you found it lying around, throw those nasty thoughts out that otherwise lie around in your head, causing all sorts of avoidable problems. It really is okay to be you, to be imperfect and to accept that."

— Robin



Henkel



DISCOVERY THROUGH MUSIC

BACK TO ROBIN'S MUSICAL JOURNEY

While the Ron Bolton Group was fun and popular, they weren't playing the music that personally lit Robin's fire. So, after a while Robin dropped out of the Bolton Group. He soon hooked up with Johnny Almond and the Mark Lessman group playing jazz, R&B, and classic soul. The group included Doug Randall on piano, Gary Underwood on drums, and Robin on bass. People loved the band as did Robin. This gang could really play, and the musical style appealed to Robin. They started playing at the Fish House West (now Jay's Gourmet) in Cardiff and soon moved next door to the popular Windjammer in Cardiff (now Ki's restaurant) where they played to packed houses of rowdy crowds. They also played Bobby G's in Encinitas (now Martini Ranch) to considerable acclaim. They were cranking out six gigs a week, burning the proverbial candle at both ends. After six months Robin concluded that the fast life, drugs, and partying needed to be left behind. Robin remembers packing up their stuff at the Windjammer after an evening gig and seeing cocaine wrappers and detritus spread across the dance floor and bathrooms. He also recalls wild partying, cars spinning donuts on Highway 101 after the bars closed, and other out of control behavior. Robin decided to go solo to get away from the schlock groups and even from the talented but fast living bands in order to assert more artistic control over the music he was interested in — playing delta and piedmont blues. While he hoped this decision would be artistically rewarding, it in fact led to some of his most frustrating and difficult days. All of sudden the spigot was turned off on the regular good paying gigs. "As I became more discriminating about taking only gigs that were artistically fulfilling, I became poorer and poorer as well as emotionally darker and more frustrated," Robin recalls. True, he still had his teaching income, but he soon found that he had to take gigs just for the money. Some of them were embarrassing, he wouldn't even tell his friends with whom and where he was playing for fear they might come. As he puts it, "You know, Huey Lewis with a drum machine kind of stuff".

Henkel

LOVE AND MARRIAGE

In 1983 Robin met and fell in love with Cynthia, an attractive down-home country girl from Ramona. They hung out, grew closer, and were married in 1985. In 1989 the marriage ended in divorce although the couple continued to live in the same house for another few years. Robin says it was a cool marriage and they have remained friends. While his love life was going South, a couple of important things happened on the musical front.

During 1985 and 1986 Robin took lessons from Hal Crook who taught him how to compose and arrange jazz and was a great influence on Robin's music. Also at that time, by luck he got a great gig at the U.S. Grant Hotel in downtown San Diego that paid well and lasted for three years (1986-1989). With Robin on guitar, Richard James played bass with him; sometimes Richard would play the piano and Robin would take up the bass. Robin says that he learned a lot playing bass behind the jazz piano of Richard James.

Robin recounts, "One night Herbie Hancock came into the lounge where we were playing. Doug Randall was playing piano that night and so we played Doug's version of a Herbie Hancock instrumental tune called "Watermelon Man," to which Doug had written lyrics. We got a surprised grin out of Herbie for that! Later, Herbie played a 10 minute version of "Maiden Voyage." Wow!" Sadly, Doug Randall would soon die in a plane crash and Robin would lose a supportive collaborator and friend. Although a great gig in many ways, even good things can get tiring and after three years Robin again moved on.

It wasn't long before Robin hooked up with local blues man Earl Thomas and the Blues Ambassadors, including stalwarts Mike Cherry on drums, Paco Shipp on harmonica, and Tom Mahon on keyboard, with many other great talents dropping in and out. Moving from the calm propriety of the U.S. Grant to this group was liberating and exciting. The music was hot and contemporary, old and venerated, and all of the above.

From 1989-1993 Robin played a lot of blues. "Independent producer J.B. Leep, who had seen me perform at the U.S. Grant, produced a CD for me in 1989 titled *Robin Henkel Blues 90*. To help promote the CD I formed my own group with bassist David Curtis and two of the guys I had met playing in Earl's band — drummer Mike Cherry and harmonica player Paco Shipp," notes Robin.

Beginning in the early 1990s they performed at Croce's for three years. They also played lots of shows at Blind Melons and did gigs for the swing dancers at the Belly Up Tavern in Solana Beach. This group gradually evolved into the Robin Henkel Band.

This was a time when blues was hot in San Diego, and there were lots of blues bands in town. Robin recalls playing at a once a month event called "Blues Fest" at Blind Melons in Pacific Beach where all of the blues bands would come in and play for an hour on the same night. Robin describes the scene as way cool. Every blues player in town was milling around, musicians were sitting in with each other's groups, and the musical stew that was created was stimulating and exciting. It was a time Robin remembers with great fondness. There was a real blues community in town at the time, centered at Blind Melons and also at Croce's and Patrick's downtown where Robin and the others played regularly. They played hard, typically without rehearsal. It was one of those magical periods when the music jelled for Robin.

As 1993 drifted into 1994 the scene in the Gaslamp District was cooling off. Robin started playing at the Zanzibar in Pacific Beach with drummer George Sluppick and bassist Clark Stacer. While his music was contemporary Robin was, by this time, in his 40s and feeling a little over the hill. But when the two young players joined the band, the music not only rejuvenated Robin but it also provided access to a younger audience. The result: the band was a local smash hit. The corner of Cass and Garnet was like a mini Haight Ashbury right here in Beach Town, USA. The crowd was young, bohemian, and wild, and the music was infectious.

At the time Robin was into playing blues, both electric and acoustic, but he also maintained his interest and love for funk and other forms of music. The spare and beautiful jazz music of Miles Davis was also a great influence on Robin then, as were Latin and Brazilian rhythms. Since 1997 many musicians have played in the various configurations of Robin's bands as the type of gig dictated and the budget would allow.

Ever interested in new directions and challenges, Robin joined Shawn Rohlf and the 7th Day Buskers in 2000, playing acoustic dobro as part of the band's bluegrass and related repertoire. Robin describes this as an exciting new direction for him as he had never played this style of music. He soon adapted and was adding not only his skilled dobro work but also his harmony vocals to the powerful musical mix. Robin's work with the Buskers can be heard on their two most recent CDs, *Born to Pick* and *Fool's Grass*.

Robin has been on three tours with the Buskers, one up the coast in 2003, with gigs in California, Oregon, and Washington; a second to Texas and the Southwest in 2004, and a repeat tour up the West Coast in 2005. In between tours the band has been busy with gigs ranging from their regular Sunday morning performances at the Hillcrest Farmers' Market and the Adams Avenue Roots Festival to performances with the San Diego Symphony and various other events. Robin and his bandmates were honored with the 2004 San Diego Music Award for Best Americana Band and have been nominated this year for best Americana CD for their new release *Fool's Grass*.

Not content just to play music, Robin and the Buskers proved their musical and acting skills in *Cotton Patch Gospel*, a musical play produced by the Lambs Players Theater in June and July of 2004. It was such a hit that it was held over for performances at the San Diego Lyceum Theater in Horton Plaza through September. Robin is still a regular, key member of the 7th Day Buskers. As Robin puts it, "In the Buskers we don't present a repertoire based on what we think the general public wants to hear. Rather, Shawn writes great original material, we collaborate and work it up, and present it for the public to receive as it will. This is the kind of 'art' band I would like to play in for the rest of my life."

On another interesting side track, Robin was invited to play with the San Diego Symphony in 2003 as part of its Summer Pops series. He performed his original composition "Solitude" on resonator guitar with the symphony to a warm reception.



Robin and his mom, Cynthia, 1951



The Hillites, 1968: Robin, Bruce Norton, Ed Shoen, Steve Smith, Jeff Lewis, Gary Pluchino



Ocean Beach, 1974



Robin discovered John Hammond Jr. in the late 1970s



Ron Bolton Group, late 1970s: George Kosta, Robin, Ron Bolton



Johnny Almond Rhythm Review, mid-1980s: Tony Cooper, Pete Marchal, Robin, Steve King, Johnny Almond



Blues 90, 1990: Robin, Paco Shipp, David Curtis, Mike Cherry



Alabama, 1998: Trading licks with Birmingham George Conner



The 7th Day Buskers at the Adams Ave. Roots Festival, 2004



Robin at the CD Release of Bad Bongos last month

Robin Henkel TIMELINE

1950



Josh White, 1962, a huge influence

1970

Jimi Hendrix, 1970, another big influence



Jumbalayah, 1973: (l to r) Paul Comstock, Robin, Corley Tanassy, David Henk



Cindy & Breeze, ca. 1977: (l to r) Robin, Jack Flannery, Cindy Chatfield, Don the Mole, Ron Dabbs

1980



1978

U.S. Grant Hotel, 1986

1990



With Willie King live at Betty's Place, Sandyland, Mississippi, 1998

2000



With the Buskers on the set of Cotton Patch Gospel, 2003



The 7th Day Buskers win the award for Best Americana at the San Diego Music Awards, 2004. (Steve Peavey, Robin, Shawn Rohlf, Melissa Hartley)

continued on page 12



Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden

FESTIVALS!

San Diego's bluegrass festival season is upon us. As you read this column I hope you are still feeling the warm glow of a great Summergrass bluegrass festival event held over the weekend of August 26-28 at the Antique Gas and Steam Engine Museum in Vista, featuring the Nashville Bluegrass Band, Fragment, Lost Highway, Hit and Run Bluegrass, the Virtual Strangers, 117° West, North Forty, and more. Or, perhaps you enjoyed the Temecula Festival on the preceding weekend, which presented the Witcher Brothers, Silverado, and others. And, I hope you are now planning to attend the upcoming Julian Bluegrass Festival on the weekend of September 17 and 18, which will re-introduce the traditional banjo and fiddle contest. Julian has some great entertainment lined up, including the ever popular Bluegrass Etc. And, for the hard core willing to travel, there is the annual International Bluegrass Music Association (IBMA) festival during the week of October 24-30, held this year for the first time in Nashville.

LOCAL NEWS

The San Diego Bluegrass Society has moved its fourth Tuesday of the month featured band event from Cheezy Pizza (formerly Godfather's) on Clairemont Mesa Blvd. to the Boll Weevil at 7080 Miramar Road. This is a great new location with a nice listening room, nice stage area, good jamming spots, and good affordable food. Come on by on September 27 for some fun and to hear the Virtual Strangers as the featured band.

I hope some of you enjoyed the recent concerts in Fallbrook and Del Mar that featured Laurie Lewis, Tom Rozum, and the Guest House Band. Both concerts were excellent with some truly great music from a talented bunch. In addition



Tom Rozum & Laurie Lewis

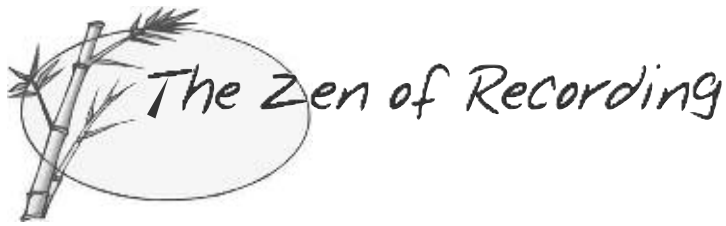


David Grier

to Laurie and Tom, the Guest House Band featured North Carolina's Scott Huffman on guitar and banjo and Todd Philips on bass. Late August also

saw guitarist extraordinaire David Grier appear at Buffalo Brothers in Carlsbad and at Chris Clarke's for a workshop and house concerts. If you've never seen David Grier perform, do yourself a favor and check him out next time he is in town. He is arguably the best and most influential player to pick up a flatpick since Clarence White and Tony Rice.

If you would like to be kept abreast of these kinds of local happenings and know where you can show up to hear great bluegrass and to jam on your instrument, consider joining the San Diego Bluegrass Society. Membership fees are only \$20 for the family for the entire year. As an SDBS member you will receive *InTune Magazine*, a bi-monthly newsletter; the SDBS "Tweener," an off month update sheet; as well as flyers for local events, discounts to certain SDBS concerts, and other good stuff. To join, contact Dee Dee Hansen at (619) 276-1949 or by email at: aradcliffe@san.rr.com. Or you can visit the SDBS website and join online at: <http://members.aol.com/intunews/sdbssubscribe.html>. We would love to have your support as a member!



by Sven-Erik Seaholm



FIREPOD

There is a girl staring at me. Though not usually a problem (it doesn't typically happen, and I generally don't mind), in this case...it sort of is. She's eight years old, and she *should* be reading the smudged and battered copy of *Highlights for Children* that her increasingly harried mother has repeatedly encouraged her to read over the last 15 minutes. At least that's what I can gather from what microscopic amount of Spanish I've picked up from living in a Mexican border town for the last 40-some odd years. Anyway, back to the girl. What is she thinking as she peers over the four month-old issue of a kid's magazine that I can only remember for its insightful behavioral advice column, "Goofus and Gallant"? Does she know and comprehend the results of my cholesterol test? Is it *that* bad? Will I ever savor the wonder that is the three-egg omelet again? Before I can really delve into these questions or the intricacies of being the reluctant center of this willful child's attention, my own concentration is diverted to the stories of dislocated L5 vertebrae and various other previous misdiagnoses of the other patients in my doctor's office. While usually a very quiet situation, for some reason everyone is very interactive today. I mean, I have never heard anyone besides the receptionist and the occasional doctor ever utter a *single word* here, ever. Today? Today I'm on the freakin' set of *The View*. Medically speaking, I know everyone's entire medical history in this stained acoustic ceilinged, Berber-carpeted, pharmaceutical advertisement-choked, mysteriously stale-aired waiting room. As time wears on (and believe me, it's *really* wearing on) I'm also in receipt of a great deal of information on military enlistment, disciplinary techniques of previous generations, and lessons learned through trial and vehicular error. I suppose this is what can sometimes happen when you try new things, like writing this column in a crowded place, rather than the cozy confines of my home, in ABSOLUTE SILENCE.

I believe that trying new things and breaking patterns are crucial to both mental and spiritual growth and well-being. If my doctor ever calls for me this morning (it's been an hour now) I can ask him to verify this for you. Meanwhile, this school of thought has fortuitously compelled me to bring my laptop along (another thing I rarely do) and given me the capability to make that wonderful proverbial lemonade from the sour fruit of my physician's tardiness. Just imagining all the time I would have wasted waiting (and suffering), rather than using it productively bears out my point nicely.

I've been using an M-Audio Delta 1010 as my digital audio interface since I switched over to PC-based recording a few years ago. I have had a mostly trouble-free experience, but in recent months, I've have some wear and tear-related difficulty with it. I thought perhaps it may be time to look into another unit.

Enter the PreSonus FIREPOD

(\$799.99 retail, \$599 street). Like the Delta 1010, the FIREPOD is a 10-channel audio interface with eight balanced line inputs and outputs, with two more ins and outs via digital stereo SPDIF. Both units also include MIDI in and out jacks, which is very helpful. Where the PreSonus unit raises the bar significantly is including *eight(!) class A phantom powered microphone preamps, with adjustable gain control*. Just based upon the fact that the 1010 can only switch between -10 and +4 with a button push would be enough to sell me on the FIREPOD. That 14 dB difference has had me running around to the back of my Delta unit every session, trying to dial in the best signal to noise ratio, whereas the FIREPOD affords me the luxury of a knob for each channel right at my fingertips. This balances out to the most efficient use of my gain structure, making my audio quality that much better...and that's before I even got around to using the mic pre's.

Having given high marks to this company's Eureka recording strip, I knew to expect excellence in its sound, appearance, and construction, and this baby delivers in flying (blue and silver) colors. First things being first, I should point out that as its name should imply, the FIREPOD doesn't use a breakout PCI card. It plugs into any IEEE1394 Firewire interface, just like your consumer video camera uses. If you don't have a firewire card (I didn't), you can pick up a nice one for less than \$75. My only caveat is that the included firewire cable was a bit too short, so I had to get a longer one.

The first thing I did after installing the card and interface was to take all of my cables that were routed to the Delta unit and plug them into the corresponding jacks on the FIREPOD. As I mentioned earlier, I was able to dial in the levels even more precisely from there, and at that point I could start to appreci-



Sven-Erik Seaholm

ate the increased fidelity immediately apparent in the PreSonus unit. Now the Delta is no audio slouch, and I was going to be sad to see it go, so imagine my surprise at finding that I could still use the Delta unit *in tandem* with the FIREPOD. That's right, now I have 20 inputs available. Nothing on either company's website mentions this, so I can't guarantee it, but it has definitely been working for me!

But what about the microphone preamps? Well, in a word: they are incredible! Unless you have some \$10,000+ mixer or preamp rack, these are probably better than what you have now, no kidding. Using the same laptop I'm writing this column on, I was able to get *audio-ophile quality* eight channel recordings using only the FIREPOD and some decent mics. No EQ, no compression, just beautiful, open Class A sound. Lovely.

Subsequent sessions over the past few weeks have been a complete pleasure and have done nothing but bolster my confidence in this very fine piece of equipment. I know it may not seem as sexy as a microphone or a guitar or whatever, but damn if this isn't one of the nicest pieces of gear I've picked up in quite some time. I'm glad I stepped outside of my comfort zone and gave it a try, because I'm a whole lot more at ease now.

Now if you'll excuse me, my cholesterol is a lot lower and there's an omelet with my name on it over at Brothers Restaurant.

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an independent producer who owns and operates Kitsch & Sync Production (www.kaspro.com) He is currently nominated for a San Diego Music Award for "Best Acoustic," as are his recordings for Manuok ("Best Local Recording"), Carol Ames ("Best Americana Album") and The Coyote Problem ("Best Americana Album"). He performs September 10th at Cosmo's in La Mesa.



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Hosing Down

by José Sinatra

WHY T.V. SUCKS

(transcript courtesy AudioGuide, Inc.)

Maury Povitch: . . . and you think it could only happen in other countries? Think again! Just watch this!

Narrator (always in malevolent voice): San Diego. America's Finest City. But is it? Oh yes . . . beautiful, nearly fecal-free beaches. A musical paradise. A creative Shangri-la. A climate to die for. And that's exactly what happens each year . . . each October . . . when San Diego's beacon of glorious music, the *San Diego Troubadour*, mysteriously disappears, never to return.

Or does it?

Maury Povitch: You won't believe what happens next. We'll be right back.

SEGMENT TWO

Maury Povitch: So, you think America is free of haunting mysteries? Think again! Parents, we want to warn you: some of what we're about to present is disturbing. You may not want to tape this and have people begging, even paying you, for copies. So, please keep that in mind. As we continue . . .

Narrator (as always): But why would a mystery overcome an oasis like the beautiful San Diego? With so much fun . . . with music coming from the alp-like mountains and echoing on the sandy, urine-soaked beaches, when the month of October arrives . . . the month of goblins, witches, Charlie Brown's Great Pumpkin, and other mysterious and terrifying omens . . . the friendly, ringing voice of their own beloved *Troubadour* . . . is stilled . . . is silent . . . is . . . dead.

Maury Povitch: We'll be right back.

SEGMENT THREE

Maury Povitch: You won't believe what happens next. You may want your children to go out and smoke a bowl. This is unbelievable.

Narrator: The residents of San Diego, located in the southern-most area of the western state of California, are a fit and happy bunch, generally unperturbed by the troubles of the outside world. They sing; they sail. They sport and they spend. They follow music always, until October arrives, and they find themselves without a trusted guide. For suddenly, nearly one month to the day before Halloween, the *San Diego Troubadour* disappears.

INSERTS

Joni Mitchell: You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone.

José Sinatra: Still, it's nothing to get upset about, really . . .

Narrator: Nothing to get upset about? Well, according to one person, maybe. But every large city has its share of the malcontents, the misinformed, the missing-brained, the monthly columnists who think it's just business as usual . . . obstinately oblivious to the crooked, cavernous crater created in the crotch of creativity, of eagle-crested dreams.

Maury Povitch: Is José Sinatra delusional? Can an idiot lounge metal god have the answer? You won't believe what he

has to say . . . when we come back!

SEGMENT FOUR

Maury Povitch: So, the *San Diego Troubadour* just ups and disappears in October, in San Diego. It's clear something's really gone wrong. And if you think you know what that something is . . . think again!

Narrator: Bad things never seem to happen in San Diego. Here it's sunny year 'round. Sewage spills don't deter the surfers, who are strong and fearless enough to swim in what amounts to an unflushed toilet. Christmas comes without the snow, but with the brisk joy that could chill the fires in the red-hot rhoids of any grinch. At Easter the bunnies bask and breed in a bounty of vacation vistas. But in October, the joy begins to abate. The leader, the guide, is gone. For there is no *Troubadour* in October. And in the end, the ghosts, the goblins smile wantonly, demanding treats, while the *Troubadour* tinkles in the memory, which entreats it to return.

Maury Povitch: Coming up next we have someone you saw briefly earlier in this exposé, who agreed to come on only after our producers assured him that he could make a brief statement without interruption. You won't believe what he has to say!

SEGMENT FIVE

Narrator: While the *Troubadour* tinkles in the memory, which entreats it to return.

Maury Povitch: If you think you know the mystery of the *San Diego Troubadour*, think again! We have with us one of the columnists from the *Troubadour*. Please welcome José Sinatra!

(audience applause)

José Sinatra: Thanks, Mo Po.

This is my fourth September column, the one that appears before the *Troubadour's* one-month hiatus each year. It's usually been the easiest to write, seeming like a sort of a "shot-my-wad-from-November-to-August" exhalation, generally an opportunity for some summings-up, spiffy plugs, and see-ya-laters. Up until now, I haven't used September to focus on anything too heavy or substantial by worldly measure. Nothing yet, for example, to comfort the needy (that's generally in February) or chastise the sleazy (usually December) or moisten the loins of the arid desert that some of us call "Life."*

(audience applause)

What's really necessary at this time is that people know we'll be back in November . . .

(audience applause)

. . . thank you . . . and that without people like you, the readers . . . along with angels at Winston's, Lestat's, Claire de Lune, and dear gifts like the Troy Dante Inferno, Joe Vecchio, Scott Slaga, Teddy Wigler, Buddy Blue, Barefoot Hockey Goalie, and Anya Marina, the Hose wouldn't have more than a handful of other people to thank for allowing him to bring his message from the page to the stage during the past year.

So bring an open mind, a greedy libido, and the cultured forms of your beautiful

Photo: Brinke Stevens



The scintillating Mr. Sinatra

virginal daughters to *The Passion of José Sinatra* at the Adams Avenue Street Fair as well as to the love sessions with Jose Sinatra and the Troy Dante Inferno at Octoberfest in Del Mar October 28-30 and Claire de Lune on September 17.

You see, Maury, that's the kind of thing I usually put in my September column. But frankly, it's become as boring as paternity tests.

Maury Povitch: You are the father!

José Sinatra: Duh.

(audience applause)

And I also wish to thank Liz Abbott, of course, Steve Poltz, Gregory Page, Bart Mendoza, my Dad Dub, Scott, Jesse, Looee . . .

(audience applause renders seven more names unintelligible)

Maury Povitch: You won't believe it, but we're out of time.

José Sinatra: You're right, Mo Po, I don't.

(audience boos)

Chaos and destruction 'til November? No, perhaps some sweet emptiness.

Maury Povitch: Thank you for your exclusive words, Hose. (to audience:) If you think we don't believe in the tragedy of the *Troubadour's* absence each October, think again. Until next time, America.

José Sinatra: Are we off?

Maury Povitch: Unh . . . unh.

José Sinatra: Wow. T.V. sucks. It's a Mo Fo, Mo Po. Hey, by the way, that's not a microphone, dude. It's my lap.

(audience gasps in rethought disbelief)

* November through August

RADIO DAZE

by Jim McInnes

TRICKLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Well, it's time for me to turn in my piece for the September issue and, as usual, my mind's a blank. This writing stuff ain't easy, ya know! I admire those who write under a daily or weekly deadline. The pressure must be intense!

So I figure I'll just sit here and tap out whatever passes through the colander that I call my mind. Wait! Why did I just call my mind a colander? Couldn't I have left out the allusion to my mind being a sieve?

When I played softball in the 1980s with my radio and musician pals I was nicknamed Sieve Colander for my fielding abilities at first base. In fact, Chris Sullivan (ex-Penetrators bassist), who was our erstwhile coach, once awarded me a square-foot section of astroturf, representing the amount of infield I could cover on ground balls to first. But what the hell?

I'm flat-footed.

Being flat-footed (or pronated, in medical lingo) has been the bane of my existence. Every time I'd get new shoes, they'd hurt like the dickens ("dickens"? because they'd come with built-in arch supports...to support my non-arches.

I love to play basketball. I played three to five times a week for 22 years, mostly outdoors. It was the constant pounding my shock-absorberless feet took on asphalt and cement playgrounds that caused my ankles, knees, thighs, and, ultimately, my back to ache.

In 1999, during a Modern Rhythm Band rehearsal, I herniated a disc in my lower spine. There is no scarier feeling than



Jim McInnes

believing that you'll never walk again, which was my reaction when I awoke the morning after that practice. A botched laminectomy in 2001 aggravated my condition and required an eight-hour spinal fusion operation in 2004, from which I am

now half-recovered. Four of my vertebrae are held in position by titanium rods and screws and have fused into one big vertebra.

It's only in the last few months that I've been able to play the guitar while standing up again!

Speaking of guitars, am I the only writer for the *Troubadour* who plays electric guitar exclusively? I have never played a folk song in my life! That would scare me. Put me on stage with a group of fellow noise makers, though, and I'm fine. You solo folkies are something! I admire you, too!

Which reminds me...Sandi and I saw Joe Rathburn at The Tin Fish before a Padres game a couple nights ago. Tough crowd, Joe. Great job!

I did, however, take an interest in learning the guitar during the great folk music scare of the early sixties.

Hahahahahahaha! I love that term "folk music scare!" That's a quote from a Martin Mull album. Also on that record, Mull describes a blues band as "five guys with matching suits and shades and big amplifiers, with maybe a heavyset guy in front who plays the harmonica." I wish I could find that album.

Lemme see, have I reached 500 words yet? Wait a second while I count them...oops! Needed three more.



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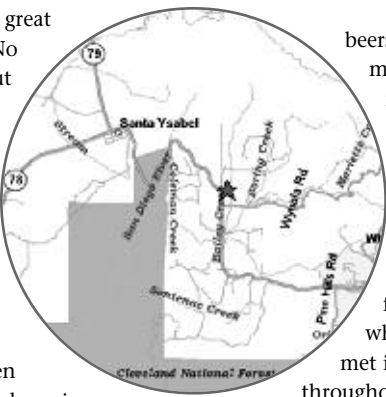
Wynola Pizza Express Offers Back Country Hospitality to Guest Musicians

by Derrick Fields

Some time ago it became the focal point of a burgeoning musical scene. A huge parking lot framed in majestic oak trees greets you as you turn off into it, just to the side of the Red Barn. For now, a sweeping view of the sunset tops it off. Although a mountain pasture, the tiny town of Wynola (just three miles this side of Julian) is, in fact, on the mountain and the perspective and pastoral beauty of this summer day surrounds the parking lot of the Wynola Pizza Express. Do a slow 360. Mountains, fields, and forest. The air smells good. It's Saturday night and word has it this is the place to catch some great music every week. No cover charge without exception. Well, almost. No, I can't think of a time when the Horners charged for the entertainment. Sure as I say they haven't though, it'll come back to bite me. Even musicians who have been in million selling rock groups have come to play in the peaceful bluegrass and country oriented shows that happen here. Singer-songwriter types seem to wander in and feel at home with it right away.

The restaurant is great. Pizza in a stone oven, itself a work of art — literally adorned in a ceramic piece by renowned artist James Hubbell. The atmosphere is family, an all-ages

restaurant with an outdoor venue in an open central courtyard or in the Red Barn next door. The Red Barn is better than the average barn, with art and offices and a hidden area, a great little espresso area, a unique stage, and, as I recollect, the challenge of a sequoia sized log column that splits the stage about two-thirds way across. It's too cool. The season and the weather dictate where the music will be set up. A house P.A. is provided as well as a couple of mics. Most performers bring their own equipment. Okay, so it's smaller than a sequoia...somehow, it works. It's rustic and that is as it should be up here in the mountains. Can this be just 18 miles past Ramona?



The selection of beers includes a few of my favorite ales from England. Wine and their own brand of sodas, such as Wynola Cola, are offered. They offer vegetarian fare and pastas, which boast gourmet ingredients throughout. The pizza sauce is made from fresh tomatoes, seasoned and roasted in pans. I know these things to be true.

The performance area is set quite away from the bustle of the restaurant and there is a very attentive audience, often including a guitar, banjo, or mandolin player or two. . . a dash of locals throughout, a smattering of tourists, sometimes members of car clubs, such as the



The Mark Jackson Band performs on the patio



Wynola's wood-fire oven was designed by James Hubbell

Audi Club, who have patronized the place as their mountain rendezvous. A real treasure is the community of musicians that you will find passing through, networking, entertaining, and enjoying the mountain area themselves.

Wynola Pizza Express is a gem. For the best of local talent to have a supportive and accessible performance venue, with an appreciative audience in a beautiful place, is a wonderful thing. Often, when the evening's entertainment ends, a musicians' jam begins. I strongly recommend checking this place out, especially if your act is honed and your '72 Ford Maverick or whatever your singer-songwriter waif of a lifestyle provides you is out of the shop and holds at least a tank of gas.

Now, take this article and put it in your glovebox and next time you turn left instead of right, just take it on up the mountain where you'll be greeted by owners Harry and Sabine Horner.

Come on out any Saturday night, 6-9 p.m., to hear some great music and to eat the best pizza you've ever had. No kidding.



Saturday, September 17. Julian's Bluegrass Festival weekend celebrations continue with a musician's jam following Jim Wakefield's Mountain Review, which includes Anastasia, Pete Filacio, Timothy McFarland, and George Piburn on steel guitar. The show is 6-9 p.m., after which the audience and musicians willin', there will be some pickin' and grinnin'.

Wynola Pizza Express
4355 Hwy 78/78
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Harry and Sabine Horner

Robin Henkel, continued from page 9.

ALABAMA, HERE I COME!

In the early 2000s Robin was invited to travel to rural Alabama to work with poor black kids. The point of contact was respected local blues man, Willie King, who lived in a trailer in the small community of Old Memphis and was the unofficial town mayor. A tiny town comprised of a collection of trailers and simple buildings in the Alabama woods, it lies next to Freedom Creek, which has served as the town water supply and laundry spot for many years. It is also the name of a local music event: the Freedom Creek Blues Festival. Robin got along famously with Willie and the kids, playing the blues with Willie at a local juke joint. Robin served as teacher and mentor to a group of young kids learning to use photo and video equipment as part of a grant sponsored program to bring technology to a technologically naive rural area. As Robin describes it, the kids were great. They filmed and interviewed community members about the history of Old Memphis and shot footage of the Freedom Creek Blues Festival, producing some remarkable stuff. It was great to see them learn to use the cameras and equipment and to film what they thought was important.

THE ROBIN HENKEL BAND

Most exciting for Robin currently is his new band, the Robin Henkel Band. In many ways this new group is the culmination of all that has gone before, which if you've read this far, you will agree is a lot! Band members include core players Bob Campbell and Dave Castel de Oro on tenor sax, Larry Dent on drums, Rodney Ratelle on electric bass, and Robin on electric guitar, with occasional sit ins and substitutions. The group has been together for about a year, although the members, in one configuration or another, has been playing since 1986. Robin's dream early on was to a member of an "art" band that played the music he loved and that would command paying gigs comparable to what could be earned playing top 40 music. When it proved impossible to do that, Robin remembers the frustration, bitterness, and negativity toward himself and toward the top 40 music that consumed him, a condition from which he has now largely recovered.

Now, in 2005, a sober, realistic, and much more content Robin Henkel accepts top 40 music as having its place while he presents the music he loves through the Robin Henkel Band. Gone, or at least substantially reduced, are the days of fear of rejection. And, guess what? The public loves the music and the positive way that Robin and his bandmates present it — with skill and with accessible melodies and rhythms, but also with emotion, affection, and humor. The music is a complex, but magnetic, fusion of jazz, funk, blues, and

acoustic rock. An evening with the Robin Henkel band is an experience you won't forget. You simply can't help but like the music and the musicians. Robin mentions, "Currently I am really into the sound of two horns so we can harmonize the melody with the saxes and guitar. The main thrust is the tunes I've written with a jazz influenced melody over a funk groove. Saxophonists Bob Campbell and Dave Castel de Oro bring an edgy emotional sensitivity to my melodies and harmony while bassist Rodney Ratelle and drummer Larry Dent groove some really messed up funk. We also blend saxes and steel guitar into a beautiful and unique sound reminiscent of the 1940s' and 1950s' steel guitar and western swing sound. There is usually a blues undercurrent to whatever we play, and the twisting of melody in blues phrases and its interaction with the rhythm has always been an inspiration for me."

The Robin Henkel Band will perform on the Blues Stage at the Adams Avenue Street Fair on Sunday, September 25, 1:30 p.m. You can also hear Robin around town soloing with the 7th Day Buskers, Big Rig Deluxe, and Billy Watson. His new CD, *Bad Bongos*, is available for purchase on cdbaby.com, along with his other recordings. To learn more, visit his web page at www.robinhenkel.com.

The final word on Robin Henkel is yet to be written as much lies ahead. Right now, though, it's great to see this talented local icon doing such wonderful things with his music with a clear head, a smile, and a perspective on life and music that can only be achieved by long travels on a sometimes difficult road. Get out to hear Robin, shake his hand, and tell him what you think about his music. He'll be glad to hear from you.



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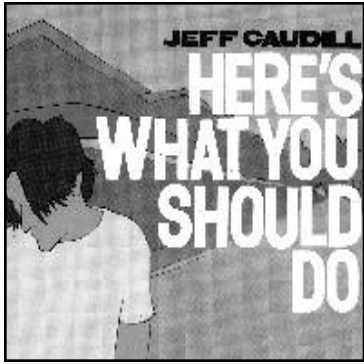
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LIVE MUSIC WEEKENDS



Jeff Caudill Here's What You Should Do

by Raul Sandelin

In most states, it's illegal to yell "fire" in a public building. It's equally dangerous to blurt out the words "nineteen-eighty-five" in front of strangers.

It's 1985. No more Hippies. No more New Wavers. A new voice led a new generation down the path to College Rock, exploring the melancholy of suburbia and helping young people cope in the moral wasteland of consumer society. Remember, this was before Prozac.

The messiah—REM's Michael Stipe—spread his gospel with many disciples, breakaway sects, and lost tribes.

Enter Jeff Caudill, 2005. He actually broke outta da O.C. ten years ago with his Emo band, Gameface. But, hey, since College Rock, or now Alt Rock, is in its second decade, we need a veteran to usher in the second coming of Stipe.

The Alt Rock recipe calls for jingling riffs, quirky lyrics, ironic emptiness. Add some acoustic folk to taste.

Caudill's pop sensibilities are honed precisely for those who toe the Baby Boomers/Gen X line. The intro to "Favorite Version of Your Life" promises something between Tom Petty and the Romantics. The acoustic soul of "Nite Life" echoes Sarah McLachlan or a kinder, gentler Metallica. "Never Been High" throws out some guitar punches, transporting us back even before REM. Try Robin Trower, 1976.

Pop hooks in place, Caudill dips into all the themes of a post-REM world: greener grasses somewhere else (not that this place totally sucks, mind you), relationships that don't click (not that we hate each other, mind you), the inability to fully know our fellow human beings (but we can still be friends, mind you). "Favorite Version of Your Life" entertains the idea that we all are stars in our own fictional dramas. "Worn Out Welcome" provides the best glimpse of Stipian irony: "The band was cool but the club was lame."

Caudill's world, like Michael Stipe's, is not a world of major political questions. However, "shiny, happy people" are equally suspect. Think of Caudill as Orange County's Joseph Conrad: Colonel Kertz stares out at the soulless chain of strip malls connecting Dana Point to Fullerton. Grasping just enough moral strength, he mutters, "The horror, the horror."



Eliza Gilkyson Paradise Hotel

by Bart Mendoza

With more than a dozen albums to her credit since her 1979 debut, you might expect Eliza Gilkyson to have melowed a little over the decades, but as her latest disc *Paradise Hotel* ably shows, that couldn't be further from the truth. Generally labeled as either a singer-songwriter or Americana artist, her music certainly contains elements of both but is much harder to pin down. Minor key ballads adjoin Hammond-drenched swamp blues, next to Spanish-language laments and more. It's an excellent mix that shows Gilkyson to be adept at numerous musical styles, all of which showcase her strongpoint: lyrics.

Paradise Hotel's ten tracks are imbued with a world-weary sense of melancholy. Dylan-esque in parts, Gilkyson does tackle traditional song subjects such as relationships but also isn't afraid to take on politics and religion, with couplets such as

Gang of goons and his big war chest
Fortunate son doubly blessed
Corporate cronies and chiefs of staff
Bowling to the image of the Golden Calf

from the intense "Man of God," leaving little question to its author's feelings about the world today. Also strong are her story songs such as "Jebediah 1777" based on correspondence from a Connecticut family circa 1771-89 and sounding not unlike "Love and Kisses" era Sam Phillips.

Where Gilkyson surpasses many other socially conscious performers, it is in the balance she strikes between politically charged observation and romantic musings, never letting one side or the other dominate the listening experience. Other points of interest include vocal cameos from Shawn Colvin and Marcia Ball, and the album's one cover tune, a nice rendition of World Party's "Is It Like Today." Good as it is, it's dwarfed by Gilkyson's originals. Whether you've followed Gilkyson's career for the last few decades or are just curious about her sound, you'll find *Paradise Hotel* a worthy, and thought provoking, addition to your music collection.



Various Artists Rock 'n' Roll Bell Ringers

by Bart Mendoza

While Bell Records is today remembered as a record label that hit its mid-seventies peak with acts ranging from Barry Manilow to the Bay City Rollers, in actuality things started out much differently. Founded in the early fifties, the imprint was one of many that first made a name for itself releasing "budget" recordings of rock 'n' roll era hits. Banking on the premise that listeners would forego star names to get a reasonable facsimile of the song at a lower price, producers would check the charts for soon-to-be hit records, then rush release a version to compete with the original. Charging as much as a third less for their discs, the label cashed in on the majors' success, selling tens of thousands of their replica productions. Ironically, this paved the way for Bell itself to become a major, eventually being absorbed into Arista Records and then BMG.

Gathering up more than two dozen of the labels' early releases, it's evident on first listen to *Rock 'n' Roll Bell Ringers* that despite the budget tag, there's nothing cut rate about the music. An excellent group of musicians were drafted to tackle the day's hits, with generally excellent results. Collectors are sure to gravitate to Tom and Jerry's 1959 cover of Jan and Dean's "Baby Talk" as the pair would go on to greater success six years later with a subtle name change to Simon and Garfunkel. However, there are plenty of other gems to unearth here, whether you're familiar with the original or not.

Among the better known tunes, Artie Malvin turns in a credible take of Elvis' "Hound Dog," the Studio B Seven's version of Bill Doggett's "Honky Tonk" could certainly hold its own in any roadhouse along Route 66, and Tony Wilson's rendition of the Diamonds' "The Stroll" actually interjects a bit of grit and menace into the overplayed classic. Certainly there are also a few misfires among the gems. Despite excellent guitar and sax work, Sam Cee's "Johnny B. Goode" fails due to his insistence at crooning the rocker, and Barry Franks arrangement of Frankie Lymon's immortal "Why Do Fools Fall in Love?" is just a little too different to work. But these are minor quibbles. Complete with superb liners notes, fans of the early days of rock 'n' roll will find this to be an absolutely essential listen, with the bonus of being a fascinating look at a little known chapter in the early days of rock.



145th Street Deluxe Blues Band

by Craig Yerkes

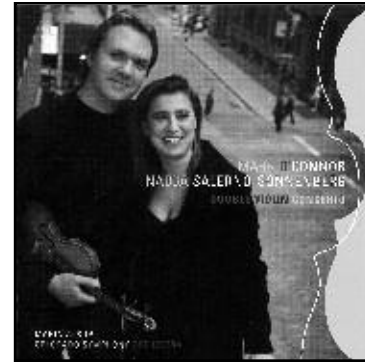
What qualifies a blues band to be categorized as "deluxe"? Let's consider this question with a checklist and see how the 145th Street Deluxe Blues Band's self-titled CD stacks up.

- A soulful, gritty, front man/lead vocalist who plays killer harp solos? Check.
- A kick ass blues guitar ace to make you play air guitar and high five your buddy. Check.
- A solid rhythm section to make you move and groove even if you don't want to. Check.
- A master Hammond organ player who adds hot sauce in all the right spots. Check.
- A smokin' four-piece horn section. C'mon, people, this is San Diego, not Memphis!

The word "deluxe" is not misplaced when describing what the 145th Street boys do with the blues. Their disc is a solid effort that does what it's supposed to do: deliver a high octane dose of the blues and good times. I very much liked the mix of originals and covers and how the tracks are arranged with variety in mind. Maybe the best thing I can say about this disc is that the music (in particular, the guitar parts) has the bite, vibe, emotion, and edge that will many times disappear in a studio recorded blues project.

All of the tracks are solid, but the ones that impressed me the most were "Say Yes to My Baby," "It'll Come to You," "You Is So Mean," and "Met Her Last Night." "Say Yes to My Baby" and "Met Her Last Night" are ultra catchy, up-tempo crowd pleasers that most likely get the crowd out of their seats and singing along at live shows. "It'll Come to You" is a pleasing, swingin', cool guitar instrumental that reminded me of Johnny A. "You Is So Mean" is the bombastic slow groove tune that every blues band needs to have in their arsenal, and this one works mightily from the start with the lead vocal and organ exploding with intensity. The only problem with "You Is So Mean" is the almost fatal lyric "I bought you a brand new Toyota, you said how 'bout a Lexus please," which is painfully yuppy for a growling blues tune!

All throughout the disc, the solos are inspired and very skillfully executed. I also liked the way the band added some musical surprises like switching from a straight-ahead back beat to a shuffle within the same tune and also the cool riffs/accents/kicks that the band hits together with gusto. If you like your blues "deluxe" style, this CD will not disappoint.



Mark O'Connor Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg Double Violin Concerto

by Raul Sandelin

Picassos are lacking in American popular music. Miles Davis, maybe. Brian Wilson, probably not. Even if the Brits compete, I'm not sure we'd strike cubist gold. John Lennon didn't live long enough. Sorry. And, Clapton? Well, God is just not good enough. To go Picasso hunting, we'll need to stray into the unknowns, which defeats the standards of Picassodom since that Spaniard enjoyed fame for six decades.

But, let's try. Enter Mark O'Connor, an American fiddler who's been hovering just outside the margins of pop music for 30 years. If anyone deserves the Pablo Statue, it's this Grammy winner and favorite within country, bluegrass, folk and jazz circles. He's performed with Dave Grisman, Stephane Grappelli, Chet Atkins, Wynton Marsalis, Yo-Yo Ma, Garrison Keillor, Lee Ritenour, Jane Monheit, Howard Alden, and Frank Vignola. His music has led him to Nashville and Appalachia, to the New York City Ballet and the Gypsy Jazz of 1930's Paris, to Juilliard and many musical niches in between.

Double Violin Concerto is partly a cooperative effort involving the great violinist Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, the Colorado Symphony Orchestra, and a number of small group musicians. Salerno-Sonnenberg is even given double-billing. But, this really is an O'Connor *opus*; the personnel come and go while the maestro is fixed at center stage.

The genre is Americana cum European classical. Think "Peter in the Wolf," with each instrument representing a different covered wagon, smoking hearth, and prairie dog. The title piece excepted, the compositions take names like "Dixieland," "Johnny Appleseed Waltz," and "Marching Along the Ohio Frontier." A haunting "Amazing Grace" rounds out the set.

These songs breathe of tilled earth, whisking scarecrows, field mice, lazy rivers, slinging streams, even smoke and violence. They are American songs that stretch out like wide plains, turning one ear back for guidance from the Old World. At center is O'Connor's fiddle, prodding, stunning, seducing, screaming.

Perhaps a bit verbose, this album may not click with O'Connor's more folksy following. It's a little like the quantum physicist who shows up at your Super Bowl party insisting on talking shop. The music is sublime. But, it also lacks the popular hooks that appeal to those who look to O'Connor for some "aw, shucks" Texas fiddlin' or for a revamped version of Django Reinhardt's "Minor Swing."

With a 30-year career already under his belt, one might wonder whether O'Connor is near retirement. Forget it! He's only 43 and has many decades to "pull a Picasso" or, at least, a musical Einstein. Quantum fiddle, anyone?

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Photo: Michael Tiernan
J. Turtle at Cosmos Open Mic



Photo: Michael Tiernan
Carlos Olmeda at Cosmos



Photo: Michael Tiernan
Aaron Bowen at Cosmos Open Mic



Photo: Steve Covault
Dulcimer player Connie Allen at the SDFH Songs/Stories Night



Photo: Steve Covault
Louisiana Red at Acoustic Music San Diego



Photo: Steve Covault
Tim Day performs at SDFH Songs & Stories Night



Photo: Michael Tiernan
Nate Weldon at Cosmos Open Mic

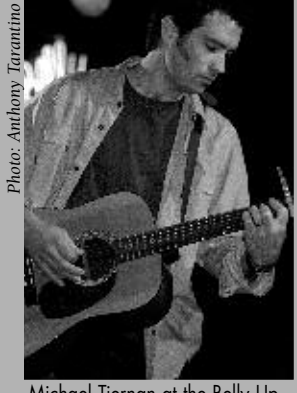


Photo: Anthony Tarantino
Michael Tiernan at the Belly Up



Photo: Michael Tiernan
Gary Jules makes a surprise appearance at Cosmos Cafe's Open Mic



Photo: Michael Tiernan
Sven-Erik Seaholm at Cosmos Open Mic



Photo: John Wyllie
Gregory Page and Steve Poltz at a Padre's game



Photo: Steve Covault
Sarah Saulter at SDFH's Songs & Stories Night



Photo: Daniel Strum
Thom Landt at Milano's Open Mic



Photo: Steve Covault
Amy Garcia at Boat & Ski Club



Photo: Steve Covault
Robin Henkel & Bob Campbell at Bad Bongos CD Release



Photo: Daniel Strum
Hope & Rusty Gorden at Milano's



Photo: Daniel Strum
The Dreamstalkers at Milano's Acoustic Cafe/Open Mic



Photo: Daniel Strum
Ron Webb at Milano's Acoustic Cafe



Photo: Bill Richardson
Bart Mendoza, Mark Decerbo, George Varga at Decerbo's CD Release



Photo: Steve Covault
Sue Palmer & Steve Wilcox at the Trolley Barn Park




Photo: Daniel Strum
Arianna Rice at Milano's Acoustic Cafe

PHIL HARMONIC SEZ:

"Justice didn't do a thing to heal me. Forgiveness did."

— D. Morris





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