what’s inside

Welcome Mat.........3
Mission Statement
Contributors
Indie Girls Music Fests

Full Circle..........4
Counter Culture Coincidence
Recordally, Lou Curtiss

Front Porch.....6
Tristan Prettyman
Traditional Jazz Riffs
Live Jazz
Aaron Bowen

Parlor Showcase ...8
Tom Brosseau

Ramblin’..............10
Bluegrass Corner
Zen of Recording
Hosing Down
Radio Daze

Of Note...............12
Crash Carter
D’vora
Amelia Browning
Peter Sprague
Precious Bryant
Aaron Bowen
Blindspot
The Storrow Band
See Spot Run
Tom Brosseau

‘Round About ......14
November Music Calendar

The Local Seen......15
Photo Page
AcousticMusicSanDiego.com
NOVEMBER CONCERT SCHEDULE
• Dave Alvin (Nov. 5)
• Gordon Bok (Nov. 9)
• Laurence Juber (Nov. 20)
• Richard Greene & the Brothers Barton (Nov. 26)
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Hours: Monday thru Friday, 9am-7pm
Saturday, 10am-5pm
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In Greek mythology Demeter was the most generous of the great Olympian goddesses, beloved for her service to mankind with the gift of the harvest, the reward for cultivating the soil. She was known as Ceres in Roman mythology. Demeter was credited with teaching humans how to grow, plant, and produce grain. Demeter was thought to be responsible for the fertility of the land. She was the only Greek goddess involved in the lives of the common folk on a day-to-day basis. The Greeks occasionally “dabbled” in human affairs when it suited their personal interests, or came to the aid of “special” mortals they favored. Demeter was truly the nurturer of mankind. She was also the only Greek goddess who truly embodied understanding and nurturing, having fully experienced it herself.

Mission
To promote, encourage, and provide an alternative voice for the great local music that is generally overlooked by the mass media; namely the genres of alternative country, Americana, roots, 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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San Diego Troubadour, the local source for alternative country, Americana, roots, blues, gospel, jazz, and bluegrass music news, is published monthly and is free of charge. Letters to the editor must be signed and may be edited for content. It is, however, guaranteed that they will appear.

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The San Diego Troubadour is dedicated to the memory of Ehlen and Lydia Duplessie, whose vision inspired the creation of this newspaper.
COUNTER CULTURE COINCIDENCE
1954 = Morrison, Hopper, and Zappa

by Ben Mackey

San Diego has been home to many renowned performers over the decades, but for even casual fans of music history, 1954 would be considered a special year.

The mid-fifties were bringing changes to this country that would culminate in the counterculture; three icons of that period happened to spend 1954 in San Diego. In fact, they were all passing through on their way to the way to greater things, it’s clear that the seeds of their successes were planted here.

Jim Morrison

The biggest surprise to many is that while The Doors may be known as a Los Angeles group, Jim Morrison (December 8, 1943-July 3, 1971) is actually from Clairemont, Will. Sort of. Coming from a Navy family, the son of Rear Admiral Steven Morrison no less, Jim traveled much as a youth, but his family settled here on and off. Visitors to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame can see a saw of Morrison’s childhood mementos from this stay at Longfellow Elementary School in good ol’ Clairemont. Ranging from his cub scout uniform to his report card, the display really contrasts with Morrison’s image as the Lizard King.

The famed tale about a young Jim Morrison being thrown out of the Cub Scouts for either talking back to a den mother or riding a bike without using his hands, depending on your source, which took place right here was clearly an early stab at rebellion. According to one biography, Angels, Dancers, Angels Die by Patricia Butler, Morrison was class president and gave a few speeches to his student body, but his stay would be short. The family arrived late in 1962, taking up residence at 2634 Amnott Street, with Jim in class from 1953-1954 and graduating from sixth grade on June 16, 1955. More important, Morrison first dipped his toes into the poetry well while here. One of his earliest poems on display at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame is dated May 21, 1954 and already shows his love of Westerns. The title of this poem, “The Pony Express,” Jim would return to the San Diego area during the 1960s to inform his parents, again stationed here, of his decision to attend UCCLA, which was not received positively. The rest, as they say, is history. The Morrison family remained in San Diego, so it was only natural that the Doors played a few shows here. July 8, 1967 at Balboa Stadium on a bill that included North County’s Lyri cs; but was also interested in more diverse sounds. It was his discovery of The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe (Volume 1 [French composor known as the father of electronic music], which he bought at a La Mesa stereo shop that really opened up his eyes to the possibilities of music. It was also while in San Diego that Zappa first made an unsuccessful attempt to reach Vanise, trading a $5 Christmas gift from his sister for the chance to make a long distance phone call. In the end he only released Vanise’s wife, but it was a quest Zappa would never forget.

Frank Zappa

Zappa first made the papers in April of 1955 when, as a ninth grader, he won the country’s Fire Prevention Week poster contest. Much more important, he joined his first band. The Ramblers later that year. Legendary for his guitar playing today, he was a drummer to begin with though not a particularly good one. Like something out of the Our Gang comedies, Zappa used pets and for drums at initial rehearsals, since he didn’t actually acquire a drum kit until the week before the gig. He played his first show at the Uptown Hall at 40th & K st., after which the band split the seven dollar take between them. Having been chastised for being too splashy with his cymbals, being a little shakier with the rhythm, and managing to forget to bring drumsticks to his first gig, it wasn’t long before the Ramblers replaced him. Indeed, by the time he turned 18 he had switched to his signature guitar. Zappa would continue to work with members of the Ramblers in later years.

During that fall, he transferred to Mission Bay High School as a tenth grader. Zappa took to the school’s music department immediately and has since become known as Dennis Hopper as having been particularly influential, introducing him to the 12-tone music. Unfortunately his love of mishief caused him his stay brief. Contrary to popular belief Zappa never graduated from that or any other San Diego school; he was expelled. It seems that he had a love for explosives and had already almost caused serious damage to himself once before moving to San Diego. His exodus from the local education system started when he came and a friend decided to set off a mixture of rocket fuel and bird seed powder at Mission Bay High’s annual open house for parents. He was caught and turned over to the authorities. Only family intervention and the news that the Zappas were on once again relocating, this time to Lancaster, kept the young Zappa from serious punishment. He spent the last six months of his senior year at Antelope Valley High School in Lancaster, where he graduated on June 13, 1958. The next time he returned to San Diego in 1966 was to perform with the Mothers of Invention. He also played a dozen gigs up through 1984. Zappa didn’t spend a lot of time in San Diego but in looking back at a long-diskored career one can easily see that each second counted.

Despite the fact that San Diego’s place in the history of the arts is often overlooked, it’s clear that local performers have been making an impact since it first became possible to do so. Though some made their greatest impact after moving on, it’s important to note that without their time spent in San Diego, none of these performers, and therefore pop culture, would have been the same.

NOVEMBER 2005 SAN DIEGO TROUBADOUR

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Full circle

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Well, another Adams Avenue Street Fair is out of the way and let- ters have already gone out for next April’s Adams Avenue Festival (the 33rd). Add those 33 festivals and the last 13 Street Fairs that I’ve booked in San Diego, particularly at the Roots Festival. The Folk Life Project is a non-profit organization that raises money through tax-deductible dona- tions and grants to do their good works. Drop by Folk Arts Records to get more information or to see how you can get involved.

Next April a variety of old-timey and traditional people should be added to the festival roster. We have letters out and are talk- ing to bluegrass pioneer Bill Clifton whose Dixie Mountain Boys made some pioneering recordings for the old Starnay label back in the 1950s and who hasn’t been out this way for a long time. He makes his home in the Clinch Mountain area of Virginia. We’ve contacted the Blue Creek Ramblers from east Tennessee. Three old- timers and an 18-year-old girl who is the Tennessee state old-time banjo champion. Why don’t we have an old-time banjo champion in California, or even in San Diego County? Old-time music sanc- tioned and paid for by govern- ment order. That’s socialism at its best, folks. Lots better to vote for what roots is all about. They hear what they can like the Adams Avenue Business Association who, I’m never quite sure, understands what roots music is all about. They hear it from a bunch of people that seem to have some idea about the music, and they all have muscles and fiddle and are as exciting and con- fident as ever. This CD tends to sound like so many of the same old tunes. I’ve heard Kenny Hall take part in on the front porch of the old Sweets Mill lodge or out in the Aztec Center patio during a folk festival or in som eone’s living room (maybe right here in San Diego).

This is a CD you have to own, with familiar Kenny Hall standards like “Hawaiian Blues,” “Mississippi Sangay,” and the title song and obscurities like the Swedish “Nath’s Sna” and his Russian gypsy tune “Bright Shines the Moon.” Kenny’s music reflects the cultural differences of all the peo- ple who came to the Great Central Valley of California. You can get a hold of this CD through www.kennyhallband.com or see Kenny at a festival. You certainly need to do that.

Recordially, Lou Curtiss

Kenny Hall & the New Santa Fe Ramblers

North Sanger Blues

By Lou Curtiss

I’ve known Kenny Hall for about 40 years and long ago I came to the conviction that there is no bad Kenny Hall recording. There are just too few of them. I’ve heard him play music with everyone from Lydia Mendoza and Sam Chatman to Tommy Jarrell and, you know, the only thing I can’t understand is if Kenny Hall knows 1,100 songs (I can’t believe he knows that few), why aren’t they all out there on CD for us to learn from, and to pass on? I’ve seen Kenny bring a tune to a festi- val and play it, and the next year everyone is playing it (Now this CD, North Sanger Blues features Kenny with some tunes I’ve heard him play for years and then there are some that are completely new to me. At the age of 81, Kenny’s voice is strong and his mandolin and fiddle are as exciting and con- fident as ever. This CD tends to show so many of the same old tunes. I’ve heard Kenny Hall take part in on the front porch of the old Sweets Mill lodge or out in the Aztec Center patio during a folk festival or in som eone’s living room (maybe right here in San Diego).

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Questions for Tristan Prettyman

by John Philips White

T wo years ago, singer/songwriter Tristan Prettyman was little known in San Diego and com-
pletely unknown outside of America’s finest city. You might occasionally find her on a Saturday night playing at
Tweegs or Kelly’s Pub, but other than that, the laid back singer and girl-

era. Tristan Prettyman was flying completely
under the radar. Oh, how things have changed!

With Virgin Records behind her and a critically acclaimed album in music out
this coast to coast, Prettyman is gaining big market appeal and fre-
quent mention in prestigious publica-
tions such as Rolling Stone, Entertainment Weekly, and Billboard.

In between gigs on a national tour
support of the new CD. The songs are
four or five years old. Everything on
the disc is brand new. The songs are
more technical and advanced than some of the
ones on the love EP. The love EP was very simple. A lot of those songs were
four or five years old. Everything on
this disc is brand new. (The songs are
about new experiences and [were cre-
after] while exploring new writing
techniques. I’ve been on tour for prob-
ably eight months of the year for the
last two years and a half of the year and I
think that definitely helps. When you
are on the road practicing, you are
essentially practicing every night. So, I
think growth is bound to happen because you are working on your craft.

Q. My guest is that your life has been changing drastically with your career
now taking off. What has been your
reaction to your budding stardom? What
has been the up side and down side of it?

A. You know, not much has really changed.
I went to New York and I
made a record and got a record deal,
but when I go home my friends are
still the same. We all go out. The
girls go out to dinner and I still go
surfing with my parents. The only
thing that has really changed is that
I get a lot of fan mail now. There is a
lot more mail in my mailbox. I’ve allowed
myself to be really open with my fans so that they can grow with me (rather
than I watch them grow further away from me). I send postcards to people.
So it is not really any different, there
are just more people. I really let my
life kind of develop on its own and I’m really stoked about the record that I made.

Q. Could you talk about your evolution and growth from your first CD to this
one?

A. The songs [written over] the last
year or two are just a little more tech-
nical and advanced than some of the
ones on the love EP. The love EP was
very simple. A lot of those songs were
four or five years old. Everything on
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are on the road practicing, you are
essentially practicing every night. So, I
think growth is bound to happen because you are working on your craft.

Q. I know there was some collaboration with [boyfriend, Jason Mraz] on this CD.
Do you often sit down together and play
music back and forth?

A. We don’t, because he has a ten-
dency when I am playing something to
say, “Hey! you should change this
note to this note.” I’m like, “Go away and
write your own song.” I don’t want to
hear about it. We have a ten-
dency to start correcting each other and
giving our opinions. We just
learned early on that it is not a good thing.
We both really want to write another
tune and then do this other tune. We talk
all the time about being a duet and writing
a lot of songs together, but who knows if
that will ever happen.

Tristan Prettyman returns to San Diego
on November 26 to open for Jason Mraz at Humphreys. Tristan Prettyman
will appear on the same bill. For tickets:
(619) 220-TIX5.

Tristan Prettyman signing autographs in Horton Plaza

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November 2005 San Diego Troubadour
Front Porch

Traditional Jazz Gigs

Thanksgiving is the holiday where we count our bless-
ings, enjoy a traditional Thanksgiving dinner, and watch
television on television. In San

Diego Thanksgiving is an opportunity to celebrate America’s
only original art form straight from New Orleans. The upcoming 26th Annual San

Diego Thanksgiving Dixieland Jazz Festival offers an eclectic mix of
traditional jazz, Dixieland, and swing for listening and dancing.

The first annual festival

was called the Holiday
Bowl Jazz Festival and was
scheduled in December to coin-
cide with the Holiday Bowl foot-
ball game. However, because December is such a busy time of
the year, the festival was moved to the week of Thanksgiving and is
now known as the San Diego
Thanksgiving Dixieland Jazz
Festival. This year’s event offers
the opportunity to experience
one of the top traditional jazz
bands in eight different venues at
the Town and Country Resort and Convention Center.

Music presented at the festival
covers the history of jazz, from
tempo to early swing, and fea-
tures musicians from throughout
the U.S., Canada, and the Czech
Republic. The music will take you
across the country — from the
music of early New Orleans and
Chicago to the New York jazz
scene, and then back across the
country for some Kansas City jazz
followed by San Francisco-style jazz.

The festival’s world-class line
up includes the Reynolds Brothers Rhythm Rascals, who utilize the
vibraphone as well as other unique instruments to accompany their
douche; the Night Blooming Jazzmen from
Claremont, California, who first appeared in 1988 and are still
entertaining audiences with their
classical education sets that focus on
opportunity to celebrate America’s
ewest traditional jazz band.

Further more, community bands
that play regularly at the
Metaphor Cafe in Escondido,
Fuddruckers throughout the San
Diego County, the MacDonald’s at
the corner of 50th St. and El Cajon
Blvd, as well as countless private
parties, will also perform at the
festival.

With more than 25 bands on
table, there is something for
everyone, whatever one’s taste in
vintage jazz may be. Come out to
hear the music born in the city of
New Orleans.

26th Annual San Diego
Thanksgiving Dixieland Jazz Festival, Wednesday through
November 23-27, Town and Country Resort and
Convention Center, 500 Hotel Circle North, San Diego.

Festival sponsor America’s Finest City Dixieland Jazz Society is a
non-profit organization dedicated to
preserving our traditional jazz
heritage. For more information
on the event, visit the website at
www.dixielandjazzfestival.org.
Live Jazz

Somewhere in the silent ether, 
Ophrained by the ear, 
Floats every note ever played 
That we no longer hear.

The iceberg tip of tape and disc 
We resurrect at will 
But one note in millions 
Drowned and ever still.

True — the ink the quill and paper 
Genius put to use 
Still comes alive in concert halls 
In reverance — or abuse.

But what of every masterpiece 
That died while being born, 
Through smoke and booze in gin mills 
A re millions, more profound by far,

True — the ink the quill and paper 
Stil comes alive in concert halls 
But what of every masterpiece 
That made their sad escape.

That died while being born, 
Jazz Violinist Johnny Frigo 
From When My Father's in the Case, 
The Poetry and Paintings of Jazz Violinist Johnny Frigo

Aaron Bowen Eases on Down the Road

by Simon Fluck

Aaron Bowen is a lot more relaxed these days — his right thumb still gives him an occasional fit, but he can still pluck a mean acoustic guitar. He’s always thought of his instrumental prowess as his ace in the hole, the one thing about him that couldn’t be subjectively disputed. But now it no longer seems so pressuring to be an aspiring king of the guitar-shredding heap. He wants to learn other instruments, like cello and tenor banjo because he’s bored with guitar and needs more options in the studio. He wants to continue recording and begin producing other artists at Ojai, his home studio. He wants to meet and play with artists like Paul Simon and James Taylor, which will raise the bar and inspire him to improve, although he freely contradicts this impulsion with a self-deprecating remark that he’ll never be as good as either of them. He wants to keep writing music he can live with (he strums progressively less when he hears it on the stereo now), music that evokes, melody, like the stuff that galvanized him as a child. He just wants to write a good song (although he says he never will), and he is learning to enjoy up and down the road.

One would hardly guess, after hearing his debut solo album, A Night at 515 (reviewed in this issue, page 11), that this decidedly old-school dude hails from the Chula Vista area of San Diego. Bowen’s CD recall folkish white ways and means, and he possesses the kind of aura that those from the South would call “character” but might be labeled “eccentricity” by the sun-baked So-Cal pundits. For better or worse, he’ll tell you what he really thinks about whatever it is you do, especially if he likes it. He’ll only tell you if you ask, and then with no sugarcoating, so be careful! And he has a penchant for wearing old-fashioned hats and button-down shirts.

Two important things happened during Bowen’s formative years: his mom played favorites with his older brother, which inspired him to take up music; guitar was his first love at age five; the violin followed later, and he discovered The Wizard of Oz, which catalyzed his lifelong infatuation with the sophisticated, melodic music of the ’30s and ’40s.

Bowen was dually impoverished growing up, since his family was financially bent and sad older brother got the front’s share of the praise and attention. This lit a motivational fire under young Aaron to become the undeniable, quintessential bent at something, anything that would get him parental accolades and validation that his brother received so naturally. The guitar fit his intricate bent to a tee; he would sometimes spend eight or more hours at a stretch, sequestered in anti-social seclusion with his inner ear firmly fixed on the goal of becoming the hottest guitar player there ever was. He began to see the guitar as a way out of the myriad destinations that plagued him, and he would later pursue this aim relentlessly.

Something about the strong melodies in The Wizard of Oz captivated him instantly. He remembers watching the fantastical musical adaptation starring Judy Garland on TV while still in single digits, and he began recording similar bits straight off the television so he could play them back and revel in the way the warm, memorable melodies lifted his spirits. Perhaps the very idea behind the story — quitting the mundane world for a vibrantly wild, enthralling, sing-song realm — provided a vicarious escape from his own quandaries. It undoubtedly helped strengthen his emotional connection to the music.

By adolescence, the flame of Bowen’s ambition had all but engulfed his affinity for the old-time music he had grown to love as a child. He had long since forgotten Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg, the brilliant composer and lyricist behind the music of The Wizard of Oz, and had tuned his attention toward the fantastic, seemingly lucrative world of scales and arpeggios of guitar heroes like Steve Vai, and Frank Gambale, with whom he actually studied. The Guitar Institute of Technology (GIT) beckoned him north to L.A., where, at age 17, he was essentially on his own.

The ambitious tusk seemed to be working for a while — Bowen was able to get a fair amount of studio work and toured extensively as a sub. He even had an endorsement with a popular guitar company, Banjo, which is a dream come true for any aspiring guitarist.

But once again, two important things happened.

Bowen began to feel disgusted with the highly technical, practically aimless music he had been playing. He began to long for a more meaningful application of virtuosity. And so it happened that in his early twenties he discovered the gypsy jazz of Django Reinhardt. It was virtuosic to be sure, but it seemed to have more of a point in that it was actually melodic. He began to rediscover other acts from the same time period, like the Mills Brothers, who delighted him to no end with their vocal simulation of harmonized horn sections.

It was right around this time that Bowen injured his right hand.

As we all know, it’s hard to get music to pay. Serendipitously, Bowen had managed to transform a sideline interest in cars into a full-time, booming business. His specialty was custom technical modifications on high-end cars, and it involved a lot of detailed work with heavy industrial machinery. The job kept him a little too busy, and he literally became suicidal from the drudgery of the concomitant manual labor. He also lamented his separation from music and longed for the easelessness gained to end.

In that light, the accident was a mixed blessing. The drill press bored a hole through the working between the thumb and forefinger on his right hand, severing the tendons. Those tendons aren’t necessarily crucial to a mechanic, so the doctor intended to leave them unattached until Aaron spoke up and said, “I need to be able to play guitar.” It took a long time to rehabilitate his hand, and it proved to be further motivation to change the direction in which his life and music were headed.

In 1999 Bowen bowed out and sold the business soon after the accident and then returned to San Diego. The nest egg generated from the sale of the company afforded him some time off to recuperate and regroup, wherein he began the exploratory process that helped shape his current musical paradigm.

About three years ago the first song came, which was initially scoffed at by a few old friends who could only accept Aaron for the guitar hero he was trying to distance himself from. There was no shedding in these songs as he was now playing with a completely new guitar, just front-porch fingerpicking (which went easier on his right hand) and no personalizations. There was no going back musically or vocationally; he realized he was no longer cut out for anything other than a life of music, and that his music must make him happy first and foremost, not necessarily famous (although he’s open to what ever happens from here). Bowen had began to move on into his current musical persona.

These days Aaron Bowen is a paradoxical mixture of contentment and ambition. He’s happy with his life and art, but he’s still anxious to improve and evolve and innovate. He’s already in pre-production for his next record, which is going to be slightly more esoteric musically than the first and will boast an expanded array of instruments (including the aforementioned cellos, banjo, and even glockenspiel). The ambition and competitive spirit are still there, but now they serve to fulfill his own happiness on the yellow brick road to creation.

Aaron Bowen
North Dakota

Tom Brousseau has the voice of an angel — an angel from some long-forgotten era. If you were to hear him for the first time with your eyes closed, you’d think you were listening to an old recording of some Carter family rendition. Hispure, high-lonesome sound, almost every time, conjures up mental pictures of prairie grass, old trunks, and sitting in the parlor drinking lemonade —勾勒出一幅更简单时代的画面。他的清脆吉他演奏陪伴着他，使他声名大噪。他的吉他演奏是一首完美的伴奏，非常适合他的纤柔的歌声。

His lyrics only draw you in further.

and so did Grandma Brosseau, but they usually deferred to Uncle Ben and younger sister Carrie would join in, singing. Tom was awakened by the sounds of “Dancing in the Dark” and “Boo Hoo” coming from the stereo. He’d run them through your hair then rub them together before putting them on the head for a second time. He’d do this until the hair was completely covered. It wouldn’t be long before someone would turn on the stereo and put on a record, usually the Ink Spots, Grandpa’s favorite. Once or twice a month, on a Saturday or Sunday, the Brousseau family would go over to Grandpa’s house where the men would get their hair cut one at a time. In the quiet atmosphere of the basement, “Grandpa would put a smock on you, then lift the chair back and say, ‘You’re done,’” Tom remembers, laughing. “He’d sprinkle water in his hands and then rub them together before he’d run them through your hair to assess what needed to be done.” The rest of the family would then run the same hair cut every time.

It was usually around noon when the family would eventually make the trip from one of the small towns along the border between Minnesota and North Dakota. Tom was already interested in music. Around the time he was 10 years old Tom and his grandmother would spend summer vacations in Minneapolis where he felt ready to find the essence of the folk scene. He lived in the city for two years, writing songs and performing while gaining the confidence and experience he would need if he wanted to take his music up a notch. He did.

Nashville

In the back of Tom’s mind, Nashville was like making his way to a home. To perform in Nashville meant you were serious about your music. Over the course of several months Tom gigged around town, but with money running out, he soon decided that he couldn’t afford to stay. Before leaving town, however, he managed to schedule an audition for a coveted spot performing on a Sunday Writers Night at Nashville’s legendary Bluebird Cafe. With auditions held quarterly and restricted to Nashville residents, those lucky enough to be selected were filled with excitement. The others who showed growing talent in their songwriting and performance skills. He had chosen to stay.

“Yodeling for You” and felt confident and ready when he walked into the audition. When he finished, he thought it had gone well and left town believing he had ‘nailed the gig’.

Those who audition are usually notified by letter whether they have made the cut or not. A few weeks later, Tom called his parents’ home to see whether there was any new auditions for him. Yes. There was something from the Bluebird Cafe that had come for him. Along with a very nice rejection letter advising Tom not to give up or feel discouraged, there was a one-sheet containing tips for writing a good song.

The Bluebird experience was an eye opener for Tom and showed him that he had a way to go with his music. Whereas his energy had previously been directed at eventually arriving in Nashville and playing in the Bluebird, Tom was now lacking a plan. He drifted for awhile, eventually landing in Park City, Utah where he found a kind spirited gentleman who sang like a bird and looked like a lark. Smokey John Wayne.

Sitting in the back of the bar with Joe we suddenly heard the sweet sounds of a beautiful woman’s voice, singing out in the main room, and one at a time the door opened and we saw that it was a dude singing. The room was still and no one blinked while this tall figure came up on stage and sang. It was with a voice that was unlike anything anyone had ever heard at Joe’s before. The next week I went down to Ocean beach in the hopes I’d hear this ghost of a person is an old soul who had unfinished business on earth. My questions would be answered soon enough.

At that time I had a gig every Wednesday at an Irish pub where I was rocking and rolling with myotton records coun-
ter outfit called The Hatshet brothers. Ioe and Wendy, and many of the regulars from Java Joe’s, would be in attendance hanging onto each other singing along, and throwing up outside by the pet store. During a set break, Wendy put her arm around me and dragged me over to a table to introduce me to his new favorite singer. “Gregory, meet Tom.” I sat down and we immediately began talking. I kept glancing over at the black-haired beauty sitting next to him who was his gal at the time. Here was a young gifted song stylist who spoke in a soft tone and had a hot little number on his arm. We made a date to meet for a quiet drink and discuss the possibility of working together in the future. I also needed to know
The Ballad of Tom Brosseau

If he had any naked photos of his girl-friend
Tom came to my apartment with his book of lyrics and his Gibson axe from the 1970s. My mom is tiny and it is filled with old-fashioned recording gear that nobody uses anymore. We talked briefly about wanting to record his songs and the next thing we knew I had set up two 599 microphones and was pressing the record button on my tape machine. I sat there and listened to him cross with tears in his eyes. The songs (which were later included in what has become known as the Blue Album) were not familiar to me, however, instantly each one became my favorite. After we had recorded ten tracks, we both needed a drink. We walked down to the bar and found ourselves talking for hours. I had not seen any person drink beer so quickly. I guess that’s how they drink in North Dakota. Over the next few weeks I spent much time recording pupil organ and tenor guitar and featuring his music in a sparse fashion. We became fast friends during those sessions and decided to form a duet, calling ourselves The American Folk Singers. Luu Curtis, our musical advisor, told us that if we want to make a lot of dough we need to play folk music. Tom and I took our show to some retirement homes and sung for anyone who would listen. We even played at a school for the deaf.

Tom’s birthday came and went during the recording of his debut album. He was 25 going on 99. I look back on that period in which we had captured these songs as a very special time. Like listening to a time machine, Tom’s songs are pure and genuine and filled with poetic imagery. He is an old soul cut from the same high voice. Already well traveled, he heard through a friend that because of her studies, she found herself spending more and more time in her room recording herself, writing songs and thinking about folk music and songwriting more than anything else. She had given up geometry one of the times. A crazy little recording she had made on a four-track, which he and I listened to one day.

After Tom had heard her sing, the two of them began to spend more time together, singing old songs just for fun. They would work up songs they both knew, such as “Goodnight Irene,” “Roll on John,” or “Sowing on the Mountain.” After Angela invited Tom to sing on a track of an album she was recording, they began singing together more and more often, which became so easy and natural that they decided to make it official and gave themselves a name: The Shelleys.

They called themselves The Shelleys because Tom had a crush on a girl named Shelley when he was a kid, and Angela thought that was rather amusing. They also liked the way the word sounded coming out of the mouth — soft and pretty. Upon hearing that there was another band with the same name, the two of them changed the name of their duo to Les Shelleys. Angela adds, “I had lived in France for a while and spoke some French, so using a different pronunciation for the ‘l’ part of our name just seemed perfect and sort of romantic and old timey and, again, we liked the way the name sounded when we said it. However, Tom has never quite remembered that Les means he because he always says, ‘Hello. We are The Shelleys,’ which makes me laugh on stage every time.”

Les Shelleys is mostly about the songs. As Angela explains, “There are so many beautiful songs that have a lovely perfect melody and sentiment, songs that need little more than a voice or two to tell the story. So Tom and I seek out these old songs that have either been somewhat forgotten or that have been cherished and sung by folks forever. We listen to them and work them out and arrange them to make them shine. We spend far more time than anybody probably should, learning them and figuring out the notes we want to sing. We then practice them over and over until we don’t even think about what we are singing anymore because it just flows out of us. The most important thing is that we listen to each other while we are singing, so the songs are slightly different and a little bit living each time. Tom will introduce me to songs that his Dad taught him as a kid and I will remember songs that I heard my Grandma humming or that I heard in some old movie. I was at one time a singer on an old tape while visiting home or something. When we get to L.A., we would spend an entire evening at Ameela’s (a used record store), hunting for songs to work out.”

Although Tom and Angela are both very busy with their own solo musical endeavors, they still manage to perform as Les Shelleys about twice a month. Over the past few years the duo has shared many memorable experiences. A few of their favorites include opening for Sam Phillips at the Silvertake Lounge in L.A., playing to a houseful of people at the Marjorie Luke, a historic 800-seat theater in Santa Barbara, and playing at a little house concert in the middle of nowhere while on the road touring together.

Arranging their schedules has become more difficult lately, but they know that the music they perform is worthwhile because of the way it has helped to respond to it. With two CDs under their belt, they are ready for their third, recording the abundance of songs they’ve learned lately. They also have plans for recording old country western tunes that his Dad taught him as a kid and for a project in Los Angeles. Gregory Page will produce the album.

Finding a Home for his Music

Tom Brosseau could be described as a hopeless romantic, a master storyteller, a fun lover who likes to laugh, a quiet observer, and a bit of a mischievous maker Blessed with a fertile imagination, he can write about anything — a speck of dirt on the sidewalk, a chip in his coffee cup — anything. He is also determined and resourceful, having spent an enormous amount of energy and work into promoting his music. While the time he lived in San Diego he cooked up a scheme, which he wrote about on his website:

Tom’s Blog

At the time I had only been in California just under a year so no one had really heard of me. I found this plan I would take my music and new album down down like a raccoon cleaner and I put a real smart business and I knew that a lot of people had done it before and I put a perfect but and a good price of cash and my tape and set out to sell my new album. I started out in San Diego and it was kind of successful that I sold 200-300 tapes. I didn’t sell one record. I was making down and everything. I started out staying for the last and singing. I was Woking on my machine and I would play a song from it. Do you want to hear a song today? Just there was too much people to try to sing to. So I would move my rail so that when people opened their door I would just start singing. I got people thinking I was selling stuff, I got people laughing at me. I got people selling me to take sleeping lessons, I got people thinking the door in my face. I got people who did not sell the perk. It was true that some things are sometimes a lot harder than they seem and one is not discouraged by it.

Following his collaboration with Gregory Page on the production of his eponymous first CD, also known as the Blue Album, Tom sent it out to dozens of radio stations, seeking airplay. Many doors closed before he finally got a bite from KCHR’s Nick Hanover, host of Morning Becomes Eclectic out of Los Angeles Airplay on that radio station got him noticed by others and he soon developed a following. He began to tour. He became so well received in Boston that he even considered moving there when he was ready to leave San Diego to pursue new opportunities. Instead he moved up to Los Angeles so he could still be close enough to drive down to San Diego once a while. After all, he had made some good friends and valuable contacts. He performs regularly at the Adams Avenue Roots Festival with Gregory Page as well as Last Exit and the North Park Vaudville and Candy Shoppe, a charming 35-seat venue in the Gaslamp.

Since moving to Los Angeles, Tom’s life has been busy and productive. He constantly performs in and around L.A. both solo and with Angela Correa at such venues as the Silverlake Lounge, Largo, Tanger, and the Mercury Lounge. He’s been written up in Performer, the Chicago Reader, and many magazines, to name a few. He has also been interviewed on dozens of radio stations and is currently on tour, with stops in Chicago, New York, and Boston.

He was recently signed to Lonesome Records, an indie label based in Seattle and founded by Sam Jones, a photographer best known for making the Wilco documentary I Married You to Break Your Heart. His latest CD, What I Know to Tell You, was released in time to rave reviews (reviewed in this issue, page 13). Bonnie Raitt even mentioned him during her interview in Performer magazine as an up and comer worth listening to.

So how did this North Dakota boy, raised on John Denver songs, the Ink Spots, and Guy Lombardo end up sounding like such a pure, timeless soul? It’s hard to say. Maybe his music can tell you.

The Story of Les Shelleys

Angela Correa was living in San Diego while pursuing a graduate degree in Latin American studies when she met Tom through Gregory Page. A big fan of his music, she had heard through a friend that he had formed a folk duo with a young blond kid named Tom who played an old Singer with a high voice. Already well traveled, especially in Chile and Mexico because of her studies, she found herself spending more and more time in her room recording herself, writing songs and thinking about folk music and songwriting more than anything else. She had given up geometry one of the times. A crazy little recording she had made on a four-track, which he and Tom listened to one day.

After Tom had heard her sing, the two of them began to spend more time together, singing old songs just for fun. They would work up songs they both knew, such as “Goodnight Irene,” “Roll on John,” or “Sowing on the Mountain.” After Angela invited Tom to sing on a track of an album she was recording, they began singing together more and more often, which became so easy and natural that they decided to make it official and gave themselves a name: The Shelleys.

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DUET SINGING IN BLUEGRASS

Have you ever stopped to notice that some of the most beautiful harmonies singing in bluegrass music, or in any other form of music for that matter, is often done by two people singing duet harmonies? If you didn’t already realize it, you now tend to notice that the duet singers the best of the lot are brothers? Think of the great brother duets from the past, including the Everly Brothers, the Louvin Brothers, the Statler Brothers, Don and Joyce McDuffie, and many others. More recently, think of The Gibsons Brothers and Uncle Charlie Mays’ contemporaneous recordings. Let’s talk a little about what duet singing can be so compelling and why we think it translates so well. In western music there are seven notes in any scale, with the eighth note being a repetition of the ‘first’ note. Combining these seven scale notes, or combinations of these notes together sometimes, can make a pleasing sound. (Why some these combinations are pleasing to the ear and others are not is a question answered by physics and the ear, but for our purposes take it a given that certain combinations sound good and some don’t.)

These basic note chords are called “triads” and comprise the first note in the scale, the third note, and the fifth note of the scale. More complex chords can be created by adding the sixth, the seventh, or other notes. Harmony singing, that is finding the second of the three notes used to create this same chord sound by having each singer sing the second note of the chord. In three-part harmony the three voices sing the three notes of the chord, and in duet singing one singer sings the melody and the other singer one of the remaining chord notes to create harmony. So, we note that in three-part singing the singers must be more disciplined.

Valley Music

by Doug Wicken

Have you ever stopped to notice that some of the most beautiful harmonies singing in bluegrass music, or in any other form of music for that matter, is often done by two people singing duet harmonies? If you didn’t already realize it, you now notice that the duet singers the best of the lot are brothers? Think of the great brother duets from the past, including the Everly Brothers, the Louvin Brothers, the Statler Brothers, Don and Joyce McDuffie, and many others. More recently, think of The Gibsons Brothers and Uncle Charlie Mays’ contemporaneous recordings. Let’s talk a little about what duet singing can be so compelling and why we think it translates so well.

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These basic note chords are called “triads” and comprise the first note in the scale, the third note, and the fifth note of the scale. More complex chords can be created by adding the sixth, the seventh, or other notes. Harmony singing, that is finding the second of the three notes used to create this same chord sound by having each singer sing the second note of the chord. In three-part harmony the three voices sing the three notes of the chord, and in duet singing one singer sings the melody and the other singer one of the remaining chord notes to create harmony. So, we note that in three-part singing the singers must be more disciplined.

They also have less freedom — since there are only three notes in a triad chord, each singer has to sing an “assigned” note to avoid duplicating another singer. In duet singing the singer/person singing harmony has a choice of which of the remaining two notes to sing, and thus a measure of freedom. And, the duet harmony singer can choose his notes as the song progresses, maybe singing the third note harmony for the first part of a verse, the second note for the bridge and fifth note harmony to build tension and drama and then back to the third.

The great duet singers have routinely made good use of this creative freedom to vary the harmonies so it progresses, keep the sound interesting to the listener and to generate tension and release. Brothers who have grown up together singing and talking all their lives, in church and elsewhere, have a sense of unspoken connection and understanding of what the other is likely to do, which makes their duet singing so sublime. The Bird Brothers (Ray and Don), for example, ask what the other is going to say at a given moment and can blend their voices, their inflection, and their harmonies perfectly as a result. Likewise with the Everly Brothers, the Louvin’s and, Joe and John, and the other great brother duets.

You don’t have to be brothers to reach this level of unspoken communication, but it helps. Other good singers can achieve this same high level, but usually only through years of singing together so that they become brothers for musical purposes. Listen to Huddie Ledbetter and Chris Hillis, for example, do their duets and you will see how good duet singing can be by two people who are not related but who have been singing together for years.

The next time you listen to a good duet singer is if you are able to hear what they are doing. See if you can hear the subtleties of the blend and how they “trick” the harmony at any given point in the song. To do duet singing well is very difficult, but it is worth it!

LOCAL HAPPENINGS

The San Diego Bluegrass has moved its fourth Tuesday of the month feature band (formerly at Goldfield’s Pub) to the St. Albert Inn on Miramar Road. Stop by next time if you haven’t visited this new venue. In September the SDBS fourth Tuesday at the Blue Wail featured the Virtual Strangers and an SDBS fundraiser for hurricane victims. The SDBS raised funds that will go to the American Federation of Musicians Hurricane Relief Fund, which will give grants to both professional and amateur musi- cians who suffered from the hurricanes. And, the APFM will match each donation dollar for dollar.

On Saturday November 26 Richard Greene (who played with Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys) will appear with the Brothers Barton at Acoustic Music San Diego, 4600 Manchester (Normal Heights) at 7:30 p.m. for tickets and information, call (818) 355-8736. Keep pickin’!

In use, the “loops” I use the term loosely, as they are often 16 bars long fit together seamlessly and one can quickly piece together a dich of a jazz piece within a minute or two. Once you’ve done this using the combo loops, you can then go about the business of replacing these with the similarly named individual instrument loops. This is the point where I began to have some difficulties because as these are live jazz combo performances, there is some linkage between the instruments, particularly with the piano and drums. This is a “real world” issue though, and I think it makes great practice for when you’ll undoubtedly run into this situation with your own recordings.

Going through and doing strange things to the resulting drum, piano, and guitar tracks yield such fun and informative results — I just had to recommend this approach. Try it and see what you think.

Next month, we explore “The Top Denver” theory from the perspective of individual musical performances. For now, listen closely and listen often!
Hosing Down
by Jose Simental

LOVE AND RASPBERRIES
(love, Raspberries, Cod Steve, and Crab Cakes)

Good to have you back again, after that extended, dreamless snooze.
This one dedicates particularly to those who actually miss my holy writ, and specifically to the females who, at this moment, are beginning to feel a pleasant filling of a Troubled Void.

I want those precious doves to keep hangin’ on, for a mere duty for me. It’s a privi-
lege to do what little I can to keep you happy, fruit, feminine.

By the way, you’re looking lovelier than ever.

Yes, you are. Does your man say that you’re every hour of the day, as any truly honest lover would if he doesn’t? His other dishonest or an imbecile, and one should just pluck him from your valuable life immediately.

This will fill you, my flower, from dis-
traction as you prepare to accept my own unwarranted, unconditional, yet thoroughly sustaining, love.

Then soon, when the time is right, you will come to me and be fully and finally mine. If I’m not home, leave a note and I’ll get back to you at my first convenience. But until that glori-
ous moment . . .

These nascent voices, which was to have taken place at 4th and B a couple of weeks ago, was can-
celled. Yes, yes, I’m sorry. Cod Steve, a voice more McClintock than McClintock himself, with writing chops to rival anyone but the Fab’s, Wally Bryson, the real heart of the group, also multipled gifted; Dave Stew art, in a couple of weeks ago, as to have taken place at 4th and B a few of McClintock’s words —  unobtrusive but thoroughly spectacular. Reports of these nascent voices, which was to have taken place at 4th and B continue to be published by W addilove

The scintillating Mr. Sinatra

The call, of course, never came. Had it all just been a dream?

Certainly not, a creepy crew of British crabs soon informed them.

When they confided to me their experience, I told them that the full of lessons and they just learned a pretty painful and embarrassing one. I assured them that only the three of us would ever know about it (I hope them that much) and then personally undertook the eradication of the lat-
est British “invasion.” It was a serv-
ience I rendered with infinite patience and care, by which time clean bills of health would be assured.

That’s kind of this person’s singer is, and yes, that’s rare.

It did I feel. It hurt and because, unlike all those other male “superstars.” This one carries his tal-
ent with him when he steps the stage.

So I can share my abundance with you, personally. Think of a snake on a staring bush.

If you need one now, I’m here.

We don’t have to wait another month, do we?

Life can be so beautiful, darling, when we grasp at the beauty that is

I did it because I cared. And because, unlike all those other male “superstars.” This one carries his talent with him when he steps the stage. So I can share my abundance with you, personally. Think of a snake on a staring bush.

If you need one now, I’m here.

We don’t have to wait another month, do we?

Life can be so beautiful, darling, when we grasp at the beauty that is
up for yet
kinky chord structure and melody in
from the piano driving the music to
how impressively versatile Gee's voice
ment to full effect and has remarkable
12
12
by Craig Yerkes

"Play On"
incorporates more of a Police influence
added some kind of high register
disc, with hooks galore and a stellar
of gusto, groove, and sensitivity. In the
this material with just the right blend

John Mears and Jeff Bowman add
play and sing with the best of 'em.
The good news is that this guy can
and throw in other varied influences,
i.e., Sting/The Police and Squeeze.
appeal of the aforementioned artists
fresh musical approach of the band,
Based, male vocal-driven tunes. That
artists like Elton John, Gary Wright,
seem to have wisely made the choice
and the performances.
A world of too many guitar bands
and guitar plucking singer songwriters.
Red Buttons Blink is a bit of a throwback to the '70s when artists like Elton John, Gary Wright, Stevie Wonder, Steely Dan, Hall and Oates, and Billy Joel were filling the top 40 charts with catchy, keyboard-based, male-vocal-driven tunes. That having said, this disc in no way sounds dated, thanks to surprising and fresh musical approach of the band, which takes some of the old school appeal of the aforementioned artists and throws in other varied influences, i.e., Sting/The Police and Squeeze.
What skilful stylistic approach they happen to be taking, the appeal of Crash Carter hinges primarily on the piano playing and vocals of Casey Gee. The good news is that this guy can play and sing with the best of 'em. John Mears and Jeff Bowman add drums and bass, skilfully managing to pull off the difficult task of enhancing this material with just the right blend of gusto, groove, and sensitivity. In the wrong hands, these tunes would be seriously damaged by a heavy-handed rhythm section. Track one, "Unreal," gets started nicely with an up-tempo, hook-laden, dainty, complete with soulful falsetto vocal riffs and a driving piano track. "Tidal Waves" is probably the catchiest tune on the disc, with hooks galore and a stellar chorus, but it also lends to the overall feel of the album, which is very cohesive.

The title track starts the disc with a small part thanks to bass playing that is so tight and juicy, I almost can't believe a mere mortal did the job. "Joe Farrell" returns to a more straight ahead, mid-tempo bop feel and features some wonderful interplay among the musicians as they trade 12-bar solos. "Alien I.Q." returns to the slow tempo (and yoga inspired) bop tune, a perfect summation of what I think this album represents, enjoy for the genius that it represents, enjoy for the

B orn in Talbot County, Georgia, in 1942, Bryant grew up in a musical family very young. I've been hearing about Bryant for some time and have wanted to bring her out to the Roots Festival for the past several years but have been unable to with the budgets like they are. This is unique finger style (a la Elizabeth Cotton and Memphis Minnie) by a southern lady guitar player and singer that does a "Teenie-Beehives" that sounds like it could have been written 60 years ago. She also does a blues version of "Take Me Home, Country Roads." Her playing is a perfect summation of what I think this album represents. In the liner notes, "Sprague talks as if this tune was written back at the start of his career. It's obvious from listening to "Kundalini" that you can find something to say about this band by using any of the genres she covers, I don't even begin to skim

One thing I loved throughout the whole recording is the way so many old school keyboard sounds were incorporated, especially the instantly groovy, clattered parts that show up on "Jump Ship" and "Better Than Thrills." Wides of Savoy's and Satin Seems to have wisely made the choice to let Red Buttons Blink stay pretty close to what Crash Carter does live and not add too many bells and whistles. The silky touches that do show up (i.e., five string sounds on "Once Like This") are welcome additions that don't distract from the natural strength of the tunes and the performances.

In a world of too many guitar bands and guitar plucking singer songwriters, Red Buttons Blink is a wonderful breath of fresh air that is likely to bring Crash Carter a dose of well-deserved attention.

As a jazz guitar lover, I have sat front row now to see greats such as Joe Pass, Joe Diorio, Anthony Wilson, and Pat Metheny. For those of you who don't realize this already, Peter Sprague has a place right up there with the great jazz guitarists of our time. More than just his instrumental ability, Peter Sprague is a writer-composer of positively world-class abilities. Taking it all in, his latest release, is a wonderful and inspiring snapshot of the essence of Peter Sprague, the composer, musician, and human being.
In the liner notes, Sprague indicates that he wanted to capture what his band does live by recording mostly live with minimal overdubs. The result of this pursuit is equal parts playful, pristine, starry-eyed, energetic, heartfelt, and just plain fun. The title track starts the disc with a somewhat spacey and groovy! Next up is a truly

This album doesn't scream for attention. It doesn't have to. It's

"This album is full of mature, well written, well
thought-out musical ideas and stories. Each song is dedicated to one thing or another that meant something to D'Vora and her pack of background vocalists. Whether it's a cat, a departed friend, a coffee shop, or Anna Frank, the album as a whole hangs out on the bluesgrass area of the musical spectrum that sounds once and again, it travels into country music territory. Maybe it's because of theiddle.
"I'm Goin' to Fly Fever Blues" is the gem of the album. Think Johnny Cash's "I Walk the Line" but add in a sense of humor. Ken Graydon recounts, in his baritone speaking voice, his lambasting for hay fever. He微信s, all I wanna do is lay down and die of my got-too-cute/non-allergenic discomfrr

D'Vora sings about what a Friday night at the Camarillo Cafe is like. This album is clearly D'Vora's baby. It's well-bred and professionally culated.

Someone said to me that you should only cover a song if you think you can add something to it. To say that D'Vora adds something to each of the songs she covers wouldn't even begin to skim the surface. She bushes years of dust off them, gets to know them, and polishes them up, pumping red blood through the cold and brittle veins of jazz music altogether.

D'Vora
Comfortable Company

I have to be honest. When I first looked at this album cover — a picture of a woman sitting on the floor of her house, guitar in hand, with her cat sitting in her guitar case — I was a little leery. "D'Vora" dedicates Comfortable Company to D'Vora's new CD and as well as the first track, to her departet cat, Shama. How much could I love another album with a dead cat? But I pressed on... and Kama was good to me for doing so.

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Aaron Bowen
A Night at Sea

By Simon Fick

Aaron Bowen's first solo release salutes in a like a Mississippi riverboat fresh off the oceanic void, he's the captain of his own lonely ship, adrift on "Waves of Regret" and resigned in the depths of his own path. A Night at Sea finds Bowen back on shore, successfully putting the troubled captain's log in an antithetically relaxing, campfire-evocative musical realm.

A Night at Sea is a strikingly subtle fusion of old and new, as though Woody Guthrie and Robert Johnson learned some jazz and possessed Paul Simon during a slumber held at Taylor's house. The vintage atmosphere is further compounded by the accompanying packaging; the ornate early twentieth-century-style cover finds Bowen posing in black and white with an antique guitar and hat next to a covered bridge. He continues to wax archaic by splicing the songs into two acts, with an "Interlude" and "Encore" and presenting the credits under the headlining "Cast (In Order of Appearance)" like an old vaudeville show.

Bowen's contemporary trained hands deftly execute old-time finger-picking and modern-age percussive placeboing as they alternate through both traditional and innovative chord changes on tunes like "Friends And Enemies." The musing that sometimes coming in Bowen's routinely highest/wrap of a tenor guitar, and it's clear that he sings when he performs the even a hint of warbling in his voice. But even these stronger tracks are excellent, with youthful energy and a clear, crisp vocal that even some hardly any fronts left in songwriting besides the lyrical content (and not just the harmonies), but that is where these songs shine most profusely. "Little Bit Of Me" sounds like this to do: to make me that blissful idea of a more simple and free place in this world. I thought you'd Miss Me," is a little alt-country ditty that serves as a nice detour from the rest of the tracks with its shuffling beat and the very welcome addition of some very nice pedal steel work.

Besides cutting a few of the tracks altogether and tweaking others a bit, the other thing I wish the band had done on this disc is to do more with the way cool, Byrds-inspired harmony vocals that appear ever so briefly from time to time. I really did dig the four tracks that I singled out and couldn't help but wonder how much better The Spring Collection could have been with a little more restraint and editing.

Blindspot
The Spring Collection

By Craig Sisko

The Spring Collection, from Blindspot, is much more than a subtle wink and a nod to the classic, Rickenbacker-fueled hippie sounds of old (the Byrds, most notably). With a hefty 16 (!) tracks, this disc is like a full-blooded tribute album to a genre. At its best, The Spring Collection is an effective, lovely crafted side to that vintage, whimsical, blissfully simplistic, free spirited pop/rock of the late '60s and early '70s. At its worst, this disc droned on to become a repetitive wash of "didn't I just hear this song?" tracks and even dances dangerously close to unintended parody (a la "The Flower People" by Spinal Tap). I think it's possible that even the CEO of Rickenbacker Guitars himself might have to concede that this disc tests the limits of how much Rickenbacker the human ear can endure, but you're a die-hard fan of this style of music, you certainly won't feel like you didn't get enough of what you like.

The tracks that worked for me were those unpretentious, "Something Happened" and "Little Bit Of Me," "I Thought You'd Miss Me," and "Rollin' Hills and Winding Roads." "Something Happened" and "Rollin' Hills and Winding Roads" rise well above the other up-tempo material on the album by way of strong melody lines and lyrics that manage to perfectly exploit the distinctive sound of the music rather than be swallowed up by it. A Little Bit Of Me" is an effective ballad, perhaps even its folk melody and lyrics seamlessly with the sound of the record. These tracks do exactly what I want music that sounds like this to do: to take me to that blissful idea of a more simple and free place in this world. I thought you'd Miss Me," is a little alt-country ditty that serves as a nice detour from the rest of the tracks with its shuffling beat and the very welcome addition of some very nice pedal steel work.

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The Storrow Band
The Storrow Band

By Simon Fick

You can almost hear the down shedding off the spreading wings of The Storrow Band on that eponymous debut release. The one-motopedia of music reveals three budding young musicians, led by singer-songwriter Martin Storrow, in the process of leaving the nest and coming to age in the adult world on their own terms. This is the sound of a young and intelligently talented band aban-
doning the cocoon in order to face their nascent wings to the test.

In some ways they're still lonely and figuratively discovering the groove (witness the loose — albeit endearing — group melodic and percussion on some tracks).

However, the suggestive songwriting, instrumentation, and production on this CD don't come off like begin-
nner's luck. There's also a wonderfully wide-ranging scope of influences — everything from the John Mayer-ish "One More Day" and Mraz-ian "Monsters" to the Dylan-esque "Ten Thousand People in White" and (the) Walter-like "Song That Makes Brendan Cry."

The musicianship and production choices are certainly top-notch, espe-
cially considering that days before there are hardly any frontiers left in songwriting besides the lyrical content (and not just the harmonies), but that is where these songs shine most profusely. Little Bit Of Me" sounds like this to do: to make me that blissful idea of a more simple and free place in this world. I thought you'd Miss Me," is a little alt-country ditty that serves as a nice detour from the rest of the tracks with its shuffling beat and the very welcome addition of some very nice pedal steel work.

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See Spot Run
Double Dingo

By Simon Fick

See Spot Run strikes me as a band who take their music and the mes-
age of their music seriously. Double Dingo, the double CD from See Spot Run, has a very earthy and somewhat less formulaic approach; like something you would hear around a fire pit at a spiritual retreat of some kind. This is how I will no doubt enjoy Double Dingo and my guess is that See Spot Run has loyal fans who will appreciate their particular brand of music and spiritual empha-
sis. Unfortunately, this recording suf-
fers from what seems to be a general lack of recording/production savvy.

Track after track, I found myself noticing problem areas, such as effects being applied much too heavily, tempo/groove issues, and poorly recorded CD's instrumental tracks (acoustic guitar, in particular) to name a few. This entire recording sounds more like a lovingly created demo than a finished, studio quality recording. I kept waiting for at least one track in which all of the ele-
ments came together to rise above that "demo-tape" level, but it never really happened, even though it's clear that the potential is there. To be fair, this album was recorded at the home studio of one of the band members according to the liner notes, but the way the CD is pack-
ed and marketed seems to indi-
icate that Double Dingo is intended to be more than just a home demo.

The three tracks that come the closest to putting it all together are, "One More Day" ("voice of reason"), "One More Day" ("voice of reason"), and "Doom's Day" ("jupiter." an instrumental, features a beautiful melody and adds a violin to create a very atmospheric piece of mood music. "Voice of Reason" seems to best sum up the heartfelt message of the CD, and I loved the way the passionate lead vocal and acoustic guitar riffs so nicely in com-
municating the emotion of the song. "Doom's Day" features some very clever lyrics and fits them nicely with a great backing instrumental. One wild (if somewhat oddly placed) sur-
prise on this CD is "Oscar's Razor" (which also shows up on an earlier track, "Electric") is some blaring, Satin- eau ead guitar work. However, even these stronger tracks are plagued with some of the aforementioned production issues in sufficient quantity to distract from the over-
all strength of the musical and per-
fomance.

See Spot Run is clearly a unique, talented, and charismatic band. Double Dingo needs more work on the rails completely, but I wouldn't be surprised if they come back again with more newly honed recording skills and I will be in line to check it out.

Tom Brosseau
What I Mean to Say Is Goodbye

By Gregory Page

Does it make a difference if you listen to a recording once or a hundred times? Not really. You connect or you don't. Tom Brosseau's latest CD, What I Mean to Say Is Goodbye, is a love it or leave piece of work. There is no middle ground on this collec-
tion of poetic compositions. You either enjoy your music with a per-
sonal flair or you are an insomniac member of the commercial main-
stream.

This is commercial suicide at its best. Brosseau's voice is a blast from the past, his very own time machine from the bad old days. This is a con-
cept album that begins with "West of Town," where Brosseau's chilling har-
monica makes you shiver inside. You can almost smell smoke from the chimneys that line a lonesome North Dakota street. The fairly tale turn "Jane and Louis" sounds like a true story that was made up in the mind of a simple soul. By the time you stumble upon "Tonight I'm Careful With You," featuring Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers' Benmont Tench on piano, you have fallen hook line and sinker for this modern day troubadour.

When you listen to Brosseau's music, your life feels more enriched. Every word seems to carry weight, especially when you know there is a wa-
dering ghost out there, driving across a dusty prairie land in a rent-a-car. "Wear and Tear" is an upbeat number that paints a wonderful pic-
ture of cherished day-to-day living in a small town. Nickel Creek's Sara Watkins' haunting violin fits the imagination in the song "Unfinished Places."

Keeping the production sparse and to a minimum was a wise choice by Sam Jones, who as sensitive as Brosseau is in the art of magnetizing such special musical reflections. You get the sense that you are peering in through a secret window at Brosseau and his friends who are playing and recording music that will be on forever and ever and ever. Amen.
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