

SAN DIEGO

TROUBADOUR

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



December 2008

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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, 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.

SAN DIEGO TROUBADOUR, the local source for alternative country, Americana, roots, folk, blues, gospel, jazz, and bluegrass music news, is published monthly and is free of charge. Letters to the editor must be signed and may be edited for content. It is not, however, guaranteed that they will appear.

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SUBMITTING A CALENDAR LISTING
Email your gig date, including location, address, and time to info@sandiegotroubadour.com by the 22nd of the month prior to publication.

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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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2008 HAT Award Winners

San Diego acoustic music is entirely unique and we all know someone who is active in the music scene – musicians, songwriters, photographers, designers, promoters, etc. The San Diego H.A.T. Awards follows the local music scene closely and each year, a very special event is held, celebrating our great local talent.

Best Acoustic Group
The Wrong Trousers

Best New Acoustic Artist
Matt Haeck

Best Performer
Veronica May

Best Songwriter
Joe Rathburn

Best Alt. Country
Grand Canyon Sundown

Best Americana
The Coyote Problem

Best Instrumentalist
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Best Backup Musician
Dave Sawyer (Doktor Dave)

Best Open Mic
Jimmie Lunsford/Lestat's

Best Support & Promotion
The San Diego Troubadour

Special Benefit Concert Celebrates Peace and Raises Funds for the Peace Alliance and Americans for a Department of Peace

by Sue Trisler

A special benefit concert in support of the Peace Alliance and its San Diego chapter, Americans for a Department of Peace (AFDOP), will be hosted by local musician, Joe Rathburn, on Thursday, December 4, at Milano Coffee Company in Mission Valley from 7-10pm.

The line-up for this inspirational event includes Joe Rathburn, Peter Bolland of the Coyote Problem, Cahill and Delene, John Foltz, Sandi Kimmell, and James Lee Stanley. These legendary musicians are donating their time and extraordinary talents to this event in support of the Peace Alliance and AFDOP. This is a pro-peace concert, not any kind of anti-war affair. It will be an evening filled with peace and purpose.

Singer-songwriter Peter Bolland heads up the Coyote Problem, multi-award winning alt-country Americana mainstays. Layering thoughtful introspection and heartfelt truth-telling over a straightforward backbeat is the singular trademark of this disarmingly simple band. For this show, Bolland takes the stage as a solo artist, highlighting the stark power of his songwriting craft.

Husband and wife Barry Cahill and Delene St. Clair perform as a duo and with the Hot Pursuit Band, sing songs that center on important and meaningful topics. While working for Tony Robbins, Cahill learned a lot about personal growth, motivation, and self-discipline, which had a major impact on his life and music. Delene has been performing since she was seven. As full-time musicians, their original music inspires and reaches out to that fully alive humanity that resides deep within everyone.

Singer-songwriter-keyboardist John Foltz began his musical journey at the tender age of three. After working the Orange County coffee shop circuit, he played with other bands and then went solo when he moved to San Diego. John has performed at over 100 venues and has played at numerous corpo-

rate functions and charity events.

Sandi Kimmell is a singer-songwriter, music healer, and inspirational speaker, called "a lifeguard in a sea of negativity." Sandi writes positive songs intended to uplift and inspire, heal the heart, and soothe the soul. She uses her words, voice, and songs to support the spirit-seeking journey toward wholeness and wellness.

Award-winning songwriter/performer Joe Rathburn has released three CDs of original positive folk/pop and garnered high praise by the press and his peers. He has earned an international reputation through his CDs and performances. He hosts a weekly Thursday night songwriter showcase called the Folkey Monkey, featuring local and touring performers, which has become the Go To destination for those seeking quality acoustic music in the area.

Renaissance man James Lee Stanley is a singer-songwriter, hailed as one of the few all-time greats and undisputed geniuses. He has been recording and performing since he was 14. He is a remarkable vocalist and composer. His songs, coupled with his outrageously entertaining repartee, make for an evening of both happiness and tenderness.

Funds from this benefit concert will support the Peace Alliance and AFDOP. Proceeds to AFDOP will help purchase outreach supplies and entrance fees for events, including expenses for teens and adults to attend conferences and trainings, as well as speaker and event expenses. Proceeds to the Peace Alliance will be used for lobbying and publicity training as well as helping to maintain their Washington, D.C. office. This grassroots campaign is supports the establishment of a cabinet-level U.S. Department of Peace and Nonviolence and a Secretary of Peace.

Additional information about the legislation currently before Congress (H.R. 808) can be found on both AFDOP's website at www.afdop.org or by visiting the Peace Alliance site at www.thepeacealliance.org.

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The San Diego Troubadour Talks to Roger McGuinn & John Sebastian

by Steve Thorn

ROGER MCGUINN

While his peers were contemplating summer employment or college, Chicago native McGuinn already had a gig lined up with the Limelickers in California. The recent high school graduate had already made inroads into the Chicago music scene, where he studied at the Old Town School of Folk Music. McGuinn is featured on the Limelickers' *Tonight in Person* (1961) LP. He also provided backing for the Chad Mitchell Trio on the 1961 *Mighty Day on Campus* album.

Another important contact for McGuinn was Bobby Darin, when the latter was making the transition from a pop vocalist to a folk singer. McGuinn was contracted by Darin as a songwriter for hire for Darin's TM Music Publishing Company, located in the famed Tin Pan Alley shrine, the Brill Building, in New York City. In 1963, McGuinn would have been rubbing shoulders with the likes of Carole King and Gerry Goffin, Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich, and Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil. McGuinn honed his songwriting craft, learning to write for a number of different markets (including a surf music single, "Beach Ball") under deadline pressure.

The Byrds' era of McGuinn's career began when Gene Clark caught McGuinn's set as an opening act for Hoyt Axton at Doug Weston's Troubadour nightclub in West Hollywood. Another L.A. folk singer with a gift for harmonic blend, David

Crosby, teamed up with McGuinn and Clark. San Diegan Chris Hillman, a mandolin player with the Scottsville Squirrel Barkers and the Hillmen, was recruited to play bass, and drummer Michael Clarke (who was initially brought into the fold due to his striking resemblance to Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones) kept the beat.

Aficionados of the group – dubbed "Byrd Watchers" in their heyday – looked favorably on the first four albums (*Mr. Tambourine Man* (1965), *Turn! Turn! Turn!* (1965), *Fifth Dimension* (1966), and *Younger than Yesterday* (1967) as the group's golden era. Time has shown that opinion to be inaccurate; *The Notorious Byrds Brothers* (1968) and *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* (1968) are as essential as the earlier quartet of records. In retrospect, the Byrds provided their loyal listeners worldwide with six magnificent discs.



Roger McGuinn. Photo: John Chiasson



Original Byrds: (top row, l to r) Gene Clark, Roger McGuinn, Michael Clarke (bottom row, l to r) Chris Hillman, David Crosby

Find any dictionary's definition of troubadour, and a choice for the word will be "a singer, especially of folk songs." Appearing monthly on the masthead of this publication is the following statement of purpose: a source for "alternative country, Americana, roots, folk, blues, gospel, and bluegrass."

Roger McGuinn and John Sebastian are not only poster boys for troubadours but they have also participated in the above musical genres for four decades. The two members of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame will be performing an intimate evening of music at the Poway Center for the Performing Arts on Saturday, December 6.

As the founding members of the Byrds (McGuinn) and the Lovin' Spoonful (Sebastian), the two music veterans made 1965 one of the greatest artistic years during the second half of 20th century popular music. The mainstream media named both bands as "America's answer to the Beatles." It was flattering commentary for the time, but in hindsight 43 years later, it detracted from the unique characteristics of both groups. Neither the Byrds or the Spoonful really sounded like the Liverpoolians, nor did the West Coast Byrds attempt to duplicate the style of the East Coast Spoonful. Energized by McGuinn's Rickenbacker 12-string guitar, the Byrds brought a vibrancy to the folk music catalog of Pete Seeger and Bob Dylan, culminating in 1965 with Dylan himself jumping on stage at Ciro's Nightclub in Hollywood to jam with the group. Back East in Greenwich Village, the Spoonful built up a loyal following, hipsters entranced by the band's penchant for jug band music, folk, blues, and lyrical content filled with wry humor.

On his current website, Sebastian reflected with amusement on the "America's Answer" tag created by the press so many years ago, "We were grateful to the Beatles for reminding us of our rock 'n' roll roots, but we wanted to cut out the English middlemen, so to speak, and get down to making this new music as an 'American' band."

With Clark, Crosby, Hillman, and Clarke departing the Byrds at various intervals, McGuinn dutifully kept the Byrds flying through several different lineups into the early '70s. McGuinn was involved with numerous solo projects over the next three decades. *Cardiff Rose* (1976) was a strong effort notably enhanced by Mick Ronson's production, and *Back From Rio* (1990) boasted an all-star lineup including Elvis Costello and an artist who might have been a Byrd (in a Shirley MacLaine metaphysical sense) in another time and universe: Tom Petty.

Over the last ten years, McGuinn has returned to his roots with his ambitious Folk Den project, a musical journey through the rich waters of American folklore. McGuinn was out on the road when he recently participated in an online chat with the *San Diego Troubadour*.

San Diego Troubadour: The Gate of Horn was one of your early folk music haunts when you started out. Is the current tour with John Sebastian allowing you to reconnect with the old days?

RM: In 1995 I was listening to a Smithsonian Folkways record of traditional music and it struck me that I wasn't hearing much of that anymore. The new crop of folksingers were singer-songwriters and were doing their own material exclusively.

SDT: What was the mission behind the Folk Den project?

RM: The Internet had just opened up to "civilians" and it occurred to me that it would make publishing and promoting folk songs around the world pretty easy. I recorded "Old Paint" in my home studio and put it up in the Folk Den along with a picture of a cowboy on a horse as well as the lyrics and chords, and a story about the song. Every month I promised to put up a "new" traditional song. I haven't missed a month in 13 years.

The Folk Den is a Global Community Service sponsored by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. People tell me they like it and use it for fun and educational purposes.

It has even been adopted by the school system in Kyrgyzstan.

SDT: Americana is a term we hear a lot these days. To me, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* may be the quintessential album of this genre. It was such a contrast from the psychedelia and special effects of the previous album, *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*. Any memories from the *Sweetheart* sessions you wish to share?

RM: Chris Hillman and I had dabbled in country music as early as the *Turn! Turn! Turn!* album but hadn't thought of recording an entire album of it until Gram Parsons came along with his contagious love of that genre.

We went to Nashville and got some of the best musicians there to help us with the sessions. During the day we played poker and sang country songs at the hotel. We were really sincere and treated the music with great respect.

When the album came out it was a disaster both in terms of sales and critical acclaim. The rock fans thought we had gone right wing and the country people felt invaded by hippies. We appeared on the Grand Ole Opry to a chilly reception. At one country radio station, I noticed the *Sweetheart* album cover pinned to a bulletin board. I was elated – until I got closer and saw DO NOT PLAY. THIS IS NOT COUNTRY! written across the cover.

Ironically, 40 years later, *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* is probably the most revered of all Byrds' albums.

SDT: In the Byrds' classic, "So You Want to Be a Rock 'n' Roll Star," you sang about selling your "soul to the company who are waiting there to sell plastic ware." Now, in the Internet age, you are allowed to sell your own ware. How has that experience been for you?

RM: We started April First Productions back in the '80s, mainly for recording demo sessions. After recording with CBS/SONY, Arista and indie Appleseed, we got tired of being victimized by record companies' relatively low percentage.

We decided to record *Limited Edition* and release it through our production company label. It was a great success, recouping the investment within the first month of its release. Since then we have released the four-CD box set *The Folk Den Project, Live From Spain* and *22 Timeless Tracks* with equal success, even turning down recording contracts from two other indie labels, citing that their business model was badly broken.

SDT: You have a well-earned reputation for spotting the latest technology. You were the first person I read about who had a car phone. What new invention are you enjoying these days?

RM: The invention I'm enjoying the most these days isn't really new. It's an electric Vespa-style scooter that I charge with solar panels. I use it for local errands and save about a gallon of gas a day when I'm home.

We have our roof covered with 30 PV panels generating 5.7 kw of electric power. We run washing machines, dishwashers, a microwave, big screen TV, and computers exclusively on solar power now. We're working on getting completely off the grid.

JOHN SEBASTIAN

As with McGuinn's career before the Byrds,

John Sebastian had also been a musician in demand. He was a member of the Even Dozen Jug Band, whose 1964 LP on Elektra Records is something of a collector's item. The group was founded by guitarist Stefan Grossman and guitarist-producer Peter Siegel. Joining Sebastian in the jug band were musicians who would later make major contributions in American music: guitarist Steve Katz (Blues Project; Blood, Sweat and Tears), mandolin strummer David Grisman (Earth Opera), arranger Joshua Rifkin (greatly responsible for the Scott Joplin revival in the '70s), and a beguiling female vocalist named Maria D'Amato, who would later be known as Maria Muldaur of "Midnight at the Oasis" fame.

The Lovin' Spoonful began to gel when Sebastian teamed up with Zal Yanovsky, formerly of the Mugwumps, a quartet that featured Cass Elliott, Denny Doherty, and James Hendrick. Elliott, Doherty, and John and Michelle Phillips became the Mamas and the Papas; the story of the Mugwumps, the Spoonful, McGuinn and Barry McGuire ("Eve of Destruction") became public knowledge when John Phillips composed the autobiographical "Creeque Alley," a huge hit for the Mamas and the Papas.

Bassist Steve Boone and drummer Joe Butler provided the rhythm section for the the Spoonful. "Good Time Music" was an early song the Spoonful performed for Elektra Records, the influential folk label that would embrace the rock counterculture by signing Love and the Doors. The Spoonful's time with Elektra was a fleeting moment; instead, the group signed a major contract with the Kama Sutra label, a subsidiary of MGM Records. For the next three years, the Spoonful were very seldom out of the top 40, with the euphoric "Do You Believe in Magic?" making believers out of American teenagers and, yes, even the Beatles.

One journalist, Percy Keegan, has compared Sebastian's compositions with the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson and the Kinks' Ray Davies. Like Wilson and Davies, the burden of the follow-up hit record was always on

Sebastian's shoulders. And he rose to the challenge, writing songs of grace, wit, and charm, including "You Didn't Have to Be So Nice," "Daydream," "Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind?," "Summer in the City," "Rain on the Roof," "Nashville Cats," and "Darlin' Be Home Soon."

The successful run went up in smoke – literally – when Yanovsky and Boone were busted for pot in a well-publicized Bay Area raid in 1967. Traumatized by his arrest, Yanovsky returned to his native Canada and reinvented himself as a successful restaurateur and award-winning chef. Jerry Yester of the Modern Folk Quartet was brought into replace Yanovsky, but the band, which once sang about "the magic in the music," had lost their magic. Sebastian remained onboard for one "post-Zal" album, *Everything Playing*, before embarking on a long and successful solo career, which included a number one hit (1976) with the Spoonful-sounding "Welcome Back," the theme song to the *Welcome Back Kotter* TV sitcom, which launched the career of John Travolta.

In more recent times, Sebastian has released a well-received series of instructional videos for the budding musician and recorded an CD with old Even Dozen Jug Band pal



John Sebastian

Grisman, now a world-renowned mandolin player. The *San Diego Troubadour* talked with Sebastian by phone from his upstate New York home.

San Diego Troubadour: How's life on the road, touring around the country with Roger McGuinn?

John Sebastian: My time on the road has been great! I've been

able to avoid a lot of air travel; I've been driving from show to show, and I've actually enjoyed the driving. Roger and I probably met for the first time in a club around 1963 or '64. We've been running into each other for years. Touring with Roger McGuinn is an enjoyable experience.



The Lovin' Spoonful, mid-1960s: (clockwise from bottom right) John Sebastian, Zal Yanovsky, Joe Butler, Steve Boone

SDT: I was 11 years old in 1965 when I first heard the opening chords of "Do You Believe in Magic?" over the airwaves of KCBQ-AM in San Diego. I thought it had a terrific guitar sound. I was shocked when I first saw the Lovin' Spoonful on TV and the "guitar"

continued on page 16



Recordially, Lou Curtiss

OF RECORDS AND THE COLLECTING OF THE DAMN THINGS

I've been in the collectible record business for 42 years. I've been a collector myself for nearly 60 years (since I bought a 78 record by Jimmy Rodgers and his Rocking Four on the Chess Label of "Out on the Road" and "The Last Time," which I later found out was recorded in 1951. Muddy Waters played second guitar on it. I bought it for nine cents at the Imperial Beach drug store thinking it was the old blue yodeler Jimmie Rodgers and that my dad would like it. Well, it wasn't. It was Chicago Blues, which he didn't care for, but I did and I was on my way).

It's easier to tell people about my first 45 because they've heard of that one ("Shake, Rattle and Roll by Big Joe Turner), but I don't necessarily want to talk about myself here. I'm talking about record collectors in general, the folklore behind record collecting, and some of the things I've seen in a fairly long time of being around sound of all sorts and kinds.

I guess the first real record collectors I met besides myself and my Dad (who collected mostly old country music on 78s and sort of quit collecting after we came to California in 1951, when I started) were guys like me who were into the new kinds of music coming in at that time, i.e., R&B, city blues, country boogie wogie and honky tonk, and later rockabilly and rock 'n' roll). Nobody I knew was a serious collector like I was. I haunted places like Rattners at Eighth Ave. and Broadway downtown, Two Leslies down at the foot of 5th Ave., Lloyds Music City on lower Broadway downtown. When the great folk scare came along in the late '50s, the place to find folk music was Wright's House of Hi Fi on El Cajon Blvd. Whenever I could, I went out to El Cajon and visited Smokey Rogers places (Rogers Record City or Valley Music). In addition, Arcade Music opened at 7th and F Streets downtown sometime in the late

1950s and shortly after that I met my first real bonified record collector: Ken Sverilas and his buddy Stan Turner.

I'd heard an old blues tune called "James Alley Blues" out at SDSU sung by fellow folkie Wayne Stromberg who knew it was from the singing of Richard Rabbit Brown and I was on the trail. Well, one of the places I checked out was Vintage Music on E Street between 4th and 5th, which is where I met Ken and Stan. They not only looked up "James Alley Blues" and Richard Rabbit Brown in a discography by R.M.W. Dixon and J. Godrich called *Blues and Gospel Records 1902-1943* (the first such old time record listing I'd seen), they also played me some vintage blues, jazz, and western swing from Ken's collection, which to this day remains one of the finest on the West Coast and maybe the country. Stan wasn't a collector of records but rather a listener and documentarian of what he heard. Stan could listen to a trumpet or clarinet solo and tell you who it was 90 percent of the time. He knew more about which old time labels were out there and what was on them than anyone I ever knew. Later, after I had opened my own store and got into the 78 record business, Stan would become an important part of what I knew (he was my teacher, or at least one of them in this record collecting business).

In the late 1960s (shortly before I opened my shop) I went on some extended record collecting hunts with some of the more high profile collectors (Nick Perls, John Fahey, etc.) and although I never got any real rare ones, I was able to view close up how rascally the collecting business can be. I remember Nick going up to a woman in the black part of a small town in Louisiana and first determining if she was church oriented. Finding out that she was, he asked her if she knew about anyone in the area that had any of those sinful Satan-spawned blues and jazz records and when finding out that several people did, he told her he was doing a raid to save these souls

(who owned the records) from the Devil. She gladly led him to several homes where records were removed and some money left. I remember when he left, the woman told him he ought to have some gospel records to listen to and Nick said well okay but he didn't want anything new. Just one of those old ones that maybe you didn't like so much (she hadn't played it a lot so it was in better shape). He got away with two Blind Willie Johnson records along with some fine blues and jazz. I remember questioning his methods and he said, "Most of those people hardly ever play those records anymore, preferring the newer gospel and R&B. They'd have wound up in the trash in a few more years. Sometimes a little deception is needed to save a lot of this good music." I guess he was right. A few more years later Nick started Yazoo records and created a label that he and his successor Richard Nevins have managed to keep around and keep reissuing some of the finest blues and other old time stuff around.

Who collects records today? Well surely rock 'n' roll people do and jazz and blues people do. Other kinds of music seem to run in spurts. Country music has its collector folks but a lot of the time they collect only one artist or one genre, such as honky tonk, rockabilly, the Bakerfield sound, bluegrass, western swing, cowboy and western songs, or old timey. Most of the time they are happy to collect CDs (although with so much stuff unavailable on CD, that's hard to understand). Folk music hasn't really developed a record collector base here in San Diego, which is even harder for me to understand. When the folk music community made up of folks who like to sing and learn both new and old songs, I'd think

that collecting rare and obscure records would be a must. How anyone into British folksongs could not want one or two of those old Riverside Records by A.L. Lloyd or Ewan MacColl is beyond me. Folksong records by Paul Clayton, Ray Bogaslav, Dick Weissman, Logan English, Frank Robinson, Robin Roberts, Hedy West, Hally Wood, or Ed McCurdy are all good sources for songs; tons of international stuff on the Nonesuch Explorer series or Monitor are also good sources for all kinds of stuff. Specialty labels like Folk Legacy (which in its early days recorded a lot of traditional guys like Frank Proffitt, Hobart Smith, Lawrence Older, the Beech Mountain Recordings, and Sara Cleveland), labels that dabbled in folk and old timey like Elektra Records (Jean Ritchie, the String Band Project, the Old Time Banjo Project, Tom Paley and Peggy Seeger, etc.), Vanguard (Almeda Riddle, Mike Seeger, and Hedy West), Prestige (Bill Keith and Jim Rooney, the Charles River Valley Boys, Bonnie Dobson, Jean Ritchie, Scrapper Blackwell, Baby Tate, etc.), Davis Unlimited (Bill Cox, Clark Kessinger, the Perrfy County Music Makers, etc.). Elektra and Vanguard have concentrated more on their pop oriented artists, Prestige on its blues and jazz, Folk Legacy on mostly modern day folksingers, and Davis Unlimited went out of business. Many of those LPs are still out there to be had. Some may be reissues but not all of them. The originals have to be found and collected. That's what I do and what a lot of other record collectors do. You should be doing it, too.

I'm leaving out other collector folks. There are those who collect movie soundtracks, original casts of shows (Broadway and otherwise),



Photo: Bill Richardson
Lou Curtiss

Vaudeville and old time show business, Celtic music of all sorts and kinds, novelty songs and all kinds of pop vocals. Then there are folks who collect records because pretty girls are on the cover, or because weird stuff is happening on the cover, or because a famous artist did the art work on the cover, or because you can dance to it (I'll give it a four). There's no good reason not to be a record collector (people that don't listen to music really irritate me). People that make a point of collecting only one thing are kind of sad. I remember a person who used to come into my store who collected nothing but Patula Clark and he had everything the woman did, yet he'd still come around trying to find something by her. I'd try to turn him on to other British ladies like Cilla Black or Dusty Springfield or even Gracie Fields, Elsie Rudolph, or Vera Lynn, but he wasn't having any. It was Patula or nothing. I lost track of him, but I've met others like him and they are always kind of sad.

I've always told people to go see or listen to some kind of music they've never seen or heard before because they might find that they like it.

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The Magic and Mystery of Slide Guitar



by Andy Robinson

I think slide guitar is one of the most expressive, emotional-sounding ways to make music. Slide playing involves a guitarist sliding a bar of glass or steel or some other smooth material over the strings of a guitar with the hand ordinarily used to fret the notes. Many people assume this technique originated with the blues, and they are partially correct. "Bottleneck" playing was indeed born in the American South, but the slide technique itself predates American musical forms considerably. I learned this at the Music of Making Music's excellent exhibit, *The Magic and Mystery of Slide Guitar*.

In fact, I'm jotting notes for this article at the Museum of Making Music while enjoying a concert of classical Indian music, which is part of a special series running concurrently with the exhibit. Master musician N. Ravikiran is coaxing quavering moans and lightning-fast ululations from a *navachitravina*, a modern-day version of a 2,000-year-old slide instrument from India called the *chitravina*. The name *chitravina* means block instrument, in reference to the ebony block used for a slide. Before launching into his current number, Ravikiran explained to us that he uses a block of teflon instead, a material he prefers for its requisite slipperiness.

The sound is mesmerizing, and, interestingly enough, despite the unusual time signatures and relatively unfamiliar musical context, some of Ravikiran's licks occasionally sound a bit like... the blues! This is apropos, since the concert series and exhibit are both meant to reflect the musical, historical, and cultural connections among slide players around the world. Besides Ravikiran, the eclectic concert roster has already included noted rock players David Lindley and Sonny Landreth as well as one of traditional music's finest interpreters, Martin Simpson. Over the next few months, the museum will present concerts by the remarkably diverse world music/blues player Bob Brozman in addition to pedal steel/Dobro player extraordinaire Cindy Cashdollar and blues star Freddie Roulette, with "avant guitarist" Henry Kaiser and friends sitting in.

Museum director Carolyn Grant says that besides appearing in concert, Henry Kaiser and David Lindley have both played important roles in the

exhibit's success. "This is a one-of-a-kind exhibit, thanks to their help. David Lindley opened a lot of doors, enabling us to borrow rare and historically significant instruments from people's private collections, and Henry Kaiser produced the museum's first-ever compilation CD, a fantastic collection of slide music created by the artists in our concert series."

The scope of the exhibit is impressive and all encompassing. A video running on a flat-screen monitor just inside the museum entrance shows musicians performing in a wide range of genres – from blues, jazz, rock, western swing, and bluegrass to folk, sacred, and progressive music. You'll see well-known players, such as Bonnie Raitt and Ben Harper, but you'll also be introduced to a few obscure ones, including one fellow who wails his way through a rollicking good-time tune holding his slide of choice – a spoon – in his mouth.

Of course, guitars are the main focus of the exhibit, and you'll see plenty of them, including teardrop-shaped Weissenborn lap guitars made of rare Hawaiian koa wood. Approximately 5,000 Weissenborn lap-style acoustics

were built in the 1920s, and no one really knows how many are still in existence today. With their earthy tone, eye-catching designs, and resonant "hollow-arm" necks, Weissenborns are considered a collector's "dream guitar."

Weissenborn popularized the concept of expanding the sound chamber of a lap guitar by building out its neck, but the idea may have been patterned after the harp guitars created by Norwegian-born Chris J. Knutsen (1862-1930). Some of Knutsen's instruments are also on display in the exhibit, and it is fascinating to learn about the similarities and differences between the two builders' work and career trajectories.

The slide exhibit offers some curiosities, such as the double-necked Electric Special lap guitar, built by W.G. Greenfield of Alberta, Canada, in 1926. I won't spoil the surprise, but I will tell you that the deep-chambered Electric Special not only had a tremendous sound, it also provided what, at the time, passed for great special effects.

One particularly interesting graphic tells the story of Joseph Kekuku (1872-1934). According to legend, Kekuku invented Hawaiian steel guitar. It is likely that he was influenced by Japanese and Indian musicians who traveled to Hawaii, playing their exotic instruments with cylindrical tubes.

The museum has a proper section devoted to bottleneck style, in which a player holds the guitar upright and wears a slide on a finger of his fretting hand. Various materials are used for the slide, but the necks of glass bottles were probably handiest at the time. Many of the Mississippi Delta's most revered bottleneck players probably learned their first licks on a homemade, one-string instrument called a "diddly bow," and you can see a photograph of a diddly bow at the museum.

Country pickers are well represented in the exhibit. The pedal steel guitar, with its multi-neck variations designed

to give a player a wide range of tuning and chordal possibilities, is given its own section. There are also National and Dobro resonator guitars, a splendid group of art deco-looking Gibson lap steels, a couple of C.F. Martin's Hawaiian models, and various instruments built by other makers who hopped on board the huge Hawaiian music craze sparked by live performances at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915.

If there is anything slightly disappointing about *The Magic and Mystery of Slide Guitar* (besides there being no mention of George Harrison's super-melodic slide playing!) it's that, for practical reasons, the different installments are spread throughout the museum rather than being centralized in one room. This is a very minor quibble, though, because you'll love meandering through the entire museum, checking out all the exhibits. Give yourself plenty of time, especially if you intend to catch one of the evening concerts, because the museum won't be open after the concert ends.

Magic and mystery, indeed. The slide guitar exhibit, the concert series, and the CD, all evince some very real magic – that of human beings in diverse cultures and widespread geographic locations who are thoroughly connected by the powerful thread of musical inspiration. Be sure to pick up a copy of the compilation CD while you're there. Special kudos must go to Henry Kaiser for producing this terrific CD. It's an enjoyable, eclectic sampler of music by some of today's finest slide players.

The Magic and Mystery of Slide Guitar and its concert series run through March 2009. Museum admission is \$5 for adults; \$3 for seniors, students and active military. Concert tickets are \$20 (\$15 for museum members) and include museum admission. Visit www.museumofmakingmusic.org for more information.



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Jim Hinton alongside the River Liffey in Dublin

Jim Hinton: This Music Veteran Is as Vibrant as Ever

mix when he performs, but he does so much so well that he hates to fixate completely on any one thing unless the situation calls for it.

"I made a living at playing folk music for over 30 years and it was kind of exhausting playing in Irish pubs. It was great in that I was able to feed myself and play great music, but at the same time the work involved was [often late night and] exhausting. Ultimately, when I had a chance to relax a little bit from it and get quiet inside, the basic inspiration returned. Folk music has a quality to it that is both conversational and connecting. It is not all about flash and technique. It is about people talking in a musical way about the important things in their lives."

The inspiration that Hinton refers to is evident on *Things I've Always Known*. Ten of the 12 songs on it are originals and all of them display very solid songwriting skills. His deep soothing voice is somewhat reminiscent of another favorite of mine, Cat Stevens. And something about his songs take me back to the '60s and the acoustic guitar songs of Donovan.

"I don't really think that I sound like the people that I admire," Hinton said. "But there were times when I wanted to. I've been steeped in all the American folk influences from the blues to folk ballads and the pop folk music from the Kingston Trio on through Bob Dylan and others. But I have also added to it that Celtic perspective and the kind of storytelling that comes from the Irish ballads."

What he has is a style that draws from many sources and one that is uniquely his own. His gentle warmth shines through in the current of optimism running through his songs.

"There is always a story unfolding and while it will often take you to some difficult places, it is a journey that we need to make and one that will [eventually] take us to a good place."

Hinton has been involved in Rathburn's Folkey Monkey presentations on several occasions, both as a guest artist and as a guest host. He loves the concept.

"Presenting music in that sort of way makes every night something special. Not only is there a different guest artist each night, but there is a different theme. You've got something to talk about. The conversation that goes on is sometimes as informative as the music. It is a chance for people to share what is really special to them. I am really happy that Joe has been successful in promoting it and making it work. The array of people that he gets there is just phenomenal."

In addition to Milano's, Hinton regularly appears at Spanish Village in Balboa Park. In the past he has frequented Cosmos Coffee Cafe in La Mesa, Camelot Inn in San Marcos, and Twiggs in University Heights. He has gotten away from performing in pubs and focuses now primarily on coffee houses. You will also find him frequently doing benefits. For seven years he served as a choir director at a Presbyterian church. Through it he became involved in performing for the benefit of the AIDS Chaplaincy Fund. One who has always sought out new ways to help, Hinton has also performed at various senior homes over the years and at benefits for kids.

Hinton's trip to Ireland last summer inspired him to produce the aforementioned soon to be released CD of Irish music.

"We had a wonderful trip to Ireland last summer and I am trying to channel that experience into this CD. I have been working on it in every spare moment and I am looking forward to having it released. I hope to have it out in the next couple of weeks or at least by the start of the new year."

While the songs will be largely familiar to fans of Celtic music, Hinton's take on them will be unique. A second CD is in the works as well.

"I am always writing, so this one will be more of the same type of songs included on *Things I've Always Known*. When I write I try to draw upon my own experience. These are songs that talk about the things that I have been through. I take a humorous look at things with some of them."

Hinton previewed some of these new songs at Milano's and one of them, "The Rare Old Beatles Times," made a huge impression on this baby boomer.

"I think I was in seventh grade when the Beatles first came out and I was in college when they split up. That was such a profound part of my life."

Reflecting back over his long and successful career he has a lot of great memories and very few complaints.

"So many people look back at our generation and see only the things that were going wrong, but there was a lot going right." (Hinton brings this out in his eloquent song "Hippies.") "I think we have to value our experience in this life and not deny it. We need to embrace these times that we have been through and connect with the people and the experience. Life comes at you fast and age gives you the perspective to look back and see what was of value with the people you met and the experiences that you had. I think my greatest satisfaction is the connections I have made with people. Whenever you feel like you have been able to bring some of the magic that music can do into someone's life and bring them something valuable, it is a huge satisfaction. As for frustrations, there was a lot that I wanted to accomplish that I didn't. I should have made some different decisions at certain points in time, but the frustrations don't amount to much compared to the satisfaction. [Performing and writing music] is a wonderful thing to do with your life."

For additional information about upcoming performances and CD release dates please visit: www.jimhinton.com

by John Philip Wylie

Don't you just love it when a friend turns you on to a talented performer? Such was the case last month when Troubadour publisher Liz Abbott offered me the opportunity to do a feature on veteran singer/songwriter Jim Hinton. While Hinton has been performing in pubs and coffeehouses since the '60s, his November sixth gig at Milano Coffee Co. provided me my initial introduction to his music. That splendid Thursday night guest artist performance as part of Joe Rathburn's ongoing Folkey Monkey series marked my first Hinton show. It won't be my last.

In Hinton and Rathburn the audience of about 25 benefited from a combined 80 years of songwriting experience. Selecting the theme of storytelling songs, the pair traded songs and stories back and forth, which showcased their individual songwriting talents. Hinton played several songs from his excellent recent CD, *Things I've Always Known*. Among the most notable were the reflective "Hippies," "Highway to Taos," and "Suburban Blues," Rathburn countered with a combination of originals and covers. He created one of the evening's high points with his poignant Katrina Trilogy, three recent songs that are among his very finest.

I was eager to accept this assignment when I learned that Hinton had a reputation for performing Irish music. I was not disappointed when he trotted out Celtic songs such as "Donegal Danny Was Here" and "The Frog Song" as well as another one with bawdy lyrics whose title I didn't quite catch. His treatment of the traditional Irish songs "Spancil Hill" and "Carrick Fergus" from his aforementioned album further cemented his status as a gifted interpreter of Celtic music. It turns out that performing

Celtic music is just one of the many things Jim Hinton does well. Such versatility is a real asset.

"What got me started back in the '60s was an overwhelming connectedness that I felt with music," Hinton said in a recent phone interview. "Through all sorts of different career changes and phases, that has never changed. It has always been the most vital thing in my life. Staying interested leads you to persist and it is important to stay true to your feelings."

Like many songwriters of the time, he was influenced by '60s icons Bob Dylan and Simon and Garfunkel. He often covered their songs when he wasn't trying out his own early compositions. Another favorite was the Edinburgh-based Incredible String Band.

"They were not nearly as well known, but they were a really eclectic group. I liked their songwriting and their poetic style. One of their members, Robin Williamson, ended up moving to California in the '70s. I saw him numerous times and I even ended up opening for him a few times after I got to know him," Hinton said.

Around the same time he found himself opening for such well-known acts as Linda Ronstadt, Dave Bromberg, and Leo Kottke. By the mid-'70s Hinton was supporting himself in pubs playing primarily Irish music.

"I have always had a sense for Celtic music since I do have some Irish ancestry in my family. I read a book in high school called *The Crock of Gold* by the Irish writer James Stevens and that really stimulated my interest in all things Irish."

Hinton hasn't gotten it out of his system to this day. His next CD, expected to be released within the next few months, will be filled entirely with Celtic music. His shows generally include a few Irish songs in the

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Meet the Fiddle: Jamming in a Jiffy

by Paul Hormick

If you're an aspiring Isaac Stern or feel that, despite being daunted by music teachers and obscure music instruction books, you want to release your inner Paganini, or even if your four-year-old child shows some interest in the violin, Celia Lawley has the program to jumpstart things in a jiffy. She promises, "In my 'Meet the Fiddle' program I will teach people to play a tune on the violin 15 minutes."

Fifteen minutes? Just like that? Learning a song in less time than it takes to boil an egg may sound too good to be true, the musical equivalent of a sub prime loan, but Lawley knows a thing or two about music, quite a bit about the fiddle, and has been teaching music for years.

A graduate of USC's Thornton School of Music, where she studied with Alice Shoenfield and earned her degree in violin performance, Lawley has spent a lifetime as a violinist and musical instructor. Under her umbrella organization called High Energy Productions, Lawley performs in ensembles of almost any musical style in which one might fit a fiddle. The bands range from rock 'n' roll, to zydeco, to blues, and bluegrass, with a number of other styles in between. She often performs a one-woman musical, *Gold Hill*, which is based on the story of our mountain town Julian's gold rush. During the

musical she sings and plays eight different instruments.

Lawley came up with the Meet the Fiddle program because she recognized that people desire to have to an experience with an instrument. Their immediate concern isn't learning scales or notes on a page, but to hear a tune when they put their fingers on a piano keyboard or have a chance to pick up a violin. "When I perform, the number one question I get is 'Can I play your instrument?' The question always comes from children, although there are a lot of adults who are thinking the same thing but aren't forthcoming enough to come out and say it," she says. The Meet the Fiddle programs are likewise intended for children, but all ages are encouraged to participate. The programs are scheduled at various local libraries and at People's Organic Food Market in Ocean Beach.

In each session five or six individuals will pluck and bow on fiddles donated by Hammond Ashley, the local violin shop where Lawley teaches. Those wishing to take part should sign up early, as time is limited. Lawley estimates that she will be able to teach about 20 people in an hour.

Lawley calls her teaching style the old school method, where a student takes one lesson a week, then practices in his room by himself, what Lawley calls "focus isolation." It removes the musical student from interacting with others who are making music. This approach stands in contrast to the way that societies empha-

sizing music and musicality initiate their children into playing an instrument.

Lawley gives the example of the Gypsies, who give their children small pieces of wood so they can pretend that they are making music along with their elders as family, friends, and neighbors play their horas and waltzes.

Lawley bases her approach to instruction, which she calls the Progressive Method, on this more traditional process of absorption. She says, "What I try to do with the Progressive Method is to create an environment in which it's more like learning music when someone grows up in a musical family." Although most of her years of classical music study were in the "focus isolation" approach, she loved the Suzuki method, which started her life in music when she was a small child. Lawley incorporates some of the Suzuki approach in her Progressive Method. The Meet the Fiddle Program is a streamlined version of the Progressive Method.

And for Lawley, music is only the starting point. "What I do is not about the music. It's about making a better world," she says. "With my music I try to foster community. I try to bring about positive social change." Lawley believes that creativity and music decrease the amount of violence in a society. And her efforts to help people play music and release their creativity is her contribution to making the world a better, more peaceful place.

Photo: Joy Elizabeth Effie



Celia Lawley teaches children at the Performance Academy

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The Spreckels Organ Pavillion

History and Harmony in Balboa Park

by Paul Hormick

Sunday afternoons in Balboa Park have many familiar sights and sounds. Psychics foretell the prospects of love and fortune, while buskers play saxophones and guitars behind the upturned hats that collect their tips. Folks stop for photographs and cyclists wheel around the crowds. And at two o'clock the great pipes ring out "Oh Beautiful for Spacious Skies..." It's another afternoon concert at the Spreckels Organ Pavilion.

Perhaps it's an oversight of the companies that print the tourist brochures for San Diego, or maybe it's the tendency of San Diegans to refrain from bragging much about their hometown. Why ever it may be, it's not common knowledge that the Spreckels Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park holds the largest outdoor pipe organ in the world. That's right, the largest outdoor pipe organ in the world. There is another organ in an open-air amphitheater in upstate New York that is actually larger, but it has a roof. For Spreckels, the organ, organist, and audience are all outside. The pipes, however, are housed in the building at the center of the colonnade. They range in size from that of a pencil to a colossus that stands 32 feet tall. There are 4,530 pipes in all.

Needless to say, all those pipes can generate a lot of volume. With the bellows really pumping (the organ version of going up to 11) the buskers in the park sometimes have to compete with the organ's afternoon program of Bach and Gershwin. On quiet days some of the forté passages can even be heard beyond the boundaries of the park.

The concerts are held every Sunday at two in the afternoon and are jointly sponsored by the Spreckels Organ Society and the city's Parks and Recreation Department. As was mentioned earlier, every concert begins with "America the Beautiful." "The Star Spangled Banner" ends each concert. The tradition of performing the patriotic tunes at the organ concerts goes back to 1917, when the United States entered World War I.

The rest of the concert program can be just about anything. Carol Williams, artistic director of the Spreckels Organ Society and the organist who performs the Sunday concerts, says, "These are free concerts in the park, so I'll try to play music that most people know and stay away from way out music. You don't want to play compositions that are too long either. There are often a lot of tourists who are just strolling through; they're not going to want to sit for a long time."

Williams notes that the tunes the audiences respond to will be repeated in future programs. Among the most popular tunes are Scott Joplin's rags and the marches of John Philip Sousa. "Of course I have to keep things fresh for myself as well and play different music," says Williams. "Playing the same music is sort of like eating the same food all the time. You need to give yourself a little variety." She keeps a musicians' calendar that notes the birthdays of great composers, play-

ing their music on a Sunday close to their birthdays.

Williams has been the organist and artistic director since 2001. Originally from Wales, she played the piano at the age of five and read music before she could read schoolbooks. "When I was seven years old I decided that I wanted to be a concert performer," she says. "I'm lucky like that, knowing so well what I wanted to do. It made overcoming hurdles and obstacles a lot easier." Williams fell in love with the organ when her aunt bought a Hammond organ, and she spent much of her youth playing jazz organ. She studied at the prestigious Royal Academy of Music and holds a doctorate in musical arts from the Manhattan School of music.

Williams did not want to be a church organist, so she is pleased to be performing in the park. Besides the Sunday afternoon performances, her schedule includes more than 75 concerts a year on organs all over the



Artistic director and organist, Carol Williams

world. Her husband, Kerry Bell, is a videographer, and the couple has produced a series of DVDs in which they take viewers on tours of the world's most famous organs. "Each organ is different," says Williams. "Some have two manuals, others will have as many as five. And you have to adjust your playing to the acoustics of each hall or church."

Although the organ faces north to protect it from the sun and the elements, weather does affect its performance. Williams says, "The Santa Anas can affect the intonation. And very cold weather will send the instrument out of tune as well." Overall, her complaints are few. "Because the weather here is so mild, if you're going to have an outdoor organ, San Diego is the ideal place for one."

Cold weather can affect the performer as well as the instrument with stiffening joints and cramping muscles. Williams relies an exercise regime to combat the cold. "When it's chilly, I do a lot of working out, mostly cardio exercises to increase circulation," she says. "The Monday night performances can be really chilly and I'll make sure to do some cardio work on the day of the performance."

Besides her hands, an organist also engages her feet to play the keyboard of pedals at the bottom of the organ. "I wear ballet shoes when I perform. My feet need to be as supple as my hands," says Williams. During some compositions or passages Williams



The Spreckels Organ Pavilion in Balboa Park

will appear to be waltzing or dancing a gig as her feet press the organ pedals. Her fancy footwork can be seen on her website, <http://melcot.com/> in which her toes and heels dance over the pedals of the organ at West Point's Cadet Chapel in a performance of "Flight of the Bumblebee."

Although it was built as part of the 1914 Panama-California Exposition, the organ pavilion does not share the Churrigueresque architecture of the rest of Balboa Park. Rather, the pavilion's architect, Harrison Albright, chose to build the pavilion in an Italian Revival motif, a style that was popular during the late Victorian era.

Besides the Sunday organ concerts, the pavilion is also used for other musical events. Summer concerts feature everything from big band, to salsa, to mandolin orchestras. In the days before the Sports Arena and Coors Amphitheater, the pavilion was used as a public event area. Social progressive William Jennings Bryan spoke there. After they had both left office, presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft addressed crowds there as well. After the discovery of relativity brought him international fame, Albert Einstein appeared at the pavilion and spoke of peace and progress.

More than a century ago, San Diego civic leaders had been advocating for the construction of a music pavilion and an organ in Balboa Park. The 1915 exposition gave them the opportunity to realize their project. San Diego's wealthiest businessman, John D. Spreckels, financed the pavilion's construction. The organ cost him \$33,500, and he paid an additional \$66,500 for the construction of the pavilion. In today's dollars that total of \$100,000 would come out to around \$2.1 million.

Born in South Carolina seven years before the breakout of the Civil War, John D. Spreckels was the eldest of eleven children born to the sugar magnate Claus Spreckels. Almost a generation removed from the great titans of American industry, 20 years younger than Andrew Carnegie and 13 years younger than the other John D., Rockefeller, Spreckels was still of the

age of tycoons and top hats.

He grew up in San Francisco, but moved to San Diego after the great earthquake devastated the city by the bay in 1906. Inheriting a great deal of wealth from his father's sugar business, the young Spreckels branched out into other money-making ventures, including newspapers and railroads. He owned the *San Diego Union* and bought the city's trolley system, which he modernized from horse to electric power. He also owned the San Diego and Arizona Railway Company and the Coronado and San Diego Ferry. It's difficult to imagine anyone similarly wielding as much financial and political power in one city today.

A native of Philadelphia, the pavilion's architect Harrison Albright moved to West Virginia, where he was named the official state architect. His impressive structures served and still serve as handsome focal points for the small cities and towns of the Mountain State. Built in 1902, the 200-foot diameter steel and glass

dome he designed for the West Baden Springs Hotel in Indiana remained the largest free-spanning dome in America until the construction of the Houston Astrodome in 1964.

Albright moved to Southern California. After his successful designs for the San Diego Hotel, Spreckels Theatre Building, the U.S. Grant Hotel, and the Spreckels mansion, he was chosen to design the organ pavilion. Architecture critics universally panned the pavilion at the time, pointing out the disparity of the design with the rest of the exposition. Many simply dismissed the structure as "too ornate." Today, most folks don't seem to care or notice that the pavilion is unlike the rest of Balboa Park. When the organ is quiet and there are no other concerts, people mill around and enjoy the structure's ornate nymphs and filigree. It is one of the most popular settings for photographers to pose brides and grooms for their wedding pictures.

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Story & photos by Chuck Schiele

When the assignment of covering Gilbert Castellanos came up as a notion with this publication, I grabbed it. I told Liz, "Let me do this one, I want it."

A few days later my band, the Grams, were playing downtown at a jazz festival. Gilbert was playing next door at the Onyx room. I remember whacking Craig [Yerkes] (who, among other things, was my jazz fan buddy...) on the arm at break time, saying, "Gilbert's next door; let's run over there and check him out." We did and I remember clearly how much fun we had in those several available moments. Our own set breaks were a little longer than usual that particular day. Knowing I had this future assignment, I introduced myself to Gilbert, stating my *Troubadour* mission. That was in March.

We caught up a few weeks ago at a coffee shop in Ocean Beach on a typically gorgeous day. The tourists had gone home and we had the neighborhood seemingly to ourselves with a few other locals. Ocean Beach is an extremely charming paradise on days like this – free of the rap that comes along with visitors from the outside.

We were comfortable in the low-key environment of the Jungle Java patio. I don't ever remember *starting* the interview; rather, we simply began *visiting* and talking as soon as we shook hands. I remember that the manner in which we conversed was along the same lines of what a *jam* is. After all, as a six-year-old boy explained, upon witnessing jazz for the first time, "It's like the instruments are all talking to each other."

Our chat was just like that. Our conversation didn't wander as much as many interviews do. And there was no uncomfortable dead space, trying to figure out what to say. We just hit it and then went with it, and I found that our conversation was "advancing" rather than wandering. I received this opportunity as a blessing – *my jam* with Gilbert.

I considered this to be special, since I have enormous respect for his art and the work ethic that goes into that art. I privately consider Gilbert to be a future jazz Hall of Famer.

Much of what we talked about I will keep as *my gift* from the experience because it was a special coffee chat for me. Therefore I scroll down to this point in our conversation.... "uh, one, two, three, fo..."

Gilbert is explaining how his new project begins with traditional Mexican folk music – like Folklorio. On that basis, his compositions expand to include world music ideas and classical traditions with a heavy dose of bop. I'm talking with an inventor!

Chuck Schiele: How did you begin in music? Tell me a story.

Gilbert Castellanos: We were still living

Guadalajara, Mexico. I started playing when I was six years old; I didn't have much of a social life because my father had me practicing three hours every day. He was a musician, too, and therefore very encouraging about playing. No baseball. No hide and seek with the other kids. By the time I was done practicing on any given day, it was too late to go out and play with friends. And he leaned on me about it, too. He was generally listening in from the other room as he went about his day. For instance, if I started to play something I had just played yesterday, he'd stick his head in the room and say something like, "No, no, no. You played that yesterday. Play something else, now."

CS: I suppose that makes him your first mentor in music.

GC: Yes, among other things.

CS: He must be very happy and proud to see how that factored into your future.

GC: Yes.

CS: How 'bout you? Are you happy that you supplanted the little league experiences with a disciplined piano practice schedule?

GC: Yes, I am very happy. I am fortunate.

CS: Who are some of the other mentors you worked with along the way.

GC: Dizzy Gillespie was probably my biggest influence, because he was responsible for me going to college to pursue music.

CS: Wow. What a thing to be able to say. Was he a nice man?

GC: Very. Another great influence, John Clayton, pushed me to become a better a person – not only on the music side, but also on the business end. He taught me to show respect to all musicians, regardless of level. Also, he preached that performing on stage is like going to church. It is the "altar of joy."

CS: Tell me an example of how this factors into your performance.

GC: First thing we do is to play every day regardless of whether we're healthy or down with a flu. Whatever. I put my hands on my instrument every day without fail. So does my band. If I miss a day of practice, I can tell. Two days and my band can tell. Three days and the audience can. One day while I was playing with Dizzy, he stopped the take. And in front of the whole band he looked at me and said, "You didn't practice yesterday, did you?" And gave me a short lecture on the subject. He was right, and I haven't missed a day since then.

CS: Inspiring....

GC: This is also why I always insist on my band wearing suits, looking sharp. It's a matter of respect for the idea that the stage is our "altar." I remember times when the guys in my band would say, "Well, we play in jeans and flip-flops on so-and-so's gig..." I simply explained how I feel about what I learned from John. This is why we wear suits. Respect for

THE PAST, PRESENCE GILBERT CASTELLANOS A LEGACY

the privilege. This is my altar.

CS: What does jazz mean to you?

GC: Life.

CS: I've noticed over the years that some players play music in a sort of "spectator" fashion, in that they work and become comfortable and complacent within their boundaries with no intention of seriously exploring what's outside of these boundaries. For instance, I know many musicians who've played for years but still don't know what it means to sing a "third." It's not the third that kills me, it's the lack of intention that does; meanwhile, they are usually the ones closing the bar, preferring the fantasy of the rockstar lifestyle. Then there are those musicians that wake up in the key of Dm and it drives them crazy until they get up and sort it out. Between your facility for music and your inventiveness about it, you, Mr. Gilbert, strike me as very much the latter – verified by what you've told me so far. But this is only my impression from across the city. In fact, you appear to approach jazz with a responsibility for it, and its future, which is entirely refreshing to me. How do you see your role as a jazz musician? What's your purpose? How do you fit in?

Gilbert smiles slyly and takes a slow swig of his coffee, looking me straight in the eye, probably thinking about what he'll gracefully exclude in his forthcoming answer. After a few moments....

GC: I am just a messenger of the music. I have to continue the tradition of America's classical music: jazz. I respectfully incorporate the tradition – the roots – into my playing, along with fresh new ideas to keep the music moving forward.

CS: Hmm. Pretty modest for a man who will be remembered as a pioneer of jazz and of music in general.

Gilbert cracks an involuntary giggle, amused with my quip.

GC: I don't know about that, but, this is just what I choose to do.

But, his eyes lit up with the prospect of this eventuality.

CS: If somebody were new to jazz, such as a kid who listens to Britney Spears and singing boy bands, what would you suggest as a first album as a means of introduction to jazz?

GC: Miles Davis' *Kind of Blue*...

CS: Woah! That would be my first choice, too.

GC: John Coltrane's *Giant Steps* and Lee Morgan's *The Sidewinder*.

CS: Where do you mine or find your inspiration as a composer?

GC: From everyday life experiences. And even sometimes from my dreams. It's out there. Some of it comes to me. I do that. And therefore, I am just the messenger.

CS: I notice that some of your compositions are tightly written, meaning that you and your band play a lot of heads and kicks *together*, and then you let 'em go. Describe how you make this work and please explain the criteria and

what concerns you regarding this balance between the two approaches.

GC: Everything is written out very clearly, and my band at this point knows what to expect from my original compositions. This is the beauty of having an organization that works together all the time.

Man, did that ever strike a chord in me!

CS: What do you think about the state of jazz right now?

GC: It definitely has improved over the past 10 years, and I have noticed a younger listening audience attending live jazz concerts. This is exactly what we need.

CS: Amen. What are your thoughts on jazz in San Diego and our music scene in general?

Without hesitation or forethought, Gilbert responds with:

GC: San Diego is very lucky to have a thriving jazz scene, mainly because we have an excellent resource for *our* music and community...

I'm referring to KSDS and other jazz supporters.

There are also many world-class musicians that call San Diego home.

CS: You've been around the block, around the world – best jazz town in your opinion?

GC: New York is the mecca for jazz and any other art form.

We chat for a while about the arts in general, since we seem to share the same general subscriptions for it and what it means to both of us. The topic of the technical revolution as applied to the arts comes up and we both concur that we are witnessing in a new "renaissance." Namely the computer's influence on the arts – the new "brush" or "hammer," so to speak.

CS: What are your thoughts on the computer's – or technology in general – effect on music.

GC: I have mixed feelings, good and bad. It's good because it facilitates the arts by new means and opportunities. I don't always like the mechanical "scrub" that can allow a band to sound fantastic on a recording. You go to see them live, and then it's a different thing altogether.

CS: I always ask this because it's so much fun: what is the craziest, weirdest story you've witnessed from the stage? You know, like the time some crazy chick dressed in aluminum foil head-butted the bass player and stole his drink....

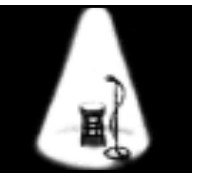
He thinks for a second while observing the young lady at the table next to us, working on some sort of art project.

GC: I was playing a gig with my group in Los Angeles, and Les McCann came in to hear the group. He sat close to the bandstand and kindly asked a couple to keep their conversations down. Unfortunately, they kept talking, so he screamed at them to "shut the f@*& up," the couple immediately got up and left the club. I ended up recording with McCann a couple of weeks later...

CS: I would have paid money to witness that.



Gilbert Castellanos and Chuck Schiele



CE, AND FUTURE OF ASTELLANOS GEND UNDERWAY



musicians in our midst. And it's improving with incredible momentum because of guys like Gilbert. I'm not saying this as a fan. I am saying this because it's not just exciting and important to the fabric of the culture in our city – it's also GOOD FOR YOU to see the real deal at such a high level of brilliance. It's right here in front of you. And I'm not just talking about Gilbert, specifically, even though his Wynton story inspires me to cheer you listeners on to see a show. We San Diegans have dozens and dozens of truly great jazz musicians right here in our back yard. There are so many folks out there who complain that we have a sub-par music scene. I wholeheartedly disagree. Get out there. I sure would hate for you to miss it.

CS: Are you going to take Wynton up on the offer?

GC: No. I live here and love it. I go to New York a lot anyway. And even Wynton tours a lot, so it makes sense to live here and tour there.

CS: What's your ax?

GC: My trumpet is a custom Paris Selmer 80J. My flugelhorn is a Flip Oaks Wild Thing, which I'm proud to play because it was made by a local in Oceanside.

CS: Cool. My own dad used to work with Flip back in the day. I've never met him, actually, but used to answer the phone when he'd call my pop about gig stuff. Ironically, I met him the same night we came down to see you at the Onyx. After your show, we stopped at Croce's to see Shep Meyers [another GREAT jazz treasure in San Diego and close friend of my pop]. On his break he introduced me to his flugelhorn player, Flip Oakes. How serendipitous.

GC: Small world.

CS: What would be your advice to budding musicians?

GC: Believe in yourself, practice, and be prepared to dedicate your entire life to the music.

CS: Is there a question I should ask that I haven't?

GC: What is the etiquette of listening to live music?

I ask it.

GC: If you are coming out to listen to live music, expect to do just that – listen and respect the artist[s].

CS: You refer to the Onyx Room as your "home." Why?

GC: Come down and experience it first hand. It will be our jazz jam's eighth year anniversary on December 2. You wanna sit in?

CS: I'd love to, but no, I'm a better jazz fan than a player.

Right here, he encourages me, anyway, innately demonstrating his respect for musicians of all levels. Using his "respect the altar" analogy, I explain to Gilbert that to me, jazz is the supreme path to musical enlightenment above all the other music forms. My respect for this means that I should prepare for that eventual baptism. I've been visiting jazz "real books" more and more ever since.

CS: What do you listen to when it's not jazz?

GC: I am open to all types of good music. I enjoy listening to soundtracks in my record collection. Also, my girlfriend has been turning me on to some great classical music.

We've been blabbing for an hour and a half by now. And with that, we look at our watches. We down the last gulp of our now-cooled coffees, because it's almost 3pm, and we both have to get to the rest of the day. We say hello to the art project girl at the next table, curious about what she's been working on. While walking back to our cars along Newport Avenue I couldn't help but think how Gilbert's "person" is of the same quality as his music. He's a class act just as a guy. He is about his music, more than his music is about him. (This to me shines like a bright beacon in the otherwise darker world of "bogus" celebrity.) And this reminds me how the yin and yang of this is why successful people are so successful.

GC: I've played on 50-something recordings, from rappers, to jazzers, to classical. This includes artist releases and things like movie soundtrack work.

And then, Gilbert tells me how his buddy Wynton Marsalis, who lives in New York City, routinely encourages him to move to Manhattan. If I understand this right, Wynton asked Gilbert why he doesn't move there. Gilbert's reply was, "I'm happy in San Diego and besides, I don't have a job in NYC." Wynton's reply to that was a succinct, "Yes, you do." (meaning Gilbert can play on Wynton's gig, with equal billing, any ol' day of the week.)

At this point in my interview, I am prompted to take a sidebar and address YOU, the reader. We have a great, GREAT music scene with world-class



I take a moment (a whole-note rest) to think about what it's like to have Les McCann stick up for you at your gig.

CS: Ummmm, you have an impressive list of friends, sir. Who else have you met or worked with along the way?

GC: Dizzy Gillespie, Horace Silver, Benny Golson, Charles McPherson, Curtis Fuller, Wynton Marsalis, Nancy Wilson, Joe Henderson, Poncho Sanchez, Natalie Cole, Diana Krall, and others...

Author's note: This is a short answer; emblematic of Gilbert's modesty. Google Gilbert Castellanos for the complete version.

CS: You're probably on your way to playing on everybody's stuff by now.



Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden

BLUEGRASS HOLIDAY SHOPPING

Looking for that great bluegrass holiday gift, or just wondering where to get bluegrass instruments and supplies? As the holidays approach, here are some tips on where you can find great gifts for your bluegrass music friends, a special new instrument for yourself, a set of strings, picks, and other necessities. San Diego has an outstanding collection of local stores that carry all caliber of bluegrass instruments and supplies, as well as providing a full range of luthier and repair services. The following run down, in alphabetical order, presents what, in my opinion, are some of the best local options, with a "Dwight's Take" on each with my personal opinion on that store's strong suit. Happy shopping!



THE BLUE GUITAR:

The Blue Guitar is one of the oldest and most complete shops that cater to acoustic musicians in San Diego. You will find a range of guitars and other instruments as well as top quality luthiers, including one of the few certified Martin Guitar luthiers in town. Strings, picks, and accessories are also available. The Blue Guitar is located at 5959 Mission Gorge Road Suite 101, San Diego, CA 92120. Phone: (619) 283-2700; website: www.blueguitar.com. A number of quality teachers can be accessed through the Blue Guitar as well, teaching all styles of music including bluegrass.

Dwight's Take: The Blue Guitar's strong suit is guitars, luthier services, and repairs.



BUFFALO BROTHERS:

Buffalo Brothers has by far the largest selection of guitars in San Diego and one of the largest selections in the country. All calibers of acoustic and electric guitars are present with very competitive prices. Mandolins, banjos, and other instruments are available as well, along with a full selection of strings and accessories, repair, and luthier services. Buffalo Brothers also boasts of its "100% upgrade" policy whereby you are allowed to trade in an instrument purchased from them for the full price you paid against a more expensive instrument at any time. You can find Buffalo Brothers at 4901 El Camino Real in Carlsbad. Phone: (760) 434-4567; website: www.buffalobros-guitars.com. Instruction is also available at Buffalo Brothers on a variety of instruments and in a variety of styles.

Dwight's Take: Buffalo Brothers has the best prices and selection if you are shopping for a medium to high end guitar. You can't beat their 100% upgrade policy.

CLASSIC BOWS VIOLIN SHOP:

If you are looking for violins, violas, bows, and accessories, as well as a great selection of specialty music related gifts, you will enjoy Classic Bows. The shop has a nice selection of instruments as well as bows and offers top quality luthier, bow re-hairing, and repair service. During the holiday season you will especially enjoy the specialty gift products available. The owner also offers appraisal services, and the shop is involved in a variety of student violin/viola programs. You will find Classic Bows at 2721 Adams Avenue. Phone: (619) 282-2010; website: www.classicbows.com.

Dwight's Take: Strong selection of bows and violins; nice people and service. Great specialty gifts for the violin enthusiast.



HAMMOND ASHLEY: Hammond Ashley Violins, the acclaimed violin, viola, and bass store out of Seattle, opened a satellite store



in Sorrento Valley a few years ago. The shop offers an outstanding selection of violins, violas, and basses at all price levels, and the store has extensive teaching facilities with private and group lessons, featuring a very nice performance space as well. Top luthiers are onsite to address your repair and set up needs. Hammond Ashley has recently moved to a larger location but is still in the Sorrento Valley area: 6255 Ferris Square, Suite E, San Diego. Phone: (858) 623-0036; website: www.hammondashley.com.

Dwight's Take: Nice people, great luthier service; great selection of instruments. One of the few places with full service for basses.



MOZE GUITARS:

Located in La Mesa, Moze is a full service acoustic and electric store with a full range of supplies and services. Prices are generally good and the staff is friendly and helpful. You will find Moze at: 8415 La Mesa Blvd. Suite 1, La Mesa, CA 9194. Phone: (619) 698-1185; website: www.Mozeguitars.com

Dwight's Take: A great place to shop or have repairs done.



OLD TIME MUSIC:

Previously called Acoustic Expressions, this shop was purchased by the owner of Buffalo Brothers a few years back and has been greatly improved. Old Time Music now boasts strong collections of guitars, banjos, mandolins, specialty instruments, violins, and accessories. The shop also has an extensive affiliated teaching school that offers lessons on a variety of instruments and in a variety of styles and has on site luthier and repair services. Prices are good and, as a bonus, the store has a performance space in the rear where it hosts regular jam sessions and presents acoustic music concerts. Old Time Music is located at: 2852 University Avenue in North Park. Phone: (619) 280-9035; website: www.sdoldtimemusic.com.

Dwight's Take: Good all around shop, good selection of affordable violins.

VALLEY MUSIC: Valley Music can be found in downtown El Cajon and offers a good selection of acoustic instruments, CDs, music books, and supplies. Valley Music also hosts an occasional in-store concert or workshop, so if you live in the area get on their list. This store is an institution in the El Cajon area, having been in business since 1952. Stop by at 530 E. Main Street, El Cajon. Phone: (619) 444-316.

Dwight's Take: Nice people, nice store. Finally, a word about the "biggies" and shopping online. Yes, there are several Guitar Centers in the San Diego area, a Guitar Trader, and Best Buy will soon be carrying instruments. Sometimes you can get things at a better price by shopping the web. And, there are music stores in San Diego that have some acoustic instruments and supplies, but that don't really cater to the bluegrass music sector, which I have not mentioned. There is nothing wrong with any of these shopping options. But, if you can shop locally and support your local music store supporting the local bluegrass community, I predict you will have a better experience and for sure get better follow up if you need it. You will also help support bluegrass in San Diego. Tell them I sent you!



TOP TEN ALBUMS OF 2008

Ahhh, yes. The end of another year. The time we reflect back upon the events and happenings that have affected us directly or indirectly. Perhaps lists of resolutions are checked and rechecked in the hope that we have somehow moved closer to our ideal of how our lives should be going, what we've accomplished, and where we've still fallen short.

Perhaps it is this same hopeful inventory that fills the pages of myriad music publications with "Best of's" and "Worst of's", so that we might, as active music listeners and creators, assess our collective progress and point ourselves as a culture toward our ideals with even finer precision.

More likely, it's just way too much fun to say what we like and why.

- 1. Radiohead *In Rainbows***
I can't accurately describe the excitement I felt when I realized this was officially released on January first of this year. Easily, in my opinion, the strongest release among all contenders, this could very well turn out to be the band's best ever as well, which is saying quite a lot in the face of such classics as *The Bends* and *Ok Computer*. From start to finish, this is an amazing combination of great songs and staggering production. *Check out:* "15 Step," "Nude," "Weird Fishes/Arpeggi."
- 2. Randy Newman *Harp & Angels***
That the ever inscrutable Mr. Newman is an American songwriting institution is at this point a foregone conclusion. The fact that he is still capable of such transcendent work is a refreshing surprise. This is a flat-out amazing record, chock full of some of his greatest songs yet. The Mitchell Froom-produced arrangements utilize an all-star core band and a full orchestra to stunning effect, running from New Orleans-flavored lilt to gospel-tinged ballads to Kurt Weil-styled romps with ease and aplomb. With *Harp & Angels*, this legend shows exactly why he is one. *Check out:* "Losing You," "A Few Words in Defense of Our Country," "Potholes."
- 3. Liam Finn *I'll Be Lightning***
Okay, so I AM a huge fan of his dad,

Neil Finn of Crowded House and Split Enz fame and the apple hasn't fallen all that far from the proverbial tree stylistically. However, this is an amazingly energetic, catchy and yes unique album filled with all kinds of sonic craziness (Optigan, anyone?) and heartfelt, well-crafted lyrics. This album makes me happy every time I put it on. *Check out:* "Better to Be," "Second Chance," "Fire in Your Belly."

- 4. T Bone Burnett *Tooth of Crime***
This man has been a hero of mine since his early '80s solo work and has always been a great record producer. This year he has been lauded for his work on albums by B.B. King and John Mellencamp, but it is this release, based around songs he wrote for a Sam Shepard play years ago that may be his finest work yet. Snarky, jagged, and menacing in as gentle a fashion as possible, this is a *tour de force* of tasteful restraint. *Check out:* "Dope Island," "The Slowdown," "Swizzle Stick."
- 5. Al Green *Lay It Down***
The words "triumphant return to form" have been unfortunately overused with regard to the soul icon's recent output, but this album proves to be the exception. Reverentially produced with James Poyser and the Roots' Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, Green has truly regained his trademark sound, and his singing has never been, ahem ... sexier. *Check out:* "Lay It Down," "No One Like You," "Just Take Your Time."
- 6. Sam Phillips *Don't Do Anything***
The former Mrs. T Bone Burnette has always been a talented and economical song crafter, and her husband-produced albums are all outstandingly *avant garde* in their sonic signature. Choosing to produce herself this time out, Sam proves it wasn't all *his* doing after all and does so with the wicked effortlessness of a straight razor to the jugular. *Check out:* "Can't Come Down," "Flowers," "Sister Rosetta Goes Before Us."
- 7. Lindsey Buckingham *Gift of Screws***
Folks like me who wish Lindsey would just grab his guitar and start ripping the way he did at the end of Fleetwood Mac's "Go Your Own Way," among others, will love this treasure trove of great guitar tones



Sven-Erik Seaholm

and approaches in support of some of his better songs in a long while. He comes almost uncomfortably close to his Mac-era achievements on a couple of them, so it's a good thing they were great songs in the first place. *Check out:* "Time Precious Time," "Wait for You," "Love Runs Deeper."

- 8. My Morning Jacket *Evil Urges***
Kentucky's greatest export since horses and whiskey gets its sexy on for this one. As usual, the lyrics are poetic and at times nonsensical ("peanut butter pudding surprise," anyone?), but there is no denying the cinematic power of the band's arrangements nor the supple and impossibly sublime vocals of main man Jim James throughout. Co-produced by John Chiccarelli of Tape-Op fame. *Check out:* "Evil Urges," "Highly Suspicious," "Librarian."
- 9. Jamie Lidell *Jim***
That Stevie Wonder hasn't made a record that lives up to his creative peak's impossibly high standards is a shame, but who would've ever guessed that a white dude as geeky looking as this guy could? Whatever. Just enjoy this for what it is, a great, fun, and timeless sounding R&B album. *Check out:* "Another Day," "Out of My System," "Little Bit of Feel Good."
- 10. Weezer *Self-titled Red Album***
Rivers Cuomo is one of those guys so alternately brilliant and frustrating that you become almost afraid to listen to the newest Weezer record for fear of disappointment. Fear not, for Rivers and Co. have lifted themselves back up to near greatness with this sprawling, muscular collection that hits so many of their touchstones; it requires multiple listens to take it all in. *Check out:* "The Greatest Man That Ever Lived," "Everybody Get Dangerous," "Cold Dark World."

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an award-winning independent record producer and recording artist. He is also a huge fan of music. Find him on the web at svensongs.com, kaspro.com, and myspace.com/svenseaholm

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José Sinatra completes a self-portrait

JUST NUTS, ROASTING – OPEN FIRE!

He has more impersonators than Elvis Presley and Jack the Ripper combined. He's had more songs written about him than anyone but Jesus Christ and the mysterious, still-identified "Laydeh." He brought more joy into young people's lives than their own parents and more anguish and psychological damage than Miley Cyrus (when the Truth was revealed...).

The death last week of Santa Claus hit the United States particularly hard and will likely require an event such as the upcoming Presidential Inauguration to even partially offset its tragic sting. Then, in the ensuing months, will come made-for-TV movies, the "tell-all" biographies, the song by Steve Vaus, the false paternity claims, and the endless legal battles over commercial rights and representation.

"When one's true nature is so hated and vilified," read the suicide note, "'tis better for all if one boogies off, ho-ho-ho." Thus was confirmed, it seems, the long-standing rumor of Claus's "unnatural" relationship with the most...uh...flamboyant of his reindeer, Prancer, whose body was also discovered at the scene.

"It appears to be a case of murder-suicide," says an investigator with the case, requesting anonymity. "Yes, it's tragic and tawdry and all that," detective Munson continues, "but not really as sick as it seems, since Prancer, as it turns out, was actually female."

What we're getting this month, folks, is the last honorable batch of Christmas/Santa songs by artists who recorded them before the tragedy, and thus are quite immune from any charges of being greedy vultures. (Mark my words: next Christmas will be *insane*.)

A brief tally, then, of the more notable stocking stuffers just out or due shortly:

— The Rocking Mountain Oysters make an auspicious debut with their two-sided single on Inbred Records. RMO is comprised of four Kentucky siblings — Jim Bob, Shorty, Ellie Mae, and Velma Skinner, along with their equally talented (though sadly retarded) offspring. "I Saw Momma Hogtyin' Santy Claus" begins nearly like a nursery rhyme but swiftly evolves into much more than its amusing title suggests. In fact, it becomes an ecstatic hymn praising the Human Struggle against oppression, insanity, and flatulence. "Don't never gone let go/Git that thang under control" chimes the elegant chorus repeatedly during the song's 2½ minute climactic refrain. This coda seems destined to eclipse both the Beatles' "Na, na, na nananana/Nananana, hey Jude" and Jumpjizzy Flip's "Slap da bitch/Nome sayne?" as the prevailing melodic mantra of the era. And as for the public to accept a Santa who says "yee haw" rather than "ho ho ho," it shouldn't be as much of a problem as one imagines — haven't we all had just about our fill of *ho's* by now? The flip side, "Moonshine and Mistletoe," contains a memorable hook that is so vibrant and infectious, you'll want to start two-stepping and line dancing and kissing the dude next to you. As I said, *you* will. I don't go that way.

— Ludacris's *Puttin' Da "Cris" Back in Crissmiss* (MoPimp) is mostly a misfire, a step backward for Mr. L. There's a lot of bluster and blasphemy, and when you sink low enough to rhyme "Kris Kringle" with "Dis Tingle," you should be shot. But there's near-redemption in one song, the startling "The Three Wise N-----s," which imagines a modern Nativity in a nameless ghetto. Instead of offering the Newborn Babe pagers, weapons, and drugs as expected, the Child receives free cable installation, a box set of Rachmaninoff concertos, and a lifetime subscription to *Gentlemen's Quarterly*.

— In Cher's *A Time for Cher-ing* (Geffen), she's up to her usual trick of stretching one-syllable words in twos ("Say-un Tai" "What a May-uln!"), but the lush production by Wayne Newton gives things the aura of a really funny LSD trip, and the cover shot of the diva (I'm speaking of Cher) as a very nude angel on a crowded subway platform is a keeper. In all, her best in months as well as a potential cash cow for independent retailers — Target, Walmart, Goody's, Best Buy, and Toys R Us all refuse to carry the disc because of that cover, and Cher, bless her heart is stickin' to her gazongas.

— Mercy, how did this get here? It seems I've just done a Christmas record too, which I'll give you if you ask me. I play and sing it all by myself, to the tune of that supremely treaky anthem, "The Rose." The lyrics come from the surface of my heart — may they unite us in the Spirit of the Season as our country, beaten and bruised, forever swears off spiking its egg nog ever again with greed, hatred, or intolerance:

'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse

The children were nestled in Michael

Jackson's bed

And they heard a Christmas story through lips so moist, so red:

Long ago the world was different, everyone was oh-so-sad

And they wanted one to help them, bring them joy and make them glad

Who would guess a newborn infant would arrive to do the trick?

Sliding out a magic chimney plopped the bearded babe, Saint Nick.

With the Christmas season on us, to those who hear our song

To the dead, the hard-of-hearing, to the yucky and the less fortunate

In December late one evening, all aglow from Rudolph's nose

Even jolly old Saint Nicholas, in his way, becomes the Hose.

If I've been able to bring you a smile or two this year, just consider it my Christmas gift to you, and you alone. It's so wonderful to share!

Now, what are you gonna get me?



RADIO DAZE



Jim McInnes

by Jim McInnes

PARDON MY FACE!

Sandi and I went to Las Vegas on November first. My birthday was two days away and we had not been out of San Diego since the Idyllwild wedding (see last month's article.) Sandi booked us a room for a couple of nights at Mandalay Bay. I'd wear my new Homer Simpson shirt with the words "Woo-Hoo" next to Homer's face.

I thought, "Yeah, Vegas! Why not?" In retrospect, I'm asking myself, "Why?"

I began celebrating my latest birthday at the airport in the early afternoon, followed by a couple more "pops" on the plane. After we checked into our room, we went to a nearby liquor store for party supplies. More celebratory toasts in our room preceded an evening of casino hopping.

In Vegas, as long as you're playing something, they'll keep your drinks coming...free. I took advantage of that, you betcha.

Unfortunately, I was also having back problems. Even in the best of times, walking for me is difficult. I've had two failed spine surgeries and suffer from severe sciatica and leg numbness when I walk or stand for more than a few minutes. I take two strong prescription pain killers every day, but on that Saturday in Vegas, I took a third one while I was gambling. Whoooooops! Big mistake!

After about 15 minutes, I no longer cared that I was hemorrhaging money. I kept dropping my wallet. My hands felt just like two balloons (*Pink Floyd—"Comfortably Numb"*). I tried to stand but my legs now had no feeling whatsoever. So I stumbled, not able to find my gravitational center. I tried to talk to my wife but all that came out of my mouth were bellows, grunts, and insults. It was like an attack of Tourette's syndrome. It's called being *really eff'd up!*

A couple of security gorillas came over and told Sandi to get me out of there...or else! My wonderful wife basically had to hold me up and drag me outside to the taxi stand. When we got there, several couples were ahead of us in line, waiting for cabs. I bellowed, "We don't gotta wait in no stinkin' line!" Pulling away from Sandi, I took one half step forward and the ground reached up and slapped me across the right side of my red, cross-eyed face.

I'd never, ever seen so much blood. And it was all *mine!* Some young punk strolled by, remarking, "Hey, I remember my first beer, pops!"

None of the other people on hand so much as moved a muscle to help. No one said a word until Sandi screamed, "Somebody get some help here!"

Finally a couple of paramedics arrived, stopped the bleeding and made sure I hadn't broken anything. They asked how I felt and I replied, "I am so embarrassed, I've even offended my ances-

continued adjacent



by Peter Bolland

HARD WORK

A lot of people think art is all about inspiration. They think people who accomplish great things are carried there on a magical cloud of divine intervention. It's not true. Inspiration is overrated. "I always thought inspiration was for amateurs," says eminent visual artist Chuck Close, "the rest of us just show up and get to work." Inspiration is the refuge of the undisciplined. Waiting around on the sidelines for inspiration to suddenly strike is a formula for failure.

Of course, inspiration is real and powerful and important, but it does not occur in a vacuum. Before inspiration visits you, three preliminary stages must be crossed. First comes love, then comes thought, then comes hard work. What use is gasoline if you don't have a car to burn it in? Let's build the car, then look for a gas station.

The first step is love. Only do what you love. Don't confuse this with enslavement to base appetites or superficial desires. Instead, give the soul what it is asking for. "Follow your bliss," Joseph Campbell told his students, and don't let anyone or anything throw you off the beam. Following your bliss changes you. And it opens doors you didn't even know were there. In the *Bhagavad Gita* Krishna told Arjuna, "You become what you love." In other words, love is a particularly effective form of focused consciousness. Thoughts have transformational power.

It's natural for our thoughts to swirl incessantly around the things we care deeply about. That's normal. That's why it's important to care about the right things — true things, real things. When we do, our thoughts become intentions and affirmations and they begin to manifest in the material world. The universe has no choice but to respond to powerfully focused conscious intentions. Thoughts may not manifest in the way you think they will, but they will manifest. "All that we are is the result of what we have thought," said the Buddha in the *Dhamapada*. "Our life is a product of our mind." It is a grave error to underestimate the capacity of consciousness to construct reality. "Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal," said Thomas Jefferson, "and nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude." For Henry Ford it was this simple: "If you think you can or think you can't, you're right."

From thoughts come actions. Actions repeated become habit. And habit constructs character. Our lives are the results of our thoughts and actions. We become what we love, we become what we think, we become what we do. Our choices set into motion complex webs of causation that interface with the lives of countless others and the consciousness of the universe itself — what some people call God. One-pointed love, conscious intention, and disciplined action are an unstoppable force. Cultivating the habit of hard work is the single most important element of success in any endeavor. "Opportunity is

Radio Daze continued

tors." Naturally, one paramedic added, "Well, partner, what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas." Not now. I've learned my lesson.

I'm never gonna wear that Homer Simpson "Woo-Hoo" shirt to Vegas again!

Merry Christmas 'n' Happy New Year, friends.

missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work," said Thomas Edison. Squeamish about work? Then don't complain about the gulf between you and your dreams.

Stop looking for the magic formula or the right self-help book. You've read enough. You've prayed enough. You've thought enough. Now get to work. "Every habit and faculty is preserved and increased by its corresponding actions," said Epictetus in the first century. "The habit of walking makes us better walkers, regular running makes us better runners." Want to write better songs? Write songs everyday. Want a better gig? You know what to do. Want to break the cycle of addiction? Act like a sober person. Want to overcome fear and cultivate compassion? Ask yourself, what would a courageous, compassionate person do, and then do that. Feel the fear and do it anyway. Aristotle, Judaism, and Confucianism all make this point loud and clear: action precedes internal transformation. Fake it 'til you make it. Act as if. Act as if you were talented, fabulous, gifted, creative, powerful. It's one of life's most delicious paradoxes. Yes, thoughts and intentions give rise to actions and behaviors. But actions and behaviors also shape consciousness. It's a never-ending feedback loop. Thoughts give rise to actions and behaviors in turn transform consciousness. That's how we become what we do.

And, finally, when we fully engage in a life of action, that's when the inspiration hits. Inspiration can never be the goal. Inspiration just happens when we show the universe that we are willing to do our part. We pay our dues. We show up prepared. We do our homework and learn our craft. We demonstrate our readiness in our everyday actions. Writers write, singers sing, lovers love, painters paint, creators create. And in the abundance of our fully-realized commitment, miracles happen. "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration," said Edison. Stop searching the sky for that bolt of lightning. Keep your eyes on the work in front of you. Let the universe make miracles through the work of your own hands. In the end there's only one thing that delivers us to the life we long for and so richly deserve: hard work.

Peter Bolland is a professor of philosophy and humanities at Southwestern College and singer-songwriter-guitarist of the *Coyote Problem*. You can complain to him about what you read here at peterbolland@cox.net. www.thecoyoteproblem.com is the ethereal home of the *Coyote Problem*.

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Kelly Joe Phelps

The Phantom Monk of Folk-Blues

by Terry Roland

In 1995, I had the pleasure of spending an evening with Townes Van Zandt at McCabe's Guitar Store in Santa Monica. There was a certain magic that night, watching this old troubadour still hanging on to his life, singing off key, sometimes rambling, but always conjuring up the image of an old blues singer sitting on his front porch, sipping whiskey and telling stories in song. That same night a young, clean-cut musician from Portland, Oregon, ambled out and proceeded to do what so many young blues musicians do: he played his heart out. He was in his 30s but sounded like he was centuries old. That night he performed the nearly forgotten genre of blues spirituals. He was like an angel holding court with one of the true saints of the surviving wild-eyed, whiskey-driven singer-songwriter movement slowing fading away into an alcoholic mortality. Kelly Joe Phelps was like a witness to a passing, fading comet as it seemed inevitable that Van Zandt was in his final years. But, just by his presence, Phelps assured us all that the music would endure – as it always does. That night he sat in on the encore "The Banks of the Ohio," and Phelps hesitated to start, just quietly sitting there. Eventually, Van Zandt looked over at him and said, "Man, are you playing?" Phelps looked up and with all humility said, "I was listening to you, man!" It was a moment of continuity and grace.

Troubadours like Kelly Jo Phelps seem to have tread a thousand rivers of blues to find the right waters for their sound. If the blues are many rivers flowing into one sea, Phelps has certainly followed more than one of them. His beginnings in music were the blue jazz of Miles Davis and John Coltrane. Phelps soon found the country blues of Fred McDowell and Robert Pete Williams. He followed this stream to learn lap slide guitar and a distinctive finger-picking style sounding eerily close to Townes Van Zandt. The

same can be said of his songwriting ability. Phelps has his own voice, but it's true listening comfort to find strands of the river of music we call Townes Van Zandt running through his work. I can't help but wonder if the muse that flowed between them that night at McCabe's came to reside in the core of the music of Kelly Jo Phelps.

His first album, *Lead Me On*, enhanced Phelps' love for the lap slide guitar and the brooding, gospel-based Delta blues with a simple one-man acoustic approach. Future recordings, like *Slingshot Professionals*, found him enlarging his musical travels with more acoustic instruments. Listening to each recording released between 1995 to 2006, something rare for any artist begins to happen. Each album builds on the other, developing a distinct style that is drawn from such influences as early Bruce Cockburn, Bruce Springsteen (of Nebraska fame), Lyle Lovett, and Leo Kottke.

His picking style, while derived from early urban blues, familiar to the era of Piedmont and even with some ragtime influence, he also brings a '50s-era jazz feel into his structure and arrangements, allowing enough space for the music to breathe and create a life of its own. The pitfall here is the danger of genre hopping. However, Phelps manages to learn the lessons of the style and then bring them into his own work. Unlike many other artists in this genre, he doesn't seek to imitate, re-create, or even preserve so much as bring to bring a new vision to the music.

This approach complements both the artist and the music. The earliest roots of blues provided a soil rich enough to be adapted to many forms. Phelps is inventive and imaginative enough to be able to take other styles like country, folk, and jazz and merge them with his own artistic voice, creating a unique sound, both original and universal. So, as he continues to add to the style mix, each album changes into a distinctive sound that is

all his own, beginning from his early jazz roots to his most recent folk-based blend.

His vocal style draws from most of the classic roots artists of the past, but his phrasing is most closely compared to Ry Cooder. He has a casual drawl that suggests Mississippi more than Portland. His voice becomes an instrument equal to his guitars, crafted carefully to bring focus to the songs.

His 2006 album, *Songsmith Retrograde*, is his transition into a gentle folk-ballad sound that could easily pass for early Celtic but then has those jazz-blues sounds around its edges. "Crows Nest" opens the album with a contemplative invitation to join him on his troubadour's journey. The instrumentals lean on his past blues picking style but add a fine folk melody with the complexities. Lyrically, these songs bring into focus little pieces of the life around us that sometimes go unnoticed, filled with well-worn trails, crying babies, shoestrings on a nether wind, old men whining, and so many illustrative threads that run through our lives.

Of the many pleasures of *Retrograde*, what stands out is Phelps' use of the banjo, which he bends into a Celtic, blues instrument that goes against the usual ironic cheerful bluegrass sound into a near apocalyptic haunt of some folksinger's nightmare. "Red Light Nickel" brings us to a midnight shanty feel, an unusual use for a banjo. This song is a testament to his creativity and imagination.

So, if you're willing to take a ride down the many rivers traveled by Kelly Joe Phelps, it will be a reminder of how

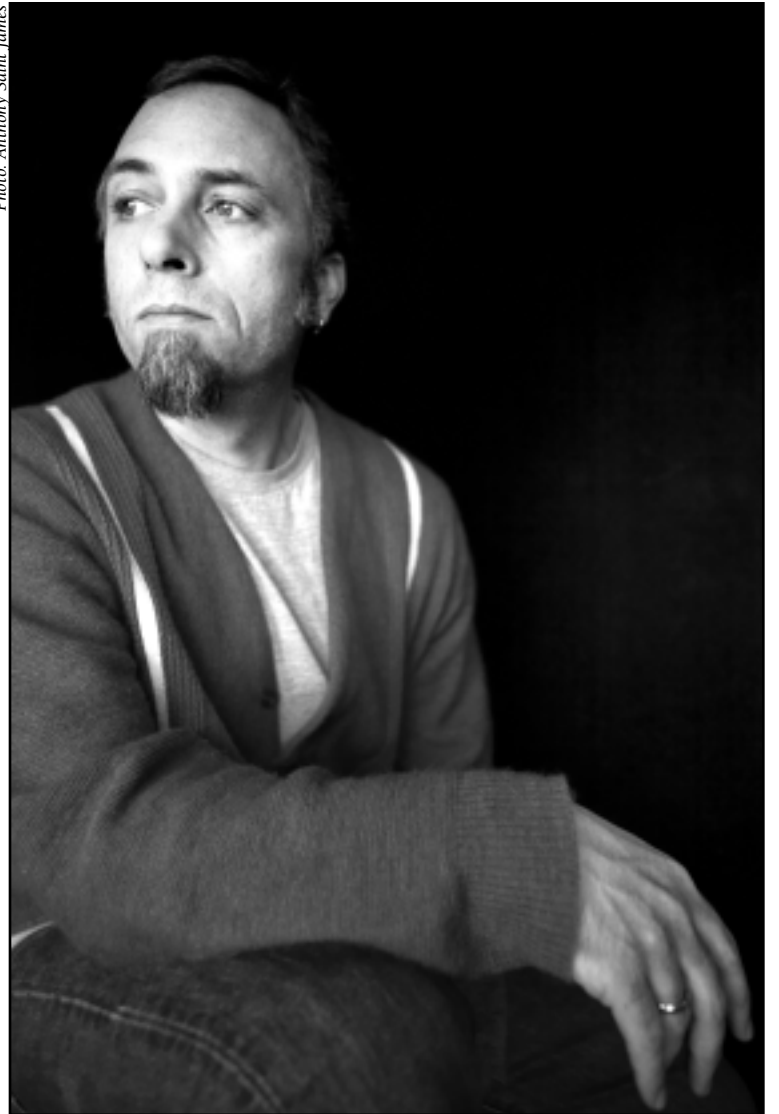


Photo: Anthony Saint James

Kelly Joe Phelps

rewarding the journey is, even though as this vital artist continues to grow, the destination remains a mystery.

As I listen to his music, the ghost of the Texas troubadour, Townes Van Zandt, still seems to be out there smiling, laughing, singing along, and maybe, just falling silent for a moment or two at the majesty of the music he hears from his lap slide playing partner... as Kelly Joe Phelps did that long ago night in Santa Monica.

Kelly Joe Phelps will perform on Saturday, December 13 at Acoustic Music San Diego, 7:30pm. The address is 4650 Mansfield St., San Diego 92116. Phone: (619) 303-8176. Or visit www.acousticmusicsandiego.com for ticket information.



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Roger McGuinn & John Sebastian, continued from page 4.

sound I loved was actually you playing an autoharp through an amplifier. Were you the first to do so?

.J: I think I probably was. It was hooked up in the same way you would "mic" a ukulele. I think the popular commercial success of the Spoonful made it possible for the development of new autoharps that could be played through amplification.

SDT: One of my favorite Spoonful songs is "Jug Band Music." What is jug band music?

.J: It was African-American music; it was regional music in its pre-electric stage. Jug band music would evolve into what is now considered the blues. It reached a point of interaction with so many different Americans - African-Americans, Irish - Americans, so many people.

SDT: I first had the opportunity to talk with you during the '80s. At that time you were receiving lucrative offers for the original Spoonful lineup to reunite and tour. You were adamant that you weren't going to unless Zal Yanovsky was on board. He declined and the tour never materialized. Yanovsky died of a heart attack in 2002. What would you like our readers to know about Zally?

.J: Zal was really the instrumental heart of the Spoonful. He had style, he provided the excitement, he expanded the boundaries of folk music. Zal was at the center of our sound. It must be said that the Spoonful were great when Zal was in the group. We weren't so great after Zal left the group. And I left the group a short time after that.

SDT: Adding to your titles of singer-song-

writer and motion picture music composer, you now have the title of music teacher. How did the idea of the instructional DVDs come about?

.J: The instruction videos are released on Homespun Video. The company is owned by Happy Traum and luckily, I live in the same little town (near Woodstock) he does! Happy is the brother of Artie Traum, who recently passed away. He was an influential folk music figure in this area.

The first instructional video was on playing the autoharp. It went very well and now we have several videos - blues harmonica, finger picking (blues) guitar.

SDT: Your current music projects?

.J: I recently did a CD with David Grisman called *Satisfied*. This was recorded simply on two-track. I was preparing to work on the mixing but was told we were done. No mixing...this was new for me. Apparently, this is the way Grisman has been recorded for years, and we actually got on the bluegrass charts!

A limited amount of tickets remain for the Poway concert with McGuinn and Sebastian. Visit www.powayarts.org for details.



John Sebastian, 1970

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Laura Roppe Girl Like This

by Mike Alvarez

There's a lot to like about Laura Roppe's new CD, *Girl Like This*. It's a collection of catchy and upbeat songs delivered by an attractive singer with a big voice. Overall, it stays positive, even when it tends toward the melancholy. It doesn't try to get too heavy or deep. The main point of this CD is fun, and on that score it delivers. The songwriting leans heavily in the direction of modern country but like most music in that genre, you can expect it to borrow generously from pop, rock, R&B, and other popular forms. Ms. Roppe does so with a good sense of taste and discrimination.

Lyrical, she favors subject matter that centers around the joys and trials of everyday life. Obviously aiming at a specific audience, she tries to paint pictures of situations that they can relate to, be it the need for a housewife to blow off steam ("Mama Needs a Girl's Night Out"), a soft ballad to a child ("Little Daughter"), or playfully teasing pop songs ("You Don't ASK," "Sing a Love Song"). There is even a flirtation with light jazz on the last song, "Can't Take It Back." It's an airy number that calls to mind the Maria Muldaur classic "Midnight at the Oasis." Every tune is crafted with catchy melodic hooks and easily digested chord progressions. The arrangements are spot on, capturing the exact moods that the lyrics need to convey.

Artistically, the songs play things a little safe, coming as they do from the standpoint of a person with a family. They remain firmly rooted in territory that is easily relatable, and oftentimes Roppe can get unabashedly sentimental. What keeps the proceedings from becoming completely bland is the tension between those values and the yearning to cross a few lines. It's delightful to watch the battle between these facets of her personality. If you're anything like me, you might find yourself occasionally rooting for her to just give in and have a little fun. My favorite song is "Crazy About You and Me" because the lyrics are a little bit darker, fuelled as they are by a tinge of jealousy. It also has one of the most unique arrangements on the album, bordering on the Beatlesque with its mellotron flute chords and big guitar hooks.

It's all recorded with a professionally produced sheen. Roppe's vocals are strong and confident, often reminiscent of Helen Reddy in tone and delivery. The musicians on the record are local stalwarts, many of whom are accompanists of San Diego favorite Eve Selis. They lay down tracks that perfectly complement the vocal performance. Perhaps a little too perfectly. After hearing every note in its place, one sometimes yearns for a little more abandon, a little less precision, and a little more fire. Regardless, this album is a light, fun romp that accomplishes exactly what it sets out to do.



Laura Kuebel Along for the Ride

by Tammy Lin

San Diego has a tradition of acoustic singers with storytelling lyrics to be more than just pretty voices. Laura Kuebel follows this tradition of San Diego-based singer-songwriters. We live in an age where everything can be sold individually and music is now no different than buying individually packaged 100-calorie oreos and cheese nips. Anyone can go online and buy a single without really knowing the quality of a full CD. *Along for the Ride* is best enjoyed when you have the time to sit down and play it from start to finish, which means it's a quality EP.

Laura Kuebel has a gorgeous voice but it's when you really pick out the story that a theme emerges from the EP. "Nowhere" is a track that hits the nail on the head about the emotions that fluctuate in a person when there's a decision and desire to leave their current life. "Start making plans, working your hands to the bone. Save up all your money, sell everything you own. Pack up what matters, say goodbye to all your friends. Glamorize what never was, what may never be again." San Diego is such a transitory city that I feel like we've all been there: sitting in that car traveling or leaving the city unsure of the road ahead. And according to Kuebel, "where nowhere feels like home."

From "Nowhere," "Along for the Ride," "Run," and "Scar," the story of the journey is all about the aspect of leaving, finding your way, and the hope but scariness it seems of ever finding your way. By the time you're halfway through the EP, the music mirrors what happens in life. You start feeling secure in your situation.

Kuebel's songwriting gets more lighthearted with "Rocky Road," even though the story at heart is about missing someone. "Some days are just plain vanilla, and some days are rocky road. Baby you could be the sprinkles on my ice cream cone." This was my favorite song on the EP because it put a smile on my face when I listened to the lyrics. In the second half of the EP, love ("Perfect Stranger") and dreams (Kuebel's version of "Over the Rainbow") seems to overshadow earlier emotions of the ride. *Along for the Ride* is the soundtrack of a journey to something scarily unknown but hopeful in the end. And each song really works toward this theme and was definitely meant to be heard as a whole, not sold individually.



Fiffin Market Lost at Sea

by Mike Alvarez

While I enjoyed listening to Fiffin Market's album *Lost at Sea*, I must confess that it had me scratching my head. There's a very unique take on Irish music that could only have surfaced in a cultural melting pot such as we have here in San Diego. While based on traditional melodies and instrumentation, they bring in unexpected influences like folk, modern rock, blues, and even a healthy dose of punk. The surprising thing is that it generally works. It's brash, energetic, and highly infectious.

The opening title track is a dramatic narrative complete with background music and sound effects that gets the ball rolling. And roll it does as they blast into their rendition of "The Wild Rover," which sounds like Green Day got their hands on it and threw it around some. The vocalists jump in full of sass and attitude and they are joined on the chorus by a tavern full of rabble rousers. The level of intensity doesn't let up on "Old Brown's Daughter" and "City That We Love." In fact it seems to have been kicked up a few notches, propelled as they are by a punk rock rhythm section and Celtic fiddling.

Things take on a decidedly more romantic turn with the acoustic waltz "My Dream." It's on material like this that the band drops all attitude and pretense, and just plays for all they're worth. It makes for a welcome lovely interlude, which occurs again later on "Wave Over Wave" and their earnest interpretation of "Molly Malone." The arrangement for "Galway Bay" would qualify it for this category were it not for its humorous lyrics about a bickering couple.

In between these quiet moments are some raucously bombastic numbers like the rockabilly flavored "Berry Picking Time," the Bo Diddley-influenced "Donkey Riding," the punk reel "All For Me Grog," and the big singalong number "Rant and Roar (San Diego Version)." Interestingly enough, they end on a soft note with the retro-psychedelic ballad "Autumn Forever," a song that might have been sung by someone like Dusty Springfield. It's surprising but somehow appropriate.

I still haven't figured out whether Fiffin Market is a band with its tongue firmly in cheek. Are they poking fun at the material or is this a serious attempt to fuse Irish music with modern rock? In the long run, I suppose it doesn't matter. It sounds like they're having an awfully good time and so will you. I bet this stuff is great in a live situation.



Chris Stuart & Backcountry Crooked Man

by Dwight Worden

San Diego native Chris Stuart has released a new, and stellar, CD of fine acoustic music. Stuart's roots are in bluegrass, and his roots show through in this great record, lending support to a fine collection of his all original music. Supported by his outstanding band BackCountry, there's Janet Beazley on banjo, penny whistles, lead and harmony vocals; who sings beautiful harmony with Stuart on many of the numbers, multi-talented Eric Uglum on lead guitar, rhythm guitar, mandolin, and harmony vocals; and two outstanding young brothers, Austin Ward on bass and Christian Ward on fiddle and viola. This is one great recording project worthy of any serious collection of fine acoustic music.

The 13 original tunes range from the lead off, "Crooked Man," through ballads, the up tempo "I Remember Memphis," to the classic fiddle and banjo tune with a modal sound titled "Silverton." Stuart is at his best when putting forth story songs like "The Crime at Quiet Dell" and when telling heart tugging stories with moving melodies like his "13 Steps."

Stuart was a winner of the prestigious MerleFest songwriting contest several years ago. Not bad, especially when you recognize that Gillian Welch took second place behind him. Stuart has also had several of his songs picked up by national acts. So, there is no doubt that the man has chops as a songwriter. The real pleasure in this record, however, is to hear the man himself render his music and to do it so well. The production is stunning in its clarity and simplicity. This is one record that is likely to find a high place in the rotation of any serious collector of acoustic music with a roots flavor.



Plow

by Allen Singer

Plow's new self-titled CD is a harvest of old and new traditional American roots music. The band tills new ground and uses the music's old roots styles to build new musical directions. Everything new here is old again! Plow is a trio of musicians who bring a variety of different personalities and musical styles to the joyous harvest heard on this fine CD. Chris Clarke is a young, good old Virginia boy raised in the heartland of roots and traditional American music. Clarke's voice and sweet low-key picking style on guitar and mandolin provide the musical backbone. Dave Bandrowski's banjo style comes from New Orleans, the birthplace of blues, Dixieland, jazz, and gospel music. Bandrowski's playing style is creatively eclectic with a mix of syncopated rhythms and solo style that fits Plow really well. John Mailender is the band's youngest member, but he plays like an old swinging, seasoned pro. Somewhere in Mailender's musical DNA there are traces of Joe Venuti, Stuff Smith, Stéphane Grappelli, and Vassar Clemens. He's a one-of-a-kind musician who's found the key to the essence of swing and heartfelt playing. This CD is alive with feeling, creative juices, humor, and a beating musical heart that drives its three members and touches the listener.

The CD's sound is clear, crisp, and full. You experience each song as if it were played live and just for you. Plow recorded 12 songs – some old traditional, some original, and some instrumentals. Clarke opens with his own tune "Goin' Down to Richmond." Immediately, you feel invited to share in the joy, creativity, and discoveries of Plow's musical adventure as it rolls through Clarke's home town. His "Tonapah Station" is a deep, well-written tune filled with pathos that could have been written in the late 1920s. Clarke reflects on those times by playing the tune in a minor key that cuts to heart of the listener. "Sunday Sadir" is a Bandrowski original tune that lets you know he's still got a hand in the Big Easy, with hints of Preservation Hall and the old cats back in Storyville. Mailender's fiddle playing throughout is his gift, showing how a young musician can capture the essence of the past and the wonders of future discovery. He plays with the hand of a seasoned musician touched by the many musical styles he's studied, experienced, and learned so far in his young life.

This terrific CD offers a musical bridge across time and styles. "Train 45," the last cut on the CD, leaves us with an old traditional song to reflect the true genesis of Plow's journey. You just know the boys had fun cutting this CD. It's serious, it's innovative, and it's very approachable.

Plow's new CD covers new ground and replants old seeds. Plow is a joy to hear and the CD itself is in an environmentally clean, beautifully designed "eco-wallet." Clarke, Bandrowski, and Mailender have really plowed some old ground and grown a great new crop of music for us.

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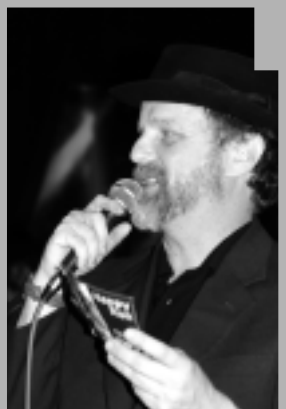


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Happy Ron @ his CD Release



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Anna Troy @ Belly Up



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Robin Henkel & Shawn Rohlf @ Belly Up



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Brooklyn, Sven, & Catherine @ Happy Ron CD Release



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Wrong Trousers @ Happy Ron CD Release



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Gayle Skidmore @ Belly Up



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Don Story w/ Modern Rhythm @ Pal Joes

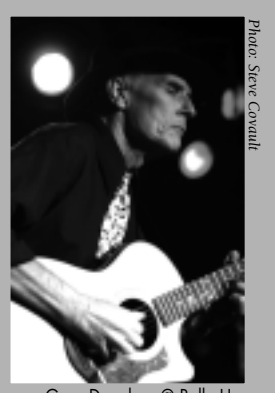


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