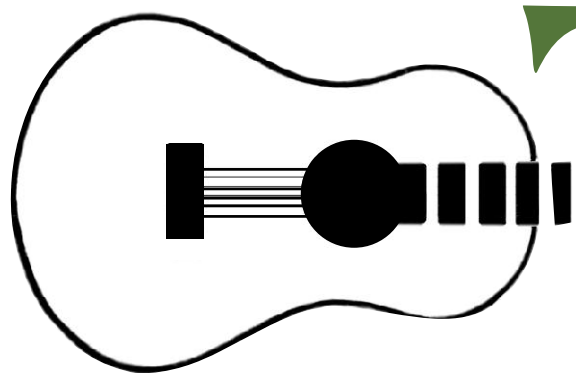


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# T SAN DIEGO ROUBADOOR

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



March 2010

[www.sandiegotroubadour.com](http://www.sandiegotroubadour.com)

Vol. 9, No. 6

## what's inside

**Welcome Mat.....3**

Mission  
Contributors  
Dennis Andersen

**Full Circle.....5**

Recordially, Lou Curtiss

**Front Porch... ..6**

BViolin  
Patric Petrie  
Siobhán O'Brien

**Parlor Showcase ...8**

Jaime Valle

**Ramblin'.....10**

Bluegrass Corner  
Zen of Recording  
Hosing Down  
Radio Daze  
Stages

**Highway's Song. ...12**

Michael Peter Smith

**Of Note.....13**

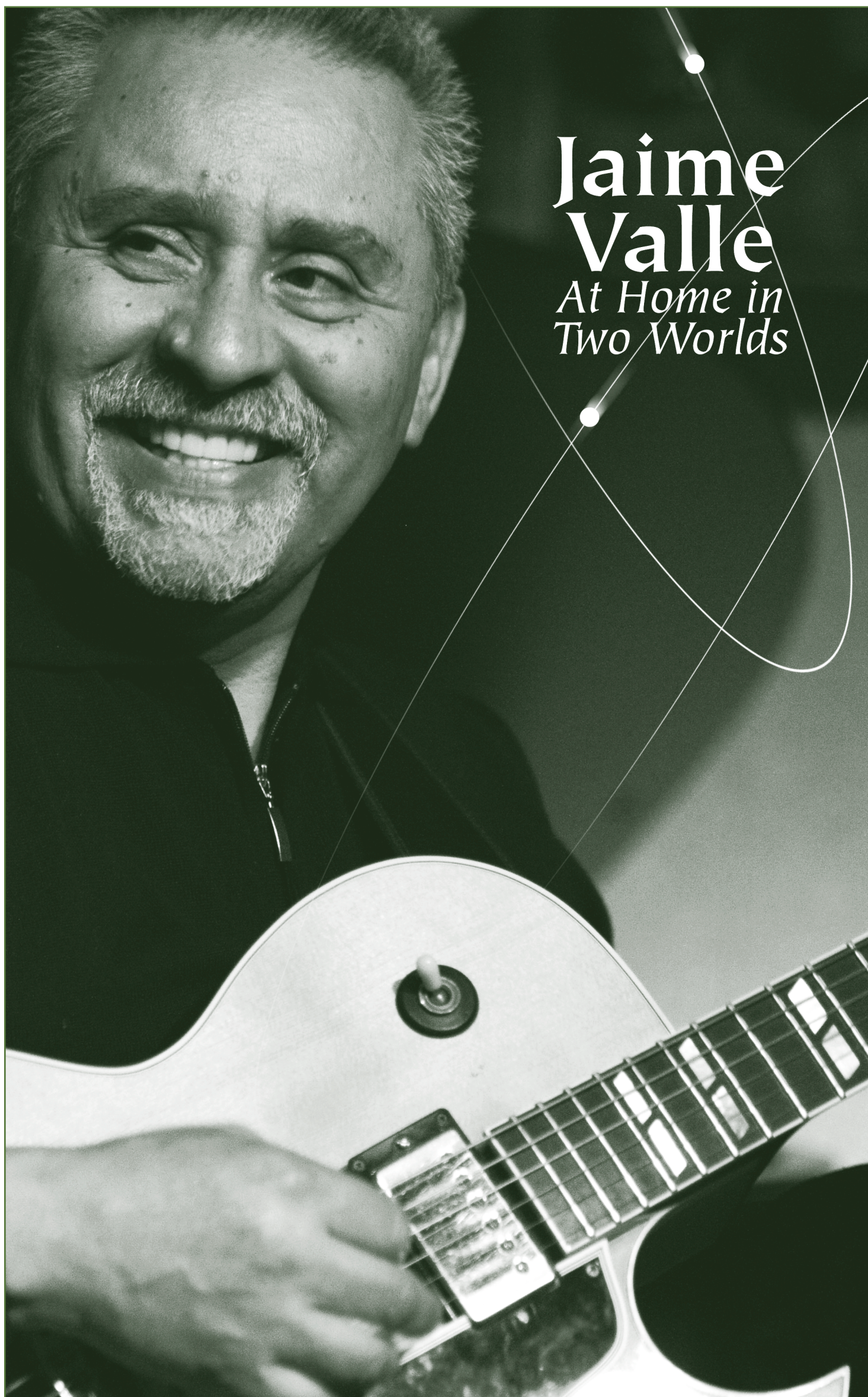
Gary Walker  
Bill Dempsey  
Jeff Diamond  
Ken McCabe

**'Round About .....14**

March Music Calendar

**The Local Seen.....15**

Photo Page



**Jaime Valle**  
*At Home in Two Worlds*



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# THE WAYNE RIKER ENSEMBLE

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— Andy Volk, *Fretboard Journal*

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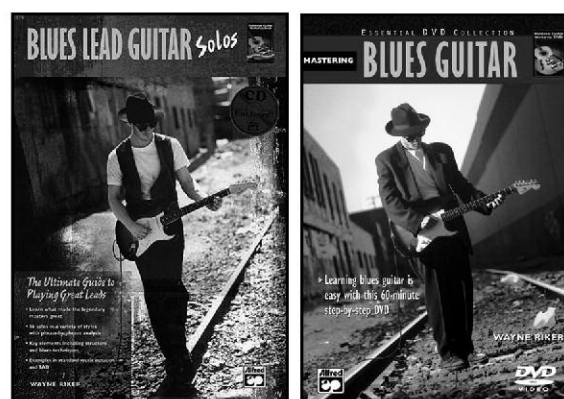
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## BOOKS BY WAYNE RIKER

All instructional books by Wayne Riker, with Alfred Publishing, are available through Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and Tower Books online, or in stock at most music stores around the globe.

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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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Cover photo: Steve Covault

Cover design: Chuck Schiele

# Dennis Andersen

## mister invisible

by Liz Abbott

There's good news and there's bad news. The good news is that the San Diego Troubadour is lucky to know many fine photographers who have supplied the paper with great photos on a regular basis – among them Steve Covault, Gail Donnelly, Dan Chusid, Bengt Nyman, Tim Flack. And we appreciate them all. The bad news is that one of them will be leaving us soon: our friend, Dennis Andersen.

I caught up with Dennis a few weeks ago so he could tell me a little about his plans. Fittingly, we met at Java Joe's, the old haunt (now at Cafe Libertalia in Hillcrest) where old friends have gathered and played music for years. Dennis' contributions to this paper have been invaluable; he has been helpful and accommodating while on assignment, too. Now, with a heavy sigh, we must soon bid him farewell, as he will be retiring (from his job of 36 years!) this month and moving to Panama. Before he goes on his next adventure, however, I wanted to take the opportunity to write something here, a little tribute to a friend – perhaps as a way to say “thank you, Dennis,” or “you go, Dennis!” ... or something. Over the years, many have seen him at music events, moving in and out of the shadows with his camera. Dennis is a friendly, likeable guy, but few really know about the man himself. Well, I was curious, so I asked.

“[My interest in photography] all started with my mom and dad,” Dennis begins. “I have an old photo of my dad standing in front of a B-52 bomber plane during WWII.” Explaining that his dad was a photographer in the army, assigned to do aerial photography, he continues. “He would take pictures sitting in the front bubble of the plane where the guns had been removed to

make room for camera equipment. He flew all over Normandy and the rest of France.

Dennis pauses, then says, “A photographer's job is to focus on the subject; it's important to learn how to tune out the rest of the world and not be distracted. You have to be invisible – to be able to get in and get out without being noticed.”

One of the best compliments he ever got was on a photo shoot at a very fancy private studio. Every year Steinway pianos invites a renowned pianist to come give a concert to an audience of 300 or more – to show off their wares, so to speak. Dennis was hired to take pictures of the concert. After it was over and Dennis had submitted his photos, the man who hired him said, “Where were you? I never even noticed that you were there!”

There's a definite art to great photography, and Dennis is one hell of an artist. He's definitely got his own style and I can usually recognize his work. There's a good segment of the San Diego music community that's become spoiled having Dennis going to all of these gigs and events and chronicling it all. He can be very unobtrusive when he works, and then a few days later, he sends this wonderful surprise – a link to these awesome pictures from a gig or party. It's always good to have a friend with a camera, and this friend just happens to be a total pro. Bonus – Charlie Imes

You might say that Dennis got serious about photography when he started going to his daughter's softball games. He always brought a camera with him and soon discovered that not only did he really enjoy it, he also had a knack for photography. He took his camera on a surfing trip around the world in the 1970s, retracing the route of the surfers in the movie *Endless Summer*. It was at the end of the trip, standing in the New Zealand airport with all his photo equipment, that Dennis met a man who

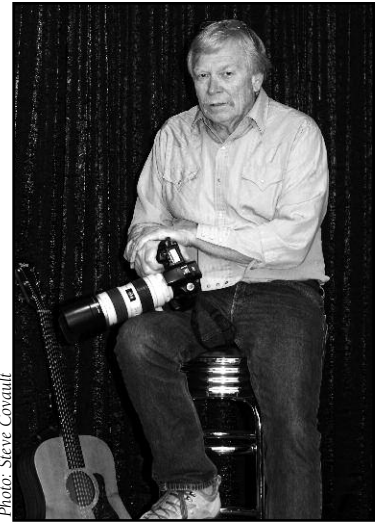


Photo: Steve Covault

Dennis Andersen

noticed he was carrying an underwater camera. By sheer serendipity Dennis ended up working for the man's export business, shooting tropical fish. It didn't hurt that the man worked in Tahiti either.

It wasn't long before one of his photos landed on the cover of *Skin Diver* magazine. It was then that Dennis knew he was good enough to pursue a career in photography. He began to get serious.

Dennis eventually branched out into sports photography. Shooting pictures at his daughter's softball games had given him the skills and confidence to capture the action; he also got to know people connected to the sports world, which would serve him well later on. As his photos got noticed, several of his photos found their way onto magazine covers for the NCAA. Dennis got jobs taking other kinds of pictures as well.

For awhile, Dennis got into rodeo photography. He says, “It was the most exciting, adrenaline-pumping experiences I've ever had. There's nothing like getting close to a two-ton bull for a shot – so close that you feel the ground actually shake. I loved the adrenaline rush!”

The apex of Dennis career came when he was invited by the women's softball team to go to the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, China.

continued on page 4

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Dennis Andersen, continued from page 3

"It was an honor to be selected as one of the few photographers allowed to go to the Olympics," Dennis says. "I was one of 1,200 selected from about 3,000 photographers."

Dennis planned his trip to China carefully, allowing 11 days shooting at the Olympics and 10 days to tour and explore on his own. "You can't go to China without seeing the Great Wall and the Forbidden City," Dennis explains. "Lucky as I was to obtain a journalist visa, you could feel the government's crushing presence everywhere. It took me two hours going through cus-

toms, so they could make sure you weren't smuggling anything in." That was just the beginning. He discovered that a translator had been assigned to him who was responsible for making daily reports of his whereabouts 24/7. "There was even a security camera over the threshold of my hotel room to record my comings and goings. I really had to watch myself every second," Dennis remembers.

While people watched the spectacle of the Beijing Olympics on television, Dennis was right there, dazzled by the spectacle of it all. He kept himself busy at the girls' softball games, taking pictures, but came away from the experience with much more. You

can see his photos of the Beijing Olympics on his website: <http://actionsportsphoto.smugmug.com/OLYM-PICS-Beijing-China>. They are amazing.

During the 10 days he allotted himself for sightseeing in the countryside, Dennis had a chance to see how the people lived and to immerse himself in the culture. In addition to the Great Wall and the Forbidden City, one of the highlights was a visit to a family who lived in a house that was 1,000 years old. Dennis had met a young man on the Internet, who showed him around in exchange for photography tips and advice. "My goal was to portray, through photographs, the China that is

emerging – contrasting the old culture with what is happening there today." Needless to say, this was a life-changing experience.

In 2006, Dennis ventured into a new territory of photographic opportunity: the local music scene. He began attending bluegrass society meetings, bringing his camera along to take photos. He eventually met Sara Petite, who was new on the scene at that time. Chris Clarke was another musician he met early on and admired. He discovered that the music world offered endless possibilities. He started following Sara's band around and offered his services. Dennis says, "Sara is one of those people who stands out – both in her music and her expressiveness on stage. Sara brought country music back to where it was before country music went to hell. Besides Sara, Eve Selis is every photographer's dream. She is a born show woman and knows how to work with the camera. Not only is she photogenic, she also displays a savvy stage presence and has an intuitive knack."

Johnny Kuhlken and I call him Dennis "Robert Redford-Mitchner" Andersen. ... We have gotten the chance to get to know him, see his pictures from China and Costa Rica, and hear stories about his trips all over the world. He went to some of the way off places [author James] Mitchellner describes in his books and his stories about being on a fishing boat. In his eyes you can see a lifetime full of adventure, stories, and mischief, and I am sure there is much more to come. – Sara Petite

Dennis makes it clear that taking photographs is something he does for love, not money. His photos are available gratis to anyone who asks. His website gets 1,200 hits a day, and Dennis tells me that he gets plenty of feedback from his subjects; musicians love him. Peter Bolland once said that Dennis is able to find the "it" thing in his photos. Most people say his photos are "different." He mentions that there's nothing better than taking photos during a music event and having photographer Steve Covault shooting right next to him, because he knows their photos will be completely different.

Dennis has been my personal favorite "live" photographer. While shooting, he listens and feels the music and picks his shots accordingly. – Gregory Page

Dennis Andersen captures moments like few can. He is a fabulous photographer and were it not for him, the only photos I'd have are ones from happy drunk guys with digital cameras. Dennis has been a good friend to me and I will miss having a smoke with him after a show. – Chris Clarke

Dennis talks a little more about the things he's learned. Sports photography trained him to find the "decisive moment." "You have to be ready for each shot and capture that moment. Good photos should be able to convey a history as well as a future," he says. Dennis follows the five "Cs" rule: composition, cropping, color,

contrast, and compatibility, which means that the photo conveys the appropriate feel for that particular artist. When he's out there taking pictures, he sees it as "borrowing the moment" – he's not taking anything away but giving back to the people who weren't there.

Dennis is on the verge of a new chapter in his life. He says, "It's too expensive to live in San Diego. And, for me, it's time to turn the page. Plus I love to travel. In Panama I can rent a furnished one-bedroom house for \$400 a month!" He will be living in the highlands on the border of Panama and Costa Rica in a rain forest. He will continue shooting pictures – wildlife, tropical flowers, sports, and the indigenous people there. He's already got something lined up in Venezuela to shoot more women's sports events. For Dennis, the possibilities are endless.

Dennis is part of the family. We're really going to miss him while he's in Panama, but I'm looking forward to the photos of the adventure. I may even have to go down there to find him and join the fun. – Charlie Imes

### Ireland's Siobhán O'Brien Joins Brian Baynes for a Special St. Patrick's Day Concert



by Sara Petite

Siobhán O'Brien returns to the U.S. this month to perform with fellow Irishman and local multi-instrumentalist and producer Brian Baynes along with the San Diego Symphony for a special Saint Patrick's Day concert called Music of the Emerald Isle, at Symphony Hall. It has been two years since O'Brien was here in San Diego, which included a show at the Belly Up with Shawn Rohlf, where her voice and songs captured the hearts of San Diego acoustic music lovers.

To O'Brien, who hails from Limerick, Ireland, music is more than a passion, it's in her blood. She comes from a family with four generations of music, including her great grandparents, who were traveling opera singers; her uncle Brendan Bowyer was a legendary Irish pop singer.

As she grew musically, so did her reputation. Pete Cummins, who has played with Nanci Griffith and the Fleadh Cowboys, was recruited to play on her latest CD, *Songs I Grew Up To*, a collection of traditionals and covers from such artists as Bob Dylan and

Continued on page 7

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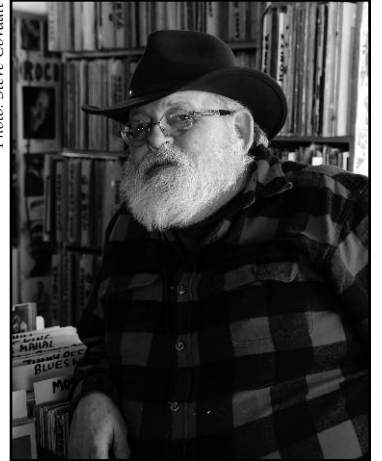
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# Recordially, Lou Curtiss

Photo: Steve Covault



Lou Curtiss

## A SPECIAL CONCERT

I don't often comment on concerts I go to. There aren't too many of them. This one was something special because it featured a bunch of people I've been there for as they get better and better. Let me start, however, with Jim Kweskin and Bob Siggins. The first time I saw them share a stage was at Club 47 in Boston and I was being introduced for the first time to this concept of a Revival Jug Band. I'd heard a couple of tracks by the Memphis Jug Band and Gus Cannon on old 78s but this was something new. I saw them again at the Newport Folk Festival (Siggins was no longer with them then, he was in the Charles River Valley Boys, who I also saw at Club 47). At any rate, it is 40 plus years later and they still sound great doing songs with as fresh a sound as they had then (maybe better). The folks on twin fiddles, string bass, and harmonica all added depth to what they were doing. I'd love to see this band record (maybe

with Geoff Muldaur who was also in that original band). Having them down here for a Haiti Red Cross benefit was nice, and along with them all of my favorite local folks who I'm sure are all gonna become famous if they want to (they are that good).

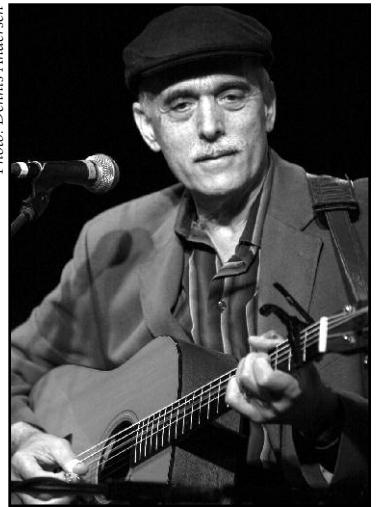
Gregory Page: It's nearing time for him to become famous. I didn't think a voice could get better or a performer could get more inventive, but he does it.

Sara Petite should be famous soon if she isn't already. Her songs get better and better and she's got that stage stuff down right for sure. Nice, pretty, and lots of talent. And you could say that about Chris Clarke. He just gets better and better. His voice is stronger and his mandolin is top notch. You can tell he plays music a lot. He always seems to attract the best musicians and brings the best out of them. Robin Henkel has that correct mix of down home blues and circus clown that will always charm an audience. Good

musicianship and extraordinary stage presence always works. Cindy Lee Berryhill has grown as a songwriter and as a performer as well (she was only on the show for one song, but it was directly concerned with the subject at hand - Haiti - and it was a showstopper). Allen Singer and Dane Terry started the show with some fine pickin' and blowin' on the guitar and harmonica. If you weren't there, I'd suggest any of these folks in any of their solo efforts around town. You won't be sorry and you should buy their CDs, too.

Recordially,  
Lou Curtiss

Photo: Dennis Andersen



The legendary Jim Kweskin at the benefit concert

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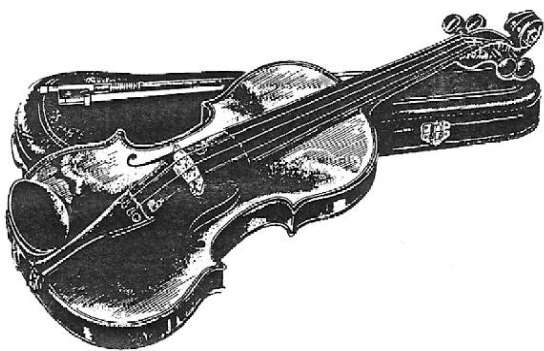
"A rockin', honky-tonkin' delight rooted in the heartbreak in Petite's lyrics and vocals..." — Mikel Toombs (SDNN)

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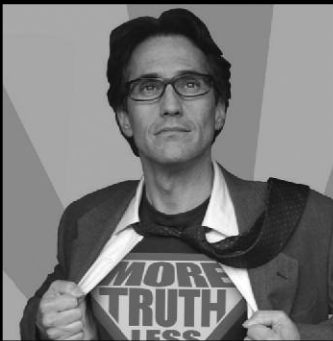
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# Stretching and Reaching with BViolin

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

It's 7:15 p.m. I am wearing a suit and sitting on the ground with my back against a wall. I have no shoes on, just a fresh pair of argyle dress socks I got from my sister for Christmas. As I look across the cushioned bamboo floor of Four Seasons Yoga Studio in University City, I notice a man with barely contained excitement headed in my direction. As my vision finally focuses I recognize him as Mehdi Sarram, father of Bahman (pronounced like 'Batman', without the "t"). Some of you may be more familiar with Bahman via his artist moniker: BViolin ([www.bviolin.com](http://www.bviolin.com)).

"It has always been this way with Bahman," Medi begins before he even gets to where I'm sitting. "Ever since he was very young; it's always been music, music, music."

For the duration of this sentence, I have been struggling to stand and greet the man properly, to no avail. My ingrained sense of propriety, proving no match for the combination of slick polyester blend and the buffed luster of the floor, I find myself slip-stumbling in place like Scooby Doo trying to run from a ghost at a haunted amusement park.

He grasps my hand, calmly places his other on top of them and continues:

"He was a master musician," he says, clearly beaming from parental pride. "He went to Villanova; he heard that Dave Matthews, and then off to California..." He trails off, almost wistfully.

"And now...all this?" He spreads his arms and gestures toward the room that in just a few moments will be filled with the music of BViolin and his guitarist, Reverend Stickman. This will be as an opening act for Bahman's successful Zen House Concert Series.

What's even more notable than the fact that Mehdi passed along this exact same information the last time I saw him, is the undeniably energetic enthusiasm with which it was rendered. This applies as well to his mom, Faye.

"Bahman has always loved music, all his life." Adding quickly, "His friends are also very important to him."

Keep in mind, these aren't things being said in the context of an interview, just pleasant familial chit-chat. What is worth noting, is that the apple has not fallen so far from the tree.

Over the last year or two, I have had the pleasure of seeing BViolin in action, as a

fine musician, promoter, and as a friend. I have witnessed that same bursting-at-the-seams zeal that his mom and dad exhibited, only in the form of just about every single thing that BViolin directs his attention toward.

"Flaming Pie? Are you kidding me? Flaming Pie! Paul McCartney playing all those parts...Melodies for daaaaaaays...I mean, everything. Just brilliant!"

"Brilliant" is definitely one of Bahman's favorite words and he always uses it with the sort of swashbuckling panache you might find displayed in an Errol Flynn movie. In other words: He owns it.

When asked about his father's twice-offered biography, the artist known as BViolin opts for humility.

"There's a certain amount of parental exuberance, for sure," he laughs. It's a characteristic laugh that might remind one of a tennis serve, his eyes and head rolling back for a moment, then effortlessly falling forward to meet those of the person he's conversing with. It suggests a connection; a way of being that lets you know he's not only listening to you, but he's also interested.

That interest, as well as the enthusiasm that so often accompanies it, is central to Bahman's musical journey.

"I was born in Iran, a short time before the revolution and subsequent regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini. Just before this [under the Shaw's rule] there was a lot of stuff being shown on television...a lot of art and music in particular. I really liked it whenever violins were on. Then one day, WHAM! No more music. No more dancing. These things were western and were therefore FORBIDDEN.

"This, of course, only made me more fixated, and when I was four years old I kept asking for a violin. Eventually, I received one, and this old guy was kind of sought out in secrecy to give me some lessons on it. It wasn't too long after that we were forced to flee the country. My dad first and my mom, my sister and me a few months later. We went to Vienna for a year and then to America.

"Vienna is about the time that music had to stop for a little while, because my sister and I had to deal with learning a new language and living in Austria. A year or so after we moved to Philadelphia, it was back to private lessons and then orchestra, orchestra, orchestra all the way up to college. Once I had graduated high school, I was like, 'Well, that's that. I'm not gonna be doing that anymore, because I've got to con-

centrate on going to Villanova.' I actually left my violin at home.

"Anyway, I started out a computer sciences major and after a year of discovering the more 'socially-oriented' aspects of college life, I found a spot at the school's radio station. Everyone else there was playing punk on their shows, but I was like, 'Let's play some Gypsy music...some rock...a little of this, a little of that.'

"So one day I get my ONE caller for the year. They want to hear 'Ants Marching' by the Dave Matthews band, so I'm like, 'Okay...' Well, I hated it! The guy's voice, the music...but then, I started to listen to the words...the stories I was a fan!

"Around the same time I met Chris [Roland], who was a keyboard prodigy. Just a ridiculous musician who can do everything. He rekindled my musical interest. I had to go back home to get my violin!" he chuckles. "We played a bad violin and piano version of Clapton's 'Wonderful Tonight' at an open mic at some no name bar, but we got a great response, and I was hooked, HOOKED!"

Still, the violin took a back seat yet again to more "sensible" concerns.

"I went straight from college into the corporate world. I mean, I still played a little, but I was focused on making the money.

"A few years later, San Diego came. Suddenly, I was in the Middle Earth Band and [Matthews tribute band] Stepping Feet. It was great. I was living on both sides of my musical brain. On Thursday nights, I played for belly dancers. Then on Saturday nights, I went downtown and played Dave Matthews songs. It was perfect!

"Then, the Fryday Band came into the picture. I was like, 'Wow. This is what it's like to play original music.' I just fell in love with the songwriting.

"The band signed to a local label, I quit the corporate world, and we hit the road for a few months. I came back and started a business doing computer work on the side. I eventually left the band and the record label for a girl who I thought I was gonna marry...She ultimately left me as well, but hey! That's how albums are made! My first album *How This Works On Me* is filled with songs about that difficult period in my life."

That recording, with its blend of folk-inflected introspective songs and flamenco flourishes, is delivered with brushed drums, acoustic textures, and a hushed delivery that suggests he's speaking in whispered tones about things that have affected him very, very deeply.

"After that album came out, things really started to happen. I got a regular gig in North County that led to me being able to



Bahman Sarran aka BViolin

perform and hang out with a lot of artists in the L.A./ Hollywood scene. I got to record at Henson Studios, Capitol...that whole 'theater' that is L.A. music.

"At the same time, I was beginning to feel as if the Dave Matthews influence was too apparent and becoming a bit of a curse. I started to tap back into the music that I had performed with Middle Earth, which were my soloing songs. I began to wonder what that music would sound like on record. That's when all the songs that ended up on my next record started being written."

That album, titled *StretchReach*, is where I personally came to experience BViolin and his music in a more comprehensive way, as it was produced and recorded at my studio. Each day I bore witness not just to an artist reinventing himself and his music, but also an excellent example of how one should carry themselves through this world. Challenges were met with all the gusto of kids on the first day of snow. Ideas were welcomed and thoroughly explored. Egos were never in evidence. And there was love, which is undoubtedly another of Bahman's favorite words. He spreads it like jelly on

the toast that is the world around him. It is this and his undeniable knack for surrounding himself with like-minded and talented folks that has prompted myself and others to refer to him as a "people genius."

At the Zen concert, BViolin and Stickman have the crowd enraptured. Eyes closed and head back, his bow slashes and swoops like a bird of prey as the reverend's guitar lays down a snaky groove. The two instruments intertwine and begin to spiral skyward, stretching, reaching, and building to an ecstatic musical climax, only to bring us all gently to the end of his impressive set of music.

"Thank you all. There's just so much talent here in San Diego, so many places you can go to hear some great music. We're just honored to have you all here. Peace."

He's right. There are lots of different kinds of music and artists out there. Here's hoping for more people who understand life and living as well as BViolin.

See him live on March 3 at the Onyx Room, 852 5th Ave., downtown, 9pm.

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an independent record producer, performer, and recording artist. [www.svensongs.com](http://www.svensongs.com)

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by Patric Petrie

THE TRAVELING HOOKER BOOTS, PART I

True enough, being in a band sometimes really is all about skittles and free beer, or you could find yourself attempting to persuade irate event security to drop all the charges and hand over the check, in spite of that unfortunate door surfing incident.

And sometimes it can just be physically painful being the only female in a band.

Ever think about all the equipment (instruments, cables, amps, batteries, wireless setups, etc.) you get to haul around when you go on tour? Add to that all the other goodies, such as fellow band members, boxes of CDs (lesson learned – always bring more than you think you'll need!), merch table set up, (and, of course, the single most important item ... a cooler) and there isn't a heck of a lot of room left in your average vehicle for girly stuff like mini-kilts and cool shoes.

And, trust me, I own some pretty cool shoes, including a pair of black thigh-high shiny stiletto-heeled boots just bought on sale, referred to by one and all as "the hooker boots."

Which is all why, when a friend offered to lend me his new Ford Explorer for a weekend gig at the Los Angeles Irish Fair last year, I shouted, "Hell yah!" and accepted on the spot. Not only was the doohickey as big as my living room, it had a GPS system that promised I could zip painlessly from Pomona to Long Beach to another gig Saturday night (at Club Good Hurt – more about that later) and still find my way back

# The G String Chronicles: NOTES FROM THE ROAD

to the Pomona, and the hotel, in the dark. Which, trust me, is a big deal as driving in L.A. terrifies me even in the daylight, and when I drive at night, I terrify everyone around me!

So first thing, come crack o' dawn Saturday morning, I'm peeling rubber on my way north while balancing the overflowing cup o' tea on my lap while twiddling with the knobs on the radio when the sudden realization hits me, I don't know where the GPS is hiding in the car. A quick search reveals the unthinkable: I can't find the power cable! But time's awasting and if we're not at the fairgrounds by 9 a.m. when the front gate closes to traffic, guess who gets to haul all this stuff across two football fields? Wearing five-inch spike heeled hooker boots, fishnets, and a mini-kilt? In broad daylight? Nah-uh. No way. No how.

Even after getting lost a couple of times (hello L.A.!), I manage to get through the front gate with five minutes to spare. Now comes the fun part: load in, set up, locate missing (possibly still asleep) band members, and bow before the awesome Gods of Sound. Oh yeah, and most important, finding the toilets.

The shows go off with a minimum of damage – three sets spaced fairly evenly with plenty of breaks for wandering around and checking out the other bands, signing CDs, and posing with fans, as well as exam-

ining the various offerings of the beer tents. Guinness, Guinness, and more Guinness. The holy trinity of Irish potables.

The only serious problem arises at the end of the day when, as we're bolting for the parking lot and the next gig, I realize I can barely hobble about on my tip toes. Too much walking around in new boots without "protection" and my feet are sporting a crop of blisters that's getting worse by the minute.

OK, the guys would never be stupid enough to have this happen to them – but sometimes you've got to suffer for your art. A fan buying CDs tells me her husband dragged them back to all our shows that day because he loved the "hooker boots" and wanted her to see what she was getting for her birthday. Long pause as I slowly back away from the table. Thank you ma'am, and good luck with that!

In the end, Enrique, our percussionist and the nicest man in the world, is studly enough to push-pull the combined load of wimpy girl/instruments/ crap out to the car.

And then it's all aboard for a dash across L.A. traffic (with a few side trips along the way because I get lost, of course) to the infamous Club Good Hurt. I totally do not understand the name of the club until we get there and are welcomed with open arms by the (exceptionally) well endowed and friendly ladies behind the bar, all of whom are wearing skin-tight nursing uniforms with huge red crosses. Well, duh!

The rest of the night speeds by in a flash, with me dragging a friend off to the ladies' room where she proceeds to lace me into my favorite bondage dress (no only a fond memory, sniff) while increasingly urgent voices, and a few fists pounding on the door, make their point clear that one should not use the toilet as a dressing room! And they call themselves ladies?

So it's back to San Diego in the early a.m. with a car that's lighter in CDs but stacked to the rafters with assorted odds and ends, including said hooker boots. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when I get up in the morning and stagger out to the driveway, only to be greeted by a vast expanse of space. Wait a sec. I look to the left and right,

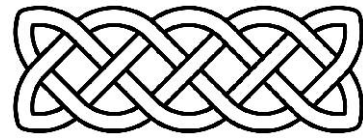


Patric Petrie (wearing the "hooker boots") and Skelpin' playing at the Los Angeles Irish Fair.

like something should magically appear. Wasn't a car there only a few hours ago? WITH ALL MY STUFF!

**Next month (it gets better):** On the run with the Traveling Hooker Boots; San Diego detectives get a laugh; what happens when a Ford Explorer meets a koi pond in Clairemont; explaining "professional attire" in the courtroom; and other fun stuff.

Patric Petrie daims it's all true and only the names have been changed to protect the innocent. She gets endless amusement (and the occasional morning after headache) from performing with her Celtic/world beat band, Skelpin', where she plays fiddle (really fast) and sings (not so fast). Skelpin' tours in the U.S. as well as abroad, mainly in Japan, and believes airlines should stop charging for instruments.



Siobhan O'Brien, continued from page 4

Harry Chapin. Cummins shared early mixes with his friend Paddy Malone of the Chieftains. After hearing the songs, Malone wanted to be part of it.

After playing on her CD, Malone invited O'Brien to sing "Lakes of the Pontchartrain" with the Chieftains on stage at Boston Symphony Hall. The song also appears on *Songs I Grew Up To*. Malone later described

O'Brien's singing as "a voice the world should hear."

Having a knack for being in the right place at the right time (not to mention knowing how to get past security), O'Brien approached her favorite artist, Bob Dylan, prior to a performance in Dublin. Startled at first, Dylan accepted a demo from O'Brien. After chatting a few minutes, he asked her to sing to him on the spot. After hearing her voice, he invited her to accompany him to his show and join him afterward for a bite. Little did she know that one of Ireland's most famous singers, Bono, would join them. Over dinner with Dylan, Bono, and others, Dylan had explained to Bono that this girl had appeared out of nowhere and sang these lovely songs. After Dylan asked her to sing a song to Bono, the U2 star simply said, "Wow!" The chain of events is so incredible that it's almost unbelievable, but it did happen and it's a night O'Brien will never forget.

Her voice is angelic, and her blue eyes are brimming with a mix of excitement, mischief, and wonderment. She is a treasure to see, hear and meet.

In addition to performing with the Symphony, O'Brien will play a few other scheduled shows in Southern California.

To hear the voice that prompted Dylan to invite her to join him in Dublin, don't miss the chance to see her with the San Diego Symphony, when they perform Music of the Emerald Isle, Wednesday, March 17, 8pm at Symphony Hall.

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by Allen Singer

Sometimes, without planning or advance warning, something happens that brings about a convergence of culture, life experiences, hard work, and a synthesis of musical variations that creates a special, one-of-a-kind person. Jaime Valle is that special person. A native of Tijuana, he played the bars along Revolution Avenue: the Convoy Club (where Carlos Santana began his career), Bum-Bum Club, Blue Note, Blue Fox, Aloha, and Mike's Bar. As he played those smoky barroom clubs, Jaime got his early musical education. He played the blues of Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed, Johnny "Guitar" Watson, and Ray Charles. He also played the rhythm and blues that predated much of the Beatles music heard in Tijuana during the 1960s. At some point during these journeyman years, he heard Wes Montgomery on jazz guitar. Those octave phrases that Wes played caught Jaime's ear and touched his soul, setting him off on his journey into the world of jazz guitar.

When you watch Jaime perform, you immediately notice that he's completely at ease and doesn't hide behind his guitar as he plays with gusto and lives the joy of the music he's playing and improvising at the moment. You can't help but be drawn into the music, connected to his jazz lines, his sense of swing, and his emotional road map.

I've known Jaime for almost three decades. During these years, I've seen his musical style mature – raw talent morphing into skilled musicianship. The music he plays is subtle and complex, but always very approachable. Jaime's music reflects not only his unique DNA but also his studious approach to learning his art and ongoing commitment to stay fresh and updated, all the while remaining connected to his roots and the jazz tradition he embraces every time he plays his guitar.

In Tijuana, Jaime worked along a porous cultural border where he lived a musician's life from early on. By the time he was 14, he was already playing all the music he heard from the U.S. in the clubs. He performed seven days a week to provide the bar crowds with the music he was continuously absorbing. This school of hard knocks, playing in smoky, crowded clubs, with the inevitable nightly tensions of the various groups that played there, was Jaime's first music conservatory. The clubs were his practice room and provided a taste of what was to be his life's journey of becoming a working musician.

As with all musical borders, the U.S. border was transparent, and Tijuana's proximity to San Diego and Los Angeles made the music flow even more seamlessly. While preparing to write this article, I mentioned my project to Lou Curtiss, who told me a story about how he and his friends would go to Tijuana to dance and listen to Jaime Valle and Carlos Santana in the clubs. The rock/dance clubs along Revolution Avenue had become Jaime's equivalent of New York City's 52nd Street jazz havens, a place of music fusion and cross-fertilization, a venue for oddball characters and underhanded promoters. To be sure, the clubs were where Jaime developed his street smarts, but they were also the places where he experi-

enced a cross-cultural synthesis and discovered his place in the larger musical worlds on both sides of the border.

In the late 1960s, Jaime eventually moved on to Acapulco to join Mexico's hit band the Love Army after being recruited by Alfredo Elias Calles, owner of the famous Acapulco club Tiberio's and other clubs in Mexico City. The Love Army was a group consisting of some of the best rock club musicians in Mexico. The band member photos looked like carbon copies of American psychedelic bands at the time, complete with Nehru jackets, paisley print shirts, Fender straits, and Beatle-like haircuts. Acapulco was a tourist town with a wild reputation, a place where Hollywood stars and the *glitterati* went to vacation, cut loose, and dance the nights away in a haze of smoke, noise, drinking, and the excitement created by the Love Army.

Over the following years, the more he played, the more Jaime became musically restless – always inquisitive and always questioning musical styles and concepts, including his own use of chord progressions. He was looking to get beyond the I, IV, V blues structure he loved, played by the old Chicago blues masters and rhythm and blues that he played nightly in his gigs. He wanted more out of the music and three chords were too limiting. British guitarists like Jeff Beck and America's Jimmie Hendrix (aka Jimmie James) caught his ear and sparked Jaime's interests and creativity. By the time he was a young man, he had already experienced the life of being in a successful band (the Love Army) and had lived and worked in Mexico City among its 20 million citizens as well as in Acapulco and Tijuana. During the time he spent in Mexico City, Jaime studied music at the Conservatorio Nacional de Musica and at the Escuela Libre de Musica. He learned music theory and the art of *solfeggio* and harmony. When he moved to Los Angeles in the early 1970s, Jaime's fertile mind had been infused with the Latin beats of his early musical experiences, American blues, and rock 'n' roll. He took this all with him when he moved to States. He was ready to try to build his jazz chops. He studied at the Dick Grove School of Music, took improvisation workshops with his friend Howard Roberts, and studied with Joe Pass, Joe Diorio, and Ted Green.

Jaime was on the move musically and moved to San Diego where he worked at Apex Music, located among the tattoo parlors and sailor bars downtown. He soon became involved with the music scene in Mission Valley's many hotels and clubs when Curt Bates, who booked those gigs, came into Apex and asked him to audition at one of the clubs. Jaime was visible, available, and always the "go-to" guy when musicians were needed for local performances. During the 30 years that followed his move to San Diego, Jaime performed with a wide cross section of accomplished local and national musicians, including Steve Allen, Frankie Laine, Sammy Davis Jr., Dave Valentin, Eddie Harris, Joe Farrell, Kenny Burrell, Ron Eschete, Russell Malone, Ramon Banda, Ernie Watts, Alex Acuña, Tania Maria, Bob Magnusson, Big Joe Turner, Larry Vuckovich, Jeff Chambers, John Lee Hooker, Salomon Burke, Dave Pike, Joe Pass, Mike Wofford, Lamont Johnson, Mundell

# JAIME VALLE

## At Home in Two Worlds



Photos: Steve Covault



Lowe, Howard Roberts, Poncho Sanchez, Mongo Santamaria, Otmaro Ruiz, Steve Tavaglione, Luis Gasca, Gilbert Castellanos, Duncan Moore, Rob Thorsen, Bunny Brunel, Anthony Ortega, Luis Conte, Allan Phillips, Holly Hofmann, and Rob Thorsen.

When you hear his music, you immediately understand that Jaime has always held on to his Latin roots. He began to do what Dizzy Gillespie did in the 1950s when he incorporated Afro-Cuban rhythms and changes into his bebop jazz repertoire. Over the years he played every possible club, saloon, and music stage in our town. He began to tire of breathing in bad air and smoke while trying to entertain uninterested bar patrons who would rather drown their sorrows than listen to his music. Jaime wanted much more. In the 1980s Jaime put together his own band called Equinox, a Latin, salsa group that would play at the U.S. Grant Hotel every Friday and Saturday night for 13 years. The band got the audience's attention with its updated Latin

sound and Jaime's ability to transcend cultures in an entertaining and enlightening way. Equinox entertained, but also didn't condescend musically. The music pulled together Latin/salsa beats from Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Mexico as well as samba sounds from Brazil, and also radiated Afro-Cuban influences and the sophistication of jazz charts with bebop themes. The band was like the United Nations of musicians. Along with Jaime Valle, band members included Allan Phillips, a Venezuelan pianist; Gene Perry, a drummer from Puerto Rico; Cesar Lozano, a drummer from Mexico; Kiko Cornejo, a vibist from the United States; and Peter Skrabek, a bass player from Czechoslovakia. The band was very popular among locals and the shows did very well, but Jaime wanted to do more. Although busy with Equinox, he also played at Tutto Mare in University City during the same years with a variety of musicians. When I heard Jaime play there ten years ago, I realized that he was playing more freely





Valle at the Bum Bum Club in Tijuana, 1962



Valle with Carlos Santana, 1970s



Valle with Tripp Sprague and Bob Magnusson



Mundell Lowe, Valle, Gene Bertocini



Valle at the 2007 Guitar Summit with Mike Magnelli, Mundell Lowe



Valle at Anthology (Rob Thorsen in background)

with a less structured approach and was improvising with more sophistication. But even in the midst of these musical changes, people still got up and danced to the music. The crowd seemed to be enjoying the performance and the dancing didn't get in Jaime's way. Over the years, he learned that people still needed to be entertained, but now he could offer them a chance to hear more complex music as well.

Jaime developed working friendships with many San Diego jazz musicians over the years, playing with such local musical treasures as Mike Wofford, Bob Magnusson, Holly Hofmann, and Mundell Lowe. His style has become almost classical as he plays in duets, trios, and quartets. In San Diego Jaime found the musical space to expand his improvisational skills, test his musical limits, and free himself as well as expand his musical comfort zone. He wanted to be free to test harmonic limits, build on the melodies, and find commonality in scale tones that are sometimes unusual, but also fresh sounding and not abrasive. The relationships he formed with some of San Diego's finest musicians gave Jaime inspiration and reinforced his confidence by providing him with new skills and recognition as a jazz musician.

Jaime and I lived in the same neighborhood for a while and during those years I would occasionally pay him a visit to talk jazz, get some guitar playing encouragement, and show him my guitars. Jaime is a Heritage Guitar artist and has represented the company for many years. During our talks Jaime would always be generous in offering up some wisdom, a few suggestions, some insights into the music business, and musical ideas. He became my catalyst for starting to play music again. In his house, among the guitars, music stands, and guitar amps, you'd always see musical writings and many CDs; upstairs Jaime had a small studio where he composed music and sometimes wrote 30-second jingles, radio ads, and even movie scores.

Jaime has always had many talents and interests related to music. He recently scored the music for an award-winning film titled *Tijuana Jews*. A few days ago, when I spoke to him via phone from his house in San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, we discussed the film and he described how he created a string quartet and composed Klezmer music to fit the movie's theme. He told me that he's currently in the midst of scoring another movie titled *Frontier Jews*, a film about Jewish rabbis that emigrated to the Southwest in the 1880s. He also just scored a promotional movie for the city of Tijuana, a piece that deals with the local music. You quickly realize that Jaime is always thinking outside the box, listening and absorbing music's many styles. He is never afraid to duplicate and fuse the music with his own creative style. In addition to writing scores for movies, Jaime also teaches guitar, but since he spends so much time in Mexico and touring abroad these days, he probably won't be teaching in San Diego very much. In the past, Jaime has taught at Mesa College and says that he still enjoys teaching and doing workshops, but most of all he loves to play.

Jaime has a longstanding friendship with

San Diego resident Mundell Lowe, a great jazz guitarist and mentor, and enjoys playing with him when he is in town or when the two of them are on tour in Europe. In the past ten years, Jaime has played in New York City and in several European capitals. He finds it musically inspiring and invigorating to tour. While describing the differences between European and American audiences, Jaime recently told me a story about a moment of stage fright he experienced at Europe's oldest jazz club, Jazz Land, in Vienna. He said that here in this country, we're used to people talking during shows, drinking noisily, and basically using the music as background to other club activities. In Vienna, after he performed with Mundell Lowe, the audience sat stone silent, not moving or getting up, and not clapping spontaneously. Jaime felt uneasy and asked Mundell what was going on. Jaime wondered if he wasn't playing well or if the audience didn't like him. Mundell explained that Europeans were like that and were intensely respectful in their love of jazz performances, which they treated as audiences would treat a classical music performance. Jaime understood and his stage fright disappeared.

Jaime commutes back and forth to his second home in Mexico. He and his wife, Elaine, have family here in San Diego, but he finds that he is also well suited to life in San Miguel de Allende, a central Mexican mountain town founded in the 1500s and a UNESCO Heritage of Humanity designated city that is also an international center of Mexican arts and music. He feels the town is well suited to him, too. There he can perform and create as well as travel to gigs around the world.

When we spoke last month, Jaime described some of the changes he's experienced and why he feels that San Diego musicians need to get out of the city to find venues. He thinks that in order to grow musically, you need to expand your safety zone and then, when you return, your experiences will enrich your music. He spoke about the unease he felt when he first went to New York to perform. New York's cachet as the center of the jazz world for many years has had a reputation of being closed to performers from outside the city and high expectations for musical competence was intimidating. Jaime said it was liberating and musically very satisfying to open that door and realize the universality of his skills and music, even in so daunting a city as New York. We talked about San Diego, its clubs, its musicians, its history, and the well of talent who live and play here. Jaime thinks that one becomes oversaturated and overplayed in San Diego and the expectation is that you always play the same thing in the same places.

For him it was eye opening to go beyond the borders. The journey he started in Tijuana clubs continues today. As a 13-time San Diego Music Award winner, he is also experienced in all aspects of the music business, including

serving as an agent. A few years ago I was playing the slots at Viejas when Jaime walked by. He was there to check on the music programs and to check on a band performing there that he hired and agented. Jaime knows the music business and in every talk we've had, he has offered me great advice and suggestions. I recently read the November 2009 article about Jaime in *Just Jazz Guitar* magazine by Dr. Steven Kinigstein that contained a quote from Mundell Lowe about Jaime. "Before he said anything about Jaime as a musician, Mundell insisted on saying a few words about Jaime as a human being. 'He's a great guy, a wonderful person. As a guitarist he's excellent. Jaime is one of the tastiest Latin and jazz players around; everything he does makes musical sense.'"

I reviewed Jaime's first CD in 1996 (Round Midnight on Amazon.com.). It was a breakthrough CD, setting out a clear statement of his musical background and establishing him as a jazz musician who was not going to deny his Latin roots. Since then Jaime has released three other albums: *Different Worlds*, *Third*

*Voyage*, and *Vital Signs*. Each one provides a new window into his amalgamation of musical style, cultural sound, and jazz chops.

Jaime is a skillful performer and an entertainer who not only brings musical knowledge and years of experience to his performances, he also plays with a hint of humor that displays his virtuosity and life experiences through his music. Jaime is unique without being unapproachable. He wants you to enjoy his work, to come away with some insight into the music process, to let you get beyond the usual, but still feel satisfied and entertained. Jaime is the totality of his roots and connections to his past. Above all, he is an example of how one's roots and traditions don't detract, but rather add to the core of your musical skills and ability.

When I spoke to Jaime at his second home in Mexico, the lake outside, and the satisfaction that comes with the continuing expansion of life's musical journey, I realized that it wasn't just luck and talent that made Jaime an outstanding musician. It took more than four decades of hard work – developing his guitar chops, seeing and exploring the world around him, breaking free from the routine of being a musician in his hometown – that made Jaime the international performer he continues to be. Borders have been bridges, not barriers to Jaime and he has never lost contact with his past and present selves. Jaime's musicianship is an excellent example of how you can carve out your own place in the world of music, if you are inquisitive and "borderless." During the last conversation we had for this article, Jaime expressed an interest in what I was doing and wondered about what other musicians were doing in town. He still has a stronghold in San Diego and was recently here to gig at Dizzy's as well as Harry's Bar and plans to be back in April.

*"My music has its own inner direction... I am changing as a guitarist all the time."*  
—Jaime Valle





# Bluegrass CORNER

by Dwight Worden



## WHAT'S COOKIN' THIS MONTH

March looks to be another great month for bluegrass in San Diego. The Gibson Brothers and their band are coming to the Del Mar Powerhouse on Sunday, March 21 for a special concert, co-sponsored by the Del Mar Foundation and the San Diego Bluegrass Society. The Gibson Brothers are one of the top national bluegrass bands presenting the very "best of the best" in brother harmony singing, of a caliber that holds its own with the Louvin Brothers, the Everly Brothers, and other great sibling duos.

Here's what some of the reviewers have said about this band: "Beautiful. Timeless. Wrenching." – Bill Eichenberger, *Columbus Dispatch*. "The Gibson Brothers deliver their tales of rural life with a mixture of pain and joy that rings true. . ." – Geoffrey Himes, *Washington Post*. "To say they've got the classic brother duet thing down is an understatement; they own it." – Michael Eck, *No Depression*.

The Del Mar Powerhouse is a beautiful venue, located right on the beach in Del Mar, but it is small, seating only about 120, so get your tickets early. For info and tickets visit: [delmarfoundation.org](http://delmarfoundation.org).

On March 6 Chris Stuart and his band Backcountry will present a songwriting workshop at Old Time Music, 2852 University Avenue at the corner of Utah in North Park. The workshop is from 2-4 pm. Call (619) 280-9035 for registration and info. Chris is the most recent winner of the IBMA award for "Song of the Year" in bluegrass music. In addition, Chris was the winner of the prestigious Chris Austin songwriting competition at Merlefest in both the bluegrass and gospel categories, so the man knows how to write a bluegrass song.

The Temecula Bluegrass Festival will be in full swing on Saturday and Sunday, March 20-21 in Old Town Temecula. This year's event features performances by Bluegrass Etc., the Alan Munde Gazette, Lonesome Otis, the Silverado Bluegrass Band, Sligo Rags, Gone Tomorrow, the Bluegrass Brethren, and others. The action happens Saturday from 11am to 10pm and Sunday 11am to 6pm. Admission is free for all of the day concerts. The Saturday evening (7pm) concert with the Alan Munde Gazette and Bluegrass Etc. is \$15 and the Sunday afternoon (3pm) concert with the Alan Munde Gazette and Sligo Rags is \$5. Camping is also available (call 951-678-0831). For more info: [www.temeculacalifornia.com](http://www.temeculacalifornia.com).

On March 27 Jay Ungar (author of "Ashokan Farewell"), Molly Mason and their family band will be here to give an evening concert at the San Dieguito United Methodist Church in Encinitas. The concert is sponsored by the San Diego Folk Heritage Society. For tickets and info visit: <http://sdfolkheritage.org>.

## BANJOS!

Last month we took a look at some of the great bluegrass guitar players, identifying some of the historical and national greats as well as some of the local standouts. In this issue we'll take a look at banjo players.

Any discussion of great banjo players must start with Earl Scruggs. Earl was a member of the seminal early edition of bluegrass' founding band, Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys, wherein Earl redefined banjo playing by perfecting and popularizing his three-finger technique. Earl then went on to even greater success as part of the all-time group Flatt and Scruggs, featuring Lester Flatt on vocals and guitar and Earl on banjo. You won't get many banjo players who argue against a claim that Earl was the "best of all time" and none who will argue he was (and still is – he's still performing!) the most influential of all time. You simply cannot seriously study bluegrass banjo without dosing yourself with some heavy Earl Scruggs.

Reasonable minds can differ on any list of

the greats other than Earl, but here is my take. Other influential banjo players include Don Reno, an early contemporary of Earl Scruggs, who was also a stellar technician and performer rightfully able to claim, along with Earl, at least some of the credit for early three-finger innovation. And, of course the great Ralph Stanley of the Stanley Brothers who penned such banjo classics as "Climch Mountain Backstep." Other players of stature and influence whose presence has been prominent in the banjo world for decades include J.D. Crowe (The New South; the Sunny Mountain Boys with Jimmy Martin), Allan Munde (Country Gazette, Allan Munde Gazette), John Hickman (Berline Cray and Hickman; California), and Eddie Adcock (Country Gentlemen).

As we step into the modern era we acknowledge many great banjo players. Noteworthy among this very competitive crowd are Jim Mills (Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder), Ron Stewart (Lynn Morris Band; JD Crowe and the New South), Craig Smith (Laurie Lewis and the Right Hands), and Richard Bailey (the Steeldrivers). And, while not currently playing a heavy mix of traditional bluegrass, Bela Fleck (Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, New Grass Revival) and Noam Pikelnny (Punch Brothers) have to be mentioned as these two have developed banjo skills of the very highest caliber.

Turning to the local scene, we recognize Mike Tatar, Sr. (Virtual Strangers) and Wayne Rice (Lighthouse) as long-term contributors to the local bluegrass scene who play solid traditional style banjo. Chris Beucler of Highway 76 is a standout with a hard-driving style that combines tradition with a more modern approach, and Jason Weiss (Bluegrass Ramblers; Taildraggers) shines in technical skills and modern banjo styles as well as traditional. Steve Dame of Gone Tomorrow may be the most underrated of the top local banjo players, but give him a listen and you will appreciate his talent. And, recent transplant to San Diego, Janet Beazley (Chris Stuart and Backcountry) plays as well as anyone on the local scene with a beautiful and clean rock solid style.

Ever wonder who plays the most bluegrass type gigs in any year? It may well be the San Diego Bluegrass Society-sponsored Emma's Gut Bucket Band. The Gut Bucket Band, as it is affectionately called, was founded by Emma Radcliffe and has been playing for three decades or more. The group is all volunteer and takes its unique brand of bluegrass, string music, and old time music to schools, assisted living facilities, community centers, and the like – all for free (donations are accepted and the money is used to support an instrument donation program that provides instruments to school and other worthy causes. Dave Kelly serves as gig coordinator and Larry Edwards manages the website. The band has played everywhere from the Balboa Park Organ Pavilion Stage to the Drop in Center for Homeless children. Here is a rundown on the Gut Bucket Band Gigs for 2009:

Convalescent Hospital gigs: 21  
Senior Events: 14  
School events 3  
Fund Raisers for worthwhile causes 3  
Miscellaneous other 5

That's a total of 46 gigs, or almost one per week. Dave reports that some of the highlights of the year included a fundraiser played for border patrol agent Robert Rosas who was slain in the line of duty, a performance for a fashion show for the San Diego County Women's Club in El Cajon, and a fundraiser for veterans attending Palomar College. You can learn more about Emma's Gut Bucket Band at: <http://www.larryedwards.com/egbb/index.html>. The band meets every Wednesday evening for practise and all players are welcome. Way to go, Gut Bucket Band! You do the bluegrass community proud!

# The Zen of Recording

by Sven-Erik Seaholm

## PRESONUS STUDIO ONE: A NEW CONTENDER FOR THE DAW CROWN

In an early issue of this column, I addressed the reasons and concepts behind titling it "The Zen of Recording." In far too small of a nutshell, it refers to the ability to become so comfortable using your available tools, techniques, and technology that the creative process is unabated by them, effectively allowing one to remain steadfastly in the creative moment while chasing down those fleeting moments of inspiration.

Frequent readers of these communiqués may have also noted that the majority of products chosen for review herein are not only chock full of great ideas, but are also easy on the relatively thin pocketbooks carried by so many of us muso types.

Hardware is a frequent focus, with high performance and solid build quality joining the list of requisite features. Baton Rouge's **PreSonus** ([www.presonus.com](http://www.presonus.com)) has been a frequent subject of review, with the venerable **Eureka** microphone preamp, **HP60** headphone amp and **FirePod** and **FireStudio** recording interfaces, all being covered here and making more than admirable showings.

Still, with regard to software, PreSonus is a relatively unproven commodity. Add to that the abundance of digital audio workstations already available (ProTools, Logic, Sonar, Vegas, Cubase, etc.) and you've got a mighty tough climb ahead of you.

Upon first opening **Studio One Pro** (PC/Mac, \$499 retail, \$399 street) after a relatively easy install process, the program opens and a start page presents itself. This allows quick access to songs, projects (more on this later), tutorials, and even a PreSonus news feed!

Opening to Song View, one can immediately see that there is a fresh approach at work here. Most apparent is the "single window" GUI, wherein most tasks are very conveniently laid out within arm's (or mouse's) reach.

The left side of the screen is where the tracks are stacked in the by now

familiar horizontal fashion, events and envelopes being centrally located just to their right. Along the top is an ergonomic toolbar, with windows at the far left, providing visual information with regard to track state, inputs, etc. Below this, buttons for Inspector (a fly-out window that gives more indepth info for a selected track), Track



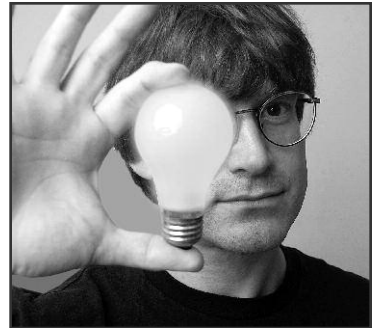
Add, File Import, Automation Envelopes, Tempo Track, and Marker Track stand at the ready. Along the bottom are the transport controls, CPU and Midi meters, metronome, time signature and tempo info, time display, and a redundant volume control.

At the bottom right corner of the screen are three tabs marked "Edit," "Mix," and "Browse." This is where things get interesting, because the tabs hold the key to how Studio One makes this virtually "navigation free" approach work.

For example, click on the "Edit" tab and the bottom half of the workspace becomes an area devoted to editing the currently selected track. If that track contains audio, everything you need for slicing, dicing, quantizing, selecting, erasing, and muting wave forms is at your "virtual" fingertips. Similarly MIDI tracks, open to a "piano-roll" styled editor with a monitor space-conscious panel and tabbed access to other parameters.

Click the "Mix" tab and every channel's input and outputs, corresponding fader, inserts, and buss assignments are displayed, making mixing and effecting tracks more intuitive.

"Browse" is the king of the interface, though. Each of its five tabs providing instant access to VST instruments, effects, sounds (loops, etc.),



Sven-Erik Seaholm

files, and a pool of the files being used in the current project. In use, nothing could be simpler or more convenient.

That convenience and ease of use are underscored by the "drag and drop" implementation of all these features. Need a compressor on that vocal? Find what you need in the browser and drag it onto the vocal track. It's automatically added as an insert effect! Need to play a keyboard bass part? Drag the included Mojito synth over to the track and instantly begin auditioning patches! How about a drum loop? Browse to the "Sounds" tab and audition any number of the great sounding loops included at the tempo you've specified.

It can't be emphasized enough just how "inspiration friendly" Studio One is in use. If you've used recording software before, the learning curve is a gentle one. I was up and running and deep in the moment almost instantly. Building arrangements and auditioning sounds with instant and contextual feedback was just plain FUN! Add the fact that audio is captured in lustrous 32-bit depth and processing is at 64 bit, and you've got state-of-the-art, pristine audio quality to boot!

Once I had made a few demo recordings, I decided to explore Studio One's "Project" mode, where one can apply mastering and compile Red Book compliant CDs. Again, the great thinking that went into this facet of the program was constantly evident. Instead of rendering (or "bouncing" if you only speak ProTools) your mixes first and then compiling your CD project, you can actually drag the Studio One file directly into the timeline. A mix is automatically rendered and placed there. Add to that the Adobe-style automatic updating of edits in the placed files and you have the best damn idea the mastering process has seen since limiters! There's even a great feature for preparing your files for digital release, with easily editable metadata and the ability to include artwork...Yes!

Studio One comes with a huge bundle of virtual keyboards, samples, loops, and effects that will more than admirably cover the needs of any pro or newbie, making it an incredible value for anyone looking to build a new recording setup. It should also be mentioned that **Studio One Artist** (PC/Mac, \$249 retail, \$199 street) comes bundled free with all new PreSonus recording interfaces. It is essentially the same program sans the mastering options of "Project" mode.

In essence, PreSonus has effectively taken the best parts of Cubase, Acid, Logic, and Ableton Live (among others) and placed them into an interface that provides unprecedented flexibility and ease of use. That Studio One ultimately promotes creative, right-brained thinking makes this an all-in-one solution for those looking to become one with their muse.

*Sven-Erik Seaholm is an award-winning independent record producer, performer and recording artist. His company Kitsch & Sync Production ([kaspro.com](http://kaspro.com)) provides Recording, Mastering, Graphic Design, Consultations and CD Manufacturing Services. Call him at 619-287-1955 to inquire about Special Winter Rates. Or go to [www.svensongs.com](http://www.svensongs.com) to see where he's playing.*

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# Hosing Down

by José Sinatra



The piercingly incisive José Sinatra

## THE PRICE OF PURITY

I first met Slowfrye some months ago when we were introduced in the parking lot of a big casino in North County. She was to be my personal assistant throughout the shooting of a video for a song "Playing Poker for a Living," which had been written, produced, and recorded by my friend Jason Mershon a few weeks before. Actually, he had more accurately supervised the recording and had sung a lot of the backing chorus parts, having hired your dewy-lipped and flaxen-nippled writer to sing the lead vocal.

Slowfrye, the only crew member dressed appropriately for such a brutally hot day, showed me to an air-conditioned trailer near the casino entrance. As soon as we got inside she pulled a chilled 40-ounce Magnum from an ice chest, removed the cap, stuck a long red straw down its mouth, and offered it to me. I felt like kissing her thong. Then she spoke, accusingly.

"Jason tells me you're the gambling dude singing the song, but that you've never been a gambler."

For some reason I felt the urge to impress her as she nonchalantly removed her bikini top and pulled on a "Playing Poker for a Living" tee shirt.

"No, I've never gambled – in the accepted sense. But for some people, life itself becomes little more than a game.

And for every one of them, taking chances becomes as natural as breathing. We're all at the same table, basically, and deal in our own way with the hand we're dealt." Nice one, Hose. How I admired myself at that moment.

Her eyes glistened, began pooling as she came closer to me. She hesitated, stared at either my lips or my chin before confessing. "Jason told me you were deep. [Right on, Jason!] I wonder how deep you can go...!"

"As deep as any talent I possess allows." Yes!

A knock on the trailer door, and a voice outside: "Hose, they need you inside in two minutes."

"Okay, thanks," I replied bitterly, yet with grace.

"Why do they call you Hose?" Slowfrye asked innocently, her eyes never having strayed below my neck.

I took the high ground, imagining its vegetation more abundant. "I have a tendency to clean things. Leave them better than they were before," I lied, accidentally dropping the Magnum bottle and allowing it to explode on the floor.

"Don't worry, I'll take care of it," Slowfrye entreated as she gently led me out the door, then screamed into the heat, "I need a mop and a broom and some towels up here. Now!"

During the first break in the shooting, when I returned to the trailer, I found it spotless and sparkling and smelling of Heaven and Slowfrye, who told me confidentially that her real name was Solanda

Frye and that she had decided to be a singer on her sixteenth birthday, when some freak boyfriend of hers had given her a copy of *Education and Outreach*, the second album I had done with the Troy Danté Inferno. She said she liked it better than the cleaned-up second version of the same title, and that maybe that's why we were different: she digs raw, I dig clean. That's not necessarily true, I offered; I actually preferred the somewhat nastier versions of those two or three songs we'd later changed and augmented. The later issue became the more popular one only because it had become unfashionable for a white guy to refer to his girlfriend as his "bitch" so much, even in so endearing a fashion.

Slowfrye pulled a CD from out of the back of her thong. It was a rare bootleg of a live recording from a club in Washington D.C. when I was a member of the Lou Christie Minstrels. "Where did you get this? I haven't seen one of these in ages!" I gasped.

"Look at the back, Hose."

I could recognize my own handwriting anywhere. "For Christine," it said and continued, "Always embrace your talent!"

It all came back suddenly, clear and clean. "That was 1971," I sighed. "You know Christine Daniels?"

"She was my mom."

Later that afternoon, we had completed a shot with Jason and me standing with guitars on top of a poker table, two gorgeous dancers at our sides, the seated players surrounding us happily yelling along to the chorus and drooling on their cards. The director yelled, "Okay, perfect! Now the export version!" As the two beauties carefully descended from the table, they were replaced by Slowfrye and another comely young blonde, both entirely topless and looking good enough to gamble for. I hadn't known that my new friend was going to be appearing in the video at all, especially in this raw "foreign" version.

I suddenly felt protective. I grabbed a magic marker and wrote "talent" across Slowfrye's chest, the T's futilely attempting to conceal that which modern American media rejects. Then I gave her a hug before the first take and she kissed me, whispering, "I assume you'll make sure this washes off..."

Suddenly, I began feeling dirty again.

To hear or view or learn more about "Playing Poker for a Living" without feeling dirty, go to [playinpokerforalivin.com](http://playinpokerforalivin.com)



# RADIO DAZE



by Jim McInnes

## RANDOM STUFF

### 215/420 NEWS

On February 17th, a research team affiliated with UCSD announced the results of a ten-year study on marijuana and pain. It concluded that pot does, indeed, offer substantial relief from certain kinds of chronic pain, including AIDS, diabetes, and spinal pain. The research team presented their findings to the state legislature. Whether that leads to across-the-board legalization and taxation remains to be seen. Right now, the "weed with roots in hell" has been legal since 1996 for those over 21 who have a doctor's recommendation.

My buddy Don, who is 60, suffers from multiple health problems: debilitating nighttime leg cramps, scoliosis, and severe lower back pain. Recently, Don took a musician (!) friend's advice and asked a doctor for a medical marijuana prescription. On January 5th, his late mother's birthday, Don got his prescription. Now his bathroom medicine cabinet has prescription bottles with labels reading, "Grand-Daddy Purple," "Blue Dream," "Cotton," "God's Gift," and "Bubble Goo," alongside the usual bottles of aspirin, laxatives, and Viagra. Don tells me the prescription-strength pot takes his mind off the pain (and makes him really hungry!), but he only smokes it after work because he gets so relaxed and mellow.

I tried marijuana once when I was in college, but I didn't swallow.

### BEISBOL NEWS

Baseball season begins soon.

Fact: between 1981 and 1984, the Padres had a backup catcher named Doug Gwosdz. His nickname was "eye chart!" Ba-da-bing!!

### METAPHOR UPDATE

I recently watched a show on History called "American Pickers," which follows a pair of men who scour barns and attics throughout the Midwest, hunting for antiques. In one scene, one of them picked up a stuffed bird dating from the 1920s and commented, "This smells like a sumo wrestler took a dump on a burning tire!" Ba-da-bing!!

### ZEPPELIN UPDATE

On January 31st, our black Lab-Rhodesian dog, Zeppelin, turned 16 years of age, or somewhere between 85 and 112 years old in human terms. She is stone deaf, has cataracts, and takes drugs to combat doggie Alzheimer's. Ol' Zeppy stands or lies down and stares at Sandi and me, panting all the while, waiting for one of us to move. Whoever walks out of the room gets followed closely. Wherever we stop, she stops. Sometimes we'll walk in circles just to wind her up! She has no clear signal to indicate that she needs to pee or poop, so we have to guess. So far, at least, the old gal is not pooping in the house. Zeppelin's bark, I'm happy to say, still rattles the walls. She sounds like a barking rhinoceros. It's like seeing myself in 50 years!

Ba-da-bing!

Next month: The April Fool's column (or not.)



by Peter Bolland

## GROWING PAINS

Spring is bursting out all over. New buds are pushing out through the bark of last year's branches. Roots bore deeper into the earth while new leaves, like pendants, wave in the wind. Sun and rain chase each other like birds across the brightening sky. The whole earth seems to be awakening from silence and shadow. With the patience of Job, life emerges from the dormant forms of last year's leavings, rising like the sun and moon – inexorable, indomitable, selfless, and unafraid.

In our own lives we too feel the restless stirring of new life emerging. We sat down to write a quick note to our dads and a nine-page letter poured out. We began humming a tune under our breath at an important meeting and wrote a song walking back to the car. We stopped at the grocery store on the way home and threw ourselves into a favorite recipe, the whole house cast under the spell of roasting garlic and rosemary. We faced down our old two-headed enemy resistance and avoidance and finally tackled that ugly pile of papers on our desk, reveling at last in the clarity afforded by uncluttered space and asking ourselves, why did I put that off for so long? Then we pick up the phone and make that difficult call – the one that's been haunting us for months, even years – and learn the truth that by simply cultivating willingness we allow the irrepressible healing of love and forgiveness to well up and wash clean the wounds we have made.

It is the nature of all life to expand. In Indian philosophy, the word for ultimate reality is Brahman. The Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita teach that Brahman is not a god; it is the undifferentiated source of all things. Our idea of God is a stop-gap measure, a mere personification of this primal energy. Brahman is the underlying nature of reality itself, beyond all the dualities of being and non-being, existence and non-existence, God and not-God. Brahman is the ground of being, the sacred, formless source from which all forms are made. It is within all things. Everything is a manifestation of Brahman – every object, every thought, every particle of light. The whirling of electrons around nuclei, the energy of consciousness, the poppies in the field, the blue whales in the sea, the spiraling galaxies in the endless night, even the fabric of space and time itself – these are all Brahman. Therefore, so are we.

The etymology of Brahman is clear and revealing. The Sanskrit word Brahman comes from brih, which means "to expand" or "to grow." It is the nature of God-consciousness to continuously move outward, to manifest itself as ever-changing forms. We are one of those forms. When we come to understand this, we can finally be at peace and stop resisting the never-ending restlessness within us, that unsettling habit of never being satisfied, of always wanting more, of feeling that no matter how great this moment is there must be yet another accomplishment to achieve, another mountain to climb, another song to write.

And in our calm and clarity we move closer toward understanding another fundamental truth: growth hurts. There can be no growth without the necessary dissolution of previous forms – forms that once meant so much to us. Growing means forever letting go.

Seeds burst and die as new sprouts emerge. Flowers wither and fade as fruit takes form. Growth is always a kind of death, and to deny this is to live forever in a debilitating lie. We must say yes to

PHILOSOPHY, ART, CULTURE, & MUSIC

# STAGES

loss and transformation. We have no choice.

With every new achievement comes a host of new problems. You want fame? Now you can't go anywhere without people bothering you. You want money? Now you long for the simplicity of the lean years. You want success and mastery? Now the demands others place on you become staggering. But they can never equal the ridiculous demands you place on yourself – the nagging, haunting worry that you are never good enough, no matter what you do.

But all of this is healed in the light of wisdom – the wisdom each of us holds deep within the folds of our awareness. We are enough, because we are the presence of God-consciousness in the world. We are the Presence of eternity in the field of time. While the forms may come and go, that which we really are was never born and will never die. Brahman is Life. "Life is not the opposite of death," writes Eckhart Tolle. "The opposite of death is birth. Life has no opposite."

Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and every other wisdom teacher worth his or her salt spent their whole lives begging us to acknowledge this truth – we are not who we think we are. Wisdom means breaking free of our limited and limiting perception of ourselves and moving into the deeper realization of our identity with the infinite, eternal ground of being, what Jesus called the Father, what Buddha called Emptiness, and what Krishna called the Self. When asked how he healed people Jesus answered, "It is not I who do these things, but the Father in me. And all of these things you could do, and more."

Creating is costly. It hurts to be more. Most of us spend our lives cultivating comfort, asleep to the fact that comfort is the enemy of greatness. To expand and grow into what and who we really are is to stretch beyond our former bounds. Sometimes we feel like we're breaking apart – and we are. Learning to love discomfort is the final hurdle. When we cross that hurdle and transcend our childish complacency we are born into a realm of limitless possibility. Knowing this, we can weather change with serenity, equanimity, generosity and compassion.

The next time you find yourself surrounded by abundance, yet still yearning for more, you can smile and know that two contradictory truths are at play: we already are everything (because we already are everything), yet still feel the ceaseless expansion of our natures. The temporary forms that make up "the world," including us, are forever emerging, expanding, colliding, conflicting, aligning, receding, dissolving, and reforming. It is our sacred right and duty to participate in this glorious emergence, this concert of co-operation. We are not to fear, avoid, or resent this process. We are to practice loving kindness, even and perhaps most especially toward ourselves. We are to join in and guide with a light touch this flowering and fading of which we are an inexorable part. This is our beautiful, glorious, heartbreaking life. These are our tears. These are the things we make. This is the light we bring with the flame of our growing awareness. These are our gifts. These are the things we must in the end let go. These are our growing pains.

Peter Bolland is a professor at Southwestern College where he teaches eastern and western philosophy, ethics, world religions and mythology. After work he is a poet, singer-songwriter, and author. He has a band called the Coyote Problem. He also leads an occasional satsang at the Unity Center and knows his way around a kitchen. You can write to him at [peterbolland@cox.net](mailto:peterbolland@cox.net)





# Michael Peter Smith Flows with His Rhythm of Songs

by Terry Roland

*The dutchman's not the kind of man who keeps his thumb jammed in the dam that holds his dreams in...*

Michael Peter Smith, from "The Dutchman"

If singer-songwriters form a kind of river of song, there are streams that flow into that single, universal body of water. The streams they follow serve the songs they write. Some are cowboys, some would-be beat poets; others are philosophers, political commentators, or comic storytellers.

Michael Peter Smith has followed many different streams that have led him to become one of the finest songwriters of the last 40 years. His songs reflect his admiration for the other art forms he's encountered in his life. He could be compared to a great writer of American literature, an abstract painter, a playwright, or a sculptor.

Most recognizable as the writer of the classic "The Dutchman," originally covered by Steve Goodman and later by Suzy Boguss, Jerry Jeff-Walker, and Tom Russell, he has created a body of work that's as diverse as it is skillfully crafted.

He moved to Chicago in the '70s to become a part of the singer-songwriter scene, which included John Prine and Steve Goodman. He became well known for his songs. But, his most notable success came in 1987 when he was asked to write the music for Steppenwolf Theater's production of *The Grapes of Wrath*, which went on to international success. He has also produced music for a children's theater production of *The Snow Queen*, a play he continues to work on for his own satisfaction.

During an hour-long phone interview Smith demonstrated the kind of storytelling that makes his songs so rich. The love not only for his music but also for the music he finds among the friends he's made along the way.

**San Diego Troubadour:** What's been happening with you today, Michael?

**Michael Smith:** I've been recording. I'm working on two records right now. Lately, I've been doing theater also. It's really similar to concerts, only you get to stay in the same place longer. There've been a couple of other musicals I've worked on. Right now it's a musical version of *The Snow Queen*. It's been presented at a local theater for four or five years now, at Christmas, for five weeks at a time.

**SDT:** How did you come upon that?

**MS:** Well, writing it was what needed to happen. I've done other kinds of work, but I actually started on *The Snow Queen* 20 years ago. It was no problem for me. I love the story. I've loved Hans Christian Andersen since I was a kid.

**SDT:** So, it seems like your approach to your theater work is progressive? Is this the same for your songwriting?

**MS:** Yes, it's similar to songwriting. It's what makes a song reasonable. This is just getting more and more narrow.

**SDT:** You've mentioned studio work.

**MS:** I've been at it all of the time. I have a studio at home that allows me to do that. The problem is I can't reproduce what's going on with a recording.

**SDT:** The Sgt. Pepper Syndrome?

**MS:** Yeah. Take Les Paul. He was a unique character in music history. He was always pursuing music. His work in recording made it possible for millions of musicians to be able to make their own recordings. Once I start recording, I don't want to do anything else. I can write a song, record it, re-record it, try something new. It's like a painting. I listen and start thinking "what can I do with this to add to it?"

When I first heard sound-on-sound and two-track recording, it changed everything with the possibilities that were there. I think I first heard it in 1965. I don't think I understood that at the time. For me, at

least, it started to be like jazz. I could start something but I had no idea how it was going to sound.

**SDT:** Do you play all the instruments?

**MS:** Yes, except drums. If I tried that I'd be there for years. I use a drum machine. I use it for the drive.

**SDT:** What about your songwriting process? I've asked this of many of the songwriters I've interviewed and everyone has something unique to say.

**MS:** Yes. I'd imagine. For me it's a phase kind of thing. It might start with a title. But, if I follow the title it gets limited. It's like going back and dating a girl from high school only to find out how shallow she's become. Going from the title can be surface. I also may look for a mood. Sometimes, it's the mood. I want to be true to myself in the song and not really write it for anyone else. There was a period in the '80s when I played with a band and they wanted things to be "hooky." Hooky is okay for some people. But, it makes me not able to write as well. If I let go of the pursuit of the hook, then I'm free. You know, you shouldn't have your eyes on the prize even though that's what we're taught to do.

**SDT:** So, the song is the prize, but the trip is of equal or more importance than the reward?

**MS:** Yes. So many people say you can play the music, but you gotta have something to fall back on. I don't really like that because it makes the music subordinate to something that may seem larger. My dad used to say things like that. Sometimes I wished he'd have said, "If you're going to play the music, go out and do it, damn it! Learn to play the guitar! Don't just pose like Elvis in front of the mirror!"

**SDT:** So you're anti-hook in terms of songwriting?

**MS:** Yeah, we were poisoned with the emphasis on having hits. I had to get to the point where I didn't care who liked what I wrote. I had to write it for me. Then, it turned out for the best because those were the songs that reached out to the audience. Those were the ones they liked. I never have a true understanding of it. But, it's just fantastic. And it comes from making a lot of mistakes along the way. But, at its best, we're giving something that helps the audience get rid of all of the crap they carry. For me, being a musician is just heaven.

**SDT:** And it's like you're bringing your heaven to earth!

**MS:** Bless you! I hope so. I know what happened to me when I first heard Sgt. Pepper. It felt like heaven; it just didn't get any better than that. I can still listen to it for hours.

**SDT:** I noticed you've been writing songs for children.

**MS:** Yes. I see such innocence from them. I was raised Catholic. Man, religion is a lot to lay on a kid. Original sin, man. Fear. That's one of the big Catholic mistakes. It's so damaging for a kid. I've found, as I've played for the kids, they just come and sit at my feet. You know, they're not charmed by me, I'm just an old guy. The thing is, I haven't frightened them. They're not thinking about me at all. I get to watch them for a while. It's a thrill. It's a feeling that just comes over you that can't be counterfeited. It's like my soul relaxes.

**SDT:** Have your songs changed over time?

**MS:** You know, they grow. There's this growth where I can tell, as I've gotten older, my writing has improved.

**SDT:** Dylan talks about how his songs change as he plays them in concert and it becomes a kind of performance art. I know he's long past his prime, but he keeps on going.

**MS:** Yes. I think, by him being past his prime, you mean he's not as popular. Today, some of the songs you hear him do in concert are almost unrecognizable. Well, today we're not nearly as shocked by him as we were when he sang, lines like "with your wine, your amphetamines, and your pearls..." or the "ghost of electricity." But, I

like him and relate to him. He's like Picasso. Today he's more abstract. As time went by, he became harder and harder to understand. You look at his work and think "is this the same person?" In a way, the same thing has happened with Dylan. He does like 200 shows a year. It gets harder and harder to understand what he's doing. But, there's no one who comes close to him. He's just way ahead of the rest of us.

**SDT:** Yes. And it seems that you and many other singer-songwriters who emerged from the late '60s have become deeper and more profound.

**MS:** Maybe I've become less foolish. Fewer foolish moves and foolish songs. We may write better today. We haven't indulged in as much foolishness or mistakes. A lot of writers tend to write a series of songs and they all sound the same. When I write songs now, I think, "How can I do this?" It sounds nothing like the last song I wrote.

**SDT:** Have you been writing new songs these days?

**MS:** Well, I write, but not as much as before. You know the *Love Letter on a Fish* record is one of two recorded at the same venue. But, it represents over 30 years of songwriting – the best songs I've written. I write many songs I wouldn't share with anyone.

**SDT:** Have you worked with John Prine?

**MS:** Not really. I've opened for him. You know who he reminded me of? Charles Bronson.

**SDT:** [Laughs] That's different! Have you told John that?

**MS:** No. I never have. I mean, he's a tough guy.

**SDT:** It's hard for me to see Prine in a black wool cap in a New York Subway with a gun, shooting bad guys!

**MS:** [Laughs] Maybe I should explain that. It's not like the Bronson from *Death Wish*. It's John's confidence. He has this undoubted sense of himself. There's this strength about him. He's his real self without trying to be someone else.

He doesn't question himself. He's more rooted than I am. I get around him and feel like I'm dancing or something [laughs]. I did a show with him and he asked me to come out and play a song with him.

**SDT:** "Paradise"?

**MS:** Yeah, "Paradise." I learned it as I stood beside him; he had this energy I've rarely felt from a performer. I've encountered it also with Arlo Guthrie. I mean, he's a giant at the piano. I played with him at the Steve Goodman Memorial Concert. He's this strength on stage.

**SDT:** Tell me about your relationship with Steve.

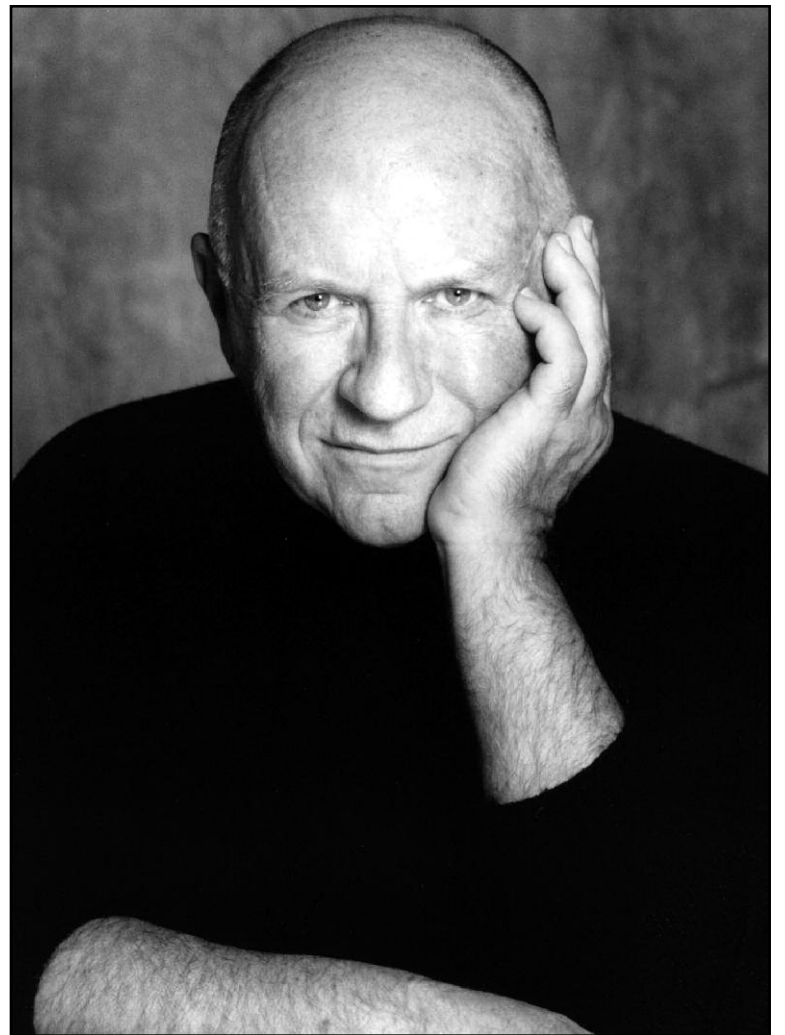
**MS:** He was a friend. He was a great performer. He was totally in the music. Even physically, he was a playing-singing machine. He was so bright. He could just write a song on the spot. I'd come in with eight lines and he'd finish up the song. You'd give him an idea and within a few minutes he'd have a song ready. He simply liked performing. We wrote a lot of songs together. I enjoyed everything we did together. He was lively, ingenious, full of joy and purpose. His personality came through his songs and the audience loved his personality. But, it didn't always translate in other mediums.

**SDT:** Like records?

**MS:** I don't think the vitality he exhibited was ever caught in the studio.

**SDT:** Well, before we finish, we've got talk about "The Dutchman."

**MS:** I'd love to talk about "The Dutchman." Around that time I was writing pretty crappy songs. It was the first song I wrote where I thought, "this is a good song." Writing a song is a journey. ... You know, as you travel, you may make big mistakes on the way to getting there ... you might get lost. But, on "The Dutchman," I didn't get lost. Early,



Michael Peter Smith

as I started writing it, I knew I was making something unique. It was totally mine.

There's this calm that comes over you when you write like this. It's rare. It was so good, I kept trying to catch it again. I kept thinking there's all kinds of ways to get there. It was the first time I encountered that feeling. I found this rhythm pattern similar to "Gentle on My Mind," which reminded me of a French song.

**SDT:** What inspired you to write "The Dutchman"?

**MS:** At first, I wanted to write something for my sister, Margaret. You know, she was dating a Dutch guy at the time. As I wrote the first line, I realized, this is not about young people; it's about old people. You know, an awful lot of writing a song like "The Dutchman" is about luck. It's like you're casting your bread upon the waters. And you know, I still like that. I wouldn't change it. But, a song like that comes around once in a lifetime.

**SDT:** It seems like, from what you've said about how your music, plays art "The Dutchman" is a kind of capsule of all of that.

**MS:** That's interesting. It is kind of spiritual. You know, not reaching for it. Letting it happen. I have a friend, Corky Siegal. He's really into meditation. He told me about this guru he was seeing. He was some big

swami or something. Corky's really into it. He got me to recite this sentence. We were in between sets at a show. He led me through the phrase. I got as high as a kite! It was an acidic experience. But, I tried again later to do the same phrase and experience the same thing, and it's never happened again. But, it's like one of life's little gifts.

"The Dutchman" is like that. We may live the rest of our lives and it may never happen again. My dad used to say, "We are too soon old and too late smart!" [too soon old, too late smart]. As I've gotten older though, I've become more industrious. I mean, I'm 68, so I'd better get to it.

**SDT:** Yes, we're all running out of time.

**MS:** You know, that song Dylan did back in the '90s. "It's not dark yet, but it's getting there." It's like that. When I heard that, I thought what the...? I was so impressed. These days though, I like to listen to doowop. It's nice to get in the car and listen to something from 1958.

**SDT:** On that note, thanks for your time. I look forward to seeing you at Jimmy Dukes.

**MS:** Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

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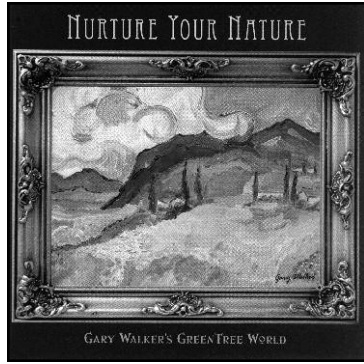


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## Gary Walker Nurture Your Nature

by Frank Kocher

To call Gary Walker's Green Tree World a music group isn't really the whole story, and the new CD *Nurture Your Nature* isn't really just an album. Walker is an accomplished arborist and naturalist who has a radio talk show and an award-winning garden. The San Diegan is also an experienced drummer who has played in a number of bands during the classic rock age, backing the Who, Hot Tuna, and others. *Nurture Your Nature* gives the nature-loving tree expert a chance to rock out while spreading his message in a sort of musical montage about going back to our roots and appreciating nature.

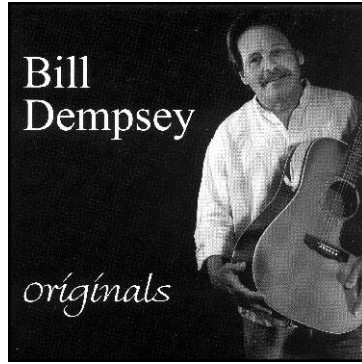
Green Tree World is also the name of Walker's talk show – already featured on a double CD – and he painted the cover art, too. The feel on this studio project is a trip back to the late '70s, and it doesn't stop with the "concept" album idea. The 11 Walker originals mostly feature Walker on drums (he's an ace), guitars and vocals, with Andrew (Andy) Machin on guitars, bass, keyboards, and vocals. Neither is a strong singer, especially Walker, but for the most part that doesn't interfere with the old-school sound, which recalls '70s radio, early REM, and arena rock.

"Bonjour" is a warm-up that serves notice that this isn't a really a mellow record, power-chording into "Wake Up," which has message lyrics and jangle guitars. "Try a Different Dance" comes back with the same basic riff as "Wake"; Machin sings this with a slow, blues-echo bridge section that in turn gives way to a highly charged closing guitar solo, elevating the track. The straight rocker "Take a Ride" is a good song, but maybe not on this disc. Machin again sings, and his growl is effective, but the vocal, music, and lyrics sound too much like an early '80s Billy Idol album track. It doesn't seem to fit here.

The instrumental, "Distant Forest," follows, a soft acoustic guitar/cello/keyboard mood song that is clearly part of Walker's naturalist concept. This track and others, like "Cathedrals," a poem about trees, read to church organ and chirping birds, and "Chopin's Nocturne 1" in B flat minor, a popular solo piano piece, fit the spiritual message of the disc but make for bumpy listening continuity in spots. Walker's lyrics at times are clumsy and simplistic, but they stay on target about his social cause.

A lengthy suite, "Right by My Side," is a drum showcase that starts with a simple, catchy radio-friendly rock melody. Like the music of yesteryear, it then shifts gears to a shuffle rhythm for a while with a keyboard solo, followed by Walker hitting the skins for a three-minute, turn-back-the-clock drum solo. "Secret's of the Heart" takes the same lick as "Side," reworks the words, adds harmonies and good keyboards, and still clicks. Closing the disc, "The Other Side" is about an old oak tree and transcendence, back to hard rock and optimism.

*Nurture Your Nature* is a statement, in various forms, of Gary Walker's musical and life philosophy. It's hard to disagree with it, and hard not to rock to his music with its old school charm.



## Bill Dempsey Originals

by Paul Hornick

In 2008 Bill Dempsey released *Shanty Man*, a collection of reels, shanties, and songs from the age of great sailing ships and a disk that was one of the best recordings to be released locally in that year. Dempsey follows up that success with a CD titled *Originals*, filled mostly with songs that he has written, along with a couple of interpretations of traditional tunes.

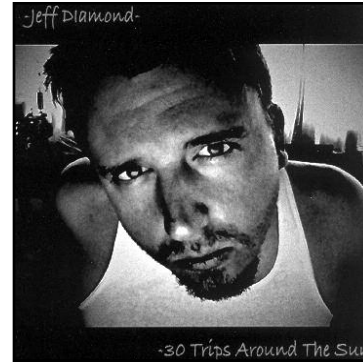
If you listened *Shanty Man* or have been lucky enough to hear Dempsey perform, you know what a great gift he has when he sings. Full bodied and resonant, Dempsey has a voice you want to hear singing while the marshmallows are roasting and the campfire is crackling, a voice meant for generations old folk-songs and boozy broken-hearted ballads. At night dreadnought guitars dream of being strummed while a voice like Dempsey's sings. If you took all the great country singers from the fifties – men such as Jim Reeves Johnny Cash, Hank Williams – and mixed them together, you'd wind up with Bill Dempsey.

For instrumentals, Dempsey relies on the traditional tunes "Spanish Fandango," "Waterbound," and "Hangman's Reel." He doesn't try to update them with anything jazzy or pop but rather stays true to the way that these chestnuts have been played for generations. He sings convincingly about love in "It's Only Love" and "Something That's Real." Accompanied with only with his guitar, as is the case with most of the other tunes on *Originals*, both songs are heartfelt and sweet, the way love songs should be.

"Life at the End of the Rainbow" is lighthearted and offers some advice that is hard to argue with: Enjoy life. It's pretty much that simple. "My Dad's Car" recalls the time when car ownership was not commonplace, when having a car meant a lot more than having a commuter device. The song is a bit reflective and a bit funny. And it's LOL time when Dempsey sings in the voice of his mother.

Two of my personal favorites are songs that go beyond whimsy and into the realm of downright silliness. "Rainbow Socks" is a wonderfully fun song that is perfectly suited for a sing-along with children. Yes, it's about wearing rainbow socks; that's about it, but that's all it needs. Using the same chord progression as "Bei Mir Bist Du Schoen" and possibly inspired by a mishearing of the lyrics to the old Yiddish show tune, Dempsey treats us to "The Bear Missed the Train." The convincing gusto with which Dempsey sings about the bear, the train, and pink underwear, without a wink or nod to let you in on the joke, only adds to the comic nature of the tune.

A Christmas song, "One Cold and Wintry Night," ends the disk. The song is somber and creates a great sense of quietude. Dempsey sings of the birth of Jesus with great feeling and great faith.



## Jeff Diamond 30 Trips Around the Sun

by Frank Kocher

Jeff Diamond has an interesting story. The San Diego singer/songwriter's bio shows that he first became interested in becoming a musician a mere eight years ago, while in his early twenties. Since then, he taught himself to play guitar, played in bands with friends, and in fairly short order managed to become a pop-folk singer, specializing in acoustic ballads. *30 Trips Around the Sun* is his debut album, and offers 12 studio tracks as well as four bonus live tracks, all written or co-written by Diamond.

This is a stripped-down acoustic affair, with most instruments played by Diamond and producer Damon Cisneros, mixed with plenty of confidence in Diamond's vocals. Good move, since this is his strength, especially on the studio tracks – his voice is clear and commanding, with an identity of its own. It is also worth a mention that for a guy who started on guitar just eight years ago, he plays very well.

"Dance" pushes the beat on the opener, drums behind acoustic guitar as Diamond comes close to rocking out. This one opts for catchiness rather than lyrical depth and is a winner. Next up, "Don't Talk About My Girlfriend" has clever, funny lyrics about a zombie gal pal, absent of irony and wrapped around a walking folk-blues pattern. One of the best pop-folk ballads is "Today." Starting with a nice finger-picked acoustic backing, the song builds with full chords and chorus background vocals halfway through, recalling the better songs Donovan recorded back in the day, like "Jennifer Juniper" and "Colors." Another highlight is "In the Shadows Beyond the Light," which changes the otherwise mellow pace for a few minutes as it uses congas and other percussion to push a trop groove. "Welcome Home" is an interesting ballad that targets returning service men and women with a lyrical thanks. The words seem to express the relief of family members who have been waiting for distant warriors, to "hold you like I'll never let you go."

There are stretches of music on this disc where soft, quiet ballads stack up and the tunes tend to come off a bit much as interchangeable "singer-songwriter" songs. These are pleasant and well-performed but lack any real edge and fade quickly; "Netherworld" and "Keep on the Light (for Sean)" feature different lyrical messages but are similar musically. At 16 tunes and 57 minutes, the overall project is too long by a third.

The bonus live tracks offer Diamond playing solo with just acoustic guitar. The first song, "Cold and Numb," is at least as good as many of the slow studio tracks, with a memorable chorus and Diamond's voice soaring.

There are some good tunes on *30 Trips Around the Sun*. Jeff Diamond has a knack for the folk form, several of the tracks get the listener involved, and he has a good set of pipes to go with his writing skill. And he sure has learned fast.



## Ken McCabe Austin 54: Songs from the Road that Connects Two Points of Paradise

by Kate Kat

Ken McCabe seems like a guy who knows how to have a good time. His latest endeavor, *Austin 54 (Songs from the road that connects two points of paradise)*, takes listeners out for some well-earned fun, kicking up a little dust along the highway, while easing them into whatever waves wash ashore in life – one salt-water breeze at a time.

Comfortable in his own voice and talents, *Austin 54* Vocalist and acoustic/rhythm guitarist McCabe sings with inspired wit and playful lyrical animation, which draws obvious, complementary comparisons as the Southern California Jimmy Buffett counterpoint.

He and featured players Andy Machin on guitar and Dan Byrnes on harmonica come across as comfortably as simply a few good friends who took over the Friday night cabana stage (much to the pleasure of their audience) at the local canteen.

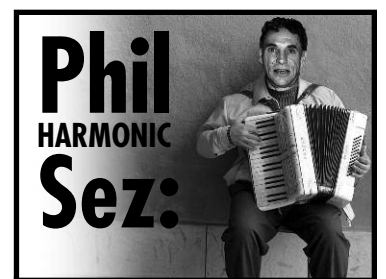
The album as a whole is a spirited collection of dressed-down, harmonica fiesta tunes that hang out in the back seat of one's mind well after the ride (and party) has ended.

On "About Yesterday," McCabe exhibits his obvious skills as a wordsmith, invoking a quiet ability in his storytelling to command even a bar patron's ear, without ever demanding more than a raised note.

On "Right Hand," McCabe asks all the well-worn, rhetorical relationship questions in a careful swoon that romanticizes words into a hopeful symbiotic union.

A light-hearted, quirky departure from the other tracks, McCabe even throws in a rap about popular West Coast Rapper Snoop Dogg, which, surprisingly, seems to fit in with the album's lighthearted air of fun.

All in all, *Austin 54* takes listeners out for a good time, gives them as much fun as they can handle and drops them off a little better on down the line.

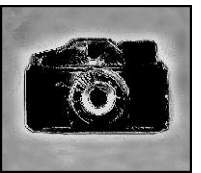


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step to overcoming the  
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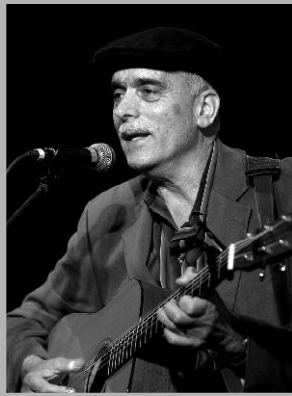
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Eric Bibb @ Acoustic Music SD



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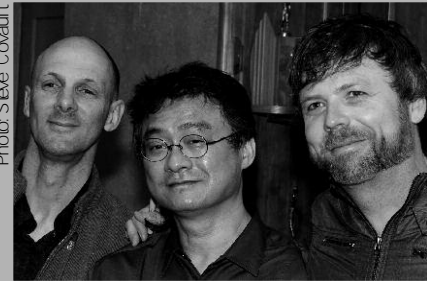
Steve Kaufmann @ OTM



Jack Tempchin @ MoMM



Peggy Watson & Robin Adler in concert @ Swedenborg Hall



California Guitar Trio @ Acoustic Music SD



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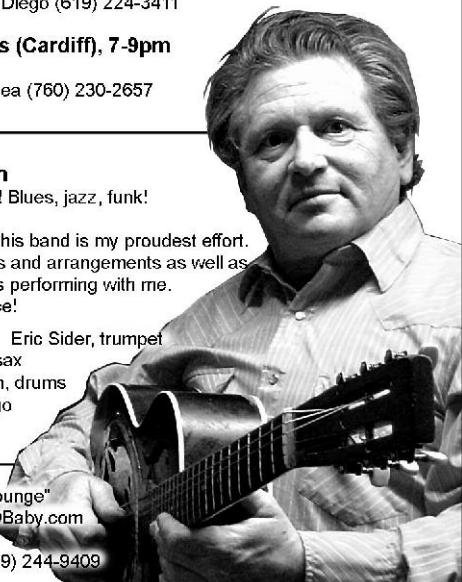
**Thurs, Mar 11, Wine Steals (Cardiff), 7-9pm**  
Robin Henkel solo blues  
1953 San Elijo, Cardiff by the Sea (760) 230-2657

**Sun, Mar 28, Lestat's, 8pm**  
Robin Henkel Band with Horns! Blues, jazz, funk!  
Wheweee doggies!  
After 37 years in the business this band is my proudest effort. It features original compositions and arrangements as well as the talents of the fine musicians performing with me. Please join us. Boss applesauce!

Dave Castel de Oro, tenor sax Eric Sider, trumpet  
Troy Jennings, tenor and bari sax  
Rod Ratelle, bass Kevin Koch, drums  
3343 Adams Avenue, San Diego  
(619) 282-0437

My newest CD "Steel Guitar Lounge" can be purchased online at CDBaby.com

Guitar and bass instruction (619) 244-9409



## Roots Fest on Adams Saturday & Sunday, April 24-25

The Roots Fest on Adams is a fun free two-day music festival, focusing on the preservation and performance of local and nationally touring acts. More than 40,000 visitors attended last year.

## Booth Rentals Still Available

The Adams Avenue Business Association is now accepting vendor applications for hand-made arts and crafts vendors, retail and corporate vendors.

**Information: 619.282.7329**

Adams Avenue between 34th & 35th Streets, Normal Heights



Robbie Robinson @ Winston's



Alan Land @ Lestat's Open Mic



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## We've got the Ukulele for you!

We've got the best selection of Ukuleles in San Diego. From starter ukuleles to custom handcrafted instruments. We also carry Uke books and supplies. Ukulele has never been more popular!

### NEW! Ukulele Fun starts March 15th

Monday March 15 from 6:30 pm - 9 pm a new Ukulele group hosted by Ron Seno kicks off. It's FREE and open to the public. The meeting starts with mini uke lesson followed by a play and sing-along.

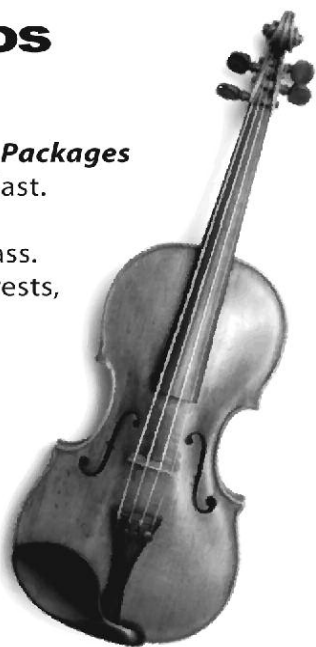
## Violins and Cellos are arriving.

Our popular *Student Violin Starter Packages* go quick! Get them while supplies last.

We have violins, cellos and String Bass. We also carry bows, rosin, Shoulder rests, strings and lesson books.

Get a starter kit and sign up for some lessons from one of our OTM Violin Teachers. Visit our website to learn more.

Need a string change, a set-up or a major repair for your Violin, String Bass or Cello? Our in-house repair team can help!



## MARCH

March 3 (Wed) • San Diego Songwriters Meet Up 7pm - 9pm Free

March 4 (Thurs) • Old Tyme Fiddlers Gathering 7pm - 9pm Free

**Martin & Co.**  
EST. 1833



Richard Starkey

March 6 (Sat) • SPECIAL MARTIN GUITAR EVENT!

11am - 5pm Bring any brand steel string acoustic guitar in for a free re-stringing and set up, courtesy of the C.F. Martin Owner's club.

Let's mention one more time that it's FREE!!!!!!

7pm - 9pm FREE Martin clinic/concert by Martin's own Richard Starkey

Mar 7 (Sun) Wayne Riker Fretbook Workshop Series

Other great Fretbook Workshops 4/25, 6/6 and 7/25

For complete info: [waynerikerguitar.com/teach\\_sched.com](http://waynerikerguitar.com/teach_sched.com)



March 11 (Thu) Mountain Dulcimer Jam 7pm - 9pm Free

March 14 (Sun) San Diego Folk Song Society 3pm - 6pm

March 15 (Mon) - NEW San Diego Ukulele Group 6:30pm - 9pm

March 16 (Tues) Bluegrass Jam 6:30pm - 9:30pm Free

March 17 (Wed) Songwriter Meetup 7pm - 9pm Free

March 18 (Thurs) Old Tyme Fiddlers Jam 7pm - 9pm Free

March 22 (Mon) San Diego Ukulele Group 6:30-9 pm Free

March 25 (Thursday) Mountain Dulcimer Jam 7pm - 9pm Free

## QUICKSTART™ GUITAR

March 27 (Sat) • KEV's Quickstart™ Guitar Workshop Series  
**Altered & Open Tunings for Guitar Workshop 2 pm - 4 pm**

A fun, hands-on guitar workshop. This workshop is designed for players who want to expand their knowledge of different tunings used on the guitar. Bring your guitars, no - amps please! Hand-outs will be provided. Fee: \$30. Bring a friend to attend and you get \$5 off.

Call to get on reserve list! 619-280-9035. The last KEV workshop was full!

Coming Workshops: April 24th Beginning Acoustic Blues 1, Blues Guitar 2  
May 29 - Beyond Basic Guitar Chords, Beginners guide to reading Guitar Tablature

March 29 (Mon) San Diego Ukulele Group 6:30pm - 9pm

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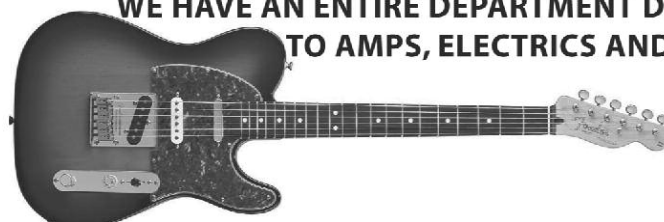
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SAT 10AM - 5PM  
SUN 12 NOON - 4PM

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