America’s Roots Music

New Film Examines the Life & Music of Appalachian People

Like O Brother, Where Art Thou, Songcatcher is a movie where the plot is built to showcase the music. As with O Brother, the music being trumpeted is from Appalachia. The haunting songs in the film, as well as on the soundtrack, represent some of America’s most powerful musical influences - the roots that later sprout into bluegrass, country music, folk-singing, and eventually, the Southern-influenced rock ‘n roll of Elvis Presley. Appalachia remains a hotbed of creative music with new stars like Iris DeMent rising out of the old traditions with the talent of gifted tunes some voice and a simple song that can shatter a person’s heart. Along with DeMent, Emmy Rossum, legendary Hazel Dickens, Emmylou Harris, Taj Mahal and Emmy and Grammy Award-winning Pat Carroll, sing songs about everyday life - stories of hardship and hope, ballads of love and murder in a powerful a cappella that takes your breath away.

Appalachian music is America’s most primitive music, our equivalent of the African drumbeat. In fact, influences on Appalachian music are the very make-up of America. African banjos and rhythms merged with Scottish and Irish fiddles and ballads.

Today, Appalachian folk culture, not just music, but the dance, arts and craftsmanship of an earlier era, is undergoing a vibrant revival. There is a broad, youthful movement to get back to simpler, more primal roots-based music and arts, and a fascination with what the “mountain folk” of American history have known and the mysteries of living a full life. Music and dance were an integral part of that life.

To us, as urban folk, music is mostly passive entertainment. Aside from small pockets of alternative culture, we tend to listen, not participate. But in some communities such as Asheville, North Carolina (where the film, incidentally, was shot), the music is still a part of everyday life, you can find it on back porches, in the back of drugstores, old folks homes in back porches, in the back of drugstores, old folks

line that Lily is walking between exploiting their music for her own gain and giving it as a gift to the rest of the world. There is another surprising romance between Lily’s sister Elna (JANE ADAMS) and her co-teacher Harriet (E. KATHERINE PENLERIC) is an academic folklorist. When she is passed over again for university promotion, she leaves the universi-

ty and heads to the mountains where her sister runs a local schoolhouse. Once there, she “discovers” the treasure-chest of music, sung with such expression and depth that she is once inspired to tell the world (and make her statement to the academic world). She wins the confidence of some of two local women: Viney Butler (PAT CARROLL) and orphan Deladis Slocumb (EMMY ROSSUM), both of whom are great singers. With the assistance of young Deladis and Deladis’ orneroy suitor, she drags a bulky cylinder-recording device to remote parts to capture the magic. She also painstakingly transcribes as much music as she can. During this process, Lily becomes privy to the struggles of moun-
tain people – from marital squabbles and run-away husbands to the community’s fight to save their land from greedy coal companies. The story is rich with conflict between the ways of mountain and city folk. Several sub-plots play backdrop to the main story, including several romances. After initially being put off by Tom Bledsoe (AIDAN QUINN), Viney’s grand-

son, who is both a war veteran and talented musician, they succumb to the attraction of oppos-

tes. Tom rightfully points out the delicate   the struggles of moun-
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As you can imagine, the story is a bit contrived. However, it does raise some interesting points. The film portrays the state of our hectic modern society versus the simple purity of the culture in the mountains. It presents the people’s daily struggle to maintain their way of life and community against the ravages of progress. And ringing through the film is the music, which in its soft simplicity can move you to tears.

We strongly recommend that you see the movie. Go for the music. Go for the dance. In addition, we recommend that you buy the soundtrack, which has cuts that are not in the film.

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T

he world of folk music and dance is not unlike most other interests in life. If you are attracted to it, it is because there is something inherent in it that speaks to you. You may have heard a singer that has sung a word or words of which you have heard. You have seen colorful costumes, flowing to intricate rhythms. It makes you smile. It makes you want to dance. It makes you want to sing.

In a part of the world, music and dance is part of our heritage. It is music and dance that we grew up with. We experienced it in our homes, in our villages, in our communities. For others, we are guests, visiting cultures that are not our own. We were introduced to it on the radio or were taken to a concert or dance by parents or friends.

We are fortunate to have many people in Los Angeles who not only have an appreciation of the music and dance, but went beyond just listening and dancing, to share their love of it with others. There are so many of these people that who not only have an appreciation of the music and dance, they have made it possible for us to be able to be gracious guests. They have been responsible for opening our eyes, ears and feet to worlds we would not have known. Thousands of lives have been enriched by Howard and Roz Larman, who for over thirty years presented FolkScene; Elaine and Clark Weissman, who have produced some of the best concerts and festivals in Los Angeles; Beverly and Irwin Barr whose patience has taught us dances from around the world and by Clark Brandon who has brought us concerts, festivals and sea-shanties.

In a passion to people, thought we would be interesting to take look at some venues past and present that have been home to folk music in Los Angeles. What could be more obvious than to find out about Rhino Records in Westwood, a mainstay of folk music or the venerable venue, the Ash Grove, which for so many years was known across the country because of its dedication to folk music.

Finally, we would like to dedicate this issue to Paul Kulak who put his heart and soul into Kulak’s Woodshed which brings music to the community every night of the week. We know the Woodshed is struggling to stay open and we hope that music can be bought there.

Having scratched the surface with a few of the people who make it all happen, we realize that we could fill a book with their stories. Short of a book, we will continue to highlight some of the L.A. folk movers and shakers in the issues to come.
INTERVIEW

GEORGE MULDAUR

BY GAILI SCHOEN

George Muldaur has enjoyed a lifetime of legendary recordings and tours. As a founding member of both the Jim Kweskin Jug Band and Paul Butterfield’s Better Days group, George has always been on the cutting edge of explorations into American Roots Music. This has paired him with the likes of fiddler Richard Greene and banjoist Bill Keith, multi-instrumentalist David Lindley, guitar wizard Amos Garrett…the list goes on. George’s current recordings (as heard in his latest album “The Secret Handshake and “Password”) bring all his influences together into a tasty package of blues, gospel and folk which he arranges in a powerful, personal style. I caught him in Washington DC in the middle of a whirlwind tour through Japan, Ireland and the States. He’ll be back home at McCabe’s on September 22nd.

Gaili: George, I know that you’ve just come back from Ireland. How was that?

Geoff: I just loved it. I drove around with a lep-rechaun and played. You know I’ll play a festival which sort of pays the way, and then I play at these little dinky pubs all over and I just love it.

Gaili: Are you touring with a band or solo?

Geoff: I’m doing it solo but from time to time I involve other musicians.

Gaili: You play guitar, and I heard you on tin whistle, and you sing…

Geoff: I do sing and arrange. I’m a singer/arranger I think.

Gaili: Yes, you do incredible arrangements.

Geoff: That’s been my job for 40 years.

Gaili: I love your arrangement, for example on the song “Beautiful Isle of Somewhere” from your latest album “Password”. You have strings and some brass and woodwinds. It’s so beautiful.

Geoff: Thank you.

Gaili: Can you tell me about that tune? It sounds like something from the 1890s.

Geoff: Well I can’t put the date on it but I can tell you a little about it. I learned it from a friend of mine. Late at night over at his apartment at Cambridge, Massachusetts. But he had learned it from his father. It was a Southern Methodist hymn. And then I was over in Glasgow for the BBC a couple of years ago and I sang “Beautiful Isle of Somewhere” on a barge on the river to a few hundred people. And a guy came up to me afterwards and said “Gee, I didn’t know that was a song. I thought it was just something my father sang me to sleep with at night.”

Gaili: Wow.

Geoff: And the hairs stood up on my head because you realize that now you’re talking about hundreds of years old, cause obviously it goes back to the Scottish lexicon.

Gaili: Right. So are you as comfortable arranging for violin and clarinet as you are for banjo and guitar?

Geoff: Well nobody’s that comfortable arranging for violin, not even Igor Stravinsky. He had to have someone show him. Violin’s tough, but on “Beautiful Isle of Somewhere,” that type of part is no big deal.

Gaili: How did you learn how to arrange?

Geoff: Well my first training, besides the fact that I came up through church choirs, etc. and had an ear for music, was the Jug Band. When I finally took courses over at the Berklee School of Music in the late 60’s, mostly what I did was find out that I already knew what they were teaching. But I didn’t know the names of things, and I didn’t know that I knew. You know ‘cause what I did in the Jug Band was intense arrangements, which was a lot of fun! And the right people were in the Jug Band to make any idea you had happen.

Gaili: As we had Richard, Bill Keith from L.A., and we had Bill Keith in the band, who reinvented the banjo for everybody. Do you know about Bill Keith?

Geoff: No, tell me.

Geoff: Well Bill Keith was the first guy to play arpeggios on the 5-string banjo and fiddle tunes.

Gaili: He stretched the instrument out. People don’t realize how boring things were before people like Richard stretched the instrument out. I mean he would take a traditional fiddle tune and enhance it. You know you take for granted what David Grisman and these Newgrassers do now, but that was not done before like the richards of George Greene. He also he was the first Rock fiddler with a group called Seatin. And I’m not even through with who was in the Jug Band, I mean it just goes on, but that’s okay.

Gaili: And the Jug Band was happening in the 1960s?

Geoff: It was 1963-68.

Gaili: And what happened with that band?

Geoff: It broke up. But you know we used to come to L.A. quite often, I mean it was amazing. When we first came to L.A., they didn’t have a clue about what was going on. We played at the Troubadour and it was the stupidest gig of our lives. We ended up playing our last set lying down in protest for the stupidity of the audience. And you know Spike Jones came to see us and people like that. And everybody thought the fact that we just talked amongst ourselves and everything was just planned shit. People would say, “we love the no-costume sh*t.” And you know we were the precursor of the Grateful Dead in a way. ‘Cause we were the first band that just was having a party in front of you.

Gaili: Wow. Was it fun?

Geoff: It was, it was. And then later when we played the Ash Grove things started hopping up in L.A. We started having some fun in that town. And we did a lot of TV in L.A. We did the Steve Allen shows and later we did the Johnny Carson shows and other shows.

Gaili: So how do you think L.A.’s doing now, folk-wise?

Geoff: It’s doing great! I mean when you see the mailing list and the things that can be done at that little dinky store at McCabe’s, you know, that’s pretty amazing.

Gaili: I love McCabe’s, and have you been to the CTMS Folk Center in Encino? There are some great concerts going on there, we just had Bruce Molsky.

Geoff: No, I’d love to play there sometime.

Gaili: It’s kind of small, but very intimate…

Geoff: There’s nothing wrong with small, I love small places. And I’ve also done the Pasadena Neighborhood Church.

Gaili: What are you doing in L.C. right now?

Geoff: I’m playing.

Gaili: Great. Where are you playing?

Geoff: There’s a Folklore Society kind of series here at a church on the outskirts. There’s no gig left in D.C., and it used to be my best town in the United States. But now there’s no gig. Some of the major cities have no gig, that’s why McCabe’s is so important. Like Seattle, no gig, really. There’s a big place for stars, or the toilet.

Gaili: I didn’t know that.

Geoff: Look at what’s happened in places like Ann Arbor and Madison. Places that were like centers of folk music.

Gaili: What has happened?

Geoff: They’re pretty dried up.

Gaili: Really. Do you play in the South much?

Geoff: Not much, but in the fall I play Memphis and Houston. And I’ve played Auburn, Alabama, so I do some gigs there. I just played the MerleFest down in North Carolina, Doc Watson’s Festival about a month ago, and had a ball.

Gaili: That must have been great.

Geoff: It was. But people down there say, “Why don’t you ever get down here?” And I say, “Where’s the gig?”

Gaili: How about places like San Francisco, Boston and New York?

Geoff: San Francisco and Boston are pretty special but New York is tough. But I have a wonderful gig there in a few days with Bob Neuwirth and my old buddy from the Jug Band, Fritz Richmond, who plays washtub and jug. And I’m playing the Lincoln Center in the summer. So I like to play like I said for 40 people in a pub in Ireland, and I also play places like the Lincoln Center. So there’s a
A Journey into Flatland

Last time on the musical highway we constructed all of the major scales in the sharp keys. This time we will journey a bit farther and enter “flat land.” Let’s start with what we already know from our study of the flat keys by writing out a chromatic scale in the key of F. Then below it we will write the familiar major scale with its proper spacing. The next step is to bring down the letter names that line up with the numbers, just as we did in the previous columns. Everything appears to be fine until we reach the fourth note of the scale.

If you’ve been reading the previous columns in this series, you may have guessed that there’s a logical way to get to the next scale. You may even realize that the next scale after F (the key of 1) for the flat keys is C, in 1997 the new Ash Grove created the next step in country music. We’ll never know.

Perhaps you noticed that “a fifth down” lands you on the same letter name as if you went “a fourth down” then “a fifth up,” especially if you are doing these calculations in your head. Use the up or down direction that works the easiest for any particular interval, but remember always to count the first note as “1.”

A little trivia: All complementary intervals add up to 9. We have just seen that a 5 and 4 add up to 9 to get the key of C# which has 7 sharps. We will never know if we could get to the same letter name by counting a 3rd down (6+3=9). Look at the scales above and try this for other intervals.

Next time we will look a little deeper into the importance of the progression of the flat keys. In the meantime you may review your knowledge of flat and sharp keys to reinforce what you have learned on this journey and be sure to stay tuned.

Part of the List of Ash Grove Performers Since 1958


Well, it’s the same thing for the flat keys, except we count in the opposite direction by 5 to get to the next key.

Here’s how: Use a C major scale and start with the C at the right end of the scale. Go down a 5th (to the F) for a count of 5.

Count the C as 1, move left to B (counted as 2), A (3), G (4) and F (5). So, going a fifth down from C lands us at F, which is the key of 1 flat. To get to the key of C in the flat major scale then, starting at the rightmost F (counted as 1), count back 5 to Fb. You guessed it—Fb is the key of 2 flats.

Keep going and you will eventually wind up at the key of 7 flats. When you finish, check your results against the table below.

F Chromatic F Fs G Gs A As B Bb C Cb D Eb E F

F Major F Fs G Gs A As B Bb C Cb D Eb E F

It looks like the next note should be an A# but in a major scale we must proceed to the next letter name with each succeeding degree of the scale and, since we’ve already used the letter name “A,” we can’t use A#. Instead, we can use the same note but give it a different name, in this case, “Gb.” What we have is the key of F—the key of 1 flat.

As you continue with the rest of the F major scale, there will be no more surprises.

F Chromatic F Fs G Gs A As B Bb C Cb D Eb E F

F Major F Fs G Gs A As B Bb C Cb D Eb E F

If you’re still following the directions for the flat keys, the key of 3 flats is Cb.

Since fire closed the Ash Grove, in late 1973, no other institution created the same level of musical, social experiences at the club with some of these great artists. It’s impossible to sketch those dynamics and the discovery of the music and its creators or the meaning and passion of the original club. It’s impossible to sketch those dynamics and the discovery of the music and its creators or the meaning and passion of the original club. It’s impossible to sketch those dynamics and the discovery of the music and its creators or the meaning and passion of the original club. It’s impossible to sketch those dynamics and the discovery of the music and its creators or the meaning and passion of the original club.
FOLK-ROCK: THE NEXT GENERATION

BY NICK SMITH

In the 1960s and even into the 1970’s, there was a movement to break the boundaries of musical genres in the United States and the British Isles. This movement was sometimes called “folk-rock” because it included both folk and rock, which wasn’t quite either one. The British part of the movement produced wonderful acts like Pentangle, Steeleye Span, Fairport Convention and others. Unfortunately, on this side of the Atlantic, folk-rock was applied to pretty much anyone who used an electric guitar to play Bob Dylan songs, and so the style failed to solidify. The Byrds and other bands fit the genre, but did not spawn successors, or break up to do other things. Now a new generation of musicians has come forth, without a particular genre label attached, but very much creating the new “folk rock” by using the instruments and the musical sensibilities of both. Young Durbiners and Brother are two such bands.

Young Durbiners, as their name suggests, take inspiration from the Irish tradition. If you’ve ever listened to the old Dubliners recordings (much less “commercial” than The Chieftains or others), you’ll realize that their name is appropriate too. The Young Durbiners are the Young Turks of Irish music. They take traditional licks and play them on electric instruments, loud and rowdy when they want to, or softly and sweetly when the song calls for it. Their closest thing to a hit song so far is “Red,” a collaboration with longtime Elton John associate Bernie Taupin.

Brother is even more of an outrage to musical traditionalists, mixing rock music, Scottish traditional music and Australian aboriginal instruments. Watching their two lead players jam with bagpipes and didgeridoo, while rock-style guitarist and drummer back them up, you realize just how small the world has become. Harnish and Angus Richardson are Australians of Scottish descent, and it shows in everything they do musically. The band originally featured another family member, Ferguson, who added even more musical instruments to their mix. Even now, their concerts range from their own wild compositions like “Romp and Circumstance” to arrangements of “Wild Mountain Thyme” and other Scottish traditional numbers.

The fans of both groups range widely in age: Teens and their parents both enjoy the show. The older fans date back to the “folk music scare” of the 60’s and the older Folks-Rock movement. The key to the appeal of these new groups may stem from something that was mentioned by a member of Schooner Fare (a group who recorded several albums of modern and traditional sea songs) at one of their concerts: “Folk music is the music your parents sang to you. The Beatles will one day be folk music.”

We have an entire generation whose idea of “Tam Lin” and other traditional songs has been flavored by the versions done by Steeleye Span, Fairport Convention, Pentangle and others. More important, we have had an entire generation that takes the musical styles and sensibilities of electric instruments for granted.

Many will scream, at this point, that electric instruments are not traditional. If, by traditional, one means old, then they are not. On the other hand, mandolins were not part of traditional American music until at least the 1800s. Dobros and steel gui-

tars are more modern still. The very size and shape of the acoustic guitar and the banjo are a lot newer than the songs you hear played on them… and just try to find a mountain dulcimer that isn’t based on a 20th century design.

Maybe the new Folk-Rock movement echoes the relationship that the early bluegrass movement had to traditional music: It is an attempt to bring traditional music to a new audience, with sensibilities affected by new technologies. In the 1920s, those technologies were radio and phonograph records, and instruments were changed to match the listeners and the methods of listening. In the 21st century, those technologies include electric instruments and musical styles from different parts of a world made closer by airlines and media.

CLARKE & ELAINE WEISSMAN

NURTURING FOLK MUSIC FOR A QUARTER CENTURY

E LAINE and CLARKE WEISSMAN have made many contributions to the folk music scene in Los Angeles and around the country. The focus of all their activities has been through the organization they formed back in 1978, California Traditional Music Society (CTMS). CTMS is known as the organization behind the Summer Solstice Folk Music and Dance Festival and as the hosting organization behind events the CTMS Folk Music Center.

The Solstice Festival is just one of many activities that have driven Clark and Elaine. For years they presented house concerts in their Tarzana home. People came to hear great concerts in an intimate setting. For years they had a News Years weekend camp in the woods of Malibu where friends came to sing, dance and relax with great folk music. For years the published the CTMS Journal, a folk music magazine with wide distribution.

In October 1999 CTMS opened its doors at the Folk Music Center in Encino Park. They renovated the 1100 square foot building to create the headquarters for CTMS operations. This center provides space for folk music and storytelling concerts. It is also used for classes, meetings, jams, and rehearsals. CTMS hosts an all-day jam and picnic in Encino Park. This event is co-sponsored by many other community folk music and dance groups. The 2nd annual Jam-in-the-Park will be on Sunday August 19th and everyone is warmly welcome to participate.

For Clark and Elaine, the primary goal is to get people involved in folk activi-

ties. The focus of the Solstice Festival is the teaching of folk music and dance. They fly notable folk artists across the country so that we in Los Angeles can learn from the masters. They also call on local talent, not only to present at the Festival, but also to teach at the local San Fernando Valley public schools. With corporate, private and government grants, thousands of local students are exposed to folk music. Clearly they are fulfilling their goal to “teach the next generation their folk musical her-

itage.”

In 1989 Elaine and Clark Weissman co-founded the North American Folk Music and Dance Alliance (Folk Alliance) which now boasts 2200 members across the Americas. They served on the formation steering committee and were members of the first Board of Directors. Elaine has been the chairperson of the Folk Alliance conference site selection committee for 11 years. Clark was the first Treasurer of the Folk Alliance and chaired the first Folk Alliance Executive Director Search Committee.

Elaine and Clark have many other folk-related credits to their names. They are members of over 500 folk music and dance organizations throughout the world. Elaine has served on the Los Angeles City Cultural Affairs Department music panel and was appointed in 1990 to the Mayor’s Arts Advisory Committee. For ten years she was a traditional music booking agent and artists’ representative introducing new musical artists from all over the world to the United States and the West Coast. She has been a consultant on traditional American music to the French, Canadian and Quebec Government cultural offices and some 20 universities. She has also been an invited lecturer at the Cannes Music Festival (MIDEM) in France and at Folklore Canada in Quebec. And the list goes on.

Elaine, a Los Angeles native, graduated from Fairfax High School and went on to study at Los Angeles City College and USC. She has played piano for 21 years, guitar for 10 and little bit of hammered dulcimer.

Clark, who grew up in New York City, plays 5-string banjo, guitar and harmonica. He played music in Greenwich Village and accompanied Peggy Seeger on her first Folkways album, Songs of Courting and Complaint. In the late 50’s, he sang with Guy Carawan’s Ballad Makers. In his non-folk life, Clark is an engineer and an expert in computer security.

Somehow, while presenting all this great music and, in the case of Clark, having a full time career, they managed to raise six kids and now have seven grandchildren. Enough of a crew to hold their own family house concerts.

Check out www.ctms-folkmusic.org
Ancient Chord Music

CD REVIEW BY DENNIS R. STONE

Reviews written for this column feature CD and occasional concert reviews mainly in the realm of Celtic folk music, which has its roots in the close neighbors in Scandinavia and Eastern Europe.

The purpose in writing these reviews is not only to spread the word about new CD releases and upcoming artists, it is also to journey into recordings of the past, especially those artists that are worth listening to a second time around. In this way, many of those "Treasures of the Past" can be discovered by new ears or rediscovered by those who either missed them on the first listen.

Another area of interest deals with the more obscure and hard-to-find releases. Many of these artists, labels or artists are independently produced and are withstanding the test of time. Lastly, as FolkWorks is a regional publication, an effort will be made to review artists based in the Southern California area.

Contact for feedback is welcome by email at AncientChord@hotmail.com or by writing to:
FolkWorks • P.O. Box 53501 • Sherman Oaks, CA 91413.

Art: ANNBJØRG LIEN
Title: BABA YAGA
Label: NorthSide Records # NSD6044
Release Date: February, 2000
Rating: ★★★★★

BY DENNIS STONE

Many folk music enthusiasts in America are still unaware of the folk music explosion that has occurred in the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark in the last decade. Minneapolis-based NorthSide Records has been the leader in promoting many of Scandinavia’s finest folk artists. Here they present one of the finest releases to date from Norwegian Hardingfiddle master Annbjørg Lien: her third North American release, BABA YAGA.

Annbjørg Lien first gained attention in her native Norway through NRK-TV (Norwegian National Television) in 1988. A recording contract soon followed, and for the past decade she has contributed to the promotion of Norwegian musical culture and the future abroad. Coming from a musical family that trained her in both folk and classical music, Annbjørg has won six Norwegian national championships in traditional folk music, as well as both a national championship and a Nordic title in dance music. She has also performed as a soloist with a number of orchestras where she has played compositions specifically written for Hardingfiddle. And she also composes music inspired by folk music traditions for her own performances and recordings.

To top that off, she is also a member of the group Bukkenne Bruse, which formed in 1987. This group has met with worldwide critical acclaim, even having the honor of being the official Olympic musicians during the closing ceremonies of the Lillehammer Winter Games in 1994. Lien’s latest solo album, BABA YAGA, recorded in 1999, refers to the famous mythic figure from old Russian fairy tales. From the opening ancient sounds of "Loki" to the closing moments of the final track "W," Annbjørg takes us on a mystical, magical journey across Russian forests and Norwegian fjords. Fiercely grounded in traditional Nordic folk, the recording includes styles ranging from soothing, almost New-Age tunes such as "Astara" to dark, moody pieces like the title track "Baba Yaga," which was inspired and influenced by Modeste Mussorgsky’s famous "Pictures at an Exhibition." Although mainly instrumental, there are inclusions of very ancient-style chanting by Lien on selected tracks, and the droning, grunt-like traditional Sámi male chants on the track "Ája." Another noticeable feature on several tracks are traditional Sámi female chants on selected tracks, and the droning, grunt-like traditional Sámi male chants on the track "Ája." Another noticeable feature on several tracks are traditional Sámi female chants on selected tracks, and the droning, grunt-like traditional Sámi female chants on selected tracks, and the droning, grunt-like traditional Sámi female chants on selected tracks.

Finally, many of their favorite Irish and Scottish artists have been including tracks on their recent albums that have been directly influenced by Galicia’s pioneering Celtic folk group, Milladoiro. Milladoiro takes its name from the Galician (or Gallego) word for the small stone tiles (cartas) left by pilgrims along the famous spiritual trail called the “Road to Santiago” leading Christians from France to the city of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. Although now a Christian pilgrimage route, its origins pre-date Christianity. Milladoiro, called by many the "Galician Chieftains," have been more influential in starting the current Spanish Celtic music revival than any other folk group in Spain. The origins of the group started in 1978, the resulting group being a combination of one group that played medieval music and another traditional music. Their first album as a group was released in 1979, and as of this year they have recorded 15 official albums to date. The group has also performed and recorded with many famous Celtic music luminaries including The Chieftains, Liam O’Flynn, Bill Whelan and more. They have now established themselves as one of the world’s pre-eminent traditional ensembles. Self-described as “Chamber-folk,” the group incorporates early music, Moorish styles and Spanish influences with an uncanny Celtic base. The all-acoustic instrumentation can include exotic instruments such as the hurdy-gurdy, scrohina, oboe, clarinet and ganita (Galician bagpipes), as well as the more traditional Celtic ones such as tin whistle, flute, Celtic harp, bouzouki, guitar, accordion, fiddle, mandola and uileann pipes. Most tracks are instrumental with an occasional group vocal or guest vocalist.

The present album Agua de Maio, recorded in 1998 and released in Spain in 1999, celebrates the 20th anniversary of the group, and is a work of overwhelming beauty from start to finish. Devoted to traditional Galician music and song, this CD firmly solidifies Milladoiro’s continuing position as the leading Galician folk group. The album includes ten traditional pieces and five originals. It contains haunting beauty of timeless beauty, foot-tapping traditional dances, and three rousing vocal tracks in the Galician language. Highlights to take note of include the opening track “Alas de Polvora” and the very Celtic-sounding “Romance de Trascastela,” which features the gaita playing of Nando Casal. Other great tracks include the gorgeous air “Ribera de Gole” featuring the harp playing of Rodrigo Romani, The entire group explodes on two marvelous dances tunes, “Muñéiras de Pozo de Manuel Dapazo” and the final track “Manco de Fonteina.”

I would describe “Agua de Maio” as a soothing pearl, with a polished sound shell distinctly Celtic in sound and instrumentation to favor I included this album in my list of top ten Celtic CDs for the year 2000. The quality of this effort is outstanding. Highly recommended.

Availability: Released domestically and easily obtainable. Other CDs by Milladoiro can be obtained through Tayberry music at 803/366-9739 www.tayberry.com, or through the Milladoiro web site at: www.milladoiro.com. I would also highly recommend two great on-line CD shops for those interested in investigating more Celtic music from Spain: In Galicia, Discos Bits at: www.discosbits.com, and in Asturias, Asturshop at www.asturshop.com.

Music Ratings Guide:
★ POOR Unbearable to listen to.
★★ FAIR One or two tracks acceptable, the rest garbage.
★★★ GOOD Same as Fair, with more favorable tracks, but still bears listening.
★★★★ EXCELLENT Overall a well produced and balanced effort.
★★★★★ BINGO The Gods watched over this creation. Basically a flawless joy from beginning to end, with an apparent effort to make it that way. A work of art that will last a lifetime. Highly recommended.
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BEVT's CAFE: On-Going Events
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7:00-9:00pm - Grateful Dudes
7:00-9:00pm - Citybilly
7:30 - 8:30pm - Fiddle Night
7:30-10:30pm - A Prairie Home Companion
8:00-10:00am - Bluegrass Express
8:00-10:00am - Bluegrass Express (New Orleans, Quebecois)
2029 N. Lake, Altadena
(626) 430-5578

BEVT's CAFE: On-Going Events
Tuesdays
7:00-9:00pm - Losin' Brothers
7:00-9:00pm - Bluegrass, etc.
7:30-10:30pm - Bluegrass Express
7:30-10:30pm - Bluegrass Express (New Orleans, Quebecois)
2029 N. Lake, Altadena
(626) 430-5578

BEVT's CAFE: On-Going Events
Wednesdays
7:00-9:00pm - Bluegrass, etc.
7:30-10:30pm - Bluegrass Express
7:30-10:30pm - Bluegrass Express (New Orleans, Quebecois)
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BEVT's CAFE: On-Going Events
Thursdays
7:00-9:00pm - Losin' Brothers
7:00-9:00pm - Bluegrass, etc.
7:30-10:30pm - Bluegrass Express
7:30-10:30pm - Bluegrass Express (New Orleans, Quebecois)
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(626) 430-5578

BEVT's CAFE: On-Going Events
Fridays
7:00-9:00pm - Losin' Brothers
7:00-9:00pm - Bluegrass, etc.
7:30-10:30pm - Bluegrass Express
7:30-10:30pm - Bluegrass Express (New Orleans, Quebecois)
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BEVT's CAFE: On-Going Events
Saturdays
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### Folk Happenings at a Glance

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ROZ & HOWARD LARMAN STILL GON’ STRONG AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

BY STEVE SHAPIRO

It’s 1999. It’s Sunday night, 7:00pm. You turn on the radio, tune to 90.7FM. You hear “Livin’ in the Country” on FolkScene. Whether you were at home with the family or driving around your part of the world, Roz and Howard Larmans would be there, bringing you the best of folk music. They would play new recordings from around the world, interspersed by their own performances, the kind of singer-songwriters who could quickly tell whether a recording was worth extended listening and on-air time.

The Larman’s always were big fans of singer-songwriters, with particular likes and dislikes, Roz said: “There are some of them that are what I call the ‘me I’ kind of singer-songwriters. Those self-indulgent singer-songwriters just bore me to death. But there’s a lot of good people like John Gorka and Greg Brown, John McCutcheon and so we don’t play one of anything.”

They were also big fans of bluegrass, old-time Appalachian and Celtic music, all of which they considered interrelated. They saw the historical connections between the people who came from the British Isles to the American south, the intermingling with African-Americans, and the resulting rich musical heritage.

KPFK became family to them. KPFK was open to things that were different, out of the mainstream, provocative. The Larman’s were proud that they could play Uncle Dave Macon or audition tapes of Hank Williams knowing an appreciative audience.

They felt at home at a station that did not demand they pick from an approved playlist. And, of course, their presence, skill and dedication helped build the station into the professional environment that it is today.

In the late 1990s, the Larman’s produced a couple of CDs that were compilations of in-studio recordings of some of their favorite artists that they had presented. These recordings were well received by the folk community, and part of the proceeds went back to KPFK. They are currently working on a third CD that will be available shortly. The Larman’s also received, in February, 2001, an Achievement award from Folk Alliance, a national organization of folk music and dance presenters and artists.

Over the years many people have assisted the Larman’s in producing FolkScene. But the person they would give most thanks to is Peter Cutler, the man who, for most of their years on air, was their recording engineer.

BEVERLY BARR

FOLK DANCE TEACHER EXTRAORDINAIRE

BY JUDY MESSINGER

The name Beverly Barr is synonymous with folk dance in Los Angeles. For more than thirty years she’s enthusiastically combined natural talent with expert teaching techniques sharing her passion for International and Line Dancing at four classes locally and workshops throughout the world. A spirited, diminutive woman, Beverly’s blond hair brings Dolly Parton to mind. She has a gift for creating a relaxed atmosphere that gets people up to dance quickly and yet have fun with a new learning experience.

Beverly began dancing as a child (her mother asserted she was born dancing) and performed in amateur and semi-professional productions throughout early adulthood. When her children were young, Beverly enrolled in an Israeli dance class and also attended a few classes. “While I was dancing I couldn’t think of anything else,” she commented, “adding, “It’s wonderful therapy.” The variety of music and style drew Beverly to International dance. And she was on her way, her curiosity extending to the traditions and folklore of many cultures. Beverly advanced her knowledge by traveling to new places. Besides teaching Balkan, Israeli, contra, English, Country, Scandinavian and even Chinese dances.

About five years after Beverly started dancing, a fellow dancer asked her to teach because, “Your feet are so easy to follow.” Her first teaching experience was a Mother/Daughter after school course. In amazement Bev asked, “You mean you’re going to pay me for this?” Before long fathers joined in and Friday evenings became a more convenient time for family folk dancing. Ironically, after a while she noticed the children weren’t around. It seems the adults enjoyed the dancing and concurrent socializing so much they decided babysitters were in order—so they had the evening to themselves!

About six years after she started teaching Beverly’s husband irvin joined her to help with the technical equipment. She indicated he wasn’t a natural dancer but is living proof that “dancing is a learned skill.” Beverly emphasizes that Irv’s become an outstanding dancer and together they lead classes and workshops, teach at private parties and special events, and plan group trips and cruises. Alaska, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, New Zealand and Australia have all benefited from the Barrs’ visits. Additionally, Beverly and Irwin share their love of dancing with senior citizens at retirement and convalescent facilities in the Los Angeles area.

Queried what International Folk Dance means to her, Beverly immediately answered, “It’s our life.” She explained, “It’s the dance community is like a family. They’re great fun to be with and always lend support in times of need.” Beverly jokes that she’s so involved she’s become the clearinghouse for most of the parties and social events in the Los Angeles area.

Beverly explained that while the goal in travel with folk dance friends is to see the sights, the experience is enriched by their mutual interest. She usually researches local folk classes and events ahead of time and the group frequently spends time with people throughout the world with whom they share a love of dance and music.

One of Beverly and Irwin’s most memorable experiences occurred soon after they arrived in Dunedin, New Zealand with twenty dance friends. As the group walked through a museum.
C an a company be a “local hero”? Can it’s vision, values and humor be expressed in the organic growth of the organization and result in both a cherished resource for lovers of pop music and culture and a force for social change? Rhino Records answers these questions with a resounding “yes.”

In the early 1970s Richard Foos was a pop music fan, a bass guitar player who gigged in L.A. blues and rock bands and a record collector who scoured local swap meets and sales for old records. His ten- der years had been filled with the outrageous patter of East Coast and L.A. DJs and their wacky humor found a kindred spirit in this music fan. He loved roots music, blues and pop classics from the 50’s and 60’s and discovered that others shared his passion and would buy his finds at a profit. A sociology major at CSU Northridge, he balanced his love for music with a sense of social responsibility that have continued throughout his personal and professional life.

In 1973 Foos began selling used records from the back of a small Santa Monica store-front. After the store was relocated to near UCLA another record fanat- ic, Harold Bronson, became a regu- lar customer. Harold soon augment- ed his own study of Sociology at UCLA and playing in bands like Morgan David and His Winos with managing the new store. This pop music braintrust shamelessly plugged their new venture with their first recording, “Go To Rhino Records” by street singer, Wild Man Fischer. And in 1978 with $500, some recording time in Dodger Stadium and the further vocal stylings of Fischer in “Wildmania”, Foos and Bronson launched the Rhino label.

According to Sonja Smith (Dr. Rhino the day this author queried), Rhino founder Richard Foos came up with the name, “Rhino”, “... because he liked the idea of a Rhino charging forward without a lot of compli- cated business plans, etc. And charge we do!” The company’s mission is straightforward: “...to put out new music by established contemporary artists like BeastieSoleil and Todd Rundgren are featured on their Forward Label; and, on Rhino Movie Music, they partnered with Turner Classic Movies to re-release such classic soundtrack albums as “The Wizard of Oz”, “Dr. Zhivago” and “The Rocky Horror Show”. Rhino Handmade, from the “Rhino Handmade Institute of Petromusicology”, produces “otherwise unavailable audio delights.”

Expanding their multimedia empire, Rhino Home Video has exalted TV classics and oddball films while Rhino Films has brought new movies such as “Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas” and “Why do Fools Fall In Love” to the screen. Rhino continues to put out great stuff, have fun, make money and make a difference. To experience Rhino visit the two retail outlets on Westwood Blvd. or their info-packed websites.
Kulak’s Woodshed
A LIVING ROOM FOR SINGER-SONGWRITERS
BY NICK SMITH

A s I edged my way through the crowded, bustling main ballroom at the Old Ground Hotel in Ennis, Co Clare in Ireland a couple of years ago, the excitement was palpable. Jetlag was to blame for my late arrival to the opening ceremonies of the Fleadh Nua, a week-long music and dance festival organized by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCE). To top off my disarray, it was standing room only. WiseVinly figuring I should save my dancing feet for later, I spotted one lone seat way up on the front row and decided to go for it. Catching my breath, I looked around to find myself seated next distinguished fiddler P.J. Hayes, master-fiddler, Martin Hayes’ father, and his legendary Tulla Ceilí Band — one of the most famous ceilid bands in the country. [P.J. Hayes, a founding member of the band, unfortunately passed away in May at 80 years old — a tremendous loss to the great East Clare musical tradition. R.I.P.] These guys have been playing together for over 50 years! Being a big fan of theirs and an Irish fiddler myself, I was in for a real treat. They were ready and waiting to kick off the evening’s activities with some spectacular music. During the opening speeches, I reflected on all the traditional events sponsored by the CCE, an international organization dedicated to the advancement of Irish traditional music (ITM), language, dance, and culture, but were logistically unavailable to me. With dozens of branches in the US and over 400 worldwide there were no branches close to home — until now. In order to benefit from CCE’s programs — this necessity would be taking me to Ireland. To learn to dance the Clare Sets and to a level were planned. In the past 50 years, the Fleadh and Comhaltas have independently grown and Irish exiles have played an active part. The CCE now has over 400 branches — in every Irish County, Britain, Australia, United States and Canada, and even in places such as Japan, Hungary, and Sardinia.

Comhaltas is meant to be a forum for the traditional Irish culture as contrasting the popular stereotypical images of which we are all too familiar. In other words, don’t come to a session expecting to hear Danny Boy and see people crying into their Guinness. Instead, what you will see are dedicated musicians playing traditional tunes and accompanying singers. You’ll most likely see some energetic solo step dances performed in jig (hard) shoes, superb sean nos (old style) dancing — and groups of spirited set dances will be underway, as well.

Annually, the CCE holds a North American Convention and also sponsors an annual concert tour of award-winning musicians and dancers. The organization has no political or religious agenda, and is open to anyone interested in traditional Irish culture.

We are very fortunate that Des Regan, a mighty musician from Co. Galway, recently took great initiative and opened Southern California’s first branch. Des is an exceedingly generous and most-charming host for the music sessions. These occur on the first Sunday of every month from 3pm to 6pm.

KULAK’S WOODSHED
5230 Laurel Canyon Blvd.,
North Hollywood, CA 91607, 818-766-9913
www.kulakswoodshed.com
As has been reported in previous issues of FolkWorks, the Larmans are no longer on KPFK. But they are still producing FolkScene. You can hear it any time on the internet at www.kpig.org. They also produce a show for WUMB 91.9 FM, a folk oriented radio station in Boston. This too can be heard on the Internet at www.wumb.org. In the past few months they have featured Vin Garbutt from the north of England, Steve Gillette and Cindy Mangsen, Over the Rhine, a band from Ohio, blues performer Guy Davis, accordionist Josephine March and her band from Scotland. Annie, the local kilt maker, who happened to be the Scottish Dance teacher.

Annie was tops in sales production. Her flexible insurance after nineteen years where she recently retired from State Fund Insurance after nineteen years where she was tops in sales production. Her flexible work schedule made it possible for her to continue teaching. On a more personal level Bev and Irv illustrate that involvement in dance not only makes a difference on a community level it’s the path to a healthy, fulfilling life.

Beverly Barr’s contribution to folk dancing? A call to the nearby grapevine twenty-four locals trickled into the visitors’ hotel over a two-hour period, instruments in tow. Annie taught Scottish dances and Beverly reciprocated with instruction in International Dance. At the end of the evening the New Zealanders serenaded the group with a popular Scottish song in a stirring farewell. Moved by this touching salute the American visitors responded in kind.

Beverly Barr’s contribution to folk dance has been immeasurable. In addition to her many years as a teacher she’s been a Past President of the Folk Dance Federation of California South. Beverly posed her standard question, “Do you know where there is folk dancing?” A call to the nearby grapevine twenty-four locals trickled into the visitors’ hotel over a two-hour period, instruments in tow. Annie taught Scottish dances and Beverly reciprocated with instruction in International Dance. At the end of the evening the New Zealanders serenaded the group with a popular Scottish song in a stirring farewell. Moved by this touching salute the American visitors responded in kind. Beverly Barr’s contribution to folk dance has been immeasurable. In addition to her many years as a teacher she’s been a Past President of the Folk Dance Federation of California South.

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When asked to define himself, Clark Branson pauses for a second then says, “A guy who starts as a hobbyist, pursues this onto a professional level, learns from other people and finally gets into small theater and small community concerts and folk festivals...I might be described as having the spiritual of a serious amateur.” One must go back to the original definition to understand what Clark means when he says “amateur.”

The word is rooted in the Latin amari (“he loves”), and perfectly describes Clark’s impetuous way of collecting, performing, promoting and supporting folk music in Southern California. All of Clark’s works have been labors of love.

It began with a record collection - jazz in particular - that in the 60s led also to folk. A trip to England brought Clark into contact with the renowned folk singer Roy Harris and the vibrant 60s British folk scene. The vitality he experienced has stayed with him ever since, as has the model of the English folk club: “It’s the way they did it. It’s the small intimate club – a neighborhood club. I thought it was wonderful...It was a grass roots affair and at the same time it was professional. Everyone considered them vital.” By the mid-seventies, Clark was back in the L.A. area, performing, doing graduate work in folklore and mytholgy under D.K. Wilgus at UCLA and forming a folk club of his own.

“I have a special affinity for the British Isles’ ballads and Irish songs,” says Clark of his performing, “but I also do very well with blues in my way. I...I sing a cappella, and I use the dulcimer fairly well. And I love other American stuff – any place in the English-speaking world.” “For most of the past three decades, Clark has performed at schools, libraries and theaters as a singer and storyteller. His performing led him in the early 70s to the West Coast sea song community and the creation of sea shanty festivals from Vancouver to San Diego. This brought him not only a deep sense of community with his fellow performers, but experiences in producing both folk events, featuring such performers as Lou Killen, Stan Hugill and I use the dulcimer fairly well. And I love other American stuff – any place in the English-speaking world.”

“Small is good,” says Clark. “I like a situation in which everybody gets to do something, in which there are plenty of chances to get in a song circle, sing, tell - lots of things to do.” With its emphasis on teaching workshops, it educates. Says Paula: “Even though Clark’s not out there in a college or teaching in a high school class, he’s doing it in the community. He’s committed to presenting these performances and supporting these performers so people in the community are learning and getting this material in a different spectrum.” And with returning participants and performers, it has begun to create a community of its own. “We’ve been able to learn a lesson from Mountain Lion.” says Clark, “how good it is to have a company that comes back there every year...and will be there as regulars.” Intimacy, education and community are much of what Clark is about.

Intimacy, education and community also define Bostom Court Theater, a characteristically small arts complex Clark is planning in Pasadena that will feature a community of its own. “We’ve been able to learn a lesson from Mountain Lion,” says Clark. “how good it is to have a company that comes back there every year...and will be there as regulars.” Intimacy, education and community are much of what Clark is about.

Clark and Paula’s years together have resulted in a plethora of entertainments featuring such local and national names as Dave Parra and Cathy Barton, Ross Alman, Leslie Perry, U. Utah Phillips and (at last October’s Mountain Lion Folk Weekend) Ramblin’ Jack Elliott, in spaces ranging from The Venue. A Performing Space (in LA’s Brewery Arts Complex) to the FolkAllience Conventions (in Albuquerque and Cleveland) to Camp deBenneville Pines (in the San Bernardino Mountains). Presentations have ranged from concerts like the annual Celtic Christmas Concert (produced in conjunction with the Celtic Arts Center) to plays like ‘Round the Horn: The Sea Shanty Musical, scripted by Paula and writing partner Bill Howard; to Mountain Lion Folk Weekend, a deliberately small, friendly festival in the mountains. His support of both individual performers and of organizations have won him, in turn, the camaraderie and support of the California Traditional Music Society, Los Angeles DreamShapers and the Celtic Arts Center, to name only a few entities.

Mountain Lion, now entering its fourth year for its opening on September 21 – 23 and featuring folk luminary Mike Seeger, seems to epitomize three of Clark’s ideals. Limited to ninety participants, it is small. “Small is good,” says Clark. “I like a situation in which everybody gets to do something, in which there are plenty of chances to get in a song circle, sing, tell - lots of things to do.” With its emphasis on teaching workshops, it educates. Says Paula: “Even though Clark’s not out there in a college or teaching in a high school class, he’s doing it in the community. He’s committed to presenting these performances and supporting these performers so people in the community are learning and getting this material in a different spectrum.” And with returning participants and performers, it has begun to create a community of its own. “We’ve been able to learn a lesson from Mountain Lion,” says Clark, “how good it is to have a company that comes back there every year...and will be there as regulars.” Intimacy, education and community are much of what Clark is about.

“Intimacy, education and community also define Bostom Court Theater, a characteristically small arts complex Clark is planning in Pasadena that will feature a ninety-nine seat performance space with a somewhat smaller recital/roots hall, both designed to accommodate jazz, classical music, folk, children’s fare and storytelling. And the labors of love continue. Clark ends the interview by singing an all-see-you entitled “Jimmy Murphy” (interspersed with footnotes). It is a song of causes. HeClark Branson is a man of causes, or as Paula characterizes him, “He is one of the kindest, most generous and supportive lights in this town.”

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