New World Flamenco Festival
La Flor de la Vida, August 10-19
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SEA SHANTIES
PLUS...
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..THAT REMINDS ME...
...AND MORE!

COVER PHOTO:
PHOTO OF JUAN OGALLA BY MIGUEL ANDY MOGG
This July/August issue in your hands lists a plethora of summer concerts. Look at page 3 for this summer’s offerings at the Skirball, Culver City, Japan American Museum, Grand Performances, the Santa Monica Pier and the Levit Pavilion.

At this time each year, we search through the listings and mark in our calendar all the wonderful concerts we plan on attending. We want here to thank all the producers who spend so much time, money and passion in searching out, negotiating, coordinating and presenting to us new and exciting artists from all over the world. FolkWorks is here to let you know about all this terrific music…along with the usual ongoing local events, dancing, singing, storytelling and folk-related arts exhibites. In case you hadn’t noticed, the Los Angeles Times and the L.A. Weekly (and other local “rags”) hardly mention what we cover, from Queen Ida on the Santa Monica pier, to the Southern California Ukulele Showcase at the Japan American Museum to Vieux Farka Toure at both Grand Performances and the Skirball Cultural Center.

Leaving you all know about these events is the reason we began FolkWorks. Seven years ago we figured that we needed 12,000 hard copy newspapers distributed to get the word out. Now we even look up telephone numbers online. Take a look at our new website www.FolkWorks.org to see what we are up to. Our calendar lists all the events for you to plan your social time and we will be expanding with new blogs so you can hear about hands we have found/heard in our travels across the country or across the street.

So guess you are getting the message. We managed to get this hard copy out at the coaxing of a lot of friends and writers. At this point, until unless we can get the help needed to print hard copies, this really will be the last hard copy issue. We realize that this will be difficult for some of you but we’ve also heard from a lot of folks who get all their information online. We are planning and discussing the new opportunities online and you will be getting announcements shortly about new venues, artists listings, musician teaching listings, etc. Be sure to look at the website and Yahoo Group for announcements. We plan to continue our ongoing columns about Music Theory, Old Time Music, Events Around Town and all other regular columns you love. In fact now you will be able to read them online and not have to worry about finding that old newspaper article. There is a good search engine on the site and you can find what you want. We, of course, will continue to have the great listing of upcoming events. We hope to make it easier for you to find what you are interested in, whether it is by location or category. This will be a bit down the road, but we are working on it.

We know you will want to continue to support us. While we no longer have the huge expense of the printed edition, we will still have ongoing expenses relating to keeping up the website, computer repair and maintenance as well as the usual telephone, office supplies, etc. We will continue to give away CDs for those of you who support us at the higher levels and will be looking into bumper stickers and other products for those of you who give at the basic $25 level.

Be on the lookout for our new T-Shirts and promotional cards. Thank you for all our new ideas. And as always…go out to live music, get out and dance, and be a part of the growing FolkWorks Family. See you at concerts this summer!

Visit us on the web: www.FolkWorks.org

The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of FolkWorks.

JULY - AUGUST 2007
FLAMENCO FESTIVAL
LA FLOR DE LA VIDA

BY CHRIS STUART

There are few folk dances that blend passion and precision, energy, and elegance, as well as flamenco. Its origins are only dimly known, and there is debate over the very word. The dance appeared first in the Andalusian region of Spain in the sixteenth century—when Spain had become a major power in the Mediterranean—until its development was financed, initially, by Moorish and African armies who were followers of the dance’s dualistic character: of loss, persecution, pride, and creation. The dance has thus been referred to as a reference to a characteristic rite of Gypsy cultures, giving rise to the term “flamenco.”

Its origins are generally acknowledged to be in the sixteenth century region of Spain in Andalusia, and there is debate as to its name. Flamenco is generally thought to have arisen in the sixteenth century, and there is debate as to its name. The word flamenco is thought to be derived from the Arabic term “al-flammin,” meaning “fire.”

The dance is characterized by the use of the hand drum, known as the “cante flamenco,” and the guitar, known as the “guitar flamenco.” These instruments are used to create a rhythmic and melodic framework that is then used to create a “cante flamenco,” which is a type of poetry that is used to express the dancer’s emotions. The dance is also characterized by the use of the “palma,” which is a type of percussion instrument that is used to create a rhythmic and melodic framework. The dance is also characterized by the use of the “cante flamenco,” which is a type of poetry that is used to express the dancer’s emotions. The dance is also characterized by the use of the “palma,” which is a type of percussion instrument that is used to create a rhythmic and melodic framework.

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THE DARK PAST

It is the 17th Century and you are the choirmaster of a Roman Catholic Church somewhere in Italy. The Church, citing the words of Saint Paul, does not allow women to participate in the choir so young boys must sing the higher parts. In some ways, this is better, because a young voice offers an unmatchable innocence and purity. The problem for you as choirmaster is that the investment of your time and energy shaping these young vocal instruments will be lost when puberty “breaks” their voices. If only there was some way to keep these voices from being stolen away at puberty. What if they never went through puberty? But how could that happen? There was only one way—castration. Castration how could that happen? There was never went through puberty? But voices. If only there was some way to be lost when puberty “breaks” their energy shaping of your time and the investment offers an unmatchable innocence.

SUPERSTARS OF THEIR DAY

For the castrati who survived and found a place in the world of music, life was amazing. They were the mega superstars of their day and the very first international stars. Composers wrote music especially for the castrati to take advantage of their virtuosity and range. Opera, which was just beginning, was made hugely famous by these castrati superstars. Adoring royalty showered them with gifts and favors. Women went crazy for them and they lived a rock star’s private life. Even though castrati were infertile (a plus in this instance!) most could still achieve erection and orgasm.

SENESINO AND FARINELLI

Two of the most notable castrati were Senesino (? -1750) and Farinelli (1705-1782). Senesino was a spoiled diva, arrogant and prone to tantrums. But Handel (1685-1759), having heard him in Dresden, brought him to London to join his Italian Opera Company. Handel created it many great opera roles to display Senesino’s virtuosity.

Farinelli was not as famous as Senesino but is better known today because of the 1994 movie, Farinelli. He was a pupil of Porpora and became famous in Southern Italy where he was known as il ragazzo (“the boy”). Porpora established an opera house in London directly competing with Handel’s. There, Farinelli sang in Porpora’s operas for several years. Farinelli sang for Philip V of Spain who gave him a permanent position accompanied by a huge sum of money. He was only successful in public and his main job was to sing the same four songs each night to the king. His planned “medical” stay in Spain lasted 22 years after which he retired to a Castle in Bologna with his amassed wealth.

THE LAST CASTRATO

Alessandro Moreschi (1858-1922) was the last castrato in the world and the only one ever recorded. In two sessions (1902 and 1903) he recorded less than one hour of vocals on wax cylinders. The quality is poor and he was past his prime but it is a novel artifact. Reportedly crowds applauded him with the call, “Eviva il coltello” (“Long live the knife!”). Moreschi was in charge of the Sistine Chapel Choir. Figure 3 is an 1898 photo of six of his choir members; note that the two in front have the physical features of the castrati.

The castrato voice will never be heard again, but there is still a great deal of interest in this phenomenon as evidenced in many books, movies and CDs addressing the subject. If you are interested, you can find a lot of information on the web. Here’s a site with many links: www.radix.net/~dalia/singers/counter.html. So for now, watch out for that wild boar and as always stay tuned.
I f you’ve been to Hawaii, then surely you’ve been to some hotel’s luau at least once (and if not, what kind of tourist are you, anyway?) A luau, as all good tourists know, is about the food. And just so you won’t go hungry, they make sure not to keep the offerings too authentic. But one thing for sure, you’re guaranteed to find that obligatory Poi—that purple paste in a bowl that the entertainers will warn you about. It’s something, they say, only a native Hawaiian could love. And do they love it? Dipping two fingers at a time, then three fingers and finally scooping out a handful in a cupped four-finger dip. Guaranteed to get a good laugh.

To a culture accustomed to sweet and salty flavors as we are, poi is a shock to the senses in its relative blandness. Compound that with the especially tasteless sample you’re likely to find at any Hawaiian Buffet, you’ll wonder why anyone would bother with it.

As opposed to the typical servings at contemporary Hawaiian eateries: rice, macaroni salad, chicken katsu, teriyaki. Poi is an authentically Hawaiian and has a rich and significant history that is anything but bland.

Long before Europeans brought guns, missionaries and high-fat food, poi was the staple of the Hawaiian diet. Poi is made from the taro plant. The tropical climate and abundance of water is an ideal environment for the cultivation of taro. Like potatoes to the Irish, maize to American Indians, and rice to Asians, taro was the food just about every islander depended on. The leaves as well as the root, a starchy tuber, are edible. As will happen with anything so central to the lives and lore of a community, taro took on a sacred character to the extent that King Kalakaua traced his lineage to “a real figure closely identified with the taro plant and had a taro leaf symbol in a prominent place on his crown. Even today, poi has an honored place in Hawaiian music: one of the best known songs of Sane’na’aua Fish & Poi celebrates the “true heart” that can satisfy him. And in the song Island Style, John Cruz rhapsodizes on how his “gramma” loves the poi real good.

Poi is made by pounding the boiled taro tuber with some water until it morphs into a thick pasty texture, about the consistency of pancake batter. Poi is traditionally pounded using an oversized mortar and pestle. The taro flesh is purple, so the paste is a bright purple. The poi is just thick enough so that one can plunge a couple of fingers (or three or four fingers for the hungry guy) into a bowl and emerge with a good slup of poi. Just like Chinese food tastes better with chopsticks than with a fork, maybe that’s why you didn’t like that poi you tasted at the luau? Put down that spoon! Actually you would take more than your fingers to make tourist poi taste better.

Poi has a notoriously brief shelf life. Kind of like a baguette, you don’t really want to let it sit on the shelf for weeks. Freshly pounded poi is slightly sweet. Day-by-day as it slowly ferments, it takes on a sour taste. Then, again, just like John Cruz’s tuta, some people like the poi real sour. What you should do is use the poi a most likely mixed from dehydrated poi, and it’s bound to be at least as good as what you get from dehydrated mashed potatoes. How would you like to introduce someone to potatoes byStarting them out with reconstituted potato flakes? Yum.

An ever-quiet reminder that river a viable ecosystem that contributes to the entire city by fostering nature within the urban landscape and revitalizing the plant and animal communities that have existed in the LA basin long before any Europeans arrived. I’m not suggesting you only need to plant California Native plants, although I am a big proponent of them, but even if we are going to garden with plants from other areas, we can be mindful of their impact on the environment.

A lot of the American folk music tradition is devoted to the 1930’s and 1940’s Dust Bowl when that were uprooted in the dust bowls and the drought that wrecked havoc on much of America’s farming communities. The drought would have come anyway, but the practices of farming at that time were as much to blame for the dust storms that killed those crops and the drought that wiped out many of the American animals. We have fallen into that same hubris and arrogance in our relationship to our native land.

Pick a few of those Meyer lemons from your neighbor’s tree (they won’t mind) and with a sip of homegrown lemonade, sing along with some local song crafters, like Fur Dixon and Steve Werner, about life in Southern California. Let’s be ever mindful of the need for stewardship in this landscape we call Los Angeles and honor the place we call home.

Grandson of a Great Plains farmer, David King is the Garden Master at the Learning Garden, on the campus of Venice High School. He shares his love of the land and music through teaching, writing and playing in a folk/country band.
Tower of Song with U2 is the best thing here musically. Others, which include rocker Nick Cave (a credible and intense presence) and Bono (a sweeter song Chelsea Hotel #2 a dull Everybody Knows) do well enough and are certainly compelling performers visually, but none lend a new interpretation to songs that are best within Cohen’s limited range, a perfect match for his lyrical directness, in songs which tend to be resistant to being “prettyed up” or rendered quirkily as just about everyone here seems to do. The rest of the movie fortunately contains interviews with Cohen, which are excellent, as is the commentary by the musical artists (such as Wainwright lovely and a funny story about encountering an underwear-clad Cohen feeding an интеллект верхом). The 2-CD set Rogues Gallery: PirateBallads, SeaSongs&Chanties [Anti] (!!!) is much better, being that these are traditional songs that don’t in most cases have the burden of a definitive reading. Chanteys also tend to lend themselves very well to punkish treatment, having with abandon and foul-mouthedness in common. There are plenty of “folkie” songs here, though, Richard Thompson, Martin and Eliza and fiddler Richard Greene to name a few. One of the better tracks, however, (as much as it pains me to admit it) is by mega-star Sting who leaves his ego behind to lend a gripping reading to Blood Red Roses. The aforementioned Cohenwainwright and Bono likewise serve the songs nicely. These known artists indeed treat the songs as if they’re on board ship, trying to quell the boredom, a tribute to Willner’s solid guidance. While modern instrumentation is used, the arrangements are unobtrusive, the songs not self-consciously “rockified” or turned into something they’re not. A class job, all told.

But the pick of the litter is definitely the wonderful The Harry Smith project Revisited, a 4-disc music/DVD set [Shout Factory] (!!!). Smith, though he loved the music of the south, was a typical folkie himself. An eccentric artist, painter and collector of found objects, his anthology of American music, released by folkways in the early 1950s, had a profound influence on the emerging folk revival, as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and the Kingston Trio, just to name a few, plumbed it for songs and inspiration. The original recordings were from his private collection. Smith felt that the songs (American roots music from country and blues to fiddle tunes, rags and sea chanties) told a story about America that was worth preserving, and since many old 78s were collected during WWII and melted down of records to contribute to the war effort, they became rare. Smith can be said to have rescued many of these recordings from obscurity.

It is the eccentric side of Smith that another diverse group of artists pays tribute to in these two discs of music and one DVD culled from concerts in London, Los Angeles and New York. Certainly this much Pakistan rock, jazz and avant garde stars had no sense of delicacy with the songs, but it’s amazing how many, while straying into left field, stayed true to the heart of them. David Thomas, head of Avant-punk band Pere Ubu, tears Fisht’s Blues limb from limb with immense performance, but with old time fiddle underneatth. Van Dyke Parks reaches the middle ground between earthy and urbane on a lovely arrangement of fiddle tune Saw Lady Away with the Mondrian String Quartet. Odd combinations—jazz trombonist Roswell Rudd with Sonny West, Philip Glass and DJ Spooky improvising soundtracks to Smith’s films, themselves shockingly recommended), songs like See That My Grave is Kept live on.

In addition to the musical performances (are expected here) the 4th disc, a documentary appropriately titled The Old Weird America, is about Harry Smith, his original anthology recordings and these new ones. Engrossing interviews with the musical performers include from New York Dolls lead singer David Johansen, who named his band The Harry Smiths, talking about the segmentation of modern music and how the inclusiveness of Dave’s Corner continued on page 8
A FEAST OF HAWAIIAN FESTIVALS
L.A.-HONOLULU ROUND-TRIP
BY AUDREY COLEMAN

The pitch was mid-range, the tone full, yet somehow fragile. It reminded me of a Native American flute, yet the sound had a unique, delicate quality I couldn’t define. Perhaps it had to do with the fact that the breath was coming from the player’s nose.

Mike Kalkolani Wong, maker of Hawaiian nose flutes, was one of several workshop leaders demonstrating traditional Hawaiian arts at the annual E Hula Mau Competition held Labor Day weekend. Visiting the canopied “Hawaiian Village” on the mall of the Long Beach Convention Center, I came upon Kalkolani chiseling holes into a small, dried, hollowed-out gourd. Moments later, he picked it up in the palm of his right hand and pressed it to his right nostril while blocking the other nostril with his left hand. Then he made this marvelous music. He spent over a half an hour showing me the rudiments of nose flute technique and made an instrument for me to take home.

Cultural workshops and demonstrations add an extra dimension to E Hula Mau. There is an exciting difference between attending an event purely as a spectator, wandering among performance stages and craft booths and having opportunities for meaningful encounters with cultural practitioners such as Mike Kalkolani Wong. This gives an event the quality of a folk life festival, even if it doesn’t bear that name.

A TOP-NOTCH FOLK LIFE FESTIVAL IN HONOLULU

Last March I had the good fortune to attend the Great Hawaiian Folk Festival, held in Waikiki at Kapiolani Park, the nearby Outrigger Hotel, and Queen’s Park. Over a four-day period, the festival offered cultural workshops, music and dance performances and artisans and community exhibits, all free of charge. Surprisingly, it was the first festival bearing that name. Now it is destined to be an annual event.

Making a Hula Rattle

In an adjacent space, another instrument maker, Michael Kop, was showing a group of children and parents how to make an ali ‘ula (oolee-oolee) – the rattle used in implement style hula dancing. Provided with hollowed out gourds, participants in Michael’s workshop filled them with small pebbles, then plugged the holes with strips of long leaves from the hala tree, softened in water.

When my sheaf of hala leaves was resisting, Michael coached me, “This one you have to pinch to get through the holes. You almost have to twist it and with the other hand you pull...” I came away with my ali ‘ula rattle, adorned at the mouth with a thick sheaf of hala leaf. It occurred to me later that Michael could have completed the process for me in half the time, but instead fulfilled his mission as a teacher of culture.

Slack-Key Grandmaster

A third workshop held at the Outrigger was a gift to any guitarist aspiring to play in the Hawaiian slack-solo style widely known as ki ho’alu. This is the practice of relaxing the tuning of the guitar strings so that the thumb and index play a bass line while the other fingers can take on the melody. Ki ho’alu has no greater proponent than Ledward Kaapana whose flawless lighting technique and soulful interpretations of slack-key classics, and playful spirit have brought him acclaim worldwide. (His recent Grammy-nominated CD, Grandmaster, provides a fine introduction to his talents.) With the pattern and good humor, he played a classic slack-key piece very slowly, over and over, while the workshop participants followed on their own instruments.

Led spiced up the workshop with reminiscences, sharing, for example, the influence his uncle, Fred Panahou, had on his musical career. “My uncle could play anything. (When he was a boy) seven nights he dreamed how to play the guitar. He sat under a coconut tree and this girl in white, with red ashes on her face. He didn’t see no faces, they taught him to play guitar. And after the seventh night, he told his dad. He said his dad knew because every morning while he was making his lunch before he went to school, his dad heard him play. I think that he never had that dream. That was a gift.”

Performance Highlights

The following Sunday afternoon, Led Kaapana was up on the bandstand at Kapiolani Park, playing to an admiring audience on the last day of the Great Hawaiian Folk Life Festival. Among the artists in addition to Led were veteran songwriter-slack-key guitarist Dennis Kamakahi with his son David on ukulele, the relatively new trio Maunaula, and honey-voiced Natalie Ai Kamauu. Interestingly, Natalie’s daughter, Uncle Ii, was dancing on one of her numbers at the bandstand and later Natalie and her husband accompanied their daughters in the hula performance space. While the bandstand concert was going on, over a dozen hula hula were dancing on the other side of the park.

Creating Hawaiian Cloth

While strolling among the booths in Kapiolani Park on Sunday, I heard a regular tapping sound – wood on wood. Was this some type of percussion instrument? It had the pattern and good humor, it played a wooden piece striking a tre on its beek. Walking toward the sound, I discovered a pretty, forty- ish woman with dark wavy hair, kneeling before a workshop tent. Ka’ulani DeSilva is well known in the hula community as a dancer, kumu hula (master teacher) and commentator at hula festivals. Today she was demonstrating the ancient Hawaiian process of converters fiber from the wailea plant, a paper mulberry found across the South Pacific, into kapa, the prized cloth that Hawaiians traditionally used for clothing, blankets, wrapping bones, and many other things. Ka’ulani let me try my hand at beating the kapa while she continued to explain the process. “You beat the strips on top of each other to bind them. At the last beating, you beat it with a special square beater, ie kuku, that has a watermark on it and you will see when you hold it up that it has a watermark. That is unique to Hawaiian kapa. After it’s watermarked, dried, you can dye it with different natural dyes found from berries, dirt, soot, all kinds of things in the environment and then open it up. That is making it.” Her hands-on activity allowed visitors to actually practice printing on the cloth with traditional patterns.

Mainland Inspiration

Born from a collaboration of the City and County of Honolulu, the Outrigger Hotel, the Hawaiian Cultural Clubs, the Hawaiian Tourism Authority, and various business sponsors, the first Great Hawaiian Folk Life Festival took its model from a mainland festival. “Fifteen years ago the mayor (Mufi Hannemann, when he headed the state’s Department of Economic Development) came up with the money to take 40 people to Seattle to participate in the Northwest Folk Life,” Festival producer Milton Lau recalled. “It was a great event. It opened my eyes up to the possibilities and I’ve always had it in the back of my mind to do something like this. We’re showcasing aspects of our culture in a positive way. This is going to be an annual festival so we encourage people to schedule their vacations around it.”

Back to L.A.

In the meantime, consider attending these local Hawaiian events: Ho’olaulea, a showcase of hula halau from the region accompanied by plenty of Hawaiian displays, takes place July 21 and 22 at Alondra Park in southwest Los Angeles (Lawndale). It’s free to the public. Also free is the Aloha Expo in Santa Fe Springs, a smaller-scale festival happening the weekend of August 18-19. Then Labor Day weekend you’ll find the event that most resembles a folk life festival, E Hula Mau, at the Long Beach Convention Center and Terrace Theater. You need tickets for the hula performances but not for the Hawaiian displays and demonstrations on the mall. Purchase tickets on-line at nammomo.org.

If you attend E Hula Mau, who knows? Maybe you’ll come home with a nose flute.

Audrey Coleman is a writer, educator, and passionate writer of traditional folk music and world culture.
BY AUDREY COLEMAN

On a warm summer evening, you’re strolling down West Seventh Street in San Pedro, headed towards the Whale and Ale, a traditional British restaurant-pub. Approaching, you can see the Victoria rain-fulnishings and oak paneled walls through the thick, green-paned picture window. Then you hear something between a song and a chant emanating from the open second story window.

Leader: Oh, Ranzo was no sailor!
Chorus: Ranzo, boys, Ranzo.
Leader: He was a Boston tailor!
Chorus: Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!

The voices belong to the San Pedro Shanty Sing, whose participants meet monthly at the Whale and Ale to pay tribute to a form of work song as old as seafaring itself. Many of the twenty or so shanty fans who gather around the long table in the restaurant’s cozy upstairs meeting room are volunteers with the Los Angeles Maritime Institute. They sail “tall ship” sail boats for youth training programs run by the Institute. For them, learning the songs that powered the labor on the 19th century clipper ships has become an extension of learning to sail the ships themselves.

One of the founding members of San Pedro Shanty Sing, Alan Rice, recalled, “My girlfriend Joan and I had started sailing on the tall ships during the 9th century when they became highly specialized, linked to the types of shipboard labor they accompanied. For example, “Reuben Ranzo” was a halyard or long-drag song, sung while raising or lowering sails. The crew would haul during the chorus and pause while the shanty singer performed the verse. A shanty singer might be prized for his robust voice, vocal flourishes or his ability to improvise on verses.

Although the days are over when a sea shanty migrated from ship to ship in true folk tradition, Alan Rice of the San Pedro Shanty Sing group has noticed regional differences in how the songs are sung today. “We were going back to Mystic each summer (Sea Music Festival in Mystic Seaport, Connecticut) – and hearing songs in San Francisco and then coming here with an occasional guest. These little enclaves – in San Francisco they’d sing a song one way and we’d come down here and start singing it that way and somebody who’d learned it from a different tape, a different version, would sing it differently.”

Somebody came through, he was aboard a visiting ship and…he came and joined our shanty sing. So he sang a song that none of us had heard before—Esequibo River. So I learnt that from him just the ways he sings it which is almost kind of a roaring, hooting kind of belting style. We all started singing it that way because that’s how we thought it was sung. (Later) we learnt that other people sing it very, very differently. But we have no intention of changing it. That’s how we learnt it from our visitor and we’re going to keep singing it that way. So there was an example of a very locally learned song.”

If you’re looking for a very local shanty sing experience, the San Pedro Shanty Sing group meets at 8:00 p.m. on the last Friday of the month. Friendly people will let you look at their shanty books so you can sing along. Added attractions are Alan’s pennywhistle and concertina, Geoff’s banjo, Kim’s collection of flutes, and Dustin and Lindsay’s robust baritone voices. And the Guinness flows freely till about 10:30 p.m.

Audrey Coleman is a writer, educator, and passionate explorer of traditional folk music and world culture.
What the folk is happening?

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SOMEWHERE OUT THERE...

THE STAGECOACH FESTIVAL

By Larry Wines

What happens when someone combines the best-known American and folk-roots music acts with Nashville’s over-hyped red-state trailer-park rockers? 

The stagecoach, the extravaganza on the Empire Polo Grounds in Indio, held May 5 & 6. Many people, including this writer in the last issue, predicted that Stagecoach would be the live music event of the year. It was, without ever going near the “Mane” stage and its lineup of Nashville big shots. And therein is what it all means.

The week before playing Stagecoach, and with no reference to it, Spoon singer Don Edwards told his audience at the annual Santa Clarita Cowboy Festival, “I don’t know why they call it country and western anymore. It’s neither of either.”

He got laughs and nods of agreement. Santa Clarita is his crowd. But other crowds of real westerners, including Edwards, Sons of the San Joaquin, Red Steagall, cowboy-poet-storytellers Ramblin’ Jack Elliott, Baxter Black, and performing stage host Waddie Mitchell, together at a country festival? That’s purt near terra incognita. After all, modern country music fans see the cowboy hats on modern incognita. After all, western music storytellers Ramblin’ Jack Elliott, including Edwards, Sons of the San Joaquin is his crowd.

At the far end of the folk spectrum was Kris Kristofferson, whose set solidified his folk credentials, and Emmylou Harris, who has long been embraced by folkies. Each of them, in the midst of their best-known crowd-pleasing hits, trotted out new songs that were布鲁斯 and scathingly anti-Bush, anti-war anthems. In each case, the same crowd that cheered wildly for their hits greeted the new songs with almost stunned silence.

You could feel it flash over the crowd like St. Elmo’s fire. About a third of the crowd applauded briskly and appreciatively. Another third seemed to go through the motions of applauding, as if some part of them was in autopilot. The final third were clearly the Nashville country / Fox News channel fans, who stood there and on the other, will those artists want to return, knowing they’re facing the sonic equivalent of a hurricane?

Goldenvoice deserves credit for taking the risk with a bold concept to establish a signature identity for a new festival, combining musicians from distant ends of the spectrum of what is, and once was, country music.

The real benefit is the potential awakening for fans who know only today’s formulaic Nashville red-state rock—“Country.” Give them an opportunity to wander through a festival where they can discover richly diverse authentic Americana music that’s not played on commercial country radio stations, and see what happens—unless the big-money, big-label, payola-driven-commercial-radio industry influences Goldenvoice to make that opportunity a singular outbreak before it can spread. For FolkWorks readers, a decision to attend next year’s Stagecoach Festival will surely be driven by who gets booked to play it, and for some, whether the Mane stage will be ruined.

Stay in touch with Larry and the massive Acoustic American Music Calendar at www.myspace.com/acoustic and catch L.A.’s only acoustic Americana radio show, Tied to the Tracks, on SoCal music station 600 AM. Find live music performances after 8, at KCSN 88.3 FM Los Angeles, worldwide at www.kcsn.org. You can e-mail him at larrywines@hotmail.com.
I intended to start off this column with the quote “Writing about music is like dancing about architecture.” I was under the impression that famous folk musician Frank Zappa was the quote’s author, but research has shown that a myriad of folks are credited with this wisdom, from Martin Mull to Elvis Costello to Igor Stravinsky. Oh well, it’s still a good quote. And since I’ve used it, most likely someone in the future will attribute it to me. Music is hard to write about, probably because music can evoke some pretty strong emotions. Of course, the argument can be made that music is just mathematics. If you don’t understand intervals and some basic math, it will probably be harder to learn an instrument. But there are many great players who simply say “intuitive math” in order to make their music. It would’ve been nice when I was grumbling about taking math in high school if someone would’ve sat down with me and my guitar and explained how much math I was using to play my guitar. Or annoy my parents, which was about the same thing.

So why do we write about music? Isn’t it just enough to listen and enjoy, or to play and enjoy? For many, yes. But I am one of those folks with a sort of mono-mania with regard to music. Most of the books and periodicals I read are about music. Much of the “retail” shopping I do, whether real world or on-line, has something to do with music or musical instruments.

Some people approach music like “train spotting.” They enjoy arguing with music or musical instruments. The potential changes here at FolkWorks have inspired a lot of discussion among the writers about why we write, we who write for and about music. Our discussion of all things music has been as fulfilling to me. I’ve also paid much better (go figure) but never assumed that someone besides us shares our interest. We hope so.

Most of us who write about music do so out of love. We love music, we love to share our “discoveries” with others. Sometimes we like to share our disappointment, or if we’re pushy writers, we may want to “instruct” the artist as to potential improvements needed. We hope that our musings will lead the reader to seek out the artist we’re waxing eloquent about. We assume that someone besides us shares our interest. We hope so.

The Living Tradition Concert Series

BY DENNIS ROGER REED

In the land of folk music concert series, a year or two is a highly regarded period. However, the Living Tradition concert series held in the Anaheim Downtown Community Center has reached the 100 show mark. These concerts, held on the third Saturday of each month, have featured the best in all things folk, and helped to foster the Southern California folk scene in a myriad of ways.

Part of the import of a long term folk music series is education. Current LT maven Steve Dulson has impeccable folk taste, and no matter what the folk sub-genre being presented, the listener will be entertained by quality performers. Dulson took over the reins of the concert series in 1998, and remembers “I realized we’d achieved some sort of milestone the first time one of our “regulars” walked up to the ticket table, pulled out his money, and asked “Who’s playing tonight?”

Admission is usually $14, unless you’re smart enough to join Living Tradition in which case you can garner a $3 discount at the door. Kids under EIGHTEEN are free with an adult, and so a new generation of folk lovers can be nurtured.

You can always contact Steve for reservations and info at 949-646-1964 or e-mail tinkersown@ca.com. Upcoming in your county’s schedule on July 21 will be the country folk of Susie Glaze and her band, including a tribute to Jean Ritchie, and opening will be LA singer/songwriter Brad Colerick. On August 18 Arizona’s wonderful harp and guitar duo D-Squared return. September 15 has Canada’s John Wort Hannam bringing his “working class folk” to LT, with Australian duo Nougat opening with great mandolin and guitar music. October 20 features Ed O’Neill, and on November 17, Alberta’s Maria Dunn, a fine young songwriter with an historical perspective.

Living Tradition is more than concerts, though. It’s a non-profit organization that hosts contra dances and jams nearly every month. Their events are intentionally family-friendly and open to the public. “LT was founded in 1982 by Carolyn Russell and continues to be a group of people who share the desire to share traditional music and dance.”

So if you have somehow managed to miss the last 100 concerts, you’ve got plenty of opportunities to “catch up,” and perhaps find a home for your folk related leanings.
CD REVIEW:

BOB WEBB AND THE BANJO—
AT LAST!

BY MONIKA WHITE

Bob Webb's album, Full Circle: The Solo Banjo Sessions means a lot to those of us who have been waiting many years for a recording of just Bob and the banjo. In the late 1970s, Webb abandoned old time banjo tunes for maritime music and Los Angeles for British Columbia and later Maine where he still resides. So, to have him back with this amazing album of old time banjo tunes is truly welcome since he is one of the finest clawhammer players in the country. The more you listen to his playing, the more you will appreciate his talent and mastery of the instrument.

In the album notes Webb states that this is a "live" recording with no "studio magic." Instead says Webb, "the music is what you might hear when I play the banjo at home after supper". Any fan of old time banjo playing and old time tunes will definitely want to bring this album home. It's an incredibly diverse collection of 21 tunes utilizing seven tunings and six different banjos. Two tunes include a soft, tasteful guitar accompaniment Vocals and instrumentals range from songs sung in a low, lazy style to the lively, entertaining, toe-tapping many of us singing and playing at jams and festivals. Non-musicians will enjoy Webb’s music because it invokes front porch, back woods, down home, barn dance feelings characteristic of its roots. For the musician—especially the banjo players—he ability to combine strong melody lines, wonderful drop thumb fills, and the gentle tic, tic of the beat into a multi-layered sound will both intimidate and inspire. The album features an interesting array of songs and tunes. Three tunes written by Webb are included. Maggie (a friend’s cat) and Sleepy Margaret (a lullaby for Webb’s daughter) are nice, but the most interesting is Fast-moving Cloud because of its timing and drive. It sticks with you and pops into your head throughout the day—a sure sign of a good tune. He doesn’t totally get away from his other musical love, sea shanties. Listen to When Johnny Comes Down to Hilo, The Unfortunate Tailor and Lady Carlisle, and you’ll hear the storytelling, so common to the genre. By the way, it’s worth listening to the words on Lady Carlisle because the story is very engaging. However, for me vintage Bob Webb can best be heard on pieces like Nine Hundred Miles, Sally in the Garden, Charleson, Policeman and Last Chance.

You’ll get to go to his website to get the tunings used on the album but as Webb explains, the tunings are similar but surely different between notes and not necessarily on pitch. You are in for some surprises on the keys and won’t be able to play along without some creative use of your capo. The website also contains historical facts about banjos and tunings and interesting background information on Bob. It’s also where you can order Full Circle: The Solo Banjo Sessions. See www.richmondwebb.com.

Was it worth the wait? Yes and hopefully, we won’t have to wait another 30 years for volume two.

Monika White, a sometimes banjo player, is proud to say she was Bob Webb’s student 30 years ago and happy to say that they are still friends.

Valerie Cooley is living in Coos Bay, Oregon. When she’s not playing—she’s and brilliant young granddaughters, she paddles her kayak on the bay, watches birds, gardens, and contrabandanges once a month.

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For those of you that don’t know the Harry Smith Anthology of American Folk Music, buy it and allow your lives to be changed. For those of you that have been infected by its sonic wonders, there’s a new box set worth your time and cash. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings recently released Friends of Old Time Music: The Folk Arrival 1961-1965. The 3-CD set contains the “historic concerts that introduced traditional music to city audiences.” Usually when I spy a box set of American music that contains the words “folk arrival” I clench my guts in anticipation of an IBS episode. I can do without “protest” songs, Joan Baez, or Peter, Paul, and Mary. In fact if I even suspect a recording has any connection to the pie-holes of the New Christy Minstrels or Ian & Sylvia, I’ll buy some Death Metal to cleanse the palate. The “folk” groups of the 1950s and 1960s certainly destroyed the term “folk.” But, moving on… This set, despite its neophyte title, is one of the best recent releases I’ve heard. The Friends of Old Time Music (FOTM), founded by Ralph Rinzler, John Cohen, and Israel Young, were responsible for a series of fourteen concerts. From 1961-1965 the FOTM, with support from Mike Seeger, Alan Lomax, and a few others, brought real traditional folk musicians to New York City to perform. The oversized booklet in the set gives you a brief history of the FOTM organization and biographical info on their founders. Several playbills and numerous artist photos are included as well.

I relate this set to the Harry Smith Anthology since several of the original artists who recorded 78 sides found on the Smith anthology are performing here decades later. It provides us with a real lesson in comprehending the timelessness of this music with and through these performers in particular. As far as I’m concerned, most of these artists are in their prime, and the recording quality is stellar. Just listen to old-school fiddlermaster Gaither Carlton or guitarist Joseph Spence. They might convince any neophyte to bow at the altar of Old-Time Music. The 56-page booklet contains three essays by producer Peter K. Siegel, FOTM founder-old-time musician John Cohen and master musician Jody Stecher. One can also expect elucidating notes and anecdotes about each track and performer. Now for the spoilers…

In this set, we have a variety of styles and musicians nearly as diverse as the music found on the Secret Museum of Mankind set, but here it’s in the American idiom. Doc and Arnold Watson begin our traditional tour with wonderful dueting singing on “I’m Troubled.” There’s a certain charm and immediacy to this particular version that dwarfs other versions, including those from Flatt & Scruggs and the Blue Sky Boys. Later on, Doc is joined by another family member: his father-in-law Gaither Carlton. Gaither is one of my favorite fiddlers and his beautiful archaic style can be heard swinging and droning through “Lonely Tombs,” “Double File,” “Hick’s Farewell” and Brown’s Dream. I might add that Doc’s guitar work in Brown’s Dream should be studied by every guitarist interested in building up old-time fiddle tunes. The bass notes are beautifully rendered.

In addition to the Watson family, there are stunning tracks by Dock Boggs, Roscoe Holcomb, Fred McDowell, The New Lost City Ramblers, Clarence Ashley, Hobart Smith, Bill Monroe, and Jesse Fuller to name a few. One of the ultimate highlights is a track of Maybelle Carter playing a beautiful version of Sugar Hill on the banjo, clawhammer style. I never thought I’d hear something like this. Maybelle played banjo as a young girl and put it aside when she started playing the guitar. I only wish there were more. The other runner-up in this set is Bimini Gal by Joseph Spence. This Bahamanian songster has one of the most wild and weird guitar/vocal styles that I’ve ever heard. I urge you to listen to any of his recordings and you’ll find a man that manages to deliver the sound and rhythm of an entire calypso band while improvising and grunting in a fashion not unlike Captain Beefheart.

Another highlight is the playing of Bill Monroe. Just listen to his mandolin solo in “I Live and Let Live” and you’ll hear a real old-time musician. There’s none of that dreadfully slick and unemotional finger work that you find in most modern bluegrass. Monroe displays a wicked sense of raw syncopation and timing that reminds me more of Yank Rachell than Doc Watson or Skaggs. Also in the set are some great tracks from other old-time legends: The Stanley Brothers, Sam McGee and Arthur Smith. All in all, the FOTM set offers a refreshing glimpse into the musical history of some extraordinary musicians, during a pivotal time period in the old-time music saga. Instrumental and vocal renditions of old-time, early bluegrass, Delta blues and gospel are offered and they’re ours for the taking.

David Bragger is a Los Angeles-based instructor and player of old time fiddle and banjo music. He also photographs, films, and collects the lore of traditional artists, from puppeteers in Myanmar to fiddlers of Appalachia. www.myspace.com/davidbragger

David Bragger teaches traditional fiddle and banjo to students of all ages and levels. He teaches music by ear, so no musical background is necessary! His students have won awards at festivals from Topanga Fiddle Banjo Festival to Galax, Virginia. More importantly, he shows you how to have a foot-stomping ruckus of a good time! You’ll learn technique, bowing and styles of traditional Appalachian musicians so you can play at local jam sessions, bang away on your front porch, or saw like mad at local festivals and contests. For lessons, call David at 818-324-6124 or email him at davidbragger@yahoo.com.
Believe it or not, one of the things I miss about life in America is the availability of Starbucks. It’s not the coffee—our little village here in Scotland actually has two outstanding coffee shops, and I’m quite happy to be getting my caffeine fix from independent merchants. It’s the music I miss. I used to look forward to hearing whatever might be playing in my local Starbucks, and I bought some pretty amazing CDs there.

So I was really pleased to hear that Starbucks is extending the scope of its “Hear Music” program and launching their own label. Say what you will, someone in that big corporate office has a pretty keen ear for innovative sounds. It’s just recently been announced that the first release on the new Starbucks label will be a studio album by Paul McCartney, which I’m sure will be a big seller, but let’s hope that they will continue to seek out and present more unknown artists, too.

Here are a few stories and creative answers to test questions which were collected from Missouri music educators:

Refrain means don’t do it. A refrain in music is the part you better not try to sing.

Music sung by two people at the same time is called a duel.

Just about any animal skin can be stretched over a frame to make a pleasant sound once the animal is removed.

When electric currents go through them, guitars start making sounds. So would anybody.

Probably the most marvelous fugue was the one between the Hatfields and McCoys.

Another legend of ethnic music has gone. This time, it’s the venerable Don Ho, who was best known for luring boatloads of tourists to Hawaii. Born Donald Tai Loy Ho in Honolulu, Ho came from true Hawaiian melting-pot ancestry: He was of Hawaiian, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch and German descent.

Although he was best known for his signature song, Tiny Bubbles, Ho was also the one who introduced the song I’ll Remember You to Hawaiian audiences. His tenure as the Hawaiian crooner coincided with the renaissance of more traditional Hawaiian music that began in the 1970s. But in spite of stylistic differences, there was always a measure of respect between Ho and the traditionalists, and he admired their efforts greatly. Don Ho was 76 when he died in April.

Monaco’s national orchestra is bigger than its army.

The singing voice of Lauren Bacall, in her screen debut, To Have and Have Not was dubbed by Andy Williams ... when he was a teenager.

In my last column, I reported on the folk, world and traditional musicians who had won Grammy awards. Unfortunately, I left out one very important item—the presentation of a Lifetime Achievement Award to Joan Baez. Throughout her career Baez has been not only a gifted musician, but an activist for peace and equality—and she even appeared in cartoon form in Doonesbury for awhile. My apology for the omission, and may her lifetime and her achievements continue for many years to come.

Do you have your copy of the Chrysalid CD yet? This is an album that was originally produced in 2005 to aid victims of Hurricane Katrina. The musicians involved are from an assortment of countries and genres, and there are some real gems included. To purchase a copy, go to CD Baby at cdbaby.com/cd/chrysalid. Proceeds continue to be split evenly between Habitat for Humanity and the American Red Cross, to be used for Gulf Coast recovery efforts.

A child sings before it speaks, dances almost before it walks. Music is in our hearts from the beginning. —Pamela Brown

Dance first. Think later. It’s the natural order. —Samuel Beckett

When I dance, I cannot judge, I cannot hate, I cannot separate myself from life. I can only be joyful and whole, that is why I dance. —Hans Bos
T
the best folk musician in Los Angeles died last Saturday, March 24, 2007. Did anyone notice? There is a special providence in the fall of a sparrows, wrote Shake-
spere, but this sparrow lived and died without Providence paying much attention. He lived under the radar screen of popular culture, and man-
egaged to squeeze out only an album’s worth of songs since his body started to fail him three years ago.
But no one who heard Bob Westbrook sing Over the Rainbow at McCabe’s—saw him that time—he’s one public appearance at a night club on the touring schedule of nationally known artists—will ever forget it, or disagree with my contention that no one besides Judy Garland ever came close to Bob’s transcendent performance. And Judy Garland did not have to play guitar while she sang it.
Bob played it on his beloved Ramirez classical guitar—to his own arrangement—as he played and reworked every song that was lucky enough to be drawn into his orbit. He learned to play guitar from the late Bud Dashiel—of Bud and Travis, the popular folk duo of the 1960’s—but he embellished and sliced his pieces like the influent folk style of his mentor, and made every song he arranged his own.
In Bob’s extraordinary hands, Hank Williams’ I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry ceased being a country song and became a requiem—for all the lost hopes and dreams of a lifetime of longing, not some lost romantic love only, but for the great love and loss of his life—his father, who died in World War 11 Air Force hero Bob “Westy” Westbrook, the bomber pilot who set his squadron’s record for most enemy aircraft downed before he went down in a firefight on November 22 in 1944.
Bob was only five years old when he lost his father, but those earliest memories became an animating force that sustained and inspired him to the end of his own life.
When Bob sang the Jimmy Cox classic blues Nobody Knows You When You’re Down and Out, he didn’t just tell Jimi Cox’s story, he sang his own—every line was true as far as he knew for every blues singer from Beale Street in Memphis. He could also bring the life of a millionaire, and he did take his friends out for a mighty good time—often at his own restaurant on La Cienega’s Restaurant Row—which he bought with his munificent inheritance when his mother eeri- and almost preternaturally was also cast down as low as he had been raised up, and for the first time had to live by his wits.
After finding and losing the true love of his life—the only daughter of film noir and Western legend Alan Ladd—through his youthful arrogance and sense of entitlement he had also inherited with his unearned riches, he finally managed to settle down long enough to marry and raise a family—surviving daughter Robyn. At the same time he began to take his music more seriously, since it became the vehicle through which he could begin to make sense of the extraordinary ups and downs of what had once seemed like a charmed life, and which now seemed cursed and doomed.
He found new meaning in a classic country song by Jack Rhodes and Red Had—Satisfied Mind: Once I was living in fortune and fame Everything that I needed to get a start in life’s game
Then suddenly it happened I lost every dime But I’m richer by far with a satisfied mind.
When Bob sang One For My Baby, and One More For the Road, you were standing in that long ago bar room—he put you right behind the bar. When he sang, Set ‘em Up, Joe, did you know—was you was talking to you—you became a character in Bob’s story. And for the first time since you ever heard the song, did you drink Sinatra in the background—you didn’t need to—it was again as if you were hearing the song and story from the inside out.
Bob died it Bob’s way.
Bob lived on a house boat—the only possession outside of his guitar and five-string long neck Pete Seeger style Vega banjo he managed to hang onto. The boat was his pride and joy—the only remnant of the good times he had left behind—and he knew every square inch of it, having shamed and vanquished it like he had built it himself. Anyone lucky enough to be invited onto his boat understood he had a friend for life—for Bob valued friendship—and loyalty, after the many times he had misconstrued it before he found the real thing—above all else. Every conversation ended the same way—he told you he loved you, man or woman, he didn’t care which—and he wasn’t ashamed to say it.
I loved Bob Westbrook like a brother. As different as our lives were—and as divergent as our politics—Bob was a Republican, and belligerently pro Bush, pro-war, even pro-male chauvinism—none of it mattered, I couldn’t help loving him. He was like a figure from another world to which his politics never interfered with his humanity and innate decency and generosity towards those whose lives he touched.
At the end, when he was confined to a nursing home and hooked up to an oxygen tank, you never felt sorry or pity for him—indeed in his presence you could not even realize he was dying. Even when he was taken off the lung transplant list because doctors concluded he could not withstand the surgery, Bob seemed larger than life—even as it was ebbing out of him.
It was then—like the final dream—like the final song—like the final story. It was then that we proved for the first time since you ever heard the song, did you drink Sinatra in the background—you didn’t need to—it was again as if you were hearing the song and story from the inside out.

Author’s note: I mostly knew Bob Westbrook through participation in the Santa Monica Traditional Folk Music Club. (A longer version of this eulogy—written for the Memorial I produced for the Folk Club—appeared in our newsletter, The Cat & Banjo, for May/June 2007) Whenever I would see Bob I’d say hello to his fence—Bob’s pickup truck in the parking lot I knew we were in for an evening of great music (and often some challenging conversation as well, for Bob was never shy about voicing his contrary opinions to the left wing nostrums that were sure to find their way into a typical evening of song). But Bob had other lives beyond the Folk Club, and other circles of friends as well. One of those friends, Michael Coleman, is making a documentary film about Bob’s life. Should any of those friends happen upon my email I’d love to add to it, please write to me at greygoozemusic@aol.com

Ross Altman has a Ph.D. in Eng-
lish. Before becoming a full-time folk singer he was the asso-
ciative of English and Speech. He now sings around California for libraries, unions, schools, political groups and folk festivals. You can reach Ross at Gre yg oozem usic@ aol.com.
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for ON GOING DANCE & ON GOING MUSIC

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