

TUCSON FRIENDS OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC

NEWSLETTER

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April, 1976
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GUEST EDITORIAL: This format will perhaps be unfamiliar to regular Newsletter readers. However, I've got lots to say, so plow on....By this time, everyone should be California dreaming. This year's San Diego State University Folk Festival falls on the dates Tues., April 20 through Sun., April 25. Just a partial listing of the featured talent is enough to sate the most jaded folkie: The Boys of the Lough (a super group present British Isles traditional music), The Balfa Bros. (the finest traditional Cajan band extant), Benny Thomasson (champion Texas fiddler), Lonnie Young's Mississippi Fif & Drum Band (the most archaic sound in American black music), The Bluegrass Cardinals, Summer Dog Bluegrass Band, Mike Seeger (mainstay of the old-time revival and a member of the influential New Lost City Ramblers), The Old Hat Band (old-time music from Washington State), Wilver Ball (old-time), Ray & Ina Patterson (old time country duets), Rose Maddox (western), Patsy Montana (western), Cliff Carlisle (western), Glen Ohrlin (cowboy songs), John Jackson (blues, Sam Chatmon (blues in the tradition of the Mississippi Shieks), and Folk Balladeers U. Utah Philips, Jim Ringer, Mary McCaslin, and Bodie Wagner. Much, much more. Series tickets including all concerts and workshops are \$10 for the general public, \$9 for students. For more information, call 714: 291-1786. One caveat, however: last year's Tucson contingent discovered to their utter dismay that there were NO legal camping facilities anywhere on the SDS campus or on the lovely beach nearby. Fortunately, the festival people arranged that a guest house on campus be left open as a crash pad for out-of-towners. But **DON'T COUNT ON THIS HAPPENING AGAIN!** Make arrangements to stay with friends, if possible. Otherwise, bring money for emergency motel accommodations.... If TFTM events seemed to be few and far between this past year, don't count us out yet. In an effort to rectify matters, the Board of Directors has scheduled monthly Member's Campouts throughout the summer, the first to fall on May 15-16 (reported below). Other campouts are tentatively scheduled for June 12-13, July 3-4-5, and August 14-15. These will be free to members (except for Forest Service camping fees). We'll try to bring in guest performers to liven things up, but we're counting on your talent as well. So bring food, kids, kites, camping gear, and plenty of music. Information available from Billy Bowman 624-2815....(con't)

* COMING EVENTS *

- * April 17: Barn Dance with Summer Dog at the Warehouse. Starts 8:30*
- * April 17: TFTM Member's Party at Matt McConeghy's. Spend a couple *
* hours at the Barn Dance, then come over to Matt's. Pot *
* luck, bring sleeping bags, food, instruments. The party *
* goes on all night. Members may call Matt at 326-3210 for *
* information. *
- * April 20-25: San Diego State University Folk Festival *
- * April : Bluegrass Cardinals at the Basement Cafe. Starts *
- * Week of April 26-30: Tentative TFTM Ray and Ina Patterson concert *
* at the Cup. Look for publicity. *
- * May 9: YWCA fund-raising Music Festival at Rancho de los Cerros. *
- * May 15-16: Member's Campout and Business Meeting on Mt. Lemmon. *
* Bring food, kids, music. We have reserved space for *
* camping at the campground near the summit. Free to *
* TFTM members and family (small camping fee required by *
* Forest Service). For information call Billy Bowman at *
* 624-2815. *

The Club is tentatively scheduling a program of folk music films some time in the future--that is, if we can find the films. I seem to recall several distributors who specialized in renting such films as John Cohen's "High Lonesome Sound" and "The End of an Old Song" and the classic "Indian Summer" with sound by Pete & Mike Seeger. Does anyone have any information on these rental agencies? Furthermore, does anyone have access to a 16mm sound projector? If we can work out a program of this sort, admission will be charged commensurate with the cost of the films--probably in the neighborhood

of a buck. Definitely a worthwhile undertaking... Along similar lines, Matt McConeghy informs me that KUAT-TV is presently lining up its fall season of programs. If, like myself, you've enjoyed many of its present offerings and would like to see more next year, write immediately to the Program Director, KUAT-TV, University of Arizona. Specify your interests. Remember there are plenty of folk-oriented videotape programs floating around and if KUAT thinks there's an audience for them, they might just schedule a few... I'd like to take a moment to note the serious state of affairs over at Basement Cafe and Folklore Center. In the space of a few short months, five young transplants from Detroit brought us something really special. And now because of financial woes and other hassles, they're getting out of the coffeehouse business. My hat's really off to Kenny, Joan, Mary, Chris, and Brenda for their selfless devotion to the cause. May they prosper and enrich others wherever they go. Word has it that another group is negotiating to take over the Basement, but nothing is settled just yet.... Meantime, everyone be sure to patronize the Friday night Cup at the Campus Christian Center. This organization recently suffered through a serious period, too, but things seem to be approaching normal again under the watchful eye of the Griffith Family.... While we're on the subject of coffeehouses, why can't someone find a large house someplace and open it up several nights a week to the local folk crowd. A modest cover charge wouldn't be out of reason and perhaps an illicit 6-pack or two might liven things up. The Basement has clearly shown the rest of us duffers that it can be done, if on a limited scale. Comments appreciated.... Well, Diamond Studs appears to have breathed its last. Negotiations to spirit the show away to the Red Dog Saloon in Scottsdale fell through at the eleventh hour. Anyway, Scottsdale's loss is our gain, since Summer Dog will still be with us. Also Leslie Keith & the Arizona Roadrunners won't have to regroup.... What's in a name? The past several months have brought us the likes of Summer Dog, Leslie Keith & the Arizona Roadrunners, Brother Ned Sutton's Gospel Wranglers, Cabbage Crik, and the Bluegrass Cardinals. How about some colorful names for a change?.... Rick Sonder of Modern Times Book Store informs me that a top-notch Cincinnati bluegrass band

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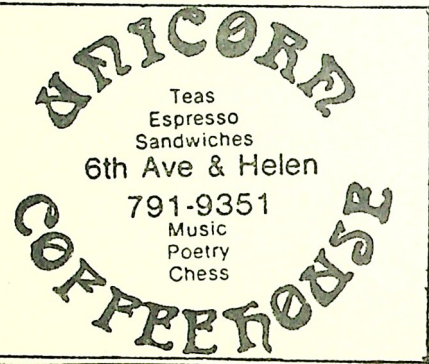
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headed by Katie Laur would love to spend a week with us if we can find them a place to play. Does anyone know of an inexpensive (or, better yet, free) concert hall or building we might use? It should seat in the neighborhood of 200 people. This is a real emergency. Please call me at 327-8259 or see Rick or one of the other Directors.... (con'd.)

-Folk cuisine? Rick Sonder and I were comparing notes on Wisconsin traditions a while back and the think I was lamenting most was Tucson's absence of a Friday evening fish fry. Well, Rick corrected me by pointing out that a remnant of that tradition does indeed survive here. So a couple Fridays later, he and I hastened up to the Plaza Tavern near Fort Lowell and Park (around 2:00 P.M.) and had our fill of beer-battered fish and trimmings. All the atmosphere of a Wisconsin roadhouse and only \$1.69.... And if you like real down-home bar-be-que don't forget Big Al's up on north Stone!.... TFTM is presently making plans to incorporate. This is a costly proposition for us and our income from memberships and concert revenues will just barely cover it. Yet there are benefits in incorporating, especially since the Club has been growing like Topsy. Future newsletters will cover this issue in greater detail.... As members, how do you feel about a TFTM directory? Would you like to know who else is a member? Let us know your opinions about this fairly soon. How about phone numbers -- is anyone inalterably opposed to our publishing these?.... Various religious holidays are upon us and Matt has asked me to mention the really exciting Easter festivities taking place at the Yaqui Indian Village of New Pasqua here in Tucson, Traditional dances continue every night through Easter with fiddle, rattles, and (possibly) harp. For the ethnographically inclined, this is something you might not want to miss.....

Bob Sayers


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ON RADIO

- KUAT-AM 1550 noon Sundays
 4-11 Kerrville, Tx. Folk Festival with Carolyn Hester, Allen Damron, John Vandiver, and Steve Frumholz
 4-18 Kerrville Tx. Folk Festival II with Darrel Royal, Weldon Bonner, Townes Van Zandt, Mike Seeger
 4-25 The Chieftains from Ireland
 5-2 Grand Ole Opry High-lights with Ernest Tubb, Jim and Jesse, Porter Waggoner and Dolly Parton, Jeanne Shepherd, Minnie Pearl
 5-9 Battleground, Indiana Old Time Musicians Gathering
 5-16 Down Home Music Festival with Paul Siebel, Patrick Chamberlain, Jack McGann, Doris Abrahams
 5-23 Viva Chile!
 5-30 Blue Ridge Folk Festival
- KUAT-FM 90.5 12:05 Saturday
 4-17 Bill Monroe and Songs
 4-24 Bill Monroe and Songs II

WHAT THIS COUNTRY NEEDS IS A GOOD \$50 FRAILING BANJO!

Whoever said that was right, and the day is almost here. Saga banjos has introduced a 5-string banjo kit at about \$64. It is easy to assemble, is not hard to look at, sounds good, and - most of all - is easy to play

Vital Statistics: It has an aluminum rim, with the arch-top style tone ring cast integrally. The neck is mahogany, with rosewood finger board and peghead veneer. Hardware includes geared tuners (except 5th), adjustable truss rod, and a tension tailpiece. All machine work is done and tools are included. A resonator addition kit is allegedly available, but I have yet to see one.

The instructions recommend starting with the neck, so as to let the finish dry while you are assembling the hoop. Problem number one: what type of finish? They recommend either laquer or oil. Laquer is difficult to apply without a spray gun, and the so-called "brushing laquers" give poor results for the first 15 or 20 attempts.

cont...

WANT TO JOIN TFTM?

Enjoy the benefits of TFTM parties, campouts, workshops, and reduced rates at TFTM concerts. Also discounts on folk music records and periodicals at Mingus, Guitars, Guitar Workshop, and Modern Times Bookstore. If you are a musician or just a good listener, we want you. Help support TFTM. Just \$5 a year (family \$8). Contact Bill Bowman at 624-2815 or write TFTM c/o 224 E. 2nd St., Tucson 85705

Oil finishes are easy to apply, however, requiring only a strong right arm and a supply of 600 sandpaper. Two snags - oil finishes become part of the wood and can not be covered with laquer or varnish later, and a well-seasoned mahogany neck will soak up an incredible amount of oil.

Varnishes are seldom used on the necks of musical instruments as they are soft, tend to peel and wear off rapidly. If you do use a varnish, I recommend Sherwin-Williams natural varnish, rather than one of the urethanes.

OK, your neck is hanging up to dry; you've fetched a six-pack to ease your aching arm after all that sanding and oiling. You are ready to attack the rim. Clear a large, flat surface and lay everything out. Follow the instructions. Repeat - follow the instructions. The only trouble I had (once I found the instructions) was elongating the lag bolt holes (in the rim) so the neck would attach at it's proper angle. This required a 1/4 in. rattail file, one of two tools I used that was not furnished with the kit.

If the rim is together the tension hoop straight, the tailpiece on, you are ready to unite the neck and the hoop. Do Not get a six-pack. When attaching the neck, make sure the playing surface of the fingerboard is at least level with the tension hoop. If not the strings will "fret out" on it in higher playing positions. Get out your rattail file and enlarge the holes until it fits. When all is firm and sound, install the tuners. The four geared tuners are secured with screws, which

will require a pilot hole. Do not be deceived by the dimples on the back of the peghead which resemble pilot holes. They are a snare and a delusion. Drill on the marks with a 1/16 in. drill slightly deeper than the length of the screw. Do not drill through the peghead!

Now for the only cheap shot in the whole kit. The position markers are pearloid plastic dots which are glued to the fingerboard instead of inlaid as usual. (This is not referred to as "outlay," no matter what Jim Griffith says.) I threw 'em away. You do what you like. It's your banjo.

You're almost finished -- ten more minutes and you'll be on the road to fame, fortune, lots of girl or boy friends, just like Chip Curry, Bil Bowman, Andy McCune, Rob Freeman and scores of other five-string banjo pickers. And you'll shit regular, too.

However, before you'll pick a note, you need to adjust the action. This is the height of the strings from the frets. Put on the strings, nut, and bridge. Do not glue the nut just yet. Check the bridge. Too high? If it's a 5/8 in. bridge, take it back and trade it for a 1/2" model. Still too high, huh? Sand some off the feet of the bridge on a flat surface. Now check the nut end. A matchbook cover should slide under the strings at the first fret. In the kit I assembled, you could slide your hand under them. To cure this, get your trusty sandpaper and remove some material from the bottom of the nut. Take it easy and check it frequently. If you go too far, shim it with a piece of paper or thin guitar pick. Now you can glue the nut on, tune her up to pitch, and head

for the Basement Cafe or the Cup and pick your brains out.

All this has taken you between two and six hours, depending on your manual dexterity, choice of finish, number of helpers, number of six-packs, number of numbers, etc. Finished, the banjo is very playable, with a responsive neck, crisp tone reminiscent of the early Ode banjos, and a pleasantly traditional appearance.

I have tried to avoid rehashing the instructions that accompany the kit, and concentrate on the problems I encountered Not covered there. They were damn few. If you need a banjo that is not a toy and can't afford a Gibson RB-800, or even a Harmony resonator, this is the only game in town.

Dave Luckow

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