

Bluegrass: a fusion of different musical styles

Edward Paukstis
Capital Times Staff

Bluegrass music has changed quite a bit since the Beverly Hillbillies sitcom in the mid 1950s.

The music, which still exists in its pure form, has been combined with rock 'n' roll, jazz, r&b, blues, and country and local musicians like Henry Koretsky and Nev Jackson can attest to those changes and have a few ideas of their own to offer the music.

The music's influence can be traced well into the 1990s unplugged movement. Various new bands like REM, Soul Asylum, Pearl Jam and 10,000 Maniacs have been performing acoustically and incorporating bluegrass instruments like the mandolin and fiddle into their music.

Koretsky, who works in the periodical section of the campus library, has been involved with many different types of music throughout the years.

"My earliest experiences with Bluegrass music go back to listening to David Grisman," he said. Koretsky began playing the guitar while still in high school and started jamming in garage bands by the time he was eighteen, he said. He performed a lot

of Allman Brothers and Grateful Dead music at that time, he said.

He developed an individual acoustic guitar style from listening to various forms of the music, he said.

"I always liked acoustic instruments and music, especially minor swing and the more progressive forms of jazz," Koretsky said.

Koretsky's first full-fledged commitment to a band was with "The High Strung," who performed jazz numbers with a flute and drums. But in 1983, he moved on to The Old World Folk Band which performs Klezmer music - a blend of eastern European/Jewish music.

His opportunity with The Old World Folk Band arrived when he replaced guitarist, Simon Bronner - PSH coordinator of american studies. He averages two to three gigs per month with The Old World Folk Band.

He recently joined the Sweet Water Reunion band who had been informally known as Nev Jackson and Friends.

Jackson, an alumnus and professional musician, is the driving force behind Sweet Water Reunion.

He brings the most bluegrass influence into the music, Koretsky

said.

"My passion is for bluegrass music, and I feel that it is evident in my style. But Henry and (fiddle player) Ken Gehrett are the "jazzers" of the band," said Jackson, a banjoist and guitarist who plays both country rock and bluegrass.

"I believe that that aspect makes our music unique and hard to define," he said.

Gehrett, along with other members of Sweetwater, plays guitar, banjo, mandolin, fiddle and bass.

Although the band has only been together for several months, they have managed to perform and record their own material.

According to Koretsky, Jackson contributes the majority of musical compositions.

He describes his writing style as being "mainly serious, but at times prolific" and has written a "Phantom of the Opry" theme in a bluegrass setting "just for fun."

"I enjoy taking a story from the Old Testament and crafting it into a song," Jackson said, who usually comes up with the ideas.

For Koretsky, the formula works just fine.

"I love to improvise material and

that's why I enjoy listening to the Grateful Dead," Koretsky said. "They tend to incorporate a "free" style of playing, while reminding the listener of how much they value traditional music," he said.

Even more similar, Koretsky said that Sweet Water tends to attract an audience who is open to almost any type of music, while the Grateful Dead have the "deadheads" who are also turned on by all sorts of music and cultural happenings.

"Some people may not like to hear a certain song taken out of context and performed a different way but we tend to bypass those negative reactions and shoot for those who are just 'digging' the music," Koretsky said.

There is less of a gap between the beginning or advanced bluegrass and rock musicians than compared to jazz musicians.

"It is possible to play bluegrass as well as rock music with a basic level of skill but it also continues to challenge you as your abilities grow," Koretsky said. "Where as jazz has a minimal access level," he added.

Still, bluegrass music has lost much of the commercial value it gained in the mid 70s when it was

used in movie soundtracks and jingles. But country music has picked up a majority of the slack.

"It seems that the unplugged syndrome has kind of recaptured the mood of bluegrass," Koretsky said. "The music just needs to resurface into the limelight, and that could happen through something as 'hokey' as the new Beverly Hillbillies

"My passion is for blue grass and that is evident in my style."

movie," he added.

Meanwhile, Koretsky is constantly searching for new music and realizes that there is plenty of it out there, he said.

"It's hard to find good music on the radio, so I'm getting more through tape swaps and trades," Koretsky said.

The future of bluegrass music depends on the ability of musicians like Koretsky, Jackson, and Gehrett to uphold the traditions - but also to change them.

Theater undergoing renovation

J. Guthrie Mann
Capital Times Reporter

After about \$280,000 in renovations, the doors to PSH's long-awaited multi-purpose theater will open Oct. 11.

The project began last spring when the plans were approved and money was secured, said associate provost Dr. James D. South.

Transformed from an Air Force briefing room, the facility will now accommodate theatrical presentations, concerts, lectures and tele-conferencing.

Although a far cry from a full-sized theater, South said, "this facility will generally provide a better environment for student's learning and enhance their educational opportunities."

Instructional Services will be responsible for the scheduling of events and classes in the new facility. Classes will be given first priority and then extra-curricular events, South said.

Adjustments were made after administrators at University Park and PSH's Dr. Eton Churchill, assistant professor of humanities, reviewed the final plans.

Norwood Construction, of Middletown, was contracted for the majority of the renovations which began in May.

The money came from a grant from the Kunkle Foundation and Penn State's Major Maintenance Fund. Renovations include refurbishing and extending the stage and installing a new

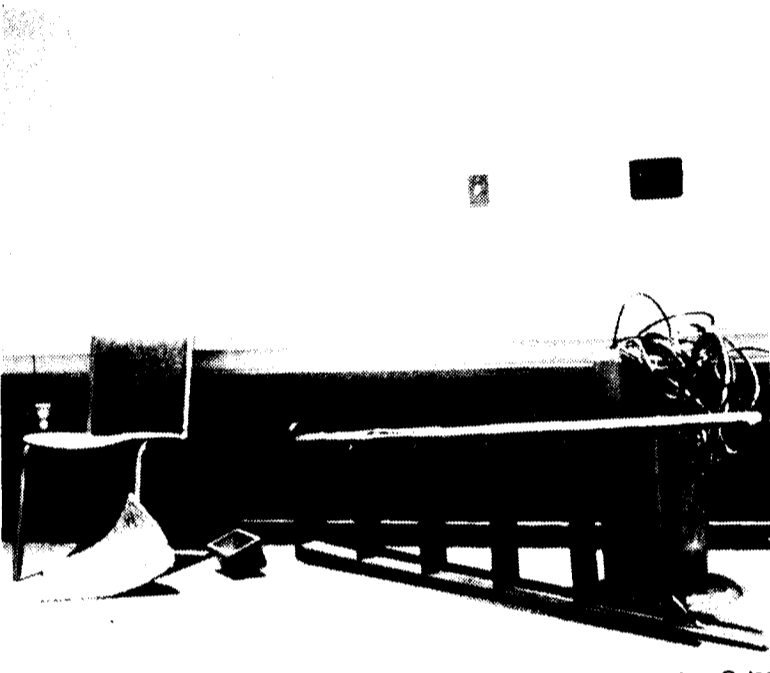


Photo by Mary Gates

Theater renovation

The auditorium on the second floor is undergoing construction transforming it to a working performance space. Included in the renovations are a new computer controlled lighting system, new curtain and drops, carpeting and an extended apron to the old stage.

electronic lighting board, premium sound system, acoustic panels and sprinkler system. The facility will also meet American Disability Act requirements.

Not included in this budget, but funded from the Classroom Renovation Committee, was another \$30,000 for refurbishing the old seats and installation of

carpeting. Ed Dankanich, manager of facilities and maintenance operations, said they opted for refinishing the old seats over

purchasing new seats "because we saved \$70 a seat by refinishing and the quality of new seats don't compare to what we have now."

From the Archives

The English historian Lord Acton once wrote, "Advice to people wishing to write history: don't."

I always thought that was an odd thing for an historian to write. That is, until I started organizing the archives at the Capital Times. Long days filled with rooting through the office and finding back issues in the most unlikely of places. When it was over, the archives took up three drawers in the filing cabinet in our office.

Because of this, Michele Loeper, our editor-in-chief, suggested we start a regular feature using the archives. Of course, being the egomaniac and masochist that I am, I did. Each issue we will have three sections to this feature; The History Of...; Deja vu All Over Again; and What Happened?

Before we move though, there is one thing that Michele wants me to be sure to include.

You see, as I was organizing the archives Michele noticed a copy of the April 19, 1984 issue of the Capital Times. That issue had a story about Ruth Leventhal, who at that time was the incoming provost.

In that story Leventhal was quoting as stating she was pleased at having the opportunity to "move the Capitol Campus forward and to make it as famous as Joe Paterno."

I mention this not only because Michele asked me to, but to serve an important purpose of history. One of the best reason to study history is to see where we have gone, where we are going, and where we are.

Have we gone? It is almost ten years since Leventhal came here. Are we as famous as Joe Paterno?

The History Of . . . the Campus Paper

This section will trace the history of something on campus, as recorded in our archives. I have a

few ideas of what I want to trace, but that does not mean those must be done. If you would like to suggest a topic for The History Of . . . , I would be overjoyed to use them. (HINT, HINT)

For this issue, I will cover the campus newspaper. I should mention that this will be a brief history and is by no means complete. To write a total and complete history would require a book. A long book.

From our archives I have discovered that there have been ten Campus newspapers.

The first two newspapers are not physically present in our archives. I know about them only by virtue of an article in a campus paper written in Fall 1982.

The very first campus newspaper was called Student Newspaper. Hey, not every name can be clever or imaginative.

The second newspaper was called Angst, which means a feeling of anxiety.

The third incarnation was called the Roundtable. The issues we have range from Spring 1966 to Spring 1968. Apparently, there was a huge round table in the lobby years ago, and everyone hung out there and exchanged ideas.

The Roundtable was nothing more than photocopied pages, contained student writings, like letters and poems, and was dissolved in a heated battle of sorts. A controversy about a letter policy forced the advisor to resign. Another newspaper, Vox, appeared at the same time, and the Roundtable staff disbanded.

After Vox came the Campus Cap; the only issue we have is for April of 1969.

Following that the paper was the Capitalist. This paper was in operation from Fall of 1969 through Spring of 1973. This looked more professional, it was type-set, used photographs, bylines, served as a weekly bastion of journalism.

In Fall of 1973, the name changed to the C.C. Reader. In the

beginning there was a literary and artsy feel to the paper. The paper resembled a small booklet, until you unfolded it. For the first time, stories were divided into general department pages.

The C.C. Reader earned wards from The Press Association of Commonwealth Campuses. Among the awards are:

-- Best Photography for 1976-1977 academic year

-- Best Editorial for 1976-1977 academic year

--Honorable mention for Best Editorial Page for academic year 1975-76

In Fall of 1982, two events occurred. One, the paper went from weekly to coming out every three weeks. In between issues a newsletter, Lion's Tale, was produced. The second event was a contest to change the name. C.C. Reader became the Capital Times.

There was a similar format first used by the C.C. Reader at this point, and then the paper reverted to a more traditional style.

In Fall of 1986, the name was changed again to Capital Times. Since the college itself changed its name to the Penn State--the Capital College--I suspect that prompted the name change, although I have no evidence to back this up.

The next major change happened this semester when the paper's format was changed to a larger size.

Deja Vu All Over Again

As I was going through the archives and saw what stories were going to run in this issue, I noticed some that seemed like I saw them before. I had, in some back issues. This section will point out similarities between past articles and current ones. The point here is to remind us that history works in cycles, and sometimes it seems to remind us that history works in cycles, and sometimes it seems we're reliving the same events over and over again.

In this issue Trev Stair brings us the controversy which surrounds an upcoming art exhibit to the Gallery Lounge. This brings to mind the question, what is art?

In February of 1985, a student organization on campus created a similar controversy when they showed the porn movie, Debbie Does Dallas.

This semester, as Eric Hein tells us, the yearbook has no staff and there are no yearbooks. A similar situation occurred in Fall of 1976. Robin Platts wrote an article which appeared in the Sept. 30 issue of the C. C. Reader which related how the yearbook ended up with no staff the previous semester. This resulted in the Director of Student Affairs having to take over and make the Capitoltite her "one woman show."

What Happened?

This feature will take a look at what happened in years past at the same timeframe that the issue covers.

Oct. 4, 1967 Capitol Campus's First Convocation

Oct. 11, 1974 Multi-Purpose Building approved by trustees

Oct. 23, 1975 Two students brought a class action suit against the University, claiming its canvassing policy violates their first amendment freedoms.

Oct. 20, 1977 Multi-Purpose Building (what we know as CUB) is dedicated.

Oct. 18, 1984 SGA votes to fund analysis of drinking water



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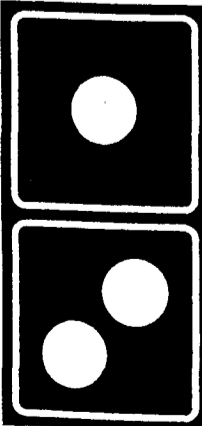
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