

# Big Muddy

# SOUNDINGS

## Looking Forward to 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Event

It's a little hard to believe it's our fifteenth year. We started with one evening in early May, moved to two days, added a second venue, Turner Hall (both halls have since undergone extensive restoration), added workshops, two more venues and a barbecue, folk art exhibits and a traditional arts demonstration. We started selling out the concerts around five or so years ago. It was when Cathy Barton and Dave Para played the January 1991 Ann Arbor Folk Festival (Matt Watroba was at that one.) that added the extra oomph to the idea of starting one of our own – an indoor festival during the off-season. Thespian Hall holds a fraction of what the University of Michigan's Hill Auditorium does, but she is a gem. It would have been hard to walk by her for years without having at least tried to do a folk festival there.

The festival is based on the idea that the term "folk music" in America refers to a lot of very different things with some very strong common threads. We have a mosaic of diverse ethnic traditions in our country. Some of them have spawned more popular forms while others have simply absorbed popular forms into their own style. It's all worth celebrating. The best success is that even though some of our guests have been known to draw audiences for many miles, the festival's variety can draw on its own.

The bats seem to have gone from the hall after the last renovation. So other friends have passed on, like Gerry Armstrong, John Hartford, Taylor McBaine, Pete McMahan, Gene Goforth, Forrest Rose, Bob Holt, Edna Mae Davis and this year Sean Blackburn and Jean Jennings. Through the years and changes, we have been fortunate for the commitment and experience of our original festival committee, the annual support from the Missouri Arts Council, the sponsorship of the Friends of Historic Boonville, and the magic of Thespian Hall. Come join us this year.

### Worldwide Bluegrass Pioneer

While the banjo became America's popular instrument of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the guitar dominated American music in the next. With access to it made easy by the first mail-order catalogues, the guitar soon pervaded every genre of popular music and most ethnic styles as well. A pioneer of one of the most intricate, and powerful of those forms, **Dan Crary**, helped transform what had usually been an instrument of accompaniment into one with a leading role capable of fluent, expressive melodies and a variety of textures. His more than 40 years as a performer has earned him an international reputation for innovation, taste and brilliance. "Power" defines Dan's playing perhaps more than any other flatpicker, but beyond technique, his music integrates many traditional American styles and tunes as well as his own song and tune compositions, creating performances that are both strongly personal and deeply rooted.

A long and distinguished recording career, featuring solo projects and group efforts (especially with the award-winning ensemble California in the

1990s) plus many guest appearances, have brought Dan acclaim as a versatile performer able to range from Mozart to Anglo-American fiddle tunes to moody, evocative original pieces. The album, "Jammed If I Do" hailed the collaboration of Dan with Tony Rice, Doc Watson, Norman Blake, and Beppe Gambetta. If there is a board of directors of the guitar somewhere, Dan has probably served as chairman at one time or another.

### Creole Sounds From Both Upper and Lower Louisiana

**Creole Stomp** is the result of the odyssey fiddler and accordionist **Dennis Stroughmatt** has made through the long tradition of French Creole culture in North America. Music is a great vehicle for the study of history and folk culture. This trek started with a thorough study in his home region of the Mississippi River – first in Illinois, then Southeast Missouri and the Old Mines area, and eventually to the Cajun areas of Louisiana. Continuing his studies in Quebec,

Dennis absorbed the language from speakers, the fiddle nuances from players and the history from scholars. The musical and cultural connections between Lafayette and Quebec, through the “pays d’Illinois” is somewhat below the surface, but its threads run as strong as they do deep. The band makes a perfect showcase for this, playing to the core Creole, Cajun, Zydeco and Swamp Pop. While maintaining “one of the hardest working bands in live music,” Dennis still plays with some of his Louisiana-based friends who tutored and adopted him.

## **Wild Flowers Don’t Care Where They Grow**

You can spot ironweed (*veronia noveboracensis*) along railroad tracks and fencerows in Central Missouri, especially when it blooms its small purple flower late in the summer. Through most of the year, however, you can spot Ironweed (*pickum singum excellentis*) at area bluegrass festivals or wherever interesting people gather for interesting reasons and need a little music to help carry the day. Founded in 1994 by two veteran pickers and a couple of charming and musical ladies, this band has developed a long, strong suit of hard driving traditional and non-traditional bluegrass tunes. Some say that their singing is even better. A primary voice for bluegrass music on KOPN radio (the birthplace of the band), **Jane Accurso** was touched by the sound of women singing country songs and yodeling. **Dierek Leonhard**, rumored to be an emperor on the distant planet Banjo, has been playing folk and bluegrass for better than 30 years and spent a number of them teaching lessons and adult education classes. **Dennis Schubert’s** guitar and mandolin playing has widened the eyes of many mid-Missourians in whatever kind of band he has played in. And though he has proclaimed himself “Captain Ironweed,” his wife, **Kathy**, harbors the biggest delusion of running the band and the greatness that could bring – while she plays the bass.

## **Can’t Beat a Good Dog Act**

There’s nothing sadder than a lonely dog left out in the rain to howl. But two dogs left out in the rain aren’t twice as lonely as one; they’re less lonely, because singing the blues together is more fun than singing them by yourself. Emulating bands like the Mississippi Sheiks and songsmiths Memphis Minnie and Bo Carter, the Kansas City **Rain Dogs** work within a framework of acoustic and resophonic

guitars, washboard, mandolin, bass, harmonic and piano. There’s some jug band music in there, too – without the jug – and some original pieces as well. **Jim Herbert, Karla Peterie, Mike Roark and Phil Smith** all provide vocal as well as instrumental work to pay tribute to classic string bands and blues masters by breathing a new life of their own into the tradition.

**Funding Assistance From  
The Missouri Arts Council,  
A State Agency**

## **Buddy, Can You Spare a Song?**

**Matt Watroba** charmed our audience in 2002 with his warm and friendly show, fine batch of songs and good sense of humor, and we’re pleased to have him back. Finding his music in the coffeehouse days gone by, Matt has kept up with musicians and trends of the folk scene for the past 18 years by producing his own folk show on the radio, “Folks Like Us,” while at the same time juggling his roles in life as husband, father, teacher, writer and musician. He is still able to sing in some of the best listening rooms left around as well as do opening spots at The Ark, in Ann Arbor, one of the best folk venues in the U.S. Recently, Matt has taken some adventurous steps in the studio, including an album of folk renditions of some classic country songs.

## **Missouri German Heritage a Family Tradition for Loehnigs**

**Terry and Marilyn Loehnig** have played old time and German music since they were 13 years old and both were members of Sonny Bottermullir’s Peace Valley Orchestra. While Terry served in the U.S. Army in Germany, the two decided to concentrate on German folk music. They formed the Loehnig Family Band in the early 1970s in which their three children played and sang. Son Erich, now 28, still occasionally plays drums with the band. They have played at many festivals in the Hermann area as well as the St. Louis Strossenfest, German Day in Omaha, and last summer they taped an appearance on the “Big Joe Polka Show,” which aired on RFD TV. The Loehnigs have recorded five albums. A retired rural mail carrier, Terry can divide his time and money more evenly between being a guitarist and being a farmer. Marilyn keeps house, but is often on hand to play for some of the many tour groups who visit historic and scenic

Hermann. At our 1997 and 1998 festivals she performed with her button box apprentice **Ehren Oncken**, who has played with the band since. He currently juggles the musical engagements with his studies at the University of Missouri. Some of the songs and dance tunes traditional to the Missouri valley since the mid-1800s comes from Ehren's great-great uncle, whom Marilyn knew in. when she was Ehren's age.

## **Cow Town's Gift to Yodeling**

**Gary Kirkland** and **Bob Tripp** appeared at our festival in 1997, the same year our catfish logo showed up, and they gave us a fine performance of straightforward country-roots music. Back when the Singing Brakeman, Jimmie Rodgers, recorded a side with Louis Armstrong, country singers couldn't make videos filled with sexual innuendos, cheesy visuals and weird fantasies to sell their songs; they had to rely on the emotion of the song and the wit of their musicians. This isn't to downplay Gary's and Bob's sex appeal, but this was the era of country music from which they have always drawn. Your first three guitar chords can give you access to a good breadth of country, folk and bluegrass songs and leave you the time to discover the truth lying therein. Sometime through the years of taking in that music down deep, these two found the heart and soul of it, and it comes out as naturally and pure as you would hope it would.

## **Locals on the Loose**

**Cathy Barton**, **Dave Para**, and **Bob Dyer**, festival organizers and popular Missouri minstrels, are glad to have a gig they can walk to. This year they welcome Kansas City guitarist and fiddler **Kelly Werts** as the fourth member of the **Discovery String Band**. This year marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the return of the Lewis and Clark Expedition from the Pacific shores. The return trip took a third of the time needed going out, and the ragged and homesick crew drove their dugout canoes swiftly downstream with little need to stop at the many spots they did going up. Regional celebrations are being planned for the commemoration of the voyage finale, and the band hopes to be part of them.

## **Folk Arts Program Tenth Year**

Dedicated to identifying and preserving traditional music and folkways among distinct communities in the state, the Missouri Folk Arts Program marks its

tenth year with the Big Muddy Folk Festival. On Saturday, at the First Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall, specialists Deborah Bailey and Lisa Higgins will present a two-hour program featuring performances and demonstrations by master musicians and craftspeople participating in the 2005-2006 Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program (TAAP). Featured this year will be master Irish Ullilean piper, Tommy Martin of St. Louis along with his apprentice Sarah Hale, African Sudanese song and dance from Kansas City and much more.

## **America's Take on the Zither**

The story goes that back in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Charles Zimmerman came up with a new system of musical notation. To teach this system, he added chord bars to a German zither invented what has since become known as an Autoharp (which is actually a trademarked name for this chorded zither). I've not met anyone who knew or cared to talk about Zimmerman's music system, but the instrument sure caught on in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially through country artists Maybelle Carter and Pop Stoneman. Back in the 1970s Big Muddy veteran Bryan Bowers restrung the instrument diatonically for a fuller sound, and **Ron Wall**, living in Columbia that time, discerned what Bryan had done and happily spread the word to the bedazzled folk music world. Ron credits Cathy Barton with getting him started on the instrument, though Cathy says she really didn't show him very much. Ron has played for twice before as part of his mother-in-law, Ramona Jones', band. (Cathy had something to do with that, too.) We'll be happy to have this majestic sound open our show.

## **Hain House Special Exhibit**

Artist Doug Ross recently retired from the University of Missouri in Columbia. He specializes in wildlife images and cartooning. We will exhibit his work at the historic Hain House, the oldest residential building in town, which is at 412 Fourth St., an easy one-block walk north of the Episcopal Church. Doug is also doing at artist's residence this year at the David Barton Elementary School, teaching cartooning to fifth graders.

Our **Friday evening concert** will include Ron Wall, Dan Crary, the Loehnig Family, the Discovery String Band and the Rain Dogs, with an old-time dance

**Workshop topics for Saturday** could very well include a Cajun dance, a bluegrass jam, blues, history in music, country songs in a folkie way, and a close-up concert or two. An occasional check at bigmuddy.org will keep you as up to date as we are.

**Saturday evening** will feature Ironweed, Matt Watroba, Kirkland and Tripp, Creole Stomp and Barton, Para and Dyer.

## Tentative Festival Schedule

### *Friends of Historic Boonville*

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