

LOCAL JORE

Your Folk Music
ConnectionWhat Is
FILK?**Short answer: Filk is the Folk Music of Science Fiction.**

The long answer is more complex. Filk is what gets sung at Science Fiction conventions, by SF fans. Filk includes parody lyrics set to existing tunes, original lyrics set to an original tune, and re-setting existing poems to new tunes. Musical genres range from old ballads to rock and rap.

The term started as a typo, either from a mock-academic article in a fanzine on "Science Fiction FOLK Music" or a sheet of words to "Science Fiction FOLK songs" distributed at a convention. In either case, the O was transposed to an I, and the word stuck.

Filk began in the mid-1950's, as an outgrowth of the then-current Folk Revival. Fans would gather in hotel rooms after the main programming of the convention was over to chat about their favorite books, movies and TV shows. Eventually, people generated parody songs about their favorite characters, or about other fans or about things that happened around them.

Then talented musicians and writers started generating original tunes and lyrics, and Filk exploded in the 1980's to include anything anyone wanted to sing about.

There are songs about chemistry, atomic physics, paleontology. There are songs that comment about daily life, computers, cats...

By the mid-1980's, certain protocols for filk were set. The Bardic Circle meant everyone in the room took turns, to either Pick a song for someone to sing, Pass their turn, or Play something themselves. The Chaos Circle was everyone for themselves, which meant some people sang more than others. It helped to have a Filkmeister, or Host assigned to the room, to keep things moving and prevent one person from hogging the stage.

The subject matter, not the musical style, makes it Filk. Like the

In This Issue:

UNIQUE RIVERS OF FOLK MUSIC	
What is FILK	1
Where is FILK	2
Queering The Folk Tradition	4
Winterfolk 34	7
Songwriter Soiree	8
President's Report	10
PFS Calendar Highlights	11
<i>PFS Concerts:</i>	
Dave Francey	12
Kray Van Kirk	13
Hunting for Wild Fretted	
Instruments	14
Take 5 With Siena Cristie	18
Oddly Specific Music Genres	19
Membership	22

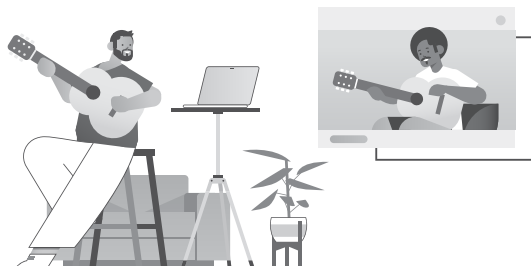
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Continued on Page 2

genre itself, Filk has gone far beyond the limits of strict Science Fiction or Fantasy. There are ballads in the old style, often with a rousing chorus, which are short stories in verse. There are songs about the Space Program. There are songs about chemistry, atomic physics, paleontology. There are songs that comment about daily life, computers, cats... you name it. And there are songs that became accepted into the Filk fold, whether the originator likes it or not, because they seem to resonate with the Fannish heart and mind.

We have revised the old concept of Filk as "Bad songs sung badly". It is a welcoming community, where we accept newbies as well as old geezers like me.

Originally amateurs performed filk at Science Fiction conventions and other gatherings, people who loved music and loved to sing. By the mid-1980's, technology had caught up with the singers, so that acceptable proficient audiocassettes and later, compact discs made filk available to those who could not get to a convention. The Pandemic added a new dimension, with the Virtual Convention and the ability to organize a meeting via computer, so that more people are heard, and can hear singers from other regions.

Thanks to technology, the current filk scene is wide and getting wider all the time! ♦

Roberta Rogow has been a mainstay of the East Coast Filk since the 1970's. She is a member of the Filk Hall of Fame. She sings about everything and anything, from Star Trek to the Space Program, with side tours through History and Literature. She has also written novels, some of which incorporate Filk.



Where Is FILK?

People who wanted to sing folksongs together at Science Fiction/Fantasy conventions back in the 1980's often had to find a quiet hallway or sang under an open stairwell. Over time, the conventions set aside a room for them – usually as far away from the rest of the events as possible so the unwanted stepchildren would not interrupt serious panel discussions with the "noise" of their songs. We had to fight to give published musicians the right to the free memberships which the writers, editors and artists received.

In 1984 the first major filk event, the Ohio Valley Filk Festival (OVFF) was organized, drawing filk musicians from the US and Canada and awarding the first five Pegasus Awards for excellence in filk music. From 1986 onward OVFF and the Pegasus Awards were

annual events avidly anticipated by members of the filk community. Other filk conventions soon followed, including FilKONtario (FKO) in 1991.

In 1989 Friends of Filk began selling filk and folk cassettes and CDs as a non-profit organization, using the surplus to bring Special Guest musicians from other regions to conventions in the Pacific Northwest. In 1991 Interfilk was born, dedicated to promoting cultural interchange between various filk communities by sponsoring guest musicians at the various filk conventions. In 1992 Mike Whitaker from the UK was the first Interfilk Guest flown to the filk convention Consonance in California. Since then, their Interfilk Guests read like a "Who's Who" in filk.

In 1993, Dave and Judith Hayman wanted to create



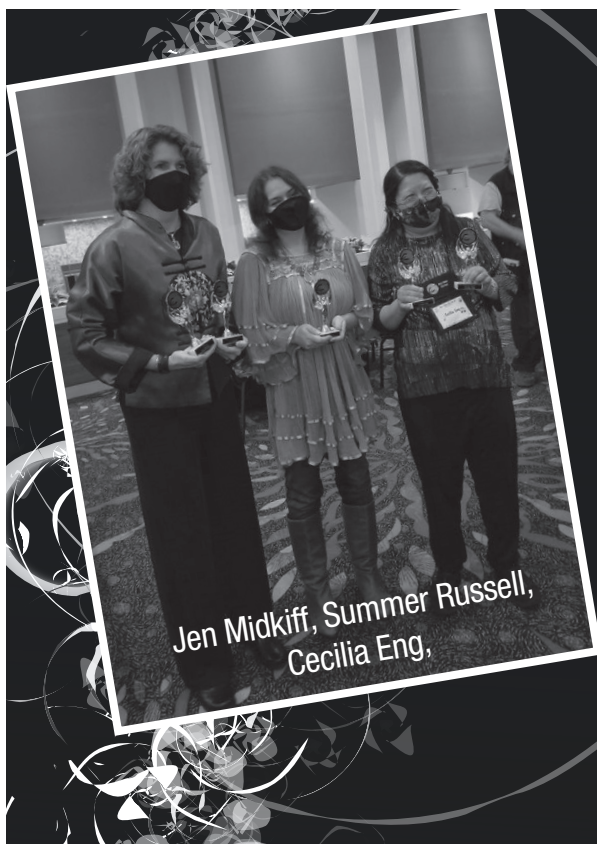
an award for lifetime and ongoing achievement within the filk community. In 1995 at FilKONTario (FKO) the first three inductees to the Filk Hall of Fame were Off-Centaur Publications, Leslie Fish, and Robert Asprin. While the Pegasus Awards are based on talent, performance and songwriting, Hall of Famers are inducted for helping to create and support the filk community. A 2017 inductee, Judi Miller, introduced visual sign language interpretations of songs, capturing the words but also the emotions of the songs.

Today, in addition to nine filk conventions/festivals in Europe, the UK, Canada, and the USA, dozens of the general science fiction/fantasy conventions are known for strong music programs. In addition to the more traditional filk as a folk genre, conventions have invited filk-rock bands, filk rap, and filk hip-hop. From the Society for Creative Anachronism, choral groups like Court and Country have discovered that filk audiences are far more attentive than the average SCA audience.

While fandom has aged, the 2021 in-person OryCon in Portland included in its late-night song circle about five costumed teens who giggled over their cell phones and helped each other sing their songs for the rest of us older filkers and were well-received.

Bandcamp and home recording technology has enabled far more filk artists to sell their music online. Kickstarter has also helped fund recording projects for filk musicians. The bright side of pandemic Zoom festivals and circles is that unknown musicians who cannot afford to travel are now household names on other continents! ♦

Cecilia Eng has been a Portland, Oregon singer/songwriter since 1984 and has performed in England, Canada and across the US. She was inducted into the Filk Hall of Fame in 2013 and has been nominated six times for the Pegasus Award. You can find her song lyrics blog and MUCH more at the Friends of Filk website at friendsoffilk.org



Cecilia Eng brings home TWO Pegasus Awards from the 2022 Ohio Valley Filk Festival!

"Helva's Song", written in November 1985 based on Anne McCaffery's short story, "The Ship Who Sang" is the first song in her 2021 Tumbleweed Music Festival Saturday Night Concert. Cecilia Eng's set starts about 48-49 minutes into the video: <https://tumbleweedmusicfestival.org/stages/saturday-night-concert/>

Cecilia shares that Anne McCaffery wrote the short story just after her father passed away. "I've had people tell me they read the story (and the novels which came much later) after hearing my song, which won the 2022 Pegasus Award for Best Classic Filk Song. I also won the 2022 Pegasus Award for Best Writer/Composer. Jen Midkiff also won two of this year's Pegasus Awards, one for her song, "Underfoot" in one of two special categories this year, Best Furry Friend Song, and the other as the 2022 Best Performer. Summer Russell won Best Filk Song for "The Entwife", and Mich Sampson and Marilisa Valtazanou won in the other special category, Best Song That Tells a Story, for their song, "Nine Hundred and Ninety-Nine."

QUEERING THE FOLK TRADITION



Folk music is a revivalist tradition, and is not immune to the prejudice and bias held by the collectors, folklorists, and archivists who collected the music we now view as the “folk canon.”

It has often been said that history is written by the victors. Any group that gains power can alter the way that a narrative is told, and excise from the historical canon any information that it does not want shared. Even in folk music, which often contains stories from oppressed and silenced groups - to quote Irish singer Frank Harte: “Those in power write the histories, those who suffer write the songs” - certain perspectives have been erased. This is not as surprising as it might seem at first look; folk music is a revivalist tradition, and is not immune to the prejudice and bias held by the collectors, folklorists, and archivists who collected the music we now view as the “folk canon”.

As a queer person who plays Celtic, American, and maritime folk music for a living, I feel this absence keenly. The queer community has always existed, but has experienced intense oppression from religious and political authorities for centuries. Only recently have people been able to openly love partners of the same gender, or exist publicly as a different gender than the one they were assigned at birth, without considerable danger. Between violence towards queer people in our society, biases of folk song collectors, and the grip that conservative ideologies had on American culture during the 1960’s folk revival (even within the famously liberal folk scene that blossomed during that time), queer narratives in folk song have been effectively stifled. This is not to say that queer narratives do not exist in folk music, but for the most part, our stories have been relegated to subtext.

This presents a conundrum for traditional folk musicians like myself, who would like to sing songs that reflect their own experience. The issue is intensified by the gatekeeping problem extant in the folk world, where new perspectives and compositions are often looked down upon. Many talented singers who got their start in traditional song have since distanced themselves from it, and now perform contemporary folk or “new acoustic” music - where they can function in a singer-songwriter capacity and write more freely. For those of us who remain, we have two options: remain silent and allow traditional music to stay a fully heteronormative space, or “queer the tradition” by incorporating queer themes into old songs and writing new songs that make queerness explicit in the text.

Changing existing folk songs has always been a touchy subject; there are many who view the tradition as sacrosanct, and who believe that songs must be preserved in their original form. However, there are a few issues with this line of thought. First, the so-called “original form” of any traditional song is nothing more than the point in its evolution where it was first captured on paper or recording. Folk music is malleable; it changes and evolves as it is passed through the oral tradition. Second, the existence of archives means that even if a new version of the song overtakes the current version as the one that is sung at pub sings and song shares, the pre-existing version is not gone forever. At any rate, queering an existing folk song need not be an exhaustive rewrite (although that is always an option); it can be as easy as changing a word here or there, changing the pronouns used in the song (something that heterosexual singers have been doing for years to avoid queering the tradition!), or even not changing a song at all, depending on the words to the song and the identity of the singer.

The writing of new songs within the tradition, however, presents more challenges. Writing a “new” traditional song is challenging on its own; traditional songs have unique lyrical, melodic, rhythmic, and structural tropes that differentiate them from most modern songs, and an understanding of that style is integral to writing a song that “feels” traditional. Writing queer songs within the tradition, however, comes with its own set of difficulties. Due to the aforementioned stifling of the queer identity, most of the language that we have today to describe queerness and gender identity feels very modern; for example, a song set in the age of sail that used they/them pronouns to describe a character would come across as anachronistic, and immediately be recognizable as a contemporary song. Furthermore, some terms that do have history to them can be charged, or even thought of as slurs today.

This is not to say, however, that it cannot be done. One of my better-known songs, “Sweet Mary Starbuck”,

tells the story of two women falling in love in 19th-century Nantucket. In writing this song, I was very conscious of two factors. First, I took pains to make sure that the song was set in a specific historical place and time. This was important to me because our culture has a habit of viewing queer identity as a “modern” idea, which could not be farther from the truth. It dovetailed nicely with historical details as well; during the heyday of American whaling in Nantucket, men would undertake three-to-five year whaling voyages, leaving the women of the island with a degree of freedom that was highly unusual for the time period. Second, I wanted to make the content of the song explicitly queer, so I structured the song in such a way that it doesn’t make sense unless it is about two women. In a world that wants to erase our identities, it was vitally important to me to write a song where that aspect could not be removed.

Up to this point, I have mainly discussed how queer folk like me can work within the tradition to carve a space for ourselves. However, our straight allies have a responsibility as well; a responsibility to respect that space, to reckon with the problematic aspects of tradition, and to help restructure traditional music spaces to be more welcoming. This respect, reckoning, and restructuring must take place both in the songs that we sing, and the spaces we sing them in.

First off, I believe that we as a community can no longer hide behind the “these are old songs” argument. While there is something beautiful about handing down a traditional piece from generation to generation, the act of singing a song perpetuates its ideas and ideology; and singing a song that is homophobic, misogynistic,

This respect, reckoning, and restructuring must take place both in the songs that we sing, and the spaces we sing them in.

racist, or gender essentialist reinforces those ideas and gives them voice. This is not to say that we must scrub everything problematic from the tradition, but rather that we as singers have a responsibility to reckon in real time with the content of the songs we sing, and give due consideration to the real-world harm that we can still cause by singing them. Second, we need to actively welcome new singers and their songs into our communities, and allow them the freedom to explore the tradition on their own terms. Finally, and most importantly, we need to listen to - and help amplify - voices that have been silenced in our culture. Perhaps these changes will make some singers uncomfortable. I don’t think that’s a bad thing; discomfort is a necessary part of growth.



Perhaps these changes will make some singers uncomfortable. I don't think that's a bad thing; discomfort is a necessary part of growth.

At the time of my writing this piece, there has been yet another mass shooting at a gay club, this time in Colorado. Even in our sanctuaries, queer people are not safe in this country; there is a powerful, vocal faction bent on our extermination. If we are silenced, we are vulnerable. Folk music is a powerful tool for amplifying the voices of the oppressed; it is a moral imperative, therefore, that our singing communities welcome queer voices, queer singers, and queer songs. ♦

Alex Sturbaum is a singer, songwriter, and folk musician based in Olympia, Washington. They have released four solo albums, and perform solo as well as with various bands. They are also the director of Raise the Rafters, a yearly intergenerational song weekend in the Pacific Northwest.

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PREMIER PORTLAND EVENT

Winterfolk



**Celebration of Music/
Community/Service
Saturday,
February 4th, 2023
Alberta Rose Theatre,
Portland Oregon 7PM**

***A benefit for
Transition Projects***

Winterfolk, Portland, Oregon's largest annual folk music concert event, a benefit for Transition Projects, will celebrate its 34th Anniversary at 7PM February 4th, 2023 at the Alberta Rose Theatre, Portland Oregon.

For over 53 years, Transition Projects has delivered life-saving and life changing support to some of Portland's most vulnerable residents. "Winterfolk" is proud to partner with this long time organization, working towards providing one of the most essential and basic human rights.

For this 34th Winterfolk concert, we are privileged and proud to feature Tracy Grammer, singer/songwriter/extraordinaire, headlining the event. She calls Massachusetts home these days, but burst on the national acoustic music scene working with songwriting wunderkind Dave Carter when both lived in Portland.

Tracy Grammer has become one of folk music's most revered artists. Tracy has been a great friend to "Winterfolk" and we are thrilled that she will be gracing our stage for this year's concert.

Also appearing at this year's "Winterfolk 34" concert is Jim Page. This is the Portland premiere for his acclaimed 2022 album, "The Time is Now" His songs have been covered by The Doobie Brothers, Christy Moore, Dick Gaughan, and many others. Jim's music is real, relevant, and hard hitting- in the tradition of Utah Phillips, Woody Guthrie, and Phil Ochs

We are also very excited this year to feature the music of "The Prairie Blossoms"-Mel Kubik and Karen Kitchen-

at this years event. They perform a compelling program of traditional and contemporary Native American music and song. They were chosen to perform on the Festival Plaza stage of the grand opening of the First Americans Museum in Kansas City in 2019, and we are delighted to welcome them to the "Winterfolk" stage

Also appearing at "Winterfolk 34" are Kate Power and Steve Einhorn, two of Portland's most respected and influential musical artists; and after spending a few years back in Maine, Hanz Araki and Colleen Raney have returned to the Pacific Northwest! Hanz is one of the truly exceptional traditional celtic flute players in the U.S., and he and Colleen will again regale the "Winterfolk" audience with songs and tunes.

Portland's own Grammy Award winning guitarist Doug Smith- and his talented wife Judy- will once again join us- and hosting and performing at Winterfolk again will be Tom May, the founder and director of the event and producer of the decades-long syndicated radio broadcast "River City Folk".

The annual guitar raffle is a "Winterfolk" tradition, and this year we will be offering a donated, handmade Loren Schulte guitar. Raffle tickets are available at Artichoke Music, and the night of the show. The drawing will be that night- need not be present to win.

"Winterfolk 34" tickets are on sale now- \$30 in advance or \$32 at the door the night of show at www.albertarosetheatre.com/ and at Music Millennium

The Songwriter Soiree:

The Healing Power of Creative Community



When I was 29 years old, my dad died. We were incredibly close. He was a songwriter and inspired me in my own path as a musician. At the time, I was also going through a devastating breakup, and I was struggling. Although the grief I was feeling was staggering, by turning towards what I loved — music and community — I managed to transmute one of the hardest moments in my life into something deeply meaningful for many.

For years I had wanted to record my first album, but I felt shy about sharing my personal songs with anyone. I had been a professional musician for many years, but I had not shared anything so vulnerable. I knew many musicians who felt similarly.

In the midst of my angst, I created a space where I

could feel a deep sense of healing, feel safe to perform, and also offer a place of support for others.

Thus, the Songwriter Soiree was born. Once a month, songwriters and friends were welcomed into my cozy living room, invited to safely share their original songs in an intimately attentive, and supportive space. What began with a handful of friends quickly grew to a hundred people gathering monthly to laugh, cry and sing together. It was magic.

Songwriting is powerful medicine, and sharing our most vulnerable compositions is part of that. Doing so requires incredible courage, and finding both a safe space and receptive audience to perform in can be daunting. While the soiree is music focused, the benefits have been more about personal growth and inspiration.

It's been transformative for so many.

One of our participants, Erin Chmela says "It's impossible to walk

Songwriting is powerful medicine, and sharing our most vulnerable compositions is part of that. Doing so requires incredible courage, and finding both a safe space and receptive audience to perform in can be daunting

Storm Large performs at the monthly Soiree (facing page). Open mic night at the annual 4-day Retreat (right).

away not feeling loved, supported, and inspired! I feel welcomed into a community that has altered the course of my entire life!"

Songwriters of all levels have found inspiration on our stage. From celebrities like Storm Large and Peter Yarrow, to people just getting up to sing for the first time. We've had over 5000 people play since 2009.

And the soiree keeps growing. In 2019 we began offering immersive retreats as a place to not only provide a safe space to share songs, but also to create a container in which creativity may be nurtured; a place not only for songwriters, but anyone who loves music and values community – even those who've never thought of themselves as 'creative'.

In a world that often feels so isolating, the soiree offers an opportunity to cultivate deeper connection with others, as well as with our own creative potential. It's about recognizing that we're in this together – that we're all living a human experience that's both challenging and beautiful.



Through laughter and shared vulnerability, we can allow our authentic selves to be seen and heard, trusting others to love and accept us for who we are. THAT is the medicine of The Soiree.

The Soiree's meaningful impact reaches far beyond the events we hold; we're a family of people who bolster one another year round, offering each other a warm kinship that is so needed in this life. We hope you'll join us...! ♦

By Robin Jackson, Musician and Songwriting teacher.
Learn more about our events and upcoming retreat at www.songwritersoiree.com



Participants jamming around the fire at the annual retreat.

The Songwriter Soiree Winter Retreat

Feb 16-19th at
Menucha Retreat Center

www.songwritersoiree.com

So many ways to engage!

Dear PFS Member,
Thank you so much to those of you who ran for the PFS Board, or even considered running for the Board. We appreciate your commitment to this organization and its mission. A hearty welcome to our new board members! We look forward to the work we'll do together.

As the new year begins, I'm curious about your musical intentions for this year. Do you have any resolutions or hopes around music? Would you like to spend more time playing, singing, or listening to music? If the answer is yes, then PFS is here to help you out. We still have weekly Virtual Song Circles on Saturday evenings, along with Singtime coming up in March (learn more on page 21), as well as the PFS Concert Series showcasing a fabulous artist once a month (head to our website portlandfolkmusic.org to learn who's

coming to town and purchase tickets). If contributing financially is more your speed, know that you can always gift a friend or family member PFS membership, or that we have a young Endowment Fund waiting to be filled. The Endowment Fund will allow us to better navigate rising prices and help PFS survive potential future shocks in the economy.

For the moment, enjoy this issue on alternative rivers of folk, all about some lesser known movements in the folk scene. There are folk movements out there I had no idea existed until joining this organization. Folk, the music of the people, changes as the world of musical humans changes. It is truly our own creation. May you have a fabulous year creating the musical life you want to lead! ♦

Alana McKenzie

president@portlandfolkmusic.org

34th Annual
Winterfolk
Benefit for Transition Projects

TRACY GRAMMER

Tom May & Friends, Kate Power & Steve Einhorn, Jim Page, The Prairie Blossoms
Doug & Judy Koch Smith, and Hanz Araki & Colleen Raney

WINTERFOLK.ORG

SATURDAY FEBRUARY 4, 2023
ALBERTA ROSE THEATRE. PORTLAND

For The New Year

Ther's lots happening in 2023, as people turn more to live, in-person events. You can find them in the PFS Folk Calendar at <https://www.portlandfolkmusic.org/>.

Winterfolk 34, featuring Tracy Grammar, joined by Tom May & Friends (Donny Wright & Matt Snook), Doug & Judy Smith, Kate Power & Steve Einhorn, The Prairie Blossoms, Jim Page, and Hanz Araki & Colleen Raney takes place on Feb 4 (Sun) at the Alberta Rose Theatre, 3000 NE Alberta. Tickets are \$30 advance/\$32 at the door and are available at Music Millennium, online, or at the Alberta Rose box office. It's a benefit for Transition Projects.

Abbie Weisenbloom continues to host a wide-ranging assortment of wonderful music at her NE Portland House Concert series. Here's what's coming up:

Jan 21 (Sat): Scroggins & Rose – mandolin/violin duo

Jan 24 (Tue): Wallis Bird – unconventional 9-1/2 finger guitar technique

Jan 27 (Fri): Corner House – old time, Scottish, progressive bluegrass, folk, improvisation

Jan 29 (Sun): Bill Evans & Dan Crary – banjo and guitar virtuosity

Feb 7 (Tue): Newberry & Verch – tunes, ballads, step dancing, and original songs by way of Canada and the Ozarks

Feb 11 (Sat): Kristen Grainger & True North – intelligent, memorable Americana

Feb 20 (Mon): Molsky's Mountain Drifters – high-powered take on southern old time tunes and songs



The Portland Old Time Music Gathering

This, but their unique event continues to astound and impress. There are many events at many venues. This list tries to be inclusive, but there's always more - take your pick!

Jan 11 (Wed): Jam at the Moon and Sixpence, 2014 NE 42nd Ave, free, hosted by Lori Prime and Ken Torke

Jan 12 (Thu): Cajun/Honky Tonk Night at the Spare Room, 4830 NE 42nd Ave, free, 21+, featuring the Caleb Klauder Reeb Willms Country Band, with the Paradise Drifters, the Happy Valley Sluggers, and a 2-step dance lesson with Marta King

Jan 13 (Fri): Friday Night Concert at the Alberta Abbey, 126 NE Alberta, wristband required, featuring Sally Jablonsky and Friends, Ben Hunter and Joe Seamons, and Méti fiddler Jamie Fox

Jan 14 (Sat): Again at the Alberta Abbey - a whole day of workshops, with a Kids Show, Luthier presentation, and a Square Dance with the Alum Ridge Boys and Ashlee, Devils Club Darlins', and Rats Gone To Rest

Jan 15 (Sun): Sunday Cabaret at the Spare Room and music until late by Caleb Klauder, Reeb Willms and Friends at the Moon and Sixpence.

For more information, go to <https://bubbaguitar.com/gathering/>.

By Barry Gorden, PFS Calendar Editor and volunteer

Explore the Portland FolkMusic Calendar Online

<https://www.portlandfolkmusic.org/calendar.php>

Your guide to Folk Music in the area

David Francey

Saturday, January 21, 2023

Reedwood Friends Church

"David's straightforward songs tell honest stories of real people and real places"
Shelter Valley Folk Festival

"David Francey: Working Man's Poetry"
Sing Out Magazine

"Francey has emerged as one of Canada's most gifted songwriters"
The Montreal Gazette

David Francey was born in Ayrshire, Scotland and immigrated to Toronto, Canada with his family at the age of 12. On weekends the family took drives exploring their new home; music played a large part in these outings as they harmonized on traditional Scottish tunes while in the car. As a young man, he hitched/worked his way across Canada three times, then thumbed his way to the Canadian Yukon for work and life experience.

"I don't care if I've sung a song 100 times, it flashes in my mind why I wrote it and where I wrote it. It becomes new again for me every night."

An authentic folk singer, Francey is a documentarian of the working person having toiled as a rail yard worker and carpenter (to name a few occupations) for over 20 years. He never imagined earning a living from his music. His wife, Beth Girdler (artist, gardener & bee keeper extraordinaire) convinced him there was quality in "his tunes." Initially he planned to sell them, but upon her prompting recorded them. Life experiences inspired the songs on his first two albums *Torn Screen Door* and *Far End of Summer*. His debut album of 1999 *Torn Screen Door* won a Canadian Broadcast Corporation Radio award for the year's top folk album and *Far End of Summer* won the 2002 JUNO award for best album.

His early success was not the normal musician's career path. Francey was still working construction when his first album came out in his mid-40's. He said "I didn't do anything but put it out and it crawled across the country."

The next 2 albums *Skating Rink* and *The Waking Hour* also won best roots & traditional album JUNO awards in 2003 and 2005. His 2004 album *The Waking Hour* was



recorded in Nashville using the simple recording style of his earlier albums but with a driving rhythm provided by veteran Nashville musicians Kieran Kane, Kevin Welch and Fats Kaplin.

2008 provided another JUNO award for the album *Right of Passage* and in 2016 Francey won two Canadian Folk Music Awards, solo artist and contemporary album of the year for his album *Empty Train*. In 2010, his song "The Waking Hour" won the Session I Grand Prize in the Folk category in the John Lennon Songwriting Contest which is an international songwriting contest made possible by Yoko Ono Lennon.

The repetition of the road was a worry for Francey. The idea of performing the same songs night after night did not appeal to him. His wife encouraged him to keep in mind the reason he wrote a particular song, what inspired it and to just recall that feeling prior to performing it. "She was absolutely right" says Francey. "I don't care if I've sung a song 100 times, it flashes in my mind why I wrote it and where I wrote it. It becomes new again for me every night."

"Folk is about chronicling your times" says Francey. "I can't recall when I wasn't writing songs. I'm writing all the time." As his song-by-song liner notes show us, Francey is a documentarian in three-minute increments.

WEBSITE: <https://www.davidfrancey.com>

Videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IFJZv4VS7rc&list=OLAK5uy_nzSj2aDEffLwWuzUKF3zWioCnk2QUgoX8&index=3 "Night and Morning"

Kray Van Kirk

Saturday, February 18, 2023
Reedwood Friends Church

As a young man Kray Van Kirk left graduate school to pursue the life of a musician. At the time, it meant living out of his van for five years while driving around the West Coast performing. However, he found it wasn't a life well suited for a single parent. "I ended up in Alaska and I ended up being a single parent. I stopped touring to be a dad" Van Kirk said. He continued to make music but put his efforts toward being a full-time musician on hold for more than a decade for both parenthood and steadier paychecks.

While living in Juneau, Van Kirk earned his doctorate in fisheries population dynamics and went to work for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as a scientist. "I was an OK statistician, I was a good coder, but I was not cutting edge" Van Kirk said. "I realized I had a choice. I could either spend the next 20 years dedicating myself to good fisheries statistical models or I could spend the next 20 years writing about Don Quixote and the hero's quest. I determined it was possible to contribute more to the world by writing songs than by writing stock assessment models" he concluded.

The songs he personally writes explore stories and socially progressive themes and retell classic myths using the monomyth or hero's journey format of storytelling.

A finger-style guitarist (6 and 12 string) with a rich baritone voice, he was able to pick up his guitar and begin touring and recording again. Van Kirk plays a bit of everything when it comes to folk music.

The songs he personally writes explore stories and socially progressive themes and retell classic myths using the monomyth or hero's journey format of storytelling. This structure involves a hero/person who goes on an adventure, is victorious when faced with a crisis and returns home transformed by the adventure/quest.

"This is what the new folk style is made of" says Van Kirk. "We are driven by myth and the seasons of the heart. New stories and myths for a complex 21st century are needed so everyone regardless of creed, color, gender, sexuality or anything else can listen and see themselves in their own hero's quest."



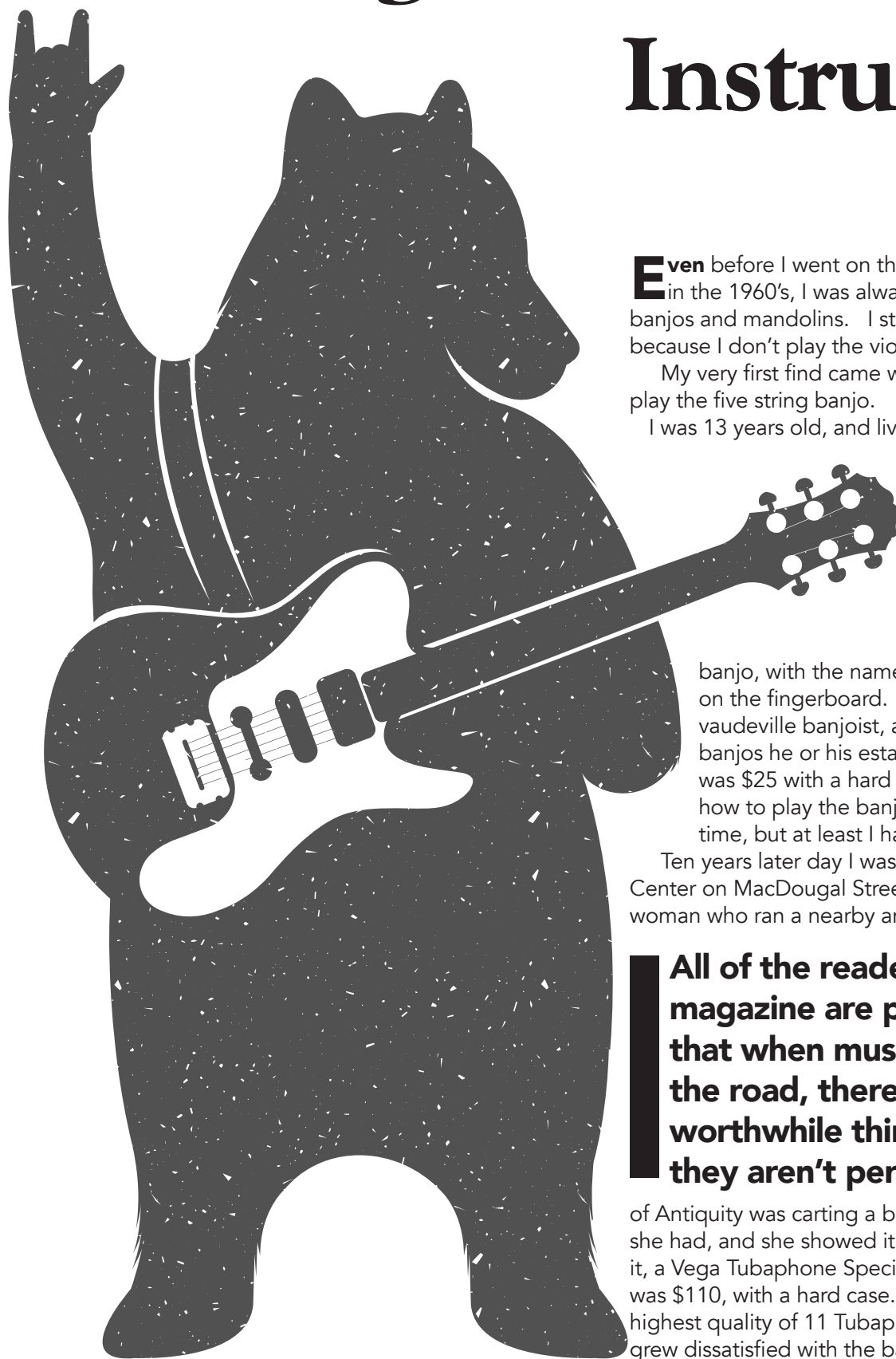
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Hunting for Wild Fretted Instruments



Even before I went on the road with The Journeymen in the 1960's, I was always looking for old guitars, banjos and mandolins. I stayed away from fiddles, because I don't play the violin.

My very first find came when I decided I wanted to play the five string banjo.

I was 13 years old, and living in Philadelphia.

Following Pete Seeger's directions in what was then then Pete's mimeographed instruction book, I headed to the pawnshop-skid row part of town, and quickly snagged an old Weymann

banjo, with the name Mike Naples inscribed on the fingerboard. Apparently he was an old vaudeville banjoist, and this was the fifth of five banjos he or his estate had pawned. The price was \$25 with a hard case. My struggle to learn how to play the banjo is another story for another time, but at least I had a banjo.

Ten years later day I was coming out of the Folklore Center on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village. The woman who ran a nearby antique store called The Den

All of the readers of this magazine are probably aware that when musicians go on the road, there aren't a lot of worthwhile things to do when they aren't performing.

of Antiquity was carting a banjo case. I asked her what she had, and she showed it to me. I immediately bought it, a Vega Tubaphone Special Deluxe Banjos. The price was \$110, with a hard case. The Special Deluxe is the highest quality of 11 Tubaphone models. Eventually I grew dissatisfied with the banjo and sold it. This was a

serious mistake, because it is now probably worth about \$25,000.

All of the readers of this magazine are probably aware that when musicians go on the road, there aren't a lot of worthwhile things to do when they aren't performing. Some use their time drinking or taking drugs, some sleep, and others pursue romance or hobbies. My solution was to look for instruments. In the 60's it was a fairly simple process. Mostly you'd find the bus station in the downtown of a city, and usually there were pawnshops nearby. (Go Greyhound, we'll leave the pawning to you.) In three and a half years on the road, here are some of the things I found.

I used to get severe hay fever in late August, so I'd try to get away from the East Coast, often ending up in Colorado. On one of these trips I found a pre-war D28 Martin in a music store for \$75. I'm not a fan of dreadnaught guitars, but I knew that my friend Artie Traum would love this guitar. I bought it and sent it to him. Some years later he sold it for \$5000. This was a mistake, because these days \$75,000 would be the going price. Another trip to Colorado yielded 3 small guitars in a pawnshop one being a Washburn. I don't remember exactly what they cost, but it was next to nothing.

I made the mistake of calling the salesman "man." He immediately threw me out of the store and lectured me about no-good hippies.

Just before the Journeymen left New York to relocate to San Francisco, I had a little money and some time. I decided to visit a friend of mine in Los Angeles, and take the all-night bus to San Francisco that night. To meet with our newly-minted managers. When I got off the bus, sure enough there was a pawnshop nearby. I looked in the window, and thought I saw a New York Martin guitar. Martins were made in New York before the company moved to Bethlehem in 1833, but they used the New York label until 1898. It was too early to visit our managers, so I had some breakfast and went back to the pawnshop. Sure enough it was a New York Martin, and the price was \$50 ! The manager of the pawnshop looked at me and said "it's funny, you're the third person who looked at that guitar in the last day or so." I had about \$15 in my pocket, and put a down payment of \$5 on the guitar. When we moved to San Francisco about four months later, the guitar was waiting for me!

To give you an idea of how this process worked: we were playing in Washington D.C., and I saw a sign for a pawnshop across the bridge to Virginia. I got up the next morning and walked over there. I returned back with two Martin guitars that I bought for \$35

each. These were small-bodied guitars, like 0 or 00 size. There was also a fine Epiphone Jazz Guitar for \$70, but I decided that was more than I wanted to spend. Besides I could only carry so many instruments.

Another good find was a OO40 Martin Guitar that I bought for \$195 at a music store in Raleigh, North Carolina. This one was a bit weird, because an employee of the store took it home with him, and the owner had to basically lay down the law to get it back and send to me. That guitar today is worth about \$30,000 or so. If you can find one. Unfortunately, I sold that one way too early in the game.

After a couple of years, music stores in small towns became aware that old instruments actually were often worth more than new ones. We were playing in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and I saw a music store there. I went in and politely did my usual routine, "do you have any old guitars, banjos or mandolins?" To my surprise, the owner totally went off on me. Someone from Chicago had raided his basement and bought a bunch of old instruments for next to nothing.

Later the music store owner had found out what the instruments were actually worth. He started screaming at me. I decided that it would be prudent to leave.

In Columbia, Missouri I found an interesting guitar

displayed in a locked glass cabinet. When I asked the salesman to unlock the case, he simply said "no."

Another time I was looking for guitars in a pawnshop on

3rd Avenue in New York. I made the mistake of calling the salesman "man." He immediately threw me out of the store and lectured me about no-good hippies.

My friend Harry Tuft opened the Denver Folklore Center in 1962. I'd send him most of the instruments I found. One was a dobro, which I bought for \$18. It had no case. We were getting gas in Oklahoma, when the attendant saw the dobro he immediately offered me \$36 for it, without even playing it. Then there was a Vega banjo-mandolin, purchased in a hotel antique shop- \$5 with a case.

I moved to Denver in 1972. Soon after I saw a Clifford Essex, English five string banjo in a pawnshop. I asked the owner what he knew about it. It turned out that he had been to the library, and knew more about Clifford Essex Banjos than I did. I realized that for all practical purposes, the game was over.

But even in the 1970's I turned up a low-priced D18 in Kansas, and a bit later I bought a Taylor 12 string for \$125 at a pawn shop in Little Rock, Arkansas.

It is still possible to occasionally find treasures at bargain prices, but it's a long shot these days. Everyone can find anything on the internet, without much trouble. I do have a few more stories, however. In 1989 I was

working in Burbank, California as the National Education Coordinator for NARAS, the organization that does the Grammy show. One day during my lunch hour I wandered over to nearby Glendale. I noticed a banjo through the window, and walked into the store. It turned out to be a Paramount F tenor banjo. It was

My daughter is fluent in French, but less so in guitar language. The salesman finally got a store manager who "allowed" me to buy that particular guitar.

listed at \$250. Since I know little about tenor banjos I called my friend Marc Silber in Berkeley. He assured me that the banjo was worth far more than the asking price. The next day I returned to the store, but it was closed, because someone was filming there. I thought to myself that someone on the film crew, a sound person or editor or gaffer was probably a banjo player, and would snap up the Paramount. I returned the next day, and the banjo was still there. I bought it for \$225, and since I don't play tenor banjo I made a deal with Marc. He gave me \$1500 credit to be used against his extensive stock of fretted instruments.

About five years ago my wife and I went to Paris, and met up with my daughter there. I wandered into a music store and saw a Larson Brothers Guitar. For years I have played an Ode banjo, made around 1962, but I've gone through a half dozen or so love affairs with various guitars.

The Larson Brothers were Martin competitors in the first half of the twentieth century, and they made wonderful guitars. However, they never used their own names, but marketed their guitars under the brand names Euphonon, Maurer, Prairie State and Stahl. The guitar mesmerized me, and I played it for an hour. I bought it and had it shipped home, because we had too much luggage to carry. It turned out that a few years ago a French luthier captured the Larson trademark, and started using the brothers' names on the headstock of his guitars. This guitar was not a bargain, but it's my favorite guitar.

There were two odd incidents involving this guitar. The shop owner wanted to ship a guitar out of the warehouse to me. It was difficult, given my inferior French, to explain that that wouldn't work, because I needed to play the guitar before I bought it. My daughter is fluent in French, but less so in guitar language. The salesman finally got a store manager who "allowed" me to buy that particular guitar.

The other incident involved the delivery of the guitar. I got a notice that it had cleared customs and was headed to our house via Federal Express. It did not arrive on the day that it was supposed to appear. The next day it snowed hard, and there was no sign of the guitar. My wife opened the door about 5PM to check

the weather. There was the guitar, shipped in a large box, fortunately in its case. Apparently, it had been sitting out there for several hours. The box and the case were soaking wet. I took the guitar out of the case, and set the case up near a heater. Fortunately, the guitar was not wet or damaged. It turns out that in my part of the

world, (Denver), Fed Ex doesn't ring the doorbell when they deliver a package. My attempts to get Fed Ex. to at least

pay the shipping charges were lengthy and unsuccessful.

Do I have any advice to the prospective instrument hunter? As the saying goes, be careful out there.



By Dick Weissman is a composer, performer and author who writes books about American roots music, music and politics, and the music industry. He is an inductee in both the Colorado Authors Hall of Fame and the Music Hall of Fame. His most recent book is A New History of American and Canadian Folk Music.

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Take 5 with Siena Cristie

1. Can you describe the journey that took you from your hometown of Los Angeles to the Pacific Northwest?

It's always been sort of a second home, because my mom is originally from Portland. We actually lived with my grandma in Milwaukie when I was a baby before my parents relocated to LA, which is my dad's hometown. When I went to college in Ohio, my parents moved to the Hood River area, and after grad school I came back to the PNW to be closer to them. My family is really important to me. They crop up in my songs a lot.

2. Your song "Dear Northland" has won accolades in several songwriting competitions (Portland's Folk Festival, Kerrville, Great River). What prompted you to write that tune?

Thanks for mentioning that! "Dear Northland" was inspired by two things: a song prompt in Matt Meighan's songwriting class, and the loneliness of 2020. The prompt was to write a song using three randomly assigned words. Mine were "porcelain," "antimony," and "hood." I had no clue what to do. At the same time, I was struggling with the loneliness of quarantine. So my wife and I went for a drive into the countryside, where I found solace in watching other humans just existing. Then I went home and wrote the song using all three words.

3. You will be attending the Folk Alliance International conference in Kansas City this coming February. What do you see as the primary benefit of FAI and regional music conferences?

I've only been to one Folk Alliance event in person, which was Folk Alliance Region Midwest (FARM) this past October. The biggest benefit I got from it was meeting other songwriters who are highly dedicated to their craft and want to support each other's careers. I'm hoping to have a similar experience at FAI this February.

4. "I aspire to write songs that listen" is a quote from your Bandcamp page. How do you know when you've reached that goal?

I can never be certain of that, honestly. I want my songs to convey truth and compassion, and to highlight the common humanity in people with



different experiences. This is why I write so often about death - it unites us all, and it forces me to accept my own limitations in a way that's hard for me. It means a lot to me when listeners tell me they were moved by the stories in my lyrics, or that my songs helped them to get in touch with an elusive feeling. I think this happens most often when I sing about grieving - either for a person, or for a time or experience that's over now.

5. After appearing at Portland's Folk Festival in January and FAI in February, what are your plans for the rest of 2023?

I'm in the early stages of planning my first road trip tour in summer 2023, so I'm really excited for that! I also plan on relocating to the Midwest next year. I've missed it ever since I moved back to the Northwest, and lately I've also realized that living there will make it easier to tour and visit my friends from FARM, Kerrville, and beyond. I'm really gonna miss my family, but I'm infinitely grateful that they want me to pursue my dreams, even if it means moving away. Until my big move, I plan to keep working, gigging, and soaking up the Portland music scene as much as I can. ◀

Siena will be performing at Portland's Folk Festival on Sunday January 15th.

By Kevin Nordlie. Kevin is based near the other Washington (DC) and works with independent musicians in the folk music community. Kevin.Nordlie@gmail.com

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11 oddly specific music genres you didn't know existed

By Hannah McDonald

1. MEDIEVAL FOLK ROCK

Medieval folk rock incorporates samples of renaissance and baroque music into traditional rock and uses few or no electronic instruments. The genre developed in Western Europe in the 1970s as a subset of progressive rock.

Medieval folk rock songs to check out:

"Opening Move" by Gryphon
"Celestial Night" by Amazing Blondel
"Abracadabra" by Mägo de Oz

2. HORROR COUNTRY

Country music is often written off as a vehicle for complaining about failed relationships, lukewarm beer and slow tractors, but horror country takes the genre to new levels. It uses country instrumentation, but discusses darker topics — often things like ghosts, demons or corpses. It's the perfect soundtrack for a horror movie

involving ranchers and farming.

"The Tardy Hearse" by The Pine Box Boys
"Shady Grove" by Jayke Orvis
"The Doomsday Cult Blues" by Graveyard Train

3. MATH ROCK

Math rock is a specific style of indie rock that uses complex time signatures and unusual meters (hence the word "math" in its name). Math rock first emerged in the 1980s before peaking in the mid-1990s, said allmusic.com. Similar uses of nonstandard time signatures and variable meters are now being adapted to pop music (called "math pop").

Math rock songs to check out:

"Atlas" by Battles
"Everlong" by Oxes
"Breadcrumb Trail" by Slint

4. LOWERCASE

Lowercase is an extreme form of minimalist music that is built around typically unheard ambient sounds. Artists record and remix sounds from crumpled paper, broken lightbulbs and carburetors, among other objects. Artist Steve Roden created the genre in 2001 when he released the album "Forms of Paper." Lowercase has been compared to John Cage's "4'33" and videos intended to evoke ASMR.

Lowercase songs to check out:

"Airria" by Steve Roden

"The Bourbaki Conjecture" by Kim Cascone

"Health Loop" by Tetsu Inoue

5. VAPORWAVE

Vaporwave is a musical genre born from a 2010 internet meme. Esquire writer Scott Beauchamp called it a genre "defined at least in part by an obsession with '80s and '90s consumer culture." Vaporwave music, paradoxically, is marked by both cynicism and nostalgia for capitalist culture. Artists use samples from 1980s and '90s music or commercials to create lengthy, electronic songs reminiscent of smooth jazz or funk. It may be easiest described as elevator music for the internet generation.

Vaporwave songs to check out:

"Enjoy Yourself" by Saint Pepsi

"Dollar Menu" by Jason Sanders

"Call Me Maybe (Edit)" by Saint Pepsi

6. VEGAN STRAIGHT EDGE

Much like unblack metal, vegan straight edge (or just straight edge) music emphasizes animal rights and abstinence from drug use and extramarital sex. Music styles differ. Straight edge music was originally founded as an offshoot of hardcore punk, but Christian rappers may also fall under the straight edge genre.

Vegan straight edge songs to check out:

"Firestorm" by Earth Crisis

"The Way it Is" by Vegan Reich

"Motivation" by Canon

7. UNBLACK METAL

Unblack metal shares the style of black metal, which tends to use fast drumming, shrieking vocals and complex guitar riffs, but it differs in content. Traditional black metal often incorporates Satanist or Pagan themes and expresses skepticism about organized religion. Unblack metal, on the other hand, promotes Christian beliefs and uses religious lyrics.

Unblack metal songs to check out:

"Where Darkness Cannot Reach" by Crimson Moonlight

"Mine Heart Doth Beseech Thee (O Master)" by Horde

"A Sovereign Fortress" by Antestor

8. GERMAN REGGAE

Germany has had a surprising history with reggae since the late 1970s. The first German reggae artists were primarily white, middle-class youths who wanted to create a counterculture for themselves. In the mid-1990s, the genre took off after the artist Gentleman began releasing albums. Today, Germany regularly hosts open-air reggae festivals that are well-attended by people throughout Europe.

German reggae songs to check out:

"Send a Prayer" by Gentleman

"Aufstehn" by Seeed

"Perle der Karibik" by D-Flame

9. PIRATE METAL

If Captain Jack Sparrow started wearing leather jackets and playing the electric guitar, you might end up with something a little like pirate metal. Pirate metal songs tend to be sea shanties sung or shrieked in the style of heavy metal, but accompanied by folk instruments like the concertina.

Pirate metal songs to check out:

"Dead Man's Medley" by The Dread Crew of Oddwood

"Lions of the Sea" by Running Wild

"Alestorm" by Alestorm

10. SPYTRACK

Spytrack music is pretty much exactly what it sounds like. An official Spotify genre, spytrack is the type of music that sounds like it should be part of the soundtrack in spy movies. It's the perfect background music for when you're Facebook-stalking someone or watching YouTube videos at work.

Spytrack songs to check out:

"The Prowler" by Alan Tew Orchestra

"Policy of Truth" by Depeche Mode

"Sour Times" by Portishead

11. BLACK MIDI (OR IMPOSSIBLE MUSIC)

Black MIDI music is sometimes called impossible music because it would be impossible for any musician to play by hand. Black MIDI files are made by inputting as many notes as possible to the Music Instrument Digital Interface. Often, that count is in the millions — the most intense black MIDI pieces contain as many as 93 trillion notes, the maximum allowed by most digital synthesizers. However, the size of those creations means they are unable to be saved, played or recorded. Black MIDI files are so named because if written in standard music notation, the compositions would be entirely black.

Black MIDI songs to check out:

"Red Zone" by John L. Sinneslösch

"Flight of the Bumblebee" by Sir Spork

"Tetris Theme" by Kanade Tachibana

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Kenny Feinstein earned a music degree from the University of Oregon and has been a frequent instructor at the Puget Sound Guitar Workshop. He is founder of the "acid

blue-grass" band Water Tower, whose music has been described by some writers as "a must-have for the modern-day folk revivalist". He has produced albums with Grammy award winning and major label friends such as Tim Armstrong and Coffey Anderson, and has recorded for Disney and Sesame Street. Banjo player Jesse Blue Eads joins him.

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Members Experience Vast Range of Folk Music

I am a political folk music person - through and through... from high school during the Civil Rights movement, when I first heard "We Shall Overcome". I adopted Pete Seeger's belief that music can contribute to change for justice and peace. When I also then joined Bay Area folk music organizations, I discovered a wider heritage. IWW, then, Ewan MacColl and Peggy's Seeger's songs for the labor movement. Then Women's movement songs with leaders like Holly Near and Chris Williamson. But since joining PFS in the 1990's, I have learned so much more about a broader folk heritage in the Northwest through fellow PFs members!

PFS has a strong heritage of Irish and maritime music (along with Seattle) with some real stars – Gordy Euler and Jonathan Lay who grace stages at Folklife, Mary Benson with the Sirens and Spinnaker. Other PFS specialists included: Meryle Korn on astounding autoharp with "Apple pies", Bill Murlin of the Wanderers and Unpaid Bills who recovered "lost" Woodie Guthrie songs from Bonneville Power. All the variety

of styles on Folkstrip in the early morning on KBOO (90.7) - most hosts are PFS members. Barb Millikan brought wide knowledge of songs from Bay Area and Camp Harmony. Ira Frankel brought music from Iran.

Recently, of course, PFS has been blessed by Joe Hickerson (former Librarian of Congress for folk music), members like Cecilia Eng from the Filk network, and the Rippey family with knowledge of Africa. And, by David Ingerson, winner of the Oireachtas Cheana-da sean-nós singing competition, 2020 (Ireland) – but all around for us locally. Finally, members from around Oregon and the world through the Virtual Song Circle every Saturday for the last 2+ years.

PFS members get access to this treasure store of musical knowledge. While access has been more limited due to Covid, please send me a request to contact any of these folks through pfs-online@portlandfolkmusic.org or Membership@portlandfolkmusic.org if you want to know more!

Jinx Kuehn

Membership ◀



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Deadlines for Local Lore:

January & February Issue—December 10

March & April Issue—February 10

May & June Issue—April 10

July & August Issue—June 10

September & October Issue—August 10

November & December Issue—October 10



PortlandFolkMusic.org

Local Lore
Volume 47 Issue 1

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Local Lore is published six times per year by the Portland FolkMusic Society, a non-profit, educational corporation whose mission it is to preserve, present, and promote folk music and arts.

Local Lore

Editor/Designer

Kim McLaughlin

LocalLore@portlandfolkmusic.org

PFS

P.O. Box 1448,
Portland, OR 97207-1448

Printed by Hush Ink

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