

# The Filking Times

June 1991

Winner of a 1990 Kazoo Award

Issue 27

From the Filk Echo

## OKon The K is for Filk

Posted by Curtis Berry

OKon '91 will be July 26-28 at the Camelot Hotel, I-44 & Peoria in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Programming will include filk concerts, filk programming, and late-night filksings.

☆ Filk Guests of Honor: Barry & Sally Childs-Helton.

Other filkers and people of filk interest who plan to be there: Robin Bailey, Suzette Haden Elgin, Randy Farran, Linda Melnick (of Technical Difficulties fame), Fran Mullen, Elizabeth Ann Scarborough (her new book The Phantom Banjo which was inspired by folk/filk is now out.), Mark Simmons, Mark W. Wallace, and Mel. White.

Registration \$15 until June 30, \$20 thereafter. For more information or to register: OKon, P.O. Box 4229, Tulsa, OK 74159; (918) 622-2225.

Hotel rooms are \$45 for 1 to 4 people; make reservations at (918) 747-8811; outside Oklahoma, 1-800-331-4423; mention OKon. Last year the hotel was booked up on Saturday. There are lots of moderately priced motels nearby, so you won't have to sleep on a park bench, but to guarantee a room at the hotel, it might be best to make a reservation.

☆ Guest of Honor: Jo Clayton

☆ Toastmaster: Warren Norwood

☆ Art Guest of Honor: Lucy Synk

☆ Fan Guest of Honor: Muff Musgrave

☆ Special Guest: George Alec Effinger.

☆ Also Keith Birdsong, Hal Clement, Glen Cook, Ron Dee, Jan Sherrill Gephardt, R.A. Lafferty, Real Musgrave, Gigi Norwood, Mel Odom, Fran Stallings, Dwight Swain, Michael Vance, and many others.

## The Folksong Revival, Filking, and the Library of Congress Or, Filking Becomes Respectable (A Pseudo-Academic Report)

By Sally Childs-Helton, Ph.D.

The weekend of May 18 [1991] Barry and I attended a reunion for the folklore alums at Indiana University; the reunion happily was held in conjunction with a Folksong Revival Conference. The conference pulled in the heavy hitters of the folk music world -- Mimi Farina, Oscar Brand, Barry Hansen (better known as Dr. Demento to listening audience), Len Chandler, John Cohen, Irwin Silber (former editor of Singout!), and Izzy Young (N.Y.C. Folklore Center) -- and this is just for starters! The conference represented a badly-needed mingling of academics and music practitioners who are also scholars in their own rights. The panels were fascinating and the music was grand, and it felt more like a con than an academic meeting.

One of the highlights of the conference was a hootenanny-style concert Friday night, emceed by Barry Hansen in his Dr. Demento persona. Anyone who wanted to play could sign up, so there were amateurs and semi-pros playing along with the big guns. Due to a forty-car pile-up on the loop in Indy at rush hour (caused by a bad storm

and the onslaught of the Bozo 500 race, run unofficially on the streets of Indy this time of year in anticipation of the real 500), we got to Bloomington after the concert had started. One slot was open, so we took it. The amateurs went on first, but since we got in late, we got scheduled with the big guns and had to follow Mimi Farina and Oscar Brand; Len Chandler followed us. When we found out what our slot was, our unqualified response was "Oh, shit." We both got the worse case of gig nerves we've had in ages, but we were pleased that we got them under control enough to give a pretty decent performance. It never hurts to be reminded what neo-filkers are going through in terms of gig nerves, and to have to stretch your abilities to make a decent performance when you should have practiced but didn't.

We did a short three-tune set of "academic filk," including "Dr. Jane's" "Drivel," Bob Kanefsky's "Song of the Folk Nazi," and Barry's "Talking Building Q Blues" as an example of popular

See Folk Music on Page 4.

From the Filk Echo

## We Interrupt for a Brief Social Announcement

Posted by Mark Bernstein

On Saturday, June 8th, 1991, under perfect skies at historic Cobblestone Farm in Ann Arbor, Michigan, long-time filker Mark Bernstein and Sharon Brevoort became husband and wife. Everything went off without a hitch, and a grand time was had by all. The one surprise of the day was a joyous one - when Gwen Zak (of the Tacky-Ons

[nee The Android Sisters]) caught the bridal bouquet, Michael Kube-McDowall chose that moment to propose. The two are now officially engaged.

Today, Mark and Sharon leave for a week in Orlando. (Yea!)

We now return you to our regularly scheduled filking.

## From the Editors

## Happenings at the R&amp;D Lab

by Rick and Deborah Weiss

Here we go again! We've been very busy this past month, what with hosting the monthly LAFA filk in mid-May (with surprise guests, Jordin Kare and Mary Kay Jackson attending) and a last-minute decision to dash up the Central Valley to attend BayCon '91 in San Jose. At one point during the con, Rick & I looked at each other and told ourselves that we had really missed conventioning (after all, that's how we met -- at Westercon 39 in San Diego) -- BayCon being the first full SF con we'd attended since Westercon 42 in LA. (We're not counting ConDigeo [sic{k}] or LosCon; both were very disappointing, to say the least.) Kathy Mar and Dean Dierschow were wonderful hosts; their new house, with its huge living room, concert stage in the front yard and oodles of space throughout, is large enough to host a mega-filk. And a special thank you, Tera, for the use of your room. A couple of weeks to catch our breath and it's time for the 'zine!

Something strange is certainly going around. . . there seems to be a new wedding announcement every week -- with more expected in the coming months! (We did it too, last year.) Our congratulations to all the new couples!

This issue should be interesting to read and to look at. We have several excellent articles, tape reviews and con reviews. The DAG and Stormgate BBS's have been active with a review of FilkOntario, news of OKon (major Southeast con with lots of filking) and other chatter. The Wail Songs BBS is up and running now. We saw Melanie Mar

at Baycon for the first time in over a year, and she graciously took the time to critique the layout of *TFT*, giving us some great tips on how to get the most in 'zine layout and what pitfalls to avoid. We'll be trying out her suggestions here and in upcoming issues. Thanks, Melanie!

More new stuff -- This being the first issue of *TFT* without the monthly LAFA flyer, we had a sizeable hole to fill. The Calendar of Events (filksings, conventions, etc.) has been moved to the back of the colored mailing cover, making it easy to tear off and post for quick reference. We updated our Editorial Policy and added an editorial column. We'll see how it works out.

Lastly, if we haven't said it before or loudly enough, **thanks for subscribing, writing and reading *The Filking Times*!** Your contributions and comments have made this 'zine and keep it going. We hope you will continue to do so (and encourage others, too).

## From the Filk Echo

## Chi-Con Filking

Bill Roper will be the person in charge of filking at the 1991 WorldCon. All filkers who plan on attending are requested to contact him at 708/328-9473 (before 10:00 PM CDT, please).

***THE FILKING TIMES***

Published by Rick and Deborah Weiss

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714/530-3546 (before 9 P.M. only, please)

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***The Filking Times*** is a fanzine for the filking community and will publish articles, commentaries, reviews, editorials, and letters and opinions on topics of interest to filkdom. All items sent to us will be considered open for publication unless specifically requested otherwise. We reserve the right to refuse and/or to edit any item sent. All submissions must include your correct name and address - pen names will be used on request.

**Articles Wanted:** Local filk news, reviews of filk tapes or books, tips on songwriting, pre-Convention programming plans and guests, post-Convention reports, filk history, local filk customs, comments on previous articles, or whatever else you can think of related to filk.

**Calendar of Events:** Open filk events and SF conventions which feature filk artists or programming will be listed free of charge. Send information to *The Filking Times*, Attn. Calendar.

**Contribution Policy:** Contributors receive that issue free; subscribers will be extended one issue. Minimum length for contributor's copy is 3 column inches of text (approximately 150 words) excluding the headline and byline.

**Disclaimer:** The opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the editors. Different viewpoints and responses on issues of interest are welcome.

**Subscription Rate:** for 12 issues via 1st class mail: U.S. \$7.50; Canada US\$9.00. Overseas US\$17.00 via air mail. Back issues are available as a set, inquire for current price. Send cash, check or money order payable to Rick Weiss. We will also trade for other filkzines.

**Submissions:** Send your submissions to the above address in hardcopy OR 3.5" or 5.25" low density IEM format diskettes with ASCII files OR upload ASCII files to the DAG Electronic BBS (213/546-1861 at 300/2400 baud) via the "Z: Upload to Sysop" command. Direct modem transfer is possible by prior arrangement.

**Classifieds/Advertising:** Classifieds will be published on a space available basis. Free classifieds up to 4 lines for subscribers; additional lines and non-subscribers: \$0.25 per line. Other advertising--call or write for rates and availability.

**Trivia:** This 'zine was produced on an Atari 520ST upgraded to 1 MB using Timeworks *Word Writer ST* and *The Timeworks Desktop Publisher* and printed on a Citizen MSP-10 9-pin dot matrix printer. Additional word processing performed on a turbo-XT compatible clone using *WordPerfect 5.1*.

**Convention Review****Consonance 1991: Whee-e-e**

by TOLF (The OLdest Filker), aka Robert D. Coleman, Sr.

"Oh, I had a wonderful time,  
A fact that I cannot deny-y-y  
But why do I now have six legs,  
And a multiple-faceted eye?"

(Work-in-Progress, dedicated to an  
unforgettable performance)

Well, I did have a wonderful time and hope all of you did too. Congratulations to Bob Laurent and all the other "worker bees" who made it happen.

Any FilkCon that has Kathy Mar, Jane Mailander and Leslie Fish is near to my idea of Paradise anyway. Kathy will lift my heart with glorious notes (and encouragement!), Jane will delight my mind and eye with outrageous mimes and parodies, and Tall, Dark and Dangerous will sing songs of courage and indignation, and march me off to War (in a painless way, with the bullets flying somewhere else).

Throw in some of my other favorite people such as Rilla Heslin and soaring Windbourne, my good friends the Creaseys, the Golds, Carolly Hauksdottir, Peter Thiesen, "Momma-Piggy" Savitzky, Mike Liebmann, Cindy McQuillin/"Doctor Jane," Jordin Kare, and add Joey Shoji and the electric enthusiasm of Gytha North, the LA FilkHarmonics and all the rest of you, and Paradise were near enough enow. Especially since I wasn't entirely sure I'd ever see another FilkCon.

I say this, and I loved it and I had a wonderful time, but I am keenly aware that I missed more than 2/3 of the convention. This has as much to do with the limits of my stamina as with the structure of the convention, but we have reached the level of multiple-tracking problems. It was impossible to attend everything I wanted to, even when I had the strength.

I did attend much of the formal "concert" programming, but had to miss several panels that were scheduled at the same time. After that, through the night, there were three active filking rooms. Short of spawning clones, it was impossible to hear and see it all.

One room (I called it the High Energy Room) was mostly Star Stuff,

otherwise known as Midwestern Chaos (Kaos?) Style. I have said before, and I say again, that this style means only Star and very self-confident types get to sing. However, clearly, the folk in that room were having a wonderful, loud, energetic time. Every FilkCon needs one of those.

A second room had a more relaxed form of Chaos. I didn't get to this one at all. I think Kathy Mar spent most of her time there. Kathy encourages the timid to sing and invites all styles of music. The result is variable, eclectic and highly entertaining. I hope to see this again at the upcoming BayCon.

The third room featured Leslie Fish. Since I had not heard or seen Leslie for more than two years, I spent most of my time in this room. Also, I love Kipling and most everything that Leslie has written or sings.

This room was run by Lee Gold's brilliant invention, the non-topological Bardic circle. I will flatly state that this is the best system I have encountered. For those of you (if any) who do not know this form, each person in the room gets "n" poker chips, in our case -- 3: red, white and blue. When you have a song to sing, you "throw in" your white chip. The "White" round continues until all white chips are used; then "Red" and "Blue" rounds follow. Each person gets to "pick, pass or perform," as in regular Bardic.

**See Filk Circles on Page 10.**

**Part 1 of 2****FilkOntario  
A Filk Convention  
Report**

by Joel Polowin

FilkOntario was held on April 12-14 at the Holiday Inn in Mississauga, Ontario. Kim, Jeff and I first saw flyers for it at Ad Astra in Toronto last summer. (Ad Astra: July 5-7 this year, at the Howard Johnson Airport Hotel; GoH Barbara Hambly and George Alec Effinger - in case you're interested.) A filk con, we thought... neat idea. We decided that if we could manage it, we'd go. We could, and did.

We weren't sure just what to expect, except that it'd be fun and weird. It was, that.

We arrived slightly late; the "tie and tails" opening reception had already begun. "Tie and tails" was open to interpretation, and garish mundane ties (courtesy of Drunken Dragon Press) and construction-paper tails were supplied for those who came without. I was one of several people to produce variations on the musical-notation symbols. The party was relatively peaceful, with most people standing around quietly chatting with old friends - the usual con get-togethers.

Except for the consuite and dealer's room, the one function room was the only space booked by the con. It seemed to work out well enough, though; the acoustics seemed OK - and there was space for everyone to sit around for the **See Filking on Page 8.**

**Errata**

☎ The telephone number given for Kathy Mar and household in Issue #24 Quicknews (and in the filksing Calendar for the SF Bay Area) was incorrect. The correct number is 415/226-8219.

☞ Dean Thomas's name was mysteriously mutated in Issue #26 Quicknews into Dave Thomas. As we all know: "Dave's not here, man."

☞ While Lee Gold recently wrote a filk to "God Lives on Terra," (two of them, actually,) she wishes to emphasize that she does not consider either of them to be "definitive." Lee does not consider any filksong she has ever written to be definitive. *The Filking Times* apologizes for adding this bit of hyperbole to the Quicknews item in Issue #26.

## QuickNews

☛ Recently received in the mail: Consonance '92 Progress Report No. 1! GoH will be Mark Bernstein with Elizabeth Ann Scarborough as TM. Good news on the hotel: Bob Laurent (Con Chair) will return us to the beautiful site of Consonance '90, the Radisson Hotel San Jose Airport. Look for more information in future issues of *TFT*. Also just out - the Wail Songs Mid-year 1991 Catalog Update. Be sure to check out Recent Additions on Page 2.

☛ Random Factors now has a catalog of their merchandise available. See Sources and Resources on Page 9 for details.

☛ More Conventions announce Filk Guests: Kathy Mar will be Filk GoH at Boskone '92 and at Quintuple '93. Cynthia McQuillin has been tapped by two filk cons to be GoH: Fourplay (British '92 filkcon) and OVFF '91.

☛ New releases from Firebird Arts & Music: Fever Season - the first Firebird tape done in their new 24-track studio, and Frank Hayes Live with song cuts taken from Frank's Bayfilk 5 performances. Upcoming project will be Shadowstalker, a Mercedes lackey tape based on the Vanyel trilogy. (Information from Debra Sanders and Na Mele O Na Hoku.)

☛ Wail Songs has activated their own BBS system in the San Francisco Bay Area. Call them at 415/763-6979, 1200/2400 baud, N-8-1, to get the latest Wail Songs information, place an order, or log on the message areas.

☛ Kristoff Klover has been a busy man. He has not only opened his own recording studio, Flowing Glass Studio (see Sources on Page 9 for more info) and started a new band named Magic Fire, but he and Margaret Davis were married on the weekend of June 15/16.

☛ New address for Margaret Middleton and the Filk Foundation: 2 Mace Circle, Conway AR 72032.

☛ Fossil Fever, an Unlikely Publications production starring the notorious "Dr. Jane" Robinson, is now available on CD from Thor Records.

## Folk Music Has a Filk Encounter

Continued from Page 1.

culture in folk music. The tunes were all very well received, with even the most terminally serious academic types laughing in the right places. And, we raised some serious interest in filk as a sub-genre of folk music with a number of the conference attendees.

On Saturday the head of the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress, an old I.U. grad, came up to us to say he was interested in collecting a representative sample of filk (tapes, songbooks, convention programs, etc.). The Popular Culture Library at Bowling Green State University (Ohio) has also been collecting filk for a few years. No archive can collect everything, but both institutions are interested in a representative sample. If anyone has anything he or she would like to submit to either or both archives, please contact me and I will put you in touch with the proper people at the institutions. [See addresses listed above. Ed.] I have been long convinced that filk is a unique sub-genre of music that needs to be preserved and made available archivally; I'm glad that two major institutions think the same.

We also had the pleasure of taking Barry Hansen back to the airport in

Indy. I'm doing some research on "cult" music, as it's called by the music industry --music that is released in small runs (50-5,000) and to a specific audience; filk is an excellent example. Since Hansen sees and hears more of this type of music than anybody, I was glad for the chance to talk to him. He is a fine music scholar in his own right, with a bachelors in music and the first masters degree awarded in folklore from U.C.L.A. I was pleased to hear him say that filk music has the best organized distribution system of any of the sub-genres of cult music he's seen, and he's noticed how filkers tend to take care of each other and promote each others' music. Hansen is also impressed with the recent rise in the quality of musicianship, material and recording in filk music, and it seems filk will remain a part of his show.

All in all, it was a grand weekend and a good time was had by all. We were pleased to have a chance to meet and talk to many of the guests and hear them play; we also met some more local musicians and other renegade scholars like ourselves. And, it was good to know that other people who the folk music scene not only think filk belongs, but is worth preserving.

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### Letter to the Editor

## Archiving Filk in Academia

Dear Rick,

While I'm writing, let me put back on my archival hat and ask if you've sent copies of the 'zine to any archives, particularly the Popular Culture Archives at Bowling Green State University (Ohio). . . [While we were at the conference] I was approached by the head of the Folklife Center at the Library of Congress who is interested in collecting filk and its related materials, including 'zines. No archive can collect everything, but would you be interested in sending samples of the 'zine to these two places? . . . I'm adding addresses at the end of the letter; use

my name if you like when you write. Filk is an important genre of music in a number of ways, and it deserves to be preserved. Your 'zine is a valuable resource, and I hope you decide to send some volumes on.

Sally Childs-Helton  
Addresses:

Brenda McCallum, Head, Popular Culture Library, Jerome Library, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403-0600, 419/372-2450.

Joseph C. Hickerson, Head, Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540, 202/707-5510.

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**Filktape Review****Who Let Him In Here?****Songs by Tom Smith**

by Jane Mailander

Tom Smith has proven himself to be a master of the fine art of filk parody. Speaking as a honed practitioner myself, I have loved Smith's work since I first heard him at OVFF in 1987.

Not only are his parodies brash and wonderful, but like Frank Hayes Tom Smith plays guitar well and has a good bold singing voice with which to perform his own work. (I share several things in common with Bob Kanefsky: neither of us plays guitar; neither of us has the greatest voice in the world for singing our own stuff; and both of us use M&M's as percussion instruments.)

Tom Smith has finally released a tape of some of his best and most well-known songs. Who Let Him In Here? is put out by Dodeka Records, engineered by Bill Roper and Gretchen Van Dorn.

What's unique is that this is not a studio tape. It is a collection of live performances Tom has done at various conventions. A major plus, that. Live performances have a freshness and wildness lacking in the best studio tapes--and for parodies, those qualities enhance the songs. The feedback of laughter or groans is instantaneous--for better or worse, jokes always seem funnier with a laugh track added. And for Smith's work, all that's needed is his guitar and his voice; any overproducing in a studio would soften the impact of the songs. The producers did well in using live performances for the tape, and all the songs are clear and distinct.

Like all good satirists, Tom Smith holds only one law sacred: Nothing Is Sacred. You like medieval fantasies? Try to keep a straight face as Tom summarizes the Thomas Covenant series in 30 seconds--or, better yet, try not to split your spleen laughing during Tom's Tolkien tribute, "Return of the King, Uh-huh." Still upset by the murder of Batman's sidekick in A Death in The Family? "Rotten Robin" will put it in perspective for you. I shan't mention what he does to Dune; all I'll say is that it's thoroughly deserved.

Then there are the songs that are just plain weird and wonderful-- original comedies. "I Wanna Be Peter Lorre," delivered in a flawless vocal impression, kicks sand in the face of all macho film heroes. "307 Ale" is a Far Side-drinking song. "Walking Along the Beach" may be the ultimate description of "cheery-ose."

This tape is not just a non-stop laugh riot, however . . .

I have maintained for years that the people who write the funniest songs also write some of the best serious or tragic songs. Christine Lavin, Bob Kanefsky, and Frank Hayes have produced wonderful songs full of anger, tears or love--and never forget that "Unreality Warp" Clif Flynt also wrote "Ian the Grim." I personally am very proud of "Hound of the Baskervilles" and "In the Vineyard."

Tom Smith proves my theory right with the serious offerings on the tape. "PQR (You Ain't Seen Nothin' Yet)," based, I believe, on a Harlan Ellison vampire story, is a vicious musical assault, charged with lust and power; "Hellraiser," which I first heard on Halloween Night 1987, is as chilling as Clive Barker's book and better than the movie; and "A Boy and His Frog," sung in a Kermit voice, will have any fan of the late beloved Jim Henson weeping by song's end.

Perhaps Tom's best-known song is "Superman Sex-Life Boogie." I'm sure it's been mentioned *ad nauseum* to Larry Niven (Niven's famous essay, "Man of Steel, Woman of Kleenex," explaining just why Superman and Lois won't ever get beyond a nervous handshake, is the most obvious inspiration for "Boogie"). What's wonderful about "Boogie," and what I believe is the secret of its popularity, is that it is not only funny, but angry--it precisely expresses the frustration of a man who can literally throw buildings around and melt steel with his eyes, but can't ask the woman he loves for a date. This is a **See Superman on Page 8.**

**Filktape Review****Audiophilikia****Who Let Him in Here?****by Tom Smith**

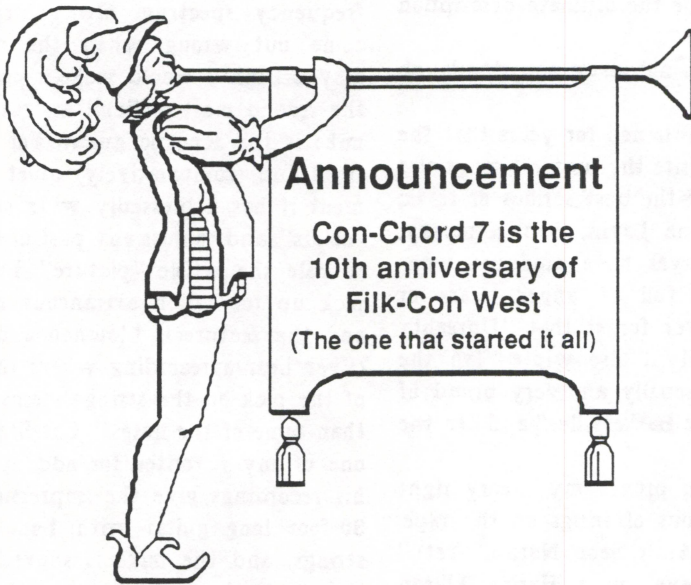
Reviewed by Rod O'Riley

A Small Observation, Part 1: It has been stated and experienced by many that the hardest instrument in the world to mike properly is the acoustic piano. No matter how many mikes or where you place them, some part of the frequency spectrum always seems to come out wrong when the tape is played back. I would make a plug that the second most difficult instrument to mike is the acoustic guitar. For such a small and (comparatively) quiet instrument it has a blessedly wide range of "colors", and to miss any part of them is to pale the whole "picture". Likewise, pick up too much extraneous material and the picture is blotched and dirty. (Ever hear a recording where the snap of the pick on the strings seems louder than some of the notes?) Cat Stevens is one of my favorites for odd approach: his recordings give the impression of a 30-foot long guitar with 1-inch wide strings, and the mike is shoved inside this somewhere. I've previously mentioned Barry Childs-Helton, who plays largely in the upper range of "colors" but manages to maintain just enough of the lower-midrange to anchor the sound in the room with you. And of course, everyone loves the rich palette that Leslie Fish brings out of her 12-string, Monster (which fortunately transfers to tape pretty well). Being the bread and butter of the folk and filk universes, a heck of a lot of the sound quality on any tape in those genres is going to hinge on how well the acoustic guitar is recorded.

A Small Observation, Part 2: Given the above statements, what am I doing reviewing Tom Smith's new tape in this column? It has no pretensions of being a "produced" or studio tape; it's mostly convention performance recordings of one guy playing guitar and singing. Well, actually that's the point: Who Let Him in Here? is a fantastic recording of a guy playing guitar and singing, probably one of the better ones that I have **See Recorded Live on Page 9.**

# CON-CHORD

## SEPTEMBER 27-29, 1991



GUEST OF HONOR  
*MICHAEL LONGCOR (Moonwulf)*

TOASTMASTER  
*JUANITA COULSON*

HOTEL  
*HOLIDAY INN - LAX*  
At 9901 La Cienega Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA. 90045 (213) 649-5151  
(The same place we were last year.)

### CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

(In no particular order)

Concerts Both Saturday and Sunday • Performers' Circle • Music and Song workshops • Open Singing Room • The Totally Tasteless and Tacky Concert • Kazoo Awards • One-Shots (Where anyone can get up on stage and perform one song) • Dealers' room

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Or subscribe to THE FILKING TIMES, the official newsletter for Con-Chord. 12 Issues (one year) for only \$7.50. Contact Rick Weiss at 13261 Donegal Dr, Garden Grove, CA. 92644.

For more information write to:  
CON-CHORD 7 • 1810 14th St. #100 - Santa Monica, Ca. 90404. (213) 546-4935.

## Part 1 of 2

## Additions and Commentary On Master Locksley's "The Celtic Bardic Tradition"

by Heather Rose Jones

It may be a bit premature to comment on an article when I have only seen the first of four parts, but discussion seems to be one of the bywords of *The Filking Times* (how many columns on ozone??), so when I felt inspired, I figured I'd give in.

Ioseph is correct, our image of bards (in fandom in general, not just the SCA) is more often informed by fantasy literature and D&D character manuals than by historical fact. They are not entirely to blame, however, as the romanticization and distortion of the historic bard was begun in the end of the 18th century by Iolo Morgannwg (Edward Williams) who invented the modern Gorsedd of Bards (and also invented some of the "ancient" manuscripts he used to justify his creation).<sup>1</sup>

My acquaintance with the Irish bardic tradition is limited, but I flatter myself that I know something of Welsh history and tradition. Roman authors used the term *bardi* and considered them a class of druid,<sup>2</sup> but earlier Greek sources described bards, druids and ovates (loosely: poets, theologians and seers) as three separate classes of "learned and privileged men" among the continental Celts.<sup>3</sup> The druids as an institution ceased abruptly when the Roman Empire realized they were a political threat and systematically eliminated them. After that the more "secular" functions of the learned class fell to a number of different groups. What these various jobs were and who did them is sometimes difficult to untangle, but they revolved around the functions of memory (of laws, genealogies, history, etc.) and of literary creation.

But there was a good millenium between the advent of Christianity and the age of the Gogynfeirdd (a technical term that translates literally as "the fairly early bards") in the 12th to 14th centuries. What was going on during this thousand years when the tradition

was "ossifying"? Well, this was the time of Taliesin (a real poet of the 6th century who had some other traditions tacked onto him), of Aneurin who wrote the *Gododdin* (a poem that commemorates in loving detail a disastrous defeat by the Saxons around 600) and of the poetry attributed to Llywarch Hen (the best known of which is a long poem decrying the miseries of growing old). The Welsh bardic tradition took delight in the music of words, alliteration and rhyme, and the complexity with which these were employed did eventually lead to prescriptively formulaic verse, but there were always talented poets, like Dafydd ap Gwilym in the 14th century, who could break and remake all the rules - and make their audience love it.

So what makes the Welsh bard "not so lucky"? I must admit that I am unenlightened by Ioseph's description. The subject matter of a Welsh bard included the standard praises of his patron and the patron's ancestors (for which occasionally excessive praise they were reviled by moralists all the way from Gildas in the 6th century to Sion Cent in the 15th<sup>4</sup>) and good rousing descriptions of past battles, both lost and won, but it also included nature,<sup>5</sup> personal experience, love,<sup>6</sup> prophecy,<sup>7</sup> history and legend, religion of course, and a goodly amount of humor, including some fairly bawdy stuff.<sup>8</sup> The standard poetic forms were numerous; several dozen have been catalogued and many of these had variants. Add to these several forms of optional ornamentation and you can produce anything from a ballad of plain couplets to an impressionistic and almost haiku-like *englyn* to an epigram of a few lines as detailed and convoluted and dazzlingly brilliant as a Faberge egg. As to the "rigidly structured rules", these came into being organically as a codification of practice. Periodically, as the officially

See Welsh Bards on Page 10.

## Bards: Part III of IV

## On Bardic Circles: Bard's Reading List

Excerpted and annotated from  
Locksley's E-Z Harp Method  
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[Although this article was written specifically for the SCA, it is of interest to modern S-F Filksinging, which has quite a few traditions in common with the SCA.—Editor.]

A **Bardic Circle**, at least in an SCA context, is simply a setting for the listeners to entertain each other. This can be with poetry, song, and stories. All should participate, though it is not necessary for all to contribute to make it a fun thing to do. What is necessary is that the number of things done by each person at any one time be limited, to keep the inevitable "stage-hog" from monopolizing the evening, and to keep the "Awful No-Talent Stage Hog" (sometimes called the "Rhino-Bard") from running everyone off.

I recommend that each person be limited to **two** songs, poems or whatever at a time, and then pass on to the next singer. This keeps it variegated, and interesting, and gives **everyone** a chance to contribute.

Try to keep discussion to a minimum, but, should it be interesting, let it go on for a while, as a break in the music. In any event, try to do something different about every hour or so, to allow your listeners to stretch, use the bathroom, get refreshments, and gossip for a while. This will keep them there longer, and add more fun to the occasion.

### Bard's Reading List

Ogham: The Poet's Secret, Sean O Boyle; Gilbert Dalton, Dublin, 1980

The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, Francis James Child; (five volumes) Dover, 1965

The Singing Tradition of Child's Popular Ballads, Bertrand Harris Bronson; Princeton University Press 1976

See Reading List on Page 10.

## Filktape Review

## St. Elmo's Fire

### Sung by Larry Warner

### Words and music by Duane Elms

by George "Lan" Laskowski

Published in Lan's Lantern, Issue #35

Copr. 1990 by George J. Laskowski, Jr.

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I knew this tape was being produced since I had talked with Larry Warner about it. As soon as I saw it on the huckster table, I picked it up. I did not need to look at what songs were on the tape; that Larry Warner was singing the leads was enough. The added bonus was that these were all Duane Elms' songs. Duane is a good songwriter (all the words and music are his, except for the parody, "Threes, Rev. 1.1," original music by Leslie Fish), an excellent guitarist (he plays lead guitar on all the tracks), but a poor singer; just ask him. Together Larry and Duane made an excellent team and have put out an excellent tape. And except for the vocal track overpowered in spots by the instrumentation in a couple of songs (not a real problem, however), the engineering is very controlled.

If you know Duane Elms, you'll know his songs. He has protest songs ("Bomber," "Too Late," and "We're Going Back"), humorous songs ("Threes, Rev. 1.1," "Spacer's Home," and "Don't Push That Button"), some from literary sources ("Late Night at the Draco Tavern," "Startide Rising," and "The Ahasuerus and Flint Traveling Carnival Show"), and the rest come from the fertile imagination and creative mind of Duane himself: "Dawson's Christian" (probably his most famous), "The Dark Children," and "Come, My Lady." There is some crossover in the songs; for example, "Draco Tavern" is also humorous.

I recommend this one; any chance to hear Larry's voice again is worth the price of the tape.

St. Elmo's Fire from Firebird Arts & Music, Inc., P.O. Box 14785, Portland, OR 97214

## Filking in Canada

Continued from Page 3.

open filk sessions without real crowding. The opening party shifted into open filking at about 9:00 P.M. Most of this was led by a half-circle of eight or nine folk with guitars up at the front; I infer that most of these were well-known filkers, but as this was my first filk con (and only the third SF con) I didn't recognize many names and faces yet. "Audience participation" would be poor phrasing; people were there to sing, and joined in freely. Duane Elms sang his "Dawson's Christian" and "Threes, Rev. 1.1", among others. T.J. Burnside-Clapp and Linda Melnick, of Technical Difficulties, did a beautiful rendition of Kathy Mar's "Velveteen," and later, T.J. - with two other females in close harmony - treated the audience to Uncle Bonsai's "Boys Want Sex in the Morning." The room was booked until 4:00 A.M., but my friends and I gave up shortly before 1:00.

We hit the consuite for a snack. Terri Neal, and Lloyd and Yvonne Penney had a nice spread of snack food laid out, ranging from some good chocolate-chip cookies (nature's most perfect food), to Yvonne's killer chili - which got good, if somewhat strangled, reviews.

Saturday was a full day. I missed the first part of Duane Elms' songwriting panel at 10:00. When I got there, the topic had drifted to discussions of filk recordings and the variable sound quality found on them. The general consensus seemed to be that, although things have improved considerably in recent years, there are fundamental limitations involved in small-volume work.

At 11:00, Brenda Sutton led a discussion of musical composition (interrupted by the *very* late delivery of Brenda's breakfast from the hotel coffeeshop. Brenda had been with a group that by any normal standard would have ordered, been served and finished breakfast before her panel, but . . .) Her fundamental advice: "Steal from the best." She suggested taking a theme that seems familiar, and moving a few notes up and down, or back and forth in the score, until you get something that sounds reasonably good and new. "No

piece of music is really new and original; they all owe something to earlier pieces." She also suggested singing or humming to oneself at all times, and carrying a tape recorder around to record anything that sounds promising. "Transcribe it later, once you've actually got a recording of it so you won't lose it. If you can't transcribe, find a friend who can." There was some discussion of musical complexity - depending on whether the song is intended as a singalong, it may be good to have a fairly simple chorus part, perhaps with some extra complexity at a bridge, to give a solo performer a chance to shine.

At noon, Bill Sutton held a panel about filk presentation. It's important to gauge your audience, and to sing songs that don't go too far from the mood. He warned that occasionally - for him, these days, perhaps once in six months - for no apparent reason, a performer simply won't seem to hit it off with his audience. It's just something you have to accept, and go on from, he says.

**Next month: Concerts, banquet and convention wrap-up.**

**Whom did you  
nominate for the  
Pegasus Awards?**

## Superman Filk

Continued from Page 5.

very human Superman with very real emotions. The slightest alteration would have turned this song into high-caliber ose; instead, "Boogie" balances on the knife-edge of satire, making it one of the funniest filk songs ever written.

Even the disruption of applause from another room during the live performance of "Hellraiser" seems choreographed. Who Let Him In Here? is a joy from start to finish. Buy it.

Who Let Him In Here? from Dodeka Records, Ltd, 1724 Oakton St., Evanston IL 60202.



## Recorded Live

Continued from Page 5.

ever heard. Sure, Tom's brassy voice might be a little bright at times, and the beautiful "A Boy and His Frog" can't help but be a little noisy with the mikes turned up all the way to get the quiet passages. But the biggest impression is the fullness of the guitar, never muddy or tinny, and Tom's voice coming through clear as a bell. And you can hear the lyrics too! The voice and guitar are well-balanced to complement but not mask each other, and even the audience sing-along parts are well balanced. With some experiments I've discovered that this tape is equally clear and forward on my home stereo or listening in a car on the freeway --some trick.

I'd be making a cold and soulless review of Tom's material if I didn't mention his wonderfully weird sense of humor, shown best on songs like "I Want to be Peter Lorre", "Return of the King, Uh-Huh" and "Walking Along the Beach". That much I knew about him. What I did not know is that he's a great flashy, bluesy guitarist as demonstrated with "Hellraiser", "PQR" and "Superman's Sex Life Boogie". (Too bad he didn't record "The Tale of Burnside-Clapp," though. . .) As you can tell, I like this tape all around. Much kudos to recordists Gretchen Van Dorn and Bill Roper for a job well done.

Who Let Him in Here? from Dodeka Records, Ltd, 1724 Oakton St. Evanston, IL 60202.

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## Filk Sources And Resources

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➔ DAG Productions, 1810 14th Street #102, Santa Monica, CA 90404. Telephone: 213/546-4935 or 213/546-1861 (BBS). Eric Gerds, owner, producer and publisher. Write or call for free catalog.

➔ Firebird Arts & Music, Inc., P.O. Box 14785, Portland, OR 97214-9998. Telephone: 800/752-0494. Andrea Mitchell, proprietor; Teri Lee, executive producer. Filk publisher and producer. Write for free catalog.

➔ Flowinglass Studio, telephone 415/845-1990. Kristoff Klover, engineer; Margaret Davis, business manager. Eight-track recording studio.

➔ Pegasus Publishing, P.O. Box 150471, Arlington, TX 76015-6471. Write for further information.

➔ Random Factors, 3754 W. 170th St., Torrance, CA 90504-1204. Telephone: 213/329-6772. John & Mary Creasey, proprietors; retailers of Firebird filk tapes and other merchandise. Look for them at conventions and local filksings. Write for free catalog.

➔ Quicksilver Fantasies, P.O. Box 1660, Post Falls, ID 83854. Write for free catalog.

➔ Records and Flowers and Things by Colleen, 343 Leigh Avenue, San Jose CA 95128. Telephone: 408/294-6492.

Colleen Savitzky, owner. Distributor of Thor Records merchandise.

➔ Space Opera House, 5271 Primrose Avenue, Indianapolis, IN 46220. Barry and Sally Childs-Helton, filk publishers.

➔ Silver Dragon Arts & Music, 1233 Weyburn Lane #3, San Jose, CA 95129. Telephone: 408/255-8603. Mike Perry and Shelley Howell, owners. Distributors of Firebird merchandise.

➔ Tales From The White Hart, 3360 Greenmount Avenue, Baltimore MD 21218. Telephone: 301/889-0099. Kathy Sands, proprietor. SF bookstore, also carries filk tapes. Look for them at conventions.

➔ Thor Records, P.O. Box 40312, Downey, CA 90241. Telephone: 213/862-1722. Chrys Thorsen and Ralph Mason, music producers. Write for information and flyer.

➔ Unlikely Publications, 839 37th Street, Richmond, CA 94805; 415/237-3839. Cynthia McQuillin, proprietor, producer and publisher of Folk and specialty tapes and songbooks.

➔ Wail Songs, Inc., P.O. Box 29888, Oakland, CA 94604. Telephone: 800/TON-WAIL (U.S. and Canada) or 415/763-6415. BBS: 415/763-6979. Bob Laurent, President. Filk producer and publisher. Write for free catalog.

From the Filk Echo

## Audiophilikia Feedback

[Editor's Note: Rod O'Riley's review of the new Phoenix tape, Keepers of the Flame, was printed in *TF* Issue #24 (March 1991). I then posted it (with his permission) on both the DAG and Stormgate Aerie BBS's. These messages were posted in reply.]

**Re: Rod's Phoenix Review**

Posted by Nick Smith

Now that you've posted it on the board as well as printed it, I have a few comments. While I agree with Rod's overall review, I am kind of puzzled by it. I mean, how many of the filk recordings are really even *close* to audiophile standards? Isn't Rod limiting the possibilities for reviews a bit too severely? Also, how many *filkers* are filk audiophiles? That is, how many filkers listen to filk tapes for their audio quality rather than overall content?

**Audio Quality: A Reply to Nick**

Posted by Mary Creasey

I won't speak for others, but I listen for the overall (impact? effect? Not sure what word's right) of the tape; performance, quality of sound, songs, singers--all of the above. No, I'm not into audiophile pickiness; I tend to go for the songs & performances. However, I do think that a high quality recording process can make a good performance better, but a poor recording of an otherwise good performance is good mainly for archiving the songs and not much else.

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## Memorabilia Wanted

In commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the first West Coast filk convention, Con-Chord 7 is planning a retrospective display on past filk conventions. If you have any Progress Reports, Program Books, badges, photographs or other souvenirs from any of the filk cons, please contact the Con-Chord ConCom. Also wanted are any personal memoirs or reminiscences as articles for the program book or display.

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## Reading List

Continued from Page 7.

The Viking Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World, Albert B. Friedman; Viking, 1956, 1982

Traditional Ballads: The Compleat Anachronist #11, Tsvia bas Tamara v'Amberview (pseud.); Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc, 1984

Folk Songs of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, William Cole; Cornerstone, 1961, 1969

Folksinger's Wordbook, Fred and Irwin Silber; Oak, 1973

101 Scottish Songs, Norman Buchan; Collins, 1974

Rise Up Singing!, Peter Blood-Patterson; Sing Out! 1988

The Troubadors: The Compleat Anachronist #44, Leah di Estera (pseud.), Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc, 1989

Caidan Bardic Circle Songbook (5 vols.), Caidan Bardic Consortium, 1988

The White Goddess, Robert Graves; Farrar, Straus and Giroux, NY, 1966 (LCCCN: 48-8257)

The Golden Bough, James G. Frazer; Avenel Books, 1981

Contrarywise, Zohra Greenhalgh, Ace (paperback) April 1989, 0-441-117112-2

**Next month:** Bards: A concluding addendum from Jeremy de Merstone, of the Barony of the North Woods.

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## Filk Circles

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This assures that, as in regular Bardic, everyone gets a chance. This is very important for me. Believe it or not, my friends, I am basically very shy in public and would never had sung out at all if Bardic hadn't guaranteed me a place. However, the "poker chip" variation also permits following a theme, a point beloved by and often cited by proponents of Chaos.

This is a good a place as any to say that I don't like Chaos. Fundamentally, Chaos is a Star-Spectator system. Only the Stars and the bold get to sing under Chaos and I am not a very good Spectator. Yes, I do like to listen to many of you, but I also like to sing. We are not rock-and-roll groupies; we are mostly performers. While I am now confident enough to hold my own under Chaos, few new or timid persons get to sing under that system unless they have an unusually kind and supportive Filk-Lord (like, for instance, Kathy Mar).

I should mention that the excellent get-together party the first (?) night. Fresh fruit, cheese and conviviality -- my wife, pat, and I enjoyed it immensely.

And since this is a review, a few negative notes: The hotel was from Hell. Windows wouldn't open and layers upon layers of old, perfumed disinfectant clogged the air. And, oh yes, we had a memorable breakfast at the hotel. Swimming in cold, stale grease. The manager did refund our money on that one. But the committee knows about this hotel and won't repeat it. The neighborhood was a little scary, too. First time I've ever been panhandled in my car by a glassy-eyed derelict at a drive-by restaurant, but I live in a safer place than most of you.

Returning to my main theme, I had a wonderful time. The music went round and round, all of you were in wonderful voice, you're a great bunch of guys all around, and I look forward to seeing and hearing you again -- as soon and as often as possible.

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## Welsh Bards

Continued from Page 7.

codified forms became noticeably archaic, there would be additions and revisions. New forms were being invented throughout the medieval and renaissance period. The "rigidly structured rules" were no more confining in practice than the structures of the sonnet or the meters used by the troubadors.

### Notes:

1. Stephens, Meic. *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986 p.643.
2. *ibid* p.31.
3. Ford, Patrick K.. *The Poetry of Llywarch Hen*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974 p.5.
4. Williams, Ifor & Williams J.E. Carwyn. *The Poems of Taliesin*. Oxford: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1975 p.xxxv.
5. Jackson, Kenneth. *Early Welsh Gnomes*. Cardiff: The University of Wales Press, 1961.
6. Parry, Thomas. *Gwaith Dafydd ap Gwilym*. Caerdydd: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1979.
7. Williams, Ifor (trans. Rachel Bromwich). *Armes Prydein*. Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1982.
8. In this field the "Cywydd y Gal" or "Ode to the Penis" is considered by many a seminal work. Johnston, David. "Cywydd y Gal by Dafydd ap Gwilym". *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*: 9 (Summer 1985) pp.71-89.

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**Kazoo Awards  
Nominations  
Wanted Now.**

**Vote Early!  
Vote Often!**

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# The Filking Times Calendar of Events

June 1991

Issue 27

## Filk and General SF Conventions

### Westercon 44 (V-Con 19)

July 4-7, 1991

WesterCon 44/V-Con 19, P.O. Box 48478, Bentall Station, Vancouver, B.C. V7X 1A2, CANADA. Phone: 604/433-8817 or 604/420-3316. Filk Programming: Concert Friday nite, other events. Hotel: Gage Residence & Student Union Bldg., University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. Memberships: \$50 at the door.

### OKon '91

July 26-28, 1991

P.O. Box 4229, Tulsa, OK 74159; 918/622-2225. GoH: Jo Clayton. Filk GoH: Barry & Sally Childs-Helton. Filk programming: concerts, panels & late-nite filksings. Memberships: \$15 till 06/30; \$20 thereafter. Hotel: Camelot Hotel, I-44 & Peoria, Tulsa, OK. Rates: \$45 for Single/Quad. Telephone: 918/747-8811 (in OK); 800/331-4423 (outside OK); mention OKon.

### Chicon V (Worldcon 49)

August 29 - September 2, 1991

Chicon V, P.O. Box 218121, Upper Arlington, OH 43221-8121. GoH: Hal Clement. Memberships: \$150 at the door. Hotel: Hyatt Regency, Chicago, IL. Filk programming: contact Bill Roper at 708/328-9473 (before 10:00 PM CDT).

### Con-Chord 7

September 27-29, 1991

c/o DAG Productions, 1810 14th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404; 213/546-4935. GoH: Michael Longcor (a.k.a. Moonwulf). Toastmaster: Juanita Coulson. Totally Tasteless Concert, Kazoo Awards. Memberships: Attending: \$20 thru 07/10/91. Supporting: \$8. Hotel: The Holiday Inn (LAX), 9901 La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90045, 213/649-5151. (At the corner of Century and La Cienega.) Room rates: \$59 Single, \$69 Double, \$79 Triple/Quad.

### Ohio Valley Filk Fest 7

November 1-3, 1991

P.O. Box 211101, Columbus, OH 43221. GoH: Cynthia McQuillin. TM: Robin Bailey. Listener GoH: Howard Scrimgeour. Special Guest: Tom Smith. Pegasus Awards. Memberships: \$18 to 09/30/91, then \$20 at the door. Children \$15, includes free baby sitting for pre-reg attendees. Midnight Buffet ~~not~~ included in membership. Hotel: Hilton Inn North, 7007 No. High St., Worthington, OH 43085. Rates: \$60 flat rate. Call 614/436-0700 for reservations.

### Musicon

January 3-5, 1992

P.O. Box 198121, Nashville, TN 37219-8121. Telephone 615/889-5951 (no collect calls, no calls after 10 PM central). Nashville's first all-filk con! GoH: Naomi Pardue. TM: Murray Porath. Other guests: Robin Nakkula, and T.B.A. Memberships: (payable to Lee Billings) \$15 to 07/31/91, \$18 to 11/01/91, \$22 at the door. Hotel: Days Inn Briley Parkway, 615/885-2372. Rates: \$42 sngl/quad.

### Fourplay

January 31 - February 2, 1992

Info: 2 Crarthe Road, Vicors Cross, Chester, CH3 5JL ENGLAND. British filkcon. US GoH: Cynthia McQuillin & "Dr. Jane" Robinson.

### Consonance '92

March 6-8, 1992

c/o Wail Songs, P.O. Box 29888, Oakland, CA 94604. GoH: Mark Bernstein TM: Elizabeth Ann Scarborough. Memberships: (payable to Wail Songs) \$25 thru Con-Chord (09/29/91), \$30 thru 02/06/92, \$35 at the door. Supporting: \$10. Hotel: San Jose Radisson Plaza Hotel (site of Consonance '90), 1471 No. Fourth Street, San Jose, CA 95112. Telephone: 408/452-0200. Rates: \$75 sngl/quad.

### FilkOntario 2

April 1992

Info: Office of the Artistic Director, 1260 Marlborough Court #902, Oakville, Ontario, L6H 3H5 CANADA.

### BayCon '92

May 22-25, 1992

P.O. Box 10367, San Jose CA 95157. Tenth anniversary BayCon Birthday Bash! GoH: BayCon is inviting all 38 past GoH's back! Confirmed filk(er) guests: Cynthia McQuillin, Spider Robinson, "Dr. Jane" Robinson. Memberships: \$25 to 05/31/92, then \$50 at the door. Total membership will be limited to 3000 people. Hotel: Red Lion Inn, San Jose, CA, 408/456-4000.

### ConCerto '92

June 19-21, 1992

c/o Rich Kabakjian, 17 Lewis Avenue #3, East Lansdowne, PA 19050-2614. GoH: TJ & Mitchell Burnside-Clapp. Hotel: Cherry Hill Inn, Cherry Hill, NJ.

## Filksings

### Los Angeles Area (LAFA)

- Jul 13: Harry & Mara Brener, hosts.  
325 Sharon Road, Arcadia, CA.  
818/447-1664.
- Aug. 24: Brandyhall  
Lee & Barry Gold, hosts.  
3965 Alla Road, Los Angeles, CA.  
213/306-7456.
- Sept. 14: Prancing Skiltaire  
Rod O'Riley, host.  
13412 Gilbert Street, Garden  
Grove, CA. 714/539-8647.
- For info/mailling list, contact John & Mary  
Creasey, 213-329-6772.

### San Diego Area

Usually held the first Saturday of each month at Barney Evans' house, 8150 Jefferson, Lemon Grove, CA 92045. Call Barney at 619/697-3244, Rilla Heslin at 619/469-4874 or Karen Rogers at 619/265-0069 for more info.

### San Francisco Bay Area

For general information or mailing list, contact Bob Kanefsky, 415/324-2001, Kathy Mar, 415/226-8219, or Colleen Savitzky, 408/294-6492.

### Phoenix, AZ

Contact Charles Coons at P.O. Box 14245, Phoenix AZ 85063-4245 or on the DAG BBS for more info.

*The Filking Times* Calendar seeks listings for open filksings, Filk conventions and for general SF Conventions which have a Filk GoH or significant filk programming and activity.

Send Calendar information to:

**Rick & Deborah Weiss, 13261 Donegal Drive, Garden Grove, CA 92644.**

***The Filking Times***

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