

PLAY IT AGAIN SAM

Too bad, most of this interview consists of casually laid one-liners that just won't come across on paper. Example:

"Sam, you forgot to hold the cream."

"I thought you said hold the sugar."

"No, the cream."

"Oh, the cream. da da da - dum, dum dum dum dada dum." (bass intro to "Sunshine of your love.")

Subtle humor. The kind you need to be present to enjoy. His music has the same quality. You don't talk about it, you listen to it. The humor in his lyrics is the same low key and you smile broadly when you realize what he just said.

Sitting down to a dinner of snails who couldn't hold his attention, he wrote a song aptly named "A Slow Blues." ("Just remember snails are bi-sexual")

"I'll be A.C. to your D.C.

I'll be Athens to your Roma.

Any way you want me baby,

Any time I'll be at home.

I'm a mean mollusk mamma.

I mean to slide into your life.

And the way the good Lord made us,

I can be your husband or your wife."

Ask Sam Mendales about his music and he talks about his partner, Neil Peterson, who plays piano to his guitar.

"Working with a guy like Neil, he's so talented and so good at improvising, his harmonics sense is so superb that he's easy to fall back on."

Sam played with Neil in the now defunct Sam Mendales Trio, a critically acclaimed jazz ensemble, which, in the words of their former manager, was too good to make it.

When it broke up, Sam returned to his native New York to do some studio work. Now he's back playing solo. His first appearance was at the Chuck Wagon during Union Week last month.

Tim Buckley is his major influence. Not a few Tim Buckley songs were interspersed among the conversation to explain this or that.

"My respect about Buckley is that he didn't sit still. He started out as a straight 'folkie' like we all did, but with a really fine voice. Then he got jazzier. He took that and kept on going and began using his voice as an instrument, began really respecting his voice and not just - his lyrics were always good - but his voice. He's a real musician. And this guy for three years was driving a cab in L.A. 'cause he just couldn't make it."

Mendales' material ranges from the sly humor of 'A Slow Blues' or 'Black and Blues' in which he sings of a man with a case of compounded bad luck to his latest about marrying a girl of sweet sixteen, a subject he illuminates with an insight of a fine poet.

"Momma disapproves

but she helps pay the rent

She's easy with Dad's money

And so we're sitting pretty

I like the married life

I got a 30 year mortgage.

And a sweet

sixteen

wife."

Sam started playing folk music in high school back in Queens NYC with his friends in a rock and roll band. One of the members, Brad Davis, the boy whiz, is now Sam's producer for A&R studios in New York. He made a tape of an impromptu recording session in his bathroom with two of his former band members Johnny Simons and Bill Menznick. He even over dubbed his guitar on two songs (a set up for a Mendales one-liner I wish I could repeat).

Most of Sam's experience has been gained in front of college audiences musically the most open. Attributing the influx of musicians to Austin to its student population, he considers the Potpourri at the Union his most receptive audience and because of the acoustics his best playing.

Good musicians are hard to find. Good artists even rarer. If you want to spend your money at the meat market and listen to the flashy dudes with their three chord progressions and stage tricks, have at it. If you want to hear something worthwhile, try Sam Mendales. His humor will make you smile broadly. His music will make you come back for more.



MOST PEAS IN A POD
A big event down on the farm.

HONKY TONX

Castle Creek - 1411 Lavaca
(Tues-Sun) Uncle Walt's Band
Armadillo - 525½ Barton Springs
(Fri-Sat) Doug Sahn
Saxon Pub - 38th. & IH35
(Mon) Uncle Walt's Band
(Tues-Sat) Wilcox West
One Knite Tavern - 801 Red River
(Mon) Storm
(Wed) Otis Lewis & the Cotton Kings
Cricket Club - 2101 Burton Dr.
(Tue-Sat) Kenneth Threadgill
Cherry St. Inn - 1600 Guadalupe
(Wed) Blind George
(Thurs) Doak Snead Band
Tumble Weed Inn 7417 E. Ben White
(Fri) Stan Hicks
(Sat) Ron Howard
Sit-N-Bull - 3500 Guadalupe
(Sat) Blind George
Bevo's 2313 Rio Grande
(Thurs) Rat Creek
(Fri) LeAnne & the Bizarros
(Sat) Doak Snead Band
Split Rail - 217 S. Lamar
(Mon & Tues) Buckdancer's Choice
(Wed) Rat Creek (Thurs & Fri) Goop
(Sat) Paradise Special
(Sun) Freda & the Fire Dogs
South Door - 1523 Tinnin Ford Rd.
(Tues-Sat) Zilker Sunday
Toad Hall - Trinity at E. 6th.
(Tues-Sat) Bill & Bonnie Hearne
River City Inn - 304 E. 6th.
(Wed-Sat) Elgin Movement
Chappell Hill Texas, Sun., Oct. 14
Freddie King, Waylon Jennings,
Kinky Friedman, Townes Van Zandt,
Charlie Daniels, Greasy Wheels,
Rat Creek & more



"Yes it's so good livin' on the Farm"

-JA-

Rock and Roll that is good for the soul will be had in a free concert at Zilker Park Hillside Theater, Friday, October 12th, at 7:00 p.m. by Stephen and the Farm Band.

The Farm is a community of 750 folks on 1,750 acres in southern middle Tennessee. Their teacher is Stephen Gaskin who in 1965 in San Francisco began a class called Monday Night Class which assumed that there was something besides the material plane of existence. They researched religion, magic, superstition, ecology, ESP, fairy tales, collective unconscious, folkways, math and physics in their discovery of the mind.

On Columbus Day, 1970, 200 members of Monday Night Class took off to discover America in a schoolbus caravan spreading their word along the way. Talking about how you be makes a difference how it is for everybody, and as you sow so shall you reap on all planes of existence. Saying that getting into it with the dirt is really where it is at and returning to San Francisco in February to caravan to Tennessee to buy a farm.

Six months later they bought a farm, started trading equipment, making planting, growing, harvesting, and building agreements with their neighbors out to a several mile radius. They have a book publishing company, a sorghum mill, do farming, construction, and have a partnership in a sawmill. They have 144 children, 30 of them attending their state approved school. Their church is chartered by the State of Tennessee as a religious and educational foundation, and the Internal Revenue Service has declared them to be tax-exempt as a religious community.

They don't eat meat or use dairy products or wear leather. For one acre of ground raising cattle you can get 140 pounds of protein per season and from one acre of ground growing soybeans you can get 4,000 pounds of protein per season. The soydairy turns out milk which is more nutritious than cow's milk when calcium is added and makes soy ice cream. They have 250 acres of farming land and use both horses and tractors for cultivation and use canning, freezing and dry storage to preserve their foodage.

On August 31, 1971 several agents of the Tennessee Bureau of Criminal Investigation along with officers of the Tennessee Highway Patrol and members of the Lewis and Lawrence County Sheriff's Department participated in a raid on The Farm and confiscated marihuana plants growing there. Stephen and three members of the marihuana committee were arrested and admitted growing marihuana explaining that marihuana is a holy sacrament and a central part of their religion. Upon conviction two of them were sentenced to one to three years and two for one year in the state penitentiary.

This month their appeal goes before the Supreme Court. They maintain the Tennessee Marihuana Law interferes with "free exercise of religion," and that the court's decision to curtail testimony as to their religion could not determine whether their religious activity upsets the good order of society thereby not showing any sufficient reason to override religious practices and thus interferes with "due process of law."

They believe in the use of marihuana as a sacrament - not as an end in itself, but as a holy tool to allow one to experience reality. Marihuana opens you up and leaves you compassionate, and mankind really needs to be compassionate if he is going to make it on this planet.

Rock and Roll is their church music. They go out on tour with the band to help make a communion happen. All the stuff they sing is stuff they want to say, and they wouldn't say it if they didn't believe it. They are a modern tribe out on a quest doing what they believe to be the best to make the world a better place.

Optimism never hurt and they have an abundance, come and partake.

- fayne k.

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