



BLUEGRASS CORNER

by Dwight Worden



Happy New Year All!

We had a great bluegrass year in 2016, and here at the *Troubadour* we are looking forward to even more in 2017. We hope to see you out and enjoying some of the great opportunities here in San Diego to hear live bluegrass music. Here are just a few:

FIRST TUESDAY EVERY MONTH: Jam session and bluegrass at the Round Table Pizza in Escondido, corner of Washington and Ash, 6:30–9 pm. Admission is free. Sponsored by the North County Bluegrass and Folk Club (NCBFC).

SECOND TUESDAY EVERY MONTH: Jam session, open mic, and pick up bands at Fuddrucker's, Grossmont Center, 5500 Grossmont Center Drive; 6:30–9pm. Admission is free. Sponsored by the San Diego Bluegrass Society (SDBS).

EVERY THURSDAY: Jam session with Jason Weiss at the Round Table Pizza in Encinitas, 1321 Encinitas Blvd., 6:30–9pm. Admission is free (contribute \$5 and enjoy pizza and salad).

THIRD MONDAY EVERY MONTH: Instructed bluegrass slow jam led by Janet Beazley. Learn bluegrass at a manageable pace. Our Savior Lutheran Church, 4011 Ohio Street, North Park. 7–8:30pm; \$5 SDBS members, \$10 public.

FOURTH TUESDAY EVERY MONTH: Open mic and pick up bands at the Boll Weevil Restaurant, 9330 Clairemont Mesa Blvd. 6:30–8 pm. Featured Bluegrass Band in concert 8–9 pm. Admission is free; donations requested. Sponsored by SDBS.

EVERY SUNDAY: Bluegrass Brunch at Urban Solace Restaurant, 3823 30th Street, North Park. 10am–2 pm the best brunch in town with live bluegrass music.

EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING: Emma's Gut Bucket Band enjoys a bluegrass and Americana jam session, 6:30–9:15 pm at Whitman Elementary School, 4050 Appleton, Clairemont Mesa. Admission is free. Sponsored by SDBS

Whew! That's a lot of regularly scheduled bluegrass. In addition to these regular events, there are bluegrass concert opportunities. You can get on the email list for these venues and see what is coming:

BRICK 15: COFFEE HOUSE AND ACOUSTIC MUSIC VENUE IN DEL MAR. 915 Camino Del Mar (corner of 9th Street). Brick 15 hosts a variety of Americana, singer-songwriter and bluegrass events. Coming soon are Grammy winner Bryan Sutton and his bluegrass band on January 8 and Rob Ickes and Trey Hensley on February 8. Tickets and info: www.brick15.com.

AMSD CONCERTS. AMSD books a variety of acoustic music, Americana, and bluegrass events. Tickets and info: www.amsd.com.

But wait, as they say on TV, there's more! The SDBS and NCBFC co-produce the premier **Summergrass Bluegrass Festival** every third weekend in August, presenting top touring bands and lots of other activities. For info visit: www.summergrass.net. Additionally, NCBFC pres-

ents Bluegrass in the Flower Fields every spring, and SDBS presents 3-4 special concerts during the year featuring top touring bands. Visit the NCBFC website at: www.northcountybluegrass.org and the SDBS website at: www.sandiegobluegrass.org for info.

Finally, we would be remiss not to mention the "Bluegrass Special" radio show, hosted every Sunday night on KSON by Wayne Rice from 10pm to midnight. 97.3 and 92.1 on your FM dial. Wayne presents a live bluegrass band once a month and programs top-notch bluegrass music on all his shows. Wayne is in his 40th year hosting this great show—check it out. If you can't stay up that late, you can stream it on the internet live or from the archives.

Bluegrass Film: History of Bluegrass in San Diego. Film maker Rick Bowman premiered his new film on the history of bluegrass music in San Diego at the new downtown San Diego Library on November 28. The film traces the early history of bluegrass music in San Diego focusing on the Scottsville Squirrel Barkers, a group formed in the 1960s by Chris Hillman (later of the Byrds), Bernie Leadon (later of the Eagles), Kenny Wertz (later of the Country Gazette and the Flying Burrito Brothers), Ed Douglas on bass, Gary Carr on guitar, and Larry Murray on dobro (later of Hearts and Flowers).

The film also covered other early San Diego groups such as Brush Arbor (with Wayne Rice), a group that made several records for Capitol Records, and local band San Diego Grass and Eclectic, along with other prominent early locals, including Walt Richards. Many of the folks featured in the film were present for the premiere, including Wayne Rice (KSON "Bluegrass Special"), Walt Richards, Kenny Wertz, and Ed Douglas.

We are blessed in San Diego to have so many opportunities to get out and play and enjoy bluegrass music. How about a commitment to participate more in 2017? To me, that sounds like a great New Year's Resolution.



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The restaurant seemed really nice. White tablecloths accented with crimson napkins, each meticulously wrapped around a silverware setup that weighed almost as much as the gold bar this meal was no doubt going to cost us. Candlelight splashed around the room like wrens in a fountain. Lovers reached their hands across and gazed at each other romantically, their eyes filled to the brim with promise and expectation. Ice cubes clinked into glasses as bussers tended to water, butter, and various other small requests. As I began to drink in the panoramic view spilling through the windows, a cheerful voice cut through the scenery like giant golden scissors at a ribbon cutting ceremony.

"Hi and welcome! Is this your first time here?"

Not through the *front* door, I thought to myself and looked expectantly over to my girlfriend, Patricia, for her response.

"Yes. A long time ago" she replied, "but it all still looks just as lovely as I remembered." She said it with a genuine sweetness that made her seem just that much more beautiful to me and, seemingly, the world around us.

"Oh, wonderful!" the server enthused. "I'll let you two look over the menu and I'll be back in just a few minutes. Can I get you both started with something to drink?" she asked.

"Sure. Do you have a wine list?" Patricia asked.

"Of course. Here it is." said the server. She opened the leather-bound mahogany folder and presented it to her like a church hymnal.

"Ohhh!" she added while pointing at the list with a single finger, whose nail polish exactly matched the napkins. "There's also a selection of our handcrafted cocktails and locally brewed IPAs, too."

Inside my head was the deafening sound of hard-braked tires squealing for half a block's distance. My face felt a match to the napkin/fingernail motif already in play.

This is where we take a little "Buelleresque" aside (except his are funny) wherein I go into a little rant about my personal belief that IPAs (India Pale Ales) are not supposed to represent *good* beer. That they are actually an *extreme* recipe variation that the English traders applied to their brews in order to preserve the beer for as long as possible without proper refrigeration on their long trips to and from India and other faraway lands. They discovered that adding a bunch more hops seemed to help. Of course, adding a lot more of these ultra-bitter flowers made the beer pretty much undrinkable, so more sugar was added. This in turn raised the alcohol content, so the sailors' process *did* have some additional benefits to try and offset the fact that it tastes like chewing on a houseplant sideways... but *handcrafted* cocktails? Oy.

I'm almost certain that by now, somewhere deep in downtown Tokyo, there's a *really* brightly lit joint that's got a robot and that thing pours a perfect Old Fashioned, all night long. The rest of us pretty much have to bear the (almost insufferable) burden of handcrafting our own damn drinks! I don't even mean to make a big deal out of it. *They* did that by charging two or three times more for the *privilege* of said craftsmanship for pretty much the same thing as we were getting before.

Maybe it's my Swedish/Irish heritage or my own obsessive tendencies or a total fear of failure in delivering what I promise, but the word craft is not a frivolous word. It runs the danger of standing alongside "genius," "perfect," and "awesome" as ineffectual and hyperbolic labels, as a direct result of their wide-

spread overuse. Craft and craftsmanship are part of a proud artistic, tradition and work-oriented concept that should never be bandied about like some quarterly promotion to sell more booze. They *should*, I believe, always be kept at the forefront of a producer or recordist's heart and mind, in service to their clients, colleagues, and peers. It can't be enough to do good work. It is my belief that we must always be striving to do *exemplary* work.

When I stopped by the Roswell Pro Audio booth at the 2016 Summer AES, I sensed that these guys really seem to get that, in a fundamental way. What began as a hobbyist's passion for modifying cheap mics to improve their specs and performance eventually evolved into a boutique microphone company, which makes a mic that exhibits flattering comparisons to one of my favorite vintage models: the Neumann U47.

We've heard this before with ever-increasing frequency, and with a history of mixed results that range from "Yeah! Really great!" to "Yeah, I don't think so."

Well, I received a matched pair of Roswell Mini K47 (\$299.00/single mic) condenser mics and used them constantly for a couple of weeks on a wide range of sources: vocals, acoustic and electric guitars, drums, percussion, and accordion. I'm here to tell you that it has been and will remain my studio's go-to mic for the foreseeable future. This is as much due to its angelic top end as its full, yet articulate "booty," extending from those crucial low-mids all the way down into the sweetest depths of the bass.

This gave it a natural "Nashville-sounding" chime for acoustic guitar, but when I tried it on a nylon stringed classical, it was *revelatory*. There may be other mics that more faithfully recreate the sound of the Neumann U47 tube microphone, but the Mini K47 emphasizes that model's very best characteristics at a mere fraction of what a vintage or even modern version would cost.



by Sven-Erik Seaholm

It honestly seemed like everything I used the K47s on tasted great "right out of the can," with much less need for sweetening when mixing or mastering. In fact, I don't remember a microphone that I so consistently did *not* need to add additional EQ to. If anything, the Mini K47s impart their own wonderful "smile curve" in a subtle, yet palpably luxurious way.

The cardioid-only pick up pattern is tightly focused when close-miking vocals and instruments, but pulling the mic back a bit spilled just the right amount of the room back into the sonic picture, often resulting in a 3D-like depth.

Stacking backing vocals became a favorite task with this mic, as I often like to record three or four parts and sometimes double or even triple-track them. The airy "frosting" of sugar it builds into oohs and ahhs, along with their pleasing lack of sibilance make them really shine in all the best ways, without building up any murk or muddiness. The "mini" moniker seems directed toward the fact that they're about 3/4 the size of an average condenser mic, but they totally measure up with a larger than life sound.

Only a couple times did sources with large, transient spikes like drums, percussion, and really loud guitar amps drive the Mini K47s diaphragm to distort, but it was worth noting. I have had unpleasant experiences earlier with the type of elastic shock mounts that are included as well, but you just can't beat the overall excellence—to-buck ratio these mics provide. Overall, I stand by the notion that these microphones are not only a fantastic value for the money, but really in just about any price class.

Sven-Erik Seaholm is an award-winning independent record producer (kaspro.com), songwriter and performer (*The Facebooks*).

Ask Charlie...

by Charlie Loach



Photo: Lois Bach

for me, playing in a band meant playing behind vocals and that's why I believed the proper answer to be "both," because I could indeed play both. You see, these are things that experienced musicians know and take for granted. The newbie player or the general public probably doesn't even realize the significance of the question. As I thought about this for a while, I realized that the basic question had evolved over the 40-odd years I've been playing the guitar and I wondered what could account for the change. Was it popular culture, relative education, age, or what?

When I first started playing, the question was, "six-string or twelve-string?" This was in the late '60s/early '70s and for most adults at the time, the musical influence was the folk-rock music of the Byrds and Lovin' Spoonful where there was a heavy 12-string presence. There was the perception that there was something magical about the 12-string guitar, and if you played one you were somehow magical, too. I never understood that idea as most of my experience with 12-string guitars at that time was that they were difficult to tune, difficult to keep in tune, and usually only had 11 strings (that damn octave G-string...). Among even older people, the question was often "classical or folk?" These people had grown up with Pete Seeger and Peter, Paul, and Mary, as well as having been exposed to Segovia, Bream, and other classical guitarists. These folks

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