

Guitarist

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1987 VOL. III NO. 6

a Publication of the Minnesota Guitar Society P.O. Box 14986, Minneapolis, MN 55414

BLUES GUITARATHON



SUNDAY • 6pm • CABOOZEBAR • December 6

featuring: BOB BINGHAM ■ CHARLIE BINGHAM ■ LARRY HAYES ■ CURT OBEDA ■ DAVE RAY ■ DAN SCHWALBE ■ JAMES SMITH
backup by BUTANES RHYTHM SECTION with STEVE 'KILLER' KILBRIDE ON KEYBOARD. SPECIAL SURPRISE GUESTS. SEE STORY PAGE 2.

tickets: \$5 NONMEMBERS \$4 MEMBERS. BE THERE & SHOW YOUR SUPPORT to the MINNESOTA GUITAR SOCIETY.

Blues

GITARATHON

On Sunday December 6, the Minnesota Guitar Society will present a **Blues Guitarathon**, an evening spotlighting the art of the Blues guitar, at the Cabooze Bar from 6 p.m. to midnight. The concert is a benefit for the MGS and will feature many of the finest local Blues guitarists: Bob Bingham, Charlie Bingham, Larry Hayes, Curt Obeda, Dave Ray, Dan Schwalbe and James Smith. They will be backed by the Butanes rhythm section with Steve "Killer" Kilbride on piano. Surprise special guests will be on hand. Film historian and archivist Bob DeFlores will be bringing rare clips of Jimmy Rushin, Reverend Gary Davis and Lighting Hopkins to show. Tickets for the **Blues Guitarathon** are \$5 for non-members, \$4 for members or you can join the Guitar Society and get in free. Come support the Minnesota Guitar Society and enjoy a great evening of music.

President's letter

Greetings and solicitations! The former should be plain enough and the latter I shall speak of anon.

This old club just keeps rollin' along! So far this year we've held two concerts, two Guitarathons (pat. pending), three lecture-demos, commissioned a composition, refined our newsletter, held a number of informative and entertaining forums and we're not stopping there! Elsewhere in this issue you'll see mention of our first forum to be held in a restaurant and yet another Guitarathon (reg. u.s. pat. orf) (sic).

The point, aside from blowing our own horn, is that your board of directors is beat! Not that we haven't enjoyed and benefitted from working on these projects and not that we haven't appreciated the time and effort you volunteers have given to the cause. The fact is, as most of your board of directors are professionals in a field that requires a fair amount of extracurricular effort to begin with, this can be a drain on their already unbusinesslike mentalities.

Luckily a solution is in sight! It's time once again for our annual meeting and election of officers! We will be looking for candidates in all of our principal posts including president, vice president, treasurer and secretary as well as board members at large. It's easy! All that's required is to have an interest in our favorite instrument and a willingness to help in the production of events like those you've already been a part of over the last couple of years. If you have a candidate in mind, would like to nominate yourself or just want to see how the society works we will be drafting a ballot at our next board meeting on Sunday the 22nd of November, 3 p.m. at the Guitar Center. Elections themselves will be held Sunday, December 6th at 2 p.m., also at the center.

So even if you're just curious as to how this bunch pulls off all the things we have this year, we want you to come to this meeting. We've got a pretty good set of things going for us now and in the future so we really need to keep our organization strong and our enthusiasm up for the coming year. See you there!

The Homestead Pickin' Parlor

by Marcy Steinberg

I first heard of Minnesota's Pickin' Parlor five years ago, when I arrived in the Twin Cities from the east coast, and began trying to locate the local square dance community. Upon a co-worker's suggestion, I called the Pickin' Parlor, and was immediately directed to the Monday Night Square Dance Collective.

Three years later I remembered the story when my brother called me from Philadelphia asking that I find the sheet music to "Step It Out Nancy" by Robin and Linda Williams. Apparently no one in all of Philadelphia had it. And the Coffeehouse Extempore did not have it. The Homestead Pickin' Parlor had it (one copy). They also had the album.

And that is what the Homestead Pickin' Parlor is all about: finding what you can't find anywhere else.

"We're kind of a clearinghouse in the folk music world."

"We're kind of a clearinghouse in the folk music world," said founder and owner Marv Mensel. "We're on all the mailing lists, and with us, it's a genuine interest. We don't just get the lists . . . we memorize them. Anyone who picks up the phone can usually answer the question asked."

This folk music emporium . . . which sells, trades, repairs and offers instruction on a wide variety of acoustic instruments . . . which maintains one of the largest folk music selections in the world (yes, the world) . . . which provides a place for amateur acoustic musicians to jam . . . which sponsors a regular season of concerts and workshops by local and national artists . . .

had its start eight years ago, when banjo-playing Marv found he couldn't find the things he needed to find anywhere in town.

"This store is the end result of my search for folk music in this state in 1979. I'd been playing banjo for about six months and I could find nothing in town in the way of recordings, instruments . . . nothing," Mensel said.

"There was a real active folk music community and a lot of good performers, but in the stores there was a real lack of variety for acoustic musicians," he explained. That void begged to be filled, and Mensel filled it.

"I enjoy working in areas where there is a need," said Mensel, who sold his 40-person manufacturing business to start the music store. He spent about six months researching what was being

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Pickin' Parlor staff.

done in other parts of the country, and found the picking parlor concept in several places. At this point in our conversation I began reminiscing about a little picking parlor I hung around in at my alma mater in East Lansing. I hadn't been able to remember its name for years. Marv not only knew it, he was able to give me an update about it and he had an album on hand that it had put out the year I graduated. Nostalgic as I am, I bought it as much for its pictures of my campus as for the music. Marv also had some albums on hand by one of my guitar teachers from those days. Now this is truly a store in which to discover things.

Mensel chose to locate his store in Richfield, on the theory that people who are into folk music now live in the suburbs, he said. (He also happens to like being able to ride his bike to work).

"The people who grew up during the folk scare of the 50's and 60's are now living in the suburbs, like me," he said. "These people are a mainstay of the folk community, in addition to the professional musicians and the revivalist folkies," he said.

Stevie Beck, who repairs instruments as the parlor, put it another way: "Marv prides himself on being able to survive in the suburbs."

The truth may be a little bit of both. Marv did mention that he planned to make his store so unique that it would draw business wherever it was located. And he has succeeded.

One thing that makes the store rare is its policy to carry entire recording labels—not just current releases or selected albums. They publish an internationally distributed mail-order catalogue, and each month a newsletter contains updates of latest acquisitions. Last month's newsletter listed almost 80 newly acquired albums and compact discs.

The newsletter also highlights new guitars and dulcimers, and reminds folks that it's time to start humidifying their instruments.

Finally, the newsletter lists jam session times and announces the beginning of the fall concert season—two things that make this store the epicenter of Minnesota's folk scene, Richfield or not.

"We started putting on concerts here in the store and in other venues as an alternative to the Extempore," Mensel said. "After all, they could only have one concert a night, and there are a lot of good musicians here—more than there are places to play," Marv said. Now that the Extemp is going out of busi-

ness, the Parlor may pick up a few more concerts, but Marv said space considerations will keep the concert schedule to one or two concerts a week.

Marv worked with Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion Show, which was a big draw for musicians. "When public radio brings people in for a show, it's nice to be able to schedule some other concerts for them," he said. Now he works in the same manner with Dale and Jim's Morning Show and he plans to work with Noah Adam's Good Evening show. Concerts include nationally known musicians such as John McCutcheon, Guy Caralvan, and Trapeziod, and virtually unknown artists looking for a place to play.

Even as we spoke, Marv got up to find an album by Linda Allen—an artist he

Parlor to 5

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Inside the Guitar Center

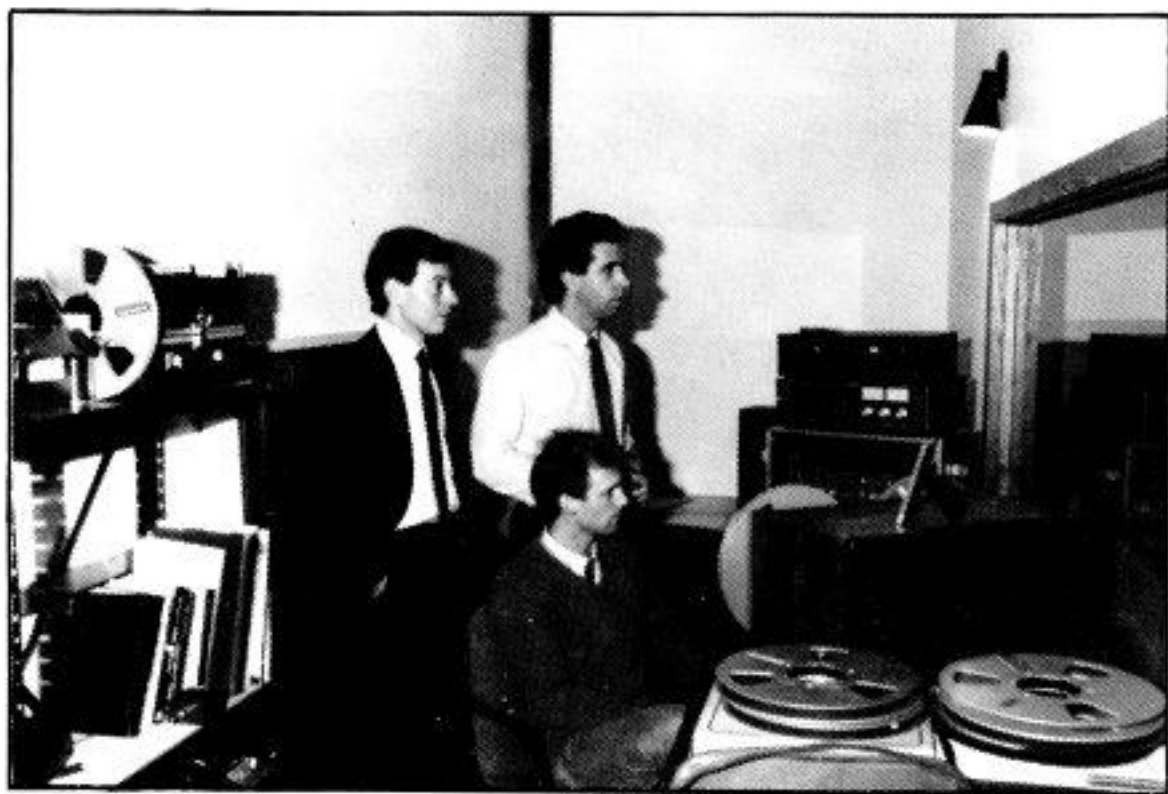
by David Brokken

Guitar students no longer have to fret about playing second fiddle. The Guitar Center of Minneapolis, Inc. is concluding its second year of offering guitar instruction, not only in performance but also in the areas of music theory, history, and recording and electronics. Located at 304 North Washington in Minneapolis, the Guitar Center was founded December 7, 1985 by Jack McNally and Doug Smith, both former MacPhail Center for the Arts faculty members. "December 7 was a coincidence—our school has nothing to do with Pearl Harbor," Jack laughs.

"We spent eight to ten years at MacPhail," Jack says. "But when the University of Minnesota withdrew its support, tuitions kept rising, our salaries kept dropping, and the program suffered. So we decided to do it on our own, figuring we could do better without the shackles of red tape."

On the second floor, the Center is decked out with a stylish dark gray decor. Practice rooms, classrooms, a recording studio, a library, faculty offices and an auditorium with a modular concert stage line the hallway.

Most of the MacPhail guitar faculty followed Jack and Doug over to the Guitar Center, and so did the students—130 of them. Other members of the Center's staff (13 teachers and 2 office workers) include Cliff Suchy, who was at MacPhail for eight years; Jeff Wressel, currently the music director at Holy Triune Church; Peter Olson, who's studied bass with Eugene Levinson of the Gary Burton Quartet; Jeff Loven, whose heavy metal band "Obsession" won two 1985 Minnesota Music Awards; Gary Michaels, who received his B.A. in vocal music and classical guitar at Gustavus Adolphus; Randy Sobaski, who's taken master classes with Sharon Isbin and Larry Coryell; and new addition David Crittenden, who has his Ph.D. in guitar from the University of Georgia.



Guitar Center Staff

As with most anything, there was more than met the eye in getting the Center started. Not only did Jack and Doug work up a 50-page market research report to get the ball rolling, but they had to make sure the facilities measured up to code. And then came the arduous process of getting the school licensed by the State of Minnesota.

"For our school to offer a state-certified diploma," Jack explains, "the instructors have to be certified—a B.A. or greater or three years experience—and three independent experts must analyze our program and conclude it meets state requirements."

There are really two different plans of study offered. One is their Private Instruction Program, which offers guitar lessons from qualified teachers in rock, folk, gospel, bluegrass, ragtime, classical, pop, blues, jazz, country and heavy metal—just about any kind of style you can name. And the instruction covers more than the mere playing of notes: a student learns improvisation, chording and theory as well.

The Professional Guitar School (PGS)—the flagship of the Guitar Center is the second plan of study and runs from September to September. In this full-time vocational school for guitar and bass, students have a solid year of intensive study.

"They come every day, five days a week, 52 weeks a year, for six to eight hours a day," says Jack. "It's demanding. By July, they're ready to explode." The PGS curriculum includes courses in theory, ear training, improvisation, fingerboard theory, songwriting, history of guitar, electronics equipment and recording techniques as well as lessons, recitals, and ensemble work.


The Guitar Center would like to offer a second year of PGS next fall, depending on state approval. The second year would concentrate on the teaching of **Center to 5**

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Parlor from 3

had never heard of who will be appearing at his store in concert Nov. 13. She was coming through town and needed a place to play. I asked Marv how he gets a crowd in for unknown artists, local or otherwise.

"We get our crowds mostly through our newsletter. We'll even say we have a new artist coming in and ask people to show, and they do," Marv said. In addition, time is made at the beginning of each concert for an opening set by a local artist or a friend of the performer's.

Artists passing through town frequently offer workshops at the parlor . . .

Artists passing through town frequently offer workshops at the parlor as well . . . a most popular one is Bill Staines' yodeling workshops, Marv said, which Staines holds at the Parlor every time he comes through town. Guitarists Preston Reed, Peter Lang and Chris Proctor are among the many who have presented workshops there.

Center from 4

guitar (pedagogy classes) and major recitals.

Happily, the Guitar Center is full up. There are 200 students in the private instruction program and 47 in PGS, and a waiting list for both. However, the Guitar Center wants to expand to accommodate more guitarists.

"We want to expand carefully, though," Jack says. "Not past our capacity to keep up our standards." A good idea, especially since right now the Guitar Center has the world on a string.

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Concerts, Engagements, Lessons

Finally, in the true nature of a "picking parlor," the Homestead offers locals a place to pick. The parlor area is a medium-sized rectangular room whose walls are lined with guitars, banjos, dulcimers, ukuleles and mandolins. (You can also find harps, pennywhistles, even drum sticks.)

This is a room that clearly invites picking for the sake of picking—not just so you'll buy an instrument. There are so many good amateur musicians and so much demand for a place to jam, Marv said, that the Parlor began to formalize some jam sessions.

Bluegrass jams are held every Saturday at 3 p.m., and beginning bluegrass jams are 7 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Folk jams are the first and third Tuesdays at 7 p.m. and "Old Timey" jams are 7 p.m. Thursdays.

Throughout our interview, Marv kept referring to his store in the first person plural. Finally, I asked, "Who is 'we'?"

"There is no one person," Marv replied. "'We' are the whole community. This place is a very sharing thing." So it is . . . so it is.



Stevie Beck/Pickin' Parlor

Upcoming concerts sponsored by the Parlor include *Metamora* (known to Morning Show listeners as the "Little Potato Song" folks) **Oct. 24**, with guest **Phil Heywood**; **Charlie Maguire** **Nov. 7** and **Peter and Lou Berryman**, **Nov. 20**. These three concerts will be at the Brady Center Auditorium, St. Thomas College. A "Cajun Thanksgiving" concert with *Beausoleil* will be held **Nov. 28** at the Median Entertainment Center. You can call the Parlor for a newsletter.

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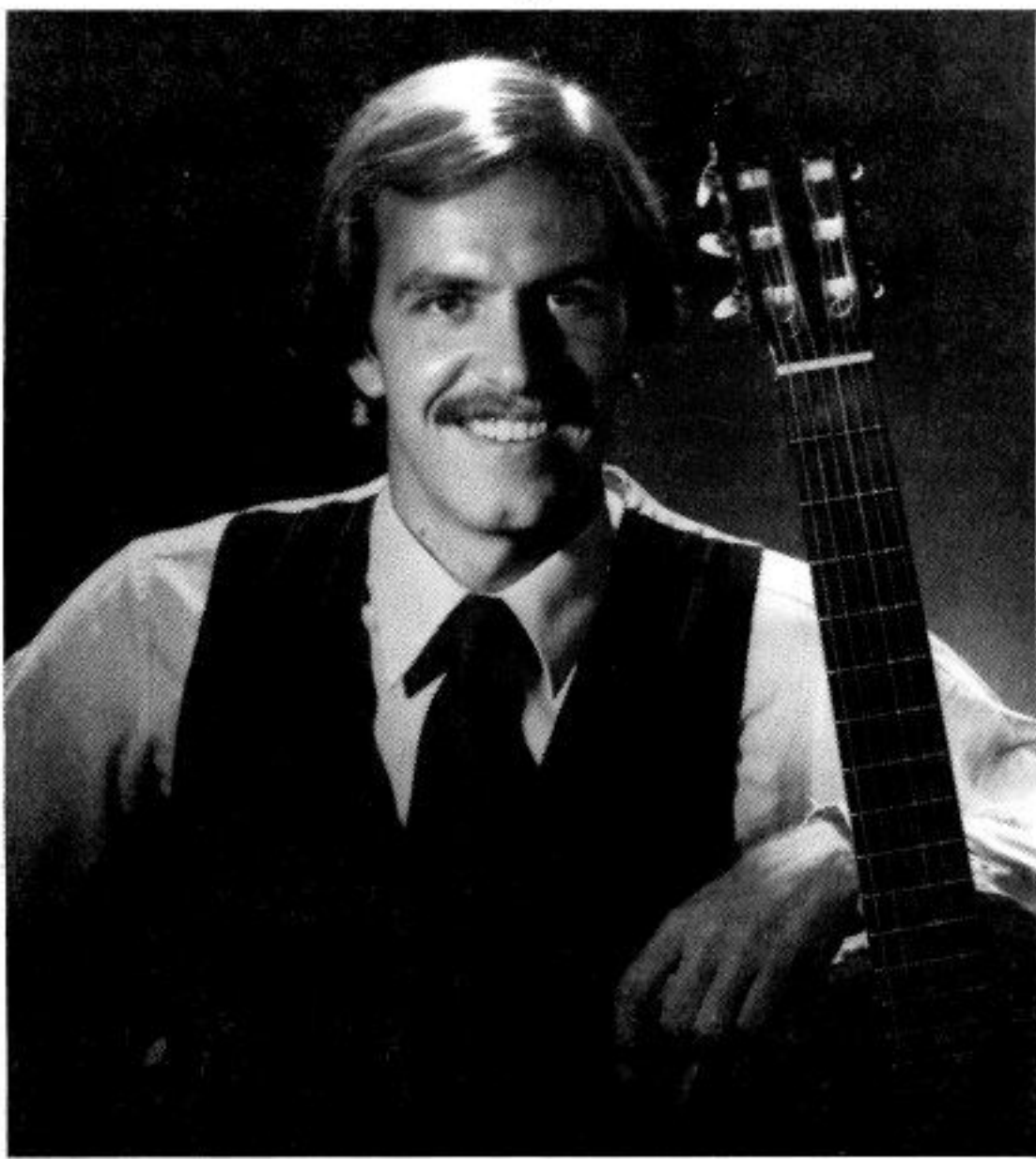
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Anthony Titus: A Teacher's Perspective



by Cathy Nixon

Anthony Titus enjoys teaching people to play the guitar. He says, "Teaching is a real art form in itself . . . being able to understand the human mind, what motivates people, and helping them to achieve something that they really want . . . it's a real responsibility."

Anthony began his own serious study of the guitar with Tony Hauser, who eventually suggested that Anthony continue his studies with Jesus Silva at the North Carolina School of the Performing Arts. In North Carolina, Anthony studied with Silva for two years, and then with John Marcus for two more years. He obtained his master's degree in performance at San Diego State University after studying for four years

with Celin and Pepe Romero. At present, Anthony teaches a large number of students himself at the College of St. Thomas and its Conservatory, at Anoka-Ramsey Community College and at the MacPhail Center for the Arts.

Teaching is a social experience, and through teaching, Anthony enjoys the contact with people while doing something he really likes, playing the guitar. He also sees teaching as a way for guitarists to create an audience for themselves. Often, the development of this audience begins with a student who perhaps can't imagine him or herself being able to play a difficult piece. Through effective teaching, learning and encouragement, the difficult piece becomes easier, and the student's confidence increases. As confidence increases, so does the desire to learn

more. The student begins to attend concerts, and also gets more positive feedback through performing for others. Anthony smiles, envisioning the creation of a guitarist.

The social aspect of teaching runs deeper and even more challenging. Anthony's students range in age from six to sixty. They include the naturally talented and seriously interested, as well as some business men who always take their guitars with them on business trips. They say it's the only way they can relax and forget their work. He soberly remembers having to cut back on his teaching schedule at one point, and being asked by some concerned mothers to keep a couple of students. The mothers explained that the students had at one time been involved with drugs. Studying the guitar seemed to have replaced their addictions, and they were afraid the students might lose interest if they didn't continue their

Titus to 7



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Titus from 6

lessons. Of course, Anthony kept the students. Sometimes he wonders if the teacher isn't a therapist.

As to his approach to teaching and learning, Anthony explains that people are somewhat like computers, processing and sending out positive or negative information. Like computers, Anthony believes that people process information better one step at a time. First, he studies a piece technically, and then again musically for dynamics, tempo and articulation. The third step is to incorporate, at a slow tempo, as many of these as possible while reading the music. Unlike computers, however, people generally have to repeat information to fix it into their memory, which is the fourth step of the learning process. Another analogy Anthony draws to learning a piece is a photographic process he's observed his father use, whereby he would set an object on a table in front of a camera on a tripod. After focusing and setting the correct lighting, his father would open the shutter for a few seconds. "All of that great color would soak right into the film, refractions from droplets of light would come in and create these incredible photos." Learning a piece slowly, Anthony explains, results in learning it more quickly and fully in the long run. How slowly? Naturally, deadlines are important to help one to be organized and make learning easier, and performance is essential to growth.

Anthony's had to cut back on performing because of this teaching. However, teaching has become the more important part of his work, and he's content to perform five or six times a year. His next performance is November 15 at the Walker Art Center, 3:00 p.m., where he and Nick Rath will perform a new work by Anthony's brother, composer Hiram Titus.

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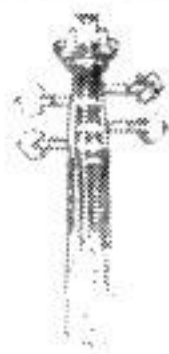
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A letter from a fan

I'm a singer who's worked primarily with guitarists and through the years I've come to love the guitar and all that the guitar can offer to a singer. By far, it's the instrument I like to sing to.

My involvement with guitar accompanists originated in circumstances not planned. I played in Brazil for a number of years and there the guitar is the most common instrument. It's affordable by most—pianos are in the parlors of the upper crust and they more often study Bach not Bossa. There in Recife, Brazil I had the great good fortune to begin my work in Manadala with Nilton Machado Rangel as guitarist. Many of you may remember Nilton from his stay here in 1985 and 1986.

The guitar provides full and beautiful accompaniment yet never covers the voice. It blends well and forms an ideal duet with the voice. Night after night a guitarist can and does change the voicings used. It's kept me interested in songs I've sung a million times. I've been amazed at all of the possibilities of sounds and effects a guitarist can utilize. Between picking, strumming, harmonica, twanging, snapping and bossa vamping; a guitarist offers rich textures and subtlety to the accompaniment.

I like the informality of a guitar. The instrument is so portable and easily accessible to all. When's the last time a piano player thrilled you with moon-

light music around a beachside campfire? Guitar players will come to your house to practice—no fuss rehearsals are also a big factor when I think of who I want to work with.

Personally I like the way you guitarists are playing. You've got a lot of punch and creativity. You're all quite versatile and eclectic. You seem to listen to a broad array of music and be willing to experiment. It's a pleasure to work with you.

—Mary Ann O'Dougherty
Mandala Bossa Band

See Mary & Mandala . . . Oct. 21-24/Dean Magraw w/Mandala at the Holiday Inn St. Paul East. 7:30-11:30, Michael's Bar. Oct. 30 & 31/Dean Magraw w/Mandala at the Artists' Quarter, 9-1:00. Nov. 11-14/Dean

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