

# Guitarist

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## **CURT OBEDA**

**Part II**

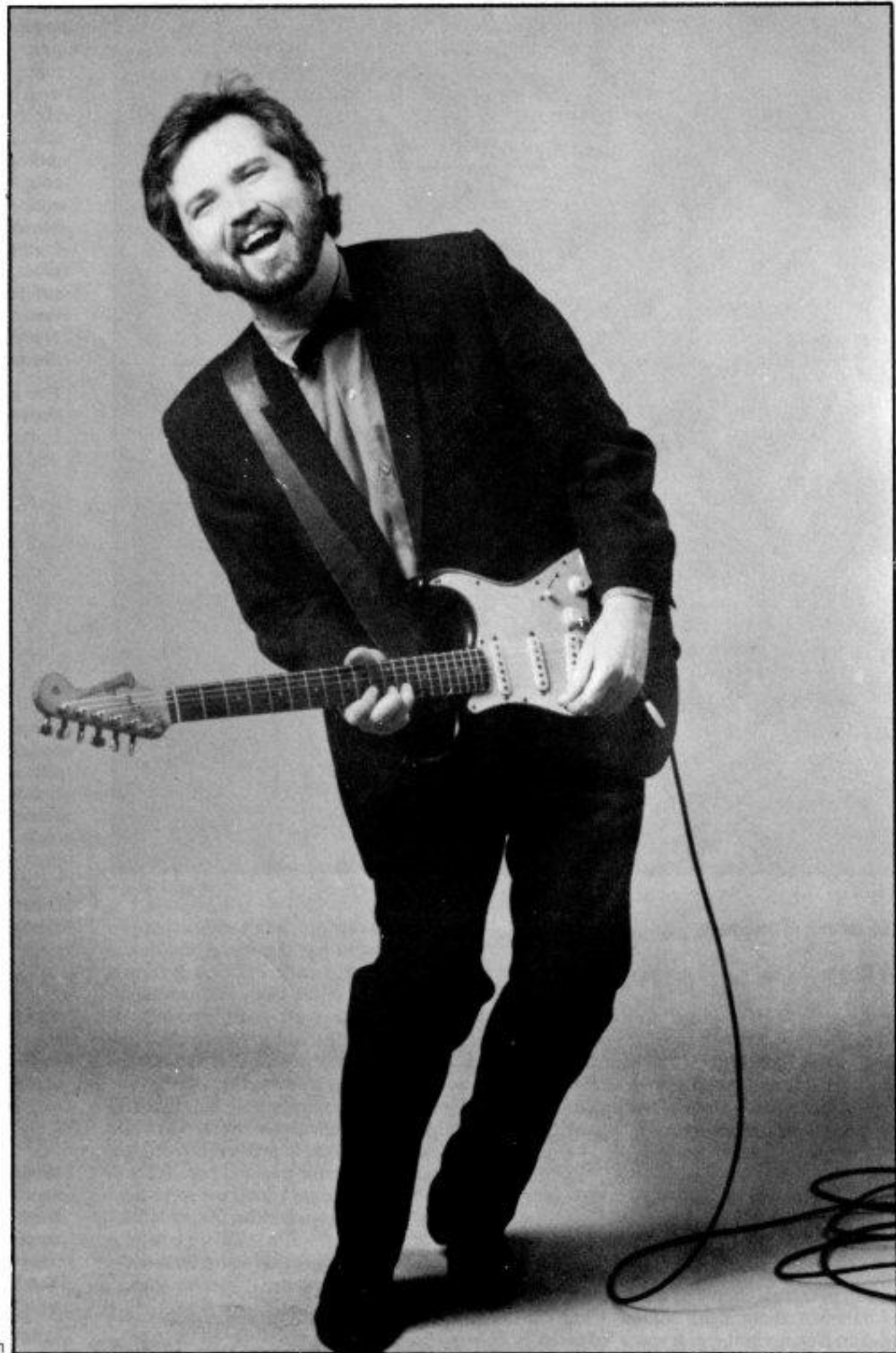


Photo: Ann Marsden

# Why the Butanes are a gas: Curt Obeda talks about the blues

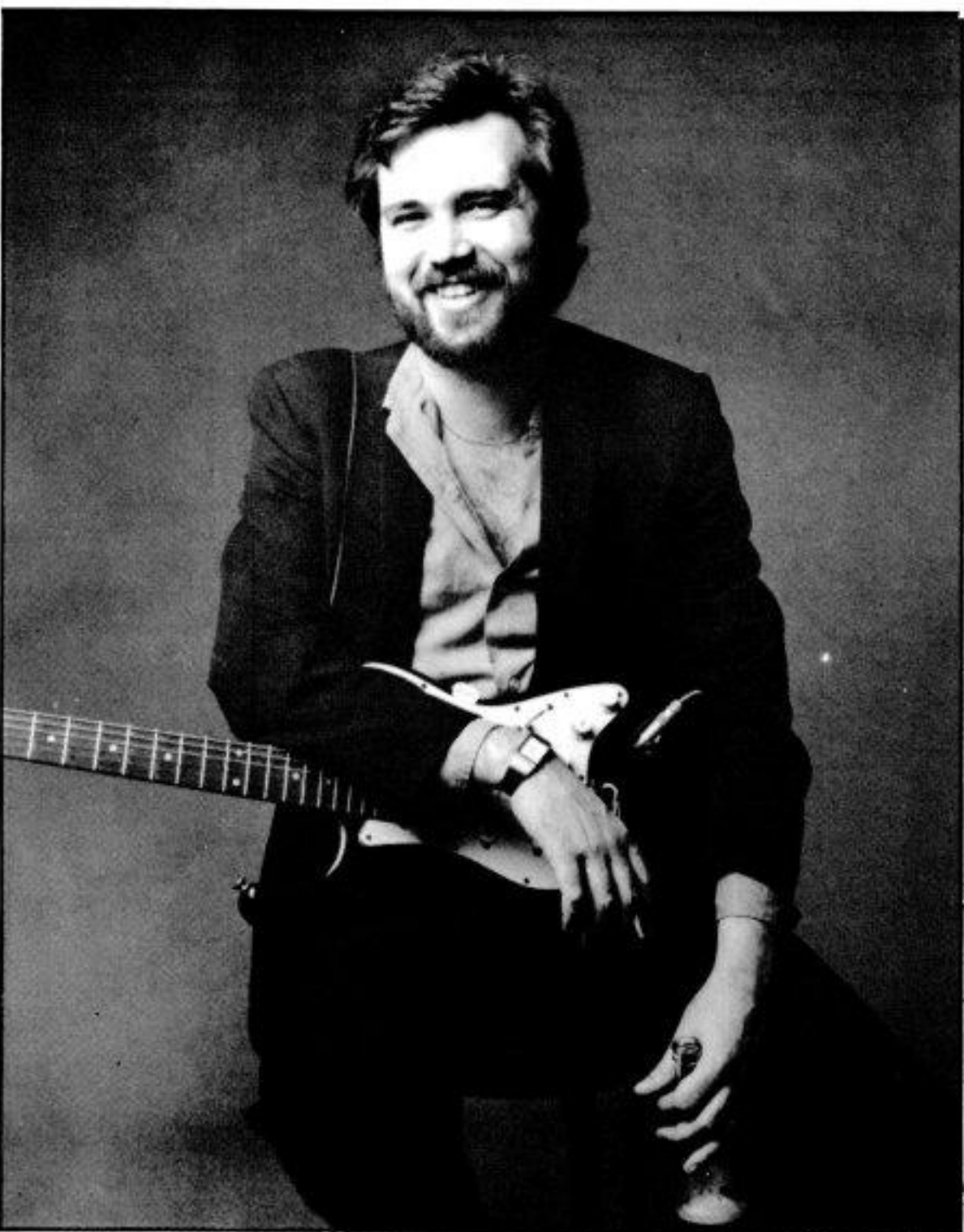


Photo: Ann Marsden

### The second of two parts

By Robin Marks

*In the last issue of Guitarist, Curt Obeda discussed his experiences as one of the boys on the Chicago Blues circuit. This time, he talks about records and the club scene in the Twin Towns, and gives us a tour of technique, from his greatest influences to an old amp he calls the "ten farm."*

*R.M.: What types of equipment do you use?*

*C.O.:* Well, the guitar I've been using for the last few years is a Stratocaster. I bought it about eight years ago, and I had to put a new pickup in there a couple of times. I was kind of bummed about that, because I had the original pickups in there. It was a '60 Strat. I

bought it real cheap. I didn't realize that you were supposed to pay thousands and thousands for vintage guitars. I bought it from a guy who played in the Daisy Dillman Band. He had real nice gear, and I guess Strats weren't real hot then. Musicians were still selling to other musicians instead of to Japanese lawyers or whoever's getting them now. Now, guitars are just outrageous. But this was great. I had the original case, and an anvil case for it, and a '60 Strat in pretty much original condition for a couple hundred bucks. Then, the other guitar I've got I don't use very often. It's a 335. I started out with an SG, and then I sold that and bought a 335. Then I bought a Strat because I thought that with a Strat and a 335, you can do anything. If you can play.

*And how about all the various possible electronic gadgets?*

Well, people have given me stuff over the years, and I still don't really know what to do with it. I've got a chorus that I use on a couple of R&B songs, and our bass player gave me a wah pedal. It's the best wah pedal I've ever seen. It's an original Vox, it's a Charlie McCoy. It's got nice throw on it, nice tone. I had to have the whole thing rebuilt because all the parts were gummed up. But I try not to use that stuff very often. A lot of times I don't even bother hooking the stuff up. I'll be playing and John will take a bass solo and I'll think, "Well, I should hook this up." It's more something to do. I play vibrato on a couple songs, but mostly I just use the reverb and the amp. Put everything on 10, turn the bass on zero. That's why I bought a small amp (pauses). Well, I don't turn it up to ten anymore, we're on eight now. I backed off a little (smiles). I thought I had better tone at eight than at ten. The difference in volume is maybe one decibel or something, but it just didn't distort quite as much.

I've got a Vibrolux reverb. I've got two of those, and I have the "Black Faced Collector's Model" which is supposedly a big deal. Of course, that's the one I don't like, because I don't think it sounds as good as the newer ones. I've been using that same amp for about eight years. I bet that thing's had 15 new sets of tubes. There's nothing original about it. I've purchased I don't know how many other amps, trying to find another amp I like. But Fender amps are like gold to me. You're going to be able to sell them for exactly the price you bought them for, in a year. So you can try it out, if you don't like it, you can sell it to somebody else. I recently bought a Fender Super 6, which may be the stupidest amp ever built. It's a twin reverb with eight tens in it, and it's huge. But I bought it for a hundred bucks. The reason I bought it is because it still had all the speakers in it. So I got eight original Fender tens for a hundred bucks. I took all the straps off and put them on my amps. I looked at all the knobs and saw which ones you could read and put those on, instead of the ones I had which were completely worn out.

*So it's a dumb amp with smart parts.*

Yeah, we call it the "Ten Farm." I don't blow too many speakers out but every once in a while one will go. Then I have to go "pick me up another ten."

*Do you aim for a certain sound, or do you just want to sound like a guitar?*

Well, I've played around with the stuff enough to know that there's certain tones that I can get. I've got a five-position switch on there, and every one of the pickups has a distinct tone, and then the out-of-phase tone. You can play with a pick, with your fingers, with your thumb, or muted with your heel on

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it. They might not be the huge tonal variations, but I do think about it. Especially when I play with a smaller band. I think "my god, how can these people listen to me play for a whole night?" I've got to do something. If nothing else, I'll change the pickup settings. I change things quite frequently actually, on different songs. I try not to play in the same key all the time, because even if you're playing the same lick, it sounds different if you play it up eight frets.

*Have you had formal guitar instruction?*

I have never had a lesson. I've just gotten down with some other guys. You know, the thing that's funny is that I always end up showing them more than they show me, because I hate to look stupid. When they show me something, I can't do it right away because I have no technique. So to get them away from looking at me, and what I'm doing clumsily, I show them something and let them figure that out. Since it takes me fifteen times as long to figure something out, I have to show them fifteen things to keep them from noticing how stupid I look.

*So how did you manage to progress musically? Did you sort of take on mentors?*

Well, one of the things that I really did was I studied the Chess records. I'm a real big fan of Robert Lockwood. I think he's one of the guys who really invented the modern blues rhythm guitar. I think that to play guitar, you have to learn how to play "guitar," and not learn to play lead guitar or rhythm guitar. I never really worked on playing leads, that's just something that came from messing around. But rhythm playing, I really sat and dug stuff out.

I remember listening to Little Walter records and listening to the same passage again and again and again, trying to figure out what kind of chords he was playing. A lot of times I'd go see Luther Allison, and I've got to credit him. I stole a lot of what he stole. He was one of those guys that knew everybody's style. Once in a while he'd say "Well, this is a Magic Sam tune," and you knew he'd play it like Magic Sam. Then you'd think about it when you got home and realize that he did this or that sort of thing. He did a lot of Lockwood and he did a lot of B.B. King, so he did a lot of the people that I liked. But I think Lockwood was the guy that I really spent the most time on. Then, a couple years ago, when we decided to start the Soul Revue, we didn't really know anything about playing soul guitar. So I spent some time with Steve Cropper. Cropper was buried a lot. I went back and tried to figure out three Jimmy Hendrix songs, tried to get that hammer-on style. A lot of times, to make the record sound good, the guitar would be moved back or you'd hear only parts of it, so the reason I pulled the Hendrix stuff out was that he was so up front the whole time.

It's really weird . . . I would just go out to a club in Chicago and I'd see something, and

Photo: Marc Norberg



I'd say "That is really cool." And then I'd get up the next morning and I'd play it. It would only take me a couple tries and it's really weird because I just sort of knew it without practicing. I guess that's partly because none of the stuff I'm doing is that difficult. The hardest part is knowing where to put it. That was something that came a lot more natural to me because I've listened to this music a lot. It's a language that I recognize. Some guys, they'll find a really cool guitar part, and it worked in one song, but for it to work in

another song, you may have to drop part of it because of where the vocals are. But they'll walk all over the vocalist because they got this cool guitar part. And, well, you should really be quiet when someone's singing.

*So who do you feel like you've learned from in person, say in Chicago?*

I learned a lot from Hubert because I played with him quite a bit. That's one of those things where you try not to sound like some-  
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## Interview with Gene Bertoncini

By Joan Griffith

On Sunday, April 1, New York guitarist Gene Bertoncini appeared with local bassist Gordy Johnson and drummer Gordon Knutson at the Dakota Bar and Grill in St. Paul. Mr. Bertoncini is probably best known as a guitarist who plays jazz on the classical guitar. His credits include performances with The Benny Goodman Sextet; singers Tony Bennett, Morgana King, Vic Damone, Edye Gorme, and Lena Horne; jazz masters Buddy Rich, Wayne Shorter, Hubert Lawes, Clark Terry, Paul Winter, and Paul Desmond. He has performed regularly on the Merv Griffin and Johnny Carson shows, and has been one of the most prolific and popular studio musicians in New York City.

Mr. Bertoncini is presently on the summer faculty at the Eastman School of Music, where he performs and conducts workshops for jazz guitarists.

Mr. Bertoncini arrived in the Twin Cities on Saturday and was gracious enough to spend a few minutes sharing his thoughts.

J.G.: Gene, I see by reading your bio, that although you started playing guitar as a kid and began playing professionally in high school, you went to college and got an architecture degree. What got you back in the music scene?

G.B.: Well, let's see. I actually never really quit playing, but I went to college because it seemed that night clubs were an unhealthy way of life. So I got a degree in architecture at Notre Dame. I then went back to New York and tried to do both music and architecture. That didn't last too long. I wanted to spend more time on music. Luckily I got a great job with the NBC staff and worked the Tonight Show. Merv Griffin made a lot of great inroads on the studio scene.

Were you playing electric?

Oh, yeah. Playing electric and studying the classical guitar with Valdez Blaine and Alexander Bellow. What made me fall in love with the classical guitar was Bream's recording of Ravel's Pavan. I heard that, and that was it for me. So much could be done with the instrument I wasn't doing with a pick. So I gradually worked the classical into jobs I was playing. I'd play some bossas on jazz gigs or accompany singers using the classical and pretty soon I was doing more arrangements for that guitar. I always had a fantasy of just guitar and bass in front of an audience. Sooner or later if you believe in that enough you realize that the other glamorous stuff is not it. You keep going home and looking in the mirror and saying that stuff isn't me, my soul. It's nice working with Lena Horne and getting first class airfare, but it's not that thing we're always searching for. That's what



lead me to start working with a duo and recording the albums.

It seems to me that there aren't too many players that are making the classical guitar swing. Are there any players you listen to for inspiration?

I guess the guy who inspired me a little was Lenny Breau. He's such an inspiration to all of us. But I think I developed my own kind of playing just from practicing the instrument and gradually incorporating different elements into it, just practicing for the love of the instrument. It really feels good to play jazz on the classical.

I think I really tried to know what I was doing more so than on the pick guitar. Pick guitar you develop chops, memorize patterns and chord grids and that's good, you know. But, on the classical I started to dig into what was actually happening harmonically.

I understand that besides all the touring and playing, that you also teach?

I teach in the summer at Eastman in New York. With the young guitar players I try to open up their minds to jazz and to a higher level of awareness as to what the guitar can do. I'm about to have a method book published by KJOS Publishing in California. I've developed my own system of teaching over the years and I'm excited about this book coming out.

You said Minneapolis is the last stop on this tour and it's back to NY—what's coming up for you?

This week I'm going to do some cuts with Maureen McGovern—just voice and guitar for her next album. I'm also working on two other albums—one with jazz singer Ethel Ennis and the other is a solo album. I don't know what's going to happen with that one. I always believe in making a painting, then worry about where to sell it.

I'm curious about what guitar you use on your gigs.

For touring and club dates I play a Takamine 325 with the built-in pick-up. It doesn't sound as nice as a miked classical, but it works fine and I can always hear myself. When I play with an orchestra I just mike the amp. I have a Valesquez classical that I love and always practice on and record with.

Gene, thanks so much for your time—good luck with all your projects.

My pleasure, I always enjoy the Twin Cities and have a great feeling about this town. ■

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## What's happenin' at Hoffman's

By Bill Connell

Visiting other local music shops doesn't prepare you for a visit to Hoffman Guitars. If not for the display of strings and the handful of guitars on the wall, you would swear you had just entered a woodworking shop. And you have. But instead of cabinets or furniture, it is guitars that you find on the workbench.

Sure, Hoffman sells parts and accessories, as well as dealing in consignments and trade-ins, but it is most basically a repair and custom work shop for all types of stringed instruments. The work ranges from simple adjustments and set-ups to full restorations of vintage instruments. "If it has strings and frets, we can repair it," said Ron Tracy, who along with Ed Beaty makes up the store's work force. Not that the store isn't busy, but the small staff ensures an emphasis on individual service. If you wonder why Hoffman advertisements aren't everywhere, it's because word-of-mouth referrals make up about all of the business they need.

What sets Hoffman repair and service apart from other shops, you might ask? Well, they have been around since 1972, for one thing (longer than anyone else), and the staff has extensive experience building and repairing. They are also one of the few authorized service centers for Martin and Gibson guitars in the state.

The shop does a wide range of repair work on guitars, as well as custom building of electric guitars and basses. Customers can commission their own design or use one of the standard styles available from parts dealers. For repairs, Hoffman's can either make the part needed, get a factory replacement or after-market part, or look for an original vintage part, as the case or wallet requires.

The most common work the shop does is guitar set-ups (basic set-up prices range from \$20-\$30 for acoustic and \$30-\$45 for electrics) and pick-up replacements on electrics. One recurring problem, as most musicians know, is the Minnesota weather. Repairing cracked wood and loose glue joints is a year-round job, although many customers with these types of problems tend not to return after a lecture from Tracy.

"People let (their instruments) dry out year after year. Usually we lecture them, tell them 'You can prevent this by staying on top of the humidity,'" he said. Keeping the instruments away from drastic changes or extremes in temperature and humidity is all that is needed. "An instrument requires a fairly stable environment. Over 110 degrees will release most glue joints. We like to keep humidity around 40 percent in here."

Tracy said the shop has done some "really strange stuff," including switching right handed guitars to left and other custom work. One customer recently had a rather large

chunk of wood taken out of his electric "to make it look weird. It didn't serve any functional purpose." Unusual instruments of late include a couple of harp guitars, some odd ethnic instruments, such as some from a Russian orchestra that went through town, and "things made out of armadillos." Once they literally had to get the bugs out of one ethnic instrument with an infestation problem.

"We had to get some bug killer stuff, and that was the repair, to keep the bugs from eating his instrument," Tracy said. "Because we have such a good reputation, we tend to get some really odd things in."

Kevin Schwab, electric mandolin builder, rents space for his work in the shop and can be found there on Saturdays. When I visited him, he had two guitars for sale, one copy each of a Telecaster and Stratocaster, but much better than standard versions. They were typical of the custom work done in the shop, featuring excellent workmanship and high quality parts. Most of the custom work done uses the best parts available, but Tracy said the design and choice of hardware is always up to the customer as far as brand choice, type of set-up—even the use of used parts—there might be something a customer wants to carry over from a past favorite.

Hoffman's Guitars began as Bellvue and Hoffman in 1972, located in the then-booming folk music district at Cedar and Riverside. Charles Hoffman, fresh from graduate school, and a friend, Rod Bellvue, took their luthier skills and opened shop. The shop quickly gained a reputation among local folkies for its quality work, and has maintained that reputation ever since. The repair business has always been the mainstay of the store, according to owner Charles Hoffman.

"(Making guitars) is no way to get rich," said Hoffman, who has built almost 350 since opening the store, but has slowed down since going to law school in 1983. He became a lawyer, and has reduced his building to only a

couple of guitars per year, but this slowing down helped return the enjoyment of making the instruments.

"It became too much of a routine," he said, "I was not getting enjoyment out of it." Hoffman still takes new orders, but many potential customers are put off not by the price (starting at \$1200) as much as the waiting. Each instrument takes about a year to be completed, but it is worth it. Hoffman builds all of the guitars himself, and has only kept the first one. All others, except for one each for his wife and son, have been sold.

As far as his philosophy toward his guitar making, Hoffman said, "Hand crafting offers an advantage that cannot be reproduced in a factory setting." That aside, he doesn't do anything to sell his guitars, but leaves that decision to the individual musician to define their idea of what guitar sound they like.

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one, but if you spend time up on stage with them, you end up doing all their licks. I stole a real lot from Albert Collins. he's such a very distinctive and bizarre player because he plays in an open tuning. I don't sound like him, but I stole quite a bit. I do my Albert Collins schtick quite a bit, but it's not very deep into what he does. He's much more inventive. I stole a couple of distinctive things that I like.

*Do you ever have any problems, being a left-handed guitarist?*

I never had a problem with that. The only thing I had a problem with when I first started was turning the volume knobs up and down while I was strumming on it. I had speed knobs on the SG when I first got it. I just had to take the knobs off and then I didn't have any problem. Now I have this kind of weird style, because I go around the knobs and I kind of do a weird thing with my wrist. But I don't have any problem with it at all.

*About your musical style . . . some of your solos sound as if they're going off into jazz, some of them sound like they're going off into rock. Is that something you do intentionally, have you played with jazz musicians before?*

I think it just sort of comes out in my blues, because jazz is a natural extension of blues and so is rock. Plus I've listened to guys that do play some jazz. I've heard stuff that I thought was really cool, and it fits in a song, so I'll pocket a lick or two. I've always said I was going to study Kenny Burrell. I'd really like to, and everyone I know says, "Curt, you should listen to Kenny Burrell. He's a jazz guy and you'd really like him." I really like the primitive stuff, like John Lee Hooker and that kind of thing, so jazz is to me sometimes more intellectual than I want to play.

*Well, some of your stuff sounds like old Coltrane solos or something . . .*

You know, that's funny, because one time a guy came up to me and he said, "You sound just like Blood Ulmer." I didn't know what that meant, I didn't know who the guy was. So I went out and got a record and I listened to it and went, "Wow, I sound like that?" Ulmer's cool, but he's crazy. But I thought of it as a compliment.

*Do you have a specific kind of voice, you know, like Lucille speaks to B.B. King. Does your guitar have a tone of voice that it speaks in, or do you just play what's coming out of you?*

I just play what's coming out of me. I play the same thing a lot, but with the band, they play a little bit different or you get a little bit bored. I really try to change it night after night. I don't know that I succeed by being wildly different, but just like anybody, I have good nights and bad nights. Sometimes I really feel like playing nothing but slow blues, other nights I'm mad and I feel like playing everything real fast.

*In your bands that have had horn sections, who's done the arranging? Has that been you?*

No. I'm terrible at that. I might tell them not to do this or that, but most of the time they just take something right off the record, because I can't do it. Some of the horn players, we just tell them to play along. Right now, though, our trombone player is doing most of the charts in the big band. We're having a little bit of difficulty. I've got some original material I'd like to do, and I just don't know what goes. All I can say is, "Nope, that's not it . . ." and they try something else and I go, "Nope, that's not it . . ." Then they say, "What do you want?" and I tell them I don't know, but it goes kind of like (hums and doo-wops). They say, "What the hell does that mean?" and I tell them I don't know, but what they just played ain't it.

*Do you have to take a different approach to what you're doing when you play with a big band, or with a horn section than you do when you play with a three piece?*

Well, among other things, with the three piece, you've got the rhythm section, and then me. So I can do whatever I want, play some chords, do some lead. Our bass player sometimes will expand his part, so I don't have to cover part of it. Then with the big band, it's very important that I don't play all over. It's very important that I don't step on the organ player, or on what the horn players are doing. With the small band, I can look over at the guys and we can decide to accent something. With a big band, it's very rare that you've going to get ten people to make eye contact all at once. So it's much more important that you either let people know what's coming by rehearsal or just kind of leave it alone. There isn't even one-tenth of the spontaneity in a big band as there is in a small band.

*So how do you feel about the situation of the blues in the Twin Cities?*

I think it's fine. The Blues Saloon is bringing people in from out of town on a pretty regular basis, and there's at least somebody you can see on any night there. The Cabooze is bringing some people in, the Guthrie has been bringing in Koko Taylor and Buddy Guy, First Avenue's brought some people in. So if you're talking about bringing some name acts in, I think it's probably as healthy as it's ever been. You've got the West Bank circuit, Five Corners, the Viking, the 400, Whiskey Junction. There's a club out in Stillwater, there's the Seventh Street Trolley on the East Side. It isn't as healthy as it has been at its peak, but bands are working. Take a look at the Sliders, they're working, the Solid Centers are working a lot.

*It seems to me like in general, the club scene in the cities has gotten smaller.*

I think that's true, but I think that's really to do with the times, with not having so much to drink. You can't pay the bands what they're

**OBEDA** to page 7

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worth because the clubs aren't making the money. It's unfortunate that liquor and music have to go so closely together. If you sell liquor, you're a good band. There's been a lot of bands that are really good, and not enough people went to see them and buy drinks, so they had to fold up. I think that's the problem, they can't sell enough drinks to keep the musicians, some of the bands and some of the venues together. A lot of places would have blues as often as they could, but it's not what's selling the drinks.

*Do you think that the raised drinking age has something to do with it?*

Yeah, I think it has a real lot to do with it. Even though the blues crowd is older, you still have 18- to 21-year-olds, and it might not be sheer numbers. I think they drink more. I think some of the crowds we bring in pay a little bit more.

*So what projects are you involved in now?*

On the 21st, we did a video of the whole show with the big band, then we're also doing a digital two track. We'll mix it right down on the spot, and if it's good enough, we'll release it as a cassette, just so we can get some product out. I've got a lot of people who want to do records with us but I'm having a real hard time with it because the money's not there or they want to do it their way. I sorta feel like I waited this long, I'm not in any rush. It's alright. I don't feel guilty that we don't have a record out. Ninety-five percent of the bands that don't even play on a weekly basis got records out. I'd like to have one out, but I want to put out a good record.

*I noticed that you hadn't put anything out for a long time.*

Well, it's hard, and there isn't really a blues label in town. Cold Wind has started, and they've released Pat Hayes latest project, that

was eight years old. I've chatted with them a little bit, but I know that they don't have the budget to do it. The Hoopsnakes, they put down their own money into it.

The toughest part is to go into the studio and record. I hate being in the studio to begin with. I really love to play live, but being in the studio, you sit around. Even if you're just going to go in and do it almost live, you're still sitting around while they're doing the drum check. Then there's always something . . . oh, there's a buzz here, and they've got to figure that out. They're always telling me to

either turn down, or that I can't use my stuff because it's got a buzz in it, and I should get something new. And I want it to sound like that, I mean, I'm sorry that there's a buzz in there, but that's the way it is.

Then I go in, and we're going to mix, and they say, "Oh, you've got so much reverb on the drums, we don't want that in there." They're always trying to make the Madonna record, and I'm still trying to make Otis Redding's first record. ■



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# PART I: The care and feeding of your guitar

By Tim Moore

The following is somewhat common knowledge to those who have been around the guitar for some time, but I consider it important to document some guitar selection and care facts for those of us who have never read "Everything you wanted to know but were afraid to ask about the acoustic instrument." This first part of a two-part series will deal with selection. Part II, which will be in the next issue, will suggest care guidelines.

Beyond the obvious criteria of price range and aesthetics, the informed buyer must first be aware of some physical options available to him/her. The scale of the classical guitar is the calculated string length for fret positioning. The actual string length, the dimension between the nut and saddle is usually a millimeter or two longer to compensate for the sharpening of the string due to its displacement while fretting. With that in mind, I will refer to the different sizes of guitars available using the term "scale." Your three choices are the short (640 mm or smaller), the standard (650 mm), and the long scale (660 mm or larger). In general, the short scale may be the choice for those with very small hands. The standard is by far the most common as it seems to provide the best compromise of all choices for projection, playability, and tone quality. The long scale normally makes for a louder guitar (in part because its total combined string tension is about 4.3 percent more than the standard) but not necessarily a better guitar. This one would be better left to those with large hands or a more developed reach.

Next and very important are the woods used in the top. The lower priced instrument may have a laminated top (like plywood layers) which can be determined by an interior inspection. Though sufficient, it is a fact that a guitar with this type of top will produce a less superior sound. The higher priced guitars (beginning at about \$400) will have solid tops, made from one of two woods, spruce or cedar. Spruce is the wood preferred by those who stress more control of the instrument's sound. Cedar has a warmer quality and produces a better sound for guitarists whose technique is less refined.

When considering physical integrity, some basic inspection points should be followed. Operate all tuning keys. They should turn smoothly, with no catching or binding. The wood surfaces on the body of a new guitar should be true with minimal, if any, dishing or unevenness. An older guitar may develop this appearance with age and in moderation is nothing to get too hung up about, so let your common sense be the judge. Look carefully for cracks. A top repair job done properly can be very costly. Nearly every guitarist I've ever met will sight down the neck of a new guitar from eye level to check for straightness. Yes,

be cautious of an obvious bow, but keep in mind that many builders will intentionally build a slight concavity to the neck and experience would be the best guideline to judge this one. Using a small inspection mirror, look into the interior of the body for a closer look at the construction and to analyze any possible repairs the guitar might have had. Be concerned about action (height of strings) that is abnormally high, as it will hinder accurate fingerfall and require more work to depress the strings. Aside from design, two possible causes of excessive height are a warped neck or the bridge glue joint lifting.

Should your guitar develop curious problems or some of the mentioned symptoms, a visit to the repair shop may be in order. Beyond the mechanical aspect, the feel and sound should be to your liking. When possible, have an experienced guitarist, not connected with the sale, play the guitar for you. His or her opinion is possibly the best consumer protection you can have.

If on your own, play scales crossing from the first through the sixth strings looking for evenness of sound, critical particularly between the third and fourth strings. It is not desirable to have a booming bass and a weak treble. Balance is the key word. Play the open string, then the twelfth fret octave, listening for correctness of pitch. If it's not correct, a possible bad string or simply bad scale is suspect. Be alert to the sustain of a tone, that of a lesser value instrument will die out sooner

than that of a good guitar. Unusual buzzing or vibrations should not be ignored. Finally, the thing that cannot be explained . . . You've got to connect, and that special guitar must speak a language that you hear in your heart. ■

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## GUITAR SCHOOL

### Beginning Improvisation

By Mike Brown

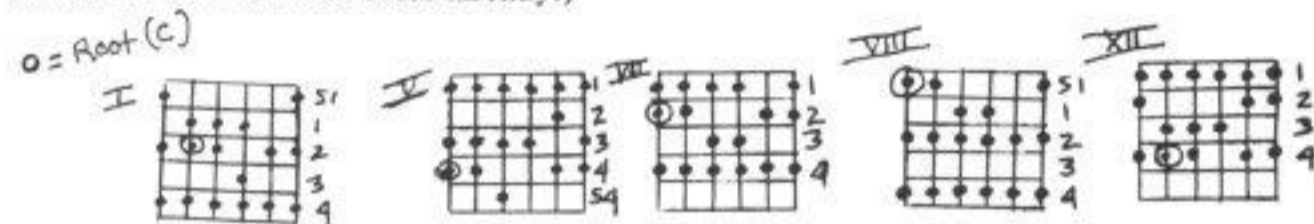
Here is an exercise that will help improve your playing in several different ways.

First of all, this exercise will help you become more familiar with the notes on the fingerboard. After teaching guitar for several years, I've found that many guitarists, even though they have been playing for some time, still have trouble in this area.

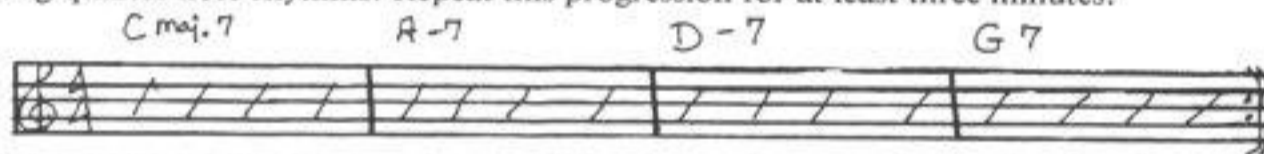
Secondly, this exercise will help you with your chord spelling. For example, if it takes you more than one second (literally) to figure out that the notes of an A-7 chord are A, C, E, and G, this exercise is just what the doctor ordered. (If you don't know how to figure this out at all, see your friendly guitar instructor at a music store or school near you.)

Thirdly, this exercise can really help you "hear" how chord tones sound against their respective chord.

So, let's start with your basic major scale fingerings in the key of "C." (I'm assuming you're somewhat familiar with these already.)



Now record this diatonic chord progression in the key of "C" on a tape recorder simply strumming quarter note rhythms. Repeat this progression for at least three minutes.



Next, select one of the above major scale fingerings and practice playing the chord tones for these particular chords using the notes of that scale fingering only.



Then, using quarter note rhythms and chord tones only, play through this progression along with the tape recorder.



Also, what you want to try to do is resolve by half step over the bar line into a new chord. If you'll notice in the above example, the major seventh (B) of the C Major 7 chord resolves by half step over the bar line to the flat 3 (C) of the A-7 chord. These notes (3rds & 7ths) are called leading tones and they define the chord type.

Of course I've written out this example, however, you will want to "improvise" your own and try to vary it every time you repeat the progression.

Once you feel comfortable with this, move up to the next scale fingering and repeat the process until you've covered all 5 positions. Then start all over in a different key.

MIKE BROWN is a Berklee College of Music graduate. He currently teaches guitar at Schmitt Music in the Rosedale Mall, The Studio Grand in St. Paul and Henly Music in West St. Paul. He also performs regularly with the variety band, Wildwood Express and his own jazz group, The Mike Brown Trio. If you have any questions or comments about this column, you can contact Mike at 646-7109.

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## Calendar of Events...May/June 1990

Doing anything interesting? Doing anything at all? Call **JOE HAUS** at 224-7366 and let everyone know! Call afternoons, and if you leave a message, please leave a date, time & phone number where we could reach you if need be. Thanks.

- MAY 1**.....7 pm—**STEVE RYKUS** plays the Delta Blues at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 2**.....7 pm—**STEVE HASKIN** unpacks his guitar at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 3**.....9 pm—the **JACK GRASSEL QUARTET** at the Dakota Bar & Grill. People in Milwaukee think this guy is great, maybe you had better check it out...
- MAY 5**.....7 pm—**TIM SPARKS** w/ **Dave Stenshoel** on fiddle & **Mark Stillman** on the accordion will play world ethnic music at your local New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 4**.....7 pm—**PAPA JOHN KOLSTAD** plays the Blues and some ragtime guitar at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 5**.....7 pm—**KAREN MUELLER** plays a mean autoharp and some guitar too, at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 7**.....7:30 pm—**JEFFREY VAN** classical guitar will play some music by Ferando Sor and a piece for guitar & fortepiano by Diabelli at the J.J. Hill House. Tickets are \$8, call 297-2555 for tix
- MAY 9**.....7 pm—**PHIL HEYWOOD** plays traditional and contemporary Blues & Rags at that place on the corner of Cedar & Riverside (the New Riverside Cafe)
- MAY 10**.....9 pm—The **DEAN MAGRAW QUARTET** will return to the Dakota Bar & Grill

- MAY 10**.....8 pm—The **JOAN GRIFFITH QUINTET** will play "Chamber Jazz" at the Crossroads Bar in Mpls.
- MAY 10**.....**OPEN STAGE** at the New Riverside Cafe. Sign-up time is 7 pm, host **Dan Carr**
- MAY 11**.....7 pm—**COLD TRUTH** will turn the heat on and rock at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 12**.....The **RANCH TONES** will play folk-rock & CW at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 12**.....3 pm—**JOAN GRIFFITH**, guitar and **Jill Allen**, flute at the Mpls. Institute of Art. FREE
- MAY 13**.....**MOTHERS' DAY**. Go buy mom a couple of Leo Kottke records
- MAY 14**.....9 pm—**DEAN MAGRAW** at the Dakota
- MAY 14**.....12 pm—**TONY HAUSER**, solo at Mankato State College
- MAY 14**.....7:30 pm—**JEFFREY VAN** will play a copy of a 19th cent. guitar in a repeat of the May 7 program. Free wine at intermission and a tour of the Hill House after the performance. Such a deal! Call 297-2555
- MAY 15**.....7 pm—**COOKER JOHN** will play acoustic blues at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 15**.....8 pm—The **JACOBEATS** with **Dean Magraw** on guitar at the Sheldon Aud. in Red Wing
- MAY 16**.....7 pm—**MIKE SALOVICH**, 6 & 12 string guitars with **Ken Sherman**, fiddle at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 18**.....8 pm—**JOE HAGEDORN**, classical guitar with soprano **Marie Jette & Bob Samarotto** at River Falls Comm. College in Wisconsin.
- MAY 19**.....7 pm—**DAITHI SPROULE**, guitar plays Celtic soul music at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 23**.....7 pm—**PHIL HEYWOOD**, traditional & con-

temporary blues & rags at the New Riverside Cafe

- MAY 23**.....7:30 pm—**THE HAUSER BROTHERS**, Tony & Michael in a duo recital at Coffman Theater in Coffman Hall on the campus of the U of M
- MAY 26**.....7pm—**JERRY RAU**, singer, songwriter and guitarist at the New Riverside Cafe
- MAY 31**.....8 pm—**PHIL RUKAVINA**, lute with Minstrelsy at the Metropolitan Comm. College
- JUNE 1**.....4 pm—**TONY HAUSER**, classical guitar will play all afternoon at the Alexis Bailey Winery located out on Highway 61 south of Hastings
- JUNE 3**.....1 pm—**TONY HAUSER**, guitar with **BETTY BRAUNSTEIN**, flute at the Alexis Bailey Winery
- JUNE 6**.....On this date in 1962 the Beatles auditioned for EMI Records, what's on your calendar?
- JUNE 6**.....7 pm—**STEVE HASKIN** performs contemporary acoustic guitar music at the New Riverside Cafe
- JUNE 8**.....1 pm—**TONY HAUSER**, solo at the Alexis Bailey Winery
- JUNE 9**.....7 pm—**CHRIS MILLER**, flatpicking all night at the New Riverside Cafe
- JUNE 9**.....**LES PAUL**, guitarist and inventor was born on this date in 1923
- JUNE 10**.....1 pm—**TONY HAUSER & BETTY BRAUNSTEIN**, music for guitar & flute will charm everyone at the Alexis Bailey Winery
- JUNE 13**.....7 pm—**PHIL HEYWOOD** will demonstrate how he won all those guitar pickin' contests at the New Riverside Cafe

CALENDAR to page 11

### HOFFMAN's from page 5

"The only way to decide is to play one, or two, or a dozen," he said.

Hoffman stresses the personal choice in finding a guitar sound. In the process of building guitars, he developed the Hoffman sound. Both Hoffman and Tracy describe it as "a real balanced sound" with equal emphasis on high and low tones.

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# THE PERSONAL TOUCH.





**CALENDAR** from page 10

- JUNE 14** . . . . 7 pm—**OPEN STAGE** at the New Riverside Cafe
- JUNE 14** . . . . 7 pm—**COOKER JOHN** has the blues real bad at the New Riverside Cafe.
- JUNE 14** . . . . 7 pm—**OPEN STAGE** plays **COOKER JOHN** real bad
- JUNE 20** . . . . 7 pm—**CHET ATKINS & BRIAN WILSON** were both born on this day and **MIKE SALOVICH** will pay tribute to both at the New Riverside Cafe
- JUNE 21** . . . . 7 pm—**CATHY NIXON** will play contemporary and original folk music at the New Riverside Cafe
- JUNE 22** . . . . 7 pm—**MARY DEVITT & JULIE DINS-MORE** play original & contemporary folk music at the New Riverside Cafe
- JUNE 27** . . . . 7 pm—**PHIL HEYWOOD** at the New Riverside Cafe
- JUNE 28** . . . . 7 pm—**TRADITIONAL MUSIC** night at the New Riverside Cafe

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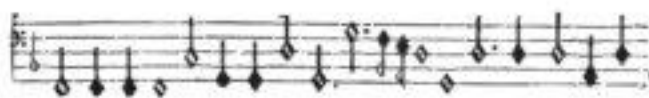
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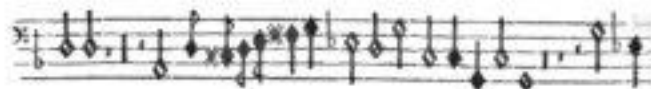
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