

# Instruments with personal touch

Several artisans in Eugene are handing down tradition by handcrafting musical instruments.

While two local instrument makers, Sam Jones and Judy Scher, are specializing in making traditional folk instruments, another artist, Steve Davies, has brought amplified instrument-making to Eugene.

When Jones graduated from high school in 1965, an experiment to replicate a Kentucky-style stringed folk instrument called a dulcimer led him to a career in stringed-instrument making.

"The first (dulcimer) was a solid fingerboard, so it wasn't very loud. After that we realized it had to be hollowed out," Jones recalls.

Popular demand kept Jones producing, and today he says he has made about 50 dulcimers, 30 fretless banjos, 10 guitars and 8 mandolins.

Jones says his wood-working and instrument making business is promoted by word-of-mouth.

Jones' handmade instruments are comparably priced to store-bought instruments of similar quality. His guitars and mandolins sell for about \$1,000, while his dulcimers run about \$300 each.

However, the fretless banjo is a traditional breed, and is not mass-produced. Jones sells those instruments for \$200.

"It's a specialized instrument. The only way to get one is to make one yourself or find a craftsman," Jones says.

Jones' contributions to traditional folk music extend beyond instrument making. His fiddle band, The Northern Broadcasters, headlines at some of the Eugene Folklore Society monthly square dances at Willard School.

Another local instrument maker is Judy Scher. Preservation of traditional folk music also interests Scher, who handcrafts and sells Bodhrans — old-Irish style drums.

Scher's career began with dulcimer-making lessons from Sam Jones in 1979. In 1980 Scher and Jones each received requests for handmade drums.

"The person who asked Sam to make him a drum specified how he wanted it made, and we both used those modifications," Scher said.

Completion of the first drum took about two weeks, and two to three failures of trying to steam bend the wood, Scher recalls.

Tacking the goatskin head to the rim of the drum was another skill that required perfecting.

"I probably had to take skins on and off six drums before I



Steve Davies of Stephen's Stringed Instruments is one of several local people who makes musical instruments.

got it right," Scher says.

However, Scher now spends about 12 hours making each Bodhran, and has completed about 20 since she began in 1980.

Scher says she has sold about ten drums to individuals and to Artichoke Music in Portland, and she hopes her booth at the Northwest Regional Folk Life Festival in Seattle, on May 25 through May 28, will increase her sales and contacts.

As a supplement to drum-making, Scher does some string instrument repairs and crafts, and she markets other woodwork.

Another instrument artisan, Steve Davies, says he makes electric and amplified acoustic guitars designed for performance use.

"Most of our market is with professional musicians because our instruments are quite expensive," says the owner of Stephen's Stringed Instruments. "I think our first big name sale was to Hoyt Axton," Davies recalls.

The Axton sale came from the

first batch of steel string guitars that Davies designed in 1979, and produced with partner David Shaw, in 1980. Stephen's gradually branched into producing classical, 12-string and electric guitars.

Davies says his shop produces about 20 to 50 guitars each year, which are sold to individuals and regional music stores. However, Davies says, interest in wholesaling Stephen's guitars, which range in price from \$700 to \$1,200, has recently come from New York.

To know Stephen's guitars is to love them. Several months ago guitarist Robert Cray heard Davies playing a Stephen's electric guitar at a blues jam at Old Taylor's bar. The next day Cray purchased one of Davies' electric guitars.

Stephen's Stringed Instruments will feature a booth at this weekend street fair, which will be held outside the EMU in conjunction with the 14th Annual Willamette Valley Folk Festival.

Lori Steinhauer

## Three day Folk Fest gets under way today

The 14th Annual Willamette Valley Folk Festival opens today and runs through Sunday, May 20. It will highlight Ritmo Tropical, a 13-piece Latin band from Portland, at 8 p.m. tonight. Obo Addy and Kukrudu, who incorporate traditional Ghanaian drumming with American electric sounds, is Saturday evening's headliner.

All other festival performers were selected from audition tapes submitted to the EMU Cultural Forum, says Jamie McKillop, co-coordinator for the event.

Following is a list of events schedule for the three day festival:

### FRIDAY, MAY 18

12:00 p.m., O'Caralans Consort

12:45 p.m., Jim Kuoni

1:15 p.m., Aurora

2:00 p.m., Rob MacKintosh and Laurie Brown

2:45 p.m., Robbie Basho

4:00 p.m., Beer Garden at Alder Street Tennis Courts:

Crazy Eights

7:00 p.m., Compton, Doherty and Einhorn

8:00 p.m., Ritmo Tropical

### SATURDAY, MAY 19

11:00 a.m., Linda Danielson and Chico Schwall

11:30 a.m., Sam Rainey

12:00 p.m., Sandunga

12:45 p.m., Darning, Ovellette and Franklin

1:15 p.m., Jim Guthrie

1:30 p.m., Radiance

2:45 p.m., File Gumbo

3:15 p.m., Manzanita

4:00 p.m., Eric Tingstad

5:30 p.m., Barbara Turril

6:00 p.m., Crystal Flame

6:45 p.m., Balafo

8:00 p.m., Obo Addy and Kukrudu

### SUNDAY, MAY 20

11:00 a.m., University Gospel Ensemble

12:00 p.m., Jim, Dave and Rich

12:40 p.m., Mike and Carlene McCornack

1:15 p.m., Rural Recharge

2:00 p.m., Jon Sirkus

3:00 p.m., Wylde Thyme

3:45 p.m., Hedgehogs

4:20 p.m., Wolf Creek

5:00 p.m., Shumba

## Fear and loathing in Mac Court

Some have pegged him a heretic; others call him a saint. Then there are those who refer to gonzo journalist, Hunter S. Thompson as simply a "strange potato."

Whatever or whoever he is, "An Evening of Questions and Answers Political in Nature with Dr. Hunter S. Thompson," promises to be more interesting than any spud-planting ceremony on campus has ever been.

The 44-year-old Thompson, who is coming to campus Thursday, May 24, at 8 p.m. in McArthur Court, is best known for his unusual stream-of-consciousness writing style, as well his affinity for ingesting remarkable quantities of alcohol and illegal substances. Thompson himself admits to having "courted brain damage like some courtesan of darkness."

Thompson's journalistic career has meandered from mainstream to left field, beginning in 1959 with a one-year stint as Caribbean correspondent for TIME

magazine. Thereafter he followed assignments for several national newspapers and magazines.

Rolling Stone readers remember Thompson as national affairs editor from 1970 to 1981, and High Times fans are familiar with his contributions as global affairs correspondent since 1977.

His first book, an inside look at America's most notorious motorcycle gang titled "Hell's Angels" (1966), was followed by the popular "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" (1972), his crazed account of a district attorney's convention in Sin City.

"Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail" (1973), "The Great Shark Hunt" (1977), and "Kona Stories" (1980), followed.

Thompson was also the subject for the Bill Murray film, "Where the Buffalo Roam," and was the model for Duke in Gary Trudeau's Doonesbury comic strip.

Tickets are on sale at the EMU Main Desk; \$3 for students, \$4 for the general public.

**Rainbow Run — 8 km**  
*Run with the business school*  
**Saturday, May 19th • 9:00 a.m.**  
 Registration: Pick up entry forms at all local sports stores or MBAA lounge.  
 Race location: Courtyard of Gilbert Hall  
 T-Shirts and Prizes  
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