

Traveling TRICKSTERS

By Nicole Garton
Oregon Daily Emerald

Chris Chandler doesn't remember trying out to be the University of Georgia mascot at age three, but he's been told he picked his nose and jumped off the stage shouting, "I'm Superman! I'm Superman!"

He didn't get the part. Decades later, Chandler has refined his act somewhat, but he hasn't lost that unpredictable comic edge. Although you probably won't hear him claim super hero status, you may hear him comment on the idolizing of Elvis Presley.

Chandler and his band, the Convenience Store Troubadours, will capture the stage at the BUZZ Coffee House tonight with their outrageous combination of poetry, music, humor and social commentary.

"We're a roaming band of troubadour tricksters from all over the country," Chandler describes. "All the real estate we own between us is one Ford van registered in New Orleans."

The music of the Troubadours loosely falls into the folk category, but people who are comfortable with traditional

folk often don't know what to do with the band, says Doug Tucker, host of KWVA's "texas chainsaw acoustic hour."

"They're pushing the borders quite drastically," he explains. He describes their performance as vaudevillian — a musical theater experience, but with a twist.

To the beat of Chad Austinson's drums and the wail of Frankie Hernandez's trumpet, Chandler delivers poetry co-written with Tarot card reader Phil Rockstroh, and Laura Freeman sings backup.

But while the show may be energetic and sometimes kooky, its content was designed to make people think. Through his poetry, Chandler explores social and political issues, often commenting on the ironies of life in America. Peter Yarrow of the folk trio Peter Paul and Mary compared Chandler to folk legend Woody Guthrie.

"Chris is someone who says, 'I'm out there experiencing the real world, I'm reporting on what I'm seeing, and what I'm seeing isn't really nice,'" Tucker says. "You could teach a course in sociology based on his disc."

He characterizes Chandler as "the professor you wish you had ... almost like a caricature of a poet," with crazy antics that get the audience involved. At the same time,

Chris Chandler and
the Convenience
Store Troubadours
bring back
beatnik days

Tucker has seen audience members responding intellectually to the performance.

"You can see people thinking — their head pauses, their eyes brighten and their face freezes for a second," he says.

That's why Mandolin Kadera-Redmond, performing arts coordinator for the UO Cultural Forum, believes the BUZZ is the perfect venue for the Troubadours.

"I thought it was about time to show that the spoken word is coming back; it's not just history from the beat times," she says. "The BUZZ is one of those coffee shop scenes I think the spoken word belongs in, to take us back to that beat time."

The Troubadours swept through Eugene last summer for performances at the Oregon Country Fair and John Henry's, and they look forward to returning.

"[Eugene is] one of the many psychic vortexes of the country," Chandler says in a telephone interview from a diner in California. The band is on the road for 40 straight days of performing, and this is their sole day off until it's over.

"We'll do two shows tomorrow to make up for it," he says, laughing. Then they're off for one show in Eugene before heading up to Vancouver Island for four or five days, after which they will loop back down through Portland.

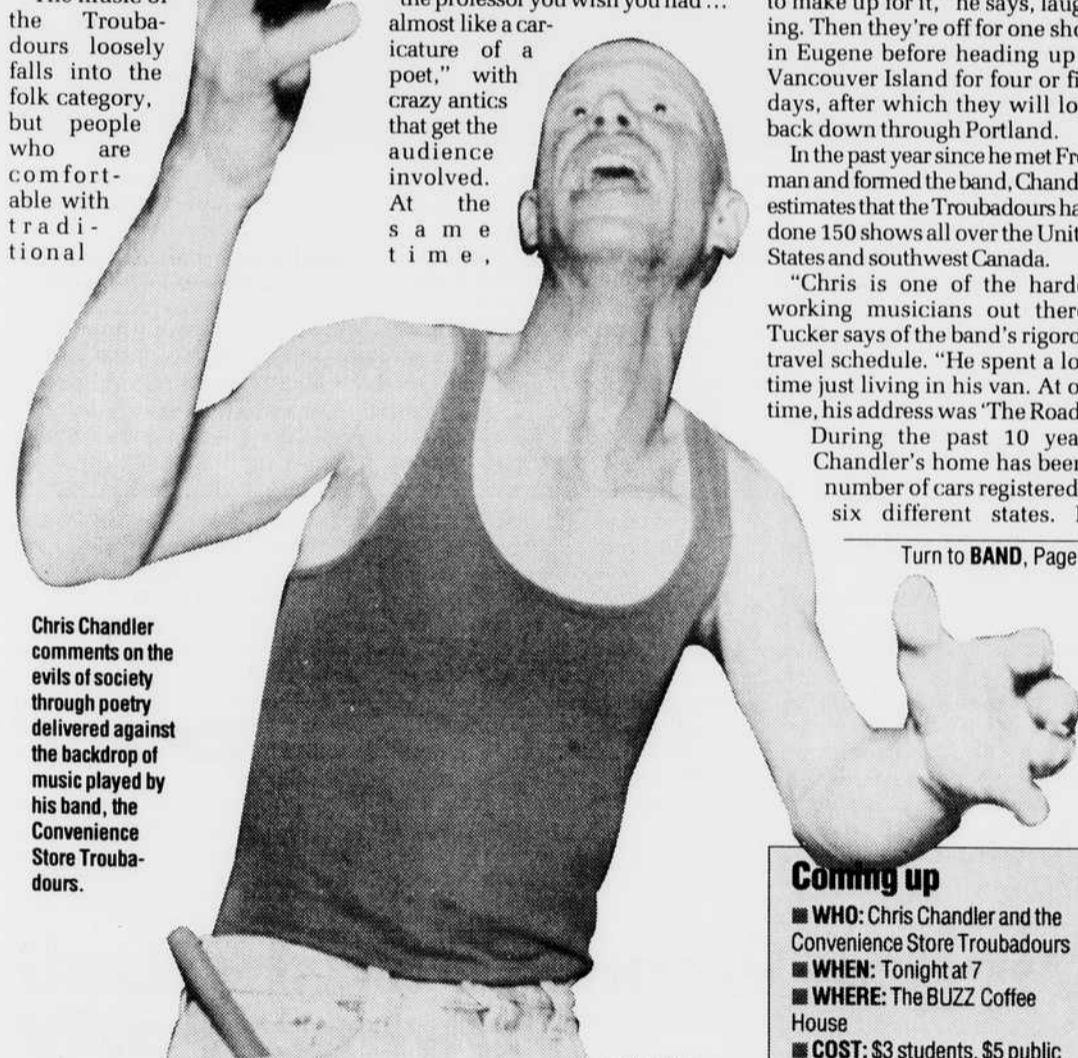
In the past year since he met Freeman and formed the band, Chandler estimates that the Troubadours have done 150 shows all over the United States and southwest Canada.

"Chris is one of the hardest working musicians out there," Tucker says of the band's rigorous travel schedule. "He spent a long time just living in his van. At one time, his address was 'The Road.'"

During the past 10 years, Chandler's home has been a number of cars registered in six different states. He

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Chris Chandler comments on the evils of society through poetry delivered against the backdrop of music played by his band, the Convenience Store Troubadours.



Courtesy photo

Coming up

- **WHO:** Chris Chandler and the Convenience Store Troubadours
- **WHEN:** Tonight at 7
- **WHERE:** The BUZZ Coffee House
- **COST:** \$3 students, \$5 public

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