

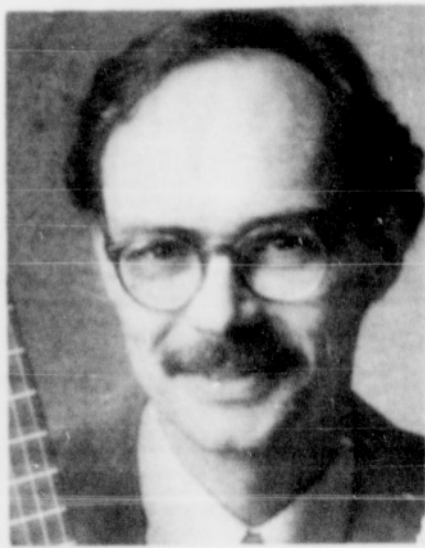


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Gramps is Back !!
By B.L. Hulls

I can't remember the first time I saw Baby Gramps. It seems like I've always known him, time seems to go at a different speed when he's around. It was probably at the Pike St. Market in Seattle in the late sixties or the early seventies. I do remember having to rescue him from Dammasch (Mental Hospital) when he was taken there by Portland police after having explained that his name was "Baby Gramps"; they just assumed he was crazy. Who am I to doubt the Portland police? He looked exactly like he does now, twenty years ago; oh, a few more miles on the speedometer, but the same basic model. He was quoted by Glenn Howard (Curator of the American Musical Heritage Foundation): "Ever since I was a little boy, I always wanted to be an oooooold man." No, I don't know exactly how old he is, but I don't think he has ever been "carded" in a tavern.

I do know one thing about Gramps: he is the most original, interesting and accomplished performer never to be signed to a recording contract, and has no "product" to sell. (He has one of the most extensive mailing lists, in the tiniest lettering you will ever see, so when at long last he does make a record/ tape/ CD he will "go gold" instantly.) To find him on records is possible but very difficult. There are eight albums he is featured on, but they are compilation albums, mostly of festivals and fairs like the Oregon Country Fair, where he usually can be found once a year.

In these times of musicians who sound just like clones of each other, produced with formulas, and marketed like any other product, Gramps defies the "reality" of the Music Business. That is not to say he isn't successful, not by a long shot!! He has played for millions, opened for some of the great names in music: Joan Baez, The Blasters, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones (he named their latest album, UFO Tofu, which is a palindrome, which he collects, and has written into a very long, funny and mentally challenging song, called, obviously, "Palindromes"). He does soundtracks for movies including the Academy Award nominated "Streetwise", has appeared in movies -- with Jeff Bridges in "American Heart", and has been live on National Public Radio with John Hockenberry.

Even though Paul De Barros of the Seattle Times calls him the "Most famous musician in Seattle", he is more than a Northwest favorite. Gramps managed to "make it" in the Big Apple, pretty much proving he can make it anywhere. James Marshall from the East Village Eye calls him, "The living embodiment of everything wonderful in the last hundred years of American music, wrapped up in one totally eccentric package that is consistent in every way. I have honestly never heard better music or seen a better performer anywhere."

So, if you have a mind of your own, and don't think everything "good" is on television, you might want to drop by Flying Barney's August 6th and see something very special, and yes, you can bring the kids, and yes, they will enjoy it as much as you do. And you can catch him August 27th at the Odd Fellows Hall (how perfect) in Corvallis (223 SW 2nd at 9PM).

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August 4th 7 pm Gary Keiski, Musician on the electric violin "Busking, Jazz and Musical Esoterica"
August 14th 6:30 pm **Northern Migration**, a performance on the river by Lorraine Ortiz and friends
August 17th 7pm **Marguerite Ely**, keyboards & piano
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August 24th 7pm
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