



Heart First, Music Second

Folk musician Peter Thompson gives back through music

by Amanda Burhop

There are lots of reasons musicians like to play the Oregon Country Fair: large audiences, outside venues, fellow musicians to chat with and like-minded spectators to appreciate the music. And for the most part, everyone's in a good mood

— maybe it's the vitamin D from all that sun exposure. But some musicians play music because it allows them to give something back to the community.

Folk musician and personal-injury lawyer Peter Thompson was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease about five years ago. While news of this nature is startling and devastating, Thompson has remained positive and has

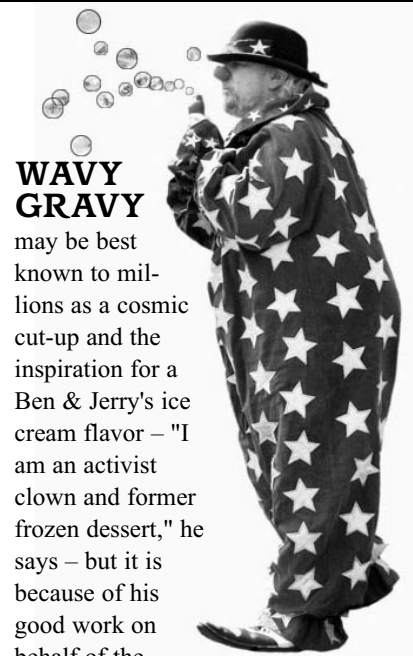
taken a proactive stance in helping others fight the disease. His latest release, *Taking a Dive (Heart First)*, is a collection of cover songs, loaded with guest singers and musicians, that includes covers of traditional folk and bluegrass songs from artists like Bob Dylan and Tom Paxton. But unlike most albums, a portion of its proceeds will benefit the Parkinson's Society of Canada.

In selecting songs for the album, Thompson had a specific theme in mind. "It goes from the freewheeling days to falling in love, settling in with children and pets, getting older, drifting apart, remorse at the loss and finally getting up and carrying on," Thompson says. In reflecting the various stages in life, the album offers something for everyone and succeeds at creating listening pleasure for children as well as older folks.

But listening to the album, one can't help but be saddened by Thompson's diagnosis. Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disease that occurs when bodies stop producing the movement-controlling chemical dopamine. Dopamine carries signals between nerves in the brain, and when the cells that produce dopamine die, symptoms like tremors and rigidity of muscles become apparent. Dopamine also controls moods, and without it, people experience bouts of depression. Currently there is no cure for the disease, but Parkinson's researchers all over the world are working to find one.

The Parkinson's Society of Canada, which will benefit from sales of Thompson's album, is a national, nonprofit charity run by volunteers who raise money for research, develop educational and informational materials and work to "ease the burden and find a cure."

OK, so most of us aren't doctors or loaded with tons of money that we can give freely to charitable organizations. But Peter Thompson is a great example of the ways we can contribute individually. In addition to his donated album sales, Thompson works with people every day who struggle with insurance companies and other legal issues. If you would like to purchase his album, copies are available on his website, www.peterthompson.ca — or buy one in person at his appearance at the Fair. He plays from 1 to 3 pm Saturday in front of Café Lafayette. **EW**



WAVY GRAVY

may be best known to millions as a cosmic cut-up and the inspiration for a Ben & Jerry's ice cream flavor — "I am an activist clown and former frozen dessert," he says — but it is because of his good work on behalf of the planet and its least fortunate residents that Wavy Gravy has achieved his own brand of sainthood. His friend and satirist Paul Krassner has called him "the illegitimate son of Harpo Marx and Mother Teresa." Wavy says, "Some people tell me I'm a saint, I tell them I'm Saint Misbehavin'."

Mr. Gravy comes to the Fair as part of the Spoken Word program that features poets, musicians, cultural icons, activists and word-smiths; seventy-two different speakers on 7 separate stages.

More information and a full schedule at: oregoncountryfair.org

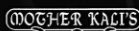
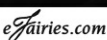
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