

# Waiting For Jerry Garcia



photo: Sam Silver

by Sam Silver

The dressing room in the Keystone lies behind the bar and adjacent to the pooltable. The pooltable is the 25¢ style and the players are very stylized. They play with an abandon that makes the back of Keystone Berkeley a very strange place. In this area the band was jiving before the gig. "Anybody know about a gas station in Berkeley?"

"There's one in the City."

"Thanks."

An astrologer makes his way into the room. Green immediately lays his fiddle down and surrounds this star-seer. "Listen, I have to talk to you, but not here."

"Whats wrong with here?"

"It's not the sort of thing I can talk about.....It's a marital problem."

Green is left unsatisfied. He goes back to his fiddle. He begins to play a thing that brought smiles to all.

Grissman: "What is that?"

Green; "It's Florian Zabach."

Garcia; "What key is in in?"

Green; "Fuck it, I'll just aggravate myself."

Out of the dressing room. The pool sharks are still doing their nine-ball thing and out into the front is the everfilling Keystone. Still an hour before the band would strike it up and Bear, also known

as Owsley, is working the mikes around with the help of a woman. The Great Merican String Band very obviously enjoys that good offices of the Grateful Dead organization.

"Could you please move?"

"I will as soon as the music starts. I will surely transformigate miself. You will surely be able to see."

You know who Jerry Garcia is. You might also know that Richard Green is a good fiddler. You remember John Kohn from his playing with Garcia. David Nichtern wrote *Midnight on the Oasis* and both he and David Grissman played with Maria Muldaur on her hit album.

All of these men collectively make up the Great American String Band. They play totally nonelectric music. They did this at the Keystone in Berkeley last Sunday night.

Garcia is not the star of the band. He plays banjo but this band has two other lead instruments--namely the fiddle and the fretted fiddle of mandolin. Despite this, he is the star of the band. He is the man "who would risk his neck for his brother man" Garcia. Garcia is the mystical force who can fill up the Keystone without even one amplifier.

There seemed to be an incon-

gruity heré. It was 10 pm Sunday night. The moon was full and in Scorpio, the crowd seemed to be there to see Jerry. They seemed to be a hard rock crowd. Lots of Dead freaks. Jerry was here all right. He had 1/3 of the lead and he was playing in back of a front line of Jewish bluegrass players. Playing in the background and with a very unamplified banjo. Could the people take it?

The Keystone is the sort of club that is built for loud music. The walls are dark, the P.A. plays neat but loud music while we all wait for Jerry and the boys. The whole effect of the club is to let you achieve wild flights of rock and roll energy without your neighbors even daring to think you strange.

Waiting for Garcia the people are patient but a little paranoid. They and I wait until 11 for the first set. I await emergence of the band eagerly. I wonder if this hard-looking crowd are really fiddle freaks. Could they really appreciate a mandolin? The band appears and the questions are answered. There are schizophrenics, both Dead freaks and hooked on the B.....GrASS.

Green is the spokesman for the

band. He goes into his best p.r. voice and introduces the numbers, thanks the audience and introduces the players. He smiles a lot and bows a lot. He takes bows because he plays his ass off.

The band is arranged in two lines. The front line is Nichtern on guitar, Green on fiddle and Grissman, known as Dog, on mandolin. The backfield is filled with John Kohn playing a big mother of a full bass and Jerry picking at the banjo.

The first number is called *Dogs Bone*, written by Grissman. It's a tour de force for the front line. The crowd roars. The band continues to play this very electric music. It's set up like bluegrass but the music is from all over. A country tune mistakenly credited to Buddy Emmons--really belongs to Buddy Spiker -- called *Bud's Bounce*. An occasional Carter Family song and especially the very original numbers by especially Nichtern and Grissman.

Then comes the most incredible part of the set. The quintet goes into a Django Rheinhardt number called *Swing 42*. The original Django number was rearranged. Where Django used only his gypsy guitar, the boys use a

guitar and a mandolin. The transposition is excellent. *Swing 42* flows through the reviewer, the audience. Even the bad painting of Jimi Hendrix starts to glow. The band is playing JAZZ.

The Band is bit unsure of the crowd. Green introduces Django with an embarrassing remark that "All of you should know who he is." Green can dig the subtleness of Django. He is surprised. The people all glow.

At this point Grissman emerges as a very neat mandolin player. He handles the Django riffs with consummate ease. He becomes a man to watch.

So strange to say that the music is worth waiting for. It is though. There are vocals, Nichtern sings about his oasis, and Jerry, Richard and David become a chorus on occasion.

This feels like the place where music should be. This is the band with the best of all possible pickers for the unique job of creating a new music. They went back thirty years to find the basis of their new music and they took it from a gypsy.

This is a very special band. They will surely make you smile and I heartily recommend them.

A two-fingered gypsy guitar pleyer--such a person to rippppp off....

## Mandalas Made Of Bodies

Committed dancers live their lives for the form and their bodies are always as disciplined as the choreography of the works in which they perform. All art forms are selfish, and the Dance is no different. It is done for the self, to prove something to the self, and, of all the arts, it is the one most closely associated with professional sports.

Those are a few of the random thoughts running through my skull along with the flashes of light and color woven into the various segments of Carlos Carvajal's *Golden Rain*. The music is traditional Balinese and Javanese, monotonous to the Western ear, particularly since it's near destruction by a decade of hard rock. The mood of *Rain* is as romantic as the attitudes. The sets are "Mandalas;" the first, using "nine flowers," all women, contrasts sharply with the second as the delicate movement of the flowers is jarred by the chants of the island warriors involved in their competitive games and initiation rites.

All men, the warriors. Ah, tra-

dition.

From my seat on the mezzanine of the Nourse Auditorium, the Mandalas were clear in a way I'm sure they were not from the main floor. To appreciate a work like *Golden Rain* and any other dance for that matter the whole must be seen as well as the individual parts. Those seated below could not have seen the circular Mandalas, only the dancers near the apron of the stage. This is unfortunate.

Beautifully orchestrated environment by Crystal Rainbow.

Traditional dancers always wear costumes and when a role calls for nudity, the wardrobe mistress has to come up with a skin. So it was in *Rites of Spring*. That wasn't a debutante streaking Dance Spectrum to chalk up a few points in Palo Alto, just the sacrificial victim in a flesh-colored costume. Skin tight.

Absolutely yummy, if you'll pardon a colloquialism.

*Spring* is a dance of the elements, seasons, and planets. This production was choreographed by Bruce Bain. Makes you feel good.

It's a lush evening of entertainment with a lobby show you can join just by wearing your fur Chubby and diamond-studded denims. Lot of hot boots and platforms and cigarette holders and cufflinks around, not to mention an "organic" food bar and a show of dance photography on the mezzanine.

It's cheaper and more interesting than *The Great Gatsby*, about \$3.50. They're doing it again this weekend with several different dances. 824-5044 for information. --C.G.