

From country to jazz--a snap

By Philip Elwood

Watch out for the Great American String Band. In fact, you ought to stop, look, and listen to them.

The presence of the Grateful Dead's Jerry Garcia in the Great American String Band's personnel, and a complement of otherwise fairly well known Bay Area folk-bluegrass-country-rockers (like fiddler Richard Greene) may make the ordinary fan assume that this is just a spin-off group of casual interest and minimal artistic quality.

In truth, the GASB is the first Bay Area band that I've heard that is moving through rock, folk, bluegrass, country, and jazz into a field of exciting string-instrument improvisation and creativity without allowing itself to be categorized at any point.

Wednesday night they played San Anselmo's Lion's Share, last night and tonight they're at the Keystone Berkeley. If you are a Garcia (Grateful Dead variety) freak or a Greene fan (from old Stoneground days) you'll want to listen as a matter of dedication.

But if you like the old sounds of Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grappelli (and the 1930s Quintet of the Hot Club of France) you'll also want to catch the GASB, because they play lots of material from those good old good ones.

And the GASB also wanders musically into the yesteryear of the Teddy Roosevelt era, featuring mandolin by David Grisman and the superbly precise guitar of David Nichtern.

Bassist in the band is Buell Neidlinger, an enthusiastic and compatible instrumentalist with a feeling for jazz, a unique tendency to bow most of the time (even with staccato move-

ments) and yet a country-bluegrass thumpiness that lifts the quintet off their beat when all the stops are out.

Fiddler Greene is astonishing, certainly one of the royalty of Bay Area pop-music artists. His country and bluegrass phrasing is impeccable and his ability to phrase on old tunes (like "Limehouse Blues") is remarkable.

On "Moonlight Waltz," Garcia played Spanish guitar beautifully, with Greene and Nichtern out front; on "Methodist Preacher" Greene turned hoe-down fiddler, Grisman following along. "I'll Be a Gambler If You'll Deal the Cards" was Nichtern's, with plenty of his Doc Watson-style guitar interludes.

This band is beautiful and refreshing. They do all kinds of string band work but seem to enjoy the ensemble interaction more than solos. And if Greene isn't one of the best musicians (instruments aside) we have in our midst, then my ears deceive me.

Garcia, of course, is splendid. He takes a musical and visual back seat in the GASB, soloing on banjo and guitar plenty, singing a bit, but never thrusting his way into prominence. His banjo, interestingly enough, is more jazz oriented than bluegrass style.

And speaking of peculiar modifications of instrumental traditions, the mandolinist with the other group last night at Keystone Berkeley, Frank Wakefield, is another of the individualists in contemporary music.

Wakefield plays mandolin

like it's a ukelele or banjo gone wild, breaking all the country-music rules for his instrument and swinging the sounds of his group, "The Good Ol' Boys" unmercifully. Dave Nelson, the quar-

ter's guitarist, is another bright artist, and fiddler Fred Wiesz and banjoist Sandy Rothman are plugging along, trying to get used to Wakefield's dominant sound within the band.

HELD OVER
BY POPULAR DEMAND!
-Must Close July 7-

Tonite at 8:30-Tomorrow 2:30 & 8:30
 Sunday 3 & 7:30

"HOWLINGLY FUNNY, IRRESISTIBLE!"

—Stanley Eichelbaum, S.F. EXAMINER

"A BRAVURA PERFORMANCE."

—Herb Caen, S.F. CHRONICLE

"A RIOTOUSLY FUNNY EVENING!"

—Barbara Bladen, SAN MATEO TIMES

**JOSE
 FERRER**

**PHIL
 LEEDS**



in Neil Simon's
 Broadway
 Smash-Hit

**THE SUNSHINE
 BOYS**

BOX OFFICE PHONE: 673-6440
 A.C.T. Geary Theatre / Geary & Mason Sts.

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY

**Brāhms
 Festival**

WILLIAM STEINBERG

Guest Conductor

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

OPERA HOUSE 8:30

Violin Concerto
 Edith Peinemann, Violinist
 Symphony No. 4

TICKETS NOW ON SALE: \$5/\$6.50/\$7.50/\$8.50/\$10

Sherman Clay, 141 Kearny St., phone 397-0717; Opera House-North Lobby, phone 626-8345; Neil Thrums-Oakland; Macy's; Peninsula and San Jose BO's and All Major Ticket Agencies. *BankAmericard & Master Charge Accepted.

Dear Fran:

Let's meet for
 lunch or cocktails
 at the new