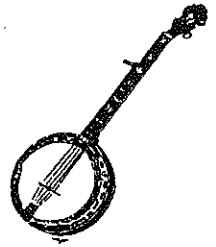


The Folk Club

of Reston-Herndon

...Preserving Folk Traditions



Vol 8, No 1; January, 1994

Music in Cyberspace

by Lou Ruffino

The previously advertised discussion of Moose Music (which was to be a report on folk music in Toronto) was cancelled on account of snow... Instead, this article will attempt to give you folkies a feeling for the BIGGEST folk club in the world—the electronic folk club on the “Internet.”

While many of you computer-literati are aware of the publicity being given to the National Information Highway and the more frequently mentioned Internet, what may not be obvious is that this network also provides access to all kinds of music!

Regrettably, you usually also have to digest all kinds of technical jargon and “unfriendly” user commands to get at this treasure. But, if you can stand the oversimplified description below of the Internet and its information resources, you can try to join in the fun. Prerequisite hardware: a computer and a modem.

In simple terms, Internet is an information service made up of a link of computer networks—world-wide. Among its incredible array of data, it keeps publications about music in things called “archives,” which are stored in some computers’ memory somewhere in the “net.” Besides useful publications and topic-oriented articles, there are specific computer files that are continually updated and “automagically” distributed to people who “subscribe” to the service (see subscription info at the end). These files are called “newsgroups.”

Some active newsgroups are: Electronic music, exotic music, K-12 educational music, Afro-Latin, Beatles, bluenote, country-western, classical, dementia, Dylan, early keyboard, folk/traditional, funky, gaffa, Grateful Dead, Indian-classical... There are also other groups that discuss musical topics such

as marketplace, reviews, music videos, synthesis, and so on.

Now comes the ugly stuff: To retrieve any of these things you must “access” the computer that keeps that file. The computer has an identity that you can find by using Internet, but I am going to spell it out for you, so don’t worry yet about finding stuff (just bear with the cryptic letter strings).

For example, let’s say you want to access some of the very nice publications that are kept on the net. There is one called Acoustic Guitar Digest (a magazine in electronic form), which can be obtained by typing in the following (these are the strings of letters, with periods or “slashes” between, as threatened above; “translations” of the abbreviations are in parentheses—don’t type the translations & be sure not to type any spaces not shown):

```
ftp(file transfer protocol)casbah(a
computer).acns(campus network).nwu(northwestern
university).edu(educational institution)
```

That gobbledygook will come back with a request that you “log on” to that system. You do that by typing “anonymous”—now you can type:

```
cd(change directory)/pub(public)/acoustic-
guitar
```

In a similar manner, it’s also possible to access guitar tablature and chords for the songs of many popular artists, from contemporary folks to old folkies. The contents of this file cover both acoustic and electric. This collection was built up by people on the net who worked out the tab/chord aurally. (Copies from books are not allowed.) As above, type:

```
ftp(file transfer protocol)to nevada.edu.
```

Log in as “anonymous” and go to the “pub/guitar” directory.

Another nice archive has MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) on it. You have to navigate through the WAIS (Wide area information server), another Internet search method (don't have room here for examples).

Also, there is a general source of music information (lyrics, chords, pictures of artists, etc.) at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside Music Archive. To get into it, type:

ftp.uwp.edu

Then go to the "pub/music" directory.

There are many other subjects available in so-called "list servers" which cover special interests. You send a message to the server asking to subscribe. For example, you can send a message to:

folk_music@nysernet.org

and you will be included in a folktalk bulletin-board-like interest group.

As a last note, Internet provides for a "relay chat" mode, so you may find people from around the world chatting about music events or commenting on last night's concert in Timbuktu.

Any you look at it, there's a lot of music to be found out there in Cyberspace...log on!

Subscription info: It is possible to get access to the Internet thru a local "freenet" which has been funded in part by the Annenberg Foundation, and is supported by George Washington University. To do this, contact CapAccess at 202-785-1523 using a computer and a modem, and you will be able to transfer a membership form from the GWU host to your computer (by voice, dial 202-986-2065). While this is not full Internet access, you will be able to get at the music stuff by e-mailing it back to yourself. (Got that?)

Two nice articles here from Lou and Alice - who's up in February? The deadline is Tuesday, January 25th for the February issue - this issue is one week late because of snow on Dec 28.

The Fiddle's Place in Folk Literature

by Alice Ross

He was the dead-serious kind of fiddler. Had to have his fiddle set just right across his knees before he'd commence, but let him get started and he sure fiddled. His piece was "Leather Britches." He went at it like a boy killing snakes, whipping and scraping away and stamping his foot till he'd worked up a pouring sweat. When he'd finished, he was as limp as an old rag. He drew down a powerful clap-hand from the listeners. (Battle 333)

Anyone on the lookout for literary references to fiddling would do well to browse Kemp P. Battle's anthology, *Great American Folklore*, a rollicking collection of legends, tales, and ballads. The preceding excerpt appears in "Fiddler's Dram," the inspiration for a public domain instrumental of the same title. In this traditional tale, contestants vie for a "jimmyjohn" (or jug) of fine whiskey. The fiddle, a common motif in folk literature as well as folk music, is often central to the action in a competition or duel. (Charlie Daniels artfully demonstrates this practice in "The Devil Went Down to Georgia.")

A duel of a different sort occurs in "The Arkansas Traveler," a yarn in which a city slicker is outslipped by a shrewd hillbilly. All of the traveler's requests for directions, food, and shelter are stubbornly refused by the old man who continuously scratches out a monotonous sequence of notes on his fiddle during their humorously convoluted exchange. At one point the traveler is denied a place to sleep because it is raining and the house leaks. When the traveler testily suggests that the old man stop playing the fiddle long enough to repair his roof, the Arkansan explains that he is unable to work on it this particular day because of the rain. In exasperation, the traveler asks why the work cannot be done when the weather is dry, and the old man replies matter-of-factly, "It don't leak then" (6). The two characters dance around in this manner for a while longer until the traveler becomes so weary of the off-key fiddle music that he offers to demonstrate the proper way to play the instrument. Because of his superior fiddling talent, the traveler quickly wins over the respect and hospitality of the backwoodsman who is delighted with the free entertainment. The old man has the last laugh when he

invites the traveler to stay (and play) indefinitely due to the impossibility of travel on the soggy roads — at least “till the weather stiffens down some” (8).

Other tales in Battle’s collection employ the fiddle in a more peripheral way. The tale, “Snake Thomson, a Good Fiddler,” for example, provides few insights about technique, but celebrates fiddling as the one redeeming quality of an otherwise shady dance hall proprietor. Without such a noble talent, Thomson would be remembered only as the scoundrel who “put snake heads in his liquor to give it strength” (109).

In “Davy Crockett and the Fiddler in the River,” the King of the Wild Frontier himself tells how a fiddle saved the life of a sulky driver caught in the raging waters of a flooded river crossing. If not for the victim’s reliance on the fiddle to broadcast his precarious situation, Crockett and his traveling companions would never have arrived in time. Following a hairy rescue, Crockett questions the evacuee’s wisdom in choosing to play the fiddle during such a perilous misadventure and is told that there is “nothing in universal nature so well calculated to draw people together as the sound of a fiddle; and he knew that he might bawl until he was hoarse for assistance, and no one would stir a peg; but they would no sooner hear the scraping of his catgut than they would quit all other business, and come to the spot in flocks” (10).

Perhaps none of Battle’s tales illustrates the diversity of fiddling techniques as colorfully as “Fiddler’s Dram,” a tale with a supernatural twist. The story’s hero, Ples Haslock, is recognized as the finest fiddler in the region. The narrator recalls how “he’d get out his . . . old fiddle and make it talk — I mean talk!” (329) Haslock’s astonishing ability gives him a powerful hold on his audience: “You’d swared to hear it that there was a live mockingbird singing in that fiddlebox or a buzzing cowfly or maybe a little peeping chicken. He could take and mock cats fighting or old gossip women gabbing till folks fell on the floor laughing. And he could fiddle the old tunes to where the meanest man in the county would break under and cry. . .” (329).

Most of the competing fiddlers in “Fiddler’s Dram” are described as mediocre, “plain everyday set-in-a-rocker-and-scratch-aways” (332). One of the more talented contestants combines energetic

fiddling with raucous one-liners. According to an eyewitness, “The way he carried on, a body’d thought he was having some sort of fit if they hadn’t knowed better. When he drew a high note, he’d open his mouth wide, run his eyebrows to his hairline, and shoot his neck up” (333). To complete the mood, “he’d throw his bow up into the air. While it was coming down he’d bawl out things like ‘Eating hogeye!’ and ‘I love chittlins!’ and ‘Ladies, where was your man last Saturday night!’” (333)

The county favorite, Ples Haslock, is not expected to show up at the battle for the dram due to ill health. However, he staggers in at the last minute, exhausted and covered with dirt after a thirty-mile walk. The audience is spellbound as the gaunt, ailing contestant saws his fiddle for over an hour. His technique lacks the flashy gimmicks and gyrations exhibited by the previous performers. His was “straight, honest fiddling — none of your stunts on the strings . . . , none of that loud fool-blabber. . .” (334). The spectators sit mesmerized, feeling as if they have been transported to a faraway place. At the close of Haslock’s performance, the thunderous applause in the hall guarantees him the jug of whiskey. Haslock wastes no time in popping the corncob stopper and taking a long drink of his hard-won prize. To the amazement of all, he collapses suddenly on the stage, and those who rush to his aid are unable to detect a heartbeat. A doctor is quickly summoned, but upon seeing the crumpled figure of the fiddler, he seems puzzled by the presence of the body. He announces that the man who has just won the fiddling contest has been dead for at least forty-eight hours and adds, “from the clay he’s got on his clothes, I’d say buried, too” (335).

Part of the allure of fiddle music may lie in its uncanny ability to echo the twists and turns of tall tales, legends, and ghost stories. No other instrument is so heralded in American folk literature for its versatility.

Work Cited

Battle, Kemp P., ed. *Great American Folklore: Legends, Tales, Ballads, and Superstitions From All Across America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989.



Folk Club of Reston-Herndon



January 9 - February 19, 1994

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Jan 9 2:00pm Hickory Grove @ Old Post Office Pavilion, DC	Jan 10	Jan 11 Showcase Perform- ance Mike Murray 7:30pm Folk Club	Jan 12	Jan 13 Doris Justis 8:00pm Frederick Folk Club - Deli Creations - Frederick	Jan 14	Jan 15 7:30pm Redleaf & Hickory Grove @ Potomac Ovrk Park
Jan 16	Jan 17	Jan 18 7:30pm Folk Club 8:00pm Hickory Grove @ Pines of Sicily, Burke, Va	Jan 19	Jan 20	Jan 21	Jan 22
Jan 23	Jan 24	Jan 25 Showcase Lottery Draw Culley & Elliott 7:30pm Folk Club	Jan 26	Jan 27 8:00pm Frederick Folk Club - Deli Creations - Frederick	Jan 28	Jan 29 Lea Coryell-Banjo Wkshp @ FSGW Festival Takoma Park Int Schl - Takoma Pk, Md
Jan 30	Jan 31	Feb 1 Showcase Perform- ance 7:30pm Folk Club	Feb 2	Feb 3	Feb 4	Feb 5
Feb 6	Feb 7	Feb 8 7:30pm Folk Club	Feb 9	Feb 10 Vickie Pratt Keating 8:00pm Frederick Folk Club - Deli Creations - Frederick	Feb 11	Feb 12
Feb 13	Feb 14	Feb 15 7:30pm Folk Club	Feb 16	Feb 17	Feb 18	Feb 19

Culley & Elliott

**The Folk Club
Proudly Presents ...
7:30 PM
January 25, 1994
at the Tortilla Factory
in Herndon, VA**

Tickets \$8.00 (\$7.00 members)

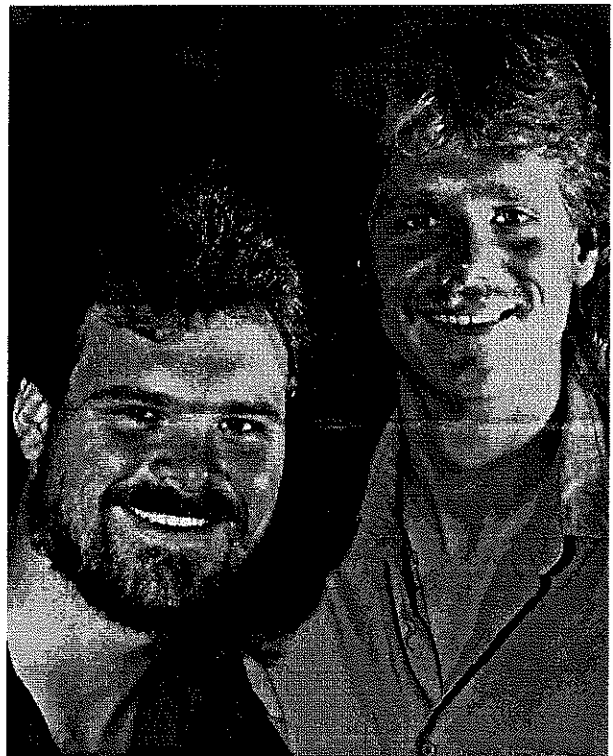
Gary Culley and Mark Elliott have been working together for the past year, travelling the club and festival circuit, including the Kerrville Festival in Texas where they were winners in the 1993 New Folk Concerts. They have performed at numerous clubs in the Nashville area.

Mark Elliott is well known at the Folk Club from his "before Nashville" days when he was a regular at the open mike.

Recently the duo has completed work on a new album, "Flight of Dreams", all originals by Culley & Elliott.

Both performers are songwriters with recording credits and songwriting awards under their belts. The music they perform is a blend of country, folk and pop, featuring strong harmonies and guitar work.

It is a pleasure to welcome Mark back to the Folk Club. He has performed in the DC area since his move to Nashville three years ago, at the Club Acoustic and festival stages in the area.



Coming Folk Club Events

**January 25 - Culley &
Elliott \$8/7**

**February 22 - Chris Procter
\$7/6**

**March 29 - Anne Hills
\$7/6**

**April 26 - David Massengill
\$7/6**

**May 17 - Tommy Sands
\$10/9**

**June 14 - Bill Staines
\$8/7**

**July 26 - The Mollies
\$6/5**

ATTENTION! ATTENTION! ATTENTION!
Check your Label - Are you expiring? "19940101" is
expiring with this issue. Don't miss an issue - Don't miss
the benefits of the Folk Club. Please send in your
membership check (\$12.00) to keep your membership
active!

Showcase Performances

January 11, the featured performer
will be **Mike Murray**.

On the first Tuesday of every month we
feature a Folk Club member in a showcase
two-set (25 minute) performance. To become
one of these "showcase" specials all you have
to do is 1) be a member of the Folk Club, 2)
fill out a lottery slip by the last Tuesday of the
month, 3) win the drawing and 4) practice,
practice practice!

The Folk Club

President, Larry Mediate

Treasurer, David Hurd

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Ray Kaminsky, Ellen Kaminsky

Lynn Jordan, Bill Davis

Richard Flinchbaugh, Liza Cobb

Jim Rosenkraus, T.M. Hanna

Brian Gilmartin, Nina Gilmartin

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