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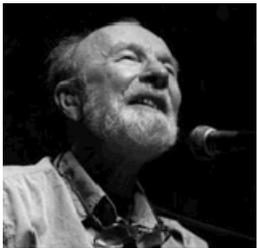
The Society Page

By Gene Mahoney

Russian Hill Upholstery & Décor is still located in Nob Hill, not Russian Hill.

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Here's something I wrote (but mostly quoted) in 2014. By the way, the place where I print the Herald has a picture of Pete Seeger hanging on the wall, so if this is the last time you see the Herald, you'll know why.



Peace is a Racket

We Shall Overcome... all these Pete Seeger tributes.

"'If I Had A Hammer'? Well, what's stopping you? Go to the hardware store; they're about a buck-ninety, tops." --- James Lileks, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

A lot has been written about revered folk singer Pete Seeger since he passed away in late January.

To tell you the truth, I pretty much just remember the guy from his guest appearances on *Sesame Street* when I was a kid. So, as usual, I'll just introduce the works of other, more talented writers.

The day after Mr. Seeger's death, Bruce Springsteen told a sold-out crowd in South Africa that he had lost a great friend, and proceeded to sing a rendition of Seeger's protest anthem "We Shall Overcome."

It was interesting that Springsteen was in South Africa when his hero died. About 2 weeks before Mr. Seeger went to that big Little Red Schoolhouse up in the sky, Mark Steyn wrote an essay about the famous South African song "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," and Pete's relation to it. Seeger fans may remember it as "Wimoweh," which was recorded by his band the Weavers. (Later, in 1961, Brooklyn band the Tokens released it with lyrics as "The Lion Sleeps Tonight.") According to the Wikipedia entry about the song, Seeger wrote that he interpreted it as being about a lion that will one day protect the Africans from European colonialism (which is ironic if you read further).

The song was actually written by a black South African man named Solomon Linda, and originally called "Mbube" (the South African Zulu tribe word for "lion").

"Mbube" went from being a song to a new vocal style, best exemplified by Ladysmith Black Mambazo (who sang on Paul Simon's *Graceland* album), inspired by the Zulu admonition of "Cothoza, bafana" - which loosely translates to "Tread carefully, boys." Here's some of that article from Steyn:

"Tread carefully, boys" is good advice for anyone in the music business. A few years after Solomon Linda and the Evening Birds made their hit record, it came to the notice of Pete Seeger, on the prowl for yet more "authentic" "traditional"

"vernacular" "folk music" for the Weavers to make a killing with. He misheard "Mbube" and transcribed it as "Wimoweh". That's a great insight into the "authenticity" of the folk boom: the most famous Zulu word on the planet was invented by a New York socialist in 1951. Still, Seeger was chanting all the way to the bank. "Wimoweh" is a tune that works in any form - as big band (Jimmy Dorsey), folk-rock (Nanci Griffith)," country (Glen Campbell), Euro-easy listening (Bert Kaempfert), kiddie-pop (*NSync), reggae (Eek-A-Mouse) military march (the New Zealand Army Band), exotica (Yma Sumac), Yiddish (Lipa Schmeltzer), football singalong (the official theme of the 1986 England World Cup Squad). And that's before we get to REM and They Might Be Giants and Baha Men, and, of course, *The Lion King*. Solomon Linda's song has penetrated every corner of the globe. It's the most famous tune ever to have come out of Africa.

He and his family must be multi-multi-millionaires, right? Not exactly. Linda sold it to the Gallo record company for ten shillings: that would be about 87 cents. Tread carefully, boy. In 1962, just as "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" was reaching Number One around the world, he died of kidney disease in Soweto, on the edge of Johannesburg, in a concrete hovel with a couple of bedrooms with dirt floors covered in cow dung. He left his widow the equivalent of \$22 in the bank and unable even to afford a headstone for his grave. For the last decade he'd swept floors and made the tea at the packing house of the Gallo company. His family lived on a diet of maize porridge - "pap" - and chicken feet.

Later in the article, Steyn addresses Seeger's defense of Mr. Linda's fate:

The child of wealthy New York radicals, Seeger has always been avowedly anti-capitalist - supposedly. Yet his publisher had a deal with Gallo Music: they snaffled up the rights to "Mbube" cheap and in return sub-licensed to Gallo the South African and Rhodesian rights to "Wimoweh". And Seeger knew Solomon Linda was the composer. He says now that back in the Fifties he instructed his publishers to give his royalties from the song to Linda, and he was shocked, shocked to discover decades later that they hadn't in fact been doing so. But it never occurred to him, as an unworldly anti-capitalist, to check his royalty statements. It was, on his part, supposedly a sin of omission. Not everyone can plead the same accidental oversight. Having persuaded Linda to sign away his copyright four decades earlier, the relevant parties made sure to slide some forms in front of his illiterate widow in 1982 and his daughters some years later to make sure the appropriation paperwork was kept in order.

Shortly after Mr. Seeger's demise, Joe Queenan wrote a story for the Wall Street Journal called "Why Pete Seeger Sent Me a Check for \$5." It detailed how Mr. Queenan, in 1988, wrote a satirical article for the New Republic about how President Nixon and the leaders of the anti-Vietnam War movement made a secret deal in 1970. The deal was that Nixon would end the war if the movement put an end to folk music. For 15 years the folkies honored the agreement, and now they were starting to renege on it. From the WSJ article by Joe Queenan:

Then one day, I got a letter from Pete Seeger, who died this week at age 94, asking if he could get the story reprinted in Sing Out!, the folkie equivalent of Vibe. "Too bad you didn't do it earlier!" he wrote. Well, that floored me. I'd always thought of Pete as a

deadly serious, hard-assed old Stalinist, and here, lo and behold, the banjo-plucking poet of the proles actually seemed to have a sense of humor. So I told him to go ahead and contact the New Republic about reprint rights.

Soon after, Pete wrote again, saying he wanted to pay me for my efforts. He enclosed a check for \$5. It had a cute little image of a red farmhouse, with the names "Peter Seeger and Toshi-Aline Seeger," his wife, across the top. In that letter, Pete cautioned that the editor of Sing Out! might not publish the story after all because Tracy Chapman's record was such a big hit in 1988, "and close behind her is that other woman, Michelle Shocked."

My dire warnings about folk music had come too late. The Apocalypse was upon us. But Pete sent me the five bucks anyway. Because each should be paid according to his wants and each according to his needs.

As Joe points out, Mr. Seeger didn't hesitate to spread it around. That's probably why, despite screwing a South African songwriter out of massive royalties, he was only worth \$4.2 million at the time of his death - which is a full \$2.6 million short of being a member of the dreaded ONE PERCENT, whom he heroically fought against by singing at the Occupy Wall Street protests. (The best things in life are free, but \$4.2 million gets you membership in the proletariat.)

Shortly after the legendary folk singer's death, Ronald Radosh wrote "Seeger Was a Useful Idiot for Stalin." As you'll read from its first few paragraphs, Ronald Radosh knew Pete Seeger even better than Joe Queenan did:

Pete Seeger's death at the age of 94 has brought forth scores of celebratory tributes. America had long ago showered him with honors, which all but made up for the scorn with which he was once held in the age of the blacklist. Yet, an honest appreciation of

Pete Seeger cannot be left at what most accolades have done. Indeed, since his political vision, his service over the decades to the brutality of Soviet-era Stalinism and to all of the post-Cold War leftist tyrannies, was inseparable from the music he made, it simply cannot be overlooked. For Seeger's voice was heard in defense of causes in which only fools could still believe. As Paul Berman put it, "Let us sing 'If I Had a Hammer,' then, and, at every third verse, let our hammers bop Pete Seeger on the head for having been a fool and an idiot."

And calling him a fool and an idiot is, indeed, not too harsh a judgment. I say that sadly. Pete was a childhood hero of mine. I studied banjo with him, got to know him, and visited him at the legendary home he built from scrap in Beacon, N.Y.

Radosh offers a laundry list of Seeger's sins: His support of Hitler during the short-lived Nazi-Soviet Pact, his traveling to Cuba to accept an award from the murderous Castro regime, his handing over of song royalties from "Turn, Turn, Turn" to the boycott-divestment-sanctions movement against Israel, his support of unilateral American disarmament and Soviet propaganda campaigns during the Cold War, his songs - like "Hey Zhankoye" - an ode to Stalin's supposed freeing of Soviet Jews while famous Jewish poets were being arrested and murdered as American spies and Zionist agents.

Radosh called Seeger out for his support of Stalin in a 2007 New York Sun article. (Seeger supported Stalin even longer than his buddy Woody Guthrie did.) The singer finally conceded he was wrong to simply dismiss Uncle Joe as a "hard driver" all these years, and actually wrote an anti-Stalin song to, uh, try to make up for it.

Oh well, better late than never. Right?

Not always.###

Here are some more excerpts from my pal John Giaccone's interview - conducted earlier this year in his adopted hometown of Seattle – with former Monkees guitarist Michael Nesmith. (Since the interview Monkees bassist Peter Tork passed away.)

JG: When you got to LA it seems you were on a roll getting your songs published, recording contracts, TV appearances - sounds like great days. And then The Monkees happened in short time - like two and a half years. Were you happy? I mean did you feel like things were going great or was it more like the classic artist struggle at the same time?



Nez: Well, it did turn into an artist struggle for me for about two or three years. Then things were good until the show was off the air and just the four of us. And being a television property made our origins curious compared to anybody else. Are you a band or are you a television show? I always had it in my mind that it was live beats, acting beats where you memorized your lines and moved the story along and so on. It wasn't 'til I got out of that I started the band, remember but Peter and us - we were all in a show. And they weren't really... the people I loved to work with were the blues guys and the...

JG: Bo Diddley. He was your man, right?

Nez: Right!

JG: It was kind of odd that you were the plastic TV band but yet you used

your real names. Peter Tork wasn't really "the dumb guy" but he was portrayed that way on the show. You were hired for the Monkees as a musician and songwriter too. They wanted somebody who could bring music to the show?

Nez: Well, that was the way the ad was. And when you got to talk to the producers you realized that they had an idea of the screening amalgam which included the ability to play, sing, and perform and....

JG: Which you were great at, by the way.

Nez: Well, I didn't know anything about it at all. I staggered around at the set asking where do I stand.

JG: You said it was like holding onto a tiger and taking off?

Nez: Haha.

JG: You didn't know what they were getting at first with all the crazy costume changes, etc. They didn't really explain it. And then you saw it and thought - hey, this is pretty cool?

Nez: Yeah. When I first saw it the first time I saw the footage set to, "Papa Gene's Blues" - a song I had written with a friend of my wife and I said, "We need a show" because I could see the marriage of images and music and how electrifying it was.

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JG: Nice. You spent some quality time with John (*Lennon*). Did you ever play music with him at all?

Nez: Yeah, but to no particular end. We were just jamming.

JG: Yeah, well - that's great! From what I can see The Monkees and The Stones are the only other bands that came close to the hysteria that was Beatlemania when you were on tour.

Was it similar to Beatlemania in that you were locked in your hotel rooms and couldn't go out on the streets?

Nez: Well, it was and it wasn't because John and the other boys had learned to manage that. With people what happens when you get approbation - they don't rush at you, they part way. They open the doors and stand back for you because you are the royalty of their times. And the Beatles had that about them. And they were such that they were just lovable. I loved hanging out with them when they were together. Loved hanging out with John. They were just...

JG: Super witty guys - like yourself?

Nez: Yeah, it was just a great frame of mind and right company of people.

JG: Incredible. And then Mickey Dolenz got Jimi Hendrix on the Monkees tour. I have to bring him up being in Seattle.

Nez: Yeah.

JG: So, you got to see him play night after night? That must have been something.

Nez: A perk!

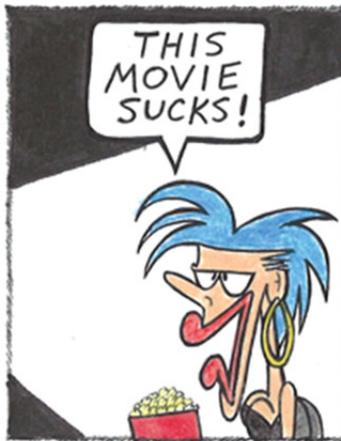
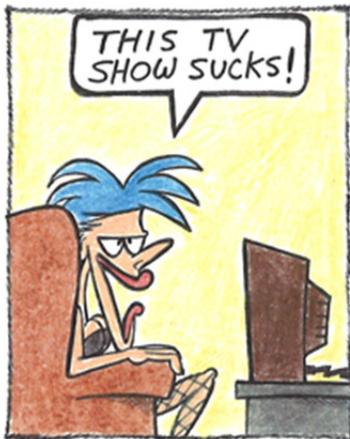
JG: And he taught you how to play "Purple Haze" in a hotel room?

Nez: Haha! Well, no - what he told me was that I was never gonna play that.###

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GOOD CLEAN FUN
"THE ELVIS OF COMIC STRIPS"
WRITTEN, DRAWN & © 2013
BY GENE MAHONEY
"BLISSFUL
YOUTH"

MIDDLE AGE IS
WAKING UP EACH DAY
AND ASKING YOURSELF,
"WHAT WENT WRONG?"
FLASHBACK TO SOME
HAPPIER TIMES...
AGNES DEVONSHIRE
AT AGE 18...



Yes, folks... continuing the tradition of the March 2019 issue of The Herald where just about all the contents are years – even decades – old, I hope you enjoyed... or rather, tried to enjoy this comic from 2013. It's in color online which is why it looks so awful in black and white print. Yeah, I know... "It sucks."

THE MURDER PALACE

By Howard Hallis

Here's an idea for a TV series on cable... In the future, what if scientists develop a "Resurrection Beam" that can bring people back to life after they die? The beam could re-construct dead neurons, cell tissues and any damaged organs by duplicating the dead genetic matter and re-charging it with the energy necessary to bring it alive once again. By this time in the future, since death and disease have been eradicated, every perversion and fetish is not only tolerated, but people keep attempting to out-do each other with how far they can delve into human depravity. When people could be brought back to life, it was only a matter of time before Murder Palaces would open. These giant towers of death allowed clients to hire professional "Victims" that they could murder in any grisly way they chose. The more grisly the murder, however, the more they would have to pay. Afterwards, the Victims are brought back to life and could option to have their memories erased if their death was too disturbing.

Many keep every memory of their horrible deaths and actually take pleasure in remembering every detail. It seemed the more a person died, the more they craved the sensation of being dead. Scientists studying the phenomenon of enjoying the process of being murdered attributed it to the black-out that comes between the last moment alive and a person's resurrection. No matter how many attempts had been made to monitor a human or animal consciousness to discover where it goes or what it experiences when it is dead, nothing had been conclusively determined. People could only remember the last moment alive and their first moments after reincarnation. No one retained any memory of what happened in-between. Many scientists believed there was nothing at all happening within these moments, but the surviving religious sects still around believed that eternal life was depriving humanity of experiencing the afterlife and protested

Murder Palaces fanatically. This made religious fanatics a main target of rich murderers who took delight in slaying a victim that did not wish to be killed. The wealthy elite could now take part in full-scale genocide: bombing thousands upon thousands of people for pleasure.

It would cost a small fortune, but the thrill of playing a god made it worthwhile and popular enough for various companies to organize the events for upper echelon clientele. Murdering without remorse becomes a reality when humans can be brought back to life. Now imagine this as a TV show. It would have to be on cable (or at least FOX) so you could show a lot of gore. Every week you could feature a different horror writer who would get to show his or her most wickedly violent murder fantasy. You could explore other elements of this twisted future as well: episodes about the religious sects and the quest to record what happens in the moments between each life and death; episodes about the police force of this time. Would any be necessary? Who are the people who collect the bodies to bring them back to life? Can anyone be permanently murdered, and if they can, would this be seen as the ultimate thrill for a murderer after they have tasted the sensation of temporary killing? Maybe because of the imminent danger of getting murdered, people would have to have a file of their genetic structure registered and have their brains scanned daily.

They would also have to be electronically implanted with Locator Chips so the powers that be could find them if they were missing or resurrect them from their files if there was no useable remains left to acquire a genetic sample. How would relationships be in the future? Overpopulation would obviously make it necessary to colonize the oceans, the moon, Mars and space stations. And since there was now a whole solar system to explore forever, would anyone stay married more than 40 or 50 years at the very most? Would parents become more detached from their children, knowing they will eventually be killed? Will teenage rites of passage include a grisly murder or other horrible task? Just think of the story possibilities! Will a show like this have adverse effects on society? Who cares!?! It's art! It's entertainment! It's

no worse than any teen horror flick... or throwing Christians to the lions... it's what people want to see! And the people can't be denied of what they want!####

Rock 'n Roll Babylon

By Ace Backwords

Today I came across a copy of this album from 1973, "*Souther, Hillman, Furay*" in a free-box. They were sort of a failed attempt at a Crosby, Stills & Nash supergroup. And on the back cover was a photo of the drummer Jim Gordon.

Jim Gordon is one of the weirder stories in the history of Rock'n'Roll Babylon. And, as a guy who had "issues" with my mother when I was a young man myself, it always struck a weird chord with me. . . . At one point Jim Gordon was one of the most sought-after drummers in all of rock. And he played with the Everly Brothers, the Beach Boys, George Harrison, Zappa, Alice Cooper, Steely Dan, to name a few. So he had his shit together. For a while. He didn't start to disintegrate, mentally, until he went on Joe Cocker's "Mad Dogs & Englishmen" tour — a tour legendary for its drug debauchment. This was followed by another legendarily drugged-out project — Eric Clapton's "Derek & the Dominoes" album, where everyone in the band was strung out on hard drugs. Jim Gordon wrote the haunting piano piece that's the coda of "Layla."

After that Gordon began to lose his mind. He kept hearing voices in his head that tormented him. Mostly the voice of his mother. And the voices kept telling him to kill his mother. So finally, just to shut up the voices in his head, he stabbed his mother to death with a butcher knife.

When he was interviewed in prison later, he said the good news was that he had stopped hearing his mother's voice in his head since she died.

The bad news was that he was now hearing his sister's voice.####

Herald Archives: 2001

Almost Famous

By Kimberlye Gold

"I Want To Thank You" —

For Giving Me Pleasant Music (on a day that really sucked!!!)

Dido/Travis/ Live at Shoreline Amphitheater, Mountain View on June 13 - (Gene Mahoney's Birthday!)

You know how "Dateline NBC" always seems to begin: "It was supposed to be a perfect (fill in the blank)... — but then it became: 'The Thing That Went Horribly Wrong' — I'm Stone Phillips."

Well, that would aptly describe my latest adventure in "concert review world for the SF Herald." Hi, I'm Kimberlye Gold, and I don't just report the news, I report how much it sometimes sucks to report the news! All the juicy "behind the scenes" details that you won't get in the SF Weekly or Rolling Stone! Why? Because I can!

Wednesday, June 13th was supposed to have been a lovely way to kill two birds with one stone: review the Dido/Travis show at Shoreline Amphitheater and celebrate my illustrious publisher of this award-winning little newsrag's birthday, who happens to be a Dido fan.

Between several e-mails to and from the media relations director at Shoreline, and many e-mails and phone conversations with Dido's publicist at Arista Records in New York over a period of weeks, I couldn't have gone to more lengths to make sure this went off without a hitch. Shoreline was supposed to have our tickets for us, and the charming publicist at Arista (who tried, in vain, to get us an interview, bless her heart) e-mailed and called me twice to confirm that she was supplying us with "Meet and Greet" passes and a photo pass that would occur at 4:30

p.m. before the 8:00 p.m. show time, and gave me a contact number for the tour manager, should we encounter any problems. She told me because Gene was such a fan and it was his birthday, she wanted to make sure he got a chance to meet Dido. What a gal! (Plus, she knew I wanted to say hi to Dido's bass player, Keith Golden, who has sublet my New York apartment for years.) So Gene dashed across town to borrow our web designer, James Dylan's \$600 digital camera and took him out for a quick lunch, where he accidentally ingested a burrito with meat in it, got a \$25 parking ticket, and ran a red light in his haste to pick me up. Certain he now had Mad Cow Disease and a \$300 moving violation on the way as well. Poor baby!

But we left in plenty of time and traffic was light, so the journey with my paranoid birthday boy publisher began deceptively well. We arrived around 3:45 p.m. and when we tried to park, the BGP (Bill Graham Presents) parking people told us they knew nothing about a 4:30 p.m. "Meet and Greet" and I immediately called the tour manager, who said this local Arista rep would meet us at will call to take us to the "Meet and Greet" - as soon as we picked up our passes. When we got to will call, nobody behind any of the glass windows knew anything about a "Meet and Greet" for the press, or had passes or tickets for us, and the media relations director had not yet arrived. They told us to try the "Blue Door" (the business office) and they told us to go to "Gate 5". What was this, Alice In Wonderland? Lost In Space? The BGP girl at Gate 5 called the Dido production office and no one seemed to know what the hell was going on! And I couldn't reach the tour manager or my friend Keith on their cell phones. Meanwhile, we could hear Dido sound checking. Finally, a new BGP guy called down there and said, "They said the 'Meet and Greet' has been changed to 'After Show' and you have to go back to will call and get the guy's number to help you."

So we walked back down to will call and they gave us this Arista rep's cell

number and I called it and got a voice mail, of course, leaving him a polite (but distraught) message, because we still had no tickets or passes waiting for us! They told us the show started at 7:45 p.m. By this time, it was after 5 p.m. and poor birthday boy Gene, having lost a whole deadline day in order to do this, and crazy from the heat and the "no meet 'n greet", said, "Let's get the hell outta here!"

So I took him out for sushi in downtown Mountain View to lift his spirits and while we were there, the local Arista rep called me on my cell phone and casually told me that he was sorry for the confusion, sort of blamed everyone else involved, and said he would make sure our after-show passes and photo pass would be left with our tickets.



Before we went back to Shoreline, we parked in a business complex and drank a little red wine in plastic, jelly cups and listened to some of the new Go-Go's CD to cheer ourselves up. God Bless the Go-Go's!! Renewed, we walked back into the venue at 7:30 p.m. and went straight back to the "Blue Door" and were told we'd still have to wait for the media relations director, who was on "an important call". Another woman came out a few minutes later and said she was the MRD's assistant and she would be with us shortly. Were we waiting for a meeting with President Bush? Queen Elizabeth? After another 10 or 15 minutes, while we were treated to some amplified karaoke (??) the head lady came out and gave us our tickets and told us no one had left our passes, seemed so annoyed with everyone else, and she was going to go and get them herself and bring them to us in our seats. She was supposed to have held our camera till after the show, because we only had clearance to shoot the after- show

and they have a very strict policy, (being the White House and all) but I think she felt so bad about all we had been through, (and Gene looked like he was going to cry – or gun down the amphitheater) she let us keep the camera in my purse after I took an oath and signed in blood that I wouldn't shoot (pictures) during the show. Kidding. Sort of.

So we set off to find our seats (and chase down our passes, literally) and got to hear the last two songs of the first opening act, Emiliana Torrini, a waify young singer who immediately reminded me of Bjork - on lithium. A mellow Bjork. Turns out she's from Iceland, too. (Do I have ears or what?) Which is doubtful the several very-young children in the row in front of us will have if their late 20/early 30-something parents keep bringing them to very loud concerts without earplugs!!!! What's wrong with people?? Call social services!!! Especially when the next band is the very entertaining, musically stimulating - and extremely LOUD – Travis – the young Scottish lads who have made such a splash in the UK and are finally getting some well deserved recognition here in the U S of A. Sounding like a cross between the Beatles and U2, wonderful lead singer and dynamic front boy Fran Healy – (sporting a kind of rooster/ mohawk hairdo) and his clan of merry men took the stage and delivered a high energy, dynamic, and very pleasing set of selections off their #1 UK second album, *The Man Who* and their latest new effort, *The Invisible Band*. Before the song, "Pipe Dreams", off their new CD, Fran delivered an intro so earnest and sincere about how we should be thankful for our blessings, I was ready to propose marriage on the spot, I mean, spot! But he could read the phone book with that adorable brogue and I'd probably have the same reaction. (But Fran, sweetie, we'll need to do something about that hairstyle, luv!) To our right, was our friend from Don Henley's last concert, Oakland Tribune music critic Jim Harrington, looking quite suave, fabulous and buff with his newly shaved head. Go Jim!

Back to Travis: The lovely "As You Are", off *The Man Who*, sounded very Crowded House, which is music to these ears. One thing I must point out immediately about Travis is that it's hard to believe they are the same ethereal, easy listening, jingly-jangly pop band on their CD's, because live, these lads are LOUD, and even though they do have a very nice dynamic range, when they come up, they ROCK! Which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but I don't think their style calls for that much volume. Sound guy or band – hard to tell. But Fran Healy really is a joy to watch and hear, with a pure, plaintive pop tenor and an utterly sincere delivery. I believe this kid! And so did the crowd of mostly young, mostly white fans. When the band got to their # 1 UK hit, "Why Does It Always Rain On Me" (our theme song for the day, apparently), it was obvious why these lads belong in a class above so much of the dreck on alternative radio these days. With songs like the amazing, "Turn" (my personal favorite), the fact that they actually use a banjo on some parts (which is just too cool) and the standing ovation the audience gave them, I'm looking forward to seeing how high Travis can climb.



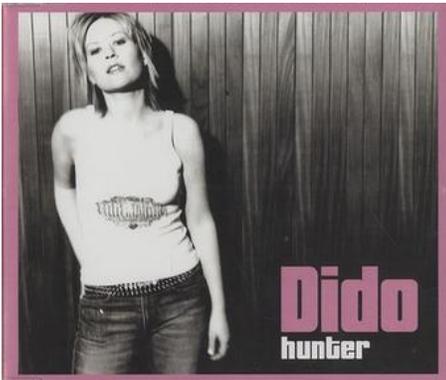
Next up was our girl of the night, the 29 year old English songstress, Dido. After wandering around in near obscurity after her debut album, *No Angel* was released back in '99, she has broken out into giant superstardom over the last year, due to the wildly successful white rap star Eminem, who sampled her song, "Thank You" (arguably the best song

on the record) on his #1 song "Stan", having her join him on some high profile live TV appearances, like *Saturday Night Live*, and enabling her song to become a smash hit (and TV commercial) as well. The TV show "Roswell" also used her "Here With Me" as the theme song – very advantageous breaks for a fledging new kid on the block. And Dido seems to be wisely capitalizing on the obvious strengths and unbelievable success of her internationally #1 CD by delivering a live show that basically duplicates it. Unlike Travis, who, sound so different live, she and her band of very talented players, (including my buddy Keith "Bunny" Golden on bass, and my former upstairs neighbor who lived in the apartment I used to sublet in the same building as Keith in New York, drummer Alex Alexander) played every song of the set, competently and tastefully, note for note like the CD.

The stage was set for an exciting and electrifying performance, with the tight band playing an extended intro amidst smoke and lights – but that wasn't quite the effect when Dido emerged from the shadows and took center stage. Dido has a very pleasant, ethereal, if somewhat derivative voice, reminiscent of Sarah McLachlan and Dolores O'Riordan from The Cranberries (without her annoying affectations and bad pitch) - in fact, playing it safe within the lines, Dido did not miss a note and her voice was strong and present. What was lacking, however, was any real star power stage presence. Dressed in a tight, shiny, powder-blue T-shirt that read "San Francisco", low slung black slacks and black tennis shoes, Dido appeared less diminutive than in her album photos, looking more like a reasonably attractive Jewel, without her guitar. And without an instrument to hide behind, it's up to a star to command that stage.

While Dido sang very well, and moved from one side of the stage to the other, there just wasn't anything outstanding or truly memorable about her performance. Perhaps, in time, she will develop that star quality and

confidence with a few more wildly successful albums under her low slung belt. Also missing, to my dismay, were any background vocals, which were stacked so liberally and pleasingly on her CD. Since there was so much sequencing used in the instrumentation, and they had so many effects on her voice, why couldn't they have used vocal tracks, if they couldn't afford or didn't want to deal with live singers? Why didn't they call me?? Hey, just a thought...But the audience adored their new pop princess, giving her a standing ovation when she walked onstage! In addition to the seamless blend of all the songs off *No Angel*, Dido offered up two new songs during her encores, one of which she played solo, accompanying herself on piano. I would have preferred her to have taken us out with the pulsing "Take My Hand" and saved the best, "Thank You" for last...



After the show (and over eight hours since we had arrived at Shoreline), we headed toward the VIP lounge with our "meet 'n greet" passes stuck on our left legs and Gene with his photo pass stuck on his right to say hello to my pals from Dido's band and to meet the lady herself. We had clearance to have that photo taken with her, as planned, which was now all Gene really cared about. I handed Gene the borrowed \$600 digital camera that had rested in my bag and when he took the cap off and tried to adjust the settings...THE CAMERA DID NOT WORK!!!! Oh my God – how in the HELL could it NOT WORK???? It worked earlier, before the show! It was the last straw for this birthday boy! I had never seen my illustrious publisher so upset – or so angry.

"Give me your cell phone!" he snarled and called our web designer to try and figure it out, to no avail. "This is the worst birthday I've ever had in my whole life! I wish I was dead!" he growled to poor James on my cell, obviously working on his best "Robert DeNiro/Al Pacino/every over-the-top-academy award nominated actor" moment. Thanks, boss.

Meanwhile, my buddy Keith, Dido's bass player, my NYC subleete', and a big teddy bear, came out, saw me and gave me a giant bear hug. He had read all my articles off our website and had seen pictures of us, and he now exclaimed, "I wanna meet the dude from the picture!"

Uh oh – happy "Bunny" Golden wants to meet Mean Gene On The Scene. When he went to shake Gene's hand, I guess he had just sneezed or wiped his nose, or something, and Gene wouldn't shake his hand!! And he had this "If you come any closer, why, I'm gonna...." look on his face.

Oh my God, I thought I was gonna die. I had told Keith the Readers Digest version of what had happened to us and the camera not working and all, and all of a sudden Keith became "Deepak Chopra Spiritual Love Clown Man" and would not leave Gene alone until he snapped him out of it and won him over. "C'mon, man, I wiped my hand, shake my hand, man! Hey, let me give you a hug, show me some love! It's all good!" Gene was starting to look like Travis – "Travis Bickle" from Taxi Driver. At the end of the movie. This was not good at all.

Undaunted, Keith rounded up some of the other band members, including my drummer pal, formerly long-haired and brunette Alex, who now has bleached blond hair – and more fun, like me – (except at this god-awful moment) and said, "C'mon, man, we gotta cheer this dude UP! We gotta give him a GROUP HUG!!" Then Keith went and got Dido's tour manager, Dan Garnett (my cell phone buddy), and told him our tragic tale of woe. Our man, Dan, apologized for all that had happened earlier and took us back to meet Dido immediately. He

even offered to track down a photographer, which he didn't do and we didn't pursue. It was too stupid at this point. But Dido was very cordial to us and we had a nice little chat, where we told her how much we enjoyed the show, and she complimented the audience on being "Lovely -responsive and quiet in all the right places!" Gene showed her his vast knowledge of London by asking her which stops she lived near on the Tube line (the English subway) and naming several of them. She asked him if he had studied a Tube map. I praised her on how well she handled Aidin Vazirri during her SF Chronicle interview, and told her he must have really been sweet on her, because he was nice. "I hope I wasn't too mean – was I alright?"

We assured her she was perfect and bid our girl goodnight. Somewhat appeased, Gene followed me back out to hang with my boys and sat while we caught up on old New York times. We noticed one table with around 9,000 empty beer bottles on it, and Alex said, "That's all from Travis." Those randy Scottish lads know how to party! Love Guru Keith actually brought a girl over to us who was also celebrating her birthday on June 13th! It was all good! On the way out to the parking lot, Gene whined, "We met Dido. We talked to the most successful pop singer in the world! And we didn't get a picture to put in the paper. It's like seeing Bigfoot! No one will believe me!"

So if you see Gene, please tell him you believe him. Thank you.###



Dido's first album in five years, "Still on my Mind" is out now.