

Linear thinking on a spherical planet

The Guys at the Library

by Scott Neily

If you like innovative acoustic guitar music that ranges in style from jazz and blues to folk and rock, then check out performers Allan Wilkie and Chip Sutherland, collectively known as The Guys at the Library.

The pair started playing together two years ago, doing performances in front of the Public Library — hence their name. Their respective playing styles balance, with Chip handling most of the guitar duties and Allan doing the lead vocals, as well as guitar and banjo.

Their influences are quite diverse but they cite Bruce Cockburn, Bob Dylan and Neil Young as being the major ones. "Bruce Cockburn was the common thread," explained Chip. "As it is, he has a jazzy-folk sound that covers the whole spectrum. It's where the style comes from." Allan put in, "Yeah, our style is still developing and it always will be, but I think what we look for is freshness, mostly."

"what we look for is freshness"

The duo has produced an eight-song promo tape of originals developed over the past two years. The sound is mostly their own acoustic playing with some various spices thrown in: bongos, a jazz guitar acting as a bass, and aluminum pie plates. Some of the stories behind the songs are quite unusual. "Guitar Tuning Blues" is directly from playing on the street one night when we just could not get our guitars in tune. As the temperature drops, your guitars change in pitch, and halfway through a song, your guitars are out of tune." At Chip's insistence, Allan turned his catchy phrase

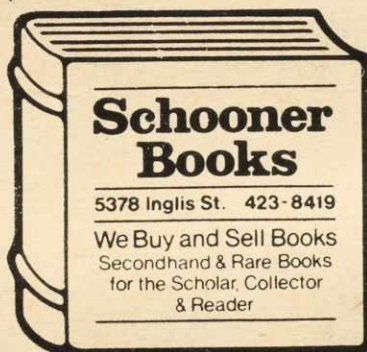
"linear thinking on a spherical planet" into a song. "I was mostly a closet player, playing for myself. I didn't really believe in my ability to write songs and I certainly didn't try that hard because of that doubt. When I mentioned this phrase, Chip said, 'Hey! That would be a great

"folk festivals would be more up our alley"

song!" and I said, 'Nah, I can't make that into a song!' I went home and tried it and it became a song."

Though they plan to move more indoors in the future, they are careful of their choice of clubs. "The problem with moving into the clubs is that we want to develop our own music. As soon as you get into clubs you begin to move in the opposite direction," said Chip. "Yeah," added Allan, "folk festivals would be more up our alley. That's the closest thing to playing on a stage that I think would fit what we do. It's much preferred to playing in a noisy club."

Providing a relaxing show for all, the Guys at the Library are currently performing a collection of songs, covers and originals, at the Grawood Lounge on Friday afternoons at 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.



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