

MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER



EAST BAY BANJO CLUB

SINCE 1963



FEBRUARY 2004

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1

Play-out Schedule

⇒ Sun, Feb 29

Banjo-Rama
Sacramento
1:40PM to 2:10PM

⇒ Wed, Mar 10

Golden State Club/
Rossmoor
Walnut Creek
7:00PM to 8:00PM

⇒ Sat, Apr 24

Special Kid's Day
Castle Rock Park
Walnut Creek
12:00N to 12:45PM

⇒ Sat, June 5

Valley View Lodge
Walnut Creek
6:30PM to 7:30PM

Please sign-up or contact Jack Starr to make these play-outs a huge success!

Editors Note

A special thanks to Ed Rossman, Gerry Kerr, Terry Horner, and Jack Starr for their assistance with my transition to Editor/Publisher of your Newsletter. Please help contribute to your Newsletter with your thoughts and ideas. Contact me:
Email: (Attachments OK) Bud.Pearce@Sun.Com
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925-264-7184

Crab Feeds Aplenty

By Our "MAN IN BACK" Terry Horner

On **January 24th** we had a good turnout for our usual gig at the Oakland Masonic Lodge crab feed. Twelve of the faithful showed up and played two rousing sets to the sound of crab cracking and munching. **BILL COOPER** and **TERRY HORNER** toted the audio equipment. **BILL** led the group, with fine songs from **BILL** and **BUD PEARCE**, who debuted with his "plastic cup" vocal, to the amazement of the crowd. **CHUCK COOK** kept the rhythm in sync with his outstanding effort on the tuba. Other strummers were **GARRY KERR**, **BETTY DAVID**, **JACK** and **DIANA STARR**, **CHRIS** and **TERRY HORNER**, **MARILYN YOUNG**, **PAT WHEATON**, and **BILL DOWLING**. We got lots of applause and some wild dancers this year.

Then on **February 7th** we took on another crab feed, this time for the Friends of the Mount Diablo Adult Day Care Rehab Center. The event was oversold, and we were set up in the center of a large hall. This time **BILL COOPER** and **BOB NELSON** brought the equipment. **BILL COOPER** led, assisted by **JACK** and **DIANA STARR**, **BETTY DAVID**, **GARRY DEITZ**, **KIT NELSON**, **BUD PEARCE**, **KEN FOGARTY**, **CHRIS** and **TERRY HORNER**, **GARRY KERR**, and that Sultan of Spit, **CHUCK COOK** on the tuba. They loved us, and expressed regret when we left before the crab was passed out; perhaps next time we should play for 2 hours instead of one.

"Gearing Up" for Banjo-Rama

By Gerry Kerr

Banjo-Rama is rapidly approaching and we all owe it to ourselves and our band to have our banjos polished and adjusted to perform their best.

Strings

Strings begin to deteriorate as soon as they are installed. Over time, oil, air-borne toxins, and dirt deaden them, and vibration causes them to become brittle. They become harder to accurately tune, and do not ring true as you proceed up the fingerboard. **Nothing improves the sound of your banjo like fresh strings.** Banjo strings are usually loop-ended but many tail-

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pieces will also accept ball-end strings, such as are used on guitars. Strings typically cost about a dollar each. Check with your local music store. String diameters are a matter of personal preference. A good combination to begin with on plectrum banjos is: 1st string - .010", 2nd - .012", 3rd - .016" and 4th - .024W". For a tenor banjo, try 1st string - .010, 2nd - .012, 3rd - .020W, and 4th - .28W. **New strings will feel soft under your fingers and deliver the richest tone that your banjo is capable of producing.....at least for a while.**

Bridge Position

To correctly position the bridge, measure the distance from the inside edge of the nut to the center of the 12th fret, double that number, and the result is the correct distance from the nut to the bridge. After placing the bridge at this location, check the results with your electronic tuner. For example, if you stroke an open "D" string, the tone should be exactly one octave higher when you repeat this while pressing your finger behind the 12th fret. In a situation of old strings or excessively high action, the pitch at the twelfth fret will often be too high. Therefore, the bridge will have to be repositioned closer to the tail-piece. Technically, this will make the pitches incorrect at the lower frets, but this pitch error in the lower register is much less noticeable to the ear. It might even be necessary to slant the bridge slightly since the needed correction of the 1st and 4th strings might be slightly different.

Cleaning And Polishing

Clean and polish your banjo. Dried beer looks ugly! Oils from your skin promote corrosion of the metal parts, hastening the day of need for an expensive re-plating. Metal parts are plated in chrome, nickel, or gold. Nickel and gold usually have a coating of lacquer to protect the thin plating. Don't use metal polish on your banjo! (I personally use Q-tips, pipe cleaners, and Windex for the metal parts and head). The exterior wood parts take nicely to most any kind of wax. Car wax is perfect for smooth wood and plastic surfaces and lasts a long time. For carved wood or engraved plastic, a furniture polish works well and doesn't leave white residue in the nooks and crannies. The fingerboard collects oil and dirt from your fingers. It cleans well with simply a cloth moistened with Windex (tm). Note that Windex contains a small amount of alcohol which could conceivably damage lacquer or varnish finishes. Test first in an inconspicuous spot.

Conclusion

Take good care of your banjo, and it will help you give your best performance!

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