

Music: Scarecroe and Mr. Finch

Guitarists lend a pick at Fairfax Open Space Committee benefit

by Matt Kramer

Saturday evening presents an opportunity to contribute to the quality of life in the county, as the Fairfax Women's Club hosts a benefit for the Fairfax Open Space Committee. Proceeds from this eve of Earth Day event will be directed into preserving and acquiring open space in and around Fairfax. The fundraiser includes a lasagna dinner, a raffle, a silent auction—and I wouldn't be hyping it here if it didn't involve music as well.

Starting at 6pm, Otis Scarecroe (I just spotted him playing an acoustic guitar while walking across Fairfax-Bolinas Road) will perform with fellow guitarist Steve Wolf. (The SFGate Web site recently featured an image of this duo performing at Fairfax's fabulous BookBeat.) You can find Scarecroe regularly performing solo (or with Wolf and other friends around Fairfax and San Anselmo), and his Halloween shows at Café Amsterdam are highly entertaining. He's original, gritty, sometimes silly, somewhat scary and not shy at all about sharing his political take on things. And he's just as forthcoming about donating his time and talent to other musicians as well as causes he believes in.

Another generous guitarist takes over the event at 8pm: Tom Finch (with the group that bears his name). A recent series of columns in the *IJ* asked people to vote for their favorite Marin guitarist, and the broad question broke nominees down into only two categories: living and dead. Tom Finch's name showed up among those mentioned and nominated, and thankfully among the living. Blues, rock, jazz, funk, world, whatever—Finch is an amazing guitar player. I wish everyone who voted for a favorite guitarist would come out to hear him play.

Also mentioned in the "greatest guitarist" poll was a player who performs on pedal steel as well as regular ol' gee-tar, and he's got a beer named after him at Iron Springs Pub & Brewery, where he'll be playing Thursday night. Music night normally takes place on Wednesday at this joint, but when Barry Sless (guitarist and namesake of a delicious stout), David Nelson (guitarist and vocalist) and Pete Sears (bass and keyboards) come a-callin' with a band, unusual things start to happen. For example, there's a cover charge for this performance, and this may be the first time Iron Springs has required a monetary donation at the door. But the last time these fellows combined talents to rock the brewpub, the crowd was way beyond capacity. In a possible attempt to thin out the throng, and an earnest effort to funnel some funds into the pockets of the musicians, there's a modest \$5 admission fee attached to the show. Think about all the experience and connections present in this performance: Grateful Dead, New Riders of the Purple Sage, Jefferson Starship, Hot Tuna, Flying Other Brothers, David Nelson Band, etc. Brewpub proprietor (and proud new papa!) Michael Altman tells me that 100 percent of the take at the door is going directly to these veteran performers. Support local open spaces Saturday, and support local musicians Thursday—think of the karmic charm we could generate.

And while we're considering things, if you think that the presence of a Thursday night show at Iron Springs will cancel out the weekly night of free music on the immediately preceding Wednesday—think again. The night before Nelson, Sless and Sears perform, Bay Area bluegrass septet Grizzly Peak returns to Iron Springs.