

SF ONE HEART

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and Myth**
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oh yeah, Jim Terr
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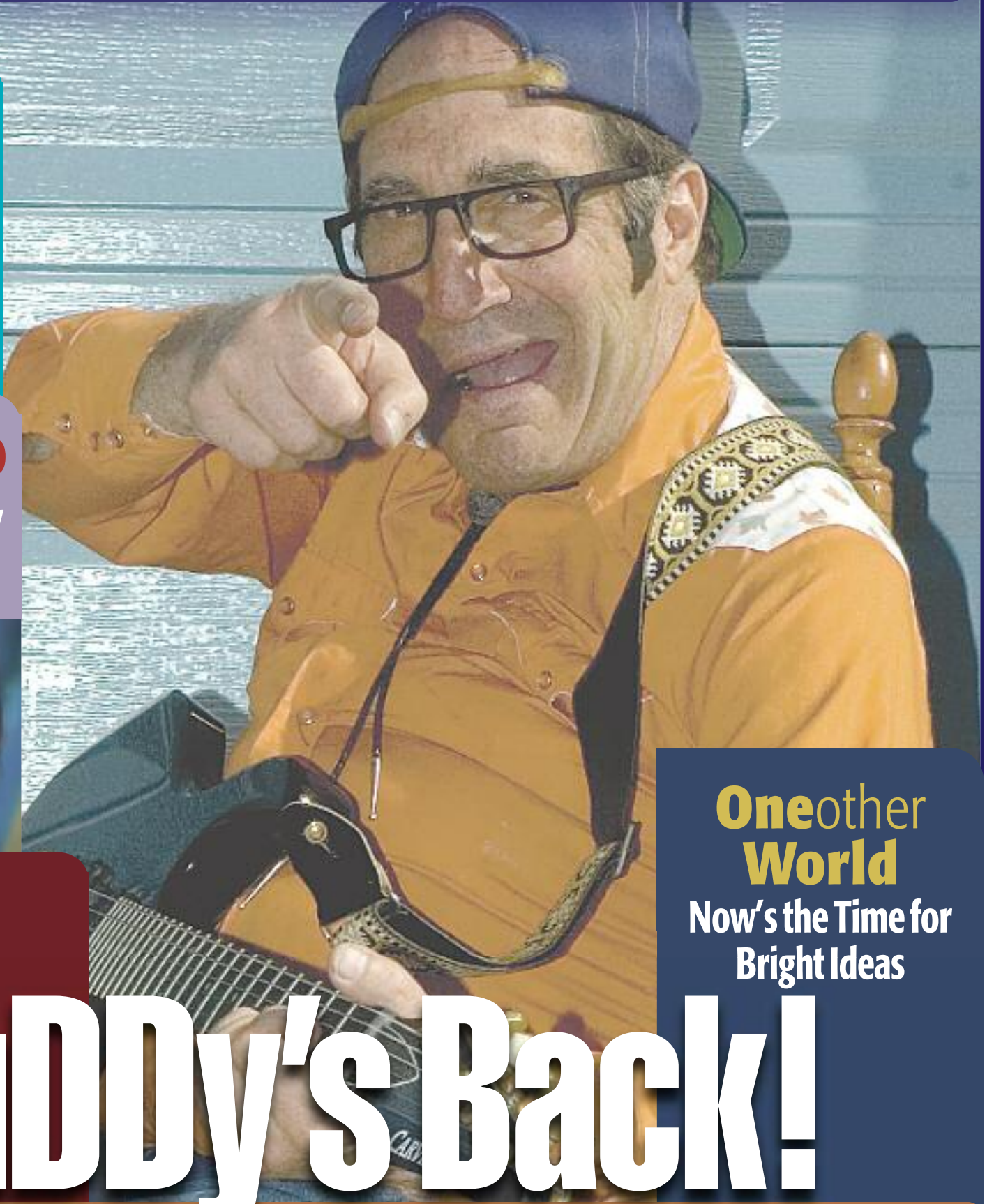
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By Gershon Siegel

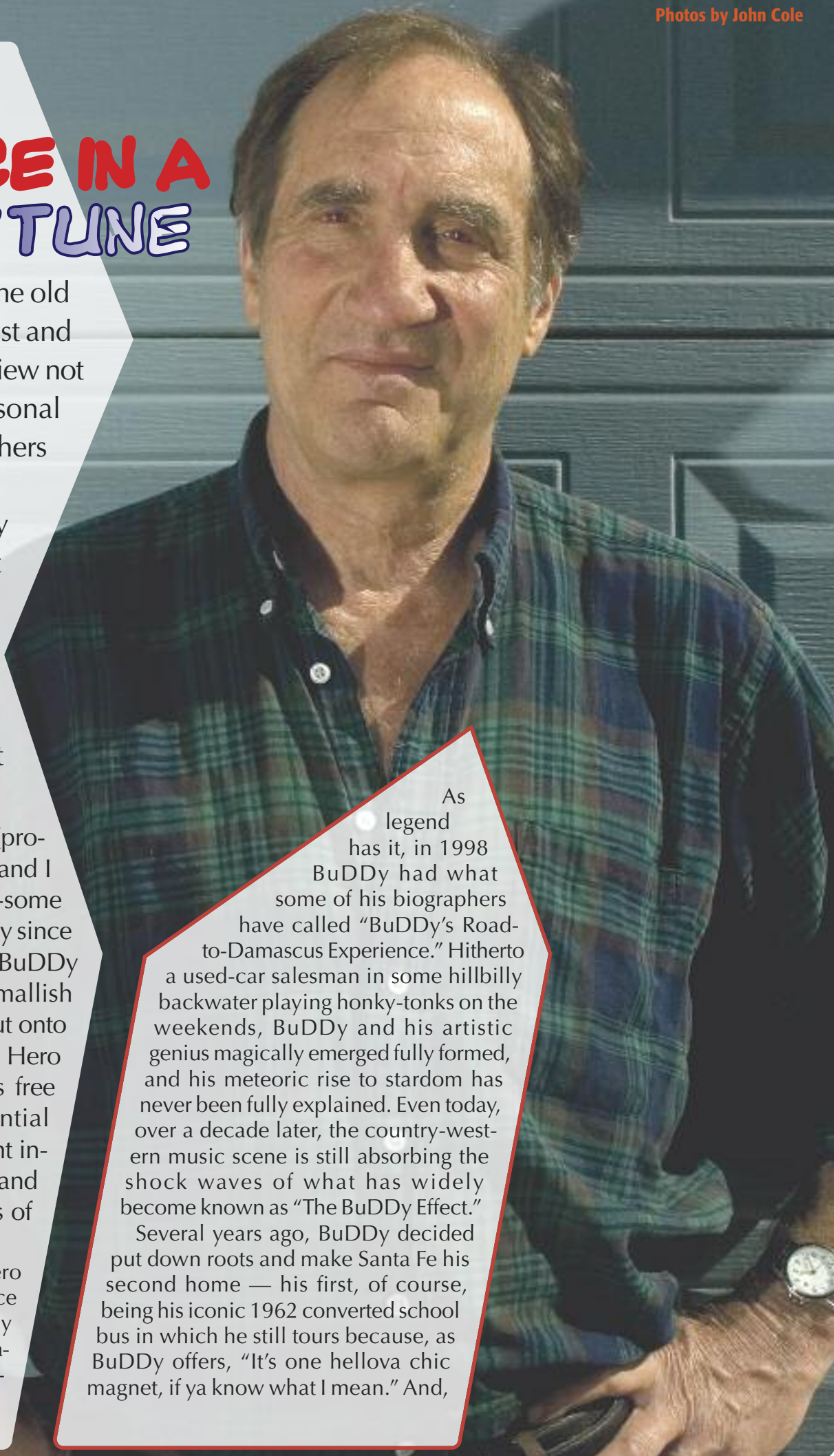
EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE FORTUNE SMILES

on some old journalist and he gets to interview not one, but two of his personal heroes. When the publishers gave permission for me to interview both the legendary BuDDy and Santa Fe's almost legendary Jim Terr for this month's cover, this humble wordsmith got down on not one, but two knees, singing thanks and praises to The Most High, Jah! Rastafari!

Full disclosure — Jim Terr (pronounced “tur” as in “turkey”) and I have known each other 20-some very odd years. However, only since he's been writing songs for BuDDy has he gotten to lease a smallish ground-floor room looking out onto the parking lot of my personal Hero Hotel. BuDDy, of course gets free room service in the Presidential Suite, overlooking a magnificent inner courtyard whose grandeur and scale rival the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

In proclaiming that BuDDy is a hero to every real fan of country music since the late nineties, I am speaking not only for my generation, but also for generations X, XX, XY, and even unto generations not yet assigned initials.

As legend has it, in 1998 BuDDy had what some of his biographers have called “BuDDy's Road-to-Damascus Experience.” Hitherto a used-car salesman in some hillbilly backwater playing honky-tonks on the weekends, BuDDy and his artistic genius magically emerged fully formed, and his meteoric rise to stardom has never been fully explained. Even today, over a decade later, the country-western music scene is still absorbing the shock waves of what has widely become known as “The BuDDy Effect.” Several years ago, BuDDy decided put down roots and make Santa Fe his second home — his first, of course, being his iconic 1962 converted school bus in which he still tours because, as BuDDy offers, “It's one hellova chic magnet, if ya know what I mean.” And,



yes, “Ole Yeller,” as BuDDy affectionately refers to the 40-foot behemoth on wheels, still contains that infamous hot tub so very familiar to more than a few BuDDy groupies.

BuDDy’s move to the City Nearly Different

As with any concert, I thought I’d start with the audience-warm-up act before bringing on the “headliner.” So before I bring on The One, The Only, BuDDy, here is New Mexico’s



has turned into an incredible lucky break for long-time singer/songwriter and New Mexico native son Jim Terr. With last fall’s release of the much anticipated CD “Love BuDDy,” it looks as if Terr has finally snatched the golden ring that’s been eluding him for so long. “Love BuDDy,” already hailed as an instant country classic, is BuDDy’s first release of mostly new material since who knows when. All good news for Terr, of course, who composed and played backup guitar on most of the CD’s 12 chart-busting, toe-tapping cuts.

Now, after three decades, hundreds of songs, and 600,000 YouTube views later, Terr is finally beginning to enjoy the recognition, not to mention remuneration, that every self-absorbed artist craves, even if it’s only by association with BuDDy. For, as Terr quipped when asked if he felt like he was standing in BuDDy’s shadow, “There’s more sunshine under BuDDy’s shadow than there is on a clear August day in all of New Mexico.” I’d agree with you there, Jimbo.

As commercial music gets more homogenized, more vanilla, it leaves an opening for the crazier stuff and the more baroque, melancholy stuff that used to be country music.

original, Jim Terr. (Did I mention it’s pronounced “tur” as in “turkey”?)

Gershon Siegel: Anyone visiting your many websites can see you’re a multifaceted, multitasking guy. You make promotional videos for businesses and

public-service causes. You write songs and jingles, make websites, do voice-overs, make commercials for local businesses, act in other peoples’ movies, and write film scripts. There seems to be no end to your talents. If you were stuck on a deserted island and you had to pick just one or maybe two of your talents to spend the rest of eternity with, which ones would they be?

Jim Terr: Thanks for all the compliments. Yeah, it’s exhausting sometimes, being so multitasking. The “deserted island” question could throw off this whole Q&A, because if I were on a deserted island, I wouldn’t have an audience for movies and such. But, as a matter of fact, in that situation I’d still enjoy the songwriting, which I’ve come to realize is my best-developed talent, my most fun activity, and probably my best shot at making some money in this lifetime.

In fact, the only money I have made – other than from a few foundation grants to do documentaries – is from having written and published some songs that were in movies, on albums, and so on. A good hit country song can still make as much as a million dollars for the writer/publisher (that’s apart from what the artist and record company make), and I’ve got some good ones. And I’ve been writing even more lately — pretty much waking up with a new song almost every day! I’ve got an album concept called “Dangerous Country,” which I think can showcase that sort of ridiculous-to-sublime range that appeals to me. It could be a “niche” for me, because as commercial music gets more homogenized, more vanilla, it leaves an opening for the crazier stuff and the more baroque, melancholy stuff that used to be country music – and is hardly heard any more.

A couple of my very-low-budget film ideas include original music, and the one I have the most confidence in includes a lot of “early rock”-sounding stuff. I’m also writing a movie I’m convinced could do as well as *Dirty Dancing*, which was an incredible hit. The movie is set in the sixties, in Albuquerque, and was inspired by a photo I saw of Dusty Springfield in which she looked very lonely while being theoretically on top of the world.

So, yeah, songwriting is what I enjoy most. It’s fun, not really like work.

Gershon: Since you are a media guy, it’s no surprise to learn that you consider it important for media literacy to be taught in our educational system. You even went so far as to write a proposal for a television show called “Let’s Play Spin Doctor.” You also wrote an entirely believable movie review of *Young Demagogue’s School*, a movie that only exists in your own mind. Why have you put so much attention on how media affects us?

Jim: Well, everyone has their own take on what’s important in politics – on understanding what’s going on and where we’re going astray, if they are aware enough to realize that we are going astray. Perhaps I was raised on too many “Holocaust studies” at a very young age, but I am completely aware and a bit paranoid about how a crowd – or a country – can be misled by demagoguery. Goering said that someone just needs to repeat a lie often enough, and invoke an enemy often enough, to motivate people — to play on their fears, and distract and mislead them.

This is going on very consciously, as well as unconsciously, at every level of politics. The Republicans, the

>> **Jim & BuDDy** continued on 8

Rush Limbaughs, the Koch Brothers who finance a lot of this – and the rest of us, as a matter of fact, who would rather focus on inane conspiracy theories than on simple cause and effect – are all complicit. I simply want to raise the level of awareness about how easily we are manipulated, and what the techniques are, so that we are all more aware and therefore more immune to manipulation.

That's the point of "Let's Play Spin Doctor." It turns this process into a game show, which I think could be popular. A show such as this would help undermine the veritable sea of bullshit in which we are so submerged that most of us are unconscious of it. Of course, advertising and PR are essentially the same game, the same techniques, which is why I applaud the media literacy movement. We must try to educate kids as well as adults to be more aware of the advertising and propaganda techniques being used on them every hour of every day.

Without more of this awareness, I'm convinced there is no hope. I see most people as being distracted from the real issues. When you're trying to do something about climate change, or war, or campaign finance, or denying corporate "personhood," and two-thirds of your effort goes into fighting lies and campaigns of distraction, then no progress is made. The Koch Brothers and Rush Limbaughs laugh all the way to the bank.

Rush Limbaugh's game, and that of his many clones, is to play on fear and ignorance — to create divisiveness. For that reason, I consider him the embodiment of evil in our time. There would have been no George W. Bush, and no Iraq war or many other absurdities and tragedies, without Rush and company. People aren't quite that stupid on their own, but they are being skillfully "enabled" by Rush Limbaugh and his clones.

Gershon: Another one of your media projects concerns the local news. Given all the grave news happening around the world — earthquakes, tsunamis, wars, genocides — what's so important about local news?

Jim: Well, I can tell you what sparked this project. One day I was driving down Cerillos Road and saw a building on fire. I

wondered about it, and realized that since Bob Barth (the local radio newsman) had died, I wasn't going to find out about the fire until 10 pm that night on the TV news. I wondered how we got so disconnected from what was going on down the block.

I simply want to raise the level of awareness about how easily we are manipulated.

I started thinking about the dying phenomenon of local radio news and what could be done to save it — to revive it. This is exciting. I'm very much a radio or audio person. I don't have a TV. Probably 75 percent of the knowledge I've gained and the "new people and new ways" I've met in the past 20 years have been via radio — public radio, talk radio, or whatever. Radio is immediate, and it's cheap. You can do so much with local issues, local news, and local stories on radio. It's amazing. We have a wonderful local resource, KSFR-FM, with a strong local news component. But what about a station in Anytown, USA, that wants to start doing local news? What tools do they have to get started? What encouragement?

I started doing interviews for a documentary to make this information and encouragement available. This project got started with some small foundation seed funding. It was incredible how many working journalists and celebrities were willing and anxious to talk about this topic, including Steve Jones (ABC), Jim Bohannon, Harvey Nagler (CBS), Scott Simon (NPR), Jonathan Adelstein (FCC), Dave Barry, Davar Ardalan, Jonathan Alter (*Newsweek*), James Fallows, Hodding Carter, Thom Hartmann, Charles Osgood, and Kirk Ellis (the president of NAB). I'm still hoping to find the funds to finish this documentary and use it to enable and encourage more local radio news reporting.

Gershon: Speaking of local, I noticed that one of your recent projects is a video concerning the theme of "buying local," certainly a topic that many New Mexicans are aware of. You've even written a song, "Mama Don't Send Me to the Big-Box Store." What's your beef with big-box stores?

Jim: Well, my beef is not original. There are many hidden costs in trying to save a couple cents at the big-box store. This savings is so often not the case, anyway, if you actually compare. It's a short-term savings. The profits are going out of state, local entrepreneurship is not being encouraged, fewer local taxes are being paid, and employees are generally paid less. For many reasons, it's just a big "suck." There is a net loss in giving your money to out-of-state chains. The video makes people more aware of these factors. The one we did for Las Vegas, NM, was a huge hit on the Internet, with over 8,000 Google views almost immediately. The one we've just made for Santa Fe should do even better. And I'm hoping to license that song to many other small-town local-business alliances as well, so they can make their own videos.

Gershon: Local people may know you largely for your catalog of satirical songs, made into YouTube videos, lampooning the likes of Glenn Beck, Karl Rove, Rush Limbaugh, corporations, the Supreme Court for their "Citizens United" decision, cell phones, British Petroleum, Facebook, and healthcare reform. You obviously enjoy using satire as a form of social commentary. Can you talk about that?

Jim: I got clearer on what I had always intuited when I read an article in *The New Yorker* about Ben Franklin's and Mark Twain's use of satire. The article pointed out that satire makes a point by taking a case or an injustice or an error to such an extreme that it can't be missed. Satire exaggerates a situation, hopefully to the point of humor or absurdity, so it's impossible to miss. Sometimes that's the only way to break the reality — the misconception that keeps things stuck.

I've never gotten rich at it. My satire has not been picked up by Jon Stewart or Stephen Colbert or Bill Maher or David Letterman or The Huffington Post. However, I still think that, at its best, satire can be the most effective way of making a point and changing people's minds. Look at the success of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert. A huge portion of people get their news from these guys, and it's almost all satire. It's just about the only way to make "sense" of an absurd, tragic world. And it is absurd and tragic that we could all be working together to get somewhere, but we get manipulated into fighting each

other unnecessarily. The Koch Brothers and the Limbaughs laugh all the way to the bank, and the human race's chances for surviving on Earth go into the outhouse.

I do get plenty of "affirmation" on my satires and videos. When *Buzz Flash.com* or Thom Hartmann plays them, there's always a huge reaction, and I've received well over a half million views on my YouTube videos. So I know that those who hear them appreciate them. It's just frustrating not to be able to do more, or to reach a larger audience.

Gershon: Recently the legendary BuDDy released "Love BuDDy," featuring mostly your songs. Can you comment on how you managed to pull off such a coup and what it means for your career?

Jim: Well, what it means for my career is something like eight cents per song per CD sold, and a bit of BMI money for the occasional bit of airplay – though unfortunately BuDDy is not as popular as he used to be. I find BuDDy a little difficult, personally — I'd even say insufferable. (You're not going to print this, are you? I trust you to use your dis-

cretion.) However, I appreciate that he recognizes he's no songwriter himself, and that he has given me the inside track on writing most of his material.

BuDDy encompasses roughly the same range that I cover as a writer – the ridiculous to the sublime – so it's a good match that way.

I don't want to talk about BuDDy's legal or personal troubles, which I feel have sidetracked his career (and therefore my potential income). These are really nobody else's business.

However, he has made a tremendous amount of money in other enterprises. This has also slowed him down in the music business, because he's really not that "hungry" anymore — just sort of playing around when it comes to music. Don't quote me on any of that. You can quote me as saying BuDDy is an extraordinary talent and a very inspiring person to work with — really a rare spirit — and I consider myself very privileged.

Gershon: I promise I won't quote you. What would you say is the overarching Jim Terr philosophy?

Jim: I'm not sure I'm encumbered by any-

thing as grand as a philosophy. I like a quote by Abraham Joshua Heschel, which is my current Facebook quote: "When I was young, I used to admire intelligent people; as I grow older, I admire kind people."

This realization has been creeping up on me over the past few years, which is not original, I'm sure. Nothing much really matters except being kind to each other, and trying to relieve the net suffering around us — making this journey a bit better for everyone.

When my sister died suddenly a couple years ago, it was a tremendous shock. It really shook me up and made this lesson clearer. There's nothing more important than trying to be kind and make everybody's trip a little better. There's very little time for judging, and especially for exploiting people and making their lives miserable – which I'm afraid there are many people seriously engaged in.

I stand in opposition to that sort of exploitation and ignorance. And I stand in support of life and the divine spark as I see it. And, God, I love a good laugh – as you've noticed.

Now, without further ado ... BuDDy.

Gershon: I'd just like to say up front that no one is a bigger fan of BuDDy's than I am. So if some of my questions seem less than respectful, please know that I have a duty to a readership with an unquenchable thirst for the salacious details about any celebrity, particularly a household name like BuDDy.

>> **Jim & BuDDy** continued on 10



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That being said, I think I speak for a lot of BuDDy fans out there who want to know why, given the impact your music has had on so many, you have not yet been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Are you bitter about that?

BuDDy: I don't need no Hall of Fame to reach my audience. That just gets in the way. Do you think I need the extra two percent record sales? Heck, no. I love my fans without no Grand Ol' Opry or none of that. Thanks for bein' a fan, by the way. I always appreciate that. You mean bigger fan than ME, by the way. Not that I like to correct anybody.

Gershon: As you know, this interview is paired with an interview conducted earlier with an associate of yours, Jim Terr. Can you say how this recent musical partnership came about? And can you address the current buzz that BuDDy and Terr are the new Lennon and McCartney?

BuDDy: Well, Jim is a good ol' boy and a heck of a songwriter. I don't remember exactly how we met — ask Jim. He probably just came to BuDDy with some good songs. Heck, even if somebody's got problems like Jim, I know a good song when I see one. So he can keep writin' for me as long as he keeps producin'. Lennon and McCartney was both songwriters. BuDDy's no songwriter, so your analogy don't hold water. Next question.

Gershon: BuDDy's famed Road-to-Damascus Experience, back in 1998, is still shrouded in mystery. Care to lift the veil a bit on that miracle and tell your many fans the details of what it was like to have the finger of God reach out and touch you? Was it like the Michael Angelo painting on the Pizza Espiritu Café ceiling on St. Michael's Drive showing God handing a pepperoni slice to Adam?

BuDDy: I ain't sure what you're talkin' about here. But I sure love pizza, hold the pepperoni. Next question.

Gershon: A man of your means can live anywhere. Why Santa Fe?

Websites

Jim Terr's songwriting: BlueCanyonProductions.com/cd.html#reviews

YouTube video, "Local Radio News Interviews": YouTube.com/watch?v=grDPrCK9aiM

BuDDy's other enterprises: BlueCanyonProductions.com/askusfolks/buddy_forbeslike/index.htm

BuDDy's website: BuDDysOldFashionedWebsite.com



BuDDy:

Well, heck, you know as good as I do that Santa Fe's got it all: beautiful mud

houses, massage on every corner, beautiful women (that goes without sayin'), acupuncture, cultural events like the flea market, good restaurants. Did I mention beautiful women? BuDDy really appreciates a beautiful woman.

Also, with all the celebrities in Santa Fe, people know how to leave you alone and not be dazzled. In fact, Santa Fe wouldn't know what to make of ol' BuDDy. I've only performed here a couple times. Mostly I perform in Albuquerque at the Reptile Club. That's where most of my on-line videos is from. [BuDDy is referring to Tricklock Theater Company's Reptilian Lounge late-night cabaret, which he insists on calling the Reptile Club. Too much booze or *something*.]

Gershon: To what do you attribute "The BuDDy Effect"?

BuDDy: If you're talkin' about how sometimes the audience feels the love and the oneness with the universe, well, that's because BuDDy truly loves his audience, and by golly they feel that. I guess it can even come through in a record or CD. It's something you can't fake, no matter how hard you try.

Gershon: Can you remember back to what it was like before you were BuDDy?

BuDDy: You mean before I was born? It was warm and cozy, and I had three squares a day. In some ways I prefer it to the present situation, I tell you what. Next question.

Gershon: Is BuDDy's motto — "We just want to be your friend" — sincere?

Because I've always wanted be friends with one of my heroes, and since you are one of my heroes, I want to be your friend. I mean, like a really close friend. Like maybe we could go to a movie or take a weekend workshop together? And you could call me up and ask for advice, or

I could call you up and ask you to jump my battery? You know, like *real* friends.

BuDDy: I could not be more sincere about wantin' to be your friend. I know you can feel it right now. You can call up BuDDy any time. Just tell your question to my secretary, Alice, or Mary Alice, and they'll check with ol' BuDDy and get back to ya with an answer. Are we finished here?

Gershon: My last question: Why the two upper-case *Ds* in BuDDy? And how can a fan purchase one of your CDs?

BuDDy: That's two questions, not one question. But you been very nice, so I'll answer 'em. (1) That's just the way we always spelled it. Why? Is there somethin' wrong with our spellin'? (2) BuDDy don't handle that end of it, but I believe you can go to my website and they'll take care of ya. Hey, we really gotta go. It's been real good fun. Thank ya, Mr. Speagel.



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