

# The First Words...



## DON'T IT ALWAYS SEEM TO GO ...

A chunk of this issue was already out the door when the news hit about the cancellation of one of the continent's oldest contemporary folk music radio programs: LA's "FolkScene," produced for more than 30 years by volunteer hosts Howard and Roz Larman for the southern California Pacifica station, KPFK. Without dredging up the swamp of internal politics and mission floundering that has been plaguing the Pacifica radio network in recent months (most of which doesn't comfortably fit under our own editorial umbrella), the move to "temporarily replace" Howard and Roz's program on the KPFK schedule by station management deals another bitter blow to the kind of community-based folk music radio that does so, so much to support, share and educate the public about folk music and the commu-

nities that have built up around love for this music. With that in mind, I scrapped the self-congratulatory clap trap that would have filled this page in favor of a bit of a tribute to two heroes of folk radio who will, I hope, find a way to return to the air very soon.

First a little background on the "crisis." The core of this dispute rests on the issue of ownership of the program name and concept. Over the summer months, KPFK issued a directive that all programs aired on the station were to be considered simple "works for hire" and that all hosts would be required to sign a contract relinquishing any claim of ownership (or control) for programs that were in many cases solely the creation of the hosts in question. Howard and Roz created the program, as volunteers at the station in 1970, pouring thousands of hours and dollars into its nurturing, growth and support over the years. To be fair, KPFK provided studio space and the broadcast frequency without which airing of "FolkScene" couldn't have happened. Logic would seem to rule that there should be some kind of shared ownership of the concept ... but the station management's demand that Howard and Roz retroactively abandon any claim or rights to the program they created, and which formed the core of a range of other efforts they've made over the years to support folk music in the greater Los Angeles area, without any offer of compensation to the Larmans, smacks of bullying. Because community public radio is self-monitored, the Larmans lose ... the LA area loses ... and the greater folk-community-at-large loses.

And the loss is immense. What Howard and Roz do may not be entirely unique in the world of folk radio – I mean, there *are* other programs which feature live music and which support regional presentation of folk music across the continent – but Howard and Roz bring a special expertise, personality and commitment to their work that *is* very special. Take a listen to either of the two collections of live music from the program released on Red House records for a glimpse at the breadth of artists the Larmans bring under the folk umbrella. (The royalties for those releases are *shared* between the Larmans and KPFK, by the way.) Or look at their commitment to the community, beyond broadcasting, that they have volunteered over the years. Along with co-editing *FolkScene Magazine* in the late 1970s, Howard and Roz have booked and or hosted many festivals and house concerts. And their on-air artist interviews, ranging from Hoyt Axton to Steeleye Span to Dwight Yokum, Rose Maddox, Stan Rogers and everyone in between, number more than 2000.

As is often the case with "intellectual property" law, the *legal* issues surrounding this matter are anything but "black and white." KPFK certainly has a right to determine what it broadcasts and who owns the programming ... but in this war of bravado, the music loses.

If you'd like to voice your opinion on this, you can write to KPFK, attn: Mark Shubb, General Manager, 3729 Cahuenga Blvd West, North Hollywood, 91604. E-mailing is also an option via Stacey Fancher, <sfancher@kpfk.org>. Do it loud.

You can also offer your support directly to Howard and Roz by writing: P.O. Box 707, Woodland Hills, CA 91365; or, via e-mail, at <folkscene@folkscene.com>. And check out their web site, <www.folkscene.com> for the latest news on this matter.

Hopefully we'll have good news to report next time out ... in the meantime: Howard and Roz, we're with you!

Mark D. Moss, Editor / Exec. Director



The *FolkScene* crew at their 30th Anniversary celebration: (standing l to r) Howard and Roz Larman, Allen Larman, Alyssa Archambault, Peter Cutler and (kneeling in front) Cannon Justice.

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