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## Oganookie Makes A Triumphant Return

by John Selby

**O**GANOOKIE'S REUNION FOR ONE PERFORMANCE Friday night at the Coconut Grove was a complete sell-out. As the crowd gathered and filtered into the grand ballroom, it became apparent that it was not only a reunion for the band, but an excuse for a town gathering.

Oganookie's sound is folk music in the truest sense of the word. There is an organic tradition in which the community directly shares and experiences a love for foot-stomping, hand-clapping, heart-lifting music. Their ascension to local fame began in the early '70's when they electrified the mad picking and fiddling of American folk & country music into a boogie beat that sent your feet flying and your heart reeling.

Oganookie's manager, Peter Troxell, was greeted as a well-known friend by the audience. They cheered when he announced that there was to be no smoking except in the dancing area adjacent to the main ballroom. Since it had been the expressed wish of Oganookie that families be encouraged to bring their little ones, he made a request for volunteers to watch over the child care center.

Troxell introduced Don & Pilar to the expectant audience. In a suit of white satin and a ruffled shirt, Don carried on a dialogue of song with Pilar that reached operatic heights. Like Sophia Loren with a voice, Pilar summoned a range of emotions within reach of only great actresses. In a low-cut black dress, she basked in the red spotlights and crooned a burning torch song in the style of a most heated chanteuse.

Pianist Paul Petzold accompanied the duo through their wide repertoire that encompassed dialogues about the pains of love, lamentations, hymns of love to "lover angels" and satire done in an hilarious style. Unfortunately, much of the subtleties of lyrics and dynamics were lost on the audience since the noisy ballroom was not conducive to a complete appreciation of their work. Still the group was received with overwhelming applause between each imaginative and well-crafted song they performed.

Troxell returned to announce: "We're going to ask you to move the chairs you're sitting on and get ready to move, because Oganookie is a *dance* band!" The band stepped on stage in a burst of smiles, and played through a set of old favorites. As the familiar tunes activated a wave of nostalgia, the audience took a look at itself.

Carrying her infant, a woman in a shawl danced across the floor. Little children wandered aimlessly, shirtless, looking up in wonder at the activity. A white-haired man in a grey suit led a smiling young brunette across the floor with a suave elegance that made onlookers smile. A middle-aged woman in a mink stole strolled by a young, barefoot couple who were doing a gyrating dance, flailing their arms like wild puppets. Many people were mouthing the words to the songs.

George Stavis' happy, electric banjo is a symbol of the Oganookie phenomena. While the carefree banjo-picking represents a return to roots and the simplicity of country life, the electricity generates a good time feeling to a large, modern audience that craves to be absorbed by volume.

In their second set, Oganookie played all new material, and the crowd continued to dance as before, the floor rumbling with movement. The fervent pitch into which the audience and performers worked themselves was similar to the emotional temperature cranked up at Grateful Dead concerts.

Gathered around the front of the stage, the enraptured folk threw up their hands in affirmation, making signs of peace. They began to clap steadily, clapping faster and faster until the band broke into a boogie fiddle number. Music began to erupt from the stage in waves of positive energy. Only the most elemental trace of a rhythm was needed to accelerate the enthusiasm.

Those who had been standing mesmerized began to rock back and forth on their feet, shifting their hips and swaying in time to the music. The passive onlookers were becoming absorbed into the flow of the most natural reaction to Oganookie's sound: don't stand there -- give it up and dance.

In the early 70's, Oganookie, their family and friends lived communally in the mountains, sharing the music and the work. After concerts they often handed out fresh produce from their garden at The Plantation. Two years ago, the band dissolved, due to many of the frustrations that musicians are heir to: failure to secure a professional recording contract, economic reasons, and the loss of personal identity within the framework of the group.

Does the success of Oganookie's return mean the group will return to life? No, because all the members have gone their separate ways. But they may return again for a special, "one time only" concert. •