

## The Centrefold

I recently got back in touch with one of my favorite publications, *Concertina & Squeezebox: The International Magazine for Free Reed Musicians*. Founded by John Townley deep in the 80s, *Concertina & Squeezebox* is currently edited by Joel Cowan, who has survived moves, fires, and various other unnatural disasters to bring the magazine into its 31<sup>st</sup> issue, fatter and fuller than ever. Full of neat stuff, like the cover interview with Lou Killen, a reprint of an interview with the late Scan Tester of Sussex (conducted by Rod and Danny Stradling), a continuing series on maintenance and repair, as well as reviews, market place, and some absolutely wonderful photos. They've been gathering and issuing cassettes made from home recordings by readers of the magazine for several years; these cassettes, *Original Readers' Tape*, *Son of Readers' Tape*, *Bride of Readers' Tape* and *Revenge of Readers' Tape*, are offered at \$12.00 (\$14.00 airmail, both prices U.S.; Canadian readers can get all four for \$40.00 U.S. postpaid). Considering that their readers include such folks and Killen, not to mention Townley and Cowan themselves, Hamish Bayne, and others less known (but often very good and surprisingly original), these cassettes are well worth owning.

My only current beef with *Concertina & Squeezebox* is that I've got to find some way to put together \$50.00 to buy the back issues I've missed during the last couple of years. [GWL]



A little known group that might be of interest to Society members is the American Banjo Fraternity. Despite the inclusive sound of their moniker, the group is quite specialized: their turf is the nylon or gut strung, finger picked (but not à la Scruggs, and *without* picks, for sure!) in the so-called "classical" mode. Of late, they've branched out a bit, showing some interest in the popular styles of playing that preceded the Golden Era of classical banjo (the late 1800s, though I gather you can still study the instrument in conservatories in England): recent articles and reprints have looked at the minstrel banjo technique, which was the prototypical "frailing" or "clawhammer" style.

I first became aware of the group during the 60s: they were not new when Pete Seeger cited them in his banjo instruction book. A friend of mine wrote a letter to the address Seeger gave, citing his source, and received a blistering response, denigrating Seeger as a Communist, blah blah blah. Not exactly the sort of thing to make a fellow much interested in joining. The current group is *much friendlier*. I think that's one reason why I keep my membership up; it's fun to receive the quarterly *5 Stringer*, their publication, even

though I've never gotten around to learning to read music well enough to play any of the music they print (though every now and then I have a moment to sit and noodle with a little of it), and though I know I'll never make it to Pennsylvania for one of their Fall or Spring Rallies. Lord knows, even as a listener, it must be a great deal of fun!

Dues for the Fraternity are \$10.00 annually. Write to the Treasurer, Joann Azinger, 271 McKinley Street, Braddock Hills, Pennsylvania, USA 15221. The 5 Stringer is edited by Elias and Madeleine Kaufman, 202 Capen Boulevard, Amherst, New York, USA 14226. [GWL]