

'60s singer comes to Dr. G's

By ROBIN BLACK
Reporter

Singer/songwriter/composer John Sebastian, member of the '60s rock group the Lovin' Spoonful who wrote and sang the theme to the TV sitcom "Welcome Back, Kotter," will bring the Dreaded Shark and 20 years of music to Dr. G's tonight.

Dreaded Shark is Sebastian's name for his guitar, a unique, low-tuned instrument.

"The Dreaded Shark lets me carry a bass line as well as a lead line," he says, "which most solo performers can't do. It gives me a much richer sound."

This is helpful, he says, since he is a solo performer and needs to develop a full background sound.

He said his low-tuned guitar compares to the average guitar about the same way the low-pitched cello compares to a violin.

Sebastian and his shark travel extensively, performing a broad repertoire of songs ranging from Lovin' Spoonful hits such as "Do You Believe in Magic" and "Did You Ever Have to Make Up Your Mind?" to the more recent "Welcome Back" theme.

In addition to his work on the road, he has kept busy working on much less visible projects.

Sebastian has scored or co-scored many movie soundtracks as well as done production and background work for artists such as Tom Petty and Randy Van Warmer.

Sebastian's film work began as early as 1964 with the score for the Woody Allen film "What's Up, Tiger-Lily?" and he was the first rock

and roll artist to compose music for a Broadway production when he wrote the score for the play "Jimmy Shine" that starred Dustin Hoffman.

His latest work has been for two new films: "The Act," a dark, Nixon-era political thriller, and "The American Snitch," a comedy about a scandal sheet that wins a Pulitzer prize.

"I like scoring because it lets me be a musical actor — it lets me act through my music and do things my audience wouldn't normally expect from me," he said. "It lets me bring out another side of my music other than the upbeat stuff like I did with Spoonfuls."

Sebastian has gained a lot from his scoring work, and he recognizes its value.

"If you're gonna do this (music) for a living — once the tide of fashion turns away from you — you find out what the business is all about," he said.

But, he says, he gains as much from his road work as well as from his work as a composer.

"The road is very valuable to a musician and it's a wonderful place to test new songs," he said. "An audience will tell you how your new song is better than any record company can, and a performer can sense this. He can actually gauge the reaction as he plays."

Sebastian's show at Dr. G's will start about 9 p.m. and tickets will be on sale for \$7.50. Since a big turnout is expected for the show, tickets can be purchased earlier today before the show, and those who buy tickets early will be put on a list to guarantee a seat for the performance.



JOHN SEBASTIAN AT WORK

'The Troubles' Ireland divided by imaginary wall

United Press International

BELFAST, Northern Ireland — Even punk rockers cannot escape the stamp of Northern Ireland's sectarian warfare.

A shock of green hair, shellacked to stand 5 inches high like a dinosaur's spine, denotes a staunch Irishman — and hence a Roman Catholic.

Vivid orange hair is for the Protestant "Orangemen," spiritual followers of the 17th century William of Orange who triumphed on the battlefield over Britain's Catholic King James.

"We live in tribes, really, in Northern Ireland, cut off from each other, with no idea of how Protestants live or they us," observes a Catholic cab driver, who approaches the idea of a Protestant like some newly discovered African tribe.

"Did you know the Protestants want to build a wall between us and southern Ireland?" he asks. A gentle Irish grin lets you know a bit of blarney is at play.

There is no Berlin-style border wall yet. But in Belfast 14 years of riots and bombings have left the Protestant majority and the Catholic minority separated by a brick wall that replaced a corrugated steel fence once inconspicuously dubbed the "Peace Line."

The communities are polarized, imprisoned in their own neighborhoods, their own pubs, their own cultures.

West Belfast today is almost completely Catholic.

In the past 14 years, yet another period in Irish history known as 'The Troubles,' nearly 2,400 people have died in sectarian warfare between Catholic and Protestant, with the police and British army providing the latest targets for gunmen.

It is a place of graceless housing projects and antiquated homesteads turned into scorched slums, "fortress-style" police stations with 25-foot concrete walls topped by barbed wire, soldiers in flak jackets hiding in armored Range Rovers, walls scrawled with "Maggie the Murderer" slogans and streets with lyrical Gaelic names.

East Belfast is Protestant. It is full of nice suburban homes, peopled by descendants of English and Scottish immigrants who subjugated the Irish. Many Protestant policemen live here, mostly in terror of Ca-

tholic attacks. The once-proud Protestant shipyards are now in decay, and so is the textile industry.

The downtown shopping district is shut off by 10-foot-high green steel gates. Before permitting access, police rifle women's purses, search cars

and British army providing the latest targets for gunmen.

So far this year, the Royal Ulster Constabulary lists 18 deaths, compared to 16 in the same period last year. Shootings are down to 65, compared to 110 last year. But explosions are nearly double — 75 compared to 40. Army bomb squads have defused only half as many devices — 16 compared to 30.

Protestants are still the majority with about 62.5 percent of the population. They still send their sons off to fight for Britain. Most still pledge fealty to the queen of England.

The Catholics, representing 37.5 percent of the population, still fight for union with the Irish Republic. The two sides rarely mix. Protestant children go to state schools. Catholics to church ones. One side learns Irish traditions, Irish dancing, history with the Irish slant on the 1921 partition. The other side learns British traditions, the British version of history.

"My 13-year-old was astonished when he met his first Protestant," Christina Moira McCulloch told a mixed group of Catholic and Protestant mothers. "I remember he stared and said, 'They look the same as us.'"

1969 record year for deals

Mergers down from past year

United Press International

The merger frenzy that has seized American business under the Reagan administration pales in comparison to the takeover revolution of the late 1960s when the giant conglomerates were formed, analysts say.

"One can make a good argument that we're not in another boom period just by looking at the total number of merger transactions," said Tomi Simic, director of research for W.T. Grimm & Co., the Chicago-based merger analyst.

In 1969, the record year for merger activity in the United States, more than 6,000 deals took place as many managements and business schools encouraged companies to spread out their risks by acquiring diversified ventures and building conglomerates, she said.

The number of mergers in 1983 totaled only 2,533 — less than half of 1969's heated pace but somewhat higher than the 2,346 business marriages in 1982, Simic said. The merger rate has picked up slightly so far this year.

"The one thing that sets today apart from the late 1960s is the size of the deals," Simic said. "Price tags have hit the stratosphere."

Larger players have entered the ring with the nation's oil titans bidding billions of dollars for competitors to replace declining oil and gas reserves.

This year alone Standard Oil Co. of California's purchase of Gulf Oil Co. for \$13.2 billion broke new ground as the biggest merger in U.S. history. Texaco Inc.'s \$10.1 billion acquisition of Getty Oil was not far behind in second place and Mobil Corp.'s \$5.7 billion takeover of Superior Oil Co. ranked fifth in the merger line-up.

"But even if you were to take the dollar totals of these merger transac-

tions and adjust them for inflation, they would come out about the same as the 1969 dollar totals," Simic said.

Statistics tell only one side of the story, however.

The recent wave of megabuck takeovers in the oil industry has raised concern in Congress and other quarters that energy companies are using vital funds to buy proven oil and gas reserves rather than moving ahead full-tilt to search for new reserves at a time when U.S. oil imports are rising.

Consumer advocates contend that retail prices for gasoline and home-heating oil could rise by up to four cents a gallon as oil companies close down service stations and refineries to satisfy government antitrust conditions for their mergers.

Even on Capitol Hill and in some corporate boardrooms there is a palpable uneasiness that the Federal Trade Commission has been too lenient in giving the green light to multi-billion-dollar acquisitions within the same industry that previous Republican and Democratic administrations would have challenged.

"Asking the FTC these days to protect the consumer is like relying on voodoo antitrust," said Edwin Rothchild of the Citizen-Labor Energy Coalition consumer group in Washington, D.C.

But many observers believe mergers may be the only weapon that U.S. companies have left to upgrade efficiency and to meet stiff competition in the world market.

"These acquisitions and mergers are American industry's answer to the recent decline of U.S. leadership in the international sphere of productivity and distribution," said Dan Lundberg, publisher of the Los Angeles-based Lundberg Survey that tracks petroleum markets.

"We have almost become a nation of distributors of other people's goods

and services, which has led to the export of so many jobs and the virtual loss of whole industries.

"But we've reached the turning point and now there is a largely unimpeded struggle on the part of business, banking institutions and the administration to restructure industry in the direction of increased efficiency and productivity."

The jury still is out, however, on whether mergers are the best tools to make U.S. industry lean and tough again.

"One can view a merger very simply as moving a lot of money around just to change the ownership of an economic entity that existed before and debate whether that's productive," said Robert McTamane, a partner in the Wall Street law firm of Carter Ledyard & Milburn.

"Wouldn't it be better to spend funds on expanding physical plants, employee benefits, jobs and new markets to increase the GNP of the country and to improve the economy rather than making money for stockholders and insiders who are the main beneficiaries of mergers?" McTamane asked.

"On the other hand, you can argue that larger is better and usually a more efficient organization. In an ideal merger, when an effective management group buys a less competent management group, both the company and the economy benefit."

Most specialists have some qualms about the rash of oil mergers — particularly the unknown impact on consumers. But few take issue with the economic wisdom of buying cheap oil and gas reserves as an alternative to risking billions on long-shot exploration efforts.

"Pessimism over future U.S. oil and gas prospects culminated late last year in the Mukluk dry hole offshore Alaska," said Daniel Yergin, preside-

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