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THE Fretboard

Number 13

PLAYERS. BUILDERS. STORIES.

Spring 2009

JOURNAL



CLARENCE & ROLAND WHITE

\$12.95 U.S. DISPLAY UNTIL MAY 31, 2009
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DARING THE FATES

**THE REGENERATION
OF GEOFF MULDAUR**

BY CLAY FROHMAN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENNIE WARREN



GEOFF MULDAUR IS

amused that *The Fretboard Journal* wants to talk to him.

"I'm not a born guitar player," he says. "I consider myself a musician who uses the guitar as an instrument to play arrangements and accompany myself. But it doesn't seem to matter that I don't consider myself a guitar player because, as it turns out, I *am* one."

After a lengthy and varied career, Geoff Muldaur the Guitarist is now emerging. He's been invited to conduct a workshop at Jorma Kaukonen's Fur Peace Ranch in Ohio. Happy Traum has made an instructional DVD of Muldaur's guitar style, and Stefan Grossman has approached him about making a performance DVD. He has a full schedule of concerts and workshops booked in Europe, Japan and the States. And, to cap it off, Martin Guitar has acknowledged Muldaur's influence by honoring him with his very own signature model, the 00-18H Geoff Muldaur Custom Edition, inspired by Muldaur's 1935 slothead 12-fret 00-40H, one of four 00s that he owns.

Muldaur's musical history traces back to his days in the early-'60s Cambridge folk scene. He was a founding member of the Jim Kweskin Jug Band and Paul Butterfield's Better Days. He made a series of well-received albums with his then-wife, Maria, as well as solo recordings and albums with guitar wizard Amos Garrett. The music he currently arranges, orchestrates and performs with a crack ensemble of chamber musicians is some of the most innovative and fulfilling of his career.

Muldaur and his delicate, bittersweet, bluesy music have long been recognized by his peers. Yet, if Muldaur's instrumental skills have been overlooked until now, it might be due to what he *is* known for: his distinctive singing voice. The *New York Times* has described it as "otherworldly, tremulous, reedy, quavering, passionate and original"; writer Peter Guralnick appreciates "the uniqueness, the impact, the undeniable conviction."

Lucinda Williams says she was "immediately

taken" with Muldaur's "rich, soulful voice and masterful phrasing" and cites him as an influence. But perhaps the reliably cheeky Richard Thompson put it best: "There are only three white blues singers, and Geoff Muldaur is at least two of them."

MULDAUR'S SINGING STYLE and his wide-ranging repertoire of American roots and blues songs are inextricably linked to the music he discovered growing up in the New York area — in a time that he considers the end of a golden era of music.

"The end of the great jazz zeitgeist," he says, over a cup of tea in the kitchen of his West Los Angeles home, "the end of the great R&B and blues eras. As a little kid, I was introduced to music of all sorts from countless hours of listening to my brother Charlie's record collection." Charlie was 10 years older, and he'd collected albums by jazz pioneers such as Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, Jack Teagarden, Sidney Bechet, Bix Beiderbecke, Pee Wee Russell and Jelly Roll Morton. "I began to notice the great singers of the era," says Muldaur. "Mildred Bailey, Joe Williams, Ella, Jimmy Rushing."

Geoff Muldaur spent hours after school listening to Charlie's collection, picking out instruments and remembering licks, players and label names. "I was a young explorer in the sanctuary of my big brother's room," he says. Charlie would show off his younger brother to his friends by dropping the needle on any part of a record for a split second, then lifting it up and asking Geoff to identify it. ("One mistake and — wham! — I'd get a noogie," he laughs.)

As Muldaur recalls, "One day, I was leafing through Charlie's collection and came upon *The Encyclopedia of Jazz* — a dozen 99-cent, 10" LPs that you could buy at the local A&P. Somewhere, probably between Tommy Ladnier and Jimmy Lunceford, was a cut by Leadbelly, 'Easy Rider.' This was the first country-style blues that

OPPOSITE: Muldaur is skilled on a variety of instruments, including banjo, piano and guitar. The guitar is one of his custom Martins; the banjo is a Great Lakes Special from 1972. The Great Lakes Banjo Company made a number of highly regarded instruments in the early 1970s, in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

PREVIOUS PAGE: Geoff Muldaur peeks out from behind his signature-model Martin 00-18H, which was custom made with koa sides and back.



caught my attention, with just a singer and guitar. It was such a mysterious rural sound. I had to have more of those country blues.”

Muldaur also found Harry Smith’s *Anthology of American Folk Music* and the *Kings of the Blues* series on RCA’s X label. He tracked down the more obscure *Roots of the Blues* on Atlantic and *Negro Prison Songs from the Mississippi State Penitentiary* on the Tradition label. Blues bibles, Muldaur calls them.

“I got a little older, and 45s came in,” he continues. “It was the doo-wop scene, with the Moonglows and Eldorados. There was also lots of R&B, with Fats Domino, Ray Charles and Larry Williams. Here it is, 1957, and we’re starting to have parties and dance with girls. What are we dancing to? Jimmy Reed. And we’re white kids outside New York City. It was totally corrupting in the best possible way. Pat Boone comes out with his version of ‘Tutti Frutti,’ and, forget that, we want Little Richard. These brilliant, talented black musicians were changing our lives.”

Muldaur resumed his enthusiastic pursuit at prep school in Connecticut. “I had a group there, a calypso band called the Goombay Rhythm Kings,” he recalls. “We listened to the calypso singer Blind Blake and the great Trinidad poet-musician the Mighty Sparrow. Then there was George Symonette, who sang what any 14-year-old boy would love to hear: ‘I kissed her hand, I kissed her lips and I left her behind for you.’

“Then producer Joe Boyd’s brother, Warwick, came to school, and we collected blues records together. Warwick had a knack for finding rare treasures. His biggest score was Blind Willie Johnson’s ‘The Rain Don’t Fall on Me’ and ‘Trouble Soon Be Over’ on one 78.” Muldaur would later record both of these tunes. “Blind Willie had an enormous, albeit subliminal, effect on my guitar style.”

As a budding musician, Muldaur was prodigious but lacked discipline. “My parents gave me a clarinet. I’d pick it up and make a sound immediately. They’d get me lessons, and I’d hate the lessons and give it up. But I would continue to play along with jazz records. The same thing happened with trumpet. The only instrument that tickled my fancy eventually was the guitar, because it challenged me.”

In 1959, Muldaur and the Boyd brothers discovered a Philadelphia radio station that played late-

night jazz and blues. One night, the DJ mentioned that Lonnie Johnson was alive and well and working in a Philadelphia hotel. The intrepid schoolboys found Johnson’s number in the phone book and called him.

“Is this Lonnie Johnson, the Lonnie Johnson who recorded ‘Blue Ghost Blues’ in 1938?”

When Johnson assured them that he was, Muldaur and crew drove down to Philadelphia, picked up Johnson and took him back to Princeton, where he played at the home of Murray Kempton. That night marked a resurgence in Lonnie Johnson’s career; he went on to make more records for Prestige and was reunited with Duke Ellington for a concert at New York’s Town Hall. “Lonnie was a big influence on me vocally,” Muldaur says. “Some of his guitar licks are part of my tool kit today.”

Muldaur reluctantly enrolled at Boston University but lasted only a few months before he left; instead, he journeyed down to New Orleans in search of traditional jazz players like the clarinetist George Lewis. “I sat at his feet every night he played at Preservation Hall,” says Muldaur. “Alan and Sandra Jaffe ran the place. After I ran out of money, they just let me come in. New Orleans is where I started performing. My first gig was in a little bar on Rampart Street.”

In the early 1960s, Muldaur moved back to Cambridge and fell in with like-minded folk and blues connoisseurs, among them Eric Von Schmidt, Tom Rush and washtub bassist Fritz Richmond. “It was a very small, hip scene,” Muldaur recalls. “There were about 20 people who all felt the same way about this music. I knew all the old styles from the music I’d grown up on, so I could get gigs playing in places like Club 47 and Café Yana.

“Our mythical heroes were becoming un-mythical as they materialized,” he adds. “We started to hang out with them, and not just in performance situations. Son House is coming over to my house because he knows I’ll give him a drink. Mississippi John Hurt, we’re taking him to the beach where he calls surfboards ‘wave saddles.’ Fred McDowell is at our parties pinching the girls’ behinds.”

IN 1963, ANOTHER BU student, guitarist Jim Kweskin, brought together Muldaur, Richmond and David Simon to form the Jim Kweskin Jug Band, and shortly

OPPOSITE: A quartet of new and vintage Martin oos. The sunburst guitar in the chair is the sixth Martin 00-18H Geoff Muldaur Signature Edition ever built. To the right is the original 1941 00-18H that inspired it. This 00-18H was one of a batch of 25, and it was one of the last Hawaiian guitars that Martin made. There is also a recent 00-18H with koa back and sides and, to the left, a 1935 Martin 00-40H.



thereafter, they enlisted banjo and harmonica player Mel Lyman. With their funky vibe and wacky ragtime tunes like “Ukulele Lady” and “Borneo,” the band was an instant smash, with rave reviews in the *New York Times*, *Time* and *Life* magazines. They were quickly signed to a contract by Vanguard Records.

“You cannot predict how a group will click,” says Muldaur. “It just happens, and it happened to us. We

‘You guys are great. I love the “no shtick” shtick.’”

(Muldaur notes that the Kweskin Jug Band was an acoustic precursor to the Grateful Dead. “I heard the story that Bob Weir gave Jerry Garcia our first record and told him, ‘We’ve got to form a jug band,’ which they did. They called themselves Mother McCree’s Uptown Jug Champions. This was before they went electric.”)

During this time, Muldaur was playing guitar (his



A poster from a 1964 Jim Kweskin Jug Band concert. Muldaur is the washboard player at the lower right. (Yes, he still plays that very same washboard.)

were a band like no other. We weren’t copying anyone. We didn’t wear suits or uniforms. We were just impressionists of all this music. We put together something that felt culturally important, just as Paul Butterfield did coming out of the Chicago electric-blues thing with an integrated band.”

The Kweskin Band came to Los Angeles in 1964 to perform on *The Steve Allen Show*, and they also played a week at the Troubadour. “We were these raggedy guys hanging out onstage saying weird, hip things,” Muldaur recalls. “The squares didn’t know what to make of us. This one guy even came backstage and said,

1961 Martin D-28), mandolin, washboard and a bit of clarinet. While Kweskin handled the main rhythm-guitar duties, Muldaur looked for interesting parts to play — a method that fit well with Muldaur’s non-traditional style of guitar education. “I learned *by the tune*,” he says. “I was always looking for parts to fill in an arrangement. The approach was refreshing. You’re not just digging into your lexicon of tricks; it’s a complete clean slate every time.” He started arranging for the band — not by writing but by shouting out directions to everyone.

By early 1965, Mel Lyman had departed; he was

replaced by banjo virtuoso Bill Keith, who had just left Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys. Maria D'Amato, a fiddler and vocalist for the New York-based Even Dozen Jug Band, came to see the Kweskin Band when they played a two-week stint at New York's Bitter End. She and Muldaur got together, and Maria accepted an invitation to move to Cambridge and become a member of the group. The two were soon married.

"It was a sweet time to be living in Cambridge," Muldaur remembers. "We got to see a lot of our musical heroes: Son House, Skip James, John Hurt and Bukka White; gospel shows at the Boston Arena featuring James Cleveland, the Swan Silvertones and Dixie Hummingbirds; blues bands at Club 47 like

learn to read and communicate with people in the language of music." He took private lessons at the Berklee School of Music and studied composition.

"It was a time for listening and practicing; Stravinsky and Duke were the teachers."

IN 1969, GEOFF and Maria Muldaur made their first album for Warner Bros., *Pottery Pie*, with Joe Boyd producing. The album featured Amos Garrett and Bill Keith, among other friends. "The world got to hear Amos' great, sophisticated playing for the first time," Muldaur says admiringly. "He has a huge breadth of knowledge in American musical forms. And, of course, Keith had already changed the world of blue-

"YOU CANNOT PREDICT HOW A GROUP WILL CLICK. IT JUST HAPPENS, AND IT HAPPENED TO US."

Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and Otis Rush; Duke Ellington at Paul's Mall. It was a paradise."

The Jug Band played the Newport Folk Festival in 1964, a time when, as Muldaur explains, "you could become a smash by playing a festival *once*. The Jug Band was a sensation at Newport. We were invited back to the festival every year during the band's existence." Muldaur also got his first taste of Paul Butterfield when his band played Newport. "I was amazed at how a white Irish kid could sound like that. Little Walter had taken Paul under his wing in Chicago and mentored him, but Paul just had it in his bones."

When the Kweskin Band broke up in 1968, Muldaur felt like it was the end of the world — and the beginning of a new one as well. "I felt the need to get organized about myself musically," he recalls. "I had to

grass music and brought his unique musical intuition to the group."

The early '70s found the Muldaurs living in Woodstock and working together on their second Warner album. Also living in the area were Muldaur's influential manager, Albert Grossman, and his clients Paul Butterfield, Bob Dylan and members of the Band. In 1972, Grossman and Butterfield put together a new band called Better Days; Muldaur and Garrett were recruited, along with New Orleans showboat Ronnie Barron on keyboards and a strong, youthful rhythm section consisting of Billy Rich on bass and Christopher Parker on drums.

Muldaur gained an appreciation of rhythm from his tenure with the new band. "Paul listened to drummers in a way that was entirely new to me at the



Muldaur first started playing this Soap Saver washboard with the Jim Kweskin Jug Band in 1965. He and fellow Kweskin band member Fritz Richmond added the hubcap and artillery shell — for extra percussive goodness — on the washboard's left leg.

time,” he recalls. “In groups like the Jug Band, we never had a rhythm section per se.”

For the first *Better Days* album, Muldaur branched out into producing and arranging, although his guitar work, he admits, wasn't a top priority at the time. (“I wasn't thinking *guitar thoughts*.”) He found himself playing piano and organ more than guitar, although he did play a little slide guitar on tracks like “New Walkin' Blues.”

“I had a Nick Lucas-style Gibson acoustic that was great for slide,” he says. “I did ‘Baby Please Don't Go’ and ‘Rule the Road’ on that guitar. I would once again look for interesting parts but, in general, I left it to Amos to hold down the guitar chair.” Still, Muldaur's time with *Better Days* would have a profound influence on his guitar playing, evident in its distinctive pulses and implied rhythms.

During this Woodstock period, Muldaur also worked with his friend Eric Von Schmidt, and with Von Schmidt, he had the opportunity to focus more on guitar. “I did a slide part on a gut-stringed guitar,” he says. “I experimented with different tunings. When I'm not around geniuses like Amos or Stephen Bruton, I'll work a little harder and come up with good parts to play. Otherwise, I'll abdicate.”

The *Better Days* lost its luster due to hard partying, and Muldaur left the band to move to Martha's Vineyard. On the heels of Maria's big hit, “Midnight at the Oasis” — featuring a sublime and memorable solo by Amos Garrett — Muldaur soon recorded his own album for Warner Bros., titled *Geoff Muldaur Is Having a Wonderful Time*. It featured Amos Garrett, Richard Thompson, Howard Johnson, Maria Muldaur and a wonderful big-band arrangement by Benny Carter

featuring members of the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

"It was my attempt to do what I wanted," Muldaur states, "and it worked, but it didn't sell."

Muldaur began playing duet gigs with Garrett, and they toured the States, Canada and Japan, where they developed a sizeable cult following. "I had to start working on my guitar chops more, since there were only two of us," he recalls. They recorded two albums together, which offered a wide mix of songs, including "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy," Hoagy Carmichael's "Hong Kong Blues" and a Django-style guitar duet of Chopin's "Prelude in E Minor."

A few years later, Muldaur released another solo album, prophetically titled *I Ain't Drunk*; in fact, he was mired in the bad-road mileage of a musician's lifestyle. In Muldaur's own parlance, he "crashed, burned and, for all intents and purposes, did not practice or play music for the next 17 years."

IN 1985, A CALL FROM old friend Warwick Boyd prompted Muldaur to come to Princeton and help run the Hannibal and Carthage record labels, which were handling the compilation and reissue catalogs of Richard Thompson and Kate and Anna McGarrigle, among others. ("It was fun," he recalls. "I was invoicing using computers, which was a new thing for the business at that time.") He was soon approached by another record label, in San Rafael, California, and he relocated out west.

When he worked in California, Muldaur would occasionally travel to Detroit to advise a friend in the steel business on computer-related matters, and this led to a 10-year stint in corporate consulting. It was Muldaur's introduction to American big business. "I got to wear nice suits and make money," Muldaur says of his decade in Detroit. "It was a safe place for a musician in recovery and provided a means to support my children, but eventually the frustration outweighed the benefits."

During his Detroit years, Muldaur often retreated on weekends to his friend Roger Kasle's farm outside of the city. Kasle headed a long-established business in the steel industry, but he also had a musical side. A childhood friend of luthiers Marc Silber and Eric Schoenberg, Kasle had become a collector and enthusiast (but not a player) of vintage Martins, with about 30 guitars hanging on the wall of his living room. Muldaur would go

to the farm to relax, hunt, do some bird watching and, tentatively at first, pick up the guitar.

"Roger had all the books about the classic Martin models, and I read them," Muldaur says. "We had endless talks about the instruments, and Martins in particular. And, as I pulled different models off his wall, I realized I was taking down one 1935 00-40H more than others. It had a clear, jewel-like, balanced sound. It beckoned me to certain chord shapes and fingerings.

"One day, I started picking this lick and I realized I could fit Vera Hall's 'Wild Ox Moan' to it. It was inspiring; it felt as if the idea came out of the sky. And it got me interested in guitar again. With the money from my Detroit consulting work, I started to make a new album, which became *The Secret Handshake*."

Around this time, the singer-songwriter and raconteur Bob Neuwirth, in town to record Patti Smith, visited Muldaur in his Detroit office. To Muldaur's chagrin, Neuwirth was not impressed with his business accomplishments.

"Bob asked one simple question," says Muldaur. "Are you hearing anyone playing music today the way you would do it?' I couldn't answer yes. The seed had been planted." Neuwirth had an upcoming tour in Italy and proposed that Muldaur accompany him. "Even though the tour didn't go over too well, I started to love what I was doing and felt ready to get back into music."

Kasle then presented Muldaur with the ultimate gift. "You're going to need a good guitar," he said, and he gave Muldaur the 1935 00-40H from his collection. Many years later, Muldaur is still humbled by his friend's generosity — and the confirmation it bestowed.

"Now I started to take a real interest in the guitar after all these years," he says. "I gained an understanding of what worked for me. A wide neck gives me more room to get around with my unconventional fingerings. The slothead adds sustain, due to the added tension on the nut. A short scale is more forgiving for the reach I need, and it's *squisbier*, making it easier to add juice to my notes. The 00 size, I have found over the years, consistently produces the most balanced sound of all the Martins."

Eric Schoenberg was called on to make various modifications to the 00-40H, including re-shaping the neck. It had originally been made for Hawaiian playing, with a raised nut and flush frets.

“Roger was adamant that this was to be a professional working guitar and not some collector piece,” Muldaur says, “and whatever work that needed to be done to make it playable for my style of music was necessary, and we shouldn’t give it a second thought.”

A successful gig opening for Loudon Wainwright III at the Great American Music Hall in San Francisco led to an offer from Hightone Records, which allowed Muldaur to finish the recording sessions for *The Secret Handshake*. He pulled together Stephen Bruton and Amos Garrett on lead guitars and Bill Rich (from Better

Muldaur enlisted the talents of David Lindley, Dave Alvin, Greg Leisz and Billy Watts on guitars and Van Dyke Parks on accordion and pump organ, in addition to mainstays like Bruton, Rich and Fritz Richmond. Muldaur’s daughter Clare shared the lead vocal on “At the Christmas Ball.” His arrangement of “Prairie Lullaby” — for violin, clarinet, bassoon, French horn and double bass — offered an indication of where his musical interests were headed.

Muldaur was back into music, but he didn’t want to be in the music *business*. He embarked on a touring circuit of clubs and small theaters, seeking out regional promoters and doing a lot of the organizational work himself. He established a website and sold his CDs at gigs. He drove rental cars and stayed in people’s homes.

“What came from that were many new relationships,” Muldaur relates. “I can go to a town where I’ve played before, and I know the club owner and his wife and some of their friends. It’s nice.” Garrison Keillor is a fan and even invited Muldaur onto *A Prairie Home Companion*. “I’ve done his show about 10 times,” Muldaur says. “It gives me a chance to try out new material, and it has helped to get the word out on me.”

In 2003, Muldaur released a pair of complementary albums. *Beautiful Isle of Somewhere* is a live recording of a 1999 solo concert in Bremen, Germany. For that date, Muldaur played an Epiphone Recording Model F. “It was a beautiful, maple-topped, long-scale instrument well suited for my blues material,” Muldaur recalls, “but it didn’t have the overall balance for many of my arrangements, and, quite frankly, the long scale wore me out. It was after this tour that I was able to swap the Epiphone for the 00-40H.”

His second release that year was *Private Astronomy: A Vision of the Music of Bix Beiderbecke*, produced by Dick Connette, which represented Muldaur’s most ambitious set of arrangements and orchestrations to date. Mounted as a celebration of an iconic hero from his early years, Muldaur created parts for chamber ensemble — a core of violin, clarinet, alto sax, cornet, trombone and baritone sax — that evoked the spirit of Bix’s world. His exploration of the modernistic material demonstrated how mature his arranging skills had become since his early efforts with the Jug Band and Better Days.

“All of my arranging ideas filter back into my guitar playing,” Muldaur says. “It is part of my process. I



Maria and Geoff Muldaur at the 1968 Newport Folk Festival. Although these days he primarily plays Martin guitars, back then he could be found playing a Gibson, like this nice Gibson L-1.

ROBERT CORWIN

Days) on bass. The tunes featured contributions from tuba player Howard Johnson, Subdudes keyboardist John Magnie, mandolinist David Grisman and many others. The reviews for the album, released in 1998, were ecstatic.

Muldaur was stunned by the accolades. (The *New York Times* called it “pop music for grownups.”) He felt he hadn’t done anything different than what he’d always been doing. Why was he suddenly viewed as special? What had happened to American music during his absence from the scene? With his newfound success, Muldaur began to feel a sense of responsibility; he needed to keep the unique feelings of these musical traditions alive.

For *Password*, his 2000 follow-up to *Handshake*,

can't imagine having done the guitar arrangement for 'Trouble Soon Be Over' without having arranged for horns and strings."

THE IDEA FOR a signature-model Martin was born during a 2004 Japanese tour. Muldaur's profile in Japan had grown, thanks to years of touring, and he had also conducted workshops in Japan for purist Martin aficionados at the Martin club in Tokyo. (He was once asked to unplug his guitar from the PA so as not to adulterate the purity of tone.) Muldaur headlined a show commemorating the one-millionth Martin sold in the world. Chris Martin and Dick Boak were in attendance.

"Dick Boak already knew about me," Muldaur says. "He saw how I went over in Tokyo and thought he might be able to sell a bunch of Muldaur guitars in Japan. And so they approached me about producing a 00-H model."

With the help of Boak, Eric Schoenberg, TJ Thompson and Roger Kasle, Muldaur developed a 00 model that would be both stylish and affordable. He determined that Brazilian rosewood was out of the question — due to availability and price — and after a discussion with Mark Knopfler on Garrison Keillor's show (in which Knopfler questioned the consistency of Indian rosewood), Muldaur decided on mahogany for the body.

With its short 12-fret scale (24.9") and mahogany neck (1¹³/₁₆" wide at the nut), Martin's GM Custom Edition 00-18H feels just right for Muldaur's eclectic style of fingerpicked folk-blues. Visually, the GM 00-18H is a stunner, with a graceful, soft, dark sunburst Adirondack spruce top, black and white purfling around the soundhole, beveled tortoise-colored pickguard and graduated abalone-dot position markers on its African black ebony fingerboard. The belly bridge, heel cap, bridge pins and end pin are all black ebony, and, in a departure from vintage rosewood veneer, the head plate is polished African ebony.

Muldaur showed off his signature model during a recent concert at McCabe's Guitar Shop in Santa Monica, California. (He was miked for live performance with an under-the-saddle Highlander pickup through a Countryman DI box.) For the first set, he was accompanied by his chamber ensemble, a sextet of violin, cello, French horn, bassoon, clarinet and percussion that added rich and unexpected sounds to Muldaur's songs. For the second set, Muldaur brought



on his former Jug Band partner Jim Kweskin to duet on guitars and blend harmonies on their '60s-era ragtime tunes like "Downtown Blues" and "Papa's on the House Top."

It was far more than a retrospective evening for Muldaur; more like a bold statement of his expanding talents as an arranger, orchestrator and, yes, guitar player. Muldaur knows that it takes some doing to sustain a career.

"I don't know what's keeping it going," he says, "but I have faith that it will continue — and continue to be interesting. I'm following my heart so intensely that I dare the fates to pull the rug out." 