



photo by bill fibben

Sherry King and the American Beauty Rose band are going to play at the Twelfth Gate. Country music it says. Probably another one of those folk or rock groups who've added a few superficial country touches to their sound. Right?

Wrong. These particular "rosebuds" have a fine country sound, plus rip roaring bluegrass, with occasional pop or blues song thrown in for an enjoyable mix.

First of all they are all fine musicians. John Cook plays bass, Tony Watts does a fine job on electric lead guitar, which perhaps could be featured a little more on some songs; Tom Murphy plays outstanding banjo plus occasional harmonica and tamborine; and Sherry King provides a good strong rhythm guitar. Then they sing good—in fine harmony together and individually, with Sherry King doing most of the solo numbers.

They've been together for six or seven months. I heard, most recently playing at one of those saloons in Underground Atlanta. There are echoes of Underground in their sound. Sometimes the style is too smooth, sometimes the musical flourished too dramatic, and sometimes King's vocals oversung. All are perhaps necessary to get attention in a nightclub, but sometimes it was a bit much for my taste.

Highlights for me were the country numbers particularly their version of George Hamilton IV's current hit, "Ten Degrees And Getting Colder." They also did "Cotton Ginny," "Rocky Top," and a fine blues number called "You've Been a Good Ole Wagon But Daddy You've Done Broke Down." The only down of their set was a teasing from one band member to another about how one was the "redneck" of the group. It was in passing and minor, but unnecessary and out of character, for the American Beauty Rose Band is clearly not playing at playing country music.

It's hard to say enough about how nice it is to go to the Twelfth Gate. On Sunday night a trio of freaks from Tampa was passing through and, since things are relatively informal, they palyed between sets of the roses. This group calls itself "Arthur, Hurley, and Gottlieb." Although most of their material is too sentimental in a trite way, they were good and enjoyable particularly on a funny song about bicycle cruising.

This weekend at the Twelfth Gate you can see David Olney on Friday and Saturday, then Bull, the fine jazz group on Sunday night. The week after it will be Rev. Pearly Brown and Buddy Moss, two of the finest black musicians in the Southeast.

—gene guerrero

FOLK →

MUSIC

← COUNTRY

Since a few years back when Bob Dylan ascended to his near deity status, there has been an unfortunate shortage of folk singers. Not that there hasn't been a lot of earnest young men and women with guitars strumming out quiet songs, but no real FOLK singers. Within the last six months, however, the music world has been refreshed with the words and music of such promising new faces as John Prine, Leo Kottke, Townes Van Zandt, and Loudon Wainwright III. At last there are some performers who are able to combine musical talent with personal realism to produce music that sounds like a product of folk art rather than the result of listening to the family stereo in a split level in suburbia. I'm talking about folk music that can be believed.

Don't look now, but someone who could well be the best of this new wave of folk talent is alive and well right here in Atlanta. He is David Olney.

In a two day engagement two weeks ago at the Twelfth Gate, David Olney proved himself to be perhaps the most promising solo performer to grace the stage at the Gate in its five years of operation. Honest. With a voice and manner that give the impression of a deep profound isolation from the hum of the modern age and an old fashioned understanding of the good and bad sides of people, David delivers folk music that is the real thing.

His repertoire is a well chosen mixture of traditional classics and originals. "Kind hearted Woman," a blues number by the great Robert Johnson, is perhaps my favorite blues song, and using the cleanest bottleneck playing I've heard on an acoustic guitar and a haunting, silky falsetto, David did it, and I dug it. Also included in his material are some old slave songs sung with only occasional harmonica, and no guitar.

Skeptics may say with some validity that performers can imitate artists with twice the talent, but only original creations can prove a musicians worth. Someone told me that David Olney was over at their place once playing some songs. He asked David if he had any originals. The traditional songs he'd just finished playing were great, but what about originals? "Those were originals," was the reply, much to my friend's amazement. Such songs as "Sailor Song," "Do your Business In the Day," and "Let Me Stay With You" make such misconceptions easy to understand. That's high praise for a folk musician. David Olney deserves no less.

—joe roman