

Former Wing flies solo

Laurence Juber plays acoustic at Swallow Hill

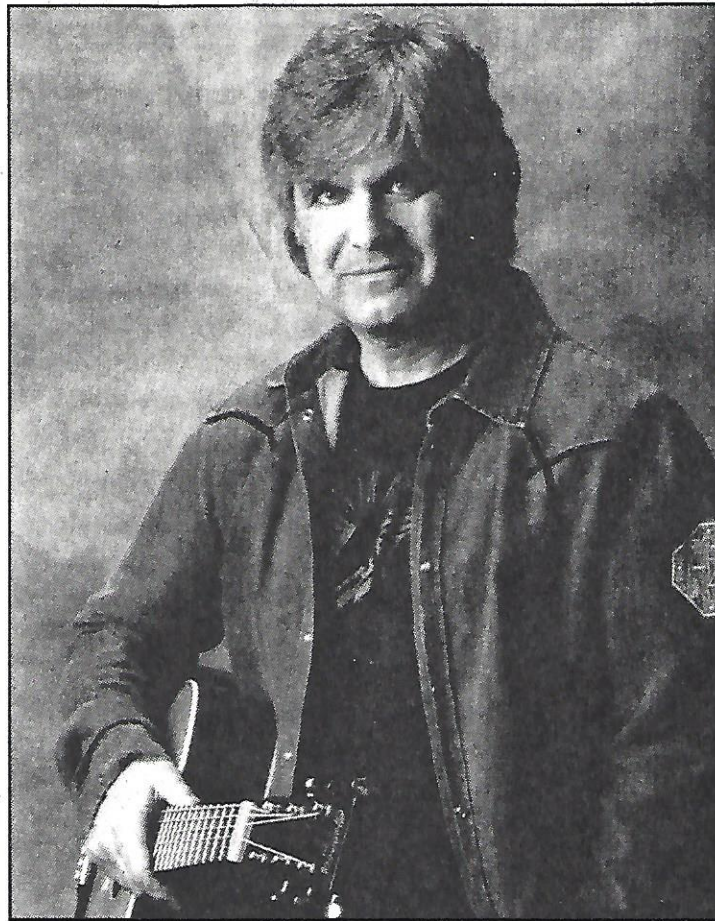
By Peter Jones
Staff Writer

Laurence Juber may not be typical of musicians working in the instrumental guitar genre, which is, generally speaking, a broad hybrid of jazz, classical, new age and folk stylings. He is very possibly the only artist in the bin whose catalogue includes an interpretation of Paul McCartney's "Silly Love Songs."

"I try to have these kind of touchstone compositions in the show, so people have a place of familiarity that gives them a perspective on what I do," the guitarist explained in his British accent. "I think this is very typical in the jazz world, too. You learn about a musician's sensibility by the way they tackle a familiar tune."

That — and the fact that Juber was a lead guitarist for Wings, McCartney's 1970s back-to-back hit machine.

For two years, the musician played with the band, whose decade-long history flew the critical highs of 1973's "Band on the Run" album and the lows of derision aimed at keyboardist Linda McCartney, who as a musician and a singer, was best known as ... well, a photographer and the ex-Beatle's first wife.



Laurence Juber



**Laurence Juber plays
March 3, 8:00 p.m., at
Swallow Hill, 71 E.
Yale Ave. Tickets are
\$18 in advance, \$21
on the day of the
show. For more infor-
mation, call 303-777-
1003 or visit
www.swallowhill.com.**

The higher flights are what Juber mostly remembers.

"There's nothing more exciting than sitting in a studio with a guitar in one hand, recording a solo with Paul McCartney basically eyeballing you," Juber remembered. "He was able to draw things out of me that I really wasn't aware I could get to."

Even Juber's latest CD was McCartney's idea. Like artists from Keely Smith to the Chipmunks, the guitarist had already cut an album of Beatles songs. In 2000, he hand-delivered a copy to McCartney.

"What about Wings?" was the ex-Beatle's response.

Juber's answer is heard on last year's "One Wing," on which the guitarist reinvents 13 Wings hits as solo acoustic instrumentals, using his unique finger-style technique and unconventional tunings.

"I'm able to do things that you can't necessarily do in standard tunings," he said. "In a nutshell, it allows me to add more dimension, more detail and bring more

intense energy to the performance."

On "Maybe I'm Amazed," Juber plays the guitar solo

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JUBER: Musician has 'Brady' connection

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while maintaining the bass and harmony parts simultaneously. As proof he used no overdubs, he will play music from the album and more on March 3 at the Swallow Hill Music Association.

In 1979, Juber was a 27-year-old London-based studio musician, whose credits had included working with artists as diverse as the Alan Parsons Project and Rosemary Clooney. A television appearance backing ex-Moody Blue Denny Laine would change his life.

At the time, Laine was a guitarist and singer with Wings, which happened to be recruiting a new lead guitarist. He was impressed by Juber's playing and recommended him to McCartney.

"The reality was I didn't know any Wings tunes," Juber now confesses. "I borrowed some albums from my brother."

He was a quick learn on "Goodnight Tonight," the band's foray into dance music. "Back to the Egg," the follow-up album, was a harder-edged departure from the disco single and from 1978's

"London Town" LP, Wings' pop flirtation with British folk music.

"It was really quite exciting because (the harder rock) aspect of things gelled very quickly," Juber remembered. "There was a certain rawness that was going on. Punk was in the air. Paul's kids had been listening to a lot of that kind of stuff so it was kind of in his ears."

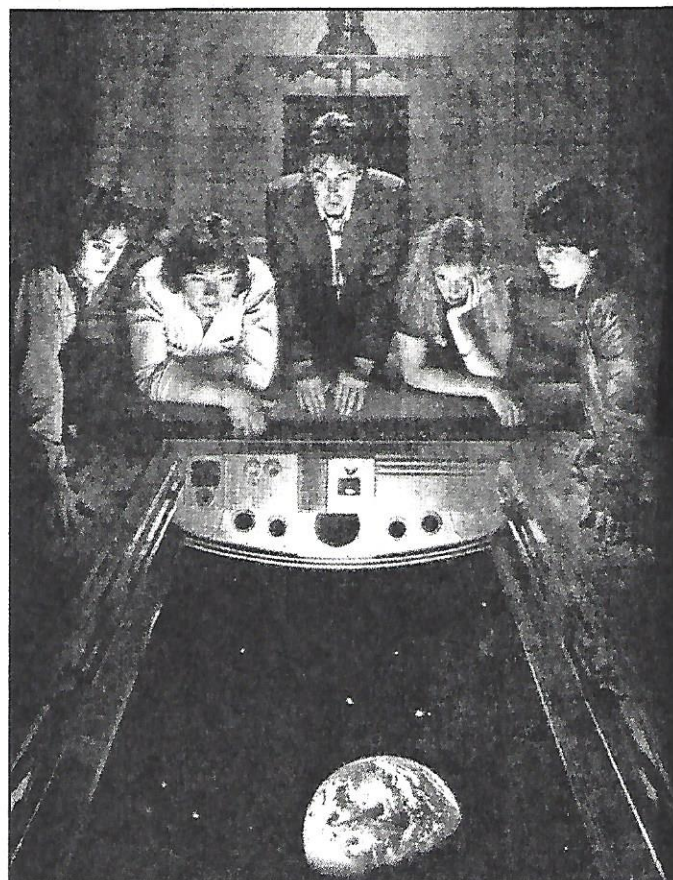
Juber collected a 1979 Best Instrumental Grammy for "Rockestra Theme," the album's all-star jam, which featured, among many others, two members each from Led Zeppelin and the Who.

Juber went on to play a distinct lead on "Coming Up," the punchy live recording that would become Wings' final single.

"(McCartney's) original conception of that was James Brown," Juber said of the hit, which he drastically reimaged for his new CD. "What I found was that it just sat there very nicely as a Celtic kind of feel."

Wings came in for a final landing in 1981, due in part to McCartney's infamous marijuana bust in Japan.

"The idea of touring



Laurence Juber (far right) joined Wings in 1979, just in time to record "Back to the Egg," a harder-edged departure for the band. From left on the album's cover, Denny Laine, Steve Holly, Paul McCartney and Linda McCartney.

became less desirable," Juber explained. "(McCartney's) kids were getting to the point where they were settled in school. At that point, it just didn't make sense to have a road band. I think the end of the road was when John (Lennon) was assassinated. Paul was devastated."

McCartney did not tour again until 1989, as a solo artist.

Juber returned to session playing, eventually working for George Harrison and Ringo Starr in the 1980s. He began recording solo guitar CDs in 1990 and won a second Grammy last year for his remake of Henry Mancini's "Pink Panther" theme.

"That was one of the occasions where I did an arrangement (that) went way beyond my expectations," Juber said.

Where to file his music in stores remains a challenge, however.

"I call it borderline every-

thing," the guitarist said, "because there are elements of jazz, blues, folk, especially English folk."

And then, there's the "Brady Bunch" connection.

Juber's wife, Hope, is a daughter of 89-year-old legendary sitcom producer Sherwood Schwartz. It was family connections that helped Juber get the job — or perhaps, obligated him — to write the score for a 2002 TV parody called "The Brady Bunch in the White House."

At the same time, Juber is frequently asked to appear at Beatlefest conventions where people with even the vaguest connections to the Fab Four are in-demand as guest speakers.

"I'm at this weird nexus of pop culture," the musician said with a laugh. "On one hand, I've got my Beatles-Wings thing. On the other side, we've got 'Gilligan's Island' and the Bradys."