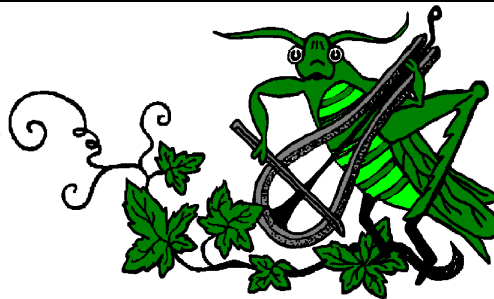


# THE FLUCK-N-POST



Volume 4 Issue 1

PO Box 92 Sumpter, OR. 97877

Winter/Spring 2000

## A Word from the Executive Director

Greetings! The Jew's Harp is alive and thriving as we begin the new Millenium. I'm very impressed with the number of people who have visited our website lately and I especially enjoy reading all the interaction from people on the "Discussion Group" page. A great big

THANK YOU to Mark Poss, our webmaster, for all his hard work on the web page.

I've also been delighted with the number of new Guild members this year. We have new members from all over the USA as well as several foreign countries. I think this is good proof that interest in the Jew's Harp is growing and I'm so proud to think the Guild has played a big part in this revival.

Our "2000 Membership Renewal Special" was very successful. In fact, we sold out of 1999 NAJHF T-shirts within the first two weeks! Perhaps we will order extra T-shirts for this year's festival and make this offer again next year. I think its a great way for folks to get a festival T-shirt, especially if they haven't been able to attend the fest. And it really helps support the Guild.

It looks like The International Jew's Harp Association is about to become a reality. Dr. Fred Crane sent me an e mail and asked me to send a list of the past and present Guild Members to Dr. Franz Kuml in Austria. Franz was the head organizer of the Austrian Congress and is the President of the IJHA. He will be sending out membership information soon.

We received word in late January that the 4th International Jew's Harp Congress will be held in 2001 in Norway. The Jew's Harp movement in Norway is really taking off, too. They formed their own "Guild" last year.

Also, the 5th International Congress will be in 2004 in Amsterdam so that gives all of us something to start saving our money for!!

Its time to start planning for our 9th annual North American Jew's Harp Festival. This year the dates are August 18th and 19th and it will be held, as usual, in Richland, Oregon. We will be needing more volunteers, especially to share the job of MC, but in other areas, too ... so, if you're interested, drop us a note or email.

We've received word that Roland Bades, the son-in-law of Austrian Jew's Harp Maker Franz Wimmer, will be attending our 2000 festival. Roland was one of the friends we made while attending the 3rd Int'l Congress in Molln, Austria in 1998 ... so we really look forward to seeing him again and having him attend the festival. I'm sure he will bring Austrian Jew's Harps to sell. Roland doesn't speak much English and we don't speak much German, so if any of you are bilingual in these two languages, plan on attending the festival, AND would like to act as an interpreter, please let us know ... we need some help here!

I'd like to remind everyone that the T-shirt Design for the 2000 NAJHF will be selected at the next Steering Committee meeting, which will be held probably sometime in May. If you have an idea for a T-shirt, please mail "camera ready art" to us (The Jew's Harp Guild, Attn: T Shirts, P.O. Box 92, Sumpter, OR 97877). All entries will be carefully considered although only one will be chosen.

Festival volunteer, Ron Vinson, has been doing some really beautiful pointillistic drawings that feature the Jew's Harp. His most recent drawing is of Abe Lincoln playing Jew's Harp. If you'd like more information about all of his drawings, you can write to Ron at 39995 Sumpter Valley Highway, Baker City, OR 97814 or call him at (541) 894-2345.

I hope all of you will have a wonderful spring and summer ... and that we will see you at the NAJHF in August. So, until next time ... Keep Twangin', Janet Gohring

## What's Inside

**Pictorial Archive** – Two new old ones

**Bulletin Board** –Ballot results, CDs, more

### Harping Effects

By Matt Glasson (alias Mugwump Jizm)

### Playing Multiple Jew's Harps – Austrian Style

By Bill Gohring

### Jew's harp Traditions in Norway

By Lars Willadsen

# PLUCK-N-POST

## The Pictorial Archive



↑ TBA – Does anyone know who made this? Stamped with "t.t.p. # 05" - It is supposed to be from the 1800's

↓ TBA – The Lenny Nylen Collection - 19<sup>th</sup> Century J.R. Smith



The Jew's Harp Guild Pictorial Archive needs photos of your favorite 'harps. Send (*non-returnable*) pics and info to:  
The Jew's Harp Guild Pictorial Archive: c/o Mark D. Poss  
924 10th. Ave. N. - Nampa, Idaho 83687

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## E-mail, News & Correspondence

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Post Your Notes

### BALLOT RESULTS - THE JEW'S HARP GUILD BOARD MEMBERS 2000

Gordon Frazier - 17

Bill Gohring - 17

Janet Gohring - 17

Kathi Vinson - 17

Denise Harrington - 16

Jim Nelson -16

Jules DiGuilio - 1

(We would really appreciate any suggestions that would encourage Guild Members to participate in the voting ... we only had 17 members respond, which is only about 20% of the membership).

### Dutch Jew's Harp Papers

From: "Henk Postma" <paclax@zeelandnet.nl>

Hello,

Just a message to let you know that a new edition of the Dutch Jew's Harp Papers is out now:

<http://www.zeelandnet.nl/paclax/jewsharp>

With info and photo's concerning:

- ❖ International Jew's Harp Festival Amsterdam Cancelled.
- ❖ Norwegians try to organize the 4th Festival next year.
- ❖ Double CD-box Molln Festival is out now. More than 46 tracks with live performances from thirty well know jew's harp players and other interesting representatives from the jew's harp cultures in Asia, Europe and Northern America.
- ❖ Video film. An exotic road movie that follows the footsteps of the Swiss Jew's Harp virtuoso Anton Bruhin on a poetic voyage of discovery from his homeland to the steppes of Yakutia Siberia and Tokyo Japan.

Originally set up to inform about the Dutch Jew's harp culture, we are trying to transform our site into a world-guide for everyone who is interested in the Jew's harp as a serious musical instrument in contemporary roots-music. The new Feb. 2000 edition is a first step in this direction. Reactions and suggestions are very welcome.

Henk Postma [paclax@zeelandnet.nl](mailto:paclax@zeelandnet.nl) - Dutch Jew's Harp Pages:  
<http://www.zeelandnet.nl/paclax/jewsharp>

## HARPING EFFECTS

### AN INTRODUCTION TO TRUMP SOUNDS ANEW

by Matt Glasson

Hi, everyone - This is Mugwump Jizm - Jew's harpist extraordinaire and PNP point man from NYC. I write from within the dirty and disheveled nooks of Manhattan known as Spanish Harlem or Hellgate. My life here is comprised of simple things: lousy job, tailless cat, beautiful girlfriend and psychedelic rock. I play in the supergroup GOD, a transcendental performance band, and we are most certainly enthusiasts when it comes to bringing diversity to the palette of our sound. Such diversity can be well cited with the trump - or, as I prefer, the Jew's Harp.

My main contribution to the band is as a guitarist and singer, but when we like to bust open the flood gates on sensory intake, I'll pick up anything to try to make music out of it. The Jew's Harp is a personal fave - I can't describe the reasons or logistics - I just picked it up about a year ago and had a natural connection with it - we do good together. My preferred harp is the Szylagi, loud and bright, but I've found that the Whitlows have some nice undertones worth exploring. I'm frequently adjusting my approach of breath and plucking and undertones to make for interesting rhythmic patterns in which GOD can 'jam.' But while there are a plethora of neat sounds that can be made without the aid of effects, implementing my Jew's Harp into our soundscape often calls for a more unique approach. There are so many effects to toy with, it can get a bit overwhelming, but let's stick with some of the basics for now and start with....

**REVERB** - There's nothing quite like the wet sound of reverb to help carry your harp's twangs and drones into the vast open sonic wasteland. There is an undeniable monotony to the tone of a Jew's harp, and the tendency, while playing with a group of other musicians, is to PLUCK-PLUCK-PLUCK away to eagerly fit into the square grooves of a 4/4 hoe-down. With a bit of reverb applied, it's natural to withdraw a little - let the BOINGS and TWANGS carry more weight and speak for themselves. Depending on the degree of wetness, the instrument can be played against the hanging overtones in the sonic mist. Throw a little reverb on anything, and the ear perceives additional depth to the sound because of the space that the echo creates. Reverb also lends a little class - a cathedral sort of reverence that is normally lacking from the hillbilly association of this instrument.

**DISTORTION** - Although you can purchase different 'Fuzz' pedals and other digital distortion effects, nothing quite does it like the good old fashioned way - playing through a guitar amplifier with some mean distortion channel to rip it up. The Jew's harp bears a heavier, dirtier sound through distortion as one would expect and naturally beefs the weight of the twangs to some significant, and not altogether unpleasant, effect. Granted, in the context of playing folk music, this end of sound manipulation is not so appropriate, but it does open up doors to some possibilities.

**WAH-WAH** - As the Jew's Harp is already on the end of shrilly sounds, a WAH would seemingly do little to vary the quality. After applying such a WAH, however, you'll find that,

with the pedal up, the characteristic high end of the Jew's Harp is distinctly muted and buried - leaving a disgruntled and embittered buzz like that of an insect being strangled underwater. On the high end of the WAH, all the shrilly glory of the Jew's Harp is amplified into an obnoxious hiss of harping frenzy. Then, of course, there is the fluctuation in-between that hails as the trademark of the WAH, most frequently associated with guitar. The fluctuating WAH pedal works most appropriately on the harp when it is being used percussively rather than harmonically or as a solo instrument that's carrying a melody. Its use with the harp certainly changes the texture of the sound fairly dramatically, and the additional rhythmic contribution that the opening and closing of the WAH creates brings a new set of cards to the table.

These are some basic effects and filters that can be purchased as individual analog pedals or comprehensive digital pedal boxes. I have used both and find them good for different uses at different times. Using the pedals and some of the extreme effects can introduce a completely new and radical face to the Jew's Harp, but it can also take off some of the edge and beauty that naturally exists within it. It is a different ballgame - playing with effects vs. playing straight - and both have their merits. Ultimately, it's a matter of application and choice where appropriate, but if you can afford to take the risk, you may be pleasantly surprised with some of the results the digital medium may bring.

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### CD from the "International Jew's Harp Festival 1998"

From: Manfred Rußmann, Heinz Anzinger

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The Austrian Jew's Harp Association proudly presents the new CD from the "International Jew's Harp Festival 1998".

For further information please have a look at our homepage:  
<http://www.stn.at/homes/maultrommel> !

## Playing Multiple Harps - Austrian Style

by Bill Gohring, Jew's Harp Maker and Player

I have had several requests for more complete instructions on how to assemble, hold and play multiple harps. I learned this technique from the Austrians when I attended the 3rd International Jew's Harp Congress in 1998.

The number of harps played and their specific keys depend on the player and what key(s) you want to play in. I recommend starting with 4 harps (two on each side) in the keys of (set 1) D and G and (set 2) A and E.

For each set, connect the harps by using two flat washers, a bolt and a wing nut. I grind a little groove on the inside of each washer that matches the curve of the Jew's Harp frame ... this helps keep the harps from sliding around. (see figure #1) The distance between the Jew's Harps should be spaced to allow room for your nose. When playing the bottom harp, the top harp should not quite touch the top of the nose.

(Hold one set in each hand as demonstrated in figure #2.) Practice with 1 set (of two harps) to begin with. Practice moving one side between the top and bottom harp ... then practice moving from one side to the other side back and forth until you feel comfortable and can play each Jew's Harp clearly. Be sure and leave the "plucking hand" as stationary as possible and let the other hand move the Jew's Harps up and down at your mouth. Then switch the holding hand to the other hand and practice holding and plucking. Give extra practice to any position you are not used to playing. This is awkward for awhile but that will diminish with practice.

The actual playing takes a little practice because while playing one side, you still have to hold the other side and pluck the tongue at the same time. And it takes a little more practice to get the "feel" of moving within each set, from the top harp to the bottom harp so that each time you switch harps it is positioned correctly at the mouth. See figures #3 and #4.

Some of the Austrians played 4 harps in each set or 6 harps in a semi-circle ... and I suppose you could use any number of harps. This method greatly increases the range of notes you can play at any given time as well as allows you to change keys without actually having to put one harp down and pick up another one. Good luck! Bill Ψ

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Join us at the  
North American Jew's Harp Festival

August 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>, 2000  
in Richland, Oregon

Workshops Jams Kids Events Mak-  
ers/Sellers Band Scramble

Unusual Instruments Day - Friday

Jew's Harp Day - Saturday

## **Jew's harp traditions in Norway**

By Lars Willadsen, copy writer & jew's harpist, Denmark

I am not Norwegian – but Danish – nor am I attempting to be an expert on this subject, but I have read a fair bit about the Norwegian Jew's harp traditions, and also take inspiration from it in the music that I play myself. Also, I understand that there is not much information available on the Norwegian/Scandinavian Jew's harp traditions in USA. So it might be interesting for others to read a bit about Norwegian harping, the traditions, the instruments, the musicians, and the harp makers.

### **A long tradition and an important role**

As in many other countries, jew's harps have a long tradition in Norway. For sure Jew's harp playing can be tracked back to medieval times. But the real interesting part comes in the mid-19th century, where a religious awakening swept through the mountains and valleys of Norway. Much of the traditional music was played either on fiddle or on the special Norwegian variety called the "Harding-fele" (Harding fiddle). In this new religious context the fiddle was considered a "Devil's instrument" and fiddling was looked upon as being sinful. This however was not the case with the jew's harp. So as the fiddlers burnt their fiddles and turned towards God and the churches, the jew's harpists just kept on plucking. And they actually maintained and preserved the old fiddle tunes, which would otherwise have been forgotten and lost. With the folk music revival of the 70's came a new interest in reviving the old fiddle tunes, and the new generation of fiddlers turned to the jew's harpists to learn the tunes. In this way the little instrument has played an enormous role in preserving an important part of Norwegian traditional music.

Most Norwegian folk music is performed solo, and band playing is rarely seen. This is the case with the fiddle as it is with the jew's harp. The Jew's harp is used for accompanying dance and for religious tunes as well, but practically always as a solo instrument.

During the 60's and 70's the Jew's harp became very popular among young urbans in Norway. Odd, that they picked on the cheap and mass manufactured Austrian harps and not the traditional handcrafted Norwegian harps. But that could be due to price and availability. Good hand crafted Norwegian harps are hard to come by – at least there is a long waiting time for most of them.

### **The Norwegian instruments**

The Norwegian Jew's harps are, with only few exceptions, of the medieval type, where the frame takes the least space of the instrument's total length and the arms takes the most space. The frame can have difference shapes, but a round or tulip-like shape is the most common.

### **The Norwegian Jew's harp makers**

With the profound Jew's harp tradition of Norway, the country also has several great harp makers. In the following I'll try to give a short description in alphabetical order:

### **Jakob Lavoll**

Jakob is a teacher in a technical school, who makes harps in his spare time. The harps are made from brass with steel tongue, and they are great craftsmanship. Some think, that the volume is not so loud, but I don't necessarily agree. The tongue is made from watch springs, and they are quite soft. This makes them delicate, but on the other hand you can really stretch the tone with breath control. Jakob makes beautiful wooden boxes for his harps. The standard box is made from beech while the "deluxe" model is made from juniper with an ancient locking mechanism. Jakob Lavoll has a long waiting time for his instruments – up to more than 1 year. The D-harp that I had (and gave away) took app. 2 years to arrive – but it was worth waiting for. Now I have another harp on order with him. Last time I bought a harp from Jakob, the prices were from NOK 800 – NOK 1.800, depending on the box. Should you consider a Lavoll harp, then contact: Jakob Lavoll N-3579 Torpo, Norway Tel: +47 32083373

### **Folke Nesland**

Folke only makes harps as a hobby, so his production is limited to 20-30 harps per year. The waiting time is 1-6 months and he doesn't make harps in the summer. Anyway I have an A-harp from Folke, and it's a great little instrument with a lot of sound. The spring is very flexible and gives good opportunities with breath control. His standard price is app. NOK 500 – NOK 600,- excluding box. Should you consider a Folke-harp, then contact: Folke Nesland N-4754 Bykle, Norway Tel: +47 37 93 81 84.

### **Bjoergulv Straume**

Bjoergulv is mostly known as a true virtuoso on the Jew's harp, but he learned harp making from Folke Nesland, and now produces very nice instruments. The normal key is G, but C, D and A is available on order. I have a G-harp myself, which I am happy about. The tongue though is a bit stiff and rigid, as the spring material is quite thick. This limits the breath control possibilities, but gives a strong and loud sound on the other hand. Bjoergulv Straume harps are sold through the folk music shop Rotspel in Stockholm, Sweden: [www.rotspel.a.se](http://www.rotspel.a.se), who also carries a CD and a tutorial video with Bjoergulv Straume. The harps sell at app. SEK 585,-.

### **Knut Tveit**

I don't know a lot about Knut Tveit, other than he is making harps of an excellent quality. Whether he is still producing I don't know – I'm trying to locate him somewhere in Norway to actually buy one of his harps. What I do know is, that he made one of Bjoergulv Straumes first harps from machine parts from a B-17 flying fortress, that was shot down over Norway during W.W.II. Bjorgulv composed a tune called "Luftslaget" (the air battle) as a tribute to the British airmen, who died. I'll come back with further information on Knut Tveit, when and if I locate him.

(Continued next page)

# PLUCK-N-POST

(Traditions in Norway – continued)

## Two CDs with the Scandinavian Jew's harp as lead instrument

Should anyone be interested in getting acquainted with the Norwegian and Scandinavian Jew's harp music, I can recommend the following two titles:

Bjoergulv Straume, Norway: "Fra aett til aett" (from generation to generation). A mixture of Norwegian tunes, "Stev" (little songs) and poetry recital. A great way to get to know the real Norwegian solo Jew's harp tradition from one of the leading Jew's harpists from Norway. Available from Rotspel in Sweden: [www.rotspel.a.se](http://www.rotspel.a.se), who also sell Jew's harps made by Bjoergulv Straume as well as his tutorial video (PAL) where he teaches traditional Norwegian Jew's harp techniques and tunes.

Tapanis Varis (Finland): Munniharppuuna (The Jew's Harp). A blend of traditional and new tunes, some composed by Tapanis himself, along with traditional Finnish, Swedish and Norwegian tunes. This is great music. Available from GO Music in Denmark: [www.folkmusic.dk/GO2/index](http://www.folkmusic.dk/GO2/index).

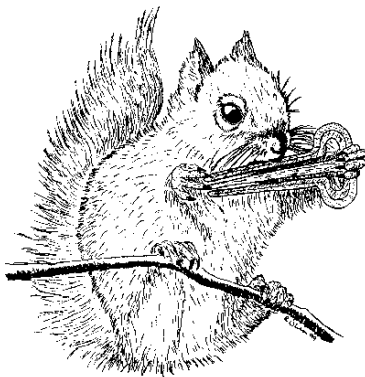
Lars Willadsen Ψ

## Norwegian Jew's harp festival

At last, our long waited for web sites are ready! Being the first edition, they will be improved and extended in due time. We will keep them updated about the two big events: this year's Norwegian Jew's harp festival at Vågå (Vaagaa) from 6th to 8th of October, and the planning and organizing of the 4th International Jew's harp Festival & Congress next year. There will be a general meeting about the 2001 event in April, which will be the starting point for our planning and organizing this big arrangement. I also want to ask you if you could put us on the links list of the JHG.

Greetings from Svein Westad, Norsk Munnharpeforum:  
[http://www.kongsberg.net/kongsberg\\_spel\\_og\\_dansarlag/munnharpe/default.stm](http://www.kongsberg.net/kongsberg_spel_og_dansarlag/munnharpe/default.stm)

Pointillist Drawing by Ron Vinson



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From the "Progressive Musical Instruments Corporation" Catalog circa 1937 – Our thanks to Doug Birch of Lansing, Michigan for sending this and others.

## A short review of VIM #8 by Mark Poss

I recently received the new trump journal by Frederick Crane - VIM #8 - 1999 - "Papers from the 3rd International Congress - Molln 1998" (127 pages). As usual I am totally impressed with the quality and content of Fred's publication. This issue features 14 papers on trump subjects presented at the Molln Congress by a multi-national cast of experts including: Tran Quang Hai, Ivan Alexeyev, Spiridon Shishigon, Rudolf Henning, and Tadagawa Leo, among others. Each paper is presented in each of the Congress's languages: English, German and Russian. (What a monumental task!) Also included are "Memories of Molln '98" as seen through Fred's eyes; a fairly thorough account of the event along with COLOR photographs.

The papers cover a wide range of topics and regional influences... It would be a disservice to attempt to summarize them here in a short form. You'll just have to trust me when I say that this issue is a MUST HAVE for anyone interested in the trump (jew's harp) or traditional music from many cultures.

Issues are US\$ 9.00 each (Postage included to anywhere in the world) VIM - 601 N. White Street - Mt. Pleasant, IA 52641

## Editor's Note:

A big THANK YOU to all the new contributors to the Pluck-n-Post !!! In the last few months we've had many offers of articles, pictures and illustrations from folks around the world. I sincerely hope that these will become a consistent part of the JHG newsletters! We always welcome new contributors! Please send me a note or e-mail if you have a great idea!

Yours in Music,  
 Mark D. Poss (Webmaster / PnP Editor)

# PLUCK-N-POST

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Kathi Vinson - Secretary JHG

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Gordon Frazier - Editor, PLUCK

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We hope that the additional revenue will enable us to produce a better newsletter.