



MASKATRON
BIONIC BEATS vol.1
4-14-19



kingcongbrewing.com
More Than Just Beer

open mic
 7-9pm
 tuesdays

April Music 7-10pm
 6th Terry Sharp Trio
 13th Alex Vincent
 20th Gentlemen Surfer/Surplus 1980
 27th DJ (tba)

1709 Del Paso Blvd
Old North Sac
916-514-8041

15 MINUTES

BY MAXFIELD MORRIS

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Bryan Allen keeps the music of the hurdy-gurdy alive and in the streets.

PHOTO BY MARIA RATINOVA

Hurdy Gurdy Man

Bryan Allen has been a lot of things. He joined the army when he was a teenager and ended up in Germany for a few years. For a while, he worked construction in the Bay Area, and now he's living in Sacramento. He's a big guy with a firm handshake, a very full beard and a feathered hat. He also **recently decided to become the Hurdy Gurdy Man**. That means he doesn't just play the hurdy-gurdy—a hand-cranked, spinning rosin-wheel string instrument—he commits to it. People have started recognizing Allen in the street from his busking, he says, and he plans on taking the performance to farmers markets and other venues. SN&R talked with the hurdy-gurdyist about his newfound role in the city.

How long have you been playing the hurdy-gurdy?

Well, the hurdy-gurdy I haven't been playing all that long—a year, a little over a year. But I've been playing music since I was a kid. I started playing saxophone in grade school and guitar all through high school, and I still play. I finally got a hurdy-gurdy about a year ago, and as soon as I did I just started busking more and more regularly.

How long had you wanted to play one of these?

A hurdy-gurdy? I got turned on to a hurdy-gurdy from a VHS cassette that I was given for my birthday, back in '95 or ['96] ... In the concert there was a performance, and they cleared the stage for this British guy, and he came out there with his hurdy-gurdy—and he had an especially special hurdy-gurdy.

Anyhow, that's the first time I'd ever seen anything like it, and it left an impression. And I never forgot it. And y'know, you grow up, you join the army, you get married, you work, work, work, and there's hardly money or time for a

hurdy-gurdy. But anyways, life changes, and the opportunity arose, and the stars aligned and I got my hurdy-gurdy, 22 years later. And I got a mighty fine one. This one's the real deal.

How often are you going out?

Well, now, a couple times a week at least.

Where do you go mostly?

Midtown to Oldtown, Old Sac.

It's more of a busking scene in San Francisco, right?

Yeah, but y'know, it's not necessarily better. It doesn't mean the people appreciate it more. They sort of expect it. You just get your picture taken a lot.

How did the busking start for you?

I'm not really a performer—that's the weird part, the weird change in me, the performing part. I was never a performer, heck no. Right? I'm not a show-off or anything. But yeah, I've just been compelled to do it. It's a high-risk high reward endeavor.

Are you kind of an introvert then?

No, I don't think so, not at all. I'm wide open. But anybody looking at me might think I was.

What kind of people respond to the music?

Well, first of all, the kids are amazing, right, they just lock on. It's super neat, kids love it. They compliment me all the time, it's just magic with the kids, thumbs up, you're really good, get a lot of encouragement from kids despite their fathers not even looking.

What's the goal?

I don't know what the goal is ... it's the Hurdy-Gurdy Man. It's just to be there, to inspire, to inspire creativity, to remind people that there's magic in the air. ... Out of everything I know and everything I've seen, it just seems to me like it's the best thing I could do with my life—to share and just resonate good vibes and interact with people, personally, intimately. □

Check out Bryan Allen's website at soundnoiseba.wixsite.com/hurdygurdyman.