

Calendar

Out-Loud Latins

Roots Rock Raza

'San Diego's a terrible town to be under 21 in," says Victor Payan, "because it's oriented toward getting musicians who play for the tourists as opposed to the kids. The bands booked in the Gaslamp are tourist-friendly. They aren't the guys who play 'Won't Get Fooled Again' or 'Get Off My Cloud' or something that will really change the world. It frightens me, but there's a movement called 'cultural tourism.' It means you bring tourists into communities to bolster the economy. But that turns places into haciendas or plantations. You'll see it in

Tijuana, where everyone sells what they think tourists buy."

Payan, who is 33, coordinates the four-month-old Roots Rock Raza series in the downtown space called Voz Alta. Two years ago, during the troubles at the Centro Cultural de la Raza in Balboa Park, the Save Our Centro Coalition was formed. Instead of saving the Centro, the group began a new organization for the Mexicano/Chicano/Latino arts community. Roots Rock Raza is one of its progeny.

"When we lost the Centro, we lost access to funding," says Payan. "And so we, like all grassroots culture, started at the bottom again. We had been having our events at different venues. When Voz Alta opened about five months ago, there was finally a space to fill the void that the closure of the Centro had left." Payan characterizes Voz Alta as "independent, artist-run, and not owned by Clear Channel." An idiom, *voz alta* roughly means "out loud." The literal translation is "loud voice."

The monthly format of Roots Rock Raza is part music, part

discussion. Every first Saturday, a featured musician performs then talks with Payan onstage. The interview is interspersed with Q&A from the audience, whose members are encouraged to approach the acoustic open mike with music of their own. "After the discussion," says Payan, "people are, hopefully, brave enough to get onstage, having realized that they can have something important to say, too, and that everyone started small."

Still, the participants need coaxing, which is provided by Payan. "I get up there and do some numbers. And I joked with last month's audience that in everybody's musical experience, there's one person that inspires you to say, 'I can do that. He's not that good. I can get up there.' Hopefully, I can be that person for someone. I'm half-joking, but, ultimately, if I can get some 16-year-old kid up there with a cheap guitar, then I'm doing my job."

What ages have been attracted to the venue? "We're getting not only the musicians' fans but the musicians' families. So we've had 10- and 12-year-olds, as well as people in their early 20s who want to know about how to write a song."

Any Latino wannabes in the crowd? "Well, they're honorary Latinos as opposed to wannabes. We're not getting any Ricky Martin types."

No particular style dominates the venue; synthesis is the point. "Here in San Diego-Tijuana, over the last 30 years, everything



Quino performing at the June 1 Roots Rock Raza

under the sun has fed the musical creative community," says Payan. "Blues, rock, classic rock, jazz, ska, metal, reggae, funk, punk, norteño. There's also mod, as we're having with Bart Mendoza this Saturday. And it's funny, because last month we had Quino, who's with [the San Diego reggae band] Big Mountain. He grew up in the suburbs and is now doing Bob Marley-style revolutionary reggae. This is a guy who, when he was 13, saw Marley on *60 Minutes*, and now he's part of that tradition. Bart is the other way around. He grew up in the barrio and got turned on by mod music, like the Jam and early Who, so he's riding around in the barrio on his Vespa. It's hilarious when you think of what that represents."

Is mod coming back? Vespas and *Quadrophenia* are everywhere in the wind these days.

"Things are cyclical," says Payan. "And since this is a very young community, there's always somebody who's mad at the world. There's always somebody who's listening to 'London Calling' for the first time."

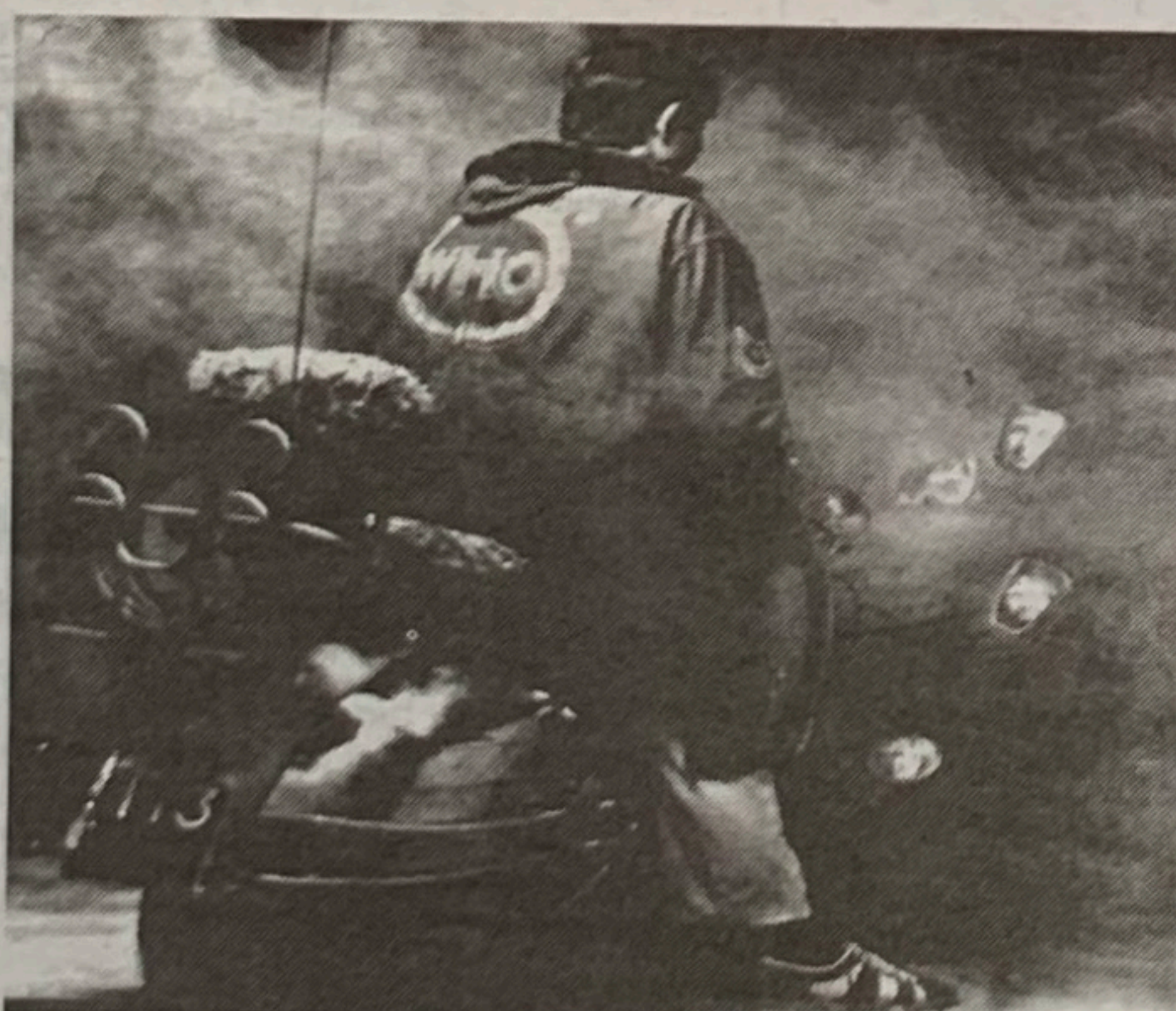
That may be so, but some things do evolve — and devolve. For example, Payan, who counts the Clash

among his own early influences, regrets that "everything rock and roll has stood for — self-expression, the do-it-yourself aesthetic — are disappearing. It's sad. Downtown on a typical Saturday night, you'll probably hear a disco band or disco deejay. It's harder and harder to walk in off the street and hear a Bob Dylan or the Beatles in their rathskeller days."

How can Payan tell if Roots Rock Raza is making a difference? "We don't know how to gauge it. A cultural transmission is going on, but you can't track it in a ledger, like corporate management people do. Voz Alta isn't located next to a bus stop, but that would be the ideal: if somebody — a bus boy walking home from work — would hear the music and come in. And actually that has happened."

— Jeanne Schinto

Roots Rock Raza
Saturday, July 6, 8:00 p.m.
Voz Alta
917 E St., Downtown
Cost: \$7 (\$5, students; seniors
\$2 off with online flyer:
www.vozalta.org)
Info: 619-230-1869



From Quadrophenia

Local Events
page 63

Classical Music
page 74

Art Museums & Galleries
page 76

Theater
page 77

Pop Music
page 82

Restaurants
page 113

Movies
page 125