

Code o' the West: MTA's Rodger Maxwell Promotes Lore of Western Music

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Nov. 27, 2002) "Riding for the brand. The whole code of the West," says MTA's Rodger Maxwell. "I'm very attracted to that."

Gene Autry's "Back in the Saddle Again" is one of many western songs that appeal strongly to Maxwell, 57, a scheduling system supervisor in Operations Support Services and the recently elected president of the Western Music Association's Southern California chapter.

The organization is dedicated to the preservation of the history, literature and performance of music unique to the American West. Each November, WMA conducts the International Western Music Festival.

A charter member of the organization, founded in 1989, Maxwell plans to expand the audience for western music by increasing the number of concerts given each year by WMA members. A fundraiser is scheduled, Feb. 16, at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage.

from Back in the Saddle Again by Gene Autry

"Back in the saddle again,
Out where a friend is a friend
Where the longhorn cattle feed
On the lowly jimsonweed
I'm back in the saddle again."



MTA's Rodger Maxwell, a native New Yorker, wants to widen the audience for western music.

from Home on the Range by Brewster M. Higley

"Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,
Where the deer and the antelope play.
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day."



On site: Rodger Maxwell

MTA project manager

At MTA, Maxwell is project manager for the Automatic Passenger Counting system and a member of the ATMS (Smart Bus) steering committee. Prior to joining MTA, he was a school systems planner and a bus driver for several transit agencies.

Employees have heard Maxwell, a 20-year MTA veteran, play and sing a number of times – although the music he and his group have played on the Plaza was rock 'n roll.

Maxwell's love of the Old West is refreshed every time he shoulders a guitar and steps up to a microphone during many performances at the Fireside Theater, Topanga Canyon Festival, Monterey Cowboy Poetry and Music Festival and other venues.

"I'm very attracted to the cowboy way, the cowboy values," he says. "It's straight-forward, open and honest."

The 'Bronx Cowboy'

As a native New Yorker, his attraction to western music was unusual, but not unprecedented in the family. His father, David – known as the “Bronx Cowboy” – was the singing host of a western music radio show in the 1930s.

The family enjoyed Saturday night sing-alongs and the younger Maxwell also loved watching the Red Foley country-western show on New York TV.

Citing as influences such musicians as Burl Ives, Roy Rogers, Bob Wills, the Sons of the Pioneers, Jackson Browne, Django Reinhardt and comics Homer and Jethro, Maxwell is equally at ease on the guitar, harmonica, bass, ukulele and percussion.

He has played in rock ‘n roll bands, folk trios, as a single act and musical sideman.

“Like most musicians,” he says, “I’m interested in all kinds of music.”

[Back to Bulletin Board](#)