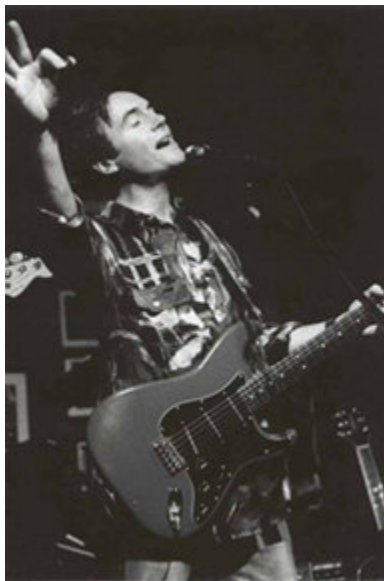


LOREN ROWAN

RANCHO NICASIO

January 10, 2004

I BELONG, I BELONG TO THAT STEEL DRIVING CREW



After a delightful stroll in the West Marin hills we dropped into a little place with a bar and an adjoining banquet room to hear what might be going down on a casual Sunday evening in the country. Rancho Nicasio is a homey sort of place of the sort that used to dot the landscape all over California and the West in general, with a comfortable, neighborly atmosphere where parents feel quite at ease taking the toddlers and rug rats to crawl and scrawl underneath massive mounted heads of the sorts of things that haven't lived around these parts for well on forty years. Where the food is good and the bar well stocked with the best tequila found north of the border.

Nicasio itself was founded in 1830 as a waypoint for cattle ranchers in the days when antelope still bounded across the grasslands of the Central Valley. It has remained a pleasant little backwater set amid the rolling hills abutting the protected slopes of Mount Tam, and with any luck will stay that way for another one hundred years.

It so happened that we stumbled in on Loren Rowen performing on twelve-string with Barry Sless on lapsteel to a packed house and the pair, joined by locals on congas and bass, with Loren's lovely wife adding backup vocals rocked the house. Did they rock the house? Hell man, they blew the doors off down the road as far as San Rafael and raised the roof another couple of feet with the energy.

The name Rowan ought to be familiar to you, for this is the same Rowen of the Rowen Brothers and the son of Peter Rowan, known in bluegrass circles as being a mainstay of the genre with Bill Monroe and primogeniture of the Free Mexican Airforce band..

In fact, Loren performed a little number dedicated to his father that had half the women in the house in full waterfall tears.

The guy was absolutely phenomenal, blazing out incendiary licks and runs and bends on the twelve-string like it was a 6-string nylon with ease while maintaining a rich, velvety voice on the vocals, while Sless glided and picked the most ethereal sounds from his electric lapsteel. At the end, the entire crowd rose to their feet for a rousing, stomping ovation. Not bad for a bar band on a Sunday evening in the country.



Loren Rowan performs at the famous Sweetwater Cafe on the 11th of February and with any luck, Sless will be with him again. You want music? You want excitement? We suggest you go.