

The Kitchen Musicians Serve Up a Generous Portion of Acoustic Music

By Jim Lipson

HAD KITCHEN Musicians Rita Hamilton, Ken Tucker, Gerry Glombecki and Earl Edmondson even a remote idea as to what they were getting into, downtown's El Presidio Park would get no more attention this weekend than it gets on other Saturdays or Sundays. But blind optimism and naïveté are the stuff great dreams are built upon. So with a lot of hard work, the park will come alive this weekend in a celebration of spirit and song as the Tucson Kitchen Musicians Association hosts the first Tucson Folk Festival.

Don't let anyone tell you it hasn't been a long time coming.

As a legally incorporated organization, TKMA has only been around since May of last year, but as a loose-knit group of musicians with a passion for promoting and performing acoustic music, their roots go back nearly a decade. That was in their early heyday when they were running shows in the Basement Cafe and monthly open stage jams in Armory Park.

The driving spiritual force behind the TKMA has always been to provide a forum where talented acoustic musicians could not only play but be seen and appreciated.

"The idea," Glombecki said, "is to get them out of the closet, into the kitchen (playing) and then on to the stage." The idea of staging a festival, if not always practical—and some Kitchen Musicians might smile as they question whether it was ever really practical—has remained synonymous with the organization's *raison d'être*.

"Everything we've done has gone to raise money for producing the festival," said Hamilton, a combination country musician and library administrator, who has worn the title of Festival Coordinator since April, 1985. "Both the Cap (Friday nights, Campus Christian Center) and the Acoustic Showcase (Sunday nights, Tequila Mockingbird) have been great for what they are. But we've never lost sight of what they were intended to promote," which was two days of continuous music on two stages, flanked by almost a dozen musician workshops with various food and crafts booths.

There is also a pronounced desire that this gathering be local. "Our idea for the first festival," Tucker said, "was to give everyone an opportunity to play." Everyone, in this case, meant almost anyone who submitted TKMA a tape. Tucker stressed they were not looking

Some have since questioned the validity and practicality of such a process. For example, there are some locally prominent musicians the festival will not get to spotlight, because, for whatever reasons, tapes were not submitted. Tucker says he regrets these omissions. Because of the number of performers and performing groups, more than 60 in all, sets must also be limited to 30 minutes at most.

"Next year will probably be different," Tucker said. But for now, neither he,

Glombecki nor Edmondson, all on the Talent Committee (and none of whom are scheduled to perform), have any regrets about the tape submission process.

The flip side, of course, is how many people took TKMA up on its offer. "I've been amazed by the number of people who've come out of the woodwork," Edmondson said. "A lot of these people have been in town all along and are very good."



Photo by Nancy Tucker

The Kitchen Musicians, organizers of the First Tucson Folk Festival, an all-weather