

The Gail Rich Awards 2004

In honor of creativity

Text By
WALLACE BAINÉ

Portraits By
SHMUEL THALER

Good surf and sunny beaches. Sidewalk Deadheads and strong coffee. These are the dominant images of Santa Cruz County, as seen from the outside.

Those of us who live and work here know there's more to the place than the superficial post-card stereotypes. The vast majority of local folks don't spend most of their time in wetsuits or Jerry Garcia T-shirts.

No, the most prized lifestyle commodity in Santa Cruz isn't leisure, but creativity. The high cost of living demands a certain level of artistry just to live here. But the truest marker of our county's fertile inventiveness — which seems as all-pervasive as morning fog — is our envied community of artists.

For the eighth consecutive year, the Sentinel honors a handful of Santa Cruz's finest artists and arts supporters with the 2004 Gail Rich Awards. Named for one of Santa Cruz's most tireless arts volunteers, who died the year the awards were established, the "Gailies" are our way of beginning a new year with a heartfelt appreciation of those whose work makes our lives here so enriching.

Yes, we're thankful for the surf and the sun. But it's Santa Cruz's artists who give this sometimes eccentric and flamboyant, but always interesting, community its distinctive character. Here's to the people who give us our personality.

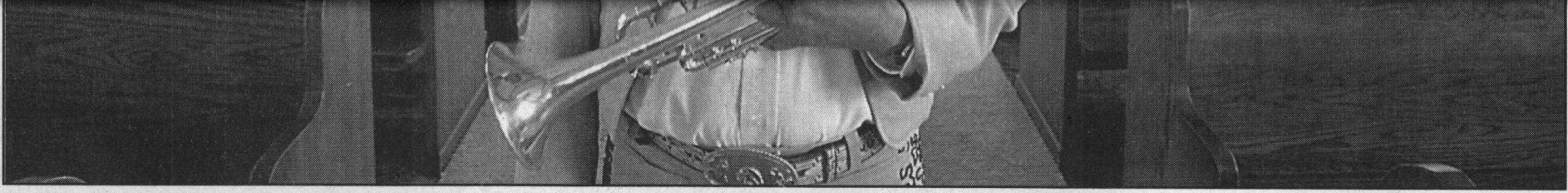
Life is sweet. Living is more so.

Art & Artists 2004

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Eleazar
CORTES

Eleazar Cortes, above, grew up in the small town of Tacambaro in the mountainous Mexican state of Michoacan watching his father — a bandleader, teacher and composer — tirelessly uphold the town's rich musical heritage. Today, Eleazar does much the same in his adopted hometown of Watsonville, where he has lived and worked for more than 30 years. He has devoted his life to performing and composing in the tradition of mariachi, particularly in the church. For years, Eleazar was a bandleader, most notably with the popular 1980s mariachi TropiCali. But the stresses of the job led him to work closer to home, first with St. Patrick's Church in Watsonville, then as a guest artist with various local arts organization. Now, he writes music to Biblical texts and travels around the country instructing churches on how to incorporate mariachi in their services, expanding a beloved tradition into sacred territory.

Laurence
BEDFORD

Don't look now, but the pulsating center of Santa Cruz cultural life is slowly migrating from downtown to the corner of Soquel and Seabright. There stands the Rio Theatre, the beloved but funky old movie house purchased by Laurence Bedford, left, in 2000 and converted into a performance space. In the past three years, the Rio has consistently hosted some of the most provocative and intriguing events in Santa Cruz County, from a political rally for a presidential candidate (Dennis Kucinich) to two guys playing with their genitals for laughs ("Puppetry of the Penis"). Not only have area producers — UC Santa Cruz's Arts & Lectures to KPIG-friendly Snazzy Productions — found a new space to work, Laurence makes sure that nonprofits and benefits have a home at the Rio as well. And, yes, the old building can still show movies, which makes it Santa Cruz's multimedia ground zero.

More **INSIDE**

Turn to Pages B4 and B5 to see the rest of this year's honorees.

GAIL RICH AWARDS

Nancy **LEVAN**

Nancy LeVan, right, has been trying for years to explain what kind of music she sings, but so far she hasn't found the right description. The mezzo-soprano doesn't take well to rigid artistic labels anyway. She began her artistic career in the mainstream, as a coffeehouse singer/songwriter type. But eventually, she took the roads not taken, into experimental and new classical, cabaret and art-song improvisation. Over the years, she has been part of many fruitful collaborations, with performance artist Bruce Lee, dancer Sara Wilbourne, fellow singer Pipa Piñon and instrumentalist Jeremy Lutes, with whom she performed in the group Dresden. Lately, she has taken on ambitious projects with international composers and has performed with Electron Salon, the Beatles' White Album Ensemble and, coming this month, New Music Works.



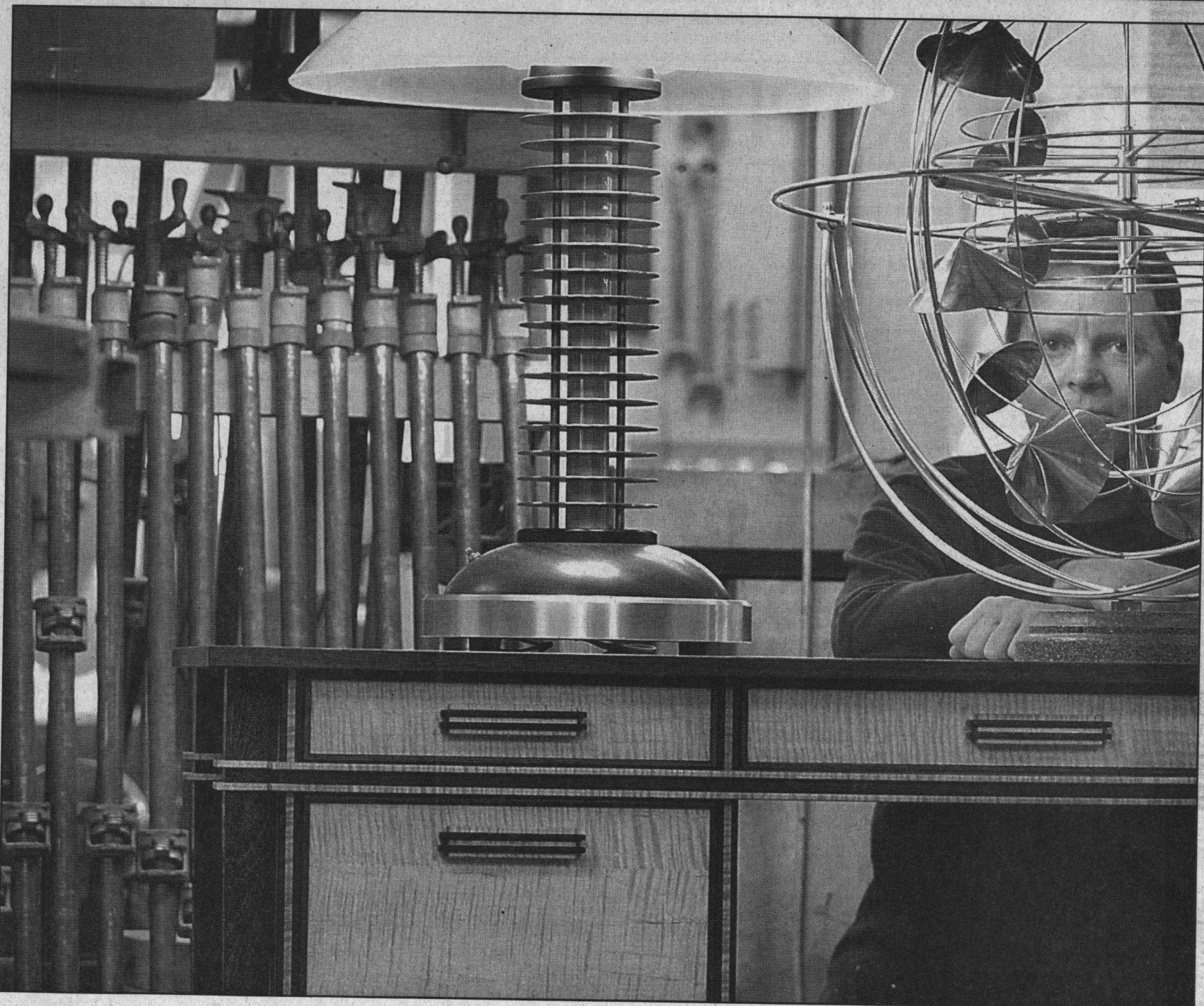


Art & REVOLUTION

There's a lot of untilled ground between theater and political activism, which is exactly where you'll find the Santa Cruz-based Art & Revolution street-theater collective, above. Inspired by the long-standing San Francisco Mime Troupe, A&R is known for its provocative, often humorous, never ambivalent street-performance protests. Instead of carrying signs and chanting slogans, the activists of A&R tend to carry puppets and act out humorous, ironic scenarios, all in the service of pointing out rampant consumerism, corporate malfeasance or political absurdity. Since 1989, the group has appeared in parades and sidewalks throughout the San Francisco Bay Area as a way to get around the high-handed rhetorical mud-wrestling that passes for political debate these days. Says one of the group's founders, Grant Wilson, "Creativity and humor can really be transformative."

Roger HEITZMAN

As a kid, Roger Heitzman saw much of the country from the back seat of a '61 Cadillac and nothing impressed him more than the car itself. Today, he makes furniture for a living, but cites the style of old Detroit-built automobiles as one of his primary artistic influences. The Scotts Valley woodworker is one of the West Coast's finest furniture designers and makers, but what he makes is more than mere home furnishings. Roger's portfolio consists of breathtaking furniture pieces of style and grace, echoing the curvaceous and flowing principles of Art Nouveau, Art Deco and, yes, even old Buicks. His work — which also features increasingly popular gyroscopic wind sculptures — inspired the Taunton Press to list him as one of the nation's top woodworkers. He even designs his own machinery, a telling indication of a distinctive artist at work.



Text By
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Arthur **HULL**

The work of Arthur Hull, right, begins with the sound of the human heartbeat. To call Arthur a drummer is a staggering understatement. He is more like an ambassador to the human race from the world of rhythm. A decade ago, when drum circles were a wildly popular effort to build a community of spirit, Arthur was one of the main reasons why; he's often been called the father of the drum-circle movement. His Santa Cruz-based company, Village Music Circles, is his tool to bring rhythm-oriented events to people around the world, in both community and corporate settings. The Arthurian gospel — which finds its expression in his drumming and teaching methods — holds that the primal experience of rhythm can unify people and be a strong force against selfishness and isolation. A fierce proponent of following your bliss, Arthur is out for nothing less than to change the world, one drum beat at a time.

Ken **KRAFT**

Imagine Ken Kraft's life back in the early 1970s. He was 18 and playing lead guitar in a successful rock band touring the country during rock music's golden era. That band was Snail, a vehicle in which Ken and fellow Santa Cruzans Bob O'Neill and Larry Hosford got a taste of the rock 'n' roll high life. Ken, below, made a different kind of splash in 2003 as the musical director of the Beatles' White Album Ensemble, in which he and seven other musicians re-created the famous Beatles album on stage for six sold-out performances. Ken has also been a respected (and busy) guitar teacher for 20 years and has played in an amazing array of local groups from Room with a View, Stormin' Norman & the Cyclones and the Messiahs. What's next for the White Album band? Ken's not saying specifically, but the news is bound to make Beatles fans happy.



Gail Rich Award winners 1997

- Rick Walker
- The Troxell Family
- Holt Murray
- Bob Lowery
- Laura Ellen Hopper
- Sara Wilbourne
- Eric Schoeck
- Joe Ferrara
- Philip Collins
- Guillermo Aranda
- Tracie Lea Lawson
- Bud Kretschmer

1998

- Bruce Lee
- Kate Hawley
- Nikki Silva & Charles Prentiss
- Sean Seman
- Mary McCaslin
- Thom Zajac
- John Orlando
- Laurie R. King

1999

- Linda Arnold
- George & Gail Ow
- Ann Morhauser
- Manuel Santana
- Claudia Villela
- Wilma Marcus Chandler
- William Coulter
- Salvatore D'Aura

2000

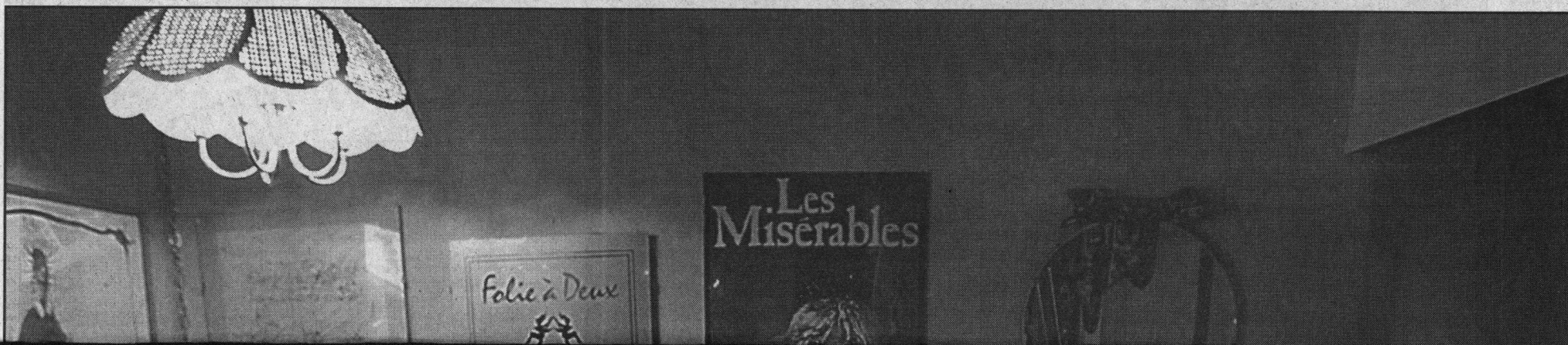
- Kathleen Bartlett Abood
- Sista Monica Parker
- Ralph Peduto
- Larry Hosford
- Patrice Vecchione
- Josh Gitomer
- Vern & Carol Bowie
- Bill Welch & Phil Lewis

2001

- The Dobson Family
- Jim Phillips
- John Sandidge
- Sister Barbara Long
- R.R. Jones
- Suzanne St. John
- Ikuyo Conant
- Richard Hoover

2002

- Helené
- Geoffrey Dunn
- Audrey Stanley





- Suzanne Schrag
- Susie Bright
- Jim Urban
- Dror Sinai
- Albert Kent, Mary Ann Kent & Tom Miller
- 2003**
- Tim Jackson
- Rock Lerum
- Janet Johns & Esperanza del Valle
- B. Modern
- Lile Cruse
- Michael Eckerman
- Keith Greeninger
- Billie Harris
- 2004**
- Ken Kraft
- Roger Heitzman
- Lawrence Bedford
- Nancy LeVan
- Art & Revolution
- Gerry Mandel/William Rubel
- Arthur Hull
- Eleazar Cortes



Gerry
MANDEL
William
RUBEL

It's been 30 years since Gerry Mandel, far left, and William Rubel founded Stone Soup, a literary journal aimed at pre-adolescent writers. And thousands of stories, poems, letters, artworks and literary reviews later, the bimonthly, advertising-free magazine is still going strong from its headquarters in Santa Cruz out to subscribers and contributors around the world. Gerry says she receives between 200-300 submissions every week, many of those from kids outside the country. Because Stone Soup won't publish anything from anyone over 13, the magazine retains the distinctive voice of children and the universal experiences of childhood. With its exacting literary standards, Stone Soup has garnered praise from various corners, most famously as "The New Yorker of the 8-to-13 set." It has been anthologized and selections from the magazine have been published in many of the nation's leading textbooks, giving exposure to writers still finding their voices.