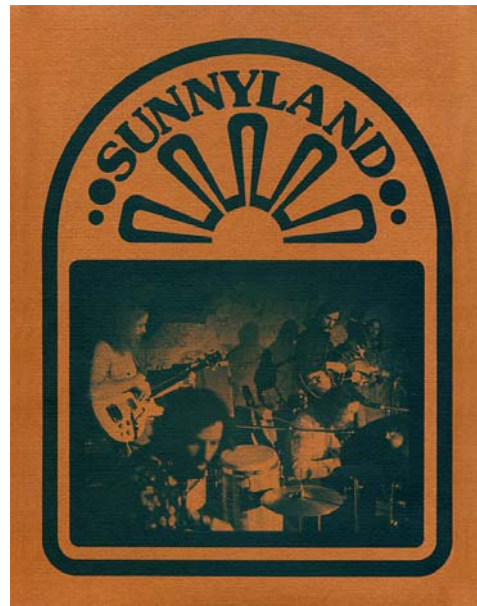


The Sunnyland Band ... Getting Some Tracktion!

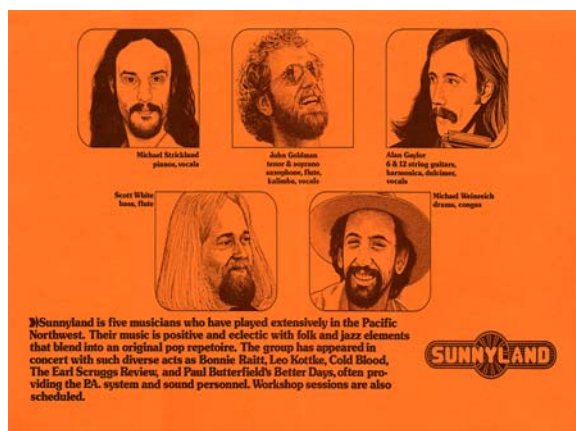
— by Alan Gaylor

Once there was a rag-tag group of young men who loved to play (and argue) about music. Coming from a diverse and eclectic variety of musical styles, the arguments went deep at times, but the resulting music was amazing and unique. As with so many bands, their ultimate recording dreams never manifested, but now thanks to Mackie's [Tracktion 3](#), the music still lives.

In 1970, the Sunnyland Band began in Portland, Oregon as a duo, and then grew in number to a total of five. The original members included Alan Gaylor on guitar/harmonica and Scott White on bass/flute. Art Lowell joined next on violin/mandolin, followed by Michael Strickland on piano and then Michael Weinreich on percussion/drums. Art's violin was replaced by John Goldman's sax/flute in late 1974. Of special note, Michael Weinreich's brother, Dennis, an up-and-coming recording engineer in LA, became peripheral to the group.



The boys wrote and produced a formidable body of work and played their music for interested listeners throughout the Northwest. Allen Cavallo signed on as the live sound engineer, later to be assisted by Christopher Compton. A loyal following developed. Sunnyland Band headlined at clubs and colleges, opened for national touring acts, conducted workshops at schools and also performed for several live radio broadcasts in the greater Portland and Seattle areas. Cavallo and Lowell decided to go in together on a small recording studio, and Dinky Recording Company was born in 1973, built around Crown 2 and 4 track industrial strength 1/4" tape machines. Thanks to Allen Cavallo's interest in live recording as well as studio work, the band also collected nearly 50 reel-to-reel tapes of live performances and other studio recordings in the last three years of its existence.



Sunnyland was scheduled to record in London in 1973, but fate had other plans. The band broke up in 1975, so it was time to look for those daytime jobs! The Sunnyland crew all stuck with music to varying degrees over the years, but the form took something short of the complete immersion model of the old band for most. There was even a joyous band reunion in the '90's, where some of the tapes and old times were revisited. The topic of preserving the music came up then, but everyone was involved with other careers and life interests at that point.

Gaylor, Sunnyland Band's founder, and one of the two main song writers, had moved to Hawaii in '77, and later started a music repping business to the trade in the Pacific. Sunnyland Marketing began in 1985, and four years later became the rep principal for Mackie Designs in that region.

Jump to 2007: Graduating From Old-school To "Digital U"

Once again, Mackie, aka Loud Technologies, was on the cutting edge of supplying affordable solutions for musicians' needs. Tracktion 3 and the Onyx Series Compact mixers with FireWire card, along with a couple of key retirements within the former band mates, provided the means and the inspiration for an earnest attempt to resurrect the music. It was always best as a group effort, and the synergy came full circle.



With some luck, and thanks to Cavallo, who had migrated into computer programming, the tapes and machines had survived over 30 years of storage in Oregon. (Don't try this at home!) The old band mates are now spread out from Honolulu to London, but with the internet, they can communicate closely again. Cavallo had workstations and space, and a new reunion was arranged for the 3rd week of August 2007 to begin the transfers. Most of the band was able to attend and participate. A [Mackie Onyx 1220](#) mixer with an [Onyx FW card](#) provided a very musical sounding and efficient path for the transfers from Analog to Digital. Everyone left with DVD's of the tunes burned from Tracktion, and the quest to sort through the archives has begun in earnest.

"to be continued..."

MEET THE SUNNYLAND BAND:



Alan L. Gaylor: 6- and 12-String Guitar, Dulcimer, Harmonica, Vocals - - Author of "Tiny Island," recorded by Leo Kotke, and currently living in Hawaii, playing his songs and working as a musical equipment rep for Mackie

Scott White: Fretless Bass, Flute, Recorder, Vocals -- currently living in Portland, teaching and playing stand-up and electric fretless bass

Arthur Lowell: Violin, Mandolin, Vocals -- currently living in Newberg, Oregon, on a llama farm

Michael Strickland: Fender Rhodes, Piano, Recorder, Vocals -- currently living in Portland, being creative and playing with toys like Tracktion 3

Michael Weinreich: Drums, Percussion, Vocals -- currently living in Los Angeles, getting ready for a trip to London

John Goldman: Tenor and Soprano Sax, Flute, Vocals -- currently living in Chicago, teaching and playing jazz with the big boys

Allen Cavallo: Sound Reinforcement, Mixing, Live and Studio Recording -- currently living in Portland, working as a web and database programmer

A View From London

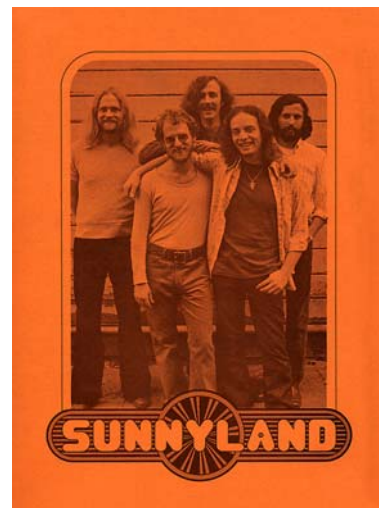
— by Dennis Weinreich



I first met the Sunnyland Band when they arrived at Denny's Music Studio in Portland, where I worked briefly as engineer during a visa-imposed hiatus from London. The studio was owned by a local music impresario, Steve Shore, who also owned the largest music store in Oregon. If you bought enough stuff in the music store you were given a day in the studio. Needless to say the quality of bands that came through was varied. None the less there were a number of great bands, but the standout for me was the Sunnyland Band. We recorded a couple of tracks that, to my mind, showcased some great musicianship and a really unique perspective on construction and presentation of their own and others material. Their arrangement of "Whiter Shade of Pale" took an already iconic track and, rather than just do a cover, they really did take it apart and put it back together to make it their own. When David Knights, the bass player from Procol Harum became my manager in the 1980's I played "Pale" for him and he, like me, could see that there was something unique, interesting and very intelligent about what Sunnyland had been doing. I also loved what they did with Hendrix's "Golden Rose", taking it acoustic with a vocal round chorus. Brilliant. But they were no cover band who did nifty arrangements. They were a group of writers, wordsmiths and performers who, not surprisingly, had a huge following in the Portland music scene through the 1970's. What they didn't have was a drummer. Step in my brother Michael who was hanging in Portland at the time. Deal done... and when soon after I headed back to London to join the staff at Scorpio Sound Studios, one of the top studios at the time, I was able to maintain a link to this band I was so keen on through their drummer. Sometime around 1975 I was able to put together an opportunity for them to come to the UK to record, but time, distance and cost eventually killed the project and the sessions never happened. Fortunately for us all the band had the use of Art and Allan Cavallo's Dinky Studio where they were able to record a tremendous amount of material. They also managed to get a lot of live performances down to tape.

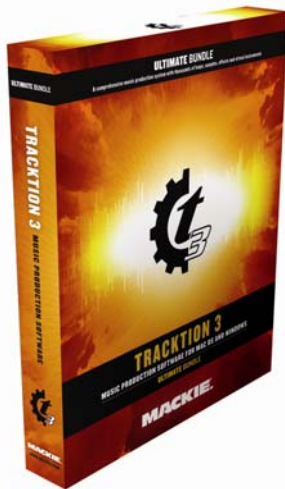
When I got a call earlier this year from my brother telling me the band were going to get together and listen to the hundreds of hours of recordings Allan did at Dinky and live, I was very excited. A year or so earlier I brought back to London some ¼" copies of the Denny's music recordings and a live performance from a broadcast on Portland radio Station KINK. My plan was to digitize the tapes and send CD's to the band members. Of course I couldn't resist a bit of mastering.

Although my background is as a music engineer and producer, my facility in London, Videasonics, specializes in mixing soundtracks for film and TV, all in the digital domain. We have 6 x mixing and recording studios including 3 THX certified film-mixing theatres with AMS-Neve DFC consoles. The other studios have AMS-Neve Logic and Libra consoles. There are also 15 digital track lay/programming suites. All the rooms have Protools, Nuendo, Audiofile or a combination there of. We feel we have tremendous depth in digital audio technology having put our first Audiofile DAW into real service in 1987, fully four years before the first simple Protools was available. We also built the world's first fully digital film dubbing theatre in 1995.



So doing a bit of tweaking on the Sunnyland tapes was not going to stress our facilities. I went into one of the smaller Neve rooms and loaded the ¼" up on a Studer A810 and used Apogee A to D converters to record 44.1 24 bit WAV files. A bit of EQ, some gentle compression and a touch of level work and some clever noise eliminating from Cedar and off the CD's went to the boys.

I guess there was some interest in seeing what else was there on the rest of those ¼" reels after that as a date was set to meet in Portland and have a listen. I unfortunately could not make it due to commitments in London, but I promised to be as much help as I could from afar. Cavallo is no slouch as an engineer and with his skill and Alan Gaylor calling in favours from Mackie/Loud, a system was put together for digitizing the material that was certainly not a compromise to what I had used in London. I was very impressed with the first batch of what I heard.



The folks at Mackie saw to it that we all had the latest version of Julian Storer's excellent Trackson software to get the best out of the tracks. I had been introduced to Trackson when Julian was writing it just a few doors away from our studio. He is one of the top programmers around and all of our studios have some tool or another that Julian has written. I got a release version of Trackson 1 and thought it had a very easy interface and actually presented itself in clear terms that were easy for someone with little background in workstations or basic digital audio to understand. I was quite excited to see where the Mackie programmers took Trackson 3. The answer to that was how easily all the band, who are hardly at the cutting edge of digital technology (sorry boys) were able to come to grips with the job at hand. Even though I have lots of tools to work with in London for the problem recordings that I have been landed with, I have used Trackson 3 to see how well it performs and to show the others what can be done. So far it has proved to be a valuable addition to my arsenal.

The Sunnyland project will run for awhile yet. When Michael Strickland sends an email that there is another set of tracks up on the FTP we set up for us to exchange the work, I get very excited. It is not just a trip down some memory lane. It is a chance to hear some really great music that was fortunately preserved for us to enjoy 30 odd years later. Now if we can only get Scott to get a computer!