

scene

Brewer & Shipley

With Ken Metz. Friday, July 20, at the Winchester, Lakewood.

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Editor's note: Dust off your Wranglers and break out your stash. Over the next two weeks, Nightwatch spotlights two forgotten heroes of hippie country: Brewer & Shipley this week and Richie Furay next.



Subject(s): Spiro T. Agnew, folk-rock, Brewer & Shipley

The Avett Brothers recently soaked the Beachland with their heady and hip fusion of bluegrass punk and tribal stomp. Although the Avetts inspired some festive boogie, these North Carolinians are not the first to concoct such a home brew.

Dive into your stoner uncle's musty records and retrieve *Weeds*, a 1969 LP from Brewer & Shipley. With its punchy harmonies, chiming guitars, and thick world grooves, the seven-minute jam "Wichi Tai To" is the well from which the Avetts sprung.

"That song was written by Jim Pepper, who was a Native American," explains Tom Shipley, phoning from his home in Missouri's Ozark Plateau. "It's actually a derivative of a Native American peyote chant."

Like most young and hairy dudes in the early '70s, who, in the words of Paul Simon, had "gone to look for America," Brewer & Shipley laced their countrified folk rock with psychedelics. This resulted in one of *the* classic odes to excess, "One Toke Over the Line."

"We *really* were one toke over the line," admits Shipley, who grew up in Bedford. "But we've been tagged with that song."

The duo is no one-hit wonder. Dig deeper into *Weeds*, as well as the 1970 gem *Tarkio*, and discover a band whose back-porch rural rock dug its heels into American earth as deeply as the Dead and the Byrds. Hell, even Spiro T. Agnew condemned Brewer & Shipley as subversives.

Nowadays, Shipley and Michael Brewer, who still sound phenomenal, play about a half-dozen shows a year. Although Shipley is a busy videographer, about once a month he feels that stubborn urge to go and see America.