

# arts & entertainment

## Guitarist's style reflects unique interest in 'Americana'

By Mary Jane Winqest

Very clean cut and as folksy as the "Americana" his tunes reflect, guitarist and songwriter Peter Spencer has a unique, personal approach to his music.

His conglomerated repertoire of country, blues and jazz reveal his interest in American culture and songs of an earlier era.

"I do contemporary material but sometimes it sounds old," said Spencer on the inevitable link between his style and his

cultural interests.

In the middle of a four-week Midwestern tour, Spencer recently played in Chicago and Minneapolis and will continue on to St. Louis and complete the tour December 16 in Kansas City.

Spencer's three-day stop in Lincoln at the Zoo Bar, ends after tonight's performance.

Spencer said his interest was in "ethnic music of all types recorded since the dawn of recording technology." He said he would play "anything that organically or

accidentally found its way on stage."

Spencer forcefully strummed his six-string acoustic guitar and matched its deep, rich sounds with an equally deep voice Monday night.

Spencer alternated between instrumentals and story-laden lyric tunes.

### Best instrumentals

Spencer proved his best with such instrumentals as "Mr. Lucky," where he displayed total absorption in his fingerwork and heavy sounds from his guitar. His opening instrumental medley most ob-

viously portrayed American culture with tunes like, "The Theme From Mickey Mouse Club," "If You Wore A Tulip," "Bicycle Built For Two," and "Old Fashioned Love."

Spencer's improvising tendency as a young guitarist still influences his music. Spencer said his medley's just happen accidentally, and will never be the same twice.

Somewhat of a record historian, Spencer describes himself as a "minor league record collector." But since he tours 25 days a month, he said he doesn't have the space to accommodate the bulky 78 speed records that many of his friends collect.

Spencer, from a musical family, said there were several reasons for his interest in vintage songs and musicians.

"I'm interested not only because of my family and my being an American, but because of my enjoyment of old records," he said.

According to Spencer, a Chet Atkins piece is the most thorough workout for his fingers.

"I'll play when nobody is listening, but I don't practice at all," he added.

### No lessons

Spencer said he also has not taken guitar lessons, and as a result uses improper hand positions while playing.

Spencer played countless Chet Atkins pieces because of the enormous strength he contributes to each chord.

He belts out lyrics with enormous strength too, and what he sings about are as varied as the tempos he incorporates into his pieces.

As Spencer rolled on the sides of his red boots he snag, "A man is a creature of constant change, after you have been eating steak all the time, beans taste fine."

In another tune his versatile voice wails, "I got the washboard you got the tub, let's put 'em together and do the rub de dub."

Spencer designates his tours east or west, depending on their direction from his hometown, Erie, Penn. He said he plans an eastern tour next, and in six months he plans to work on an album.

Spencer said he was superstitious and didn't want to talk about his new album, but he did announce that its title would be, "God's Wrath In The St. Louis Cyclone."

Taken from a 78 speed recording of black preacher, J.M. Gates, and his congregation, the title is the same as Gate's sermon, according to Spencer.

"I like the title," Spencer said. "I use anything that I like and will fit."

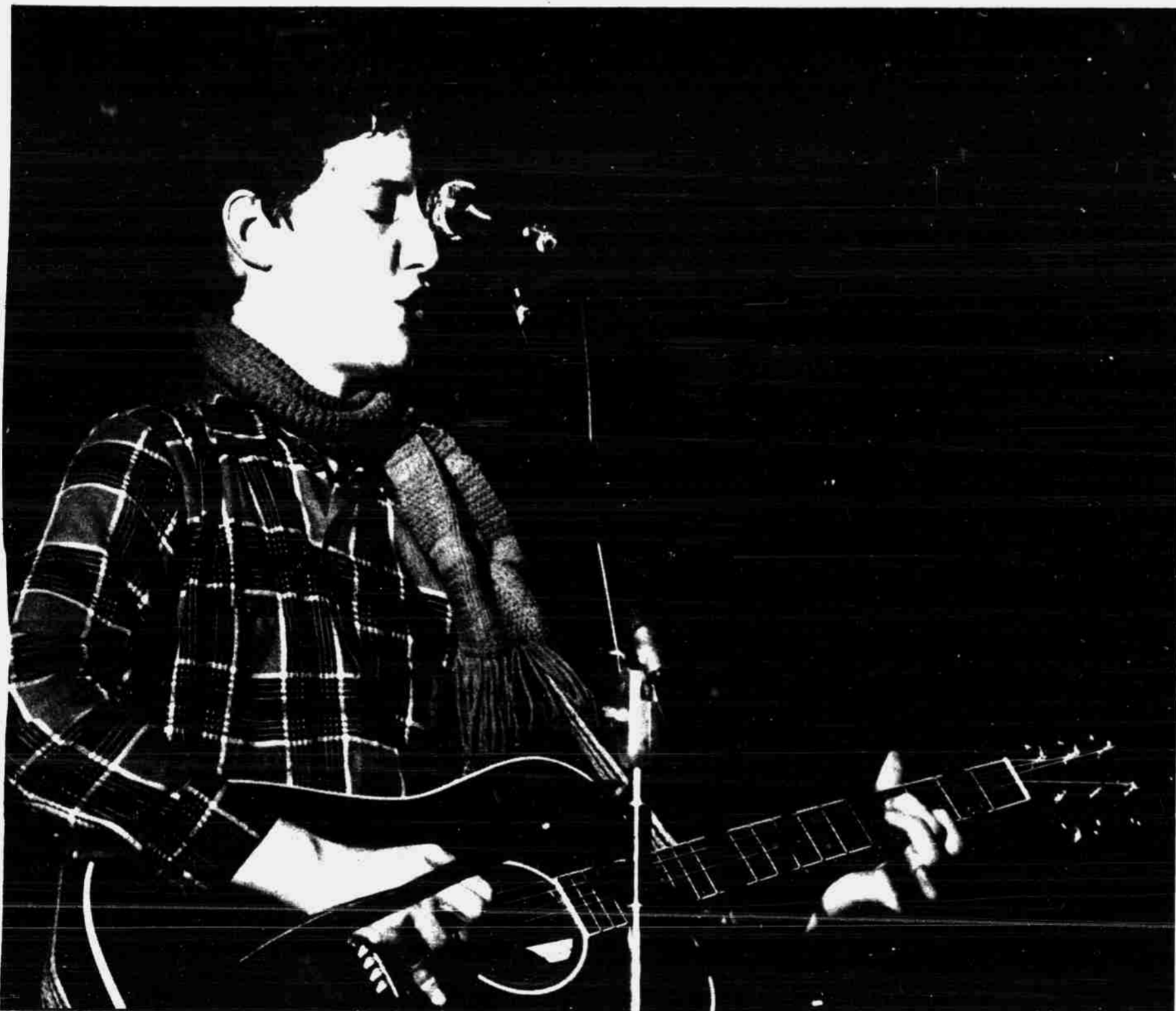


Photo by Mark Billingsley

Guitarist Peter Spencer strums away in performance at the Zoo Bar.

## Ravi Shankar to appear in concert at Kimball Hall



Photo courtesy of Herbert Barrett Management

Famous performer and Beatles' teacher Ravi Shankar will perform tonight at Kimball Hall.

World-renowned musician and composer Ravi Shankar will appear in concert tonight at the Kimball Recital Hall. Shankar is well-known for teaching the Beatles how to play the sitar, and as a figure in the peace-through-music movement that became popular in the '60s.

### entertainment notes

Born in Varanasi, India, Shankar embarked upon a career of unique artistic accomplishment after many years of intensive study. As a composer, Shankar has done extensive writing for the ballet and film in the United States as well as Canada, Europe, and India. Today he is a singular phenomenon in the classical music worlds of East and West. He has performed in all the major concert halls of Western and Eastern Europe; North, Central, and South America; North Africa, Australia and New Zealand; the Middle and Far East and the Soviet Union.

In the United States, Ravi Shankar's artistry and musicianship has been placed, as the *New York Times* wrote, in as high a virtuoso class as anything this century has heard from Horowitz, Heifetz, Casals or Menuhin. . . and his impact on American music has been more profound in the last decade than that of any other non-Western musician."

### Frequent guest

Shankar is a frequent guest performer and lecturer at major colleges and universities. He has written an autobiography entitled, *My Music, My Life*.

Sponsored by the University Program Council Concerts Committee, Shankar will appear at Kimball, 11th and R

streets. Admission is \$4 for UNL students and \$5 for general admission.

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UNL's Studio Theatre's latest presentation, *The Shadow Box*, will be performed tonight through Dec. 3.

Dealing with the dying and the struggles of those who surround them, the play is set in a hospital with private cottages for the terminally ill and their families. In one cottage, Joe, played by Dale Wilson, is a middle class laborer who fights his wife's (Lorenda Schuster) stubborn refusal to accept the fact that he is dying. In a second cottage, Brian (Scott Lank) tries to intellectualize his death while his ex-wife (Marla Harper) and his lover (Scott Baughn) must come to grips with the situation on their own terms.

### Force of will

Finally, in a third cottage, Felicity (Shana Higgins), continues to live through sheer force of will, much to the consternation of her daughter (Kathy Lang). The play revolves around these three groups and their efforts to resolve their alienation from death. Together they seek to find meaning in life, no matter how short it may be. Other actors include Larry Peterson as the interviewer, and John Thew as Joe's teenage son.

*The Shadow Box* is directed by Phil Stone as partial fulfillment of his master of fine arts degree. It also serves as the thesis production for Steve Probus, who designed the sets and lighting. Other technical staff members include Mary Dillon, assistant director and stage manager, Lia Jantz, costume designer, and Cary Noble, sound designer.

Tickets for *The Shadow Box* are on sale at the box office in the Temple Building, 12th and R streets, open from 1 to 5 p.m. weekdays.