

Presenting Doctor Oakroot and his instruments out of the ordinary

by Chiemi

Meet Somerville resident David Smith, a/k/a Doctor Oakroot. He has been making his own instruments for years. He said this craft "comes out of the tradition of medieval troubadours—they did not necessarily have guitar strings, so they used what they had...in combination with creativity."

Oakroot arrived in Somerville this past January for a day job as a statistical programmer. He uses his scientific/mathematical bent in a different way when designing his works. Lately, he has been sporting what he calls his "Cyclops creation" at The Cantab in Cambridge and The Burren in Davis Square. The instrument is a cigar box with six guitar strings and two doorbell buzzers as pickups. Many have also heard uncanny music performed by Oakroot on his goatskin banjo, complete with hair.

Oakroot said he has been fashioning these instruments since he was "a kid in North Carolina." He recently sold one to a blues aficionado in Florida.

"When you get it down to a box a stick and a string, you



Doctor Oakroot and his one of a kind "Cyclops creation."

have music with a rough edge that works at a primal level—nowhere to hide—and anything but ordinary," he said.

In live performance, Oakroot's playing and singing come across as visceral and dark. It could fall under the

category of blues, but Oakroot prefers to call his music "songs to haunt your dreams."

Oakroot's music is anything but something that would fall into a narrow definition of any music genre. For example, Oakroot has been

known to wave his hand over an apple and change it into a silk scarf as part of his performance. Expect the unexpected from Oakroot.

For more information, you can check out <http://DoctorOakroot.com>



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