



Googabouts and Those Darlins

It's not difficult to spot articles written by Google addicts these days:

Woman Sculpts Idol in Lint: Myrna Mplpaplpr of Omro, Wisconsin -- a town 58.3 miles southwest of Green Bay, and named after Charles Omereau, the French trader and blacksmith who started a fur trading business there in 1639 -- has developed a form of soft sculpture to represent her idol, Pinky Lee, born Pincus Leffon May 2, 1907 in St Paul, MN. Myrna -- a name of Irish and Gaelic origin meaning beloved -- tried many mediums before settling on lint, that fluffy raveling issuing from the dryer vents of Omro homes, of which there were 1,236 in the 2000 census.

I'm guilty as a major abuser of this style. But few things are more captivating at my age than a midnight Googabout -- named (by me) after the Australian *walkabout*, defined online (questionably) as: *A short period of wandering bush life engaged in by an Australian aborigine as an occasional interruption of regular work.* I think Googabout implies a reasonable adaptation of the definition, even though I've had no *regular work* since the Club de Wash went electric in 1986.

Sometimes there are amazing disappointments on these finger-trudges. In the 60s I learned a song from the Burl Ives album **Australian Folk Songs**, with the title of *Across The Western Plains I Must Wander*. My guess is Ives used this title instead of the more usual *All For Me Grog*, which would have been too wild for 1958. Then again, aspirin and naps were too wild for 1958.

Anyway, in a recent Googabout in search of versions of the lyrics, I came across one that finishes with the lines: *Graftin' humour I am in, and I'll stick the peg right in / And I'll settle down again and back to yakka.*

Turns out *yakka* is Australian slang for *work*. But thinking first it was a place name, I Google-Earthed and found an

Australian settlement named Yacka. One street view features the General Store there, and -- though the picture has changed since my first visit -- the snapshot was intriguing.

I thought, hm, maybe I (a frustrated artiste) should do a series of paintings from Google Earth images. I'd call myself *Vincent Van Google*. With a hunch that this name might be taken, I Googled. Boom! The web page of **Vincent Van Google**, promoting a series of paintings based on Google-Earth images! Amazing disappointment! So either my whole idea, complete with name, had been taken well before I came up with it, or I had found a way to Google the future. Google *Vincent Van Google* and see for yourself.

When I'm tired of the iBook screen, I pivot toward the TV screen. I'm drawn to screens like a June bug. A while ago, my wife **Kristi** and I were mesmerized by a TV spot for a Kia Sorento. In the video, human sized puppets are on a goofy road trip. The song in the background is *Red Light Love* by **Those Darlins**, a female trio plus a guy on drums. A few more Googles and trips to YouTube got me hooked on this band.

They have two CDs. The first one, just called *Those Darlins*, is my favorite. The selection has a mixture of old country and old folk, but is mostly original and rocky, all catchy. On YouTube I watched a few interviews with **Jessi Darlin**, whose nasal but powerful voice reminds some, including me, of the great **Wanda Jackson**, *Queen of Rock and Roll*. **Jessi** mentioned some of their influences, which include the **Carter Family**, the **Ramones**, **Loretta Lynn**, and the **Beach Boys!!!** Wow! I think the only thing these have in common is that they all influenced **Those Darlins**.

This launched me on yet another Googabout, tramping back and forth mainly on the path between YouTube and Wikipedia, researching the **Carter Family**, the **Ramones**, **Loretta Lynn**, watching **Wanda Jackson**, seeing a clip of her on **Letterman**, listening to the horns backing her up, YouTubing **James Brown** to listen to HIS horns, etc. It's an endless journey, hooray!

But getting back to **Those Darlins**, I would assume that for most ancient lyricists like me, their rock accompaniment is so loud it is unfortunate, because you can't hear the lyrics, particularly on their second album. But on the first album, their folk, country, and rockabilly roots are very evident. They sing a marvelous version of **Uncle Dave Macon's** *Keep my Skillet Good n Greasy*, made popular by and maybe written by him long ago.

So I Googled him, of course. **Uncle Dave Macon** (October 7, 1870–March 22, 1952), among many other things, ran a mule-based shipping company from about 1900 until 1920 (*The Macon Midway Mule and Wagon Transportation Company*) out of Murfreesboro, TN. He would sing and play banjo for the people at the various stops along the route. Murfreesboro, which holds an *Uncle Dave Macon Days* festival every July, is also home of the *Southern Girls Rock and Roll Camp* (sgrrc.com/) where the **Darlins** met and started their band a half dozen years ago. I don't know if this geography had anything to do with the **Darlins** recording *Skillet*, but they do a swell job of it, as can be heard on YouTube at a little live show in St Louis, and on their CD.

The lyrics of **Those Darlins** are often enchantingly evocative. In the *Red Light Love* song, still my favorite, the rhymes are a stretch sometimes, but this adds a relaxed mood to the song whose last verse ends with "...we ain't that hard to please / All we need is a couple o' bucks / And a can of gasoline." (Rhymes can't get stretched much further than *please* and *gasoline*.) But the master touch of saying "can of gasoline" instead of "tank of gasoline" is thrilling to me, as this one word calls up so viscerally the mechanics of being young, broke, and in love.

There's a lot of bad music out there (a fluctuating percentage of my own stuff qualifies). But there's great music too, all along the billabong. And anyone who, under the influence of the **Carter Family**, the **Beach Boys**, **Loretta Lynn**, and the **Ramones**, sings *Skillet Good and Greasy* by **Uncle Dave Macon**, deserves at least a second glance on the Googabout.