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## **Janet Klein Finds something old is new again**

By Randy Lewis

Singer-instrumentalist-bandleader Janet Klein is one of the veterans among a slew of Southland musicians who are riding a wave of interest in music rooted in earlier styles.

Many members of this community, often called “throwback bands” are tapping jazz, folk, blues, and country traditions from the 1920s and ‘30s. Odd thing is, most are in their 20s and 30s and have been exploring vintage styles for just a few years. I interviewed many of them for a feature in Sunday’s Arts & Books section.

Klein said she started delving into Depression Era music in the 1980’s, when many aspects of music were very different. “When I started getting interested in this kind of music and tried to find more of it, I was spending a lot of time in the music library at UCLA.” Said Klein, who plays her final show of 2012 with her band, the Parlor Boys, Thursday at the Steve Allen Theater in Hollywood. They’ve been in residency there for eight years, playing the first Thursday of every month. “At that time, it was before we all had access to the internet. Finding pre-big band era music was really a quest. I didn’t know anybody else who was interested.”

Klein brings her lyrical voice, vintage dresses and stage persona to bear strongly in these shows, highlighting songs from nearly a century ago played by accomplished musicians who make up the Parlor Boys. Klein joins in with her ukulele, an instrument she adopted in the mid-nineties when she was busier giving poetry readings than concerts.

“I started playing ukulele because I wanted to work something musical into my poetry reading,” she said. “That ukulele allowed me to share some of the old songs that I adore and I started to meet other musicians. I found people in town playing old music, and they were great characters. I met them one at a time, like Dorothy on the Yellow Brick Road.

“I feel like I began to make this music partly because it just was nowhere to be found” she said. “something was missing for me and I figured if there was none around, maybe I should make some.”

Now it’s a different story. L.A. is home to a growing cadre of musicians playing music rooted in vibrant styles from the early 20th century: Vaud & the Villains, the Dustbowl Revival, Leftover Cuties, Capt. Jeff & His Musical Chumbuckets, the Petrovic Blasting Company and others.

Klein summarized what a lot of these musicians expressed about the appeal of the traditions they’re mining when she told me “I was just trying to reach out toward the things that are meaningful to me, things that make sense, things that fill some yearning for something that seems to be missing in the culture around me.”