

More Toys for Street Noise

YOU NEED MORE THAN A CATCHY tune and an open guitar case to make it as a street musician in Harvard Square these days. The successful busker has to go high tech.

Guitarist-vocalist Flathead (aka Ned Landin) is a case in point. "Back in the sixties, things were quieter," says Flathead, a Harvard Square regular who has ridden the rails and played his music all over the United States and Europe. "People were more into stopping and listening. Today, you kind of have to hit them over the head a little more." And to do that, Flathead uses a custom-built amplifier; a pair of speaker cabinets, each packed with eight four-inch speakers; and a series of effects pedals that add parametric equalization and digital delay to his otherwise folksy sound.

Flathead isn't alone. Joseph Kessler needed more than fiddle playing, foot stomping, and hillbilly whoops to compete. So he added a Maxi Mouse—a 10-watt battery-powered amplifier—to his show. Kessler's traditional mountain music is also equalized and given a chorus effect before it gets to your ears. Even Andean folk groups such as Inka Son—with their traditional costumes and rustic-looking drums and percussion and string instruments—electronically modulate their sound with effects pedals and a Maxi Mouse or two.

Modern street musicians are also using high technology to cash in on the take-home market. New inexpensive



Joseph Kessler, with fiddle, Maxi Mouse, and invisible electronic chorus.

home-recording equipment allows them to produce their own CDs and tapes, most of which sell for \$5 and up.

Still, none of the buskers we listened to rode home in limos. Asked how much he could make in a night, one street musician replied bitterly, "You mean me or Mark the Juggler?" A street musician can make \$200 on a good

night. Jugglers, magicians, and even, incredibly, *mimes* are rumored to make many times that.

There's one thing, however, that hasn't changed. Buskers still decide who gets to play in the coveted Harvard Square T station in the most low tech of ways: a daily 7 a.m. coin toss.

—Erik E. Eskilsen

The \$500-Million Woman



Name: Kathleen Betts.

What she does: Part-time administrator in the Department of Public Welfare, mother.

Most recent accomplishment: Saved state from fiscal disaster by finding almost half a billion dollars in untapped federal Medicaid funds.

Favorite book: *Death Be Not Proud*. ("It shows real heroism at work.")

Favorite food: Pizza.

Ambition for her children: Health and happiness.

Money-saving tips: Marry a banker (like she did). Use coupons. Teach your children delayed gratification.

How she manages money at home: Lets husband do it.

Long-distance carrier: AT & T.

Favorite vacation spot: Family cottage in Wellfleet.

Quote: Take one day at a time.