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Like fireflies in a jar, the characters on the cover of Steve Goodman's "Somebody Else's Troubles" record were captured in the summer of 1972.

It was always summer when Jimmy Buffett and Goodman got together.

Buffett popularized the Goodman ballads "Banana Republics" and "California Promises," and the late Chicago singer-songwriter and Buffett co-wrote the Pensacola, Fla.-based "Frank and Lola" and the Key West ballad "Woman Going Crazy on Caroline Street" among others.

On Aug. 7, 1972, Goodman put out a casting call for a cover shoot for his second album. A group of raconteurs and songwriters were instructed to meet at Goodman's huge apartment at 3759 N. Wayne, not far from Wrigley Field. There would be no last call.

The crew included Buffett (identified as Marvin Gardens on the album cover and to the left of Goodman's wife Nancy); Earl Pionke, (far left) the larger-than-life owner of the Earl of Old Town folk music club; Goodman's best friend, John Prine (to Earl's right); Fred Holstein (far right), and his brother Ed (right foreground). Steve Goodman is seated holding his daughter Jessie.

The photographer was P. Michael O'Sullivan.

A regular at O'Rourke's Pub on North Avenue, around the corner from the Earl, O'Sullivan was an internationally acclaimed photojournalist who documented civil strife in Northern Ireland. One of his images from the Detroit 1967 riots ended up on the cover of Life magazine. O'Sullivan also took pictures of Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones when they dropped into O'Rourke's. (Dylan contributed uncredited piano and vocals on the "Somebody Else's Troubles" title track.) O'Sullivan died of lung cancer in 2004 at the age of 64.

Buffett recalled that David Goodman, an assistant photographer at Playboy magazine and Goodman's younger brother, brought O'Sullivan to the session.

The album cover was designed by Gib Foster, who had designed the first two album covers for Earl of Old Town favorite Bonnie Koloc. Foster knew O'Sullivan from the Old Town neighborhood and asked the acclaimed photographer to shoot the cover.

An outtake from this historical gathering hangs in Buffett's new Margaritaville Bar & Grill at Navy Pier. Clay Eals, the author of the definitive 2007 biography "Steve Goodman: Facing The Music" scanned three of O'Sullivan's photos together to create the image. O'Sullivan made nearly 150 images of the session.

Expect Buffett to drop in his new club — unannounced, of course — when he is in Chicago with his Coral Reefer Band.

"I had just gotten into Chicago and was told we were going to have dinner at Steve's place," Buffett said in a Tuesday phone conversation. "And we were going to shoot this album cover." Buffett had met Goodman at the Earl of Old Town. In the early 1970s, Buffett was an opening act at Richard Harding's Quiet Knight, adjacent to the L tracks on West Belmont Avenue.

Buffett had his first major market success in Chicago. He opened for Dan

Hicks and the Hot Licks, Neil Sedaka and others at the Quiet Knight. “I was loyal to Richard,” Buffett said. “He played me there many times, and I stayed when I started getting a following. That’s how it was then.”

But some things never change.

The night before the shoot Goodman’s beloved Cubs were waxed 12-2 by the New York Mets, with washed-up Cubs relief pitcher Tom Phoebus as the main victim.

Sometimes you just have to laugh.

The longer you study O’Sullivan’s photos, the more you wonder if there was a sly and humorous 1970s Chicago style of songwriting. Goodman was funny and made a point in his stage show never to linger in one mood. Prine has rapier wit and is a gifted storyteller. Eddie Holstein is wry. His brother Fred, who died in 2004, was the most pensive of the group, as the photograph depicts. Fred Holstein does not seem to be in on the joke going around the kitchen table.

Buffett was the outsider who was born in Pascagoula, Miss.

“It is a Chicago style not necessarily identified with the city,” Buffett explained. “There were just so many good people doing solo acoustic guitar shows. The Holstein brothers, Bonnie Koloc, Mike Smith. And those singer-songwriters also had to be comedians and emcees. I had to do that in my early New Orleans days. Stephen Stills and [Eric] Clapton were the guitar players I idolized. My natural strength seemed to lie in the ability to bulls--- on stage. I had that talk with myself. I thought, ‘It’ll take a lot of hard work and practice, so if I’m successful, I can hire a good guitar player.’ After New Orleans, when I got to Chicago I worked places that were minor league ballparks, the Steak & Ale circuit. So meeting all those people in Chicago was a renaissance for me.

“They were great storytellers, bulls--- artists on stage and performers. I gravitated toward that. I found my place.”

Goodman wanted Foster to capture the rustic look of the 1970 cover of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young’s “Deja Vu.”

“A down-home feeling,” Foster said Wednesday from his studio barn on the wetlands of Rochester, Ind. “These were his friends. John, Ed, Fred and everybody. He had Nancy [Goodman’s wife] cook a big roast. When I got there

Earl had brought in a couple of ‘Texas fifths’ [gallon jugs of whiskey]. Steve was picky on what had to be done. Michael gave me complete freedom. He let me stage everything, and I’d look through the camera and OK it. You don’t find that very often, especially with Michael and the photojournalist he was. I liked everything he did.

“I may have been his first commercial job. I had done a lot of commercial work, but I had never done a record that had Bob Dylan and David Bromberg on it.” (Also tenor saxophonist David “Fathead” Newman).

Buffett actually was shy about participating in the photo session.

“I didn’t know who he was,” said Foster, 70. “And today I have a lot of friends who are real Parrotheads. When I walked in, there was John, Earl and this guy wearing a ripped T-shirt. I figured he was a neighborhood friend. Buffett never said anything. He just stood in the back. Michael didn’t know him. In fact they never introduced us. I think Goodman was behind all that. It became a good ol’ boy, down-home event.”

The characters in the photo are ahead of today’s hipster quotient with cans of Pabst Blue Ribbon and Schlitz beer in the foreground.

“I drank snifters of cognac,” Pionke said from his pad in Pullman.

Buffett said, “PBR’s? That was Earl’s influence. It was either cheap or happening, I can’t remember.”

Pionke recalled, “Michael was a real good photographer. All the folk people really liked him. He was a good Irishman. I spent a lot of time in that apartment. Stevie would hold his Christmas parties there. I’d give Steve \$300 and they’d get the food. I’d bring the cognac and wine. I never bothered bringing the beer. Go to the corner and get it. We’d talk about whatever the musicians wanted to talk about: themselves. Then the guys would pull out their guitars and we had a hootenanny. It was wonderful.”

Pionke’s 4 o’clock license at the Earl was equally wonderful for performers closing other Chicago clubs.

“The Earl had the best Chicago acoustic folk guys,” Buffett recalled. “The Quiet Knight was a bigger venue [Bruce Springsteen and Tom Waits played there] but the Earl was the late-night place to be.” Pionke said, “Performers were hungry, and they’d come in for our cheeseburgers and a couple of beers. And

the stage at the Earl from 2:30 until 4 in the morning was a place where you could play anything you want. Jimmy would also cash his checks from Richard Harding.”

Pionke, 76, never would have pegged Buffett for superstar status.

“He looked like a natural born shit kicker to me,” Pionke said with a gritty South Side laugh. “And a con artist. He was so smooth. I’d put him in my class where you’re amongst the elite. Steve befriended Jimmy right away. They were good pals.”

The Goodman-Buffett friendship lasted until the singer-songwriter’s death from leukemia on Sept. 20, 1984. Buffett sang “The Star-Spangled Banner” for his friend on Oct. 2 in the first game of the 1984 divisional playoffs at Wrigley Field.

“Not long after that photo was taken I had finished my Chicago run and was heading to Denver,” Buffett recalled. “We always took the train. I was staying on Steve’s sofa and he took me to Union Station. The night before I had gotten drunk and spent most of my money. I didn’t have money to buy a train ticket. Goodman was having a lot more success than I was. People were recording his songs. I said, ‘I need to borrow some money, I’ll give it back to you when I get out there.’ Without hesitation he lent me \$100, \$200.

“That’s the kind of friend he was.”