

CITYLIGHTS

This week's most intriguing events:

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FRIDAY

Back in the early '70s, a group of singer-songwriters dubbed as the "new Dylans" not only had to contend with being unfairly compared to the Greatest of All Time, but also had to deal with the curse of the novelty song. John Prine could break our hearts a thousand different ways, but nothing got the crowd gassed up like another rendition of the doobie ditty "Illegal Smile." Loudon Wainwright III may have given the world many self-effacing folk songs and two musical offspring, but "Dead Skunk" is his only tune to ever get much airplay. Todd Snider can relate. He is a prime example of what we might call the "sons of the new Dylans," though he is as equally influenced by Jerry Jeff Walker, Billy Joe Shaver, and other three-named Texas troubadours. In fact, Snider's last four records, including the latest and best one, *East Nashville Skyline*, have all been released on Prine's Oh Boy label. Snider scored a minor radio hit with 1994's "Talkin' Seattle Grunge Rock Blues," a jokey number that seemed to have missed its mark by a couple of years. Snider, like Prine and Wainwright, responded to novelty marginalization by finding a niche market and plugging away, through "Seven managers, five labels/A thousand picks and patch cables/Three vans, a band, a buncha guitar stands/And cans and cans and cans of beer/And bottles of booze, and bags of pot/And a thousand other things I forgot." He puts on a hell of a live show, and if you're lucky, maybe he'll sing the red-state-baitin' "Conservative Christian, Right-Wing Republican, Straight, White, American Males." It's a damn funny song. **Todd Snider & the Nervous Wrecks** play with Steven Kellogg & the Sixers at 9 p.m. Friday, May 27, at the State Theatre, 220 N. Washington St., Falls Church. \$18. (703) 237-0300. (David Dunlap Jr.)