

Obituaries

Jack Hardy

John S. 'Jack' Hardy was born November 23, 1947 in South Bend, Indiana. He passed away in New York on March 11, 2011 following a short battle with lung cancer. His father, Gordon, is past dean of students at Juilliard (New York), and former president of Aspen Music Festival (Colorado). While attending Pomfret School (Connecticut), aged fourteen, Jack penned his first song. Almost chronologically, Jack quoted his early musical influences as: 'Everly Brothers, Ian and Sylvia, the Kingston Trio, Gordon Lightfoot, the Beatles, Paul Seibel, Hank Williams and later, Bob Dylan.'

A music major at University of Hartford, Connecticut, Hardy transferred to the English Department and graduated with a literature degree and the Creative Writing Award. While attending Hartford, Jack studied opera with Hungarian, Elmer Nagi—'I learned about being onstage from him.' As editor of the student newspaper, the News-Liberated Press, circa 1968 Hardy was arrested, convicted and fined \$50 for libelling President Nixon, when a lewd cartoon was published. The conviction was later quashed. During his Hartford years, Jack played music with the group Some Dead Bears.

Jack began making home recordings during the mid-1960s, often harmonising with older brother, Gordon Jr. His brother passed away in 1968. In late 1970 Jack recorded his self-titled debut album at Plaza Sound Studio, part of New York City's Radio City Music Hall, and self-released it the following year. Based in Aspen for a time he performed in local bars, took horseback trips into the backwoods including one with the late Townes Van Zandt. Circa 1973 double booked for a college gig, Hardy met Maggie and Terre Roche. Captivated, Jack followed them to New York where he found exactly what he had been seeking—a community of similarly and seriously minded songwriters. The following year, Hardy made demo recordings for CBS.

In 1975 Hardy moved into a shoe-horn apartment on West Houston Street, Greenwich Village. A regular Folk City performer, Hardy was practically expunged from Robbie Woliver's venue history, Bringing it all Back Home (1986). Decades ahead of his contemporaries Hardy founded his own label, Great Divide Records, and released a sophomore collection THE MIRROR OF MY MADNESS (1976). The Songwriters Exchange, a folk music collective of which Jack became a leading light, began meeting early the following year at the English Pub. They relocated to Robin Hirsch's Cornelia Street Café that December, and seven years later became a permanent Monday night, pasta dinner with songs, fixture at Jack's apartment. The rule—songs performed were less than seven days old. Finger clicking indicated appreciation.

An avaricious student of poet W. B. Yeats, in 1977 Hardy discovered Irish bard, Clarence Mangan (1803-1849). Hardy lived on the west coast of Ireland for a time researching Yeats' and Mangan's work. Robert Graves (1895-1985) also greatly influenced Hardy. Jack's compositions through the 1980s and onward displayed discernible Celtic influences, lyrically and musically. In late September 1981 Angela Page persuaded Joseph Zbeda, owner of the MacDougal Street restaurant the Speakeasy, to let her use his back room as a music venue. Under Hardy's direction the venue later became part of the Musician's Co-

Jack Hardy "shuts up and sings" – Ballad Tree, Kerville Folk Festival, Thursday 27th May 2010. ©Arthur Wood



operative remaining open until 1989. Established in late 1981 by Jack Hardy and Brian Rose, the Co-operative acted as a focal point for the Village's acoustic musicians. Initially The CoOp, a name suggested by the late Dave Van Ronk, the organisation evolved into Fast Folk Musical Magazine. Between February 1982 and June 1997, the CoOp/Fast Folk published nearly one hundred magazines each with accompanying vinyl or CD album (http://www.folklib.net/ff/ff_coop.shtml). In his own name, Jack contributed over two-dozen songs.

Fast Folk's January 1984 show at the now defunct Bottom Line venue became an annual event, memorialised on the aforementioned album releases. Initially featuring New York and East Coast musicians, Fast Folk recordings eventually drew performers from across North America. Hardy edited Fast Folk's magazine from February 1982 through March 1986, and June 1992 to October 1996. Following the Speakeasy's demise, Hardy found a performance space in the Tribeca. The seventy-four seat Fast Folk Café doubled as the magazine's headquarters. Concerts ended there during 1999.

Fast Folk's archive of publications, recordings and memorabilia was, in May 1999, presented to Washington D.C. based Smithsonian Folkways Recordings. Fast Folk recorded over two-hundred musicians and captured some thirteen-hundred songs—many became major label recording artists. Through the late 1970s, the CoOp/Fast Folk years, and into the new millennium Great Divide continued releasing Jack's solo recordings—eighteen titles in all. Circa 1989 the Swiss Brambus label began issuing Jack's albums allowing him to tour Europe. Also a dramatist, titles of Hardy's performed works included THE BLUE GARDEN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT.

MAVERICK *Obituaries*

Ferlin Husky

Flamboyant country music entertainer Ferlin Husky passed away on March 17 at his daughter's home in Westmoreland, Tennessee. He had been in the Critical Care unit of a Nashville-area hospital where he had been under intensive care for several days. He was 85 and suffered from congestive heart failure.

The Country Music Hall of Famer helped usher in the pop-leaning Nashville Sound era when his 1957 million-seller *Gone*, became one of the first pop-country crossover hits. A dynamic stage performer, Ferlin also starred in Hollywood films, was a television host and also a comedy star with his comedic alter ego, Simon Crum. But for country music fans it was his lengthy career as a country singer that saw him notch up such classic hits as *A Dear John Letter* (a 1953 chart-topping duet with Kean Shepard), *I Feel Better All Over*, *A Fallen Star*, *Wings of A Dove*, *Timbe I'm Falling*, *Once, Just For You*, *Heavenly Sunshine*, *Rosie Cries A Lot* and *Freckles And Polliwog Days*.

He was born Ferlin Eugene Husky on December 3, 1925, on a farm in Cantwell, Missouri. His mother named him Furland, but his name was misspelled on his birth certificate. He grew up on a farm near Flat River and attended school as a youngster in Irondale. Very keen on music, he learned the basics of guitar from an uncle. After dropping out of high school, he moved to St. Louis, where he worked as a truck driver and steel mill worker while performing in honky tonks at night. During the Second World War he served in the United States Merchant Navy for five years, entertaining troops on transport ships. It was at this time that he developed the Simon Crum character as it evolved from stories he told about a Missouri neighbour named Simon Crump. The ship that he served on was involved in the D-Day invasion at Cherbourg.

After the war, Husky continued to develop the Crum character while working as a disc jockey in Missouri and then Bakersfield, California in the late 1940s. In 1948 he began using the name Terry Preston at the suggestion of Smiley Burnett, who said that Ferlin Husky would never work on a marquee. In 1950 he began his recording for the Four Star label under the name Terry Preston without too much success. Those early singles were heard by Southern California country impresario Cliffie Stone, who helped Ferlin garner a recording contract with Capitol. After five singles, Terry Preston decided to revert back to his real name of Ferlin Husky, and in 1953 he and Jean Shepard scored a number one country duet with *A Dear John Letter*. As Shepard was not yet 21, her parents had to assign guardianship to Husky so Shepard could tour with him across state lines.

The follow-up *Forgive Me John*, was also a hit for the duet pair, but from then on the two singers went their separate ways, both creating lengthy careers for themselves. In 1955, Husky had solo hits with *I Feel Better All Over (More Than Anywhere's Else)* coupled with *Little Tom* and *I'll Baby Sit With You*. As Simon Crum, he signed a separate contract with Capitol Records and began releasing records, scoring hits with the *Cuzz Yore So Sweet* and 1959's *Country Music is Here to Stay*.

Throughout his career, the odd-talking 'Simon' with his drawing, high-pitched voice, was featured during stage performances. A typical Ferlin Husky concert found Mr. Husky performing as Crum, offering spot-on impersonations of other



In the FF#801 Editorial Jack wrote: 'There is absolutely no reason to continue Fast Folk...' Low cost digital recording technology was now within every musician's grasp—Fast Folk had served its purpose allowing young, inexperienced musicians to make their first recordings. In February 1997, at the Birchmere, Hardy was presented with the Kate Wolf Memorial Award for his contributions to folk music. In 1998 Prime CD issued a ten CD retrospective, *THE COLLECTED WORKS OF JACK HARDY*. An obscure folk musician who had issued a box set justifiably became Jack's bragging right. In 1999 he ventured to the southern hemisphere and toured South Africa.

Hardy's songs have been covered by the late Dave Van Ronk, Suzanne Vega, the Roches, Lucy Kaplansky, Anne Hills and Cindy Mangsen. Jack's younger brother, bass player and executive chef, Jeff, perished on 9/11. The Village Dudes, a quartet composed of Rod MacDonald, Jack Hardy, David Massengill and Frank Christian, made their concert debut at the Outpost in the Burbs during November 2004. Their planned album never reached fruition. Teamed with long-time associate David Massengill, the Folk Brothers debuted with *PARTNERS IN CRIME* (2008)—Jack's only non-solo release. *RYE GRASS* (2009) was Hardy's most recent solo outing.

Jack's backroom contribution in keeping the flame of American folk music alive, and reviving the genre in Greenwich Village is incalculable. Hopefully, history will also judge him to be a great American songwriter. His lifelong delight lay in hearing new songs, and if touched would compliment/encourage the singer. Bored by inane song circle chitchat, his catchphrase was: 'Shut up and sing the song.' Twice married and divorced Mr. Hardy, is survived by son Malcolm, three daughters Morgan, Miranda and Eva, two grandchildren, his parents, brother Christopher and sister Susan Suechting.

P.S. The S. in Jack's given name stood for Studebaker, but that's a whole other story. **Arthur Wood**