



## Various **“One A Winter’s Night [Expanded]”** Rounder/Philo Records

The old maxim runs *“If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”* As for the history lesson, some fifteen years ago Christine Lavin put together a twenty-one song cassette tape titled, **“On A Winter’s Night,”** selling it at her concerts during the closing months of 1989 [*“Anyone out there got a copy???”*]. The following year, the Rhode Island based label North Star issued a fifteen-song CD edition, which in 1994 was reissued track-for-track by Rounder/Philo. A decade on, and in the wake of the annual, songwriter winter tours inspired by this collection - tours that have featured Lavin, David Wilcox, John Gorka, Patty Larkin, Cliff Eberhardt and Cheryl Wheeler and more, as participants - Rounder/Philo, in association with Christine Lavin, has released the redux edition. Or have they.....?

While Cliff Eberhardt was a regular participant in the road tours, he didn’t feature on the original CD, and deservedly appears on this revision. Rounder/Philo and Christine *the compiler*, have upped the head count to twenty tracks on this expanded edition. The lyrical undercurrent of **“One A Winter’s Night [Expanded]”** has always been to focus upon the coldest period of the year, or at least embraces the spirit of that treacherously beautiful season. In terms of content, one previous contributor Julie Gold has been dropped, so that gives us six new contributors. That said, the songs performed by a quintet of the original performers have altered, while – yes, isn’t arithmetic wonderful? – nine tracks have remained exactly the same.....except that, in at least one instance, it’s a new recording. Will this insanity never end.....?

The inner front page of the sixteen-page liner booklet contains the simple but effective memorial, *“This album is dedicated to Dave Van Ronk,”* while inside the closing page, and ever the warm, sharing and caring Auntie Christine that she has always been, Lavin includes a recipe for Hot Cider [For A Winter’s Night] and closes the accompanying narrative, perfectly, with *“Any way you make it, drink a toast to Dave Van Ronk.”* In addition to the latter, Dave is one of the *new [older] faces* on this edition and performs his “Another Time & Place.” Maybe it’s because you don’t expect a man of huge physical stature [and presence] is capable of penning a tender love song, yet Van Ronk’s contribution is filled with honesty and warmth.

On the opening track, “Secret Gardens,” Judy Collins takes the listener on an uplifting seasonal journey through her family tree by way of visiting the places those ancestors once called *home*. This version hails from her CD/songbook/book collection **“Voices”** [1995] [\*], while Lynn Miles’ portrait of a cold Canadian winter evening, “Last Night,” the second new contribution, appeared on her classic **“Slightly Haunted”** [1996]. On this collection, Patty Larkin’s “Winter Wind” is the first of the *as was* participants. As for Cheryl Wheeler, “Quarter Moon” is replaced by “The Storm” and the latter ostensibly portrays a coastal town besieged by the elements and a raging white capped, icy cold sea. That said, there’s fleeting mention of *“Blowing home, heavy hearts again.”* Philadelphia based wife and husband, and compilation newcomers, Annie Bauerlein [vocal] and Chip Mergott [piano] deliver a sweet and atmospheric reading of Annie’s recollection of youth and innocence “Remember When We Were Just Good Friends.” Another *new, more mature contributor* is Cliff Eberhardt, a time-served picker in the folk music trenches. “Your Face,” a love song, appeared on Cliff’s debut album **“The Long Road”** back in 1990. Kenny White has been Cheryl Wheeler’s *on the road* keyboard player for a couple of years and he’s joined by Shawn Colvin for “In Your Hands,” a cut from his sophomore album **“Uninvited Guest”**

[2001] that finds the protagonists recalling the evolution of their love for each other, over a period of years.

As for the remainder of the *old guard* [ie. same vocalist, same song] - the piano on Sally Fingerett's "Wild Berries" has always sounded to me like a wild, burbling mountain stream, while subjectively her contribution is a road song that merges contemplations on freedom with natural world images. There's the uplifting "Rising In Love" from David Roth, Bill Morrissey [also assisted vocally by Colvin] wends his way through "She's That Kind Of Mystery," while Christine Lavin delivers a new recording of "The Kind Of Love You Never Recover From," a tale of four lives and the possibilities of "*what might have been.*" Lucy Kaplansky has ascended in the public's perception during the past decade [#], and now receives a joint credit with Hugh Blumenfeld on his self explanatory, "Let Me Fall In Love Before The Spring Comes." Once upon a time, the segue of David Wilcox's seasonal "Frozen In The Snow" and Willie Nininger's album title cut opened this collection. On this *re-collection* they precede what has always been, and remains, the closing cut, "Stars." It's performed by the *Voices [of Winter] Trio* - Priscilla Herdman, Anne Hills and Cindy Mangsen, aided by Cindy's husband, Steve Gillette. At just under two minutes duration it's the shortest track, and the only cover song, penned by the late Jan Harmon. The quartet's choral styled reading perfectly captures this portrait of a twinkling firmament, and – at least in my mind – it also conjures up images of a sparkling winter landscape.

In terms of the *old guard with something new to say* [ie. same vocalist, new song], "I Saw A Stranger With Your Hair" may now be vintage John Gorka, but it remains one of his finest love songs – maybe one of the finest ever? Lucy Kaplansky included Robin Batteau's "Lancelot's Tune [Guinevere]" on her eponymous debut and, here, with his long-time musical associate David Buskin, the pair deliver a string drenched reading of this historic tale of love and deceit. In my book, Megan McDonough owns one of the finest singing voices, bar none – at full title she has the power to shatter pure crystal – and here, totally in control, she delivers the silky smooth "A Lesson In Every Goodbye." Hailing from Maine, David Mallett's "April" has been replaced by "Here We Go." While founded upon a good-time sounding melody, lyrically it finds a mature couple reflecting upon the state of their relationship.

I'll offer one final, simple comment - this remains one of the most perfect [folk music] compilations ever to be released, and with new vintage added to what was an already heady and intoxicating mix, if you don't own any of its predecessors go out and buy "**One A Winter's Night [Expanded]**" today. Don't even hesitate for one second. As for Christine Lavin, bless you for the original concept as well as this fresh, sparking new edition.

**Note.**

[\*] – In terms of vintage, the song first appeared on Collins' "**True Stories And Other Dreams**" [1973].

[#] – Lucy's debut album "**The Tide**" was a Red House release, circa 1994.

Folkwax Rating 9 out of 10

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