

# KERRVILLE KRONIKLE

No.26

11th. Year

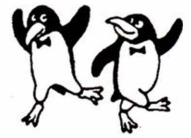


Photo : Kerrville Kronikle Katalogue



Greg Trooper – Hare & Hounds, High Street, Kings Heath, Birmingham – 19<sup>th</sup> April 1999

## Greg Trooper



Keith Greeninger/Jamie Byrd & Steve Fisher/Kate Campbell/Terry Lee Hale/Jimmy LaFave/Janis Ian/Blaze Foley Tribute/Kat Eggleston/Cheryl Wheeler/David Olney/Chuck Pyle/Kelly Willis/"Respond" Compilation/Rick Lee/Tom Russell/Lucy Kaplansky/The Trio – Emmylou, Linda & Dolly/John McCutcheon/"Song of the Hills" – Various/Toni Price/Butch Hancock/Clive Gregson/Rosie Flores/The Gourds/Tom Pacheco/Bill Morrissey/Plainsong/Carrie Newcomer/Alison Krauss/Cathy Bonner/Ian Tyson/Erica Wheeler/Dave Moore/Rose Polenzani/Linda Ronstadt & Emmylou Harris/Lyle Lovett/Gram Parsons Tribute/Terry Clarke. Michael Messer & Jesse Taylor/Hoyt Axton/Terence Boylan/John Prine/Catie Curtis/Jeff Talmadge/Sam Boordman/Beth Lodge-Rigal/Utah Phillips/Troy Young Campbell/Wiggins Sisters/Mary Chapin Carpenter/Rod MacDonald/Michael Weston Young/Judy Collins/Patty Larkin/Michael McNevin/Julie Miller/

Kerrville "Live Highlights" / Kerrville - The 28<sup>th</sup> Annual New Folk Concerts

featuring Mark Erelli, Suzanne Buirgy, Ray Bonneville, Jeff Berkley, Diane Zeigler and Mitch Barrett

Scotland 1998/Nova Scotia 2000

Kerrville-kompacts,  
kassettes & other  
koincidences.



## Kerrville-kompacts, kassettes & other koincidences.

Keith Greeninger "Wind River Crossing" Wind River Music [Import]

It was 6.00pm on Sunday 30th May 1999 at the Quiet Valley Ranch in the West Texas Hill Country when the four-piece ensemble led by Keith Greeninger took the stage. One hour later – the verdict – I was a helplessly addicted to the music I had just heard. Another of those *memorable musical moments* had been implanted in this heart – for as long as it dares to beat. It's amazing how a concert grand piano, accordion, double bass, acoustic guitars, resonator guitar and flute can invest what are already stunning tunes, about life, love [lost and won] and death, with such vibrancy. Come to think of it, Californian musicians have been the source of the most interesting music on my most recent visits to the Kerrville Folk Festival. Back in '92 it was Michael McNevin, '96 provided an introduction to Joel Rafael. At the threshold of the next millennium, Keith Greeninger, a 1997 Kerrville New Folk winner, did it.....and how. Over the ensuing months I've played this 1997 album *ad infinitum*. Some folk around here would probably offer, "*ad nauseam*." Based on the foregoing act of repetition, "**Wind River Crossing**" has ascended to my personal, and rather select, Library of Recorded Fame. On a number of tracks there's a hint of Jackson Browne's music, principally from his fruitful, collaborative period with [David] Lindley. No copyist, Greeninger leavens his melodies with a dash of acoustic blues and a considerable measure of the rhythms from the land of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua et al. Vocally, where necessary, there's a throaty roughness to Greeninger's delivery or a heartrending ache that perfectly captures the, often, anguished situations painted by his words. Clocking in at just over 64 minutes duration, the only cover on this set is the Robert Hunter/Jerry Garcia collaboration "Broke Down Palace." Among the supporting players enlisted by Greeninger are Flaco Jimenez [accordion], Pete "Coke" Escovedo [percussion] and Martin Simpson [guitar]. In "Mercy of the San Joaquin" Maria and the unnamed narrator are fruit pickers in the fields of California's San Joaquin Valley, who, unknown to her parents, partake in late night trysts. Their desperate plight is further magnified by the lovers' seemingly unattainable dream of making sufficient money to allow them to return to their homeland, Mexico. Elsewhere there's the delightful "Josephina," the thoughtful hymn to mother earth "My Religion," and "Catch A Glimpse," a call to stop, unite and *find a new way* to ensure the survival of mankind on this planet. Quite frankly, all the way from the gentle opening, title cut through to the eleven minute closer "North to Southeast," "**Wind River Crossing**" is a musical journey of truly epic and thoughtful proportions. Enrich your life today.....available from **Wind River Music, P.O. Box 2876, Aptos, California 95001, U.S.A.**

Jamie Byrd & Steve Fisher "**The Looking Glass**" Roosterdog Records [Import]

This recording was available last year as a cassette. Now it's available as a CD, with the same contents – six songs each by Fisher and Byrd. Rare as they are, it's always a pleasure when Steve Fisher releases something new. Compositions such as "Born of Grace," "The Mission Trail" and "The Time is Now," furnish irrefutable evidence that

Steve is an existential spirit whose words [and melodies] reflect on cherished recollections and minor vignettes recalled from his life journey. It's hard to decipher how much of an inspiration each of the participants have been to the other's writing. I'd surmise that it is immense. Byrd's lyrical approach is that of a conversational storyteller, and there's little doubt that the unnamed *hero* in her "Minuteman Man Café" is Steve Fisher. Elsewhere, her heroine "Carolina Mae" recalls a stolen moment of youthful pleasure at sixteen and a child that she never saw grow to full bloom. Reflecting, on her role in the Civil War and subsequent events, some thirty years later, Carolina Mae muses "*Did they let you keep my photograph ?*" As for Fisher's "Down Here," the special place where *water tastes like wine and clocks run slow all the time*, could be Kerrville's, Quiet Valley Ranch.....Essential undersells this recording, be it Byrd or Fisher. And the mailing address **The Byrdhouse, 634 San Bruno Avenue, Suite A, San Francisco 94107, U.S.A or Waterbug, U.S.A.**

Kate Campbell "**Rosaryville**" Compass [Import]

The title is only the tip of the iceberg, as far as religious references on this album are concerned. The liner dedication by this preacher's daughter runs to "*for all the mary's in my life*." From the outset I should tell you that this album is *currently* the prime contender for my album of the year. The title track opens the album, and appears to hint at a temporary retreat from the daily routine of life. What can we read into the credit in the liner for the Rosaryville Spirit Life Center in Ponchatoula, Los Angeles ? Elsewhere the spiritual stories told and the pictures painted are legion. Here's just a few. In "Rosa's Coronas," a cigar maker in Castro's Cuba, dreams of her daughter and grandchild who took "*a boat ninety miles from Havana to escape the only life I've known*." As she rolls cigars Rosa gently ponders whether her creations will end up in the "*hands of kings and presidents*," and if she should defy her employer and attend the local parade – after all, the Holy Father from Rome is due to be there. The foregoing is far from deep or intricate, yet it perfectly captures Rosa's devotional innocence – in her religion and her other [almost] genetic ethic, work. The image of "*the bowling ball rosary in the yard*" in "Heart of Hearts" and the reaction of the people who notice it as they pass it by, is a work of rare beauty and observation. Written for Kate's mother, "Rosemary" focuses on the fact that her mum's singing voice sounds like Rosemary Clooney. The penultimate cut, and hymn like "Look Away," tells of the destruction of a building with "*sixteen stately doric columns*" after it is struck by lightning. Campbell draws a parallel with the burning of buildings during that troubled time when life [and death] in the south was determined by colour – black and white. As the twentieth century draws to a close, Campbell's last recording of the millennium is a stunning piece of work in concept and execution. And she is one of the finest songwriting discoveries of this gently ebbing decade. Available in your local record store now.

Terry Lee Hale and the Blind Doctors "**Old Hand**" Glitterhouse [Import]

Recorded in Prague during the autumn of last year, Hale is supported throughout "**Old Hand**" by the five piece, Blind Doctors. The opening trio of songs, come across as a tilt at anthem rock, compared to Terry Lee's normally electric singer/songwriter fare. The back-beat eases by a few notches on the appropriately titled "Fading Anger," while there are shades of the melody of Oldfield's "Tubular Bells"



# Greg Trooper

*The interview with Greg Trooper took place in one of the upstairs rooms of the Hare & Hounds, High Street, Kings Heath, Birmingham on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April 1999. Subsequent additions were made by telephone on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> August 1999. Thanks to Pat Tynan at Koch International for making all the arrangements, and also to Brian Taylor and Monty Hitchcock at Hitchcock Management in Nashville, Tennessee.*

**Where do we begin. New Jersey.**

Well that's where I started, so we might as well start there.

**To get a historical feel, where and when.**

1956 was the year and Neptune, New Jersey was where the hospital was. I lived and grew up in Little Silver and went to High School in Redbank, New Jersey. That's in northern New Jersey, about forty miles from New York City. I lived there until I was seventeen or eighteen years of age. Spent a lot of time going into the city, to folk clubs and shows - everything from Artie and Happy Traum to Van Morrison. The Band was playing in those days. Saw Dylan play at the Garden, at the Bangladesh concert - that was the first time I ever saw Dylan and it blew my mind. Saw The Beatles play at Shea Stadium.

**With Sounds Incorporated and Barry and the Remains.**

That was the 1965 tour, this was 1966. It was The Cyrkle and Bobby Hebb who supported them. My father worked for a radio station that was one of the sponsors, so he got tickets thrown at him. He took my brother and I. I was only ten and it was great.

**You've just mentioned your father, was there a lot of music in the Trooper household because of his work.**

Probably more from my mother's side. My father was Jewish and from Brooklyn. He was a graphic artist. My mother was from Pennsylvania and came from an Irish, German Catholic background. Her mom played organ in church, and my mother sang a bit. It probably came more from that end of things - as far as being a little kid. Once I was a little older - I used to listen to cowboy music and stuff like that.

**On the radio or records.**

That was on records. Once I was old enough to be in the back seat of the car while the radio was on - radio in the sixties was phenomenal in the States. It was awesome and nothing like it is today. It was all R&B, Motown, Stones and Beatles - a great way to learn all about music. They didn't have a lot of country music on there. I got interested in country music as I got older. I was attracted to singer/songwriters in the

seventies and their influence from a country music angle caught my interest. Then I started to get into that in a big way.

**When did you first pick up an instrument.**

I probably started playing guitar when I was about fourteen or fifteen - something like that.



Photo : Kerville Kronikle Katalogue

**Greg Trooper, Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath - 19/04/99**

**This was with friends in school.**

Yeah. There was a small group of friends - once I got into High School - there was a handful of us that listened to the same kind of music. We were all learning guitar and trying to figure out the songs. We got deep into Dylan. In the seventies, we were into Loudon Wainwright, Randy Newman, John Prine and Steve Goodman. Bonnie Raitt and those people.

**Did you have a band.**

I did. I had a band, probably when I was around eighteen. I started the band, went across the country, and then moved out west to Kansas. I also had a band out there that was a lot of fun. Moved down to Texas, but I was more of a solo artist down there. The initial thing in Kansas was me and another guy - more of an acoustic thing. I started a band a few years later, in Kansas, called the Eleventh Street Rhythm Method - for the lack of a better name. We did a lot of Van Morrison songs and things like that. Before that, in



Jersey, we had like more of a Gram Parsons kind of influenced country rock/Austin, Texas influenced group called the Ravioli Brothers. That was me, two brothers named Jim Paschetto on guitar and Tom Paschetto on drums – actually their brother George played with us, on keyboards. The bass player was Richard Scott. We did a few gigs, but we probably rehearsed more than we gigged. We only did cover songs plus a lot of Texas music. It occurs to me that we were together every day over a whole summer, and it probably lasted for a year. After that year, we would have a reunion every year [Laughs]. Jim Paschetto was the guitar player in the Eleventh Street Rhythm Method. That band lasted for a good year or two.

***Did you do any recordings with those bands.***

Nah, that was just kid rock.

***Why did you move to Austin.***

I was drawn there by artists I was listening to – Townes was down there, and we were all big Townes Van Zandt fans. Him and Guy Clark and Jerry Jeff Walker were holding court down there. Me and Richard Scott played as a duo down there. We performed as Trooper and Scott – sounds like a boy and a dog act. That was a big – at that time it really was a big deal to be down there – but I ended up back in Kansas.

***I believe this was in a place called Lawrence, where you went to college.***

I went to college at the University of Kansas for a couple of years, and it was after that – that was when I really started writing my own songs. After a couple of years of college, I had *ants in my pants* – I couldn't stand it any longer – I wanted to move more into a situation where I was doing music professionally, so I moved back to New York. That's where I stayed for the next fifteen years.

***What did you study in college.***

Writing. I took a couple of music classes. I was a music-major to start with, and then kind of went into more of an English writing thing. Like I said, I did two years and I got too antsy and had to leave.

***Once you were in New York, did you only work as a singer/songwriter.***

I started out as singer/songwriter hitting the clubs downtown. Worked my way in. Met musicians and started putting bands together. That developed into having a real steady band, the Greg Trooper Band. We played a lot, and we were a rocking little group. It was myself, Larry Campbell was in that band – he is now with Dylan. We had a drummer named Walter Thompson, and the bass player was Greg Shirley.

Greg has moved to Nashville, where I am now, and is still playing with me. We had a great time. We made one record together and toured in Scandinavia. The record was called, **"We Won't Dance"** and basically it is impossible to find – I think I have one unopened copy at home.

***I think I have one tape copy at home.***

Do you [Laughs]. That's great.

***That album came out in 1986. But who was Wild Twin Records.***

I was fifty per cent of that company. The other half was the guy who produced it, Carter Cathcart and his partners.

***What was his background.***

He was in a band – I forget their name – they had a band that was part of the CBGB's scene of the late seventies, early eighties. Good band [ED. NOTE. Best I can figure this one out, the band was called the Laughing Dogs]. He kind of got into home producing and stuff. I was introduced to him by The Roches, since they had done some recording work with him [ED. NOTE. Cathcart produced "Another World," the title track of their 1985 Warner Bros. album. He also played keyboards on their 1989 MCA album **"Speak"**]. We produced that record together. He was a very, very talented guy. I don't know what he is doing now – very talented musician and producer. He had a little eight-track studio, and we would bounce it back and forth to do things. It was really a fly by our pants kind of a situation. The record never really came out, like I was hoping it would. It never really lived up to what I was looking for, but it had its moments. That record – Steve Earle got his hands on a copy, and he walked all over Nashville with it and tried to get people to listen to it – he recorded one of the songs on that album – "Little Sister," which I re-recorded on **"Noises in the Hallway."**

***What formats did "We Won't Dance" come out on.***

Just on vinyl.

***What's Greg Shirley's background.***

He grew up in Meridian, Mississippi and him and Steve Forbert were in their first bands together. That was before Steve ever made any records. Greg played with a few different bands around New York as well as mine, and he plays with a few bands in Nashville.

***How did you meet The Roches.***

They were part of that Greenwich Village scene at the time. I got to know their brother David, before I got to know them. David also travels with them and he writes



songs and sings, and produces music. I got to know him and basically met them through him. As big a city as New York is, it was small world.

***I tried to find where Steve had recorded "Little Sister" but couldn't find any reference.***

It's only on a single, and is a very cool kind of collector's item. It's a little canister that the CD comes in, and it's got "Copperhead Road" on there as the lead cut. There are a few other songs, one of them being a live recording of my song [ED. NOTE. Circa 1988, it was also released as a 12" single, and I would guess, also on 7" format. "Little Sister" and "No. 29" were produced by Earle]. In fact the only time I've seen one - this guy was doing merchandise for us up in Scotland - when we went into his apartment, because we were staying there, a copy of it was there on the counter. He didn't know my song was on there. Again, that's not easy to find.

***Did you write much with Larry Campbell during that period. "Play to Win" which opens that album is one of your co-writes.***

That's right, "Play to Win" was me and Larry. There's going to be a song - my album "**Everywhere**," is being re-released by Koch in June. We're putting two extra songs on each record, and one of them is a song called "Too Bad For You," that Larry and I wrote together. You'll be able to tell, because it has great guitar playing. It says on the reissued version of "**Everywhere**" that the song was recorded in 1998, but it was recorded in 1988. That's a typo.

***Were these extra songs all recorded at that time.***

Yeah, we recorded them with Garry Tallent producing, in probably 1988. Something like that. Maybe '89. I'm not sure.

***What inspired the song "Heroes" on your first album.***

Oh man [Whistles]. I think it was vaguely about my old man. My father. I have a great relationship with my old man. I think that it was a song - oh man, you're digging deep here. It was written at a time when I was recognising strengths and weaknesses in my father. Growing up you don't notice that. I don't know that I was trying to be critical - it was more that I was trying to understand his strengths and weaknesses, as they relate to my strengths and weaknesses. He was very hero oriented, I think, my father. Heroes are great to have - I think that can be dangerous for one's own ego. I think he struggled with that somewhat. He's a great guy - a talented artist himself. That song was written with him in mind and I don't think he knows it [Laughs]. I've never really pointed it out to him. I think he suspects it, but we've never really talked about it.

***Maybe it's the sort of thing you don't need to talk about.***

Yeah, that's possible. We're just being guys.

***What about the title song - "We Won't Dance."***

Well - you mean, why was it a title.

***Yeah.***

I remember my drummer giving me a real hard time about that. You know the only reason that was the title, was because we were trying to focus on that song. We felt like that was the strongest song. The producer kept saying, "*You got to focus on this one.*" Meanwhile, we probably could have produced it and recorded it even better. Nonetheless, that song ended up being recorded by Vince Gill so we were probably on to something. I've seen more income turned over from that song, than any other song in my career.

***Your songs were published at that time by Door No. 1 Music.***

Door No. 1 was a company that I was signed to - they were a Polygram company. My company was Seven Long Days. I had a partner called Earl Shuman who is one of the greatest people of all time. My dearest friend. He's 75 or 76 years old. He wrote "Hey There, Lonely Girl," and he wrote "Seven Lonely Days." I have a song called "Long, Long Days." He liked that song very much. We had this little publishing company together. We decided to call it Seven Long Days, by combining the titles of the two songs.

***How did you meet your guitarist Larry Campbell.***

In the scene - the downtown live scene. In fact the drummer - he was a character himself. We were going through different guitar players, using different guys - looking for someone that fitted what I was about. Walter said, "*You've got to listen to this guy, Larry Campbell. He's right up your alley.*" I called him and he said "*Yeah man, I'd love to hear your stuff.*" It just kind of went from there. He was playing with all these people that I knew of, and I was a fan of. It was really right. When he heard the music, it was right up his alley. We're still very close friends to this day.

***What about Ken Blevins.***

He was working with John Hiatt. Hiatt was being managed by Will Botwin, who was managing me, as well. Ken moved up to New York, and we started using him in the studio. It was just a good fit. What Eric Ambel - Roscoe - said about Ken Blevins is "*Man, he's just a musician who happens to sit down.*" He's a very, very talented drummer.

***Apart from Scandinavia, did you go on the road in the U.S.A. with the "We Won't Dance" album.***

Ken wasn't on that record. Abel Dominguez [guitar], Ken Blevins and Greg Shirley played on the



**"Everywhere"** album. It was Larry, Walter Thompson and Greg Shirley that played on the **"We Won't Dance"** record. Abel, Ken and Greg were the Flatirons. Larry played a lot on the **"Everywhere"** record, but he wasn't touring with us at that time. What we did - was we did what we could - we did a bunch of gigs in London with the **"We Won't Dance"** record, but Scandinavia is where we did the most with that record. We only went down the American East coast a little bit. We didn't get much shaking in the States on that record. In London we played at Dingwalls, the George Robey and The Mean Fiddler. We played the Mean Fiddler a couple of times during that era.

***Since you were based in New York, I guess you knew the Five Chinese Brothers.***

Yeah, I know those guys. I met them when they were still called The Special Guests.

***Did you ever work with the Fast Folk people in New York.***

Not very much. A little bit - it was a scene that for some reason, I was never kind of seen as being part of.

***Because you had an electric band.***

At the time I had The Greg Trooper Band and we were more of a Lone Star act. There was a club called the Lone Star. We played the Bottom Line some. At that time, I was really focusing more on having a band than being a solo artist. That's probably why I didn't work much in that scene. Sometimes I look back and say *"I should have been,"* because all those people that were part of that scene are working like crazy right now.

***Although "Everywhere" was the next album to gain a release, "Noises in the Hallway" had already been recorded.***

**"Noises"** was recorded first, except that we re-did **"We Won't Dance"** and I put a couple of new songs that I wrote on there. **"Everywhere"** was recorded second, but released first.

***We'll return to "Noises." In terms of "Everywhere," the copy that I own is on Black Hole Records. Was there also a label called Ripe and Ready involved.***

Yeah. Black Hole was my manager and his partner. They were having a hell of a time getting a record company to sign me. All the record companies in America think I'm just terrific, according to what they tell us. They love me - but oh, to sell Greg Trooper music, would that be difficult? Is that true? - I have no idea - it might just be an excuse. Will Botwin and Ken Levitan decided to create their own label and put it out - we had a deal with HEAR Music but they

never had a really good distribution thing going. They called it Black Hole Records - and I thought *"Thanks a lot guys."* Ripe and Ready is a guy named Mike Dearso. He had a little label with real distribution. After about a year or so of Black Hole looking for distribution and having this thing with HEAR Music, that had run its course, so we went ahead and Mike was interested, so we licensed it to Mike. He got a little further than Black Hole did. That record and **"Noises in the Hallway"** are being reissued by Koch in June.

***Stuart Lerman produced "Everywhere." How did you meet him.***

I started doing my publishing demos in his studio. I was introduced to Stuart by Willie Nile. I met Willie soon after I moved to New York and we wrote some songs together. We became fast friends and we're still very close. Really what **"Everywhere"** was, was all those demos - we kind of picked the songs out of all those demos and brought them back in the studio and fixed them up and mixed them and put it out as a record.

***Why was the band on that album called The Flatirons.***

Like a friend of mine in Brooklyn said, *"It's better than the Tall Skinny Buildings."* There's a building in New York called the Flatiron, because it's shaped like a Flatiron. There are mountains out in Colorado, near Boulder, that they call the Flatirons. There's also a mandolin that they call, the flatiron. There are a lot of different sources that it's derived from. The band wasn't crazy about the name. Apparently there's a new band out now, I think from the North-West, called the Flatirons. I'm sure they have no idea about my band. Apart from which, my band with that name is long over.

***Through the history of popular music, there's been a regular duplication of names. The Highwaymen being a prime example.***

Right. I'm not too worried about it anyway.

***Tell us about your song publishing deals.***

I've been able to keep my foot in the door and stay alive in this business through publishing deals. There are pros and cons to taking them or not taking them, but I had to, because they were offering me enough money where I could keep my career going, and record music and stuff. It was Earl Shuman, who I talked about earlier, who introduced me to CBS Songs in New York and they were the first ones to sign me. After a year there, they said *"We'll keep you on, but we've just bought Tree in Nashville and we think you're more suited there."* From that time on, I was really writing for publishers out of Nashville, although I was living in New York all that time.



***Were you commuting to Nashville.***

Yeah, I would go down there every few months and write and gig. Really became – made a lot of friends and had a lot of relationships down there. I did band gigs and solo gigs down there. In fact, every time I'd go down there on a writing trip, I'd always try to do a gig. I got most of my cuts – which aren't that many – they add up to maybe fifteen, or something like that – during that period. It seemed like there was a nice little buzz about this New Yorker coming down to Nashville.

***When did you get the CBS deal in New York.***

That seems like around 1988. I did three years with them, and then I went over to Polygram with a co-deal and did two years with them. After that I went with someone who had a co-venture with Sony Tree. So I was kind of back with Sony Tree, and that ended two years ago. Since then I haven't had a publishing deal, which has been fine – and I've been happy not doing that, but I'm trying to put a situation together right now since it's been financially worth my while in the past.

***Was 1989 the first time you went to Nashville.***

I'd hitchhiked through there a couple of times before. Drove down there when we were – remember I told you earlier about when I was like seventeen, my friends in Jersey – we had a little crew of guys that liked this kind of music. I remember going down to Nashville and buying a cowboy hat and walking around and going to see some bands. It was '89 when I first went down and started really dealing with songwriting.

***Did you first meet Don Henry in Nashville.***

He was writing for the same publishing company – someone introduced us – we've written some nice songs together actually. He's a very talented guy.

***I know of only one album that he has released. It's a great album.***

Great album. He has just finished a new record, but I don't know whether he has found anybody to put it out. It's great. Very Beatles and Beach Boy oriented, and not what you'd expect from someone out of Nashville.

***Can we talk about some of the tracks on "Everywhere." Was "Ireland" written because you'd been there.***

Never been there when I wrote it. I've been there since. A lot since, actually. Like I say when I introduce the song onstage, "This song is called "Ireland," and it's about a girl from Brooklyn who I'm now married to."

***I thought that was the connection. The next track on the album you co-wrote with -***

Claire Mullally. She was in bands as a singer, when she was younger. Post high school and in her college years, she was in a local band in New York. She went to college and studied acting. She also got a law degree after a time. She's my editor, in a way, because I'll sit around and write songs and she'll come in – I'll go "Listen to this," and she'll go "That's terrible. You've got to do this. You've got to do that. Call me when you're ready."

***When did you meet Claire.***

When I moved to New York and started a band – I met Claire probably about '82 or '83. We were just hanging out, she really wasn't part of the band or anything. It wasn't for quite a while of her being around, that we started going together. She has sung on all my records. I think she wrote a few things when she was in that other band, although they were more of a cover band as I understand it. They did do some originals and she was involved in some of the writing.

***Then we get to "Noises in the Hallway." How did you meet Gary Tallent. Was it because of your New Jersey connections.***

You would think. The first time I met Gary – I won this award in New York after my 1986 record. It was a New York Music Award and I won the Best New Male Vocalist category in 1987. I went up and received the award from Gary. He had heard my record and we sort of got together – at least, he came back into my life when he spoke to Steve Earle and my name came up. Steve said "Have you heard this record by Greg Trooper," and Gary said "You know I have." They got talking about me and they were both in touch with me and were thinking about doing a project. The three of us. Steve got too busy, so Gary and I decided to start working on the project together. We worked a lot in those days – we actually went down to Nashville, a year or two after that and recorded the lion's share of "Noises in the Hallway." Gary went ahead and moved down to Nashville and I stayed up in New York. We stayed fast friends and we tried to get that record picked up. It never got picked up, until years later when Gary had a couple of partners and they had a small label together. He said "Why don't we put this thing out" and I said, "Sure." We went in and recorded a couple of new songs and re-recorded maybe one or two others and put it out as "Noises in the Hallway."

***Who else was involved in the D'Ville label.***

Gary and a guy named Ron Lasalle and Tim Coats. They were terrific. They were doing it on a shoestring. The only money they had, was what they would dig out of their pockets. It was very hard for them to promote. It was distributed through Rounder and the



record started to get out a little bit, but it was very difficult to promote it. When you start digging into your own pocket for the money, you're going to go broke. No matter who you are.

**Who was in the band at that stage.**

Larry Campbell, Greg Shirley and a drummer named Denny McDermott. He was a New York drummer, but he wasn't really in the touring band. He just came down and did the sessions.

**When did you meet Tom Russell, because you have a couple of co-writes on the "Noises" album.**

Believe it or not, I met Tom in 1976, in Austin. Just briefly. We did a gig or two together.

**This would have been Hardin and Russell.**

Yes. Exactly. You really did your homework. We didn't really know each other and didn't stay friends or anything, we just kind of crossed paths down there. We got reacquainted in New York – we were living around the corner from each other in Brooklyn. I was in Manhattan for eight years and moved to Brooklyn for seven. By that time, I knew Tom. When you're doing this type of music, even though New York was so big, we found each other. It was a pretty small community really.

**What inspired the song "Little Sister," because the lyric hints at bullying.**

No, there wasn't any of that - when I finished writing that song, I saw that the song was going to be looked at in a lot of different ways. It could be interpreted as pretty dark. I let it stand at that, because I felt like that was what was going to give that song its power. What it was inspired by, and how it came to be written, really was – I was going through a dark period in my life at the time. I had spent some time living with my sister – my youngest sister. I was scaring her because I was so blue, and I could really feel her being uncomfortable with me, her brother – and I thought – I'm going through this thing right now and I hope to God that you never have to go through it. Really that's what the song came from. Yet, when it was done, it was like there was a lot of different levels going on. There was a lot of abuse references and things like that. People have even asked about incest. There was no incest in my family. Any reference to abuse was just drawn from knowledge of your normal, everyday, dysfunctional family, which isn't hard to avoid these days. Like I said, I got a lot of people asking me those questions. It wasn't literally from that, but like I said, I let it stand and I saw that that would be coming too. It wasn't like I was blind to it. I just thought, *"That's what is strong about the song."*

**Going back to the beginning almost, how many siblings do you have.**

I have an older brother and two younger sisters.

**The other song I wanted to ask about, also has a dark side to it. "Perfect World." What I found amusing is that you wrote and recorded the song in 1988, and the "Noises" album, officially, first saw the light of day in 1996, while a couple years earlier Clint Eastwood directed Kevin Costner in the movie "A Perfect World." Although Costner's character in the movie doesn't totally fit the character in your song, he comes pretty close.**

I don't even think I've seen it.

**Costner's character is on the run, and he kidnaps a youngster - except that he doesn't deliberately kidnap him.**

Right, right I did see that movie. Gee, maybe they stole my idea. I wish they'd used the song, but they probably didn't know that it existed. You know that song – there was a David Mamet play called *"Edmund"* – I was in the middle of reading it and this song came out. I was very influenced by that play. During my days in New York, we used to - that was one of our big numbers. We used to have a lot of fun playing that song. I haven't played it in a long time.

**I wondered if you knew a guy who had left his wife in real life.**

No. It was more to do with the play I was reading. It was a great play – and it was so real. It was easy to write that song.

**Have you ever worked as an actor.**

Never have worked as an actor. I enjoy reading and I enjoy going to plays. For the same reasons that I enjoy seeing music – the live performance is just so exciting – performers are always walking on a wire. You never know when they are going to fall off. I enjoy plays a lot. My wife and I – my girlfriend, at the time – we used to indulge in that stuff in New York. When we didn't have a kid, we could afford to indulge in going to the theatre. My wife graduated as an actress from a university in New York City, and studied acting even after that. She did quite a bit of acting as well as singing. This was mostly off-Broadway. She always wanted to go out to a play, and I was always happy to go with her.

**You have a number of co-writers on the album. Tom Russell, Larry Campbell and Willie Nile, I know of. Who is Jon Walmsley.**

[Laughs] Good question. Do you know who he is.

**I haven't a clue.**

OK. When I moved down to Nashville, Jon Walmsley – that's a song that we recorded later. That was a new song that I recorded. A friend of mine in Los Angeles



said, "I got this guy, Jon Walmsley, who is going to be coming into Nashville. I'm trying to hook up some co-writes for him." He said, "Would you be interested." I said "Sure. No problem." So I meet this guy. I do this co-writing thing, which Nashville is famous for - I do it sometimes, but mostly with my friends. I said, "Let's go get some lunch and get to know each other." I'm talking to this guy, and thinking "Man, who is this guy." He was just a straight looking guy, nothing - real kind of normal. He could have been an insurance salesman. But I'm going to myself, "There's something familiar about this guy." We're talking and I'm asking him what he does and he says he played in this band and that band. "I did some television," he said. I said, "Really, what did you do on television," and he says "I was on a series for twelve seasons." I said "Twelve seasons, what do you mean. That's like a pretty long run." And he goes, "Oh, I was Jason in **"The Waltons."**" Of course, I'm like Mr. Cool and going to myself "Oh no man, I'm writing with one of The Waltons. What a weird thing to happen." I've just moved to Nashville and I'm writing with one of The Waltons - my life is falling apart.

**Is he the one that was also a musician in the series.**

He was the one that played guitar on the show.

**He also owned a bar in that series, where he performed.**

I don't know about that. That was more my sister's era, that show. I just knew that he was the Walton who played guitar. It turns out he's a lovely guy - terrific guy - a very talented guy - and we wrote this song. In fact, we were like "Let's go for something like" - we were thinking about The Band as we were writing that song, because that was an influence we shared. We finished the song and I said, "Man, I'm putting that on my record." [ED NOTE. The song is "Light in the Window" which opens **"Noises"**].

**Was that the only song you wrote together.**

No. We've written some others together. We've wrote this cool little country swing thing, that I thought was a pretty good song.

**Does he still visit Nashville.**

He goes back and forth. He lives in Los Angeles, but comes to Nashville a lot. It goes to show you that you should not judge people. Here I was like, "The Waltons. Oh no." I don't know what anybody else thinks, but I'm proud of that song.

**How did "Popular Demons" come together.**

After D'Ville Records kind of folded and I didn't have a writing deal, I was still touring around - I decided I was going to see if Buddy [Miller] would be interested in producing a record with me [ED. NOTE Miller and Tallent had been involved in mastering the **"Noises"**

album]. I got together with him and he said, "Great. I'd love to. Any time." I said, "Great. Listen, I've got one small detail that I've got to iron out, and that's I don't have a label right now." We stayed in touch for about a year and finally the Koch deal came through. They were pleased as could be to have Buddy produce it.

**When did you actually record the album.**

This one was actually done the way it is supposed to be done, where we recorded a record to be a record, within the amount of time you're supposed to record a record, and put it out - instead of what happened with all my other records.

**There's a guy called Duane Jarvis in your band now.**

I met him in Nashville. He moved to Nashville, probably just before I did. I moved there in '95. I think he might have got there in '94. He's got his own solo career going, but he also plays with a lot of bands, because he's such a great player. I just asked him to do some dates with me, and I always felt like it fitted - he is great.

**Had you known of him, before you met him.**

No. I didn't know of Duane. In fact, he did a record with Gary and I met him over at Gary's studio and then I kept running into him at gigs. I had a gig coming up where I needed a guitar player and I called him up and asked him if he would be interested and he said, "Sure."

**In Nashville, do you normally perform with a band.**

In Nashville I use a band, usually because - I tour with a band when I can, because I prefer the band, but I can't always afford it. Fortunately I can do solo or duo dates, what have you - so I can continue getting out and doing dates. When the money is there, I prefer to take the band.

**Where did you find the drummer, Rick Schell.**

I met him in Nashville too. He's a guy from Syracuse, New York who moved there, because of the type of music he was interested in.

**The song "Twenty Two Miles to Bristol." Is that Bristol, Tennessee.**

Yes. It's a story that I made up. There's a sign when you're driving down Route 81 - which I take, because Interstate 81 is a long stretch of road that you take if you're travelling from New York to Nashville - which I do all the time. That's where the title came from - "Twenty Two Miles to Bristol." - it's a story song, but it's also - I have a four year old son - he's going to be five soon. When you have a kid, issues of, like abandonment, started swimming to the surface. I was like, how could anybody do that - but it's done -



issues like that were on my mind. That's what that is about. I think it's also – if you ask any writer, more than likely they are going to say most songs start by being about themselves. Then the song goes on to become something else. At the end of the day, it was about me putting myself in his shoes – or, I was expressing what it felt like, or whatever. It's part psychosis, part story.

***I don't know why I keep picking your dark songs, it may be my personality, but "Cumberland Square" seems like another dark place.***

"Cumberland Square" is about being stuck in a rut, which we all feel in our own different ways. There's also a little hidden thing in there – the Cumberland River runs through Nashville. Music Square is where Music Row is. Nashville has a tendency to be stuck in glue. There's another level to that, where – in Nashville you could take a stone and throw it in any direction and you'd be able to knock on the head a man or woman who can write unbelievable songs. And write great traditional country songs. Music Row acts like they don't exist. Doesn't know that they're there. There's such an enormous amount of talent there.

***But Nashville is really about marketing music as a concept.***

It's like mainstream country music is the weirdest thing. It's like they keep writing one song over and over and over again. They had such a boom in the eighties, and they're losing money now – and they're still trying to figure it out – they can't figure out that you've got to have good music to sell music.

***You've already mentioned one of your co-writers on the new album – Roscoe. How long have you known him.***

Well, me and Roscoe did a record that doesn't exist here, because it never got picked up. In New York, around 1994, just before I moved to Nashville, we got together and cut it at Coyote Studios. The guys in my band, Abel, Ken and Greg played on the sessions. I was doing a lot of demos with Roscoe and we did this record which is a rockin' cool record, I think. We re-recorded about six of those songs, on the Buddy Miller record. We raised some money and had a whole band play on it. He works at that studio all the time, or at least he used to.

***Did the record ever have a title.***

It had a bunch of different working titles, but it never saw the light of day. When I got involved with Koch, I offered the record to them. They liked it, but they were familiar with a bunch of other songs that I had written by that time, and they liked the idea of doing a record with Buddy. Plus, they wanted to see if I could just make a whole record with Buddy, instead of putting some of the songs that me and 'Soe did on there. I

have mixed feelings about it in a way, because I'm very happy with what Buddy and I did.

***Were the songs on the unreleased album yours and Roscoe's.***

No, they were mostly mine. We had written a couple of things together. We didn't cut "Long Gone Dream," which was a song I wrote with Roscoe that he put on his own record. That indie record that he did [ED. NOTE. Featuring Eric Ambel and Roscoe's Gang, the album was titled "Loud & Lonesome" and was released in 1995]. We actually did another song on our duo album, that we wrote together, called "Quite Like You."

***The co-writer that you seem to have worked most with recently is John Sieger. Who is he.***

Do you remember a band – they were from Milwaukee, called Semi Twang. A great band. They did an album for Warner Brothers around 1988.

***Did they sound like a Jason and the Scorchers type outfit - or maybe, Rank and File.***

It was different to that. John is someone I met in Nashville and he has become a very close friend of mine. Our kids hang out together. Our wives hang out together. John and I, we'll just be hanging around with the family, and then we'll sneak off and mess around and write some songs. He's a tremendous talent. An unsung talent – people don't know what they're missing.

***Is he a young guy.***

He's not that young. He's older than me actually. A terrific talent, and a very good guitar player. Very black music influenced. Very R&B influenced. He also had a band called the R&B Cadets in Milwaukee, with Paul Cebal.

***Why did you call the album "Popular Demons." It seems like we're sticking with that dark theme.***

[Laughs] Well' it's kind of funny – "Popular Demons." I had a little fun with that title. In fact, I call the band Popular Demons now. Because that's just what they are – they're popular, but they're demons. This guy, the photographer, Michael Wilson, - lives up in Cincinnati. We went up there to have some pictures taken – great guy. We took pictures all around Cincinnati, and there was this club – you know, this is not the story you were hoping for, I'm sure – there was this club, that was being demolished. On the outside, right in the cement – it was an old music club – it listed the kind of music they had in the club. It said "Popular, country, jazz and sacred." It was a brilliant little sign – and it was falling down – it was old, and I'm sorry that it's probably gone at this point – we kept trying to get a good picture of me with all that sign in



there. And I was thinking of calling the record that. That would have really confused everybody. There was one shot that came out that we liked, with me standing under the word "Popular." Then I got the idea, "Why don't we call the record "Popular." Then I thought "I can't call the record "Popular," I began feeling uncomfortable with that. Then the label guy Steve Wilkison said, "Popular, popular what." I came up with **"Popular Demons."** To make a long story even longer, that's how that happened.

***And of course you give Steve, who owned the Dejadisc label, a name check in the liner.***

Well, he's working at Koch now. He's really managing the label, actually. He's based in New York. Steve actually wanted to put my records out on Dejadisc, but the timing was never right. I always had something else going. Now he's at Koch – it was actually John Porter who signed me – I've known Steve for years and he's been a great supporter. I have a good little team up there.

***No doubt Steve was the agent provocateur.***

He became sort of our product manager. He was involved in the record, and came along to the studio. He was hands off, however – I mean he had his opinions, and I really appreciated them. He had his opinions, but it was my record and it was Buddy producing the record. He respected that.

***The closing track on "Popular Demons" is the Dylan song "I'll Keep it With Mine." How did you become involved with the label, Sister Ruby. They have issued a number of Dylan tribute compilations.***

Right, and I have an acoustic version on one of them. I forget how that – I think, when I was being managed by Will Botwin, they contacted him looking for contributions. They recommended me. Of course, the version that is on **"Popular Demons"** was re-recorded with Steve [Earle]. It was kind of a last minute thing – "Let's cut that one, just in case we want to use it. Maybe Steve would want to come in and sing on that. So we did that." I really didn't know if I was going to keep the cover, but Koch liked it and wanted to issue it. I think they liked having Steve on it. Buddy and I were like, "I'm not sure." Now, when I listen to that song, I find it refreshing. I really enjoy it. After Steve sang his part, I looked at him and said, "Would you mind singing the rest of my record." It sounded so great.

***How had you met Steve Earle.***

That was back during the **"We Won't Dance"** record days, through his manager. Steve just kind of dug that record, and we – he got in touch with me, or I got in touch with him and blah, blah, blah. Steve has been a tremendous support to my career. Very helpful. He's been a very generous soul, for over ten years.

***You've already mentioned that "Noises in the Hallway" and "Everywhere" are going to be reissued by Koch. Were there a lot of extra tracks cut, that never turned up on the original releases.***

There's a lot of stuff from those days. We went through the stuff and found a couple of songs that we sort of felt would fit on the **"Noises"** album. In fact one of them is a newer song, and one is an older song. **"Everywhere"** is going to have one from the Gary Tallent days – the one that me and Larry wrote – and it's also going to have a newer song of mine that I wrote in Nashville with my friend Will Kimbrow. "A Train Runs by My Door." I don't know what that is going to sound like, because we recorded it on a little cassette player up in his attic. It might be fun or it might be insane, but it's kind of a cool song I think. Basically, he's the band leader for Kim Richey, right now. One of the extra tracks on **"Noises"** is "Pink Motel."

***I believe that "Popular Demons" was nominated for Folk Album of the Year by the Nashville Music Awards.***

Yeah. I didn't win. Nanci Griffith took the honours with **"Other Voices, Too."**

***Has your biggest sales inroad over the years, been on the American charts.***

Yeah, we did great on the Americana charts on this new record. I was in the Top 10 for twenty-one weeks. I don't know what that means, but I'm happy that they exist and I love the music that they're playing.

***How about "Everywhere."***

When that was out, there was no chart. When **"Noises"** was released, that did well on the Americana charts for a while.

***And the song, "Everywhere."***

Me and Sid [Griffin] wrote it. We wrote that years ago – I had the song pretty much put together, and I brought it to Sid and I said "It still needs a couple of things." Sid helped me – we slowed it down, we patched it up, he threw in some lyrics here and there –

***Was this during Sid's time with The Long Ryders.***

Just post The Long Ryders. They had just kind of ended, I think. But he wasn't living over here. He was still living in Los Angeles.

***How had you met the walking encyclopaedia of popular music.***

[Laughs]. I met him – it was a publisher in New York that said "Do you know Sid Griffin." I said "I know The Long Ryders, and I like their stuff." He goes, "You should meet him." We got in touch and I went over to his house and met with him.



***I believe that the song is going to be in a movie.***

It is. How did you know that? I keep being told this, and I'm psyched about it. This all happened two days before I came over here. It's a British movie featuring Bob Hoskins titled "**A Room for Romeo Brass.**" It's the Billy Bragg version that's in the movie.

***You mentioned earlier, that of all the covers you've had, "We Won't Dance" is your biggest earner.***

The Vince Gill version was the biggest earner for sure. It was never a single – just an album cut – but it recouped all my publishing advances at the time [ED. NOTE. It was featured on Gill's 1989 MCA debut "**When I Call Your Name**"]. It's amazing how much money it has earned.

***Over the years, you've toured with Joe Ely and Roseanne Cash.***

The Joe Ely tour was a great one. That was like two months on the bus with those guys, in '92. I was out with Willie [Nelson] in '89. I've done gigs on and off, with Roseanne. We've never done a proper tour. Just dates. I've been up in Minneapolis with her. We've played New York together. We played Philadelphia together. Different places.

***Was the Joe Ely tour in support of "Everywhere."***

Yeah. That was tough, because I had copies with me, but it basically wasn't in any stores. I was very lucky to get that tour. We toured all over the United States. It was great fun – great guys in that band. Joe is just a tremendous talent.

***I kind of figure that Vin Scelsa, the DJ, has been a big supporter of yours over the years.***

Very big. A very big supporter. I consider him a good friend as well. He's the first guy that ever played my record anywhere. I think he was on KROCK at the time with his show "**Idiot's Delight.**" I think he had left WNEW, but now he's back on that station. I forget how he got the record, but someone called me up one day and said "**Scelsa's playing your record.**" We've had a relationship ever since, and it's been very good. Everybody has their likes and dislikes, but Vin has a special show in New York City and he's been playing my music forever – demos of mine – tapes of mine – and records of mine. I can't thank the guy enough.

***Can we talk about another song of yours that's been covered, "The Heart" – which Lucy Kaplansky cut. Larry Campbell and Ken Blevins played on her version.***

Oh yeah. That's one that Tom Russell and I wrote together. Lucy cut it in New York, and Shawn Colvin produced it. Those guys had all played with Shawn, a lot. That was just a band that she assembled to make that record. Shawn has always loved that song, and I

think she brought it to Lucy. She knew the song from seeing me play it. I remember doing a radio show with Shawn and she went "**I love that song.**" Lucy did a great job. I could have done with Shawn cutting it. I'm just saying that to be funny, because Shawn sells a lot of records. I love the version Lucy did of it. I get a lot of comments about that actually – people tell me it's their favourite song on that record.

***Sarah Elizabeth Campbell also cut the song.***

I met her in Austin with a group of people that I know down there. I think Lucinda [Williams] might have introduced us. I forget. It was Steve Wilkison – because she was on Dejadisc – he brought the song to Sarah. He liked the song. I met her before she cut my song.

***What about co-writing with Robert Earl Keen.***

We were introduced by the guys who were managing me at that time. I've done some dates with Robert since then. That was a funny deal, because he wrote the lion's share of that song, but always says "**Yeah, but you wrote the line about the wheels rolling round.**" I usually say "**Man, you wrote the lion's share**" and he says, "**Yeah, but you wrote the line that counts.**" That was the only song we ever wrote together. "**Night Right for Love,**" that's what it was called.

***Going back to Austin in the mid-seventies, when you were just entering your twenties – was Shawn Colvin playing in town with the Dixie Diesels.***

I only got to know her when I moved to New York.

***You mentioned playing with Hardin and Russell in Austin. Who else did you play with.***

No one really. For a while, like I said, I worked with Richard Scott, and then I did the solo thing. I was pretty young and a little drunk at the time. I mostly played covers. You know, Sixth Street wasn't the only place to play. It was all over the place. At the level that I was getting gigs, it was anywhere you could. There was a little place on Guadalupe. Here and there. I probably did more going to see music, than I did playing music while I was down there. I saw many shows at the Armadillo. That's all we did – I don't know how we survived. We lived in a trailer. It smelt like a sewer. I don't know how I did it, but all I did was go see music. I saw Townes Van Zandt a lot. I even saw Willie Nelson play in a bar.

***You need a cut on Willie.***

I'd love that.

***Have you ever been to the Kerrville Festival.***

I played there once. Kind of a new writer's thing. This was back in the seventies. Tom Paxton was the host. .



**You're touring here with Sid Griffin's band The Coal Porters.**

Yeah. Koch couldn't afford to bring me over with a band. Sid said, "I'll put you on tour with us, and you can use us as a band." I do four songs solo, and then they come up and do five songs with me. It was affordable, and Koch said "OK, we'll bring you over by yourself." It's been going great, because Sid has had good houses, with people that I think are happy to hear me. The response has been great. I've been selling CD's, and it's really working out great. Sid's done me a great favour, I think.

**Will you ever reissue the first album.**

Probably not, because I have no idea where the masters are. I haven't talked to Carter in many, many years. [Laughs] Maybe we'll just copy it from the vinyl and put it on a CD, and do it from there.

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**Kerrville - The 28<sup>th</sup> Annual New Folk Concerts :  
A Fine Wine, A Great Vintage**

**- And All For The Sake Of The Song**

Noel Coward would have had us believe that "Only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the mid-day sun," but each year during Memorial Day weekend [ED. NOTE. Whitsun in the UK] in the West Texas Hill Country you can observe an equally foolhardy group of, mainly American born, individuals. Over two consecutive days and six hours of baking heat and blazing sun, protected only by the occasional oasis of shade trees or sundry man-made accessories, hundreds of hardy souls indulge in some very rash behaviour. The driving force is their addiction to folk music and the prized opportunity to observe, hear and assess its future. The event in question is known simply as the New Folk Concerts. For some, those annual performances at the main Outdoor Theatre are the very essence and heart of the Kerrville Folk Festival. "They grow their own crops here" may appear a trite platitude. The reality is that for many years now, over thirty per cent of the main-stage bill of one hundred plus performers has been composed of previous winners and contestants. As you will discover later many of those songwriters now possess a national, and in some cases an international, reputation; surely a testament to Kerrville's futures policy bearing fruit.

Since the inaugural Festival in 1972, and at the behest of Peter Yarrow, a late addition to the bill that year, the New Folk concerts have remained a permanent fixture on the Kerrville schedule. Yarrow had been involved in running a similar event at the Newport Folk Festival during the sixties. This year's festival, the 28<sup>th</sup>, drew 513 New Folk competition entries from forty-five states, plus the District of Columbia and five Canadian cities. Through April, Festival Producer, Rod Kennedy, assessed the two song, tape submissions and whittled the entrants down to a short list of thirty-two writers. On the Saturday and Sunday afternoon of the opening weekend of the Festival, sixteen writers performed a short, two song set.

The judges for the competition were advertised in the Festival programme as Eric Taylor [a 1977 winner, and thankfully once again touring and recording], Cindy Greene [a winner in 1998] and the poet/lyricist Charles John

Quatro. Forced to withdraw, Greene was replaced by Amilia Spicer, while Quatro fell ill, early on the Saturday afternoon, having only witnessed a couple of the performers. In subsequent discussions with long-time Festival regulars, no one could recall a New Folk competition that had been judged by a jury of two. Then again, the final contest of the current millennium yielded many other firsts. The six winners announced, at around 8.00pm, during the Sunday evening main-stage concert, had never entered the competition previously. What's more, in local parlance, four of them were *kerr-virgins*. First time visitors to planet Kerrville.....



Left to right above, Ray Bonneville [Nashville, Tenn.], Diane Zeigler [Montpelier, Vt.], Mark Erelli [Amherst, Ma.], SEE BELOW, Suzanne Buirgy [Venice, Ca.], Mitch Barrett [Berea, Ken.] and Jeff Berkley [San Diego, Ca.] were the selected six. [ED. NOTE. The guy in the middle of the photograph is John Briggs, Asst. Vice President of ASCAP].

Lest we forget, the event is a contest where the outcome can only be based on the subjective opinion of the judges. Late on the Sunday afternoon, Eric Taylor offered some observations on his role in the process, "I think New Folk is a great thing. I worry that some people put too much stock in it. It's not going to catapult you to fame, in any way, but it let's you know where you stand as a performer with your contemporaries. Songwriting competitions are an opportunity for people to break into the large festivals, in a way that they might not get to otherwise. It's very, very obvious to me that if you're going to have a performing songwriter competition, I don't think you can escape the fact that some of the people are going to be professionals who do what they do for a living. I think what they do here is a good job of trying to make it as level a playing field as possible. Writers get a chance to come here and hang out with their peers and hopefully they will all learn something."

While each winner receives a \$250.00 dollar cheque funded in part by ASCAP and a couple of festival endowments, the real prize lies in a two-fold opportunity to make further Kerrville main-stage appearances in the future. On the second Sunday afternoon of this eighteen-day musical event, the six competition winners returned to the main-stage where each performed a twenty-minute set. Rod Kennedy subsequently selects one of the artists to open the following year's festival. Cindy Greene [Nashville, Tenn.] opened this year's Festival - 6.00pm on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May.



Before presenting a thumbnail sketch of each of this year's winners, let's take a look at some New Folk performers from the past. Former winning alumni include Lyle Lovett [1982], Robert Earl Keen [1983], Tish Hinojosa as Tish Hanley [1979], John Gorka [1984], Kristina Olsen [1985], Pierce Pettis [1986 & 1987], James McMurtry [1987], Buddy Mondlock [1987], David Wilcox [1988], Karen Taylor Good [1992], Ellis Paul [1994], Barbara Kessler [1995] and Tanya Savory [1996]. A festival fixture for almost a decade commencing in the late seventies, Nanci Griffith competed but was never a contest winner. Hal Ketchum was a finalist in 1986, as was Shawn Colvin two years later. The foregoing coterie includes writers of No. 1 country chart songs as well as Grammy award winners.

A self taught guitarist and piano player, in her late teens, Suzanne Buirgy was a principal player in the New York Shakespeare Festival touring companies production of **Pirates of Penzance**. Inspired by the melodies and lyrics of Joni Mitchell and the vocal style of Janis Joplin, Suzanne subsequently became the lead singer in the all-girl band, The Riveters. One of nine California based performers who made this year's final, Buirgy's performance of her as yet unrecorded *Lullaby*, will long remain a personal highlight of the 1999 Kerrville Folk Festival. This gentle song of reflection and regret, about a teenage abortion, opens with the thought provoking line "You would have been ten years old." Buirgy's debut solo album on the Attune label, **A Small Word**, was released last year.

Formerly a light aircraft pilot, Canadian Ray Bonneville has, in the past, performed at the New Orleans and Montreal Jazz Festivals. By the time he was 12, Bonneville had lived in fourteen different locations. Since then, with music constantly underscoring his journey, Ray has resided in Boston, Boulder, Seattle, New Orleans, Quebec and Paris, France. His most recent domicile has been Nashville, where he partly cut his third album **Gust Of Wind**. Released by the Edmonton based Stony Plain label, it features eleven Bonneville originals, and is a potent blues cocktail reminiscent of John Lee Hooker and J.J. Cale, leavened with Clapton and Dire Straits styled guitar work.

Born and raised in Eastern Kentucky, Mitch Barrett incorporates traditional Appalachian sounds in his contemporary compositions. A performing musician for nearly two decades, Barrett entered the Chris Austin Songwriting Contest at Merlefest in North Carolina in 1997 and 1998, where he was respectively placed second and first. Post Kerrville Mitch and his wife, Carla Gover, with whom he appeared at the Festival, recorded a CD, as yet untitled, that should be available in a few months time. Their Redbird Mandala Music catalogue already includes a Mitch Barrett cassette titled **Soft Lies** [1995], Carla's **Hush My Restless Soul** [1996] and their duo recording **Almost Home** [1998].

Mark Erelli, 24, was this year's youngest winner. Although he holds a master's degree in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, Erelli's current aim is to pursue a full time career as a performer. His self titled, debut solo recording was released by the Signature Sounds label during the late spring. Including the memorable titles *The River Road*, a song about how the majority of mankind never bothers to *check out the grass on the other side of the fence*, and *Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained*, prior to Kerrville this

album was already headed for my end of year "Best of....." list. Taking the opportunity to interview Mark during the festival, I soon concluded that this young man possessed a totally focused view of his art and where it is going to take him.

Twenty-nine year old Jeff Berkley, the second winner among nine California based finalists, is the first of two non *kerr-virgins* among the winning septet. Percussionist in the Joel Rafael Band for the past eight years, Jeff had already made a number of main-stage appearances with his boss, a 1995 New Folk winner. Berkley is also a member of the San Diego based quartet, The Redwoods and they joined him for his contest winners performance. Berkley has just released his debut CD **Demonstration**. A nine-track set of originals, following Dar Williams' smoke trails, Jeff cut this basic guitar and vocal set in his bedroom. Close your eyes, listen, and you'd swear that it was David Wilcox.

The Rounder Records subsidiary, Philo, released a Diane Zeigler album titled **Sting Of The Honeybee** during 1995. Marriage and the arrival of a couple children filled the intervening years, but as Zeigler recalled during the winner's show the *call of the couplet* is hard to resist. "*When I first came out here in 1991, I felt like this ranch was telling me - speaking to me in my bones, telling me that I needed to pursue this. I needed to be a musician and follow it. I ended up calling home, quitting my job and staying on the ranch for the duration. I was only supposed to be here for a weekend. Now that I'm back I can't call home and quit my job, because I'll always be a mom.*" A few weeks post Kerrville, Zeigler was placed second in the Troubadour Contest at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. Later, Diane placed first at the Rocky Mountain Folk Festival contest in Colorado. A new recording by the spring of 2000 ?

You may recall, I mentioned Peter Yarrow toward the start of this piece. His commitment to the festival and the New Folk Contest, in particular, remains totally vigorous to this day. During the winners' concert he hovered backstage like an anxious patriarch, disseminating advice, encouragement and his *trade mark* hug - to each participant.

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Here's reviews of the most recent recordings by five of the 1999 Kerrville New Folk winners. Sadly, there's nothing here from Mitch & Carla Barrett, as I found their New Appalachia style rather appealing.

#### Mark Erelli "Same" Signature Sounds [Import]

The trials and tribulations of modern life weave themselves like robust vines through the lines of Erelli's compositions, and a decade of Mark's creations are included on, this, his debut solo recording for the five years young, Massachusetts based imprint. There's nothing stunningly new, radical or complex about the subjects that Erelli has chosen to write about - yet, he captures the essence of mankind's strengths and frailties with consummate ease. The *gotta get up and go to work* tribute "Do It Everyday," kicks off the collection with an upbeat flourish. But not for long - if resigned melancholia is your aphrodisiac of choice, you need look no further than track four. *The River Road* is the domicile where most of us live and observe our *four score and ten* unfold - the [often reluctant] *second best* choice that we accept as our lot in life. A place where, it's *as good as it gets* - until, lady luck takes a hand and we accurately come up with, for instance, the numbers for six



balls, or eight scoring draws, or the correct answers to fifteen questions. *Nothing Ventured, Nothing Gained*, pursues the theme of gambling, albeit in relation to an affair where the participants fail, in the end, to sustain their love for one another. *Hollow Man* homes in on the public domain and the rise and fall of political personalities, fed by those *avaricious monsters* - hype and manipulation. Like a missile, Mark's lyric blasts the [late twentieth century] media for its entirely *false* take on reality. The anthemic *Northern Star*, a tale of irresistible attraction, closes one of the best collections to grace the final year of the twentieth century. Mark's *weathered* voice is reminiscent, at times, of fellow North American bard Chuck Brodsky, while his songwriting already marks him out as a time-served professional - all this, at the tender age of twenty-four. Supported by Jim Lamond [bass] and Lorne Entress [drums] from the Mark Erelli Band, Entress produced the recording. The cast of support players include Rani Arbo, vocalist from the lately defunct Signature Sounds combo, Salamander Crossing, and Mary Chapin Carpenter's sometime electric guitar picker, Duke Levine. According to the liner, Mark Erelli regularly consumes Paul Newman's Peach Salsa - if that's the secret ingredient that has inspired him to pen such high calibre material, long may he continue to indulge in copious amounts of the product. Available from **Signature Sounds, P.O. Box 106, Whately, Massachusetts 01093, U.S.A.**

**Suzanne Buirgy "A Small Word" Attune [Import]**

I honestly believe that this 1998 recording will be viewed as Buirgy at *the crossroads* in years to come. She's eminently capable of delivering a screaming rock vocal when the song demands it. "Rock & Roll of the Dice" and "Never Say Never" are prime examples, with shades of Janis [Joplin] as the latter tune closes. "A Small Word" also finds her reaching out, on occasions, for that gentler approach generally taken by the singer/songwriter. For example, "Down" features a loving relationship that evolves into a claustrophobic nightmare. The narrator [Buirgy] is eventually forced to walk away. "Finding My Way Over You" was undoubtedly *born* of a similar situation. By way of varying the lyrical fare, "Mim's Story (My Mother's Song)" opens in the desperate dustbowl days of the 1930's. The narrator finds "*the man of her dreams*" when she leaves home, and is blessed by two children, the firstborn a crippled son - and eleven years later, a daughter. Later, and two years after Mim's husband dies somewhat prematurely, she loses her own life to breast cancer. Despite the impression that the latter song is a doom-laden tale, it stands proud and optimistic as the shining gemstone in this collection. I've said it before - story songs slay me. In the certain knowledge that Buirgy's songbook already contains another diamond - in the as yet unrecorded "Lullaby" - should she choose to further chart the course that led her to the latter pair of songs, the future will bring untold riches to her life and those of her listeners. On the final track, "Shooting Stars," Suzanne is joined on vocals by another *vocal* Janis, Ms Ian. Available from **Attune Records, P.O. Box 1467, Venice, California 90294-1467, U.S.A.**

**Ray Bonneville "Gust of Wind" Stony Plain [Import]**

Produced by countryman and fellow blues picker, Colin Linden, the support players include Richard Bell from The Band. It's a treat to hear a B3 handled properly. As for the eleven blues flavoured Bonneville originals, they range in augmentation from the voice and guitar [and foot] of

"Listen," through gentle languid shuffles like "Foolish," to hard edged numbers such as "That's Why" and the title track. By way of variation, Ray even involves in a little jazz on the closing "Darlin' Don't Forget." I can't ever claim to have been a blues fan, but Ray Bonneville music now that's a whole other *kettle of fish*. Available from the **Stony Plain Recording Company Ltd, PO Box 861, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5J 2LB.**

From KK19, here's my thoughts of her 1995 solo debut.....

**Diane Zeigler "Sting of the Honeybee" Philo [Import]**

Diane Zeigler is the latest 90's *generation*, solo acoustic artiste to appear on Philo. Indications of her arrival were multitude last year. Her "Cog in the Wheel" appeared on the second Martha's Vineyard/Philo compilation "**Follow that Road**," while the label repeatedly featured parts of her anatomy in the liner booklet of their "**20th Anniversary Folk Sampler**," excluding Zeigler's face, that is. On her "**Sting of the Honeybee**" the opening cuts "Leap of Faith" and "Walk on Water" are indicative of major moves and miracles, but it was track five on the *first run thro'*, and "You Will Get Your Due" before I could say - "*now there's a finely crafted song*." Addicted to story songs, I guess. Subjectively, it's an [admiration from afar] ode to an unnamed male troubadour and the calibre of his self-composed material. James Taylor's "Millworker" is the only cover among the dozen tracks. A couple of complete circuits later, other special Zigsongs come tumbling to mind. "One Who Got Away" - an epitaph for a fisherman, "The Hiding Place" - about child abuse, and "Rock of Ages" - a memorable memorial. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Jeff Berkley "Demonstration" no label [Import]**

Following a tradition established by Dar [Williams], Berkley cut eight of this set of nine self-composed songs in his bedroom. "California Mountain Time" was co-written with his co-conspirators in The Redwoods, Calman Hart, Carroll and John Katchur. The closing "Balloons" is a live rendition from a local club. As for the title of the set it's somewhat appropriate, since these are little more than basic voice and acoustic guitar cuts. In addition to working as a solo act, Berkley's other musical projects include The Redwoods - well almost - "*We've evolved into a duo called The Raindogs. Calman Hart and I have just finished tracking 14 original songs for our debut album which will be released in time for Folk Alliance 2000.*" My closing thought runs to - while you wait for the next David Wilcox solo album - or for that matter, one by America - fill the gap with some JB. Nourished, tiny acorns can grow into mighty oaks. We'll see. Available from **2240 Madison Avenue #6, San Diego, California 92116, U.S.A.**

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**Terry Lee Hale "Old Hand" [cont.]**

in the instrumental break midway through this cut. The high lonesome harmonica that opens "Toss" gives way to a pop oriented melody, while the angst filled lyric can be summed up by "*if she'd take me back, she'd learn about the real me.*" What sounds like Irish pipes and a bodhran add a Celtic flavoured intro to "Edenless," while the subsequent



"It's Only Love" is sung in French. The lyrics are reproduced in the liner booklet in English and French. When it comes to lyrically exploring the erotic with subtlety, Lee Clayton's two decade old recording "**Naked Child**" and the words of "10,000 Years/Sexual Moon" in particular, leaves the pitiful "*but suck that tit she's now your mother,*" on "Just Words" languishing in the spotty schoolboy doggerel league. The closing "Rainer's Song" is a slow jazzy, dreamlike instrumental dedicated to the late Rainer Ptacek. Probably the weakest of Hale's recent efforts, "**Old Hand**" possesses few real sparks of genuine inspiration. Available from **Glitterhouse Mail Order, Gruner Weg 25, D-37688 Beverungen, Germany** or via [mailorder@glitterhouse.com](mailto:mailorder@glitterhouse.com)

**Jimmy LaFave "Trail" Bohemia Beat [Import]**

When Tom Russell penned "The Dance," in reality, he was commenting on the passage of time. The life cycle, cradle to grave. Sustaining that poetic view, "**Trail**," Jimmy LaFave's latest 30 cut, 2CD release presents selections from *the road and the studio*, spanning 1984 to date. The tracks having been cut in Europe [Switzerland, Netherlands, Italy, France and good old blighty], Montreal, Canada and his beloved, *local stomping grounds* Oklahoma and Texas. The main tunesmith featured is, Dylan [12 songs] - according to one tale, Jimmy owns a window frame from Robert Zimmerman's childhood home in Hibbing, Minnesota. In the annals of fan worship, that goes down as the work of a pretty serious archivist. Single song contributions come from his *spiritual Oklahoma brothers*, Woody Guthrie and Bob Childers. Following last year's Billy Bragg/Wilco effort, it would appear that Nora Guthrie intends working with LaFave on a follow-up Woody project. Bruce Springsteen and Joe Ely supply one song each, while LaFave pitches in with a decade of his own compositions, a handful of which have never been featured on Jimmy's previous releases. As far as "**Trail**" is concerned, the plaudit superb is totally insufficient. This guy can most certainly write 'em, and [even where he doesn't] LaFave knows exactly how to interpret them - all the way from stripped down acoustic presentations, to hard edged rock 'n' roll. Available from **Topic/Direct Distribution, 50 Stroud Green Road, London N4 3EF**.

**Janis Ian "Live at the Bottom Line 1980" Bottom Line [Import]**

Once upon a time, the 1978 Austro/Nippon double vinyl release "**In Concert**" was the only live evidence of her three phase performing and recording career. A few years ago BBC/Windsong gave us "**Live On The Test 1976**" featuring eight cuts from the BBC2 television show, and, for good measure, appended a couple of early nineties Radio 1 session tracks. Now the fledgling Bottom Line label brings us a similar mixture to the Windsong collection. Two bonus songs "Society's Child" and "At Seventeen" are featured. The source tape was probably a radio broadcast, circa 1980, and I'm certain that the interviewer is Vin Scelsa. The main clue as to the *true* vintage comes from Janis' comment that "*kids who grew up listening to 'At Seventeen' now bring their kids to my shows.*" Backed by a three-piece band consisting of bass, guitar and drums, with Janis on piano/guitar, at the time of the Bottom Line recording "**Night Rains**" would have been her current album. Four selections including the title cut are featured here. Apart from the favourites mentioned so far, this New York performance also witnessed Janis perform "Jesse"

and "Stars." This one, is just for the "Memories." Available from **CDX, The Olde Coach House, Windsor Crescent, Radyr, Cardiff CF15 8AE** or via [sales@cdx.co.uk](mailto:sales@cdx.co.uk)

**Various Artists "Blaze Foley : In Tribute and Loving Memory Volume 1" [Import]**

Blaze Foley was shot dead in the alleyway behind Austin's Continental Club just over a decade ago. Soon after his passing, a live cassette featuring Blaze and titled "**Live at The Austin Outhouse (...and not there)**" was released, although its availability was limited to the mid Texas region [ED NOTE. Circa 11/99, it has just been reissued on CD. Volume II of this tribute series is also available now]. This sixteen-track compilation features a legion of Texas musicians, some of whom are no longer with us, interpreting Foley's music. On a practical basis, he was famed locally for the diverse number of applications he found for duct tape. As for country chart fame, that amounted to Willie Nelson's cover of "If I Could Only Fly" which was a hit in September 1987. Kimmie Rhodes' interpretation of the latter tune, the second track, is a genuine heartbreaker. The Texana Dames, Mandy Mercier, Calvin Russell, Timbuk 3, as well as the late Townes Van Zandt all contribute to this heartfelt compilation. Lucinda Williams' "Drunken Angel" on her 1998 release "**Car Wheels on a Gravel Road**" was written in memory of Blaze - a much missed, quirky genius. Available from **Village Records, 12156 W 63, Shawnee, Kansas 66216, U.S.A.** or via [info@villagerecords.com](mailto:info@villagerecords.com)

**Kat Eggleston "First Warm Wind" Waterbug [Import]**

Composed of ten Eggleston originals, this debut solo recording, circa 1990, was previously only available on cassette. Cut while still a Washington State resident, *China* and *Dark Side Of The Moon* testify to a talent that attained full fruition on **Second Nature** [1994] and **Outside Eden** [1997]. Available from **Waterbug UK, 2 Woodhouse, Shilbottle, Northumberland NE66 2HR**.

**Cheryl Wheeler "Sylvia Hotel" Philo [Import]**

Just when you thought that, circa 1995, "**Mrs. Pinocci's Guitar**" was as good as it would ever get, Cheryl re-enters the ring with yet another stunner. Go figure how the opening track "His Hometown," dedicated to the skills and exploits of a local mechanical digger driver, holds you rapt for the duration - yet it does. Skill and grace turn up in the strangest places. The latter song was featured on Wheeler's 1998 Philo concert video "**What Do I Care I Don't Have Kids Construction Company, Inc.**" Paced by a rapid militaristic beat, on "If It Were Up to Me," Wheeler breathlessly delivers verse upon verse of potential symptoms that cause *them* to be used, and concludes - "*If it were up to me, I'd take away the guns.*" [ED. NOTE. Want an example of recording industry/gun lobby politics? Check out how Garth Brooks/Chris Gaines missed out the punch line on his "**in the life of....**" version. Does Cheryl care? Ask her banker]. Meanwhile, down in that Tennessee tinseltown, if they're seeking an intelligent relationship song for '99, they need look no further than "Right Way to Do the Wrong Thing." Apart from the *tongue in cheek* interest compounded by the closing hidden track, "We're the Bank," Wheeler's sense of humour surfaces on the two live cuts. "Unworthy" features a forty something couch potato slash slob, who has decided to finally, fill her life with worthwhile activity. According to Wheeler, the inspiration for "Potato" came to her during a walk in the



countryside. The scheme involved employing the melody of the "Mexican Hat Dance," married to a lyric based on the life of that Francis Drake import, the tuber. "Potato" boils down to one of those songs that you need to hear to appreciate the full flavour. Road songs inevitably end up in the rut populated by the "Oh, woe is me" sentiment. Not so, as far as the title cut, "Rainy Road into Atlanta" and "Lighting up the Mighty Mississippi" are concerned. "**Sylvia Hotel**" is one of the best you'll hear this year. Available from **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**David Olney "Through A Glass Darkly" Philo [Import]**

Olney may be a Nashville resident, but thankfully the years have not witnessed his conversion to the style of songwriting which affords the commercial survival of that Tennessee town. There are sixteen cuts on Olney's latest work, including two covers. "C'mon Through Carolina" from Tom House and "Snowin' on Raton" the Townes Van Zandt classic. Stylistically, Olney's "Avery County," the third cut, could have been a Van Zandt creation. Josiah, the narrator, recalls how, his father, a moonshiner, was killed in a road accident while delivering his illicit brew. In desperation, his mother takes up with a man who "*preached and he roared, like a man of the Lord.*" Mistreating them both, Josiah runs away from home leaving his mother at the mercy of this "*wicked and evil*" man. Elsewhere on this collection, are other Olney stories; a soldier on three days leave who seeks solace with a prostitute ["1917"], "Dillinger" [the John who terrorised American during the thirties] and the biblical "Barabbas." On a natural, nay horticultural, note, there are recollections of the Springtime aroma of "Dogwoods" blooming, while the latter flower and Texas bluebonnets are mentioned in the lyrics of the dreamlike, "Lilly of the Valley." Available from **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Chuck Pyle "Keepin' Time by the River" [Import]**

Let's hear it for California and, in particular, those folks with an acknowledged music industry pedigree. For instance, Doug Haywood – long time associate of Jackson Browne who produced this disc, and former Hot Band member Ric Cuhna, who recorded the whole deal. They may have transported Pyle to the West Coast, but they sure as hell couldn't suppress the brand of melodic South-Western country music that is his speciality. Add to the mix, contributions from local pickers and singers like Craig Doerge, Greg Leisz, Rosemary Butler, Don Heffington and Jenny Warnes, and for added impact, leaven with some Lone Star flavouring from Jerry Jeff Walker and Tish Hinojosa. Three of the selections – "Other Side of the Hill," "Step By Step" and "Jaded Lover" – are already widely acknowledged Pyle classics. This is the third recording of the latter song. As for cover songs that fit Chuck's persona like a glove, Jane Voss's 1985 tune "Far Flung Places" is truly one that will, in future, cause the repeat play button to be pressed on a regular basis. The humorous quotient comes in the shape of Steve Walters' "The Remember Song" – for those *gremlins* who regularly *steal* our spectacles, car keys and wallet. Chuck's presentation, throughout this set, may appear casual.....almost devil may care, and is epitomised by the closing, album title cut – then again, that's the secret of his appeal. Available from **Village Records**.

**Kelly Willis "What I Deserve" Rykodisc [Import]**

The 1996 EP "**Fading Fast**" was the only aural oasis in a six year long album silence from this Austin based

songbird. The title cut of the latter recording, a Willis/John Leventhal collaboration, which was featured on the soundtrack of the Wynona Ryder movie "**Boys**," reappears here as track 8. Other featured writers on "**What I Deserve**" include fellow Austinites, Damon Bramlett and Bruce Robison [her husband], while the *out of town* contributions come from Paul Westerberg [The Replacements], Dan Penn/Chuck Prophet and the late, Nick Drake. Apart from "Talk Like That," Kelly's contributions amount to three collaborations with *head* Jayhawk Gary Louris, and two more with Leventhal. Among the Robison composed cuts is "Wrapped" the title song from his second [and subsequently reissued] solo album. Somewhat like Kim Richey, Gretchen Peters and Roseanne Cash, Willis treads that borderline that is Nashville inspired, sans the glitz and hype. What's more, her voice bears a distinctive edge that makes it immediately identifiable. That said, her collaborations and original material, as well as the covers featured here, lean toward pop rather than alt. country. That said, "**What I Deserve**" is a somewhat pleasant, if unchallenging, concoction. Available in your record store now.

**Various "Respond" Signature Sounds [Import]**

This proceeds from this two CD, 27 track collection will benefit RESPOND a Boston based agency that assists women and children who are the victims of domestic abuse and violence. The performers involved, all female, are mostly based in Boston and the surrounding area, while some the selections [principally from the better known acts] have been culled from existing, already released recordings. The contingent of *known* performers includes Patty Larkin, Barbara Kessler, Catie Curtis, Jennifer Kimball and Juliana Hatfield, while the twenty plus other artists involved in this project furnish the possibility of discovering previously unheard writers who possess style, content and focus. Linda Sharar's pop driven "Any Kind of Love" pegs her stylistically as an inheritor of Mary Chapin Carpenter's skills with a pen. Other standouts include Jess Klein's folksy love ballad "Romeo," "Fireflies" the fantasy woven by Lori McKenna and Linda Nawn's "Lately." The late Alexis Shepard closes proceedings with "Purple Ray Gun." The remaining contents are best categorised as *under development*. Available from **Signature Sounds, P.O. Box 106, Whately, Ma. 01903, U.S.A.**

**Rick Lee "There's Talk About A Fence" Waterbug [Import]**

Lee is a journeyman folk singer, having spent more than three decades plying his chosen trade from a New England base. Underpinning his vocals with banjo and keyboards, the fourteen selections on, this, his second Waterbug release, feature a small cast of mostly, acoustic pickers and players. While the foregoing hardly suggests anything out of the ordinary, Lee's *particular genre twist* lies in interpreting both traditional and contemporary material, including two instrumentals and one self-penned song, in a traditional vein. The title of the set comes from a line in the 1998 Chuck Brodsky composition, *The Come Heres And The Been Heres*. Endlessly repeated across our planet, financially secure white-collar newcomers impose themselves upon the long-time, poorer residents of a community. In the process, *The Come Heres* decimate the history and heritage of the area with *fences*, real and imagined. Historical events are further explored in *The Ballad Of Harbo And Samuelsen*, as two oyster-men row



from West to East across the Atlantic in an open boat. That this long forgotten, century old event was achieved without the benefit of modern sailing aids, makes their efforts all the more extraordinary. Acting as an antidote to the foregoing scholarly works, humour surfaces as a member of canine family displays his appetite for making love to any human leg in, *Don't Pet The Dog*. The traditional material includes *Dives And Lazarus* and *Daemon Lover*, while *The Ballad Of The Tinker's Daughter*, appears in an extended form. The latter song appeared on Lee's 1995 Waterbug release **Natick**. My first aural recollection of Rick Lee, was his performance of the John Lincoln Wright song *These October Days* on the 1997 sampler **Waterbug Anthology 2**. Included here, autumn fades and winter approaches as the narrator reflects that his soul now *rests peacefully* as the *October sun warms his heart*. Available from **Waterbug UK**.

Tom Russell "**The Man From God Knows Where**"  
Hightone [Import]

The last addition to Russell's catalogue was "**Song of the West : The Cowboy Collection**" which I took to be a career crowning glory. It made my 1997 "**Top Five Albums**" list. Somewhat sceptical on first hearing this new release, did I say "*career crowning glory*"? Let me merely add, that was a serious underestimation, since "**The Man From God Knows Where**" is one of those *once in a lifetime* events. It's a suite of twenty-six songs. It's a piece of theatre. It's a work of art. At this juncture, let me sketch the plot of this ancestral exploration that Tom has been working on for much of this decade. The two branches of Russell's family arrived in North America from Ireland and Norway, and traversed the continent many times before they were united in marriage. In order to add edge and accent to those journeying ancestral voices, Russell enlisted the help of a number of vocalists - Norwegian singers, Sondre Bratland and Kari Bremnes, Dolores Keane from Ireland, and from North America, Iris DeMent and Dave Van Ronk. Either in solo roles, or as duos they allow the story to unfold [mainly] via Tom's lyrics. Oh yes, and let's not forget the voice of one of Russell's literary *heroes*, the poet - Walt Whitman. The melting pot of nations, Van Ronk adopts the vocal style of an American carny caller and the role of *the black sheep of the family* as he delivers the *tour de force*, "The Outcast." Dement first appears performing the traditional "Wayfarin' Stranger," and tears your heart out as she reviews her, now, *long lost dreams* in "Acres of Corn"; later, Iris is joined by Kari on the well known hymn "The Old Rugged Cross." Other than Tom's original material, the only other contemporary song included here is David Massengill's "Rider on an Orphan Train." In order to maintain a link through this song cycle, Russell [and the other vocalists] consistently repeat the phrase "*American Primitive Man, American primitive land.*" Recorded in a barony farmhouse in Hardanger, Norway last September, traditional Irish and Scandinavian instruments add further authenticity to this project of countless highlights. "**The Man From God Knows Where**," may have once been inspired by "The Dreamin'" [an Irish flavoured song co-written with the estimable Katy Moffatt], but he arrives at his destination with the glorious reality and climactic conclusion....."Love Abides." You struggle, you survive and the dream does come true....."Hey look out how far we've come, Do we know who we are, Stranded on a mountain top, Trying to catch a falling star." Available in the UK from **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Lucy Kaplansky "**Ten Year Night**" Red House Records  
[Import]

I first heard Lucy perform the title [and opening] song of her third solo release, in the upstairs room of a pub in Preston, about a week before Christmas 1997. Fifteen months later, the lasting memory of her delivery finally arrives in a form where the aural stimulation experienced that night can be exercised and repeated at will. And it has been with indulgent glee. Co-written with her husband, Rick Litvin, the duo collaborated on eight more selections here, the exception being Steve Earle's "Somewhere Out There" which appeared on the Texans 1997 album "**El Corazon.**" Produced by Ben Wittman, who was responsible for Jennifer Kimball's recent and memorable solo debut, the cast of supporting players remains much as before. Larry Campbell [guitars etc.] and Zev Katz [bass] being the principal players, while the supporting vocalists [on whose album[s] Lucy has regularly contributed] amount to long-time pals Richard Shindell, John Gorka and Ms. Kimball. The most musically stripped down song here, supported only by Lucy's acoustic guitar, is "For Once in Your Life" which deals with death, loss and memory and was written for Lucy's mother. "Promise Me" is a rare and special treat - a passion filled road song - so there's a new twist! Events that occur in the night undoubtedly inspired a number of other songs. As for the mystery participants, one of each gender, in the lyric of "End of the Day," no doubt in time we will learn their true identity. The future has never seemed brighter for Kaplansky.....and that's the truth. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution**.

Emmylou Harris, Linda Ronstadt, Dolly Parton "**Trio Two**"  
Asylum

A decade on [plus a few more years], since their first joint foray, the girls retain the same producer, George Massenburg [Ronstadt's long-time associate], while continuing to vocally plough a furrow employing material by acknowledged contemporary writers - as well as songs originally written for the bluegrass genre. The nearest they come to a pop oriented tune is the Jennifer Kimball [the Nashville one]/Tom Kimmel collaboration "The Blue Train" on which Ronstadt takes the lead vocal, while the Trio supply a chorus that is truly heaven sent. The supporting cast of players equates to an interstellar Who's Who and includes Alison Krauss, the late Roy Huskey Jr. [this confirms the rumour that the disc has been in the vaults for some time], David Grisman, John Starling, David Lindley and Dean Parks. Totally competent, as always, in all areas, sadly none of the interpretations achieve that special something which elevates them to the level of extraordinary. Available in your local record store now.

John McCutcheon's Four Seasons "**Springsongs**"  
Rounder Kids [Import]

With the release of "**Springsongs**," McCutcheon has completed his quartet of seasonal song selections. Essentially, each is a collection of original children's songs. Si Kahn co-wrote eleven of the twelve selections, the exception being John's "Grounded." On the front liner shot, McCutcheon is kitted out for baseball practice. Stateside, springtime sees Little League practice games become the main topic of conversation for that nation's youth - and precisely the plot of the opening cut, "Hope I Make It." Farther along, there are observations of an older sister going to the prom [with a guy ....and she's holding his hand /], and cleaning out a child's junk crammed closet, where



John explores the humorous side of life. Supported by a muted trumpet, the gentle and reflective, "Snow In April," is one of the many gems in this collection. Elsewhere the upbeat "Dog's Life," the bluesy *I'm down, and so low* "Grounded" and "Junk Mail" are self-explanatory titles, while the collection closes appropriately with the rockin' exclamation, "Summer Is A-Coming." Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Various Artists "Songs of the Hills" Shanachie [Import]**

This pleasing, low key, fourteen song selection, features *Appalachian* instrumentals from end to end. Recorded over a three year period, the pickers include Jay Ungar, Molly Mason, Eric Weissberg, Norman Blake and John Sebastian. "The Water Is Wide" and "Shenandoah" are probably the best know compositions, while anyone familiar with Judy Collins' early catalogue will readily recall "Maid of Constant Sorrow." Except that, in this incarnation, it has undergone a gender change. Produced by Brian Keane, with a similar feel and sound to Darol Anger's darned fine 1997 compilation "**Heritage**" [albeit without the support of a million *star* session players], the music on this release makes for ideal listening during those quiet reflective times. A most definite keeper. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Toni Price "Low Down and Up" Antones/Sire [Import]**

Gwil Owen, Price's favourite songwriter, was nominated for an Oscar this year for co-writing the Alison Moorer *hit* cut "A Soft Place to Fall" featured in the movie, "**The Horse Whisperer**." That said, Toni's latest recording, her fourth, contains only a quartet of Owen originals. That said, you don't need many songs of the quality of Gwil's "Anything," about helping your friends when they're in need, and the upbeat toe-tapper "Looserville Blues," for that to be an irrelevant factor. Elsewhere on this set, the contribution to Texas music by the late Walter Hyatt and Uncle Walt's Band are acknowledged, with the inclusion of the Hyatt/Libbi Bosworth collaboration "Foolin' Around." Former Walt alumni David Ball supplies "Don't You Think I Feel It Too," while the third member of that estimable trio, Champ Hood, has been a long-time fixture in Price's house band. The late Jimmy Day [pedal steel] and Donald Lindley [drums] contributed to the sessions for this album, just prior to their passing. On the same tack, the closing cut "Why Is Love Like That ?," was composed by the late Charlie M. Brown. Probably Price's most accomplished set to date it features a number of torch songs.....and is definitely another candidate for the *repeat play* button. Available from **Village Records**.

**Butch Hancock "Diamond Hill" Rainlight [Import]**

As far as the six release, [original] vinyl quotient of Hancock's back catalogue is concerned, "**Diamond Hill**" is the penultimate reissue. "**1981 : A Spare Odyssey**" being the one yet to come. "**Hill**" was cut in Lubbock, a mere two decades ago, with production assistance from the current *top studio cat* on the Texas music scene, Lloyd Maines. Never one to stint on the length of the cuts, the nine tracks featured, all Hancock originals, run out at nearly forty-two minutes duration. Supported by a couple of Lloyd's brothers and a swathe of local North Texas players, including the pre-solo career David Halley, the acoustic and electric folk/country content sit comfortably with the occasional forays into Tex/Mex rhythms. One of this unique individuals best works.....may Hancock's "Wheel of

Fortune" continue to spin with such inspiration for many decades to come. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Clive Gregson "Happy Hour" Fellside Recordings**

Bells. Yes, Bells. Of many different sizes, can be heard all over this album. Why ? You tell me. One thing is certain however, and that's the cast iron, rock solid guarantee you get with a Clive Gregson album – every time - great tunes are always appended to his lyrics. According to the liner, after Clive had recorded these songs, the results far exceeded his expectations to the extent that the demo tracks became the album. And the supporting musicians ? - the only player featured here is Clive, on guitar, piano and percussion. A Nashville resident these past six years, Gregson retains a distinctly English flavour in his lyrics as evidenced by the mention of, for instance, the Palais de Dance and Yorkshire in "Fred Astaire," and the semi-detached suburban household featured in "Salt." The latter song traces the events that climax with a divorce, following the discovery of marital infidelity [by the husband]. In fact, many of the songs here take that male/female struggle as their theme. "I Would Have Walked Away," "Until We Meet Again" and "How Could I Resist ?" being prime examples. As if to confirm my contention at the outset of this review, there's even a song here titled "Melody".....all about the joy of singing. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Rosie Flores "Dance Hall Dreams" Rounder [Import]**

The 1996 reissue by Rounder of Rosie's 1987 debut album under the guise of "**A Honky Tonk Reprise**" formed part of the trade-off that took Iris DeMent from Philo/Rounder to Warner Bros. In the years since, Flores has been as busy as ever. She spent some time working on the west coast, became a member of Asleep at the Wheel when she relocated to Austin a few years back, and had her duo album with Ray Campi, "**A Little Bit of Heartache**," issued by the [currently] financially troubled Watermelon imprint. Finally we get Rosie's official Rounder debut, part of which was cut in concert at Cibolo Creek Country Club, San Antonio during January. Apart from the Westberry/McCoy song "Funnel of Love," the remaining songs all feature her skill as a composer, some in alliance with the cream of the crop – including Don Henry, Radney Foster and our own Julian Dawson. "Who's Gonna Fix It Now" is a touching tribute to her late father, and "From Where I Stand" takes the form of a personal life assessment to date – with the balance most certainly in credit. A rockin' n' rollin' lady on the surface, scratch a little and you'll find that Flores' possesses real honest depth and integrity. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**The Gourds "Ghosts of Hallelujah" Munich [Import]**

Augmented since their last recorded outing by the addition of Max Johnston, ex-Wilco, The Gourds laid down the initial tracks for this album at their spiritual home - Laurels Ranch in Comfort, Texas. As sloppy sounding as ever, their lyrics would undoubtedly make truly *unwholesome* fodder for a "Buzzcocks" interpretation. Kevin Russell and Jimmy Smith supply, respectively, eight and seven songs, while Mike Stewart and the band are credited for the production. Alt. country Texas style probably describes the result. And it might even be their best set yet... Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.



**Tom Pacheco "The Lost American Songwriter – Bare Bones II" The Road Goes On Forever**

The basic statistics - two discs [the second pair in the series], featuring a total of thirty tracks, and including twenty songs that are previously unreleased. Among the latter category are a number of songs that Tom premiered during his 1997 UK tour – "Shadow of a Seagull" written for his sister, and the truly magical "Fly With the Lightning" being lasting and cherished memories of those live shows. Recorded over a three day period during the summer of '98 in John Weider's Woodstock, NY studio - and featuring Tom, his guitar and songs, with occasional contributions from Weider - the tracks come complete with the sound of squeaking studio seats and contributions from the local bird population. Just like experiencing Pacheco in concert, replete with sound effects. A portrait of the legendary and late Neal Cassady is painted in "Out of the American Blue," while the connection between one of Pacheco's ancestors and a notorious American assassin is explored in "John Wilkes" Booth." "The Lost American Songwriter," the opening cut [of disc one], could quite easily feature scenes from Tom's own life journey, while "China Blue" is the tale of a modern day "Black Beauty" with shades of Robert Redford's movie "The Electric Horseman." The [Bobby] Kennedy years are re-examined through the eyes of "Juan Romero," while the aliens who arrive on Earth, circa 1880, deliver their own brand of retribution and in the process save Muddy Waters' grandfather from a Ku Klux Klan lynching in "The Abduction." "Loose Change" traces the lifestyle of some of Woodstock's female inhabitants at the height of the town's fame in the late sixties and again at the threshold of the next millennium. Some survived and evolved, while others stumbled and fell. As for Pacheco's own story, he is most definitely a survivor.....and for the songwriter that evolved, we should offer eternal thanks. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Bill Morrissey "Songs of Mississippi John Hurt" Philo [Import]**

The vital word in the title of this album is "of," since the fifteen songs featured were not all written by Hurt. Some are traditional, in terms of their source. The binding link, according to Morrissey's sleeve notes, is that by performing and recording them during his lifetime Hurt managed to "make the songs his own." Produced by his manager, Ellen Karas, Morrissey is joined on a number of the cuts by two contemporaries [and close pals] – Peter Keane and Cormac McCarthy. Bill produced Keane's most recent set "Walkin' Around," while Bill and Cormac have written songs together in the past. Rather than being a deep exploration of blues guitar playing, there's a finger picking flow and bottleneck slide about the "Songs of Mississippi John Hurt." But here's the reservation. Making this album may have been, for Morrissey, the fulfilment of a long cherished dream – he discovered Hurt's work via a recording, circa '66, and was hooked. In truth, the end result smacks of a musician marking time. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Plainsong "New Place Now" Spin Along Records**

This aggregation has been around since 1972. In the decades between, as far as touring and recording has been concerned, it's principally been a case of *off*, rather than *on*. The nineties have, in truth, seen their greatest activity in all the foregoing areas. The current line-up features founder members Iain Matthews and Andy Roberts, plus

*relative new boys*, Mark Griffiths [Matthews Southern Comfort, Al Stewart], and Clive Gregson [solo, Any Trouble, Richard Thompson Band etc]. The disc was recorded at a familiar Matthews haunt, Congress House studio in South Austin. In time honoured tradition, there's a song featuring Amelia Earhart. The author, on this occasion - Gregson. "Following Amelia," outlines a journey around the planet identical to that taken by the pioneer of flight. Matthews supplies the darned fine, eminently hummable "Stranded," and "What's Wrong With This Picture," while Gregson wrote the penultimate "The Wrong Track" and co-wrote "Valley Got A New Dog" with Andy Roberts. Part of the band's reputation hangs on their interpretation of material by obscure as well as established songwriters. The *hit* cut here is the opening track and Chip Taylor/Al Gorgoni composition "I Can't Let Go," a 1965 chart success for the Hollies. As for the obscure angle, that's covered by the closing "Another Country" from the pen of the long gone Richard Farina. An understated addition to their catalogue, "Valley Got A New Dog" is the one *sore paw*. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Carrie Newcomer "Bare to the Bone" Philo [Import]**

Meantime, this live album is only available by Mail Order and at Carrie's concerts. Profits from the sale of the recording will be donated to America's Planned Parenthood Health Centres. Drawn from two solo concerts [with guest musicians] that took place in late December 1998, four previously uncut Newcomer songs are featured - "Sparrow," "Just Like Downtown," "Anything with Wings" and the title track. The remainder is drawn from material featured on Newcomer's handful of solo recordings to date, the result ostensibly being a greatest hits collection - or, a selection of Carrie's most requested songs. What more can you really say, except that here are thirteen jewels in a new setting.....*bare to the bone, just as they were when conceived [and went on to take their first breath of life]*. Available by mail order only, from **Rounder Records Corp. One Camp Street, Massachusetts 02140, U.S.A.** and <http://www.rounder.com>

**Alison Krauss "Forget About It" CRS/Rounder**

When the voice of Krauss sails out there into the stratosphere, I've thought for a long time that there's a [Dolly] Partonesque edge to her vocal skill. Dolly and Lyle [Lovett] provide harmony vocals on the closing, eleventh cut "Dreaming My Dreams With You." Alison's eight recording is a non-bluegrass driven solo effort, with the members of Union Station relegated to the role of support players. Self produced, the whole affair is a pleasant, unchallenging, mostly acoustic menu of covers that explore the *heartache that love can be*. As I write this review, Krauss is featured on the front cover of the UK's two major, monthly country music publications and for the life of me I can't figure out what all the fuss is about. At least the young chanteuse didn't resort to a hidden track; other than that, did I miss something special? Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Cathy Bonner "Letter to America" Rideout Records**

Building on the firm foundation of "Same Blood" we now have Bonner's second solo effort, featuring a decade of her *hand crafted* originals. There's a definite transatlantic flavour to her lyrics, supported in each case by a pop inflected melody that marks her out as the female equivalent of our own transatlantic exile, Clive Gregson.



The chorus of "Magazine" confirms the latter contention, while subjectively Cathy asserts that here in the nineties we fall too easily into the trap of conditioning our daily life according to the pages of such publications – I think we all know the titles involved. The title cut is a prayer for the safe keeping of a lost love domiciled on the western shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Although she isn't a *beginning, middle and end* story song lyricist, each of her works features day to day situations that are profoundly easy to associate with. Which brings the thought that Bonner's style fits perfectly with a colleen from Cookstown, County Tyrone who is domiciled in the heart of England - in Leicester. Does it fit ? - of course it does. Available from **Rideout Records, 1a Conduit Street, Leicester LE2 0JN**

**Ian Tyson "Lost Herd" Vanguard [Import]**

Recorded in Nashville, Toronto and at home in Calgary, and following his 1996 *greatest hits* package "**All the Good 'Uns**," Tyson closes this album with a *live* cover of the standard "Somewhere Over the Rainbow." The remaining content amounts to nine new Tyson conceived classics – "Brahmas and Mustangs" was co-written with Dick Jones. "La Primera" tells how Spanish mustangs were brought to the Americas at the dawn of the sixteenth century. The lines "*the Conquistador – Comanche and the cowboy, I carried them to glory*," perfectly captures the impact of this genus upon the history of that continent. The highlights of this easy going set are many and various but, then again, Tyson possesses a pedigree that has spanned in excess of three decades. Here are a few of the memorable moments.....the jazz inflected saxophone breaks on "Lost Herd," the time served cowboys portrayed in "Legends of Cutting" and the love story that *might have been* in "Blue Mountains of Mexico." Available from **Village Records**.

**Erica Wheeler "Three Wishes" Signature Sounds [Import]**

Wheeler's "**The Harvest**" was one of the most pleasant and memorable surprises of 1996. "**Three Wishes**" has been cut from the same bale of cloth. Apart from covers of Bill Morrissey's "Casey, Illinois" [the closing cut on his 1992 album "**Inside**"] and James McMurtry's "Angeline" [from "**Too Long in the Wasteland**" his decade old debut], Wheeler's nine originals, on her fourth solo offering, musically plough much the same ground as her predecessor. "Onward From Here," the opener, finds the narrator recovering and moving on from a failed love affair. While the narrator in the latter cut appears indecisive, Erica's message to her man in the folk rap "Layin' it Down" is "*shape up or move out*"; and it is delivered with potent and threatening intent. In the small town America vignette "Jack's Tavern," a waitress dreams of becoming a country star in Nashville. She reflects that "*living sometimes keeps you right where you are*" and compares her own plight with Richard, a war veteran now resettled in the town, who left home years earlier and failed to fulfil the dream that he was "*gonna be someone*." The *finer days that have come and gone*, as one more rural community struggles to survive the twentieth century, is the thread that permeates "Nowhere to Go." Based on the foregoing, let's guess that Wheeler yearns for a simpler time when life wasn't driven by technology. Overseen by Steven Miller's Cacophony Productions [responsible for Dar Williams' "**Mortal City**" and "**EOTS**"], with stunning guitar support, as always, from Larry Campbell, Wheeler's "**Three Wishes**" more than

fulfil the possibilities created by her previous *harvest* of songs. Available from **Signature Sounds**.

**Dave Moore "Breaking Down To 3" Red House [Import]**

If you're seeking obvious stylistic guidelines, Brooks Williams and Chris Smither toil over similar, self-composed furrows in the field of folk-blues. Like bookends, Moore's **Over My Shoulder** [1990] and this set, constitute his only nineties recordings. The loss of his second daughter, at the age of one week, halted Moore's initial attempt to record this album back in 1994. Come to think of it, appearing as they have over a fifteen year span, Dave Moore's catalogue of three recordings hardly qualify him for the accolade, prolific. There are times however, when quality is what really counts. Enlisting the help of long time Greg Brown producer and guitar picker, Bo Ramsey, as well as a back-line of local Iowa City session stalwarts, the ten cuts featured here are Moore originals. His back catalogue has, to date, depended on a mix of covers and originals. With a happy-go-lucky melodic hop and a skip, the album opens with *Mr Music*, a tribute to a major Moore influence, Sonny Boy Williamson. Elsewhere there's the Dire Straits tinged *Sharks Don't Sleep*, and Dave's biography of generations of his ancestors, *Magic Dust*. There's nothing intellectually deep about Moore's lyrics, and considering my earlier comment about the original attempt to cut this album, a fair summation of **Breaking Down To 3** would be that it portrays a man totally at peace with himself, his life and his music. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution**.

**Rose Polenzani "Anybody" Daemon Records [Import]**

In certain quarters Stateside, Polenzani is touted as the next, anguished, female folk *wunderkind*. On the strength of this collection which brings together eleven songs plus the *de rigueur* hidden and rather fey, closing cut, Rose may have come up with some obtuse worded lines, but I sure as hell miss that other necessary musical ingredient, melody. And if the near five minute epic *Parhelion* is an example of a voice in tune, then my ears have finally failed me. Released by Indigo Girl, Amy Ray's Decatur based record label the vintage of the tracks on **Anybody** span the period 1995 to 1998; the sources being Polenzani's self-produced cassette recordings **Four-Track Demos** and **Studio Demo**, the CD **Dragersville**, plus a pair of previously unreleased selections. As for the title of this collection, one interpretation could be sexual preference. The lyrics certainly portray more than a fair quotient of random pollen spreading by humankind, and Polenzani's verbal execution of *the act* is bolstered by botanical and biological references aplenty. Truth to tell, the whole album possesses an air of desperation, as this still maturing soul seeks meaning in her somewhat confused existence. Already a veteran of the revived Newport Folk Festival and the all-woman mobile monolith, Lilith Fair, as far as the art of Polenzani is concerned, I could be totally off-beam. My realistic assessment.....definitely not [riveting]. Available from **Village Records**.

**Linda Ronstadt/Emmylou Harris "Western Wall : The Tucson Sessions" Warner Bros.**

On present evidence, Emmylou appears to be buckin' for the title of *most personal appearances on recordings during a twelve month period*, for the second year running. Hot on the heels of the contribution by this duo to "**Trio II**" comes this collection of covers, a baker's dozen, by some of the finest contemporary writers to have surfaced in the last four



decades. How about Browne, Cash, Kennerley, Olney, Cohen and Springsteen ? Based on the latter list, you will have gathered that on this set, the ladies are stylistically a million miles beyond the folk/country leanings of their Trio efforts. In reality, this is the land of the wrecking ball. While Jackson's "For A Dancer" and Leonard's "Sisters Of Mercy" are [already] established classics, Dave Olney's WWI epic of love n' war "1917" is a recent addition to that college. And let's not forget the atmospheric opener, "Loving That Highway Man" which raises the question, who the hell is Andy Priebay and has he cut and solo album yet ? To add some tang to this cocktail, there's a number of curved balls. Never a prolific composer, Harris enjoys three credits on this set, in one instance collaborating with the sisters McGarrigle – their "All I Left behind" is truly heartbreaking – and also with Jill Cuniff of Lucious Jackson. In fact more than half the songs come from women writers, including "Valerie" from Mrs Springsteen. I seem to recall an article, was it in **ZigZag** [?], from [way, way] over three decades ago where Ronstadt mentions her then unknown houseguest, Emmylou. Their subsequent adventures, together and apart, have most surely made for a long and fascinating journey.....this is just one more, damned fine, genre busting episode. Available in your local record store now.

**Lyle Lovett & His Large Band "Live in Texas" MCA/Curb**

One of the most memorable gigs of my life was Lovett & Co at Manchester's International 2, circa 1988. OK, Saturday June 18<sup>th</sup> to be precise. A decade plus later we get this live set, featuring the eighteen piece ensemble, cut in Austin and San Antonio, Texas some four years ago. So let's hear it for the preservation of historical events. Drawing upon cuts from every Lovett release starting with 1986's self titled debut through to "That's Right (You're Not From Texas)" from Lyle's, [at the time] yet to be released 1996 album "**The Road to Ensenada**," the Large Band stamp their own in-depth sound on the proceedings. Rickie Lee Jones steps up to add some atmospheric harmony vocals to the Lovett/Willis Alan Ramsey co-write "North Dakota." As far as the generation of Texas musicians who rose to prominence during the eighties, Lovett is a cross genre performer. In a solo/small combo setting you're liable to be served his folk and country leanings. With the Large Band you're ensured of a swinging sound and styling that draws heavily upon jazz, gospel and soul music. For "**Live in Texas**" read sixty minutes of toe tappin' fun, from the psyche of a guy who well knows that a moving target is the hardest to hit. Available in your local record store now.

**Various Artists "Gram Parsons Tribute Album" Almo Sounds**

Lucky thirteen is the number [of tracks], with ne'er a mention of Sid Griffin. Mind you, Lucinda Williams shares a duet with David Crosby on "Return of the Grievous Angel," so I guess there is a Sid connection after all !! All the obvious Byrds/Burrito solo career songs are featured – "Sin City," "Hot Burrito #1," "Hickory Wind" plus the aforementioned Williams/Crosby duet. Most of the performers involved have endured [for their art] fifteen minutes of fame, although, for the ex-Byrds featured, that flame is now flickering in the rear view mirror. As befits the spirit of this project, there is a significant contribution from Emmylou Harris, in the form of duets with Beck ["Sin City"] and Sheryl Crow [Juanita"] and though not credited on the test pressing, with Chrissie Hynde & The Pretenders

["She"]. Gillian Welch's interpretation of "Hickory Wind" develops into a slow, eerie prayer, while The Original Harmony Ridge Creek Dippers appear here as The Rolling Creekippers [unless it's a misprint], with a Rickenbacker enriched version of "In My Hour of Darkness." Interesting – Yes. Awesome – Hardly. Available in your local record store now.

**Terry Clarke, Michael Messer, Jesse Taylor "Rhythm Oil" Koch International [Import]**

The title track opens this set at breakneck speed. Originally a 1993 release on the now defunct Minidoka label, this is the first in a series that will see Koch International reissue the complete Terry Clarke/Mindoka catalogue. This particular collection mainly falls into the category of, blues infused rock; particularly so, when considering the contributions from our own Michael Messer, and the legendary Lubbock picker, Jesse Taylor. Eight of the decade of selections were written/co-written by Clarke, and he co-produced the set with Messer. The Austin, Texas recorded country rock influenced "**Call Up A Hurricane**" and the Irish folk music classic "**The Shelly River**" will be coming down the turnpike 'ere long...and you know what ? It's great to see them back in print. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution**.

**Hoyt Axton "Gotta Keep Rollin' – The Jeremiah Years 1979-1981" Raven [Import]**

Mother Mae's *little* boy first enjoyed country chart success during the mid-seventies. He only enjoyed one Top 10 hit, namely the late 1974 duet with Renee Armand on their co-write "Boney Fingers." A version of the latter song appears here. In 1978 Axton established his own Jeremiah label, and the quarter century of cuts included on this seventy five minute long recording are drawn from that part of his career. The half dozen Jeremiah/Axton hits that date from 1979 till 1981 are included here. Happy go lucky country, from the late Hoyt Axton. Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Terence Boylan "Same" Spinnaker [Import]**

Three decades ago Terry and his brother John launched their recording career as The Appletree Theatre with the album "**Playback**." John went on to become a record producer [Association, Linda Ronstadt, Michael Martin Murphey, Pure Prairie League etc.], while Terry launched his solo career with "**Alias Boona**," later cutting two solo albums for Asylum – respectively "**Terence Boylan**" [1977] and "**Suzy**" [1980]. After nigh on two decades of musical silence comes this *hi-tech*, fifteen track selection that combines eight of the nine tracks from the 1977 release, and four cuts from "**Suzy**" topped off by three new songs. The precise vintage of the latter trio is not revealed on the liner, although the instrumentation is stripped down relative to the other material here. Definitely a nugget from an era that was magical. Available from **Spinnaker Records, PO Box 450, Rhinebeck, N.Y., U.S.A.**

**John Prine "In Spite of Ourselves" Oh Boy [Import]**

This collection is Prine's first studio recording since 1995. During the intervening years he had to deal with a bout of cancer. Basically, the album is composed of duets with female vocalists, young and slightly older. The tunes are covers, apart from the penultimate Prine composed album title cut – soon to be featured in the new Billy Bob Thornton movie "**Daddy & Them**" in which the musician also stars.



The closing selection "Dear John (I Sent Your Saddle Home)" finds Prine supported by the all star male chorus, The Gifting Cowboys. As for those female vocal partners they consist of Iris DeMent [4 cuts], Patty Loveless [1], Trisha Yearwood [1], Melba Montgomery [2], Emmylou Harris [1], Connie Smith [2], Lucinda Williams [1], Delores Keane [2] and Prine's wife, Fiona [1]. The songwriters covered include Don Everly, Hank Williams, Roger Miller, Jack Clement, Felice Bryant and from the current crop, Kieran Kane. As you might guess from the foregoing, this is a country record both in content and execution. *Cheatin' and drinking songs*, mainly drawn from the era when country music wasn't driven by a balance sheet. Standout tracks are "It's A Cheating Situation" with Delores Keane, and for the fun and twist in the lyric "(We're Not) The Jet Set." Available in your local record store now.

Catie Curtis **"A Crash Course in Roses"** Rykodisc [Import]

I missed out on Catie's 1997 self titled collection, her fourth. In spite of winners like "Dad's Yard," the grist on **"Truth From Lies"** and the earlier **"From Years to Hours"** failed to see my Curtis listening habits ascend to addictive levels. I abandoned the journey. On the basis of the glowing reports that preceded **"A Crash Course in Roses,"** I decided to give Catie another spin. These days Curtis' employs a band sound, and the *added colour* imbues her material with a lustrous shine. The repetitious use of *"You gave me love"* and *"I'll give you love"* in the opening cut, "Gave Me Love," kicks off this collection of fourteen songs with an upbeat vibe. Thirteen songs are credited on the liner – yes, you've guessed it! Co-produced with Ben Wisch [Patty Larkin, Cheryl Wheeler and David Wilcox], Catie's band features guitarist Duke "languid electric guitar breaks n' six string pickin', a speciality" Levine [Mary Chapin Carpenter] while the backing vocalists include the latter folk/country diva, Jennifer Kimball and Melissa Ferrick. "Magnolia Street" is a popular song title this year – Buddy Mondlock got there first. Curtis' take is that she found a lasting love on that street. In fact, her lyrics generally concern those four letters, I-o-v-e. For something around fifty-five *thoroughly satisfying* minutes, you can accompany Catie on **"A Crash Course in Roses."** Available in your local record store now.

**P.S.** By the way, not that I was checking your arithmetic but, Catie's debut tape, circa 1989, was titled **"Dandelion."**

Jeff Talmadge **"Secret Anniversaries"** Bozart Records [Import]

Sam Baardman **"The Rookery"** Pelican Records [Import]

Apart from "Midnight Flight," co-written with fellow Texas born lawyer, turned musician, David Rodriguez, Jeff composed the nine other selections, including the closing instrumental "Adeline." There's a gentle, almost restrained, grace about the material. In the main, Jeff's lyrics focus on affairs of the heart and the journeys that we humans take in pursuit of that elusive and abstract phenomenon they call love. Here the outcome leans, in the main, toward relationships that don't last. Inspired by the words of Longfellow, the title cut opens with the line *"there are no kids around her birthday cake,"* but fails to reveal the full story of this [lonely] woman's life. Among the cream of Austin players supporting the legal eagle are Beth Galiger, Chris Searles, Glenn Fukunaga, Gene Elders, Freddie Krc and Brian Wood. I pegged Baardman's debut solo recording **"Kicking The Stone Home"** as soft, folk rock.

This time around, close your eyes on Baardman compositions such as "Time," "When The Freight Train Rolls" or "Prospect Bay" and you'd swear you were listening to Sam's countryman, James Keelaghan. Keelaghan was a storyteller from the outset. The McCarthy communist witch-hunt of the early fifties forms the backdrop to "The Rookery," in which *"Guthrie's gone to ride the rails,"* while *"Seeger's looking worn and pale."* Maintaining the cold war theme, and set in the mid-sixties during Sam's schooldays, "Breathe Easy" is a recollection of a nuclear air raid practice. It may well be the case that, day after day, "The Amazon Is Burning," but Rod MacDonald truly nailed this ongoing human and ecological disaster a decade and a half ago with "The Unearthly Fire." Derivative, is a fair conclusion. Jeff Talmadge's recording is available from **Bozart Records, 812 San Antonio Street, Suite 505, Austin, Texas 78701, U.S.A.** or contact [BozartCD@aol.com](mailto:BozartCD@aol.com), while Sam Baardman can be contacted at **Pelican Records, 390 Scotia Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R2V 1W9, Canada.**

Beth Lodge-Rigal **"Dreamtable"** Handydown Productions [Import]

Beth is currently a resident of Bloomington, Indiana, home to Carrie Newcomer, Grey Larsen and Malcolm Dalglish - fellow scribes in *word and melody*. Incidentally, Lodge-Rigal and her husband Dan appear on Carrie's current, mail-order only, live retrospective CD for Rounder/Philo, **"Bare To The Bone."** **"Dreamtable"** is Beth's sophomore effort. Her 1997 solo debut was titled **"Follow Me."** Newcomer and Lodge-Rigal, in terms of songwriting style, are *soul sisters* who often weave words about simple, everyday events into their song lyrics. The conclusions are often significant. The interesting and unexpected things that you find in the "Back Of My Car," and "Girls In The Trees," the recollection of a happy tomboyish youth, are prime examples of that ability. On the latter track, the melody is neatly underscored by a string trio. From the darker side of life comes the sympathetic portrait of the New York *bag lady*, "Molly." We've all stumbled across a *Molly* at some time in our lives, our loss being the fact that we never took the time or trouble to put aside self-absorption and get to know her story. The lesson - *there but for the grace of God go I*. This collection of one dozen originals opens with the anthemic "Where Are You Now," as Beth recalls, at the age of twenty-three, she loved a man on the [New] Jersey shore who was *"six foot five,"* and had *"bedroom eyes."* In "Ghost Of Me" it's Christmas time, five years earlier, in a land far, far away when Beth's needs were simpler - *"some smoke and poetry."* "Goodnight" is a prayer for peace, in the form of a verse by verse late twentieth century excursion through the ravaged lands of Ireland, Bosnia, Zaire and Bolivia. And on Lodge Rigal's *own doorstep*, there's a city called Los Angeles. Beth's vocal delivery is light and breathy where necessary, and bold and vibrant on the up-tempo tracks. In truth this disc is as good as it can get. Available from **Handydown Productions, P.O. Box 6657, Bloomington, Indiana 47407, U.S.A.**

Utah Phillips **"The Moscow Hold"** Red House Records [Import]

The first thing to make clear is that this recording contains precious little music - in truth, a mere two songs. That said, Utah's rich spoken voice is almost ceaseless for the seventy plus minute duration. Within two minutes of the



opening cut, he sets out his store with the profundity "folk music is boring." *"Whack foll de di do"* and *"Blow ye winds hi ho."* That's boring." From that point on, and covering a span of twenty plus years as far as the source of these recordings are concerned, Phillips verbally homes in on every conceivable subject and injects each with his own brand of humour. Politics, farming, sex, sporting contests and new age believers - nothing is sacred. A number of the narratives relate to *folk tales* about two pioneers of the old west, Charlie Goodnight and Oliver Loving. That their main claim to fame was pioneering the Goodnight/Loving cattle trail, hardly scratches the surface of the lives of these two spiky characters. On the "Egg Sittin' Horse," Goodnight informs Loving that he is sick of his "*Rural ribaldry, raucous rusticana, fecal badinage.*" The latter terms perfectly capture the essence of the thirteen narratives that Phillips delivers on this recording - an experience you can regularly repeat and still stumble across something new. On each cut there are countless asides. For example, on the "Egg Sittin' Horse," *"He mounted it, saddle-wise [pause for laughter] - my discourse is welded together with little language tests to see if you are with this."* In terms of style and delivery, Garrison Keillor, the creator of Lake Wobegon, and Utah Phillips come from the same school of American storytellers - one, thankfully, that doesn't take itself too seriously. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution**.

**Troy Young Campbell "Man vs. Beast" M.Ray [Import]**

Transform the maxim "*Don't judge a book by the cover*" into "*Don't judge a CD by the drawings on the cover of the liner booklet.*" Truth to tell, the barely human figures featured there lean [heavily] toward the grotesque. Gerald Scarfe, would be an accurate reference point. Although the set title hints at some form of conflict between two life forms, the contents of the accompanying disc are a truly palatable concoction. As for the support musicians, there's no sign of former Loose Diamonds sideman Scrappy Jud Newcomb, or for that matter brother Mike [on bass] and drummer Ian Bailey. Among the local pickers and vocalists who support the kid from Ohio in the studio are Patty Griffin [vocals - like Sandra Bullock, now an Austin resident], Ray Wylie Hubbard [guitar] and Mitch Watkins [guitar]. In terms of co-writing, Troy's collaborators include the Oscar nominated Gwil Owen. Available from **Village Records**.

**Wiggins Sisters "Minnesota" no label [Import]**

**Wiggins Sisters "The Wiggins Sisters" no label [Import]**

Every once in a while you stumble across a recording by an artist or band that sets you back on your heels. The thing is, the Wiggins girls have accomplished that feat with both their recordings. The first, undated, opus was cut in Connecticut and opens with Jimmy LaFave's "Measuring Words" and continues with a dozen tunes written [separately ?] by the duo. Once upon a time, Mizzy Hallman, nee Wiggins, was a draw at Austin's now defunct songwriter haven, Chicago House. Hence the LaFave song connection. Five years ago, Mizzy deserted Austin to join her sister, Casey, up North. From time to time, the sisters had pursued solo careers as musicians without shattering any industry records. Casey and her husband moved from Los Angeles to the eastern seaboard in '94, and the sisters soon began working as a duo. Their ability to harmonise like angels with *aching* voices, undoubtedly sources from their common bond in blood. As for their self titled debut, songs like "Texas" - *"I wanna go to Texas, Back to La*

*Zona Rosa's, Hear Jimmy LaFave play,"* the rocking country/pop number "Angel Girl" and the other side of life that is painted in "Hollywood" most surely confirm that these girls are the real thing. "**Minnesota**" was recorded in Austin, more of which later. This recording, once again, opens with a LaFave penned classic. In this case, "Desperate Men" - and the writer even lends his voice to the final product. On this occasion, the liner clearly indicates whether Casey or Mizzy wrote the song. Casey composed the five-minute long closing, title cut; a fond remembrance of the age of innocence while attending her high school reunion. Produced by Lloyd Maines, the list of featured players reads like a Central Texas Who's Who of pickers. Suffice to say, Gene Elders violin work on Mizzy's "Saturday Afternoons" is to die for. The lyric, subjectively, may appear to be about a shopping expedition, while it is in truth a paean to friendship and the preservation of precious memories. The other cover here is Will T. Massey's "You Take the Town," another connection that *screams* "*We'll never forget the Chicago House.*" The guitar break on the latter song is pure John Inmon. Admirers of Jerry Jeff Walker will understand precisely what I mean. Elsewhere, Casey's "Only Mine" is a gentle love song [to one of her children ?], Mizzy's "Boys From New Jersey" rocks, while her "Killing America's Soul" is a portrait of that nation's crumbling moral code and infrastructure. Both recordings make for essential listening, and are available from **P.O. Box 768, Westport, Connecticut. 06881, U.S.A.**

**Mary Chapin Carpenter "Party Doll" Columbia**

This seventeen track "*career retrospective,*" was originally scheduled to appear late last year. The content is a very astute mixture that includes five "live" versions of Chapin chart hits and concert showstoppers - sic. "Down at the Twist and Shout" performed with Beausoleil, and "Quittin' Time." Then there are the songs taken from her regular side trips. "Grow Old With Me" hails from the John Lennon tribute disc "**Working Class Hero,**" while "Dreamland" first appeared on the 1992 CBS children's album "**Til Their Eyes Shine...The Lullaby Album.**" No review to date has had a kind word to say about the traditional song "10,000 Miles." The track appears on the soundtrack toward the end of the movie "**Fly Away Home.**" Reviewers have mainly balked at the syrupy nature of Mark Isham's orchestration, yet I find the wistful nature of the rendition rather beguiling. Consider the foregoing as the icing on the cake. The cherry's amount to the pair of new MC2 songs - "Wherever You Are" and "Almost Home" - the latter co-written with Beth Nielsen Chapman and Annie Roboff. Just like one of her concerts, Chapin closes this collection with a cover - Mick Jagger's "Party Doll." That apart, whither an MC2 rendition of "Girls With Guitars" and "Opening Act" ? Available in your local record store now.

**Rod MacDonald "Into the Blue" Brambus [Import]**

It's obvious from the lyrical content of some of the seventeen songs on MacDonald's fourth release for the Swiss Brambus imprint, that MacDonald is now a resident of the state of Florida. He moved from New York City a few years ago. Now an established member of the folk community in the sunshine state, there's a definite acoustic folk/blues edge to some of the fare. As for the production, Rod is aided and abetted - *it seems like it has been for forever* - by Mark Dann. Relative to the American Gadfly version of "**Into the Blue**" there are four extra "live" tracks on the Brambus release. That's the commercial tease. As



for deception, that could be construed as a great skill. Musically and lyrically, "Here's A Song For You" appears simple – stylistically it could be a standard from the 1940's, yet that's the deception. Simple hits the target every time, even down to the "doop do wah" female chorus. Returning to the theme of Florida - "Days of Rain," "It's A Tough Life," "Lightning Over the Sea," "The Aucilla River Song," the album title song and "Deep Down in the Everglades" – the latter about the May 1996 ValuJet plane disaster, have all been inspired by life experiences in his new home state. "Six Strings & A Hole Big & Round" is a tribute to this songwriter's most precious tool – his instrument of choice. The closing quartet of tunes are "The Cure For Insomnia" an instrumental, the long established concert favourite "Some Things I Like About America," plus the bluesy cover "Come Back, Baby" and from 1936, the standard "It's A Sin To Tell A Lie." And finally, on "Sun Dancer," ankle bracelets must surely amount to the most exotic musical instruments ever used on a recording.

**Michael Weston King "God Shaped Hole" Glitterhouse [Import]**

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the word "*sabbatical*" as "*of or appropriate to the Sabbath; a period of study, or leave for travel.*" This solo recording, his first, finds Michael on leave from his band, The Good Sons. The closing days of 1998, were a disaster for the quartet and a personal nightmare for Weston King. Their bus was involved in an almost fatal crash while touring Germany, then Watermelon, their US record company, went belly up financially and Michael's marriage of eleven years came to an end. The sessions for "**God Shaped Hole**" took place in January this year at Martin Joseph's house in Cardiff, with the foregoing string of events heavily influencing the lyrics of Mike's latest compositions. As you might guess a melancholic air permeates the end result; the use of acoustic guitar, piano, keyboards and cello simply serve to enhance the tenor of the material. Instead of emerging from the process with a negative mindset, Weston King offers an optimistic outlook having found love once again. "No More Songs," written almost three decades ago by the late Phil Ochs opens the proceedings. Lyrically, it literally describes the events in Weston King's life of late. "Lay Me Down" which follows, is Mike's farewell to his friend and fellow picker, the late Townes Van Zandt. "Beautiful Lies" draws inspiration from the same *well* [of unfulfilled promises] as Jim McGuinn's "So You Want to be a Rock'n'Roll Star." "Don't Leave the Lights On" and "Endless Wandering Stars" are to his past, what Louise in "England's Dreaming" and the title cut are to Michael's future. King even offers us a *sabbatical* hymn, "Dear Lord, Why Did You Desert Me," while the reflective "Annie" co-written by the late Ronnie Lane, with Kit Lambert and Eric Clapton, draws this episode of Mike's life to a close with the reflective line "*God bless us all Annie wherever we'll be.*" Available from **CDX**.

**Judy Collins "Classic Broadway" Platinum Entertainment Inc. [Import]**

Last year's Platinum release "**Both Sides Now**" was subtitled *classic folk*. Originally touted as a, QVC only, 2CD release, the twelve tracks here form the complementary second half of that project. Of those artists who have survived and recorded through each decade since the sixties, Collins remains the one voice that sustains me, irrespective of the content. Rarely a writer of original material, these days she is hardly the cutting edge

interpreter she once was. In that role, she lent a helping hand and exposure to countless, struggling new writers. Joan Baez appears to have cornered that market during the current decade. So what do we have here? Well, apart from the opening gambit "Don't Cry for me Argentina" from the long defunct team of Rice/Lloyd Webber, this is strictly an American affair. The Gershwin's have three cuts [one co-written with Vernon Duke], as do Rodgers & Hart. Lerner & Loewe, Hammerstein & Rodgers, Irving Berlin, Meredith Wilson all score one cut. It hardly seems like a quarter of a century since Collins scored a Top 10 hit with the closing selection, Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns." Timeless voice. Timeless music. Available from **Wildflower Records Inc., P.O. Box 1296, New York City, New York 10025, U.S.A.**

**Patty Larkin "A GoGo" Vanguard/Road Narrows [Import]**

Once upon a time, an innocent Austinite – male gender – was rash enough to utter something in the vein of, "*Girls don't play guitars*" in the post show presence of Mary Chapin Carpenter. Like the Ray Davies of her generation, she promptly penned a lyrically *ironic* tribute "Girls With Guitars." Larkin is one gal who can certainly cut the acoustic mustard with six strings. Not a shadow of a doubt there. At the dawn of this now dying decade, "**Live in the Square**" ended her three-album sojourn with the Rounder/Philo label. Patty went on to cut a quartet of discs for the Windham Hill subsidiary, High Street, in the process developing an obtuse, almost impenetrable lyrical style. As one of the newest members of the Welk family, on their Vanguard/Road Narrows imprint, "**A Gogo**" is *quite logically* a live recording. The principle, "*We shall end as we began.*" Ten venues, fourteen cuts, pieces of wood and steel, one woman and her songs. That is, apart from the cover of "Don't Do It" and a reprise of Richard Thompson's "Banish Misfortune" on her "Open Hand." The material Larkin employs leans heavily on her High Street recordings, and there's the rub. A few new tunes would have added some body to the mix, as would some of her between song banter. And the girl can banter with the best – fifty-seven minutes of music hardly pushes the *space* envelope. One final thought.....although not lauded as widely on planet *Folkworld*, her "Mary Magdalene" is as powerful as Richard Shindell's "Ballad of..."

**Michael McNevin "Sketch" Mudpuddle Music [Import]**

First he gave us his "**Secondhand Story**," and then a couple of years back Michael put some live versions of his "**Napkin Literature**" on cassette. Maintaining the theme of spinning yarns, McNevin's latest contribution is, "**Sketch**." "Bagger," a tale of life at a supermarket checkout, opened Michael's 1995 tape and does so here. The other songs that survived the transition to CD are "Rogue River Revisited" and "Mr. Mayes." The former tune recalls a childhood holiday resort re-visited some twenty years later, while "Mr. Mayes" is an aging neighbour that all Mike's brothers and friends thought an ogre. A four year old at the time, Michael found him to be a gentle soul. If there is a secret to this man's success as a writer, it is that he retains no secrets. He willingly welcomes you into his world like a beloved brother and *matter of factly* spills the beans, warts and all. For instance, "John's Cocoons" is set in his youth, and recalls a time when his [older] brother collected moth cocoons, hatched them and then had the moths fly around the McNevin home; "The Ballad of Big Daddy's" is a eulogy to the closing of Mike's favourite restaurant. On the *hidden*



track McNevin tells how, later, he sneaked on to the roof of the building and captured a *souvenir*. Mike is to be congratulated, since he's the first artist, to my knowledge, to acknowledge a *hidden track* on a CD liner. There isn't a weak link in this latest episode from the life of McNevin. Oh yes, I almost forgot – one of the reasons that the album is called "**Sketch**" is that Michael is now an official Etch-A-Sketch artist. Examples of his success at that artform grace the liner booklet. Available from **Mudpuddle Music, P.O. Box 5062, Pleasanton, California 94566, U.S.A.**

**Julie Miller "Broken Things" Hightone [Import]**

Let's face it, Julie Miller possesses a *little voice*. It's thin and reedy, and it makes *curious sounds*. It's a fragile thing. And fragile *things* require extra special care. They are easily *broken*. As for her lyrics, Miller's sophomore effort for Hightone ploughs much of the same sad, wistful territory that was featured on "**Blue Pony**." Surely new titles such as "I Still Cry," "All My Tears," "Orphan Train" and the superb "Broken Things" testify to that proposition. Which doesn't mean to say that the lady can't rock. "Ride the Wind to Me" and "I Need You" attest to that. Created with her multi-talented husband Buddy, her *curious sounds* reach deep into your soul. And if you're really listening, the sentiments expressed in Julie's words might just tug at the melancholy strings of your heart. Written in 1993, Julie dedicates her song "Broken Things" to the victims of the Omagh bombing. There's no need to say more. Available in your local record store now.

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**Scotland, August 1998/Nova Scotia, September 2000**  
 In late 1997, my New Jersey based pals Tim & Lori Blixt, perpetrators of the famous **Log Cabin House Concert Series**, decided to take that concept on *the road*. From the sublime to the certifiably crazy, in one short step. The logical and obvious *road* location, was St. Mary's Cottage in the grounds of Duns Castle, Duns, Scotland. The chosen guest musician, Rod MacDonald, and his wife, Nicole. The *audience* was composed mainly of American *folk* music addicts, apart from *moi* and *spouse*. In collusion with Rod and subsequently the remainder of the participants, but to the total exclusion of the Blixt's, I conspired to bring one of Tim's musical heroes along for the first couple of days. Lori's reaction as she met Krys and I at the garden gate, with Terry Clarke in tow, has been recorded for posterity as "*Oh my God, Tim is going to die.*" That was the first of a million treasured memories acquired during the first week of August 1998. Seven days during which, valued new friendships were forged. Our "**Walk In The Highlands**" [OK, what's in a title, since we were in the *wrong corner* of the *correct country* !], titled after one of Rod's compositions, was captured on video by Tim & Lori and *chief lens persons* Gary & Jeri Ashorn of Friendswood, Texas. Tapes of the various concerts have now been condensed into an eighty-minute video by Gary [substitute *genius*] and feature Rod performing at the Cottage, in the Spiegeltent as part of the Edinburgh Festival, and on our final night, at the White Swan in Duns. Available in NTSC video format it can be purchased for \$20.00 per copy from **P.O. Box 2152, Delray Beach, Florida 33447, U.S.A.** Add \$5.00 for postage and handling [U.S.] I'd suggest around \$8.00 postage for other locations. Should you require a PAL version of the tape, then \$30.00 per copy should cover the additional cost. When you mail your order, ask for a copy of Rod's current list of recordings, as some interesting archive material has been added to his catalogue recently. For the record, the *house concert holiday*

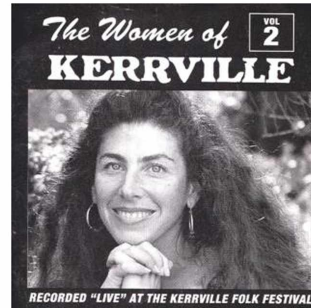
is happening again September 2000 in Nova Scotia. Think about it - neat twist, huh. If you're interested in more details about the trip, contact me at **127 Pinewood Drive, Bartley Green, Birmingham B32 4LG.** Consider £1,000.00 as a minimum outlay/head including air fare etc. The precise cost has yet to be established.

## Kerrville "Live Highlights"

Silverwolf have released two further recordings in their Kerrville Folk Festival "**Live Highlights**" series. The first drawn from the 1996 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary festival, contains twelve tracks. The second, a woman only affair features recordings from the 1996 -98 festivals. The liner covers and track lists appear opposite :



Cover Artist : Kevin Welch



Cover Artist : Alisa Fineman

## 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Album

1. KEVIN WELCH - Wilson's Track (4:03)
2. CHUCK PYLE - Other Side of the Hill (3:01)
3. RICHARD SHINDELL - Arrowhead (4:08)
4. GAIL DAVIES - Where Love Comes From (4:32)
5. BUTCH HANCOCK - Welcome To The Real World (5:52)
6. JON IMS - I Don't Love You And I Always Will (3:00)
7. CARRIE NEWCOMER - My Father's Only Son (4:00)
8. TOM PAXTON - Ramblin' Boy (3:33)
9. CHENILLE SISTERS - Girl Shoes (2:55)
10. MICHAEL LILLE - Perfect Strangers (2:55)
11. TIM BAYS - It's Magic (4:45)
12. GARY P. NUNN - What I Like About Texas (5:20)

## The Women of Kerrville - Vol. 2

1. THE BURNS SISTERS - God Made Woman (3:32)
2. DEE CARSTENSEN - Time (4:46)
3. BARBARA KESSLER - Notion (3:48)
4. COSY SHERIDAN - Don't Go in the Water (2:52)
5. BETTY ELDERS - Longbed From Kenya (5:06)
6. KAREN TAYLOR GOOD - Perfect Work of Art (3:13)
7. ALISA FINEMAN - Safe Place (3:33)
8. KATY MOFFATT - Walking on the Moon (3:37)
9. KATE WALLACE - Old Fashioned Girl (3:54)
10. SALLY FINGERETT - Ballad of Harry and Esther (5:25)
11. ANNE HILLS - First Day of Autumn (4:17)
12. AMILIA SPICER - Like an Engine (5:05)
13. EMILY KAITZ - Shallow End of the Gene Pool (3:10)
14. PELE JUJU - Move (6:54)

Copies of either recording, at \$15.00 each, are available nationwide in U.S. record stores. Or, contact the Festival Office at **P.O. Box 1466, Kerrville, Texas 78029, U.S.A.** or **Tel. No. 830 257 3600** or **staff@kerrville-music.com**



# A Kerrverts Festival 50.



There is a reason, There is a rhyme,  
There is a season, There is a time,  
and then, there's the latest KERRVERTS FESTIVAL 50.

1. The Dutchman **JUAREZ** "Same" Decca DL75189 [1970] #
2. The Way To Calvary **ROD MACDONALD** "Highway To Nowhere" Shanachie 8001 [1992] #
3. Years **BETH NIELSEN CHAPMAN** "Beth Nielsen Chapman" Reprise 9 26172-2 [1990]
4. Mercy of the San Joaquin **KEITH GREENINGER** "Wind River Crossing" Wind River Music WRM 001 [1997] #
5. River Road/Northern Star **MARK ERELLI** "Mark Erelli" Signature Sounds SIG 1249 [1999] #
6. Look Away **KATE CAMPBELL** "Rosaryville" Compass Records 7 4276 2 [1999] #
7. The Time Is Now/Down Here **STEVE FISHER** "The Looking Glass" Roosterdog Records RDR 2124 [1999] #
8. Yarrington Town **MICKIE MERKENS** "Other Voices/Present Echoes" Elektra PRCD-1134-2 [1998]
9. Saturday Afternoons **WIGGINS SISTERS** "Minnesota" no label 91022 09872 [1999] #
10. Mim's Story **SUZANNE BUIRGY** "A Small Word" Attune Records 20903-2 [1998] #
11. 100 Miles **CATE CURTIS** "A Crash Course in Roses" Rykodisc RCD 10478 [1999] #
12. Shadow of a Seagull **TOM PACHECO** "The Lost American Songwriter" Road Goes on Forever RGF TPDCD 046 [1999]
13. Meanwhile the Rain **JOEL RAFAEL Band** "Old Wood Barn" Reluctant Angel [1996] #
14. Patrick Russell **TOM RUSSELL/IRIS DeMENT** "The Man from God Knows Where" Hightone HCD8099 [1999] #
15. Carolina Mae **JAMIE BYRD** "The Looking Glass" Roosterdog Records RDR 2124 [1999] #
16. Girls in the Trees **BETH LODGE-RIGAL** "Dreamtable" Handydown Productions 1002 [1999] #
17. These October Days **RICK LEE** "There's Talk About A Fence" Waterbug WBG 0047 [1999] #
18. 6 Strings & A Hole Big & Round **ROD MacDONALD** "Into the Blue" Brambus 199925-2 [1999] ^
19. Somewhere Out There **LUCY KAPLANSKY** "Ten Year Night" Red House RHR 126 [1999] #
20. Comes Love **TONI PRICE** "Low Down and Up" Sire/Antone's 10044 [1999] #
21. How It Must Remain **JIMMY LaFAVE** "Trail" Bohemia Beat/Munich BBEA 9 [1999] ^
22. I Should've Known Better **CARRIE NEWCOMER** "Bare to the Bone" Philo CD 9901 [1999] # **XX [Mail Order only] XX**
23. Fred Astaire **CLIVE GREGSON** "Happy Hour" Fellside FECD141 [1999]
24. The Purple Dress **TERRY CLARKE/MICHAEL MESSER/JESSIE TAYLOR** "Rhythm Oil" Koch Int. 332872 [1993/1998]
25. Walk With Me **TERRY CLARKE** "Mother Indigo" Gadfly 250 [1999] #
26. Tell Me **TERRY BOYLAN** "Terry Boylan" Spinnaker SP-A307 [1999] #
27. God's Country **DIANE ZEIGLER** "Sting of the Honeybee" Philo CD PH 1174 [1995] #
28. England's Dreaming **MICHAEL WESTON KING** "God Shaped Hole" Glitterhouse GRCD 463 [1999] ^
29. Broken Things **JULIE MILLER** "Broken Things" Hightone HCD 8103 [1999] #
30. Wide Open Spaces **THE GROOBES** "Wayside" no label/0002 [1997] #
31. Mary Magdalene **PATTY LARKIN** "A GoGo" Vanguard/Road Narrows 79547-2 [1999] #
32. A Little More Everyday **TROY YOUNG CAMPBELL** "Man vs. Beast" M.Ray Records 13907-2 [1999] #
33. 10,000 Miles **MARY CHAPIN CARPENTER** "Party Doll and Other Favourites" Columbia 488659 2 [1999]
34. Jack's Tavern **ERICA WHEELER** "Three Wishes" Signature Sounds SIG 1250 [1999] #
35. The Ballad of Big Daddy's/Big Daddy's Epitaph **MICHAEL McNEVIN** "Sketch" Mudpuddle Music MM1002 [1999] #
36. The Changing Sky **RAY BONNEVILLE** "Gust of Wind" Stony Plain SPCD 1256 [1999] #
37. Lonesome Wind **GWIL OWEN** "Magnetic Heaven" Earnest Whitney Entertainment EWE 011 [1999] #
38. North Dakota **LYLE LOVETT** "Live in Texas" MCA/Curb MCD 111 964-2 [1999]
39. Big Wide Empty **MEGAN PETERS** "Queen's Bed" Sweet Receiver/no index no. [1999] #
40. Penny Black **PLAINSONG** "New Place Now" Spin Along SPACD 001 [1999]
41. Blue Tick Hound **FRED EAGLESMITH** "50 - Odd Dollars" Razor & Tie 7930182843-2 [1999] #
42. For A Dancer **EMMYLOU HARRIS/LINDA RONSTADT** "Western Wall : The Tucson Sessions" Warner Bros. [1999]
43. Cortez Sail **TERRY ALLEN** "Salivation" Sugar Hill SH-1061 [1999] #
44. Captain Torres **JAMES KEELAGHAN** "Road" Hightone HCD 8101 [1999] #
45. Passed Him By **TANYA SAVORY** "Town to Town" Philo 1182 [1999] #
46. California Mountain Time **JEFF BERKLEY** "Demonstration" no label/no index no [1998] #
47. Shark Fishing **UTAH PHILLIPS** "The Moscow Hold" Red House RHR 118 [1999] #
48. Cradle of Love **KELLY WILLIS** "What I Deserve" Rykodisc RCD 10458 [1999] #
49. The Messenger **RAY WYLIE HUBBARD** "Crusades of the Restless Knights" Philo/CRS CSCCD 1009 [1999] ^
50. Heal In The Wisdom **BOBBY BRIDGER** "Kerrville Folk Festival - Live 1986" (cassette only, no index no.) [1987] #

**waitin' their turn** - Runaway Train **TRISH MURPHY** "Rubies on the Lawn" Doolittle DRPR 9029 [1999] # ; China **KAT EGGLESTON** "First Warm Wind" Waterbug WBG 0041 [1990/1998] # ; 1917 **DAVID OLNEY** "Through A Glass Darkly" Philo 1224 [1999] # ; Step by Step **CHUCK PYLE** "Keepin' Time by the River" Bee'n'Flower Music/no index no. [1999] # ; Riding the Range **TOWNES VAN ZANDT** Exile (7" single) EX7013 [1996] ^ ; Just Married **BRUCE ROBISON** "Long Way Home From Anywhere" Lucky Dog CK 69173 [1999] # ; Sing Sister Sing **IAIN MATTHEWS** "Orphans & Outcasts Vol. 3" Perfect Pitch PP005 [1999] ; Come Back to America **THOMAS ANDERSON** "Bolide" RR 1802 [1997] ^

**NOTE.** All albums released in the UK, unless marked otherwise. US releases marked #. European releases ^. Japanese releases \*. Introductory rhyme taken from the Bobby Bridger song, "Heal In The Wisdom" - The Kerrville Folk Festival Anthem.



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## Editorial.

It seemed appropriate to end the second Millennium AD with an asymmetric Editorial. As I put this particular *puppy to bed*, I invited two close pals – one boy, one girl – to contribute a few lines of verse. Maintaining the balance, I offered them the same blank canvas. Unprompted, and this the neat twist, they came up with verses that homed in on different aspects of the same event. Life really can be a revelation.....see opposite.

No doubt we'll see more, *new*, Townes Van Zandt product on the other side of 31/12/99. For the time being, here's details of a 7" vinyl single [Wow !] from Germany that teams Michael Weston [The Good Sons] King's "Riding the Range" with "Dirty Old Town" from the pen of the late, Ewan MacColl. Available through **Topic/Direct Distribution**, this 2000 copy limited edition was released by Exile Records during the early summer this year. The back cover, liner photograph of Townes, from the lens of Butch Hancock, is pure poetry – as for the music, it's darned good, new and for Townes, original.

If I were to pick a writer that was introduced to us during the current decade, to whom I'd award the accolade, The Best, then without any shadow of a doubt for his display of ascending skill through three albums, it would be Richard Shindell. His next project "**Somewhere Near Paterson**" will be with us, via Signature Sounds, on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2000. Mark the date in your *whatever* now. Right now.

As for the quirkiest survivor of the decade, that title must surely go to Jane Siberry. She released the double, live, Christmas song set

"Child" two years ago. The latter disc has now been teamed with two other, single CD, live sets from her Bottom Line, New York "**Siberry Three Wednesdays**" musical experiment, circa the fall of 1996. The box set "**New York Trilogy**" comprising "**Tree**"/"**Lips**"/"**Child**" is available by mail order from her Sheeba Web Site <http://www.sheeba.ca> or by mail from **Sheeba, Box 291 – 238 Davenport Road, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 1J6**. The cost is in the region of \$50.00 US.

Back in 1994 Michael Smith privately released an eighteen track CD titled "**Michael, Margaret, Pat & Kate**." It was based on a stage show, of the same name, that Michael presented at the Victory Gardens Theatre in Chicago. The plot, episodes from his life presented in song. Enhanced by one track, "Little Falls," the recording was recently reissued by the Wind River subsidiary of Rediscover Music. It also includes a new version of "Coffeehouse Days" featuring backing vocalists. The cost of the CD is a mere \$10.00 plus postage. Should you require a recommendation, I'd rate this recording as my **Album of the Twentieth Century**. The mailing address – **Rediscover Music, 705 South Washington Street, Naperville, Illinois 60540-6654, U.S.A.** Telephone (630) 305 0770. Web Site – <http://www.folkera.com/windriver>

Regarding the contents of this issue, and in no particular order, thanks are due to **Rod Kennedy, Greg Trooper, Pat Tynan, Michaela O'Brien, Blair Lendell and Alpha Ray + all my Kerrville'n'Stateside pals [you know who you are]**. This issue is dedicated to the nineties. A year/decade/century/millennium almost gone – don't have the opportunity to say that too often.

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**You can also find us at :**

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**Keyword: Y2K**

**6th October 1999**

Come, my new millennial partner, climb out your desktop window  
Download your toolkit and ramp up your full text engine  
You, with your customizable features, and your search box on  
Come, link palms with me, press

Enter my internally developed local portal in ever-expanding unlimited real time  
Before my end task but well after my click herefore  
I standalone on my multilevel platform between a zero and a one  
To begin a new search for our Single Source Provider

**Mickie Merkens a.k.a. Alpha Ray**

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**THE END & THE BEGINNING**

**MATTERS NOT TO THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS**

**THAT FRIDAY THE 31ST**

**IS THE END OF A MILLENNIUM**

**FOR THEM ONE DAY DIFFERS LITTLE FROM THE LAST**

**MANKIND ON THE OTHER HAND**

**HAS ASSIGNED IT A CASE NUMBER**

**AND ORDERED THAT ALL BE COMPLIANT**

**GOING TO BE INTERESTING TO WATCH**

**TO SEE IF WHAT THE SEERS SAID**

**AND THE BELIEVERS' BELIEVED**

**WILL COME TRUE**

**OR IF WE MOVE SMOOTHLY**

**INTO THE NEXT MILIEU**

**MATTERS NOT TO THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS**

**Blair Powell a.k.a. Walking Hawk**