

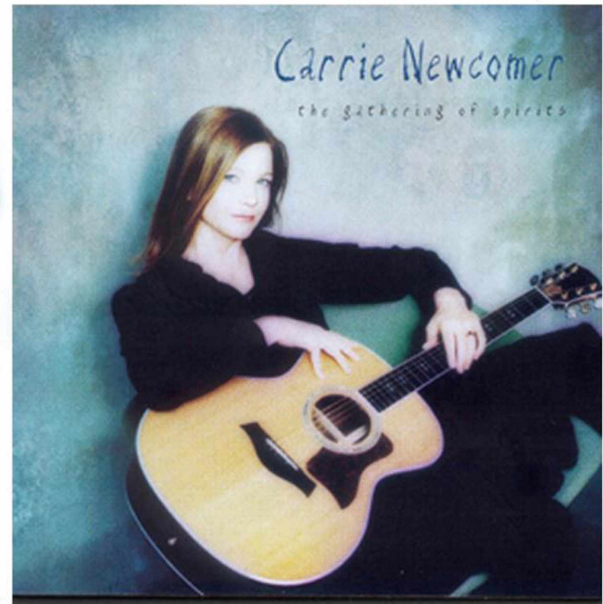
# KERRVILLE KRONIKLE

**No.31**

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"Fourtold" album sleeve, Applesseed Recordings



Carrie Newcomer's "The Gathering Of Spirits" Rounder/Philo



Photo: Applesseed Recordings / Robert Corwin

Fourtold, clockwise from top right are - Steve Gillette, Anne Hills, Michael Smith and Cindy Mangsen



Photo: Arthur Wood, Kerrville Kronikles Katalogue

Dalis Allen, Producer, Kerrville Folk Festival

**Kerrville-kompacts,  
kassettes & other  
kooincidencees.**

# Kerrville-kompacts, kassettes & other koincidences.

Jonathan Byrd "The Waitress" no label

Byrd, one of the half dozen winners of the 2003 Kerrville Folk Festival New Folk Songwriting Contest, was, frankly, one of the musical highlights of this year's entire event. His five song Contest Winners set was an accomplished tour-de-force. "The Waitress" is Byrd's sophomore solo offering. In the spirit of the album title and by way of pursuing the diner theme, the songs are categorised as *Starters* – two selections, *Entrees* – six selections and *Desserts* – three selections. Now if your arithmetic is up to scratch, you'll note that the foregoing only adds up to eleven. Thirteen cuts are listed on the liner, "Down The Old Mountain Road" and "Home Sweet Home" being instrumentals, the former a Byrd original.

Byrd opens with the album title cut, wherein the narrator sings the praises of his favourite server even though she's had an undefined "brush with the law." Slipping in references to the gum she chews and her orthopaedic shoes, from a tentative "I think I'm in love with her" in the opening line, the narrator fesses up in the closing line "you're the waitress I love." Down at the local store Larry, a veteran – and "broken old man, in a broken old van" is buying "a six pack of malt liquor – it's the Prozac of the poor." As this tale of one human reaching out to help another evolves, the narrator reveals that he has an old piano to dispose of. "If you can haul it, you can have it" the newspaper ad proclaimed. Many come to view it, some even played a tune, but revelation comes on the day that Larry calls – "I heard you got a piano" he said with suspicion, he was shaking from the cold and probably malnutrition." In next no time Larry reveals the instrument's history, and then "played songs of love and country, from C to shining C." An intriguing wordsmith, "The Ballad Of Larry" is a song of which Byrd should be justly proud. When the broken old man and his van depart, they're the rich new owners of a broken old piano. And the latter, folks, were merely Byrd's classy pair of *Starters*.

Featuring a couple of sombre introductory bars from Robbie Link's cello, "Radio" is a [road] song about the companionship and relief that countless [radio] stations bring the driver whose view is the centre line and the endless horizon. Byrd even imbues the radio with human characteristics – "it's just me and you again." "The Snake Song" is possessed of a finger picked fluency that soon drew me in, and Jonathan neatly hangs his lyric around the major image "a snake is like a memory – half is gone before you see." Looking around at the world he lives in, in "My Generation," Jonathan witnesses the spectrum from the rags of poverty to the consistently frivolous financial excesses of the rich. In the process he, subjectively, embraces politics, religion and much more. In this push-button media filled age, Byrd totally nails that current disease of the public domain – a truly pernicious drug – that feeds upon our naivety, utter gullibility/stupidity and our shallowness, with "my generation is addicted to fame." Oh that I wish the world wake up and smell the roses. Warhol, it must be said, was a visionary. "Small Town" is a

recollection of how beautiful and natural life on this planet used to be, before the inexorable march of what we like to pigeonhole as, progress. Ringing the changes, "Tape Full Of Love Songs" proves that Byrd possesses a sense of humour, and a thoroughly wicked one at that. Angelina broke the narrator's heart when she ran off unexpectedly, so he pawned her stuff, including a stereo system, to pay his rent. He held on to the "Tape Full Of Love Songs" that she had made. Learning, years later, that Angelina was a jewel thief, the narrator finally plays the tape all the way through. As it comes to an end, he hears Angelina's voice. What she reveals about the pawned stereo system comes as a crushing blow.

The final *Entree* is a rendition of the traditional "Stackalee," and another traditional song, "Fiddle And Bow" is one of the *Desserts*. Sounding traditional in terms of source, Byrd's folk/blues tinged "Rosie" closes the album and is a tale of illicit love that results in the murder of a handsome but devious preacher man. Like "Ashe County Fair" on Byrd's equally stunning debut collection, "Wildflowers," the later cut wonderfully melds those essential traditional folk elements, love and death. Five years down the road this relative youngster is gonna be a major name in folk music. He already is a fully realised songwriter, and the number of folks who are acknowledging that fact grows daily. This recording can also be purchased at Jonathan's web site, <http://www.jonathanbyrd.com/>

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Much in the vein of page 32 of Kronikle Issue # 30, rather than squeeze in, only, one more full album review, in the remaining section of this column I intend mentioning some recordings that have impressed me over the last eight months. In recent times, Eddi Reader's latest on Rough Trade "Sings the Songs Of Robert Burns" has received its fair share of playing time in the Kronikle office. It's already in UK stores and is due to surface in the States by early July.....Eric Taylor has a live recording available via Silverwolf, the Vermont based label that used to hold the franchise for releasing recordings made at the Kerrville Folk Festival [approx. 1995 through 1999]. The liner details on "The Kerrville Tapes" are pretty thin, and the precise date of the recordings is not stated. That said, all the songs featured are already available on Eric's studio recordings.... A low-key acoustic item that turned up on my doorstep a few months back was by Irish based broadcaster, Eamon Friel. "The Waltz of The Years" is his fourth release. Meantime, it is available from his web site <http://www.eamonfriel.com/> .....Steve Fisher has a new album available. Titled "The Coming Attraction" it's currently the main [and probably only] contender for my "Album of 2003." There is an 1100 word review of the disc on the Folkwax site, which I won't bother repeating here. Suffice to say it is a songwriter symphony composed of fifteen Steve Fisher originals. A self release, and aural medicine for the soul, it is only available meantime by mail order from Steve c/o 615 E. Caddo, Cleveland, Oklahoma 74020, U.S.A. The disc costs \$15.00. Please add \$1.50 for shipping to locations in North America. For other worldly locations add \$5.00 for shipping.....Finally, I'd recommend any of Jeff Black's three recordings. "Birmingham Road" [1998], is the oldest, and then there's "B Sides And Confessions Volume One" [2003] and "Honey And Salt" [2003]. Now go to page 32...

## Carrie Newcomer

### "The Gathering Of Spirits" Interview

*The interview with Carrie Newcomer took place on the evening of 5<sup>th</sup> November 2002. Carrie was at her home in Bloomington, Indiana, while I was at Kerrville Kronikle Headquarters in Birmingham, England. To the sounds of countless fireworks exploding in my immediate locality – it was Guy Fawkes night in England – we got down to talking about Carrie's latest album, a rather sublime collection of songs titled "The Gathering Of Spirits."*

*This is the fourth consecutive studio album on which Mark Williams has worked as a producer [the first was "My Father's Only Son"]. Did you, at any time, think of working with any other producer.*

Of course you think about that, but you know - working with Mark, I think he has a real understanding of what this music is about, and what I was after with this album. I'm just so glad we got to work together one more time. You never know, as it's always album by album, whether he'll want to do it too. If he really feels like this is an album he wants to do. I was so excited that both of us felt like, "yes" this is another project that we could do something wonderful with.

*There's also the point that he had become familiar with your style over three albums, and the direction your writing has been taking.*

I think Mark has also grown with me. I think we both have really grown as artists, as musicians, as producers. That has been pretty wonderful. I really feel like this album is the best thing I have ever done, and I think it's the best thing we have done together.

*Is Mark easy to work with in the studio.*

[Laughs]. Mark is one of the most easy going fellows I think you'd ever want to run across. I think we both get along very well. He's also one of those people – he's an incredible engineer. He's one of those engineers who is always doing a lot, but you never think they are doing anything. He exudes this kind of calm sort of, *one thing at a time* way of working. It's not frenzied. He'll be doing incredible amounts of things, but there is always this feeling of being relaxed in the studio with Mark. I really appreciate that.

*Does he come up with a lot of ideas for instrumentation etc.*

Well, you know, we both do. We don't score for the artists that work with us. I think both of us have this philosophy where the most important thing is finding the right players. The people who are going to be able to get you the sound that you want – that you are looking for. That's important – bringing the right people together. And they write their own parts.

*Presumably you give them a demo to work from.*

Yes, absolutely. They hear the work and then we ask them to be creative with it. There will be different incarnations. We'll try this, and we'll try that. It's very organic in terms of how that works. This is interesting, as it's the first time that we did this – the people who did the strings – Chris Wagoner and Mary Gaines – they live in Wisconsin which is seven hours away from here. We did a lot of work over the internet where they would record ideas and put them up on their web site and I would listen to them. Then I would mail them MP3's and things to work on, from a distance. That was kind of interesting.



Carrie Newcomer, "The Gathering Of Spirits" publicity shot [Rounder/Philo : Photograph : Senor McGuire]

*Presumably they did come to Indiana at some stage.*

Oh yes. Everybody came to the studio and we worked together, but that preliminary work was done before we got to the studio.

*How did you find Chris and Mary.*

I worked with Chris and Mary before, on another album. They did a couple of songs with me. I also had done shows with the band that they used to be in, a few years back, The Common Faces, and I just loved their work. That's how I encountered them. Those shows were in Wisconsin and also in the mid-west. They are two wonderful players. I think the attitude on this album that I love, in terms of the players, is that they are very mature musicians – and I mean mature, not so much in age, but in the philosophy of how you play. You know, a person who really understands the concept of creating music, knows that what you don't say is just as important as what you do say. And that

there's a certain elegance about sound, in that simple is not necessarily easy. Simple can be very elegant. Sometimes you need a lot notes, and so you step forward and do that, but sometimes what you need is something very simple.

*You need space.*

And breadth. It's all about a song – it's not even about Carrie Newcomer. It's about what will make this song the most powerful thing it can be, and that means getting out of your own way. That means putting your own ego aside and always focussing on the song.

*While we're talking about musicians, Winton Reynolds plays piano on most of this album.*

Yes he does, and he's touring with me on this album.

*Dan Lodge-Rigal used to play piano with you regularly.*

Yes. Dan did and he actually plays on two songs on the album. They are beautiful parts too.

*How did you find Winton.*

Indiana University is in Bloomington where I live, and it's one of the major music schools in the country. There's like Julliard, and there's IU so there is always lots of musicians here. Winton was here finishing up a doctorate, actually, in classical composition, and that's how we met. Then he moved to Austin and he's been there for about three years now. He's originally from the Bay Area, near Stanford and Palo Alto. He's in his thirties, which I think is a fairly young guy. A fabulous player, because he is classically trained, but at the same time he's an amazing jazz pianist and has worked with rock bands and funk bands, as well as acoustic/roots players like myself. He brings this whole range of influences, and an ability to add flavours to things, that you don't always find. Someone who is really diverse in what they play.

*You co-produced this album with Mark. Is it something that you enjoy doing.*

Yes, I do. I like being able to be really part of that creative process. It's a whole different art form. Writing is a certain kind of art form. Performing is a certain kind of art form. Creating an album, producing, is kind of like the difference between painting and sculpture - something like that. They are both art forms and they come from the same place, in a way, but they are very different. It's fun and I really enjoy that work.

*In the studio, do you ever get torn between the performance of a song and your role as a producer.*

Well, I think it has gotten easier. I think it's easier because I have been working with Mark for so long now, and I can let go of certain things. When I go into

perform. When I go in to do my parts, I trust him, I really do trust him as a really fine producer, so I don't have to be thinking about that all the time. So I go in and I just play my heart out you know. There is always that thought - production part - in the back of my mind, but I really do trust Mark, when it's time for me to play – for him to be there listening and assessing and helping move it along.

*When you into the studio to perform can you just shut everything else out and say, "Now I'm the singer."*

It hasn't been in the past, but with this album, and the last couple of albums, I really feel like it has gotten easier to do that. Where I can say, "now I'm a singer and this is what I do. I want to do it with all my heart."

*Since you first worked with Mark on "My Father's Only Son," you seem to have alternated between recording at Reflection Sound Studios in Charlotte, North Carolina and Airtime and Echo Park Studios in Bloomington, Indiana. Any particular reason.*

Well, you know, the studios - a lot of that is logistical. I live in the town where Airtime and Echo Park is located. This last album, I wanted to be closer to home. They are fine studios. The person who owns and runs Airtime Studios – because that is where all the overdubs were done, and the bulk of the time was spent. The rhythm tracks – all the basic band stuff - were done at Echo Park. All the vocals and overdubbing of instruments was done at Airtime. The person who runs that studio is a wonderful engineer, and producer, and he's also a really dear friend. In terms of being in a place where I felt as comfortable as I could be – it was a wonderful place to be. And it has been. I haven't got to think about being in a studio. It's more like "I'm over at my friend David's house." That's great. I really love that. I can go outside and play with his dog and two kids, and then go back in and sing some more.

*This is David Weber.*

Yes.

*Is Echo Park attached to the university, or a local radio station.*

No. Echo Park is a pretty major studio. It is owned by Mike Wanchic and Mark Hood. Mike Wanchic is the guitar player in John Mellencamp's band. It has had a lot of major artists come through there. It's a large facility and they have great equipment there, and a fine name. I do like working there. When it comes down to doing the vocals and the more intimate things, I have really enjoyed going to a place that is smaller, where I can really feel comfortable. I think the vocal performances this time show that. "My Father's Only Son" was done in, like, one week. That entire album was done, start to finish, in terms of the recording process in seven days, in a large studio.

You know, Reflection Studio in Charlotte is a fabulous studio. It's a wonderful studio – again, it's more of a major studio with a large facility, so you can bring a band down and really do great stuff in there – with those kind of sounds. Mark Williams lives in Charlotte, where Reflection Studio is located. So it's like working in his hometown, in a way, in a studio that he is very familiar with. We did all the rhythm tracks for **"The Age Of Possibility,"** the last album, in Charlotte at Reflection Studio. Then we came back up to Airtime and did the vocals.

*How long did it take to record "The Gathering Of Spirits."*

I would say about three weeks of recording time, and about a week of mixing.

*In the past you've been involved in the mixing process. For instance you are credited on "My True Name." In this instance Mark seems to have done all the mixing. Any reason.*

I was there for the whole thing. The mixing was all done in Nashville actually, at a great studio called Ocean Way. I added my thoughts about mixing and balance, though I'm not truly a technical person. In terms of all the engineering that is involved in achieving a really good mix, I don't do any of that. For me, honest to goodness, the credit stuff isn't that important – I know it is to the process – but all I want is a good album.

*You've already started touring on this album. How has your audience received the album so far*

The album was released in the States on the 10<sup>th</sup> September. The audiences have been great. The early weeks of sales tripled anything I've ever done. The last album was on Rounder's Top 10 list for the year, so they are happy, which is great. It's always nice when Rounder is happy. That makes everybody happy [Laughs]. More than anything else, I feel this album is the truest album to who and what I am, and what I'm trying to do with this music. The closest I've ever gotten to what I'm trying to do.

*Hasn't that been an evolutionary process though, across your seven solo studio albums.*

Yes. Well, that's true. It is an evolutionary process and you are always trying to – every album – to move along. I mean, I don't want to make the same album again. Sometimes people get a formula that works and they do that. But gosh, you know, if you're not growing, you're dying. I'm very much alive as an artist.

*While acknowledging the album title, the songs possess a powerful spiritual content. From that point of view – for instance going way back to "Three Women" on "An Angel At My Shoulder" [1994] – in terms of the focus of "Three Women" as a song, and the focus of the whole of "The*

*Gathering Of Spirits," isn't it true to say that you have continuously refined that focus over the years.*

Absolutely. I really feel that. In a lot of ways, I feel like this is the album I've been trying to make my whole career. And hopefully, even the next one, I'll say the same thing. Every one that you get to make, you feel like you have gotten one step closer. Right now, I do feel like that. I feel it's the strongest writing that I've ever released. I think it's also the strongest music I've ever released. It's a more intimate album. It's interesting, there is a spiritual side to this album, and there is a spirituality that runs through all my work – but maybe this one is a little more overt, a little more up front with it. It's spiritual, but not necessarily religious. I like to make that distinction. I have people who have told me when this album was going to be released – "Carrie you can't do this sort of thing. You use this kind of language and these sorts of ideas, you are going to be put in a category you don't want to be in." I guess I feel like I don't censor myself. I don't censor my writing. I write about being a human. In my romantic relationships, and also my family relationships. It's about my spiritual relationships. It's about political relationships, sometimes. I just don't feel I want to censor any of that. I want to really write about being a human, as a whole.

*When people say that you should be more cautious, who are you talking about. Family.*

Other writers. Some music business people.

*Does their input make you stop and think for a moment.*

Absolutely. I know I'm taking a risk, when I do that. I mean I'm taking a risk whenever I get off the subject of boy/girl relationships. "He done me wrong," "She done him wrong" – when you get off of that subject matter, you are immediately taking risk. Also in terms of the language on this album, the ideas, I just feel like this is powerful language. The Western spiritual language is powerful language, and they are powerful words and they are powerful concepts. They just don't get to be claimed by one group or another they belong to all of us really. I get to say the word "spirit" or "soul" or "holy" – that doesn't belong to just one group. I guess that is just the orneryness in me [Laughs]. To say, "I will use this powerful language, because it is mine as well. And it is yours as well."

*How has the press in the States received the album.*

It has been very complimentary. It has been great in that, like I've said, I felt like it's the strongest thing I have done, but you never know till you get it out there. That has been the confirmation I have been getting from the people and fans who have listened to me for years. Also from the media, the press, radio that I've been talking to – that "yes, this is the strongest thing you've done."

*How many gigs do you play in an average year currently. A couple of hundred shows.*

No, not that much. The last album, when that one came out, I did about one hundred and fifty shows, and all the time that it took to get there and back and stuff. That was a lot for me. A lot of that was done in the first six to eight months after the album was released. It's pretty intensive touring when an album comes out. Last year, I probably backed off as much as I've ever backed off. I did probably under a hundred dates. My husband got a job. He's a lawyer, and he got out of law school. So it was kind of nice that I didn't always need to be on the road, in between albums like that. Also, I just felt like it was time for me to back off. I had some other projects that I wanted to pursue. I did a lot of writing last year, and I have been teaching writing. Writing workshops. Songwriting and creative writing. I've been doing that in colleges and retreat centres. I have really enjoyed that. Between albums, this last time around, I really wanted to do more of that. Get off the road a little bit, in terms of regular performances, but do more teaching.

*Once Rounder issued your first album for them, which would have been what? – 1994 – then you have been pretty busy.*

The first album came out in 1994 with Rounder. It has been really non-stop. Even in between albums, some of them were coming out, like, a year and a half between albums, so I never really stopped touring. And recording at the same time, so it has been very fast paced, but then, you know, I think that was the time for that. It was good. I have always toured in an unusual way, in that my daughter is off to college now, but until then I made a decision a long time ago that I would be home for her. If you saw my touring schedule, it would always look crazy. I would be four days down in the southern part of the States, and then I'd be five days over in Texas, and then home for a couple of weeks and doing shows around here. Then out to the West coast, and doing shows here again. So I'd be out and back, all the time. Being here, being really present for my daughter, your career doesn't progress as quickly. You don't make as much money, but it was what I wanted. I wanted to be really present for her. I don't regret a single second of that at all.

*Were most of the songs for "The Gathering Of Spirits" written last year, while you were, inverted commas, resting.*

[Carrie laughs out loud].

*For instance, I know that the title song turned up on your Y2K video release. So that song was written a couple of years ago.*

Right. That was. Everything else was written last year. I did a lot of writing last year, and it was nice, because I was off the road enough to really focus. I always write. I'm writing on the road. I'm writing all the time.

*That's unusual, because a lot of songwriters can't write and tour at the same time.*

Well, I don't write music so much on the road. I always have my journals and I write essays, and poetry and prose. I'm always writing. I don't usually write the music that goes with it on the road, because it's just doesn't seem – it's easy to get your notebook on an aeroplane, but it's not as easy to get your guitar out.

*But you don't publish those essays anywhere, or do you.*

No, I don't, though I have been thinking about it – in terms of what will my next project be.

*Are you coming back to tour in Europe and the UK*

I don't have anything in Europe planned just yet, and I'm bummed because I love to come over to Europe. There is nothing in the works, but there is some talk going on, so we'll find out sometime soon.

*When you go out on the road do you take a band with you all the time.*

It just depends on the album tour. On this particular tour I'm doing most of it with Winton Reynolds. So it's myself and a piano. The last album, I did about half of that tour with a band and the other dates with either Winton or Dan, or just as a solo act. The "**My True Name**" tour was almost all with a full band, everywhere I went. It just depends on the album.

*Presumably when you play locally, it's with a full band.*

You know, I have one if I want to use one, but with this album I've really pared it down to myself, a guitar and a piano. This is a much more intimate album. The last couple of albums – the last one really had a bite to it and needed a band. It presented really well with a band. This one is a much more intimate album, and I'm really enjoying presenting it in a smaller context.

*So will you work with a band again.*

Oh I'm sure I'll work with a band again. It will be the context of the songs I write that will determine that. Where I can say, "*Gosh this needs a band.*"

*How did the duet with Alison Krauss on the title track come about. You toured the UK with her in the summer of 1997.*

She's from this area of the country. She's from the mid-west. We had actually met years ago, when she was very young. We've kind of known about each other for a long time. Then I did that UK tour, opening for her. That wasn't set up by Rounder or anything, that was really basically talking to her and saying, "*I'd like to open,*" and Alison saying "*Fine.*" It wasn't a situation where, we were put together by the record company. Since then she has been very gracious and

very helpful. She just produced the new Nickel Creek album. They are wonderful, and she introduced them to my music. There's a song on the new Nickel Creek album that's one of my songs.

*That would be "I Should've Known Better," the song that opened your "My True Name" album.*

Right. That happened because Alison let them know about me. She has been - I can't say enough nice things about her, in terms of being a wonderful musician and being incredibly supportive and gracious to me, as a writer and as a musician. The song "The Gathering Of Spirits," when it was being recorded, it was like *"this is perfect for Alison. This is just the perfect song for her."* It was just a matter of sending it to her, and -

*So Alison cut her vocal in Nashville.*

In Nashville. She heard the song and said, *"Sure, I'll come in."* Out of the goodness of her heart, she came in and put down this beautiful part. An elegant part. She cut the vocal at Ocean Way. We did the mixing at Ocean Way, and this track was all over the place and the last to be mixed - we had to wait for a week after mixing, because Alison had a terrible cold. When we originally planned to mix the cut, she just couldn't sing at all. I came down the next week and we just booked the studio for a day and she came in and did it that day. Then it was mixed at Reflection Studios, that particular song. Everything else was mixed at Ocean Way.

*Going back to Nickel Creek, have you ever played dates with them.*

I have met them and they are really nice people. I love their stuff. If you could have asked me, what new up and coming band would you love to have do one of your songs, it would have been Nickel Creek. They are so creative and interesting. I just think they are really talented, and I'm thrilled that they are doing the song, but we haven't done gigs together.

*Has anyone else covered your songs of late.*

Well Alison has kept several - it's like *knock on wood* you know - it's like she has had some on the back burner. She actually said she was holding back the song that she gave to Nickel Creek for herself. She was going to do it herself and then gave it to them instead. So you never know, she might cut something else of mine. She continues to say, *"Send me what you have."* She listens to it all and keeps it, and she's considering things - so who knows. You never want to say *"Sure"* until something happens.

*Has anyone else, other than Alison, expressed an interest in recording your songs.*

Yeah. It has been interesting, because I haven't done a lot of shopping on the Nashville circuit, but I have a publishing company I work with now, Bug Publishing. They are shopping my work. They have had a couple of really close bites. Since they have just started, and they've already had a couple of close ones, then it looks pretty good.

*I don't know if I have ever asked you this before. You don't appear to co-write songs. Is there a particular reason.*

I don't co-write a lot of songs. You know, I have a few. I've done a little bit of the Nashville co-writing thing, but I'm not very good at this thing of putting two people in a room together - they don't know each other, they play and make a song. It's OK, but it's kind of like sex on the first date, or something [Laughs]. It's OK, but it's not how I best write.

*This would be because there is no real connection between the two people. It's more like a manufacturing process, as opposed to a creative process.*

When I do co-write, it's usually best with people that I know, and I know their work. I have co-written with Pierce Pettis and my husband, Robert - I've done several songs with him. Jason Wilber, who works with John Prine.

*Isn't Jason Wilber a local guy. I'm sure I've got some albums by him.*

He's from this area, but now he's working with John. Originally, I met him around here.

*Can we talk about each of the songs on the new album. "Holy As A Day Is Spent" seems to say every aspect of life is holy. I don't think you mean holy in the traditional sense [Pause]. I'm fumbling here.....*

In the liner notes - there's a little note that my friend made a comment to me that *"Carrie, you know, the sacred is when two and two make five."* I loved the concept when she said that to me. That idea that life is more than just what we see in the palm of our hand. You know it's just a sunset, but it's really *five*. It's just a kid in your arms, but there's something really very *five* about it. It's more than just what you see. A lot of us know what *five* is. We've felt *five*. We know what that is. But it's very hard to explain. Sometimes that something *more* that happens to us happens in the smallest of things. You know, it's just a sunset. A lot of this album talks about the *small moment* - we have the big stuff, the birthdays and the anniversaries and stuff, but most of our lives are really lived in the *small moment*.

*What you describe in the lyric are just the mundane and ordinary daily events of life.*

Yes. That's kind of how I see it. That is, when I take notice. Life is so busy, we are all so busy, that I hate

when I get to the end of a day and I go *"I missed it. Dam, I missed it."* Because I have been too busy to notice and a lot of that song is about noticing.

*Is there also an aspect of living every day to its fullest extent.*

You know I don't know about England, but here in the States there is such a culture of celebrity. It's like, to be valid, you have to have been fifteen minutes on some programme on television or something. To me, I feel like there is such nobility in just, a life well lived. To be a good writer, or to be the person you can always depend on - to borrow the truck when you need it [Laughs]. The good friend who is a good listener, or a good father. It's a person who - I don't know - there is a lot of nobility in that, and in this culture of celebrity that gets lost. It's not big enough or fancy enough to be the friend that listens well. That's what a lot of this album is about - it is saying, *"It is good enough. In fact it's a lot."*

*I think that Andy Warhol was right, in terms of this thought that lodges in way too many folks brains here that they have to be famous. My question to them would be why? I say, simply live your life. It's like Warhol was joking when he said everyone should enjoy "Fifteen minutes of fame," but now that joke has become a very sad reality.*

Yes, that's true. It's interesting being a performer in the field of music too, with that idea. People say to me all the time, *"Well don't you want to be more like Madonna?"* [Laughs]. There would be OK things about being more well known - I could pay the people who work with me a whole lot more. That sort of thing. Maybe pay them what they are worth, and not what I can. That would be one good thing. There is a certain amount of effort needed to get your work out there. Just letting people know that you exist. That there is this music available that people can listen to, and hopefully get something from, that touches them. This whole idea of - but it has to be the next Britney Spears, to be valid, is a strange concept. It's very valid without that, so this is a funny kind of profession to be in with that idea in mind. At the same, like I said, a lot of this album is really talking about how wonderful and amazing, and OK it is to be a human being right now. You don't have to be famous to be OK. I don't know, you get that message so much around - it sounds like in the UK it is also a primary message.

[To which I added : *I don't know if you get these glossy celebrity magazines in the States. I think they were introduced to this country from Spain, of all places, but all they do is glorify the latest thing these celebrities had been up to. To me the question remains, why? These are just ordinary people like you and me who happen to have lucked out in life, in some way.*]

*Does any of the lyric to "Holy As The Day Is Spent" come from your Quaker background.*

Oh yeah, definitely. That whole idea of simplicity, and the validity of a life well lived. That's something I think a lot about. I try to live close to - you know, there's a lot on this album about relationships. Like *"I'll Go Too."* Sometimes there are things that you have to do alone. There is just no getting around it. But there are times when someone says, *"I'll go with you. I'll walk with you on this one."* Sometimes you return the favour on that. What an amazing thing that is, that we experience that in our lives, and it's such a small thing, and such an amazingly important thing. That's really what that whole song is about, just having someone say, *"OK, I'll walk this one with you."*

*Following on from your earlier composition "My Father's Only Son" [ED. NOTE. Carrie's parents had no sons. The song particularly refers to her regular fishing expeditions with her dad as she grew up], isn't "I'll Go Too" yet another tribute to your dad.*

Definitely my dad is a main character in the song.

*There's a young child frightened of the dark, there's the child learning to swim, there's a young woman about to be married, and in the final verse you also mention the passing of your mother.*

And there's also the time when it turns around and you almost tear at your parents at a certain point. It's time for that, and hopefully when that comes it's something that they can accept with love. But it's also a very human thing to happen.

*Did you play the new song for your father.*

I sent it to him. I recorded it and I sent it to him. He called me up and he really liked the song [Carrie speaks in a deep voice]. He's not a real demonstrative kind of guy [Laughs]. He was touched by it.

*You said earlier that in taking this album on the road, you decided to keep it simple with voice, guitar and piano. "Straight to The Point" is however very much a band type song.*

It kinda is. There are three songs on the album that are very band oriented.

*Is the gist of the lyric that you don't like to waste time.*

Yeah, in that - I don't have anything to give you but the truth. I don't have anything to give you, but my honesty. There's a B. B. King quote that I just love, that goes *"I always tell the truth, because then I don't have to remember what I said"* [Laughs]. I love that. That just cracks me. The song *"Straight to The Point"* is like grabbing life with both hands, and saying *"This is who I am, this is what I do."* Go straight to the point about it.

*And hope that there are not too many days where you end up saying "Well, I missed that one."*

Yeah. That's true.

*"The Gathering Of Spirits" is a song about the renewal of friendship. Almost to the point where it doesn't matter whether it's a week since you last saw the person, or ten years have elapsed. When those people meet again, they can pick up the thread almost as if they last met yesterday. Is that the scenario where that song came from.*

The song came from a variety of places. It covers a lot of ground. It can be taken very literally, as meeting old friends later in life and picking up where you left off. There are special people in our lives that we do that with. There are places that we return to, that we can do that with. That's a wonderful continuity. There is also a spiritual context to that, in terms of it was written when someone I know passed. You know, I don't know what the next adventure brings, but I hope it will be a gathering of spirits.

*The line in the song "life's a twinkling, that's for certain." That is just turning on its head the old proverb "life is over in the twinkling of an eye."*

Doesn't it feel that way? I mean, I think in terms of that song – I recall watching my daughter grow up. When she was a little baby people said "Oh, it's going to go so fast. It's going to go so fast." You know, walking the floor late at night, you go "Sure. It's going to go fast." It was so fast. Life is kind of like that – it is the twinkling of an eye. It's all the more important that we take a hold of these moments that we have. "The Gathering Of Spirits" – it's really a continuation of that same theme. To appreciate the moment we have here, and hope for the gathering later.

*Years ago I was watching a documentary about Ireland on television, and this old lady was reflecting upon her life. At one point, she said in a broad Irish brogue "Life is a mystery between to sighs." As in the first and last breath.*

That is really lovely and true. It is the same concept. That song has been an interesting song to do in the way it has affected people.

*That song is the oldest one on the collection, so presumably you were playing it with your band a couple of years ago.*

Yeah. It is a couple of years old. Songs seem to have their lives, in terms of when I put them on an album. I don't usually put things on that are older than a certain amount, because I always have new stuff to do and I'm always close to the new stuff. This one was kind of special.

*In what I would describe as, the scholarly world, one interpretation is that the legendary Fisher King was the keeper of the much sought after Holy Grail. In the song "The Fisher King" you refer to that legend, but you also seem to draw the conclusion that – the circle, the journey, whatever you want to call it – is one that eventually leads us back to where we started.*

I love the idea of that story, that you don't – in this life you get to the place where you realise there aren't a whole lot of answers, but you eventually start to ask the right questions. That's a lot of what "The Fisher King," the song, is about. Starting to ask the right questions. Coming back to where you started – but coming back on your own terms. Sometimes you have to walk away from something, to be able to come back to it. There is just a lot in that story that has always kind of fascinated me. I was reading a book that talked about it from the perspective of Jung – that archetypal journey. That coming back around, by going off to slay the dragons and finally figuring out you needed to come back and ask the right questions.

*Is that because the answer lies in the place where you started the journey, in your home.*

Yeah. It's a little different when you come back, but it's still kind of there.

*That would be because you are now wiser.*

You've learned so much. You've come back with something new, that you didn't start out with. I feel as a writer – I'm forty-four now, and as a woman in music you are not supposed to say that out loud [Laughs]. I feel like I had incredibly valid things to say at nineteen. I did. There is a passion about it, at that age. At the same time, I feel like I am writing things now that I never could have written even five years ago. That you do learn something along the way –

*To quote an old chestnut, that's the wisdom of age.*

The wisest people know they are not very wise. That they are still learning. You have to start with this well of experience to draw from, and to come back with the same questions. I really feel that I have found my voice as a writer and as a musician, in the last ten years. Not that what I did before wasn't valid – but I just feel like it has grown to a place where it has come back around. This new album is much more acoustic than my recent albums have been – certainly the last three albums. In some ways, that is a coming back around for me. There are also songs that are very band oriented on this album, because I like a band – I like upbeat tunes, and that is a part of what I do too. It's finding that balance, the intimacy as well as the excitement of working with a group of musicians. This has been an interesting project from that viewpoint.

*You mentioned earlier that there were two or three, of what you would class as, band tunes on "The Gathering Of Spirits." "Little Earthquakes" is undoubtedly one of those.*

Yeah. That song could be taken as a song about a romantic relationship. It was really written right after my daughter left for college. I was thinking about how, when you love something so much, and so deeply, you open yourself up to having these little earthquakes in your life. Things will rumble and

sometimes shake you up, quite a bit, because you have opened yourself up to that kind of a love. But it's also the only kind of love I've ever really wanted. The kind of love that is that big that it makes you want to be a better person. That kind of love. It's not – I wanted to write it, so that a person could listen to it and it could be about a romantic relationship, it could be about a family relationship, or a parent and child relationship. It's not so much about myself and my daughter but what you agree to when you love something that much.

*"There And Back" struck me as the fun song in the collection.*

So you like that one ?

*I think my favourite is probably "I'll Go Too," but I think "There And Back" is a fun song from the point of view the down to earth message - home is where the heart is.*

And it is. It's about touring, and I love going different places – you have to have a little touch of wanderlust to do what I do.

*But a happy road song is a very unnatural creation when you look at the work of other singer/songwriters.*

Well, it is. Then again [Laughs] – I don't always kind of go with the flow [Laughs]. I like the idea. I enjoy going different places. I love that different places have such personalities to them. Then again, there is no place like home, and that is kind of OK too. This is also a band song, and it was a lot of fun to do in the studio.

*I think somewhere in the liner notes you use the word - wry. What I'm about to say is directly lifted from my review of your album, and it's in reference to "Silver." Quote "As love songs go, the wryly worded "Silver" focuses upon that time to come when we are no longer the svelte examples of manhood and womanhood that we once were."*

[Laughs] I love that quote. I had a great time writing that song. It was actually written on an aeroplane – well, half of it was. I started it on a flight to Boston. Then I got into Boston and I was having such a great time with it – I had been giggling so much on the plane, that I kind of continued writing it as I was driving up to Maine in a snowstorm. That's when that song was written. I think there is a lot of wryness in this whole album, but that song in particular. If I hadn't learned to laugh at myself, or chuckle at myself – I would have given up this thing a long time ago.

*This song does at least prove that with this album you are covering the whole spectrum of life. There are some serious bits, and there are humorous bits. If you can actually see the connection between those two facets then you've figured what this album is about.*

That's really true. Honestly you are the first one to say that out loud, but that's kind of what I hoped all along.

That even in the serious songs – there's a line in "Holy As The Day Is Spent," which is a very serious song in a way, and it goes *"To pray as only laundry can."*

*So there is humour, but there is also simple truth. This collection of songs really adds up to being a concept album.*

It kind of is. That idea that there's wry moments even in the serious songs – there's wry moments on the album. Some songs are more serious, like "The Fisher King," but – I don't censor my subject matter and I really like to look at it as a whole. You know, people are so funny. I mean, there's a song on the album called "I Heard An Owl" – the idea behind that one is that people can do really scary things and we see that all the time. I mean, we're reminded of that in the news constantly.

*I took "I Heard An Owl" to be your 911 song.*

It's not written anywhere in the album liner, or press literature, but it was written on the 12th. It was written on 912. It's that idea that people are capable of scary things, but we're also really capable of the finest things. I have seen that. I believe in that, and that's kind of where my hope for the future lies. That I know we are capable of finer things. It doesn't change that we are capable of scary things, but that's not where I'm placing my hope. That's not where I stand, I guess. I stand on, the best of what we are.

*The truth in your lyric would be the line, "Don't tell me hate is ever right or God's will."*

For how many centuries have people marched off to war saying, *"God is on our side."*

*Religion has proved to be a constant in having to choose sides over the centuries.*

I think there was a lot of feeling – I mean, gosh, this country was deeply touched by it. Part of that was - I think a lot of folks here did not have a sense of being connected to the rest of the world. There is a lot of isolationism here. For a lot of people it was like *"Oh, we are part of the world. We are as vulnerable as anybody else."* That sorrows happen here, as well as other places. I think for some people, that is a new concept - that we are part of the world. For a lot of people, like myself, we have been thinking that for a long time – for some people, that was a new thought.

*I presume your solution to the problem lies in the line – "The only peace this world will know, Can only come from love."*

Martin Luther King said *"Hate is never conquered by hate. Hate is only conquered by love."* Maybe this song is a paraphrase of that, but I believe that only real and long-term change comes about through love.

*If you say you wrote the song on 12<sup>th</sup> September, were you feeling desolate at that time.*

Yeah, I did.

*Was this a difficult song to write because of the way you were feeling.*

Sometimes songs don't come from you, they come through you. I have talked to other artists about that. I write songs and I hone them and I work on them, I create them, but every now and again – once in a while – songs are just there. You sit down with your guitar and they come out. And they come out as they are. What they are. They are everything that you are at that moment. This song was one of those songs.

*Was that to the extent that the lyric didn't require editing.*

Almost didn't take any editing at all. It just came out as it was. I've had a handful of songs in my career that have happened that way. This was one of them.

*Did it take long to finish.*

I finished the song in the matter of a couple of hours. The next day, I think I went back to it and looked at things and maybe made a couple of small changes, but it came out – it was kind of born. Part of that was coming out of a sense of – this is very big, and this is so powerful. This is so much sorrow, and what do I do with all this? Where do I stand with all this?

*You put a version of this song on your web site soon after 9/11. Is that the version that is on the album.*

No. The one that was on the internet - I went to my friend David's studio – Airtime Studio – and I just asked him if I could sit down with my guitar and play it. He helped me with that and I put it on the internet. We finished it in one take. It was like "OK, this is what it is."

*Was the song "I'm Still Standing" written around the same time as "I Heard An Owl".*

That song was written about a month later.

*Since listening to this album, I've had this feeling that the songs are connected in some way.*

Well they are connected, but probably not how you think [Laughs]. In that, I'm very much a peace activist. "I'm Still Standing" was written when the Bush Administration decided to go ahead and bomb Afghanistan. When the bombs started falling, that's when I wrote that song. It was written, as if I was talking to George Bush and that particular Administration. As an activist and a person, I didn't feel that it was the wisest choice, and the wisest way to try to make the world safer. There was a lot of talk here in the States that – people who are opposed to

this kind of action, there were very few of them. Like there only 10% of the nation who opposed the bombing. I travel all over this country and I must run into the same, like, 15 to 20% of people everywhere I go – there are a lot of people who are not in support of a lot of these policies. That song was basically saying, "I'm still here. I'm still standing and I love the world enough, to not shut up." That's what that song is about. You know you can take it as a relationship song, if you want to. Some people think it's about me getting dumped by a fellow. I've had people ask me that. I've just said "Well, no, not necessarily" [Laughs].

*Was it deliberate that they are consecutive tracks on the album, or was that a subconscious decision.*

No, it wasn't deliberate. They just seemed to work best that way. We had a lot of different sequences for this album. That was the one that worked best.

*I'm sure that I would have asked about the connection between these two songs, even if one of them had been track one or two, or whatever.*

You are very perceptive person. Some people realise what it's about, and some people think it's about me getting dumped, so – [Laughs]. My response is, well, if I really wanted people to know, I would have put it in the liner notes or I would have made it more clear. Again, the song is about that process of saying "I'm still standing here. I'm not knocked down. I love something enough to not shut up." That's what it's about. If I make it too specific, you know – "this is about this boyfriend, who lived in this town," then there is no access point, and it would be too much about just me. I'm writing about an idea – I'm using my details, because details make it rich, but I'm trying to write about what we both recognise as being human. I'm glad you made that connection, and some people do make that connection.

*The closing track almost, in a way, is a summation of the whole album. The lyric of "The Things I've Gone And Done" seems to be saying in relation to "life" that, "I've learned my lesson well." By that I don't mean that you're blowing your own trumpet, but that the song is saying, "life is rich and if you grasp that concept, in time you will come to understand life." That's wisdom, or whatever you want to call it.*

And the idea that the more I look back, being at a place where you can see behind, and see ahead, it's about the same in terms of a span of years – or it may be getting lesser on the one end than the other [Laughs]. Getting to the place where you look back and say "The things that – " – I mean I'm not going to regret anything I've done, because I did it and I learned something. But I am going to regret what I didn't do, because I was afraid to. Things I was afraid to say, so I didn't say them when I should have.

*Do you have a great deal of regret over that.*

No, not necessarily.

*Do you have a wish to go back and change anything.*

No. It's not about wanting to go back and change things, or a regret like that, or sitting and really fretting about that. It's more the idea of, *knowing that now*, which makes me want to be more forthcoming with my life and with who I am. And not be afraid to try things, or do things, or grab on to life. Or be honest. Looking back now, those are the things that always along the way, that – they were the best things to do, even when they didn't work out.

*So the lines "Every time I stop to gather stones, I straighten up and walk away" is obviously a reference to the old proverb.*

Yes, it is.

*Once again, it's a case of learning the lesson.*

The first person without a sin can throw the first stone. That's something you learn too – that along the way, we all rise and fall short of what we want to be. Being able to look at other people with compassion. Being able to look at ourselves with compassion and say, *"I don't necessarily want to throw stones at other people, and I don't want to throw stones at myself."*

*In the penultimate verse you ask why "something good can get so twisted, That there's no semblance at all." Is that an expression of your frustration.*

The lines that preceded that, talk about -

*The teachings of Jesus and Mohammed -*

Right. In that I'm not trying to sell anything. Some of the greatest teachers in the world have beautiful wonderful things to give, but sometimes people twist them around. There have been a lot of awful things done in the name of Mohammed, or done in the name of Jesus, that have no semblance to truth. Or teachings of love or fairness. Or right living. They have gotten kind of divorced from that. There is a frustration with that. There is a very strong fundamentalist movement in this country that – I don't think fundamentalism is a spiritual movement, I believe it's a political movement. And it gets so far away, and it gets twisted from what the truth really is. One of those lines in the song, I was told *"You know Carrie, that's gonna piss somebody off"* [We both laugh]. I said *"Well, so be it."* Whenever you are living your life in a really passionate and truthful way, you are going to upset somebody. You're not going to be able to please everybody. It's best just to be honest and let it fall where it may.

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***Fourfold are Anne Hills, Steve Gillette,***

***Cindy Mangsen & Michael Smith***

*The following interview took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2003. Anne was at home in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Steve and Cindy were in Bennington, Vermont and Michael was in Chicago, Illinois. As usual, I was at Kerrville Kronikle HQ in Birmingham, England. I began the interview by posing a question to Anne.*

*I think it would be interesting to tell the readers how long you have known each other. Anne, maybe you could tell us how, where and when you first met Steve and Cindy, and Michael.*

**Anne Hills.** Michael and I met when he was playing bass with Bob Gibson in Chicago. This would have been in 1980. He and Barbara [Michael's wife] moved to Chicago from Detroit, and I moved from Michigan in 1979. Cindy, I heard singing on the **"Midnight Special"** [Ed. Note. a radio show, broadcast weekly since 1953 by Chicago station WFMT]. She was singing Gordon Bok's song "Little River," I remember that very distinctly. Then they said she was playing with a band called The Ravenswood at a pizza place in Evanston and I went and I heard her there. When I first heard her voice I thought *"This is somebody that I really want to meet."* I loved the way she sang. This would have been about the same time that I met Michael. There was a big scene happening in folk music, in Chicago, at that time. This was, in part, because of clubs like the Earl of Old Town, and because Stevie Goodman and John Prine had become national acts with record deals. I met Steve Gillette, actually, down at Kerrville, around the same time that I met my husband Mark [Ed. Note. Mark Moss is the Editor of **Sing Out**]. This would have been in the early eighties, maybe 1983. I had not heard of Steve Gillette before. I was not a person who followed any particular type of music in my high school years. I really didn't know Steve's material. Not even "Darcy Farrow." He was new to me and I liked him very much as a person. The first song of his that I learned and sang with him was "Bed Of Roses," and that was on main stage at Kerrville. That was either that summer, or the next.

*Who came up with the idea for a quartet.*

**AH.** Cindy and I had been talking about various other projects. Both Cindy and I love to sing harmony. We had planned a Shape Note project with John Robertson and Tony Baron. Shape Note singing is also known as Sacred Harp singing [Ed. Note. Ref. Sacred Harp go to <http://fasola.org/introduction/introduction.html> ]. Tony is the scholar, and he really felt that as much as he loved the four voices, that this particular type of singing is really meant for groups. So even though we thought it would be a great sound, that project fell apart. Tony and John are both from England. One lives in New York and the other in Vermont, and they are well loved over here for their ballad singing. They have some Kipling Ballad records, and Tony, like I

said, is very well known for his work with Sacred Harp. Anyway that plan fell apart, and Michael loves singing harmony too. Any time I talk about these various projects, Michael would say "Well, you know, if you ever want to include me on something." I was talking to Steve and Cindy about harmony work and I said, "Well Michael and I work together. Maybe our four voices would work." Then everybody got excited about the idea. It was just a matter of everybody going "Yeah." The first time we got together and sang was very powerful. The first rehearsal, I think, is the thing that clinched it. After the first rehearsal we had a few times that it wasn't as smooth, and we were questioning whether it made any sense. Steve, when we doubted, I would say, out of the four, had the most faith in it. He really loved the idea, and we're all pleased with the way the record turned out.

*When did the quartet idea first surface, time wise.*

**AH.** We had talked about it, probably, for the last two or three years. I got busy with the Tom Paxton duet record. If you look at my history, this is one of my favourite things to do, collaborate with people. I've worked with (Winter) Voices [Ed. Note. A trio that features Cindy and Priscilla Hardman], with Michael, with Tom, and I have one project coming up with Bill Jones and Aoife Clancy. I kinda make fun of myself and call myself a "vocal slut," but it isn't really that bad [laughs]. I love doing solo stuff, but after doing that for a number of years it's really exhausting travelling by myself. And it's not much fun. And I miss my family. But my family doesn't want to travel with me, so finding people that enjoy the music and that I can collaborate with, makes it more palatable for me. It brings the joy back into it.

**Michael Smith.** It's only been a year long project, it seems to me. That's my picture of it, at least. I had been talking to Anne about the Voices group and how they had isolated their working periods to, essentially, December of the year. I thought that seemed awfully civilised. To enjoy it but not have it occupy your mind the entire year. I liked that idea. As it turns out, for me at least, it's hardly work at all to get to do music with these people because they really take up the burden and they make it roll. To tell you the truth, I feel very good that I can work on that plane. I feel like I'm bringing things to it. God knows, I've been thinking about harmonies for years and years and years. Quite a bit of my musical life has been with groups.  
*Does anybody else want to offer their recollection.*

**Steve Gillette.** We've talked about it, over the last four or five years, a few times. For some reason, I guess, about two years ago it seemed like a timely thing. Everybody seemed to be free enough and ready to do it. I was very excited, I thought "Boy this is going to be a bigger thing. A very exciting thing." I have so much respect for Michael and Anne and for Cindy too, that I was thrilled.



Photo: Steve Gillette Archive

**Fourtold [L. to R.] – Steve Gillette, Cindy Mangsen, Anne Hills and Michael Smith.**

**MS.** I love being in groups, that's my favourite thing. And it has always been a question for me of – I've always wanted to be part of more than a duet – and at least three-part harmony. I get really lost in that. The Kingston Trio, I think, really has always been my idea of an ideal way to work. Where there are two people taking care of the harmonies, along with yourself. There isn't a chord that you can't sing. It's just a great feeling to start out on a song and have somebody else right beside you make it a chug-along too. I admire these people. They're all very musical people, so I felt like I'm going to be the least adept at harmonies [laughs] of the four of us. I heard Anne and Cindy and Steve together one time, doing a tune, the name of which escapes me at the moment, but it was a show we did in the last couple of years someplace where we were all on the bill, and it was beautiful – very harmonious. And I thought, "Boy, I'd sure like to get involved in that." My original picture was that I would sing bass, because I had been doing that with Weavermania [Ed. Note. A quartet project that performs the music of The Weavers. The group also features Michael's wife, Barbara Barrow]. There were times when I got to sing lead, which is nice. And also got to sing other harmonies, other than bass.

**Cindy Mangsen.** As you know Anne and I have done projects together quite a bit over the years.

*You mean Winter Voices.*

**CM.** And a couple of duet albums too, where we sang with other people. Anne and I both really love singing harmonies, so this was a chance where we would both get to sing harmonies [laughs]. I've known Michael a long time, because I used to live in Chicago, but I'd never worked with Michael and I have enormous respect for him as a musician. It was really exciting to work with him. I've seen him play at festivals and workshops and things.

*I believe you had some practice sessions. When and where.*

**AH.** We had our first practice session in the Spring of last year. Maybe May. We were in Vermont for the first practice and then another time we rehearsed at my house in Bethlehem. We also got together the day before we went into the studio, and worked all that day on the new tunes. Songs like "Nine Little Goblins," the song that I wrote the melody to, and is the old James Whitcomb Riley poem. That song only came into play the day before we went into the studio. And Michael's "Aramalee," his rewriting of the tale of the *false knight*, that came into play the day before we went into the studio.

**SG.** That was the tricky thing, trying to get everybody together. Anne's five hours away down in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and Michael's in Chicago which is a day and a half's drive from Vermont. We arranged to spend a weekend at our home, and we also worked out there in Michigan, at one point, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, two years ago.

**CM.** No, that was just last year. We started rehearsing about a year ago, just before Easter. I recall that it was the end of March.

**SG.** That was at our home in Bennington, and we really enjoyed it. We had two good sessions, just sat around the dining room table, all day, each day and drank some wine and talked about songs and sang. It was very relaxed and informal. I did set up a couple of microphones just so we could listen and hear what we were getting. We went through a whole lot of songs that we thought might be possibilities. Three of four of them really seemed to ring true, and so we kept those and kept moving on.

**CM.** It was very informal and what surprises me is how quickly it all came together. We didn't agonise much over arrangements. We would decide who was singing lead and then start finding parts on our own.

**SG.** It seemed very creative and kind of exciting to feel that it was a real step up in terms of the energy and all the values of the music. We looked at a lot of music that we all had loved for a long time, but hadn't considered performing in our one's and two's and three's.

**MS.** One of the things that was really kind of nice about this particular group, is since we are all adults, there really isn't a leader. Everybody was willing to say what they thought, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on their personalities. I think that there was a period of time where, at least, Cindy and Steve were thinking twice [laughs] about whether or not they wanted to work with me. That had to do with the fact that I get really specific about what I want to have and

what I don't want to have. It was because – as I say – I thought of it as voluntary, and I thought let's all be pleased. I would say, "*I absolutely don't want to do that song*" – that kind of thing. And when I was first expressing myself, I could see looks of dismay particularly from Steve and Cindy. I think Anne is used to me being that way. I really respect those people, and at the same time there's a part of me that says, "*If you don't speak out about what you believe, it's as if they are not really getting you.*" They are getting some more polite version of you. I'm pretty, how do I put it, I'm pretty aggressive about what I think. We got together about three times to practice. The first time was at Steve and Cindy's, which is in Bennington, Vermont. Do you know who Shirley Jackson is?

No.

**MS.** She wrote a great short story called "**The Lottery**." And then wrote many, very interesting, sort of, horror books. She lives down the street from Steve and Cindy. It's a nice little town that has a mill across the street from their house. It's a lovely place to be and Anne and I went there for a little short of a week, and we worked on a bunch of things and kind of did some preliminary taping. The next time we met, I believe, was at Anne's house in Bethlehem, and then we did two recording sessions. It was very quick.

*Presumably there were more than twelve songs that you looked at during the practise/non-recording phase of the project.*

**AH.** Oh yeah. There were a couple of Michael's that both Cindy and I loved, but Michael wasn't happy with them. "The Ballad Of Dan Moody" and "Demon Lover," which are both great story songs. "Dan Moody" kind of replicates "Four Rode By" which is exactly the point Michael made. It was interesting to pick and choose, but again, we had that very specific understanding that they had to be story songs. There were a couple that we brought that didn't quite make it. They were still good songs. We tried to bring each of our writing in, in some way. Cindy, actually, I was hoping would finish a couple of projects that she was working on. They weren't ready in time.

**CM.** We tried some other songs actually – and some seemed fine. At one point, we decided to narrow the focus of what we would do.

*Was storytelling always going to be the thrust of the songs. Did you deliberately aim for as subjectively diverse a range of tales as possible.*

**AH.** I was very specific about wanting the songs to be all story songs. I wanted to get away from the personal, in the sense of a very specific personal experience kind of a song, which I kind of feel like we have so many now in folk music. And I love story songs. Of course, unfortunately, when you get to good

story songs, it's just like tv plots or movie plots, a lot of times there's a fair amount of death. At one time we jokingly, well I, talked about calling the album "**Death, Death And More Death**" [laughs]. And yet when we finished it, it had an overall upbeat feeling to it. My reaction to it was not one of "*Oh this is morbid*" – even the song about the Springhill mining disaster. Revisiting Peggy's writing about that disaster, in light of the number of Pennsylvania and other coal mining disasters during the last two years, seemed perfectly appropriate and quite poignant.

**CM.** We decided not to do humorous songs, and pretty much stick straight to storytelling songs. That, at least, gave us a little framework to operate within otherwise it would have been impossible to choose songs. The storytelling aspect arose even before we rehearsed. We were all down at Anne's, kind of accidentally, when we started to talk about it and went out for dinner. I remember we decided on that approach at that point.

**SG.** Actually it was breakfast.

**CM.** No, it was dinner. It was the dinner, because I remember the moment [both start laughing]. I remember looking at you and going "*What do you think?*"

**SG.** I remember the idea of story songs coming upon me, kind of, as a surprise. I remember feeling a little restrained because a lot of us don't write story songs.

**CM.** You do though.

**SG.** Well, there are a few from the past. It was exciting – it seemed to limit us, but at the same time – reading Mark Moss' notes for the first time I realised that that was what he picked up on. The theme being that songs used to be the movies, the soap opera – they used to be the chance to laugh and cry, so it does make a lot of sense. As of yesterday we finally got a couple of boxes of them, so we now have the album to hand.

**MS.** I think one of the things that made this group work, in a way, which struck my imagination was, when we first got together, the reason I wanted to be involved in it was I wanted to do those harmonies. I just like doing harmonies, and like doing harmonies particularly with people who sing really in tune, which they all do. Somewhere, Anne – I think it was Anne that came up with the notion, "*Let's only make it songs that have stories.*" I think for me that was a real, that really helped a lot, in terms of getting a picture of what was going to happen with this group. It also made it closer to what I think of as a kind of folk music ideal. I don't remember a lot of folk songs that had to do with personal feelings. Most of them were stories,

in some fashion. A little more impersonal, and I really liked that idea.

*Who came up with the name FOURTOLD. And when.*

**AH.** We had a kind of a rule that everybody had to approve of something. If anybody was uncomfortable with anything – and I would say that probably the one thing that we never really were all completely comfortable with, but we had to make a move, was the name of the group. We tried various things. I don't think any of us are like "*Oh, great name.*" We were just trying to come up with something that said four-part harmony, story songs. It felt like that's what Fourtold did, but it doesn't matter. We wanted something that said - a group. That the four of us together were a specific thing, as opposed to each of us separately, which people kept confusing with Herdman, Hills, Mangsen. People wanted to call us Voices of Mid Winter, Voices of whatever, because people want a name. Fourtold works as well as anything we could come up with. We all kind of came up with the name, I would say it was a bit of all of us.

**SG.** We had thought about the word "*four*" being used in some play on words and we actually came up with about forty-five or fifty different forms of the word. Actually, I like just the word, four, that was my favourite choice.

**CM.** Then we thought about someone introducing us and going – "*four*" [Cindy says the word loudly]. It sounded too much like everyone would duck down [laughs].

**SG.** I think Anne actually came up with Fourtold.

**CM.** We had Fourtell for a long time, and then we found out there was a gospel group with that name and we didn't want to step on toes there.

**SG.** Oh that's right. Yeah. Not those toes. There were some good ones, but I think Anne was the one who finally stumbled, pardon the expression, on Fourtold. And it sounded right.

*I've spoken recently to Brooks Williams and Buddy Mondlock about the name, even wrote it down for them, and when they "saw it" as it were, they both said "Neat."*

**SG. & CM.** Oh good [said in unison].

**SG.** We've not been sure just how strongly we mean that. We don't know if it's really the name of a group that will be indelible. Or if it's the name of this project. It's the name of this album.

**MS.** I pretty much stayed out of the naming of the group, because I think of very corny things. I just thought "*I'm going to leave it up to them.*" Similarly with the photographs, I thought – when I see

photographs of myself, I'm always like "I don't want to look at that." Or I have a hard time judging them. I just left it up to Anne. I said "If you think it looks good, then go right ahead." Similarly with the name, I kind of left it up to all of them, saying "If you find a name that works for you, I'll be happy with it."

*Fourtold is a clever name, and does indicate that someone has applied some thought.*

**MS.** It is, and for that reason I think that I must say as far as "thinking it through," that's Anne. I think that, in general, she has a clearer and more straightforward way of looking at the possibilities - and also settling on the possibilities. I mean, that's why I had her produce my records. She is willing to make a decision. In certain areas of things, I definitely am not. There are certain things I definitely know for sure, like whether or not I'm willing to do a particular song, or whether or not a particular harmony or musical idea works. When we get into the area of how are you going to present yourself, or the public image, or the name - then I get a little equivocal. And Anne was right there with the goods. She has reasons for the things she says and I feel quite guided by her. Fourtold is not bad, considering how goofy you can get with names.

*Anne, was it a foregone conclusion that Fourtold would record with Scott Petito. Cindy and Steve worked with him on their "A Sense Of Place" album. You have worked numerous times with him. Steve even appeared on the Herdman, Hills & Mangsen album "At The Turning Of The Year" he produced. Michael seems to be the only one who hasn't worked with Scott.*

**AH.** Michael has worked with him on four projects. He worked with Scott when I cut my album "Angle Of The Light." Michael's album "Time" [which Anne produced] was recorded in Scott's studio. Michael was also with Scott on my album "Bittersweet Street." That makes three, so this would be the fourth project. So there was a past history for all of us. We all love Scott and one thing that is great about Scott is, not only is he a premier engineer and mixer, and really knows how to record acoustic instruments well, and has a beautiful studio, he is a fretless bass player as you hear on "Aramalee" and a couple of other songs, and he's a stand up bass player which you hear on "Darcy Farrow" and "Run, Come See Jerusalem." So Scott was the perfect person to work with us. He'll probably be doing some of the festivals that we're playing this summer - I think he's doing the Philadelphia Folk Festival and maybe the Old Songs Festival.

*So, Michael, you have worked with Scott before.*

**MS.** Oh yes. The first time I believe was the "Time" record that I made, probably ten years ago.

*Does Scott come up with ideas for the arrangement of songs.*

**AH.** No that was pretty much our domain. When it came to percussion, Scott and I worked together. He and I have worked on countless projects together and have a good sense of batting back and forth ideas about percussion. Really tempo, guitar arrangements, a lot of that was Steve's work - some Michael's, but I would say that Steve on "Four Rode By," and his tunes "Molly And Tenbrooks" and "Darcy Farrow" has very specific ideas. He and Cindy have a studio at home, so he could work there and come up with some of his ideas for the guitar arrangements. And then Michael also played the twelve-string guitar on this album. It is such a beautiful sound to work with. I've used it here and there, a little bit, but this time there was real emphasis on the twelve-string for Michael.

*Does anyone else have comments on Scott's input to the project.*

**SG.** He's absolutely wonderful. You know, he's our oldest boy [laughs]. He's so gifted and so musical, and, of course, he has worked with everybody. He has produced projects for everybody in Woodstock. He's also a wonderful musician. He's probably the best bass player that we know. Not only in electric bass, but upright bass as well. He has a gorgeous, brand new - what looks like a three hundred year old, hand made Hungarian bass. He's also got several other instruments. He's a great guy and a joy to work with in the studio, because he really knows how to make things sound the way he knows we want them to. That's a great gift.

**CM.** Actually Scott is the best educated musician of all of us. He went to Berklee School of Music and he really knows his theory. He's very tactful in dealing with musicians - he doesn't step in unless he really needs to. Boy he's got such a good ear that we really trust him. He's just absolutely great to work with.

**MS.** He's totally involved in this kind of music and has been for years, on the one hand. On the other, he's obviously very deeply involved in sound reproduction. That's a great combination. Even when I did my first album, I was saying "What do you think Scott, is that good?" because he's quite succinct in the way he expresses himself. I trust him, similarly to the way I trust Anne although, I would say, maybe in different jurisdictions. He is clearly someone with no axe to grind on one level, and on the other likes what I do. I feel as if I can say to him "Does this work?" and I'm going to get an answer that's within the realm of reality. There are very few people that I can talk to like that. I feel quite fortunate in that I have Anne and Scott at the same junctures. Because I think that I, for one, need an editor. I definitely will step out and do odd things, and then I need somebody to go, "Well, maybe this works and maybe it doesn't. Maybe you need to shift this in some way." I would say that he's involved in the sense that, how do I put it, if we were less talented, or less together, he certainly would

have been verbalising a lot more. I feel like he's the captain of the ship, let's say, and we all know where we are going. It's not as if we were waiting around for someone to tell us. He didn't really need to say that much. I, for one, wouldn't care to be recording and have him thinking or expressing himself as, *"This isn't going to work."* That would make me very nervous.

*But he would be being honest if he did say that.*

**MS.** He would be. And he has been. He's like me in that respect, I think when he feels something, it's very difficult for him not to express it. I think in the end, that's what makes the whole thing work, is that everybody has their places where they just feel that they can't compromise. That's a good thing. I prefer that, than to be the bandleader. I wouldn't want to be the bandleader anymore. Not with the level of talent I was working with there. I felt as if, and we all probably felt as if, now and again, we were along for the ride. Because it was being taken care of. What needed to be done was being taken care of. And you didn't have to think about the others being more in tune, or need them to phrase differently. One of the things that's interesting about adults in the studio, in my opinion, when there is roughly the level of experience that we have, is everybody knows when it works. And everybody knows when it doesn't. It's not like there's 2 against and 3 for, that's not the way it works you know, we all agree, immediately it seems. This has been going for so long that it's an anomaly, I do believe that everybody who has any kind of sense about music, pretty much hears the same thing.

*How long did the studio sessions last. Continuous, or over a number of separate occasions.*

**AH.** We were there in September for like, five days. And then in January, for five days. The truth is with these kinds of projects, what you have to build in is mixing time, because people think, *"we'll record and record, and mix it in a day or two."* Mixing is really one of the hardest parts. Scott has taught me that. In particular with this project, one of the things you'll notice - Scott's a wonderful mixer, and yes, this album isn't perfect, but boy, you can hear Cindy's voice and then you'll hear Michael's voice rise up and it is really like watching waves in the water. You hear a voice surface, and then another voice, and he did a great job of mixing voices I think.

**SG.** One thing about mixing this project was that, Scott works mostly on the computer, on a Macintosh with Digital Performer. We were able to do cumulative mixes in the studio while we were working on the songs. Then we were able to go home with some pretty good rough mixes that we could listen to and live with, and then we were able to communicate with Scott by E-Mail and talk to him on the phone too, about different issues and problems. At the same time, I was able to redo some tracks in my studio. On

one of the songs I wanted a different guitar lead and some other things. We were able to send him more tracks, on CD, and send those down to him as .wav files. Later on, we got a version of the mixes that he and Anne had done, and we are able to respond to those and make suggestions. We sat down in our living room - and listened on our good listening speakers and Cindy and I each made a list of all the things we wanted to change and adjust. That way, we were able to keep a dialogue going. They even offered us one last chance, after the final, final, final mix, but we were pretty happy with that one.

*Were most of the tracks recorded "live" or were there overdubs/edits.*

**AH.** The latter - for pretty much all of it. We put the instruments down, and then we did the voices. We tended to try to do the voices together in the room, so that there was that live feeling.

**CM.** We did as much live as we could. One thing we like about the album is that it really is just the four of us, and Scott on bass and percussion. So we can pretty much recreate what we did in concert. I like that idea.

*Did you record more than twelve songs, or were the songs destined for the album pre-determined by the time you got to the studio.*

**AH.** We did cut one more song, and originally it was going to be on there. That was "The Three Bells." We left that off, in part, because we were all a little iffy about it. I thought it was the perfect story song because it was someone's life - they're born, they're married, they die. It was like a perfect - beginning, middle, end that they teach you in story writing that you need to be sure you have. It ended up sounding a little bit, maybe, too sentimental. I think we'll probably do it in the live shows, but we decided not to include it. I have a version of it that's pretty good, because it's all a cappella, just the four voices.

*Is that a traditional song.*

**AH.** No. Michael brought to the sessions a really early recording of some French singers doing it, that was quite beautiful. You know, it's the one about Little Jimmy Brown - *"And the chapel bells were ringing."* [Anne starts singing the melody].

*Yes, I've got it now.*

**AH.** It got a little soupy, we felt.

*That could be a little bit sugary relative to the other songs. Cloying, in fact.*

**AH.** You got it. I mean I loved it. We had our doubts and so, just like we've done with everything else, when any of us had real strong doubts, we let it go.

Anne, did you have to twist Mark's arm to do the sleeve notes.

**AH.** No, what happened with the sleeve notes was, I went to do some writing and I tend to be a little bit poetic and a little, maybe, Victorian in my language, or frilly in my language and you can sort of see that on the "Voices Of Winter" or "At The Turning Of The Year" – those liner notes that are mine. Cindy wanted it to be more – sort of factual and pragmatic, and I found that Cindy and Steve felt like theirs was too plain. I finally said, "You know, we're all writers. There's just no way that we're going to be able to write this. Let's just ask Mark if he can capture what he hears going on with this group." So he did it. I didn't have to twist his arm at all. He just said "Sure."

*What did you think of them Michael.*

**MS.** I really was happy with them. I thought he captured what was going on there. At the same time, to tell you the truth, I was very glad that he liked it. He's another one – I trust his judgement. He's always thinking about this music, and he's real involved with how this music – that is, folk music – is being exercised around the world. He definitely is an opinionated man, one of the most opinionated men I've ever met. It's nice that he feels strongly about it.

*I felt that what Mark said about being snowed under with "me, myself I" songs, was an astute and honest summation of the current climate. Yet no one seems to be grasping the fact that it's an epidemic.*

**MS.** You can always write a song about your inner state. It's hard to write real story songs, particularly now, I think. There used to be a time when, how do I put it, there wasn't as much self-criticism in the air.

*There's also a cut-off point where the subject can only be so dark, to allow the story to work.*

**MS.** Yes. And the thing is, I don't know that the ballads from the thirteenth and fourteenth century, let's say, I don't know that they considered that area of things. There is a certain bliss in ignorance. That's always the question – is the ballad that you hear, a construction by one person who sat down and thought it out and worked out the poetry of it, or is it something that comes unconsciously from thousands of people. Sort of coalesces in the future. I find old ballads particularly, they're as dark as they can be sometimes.

*It may have been a simpler time, brutality existed, there were smaller wars but lots of them, and of course in those times disasters like plagues were more rife. Songs in those days were a way of delivering the news. Capturing the history.*

**MS.** Yes. And they are worn too, like stones. There is a patina to those old songs that is hard to capture.

Truly, if I could, that's what I would do. I would write songs about exactly the things that fascinate me. I do stay away from a lot of the things that fascinate me. It fascinates me when people murder – not serial killers, or that sort of thing – within their families. I can't describe to you how attractive that is to me in terms of the story. My wife Barbara says, "Boy, I'd just love to be a fly on the wall" during some of these situations. There's a tune that's on the Fourtold record, which is a rewriting for me of an old English ballad – the story of *the false knight*. The premise is that a young man entices a young woman away to be his wife and it turns out that the reason he has taken her away is because he wants what she is bringing with her, her wealth. I love that story. I love the whole idea of it, that he does that. That they would essentially capture the notion of a predator like that in a song, and also that he gets his just desserts.

*Anne how about these "me, myself I" songs,*

**AH.** Right. I think everything goes – reaction, reaction, reaction. I think that there was a period of time where there were more story songs and ballads, and that's what was emphasised. And then people wanted to do self-exploration. This album is kind of interesting, because, in a sense, you're getting a little bit of political music when you think of "Two Men In The Building" – you're getting some political statement. You're getting some historical statements with, certainly "Nine Little Goblins" and a couple of the other songs.

*"Joshua Gone Barbados" kind of fulfils both those roles.*

**AH.** Right. You're still getting original writing, and yet at the same time it's writing within the tradition of storytelling.

*Does anyone else want to offer a comment about how Mark succinctly picked up the aspect of how stories affect us and "may make us cry, scare us, make us laugh."*

**SG.** Yeah. Well, we told him what to say.

**CM.** I'm sure Anne told Mark what to say [laughs].

**SG.** Well, actually we did see a couple of drafts. I love Mark, he's a genius, he's a gifted guy, and a good guy. But we did have a few drafts floating around. I'm not sure what it was that Cindy reacted to. There was something that seemed to be kind of – a hyperbolic or something.

**CM.** There were some parenthetical phrases, and I thought this is a little bit too much.

**SG.** We kept him on track. But, no – it's an honour to have him write those notes.

**CM.** We do have an inside track there, but –

*Of course. I do however think that it's a good thing and it's an honest thing that he says, in that we are awash in the "me, you and our relationship" type of song these days. We really do need to turn the stone over again.*

**CM.** I'd like to see that. Yeah.

*Anne, your banjo playing on "Molly And Tenbrooks" sounds like a guitar. Is this something that you specially developed and is the instrument a basic five-string model, or a hybrid.*

**AH.** You know, sometimes I have a difficult time hearing which is the banjo and which is the guitar. I have to kind of hold my hand in position and go "Oh yeah, that's the banjo" [laughs]. I was trying to get that driving feeling that Steve gets with his guitar playing. It seemed to work. It lifted it up to a pretty energetic place. It really is just a five-string banjo that I'm frailing at a real rapid pace, back and forth. It's pretty simple. The way it sounds is probably just because of where it sits in the track. It's also there on "Panther In Michigan," but you don't hear it quite as dramatically.

*Was the album always going to be an Appleseed release, or were other labels involved early on.*

**AH.** I approached Appleseed, since that's the label that Tom's and my record was on. One of the things with Appleseed is besides his goal of sowing the seeds of political change through song, Jim Musselman also loves good harmony singing and traditional music. For Jim, this album, in a lot of ways, is what he likes to do. He likes interpretative work that's roots oriented, but he likes original work as well. And he loves vocal harmonies. We just went right to Appleseed, and he said he'd be interested, so we set it up.

*How are you going to promote the album.*

**AH.** We are doing about six summer festivals and a couple of independent dates besides that. Then we'll see. I tend to be, and Tom knows this from our "Under American Skies" album, kind of project oriented. I work on something for a time, plus Steve and Cindy are pretty busy. So is Michael, he's very project oriented too. We were supposed to be doing a theatre piece this fall, that's been postponed one year. Part of reason we didn't set up any other Fourtold dates this fall, was because Michael and I were going to be onstage in Chicago. Now that's been postponed. We'll see what happens. There may be some other dates that will come through for us as a quartet. It's really meant to be a special sort of thing, and we really also felt like it was perfect for the festivals that need something for the main stage. Fewer and fewer solo performers really are given the main stage. You've got Cheryl Wheeler. You've got Vance Gilbert. There are some people who just get up there and have this command of energy that works. In general, you go to festivals, they like groups on the stage. Either big names - Tom Rush, or groups. It felt like

this was an opportunity to bring the people they'd want into the workshops, and then have something particularly special for the main stage. We have pretty much filled up every weekend in the summer. In August, Steve and Cindy have a play that they have written music for, that they are busy with right now. They didn't want to be out in August very much.

**SG.** These festivals can do that. They can hire all four of us and then put us in workshops as two's and singles, and so forth. What we are hoping is that, after one round of festivals, if the album gets played and people like it, then it may open up the opportunity to do some of the larger venues that we wouldn't normally do as a duet.

**CM.** Of course now that we've made the album, we'll have to learn the songs [laughs].

**SG.** We'll probably do five or six or seven from this album.

**CM.** Some festivals are fairly short sets, so we'll do half a dozen songs. I think a few of the festivals are full concerts, so we'll probably do some quartet things, and then split up into solos, and duos and trios and divide it up a little.

**SG.** Anne and Michael have sung together for so many years, and done albums together. Cindy and I work together, Cindy and Anne as well. We can pull things out of the hat that we've done before, but it will be challenging.

**CM.** We'll probably come up with a few other songs that we haven't done yet either [laughs]. Anne mentioned "The Three Bells" and we'll probably do that in concert.

**SG.** I think where "The Three Bells" fell down for me was that the parts just stayed the same all the way through. I think what we needed to do was change the lead in each section. Make it more interesting. The harmonies are very exciting. I really love the concept of it, and there are some nice dissonances that move, and things that pull this way and that. I think we have to take it to the next level and make it something that really, the way I see it, would be like an encore, or a second encore where you just come up, stand there and sing a cappella. Do something that is, harmonically, really interesting. Michael and I both had the same reaction to the song. I found the old lp in Bar Harbour, Maine in a library book sale for fifty cents. I was so enchanted to find it, because it was a song that had meant something in my early childhood. I mentioned it to Michael and he remembered it, so I gave him a cassette and he told me that he cried all the way home, listening to the cassette in the car. So he worked up the parts and there was a lot of

enthusiasm for it, but we all agreed that it was pretty saccharine.

**CM.** First we had the guitar. Then we took the guitar out. I think we didn't quite settle into the arrangement.

*Maybe the story line wasn't as strong as in the other songs.*

**SG.** The story doesn't really hold up, in logical terms, like the other songs on the album.

**CM.** The older we get, the more sentimental we get. I would never have even thought about that song twenty years ago. Now it kind of appeals to me.

*You've said that the songs had to be story songs, but did you consciously take the concept one more step further down the road, in that the lyric had to be based on fact. A considerable number of the songs that you recorded fit that mould.*

**AH.** No. I think that just happened. "Pendle Hill" could have been made up, but the story comes from my family. "Two Men In The Building" certainly is factual, but it has more to do with Steve's conflict I think. "Aramalee" – Michael wanted to rewrite that, and I love some of the new verses that Michael created. "Four Rode By" possibly is factual.

*Tyson talks of two generations. There's the depiction of wild cowboys during the late nineteenth century, and the generation that perishes in World War 1.*

**AH.** I think we touched on some things that were factual, and we touched on some mythical legends. Maybe not legends - I don't know what you would call "Aramalee." Certainly the story of the false knight on the road is something that has been covered many times – almost a fairy tale.

*What do you other folks feel about the factual aspect of the songs you recorded.*

**CM.** Well that's folk music isn't it.

*Folk music was once the way of passing the news on. It wasn't always a push button world where communication was instantaneous.*

**CM.** I'd like it to slow down a little bit.

**SG.** I'm not sure that I can credit it to the right person, but I love the expression that says, "Art is the lie that tells the truth." It's the lie that you need to make, to really tell the truth and the thing about story songs is that unlike CNN which we get too much of, there is a truth in the willingness for the singer to be present in what is being said. In other words, it's not just the whipping up of sensation. Actually someone is really present in that, and I love that about the great ballads, and the great story songs.

*Ian Tyson's "Four Rode By" appeared on the Ian and Sylvia Vanguard release "Northern Journey" 1964, and features two generations of a wayward bloodline, the McLean's. Anne tell us about finding this song.*

**AH.** I was on my way up to rehearsal in Vermont. I borrowed some CD's from **Sing Out**. One was a re-release on Vanguard of Ian and Sylvia. As I was going along I heard "Four Rode By," and I thought that it would be perfect. It's so beautiful. I'd never heard it before. When I showed up at rehearsal and I was so excited about it, both Michael and Steve said "Oh yeah, that was a big hit." Clearly, I was too young when it was a big hit, to know it was a big hit – because I'm a few years behind them. Not many, but a few.

*Personally I found "Molly And Tenbrooks" one of the most stunning aspects of this album. Steve, I have your 1967 Vanguard album on vinyl and CD, so it's same song, and yet on "Fourtold" it sounds so totally fresh and new.*

**SG.** Being that there were four of us, really brought things to life in a new way. We could explore – first of all, the melody. Cindy reminded me that I don't actually sing the melody. I started singing it to get the four parts working, and I actually sang it in such a way that Cindy is on the melody. I'm actually singing what's really -

**CM.** Well Anne and I change, we trade off.

**SG.** So it's different from the original concept quite a bit.

**CM.** I think the rhythm changed too.

**SG.** Yeah. I think so. Of course being able to hear it with the division of parts, no one person has to make it all, keep going all the time. The twelve-string, I think, does some wonderful things on the track, and it gave me a chance to play some lead guitar, which I never would ever get to do, if it were just me playing and singing. For years I did that song in a kind of an experimental way, where I would play a pattern of 1,2,3 – like four groups of three that would divide either three as four, so the song was really in 3/4 time, but was really like 12/4 time and it was very strange. I thought it was exciting, and innovative and original, but I don't know if anybody else ever did. I really like the Fourtold approach.

*Was it an obvious quartet song from the outset.*

**SG.** Well, Michael suggested it. He said he really liked the idea of the horses speaking to each other. He thought that had a wonderful poignancy about it. I hadn't really known how my songs – or how I would draw from my songs. My tendency would have been to bring the newer songs, or the newest, or write something, but when the story song issue became

clear then it seemed like we could draw, from one viewpoint, from a wider range of songs. I was honoured that Michael suggested it, and pleased to know that he was that familiar with my work. And the same with "Darcy Farrow," that was his suggestion also. That felt right, to be able to draw from that early time. And of course in terms of time, Ian and Sylvia and a lot of the elements that were influential on all of us have been brought up.

*In terms of the lyric you wrote with Linda Albertano, there are subtleties. For instance, you just mentioned giving the horses voices. What do you recall of writing that lyric.*

**SG.** Of course it's based on a traditional song, and it's kind of our adaptation. For instance the name Kuyper, is such an unusual and strange name and if we were writing the song, we probably wouldn't have chosen that name. But that was what we were given, so we worked with it. I think that I was very intrigued by the idea of the horses having voices. And of the horses actually having compassion. Especially Tenbrooks [the male horse] for Molly.

*I take it that Kuyper is Tenbrooks jockey.*

**SG.** Yes. I have the impression that he is, like, the son of the owner of the horse. Something like that. Maybe I'm imagining this, but to me there is a sense of "Come on boy, get it together." I always used to say that the song was based on fact. The song was in **Sing Out** at one point. I'm not sure where we got the idea, but it seemed to me that it was something centred around Lexington, Kentucky in the 1870's. I saw a wonderful tv special last night on Sea Biscuit. It turns out that Sea Biscuit, was not, basically, a California horse, but was moved to California to be trained and to be raised. It always had the reputation of being a California horse, which I didn't realise this until we saw this last night, but apparently that meant that the horse was not part of the accepted Eastern establishment. Some horses just refused, especially War Admiral who was a very prestigious horse, his owners just refused to race against Sea Biscuit because he was a California horse. There was that kind of stigma, of being a lowly westerner. And the blue blood that they talk about, especially in Kentucky, they take a great pride in their horses.

*Anne, "Pendle Hill" is a retelling of the story of the Lancashire's Pendle Witches. The main character, Alice Nutter, is an ancestor of yours. Did you discover this recently.*

**AH.** Oh I've known about it since I was a little girl. We had a book on the Lancashire Witches, but the song really happened because my mom gave me a school report. It was probably either a late high school or an early college report by a cousin of mine. I'd wanted to write about this relative for a while and it gave enough information and I thought, "I want to do this." I was on

the road and that is always a good time for me. When I'm home I'm busy doing other things, being a mom, and doing schoolwork and I tend to get distracted from my writing. I love, sometimes, when I end up on the road in a hotel room and don't have to worry about cleaning up. One day I sat at my computer in a hotel room and I finished it. It was written around the end of last summer, the beginning of the fall, because I was doing it on the first Faire Winds tour [**Ed. Note.** Anne's trio with Aoife Clancy and Bill Jones].

*Alice Nutter was a woman of considerable financial means and one theory is that the witches trial may have been instigated by a neighbouring landowner, also the court judge, as revenge because of a disputed land boundary. This issue is not mentioned in the lyric.*

**AH.** Well there are so many different possibilities of what had gone on there. There were some reports that she was not liked because she gave money to the poor. People didn't like that. There are people who say that there was the land dispute, which is, of course, a lot of times what the rumour is. This particular report emphasises that it was Good Friday. And that it may actually have been that they were holding a Catholic service. That's why I brought that into the lyric.

*James I of England [who was also James VI of Scotland] was on the throne and there had been a split with the Church of Rome some years earlier when Henry VIII had been king.*

**AH.** Anything you read gives you a different account. So you never know. There were a number of things that I sort of pursued, just because they were interesting, and then left the lyric open to speculation. Somebody did die, and one of the accusations was that they had passed a curse on this fellow. When he probably just died of a heart attack or an aneurysm, but they were blamed for that as well. There were all different sorts of things going on. Someone else told me that part of the reason that Alice may have been silent was because you weren't allowed to speak in your own defence in those times. We'll never know, we'll never know any of these things. It will always be conjecture but that's what makes it kind of interesting and fun.

*"Joshua Gone Barbados" focuses upon a cane cutters strike that ends in disaster. How long have you known the song.*

**CM.** That was on an album by Howie Bursen in the 1970's. A Folk Legacy record. I know it was recorded before then. Steve do you remember who sang it?

**SG.** I remember Tom Rush singing it. I don't know which album. Possibly on the Elektra label.

**CM.** I used to sing that song alone, as a solo, with the guitar in an open C tuning. It was always kind of a nice arrangement. It seemed like a great song for the

four voices, especially the chorus. I love Michael's voice on that song, because he just shoots way up into this high screaming voice. It just works great.

*The other thing that's peculiar about the lyric is that it's not written in precise English, but in a local dialect that they would call, patois.*

**CM.** It was written by Eric Von Schmidt, and I know that there's a true story behind it, and I know I have seen it somewhere, and I was never able to find it or track it down.

*That song introduces a political aspect into the album.*

**CM.** Yes, that and "Ballad of Springhill."

*You must have written "Panther In Michigan" about twenty years ago Michael.*

**MS.** Yeah, I would say. Eighteen years old. That one was a situation where, I think originally, it wasn't something I wanted to do. My idea was that I was going to come up with new songs. Or that, I was going to find folk songs that I liked that I thought we could do and would be exciting to me. I think it might have been Anne that said "Panther" and the other folks said "Oh yeah, let's do that." I was kind of iffy about it. Once we got started I was very happy. Also I've come to understand that I think of "Panther" as that old song that everyone knows, when in truth, there aren't any songs of mine that everyone knows. Now I'm seeing – my nose is too close to the line in the sand as it were.

*Didn't Steve call for that song.*

**MS.** He may very well have. As I say, I can't recall. But it certainly was not my idea, that's what I would say. At the same time, I'm very glad that it's there. I got a chance to experiment with it a little on this album. I certainly sang that song for ten years after the 1986 recording.

*I'm well aware of how that song came about, maybe you'd like to tell our readers how you wrote it.*

**MS.** There was an article in the Chicago Tribune, and the headline was either "There's a panther in Michigan" or "Panther in Michigan." One of the two. I just looked at the headline and I thought that is a wonderful title for a song. When I looked at the article, which, for all practical purposes, I reproduced in the song. I saw that every line had this power, and that if it was just sung, there would be an honesty to it that you could not buy – or that you could not think up. There were lines in there about – "Thirty-four years in law enforcement, I've never been so scared" – when I came upon that, I thought "I really don't need to do much to this article, except attempt to sing it as it's laid out on the page." I only made up about two lines in the entire song.

*Was it hard to come up with a melody.*

**MS.** Not hard at all. Originally it was a rhythm and chord progression, on top of the words. I sort of said the words. The melody was easy to sing over that chord progression. Originally it was based upon, "I want the guitar to sound like this and the vocalist is going to have to do the best he can to keep up with the guitar." It was more a feeling than a melody. When I'm playing the guitar in a satisfactory fashion, and I've found what I think of as the correct key to do the endeavour in, then the melody becomes whatever I can cope with given that the guitarist is playing those chords.

*Did you use the twelve-string guitar on the "Panther In Michigan" track.*

**MS.** Yes. I think there wasn't a time on the record, where I didn't play that twelve-string. I think I pretty much glommed on to the twelve-string for the entire record. If I was going to play, that was going to be what I'd use.

*Next is Steve's "Darcy Farrow."*

**CM.** That's another song that you wouldn't think would work for four voices particularly.

**SG.** That's right. I wouldn't have suggested it, but again Michael felt strongly that it had a place and, of course, Tom Campbell and I wrote that in 1965, and it has been done in so many different ways, different versions, but I honestly feel this is the best version that I've ever been a part of. It's high up there in my favourite ways to hear it.

*When anyone ever mentions "Darcy Farrow" to me, I have to pause for a second and think "No, that isn't a traditional song." Yet it sounds like one. Was that a deliberate approach in writing the song.*

**SG.** It was. But it wasn't like we were trying to create a counterfeit wooden nickel or anything. It was more like we were just enchanted by the particular, you know there's a certain style of old cowboy ballad, and many of them have old Scottish, Irish or English melodies. Like "Streets of Laredo" and those things. So we were kind of enchanted by that, and were steering it in that direction. Part of the reason for that was, the name Darcy is my little sister's name. For me there was a little bit of anxiousness about singing a song that was so dark and so sad, using my sister's name. Again, I say, sort of we took refuge in the idea that we were steering it toward a real old sounding song. When you look at actual literature relating to those old cowboy songs, all those melodies are familiar old British Isles melodies.

*Anne, how long have you known one of the cover songs you brought to the project, Peggy Seeger's "The Springhill Mine Disaster."*

**AH.** I probably sang that in high school years ago. So I've known it since I was fourteen or fifteen.

*It's set in Nova Scotia, so recalling what you said earlier about recent mining disasters near your home, did that dictate the choice of this song.*

**AH.** Well, there was one incident in Pennsylvania about two years ago. I actually think that it was, probably, covered around the world a little bit. It was covered all over the United States, and nine miners were trapped in Western Pennsylvania and they managed to save all of them. They didn't know where they were underground, and were just lucky. I think there actually was, recently, another mining disaster in Nova Scotia where some miners were killed. That sort of work is never going to be guaranteed as safe. We all just knew that song, so I literally started singing it and we all could sing it. That was another part of what would happen, is that when everybody knew a song and we loved the song, we would immediately go, "OK, let's do that one" – though I will say that, once we recorded that song, I never was fully happy with the vocal tracks. And kept saying "I'm not sure I like it. I'm not sure it works." It's right in an area of my range that I don't really like the way my voice sounds. The other voices are strong on it, and we came up with a kind of dramatic presentation that's different to Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger.

*Michael, it seems to me that you have an interest in setting poems to music. The last time I saw you play live you'd set some Yeats poems to music. John Jacob Niles song "Aramalee" is based on an old English folk tale.*

**MS.** I think that one of the reasons, let's say, The Beatles were really wonderful is that they were more steeped in the English language than people in America. That's been my picture. Right now, I'm reading a biography of Mary Queen Of Scots and one of the things that struck me – they talk to some degree about the games that they played in those times, and some of the songs they sang. There's a beauty in the English language phrases they use. It seems to me that ballads, in general from England, really get a grasp of the language that I don't encounter any place else. And they are lessons on how to write songs.

*Am I correct in thinking that Niles was an American.*

**MS.** He is, but that particular tune was English. He wrote some great songs although the one I did was not written by him. Niles was a writer and a song collector. American ballads are rewritings of English ballads, and there are some interesting ways in which they twist the language, because of the fact that they were, how do I put it, uprooted from their source. So you can see how a song might have gotten sort of perverted into interesting odd, turns of phrase once it came over here. As far as I'm concerned, the basic

approach "The king sits in Dunfermline town, drinking the blood red wine," that to me –

*Well it just paints the picture. Says it all.*

**MS.** Does it ever.

*How much lyric rewriting did you undertake.*

**MS.** First I strived to learn the song. I tried to make up my own version of it melodically, when I first encountered the words. I had this idea, this was maybe ten years ago, that I would find folk lyrics that didn't have melodies and make them up, and do an album. That was my idea. I thought that would be a fun thing to do and a chance to explore making up songs without feeling the burden of making up lyrics. "Aramalee" was one of the first ones that I encountered in this John Jacob Niles book that I found at Anne's house. I worked up a whole melody, and sat with it for five or six years and it just didn't work for me. When I got this new melody, or what I thought of as a setting for it, it's almost like there isn't a specific melody. It's more, "If you sing this song, these are the four parts I want you to do." It's more like that, rather than a specific melody. When I thought of this new melody, some of the words just didn't quite swing with the new melody. I wound up making up a couple of verses or changing the phrasing of the words in a few verses. Also, there were things that I wanted to put in there that I felt that the ballad writer would have, if he'd thought more thoroughly about it. There are lines in there that I needed – I wanted people to have this particular mental picture – for instance, traditionally, when a villain – probably in this song but also in other songs, when the villain gets drowned, they talk about the bones are lying there in the sea, for some extensive period of time – or forever. I thought I want to see some juxtaposition of the fact that his bones are lying at the bottom of the sea and he's sort of received his retribution, while on the other hand, nine of his victims are rejoicing that he's finally got his comeuppance. I wanted to see that in the same verse, so I thought "I'm going to mess with this, because it's what they call the folk process." People have been doing this for centuries unbeknownst, as it were. I thought, "Well I'll do this consciously and I'm going to feel free." Another person I would use as a kind of guiding light is Dylan, who will do that rather casually to a ballad, and will just write a verse. He'll feel freer with a ballad, than I'm used to feeling. I think when I first started out singing folk songs, there was this heavy emphasis on being authentic which is just silly when you think about it.

*It's the forerunner of political correctness.*

**MS.** Yeah, it is. It really is. For someone who is eighteen or nineteen years old, from New Jersey, to attempt to do anything that's authentic is just

pointless. I remember recently I was driving someplace and they had a folk show on the radio. There were two French Canadian gentlemen who were singing and they did some kind of little duet number with, perhaps, an accordion and a guitar. Of course they had perfect French accents and I was driving along listening to them and thinking how charming it sounded. Then I realised that when I was twenty years old, had I heard them, I would have attempted to do what it was they were doing. I would have said "I've got to learn that song. I've got to get the accent just right." Now I think, "Oh no, I'll leave it to them. Let them do it."

*Am I correct in thinking that Niles' song was also called "Aramalee," and do we know where the name came from.*

**MS.** It was called "Courting Of Aramalee" in the book. I'm guessing that Aramalee might be some poetic perversion of Emily. Or maybe Emily is some poetic perversion of Aramalee. I don't know exactly. I presume that somewhere along the way it could have been Eleanor, because I've heard of Lady Eleanor and the Elf Knight. Or Fair Eleanor.

*Going back to the traditional source, the language used in those days could sometimes be quite bawdy. I presume I'm not misreading the open lines "He courted her above, he courted her below."*

**MS.** [Laughs] Yeah, that's what I got. The first lyric was "He courted her above, he courted her below, He showed ways of courtin' she never before did know." I read that and thought, "That third line has got to be love." Obviously it has got to rhyme with "above," so the first thing I changed was that. Because it felt like, "I want this to sound more pop."

*Anne, you took "Nine Little Goblins" by Indiana poet James Whitcomb Riley [1849 – 1916] and put music to it. How much of his poem did you use.*

**AH.** The whole thing. That's exactly it – and in the lyric notes in the album it's printed exactly as it is in the little book that I have of child rhymes. There was no rewriting of the words. None. I wanted to make it fit, that's why it took me a long time [laughs]. Mark and Tamlin don't care if they ever hear that melody again. I'd do something in the house, and then go to the bedroom and pick up the banjo and start working on it again. Then I'd go do something else, and come back – because it was important to make those words fit, and come up with a melody that was both joyful and fun – and also a little bit spooky, in a quirky way.

*How long have you been aware of the poem.*

**AH.** I like old bookstores. I have two different, original books of his that I just happened to come across. This was probably back in the late seventies, when I moved into Chicago. "Little Orphan Annie" is probably his best-known work. Now I'm determined to set a few

of his poems to music. I found out that either he played banjo or guitar, and liked to sit around with a friend of his and play. Now I know that, I think I will set some more as it was great fun.

*I know that you included "Two Men In The Building" on your 1998 "Texas & Tennessee" CD. Steve, I presume that the conspiracy in Dallas on November 22<sup>nd</sup> 1963 has troubled you for years.*

**SG.** I think that's a good way to put. Yeah. You notice also, in that song, there's a theme of the Roman Empire – you know, the idea of the Roman ruins. The fact of Caesar's Palace – it's kind of like "hope spring eternal." You know people are trying to do these large powerful things and, of course, that's so much in the news today. If you look at the Tigris and the Euphrates, look at the sense of history that's in that. That was part of my scope, and the song was that these are eternal kinds of things. But at the same time, it was very personal. It was that everyone in my generation certainly, and I think everyone who was alive then and is alive now, in some way was affected by that event.

*How long ago did you write the song.*

**SG.** Around the time that I put it on "Texas And Tennessee." It turned out it, it wasn't really quite finished. When we started singing it with the group, everyone pretty much objected to the last section musically, which sort of droned. It sort of set up a chord and stayed on that chord. Of course when you're just one person singing, you can make it kind of a spoken part. Almost like a monotonous sort of part. For me that had certain dramatic effect, that was desirable, which is, that I was able to kind of just spit out those ideas in a rhythmic sort of way. When we started singing it, everyone seemed to feel that the song fell apart right there. I ended up changing it, so that the chords change in a way that's more like the earlier two verses. It keeps the four-part movement, and I was much happier with that really. Actually, when I recorded it in – gosh, it was 1997. That was the time when all those elements were pretty much in flux, I was actually writing the song then and wanted to include it on that album. I really felt it said something about my childhood, illusory sense of Texas on all of the levels. Everything from doggies, and pioneers, and ghost riders all the way down to the politics.

*Having performed the song, solo, over the last five years, have you had any comments about it.*

**SG.** A few. Some reviewers said that it was a conspiracy theory song. Radio would play the "Texas And Tennessee" version on 22<sup>nd</sup> November and say, "Here's an interesting perspective on it." Doing the song live, Cindy and I haven't done it that much together, although we have worked on it a little bit as

a duo. I would sing it at Kerrville. You know how sometimes you get into those campfires at Camp Cuisine where people are saying, "Do the first song you ever wrote. Or do the darkest or the weirdest song or whatever." I would do it at those times when people had heard everything else I do. It's kind of provocative. I feel better about it in this context, because when you talk about Fourfold, it brings another dimension to the group of songs. It's one of the few songs that really talks about national level politics, in any context, and that's a hard thing to bring up without being too, what I mean to say, too restricted by time, and having it not mean the same thing a week later.

*I think I'm correct in saying that, "Two Men In The Building" and Michael's "Panther In Michigan," in terms of their historical source, are the only songs that feature events which occurred in the latter half of the twentieth century.*

**SG.** Oh yeah.

**CM.** At least in subject. Yeah. You know you probably have a clearer overview of it than we do. We get so meshed in the details – we probably don't have any overview of what it covers.

**SG.** To be nit picking, I think Springhill, didn't that occur in 1953 or 1956? That's a Peggy Seeger song, and I think she was a Brit when she wrote that.

*Cindy I understand that "I Drew My Ship" was almost a last minute decision.*

**CM.** Well yeah. I kept suggesting songs [laughs]. I wanted to do a traditional ballad and I have to say Michael gave me a hard time about quite a few songs. I was really kind of at the end of my rope about finding something that he would want to work on. I finally, just, in the studio, sat down and said "What about this," and I played it on the piano, which I never play.

*So you finally get to play the piano on a recording.*

**CM.** It's my piano debut, and it was completely by accident. I actually had to go back to the hotel that night and sing through the song and make sure I remembered all the words, because I hadn't sung it in – I don't know – Steve, you probably never heard that one.

**SG.** No, I didn't.

**CM.** So it's got to be fifteen or twenty years since I've sung that song. I always loved the mysterious kind of quality it had. It's not quite a big ballad, but it's got the same qualities and it's a real long, wonderful, detailed story.

*My synopsis ran to it being, the unrequited love story of an impatient sailor.*

**CM.** [laughs]. Well, he's dead.

**SG.** It has a wonderful poignancy. The way that it describes death, I think, is a fascinating thing, because it talks about "forgetting your home." To me that was a wonderful way to portray that.

**CM.** "Where bright eyes glancing and fishers dancing, Have made him quite forget his own."  
*Where did you pick up this song.*

**CM.** That was from a recording that Gordon Bok, Ed Trickett and Ann Muir made. Ed Trickett sang it. What first attracted me to that song was the melody. I think it's a beautiful melody. I've always loved ghost stories, so that fit right in. The recording probably came out in the seventies.

*The closing track, "Run, Come See, Jerusalem" was brought in by Michael. It's a fairly rousing tune, although lyrically it relates a fairly sad tale. There's a connection with The Weavers in as much as a later version of that group used to perform the song.*

**MS.** Yes. With Weavermania we've been doing that song on occasions. I really loved the way Erik Darling did it on one of The Weavers records. It was almost hysterical sounding, the way he sang it. When I first heard it, all those "My God's" that happened over and over – I found that really powerful. I've known that song since I was maybe, eighteen. I just thought it would be really fun to do this song and get a chance to sing the lead vocal.

*I'm mentioned already that a significant number of the songs are actually based on fact. This song is based on a 1929 event.*

**MS.** Yes, as far as I know it was a totally true thing that happened. That's the whole point of ballads that they are rooted in some kind of truth. It's not like you made them up. Consequentially, there is a strength about them that other kinds of songs don't have – and that's part of what makes "Run, Come, See" a powerful song, I'm sure, is that you know exactly that this is a real thing. You know "Lady Isabel And The False Knight" – maybe, maybe not, you know – but I think in terms of rooted in reality, it could have been. That's the important thing I think, is that it could have been.

*Have you ever heard the Blind Blake Higgs version of this shipwreck song dating from 1940.*

**MS.** I have years, and years, and years ago. And you know, I couldn't comprehend it. That was the feeling I had when I first heard Leadbelly, and Woody Guthrie too. All those people I heard, when I first started in folk music – and you know, it was so foreign to my sensibilities that it was, it was a little like the first time I heard John Coltrane. I was maybe twenty-five. I thought the band was tuning up. I literally thought the

band was tuning up, and they were playing. It was so far removed from any experience I'd ever had musically, that I thought *"When are they going to get started."* That's the impression I had with Blind Blake and Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly, all three of those. With Robert Johnson I had a similar response.

*Presumably the Weavers version was quite rousing.*

**MS.** Yeah. And they kind of spoon-fed you the song. For me that's the joy of The Weavers and The Kingston Trio. I don't know that I would have listened to folk music had it been presented by the authentic, original purveyors. I don't think I would have gotten it, because I was so white bread.

*If your heart is in the music, the commercial eventually leads you back to the original or the authentic.*

**MS.** Yes. And now I'm a big Robert Johnson fan. Now I'm a big Leadbelly fan. Now I'm a big Woody Guthrie fan. But I do remember that time when the records first came on that I thought, *"What is this. I don't understand what this is at all."* It was almost like The Weavers gave you a chance to get on some solid footing with those songs.

*OK, each person has talked about the songs they brought to the project. Relative to songs that each of you haven't talked about, does anyone want to offer any comment.*

**MS.** Yeah, there is one that I'm really knocked down by and that's the "Pendle Hill" tune. I feel like that is really, really a good song. I've got to say, I was really impressed. The thing that is interesting to me about "Pendle Hill" is, it zips by in some way. It's a fairly lengthy ballad, I do believe – it's got a bunch of verses, and yet when I sit down and listen to it, it just zips. The pictures are so exciting on the one hand and the melody is so elusive and kind of old and worn sounding that it sounds very authentic to me and I also think it's a really, really good song. I think it's a kind of sleeper, in the sense that I don't know if people are going to go *"Oh that's a great song."*

*Subjectively it's a song about witches and therefore could be said to be dark, but the way that Anne has treated it, is with a very light hand.*

**MS.** Yes. I agree. She's a good songwriter. It's becoming more clear to me as time goes by, how good a songwriter she is. I think that her contributions are the ones that snag me the most when I listen to the record. But I must say, each person in this group has come up with things that I like very much. The "Darcy Farrow" tune – I've always loved "Darcy Farrow." Ever since I first heard it, when I was must have been about twenty-two. It's dryly laid out, and there are some great place names and some great personal names in that song, and it's a beautiful melody. You can't go wrong. I love the tune that Cindy came up with "I Drew My Ship." That's poignant –

that's a song that makes me cry every time, and I don't even know why. I like the fragmentation of it. The fact that I'm not exactly sure what's going on, and the melody – it's just a gorgeous melody. I got to say, that that one to me – I want to take a little credit for it, because Cindy came in with a song that I just really did not go for at all. I was so surprised, because everything I've heard from her over the years, I've always loved every song she's come up with. She can find, it seems to me, the most esoteric folk tunes. Anyway, when I was just really adamant about *"I don't want to do that song"* – when we came right to the end of the album I was feeling bad about having been so negative about that one tune and I said *"Cindy I feel like you need to be more represented here. Is there something you have?"* and it was the night before the last session, I think, and she came up with that and I was so thrilled. Because for me, it's the song I'm happiest to have been involved in.

*Anyone else.*

**CM.** I love Anne's setting of "The Nine Little Goblins" [Steve laughs]. To me, I think we really needed something kind of joyful and exuberant and that song gives those qualities to the album that it would be lacking otherwise. I think we all have mixed feelings about that one, but I like it a lot [laughs]. The little goblin laughter is one of my favourite parts.

**SG.** I like the diversity. Actually "Panther In Michigan" was my suggestion. I have admired that song a lot. I felt that it was unique. I felt the sense of it seemed to be of its own. I liked it the first time I heard Michael do it years ago. I liked the energy of it, and I thought that maybe with four parts it would have a kind of breathless, heart pounding kind of rhythm – as you work with the four voices, and consider the possibilities. What's the potential? That song seemed to fully realise the potential that I'd hoped for.

**AH.** Let me see. "Molly And Tenbrooks" came to the project because Michael loves that song. It had nothing to do with the Ian and Sylvia version. He told me about a time that he was listening to it while he was out running and he got all choked up by it. He was very moved by the song, so that came about, I would say, because of Michael more than Steve. "Joshua Gone Barbados" was one of the songs I used to hear Cindy do in Chicago and I always love the way she sang it, so I'm glad she finally recorded that song because she has done it for years. "Panther In Michigan" everybody was excited about, because both Steve and Cindy like that. I'm real pleased with a lot of these tracks. They're really exciting to me. "I Drew My Ship" – Cindy had brought one of John Robertson's and Tony Baron's Kipling poems to the project and Michael, as I said, we tended to want everyone to be excited by something, so Michael didn't like that one. We wanted a song where Cindy

did the lead, so I said to her "Think. Think. Think." This was when we were already in the studio, and we only had a couple of days of recording left. She thought about it and then this song came to her, that she had learned from, I think, Ed Trickett. She sat down at the piano, and I'm glad that we finally have Cindy on the piano, since she is a lovely piano player. That song, "I Drew My Ship," is just such a beautiful way to kind of draw things down to a quiet place before we do the final "Run, Come, See Jerusalem." That again, "Run, Come, See Jerusalem," was something that Michael brought that I'd never heard. It kind of fell together, in a nice way, the whole project. It has got a nice variety of styles and feeling to it.

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## **Dalis Allen - The New Kerrville Folk Festival Producer [And Empress of the Quiet Valley Ranch]**

**Introduction :** *By the late summer of last year the Kerrville Folk Festival was in dire financial straights, its immediate future literally hung by a thread, and so a Board of Directors was appointed. This year's main Festival was the first to be produced by Dalis Allen, long time assistant to Festival Founder/Producer, Rod Kennedy. On Day 15 of this year's 18 day long main Festival - 5<sup>th</sup> June 2003 - I interviewed Dalis and began by asking her about her career history.....*

I ran a coffeehouse at the University Of Houston, and hosted an entertainment conference where I met Allen Damron, Ray Wylie Hubbard and a bunch of those guys.....and we blame Allen....he said "There's this thing getting ready to happen up in the Hill Country. You probably ought to go check it out." So, I jumped in my mom's '55 Chevy and drove up here to Kerrville and went to the very first programme, which was in the Auditorium in town, in 1972. The next year I was on staff. When we moved out to the ranch in '74, I worked in the office. Rod still had his Business Manager from Austin, Joe Bermea, and I assisted him and checked in the artists. It was very casual. The office then, was about one piece of what it is now. Over the years, it has gotten three additions to it. Then I somehow phased out of the office, and I was one of the first Craft Co-ordinators and I did that for many years – just as a volunteer. Then I was gone a little bit in the eighties. I had a regular job and a relationship and just didn't come out to the Festival that much. I ran into Rod at a show in Houston, and he said "God, I haven't seen you in a decade, what are you doing ? Why don't you come back to the Festival and hang out ?" – so I was his guest, and then ended up back in the office. I was part time, and I would work about six months out of the year. I'd come up in March or April and stay through till September, and then go back to Houston again till the following year. I was hired full time about three or four years ago, so it's been a natural progression, because, I guess, I've been associated with and worked closely with Rod for so many years. Going to conferences and other festivals and putting on

production over and above the Festival, I just sort of learned everything in spite of myself – or at least without a great deal of intent. It just seemed like the natural thing that I would succeed him.....and that's where I am now.

*Although you've been in the office for so long, was there any obvious tutoring on Rod's part in the last few years.*

It wasn't obvious. I'm that type of person. They used to call me in Houston and ask me where stuff was, because I have a knack for paying attention and hearing two or three things at the same time. I have a natural penchant for being in the music business because I've run other venues, I've had my own booking agency several times. I've been involved in music, in some fashion, for most of my life, with or without intent [laughs].



Photo: Arthur Wood, Kerrville Kronikles Katalogue

**Dalis Allen** [centre], Producer of the Kerrville Folk Festival during the performance of Bobby Bridger's song "Heal In The Wisdom" on the final night – 8<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

*When did you actually assume the title of Festival Producer.*

Rod retired in October of last year, and we had his retirement event in November. I actually produced last year's Wine & Music Festival, but I inherited a partially produced affair. It was partially produced by Rod, and then Vaughn [Hefner], and then they butted out and I ended up with it. We turned it into a benefit. I had to call everybody back and ask if they would play for free. And that all worked, and it was fine. That was kind of my first official act, but this is the first one that I

did completely on my own. I had no input from Rod, or Vaughn or anyone else. I just did it.

*Back in November last year, in terms of looking forward to organising the main 2003 Festival, what was your mindset.*

Well, I still wasn't even quite sure that it was my place to do this. I printed a blank copy of the schedule and pencilled in a *wish list*. I wrote down whom I would like to invite, and in what order I would want that to be, and then started making the calls. I erased the folks that couldn't come, because they were scheduled somewhere else, until everything kind of fell into place. It was like working a big puzzle. It was fun to do that, and to know that I wanted certain people in certain places to create an evening's music. Let me put it this way, I always thought that Rod was an artist at what he did. Most people would never know that he had an exact reason for every single thing that he did in terms of who followed who, and who was on what night. Scheduling is an art. This year's Festival has shown that I somehow inherently have that skill, possibly through my interactions with Rod. Other people realised that's what it took, and that I have the ability to create that. What I realised once the festival started, is that, for instance, having Ruthie [Foster] follow Judy Collins was good scheduling. That's because Ruthie could hold the crowd. The scheduling has been good and it's interesting to me too, to watch the Festival through my memory of creating it. Like with New Folk, when I heard them perform onstage, I could remember when I listened to their tapes. And how I felt about their songs at the time.

*Did you ever feel between November and the opening day of the Festival that you were climbing a tall mountain, or did the programming just naturally fall into place.*

I think there was some of each. I think that as I study myself, I realise that people say, "*How in the hell do you do that? How do you do this? How did you get through that?*" I think I have sort of a place, a zone, where I have these things to accomplish and if I put one foot in front of another I get there. If I sat down and thought about the immensity of it all, it would be – "*Oh my God*" [said in a loud voice]. Then I might freak out, but I don't ever do that. It doesn't occur to me that there's anything particularly huge that I'm doing. I'm just doing what I do, and that is to put the Festival together. And allow other people to help me do that.

*Considering the recent financial problems, in terms of your wish list, when you contacted the musical community regarding the 2003 Festival was everyone fairly positive.*

Yes. Oh yeah. Even folks that couldn't come wished they could. Peter Yarrow certainly was the reason we had Judy Collins come to play. There were also other folks like Art Garfunkel and people like that, that I contacted. It wasn't a negative reaction. It was a case

of they couldn't do it right now, or they weren't quite sure about it, or they needed to know a little more about it. The Festival itself has a good enough reputation, in terms of being a great venue to play. There's probably some animosity still lingering out there, which I don't know who or what it is, and hopefully because I'm someone different whatever's out there will just sort of melt away. Mostly, I would say, it's been a good reaction.

*Rod is listed in the official programme as a Consultant to the Festival. Did he have much input.*

He was available to me. He also consulted on some of the business things with the Board, and Charlie [Land] our President. We worked through some things where the ball had been dropped and we needed to straighten them out. He had some relationships with people in relevant organisations. He helped in those ways. If I had a question, and I asked him, he'd come visit with me about it. I would say "*I don't quite remember what you did about so and so, or exactly how did so and so work,*" because I might have been on the outside of it, and didn't know the exact internal thing. Basically, it's that kind of a consultancy. He didn't come in and say "*I think you ought to do....whatever.*" If I said "*What do you think about me putting this together,*" then we would discuss it and work through it. That's how our relationship has always been. When we'd go anywhere, that's mostly what we talk about. What the musicians are doing. We'd always be talking about the music business.

*Having had to listen to the work 600 New Folk applicants, who each submitted two songs, and then shortlist 32 of them, do you want to offer any comments.*

I had watched Rod do it for several years, and then I actually practised for the last couple. I listened on my own, without having any effect on the result, so I already knew what it would feel like. It's actually a little bit daunting, in terms of the numbers. And also knowing the effect that my decisions can have on those folks – whether they get in, or whether they don't. The folks that come here to play, something changes. Something shifts in their life, in some way, and having that final decision power was daunting. I didn't think of it in those terms when I listened to those tapes, but afterwards it kind of dawned on me. Like I said earlier, when I listen to them do the songs live, I remembered how I felt or what I thought when I listened to those tapes. I may change and get a team to do it in future. Then again, I may not. I haven't made that decision yet. It is a lot to do.

*Between the competition closing date and the announcement of the list of 32 Finalists, how much time does the short-listing process take.*

I tried to do it all in three days, and do it solid. That didn't quite work out. Obviously, it's not an impossible

task. It's very subjective, and so if I had a group it would change the whole way it feels – that may be OK.

*When you were referring to "something changing" to the songwriters who come here, I presume that you were referring to the 32 finalists and not just the 6 winners. In that they would all meet other people including songwriters, and absorb what goes on here.*

Right. Yes. I have a belief that it could have been any 32 people out of 600, but that it was just their turn. It was their time to be here, to make their next step. Make their next move. To be recognised. To meet someone. Whatever it is that was meant to happen for them right now in being here. It's like Tom Prasado Rao, Tom Kimmel and Michael Lille all met in 1993, when they were in New Folk. Now they write together and part of their careers is, The Sherpas. It's thing like that, that happen over and above being one of the six. Or whether or not you get invited back to Mainstage. Or if another festival or venue hears you. A lot of the venue operators are here on those days specifically for that. They are always looking for emerging artists.

*You mentioned Judy Collins earlier, but for your first full production it was something of a coup to have her come down and perform. Do you want to comment on Peter Yarrow's contribution.*

Peter, of course, has worked with the Festival since it started in the area of New Folk and has been something of an advisor and a support for Rod, and the Festival itself. He's here every year and usually stays a week or more, and celebrates his birthday here. He feels that people like Peter, Paul and Mary who have the influence that they do, should get what this Festival is all about. With their support we sell more tickets. More people come and hear the emerging artists and our mission is supported. He's very gradually working with people like Judy to get them to find out what we're about. There were more details to take care of for her and her crew than most of the other artists, but once she got here she did a beautiful set, and was very pleased to be here, and went away with a good feeling about the Festival. That's what we want. Peter is talking to other performers of that stature, for other years. The festival will not turn into that, but having one such act each weekend will bring people who have not come to the Festival before. It's real weird that somebody doesn't get hooked on coming back, because they're given the opportunity to discover all these new people that they might never have heard of otherwise. Arlo or The Smother Brothers, Richie Havens. Joan Baez. There's a whole list of folks that Peter knows and has been contact with and we'll see if any are there are willing to come down.

*You just mentioned ways of selling tickets. It's my impression from Mainstage that they've been quite healthy this year.*

Yeah. Of course on that Saturday night with Judy it was full right up to the booths. Even opening night was good. It was one of our best attended opening nights and that was due partly to the fact that we are really trying to encourage local Kerrville folks to come out and find out what we're really about. There's still a little bit of distance between them and us. We gave away three thousand tickets to local vendors and shops in town that either advertise with us or have some sort of sponsorship deal with us, to give to their customers and the people in Kerrville. We advertised it in the paper and on the radio and said "Go pick up your tickets for opening night." I don't know how many years we'll do that, or if we'll even continue. We don't want people to get used to never having to buy an opening night ticket, but it did swell our numbers and it got some people from Kerrville to come out.....

*That might encourage them to come back for other nights.*

Exactly. To get them to at least realise that we have a family atmosphere. It's a really wonderful event with good music and food and crafts and everything else that we have. I think that there have probably been more people from Kerrville this year, than there has been in the past.

*One thing that I've noticed in the campgrounds is that there have been many more teenagers around than at previous festivals. From the age of 15 to 20. And I'm not talking solely about the offspring of older Festival regulars. It seems to me that there are lots more of them.*

Well, that's a goal.

*Because you have to keep replenishing.....*

Right. That's something that I put out there. I think a lot of them come with their families and their friends and a lot of them are kids of our staff, who are also on staff. People come with their whole family to be here, and to camp out. I think some of them come from the local area, because they know they can come out here and hang out. As much as we need the next generation, and the kids to come out, we have to make sure that we have places available for them and things for them to do. So that it's interesting for them. They can hang out, but we wouldn't want them to wander around and get bored.

*I guess a lot of folks who come in the evening only see Mainstage, and not the living, breathing community that the campgrounds become for two weeks each year. So they may not get what this Festival is truly about – I'm thinking in terms of say, the subordinate official events and the whole swathe of unofficial events. You really have to "plug into" the campground to see that and get that.*

Sure. You have to be willing to sort of wander, and find out what's going on. It may not be in the programme, but you'll find posters and stuff all over the ranch. People come up with stuff after they get

here that they want to put together – all of that's good. It's like a community. It's like a village.

*Going back to Day 10, last Saturday night - when you closed the gates how many people were on the ranch.*

I would guess about 6000. I don't have an exact count, but that's about what that theatre would hold.

*Today is Day 15 and there's only three days more to go. Surely you can begin to look back. How do you feel that this year's Festival has gone so far.*

I think it has been a great success. I feel really good about how everything came together. The music. The co-operation. The feel of the whole event. It has really turned out well. All of our teacher's programmes, all of those things just meshed, and worked, and were well attended. I think folks have a real good feeling about everything overall. We've had very few problems. The sound guys equipment blew one weekend and we dealt with that. Then we had the storm and it bent the scaffolding that supported the sound equipment and we're dealing with that. Things like that, that were maybe somewhat due to natural causes, but overall the feel of the place and any problems or issues we've had have been very minimal.

*Any lessons you've learned for next year.*

Just to continue – I don't have any intent to make any big major changes, or to do a sweep of anything. Some subtle changes have really worked. I intend things to continue to work in a real easy fashion. My lesson, I guess is that – well, the most interesting thing for me is that I did not intend to be the MC. I really wanted a lot of other people to do it, but as it worked out – particularly after the first weekend – it was better that I did it. I didn't know what I was going to do until I got up there and did it.

*I was wondering if you'd been taking lessons. You seemed to glide effortlessly out to the microphone and oozed so much calm and confidence.*

I was nervous at first and felt people could tell that I wasn't used to doing it.

*I thought you did a creditable job from the get go.*

That's what a lot of people have said. Inside of me, when I stepped up there, it basically felt like I was talking to a room full of friends. It's just a bigger room.

*It's all a matter of degree. You're either at the door of the office communicating with one person, or half a dozen –*

Or a few thousand from Mainstage. I have often said that you could say all day "Boy, if I ever do that, this is what I'm going to do." You really never know until you do it. I just walked out there and started talking, and it was like "This is kind of cool" [Laughs]. I guess I'm

getting more and more comfortable with it. I forget stuff. I'll have a whole plan when I walk out there, and then I'll look at somebody and start talking about something totally different. There's a few things I've forgotten to do but, we'll live.

*The last time I was here was for the main Festival was in '99. Since then you've begun the accreditation programme for teachers. Will you develop other such programmes.*

That will continue to change some. The teacher's programme was an idea that took a while to bring to an actuality. Last year was the first time we did it. The Music and Business Seminar that we had been doing was starting to wane a little bit. I'm going to do some of that again, but maybe as a one-day thing. Going back to the teenagers, there are some programmes that I'd like – I'm not sure about this yet, but I've heard that Ray Wylie Hubbard does a programme for teenagers about what can happen in the music business in terms of drugs and alcohol, or stress, or getting over tired. And he uses humour in presenting things like that. I want to do some programmes to address issues that kids might have coming out here. The peer pressure. They may be doing things, like drinking, that they're not supposed to or whatever. I want to utilise those midweek periods for "our village," as someone said, for the kids of folks that are here for eighteen days, or who stay through a whole week, and address the issues of living together. Maybe do some Music and Business programmes, and reduce the teacher's programme to three days instead of five, and create a real solid core of educational programmes. We will always do the Songwriters School, and the Blues Guitar Workshop has been going great. Some people have talked about wanting more vocal lessons, which we have had as part of the Teacher's Programme. Maybe we'll separate that out and have it for musicians. We could do harmonica lessons. We had Sky Walking Stick Man Alone out here one time, and he did a flute workshop. It was an overwhelming success and people got to make their own flutes. They were very excited about that. I intend to continue things like that, and also do new things as well.

*I know that I mentioned teenagers earlier, and certainly Kidsville copes with youngsters to a certain age and the more adult programmes cope with those folks over twenty, but there is a gap for those in the 12 to 20 age bracket.*

Yeah. We'll address all of those things.

*What of the future. Are you optimistic.*

Oh yeah. I think this has shown that we have the ability to regroup and that the Kerrville Festival is bigger than any of us. It's going to continue and everyone plays a part in that. I have a real good feeling about where we are going. Just the fact that we did it this year means that – if we can do it this year, it's a *no brainer* to do it from now on.

# 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 **CASHMEN & WEST** "Lifesong" ABC/Dunhill DSD-50179 [1974]. #
2. Years **BETH NIELSEN CHAPMAN** "Beth Nielsen Chapman" Reprise 9 26172-2 [1990]. #
3. The Dance **TOM RUSSELL BAND** "Beyond St. Olav's Gate" Round Tower Music RTM CD 40 [1992].
4. Molly And Tenbrooks **FOURTOLD** "Fourtold" Appleseed Recordings APR CD 1071 [2003]. #
5. Alice Nutter **FOURTOLD** "Fourtold" Appleseed Recordings APR CD 1071 [2003]. #
6. Ashe County Fair **JONATHAN BYRD** "Wildflowers" no label / no index no. [2000]. #
7. The Ballad Of Larry **JONATHAN BYRD** "The Waitress" no label / no index no. [2002]. #
8. Down Here **STEVE FISHER** "The Coming Attraction" no label / no index no. [2003]. #
9. Aramalee **FOURTOLD** "Fourtold" Appleseed Recordings APR CD 1071 [2003]. #
10. Yarrington Town **MICKIE MERKENS** "Texas Summer Nights, Vol. 1" Potato Satellite PS2-1000 [1983]. #
11. His Eyes **CHIP TAYLOR & CARRIE RODRIGUEZ** "Let's Leave This Town" Train Wreck Records TMG-LS-4009 [2002]. #
12. Rollin' Home **AENGUS FINNAN** "North Wind" Borealis Records BCD148 [2002]. #
13. Holy As A Day Is Spent **CARRIE NEWCOMER** "The Gathering Of Spirits" Rounder/Philo 116 711 243-2 [2002]. #
14. The Wing And The Wheel **NANCI GRIFFITH** "One Fair Summer Evening" MCA MCLD 19388 [1988].
15. When I Have Arms Again **ANDREW CALHOUN** "Tiger Tattoo" Waterbug WBG0053 [2002]. #
16. Two Fires **ERIC TAYLOR** "The Kerrville Tapes" Silverwolf SWCD 1031 [2003]. #
17. Carolina Mae **JAMIE BYRD** [and **STEVE FISHER**] "The Looking Glass" Roosterdog Records RDR 2124 [1999]. #
18. The War Bride's Waltz **AENGUS FINNAN** "Fool's Gold" Shelter Valley Productions SVP01 [1999]. #
19. Sligo Honeymoon 1946 **TERRY CLARKE** "The Shelly River" Catfish KATCD208FP [1991/2001].
20. What I Love About Rain **ART GARFUNKEL** with **BUDDY MONDLOCK & MAIA SHARP**  
"Everything Waits To Be Noticed" Manhattan 7243 5 40990 2 1 [2002]. #
21. Gold Heart Locket **JEFF BLACK** "B-Side And Other Confessions Volume One" Dualtone 80302-01135-2 [2003]. #
22. Home Boys **TIM HARRISON** "Wheatfield With Crows" Second Avenue Records SAS 2008 [2002]. #
23. The Knives Of Spain **RAY WYLIE HUBBARD** "Growl" Rounder/Philo 116 711 237-2 [2003]. #
24. December Skies **GREG TROOPER** "Floating" Sugar Hill Records SUG-CD-1075 [2003]. #
25. American Hotel **TOM RUSSELL** "Modern Art" Hightone Records HCD8154 [2003]. #
26. 24 / 7 / 365 **PATTY LARKIN** "Red = Luck" Vanguard 79727-2 [2003]. #
27. Salt On Your Skin **ERIC ANDERSEN** "Beat Avenue" Appleseed Recordings APR CD 1068 [2003]. #
28. Hymn : Page 9/11 **PETER OSTROUSHKO** "Coming Down From Red Lodge" Red House RHR CD 170 [2003]. #
29. I Just Drove By **KIMMIE RHODES/WILLIE NELSON** "Picture In A Frame" Sunbird SBD 0007 [2003]. #
30. Workshirts And Turpentine **ROD PICOTT** "Stray Dogs" Welding Rod Music RP3167 [2002]. #
31. Hob Thrasher **MICHAEL McNEVIN** "In The Rough" Mudpuddle Music no index no. [2002]. #
32. Aces **CHERYL WHEELER** "Different Stripe" Rounder/Philo 116 711 217-2 [2002]. #
33. You Are The Rain **BILL MILLER** "Spirit Rain" Para Recordings PRC 1126 [2002]. #
34. Small Town Hero **RICHARD DOBSON** "Doppelgaenger" Brambus Records 200265-2 [2002]. #
35. Gone To Pablo **LUKA BLOOM** "Amsterdam" Evolver EVL2014-2 [2003]. #
36. Dead Man's Hand **JACK HARDY** "Bandalier" Great Divide Records JH4698 [2002]. #
37. Profit **THE MAMMALS** "Evolver" Humble Abode Music HAM 004 [2002]. #
38. She Don't Like Roses **CHRISTINE KANE** "Rain And Mud And Wild And Green" Big Fat Music no index no. [2002]. #
39. All For You **LISA ASCHMANN** "The Pear" no label LA06 [2003]. #
40. AmBush [The Death Of The Myth] **JOHN FLYNN** "Dragon" MettaFour Records no index. no [2003]. #
41. September When It Comes **ROSANNE CASH** [feat. **J. CASH**] "Rules Of Travel" Capitol CDP 7243 8 37757 2 9 [2003]. #
42. If I Can Sing A Song **HERB PEDERSEN** "Southwest" Evangeline/Acadia ACA 8039 [1976/2002]. #
43. La Mer/Byond The Sea **CHRISTINE ALBERT** "TexaFrance - Encore !" Moon House MH2899 [2003]. #
44. Rain On The Roof **JOHN SEBASTIAN** "One Guy, One Guitar" Hux Records HUX024 [2003].
45. If My Eyes Were Blind **AD VANDERVEEN** "The Moment That Matters" Unique Gravity UGCD5212 [2003]. §
46. Walking Angel **THE CONTENDERS** "The Contenders" Gadfly 283 [2002]. #
47. God's Own Open Road **TISH HINOJOSA** "The Best of Tish Hinojosa" Rounder/Philo 116 613 221-2 [2003]. #
48. Cowboy In The Distance **JOHN STEWART** "Havana" Appleseed Recordings APR CD 1070 [2003]. #
49. Nonbody Knows **PAUL BRADY** "The Paul Brady Songbook" Compass 7 4358 2 [2003]. #
50. Heal In The Wisdom **BOBBY BRIDGER** "Live At The Kerrville Folk Festival 1986" cassette only, no index no. [1987]. #



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

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## Editorial.

In the most recent two or three issues of the Kronikle I seem to have singularly omitted to mention the fact that since early June 2001, and almost on a weekly basis, I have been writing for an internet based publication called **Folkwax**. It is based out of Des Moines, Iowa. If you have a web access, to receive **Folkwax** you simply need to register at [www.visnat.com](http://www.visnat.com). At that location you can subscribe to any of Visnat's forty odd publications. In the area of music there are three publications, **Folkwax** – and a pretty broad church it is, in terms of interpreting the word *folk*. Then there's **Blueswax**, which hopefully needs no explanation. Finally, for those indie rockers out there, there's **Nuwax**. To subscribe to any of these publications simply hit the relevant *publication icon* at the Visnat web site and supply a Nickname and a Password. It costs nothing to join and nothing to receive **Folkwax** weekly. What could be simpler, easier and cheaper.

It seems appropriate to include my interview with the Kerrville Folk Festival's new producer, Dalis Allen, in this issue. Having just returned from the main 2003 Festival, I can personally confirm that *"the magic is back."* Sceptics, eat your words. 2003 turned out to be a truly magical *18 days in Avalon*. The previous main festival I attended was last century - in 1999, although I did manage to get over for the shorter, early Fall, Wine & Music Festivals in 2000 and 2001. Having had to sit here in the UK through most of last year, and be told by American friends, in Texas and elsewhere, that the Festival was in deep trouble financially did not make for a joyful experience. Thanks to the valiant efforts of many, many people, the festival appears to be alive and kicking once again. Amen to that.

Regarding the contents of this issue, and in no particular order, thanks are due to Rod Kennedy, Dalis Allen, Carrie Newcomer, Anne Hills, Steve Gillette & Cindy Mangsen, and Michael Smith. This issue is dedicated to the late Jim Ross, *the spirit* of Camp C.A.L.M.

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You can also find us at :

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OK, let's tidy up **Jeff Black**. The 1998 album was an Arista Austin release, but that label is now defunct, although copies of the disc are still out there in the public domain, if you care to look for them. **"B Sides"** is a Dualtone release, while **"Honey"** [actually Jeff's second Arista album] was issued by Blue Rose in Germany..... **Tom Russell's** latest **"Modern Art"** is a collection of fourteen pieces of songwriting art. There's six covers from the respective pens of Emmylou Harris/Paul Kennerley, the late Carl Brouse, Michael Smith, Warren Zevon, Dave Alvin and Nanci Griffith/James Hooker/Danny Flowers, plus eight Russell originals of which a pair are co-writes. If asked to define **"Modern Art,"** I'd simply offer that it equals fifty-five minutes in songwriter heaven..... On **"Growl"** **Ray Wylie Hubbard** continues his explorations of blues music. The word *growl* means to utter a gruff and intentionally aggressive sound. It could also express anger. I don't detect any overt hostility in Hubbard's lyrics, on any of the eleven **"Growl"** cuts, although he occasionally displays some displeasure at the way things are with the world. *"Our corporations well they are corrupt, And our politicians are swindlers and loco."* The poetic mother lode that Ray struck on **"Loco Gringo's Lament"** [1994] is as deep and as rich as ever on **"Growl"**..... Through late January and into early March 2002, **More Than A Song** aka Ad Vanderveen, Eliza Gilkyson and Iain Matthew toured Holland. **"Witness"** was recorded at Amsterdam's Kleine Komedie Theatre on their final night together, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2002 and features tunes from their only studio album as well as solo career material..... Some would call it foolhardy, even excessive and dumb, to release an album of songs solely about baseball. Lord knows, **Chuck Brodsky** has stepped up to *the plate* on previous recordings and regaled us with his *passion* for America's *national pastime*. Truth to tell **Chuck Brodsky's "Baseball Ballads"** is one of the finest song collections you'll hear this year..... **"Rain And Mud And Wild And Green"** is an engaging collection by **Christine Kane** that features eleven of her songs. There's an intimately confessional feel to Kane's words that, song after song on **"Rain And Mud And Wild And Green,"** seductively drew this listener in and before I knew it, I was hooked. It was recorded in NYC, and produced by Ben Wisch..... **"Different Stripe"** amounts to a collection that reprises **Cheryl Wheeler's** recording career to date, as far as her wonderful ballads, like *"Aces," "Addicted," "Arrow,"* and *"Northern Girl"* are concerned. Sadly, on this album there's no place for the *anti-gun law* song *"If It Were Up To Me"* and the rib-aching humour of *"Potato"*..... The sepia tinted main liner picture of **Jack Hardy's "Bandolier"** features him wearing a Stetson with his guitar slung from a neck strap, leaning against a tree. That's appropriate, since the fifteen original songs are predominantly *country folk* in style and possess a *western* theme..... **Luka Bloom** lived in Holland for a time during the early eighties. As a result, he has always retained a fan base there. The live album **"Amsterdam"** was recorded at The Koninklijk Theater Carre in Amsterdam on February 11<sup>th</sup> 2002..... **The Mammals** are Tao Rodriguez-Seeger [Pete's grandson], Ruth Unger [daughter of Jay Unger And Lyn Hardy] and Mike Merenda. **"Evolver"** is the debut studio album by this 21<sup>st</sup> century string band, and it is a powerful mix of band originals and traditional songs and instrumentals.