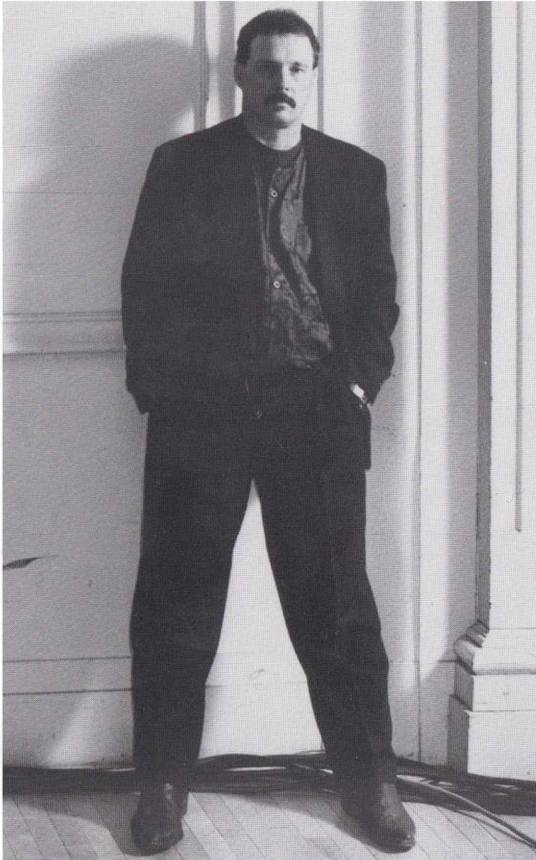


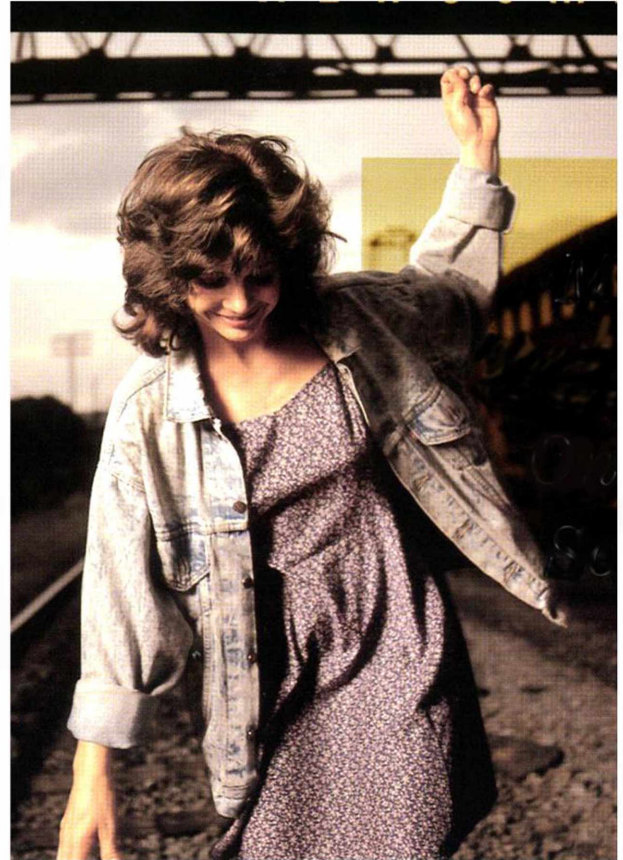
KERRVILLE KRONIKLE

No.23

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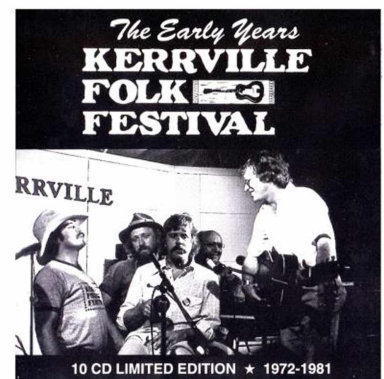
Peter Nelson



Carrie Newcomer

*Terry Clarke/Bill & Bonnie Hazen/"American Impressionist Songwriters - Volume 2 - Memorial Day"/"W. 4th & 6th Ave. - Selections from the Greenwich Folk Festival"/Michael Jerling/John Stewart [*4]/Bob Gibson/Ray Wylie Hubbard/Guy Clark/Slaid Cleaves/The Gourds/Mazy Black/Tamarack [*2]/Kat Eggleston/John Stewart/Laura Nyro/Chuck Prophet/Danko, Field & Andersen/Nanci Griffith/"Women's Work"/Kim Richey/Tom Russell/Robert Earl Keen/Chris While/"Mystery Train - Classic Railroad Songs, Volume 2"/John McCutcheon/Kristina Olsen/Roxy Gordon/"Live at the Iron Horse - Volume 1"/"Cornstock Volume 1 - Songs in the Park"/Christine Lavin/"Out of the Blue - Volume 4"/Monica Casey/Megan Peters/Julie Miller/Darrell Scott/"Various - Folk - Live from Mountain Stage"/Jimmy LaFave/Chris Murphy/Bruce Robison/John Stewart/Tom Russell/The Woody Brothers/Daz Williams/Waterbug Anthology, - Volume 2/R. B. Morris/DeVillev & Motivo [*2]/Asleep at the Wheel/Beth Nielsen Chapman/Toni Price/Jim White/James McMurtzy/Ron Sexsmith/Five Chinese Brothers/Richard Julian*

**"Son of the Son of the Father of" Katching Up
feat. Dee Carstensen/Christine Kane**



Rod Kennedy Presents
KERRVILLE
FOLK FESTIVAL
HIGHLIGHTS RECORDED "LIVE" AT KERRVILLE, TEXAS

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Luscious and verdant as the Emerald Isle from which it draws inspiration and was given birth, Terry Clarke's **"The Heart Sings"** is about half a decade overdue. As it evolves, track by track, the characters in Clarke's lyrics find themselves scattered on a planet wide stage. Despite that they never lose their humble sense of belonging. Clarke is one of our finest songwriters [if not the best]....no shadow of a doubt there. Possessed of a roll'n'roll soul [musically] and the heart of a poet [lyrically], he pours tales from his own life and that of his family into his compositions with reckless and joyous abandon. The result - pure, heart rending beauty. At the get go, "The Rocks of Ireland," is the foundation....and on this rock Clarke has built....a tumultuous masterpiece. Though this set includes re-interpretations of five cuts from the stunning **"The Shelly River"** [1991], they stand as new songs, particularly the additional lyric to "Irish Rockabilly Blues." Rosie Flores' vocal on "Back to the Well" fits like a glove, but nothing prepares you for the intensity injected by her into Clarke's words about those who *dream of a homeland* across the sea [one that they'll probably never see again] in "American Lipstick." Cleethorpes and Scarborough may not have made it lyrically, in the same way that Tulsa and San Jose have, but Reading is now firmly on the world map by virtue of "Bruce Channel in This Town." One of my "Albums of '97" is laid gently to rest with the acoustic "The Last Rhythm" replete with it's Laura Nyro reference.....even at the closing echo there's only one thing you have to deal with, wall to wall perfection. Available in your local record store now. [ED. NOTE. Three days after I wrote this review, the news came through that Laura had passed away. She rarely performed in public. A Laura Nyro fan for three decades, illness prevented Terry see her play in London a couple of years ago. We all possess our share of unfulfilled regrets].

I first heard Bill & Bonnie Hearne perform at the Kerrville Folk Festival over a decade ago. Can't really say that it was instant love. So you're walkin' down the road a few days later - hummin' one of the tunes they cover so well and quite frankly, like it or not, "you're hooked for life." This year Bill & Bonnie celebrate a quarter century of making music together. With a swathe of small budget recordings behind them, it's appropriate therefore that **"Diamonds in the Rough"** is their major label debut - for Warner Western. Stylistically the music they make is firmly set in what I would geographically describe as the "South West," though as I indicated earlier, it principally consists of covers. Let's peg it as cool, clear, country/folk crossover. Recorded in Austin [initially] and in Nashville [latterly], this set was produced by Jim Rooney. Guests include Tish Hinojosa, Nanci Griffith, Jerry Jeff Walker, Lyle Lovett and Christine Albert. Bonnie is blind, while Bill is partially sighted. And let's give a special mention here to the cover artwork. In particular, the simple black and white front cover graphic, of Bill n' guitar with Bonnie at the piano - stunning and effective doesn't even partially cover it. Apart from "Georgetown," Ian Tyson's "Wild Geese" and "New Mexico Rain" [literally their theme song] penned by

nephew Mike Hearne, the decade of other songs featured here have never been cut previously by the couple. Like an old jacket that fits perfectly, that's their secret - they do things so well that every track sounds like a *familiar old friend*. *The maw and paw of the Kerrville family done great.....*[ED. NOTE. The Austin sessions took place last May, just as the 25th anniversary was kicking off. On the night that the **"Second Helpings"** Threadgill's recording was enjoying a record release party at the North Austin restaurant, who should turn up for a meal and a couple of songs, but Bill, Bonnie and Jim Rooney]. Available from **Waterloo Records, 600-A North Lamar, Austin, Texas, U.S.A. 78703.** E-Mail : mailorder@waterloorecords.com

If nothing else, **"American Impressionist Songwriters - Volume II - Memorial Day"** constitutes the best value for money singer/songwriter package that we'll probably hear this year....in truth it's a classic....all 20 cuts. Waterbug's Andrew Calhoun deserves a million plaudits for his [to date] five year crusade on behalf of the acoustic folk community. The storyline of Anne Gallup's "John Llewellyn" honestly and tellingly interprets "love" as more than a physical act, while her *pal* Chuck Brodsky captures post war [colour] prejudice in the baseball tale "The Ballad of Eddie Klepp." Elsewhere centuries of American history come to life through the lines of Brian Anderson's "The Last Comanche" [the subject is pretty obvious], Kat Eggleston's "Meeting Stucky at the Gas Station" and Michael Jerling's "Long Black Wall" [respectively, concerning friendships made during a war, and a memorial erected to the same]. Many of the eighteen artists featured will be nationally [if not internationally] acknowledged song poets within a few years. Dar Williams is tantamount to being in that league [already] and her version of "Flinty Kind of Woman" is unavailable elsewhere, as are many other of the cuts featured. Quite simply, some the finest impressions I've ever visualised have been conjured from words heard on this seventy minute disc. Available by Mail Order from **Canadian River Music, 4106 Tyler, Amarillo, Texas 79110, U.S.A.**

Chronologically [!!!!], the previous duo of Greenwich Folk Festival CD's from Gadfly respectively covered the years 1989-1990 and 1988. The recordings on **"W. 4th & 6th. Ave. - Selections from the Greenwich Village Folk Festival"** source from the 1991, 1993 and 1994 Festivals. The dozen cuts sport such prominent US songpoets as Lucy Kaplansky covering Cliff Eberhardt's "Brake a Train," Richard Shindell's "Arrowhead" and Jim Infantino's "Big Chinos." The latter cut is an absolute hoot [OK, let's all hold hands it's a folk fest] lyrically. Representing the older [folk] generation is Paul Siebel, Pat Kilbride, plus Steve Gillette and his missus Cindy Mangsen. David Massengill closes the set with a haunting version of the Stephen Foster classic "Hard Times Come Again No More." By the way, the junction of W. 4th & 6th. Ave. is the geographical location in New York City of the Washington Square Church - the spiritual as well as the physical home of the Greenwich Folk Festival. Amen. Available by Mail Order from **Gadfly Records Inc, P.O. Box 5231, Burlington, Vermont 05402, U.S.A.**

Continued on Page 11

Peter Nelson

Here's a first. This interview was performed by E-Mail, between Kronikle Mission Kontrol and Peter Nelson's home in Western Massachusetts during late April 1997. Many, many thanks go to Peter for steadfastly dealing with the tedium of typing out the answers. As you will soon learn, Peter is also a scribe, of vastly more experience than I. We concur on the subject of abstracting "face to face" interviews from cassette tape. A tedious task – and I'd say that's a diplomatically structured answer. I'd also like to acknowledge my New Jersey "music mad" pals, Tim & Lori Blixt, who were responsible for creating the spark which brought this interview to fruition. You guys are....well, I think you already know. [ED. NOTE. The style of questioning is slightly different to normal. Each question may seek to redress a number of issues under the same generic heading. Bear with it].

Your family roots are Scandinavian, but which particular country. How many generations of your family have lived in the U.S. Does your family Stateside still maintain contact with the "old country."

My patrilineal great-grandparents on my father's side came from Norway in the late 1800's. My patrilineal ancestors on my mother's side also came from Norway in 1857. My great-great grandfather fought in the Civil War, but when I asked my grandmother about him, all she could recall (she was 98 at the time) was that they called him "Grandpa Nelson on the Prairie" (different line of Nelson's). My parents still go to Norway and stay with fifth cousins, Gro and Dagfind, and they come over occasionally from Norway to Minnesota and stay with my folks. Minnesota (if you saw the movie "Fargo" you'll get an idea) was heavily settled by Scandinavians, who liked it for its brutish weather and endlessly grey skies, a climate which resonated with their Nordic souls.

Strange to relate last night we saw "Fargo" on video. For quite a number of years, around the last ten I think, I have been a raving Garrison Keillor fan. Got all the books. Got quite a lot of his live recordings....so yaa, I know all about the Norwegian bachelor farmers who live in Minnesota. How true is the parody relative to the reality though.

It's pretty true, though to be fair, the accents were exaggerated for effect. It's more likely you'd hear people from the rural parts of Minnesota sound like that, than it is to hear people from Minneapolis or St. Paul talk that way. Minnesotans aren't stupid, and they aren't innocent, but they do live in a kind of fog of denial, thinking crimes like the one in the film "don't happen here." The denial stems, I think, from how bad the weather is. When it's 20 below you hear people saying, "You think this is cold? Heck, this ain't cold," and you know they have to convince themselves it's true or else they'd die. Or move. Denial gets to be a way of life.

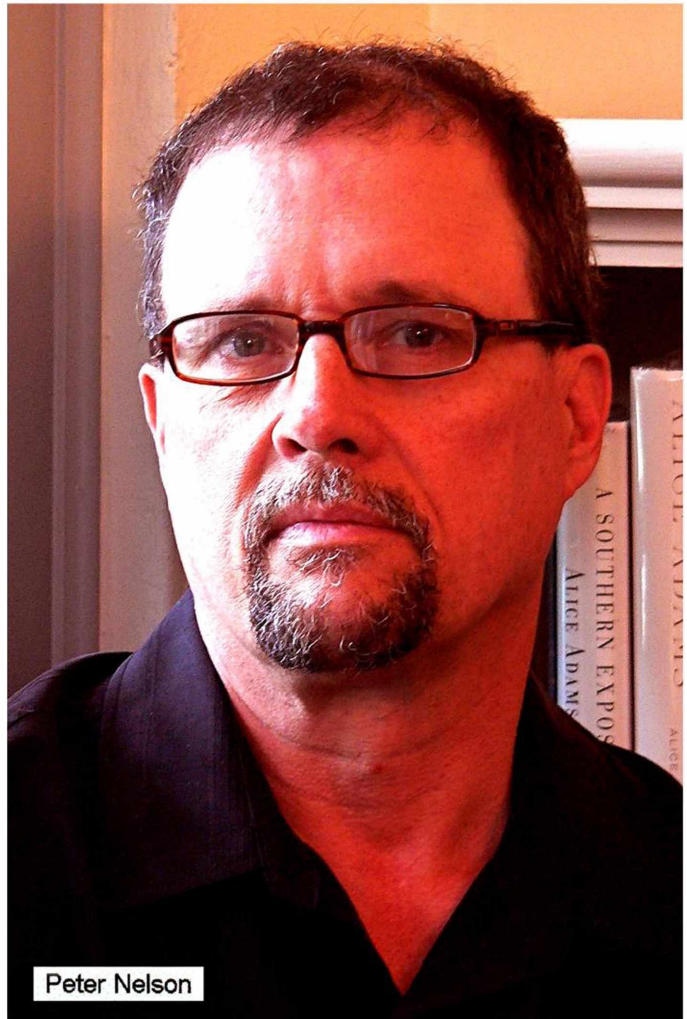
Where and when were you born.

In the city of Minneapolis, which with St. Paul and the suburbs, forms a metropolitan area of 2.5 million people.

The date was February 8th 1953.

Were you raised where you were born, or did you move around due to parent's occupation.

I lived in the Minneapolis suburbs until I was five, and recall doing a lot of playing on construction sites in the 1950's during the post-war housing boom. If you were to ask me, "What does being four years old smell like?" I would answer "Sawdust." We moved into the city of Minneapolis so that we kids could go to the schools there, the year I started kindergarten. My mother had to walk me all the way because I was crying and refused to go in. I should have stuck to my guns. I remember that, walking to school in the winter, before I had sunglasses, the sun shone so brightly off the snow (it's very cold in Minnesota in the winter) that it would nearly blind me. I would pull my knit stocking cap all the way down over my face and proceed by peering through the weave. I must have looked very strange. I still physically can't be outdoors in the winter, in the snow on a sunny day, without sunglasses – it hurts my eyes too much.



Did both your parents work while you were growing up.

My mother Lois was a housewife until we were all out of the house, and then she took a job as a secretary for the president of the American Lutheran Church. She was a

preacher's kid from North Dakota, and has been a churchgoer all her life, as has my father. My father Bud worked as an economist and was employed by General Mills, which meant that as an employee's family we got to test products before the rest of the country did. We'd have cereals and snack foods and things like Bugles or Baco-Bits way before anybody else. If we didn't totally vomit after ingesting them, they'd go on the market a few months later.

How many siblings. Are any of them active musically. Which instruments did they play.

My sister Rebecca (2 years older) sings in her church choir and also in light opera productions in Great Falls, Montana. My brother Dan (2 years younger) sings in the church choir in Minneapolis, as does my younger sister Suzu (4 years younger). My sisters play the piano, my brother doesn't. They all have gorgeous voices, and the house, as I grew up, was full of people practising choir pieces. I sang in the choir too, but I didn't really like it. I learned how to watch television while people were singing in the background, which proved useful when I rented an office eight years ago from an opera company. They would rehearse while I was trying to write. The advantage was that I got a break on the rent of \$75 a month. Dirt-cheap where I live. I also got a marvellous 100 year old Steinway to play, which was how I got good enough to play piano in public.

Were your parents active musically as you grew up. Any professional musicians in the family, or was music just a hobby. Did any of them compose music.

My mother sang in choirs, and in particular the choir at my College, St. Olaf College, which is a world famous choir and very difficult to get into. In fact, when I drove my younger sister down to campus to try out for the St. Olaf Choir, she was nervous and said she feared being the first kid in the family to try out for it and fail. I lied and told her I'd tried out for it and failed, but never told anybody. She was accepted, and I forgot all about the lie, until a few months later when I talked to my parents on the phone. My mother said, proudly, "*We know your secret...*" and all I could think was, "*Oh shit, which one?*" I told them the truth later, but I let them be proud of me for a while. Anyway, my kid sister Suzu is a soprano who plays the piano. My dad is basically tone deaf but he likes to sing anyway. His father had a beautiful bass voice. One of the last things I remember about my grandfather was that, before he died, he and my dad and my uncles got together one last time and they all sang barbershop tunes. My dad was trying to follow along, even though he couldn't do it very well, but that wasn't the point. Both my grandfathers died lying in hospital beds singing. So I've been told. I wasn't present. No one else in my family writes music.

What is your first musical memory. What was your favourite music when you were young and still living at home. Pre teens and during your teens.

My mother singing lullabies. She'd sing, "*Now the day is over, night is drawing nigh, shadows of the evening steal across the sky,*" and I could literally see those shadows, dark blue against a raging orange sunset. My favourite

music was anything in the house, largely classical recordings, as well as the 45's my parents had lying around. My favourite record was Cab Calloway singing "Minnie the Moocher" to which I would dance and sing "*Hi-dee-hi-dee-hi-dee-ho*" at the appropriate moments. I adored Grieg and the "**Peer Gynt Suite**," some of which I've stolen for my own tunes. My favourite song of all time, then and now, was/is Samuel Barber's "**Adagio for Strings**." I would put it on the hi-fi and then lie on the floor and listen, and visualise myself wearing a long black coat walking around a lake on a rainy day feeling really lonely. Then I'd imagine meeting a babe and we'd kiss. Mary Tyler Moore or Anne Margaret. Sometimes, girls I knew. But perhaps that's telling you more than you want to know. During adolescence I loved (more than I can say) the Beatles and all the British bands. The Stones, The Who, Dave Clark 5, but mostly The Beatles. I owned a Beatles wig. Okay, I wore a Beatles wig. Around the house though — not to school.

Barber's "Adagio for Strings" is also a favourite piece of mine. It evokes fairly sombre feelings as far as I'm concerned.

I believe Barber was commissioned to write the Adagio for Franklin Delano Roosevelt's funeral, but I might be mistaken about that.

When and where did you begin to play an instrument. Any formal lessons.

I'd bang on the piano, and to their everlasting credit, my parents never told me to stop. They never said that what I was doing, the noise I was making, was unpleasant or incorrect, so I learned the simple joy of uncritical sound. The pleasure of notes shifting in timbre and decaying into thin air. They wanted me to take lessons but I wasn't interested. I did ask my mother to show me how to play Barber's "**Adagio**," which I sort of learned by memory off the record. Then one day she hauled out a boogie-woogie piano book and showed me what that was, and I was totally sold. I never knew pianos could rock. I'm still not sure if I wish I'd had taken lessons. I'd be a better musician in some ways, but not in others. Learning music intuitively has its own unique rewards.

Where did you become actively become involved with playing music and what instruments did you play. Was this at home, in School or while you were attending College.

I was told in first grade that I had no musical talent, so I never played in bands. I picked up a guitar in seventh grade or so, an old Harmony bought at Woolworth's for, I think, about \$60. I have a photograph of me playing through my Simon and Garfunkel songbook, wearing a beret (which I probably borrowed from my mother). In College, I'd sneak into the practice rooms and whack around on the piano, but I didn't really know how. I never learned to read music, but I got to where I knew the guitar chords and could find the same chords on the piano. I played in a band with my cousin called The Astro-Nuts. We'd borrow melodies from TV shows like "**The Beverly**

Hillbillies" and write new words to them to insult our sisters, as in (to the tune of the Beverly Hillbillies theme): *"Sing you a story 'bout a girl named Beck', she was really ugly and her figure was a wreck, then one day while-a eatin' off the ground, poor Bekka Nelson gained a million pounds.....blubber, that is!"* Later, my cousin and I and a guy with an upright bass tried to form a combo. We entered a YMCA contest - we lost to a quartet of white girls singing gospel tunes - and played a gig at my uncle's country club for the girls' golf team.

Why did you write your first song. Do you recall the title. How many songs did you compose before you had a "keeper." Did you collaborate with other writers at this early stage. Have you ever collaborated with other songwriters.

I used to bartend in a bar in Iowa City, when I was in graduate school. That was between August 1979 and March 1981. Greg Brown used to play there every Friday night, though few people listened — he was just *"that local guy."* I was studying poetry at the time and getting my MFA degree from the Iowa Writer's Workshop. I had an inkling that what Greg was writing was really good stuff. I'd seen Steve Goodman in college, a few years earlier, and had already begun to appreciate what one person on stage with a guitar could do. We'd hang out after hours or go over to Greg's house or Dave Moore's house and play music into the wee hours. I hadn't written anything, to that point, but I started writing parodies while I was working, scribbling on cocktail napkins. Often they were parodies of tunes being performed on the stage at the bar where I worked. If the performer was doing "Mr. Bojangles" in earnest, I wrote *"I killed a man, Bojangles when he danced for me, in worn out shoes; I couldn't take the way he'd make for sympathy and free shots of booze — he dance so slick, I thought I'd be sick, so I plugged him then and there... Mr. Bojangles, Mr. Bojangles, Mr. Bojangles...die!"* When the performer sang "Happy Together" by the Turtles, I wrote: *"Imagine me and you, I can't, the notion makes me laugh so hard, I wet my pants, I'd rather go to bed at night with army ants — unhappy together."* I didn't write any songs in earnest until I moved to Providence, Rhode Island in July 1982. I lived there till August of 1985. Not writing songs till then - partly that was because if you tried to write songs in Iowa City, you'd be called a Greg Brown clone, whether you were one or not. No one wants to be thought of as merely imitative. I think the first song I wrote (I could be wrong about this) was a broken-heart farewell type tune called "Cold Wind" in which I totally pilfered the melody from Edvard Grieg's tune "Morning," from the **"Peer Gynt Suite."** I used to tell my students, when I taught creative writing, that I had no idea how songs got written, and it was true. I couldn't imagine it, until I tried, and then they started to pour out. I couldn't tell you when I had my first "keeper" — I still do a few of the early songs, but I'd written about 250-300 songs before I made my CD. As opposed to the young kids now who seem to see no reason not to record the first 10 songs they've ever written. I've written a tune with a Cliff Eberhardt, another with Marty Sexton, one with Fred Koller, but I don't really collaborate much.

When you first began composing, were there particular writers you liked. How did you avoid copying their style.

I admired Greg Brown, Tom Waits, Randy Newman, Harold Arlen, Stephen Foster, Lennon and McCartney, Paul Simon, Steve Goodman, Duke Ellington, Cole Porter — a lot of times I admired songs but had no idea who wrote them. I never bothered worrying about copying anybody's style because there's not a single tune that's ever been written that wasn't influenced by something else. Lines, melodies, phrases, notes, fragments, bits and pieces of songs all float around in the universe like bits of DNA. Sometimes they connect to form songs, and it feels quite independent of any volition on my part — I'm more like the doctor in the delivery room than the mother or father. I mean, that's a bit disingenuous, but it does feel like you find songs rather than create them. Sometimes you find one piece first and then have to search for the other pieces. I don't edit myself while I'm doing that, so I'm rarely aware of direct influences, with the exception that occasionally I'll be playing somebody else's tune. I'll change it, maybe rock it up or slow it down to turn it into a waltz or a reggae tune. It can happen that the new version is so utterly different from the source version that you can write new words and claim it as something new and original. I have a slow jazzy adaptation of The Beatles "I Don't Want to Spoil the Party" which is so unlike the original, that I can't decide whether to do it as an interpretation or take it even farther afield — that, is an example of a song with a direct influence. Most songs are just big boiled stews with a thousand influences.

Do you compose the melody or write the lyrics first.

As might be implicit in the previous response, at any given moment I have either, consciously or unconsciously, dozens or hundreds of melody bits or lines floating around in my head. When they connect or hook up, it no longer makes sense to ask which came first. It would be like asking somebody, *"When you were conceived, which came first, the egg or the sperm?"*

What do you look for in a song. The song can be written by others or by you.

I mainly look for clarity. There isn't a songwriter I admire who isn't clear about what they're trying to say. Greg Brown, John Gorka, Bill Morrissey, Cheryl Wheeler, Christine Lavin — I defy anybody to find a single line in their music that is confusing. Think about it. Cheryl Wheeler writes *"I remember you in the TV light"* and creates one of the most romantic images I can think of. Everyone knows what TV light is. I hear young songwriters write stuff like *"I'm like the jasmine moon,"* and I think, first of all, they don't know what "jasmine" is. Second of all, neither do I, so the line is useless and they are simply bullshitting me. That's something with which I will not put up, particularly the older I get. A lot of bad songwriters get taught poetry in school, by teachers who don't understand poetry, so the students leave College under the impression that poetry is a way of disguising or worse codifying what you mean. Like it's a puzzle to be solved. So they go off and write songs where they don't have a clue what they

mean. In a nutshell, good songwriting evokes true feelings by presenting concrete images, which recreate actual experiences. Bad songwriting uses abstract language and obscure images to imitate other songs. Good songwriting might ask a question you don't immediately know the answer to, but it doesn't garble the question itself.

Tell us about seeing the late Steve Goodman perform at your College. Was this a pivotal event in your musical life. Which year did you see him.

I think it was in 1974. A solo performance in a huge gymnasium. I remember him doing Michael Smith's song "The Dutchman" that nearly made me cry. Also a song about a yellow raincoat that made me sad, and I thought, nothing about a yellow raincoat is inherently sad — how is this working? [ED. NOTE. Great, as far as I'm concerned. As for the song, it was called "Yellow Coat" and appeared on Steve's self titled, 1971 Buddah album]. It was a weird combination of poetry and storytelling and music that was "in your face" despite the fact that there was no band behind him. No volume or energy other than that carried in the lyrics. I'd loved Simon and Garfunkel, Joni Mitchell, Tom Rush, but I'd never seen anybody really do it live.

What did you major in at university. Which university and during which years.

I majored in English and Art at St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, graduating in 1975. I went on to graduate school in writing because I was much better in art than I was in writing, so I figured it made sense to study what you were worse at. Ironically enough, art (drawing, mostly) remains the thing I am best at, or was best at all my life, but I don't really do it much anymore. Only because there isn't enough time. Or I'm lazy, or something.

Tell us about the University of Iowa's Writers' Workshop - was this a post graduate style course. Were you a student or a lecturer. Did you only study American poetry and fiction, or was there elements of European and Contemporary work.

An MFA degree is half way between an MA and a Ph.D. 48 graduate credits, I believe. The Iowa Workshop was the first of its kind and the most famous, having produced a huge percentage of the more highly regarded poets in America. Writing programs at other Universities are still likely to have been founded or staffed by Iowa graduates. I got my degree in poetry, but by the end I was only taking fiction classes and writing fiction. Largely, because I could see no future in poetry. I looked at the lives that moderately successful poets led, moving around to one-year teaching appointments, kissing the asses of other poets to get invited to come read or to get published in literary quarterlies that nobody read. I couldn't find a poet whose way of life I sought to emulate, though I never lost my love for poetry. We studied poetry from all places and countries. My favourite was Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai, whose books I keep buying and then give away. I much admired American poets Phillip Levine and Richard Hugo, and many others. I taught freshman English as part of my financial aid requirement, and hated it. My students hated me and I hated them, so all I did was show movies and

give brutal tests to prove to them how stupid they were. It wasn't a good situation. I was in school at the University of Iowa Writers Workshop from September of 1977 through May of 1979, but I hung around, audited classes, and finally left town July 15th, 1981.

What was the name of the bar you worked in Iowa. Greg Brown, Dave Moore and who else played there. Did you ever play there.

It was called The Mill, run by a guy named Keith Dempster, who is also president of the BMW Motorcycle Club of America, so all these older stodgy type bikers on BMW's used to come in to drink. Keith weighed about 400 lbs. and ate popcorn by the fistful all day long. He was very smart but really conservative and kept trying to fire me because I was funnier than he was. He couldn't fire me because my cash register was always accurate to the penny. At least until my girlfriend broke my heart and I started screwing up on the job. All kinds of people played there, Duck Baker, a very young Bela Fleck, Eddie Adcock, Jethro Burns, lots of bluegrass. Greg Brown, by the way, had a band for a while, before moving up to St. Paul to be a regular on **Prairie Home Companion**. I'd go to all their gigs. I think I'm one of maybe five people in the country to have a bootleg tape of that band. Dave Moore played harmonica in it, with Dave Hanson on bass, Chuck Henderson (world's funniest human being) on guitar and Paul Cunliff on drums. I played at a few open mike type things, but never for money. Partly because the owner would never offer and I would never ask, plus when I lived there I wasn't playing out. Now when I go to visit, I jump up just for fun.

Where did you work first after graduating. University of Arizona ? University of Iowa ? Expand.

I've been a freelance writer since leaving graduate school, writing for magazines from **Playboy** to **MS** and everything in between. I've been published in **Harpers**, **Redbook**, **Mademoiselle**, **Outside**, **National Wildlife**, **Men's Journal**, **Men's Health**, and on and on. I now write mainly for a magazine called **Live**, where I cover live events like the Westminster Kennel Club Show, Snowboarding Championships, arm wrestling competitions, car shows, fly fishing conventions and so on.

Tell us about your life in Rhode Island. And R.I. School of Design.

Rhode Island School of Design is an art school near Brown University, where all the students try to dress and talk and act like artists. Those without talent will blend in with those students who actually have talent. Most did have talent, lots, but it was also a big behaviour modification experiment. I taught creative writing, and I enjoyed it a great deal. As for Providence, I got robbed a lot. Providence is very crime ridden and very corrupt too. When I was there, the mayor got kicked out of office for kidnapping a guy who was having an affair with his estranged wife. He also beat the guy up. He later got a radio talk show. He was recently re-elected. The town, notorious as a haven for Mafia types, tried to change its reputation. On the waterfront at Narragansett Bay they

erected a sign which featured the following slogan: **PROVIDENCE – WE HARBOR THE BEST.** I'm totally serious. My car got broken into twice. My house - twice. Once they took my backpack from my shopping cart at the supermarket.

Why did you move to Northampton, Mass.

I was dating a woman who taught at a prep school nearby, so when I'd visit her from Providence, we'd eventually come to Northampton to eat or hear music at the Iron Horse. It's one of the top listening rooms in the country and a big reason why I wanted to live here. We picked Northampton to move in together, and then she left and went to the writing program in Iowa City. Ironic, isn't it? I moved to Northampton in August 1985 and have maintained an address here ever since.

Tell us about St. Lawrence University. What courses did you run. So what's so fascinating with The North Country.

I taught three classes in creative writing, after getting a call in early August 1991 from a friend who taught there to come up and replace a woman who had been stricken with some kind of woman-thing. She required surgery, so I had no time to prepare and barely stayed one step ahead of my students. This was during the campaign and election that put Clinton in office in 1992. For the first time I truly loved teaching, maybe because I was teaching writing to people who were really serious about it, instead of forcing stuff down the throats of students who couldn't care less. Little is fascinating about the North Country, which is utterly impoverished and quite empty – all there is to do there is to drink, which I did, in copious amounts. So did my students, who regularly submitted short stories to me detailing times when they drank so much they puked. They apparently saw a drama in it, which eluded me. The North Country is, however, extraordinarily beautiful, encompassing the St. Lawrence seaway and the Adirondack mountains. I also found, for the first time after I was done teaching for the week I could relax, in a way that I was not able to do as a freelancer. A freelancer never knows where the next cheque is coming from, or, more to the point, when the cheque I'm actually owed will arrive. I walked my dog and fished and would have been great company if I'd known anybody there, though mainly I was lonely. And drunk.

Tell us about your nominations for the Pushcart Prize, the Edgar Prize. What is the Esquire Register.

The Pushcart is a prize for short stories in literary magazines. The Edgar is an award presented by the Mystery Writers of America. I was nominated for a young adult book I wrote. One of a series of six books I'd had published, all featuring a character named Sylvia Smith-Smith. A girl, whose mother had the same name as her father, but refused to take his name when they got married, hence the hyphen. The Esquire Register was a list of the 100 best writers in America.

How and when did you meet Scott Alarik.

I met Scott at the Martha's Vineyard retreat, and we hit it off because we're both from Minnesota.

Have you always found humour a powerful weapon.

I hunt bear with it. Seriously though, I remember going to a party when I was five years old at Bizza (Elizabeth) Rockman's house, when her father told us all a joke and everybody laughed. I can still remember the joke and recall clearly that at the time I thought I wanted to be the guy who tells the jokes — because you get attention and girls like you. Ever since then I've remembered and repeated practically every joke I've ever heard.

Tell us about Peterboro, New Hampshire in October/November 1990. What is the McDowell Colony.

The MacDowell Colony is an artist's retreat, the place where Aaron Copland wrote "Appalachian Spring" and where Thornton Wilder wrote "Our Town." Hundreds of famous people — Leonard Bernstein, Mark Rothko, have gone there to work on projects. I was finishing my first unpublished novel. I was also performing in the local folk club. A place called the Folkway, run by a woman named Widdy Hall, who gave me my first real gig in front of a bunch of people. I was waiting in the audience for Patty Larkin to show up. Her car was stuck in a blizzard and she was going to be late. The house was full and growing restless, so Widdy tapped me on the shoulder and asked if I'd mind keeping everybody busy until Patty showed up. I didn't have time to be nervous. I think I got a standing ovation and was high as a kite for day afterwards. I later played at a going away concert for Widdy, who died of cancer in 1986. I wrote a song called "I'm Not a Deer" while at MacDowell while walking into the woods during hunting season. It goes: *"I'm not a deer, I'm not a deer, buddy I don't even live around here so don't shot, I'm tell you the truth, I'm not a deer."*

Has anyone covered your songs. On stage. On a recording.

David Wilcox and Christine Lavin have both done a song of mine called "Old" on stage. Nobody has recorded anything, to my knowledge, though I was told a while ago that Ian McEwen was going to cover "Summer of Love." Ian McEwan is a writer. Maybe I meant Ian McColl? I don't know. They told me the guy played the banjo and was considered the Pete Seeger of Scotland.

What was your first performance in public.

With the Astro-Nuts in my cousin's basement, in front of our family. We passed the hat and made almost four dollars.

What's your most memorable performance [to date].

Martha's Vineyard.

Ever done any residencies.

None.

What about touring - as a support act or on your own.

I haven't really toured. I play a couple dates a month, but my job requires me to fly all over the place so it's hard to put dates together.

Have you got a band.

No.

In 1992 you attended the First Annual Martha's Vineyard Singer/Songwriter Retreat. How did Christine Lavin find out about you. From Gorka ? Tell us about your Martha's Vineyard experience.

I think I'd heard about Christine from a girlfriend. One night she was playing at the Folkway, in Peterboro, and I was in the audience. I'd been writing a monthly column for **Mademoiselle** magazine, and that month, they did a feature on the "10 Most Eligible Bachelors in the Country," with guys like Don Johnson or Jellybean Benitez. The magazine included my picture with the article, I think, as a way to promote the column. Anyway, Christine was mentioned in the same issue, so she did a joke from the stage about the eligible bachelor's thing and said, "*Who are these guys?*" I raised my hand from the front row and said, "*Well, actually, I'm one,*" and embarrassed the hell out of her. Later I profiled her for a magazine and gave her a tape of my songs. I guess John had heard a few of my tunes too. I would put musicians up who needed a couch to crash on after playing at the Iron Horse, but I knew that the last thing a musician crashing on somebody's couch wants to do, is hear their host play songs they'd written. People will sleep in their cars before subjecting themselves to being forced to listen to bad music for hours by someone who is going to want to go out for breakfast in the morning. I knew my songs were pretty good, relatively speaking, but I still kept them to myself because it would have been impolite to force them on anybody. Christine took the tape I'd given her and played it on a radio program she used to do, even though the quality was poor. Later, she invited me to the Vineyard. I was thrilled. Also terrified, given that the first time I ever played "Summer of Love" was for a room full of musicians, all of whom were better than me. The experience was spectacular. It gave me a sense that even though I was raw at performing and totally without experience, and hated the sound of my own voice, it perhaps didn't matter, if the songs got across and if I could sell them. It gave a stamp of validity, I suppose. Then Christine included my cut on the record "**Big Times in a Small Town.**" I felt doubly validated and thrilled. I understand she had to fight to include my cut, because Rounder only wanted to have big names on the record to help sell it. And I was a nobody. For that, I've decided to donate a kidney to Christine, whether she needs one or not. I'll have it frozen and shipped UPS. The operation is scheduled for this summer.

Are there any Peter Nelson recordings which predate "Three Mean Fish and a Yellow Dog."

There was a really lame home made production done on my Tascam 4 track that a radiologist friend with lots of

money had reproduced because he liked my stuff. We made 200 copies, I think.

How many songs were on the Tascam tape.

There were 19 songs. You're in luck --- I found the directory in my computer. The songs were:

Side A

1. Lonesome Stevie
2. Round Round
3. Last of My Final Goodbyes
4. Wedding Song
5. Midwestern Boy
6. Funny
7. Waiting for the Other Shoe
8. Remember Me
9. Once in a Very Blue Moon

Side B

1. I Love You, You Love Me
2. Long Time Lonely
3. Nothing Stays the Same
4. Perry Mason
5. Sara and Donald
6. I'm Not a Deer
7. Remembrance Waltz
8. It Must be Love
9. Anachie Gordon
10. No Way to Say Merry Christmas

Why did you decide to release the Martha's Vineyard tape.

It was the first high quality recording I had done. I guess the goal in releasing it was to help get gigs and maybe attract some attention from big shot singers looking for material.

Tell us about "Women's Shoes" [Heck, that tune seems kind of familiar].

I lived in a loft apartment with a woman who left her shoes downstairs all the time, so to put them away I developed this sweeping hook shot to throw them upstairs rather than climb the spiral staircase. Actually, the song's not about her, as much as it's about the girlfriend before her, who had a really great collection of shoes.

What about "The Home Team."

Just a true story about a kid who lived around the corner from me. I think before I wrote this one I'd heard John Gorka sing a song about his old neighbourhood. Yeah. His name was Bruce Kazinski and he was a hydrocephalic kid. He would sit in his wheelchair and watch us play in the street. He'd really get into it and would call stuff out that didn't make any sense, but we were nice to him even though nobody told us we had to be. Hydrocephalic's used to die fairly young but now live into their fifties and sixties, I gather. I wrote the song assuming he'd died. My parents tell me he's still alive and living in the same house, with parents who are so old themselves that they have a hard time caring for him.

Is the discordant playing on "Let's All Go Out to the

Ballgame" deliberate.

Uh, yeah, that's right — it was deliberate.

In the light of the closing bars of "Summer of Love," were you a big Beatles fan as a child [and are you still as an adult].

Totally and without reservation a Beatles fan. It's still the music we play at parties when we're jamming.

"This is a song about an old friend. Written while driving across Indiana." What sparked the creation of this song. In the light of "Summer of Love" existing as a recording, has Shawn resurfaced.

Hard to say what sparked it. I was driving home to my High School reunion, thinking back on old friends and realising there was one person who disappeared, so I wrote the song, speculating on what might have happened. I think I wrote it hoping that one day Shawn might hear it and get in touch with me. Interestingly enough, after performing the song at the Bottom Line in New York recently, a woman came up after the show and introduced herself as a producer for the TV show **"48 Hours."** She said, *"I find people for a living — would you like me to find out what happened to Shawn?"* I said I absolutely would like that, and gave her all the information I had. I'm still waiting to hear what she turns up. Shawn could be anywhere, anything. She was brilliant and wilful and capable of anything from brain surgery to heroin addiction. No telling.

Why are the residents of Northampton "Prisoners of Desire."

Aren't we all prisoners of our desires? Northampton, of course, is a town famous for all the lesbians who live here. To the extent that you can walk into a bar and see a woman sitting alone at a table with her chin in her hands muttering, *"What do women want?"* Everyone I know here dreams of something. Moving to New York, publishing a novel, meeting Mr. or Ms. Right.

In 1994 Signature Sounds released a compilation album titled "Homegrown Harvest." Which of your songs are featured. Are those songs also included on "The Restless Boys Club." What other artists appeared on "Homegrown Harvest."

Homegrown Harvest, a charity fundraising album, has "Prisoners of Desire" on it. I lost my copy so I'm not sure who else is on it. Probably Jim Henry, Brooks Williams, Louise Taylor and others.

In 1996 Signature Sounds released "The Restless Boys Club." Is the deal with them for more than one album.

No, just one album.

Did you consider a number of producers before picking Adam Rothberg.

Never really considered anybody else. Adam had just

finished Dar William's first record, **"The Honesty Room,"** and was looking for another project. The guys at Signature Sounds asked Adam, I think, to recommend somebody with good songs. Adam was taking part in a songwriting group that met for about a year in my office. When the company asked me if I wanted to make a record, I said **"Sure"** (as if I was going to say **"No"** to somebody who wanted to spend a ton of their own money to record my music) and they suggested Adam produce it. I thought he was great. Full of fresh ideas and equally able to listen to mine. The whole thing, needless to say, took far far longer than we thought it would. We were all broke and overspent by the time it was over, but the results, I think, were terrific. Even though we were forced to include one really lame musician on all the tunes (me).

How did you meet Leah Kunkel. Are you aware of her 1979 and 1980 albums for CBS, as well as the Mama Cass and Russ Kunkel connections. Last I heard of her was in 1984 as a member of The Coyote Sisters [with Marty Gwinn and Renee Armand]. They cut one album for the Motown label.

Leah is a lawyer here in town. I play poker with her every Friday. I knew she had a musical background but she rarely talks about it, because when she does, she can literally and legitimately drop so many names your head spins. She was there, for example, when Crosby and Stills met Nash and Young. She's still working, slowly but surely, on a new album with Marty. I've heard rough mixes of it, but last I heard, the studio where she was doing it went out of business.

Greg Brown, Cliff Eberhardt, John Gorka, Bill Morrissey, Cormac McCarthy - how did you get this team to "pitch in your ballgame." How many of them did you already know.

You mean, how did I get them to sing on **"Let's Get Some Beers?"** I knew them all because they'd stay at my house when they played in town. I knew Greg, of course, from my years in Iowa. When I told Greg I was doing a record, he volunteered and said, *"Let me know if you want me to sing on it,"* so I wrote a new verse to the song just for him. He sings right before me on the record. We did everything we could think of in the studio to make him sound bad, so I wouldn't sound so weak in comparison, but to no avail. We had to pick up John and Cormac in a studio in Portland Maine, but we had Cliff, Bill, Greg and myself in the studio all at the same time. We spent a lot of time drinking beer and doing Bill Morrissey impersonations. Afterwards we went to an Italian restaurant and had a feast.

Can we talk about a couple of songs on "The Restless Boys Club." First, one of my favourites, "Norman."

A true story in the newspaper about an old man who got lost in a blizzard and drove into a swimming pool. In reality, his roof rack was sticking out, so they found him right away, but all I could think was, what if he didn't have a roof rack? What if it had snowed harder? There's also a bit about my grandfather in there, who went to France during World War I.

How about "Old."

Just all the things that make you feel old. Falling down and watching huge blue bruises form. Cursing in theatres and saying *"Why can't they focus movies anymore !"* and then realising I needed glasses. Getting a R.V. accessories catalogue in the mail because a computer kicked out my name, as if I'm ready to retire. Then looking through the catalogue and realising there was a lot of cool stuff in it. Musically I was figuring out a Cliff Eberhardt song called "Assembly Line" when I played the first two chords, but I altered it from that point on.

How about the closing track, "Midwestern Boy."

Inspired by the farm crisis of the early 80's. By Greg Brown's writing. By the sound of a train in the night, and by all the images of my home territory that I cherish.

Acting. Ever tried it.

Sometimes, while masturbating, I'll fake an orgasm.

Writing prose. Magazine writing - what started you.

I've written stuff my whole life, and won a prize for writing the best poem by a first grader in the Minneapolis public school system. My cousin and I wrote skits and fake commercials and all kinds of stuff. I was inspired to write for magazines after taking a seminar in Surrealism. The teacher, a man named Richard Shelton at the University of Arizona, said *"You can either write a paper or an article for this class."* I'd written a million academic papers, so I asked him what he meant by "article." When I realised I could take what I'd learned, make it fun to read instead of boring, share my knowledge and insights with thousands of other human beings, and get paid a lot of money to do it, I never wrote another paper again.

Novels - what made you want to write a novel.

Apart from maybe carving Mt. Rushmore with a pocket-knife, writing a novel is the biggest artistic thing you can do, and the most difficult, I think. It can take you years and years. Consume you and preoccupy you and wreck your marriage. While you're doing it, you have a god-like control over the universe you're created, but without the omniscience it takes to really run a universe, so you're always on the edge. I wanted to write one because novels or literature is what changed my life and shaped it, from Huck Finn to Moby Dick to science fiction to whatever.

You haven't written any novels since 1993. Is that because you have been concentrating on your music career.

Partly. I was writing young adult books but the market changed and now instead of mystery-thrillers they want gore, which I don't know how to write and/or don't care to learn. I wrote two novels for grown ups but my agent couldn't sell either of them. I suppose I'm daunted by that, or reluctant to start something I'm not sure of. I did start something last Fall that I hope to get back to soon. I also got married, and my wife wanted some sense of security. A

house and so on, so I concentrated on working to pay the rent and accumulate savings rather than on a novel which might never pay off. Now that I'm divorced I can work on such things again, though all I do for money right now is freelance journalism.

"First to Die," "Double Dose," "Third Degree," "Fourth Quarter Fix" and "Six Deadly Lies" - all seem to have a numeric basis.

This was a series of young adult books which I wrote, or rather, I wrote the first book and outlined the next five, which were written by someone else with my name on it, saying "created by" instead of "written by." A fairly common practice with series.

Have you ever been approached to write a screenplay. For one of your own novels.

I've written a couple screenplays, one of which was optioned several times, but which was never made. The guy who optioned it called me a few weeks ago and wants to work with me writing a screenplay set in the Orkney Islands. I gather this will require that we go there and play a lot of golf.

Tell us about your two non-fiction books. Subject matter. Inspiration etc.

One is a collection of pieces I did for *Mademoiselle* and other women's magazines on love and romance, called *"Real Man Tells All."* The other is a book I wrote while I was getting married, a guide for bridegrooms called *"Marry Like a Man."*

Which is more satisfying. Writing songs. Writing a novel. Playing a concert. Quite simply breathing and in the process creating.

The satisfying thing is having what feels like a good idea. You might later prove yourself wrong, that you've actually had a quite stupid idea, but at the moment that you think you've had a good or even a great idea, it's epiphanous. In the execution of the ideas you often come up with other linked ideas, and it's very exciting, typing away, thinking, *"Oh, that's good, that's brilliant — I'm a genius"* — and then maybe — *"Oh wait! I know — instead we could....."* The rush of creativity is what's satisfying, and then later you edit and reshape and rethink and rewrite — it's the initial flow that gets you hooked, and that's true with prose or non-fiction or songs. Songs, of course, provide more immediate gratification, and the best thing is playing music with other musicians, where your tunes become greater than the sum of their parts through alchemy. If I ever have a gig that pays enough to allow me to pay another musician to come along to play with me, I will, because I'm truly not in it for the money — I have a real job that provides money. Performing in concert is both satisfying and frustrating, because even when you do something right, afterwards you think of how you might improve or what you should have said. My goal as a performer is to do as well in public as I can in private, noodling around on my guitar or at the piano. So far I've never gotten comfortable enough to where I can do that. You cannot,

however, get better at playing in public by practising in private — they are two very separate things. You have to play out. I think I would be quite satisfied to have other musicians perform my songs (like, maybe Tony Bennett) so that all I would do is write them and mail them out. Then again, I'd probably miss performing. The fact is that of you write a song, it makes no sense to keep it to yourself. — songs exist to be shared. It would be silly to keep writing songs and not perform them.

Kerrville-kompacts, kassettes & other koincidences.

In "In Another Life" Michael Jerling spins his stories like spider's webs, slowly revealing pieces of the bigger picture. Possessed of a world-weary vocal style, this is his third album of the nineties and as much a *keeper* as his previous duo of releases for Shanachie. Time spent in the *motel from hell* is revealed in "Wide Awake in Parsippany," while "How Can People Live Like That" tells of the injustice of progress as far as some [financially less fortunate] families are concerned. Ringing the folk/pop rhythmic changes, there's the reggae shuffle of "Room at the Top" with some fine Hammond B-3 from The Band's Richard Bell. "Come Away with Me" is as fine a love song as you're liable to hear this year, and "Whinin at Me" truly bears a lyric for the cynical, sarcastic nineties. "On the Far Side" — where we're all eventually bound — gently closes this [lucky] set of thirteen cuts. Available from **Canadian River Music**.

Three of these recordings enjoyed a previous existence on John Stewart's own Homecoming imprint. Back in those heady mid-eighties days of record label independence, the *wall to wall, new age* instrumental "American Sketches" was known as "Centennial." "The Trio Years" was previously a cassette only recording featuring Stewart compositions written [1959 to 1967] during his tenure with The Kingston Trio [1961 to 1967], while "The Last Campaign" was Big John's tribute in word and melody to the late Bobby Kennedy. All of the foregoing recordings enjoy new liner artwork and photographs relative to their original versions. "An American Folksong Anthology" is the *first light of day* release among this series, the source material being totally traditional. Recorded between 1990 and 1994, "Pick A Bale O' Cotton" rubs shoulders with "Corrina Corrina" and "Molly Malone." So you'll probably have got the idea. This CD quartet is available Stateside for around \$6.00 per disc. A *snip* is the term, I believe. Available from **Village Records, 12156 West 63rd Street, Shawnee, Kansas 66216, U.S.A.** E-Mail : musicvil@gvi.net

As far as Bob Gibson is concerned, his allotted span came to an end in September last year. Sadly confined to a wheelchair during his final years, Stateside, Gibson was *the artery* which linked the traditional folk community of the late fifties with the contemporary [let's write our own material, folk] scene which rose to popularity at the opening of the following decade. Back in those days recording technology simply did not exist so these recordings, circa '56 to '59, instrumentally consist of stand-up bass, banjo, tambourine and guitar mixed to one track.

And let's not forget the unique voice of the [Real] Mighty Bob. "Joy Joy ! The Young and Wonderful Bob Gibson" is a twenty-seven song compilation drawn from Gibson's four Riverside discs consisting mainly of traditional material, with a handful [or so] of Gibson originals thrown in, and topped off by a few covers. Check out Roger McGuinn's *Biggest Influence on Career* in the Byrds Box Set booklet....Bob Gibson is credited along with Elvis Presley and Pete Seeger. Mighty company. In closing, let's not get too cynical. These recordings haven't been available for decades, although I must point out that this disc is one of four [recent] retrospective Riverside releases. The others being various artist compilations. Available from **Canadian River Music**.

Cut in Austin and Nashville during late January this year, Ray Wylie Hubbard's "Dangerous Spirits" should have been titled "Released Like A Lightning Bolt." If "Loco Gringo's Lament" was classic Hubbard, then musically, "Dangerous Spirits" sources from the same recipe book without bearing the stamp, *duplicate*. Even *fresh and new*, fails to adequately hit the spot. In a few months time, I'm probably going to feel the word *classic* is more appropriate. The album opener [and title track] seriously rocks for nearly five minutes. Someone can be heard to draw breath over the fading echo of the final chords. A perfect summation of the giddy pace it sets. Alternatively, the gentle shuffle "If Heaven Is Not A Place To Go" possesses a heartfelt lyric [ED. NOTE. Written I believe, after a visit to the Kerrville Folk Festival], while Hubbard's penchant for humour rises to the fore in the lyric to "Hey That's All Right." As with "Loco," "Dangerous Spirits" was produced by Brian Hardin and Lloyd Maines. This time around the guests are legion and include Kevin Welch, Jimmy LaFave, Lucinda Williams and Sara Hickman. Available in the UK from **Topic/Direct Distribution, 50 Stroud Green Road, London N4 3EF**.

In songwriting [heart and soul of a poet chapter] terminology, a *keeper* is a good 'un. Minimum rewrite required, and by the way, that rubbish bin over there won't need emptying today. Over a two-decade recording career, Guy Clark has written countless *keepers*. They're his stock in trade. A song carpenter par excellence being Clark's definite skill. His contribution to our planetary tapestry. On "Keepers - a live recording" two previously unrecorded tunes "A Little of Both" and "Out in the Parking Lot" are teamed with thirteen [Is Guy a lucky number gambler ??] Clark Classics *prepared earlier*. Aiding and abetting the whole process is Clark's son Travis on bass, plus Verlon Thompson, Suzi Ragsdale, Darrell Scott and Kenny Malone. "Like a Coat From the Cold" never sounded more heartrending, and twenty years on those "Desperadoes Waiting for a Train" are just as real. After a damned fine two-album sojourn with the Asylum label, Guy's back home with his *old friends* at Sugar Hill. Available in UK record stores via **Koch Distribution**.

Think about it — Slaid Cleaves possesses a [stylised] name that would automatically make airhead Nashville record executives open their chequebooks. It reeks of the American West. Tradition. Marlboro man. Except that Slaid is "no hat act," but a songwriter with some neat

ideas. As a fairly raw recruit to the art, I observed him win the 1992 Kerrville Folk Festival Emerging Songwriters Contest. I caught his 1992 album **"Life's Other Side"** but passed on the follow up [**"For the Brave and the Free"**]. At the time, I figured that the world didn't need another Steve Earle clone. Slaid required room to grow. He's still not quite there, but with **"No Angel Knows"** he is farther along the highway. Coming from the farmlands of roots rock, many of Slaid's originals and collaborations pack a rhythmic punch, though Gurf Morlix's production may be the significant factor in that area. "29" makes for a neat closer, since Hank is one of Slaid's primary musical reference points. Available in the UK from **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Although it comes across as sloppy roots rock mildly laced with a few world rhythms and possesses hard to distinguish lyrics, The Gourds **"Dem's Good Beeble"** is one of the best things to go for a spin on my player so far this year. Titles like "Piss and Moan Blues" vie with lyrics that [possibly] state *"A little seltzer down your pants."* These guys are truly out of "it" ["it" being a.k.a. their gourds], but musically, in the best way possible.....And what's more, dey recorded dis in Comfort, Texas. Available in the UK from **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

"Shine" ? - It doesn't ! It's a sad tale of two avenues that have led to a musical cul-de-sac. First off there's Larry Klein's slick L.A. production. OK, so three tracks were cut in Dublin ! So bang goes one of Mary Black's strong points, contemporary with respect for tradition. Next let's focus on the choice of material. Mary isn't a songwriter, so her forte is that of an interpreter. Consider also the school of thought that would proffer that, an artist must move on in order to grow and sustain the public's interest. That said, following a brief flirtation with John Gorka tunes on **"Circus,"** Mary has gone full circle on **"Shine"** and dumped regular homebred song providers Shane Howard, Jimmy McCarthy, Thom Moore and [most surprisingly] Noel Brazil. If this is Mary's calculated tilt at the *international gold ring*, then five David Gray songs within an eleven cut album constitute a stupendously poor choice of material. That two Klein collaborations are also included in the set, smacks of an artist not standing her ground. Pass. Available in your local record store now.

Time to catch up with the latest recordings from the Ontario, Canada based traditional sounding trio, Tamarack. The [entirely] original material on 1994's **"On the Grand"** bears a watery theme throughout, while many of the song lyrics on **"Leaving Inverarden,"** from 1995, describe Canadian historical events. Available by Mail Order from **Canadian River Music**.

Hailing from the Pacific North West, Kat Eggleston is domiciled in Illinois these days. Her third solo album, **"Outside Eden,"** combines nine of her own songs, with the traditional ballad "The Flower of Northumberland," Guthrie's "Pastures of Plenty" and finally, Waterbug labelmate Jano Brindisi's "Again, Again !" Her own songs paint portraits concerning love, lust and obsession. Respectively "Dreaming in Colour," the album title song and "Mirror, Mirror." For that essential injection of humour

and reality, Kat surveys the overflowing contents of her shoulder bag in "Shit." And for a beguiling *stranger than fiction* storyline, there's "Meeting Stucky at the Gas Station." A balanced traditional/contemporary folk set executed with taste. Available by Mail Order from **Canadian River Music**.

Cut in Dalry, Ayrshire on November 4th 1994, the nineteen song concert CD **"Live at the Turf Inn, Scotland"** includes four solos from John Stewart's wife, Buffy Ford. Three of her contributions are traditional songs, the exception being "Across the Milkyway." Stewart meanwhile reprises his songwriting career all the way from "Cody" [1968] through to "Bringing Down the Moon" [1984] and as an added bonus, features a trio of new songs. The spirit may still be willing, but the voice is no longer the power it once was. The new cuts clearly display that Stewart's writing has lost the bite it once possessed. Available in your local record store now.

"Stoned Soul Picnic - The Best of Laura Nyro" is a two CD retrospective that draws upon CBS recordings made by Nyro over the period 1966 to 1994. Like fellow New Yorker Janis Ian, Nyro's recording career has been somewhat episodic. For instance, no recordings made between 1984 and 1993 are featured, although the now defunct Cypress label issued her **"Live at the Bottom Line"** album in 1989. The thirty-four tracks featured, open with "Wedding Bell Blues" and close with a new, live version of the "Save the Country." Essential aural fodder for *"The Rock Machine Turns You On"* generation. Available in your local record store now.

Chuck Prophet sounds and rocks like Tom Petty on the opener, "Credit." By "New Year's Day" he has mellowed out, and it's that way with the title song as well. No pain, just loads of Prophet.....that's what you get with **"Homemade Blood."** Available in your local record store now.

"Ridin' on the Blinds," the follow up to the self titled **"Danko/Fjeld/Andersen"** [1993], has been available in Scandanavia since 1994. Recently, it has gained wider international distribution. The trio alternate on lead vocals, while the rootsy founded songs featured are a cocktail of self composed [mainly Andersen] and trio collaborations, together with covers from David Olney, Richard Thompson, Robbie Robertson and Tom Paxton. Pleasantly understated when it has to be, these veterans also know how to rock with urgency when the need arises. It's uncanny how you'd swear that Tom Pacheco took the lead vocal on Andersen's "Come Runnin' Like A Friend." You'd even conceive that it could be a Pacheco composition. Available in your local record store now.

Blessed or cursed ?....Nanci Griffith has sung from the beginning with two voices [in many rooms !] There's the fey breathiness of the *little girl lost*, and there's the *ballsy shouter* of her self-invented folkabilly genre. On album twelve [?] **"Blue Roses for the Moons,"** atmospherically produced by Don Gehman, a third *thoroughly lived in* voice has been added...and rather appealing it is too. That said, unfortunately there's too many instances here where Nanci

has taken stylistic soundbites from previous compositions and bound them into her nine *new* compositions...and I don't mean the obvious reprising of the line "*there are lights beyond our woods*" at the close of "Saint Teresa of Avila." It's the overall effect, which sounds far too familiar. At least there's some leavening of the end result, with four covers and a [pointless] revisit to the "Gulf Coast Highway." [ED. NOTE. [*] Including the MCA "Best of" package]. Available in your local record store now.

In the Putumayo Master Plan for World Domination through the release of compilation albums [which feature, retrospectives by individual performers as well as selections by various artists], "**Women's Work**" is their twentieth release. And only the third, to wholly feature the work of female artists. Those represented here, constitute a rather clever mix of the internationally known [Janis Ian] and the obscure [Fiona Joyce]. Major label as well as independent acts. Straight females and not so..... Of course, if you're regularly addicted to the pages of **DIRTY LINEN**, you will already be fully familiar with all these folks. Apart from the superfluous Laura Love [she already enjoys a full compilation on Putumayo], this set works rather well. Ani DiFranco sounds distinctly like Patty Larkin [or is that vice versa], and Christine Kane is definitely an artist to be investigated further. Available in your local record store now.

Come to think of it, there aren't that many female protagonists among the *no depression* [re]generation, of what us old farts used to refer to as country rock. Nowadays it's roots, m-a-a-a-n. Karen Grotberg [Jayhawks] and Christy McWilson [The Picketts] are members of *the band*, while Kim Richey is out front, the songwriter [with collaborators] and the centre stage focus. Richey's work is best described as tuneful, lightweight roots and "**Bitter Sweet**" is her tasty second visit to recording land. Darned fine. Available in your local record store now.

Here's an alternative twist to an old theme. For a retrospective, that is. "**The Long Way Around**" is Tom Russell's fifth solo effort for Round Tower and combines new studio versions of already familiar songs [8], in concert versions of old tunes [8] recorded in St. Louis, Missouri and finally, "Big Water" - the only new song on which Iris DeMent duets, plus versions of the already familiar "Eyes of Roberto Duran" and "Mineral Wells." That Texas born trio Nanci Griffith, Jimmie Dale Gilmore and Katy Moffatt individually pitch in vocals on a number of tracks. Never less than one of the most literate writers to walk this planet, Tom's incisive liner notes complement the pleasure of listening to some of his many well-known old gems presented in new settings. Available in your local record store now.

"**Picnic**" is album sieté. The big label deal ! A compromise? No way. Production-wise, this is [John] Keane on [Robert Earl] Keen; though *the giant* supporting *her man* has always been [R. E.'s wife] Kathleen. Instrumentally, Keen's regular road band aided by Gurf Morlix [electric guitar and slide] and Tim O'Brien [mandolin] comfortably stretch out on the eleven cuts. A clever koncept - aka junk the studio pickers. Keen even

displays the kourage to kover kompositions by three other thoroughly worthy komposers - James McMurtry, Dave Alvin and R.E.'s long kompadre, J. D. Hutchinson. The latter kut, "The Coming Home of the Son and Brother" is a killer among a pack of sparkling Keen kreated gemstones and kovers. Vocals by the Kowboy Junkies Margo Timmins are featured on five tracks. Prime kuts include [the potential hit single] "Over the Waterfall," "Oh Rosie" and Robert's latest heartfelt lyrical tribute to Kathleen "Then Came Lo Mein." Down in that ol' Lone Star state, Aggie Keen is kurrently the king of the kastle. In konklusion.....[wild dingoes ain't gonna stop inclusion of this disc in my End of Year Best of].....this is the finest darned picnic I ever set down to enjoy. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

Our own Chris While has been rapturously received elsewhere. While's *so what* lyrics on "**In the Big Room**" are devoid of anything which intellectually challenges this scribe. Even the trio of covers are relatively uninspiring choices. Time to stick my forefinger down my throat....and cry, "*Ruth !*" Next. By the way, excuse me. Available from your local record store now.

With "**Mystery Train - Classic Railroad Songs, Volume 2**" you get precisely what the title indicates. Fourteen of them. Train songs [American style, that is], each with a distinct folk, country or bluegrass bent. The liner booklet comprehensively traces the history of *smokin' the iron horse*, while Johnny Cash kicks the journey off with the well familiar "Casey Jones." Steve Goodman [guess which song !!], Mary McCaslin, Bob Wills, Whitstein Brothers and the Carter Family are among the other contributors. All aboard. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Unlike recent predecessors, on "**Sprout Wings and Fly**" there's only three McCutcheon originals. It's John's nineteenth album, but who's counting. The remaining constituents being arrangements of traditional songs, some instrumentals, plus one cover each from A.P. Carter and Woody Guthrie. While the use of hammered dulcimer, autoharp, fiddle and mandolin would stylistically mark Virginia based McCutcheon as a folk traditionalist; he also embraces the use of didgeridoos, as well as log and talking drums. Let's call it traditional folk with a nineties edge. With guest vocals from, among others, Iris Dement and Robin & Linda Williams, the end product is a gently engaging joy. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Drawn from concert performances recorded in Scotland, Ohio, California, Illinois, New Zealand and Australia, Olsen intersperses the fifteen songs on "**Live from Around the World**" [including two Robert Johnson covers and a quartet of previously unrecorded self penned originals] with narrative reflections about her home life in California, the road, her new folding bicycle, friends and her passion for dancing. Kristina is assisted on some of the U.S. cut tracks by the guitars of Nina Gerber or Al Petteway. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Once upon a time, Peter O'Brien's [long gone fanzine] **OMAHA RAINBOW** chronicled John Stewart's life in and

out of the recording studio. It also, regularly, featured stories penned by Native American writer Roxy Gordon. The latter contributions were always the first I visually and mentally digested, way back when. O'Brien released an album by Gordon back in 1988, titled **"Crazy Horse Never Died"** on his Sunstorm label. A few years on, another Native American and activist, John Trudell, came up with two discs full of stylistically similar, spoken free-form train of thought narratives backed by music. O'Brien and Gordon have teamed up again to bring **"Smaller Circles"** to your attention. Roxy's writing is densely structured and requires rapt attention, but is ultimately rewarding. One for the early or late hours of day, when all else in the house and the immediate surroundings is quiet. Available in UK from **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Although Northampton, Western Massachusetts is home to numerous folk/roots musicians none of them make it on to the first compilation from the town's premier acoustic music venue, the Iron Horse. Showcasing artists for some 363 nights a year, with two sets each night, the club opened its doors to this small college town way back in 1979. The Iron Horse now possesses a nation-wide reputation as one of *the acoustic places to play*. Drawing upon *live* recordings made since the dawn of the nineties and up to last year, the artists featured on **"Live at the Iron Horse - Volume 1"** include Richard Thompson, Mary Chapin what's-her-name, Tish Hinojosa, Jimmie Dale Gilmore, Fred Eaglesmith and an octet of others. Tasty is the essence. Essential is the reality. More, more, more.....Available by Mail Order from **Signature Sounds, P.O. Box 106, Whately, Massachusetts 01903, U.S.A.**

We're talking Indianapolis here. The one in Indiana, U.S.A. Southeastway Park to be exact. The venue in July last year for the "Cornstock '96 Songs in the Park" Songwriter Festival. Dependent on whether you go this far back acoustically, among those *caught in the act* on **"Cornstock Volume 1 - Songs in the Park"** are Brewer & Shipley and Loudon Wainwright III. From the current crop of Stateside shakers and money-makers, there's local girl Carrie Newcomer, Boston resident Ellis Paul, Austin's Darden Smith and John *"the beard from Bethlehem"* Gorka [the Bethlehem located in Pennsylvania]. Oh yes, and not forgetting the darned fine Pierce Pettis. Among the folk[in] baby boomers to look out for in the future, there's Cosy Sheridan and Barbara Kessler. A souvenir with sparkle and substance. Available by Mail Order from **NiteMusic Records, P.O. Box 441724, Indianapolis, Indiana 46244-1724, U.S.A.**

Hardly seems like any time at all since this [generally] humorous lyricist launched her career with **"Future Fossils"** on the Philo imprint. That was circa 1985. At the time I just didn't get Christine Lavin. Years elapsed before I did. Cerebrally enriched was the emotion, when I finally did [get what she was all about]. Just suspend caution and go with Chrissy's lyrical *lava* flow. Seven solo albums, one cassette EP, a trio of Bitchin' Babe discs and legions of songwriter compilations [including countless Fast Folk appearances] later, Christine brings her *personal world* view up to date by **"Shining My Flashlight On The**

Moon." Challenger of the impossible, she has consistently *shone her flashlight* upon the amusing situations us humans manage to get ourselves into. A song composed of verses about individual members of the medical profession vie with others concerning divorce, scientific inventions, a polka dancing bus driver and finally, the scent of aftershave. Like I say, quirky.....except, on those occasions when she zaps you straight out of the blue ! - by plucking those old strings with words delivered straight from the heart. This lady never disappoints. Available at your local record store via **Koch Distribution**.

Bless their hearts, Glitterhouse have slipped in half a dozen previously unavailable cuts from Nadine, Hazeldine, Gary Heffern, David Munyon [yippee !], Larry Barrett and Chris & Carla among the sixteen track compilation **"Out of the Blue - Volume 4."** Musically the territory covered includes that of the *no depression* roots folk/country generation and those acoustic songpoets of yesteryear. Available by Mail Order from **Glitterhouse Mail Order, Gruner Weg 25, D-37688 Beverungen, Germany. E-Mail : mailorder.glitterhouse@compronet.de**

Monica Casey's self produced, and mostly self-penned release **"Again and Again"** [there's only one cover among this thirteen song set], bears repeated listening. Based in St. Louis, Casey is one of the local acts at the Off Broadway venue when acts such as Tom Russell and Katy Moffatt pass through town. Subjectively, Monica's lyrics are set [too] firmly in a relationship and human emotion groove. Upon reflection, how about a couple of story songs girl, 'cause melody wise you've got that aspect of *the art* firmly battered down. Available by Mail Order from **P.O. Box 12227, St. Louis, Missouri 63157, U.S.A.**

I stumbled across the Salt Lake City sounds of Megan Peters at the 1996 Kerrville Folk Festival. The way she sang the hell out of her "Take Me Home" - it damned near broke my heart. One of my Songs of '96 [unrecorded], it closes her Texas cut debut set **"About Time."** With a folk foundation stylistically reminiscent of the soulful Joan [Armatrading, that is] and possessed of lesser shadings by Ani DiFranco and Michelle Shocked, Megan lyrically majors in gender relationships of various mixes. "Give Up and Go" prequels "Fault Line" in more ways than one, since the latter cut centres on the hub of the sex act. Elsewhere, humour and *day to day* reality are finely balanced in the [probably] autobiographical "Beautiful." For a first attempt.....it's darned essential. Available from **Painless Productions, 956 East 1300 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84105, U.S.A.**

Following in the slipstream of husband Buddy's 1995 album for the same California based imprint, Hightone, we have the unique voice of Julie Miller and her **"Blue Pony."** If at first Iris sounded hokey and folksy, then, like her pal Victoria [Williams], Mrs. Miller comes equipped with the voice of a "little lost angel." Her songbag of originals knocks you back on your heels, aided by a cover of the Lowell George/John Sebastian collaboration "Face of Appalachia" and the subtly titled closer "Last Song" - co-written with Vigilante of Love, Bill Mallonee. From the slap beat of the opener "A Kiss On the Lips" through the pseudo

traditional folk ballad duet with Emmylou on "Forever My Beloved," this set blends folk and country with style. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution**.

Fresh from backing Guy Clark on his **"Keepers"** live set, **"Aloha from Nashville"** features a decade of Darrell Scott penned originals [plus one by his father, Wayne] as well as "Banjo Clark" co-written with Verlon Thompson. Opening with the western swing flavoured "Head South," the traditional sounding co-write follows. The lyrically twee "Spelling Bee Romance" and the closing "Title of the Song" stand out like *sore thumbs* among what is otherwise a set of reasonably intelligent country songs. At best, Scott is reminiscent of early career Hal Ketchum.....maybe next time. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution**.

Recent releases from the Mountain Stage series of live recordings have taken a thematic turn. This time it's **"Folk"** - whatever that much maligned term currently means. Contentwise the interpretation at Blue Plate HQ, appears to run to country and blues as well. While Taj Mahal is the lone bluesman, contributors from the former genre include the Nitty Gritty's, Iris, the Delavantes and John Hartford. Contemporary pigeonholes the *"folk"* featured here, be they the normally electric variety [Richard Thompson and Steve Forbert], or strictly acoustic [Bill Morrissey and Cheryl Wheeler]. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

First mention goes to the colourful liner montage featuring photography, which perfectly complements the album title. Musically, all the well proven Jimmy LaFave *road markers* are present on **"Road Novel."** He covers a Leon Russell song titled "Home Sweet Oklahoma." And a seventies anthem from his songwriting hero Dylan. Next there's "Long Time Since the Last Time" from the pen of Jimmy's Oklahoma based buddy, Bob Childers. Finally, there's a dozen LaFave originals - you already know the fare. "Vast Stretches of Broken Heart" an out and out rocker, vies with the gentle ballad "Into Your Life," while somewhere between there's a string of toe-tappers such as "Ramblin' Sky." Available from **Glitterhouse Mail Order**, and more recently in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Trish Murphy's **"Crooked Mile"** was No.1 in Austin, Texas for a about two months following its release. Basically, Trish is a *no depression* generation, country n' twang blonde goddess raised on the Gulf Coast. Houston, to be precise. That she penned the material herself, just adds to the fascination and pleasure. There's a cover of Dylan's "She Belongs to Me" and one cut co-written with Jesse Dayton. Aided by some of the Texas capital's best pickers - Gurf Morlix [Lucinda Williams' band], Mike Hardwick and Jon Dee Graham [a solo album soon from this ex-True Believer], there's masses of jangly power guitar chords. Oh yes, and some fine songs like, "Relentless" and the rowdy "Scorpio Tequila." A couple of albums from now, given further advances with her songwriting skills this gal is gonna be unstoppable. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

Two years on from his self titled, Vireo label debut, Bruce Robison is now hitched to songbird Kelly Willis. Brother Charlie co-produced his 1995 debut set **"Bandera"** with

the astute Lloyd Maines, and brother Bruce has followed suit with this self released set of eleven songs. **"Wrapped"** includes a cover of the Louvin's "When I Loved You," "Lonely For You" penned by Kelly Robison Willis and our home-grown Nashville ex-pat Paul Kennerly, plus nine Bruce originals including tunes written [separately] with Monte Warden and Jim Lauderdale. Contemporary Austin country, brewed with a pinch of swing, a smidgen' of bluegrass and an *"I've lived precisely this kind of life"* rural attitude. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

First there was the plan. Paraphrasing the liner **"Rough Sketches"** is singer/songwriter John Stewart's *audio sketchbook from two summers worth of trips down the Mother Road - US Route 66.* From an aural standpoint, as I mentioned earlier, Stewart's voice is a ghost of it's former self. Practically speaking, thematic albums can be an albatross as far as the writer is concerned. From the heart of Chi-Town to the Pacific waters which wash Santa Monica Pier, here's eleven Stewart penned snapshots of the shimmering black bitumen ribbon and the people who travelled it, lived beside it and most importantly, believed in the all American Dream. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

Subtitled **"The Cowboy Collection,"** what the deuce is this ? Despite what your mother claimed, sometimes things do come in two's, not three's. So here we have, **"Song of the West,"** the second Tom Russell album in as many weeks. Tom's second collection of songs dedicated to that era when *the west was wild and untamed*. Previous Russell recordings have contained seven of the fifteen songs gathered here, a handful having appeared on *homage one*, **"Cowboy Real."** What the hell, I rate this as Tom's finest album. A man at the apex of what he does best - performin' his own story songs and interpreting others by writers such as Steve Young and Mary McCaslin. And here's a special mention for the liner artwork that marks out in pictures, Russell's family history as well as his love of things old and western. By the way, **"Cowboy Real"** was issued in 199*two*.....Available by mail order from **Village Records**. [ED. NOTE. After the **"The....,"** one word has been omitted from the subtitle of this set and that is.....consummate].

By birth I've got more right to use this appellation, since there isn't a single Wood by surname among this Jacksonville Beach, Florida based quintet. Visual assessment of the liner shot brings the conclusion that what when it comes down to talkin' turkey, **"The Woody Brothers"** aren't spring chickens. Teenage wunderkind - not. Ageism apart, this set boils down to a well recorded, self released, gig CD. Of the dozen darned melodic songs, most were composed individually, by the band's three principal songwriters Chris Mucci, Justin Patterson and Jason Chase. Stylistically the Woody's have been compared to seventies country rock aggregations such as Poco, Eagles and Pure Prairie League. Time warp music from a simpler era. The way their rather effective harmonies inter-twine, is reminiscent of a *non-electric* version of Crosby, Stills and Nash. Their lyrics portray, for instance, well oiled bar-room philosophers and the advice they offer, the stillness which proceeds those Gulf Coast

winds of the variety - tornado. Sad to relate, elsewhere, there's seemingly countless tales centred on that male/female relationship situation. *Uncommon Sense* is the best track in this retro pack. Available from **2123a South 2nd Street, Jacksonville Beach, Florida 32250, U.S.A.**

With album numero three, and ever progressing forward, Dar Williams goes for a band driven sound on many of the eleven tracks. It will be interesting to gauge the reaction of her massive fan base on the Internet over the next few months, because on this occasion, the lyrical intensity of certain songs necessitates devoted attention. On the other hand, "Party Generation" and "Teenagers, Kick Our Butts" are rollicking singalongs - and potential radio singles - while the title cut is a thoroughly poignant piece of work based on memories of that annual occasion we all dread - *back to school*. So what's missing? Personally, I feel it's the lack of any new, [and previously highly personalised] story songs - a powerful ingredient in Dar's earlier albums.

It hardly seems like milliseconds since Andrew Calhoun came up with the compilation of '97 [so far] "**Memorial Day**." Now we have "**Waterbug Anthology 2**," a budget priced sampler featuring the singer-songwriters and folk musicians who contribute their work to his Waterbug label. Adopting the major label style lead he took with "**Memorial City**," "**Anthology 2**" includes tracks unavailable elsewhere. I've gushed ad nauseam previously about the attributes of Steve Fisher, songwriter. While we wait patiently for his next solo work, the anthemic "The Time is Now," featuring a duet vocal from Steve's buddy Jamie Byrd, brings back wonderful memories of hearing this tune during Kerrville '96. Other exclusives include Calhoun's "The King", Cosy Sheridan's "88 Keys," Chuck Brodsky's "The Food Pun Song" and Bill Staines/Dave Mallett soundalike Rick Lee with the awesome "October Days." Nineteen cuts in all, including one from our own Les Barker - the latter offering, like a sore thumb, discloses much about the depth of the British folk scene. Available from **Canadian River Music**.

By track three, R. B. Morris' "**Take That Ride**" has rocked out on the opening "World Owes Me," electrically sampled a pseudo Irish beat throughout the autobiographical "Ridin' With O'Hanlon" and then settled down with the slow bluesy ballad "They Say There's A Time." Add some country licks and that's pretty much the rhythmic mix of the remainder of this album, which encompasses a moral tale about peddling illegal alcohol [the only song here not penned by Morris], the story of Roy the wino, that *sticky* climatic condition known Stateside as the "Dog Days" and some poetic reflections on the impending millenium. To attain maximum effect, this intriguing debut calls for an alert listener. Does R.B. stand for rhythm and blues ?? Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Based in Austin, Texas on "**Tense Present**" Jeffery DeVille's band Motivo boils down to David Heath [bass], Paul Percy [drums, percussion], Marvin Denton Dykhuis [guitar] and Floyd Domino [piano, organ]. Literally "the cream of the local crop." Danny Draher joins the foregoing quartet for the more recent "**Tropicowboy**." In addition,

the playing of Paul Glasse, Marty Muse, Gene Elders, Chris Gage, Darcy Deaville and Randy Glines graces, and is generously spread throughout, this pair of recordings. From the liner shots, Jeffery M. DeVille looks like a cross between a staid college lecturer and an insurance salesman with eccentric dress sense. Musically, this boy from Indiana ["Hoosier Boy in Texas"] has been much influenced by jazz, as well as the rhythms of South America and the Caribbean. A few steps away from shopping mall music, this is one for those relaxing [and non taxing] moments in life. Available via **Club de Musique Records, La Palud, 11013 Courmayeur, Aosta, Italy**.

That fluidly composed institution, Asleep at the Wheel, seems to roll *own and own and own*. On "**Back to the Future Now - Live at Arizona Charlie's, Las Vegas**," their fourth concert set from a quarter century long cruise through the galaxy of western swing, leader Ray Benson even retreads the cut "Cherokee Boogie" from their debut set "**Comin' Right At Ya**." It seems that The Wheel have played Arizona Charlie's Casino in Las Vegas for the last eight years, during National Rodeo finals week, hence their latest product. Guest performers include Tracy Byrd and The McGuire Sisters, while former band alumni Lucky Oceans, LeRoy Preston, Chris O'Connell, Floyd Domino, Tony Garnier and Tim Alexander add their weight to the proceedings. Available via **CDX**.

Here's a sad a case of anticipation, not quite fulfilled. Despite being classed a naval gazing disaster by the majority of our national press, "**Beth Nielsen Chapman**" was a classic in my book. I've converted sufficient folk to the joys of that album during the intervening years, to have total faith in my personal assessment. While 1993's follow up "**You Hold the Key**" was a calamity best forgotten, the Rodney Crowell co-production "**Water and Sand**" falls somewhere between the preceding duo, in terms of quality and potential longevity. Before we go further, this review is based on the Japanese version of the recording which features two extra tracks. In the liner notes to "**Water and Sand**," Nielsen openly acknowledges the death [from cancer] of her husband, Ernest A. Chapman III, in 1994. Adversity can be a powerful spur when it comes to creation - it can be a writer's most powerful ally. Apart from the duet with J. D. Souther on the Bryant/Bryant classic "Sleepless Nights," Nielsen had a hand in composing the remaining dozen cuts, albeit that the closing track is an instrumental reprise of the opener "The Colour of Roses." As for BCN solo writing credits, there's a handful of those. Personally, they constitutes the real quality time as far as this collection is concerned. Collaborators on the other half dozen titles include Matt Rollings, Gary Nicholson, Joe Henry and Bill Lloyd. As an antidote to her recent [and highly personal] problems, the appropriately titled "Happy Girl" and the bluesy "Heads Up For the Wrecking Ball" [featuring Bonnie Raitt] are the antithesis of introspection. Upon reflection, their inclusion is a positive sign. Chapman has clearly chosen to balance introspection with sufficient indicators which unequivocally state that she has not withdrawn from contact with society. For your latest quotient of Acme quality Nielsen Chapman songs hit on the title cut, "Seven Shades of Blue," "Thanks to Spring"

[the extra Japanese cut along with the old Bryant's hit] and the haunting "No One Knows But You." American version available via **CDX**. Japanese version ??

The thirteen songs on Toni Price's fifteen cut set **"Sol Power"** were recorded at Railroad Blues in Alpine, Texas around the turn of the year. The opening and closing cuts feature the sound of trains running on railroad tracks, while Price's vocal can be heard faintly in the background of the closing contribution supported by a chorus of chirping sparrows [or at least the Texas equivalent]. Aided [mostly] acoustically, as always, by Champ Hood [fiddle], Jud Newcombe [guitar] and Rick "Casper" Rawls [guitar] you have to marvel at the skill with which Price executes this set of songs. Purely an interpreter, Toni possesses a most impressive sets of tubes and boy does she know how to apply them with maximum effect. One more thing, the contents of **"Sol Power"** all sound damned familiar yet there isn't one cover here from her two studio sets. Materialwise, Price's one woman "Crusade for the cutting of Gwil Owen songs" gathers pace and strength with seven further samples covered here. Herb McCullough meanwhile, is sneaking up on the outside track with three co-writing credits on **"Sol Power."** Live, liberated and a toe tapping delight from end to end. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

Jim White spent twenty three years living on the margins of a Pentecostal community in the Florida panhandle, has been a pro surfer, a fashion model in Milan - the one in Italy, and a New York cab driver. The majority of the 20 page liner booklet is given over to a story penned by White, which also gives the album its full title. Subjectively, the tale embraces teenage drug abuse, sex, religion, child molesting, hippie culture and surrealism. As for the contents of the disc, **"(The Mysterious Tale Of How I Shouted) Wrong-Eyed Jesus !,"** White delivers at worst, incomplete, simplistic melodies and stream of consciousness spoken lyrics. *"I'd lick a spittoon, I'd wear all the underwear in a sauna"* gives a flavour of White's competence in the latter area. And the press sheet proudly boasted that White was a polymath ! At best, Jim is reminiscent of a sub-standard Robbie Robertson or John Trudell. For no obvious reason, on a number of cuts White and producer Paul Rabjohns have even resorted to distorting the vocal. If it's meant to entice the listener to pay closer attention, it fails. Miserably. White was aided on this project by long time Tom Waits collaborator Ralph Carney, while former Talking Head, David Byrne, was one of the Executive Producers. The latter says much about this *new frontier* style, impressionistic recording. If this recording is perceived as a shining new way forward for music, leave me behind when the last plane flies out. For instance.....the vocal on the closing track, *The Road That Leads To Heaven*, fades at around five minutes. Three silence filled minutes later, the listener is treated to a further sixty seconds of discordant sounds, while in the background a voice repeats and repeats - *"Hey can't you hear me. Let me in."* Not a snowballs chance in hell, Jim. Available via **CDX**.

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Cazzie Newcomer

The interview with Carrie Newcomer took place in the foyer of the Inn of the Hills in Kerrville, Texas during the late morning of 8th June 1996. We weren't to know it at the time, but the "massed backing vocalists" [i.e. other guests passing through the foyer who talked, while they walked], made this one of the hardest interview tapes to extract. Ever. Add to that, the fact that for the first minute of the interview the Editor had the microphone jack plug firmly inserted in the earphone socket, and we had the recipe for.....crisis ! That mended, the really good news amounts to the fact that a couple of other yet to be published interviews [with Mary McCaslin and Ray Wylie Hubbard] took place in the same locality during the 1996 Festival. We will overcome. Many thanks go out to Carrie Newcomer and Robert Meitus for all their help in setting up the interview.

What do you remember of your childhood. Was there much music around the Newcomer home in Elkhart, Indiana.

You know, there really wasn't. It wasn't a real musical family. My paternal grandfather played the fiddle, but I really don't remember seeing him play, it was more my dad talkin' about it. My parents on my mother's side were Italian. She was first generation and so - they liked music, but more like the music of their homeland. But - this little factory town had some of the biggest musical instrument plants in the country at that time. Like flutes and cornets and trumpets. Saxophones. Selmer, Conn and Armstrong - all these major makers were there. So they had a wonderful music programme in the public schools. Everybody played an instrument by the age they were eight. I started playing music because of that public school programme, but I quickly fell in love with doing music. As a kid you have different experiences - and you find things that you just love. I loved making music. We had a radio in the house, but my parents weren't real musical. It was an interesting background for that - to come from somewhere that wasn't really based in the arts. I went to College for visual art and not for music. Found what I loved, and wanted to pursue it in the arts. I attended an inner city school and Tamla Motown was the music that you would listen to. At lunchtime, we'd spin 45's in the gym and dance. It would be like, Aretha Franklin - well, she was Stax and not Motown. The Temptations. All those wonderful soul bands of the early seventies. I played the flute first, because I loved the sound of it. The melodies were so pretty. I started listening a lot, at that time, to the singing poets like Joni Mitchell, Janis Ian, Leonard Cohen, Bruce Cockburn - I picked up the guitar when I was about fourteen.

So how far were you away from Motown.

Well, Indiana is a very long state. I lived about ten miles from the Michigan line. It was a couple of hour's drive to Detroit and the same to Chicago. All my family talks with a Chicago accent.

If you took up the guitar at the age of fourteen, when did you contemplate the step of performing in public.

That was real funny, because I was a real shy kid. Through my teenage years and even to the beginning of College. I had a hard time even talking to folks, but I loved to make music and I loved to sing. There was a teacher when I was in my senior year in High School who knew I did poetry and wrote songs. He introduced me to some wonderful music. He played jazz in New Orleans in the fifties. At a certain point he decided to get a teaching degree because it was steady work. A great guy who was very encouraging. The basis of this particular class, was that you didn't have to respond in the normal way with a test. You could respond to him with a review of a book you had read, or a project you were doing. Whatever you felt would be interesting. It could be a painting or writing. I wrote poetry and music for this class and at the end of the year he asked me if I would do a little performance of the songs I'd written. I was so scared. Oh, I was so scared. It was wonderful, because it pushed me to do it. I did this programme with all these songs. My friends were there. The kids in my class were really supportive and liked what I was writing.



Photograph : Rounder/Philo - Senor McGuire

Carrie Newcomer

Was it through receiving a round of applause, that you discovered a whole new world existed. Were you encouraged to perform more.

It wasn't so much the applause. I've always been such a personal writer, in terms of what I've been trying to do. All this time, it's been the singing poets. Finding that universal meaning. Storytelling. It's that celebration of what's human. That really attracted me and in some ways did something for me. It was a healing thing for me and I also started for the first time, really connecting with other people. I knew music did that for me. It was like *"Maybe I could do that too."* It's a powerful thing and I owe a lot to that teacher.

If you had been writing poems for a while, when did you write your first song. Did anything in particular influence you to write it.

I learned my first three chords on the guitar and straightaway, wrote a terrible song. I was a voracious reader as a child. Still am. I love literature. I think if I have given anything good to my daughter, she's a real voracious reader too. She loves books. My father was an educator - a teacher and school principal, and that was something he gave to me. He used to tell stories about my grandfather not being able to finish the eighth grade of school because he was a farm kid - farm kids were needed on the farm in those days. He always had a library card though, and he always had a stack of books - I remember that as a child - and he would work through them. He always was reading something. My dad got to go to College on the GI Bill. He would come home and Granpaw would help him with Calculus. He was a man of books and had self educated himself. My dad was a big believer in the power of books and ideas. I've always had this love affair with good books.

Did performing for friends at School encourage you to play music for the general public.

Well it was funny - like I said I was shy, but I would sing for friends. I remember they kept pushing me *"Oh, you ought to sing these songs for people."* I would make little tape recordings. I remember getting this job in a bar in Michigan. The drinking age in Michigan was lower than in Indiana. I lied about my age, so I could play in this little bar. My friends started coming to hear me sing. One day, my Mom and Dad showed up [Laughs]. They didn't get mad at me, they just wanted me to know that they knew what I was doin'. When I went off to College I kept on playing in coffeehouses and little bars. Eventually, I put myself through school and would drop out to earn some money and then go back to school. I started doing music as my way to earn money. Sometimes I'd play when I was in school as well - I'd go to School by day and sing in these little diners at night. I always played some of my own material. At least half-and-half. Especially when I was playing bars. You need to be able to play things that people like, and know, and can sing along with. I have to say, I always did things that I enjoyed myself. I didn't want to just be a human jukebox.

I understand that you went to Purdue University, but what precisely did you study. You mentioned visual arts -

I went to several Colleges. I kept switching Colleges. For me it was a bit of a long haul, but I really wanted to go to College. The College I went to the longest though was Goshen. It's a small Mennonite school and that was the one where I probably did most of my art training. I graduated from Purdue University. I got my visual art degree, but I also got a teachers certificate so that I could teach from kindergarten to twelfth grade, which made my parents very happy. They knew I had something to fall back on. Once I finished school - you know I - I think I was an OK visual artists, and I still dabble - and I love it - but I really felt that my heart was in my music. I think I wasn't ready, you know, when I was in School. I didn't go to music

school because I think I wasn't ready to risk something I loved that much. I could deal with rough critiques of my visual art, but I wasn't ready to risk that with my music. After school I felt that *"This is what I want to do,"* and I started following that instead.

How quickly after your graduation was Stone Soup formed.

About a year after I graduated. I played solo stuff for a while in bars and coffehouses. It happened very organically. I was playing in this little place and the guitar player Larry Smeyak came in and said *"I've been hearing you play around town and I got my guitar out in the car. I'd love to sit in."* He was a lead player. I said, *"Great."* So he started sitting in on my shows. Then the percussionist Dennis Leas started bringing hand drums and ethnic percussion. Just sitting in. Eventually we said, *"Let's just call this something."* It wasn't a case of *"OK, now I'm going to have a band."*

You mentioned listening to the songpoets earlier. Joni Mitchell, has leaned more and more toward jazz over the years. If you follow my meaning, the only box which you can put Leonard Cohen in, is Leonard Cohen. Yet there was a very particular sound which Stone Soup created, using for instance, the dulcimer.

I was really interested at that time, in learning more about folk music and traditional music and ethnic music. I didn't really come from that background. I came from the pop poet area - and Motown [Laughs].

One of the descriptions I would have used is that Stone Soup was an old time string band.

In some ways it sounded like an old time string band, but I was the writer and I wrote in a contemporary vein. It was kind of an unusual mix, with all the percussion. It was an interesting group and I learned a lot in that band. Eventually the band broke up, for a couple of reasons. I was married to the drummer for a while and we split. Also, I think I was ready to move on to a different sound. I was moving and changing constantly and it was time to do something else. I think I have taken with me, some of the ideas and some of the things I learned in Stone Soup. We were a very regional band performancewise. We didn't tour because the two fellows were very limited - they had day jobs. But - it was very interesting, because we put out albums on our own label. One of them was actually on vinyl and the other was on CD. It was one of the first independently produced CD's, so it got a lot of airplay. Public stations and syndicated programmes picked it up. It was an underground sort of thing. It was very funny that we were getting played so much and people knew about us, yet we toured so regionally.

The sound and the whole presentation of the group was unique. You created a balance between the worlds of traditional and contemporary music. Did you ever play summer festivals.

No. Not really. Only a few local festivals. Like I said, it was an interesting phenomenon. I still have people who ask me about Stone Soup, and knew about me originally from that

band. Again, it was almost an underground thing, because the recordings were real hard to get. It was kind of like *"Oh, I have this tape that someone put on the back of another tape, that I have just loved for years. I never knew who the singer was, and it's you"* [Laughs]. Or *"I have a tape of a tape of a tape of yours, on the back of a Grateful Dead tape that I've been passing around."*

Did you decide to make the two recordings almost as a way of documenting the group and that part of your career.

Yeah. It was like I wanted to write a book and recordings are like writing a book for a musician. I had all these songs. We sold a lot of those recordings. I was doing it full time. I was like the businessperson, as well as being in the band full time, so it was more like a living for me.

Why did you pick the name Windchime Promotions.

I had some wind chimes on my front porch that I just loved, so when I was thinking up the name of the record company it just struck me. It kind of fits with the music as well.

Once you went solo again, was it almost like starting over.

It was. It was a rough time, in that, I had worked so hard and the band had gone so far. No band is forever, unless you're the Rolling Stones. There was a certain amount of sadness and some disorientation for a little while. But, I was still writing and music was still my great love. I was also supporting my daughter. A single mom trying to make a living. I went back to doing solo shows, and started working on my solo album. I was also teaching music lessons at the time. I put out my first solo recording on my own -

You co-produced that album with the album's recording engineer. You'd had experience of his studio when you were with Stone Soup.

They were always co-produced. Those Stone Soup albums were literally done in someone's basement. He was actually an excellent engineer and a friend. Richard Thomas. He's actually a sound designer for the theatre. He just happened to hear us when we went in to work on these albums. He had a little studio of his own and kind of took on the project as a labour of love.

Michael Graham also helped you produce "Visions and Dreams." Where did you find him.

Half of *"Visions and Dreams"* was done with Rick Thomas. It's truly a crossover album for me. There were some songs that really had a more contemporary sound and feel to them. I really needed to work in a studio where I could record those sounds and do those kinds of songs - it didn't work out in Rick's studio. Robert Meitus, who I'd met that year, had worked with Michael on several albums and knew that he was good engineer and a good producer and had a nice studio to work in. He introduced me to Michael. Again, I've always had the great fortune of

working with people on these projects where they become labours of love for them. We completed the last half of that project together. Through Michael and his connections, and Robert as well, they were able to bring in some wonderful session people. Some of the John Cougar Mellencamp people - that was a nice, boost to the album.

Once the album was released did you start touring outside Indiana.

Well, I started touring on my own. Really logging on the road miles. I had a little Toyota station wagon that I sold about a year ago with two hundred and twenty thousand miles on the clock. I just drove that little thing all over the country. I did unusual tours though - since I had a daughter and was a single mom. I didn't do those long tours, where people go out for a couple of months at a time. I would do these short, out and back deals. It was very concentrated work. I'd do regional work and be home, and then go out on the road again. You don't make as much money that way, but I got to have a life and be a mum and see my daughter grow up. It was just so much fun to do it in such an unusual way [Laughs].

How was "Visions and Dreams" received as a debut solo album.

Very well. Again it was hard, because my distribution was not that of a regular record label. I sent it out to all the community public stations that I could. It won some awards. I was very pleased with it. Rounder Records came very close to picking up "Visions and Dreams" at that time. They had been familiar with Stone Soup. I think the next Stone Soup record would have been on that label. I had been keeping in touch with different labels. I figure with "Visions and Dreams" I have sold 10,000 copies out of the back of my car. People were calling me up. They'd hear it on a radio station and they'd call the station and say they couldn't get it anywhere. Then they'd call my home, because that was the phone number on the back of the album. They'd say "You ever hear of this woman, Carrie Newcomer?" I'd say, "Yeah." They'd say "Well have you heard this album "Visions and Dreams"?" I'd say "Yeah, I got a bunch in my basement, I'll send you one" [Laughs].

If with Stone Soup you hadn't played any national festivals - in 1991, you came down to Kerrville - how had you heard of this place.

I had heard about the Kerrville Songwriters Competition. Other writers had told me about the place and said that it was a really amazing place for a songwriter. I was pretty naive about it too. Real naive about it, because I was just getting out there at that point. I presented my songs and Rod picked a couple of them and I came down here and did the New Folk Competition. Boy, I was so scared. I thought I was going to die [Laughs]. I really hadn't done the Festival circuit and boy that's a whole different thing. It's a very different thing to learn how to connect. It's also a hard competition because you go out with only two songs and you're off.

And how can you decide the best six out of forty

participants.

It's very subjective.

Were you aware at that stage how highly regarded the competition is.

Oh yes. At that stage I was, and I think that's what made me nervous. I felt it was a little daunting. I loved it and just thought it was a wonderful Festival. As a songwriter and a performer sometimes it's a very solitary existence. I wasn't living in one of the music meccas. I didn't live in Boston. I didn't live in Austin. I lived in the middle of the Mid West and was making my way there because this is what I loved. Sometimes it was a very isolated kind of profession. I didn't have a lot of colleagues. It was purely this thing in my heart that I was following. Sometimes, I think writing music is like a calling. Music picks you. When I came down here, it was like this wonderful experience of meeting kindred spirits. We're all a little quirky, or we wouldn't be doing this. I felt a real sense of community. People would listen and appreciate songwriters and what they were trying to do. The storytelling and what they're doing in their songs. I went back feeling like my well was full. It was like "I want to write good songs too" [Laughs]. It was a great revelation and motivation for me. And a comfort too.

Did it encourage you to go to other festivals.

Yes. And to keep doing what I was doing, and to travel. Rounder picked up my next tape. I had recorded it for my own label. It was licensed to them. Before I put it out I sent copies to several record companies. A couple of labels expressed interest in it. I think I was at that point too, where it had become too much for me to handle on my own. I was going to have to hire someone to help me in the office, or work with a label. What I really wanted to do, was be a musician and not be a record company.

Having worked with Michael Graham on your first album, was it a conscious decision to carry on working with him.

Oh yeah. I liked what had happened on "Visions and Dreams" with Michael and I liked the band sound. At that point Robert Meitus was working with a band called The Dorkestra. We did a lot of double bills together. The Dorkestra were a real funky, kind of bluesy rootsy rock 'n'roll band. Folky. What were they - they were just great, great guys. They'd sit in with me and play my tunes. I'd sit in on their sets and be a Dorkette. They came in and did several songs. We also brought in session players.

The album was still what you would class as a folk album. Particularly in overall sound.

I would say so.

The reason I say that is, relative to what I witnessed last night - I think it's preferable to talk to musicians after you've seen them perform - you create this image of how the person is going to come across from their recordings. My ears were pinned back from the first

note. I thought *"Goodness gracious - Carrie Newcomer is going to be kicking some ass here tonight. Which is not what I had imagined."*

Really.

Well fragile probably isn't the best word, but I had this image of you as a fairly reflective person. There was a definite beat to what you did last night - it was like seeing a whole new work of art, taken from a painting you were already familiar with. It was like, "Well, I can see this fits."

That's interesting. *"The Bird or the Wing"* came out the next year and Robert and I put together this band to basically tour that album. To be able to play those songs in concert. I really loved working with a band again. Last night we really came out rockin' - we really did. In my live shows with the band, generally I'll take a part of the night and come out solo and do a few tunes. That intimacy and the connection it makes is, really I think, what I do. But, I also love to come out and just rock. That's a part of me. I grew up with that. I have fun playing with them and doing something that's got a little ethnic flavour to it. A little cajun thing. What I really am thankful for, in the last couple of years, especially, is that I get to do a musical smorgasbord. I still go out and do shows with just myself and my guitar. I do house concerts where they literally push over the couch and I sing, but with a band I can also kind of crossover. I like having a band and working with other musicians. I love solo work too, so I feel really good right now. Sometimes, I go out with small combos. Where the room doesn't really require a full band. I'll just bring the upright bass player. Or I'll bring a multi-instrumentalist from the band. It keeps things really creative for me, all this changing and always moving. I like that, I really do. But, the one thing that I try to include in all my shows is a solo set. To really intimately be there, because that's what drew me to it, way back in High School. At the same time the band is another way of making music that's really fun, because it really kicks sometimes. Some of the earlier stuff was more fragile and I think as a person I was more fragile. I just recorded an album in April with this band at Reflection Sound Studios in North Carolina. It was produced by a guy called Mark Williams, who has worked a lot with Don Dixon. He cut a lot of the early REM things, and the first Hootie and the Blowfish. He also did this real cool album, *Southern Culture on the Skids*. A rockabilly band. A great person to work with. It's been a new - I always have to kind of challenge myself. I loved working with Michael, and I love that we got together, but it was time to challenge myself with something different. I don't know it at the time, but this new album and the songs that came out of the last couple of years, I really am feeling that well of experience. Feeling my strength as a woman. I dunno, I'm in my thirties now. I feel like I have this wealth of experience and I have a talent that I think is solid. Some of it has been hard and I feel stronger for it. So when I come out rockin' - it's because I feel like I have that confidence, whereas, there are still things that are tender and nostalgic and bittersweet or sad. There's also a feeling of solidness. Right now, the working title of the new album is *"My Father's Only Son."* The album will be on Philo and it will be out in September.

From the song you played last night. Was your father a great fisherman.

He was a good fisherman. A weekend angler. We just, I dunno - there's a lot of little lakes up there and goin' out fishin' with my dad or my grandfather was just a real good memory. I was the tomboy. That's kind of an interesting placement in the family and an interesting relationship with my dad. There weren't any boys.

Do you tour much these days.

I'm touring more, but again I've just made real decisions on how I tour. Again, it's not real standard. I play a lot. I go to the places I need to go and tour where I need to tour. I guess that it's just not your standard way of doing it.

Have you managed to gain access to bigger venues over the years. Like The Birchmere, McCabe's and The Great American Music Hall.

Yeah. Sure. And that's been really exciting.

Do you feel that it's also been an affirmation of what your music.

Yes it is. I got to play Carnegie Hall, which was really cool and my Dad came. It was on a Putomayo bill, for one of their compilations. There was a release concert and I got to play my one song at Carnegie Hall. It was great, because we were in the dressing room and there were these pictures of The Beatles in 1964 playing there. Leonard Bernstein and Caruso. It's a wonderful historic place, and in the States we don't have really old places [Laughs]. This was like, a place for us - in terms of history. And also, like I said, my Dad though he's been supportive - I think parents worry when their kids are in the arts. It's not a secure kind of job and there's not a retirement pension. There's not any insurance plan. You're really striking out bravely into a world that's not very secure. I think he always worried a little, but getting to call him up and say *"Dad you want to go to Carnegie Hall ? I'll buy the ticket"* [Laughs] - and it was great, just great.

Have you ever toured outside the USA. For instance, Canada.

I've done a little in Canada. I've played the Winnipeg Festival and I've played up in Toronto. I've haven't done Europe yet. That's kind of my next goal, because I'd love to play there. Musician friends I have who have played there, have such good things to say about playing in Europe - and the openness to what they are doing. I've heard such wonderful things, that's next on my list of things I'd love to do.

Can I just ask a couple of questions about songs on your albums.

Oh sure. Gosh, you have the whole collection. [ED. NOTE. As Carrie surveys her entire recording career in cassette and CD liners].

Once I got to what I thought was the beginning, with

"An Angel at My Shoulder," then I worked my way back to Stone Soup. Then I began moving forward and waiting for the next episode. But last night's episode really did pin my ears back.

I have to ask. Did you like it.

Oh I loved it.

Well, good.

Don't take this the wrong way - but I had this impression of Carrie Newcomer as this shy, quiet person. [ED. NOTE Carrie bursts out laughing]. When you came on stage last night I thought "This is Carrie Newcomer isn't it ?" Then I thought, "If this lady possesses all this confidence, then this is g-o-o-d."

It's funny you know, it's where I came from. Music's been good to me in that way, because I think if I hadn't wanted to play so much and give what I have to give, I never would have overcome all that shyness. It kind of made me step out there. And learn. Because I do love people. I do. And just knowing that about myself, and knowing that "It's OK." It was a real struggle and a hard thing for me in the beginning. Really. The one thing I really have loved about this singer-songwriter genre I'm in, is that when it's good it's really communicative. When it's at it's best, it's like it embraces you - I love that about it. There is a give and take. Sometimes I send it out to the audience and I don't know exactly where it is landing all the time - but I send it out and sometimes people send it back so hard. It's like "Boom." It's like "Thank you."

Getting back to the songs on your albums. Is "Only One Shoe" about being "half a couple," where something isn't quite fitting yet.

I had fallen in love again. I'm a hopeless romantic. I believe in love. I wasn't sure I wanted to take that risk. There's an old saying "You're waiting for the other shoe to drop." OK, when is it going to happen ? When is it going to go bad ? The whole idea of that song was sometimes it just doesn't, and you have to believe that the shoe doesn't have to always drop. It was a little pep talk to myself really.

"My Mamma Said it's True." Every line in that song is true - Mamma was right. Did you have fun with the lyrics and was it written quickly.

I thought about that song for a long time. I was making notes - I carry this notebook with me everywhere. Even on the road, I'm always jotting down notes. I'd been making notes on that one and then I just sat down and wrote it. My mother's gone on. She passed away about four years ago. I got to sing it to her and she laughed. She said to my Dad "I didn't say those things," and my Dad said "Yes, you did." It's so funny, because what I love when I do that song with audiences is - I love when I see people elbowing each other. It's like "Oh my mum said that," or a son or a daughter elbowing their parents.

And it's always those things you've got to remember,

like "Have you got a clean handkerchief. Have you got clean underwear."

There's nothing wrong with that.

What about "Three Women." Is that about that sense of community which women have.

Yeah. Actually that's an interesting song, because it has just released on an album by the Domestic Science Club. It's the title cut of their new album. It was a funny song 'cause, I didn't know how people would react. Some songs you sense - this is going to touch people. Sometimes you feel this is more personal. I wondered about it and I didn't know for sure, but this song I guess has connected more than I ever expected it would. I wrote this song when my mother was quite ill. And the women who were taking care of her - it was a particularly hard, and a loving thing to do. A life thing to do. I remember my Mom was sleeping and they were just holding hands together. These three women were just sitting at the table. It would have been a particularly hard thing for them to be holding each other's hands and talking about things that - I don't know - sometimes the community of women do that for each other. Who is bringing the casserole. Who is going to wash the dishes. And saying "I love you very much." That bond and that kind of strength. I looked at the other women and I just felt this real appreciation and love for them.

What about "Nomads." Do you look upon yourself as one, because you're a musician.

Yes I do. You know "Nomads" works on different levels, in terms of the way I work. Especially at that time with all the driving I was doing. I was literally behind the wheel for hours and hours and hours. Some of it had to do with just my lifestyle. What I thought of moving from place to place in my life. Some of it - just a feeling - is about being a short time in this life. It worked on a couple of levels.

But you've never been a writer of "Oh woe is me, I'm on the road." You've never indulged in that.

And maybe part of that is this odd way I've toured. I've made sure that I'm grounded. When I'm out of balance, boy, I know. It shows. And sometimes I get out of balance slightly. It's been a learning experience, when I've been out on the road too much. I don't want to write songs about being on the road. I want to write songs about - maybe what I learn on the road, but also about the rest of my life.

What about one of my all time favourite songs "The Yes of Yes."

I'm glad you like that. I would think that "The Bird or the Wing," that whole album, is probably one of the most spiritual albums. I tend to write about everything in my life, so that includes my spiritual life. I try real hard to be inclusive, because there's a real loud and vocal minority regarding spirituality as a stance. I try real hard not to do that. I think it's a real unique experience. The "Yes of Yes" is that. You know we all have spiritual experiences, whether it's a prayer, or a form of communication, holding on to someone's hand, looking at your new born baby. It's

a human experience and one that I really value, so I write about it.

What about "Distance."

That's a road song. Yeah, I'm out of balance.

But with fondness and love.

Yeah. Yeah. Sometimes - being on the road and loving someone. I'm a pretty independent person, and it takes another pretty independent person to love someone who is out on the road so much. That helps. It's one of those songs where I just talk about that process. Sometimes it's wonderful. Sometimes it involves a lot of longing.

Was it a conscious decision with Philo from the outset, that you would reissue "Visions and Dreams."

No. It was one of those things where the first two albums did so well. I said *"Well, I have another album that's ready to go."*

But the lady pictured on the original version of "Visions and Dreams" was the person I was expecting to see last night, whereas this was what we got last night.

But they're both on the album though [Laughs].

Once you began recording it, was your first album always going to be called "Visions and Dreams." From the point of view that you were now a solo artist.

I wrote that song right when Stone Soup was ending. We never performed it as a band. A lot of things to do with the recording of that first solo album was a new process for me. It was a real crossover album. A crossover in music. A crossover in what I was thinking about - my life. My band or going solo. That particular song was probably my crossover song. I was going through many things at that time. I've always written about my dreams as well, and I've had dreams that have been very important to me. In that they've carried me along sometimes.

What about "Birds On A Telephone Wire." That's not an influence creeping in from Mr. Cohen.

No [Laughs]. I don't think so. The first poem I ever wrote, that I actually showed somebody - another teacher - was called "Birds On A Telephone Wire."

Without an awareness of Leonard Cohen.

None whatsoever. The whole song is just like a little snapshot of this neighbourhood I grew up in. This little town of Elkhart and the eighty kids who lived on this block and ran around kind of like bees [Laughs]. I was like this quiet kid with a poetic sensibility in this tough school.

So is the bird on a telephone wire an observer.

Yeah. But, kind of ready to fly - and listening to the humming of the wire. This idea that right through your feet

you can feel the humming. That's what that original poem was about.

"Situations Like Lightning"

That one was kind of stuck on the end of the reissue. It was written during the same time period that I cut the album. I tried to find a song written during that time. To keep the integrity of the set. Actually, the song was recorded and produced in a similar fashion to the way the **"Visions and Dreams"** album had been recorded. It was more in keeping with that album. I didn't want something that sounded completely different. Sometimes life throws things your way such that you just have to have them. You didn't expect it. You didn't ask for it. But you take it to yourself and you do the best you can. Hopefully become a deeper person for it. That's what the song is about really. They'll strike like lightning and you rally to them. And people do rally to them.

But sometimes people don't grasp the moment and the opportunity.

Someone told me a long time ago, I think, that the Chinese characters for Crisis are danger and opportunity. I always liked that idea, that whenever I felt like things were changing and there was something different happening, it was an opportunity for me. Grown-ups don't change very easily. It's a chance where I'm most likely to change and grow up. If I look at it like that, then I'm taking advantage of that too.

And surely that shows there has always been a strong person within, despite the shyness.

Like I said it was funny with "Birds on a Telephone Wire" how this sensitive figure with a poetic sensibility dealt with a school where you can't walk into the bathroom because kids are getting beat up. How do you balance that. How do you create a place where you can live. I watch my daughter - she's a very sensitive young lady and I see myself at thirteen. Just as sensitive and in some ways, just as fragile. But also - I got feet. I can stand.

Is "Right Brain Born (In a Left Brain World)" another comparison of how you felt as a young teenager.

No. I think "Right Brain Born" was just poking fun at myself. Something in my earlier material - especially on the Stone Soup albums, there was so much seriousness. They were very serious albums. I like to laugh and I think that people are amazing and funny. I think that being able to poke fun at myself and being able to laugh at myself is a good thing. I'd never really done anything on my albums that showed that I have a sense of humour - I like to laugh. I like to laugh with people and I am a very visually minded person. The whole idea of right brain and left brain being visual and analytical - I would tell people kind of in jest, *"I carry my head around in a sling on the right side."* Because I'm pretty visually minded and right brained. I guess I must be left brained some, because writing comes from the other side. So the song is making fun of myself really.

The other extra track on the Philo reissue of "Visions

and Dreams" was a L. J. Booth song. Was he somebody you knew.

Well, we're both from the Midwest and I first heard L.J. right about the time I was originally doing the album. Someone had given me a bootleg tape of this live show. I fell in love with this writer and thought "Who is this man?" Wonderful songs and writing. "The Boogie Man" I thought was just a scream, because it's so true to life - I have an older sister who used to scare me with spooky stories. I got the biggest kick out of cutting it. I started doing it as a cover in shows. When this album came out - I've always loved doing that song and I've always loved L.J.'s work so - it was kind of like "Credit where credit is due." So I cut it.

Have you ever met L.J.

Yeah. We've done shows together. He's a wonderful man and wonderful writer. I actually just talked to him last week on the phone.

I guess you would say, that currently, this is the happiest period of your life.

Yeah, I would say so. I feel like this is a really good time for me personally. This last album too. I feel like it's my best one. As a writer, you grow, you plateau, you grow, you plateau. That's just how it works sometimes. I feel that in the last year, my writing has really grown and that I've finally kind of made peace with this well of my experience. I can write from it. I can really write from it and kind of cherish it. Also that last song I did "Bearing Witness" last night - that idea of cherishing other people's stories. Stories are so important. This new album is more of a storytelling kind of album. There's a lot of family things and a lot of growing up things - watching my daughter grow up, for instance - it's a different kind of album.

*"Son of the Son of the Father of"
Katching Up*

By way of a total diversion, here's a personal reflection - and a humorous, coincidence ridden tale at that. So let's go back to the day in early April when a flyer for this year's Festival arrived at Kronikle Mission Kontrol c/o Danna Garcia of Canadian River Music in Amarillo. As I scanned the detail-laden pages my eyes alighted on the name Dee Carstensen for what, I thought at that time, was the first time. A couple of days later I spotted a copy of her "Regarding the Soul" album in a local branch of Virgin Records. On the rear of the liner was a reference to the New York based Exit Nine label. What really caught my eye was the fact that the Executive Producer was Mike Mainieri. At the time, I decided to pass on the possibility of purchase. Could be a clunker. Might be a sparking gem, but who could tell from a sealed CD case? OK, let's segue even further back in time. To late October 1994, if I recall correctly. Within a few weeks of cable television hitting this section of the Birmingham metropolis, late one night, my [then seventeen-year-old] son Paul was remotely surfing the channels. He alighted on the cable only Performance Channel and a 1986 concert video shot in Tokyo, Japan featuring the New York based jazz-fusion combo Steps Ahead. The leader of the band? -- Mike Mainieri!

Musically, as far as Paul was concerned, it was one of those instantaneous slam wham bam love affairs. Us Wood's are just so emotional when it comes down to music that we love.....anyway, more about Paul shortly. A few weeks after crossing Carstensen's path in that Virgin store, I happened to be visiting one of my personal versions of heaven here on planet Earth. The upstairs level of the Decoy Records store in Manchester, that is. Strange to relate, back in late '94 Decoy's, jazz only, downstairs floor were able to supply a large number of the Steps Ahead back catalogue to my fusion hungry offspring. Anyway, I digress - there I was in Nick Swift's emporium scanning his folk and country shelves for little silver aural delights. Hell, if he didn't have a copy of "Regarding the Soul" as well as an earlier set titled "Beloved One." Thirty seconds into "Time," the opening cut on the former disc, [and after picking myself up off the floor,] I was a confirmed Dee Carstensen follower. Later, as Nick and I swapped stories, he casually slipped in the little gem - "Isn't she Mrs. Mike Mainieri?" Say that it is no so. Say that it is no so. I subsequently stumbled across a Dee Christensen Homepage on the Internet and found that she had also released a live EP. What's more, it transpired that there are occasions on which the eye sees, but doesn't see !!! You'll soon understand what I mean. Way back in Issue 21 [November/December 1996] of the Performing Songwriter, "Regarding the Soul" was featured in their regular Top 12 Independent Recordings series - and I missed it. Not to worry, we've caught up now. Dee Carstensen has played a number of the Kerrville Festival out of season showcases in Nashville and Austin. This year, the lady made her mainstage debut. Here are my thoughts on the two solo albums and "live" EP that I'm aware of.

The first thing that struck me when I heard Dee was how much she sounded and wrote like Beth Nielsen Chapman. The BNC who made the self titled "classic" album way back in 1990, compared with the lady who was responsible for the lacklustre follow up in 1993. Dee's debut album "Beloved One" opens with the jazzy shuffle "Forgiven." Acres of heavenly choirs appear on all the tracks, while Mark Knopfler plucks six strings on "Waterhole" and Mainieri shares a trio of writing credits. Remarkable. There isn't a composition on "Regarding the Soul" which is shorter than three minutes fifty seven seconds....a trio of cuts exceed four minutes duration....six of the eleven tracks break the five minutes barrier....and the longest song runs out after a mere six minutes. By the way, apart from her keyboard skills, Dee is an accomplished harpist. That instrument is prominently featured on "Time" and numerous other tracks. More accessible and accomplished, the jazz shuffle remains the prominent style among the eleven compositions on her second album. There's a cover of Jimi Hendrix's "Angel," while the only Mainieri co-write on this set is the intriguingly titled "Hemingway's Shotgun." Four other songwriting pals are credited here, while Carstensen penned a handful of numbers on her own. Her lyrics deal mainly with human emotion. When it comes to telling stories and painting pictures, she doesn't quite match Chapman's skill in that area. Nevertheless, her two albums to date are definitely - keepers. Oh yes, I almost forgot.....in late February 1995,

my son Paul got to see the latest incarnation of Step Ahead play at Ronnie Scott's club right here in town. Backstage, Mike Mainieri graced a couple of Steps Ahead CD liners with his signature. After all these years, those Wood boys are just crazy about their music.....

Christine Kane was mentioned earlier in the **"Women's Work"** compilation album review. At the time of writing this piece, Christine was wrapping up the sessions for her second solo effort, which is due out this Fall. Meanwhile, we catch up with her debut set. On **"This Time Last Year,"** Christine Kane the lyricist, is a relationship kind of girl. While the pop inflected "Off the Ground" on the recent Putumayo compilation **"Women's Work"** first attracted me to her work, the cello driven, angst filled "Fall from Grace" confirms her as a writer on the rise. For that essential injection of folk n' roll try the fun packed "Scratch My Back." Available from ISG, P.O. Box #9974, Asheville, N.C. 28815, U.S.A.

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Kwik Kuts

The rear liner photograph of **"Each Little Thing"** features Sharon Shannon's now famous smile, while the small silver disc inside the plastic jewel contains another selection of jigs, reels and sundry rhythms from far flung corners of this revolving sphere. "Libertango" features a vocal by Kirsty McColl. Fair sets your feet a tappin.' Available in your local record store now.

Drawn from their five albums for the Green Linnet imprint, Altan principally interpret traditional Irish folk music. Worth noting.....the initial pressing of **"The Best of..."** also includes a bonus, eight cut CD recorded live in Germany circa 1989. Bargain....Available in your local record store now.

The Various Artists tribute **"Now and in the Time to be"** is a fourteen selection set featuring the poems of Ireland's W.B. Yeats, set to music. Richard Harris opens and closes the disc with readings from "Under Ben Bulbin," while other internationally known contributors include Van Morrison, The Cranberries and The Waterboys. Released by Grapevine, and tinged by nepotism, label artists such as Christy Moore, Sinéad Lohan, Tamalin and Nervous turn up among the contributors. To be honest, the final product has limited appeal musically.... lyrically, it's a rock. Available in your local record store now.

Only in her mid twenties with a swathe of further Country Music awards heading her way, based on the evidence of this, Alison Krauss's sixth album [of covers], I get to about track five and for me it all becomes an endless loop. Each cut on **"So Long So Wrong"** scores the same superb ten for production and sound. As for intellectual stimulation, nada. Such is the intriguing life of a bluegrass wunderkind. How about committing some notes [musical ones] and words [the rhyming kind] to paper Alison ? Available in your local record store now or from **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

After a couple of local, self-production jobs, Austin's premier bluegrass quartet, Bad Livers, hit the big time with this Sugar Hill release tilted, **"Hogs on the Highway."**

The Livers forsake the electric, thereby sustaining the authentic by way of the acoustic. With the majority of the material here penned by frontman, Danny Barnes, do I detect a lyrical and musical tongue pressed firmly into the cheek on occasions ???????? Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution.**

The Spanish for *watermelon* is *sandia*, hence the title of this Tish Hinojosa compilation, **"The Best of The Sandia - Watermelon 1991-1992."** Cast adrift by A'Mericana and before Rounder and Warner Bros. sailed over the horizon to her aid, Austin's Watermelon label released a trio of Hinojosa recordings. Augmenting this set is a quartet of previously unavailable cuts. Three from the **"Aquella Noche"** sessions, while the Kris Kristofferson duet "By the Rio Grande" sources from **"Culture Swing"** version # 1. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Enhanced by three cuts relative to last year's Razor & Tie release, Stateside, the major label reissue of **"Gotta Get Over Greta"** is going to leave the burgeoning number of Nields fans somewhat pissed. They're a rock band really, though heavily supported and lauded Stateside by the folk press, and feature the lead vocals of Katryna Nields, supported by her older sis' Nerissa. If you can imagine diverse tales about a taxi prostitute, losing your best friend [the title cut], Einstein's long lost [real life] daughter and a cover of Lennon/McCartney's "Lovely Rita," then you've got the flavour of this Massachusetts based five piece. Available from **CDX, The Olde Coach House, Windsor Crescent, Radyr, S. Glamorgan CF4 8AE.** E-Mail : **101475.2114@COMPUSERVE.COM**

Ray Campi cut an album for the German Bear Family label titled **"Taylor, Texas 1988"** which featured Rosie Flores on a trio of cuts. The sessions for their duet recording, **"A Little Bit of Heartache"** took place in 1990, but they've only just seen the light of day on Austin's Watermelon label. Included among the sixteen cuts are a trio of Campi originals and one of Rosie's best, "Bandera Highway." Available in the UK from **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Subtitled **"A Collection of Odds and Ends"** her *oddball* twenty cut compilation **"Misfits,"** features an eight year old Sara Hickman singing "Grandma's Featherbed," includes thirteen of her own compositions and collaborations mostly cut during the nineties [tho' written as long ago as the seventies], plus covers like "Everyone's Gone to the Moon" and "Baby's It's Cold Outside." Appropriately whacky. God bless you Sarah.....stay just the way you are. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution.**

This compilation of *no depression* country bands arrives a mere six months after the initial volume in the set. **"Luxury Liner Volume 2,"** that is. Fourteen new bands in all, who are domiciled from Alabama in the South, through Nashville to Rhode Island and across the border to Montreal and Ottawa in the North. Heading South again, you then pass down through Indiana and Illinois to Missouri, before heading West for Nebraska. Seems like sweet ol' California escaped this rash of regressive roots rock, country style. Available from **Glitterhouse Mail Order.**

A quarter of a century spans the four "Portraits '72 - '97" CD's which are housed in a slip box, sixty two tracks in all, including a handful of previously unreleased tracks and a single "B" side from Dan Fogelberg. A mighty fine history lesson should you take the time to investigate. Available from **Village Records**.

Following almost a decade of silence that commenced during the mid-eighties, "**Backbeat**," is album three in as many years from our very own London based country roots rocker, Wes McGhee. Twenty tracks in all. As with "**Heartache Avenue**" it's a compilation of old songs some of which have been specially re-recorded [10], items never heard before including a trio of instrumentals [8], and a pair of cuts from Wes' musical alter ego Vince & the Viletones. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Kerrville-kompacts, kassettes & other koincidences.

The quartet of album reviews which follow are late arrivals. So when do you decide to close the door ???

"**It Had to Happen**," James McMurtry's fourth solo album marks his move from major label status to prominent independent. Sugar Hill has of late been dismantling its bluegrass only foundation. In the league of fresh beginnings, this is also the first disc McMurtry has wholly cut in Texas. Produced by local boy, Lloyd Maines, the Austin pickers featured include Chris Searles, Lisa Mednick and Ronnie Johnson. Apart from Kinky Friedman's "Wild Man From Borneo," James penned the other nine songs. The opening road song, "Paris" co-written with Wally Wilson is delivered in typically laconic McMurtry fashion. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution**.

The stitching that binds Ron Sexsmith's first and second recording forays together is hard to detect. Same production team [Froom/Blake], many of the same players, different studios on two coasts. Titled "**Other Songs**," the pitch of Sexsmith's voice never rises above the totally laid back. Not even for the backbeat on tracks such as "Strawberry Blonde" and "Average Joe." Does anything ever phase this guy ? Kind of irrelevant really, as it's a classy album. Available in your local record store now.

The backbone of the Five Chinese Brothers is most surely the individual songwriting contributions of Tom Meltzer and Paul Foglio [with occasional contributions from Steve Antonakos]. "**Let's Kill Saturday Night**" their third 1-800-PRIME-CD recording finds them ringing the rhythm changes with consummate and melodic ease. Available via **CDX**.

Sometime **FAST FOLK** acoustic contributor Richard Julian's self-titled album finds him in a band driven rockin' mode. Best encapsulated as a songwriter with a rhythm n' blues/soulful bent, the Uptown Horns appear on a number of cuts. Available via **CDX**.



Hot on the heels of the [now **SOLD OUT !**] 1982 to 1991, Volume 1 & 2 limited edition "**Kerrville Folk Festival – Ten Great Years**" 10 CD set, comes "**The Early Years**" a 10 CD compilation charting those performers who appeared at Kerrville during the first decade of the festival. During the latter period, the 1973, 1975 and 1981 recordings were double vinyl sets, while the remainder were single album releases. Considering the 74 minute CD content limit, there was always going to be a volumetric problem with the 1973, 1975 and 1981 recordings. On the 1973 CD [duration 61min. 16secs.], 15 of the 22 acts are featured; with the 1975 edition [69min. 40secs.] 20 of the 30 tracks are included. As for 1981, the CD [73min. 1sec.] contains 18 of the original 24 songs. Could the over spill from the foregoing trio of recordings have been included on other discs in the set ? Maybe ! Finally in this section, there's a misprint in 1977 entry as the disc contains all 12 cuts and not 11 as indicated. These include the late B. W. Stevenson's interpretation of the Shake Russell tune, "Temper, Temper" and [the also late] John Vandiver's performance of "Memories of You." Other than that, everything else remains intact.

Across the decade of discs, 90 artists perform 140 songs. It's an impossible task to pick out highlights, as in truth these recordings are already "*historical documents*" which chart the development of Texas [and for that matter, American] contemporary folk/country music from the era which followed the appearance of Jan Reid's eponymous chronicle "**The Improbable Rise of Redneck Rock**."

My set is 134 of 500 and at the incredible bargain price of \$99.00 plus postage, you deserve to spoil yourself by investing in this documentary recording while it's still available. Payment can be by Credit Card [Visa, Mastercard] or cheque/IMO. The latter should be made payable to **Kerrville Music Foundation**. Texas residents add 6.75% State Tax. The mailing address is **Kerrville Music Foundation Inc., P.O. Box 1466, Kerrville, Texas 78029, U.S.A.** You can also order the discs by contacting the Festival office via E-Mail at : kfest@hilconet.com

A Kerrverts Festival 50.

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

1. The Dutchman **MICHAEL SMITH** "Tribute to Steve Goodman" Red Pyjamas RPJ 004CD [1985,1989]. #
 2. The Way To Calvary **ROD MACDONALD** "Highway To Nowhere" Shanachie 8001 [1992].
 3. Years **BETH NIELSEN CHAPMAN** "Beth Nielsen Chapman" Reprise 9 26172-2 [1990].
 4. Walk With Me **TERRY CLARKE** "The Heart Sings" Transatlantic TRA CD 226 [1997]. 
 5. To You From Me **DEE CARSTENSEN** "Regarding the Soul" Exit Nine 120252 [1995]. #
 6. Take Me Home **MEGAN PETERS** "About-Time" Painless Productions [no index no.] [1997]. #
 7. Yarrington Town **MICKIE MERKENS** "Texas Summer Nights, Vol. 1" Potato Satellite PS2-1000 [1983]. #
 8. American Lipstick **TERRY CLARKE** c/w **ROSIE FLORES** "The Heart Sings" Transatlantic TRA CD 226 [1997].
 9. America Come Home **JOEL RAFAEL Band** "The Joel Rafael Band" Reluctant Angel [1994]. #
 10. Levelland **ROBERT EARL KEEN** "Picnic" Arista Austin 07822 18834-2 [1997]. #
 11. Abilene **BOB GIBSON** "Joy Joy! the Young and Wonderful Bob Gibson" Riverside RVCD-9909-2 [1996]. #
 12. Flinty Kinda Woman **DAR WILLIAMS** "American Impressionist Songwriters - Volume 2 - Memorial Day" Waterbug WBG 0029 [1997]. #
 13. Meanwhile the Rain **JOEL RAFAEL Band** "Old Wood Barn" Reluctant Angel RAM0423 [1996]. #
 14. Off the Ground **CHRISTINE KANE** "Women's Work" Putumayo World Music PUTU128-2 [1996]. #
 15. Doubter's Prayer **MICHAEL JERLING** "In Another Life" Waterbug WG0027 [1997]. #
 16. If Heaven Is Not A Place to Go **RAY WYLIE HUBBARD** "Dangerous Spirits" Continental Record Services CSCCD 1004 [1997]. ^
 17. Yellow Rose of Texas **JOHN McCUTCHEON** "Sprout Wings and Fly" Rounder CD 0406 [1997]. #
 18. When Wine Was Cheap **THE GOURDS** "Dem's Good Bebbble" Munich Records MUSA 501 [1996]. #
 19. Willie **ROXY GORDON** "Smaller Circles" Road Goes on Forever" RGF/WOWCD 031 [1997].
 20. That Old Time Feeling **GUY CLARK** "Keepers - a live recording" Sugar Hill SHCD-1055 [1997]. #
 21. Lucile **FRED EAGLESMITH/VAR.** "Live at the Iron Horse - Volume 1" Signature Sounds SIG 1240 [1997]. #
 22. New Mexico Rain **BILL & BONNIE HEARNE** "Diamonds in the Rough" Warner Western 9 46514-2 [1997]. #
 23. Come Runnin' Like A Friend **DANKO, FJELD & ANDERSEN** "Ridin' the Rails" Grappa GRCD 4080 [1994]. ^
 24. Home Sweet Oklahoma **JIMMY LaFAVE** "Road Songs" Blue Rose BLU CD0046 [1997]. ^
 25. Amelia Almost Thirteen **CARRIE NEWCOMER/VAR.** "Cornstock Volume 1 - Songs in the Park" NiteMusic 001 [1997]. #
 26. Maple Syrup **TAMARACK** "Leaving Inverarden" Folk Era FE1432D [1995]. #
 27. The Eyes of Roberto Duran **TOM RUSSELL** "The Long Way Around" Round Tower RTMCD 88 [1997].
 28. In My Arms **KRISTINA OLSEN** "Live From Around the World" Philo CD PH 1195 [1997]. #
 29. Forgiven **DEE CARSTENSEN** "Beloved One" NYC Records NYC 6005-2 [1993]. #
 30. Bay of Mexico **JOHN STEWART** "American Folk Song Anthology" Laserlight 12698 [1996]. #
 31. No One Knows But You **BETH NIELSEN CHAPMAN** "Sand and Water" Reprise WPCR-1005 [1997]. *
 32. The Lonesome Side of Town **KIM RICHEY** "Bitter Sweet" Mercury 534 255-2 [1997]. #
 33. Ridin' With O'Hanlon **R. B. MORRIS** "Take That Ride" Oh Boy OBR 016CD [1997]. #
 34. Stoney End **LAURA NYRO** "Stoned Soul Picnic - The Best of Laura Nyro" Columbia/Legacy 485109-2 [1997]. #
 35. Brake A Train **LUCY KAPLANSKY/VAR.** "W. 4th & 6th Ave. - Selections from the Greenwich Folk Festival" Gadfly 222 [1997]. #
 36. The John Bull Tin **TOM RUSSELL** "Song of the West - The Cowboy Collection" Hightone HMG 2501 [1997]. #
 37. As Bad As It Gets **CHRISTINE LAVIN** "Shining My Flashlight on the Moon" Shanachie 8024 [1997]. #
 38. Dance Around the Fire **SLAID CLEAVES** "No Angel Knows" Philo CD PH 1201 [1997]. #
 39. She Belongs To Me **TRISH MURPHY** "Crooked Mile" Raven Records [no index no.] [1997]. #
 40. I Will Be There **MARY BLACK** "Shine" Grapevine GRACD 015 [1997].
 41. I'm Not Finished Yet **5 CHINESE BROTHERS** "Let's Kill Saturday Night" 1-800-PRIME-CD PCD034 [1997]. #
 42. The End of the Summer **DAR WILLIAMS** "The End of the Summer" Razor & Tie RT2830-2 [1997]. #
 43. Meeting Stucky at the Gas Station **KAT EGGLESTON** "Outside Eden" Waterbug WBG 0028 [1997]. #
 44. Sun Won't Stop **HOLLY NEAR** "Folk - Live from Mountain Stage" Blue Plate BPM-310CD [1997]. #
 45. She Ain't Goin' Nowhere **NANCI GRIFFITH** "Blue Roses From the Moons" Elektra 7559-62015-2 [1997].
 46. Thinly Veiled Disguise **RON SEXSMITH** "Other Songs" Interscope INTD-90123 [1997]. #
 47. Do You See...Will You Ever **MONICA CASEY** "Again and Again" [no label or index no.] [1996]. #
 48. Run the Wild Country **LOUISE TAYLOR** "Ride" Signature Sounds SIG 1241 [1997]. #
 49. Down to a River **CONNIE KALDOR** "Small Café" Philo CD PH 1205 [1997]. #
 50. Heal In The Wisdom **BOBBY BRIDGER** "Kerrville Folk Festival - Live 1986" (cassette only, no index no.) [1987]. #
- Waitin' their turn - Closer to You **NIAMH PARSONS & THE LOOSE CONNECTIONS** "Loosen Up" Green Linnet GLCD 1167 [1997]. # ; Siberia **RICHARD JULIAN** "Richard Julian" Blackbird International 620141 [1997]. # ; The Workings of the Soul **BOXCARS [CHRIS GAGE & CHRISTINE ALBERT]** "Jumpin' Tracks" Flatrock Records 3121 [1997]. # ; 12 O'Clock Whistle **JAMES McMURTRY** "It Had To Happen" Sugar Hill SHCD-1058 [1997]. # ; Sunset On Louisianne **HART ROUGE** "Beaupre's Home" Red House RHR CD 102 [1997]. # ; Dancing Girl **JULIE MILLER** "Blue Pony" Hightone HCD8079 [1997]. # ; Love Like That **CHRISTINE KANE** "This Time Last Year" Independent Songwriters Group ISG CD 1200 [1995]. # ; I Want to Go Swimming In Your Eyes **SARA HICKMAN** "Misfits - A Collection of Odds and Ends" Shanachie 8026 [1997]. #

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

Edited and published by,
Arthur Wood,
127, Pinewood Drive,
Bartley Green,
Birmingham B32 4LG,
England.

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Editorial.

The proposed "Live Highlights" CD's from the 1996, 25th anniversary Kerrville Festival won't be released until around the Spring of 1998. In the meantime and further to my comments on page 26, the 90 artists featured on "The Early Years" set are listed below and opposite.

David Amram
Asleep at the Wheel
Dick Barrett
Rick Beresford
Bluegrass ReVue
Juke Boy Bonner
Bobby Bridger
Ken Brothers
Gatemouth Brown
Milton Carroll
Guy Clark
Alvin Crow
Denim
Jimmy Driftwood
Eaglebone Whistle
Joe Ely & Butch Hancock
Ewing Street Times
Steven Fromholz
Frummox
Segle Fry
Bob Gibson
Gison & Camp
Gibson-Odetta-Yarrow
Jimmy Gilmore & Butch Hancock
Lonnie Glosson
Nanci Griffith
Lindsay Haisley
Butch Hancock
Kevin Hatcher & Ken Brothers
Bill & Bonnie Hearne
Tim Henderson
Carolyn Hester
Hardin & Russell
Ray Wylie Hubbard
Tish Hinojosa
Jon Ims
Flaco Jimenez

Jimmy Johnson
Spider John Koerner
John M. Lomax, Jr.
Mance Lipscomb
Masters Four
Michael Marcoulier
Mary McCaslin & Jim Ringer
Mark McKinnon
Red River Dave McHenry
Mercy River Boys
Augie Meyer
Dee Moeller
Mother of Pearl
Willie Nelson
Gary P. Nunn
Odetta
Riley Osborne
Tom Paxton
Plum Nelly
Bill Priest
Louis Real
Riders in the Sky
Jim Ritchey & Be Jae Fleming
Royal Light Singers
Peter Rowan
Shake Russell-Dana Cooper Band
Don Sanders
Sunny Schulman
Mike Seeger
Shady Grove Ramblers
Robert Shaw
Bill Staines
B. W. Stevenson
Southern Strangers
Rev. Charles Summers, Jr.
Eric Taylor & Nanci Griffith
Texas Fever

As predicted in Issue 22, Terry Clarke's "The Heart Sings" was finally by the Transatlantic label during May. It deservedly forms the lead review in this Issue. Other than Terry's long overdue album, the two stunning Waterbug compilations reviewed here, Ray Wylie Hubbard's new album, plus Robert Earl's "Picnic" and Tom Russell's "Song of the West - The Cowboy Collection" the quality of this year's releases is still located around the *failing to satisfy like before* level. Of course the "live set" from Toni Price and the debut from Megan Peters are also keepers, along with the Dee Carstensen and Christine Kane recordings. There's a distinct possibility that my palate is becoming jaded, particularly so when even the new Dar Williams, James McMurtry and Beth Nielsen Chapman albums have all failed to attain *golly, gosh, well, phew* status or have incited me to press the repeat button with regularity.

Regarding the contents of this issue, and in no particular order, thanks are due to **Rod Kennedy, Peter Nelson, Tim & Lori Blixt, Carrie Newcomer and Robert Meitus and Alpha Ray**. This issue is dedicated to the memory of the late, Laura Nyro.

Kenneth Threadgill
Three Faces West
Timberline Rose
Uncle Walt's Band
John Vandiver
Bill Haymes
Kurt Van Sickle
Townes Van Zandt
Terry Waldo
Jerry Jeff Walker
Wheatfield
Buck White
Rusty Wier
Lucinda Williams
Chubby Wise & Terry Morris
Peter Yarrow
Steve Young



Photo: Kerrville Kronikle Katalogue

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You can also find us at :

Kronikle Web Page :

<http://wavespace.waverider.co.uk/~kerrkron>

E-Mail :

kerrkron@waverider.co.uk

=====

2 February 1983

my conscience lives
in my ceiling fan
I watch the blades go
round and round
from my cold bed
in the moonlight

each turn spins me freely
in the wind of my past
and splashes my cold sweat dry.

Alpha Ray

