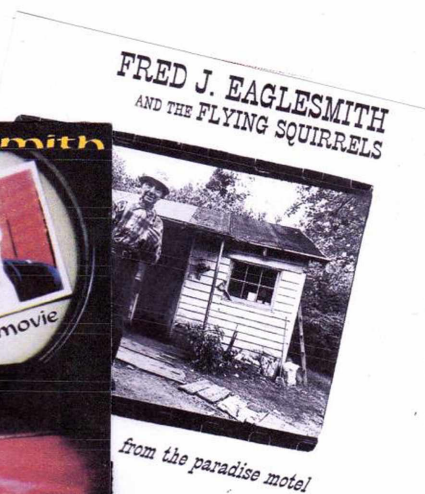


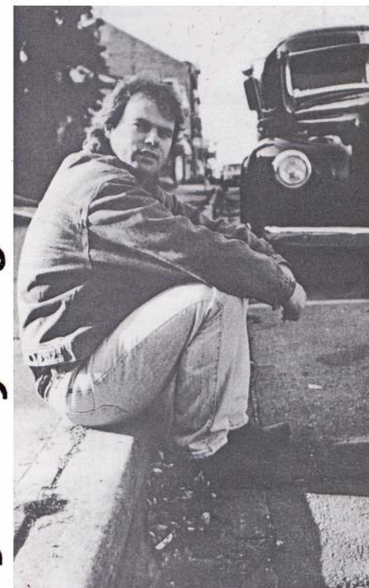
# KERRVILLE KRONIKLE

**No.22**

**9th. Year**



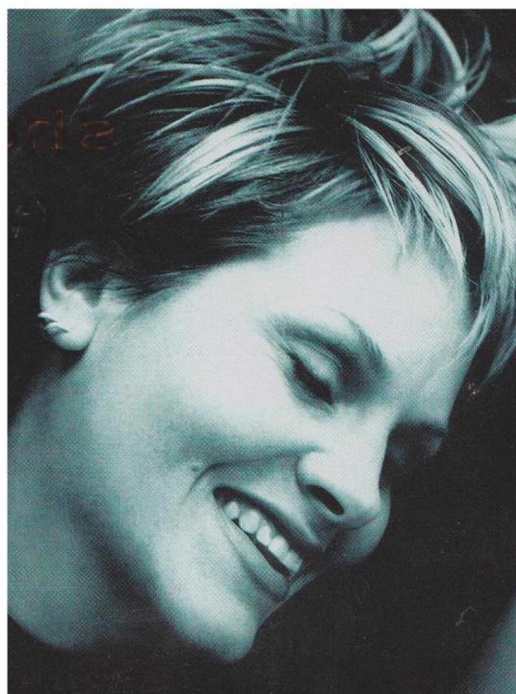
*Fred J. Eaglesmith*



*John & Laurie Hill c/w Brian Wood*

*The Best of '96*

*Daz Williams*



*Shawn Colvin*



*Jane Siberry*

*Kaptuzed by Kinematics*

*Kompletists Alkove*

*Kwik Kuts*

*Tom Pacheco/Cazzie Newcomez/Lucy Kaplansky/Pierce Pettis/Marti Jones/The Picketts/Terry Lee Hale/Townes Van Zandt/Cosy Sheridan/Shakin' Apostles/Mazy McCaslin/Megan McDonough/Rice, Rice, Hillman and Pedersn/The Burns Sisters/Kevin Carroll & the Sleestacks/Jim Henry & Brooks Williams/Jack Hardy*



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



A few of us, the ones who cared, have known the truth for years. Tom Pacheco is a friggin' Grade A genius. While he enjoyed two major label releases in the mid seventies, there was well over a decade of [vinyl] silence before Clive Hudson brought Tom to Dublin and a quartet of albums for Round Tower. **"Woodstock Winter"** was recorded in Tom's [former] spiritual home a year ago with instrumental support from local combo, The Band, and production by Jim Weider. The opening cut, "Hills of Woodstock" is a *"these are my memories and once upon a time this was my adopted home town"* anthem in the mould of John Phillip's "Creeque Alley" and Michael Smith's "Lauderdale Rain,".....and, naturally, we're talkin' classic. [ED. NOTE. That I can compare Tom's lyric with the way I feel [inside] during each precious second that I'm given the opportunity to walk over the acres of the Quiet Valley Ranch is where this song has hit me the most....like the sign on the driveway to the main gate of the Quiet Valley Ranch says, *"A friend made at Kerrville is a friend for life"* and they have been legion.....Tom, my November comes around at the end of each May.....and when I'm in Kerrville, I *"never felt a warmth that felt so good"*]. If you understand anything about the art of songwriting, then you too will feel the chills that run up and down my spine when you repeatedly listen to this song. That it was penned by one of the most genuine human beings that it has been my pleasure to meet, makes it all the sweeter. Of the thirteen cuts which follow, numerous deserve equivalent analysis and comment. Is the main character portrayed in "The Sacred," a seeker and searcher for truth, actually Tom? From the annals of "X," "Four Angels" is an unsolved mystery from New Mexico circa '47 when a "spaceship fell down from the heavens." "Come" describes the reunion of two old friends, while the words of "The Snowstorm" perfectly captures the beauty of that wintertide physical entity, and compares it with those times when the human spirit overcomes life's major and minor obstacles. I could go on and on [and probably will]. In over two decades, this is Tom's first [real] worldwide release.....I trust the world is listening on this occasion.

**P.S.** As the closing cut relates.....this moment, this is life, it's now. One day I'm gonna walk up Tinker Street and breathe the air in the hills of Woodstock. First, there is the place where you are born. Then there are the places you get to visit and possibly, live. Some are *truly special*. Only you know where yours are.....

I had the [extremely great] pleasure of seeing Carrie Newcomer and her band play Stateside at Kerrville last summer. For some inexplicable reason I had marked her down as a shrinking violet. To be frank, Carrie's set blew me away - like Griffith did in '86 and Chapin Carpenter three years later. All reflections of my memory from the same West Texas mainstage! Carrie Newcomer the musician [and person] is the epitome of, *strong*. Anticipation that Newcomer was about to deliver a classic recording has been fulfilled and more, with **"My Father's Only Son."** The humour, pathos,

vibrancy and honest love for a parent which pulses through the lines of the title cut *"My father had three daughters, So I became his only son"* reappear in the equally powerful "The Rooms My Mother Made." The joy of the search and the treasure trove to be found "Up In The Attic," the guidance offered to her beloved daughter in "Amelia Almost 13" and the politically angled "The Madness You Get Used To" are all facets of the same gem. Watch this flawless one shine, shine, shine. Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution, 50, Stroud Green Road, London N4 3EF.** [ED. NOTE Dave Henderson's one star review of Newcomer's album in the March '97 issue of *Q* is sad. Time to force him to watch **"On Golden Pond"** for a week solid. His *"tough-to-describe niche"* comment, equates to didn't listen to this one long enough].

Well received, Lucy Kaplansky's **"The Tide"** was ostensibly a set of covers [OK, there was a trio of originals] by *the folk voice of the '90's*. Of late, Lucy and hubby Richard Litvin have been active with a [twenty four carat] vengeance, as the bulk of the material on her second solo album, **"Flesh and Bone,"** has been composed by them. Elsewhere and ever the Richard Thompson fan, there's "Don't Renege on Our Love," and the country rock of Gram's "The Return of the Grievous Angel." Flavourwise, there's the bluegrass driven Nick Lowe cover "[What's So Funny 'Bout] Peace, Love and Understanding," the traditional sounds of "Mary and the Soldier" and the toe tappin' "Love is the Ride." Lyrically, there's the analysis of a relationship in "Edges." The longest track here, "Still Life," is a six minute epic in which a [single parent] child reflects with melancholy on being fatherless [ED. NOTE This song impressed me greatly during Lucy's Kerrville '96 set]. Lending their vocal skills to the final product are Jennifer "The Story" Kimball, John Gorka and Richard Shindell. In your local record store now.

Pierce Pettis and the late Mark Heard were great pals. Heard produced Pettis' second album for the High Street label, circa 1991. Now recording for the fledgling Nashville imprint, Compass, Pierce's **"Making Light Of It"** opens with Heard's "Satellite Sky." On the four previous Pettis recordings there were occasional collaborations with other singer/songwriters. On **"Making Light Of It"** half of the dozen of originals have been co-written. Maybe it's the three year rest he has enjoyed since **"Chase the Buffalo."** Possibly it's the sharing of ideas with other writers - one thing is absolutely certain - had this late '96 release had been available earlier in the year, it would certainly have made it to my annual "Best Albums" list. Available from **Waterloo Records, 600-A N. Lamar, Austin, Texas 78703, U.S.A.**

Half a decade of silence and then, *wham bam*, in the space of a year Mrs. Don Dixon, Marti Jones, comes up with a couple of albums for Sugar Hill. While **"Live at Spirit Square"** was a "live" retro view of her earlier recordings, **"My Long Haired Life"** is a *back to situation normal* concoction of covers and originals. The latter mostly composed with Dixon. Her territory is best described as that of a female Marshall Crenshaw. And there you have it. Available in your local record store.



## Fred J. Eaglesmith

*The interview with Fred J. Eaglesmith took place by telephone on the evening of Sunday 1st December 1996. Fred was at his home in Ontario, Canada. Many thanks to Michaela O'Brien at Young/Hunter Management in Massachusetts for making all the telephone arrangements. I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank another couple of ladies who had a hand in bringing this grand scheme to fruition, namely Ellen Russell and Mary Eaglesmith.*

**The name Eaglesmith. Where does it come from.**

I don't really know where it comes from. There's not very many around. It was adopted from a friend of mine. I was nicknamed that at school really. That's where it came from in my life. There's a few around here, but not very many.

**So your original given name isn't Eaglesmith.**

No, it isn't Eaglesmith.

**Can we go back to 1957.**

Sure.

**Can you tell us about where and when you were born.**

I was born in Hamilton, Ontario. I was born in the city, although we lived in the country. We were chicken farmers then. I don't even remember what we were during the first four or five years of my life, but the first thing I remember was chicken farming. That was a bad idea that went wrong. There was a bunch more siblings born, so I have eight brothers and sisters. I'm the sixth. Just sort of grew up tough - it was a very hard childhood and we were poor. To tell you the truth, a lot of memories of that time aren't - I have some memories of my later years and earlier years, but there's an in between time that's almost gone. I remember the farm and I remember doing the work, but I don't have a whole bunch of - it's sort of blanked out you know.

**From what I recall of your press biography, you were working in the fields as early as the age of eight.**

Oh yeah. We were working like men when we were ten. At eight, already, I was getting up at five in the morning and throwing hay down for the cows. Just before school. When we came home we would work again. It was the way things were done then. Kids just worked. They were horrendously long days. And very religious. Mix that with the hard work and you've got a tired kid. You become the zombie guy. A lot of that was going on when I was younger.

**So what's your very first musical memory.**

Well that's what I was just going to get into. I remember working in the dark at night - it gets dark here at six thirty, in the winter. I remember going in the house and we had just got a television. No, we had got a television for a month, during Christmas break or something. I can't remember. Maybe, during Spring

break or something. We didn't have television until I was about fourteen, but this was when I was younger. I saw Elvis Presley. I thought "Man, that's all he has to do. Look, everybody loves him, going around singing. That's all he has to do, I imagine that's all I would have to do." I thought, "I can do that. I have the resources. This is available to me." So I just started singing. I was ten when that happened. I started writing songs around that time as well.



Fred J. Eaglesmith, circa 1983.  
Robert Earl Keen lookalike, or what ?

Photo by the Puckett family.  
From the liner of "The Boy That Just Went Wrong"

**What was inspiring you to write those songs.**

I don't know. I just saw Elvis Presley and started writing songs. They were just goofy little kids songs. Love, love, love stuff.

**Were you listening to much radio at this stage.**

Yeah, later on, as I got into music. Of course that was the first experience. It didn't take long and I was listening to everything I possibly could. I was listening to country music - we would get the skip across Lake Erie. Do you know what that is ?

No.

It's the bounce off the clouds at night. You can't get the stations during the day, but you can at night. We would get WWOL out of Wheeling, West Virginia.

**Was this Louvin Brothers and stuff like that.**

It wasn't really. My exposure to that was way - although there was exposure to it, I don't remember any of it consciously. What I really listened to was Hank Snow, Wilf Carter, the Canadian guys. Then there was Hank Williams and all those guys. Dolly Parton. All those, sort of, commercial country guys in the early sixties. Conway Twitty. All the bad stuff. I listened to that on WWOL. My father had cowboy records - a few. I don't even remember who they were. Then, I sort of started listening to a lot of things like The Turtles and stuff.



**What about The Byrds. Particularly the post Parsons stuff.**

Not really The Byrds. I was into much sweeter stuff, much to everyone's dismay. I was into real sugar.

**You mean harmony groups like The Association.**

Yeah. There was that stuff. Really into the real romantic guys like Gary Puckett. Real teenage stuff, because I was young. Of course, every song I wrote was just horrible. They were just awful - dreck - terrible stuff.

**Did your parents own any musical instruments.**

Yeah, there was a piano that I couldn't play. I had some sisters that would play. We went to church all the time, so we sang in church. I was in school choirs a little bit, and sang at school some. We were encouraged to sing a lot, for religious things. There were also some school plays, but because we lived so far from school, we were on the bus for an hour and a half. Every day. We were so far from school, that you didn't have much time to do anything. My parents would never take us anywhere. We just lived on that farm.

**What was the nearest town.**

The nearest major town was Hamilton, which was about half an hour away. There was a little town of five thousand called Dunville, which was also half an hour away. We gravitated toward Dunville, which was really bad. That's where the church was. It was a really bad place. Almost cultish - a lot of stuff to this day isn't talked about there, but I know what went on. Every girl got married pregnant. Boys from our church would go to town and mess with all these girls. As soon as they got caught, they would come back and marry one of the girls from the church. That sort of stuff went on. Real underhanded stuff. All of this was sort of - I couldn't find my feet because there was this religion. I was listening to this music, and I was at this point an artist already - I was working really hard on my art. I developed insomnia and stayed up every night till two or three in the morning. My father bought me a cheap guitar. Like a \$10 guitar, when I was twelve years old. I started trying to play that. I couldn't figure out how to play it. There were no lessons. I got some books, and then I saw John Prine on the television and it changed my life.

**This was on the David Frost Show.**

That's right. When I saw that, I was thirteen or fourteen years old I think, and I just went "OK, I can be this sarcastic. This is how I really feel. I don't feel all that sugar and that sweet stuff. I'm pissed off." That's when I started becoming a serious writer. I still didn't write anything good for a long time.

**Were you going out in public and playing at this stage.**

I started playing at school around fourteen or fifteen years old. I was just horrible. I couldn't really sing. I had a really bad voice - my voice changed. Before my voice changed, it was a good voice. When it changed,

it just became this other thing. I really had a hard time convincing anybody that I was going to be a musician. Of course I was turned on to Bob Dylan at this point, and he couldn't sing either. That was my whole point. John Prine really couldn't sing.

**So was that a confidence boost.**

Yeah, it was. Plus the fact that I went to this religious school. I went to the same school as the church I was raised in. I was rejecting this very quickly. I was starting to think everything they believed in was wrong. So if they didn't believe it, it must have been good. I started rebelling. When I was sixteen or seventeen, I started going to the coffeehouses. Playing open mikes.

**Am I correct in thinking that when you were fifteen you hitchhiked to Vancouver.**

Yeah, I left home when I was fifteen. That's actually when I became a competent musician. I played right across Canada, every night in a Youth Hostel. Every single night I just played, no matter how good or bad I was, I just did it.

**Was this as a summer vacation.**

Well, I had left in June and I think I came back in October or late September. I can't remember. I went a couple of times. I went more than once. I went in the winter once. I was really messed up - because I was trying to figure out my childhood. I was exposed to the world. It was the time of the hippies. Well, it was really the end of the hippy thing. I was sort of finding my place. The playing was great. Of course I was encouraged. Once I got on the road, I was really encouraged by all the people I met. Don't forget, this whole time, I'd been raised in this religious thing where they were discouraging me. My parents didn't want me to do this. Nobody wanted me to do this. They didn't understand art or being in the entertainment business. They thought it was a thing of the devil.

**So what was this religion.**

Christian Reformed.

**I believe that you father lost his farm in your early teens.**

Well, they didn't officially lose the farm. We originally had two hundred acres and by the time we were finished, we had twelve. Somebody bought it. They kept splitting it up and selling off pieces, trying to keep it going. In 1968, my father really gave up. Although we kept the farm, he gave up. He went to town and started selling real estate. He was very good at it. Basically he left the farm to us, my brother and I. I was eleven or twelve, and he was ten or eleven. He was a year younger than me. We were farming like men at this point, trying to make this farm go. We didn't know the difference. I remember particularly one summer, just - I was so lean and mean you know - I was real tough and I think we brought in 11,000 bales of hay that summer. An amazing amount of work for two boys to do. I remember all the kids were having parties during that summer, and we couldn't go to any of them. We just got up in the morning and worked. That



was our life. Around eighteen all this started dawning on me, when I was on the road. I found this book in a Youth Hostel about going back to the land. It dawned on me that I had come from a really good foundation. I had come from good roots. I had been raised with all this information. I know all this stuff that nobody my age knows - not nowadays - I know how to plant buckwheat. I know when to bring it off. I know when to plough. I know when the wheat is ready. I know all this stuff. It's great knowledge to have - now - I know every day, where the wind is coming from. I just can't get it out of me. The book I read in that Youth Hostel, was called *"Cloudburst."* It was a hippy, back to the land book. Because it was cool, and I was young and impressionable, it had an impact on me. I went *"Oh, these guys are all trying to do what I did. They're all trying to go back to the land and do all this stuff. Well, I did it. I know about this stuff."*

**Did the book become a bestseller.**

I think it probably sold about five thousand copies in Canada. I don't know. I remember it was a cool book. It was real idealistic. Real dream stuff. I found these friends who were trying to homestead near where I was raised. They were freaks. They had all lived on the road and stuff. I began hanging out with them and they were musicians. We played day in and day out. I was around sixteen to eighteen - I don't have the dates right on the money, but around that age.

**You were also involved in growing flowers at one stage.**

This was much later. When I was twenty three I went into the flower business. This was to support my music career, but it proved to be a huge mistake.

**So when did you actually leave the land which your father owned.**

Between the ages of eighteen and twenty, I got off that farm. I hung out with this other group that lived nearby, as well as going on the road. I got married when I was twenty three and built a little house which was a great thing for me. I took his chicken coop sort of house, which was on this acre of land - one of my neighbours owned it, in this little hamlet - I jacked it up and put a basement under it and made this completely new house out of it. That was a real confidence booster. This was just five miles from where my parents had their farm. I kept that for a while and then sold it and bought another farm of my own.

**The very first album you cut "Fred J. Eaglesmith" [1980] is long out of print. Was Boot Records a national label.**

Yes. That was a national Canadian label. When I got with them they were just bailing - Stompin' Tom Connors had a hand in that label - he's a legendary Canadian East Coast guy, a funny sort of patriotic guy. He owned part of it. I was young. I was twenty three years old. I put out this record and thought *"Wow, I'm going to have something happen."* I didn't even understand how the business worked. They didn't put it out for a year. They sat on it and I got very discouraged. I went out West and did a few festivals. Nothing really happened, and that's when I decided I

had to go and start a business. I think I played the Winnipeg, Sudbury and Dawson Creek Festivals. I played some gigs as well. It wasn't very much. I think I was out for six weeks and played seven or eight gigs. This was just me trying to flounder around Canada.

**There were ten songs on that debut album. Were they all your own compositions.**

Yes. I already had a lot of songs at this point. I had been writing - for about five years, I had been writing what I considered were adequate songs.

**Tell us about your producer, David Essig.**

I met him when I started coming up - there was a very good Canadian scene going. There was David Essig, Willie P. Bennett and David Wiffen. All these great Canadian musicians. Fraser and DeBolt. I was watching them and going *"Wow."* Somebody wanted to make a record with me. I really liked the records David had made with Willie. I met David at a festival - I had met him before - and said *"Would you be interested in doing this record."* He said *"Yeah, I think I can do it for \$4,000.00 total."* I said, *"I think I have \$4,000.00."* Then I went out and got a high pressure water blasting job to pay for the sessions. It was real dangerous work and paid about \$20.00 an hour. I did that and paid for the record. We were best friends for about five or six years, I think - even longer - seven or eight years, we just hung out endlessly. The relationship just sort of faded away.

**Where did you cut the album.**

At Grant Avenue Studios in Toronto.

**Would you describe your writing at that time as autobiographical.**

No. At that point I was still sort of trying to find my true style. I was writing - I sounded a little like John Prine still. I sounded a bit more like my influences. Although there were moments when I sounded like me. That first album sounds really good, but if you listen to it - I mean, the production was very good and everything - but if you listen to it, it's hard to recognise me very well on it. Although there are moments.

**Was Ralph Schipper playing with you back then.**

Yeah. I met him in High School. We started playing together when we were fourteen. We just played all the time. In my band, David was where Willie [P. Bennett] is now. David was a mandolin player. The three of us went out as a trio, when we played out. I had a whole bunch of musicians come in and play on that record.

**Is "The Town of Clarkston" about a real place.**

Yes. It's near Toronto and I had gone out with this girl and we had sat in this car in the town of Clarkston. That's what the song is sort of about. It's a little bit like John Prine's *"Kathy Was Cleaning the Spoons."* It's a bit like that - I was still copying things.



**"Someday It Will All Be Gone" - are you someone who wishes for a simpler, non corporate time.**

Subjectively, that song is much more like a Stanley Brothers bluegrass song. It's about this girl who has everything - you know what I mean - she's got all this stuff and the hook is, someday it's all gonna be gone and you'll be left on your own.

**Was "The Highway Callin'" inspired by your mid teen years.**

That was the road stuff. That song is on a later album too.

**Between the release of your first and second albums what did you do.**

I was growing flowers. Selling flowers. Just trying to make a living. Working at building a house, making a living and playing music.

**Did you only play locally.**

Yeah, I'd play locally and wouldn't go on the road much. First of all, Canada never really got on to me at all in those years. They just sort of looked at me and went - because I didn't have Celtic roots - because I had all these country, sort of hillbilly, roots I was not encouraged in Canada. The other thing was, I began at the end of an era. There's a whole big era of the Essig's and the Bennett's and all those guys. I was the young guy - they didn't want to let me in, because their careers were beginning to fail. It wasn't even them, it was more their associates. The people in the business. I was really shut out, as were a lot of other people my age.

**Your second album was titled "The Boy That Just Went Wrong." Why New Woodshed Records.**

Essig's career wasn't doing much. He had gone on to these other labels making records. We decided that it would be a good idea to put this record out on New Woodshed Records, because we thought we could get some interest from people who had followed Woodshed Records, which was his previous label. Which had been a good label. That record didn't do anything. I didn't have the resources to promote it. We made it for \$700.00. I had no money. It was a pretty odd record. Really odd for the time. It was a death record made in 1983 - sort of a bluegrass death record, which I didn't understand [Laughs] - it was just me, being me and trying to find a place. I was living in this little village, and just having this life that was so isolated from the music scene. I had no clue.

**Your songs are published by Sweetwater Music. Where did that name come from.**

Where those guys lived, who had all been on the road, was called Sweetwater Farm. That was related back to that.

**Shotgun Studios. Is there some hidden humour in that name.**

No, that's what it was called. It was a really dumb little

studio right by the side of the highway. They had to fill the basement with sand, so the studio wouldn't shake. The building is still there, but it's called Solid State now. There's no studio there now, it's just a sign on this house. On this horrible looking place. It was run by a bunch of hick, country guys - real greasy sort of country guys - the studio was cheap. Something like \$35.00 an hour. \$100.00 a day. I can't remember. We just went and found it, and played in it. It was a really bad studio too [Laughs]. The sound was bad and everything was bad, but we made the record.

**There's a dedication on the liner of this album to "My brother Ivan, who is somewhere in Alberta." Was that because you had lost touch with him.**

He had lived this really wild life. The pattern for "The Boy That Just Went Wrong" was sort of based around my brother. He was the black sheep in our family. The album really is about black sheep in families. That one guy or that one girl, who just didn't fit in. Whose life didn't work out. That's what the album was really about. The album was almost, in my mind, a bit of a movie. Like a soundtrack. It just seemed real appropriate because he had had this just, you know - he had to hide for three or four years from the law. Because of all that stuff, it seemed appropriate to dedicate it to him.

**Was writing the material for that album, a cathartic experience. To not have it stuck inside you.**

You know, I wrote it so sort of nonchalantly. I was just writing these horrible songs about people dying and getting killed and not even thinking about it. Of course I was listening really heavy to bluegrass music now. The Stanley's, Bill Monroe, whoever I could get my hands on. That was affecting it. I wasn't really paying attention to what I was doing, which might prove that it was just - I always think your best work is from your subconscious. Subconsciously, I was writing about my childhood. There's some very horrible things that I saw as a child, which came out through that. I remember my parents were horrified by that album. They were just horrified by it. They hated it.

**If you look at the front liner photograph of that album, even the posture you adopt, you'd swear that it was Robert Earl Keen standing there.**

I know, that is sort of shocking. It is weird. Someone told me that in Chicago last month - of course, Robert and I are friends now. I didn't know Robert's music - seriously, you're not going to believe this - until this year. We toured with him this May, and that's when I got to know Robert Earl and his material. I'd heard of him and I'd heard a cut or two, hadn't paid much attention to it - but I met this girl in Chicago a month ago who is Robert Earl's biggest fan, and she said "I can't believe how much you are like Robert Earl." It's very funny, because we ran sort of the same careers.

**On the rear of that cover, there's a photograph of three people sat at a table. Obviously you're in the centre.**

And Ralph is the blonde haired guy. The third person is David Essig.



**You mentioned the Dawson Creek Festival earlier. There's a song on your second album called "Dawson Creek."**

I was on my way to a festival and I can't remember whether I was in Dawson or Dawson Creek. I wrote that song around that time.

**Was "Living Out On the Road" another song about your teenage experiences.**

Yeah. Still, I had been living on the road. This whole time, I had gone out West a couple of times. I had done a little touring. Really had the road in my blood. Had travelling on my mind.

**You've said that "The Boy That Just Went Wrong" is a dark album, yet "Flowers in the Dell" isn't that dark.**

Except that he throws her underneath the train. You've got to remember that at this time, the feminist movement was getting very strong in Canada. Those women were looking at me, like they couldn't believe it. Here I was killing women in songs, you know. Oh man, I just remembered the flack I took [Laughs]. I had no idea. To me, I was just writing classic, old time, country music.

**Of all your recordings, "Bottom Dollar" is a haunting and beautiful song. Is that song special to you.**

Yeah. We haven't played it for a couple of years, but we played it every night for many many years. I forget to drag it out. I have too many songs you know. We loved that song.

**Don't you think that there's a strange atmosphere about that particular recording.**

Well, it's very Northern Canada that's for sure. It is a real eerie thing. I like it a lot. It's still - if we were to sing a few songs off that record, that would probably be the one we like to sing the most.

**In terms of sequence, there's a four year gap between your second and third albums. Is that because of holding down a day job.**

Yeah and pulling money together. And still trying to get my style together. You know **"The Boy That Just Went Wrong"** was rejected so badly here. I mean it was just - I only pressed a thousand and I still have records left. I doubt if I've sold eight hundred of those records. I was being slapped in the face by Canada at this point, really badly. They just didn't want to hear about me. They didn't want to know about me. The music business was in trouble. I was getting on with my life. I was doing other things. It just wasn't my time.

**You've already mentioned that Willie P. Bennett had been a solo artist, so when did you first meet him.**

I opened for him a couple of times and stuff like that. What happened was, we were at a festival with David and Skip [Ralph Schipper] and I. Playing the Owen Sound Folk Festival. Willie came up to me and said *"Hey, do you want a harp player during your set."* I thought *"Oh sure, why not."* He came on and it was really good. Willie and David had a reputation. Sort of

like Willie and Waylon, in my country. I thought *"Wow,"* and I was young and sort of thought *"I can have Willie P. Bennett and David Essig in my band. They both need the work. It will be a cool band."* That summer David went Djakarta and when he came back, things had changed between us all. That was when he left and Willie stayed.

**So Willie joined you before you cut "Indiana Road" which, once again, David produced. Once the album was done, what happened.**

That was the end of our relationship. We had bad blood over that album. That album cost a lot of money. I had been making records for peanuts. That record cost almost \$15,000.00 to make, which was unheard of in those days. I borrowed the money from a friend. He got uptight with David. It got really weird you know.

**Did your road band have a name by this stage.**

We were starting to be called Fred Eaglesmith and the Flying Squirrels. That name was popping up. You know, it popped up one night when we were drinking somewhere and it had been sort of used as a tease. As a joke. We have flying squirrels in Canada. We have flying squirrels an hour away from where I live right now. Some of them are endangered, I think.

**One of the things I immediately felt about "Indiana Road," was that in terms of the songs you wrote about farming, there was suddenly a harder, even political, edge to your lyrics.**

Yeah, I started to get more political. I was getting angry about what was happening about the farm. I was really getting pissed off. About what they were doing. I saw - I was probably mad about my childhood. You know, the land that had been stripped from our family. I could have had this beautiful two hundred acre farm and blah, blah, blah. Instead I was working my head off - being a high pressure water blaster, which was really awful work. Doing all this stuff and sort of resenting it. I was becoming a better writer. I was able to put my feelings more on paper.

**In terms of land repossession, presumably the word "banker," is one of your least favourite words.**

Yeah. Well you know, banker and record company [Laughs]. Especially in those days. I'm not a violent about it as I used to be. We used to put on our posters, Admission \$10.00, Bankers \$50.00, Lawyers \$100.00. We used to do all that stuff. I was very political in those days. Very political.

**Presumably your song "Thirty Years of Farming" was written about your father's experiences. And for that matter, your own.**

I actually wrote that song in my late twenties sometime. Between the second and third albums, because it took four years to make **"Indiana Road."** I don't exactly remember when I wrote it, I have it in a book somewhere. I was at this point, having a really good relationship with my father. I was building this house and he was coming around helping me. I was



literally cutting the wood out of rough lumber, I was so poor. I was doing things very primitively. I was making the windows for the house, not putting ready made frames in. I was buying glass or scrounging it. My father was really from the old school. He knew how to do all this stuff. This was still that house I had been working on. I worked on this house for about eight years. The shack was really representative of my life - as I made it into this very cool house, with loft and skylights and beautiful windows and everything. My life was coming together. I was getting my confidence. Every day I was going *"Look at what I've done. I've done this thing."* That was all part of it. It had to do with my father. I was driving - one of my father's things was, he got up every morning and drove for hours, sometimes all day - just drove around the countryside.

**Was this something which had only recently begun to happen.**

He did this almost all his life, but he had done it especially since 1968, under the guise of being a real estate agent. It let him get out of the house. Just to drive around the country. I learned this behaviour from him. It's one of my favourite things to do, to this day. I've curbed it some now.

**"Yellow Barley Straw" is pretty political in content.**

I was really getting pissed off at the provincial government which was out of Totronto, and all this stuff they were doing. I was really getting fed up. We had a real socialist government at this time, that was trying to make farming work in a real weird way. It wasn't working, so there was all this stuff going on, and I was just angry. This was post Trudeau. They had tried putting in supply demand, then they had taken it out, then they put it back in. They were just basically playing with our lives - with smiles on their faces. The bureaucrats payscales were going up every day. They were giving themselves huge raises, and we were living in the country - poor. Rural Canada just started getting very poor. All the stores started closing. All this stuff started happening and I got really angry.

**What inspired "Her Heart Or Mine."**

I'm trying to think. I remember. I was going to this place called Port Dover. I was hanging around. There were some bars there. There would be fights and I knew this girl, who - the song was sort of true about this girl. I had this girl there and we were in love. She - it wasn't exactly true but it was sort of true.

**What about "Caroline."**

That again, was really a throwback to the **"The Boy That Just Went Wrong."** That was from that little town I used to live in. That was really just a holdover.

**The title track on "Indiana Road" sticks out in relation to the other songs. Apart from it's sheer length, it is an electric track whereas the rest are acoustic. Was that deliberate.**

I really didn't know my way around a studio at this time. David really had trouble producing this album. It was one of the reasons we had the falling out. Over

the sound of the album. I've never liked the sound of that record. It's a really weird sounding record to me. We had pulled a lot of electric guitar off that record. David had bought a new electric guitar and he thought he was Hound Dog Taylor. At this point, I felt, he had lost his perspective as far as my work went. I was gaining perspective. The pupil was passing the teacher. That's how I felt later. I realised that's what had happened. Skip has always regretted that we ever put that record out. He has always thought that that was a real bad example of work. Plus there's a lot of bad singing on that record. A lot of flat notes and stuff.

**Was the title track based on a true story.**

I'll tell you what was happening. During this whole time, I was looking to buy a farm. I went to look at this farm. It was a beautiful farm. It had been in the family for one hundred and forty years, and we were going to buy it. We went out one Sunday. On the back, all of a sudden, we heard this roaring. There was a drag strip on the back of the farm. The owners were both in hospital. They were old, like ninety years old - we found out all this stuff. Then I met this guy on the Indiana Road who was burning gas in his house for lamps - you have that in England don't you - we don't have that much here. He had made these things up, and there was this gas smell in his house. There was all these yellow ceilings because of the lamps. He was really screwed up. Stuff all over his yard. His wife had died and there was a real weird vibe to him. I sort of combined the two stories into the song.

**You mentioned that you thought the vocals on "Indiana Road" were sub-standard. There's a real deep voice on that recording.**

That's Willie singing bass. He started out as a bass singer, while Skip was singing the high stuff. Now they trade off.

**You often wonder about an artist's early work. You can often trace progress through time and the catalogue of recordings. Maybe it's because I'm searching for great songs rather than great performances, but to me, the songs on "Indiana Road" are -**

You like that record. Is that what you're saying ?

**I love that record.**

You see, this is what happened. I'm being a little hard on myself. I put that record out, and nothing happened. Again. Nothing happened. I went back and sort of said *"Forget it,"* and really concentrated on the flowers at this point. *"I'm not doing this anymore."* Three years later, or four years later, the flower business went bust and things were really bad. All of a sudden, somehow I started getting this realisation - I was getting these calls from people saying, *"We want you to play. We'll give you \$1,000.00 a night."* This record had, in a real quiet way, taken off. In a real cult following way - all of a sudden, I had a following - it was amazing to me. I had been very hard on the record. The truth is, that's the record which really launched me, as far as playing for more than \$100.00 a night. And the fact, that I could actually get more than two gigs in a row. I could



go up to Ottawa, and sell out a house. Yeah, I'm being a little hard on myself.

**The single which appeared in 1990. That was commissioned by CBC.**

Yes. "Wooden Wheels in Hagersville." They just asked me to write the song. People liked the song so much, because of what happened there. In the end, I put it out as a single. Some kids set this tyre dump on fire. While it was going on, they predicted that it would burn for three years. Now it only took twenty three days to put out. It was a huge, huge thing. There were black clouds everywhere and smoke. It was an amazingly big thing in Canada. Hagersville is about twenty minutes from where I live now. It lies between Hamilton and Port Dover.

**Was the song title, a comment of modern life.**

Yeah. And Hagersville is known as a real backward, inbred town. It was very funny to think of these Hagersville guys driving around on these wooden wheels. We can't lay that song to rest. We have tried many times. It's still real popular here. No one would play it on the radio however.

**Because it was social comment.**

No. It was just because, that's Canada. Really the Canadian way - if it had been a major label, they probably would have played it. It's like that.

**Where did the idea to put two cassettes in the wooden box come from.**

This was an idea I'd always had. I'd always believed in making these records that had to do with my life, as much as reality. I was still trying to look like I belonged on a major record label, and I could do all this stuff. It was more that - I can only afford to make an \$800.00 record - let's go to this little hall, stand around a couple of mikes, record the songs, and see how it sounds. Well we recorded it, and we thought it sounded OK, and I put it out. I had wanted to make this wooden box for years, because I thought making your own packaging was as honest as I could be. I'm poor, I have to make my own packages. I can make them. I can make them very good. A lot of this had to do, again, with that Luddite sort of Appalachian attitude that my father had passed on to me. You know, you can make your own chairs, if you have to. You didn't want to owe money. You didn't want to do that, so this was really a statement about "OK, I can do this."

**You machined all the boxes.**

I made the first five hundred myself. Then it got to be too much and I started getting them done. I sold the first five hundred over, like, eight months. We would be in the garage every night with the sander doing the boxes. Same old thing, we would cut the wood out of rough lumber. My sister helped me one day, and she sanded her finger. She was playing guitar, as well, at this time. That was a bad thing. I thought about it for a while and decided "You know, if I zip my fingers off, while I'm doing this, I'm going to really regret it." I

really couldn't keep up anymore. I was spending all this time making these boxes and it just got to be stupid, so I found somebody who would do it.

**Why did you pick the Town Hall Theatre in Port Dover to cut the album.**

When my flower business failed, this guy came in almost the same day and said "I can't believe you're doing this anyway. Why are you in this. Why are you doing this flower thing. Why are you doing all these things. Why aren't you being a musician. You have this big following in Port Dover, who just love you." I really had no idea that there was a following. He was a graphic artist, and had a little studio in Port Dover. It was really good for me. I would just drive there every day and he would teach me about things - like graphic art and stuff. How to do things. I told him I wanted to do this box. He knew how to get the theatre for free and we just sort of developed it from there. I was sort of surrounded at that time by people who were saying to me, "How come you're not playing full time. We thought you were a star. We thought you were living in a stone house somewhere in Ontario." In fact, I hadn't done any of that.

**Scott Merritt who was on "The Boy That Just Went Wrong" reappears on this album. When had you met him.**

When we were very young - about eighteen or nineteen - and we were both working the coffeehouses. He, ironically, was offered the big deal very early in his career. He was offered a five record deal with Warner Bros. and eventually signed with I.R.S. His career just didn't go. The record company didn't know what to make of him, or do with him, even though they signed him. He was a friend, and he had good ears. We had all worked with Daniel Lanois at Grant Avenue. Scott had worked with him a lot more than I had. I could trust Scott. He was cheap. He free most of the time [Laughs] - we were just friends, you know.

**You produced that album with the band.**

I did it pretty much myself. It wasn't much of a production. It was just a matter of putting some masking tape on the floor and telling everybody where to stand, and where to back up to. We sort of mixed it on the floor, if you know what I mean. Working closer and then back from the mike all the time.

**Has Scott ever been on the road with you.**

No, Scott has never gone on the road with us. Other than as a trip. He has never played with us in public.

**The opening track on the first cassette, "Makin' Whiskey" - my maternal grandfather worked in a distillery, but was also one of Scotland's most famous bootleggers. From where did you borrow the storyline for this song.**

We had neighbours who would make it. There's still bootleggers here in Canada. On the Indian Reservations, there's still guys selling illegal whiskey. I knew a guy and sort of it just came - I wrote the song about him.



**One of my favourite Fred Eaglesmith songs is "Highheels in the Rain."**

It's also one of my favourite songs. Again, these songs - almost all the songs, because I'd had a four year gap between albums, I just sort of tossed them off. I was just writing them. Twisting things around what I was seeing. I wasn't aware - I was not thinking about records, or thinking about business. I was just making these songs.

**The imagery in that song. Was the woman in the song a work of fiction.**

Yes, that was fictional. Again, there's always some truth. I knew couples who ended up like that. Not that she became a prostitute, but that the guy just sat there and couldn't believe what his ex-wife was doing. She would walk by him with a guy on her arm, and not even acknowledge her ex-husband. I'd use all these little bits of truth, but that story is definitely not true.

**Who is the "Darlin' Boy."**

There was a lot of stuff going on in my life at this time. On that side of my life - I've just led this wild existence, full of craziness. Very romantic as well - a lot of it had to do again, with growing up the way I did. Plus, I had this vision of this innocence - of my innocence, at this time. It's very interesting because around this time, in the late eighties, I started hanging around Toronto a bit. Which was against everything that I've been talking about. I'd been this country guy and the innocence of me going to Toronto was very enlightening. Very enlightening for me. A lot of the songs then, were about me changing over.

**In terms of what.**

People I met. The way I was behaving. What I was doing. I was starting to see another side of life. Before, I'd rejected it. Life always does this to me. Just when I'm rejecting something, it turns out to be - you shouldn't reject anything until you know it. You learn about it first and I had to go and learn what city life was all about. Why they did it, and what they did. Eventually I got to really dig it, I got to go *"Wow, this is easy compared to how I've lived."*

**Are you the "Darlin' Boy."**

Yes, I was the "Darlin' Boy."

**You mentioned earlier that you were the sixth of nine children. The lyric to "Safe Ground" mentions someone who was the seventh child. Did you write that song for your father.**

No, it was really - do I mention the seventh in there -

Yes.

I wonder what I was doing. I'll have to think about it. Don't forget, this was just around the end of the yuppie era. There was all these yuppies around and all this stuff. That's what it was really about - like, don't tell me about your hard times, you didn't have any. I was

starting to realise again, going into town and meeting these people who had no idea what a life mine was like. I had already lived ninety years. I was only thirty two or thirty three years old. I had lived two or three lifetimes. People were looking at me in astonishment. I was starting to realise, what a life I did have. Compared to my friends, or compared to people I knew.

**So what about the song "Look Who's Changed."**

That was strictly me down on Young Street, listening to Blue Rodeo. Walking around in a leather jacket. Understanding how to order food at a restaurant. Figuring out how to ride a city bus. Being able to take the subway. You know, these were foreign things to me. All my life. All of a sudden, I could manoeuvre in the city, as well as anyone. My friends - my hippie friends had rejected this. They were really mad at me.

**"Go Out and Plough" is another anti-banker song. It's a powerful piece of work. Is it an older song.**

No it wasn't. I wrote it during the period between albums. This album witnesses the changes in my life. I was going back and forth to the city. Again, I was still really passionate about - as I am still to this day - I am very passionate about what is happening on the land. What that song was saying, as opposed to *"look what's happening"* - it's going *"look what happened. It's done now."* That song was much more about, *"it's done."* Almost like *"he's lost it. He's given up."* It's ironic, because that's what I was sort of getting here. I had to either stop being so angry about this, or I had to cool out a little bit.

**The final song on the album, "Jericho." Did you deliberately sequence the song there.**

Yes. I put it there. Again I wrote that song incredibly fast. Maybe in ten minutes. There is a place called "Jericho" and I bought a dog there once. It had so much to do with my life and it really was the closing of a whole thing for me.

**Because your life had almost mutated into another existence.**

Yeah. And I was also realising that there ain't no easy road for anyone. Just because I'd had a hard life, there were lots of other people who had had a hard life. I had to sort of open my eyes a little more. As people went to me *"Oh, look at him, he's cut his hair off now. He's wearing a leather jacket. He's an odd guy."* Whereas, it's not easy for anybody.

**In the back of the liner booklet, there's a photograph of Dylan and Tim.**

Those are my sons.

**The concept for the brown paper liner booklet in "Things Is Changin'." Is this Fred Eaglesmith turning his hand to -**

Well, it's Fred Eaglesmith with no money still. Still no money. Still making records. Like we made that record for \$3,300.00. Scott - we just recorded it, and Scott put



all that percussion stuff on it with his machine, or whatever he used.

**"Things Is Changin'" is actually the first Fred Eaglesmith album I heard, in the Spring of 1996. A friend in Illinois sent me a copy, completely out of the blue. I listened to it, liked it a lot and thought, Woody Guthrie. Not long after that, I heard Lynn Miles' album "Slightly Haunted" for which you penned the liner notes. When I interviewed her, your name cropped up in the conversation. Next, I bought your latest album "Drive-In Movie." John Conquest wrote about you in MUSIC CITY TEXAS, and I learned all about your back catalogue of material. So here we are.....as for the brown paper bag - back in the seventies a guy called Paul Hambrick released an [excellent] album titled "Windmill in A Jet Filled Sky." It was on Brown Bag Records and the album came in a heavy duty, brown paper bag. It's a folk/country rock style album, but brilliant none the less. I thought that little aside, might amuse you].**

**So where is The Cottage.**

That's Scott's house. It's a little cottage. Brantford, Ontario is very famous for their cottages. They have all these cottages where people lived, when industry was very big there. They're very cute and very sweet. You have them in England too. These are little brick cottages. It's not a very picturesque town, but they're very sweet little things and he has one.

**Who is Fraser Yates. Did Scott know him.**

Yeah, he was a guy who just lived down the road and we needed an organ. I really hadn't met him. Scott just took the tapes down and they worked on them in the studio.

**The title of this album, were you envisaging that the thirties were about to be repeated.**

I had a real awakening during this period. I had sort of had, a mid life crisis. Real deep time of the soul and really re-evaluating my whole existence. Really started to get my life together as far as what had happened to me as a child. How it related to what I was doing. How it related to my relationships. How it related to everything that I had done in my life. I was finding my way finally. I was really finding my way as a human being. I discovered that I wasn't such a great guy. That I had done some things in my life I wasn't very proud of. I had hurt people. All that stuff. Now I was sort of getting very introspective. All those songs on that record are really about my life. Really about what was going on at this time. **"Things Is Changin'"** was really *"Things is changin' for me."* All of a sudden, I'm buying my bread at the bakery. I got a tear stained wife.

**Having said that I could hear the influence of Woody Guthrie on this album. I presume you were musically aware of Guthrie.**

I had been compared to Woody Guthrie on the box set. A lot. I never bought into it very much. I'll tell you the truth, whenever I listened to Woody Guthrie records when I was young, I didn't like them very much. I didn't like the sound of them. They drove me nuts. Again, I was listening to that sugar stuff. That sweet stuff. But I got it - I know why they compare me

to Woody Guthrie - I don't think the **"Things"** albums is as much Woody Guthrie like, as the previous one. To me, this was much more Texas songwriter like. That's where I was getting an angle on things - where I live in Southern Ontario there's a big sky - and I was starting to think about the big sky.

**Tell us about "Carmelita."**

There's a place called Cimco, near where I live. One time I went in there, and there were all these migrant workers on the streets. On a Friday night, the whole town was full of black people, which is unheard of in Canada. Right. It was spooky, as a Canadian, just to drive through and go *"I've never seen anything like this."* I was thinking about how they bring in these migrant workers to Canada, and they think that it's not going to - nothing's going to happen and they're just going to send them home again. That's how they do it. And I think, someday somebody's daughter is going to get pregnant, and he's going to be a son-in-law. This is going to change the face of rural Canada as well.

**Because they'll become part of the population.**

Yeah. They're going to be there and - that's a good thing. It's not a bad thing, but there was no doubt in my mind, that this was going to change things. That was the inspiration for it.

**Is the story of "Rodeo Rose" a fiction.**

That's a pretty true story about my life. When I was living really wild, I was wilder than any of them. I've broken horses and stuff. I've never been a horse trainer. The setting is fiction, let's say, but the story is true.

**When you released the box set, and people were asking where you had been - from '91 onward, did you start touring more extensively.**

No, I still wasn't. I'm still getting *"Where have you been"* but I'm still getting soundly rejected by the industry in Canada. Just getting beat up. We submitted the box set for a Juno Award as the **"Most Innovative Record Album Cover"** - hands down - nothing else came close to it, and they wouldn't even nominate it. I just kept being regarded as a sort of hokey, hick guy out there, doing that stuff. I wouldn't join the industry. I wouldn't schmoose. I didn't like them. I didn't like the Canadian ones especially, because I found them just emulating Americans. I couldn't get enough work.

**You wrote the Liner notes for Lynn Miles' "Slightly Haunted." When did you meet her.**

Well we had been really good friends for a few years. I met her one day after I played a concert - we were sitting around at a fire that night and she came up and said *"Hey, I'm a big fan of yours."* I didn't really know who she was - we became friends. We had the same manager for a while. Went through some stuff together, businesswise - I helped her with her business a lot. Because I'd run my own little business for a long time. My own little record company. We started hanging out a bit and she introduced me to the



concept of a publishing deal. That's when things changed for me. I went down to Nashville and got a publishing deal.

**Which year was that.**

That was '93. That was when I met Brownlee Ferguson, who has become my best friend as well. He just took me by the hand and said, *"Look I can't do anything with you as a commercial artist, but as an art collector, I want to have this stuff."* He started paying me every month to exist. That changed my life and it just got better from there. I've had holds - what's the band with Kris Kristofferson and Willie Nelson - The Highwaymen, I've had a hold with them. I've had a hold with Chris LeDoux. I've had one or two holds and they've just passed by. I'm really not worried about that stuff too much.

**When you played the La Casa Concert Series in Birmingham, Michigan was it intended that you record your set.**

No. I was on my way to Nashville. That was my first trip to Nashville. I had just done *"Things Is Changin'"* and it wasn't even out yet. The first stop was Detroit to play this gig. He put it on an ADAT and he kept phoning me and saying *"We made a really great recording."* This was Dave Brogan who runs the series of concert. Barbed Wire Records was his company, and I wasn't paying attention to business at this time. He started this record company and had these *pie in the sky* ideals about what was going to happen with this thing. It was a very bad mistake. He got soundly disappointed and very pissed off. I just have this life where I'm not meant to be a star, and I'm really meant to be barely successful. I think that is what has helped me keep my edge all these years. I've managed it because I haven't been rich and I haven't been comfortable. He thought that he could beat the forces of gravity or something. He was wrong.

**Who is the old guy standing outside the shed on the front cover of the album.**

I don't know. He took that picture. You see, I had very little control over this album. He just sent me the tapes and I said *"Yeah, it sounds good. Go ahead and put it out."* I was busy with publishing. I was busy trying to get out from under my poverty. I had accrued a lot of debt, up until my publishing deal. I was starting to figure out how to get out of it.

**Was the song "Sweaburg General Store" written, because as you've said, small local stores were closing down.**

Well, I drove through Sweaburg one time and the store was closed and I wrote the song. It just came up in my head and I wrote it. Sort of went home, and wrote the song down.

**Was "Sunflowers" a difficult song to write.**

Again that was a five minute song. What had happened was one of my neighbours had fallen into the snow blower. Into a tractor operated snow blower. Just horrible. I live in Alberton, Ontario. My friends

called and it had been on the news that this forty year old man had died. They thought it was me. The calls were coming in. I just sort of got a picture of the guy dying on his tractor.

**"The Mindless Side of Town" - there's three previously unrecorded song on the La Casa/Barbed Wire album. Was that another song about your past.**

It was sort of about the Toronto thing. These fancy girls and how mindless it really was. That sort of thing.

**Once you had met Brownlee Ferguson, was it always the plan for him to set up a record label.**

No, Brownlee just loved me you know. He just loved my music and just couldn't believe that other people weren't interested. We got all these guys out. We got Jim Rooney out. We got this guy out. Ken Levetan. And nobody would respond. He would just get so miffed and so mad - I wouldn't because I was used to this - people don't get me right away, a lot of times. Especially in North America. He just said *"Heck with it, I'm going to make this label"* which he'd always had a dream of doing. *"I going to make this label, and I'm going to put this other guy on it."* I said, *"Why would you put this other guy on it, I'll work harder."* This other guy wasn't a very good choice, I thought. I said, *"I'll just work really hard for you."* He sort of got enthused about it and then we started doing it.

**Once you were making another album, was it an automatic decision that Scott would produce it.**

No it wasn't. We did some pre-production and sent the stuff down to Nashville and they really liked it. They said, *"Yeah, go ahead."* The Canadian dollar is good value and I love working in his little basement there. It's close to home. It's not like a recording studio.

**Your songpublishing company, Bash Music - where did that name come from.**

Bash is part of Brownlee's company, Bluewater. It's just a name.

**Does Sweetwater Music still exist.**

Yes. It's really Fred Eaglesmith and Sweetwater. Sweetwater, if I do the business right, actually owns half those songs.

**"Drive-In Movie" has more of a band sound than your previous records. And is more electric sounding. Was that deliberate.**

No it wasn't. It had to do with the fact that - all my life people have been saying to me, *"I hear two sides to you. I hear this folkie acoustic guy, but I also hear this electric guy. This Rolling Stone sort of thing with you. What is that ?"* I didn't really know how to explore it, because I'd always played an acoustic guitar. I also didn't want to just make another same old Fred Eaglesmith record. I felt that I couldn't make another farm record. I did ten years of work there on that one subject and I felt it was time - I also felt that people were starting to expect certain things from me. They



wanted me to become a caricature of myself. I certainly didn't want to do that. I decided that I had to do something else, and I got a little flack from it but it sure straightened itself out pretty quick.

**There's a lot of references to trains on the album. Was that because something had happened in your life.**

No. Really what this thing was about, was about moving. All of a sudden, I was going on the road. I was out of town - I was flying all over the place. All of a sudden, I was having a life. I had also, as I told you, before cutting *"Things Is Changin'"* gone through a lot of introspective stuff. A lot of - that's almost a psychotherapy record for me. What you are seeing in *"Drive-In"* is a much happier guy, for one thing, and a guy who is sort of moving all the time. I'm driving through California, through Texas, back into Nashville, down to Florida, back home. I'm just having this life where I'm moving.

**When we spoke about "Things Is Changin'" I had reflected on it as Woody Guthrie in style, while you said your intention was Texas songwriter. By that, I presume that you mean writers like Townes Van Zandt, Guy Clark or Butch Hancock.**

I was starting to explore - I really wasn't exploring it, but I had a vision of what they would be like. Really they weren't anything like what I was doing. But that was my vision.

**"I Like Trains" contains a reference to Texas in the lyric.**

Yeah, because I drove through Arkadelphia and saw the name, and I was on my way to Texas. The musical universe for this record is much more in the United States, than it is in Canada. For *"Drive-In Movie."* Much more between Nashville and Memphis, to me. There's a road there that I drove, and really had this vision of what the universe for this album would be.

**The song "49 Tons" refers to a stand off with the police, did that come from a newspaper report.**

I don't really know, because I wrote the song a really long time ago. I needed a song for the record and I found it, and fixed it up. Brought it in the next day and we recorded it. I don't really remember why I wrote it that way. I think I was just trying to evoke an impossible situation.

**There's a Springsteen feel to the sound of your new recording. Similar to his "Nebraska" album.**

I get compared a lot to Bruce Springsteen on this record, or John Cougar sometimes. Who else? Steve Earle, as well. I get compared to those three guys all the time. I think if you look at *"Indiana Road,"* which thank God at least you've know about - most people have never heard that record. I think you can find the common lines between those albums.

**Although I want to talk about other songs on "Drive-In Movie," one thing I would say, is that my bottom line as far as most bluegrass recordings are concerned - five seconds exposure is quite long enough for my lifetime.**

OK.

**But I can listen to your music for hours and although I clearly acknowledge your influences, there's something about how you structure your sound that doesn't alienate me.**

But have you ever heard the Stanley Brothers.

**Yes. But maybe when I quote Laurie Lewis, Alison Krauss and Tim O'Brien, these are contemporary bluegrass performers, trying to reinterpret the style.**

That's how I feel too. I can't listen to some of those contemporary performers. People tell me how good they are, and I just don't get it. It's pretty for five seconds, as you say. I think the reason - people tell me this a lot - they don't like country music, but they like me. They don't like bluegrass music, but they like me. I think it's because somewhere in there, there's a real rock influence. There's a blues sort of rock influence. I don't really know, but I think that that's what it is. I'm guessing that that's what it is.

**The song "Here's the Keys" has a very upbeat melody - almost like Roger Miller -**

Well, that's cool. You know, that's me sort of being Elvisy a little bit. It's very Elvis to me.

**I don't mean that it had flaky, throwaway lyrics, but it was that Miller feel melodically.**

I can see that. That's a real outside song for me to write. I don't have a lot of songs like that.

**So was it a conscious decision to write the song in that manner.**

No. I was just sitting in the kitchen one time playing it for somebody and they said *"Man, that's great."* I just had the first three or four lines. I thought *"I guess it is pretty good, but I also think it's weird."* I thought *"I'm gonna write it. See what happens."* I didn't really get it and I never play it on stage, but whenever I played it for people they went *"Whoa."* It was really great to put something that was whacko on this record. People either liked it right away, or they went *"What's wrong with you. Where's the horse songs."*

**Tell us about "White Rose."**

That's a real true song about Southern Ontario. There were all these beautiful White Rose Gas Stations there. It was a chain and Shell bought it out or something. Again, that's a bit of a throwback to *"Thirty Years a Farmer"* or the *"Sweaburg General Store."* That's a little bit of tracing a line where I'm saying *"This is what happened, but this is where we are now."*

**How about "Good Enough." I could almost hear traces of Robert Earl Keen there.**

I never even knew a thing about Robert Earl Keen when I wrote that song. Isn't that wild. That to me - you see, I started exploring this other side of the life that I was raised with - of course we all had fast cars in our drying sheds, because in the winter, we had all these tools from working on the tractors - and we would build these cars. When they paved the road up



by our place they put a Stop/Start line on it, over a quarter mile, and there were races at three in the morning. A lot of this stuff I was getting - the "White Rose" sort of twiggied it - *"Oh yeah, there was that side of my life. Fast cars."* There was always fast cars in the country with big mufflers and big engines. Loud. That was part of our life. I just sort of explored another piece of my culture.

**Was the title song of the album meant to be another exploration, since "Drive-In Movies" were very much a North American phenomenon.**

No. "Drive-In Movie" to me was a real thing about not wanting to go back to the past. Again it relates to "Things Is Changin'" where I'd come though all that stuff and was sort of going *"I don't want to be a - there was a lot of dysfunctional people on 'Things Is Changin'" and on 'Drive-In Movie.' It was like 'I don't want to go back there now. I don't want to go back to that girl. I don't want to go back to that situation. I didn't like it then, so I'm not going back.'* It sort of related to me.

**Over the past year you've taken your band on the road quite regularly. You've toured with Robert Earl Keen and James McMurtry. Presumably countless other people -**

Cowboy Junkies. Jimmie Dale Gilmore. It didn't end. We toured solidly for the last ten months. I just cancelled a tour with Robert Earl, this month, because we're too tired and we just couldn't make it work. This was in the States. We've hardly played in Canada in the last year.

**What about plans for coming to Europe.**

We're trying to get it together - part of it is I'm just landing a new record deal. Brownlee is going to sell me to a better record company. Because we're having trouble getting things distributed and stuff. It's got bigger than he could handle. We're in the middle of negotiating with another company. It should be done in the next two weeks. We're starting my new record and hope to have it out in March. Then we're just going to go out and tour. We've had so much interest all of a sudden from England and Ireland, that we can't believe it. I'm finding that the reaction out of your country is amazing. And out of Scotland and out of Ireland. There's something else there. Something that's more in tune with what I'm doing - the reaction I've had has been over the top.

**Maybe you have some Celtic blood in your veins.**

No man, I don't. I don't have any of that. I have pure Dutch blood in me. I think that it has to do with the fact that I really understood the hillbilly thing. All the hillbillies are Scottish and Irish. I really got the Ozark thing figured out a long time ago. I think they identify with the primitiveness.

**Will you cut the new album with Scott.**

Yeah, we're doing it at Scott's. I'm auditioning a drummer tomorrow.

**Will it be a natural follow on from "Drive-In Movie."**

This album will actually be somewhere between "Drive-In Movie" and "Indiana Road." We'll see. We'll see.

**Presumably, you're happy with your life these days.**

Yeah. I had a few real good years there [laughs] and that was a good thing - learning. This was me just learning, learning, learning. I haven't had it easy as an artist. I've had it really hard and I've resented it and I've stopped resenting it. I've started to go *"You know what, I'm OK."* I'm not rich. I'm actually still poor but I've learned to live with my poverty. I've learned to be more content with my chaotic life.

**Have you played many Festivals through this past summer.**

I played some. Again, Canada has really resented my success in the United States. I've had this sort of backlash, although we're starting to see it fade away now. We played some in America. The Strawberry Festival in California. A festival in Massachusetts. I forget what it was. We're having enquiries now. It's growing. It's really growing as far as getting more well known is concerned. I don't ever expect it to be the great big thing. It's always going to be this sort of career that I've had. Probably I'll have enough money to live on and probably I'll be able to have a pretty good rest of my life. I just feel a bit more like a regular worker. I've put my twenty years in and it's just going to carry on from here.

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### **Kerrville-kompacts, kassettes & other koincidences.**

"Euphonium" was produced by Steve "Los Lobos" Berlin, and The Picketts are a Seattle based *new country* quintet, led by Christy McWilson. *New country* that is, as in Wilco and the ilk, by way of listening to the Everly's at their best, classic Byrds guitar solos and Patsy [Cline] during her smoky country blues prime. Mix in a little of that Washington State grit and musically you get - The Picketts. Ah well, time to catch up on their two earlier recordings. And let's not omit a mention for McWilson's mostly self composed originals, many of which possess that *"where have I heard this before"* feel. Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Domiciled in Seattle, Texas born singer/songwriter Terry Lee Hale is a firm personal favourite. What's more, he's been touring Europe regularly during the last few years. As for the UK ? - nada ! That omission should be remedied this year. As far as *the smoke* is concerned, that is. Now up to solo CD five if you count Glitterhouse's limited issue **"The Wilderness Years."** A few years back, Hale was still plying his trade, driving nails. A self confessed rocker who picks an acoustic guitar, a few European and Near Eastern musical touches have crept into his repertoire. Witness the Brecht/Weill flavour of "Freak Show" and the Cossack style dance rhythms which pervade "Gypsy's Minor Swing." Don't let this guy kid you though, as he also



comes up with dreamy fantasies such as "Tonight." Self produced, **"Leaving West"** is another hallmark quality Hale product. Available in your local record store or via **Glitterhouse Mail Order, Gruner Weg 25, D - 3 7 6 8 8, B e v e r u n g e n, G e r m a n y [mailorder.glitterhouse@compronet.de]**.

The sepia shaded main liner photograph features the late Townes Van Zandt wearing a fur hat and winter coat, and also bears the enigmatic Roman numerals "XXIV" !!! - the CD features a [Chinese ?] postage stamp with the face value 24, marked with the logo Return to Sender. This limited edition 2000 copy, 15 track pressing titled **"Abnormal"** from the German based Normal label, bears precious few details as to source, except "Recorded live throughout Europe...." The bulk of the songs are familiar Van Zandt fare, while live versions of "Marie" and "A Song For" from 1994's **"No Deeper Blue"** are featured. The appearance of the latter duo is probably the main clue as to the age of this recording. An amusing version of "Old Shep" closes the album. One for completists only. Hell, I bought my copy. So what does that say about moi !!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Rather than settle for a **"Best of"** selection on this live album, which was cut at two locations in Utah [her current "home from home"] and at *the* Club Passim in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Cosy Sheridan merges the familiar with the brand spanking new on **"One Sure Thing."** In the arithmetic stakes, the decade and a half of cuts boil down to a three way split. A trio of covers, including Jean Ritchie's "One I Love" and T.R. Ritchie's "Quiet Hands," is teamed with five "old" songs and seven newies. Accompanied only by her guitar, Sheridan's voice is as clear ever, while her skill with a pen goes from strength to strength. For humour there's "The Mustang Ranch" and "The True and Terrible Trials of Waldo the Dog." For touching, try the affectionate "Always Under Your Pillow" plus the album title song. Available from **Canadian River Music, 4106 Tyler Street, Amarillo, Texas 79110, U.S.A.** or from **Waterbug Records, P.O. Box 6605, Evanston, Illinois 60204, U.S.A.**

Obvious that one day, some one or some band would title an album **"Austin, Texas."** Not unexpected that it should be Freddie Krc's Shakin' Apostles. Strange to relate the set is a compilation of new [live cuts mainly, recorded at two venues in California] and the old and familiar. There's five cuts from their self titled, 1993 debut set and four tracks from last year's story/song cycle **"Tucson."** The remainder of this album is composed one previously unreleased studio cut and four live recordings. The former is appropriately titled "In My Head," since it features two members of the legendary 13th Floor Elevators. The latter quartet includes titles such as "Ride Through Wild Country" [ED. NOTE. Wild Country being the working name of a former Freddy "Steady" Krc band], while "Howard Hughes Blughes" penned by Eric Frandsen features an original sixties Charlatan, Mike Wilhelm. Which leaves the conundrum, "Why Austin, Texas ?".....if you've ever visited that city, you already know the answer. On the Blue Rose/East Side Digital label and available

from **Glitterhouse Mail Order**.

Philo have reissued, on CD, what I personally rate as Mary McCaslin's most accessible solo album. The title cut of **"Old Friends"** is the only McCaslin writing credit, the remainder being a selection of Mary's favourite songs. New and old. And a multi-coloured rainbow of styles and genre's they make. From Cole Porter to Lennon/McCartney and Holland/Dozier/Holland, McCaslin recalls her folk/country raisin' with "Wayward Wind" and "Oklahoma Hills." Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Over two decades ago, by way of a *little schmillsson in the night*, the late [Harry] Nilsson gave us an album of standards by composers such as Berlin and Kahn. Concurrently, Megan McDonough, the Bitchin' Babe from Illinois was cutting a quartet of folk tinged albums of her own songs for the Wooden Nickel label while developing a secret passion for the recordings of Billie Holiday. Still essentially a folk performer, **"My One and Only Love"** is Megon's smoky late night tribute to the works of Sondheim, the Gershwins, Sammy Cahn and Jimmy Van Heusen.....and in the process, a nod to Holiday's enduring influence. Possessed of a fine set of tubes, McDonough earns my vote everytime. Available in your local record store.

The seeds for this album were planted over a third of a century ago when this quartet of [bluegrass] pickers and [country rock] legends, partook in a jam session in Pasadena, California. While I found little to redeem the recent Hillman/Pedersen *"trip to Bakersfield,"* **"Out of the Woodwork"** neatly acknowledges their career influences without straying too heavily into either genre. Lead vocals are shared, cut on cut, by Larry Rice, Chris Hillman and Herb Pedersen, while Tony Rice plucks his guitar throughout. The harmonies, hell, they are truly heavenly. Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

So we're talking New York State, AKA the home of chick singing trios. While the Roches are famed for lyrics with a quirky world view, the folk-rockin' Burns Sisters - Annie, Jeannie and Marie - are consistently foot tappin', occasionally reflective, harmony darlins. Close your eyes during track three of **"In This World"** and you'd swear that Betty Elders was making a guest appearance, voice, lyrics, the whole enchilada. Apart from Hazel Dickens "Working Girl Blues," Annie and Marie penned the remaining dozen songs, occasionally with collaborations. Gentle on the ear, with non taxing lyrics, this set was cut in Nashville and produced by Gary Tallent. Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

On the ten cut **"Redemption Day,"** Austin based, Kevin Carroll & the Sleestacks sound like a cross between the Rolling Stones, Tom Petty, and those bands spawned by the division of the Jayhawks/Uncle Tupelo. Kevin's songwriting collaborators include fellow Austin transplants Beaver Nelson and Jud Newcomb [of Loose Diamonds]. Newcomb produced over half the sessions and his guitar can be heard throughout the collection. There's shades of "Ghost Riders in the Sky" on "Ropes and Trees," while the melody of "Swine"



bears a Celtic swing. Intriguing is the word. Carroll's latest band, Clovis, features the highly respected keyboard player and composer [and amour] Lisa Mednick. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

First, take one recording studio, two pickers [Jim Henry & Brooks Williams] and three acoustic guitars - a Nickerson FC3, a Gibson B25 and a Martin D16. Next, take three microphones, four hands, a dozen compositions - no lyrics - and you have the list of ingredients with which to **"Ring Some Changes."** This is Henry's second disc for Signature Sounds, while Williams already has six solo albums under his belt - initially via his own Red Guitar Blue Music label and lately, on the Green Linnet imprint. Henry and Williams supply one self composed tune each, while the remaining decade of cuts includes the works of Richard Thompson, Reinhardt/Grappelli and Robert Johnson. Superbly picked, these guys know precisely how to sooth the spirit. Available from **CDX**.

What can I tell about Jack Hardy ? When he cuts albums they're never embellished with needless studio pyrotechnics. For Jack it's gotta be two track, *Roger and out....* Jack allows his songs to do the talking, and the stories his lyrics relate are consistently awesome and intricate. Far from being a throwback, Jack moulds the classicism and structure of the traditional folk ballad into a late twentieth century form that is the Hardy trademark. From the Celtic foundation of the [opening] title track, through the astute [and melodically speeding] thought that *"The 20th Century" was a train*, to Jack's honesty as an eyewitness visiting "Dachau," his vision remains straight and true. The prescription reads, *"Apply the acoustics of "The Passing" liberally. Repeat daily."*

### Kwik Kuts

Rod MacDonald always manages to write at least a couple of classic songs for each succeeding album. On **"And Then He Woke Up"** [Brambus] there's a handful of such stunners, including "On Any Old Sunday" and "Out In the Country," both of which were first heard in the UK....in a Wolverhampton pub circa March 1995 !

Iain Matthews' **"The Seattle Years 1978-84"** [Varese Sarabande] is a Stateside compilation, which merges one and a half dozen cuts from **"Stealin' Home"** [6], **"Siamese Friends"** [5], **"Spot of Interference"** [3] and **"Shook"** [4], the latter of which never gained a release on that continent. Available from **CDX, The Olde Coach House, Windsor Crescent, Radyr, S. Glamorgan CF4 8AE**.

Tucson, Arizona based singer/songwriter **Chris Burroughs** breaks half a decade of silence with **"Clutter"** for the German Blue Rose label. Recorded over the period, Election Day 1992 to Independence Day 1996, Burroughs used *"the funkier old tube mics and the crankiest old amplifiers."* A reflective lyricist who rocks. Welcome back. Available from **Glitterhouse Mail Order**.

These days, they seem to be calling it *left field* or *insurgent* country [rock]. On **"Luxury Liner Volume 1"**

[Glitterhouse/Round Tower], you hear fourteen examples of this genre nouveau. **Cheri Knight, Hazeldine, Loose Diamonds, Neal Casal, Chris Burroughs and Rainravens** are among the featured acts. Available from **Glitterhouse Mail Order**.

**"All the Good 'Uns"** [Vanguard] is a nineteen selection compilation of **Ian Tyson's** five cowboy albums from the 1983 set "Old Corrals & Sagebrush" onward. Included are two new recordings from a songwriter who is personally intimate with the rigours of the cowboy life and the hardships of ranching,.....from the wrong end of a stubborn steer. Available from **Canadian River Music**.

Praise be for preservation of the memory ???? The latest addition to the late **Kate Wolf's** catalogue features radio station recordings dating from 1978 through 1981. **"Carry It On"** [Flat Rock Records] includes two previously unreleased Wolf compositions, as well as songs from fellow folkies Guthrie [Snr. and Jnr.], Paul Siebel and Willis Alan Ramsey. Available from **Owl Productions, P.O. Box 151208, San Rafael, California 94915, U.S.A.**

No longer enjoying worldwide distribution via Rykodisc, **"Scamp"** [Tried & True] is **Jerry Jeff Walker's** second album of 1996. Aided by his Gonzo Compadres, *Scamp* wends his way through a decade of originals plus that old chestnut, "He Was A Friend of Mine." Available from **Waterloo Records**.

For his fifth solo disc, **David Wilcox** comes up with a twenty song live recording titled **"East Asheville Hardware"** [Koch]. Sad to say, although the liner attests to *"unpolished recordings"* and *"inclusion of Wilcox songs not available on disc,"* it's his weakest set to date - principally due to the strength [or lack, that is] of the material. Available from your local record store.

Of late, the Mountain Stage compilation recordings have been specials. **"Women - Live from Mountain Stage"** [Blue Plate] features a dozen acts including the **Indigo Girls, Emmylou, Baez, the Williams's - Viictoria and Dar, k. d. lang and Kennedy Rose**. One of the best yet.....Available from **Waterloo Records**.

Ever the *"Entrepreneur of American Folk"* Christine Lavin's latest fun filled compilations are titled **"Laugh Tracks Volumes 1 & 2"** [Shanachie/Koch]. Naff title huh ! Yup !! Except, across thirty seven cuts Lavin has gathered the cream of the contemporary crop, male and female. The unlisted cut on Volume 1, "Born to Run," is an ode to the contents of eggs. And it's a cracker version to boot !!! Available from your local record store.

Cut in NYC, the pop face of **Darden Smith** continues to shine on **"Deep Fantastic Blue"** [Plump/Grapevine]. "Skin" and "Different Train" are outstanding, while the rest are passable to could be better. Don't ignore your folk roots boy, that's when you were musically at your best. Available from **Waterloo Records**.



If folk blues is your fave flavour, then **Les Sampou's** your gal. Produced by Mason Daring, **"Fall From Grace"** [Philo/Direct Distribution], her second solo set features a dozen originals. Available from **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**"Fresco Fiasco !"** [Freedom], a seven track mini set from **Loose Diamonds** includes guest appearances by Toni Price [vocals] and Champ Hood [fiddle]. Frankly these guys don't care a *dos* anymore, while they still let their roots rock out. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

**Gary P.** "London Homesick Blues" **Nunn's** latest Texas country set is titled **"Under My Hat"** [Campfire]. The dozen tracks include two Nunn originals, a production credit shared with Lloyd Maines and support from numerous Austin stars - like Kimmie Rhodes, Gene Elders and Paul Percy. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

For a trio of years back in the mid seventies, the late **Steve Goodman** made an annual appearance on Vin Scelsa's Easter Show for WNEW - FM, New York. Along with recordings for an August '75 session, **"The Easter Tapes"** [Red Pyjamas], is a nineteen track remembrance of Goodman's contributions to those shows. Musically, this guy was a *giant*. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

A Nashville resident for more years than she'd probably care to remember, **Marshall Chapman** has sporadically released *rock oriented* albums over the last two decades, while penning a string of hit country songs. **"Love Slave"** is her second album for Island/Margaritaville, and features eleven of her songs, including six co-writes. Available from **Waterloo Records**.

Recorded by **The Gourds** in the Texas Hill Country town of Comfort, Texas, **"Dem's Good Beeble"** [Munich America] witnesses another band dabbling with those [laid back] country roots. To great effect, as well. Check out their EP **"Clear Night,"** as it includes one non album cut. Available from **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**Chris Smither** has been treading the boards for decades, delivering his unique brand of electric and acoustic blues interpretations. Original compositions, as well as subtly selected covers. His second Hightone album, **"Small Revelations"** reveals a born pro at work. Available from your local record store.

If "western beat" flavoured tunes get your feet a tappin', then **Jim Lauderdale's "Persimmons"** is probably the album for you. It's also liberally laced with ballads, including an *almost* GP duet with Emmylou on "Some Things Are Too Good To Last." Now ain't that the truth.

Christine Collister's second solo trip is titled **"Blue Aconite."** Essentially an interpreter, Collister covers Jesse Winchester, Anna McGarrigle, her old boss Richard Thompson and comes right up to date with a Gillian Welch/David Rawlings tune. And there's more,

Christine has been, of late, scribbling notes [musical ones] and words. "Kicking in my Stall" was co-written with Helen Watson, while "Forever He Said" is all her own work. Husky vocals essentially for late night listening. Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

This ten piece Austin aggregation, the Asylum Street Spankers, remind me of Spanky and Our Gang prior to their Mercury recordings, as well as of an early career Sopwith Camel. A good time, jug band style combo with a musical emphasis on having fun and dishing out lashings of humour. Very much a visual "in concert" experience, rather than a listening one, as the humour we hear here is like year old beer. **"Spanks for the Memories"** is the title of their debut for the Watermelon label. Oh well.....Available via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

Based on parts of the orchestrated evidence presented on **"When I Grow Up,"** it's obvious that our Lucy [Ray] has been listening closely to our Nick [Drake]. And that's the problem, because at her best Ray is derivative - the title track - and ordinary, at worst. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

"Familiar Surroundings" is the cosy titled, hellbound sonic express which opens Dennis Brennan's album **"Iodine in the Wine."** It even cops a "Paperback Writer" style guitar riff into the bargain. Dennis settles for a roosty feel on the next cut, "Mighty Long Time," and gets his rocks off through cut three and sublimates to an acoustic sound once more on groove four. And so it goes on and on....lyrically there's nothing to write home about, while competent but uninspiring kind of covers the overall effect. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**.

**"Misery Loves Company - More of the Best 1975-1983"** is a latter career Michael Stanley compilation which compliments the 1992 Razor & Tie set **"Right Back At Ya [1971- 1983]."** Basically it contains eighteen tracks drawn from eight albums recorded for three labels. Michael's rock band years, as opposed to his country rock beginnings. Of course if you want to go for the original MSB discs, then Razor & Tie have a decade of them on catalogue [the only exception of all the MSB recordings being the 1997 Epic double album **"Stagepass"**]. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution**.

Four females and four males of Irish descent constitute **"The Loving Kind"** compilation contributors. While Leslie Dowdall and Kieran Goss only score one tune apiece, The Black girls [Mary and Frances], Paul Brady, Sinéad Lohan, Noel Brazil and Brian Kennedy each contribute two. All of the material sources from previously available releases, but as a lightweight introduction to contemporary celtic singers and songwriters you cannot fault this fourteen track disc. Available in the UK via **Koch Distribution**.

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**Kaptuzed by Kinematics - AKA Video**  
Artie & Happy Traum have lived in Woodstock for more decades than they'd probably care to remember. From their New York State base they distribute to



planet Earth the Homespun series of self help videos [for aspiring musicians]. On **The Guitar of David Wilcox**, this folk performer reveals the secrets of open tunings and song accompaniment - principally in the keys of C, D and G, as well as the legendary DADGAD. 80 minutes in duration, Wilcox illustrates the skills required by performing [at least part] of ten of his compositions. The set also includes an accompanying booklet with transcriptions of David's melodies. Strictly for aspiring guitar pickers. Available in the UK at your local emporium.

The latest addition to the Kate Wolf video collection is titled **"Here In California"** and consists of a 28 minute Marin County community access cable television channel recording dating from May 1980. On the seven songs featured, which are taken from her albums **"Back Roads," "Lines on the Paper"** and **"Safe at Anchor,"** Kate is supported by Rick Byars [bass] and Nina Gerber [guitar/mandolin/harmonica]. Available from **Owl Productions, P.O. Box 151208, San Rafael, California 94915, U.S.A.**

### Kompletists Alkove

The soundtrack album to the Kevin Costner/Rene Russo movie **"Tin Cup"** features tracks by Mary Chapin Carpenter, Shawn Colvin and Joe Ely.

### John & Laurie Hill c/w Brian Wood

*The interview with John & Laurie Hill accompanied by Brian Wood, was conducted at Loma Ranch, Fredricksburg, Texas on the evening of Sunday 31st May 1992. Thanks to Brian Wood and Mickie Merkens Wood for making all the arrangements and giving me the directions, and to John & Laurie for their kind hospitality and the grand tour of their recording studio and home. At the end of the second episode of this interview, John and Laurie had just talked about the New Age album which Kurt Van Sickle had cut at their studio.*

**[Laurie Hill]** We've done a lot of conjunto, which is a lot of accordion - the San Antonio conjunto music. Fredericksburg too. **[John Hill]** Si.

**How do you spell that, let alone play it.**

**[John Hill]** Like you say it. S-A-T-E-L-I-T-E Tropical. That's what I love about Spanish. You ought to learn some Spanish. It is so easy.

**When did you do the Hal Ketchum video.**

**[Laurie Hill]** That was in August of 1991. The producer of the video said *"You know, you could do a hundred videos out here and not know that it was in the same place."*

**Was that because of the rural aspect.**

**[Laurie Hill]** Because there are so many different places to film out here. **[Brian Wood]** Well you're sitting in a 105 year old rock German house, which for Americans is old. **[John Hill]** Of course, that's really young for Europeans. **[Laurie Hill]** You can go upstairs

here. Downstairs. In the barns. In the studio. Over the fields. Pat Mears wants to do a video out here at the creek. Nobody has done a video there before. It's a totally different concept. You can take different concepts - **[John Hill]** We're going to go take her skiing on a jeep.

**Isn't she an Austin blues singer**

**[Laurie Hill]** Yea. Kind of rock n' roll and blues. **[John Hill]** She can get as country as you want too, though. She can really pull your heart strings with country music. **[Laurie Hill]** It's basically this energy that she's got. She does a lot of touring in Europe. The label that she is on is out of Amsterdam. Silenz Records.

**They also put out one of Townes' live albums.**

**[Brian Wood]** I remember her from Emmajoe's. When it was a folk singer/songwriters place. **[John Hill]** She can cover the bases. What's exciting, is that she is one of the few singers I've ever had on a microphone that would come in and go *"I like it right now what I've sung. I might want to do this over, or this over"* For the most part she'd nail the song. Maybe she'd come back and replace a word or a phrase and that was it. She's a very highly stylised singer. That's what I love.

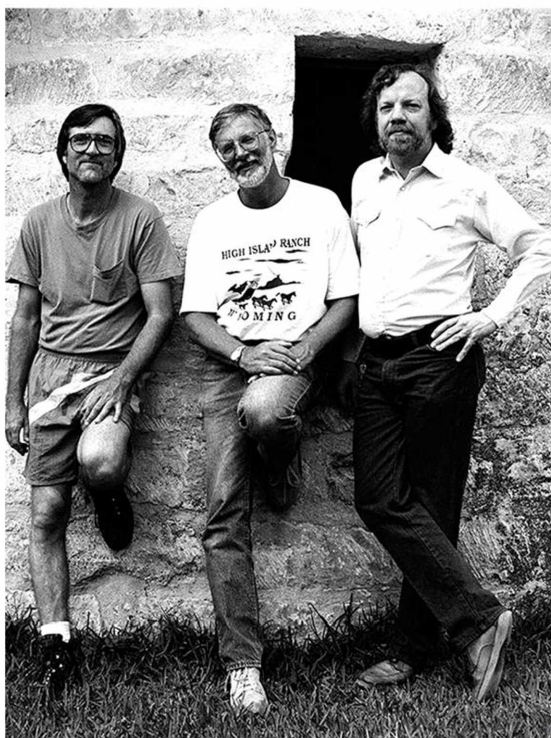


Photo : Mickie Merkens. Taken at Loma Ranch Studios during the recording of Bill Staines 1993. album **"Going to the West"** which was produced by Brian Wood.

John Hill, Bill Staines and Brian Wood

**Going back to David Rice of Houston, what you've said really interests me**

**[John Hill]** What we're talking about is world pop. This is what is interesting about David Rice. It's quite a bit different from what you hear on the radio. It's well thought out. Elements of Poi Dog Pondering came in to tape overdubs. There were horn players from L.A. There were people from everywhere comin' in to add to this record - and they were let go, full time, to be whoever they were on the tape and just go for it. It's a



different kind of a listening experience. [Laurie Hill] It has great commercial value also. [John Hill] It's wonderful lyrically and it's incredible musically. It is, I would term, a world music project. It's way out there and it's neat.

**So it's not acoustic singer/songwriter.**

[Laurie Hill] No. [John Hill] He plays acoustic on a bunch of songs, but then from there, watch out. Here comes everything else. [Laurie Hill] The rhythm section. The bass. There's a drive behind this music that's really good. [John Hill] It transcends the normal pop formula. The one hundred and twenty dance beats per minute and the stock chorus. [Laurie Hill] He's going to go somewhere.

**What label is he on.**

[John Hill] He has his own thing going right now. [Laurie Hill] He also has a lot of label interest.

**What else can we talk about, as I've exhausted the list I prepared.**

[Brian Wood] You might want to talk a little bit about the Uncle Walt sessions. [John Hill] We did the "American in Texas" album. [Brian Wood] Weren't you involved in the live recording somehow. Didn't you mix it. [John Hill] I think that was it. "American in Texas" was the one we did. [Laurie Hill] I think this is the original cover of "American in Texas." [ED NOTE. Laurie shows me a copy of the first Uncle Walt pressing]. [Brian Wood] That's Champ Hood, David Ball in the middle and Walter Hyatt on the right.

**This cover looks as if it has been hand coloured.**

[Brian Wood] That's an incredible album. That album was totally recorded and mixed here. [Laurie Hill] Right. It came out originally on Lespedeza Records.

**So what was the connection in terms of Uncle Walt coming to record here.**

[Laurie Hill] This happened long before the Geckos and Nanci. This happened when we were eight track so it was seventy nine. [Brian Wood] It's more a contemporary of Eric's album. [Laurie Hill] A lot of our connections in the music business started with our live sound company, Loma Sound. We're Loma Ranch Studio now. [Brian Wood] "Loma" is Spanish for "hill." [Laurie Hill] OK [Laughs] Get it.

**Yea, OK.**

[Laurie Hill] Loma is John's nickname from when he was a young boy. All of John's close friends call him "Loma." Sometimes it's through our reputation and what we do that people arrive here. Sometimes, I don't know how people find us. Most of it is word of mouth. [Brian Wood] Do you recall how Uncle Walt's Band found you. [John Hill] Sure. Through Willis Alan Ramsey.

**Had they tried to record at Hound Dog Sound.**

[John Hill] Before we came here, we recorded everywhere in Austin. Everywhere. When we got this studio together, it seemed that all of our friends - [Brian Wood] Recording as freelance engineers you mean. [John Hill] Yes, as freelance engineers. And as a drummer I had been everywhere. Playing in different bands and this and that. When they heard that I had put this studio together, they had to come check it out. That's essentially how that happened. Word of mouth.

**Did you know them personally.**

[John Hill] Oh sure. Again, I was in the Austin Interchangeable Band. if they needed a drummer, I was there.

**Have you ever played drums on any Loma recordings.**

[John Hill] Oh yes. I played on Nanci's record. And the Geckos record. I sing harmonies quite a bit, on different projects. If I come up with one that nobody can hit. [Laurie Hill] High, high harmonies. [John Hill] If they need Mr. Chick to sing, there I am. [Brian Wood] You might have played on Hal's album too. I have a vague memory of that. Of course, I have a dubious credit there as vocalist. [John Hill] That is kind of dubious [Laughs]. [Brian Wood] Exactly. I've been sat here thinking - It's a very lengthy list of very notable names who have recorded here. I mean, not even released records. Just demos. Hours and hours and hours of work. To me, Loma Ranch has a feel of utter comfort while you're doing this stuff. This is very hard work - being in the studio, I mean, on either side of the glass. Either performing or producing, it's incredibly hard work. The thing about Loma Ranch is that it is comfortable. I enjoy being here. I enjoy doing either job. That is fairly unique. I have played in studios in Austin and so on and all that is, is digging ditches. Frankly. John has great ears for what I do, and that's all I can relate it to - is the experiences that I have had here in either role - John is wired in. He's on the wavelength and it's incredibly easy. Being a residential facility, when we're done we can go up to the bunkhouse and crash in a brass bed. It's a library as well. There are a thousand books up there, on any subject you can possibly imagine. It's an environment that does two things. One, is it makes you feel very, very good about being here. As an essential comfort level. Secondly, it's an environment that makes you focus on the music. I say, "it makes you" - it's not a compelling thing - it's not a whip on the back - it's like, if you're out here to record, you will focus on the music. Like it promotes you to focus on the music. [John Hill] Well, we know they roll up the sidewalks in Fredericksburg at night, so what are we going to do - well, we might as well play. [Brian Wood] There is the element of isolation about being out here - which coming from Austin as I do, is a joy. I'm going to be as intense about my music time as I am about my day job - and I always have been. This place fosters that. It is an environment that allows you - if you're willing to do so - to focus hard on the music, so that the time you spend out in that studio is solid time. There's no waste. There's no distractions. There's nothing else to think about. If it gets intense, you're tired and stressed, something's not happening - you walk outside and look



at the stars. There's a billion stars out here in the middle of the country. There's no city lights to blot out the starlight. In my experience, as quote "an Austin musician" it is absolutely unique. [Laurie Hill] It is though. We have happy people out here. We booked the whole month of January with someone who just did not want to do it anywhere else - who is from Houston. [John Hill] He brought his own furniture and rugs and everything and outfitted the studio. And made the place feel as if he was at home. But that's what you can do out here - transform the place into whatever you want. [Brian Wood] From a competitive situation you have a 24 track studio out here in direct competition with a bunch of studios up in Austin. If you are an Austin based musician, you're quite likely to think "Well, hell I can go down to 6th Street, or Riverside or wherever and do my project" - and you can do it - but the ambience here, not to mention the expertise and the ears, for the kind of music that I do - there's no match - for acoustic music there is no match at all. [John Hill] But Brian you haven't heard my heavy metal project. [Brian Wood] That's exactly right. I have not heard it.

## Shawn Colvin

*The interview with Shawn Colvin took place by telephone during the late afternoon of Tuesday 12th November 1996. At the time, Shawn was in a car somewhere in the London rush hour traffic. Many thanks to Sally Reeves at Richard Wootton's office for making all the arrangements.*

**You recently performed a duet with Lyle Lovett at a Walter Hyatt Tribute Concert in Austin. Did you know Walter.**

No, I didn't. I knew Uncle Walt's music and I had seen them play when I first lived in Austin during the late seventies and early eighties.

**On your new album you seem to be going back to the beginning of your recording career, in as much as John Leventhal has produced "A Few Small Repairs." Was that a deliberate move.**

Yeah. It started out that I wanted to write songs with him again. I asked him if he would like to do that, and he said "Yes." Whenever we write songs together, he always has really great production ideas. Eventually, I thought that getting John to produce the album would be a good idea too. I hoped he would want to do it and he did. We work well together, and I think it was nice to be able to do it again.

**Presumably the songs were completed before you began recording the album.**

Yeah, we wrote together over the course of about a year.

**But John lives in the New York area these days, while you've moved back to Austin.**

We got together twice and we worked independently, as well. Over the course of a year we got it worked out.

**Three quarter of the songs we co-written with John. Are you more comfortable co-writing.**

It's not that I feel more comfortable with it, it's just that I like co-writing with him. When I write lyrics to his music, it's easy. I get ideas really fast. It's inspiring. I can't do that with everybody. I had written - there's a couple of songs on the album that I wrote on my own - I had written more, but these were the best ones I thought.

**Tell us about another of your co-writers, Tom Littlefield.**

He's a songwriter I really like in Nashville. He was in a group called The Questionnaires. I recorded one of his songs on my "Cover Girl" album, called "Window to the World." We got together and tried to write something. This was quite some time ago. We wrote "Trouble," but it sounded a lot different to the way it does now. It was in a major key and it sounded kind of happy, and there was no chorus. I showed the song to John. I hadn't really thought about it in a while, but I did like a lot of the lyrics. Then John and I kind of transformed it from there.



Photo : Cynthia Levine

Shawn Colvin, "A Few Small Repairs" [1996]

**What about Neil Finn.**

That was - I'm just a huge Neil Finn fan and my manager knows his manager. He said "Would Neil ever write with Shawn." The next thing I know, I get a tape from Neil that's just "Here's three unfinished things. I don't know what to do with them. If you want to mess around with them, go ahead." I took one of them and finished it.

**Is there a reason why the lyrics to that song don't appear in the liner booklet.**

No. I don't know what the reason for that is. They're going to add them on the next printing. I don't know what happened.



**One track on "A Few Small Repairs" was produced by Malcolm Burn, who has been associated with Daniel Lanois. What's the story there.**

I did more than one track with him. When everything was all done between John and Malcolm, I had way too many songs. I just picked the ones that went together the best. I want to get back together with Malcolm so we can do more work, and so I can use the stuff that we did together, that didn't end up on this record.

**Was there a whole other album cut with Malcolm.**

There was about five or six songs.

**There's no Stuart Smith and Larry Klein playing on this record. Was that a deliberate direction, soundwise.**

No. It was just in the quest for simplicity really. I mean - we made the record in New York. John was producing it. I had worked with the drummer, that was on this record, before [ED. NOTE. Shawn Pelton]. The bass player I knew of. John had been working with them a lot. It was fine with me. I liked the idea of just having one band to do all the songs. I really enjoyed Shawn Pelton's playing and Michael Rhodes, the bass player, was someone that had played with John and Shawn Pelton before. John played so much guitar, there was really no point in having another guitar player. I'll work with Stuart again.

**Tell us about Julie Speed's liner artwork. Was it specially painted for the album.**

No. It existed before. She's got a whole body of work that have women in the foreground, with stuff happening in the background. Like tornados and fires and things like that. I really liked that stuff and I asked her "Could I use something." She let me look at all the transparencies. This painting was sold years ago. Somebody owns it.

**The title for the album turns up in the lyric of the first song.**

Yeah.

**Tell us about "Sunny Came Home."**

I wrote the song about the painting. I don't know - obviously I feel some connection to it. Even thought it's about another character. I mean, it's sort of a sarcastic statement - the few small repairs, because she obviously set their house on fire. I think the whole record is about ills. Be they - whether your heart is sick, or societies ills, or whatever. And what kind of remedies you choose.

**The "home" in that song. Is it someone asking Sunny to come home.**

No, no. It's that she came home to do something. It's just telling the story that she's got something on her mind.

**The song which follows, "Get Out Of This House" is pretty direct lyrically. Did that come out of a particular situation.**

Well, everybody says it's about my divorce. I really wrote it when I moved into my house. I'd just bought it, and I was afraid of all the money I'd spent. I just wanted to get out of the house. That's where it came from.

**What about "If I Were Brave." The third verse in that song refers to "If I were brave and had a baby." Is that a personal cry.**

I think about it a lot. You wonder how your life will turn out - it becomes a big issue, as time goes on. Are you going to have children, or are you not going to have children. I think it's a real common question.

**In the melody line of "Wichita Skyline" there's a cross reference to an old sixties hit. Was that deliberate.**

To "Wichita Lineman" you mean.

Yes.

Yes, that was deliberate. I'm a very big Jim Webb fan, and I'm also a big fan of Glen Campbell versions of Jimmy Webb songs. It was a total tribute.

**Carol Webb who plays violin on the track. Is she a relation of his.**

No, not at all.

**What about the song "Suicide Alley."**

It's not - I wrote that song pretty quickly. I liked the title. I liked putting the words together that basically just say, "Life is worth living. Don't do it."

**And how about "Nothing On Me" which closes the album.**

It's a really old song. That's the only song on there that's very, very old.

**Even predating your first CBS album.**

Oh yeah. It was probably written in 1983 or 1984.

**Is there a FAST FOLK version of that song.**

No. It was just a pop song that John and I wrote. We never really did know what to do with it. We kind of resurrected it for this album.

**The penultimate track, "New Thing Now." Is that a summation of how you currently see your life.**

No, not really. It's said in music that there's always a new thing, whether it's really new or not.

**The last time you played Birmingham, mid set, you ended up in a question and answer session with the audience. Is that something which often happens at your gigs.**

Sometimes, if I feel like I want to break the ice, I'll do that. It's kind of fun.

**There was a couple of questions I was too shy to pitch. On the "Cover Girl" sessions, did you cut a version of Rod MacDonald's "American Jerusalem."**



No I didn't. I thought about it. I think it's a great song, but I didn't do it in the end.

**What's Elly Brown doing these days.**

I don't know. I know she had a son. Beyond that, I don't know if she is making music or what. She and her husband had the band, Grace Pool, but I don't know any more than that.

**Any chance of a UK tour by Shawn Colvin in the near future.**

Hopefully. I'm not really sure but it's been talked about.

**Have you been on the road in the States with this album.**

No, not yet. I generally go by myself. *[Crackle, crackle, ...and the mobile phone line goes dead. C'est la vie].*  
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## **Jane Siberry -**

### ***The "Teenager" Interview***

*The interview with Jane Siberry took place by telephone on the afternoon of Monday 2nd December 1996. Jane was at the office of her [own] record company, Sheeba, in Ontario, Canada. Many thanks to Sally Reeves at Richard Wootton's office for making all the arrangements.*

**You mention in the liner of the "Teenager" album that you were mixing a live album recorded during the "Maria" tour. Will that album be released by Reprise.**

No. Everything will come out on my own label from now on.

**Do you think that Reprise will ever issue a box set of Jane Siberry recordings.**

Oh I'm sure they will milk my tiny collection for every penny that they can get from it. I think I owe them quite a bit of money. Anyway, I hope they'll do something. More importantly, I'm working on a box set of live music that's already been recorded this fall.

**This would be the Three Wednesdays concert series.**

That's exactly right. The first of the collection of three will come from shows which that were done this summer. There's a fourth record that will be live too. It will be a Christmas record, but that won't be part of the box set.

**You've already played two of the Three Wednesday concerts at the Bottom Line in New York. How have they gone.**

They've been great. They've been really - just what I wanted and very exciting. A reason to write a whole bunch of new material. They've been just great.

**Each show, in concept, has been thematic.**

Yes. And each has had a different sound. The second show was with a funk band, while the first show was with strings and brass and vocals.

**The last show has a Christmas theme.**

Yes. It's strings and brass, including tuba this time. Extra vocals. Christmas songs. Traditional ones, new ones I'm writing, old ones I've written and covers of some friend's songs.

**The songs which you've included on "Teenager" - between which years were they written.**

From when I was sixteen till I was twenty years old. I'm forty now, so whenever that was.

**Were you performing in public during that period of your life.**

When I turned, I guess nineteen, I started to perform in coffeehouses. Before that, I did hardly anything.

**This was at Carden Street Cafe.**

Yea, in Guelph. That's right.

**What inspired you to write songs in the first place.**

Lyricwise, you know, that strange mysterious need we humans have to articulate things. The drive we have. Musically, I have always written since I was a little kid. I have always heard music in my head.



Photo : Trevor Hughes

Jane Siberry, circa "Maria" 1995

**Was there a history of music among your parents and grandparents.**

Not really. My father used to sing in restaurants, but that's about it. This was not professionally. As a guest, we'd be having dinner, and every now and again he'd get up and sing.

**Did you have music lessons when you were younger.**

Yeah. I had a bit of piano. In High School, I took the French horn and played in the school band. I was always writing. Even when I was four I took something to my piano teacher and played it for her and she scolded me for not practicing what she had given me.



When I told my mum, she pulled me from my piano lessons and that was it. They were just little musical pieces, no lyrics at that stage.

**Was "Song To My Father" the first that you wrote with a lyric.**

Yes.

**Are there more songs written during the "Teenager" period which have yet to be recorded.**

There are actually about twenty other songs. Until I finally wrote the first songs with lyrics, there was a stream of poetry writing and a stream of music, but I never connected the two.

**Do you envisage recording those twenty younger songs in the future.**

I don't know. Maybe as the "B" sides of my "B" sides. That would make them "A" sides wouldn't it. Maybe.

**Why name your label Sheeba. Is there a story behind the name.**

I wanted to use Sheeba, actually, for a couple of past records. It was in the air to use something else, so it seemed right to use it for the record company. A lot of the reasons why we choose names comes from an inarticulate place. In hindsight, to sound half articulate in interviews, you try to think of reasons. Really the sound, the connotations I suppose, the sense of a kingdom run by a woman [laughs] - to me Sheeba isn't just about women, it's about a woman who had a good balance of male and female. It's a bit of a misnomer when people think "*Oh, Sheeba is woman power,*" when it's actually a woman with full power. Plus, I like the sound of it.

**When you consider the material which appears on "Teenager," and then you reflect on the musical styles spanned by "Jane Siberry" in 1980 through to "Maria" in 1995, do you see "Teenager" as a logical career step.**

Yes, I really do now. And in particular, because it's the first release for my new label. I feel like I'm in - something happened when I turned forty, and I took stock of a lot of things. Going back and putting things in order. I lacked patience for a lot of older personal issues I used to have, and they just feel really unnecessary now. I'm in a clean-up mode. Which doesn't mean that "**Teenager**" is garbage. Rather, it's taking stock and putting things in order. It feels actually like a very symbolic first release.

**Like it's a new beginning.**

Yes.

**Had you ever considered recording some of these songs earlier in your career.**

No I didn't, because a lot of them seemed too young, and I was more interested in what I was hearing in my head at that moment. That's what makes this an even more important and symbolic release. I've scooped up a part of myself that was rejected for a long time - as

in the purity and the undistilled whatever about these songs, which was once unacceptable to me - now it's part of the full package.

**Are you saying that there was a stage where you were denying the existence of these songs.**

Yes, in as much as it was my own way of seeing the world.

I'd like to talk about each of the songs on the album. "**The Squirrel Crossed the Road**" contains great images. For instance, the comparison of a ribbon in the wind and the motion of a squirrel running.

Also the song is about the ocean, and the wave like motion and cycles. And how people keep rolling up across the sand. Even within the song itself, each verse is a new wave but you have the same motion going through the whole song.

**The characters in each verse of the song - None, Dewar, Madam, Thomas - were they all friends of yours.**

Yeah.

**And they in a way, *crossed the road*.**

Yeah. Crossed my path in other words. Gee, I never would have thought of these things when I wrote it.

**Is it significant that the term "little one" turns up in a couple of your songs. As a character in "The Squirrel Crossed the Road" and in the lyric of "Puppet City."**

I hadn't noticed that. Some of those characters in "Squirrel" were friends of mine. Some names were changed to protect - the whatever. I usually don't use the real names of people - I rarely have, unless I was distanced enough from them that no one could really put their finger on them. To me, that's what makes me sit on the "open table" - if it's fairly timeless and fairly disconnected from an individual.

**Was "Let's Not Talk Now" written for your mother.**

No, that was written for my first boyfriend.

**There was an obvious level of affection in the lyric, but I could only tie it to a relative.**

That's interesting - I've never read the lyrics and concluded that someone could think it would be about a mother. I think one of the most beautiful things that I ever saw, was seeing Roberta Flack sing "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" and she dedicated it to her mother.

**You've already said that "Song To My Father" was the first song you ever wrote. What triggered that song. Was it a crisis.**

In a way, because I left home at sixteen - that's the first time I had the distance to see him as a person. This was to go off to school.

**Who was the character who saved things in "Broken Birds."**



That was a girlfriend of mine who was the first of that kind of person that I had ever met - I was very fascinated with her and concerned with her, because she - in my mind, was unable to stop saving people. They just ate her up.

**Because she was a sponge who absorbed all the problems of the world.**

And she couldn't say "No." Being near her, made you feel like you were in a downward spiral that you couldn't escape.

**What inspired you to write "Puppet City." Was it because you saw people attached to strings over which they possessed no control.**

No. Of course it's a metaphor, but that was like a sixteen year old looking at what was real about people and what was programmed, and trying to sort out the whole mess. It's quite a mess for people to sort out, particularly once you're grown up. I think it's even harder for kids these days.

**Did you grow up in a small town.**

No. It was just a small mentality. I grew up in Etobicoke which is a suburb of Toronto. It was different than that - it was talking about what love is, and if you love someone you're supposed to miss them and all those things. You're supposed to feel sad and I didn't feel any of those things. It was something I had to sort out, and I'm not saying that I did sort it out, but that was where I was then.

**Are you the younger of two sisters.**

Yeah.

**Was "Oh My Sister" written out of affection.**

Affection and consternation and concern. I think very few people escape that - I believe families were invented so that you have to deal with a lot of very difficult issues. Otherwise, you'd just choose friends that made life easy. Families - you can't choose them. That's the universe's device to make sure that you don't just have a great, easy life.

**The song "The Long Pirouette" - were you a keen night skater as a teenager.**

We used to skate a lot, day and night. Night-time skating was the best. My image of the pin pricks in the sky - would mean that behind the black of the sky it is all light. I liked that idea.

**What can you tell me about "Bessie."**

Let's see. "Bessie" is a sister song to the song on my first record, which is called "The Mystery at Ogwen's Farm" - about an old couple whose cow went missing. "Bessie" is the story about where she went. The answer to it.

**Would I take it from "We Should Be There By Morning" that you backpacked in Europe as a teenager.**

I did, but that song was written during a very intense trip to Wales with my mother, to visit her homeland. My grandfather was called Philip Thomas Lewis which, I think, is about as Welsh as you can get.

**I got the impression that the song "Viking Heart" had been written in England.**

Well "*climb the steps up from the sea*," actually was a line that my mum wrote to me in a letter she sent from England. When she was there. That's a great hook up - I really think that you can communicate beyond the words of a song - that the words and the sound of the voice - whatever I pictured in my mind, which was definitely England, can be carried just in the sound of the voice.

**"When the Spring Comes." Is that your favourite season.**

[Laughs] No. Really, each season still surprises me enough, that it's always my favourite.

**Is "Angel Voyeur" based on a true story.**

Yeah, It's about a break up. Trying to make sense of a break up. It's about what happens when you love someone and it doesn't work out. It's almost harder than when you hate someone and you break up. When you love someone and you break up, that's I think the harder one. It was about that kind of a break up and how I was trying to understand it for myself. When I went back to re-record that song, I was very surprised to realise that I'd mentioned angels in the lyric.

**Which literally brings you up to date, and all the angel references on your 1993 recording "When I Was A Boy."**

Well, there you go. I'm glad you're writing this and not me.

**I believe that "Trumpeter Swan" was written about one of your aunts.**

That was about my fascination with her and this trumpeter swan image - "the neck white and eager" - every time she - I don't know if you know people like that, but they're always attentive and eager and sweet, sweet, sweet. It's real sweetness. It's true sweetness. Which would always make me feel even worse about myself, because I felt like I was consorting with the devil and she was an example of a truly innocent type of person.

**But it's also a song of admiration and deep love.**

Oh yes.

**So how can you say that -**

That it made me feel bad.

**Yeah. It is, after all, a song of great beauty.**

Yeah. But then that was who I was at that time. Just comparing myself with -

**In the lyric, who were the thirteen brother swans.**



That's from an old children's tale, I believe. Where the sister had to - they were under a spell - the thirteen princes turned into swans. She had to sew thirteen flaxen shirts and throw them on to the swans to get rid of the spell, and they would be saved.

I've almost run out of questions. I think my final phrase would be, "Isn't music the greatest medicine."

That is a great final phrase. I totally agree.

When are you coming over to play for us on this little island.

We just confirmed our first date there in years. It's at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on March 9th.

## **The Best of '96 -**

### **Albums of '96**

Jimmie Dale Gilmore **"Braver Newer World"** [Elektra] : The album which has redefined country music in the ninties. If Emmylou's '95 set, **"Wrecking Ball,"** was akin to the coming of John the Baptist, then as my old pop would have said, "Jimmie's the real McCoy."

Joel Rafael Band **"The Joel Rafael Band"** & **"Old Wood Barn"** [Reluctant Angel Records] : OK, so the first album is two years old. Both are classics and I don't use the term lightly. A comparison ?? Like Jackson Browne at the peak of his powers, with a ninties eco-acoustic sound.

Counting Crows **"Recovering the Sattelites"** [Geffen] : Praise be, Duritz returns.

Iris DeMent **"The Way I Should"** [Warner Bros] : Ever the doubting sceptic, I found little reason to jump on the bandwagon when **"Infamous Angel"** first appeared. The title cut and "Childhood Memories" from **"My Life"** convinced me that Iris was a writer of substance. This album marks DeMent's ascendancy to the Halls of the Mighty. "Wasteland of the Free" and "There's a Wall in Washington" could be to the ninties, what "Blowin' in the Wind" was to the sixties.....

Pete Nelson **"The Restless Boys' Club"** [Signature Sounds] : I guess it's the fact that, subjectively, Nelson mingles fact with reality - stories where you can't see the join. He's a substantial songwriter, and I fully concur with the tenor of his "old" songs.

### **A Few Runners Up !!!!**

Carrie Newcomer **"My Father's Only Son"** [Philo] ; Mickey Newbury **"Lulled by the Moonlight"** [Mountain Retreat] ; Bob Neuwirth **"Look Up"** [Watermelon] & Erica Wheeler **"The Harvest"** [Signature Sounds].

### **Song of '96 [Recorded]**

"Dark Dear Heart" written and performed by Mary Margaret O'Hara, on The Henrys album **"Puerto Angel"** [Demon]. Congratulations to KOCH for reissuing Mary's groundbreaking **"Miss America"** set, from 1988. All we need now is another Mary Margaret solo album....we should have had three or four [of them] by now.

### **Song of '96 [As yet unrecorded]**

"Take Me Home" written by Megan Peters. Heard at a number of Kerrville Folk Festival campfires in late May. Somewhere in Salt Lake City, there's an as yet

undiscovered female songwriting talent.....of phenomenal proportions.

### **Most Prolific Artist of '96**

The title goes to David Munyon for **"Stories From the Curve"** and **"Acrylic Teepees"** on Glitterhouse, while he topped the year off with **"Slim Possibilities"** on Stockfish, another German label. What's more, there wasn't a dud track among the trio.

### **Gig of '96**

The 25 day long Kerrville Folk Festival, way out in West Texas. Never gonna happen again. It brought the opportunity to witness all time heroes such as Michael Smith and Mary McCaslin, play solo sets; and to hear fine [new] writers such as Carol Elliott and Laura Smith, and see Carrie Newcomer deliver one "mother" of a mainstage performance.

### **Record Label of '96**

Glitterhouse, with Watermelon and Philo still major players in my wacky world of music.....

### **Publication of '96**

Dirty Linen, again.

### **The Good, The Great and The Downtight Multi Talented - Any Year**

Applies in equal proportion to all of them. Them being, Chuck Brodsky, Steve Fisher and Michael McNevin - young American singer/songwriters to look out for.

### **And in '97**

Finally, a new Terry Clarke album. The eagerly awaited, **"The Heart Sings."**

## **Dar Williams**

The interview with Dar Williams took place at Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, Broad Street, Birmingham at 1am on Tuesday 19th November 1996. Thanks to Carol Young of Young/Hunter for setting up this last minute impromptu chat, and to Dar for taking time out to talk at such a ridiculous hour. After informing Dar that my adopted hometown [of some 25 years], had more miles of canals than Venice and that Mendelssohn had once played a gig at the Town Hall, we started talking about what she had been up to of late...

How far away is album number three.

We're shooting for June ['97]. Everybody has said that it's OK, if I can't do it - you know, if I really haven't written enough songs, then that's OK. They'll be angry [laughs], but they'll be OK. We hope to record it in March and release it in June. We're also hoping to do some work on the album in December as well. I've written seven songs for it already. I'm working on two further songs at the moment. When I'm done with them, I want to work on a final one to make ten.

Do you write much while you're "on the road."

Yeah, I do - I mean because the hotel rooms are less full of memorabilia than my office and my house.

You mean distractions.



Right [laughs]. And things to do. There's actually better opportunities to fill a neutral space with music.

**Have you a producer in mind for the next album.**

We're going to work with Steven Miller again.

**What about the studio.**

We're going to work with the same combination again. [ED. NOTE. Dar's album "Mortal City" released in the UK in early '96 was cut in the bedroom of her Western Massachusetts home].

**The same combination - well, it's an idea.**

You don't like this idea ?

Oh yes.

We're thrilled [laughs]. We've developed a way of talking with each other and it just seems like a great thing to build on that. I feel very comfortable with him and I really trust him.

**Does the next album already have a working title.**

It was going to be called "Revolution Door" but nobody liked that title. Then a friend of mine thought that I should name it "Who Invented Roses." Charlie [Hunter] doesn't like the title. So we're going to start from scratch.

**One of the new songs you did tonight - "If I Wrote You" was written in Austin, Texas. I was a little confused about the reference to snow in the first verse.**

Well, I wrote it in Austin - it takes it's time and it doesn't have a lot of words and it doesn't sort of jump to explain itself - that to me was sort of like one of the personal detail filled songs that you hear out of Austin. It has a couple of twists. It doesn't explain everything but it gives you a lot of resonant details to work with. To me, it felt like it was really born there.

**"What Do You Hear In These Sounds" is another new song. Was that a hard song to write considering that the subject matter is therapy.**

Every song that I write - you know, I can tell you for every single song there is something difficult - like the "Mark Rothko Song," people are going to think this is too pretentious and difficult. "The Christians and the Pagans" - I didn't spend enough time on it for it to be a good song. "The End of the Summer" is too long. "Therapy" is too personal - or at least it sounds like the Neil Simon equivalent in songwriting. Or bad Neil Simon. You know everything - "If I Wrote You" is too simple. It was really just as difficult as anything I've written. The grace of - the wisdom of my years is really important, because I have to keep on remembering to just keep on writing stuff and know that maybe I'm right. And that people will like them.

**Was it like the proverbial "taking out the garbage" or "shedding skin" - in fact, was it a cathartic experience that you were seeking by writing that song.**

No it wasn't cathartic. Therapy was cathartic - but kind of coming to terms with it was not. I'm just very grateful and I've become real sort of won over to looking at psychological conflicts and looking at the components of things. And trying to figure out how everybody is vulnerable in some way. For instance, not being so afraid of other people. Those are revelations that I had long ago - that was when I was twenty two. There's really no new revelations in this song - this isn't really the overturning of a lot of stones.

**I've asked this once before, but what about a band for Dar Williams. Is it time yet ?**

Next Fall. We're shooting for next Fall, just to promote the album. Then, if it goes really well, we'll see what happens.

**What did you think of our Cambridge Folk Festival, relative to say North American festivals.**

It was wonderful - and as a festival I thought it was first rate. I didn't think anyone was listening to my set, so I was thrilled to find out that they were, indeed listening. It was a very lovely audience. When I started to play, after a few songs I thought "OK people hate those."

**I guess you experienced our British reserve and reticence coming to the surface again.**

No. In this case it was a little bit of the British drunkenness. They had a bar at the back, so I should have seen it coming.

**Have anyone ever asked you to contribute songs for the soundtrack of a movie.**

Yes. Someone has asked me to write a song for his soundtrack, but I don't think he is going to get his film off the ground.

**Do you think you'll ever write "Mortal City 2."**

[Laughs] No. There's nothing more to write. I think the fact that this couple don't really physically consummate a relationship is the best place to leave them. If they do or they don't, then that's other mortals - that could be any mortal.

**Finally, the other new song you did tonight - "The End of the Summer." You mentioned how you would get a twinge in the stomach when it was time to go back to school, but was it also a period that you were fond of.**

Oh yeah. Someone said that they really associate me with the Fall, which I think is great. You have the Spring and the Summer, and then Fall is a time of reflection and also of gathering up and dealing with stuff. Putting it together and figuring out how it fits into your life. Figuring out what direction you're going in. Winter is a time of recording - of writing it down.

**So do you compose more songs in the latter part of the year.**

A lot. Yeah. For the most part, I think that would be the trend.



# 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 **STEVE GOODMAN** "Somebody's Else's Troubles" Sequel NEM CD 607 [1972, 1990].
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. Hills of Woodstock **TOM PACHECO** "Woodstock Winter" Mercury 532 793-2 [1997]. ^
5. Amelia Almost 13 **CARRIE NEWCOMER** "My Father's Only Son" Philo PHCD 1203 [1996]. #
6. Yarrington Town **MICKIE MERKENS** "Texas Summer Nights, Vol. 1" Potato Satellite PS2-1000 [1983]. #
7. Still Life **LUCY KAPLANSKY** "Flesh and Bone" Red House RHR CD 92 [1996]. #
8. Depending on Gravity **PIERCE PETTIS** "Making Light of It" Compass 7 4236 2 [1996]. #
9. America Come Home **JOEL RAFAEL Band** "The Joel Rafael Band" Reluctant Angel RAM 0420 [1994]. #
10. (These Eggs Were) Born to Run **ROB CARLSON/VARIOUS** "LaughTracks Vol. 1" Shanachie 8022 [1996]. #
11. Under Your Pillow **COSY SHERIDAN** "One Sure Thing" Waterbug WBG 0024 [1996]. #
12. Cheyenne **TERRY LEE HALE** "Leaving West" Glitterhouse GRCD 399 [1996]. ^
13. Meanwhile the Rain **JOEL RAFAEL Band** "Old Wood Barn" Reluctant Angel RAM 0423 [1996]. #
14. Alberta's Child **IAN TYSON** "All the Good 'Uns" Vanguard 79495 - 2 [1996]. #
15. Wasteland of the Free **IRIS DeMENT** "The Way I Should" Warner Bros. 9 46188-2 [1996].
16. House Made from Cards **THE PICKETTS** "Euphonium" Rounder CD 9056 [1996]. #
17. Clear Night **THE GOURDS** "Dem's Good Beeble" Munich America MUSA 501 [1996]. ^
18. September Song **KATE WOLF** "Carry It On" Flat Rock FR 301 [1996]. #
19. Old Friends **MARY McCASLIN** "Old Friends" Philo PHCD 1046 [1977, 1996]. #
20. On Any Old Sunday **ROD MacDONALD** "And Then He Woke Up" Brambus 199684-2 [1996]. ^
21. One Kiss Won't Hurt **LOOSE DIAMONDS** "Fresco Fiasco" Freedom FR1011 [1996]. #
22. If I Ever Pass This Way Again **JACK HARDY** "The Passing" Brambus 199789-2 [1997]. ^
23. Runaway **STEVE GOODMAN** "The Easter Tapes" Red Pyjamas RPJ-009CD [1996]. #
24. Here's That Rainy Day **MEGAN McDONOUGH** "My One and Only Love" Shanachie 5027 [1996]. #
25. A Song For **TOWNES VAN ZANDT** "Abnormal" Return To Sender/Normal RTS 24 [1996]. ^
26. One Million Miles From Here **G.W. McLENNAN** "Fireboy" Beggars Banquet BBQCD 127 [1996].
27. Amarillo Highway **ROBERT EARL KEEN** "No.2 LIVE Dinner" Sugar Hill SHCD-1051 [1996]. #
28. The Great Divide **CHRIS BURROUGHS** "Clutter" Blue Rose BLUCD 021 [1996]. ^
29. Dance Upon this Earth **THE BURNS SISTERS** "In This World" Philo PH CD 1198 [1997]. #
30. The Land of Love **NOEL BRAZIL/VARIOUS** "The Loving Kind" Dara TORCD 085 [1996].
31. Malted Milk **JIM HENRY & BROOKS WILLIAMS** "Ring Some Changes" Signature Sounds SIG 1238 [1997]. #
32. The Road to Ensenada **LYLE LOVETT** "The Road To Ensenada" MCA/Curb MCD 11409 [1996].
33. Sleep of the Just **MARTI JONES** "My Long Haired Life" Sugar Hill SHCD 5503 [1996]. #
34. Bill and Annie **CHUCK BRODSKY** "The 1996 Fast Folk Revue" FAST FOLK FF808 [1996]. #
35. Untroubled Mind **KEVIN CARROLL & THE SLEESTACKS** "Redemption Day" Freedom FR1009 [1996]. #
36. Broken Branches **DARDEN SMITH** "Deep Fantastic Blue" Plump 6905-2 [1996]. #
37. Song of the Trees **JOHN TRUDELL/VARIOUS** "If A Tree Falls" Earth Beat ! R2 72495 [1996]. #
38. The Night's Too Long **LUCINDA WILLIAMS** "Lone Star O/st." Daring CD3023 [1996]. #
39. Wild Wild West **SHAKIN' APOSTLES** "Austin, Texas" Blue Rose/East Side Digital BLU CD0036 [1996]. ^
40. Higher Ground **JERRY JEFF WALKER** "Scamp" Tried & True CD 4441 [1996]. #
41. The Kenworth of my Dreams **RICHARD SHINDELL/VARIOUS** "Treestar Revue" BCN Records BCN 10142-2 [1996]. #
42. When Word Gets Around **G. W. McLENNAN** "Watershed" Beggars Banquet BEGA 118CD
43. Iron Horse **KENNEDY ROSE/VARIOUS** "Women - Live from Mountain Stage" Blue Plate BPM-308CD
44. Texas Moon **GARY P. NUNN** "Under My Hat" Campfire CF-20010-2 [1996]. #
45. Johnny's Camaro **DAVID WILCOX** "East Asheville Hardware" Koch KOC-CD-3-7920 [1995]. #
46. Gypsy Rider **MIDNIGHT CHOIR** "Midnight Choir" Fjording/Sonet 119742 [1994]. ^
47. Winsome Smile **CHRIS SMITHER** "Small Revelations" Hightone HCD 8077 [1996]. #
48. Apothecary **HAZELDINE/VARIOUS** "Luxury Liner Vol. 1" Glitterhouse GRCD 413 [1996]. ^
49. Holy Land **LES SAMPOU** "Fall From Grace" Flying Fish CD FF 657 [1996]. #
50. Heal In The Wisdom **BOBBY BRIDGER** "Kerrville Folk Festival - Live 1986" (cassette only, no index no.) [1987]. #



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**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.

This issue was pretty well pulled together over Christmas 1996. In the blink of an eye we're one sixth of the way through '97 and the period between has been disturbingly slow as far as memorable new album releases has been concerned - except for Pacheco's stunning **"Woodstock Winter"** that is. I hope that the beat picks up sometime soon. Then again, when Transatlantic finally decide to push the GO button, there's fourteen cuts on Terry Clarke's damned fine **"The Heart Sings"** to look forward to. Would I lie to you. Trust me.

Regarding the contents of this issue, and in no particular order, thanks are due to **Rod Kennedy, Fred & Mary Eaglesmith, Ellen Russell, Michaela O'Brien, Sally Reeves, Shawn Colvin, Jane Siberry, Dar Williams, Carol Young, John & Laurie Hill, Brian Wood and Alpha Ray.** This issue is dedicated to the memory of the late, the great, the one and only Townes Van Zandt.

### TOWNES VAN ZANDT

Townes Van Zandt passed away on Wednesday 1st January 1997 at his home in Smyrna, Tennessee. He was aged 52. During the week prior to his death Townes had undergone hip surgery. The great grandson of one of the first settlers in Fort Worth, he was born into a prominent Texas oil family, yet Townes life was a *"dance to beat of his own personal drum."* Having dropped out of the University of Colorado in 1966, Townes gravitated to Houston and fell in with fellow Texas based song poets, Guy Clark, Jerry Jeff

Walker and Mickey Newberry.

Van Zandt released his first album **"For the Sake of the Song"** on the Poppy label in 1968. It was co-produced by the legendary Jack Clement, with liner notes by Newberry. His last, and 10th studio album [depending on which ones you count] **"No Deeper Blue"** was cut in Ireland in 1994, with Philip Donnelly producing the sessions. Van Zandt's enjoyed commercial success during the early eighties when Emmylou and Don Williams enjoyed a No. 3 Country Chart single with "If I Needed You." The following year Willie Nelson and Merle Haggard took Townes' **"Pancho & Lefty"** to the No. 1 slot. At the time of his death, it was rumoured that Townes had signed with a major record label.

As far as the subject of *"live"* albums is concerned, the double **"Live at The Old Quarter"** is a classic. The spate of recent *"live"* Townes Van Zandt releases have been of extremely dubious quality [and seemingly repetitious content], although they do appear to have been issued with the man's consent.

I first saw Townes play at Kerrville in 1986, with Mickey White featured on guitar. Then there were a couple of local [West Midlands] performances during the latter half of the eighties. I don't recall seeing him play during the ninties, although I never failed to buy the albums. Those albums and concerts could be a *"hard road."* There were some triumphs. And there was also that tinge of sadness when reflecting on *the could have been*, as Townes fought to keep his capabilities under control.

In closing, I won't bother trotting out that that tedious Steve Earle quote. I'd guess that Townes would have agreed that he had lived his life to the hilt and then some. May he find eternal peace and rest in the place he has passed on to.....after all, Townes Van Zandt was one of life's unique and true diamonds.

December 1982

*frozen pipes again  
another cold winter  
has screamed  
around the corner  
and surrounded the house  
with its icy tentacles  
pushing on windows  
till they pressure pop,  
flapping battered shingles down,  
ripping the last Catalpa leaf loose,  
and coating the yard  
in a soft, white sweat*



*Alpha Ray*

*You can also find us at:*

Kronikle Web Page  
E-Mail

<http://www.waverider.co.uk/~kerrkron>  
[kerrkron@waverider.co.uk](mailto:kerrkron@waverider.co.uk)