



Tom Paxton / Anne Hills **“Under American Skies”** Appleseed Recordings

Once upon a time - almost twenty years ago, to be precise - and only for a short period [of time], there was a trio who performed as, The Best Of Friends. Sadly, one of those Friends - Bob Gibson - is no longer with us, while, thankfully, Tom and Anne very much are. The Best Of Friends never got around to issuing any recordings. The trio are, however, featured on the closing cut of this collection performing "And Lovin' You," co-written by Bob and Tom. The track appears thanks to the taping of a WFMT, Chicago radio broadcast, circa 1984.

The concept for this collection came out of a conversation between Anne and the Appleseed label owner, Jim Musselman, wherein they discussed the *falling from grace* of many noteworthy folk songs written during the height of the 1960's folk revival. As a result, the covers on this collection come from Richard Farina, Gil Turner, Malvina Reynolds and from the late seventies, Kate Wolf. From more recent times there's, Tom Russell's atmospheric piece, "Manzanar" - which tells of the incarceration during World War II of a Japanese citizen who had settled in America circa 1927. And let's not forget Mr Paxton or Miss Hills, who, in their time, have been known to produce a thoughtful tune or two. In this age where *spin* has become the vital ingredient in almost every facet of life, they came up with the idea of *"I'll sing yours, you sing mine, and sometimes we'll sing them together."* In that regard, Anne performs with Tom on his prayer for environmental restraint, "There Goes The Mountain," while Tom takes on one of Anne's finest, "Follow That Road." The album title track, a Paxton / Hills collaboration, focuses on the execution, for murder, of a woman who, from the outset of her sad life was an abused child. The conclusion being, that she was never given the opportunity to enjoy a productive and fruitful life. As for beautiful simplicity, it's right there with Anne's rendition of Paxton's, "Getting' Up Early." A mighty fine collection. Mighty fine.

Folkwax Score : 7 out of 10

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