KERRVILLE KRONIKLE

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Lucy Kaplansky

Ellis Paul

John & Laurie Hill c/w Brian Wood

Kerrville-kompacts, kassettes & other koincidences.

Kerrville '96
- Memories & a four album review

Jimmie Dale Gilmore/Erica Wheeler/Fred Eaglesmith [2]/Alejandro Escovedo/Hunter Moore/Bob Neuwirth/Mac Gayden/Michael Stanley/Jerry Jeff Walker/Andrew Hardin/Don Walser/Hugh Moffatt/Julian Dawson/Derailers/Greg Trooper/Various - "Out of the Blue" Vol. 1,2 & 3/Terry Lee Hale/David Munyon [3]/Bill Morrissey/Various - "Strong Women Rule the World"/Eddi Reader/The Blazers/Ron Sexsmith/O/ST. "Lone Star"/Rosie Flores/Katy Moffatt/Tammy Rogers/Carolyn Wennblom/Various - "Threadgill's Supper Session - Second Helpings"/Various - "One More Song - An Album for Club Passim"/Wes McGhee/David Massengill/Tom Paxton/Jim Ringer/Carol Noonan Band/Domestic Science Club/Mickey Newbury/Banded Geckos/Dave Alvin/Carol Elliott/Chuck Brodsky/John Gorka/Marti Jones/Various - "The Women of Kerrville" & "Kerrville - 1995 Highlights"/Jeff Wilkinson/Ellis Paul/Iain Matthews/Alan Rhody/Mollie O'Brien/Chris Hillman & Herb Pedersen/Carolyn Hester/Peter Keane/The Delavantes/David Olney/Various - "Welcome to Transatlantic Country"/Various - "Honor - A Benefit for the Honor The Earth Campaign"/Various - "Orphans of God"/Various - "the bottom line - volume 2"/Kim Miller/Steve Gillette & Cindy Mangsen/Richard Dobson

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"Braver Newer World" is quite simply the finest album drawn from a country foundation to appear in the ninties. Make that, since the conception of recorded sound. In the experimental stakes, it's the genre equivalent of **"Pet Sounds."** It's pretty solidly Texas in source and gestation. For openers, it was produced by T-Bone Burnett. Of the eleven cuts, including the oldest song Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Black Snake Moan," a decade were authored by Texans. So what are the ingredients which make this Jimmie Dale Gilmore recording so special ? Well, for instance.....there's the ethereal intro to the other worldly "Come Fly Away," the distorted "Bombay" lead guitar on the extremely hummable [Gilmore penned] title track, a Cormac McCarthy influenced Tex-Mex storyline to "Borderland" and the soaring and swooping melody of Al Strehli's "Sally." And after all that, there's still much much more. Working from any angle you want, there are no weak links. Finally, there's that unique Gilmore voice. He has never sung with a clearer vision and a larger ache. An ache the horizons of which match the extensive boundary of the Lone Star state. The total sum of **"Braver Newer World"** is nothing less than pure and certain perfection. The missing Texas link ? The execution, no less. The sessions took place in L.A. Not unlike Emmylou's **"Wrecking Ball,"** there's the pleasing scent of cocking a snoot at the establishment and musically launching off that toeboard into the wide blue yonder. Thing is, I love it when a plan totally comes together. And this one certainly has [succeeded in that aim]. I think this is what they call classic.....and I didn't even mention the liner artwork. Available in your local record store now or try **CDX, The Olde Coach House, Windsor Crescent, Radyr, S. Glamorgan CF4 8AE.**

It's always the curse of not listening closely enough at the time. Lacking attention and concentration, and subsequently regretting things at a [transatlantic] distance. I caught Stateside solo performances by Erica Wheeler on a number of ocassions recently. If I said that I was underwhelmed, then this Lawrie Lewis production, **"The Harvest,"** has engendered the antithesis of that Stateside impression. Rich ain't big enough an *umbrella.* Lewis has avoided the obvious trap of stamping her bluegrass roots [end to end] on this set. Materialwise, it features eleven Wheeler originals, plus Claudia Schmidt's "Quiet Hills." Lyrically and musically, Wheeler's latest rainbow is a spectrum of not just seven, but an infinite range of colours. There's the - tragedy of a teenage husband's accidental death in the title cut, while Erica concludes that his 16 year old, newly pregnant wife has "already lived a lifetime" - cinematographic aerial landscapes of "Arrowheads" - celtic sound which shroud "Colorado Town" - rhythmic swing of the raunch that's "Hot" and finally, the spine tingling beauty and heartfelt tribute that is, "Goodnight Moon." Frankly speaking, considering the countless strengths possessed by **"The Harvest"**, Wheeler has joined *that league* which counts *hitters* such as Cash, Colvin, Chapin Carpenter and the Williams *Sistern* [Lucinda and Dar]. What's more, check your laurels Cheryl. Watch this space and remember. Available from **Signature Sounds Recording Company, P.O. Box 106, Whately, MA 01093, U.S.A.**

By way of sneaking in a connection with one of the album reviews in Issue 20, Fred J. Eaglesmith penned the excellent liner notes to Lynn Miles' *totally bewitching* new Philo album, **"Slightly Haunted."** So what of Fred ? Well, these Canucks appear to be recording with a vengence these days [witness also the review of Wyckham Porteous' Bohemia Beat newie in Issue 20]. With twelve titles such as the opening "Sharecroppin,'" on **"Things Is Changin'"** Fred comes across as a modern day Woody Guthrie, from North of the 49th parallel. "Harold Wilson" alludes to farming with only a *"pick and a shovel,"* until that is, the bank repossesses his land. There's a feeling of helpless desperation [akin to that prevalent in the States during the early thirties] in the lives of the characters who pass through the Eaglesmith's lyrics. Here in the ninties, some people would claim we're almost running on a parallel track. Even with support from his four piece band, The Flying Squirrels, the overall sound remains firmly set in an acoustic vein. Import.

Vertical is yet another Nashville label, but Fred Eaglesmith, ain't no hat act. Musically, Eaglesmith treads the same verdant valley as LaFave, fellow countryman Wyckham Porteous, Greg Trooper, Tom Russell et all. So we're talkin' roots rockers, and ballads with an intelligent backbone. Subjectively and vocally, "49 Tons" could be an outake from **"Nebraska."** All eleven cuts were composed by Fred, albeit that one is a forty nine second reprise of "49 Tons" - neat timin' huh ??? Elsewhere there's tales of overgrown gas stations, racin' on the drag, lost love and empty soda machines. Fred's **"Drive-in Movie"** is without doubt, a blockbuster as far as main features go. Now signed to the estimable Young/Hunter Management team, who are also directing Dar Williams' interstellar career, you're going to hear lots more of Fred from here on in. Are you paying attention ? I said, right ? For you completists out there, there's six Eaglesmith albums prior to this one [three on vinyl, a double cassette in a wooden box and two other CD's] plus a single 7" single, to catch up on. The address for the latter, **Sweetwater Music, General Delivery, Alberton, Ontario, Canada LOR 1AO.**

Alejandro Escovedo was signed to Rykodisc immediately after the 1995 **SXSW Music Festival** in Austin, Tx. and following on from the 1994 **"Hard Road"** *2 for 1* reissue of The True Believers albums by this Salem, Mass. based label, I've been patiently waiting for the appearance of Alejandro's third solo presentation. **"With These Hands"** perfectly follows in the footsteps of **"Gravity"** and **"Thirteen Years."** Alejandro Escovedo, the songwriter and musician, is a melting pot of influences and genres and he gives vent to most of them here. Some samples ? There's the Buick McKane influenced heavy metal of "Crooked Frame," "Pissed Off 2AM" the ballad [with harmonies c/o Jenny Warnes], the violin enriched country waltz "Nickel and a Spoon" [featuring a Willie Nelson vocal], the bluesy "Little Bottles" and the driving rhythms of the Escovedo Family Percussion Orchestra [including Uncle Pete of Santana fame and cousin Sheila E] on the title cut. No contradiction. Quite simply.....bloody extraordinary. Import available at your local specialist record store now, or try **CDX.**

Missouri born and bred, and currently Nashville based, if you sought a comparison.....Hunter Moore's writing is a cross between Robert Earl Keen and Kevin Welch, on this generally acoustic sounding set from Brambus. **"Delta Moon"** is the follow-up to his 1993 independently released, debut recording **"Departure."** Trackwise, the narrator in "I Should Be Gone" ponders over *"how do I avoid cheating on my best friend with his wife,"* while in "Home Again" the beauty of seemingly plain [and familiar] surroundings truly lie in the eye of the beholder. The returning prodigal son is shot by his brother in "You Can't Ever Tell About Folks," while the jury *is still out* as the song closes. Ricky Skaggs, Don Williams and Kathy Mattea have already cut Moore's above [that mundane *"Moon in June"*] average variety of compositions, which makes this *Nashville scribe* a name to watch.

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Ellis Paul

The interview with Ellis Paul took place at Camp Nashville, in the lower meadow of Quiet Valley Ranch campgrounds on the afternoon of Saturday 25th May 1996. Thanks to Ralph Jacodine of Ralph Jacodine Management/Black Wolf Records, Boston, Mass. for all his help in setting up the interview and to Ellis for sparing the time to talk.....

Fort Kent, Maine is where I was born. It's on the Canadian border. A lot of French speaking people live there. It's basically a bi-lingual community, and I had a pretty heavy duty French accent growing up, until I moved out of the area. My grandfather was a potato farmer. I worked on his farm, as I grew up. The whole area is based on the potato industry. Kids got out of school for three weeks each year, to harvest the crop. You wake up at six in the morning, and go pick potatoes till six at night. They bring you home in an old dirty bus. The climate when you wake up in the Fall - it'll be thirty degrees maybe and frost on the ground. By midday it might get up to seventy or eighty and then it would be cold again at night when the sun goes down. My father was Executive Director of the Maine Potato Commission. He did all the marketing of the potato product for the state. He also did research and actually invented a few potato hybrids. And got to name them, but not after himself. We moved to the Mid-West for a while. My father was working in the agriculture business in the Dakotas and in Minnesota. We moved back to Maine when I was about twelve. He was still doing potatoes, since he was a potato specialist by education. I didn't play guitar until I was twenty one and was at College - but I was a musician in High School. That's where I got my interest in music. We had a good music programme, and I had formal lessons with trumpet at school. Stuff like that. I can read melody lines and that kind of thing. The High School was in Presque Isle. That's my home town.

You went to College on a track scholarship.

I was state champion for Maine in High School. I was second in the country in the National Age Group Championships. My distance was five kilometers. I got a few scholarship offers, and decided to go to Boston College. I got injured, three years into my degree, when I was a Junior. I had all this time on my hands. I missed music a lot and was looking for an outlet to express myself. I had to take a year off from running, so I started playing guitar.

Had you listened much to music up till then.

On the radio. I think around that time, this classic hits station came into vogue In Boston. You were hearing - Neil Young and Bob Dylan and James Taylor and Joni Mitchell. Up until that point, they hadn't been on the air since the seventies. This was like, the mid eighties. I wasn't very familiar with that kind of music.

Did you feel an almost instant affinity with it.

Yeah. Because it was acoustic based. When I heard Dylan for the first time, in depth, I was dumbfounded by the way he sounded. I spent a long time just makin' fun of him, just because his voice was so funky. Now, I think he's a brilliant singer. A little familiarity can overcome any prejudice, I guess.

So you picked up a guitar.

I started playing and learned a few songs by other writers to begin with. I started writing originals within a few months. My songs were pretty horrendous to begin with. They kept on getting better and better. When I graduated, I started playing at open mikes in bars in Boston. Eventually discovered that there were folk clubs where people were actually listening, and not drinking and carousing while you played. I got involved in that circuit. I think that's why I've become so lyric concious - because of those listening rooms, where you really have to rely on words in those situations.

Photo : Kerrville Kronikle Katalogue

Ellis Paul - Mainstage, Kerrville Folk Festival Saturday, May 25th 1996

Were you playing open mikes seven nights a week.

Three or four nights a week. Within a one hour drive of Boston was usually my limit. Occasionally, I'd drive up to New Hampshire and do a show there. I'd also play the Western suburbs, or just outside of Boston. There was a couple of regular places I played open mikes - The Nameless Coffee House in Cambridge, and a place called The Naked City. The latter one was held in a hallway, in this old building, on Wednesday and Thursday nights. They just put up candles. Eventually the police found out about it and shut it down. By that point, there were about two hundred people attending that open mike.

Boston has a strong folk music heritage, particularly in Cambridge during the sixties with the original Club 47, and later with Passim's.

And it started up again in the late eighties. From the mid seventies to the mid eighties, there was a real black hole there. Nothing was being developed. Then the New York **FAST FOLK** scene started up with people like Shawn Colvin, John Gorka, Suzanne Vega and Jack Hardy - that was in New York in the mid eighties. And in Boston, it began to well up again.

You had a day job, as a school teacher.

I was a case woker and a teacher for inner city kids who had been kicked out of the school system for emotional problems. Many of them had criminal records. It wasn't a good job for music, because I was so burned out by the end of the day. Mentally, it was real hard. I had about five years with those inner city kids, while trying to do music on the side. I finally quit to put out my first record and live off music full time. I think the progress I made sort of magnified very quickly, because I had time to concentrate on what I was doing. I put more time into it. More time to focus. And develop an approach to songwriting.

From the beginning were you a story songwriter - in terms of initially painting a scene -

I would paint the scene, but I wouldn't develop the characters or the moment. I've always been good with words and using them as a hook that you could fit people into. I really didn't start developing the idea of using character sketches and developing a story - or a moment in the character's life, until after the first record - when **"Stories"** came out, that was when the focus began to be purely on that moment in time in a character's life. Somehow that explains everything that came before and everything that came after.

Was walking away from your day job, which paid the rent and put food on your table, a hard decision.

No. Early on, I tried it a couple of times and kept realising that financially it wasn't going to work out. When I put out my first CD, I knew from the sales alone that I would be able to at least cover my rent. If I worked hard enough gigwise, then I would be able to do music full time. I was about twenty seven then, which is a late start for a full time musician. For a folk musician, that's about the point where you're ready to go hit the road. You've got enough backlog of songs to survive.

You released a couple of cassettes early in your career.

Yeah. It was all my own material. One was called **"Urban Folk Songs"** and the second was **"My Home."** They're pretty green you know. I went into a little eight track studio, and did them live. I used a couple of other players. Bass and another guitar, and a singer here and there. I sold about five thousand of those over the course of two or three years, so I knew when **"Say Something"** came out on CD, I'd be able to sell five thousand copies rather quickly. And they went quickly. **"Urban Folk Songs"** was cut at Honey Bear Studios. For the second one, I used a place called Playtime Studios. They were very basically equipped studios. I self produced them and got some friends together to help play on them.

You won the Boston Underground Showcase. It sounds like the open mike in the hallway deal. Was it the same place.

No, that was actually a very serious thing. Two hundred people sent tapes in and they picked eighty to play. They divided those eighty performers into ten clubs. Eight people would showcase and two people would graduate as winners from that night. There were quarter finals, semi finals and the final. I won the final at this big club in Boston. Got got to play for three hundred people. It was the biggest crowd that I had played to, at that time.

How did they maintain continuity of judging.

There was none. It was just a crapshoot. There were different judges at every club. You never knew who was going to have a particular taste, musically. These contests are all biased. The bias is based on the opinion of the judge and what the judge will think of a piece. They're really meaningless, but the fact is you're going out to a club and you're playing to a lot of people. That's what you need to be there for.

By then, had you begun playing farther and farther afield.

No, not really. Just around New England and doing Colleges here and there. I had no management at this stage. I befriended a person, who became my manager. His name is Ralph Jacodine. He always wanted to start a record label, and he heard that I was putting a record out on my own, without having a label. He said *"I'll make a label and I'll double your money* [**NOTE.** I think Ellis was alluding to the recording budget] *and we'll go in there and do it right."* We got Bill Morrissey, who is a great songwriter to produce it. It was broadcast on some commercial station in Boston and sold five thousand copies, basically in town. That instantly made it afforable to do music full time. I could gig in Boston and make a thousand bucks. Then I could hit the road and loose that money. Then go back to Boston make some more money.

Did you pick the musicians who played on the first album. There are some pretty well known Boston pickers there.

It was a combination of both of us. Bill and I. We talked it through, to make sure that we were both meeting eye to eye on what we wanted the sound to be like. We got Johnny Cunningham in. He is a good buddy of Bill's. And has since become a great friend of mine. Duke Levine too.

He has been touring with Mary Chapin Carpenter lately.

Yeah. He also ended up producing **"Stories"** for me. He has become one of my great friends.

How did Windham Hill pick up on "Ashes to Dust" and put it on "Legacy II" in 1992.

They made a call to the entire music industry that they were looking to put out a songwriter compilation album. It had been done before, but this was going to be a very big thing on a national label. One of the people who runs the open mike at The Old Vienna Coffeehouse sent in a tape. At that time there was enough of a buzz about me. There was also collaborative evidence that it was worth their while. They called me up and said *"Would you like to be on it."* At that point, I thought *"Wow, I've made it."* They had done one before that, and it had done really well. I was very excited to be on that one. It gave me some national exposure. It didn't sell as many copies as the first one. Will Ackerman, the owner of Windham Hill, quit. Sold the company. He was the spearhead and

energy behind the label. **"Legacy II"** was sort of put aside and didn't have as big an impact, relative to the first record. It was still a calling card and I could say, *"I'm on* ***"Legacy II."*** Every DJ and folk promoter in the country would recognise it. I got a lot of phone calls about it.

You mentioned The Old Vienna Coffeehouse. Was that a place where you played regularly.

It was a regular open mike place. I was there every Thursday night. Passim's, at that point, didn't have an open mike. It was run by this curmudgeon called Bob Donlin, who we all came to love once we got in the club. It was a hard door to knock down. It took months and months for me to finally get a gig. The only reason I got one was because, of a guy named Dick Pleasance. He was the big folk music DJ in Boston. He said, *"You need to hire Ellis Paul and get him in here."* Passim was - I loved the club and I loved Bob - he was not very well organised. The first day that I got in there to do a show - it was the biggest club gig of my career, at least in my mind at that point. I was opening for John Gorka. Bob had double booked that slot, so I got axed in the process. He put me on, maybe the following weekend - he eventually started using me as a regular opener, for a whole weekend. Then I became a headlining act.

Was End Construction, which you were involved with, a Boston equivalent of FAST FOLK.

Well, sort of - it became - we were all hanging out at The Old Vienna Coffeehouse open mike. We were all twenty three, twenty four years old and decided that we would combine our mailing lists. Brian Dozer, Jim Infantino and a guy named Jon Svetkey. Brian is actually here at the festival. We broke up - sort of like The Beatles phenomenon - after a while. It was just too many egos, trying to stick their spoons in the soup. It helped a lot, because we all quadrupled our mailing lists. We started doing group shows together. It almost turned into a band thing - we went up there with four guitars and sat in a circle. We'd collaborate on everyone else's material. It ended up being a really wonderful thing. I think by being amongst - Jon Svetkey for example, strums very loudly and does uptempo stuff - I learned a lot from watching him play. Jim Infantino is very, very funny - one of the best black humour songwriters in the country, I think. I learned a lot from having to follow him in a set. You basically had to come up with the goods, in order to keep up with those guys. I had some advantages - I think I had a prettier voice. My songs were a little bit more accessible. It ended up being a great thing for all of us. We learned a lot from each other, but eventually we just burned out on the competitiveness. It had run it's course. We were talking recently about doing a big reunion show in Boston - doing a theatre show. I think that we probably will, in the next few years.

Was it a boost to your career when HEAR MUSIC MAGAZINE picked up your first album.

They helped me out a lot. They put me in the Editor's Page as sort of *the big pick. A folk rocket* is like one of those rubber band wind-up things. It goes, and you never know how far it's going to go. Every little bit helps. I'm realising that, with my music - it's like you get one little chunk of success. A building block. No single building block is going to be the thing that puts you over. It's the collective building blocks that build this pyramid, which is large enough for the entire world to see. I think I'm at the stage in America, where I can see the pyramid now. Now, I have to get it big enough so people outside the folk world can see it.

When you came to record "Stories," was it because you'd met Duke Levine on the "Say Something" sessions that you got him to help co-produce your second album.

Yeah. We were lookin' for somebody - I really wanted to have control of what was happening, but I wanted someone who could go places where I couldn't go in my head, musically. We called Duke and I said, *"Basically what I want to do is co-produce this."* I wanted to capture some of that early seventies, **"Blood on the Tracks,"** The Band kind of thing. Duke's band was basically that kind of set up, with a Hammond B-3.

Which is not an easy instrument to play properly.

No. But the guy we used - a guy named Tommy West was phenomenal.

Who is this other guy, Mark Tanzer, who shares a production credit.

He was the engineer. I used him on **"Stories"** and I used him on my new record **"Carnival of Voices."** **"Stories"** is great. I think I had a whole year to sit on the songs and write them. I wasn't working a day job. I was living on a farm. I'd go out in the barn and write till I had the song captured.

How did you pick the studio for "Stories." Was it one that Duke was familiar with.

Sort of. Blue Jay is the big studio in the Boston area anyway. Aerosmith has recorded there. The studio is located outside of Boston, in a little town called Carlisle. It's only something like twenty minutes from my house. It's a nice place and a professional studio.

Did it take a long time to cut the second album.

No. We were still working on a limited budget. It was a bigger than for **"Say Something,"** but it was still small - we cut the record in about two weeks.

In the same year, you were invited to go to Christine Lavin's Songwriter Retreat in Martha's Vineyard.

Actually, I didn't get invited to go there. I was touring a lot. I wasn't involved with Christine Lavin and her circle of musicians, who were doing the annual thing. I went up to play an open mike. Christine hadn't heard me before. As a result of playing this song at an open mike, she put me on the record - that wasn't supposed to happen with open mike singers, because they didn't have any of the recording equipment there. They just ran a DAT off the board and used professional mikes.

I heard you on the "Legacy II" album. Nothing prepared me for "King of Seventh Avenue." Where did that song come from.

I was reading a book called **"Emperor of the Air"** by - I can't remember his name, it might come to me - it's a collection of short stories. There's a character in one of the stories - an old guy who used to go out and look at the stars. He was evaluating his life, by where he was at. I wanted to have that kind of personality - an older gentleman, who is a widower, who goes out on a ledge of a tall building in New York City. He misses his wife and is lonely. You don't really know whether he is going to jump or not. He's kind of posing the question to himself. All the things he sees, remind him of his relationship with his wife - silhouettes of people in windows. A couple fight and then make love - a burgler in another window. Images from real life transposed into his life, which trigger his memories - and trigger the emptyness of what he's got going on. Eventually he sees the police coming and a crowd forms - I took a lot of time with that song. I really, really tried to develop a character and the moment - I think it's one of the songs I've worked hardest on.

You've been coming here to Kerrville for five years. Did you enter New Folk from the beginning.

I did. I tried five years in a row, before I got in. In 1994 I made it. Once I got in, I thought *"Well, I think I got a great chance"* because I knew the songs were - once you got to know what they were looking for in the contest, you knew what songs to submit. I wasn't necessarily writing for the contest, but I might have submitted something that was maybe too political at first. Or maybe something that was just a little bit too personal. They're looking for great songs I think, that are kind of universal. That can be sung by another person, and still have the same effect. That's finally what I sent in to them - two songs from **"Stories,"** "All Things Being the Same" and "Here She Is" which I think are pretty universal themes. It worked. I got in. It's easier to win when there's thirty two people, which the finals is, than it is to be chosen from eight hundred for thirty two slots. I was pretty happy to be in.

Did it have many positive benefits.

Yeah. It was the biggest building block, I found. I think the reason why it was the biggest building block, was because I was getting all the other building blocks. This was like pure confirmation that I was somebody to look out for. There was a little buzz happening anyway. Then I won the big contest in the folkscene. That really started to grease the wheel for me.

Did you enter any other song contests. Like Telluride.

I hadn't done Telluride and once I'd won Kerrville, I figured that that was the one I wanted anyway. There were a few people that were upset that I was in the contest to begin with. I was already getting a lot of national press. They probably felt, *"Well, you don't really need this."*

They thought your name was already established.

And it wasn't. I think regionally in New England, it was at that point. Winning here was going to be my calling card for the rest of the country.

How did you become involved with the Internet Quartet series of concerts.

Through Alan Rowoth who set them up - he and I have become great, great friends. He has been really supportive of my music. The Internet has been incredibly supportive of my music. When he was setting it up, I volunteered my services right off the bat. I knew I would be a big help to the group. A lot of the people in the quartet I was in, hadn't travelled nationally. Even on the East coast, where I had a following. I knew I could always draw a crowd and make it an interesting night. Then Buddy Mondlock got involved with it. [**NOTE.** Michael McNevin and Dave's True Story {Kelly Flint and David Cantor} made up the Quartet which toured with Ellis]. It was a one time deal with the Quartet, which lasted for two weeks and maybe ten shows.

Were you touring for long periods as a solo act by then.

Initially I'd go out for maybe two or three weeks and just try and get whatever gigs I could. Now it's gotten to the point where I'm doing four and five week tours. I'm doing almost two hundred dates a year.

How did it work out that Philo signed you.

DNA, which is Rounder's distributor, was also distributing **"Say Something"** and **"Stories."** Once they found out how many copies were being sold - we approached them about putting out **"Say Something"** but they weren't interested at the time. They subsequently realised how many copies it was selling and became interested, without us knowing about it. We put out **"Stories"** on our own. After it sold about ten thousand copies, we said *"Maybe to get it boosted to the next level, we need to talk to record labels again."* We went to Rounder and said *"Would you like to put this out."* They said *"We would have put this out when you recorded it, if you had told us that you were looking for a label."* At that point, I guess I was waiting for them to come to me, which is not a good attitude to have in this business. You have to really go to them. So we put it out on Rounder/Philo.

You were quite happy with the idea of moving "Stories" to a national label.

I wanted to get back all the investment I had in it - for our little label - Ralph's and my label. We did that. We knew that if we wanted it to really hit bigger nationally, we needed to go to a bigger label. They're doing great with it. They couldn't do a lot of new promotion with it, because it had been out for a year, year and a half when they got it - they got it in stores. They licenced **"Stories,"** so it's going to come back to me. They're just renting it. When **"Carnival of Voices"** comes out, that's going to be their first test as a label for me. To put promotion behind it and get it in stores.

Tell us about the producer of your new record.

Jerry Marotta had done Kristen Hall's record - which I loved. I love her music and I thought he did a great job on it. Ralph bumped into him at a bar. We were looking around for a producer at that point. We had heard he was doing a friend of ours, Barb Kessler. Ralph told him that we were interested in maybe using him. Jerry came out to see me play at a show and loved it. Then we hooked up and did the record in January this year.

Where did you record the album.

We recorded it at Apple Head Studios in Woodstock, New York where Jerry lives, and mixed it at Blue Jay where we had done the previous record. By doing it out there, we had a little more access to people like bassman, Tony Levin. Tony lives there. And also Jerry's circle of players. I really wanted to get out of the Boston scene, because everyone is using the same players. We got Duke [Levine] on it again. We had a guy named Bill Dillon playing guitar. He flew in from New Orleans and spent the entire session with us. He has worked with Joni Mitchell on her last record - and Sarah McLachlan and Counting Crows. There was my acoustic guitar and Jerry on drums - we had Patty Griffin came in for back-up vocals, because she's my big choice of backing vocalists.

How many song are on the new album.

There are eleven. I wrote nine of them in the month of January. We were recording by the end of that month.

Didn't you have a back catalogue of songs for the new album.

I did - but it's hard to write on the road. I was writing these songs on the road. I realised as the album was approaching, that I only had two that I would really be confident and comfortable with putting on the record. The subject matter of the songs I already had, weren't intriguing enough for me to re-edit them. I still play them occasionally, but they are sort of like set fillers - when you need a lighter side of things, I might pull one out. The new songs are good. I'm proud of them and certainly it's a better record than I would have put out, if I'd stuck with the older songs I had.

What are the song titles.

The album is called **"Carnival of Voices."** Again, I was trying to set up something chromatically. I had this concept, of a record of character sketches - different people in different towns. That ties in with the carnival mentality of travelling. I have a song called "Midnight Strikes Too Soon" which is about a friend of mine in New York City. The second song is called "Paris In A Day" which is about my wife and I, on our honeymoon.

So the record isn't confined to North America.

Well, that's the only song that mentions a place outside America. The third song is about traveling in a blizzard aboard a subway car in Boston [**NOTE.** The song is titled "Trolley Car"]. The fourth song is called "Deliver Me" which is going to be the single. It's a roots rock thing, acoustic based, but it's kind of a love song. The fifth song is about New Years Eve in New Orleans. There's different pictures of people who kind of are having a miserable time.

Have you ever spent New Years Eve in New Orleans.

No. I actually based it on my New Years Eve experience, this past year, in Boston. I've spent a lot of time in New Orleans, so I was trying to capture the mood of what happens there around that time. I compared Mardi Gras to New Years Eve, and tried to picture New Orleans. Then I've got a song called "All My Heroes Were Junkies" which is a character sketch of a person I'm good friends with, who runs a coffeehouse on Martha's Vineyard. He's a recovering addict and got to party with a lot of famous people in his time. He has great stories and a great sense of humour about his past. There's a song called "Weightless" about a woman who runs a bed and breakfast for songwriters in Nashville. She's actually camped over here. It's a song about faith and how it physically changed her appearance.

Does she know you wrote that song about her.

Oh yeah. They all do. I write songs about real people - I tend not to - the "King of Seventh Avenue" is a rare example of a purely fictional character. I don't speak from character on this record - I'm actually in the songs themselves, having dialogue with the people who the songs are about. I did that because I think people wanted to see me more in the songs. And have me write about myself. I'm not like the *"touchy feely, Joni Mitchell, James Taylor type of writer"* - that *"this is my life struggle. This is what I was emotionally going through at the time"* style. I'd rather write about the world and what I'm seeing. So this was cool - I put myself in the songs, like Alfred Hitchcock does with his movies. I interact with the characters. It was a wonderful experience for me to do that.

What other songs are on the album.

"Never Lived At All" is about people who abandon reality to pursue a dream - and how important a dream is to really living a full life. It's kind of a family sketch of different people in my family. I'm in there - I don't use my own name. I use someone else's name. He's a novelist, not a musician. The whole thing is about being able to work through rejection and failure, and still live for the dream. I wrote "Self Portrait" in the studio. I wanted to use the phrase *"a carnival of voices"* in a song somewhere. I wrote this song around that phrase. It's about internal battles in people's heads. The song "Lay Your Wager Down" is about as personal as I get - it's between my father and I. When I get personal, I tend to veil things in metaphor. I don't think you could exactly establish what the situation is between us. You sort of sense it through the mood of the music. It's like with "Conversation With A Ghost," no one really knows what the song is about. They get a lot out of it, because of the mood. The last song on the record is called "Change" and I wrote it on Martin Luther King Day. It was around the time that a lot of things were happening - the Oklahoma bombing and

all that. It's sort of a social song, about people's perspective of change in the world.

When you appeared on "The Postcrypt" compilation, was that because you played there regularly.

Yeah. I'm one of their favourite artists. I got a great following there. I'd written the song "All Things Being the Same," a couple of weeks prior to that recording. I'm glad it got on there, because I go back to it sometimes, just to hear where I was coming from musically. The song has evolved some since that time.

What's happening with your video documentary.

I just saw the film portion of it - we had forty five minutes of Super 8 film that we took. It came out wonderfully. We're going to let the album come out first and get it rolling. Probably around Christmas, I'm going to release the video. We have forty five hours of video to edit down. We have a lot of work in front of us. I'm going to be pretty much tied up with the record until the Fall. It's going to be great. I hope to do another video when I'm forty. We went from Boston to San Francisco, and then we drove back across the country.

It's not an "oh woe is me, touring is so hard" scenario.

No. I don't think so. It's sort of like **"Spinal Tap"** meets **"Don't Look Back."** It's reality - it starts off and I'm doing a theatre show. There are several hundred people in the audience. Then it switches to me sitting on my own playing to an audience of six.

And you knew all their names by the end of the evening.

Exactly. That scenario is why I wanted to do the film to begin with. So that people would understand that it's not all -

Glory.

No, it's not. It's very, very difficult work.

Who will release it. Philo don't have a video wing as far as I'm aware.

They do actually, but they release mostly teaching videos. What I'm going to do and hopefully with their permission, this is going to be cool - either they'll put it our themselves, or they'll let me put it out and get the money back that I invested in it. I'm not looking for major distribution. I'm basically releasing it to let it get to my fanbase in the folk world. I'll cart it around the country, till I sell five hundred copies. Then I'll start thinking about the next one.

You intend doing more of them.

Yeah. They're going to be like documents of how my career develops. I'll do one when I'm thirty five or forty.

What about becoming involved with enhanced CD Roms.

If the technology can be done easily for me, I think I would be interested in doing them. We could even use footage from the film we've made. Rounder would have to get involved with that. I don't think they're ready to move into that world.

Whose idea was it to release "This Is Boston - Not Austin" compilation.

That was Ralph's idea. There are compilations all the time, but I don't think there's a been good one that represents Boston. The Acoustic Underground was recording people who won their contests. That was leaving out a lot of the people, who are beyond the contest level. So Ralph put that out and it did great. He's actually planning another one.

Is "Paperback Man" going to be something of a rarity.

I don't know that I'll record it again. It's nearly five minutes long and it's an out there song, about a woman who gets sucked into a novel - it's almost like science fiction. I don't know if I'll put that on a record. I like to use compilations to put out whatever I'm writing at the time. I had that song, as I'd written it the week before. He wanted me to record something. I've been performing it live, here and there, and it's a lot of fun. It's got a great groove.

Finally, can I just ask you about some of the songs on your first two albums. On "Say Something" was "Blizzard" influenced by living in Boston.

I was driving in the mid-west - in Chicago, I think. Around November or December. There was this huge storm. I just pictured a person driving and wanting to get home - having been away from his loved ones for a long time. That kind of thing. I wanted to capture the emptyness of the road. Driving in a blizzard can be a wonderful thing. I've done it frequently.

I thought it would be pretty scary.

It can be. I don't worry about accidents so much, because people are driving so slow. When you do go off the road - I've had a crash on the highway in a blizzard, at sixty miles per hour. I slammed into a guard rail that was packed with snow, and managed to pull the car back on the road and just drive away. It's fairly safe to drive in a blizzard, if there's not much traffic. You can't really hit anything solid but snow.

Is there a particular situation which "Washington D.C. 5/91" refers to.

Yeah. The night I was there - there's a Latino section of town - there had been some green card situation, where the Feds had gone in and swept the area. Riots broke out. Five people were killed. Cars were overturned. They had to call in riot police. If you know Washington D.C. and most Americans you know - they always make the family visit to Washington D.C. - in one part of town, it's the most incredible beauty and money, and everything is well groomed. On the other side of the city, they have the worst murder rate in the country. Extreme poverty. It's that dichotemy, which made me write the song.

What about "Angel."

Angel was a kid that I worked with, who was a dealer. He came into school high every day. When he was twelve years old he got caught in the projects selling a bag of heroin. It was inspired by him. I pictured it from an addicts perspective. Then Angel comes in as sort of the guest artist who is selling heroin.

Obviously you have different gun laws in the U.S. relative to the U.K. Tell us about "Autobiography of a Pistol" and what you feel about U.S. gun laws.

I think people see it as a black and white issue and it's a grey issue. The people who are pro-gun, think there should be no restrictions on what a human being can hold. People who are anti-gun, think that no one can have guns. No one should be able to hold guns. It's a grey issue. There should certainly be stiff restrictions on who can carry a firearm - the amount of firearms that people can own, and the kind of firearm. To me it should all be done - I mean you have to take a course and get a licence to learn how to drive, but any moron can pick up a gun and start shooting things. I'd like to see a psychological test and - just simple ones, that are revealing about the person taking the test.

Obviously we've had problems at home of late, but you cannot predict what initiates these rare situations.

You can't. If people really want to kill someone, they're going to find a gun anyway. "Autobiography" is a song about shirking responsibility, and how everyone is sort of blaming it on someone else. The line *"guns don't kill people bullets do"* - that's the whole apex of the song summed up right there.

You came to songwriting late in life, yet you wrote a song titled "Who Killed John Lennon." Has he been an influence on you musically.

Yeah. The Beatles were, I think, in my unconcious from childhood. Just because they were The Beatles. I didn't really dive into them artistically, until I was in my early twenties. I started listening - not listening for the music, but started listening to what was being said and how it was produced. Tried to figure out what the effect it was having on people. I think Lennon is really the rock n' roll heart and soul of The Beatles. And a big hero of mine.

Were you also trying to make a point with the song, in terms of who killed John Lennon.

I was watching tv and they were interviewing the guy who killed him. Over two days. It wasn't even a one day interview, it was a two day thing. I just thought *"What the hell are they doing with this guy."* This is exactly the reason why he did it, and they're putting him on tv.

To encourage somebody else to shoot -

The next guy. Right. The gist of the song is, not to mention his name publically - not to give him any space - just to say, he's the guy who killed John Lennon. Don't say his name. Don't give his face any coverage. Don't let him talk into a microphone. The song also connects well with "Autobiography of a Pistol" and the madness of the whole thing.

What about this guy Robert Wilson in "3000 Miles." Is he a real person.

Yes, he was. He was based on a guy - his name wasn't Robert Wilson, but I used that name because it seemed to fit. And it rolled off the tongue. It was a kid I went to go to College with, who used to take the Greyhound every summer and go for these adventures. I think you learn a lot about Americans by sort of getting captured in this *tin can,* and going round the country with people. Having conversations with strangers. People from the mid-West get on and there's a different vibe. Then they get off and people from the Utah Rockies area - they get on and it's a different vibe - then the Californians -

Was this guy older than you.

He was, yeah. He was twenty four when I met him. He was still a College student and had been to about eight Colleges at that point. I was twenty one at the time.

How do you feel about your musical career at this point in time. Is everything going as you had hoped.

Yeah. I have a long way to go before I'm a national name. I'm selling around twenty thousand copies of each album now. When I sell up to around one hundred thousand, that's when I get to be on the level of the people that I think I want to be at. I think this new record is going to sell probably, almost twice as many as my last one did. The next record beyond that, will probably be the one to break me nationally. And get people who are not folk fans, to become aware of who I am. It takes a long time to build up through this grass roots thing.

You mentioned bulding blocks earlier. You feel that *the gradual* is the better process, rather than *the instant.*

Well, it's the process that I'm on. I think that there are other people who can go overnight like that - put out one record and have it work for them. I'm sort of writing stuff that's - I don't know how poppy it is - how pop accessible it is. It's kind of heavy stuff. I think once you see it live you're smitten by it. I tend to write character sketches. You don't hear a lot of that on commercial radio.

Because people have to listen and people sometimes don't have time to listen.

People listen to music. It's meant for background. It's the soundtrack to their lives. They're not paying attention to the words. I don't write music like that. But - we'll see what happens. Press is how I got my following. I don't get a lot of radio airplay - the folk stations are playing it of course. Every single person we sent my press kit too, would write about me because I'm a writer. They connected, because journalists are writers and they could see the quality of my lyrics. That has been the most important aspect of my career - is my ability to get press - so far anyway.

Kerrville-kompacts, kassettes & other koincidences.

For concept of the year, the decade even, Bob Neuwirth's **"Look Up"** recreates the *lost art of the field recording* by geographically *taking the track* to the studio, garage, art gallery, wherever - the location really wasn't all that relevant, the real magic lay in the music made there. In Europe, California, Texas, Michigan, NYC and Tennessee. The 3D, technicolour, multi talented cast includes Peter Case, Rosie Flores, Butch Hancock, Bernie Leadon, David Mansfield [a personal hero], Gurf Morlix, Elliott Murphy, Mark Olsen/Victoria Williams, Chuck Prophet, Charlie Sexton, Patti Smith and Billy Swan. Bob penned three quarters of the sixteen songs, some as co-writes with Peter Case, Tom Russell, Patti Smith, Sandy Bull etc. A legend in folk/roots music circles, this is only his fourth solo album in over two decades. He was even legendary, a decade before he cut his self titled Asylum debut set, circa 1974 - and all because he knew Bob Z during his scufflin' Greenwich days. Down home and on the button, this set is one of '96's real keepers, from *the other* Bob. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution, 50 Stroud Green Road, London N4 3EF.**

It's fun and funny how the CD age is aurally coming to the rescue of us *boring old farts* - at last. Back in those slabs of black plastic days, when *cut out stores* were *a happy hunting ground,* Mac Gayden's **"Skyboat"** and **"Hymn to the Seeker"** were much sought after treasures. Two decades on, Mac is still lyrically the hippy, and musically the soulful face of Nashville. "Morning Glory," is the only cover from career, stage uno. The fourteen cuts on **"Nirvana Blues"** represents sixty plus minutes in the company of the man who remembers brother Otis, Sam and Dave, Booker T and Rufus. Available on import from **CDX.**

Michael Stanley is one of the best musicians to come out of Cleveland, Ohio. From the acoustic country slant of **"Rosewood Bitters"** [circa 1971], all the way through a decade of MSB albums which closed with the somewhat prophetically titled **"You Can't Fight Fashion,"** this guy rocked the States, coast to coast. Razor & Tie reissued all of the MSB catalogue a few years ago, except for the live double **"Ladies Choice,"** which CBS reissued. **"Coming Up For Air"** is his first studio venture for around thirteen years, and the guy is straining at the musical leash based on the evidence here. All this and the "Horizontal Mambo" - this is not the guy I used to know. Michael's CD also features Rom information, but my machine has yet to unlock it. Available on import from **CDX.**

Jerry Jeff has issued more live albums than any artist I can immediately recall. More than the extent of most artist's recording catalogues. Well, almost..... Cut at one of *the premier listening parlours* Stateside, The Birchmere in Alexandria, Washington D.C., the sessions took place on the same night which produced Tried & True's other recent release - Steve Fromholz's **"The Old Fart in the Mirror."** Ably supported by John *"One Hell of a Picker"* Inmon, Bob Livingston and Freddie Krc, Walker opens with "Contrary to Ordinary," proceeds to Mother Hubbard's "Redneck Mother....," pitches in four of his own tunes, is still coverin' Chris Wall's "Trashy Women" as well as the timeless Guy Clark classics "L.A. Freeway" and "Desperadoes Waiting for the Train," and closes out with "Takin' It As It Comes." Been there, seen it, heard it, got the T-shirt, but it still boils down to class, **"Night After Night."** Import available from **CDX.**

Although they've been performing together for well over a decade, the only Tom Russell/Andrew Jefferson Hardin songwriting collaboration **"Coney Island Moon"** is the title and opening cut on this twelve instrumental set. Aided by Tom and a couple of *reasonably* well known pickers - Amos Garrett and Albert Lee - Hardin's solo debut is a pleasing, low key affair from Round Tower. Long a personal favourite, Russell and Carl Brouse wrote "The Dance" about twelve years ago. One day, it will be a chart hit, lyric and all. Here Andy picks the hell out of the tune, as well as a half dozen of his own compositions. Available in the UK from from **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Hot on the heels of last year's two volume **"Archive Series"** from Don Walser, comes a new co-production from his manager T.J. McFarland and Ray *Asleep at the Wheel* Benson. Another Watermelon release, it's titled **"Texas Top Hand."** Walser is more than happy to be trapped in a *musical timewarp* somewhere between the thirties and the fifties. In fact, I defy you to *spot the join* when you compare his covers of Bob Nolan [Sons of the Pioneers], Floyd Jenkins [Bob Wills] and Hank Williams tunes, with his own compositions. What you get is, is what you pay for - Walser's speciality - down home, yodelin' western swing, wall to wall. Import available from **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

"The Life of a Minor Poet" is Hugh Moffatt's first *studio* set for four years. Since the **"Dance Me Outside"** duo album with sister Katy, in fact. There has always been a gentle eloquence and understatement which hallmarks Moffatt's compositions and recorded product. Among the dozen tracks, Hugh penned five himself - of those, "Angels" is a classy cut indeed; while he collaborated individually with seven writers on the remainder. The title cut, co-written with David Olney, is an honest reflection of each of their *day to day* lives - *the minor poet* who returns from the road with a little bit of cash, only to turn around and head out again. *"To work for gold is to learn to say, What others want to hear, To work for love is to sing from the soul, When no one seems to care".....*and ain't that the truth. Co-produced with long time Emmylou Harris/Rodney Crowell studio engineer, Donivan Cowart, the set is a welcome addition to Hugh's *satisfying, laid back* song catalogue. Import available from **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

The only time I ever saw Julian Dawson perform in public, was one cold British winter Saturday afternoon, at an Arts Centre Music Festival in Bracknell. I quickly concluded that the guy was in custody of a *head* problem [as in *conceit.* The *massively inflated* variety]. It came as some relief that I didn't rate his songs that afternoon [*spiteful huh ! could have been the lunch ?*]. Since then, I've successfully avoided even the slightest involvement with a swathe of Dawson European solo releases, recordings by the reformed Plainsong [with Ian Matthews and Co.], as well as one of the initial Watermelon releases **"Live on the Radio."** Having torn down the facade, it's never to late for a reassessment.....try as I did to dislike **"Travel On,"** it's actually a pretty fine set of melodic tunes. None lyrically source from the *golly, wow, phew zone of songwriting* [ie. *none of them are goose pimple jobs*].....but, neat nonetheless. Import available from **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Produced by *the* Dave Alvin, this Austin based trio is led by Tony O. Villanueva who composed eight [*] of the dozen gospel, rockabilly tinged selections featured on **"Jackpot."** Brian Hofeldt contributed three numbers, while Vic Gerard completes the headcount with a single song [plus a co-write [*] with the bossman]. Non brain cell taxing, toe tapping stuff from The Derailers. In fact the guys are *almost Buddy Holly* on the title cut. Import available from **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Attempt to check out the date of the sessions which led to **"Noises in the Hallway,"** and you won't find one. The liner credits Garry Tallent [as in *The Boss'* bassman] as the producer, while Greg Trooper's supporting players principally includes the trio of Greg Shirley [b], Dennis McDermott [d] and Larry Campbell [g]. The thing is, the recording of this album predates Trooper's 1992 album **"Everywhere."** Of the eleven cuts, the opening "Light in the Window" and track five, "Whiskey on Your Breathe" were new to these ears [ie. the other songs source from *an unofficial tape* I'm been familiar with for years]. Trooper musically trades in the same folk/country crossover area as Tom Russell [on this set, Trooper co-wrote "The Heart" and the penultimate cut "Time Stands Still," with Russell]. Other featured pickers and harmonisers include Steve Earle, Tammy Rogers, Harry Stinson and The Roches, while Willie Nile is another of Trooper's songwriting collaborators. Try **CDX.**

The Mail Order Only compilations **"Out of the Blue Vol. 1" "Out of the Blue Vol. 2"** & **"Out of the Blue Vol. 3"** from Glitterhouse set you back a mere 7Dm [around £3.20] and each features around a decade and a half of cuts - drawn from available, or soon to be released Glitterhouse albums; non-album tracks from singles; demo tracks; and songs taken from their burgeoning [1000 copy only] Mail Order Only album release series. And finally, tracks available only on these compilations. Isn't life hell for us completists ! There's also one major draw back, the minimum Glitterhouse postage rate is 12Dm [for one, or a number of their CD's], but you can whack your plastic to save those mortgage size bank charges. Why not buy all three. Acts featured include The Walkabouts [now with Virgin], Terry Lee Hale, Chris & Carla, David Munyon, The Shivers, Hugo Race & The True Spirit, The Good Sons, Go To Blazes and much, much more. Import available from **Glitterhouse Mail Order, Gruner Weg 25, D-37688 Beverungen, Germany.**

This Mail Order Only album **"Stories From The Curve: Christian Hill Community, Alabama"** was recorded in Germany last September and features Munyon's voice and acoustic guitar. Video director Wayne Miller's [the former Nanci Griffith beau ?] 1950 B&W photo *"Migrant Workers,"* graces the front liner. Three of this one dozen song set are dedicated to the dead or dying - respectively River Phoenix, Bill Graham and those suffering from AIDS. An air of gentle melancholy permeates the set, while a robed worshipper of Krishna, Beijing students in Tiananmen Square, and a two decade long, time served biker are some of the diverse characters who pass through Dave's lyrics. The road weary "Angel With A Busted Wing" being my favourite cut. From **Glitterhouse Mail Order.**

Terry Lee Hale's sixteen song, Mail Order Only disc **"The Wilderness Years"** is drawn from his early career, cassette only albums, **"Fools Like Me"** [1988] - 6 tracks, **"Little Wood Guitar"** [1989] - 5 tracks, and **"My Confession"** [1992] - 5 tracks. In addition to the foregoing, there was a 1991 tape titled **"Oh What A World,"** which appeared on Germany's Normal Records in 1993. Guess you had to live in Seattle to keep up with this guy's career. There's a touch of klezmer, with the Mazeltones providing support on "A New Heart," while the unlisted seventeenth track is an acoustic guitar instrumental. If you enjoyed Terry's **"Frontier Model"** & **"Tornado Alley"** - To date, this limited edition 1000 copy Glitterhouse series also features albums by **Kusworth, The Good Sons, Hugo Race & The True Spirit, Gary Heffern, Gary Floyd Band** [2 albums], **Go To Blazes, Freakwater, Larry Barrett, Chris & Carla** and their band **The Walkabouts.** Available by employing your little plastic friend, from **Glitterhouse Mail Order.**

Bill Morrissey readily acknowledges Mississippi John Hurt as one of his first musical inspirations, but this album, his seventh for Philo, is the first to be cut South of the Mason Dixon line. It was co-produced by longtime manager Ellen Karas, assisted by Scott Billington. **"You'll Never Get to Heaven"** features a dozen [new] insights into the lives of the diverse assortment of fictitious [?] characters who people the mind of Bill Morrissey. Considering that the sessions took place in New Orleans, Louisiana it's hardly surprising that trumpet, trombone and saxophone, occasionally adopting that familiar Dixieland rhythm, turn up on a number of the tracks. Those include the title cut, the prairie wind which bears "Ashes, Grain And Sand," *the two characters on the run* in "Hills of Tuscany" and finally, the good time closer "Big Leg Ida." Elsewhere, Bill focuses on a girl who sold out and "Married For Money," indulges in *double entendre* with the lyric of "Closed Down Mill" and tells of a diner waitress who trades herself for a lift to Atlanta in "Different Currency." Little wonder this guy is a folk legend Stateside. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

"Super Blue," a paen to the glory of two motorised wheels, opens this set which features also another handful of songs from last year's 1000 copy limited edition pressing, **"Stories From the Curve."** While the latter Glitterhouse set by David Munyon was acoustic in execution, **"Acrylic Teepees"** features band renditions of the same, with Munyon treading a territory which seeks to marry the best aspects of Lee Clayton and Tom Pacheco - the art of the songpoet and the musician. "Coffee in Duluth" focuses on two musicians who form a close friendship while on the road, and was co-written with Hugh Moffatt's ex, Pebe Sebert. There's more vehicular references on "Still Got A G.T.O." - right there in the title, and "Coney Island" - a Harley. "Be Bigger Than A Dream" can be summed up with the closing lyric *"Thanks for the sense to do something useful. With my life"* - something greater than a mere dream, that is. Check out "Desperate For A Friend (Song For The Dying of AIDS)" and finally, "Jumper's Tune" - which is kind of where we came in with Munyon's 1993 Glitterhouse album **"Code Name: Jumper."** Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

There's no indication on the liner of **"slim possibilities,"** as to where and when it was recorded. Fact is, it's the third David Munyon release to appear within the past twelve months. Like Glitterhouse, Stockfisch is a German imprint. The front of the **"slim possibilities"** liner features a picture of David - that's a first. We also discover that his principal writing collaborator S.P. Standley, is *"my love Sharon."* All pieces of an intriguing jigsaw. For the remaining legion of answers, I guess it's a case of a trip to Munyon's current domicile, Huntsville, Alabama. Enough, of this digression....on **"slim possibilities"** Munyon's voice possesses a gentle peace and non questioning resignation, as do his storytelling lyrics for that matter. Facing life full on, he adeptly sifts the hype from the real, and comes up with fascinating tales and vignettes.....Available via **Glitterhouse Mail Order.**

The women on the Brambus release **"Strong Women Rule the World"** are all American by birth. The fifteen tracks on this recording, being drawn from already available Swiss or Stateside releases. The labels in question, being Switzerland's Brambus, Waterbug based in Evanston, Illinois and the *brainchild* of that estimable folkie Andrew Calhoun. Finally, there's that New York based outlet, 1-800 PRIME CD. The styles presented range from cajun [J.J. Reneaux], through various shades of folk from the across the length and breadth of the USA [Wendy Beckerman - New York, Cosy Sheridan - Utah, Leslie Smith - Pittsburg], to the pop of New York's Robin Greenstein. Favourite cuts include "Home" from Kat Eggleston [aka Mrs. Andrew

Calhoun] and Jano Brindisi's "Angels in the Snow."

Eddi Reader continues to be attracted by fairgrounds. That's quite apparent from the **"Candyfloss and Medicine"** liner photographs. Apart from a cover of the 1961 Gene Pitney hit "Town Without Pity" [from the movie of the same name], Reader's arrangement of the traditional "I Loved A Lad" and the MacColl/Hewerdine collaboration "Butterfly Jar," Eddi had a hand in composing the remaining seven cuts. Contentwise, there's languid and hypnotic acoustic driven melodies, big band brass, percussive world rhythms, overlaid by Reader's spacey vocal jazznastics. There's the without a care busker, in "Glasgow Star" who *"walks down the middle of Great Western Road, and has a poketful of silver pennies from singing in Buchanan Street all day."* Further reference to Glaswegian landmarks is made in the lyric of "Medicine," while *loss* [of love, friendship, hope and dreams] is analysed in the dreamy ballad "Semi Precious." The undeterred narrator concludes *"I will find you"* at the close of the latter cut. So here's ten reasons why we should thank God that we never lost Eddi Reader, recording artist and songwriter. Available in your local record store now.

This seven track ep/mini album, **"Going Up The Country,"** features a handful of live cuts recorded especially for Mary Costello's late and sadly lamented radio prog...which was consistently brill. Acting as bookends, are two cuts from The Blazer's second, 1995 studio album **"East Side Soul."** Namely "Cumbia Del Sol" and the Canned Heat anthem from three decades back, "Going Up The Country." The five live selections from this *less well known* East L.A. rock combo, include another stab at the Canned Heat hit, plus three songs from their Rounder debut **"Short Fuse"** topped by "Brother" from **"East Side Soul."** Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Based on the front liner photograph, I can't help thinking that Ron Sexsmith bears a striking resemblance to Maureen Tucker, circa the first incarnation of the Velvet Underground. That said, Ron is a thirty something Canadian, who has been writing songs for a couple of decades and performing them acoustic style in Toronto clubs. His self titled debut record contains a cover of Leonard Cohen's "Heart With No Companion," plus twelve Sexsmith originals. Among the fourteen cuts, there's even two versions of "There's A Rhythm," one produced by Daniel Lanois. Possessed of a plaintive voice, there's fond memories of a stable childhood in "Galbraith Street," plans to heal old wounds in "First Chance I Get" and dreams of a job and stable family life in "Lebanon, Tennessee." Produced by Mitchell Froom, it's extremely essential. Available in your local record store now.

In his latest movie, **"Lone Star,"** writer-director John Sayles' heads for the Rio Grande and the fictitious [though appropriately named] Tex-Mex border town of Frontera [Will Tom Russell sue ??? Isn't life a total circus !!!!]. To accompany the foregoing, Mason Daring has concocted a soundtrack which merges, the divergent, but essentially Mexican rhythms of Lydia Mendoza and Conjunto Bernal/Ruben Mendez, the latin sounds of Alvaro Carrillo, the soul of Ivory Joe Hunter [there's even a Freddy Fender Mexican country translation of the same tune], the rockin' electric blues of Little Walter, the old timey country of Patsy Montana and for that contemporary edge, one cut from singer/songwriter Lucinda Williams. Topping off the fifteen cuts are a trio of Mason Daring originals featuring, among others, some neat guitar pickin' from current MC2 sideman, Duke Levine. Music for the numerous *backroads* and border routes of your mind. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

The initial decade of tracks on this Rosie Flores reissue originally appeared on the Warner/Reprise imprint back in 1987. That album arrived hot on the heels of "Heartbreak Train," her rowdy contribution to Volume 1 of the compilation series **"A Town South of Bakersfield."** Back then, those ten cuts constituted Rosie's self titled, debut solo release - a recut version of "Heartbreak Train" was also included on the solo set. This time around, augmented by half a dozen [previously unissued - *ah !, those tempting words aimed at record collecting completists everywhere*] songs which were originally intended for her second Reprise release, this disc is titled **"A Honky Tonk Reprise."** Got the pun ?? Anyway, ever the rockabilly girl, Flores merges her own genre compositions with numbers from legends such as Harlan Howard/Bobby Braddock and Carl Perkins, as well as *young pretenders* like Paul Kennerley/Hank De Vito. In truth, this worthy [and overdue] reissue comes care of the transfer deal which took Iris from Rounder/Philo to Warner Bros. A rare instance where the punter has gained twice over. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

For their third co-production in as many years, Katy Moffatt and Tom Russell have reverted to the acoustic feel of their first collaboration **"The Greatest Show on Earth"** [c/o Barnum & Bailey, aka **"The Evangeline Hotel"** Stateside]. Since they began writing together in 1987, having met while judging the 1986 Kerrville New Folk contest, they have cut some thirty songs resulting from their association. Eight more are included on **"Midnight Radio,"** including further biographical explorations - Dylan Thomas in "Sparrow of Swansea," and Hank Williams and his first wife, Audrey Shepard, in [strange to relate] "Hank And Audrey," while "Nazareth To Bethlehem" requires no explanation. "Midnight Radio" recalls Katy's teen years growing up in Fort Worth, listening to Jimmy Webb songs on late night radio. Moffatt also sings the blues as in, "Sojourner Truth (Ain't I A Woman)" and "If You Can't Stand the Heat," while "Never Be Alone Again" bears an country-blues inflection. There's an almost six minute, folk rendition of the Alfred Noyes pseudo-traditional poem "The Highwayman," while in the straight country music stakes there's "The Sound of One Heart Breaking." As you'd expect **"Midnight Radio"** covers numerous styles - but, in that inimitable Katy Moffatt fashion. Round Tower release available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

It only seems like seconds since **"In the Red,"** Tammy Roger's collaboration with Don Heffington appeared. On this self titled set, Rogers is ably supported by all her Dead Reckoning chums, while the material featured is self composed, except for the closing traditional air "There Is A Fountain." A trio of tunes were co-penned with bass playing stablemate, Alison Prestwood, and there's a pair written with Mrs Mark Olson [aka Victoria Williams]. Emmylou Harris, Kim Richey, Victoria Williams, Buddy & Julie Miller lend their vocal support, while Jerry Douglas picks some dobro. Low key and laid back in conception and execution, this is a dues paid session player at the peak of her [pickin' n' pen wielding] powers. What makes **"Tammy Rogers"** all the more astounding, is that this quality recording ["this wide" and "this long" - *indicates with arms spread widely apart*] was laid down in only three days. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

"Bees to the Honey" is a neat little Glitterhouse gem. As things stand, Carolyn Wennblom can hardly be described as a prolific writer, since her only credit here is the co-write with Dan Webb, "Little Birdie." Apart from the John Prine/Phil Spector collaboration "If You Don't Want My Love" and the traditional "Jenny," most of the remaining songs source from Seattle, Washington State writers. There's album producer, Michael Shuler's "The Heart Speaks," a trio from Dan Webb

[including "Little Birdie"], "Morningstar" from the Walkabouts Chris Eckman [with sundry Walkabouts lending instrumental support on the backing tracks] and John Ramberg's "Rowboat." Soft rock, with a nod toward those folk n' country roots, kind of pegs it. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Originally slated for release on the final day of April, **"Threadgill's Supper Session - Second Helping"** finally appeared one week after one of the main, guest contributors on this live recording was lost in the mid May, Florida Everglades Valuejet plane crash. The picker in question being, Walter Hyatt. Further compounding the issues of sadness and coincidence, the recording sessions for **"Second Helpings"** took place on October 25th 1995 - Walter's 46th birthday. While the first volume of this Watermelon/Buddy Records series captured the close of Jimmie Dale Gilmore's reign [well, almost true] as the compere/performer of this weekly North Austin, Wednesday evening sittin' n' pickin' and singin' session, **"Second Helping"** documents the style and musicianship of the new man in charge, Champ Hood. Champ's guest pickers include Sarah Elizabeth Campbell [also on the initial disc], Tish Hinojosa [only appears on the somewhat superflous "The Vegetable Song" from her recent children's album **"Cada Nino"**], Darcie Deaville [who performs and penned my favourite cut here, "The Wandering Song"], Toni Price [without a doubt, currently the hottest vocalist in Austin with two cuts], Mandy Mercier [with Janis' "Turtle Blues" {*}] and the late Walter Hyatt, who takes the lead vocal on a trio of tracks including Big Bill Broonzy's "All By Myself." And before we close, let's not forget the Threadgill Troubadours featuring Champ, Marvin Dykhuis, Rich Brotherton, David Heath, Ron Erwin and Gary Primich - each, already Austin music legends in their own right. Like a portion of Threadgill's Buttermilk Pie, **"Second Helping"** is a series of damned fine [rootsy, music] flavours. To all at Threadgill's, thanks for another great night out - and here's to even more main courses. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.** {*} Back in the early sixties when old Kenneth Threadgill owned this North Austin bar/eaterie, a young girl from Port Arthur, Texas often performed there. Her name, Janis Joplin.

Club Passim lies below street level in an alleyway, which separates the two buildings that constitute the Harvard Coop department store. Geographically, that's just off Harvard Square, Cambridge, nr. Boston, Massachusetts. The previous occupier of this building, Club 47 [Mark 2], observed the sixties folk boom flourish and wither; Passim, has retained the keys to *Boston folk nirvana* from the 70's onward. Rae Ann and Bob Donlin initially managed and subsequently owned this coffeehouse/book store. Bob passed away earlier this year, and the Club is now managed by a co-operative. Folk music owes Donlin a incalculable debt and this Philo compilation **"One More Song : An Album for Club Passim"** [Philo] goes partway to squaring that bill. Current Rounder/Philo artists are featured on eight of the fourteen tracks. Carrie Newcomer's contribution [for her own daughter] "Amelia, Almost Thirteen" is quite stunning, while rising star Catie Curtis impresses with "On the Phone with My Sister." Bill Staines [c/w Jeanie Stahl], Christine Lavin, Tom Paxton [c/w Geoff Bartley], Kristina Olsen, Mary McCaslin are among the other contributors. As far as I can check the tracks aren't available elsewhere, by these artists. The closing track "Every Little Moment" was composed as a tribute to Bob Donlin. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Song for song, thirteen of the cuts on this eighteen track Wes McGhee retrospective **"Hearache Avenue : Classic Recordings 1978-92"** are repeats from the **"Neon & Dust"** Minidoka compilation of a few years back. There's the original 1987 version of "Whiskey is my Driver" and two other tunes from **"Airmail"** [1980], a quartet from **"Landing Lights"** [1983] and six compositions from **"Zacatecas"** [1986]. The remaining handful of songs source from the 1993 **"Border Guitar"** sessions. By far the best British born exponent of Texas roots rock, McGhee is no copyist - he's true original who, for over two decades, more than matches the best of this genre from across the big pond. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Born in Bristol, Tennessee, David Massengill has long been a highly literate feature of the New York folk scene, is a time served **FAST FOLK[ER]** and, circa 1989, was a winner of the Kerrville New Folk emerging songwriters contest. Dave's second, Steve Addabbo produced recording **"The Return"** finds him on the new Plump label, actually a subsiduary of his management company. Guests vocalists include Jane Siberry, The Roches, Suzanne Vega and Massengill's *amour,* Lisi Tribble. Of the dozen compositions, "The Great American Dream," "Blind Man/Black Swan," "Wake Up," "Sightseer" and "What's Wrong With the Man Upstairs ?" source from his early career *self produced/unofficial* tape **"The Great American Bootleg Tape"** [1986], while "Madou" was included on **"The Kitchen Tape"** [1987]. The latter re-interpretations hardly indicates a prolific lyric poet. That said, Massengill only deals in flawless gems. Import available in UK record stores via the Grapevine Label.

"Live - For the Record" was cut during a residency at the legendary Birchmere [listening club] in the Washington D.C. suburb of Alexandria, and produced by Jim Rooney. Tom Paxton is supported here by a legion of American folk and bluegrass stars - old and new. Lucy Kaplansky, John Gorka, David Buskin and Susan Graham White hail from the former genre, while Cathy Fink & Marcy Marxer, Robin & Linda Williams and Mike Auldridge are from the latter. If your pleasure is *singalong fun folk,* Tom's your man. There's attempts at amusing lyrics concerning President Jimmy Carter and a bunny-wunny, skater Tonya Harding's bodyguard, the short penal [!] sentence served on John Wayne Bobbitt, plus a who does what to whom crisis for Jackco and his Lisa Marie. On a more serious kick, there's further lyrical politics in "On the Road From Srebrenica." Fleshing out this set are those decade old, Paxton composed *standards* "The Last Thing On My Mind," "I Can't But Wonder Where I'm Bound" and "Rambling Boy." Here's to the survivors....the picker and the audience. Import available in UK record stores via Koch Distribution.

"The Band of Jesse James - The Best of Jim Ringer" is another example of a long overdue delivery of justice. Jim Ringer passed away on St. Patrick's Day 1992. His final solo recording, **"Endangered Species,"** appeared on the Flying Fish imprint over a decade earlier. Never in the best of health, Ringer was a true born, *rough diamond.* In a solo recording career spanning a mere ten years, Jim cut a handful of folk/country albums, plus the classic duet **"The Bramble and the Rose"** with his wife, Mary McCaslin. Sadly, recordings by the duo were out of print for most of the eighties. A single CD retrospective of Mary's earlier work appeared in 1992, followed by an album of new material two years back. Now we have this seventeen track, Jim Ringer retrospective. Although's there's no material from his Folk Legacy debut **"Waitin' For the Hard Times To Go,"** we get a trio of Ringer compositions from his last album [this being one of the tangible benefits of the purchase of the Flying Fish catalogue, by Rounder/Philo. Also makes for some potentially interesting future compilations]. Apart from nine Ringer penned/co-penned tunes, there's material by Roy

Acuff, Dick Feller, Bob McDill and Larry Murray. More than essential. Even classic ain't enough. More like, timely and timeless. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

It hardly seems like months since Carol Noonan's solo debut **"Absolution."** Frankly, I didn't rate that set - ten tunes going nowhere. Now she's come up with a thirteen track disc titled after her song publishing company, **"Noonan Building & Wrecking."** Now that's a neat move - rarely seen, though Iain Matthews used it on **"Pure and Crooked."** There's no doubt Noonan possesses a powerful voice [it fails to move me however], ace guitarslinger Duke Levine [who also picks for MC2] is a member of her band, and that's about all I can say about the overall sound - which [totally] lacks interesting hooks and memorable melodies. What's more Carol's mostly self penned material, including the Amy Ray lyric of "Comes in Waves," doesn't move me one millimetre in the word stakes. Where's the joy ? Far too dirge like pegs it, although the foregoing tune and "Getty" each come close to possessing a melody. Territorially, I've never quite understood the supposed musical [folk] magic purveyed by Messrs. Richard Thompson and the late, Sandy Denny. Noonan trades in the same area, if that's your chosen flavour. Some days are real sad - another female songwriter drowns in her own naval canal of misery. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

"Three Women," disc two from the trio of Sara Hickman, Robin Macy [ex-Dixie Chick] and Patty Mitchell Lege, aka The Domestic Science Club, is a self produced, full blown, sixteen track set. Songwise, that's twice the length of their self titled, 1994 mini album debut. Carrie Newcomer's "Three Women" opens the proceedings. It's a heartfelt song about loss, based on her own personal experience.....the line "They're easing the leaving and holding hands" clarifies the situation. Further along, there's four band compositions [two each from Sara and Robin], the pop of "Reserved For the One I Love," Nanci Griffith's "Time of Inconvenience" is given a midstream banjo pickin' bluegrass break, there's the big band styling of "When You Hold Me," the western swing of "Goodbye and So Long to You" and the traditional folk feel of Jean Ritchie's "Blue Diamond Mines." Vocally these ladies rise and swoop like free spirits, totally in harmony. They brazenly ring the stylistic changes and it works. Action packed fun.....what more could a punter ask ??? Try **CDX.**

The first Mickey Newbury album I ever purchased, **"Looks Like Rain,"** opened with the sound of rain. It was released in 1969, though I didn't catch up with a mint copy until the mid-seventies. And all for the princely sum of 50p. It's been a twenty year love affair so far, sustained only by a trio of releases in the last decade. **"Lulled by the Moonlight,"** his fifteenth album, also opens with the sound of rain. Except for the penultimate "Silver Moon," which was penned by and features the voice of Toni Jolene Clay, the sixteen remaining tracks are pleasingly littered with Newbury stylistic trademarks. Four instrumental interludes are spaced throughout the set. There's the sound of mother nature at work, with thunder [and rain] and more. There's the clang of church bells. And best of all there's Newbury's songs [mostly ballads], only four of which have appeared on previous recordings. This self released set is only available by mail order from **P.O. Box 888, Escanaba, Michigan 49829, U.S.A.** Autographed copies run out at $32.00/£21.00, including Air Mail postage. Not cheap, but we're talking about the work of one of this planet's true originals. A rebel. A Nashville renegade. Welcome home old friend, with a limited edition of 2000 copies.

Founded, as ever, around the foundation of Tim & Evelyne Taylor, the Banded Geckos return with **"Gecoupage,"** episode three of their recorded story. With their Houston, Texas days behind them, the duo are now based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Decoupage is defined as: *n.* decoration of surfaces with paper cut-outs. Hence **"Gecoupage,"** which welds a collage of acoustic music styles; mainly folk, bluegrass and ragtime/goodtime. Their previous set was thematically titled, **"Art Gecko."** Get it ? Another thing, musically, life with the Geckos is always a joy. Augmented by Russell "Gus" Fory and Robert Knetsch from Houston, and local *new [Mexico] boys* Grey Howell and Pat Longmire, this is the largest line up of Geckos ever to spend time in a recording studio. Of the fourteen tracks, Tim and Evelyne, separately, together, and with others, supply half the material here. This fun filled, self released set is available by mail order from **Spanish Omelet Productions, 1704-B Llano Street, Suite 102, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505, U.S.A.**

Four solo studio albums on since those hard rockin' Blasters dissolved, Dave Alvin tries his hand at the art of live recording with **"Interstate City."** Aided by a four piece band [The Guilty Men], the chosen venue was one of Austin's centres of rock n' roll excellence, The Continental Club on South Congress. Cuts from The Blasters era ["So Long Baby, Goodbye"] merge with tracks from **"Romeo's Escape"** [aka in the UK as **"Every Night About This Time"**], **"Blue Boulevard"** and **"Museum of Heart."** There's even a handful of new numbers, including "Out in California" co-penned with Tom Russell. Long time sidemen Greg Leisz and Bobby Lloyd Hicks lend their support, while special guests Teddy Roddy and Katy Moffatt, respectively, blow some harp and supply backing vocals. A case of raw is good. Available in UK record stores via Koch Distribution.

When she's not on the road, this Georgia born songbird is domiciled in Nashville. **"The People I Meet"** is Carol Elliott's debut CD recording, although it was preceeded by a couple of cassette releases dating from 1991 onward. It's also a self financed, self released project. Already a hit songwriter ["Corn, Water & Wood" co-written with Wendy Waldman was covered by Michael Martin Murphey and won a National Cowboy Hall of Fame award], Elliott treads a borderline which neatly merges folk-pop material with that of the more thoughtful contemporary songwriter. Elliott also sings covers. Namely, Mark Germino's "Rex Bob Lowenstein," a Buddy Mondlock tune and "The Sheik of Sh-Boom" co-written by the late Walter Hyatt with Ken Spooner and Austin Church. She tops the set with a decade of her own songs. Hyatt plays guitar on the "Sh-Boom" cut [one of his final studio jobs], and Carol eulogises her friend in the closing "Message from Walter." Standouts, the opening, title cut and "V.T. & Me." For Americana, try "Sequoyah." This goodie is available from **Heartstrong Records, P.O. Box 92075, Nashville, Tennessee 37209.**

While the 1991/92 cassette **"Live from Spam City"** was a beginning, **"A Fingerpainters Murals"** was the triumph which followed four years later. Now Chuck Brodsky has moved up the independent label league from Andrew Calhoun's damned fine songwriter label, Waterbug, to Red House Records and **"Letters in the Dirt."** Like the man said toward the close of last century, *"Head west young man"* [OK, more North and slightly West]. So.....Waterbug is to Illinois, as Red House is to Minnesota. Lyrically the twelve Brodsky acoustic flavoured originals feature Chuck's baseball heroes ["The Ballad of Eddie Klepp," "Letters in the Dirt"], a song about a Texas Hill Country peach seller ["Bill & Annie"] and the art of successful suing ["Talk To My Lawyer"], mark this album as a worthy successor to Chuck's 1995 album. Stateside, on the male side of the field, there are three [young] contemporary songpoets who, for me, stand head

and shoulders above the rest. Brodsky's among that select trio. The others ??? Michael McNevin and Steve Fisher. The common link ? Their recorded work has appeared on Waterbug at one time or another. Says something. Import available in record stores UK via Koch Distribution.

To be truthful, the trio of albums which followed John Gorka's **"I Know"** and **"Land of the Bottom Line"** didn't possess the same bite lyrically, nor did they lodge solidly in the memory melodically. Now up to solo set six, aka **"Between Five and Seven,"** the album features one dozen [new] Gorka originals. John Jennings shares the production credit with Gorka on this disc, which was mostly cut at Paisley Park Studios, with support from the entire [and current] Chapin Carpenter road band. Female vocal backing comes in the shape of the Misses Kaplansky and Kimball [The Story], on a handful of the tracks. Personally speaking, it boils down to just another John Gorka album. Beautifully recorded and structured soundwise, it never descends into the ordinary, but neither does it soar into that spine tingling ether somewhere out on the boundary of infinity. Try **CDX.**

When I first learned of this release it was "with great pleasure." Hell, I'd waited over half a decade for Marti's next album.....having heard it, my conclusion is "whither, and what price the future ?" Let me explain. **"Live at Spirit Square"** features a Marti Jones concert, circa August 1990. The liner doesn't even indicate where Spirit Square is located - state or town ? Then there's the point that this pop inflected, female singer/songwriter [aka Mrs. Don Dixon] is hardly staple Sugar Hill musical fodder [ie. how serious is the promotion going to be]. Excluding Track 1 ["Intro"] and Track 15 ["Percussion Solo"], the seventeen cuts source from the quartet of Jones recordings which I already own. In chronilogical order, there's **"Unsophisticated Time"** [A&M 1985 - 2 cuts], **"Match Game"** [A&M 1986 - 2 cuts], **"Used Guitars"** [A&M 1988 - 5 cuts] and **"Any Kind of Lie"** [BMG/RCA 1990 - 8 cuts]. Apart from finally being allowed to hear Marti Jones in a "live" situation, this recording fails to explore new compositional territory. Oh well. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Eight female artists appear on the seventeen track **"1995 Highlights."** That octet also contribute to the fourteen track **"The Women of Kerrville."** I guess that's my main crib regarding this pair of commemorative CD's, since this selective choice of performers has effectively curtailed the opportunity to hear the work of a wider range of songwriters - a total of around ninety solo acts and groups appeared at the 1995 event. Arithmetically, we get twenty three different acts across the two CD's - they're also the first Kerrville recordings to be distributed nationally in the U.S.A. Dar Williams, Caroline Aikin, Cheryl Wheeler, Carol Elliott, Mumbo Gumbo [Chris Webster & Tracy Walton], Domestic Science Club [Sara Hickman, Robin Macy & Patty Mitchell Lege], Susan Werner and Catie Curtis constitute the octet. The other contributors to **"The Women of Kerrville"** being Jana Stanfield, Lynn Miles, Vicki Pratt Keating, Eliza Gilkyson, Tish Hinojosa and Christine Albert. In order of appearance on the disc, the nine male contributors to **"1995 Highlights"** are Tom Russell, Jimmy LaFave, Tom Kimmel, Stephen Alan Davis, Trout Fishing in America [Ezra Idlet & Keith Grimwood], Ellis Paul, Tom Prasada-Rao, Cliff Eberhardt and David Massengill. Available from **Silverwolf/Kerrville Records, RR1, Box 10, Thetford Center, Vermont 05075-9701, U.S.A.**

After half a decade of silence, New York based folk roots soft rocker, Jeff Wilkinson is back in action with **"Just Luck."** Picture the city sidewalk scene on the front liner. Pedestrians are passing by, going about their business, except for one person who carries a fully opened umbrella above his head. Elsewhere on the street it's perfectly dry, while it's raining down on that umbrella. Nothing more, nothing less. Just [dumb] luck. Featuring eleven Wilkinson originals, one co-written with Fred Koller ["Stolen Art"], this set is completed by "Bricks of Shame" an extract from Oscar Wilde's "The Ballad of Reading Goal" set to music by Wilkinson. The opening, five minute plus long cut "John's Dream," is a classic reflection of the thought patterns of an adult who believes he controls the universe; even though it's just a dream. Elsewhere there's a tale of *stolen art,* "Jumbo" a warts n' all elephant's life story with parallels to "Black Beauty," and the murder of a blackmailer in "Two-Hearted River." Gentle and understated, given time, it's also insidiously good.

An inital thought re: the liner photography - What is it with Ellis Paul and snow ? I suggest you check out his **"Stories."** Musically when you score a bullseye, I guess it's natural that people expect you to do it again.....over and over. Me ? I was listening for another "King of 7th Avenue." That being the case, up to track 9 - "Never Lived At All" - it appeared to be a vain search as far as **"A Carnival of Voices"** is concerned. Second time around the block, things were a little more familiar. Basically eleven portraits by the *"crowd of mismatched people inside my head, conversing in little clusters like guests at an impromptu debutante ball on a New York City subway car"* this album was produced by stickman Jerry Marotta. So here's a final declaration, "Paris In A Day" is a pretty neat idea for a tourist tale, with a darned fine counterpoint vocal from Patty Griffin. Looks like a slow burner which, given time, will probably burst into an all consuming flame and torch much of this year's competition. Tell you in a couple of months.....Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

Although it isn't clear from the liner notes, I'd guess the photograph on the rear of the **"God Looked Down"** jewel case was taken in the UK circa the sixties. A cloudy sky, chimneys, television aerials, washing on the line - all the trademarks of memory. Those trademarks are also very much this ex-pats current lyrical suit. They say that the confessional songwriters art is an act of *"shedding skin," "taking out the trash," "hanging your washing on the line."* If that's the case, **"God Looked Down"** measures well with it's predecessor, **"The Dark Ride,"** which was Iain Matthews most powerful vision of recent yore. The five decades spanned and the characters portrayed in the story song "This Train," culminates with the inevitable obsolescence of age - and let's not forget a mention for Gene Elders stellar fiddling here; while the *current state of the world* surveyed in the title cut, is probably as much Matthews' own personal vision as a reflection of *god looking down.* Further along, there's the lost love of "Alone Again Blues" and the sadness of "The Power of Blue." Produced by the estimable Mark Hallman and recorded at his Congress House complex in South Austin, **"God Looked Down"** features an octet of that city's best pickers. Import available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

These recordings represent Alan Rhody's third and fourth solo albums. **"From A Real Good Home"** being the latest. In my Issue 20 review of the compilation **"The Songs of Route 66 - Music from the All American Highway,"** I commented, *"On the strength of this cut ["Mother Road"], we need an Alan Rhody solo selection forthwith."* Just proves how far behind the game you sometimes get - well, a mere four albums ! Based in Nashville, Rhody has collaborated with some of the best contemporary country writers around - Kevin Welch, Don Henry, Dave Mallett and Jon Vezner. **"Dreamer's World"** was released by the German Taxim label

in 1992, while **"From A Real Good Home"** is a self released set from late '95. Of the dozen Rhody compositions and collaborations on the new set, seven are live tracks taken from his 1995 Kerrville Folk Festival appearance. The latter disc also features the track which initially kindled my interest - "The Mother Road" co-written with Kevin Welch. On the evidence of these two discs, Rhody is one of the most palatable faces of Nashville. Available from **Headless Horseman Music, P.O. Box 121231, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.**

Mollie O'Brien's husband, Tim, is one of the premier bluegrass musicians Stateside. Unfortunately my bluegrass tolerance threshold normally runs out after only one song. Thankfully **"Tell It True,"** a set of one dozen tunes covers a range of acoustic roots bases, which show off her crystal clear voice to great effect. A songwriter she ain't - O'Brien covers contemporary folk writers such as Dave Mallett, Leslie Smith and Kate MacLeod, arranges traditional bluegrass tunes and then hits you with Terence Trent D'Arby's "Sign Your Name." MacLeod's "Lark in the Morning" is the best cut here. Import available in UK record stores via Koch Distribution.

Once upon the seventies country rock boom, Hillman and Pedersen, were stalwart heroes of mine. *They could record no wrong.* With Hillman it was the Byrds, Burritos, Manassas, Souther/Hillman/Furay, some solo trips, then McGuinn/Hillman/Clark and finally, the Desert Rose Band, which also included Pedersen. At that point, my stamina gave out. Things were getting too darned slick and samey. Remoulds resurfaced as retreads. For Pedersen, thehad been The Dillards, Country Gazette and two fine solo sets for Epic Records. During the late fifties and early sixties, Bakersfield gave birth to the musical careers of Buck Owens and Merle Haggard. For a short while, the California town rivalled Nashville's monopoly of the country music market. So those time served pickers, Chris & Herb, are **"Bakersfield Bound"** on this stylistic concoction of covers and originals. Musically, seems like the *disengage* switch was thrown sometime during the eighties, as far as these guys are concerned. Of course, what goes around finally comes back around again. Me ? I guess I'm on some other planet musically these days. Import available in UK record stores via Koch Distribution.

"From These Hills" is the third of recent date on the Road Goes On Forever imprint, is the first new recording by Texas born folk legend, Carolyn Hester, for nearly a decade. Among a handful of Hester compositions, is the appealing childhood reflection "Flatlands of Texas," "Cycle of Seven" and "Nanci's Song." The latter being a decade old paen to Hester's early eighties touring companion, Ms. Griffith. Hester's daughters, Amy and Karla, and husband David Blume are featured throughout this recording, with Karla even pitching in two of her own songs. Also featured is a song by one of our own folk giants, Sydney Carter, as well as material from Stateside legends such as Tom Paxton, Richard Farina and Buddy Holly. In a nutshell, folk music from a simpler age. And why not. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution**

Born in Cincinnati, Peter Keane completed his education at Harvard and moved to Austin in 1994. As with his 1992 debut, **"The Goodnight Blues,"** this new set was produced by Stateside *contemporary folk legend,* Bill Morrissey. There's a simple grace to Keane's interpretative skills on **"walkin' around."** In the contemporary field Dylan, Hardin, Farina, Von Schmidt and Morrissey, rub shoulders with the traditional acoustic blues of Mississippi John Hurt. Add to that an octet of Keane originals, and you have the full picture. Touted as a band album, legendary Austin sidemen, Paul Pearcy, Champ Hood, David Heath and John Hagen lend their support, without intruding on Keane's desceptively simple, yet sublte folk/folk-blues crossover style. From any angle, this is a low key, fingerpickin' acoustic delight. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

The Delevantes **"Long About That Time"** features the title cut from their debut album, and is aumented here by a handful of live cuts [recorded at the High Sierra Music Festival] which also appeared on their full album of the same name. Mike and Bob Delevante - kind of like the Everly Brothers meet The Bryds, with the sound space filled by jangling guitars and soaring harmonies. Got that. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

A decade on, **"Eye of the Storm,"** David Olney's debut solo album is reissued on CD by Philo. Following the commercial failure of the 1981 **"Contender"** album which featured his high energy band, the X-Rays, Olney slips comfortably between folk acoustic settings ["Ain't It That Way," and "Queen Anne's Lace"], country ones ["Who Knows Better Than I" and "My Baby's Gone"] and the blues ["Steal My Thunder" and "Titanic"] on this twelve song, self penned recording. Subjects as diverse as Lawrence of Arabia, and the iceberg which sank the Titanic, mark Olney as an extraordinary scribe. Richard Dobson's original liner notes are augmented by a new set from Scott Alarik. Although **"Eye of the Storm"** doesn't feature anything as spine tingling as the subsequent Olney classic "If My Eyes Were Blind," this remains a more than competent contribution to his catalogue. Available in the UK via **Topic/Direct Distribution.**

"Welcome to Transatlantic Country" is a ten track compilation which is only available from larger branches of HMV at the amazingly competitive cost of £1.99. What you get are nine tracks from existing Transatlantic releases by Joe Ely, Waylon Jennings, Kimmie Rhodes, Willie Nelson, Jesse Dayton, Kris Kristofferson, [Billy Joe] Shaver, The Band and Four Men And A Dog. The closing track, "Shelly River" [which by the way, is misspelt on the liner], comes from Terry Clarke's forthcoming album **"The Heart Sings."** The reference to *country,* is *regional landmass* rather than *genre.* The contents, bargain of the year.

The [best known] ringleaders responsible for the twenty one track, 2CD compilation, **"Honor - A Benefit for the Honor The Earth Campaign,"** are Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, aka The Indigo Girls. The purpose of the *Honor The Earth Campaign* being to eliminate the exploitation of the mineral resources on sacred native lands [Stateside and planet wide]. By association, comes the protection and maintainance of the forests and endangered wildlife on those lands. Native American bands such as Ulali [2 cuts], Keith Secola and Wild Band Of Indians and Indigenous, rub shoulders with solo artists like John Trudell. Among the "major league hitters" lending their assistance to this project are Bonnie Raitt, Jane Siberry, Luka Bloom, Bruce Cockburn, Victoria Williams, Matthew Sweet, Soul Asylum and of course, those Indigo Girls. Cockburn's "Wise Users" is an anthem dedicated to the conservation of Earth's resources, while Indigenous come across as a roots influenced crossover combo of some stature with "Things We Do." At least two performers subjectively focus on the Wounded Knee massacre. Karla Bonoff's "Home" is probably the best known song on the set, as covered by Bonnie Raitt and David Grisman. And finally, odd and improbable as it may seem, Matthew Sweet almost comes across as a folkie on "A Day in the Life of a Tree." Try **CDX.**

A couple of year's ago Fingerprint Records issued a tribute

compilation to the late Mark Heard, titled **"Strong Hand of Love."** There was even a limited issue, radio broadcast CD of the same name, which followed soon after. Fourteen of the cuts from the former and a trio from the radio set reappear on this thirty four track, 2CD collection. So that's 50% new material, if the old beads are still working properly. Well not quite, since it's Olivia Newton John's interpretation of "Big and Strong" which appears on the new release, [with Mark playing bass]. Rich Mullins performed the song on the original disc. Included with **"Orphans of God"** is a 48 page booklet featuring extracts from Mark's journals, the lyrics to his songs, as well as some of his photographs. From the ache of Buddy and Julie Miller's voices on the opening title cut - *an ode to mankind*, through the folk/pop of "Mercy of the Flame," the two versions of the stirring "Rise From the Ruins" and the same headcount [in acoustic and folk/rock formats] for Mark's [yet to be] pop hit "Strong Hand of Love," this is a damned fine brew. Fingerprint are to be congratulated for their dedication to the song catalogue of one of America's greatest [twentieth century] songwriters. What's more, they have a Mark Heard album of new material titled **"All She Wanted Was Love"** scheduled for 1997 release. Can't wait, but I'll have to. Available by mail order from **Fingerprint Records, P.O. Box 197, Merrimac, Ma. 01860.**

Subtitled *"a bunch of songwriters sitting around singing"* the contents of **"the bottom line - volume two"** don't exclusively boil down to an infinite dose of naval gazing. Far from it. The soul songs of General Johnson and William Bell, are balanced by the power pop of Marshall Crenshaw and Squeeze's Difford/Tilbrook. Introspection comes from Suzanne Vega, while David Johansen's "Lookin' For A Kiss" recalls his sojourn with the punk era New York Dolls. Marcia Ball rolls out some laid-back blues piano on Randy Newman's "Louisiana 1927," and the grandaddy of these proceedings, Pete Seeger, stirs the audience into vocal participation with his amusing "Get Up and Go." Available in the UK for about half the cost of a full price CD, Gordon [Violent Femmes] Gano's "Songwriter's Song" sums up the whole affair. Long may this world class series run.....Try **CDX.** Available in the UK at the rediculous price of £6.99.

"Child of the Big Sky" is a six track set of gentle, acoustic originals, cut in Austin, Texas, and produced by ace guitar picker Mitch Watkins. Aiding Kim Miller's solo debut, are local studio *stars* Paul Glasse, Gene Elders and Chris Searles. The title cut is cinematic in detail and autobiographic in conception, while Elder's aching fiddle playing perfectly fits the lyrical sense of loss [of youth and innocence] like a glove. "Missin' You" is for a love now lost, and the same goes for "You Were the Levee." If you care to let go, Miller's vocal on the latter cut will quite simply break your heart. A definite case of less is more. Here's to the next one.....Available from **Sea Robin Records, P.O. Box 160672, Austin, Texas 78716 - 0672.**

Their first folk recording for the Swiss Brambus label was an "in concert" set. This time around it's a studio recording, featuring one Mangsen original and a quartet from Gillette [three of which were co-written]. The remaining material on Steve Gillette and Cindy Mangsen's **"The Light of the Day"** is a mixture of traditional songs [eg. "The Bonny Light Horseman" and "Get Up and Bar the Door"] and cuts such as "Right Said Fred" [yes, the pop hit from the jurrasic, pre Britpop '60's !!]. Personal preference leans toward Gillette's more contmeporary compositions, particularly "The Restless Wind" and "Song for Gamble" - the latter written in memory of the late Gamble Rogers.

Of all the American artists to record for the Swiss Brambus label, Don Ricardo is by far the most prolific. **"Love Only Love"** being Richard Dobson's fifth solo release in the last seven years. It's also fairly precisely titled recording - paraphrasing the man *"most of these songs came about during a year on the road. Many are about love, which came as a shock and surprise; I didn't see it coming and it hit me like a train. Sometimes the songs you write will tell you what's going on before your concious mind is ready to admit it...."* Standout tracks "I'm Not Afraid of Forever Anymore," Ron "Silent Song Through the Land" Davies' "Rise to the Occasion" [one of two covers on the disc] and "I Keep On Missing You." Thoughtful country.....the brand with two vowels and no Top 50 commercial pretentions.

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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 first episode of this interview, Brian credited John and Laurie as the "silent producers," relative to their input on numerous recording projects he had been involved with over the years at Loma.

You're credited as engineer on most of the recordings made out here.

[John Hill] Yea. I like to add what I can, if it's helpful. My joy is the engineering and listening to everybody come together playing music. That to me, is what it's all about.

When musicians walk into your studio do you ask them how they want things to sound.

[John Hill] No, you can't ask people that. Basically they won't know that till they hear their initial effort played back. They understand that, after they've heard the headphone system, after they've heard the playback system - they might have some initial ideas. **[Laurie Hill]** When Brian was working here, he had concepts that were exactly what needed to be done. Brian was the producer. **[John Hill]** Well, most producers do know what they want. **[Laurie Hill]** But Brian actually knew the direction the session needed to go in, and it was great. **[John Hill]** I was basically referring to groups that don't have producers. **[Laurie Hill]** If you have a producer like Brian, you don't have as much of a problem. If you don't have a producer, then that's where you get into *"Well, what do you want ?"* [Laughs]. **[John Hill]** You'll find in the business of engineering that if you ask *"What do you want"* too much, then what you have is a lot of people who can play the music, wondering what they want all of a sudden - when all they really wanted to do was to play the music. It's gonna end up soundin' great anyway. You can express that on the mix side of it - then you can ask them *"What do you want ?"* and it works better than asking that question when you first started. They have to concentrate on - they have built an entire thing out of their music, before they even come to see you - the thing you do at first is you make it real easy for 'em to put down. Then that's when you

can ask 'em questions like that - unless they really and truly ask for your help. Like, *"Is this the wrong guitar for this song ?" - "Sure" - "OK, it's the wrong guitar, I'll try another one."* You don't want to get too complicated with the original creation process. You can always come back and modify it if you need to.

Getting back to "Poet In My Window," had you playing the songs in concert with Nanci, prior to recording them.

[Brian Wood] There was only one song on that album that I had never played before. That was the title cut, which Nanci wrote here. She wrote it upstairs in the bunkhouse. That was very much kind of a spur of the moment thing. All of the other songs I had played with her before. **[Laurie Hill]** Brian definitely knew the direction where this album needed to go, because they had worked together. **[Brian Wood]** Nanci's ears and my ears are kinda tuned into the same thing. It was very easy for John to dial in - it was like we were all hearin' the same thing. That's when the skids are greased and it all works pretty smoothly, when you all have the same vision. All you're trying to do in the studio is to get it out of your fingers, on to the instruments, into the microphones and on to the tape. **[John Hill]** There is an interesting anecdote that I have to relate about the Eric Taylor album and the Nanci Griffith one. Don't ever do the printing for the album before you've laid your title song down. **[Brian Wood]** Yes. **[John Hill]** Neither of those albums succeeded in terms of the title songs. Nanci wrote a marvelous song while she was here, that became the title song. It was basically because of the fact that we couldn't get the original title song down at all. We're talkin' from the very basic respect of just voice and guitar. We couldn't even do it from that respect. **[Brian Wood]** The original working title for that album, comin' into the studio, was **"Trouble With Roses." [John Hill]** Yes. It's probably still "Trouble With Roses" [Laughs]. What I mean is, it's kind of like "Trouble With Tribbles" or something. **[Brian Wood]** It was after she wrote "Poet.." that she changed the title. **[John Hill]** So the point of the anecdote, is don't press up your artwork till you've finished the album. Don't ever come into a studio with a game plan that, *"This is my hit,"* because it might not be. What you have to do, is a little bit more than you think you're gonna have to do, in the studio. Do two or three more songs than you think you might have to, on an album, and then call them all down. Pick the best out of those - and then title it. Sometimes it will surprise you. You will think that you've got a hit in your own estimation as an artist - and when you get in there, it just doesn't seem to want to come together. You'll have another one that's stronger. **[Laurie Hill]** I think **"Poet In My Window"** was perfect. **[Brian Wood]** One of the things I remember the first time I was here, was John sayin', *"Have you heard this guy from Houston, named Lyle Lovett."* Because Lyle had done a lot of work out here, doin' demos and whatnot. He put him on the tape machine. That's the first time I ever heard Lyle. Ultimately I wound up playin' with him off and on. The first time I ever heard Lyle Lovett was out here.

Was it a case then, that Loma Ranch studio become known almost by "word of mouth." The next band I'm aware of to cut an album out here, was Beacon City Band.

Probably so. The **"Texas Summer Nights"** albums after that.

Was that a hard album to record, because on the first album there was such a wide spectrum of musical styles involved.

"Texas Summer Nights" was a hard one because we're talkin' six to eight different groups comin' in, at different times of the year. We're layin' them down and tryin' to make an album out of these different samplers of people. It's a lot harder, because you kinda have to remember where you started from, in the first place. I really loved those albums because they had such breadth and depth of songwriting and musical quality to 'em. **[Brian Wood]** I was supposed to play on Mickie Merkens "Yarrington Town" on Volume 1. **[Laurie Hill]** Boy, that is a wonderful song. **[Brian Wood]** I was quite ill. Tracy [Ferguson] called me and said that she would like for me to put a pedal steel track down on "Yarrington Town" and I couldn't make it, so they would up puttin' a flute part on it. That worked beautifully. That was my near miss on Volume 1. On Volume 2 of **"Texas Summer Nights"** which was mixed here - I was associate producer and helped Tracy do the mix. **[John Hill]** That was a good 'un. Didn't we at one point though - just because you weren't able to do it on the first Volume - didn't we at one point do another "Yarrington Town" demo. **[Brian Wood]** We did. **[John Hill]** I don't think it went on a record. **[Brian Wood]** No it didn't. **[John Hill]** It was beautiful. **[Brian Wood]** We came out one day - Mickie and Denice Franke and I and recorded for a solid day. Did eight or nine songs. That was one of the ones that we did.

So what happened next, The Banded Geckos.

[Laurie Hill] Actually The Banded Geckos happened in 1982. The Geckos were even before **"Texas Summer Nights."** [Brian Wood] I met the Geckos at a place called Snaveleys which was a club on Sixth Street in Austin, that had acoustic music. Actually it was Nanci who introduced me to the Geckos. Nanci was a big fan of the Geckos. **[John Hill]** Evelyne [Taylor of the Geckos] sang on Nanci's album. **[Brian Wood]** Right - Evelyne Taylor was on **"Poet In My Window."** I got to know them and so on. They asked me to produce their first record out here. That was great fun, workin' with them. They're fine people. They're fine musiciains. They're excellent writers. Above all, they're fun. That's the main thing about workin' with The Banded Geckos, is there that they're completely fun people. It wasn't even work.

Was it a licence to riot.

[John Hill] It was. **[Brian Wood]** Almost - not quite. **[Laurie Hill]** We were serious. It was serious. **[Brian Wood]** We were all exploring each other. We were finding what everyone's limits were. What we were all capable of. Exceeding limits and being excited at the fact that we could exceed our limits. John and Laurie, as usual, were very supportive and helpful. Just made it all work. It was a wonderful - for a group like that - especially, a very eclectic kind of music and eclectic

bunch of people, with very diverse tastes in music and song, to pull an album together and make it sound that way - that coherent and that good - and to transmit that much fun into a record was a real treat. To me it was very successful, just from that point of view. When I go in the studio with anyone, I always ask them *"What are you doin' this for ? What are you goin' into the studio for ? Is this a snapshot for the family album ? Is this a product to sell from stage ? Are you tryin' to make something really happen, to get a shot at major labels ?"* A level set. They just said, *"We want to capture what we do, as best we can, so that when people buy our album, they're takin' us home with them."* **[Laurie Hill]** It was a serious project, but it was something that had a lot of life to it. **[Brian Wood]** Right. There are Gary Young songs that - he had a humourous song "Magna Charta Rag" and he a beautiful ballad "Farewell Olympia." Tim's songs, the swing stuff is excellent - very well written. Evelyne's voice - she sings like a bird. The songs she had written were gorgeous. They tended to have a reputation as a bit of a novelty band, but when we were in the studio, it was pretty serious stuff. Even on "Magna Charta Rag," which is a funny song, the approach was very serious. To make it work on the record, so that when people take it home they were capturing the Geckos.

Part of what they are about, is being a good time band.

[Laurie Hill] Right. **[Brian Wood]** That's part of what Loma Ranch is about. Tryin' to make it as real as possible. What's happening in the studio. To really capture what these people are about, as well as their music.

If the liner artwork for "Poet In My Window" was shot here at Loma, what about the liner artwork for The Beacon City Band artwork.

[Brian Wood] The photograph on the front of the liner was probably shot either here, or in San Marcos some place. **[Laurie Hill]** I think the front was done in San Marcos, and the photograph on the back of the liner was done in New Braunfals, at Gruene Hall.

What about the convicts photograph on the back of The Banded Geckos album.

[John Hill] That was Evelyne's idea. Don't ask me why she came up with that one. We had fun with it - they're banded in that picture alright. There is a band in that picture and they're wearing banded clothes. I don't see any geckos on that wall. That's the only thing we didn't do, is get a big rubber gecko. Other than that, it worked. **[Brian Wood]** The last time I was in Houston, Evelyne still had the convict outfits hanging in her closet. I think they kept a couple for old time sake. **[John Hill]** She does ? That's so we can go spend Halloween with her.

After the first "Texas Summer Nights" album, the next Loma album that I'm aware of, is by Melissa Javors. Was there lots of other recordings that you did in between.

[John Hill] Actually Melissa brought us a project, where all we really did was mix it out here. Because she respected the way that we handled the music. She had already cut the tracks in San Antonio. We just put our little touch on it, you know. **[Brian Wood]** I was involved in the recording of that in San Antonio. I played on several tracks. It was basically done in a person's bedroom studio. Literally a bedroom. You were sitting on the bed, as you were recording. The window was open, and if you listen carefully, you can hear birds chirping outside the window. **[John Hill]** It sounded good to me. I liked it, because it remined us of how we had done it from the beginning. In fact, I can remember one night when I had to go outside and mow, because the night bugs were too loud. I had to go out there and lay 'em low with a lawn mower. Just so you could record an acoustic guitar without having bugs on it [Laughs].

Does sound leak into the studio that easily.

[John Hill] No. They got to be loud. I'm talkin' the invasion of the bugs. **[Brian Wood]** This is hill country bugs. **[John Hill]** By the time you've got 20000 crickets outside in about 5 square feet of ground. That kind of thing - where you got the invasion. **[Brian Wood]** Really deafening. **[John Hill]** When you've got the invasion, you've got to go out there and spray and mow 'em [Laughs]. You never know when that's gonna happen, but it's a good break for everybody too. Everybody laughs and gets back into it you know.

What would be the next album, Hal Ketchum's.

[John Hill] Gosh, there were a lot of albums in between. If you're just talkin' pure folk music or anything that relates to folk or country - yeah, that would probably be the next thing. Gosh, we forgot Uncle Walt's Band. We've got a couple of other folkies that were really good **[Brian Wood]** Kiwi. **[John Hill]** They never released anything, but I've got a tape on them that - ooh, do I have a tape on them. **[Brian Wood]** They're one of the greatest early Austin bands - acoustic bands. **[John Hill]** Two guitars and a spoon player. Original material, plus they played totally different versions of things like Beatles songs and stuff. At one time, we released more new wave records than any other studio in Texas. Rauls was happenin' in Austin. Folk music has been a wonderful thing for us, but at the same time we've done a whole lot of other stuff. We've done soul, we've done jazz, we've done blues, we've done conjunto. Gosh, you name it, we've recorded it. It's wonderful. **[Laurie Hill]** Last year we did a project with a band called Firecreek - a wonderful country band.

Are they a local band.

[John Hill] Yes. One of the fellows lives on the back part of this ranch. **[Laurie Hill]** Last year we did a tribute to Robert Johnson, with Sunny Shines and Snooky Pryor. It was very interesting. That album was for Blind Pig Records out of Chicago.

Have you ever cut any punk bands out here.

[John Hill] That's what I was gettin' at. We skipped over that punk era that we were in. We did The

Skunks, The Shades, The Explosives. We did demos for The Blame. What else we got goin' - the Standing Waves, was one of our favourite groups. We actually created some standing waves while they recorded I think [Laughs].

Aren't you amazed that the house is still standing, if all these punk bands gathered out here.

[Laurie Hill] Actually there have been very few problems with musicians. Musicians are very responsible and well behaved. They're out here to work. It's not just a free for all. They're out here to do what they do. I might be surprised, but I'm really not. Musicians respect what we have out here. **[Brian Wood]** Again as a client, I remember the first time I came out here - at the top of the stairs, in the bunkhouse, there was a semi stern sign on the washbasin, in good old Hill Country German words that said *"Bring your sheets down when you're done."* As if to say, "this is not a hotel," so forth and so on. That tended to instill some self discipline that might, or might not, have been there to begin with. **[John Hill]** Brian's right. The thing is that people sometimes - unless you really kinda hint at it. What they'll do is, they'll forget it's your house that they're in. What we're doin' is offerin' them a place to stay while they come and record. That's all we really need to say *"This is our house guys."* **[Laurie Hill]** And this is your house while you're here. **[John Hill]** Usually that's all you need to do. Very rarely do we have the train wrecks. **[Laurie Hill]** And then there were the Gulf Coasters.

Nanci's father's -

[Brian Wood] Barbershop group. **[Laurie Hill]** Yeah, that was wonderful. That was when Nanci did the **"Poet in My Window"** record. **[Brian Wood]** The Gulf Coasters have been together - well, they're not together anymore - Nanci's father has been in babershop quartet singing for a long, long time. The Gulf Coasters were an award winning group. They were nationally recognised as being one of the top barbershop quartets in the country. Her father is an incredible tenor. The last time I saw him, which was in January I think, he's still with an award winning group. It's not the Gulf Coasters anymore, but he's still on top of it. **[Laurie Hill]** They had a good time [Laughs]. **[Brian Wood]** Yeah, they did [Laughs]. **[Laurie Hill]** And we had a good time with them, because they were just - it was great workin' with them in the studio. It was exciting. They were excited. **[Brian Wood]** They were in love with what they did, which was sing barbershop quartet music. Nothing was going to stand in the way of their exuberance for their music. **[John Hill]** Not even the engineer or his sleep. **[Brian Wood]** Not even the engineer, the producers, the musicians.

So was it a case of 24 hour a day recording sessions.

[John Hill] Let me tell you what happened. The thing I remember about The Gulf Coasters was that, the night that we tracked Eric's bass guitar - Eric Taylor's bass guitar on to the album - we tracked until about four o' clock in the mornin'. Something like that. At about the crack of dawn, Laurie and I are in bed downstairs and we hear "Amazing Grace" with a barbershop quartet right above our heads. We go *"Oh no."* We got about three hours of sleep that night, but it was worth it, 'cause those guys laid it down on Nanci's album. It was great. **[Laurie Hill]** I heard one of Nanci songs on KFAN "The Light Beyond These Woods" just last night. Sounded good. **[John Hill]** We would like to emphasise for everybody who is in Europe and is comin' this way, to pay attention to radio station KFAN in Fredericksburg, Texas. They advertise themselves as, and really are, the rebel Texas radio station. **[Laurie Hill]** All Texas music. **[John Hill]** In fact we're startin' to do what we're going to call **The Texas Music Hour** with these guys. We're going to be doing a whole hour on anybody who plays Texas music. What we're going to do is go straight to DAT with it. It's a live show in our studio and the DJ actually comes out here, interviews the group - helps it go during the recording process. It's real interesting. **[Brian Wood]** Although it's not folk music, you ought to talk a little bit about the W.C. Clark album too. **[John Hill]** Oh yeah. One of our most favourite people is W.C. Clark, who has a blues band - well gosh, you could call it soul, you could call it blues - he has won the best blues band, the best soul band in the [Austin] Chronicle Awards for years. If you ever want to be really moved by that kind of music, go see W.C. He can do it to you. He can sound like the original Joe Tex or Otis Redding. All of a sudden you're hearin' W.C. playin' his own songs and it's the most exciting thing you've ever heard. **[Laurie Hill]** He's very original. [Laurie hands me a photo of the W.C. Clark band].

I recognise the drummer.

[Laurie Hill] You do.

It's Frosty.

[Laurie Hill] Yeah. **[John Hill]** He's a character. And what a drummer.

He looks petite in this picture.

I think they reduced him down a little bit in that picture. He ought to be Godzilla size compared to the rest of the band [Laughs].

Did the Hal Ketchum album "Threadbare Alibis" take a long time to record.

[John Hill] Not in terms of studio hours. It was spread out a bit. **[Brian Wood]** It was something like eight sessions. We started in July and it went to something like October I believe. **[Laurie Hill]** That's not bad. **[John Hill]** Well, we had to think about it [Laughs]. **[Laurie Hill]** Also Hal was working, between sessions. **[John Hill]** There were a lot of things that we couldn't do on the spot, because people had to go do their day gigs. **[Brian Wood]** Hal and I were co-producing. I had the day job. So it was another of these, come up here on the weekends or extended weekends and record.

Hal would still have been pounding nails at this stage.

[Brian Wood] Right. Exactly. We had quite a few musicians come in and play on it who were busy at the

time. We had Gene Elders on fiddle, who was still playin' with George Strait. John Inmon on guitar. John Hagen on cello. Riley Osborne on piano. Mickie Merkens and Denice Franke on harmony vocals. Tryin' to get all those folks co-ordinated - a lot of times it had to happen on a weekend. It stretched out over, basically, multiple weekend sessions. It took a while. In terms of hours it actually went pretty fast. In terms of actual calender time that it took to record those hours, it stretched out over a few months. **[Laurie Hill]** Plus Hal was still workin' days as a carpenter. **[John Hill]** What's interesting, is that once again we were presented with a bunch of songs that lean themsleves to certain instrumentation. Any time we tried somethin' that was way out there, we knew immediately that we were gonna have to do somethin' else. It was just wonderful. Plus, Hal had a trademark sound. **[Laurie Hill]** Plus, with Brian workin' on it, it worked perfectly. **[John Hill]** All you had to do was listen to the first two or three notes of somebody tryin' to overdub and - **[Laurie Hill]** Brian would know what to do with it. **[Laurie Hill]** And there it was, and it was great.

Had you been working with Hal in a "live" band situation.

[Brian Wood] Pretty much. When I was playing live with Hal, it would be anything from Hal and I, to Hal, Mickie and I, to a five piece band with Paul Glasse and Paul Pearcy on drums and - he was covering a fairly wide swathe of musical presentations in his live shows. He sometimes played solo. With a full band it was pretty full tilt, hardcore, kick ass country stuff. **[Laurie Hill]** Didn't we start in the studio with Paul [Pearcy]. Wasn't that the way you put it together. Did basic tracks with Paul - **[Brian Wood]** Right. It was Paul Pearcy and Roland [Denny] on bass, and then we got Paul Glasse on mandolin. Towards the end, Gene Elders on fiddle, and then Riley [Osborne] overdubbed acoustic piano. **[John Hill]** As I remember, the producer played a whole load of guitar on that one. **[Laurie Hill]** And Mickie sang a lot too [Laughs]. **[Brian Wood]** Yeah, I was on both sides of the glass. **[John Hill]** I had to torture the producer, up there, on the other side of the glass [Laughs]. Hardly ever does an engineer get an exclusive chance to torture the producer like I did.

In terms of current artists coming to record here, are there any folk and country artists we should look out for. It seems to go in cycles.

[John Hill] That's the studio business. It also depends what wave you're ridin' at the time. It's real interesting. We've got everything from heavy metal out of San Antonio, to real interesting kind of circumspect rock from the Fredericksburg and Austin areas, we've got conjunto -

When you say circumspect, do you mean new age.

[John Hill] Well, we do that too. The fellow that just drove in, he hasn't even come in the room yet, but he produced part of this project that we're real proud of now - from David Rice out of Houston, and he's an original songwriter who has done an eight song demo that would knock your socks off. **[Laurie Hill]** Kurt van Sickle is new age.

When I saw him play mainstage at Kerrville in 1986, he struck me as an acoustic blues player.

[Laurie Hill] Yeah, but it's new age. **[John Hall]** He was a protege of Mance Lipscomb's. However he has gone into a chant situation. He is into making meditation tapes now. They're really incredible - beautiful tapes. **[Brian Wood]** Chuck Dill. **[John Hill]** Original electronic music from him. He's amazing. he's a monster. **[Laurie Hill]** The Chromatics from Austin. Grant Fowler who is from Oklahoma. He does kind of a country rock - it's not country really, because he has a lot of keyboards. It's different.

to be continued.

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Lucy Kaplansky

The interview with Lucy Kaplansky took place in the backstage area of the Kerrville Theatre on the evening of Sunday 9th June 1996. Thanks to "my people" in New Jersey, Tim & Lori Blixt, for helping out with the initial contact, and to Lucy for her time.....

So you were born in Chicago in 1960.

Yes, I am thirty six.

You grew up there.

Right. I left Chicago when I was eighteen.

Growing up in Chicago, there was The Gate of Horn. Did you ever go there.

You know, I didn't. I remember the name - I never went there. The places I played - I had only started playing when I was seventeen, when I was still in High School. I was actually too young to be, or even play, in the clubs. They didn't know I was seventeen. I only played two or three places - Somebody Else's Troubles which later became Holsteins, and a place called The Bulls.

If one place was called Somebody Else's Troubles, was there a Steve Goodman connection.

He was one of the owners.

So when did you pick up an instrument for the first time.

I don't remember the first time I picked up a guitar. It was probably seventh grade. I started taking guitar lessons and really started playing in earnest around the age of thirteen or fourteen.

Up until that time, had you only been a listener as far as music was concerned.

No. I always sang. My father, who is also a mathematician, plays the piano and my family is very musical in general. Growing up he would play, and I was the one who had the best voice in the family. Probably the best ear, aside from him. I learned all the songs that he would play - George Gershwin, Cole Porter and Gilbert & Sullivan. All that stuff. A lot of times in my childhood, I remember singing while he

would play. For family and friends. Singing with my brothers. That started when I was probably five or six.

You're the only girl in the family.

I'm the only girl. I've got two brothers. I'm the youngest too, which means that I was very spoiled.

What encouraged you to venture outside the four walls of the family home, to play music.

I met a guy when I was seventeen, who had just - I grew up at the University of Chicago, where my father was a professor. This guy had just graduated from there. A mutual friend introduced us, and he was someone who wrote songs and sang. That was Elliott Simon, who I formed Simon & Kaplanski with, and we were on the Cornelia Street record. Before that I had sung in my High School. For crowds of people. People encouraged me to pursue this. I didn't really do it until I met him. Then we started really pursuing it seriously. We moved to New York together. We were also lovers for a while.

In school did you perform in musicals.

No. never.

Photo : Kerrville Kronikle Katalogue

Lucy Kaplansky - Mainstage, Kerrville Folk Festival
Sunday, June 9th 1996

While you were still in school and living in Chicago, had you started writing your own songs.

Yeah. I wrote a few songs when I was like about fourteen or fifteen, which were terrible. I mean really, really terrible.

No keepers.

No. Although they had nice melodies, the words are real terrible - well, I was fourteen. My brother had turned me on to Joni Mitchell's **"Blue"** album when I was fourteen and that completely changed my life. Joni Mitchell was the first, and then I started listening to all the stuff that came out around that time - Joan Baez's **"Diamonds and Rust,"** Jackson Browne, Bob Dylan's **"Blood on the Tracks,"** James Taylor. All that stuff. I tried to write like that, and I tried to sing like Joni Mitchell - which didn't work, because I don't sound like her. Then what happened was - when I was seventeen, and had just met this guy Elliott, we went to see Mary McCaslin play. I had never heard of her, and he was a fan of hers. That really changed my life. I had never heard anyone sing like her. I actively imitated her, as one does when one is seventeen.

I was astounded when I discovered she was an influence on you.

Oh yeah, it's funny because some people hear it. I hear it. I think that sort of twangy nasaly kind of thing that I do sometimes, is directly a rip-off of her. I think what ended up happening was, I took that influence and somehow incorporated it into a style of my own.

Once you got to New York, was it basically Greenwich Village.

Yeah. Elliott and I had seen an article in the New York Times in, I think, December of 1977 about a big folk revival in Greenwich Village. It was a huge article. It featured The Roches, Steve Forbert and George Gerdes. Jack Hardy was mentioned. That propelled us. The folk revival was based at Folk City, so that's where we went. We started playing open mike nights. Eventually we got a gig there. We started playing at the Cornelia Street Songwriter Exchange. We got on that record. Things started to happen and then we broke up. I left him and started pursuing a solo career.

Presumably you then met Jack Hardy, because you became fairly actively involved with FAST FOLK.

Yeah. I met Jack when I first moved there. When he started the **FAST FOLK** thing in 1982, he - I remember he very much included me, actively. He always liked that way I sang, and he liked that I did songs by people who were unknown. He put me on a bunch of the **FAST FOLK** records, which was really nice.

Did you attend Jack's Thursday night spaghetti, and new song sessions.

You know, I never did that. I never considered myself a songwriter. That came later. I never went to the songwriter meetings.

You've mentioned the Cornelia Street Cafe, how did that record deal come together.

There was this whole scene based around Folk City, and we heard about this Songwriters Exchange. We started hanging out there. The guy who owned the Cornelia Street Cafe, decided to do this record and chose us to be on it. He thought we were good. Then that album got written up in the New York Times and we were singled out as one of the highlights of the record. That's how I ended up getting that write-up in the New York Times later - because it was the same writer. He obviously liked the way I sang. That was sort of like a stepping stone to other things.

Was it in the eighties that you met Shawn Colvin.

Met her, I think, in December 1980. I had been there

a couple of years. She had just moved there. She and I met because - the story was that Cliff Eberhardt who was a good friend of mine, who I'd met in 1978 - I used to sing back-up with him. He also played guitar with me and Elliott. Cliff told me - I remember him saying *"Lucy, you're a great back-up singer but there is someone I know who is as good as you are."* I thought *"Oh come on Cliff, you're exaggerating."* It turned out that he had known Shawn for years, from elsewhere. He introduced us. When I first heard her sing, I think my jaw must have dropped - I couldn't believe how good she was. I still can't believe how good she is. He introduced us - then we started sitting in on each other's gigs. Gradually developed into an informal duo. We played parties and weddings and stuff. Then we started getting gigs. Actually I should backtrack a little bit - I was doing solo stuff initially, from 1980 to 1983. It was going well and I got this write-up in the New York Times. I was starting to build up a little circuit of gigs. For reasons I didn't understand at the time, I suddenly decided that I didn't want to do it anymore. I didn't want to be a singer. I wanted to quit. I wanted to be a therapist. I decided I wasn't using my real talents, which boggles my mind when I look back. I did quit. It's taken me about fourteen years to figure out that that was actually a lie and that I did want to do it. I think - and I spent a lot of time in therapy figuring this out. I think I was really scared that I wasn't all that good. It's a very convenient way never to find out. To just quit. Then I was able to - because I quit - I quit doing the solo thing. I kept doing harmonies. I was in duos, but I never let myself be in the limelight again. I think that way, I was able to kind of have this fantasy, for years, that if I had stuck it out, I would be famous too. Or that I would be famous. Very convenient fantasy. Shawn and I did this duo thing, after I quit the solo thing. That was actually starting to go well, and we were getting known as a duo - one night we did a gig at Folk City and a record company approached us and said *"Hey, we would really like to record you guys."* I had been kind of seeing this all along as, sort of a hobby. I said *"No, no, no. I don't want to make a record, I'm going to be a therapist."* I had already gone back to school at this point. Shawn looked at me in total shock and sort of said something like *"If you're not going to pursue this Lucy, I guess I have to."* That was the end of our duo. I did a lot of harmonies, but I never pursued the solo thing until Shawn and I made this record. I was in graduate school and Shawn approached me - I decided to go to psychology school. While I was in school, Shawn had this idea that we could make a record. She could produce it. She had always wanted to produce a record. She has this idea one day *"Hey, let's make a record. You'll sing. We'll do it live in the studio. You're a good live singer Lucy. I'll produce it."* So we got the money together and made this record. I never really thought of it as a career move, because I wasn't going to be a singer. I was going to be a psychologist. We made this record, **"The Tide,"** and we were very happy with it. In the process -

Was it almost that you were trying to document Lucy Kaplansky, the singer. A case of, "Well, at least I've recorded an album."

I never even thought it that far through. It was sort of like *"Oh, Shawn wants to make a record."* I was very passive about it. Extremely passive. Like *"Oh, somebody else wants to do this. Fine. I'll come along."* I gave her the driving wheel. It was her baby. I didn't take it that seriously. It was sort of a fun thing to go and sing on a record.

When did you record the album. '91 or '92.

Let's just say that it was a while ago.

Did you pick the songs to go on the album. What about the Robin Batteau song.

Robin and Shawn and I were friends. Shawn and I had a gig at this place - The Cottonwood Cafe - Robin would come and sit in with us. I remember him coming and singing those two songs, "Guinevere" and "The Eyes of My Beholder." We would sing harmony with him. That's how I learned them. I just always thought they were amazing songs. How we chose the songs for **"The Tide,"** was pretty much stick with a combination of the songs that had been in my repertoire for years. Because they were mostly songs by friends of mine from the Village. A couple of songs Shawn suggested, that she had heard, that I didn't know. Like "The Heart." And then a couple of songs that I had written. "The Tide" was actually something that got written later.

Had you continued writing songs on a regular basis.

I had written four songs by about 1985. Two of them ended up on the record. I didn't write another song until 1994. Nothing, except college papers and a dissertation. Then my husband - I had a gig - it was a showcase actually, where I had to do two original songs and he said *"Why don't we try writing one."* He's a film maker and a writer. We wrote "The Tide." People liked it so much, we continued writing and we've now written a bunch of songs together. The new album I'm making, is going to be primarily original songs.

Have you started recording it yet.

Yeah. I'm about halfway through. I have to go back in the morning, tomorrow, because I've got to go into the studio.

Where are you recording it and who is producing it.

In New York. The producer is Anton Sanko. He produced a couple of the cuts on **"The Tide."** He used to work with Suzanne Vega. He produced one of her albums. He's a great producer. I'm working with a bunch of studio musicians, who are friends of mine and great players. I think it's going to be different to **"The Tide"** in some ways. Certainly because it's going to be original material. It's also - a different kind of sound. Less bluegrassy. It's very acoustic based, less bluegrass, and more - I don't even know what you would call it. So far I'm very happy with it.

How many tracks will there be.

Probably twelve, with nine originals.

Tonight you sang an Ian Tyson song.

That was just for fun. That's not going to go on the record.

What about the last song you sang tonight. Because it was a darned fine song.

Thank you. Rick, my husband, and I wrote that one.

What about the covers.

I don't want to say. I'll let it be a surprise.

Backtracking to the eighties, were you a member of a group called The Song Project, which had an album out in Italy.

Yeah. Yeah. I sort of skipped over that. It was Tom Intondi, Frank Christian, me and Martha Hogan. She isn't around anymore. She's also on the Cornelia Street album. That group started in 1980. It was literally going to be for one weekend of gigs. It did so well - it was a group put together to do songs by writers in the Village. It did so well, that we kept it together as a group. We started to get very popular and did lots and lots of gigs. Eventually the group broke up. We put it back together - it lasted about two years and broke up - in 1985. We got an offer to go to Italy and record, so we got back together and made the record. Went to Italy, ate a lot of pasta and had fun. There was one song by each of us and the other songs were by people from the Village whom we knew. Mostly unknown writers.

Is the album still available.

I don't even know if I have it. I had copies of it and I gave one to my parents, so I know they have it. I can't remember which label it was on. We cut the album, and then we went back to Italy six months later and did some gigs, and that was it. Then we broke up again. Martha ended up moving away to Japan. Tom passed away last year, which was really, really sad.

You were in a duo with Shawn, and in the Song Project during the eighties, were there other musical aggregations that you were a member of.

Just briefly, I played with a guy named Andy Pasternak, for a few gigs. You probably wouldn't have heard of him. That's about it.

How did you end up on Nanci's "Lone Star State of Mind."

She had heard me, I think, with the Song Project. I had met her - oh I know, I was singing on John Gorka's first record - he made one version of it in Nashville, which he didn't like. He ended up redoing it in New Jersey. She came to the studio and I met her there. Out of the blue, I get this call - she had heard me sing, so she called me and asked me to sing on her record. That was an unbelievably exciting thing. It was her first MCA record. That's how that happened. I also worked on **"Little Love Affairs."**

How did you meet Gorka.

I met him through - it was actually an all day taping session for the **FAST FOLK** magazine. This was like, I think, his first recording for **FAST FOLK.** I'd never met him before. He came up to Shawn and I, and asked us to sing on his cut. He tells the story on stage now when I sing with him. It's very funny. We had no idea who he was. I remember thinking, *"Who the hell does this guy think he is."* Shawn and I were the hot harmony singers. We didn't know who he was. We thought he was some nerd. We said *"Well, we have to hear the song."* He sang "Down in the Milltown" and we were just blown away. We sang with him and formed a lasting friendship and musical collaboration, that was, and still is amazing.

While you were at College and once you started practising, did you completely stop performing music in public.

Yeah. Well, I mean - I guess I never completely stopped. Every now and then, I'd get a call to sing somebody's record. Mostly low budget kinds of things. I also did a lot of country and western gigs. Like parties and things. It's interesting that the only gigs I realy let myself do for a long time, were gigs where nobody listened. Where you were sort of the background music.

And nobody realised who you were.

They didn't realise who I was. I mean, I was just some country singer. That was pretty frustrating and made me very unhappy. I certainly didn't do any good gigs for years. I mean probably from, 1987/88 to 1992. I didn't do a gig. Not a good gig, where people actually came to listen. I remember the first one I did which was - well, the tenth anniversary of **FAST FOLK** which I guess was - I don't remember when that was.

1992.

Yeah. I finished graduate school in 1992. While I was in graduate school, there really wasn't time to do anything else anyway.

Why particularly did you pick psychology.

I think what happened - again, sort of in retrospect, I think I understand it better. First of all, I was in therapy at the time. I kind of liked - it seemed like an interesting thing - I thought therapy was a useful thing. I thought it was something that I could be good at. I think I also really wanted to heal myself, which is why a lot of people go into the field. Except they don't know it. I knew, probably somewhere inside, that I was very troubled and very confused. So I think I went into it for reasons that weren't necessarily so healthy. Ironically, I like being a psycholigist. I really like the work. I like my patients. If I didn't have this burning desire to do this other thing, I'd probably be very happy as a psychologist. Which makes me realise, I didn't explain how I kind of came to this realisation that I wanted to sing again. What happened was, about two and a half years ago, I was in the process of shopping this record to record companies. I had been in therapy before and I had started with a new therapist. I felt like I wasn't

getting what I needed from the old therapist. Within about three months, a very, very important thing happened. I was talking one day in his office about how - something about *"Well, I wouldn't want what Shawn has."* Because at this point Shawn was very successful.

Do you mean the limelight, as well as the pressure.

Right. Exactly. All of it. He said, *"Why not"* which no one had ever asked me before. I started to say something like, *"Well you know, I wouldn't want to be away from home so much,"* The way I remember it, I sort of stopped and said, *"You know, I'm not sure why not."* It was from that moment, I started to realise that I did want it, and that I had never let myself know that. That was really a kind of life changing moment. I really credit my work with this guy, for changing my life. I would probably have spent the rest of my life, not singing, filled with envy and despair. Would never have known what was wrong.

From what you said tonight, you're still balancing two careers.

Well, I'm doing - the balance is definitely shifting. I don't know how I portrayed it and I'm very careful about what I say about it, because I still have patients. The balance is definitely shifting. I'm doing psychology very, very part time now. That's all I can say "on the record" about what's gonna happen with that.

Is the new album going to be on Red House.

Yeah.

Did you do nationwide tours of the States in support of the first album.

Initially, I didn't have an agent. I was booking myself. I got as many gigs as I could. Actually I did a lot of gigs. Then about six months after it came out, I got signed to the biggest booking agency in folk music - Fleming/Tamulevich & Associates - that changed my life completely. All of a sudden -

There was a weight removed.

Not just a weight. They got me a million gigs. It took about six months for it to kick in. Last September is when it started kicking in and since then I have been doing a million gigs. Especially since January this year. I've been away from home at least a third of the time. All over the States. I've only been to Canada for one festival.

Are you doing a lot of festivals this summer.

Not this summer. I'm doing three or four. I did a few festivals last year and generally speaking, festivals don't have you two years in a row. I'll probably do more next summer.

What about Europe.

Nothing.

The album has been really well received there.

It's done very well in England. My agent and I have talked about - it hasn't worked out that I could get over there. I'm really hoping for this new record, that I'll make it to Europe. I really want to. I lived in England for a year when I was five, in London. My father was on sabbatical. I'd love to go back.

Can we talk about some of the songs on "The Tide." You did a Richard Thompson cover.

I've been doing that song since 1981, I think. Someone turned me on to Richard and Linda Thompson. I was completely blown away by that song - I loved it. Shawn used to sing harmony - she would come and sit in - the harmony she sings on the record is the same one she sang in 1981. We just decided it was a great song and we wanted to put it o the record.

You also covered George Gerdes. He never became known outside the Village.

Not really. Now he's a very successful actor in L.A. I saw him in **NYPD Blue.** I saw him on **Seinfeld.** He's done very well for himself, but he's not doing much music any more. He's a great songwriter.

How did you meet Cliff Eberhardt.

The same as Gorka. At Folk City. I don't remember the exact moment I met him, but there was this group of people who would hang out at Folk City every night. He and Elliott and I got to be good friends. Cliff and I are still good friends. I though he was a great songwriter. I thought "Goodnight" was one of the most beautiful songs I'd ever heard. I started performing it and people loved the way I did it. This was in 1980. I've been doing it ever since. It was kind of a logical one to go on the record.

How did you meet Cindy Mangsen.

I heard her in Chicago. She was in a band with a couple of guys, and I just loved the way she sang. I've got a tape of them. They were called Ravenswood. They don't exist anymore. I remember she sang "When I Hear Them Cuckoos Hollerin'" - it's an old folk song. It was real down to earth - not pretentious and I just dug it. I copied her also.

By the way, did you ever get to meet Mary McCaslin.

I met her a few years after I first heard her. I remember I was playing with the Song Project and she was on the same bill. I went up - oh no, she came up to me and said *"Boy, you have a great voice."* I said *"I can't believe you're saying this to me, you're like my idol etc. etc."* Then I met her again recently. I was playing in Santa Cruz. That's where she lives and she came to the show. I told her *"I was a big fan of hers."*

I first heard her around 1978, when this guy in Norway sent me a tape. At that time I thought "What a voice." I think it was the "Old Friends" album.

Unbelieveable album.

Kerrville '96
- Memories & a four album review

Those precious memories

Well, it was long. Almost forever. Twenty five days on the Quiet Valley Ranch. Down at Camp C.A.L.M., in true Star Trek fashion, we dubbed Days 19 through 25, "The Kerrlight Zone" - a time space where even the most foolhardy folk fan had never previously dared to venture. And we did.....

A perrenial favourite with this writer, the New Folk Contest '96 failed to light any personal fires. That apart, I finally fulfilled a couple of personal goals - to see all time heroes, Michael Smith and Mary McCaslin, play solo sets. The opening night's marathon [6pm Thursday till 2.30am Friday], featuring eight original '72 performers/longtime festival favourites, cast the dye for the whole event as far as the Mainstage Concerts were concerned. Midnight came and went, many times over, with the sound still going full tilt. Value for money or what ?

By Day 23 I was less than 100% physically - I mean to say, how much undiluted, good music can one set of aged ears take - in addition, I had undertaken some twenty seven interviews by that stage [on and off the ranch]. The final night's symphony orchestra set, with guest performers, was stunning in concept and execution. OK, it's been done before at the Quiet Valley, but I wasn't there on those occasions. And yes, the final night concert finished before midnight ! Well before the bewitching hour.

I was able to renew many old acquaintances and make numerous new friends. I've already embarrassed a few of the innocent in this issue's Editorial, so I won't compound it further here - suffice to say, you know who you are, young or of greater maturity. Aren't Kerrverts perennially, young at heart anyway ?

As for new unrecorded songwriters heard at nightly campfires or daytime song sessions, my pick of the bunch has to be a lady, currently from Salt Lake City way, by the name of Megan Peters. Among her damned fine songbag is a *"spine tinglin' killer"* titled "Take Me Home."

Before the big bird transported me across the great pond, pe-festival analysis of the 1996, 25th anniversary Kerrville Folk Festival bill gave rise to a category of around twenty acts which I listed at that time as, ***"Who Is He/She/Are They?"*** The following handful of reviews can now be titled ***"Well, now you know....."***

A four album review

Clear winner, by miles, of the Kronikle's 1996 Festival title ***"Favourite New & Previously Unknown Songwriter"*** is, The Joel Rafael Band, an acoustic quartet which hails from San Diego, California. Jeff Berkley plays what has been termed custom ethno-percussion [congas to most of us], Carl Johnson is on acoustic guitar, as is leader and songwriter par extraordinary Joel Rafael, while they are topped off by Joel's daughter Jamaica Morgaine on violin. The band members also pitch in with backing vocals where necessary. To date, two Joel Rafael Band albums are available. The twelve song **"The Joel Rafael Band"** [1994], with one track less on **"Old Wood Barn"** [1996]. Joel was one of the winners of the Kerrville New Folk Contest, circa 1995. For me, it was a case of instant Joel Rafael conversion, on the evening of Saturday 25th May, somewhere between 6pm and 7pm. In fact, by halfway through their set, I'd made my way to the Kerrville Hospitality Booth and purchased both of Joel's albums - there was no way that the "big bird" was going to return me Eastward without them. Smitten doesn't even touch the perimeter of what I felt. There's an incalculable listening longevity about Rafael's material. The guy's a lyrical philospher and a dream weaver with melodies. His "America Come Home" could loosely be described as an anthem in the mould of Jackson Browne classics such as "The Pretender," "Before the Deluge" and "Running On Empty." In concert, Rafael performs a selection of his countless other *"hits"* - "My Father's Son," "Ballad of Bellingham," "Goldmine" and "Meanwhile the Rain" - like I could list here, all twenty three tracks Joel has cut to date. He is that good, and then some.... Joel's recordings are available by Mail Order from **Reluctant Angel Records, P.O. Box 357, Bonsall, CA. 92003, U.S.A.** I'd suggest $20.00 per disc incl. Air mail postage.

Celeste Krenz is currently based in Denver, Colorado and has two CD albums avaliable on the Emergency Record label. **"Edge of the Storm"** dates from 1993, while **"Slow Burning Flame"** followed roughly twelve months later. The material contained thereon is a mixture of self composed originals, co-writes with Bob Tyler [mostly] and Tim O'Brien, Lisa Valasco and Hugh Moffatt [occasionally], merged with covers of compositions from Dolly Parton, Stephen Allen Davis and Dave Crossland. The most recent of her two recordings was produced by Tim O'Brien. Krenz, is best described as a songstess in the mould of Ronstadt, Warnes, Hinojosa and Newcomer - get the idea ? Celeste's albums are available from **Emergency Records, P.O. Box 101056, Denver, Colorado 80250, U.S.A.**

Adam and Kris are based in Los Angeles, although Adam is originally from Canada. They were instantly booked by Rod Kennedy for Kerrville '97, on the strength of their '96 appearance. The latter date, consisted of a 50% share of a Sundown Concert at Threadgill Theatre, which proved this young duo were possessed of an infectious energy set in a pop/folk mould. Sad to relate their two current recordings, one CD and one cassette, fail to effectively capture my Threadgill memory of them. The CD is titled **"In the Garden"** while the cassette bears the name **"You Asked For It."** Available from **P.O. Box 952, Manhattan Beach, California 90267, U.S.A.**

Heard talking onstage, you would swear that Laura Smith was of Celtic descent. In fact she is yet another addition to the burgeoning quota of Canadian performers who are infiltrating the land to the South. Stylistically, Smith draws on traditional folk sources [undoubtedly gained during the Cape Breton period of her life] while injecting a twentieth century bite into her self composed material. Her current catalogue counts two CD's, **"Laura Smith"** and **"b'tween the earth and my soul."** The source for Laura's albums is **Cornermuse Recordings, P.O. Box 34105, Scotia Square P.O., Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada B3J 1N0.**

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And As We Run Out of Space
- Some Final Footnotes.

The twenty one tracks which compose **"Kerrpilation - Kampfire Kuts - Volume 1"** were cut in the campgrounds at the Quiet Valley Ranch during the '95 Festival. In order of appearance there's Dana Cooper, Melissa Javors, Rex Foster, RST, Janet Feld, Michael Camp, Jabbering Trout, Jamie Byrd, Steve Fisher, Chuck Pyle, Nigel Russell, [Chris] Chandler, Tom Frost, Carol Elliott, Adam & Kris, Andy Gibson, Bernice Lewis, Buddy Mondlock, Mike Williams, The Studebakers and finally, Erik Moll. It's intended that this cassette will eventually take on a CD life. In the meantime, the cassette version is available for the sum of $10.00 plus postage, from **Wyldwood Studio, 7611 Cooper Lane, Austin, Texas 78745, U.S.A.**

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 **ANNE HILLS** "October Child" Flying Fish FF 70621 [1993]. #
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. Montana Song **DAVID ACKLES** "American Gothic" Elektra 7559-61597-2 [1972, 1993].
5. America Come Home **JOEL RAFAEL Band** "The Joel Rafael Band" Reluctant Angel [1994]. #
6. Shelly River **TERRY CLARKE** "Welcome to Transatlantic Country" Transatlantic TRA CD 239 [1996].
7. Come Fly Away **JIMMIE DALE GILMORE** "Braver Newer World" Elektra 61836-2 [1996]. #
8. Yarrington Town **MICKIE MERKENS** "Texas Summer Nights, Vol. 1" Potato Satellite PS2-1000 [1983]. #
9. Coffeehouse Days **MICHAEL SMITH** "Michael, Margaret, Pat & Kate" [no label, private pressing] MPS1 [1994]. #
10. Goodnight Moon **ERICA WHEELER** "The Harvest" Signature Sounds Recording Company [1996]. #
11. Meanwhile the Rain **JOEL RAFAEL Band** "Old Wood Barn" Reluctant Angel [1996]. #
12. I Like Trains **FRED EAGLESMITH** "Drive-In Movie" Vertical VER 4218-2 [1996]. #
13. Ballad of Elizabeth Dark **MICHAEL SMITH** "Michael, Margaret, Pat & Kate" [no label, private pressing] MPS1 [1994]. #
14. Angel With A Busted Wing **DAVID MUNYON** "Acrylic Teepees" Glitterhouse GRCD 393 [1996]. ^
15. Things We Do **INDIGENOUS** "Honor - A Benefit for the Honor the Earth Campaign" Daemon Records 19012-2 [1996]. #
16. Heroes **BOB NEUWIRTH** "Look Up" Watermelon CD 1050 [1996]. #
17. Tramps and Hawkers **JIM RINGER** "The Band of Jesse James: The Best of Jim Ringer" Philo PHCD 1202 [1996]. #
18. Nickel and a Spoon **ALEJANDRO ESCOVEDO** "With These Hands" Rykodisc RCD 10343 [1996]. #
19. Galbraith Street **RON SEXSMITH** "Ron Sexsmith" Interscope IND 92485 [1995].
20. Strong Hand of Love **BRUCE COCKBURN** {Various Artists} "Orphans of God" 9601 FCD [1996]. #
21. Rider On An Orphan Train **DAVID MASSENGILL** "The Return" Plumb 5903-2 [1996]. #
22. Condition of the Heart **HUNTER MOORE** "Delta Moon" Brambus 199679-2 [1996]. ^
23. VT & Me **CAROL ELLIOTT** "The People I Meet" Heartstrong 005 [1996]. #
24. Mississippi Rain **DAVID MUNYON** "Slim Possibilites" Stockfisch RTD 357.6012.2 [1996]. ^
25. Drifter's Wind **ALAN RHODY** "From A Real Good Home" ARCD-04 [199]. #
26. The Heart Speaks **CAROLYN WENNBLOM** "Bees to the Honey" Glitterhouse GRCD 385 [1996]. ^
27. Wasteland of the Free **IRIS DeMENT** "The Way I Should" Warner Bros. 9 46188-2 [1996]. #
28. This Train **IAIN MATTHEWS** "God Looked Down" Watermelon CD 1055 [1996]. #
29. Hannah's Dreams **GREG TROOPER** "Noises in the Hallway" D'Ville Record Group CD DV5002 [1996]. #
30. Wings of a Blackbird **KATY MOFFATT** "Midnight Radio" Watermelon CD 1054 [1996]. #
31. The River **KIM MILLER** "Child of the Big Sky" Sea Robin SR01 [1996]. #
32. Romance Is A Slow Dance **CELESTE KRENZ** "Slow Burning Flame" Emergency Records E-913 [1994]. #
33. Tylersville Road **PETER KEANE** "Walkin' Around" Flying Fish FF652 [1996]. #
34. The Rules of the Raod **CHRIS BURROUGHS** "Clutter" Blue Rose BLUCD 021 [1996]. ^
35. Superblue **DAVID MUNYON** "Stories From the Curve" Glitterhouse GRCD 384 [1996]. ^
36. Lazy Heart **EDDI READER** "Candyfloss and Medicine" Blanco Y Negro 0630-15120-2 [1996].
37. The Dance **ANDREW HARDIN** "Coney Island Moon" Roundtower RTMCD 76 [1996].
38. If It Wasn't For The Wind **DAVID OLNEY** "Eye of the Storm" Philo PHCD 1199 [1996]. #
39. The Wandering Song **DARCIE DEAVILLE** "Threadgill's Supper Session - Second Helpings" Watermelon CD 1052 [1996]. #
40. Highheels in the Rain **FRED EAGLESMITH** "There Ain't No Easy Road" Sweetwater FSE 004 [1992]. #
41. Paris in A Day **ELLIS PAUL** "A Carnival of Voices" Philo PHCD 1191 [1996]. #
42. Nothing At All **TAMMY ROGERS** "Tammy Rogers" Dead Reckoning DR0052 [1996]. #
43. Another Road **HUGH MOFFATT** "The Life of a Minor Poet" Watermelon CD 1047 [1996]. #
44. Heartbreak Train **ROSIE FLORES** "A Honky Tonk Reprise" Rounder CD 3136 [1987/1996]. #
45. Hills of Tuscany **BILL MORRISSEY** "You'll Never Get to Heaven" Philo CD PH 1194 [1996]. #
46. Morning Glory **MAC GAYDEN** "Nirvana Blues" Winter Harvest WH 3305-2 [1996]. #
47. A Sort of Goodbye **ADAM & KRIS** "In the Garden" Hansen Records HNSN CD-3 [1993]. #
48. Short Fuse **THE BLAZERS** "Going Up the Country" Rounder/CRS CRCDM 3 [1996]. ^
49. Texas No.1 **WES McGHEE** "Heartache Avenue" The Road Goes On Forever RGFCD 017 [1996].
50. Heal In The Wisdom **BOBBY BRIDGER** "Kerrville Folk Festival - Live 1986" (cassette only, no index no.) [1987]. #

waitin' their turn - I'm Not Afraid of Forever Anymore **RICHARD DOBSON** "Love Only Love" Brambus 199681-2 [1996]. ^ ; Child of Steel **ROSANNE CASH** "10 Song Demo" Capitol CDP 7243 8 32390 2 [1996]. # ; My Bonny **LAURA SMITH** "B'tween the Earth and My Soul" Cornermuse 50235-2 [1996]. # ; Florida **MARY MARGARET O'HARA** "Sweet Relief II : Gravity of the Situation" Columbia 484137 2 [1996]. ; Johnny's Camaro **DAVID WILCOX** "East Asheville Hardware/Live" KOCH International KOC-CD-3-7920 [1995]. # ; The Ache For Fame **MICHAEL HALL** "Day" Dejadisc DJD 3225 [1996]. # ; If I Were Brave **SHAWN COLVIN** "A Few Small Repairs" Columbia 484327 2 [1996]. ; My Soul and You **RAINRAVENS** "Rainravens" Dejadisc DJD 3226 [1996]. # ; Hard Times **QUARTETTE** "Quartette" Round Tower RTMC079 [1994/1996]. ; We Don't Run **WILLIE NELSON** "Spirit" Island 314-524 242-2 [1996]. ; Baby You Scare Me **KRIS McKAY** "Things That Show" Shanachie 8020 [1996]. # ; When It Rains **TISH HINOJOSA** "Dreaming From the Labyrinth" Warner Bros. 9 46203-2 [1996]. # ;

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

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Editorial.

On 30th September 1996, the Kerrville Kronikle landed on the World Wide Web. You can look us up at:

http://www.waverider.co.uk/~kerrkron

Your comments [good, bad or indifferent] and news [for inclusion on the Kronikle Web pages] can be sent by conventional mail to address above, or you can E-Mail us at:

kerrkron@waverider.co.uk

I guess it was something to do with the number of times I was met with the comment, *"You mean you're not on the Net yet ?"* when I was in Texas during May/June for the 25th Anniversary Kerrville Folk Festival, which finally made the decision for me. In that regard, why should I protect the innocent. Yes, Roger Allen Polson, Beverly Luna and Rex Foster, it's all your doing that the Kronikle is now up there on the Web. If you're a Betty Elders fan, you should check out Beverly's tribute to the **"Crayons"** lady at:

http://www.eden.com/~b_luna/elders.html

If you scan the Kronikle Favourite Web Sites page, you'll find a "hot" link to Rex Foster's Home Page.

With regard to my piece in the Editorial of Issue 20 regarding the third Martha's Vineyard Songwriter's Retreat compilation recording, some nine months and at least two letters later, I've received nothing. I trust that none of you lost money in this deal. If any of you actually received the recording, I'd be pleased to hear about it. Someone, somewhere has my $. The address to avoid: **Wintertide Foundation, P.O. Box 29, Vineyard Haven, MA 02568, U.S.A.**

Proof that perfection sometimes takes forever, Terry Clarke's new album **will finally appear** in UK record stores in early '97. It will be on the Transatlantic label and will be titled **"The Heart Sings."**

Talking of poets, my friend Blair Powell has published his first book of poems titled **"I've Got Too Much Free-Time,"** and subtitled **"how to destroy prose and poetry with a single pencil."** Like Kate Wolf's songbooks, it's spirally bound with a plastic comb. Some 60+ pages in length, copies can be obtained from **4130 FM 2854, Conroe, Texas 77304.**

Regarding the contents of this issue, and in no particular order, thanks are due to **Rod Kennedy, Ellis Paul and Ralph Jacodine, Lucy Kaplansky, Joel Rafael, Tim and Lori Blixt, John and Laurie Hill, Brian Wood and Alpha Ray.** This issue is dedicated to the memory of the late, the great, the one and only Bob Gibson.

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BOB GIBSON

Bob Gibson passed away on Friday 27th September 1996. He was aged 66. In my book, he was a colossus among men. The folk music world owes him an enormous debt of gratitude. Pioneer, is the word which most comes to mind when I think of Bob's eventful career. He never failed to acknowledge that the pivotal event of his life was meeting Pete Seeger. Bob was aged twenty five at the time. A few days after that meeting, Bob purchased his first banjo. Those five strings constituted the backbone of his livelihood for the next four decades. He subsequently spent time working as a collector of field recordings of folk songs for a professor at the University of Ohio. His first recordings for the Riverside label were followed by others for Elektra, Capitol, Mountain Railroad, Hogeye [a label of which he was part owner] Bob Gibson Enterprises, Folk Era and finally, in 1995, Asylum. Although his musical foundations lay firmly embedded in the traditional folk music world, he also possessed skills as a composer which saw him successfully tackle contemporary material. He did it with aplomb, a clear vision and much humour. Over the years, Bob also worked as a music teacher, in the process, keeping the folk tradition he so loved, very much alive. In 1994 he was struck down by super nuclear palsy, eventually being confined to a wheelchair.

On a personal note, Bob Gibson was one of the first people I ever had the pleasure of interviewing. During the 1986 Kerrville Folk Festival, in fact. I saw Bob's performance that year, and again in 1989, when he played for two hours at the Threadgill Theatre. Life can be full of cruel ironies. I missed Bob's Kerrville performance during the 1992 Kerrville festival, due to the fact that I was involved in a marathon interview with another songwriter at the time. Quite simply, "Bob Gibson was one of the greatest musicians this planet will ever see."

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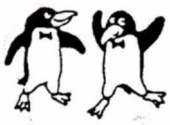
9 December 1982

your toes grip the platform's edge
your feet are desperate to keep you grounded
they shuffle to the edge and back
your upper body fights for balance

electric waves push you back and forth
they carry you away, away
and bring you back again with sounds
of what I least expect
and words that make me smile



Alpha Ray