



Janis Ian **"Best Of....The Autobiography Collection"** Rude Girl Records

Janis Ian's **"Society's Child: My Autobiography"** [ISBN: 978-1-58542-675-1] was published by Penguin/Tarcher during late July 2008, and FolkWax reviewed the work during early September [\[link to review\]](#). **"Best Of....The Autobiography Collection,"** a thirty-one track, 2CD collection featuring material drawn from Janis' four decade recording career, was released concurrently by her label Rude Girl Records. Twenty chapters long, each chapter took its title from one of Janis' compositions [drawn, by the way, non-chronologically from her extensive song catalogue], and fourteen of those chapter titles appear on Disc 1.

The collection opens with the Chapter 1 title "Hair Of Spun Gold," her first composition, penned when Janis was a mere twelve years of age. Where the latter cut dates from Ian's 1967 self-titled debut album, the ensuing live version of "God & The FBI" is previously unreleased. The latter song first surfaced on **"God & The FBI"** [2000] and three years later on **"Working Without A Net: Live."** Ian attests as Chapter 2 unfolds that her school teacher father, the first generation son of a Russian emigrant, was constantly under FBI surveillance. During 1967, peaking at # 13, Ian first tasted U.S. Pop Chart success with "Society's Child" – the title of Chapter 4. Following the release of her fourth Verve Folkways release **"Who Really Cares"** [1969], Janis took her first music career sabbatical. The Capitol Records release **"Present Company"** [1971] was quickly followed by another period of down time. Her third tilt at the Holy Grail began with the CBS album **"Stars"** [1974] from which "Jesse" – the title of Chapter 6, and "Stars" – Chapter 7, feature here. Janis' next album **"Between the Lines"** turned out to be a platinum seller, and the 1975 Grammy Awards saw her pick up the "Best Pop Vocal Performance, Female" gong for "At Seventeen," while the album also scored in the "Best Engineered Recording – Non-Classical" category. "At Seventeen" - the Chapter 9 title - when released as a single, scored Janis a Top Three slot on the U.S. Pop Chart. The album version of "At Seventeen" appears on Disc 1, while the single version closes Disc 2. **"Aftertones"** [1976] was a # 1 Chart album in Japan, while the track "Love Is Blind" - Chapter 10 title – gave Janis a # 3 Chart single in the land of the rising sun. From the same collection, "Fly Too High" – Chapter 11 - from **"Night Rains"** [1979] peaked at # 44 on the U.K. Pop Chart. The only non-chapter song title on Disc 1 is "Thankyous" from **"Stars."**

The remaining half-dozen Chapter titles are threaded through the initial ten [of sixteen] tracks on Disc 2. Janis's **"Billie's Bones"** [2004] was the source of "My Tennessee Hills" - Chapter 15 - and "I Hear You Sing Again" - Chapter 19, while Chapter 16 title "Stolen Fire" hails from **"Revenge"** [1995]. "Joy" the title of the, twentieth and, closing chapter appeared on Ian's most recent solo release **"Folk Is The New Black"** [2006]. Prefacing the writing of her book, the latter disc featured a number titled "My Autobiography" and the lyric is reproduced immediately following Chapter 20. We were introduced to "Some People's Lives" and "Through The Years" – the Chapter 18 title - when Janis released **"Breaking Silence"** [1993] but the versions that appear on **"Best Of....The Autobiography Collection"** are new recordings, as is "Days Like These" – Chapter 17 title - from **"God & The FBI"** [2000]. Completing the aforementioned 'initial' ten tracks on Disc 2 are "Every Love" from **"Unreleased 3: Society's Child"** [2001] and "Tattoo" **"Breaking Silence"** [1993].

Listed on the liner as 'Bonus Tracks' [and according to the liner booklet, recorded circa 1964/1965] is the original work tape version of "Hair Of Spun Gold," while "I Long For You" is taken from a 'recently unearthed' 1978 tape. "Ginny The Flying Girl" hails from the long out-of-print Sesame Street album **"In Harmony II"** [1981], and Janis' rendition of the traditional "Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye" from last year's 3CD 'music through history' release **"Song Of America."** "Today You're Mine" opened last year's

Japanese only **"Ultimate Best"** compilation, and – as I stated earlier - Disc 2 closes with the 7" single version of "At Seventeen."

Major label career-wide compilations normally include one or two rare or new cuts, this self-released 'tie-in' release features eight examples of the latter. In a life that has witnessed a fair share of highs and lows the latter is proof that Janis can teach those major labels a [life] lesson or two. Very few musicians enter and leave the music business on four occasions, while sustaining an artistically/financially fruitful recording and performing career that is the envy of her peers. Janis Ian did. The rude girl is still doing it.....

Folkwax Score 9 out of 10

**Arthur Wood.**

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### Disc 1

"Hair Of Spun Gold" **"Society's Child"** [1967]  
"God & The FBI" \* new version **"God & The FBI"** [2000]  
"Silly Habits" **"Janis Ian"** [1978]  
"Society's Child" **"Society's Child"** [1967]  
"Haven't I Got Eyes" **"Folk Is The New Black"** [2006]  
"Jesse" **"Stars"** [1974]  
"Stars" **"Stars"** [1974]  
"Thankyou" **"Stars"** [1974]  
"This Train Still Runs" **"Breaking Silence"** [1993]  
"At Seventeen" [Album Version] **"Between The Lines"** [1975]  
"Love Is Blind" **"Aftertones"** [1976]  
"Fly Too High" **"Night Rains"** [1979]  
"Arms Around My Life" **"Unreleased 2: Take No Prisoners"** [2000]  
"His Hands" \* new version **"Breaking Silence"** [1993]  
"When Angels Cry" **"Revenge"** [1995]

### Disk 2

"My Tennessee Hills" **"Billie's Bones"** [2004]  
"Every Love" **"Unreleased 3: Society's Child"** [2001]  
"Some People's Lives" \* new version **"Breaking Silence"** [1993]  
"Stolen Fire" **"Revenge"** [1995]  
"Days Like These" \* new version **"God & The FBI"** [2000]  
"Tattoo" **"Breaking Silence"** [1993]  
"Through The Years" \* new version **"Breaking Silence"** [1993]  
"I Hear You Sing Again" **"Billie's Bones"** [2004]  
"Joy" **"Folk Is The New Black"** [2006]  
"My Autobiography" **"Folk Is The New Black"** [2006]

### Bonus Tracks

"Hair Of Spun Gold" [Original worktape, Janis' first song] **"Society's Child"** [1967]  
"I Long For You" \* new version "" []  
"Ginny The Flying Girl" "" []  
"Johnny I Hardly Knew Ye" "" []  
"Today You're Mine" \* new version "" []  
"At Seventeen" [Single Version] **"Between The Lines"** [1975]