

# FAST FOLK

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Some ol' COOT. NEW YEAR EVE '83

# FAST FOLK

MUSICAL MAGAZINE

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## Introducing The Fast Folk Musical Magazine

That is called love for the workers in song  
Probably still is for those who are left.

Leonard Cohen

The Fast Folk Musical Magazine is a desperately needed venue for the expansion of the concept of the noncommercial artistic song. Noncommercial in the sense of intent. Commerciality is an objective byproduct judged after the fact. So is art, for that matter, often reevaluated in the subsequent fads of academic endorsement.

What we are dealing with here is encouragement. By providing an outlet for songs judged on their potential artistic merits rather than on their potential commercial merits, we hope to encourage more experimentation, cross-pollination, and enjoyment of this musical/lyrical form.

Nowhere is it guaranteed that if one picks up a guitar one can or should earn his or her living by it. The obscene amounts of money made in the field of the popular song has created its own classification system, its own history, its own terminology. They talk of a bullet "on the charts." A "hit" song. An old "hit" song is "solid gold." A super hit song is called a "monster."

Also created has been a class of entrepreneurs as well as a legal class, who now run the music business. An acquaintance of mine who has been on both sides of the fence has recounted stories to me of people in the business who have asked him, "Why do you want to be an 'artist'? The money is in the business."

Indeed, the business has come to look down on the artist, with his art, his persona, becoming a "package," a commodity that can be bought and sold, traded, split up into "points" and cast off if the return is not good enough and written off as a bad investment.

We need a wholly different set of values and terminology, not one that looks down on business or ignores it, but a separate set of criteria that can encourage writers to create, and that can reinforce and reward them for their work well done.

In looking at the eighteen issues produced by The Coop, a cooperatively produced, subscriber-supported record/magazine, we have seen the emergence of an alternative. The Fast Folk Musical Magazine will greatly expand this alternative. No longer tied to the economics and politics of a fledgling cooperative New York-based movement, the new record/magazine will branch out, actively soliciting songs and articles nationally and internationally. In the not too distant future we will acquire funding that can greatly expand our visibility through advertising, and improve our quality by paying for articles and paying at least mechanical royalties for songwriters. We hope to encourage a more active national and international intercourse on songs, helping good songs to surface and circulate.

Our subscribers will still be the mainstay of our operation. By subscribing, one is not paying after the fact for that which is already popular, but providing money up front to support what can be an exciting experiment. We would like as much feedback as possible, not just public letters to the editor, but private constructive criticism of the artists as well. No one creates in a vacuum, nor do we intend to publish in a vacuum. We intend to fill a vacuum, and fill it well, with music.

Jack Hardy

# Toward a Definition of Folk Music

by Byrne Power

Why define things? Why not let music be music? Why call it folk? Jazz? Rock? It's all just music, isn't it? I suppose so. At least enough people have been reasoning this way lately to make a boy like me feel guilty for attempting to divide the knot.

Yet circumstances have driven me to the onerous task of definition. When the wheels at Conglomerate Records Incorporated release this week's batch of presold vinyl to the Western World; when they stomp out the vital traditions of American music in the name of chart action and sales figures; when they justify themselves, saying, "It's all just music, isn't it?", you get a little more suspicious about all the moaning at the consumer level.

Just where is this 'it's-all-just-music' line originating from anyway? Damned if I know! But when you go shopping for gospel records and end up with disco instead (not even good disco); when you go through the country music bins and have difficulty finding anything but easy-listening Nashville sleaze, a body has to stand up to ask if there isn't a limit to this madness.

Howlin' Wolf summed it up well. He asked for a glass of water; they brought him gasoline. Can't drink that. You've got to stop and ask what it is. There is a need for definitions of some sort. You don't want a belly full of unleaded, do you?

Our problems with definitions stem from the hardness of our scientific objectivity. When you ask what water is, what kind of answer do you usually get? H<sub>2</sub>O. Now that's a scientific compact complete answer. It's firm but it's also completely abstract. Unless you know the properties of hydrogen and oxygen, which is very doubtful. In our rational world view, all that matters is that which can be weighed, measured, quantified. But is H<sub>2</sub>O really a definition of water? Isn't it an abstraction upon the truth of what water is?

Water. Think about it. You swim in it. You drink it. You boil it. You're made of it. It's a home for ducks, sharks, and toads. It rises into the air to become clouds. It makes a rainbow possible. It drowns

the infant toddler who cannot swim. It can be sweet or salty. It reflects the sun at twilight. It floods the valley dwellers. We sail its storm-tossed oceans. 'H<sub>2</sub>O' is pretty limp when you think about it. How do you write a full definition in an encyclopedia? It's tidier to discuss 'H<sub>2</sub>O'. The reality of water nearly defies definition. Nearly; but not quite. You can get a glass of water when you ask for it. It's pretty clear what's water and what's gasoline.

Two million years ago in the late fifties-early sixties, folk revivalists used to spend their time trying to define folk music, when they weren't singing to each other around campfires that blazed from the floors of Greenwich Village coffeeshops. You couldn't write a folk song; it had to be passed down word of mouth, said a few adamant souls. Most everyone agreed. You could adapt a song for a modern setting, couldn't you? Oh sure, sure. That was permissible. What about Woody Guthrie? Surely his songs were folk songs. Ah...well...that'll be the exception to the rule. His songs are so authentic. His songs about America and unions, and protest have eternal relevance.

Then someone spoke up from the back row. It might have been Phil Ochs. 'Look,' he said sincerely. 'My protest songs have eternal relevance too. Why can't I sing them as folk songs?' The elders looked at each other and said, 'Why not!'

Then a young heathen poet stood up. His name was Bob Dylan. 'Then it

doesn't matter what I sing about. Does it?' he spoke boldly. 'I could even write poetic songs about myself, couldn't I?' He sat down. The crowd grew hushed.

Just then young Joan Baez, a favored daughter of the elders, stood up. 'If he wants to write songs,' said she, 'I'll sing them' Peter, Paul, Mary, and a host of others joined the chorus.

The elders conferred for a moment. Then they spoke. 'All right,' they said, 'poetry is allowed. . . But! You must always lean it leftwards and play acoustically. No electric guitars. No rock and roll.'

That sounded good for about five minutes, until the rebel Bob strolled back in whining with an electric guitar in hand. He sang something awfully cryptic and the elders banished him from the folk world forever. Most of the folkies sided with the rebel Bob and followed him out the door. A nearly completed definition of folk music was lost to the world as it was swept into the eternal campfire in the rush to sign contracts with the majors.

So what is folk music? Obviously there's no scientific answer to the question. Even if there was, what good would it do? It would be too hard, too constricting. It would be a definition that, like the early sixties definitions, would break with the slightest breeze of dissent.

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You see, they were right in saying folk music is passed down word-of-mouth. But even they would admit that country music is folk music. And yet it was often freshly written material. Sometimes it could be said that gospel music or country music was folk even if it was new because the writers were writing unconscious of art or commerce. Yet Woody Guthrie himself, whose songs were universally accepted as folk, was no mythical naif.

Quick definitions fall apart because they don't see broadly enough the issues at stake. I'm sure my own contributions here will need probing and extensive questioning. Perhaps I can expand only a little on a vast subject. Trying to pin down a concrete definition of folk music would fill a twenty-volume set with ease, let alone a microscopic article in a tiny magazine. I must try though.

One of the most lucid statements of definition I've ever heard concerning folk music was tossed off by some nameless blues musician, who said of his blues, 'It's music for folks.' Folk music is music for folks. Simple, huh? Laughably simplistic, or so it seems. It looks like we're back with the 'it's-all-just-music' people.

We're not, however. There's something in the word 'folks' that connotes something fairly precise in our minds. Folks. Our parents are our folks. Our neighborhood is folks. America is not our folks. The Cajuns in Louisiana are folks. New Yorkers are not. Los Angelans aren't either. But Ireland is full of folks. A village is full of folks. A modern city has only people.

If this all sounds like word games to you, I beg your pardon. It's not. The word 'folks' discusses locality and kinship with us. New York and America are just too big, too abstract, too mass, too modern to fit as folks. A folk culture is a regional, local, familial organism. Modern society is a technical organization. A folk culture makes its art, its music, its cooking, its living out of whatever is local and indigenous to its environment. You won't find an eskimo eating a watermelon--unless he's being assimilated into the modern world.

Folk music is the music that comes natural to a local geographic community. That means that most fifties rock and roll music suddenly turns out to be folk music. Indeed

there may be a better case for Fats Domino, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Little Richard as folk musicians than the case for much of the folk revivalists.

At this point I might be seeming a little heretical, but follow with me a little longer. I have reasons for what I say. Cajun music is the music of the Louisiana bayous. Tex-Mex is the folk style of the Texas Mexico border area. Stringband music and bluegrass are folk musics based on the original European styles brought over hundreds of years ago. Blues and gospel are Black-American folk forms that change from city to city. French-Canadians play music which is different than music played in France. And in France, folk styles change from region to region.



Folk music, like wine and cheese, changes from valley to valley. But just as processed American cheese tastes the same in California, New York, or France, so it is possible to take the sharp (and subtle) taste of local music and to bland it out for universal consumption. After all, how are New Yorkers to appreciate country music if it doesn't have the prerequisite string arrangements? And how is your modern mass market Black person to continue to buy gospel records unless the music is updated? New Orleans rhythm & blues, like Louisiana gumbo, is too regional to appeal to everyone.

Now in some places, suburban California or the industrial Northeast, they have squashed their folk cultures as the white man did to the earlier

Indian cultures. There is a big difference though. The culture the white man originally brought to America encouraged other regional styles that naturally adapted themselves to the soil. But the technological colonists destroy all regional distinctions. The McDonald's in France serves a substance which is identical to that which is served under plastic golden arches in Japan or America. It's quick. It's soft. It's bland. In these newer colonized areas, people have been subjected to mass culture for so long that they've actually developed a taste for blandness. Gumbo would taste like gasoline to them. And true regional folk music goes the route of home cooking.

Into this void stepped the folk revivalists. They weren't often the real folksingers of a given region. Though we must give them a good word for bringing many of the real folks into town, saving them from regional obscurity. They were more like second stringers. They were interpreters.

In many ways an early Judy Collins folk song bore little relation to the genuine article in the hills. But it seemed much more real than a good many pop songs. And it seemed much more accessible than a good many artistic compositions.

So in the sixties we sang folk music with a popular face. Folksingers sounded very similar in San Diego, or Denver, or Cambridge. It wasn't a bad thing by any means. It triggered off a good deal of valuable questioning about our mass culture.

However, by the time Bob Dylan left folk music to be an artist (and a messiah); by the time Judy Collins had become another middle-of-the-road pop singer, most people had completely forgotten what folk music was. (I'm ignoring the traditional music scene here.) It is even doubtful, though perhaps not hopeless, that people in our society can even make folk music anymore. Still they try. And that is a good sign.

I've often wondered why so many of the men singing folk music these days sound reminiscent of Dylan and the women of Joan Baez and Joni Mitchell. Admiration I suppose. I think there are people who think that by picking up an acoustic guitar, you're somehow mysteriously playing folk music. When in reality the fact that from

coast to coast the sounds are so similar belies a poverty of true folk styles. There were more regional styles of fifties rock and roll than there are in today's, though, if our mobility doesn't get the best of us; if some of us can stay put long enough, we might be able to see new styles re-emerge or old styles re-kindled.

Now there's a folk form. It's fragile, or course. The commercial boys are working hard to kill it. Yet there it is. There's some hope there for music. It's tough music developed out of the rubble and waste of the South Bronx. Let's hope we don't have to be reduced to rubble before we can recreate a folk culture. But here's to the rubble if it can make us more human.

When I ask for a glass of water, please don't bring me gasoline. ■



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## A Special Quartet of Canadian Musicians

by Marsha Necheles

A few Canadian songwriters have become so popular with American audiences that their geographical birthrights have been totally forgotten, artists like Neil Young, Joni Mitchell and Gordon Lightfoot. There are many other Canadian musicians who should be familiar to us, but because they were born in Canada and perform there, they are virtually unknown to audiences in the United States.

The dedicated music lover who is adventurous enough to wander up 'north' can see new and exciting music at folk festivals, concert halls and coffee houses. Some of the music is definitely worth the price of the airfare or a trip to your local record store bargain bins.

Case in point are four exceptional Canadian artists, and it should be clearly noted at the outset that these four are only a few of the special musicians I could name. This quartet of individuals has been chosen primarily because their names came to mind first when I decided to do a piece on outstanding songwriters/performers from Canada. These four best exemplify what we're missing by

not hearing the music created by our close neighbors.

Connie Kaldor, Bim, Willie P. Bennett, and Ferron are musicians that you see once and need to see again--soon. They have an impact on audiences that is powerful, as powerful and as moving as their songs. The four also have in common forceful personalities and a desire to reach their listeners. None of these characteristics is necessarily unique, but these individuals definitely are.

CONNIE KALDOR hails from the Canadian prairies (a locale completely unknown to most of us Yanks). But where she comes from is secondary to what she is--a superbly talented singer and writer. Her songs come from the heart, and she writes with a simplicity and a conviction that are eloquent. Kaldor has the added ability of being able to treat with humor subjects that aren't usually tackled: women being ogled and taunted by groups of obnoxious macho men ("Jerks!"); the trauma and the absurdity of seeing old relationships again ("Old Boyfriends!"); the need for women to leave their commitments and find personal freedom ("Wanderlust").



Connie Kaldor at the 1982 Winnipeg Folk Festival

Rich Warren

Kaldor has a sense of style that is totally natural and engaging; one feels that the person on stage there making fun of her outfit and talking about her crummy dinner is the real woman. The art of Connie Kaldor is her lack of artifice and her belief in the passion of music to transmit emotions and experiences. Kaldor could be the newest 'star' on the contemporary music horizon, given the right direction and some luck, not to mention the right credentials from the Canadian government which would allow her to perform in the States, a difficult task for all Canadian artists.

BIM (alias Roy Harper) has been compared to Ray Charles and Roy Orbison or a combination of both, but he is really difficult to pigeonhole. An exceptional guitarist, Bim is an R&B singer whose roots are centered in rock n' roll, country ballads and blues. His original songs sound like standards; his renditions of Hank Williams and George Jones and Mick Jagger material sound more authentic than the originals and capture just the right essence of admiration and imitation to make it all his own.

Bim is one of the few singers around who can sing rock n' roll on an acoustic guitar and still make it move and throb with all the energy of a complete electric group. "I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry" is a three handkerchief affair; his own "Night

on a Hill" is a perfect cinematic gem of a story about a girl, a guy, a car, and the right night; "In the Northern Sun" is a simple story of an afternoon spent with a little niece in the snow; and one could go on and on.

This guy burns with the desire to entertain, and his live shows elicit standing ovations even with jaded folk festival audiences and those who see him for the first time. Like Kaldor, Bim is himself on stage, sharing his love for the classic songs and writers and sharing his personal statements in verse. His voice is different, his high-pitched tenor switching easily from a bluesy tune to a rock n' roll classic. Bim is a semi-legend in his native British Columbia, some of his out-of-print records are rare and valuable finds, and he sells out wherever he plays. Except he doesn't play in the States, which is our very sad loss.

WILLIE P. BENNETT has been described as a lot of things, and I'm sure all of them are equally accurate and inaccurate; the man is an enigma and a mystery. I don't know where he is from, but his music has country and rock roots with a heavy blues feel. He has three albums out that I am aware of (and probably a few more that I don't know about), and each has great musicians playing on his own terrific, carefully produced tunes.

Bennett's harmonica playing is stunning and I've seen him on workshop



Ferron

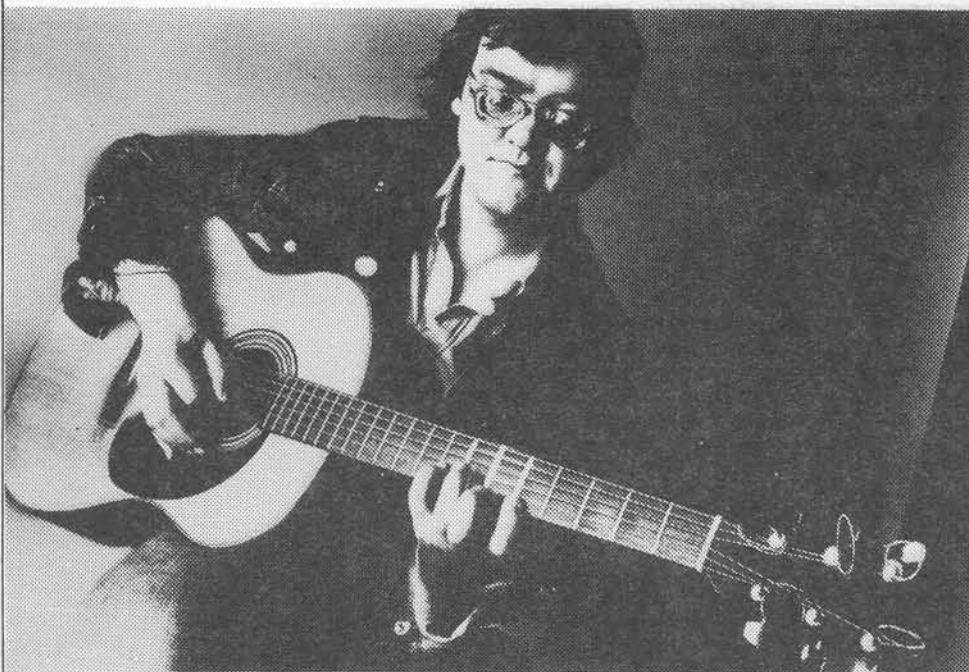
stages playing with harp virtuosos who sit with their mouths open upon hearing Willie P. His voice is gruff, and he usually looks like he woke up on the wrong side of the bed after a night of no sleep--but he can move you and have you crying and laughing all at the same time.

My most vivid memory of Bennett was at a workshop at the Owen Sound Folk Festival entitled "Love Songs." After an hour of mellow and sappy love songs, Mr. Bennett got up and sang the raunchiest song he had written and proceeded to rip the guitar strings off his guitar while tearing off his shirt. Subtle, he ain't; talented, he's one of a kind. It would be nice to see the ubiquitous Mr. Bennett show up looking disheveled and disarming and full of new tunes in our neck of the woods.

FERRON is a writer of moody and brilliantly poetic songs, songs that don't come to life immediately but only after repeated listenings. The same can be said for the woman herself. With her hypnotic rough voice and unmelodic tunes, it takes time for the magic to take hold, but when it does, it is real.

Ferron has become known as a feminist performer and as such has been getting more work in the States by opening for performers such as Cris Williamson. But her songs do not only speak to the feminist/lesbian contingent; like Williamson, her songs are about human beings and the human conditions, and women are a secondary theme.

Ferron writes in lyric poetry much like Joni Mitchell or Dylan from years past. But it is not fair to describe Ferron only in terms of her



Bim

Courtesy of Stony Plain Records

fellow artists as she is a talent in her own right and one that is still in the fragile stages of development. Her songs stay with you and get into your system ("Sadie" has been running through my consciousness for two years now, and "Ain't Life A Brook" says it all). Her poetry is brutally honest and revealing and yet not the 'true confession' type of doggerel.

On stage, Ferron is modest and self-effacing, but her power over the audi-

ence comes through when one can hear a pin drop in a fully packed house of rapt listeners. Ferron has magic and one can only guess to what lengths she will take that magic in her music.

while, especially if the discovery takes a bit more effort. It's more than worth the challenge, and once you begin to search out these obscure Canadian songwriters you won't be able to stop and you'll hear people like Ken Whitley, John Allan Cameron, Eritage, Tim Harrison, Valdy, David Essig, Chris Whitley, Nancy Ahern, Amos Garrett. . .

Happy hunting!

## Selected Discography

Connie Kaldor:

One of These Days (Coyote Records WRCL 1317) Coyote Records, c/o Lila Ross Agency, 10938-66 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6H 1Y2 Canada (in print)

Bim:

Raincheck on Misery (Casino CA 1009); Kid Full of Dreams (Casino CA 1007); Thistle (Elektra 6E-132); Anything You Want (Stony Plain SPL 1044) Stony Plain Records, Box 861, Edmonton, Alberta T5J 2L8 Canada (The Stony Plain release is in print and others can be found in cut-out and bargain bins.)

Willie P. Bennett:

Tryin' to Start Out Clean (Posterity Woodshed PWS 004); Hobo's Taunt (Woodshed WS 007); Blackie and the Rodeo King (Posterity Woodshed PWS 013) (All are out of print but can be found in cut-out and bargain bins.)

Ferron:

Testimony (Stony Plain SPL 1036; first released on Lucy Records) (in print)



STAN ROGERS. Any article on Canadian songwriters would be incomplete without at least a mention of the late Stan Rogers, a man whose songs about the Canadian people and their history did more to call attention to Canada's music than anyone in recent memory. His impact on the contemporary Canadian music scene can only be imagined at this point in time, only months after his tragic death, but one hopes that the commitment and belief he had for the future of Canadian music to reach beyond its borders will be his legacy to other Canadian songwriters and musicians.

Kaldor, Bim, Bennett, and Ferron have in common the fact that they are Canadians and musicians, but the four are so special that they would stand out in any group of musicians from any locale. That their music and live performances are more difficult for American audiences to discover is beside the point. Discovering exciting new talent is always worth-

—with Pete Seeger

Bluegrass And Beyond

—with Citizen Kafka

The Piper In The Meadow Straying

—with Ed Haber

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**“The Only Programming of its Kind in New York”**

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## A New Jersey Folkie in King Willie Nelson's Court

by Roger Deitz

There is no money in folk music he tells me. Now there's a revelation. I'm sitting at the get-the-message end of a mahogany desk and I'm listening to a sermon delivered by Randall Poe, general manager of The National Academy of Popular Music/Songwriters Hall of Fame in Manhattan. He suggests that country music is where the money is. Randy speaks in kind of a red neck drawl punctuated with New York Yiddish. In the music business one learns to touch all bases.

Mr. Poe says that if I am interested in solvency, I should come along with him to the Country Music Association awards ceremonies to meet some important people. Press some flesh. And consider writing country hits. "After all," he asks, "what's wrong with making a few bucks from your work? Plumbers get paid for their work, you're entitled also."

I would have preferred a different analogy, but my landlord would be the first to agree--what's wrong indeed? I'd trade my mother and a relative to be named at a future date if it would help me sell a song. My last regular paycheck went as a down payment on a brand new 1969 Chevrolet Nova--which I still drive. I find myself concerned, however, that Nashville might not be ready for my classic songs, for example, "The Sheep Dip," which is about love between consenting mammals. Yet the lure of fame, fortune, and new socks is great.

Randy, you've got yourself a deal. He leans back in his One Times Square chair and smiles, taking on the look of a Baptist minister who has just saved a wayward soul, immersed a Catholic in the purifying waters. But could he turn a sinner away from demon folk?

Borrowed tuxedo, check. Velvet lapels were no longer current ten years ago, but a borrowed tux is always in style. I am a consummate scrounge, and wearing something for which I didn't have to pay releases me from worrying that I might have had the poor taste to purchase something so hideous. Ruffled powder blue shirt, check. Nashville, I am



(l to r) Keith Hope, Richard Bowden, BBC's Wally Whyton, Buddy Hooper, and Amy Knowles at the 2nd Annual AGAC Marble Tournament

ready to be taken to your bosom, or bosoms. Either way, I am in a swivet with the anticipation of glitter and grits.

I've been scratching around for a while, but I seem to have a penchant for writing noncommercial music. If fame and fortune lay yonaways upstream, I am a coho salmon with a proclivity for spawning in the wrong direction. Nashville has to be a better bet, for after all, Nashville has two rivers. Even a wayward salmon should get lucky there.

The best I can tell, in Nashville you are either a star or an astronomer. This town revolves around its music, and the money flows in not only from record sales, but also from tourism. Nashville is abashedly commercial. Every major and minor country music personality has a leather goods, souvenir, or fried chicken store established in their own name. My favorite is Twitty City. Johnny just calls his the House of Cash, and well he should. Tour buses unload continually at these places and cash registers ring out the true sound of country music as tourists plunk down big bucks on such essential items as banjo earrings, snakeskin boots, and "Jesus was a Capricorn" T-shirts.

Randy and I check these places out. People are very friendly here and I feel comfortable. We drive about in our rented Ford Escort (maybe Randy isn't as highly placed in the music business as I thought). As Randy tunes and retunes the radio, I begin to discover that there are many types of country music. A partial list includes gospel, inspirational, country & western, western swing, old timey, bluegrass and much more. We cruise on by the boarded up Ryman Auditorium, home of the original WSM Grand Ole Opry program. We are listening to "On the Wings of a Snow White Dove" for the third time. I begin to get a sense that there is more here than I had imagined. Country music is not a pastime; it is a religion. People actually worship country music here in Nashville.

Business is about to begin. Randy and I arrive at the first event, the American Guild of Authors and Composers picnic. True to form, I find that I have left my business cards back at my room. It's not easy spawning when you're a decerebrized coho salmon. The AGAC festivities commence with a fast paced game of marbles. Billy Edd Wheeler takes on all comers.

Courtesy of AGAC



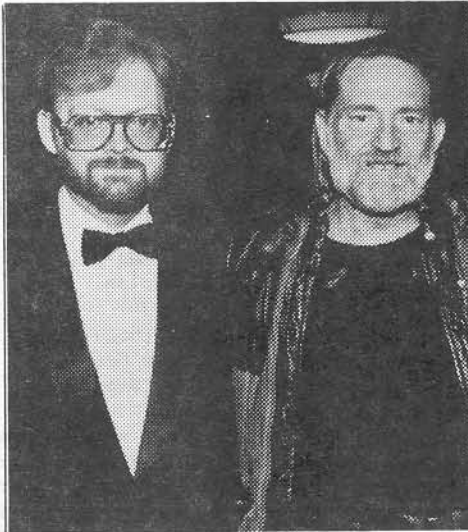
Afterwards it's on to fried chicken, volleyball, and horseshoes. Randy is introducing me to songwriters, executives, and artists, but I wish he would stop telling people that my name is Roger-Bob Deitz. Roger-Bob is a little too down home for me, but that's what folks are calling me.

After some talk about congress and royalties, Jim Conner ("Grandma's Featherbed") and I play banjo together--or as close together as I can get. He and Ginger Boatwright invite us to move on to the Nashville Blue Grass Association International picnic which turns out to be on Mother Maybelle Carter's farm. Emmylou Harris and Peter Rowen are singing "Blue Moon of Kentucky" to about sixty people as John McEuen heckles. "Play 'Blue Moon of Kentucky'" he shouts after the song is finished. He repeats this procedure after each new tune ends. Guys who wear argyle socks are always funny.

I wonder why the audience is so small. Is bluegrass taken for granted in Nashville? In New York this place would be packed. Randy leans back and takes in the show and informs me that this is a case of the entertainers amusing themselves.

Now it's Monday and time for the CMA Country Music Awards Show. It is a slickly produced show in which Willie Nelson becomes a stand-up comic. "How can Julio Iglesias call himself a supef star? He ain't done a duet with me yet." (If Iglesias is country, Menudo is progressive bluegrass.) They do a song together. Anne Murray is almost wiped out by falling scenery, not a line is missed. What a trooper. Scores of awards are handed out. All week long hundreds of awards are handed out. I might be the only person in Nashville without an award.

All the receptions (CMA, BMI, ASCAP) are more or less a black tie blur at this point. I have met Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, other performers, songwriters, execs, and radio people. I feel a bit like an insider. People are being nice to me, they seem as eager to meet me as I am to meet them. I guess they don't know who I am, or who I am not. They just must assume that I have to be somebody since I am an invited guest. A good number of howdy-do and handshakes later, I begin to get the sinking feeling that now, having made some contacts, my talent could be my only limiting factor to success. A frightening thought indeed.



Randy Poe and Willie Nelson

I could endear myself to folkies everywhere by saying how decadent this all is, but I can't. I'm having a good time. I am amused to see wealthy people dressed in tuxedos waiting in lines dozens deep in order to fill their plates with barbecued beef and biscuits. People with gold records wait in lines? They do if the food is good.

The most noticeable difference between the BMI and ASCAP dinners is that the songs honored by BMI are a little more familiar. At the BMI affair I am seated with Hal David, president of ASCAP. I am introduced to him as an ASCAP songwriter. He looks strangely relieved that someone in Nashville is. He is very gracious, but little does he know yours truly has made as much money for him (ASCAP) as have the BMI songwriters. Hal must realize he is not at the head table--I'm with him.

So now for the big question, why can't folk music make it as big as country? Perhaps folk needs a geographical center like Country's Nashville, or Motown's Detroit. Perhaps it's a question of marketing, or as noted before, people who are religious feeling strongly about their music. Folk music is grand stuff. Folk people sing prettily, play nicely, write neat songs, and collect food stamps. If there are places to play and people who listen, why can't this form of music reward performers and writers with more than applause?

Perhaps the answer would be to have a Folk Music Awards Show. Pete Seeger and Odetta might be asked to host, and oversee the handing out of awards in

appropriate categories such as Worst Tuning Jokes, Most Homespun Singer from the Bronx, Close Enough for Folk Award, Best Vocalist Who Can't Play, Best Instrumentalist Who Can't Sing, and a special Guthrie Award for the artist who is bound for glory.

At the ASCAP dinner I am seated next to Ben Weisman, a man who made a great deal of money writing those memorable songs for Elvis Presley films. It all starts to fall into place. Monetary success isn't all important. I'd hate to have to atone for my creative work. But when journeymen folksingers, looking every bit as if they subsist on 400 calories a day, say that they're not in it for the money, that the music and the message are all important, that they actually like vegetarianism and hate thick juicy steaks, are they serious or only adjusting to the status quo? Is making money from music inherently evil? Is making music without making any money inherently noble?

Perhaps making money and making music should be like yin and yang, the feminine and masculine passive principles in Chinese cosmology. Yin is exhibited in wetness, cold, or darkness; yang in dryness, heat, or lightness. Together yin and yang combine to form all that is to be. The music is free, but it must have a value also. Either side of the spectrum should be aware of the other. Ben Weisman and I are all too aware of each other.

Randy and I leave the ASCAP dinner quite early in the evening. Too much has gone on this week. My brain is about ready to go on sabbatical. We drive to an all night video game arcade. The sight of two men decked out in tuxedos, playing Pac-Man causes no stir at all. Nobody wants to shake my hand. I explain to Randy that Pac-Man is just like the music business. If I run the board, it will be a sure sign that I will make it in country music.

I'm playing as never before. I ask Randy what he thinks about "I Do The Sheep Dip" T-shirts. He leans back, smiles, and nods approvingly. He gives me a pat on the back, and I am distracted for a split second. I send Pac-Man in the wrong direction. I'm trapped. Blinky gets me. Yep, just like the music business. But as with all religions, you gotta keep faith.

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**DON'T EVER CALL YOUR SWEETHEART BY HIS NAME**

To look at me you may not think  
that I'm a femme fatale  
but I've got more boyfriends than I can count  
you know I don't mean pals  
well there's Andrew Barney Charlie Dan  
and Ed to note a few  
I used to get their names mixed up  
but now here's what I do . . .

I call them Sweetheart, Baby Love  
Angel Face, Turtle Dove  
Honey Pie, Sugar Lamb  
Huggy Bear, Lover Man  
to avoid any possible embarrassment or blame  
I never call my sweetheart by his name

My girlfriend Marsha's quite a dish  
she meets boys by the dozens  
she knows all the NY Jets  
their brothers and their cousins  
and each one thinks he is the one  
that she is crazy 'bout  
'cause at that crucial moment  
she's been known to holler out . . .

Oooo Sweetheart, Baby Love  
Angel Face, Turtle Dove  
Honey Pie, Sugar Lips  
Macho Man, Motor Hips  
to avoid any possible embarrassment or blame  
she never calls her sweetheart by his name

**TOM'S DINER**

I am sitting in the morning  
at the diner on the corner  
I am waiting at the counter  
for the man to pour the coffee

and he fills it only halfway  
and before I even argue  
he is looking out the window  
at somebody coming in

"It is always nice to see you"  
says the man behind the counter  
to the woman who has come in  
she is shaking her umbrella

and I look the other way  
as they are kissing their hellos  
and I'm pretending not to see them  
instead I pour the milk

I open up the paper  
there's a story of an actor  
who had died while he was drinking  
it was no one I had heard of

and I'm turning to the horoscope  
and looking for the funnies  
when I'm feeling someone watching me  
and so I raise my head

there's a woman on the outside  
looking inside--does she see me?  
no, she does not really see me  
'cause she sees her own reflection

and I'm trying not to notice  
that she's hitching up her skirt  
and while she's straightening her stockings  
her hair has gotten wet

oh, this rain it will continue  
through the morning as I'm listening  
to the bells of the cathedral  
I am thinking of your voice

and of the midnight picnic once upon a time  
before the rain began . . .

I finish up my coffee  
it is time to catch the train

la la la la, la la la la  
la la la la, la la la la

© 1983 by Suzanne Vega

Some people think this is dishonest  
some people think this is not right  
but have you ever said 'I love you, Thomas'  
when Thomas was the boy  
you were in love with last night?

Next time your sweetie calls you "dear"  
maybe you should wonder  
are they just trying to avoid a social blunder  
I'm not trying to make trouble  
monogamy is grand  
but if it's not your style  
better follow my plan

and call him Sweetheart, Baby Love  
Angel Face, Turtle Dove  
Honey Pie, Sugar Lamb  
Lover Boy, Superman  
avoid any possible embarrassment or blame  
don't ever call your sweetheart by his name  
don't ever call your sweetheart  
no, never call your sweetheart  
don't ever call your sweetheart by his name

© 1984 by Christine Lavin, Flip-A-Jig Music,  
ASCAP

**SIDE LYRICS ONE**

(Lyrics to "Drummer Boy" by David  
Indian are on page 18.)

**THE GIRLS OF DENMARK**

Milano is hot and dripping  
The skies are filthy and gray  
What isn't ruled by Roman ruins  
Is now prey to the Red Brigades  
The pope was last seen in the jungles of Brazil  
Such things don't concern the girls of Denmark

Everything is crumbling  
Clothes are hanging from the lines  
Latin lovers they get angry  
'Cause the girls all go home at night  
Milano, you're the most dangerous woman in the world  
Such women never scare the girls of Denmark

There's something terribly wrong  
There's too much noise everywhere  
Everybody's running  
But no one's going anywhere  
Last night I dreamed my lover was with someone new  
Such dreams never haunt the girls of Denmark

America be blessed  
You're still alone  
You're still the place that's right  
For the ones who have gone wrong  
The rain is cold and Hamlet's castle's made of ice  
Men pay any price for the girls of Denmark

Milano is hot and dripping . . .

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INDIANA

Laying brick until his day is done  
5 o'clock you find him on the run  
driving to town with the radio playing  
out a memory  
Liars poker at the back of the bar  
he's always leaving but he never gets far  
taking chances when a sky full of  
stars chase the light of day

Chorus:  
Indiana in the afternoon  
with the sun so bright  
on an empty room

Fountain city right by the state line  
waiting for something that can change  
her mind  
Tracy thinks of a life that she longs  
to leave behind  
serving drinks down at the Neptune Bar  
living on tips they leave in a jar  
two kids at home with the memory  
of a man who's gone too far

Italian translation:  
OTTOMANELLI

Ottomanelli, i cugini e sua moglie  
oltre l'Atlantico vollero andar  
un contadino e l'altro un fornaio  
ed uno un pittore di pubblicita'

Ottomanelli seguiva un suo sogno  
di mangiare e bere e di vendemmiar  
fuggi' dai Fascisti, fuggi' dai Tedeschi  
per una cascina, lassu', nel nord-est

Ritornello:  
E nella notte, nel freddo dell'ombra  
pensava al suo sogno, alla patria d'un di'  
cercando di poter mettere a fuoco  
in quel barlume, Gesu', segui'

Credeva nel Papa, cost', ebbe figli  
piu' bocche che han fame ma pur braccia in piu'  
per mungere le mucche, per portare il latte  
per mietere il grano e per vendemmiar

Dopo anni di pace, furon disturbati  
da dei venditori di altre citta'  
i figli, ormai grandi, cercaron lavoro  
per comprar le cose che non eran la'

Quello piu' grande trovo' per lavoro:  
congegni di mira per Colt M-Sixteens  
molto richiesti per la guerra in Asia  
con gli straordinari, cosi', s'arricchì'

Un giorno guardava, in TV, la partita  
bevendo una birra, mangiando popcorn  
"sospendiamo il programma per darvi notizia  
la guerra e' finita col vostro lavor"

Ottomanelli, oramai, era vecchio  
piu' non coltivava la sua proprieta'  
vendute ha le mucche perche' non poteva  
competere con le latterie di citta'

Nessuno poteva far il suo mestiere  
ne' mietere il grano e ne' vendemmiar  
il terreno e' richiesto per costruir case  
cosi', dove vai quando il sogno tuo va

Translation © 1983 by Germana Pucci

He walked in, she'd seen him before  
later on they talked, their backs to  
the door  
nothing was said either of them had  
never heard before  
and they knew it when the time came  
to go when the lights were turned way  
down low with the evening  
ahead of them moving on oh so slow  
driving through the Indiana night  
with the moon up above  
such a beautiful sight

In the morning both unable to rise  
holding the moment such a thin disguise  
telling each other all the lies they  
both want to hear  
check out time come a rap at the door  
picking their clothes up off of the floor  
saying goodbye for the whole, wide,  
whispering world to hear

OTTOMANELLI

ottomanelli, his wife and two cousins  
had crossed the atlantic to see what they'd find  
one was a farmer and one was a baker  
and one was a painter, a maker of signs

ottomanelli had one dream above all  
to eat and to drink and to make wine in peace  
he'd run from the fascists, he'd run from the germans  
he'd now run a dairy farm in the northeast

chorus:  
late in the night he grew cold in the shadows  
tried to recall his homeland his dream  
and all to what end were they following jesus  
trying to focus and follow the gleam

because he believed in the pope he had children  
there were more mouths to feed but more hands to help  
to milk all the cows and deliver the produce  
to cut all the corn and make wine in the fall

the years that were peaceful they soon were unsettled  
by salesmen come calling with things they don't need  
the children grew older the children grew bolder  
went looking for jobs to buy all those things

the oldest went out took a job in a factory  
making the gunsights for colt M-sixteens  
they were much in demand for a war off in asia  
so he worked overtime and grew wealthy and clean

one day he was watching a televised ball game  
a can of budweiser and popcorn in hand  
"we interrupt program to bring you the great news  
the war it is over your jobs have been canned"

ottomanelli was too old to farm now  
the fields they lay fallow he sold all the cows  
he could not compete with the lobbying dairy-marts  
and their certified pasteurized homogenized now

and no one had learned how to plant all the cornfields  
or help make the wine in the warm autumn sun  
the real estate people want land to build houses  
so where do you go when your dream is all done

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Indiana in the afternoon...

© 1984 by Tom McGhee

SO LONG TO LOVE

Lately I've been wearing green  
Wearing green, wearing green  
Lately I've been wearing green  
Wearing green and living a dream

But my better half says leave it alone  
There's no going back and there's no going home  
My better half says leave it alone  
But I see only dreams

Chorus:  
And it's so long to love  
Once I did love you but now you are sorely missed  
So long to love  
Once I did love you but now you don't even exist

Lately I've been wearing white  
Wearing white, wearing white  
Lately I've been wearing white  
Wearing white and walking at night

And my better half says leave it alone  
There's no going back and there's no going home  
My better half says leave it alone  
But I walk at night

Chorus

Lately I've been wearing black  
Wearing black, wearing black  
Lately I've been wearing black  
Wearing black and slipping out back

And my better half says leave it alone  
There's no going back and there's no going home  
My better half says leave it alone  
And this is the last time

Chorus

© 1984 by Brian Rose



Cyrus Clarke

**SIDE LYRICS TWO**

I SAW A STRANGER WITH YOUR HAIR

I saw a stranger with your hair  
Tried to make her give it back  
So I could send it off to you  
Maybe Federal Express  
'Cause I know you'd miss it.

I saw another with your eyes  
The flash just turned my head  
I went to try them on for size  
But they looked the other way  
And they wouldn't listen.

Chorus:

But you're never hard to find in a crowd  
The people around you smiling out loud  
The feet don't touch the ground  
No, the feet don't touch the ground  
No, the feet don't touch the ground.

I heard a stranger with your voice  
It took me by surprise  
Again I found it wasn't you  
Just an angel in disguise  
In for a visit.

By the way, how is my heart?  
I haven't seen it since you left  
I'm almost sure it followed you  
Could you some time send it back?  
I'll buy the ticket.

Chorus

I saw a stranger with your hair  
I saw another with your eyes  
I heard an angel with your voice  
By the way, how is my heart?  
By the way, how is my heart?

© 1984 by John Gorka

**A BIG MISTAKE**

You're makin' a big mistake  
You don't know who I am  
You're makin' a big mistake I tell ya  
I'm not your man

My name is Jesus I'm really harmless  
I'd never hurt a fly  
My dad's a big-shot, his name is Yahweh  
He wouldn't let me die

You're makin' a big mistake  
Please let go of my hand  
You're makin' a big mistake I tell you  
I'm not your man

I'm really sorry I busted up your temple  
I guess I lost my temper  
I know it's no excuse  
But that's no reason to string me up for treason  
I beg you fellas please turn me loose

You know my father  
Who art in heaven  
He could make it worth your while  
He'd be so grateful  
If you'd release me  
We could work it out somehow

You're makin' a big mistake  
You don't know who I am  
You're makin' a big mistake I tell ya  
I'm not your man  
I tell ya  
I'm not your man

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**RAIN**

They say, "You need someone to tell you everything's gonna be all right...  
Someone to hold you, all those lonely nights."  
Well, the rain that's fallin' now, to me feels real good...  
It's coolin' the air and the heat and my cares  
Just like I knew it would.

Chorus:  
Rain, Rain, Rain...  
Soak the ground and wash the street,  
Refresh my soul, make the season complete.

Rain, Rain Rain...  
I hear your sound and it soothes my brain,  
And the Sunshine would mean  
Nothin' without rain.

They say, "Where are all the heroes like in times of the past...  
It's all been said and it's all been done, and now the dye is cast.  
The problems that we live with are very much the same...  
But I don't need nobody tellin' or sellin'  
When I'm listening to the rain.

They say, "Too much of a good thing can be so wonderful...  
Too much of a bad thing can make the devil call."  
Too much of anything's not what's concernin' me...  
With a bad newspaper over my head, in the rain  
I feel free.

Chorus (twice)

© 1984 by Jim Glover

**DON'T SLIP AWAY**

In the darkened alleys of circumstance  
The bastards of war await their chance  
Where your back is strung with ignorance  
And the conscience of knowledge lies in  
a trance.

Chorus:  
Don't slip away or plead in vain  
Just ask the sun to stop the rain.

In the trenches of freedom the TV is on  
Technology whistles a new battle song  
Where having a job means building a bomb  
Which side of defense do we belong?

Chorus

In the bright shadowed field of remembrance  
Where nothing is lost and our children dance  
Where to know is to give is to understand  
And the heart is delivered from the armies  
of man

Chorus

© 1983 by Cyrus Clarke, Dixie Highway Music

**WE DON'T PLAY NO ANDREWS SISTERS**

I no drink cola  
You no drink cola  
We no drink no rum and cola  
We not no Andrews Sisters  
We no drink cola  
We no drink no rum and cola  
Our lovers take coke and I don't mean cola  
We just play blues on our victrola  
We don't play no Andrews Sisters  
We don't play no Andrews Sisters

I play piana  
You play piana  
We don't need no candelabra  
We don't play no Liberace  
We play piana  
We don't need no candelabra  
We got a bunch of fingers  
Like a bunch of bananas  
We play blues on our piana  
Can't play no Liberace

No I no look like Groucho  
You no look like Chico  
We no look like Harpo Marx  
We not no Marx Brothers  
We no look like gumbo  
We no look like Zeppo Marx  
We play blues on our harp  
Can't play no heavenly airs  
We smoke big cigairs  
We wear fright wigs on our hairs  
We not no Marx Brothers  
We not no Marx Brothers

© 1984 by Baby Gramps

## Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger

by Jean Freedman

On October 7, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger performed at Town Hall in New York with their sons Neill and Calum. They sang a lot of traditional songs and a lot of songs that they had recently written--on such varying topics as gypsy life and Tory politics.

At most concerts, there's a clear line of demarcation between artist and audience, but not with Ewan and Peggy--they talk to us as if we were family friends in the living room. They insist that we join in on choruses and make us an essential part of their concert. They provide the music and we provide the folk, and it works well.

They are so different, Ewan and Peggy, in terms of background, age, and--to belabor the obvious--sex. The songs that they write and the way in which they sing are very different. Yet their personalities and talents mesh in a remarkable way, a sort of communion that is both productive and joyful. Their delight in each other is obvious; it communicates to everyone and embarrasses no one. Yet neither seems insufficient without the other; they are simply two interesting and exciting people who would rather be together than not. After all, there are certain things that a person cannot do alone--things like getting married, having children, and singing duets. Ewan and Peggy have done them all. And a great deal more besides.

Ewan MacColl was born in Scotland in 1915 to a father who was an ironmolder and left-wing militant and a mother who cleaned houses and offices for a living. Ewan was the only one of his parents' five children who lived. His father was a trade unionist who was blacklisted throughout most of Scotland, and the family never had enough money. At one point, Ewan's father, tired of being unemployed and of the Scottish climate which irritated his asthma, went to Australia and stayed until he was kicked out for union activity. (It took three years; Australia, in a desperate attempt to get its country populated without admitting blacks or Asians, cherishes its European immigrants. At times, it has literally paid the

way for British people who were willing to settle in Australia.)

Ewan shared his parents' political dedication--and their love of music. (His father was a top-notch singer.) When Ewan left school at the age of fourteen, he was unable to find work, so he turned to politics and theatre. He worked with several political and street theatres and with the highly successful Theatre Workshop that was formed in the mid-1940's.

He wrote eight plays for the Theatre Workshop--two of which are ballad operas that use folk music, one an updating of *Lysistrata* entitled *Operation Olive Branch*, one that deals with the rise of fascism after World War II and the coming of World War III, an experimental play called *Uranium 235* that consists of sketches on the theme of nuclear physics, several psychological dramas that concern soldiers who will not conform to their armies, and a fairly new play (just two years old) about a sea captain who cannot adjust to mechanically run ships.

One can see Ewan's political identification in his plays, his songs, and even in ordinary con-

versation. He speaks--eloquently and without apology--of the anger and the hopes and the memories of the working class. Political dedication frightens many people--for nearly ten years, Ewan was considered too dangerous to be allowed on American soil. Fortunately for American folk devotees, that time is over.

Peggy Seeger was born in 1935 in New York. Her father was a teacher and musicologist, and her mother, Ruth Crawford, a composer and pianist--the first woman to win a Guggenheim Fellowship to study music in Europe. Her half-brother Pete and brother Mike--as well as Peggy herself--have made the Seegers one of the best-known folk music families in the world.

Peggy grew up in a big house in Chevy Chase, Maryland, where folk people were always popping in and out. She fondly remembers Leadbelly and Woody Guthrie and was very impressed with Guy Carawan because he could make bread and do his own laundry. (I'd never seen a man wash his own clothes in my life.) Peggy's mother was originally a student of her father--he was fifteen years older than



Peggy Seeger

she, and according to Peggy, they stayed in love the whole time they were together. The parallels to Peggy's own marriage are striking.

Peggy first met Ewan when she was 20 and he was 40. At the time, Alan Lomax was in London doing a television production of Dark of the Moon with a group called the Ramblers, of which Ewan MacColl was one. Lomax needed a female singer and banjoist for the production, so he contacted Peggy. She arrived in London exhausted and disheveled after a 26-hour train ride from Denmark and was told that she was to meet the producer (and the Ramblers) in four hours. Lomax's girlfriend -- a model -- went to work on Peggy and turned her into a high-fashion banjo player. That's the first glimpse that Ewan got of Peggy -- all done up in a glamorous hairdo and fancy make-up and somebody else's clothes.

After Dark of the Moon Peggy returned to the States for a few months, then went to Moscow for the World Youth Festival -- a huge gathering of people interested in music and politics. The festival lasted for two weeks, during which time Peggy met people from all over the world. She teamed up with Guy Carawan (apparently still doing his own laundry), and they did a few concerts together. Then, the American delegation to the festival was invited to go to China.

This was 1957, and the United States did not admit that China, a country of more than half a billion people, actually existed.



All 300 members of the American delegation got individual telegrams from the State Department threatening fines, prison, and loss of passport if they ventured into this nonexistent country. However, 40 people decided to go anyway -- Peggy Seeger among them. For five weeks, the Americans toured China -- meeting the people, absorbing the culture, watching a society completely different from their own. "It was the first time I'd ever been in a country where almost everybody looked happy or constructive," said Peggy.

After China, Peggy travelled back to Russia, then to Poland and France, giving concerts and exploring. Then she returned to England. The United States had, as promised, taken away her passport, but she had already decided to stay in England with Ewan MacColl. England has been her home ever since, and she now travels with a British passport.

For 25 years now, Ewan and Peggy have lived together, gone on protest marches together, and, of course, sung together. They have three children -- Neill, who's 24; Calum, who's 20; and Kitty, who will be 11 in December. They both write songs -- Ewan has written hundreds, and Peggy has written about 80, of which she says "30 are good, 15 are mediocre, and nobody else is ever going to see the other ones."

As I mentioned earlier, their styles of writing are quite different. Peggy's songs are topical and personal; they are in the voice of an intelligent, independent modern woman. Though their language is simple and without modern cliché, they bear the stamp of their time.

Ewan has also written a good many topical songs -- full of wit and word play and melodies that roll along so fast it's hard to keep up with them -- but they are not what he is best known for. Ewan's most famous songs are timeless; they seem to stretch back through all people who have been hurt and exploited and who count small pleasures as big ones. More people know Ewan's songs than have ever heard of Ewan. Gypsies and travellers in Britain swear that they have been singing Ewan's songs since before Ewan wrote them. I once found "Freeborn Man" in an Irish songbook that had changed Ewan's name to "McColl." Ewan has seen his songs in books that change his name to "Anonymous." And surely

there are few English-speaking people who do not know "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face."

Ewan's method of songwriting is quite interesting. First he chooses the sort of feeling that he wants his song to have and picks a folk song that has this same feeling. Then he hums the tune over and over. Once the tune is firmly settled into his brain, he changes the first line. Then he hums the changed first line with the rest of the tune unchanged. Then he goes on to the second line or perhaps the third. He fits the words in as they come -- perhaps he starts out with a text that he wants to set to music, or perhaps the act of changing the traditional melody gives him ideas for the words. Thus his songs are born of older ones, in true folk tradition. Peggy suggests that this is one reason why his songs are so readily accepted. Certainly there is a sense of familiarity in Ewan's tunes, the same sort of familiarity that most folk songs have. The surprises come in the form of words, but the tunes are like a homecoming.

If you caught their concert at Town Hall, you were able to see the difference in performing styles. Ewan, who left school at fourteen, uses long words and complicated syntax and will introduce a song by giving a brief history lesson. Peggy, who attended Radcliffe, speaks more simply and usually introduces a song with an anecdote about the time she learned it or something her father used to say or the time she sang it for a bunch of English schoolchildren. She speaks like a storyteller, but it is Ewan who usually tells the stories -- in Scots dialect.

What I like best about their performances is that they sing with dignity and artistry yet never do they compromise the words. Everyone is familiar with disastrous renditions of folk music done by people who concentrate on one half of the process and forget the other. There is one school that emphasizes the music and forgets the folk, so that the gritty realism of the songs gets lost in pure vowels and Baroque harmonies. Then there is the school that thinks folk musicians shouldn't have good voices or any hint of musicality. (I don't quite understand this logic; it seems a subtle prejudice against the working classes -- those who wrote most of the folk songs. Though able to write

well, they should not be able to sing well.)

But Ewan and Peggy have good voices and are inherently musical, though, of course, there are differences. Peggy is a trained musician, but in her voice you can sometimes hear the plaintive twang of the mountain women who have sung these songs before her. Ewan, whose parents sang to him because there weren't any radios, has a rich, full baritone that would sound quite at home in front of a full orchestra.

Human beings desire conformity, and art demands variety; thus artists have traditionally been lonely people. Ewan and Peggy are luckier than most, because in each other they have found someone who respects and enjoys the

differences between them. In a moment of relaxation on the day she was to leave for London, Peggy said, "They say that working class people should marry middle class, and vice versa, because they're complimentary. They each bring the best of their class to the other, and they can temper the worst."

This is not meant as general advice to the lovelorn; "Marry outside of your class" is as senseless as "Marry within your class." But it's a good view, a view unhampered by the everyday evils of cowardice and prejudice, and a view that speaks to the strength that arises from dissimilarity. Purity is useful only as a moral absolute; in everyday life, variety is much more interesting.

with a giggle. The fat guy starts running to impress his girl, begins to enjoy it for its own sake, and gets his revenge "looking even better than you." The unfortunate snob is left in the dust as her now-handsome suitor runs off after someone else.

"Try a Little Harder" is an inspirational lyric set to a rhythm derived from Miles Davis. Andy's guitar playing has the fullness of a piano part.

"I Blew It" has a guitar vamp that takes the guitar-for-piano substitution even further. The lyrics are an ode to frustration with a wild vocal outro. The song ends with our narrator yelping, weeping, pleading. It reminds me a lot of "No One to Love Me" by the Sha-Weez (Aladdin Records).

The album's first love song is "Warm and Precious Love." It's a strong, simple song with seamless guitar overdubs and a nice vocal chorus.

The choir reappears on "City Bike Ride," the album's one instrumental and my personal favorite. It's an airy piece, cinematic, impressionist.

"If We Only Had Some Music" starts off side two. Lyrics about the healing power of music bring out the curmudgeon in me, but the music is pretty and there's a nice Chet Atkins/Jerry Reed feel to the guitar part.

"Baby You've Got Me Spinning" is a John Hurt-style exercise with a roaring, shouting vocal--another personal favorite. After this there's another ballad, "Running From Myself," with a nice set of changes and the reappearance of the choir. Human voices make a great accompaniment, as this track amply proves.

But we don't want to get too soft-hearted here on side two, so Andy runs down a barrelhouse number called "It Hurts All Over Now." It's a hokum style piece reminiscent of Blind Blake's "That'll Never Happen No Mo'." The consequences of marital infidelity are in this case painful to the narrator but pretty funny to the audience.

The title song finishes the LP on a more sophisticated note. "Mad Metropolis" is a catalogue of urban weirdness leavened by the narrator's desire to get next to the girl of his dreams. Andy Polon is a fine player with a fluent pen, and one can't help but wish him luck.

## RECORD REVIEWS

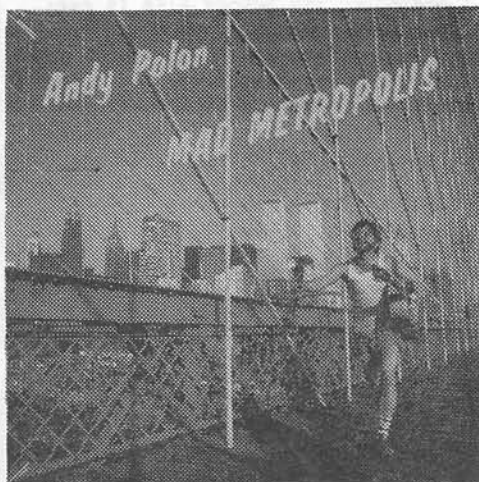
### Andy Polon Mad Metropolis

by Peter Spencer

There are days, in this most technological of worlds, when the folksinger finds a precedent (Michael Hurley, Dylan's *Basement Tapes*, Robert Johnson) for the argument that technology is antithetical to the unique one-to-one communication that is folk music. In this way one sees technology, especially the newest recording technology, as a kind of mark of the beast. Artists whose records show too much state-of-the-art perfection can be stigmatized as too "slick" or "commercial."

Yet the technology won't go away; and like every other machine since the days men hunted with sticks, a machine is only as good or bad as the people using it. So the folksinger is left with questions. How much recording technology is too much? How does one strike a balance between illusion and reality?

*Mad Metropolis* goes a long way toward answering those questions. Andy Polon has produced a remarkably good sounding LP. The vocals are clean and mixed



*Mad Metropolis* is available from ADP Records, 237 East 26th St. Suite 5H, New York, NY 10010.

up front so every word can be heard clearly. The instruments all sound like they do in real life. The music seems to jump out of the speakers at you. There is even, gasp, a slick cover with a color picture.

"Jogging for Your Love" opens side one



## The Johnson Mountain Boys Play Bluegrass

by Roger Manning

Bluegrass music came about in the 1940s when a mandolin player from Kentucky named Bill Monroe conceived of and developed a new sound and style of playing the old country and folk songs. For the most part, this sound involves combining elements of Anglo musical traditions with Afro-American music styles. Bill Monroe himself puts it this way: "It's got a hard drive to it. It's Scotch bagpipes and ol' time fiddiin'. It's Methodist and Holiness and Baptist. It's blues and jazz, and it has a high lonesome sound. It's plain music that tells a good story. It's played from my heart to your heart and it will touch you." (From *Bill Monroe, 200 Bluegrass Specials*, edited by Jeff Yates, Hansen House)

Instruments found in the bluegrass group include mandolin, guitar, fiddle, banjo, bass fiddle, and sometimes a dobro (forerunner to the steel guitar, played with a slide). There is a lot of high tenor and tight harmony singing. There are a lot of bluesy riffs during frequent solos. And there is the all important "bounce" feel that one gets from listening to the group as a whole. Quite often an actual boogie riff can be heard coming from the bass or the banjo.

A good place to hear the real thing would be on recordings made by Bill Monroe (especially from the early fifties) or the Stanley Brothers. (Bill Monroe and Ralph Stanley are still actually touring.)

The most up-to-date version of the "real thing" is the Johnson Mountain Boys, a relatively new group from Maryland that has shown itself to be extremely sensitive to the essential elements of bluegrass music.

In their October 8 performance at New York University (sponsored by the Bluegrass Club of New York) they did it all, from the high harmonies to the bounce.

Guitarist and lead singer Dudley Connelly sang all the high tenor parts with clarity and emotion. His ex-



The Johnson Mountain Boys

ceptional performance was especially evident during "Get Down on Your Knees and Pray," a gospel quartet arrangement (there's nothing quite like a JMB quartet). Dudley was responsible for the group's foundation around 1975.

Ernie Stubbs' incredibly solid fiddling bounced and weaved its bluesy, lonesome sound into the hearts of the audience. Applause was not uncommon after one of his solos. Ernie also sings bass.

David McLaughlin provided solid coverage on the mandolin while singing harmony and some lead.

Richard Underwood makes the banjo do what many fail to. He makes it bounce, even on the incredibly uptempo pieces where it's easy to let all the notes melt together and lose their identity. The set included a couple of his instrumental compositions. (The JMB write much of their own material.) Underwood also sings lead and harmony.

Larry Robbins plays the upright bass and does it well, which means more than I can say in such a rhythmically oriented group.

The Johnson Mountain Boys hit the

stage wearing matching suits and western hats. They immediately stepped up to their microphones picking away. They are very impressive and professional. When singing the harmonies they gathered closely around a centrally located microphone setup, spreading out again in time for the instrumental portion of the song without missing a beat.

The tempo ranged from intense speed (even by bluegrass standards) to slow and lonesome. By their own choice, few of the selections are recognizable standards. It is their ability that carries the set.

The Johnson Mountain Boys love their music and are dedicated to it. This gives rise to a cheerful, good-natured attitude that is sincere and felt by all who hear them.

The audience is a sensitive one and aware that this group is special. Other than the music and the thunderous applause between songs, you could hear a pin drop. There was no talking or footstomping, just people listening.

Since the fifties, there has been a lot of experimentation producing various offshoots of bluegrass (pro-

gressive bluegrass, newgrass, dawg music (jazz), mellograss, etc.). Various musicians were either looking for greater commercial success or to "expand" musically. The Johnson Mountain Boys are showing a lot of people that actual bluegrass music still has plenty to offer.

The Johnson Mountain Boys have three albums on Rounder Records.

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Tom Intondi	Carolyn McCombs
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Continued from "Lyrics Side One," page 10.

#### DRUMMER BOY

(To The Poets And Musicians of the Streets  
And of The Underground)

sometimes when I wake in the morning  
I want to go up to Innisfree  
often enough and again  
I want to lay down in bed  
and drink in the dreams  
of a lover long gone across the waters  
it's then when the chords of the drummer  
come alive in my head

'wake up' sing the drummer boy  
'come arise now for the dawn is come'  
and he laugh and shake his tambourine  
start to tapping on his tympanum

when you work for a living, well  
the system has a tendency to 'get to' you  
and taking the tubes into town'll take it  
out of your hide  
but it's alright  
I hear the swift, sweet musical interlude  
banged out by a drummer  
playing the platform on Manhattan-side

O Drummer Boy!  
I'm wondering how did he get there  
and I hear his voice reverberate  
as we ten thousand stumble up the subway stair

on any given day (now) you can hear him  
in the heart of the city  
beating his wings like a dove  
in the belly of the whale  
among the cinders and girders  
the concrete and ashes  
he seems compelled  
to tell his tale

of being born as a drummer boy  
soon apprenticed to a mummings band  
refugee gypsy of the angry night  
sojourner in the foreign land

singing 'go up!'

it's a shame what we do to the language  
not to mention other miracles  
the noon rolls around  
we only mark it as a number on the Dow  
I must put it down, hit the pavement  
consult inner oracles  
hey, could that be a drummer  
playing on the corner to the lunchtime crowd

O Drummer Boy!  
sing his song and trope in rhyming tongue  
indeed he's got me wondering how  
he get the six string sound out of his steel drum

he tells the tale  
of the outlaw, renegade lover  
he could not deny her  
who loved her the best of his kind  
married in moonlight and water  
they sail on the Rubicon  
not knowing what Eden  
or land to the east they may find

time is tapping on the drummer boy  
lovely lady re-arrange her plans  
and he has given up his Wall Street job  
to sing in a Rock of Gibraltar band

he was born to the drum  
was a drummer boy's son of a drummer boy  
seven generations of preparation  
poised at his command  
now he tunes up his timbrels and bass  
in the shadow of the marketplace  
turns to his countrymen and  
proclaims his demand

'give a dollar to the drummer boy  
give him something with an open hand  
think it over for a moment now  
you may never pass this way again

and if you go, go up!'

nowadays I'm amazed  
to make it home in the evening  
a certain kind of peacefulness  
is singing alive in the air  
have a drink with a friend  
as the dusk come down over Brooklyn  
once again  
and drink one for the drummer  
I hear his music everywhere

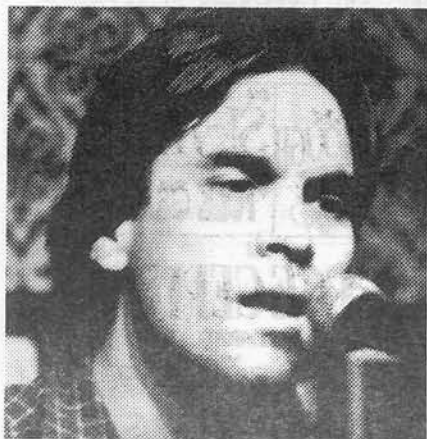
o serenade me drummer boy  
tide me over til the dawning's come  
when I'm going down for dreaming now  
heartbeat pounding like the drummer's drum

Jack he live on alone  
and without Ezekiel  
Elizabeth and Thomas are "  
living in Paris he say  
I think of old friends  
well I guess how we all have got to travel  
I think of one lover  
am I ever going to see her someday  
o tell me truly drummer boy  
is that happy morning still to come  
I'm listening for hints and clues  
every time you play your scales and runs

and go up!

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The Parkdale Poetry Publishing Co.

**ON THE RECORD**



Nancy Talanian

Eric Andersen

ERIC ANDERSEN, one of the more poetic folksingers to emerge from the sixties, has tried on several musical coats during his career. Audiences across the U.S. and Europe have enjoyed his solo performances and his newfound intensity when accompanied by a rock band. His two latest LPs, Midnight Son and Tight in the Night, released in Europe, capture the transition, incorporating his fine sense of lyric into viable rock pieces.

CYRUS CLARKE is a guitarist, songwriter, and cofounder of the Flying Fish Recording group, the Cache Valley Drifters. He has been performing and recording in the west for the past 11 years and currently resides in lower Manhattan. He urges all to remember the past in order to fulfill the future.

JIM GLOVER, Phil Ochs' roommate and guitar teacher at Ohio State, toured with Phil in the early sixties as "The Sundowners," and later with Jean Ray as "Jim and Jean." Proficient at songwriting; singing; playing harmonica, autoharp, banjo, and guitar; and avoiding the call to military service, Jim is also an accomplished welder, and as such, is one of a select handful of performers who can make something useful out of his broken strings.

JOHN GORKA is an intense white guy from New Jersey who currently lives in Easton, Pennsylvania. He recently joined the staff of Sing Out! as the Assistant Editor.

BABY GRAMPS stopped through New York recently, played a lot of street corners and a few late night spots at

the clubs, and just as quickly disappeared. He is based out of the state of Washington.

JACK HARDY has released five albums on the Great Divide label, some of which have been reissued by First American in this country and Pastels abroad. He was the editor of The Coop for the past two years. He is now the editor of The Fast Folk Musical Magazine.



Alan Schweitzer

David Indian

DAVID INDIAN is a pen name of David Joshua Ruderman, adopted in empathy and respect for those Native Americans whom he has known. Their societies give birth to individual personal, communal, and cosmic purposefulness, despite centuries of exploitation and genocide (not to mention the contemporary malaise). Thanks to Yeats. He is a Brooklyn Indian.



Alan Beck

Christine Lavin

CHRISTINE LAVIN has been in New York for six years, has recorded two LPs and one EP. Dave Van Ronk is her idol and one day she hopes to be able to sing like him. (Ed. Note: Christine's song on this issue, "Don't Ever Call Your Sweetheart

by His Name," has been banned by Gracie Mansion, the mayor's residence in NYC, for fear that it promotes promiscuity.)

LEFT FIELD is Elizabeth Emmert, Thom Weaver, Bill Neely and Gordon Swift. Weaver and Neely started working together in western Pennsylvania in 1972; they began singing with Emmert in New York in the mid-seventies. Left Field was born during the 1981 baseball strike, and Swift joined the team about a year later.

TOM MCGHEE lives in Brooklyn and drives a truck.



Nancy Talanian

Tom McGhee



Bob Zaidman

Germana Pucci

GERMANA PUCCI was born in Italy to a family of singers and farmers who lead singing in the fields and are hired to sing the Maggio (peasant's opera) after harvest. Germana moved to New York in 1977. She loves to cook.

BRIAN ROSE is a 29-year-old New York songwriter and photographer. He was one of the founders of The Coop magazine and the musician's cooperative at SpeakEasy in New York City.

SUZANNE VEGA is from New York City. She is a Barnard College graduate and is 24. She has been active in dance and theatre, writing and staging a production on Carson McCullers.

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29 NICK FLAKIAS RITA FALBEL JOE NEUKEROTT	30 Erik	31 PAUL KAPLAN ANDY POLON AKEMAN HOROWITZ	COMING FEBRUARY 1 & 2 DAVID MASSENGILL	<h2>January 1984</h2> <p>CALENDAR OF EVENTS ALL SHOWS START AT 9:00 PM</p>		

## SIDE CREDITS ONE

1. Drummer Boy (David Indian)  
David Indian/Vocals & Guitar  
Mark Dann/Drums & Keyboards
2. Don't Ever Call Your Sweetheart by His Name (Christine Lavin)  
Christine Lavin/Vocals & Guitar  
Mark Dann/Bass
3. \*The Girls of Denmark (Eric Andersen)  
Eric Andersen/Vocal & Guitar
4. Ottomanelli (Jack Hardy)  
Germana Pucci/Vocal, Guitar & Translation  
Jill Burkee/Mandocello  
Peter Lewy/Cello  
Mark Dann/Bass
5. Indiana (Tom McGhee)  
Tom McGhee/Vocal & Guitar  
Mark Dann/Guitars & Bass
6. Tom's Diner (Suzanne Vega)  
Suzanne Vega/Vocal

\*Recorded at The Lone Star by Joe Lang and Jace Reiken

## SIDE CREDITS TWO

1. So Long to Love (Brian Rose)  
Brian Rose/Vocal & Guitar  
Mark Dann/Keyboard Bass  
Christine Lavin/Background Vocal  
Jack Hardy/Background Vocal
2. I Saw a Stranger with Your Hair (John Gorka)  
John Gorka/Vocal & Guitar  
Mark Dann/Guitar & Bass
3. A Big Mistake (W. D. Neely)  
Left Field:  
Elizabeth Emmert/Vocal  
Thom Weaver/Vocal  
Bill Neely/Vocal & Guitar  
Gordon Swift/Fiddle
4. Rain (Jim Glover)  
Jim Glover/Vocal & Guitar  
Ned Treanor/Background Vocal  
M. G. Ivce/Background Vocal  
Mark Dann/Bass & Guitar
5. Don't Play No Andrews Sisters (Baby Gramps)  
Baby Gramps/Vocal & National Steel Guitar
6. Don't Slip Away (Cyrus Clarke)  
Cyrus Clarke/Vocal & Guitar