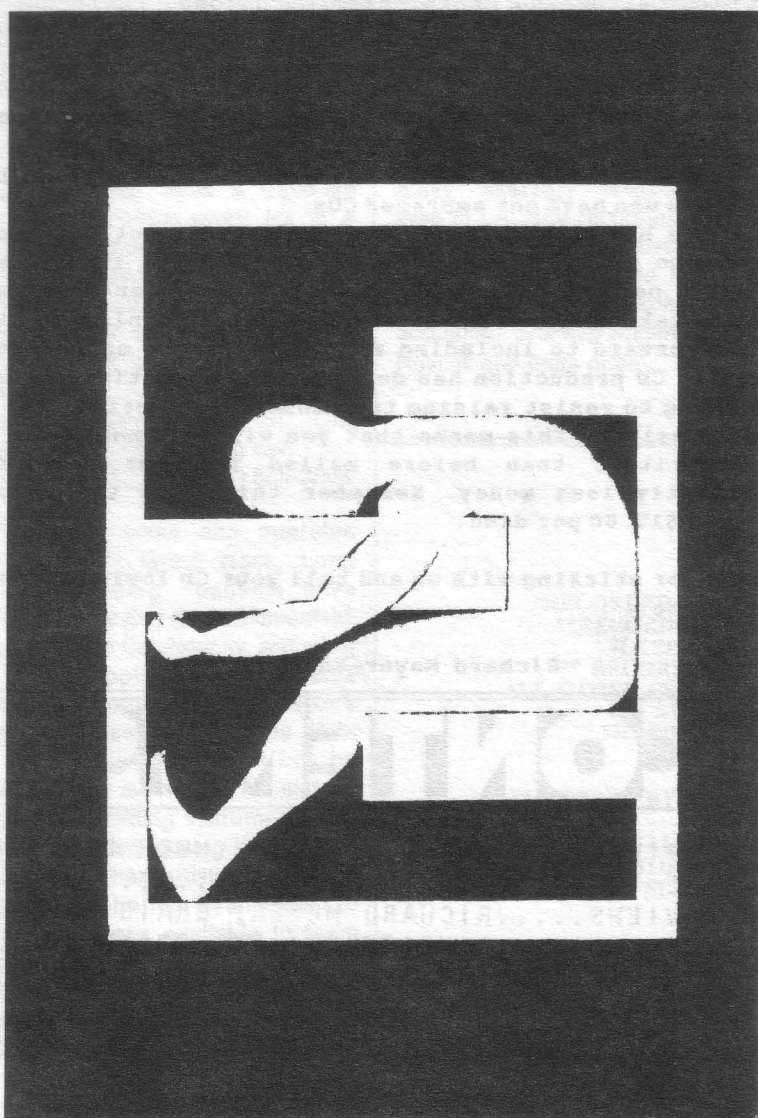


# FAST FOLK

M U S I C A L M A G A Z I N E

1991

Volume 5 No.6



MOTIONAL VICES

# FAST FOLK

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This is the last FAST FOLK Lp. After 63 Lps we have decided to switch to CD. The evidence of record stores, radio station preferences, the elimination of vinyl by other 'folk' labels and a random sampling of subscribers has convinced me that it is time to change. We cannot afford to issue FAST FOLK in more than one format otherwise we would continue to produce vinyl!

While it may be premature for some subscribers, I know that some of you continue to subscribe even though you no longer have a turntable. You have said that you copy the albums to tape, I am presuming that this will take place for subscribers who have not embraced CDs.

This is a big change for us too. We decided not to reduce the magazine to CD booklet size because we want it to stand as an equal part of FAST FOLK rather than be extended notes. We will be taking advantage of the CD's extended playing time and look forward to including more material on each issue. The cost of CD production has decreased so dramatically that we are going to resist raising the subscription price, for as long as possible. This means that you will get more work by new songwriters than before mailed to your home for proportionately less money. Remember this when the majors charge you \$15.00 per disc.

Thanks for sticking with us and tell your CD loving friends to subscribe.

Richard Meyer-Editor

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KEITH KELLEY, BRIAN ROSE  
LEFT, LEFT, LEFT WRITE LEFT.....HUGH BLUMENFELD  
LYRICS AND BITS

Special thanks to Recording Engineer  
David Seitz for reviving his recalcitrant  
Studer-multitrack in time for our  
production deadline.

# FAST FOLK

MUSICAL MAGAZINE

**THE FAST FOLK MUSICAL MAGAZINE** WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1982 TO DOCUMENT THE WORK OF CONTEMPORARY SINGERS AND SONGWRITERS. **FAST FOLK** IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATION WHICH PUBLISHES TEN ISSUES PER YEAR FEATURING THE WORK OF SONGWRITERS FROM ACROSS THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE. THE COMBINATION MAGAZINE AND LP IS AVAILABLE BY SUBSCRIPTION:

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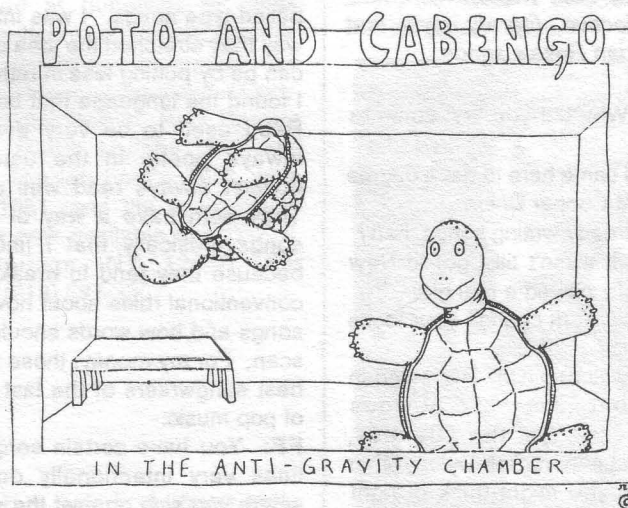
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Photo: Teddy Lee

T-bone Burnett leading the finale of the 4th Annual Greenwich Village Folk Festival, held at Loeb Student Center, NYU in Oct, 1990.

"Sounds like Joni Mitchell gone Pink Floyd."  
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Floating Turtle Records has just released a new album: "IN THE ANTI-GRAVITY CHAMBER" by POTO and CABENGO™ (aka Judy and Carol Ficksman). The album contains all original songs written by Judith Ficksman whose song Kumar Shankar is featured in this issue of the Fast Folk Musical Magazine.

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## Brian Rose: Interviewed

by Jim Allen

*Brian Rose, originally from Virginia, has been a mainstay on the Greenwich Village scene since the late 1970's. He divides his time between photography, mostly of architecture, and songwriting. Over the last few years he has made numerous trips along the Iron Curtain to photograph it and the surrounding area. This work was featured in exhibits at the International Center of Photography and East Coast Arts. This interview took place before Rose's most recent trip to Germany to document the changes that have occurred there since the borders to eastern Europe opened. Brian was featured on the original LP of the Cornelia Street Songwriter's Exchange (Paddy on the Handcar) as well as the first (and subsequent) Coop/Fast Folk records. His songs have been covered by Village artists such as the Song Project and Lucy Kaplansky. It is a particularly objective, literary style that distinguishes Brian Rose's songs.*

**FAST FOLK:** Why did you first come to New York?

**BRIAN ROSE:** I came here to get a degree in photography at Cooper Union.

**FF:** Were you already writing songs then?

**BR:** Yeah, but it wasn't till I got to New York that I actually played a real gig.

**FF:** How did New York change your ideas about songwriting?

**BR:** It didn't. I was originally interested in songwriting because of obvious precedents such as the Beatles, particularly John Lennon, Bob Dylan; other songwriters who you might think of right away as folk songwriters. Although I think I probably listened to Paul Simon and Leonard Cohen at some point, what I was really interested in was new wave rock 'n' roll, and I was already listening to that before I got here. So coming to New York didn't really change my ideas about songwriting, but I got more involved in a critical process of learning how to write and getting control of what the hell I was doing.

**FF:** Had there been any songwriters you had known about previous to coming here of whom you changed your impression, once you saw them in New York? This is

where you tell your disillusionment story.

**BR:** Well, I had this idea in my head that the sixties were the golden age of folk songwriters; not based on having heard much, other than Dylan or Phil Ochs. I found out that most of the other people I had heard of, but didn't know much about, were not that interesting to me. I didn't think they were quite the songwriters that their reputation may have indicated. I partly found that out one week when Folk City had its 20th anniversary, and there was no question that the newer songwriters were more interesting than the older ones.

**FF:** You've mentioned before that there were two seminal rock 'n' roll bands who had as much of an effect on your songwriting as anything else - the Velvet Underground and the Talking Heads. What was it about them that informed your sense of composition?

**BR:** I like the fact that Lou Reed and David Byrne didn't write traditional narrative ballad-type songs. I was intrigued by the way they stretched the idea of what a song can be by putting less in rather than more. I found the language that both Byrne and Reed used to be very evocative - not always poetic in the usual sense; it doesn't always read well on the page. They both have a way of phrasing the songs musically that I find interesting, because they tend to break some of the conventional rules about how to construct songs and how words should or shouldn't scan. For my money, those are two of the best songwriters of the last twenty years of pop music.

**FF:** You have certain songs where the lines very intentionally don't scan, or where you sing against the meter. Is that where those ideas come from?

**BR:** It might. It's not the same thing as some of Dylan's earlier songs, where he tries to cram a lot of words into a phrase so that it doesn't quite scan. There are ways of playing against the idea of something scanning perfectly, in which you can stretch a word out or add an extra syllable that doesn't quite fit, to make people listen; to provide little things in the way of the listener that they have to trip over, which might at first cause them to stumble and be uncomfortable, but after a while becomes part of one's vocabulary. Those stumbles become footholds instead.

**FF:** Do you think there are those kinds of devices, in what we now think of as conventional song-form, which may have originally had that same intention behind them?

**BR:** I think so. I would have a hard time analyzing earlier kinds of song-forms though. I don't consider myself an expert. There's plenty of folk music prior to the 20th century that I would imagine was breaking new ground, and there's probably a lot of pop songwriting in the 20th century prior to the 1950's that broke a lot of new ground musically and lyrically.

**FF:** Are you personally trying to expand the common language of the song-form?

**BR:** I wouldn't take it that far. I don't think I'm trying to make a radical break with the past. I'm just trying to push on the edges a little bit.

**FF:** In a number of songs you use unusual chord progressions. How do you arrive at those?

**BR:** Mostly by trial and error. None of it is breaking new ground musically, but it may be unusual in this format to do certain things. A song is a lot less complex than other kinds of music, where all kinds of things have been done that I don't have much ability to comprehend, except as a listener.

**FF:** You've mentioned that your style of lyric-writing is sometimes informed by the sensibilities of the short-story writer Raymond Carver.

**BR:** The kind of minimalist short-story writing that Carver is known for can translate itself into a way of approaching songwriting, as well. It's a very compact, very clean, attenuated kind of writing. It's not inside the head of the character, generally. It says what's going on, describes things; people say things. There's a narrative, but it's very slim. There's not an obvious climax in the stories. They tend not to be like a fable, where you have a storytelling structure that leads to some kind of moral or finality. You imagine that life continues on after the stories are over - the characters continue to muddle through their lives. I think that a number of my newer songs have probably been influenced by those stories. It's nice sometimes to take your cues from artists or writers who are not songwriters, who aren't that closely related to what you're

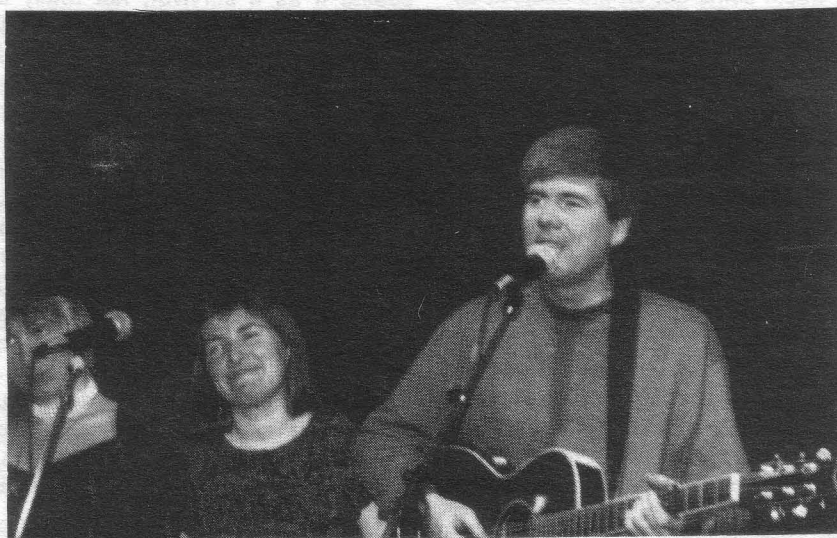
doing. I think different people would have different reactions to his stories, and, generally, that's good. As a songwriter, I wouldn't want to create a totally amoral universe in which you feel completely at sea all of the time - where you have no sense of a specific vision behind the writing. On the other hand, I don't want to create a universe that is manipulative, or is calculated to instruct. I think everything that you do as an artist involves an ethical or moralistic structure, and that's something you have to face up to. You may choose to avoid saying something at a certain point, or you may choose to say it; but whether you're subtracting or adding, you're always involved in a process by which you're taking some kind of stand. For instance, as a photographer, which I spend as much time at as writing songs, the camera can be a rather mute instrument, in the sense that it's hard to have a direct voice as a photographer. What you choose to photograph, and when you photograph it and from what angle - all those decisions that you make are extremely critical, and what you avoid is just as important as what you pursue. It takes a great amount of discipline to arrive at something that has an internal logic, and a personal point of view. Some people have their personal point of view all over the place. The camera is a very weak medium for trying to do that. I think songs are equally weak for doing that. A lot of songwriting that's polemical, I have a great distaste for. If you're a teacher or a politician, having a particular point of view on things is the way to go, but as an artist I think you have to watch your step.

**FF:** To what extent are your songs an attempt at communication?

**BR:** It's definitely communication, otherwise, there's really no reason for doing it. If it's just to satisfy yourself, that's something I'm not much interested in. You always assume there's an audience that you're writing for, whether you've got a large audience or a small audience. That's true of artists in all different mediums. I think it damn well better be communication.

**FF:** What is it that you want to get across to your audience?

**BR:** I guess I want people to look at the world acutely, with great concentration, yet at the same time with a certain deference to what's going on. I think it's important to look at things with persistence and with as great a sense of awareness as possible, and from that you can develop a way of living, or relating to



events that occur. Songwriters are trying to get people to look at the world in the same way that they do. I think there's a certain amount of presumption in that, but if your craft is developed enough, and you're able to maintain a balance between ego and the kind of discipline that I'm talking about, it's possible to provide an avenue by which people will see things differently, or find things more interesting to look at. I think it's definitely a virtue to shake people up, if possible. Not to say that you need to be Robert Mapplethorpe or 2-Live Crew, but I think it helps to be out there on the edge, sometimes, or to just surprise people.

**FF:** What do you mean when you say you want people to have deference to what's going on?

**BR:** People develop a way of relating to the world that conforms to television, or the way their parents told them to look at things, or a kind of moral universe that they believe in. I think that if you *don't* question the way you're looking at things, you're only going to see in one dimension. You're going to miss a lot and, in fact, you're going to be wrong about a lot of things. None of this is to say that I've been able to see beyond my prejudices, or my point of view on things, but my quest, if I have one, is to keep my eyes wide open and to allow things to happen in front of me in such a way that I don't come to the first quick interpretation of what I see that pops into my head; that I'm able to reserve judgment for a while, at least. [It's] to defer to the ambiguity of what's in front of

me, and respect the mystery of an unknowable quality of what's happening around me all the time. I'd like to convey some of that sense of appreciating the world in the kind of songwriting I do.

**FF:** Do you believe that there is such a thing as a political song?

**BR:** No. I think that there are polemical songs. I think that there are songs that are ideological, but political is a difficult word to apply. There's so many things that are political. The way people relate to one another, on a very basic level, is political. I would rather describe songs that other people describe as "political" as "issue-oriented" songs.

**FF:** Recently, some of your own songs have been concerned with particular socio-political phenomena.

**BR:** That's true. I have a recent song called "Cities on the Aerial Paths of Communication," which is ostensibly about the fall of the Soviet Union. What it's really about is the failure in the 20th century of idealism, and the sense that there was a striving for a utopian vision of the world; a lot of those strivings were dashed along the way by war or by authoritarian governments, and it led us to the present, which is a much less idealistic time. That song deals with those kinds of issues, but in the narrow sense, politically, I don't think it has anything to do with taking any stand on any so-called issues.

**FF:** You've also written a series of songs in the mid-to-late eighties about the East-West German border.

**BR:** Right. Well, since 1985, I've spent a lot of time photographing the border, and the Berlin Wall. It's inevitable that a few songs would come out on the subject, as well. Those songs are as much about borders in the psychological sense, as they are about political borders. It's a cliché, in a sense, to look at it that way, but it's impossible to look at borders - particularly that border which split the world into two camps - without bringing your personal sense of what borders are into play. For me, the most poignant sense of a border is the border that separates you from other people. Sometimes this image has come up in different songs of mine, where I or some other character is pressed up against, or looking through a sheet of glass, and that becomes that border. You witness things that are going on, but you're not actually a participant. Then there's the sense of a border when you press up against the edge of what you know, or what it is that you can understand of what you see, and I'm constantly coming up against the edge of my ability to know things. It's painful, if you spend much time against that border. That's the landscape that I occupy a lot, as a songwriter.

**FF:** Do you think your songs have their roots in Realism with a capital "R", like the Realism of Flaubert or Zola, for instance?

**BR:** I prefer the realism, if you want to call it that, of James Joyce or T.S. Eliot. Even the realism of Bertold Brecht. Of course, they're very much 20th-century writers that I relate to more strongly. I see things in a more Modernist sense of what realism is. I don't tend to look at things symbolically very much. I'd rather keep things on the surface and provide additional meaning by evocation, but not necessarily by symbolism.

**FF:** Tell me about the song, "The Moral of St. Brigid's."

**BR:** The song takes place on the lower East Side of Manhattan. It's a view of the world from a somewhat younger songwriter than I am at this moment. The songwriter is essentially walking the streets of the lower East Side. There's a love affair at the heart of the song, one which is not working out so well from my point of view. At the same time that I'm consumed by this sense of romantic defeat, I'm also aware of the city all around me; crumbling buildings and the sense of danger that lurks around every corner in a somewhat rough neighborhood. St. Brigid's is in actuality a church on Tompkin's Square Park that survived the destruction of many of the blocks around it. Perhaps I was

seeing it as a survivor, not really in a religious sense, but in the sense that there's a lot of people's hope invested in a thing like that, in a neighborhood like the lower east side. The last verse I've never been as comfortable with as I am with the first two verses. It sort of goes off into flights of fantasy and romanticism, which I probably wouldn't allow into my songs now, but I hadn't rejected it in earlier songs. In the sense that my songs are autobiographical, I recognize that it was a legitimate way of looking at things, so it stays in.

**FF:** Are there any songwriters you've heard since you've been writing that would have had as strong an effect on you as the ones you heard before you started writing? Say, in the last ten years?

**BR:** I guess the most obvious person is Suzanne Vega, whom I met years ago at Folk City. Of the people I've met over the last ten years, I probably relate most closely to her way of writing songs. There are other people whom I don't relate to so closely in terms of their style of songwriting, but who've had some impact on me as a writer. I've liked some of the stuff that Laurie Anderson has done in the last ten years. In my own circle, I'd say that Jack Hardy and David Massengill have been influential, but in different ways.

**FF:** What would you like to be able to do in songs that you haven't done?

**BR:** I'd like to be able to write another couple of dozen songs that add to this particular world that I'm slowly building; that take off from where "The Decision" or "Open All Night" leave off. I think that those songs relate to the kind of urban and suburban milieu that most people in this society live in, and I think that by adding one song to another, eventually a whole cloth may yet come about - that over the course of my life as a songwriter there will be a kind of cohesive perspective on things. I'm not necessarily interested in doing something altogether different than what I've done before. What I'm most interested in now is expanding the scope of those songs I feel most strongly about. In some ways I'm fortunate in that, up till now, I haven't put out an album, because I think that now I'm capable of putting out something that will be much more cohesive and true to what I'm trying to do. The other thing that I want to emphasize is that, usually, when the people that I hang around with talk about songwriting, we

almost always talk about it in terms of lyrics. I think that lyrics are obviously important, but it's mis-emphasis to talk about songwriting strictly from a lyrical point of view. It's easy to talk about lyrics because they're concrete things, but it's important to be aware that music is equally important, and it's wrong to detach one from the other and think that you can talk about it as a discrete thing.

**FF:** Is there anything else you'd like to add?

**BR:** I guess I could say that I think most songwriting is not about the kinds of things that we've been talking about in this conversation. Most songwriting is, in a very broad sense, about entertainment. It's about making people feel things and sometimes think about things. Generally speaking, most songwriting is not about taking as critical a perspective on things as what we've been talking about. Some of that songwriting turns out to be wonderfully good anyway, from an artistic standpoint. Most of it doesn't, but it operates in another realm that I'm happy to live alongside of. Most of the people that I know in my circle of songwriters relate first and foremost to the pop music industry and secondarily to the more, well, just say to a different frame of reference. You have to understand that I come to things from an art background, and not from a musician's background, so I feel that as a songwriter I'm trying to operate in the same realm that I operate in as a photographer. I'm not saying that it's a better or more correct way of doing things, but it is a different perspective. Actually, the Talking Heads, for that matter, come from an art background, and they've sort of transcended that, and have very much found themselves in the pop frame of reference. They've used pop music rather well to convey ideas that generally haven't crossed over into the pop area. I think that that's a worthy thing to try to do; to take ideas or points of view that tend to find themselves in one box and try to either expand the box, or take it and move it into another box, and see if it's going to fit. Sometimes it doesn't fit at all, but you can get away with it. It might be possible for me to take my box and sort of force it into another box, to some extent the pop music box, and give it a whirl, but it would be a mistake to forget that the original intention is contained in that first box.

# EARSHOT:

## THE ECSTASY:

### PIERCE PETTIS' RELIGIOUS SONGWRITING

By Hugh Blumenfeld

One of the great moments on Pierce Pettis' first record, *Moments*, is "St. Paul's Song." In it, Pettis transforms the well-known passage about love in Paul's "First Letter to the Corinthians" into one of the few wedding songs that do what it's supposed to do. The melody carries the joy, the words carry the message of transcendent love; "more than faith, more than hope, love is the greatest." It's romantic without being sentimental, religious without being dogmatic.

In *While the Serpent Lies Sleeping*, Pierce Pettis continues to draw out the pure spiritual thread from the tapestry of his Christianity. The love songs on this album are all love songs to God, but they never lose that human intimacy, that sense of touch which marks human love. They express all the joys and pangs of love, all the doubt and desire, only taken to the highest pitch. I think of John Donne's lines from the sonnet "Batter my heart three-personed God":

.... for I  
Except you enthrall me,  
never shall be free  
Nor ever chaste,  
except you ravish me.

Pettis' songs surprise you. Their religious intensity dawns on you slowly; romantic love is always turning into spiritual love in these songs, as you listen. They revitalize not only the tradition of religious songs, but the tradition of love songs as well. In this effort, his songs stand alongside Bob Franke's best, "Hard Love" and "For Real." For both, their Christian faith is their rock; creating an art that ultimately brings hope, is their work; and their family is their life. But of faith, hope and love, the greatest of these is love.

If you are not paying very close attention - and the pop arrangement invites you to be a little lazy - the first verse of "Come Home" describes a once beautiful city that's gone to pot in someone's absence. Except for the one word "holy," the description is so graphic - "fresh flowers in the market," "children running in the street," then a "red-light district, an international disgrace" - that it could easily be New York, or Atlanta. Then the chorus calls "Come home...come home/you've been gone so long...come home."

The genius of it is that the music makes this simple hook stand quite separate, where it sounds like any typical lover's complaint, half lamentation, half exhortation. The second verse talks about the absentee's wife and child, beset by bills and thieves like a traditional widow, strengthening the idea that it's a love song, only now the one who's singing is not the abandoned lover. The chorus starts to sound more imperative, almost admonishing, and this heightens the tension as you begin to realize the whole song describes the loss of the Messiah and the expectation of His return. Go back. The first line of the song is;

I remember how you loved you  
this holy city in the spring

and it's Jerusalem, Easter, followed by decline. Everything in the song has a luminous quality - it's all allusive or metaphorical: "Thieves break in at night, they say you won't be back no more." The song stays anchored though, because it never loses its concreteness. Like any good gospel, it never gives up its literal sense. It keeps its ground of modern urban experience. Here God is not transcendent - God is immanent. After the first hearing, you feel the doubleness shot through every line. It feels like prophecy.

So many religious songs wear the trappings of the priesthood, quoting from scripture for effect, and in some songs Pettis can seem to do this too. But mostly, Pettis is making us experience the religious moment, the fresh spark that will not tolerate the meddling of appointed priests, but overthrows them in every age. There is desperation in it, and righteous rage:

But the ones you left  
to run your business  
run it right into the ground  
Each one a law unto himself  
leading followers around  
And in the babble of the streets  
and the jostling of the crowd  
On every side like helpless sheep  
it makes me want to cry out loud

This is no cheerleading for Jesus, as Chuck Hall once put it. It still has its evangelical moment, "And the child who's never known you just stands at the wall and wails," alluding to the unconverted Jews. But the image offers a striking portrait, accurate too, even if it implies the wrong solution. After all, the Christian in the song is wailing himself.

"Don't Ever Wanna Be Without You" keeps up the purely lyrical mode of the love song, this time of found love. But it's not the satisfied, bland crooning of a sheep securely in the fold.

I don't ever wanna be without you  
I don't ever wanna lose your touch  
I don't ever wanna be without you  
I could never stand to lose so much

This is a song of new love, soon after it has hit with its sudden force; the emotion is strong, but the grip feels tentative, and can't help contemplating loss. I like this song because, again, it takes you by surprise. At first it's a love song, then it seems like it could go either way, but finally it is both romantic and religious. It makes these lines especially tender:

But you know the man in me  
All the inconsistencies  
You manage to love me anyway

A human lover learns these things over long years of intimacy; God knows these things instantaneously, strips you naked. Either way, forgiveness is frightening and physical. The sense of touch in the song makes the lover's presence real:

Everybody has the same desire  
Moving closer to the fire

Like Donne, Pettis knows how to work sensuality and desire into devotions in a way that plays on sexual ambiguities. In "Seven Times Seventy" a mystical union or marriage is constantly thwarted by a lover's inconstancy:

Seven times seventy times  
I find my way back to you  
Seven times seventy times  
I have played the fool

"Working My Way Back To You" is an old love story, and its familiarity is the hook that sets us up. But no love song gets this worked up about indiscretions:

Seven times seventy times  
I've stood at your door  
Seven times seventy times  
I have played the whore  
Seven times seventy times  
Seven times seventy times

This is the extremity. We're in *Revelations* here, with the seven trumpets and the seven seals and the Whore of Babylon. But it is William Blake's visionary version of the Last Judgement: "Whenever any Individual Rejects Error & Embraces Truth, a Last Judgement passes upon that Individual." No matter how many times we go through it, the feeling of extremity is never lost. And while lovers make excuses, wheedling for forgiveness and sometimes getting it, the awful mystery that haunts the worst sinner is that the simplest honest request will always secure grace. Sometimes it is such an irrational, imponderable thing, that the rational man lapses into despair and cannot even ask. This is what happens in "He Burns For Her," where a man's whoring leads to his frightening and permanent downfall. As Pettis says here, "Grace is free but it ain't cheap."

"The Longing" belongs with these songs, and it ends the album by returning to the waiting, unfulfilled stance of "Come Home." And it is as beautifully lyrical in its movement as "Don't Ever Want to Be Without You." It is the most economical of them, achieving the dimension of desire with the one word, "longing," set at the end of each long line. "The Longing" gives us Pettis the travelling singer, homesick for his lover, recalling the last song of the first side, the small gem "Wanderin' Moon." And it gives us Pettis the inspired artist, a "vessel" waiting to be filled with the spirit. It is one of those songs that you forgive if the rest of the lyrics don't match what you think Pettis is technically capable of. All you remember is the long lamentation of "longing." It is enough.

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These are the songs that I think form the core of this album, and by themselves they would make this an important collection of songs. In them, faith is a palpable thing, searing and ecstatic; it is woven through life, not some sweet dusting on top. But *As the Serpent Lies Sleeping* also contains the song "Legacy," which is also appropriately the title cut of Windam Hill's recent folk compilation album. "Legacy" will be remembered. It is flawless, compelling, beautiful. And it needs no analysis to show its power. Pierce Pettis conjures up the spirit of the South and sings the love/hate of the South, the legacy of every Southerner. It is a white man's invitation to a black man, not to shake hands and embrace, but to look together, as estranged brothers, at the lines that their common history has drawn between them. It does not close this distance, Pierce knows that no song honestly can. But there is a promise, shimmering above the mistakes of history, the corruptions of church and state. It shimmers there all the more strongly as Claude McKnight III sings a ghostly "Amazing Grace" in counterpoint to Pierce in the last verse.

*Moments* / Small World Records, 1984  
*While The Serpent Lies Sleeping* / Windham Hill, 1989

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## Left, Left, Left Write Left

By Hugh Blumenfeld

I've been having a running argument with several friends about the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary political songs, mostly staying within the orbit of folk music. Recently Charlie King sent me a fascinating article by R.G. Davis in the journal *Rethinking Marxism*, which offered some background for the present state of political folk music, and suggested to me a possible rationale for the use of irony in political folk songs.

The article "Music from the Left" describes an argument among intellectuals on the left in the 1930s, a split in the folk music world whose consequences are still with us. One side was represented by Hans Eisler, a composer of a music of some complexity. The other side was led by Charles Seeger, who championed a folk style that used simple melodies and simple words that "the masses" would understand. Eisler argued two points: one, that audiences were more sophisticated than Seeger allowed, that before the Industrial Revolution and the cultural shifts it entailed, classical music from symphonies to opera was enjoyed by everyone, not just an educated elite; two, that musical form was as important as lyrical content, and that simple, repetitive musical forms could only communicate simple, one-dimensional ideas.

Eisler said that the fugue, for instance, was a good form for representing the interweaving and resolution of multiple voices. He thought it could do justice to a counterpoint of ideas. The sonata, which introduces a theme, a counter theme, exposition, and a resolution, parallels Hegelian Marxist ideology. This was music audiences could ponder. Eisler himself achieved a fair amount of popularity, and Brecht's songs were even more popular. The dissonant and unsettling *Three Penny Opera* shocked and provoked audiences of all classes when it first came out. Over the years, its music has been treated more and more as an aesthetic work, with most productions geared to the cultural elite. The recent production casting pop singer Sting as Mack the Knife was an attempt to bring the musical back to its populist roots, even if tickets were expensive and Sting could not manage the singing.

Overall, though, the faction of Charles Seeger eventually won out. Their music dominates the folk scene, especially where music meets politics. Seeger was more pragmatic, at least in terms of short-term results. A simple folk tune could carry a single message, easily understood by everyone. It was a good medium for rallies, marches, and impromptu concerts, perfectly suited for topical songs whose goal was immediate action. Charles Seeger and his descendants—biological and spiritual—have shaped political folk music. The influence goes beyond the form and content of the songs to where they are performed, why, how they are played, and who will listen to them.

A look at today's protest music finds a predominance of sentimental, simplistic answers to complex problems. Too many songs are content to make heroes and villains, to point in righteous horror at problems without examining their causes. I've heard it said that the purpose of songs is not to discourse on causes and effects, but to galvanize the listeners to do something. This is probably true, but songs create a mindset for future work. When the caring "folk song army" is galvanized, what will it do? And how? I think of a concert where Fred Small made a simple request for people to refrain from smoking. The resulting politically correct applause and hooting were so hostile that the half-dozen smokers in the audience were visibly shaken. Small, a little horrified, had to gently reprimand the mob. I can remember the look on Fred's face, and wonder if at that moment he connected the audience's action to the kind of songs he sings.

Eisler's ideas, meanwhile, have never been dismissed, as wave after wave of *avant-garde* conceptual artists have risen to brief popularity. But theirs are so often visions that, in the end, offer a nihilism no less simplistic than "We Are the World."

I think Charlie King sent me Davis' article as a way of asking the question: If you agree with Eisler about the uses of music and the need for songs to address more complex issues without sentimentality and easy resolutions, and if you value the skilled use of musical form, then how do

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you justify working in the musical folk idiom of Charles Seeger? It stumped me for a while.

The answer, I think, is irony.

A simple, repetitive melody, when used straight-faced, can be linked to simplified issues and single answers. But when irony undermines that simplicity, there is room for thought. Take for example "This Land is Your Land," which Pete Seeger sang to finish off the 1989 Newport Folk Festival. If you learned it at camp, or from your parents' Trini Lopez records, it's a pretty, innocuous celebration of a big and great country—but then there are the verses that Trini Lopez didn't sing (ironically enough). The verse about the "No Trespassing" sign is an ironic little joke on its surface, but it's really the last sentence of the Communist Manifesto, thinly disguised. In the verse that goes "In the shadow of the steeple, I saw my people / By the relief office, I seen my

people . . .," the irony is tragic. In the middle of a beautiful, plentiful country, people are hungry, and both church and government are implicated, without being named. "This land was made for you and me" is turned into the question "Is this land made for you and me?"

Another classic song that takes a simple form and gives it the ironic twist it needs to achieve the complexity we recognize as the mark of the real world is "Blowin' in the Wind." Partly, the irony is that every listener, even the "friend," is implicated. All of us are cut off from others' suffering and from self-knowledge, no matter what our political ideas are. The song achieves its openness in the traditional way, by asking questions instead of giving answers. And the biggest irony is, how can such simple riddles not have answers you can pin down? Such questions can keep a song alive for thirty years, even three hundred.

It's awfully safe to talk about known classics. How about less-proven works? Let's take "Legacy" by Pierce Pettis. A Southern white man addresses a Southern black man. The legacy, the "wild and bitter seed" whose "roots run deep," is never named, but the tragedy of inherited prejudice is in every line.

Sundays we congregate  
Praise Jesus, pass the plate  
Sitting in our Sunday best  
Singing hymns and mopping sweat  
We learned the golden rule  
In separate Sunday schools  
In a house long divided  
Against itself

These lines do not just mock the church; that would give the one-dimensional accusation I've been arguing against. Pettis's irony comes from showing how the ideals he and his Black brother love have been subverted in practice. The house, though long divided, has not fallen yet. Every line shows what must be done. The simple structure counterpoints the paradoxes; the welcoming gesture counterpoints the bitterness. This ballad tells a continuing story that has yet to be completed, and the balances are the key to its integrity. Black and white remain separated by a very real gulf when the song ends. "We are quite different, we are the same," Pettis says.



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In the version on the new Windham Hill release *While the Serpent Lies Sleeping*, these tensions find their way into the music. Pettis sings the last verse while Mac McAnally sings "Amazing Grace" in a minor key and in rhythmic counterpoint. This is a bit of musical complexity that Eisler would approve of, but it only heightens the effect achieved in the simpler form.

Bill Morrissey's "The Driver's Song" depends on the ironic relation of simple form and real content for the bite of its humor. The song is disguised as a ditty. Bill sings as lightly as he can in the person of a truck driver enjoying the solitude of a long night drive through the snow-covered New Hampshire wilderness. Every nature lover must be drawn in by the softening of this working stiff. Then, with only a pause and a new chord to indicate a shift in the action, the driver opens the side valve of his cargo tank and drives on, once again happily enjoying the scenery along the deserted scenic road. The end. When you realize what all this adds up to, it's too late. Morrissey is the original flim-flam man—the one who makes you glad you've been had.

The problem with irony is the difficulty of making positive statements. There is a strong tendency toward cynicism, a negative view that dismisses any useful discussion of ideas as foolish. A sophisticated image is tempting, but despair makes us weak. So folkies remember Woody Guthrie's famous words about not singing any song that puts people down and makes them think they can't get up again. But Guthrie's simplicity is deceptive. Like all good political songs, his are as subversive in how they work as in what they say.

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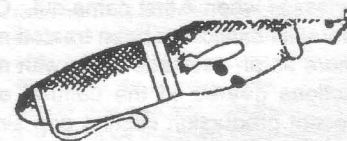


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# SIDE BY SIDE

## She's Driving Home Tonight

He looks in the mirror and straightens his tie one more time  
She knows that's the last time she'll be sure who he is tonight  
As she turns the wheel out of their front drive  
He tells her it's gonna be different this time  
He's dressed to kill  
An . she's driving home tonight

They fell in love with a crash on a cloudy day  
There was nothing to stop them, no reason to hit the brakes  
But she just couldn't see them, and she wonders why  
'Cause his fists get so big when he's wild in the eyes  
Now he's drinkin' doubles  
And she's driving home tonight

And she talks about leaving  
But it's always too soon  
And he talks about changing  
But he might as well change  
The man in the moon

Now she flips the mirror, signals into the passing lane  
The headlights behind her get smaller as it starts to rain  
There's a tear on her cheek as she hits the state line  
Maybe she'll find the answer in her mother's eyes

He's more than a mem'ry  
And she's driving home tonight  
Yeah, He's more than a mem'ry  
And she's driving home tonight

Words and Music © 1990 by Katy Moffatt

## Things I Learned From Life

Thinkin' about my younger days  
and lookin' back on life  
Thinkin' about the girls I knew  
before I took a wife

Me and all my character flaws  
out on the town  
Spread out like a bald spot  
and followed me around

Things I learned from life  
Years don't make you wise  
Learn from your mistakes  
Then you make 'em twice

Well all my friends are settlin' down  
That's as it should be  
They stay home, mow the lawn  
Sit and watch TV

Saturday night stare at the clock  
and worry about the kids  
Hopin' they're not doin'  
what their mom and daddy did

(chorus)

Just when you think you've got it  
You find out it's got you.

(chorus 2x)

Words and Music © 1989 Michael Jerling

## The Fool

You can call him the Jack of Hearts, you can call him the Prince of Knaves  
From the suits he has discarded and the cards you think he saves  
But his face is hard to read, he's grown open as a grave  
And now you just can't guess his hand until he makes it

And the Judge says he is dangerous, and crazy, like a fox  
As he walks into the courtroom with his favorite paradox  
That says 'you cannot hope to catch this boy if you nail him in a box'  
Then he takes the Judge's hammer and he breaks it

And they say that he is crazy, they say he is a fool  
Like the ones in caps and bells, like the ones who break the rules  
He's always standing ready to fly or take a fall  
And the Fool could be the savior of us all

The diplomats and princes of this world they think is real  
Are served by those with broken hearts and shoulders on the wheel  
They see the Fool in his ragged dance and they don't care how he feels  
When by just his simple steps he seems to tell them

"You say your days are wasted, you tell me they're too tough  
For you to lead the lives you'd like, But you know that's just your bluff  
'Cause you have all the time there is, who never have enough"  
But they never seem to buy this dream he's selling

Instead they say he is crazy, they say he is a Fool  
Then they dream of their caps and gowns, and the years they spent in school  
'Till they are haunted by the wisdom, born of that freedom they recall  
That the Fool could be the wisest of them all

Now romantics turn to cynics when the fiery leaves are gone  
And the trees stand cold and naked, unprotected from the dawn  
They are stripped of all illusion, with no dreams to carry on  
And life is only a series of departures

But it takes as great a leap of faith to deny as to believe  
And you are the looms and the guiding hands and the patterns that you weave  
And his is just a gypsy soul, with no intent to deceive  
When he tells you he sees arrivals in your future

And I've heard that Love is treacherous, I've heard it's not for fools  
That it's only for the cunning thieves, like ancient, treasured jewels  
But he has no need to hide his heart behind the unseen walls  
And the Fool could be the richest of us all

Words and Music © 1990 Josh Joffen (BMI)

## So I Could Get To You

My mother cried, my mother moaned  
So early one midsummer's morn  
And with one final heaving groan  
To her a child was born

She suckled me upon her breast  
And she and Dad did all the rest  
To ready me to leave the nest so I could get to you

So I could get to you my love  
No road too long, no sea too rough  
For I was made of sterner stuff so I could get to you  
So..

I found that life is just a play  
You strut and fret upon the stage  
You learn the lines you have to say  
And try to act your age

I was sometimes up and sometimes down  
And sometimes I went round and round  
But I escaped the lost and found so I could get to you

### Chorus

In hurricanes with crashing trees  
In thunderstorms and winter gales  
A steady voice was telling me  
To stay upon your trail

Through drifting snow and sheets of ice  
I kept my eyes on paradise  
As I used every known device so I could get to you

### Chorus

And when at last I saw you there  
Holding out your valentine  
I shrank with fear and would not dare  
To cross the borderline

I was stumbling blind without a guide  
When something moved me deep inside  
To leap across the great divide so I could get to you

### Chorus

And now that we have joined our fate  
We're touching deep within the heart  
Though sometimes we must separate  
We'll never be apart

And as I stand beneath the sun  
And think of what I've lost and won  
I thank my stars for all I've done so I could get to you

### Chorus

Words and Music © 1990 by Paul Kaplan/ Paul Kaplan Music (ASCAP)

## Kumar Shankar

I hear you breathing  
I feel your heart beat  
When my sarod says  
Kumar Shankar, Kumar Shankar  
I hear a story  
I feel a melody  
When my sarod says  
Kumar Shankar, Kumar Shankar

There is a black prince who spoke of a rose  
Look for the beauty not the dark side below  
And if a thorn should scratch my heart then  
When I remember there's a new tune I'll know

### CHORUS

All of the people think I'm a wonder  
Tell me my teacher what is missing when I play  
There is a lesson I cannot give you  
Go to the forest with my daughter to stay

### CHORUS

All night long music and now comes morning  
The king and queen in bed having romance  
In comes a peacock ca-ca-ca-calling  
The king is angry, the queen is afraid

### CHORUS

Words and Music © 1988 by Judith E. Ficksman

## Castaway

I welcome you my little man  
stolen from your sleepy land  
cut loose from her, my calloused hand  
branded you an exile

the ocean parted when you waited  
and debris of your catastrophe  
set sail inside a silver cup  
that she handed to me

no ocean deep, no mountain tall  
no liberty, no prison vault  
can keep my baby refugee  
from his own inland sea

where he can play castaway  
where he can play castaway  
where he can play castaway

now on a dolphin's back I come to you  
bounding from across the blue  
swollen flood inside my vein  
to try to explain

how someday far below the moon  
you may live beside a green lagoon  
and store up pearls for skipping stones  
and you'll never be alone

and ocean fall or ocean rise  
I see her deep, deep in your eyes  
I'm an ocean apart from you  
but you'll always be a part of me

'cause I can play castaway  
two can play castaway  
where he can play castaway  
we all play castaway

Words and Music © 1990 Richard Shindell

# SIDE BY R (C) TWO

## The Moral of St. Brigid's

i venture out with hopes i have doubt  
i know not where these feelings are bound  
i wander by the tailor's  
shop on the wrong side of town  
these beat streets breed defeat  
i am alone and i am afraid  
as the shops close the eyes know  
that no one will come to your aid

and the bricks fall upon us all  
by st brigid's the church bells chime  
and the landlords and warlords  
by st brigid's they bide their time

the breeze stirs the winter  
my eyes are stormy and gray  
i call to a friend can we still be friends  
if i hold my heart at bay  
the answers a smile that warms me awhile  
till the next time we meet the street mime  
where strangers pass through broken glass  
fearing an ambush of time

and the bricks fall upon us all  
by st brigid's the church bells chime  
and spring blooms in costume  
by st brigid's i bide my time

the shadow of tomorrow  
ever keeps me here in the dark  
as danger stalks where money talks  
deep in tompkin's square park  
this hungry night of street lights  
lies like a dog neath the moon  
this pale night turns white as my dreams sway and swoon

and the bricks fall upon us all  
by st brigid's the church bells chime  
and my love grows solo  
by st brigid's i bide my time

Words and Music © 1990 by Brian Rose

## The Burden

First the signs went up all over town  
'If you're guilty or proud come and say it out loud'  
Hands in his pockets tried to understand  
She bit the apple and he was her man

The rain spit at the revival tent  
They swore to lay the burden down  
What they wanted wasn't legal or heaven sent  
There are some words you don't say out loud.

When you turn a wheel  
You're gonna move  
With nothing to live for  
There is nothing to prove  
No matter how hard the rain falls  
You can only walk to shelter  
if its where you belong

She nearly wore her future out for all to see  
He wished he'd been blinded at his mother's knee  
It didn't take a fast car, it didn't take drugs  
She had a few months to go to motherhood

They walked together to be witnessed there  
To confess that they had been in love  
Then a few questions on the other side of town  
it didn't take long and it didn't take love

CHO

The holy rollers laid their own burdens down  
A hot wind blew, he finally prayed out loud  
He knew she'd be alone, he knew that she would cry  
When her blood rain came down  
He waited for her in the parking lot  
And then the doctor looked him in the eye  
Maybe a few hundred dollars could fix her up  
But a prayer, could it ease their minds

CHO

First the signs went up all over town  
If you're guilty or proud come and say it out loud!

Words and Music ©1989 Richard Meyer (ASCAP)

## Disenchanted

Gone lost all my soulful friends  
I'll not make ones like those again  
I thought I had so few of them  
And now not even you

I feel just like them old guys now  
Old times is all I talk about  
I mumble to myself out loud  
This disenchanted muse

Lay low in this town  
Climb board the next rain comin' buddy  
I got these low down  
Disenchanted  
Disenchanted  
Disenchanted blues

The moon is full and high and hued  
The shadows of the trees are glued  
To streets lit like the empty mood of nothing left to lose

I wonder why the rising sun  
Each day for this again does come  
And cast it deep down under some dark  
disenchanted blues.....

Words and Music © 1990 Eric Wood/ Romany Music

## Politics

I'm gonna take little bit of knowledge  
Gonna turn it all into honey  
Take four years of college  
And I'm gonna turn 'em all into money  
My father is a big shot company man  
My mother is a playboy bunny  
Son of a bitch, when I get rich  
Gonna live where the weather is sunny  
Live where the weather is sunny

I'm never going back to school  
Please don't you ask me mister  
My teacher told the principal all about the time that I kissed her  
The dean called me down to the office and he said to me  
You're just the same as your sister  
He boxed my ears and he rapped my head  
And he give a me bloody nose and a blister  
Give a me bloody nose and a blister

Out hunting time in the gooseberry bog  
We came upon an Indian ruin  
Full of buffalo hides and a drum made of logs  
And a pot to make Indian stew in  
Molly and me in our little tee-pee  
Who knows what we were doing  
'Till the bulldozer came and they flattened our game  
Just to put another house or two in

I'm going down to the opera house  
Listen to a real fine singer  
Her throat is gold and her heart is gold  
And she's got a gold ring on her finger  
Her voice is ripe and round and free

And it heals my heart just to hear her sing  
She'll catch my eye with a wink so sly  
Singing "I will marry you in the winter  
I will marry you in the winter"

repeat 1st Verse

Words and Music © 1990 by Andrew Calhoun

## Strange, Strange Life

I used to walk down tenth avenue  
lookin' at the girls in the street  
there was a pretty little girl blowin' on a bubble  
and makin' like the bubble was me  
so I bit pretty hard on her bait  
said "Honey don't you think you're out a little too late?"  
she said "I was hopin' that you could use a date  
now how about it, mister?"  
I could show you a really good time."

Well it didn't take long to discover  
that her talk wasn't cheap  
she was just about as bright as the bottom of a lake  
but she wasn't quite as deep  
and she spoke with a beautiful charm  
about South Dakota and livin' on the farm  
back in the cradle of her family's arms  
"I used to be a sister" she said  
till they cut the telephone line

Isn't it a strange, strange life  
well that's how it's made  
isn't it a strange, strange life  
how your soul can just fade  
you wake up one morning, you don't know anything  
the very next day, you become the king  
of everything you didn't wanta know  
everything that you never wanted to know about  
a strange life

So I hopped on a train downtown  
with all the other subway zombies  
stopped in a village bar, had a drink  
with all the usual commies  
til I ran into Micheal Mann  
lookin' like a prisoner of Vietnam  
because they put his brain in a frying pan back in '71  
now he only makes sense to the wall

well he sat there in the corner with his headphones  
and his radio static  
said somethin' funny 'bout Ludwig Beethoven  
and threw his arms up kinda frantic  
cause since his soul got caught  
he cannot produce an articulate thought  
and now he's just a lesson that never gets taught  
to all of the other ones  
if we barely listen at all

## Paul Cezanne

Well, I love Cubism, it's my favorite style  
When I see a Cubist painting I've just got to smile  
But there's one painter, I'm his biggest fan  
He's the father of Cubism and his name's Cezanne, Cezanne

CHORUS : Cezanne, Cezanne, the father of Cubism

Some people say it was Picasso  
Other people say it was DeChirico  
Some people think it was Modiglian  
But they're all crazy, it was Paul Cezanne, Cezanne

CHORUS

When Paul Cezanne sat down to paint a flower or a face  
He had to solve the problem of three-dimensional space  
He said "Form is content!", he smoked a Gitanne  
He was right, now he's Paul Cezanne, Cezanne

CHORUS

Cezanne's father wanted him to be an *avocat*  
But Paul just looked at him and said, "*Mais non, pa.*  
I want to be a painter, I know I can."  
Now his oeuvre's in the Louvre, he's Paul Cezanne, Cezanne

CHORUS

Well, I had an aunt, and she was in a coma  
So we loaded up her bed and we took her down to MoMA  
We got through the door, you wouldn't believe what began  
She sat up and started screaming, "I want to see some Paul  
Cezanne, Cezanne,"

CHORUS

Paul Cezanne is famous now, I think that's really nice  
'Cause his melons look like footballs, his apples look like dice  
So all you would-be painters, get out your brush and can  
You may be the next Paul Cezanne, Cezanne

CHORUS

Words and Music © 1983 Tom Meltzer

CHORUS

people do anything for a dollar  
say, "Just go right ahead and use me."  
people in this town will do anything anywhere  
just to be in the movies  
there ain't no room for a man  
to sing an innocent song  
and I wanta sing before I've been too long

So I'm walkin' down the boulevard  
I'm takin' in all of the new  
you know it's funny but it's sad  
how the streets have changed  
since my days on Tenth avenue  
I hear the fading of the steeple bells  
while walking right through the kitchen of hell  
42nd street, the Highland Hotel  
steppin' over men who from grace once fell  
and the hands of a priest who's crying for help  
to put a lid on the rain  
there's a priest and he's cryin' in vain

CHORUS

Words and Music © 1990 Richard Jullan

# UNITED GERMAN APPEAL

(Translation)

Ach, du lieber, we're united!  
Throw a party, Poles invited!  
To the bierstubes everyone!  
Germans will be Number- er, having fun!

Our party it will not be Goering, er, boring!  
Gut in Himmler--er Gut in himmel, we'll be roaring  
We'll have music, we'll have Danzig, nein dancing!  
We'll all get tanks and do our France-thing, nein!  
We'll all get tanked and do our dancing!

Ach, du lieber, we're united!  
Throw a party, Jews invited!  
To the bierstubes every one, Germans will be...having fun!  
(And when you get to the beerhall, nobody push!  
Nobody PUSH in the beerhall! PUSH IN THE BEERHALL!)

We'll have a Turkish bellydancer  
Fry some sausage in a panzer...nein, in a pan, sir!  
Gemuetlichkeit we'll be our goal  
And Fritz will swallow a herring whole. Yah, whole!

But Fritz won't swallow a dolphin, a dolphin, a dolphin  
(Adolph's in, Adolph's in, pass it on, Adolph's in!)  
A dolphin, a dolphin  
Nein, Fritz won't swallow a dolphin  
'Cause that would make Fritz too big and Fritz he's no pig  
(Nein, he's a finch kleineh schweiner! Ha ha!)

Reunion will make us rich, not poorer  
There will be no fuss, no furor  
(No Fuehrer! Mine Gott, how can we live without a Fuehrer?)  
German workers will stand tall  
Dressed in Deutschland overalls...

Deutschland! Deutschland overalls  
The overalls for you and for me  
All the world will want to wear those  
Jazzy stripes horizontally

Vell, I think with this song we have come to the finish line  
The Finnish line? Where's Rommel? We can't cross without Rommel!  
Ach, seriously, I remember Der Fuehrer...he wasn't much on brains  
But in the end he was getting a little brawn...

So now I have proved fascism is dead in Germany. But there are none  
So Blind as those who will NOT see, NOT-see, NAZI! NAZI! Ha ha  
ha! Fritz, Fritz, Fritz, what's the world coming to? I have my  
suspicion this song is written by a Jew! Yah, whole! Ya, whole!

Words and Music ©1990 Sherwood Ross

## TEST YOUR PERCEPTION

First read the sentence enclosed in the box below.

FINISHED FILES ARE THE RE-  
SULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIF-  
IC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE  
EXPERIENCE OF MANY YEARS.

Now count the F's in that sentence. Check once  
again to be sure of your count.

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# RECORD REVIEWS

## TEXAS NEWS

Since the last issue of FAST FOLK we have received two tapes recorded and issued in the spirit of the Kerrville Festival.

### No Two Alike

Butch Hancock's Marathon

Fans of the Texas scene were treated to a rare indulgence by one of their home state songwriters in January, 1990, when Butch Hancock presented his *No Two Alike* concerts on six consecutive nights at the Cactus club in Austin. The shows originally scheduled for a five night run were extended for a sixth.

Hancock, who is known for his prolific songwriting, his independantly released albums and membership in the legendary group The Flatlanders; treated the sold out audiences to a wealth of his material; performing a total of one-hundred-fourty songs with out a single repeat. The material ranged from Little Coyote Waltz from his first LP (1977) to new material. The finale of the week long event was the twenty-seven minute long 'Last long Silver Dollar'. There were sequels to old songs, wild duets and group numbers. Nearly half of the songs were previously unavailable on Hancock's recordings.

Hancock put together a shifting all star band for the occasion which included at times, Steve Wesson, Joe Ely, Tony Pearson, Jimmy Dale Gilmore, Erik Hokkanen and David Heath. There were some special guest appearances by Townes Van Zant and a reconstituted Flatlanders.

The Cactus Cafe- *No Two Alike* - concerts were recorded and are available through Hancock's Rainlight Records. The fourteen instalments on cassette cover the complete series of shows and they are available by mail for \$10 + \$2 postage on a monthly basis. The complete set will include a discography and songbook.

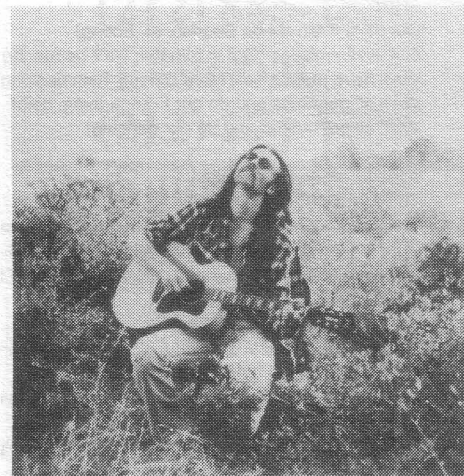
For more information write: 'No 2 Alike' Tape of The Month Club, Butch Hancock, 406 Brazos- Austin, Texas 78701;(512) 478-1536

### FROM THE CAMPEIRES OF KERRVILLE

#### Camp Cuisine Tapes- Music from the Kerrville Campgrounds

Drawn from over sixty hours of on site recording at one of the Kerrville Festival campsites, The *Camp Cuisine Tapes* is a marvelous evocation of the mood at the unofficial festival, the campfires. Many attendees, performers and civilian audience members feel that the 'real' festival takes place after the mainstage acts have finished and the private sessions begin. This collection captures some of the fun and variety of material one hears by the campfires. The sessions, though it is incorrect to call them 'sessions', were recorded on a portable R-DAT and sound wonderfully immediate. The sing-along atmosphere of John Ims 'She's in Love with the Boy', and Chuck Pyle's 'Step By Step' is engaging. Other kinds of group enthusiasm can be heard on 'Invasion of the Money Snatchers'. The intimacy and power of a single performer with a single song is clear on David Wilcox's 'Burgundy Heart Shaped Medallion', Lorie McCloud's 'Row' (sung by Rachel Polisher) and McCloud's own performance of 'Second Chances'. This is a live tape that leaves the listener feeling that he has heard a true recording of a simple casual human event, and that is rare when many recordings try to emphasize the bigness of an event which might in fact, be small. This cassette, which will be issued in the near future on CD is available from:

**Agua Azul Records:**  
16 Peak Road North  
Austin, Texas 78746  
(512) 328-4613



### Doyle Carver High Ground

This recent release from Houston's Doyle Carver is a haunting album of stories from the heartland of America. The dark lyrics are remarkably immediate and bring the listener along through the brush during a storm, into town, in the steelworks and the brickyards. We are suprised, as we listen, how we fit in these oddly inhuman settings that have become the true places of action in modern life. The arrangemets are simple and clear. Carver's singing, much like Neil Young's is plaintive and affecting. Like his first tape, *At the Circle K*, these are snapshots of a contemporary world that carry the shadow of a more innocent, but lost, time where person to person growth was somewhat easier. **Carver Records;** 9518 Concord Lane, Houston/ Texa 77064 (713) 466-5134

### Camp Coho- A Long Way From Texas

One might ask- "what happens when the Festival closes and the participants and audience goes home?" A partial answer come to us from Seattle where five Kerr-vivors (Heidi Muller, Jill Kennon, T.R. Richie, Janis Carper, and Kat Eggleston) returned home inspired by the festival and

determined to put that energy to good use. They each wrote some new songs and recorded it along with some other new material. The result is *Camp Coho—A long way from Texas*, a cassette only release whose sale is intended to raise money for these performers to return to Kerville next year for more inspiration. The money however, is not the point—its the songs. Some of the highlights are: 'Broken China', 'The Decision is Mine', and 'Love Makes You Stupid'. The tape is available from **Camp Coho: Cascadia Music, P.O. Box 95884, Seattle/ WA 98145**



## Cliff Eberhardt

### *The Long Road*

Windham Hill Records

By Keith Kelly

Countless lousy gigs. Too many opening-act slots. A few tours. A few tapes. Some radio. Some TV. What can a solo singer-songwriter hope to get out of all this?

Success. *The Long Road* is Cliff Eberhardt's first major-label release. It represents the fruit of many years of obscurity, a few years on the edge of notoriety, and the starting point of an admirable musical career.

The twelve self-penned selections on the Windham Hill album offer some signposts along the Eberhardt journey. One of the great writerly themes—the transforming power of love—is the core of many of the songs. The title track is autobiographical, with the singer reflecting on his life and

achievements, yet he is careful to insist he owes it all to his better half. "I can hear a voice in the wind, are you calling to me / I have followed my dream down the long road," he sings.

Indeed, the next five songs are variations on the "I'm no good but you're a saint" motif. "Always your face appears in my dreams / and brings me back home tonight," goes one. "The streets don't care what becomes of me . . . I'm so blinded by your love tonight" goes another. A standout track, "That Kind of Love," reduces these professions of love to the bare essentials: "No sailboat, no deep blue sea / No candlelight, just you and me . . . no moon above / that kind of love . . . I can hear some fool on a balcony / Just a Shakespeare drunk killing poetry / I think I know what you're dreaming of / that kind of love." These heartfelt words are sung to a sensual accompaniment of lazy guitars, drifting keyboards, and softly tinkling percussion. A similar atmosphere is realized in "White Lightning," where, for a change, the lover's hard times are the subject. "The devils employed you, don't question your fate . . . nothing is the way it's promised . . . some stumble like fools when they try to do this dance."

Eberhardt, on vocals and acoustic guitar, employs a versatile four-piece band (Kevin Jenkins, bass; Jeff Pevar, guitar; Seth Farber, keyboards; Jake Ehrenreich, drums) to craft everything from the energetic rock of "My Father's Shoes" and "Right Now" to the midtempo ballad style of "Your Face" and "Always Want to Feel Like This." While his strong vocal style can handle it all, he and his players are augmented by the vocals of the legendary McDonald's/Amtrak folksinger Richie Havens (a duet on "The Long Road") and Shawn Colvin (on "White Lightning"). The album is crisply produced by Peter Galloway.

Overall, Eberhardt has come up with a thoroughly impressive first, one all his friends and fans nationwide always knew he had in him. His road from here on may be longer, but will certainly be easier.

## Fairport Convention: *The Boot; The Other Boot; The Third Leg*

By Craig Harris

The most versatile of all English folk revivalists, Fairport Convention can do it all. Centuries-old fiddle tunes, ballads, and tradition-rooted songs are all incorporated into the group's repertoire. This trio of two-cassette sets captures the band during their reunion concerts of 1983, 1986, and 1987. Although the nucleus centers around Fairport's latest reincarnation—Simon Nicol (guitar, vocals), Dave Pegg (bass), Martin Allcock (guitar, keyboards), Ric Sanders (electric violin), and Dave Mattacks (drums)—the presence of such noted alumni as Richard Thompson, Dave Swarbrick, Jerry Donahue, and Ian Mathews make these important musicological collections.

The emotional soprano vocals of the late Sandy Denny are missed, but sound-alikes June Tabor and Cathy Lesurf do their best to compensate. Sound quality ranges from the bootleg-like rawness of "The Boot" to the soundboard brilliance of "The Third Leg." Instrumentals that blend acoustic and electric instruments are balanced by updated traditional songs, including "Matty Groves," "John Barleycorn," and "Tam Lin," and contemporary tunes by Bob Dylan ("Percy's Song," "Tomorrow is a Long Time," "Million Dollar Bash"), Richard Thompson ("For Shame of Doing Wrong," "Hand of Kindness," "Saturday Rolling Around"), Richard Farina ("Reno, Nevada"), Leonard Cohen ("Suzanne"), and Ralph McTell ("The Hiring Fair," "Bridge of Sighs").

Many of the group's best-known tunes, including "Who Knows Where the Time Goes," "Walk Awhile," and "Meet on the Ledge," are presented in pace-setting interpretations. Jethro Tull's flautist-bandleader Ian Anderson and guitarist Martin Barre are featured during the jazzy instrumental "Serenade to a Cuckoo."

*The Boot, The Other Boot, and The Third Leg* can be ordered from *Dirty Linen* magazine (1419 Regester Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21239).

## Songs for Drella

Lou Reed & John Cale

by Brian Rose

Andy Warhol was never one of my favorite artists, although it has always been obvious to me that it is impossible to talk about contemporary art without acknowledging his impact. Warhol and pop art were something of an antidote to the Sturm und Drang of abstract expressionism - the idea that art was primarily about baring one's soul. Behind the personal testimony of abstract expressionism was an intensely moral view of the individual in society. Artists were viewed as high priests of culture who stood above crassness and bourgeois materialism. The fact that their art had become a commodity like everything else was considered distasteful. The artists, of course, after years of struggle were happy to take the money, but their work was never intended to be a commodity.

Warhol rejected much of this anti-materialist thinking. He looked at culture around him for his ideas rather than delving into his own psyche. Rather than plumb the spiritual depths, he turned the material world back on us and said this is who we are. Warhol took the stuff of bourgeois society and processed it into art. His work was never about moral angst. He took a neutral position, whether he was appropriating images of a soup can or the Kennedy assassination. Art to him was as much about being a commodity as anything else bought or sold in the marketplace. Money was neither good nor bad. Warhol's art was about fashion, celebrity, and the media. Of course, he became a celebrity himself, and promised us each our fifteen minutes of fame.

**MATT UMANOV**  
**GUITARS**

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Reed and Cale present Warhol sympathetically, although somewhat sentimentally. That is Reed's occasional penchant, though I have always thought his sentimentality was necessary as a counterweight to his usually blunt vision of urban life. So I think it's a virtue that he and Cale allow emotion to enter their portrait of Warhol. It may be inconsistent with Warhol's depiction of himself but, for once, Warhol is a flesh and blood person whose life and death deserves to be remembered and mourned - not just noted in the art textbooks.

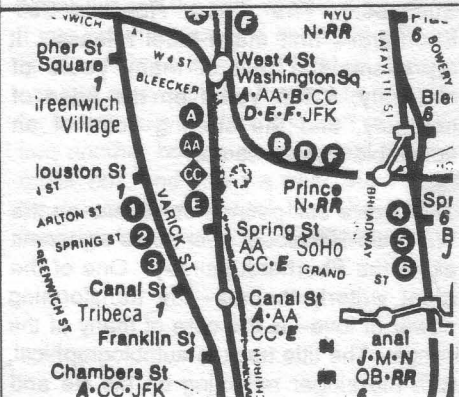
The songs are arranged very sparsely - Reed on guitar and Cale on viola and keyboards. The sound of Reed's electric guitar against Cale's acoustic piano is unconventional with no rhythm section to nail it together, but the oddly incomplete arrangements keep the lyrics out front and emphasize the narrative and the song cycle. The lyrics are intentionally unpoetic (particularly on the songs Reed sings) and often don't quite scan. Cale's songs tend to be smoother - though I assume that most of the songs are collaborations - and his recitation of "A Dream," which is suspended over an atmospheric interplay of piano chords and echoing guitar crescendos, is the emotional climax of the album: "I was so scared today. There was blood leaking from my shirt from those old scars from being shot."

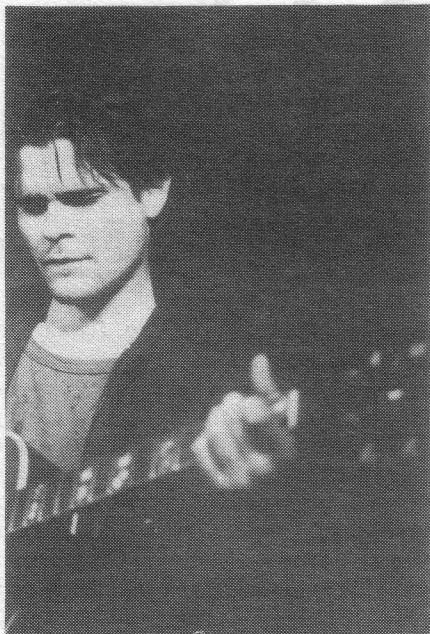
But as much as Warhol made himself the "famous artist," he wore himself like a mask. He became a simulacrum of himself - that is, an art image of himself. His work was always about what lay on the surface of things, and the Andy Warhol he invented for us also existed only on the surface. Lou Reed and John Cale personalize Warhol in their song cycle "Songs for Drella," ("Drella" being a nickname contraction of Dracula and Cinderella) performed last year at St. Ann's Church and The Brooklyn Academy of Music, and recently released on Sire Records. In their so-called fictional account of his life, Warhol was an albino gay kid in Pittsburgh who went to New York to find fame and live out his ambition to be a great artist. His life was dominated by his Catholic upbringing, and an intense work ethic. He needed people around him to give meaning to himself, so he created the Factory, and allowed all kinds of weird

and exotic people to come into his life (including Reed and Cale in the Velvet Underground). He was finally shot by one of them and almost died. He feared death and God. He was hurt by friends like Reed who didn't visit him in the hospital. He found himself alone amidst the gaggle of freaks and the famous who surrounded him.

This is obviously not a mainstream rock album. It is a serious and somewhat demanding homage to an artist who, no matter how famous he was among the art intelligentsia, was an enigma to most people. The ironic chilliness of his art is still with us in the work of many younger, often derivative artists, and the big time art world seems more than ever to thrive on fashion, hype, and sudden fame. Is this Warhol's legacy? Reed and Cale don't directly address this question, although in one song Cale sings: "You might think I'm frivolous uncaring and cold/You might think I'm frivolous - depends on your point of view/Society Andy who paints and records them - the high and the low/I left my old life behind me and never went back/Forever changed, forever changed."

To many, Warhol's art seems best exemplified by those repeated vacuous images of Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Kennedy and other society types. Reed and Cale paint a warmer, if contradictory, portrait of an artist who was not quite a hero. To me, it's the two former Velvet Underground musicians who emerge more as heroes from this project. Coming together again for the first time since the late 60s, and fresh from artistically successful solo albums (Reed's *New York*, and Cale's *Words for the Dying*), they have yet again found the cutting edge with their tribute to one of the most influential artists of our era.





Eric Wood

**Eric Wood** was raised in Cleveland, Ohio until he was 14 years old. He spent the next ten years in as many cities before arriving in New York in 1976. Performing began to take on greater importance for him there, after he had spent four years in Nashville publishing and recording houses, concentrating mainly on songwriting. Recently he left the city for the end of a long dirt road in upstate New York where he is clearing land by hand and building a house.

In a 1971 article about his public relations wizardry, The New York Times once wrote, "**Sherwood Ross** has already been a Chicago newspaper reporter, a star of a Washington radio show, a new director of the National Urban League and a press aide to political candidates." Ten years later, Ross picked up a guitar and began to hammer out crazy songs, including "I Sliced Pastrami for the CIA, and Found God" (Coop, May 1982) and now "UGA, United German Appeal". You'd never know from this spoof he favors reunification, but Ross says, "I just can't pass up the chance to set a lot of bad puns to music." Ross is now working on an album and has begun performing regularly in public.



Michael Jerling

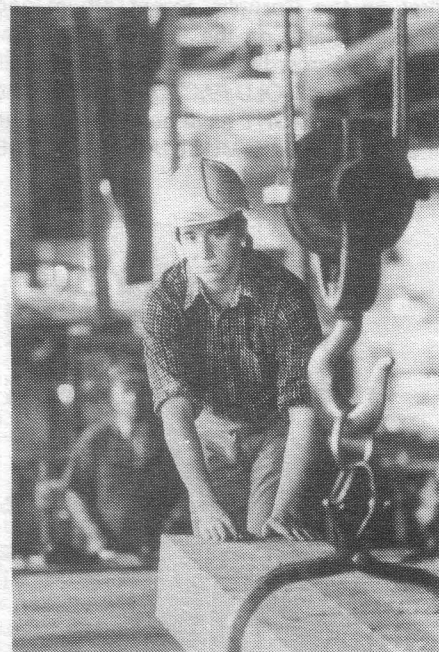
**Micheal Jerlings** originally from Illinois and has performed at hundreds of clubs, colleges and coffehouses from California to New York. Jerling has opened for the likes of Roger McGuinn, Commander Cody, Dan Hicks, Nanci Griffith, Paul Barrere and Micheal Martin Murphy. His first album, "On Top of Fool's Hill", was released in 1981, and his latest, "Blue Heartland", is now available at Box 718, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866. For bookings call (518) 587-3307.

**Paul Kaplan** lives in Amherst Mass with his wife and two daughters. His best known songs are 'Call Me The Whale', 'Henry the Accountant', and 'I Had an Old Coat'. Paul's songs have been recorded by artists in at least six countries. He has put out two albums on his own Hummingbird Label: *Life On This Planet* (1982) and *King Of Hearts* (1985). He edited the first Coop Songbook and performs frequently in the New York, New England area.



Judith Ficksman

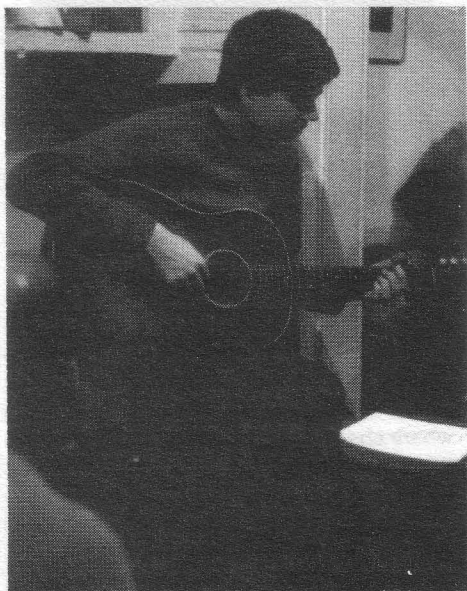
**Judy Ficksman** spent time in India where she wrote Kumar Shankar and where this photo was taken. She wrote all of the songs on the soon to be released album *In the Anti-Gravity Chamber* by Poto and Cabengo, who in reality are Judy and her sister Carol. (Available for \$8.50 + \$1.50 for P&H from: Floating Turtle Records, PO Box 2342, New York, New York 10009-8919) Her work is also featured on **FAST FOLK** - FF501: 1989.



Andrew Calhoun

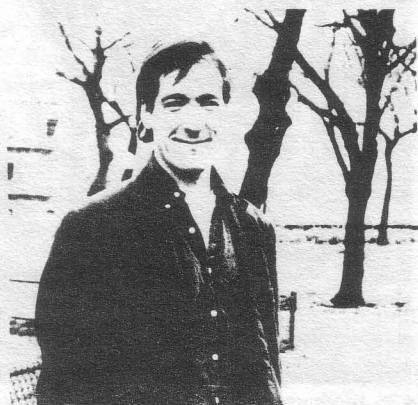
**Andrew Calhoun** 33, lives in Chicago. He has two kids and 2 records out on Flying Fish as well as a tape of guitar instrumentals. The rest of his life could fill a huge volume but....

# ON THE RECORD



Brian Rose

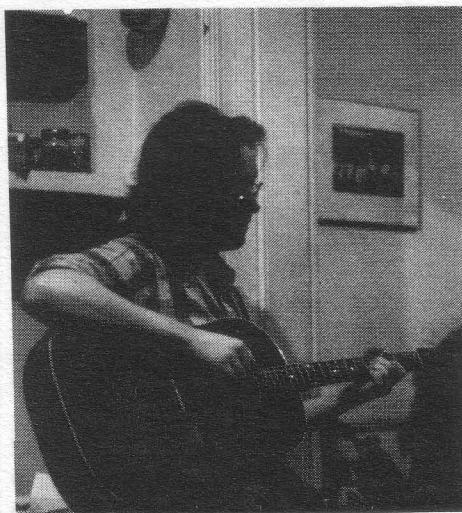
**Brian Rose** is from Virginia and moved to New York in the late 70's. He recorded first on the Cornelia Street Album and appeared also on the first Coop album. Brian has recorded regularly for Fast Folk and his songs **OLD FACTORY TOWN** and **OPEN ALL NIGHT** have been featured in the **FAST FOLK MUSICAL MAGAZINE REVIEW**.



Richard Shindell

**Richard Shindell** will soon complete his first album, which is tentatively being called *The Courier*. It will be released on Who Knows What/ if Any records. He lives on the Upper West Side of New York City.

**Five Chinese Brothers** is a New York-based band whose music draws equal amounts of inspiration from folk, country, and rock and roll traditions. Founded in 1983 (then called The Special Guests), the band originally played bar-style rhythm and blues, at times complemented by a full horn section. As band members changed and the tastes of the band members expanded, Five Chinese Brothers evolved into its current manifestation--an ensemble equally at home in folk clubs, country and western bars, and CBGB's. The original songs are penned mostly by lead singer Tom Meltzer and bassist Paul Foglino, although all band members contribute to the band's repertoire, both with their own



Richard Julian

**Richard Julian** is an up and coming songwriter/performer on the New York scene. Richard moved here from Las Vegas in 1986 after spending a year taking requests and playing the cheesiest chords he knew in the land of slot machines and neon cactus trees. In the last year he has performed at the Newport Folk Festival, the Fast Folk Revue at the Bottom Line in New York City, and the Bluebird Cafe in Nashville, along with a 4-week European tour with Jack Hardy and Buddy Mondlock. Although he is currently performing in the folk medium (solo, acoustic guitar), Richard's music leans more toward pop and blues influences. He has currently completed his second cassette, entitled "Bones", which can be bought at his performances.

compositions and with the vital additions of each's sound and savvy in arrangements. The band's material represents the diversity of its influences: Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, Nick Lowe, O.V. Wright, The Coasters, Gram Parsons, John Prine, The Rolling Stones, Paul Simon, The Louvin Brothers, Billy Bragg, Ry Cooder and many others. *"I don't know what the sound of the 90's is, and neither do the Five Chinese Brothers. That's why they're so good. The music is fine, and it runs footloose in time. It doesn't sound like it belongs to any period, and trend, any Sound. It's just solid. It's just good. And sometimes a good deal more than good. Whenever I want a little foundation, I play the Five Chinese Brothers: I wish there were more of them. Jay Cocks, Newsweekly music critic."* **Five Chinese Brothers** are: Tom Meltzer, lead vocals and acoustic guitar; Paul Foglino, bass; Kevin Trainor, lead guitar, dobro, and vocals; Neil Thomas, piano, accordion, and vocals; and Charlie Shaw, drums. As the publicity photo makes apparent, none of the band members are brothers.



Five Chinese Brothers



Richard Meyer

**Richard Meyer** lives a triple-life (excluding the personal one). He is a scenery and lighting designer for the stage in New York, Off-Broadway and around the country. He has recorded for FAST FOLK since 1983 and has been its editor since 1986. Richard's own album, *LAUGHING/SCARED* is available from Old Forge Records, 21 Schofield St., City Island/ NY - 10464 . For booking call: (212) 885-3268

**David Seitz** owns and operates Synergy Sound in Great Neck, Long Island. His recording patients have included (soon to be Dr.) Hugh Blumenfeld, the Canadian group Catchpenny, and many others. David applied his boardside manner to the recording of our *Season's Greetings* album and *Live at the Hoot* albums. while none of his work can be called sterile David is proud of his state of the art Analog recording instruments and leaves no scars when making incisions on multitrack tape. When artistes are in the fever of recording he has been known to make sleeping space available to them untill they recover sufficiently. He prescribes a mean electronic tuner and occasional practice, his perfectionism indicates adherence to the tapeocratic oath. As soon as he completes his impending residency we will be calling him Dr. Seitz.

**Katy Moffatt** is from Texas and now lives in LA. She recorded two albums for CBS in the late seventies and her recent albums *Walking on the Moon* and *Child Bride* on Rounder/Philo have been highly acclaimed. She has written songs with Tom Russell and tours often.



Josh Joffen

**Josh Joffen** is a two time winner of the Kerrville Folk Festival's national songwriting contest. When not performing, he enjoys Italian opera, Indian Cuisine, Japanese beer and going Dutch. Josh is working on his second album, and dreams about owning a white convertible and living in France.

\*RECORDED AT MARK DANN'S STUDIO BY LILLIE PALMER  
\*\*RECORDED FOR FAST FOLK BY GARY HOROWITZ AT:  
SLEEPY HOLLOW SOUND, DOBBS FERRY, NY  
\*\*\* RECORDED BY ANDREW HARDIN IN BROOKLYN, NY  
ALL OTHER CUTS RECORDED FOR FAST FOLK BY DAVID SEITZ:  
SYNERGY SOUND? GREAT NECK, NY  
MIXED BY DAVID SEITZ AND RICHARD MEYER

MASTERED BY JOE BRESCIO AT THE MASTER CUTTING ROOM

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'E' is for El Salvador  
{From the Amnesty International Alphabet of Human Suffering}

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Special thanks to Lew Mead at PROMIX

## SIDE ONE

### 1 THINGS I LEARNED FROM LIFE

(MICHAEL JERLING)

MICHAEL JERLING/GUITAR & VOCAL  
TONY MARKELLIS/BASS

### 2 THE FOOL

(JOSH JOFFEN)

JOSH JOFFEN/GUITAR & VOCAL

### 3 CASTAWAY

(RICHARD SHINDELL)

RICHARD SHINDELL/GUITAR & VOCAL  
DIANNE CHODCOWSKI/VOCAL

### 4 KUMAR SHANKAR

(JUDY FICKSMAN)

JUDY FICKSMAN/VOCAL

### 5 SO I COULD GET TO YOU

(PAUL KAPLAN)

PAUL KAPLAN/GUITAR & VOCAL  
LISA GUTKIN/VIOLO  
MARK DANN/BASS

### 6 SHE'S DRIVING HOME TONIGHT

(KATY MOFFATT)

KATY MOFFATT/GUITAR & VOCAL  
ANDREW HARDIN/TIPLE  
FATS KAPLAN/DOBRO  
HANK BONES/BASS

## SIDE TWO

### PAUL CEZANNE 1

(TOM MELTZER)

FIVE CHINESE BROTHERS:  
TOM MELTZER/GUITAR & VOCAL  
PAUL FOGILINO/BASS  
KEVIN TRAINOR/LEAD DOBRO & VOCAL  
NEIL THOMAS/ACCORDIAN  
CHARLIE SHAW/DRUMS

### \* DISENCHANTED 2

(ERIC WOOD)

ERIC WOOD/GUITAR & VOCAL

### \*\* THE BURDEN 3

(RICHARD MEYER)

RICHARD MEYER/GUITAR & VOCAL

### THE MORAL OF ST. BRIGID'S 4

(BRIAN ROSE)

BRIAN ROSE/GUITAR & VOCAL  
LISA GUTKIN/VIOLIN  
GREG ANDERSON/BASS

### UNITED GERMAN APPEAL 5

(SHERWOOD ROSS)

SHERWOOD ROSS/GUITAR & VOCAL  
FIVE CHINESE BROTHERS, KATHERINE HEALD,  
GREG ANDERSON, RICHARD MEYER/  
ATMOSPHERIC NATIONAL ENTHUSIASM

### POLITICS 6

(ANDREW CALHOUN)

ANDREW CALHOUN/GUITAR & VOCAL

### \*\*\* STRANGE STRANGE LIFE 7

(RICHARD JULIAN)

RICHARD JULIAN/GUITAR & VOCAL