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Photo: Peter Cunningham

Mike Porco: In Memoriam

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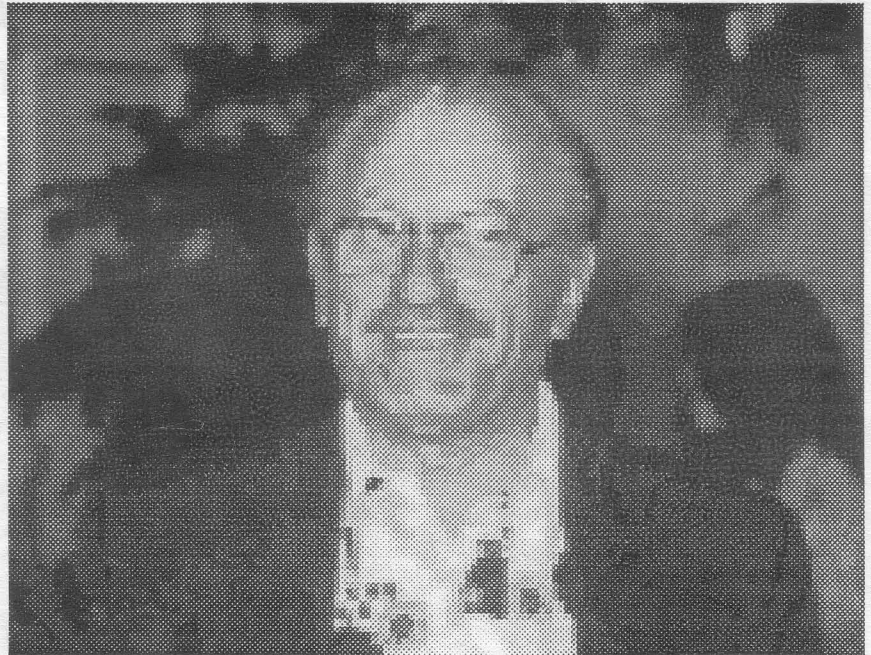
On The Cover

A Peter Cunningham photo of well-loved Mike Porco surrounded by Maggie, Terre and Suzzy Roche

Mike Porco:

written and compiled by Frank Christian

Photo: Peter Cunningham



"You gotta have the draw; you gotta have the following." These words, spoken early and often by Mike Porco in his Calabrian-American-English accent, were frequently the introduction to Folk City for performers soliciting gigs. Those words certainly were part of my first verbal exchange with Mike late in the 70's, and familiar to so many of my peers, friends and

associates, when the thrust of mainstream pop music had tossed alternative music forms to the outskirts of the musical current. Here I was a young, naive singer/songwriter/guitarist, one of seemingly a million who had approached Mike and his Folk City for the opportunity to present their music, yearning to cast their creative "stones" into this Mecca, this Citadel of Folk Music.

There he stood behind the bar, Mike Porco, whose reputation approached the mythic. Championing the likes of Bob Dylan, Judy Collins, Cisco Houston and so many others throughout the 60's, he stood before me now as I, shaking in my boots, arrogant in my fear, was asking him to hire me.

It all felt so imaginary. Would his pensive yet gentle eyes, peering out from his glasses, welcome me into this flock of Folkdom? I shuddered with

apprehension, feeling as if I had been sent off to the Principal's Office in second grade.

Thus was the beginning of my relationship with Mike Porco, the nature of which was always caring, frequently tenuous, precariously supportive, reliant, enduring and growing through the 80's until his regretful death on March 11, 1992.

He died in Florida, the place he called home in recent years.

Mike was responsible for nurturing a music scene in Greenwich Village beginning in the late 50's and continuing until his retirement in 1980, at which time he moved to Florida.

Born in the province of Calabria in Southern Italy, he immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 18 to work for a family business. In 1952 he purchased Gerdes Restaurant together with his partner, his brother John and a cousin. Their customers were a mix of factory

In Memoriam

workers and local residents. Approximately four years later, Gerdes moved to 4th Street and Mercer from its previous location on 3rd Street. In an attempt to increase business at the restaurant, Mike occasionally hired "cocktail pianists" or small "club" musical ensembles.

It was Izzy Young, proprietor of the Folklore Center on MacDougal Street, who approached Mike with the notion of putting in somewhat regularly scheduled folk concerts at Gerdes in the late 50's. In many ways Izzy Young was the catalyst for what would become Folk City's rich and diverse musical history through Mike Porco's care and attentive enthusiasm. This first musical venue at Mike's Gerdes was called "The 5th Peg."

Mike and Izzy's "business" relationship was short-lived, but Mike liked this "folk music," even if at times he wasn't sure what it actually was. He decided to continue with the addition of Folk City.

For over twenty years, Mike Porco supported music at his club. With a keen ear and occasionally necessary shrewd business sense, he afforded audiences an opportunity to witness first-hand the growth and development of upcoming artists into mature and seasoned performers. He presented artists the opportunity to play their music in a vital performance setting, when other rooms would not. It is for this reason that I and so many others owe their indebtedness to Mike Porco. He gave us a chance...

...and on Sunday nights after closing,

after five night work weeks for little money, and three shows on weekends, he would pack whatever regulars happened by into his car for a late supper on Mike.

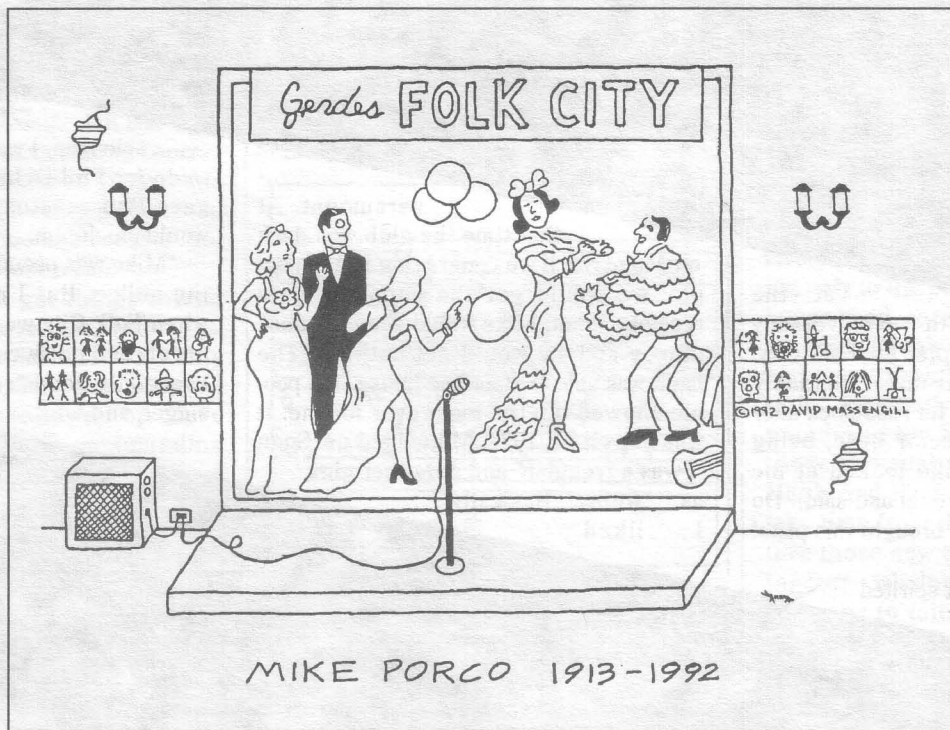
He was a kind and loving man.

He will be sadly missed.

"I was in the Village in 1955. Eventually I worked The Bitter End, the Au-Go-Go and afterwards I met Mike at Gerdes. He was always a gracious host and a wonder-

I did. In those days a gig at Folk City was a five night run with two shows on weekdays and three complete shows on weekends. Even if there were two tables of customers you still played the third show. When I moved into my place on Houston Street he gave me several chairs from the club, one of which I still have. He taught me that it was possible to like someone even if you didn't agree with his politics.

"It is hard to tell stories about Mike without them sounding derogatory though they were also endearing, but here goes. He was from a different generation. We always complained about the microphones. They were Electro-Voice 664's (state of the art in 1963, but held together by tape in 1978). Finally he said 'I gotta new mike' and came up from the basement with a brand new 664, still in its original box from 1963. Or, we were trying to put together an evening of women's feminist music and Mike said, 'Great! We can put in the paper



ful guy...great to work for and great to work with; which I thoroughly enjoyed when Mike asked me to host the 20th anniversary celebration in the late '70's.

"He was the Old Gentleman of Folk Music. I loved him very much."
- Bob Gibson

"Maggie and Terre Roche introduced me to Mike. I was impressed by the fact that he was unimpressed by stardom. He always said 'If you gotta your health and you're doin' what you want, that's enough success.' He knew I needed work and paid me \$10 a night to MC the shows, and work

Girls! Girls! Girls!

"But when Phil Ochs was on the skids, Mike gave me money to get him a hotel room, on several nights.

"I dedicated my *Mirror of My Madness* album to Mike, and in some ways all of my albums have been dedicated to him."
- Jack Hardy

"Terre and I first went into Folk City when it was on Mercer Street. He first booked us in 1968, when we were under age. He seemed to really just like all of us. Club owners usually weren't that way. I remember working as a bartender for him

in '76. He gave us (The Roches) our first gig (opening for Jack Hardy). He really knew how to let all that creativity happen without killing it. Some of the best shows I've ever seen happened at Folk City." - *Maggie Roche*

"The story that sums up Mike's charm and warmth for me is this: Mike and I went to see Bob Dylan on the Letterman Show in the fall of '85. Mike had wanted to ask Bob Dylan to perform

taining customers and supporting the performers were the focus of this hard work." - *Robbie Woliver*

"When I first came to play, it was with a seven piece band from Queens. Mike gave me his litany on a performer's ability to 'draw' customers into the club as

tinued the folk policy. He had good instincts and got hip to what worked in his tolerant manner, but Izzy started the folk thing.

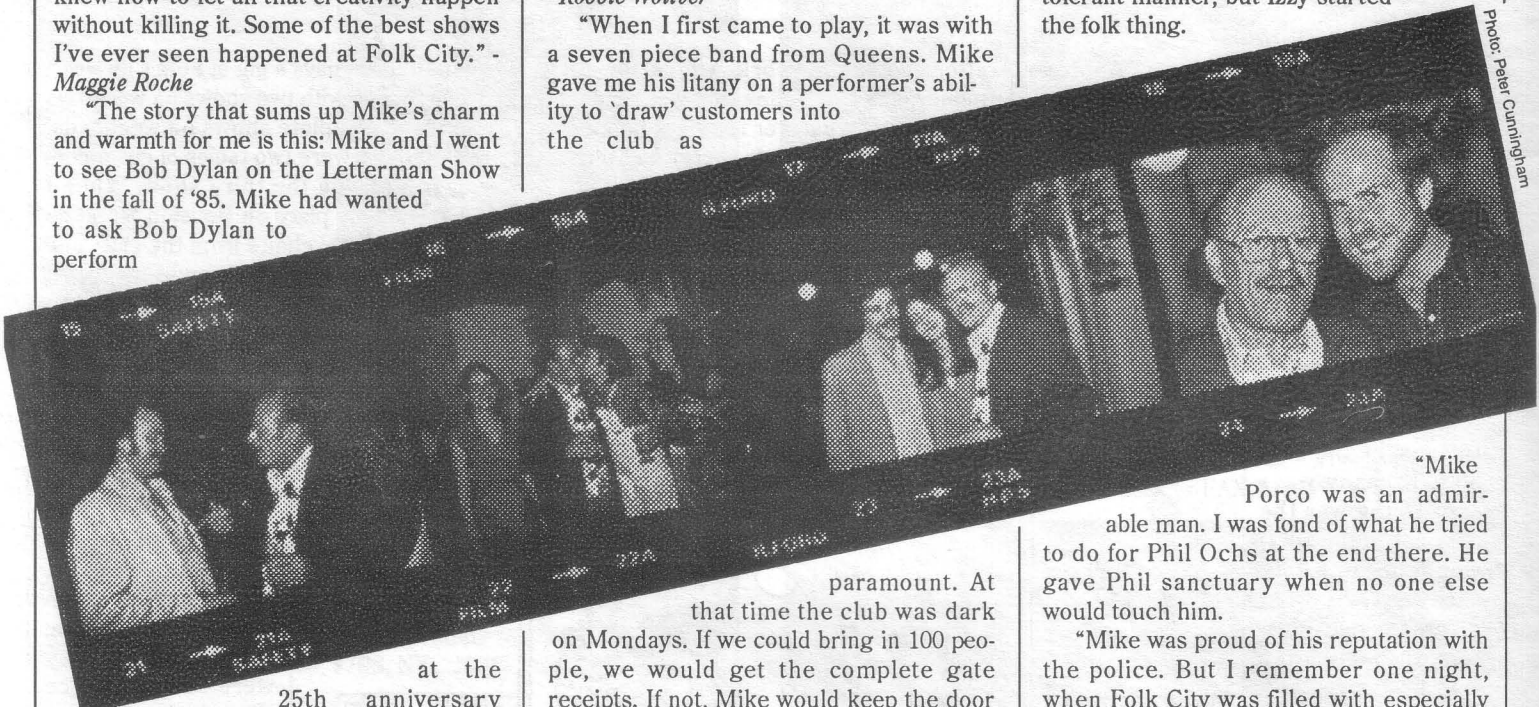


Photo: Peter Cunningham

at the 25th anniversary concert at the pier for Folk City. Security backstage was understandably tight. It seemed that we hit roadblock after roadblock. Metal detector here, being frisked there, etc. Mike looked at me halfway through this ordeal and said, 'Do you think I should have brought this pistol with me?'

"Bob Dylan was light spirited and genuinely

paramount. At that time the club was dark on Mondays. If we could bring in 100 people, we would get the complete gate receipts. If not, Mike would keep the door money and we would get nothing. The band was able to stack the house. 175 people showed up, the most ever for me. It was March 31, 1974. Mike liked us. Soon I was a "regular" and got other gigs as well. Basically, I liked

"Mike Porco was an admirable man. I was fond of what he tried to do for Phil Ochs at the end there. He gave Phil sanctuary when no one else would touch him.

"Mike was proud of his reputation with the police. But I remember one night, when Folk City was filled with especially unruly and noisy customers, and I, not an especially good "rowdy-bar" singer, and



Photo: Peter Cunningham

happy to see Mike. It seemed that he would do anything for him.

"Mike was an affable and generous host as a club owner. The social aspect of enter-

him an awful lot." - *Tom Intondi*

"I grew to like Mike very much and worked for him often at the 4th Street and Mercer location. My first performance, early on in the club's history was with Molly Scott. After the unsuccessful arrangement with Izzy Young, Mike con-

I called the police...Mike wasn't pleased with me at all that night." - *Ed McCurdy*

"What I remember most is the way he joked around with people. He was pretty funny too. One time some fella came in who wanted a job, and his name was John Hooker. He went on about how he was the greatest act there ever was, and Mike said in this thick Italian accent, 'So you wanna hooka me, huh?' The guy didn't realized he

was joking right away. Mike just evened everything out that way. You could never be too much of a big shot.”

- David Massengill

“He was one of the first club owners who gave me an opportunity to play my music on a regular basis. I wasn’t alone in that regard. His club in those days was the hangout for singer/songwriters around town doing this kind of music. I met many of my long term friends and associates there. He was a very warm and compassionate guy who always had time, and you were always welcome at his club. He used to take care of many of us. He also encouraged us to work together. He was a lively person, fun, with a wonderful sense of humor. Sometimes he would take a few of us to breakfast in Chinatown at 5 am. Recently I saw him in Florida and watched one of the Superbowls with him at his house. He used to tape all the shows through a mike in the ceiling at Folk City that no one knew about and ran an old reel-to-reel in the basement. When I walked into his place he was playing a tape of me from 1977. He said, ‘Oh, I taped every-

thing.’ They weren’t very good quality, but they were good enough for him to listen to. It made me clearly realize how much the music mattered to him. You used to see him carrying around a case of beer and it seemed like he was ignoring the music, but he wasn’t in the slightest.”

- Rod MacDonald

“I met Mike through Stanley, and we agreed to book the club for two years to help him out at a time when he was ready to throw in the keys. He totally respected us, never pulled rank. He was well-liked by the people who came in. We used to say that if anyone ever wrote a biography of Mike Porco it should be called ‘Hey, have a drink!’ We were young and he took us under his wing. His biggest contribution was that he allowed artists to use his space to experiment. He really had an eye for talent — after a hoot he could tell you the three or four who were good during the whole night. He started out with a little restaurant and sold beer and liquor. When some people said ‘let us perform for free’ he found that he sold more, so that’s really how he backed into running a club in the

first place. He was a businessman. He ran the place like it was his own living room. He was against us bringing in electric music, but he let us. One time this band came in with a huge amp, and he said, ‘What do you think this is, Radio City Music Hall? This isn’t Radio City Music Hall! You don’t need this!’ He cared about people. More than once he’d go into his pocket for people.” - Allan Pepper and Stanley Snadowsky, owners of The Bottom Line

“He was a friendly and loving man.”
-Paul Colby, owner of The Bitter End

“He was a most likable person, who was very easy to get along with, and a good host as well. There was no real competition between us, even when business in the Village was booming.

“Mike was a credit to the human race and liked to attach himself to both performers and customers alike. As a lover of music, he contributed to the folk music scene nationally and to the lives of anyone who had the pleasure of his acquaintance.”
- Art D’Lugoff, Owner of Village Gate



L to R Jack Hardy, Mike Porco, Jeff Hardy and Joe Henderson at Folk City in 1978.

Some Thoughts About Songs: A Modest Proposal

by Jackson Braider

Somewhere in these pages, you will no doubt find some reference to "poetry." Discussion of a songwriter and his or her work will probably make mention at some point of the use of "irony," "humor," "imagery," and "metaphor." In certain cases, the writer may even go so far as to bring up the issue - excuse me while I wretch - of a "message."

The thing I'd like to point out here - and what I will be harping upon for the next thousand words or so - is the absence of any reference to music in all this talk of songwriting. In our relentless pursuit of a poetic ideal in songwriting, we have forgotten (or so it seems to me, at any rate) that a poem is not a song. It is, given our supposed interests here, a half-song at best.

So why doesn't anybody want to talk about music and the

role it plays in songwriting? Why doesn't our discussion of our work and the work of others make at least some mention of the ways in which we illustrate, embellish, express, and, in a word, deliver our texts?

Forgive me; I can sense the indignation. Oh, that Braider fellow - make him a classical record executive (excuse me!) and he gets all high and mighty with his artistic sensibilities. Look at how he holds that demitasse of espresso - isn't it disgusting, the way his pinkie hangs so effortlessly away from the cup? And didn't he used to smoke a pipe?

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I used to be an effete intellectual - until I managed to get away from New York, that is, and learned how to be real. Now I'm a powerbroker in a glamour industry, a loose cannon rolling about the decks on the ship of state, a dealer in product. What I'm going to tell you here is that what is lacking in all this talk of poetry is any sense of production values.

Phew - How's this for a Daily News front page banner: SONIC SENSITIVO SLANDERS STRING-SLINGING SINGERS!! Details, page 6.

Production values??!!

Isn't it strange how different words mean different things to different people? For those who see the world as the stage for the great battle between Art and Commerce, the whole idea of "production

values" smacks of Vanilla Ice or Pia Zadora. And, to some extent, they're right. Oftentimes, the rendering of bad material in performance or recording becomes an attempt to turn a toilet into a potty of gold. A dull song, a dull performer - they need such alchemy if anyone is going to listen.

My concern turns more on how the musical elements in the performance of a song can be used either to highlight particular meaning in the lyric or rein-

force its overall sensibility. The question may be one of melody; it may be a matter of accompaniment. Indeed, it may be both. I speak of them here in terms of production values because we, as a musically illiterate community and nation, generally experience music only as sound; we have little idealized sensation of how we think music should sound.

What does that mean as far as our musical practice goes? On one level, it suggests why the musical expressiveness of singer/songwriters these days is so limited. While our musical language may be comprised of hundreds of thousands of different expressions, we can count what expressions we typically use in terms of tens or maybe hundreds. And because we challenge neither ourselves nor our colleagues on musical matters, we have little interest in expanding our range of musical expression.

I am not trying to suggest that we all start behaving like Beethoven trapped in a folksinger's body, but maybe - just maybe -

if we start thinking at least half as much about the musical elements of the songs we write as we do about the lyrical content, we may actually increase the emotional power of our material.

How do we begin such a venture? Part of the problem turns on our reflex attitudes about music generally. The application of vague categories like "pop," "classical," "folk," and so on turn, I suspect, more on prejudice than on any particular musical judgement. Who hasn't cringed at hearing the phrase, "Some of my best friends are black?" Well, the same rules apply to music. "Some of my favorite composers are dead." To discount a piece simply because it's "pop" is to deny the songwriter access to a whole range of musical vocabulary.

We might also consider exposing ourselves to other musical values. We don't all need to behave like that great postcolonialist Paul Simon, stealing from the natives of continents the world over to aggrandize our own egos, but in listening to different musics, we may become aware of musical ingredients that could add some spice to our own work - I mean, does every song coming out of New York have to be in 2/4 time? Oh, I'm sorry, of course it does. How many of us can actually count to three?

Finally, we could do worse than to learn other people's material. I realize that the Great Market Forces of the music industry benefit songwriters far more than they do performers, but one reason why there is so

much dreck on the radio right now is many performers are more interested in getting publishing royalties than in performing great music. In the long run, however, greed has rarely proved to be a factor in the creation of good work. The problem, of course, is how many of us tend to think in terms of the long run when

greed can be so rewarding?

Okay, I'm climbing down off my soapbox. It's safe to come out. But just remember this and take heed: The oracle of Federal Hill has spoken; defy him at your peril.

*So why doesn't
anybody want to
talk about music?*

*We don't all need
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Boppin' In The Burbs

Folk Venues in the Mid-Hudson

by Stuart Kabak

Despite the dwindling number of coffeehouses in New York City, one should be careful not to draw the wrong conclusions. Acoustic music is alive and well, it's just not living in Manhattan so much anymore. Well then, where the hell do you go nowadays to listen to or perform folk/acoustic music? Within ninety minutes or less of driving there are quite a few. Some of them pay featured performers, even if you are somewhat less than famous. Here are a few...in no particular order.

Towne Crier Cafe-Rt 22 Pawling, NY, contact: Phil Siganer (914)855-1300. The Towne Crier is one of the premier acoustic music establishments in the Northeast, if not the entire continent. Of the places listed in this article it is the only "commercial" enterprise. The atmosphere is "new-age rustic" with the main listening/dining room expressing a south-western desert decor complete with plastic cactus plants adorning the stage. The listening room is separated from the bar by a fully enclosing glass window. You can enjoy great music, wonderful food and clean air, as smoking is strictly prohibited in the dining area. Open mics are held at the Towne Crier once a month. If they like your work, you will have a very good chance of being hired to open up for some of the better known performers. Competition is fierce, many of the open mike performers are beyond excellent! If you have a big following, let Phil know. It may help determine whether or not you will be selected to open for a particular act. The sound system is the best of the lot and you can get a recording of your performance if you bring along a tape and get things set before going on.

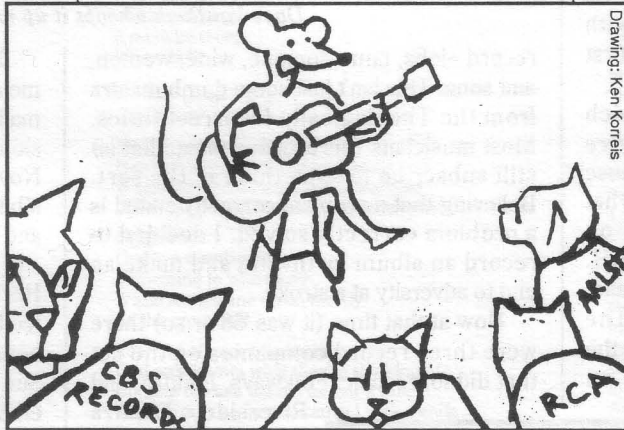
Hudson Valley Folk Guild, S. Randolph St, Poughkeepsie, contact:Kevin Becker (914)229-0170. The H.V.F.G. is located in the Fellowship Hall of the Unitarian Worship Center. It is the oldest coffeehouse in the region, recently celebrating its 12th anniversary. The listening room is probably the most comfortable of the church coffeehouses, perhaps owing to its circular

design. Capacity is approximately 130 seats with average attendance falling somewhere between 70 and 100. It is not unusual to find standing room only, but attendance is directly tied to weather conditions. Sign up is at 7:30 with the ten slots disappearing quickly. The show starts at 8 with four brief open mike acts followed by a "featured performer," who plays for 45 minutes to an hour, and is selected from Guild membership. Joining the Guild is a very good investment at \$7.00 as it automatically subscribes you to the Guild newspaper. You may also have an opportunity to appear on a *Fast Folk*-like CD sampler which is scheduled to premier in the fall of 1992. At this writing the CD sampler is limited to the best of the

Bruce Morrison (914)855-9705 or Kevin Becker (914)289-0170. Except for the fact that this coffeehouse runs the second Saturday of the month, the Guild II runs pretty much like its Poughkeepsie parent. The room is not quite as cozy as the one in Poughkeepsie, but attendance has been improving to an average of 40 to 90 listeners. Signup is also at 7:30 with the show starting at 8. Sales of personal recordings are encouraged.

Tree Star Coffeehouse, Mt. Kisko Presbyterian Church, Rt 133 and Crow Hill Rd, Mt. Kisko, contact: Kathleen Vojack or Mitch Katz (203)438-6102. Barely one year old, the Tree Star has rocketed to the forefront in both attendance and talent. Room seating capacity is 210 and you are very likely to find even standing room at a premium. When Mitch and Kathleen started they had a feeling it would go over big. They were more than right. Maybe it was their unique approach to the audience that

makes this the best attended coffeehouse in the region. Along with the traditional candles, white paper covers the tables instead of cloth. Crayons and bubble soap are stationed at every table with the unspoken encouragement to use both. Some of the more spectacular drawings left on the tables are used to decorate the walls of the listening room. "We do this to set free the inner child," explain Mitch and Kathleen. Due to the popularity of the place, a lottery system for selecting the open mike performers will begin in June. Featured performers and their designated opening act are paid. Three or four times a year a special performance for a national talent is set up, like Aztec Two Step and most recently Jonathan Edwards. Opening acts for featured performers and special performers are selected from the best of the open mics. Talent is the major factor in the decision process. There is plenty of it to draw from here. Near future plans include a "by invitation only" best of the open mike performers which will be recorded on DAT and pressed into CDs and tapes for release to the public. There is also some talk about having a best of Fast Folk performance as a special feature (a la the Bottom Line Concert). The Tree Star Coffeehouse happens the third Saturday of every month and performances are scheduled through the summer.



Drawing: Ken Korreis

Open Mice Night

Guild's performers, where the featured performer slot has more to do with personal contribution to Guild activities, and talent is a secondary consideration. Unfortunately, this method of selecting featured performers has made some evenings rather tedious and may be partially responsible for the slight decline in attendance. The audience is warm and enthusiastic. Good sound system. The Poughkeepsie Guild is held every third Saturday with a summer hiatus. It should be noted that at this time featured performers are not paid but if you have an album to sell you can count on selling a bunch of them, especially if you put on a good performance.

H.V.F.G II Patterson Chapter, contact:

Dave Van Ronk -A Chrestomathy

by Dave Van Ronk

Editor's note: On May 3, 1992 there was a party at The Village Gate to celebrate 35 years of performing and recording by veteran folk singer Dave Van Ronk. In conjunction with this party Gazell records released a two-CD anthology of Van Ronk's recordings covering those years. The following is excerpted from the liner notes from the anthology. The photos are from the party.

It wasn't until Sam Charters at Gazell suggested a retrospective album that I realized that I've actually been making records for thirty-five years. Since my first time in the barrel back in '58, I've lost count of how many records I've made. (20?) A lot of those sessions have dimmed to a blur, but with recording, as with sex and death, the first time really makes an impression.

I started singing around Greenwich Village in '54 or '56. Mind you, there were no steady places to perform there in those dim days, at least not for my ilk, but what we had was Washington Square on Sundays, hootenannies at the A.Y.H. (American Youth Hostel on 8th Street), and, God help us, we had benefits. The Committee to Save the World on Friday, the Committee to Blow Up the World on Saturday, and the Locofoco Party of Baluchistan on the first Monday of each month. I enjoyed it, and since I was a raving bolshie at the time, you might say I was doing the Lord's

work. Eddie Condon once remarked that if you're a musician, in the course of an evening a dozen people might offer to buy you a drink, but nobody ever walks up to you and says, "Hey, let me stand you to a ham sandwich." At the rate I was going, I would starve to death gradually while my liver did a stately melt-down.

The problem, as I saw it, was obvious. I didn't have a record. The equation goes like this: In Vinyl Veritas - no record = no work;

...with recording, as with sex and death, the first time really makes an impression.

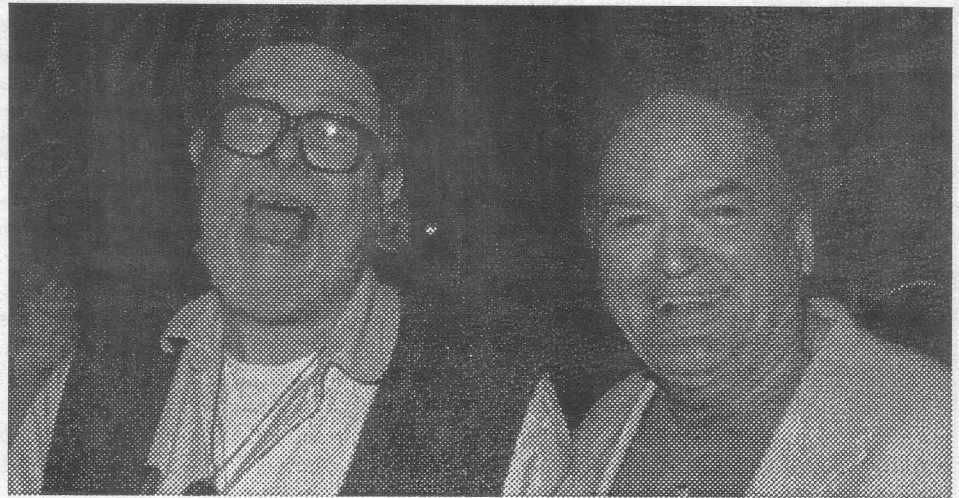


Photo: Nora Charters

Dave VanRonk whoops it up with Sam Charters

record =jobs, fame, fortune, wine, women, and song. This isn't just some dumb mantra from the Theologically Incorrect fifties. Most musicians (unrecorded ones, that is) still subscribe to something of the sort. Believing that a problem correctly stated is a problem correctly solved, I decided to record an album forthwith, and make an end to adversity at a stroke.

Now at that time (it was '58 or so) there were three record companies on the set that did folk music: Folkways, Elektra, and Riverside. Elektra was out. I had written an article in a folk fanzine pussy-footedly entitled "The Elektra Catalogue - - A Sarcophagus," and Jax Holzman at

Elektra didn't take to being damned with faint praise. That left Folkways and Riverside. Both companies had the same producer - a brilliant young folklorist named Kenneth S. Goldstein. I conceived of a plan whose elegance was surpassed only by its brilliance- Bug Kenny Goldstein! This I proceeded to do with such gusto that eventually a Van Ronk record seemed a lesser evil than Van Ronk, and the poor man caved in totally.

The sessions were a snap. Kenny drove me out to his place on Long Island and we made the album in his basement in one session, something of an anti-climax, actually. Now it remained only to wait until the album was mastered, pressed, and released, and a new golden dawn dawned.

When dawn finally broke I was in Hermosa Beach, California, singing in a coffee-house, or rather singing in two coffee-houses, one on the beach and the other on Sunset Strip in Hollywood. This was a bit embarrassing for me. Back where I came from, no life form was more protozoan than a coffee-house folksinger. Coffee-house folksingers were squeaky clean optimists who brushed their teeth 87 times a day. Coffee-house folksingers wore drip-dry seersucker suits and sang "La Bamba." Just because I was singing in a coffee-house (or two) that didn't make me a coffee-house folksinger - did it? Besides, New York was 3000 miles away, and, if I exercised a little discretion, who would know?

Finally, the day of liberation arrived, a record album-shaped package from New York. I ecstatically tore it open and saw the cover for the first time. It looked like the boiler room of the Robert E. Lee, but there was no mistaking what it was. An espresso machine.

It was several days before I calmed down

enough to notice that my name on the label was spelled V-O-N Ronk. By this time I was philosophical, and have remained so ever since.

The songs on these discs are programmed as they are for esthetic reasons - pacing and such like. But in these notes I would rather approach them more or less chronologically, record to record, which is the way I think of them. Bear in mind that these recollections are off the top of my head, and make allowances for my notoriously sieve-like memory.

The earliest cuts on this compilation are from the second Folkways album, the aforementioned maiden effort being currently available in its jejune entirety (senza macchina). (Smithsonian/Folkways CD SF 40041) TELL OLD BILL and COME BACK BABY are, I think, especially apposite here. The first gives an idea of where I was coming from, and the second being my first recorded attempt at slow 12/8 blues guitar that has since become a staple with me.

Around '62 I signed with Prestige to do two albums. By this time I was, no bones about it, a coffee-house folksinger. Bob Weinstock of Prestige wanted to call the first release "New York's Finest." "Bob, for Christ sake, you're calling me a cop!" It was released as "Dave Van Ronk, Folksinger," whereupon I subsided, muttering, "Better a dork than a narc." The Prestige sessions were the first recordings that I was relatively satisfied with. These cuts reflect the fact that I was performing regularly, and was beginning to get some kind of handle on phrasing and dynamics. Included here are: COCAINE BLUES - a soliloquy from Reverend Gary Davis - friend, guru, and, I like to think, my third grandfather. COCAINE is probably still my most requested number. I don't sing it very often these days - just once in a while to rasp-berry the D.E.A. MOTHERLESS CHILDREN - also from Gary, with an assist from Blind Willie Johnson's recording. POOR LAZARUS - from I forget where. MR. NOAH - from Billy Faier, a former song

leader at Camp Gulag-on-the-Hudson.

IF I HAD TO DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN, BABE I'D DO IT ALL OVER YOU - the first recording (I think) of a Dylan song. Bobby was acquiring a considerable local reputation in the Village as a songwriter. One night at the Kettle of Fish a fellow celebrant said: "I bet you couldn't write a song to the title of 'If I had to do it all over again, Babe I'd do it all over you'." A day or so later he emerged with this. A fine example of his meticulous craftsmanship, and the dry understated wit that has made him the Ogden Nash of our

time. KENTUCKY MOONSHINER and FAIR AND TENDER LADIES - two holdovers from my 1950s repertoire, the former from Bob Gibson and the latter from Luke Faust. I bet you didn't know I played the five-string banjo - you still don't.

Sometime in 1963, Max Gordon of the Village Vanguard was sojourning in Cambridge, Mass., where he saw an enormous line in front of the Club 47 waiting to see the Jim Kweskin Jug Band. In his mind's eye he transposed this queue to 7th Avenue South, where he kept his room, and visions of sugar plums danced in his head. He called Bob Shelton, critic for the New York Times, who called me: "How long would it take you to put together a jug band for a gig at the Village Vanguard?" "Gee, Bob, I don't know, at least an hour." I got hold of Barry Kornfeld, Artie Rose, Danny Kalb, and Sam Charters (this was not the beginning of my long and nerve-wracking friendship with Sam - the magisterial producer of the disc to hand - we had been carping and snarling at each other for almost 10 years already), (You can delete this if you want, Sam) and the Ragtime Jug Stompers came to pass.

Sometime I'll set down the dolorous history of the Stompers' live performances, but for now suffice it to say I loved the record album that we made, and still do. YOU'S A VIPER, TEMPTATION RAG, and STEALIN' are a pretty good cross-section of the group's range, going from 30's swing through classic ragtime and back to the country music the jug bands of the 20's

started with.

By the time the folk-rock era arrived, I was back to working solo, and liking it, but the singer-songwriter thing was happening, and while I was no tunesmith, some of the material being written at the time was simply too good to pass up. Also, there was a new mantra on the street: "Record? Everybody's got a record. If you want to get anywhere in this business you gotta have a band!" I didn't especially want a band. I kind of liked going mano a mano with an audience, but everybody else seemed to have one, and I was beginning to feel like the only kid on the block who didn't have an Erector Set. So I decided, "Who am I to shovel shit against the tide of history?" and called Dave Woods.

Dave was, and is, one of the best musicians I know, a versatile jazz and blues guitarist (my earlier cut on this disc COME BACK BABY is basically his chart), and a

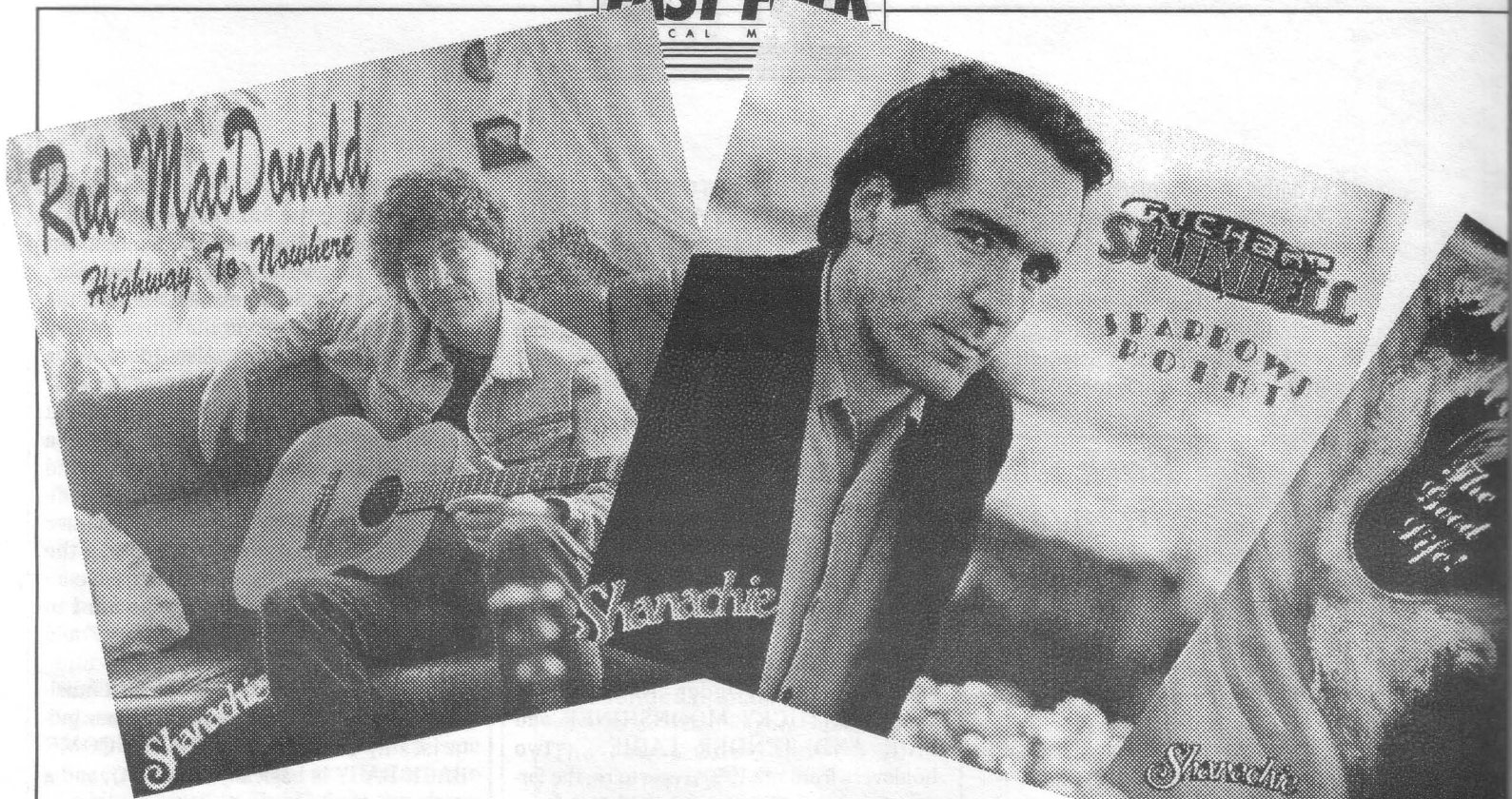
Back where I came from, no life form was more protozoan than a coffee-house folksinger

Photo: Nora Charters



Rosalie Sorrells at VanRonk party at the Village Gate.

deft and cunning arranger. So we sat down and invented the Hudson Dusters. The idea was to explore some of the musical possibilities inherent in the more or less standard rock band instrumentation and to make a pile of money. On point one we succeeded. I think, surprisingly well. (Mostly thanks to Woodsy). As for point two - Ha! But that, too, is another story. By the way, the original Hudson Dusters were a bunch of plug-uglies who plied their trade in the West Village around the turn of the century.



The Gang of Four Rides

New Songwriters On Shanachie

Again

By Jim Allen

Shanachie Records is a small independent label out of New Jersey. For years they concentrated on traditional Irish music. The name Shanachie in fact, is the Gaelic term for a wandering storyteller. It's only fitting then, that following subsequent forays into Reggae and World Music, the label would turn it's attention to singer-songwriters.

The recent release of four new albums on Shanachie heralds their full-fledged dive into the waters of the folk-derived songwriting tradition. Rod MacDonald, Richard Meyer, Richard Shindell and Michael Jerling are New York-based performers whose names may already be familiar to East Coast folk aficionados. The four are supporting their new releases with a series of group performances. These recordings and performances offer a unique opportunity to examine the parallels and contrasts of four different writers working in and around the well-worn notions of what a singer-songwriter is and should be.

Of the four, Rod MacDonald is the elder statesman, and probably the most

well-known up to now. He has released several albums in the eighties and nineties on various independent labels both here and abroad. His Shanachie debut, *Highway To Nowhere*, is the most traditionally oriented, folk based collection of the quartet. This fact is borne out musically by his spare approach to production and arrangement. Many of the songs here center on voice and acoustic guitar, with little else in the way of accompaniment. MacDonald relies extensively on the use of his voice as an instrument, and it is accordingly featured in the forefront of the mix.

His songs appear to be stylistically descended from the folk era of the mid-60's, with the most obvious antecedents

being the dual icons Eric Andersen and protest-era Dylan. In keeping with this motif, *Highway To Nowhere* alternates between romantic ballads and sociopolitical anthems. Representative of the former is "The Coming of the Snow". This Dylanesque love song recalls "Girl from the North Country" with it's lament for a lost love far away;

and if you're travelling in the woods
I used to walk along
and you find her out there
standing in the falling leaves
and a chill should pass through
the arms
that cradle her longing
you know you can take her hand
one more time for me.

MacDonald vents his political spleen on songs like "The Way to Calvary". Here he employs a densely allegorical narrative somewhat atypical of his more conven-

tional lyric style to tell a tale of a galley slave who made his way through a series of tribulations in search of freedom;

and to me who knew nothing of wise men who believed in no God you can't see he said 'Show me the way to Calvary and no chains will ever hold thee'

MacDonald has been a fixture on the folk scene for some time, and as such he has influenced a number of other songwriters, some covering his songs and some assimilating and adapting his stylistic sensibilities. This influence is apparent upon listening to Richard Meyer's *The Good Life*. Meyer updates the style somewhat, adding a more urban, cynical wrinkle, as well as a more metaphorical approach to writing.

Meyer's visual arts background underlies a more New Yorkish artiness evidenced by the fragments of poetry spread out across the pages of the CD booklet. It is this same spirit of experimentation that finds him utilizing more exotic instrumentation on several of the songs. "New Dirt Road" features ashtray and frying pan among the percussion devices. "The Empress of Clowns" employs lute and tablas to create a slightly Middle Eastern effect. Of all the Shanachie releases *The Good Life* is the only one to engage in flat out rockers (though Jerling and Shindell flirt with rock instrumentation) on songs like "New Dirt Road" and "The Burden".

Meyer's songs are heavy in simile; on "New Dirt Road" a woman's life is "hot as a hurricane lamp". On "Uneasy Nights" he sings of a curfew that "cuts and falls down like a sabre blade". On many of the cuts here, he one-ups MacDonald's "Times They Are A-changin'" orientation by practicing a wordiness that recalls "Blonde on Blonde"-era Dylan. More than a means to an end, this dense verbiage appears to be a gestalt unto itself. It seems to be Meyer's intention to use this device to contribute to the overall sound and mood, in a manner not dissimilar to that in

which MacDonald's voice becomes an element of instrumentation over and above it's primary function of conveying the literal meaning of the words.

Informed simultaneously by traditional folk music and modern poetic sensibility, Richard Shindell evokes a variety of moods on *Sparrow's Point* with the aid of a sonorous baritone that recalls such seminal folk luminaries as Richard Thompson and Stan Rogers.

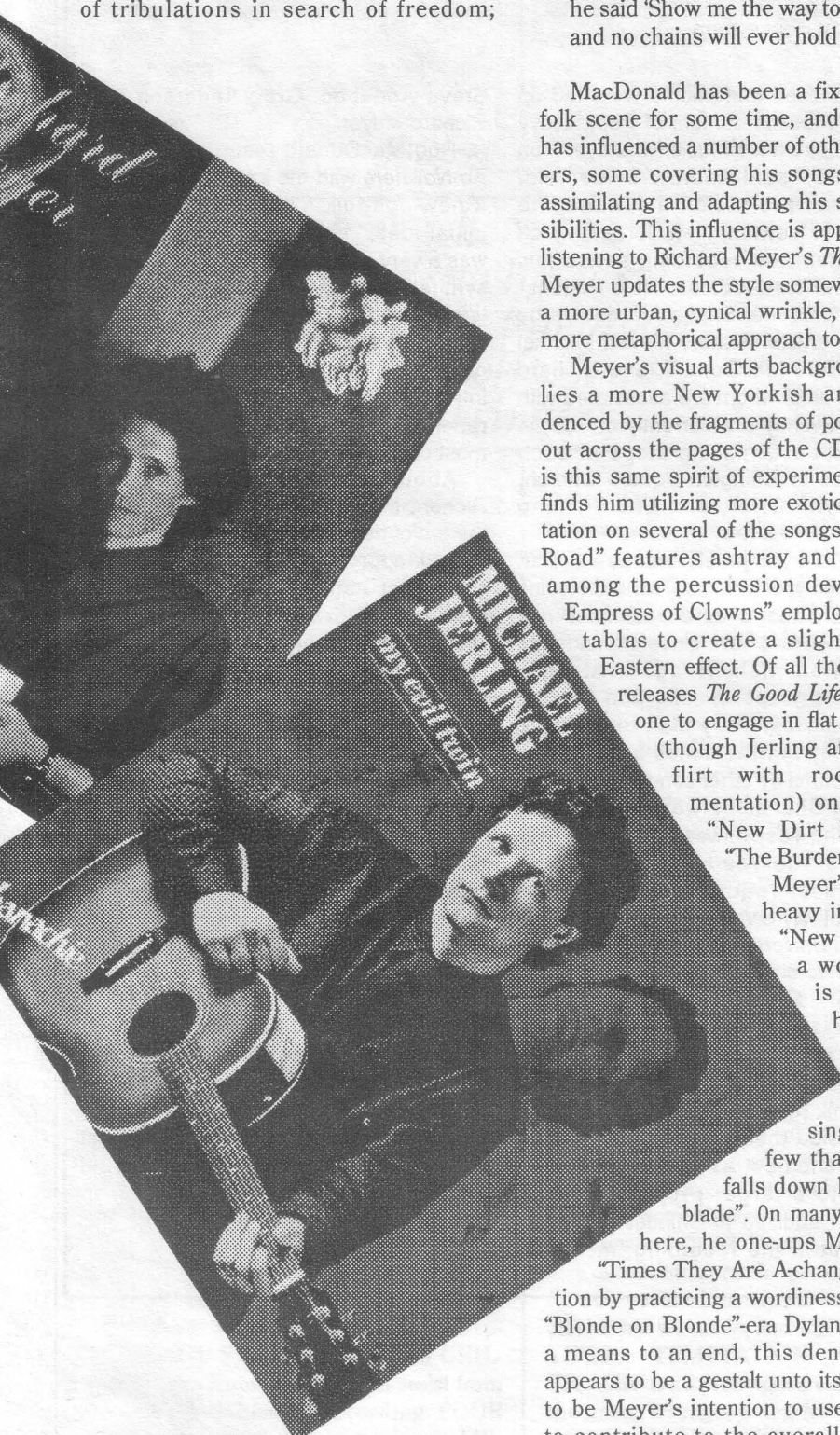
Several of the songs make use of characterization, enabling Shindell to take on different personas. There's the young soldier of the Stan Roger's-abandoned shipyard setting that backdrops the title track. There's the more explicitly militaristic story told by a wartime messenger in "The Courier", a bleak tale of violence and desolation that brings to mind the WWI poetry of Wilfrid Owen, dispassionate but damning;

a hundred men all knee-to-chest
a hundred marionettes

"Are You Happy Now", the opening track, is an almost gleefully bitter song of lost love. Much in the manner of Elvis Costello's "I Hope You're Happy Now", the narrator seems to take a perverse pleasure in excoriating the object of his anger with darkly humorous quips;

though I know it's hard to tell
I hope that what's-his-name
treats you well
I still maintain that he's a bum
but it's your money, have some fun

At times Shindell's muse runs to the more obscure. In many songwriters this would be a drawback, but here it is a distinct strength. "On a Sea of Fleur-de-lis" finds the ex-seminarian reveling in the loaded biblical imagery which is so often the bane of mediocre poetry. Fortunately, Shindell has the ability to make such extended symbolism breathe, making the song a finely wrought evocation of adoration and longing for some unspecified mix of the corporeal and the eternal (the lyrics are too good to quote, buy the record if you're curious). Similarly elliptical is "Nora", a song which intertwines the timeless story of Abelard and Heloise with



some more personal tale. The details wash together to prevent true linearity, but ultimately there is an epiphanic feel which emerges and transcends detail.

On the more proletarian side of the coin is Michael Jerling's *My Evil Twin*. For the most part, Jerling eschews the lofty artistic concerns of writers like Shindell and Meyer, opting instead for a more straight ahead storytelling style, using simple, direct language to get the songs across.

My Evil Twin is also the most accesible, mainstream-oriented offering of the Shanachie releases. The overall sound here is frequently that of radio-ready modern country in the manner of Lyle Lovett or even Randy Travis, albeit with more rough edges. Drawing from a tradition squarely outside of the Village folk scene, Jerling is nonetheless equally committed to his own roots, perhaps even more so than the others. "Before the Country Moved to Town" finds the singer recalling his early inspirations—Jimmie Rogers and Bill Monroe, and lamenting country music's subsequent commercialization. The similarly tradition-minded "Pinto Pony" reaches back in time again, this time to recall playing cowboy games as a child in the 50s.

Compositions like "Sorry Thing to Say" and "Fast Forward" are more conventional modern country songs that mine the sanctified C&W lode of love and pain in an economical fashion. *My Evil Twin* is also the most extravagantly arranged of the four, even including a full horn section on some of the tunes.

For their first large scale endeavor in the singer-songwriter field, Shanachie has displayed four artists who, while possessed of certain primary stylistic connections, still represent somewhat of a cross-section of the scene. Still, there remain ten times as many other directions as yet unexplored that fall under the umbrella of modern song. Perhaps if these first steps meet with success it will become possible for even more perspectives to be brought to light.

Shanachie: New Voices, New Visions

By Wendy Beckerman

"We noticed that people were fed up with the vacuous content of Pop, Heavy Metal, Rap, Dance Music, whatever's on the charts," said Andrew Seidenfeld, director of promotion at Shanachie Records in Newton, New Jersey, which began their new recording series this year. The "New Voices, New Visions" series represents Shanachie debuts by four new artists: Richard Meyer, Michael Jerling, Rod MacDonald, and Richard Shindell, all of whom are associated with Fast Folk. They are currently on tour in the Northeast, making stops at such venues as Washington Square Church, The Towne Crier, and The Turning Point, to name a few.

In 1975 Irish music enthusiast Dan Collins and musicologist Richard Nevins started Shanachie as a traditional Irish music label, and have since expanded to record Pop Irish, Reggae, African, traditional gospel music, and historic blues reissues. They plan to continue the new songwriter series by releasing future albums by other songwriters.

When Shanachie was asked about the public response, they said that Shindell's "Are You Happy Now" is the single most requested song in the history of WFUV, the radio station at Fordham University. His album *Sparrow's Point* reflects many diverse influences. "The philosophy of the album," said David Seitz, who engineered most of the project, "was to get people for each genre, from acoustic stuff to country to pop to folk rock, so the musicians didn't play outside their specialty style." The album started out as a demo tape then grew into a larger project. Several people in addition to Shindell and Seitz had input in the recording, including

Steve Addabbo, Greg Anderson, and Richard Meyer.

Rod MacDonald recorded *Highway To Nowhere* with the intention of making a new-age-folk album. "That was the initial idea," says MacDonald. "There was a very lush sound with the violin and synthesizer in my working band at the time. I tried to translate that into a rich sound in the studio. Fred Pohlman organized this collection of quieter, more introspective songs from MacDonald's repertoire, and Mark Dann engineered most of them.

About his album *The Good Life!* Richard Meyer says "Somewhere along the arc of desire is a point near the crest, a peak approached or passed. Neither side is apparant; only a person-present. These songs exist inside and out of the mind—there moral ground is slippery. Human dilemmas framed in breif scenes of people whose resisted feelings crisscross." The album was produced by Richard Meyer and Mark Dann.

Michael Jerling's *Evil Twin* was so named due to its very eclectic mix of styles. "It was different from what I've done before in that it is a studio album rather than a live sound," said Jerling. "We listened to the songs and thought of what might bring each one out in its own style."

As Shanachie introduces these four singer/songwriters, they do not pretend to compete with labels like Warner, CBS or Polygram, which dominate most of the world's \$21 billion record sales. Instead, they are interested in responding to what they feel is an increasing public demand for singer/songwriters and the human edge they bring to their songs.

Lyrics In Order of Appearance

Marelene (Kelly Flint)

Marelene had another thing coming
when she asked that her kindness be returned
Marelene was just waiting for no one
when her dreams fell like highway lines
she burned the streets up
and she waved to me when she passed
and she smiled that wicked smile of hers
and stepped on the gas

CHORUS

No one can hold her down
when her mind's made up
sky's just another road
when you get fed up
you just change your clothes
put on some make-up and go

All this running has the taste of romance
but Marelene looks worn out
another rainstorm and her eyes become transparent
nothing's perfect so the chances get thrown out
she's talking like she doesn't care
then she hides behind her long black hair

CHORUS

Marelene doesn't cry
she's never been too much
for sad good-byes

CHORUS

slow new york (richard julian)

she's drunk enough when she is sober
she don't need no alcohol
don't need no artificial means
no amphetamines
to make her fall

she's like the rain in the middle of sunlight
leaves you confused but still reborn
i've been up all night having a ball
staring at the view of my brick wall
in slow new york

i heard the sounds of someone weeping
i wiped my eyes and turned on the light
took some medicine from the shelf
just a bad influence on myself
when you're out of sight

i thought she asked me for the world once
all she wanted was the truth and nothing more
but like the mornings on monday
the truth is always colored gray
in slow new york

bridge:

and if you come back to me now
we'll go buy the sunday times
a little salt and a couple limes
to beat the heat
you're gonna swear i make 'em better
than the mexicans on sullivan street

i'm going down to get my toolbox
unscrew the lock off of the door
if you want to come home like you once said
i'm still on the same side of the bed
in slow new york

she needs a crutch for all her pain
i could only be a broken cane
hey, won't you come in from the rain
in slow new york
slow new york

There Is A Light (Frank Tedesso)

there is a Light
And it's shining
It must be there
It's gotta be

Deep inside of me
Beneath my overcoat
Beneath my skin
in the hollow of my Bones
Some nights I just glow like a pumpkin

There is this ghost
He lives inside of me
Everyday is Halloween
He ain't such bad company
But he gets a little sad
He longs to be a man
Me, I long to fly over the river
and never come back again...

But I can't let it go
I can't let it go
I can't let it go...

Teddy got a tattoo
of an old sailing ship
and a mystical Chinese Fish
and then he took a razor
and made a river
from the veins that crossed his wrist
Did his Heart wash out to sea
Did he get to make one last wish
Maybe he just disappeared into the shadows
Maybe he found something he was looking for in the
darkness...

I can't let it go
I can't let it go
I can't let it go...

there is a Light
and it's shining
it must be there
it's gotta be...

As The Crow Flies (Jim Allen)

Rockabye babe in the treetop
Don't be afraid until the wind stops
When the storm comes out of the blue
When the bough breaks right under you

chorus:
Under a mayday sky
Something to whistle by
While armies line up on the sly
As the crow flies

Roomful of mice blinder than love
God only knows what they're thinking of
Coming too late the old farmer's wife
There's only so far you can get with a knife

Now little bird fly away home
Your house is on fire your wife is alone
A newspaper moon shot full of holes
A bulletproof clock sits on a pole

Last Song Sung (Biagi/Pucci)

A Cupid's arrow
cuts the sky
a sickened heart is struck
a sickened heart is hurt today.
A darkened shadow lies late
upon the breast of a young bride
early to a mother's cry.

Warm wind
turns leaves, turns hair
faded, long
forgotten by comb and desires
twenty six struck the bell
carrying far the old woman's dream
in her celestial deafness

Late at night
Cinderella
falls into her blue dreams.
And by dawn
the flame is out.

Another arrow plows the sky
from the Cupid's bow that strikes
one more weakened heart

The last song is sung
the song of the stone sword
where poetry is engraved
to fight
where no winner nor loser lies
wisdom through words
wisdom through love

The Fire Fly Field (Carl Alderson)

Twinkle twinkle little star
can I chase you down
put you in my jar
and take you home with me
keep me company
I promise not to keep you long
I'll poke some holes
to keep you strong
and then you'll see
I'll set you free
My momma and daddy
moved when I was three
to raise me far away
from the big city
to the Fire Fly Field

Out in a place
where the mower's don't mow
is a world apart
where a young one grows
to be a child
running wild
There in the fields
in the month of June
'neath a blanket of stars
and the sweet perfume
night would fall
and momma calls
But nothing momma said
would ever interest me
I could hear her voice
trailing after me
through the Fire Fly Field

A man must walk quickly
to get where he wants
in this world
but a man who walks slowly
will find all the treasures
in this world
As we race with time
and our adversities
do we never look around
till we're in the ground
with no eyes to see

Last night coming home
from a local bar
I pulled to the shoulder
in my car
and I sang this song
with my guitar
there in the fields
of long ago
was a sign telling of
well constructed homes
coming soon
in the month of June
But then a police car
pulled up next to mine
he said I'd best take it
further on down the line
from the Fire Fly Field

Oh but nothing he could say
would ever bother me
nothing gets me down
never ever hurts me
in the Fire Fly Field

No nothing they could say

would ever interest me
I can hear their voices
trailing after me
through the Fire Fly Field

©1988 Carl Wayne Alderson

Holding On
(Al Schere)

There is a beauty in the holding on
You find it in the autumn colors
Red and gold they burn just before the end
Then softly melt and drop like ashes
It's just before the truth of loss
The truth of love goes gently silver
You feel the power of things just before they're gone
You feel the beauty in the holding on

My love is deeper when you are away
I feel your presence and it squeezes me
There's something desperate that won't let you go
That burns your image in the shadows
Your voice keeps whispering under every sound
You are a song that haunts my memory
It is your face I find I dream upon
There is a beauty in the holding on

tillamook
(bob chabot)

the sun rained down as the clouds fell away
and the highway stretched out over tillamook bay
you were framed by the window your face to the shore
i was wondering where had i known you before
you were telling me something with words hard to hear
your voice lay before me like a vision so clear
and it floated there just long enough to feel

and oh frances
the stars in the sky have smiled down upon me
they gave me the sun and they gave me the sea
the forest cathedral and when they were through
they went a step further and led me to you
and oh frances
what would i ever have done

snow caps and sea lions a nurturing waiter
and how the forest exploded on up to that crater
i was wondering if we were friends in that life
or a brother and a sister a husband and wife
and the chance that our paths had crossed somewhere
before
it could lead one to thinking there could be so much
more
and imagining what that landscape might reveal

and oh frances
the stars in the sky have smiled down upon me
they gave me the sun and they gave me the sea
the hawks on the skyline and when they were through
they went a step further and led me to you
and oh frances
what would i ever have done

now the lake threw back light in a wondrous hue
and as we sat on the ridge you said if it were true
then you might just be able to sleep in the night
you might start to trusting that the world was alright
and what if that should happen just where would it
leave you
you held it unthinkable and i thought to believe you
still that notion seemed so very real

and oh frances
the stars in the sky have smiled down upon me
they gave me the sun and they gave me the sea
the fire in the canyons and when they were through
they went a step further and led me to you
and oh frances
what would i ever have done

seven sorrows
(dave elder)

green is the color of the leaves of grass
soon they'll be falling as the seasons pass
changing colors then they will burn
and in circles they will turn

white is the color of the wandering clouds
hey, it ain't like you to be down and out
free and easy you've always been
drawing circles once again

blue is the color of the restless sea
ships and their sailors all will homeless be
til the waters one day run dry
and draw circles 'round the sky

brown is the color of the dusty road
there on my back i've got a heavy load
it's no good saying i could be free
it's just circles i can see

gold is the color of the harvest grain
child without sorrow can you feel no pain
for do you hold life without end
or draw circles and pretend

black is the color of a true love's hair
so is the wedding gown that she will wear
she calls me names that are not mine
and draws circles 'round my time

red is the color of the setting sun
it looks like fire when the evening comes
lines of woodsmoke will climb and spin
and draw circles in the wind

The Cats of the Coliseum
(Buddy Mondlock)

The cats of the coliseum sit on the stones
With the Coca-Cola cans and the dried pigeon bones
Warming in the sun where centuries have slept
They are older than the ruins
They are no one's pets

The cats of the coliseum are finishing a meal
They are lazy in their grace, they are quicker than steel
They are innocent and wild with faces none too clean
They will eat what they can catch
And it will not disturb their dreams

chorus:
On my trip to Rome I visited the Sistine Chapel
And the Vatican and Saint Peter's Basilica
I saw a lot of nuns and priests there
And the Swiss Guard too, but the Pope was in Vienna
Threw a coin in the Trevi fountain
Then I cabbed it over to the ruins of the Agora
Had a little trouble by the Coliseum
So I spent the afternoon at American Express

The cats of the coliseum pose for photographs
They can steal a tourist's heart, they can make a tourist
laugh
Their images will wind up far away as souvenirs
Their souls will stay with them
But even those for so few years

The cats of the coliseum run away on two legs
Their names are Rafael, Pippio, and Oleg
They are living by their wits and they will do the best
they can
And my travelers checks are gone
In a nine-year-old's hand

chorus:
On my trip to Rome I visited the Sistine Chapel
And the Vatican and Saint Peter's Basilica
I saw a lot of paintings there
And a statue by Michaelangelo called The Pieta
Walked the gardens of the Villa Borghese
And I bought a cool shirt in a store on Villa Saleria
Had a little trouble by the coliseum
So I spent the afternoon at American Express

The cats of the coliseum sit on the stones
With the Coca-Cola cans and the dried pigeon bones
Warming in the sun where centuries have slept
They are older than the ruins
They are no one's pets

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ASCAP

Dancin' in the Kitchen
A Children's Song
(Frank Christian/Wendy Celsanliter)

It's six o'clock at night we all know that's our cue
We step into the kitchen and see what we can do
Hand me a spoon hand me a bowl
Turn on the radio we're ready to roll

We makin chicken & dumplin's the dumplin's sit on top
Did you add the carrots, if not, chop, chop
Grab the pepper mill give it a turn once or twice
Sprinkle on paprika it sure looks nice

Mama snaps the beans throws them in the pot
Adds a little water steam them till they're hot
Daddy takes the beans gives 'em all a butter pat
Puts them on the top shelf to keep them from the cat

Dancin in the kitchen, all the family's here jump to the left
Dancin in the kitchen, music's cookin', everyone's a chef
Dancin in the kitchen, all the family's here jump to the right
I think we may be dancin' in the kitchen all night

Take a piece of shortcake, put it in a dish
Pile up some strawberries any way you wish
Pop on lots of whipped cream, don't you be a fool
Put it in the ice-box to keep it really cool

Dinner's almost ready, it's almost time to eat
But the music on the radio makes us move our feet
We may be hungry but dinner has to wait
'Cause all the legs are movin' 'cept the chicken's on the plate

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I Don't Think It's Love
(Sundae/Palmer)

There's a little girl well she lives far away
About a thousand miles from here I'd say
She's always doin' some crazy thing
Like spending her money and sayin' she loves me

Chorus:
Oh I don't think it's love
But I do feel something for her
Oh yeah I don't think it's love
But I kinda feel something right here

I took a long trip on that Amtrak train
Gonna visit the little girl cause she's payin' my way
Gonna meet all 'er folks and visit her friends
Will see if they like me I'll bet they pretend

chorus

I got these buddies wanna take my place
They call themselves friends, well I call 'em snakes
It's funny about love never works quite right
Hell I'd say cupid's a creature of spite

chorus

Two weeks gone by guess it's time to head home
Boarding the train I feel all alone
A pretty girl walks by she turns my head
She says hi and I sing instead

chorus

©1992 Sundae/Palmer, BMI

Something Old Something New
(Stuart Kabak)

Wedding day, satin dress
Friendly smiles, From all the guests
Relatives from near and far, paper flowers on the car
The scene is cast for matrimony, why do I feel so
lonely?

There's something old, something new
Something borrowed, something blue
Something of a deja vu
For I've been here before

Here we stand as man and wife
Today is the first day, in the rest of my life
Maybe this time love will last, can't be living in the past
Rice is falling all around, love will grow in fertile
ground

There's something old, something new
The tears I cry are not for you
Something of a deja vu
For I've been here before
I've never closed the door
Until now...

Beauty Of The Island
(David Roter)

There is a bodega on 99th Street
where the men drink Rheingold and piss on the wall.
And speak about culo grande, the Virgin Mary and
and the mystery of it all.

There's Carlos and Manny, Crack-head Fred and
Ramon.
They get so drunk their sisters drag them home.
That's how I met Theresa, cursing her brother and
his miserable life.
A thunderbolt cut through my heart just like a rusty
knife.

chorus:
She's the beauty of the island.
You can see those brown eyes shining
like the moon and stars
when they fall down in the night.
I don't want to be her lover.
Gonna beg her sister and her mother.
"Beauty of the island, be mine."

Amsterdam Avenue is an ocean.
Drowning men pull each other under.
Sharks circle little drops of blood.
And no one takes a number.
You'd better mind your own business
or you're gonna pay.
You'll be the first one at the scene
of your own accident someday.
She was wearing those tight white pants
and Spanish lace,
a Saint Christopher's medal 'round her neck,
a hungry look on her face.

chorus
Carlos put a razor to my throat,
and his mouth did twitch.
"Keep your hands off my sister,
you white boy mother chinga puta
son of a bitch "
"Loosen up, Carlos man. Hey man,
me and you, I'm gonna be your brother-in-law."
I woke up three days later
with a nurse checking my vital signs.
Carlos, he was holding my hand.
"Jesus man, I'm sorry. I don't know,
I get a little crazy sometimes."
I said, "Thanks for sharing that with me."
I turned my face to the wall.
and I dreamed a dream of love.
The doctors were laughing in the hall.

chorus
©Unknown Tongue Music

Soldiers
Words and Music © 1990 Jim Infantino. All Rights
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Everybody says she's crazy
and she's living on my floor
she stays alone all day
in an apartment without furniture
one day some people come
to take her to a place
they said to make her better
but I've never seen her since

There are soldiers in the city

I saw it on the news
there was a fire in the armory
spreading through the mattresses
in people's cots
and it might have been a bomb
because it woke me
from my sleep last night
but everyone I talk to
seems to have forgot that there are

There are soldiers in the city

Well now it's Christmas morning
and I'm watching thr parade
coming upt the streets along 6th Avenue
and in the back is Santa
in the front is Mickey Mouse
and in the middle marching there are me
and you

There are soldiers in the city

Beau Ideal
Words and Music © 1991 Liz Brahm. All rights
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I'm not sure you ever knew, but I had a crush on you
It lasted a long time and it was just what I needed
It was kind of an eighth-grade kind of thing
But serious - it was not a fling
And I was true to you till it receded

It's too bad we never had a date, but you lived in
another state
A couple times a year I'd see you and stutter hello
You probably don't remember those times
But each one's burned into my mind
You were polite - I was aglow

Chorus:

Thanks for not laughing, if you know who you are
Cause you were my hero, my bright northern star
I needed to love you and you were there
Well really you weren't but I didn't care
It was enough - you were my Beau Ideal

We never kissed in the afterglow, we never spoke of
bands of gold
You were distant, it's true but you stayed perfect that
way
And when I felt my love grow old, you didn't even need
to be told
You never called me up and begged me to stay

Chorus

Well the one I love now knows about you
And it's okay cause he's had crushes too
So he won't come to beat you up or tell you to keep
away
We fight and laugh, we kiss and we sing
We've learned to share just about everything
And I'm happy, but I just wanted to say

Chorus

Follow Your Lucky Star
(David Goldfinger)

Life can be just like a fairy tale
That's what you said
When you ran off with the circus
Suzy, How romantic can you get

Living barebones in a painted trailer
Set up on blocks in a gravel lot somewhere
Searching the sky like a desperate sailor
Doing what so many dream but so few dare, Suzy

chorus:
Follow your lucky star/to the bigtop
And listen to your ragtime tune
Your friends are cheering from afar/go on Suzy
Grab hold of that ring
And take your best swing at the moon

You were the kid with the gap-tooth grin and the
broken wing
And the cast all the other kids signed
Your high school days were spent crazy tattooing the
streets
With your daredevil feats and blackberry wine

There's a niche in your head for every windshield you
did in
And one in your heart for every James Dean
The gang was just a bunch of kids who never fit in
Trying to spraypaint their name on the scene, Suzy
chorus

May there always be a pair of hands to catch you when
you fall
And a clown to put a smile on your face
May there always be a palomino with a plume in his
mane
To keep you running high in the race

instrumental

So give 'em the old razzle dazzle Suzy
Give 'em what they paid to see
Help them to lose their troubles for a moment
In a whirl of cotton candy dreams

And it's a wonder such good clean family fun
could be staged by a crew like this
Just goes to show what people will swallow
For a taste of the life they miss, Suzy

chorus

©1990 David Goldfinger

All songs ©1992 by author unless otherwise noted

Tape Submissions

Send no more than three or four songs on
cassette complete with lyric sheets to:

Al Schere/Tape Review
Fast Folk
P.O. Box 938
Village Station
NY, NY 10014

Tapes must be clear, but need not be
master quality as all songs are re-recorded
for Fast Folk.

Thoughts About Songs

a collection of singer-songwriters

Legacy II

Tony Gilkyson

Heidi Berry

Frank Tedesso

Doug Mathews

Nick Berry

Paul Metsa

Greg Brown

The Story

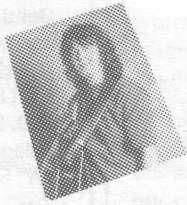
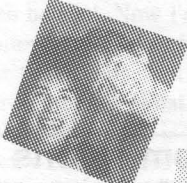
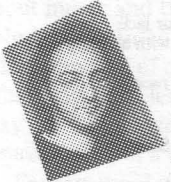
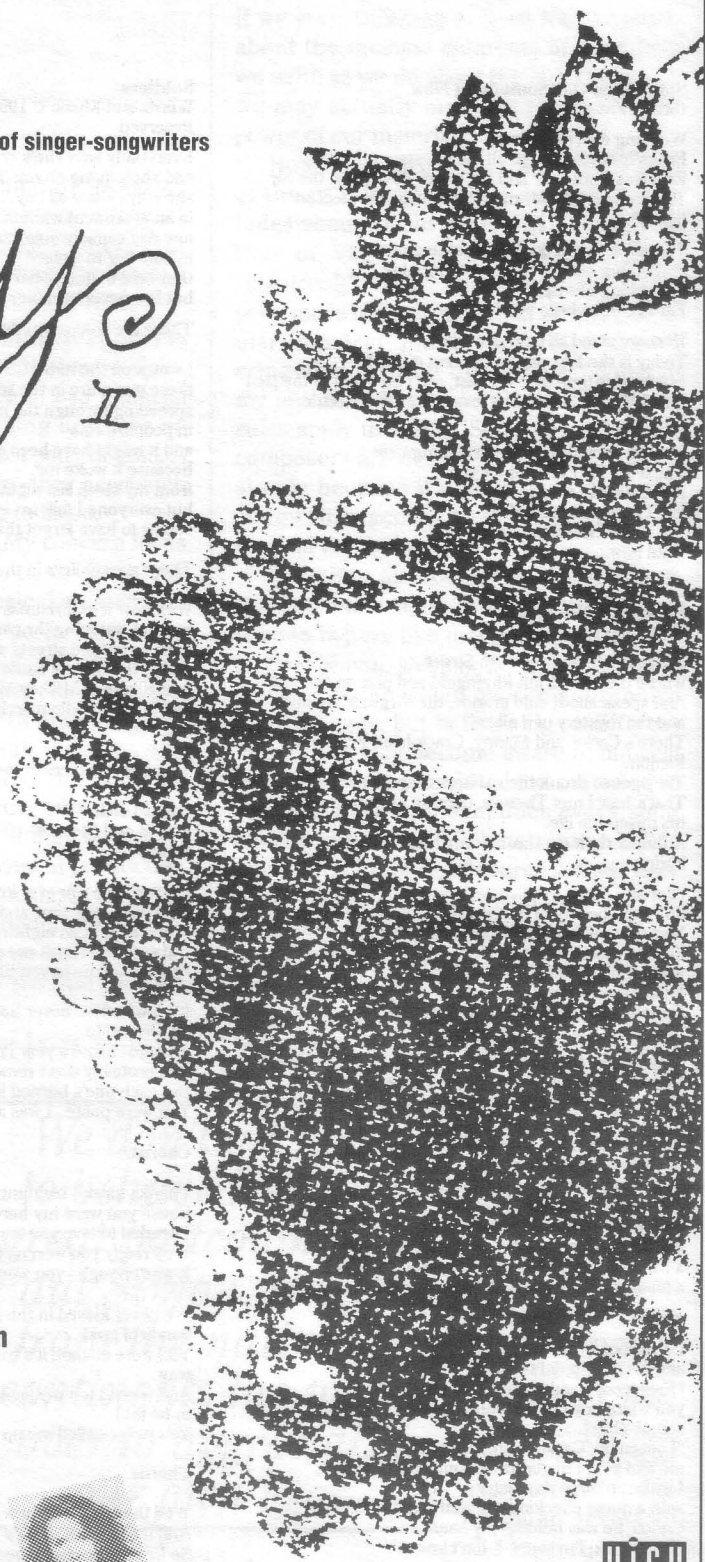
Patty Larkin

Ellis Paul

Cheryl Wheeler

Mark Heard

Patty Griffin



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Review Boston Songos in Concert

by Kevin Connolly

Saturday, May 16. The bardic tradition is alive and well in Cambridge, MA. Last night at the Old Cambridge Baptist Church, the Songos demonstrated that the Boston area is still growing some outstanding singer-songwriters.

Inspired by the New York Songwriters' Exchange, the Songos have been meeting for four years to criticize and support each other's new creations. The Songos are a diverse group that includes not only professional musicians, but also those who carefully preserve their amateur status by maintaining careers in psychotherapy, high tech, etc.

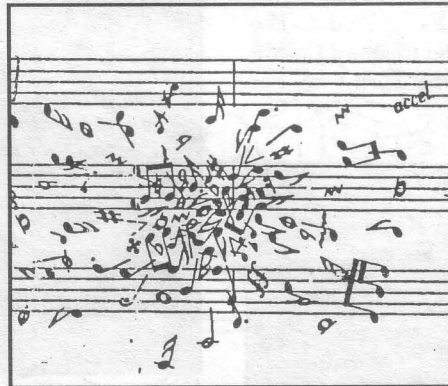
This sort of egalitarianism doesn't always make for good music, but last night it produced a highly entertaining concert for an enthusiastic audience. In fact, this was an exemplary collection of the broad range of musical styles and content that makes up the current folk scene.

Laurie Goldsmith got things rolling with the up-tempo "Love Just Ahead", displaying the strong voice and musicality that is building her reputation as "someone to watch." She was followed by Steve Brennan, who mixed his commanding presence with a warm voice and whose later song, "Gettin Out of Town", suggested a sort of Big Bopper meets Dylan. Meg Daley followed with "Reel It In", singing dreamy lyrics with a range and modulation that was especially impressive since she had stepped off a plane from Paris mere hours before.

Deborah Galiga, a veteran of the Boston music scene, turned in a solid vocal performance in the affecting and simple "Long Way Home" ("the oldest wounds are the last ones to heal"). Paul Hatem, and architect, followed with "Buy Me Please", and accessible song that was, appropriately enough, about a house. Paul Rogoshewski did "Dirty Feet", an engaging song with a Caribbean lilt that was very well received. He was followed by Geoffrey Cary Sather, whose "Eleni" featured a chorus in Greek and showed why he was just selected to perform in the New Folks competition at the Kerrville Folk

Festival. Phyllis Capanna impressed with "I Miss Your Touch", which effectively mixed intimate lyrics with an up-tempo chorus. (Phyllis also won the most musical stockings award.)

Jan Luby, a veteran performer clearly capable of doing what she wants on stage, did "This Rockin Chair", which contrasted affectionate lyrics with a nice change in the chorus and a vocal with some bite. She was followed by Max po-KRIV-chak, another confident performer whose song, "Stonecutter", is based on a 13th century Buddhist tale. Jenny Burtis then turned in one of the highlights of the evening in her first public performance with "Future Homemakers", an emotionally honest song about a close



Artwork: Geoff Bartley

friend whose life took a different course. (Jenny also produced this concert.) Geoff Bartley finished the first set with "Bozos on the Road", an amusing but unfortunately accurate statement about Boston driving.

Jim Infantino opened the second set with a short, funny a cappella number, "35-Foot Lady", and immediately followed with "Soldiers", a moodier song with well conceived lyrics. A confident performer who projects and writes well, Jim is definitely an up-and-comer. Another performer with strong stage presence, David Goldfinger, performed "The Woman and the Man (Who Brought You Here)", a haunting, but comforting lullaby for parents. He was followed by Elizabeth Connolly who was

careful to explain that her country-influenced and slightly cynical "Going-Out-Of-Mind Sale" as not a reflection of her happy marriage. In her second song, "Even Our Dreams", Laurie Goldsmith used modulation, phrasing and a strong voice to great effect in a coming-of-age story.

Geoff Bartley performed "Noah's Ark", an ambitious treatment of a powerful myth that combined images both specific and poetic with great musicality. He was followed by Jack Hardy, in a cameo appearance, with the a cappella "Corduroy Song". Liz Brahm, a polished performer with a warm, funny manner, did "Happy Love Song" and "Beau Ideal", a look at "crushes" that benefitted from a rather clever introduction. David Goldfinger closed out the set with "Follow Your Lucky Star", an instructive story about a friend's choices that was well performed and well received.

Performances were consistently professional and musical, which was a credit not only to the performers but also to the house band, consisting of Dennis Pearne on bass, Carolyn Castellano on drums and Geoff Brantley, a prize winning guitarist, nationally known performer and founder of the Songos. Geoff is one of those unusual people who, like Jack Hardy and Richard Meyer, are willing to take time from their own careers to nurture those new to their trade. The passing of wisdom from experienced veterans to talented newcomers is an ancient bardic method and the basis of the folk tradition. Last night in Cambridge, it resulted in some vital and original music.

Editor's Note: Live recordings of three of the songs from this concert are included on this CD: *Soldiers* by Jim Infantino, *Beau Ideal* by Liz Brahm, and *Follow Your Lucky Star* by David Goldfinger.

Bios In Order of Appearance



Kelly Flint has been writing songs for a few years. This is her second recording on Fast Folk.

Richard Julian recently completed his third independently-released recording, *Living With Ramona*. He has played at The Newport Folk Festival, The Bottom Line, and The Bluebird Cafe in Nashville. He frequently plays at Tramps in New York City. For info and tapes: 794 9th Ave, #7RS, NYC 10019



Frank Tedesso is a songwriter from Chicago now living in New York City. His song "What Could I Add To That" is featured on the new Windham Hill Legacy II compilation. For information about upcoming performances or tapes please write: Frank Tedesso/P.O. Box 20241, NYC

Jim Allen was born in New York City and still lives there. His song in this issue was written a couple of weeks ago at the time of the LA riots.

Germana Pucci, a third generation peasant opera singer, is a native of Pietrasanta, Tuscany. She made her debut in the Village at Cornelia Street Songwriter's Exchange in 1979. Known as a



singer/songwriter, she works with Giancarlo Biagi and Jill Burkee on theatrical performances. With Biagi she collaborates as a co-writer in music and lyrics. For more info: Artida Productions, 56 Ludlow St, NYC 10002 (212) 777-4323 or FAX(212) 260-1732.



Carl Alderson has been writing songs and playing guitar for several years. This is his first appearance in the magazine. Lately his name has been seen in the staff column of the magazine and he acted like a stage manager for this year's show at The Bottom Line. Carl is a restoration ecologist with The New York City Parks Department and specializes in Coastal Marsh Ecology.



Al Schere has been writing songs and participating in the Songwriters' Exchange since its early meetings at The Cornelia Street Cafe. This is his second song on Fast Folk. Al is known for having hosted many of the folk shows at SpeakEasy in the 80's and for playing the smallest stringed instrument in the Village.

Bob Chabot grew up in North Attleboro, MA. He came here in 86 and has been playing his songs here and there since 89. "Tillamook" was written mostly coming down the Oregon coast with Frances.



Dave Elder moved from Berkely, CA to Brooklyn, NY in September, 1988. He plays mostly New Jersey bars and New England coffeehouses, and recently released a tape of fifteen of his songs entitled *Wooden Y'know*. Asked about The Songwriter's Exchange, Dave said, "Good pasta, but I never walk into that room without a railroad spike in my back pocket."

Buddy Mondlock, originally from Chicago, now lives in Nashville. He recently toured Europe, and is currently working on his second album. He is a staff writer for EMI publishing in Nashville.



Johnny Sundae lives in Florida, having done a stint in trade school in NYC. His song "Hey, We're Americans" was a hit with the troops in the Gulf War, earning him a personal letter from the President. For info: P.O. Box 542405, Merritt Island, FL 32954



Frank Christian is an acclaimed singer/songwriter living in NYC. His work can be heard on albums by Suzanne Vega, The Smithereens, Marty Jones, and Christine Lavin, among others. He appears as a featured artist and sideman in major venues in the US and Europe. Among his current projects are a filmscore for a feature motion picture, a compilation album being produced by Christine Lavin, and a production of a children's record.

Stuart Kabak hails from Sullivan County, NY. He has been active in the Hudson Valley Folk Guild, and has also been co-organizer for the Catskill Music Fest and Hosting of the Bards for the past four summers. He has just released his first cassette entitled *The Drawer*. Info: 237 Broadway, Monticello, NY, 12701

David Roter lives in NYC and works as a high school teacher in the inner-city warzone. He has participated in The Songwriters' Exchange for several years, and has released several albums. Info: Unknown Tongue Music, Box 20225, Columbus Circle Station, NYC 10023

Jim Infantino performs from an extensive eclectic repertoire of original songs. "Soldiers" is featured on his new album *The World of Particulars*.

Liz Brahm is a singer/songwriter and guitar teacher.

David Goldfinger has been writing and performing in the Boston area for the past six years, and is currently working on his third album of his songs. He will be moving Michigan in the fall to pursue training in clinical psychology.

Musician Credits

-1-

Marelene
(Kelly Flint)

Kelly Flint, Vocal
Richard Julian, Guitar

-2-

Slow New York
(Richard Julian)

Richard Julian, Guitar & Vocal
Mark Dann, Bass

-3-

There Is A Light
(Frank Tedesso)

Frank Tedesso, Guitar & Vocal

-4-

As The Crow Flies
(Jim Allen)

Jim Allen, Guitar & Vocal

-5-

Last Song Sung
(Biagi/Pucci)

Germana Pucci, Vocal
Pico Ben-Amotz, Percussion

-6-

The Fire Fly Field
(Carl Alderson)

Carl Alderson, Guitar & Vocal
Mark Powell, Bass
Chris Birmingham, Mandolin

-7-

Holding On
(Al Schere)

Al Schere, Ukelele & Vocal
Richard Julian, Bass

-8-

Tillamook
(Bob Chabot)

Bob Chabot, Guitar & Vocal
Carol Sharar, Violin

-9-

Seven Sorrows
(Dave Elder)

Dave Elder, Guitar & Vocal
Jill Burke, Mandolin
Richard Julian, Bass

-10-

The Cats Of The Coliseum
(Buddy Mondlock)

Buddy Mondlock, Guitar & Vocals

-11-

Dancin' in the Kitchen
(A Children's Song)

(Frank Christian/Wendy Celsanliter)
Frank Christian, Guitar & Vocal
Richard Julian, Bass

-12-

I Don't Think It's Love
(Sundae/Palmer)

Johnny Sundae, Guitar & Vocal
Dave Palmer, Guitar & Bass

-13-

Something Old, Something New
(Stuart Kabak)

Caroline Westfall, Vocal
Stuart Kabak, Guitar & Harmony Vocal
Paul Kean, Bass
Peter Lewey, Cello
Patty Smith, Flute

-14-

Beauty of the Island
(David Roter)

David Roter, Guitar & Vocal

-15-

Soldiers
(Jim Infantino)

Jim Infantino, Guitar & Vocal
Jenny Burtis, Harmony Vocals
Dennis Pearne, Bass
Carolyn Castellano, Drums
Geoff Bartley, Electric Guitar

-16-

Beau Ideal
(Liz Brahm)

Liz Brahm, Guitar & Vocals
Dennis Pearne, Bass
Carolyn Castellano, Drums
Geoff Bartley, Electric Guitar

-17-

Follow Your Lucky Star
(David Goldfinger)

David Goldfinger, Guitar & Vocals
Geoff Bartley, Harmonica
Phyllis Capanna, Harmony Vocals
Laurie Goldsmith, Harmony Vocals

The *Fast Folk Musical Magazine* is published regularly by subscription. Each issue contains a 16 SONG CD featuring new songs by well-known and emerging songwriters. A 20 page printed magazine is included with articles about contemporary songwriters and their work.

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Call Carl Alderson, coordinator of volunteers at (718) 447-1601.

Recorded live to two-track by Richard Julian 5/16/92

Last Song Sung, The Fire Fly Field, The Cats Of The Coliseum, and Tillamook, - recorded direct to DAT by Mark Dann/World Studios, NYC 4/5/92

Something Old, Something New - recorded by Will Hoppey/Little Brook Studio, Port Jervis, NY (Dolby B) 1991

Beauty Of The Island - recorded by David Seitz, Duane Bergman and George Trepani at The Postcrypt Coffeehouse, Columbia University 3/16/91

I Know This Road, Future Homemakers, and Follow Your Lucky Star - recorded live to DAT by Jeff Garber/Old Cambridge Baptist Church, MA 5/16/92