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"The Wreck
of the
Old 107"

Reviews of:
Erica Wheeler
Wendy Beckerman
Kitty Donohoe

Richard
Meyer
Interview Pt. 1

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Feature

The Wreck of the Old 107

by Keith Kelly

A MacDougal Street Club Sings A New Tune

It was a black day in Greenwich Village. Outdoors, no birds sang. No children frolicked. No panhandlers jingled. Indoors, no guitars were strummed. No microphones squealed. No applause thundered—well, people were used to that. Still, the unthinkable had finally come to pass: that legendary falafel restaurant-turned-folk-music club-turned-sports bar-turned-folk-music club had finally gone belly-dancer-up. No more open mikes. No more disco nights. No more poetry readings. SpeakEasy was out of business.

The club's red-and-gold façade at 107 MacDougal Street was shuttered without warning in early spring of this year. All anyone could surmise was that its principal owners and long-time manager could no longer maintain the entertainment complex in the posh style to which everyone had become accustomed. SpeakEasy sat forlorn and ignored on the bustling street, while the nearby heavy-metal bars and jazz clubs thrived. It seemed folk music had lost another of its very few Manhattan venues.

But then salvation appeared in the form of a new management team, who evidently settled all accounts, took over the operation, and after performing a thorough (and quick) renovation of the venerable premises, opened for business as the Spotlight Club.

New principal owners Larry Guttman and Fred Den, manager Mike Considine, and designer Chuck Hutteringer have transformed the decaying club space into a sleek, inviting music room whose clean, modern lines and dark color scheme

should appeal to a variety of audiences. And a variety of audiences is what they're after; the Spotlight's new policy is to fill the week not only with folk and acoustic music, but also with evenings of jazz, cabaret, comedy, and even magic acts.

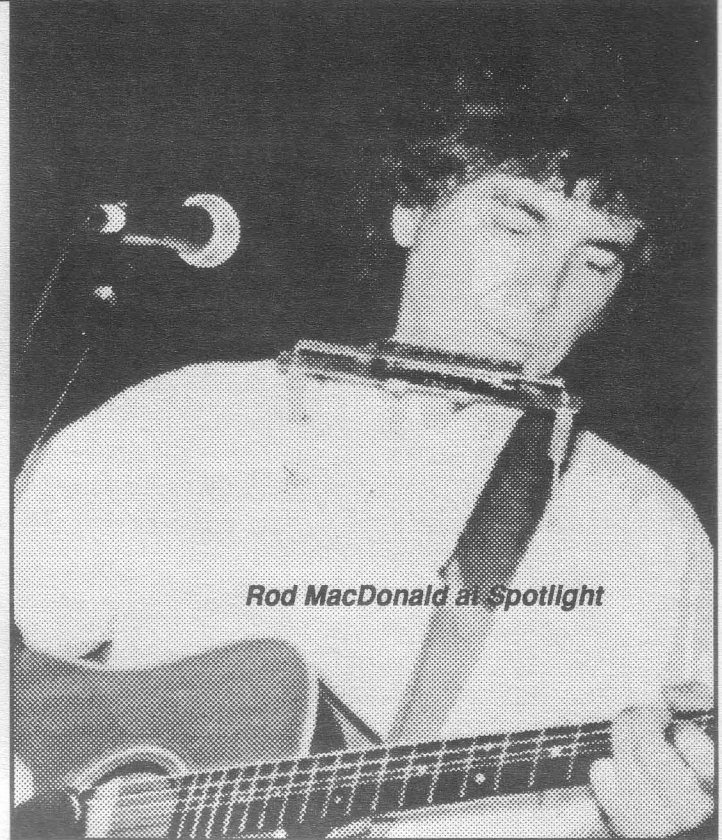
I attended a recent Saturday-night show featuring Rod MacDonald and Lili Anel, and upon entering could scarcely recognize the place where I used to spend half my time. Gone are nearly all the charming artifacts which gave SpeakEasy its unique crumbling ambience. Yes, the mirrored ball is history. No more red velvet wallpaper, filthy fake-Persian rugs, mutilated Naugahyde, or rickety old tables and chairs with the jagged wood protruding at all angles. No more yellowing old publicity photos, blaring TV sets, or chiming video games. No more indescribably disgusting toilet facilities. No fish tank. The bizarre Bokov mural that enveloped the entire stage (and even the piano) is lost to the ages, gone with the snarling semi-bilingual waitresses and other staff members.

Now there's actually a guy *in a tuxedo* out front to welcome patrons. The interior of the Spotlight, from outer bar to listening room to bathrooms, has been done in shades of deep blue and black. A textured blue ceiling replaces the oppressive old black one. A new bar and new floor grace the front room, where colored light fixtures adorn the walls. The door between the front and middle rooms has been removed, so those two areas are now one. In the listening room, all-new black furniture and grey carpeting make music lovers comfortable, while a seemingly all-new waitstaff performs with efficiency and even charm. The sound and light systems have been improved. Spending an evening here used to be a grim prospect; I dreaded inviting friends. Now it's a pleasure.

That the new owner/operators were able to rebirth this place so completely in such a short time (less than a month) is evidence of their experience and vision. Manager Considine has 25 years' experience in the restaurant/nightclub field, mostly on the West Coast, though he has worked at New York's Village Gate. It was his idea to make the Spotlight home to different kinds of entertainment. "We want to get a unique mix in here," he told me. "We'll have plenty of folk music, but we'll have other things as well." For instance, the magic-and-comedy nights (Wednesdays) were scheduled partly to accommodate the patrons of a nearby club, Mostly Magic, which also closed recently. And while the open-mike nights live on, they have been moved to Tuesdays, to leave Mondays free for cabaret. (A note for locals: headliner MacDonald informed me that Considine is on the lookout for new acts, and isn't yet that familiar with area performers, but is quite open-minded and receptive to new talent, so make your pitch soon.)

While the Spotlight has been open for business since late May, they have scheduled their official Grand Opening night for Thursday, July 22. Confirmed to appear are Dave Van Ronk, Cliff Eberhardt, David Massengill, Jack Hardy, Erik Frandsen, and Kristina Olsen, with more performers and surprise guests expected. As pleasant as the new club is, it still only holds 65-70 people, so drop by 107 MacDougal Street or contact Mike Considine for information and/or reservations at (212) 254-8683.

So the birds may sing yet again. The children may frolic. The panhandlers may jingle. The guitars will strum, the microphones won't squeal, the applause will... well, sometimes it might thunder. Ah, a new club on MacDougal Street. Falafel for the soul.



Rod MacDonald at Spotlight

Letter to the editor

Dear Fast Folk,

Well, here's my check for my 5th (or is it 6th?) year with you. I love the CD format and especially the new "management" who appear to have it together a lot better than the prior group. The music has been great but I do have one small request: please, no more poetry readings! CD space is valuable, and should be reserved for music. This is a musical magazine, right? Not a poetry magazine.

Thanks for considering my request. I'm quite sure other subscribers feel the same. I would love to hear back from you with a little feedback.

Bryan Lorber
South Burlington, VT

by William Ruhlmann

Interview

An Interview with Richard Meyer

Richard Meyer, singer, songwriter, theater person, and editor emeritus of Fast Folk Musical Magazine, was born in New Rochelle, New York, on September 6, 1952. He remembers his childhood as "a pretty typical suburban upbringing of the Rob-and-Laura-Petrie type." His interest in music was spurred by his older brother, also a musician. "The first thing that got me excited was radio at the end of the '50s," Richard recalls. "I remember hearing the Everly Brothers and the Four Seasons. I went to see Ruby and the Romantics in 1967. I started writing, I guess, in the ninth grade. I wasn't really writing songs. There was a piano in the basement of my house that I used to make horrible noises, and sort of wrote some songs. I would say, 'Sang words and banged on the piano.'"

In high school, Meyer became involved with "a little coffeehouse" called the Bedpost Café and ended up being the director of it. He did not, however, play music yet. "I think because of my older brother, who was so good, I was intimidated," he says.

Finally, in August 1970, just before college at the University of Bridgeport, Meyer bought a guitar he still uses and started playing.

"It wasn't until I got the guitar and started to learn other people's songs that I recognized a certain group of songs that I liked were all written by Carole King, or Neil Sedaka, or a certain group of songs that I

Part I

didn't like were all written by Neil Diamond," Meyer says. "But having written little poems before that, in isolation, that's when I started to actually write songs. The first one was about a coal mine. I was working in the White Owl Cigar Display Case factory the summer of 1971, and somehow that made me think about coal mines."

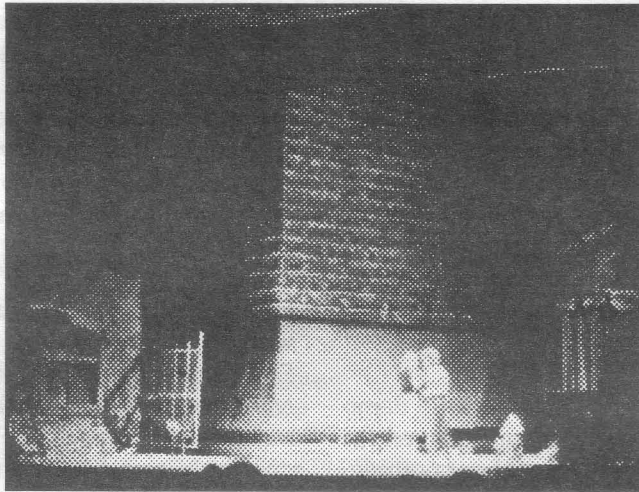
Meyer got his first experience in record-making cutting albums as birthday presents for his girlfriend. "It used to be that you could send a tape off to this studio in New York on 45th Street, and they would make you an acetate for \$12," he recalls, "and so as a present I made two albums. One has 'Virginia Coal' on it and a couple of others that will remain hidden forever. It has 'You've Got A Friend' and 'Blackbird.' There's only one copy of each of these. What I think this shows, and ties into *Fast Folk* coming later, is that at the point I decided I wanted to write songs, one of my first impulses was to try to make a record."

In his sophomore year, Meyer became involved in a new coffeehouse called The Carriage House. The first person hired to play there, he gave his debut performance in February 1972. By the following year, he was booking the club. "This is a pattern with me," he notes. "We did plays, we did poetry readings, and that's where I decided that songwriting was what I wanted to do."

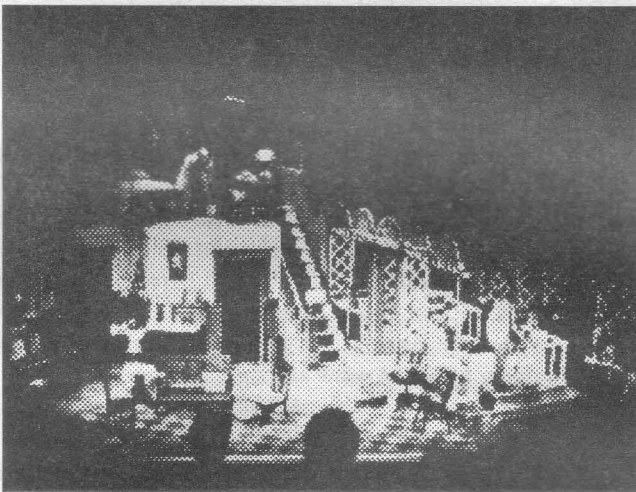
What he wanted to do was both music and theater, and he has balanced the two fields ever since. Meyer was a theater major at Bridgeport, designing lighting for most school productions. When he graduated in 1974, he spent the summer as the designer/technical director for a summer theater in upstate New York. "That was when I started to be the obsessive theater person," he says. "They paid me \$1,000 for the season, and they gave me a \$1,000 budget to design, build, and light three plays. They said if

I went over budget, the money would be subtracted from my salary, which, not knowing any better, I agreed to. I brought three plays in for seven hundred and sixty-some-odd dollars. From that day forward I usually held all three of those jobs on any production I did.

"Around the winter of 1975, I decided to play some clubs, and I had some success. I'd booked a lot of people, and I knew that there was a circuit, but I had never actually gone out and tried to play. So I started doing that."



Stage sets by Richard Meyer



In the spring, he won a full scholarship to Smith College as a set designer, and reluctantly spent the 1975-76 school year there as a graduate student. "Being the product of suburban upbringing, I felt obligated to go. I didn't have a good time. They didn't really like me, and I didn't like them. The teachers were designing, and I got frustrated. So we parted ways at the end of a year. They said I would never have a career in the theater, and I said I didn't think that their program was any good."

Meyer embarked on his career the next day by getting a job lighting the Massachusetts Bicentennial Pageant. Once the play was up and running, he spent time with the show's sound man recording songs. "By the end of the summer, we had two hours of Richard-Meyer-at-that-point, which is nothing to brag about," Meyer says, although "Music Like the Wind" (CooP #207) is from this period. More importantly, though, "I realized I had about 50 songs. It's what in many ways the *Fast Folk* project does—if you record over time, it gives you the knowledge that you have a body of work. And I've found it very helpful every year or two to just play everything in my notebooks onto tape."

In the fall, Meyer returned to playing the clubs, supporting himself by dressing department-store windows. In January 1977, he got a job in the art department at Warner Brothers Publishing. "I was not

terribly committed to being in theater, and was obviously not good enough to be serious about music yet. Even I knew that." He took out a loan and bought a car.

Settling down didn't work out. Meyer was offered the opportunity to design and build the 1977 Maryland state play, *Wings of the Morning*, an outdoor production on a river. After an idyllic summer, he returned to New Rochelle to be technical director for a theater company founded by Group Theatre member Robert Lewis. "It was the first artistically serious job I had," Meyer says.

Though he wanted to get back to songwriting and performing, he was persuaded to become a founding member of Shakespeare & Company in Lenox, Massachusetts, the company's home, in the summer of 1978, which involved directing the restoration of a mansion built by Edith Wharton. At the end of the summer, however, he made a decisive move to return to music—a move to Los Angeles.

"I did the whole routine," he recalls, "making little demo tapes at home. I had lead sheets done up and played for people at different publishing companies and got nothing. Mostly, I was not really trying to be a performer, but I was trying to get people to cover my songs. I was writing a lot of piano ballads because that's what the publishers were asking for. They weren't interested in the rock 'n' roll. The New Wave bands were writing their own stuff and so there was no need for that. The big ballad was the thing. I went into one publisher who said, 'No, like this,' and put a Barry Manilow record on the turntable. So I tried to write those.

"After about two years, I just got completely demoralized. I stopped writing. I threw out all my tapes. I had been doing odd jobs as an elevator operator, a commercial electrician, I worked in a bookstore in Beverly Hills. And I started to gravitate back to theater."

Meyer played in clubs in L.A., in a band, The Odd Sox, gradually improving as a performer, and in the spring of 1982, became part of a spontaneous songwriting workshop. He began writing again, composing, for example, "No Reason To Cry," which eventually would turn up in the March 1983 issue of *Fast Folk*.

In the summer of 1982, after nearly four years in L.A., Meyer returned to Shakespeare & Company, to light a well-received production of *Twelfth Night* in Brooklyn's Prospect Park. "That put me back in New York," he says. "I started re-acquainting myself with the Village. I had heard of SpeakEasy only through the Bob Dylan Imitators' Contest when I was in L.A. I read about it in *Rolling Stone*."

Meyer began to go to the Monday-night hoots at SpeakEasy and Folk City. One night in December 1982, Meyer was approached by David Massengill, who complimented him and said, "'Have you net Jack Hardy?'" Meyer recalls. "All I was doing was showing up, picking a number, playing, and hanging out. I didn't even know that there was a co-op that ran the place."

Meyer began attending the co-op meetings and made a tape that he gave to Jack Hardy. Hardy and Massengill chose the newly-written "Jive Town," which became the first of many songs Meyer recorded for *The Coop*, when it appeared in the February 1983 issue. One month later, not only did "No Reason To Cry" turn up on the record, but Meyer also published an article, "L.A. Opportunities," in the magazine.

He also, using the graphic experience he'd acquired while working at Warner Bros. Publishing, began laying out *Fast Folk* album covers. Gradually, as he had with his college coffeehouse, Meyer became a more and more involved member of the magazine staff. By the October 1984 issue, one could find Meyer's name in three separate places in *Fast Folk*'s masthead. In 1985 and 1987, he coordinated booking for SpeakEasy and co-produced the *Live From The SpeakEasy* broadcasts on WBAI radio. In March 1985, he was listed as one of *Fast Folk*'s "production coordinators;" by January 1986, he was one of the associate editors; by March, he was "acting editor;" and by August, he was *Fast Folk*'s editor, a position he held for six years.

But that was far from all. In what one of his *Fast Folk* bios referred to as a triple life, Meyer also maintained his musical career, playing in the U.S. and Europe, recording and producing regularly for *Fast Folk*, and releasing two self-produced albums, *Laughing/Scared* in 1987 and *The Good Life!* in 1992. He continued to design lights and scenery and to work as a technical director simultaneously for two regional theaters and off-Broadway productions—80 of them, in fact, including the Mabou Mines' production of *Through The Leaves*, which went to Jerusalem and Montreal, *Old Business* at the New York Shakespeare Festival, the Los Angeles production of *Hurly Burly*, and *All My Sons* in Madras, India.

"It's impossible to describe now the kind of workaholic that I was then. I was near physical collapse," Meyer says today of his "chaotic life" of the mid-80s. By later in the decade, he was able to slow down slightly and organized his triple life, but his activities remain dizzying to most eyes. Now, having cut down to a mere double life, he continues his theater work while preparing his third album, and, though "editor emeritus," continues his involvement with *Fast Folk*.



Fast Folk: *I think of your two records as very different, and that, I think, is worth talking about. I almost think of The Good Life! as a very coherent, unified set of pieces, and Laughing/Scared as a series of very different kinds of songs.*

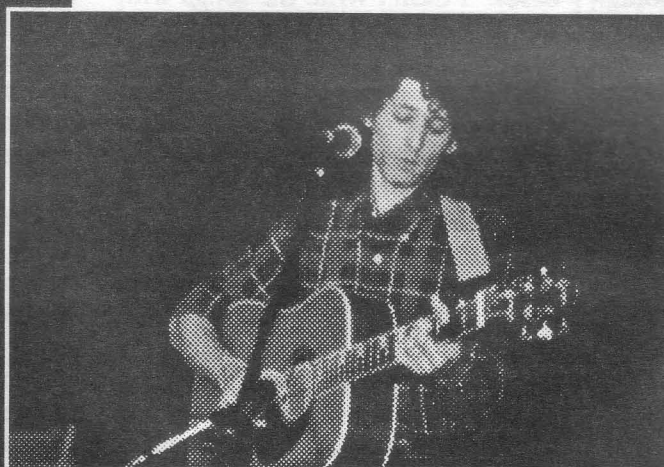
Richard Meyer: Most of *Laughing/Scared* was recorded in the winter of 1985 through the summer of 1986 by Mark Dann. Almost all of those songs were written out of the Cornelia Street songwriters' exchange, except for "No Reason To Cry," which I wrote when I was in L.A. in probably '81, and "Jive Town," which was the first song I wrote after coming back to New York.

I commuted from the Berkshires every Monday and went to Cornelia Street. As often as not, Jack and I would hang out, usually with Suzanne [Vega] or Brian Rose. This was a period when people would challenge each other. So, Jack and I would challenge each other, among other people. Probably four or five of the songs on his *Cauldron* album were responses to my challenges, to write a song about the Depression, about a horse with a broken leg, which is "The War of the Roses," and others. He challenged me to write an

and a political pop song, which was "The Walkman Song." "The January Cold" was another. The different styles that you hear on *Laughing/Scared* is me trying to exorcise some of the popness that I wanted to express, just to get back in touch with feeling that there was something that I could write. Being in this group that was much more folk oriented, I was also trying to write these more folk songs.

One weekend, Rod MacDonald was playing at the SpeakEasy on a Friday. I happened to hear his song "Blues for the River" at soundcheck. I thought, "What a great song this is." I had to go up to Connecticut, and all the way up there, I had the song going in my head (my car radio was broken). I tried to remember the song. I had the wrong rhythm and a little bit of the melody, but I had only heard half the song. Anyway, I went on to the Berkshires and was sitting in Edith Wharton's supposedly haunted writing room. I was trying to play Rod's song. What came out of me was "Laughing/Scared" almost complete. Had I stayed for Rod's gig, I probably never would have written my song.

So, the answer to your question is, I think I was trying to find my voice as a writer again. I was being influenced by the scene, the folkiness of the scene. But something like "Jive Town" was much more me going home and listening to Hall and Oates records and Ella Fitzgerald's songbook series. The last two years in L.A., I hardly played. I just was musically dead. And so, in making *Laughing/Scared*, I didn't really think about what the record was going to be or who the audience might be. It didn't really matter whether it was going to be a folk record or a rock record. That's why there's all



animal song with a sexual image, which is "The Lady of the Moon,"

these different influences on it. It is scattered, because I was scattered. I was also learning about recording by doing it.

I remember thinking, "Oh, isn't it going to be fun to have 'No Guarantee,' the sort of pop song, 'Strangers and Friends,' this bluegrass rave-up, 'Midnight Rain,' a little ballad, and 'Jive Town' right after each other." I was trying to avoid what I would have said then was a boring folk record. I stand by its eclecticism.

Am I answering your question?

FF: *Yes, but in order to answer my question completely, you must move from the first album to the second album and thereby bring a balance and completion to the point.*

RM: Okay. A lot of those are the "Oh, I'm having a bad relationship" songs in one form or another, and by the time I finished *Laughing/Scared*, I decided I was not going to write any more of those songs. I think, having more sense of myself, maybe by virtue of a little bit of authority and command that I had around here rather than just being the new kid in town, I felt more free to write—to try a little harder, and to try to make the songs more complex. Now I'm only writing for myself. I feel that my work on the scene, with its politics, has kept people from actually hearing the songs.

"The Good Life!" and "The Empress of Clowns" were the first two of that next bunch. I realized that I was writing for two levels at once: I want songs to be ironic and sensual at the same time, and I wanted the songs to be heard in two different ways at the same time. I want somebody to listen to "The Burden" and hear it as both a pro- and anti-choice song. "The Black Swan" is a song about human/animal transformation on the

surface, and underneath it's about how people find each other through jealousy and fear. "The Good Life!" has all these images jammed into a bizarre city and describes embracing a wild life and being destroyed by the wild life at the same time. I tried to make each line have two senses to it. Is "The Lone Wolf" a story about the guy building the fire to keep the wolf away or is it about the fire going out and the wolf getting him? It is the male equivalent of "The Empress of Clowns."

The other thing that I get a sense of in *The Good Life!* is how many of the songs have a religious set of images. As I put a song list together, I found there were a lot of common words among those songs. I'm not a doctrinaire religious person, but I think about the spiritual side of life a lot. *The Good Life!* seemed to me to be a group of songs about, if not the same couple, a type of person confronting some questions about spirituality or religion. Even a song like "Je Ne Sais Pas" has this couple kissing in the church while the saints watch—I don't know whether they're approving or disapproving. The religion that's supposed to comfort the world has been dissipated. The imagery is there; a lot of our social habits are drawn from religious bases. I didn't write the songs with this in mind, but I noticed it later.

FF: *What songs need to be written? What is the job of the songwriter now, as you perceive your job where you are at this moment in your career?*

RM: What I consider to be my job is figuring out what my ideas are, and then stay true to them between the beginning and the end of a song. What I'm interested in now is finding a way within a song to describe a very complicated, fractured, kind of fly's multiple-eye view of the world, and do it in such a way that it is

elegant, convincing, and musical. Not as an exercise, like Dadaism for its own sake, but because that's what interests me right now.

I'm off on my own right now, and some of the new songs are short little ballads, and then some of them are these more extended kind of things up in my head. Whether I'm successful, I don't know, but I'm trying to make them be songs of the mind without being so intellectual that people are put off.

Now I have an idea of what I want the song to be before I'm writing it. I just kind of write and write and write, almost automatically. After a certain point I think that I've got something. It doesn't mean that I've got a song, but I have this mass of material that I know is going to become something cohesive. I can sense it, and I know that the only way to get it from these five pages of utter, confused trash is to keep whacking away at it, play it for a couple of people, record it, listen to it 20 times in the car over and over again until my mind knows, "Oh yeah, it's supposed to be like this." The tape recorder is a tool for me. It used to be that I would write on my 1952 electric typewriter. My method would be to type it out, take the paper out, work on it long-hand, and type it again, because for me there's something engagingly physical about the act of writing and the act of having to rewrite something in its entirety.

So I figure out what's going on, and then immediately re-type it, and in the re-typing I would incorporate whatever the revisions were and then some other things that I didn't think of previously because it wasn't actually going from my head to my fingers again. For some of those long songs, I've got a little computer. I've started putting long songs on a computer so I can move things

around. But I'm generating a lot of paper because I still print it out and work on it long-hand. It's not unusual for various fragments within the course of a month or two to find themselves in the same song at the end of my compressing/editing process. I also carry my notebook with me everywhere. I believe notebooks are like talismans and by keeping them, thinking about them, and using them, they help focus the mind.

FF: *In talking about some of the music that you used to listen to in the late '60s, you cited the moodiness of Procol Harum and Donovan. One can't listen to The Good Life! and not get the sense that moods are an important element in your recordings. Certainly, by bringing in different kinds of instruments, and the arrangements are very much—I wouldn't say "moody," but they have distinct moods.*

RM: I don't mean "moody" meaning "negative," although occasionally it is that, but songs seem to have a temperature or a texture. I don't think you can listen to [Donovan's] "Young Girl Blues," just the way he's playing guitar and the way they've got it mixed, and not feel some kind of bittersweet, almost disconsolate feeling. Just the way they've taken all the high frequencies out of his guitar. That's part of making a record. You have the ability to choose from the entire musical spectrum. Why not use it?

If I'm in a studio with my guitar and the engineer says, "What do you think?" to the extent that one has the experience and has listened attentively to other records and cares, you can say, "Oh, I'd like it to be a little brighter," or "Can you make the guitar sound like 'Here, There, and Everywhere'?" In the studio, you

have to make a choice, and by not choosing, you allow someone else to. Eldridge Cleaver said, "If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem," and artistically it's the same thing. If you just go in and let your engineer make a record, then they're making your record, and some people like that. I listen carefully to records and have specific ideas for production and arrangement, far beyond my budget and musical training.

FF: *Some people pay a lot of money for that. They do that very deliberately.*



RM: Yeah. If I had the money to hire T-Bone Burnett, I would allow that to happen. I haven't been in that kind of relationship with somebody, but one assumes that you discuss it beforehand so you know what you're getting into.

FF: *I think it's a good way to put it, though, because it almost gives the lie to that sort of notion that describes recordings as "unadorned" or "raw" or a sort of audio verité—isn't that Robert Fripp's phrase? "This is what it really sounds like." Well, it's never really what it really sounds like.. It's what it sounds like through particular microphones in this particular room.*

RM: If you work the way I have, you are limited by the equipment to a certain degree. But you still have choices who to play with, what instruments, what key, tempo, et cetera. The tape hears what you do for better or worse. It's kind of Zen.

Part of the fun for me is to learn to make better and better choices. The record I made for my girlfriend in 1971 I made with two little mono microphones in stereo on my \$89 Sony reel-to-reel, and it sounds like that. It sounds like I made it sitting next to my window in my dorm room. It has charm, but it doesn't have any quality that I consider an artistic recording. If you are a recording artist (not the same as being a songwriter), and you're going to make a record, you must recognize that recording itself can be an art. I'm gonna embrace what the studio has to offer, to enhance what I do.

Part of the fun of hanging around the *Fast Folk* project has been to learn about producing hands on. I think that's one of its valuable lessons. You can go in and make a record simply, or you can go in and make a more sophisticated record under more complex conditions. A lot of the early ones were recorded in one or two takes, but then Mark Dann would stay up all night long and, he says, put 100 hours into overdubs. His enjoyment was being the artist from the other side, part of the collaborative production technique used on most *Fast Folk* albums. My records are more produced but are at least half "live in the studio" affairs.

FF: *How do you see the folk scene at present?*

The conclusion of this interview will appear in our next issue.

Bios *in order of appearance*



Michael McNevin

Michael McNevin was raised in Niles, California, across the bay from San Francisco. He was a 1992 winner of the Kerrville New Folk

competition, and is now touring nationally. For booking or to order *Secondhand Story*, an 11-song collection, contact Mudpuddle Music, P.O. Box 5062, Pleasanton, CA 94366, (510) 644-9935 (\$11 cassette, \$16 CD, payable to Michael McNevin).



Beverly Greenfield

Beverly Greenfield lives and works in New York, where she performs and writes songs as much as she can manage. "Smile" was written mostly

during a daily effort to walk off the evil effects of a three-week secretarial job in midtown Manhattan.



Jamie Watson

Jamie Watson has lived in Philadelphia most of his life, making music as a child by teaching himself to play his favorite TV show themes on guitar. He

joined the American Boychoir at the age of eleven, singing and touring with the boys throughout the United States and abroad. In the early 1970s, Jamie became interested in folk music, started to play clawhammer banjo, and began

performing both as a soloist and in several bands, earning the reputation of a powerful singer, solid musician, and engaging performer.

Dirty Linen praised his recently released compact disc *Tell the Truth*, calling it "an impressive debut." Jamie is joined on this *Fast Folk* recording by Paul Friedman, a Brooklyn-based dance musician. To contact Jamie or to obtain a copy of *Tell the Truth*, you can write to Jamie Watson, Box 1022, Havertown, PA 19082.



Louise Taylor

Native Vermonter **Louise Taylor** has been bringing her personal brand of contemporary folk music to New England audiences for

the past four years. With the release of her 1992 CD *Looking for Rivers*, Louise caught the attention of *Fast Folk* Managing Editor Wendy Beckerman, who reviewed the album in issue 608. This year Louise can be found performing at noteworthy folk clubs and coffeehouses throughout the Northeast. She is currently working on her next release. For performance dates and CDs or tapes, write Blue Coyote Records, RR1 Box 1505, Newfane, VT 05345. Send \$15 for CD, \$10 for tape, plus \$2 postage and handling, \$1 each additional unit. Outside of the USA please write for information concerning payment.



Keith Kelly

Sometime pain in the butt **Keith Kelly** was proud to record "The Troublemaker's Waltz" with his new band, The Invisibles. Work has actually begun on Keith's first album, on which he and the boys will

tackle many more of his songs. But they still can't agree on a title. They wouldn't pose for a picture, either. Keith really has his hands full.

Skip Barthold

Sheila MacDonald

Sheila MacDonald has been writing songs and performing since 1991. This is Sheila's third appearance on *Fast Folk*. For info: 260 Market Avenue, Quincy, MA 02169.

Ed Carey

Ed Carey is a 24-year-old singer/songwriter born and raised in Bearsville, NY. Currently he is touring clubs and coffeehouses in the area and is working on his first album. This is his second recording for *Fast Folk*. For correspondence /mailing, Ed can be contacted at P.O. Box 280, Cross River, NY 10518.



Brian Crawley

Brian Crawley lives and writes in New York City, where theaters are at last catching on to his plays. This is his third appearance on a *Fast Folk* issue, and this

song, like most of his others, owes a thing or two to Dave Van Ronk's helpful advice.

His sister's new baby finds his singing endlessly amusing.



George Gerney

George Gerney lives in New Jersey but has been part of the Greenwich Village songwriters' scene for the past two years,

and has begun to perform sporadically again after a twenty-year "retirement." He has recently been rewarded (?????) for his production work on *Fast Folk* by being named an assistant editor. This is his third appearance in the magazine.



Lori Bloustein

Lori Bloustein is in her second incarnation as a singer-songwriter. She wrote for several years, beginning at age 14, but her music was a well-kept secret.

After a hiatus of 15 years, Lori began writing again two years ago. This time, she really wants to be heard. Thank you, *Fast Folk*, for making this possible. For more information, please contact Barbara Moss at (212) 233-2717.

McDonnell/ Tane

McDonnell /Tane is a New Haven-based acoustic duo consisting of Katie McDonnell and Freddie Tane. They have toured New England extensively, either as headliners or sharing the stage with Bob Dylan, Suzanne Vega, and Kathy Mattea, to name a few. Two recordings are currently available *McDonnell/Tane*, cassette only, and *Volcanic Rendezvous*, CD and cassette. Contact Treestar Management, P.O. Box 3287, New Haven, CT 06515, (203) 438-6102.

Frank Mazzetti

Frank Mazzetti was one of the songwriters who helped conceive and organize the New York Musician's Cooperative circa 1982. He was on the original staff of *Fast Folk*. For ten months out of twelve, he teaches *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *Lord of the Flies* in the New York City school system.



Ron Renninger

Ron Renninger was classically trained and proficient on both the piano and violin by age ten, but by 1966 he began

making his mark on the music world by playing guitar. The first act to be signed to the then-newly-formed Sire Records, his band The Basement Concession (with Ron on electric lead) released a single that reached the national charts. He later played rhythm guitar in Chuck Berry's back-up band.

By the mid-70s Ron turned his attention toward singing and writing his own material. Today Ron is based in New York City, and has recently released his second album, *A Vanishing Breed*, available through Vienna Virginia Records, 84-70 129th Street, #4E, Kew Gardens, NY 11415. He's performing at the Hartford Folk Festival July 31 and August 1, 1993. For more information: (718) 846-2789.



Diana Jeanne Feldman

Diana Jeanne Feldman lives in New York City and has been writing songs and singing since she was a little girl. She has performed at numerous

clubs in and around New York. She is also founder and artistic director of the ENACT Theater Company (an educational theater company), devoted to working with youth, to help them find their own voices for expression and problem solving. For booking and correspondence, please contact: ENACT, (212) 645-0399.



Lou and Frankie Gallo

Lou and Frankie Gallo teamed up on "She's a Dog" when Frankie was two years old. They have been singing and songwriting ever since. Lou enjoys making

people laugh, especially children. "Nothing compares to collaborating with Frankie," Lou says. "He's naturally creative and very funny; it's a partnership." Lou teaches Frankie a little something about songwriting and

Frankie gives Lou some lessons on love.

Lou Gallo, age 39, resides in Manhattan. Frankie, age 7, lives life to the fullest in New Jersey with his Mom, and in New York City with his Dad. Justice, their dog, died last year.

Ewart Skinner

Ewart Skinner has been writing poetry for over twenty years, published in numerous magazines and anthologies. He currently teaches at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He is originally from the island of Trinidad.

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Lyrics

It's Raining Michael McNevin

One night it rained in the streets of my home
The industrial grid of what some people know
As an animal living and breathing like us
But its bones are of iron and its muscles can crush
To survive any winter but water and rust
Are the downfall to anything steel to the touch

Chorus
It's raining, it's pouring
And the old machine's burning a hole in the ceiling
We go to bed and cover our heads
And wake up to find it's still there in the morning

As it stands and stares at us ten stories high
Like a giant asleep with its eyes open wide
While beneath the black smokestacks and grey broken windows
Something melts deep inside and returns to the shadows
Of steel and its mother but not to its own
It's just added to more of the hilltop we've blown off
To get to the ore and the blood of the stone

Chorus
As the factories smother and spit like volcanoes
Thrown in with what's left of the dinosaur bones
It brings to us comfort and leaves us in chains
What's left of that dinosaur after it rains
But an armor so thick that it's more like a cage
As we hold it again and again it decays
Into something brand new we indenture like slaves

Chorus

©1992 Michael McNevin/ Mudpuddle Music

Smile Beverly Greenfield

Mama cleans apartments on Fifth Avenue
She buys the groceries alone
And I spent two years at Katherine Gibbs
And I'm making better money than Mama ever did

Chorus
So I smile a little bit every time he calls me honey
I smile a little bit when my heart beats fast in anger
I smile a little bit when he hands me a dime
I'm wishin' it were a dollar for every smile

I married the man of my dreams
You know he promised me the world
And now there's Janie and Esther Anne
And the man of my dreams is nowhere to be found

Chorus

There ain't a day goes by when I
Don't wake up and wonder why
They're getting younger and me, I'm growing old
How did I get here and when can I go

Mama cleans apartments on Fifth Avenue
She buys the groceries alone
And I spent two years at Katherine Gibbs
And I'm making better money than Mama ever did

Chorus

Weep Anymore Jamie Watson

I am travelling down a long, lonesome road
How I wish that my journey would end
I am travelling down a long, lonesome road
And I'm longing for the day when I see my home again

I mistreated you so upon the day I left
Even now I still sit and wonder why
I mistreated you so upon the day I left
Why did I fail to make it right before I said goodbye?

When I'm weary and tired of trouble in

this life
It's no wonder I act the way I do
When I'm weary and tired of trouble in this life
I'm ashamed of how it causes me to take it out on you

Late last night in the dark I heard a mournful sound
Little one don't you weep anymore
Late last night in the dark I heard a mournful sound
There's a pain in my heart I've never felt before

I am travelling down a long, lonesome road
How I wish that my journey would end
I am travelling down a long, lonesome road
And I'm longing for the day when I see my home again

©1992 Jamie Watson

Archaeology (Grandmother's Chiffonier) Louise Taylor

She always falls asleep
On these long drives home
And leaves me to my memories
Bare feet on cold linoleum

And the warm pastels of sunsets gone
The scent so sweet and dim
Like her old overcoat
Over-loved and worn thin

By the light of kerosene
And dusk through lacy curtain dreams
I watch her thin paper skin
Undo her last hairpin

To let her silver halo fall
Down around her gathered robe
Red plaid sleeves, a man's arms long
Pockets full of knitting yarn

She'd pull a little drawer
And turn a tiny key
And unlock the family
Archaeology

With tools of silver and bone
Paper and a poem and a fine-tooth comb
She'd sing that little song
"Lamby Pie Won't You Come Home"

Now I'm staring past the wipers
In the cold November rain
Past her slow breath rising
And her weathered veins

To two sled runners slicing snow
Up to my elbows
Like knives as keen as those
To carve an unthankful turkey whole

To smoky chimneys and steamy breath
And pies in auburn windows rest
To the grand elms as still as churches
We tiptoed past in reverence

She'd pull a little drawer
And turn a tiny key
And unlock the family
Archaeology

The tellings were her jewels
Spun gold on a wooden stool
Then she'd sing that little tune
Lamby Pie won't you come home

To doors that opened by themselves
And let all that laughter out
And it went bounding through the bric-a-brac
And we never could get it back

And the days followed in hot pursuit
And we ran hard but not so fast
Past silver moons in stocking caps
With icicles for bayonets

Her French perfume, her Chinese fan
A purple heart, a wedding band
And then she'd sing me back again
Lamby Pie won't you come home

She always keeps her eyes closed
On those long drives home
But I believe she sees it all
The keeper of the treasure trove

Buttoned up beneath her coat
Somewhere between her halo and her toes
Are the places only she owns
And she may take me still

She reaches in her bag
And holds out a tiny key
And smiles that melody
Lamby Pie won't you come home

©1993 Louise Taylor/Blue Coyote

The Troublemaker's Waltz

Keith Kelly

I ran into my ex-boss downtown
yesterday
By the City Hall steps in the rain
I was saving the whales or the bears or
the trees
So I asked him for any spare change
He said, I remember why we let you go
Didn't have your priorities straight
If you'd worked this hard you might still
get that paycheck
Wise up, kid, before it's too late

I was all set to argue but I only smiled
Not everyone cares what I say
I'll be civil, obedient, just for a while
Until this dumb jerk goes away

My father's best friend was on line before
me
We're both getting checks from the state
He said, your old man would revolve in
his grave
If he saw his favorite child's fate
I remember the party when you finished
college
Your dad nearly busted with pride
'Til you told him you'd joined the Peace
Corps, then I could see
Something collapsing inside

I was all set to argue but I only smiled
Not everyone cares what I say
But my dad always taught me to walk
one more mile
And let nothing stand in my way

Then I saw my ex-fiancée early this morn
Once more put our love to the test
I was chaining myself to the power-plant
fence
My sweetie-pie made the arrest
She said, you've the right to remain very
silent
And I wouldn't mind if you do
Ever since you took over the dean's office
I knew
One day I'd slap handcuffs on you

I was all set to argue but I only smiled
Not everyone cares what I say
My sweetie, it seemed, was no longer
beguiled
I guessed as they hauled me away

In the wagon I thought, why not give up
the ghost
Throw the towel in and call it a day
Somebody else always carries it on
And what's it to me anyway

Saw my favorite professor at police HQ
He wouldn't give them his right name
He said, I've sure wondered what
happened to you
Now I see I've not taught you in vain
My spouse is fed up, she says, you're
nearly seventy
Is this still your idea of fun
But you can't teach old dogs to pull no
more tricks
Not when there's more work to be done

Well, I never would argue, I smiled a big
smile
For someone who cares what I say
Told him, Doc, when we leave here, the
coffee's on me
And we'll both live to fight one more day
Yeah, we'll both live to fight one more
day

©1990 Keith Kelly

Dear Life

Skip Barthold

Way up north, on quiet land
With the border close at hand



Dirty Linen extends the range of folk music with "a wild sense of dedication matched only by good humor and intelligence." (*Library Journal*) Acoustic to electric, traditional to progressive. Artists, festivals, new releases, news, reviews, interviews, photos, and more. Comprehensive tour schedule of North America listed by artist. From John Prine to Fairport Convention, Mary-Chapin Carpenter to Béla Fleck & the Flecktones, Bulgarian Choir to 3 Mustaphas 3, Jody Siccher & Kate Brislin to Bartlefield Band, Nanci Griffith to Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown.....Now with oat bran!



Dirty Linen

P.O. Box 66600
Baltimore, MD 21239
(410) 583-7973
FAX (410) 337-6735

Lived a girl, a pretty form
With a manner that was warm
Nothing great or grandiose
But a most generous host
She came to me, I did not strike first
With a deep romantic thirst
It's not an action I would condone
Though she went down on her own
She held on for dear life

For seven months I did my best
Feeling hollow in my chest
Until her shape so coveted
Did its damage to my head
She followed me, like a fact
Like an aching in my back
Showered me with much attention
And gifts too kind to mention
Like a waving battle flag
Or concrete in my saddle bag
She held on for dear life

For seven years now I have stood
And kept well hidden in these woods
Breaking sticks and throwing stones
But never more alone
Though the reason isn't clear
Somehow she disappeared
Out on the water where we went
With different intent
It's not an action I would condone
Though she went down on her own
She held on for dear life

Holy Holy Ghost

Sheila MacDonald

Holy holy ghost, it's the least or the most
The first or the last, I have forgotten
When I lost it long ago I was too weak
willed, I know
With nothing to show I wasn't talkin'

Chorus
And when the moon looks thin and I'm
counting up my sins
Do you see me a self-pitying child?
And when I've lost out again, drove me
round the bend
Do you think you could watch me for a
while?

Holy holy ghost, I have little to boast
With holes in my shoes and both my
pockets
Still, I am seldom sad and you should be
glad
We send software up there in new
rockets

Chorus

Holy holy ghost, I am not a good host

As a guest I do best by the exit
Still, you can come and look, it's the fish
or the hook
And sometimes there's still time left to fix
it

Chorus

Holy holy ghost, it's the least or the most
The first or the last, I have forgotten

Foolish Game

Ed Carey

The cuts they go so deep as to pierce my
heart
And leave me wounded inside
And the cuts that scar my memory
They're the hardest ones to hide

Chorus
I've tested the waters a time or two
Now I'd rather keep my feet on the shore
'Cause love is just a foolish game
That I've played somewhere before

I'll let love slip by my fingertips
As my heart stands shattered and frail
When I run the dust will fly from my feet
As it covers up my trail

Chorus

You can run but you can't hide
From shattered dreams that take your
head for a ride
You get yourself together, get on the right
track
Just then you realize your heart ain't
coming back

The cuts they go so deep as to pierce my
heart
And leave me wounded inside
And the cuts that scar my memory
They're the hardest ones to hide

Chorus

Time On The Wind

Brian Crawley

O I once met a sailor, he grabbed hold my
arm
Said, "Time, time's yours to spend!"
When I asked, "Old man, why is this
cause for alarm?"
He said, "Spend your time on the wind"

"What land do you come from, say,
where have you been
Time, time is yours to spend

Did you bring back gold pieces and fine
porcelains
From the time you spent on the wind?"

"Young man, I just gave you the treasure
I won
Time, time is yours to spend
For time is the fortune you have when
you're young
Spend your time on the wind"

"If your family is noble, or your marriage
is shrewd
Time, time is yours to spend
But how, sir, can a man feed his wife and
his brood
If he spends his time on the wind?"

"Your time is your own, son, it's your
blessing and curse
Time, time is yours to spend
What good is the gold that you hoard in
your purse?
Spend your time on the wind"

"But since, sir, I have no estate set aside
Time, time's running thin
Would I end a rich man if I did decide
To spend my time on the wind?"

"Don't waste what you have in schemes
and plans
Time, time is yours to spend
See how your watch hides his face in his
hands
Spend your time on the wind"

The Boys In The Back Room

George Gerney

What's goin' on with the boys in the back
room?
How long have they been in there?
Will they be comin' out soon?
Did you fix them what they want to eat?
Have they had any phone calls put
through?
What's goin' on with the boys in the back
room?

What's the deal with this guy over by the
door?
Don't he know that I belong here?
What's he starin' at me for?
Do you see that scar runnin' down his
face?
It's about the length of this crack in the
floor
What's the deal with this guy over by the
door?

What's goin' on with the boys in the back room?
Did I neglect to tell you they'd be stoppin' by here around noon?
We always give them free eats and beers
They've been hangin' out here for a couple of years
What's goin' on with the boys in the back room?

I had to leave a couple hours ago
There's always those errands to run
(Don't worry, I saved some for you and me)
The word down at Steve's Pool Hall
Is that some fool's headin' for a fall
Do you know who it's goin' to be?
Did they tell you who it's goin' to be?
I'm dyin' to know who it's goin' to be

What do you mean, you have to speak to me outside?
You've got a look on your face like you've seen someone who died
Stick around 'til their prayer meeting ends
I'll introduce you to all of my friends
Quit lookin' at me like you seen someone who died

What's goin' on with the boys in the back room?
How long have they been in there?
Will they be comin' out soon?
Do they need anything else to drink?
Man, this place is as quiet as a tomb
What's goin' on with the boys in the back room?

Gimme Home

Lori Bloustein

Traveled all the way to Chrysalee
No one there remembered me
And I felt so alone
I was born in that small town
Now I want to lay me down there
I am so alone

Mama won't you show me
How to save my soul
Papa please just help me
Which way should I go

Sent away when I was small
A prophesy, some crystal ball
Said I should be a queen
Schooled in all the finer ways
Married young in nobler days
But I was so alone

Mama won't you show me
How to save my soul

Papa please just help me
Which way should I go

When my king died suddenly
Shrouded in great mystery
I fell down from grace
Held as prisoner ten dark years
Finally pardoned by my peers
But I was so alone

I blame no one for my fate
For what I have become
But every day I pray for one thing
Let me find a home
Gimme home
Dreamin' of a home

Traveled all the way to Chrysalee
No one there remembered me
And I felt so alone

Seeking Passage

Kate McDonnell

Maybe it's the weather
Maybe it's the moon
But my feet are stumbling
And I'm singing out of tune
Birdie on my windowsill
Stops and stares at me
She feels the winds and currents
Of my churning sea

Chorus
You say you seek passage to my heart
I just seek passage through the dark
You say it's lonely at the bottom
You don't know how far down the bottom goes

Scylla and Charybdis
Straits of Tumar
You never wanted to sail your fragile ship that far
Wild and dangerous water
Dark and angry sea
Your journey's long and hard
Just to get to me

Chorus

Batten down the hatches
Bring down the main
You're heading straight for center
The center of my pain
Crashing rocks and rattling locks
Watch out for the pier
Ah, you made it safely
I'm so glad you're here

Chorus

©1993 Kate McDonnell/Schnabb Music
(BMI)

A Better World

Frank Mazzetti

You shouldn't be on these avenues
Where needles crack the night's hard shell
While sirens squeal, God's back is curled
You don't belong here
Can't you find a better world?

Me, I grew under suburban skies
It's golf and sniggering locker room jokes
You think that's where the earth was twirled

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and tales of struggle
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But you don't belong there
Can't we find a better world?

Chorus
A better world where we can follow our
heart
Yet want to be responsible
Add our own part
And go for a better world

Concrete blocks to megabytes
Construct the beauty men possess
A thick mitt where the hardball's hurled
Let's climb outta here
Let's go build a better world

I'm In Your Neighborhood

Ron Renninger

Are you gonna love me
I think that you could
Wrap your arms around me
Like a lover would

Hold me tight
I think you should
Are you gonna love me
I'm in your neighborhood

The very first time I looked in your eyes
I saw a reflection of the passion in mine
And it keeps burning brighter, I knew
that it would
Can't wait for tonight, I'm in your
neighborhood

I'm in your neighborhood
I got here yesterday
Can't help but remember
The sweet love that we made

Are you gonna love me
I think that you could
Wrap your arms around me
Like a lover would

Hold me tight
I think you should
Are you gonna love me
I'm in your neighborhood

©1992 Ron Renninger/Lifeform Music
(BMI)

From Above

Diana Jeanne Feldman

I feel myself rising above you
Moving into a cloud
Higher and higher I'm going

Knowing goodbye

In a dream I'm lighter than I thought I
could be
Down below your crying
Are you crying for me?
Don't cry

I'm dancing with the wind
Moving in the air
I am everywhere

I feel your heart pulling me closer to you
Closer through your love
Falling, I'm falling into myself through
the love
It's real love

I feel your love, your love
I feel your love, your love
From above

©1989 Diana Jeanne Feldman

She's A Dog

Music by Lou Gallo

Lyrics by Lou and Frankie Gallo
and Martha Carlucci

This is a song about our dog Justice

She's got two ears
She's got one long tail
But she's got no hands
'Cause she's a dog

She runs around the house
Never catches her prey
She's got no hands
'Cause she's a dog

Chorus
She's a dog, dog, dog
She's our dog
She's a dog, dog, dog
She's our dog

She's got teeth like a wolf
And breath like a bear
But she's got no hands
'Cause she's a dog

She's got a big heart
And a bigger appetite
But she's got no hands
'Cause she's a dog

Chorus

Now I gotta go to school
So I have to say goodbye
But she can't go

'Cause she's a dog

Chorus

She's a dog
She's a dog
She's our dog

Remembering Aunt Emma

(Mind Adventure Into the
State of Kentucky)

Ewart Skinner

By blood, three transfusions away
Your corner. The Music. The familiar.
The house breathed us in and out
Like an old accordion and
twisted us out of shape
in its own ambition,
the family reunion.
It twisted us in, in, in
slow wormlike contortions,
like God compressing a caterpillar.

You are silent and long and tight,
a widower murdered by Velasquez,
in the vector of her lunatic piety;
consciousness, you have.
You speak to me through the
silent ghosts of your cigarette;
the same cigarette, this year, last year,
the year before. The same inch of ash.
Smoke speaks in heavy tongues
in the expanding, angry snort of the
accordion;
The old accordion house breathed in in
in,
and let us out in the collapsing lungs of
its
consciousness;
whuff gurgle, whurf gurgle, whurf
gurgle,
three transfusions away.
In the end, your voice is immutable.
Sharp sad bones protrude from your
cotton
chemise.
You signal with the same cigarette
from the mouth that never curls to
breathe
in or out.
The smoke, like sad, misshapen
pancakes,
drift heavy and listless to the floor and
crawls into corners.
And the house breathed us in
like an old accordion, twisting us,
relatives
in long, odd, misshapen members of an
alphabet,
and bent us in hollow Klee-like

effigies of our language
and breathed us out whoof, whoof;
distributed like exhausted confetti pies
after a confederate parade.
White and scattered on a hardwood floor.
No wind will move us now.
No human wind. We are the parables
that we tell ourselves.
White and scattered on the hardwood
floor
noiseless and bare.

I brought you a rose.
She brought me a rose.
She brought her a rose.
Daddy took the carnation.
Two foot long green stem and
put it in a coke bottle on the piano.
Hmmm, a rose.
She's got something in her, that one.
Something that will lift my smoke
from the corner.
Infectious is the silence that we seek
to find our ghosts within.
But we know the coming of the wind
will change the image before our eyes,
and we fear.
The old house breathed us in in,
like an old accordion, breathed us in,
tightened us together in tight high
pitches,
and some of us died for it suffocating
crowds,
and some of us grew mad in long and
silent corners.
In the after-silence of expiring,
the final drawn-out tired worm,
I hear the crick, crick of your rocker.
I must go now Aunt Emma, I must go
The hills open to let me through.
The road is black.
The sad drooping eucalyptus is black.
The craggy moss-ridden oak, black.
Black, the energy of the sun;
A rose at the end of its day
takes its own distant corner.
I pass the house. The factory. The fields.
Things that push back into memory
like a worm gathering traction.
Fly. I must fly.
There will be no more reunions.
I wonder where you are Aunt Emma.
And how you are.
I hope that your smoke has crawled
out of your corner
and that your mouth can speak a word.
As for me, I'm working at the college
now
And doin' just fine, just fine.

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Attention Songwriters! Get serious about your career! Join the National Academy of Songwriters!

The **National Academy of Songwriters** is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to the protection, education and development of songwriters everywhere. NAS has been set up to **help you make contacts, learn about the business, and keep you from getting ripped off.** NAS offers a wide variety of services for the beginning and professional songwriter, such as:

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National Academy of Songwriters

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Reviews

by Jack Licitra



Erica Wheeler

Not Too Far From That

From That Far is the second release from Florence, Massachusetts singer-songwriter Erica Wheeler. Complete with songs about home, love, and the Grand Canyon, this CD was made to be loved. The album's flowing melodies and Erica's charismatic voice make for an intimate look at a sensitive artist with new insight on some old ideas.

The album was produced by Darleen Wilson (Patty Larkin and Bill Morrissey's producer). The sparse arrangements leave enough room for the songs to speak for themselves. Wheeler's voice and rhythmic guitar are seldom accompanied by more than some light percussion, bass and fiddle. All of the tracks on the album were penned by Wheeler, except a fresh arrangement of the traditional "I Know You Rider."

From That Far opens with "Beautiful Road." Erica's portrayal of home has some nice fiddle and winding lyrics:

*Travelling down the highway,
my fingertips to the wheel
Every landscape mirrors how I feel
I've got wide open valleys and
high walls of stone
Sometimes I can see forever
down this beautiful road.*

On the title track, "From That Far," Erica demonstrates her ability to write powerful melodies and lyrics that have much more than surface value:

*Wish I may, wish I might
Catch you falling
through the night
When even stars that fall down
Well they're gone when they hit
the ground.*

About the track "Down River," Wheeler writes "a friend came home from the Grand Canyon truly glowing. When I told her that, she said, 'Yeah, I talked to God down there.'"

Wheeler breathes life into the Canyon and captures the essence of a religious experience:

*She tells me of the time I pulled on the shore
And how the canyon held her each night,
gave her more
She could hear the ancients singing from the walls
Before a whispering fire, her own voice call.*

Some other highlights on the CD are "Amanda Crazy Wolf" based on a poem by Sarada Shanti, and "River," a song on which Erica collaborated with the Mill River in Florence, MA.

If you're looking for an album to get intimate with, I highly recommend this. It has great songs and a unique perspective. To get a copy, write to Blue Pie Music, 121 Pine Street, Florence, MA 01060.



Wendy Beckerman

A True Original

Faring from the grand state of New Jersey, and now a New Yorker, Wendy Beckerman brings us one step closer to making the human experience more bearable. Her debut CD *By Your Eyes* has a vulnerability that makes her extremely accessible. Wendy's approach to songwriting is

full of brilliant metaphors and vivid images. She is a different kind of storyteller with a different kind of story.

By Your Eyes was produced by Jack Hardy. It features Eddy Lawrence on lead guitar, Jeff Hardy on bass, Jeff Berman on drums and Christina Muir on harmonies. On this CD are fourteen of Beckerman's strongest tracks that find even more strength in their bare necessities arrangements. There isn't any Zen fretless bass, but *By Your Eyes* has an ambience that even the Dalai Lama could enjoy.

The journey begins with the title track "By Your Eyes." Wendy's lyrics celebrate the power of deliberation.

*By her lips she brings you in
By her hands she sends you gone
By your eyes you cry
By her arms she holds you strong
By her feet she sends you down
By your eyes you cry*

On "Shadow of the Devil" she turns simplicity into an art form:

*It never asked me for a favor
It didn't take my hand
The big shot shadow of the devil
Didn't think I'd understand*

Wendy finds the perfect medium for story and image in "Gilliana:"

*Gilliana blue and cloudy
Takes a rowboat out to sea
Ends the day without a lover
Two get hooked and one set free*

"This Part of Town" has the mark of a poet:

*In this part of town
The thunder has wheels
It rolls on for miles
And the rain never comes
The rain never comes
In this part of town down*

Beckerman has a great melodic sense. She knows what to say and how to say it. *By Your Eyes* is only the beginning for this truly original singer-songwriter. It is available on Great Divide Records, 178 W. Houston Street, Suite 9, New York, NY 10014 or call (212) 989-7088.



Kitty Donohoe Flying High

Kitty Donohoe is getting ready to head down to Nashville, but if there is any justice in the world, Nashville would head up to her. As *Sparks Fly Upward*, the new release by this Lansing, MI songstress, is the work of a ringer. Donohoe has a laid-back singing style and a voice that could ruffle the feathers on any school boy's neck. From the Irish traditional "Chester City" to the struggle of "Emma Sutter," this CD has true depth.

As *Sparks Fly Upward* is a collection of twelve listener-friendly songs. The production work is first class. This album features cittern, fiddle, harmonica, tin whistle, bagpipes, clarinet, piano, guitar, and Kitty all in one coherent package. The

combination of beautiful songs and solid performances take it to another level.

"Steady as a River" is Kitty's modest love song:

*Steady as a river, safe as they sky
My love loves me though I don't
know why
I'm not much of a bargain when I
get uptight
I'm rough to live with, spoiling for
a fight alright.*

From "Thin Ice" comes the words of wisdom:

*Time heals, time fades
Time changes most everything
Time can make it hard to see
The love that once gave your heart
wings*

Provocative images and seasonal metaphors are at the heart of "Autumn Dance:"

*Finally frost will settle in
Turn the world to red and gold
I'll make coffee black as sin
To stir the blood and cheer the soul*

And the album's most haunting track "Emma Sutter," is the moving story of a widow fighting the monster for her land:

*And in my dreams the auctioneer is
holding out his hand
Behind him stands that oil smiling
bastard of a man
Who wants to build a shopping mall
where all my trees now stand
The fools don't know a thing of ties that
keep you on the land*

As *Sparks Fly Upward* is one of the best albums I've ever heard. It is the kind of CD that makes you say, "God bless self-produced projects." To get a copy, write Roheen Records, P.O. Box 1813, East Lansing, MI 48826-1813.

Credits

1. **It's Raining**
(Michael McNevin)
Michael McNevin: guitar, vocal
2. **Smile**
(Beverly Greenfield)
Beverly Greenfield: guitar, vocal
3. **Weep Anymore**
(Jamie Watson)
Jamie Watson: banjo, vocal
Paul Friedman: fiddle
4. **Archaeology ***
(Grandmother's Chiffonier)
(Louise Taylor)
Louise Taylor: guitar, vocal
5. **The Troublemaker's Waltz ***
(Keith Kelly)
Keith Kelly: guitar, vocal
Wood County: mandolin
Tom Quinn: banjo
Rick Hand II: bass
Gregg Place: drums
6. **Dear Life**
(Skip Barthold)
Skip Barthold: guitar, vocal
7. **Holy Holy Ghost**
(Sheila MacDonald)
Sheila MacDonald: guitar, vocal
Wendy Beckerman: harmony vocal
8. **Foolish Game**
(Ed Carey)
Ed Carey: guitar, vocal
Scott Sylvester: bass
9. **Time On The Wind**
(Brian Crawley)
Brian Crawley: guitar, vocal
10. **The Boys In The Back Room**
(George Gerney)
George Gerney: guitar, vocal
11. **Gimme Home ***
(Lori Bloustein)
Lori Bloustein: guitar, vocal
12. **Seeking Passage ***
(Kate McDonnell)
McDonnell/Tane
Kate McDonnell: vocal
Freddie Tane: guitar
13. **A Better World**
(Frank Mazzetti)
Frank Mazzetti: guitar, vocal
14. **I'm In Your Neighborhood**
(Ron Renninger)
Ron Renninger: guitar, vocal
15. **From Above**
(Diana Jeanne Feldman)
Diana Feldman: guitar, vocal
Scott Sylvester: bass
16. **She's A Dog ***
(Lou Gallo, Frankie Gallo, Martha Carlucci)
Lou Gallo: guitar, vocal
Frankie Gallo: vocal
17. **Remembering Aunt Emma ***
(Ewart Skinner)
Ewart Skinner: vocal

*All songs recorded by Matthew Weiner at Reel Deihl Audio, Inc. New York, NY except *.*

This issue was produced by Fast Folk, Joe Deihl and Matthew Weiner.

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