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The 1996 Fast Folk Revue



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Editorial

Here is another live slice of the American singer/songwriter scene as presented last year by Fast Folk. The scene is shifting around the country more than it used to when New York, Boston and Chicago were felt to be the centers of contemporary folk. Annual migrations of both audience and performers around the festival circuit have helped to dissolve the preeminence of those communities. Where performers did move to New York in large numbers 10 years ago looking for a folk community, that doesn't seem to be the case as much now. Strong centers of songwriting have grown up in Asheville, NC, Seattle, Northampton, MA and Eugene, Oregon.

So this past years' installment of the Fast Folk Revue at the Bottom Line, begun in 1984, tracks some of the evidence of songwriters' peripatinations. Chuck Brodsky and Annie Gallup, both from different homes on the West Coast, are now settled in Asheville, NC; Patrick Brayer has only visited New York twice (to play the Fast Folk Revue) from his native Fontana, California. David Massengill and Jack Hardy represent an earlier generation of writers who did move to NY and were instrumental in creating the scene which grew to national dimensions. NPR and key radio stations, and the avalanche of independent CDs along with casual but far-reaching distribution have established names, though not necessarily careers, nationally. Local compilations may have encouraged writers to stay home rather than risk a move to New York. Of course, *Fast Folk's* tradition of taping performers who passed through the city provided the first recordings of many out-of-towners for radio station programmers who paid attention, before every guitar player had his or her own CD.

It has also been interesting, while putting our back issue catalogue back in print, to see how many Villagers have come through, left a musical mark and found other homes. Jeff Gold, a fixture in the Village for years, is now one of the leaders of the LA songwriter's scene. Michael Fracasso settled in Austin, Buddy Mondlock moved from Chicago to Nashville, and Rod MacDonald, after years living on MacDougal street, moved to Flint, Michigan, then to Italy, and now is settled in Florida. Some, like earlier blues artists, may not be heard from again for many years.

These are simply statistics that show how a small recording project can, aside from the music, tell you something else entirely about the shifts in the American singer/songwriter population. In the end what you hear, and what is important, is the developing vibrancy of contemporary American songwriting.

Richard Meyer, Jan. 1997

On Songwriting and Creativity

by Judith Enovich Zweiman

"We do not compose - we are composed." -Gustav Mahler

Being a songwriter is a misnomer. We don't so much write songs as catch them like butterflies; the song could choose to light anywhere if it's meant to be here. There've been songs I've written because a friend was lax and missed it; I paid attention, so it chose me.

Songs can be simple things, or they can change the world. To me, it's not about me singing a song, it's about letting the song sing me. John Lennon wrote *Imagine*; he also wrote *Oh Yoko*. Both sang themselves through him. *Imagine* impacted on a larger scale. It's hard for me to sing; the song still makes me cry. It's huge, so powerful that it glows.

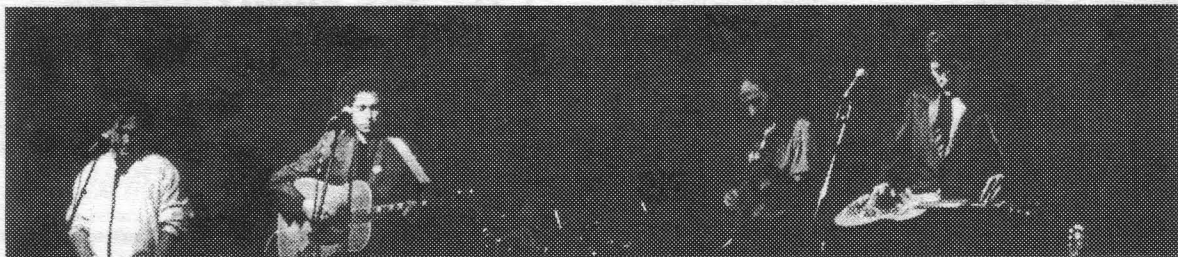
Songs can be enormous, or they can be a game, like *Don't Worry, Be Happy*. Anyone might have written that song, but no one did 'til Bobby McFerrin heard it and wrote it down. Such a simple little butterfly, just a rhymed couplet and a refrain, yet the rest of us missed it. But he wasn't afraid; he wasn't to cool, too hip, or too uptight to let it have fun and play.

We songwriters worry too much. We're too concerned with external forces. We think, "Is my song good enough, deep enough, heavy enough, important enough, commercial enough...Will it sell? Will it be the greatest thing since sliced bread..." How many *hits* have emerged from all those courses that teach songwriters to craft the perfect pop song? Songwriting at its most basic is simple formula, but writing a great song is an art, beyond the science of producing identical crinkle-cut french fries.

"To produce music is also in a sense to produce children."
-Friedrich Nietzsche

Songs are children; we create them, then they're meant to grow up and leave us. As good parents, we have to be willing to stand aside one day and let them go; hopefully they'll survive on their own without our help. After all, what is *folk music*, but songs that are handed down and continue to be sung; songs that are their own *people*, so much so that no one even bothers to remember who wrote them, or why. Baby-boomer folks and Generation Xers know that Bob Dylan wrote *Blowin' in the Wind*. Kids who sing it at summer camp couldn't care less.

Just as a mother often can't see her own child clearly, or still remembers us when we were still in diapers, we need to remind



Richard Shindell, Richard Meyer, Dave Anthony, Mark Dann, David Hamburger (l)

ourselves to step aside and let the song sing itself, without imposing our will upon it. As writers, we're too close, we may not always know what's best for our creations. Don't get me wrong, I'm a great fan of structure, I often refer to myself as the *Structure Nazi*, I enjoy creating a lyrical framework, and then working at unlocking the opportunities inherent within that structure; it's like solving a puzzle. Each *correct* answer feels like a victory, but the truth is, I open myself up and let the solution find me. Rewrites are a necessary part of the process; I don't for an instant devalue the work involved: It takes nine months to produce a child, and years to raise it. But eventually there's a point where we need to stop over-thinking, or over-writing a piece, or we drain its vital essence, and all that remains is lifeless, soulless structure.

My job is to pay close attention to what the song wants. My *opinion* doesn't matter to the song; it already exists somewhere along the space-time continuum. On the one hand, I am merely its conduit. On the other, somebody's gotta go into labor or lay the egg, or ain't nuthin' gonna hatch.

Some songs have an easy delivery and tumble out, lead a charmed existence, and everyone loves them. Others are agonizing, never want to be finished, or are misunderstood. Some are stillborn, others premature. Maybe they won't be heard in our lifetime, maybe it'll be years before they see their day. When Julie Gold's song *From a Distance* was first performed in the Fast Folk Revue at the Bottom Line, many folks in the cast, I'm told, didn't like it. But years later, after it had been covered by other singer-songwriters (among them Nancy Griffith and Kathy Mattea), *From a Distance* was a smash hit for Bette Midler, and it won a Grammy award for Song of the Year.

"There is a vitality, a life force, a quickening that is translated through you into action, and because there is only one of you in all time, this expression is unique...It is not your business to determine how good it is, nor how valuable it is, nor how it compares with other expressions...Keep the channel open. No artist is pleased. There is no satisfaction whatever at any time. There is

only a...blessed unrest that keeps us marching and makes us more alive than the others." -Martha Graham, from a letter written to Agnes DeMille.

If I say a song is *mine*, I am speaking within the confines of language; the song is no more *owned* by me than a child is owned by the mother who bore it. If I pay attention, the song will have life. The heart is the womb; it's my responsibility to shut up and listen.

Too many of us are so ego-connected to our songs, our creations, that we keep the poor things chained to a fence in our own backyards. As creatives, our mission, if we choose to accept it, is to make the time and space available to let the song be. No more, no less. Anything else is hubris, or delusion. It is not our job to judge our work or to concern ourselves with its future. Our responsibility is to let go, and do the best that we can.

Judith Zweiman is a singer/songwriter, musician, poet, writer, and videographer. She's been featured numerous times over the years on *Fast Folk*, both as solo artist and alongside many other songwriters as vocalist, guitarist and/or bass player. She is owned by five cats.

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Annie Gallup's Snapshot

By Brother Greg Muirhead © 1996

[This is the first in a series of articles, based on interviews with artists featured at the Fast Folk Cafe, that explore the art of songwriting and the making of a single song. Upcoming articles will include pieces on Rosalie Sorrels and Richard Shindell.]

Annie Gallup's *Camera* is a reflection on the meaning of photographs. In the course of the song, a slow viola- and guitar-accompanied melody flows like a river, while the guitar chords gently roll back and forth mostly between Ab and Db. In three

stanzas, Annie Gallup describes three scenes of photographic clarity.

One stanza/scene recalls regrets and former lovers (deftly making a distinction between the two), focusing in on a photograph of one lover who played the violin so beautifully it brought tears, and played the Romantic to a tee. But the camera catches the details that don't lie: "and of course he brought you roses and a satin camisole/ the cut was not unflattering, but the cloth was cheap." A second scene describes someone's attempt to commit suicide by jumping into a river. The person stops when she (could be he) finds herself pinching her nostrils before taking the plunge. How is it that this poignant reflex surfaces just as the sufferer means to jump? As Annie puts it, "even in despair, you are programmed to survive." The third and final stanza reflects upon a news headline, "Lightning Hits River, Picnicker Killed," and the indignity of a death that, like the camera's shutter, catches you unawares, in your most unguarded moment.

The verses are linked together with this chorus:

*Get your camera, the sun is going down
It's going to be a long night, going to be a long night
Take a picture, nothing's going to change
You're safe against the closing of the light.*

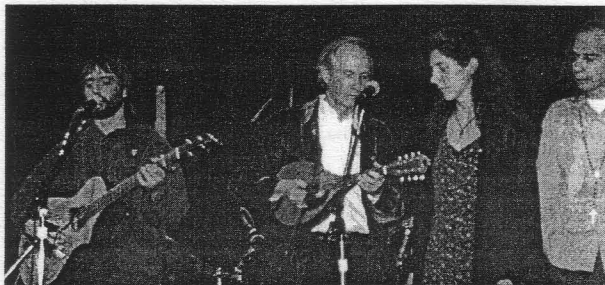
Annie told me this song seemed to mean the most to her of all the songs on her album, *Backbone* (Prime CD). Why? She said she didn't quite understand it yet. Also, the song scared her. "*Camera* took me completely by surprise," she reflected. "It was a frightening song to me. I had no idea where it came from. I didn't play it for a year or so; I just couldn't touch it."

So we explored it. She said, first of all, that she drives around with a camera, but she doesn't use it. The idea of taking pictures bothers her. It has something to do with the way people take pictures in an attempt to preserve themselves in time, to stop time itself.

Annie said she wrote the song three months after her mother died. Her mother used to take photographs and use them in her screenprint creations. She'd take different images and superimpose them in different ways. Up in Michigan, her mother created these screenprints for many years and achieved regional recognition for her work.

"Maybe she would take a photograph of petals floating on a pond. It would be pretty abstract. Then she would play with that, blow it up, or shrink it down and use it in different colors," she said. The collages often began with photographs of people, which were altered or added to as the creation came together, becoming interpretive, psychological portraits.

As an art student, Annie herself had taught her mother how to do screenprints. Her mother had latched onto the technique and made it her own. "She was really obsessed with it. Nothing could stop her," she recalled. She described driving with her



Chuck Brodsky, Jack Hardy, Wendy Beckerman, Patrick Brayer (2)

mother during a blizzard to a car wash so she could get the high-pressure water jets that she needed for part of the screenprinting process. When her mother died, Annie inherited the camera her mother had owned for as long as she could remember. And then came the song...

"It's probably as much like a photo as what she did with photos. It's using the experience...I think I work more like a fiction writer than a biographer," she said. "When I paint this picture, you probably won't recognize anyone by the end of it, but they're all composites of many things."

What is it about photographs that can be so disturbing? You can pick up a photograph over and over, and the person doesn't change. In a way, the image makes us eternal, as if there's no time before or after that moment in which the picture was taken. No birth, no death. This is what the lines of the chorus seem to promise: in the face of a long night, the light you capture on film will keep you safe from the impending darkness.

And yet the picture is a kind of death too, in which a person moves and breathes no longer. And when someone you know dies, all you have left are memories – mental images of how that person looked at a particular moment, as unaware of death as a picnicker on a riverbank, as unwilling to succumb to it as the would-be suicide on the bridge. And as unable to see the truth as it is to see through an old flame. But the pictures tell the truth. No wonder Gallup found *Camera* so difficult to sing. In choosing song as the medium to create her own images, though, Annie took on its burden too. A song, unlike a photograph, is dead until it's played – only then does it come to life.

CD Review

Andrew Calkoun/*Phoenix Envy*

on Waterbug Records; review by Hugh Blumenfeld

Poetry without music is a temporary aberration in the history of literature. Before print and wide-spread literacy, singing or chanting was the only way to preserve poems. The post-modern

era is post-literate; recording technologies can finally preserve words and music together, accurately and cheaply. In between, poets committed their lines chiefly to paper and gradually lost the music. For roughly three hundred years, most of our poetry has sat on the page. It has sat on the page and gotten fat and slow and inbred.

Song has been there all along, of course, a refuge for the sacred and the profane. Murder ballads, love songs, divine psalms: all have preserved a directness, passion and power that poets have consistently tried to carry off with words alone. Sonnets, odes, villanelles – all originally song forms – helped evoke the lost music and escape the abstractness inherent in the print medium. The Romantics tried especially hard, writing more odes, songs, hymns and lyrical ballads than anyone. But only Blake and Burns are known to have actually sung theirs; the Romantics' "ditties of no tone" were mostly a tactical maneuver in their programme for returning poetry to its sources in everyday language and powerful emotion. Until the advent of the tape recorder and the radio, poetry and song continued on separate courses, with song – even sacred song – becoming simplistic while poetry became hopelessly arcane.

In the last fifty years, this split has begun to heal. No living North American poet of the page has had the cultural impact of Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, or Joni Mitchell: none has added as many bywords to the language, inspired as much social thought and action, or brought about as much catharsis. Only the Beats and the Black Revolutionary poets, along with a few of their slamming and rapping descendants, rival the power of the song poets, and they, too, write for the voice, evoking the breath – or breathlessness – of musical chanting. Contemporary music is full of poetry, if you can get past the triumvirate of major labels that virtually monopolize our ears. There is a surprising number of quiet, eloquent poets singing, and Andrew Calhoun, founder of Chicago's independent Waterbug label, is among those who are helping to bring some of them to a restless audience.

Calhoun himself is one of the best of these song-poets. His music is shaped by traditions as varied as the Scots song hoard, the baroque guitar repertoire, and the Chicago blues. In his poetry, Robert Burns, Leonard Cohen, and Anonymous meet. Calhoun has fused all of it into an art that is at once contemporary and timeless. His fifth album, *Phoenix Envy*, selects twenty of his finest songs from the last twenty years.

The recurring theme of *Phoenix Envy* is the longing for rebirth. But unlike the mythical bird, when we rise from the ashes of the loves and passions that consume us, there is always a loss; diminishings that humble us and scars that make us sadder but wiser. Our endless potential does not make us omnipotent; our best intentions do not make us good.

Because he looks unflinchingly at the limits of love's power and at the pain we cause each other in love's name, many have



Annie Gallup, Louise Taylor, Wendy Beckerman, Catie Curtis (2)

called Calhoun's songs depressing, but they are the opposite. If he puts his finger on the source of each particular brand of suffering, he also finds out the reserves we possess to survive it. His finest images flash and cut so deeply, that even though love conquers all, it cannot dissolve the moments of searing pain or heal the wounds. Instead, each song has the quality of a koan, a puzzle without a solution beyond the effects of its own repetition.

Lonesome, for instance, has the simple, plaintive power of Hank Williams, who also knew that lonesome is different from lonely:

*I am so lonesome
As lonesome as darkness
As lonesome as water
As lonesome as God*

Lonesomeness is not relational but ontological, the knowledge that the presence or absence of others does not affect the essence of who and what you are. *Sheila* is a study in blindness and insight, the story of a man who escape's from one couple's domestic hell, realizing too late he is only stumbling toward his own. Balancing these preoccupations is a generous dose of playful humor. The live performance of *Folksingers Are Boring* (c'mon, join hands and sing along!) and the balky ballad of the hapless *Paul Scott* ("I don't know if it's the end of his career or mine") lighten the mood, but even dark songs like *Sheila* show a wry wit, and many, like *Sparrow*, a eulogy for a South Side gospel singer, are full of joyful exuberance:

*She's fatter than her Mama
Bigger than the blues
Louder than the comics
in the Sunday News*

Two long songs support the weight of *Phoenix Envy* like suspension bridge towers. *Jack and Jill* is a magic tale of sacrifice and salvation. Like Laura in Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* Jill seeks out Death in a night-forest and wrests a feverish Jack from its power. With nothing but her fierce love she confronts a "marvelous man" of ivory and flame and is consumed in Jack's place. Her sacrifice rouses Jack whose dream of pulling her from a pit saves her. Using echoes of the disturbing nursery rhyme *Jack and Jill* is typical of the way Calhoun mines the darker, often repressed experiences of childhood for material that has the power to free us from the bonds of reason and habit.

Never Enough is a tour de force of Calhoun's methods. The playful stream of consciousness that drives its rhymes and images also drives its epileptic shifts from one rhythm to another, its hanging dissonant chords, and its lapses of nonsense disintegrating into nonsense syllables that suddenly open onto moments of clarity:

*We know many things
And they have made us weak
We have many friends with whom we do not speak*

As in many of Calhoun's songs, an angry God also makes a cameo appearance here, this time in pursuit of a Cain-like character named Henry: "Here he comes, Henry, the great forgiver / To unwind your bowels and pluck out your liver." There's a similar moment in *Journey*:

*And the sun raised high
Like a mighty club
Said "Where are you hiding?
And why are you hiding?"*

Calhoun's theology is tragedy. God stands for the fate-like forces in the universe that lie beyond our control, buffeting and punishing us. But He barely figures in the struggles we carry on with our own human shortcomings and our imperfect loves. Jesus embodies all that is divine in humans, pitted against the impersonal forces of the natural and supernatural world. So, in *While Jesus Was Waiting to Die* an impassive crow presides over a carnal crucifixion:

*While Jesus was waiting to die
His belly groped for air
And piss burned on his thigh
While Jesus was waiting to die*

Jesus' cry "My God, why have you forsaken me?" gains pathos by coming after the gorgeous song *O My Son*, in which a father tries to save his son from the pain of his parent's divorce and to reassure the boy of his continuing love and protection. Calhoun's characters stand utterly naked before their parents, their children, their lovers, and before us, vulnerable and powerless, as if every song were a crucifixion, a fall-from Eden. And yet they stand unembarrassed, these fragile, divine heroes.

When My Time Comes is a perfect farewell. Like most songs on the album, it is delicate and almost painfully beautiful. The voice is not a singer's voice, but the voice of a poet compelled to song, breaking sometimes with passion or rage, never sentimental. If the poets are to teach us anything about living, they must also teach us about dying. Victory is not the point – death defeats us all in the end.

*Goodbye to hearts that burn
Goodbye to hearts that break
And I'll let go of the difference
That was not mine to make
When my time comes*

But not before then.

Hugh Blumenfeld is a singer-songwriter and former professor of poetry. His recent album, *Mozart's Money*, was released on the Prime CD label.

Lug Affair with the Awful

by Dave Elder

How much we take for granite in our madder society! Take, for insistence, the murder car, or "workless wreckage," as it was first caused. This blunder of modern takenowledgy was not always the relikeable source of aggravation we curse on to get us from one place to another. "Get a war!" they would cry at the murderess behind the wheel – people had always depended on the hoards and bucky, you seed. Roads were sometypes no more than dirt past, which turned too much when it rained, causing the tired to get stubs – a far grime from the concracked supersideways that now crowd our laugh in every distraction. And bad then, if your car had enjoy trouble, you couldn't find a maniac to fake it. Now there are car maniacs all overt, and you can get gab too, where years ago the serpent stations that now blot the countryside did not even exhaust!

Who in the early daze would have predicted that the otter-mobile would sunday drive the nature's econoline! Todate, one out of every sick people rots in the oddmotive feel, why is which some say, "What goods for General Muggers is goop for us awls" though the United Networkers disagree. They say that the major oughta makers such as Force and Griper are trying to make a money out of the working mad. Leach Imacaca, Griper's CEO (Cheap Executioner Often) clams there is no conviction between his large celery (3 malls/year) and the recent cut in play his slavers had to expect. Deplorers at one Destoyed, Missedagain plant were redder to stipe if their watches were cut, but couldn't ford the bad publicly. Rally Nadir even says that cars today are unsaved, but it's a freak country, and everybod has their own life to leave, so happy muttering!

What About Our Son?

by Richard Meyer

How often people say it. "It always ends like this": years after one first breathless moment of mutual recognition and mystical attraction. It can happen in a bus. It can happen in a bar; or in my case, a housewares department. Suburban visitors might not notice our small urban rituals, but all granite cliff dwellers can tell when a single person is buying new towels as a hedge against the next cold winter, or the lonely scented candle, or one really great piece that will stand out against lumpy apartment walls until it gets chipped and sold in a pre-nup tag sale. That was years ago. I made some comment about the candle she'd picked out matching her perfume, which of course, I couldn't even smell. It did the trick, along with a conveniently located café and a perfectly timed rainstorm.

But two years later the stereo was on, loud enough so we didn't have to speak, but not high enough either to really hear or to bother listening. Raw feelings were not at a premium and we were trying hard to maintain our cheerfully resigned civility. Sandra was not happy with me. She was not at all pleased with me. I guess I misinterpreted all those heart-to-hearts about getting out; the ones she started and the ones I started. So, there we were, me packing. Since I'd moved into her place she was naturally keeping an eye out, helping me find my stuff now that I was moving out. OK, on the outside it was my fault, after a perfunctory offer of a job transfer to a Chicago suburb, Evanston. I accepted it immediately thinking she'd be excited and ready to split. The city had gotten to both of us. We talked about it - all the time. Damn the pigeons, and the rising level of edginess on the street in high August's collective of looming sweaty chaotic faces. Rush hour seemed to be accompanied increasingly by a blinded wandering population of wraith people following me only to be saved when they got distracted by a lost newspaper page blown down the other way by a shear wind.

I didn't really want help with my stuff. We'd been together two years and I carefully filed away everything from my previous grandé affairs. If the subject of others came up it seemed to lead to trouble. Out of sight, out of mind, worked for both of us - I guess. We'd never had any trouble really except that she complained about what I ate. I still eat what I've always eaten and I gave into some of her "medical discoveries". After a while I even felt comfortable steaming the brussel sprouts.

We dated. The French film, the street fair, the other French film, the party at her friend's house and an expedition to find cheap eats afterwards to make up for so much designer party food. "Those people..." she explained and I understood. Coily she invited me up to see those towels - we ended up in her shower. Eventually one towel hook was assigned to me. Once after we met for coffee and she'd picked out a clean new can opener and her favorite dish scrubby to leave at my place. Everybody's got a different idea of what clean is.

Tiny territorial entanglements sure brought us closer, and after a few months I moved into her place. The choice was done with a flip of a coin fol-

lowed by some possessive deliberation. My place was a walk-up in a slightly better location, but her doorman, elevator and window box won out in the end. I didn't mention that the walls were lumpy, but my painting looked great in contrast. It was the first time I'd ever had an apartment where I could actually watch a pushcart vendor. One time she called me from the street with an urgent request for me to find a particular dress, the one I called her *Stella!* dress in the closet. Right then she came through the door with a pair of hot dogs and we leaned out the window for at least half an hour watching our pushcart vendor from our window, eating his hot dogs while Sandra modeled that incomparable dress.

In the beginning our things were pretty well separated. I filed her few records alphabetically with mine, and my books by subject with hers. Laundry, as always, formed one undistinguished pile behind the door. It didn't seem to matter much 'cause, well, I always knew - with certainly - I'd be able to pick out my own things if it ever came to *that*. It was now *that*, and I couldn't. Its one of the great mysteries of coupling how personal objects meld into common property.

I thought accepting the new marketing job in Chicago would be a great surprise and that we'd drive off out of Albany into a kissable 1940's movie long shot, silver, perfect and incandescent. I called a couple friends, but waited to tell her and by then there was no turning back on the company. My insignificant career was not a force to be reckoned with. I was just another grey flannel dwarf.

"I love you, can't you see?" I said to her.

Most of Tuesday she scoured the kitchen. I had things to pack. She was showing me that our house was going to be cleansed of my scent almost before the door latch clicked closed on my behind. I am even surer now after she accidentally dropped my Flintstones glass, on purpose. It was a stupid thing, corporate junk, but it was my favorite stupid orange juice glass thing. Even as it hit the floor and I heard her curse, I could discern a little laugh underneath. She used the metal dustpan to pick it up instead of the quiet rubber one. Maybe she didn't even think of it, but I took it personally that she made so much scratching noise picking it up. After a short while she stood in the archway with the big pieces and said "Look, I'm sorry". She wasn't.

About 15 minutes later Sandy came in and sat on the couch. "If you'd only mentioned it to me before I might not have cared. Now I care and I can't seem to stop. You wouldn't want me to stop caring."

"The job, you mean?"

"Yes, and what are we going to do about our son?"

"What?" A cold razor went through me.

"Rafael, our son."

I had a book in my hand stuck in mid-air. I looked at the spine again and put it title side down in the corner of the box I was filling.

I said nothing.

"Please say something," she said.

"Our son?"

It wasn't that I had forgotten about him. Well, I had. We sent off a letter to him only six weeks ago and the \$20 automatically deducted per month was there for me to see on our credit card statement. I guess I hadn't consid-

Coming to the Fast Folk Cafe...

Fri..	2/7	Christian Bauman/Hugh Blumenfeld
Sat.	2/8	Karen Savoca & Pete Heitzman/The Sloan Wainwright Band
Wed.	2/19	Pinewoods-Fast Folk Monthly Traditional Music Open Mike
Thurs.	3/6	Lisa Gutkin Trio
Fri.	3/14	Eddy Lawrence/Cosy Sheridan/Hans Theessink
Sat.	3/15	Michael Smith & Anne Hills
Wed.	3/19	Pinewoods-Fast Folk Monthly Traditional Music Open Mike
Fri.	3/28	Bob Franke/Bill Parsons/Kevin So
Wed.	4/2	Roger Gillen/The Nudes

Thurs.	4/3	Barry McGuire (<i>Eve of Destruction</i>) First NYC club date in 30 years/ Terry Talbot (of Mason Profit). Tickets are \$25 and are available now at The Fast Folk Cafe or by mail. No telephone reservations for this show.
Fri.	4/4	Barry & Holly Tashian
Thurs.	4/10	Rod McDonald
Wed.	4/16	Pinewoods-Fast Folk Monthly Traditional Music Open Mike
Wed.	4/23	Guy Davis/Rick Nestler/Rik Palieri
Fri.	5/16	Camp Hoboken - Christian Bauman/Gregg Cagno/Linda Sharan/The Marys

ered what the transfer would mean for Rafael. Taking care of him had become habit. I had never seen him. Neither of us had, but we did talk about him a lot. Some nights when the air was humid and full of dust we imagined what it must be like outside his shack in the small village. We'd seen pictures and even planned to visit. There was a local construction site a few blocks down from our condo and the contractor's shed had one of those corrugated tin roofs that looked like the shack. During a terrific thunder storm we ran down and stood inside to hear what it sounded like. Sandra put a map on the fridge with his town, a dot, circled and a succession of pictures taken by a person from the agency out of which he stared straight at the camera. One, where he wore a red hat and little Levis we'd sent down, was particularly compelling. Dark, dark brown eyes - his hair was straight, he was six.

"Look, you can go and leave me, but what right've you got to leave him behind?"

"Who said I was going to leave him behind? He's right where he's always been. I've paid all along. Its not even like he was your idea. We could split the payments if you'll feel better, like a better mother?"

"That's low. We agreed together about this. We would take care of him."

"What would we do if we had fish, or a dog?"

"Fish, you compare our son with a fish?"

We knew his birthday was around April 23rd, but since we got the papers and the first snapshot November 17th that was when we celebrated his birthday. In fact it was Sandra's birthday too, and I had dreamed this up as a surprise. At that time, of course, it seemed like nothing would ever go wrong. Eventually we would mingle enough DNA to grow our own rug rat. So, late on a beautiful Friday with a bottle of Australian vino rosa I gave her the Worldwide Children's Fund package with a file on Rafael, this kid, *our son*. Now it seems a vaguely colonial thing to do. At the time it was so romantic. Before the wine was two-thirds gone we were both crying.

"No, I will continue to take care of him!"

"But you won't see him!"

"We can split up the photos." I said "Look, I still love you, this move is all about work. I'm trying to improve my chances, to get out from under those plastic credit shysters. Anyway what's so damned special about Albany? You really attached to that librarian job?"

"There aren't a lot of jobs."

"Chicago has a great museum."

"So did New York but we never..."

"Look, I think I can really get ahead on this job. I hate corporations but this one really might suit me."

"What about the boy? We have to write him. I don't want him to know about this. He might feel abandoned...again."

"Come with me, then - we'll keep his file in one place."

"How come you didn't even ask me before?"

Sure, I was about to say, all he knows us by is a package of condensed milk, kids clothes and trinkets distributed by some W.H.O. worker along with pictures of white strangers. I've heard about the beneficiaries of these programs occasionally going to college. We never set any money aside for college. Really who were we kidding. This sort of adoption was a middle class guilt reduction plan, and in our case I sent in the form on a lark. How could we even know where the money went. Our money goes to Doctors Without Borders, we give money to NPR, we buy at the Body Shop and feel goddamn glad that Human Rights Watch exists. In fact, I knew ahead of time it would be a boy; I requested that, though I was surprised he was already named. We had no say. Sandy liked the classicism of the name Rafael right off. She'd looked at me holding the little passport style picture and said Rafael's name over and over. It wasn't until the second month that we even thought to ask if he had a last name - thinking it might be ours. No. Still the question that chilled the air was "what do we tell our son?"

"I'll call the agency tomorrow and see if they have any guidelines about separating sponsors."

"I don't want his picture on some one else's refrigerator. I mean how would it feel to walk in to a house in Evanston

and see our son on the mantle in a house without taste."

"That won't happen, not to my son, taste only."

I wasn't set to leave for a few days, but separating everything was done so stuff could be shipped ahead. The company liked having its fresh employees arrive in new digs to find familiar comfortable things. I suppose I took extra time with all the sorting and wrapping and file-drawer purging as a tactic.

A job. All this for a job. I'd worked in a warehouse when I was sixteen. I hated it. We made cigar display cases. Well, actually we didn't even make them, me and Tom, the junkie, just took all the parts as they came in from a dozen filthy trucks and packed sets of parts into kits that now stand assembled in the way of telephone booths in the backs of neighborhood stationary stores. He liked throwing the chrome tube frames on the cement. It was a loud sound and he said it made him feel. To me it was a job, a summer job, just a job. How was this job going to be any different?

I looked at her and said "I think its time we had another kid."

© Richard Meyer
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City Island, NY 10464
(718) 885-3268
6/21/96



Patrick Brayer, Louise Taylor, Richard Shindell, David Hamburger (2)

How to get to the

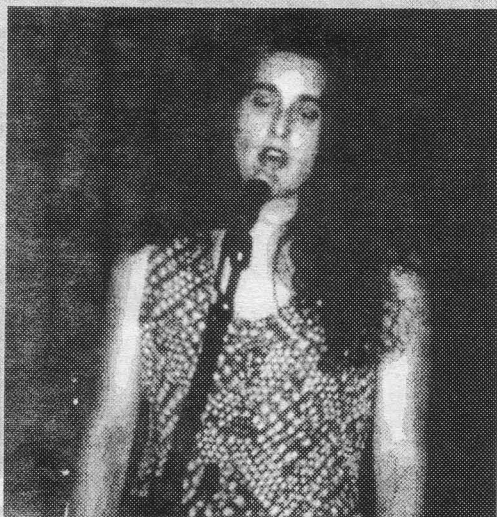
(one way street)

- 3 blocks south of Canal St., between Varick & Hudson
- Franklin St. stop on #1 train
- Canal St. stop on A,C,E trains
- Canal St. exit on West Side Hwy- Right on Varick- Right on N. Moore

BIOS

Montgomery Delaney, an ex-NYC cop, was born and raised in the Bronx. Author of over 300 tunes, this is his third mention on a *Fast Folk* CD. His solo debut *Walking in the Light* has received praise from the likes of Martin Sexton, David Massengill and Brooks Williams. Produced by Rex Fowler of Aztec Two-Step, it is available by mail c/o Monty at 2 Division St., New Rochelle, NY 10801. He is a big fan of Dave Elder as well...

Richard Shindell has two CDs on the Shanachie label, *Sparrow's Point* and *Blue Divide*. He is currently working on his third record. For booking call (201) 358-8785 or (505) 242-5028.



Louise Taylor (2)

Louise Taylor was born and still lives in Vermont. On her 12th birthday she was given her first guitar, a Stella Harmony. A self-taught guitarist and songwriter, she left home at sixteen and traveled extensively in the States playing street music from Key West to California.

She later studied voice with Frank Baker of Bennington College. In 1992 she wrote and released *Looking for Rivers*, found the perfect guitar and married its' maker, Michael Millard (Froggy Bottom Guitars). *Looking for Rivers* is currently being distributed by *Hear Music* and Tower Record Stores. Her new CD *Ruby Shoes*, produced by William Ackerman, was released by Signature Sounds Records.



Tim Robinson (2)

Tim Robinson is from Croton, New York by way of Park Slope, Brooklyn. He has been writing songs of one sort or another for years but has most recently become active in the New York folk scene. Tim recently released *Disassemble Yourself*, a nine song effort culled from his extensive, quirky catalog. He believes it is best to write while disassembled, and since he writes often, he is seldom otherwise. Tim makes his living as an illustrator. Songs are pictures and he can draw. For additional information and cassettes write to him at 688 President St., Brooklyn, NY 11215 or call (718) 789-5707.

Originally from New Jersey, **Wendy Beckerman** has been an active part of the acoustic music scene for several years. She has recorded songs for *Fast Folk Musical Magazine* and has performed in their annual revue at The Bottom Line since 1989. She also participates in the weekly Songwriter's Exchange, the premise of which is to write a new song every week. Her song *Lion's Mane* can be heard performed live by Gordon Bok's trio (Bok, Trickets, and Muir).

In addition to touring in Europe, Wendy has performed in many acoustic venues throughout the United States, including The Ironhorse in Northampton, MA, The Newport Folk Festival, The Birchmere, and The Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, among others. She has appeared as a supporting act for such artists as John Gorka, Bill Morrissey, Maura O'Connell, Odetta, and David Massengill.

Wendy released her debut album *By Your Eyes* in January, 1993 both on the Great Divide and Swiss Brambus labels. Her second album, *Marina's Owl* was released in Autumn, 1994. Both are distributed by *Hear Music* and Tower Record stores.

Believing that one art feeds all others, and that sleep is the only activity that really qualifies as "between jobs", **Richard Meyer** has served as editor of *Fast Folk* (1986-'92), released three albums, designed scenery/lighting for 150 plays Off-Broadway,



Richard Meyer (1)

around the country, overseas, for fashion, videos and even QVC. Recently he has been designing recording studios, fulfilling art furniture commissions, writing a book of imaginary dreams, editing the folk section of the *All Music Guide* and writing more songs. Touring? Sure -- contact: (718) 885-3268.

When you hear Alan Andrews for the first time, you know why he's at the vanguard of the modern folk scene. His edgy lyrics, coupled with an unorthodox approach, set him apart from the folkies of yore.

That he was born and raised in New York City plays a large part in that. Obviously, a good dose of cynicism and wit come with the territory. So does the exposure to an eclectic range of musical styles.

So, from the boomboxes near his house on Manhattan's West Side, he's picked up a taste of Texano music. By befriending a waiter at his favorite diner, he's taken a shine to some Greek instrumentation, and of course, as is the birthright of any American boy, he throws a little rock and roll into the mix as well. But as a songwriter with something to say, his interest was inevitably peaked by the burgeoning downtown folk scene.

To contact Alan Andrews, write 609 Columbus Avenue, #2Q, NY, NY 10024. Ph: (212) 799-4049.

No one wakes in the morning intent on being the point man in an avant garde songwriters' movement, as such a shield will assure you no more than a stern seat of pauperdom in this lifetime, not to mention the imminent inherited key to foxhole living.

Patrick Brayer has been acknowledged by such distinguished musicians as Michael Hedges, John Doe and Alison Krauss as no less than today's prime dreamer. These aren't merely great songs on dead air. He was once quoted, "I don't feel safe walking out onto a stage until the air is right. Atmosphere is the feet of my every word and note. If a space does not move to meet you half ways, look around, you probably have a room on your back." One must start, I suppose, with the vantage point that twenty-five years of chiseling songs out of an ex-steel mill town called Fontana, California will almost certainly render any smooth edges you might have ironically jagged. Another Brayer quote reads, "You aren't ever 'one of a kind' by choice. We always look for the convenient way out. Thank goodness some of our favorite artists are trapped there."

Brayer's performance rings of everything from tent village street singers to a tweaked rest home Hogey Carmichael intimacy. But the comparisons slam to a halt when it comes to the subject of the sheer power of imagery. Patrick Brayer has written the book and sings it as the rawest virtuoso of our time. You somehow get the feeling, said an *L.A. Times* critic, that "somewhere behind this contemporary songwriter is the slight reverberation of the very beginning of time."

Brayer has worked with such greats as Queen Ida, David Van Ronk, D.L. Menard and John Fahey. His works have been covered by X's John Doe (Geffen Records), Stuart Duncan (Rounder Records) and Larry Sparks (Rebel Records), to name just a few. Duncan's version of *Lonely Moon* was up for a 1994 Grammy and reached number thirteen in a nationwide music poll. His own recorded works consist of nine volumes entitled *The Secret Hits of Patrick Brayer*.

Brayer records and archives his work, as well as other regional jewels, through *The Brayer Archives*. He also appears on the staff of a local arts magazine, in which he contributes a stream of consciousness column entitled *The Zenland Empire*. To quote a



Jack Hardy, Wendy Beckerman, Patrick Brayer (1)

headline from a local newspaper, concerning the obscurity of his many talents, "The world owes this guy an apology."

Personal Management:

Ivory Jackson and Associates
17586 Pinedale
Fontana, CA 92335
(909) 823-2016



Chuck Brodsky (2)

Chuck Brodsky is a travelling troubadour. The years he spent as a migrant fruit picker and streetsinger are evident in the hard-won wisdom and stubborn faith in humanity that are trademarks of his songs. Winner of the 1992 Emerging Songwriter Award at the Napa Valley Folk Festival in California, he's also played at the Philadelphia Folk Festival and the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Chuck was playing piano by the time he was five. After working at the legendary Main Point Coffeehouse, he did time at Penn State University where he started playing guitar, writing songs, and performing at student coffeehouses.

In 1981 he hitch-hiked to San Francisco and for the next fourteen years called the Bay Area his home. He spent two years in the mid-eighties journeying through Europe as a streetsinger and then returned to California, settling in Berkeley and developing his personable and down-to-earth performing style playing in the local clubs. He now resides in Asheville, North Carolina. Chuck's debut CD *A Fingerpainter's Murals* is available from Waterbug Records at (800) 466-0234.

Jack Hardy served as founding editor of *Fast Folk*. He has 11 albums to his credit. He also recently had the honor of a tribute album of other people singing his songs which was released on BCN Records, though Jack steadfastly maintains he is neither famous nor dead, which is the usual requirement for such efforts. He tours regularly both in the US and Europe, and at the time of the 1996 Fast Folk Revue had acquired a witch's hat.

Consult a road map of **Annie Gallup's** life and you'll encounter a wealth of intriguing exits along the road to becoming a celebrated singer-songwriter. "It hasn't been the most direct way of getting here," Annie agrees. From her childhood in Ann Arbor, Mich, through high school, Annie studied dance. In college, she moved to metalsmithing. Then came an even bigger move, to Seattle, where Annie worked as (among other things) a baker, and a cook on a yacht. She's also run a business designing custom wedding rings, and a massage therapy practice. She's constructed sailboat sails, and once sculpted the entire Civil War in miniature for a toy soldier manufacturer. Through it all, though, she practiced and played her guitar in private, writing songs no one else ever got to hear.

Annie was a finalist in the prestigious Telluride Troubadour contest (Telluride, CO) in 1994 and the Columbia Music Festival (Spokane, WA) in 1992 and received an honorable mention at the Napa Valley Music Festival (Napa, CA) in 1993. Her songs, full of startling word play, rich insight and unconventional (yet sparkling) guitar and vocal signatures, have left critics scouring for fresh accolades, and struggling for comparisons. Its sources can be traced, in part, to Annie's high school years in Ann Arbor, where she picked out complex guitar parts from albums by Doc Watson, Dave Van Ronk, Mississippi John Hurt and others. "And Ann Arbor has a wonderful folk club, the Ark, - I would go two or three nights a week and watch great musicians like David Bromberg from literally only a few feet away. It really opened my eyes to the possibilities."

Annie's well of inspiration has it's non-musical origins too: reading such luminaries as poet/novelist Margaret Atwood and essayist Joan Didion, she says, causes her to think "in a way that generates stories and word-combinations." Annie's two albums *Cause and Effect* and *Backbone*, on Prime CD, a songwriter label out of New York, were coproduced by David Lange and feature a group of top Seattle musicians.

Annie recently relocated to Asheville, N.C., needing a more central geographic base for her ten-month-a-year touring. But she views her hectic road schedule as anything but a grind: "For me, songwriting is a circular process," she says, "and playing live is what closes the circle."

Mark Dann, along with Jack Hardy, holds the distinction of being part of every Fast Folk Show. He currently lives in Tribeca, a mere four blocks from the Fast Folk Cafe ("I was here first..."). He spends most of his time producing and engineering records in his 24-track recording studio, building and repairing guitars, fixing other peoples computer nightmares, and talking on the telephone. For relaxation, he plays gigs. He can be seen around town playing bass with The Robert Ross Band, up in Woodstock with a Tibetan rock'n'roll band called The Dharma Bums, and once a year or so on tour in Europe with Rod MacDonald, where he catch-

es up on sleep. He can be reached at the studio, at (212) 941-7771. Or Mark107@aol.com.

David Massengill once chased a bobcat and vice versa. A native of Bristol, Tennessee, he has written songs recorded by Dave Van Ronk, The Roches, Nancy Griffith, and Joan Baez. His recordings are bootlegged and kitchen taped. *Coming Up For Air* is available on Flying Fish. His new release *The Return* is on Plump Records. He is an honorary member of Edsel Martin's Lying and Loafing Club, although he was nearly kicked out for being overqualified.



David Hamburger (2)

David Hamburger has done the Fast Folk Revue three times now and has yet to be offered a drum solo in the show. Despite this oversight, he's been keeping busy – playing on recent albums by 5 Chinese Brothers, Hugh Blumenfeld, Dave Elder and Michael Kroll, writing for Guitar Player Magazine, and learning to give his cat Finley daily insulin shots without losing the skin on his fingers. David's solo CD, *King of the Brooklyn Delta*, is available from Chester Records, P.O. Box 170504, Brooklyn (where else?), NY 11217.

Al Grierson is from Ashland, Oregon. He just put out his first CD, entitled *Things That Never Added Up To Me*. He can be reached at Folkin' Eh! Records, 4330 Highway 99 S., Ashland, OR 97520.

Linda Sharar hangs out in the Village looking for gigs and pick-up soccer games. A New Yorker for four years, she has challenged herself to find the ultimate Italian restaurant and also to compose thought-provoking songs...the topics of which range from a conversation with a homeless man to the story of a woman who overcomes a violent rape. You can find her playing in cafes around

New York including the Fast Folk Cafe, the Cottonwood Cafe, and the Postcrypt Coffeehouse at Columbia University. A CD is in the plans for 1997, but until then, demo tapes and booking information are available through Share Our Music Productions, ldsharar@aol.com.

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LYRICS

I Was A Loner

I was a loner, don't answer the phoner
If I'd never known her I'd still be that way
But then she came to me with eyes that looked through me
In a second she knew me — that blew me away
I was a hopper, a day-to-day coper
A sweet interloper came into my life
She taught me the meaning of living my dreaming
She got me believing that I would survive

chorus: Now every day's a brand new day
Empty canvas I can paint
Every day's got a brand new meaning to me

Oh, I was her lover and under the covers
She helped me discover the meaning of things
In the dark of the night while holding her tight
I found the words to the songs that I sing

(chorus)

I was a loner, don't answer the phoner
If I'd never known her I'd still be that way
But then she came to me with eyes that looked through me
In a second she knew me — that blew me away

Words and Music ©1993 by Montgomery Delaney

The Next Best Western

It's the middle of the night
Near the Indiana line
I'm pulling in a Christian station
The signal's crystal clear
But I cannot really hear
What he says about the Revelation
I am wretched, I am tired
But the preacher is on fire
And I wish I could believe

chorus: Whoever watches over all these truckers
Show a little mercy for a weary sinner
And deliver me, Lord deliver me
To the next Best Western

Did he who made the lamb
Put the tremble in the hand
That reaches out to take my quarter
I look him in the eye
But there isn't any time
Just time enough to pass the tender
The highway takes its toll
The green light passes go
And it's welcome to Ohio

(chorus)

It takes light years of nothing
To let these stars shine through
And it's an empty road
That finds its way back home to you

At 4 am on 80 East
It's in the nature of the beast

To wonder if there's something missing
I am wretched, I am tired
But the preacher is on fire
And I wish I could believe

(chorus)

Words and Music © 1996 by Richard Shindell (ASCAP)

Katie's Smile

Katie's smile a clean apple bit
taste it and chew real slow
there's room to graze between her pearly whites
and catch your breath where the crooked branches grow

We practiced kissing on the limbs of the poplar
bark and skin arms around each other
we kissed those trees till they caught the fire
of Katie's smile

Katie rides a long legged bay
and she curries his coat with a handful of hay
she shoos the flies and rubs the tears away
whistles I-wish-I-will on a blue Colorado day

Neighbors talk how she walks the line
picked a husband like her daddy this time
when she waves him gone they'll read between the lines
of Katie's Smile

Katie's gone with the wind off a semi
and she sleeps in the trailer on a bed of pine
and her hair falls around her a wheat field of summer sighs
while her big bay whinnies on a snowy rise

Throw your saddle and your chaps in the back boy
kick the dust and tip your cowboy hat
some things can't be caught with a lariat
that's Katie's smile

Words and Music © 1996 by Louise Taylor

The Fool's Last Mile

I remember how the bottles shone behind the bar
and every second guys looked her direction
I still see myself clearly as I walked right up to her
about to learn one of life's hard lessons

She was all dressed up and boys didn't she impress the crowd
Laughing like those careless girls we knew
Who whisper at last call a swallow's siren song
I'd like to dance the night away with you

chorus: I'm walkin' the fools last mile
Where love makes one grand stand
and inspiration's whiskey and a lousy country band
and all the guys are smiling who thought they'd
take her down the aisle
but instead, like me, they've been walking
the fools last mile

bridge:

I guess I'm blind to reason,
walkin' the fools last mile
She was too good to be true boys,
walkin' the fools last mile
Pride will make you strong

Smile like nothing's wrong
Walking on the fool's last mile

Noisy whiskey hit me boys, I saw her there
Turning with a fresh one in her hand
She looked me over once and asked just who I was
And gave the crowd a wink and one good laugh

(chorus)

(chorus)

Words and Music ©1996 by Richard Meyer, Laughing/Scared Music (ASCAP)

Phony French

Let's go back to Paris, before the war
I'll write a novel, you can learn how to draw
New York City has become such a bore
Let's pretend we're phony French

Let's go meet Picasso before he had the blues
Let's grease Matisse while he's painting a nude
I want to party all night with Jean Cocteau
Let's pretend we're phony French

Bon soir, madame, bonjour monsieur,
Leave your Brooklyn accent at the door
I wanna hear the entire Jacques Brel score
Let's pretend we're phony French

Let's go back to Clichy in the quiet days
Let's see Josephine shake her tits and ass
at the Champs-Elysee
Henry Miller swears he'll get everybody laid
Let's pretend we're phony French

Stoppin' by for brownies at Gerty Stein's
It's early yet, Hitler has not made up his Mein
I want a bowl of those greasy fries
Let's pretend we're phony French

Bon jour, monsieur, bonsoir madame,
I don't give a damn if you can't can-can
Let's get there on anything but Air Japan
Let's pretend we're phony French
Let's pretend we're phony French
Let's pretend we're phony French

Words and Music ©1996 by Alan Andrews

Balloons

Where do all balloons end up
Ones you let go and watch disappear
Ones with tails of ribbon and string
Ones that fly in the sideways wind

I've never been walking alone on a hill
To feel a tap on the top of my head
Finding the wilted pieces left
One someone let go

Once let go of yellow or blue
Or birthday or whole bouquet
Once let go of big or small
Or silvery one
It's gone

They never come back they never come down
They burst in midair between the planets

Meteor shower balloons on fire
Make a wish, it's magic

What if I told you I'm letting you go
Cutting your string from my wrist with a knife
Watching you disappear in the sky
Would you shine for me that night

Once let go of yellow or blue
Or birthday or whole bouquet
Once let go of big or small
Or silvery one
It's gone

Words and Music © 1996 by Wendy Beckerman

The Passing

It was a bird a petulant bird that pecked upon the window
First so slowly slowly then with urgent crescendo
As if it could it finally could say what it had to say-o
Its cry so muffled by the glass the structure in the way-o

chorus 1: Mo ghra sa'n Bas is deacair a ra
's riamh an la d'ag gabhail-o

She had lain for many days no years of indecision
Drifting in and out of sleep no words describe the prison
With passion all reduced to pain in swollen joints and vision
She once independent now dependent on good wishing

chorus 2: Mo ghra sa'n Bas is deacair a ra
's riamh an la siud sa chre-o

I walked so slow so not to scare this cold bird at the window
Trying the while to ascertain its variegated colors
As if the seasons there had left confusion in the willows
Of leaves and flowers blown apart and covered on the pillow

(chorus 1)

She had said o'er and o'er that they could take her home now
As if she was some other place with strangers all unknown-o
Was it home to Clay Street to her childhood she would go now
Closer than I would have come this bird had come much closer

(chorus 2)

This bird was finally dismayed to find its own reflection
Stood so starkly motionless then flew in all directions
By the lines of modern thought the ancient body was consigned-o
The ashes to be placed somewhere where stained glass cast its
light-o

(chorus 1)

Was it there it finally flew this bird that was at the window
It looked so free in passing as if the passing opened in-o
T'was days and days and days before I could finally hear the cry-o
As if this passing the only way that I could say goodbye-o

(chorus 2)

Words and Music © October, 1995 by Jack Hardy

Drinkin' Alone

I was eying the obvious blond in black
at the horse shoe bar on a stool toward the back
I was trying to drown what floats when you rattled your bones
ohhh... caught drinkin' alone
ten shots to the wind and happy that way
stewed just enough to have something to say

to myself in a serious tone
ohhh...you caught me drinkin' alone

bridge: you with your sycophantic throng
with your yes men and your hangers on
you who left the womb in search of a... phone
ohhh...you caught me drinkin' alone

you were always quick to judge and slow to forgive
everybody needs some words to live
bye bye baby, bye bye, this is a judge free zone
ohhh...caught drinkin' alone
well, I got Jim Beam for a sounding board
so you keep the crowds and the smiling hoard
I'll keep my bar stool, you can have your throne
ohhh...I like drinkin' alone

(bridge)

Words and Music © 1996 by Tim Robinson

The Flood

When it rains like this you know for sure that river's going to flood its banks
again
'cause where else is that water going to go but wide,
spilling across my little apron of land here where the river takes a jog,
going wide and deep till it seems one more drop
my whole world's going to wash away, that's how close, that's when it stops,
the sky clears, the floodwater all runs downstream,
and overnight something miraculous happens,
I wake in the morning to a profound miracle,
like the time I woke and looked out and it seemed my whole riverbank was
paved with shimmering silver,
well I grabbed my boots, ran down there in my nightgown
and what do you think it was but millions of tiny little fish, beaching themselves
to die,
gasping out their last words, little "oh's" of surprise.
Well what could I do but go and gather up my buckets and my wheelbarrow
and go down there and pick them all up, the ones the crow hadn't already got to,
and go through my garden with a basket of seed corn and a long stick,
planting just like Squanto taught the Pilgrims to do the year they had that first

Thanksgiving,
you know, one seed, one fish, one hole.
'Course it took me the best part of a week,
and wasn't I glad when the last of those fish had a proper burial,
but that corn grew to be the tallest anyone around here had ever seen,
ten, fifteen feet tall, some of it, with ears like watermelons,
and folks around here still talk about the year I grew that corn so tall,
but I never told them how I did it, I never gave away my secret
because it seemed like a sort of pact, or maybe a test
and maybe I passed it
because the next time we had a flood, the morning after the water went down
I looked out and my riverbank was all shimmering silver again.
Well, this time I got ready, I got dressed,
I gathered up all my buckets and my wheelbarrow and went down there
and as I got closer I saw that no, that was no fish.
That riverbank was covered with twenty-dollar bills.
Can you imagine?
And all I could think was, well, aren't I lucky
that I have all these buckets, and this wheelbarrow, and I filled them up,
two, three times over some of them. which is a lot of twenty-dollar bills,
it took me the best part of a week just washing the mud off of them there in my
kitchen sink, and rinsing them, and hanging them out on the clothesline
with clothespins to dry and then running the iron over them because they
got a little wrinkled,
but when I was done, I had a stack of twenty-dollar bills enough to stuff a mat-
tress with,
if I wanted to,
and maybe I wanted to, maybe I didn't, I'm not saying that's what I did with
them,

just that the next time it started raining like it wasn't ever going to stop
I got that kind of Christmas feeling, like you know something really wonderful is
about to happen, and you know you're going to scare it off if you think
about it too much but it's really wonderful and you can't stop thinking
about it and you know you're going to scare it off if you think about it too
much but it's really wonderful and you can't stop thinking about it and you
know you're going to scare it off if you think about it too much but it's really
wonderful and you can't stop thinking about it and you know you're going
to scare it off if you think about it too much but it's really wonderful.....you
know that feeling?

Well, that was the year it rained and rained, days and days of rain and high
water, and my back porch steps waking out into a little eddy for days and
days
and me feeling all Christmassy and wishing I just knew the end of the story and
it would all go away,

for days and days
and days and days and days.

Well, finally there was a day when my back porch steps walked out onto dry land
again

and that night was the longest night of my life.

That night was as long as most weeks would be if you went a week without
sleeping
but I waited.

I waited until I could see the sun was up full and shining on that riverbank
before I peeked open the blinds, looked out,
and what do you think it was, sitting there on that riverbank,
looking just like in the showroom,
except for a little water running out the bottom of the doors,
but that blue Pontiac, same one you see sitting there in the drive,
not a scratch on it,
North Carolina plates, if you can figure that out,
key in the ignition,
started right up.

'Course it was the best part of a week
before the mud firmed up to where I could budge her
but after that I drove that car everywhere.
I'd probably be driving it right now if it weren't for that flat tire, but no matter,
the radio works fine and I like to sit in the car and listen to the radio,
get the weather report,
but you know when it rains like this, I don't need a weather report to know for
sure
that river's going to flood.

Words and Music © 1996 by Annie Gallup

Straight Life, No Chaser

on white rose pedals i find you
alone and indebted to the past
in a world of hearts and rapture
no days are ever gonna last
does gold really have any value
who made up those rules ?
does it shine any brighter than your true loves arms
does it die in the eye of a fool

chorus: i'm gonna dream about my lover
as i walk down the old road side
like a cigarette ember in a limousine
i'll meet her on the other side, where there'll be...
straight life no chaser
where you can't comprehend the past
clouds do part for the friendly there
and the lovers of us intertwine

you look in the eye of a scarecrow
in some farmers field
you saw the ancient mascara
of your lovers final shield

i'll meet you down at the graveyard
rosary in my hand
on my knees before the stone cold truth
humble as a grain of sand

(chorus)

no gods like we've ever known them
enter upon our town
i was just there to bid farewell
to my lovers fresh packed ground
willfully we have paved our way
no one forces us to live or die
is that a crumpled poem or cloud in the sky
which ever's gonna make you cry

(chorus)

Words and Music © 1996 by Patrick Brayer

What's Wrong With The Man Upstairs?

What's wrong with the man upstairs?
He just lost his boyfriend
He can't stop crying
With tears as big as Stonehenge
Just look at my ceiling
The plaster is peeling
He's old and gay but just yesterday
His shoes were polished
Now he wants to go into the snow
And practice bird calls

What's wrong with my generation?
To play with paper dollies
Or go back to college
That is the question
Where are the Jack Londons
Now that we need them
Oh you may say no dragons to slay
They're in the ground
But keep an eye on me and you will see
My bones light up

What's wrong with the Russians?
Have you read their novels
They all die in brothels
Oh Anna Karenina
You should meet Sherlock Holmes
Or is it Basil Rathbone
Do you get my gist all you communists
Can't you take a joke
Did you hear the one the traveling salesman
And the Bolshevik's daughter
(Bolshevik you've got a lovely daughter)

What's wrong with the angels?
Are they really Martians
Or renegade space nuns
Sugar bricks my pleasure dome
A wind made of ether
A garden to please her
I don't believe in Adam and Eve
I pray anyway

So when life is tough just call its bluff
Homo erectus

Words and Music © 1979 by David Massengill

The Widow's Lament

I spied a young woman
Alone by the quays
And heard her lament
As she scolded the breeze
Abusing the ships there
And cursing the seas
For taking her true love away

He's bound to an exile
Of shackles and sheep
In a land the Almighty
Designed in his sleep
Where creatures abound
That should only be found
In Bedlam or deep in the sea

But I swear to this truth
That I seal with a tear
Not even the bride
Of a wild buccaneer
Or the high riding queen
Of the western frontier
Ever had such a lover as he

Like the wheel in the wind
He was roguish and wild
He was soft as the breath
Of an innocent child
He was pure as a dove
And the taste of his love
Was sweet as the juice of the bee

But they've taken my pirate
My king of the cowboys
Leavin' me courted
By peasants and ploughboys
Each with a mind
Like a horses behind
And a skin like the bark of a tree

And they come for a mistress
A wife or a whore
Or a fine easy mare
Who's been ridden before
But I'd have to be dead
To be found in a bed
With a lout like the best of them be

So if even the finest
Should dance through my door
With a neck like a bullock
And balls like a boar
Though he numbers his coin
like the sands of the Boyne
Yet he'll not get a leg over me

So the nuns of the
Magdalen Laundry can perch

Like the haggard ould bats
 In the roof of a church
 Tradin' penance and soapsuds
 For honour and hope
 But they'll never take either from me
 And I'll give all the money
 I hold in my purse
 Just to see his tormentors
 Live under a curse
 May the winds of their fortune
 Blow all in reverse
 Though they live to a hundred and three

And I pledge to the seabirds
 And all the good fish
 If the fairies will answer
 And honour my wish
 May the bones of his jailers
 Be yours in a dish
 May their widows be lonely as me

Words and Music © 1995 by Al Grierson

Bill and Annie

We stopped for peaches at a little roadside stand
 Man said his name was Bill, I said I'm Chuck, and this is Annie
 He said Annie was the one and only true love of his life
 They met at his wedding, but by then he had a wife

It was during the reception in the Spring of '64
 She, his newlywed's best friend, followed him out the ballroom door
 Maybe his ring got smaller - maybe his finger swelled
 Maybe he'd made a big mistake - and maybe time would tell

Bill asked, "Do you feel what I feel?" Annie said, "I do."
 Bill was at a loss, wondering now what should he do?
 He did what he had to - he'd just taken a wife
 And she would take good care of him for the rest of her life

Bill and Annie fought the urge, they saw each other often
 She was there in black the day Bill's wife lay in her coffin
 By then she'd gotten married - by then she'd moved away
 She'd asked Bill for his blessing - he'd said it was ok

Bill said, "Taste the peaches," and he cut us each a slice
 They were a little on the small side, but they sure tasted nice
 "Do you think I did the right thing?" he asked, but I knew he knew
 So I answered with a question, I asked him, "Bill, do you?"

He said, "Annie, pleased to meet you, it was nice to meet you,
 Chuck."

Annie & I, we drove away in Annie's pick-up truck
 With a box of twenty peaches - a homegrown tomato too
 And a couple of things to think about & every now and then I do...
 I do

Words and Music © 1996 by Chuck Brodsky

Carriage Horse

Paintings in oil
 Lined against the sidewalk
 Poets in voice
 Preaching through the crowds
 Pretzels in salt
 Rise to tease my hunger

Tourists in pairs
 My driver begs to charm

chorus: I am the carriage horse
 And I will bear you through this park
 And I have worn these streets
 With the weight of my hoofmark
 And the work is free
 They have bound me into silence
 And I will stand this heat
 Just to top off your last day in the city

When I was a colt
 I don't dare remember
 Feeling so spry
 As the one they just brought in
 If someone came by
 And freed me from this holster
 I'm not sure that I would even think to run

(chorus)

(instrumental break)

Waiting in line
 Mine is not the best cab
 Motionless time
 They've trained us how to stand
 Catching my eye
 The lady stops her courtier
 They're climbing inside
 He's got the ring in hand.

Words and Music © 1996 by Linda Sharar

Diamond Mines

One man hides the diamonds
 The other bars the door
 He thinks he'd like to have what his neighbor does
 If he only had a diamond more
 And if he strikes it rich
 His friends will all drink wine
 From the finest cellars
 In the darkest diamond mines

And he'll pass it to his children
 When he's had his play
 And he won't have to work in the diamond mines
 A single night or day
 He's got big plans
 With big bold red lines
 He'd like to be among the richest lords
 In the grandest diamond mines

I knew of two brothers
 Who set out for the mines
 They chipped and picked and schemed and dreamed
 And one day they did find
 A diamond huge as ll
 Their wildest designs
 One slit the throat of the other
 And he lit out of the diamond mine

Tell me brothers
 How did this all start

You remember when we'd roll the dice
 No diamonds in our hearts
 What has become of
 Your princely charity
 Are you feeling less than even
 The next round is on me

chorus: And we'll drink a toast to our great success
 If in our life and times
 We've been blessed to have not been lost
 Somewhere in the the diamond mines
 We sing lai . . . lai da dai dai . . .

A woman I know, she gave it all
 For a life way down the line
 With a deal for good behavior
 She quietly bid her time
 Now she's free and she can do what she wants
 But she's so sad to find
 The only thing that she knows how to do
 Is to work in the diamond mines

Who stands to profit by
 The diamonds on her hand
 We've all been deemed to win her share
 And the winners in the land
 Count their blessings by the bill
 And weakly grease the band
 For the cunning rule the miners
 In the shafts of diamond land

chorus: I'll consider myself a great success
 In my life and times
 I've been blessed to have not been lost
 Somewhere in the the diamond mines

It's been said rebellion
 Is a luxury of class
 You'll not have time if you're working
 In the diamond shafts
 You'll not raise a ruccous
 A question about the take
 As long as you believe you could own it all too
 With the very next swing you make

The evils of pursuit
 Will take you by surprise
 You're talking with your friend
 You'll see diamonds in his eyes
 Lazarus he would not let go
 He would not compromise
 I've seen his grave and I've also seen
 My diamonds in the sky

chorus: I'll consider myself a great success
 If in my life and times
 I've been blessed to have not been lost
 Somewhere in the the diamond mines
 I consider myself a great success
 If in my life and times
 I've been blessed to have not been lost
 Somewhere in the the diamond mines
 We sing lai . . . lai da dai dai . . .

Words and Music © 1996 by Nikki Lehman



Tim Robinson, Catie Curtis, David Massengill, Annie Gallup (l)

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FAST FOLK

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

- 1) **I Was a Loner** (Monty Delaney)
Richard Meyer (guitar & vocal)
Jack Hardy (mandolin & vocal)
Chuck Brodsky (vocal)
Catie Curtis (vocal)
- 2) **The Next Best Western** (Richard Shindell)
Richard Shindell (guitar & vocal)
- 3) **Katy's Smile** (Louise Taylor)
Louise Taylor (guitar & vocal)
- 4) **The Fool's Last Mile** (Richard Meyer)
Richard Meyer (guitar & vocal)
Richard Shindell (vocal)
- 5) **Phoney Phrench** (Alan Andrews)
Tim Robinson (guitar & vocal)
Jack Hardy (mandolin & vocal)
Chuck Brodsky (vocal)
Richard Meyer (vocal)
- 6) **Balloons** (Wendy Beckerman)
Wendy Beckerman (guitar & vocal)
- 7) **The Passing** (Jack Hardy)
Jack Hardy (mandolin & vocal)
Wendy Beckerman (vocal)
Louise Taylor (vocal)
Dave Anthony (bodhrán)
- 8) **Drinkin' Alone** (Tim Robinson)
Tim Robinson (guitar & vocal)
Jack Hardy (vocal)
Wendy Beckerman (vocal)
- 9) **The Flood** (Annie Gallup)
Annie Gallup (guitar & vocal)
- 10) **Intro to Straight Life**
- 11) **Straight Life, No Chaser** (Patrick Brayer)
Patrick Brayer (guitar & vocal)
Wendy Beckerman (vocal)
Louise Taylor (vocal)
- 12) **What's Wrong With the Man Upstairs?** (David Massengill)
David Massengill (dulcimer & vocal)
Wendy Beckerman (vocal)
- 13) **The Widow's Lament** (Al Grierson)
Wendy Beckerman (vocal)
Louise Taylor (vocal)
Annie Gallup (vocal)
Catie Curtis (vox hurdy gurdy & bodhrán)
- 14) **Bill and Annie** (Chuck Brodsky)
Chuck Brodsky (guitar & vocal)
- 15) **Carriage Horse** (Linda Sharar)
Wendy Beckerman (guitar & vocal)
Louise Taylor (vocal)
Annie Gallup (vocal)
- 16) **Diamond Mines** (Nikki Lehmann)
Chuck Brodsky (guitar & vocal)
with Annie Gallup, David Massengill, Patrick Brayer,
Wendy Beckerman, Catie Curtis, Louise Taylor,
Richard Meyer, Jack Hardy, Richard Shindell

The House Band:

Mark Dann (electric & acoustic guitar)
David Hamburger (pedal steel & dobro)
Jenny Hersch (bass)
Dave Anthony (drums)

Recorded live at the Bottom Line, New York, January 27th 1996.
Concert produced by Jack Hardy. Recorded for Fast Folk by Adam Blackburn. Album produced by Richard Meyer and David Seitz.
Master tape sequencing and preparation by Mark Dann.
Mastered by Joe Brescio at the Master Cutting Room/NYC.

Stage Manager for Fast Folk: Susan Kohn, Denise Battura
MC: Christina Houghton
Stage Manager for the Bottom Line: Banjo Jim Croce
Fast Folk production crew: Paul Gioia, Michael Hagen, Richard Cuccaro, Nich Haber, Ken Korreis

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Tim Robinson, Catie Curtis, David Massengill, Richard Meyer, Annie Gallup (2)