

STEREO FOLKWAYS RECORDS FSS 37335

*Australian Ballads The Early Years Seona McDowell*

AND FOLK MUSICAL GROUP ACCOMPANIMENT





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**SEONA McDOWELL**

Winner of the 1979 and 1980 Oz Music Awards, Seona is a multi-talented performing artist who enjoys entertaining people of all ages and accompanies herself with six and twelve string guitars, five string banjo, Appalachian autoharp and dulcimer.

One of Seona's many ways of expressing and communicating musically with Australians of all ages was her involvement in the schools, where she sings history and poetry through music. She found that very few Australians knew anything about the richness of Australian music which, for the most part, was originally brought over from England, Ireland and Scotland, but which has developed into what can only be called Australian.

With gratitude to the country that gave her the opportunity of expressing herself so well through music, and the Australian people who have so generously shared their heritage with her, Seona, in turn, lovingly shares with those who would listen to this album, some of the wealth in words and music, that is Australia.

**CREDITS:**

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With special thanks to Richard Adams for information on Lady Franklin's Lament.

With thanks to Bob Gregory for passing on to me his enthusiasm for Australian history and music.

Photo Credit: Don Muir

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*Australian Ballads  
The Early Years*

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FSS 37335

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



## Australian Ballads—'The Early Years'

BLACK VELVET BAND, of Irish origin, was adapted to suit Irish convicts going to Australia. There is also an American Appalachian version known as "The Girl With The Blue Velvet Band", brought to this mountainous area by Irish immigrants.

CONVICT MAID, a 'Street Ballad', derives from an old English 'Broadside'. The most renowned convict maid was Mary Reidy. She was transported to Australia from Yorkshire, England, at the early age of thirteen years for stealing a ride on an English Squire's horse. Mary, a financial wizard, became the wealthiest woman in Australia.

BOTANY BAY was written in 1885 for the musical comedy "Little Jack Shepherd" and sung by the London Music Hall singer, David Belasco James. It parodied a convict transportation song known as "Farewell to Judges and Juries".

MORETON BAY, the origin of which still remains a mystery, though thought to be Irish, tells about Captain Logan, a strict disciplinarian, who was speared in October of 1880; and Australia's infamous bushranger (outlaw), Ned Kelly, who quoted lines from the ballad in his "Jerilderie Letter" (1879).

LADY FRANKLIN'S LAMENT over her husband, Lord Franklin, an English explorer who also did some exploring in Australia, is a sad tale of undying hope. Lord Franklin was trying to find a passage through the Pole when his ship, together with another, became imbedded in ice. They abandoned ship but were never seen again. Lady Franklin never gave up hope and continued to send out search parties until her death.

WITH MY SAG ALL ON MY SHOULDER is an Australian gold-rush song. The last verse tells about Lighthouse Mountain in the western district of Victoria, which served as a guide to gold prospectors on their way to the Ballarat Goldfields. These adventurers rolled their possessions in a blanket, known as a swag, which they carried on their shoulders while they walked to the goldfields. The mountain was subsequently renamed Elephant Mountain because of its shape.

CROSS OF THE SOUTH originally was known as "Kelly The Boy From Killane" from the 1798 Irish uprising. This old Irish tune was borrowed, with new words written, to describe the plight of Australian goldminers. Fighting for their civil rights and against the high licence fees levied upon them, the miners led by Peter Lalor, whose brothers were rebels in Ireland, finally took a stand against the troopers who had so badly mistreated them.

THE OLD PALMER SONG describes a gold-prospecting area, where the Palmer River runs through it. A very inhospitable area, not only did the miners have to contend with the aborigines, who owned the land, they were deluged by frequent monsoons during monsoon season. Though encouraging would-be prospectors, it doesn't hide the drawbacks.

## BLACK VELVET BAND

In a neat little town they call Belfast,  
Apprenticed I was bound.  
And many an hour's sweet happiness  
I spent in that neat little town.  
'Till a sad misfortune overcame me  
That took me away from my land,  
Far away from my friends and relations  
Betrayed by that black velvet band.

### CHORUS

Her eyes they shone like diamonds  
I thought her the queen of the land.  
And her hair it hung over her shoulders  
Tied up with that black velvet band.

I took a walk with this pretty maid,  
And a gentleman passing us by,  
Well, I knew she meant the doom for him  
By the look in her black roguish eyes.  
A gold watch she stole from his pocket  
And placed it right into my hand.  
And the very last words that I said were  
"Success to that black velvet band."

### CHORUS

Before the judge and the jury  
Next morning I had to appear.  
The judge, he sez to me "Young man,  
Your case it is proven clear.  
We'll give you seven years penal servitude  
To be spent far away from the land,  
Far away from your friends and relations"  
Betrayed by the black velvet band.

### CHORUS

So come all you jolly young fellows,  
A warning take by me.  
When you're out on the town me lads,  
Beware of the pretty colleens.  
They'll beat you with strong drink me lads,  
'Til you are unable to stand.  
And the very first thing that you'll know is  
You've landed in Van Diemen's Land.

### CHORUS



THE WILD COLONIAL BOY, the origins of which are still obscure, is a ballad about the outlaw, Jack Doolan. No historical trace has so far been found of an outlaw, Jack Doolan, Jack Dowling or Jack Duggan, all of whom are depicted in different versions of the song. John Meredith, who researched the derivation, suggests that the song describes the Australian outlaw, Jack Donahoe from New South Wales in the 1820s. It is sung in several parts of the world, notably Ireland and the United States of America.

MATT BRADY, nicknamed "Gentleman Brady" because of his consideration to his victims and courtesy toward women, was an educated man sent to Botany Bay for forgery. Protesting prison conditions, he was sent to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), where he escaped. He and his gang roamed the Bush (forests) robbing the settlers. Finally, betrayed by one of his own gang, he was captured and hanged, an eveny that was sorrowfully mourned by the women of Hobart.

CLICK GO THE SHEARS, originated in Queensland, northern New South Wales, and goes back to the days of blade-shearing. The tune, borrowed from a semi-spiritual, "Ring The Bell Watchman", with new lyrics, describes the "Ringer" -- a shearer with the highest tally of sheep shorn; the "Snagger" -- a rough-handed or incompetent shearer, and the "Tar-boy" -- a lad employed in larger sheds whose job it was to apply tar to a wound or cut on the sheep incurred during the process of shearing.

THE SPRINGTIME, IT BRINGS ON THE SHEARING is a story about the sheep shearers, who travelled from one country station (ranch or farm) to another, seeking work during the shearing season. When the shearing was over, many of them became "swaggies", living off the land and sleeping in the open. The "new chums" were newcomers to the game, usually troublesome sons of wealthy English parents, who sent their boys to Australia not only to get them out of the way but in the hope that they would be straightened out by the hard life. Experienced shearers regarded the "new chums" with scorn.

WALTZING MATILDA, means to carry a swag as did the old time tramp or hobo. There are two versions of this song, one written by Marie Cowan, the most popular version and the one used on this album; Banjo Patterson, a famous Australian poet, wrote another version, generally known as the Queensland version. The ~~tune~~ shows some similarity to an old Scottish one known as "Craigielea".

Glossary of terms: Swagman -- A hobo or tramp  
 Billabong -- A cut-off portion of a stream, which has formed a pool.  
 Billy -- A tin can with a handle, hung on a stick over a fire and used for cooking in.  
 Jumbuck -- A young sheep.  
 Tucker-bag -- A knapsack or food bag.  
 Squatter -- The landowner who owns the sheep.  
 Troopers -- Policemen.

## THE CONVICT MAID

Ye lads and lasses all attend to me  
 While I relate my tale of misery.  
 By hopeless love was I once betrayed  
 And now I am, alas, a convict maid.

To please my lover did I try so sore  
 That I spent upon him all my master's store,  
 Who in his wrath did so loud upbraid  
 And brought before the judge this convict maid.

The judge, his sentence then to me addressed,  
 Which filled with agony my aching breast.  
 "To Botany Bay you must be conveyed,  
 For seven long years to be a convict maid."

For seven long years I toiled in pain and grief,  
 And cursed the day that I became a thief.  
 Oh, had I stuck by some honest trade,  
 I ne'er had been alas, a convict maid.

## BOTANY BAY

Farewell to old England for ever.  
 Farewell to my rum culls as well.  
 Farewell to the well-known Old Bailey,  
 Where I once used to be such a swell.

### CHORUS

Singing too-ral li-ooral li-ad-dity  
 Singing too-ral li-ooral li-ay  
 Singing too-ral li-ooral li-ad-dity  
 Oh, we're bound for Botany Bay.

'Taint leaving old England we cares about  
 'Taint 'cos we mispells what we knows,  
 But becos all we light-fingered gentry  
 Hops around with a log on our toes.

### CHORUS

Now, if I had the wings of a turtle-dove  
 I'd fly on my pinion so high,  
 Slap bang to the arms of my Polly love,  
 And in her sweet arms I would die.

### CHORUS

So come all ye Dookies and Duchesses,  
 Take warning from what I've to say.  
 And mind all is your own as you touchesses,  
 Or you'll wind up in Botany Bay.

### CHORUS



## MORETON BAY

One Sunday morning, as I went walking  
By Brisbane waters I chanced to stray.  
I heard a convict his fate bewailing,  
As on the sunny river banks he lay.  
"I am a native of Erin's island,  
But banished now from my native shore.  
They stole me from my aged parents  
And from the maiden whom I do adore.

I've been a prisoner at Port Macquarie,  
At Norfolk Island and Emu Plains,  
At Castle Hill and at cursed Toongabbie,  
At all these settlements I've been in chains.  
But of all places of condemnation  
And penal stations in New South Wales,  
To Moreton Bay I have found no equal,  
Excessive tyranny each day prevails.

For three long years, I was beastly treated  
And heavy irons on my legs I wore.  
My back with flogging was lacerated  
And oft-times painted with my crimson gore.  
And many a man from down-right starvation  
Lies mouldering now underneath the clay.  
And Captain Logan he had us mangled  
All on the triangles of Moreton Bay.

Like the Egyptians and ancient Hebrews  
We were oppressed under Logan's yoke,  
'Til a native black lying there in ambush  
Did deal this tyrant his mortal stroke.  
My fellow-prisoners be exhilarated  
That all such monsters like death may find,  
And when from bondage we are liberated  
Our former sufferings will fade from mind."

## LADY FRANKLIN'S LAMENT

'Twas homeward bound, one night on the deep,  
Swinging in my hammock, I fell asleep.  
I dreamed a dream and I thought it true,  
Concerning Franklin and his gallant crew.

I dreamed a dream by the Humber shore.  
I heard a female, she did implore.  
She wept aloud and she seemed to say,  
"Alas!, my Franklin has been long away.

With a hundred seamen he sailed away  
To the frozen oceans, in the month of May,  
To seek a passage around the Pole  
Where poor brave seamen do sometimes roll.

Through cruel hardships they vainly strove.  
Their ship on mountains of ice was drove  
Where the Eskimo in his skin canoe,  
Is the only one who can ever come through.

And now my burden, it gives me pain.  
For my long lost Franklin I would cross the main.  
Ten thousand pounds would I gladly give  
To know on earth that my Franklin doth live."

## WITH MY SWAG ALL ON MY SHOULDER

When first I left old England's shore  
Such yarns as we were told  
As how folks in Australia  
Could pick up lumps of gold.  
So when we got to Melbourne town  
We were ready soon to slip  
And got even with the captain  
All hands scuttled from the ship.

## CHORUS

With my swag all on my shoulder,  
Black billy in my hand,  
I travelled the bush of Australia  
Like a true-born native man.

We steered our course for Geelong town  
Then north-west to Ballarat  
Where some of us got mighty thin  
And some got sleek and fat.  
Some tried their luck at Bendigo  
And some at Flery Creek.  
I made a fortune in a day  
And spent it in a week.

## CHORUS

So round the lighthouse now I tramp  
Nor leave it out of sight.  
I take it on my left shoulder  
And then upon my right.  
And then I take it on my back  
And oft upon it lie.  
It is the best of tucker tracks  
So I'll stay here 'til I die.

## CROSS OF THE SOUTH

'Twas the month of December, the year '54,  
When the men of Eureka rebelled.  
And they swore the flag they had made for themselves  
Ever proudly aloft would be held.  
The miners took arms in the stockade that day.  
The bold word passed from mouth.  
"We will stand by this flag, the stars that it bears,  
White stars of the Cross of the South."

The hot blood of heroes ran fast in their veins,  
There was but one man they obeyed.  
The hero of heroes they chose from their ranks,  
Peter Lalor their hero they made.  
Peter Lalor said, "Now we must stand by our guns,  
Fear not the cannons fierce mouth!  
For I see the soldiers are gathering now  
To tear down the Cross of the South."

Captain Thomas charged the Eureka Stockade,  
Three hundred troops by his side.  
Fire and steel met them there. They fell back again,  
But the first of the miners had died.  
The smoke from the battle had scarce cleared away  
When the soldiers came charging once more.  
The miners were killed as they stood round the flag  
Or fell from the wounds that they bore.

Bold Peter Lalor lay shot on the ground  
Where the soldiers had left him for dead.  
And the flag that he loved lay there by his side,  
The white stars all stained with red.  
Peter Lalor he rose on his knees in the dust,  
Wild words poured from his mouth  
"You can murder us all in black tyranny's name,  
But you can't kill the Cross of the South."

## THE OLD PALMER SONG

The wind is fair and free, my boys,  
The wind is fair and free.  
The steamer's course is north, my boys,  
And the Palmer we will see.  
And the Palmer we will see, my boys,  
And Cooktown's muddy shore,  
Where I've been told there's lots of gold  
So stay down south no more.

## CHORUS



Blow ye winds, heighho!  
 A-digging we will go.  
 Stay no more down south, my boys,  
 So let the music play.  
 In spite of what I'm told,  
 I'm off to search for gold.  
 Make a push for that new rush  
 A thousand miles away.

I hear the blacks are fierce  
 And spear both horse and man.  
 The rivers all are wide and deep,  
 No bridges them do span.  
 No bridges them do span, my boys,  
 And so you'll have to swim.  
 But never fear the yarns you hear  
 And gold you're sure to win.

#### CHORUS

So let us make a move, my boys,  
 For that new promised land.  
 And do the best we can, my boys,  
 To lend a helping hand.  
 To lend a helping hand, my boys,  
 Where the soil is rich and new.  
 In spite of fears of unknown tracks,  
 We'll show what we can do.

#### CHORUS

#### WILD COLONIAL BOY

There was a wild colonial boy,  
 Jack Doolan was his name.  
 Of poor but honest parents,  
 He was born in Castlemaine.  
 He was his father's only hope,  
 His mother's only joy.  
 The pride of both his parents  
 Was the wild colonial boy.

#### CHORUS

Come all my hearties, we'll range the mountain side.  
 Together we will plunder, together we will ride.  
 We'll scour along the valleys, and gallop o'er the plains.  
 We scorn to live in slavery bowed down by iron chains.

One day as he was riding  
 The mountain side along,  
 A-listening to the little birds  
 Their pleasant laughing song,  
 Three mounted troopers came in view  
 Kelly, Davis and Fitzroy  
 And thought that they would capture him,  
 The wild colonial boy.

#### CHORUS

"Surrender now, Jack Doolan,  
 You see there's three to one.  
 Surrender now, Jack Doolan,  
 You daring highwayman."  
 He drew a pistol from his belt  
 And spun it like a toy.  
 "I'll fight but I won't surrender"  
 Said the wild colonial boy.

#### CHORUS

He fired at trooper Kelly  
 And brought him to the ground.  
 And in return from Davis,  
 Received a mortal wound.  
 All shattered through the jaws he lay  
 Still firing at Fitzroy.  
 And that's the way they captured him,  
 The wild colonial boy.

#### CHORUS

#### MATT BRADY

Take off your gay bonnet, put on your black gown.  
 Close all the shutters in old Hobart town.  
 Let nobody laugh and let no children play,  
 For they're going to hang Matt Brady today.

He was taken in London and told he must die.  
 The sentence he heard without batting an eye.  
 They sent him, instead, to Botany Bay,  
 Where they left him to pine and wither away.

Imprisoned in chains at dread Macquarie,  
 He took a boat and he sailed out to sea  
 With twelve other men, who knew tyranny's goad.  
 When they headed for shore, they took to the road.

For three years he rode at the head of his gang,  
 But never a man died at Matt Brady's hand.  
 He was gallant in victory and brave in defeat.  
 And no woman feared Matt Brady to meet.

A traitor named Cohen the soldiers let loose  
 And offered him gold for Matt's head in a noose.  
 'Twas Cohen that brought him to his bitter end,  
 For Cohen the dog was a traitorous friend.

And now traitorous Cohen is sailing away,  
 A pardon and gold were his traitorous pay.  
 And gallant Matt Brady will never go home,  
 And never again the high hills to roam.

#### CLICK GO THE SHEARS

Out on the board the old shearer stands  
 Grasping his shears in his thin bony hands.  
 Fixed is his gaze on a bare-bellied yeo.  
 Glory if he gets her won't he make the ringer go.

#### CHORUS

Click go the shears boys, click, click, click.  
 Wide is his blow and his hands move quick.  
 The ringer looks around and is beaten by a blow  
 And curses the old snagger with the bare-bellied yeo.

In the middle of the floor in his cane-bottomed chair  
 Sits the boss of the board with his eyes everywhere.  
 Notes well each fleece as it comes to the screen,  
 Paying strict attention that it's taken off clean.

#### CHORUS



The tar boy is there and awaiting in demand  
With his blackened tar pot in his tarry hand.  
Sees an old sheep with a cut upon its back  
Here is what he's waiting for it's "Tar here Jack."

CHORUS

Shearing is all over and we've all got our cheques  
Roll up your swags boys, we're off on the tracks.  
The first pub we come to it's there we'll have a spree  
And everyone that comes along, it's "Come and drink with me."

CHORUS

Down by the bar the old shearers stand  
Grasping his glass in his ~~thin~~ bony hands.  
Fixed is his gaze on a green painted keg.  
Glory he'll get down to it ere he stirs a leg.

CHORUS

THE SPRINGTIME IT BRINGS ON THE SHEARING

The springtime, it brings on the shearing.  
And then you will see them in droves,  
To the west-country stations all steering,  
A-seeking a job off the coves.

CHORUS

With a ragged old swag on my shoulder  
And a billy quart-pot in my hand  
And I'll tell you we'll 'stonish the new chum  
To see how we travel the land.

Oh, and after the shearing is over  
And the wool season's all at an end.  
It is then you will see the flash-shearers  
Making johnny-cakes round in the bend.

CHORUS

BOLD TOMMY PAYNE

I'll tell you a story, it's sad, but it's true,  
Of the wild pigs where I came from and the damage they do.  
Oh, there once was a farmer called bold Tommy Payne,  
Who grew some sweet pinder and Q.50 cane.

It was late in the evening when an old boar he came  
And started a-dining on bold Tommy's cane.  
So up steps bold Tom, and with fire in his eye,  
He cursed and he swore that the old boar would die.

He grabbed for his rifle that stood by the door.  
He called for his pig dogs and they came by the score.  
Then out to the cane fields all dressed for the fray,  
In weskit and trousers, bold Tom made his way.

As he stood on the cane break he gazed all around  
Then quickly he turned as he heard a strange sound.  
As that big boar came charging straight for bold Tom,  
The dogs were all barking and the battle was on.

Then up jumped bold Tommy six feet in the air,  
As he straddled that grunter he heard his pants tear.  
Oh, you should have heard the language and the words of bold Tom  
When he found to his sorrow his trousers had gone.

Out in old Speewah, where the pinder does grow  
The folk tell the story and they ought to know.  
They say in the mountains an old boar resides,  
And they say he's still wearing bold Tommy's strides.

WALTZING MATILDA

Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong  
Under the shade of a coolibah tree.  
And he sang as he watched and he waited 'til his billy boiled,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

CHORUS

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."  
And he sang as he watched and he waited 'til his billy boiled,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

Down came a jumbuck to drink at the billabong.  
Up jumped the swagman, grabbed him with glee.  
And he sang as he shoved that jumbuck in his tucker-bag,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

CHORUS

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."  
He sang as he shoved that jumbuck in his tucker-bag,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."



Up rode the squatter mounted on his thoroughbred.  
Down came the troopers, one, two, three.  
"Whose that jolly jumbuck that you've got in your tucker-bag?  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

#### CHORUS

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me.  
Whose that jolly jumbuck you've got in your tucker-bag?  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

Up jumped the swagman, he sprang into the billabong,  
"You'll never catch me alive!", said he.  
And his ghost may be heard as you pass by that billabong,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

#### CHORUS

Waltzing Matilda, waltzing Matilda,  
You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."  
And his ghost may be heard as you pass by that billabong,  
"You'll come a-waltzing Matilda with me."

#### (NOTES:

Our's was a family of eleven children, each so very different in character and personality; each attempting to express his or her opinion and need to parents, Ruth and Basil McDowell, whose sanity was saved only because they were blessed with a strong and splendidly outrageous sense of humor. Though Ruth and Basil seemingly set out to have a very orderly family by pairing us off starting with two boys, two girls and so on down to the last single daughter, this was to be the only orderly accomplishment they made. Sheer bedlam and chaos resulted because each of us inherited, or were forced to acquire, a sense of humor as a means of coping with day to day living in a madhouse our parents must accept responsibility for, because we deny we had anything to do with it.

The rules laid down by Ruth and Basil were made to be broken by the "McDowell Hooligans", one of Dad's favorite expressions. But the one parental command we gladly chose to accept was that we were each to learn a musical instrument. Seona was one of the youngest of the tribe. And though we McDowell's found very little that we considered to be strange, we all agreed that Seona was indeed rather odd. Seona did many strange things, but family pride forbids my disclosing most of them. I remember her as a very young child; she could mostly be found up a tree with her dolls lined along a branch staring blankly at her while she performed marvellous stage feats. A vague, airy-fairy child, Dad fondly referred to as "Ophelia" from Shakespeare's "Hamlet" because she appeared to be lost in a world of strange musical sounds, which she constantly hummed and which the family learned to use as a means of tracing her whereabouts, Seona chose to learn the piano. As the family grew up and combined their musical talents by forming the McDowell Band, a truly remarkable group of musicians, or so friends and neighbors thought, Seona was delegated the role of pianist.

Oddly enough, other than for song-writing, the piano was not the musical instrument Seona ultimately chose to pursue. After completing her education in New Zealand, young Seona decided to see the world, her first stop being Australia. Discovering stringed instruments (she plays the six and twelve string guitar, five string banjo, Appalachian autoharp and dulcimer), and Australian folk music, she became so engrossed that she did not continue her journey.

One of Seona's many ways of expressing and communicating musically with Australians of all ages was her involvement in the schools, where she sings history and poetry through music. She found that very few Australians knew anything about the richness of Australian music which, for the most part, was originally brought over from England, Ireland and Scotland, but which has developed into what can only be called Australian.

Contributing to the rich culture of Australia, such well-known Aussie poets as Henry Lawson, A. B. 'Banjo' Paterson, C. J. Dennis 'The Sentimental Bloke' and Dame Mary Gilmore, among others, describe the harshness of frontier life, the barren beauty of its terrain and the dry Aussie wit. Mary Gilmore instructs her fellow-countrymen that they have much to be proud of in one of her patriotic poems "Old Botany Bay" where she writes "Shame on the mouth that would deny the knotted hands that held us high..."

With gratitude to the country that gave her the opportunity of expressing herself so well through music, and the Australian people who have so generously shared their heritage with her, Seona, in turn, lovingly shares with those who would listen to this album, some of the wealth in words and music, that is Australia.

(Moya McDowell)

*Moya McDowell*