

S M I T H S O N I A N F O L K W A Y S

# FAST FOLK

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

A TRIBUTE TO  
**JACK HARDY**



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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# FOREWORD

## *Fast Folk, One More Time*

Mark Dann

In December 1981, Jack Hardy walked up to me at The Speakeasy club in Greenwich Village and asked, “Is it true that you have a four-track tape recorder”? He then proposed to me what would later become *The Fast Folk Musical Magazine*: a monthly record album of a dozen or so singer-songwriters, each doing what was deemed to be a great song. It was to be accompanied by a printed magazine, containing articles, editorials, and song lyrics, pertaining to the local songwriting scene. It sounded like a great idea, so of course I said yes. It was recorded over two consecutive days, and was for sale within three weeks. I was sure this was going to be a one-time thing, and was actually surprised when Jack asked me about dates the following month. This went on month after month, for the rest of the decade and well into the 90s. In all, there were over 100 issues. I was the recording engineer for most of the first half (some live recordings aside), and a bit of the second.

Jack was a great believer that the song was more important than the performance. Being a great singer or guitar-player would not earn you a slot on a Fast Folk recording, if you didn't have a song that made the grade.



Mark Dann, Jack Hardy, Jeff Hardy, Howie Morrel. This photo was for a “tour t-shirt” for the 1982 and 1984 Europe tours. Photo courtesy of Angela Page

Fast Folk was a not-for-profit organization, in all senses of the term. Tape was expensive; so each artist could keep only one take of their performance. They were allowed to do a second take, but only if it erased the first. As a result, most of the performances were “first takes.” Also, unlike most recordings made today, the artists performed live, without overdubbing their vocals. I would often overdub bass (or some other instrument) afterwards, but the performers themselves were live. And of course there was no editing, no pitch-correction, or any of the other tools that we have today. So they were pretty much live performances. There were mainly two reasons for this: In order to produce a full record album per month, we had to move fast. Hence the name, Fast Folk. But maybe more to the point, Jack didn't want “production.” He wanted to keep it stark, he wanted the song itself to be front and center. Fast Folk was to be, first and foremost, a showcase for the songs, not the artists themselves.





David Massengill and Jack Hardy at Princeton Folk Music Society. Photo © Michelle Alton

Jack also understood that there was “strength in numbers.” A “scene” would attract a lot more attention and press than individual artists could. And it did. The records were getting airplay, exposing new artists (and their songs) to new audiences. And beginning in January 1984, we started doing an annual show at New York’s prestigious Bottom Line venue, which often got write-ups in major papers. Strength in numbers indeed.

I had recently done several studio projects with Jack. We had just re-mastered his entire catalog, for a Korean record company (you can’t make this stuff up!). The summer before that, we did *Rye Grass*, Jack’s last studio recording of new songs. And before that, *The Folk Brothers*, Jack’s duo recording with David

Massengill. We also did the compilations (*Live Album* and *A Tinker’s Coin*). A common thread though all of this was what I would almost call “anti-production.” Jack would do everything live, with everybody playing in the same room. He would never wear headphones. No click track. Minimal audio processing of any kind, if any. And of course all of this based on the premise that the song had to stand on its own, much the same as Fast Folk itself.

So, with that spirit in mind, we fire up Fast Folk one more time, to do an issue of Jack Hardy’s songs. All were recorded live, quickly, and with minimal production. The songs, front and center. This seems a fitting tribute to Jack.





# JACK HARDY

Mark D. Moss, editor *Sing Out!*

[Reprinted from *Sing Out!* Volume 42, Issue #1, Spring 1997,  
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I first met Jack Hardy in early August 1982. I was just getting ready to begin my tenure with *Sing Out!*, and he was rounding the corner, as editor, on the first half-year of *The Coop* (soon to be renamed *Fast Folk*), an LP/magazine that featured songs homegrown in the fertile soil of the *New York City Musicians' Cooperative*. At the time, copies of plain-jacketed compilation LPs were sold out of a crate in the back room of a falafel joint on MacDougal called The Speakeasy—a dimly lit, gaudily decorated former disco turned contemporary folk mecca in the heart of Greenwich Village.

After meeting with some folks earlier in the day, I went for a bit of philosophical conversation and a couple of drinks with *Coop* member Rod MacDonald. We discussed the sociopolitical implications of the reviving Village folk scene, and Rod suggested we head to the club to check it out. Jack was holding court at The Speakeasy that weekend, and at that point it didn't take too much arm-twisting to get me to stick around and give a listen. When Jack took the stage with his group (including Frank Christian on guitar, and Jack's brother Jeff on bass) he swept me away! His raspy, but pleasant voice delivered lyrics thick with ancient imagery and mythology wrapped in strong melodies, punctuated by the counterpoint of acoustic guitars and bass. These were folk songs, but clearly new and every word, every phrase, seemed meticulously crafted with care akin to great traditional songs. Jack delivered them with fire and care that, at once, made me a fan for life.

*Fast Folk*, under Hardy's leadership, was one of the primary sparks that lit the bonfire of interest in contemporary folk by the mid-'80s. And that project itself was born in the wake of *The Cornelia Street Songwriter's Exchange*, started by Hardy and others in 1977; *Exchange* members would write a song each



Jeff Hardy, Maggie Roche, Terre Roche, Suzzy Roche, Jack Hardy, Folk City, late 70s, Photo © Theodore Lee

week and bring it to the group to be critiqued by peers, helping to form the foundation upon which Hardy built his unwavering philosophy of craft and responsibility of songwriting. Those meetings, which by the mid-'80s had moved to Jack's Houston Street apartment, helped nurture dozens of songwriters (including Suzanne Vega, John Gorka, Shawn Colvin, Christine Lavin, Cliff Eberhardt, David Massengill and many more) who have gone on to not-insignificant careers themselves. The meetings continue every Thursday evening at Houston Street and have inspired other songwriters' cooperatives from Boston to L.A.

Last June, Jack resigned from his second stint as *Fast Folk's* editor to, as he says, "concentrate on my own songs." His 11th album, *The Passing*, was released in February, adding ten more songs to his recorded body of work—a songbook that has led *The Boston*

*Globe*, among others, to describe Hardy as "one of the most influential figures today in defining the American folk-song." In my view, he's also one of the most uncompromising, true artists working in the genre.

Born in Indiana, Hardy began playing guitar in the early '60s sometime after his family moved to Colorado, inspired, he says, by the first wave of that era's folk revival and as "something of a rebellion against studying the piano under my father. I took up guitar at 13, and started writing songs at 14." At 15 or 16, adolescent angst over "a severe broken heart" kicked the writing into high gear.

His early repertoire (with a brother as a duo) was drawn from The Kingston Trio and the Everly Brothers. Beatles' material was a natural progression—anything with harmony and melody. Hardy also cites Dylan,





Jack Hardy. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose

of course, and Hank Williams and Jimmie Rogers as early influences. “I especially liked to follow and listen to influences,” he noted.

Hardy moved to Connecticut in the late '60s, earning a degree in literature (and The Creative Writing Award) from the University of Hartford. He edited the university paper for two years, during which time, in 1968, he was arrested and convicted of libeling then-President Nixon. (“It was the only time anyone had ever been convicted for libeling a sitting president. They used an outdated 1854 ‘obscenity’ statute to do it, and it was thrown out on appeal. The ACLU handled the whole thing. ...I try to do benefits for them whenever I can.”)

After college, Jack traveled for several years before resettling in New York City, soon becoming a fixture at Folk City, The Cornelia Street Café, and The Speakeasy. But it was during his college years that the epiphany

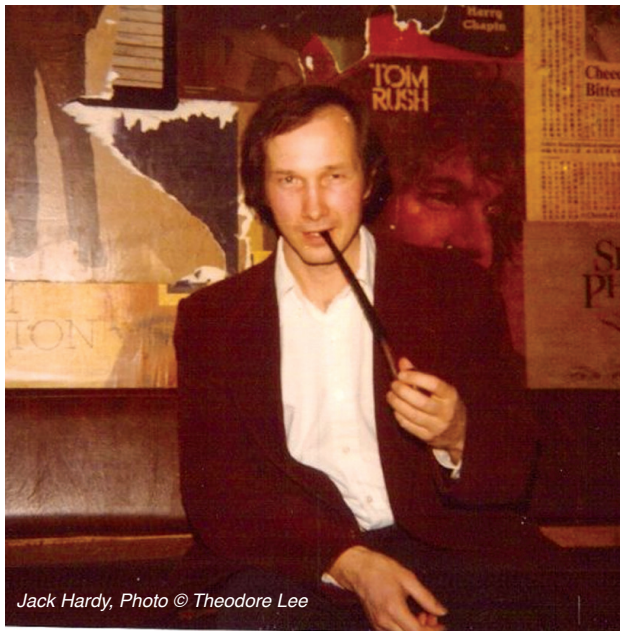
happened for Hardy as a writer when he discovered the work of William Butler Yeats. “He saved me from terminal Dylan-itis! I devoured everything Yeats wrote. His work showed that there was a lot more that could be done with written lyrics than what was being done at that time in modern folk song.”

In true form, Hardy sought out Yeats’ influences and discovered James Clarence Mangan, “a minor poet who influenced Yeats greatly—and saved us all from iambic pentameter. My next big influence was Robert Graves, whose work, such as *The White Goddess*, showed that poetry could be based on the sound of words rather than the absolute rhyme. This is a type of poetry that comes from the subconscious of the writer and affects the subconscious of the listeners. In modern times, poets hit it accidentally and attribute it to the muse. The ancient poets did it on purpose. And they could control it. Melding lyric with melody is essential, too. A lot of modern writers ignore the melody—it’s as important as the lyric!”

That statement strikes at the core of Hardy’s philosophy about the music. “Songwriters are the poets of this era,” he notes. “The invention of the printing press 400 years ago forever changed the way we ‘heard’ poetry. It was always meant to be sung. Yeats himself bemoaned, many times, that he wished he could have played an instrument.”

That said, Hardy is extremely clear that the *song*, more than the singer or the writer, is what is important. “To truly create or transcend the creative powers, you have to transcend your ego. If you are driven by ego, you’ll never truly create art, and there’s a big difference between craft and art. The creation of art is one of the few transcendent experiences left in our mechanized, consumed-by-technology society. Today’s technology has very few answers for what really troubles people—mortality, procreation, and transcendence. The ancient bards were rooted by three powers which spoke to





Jack Hardy, Photo © Theodore Lee


that: invocation (religion), enchantment (love), and curse. We live in a society that is so filled with anger—inequalities in society, war, economic injustice. That’s why the art form is so powerful. I hear from people who have used ‘The Wedding Song’ (from *The Hunter*) at their ceremony. Other songs of mine have been used at other important occasions, like funerals. We turn to songs at important times in our lives.”

One of the reasons Hardy’s work translates so well at important times in our lives is his songs’ strong structural similarities to traditional music. “Traditional forms have lasted thousands of years for a reason,” Hardy believes. “I consider myself as part of that tradition. I believe that bards work outside the system, expressing freedoms for the rest of us. My true success as an artist will be revealed if, hundreds of years from now, people are singing my songs without knowing who wrote them. I got a letter from a woman in California who’s been singing ‘The Tinker’s Coin’ for 15 years thinking it was traditional. Another song of mine (‘The Drinking Song’) has been sung at Renaissance fairs for years. These things are more of an accolade than having something on the charts.”

OK...but Hardy really is a great performer of these songs, too, and it’s still stunning to me that more people are not familiar with his work. As is the case with many influential artists, it remains an unfortunate truth that many of Jack’s “disciples” are better known than he on the club and festival circuit. Despite the significant shadow his songs and work have cast, his independent nature and uncompromising approach have worked against him. Most of his recordings, though critical masterpieces (as proclaimed by reviewers in these pages as well as *Rolling Stone* and *The New York Times*, among others), were relatively limited releases on his own label, Great Divide (and most are now out of print). Earlier this year, Hardy was recognized for his work by the World Folk Music Association with the 1997 Kate Wolf Memorial award, but the fact that Jack has never performed at any of the major North American folk festivals (except as a member of the *Fast Folk Revue*) remains outrageous. (This is probably due, in no small part, to the fact that he does his own booking and, like most artists, focuses on his art rather than on his business.)

On the other hand, Hardy recently returned from another of his frequent successful tours in Europe. “There’s a tradition of supporting the arts in Europe that we don’t have in this country,” he notes. “Because of funding, I can tour with a band there, which is how I hear my music—with harmonies. I’d like to find a way to tour with a group here, and to get my back catalog reissued. The biggest danger in this business is bitterness. One of my mentors from the early part of my career is Paul Siebel. Today he’s a baker in Maryland and not even playing guitar.”

Hardy is talking to a couple labels about reissuing the Great Divide catalog, and now that he’s passed along the responsibilities for *Fast Folk*, he’s beginning to tour more. He’s also working on a collection of essays about songwriting (tentatively titled *Shut Up and Sing the Song*).



*“If you’re going to be a songwriter, write songs. Our weekly songwriting workshop is now in its 20th year. Every week, each of us tries to write a new song. We bring it to the workshop to share with other writers. There are periods that I don’t do that—like while I’m recording or touring—but last fall I wrote 13 songs over 15 weeks. Five made it into my working repertoire. Two more might eventually. Six got thrown out. This is a pretty typical ratio once you hit a stride...and due to being in a creative environment. If this was Nashville, we’d all be getting co-writing credit on each other’s songs.”*

*“We give real advice and edits during these sessions. That’s why it’s important that we bring new songs, so that we’re open to changes. It’s not a workshop or critiquing session in the normal sense—it’s a process. Everyone improves. Gorka, Vega or anyone improves drastically as a writer after going through the process. I believe that, as a songwriter, I’m only as good as my latest song. It doesn’t matter if I have 11 albums out or if I’m just starting. A consummate professional can improve as much as a complete novice if they work this program. When Wendy Beckerman first began coming to the meetings, she had only written a couple of songs. Ten years later she has three recordings. David Massengill, Suzanne Vega, John Gorka all learned to take their writing more seriously through our meetings.”*

*“My definition of folk music is where the song is more important than the singer. My motivations are not fame and fortune. My motivation is to be the best songwriter that I can be. Eventually your body of work is all that exists—at that point, I’ll match what I’ve written against any other songwriter and we’ll see who’s where.”*

**Jack Hardy**



# Courting the Muse

Jack Hardy

*[In 1992, notable folk music publication Sing Out! introduced a new column to the magazine called Courting the Muse. The first contributor to the theme was Jack Hardy, accompanying the essay with music and lyrics to "Before You Sing." This column originally appeared in Sing Out! Volume 36, Issue #4.]*



Jack Hardy. Photo courtesy of Angela Page

These days it seems that every person who turns 13 is issued a guitar as a rite of passage. What started out as the great equalizer, the Colt .45 of the 1960s, which first allowed the nerds to outgun the jocks and win the hearts of the ladies, has now become so commonplace as to scarcely cause a pang of guilt in the yuppies when they come home from their six-figure life sentence and take down their Martin herringbone D-28 from the wall. What has also become commonplace is songwriting. And, as with many other things that caught on in the 1960s, from marijuana to baseball, it has made a rather quick jump from the mystical to the recreational. It has gone from a socially conscious, selfless ritual that existed outside the economic system to either a "me first, look at me,

aren't I great" way to make money or a pipe dream hobby. Songs that were sung to anyone who would listen are now only sung either in huge stadiums or in front of the mirror.

Songwriting should be sacred. It should exist outside of the economic system, outside of the ego, outside of time in that timeless, nameless tradition that far predates the written word. But even the tradition has been corrupted. Corrupted by the academics who somehow think that songs are artifacts to be dug up, dated, catalogued, dissected, authenticated, criticized and then generally ignored. And they're so condescending. "Aren't they adorable, the little natives, with their primitive baskets and their cute little songs." So where does that leave us, the remnants, the survivors, the writers of songs, the true poets? For what the academics forget is that at some point somebody wrote these songs.

The true songwriter today must be a wild man in the terms of Robert Bly's Iron John. In the terms of Moore and Gillette, the true songwriter must be a king, warrior, magician and lover and all at the same time. If you want to be politically correct you can substitute your own politically correct language here by changing he into she, king into queen, Lawrence of Arabia into Joan of Arc, but later on you're going to have to change goddess into god and you're not going to like it. I prefer to write from a male perspective, as I believe it is honest, and I do it without apologies. I also think it is possible to put the concepts "sensitive," "singer" and "songwriter" together without creating the gestalt of "wimp."

The songwriter must be a king in his definitive actions, in his benevolence and his concern for his people. But he must live like a warrior: an austere life of self-



deprivation, of long hours serving a higher cause. He must be a magician, adept in the initiated knowledge of the earth, its shapes and its signs. He must be a lover, whispering secret thoughts into the ears of all the ladies, and he must be a wild man actively working to initiate others, seducing them away from their bourgeois complacency.

The songwriter must seek knowledge, absorb it, commit it to memory. He must work long hours actively invoking the muse, hunting her. He must give in to his instincts, trust in the magic. He must passionately enchant all humanity as though it were the most beautiful woman in the world, no matter what cities he burns. Songwriting should be sacred, but not the songwriter. The songwriter should create his own ritual. His tabernacle should be language. He should absorb language and wear it as a sensuous robe. The sounds of the words are sacred. The sounds control the subconscious mind. He should not tie his work to his ego. He should not fear his own mortality, as all authorship fades with time and only the song is immortal.

This is where the bourgeois backlash begins. Chorus: "But you have to earn a living," "Surely deep down inside you must want to write a hit song," "You're just filled with sour grapes." To which you reply: "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's and render unto the goddess what is the goddess's," knowing full well that what is the goddess's is far more interesting than what is Caesar's. Consider the word "tongue."

You see, the battle lines were drawn long ago. In the time of King Arthur the lines were drawn between the bards and the gleemen. The bards, being the inheritors of the true poetic tradition, were thrown out on the road to live in abject poverty while the gleemen, the official court bards who were the "entertainers," laid false claim to the poetic tradition and wedded it with the written word, although they did make a lot more

money with it. A counterattack was started by Clarence Mangan, W.B. Yeats, Robert Graves and only a handful of others who took out their Celtic (s)words and singlehandedly saved us from iambic pentameter. There's nothing wrong with being a gleeman, I just don't concern myself with them. They all end up in Las Vegas anyway, and I couldn't wish a worse fate on anyone.

But for all my masculine talk, sometimes I write from the perspective of the goddess. The goddess warns: before you sing, be aware that what you sing, you write, as we each interpret a song differently. Unless of course, we are imitating, which is the sincerest form of irrelevance (although a necessary building block in learning).

The goddess also warns: before you write, beware that what you write, you sing.

A song only exists insofar as someone listens to it. Do not write for yourself. Songwriting is not a form of self-expression or masturbation; it is a form of communication and intercourse.

You are now the singer. But as the singer, you are a metaphor for society. Songwriting is metaphor, it is allegory. It is not rhetoric or simile, it is not like anything. As the singer, you will be confronted by the goddess your entire life. The virgin says you have not dealt with love in its purest sense. The mother says you have not dealt with the miracle of family in its purest sense. The crone says you have not dealt with your mortality in any sense. Unless you grapple with all three of these constantly, she (the goddess) says, still you will not know her.

The goddess works in wondrous ways.

# Songwriting Manifesto

*Jack Hardy (circa 1997) [Rescued at the time of its writing and rediscovered in 2011 by Mike Laureanno.]*

## INTRODUCTION

I am writing with trepidation, as the world doesn't need another "how to" book, nor another "self-help" book. So I am not calling this a book at all but rather a manifesto.

When I was young, people were drawn to songwriting as a need to communicate—

politics, mysticism—and a sense that they were part of a great and long-lived tradition. Before one even thought about writing a song one learned numerous songs from that tradition. Here I must state that I do not delineate between the traditional songs and the world of songwriters; someone once wrote all those "traditional" songs and the songs we learned at that time that had been written more recently were almost never learned directly from the person who wrote the song but rather passed on third or fourth hand. When I set out to write my first song I had an idea of what a song was and I had something to say.

When I hit New York in 1974 it wasn't with a bang but more of a whisper. The folk scene was dead. The only thing that could fill a club was a rumor that some celebrity would be there. But there were numerous good writers who seemed to take their work seriously.

Our songwriters' meeting grew organically, first with two of us meeting every week (myself and Maggie Roche), then a group of us at the English Pub on 6th Avenue (including David Massengill, Brian Rose, Tom Intondi, among others), then the Cornelius Street Café for five or six years and (when art could no longer get in the way of commerce) at my Houston Street apartment where it has met ever since, with a few guest venues when I was out of town. We have been meeting for over 21 years. Over the years a certain process has emerged, a process that works to fuel, inspire, encourage, teach and validate the writing we do. This manifesto is an attempt to put down some of the truth that I now hold to be self-evident.



Jack Hardy, Jeff Hardy. Photo © Theodore Lee

## **PREFACE: THE PROCESS**

Everything about writing is a process. It is a process that one must immerse oneself in to be good. We have to stop thinking of the song as a commodity. We have to stop getting hung up on the song itself, as an end in itself, and pursue the process. Young writers (or middle-aged writers) who come to our workshop for the first time are always looking for recognition of what they have already written. They are looking for validation. The first thing we do is humor them. Let them get it out of their system. “Play your greatest hit,” “play your latest song.” If we had the time we would say “play every song you’ve ever written.” Then we say, “Throw them all out. Start over.”



*Jack Hardy at Houston Street. Photo © Brian Rose*

Most people cannot do that. We never see them again. But to enter the process that is what one must do. Hemingway’s wife once lost a suitcase in a train station with all of his early manuscripts in it. Of course he was furious at the time but later he said that this was the best thing that ever happened to him. He could start over without the albatross of those early immature writings holding him back. It gets harder when one has some success, and most of us have had some success even if it is Joe at the local coffee shop saying he liked a certain song when no one else was listening. Throw it out.

The process means giving yourself the license to be something new, something potentially better or worse. To have fun writing. To trick yourself into new ways of looking at the world. Only then can you reach into your own emotions and touch the emotions of someone else without dragging everything else in a moving van with you. If you showed up at a “first date” with a moving van with all your belongings it would never allow the relationship to start.

Writing is the same way. Of course if you work with the same writers over a period of time you will become familiar with their body of work but that is different. For now you have to throw it all away, to pursue the art and the craft of songwriting. But be forewarned, where it takes you will not sit well with those left behind. Relationships, economics, lifestyles have been known to change. So now that you’ve read the warning label you may open the box.



## THE PROCESS #1

**W**rite a song a week. Sounds simple. It is and it isn't. Make it that non-negotiable item on your calendar. No excuses. None. Jobs, kids, weddings, funerals, hurricanes. Still a song a week. If you write a song a week several things will happen:

1. You will improve. In spite of yourself you will improve.
2. It will force you to pay attention, to seek out things about which to write. To find metaphors on just what is interesting out of the seemingly mundane.
3. It will force you to take yourself less seriously, to not second-guess yourself out of a good idea. No time for inner critics; just have fun writing.
4. It will force you to take yourself more seriously. You can now call yourself a songwriter. I have always marveled at those who write two songs a year and call themselves a songwriter, or those who have to take a month off their touring schedule to "write" the songs for their next album. If you are going to call yourself a writer and think of yourself as a writer you must write.
5. It will take the pressure off you to expect everything you create to be great. If it fails it doesn't matter. There will be another one next week. Give yourself the right to fail.
6. It will force you to expand your horizons: to try styles and ideas you wouldn't have tried—and at least you will have written something.

## THE PROCESS #2

**G**et together with other writers once a week. Not every other week. Not the first Tuesday of the month. Every week. This gives you a self-imposed deadline and a group of U.N. observers to enforce the deadline.

This group can also include other "kindred spirits." Our group has included novelists, photographers, poets, painters, playwrights, and actors. Make it fun. We always cook up a big pasta, people bring wine, beer, or organic fruit juices (or whatever they think will help them enjoy the process).

This is also a mutual support group for this out-of-the-mainstream line of creativity we have collectively chosen to pursue. We cook together, we eat together, we drink together. We chat, socialize and have fun and then, and only then, do we play what we have created that week. If anyone hasn't created that week they don't play, however they can still participate.



*Chuck Hancock, Jack Hardy, Jeff Hardy, on tour in Germany, 1984. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose*

### THE PROCESS #3

Criticism is a harsh word. Because of our banal school system that teaches us not how to create or how to appreciate art, but rather how to make money and how to criticize art, the word criticism has taken on a frighteningly negative connotation. True criticism focuses on what is being done right. It can only come when there is a feeling of trust between the participants and only when the participants are intensely aware of where the artist is coming from and where the artist is attempting to go.

If you get together with the same people every week, you will develop this sort of intimate creative critical relationship where everyone is equally vulnerable and everyone is fully aware of each other's capabilities so that one is not comparing one against the others but rather against what they are capable of and their own line of progress.

This allows writers of all different levels of maturity to participate at whatever level they are currently at. Not ever rest on their laurels, our group has no entrance requirements, no auditions. There are rank amateurs alongside full professionals. Each has something to offer and something to gain. We rejoice in each other's successes, minimize each other's failures, and suggestions for improvement are specific and coming from a desire to see each other improve and write as well as we possibly can.

There is a world of difference between some of the shattering, invalidating, summary executions that I have witnessed at “writers’ workshops” where someone with “credentials” passes judgment on a “worthless” piece of writing and (on the other hand) someone who says, “This line is brilliant. This line shows that you are capable of writing great things. Now you need to bring the rest of it up to this level.” It is not a massacre. It is also not a love fest where we are just supporting anything that happens.

Write songs. Even if you write your three “morning pages” it does not make you a songwriter. Even if you take all the songwriting classes and read all the songwriting and self-help books it will not make you a songwriter. Even if you have had ten hit songs recorded by a country star of your choice it does not make you a songwriter. Even if you are an impeccable insightful critic able to make or break careers it does not make you a songwriter. No amount of talking about the process or psychoanalyzing the process or yourself will make you a songwriter.

The only thing that makes you a songwriter is writing songs. And writing songs. And writing songs. Just write. Write now, judge later. Finish the song, even if you suspect that it is no good. Finish it. Plug ahead. Even if it is only a half-baked idea got on the subway or in the car on the way to your weekly songwriting meeting, go with it. Finish it. Even if you wake up in the middle of the night and have an idea, write it. Sort it out later.

Sometimes it takes you years to realize that you have written (for the better or the worse). Have faith in yourself, in your creative process, not in your critical process. No one ever wrote a song or improved their songwriting by having an opinion on a song, theirs or someone else’s. The only way to improve is to write.



*Jeff Hardy, Jack Hardy, Chuck Hancock, 1984. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose*



## THE THREE POWERS OF THE BARDS

The Bards were traditionally endowed with three powers. Yes, I suppose these are magical powers; however, they can be learned, honed and exercised with a certain degree of forethought. All good songwriting comes under one or more of these headings.

The first power is the power to enchant. Your basic love song comes under this power. I don't know what drew you to song writing but what drew me was a need to express my emotions concerning a certain member of the opposite sex. When Hallmark greeting cards could no longer do the trick I transcribed pop lyrics into letters. When that no longer mooted the complexities of my situation, I had to write something myself. What came out came from some place I didn't know was in me.

Most people attribute this to "the muse." I had all the symptoms: a broken heart, the unattainable beautiful woman (girl? I was 14 at the time). Over the years, I have realized that "the muse" is within us all. We just have to learn to recognize it and encourage it.

The second power is the power to invoke: invocation, usually associated with religion, I suppose it is, recalling the immense amount of religious music bestowed or perpetrated on us. But if this power is religious, and it is, it is a far older concept of religion: the concept of religion attached to the life cycles of the world.

It is always the songwriter who is called upon to commemorate weddings and funerals, births, special celebrations. This can produce beautiful transcendent writing or embarrassing toastmaster drivel (always rhymed). Transcendent is a word that I use specifically. A song, to be good in this situation, is one that metaphorically transcends the situation at hand, bestowing an importance and a ritualistic affiliation with the grander scheme of things.

The third power is the power of the curse. Traditionally the bards were feared for their power to curse. Songs can topple regimes. Songs can swing elections. Songs can ruin careers, songs can make light of the serious and make serious of the light. Humorous satire can come under this heading. Profound enlightening metaphor can come under this heading.

The bards not only studied for 21 years (under a master bard) in order to acquire the vast store of knowledge that was needed to be memorized but also to make sure the motives of the novice were pure enough to warrant having these powers. In the wrong hands these powers could be devastating. Consider the Nazis' use of folk music in their rallies. The mumbo jumbo, varied formulas of the dark side of witchcraft, are a small remnant left over from the bardic culture (obviously in the wrong hands).

## THE HERE AND NOW

In that we are dealing with primarily our emotional language let us look for a moment into what and how it is that certain songs seem to grab us by our heartstrings. Often it is a song that seems to place us in a whole different place, transport us almost physically out of where we are. This can be done by a description, a character, a story line, a scene evoked of a time of year or a time of life, certain weather or sounds or smells. It is the physical plane that attaches our emotions and transports them. Not the cerebral rational part of our brain.



Jack Hardy. Photo © Theodore Lee

No one is transported by being told what to feel or how to feel or by vague generalizations or clichés that leave us in the place where we were (looking at our watch wondering how long this song is going to go on). The physical plane also has access to our collective memory and collective unconscious. We are far more tied to life cycles of nature programmed over millions of years than by this mere few thousand-year digression into intellectualism and rational “intelligence.” When we paint a picture with our words or tell a compelling story or build a believable character, we grab the underpinnings of the listener’s emotions.

Often I have heard someone say, “I don’t know why that song affects me but it does. I come to tears when I hear it.” Often it can be the slightest bit of detail that makes the difference between grabbing that part of the listener; detail that alters their perspective, forces them to look at something from a different angle, so that they forget to “think” about the song and just be in it.

In our modern educational system we are not taught how to create or how to enjoy creativity. We are taught to criticize, to be critical and to pass judgment. We as songwriters have to forget what we learned and try to get our audiences to forget what they learned. We have to ambush them with superior forces when they least expect it. To lull them out of their critical posture and then transport them emotionally before they can say, “But what should I be thinking about this? What did the newspaper critic say I should think about this?”

The few who are “famous” or “critically acclaimed” have an easier job in that most people give them more license; although there can be a converse effect of people out “gunning” for them—waiting for them to fail. The vast majority of us are not famous so

## CLEVER THEFT

we are lumped in with the huge cesspool of mediocrity that tries to get the dwindling audiences' attention. We have to batten our powers to fight this uphill battle.

I imagine it was far easier years ago, before the mass proliferation of media and mediocrity. But this should not discourage us, but rather challenge us to be better. The old tricks still work. Simple, direct description and bam! The listener is out of this culture and totally moved by your song in a way that they didn't even know was missing in their life.

What brought most of us to writing songs is that we were once moved by a song. We want to be able to move others the way we were moved. Later we may be distracted by ego considerations and economic considerations in the fame and fortune department, or the quit-the-day-job department, but still what drew us to this were emotions. Let us not forget that.

Aristotle said "genius is merely the ability of clever theft." In terms of what we were just considering, consider two "good" songwriters who go to an open mike. One spends his time trashing everything he hears, putting down the amateur, pointing out all the clichés and the lack of musicianship. The other concentrates on what (although admittedly little) is being done well. A good line here, an idea unrealized here and a melody that is great as far as it goes. Which one will profit from that experience? One will know everything that he shouldn't do. Though his ego feels satisfied, he's learned nothing new. The other has some good ideas programmed into his central computer to resurface when they are needed. For this reason, at our songwriters' meeting we try to keep the criticism to the pointing out of what is being done well, knowing that everyone is risking the same.

We can only learn from failure, by the attempting of something: If we wallow in the failure aspects of that exercise we don't gain anything, but if we focus on what little we have done well, we can do it better the next time (without our self-esteem being so shattered as to get defensive). No one ever improved their writing by putting down someone else's writing.

Someone asked a musician who had backed me up for years as to whether it was easy to play with me or not. The musician said, "Oh yes, very easy: You get to the point in the music where it could go either two directions and he always goes the way you don't think he's going to go."

The same can be said for lyrics: Don't be predictable. That doesn't mean bringing in a word from left field. The only rule of thumb both musically and lyrically is that it sounds good to the ear.



If you are playing in a certain key, there are notes and chords that sound good, even dissonant ones, and there are ones that make the listener say, “Why did he do that?”

With words: A word like “bones” is a beautiful sounding word even though the subject matter may be a little raunchy. When you put words and notes together the possibilities go up geometrically. Robert Graves in *The White Goddess* spells out an insight into poetic history, that the ancient bards knew the powers of the various letters. But let us remember, this was an oral culture that he was talking about. They looked on writing as a weakness and prided themselves on their memory. So when he is talking about letters he is talking about the sound.



Jack Hardy. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose

The whole basis for Gaelic poetry is the sounds of the words: the internal rhyme, the assonance and consonance and alliteration. We all remember these words from high school English class, but long before there were names for these tricks of the trade, they were being done.

Someone asked me recently why I study a language (Irish Gaelic) that is spoken by only 40,000 people in the whole world. One has to realize that in 1600, more people spoke Gaelic than spoke English. The last vestiges of the oral poetic culture lasted longer in that world than in the first modern industrialized world of printing presses (invented about this time), which took poetry out of the oral/aural world and locked it on the printed page where it could be dissected, cannibalized and petrified by the academic world.

## TRANSCENDING EGO

In order to improve as a songwriter one must completely transcend the ego. This seems to be a paradox of sorts in that most people who go into songwriting and/or performing are thought of as being egotistical. Perhaps this is due to the lack of realization that the self one needs to write is dramatically opposed to the self that one needs to perform. One is introverted, the other extroverted. In order to tap into the subconscious one has to put aside any importance of the self and become a vehicle, not to form any judgment or any expectation but rather to “go with the flow,” and it is a flow.

## TWO-WAY STREET

A song is a two-way street. It is not therapy for the writer. It is not just what he wants to say (propaganda or otherwise). It is also what someone wants to listen to. I am a big fan of beauty: the beauty of emotions. When it comes from an emotional place and affects emotional fabric of the listener true transcendence takes place. A songwriter must always remember that the listener is as important as the singer; that without the listener the song, like a tree in the forest, doesn't exist (or make the sound).



Early band, Jack Hardy in middle. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose

Editing is crucial. Everything that comes from our trance-like creativity is not golden. It must be weighed against the needs of the listener. I remember in high school someone asking the English teacher how long an essay had to be and he replied (in dated language of the early 60s), "It should be as long as a woman's skirt: long enough to cover the subject but short enough to keep it interesting." That is, interesting to the listener. Clear concise language. However, I have never been afraid to challenge the listener a little bit. Give them the credit of intelligence. Songwriting is not like journalism. It does not have to be written on an eighth-grade level.

Often at our meetings when someone has played some long, rambling song, I ask them to explain in 25 words or less what they were trying to say. They proceed to give a concise explanation, clear and to the point. Then I say, "Write that song."

Sometimes they think that a song has to have all this extraneous garbage in it when even if it is nice poetic garbage, it doesn't serve the point. One must learn first to edit out all the garbage. What is garbage? Anything that does not serve the point and serve it well. In gardening a weed is not only a noxious (or obnoxious) plant but can also be a perfectly good plant. If you are planting peas you don't want huge corn plants coming up in the rows. They might be perfectly good corn plants, but in this situation they are weeds.

The first step of editing is to get out anything that is bad writing. The second step is harder to learn: You have to get out even the good writing if it does not serve the point. It is difficult. The lifeboat is leaving. There are too many people for it. They are all good and deserving people. But if they all go in the lifeboat, it will sink!

## OUT OF CONTROL

We live in a society that tries to control everything: nature, psychology, history (spin doctors), health. Creativity is something we cannot control. That does not keep us from trying. Everything in our educational system forces us into rational behavior, analytical behavior, clarification, dissection and most of all, adulation and imitation.

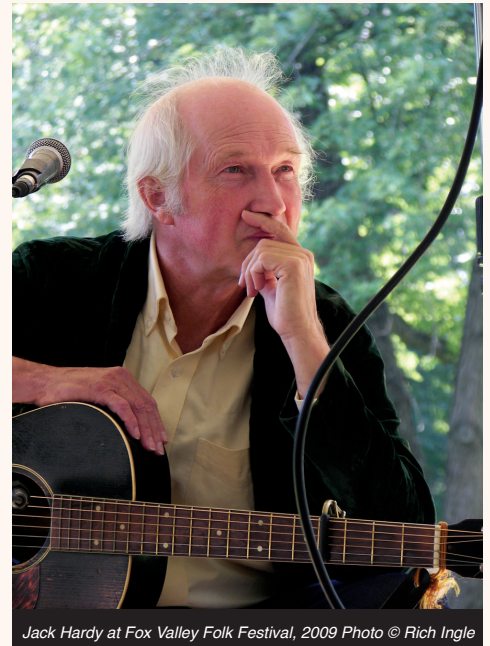
True creativity is far different. We have to unlearn everything we have learned. We have to give up the control. All we can do is program our computer (our memory) with as much useable fodder as possible: experience, imagery, tradition, vocabulary (musical and verbal), so that when we tap into that other energy we don't have to break off to look something up or try to remember where we put something (in its neat compartment or in its file in the mechanical computer).

Call it channeling, transcendental meditation, tapping into the muse—call it what you want; it is something that comes from the subconscious and affects the subconscious of the listener. The ancient bards studied for 21 years under a master bard before they were allowed to create. Now that is programming. In the first three years, they had to memorize 50 different Ogham alphabets each year, for a total of 150. These were alphabets that related to trees, birds, times of the year, colors, etc.

Once again I remind you that we are not talking about letters but rather the sounds of letters. So if the sound of the letter “A” was used, the bard was aware that that carried with it the fir tree, the winter solstice, the lapwing and piebald color, etc. If one puts that together with an “S” sound then the possibilities go up geometrically.

Another study has shown that these Ogham alphabets were also tunings for the Irish harp. Now the possibilities are three-dimensional. The remnants of this tradition were the “magic” formulae of “witchcraft.” These powers were immense. When they say that Merlin moved the blue stones to Stonehenge through the powers of music, I tend to believe it.

Now I have studied songwriting far more than 21 years but I had no master bard to study under. I have tried to piece this lore together as well as I can, although it is similar to my typing (hunt and peck), trial and error. I hope that within my lifetime



Jack Hardy at Fox Valley Folk Festival, 2009 Photo © Rich Ingle



we can collectively put back together the powers of the bards. This intrigues me more than writing “ooh-wah-diddy diddy” or some other such pop-drivel nonsense—although, come to think of it, maybe I better look into what the vowel formula was for that.

Back to “out of control.” Control is the hardest thing to give up: our desire to control the process. But this we must do. I follow the magic of the sounds and fill in the words later. Often I don’t even know what a song is “about” until it is written and I realize that its subject matter is what I was actually thinking about underneath my day-to-day concerns.

For a song to be a two-way street, we also have to give up trying to control the response of the audience and trust that what we are doing is reaching them on a deeper level. We have to give up needing a laugh track to point out where to respond.

## MELODY

And then there was melody. Melody is half of a song, and yet most often ignored or not understood by the songwriter. Test: Sing the song a cappella. If there is no melody there is no melody. No amount of chord progressions or production or harmony can make up for a lack of melody.

Unfortunately melody is perhaps the most metaphysical part of the song. There is really no way to teach melody. One has to learn it. One can study melodies, imitate them, pirate them until something clicks and voilà!—melody. A good rule of thumb is: Do not write melodies on the guitar. You will hear harmonies and overtones and tend to write melodies that follow chord progressions. Piano is worse. You hear the whole orchestra. Strip it down. Go for a walk. Whistle your idea. Try singing verbal sounds until they fit a pattern of notes.

## THE GESTALT

If songs are to be at their best, they are not poems set to music or words crafted to a melody but rather both words and melody crafted together, so that the gestalt of the two form something that transcends the sum of its parts. Now I am not saying that all songs should be sung a cappella, but if they can’t be, then back to the drawing board.

If you strip down Beethoven symphonies you’ll find Hungarian folk melodies. It doesn’t mean that they sounded better as Hungarian folk melodies; just Beethoven has something to build from.

All poetry was originally sung. Long before the printed page or the recording. Melody is half the magic.

# TRIBUTES TO JACK HARDY

## David Massengill

[A shorter version of David's piece ran in *Sing Out!* Volume 54, Issue #2, Spring 2011]



*The Folk Brothers, David Massengill and Jack Hardy, first gig, 2009 Falcon Ridge Folk Festival. Photo © Lisi Tribble*

Jack Hardy was a man of a thousand songs. I first heard one of them in 1977 at Gerdes Folk City in New York City on hoot night. I had come up that fall hoping to make my way as a songwriter and was playing all the hoot nights I could find. Hoot nights are hit or miss: everyone is brave, but rarely are they the gold standard. Jack Hardy was the jackpot. He stood on stage as though he owned it, looking like Wild Bill Hickok hell-bent-for-leather in his cowboy hat, with flowing long hair and a big handlebar mustache. Singing perfect harmony and in similar attire was his handsome younger brother Jeff, playing a big standup bass. I half expected to see their horses tied up to the hitching post outside. I sat bolt upright as they sang "Go Tell the Savior," one of Jack's early signature songs. It was my good fortune to hear many more over the years.

Just a week later I was performing at another hoot at The Dugout and after my two songs I sat sipping a beer, when this very clean-shaven and moderately dressed fellow approached and with a calm demeanor politely introduced himself. He said he'd seen me perform at the hoots these last two months and liked my songs; that he often made pasta dinners for a whole group of promising songwriters and that I'd be welcome to come join in the next time.



David Massengill and Jack Hardy at Princeton Folk Music Society. Photo © Michelle Alton

Then he casually asked if I'd seen any acts that I particularly liked at the hoots and I remembered the two cowpokes from Folk City. I enthusiastically began to describe this act that I swore was as good as Bob Dylan. I described their cowboy hats, their bandanas, the big bass, the flowing locks, the harmonies and most of all, the perfect song. Jack had a sly little smile as he repeated my review. "As good as Bob Dylan, you say? Tell me more..." And I was happy to rhapsodize some more about this magical act I'd heard the week before. Jack milked me good and his sly grin finally broke into good-natured laughter, as he told me I was describing him and his brother; that they'd shaved and gotten haircuts and thrown away their dusters. He no longer looked like Wild Bill Hickok, but he would prove to be just as legendary. And it was my good fortune to witness that sly grin many times over the years.

There was a new folk movement afoot and Jack Hardy took that movement by the scruff of the neck and made it go. He was the catalyst behind *The Musicians Cooperative* that became *The Speakeasy*, where legends like Dave Van Ronk and Odetta would play shows with Jack or myself and a whole new gang of performers, which for the sake of brevity shall be listed as the usual suspects. This is written for Jack and not the future stars for whom he hewed a path. Jack also founded the *Fast Folk Musical Magazine* LP/CD that helped give airplay and career breaks to these usual suspects. You'd hear a good song at a hoot and Jack would have it recorded the next month and on the radio. All this, while leading a weekly new-song and pasta



dinner at his apartment for over 30 years. This was a forum for new works. A chance to fail and fail grandly, but now and then there was magic. Jack looked beyond himself while fostering the songwriter movement. He saw the big picture. "Shut up and sing the song," he'd say encouragingly. Among his many mantras I most favor: "It's not the singer, it's the song."

When things were going good there was no one more fun to be around than Jack Hardy. When things were going bad, there was no one more interesting to be around. He had the uncanny knack for telling you things you didn't want but often needed to hear. Many a grumble has been heard in the night and in the bright light of day: Who does Jack Hardy think he is? And yet this selfsame grumbler has softened with the passage of time to admit, by God, Jack was right on the mark on this and that—well maybe not that, but certainly this. Jack kept poetry alive as he stood his ground. He never held a grudge and for as long as I knew him, he never turned away from a beggar on the street. He believed in himself and thereby believed in the dignity of others. And yes, it has been my good fortune to witness that dignity many times over the years.

He was a dutiful son and his children adored him. He is survived by his mother and father, Lillian and Gordon, his brother Christopher and sister Susan, and his four children Eva, Morgan, Malcolm, and Miranda. He loved his children for who they were and not for who they might be. As a result all are flourishing. As he did with his parents, he greatly admired his children's quirks and eccentricities. Life is a banquet to be enjoyed and Jack did that to the hilt. He was a beautiful scoundrel.

When Jack first moved to New York City in 1976, he and his brother Jeff planted two trees in a little park near his apartment on Houston Street and Sixth Avenue. They have grown apace and will be a comfort to me as I continue life's journey. Jack's tunes were pure, haunting and yes, sexy. Spicy too. The world is a better place for his mighty efforts and I am a better person for having known him. Rest assured for those who knew and admired Jack, he spent his final weeks on earth surrounded by friends and family and he knew he was loved. He had his wit to the end. He was brave in life and brave in death. He was a passionate man and gave his all to us workers in song. For Jack Hardy the song was sacred.

The song the song the song. *Shantih Shantih Shantih*

## Andrew Rose Gregory

The first time I ever heard Jack Hardy play “White Shoes,” it was in a tiny little basement bar in the East Village—sometime during the winter of 2010. I was mesmerized, and felt like the song spoke to me somehow supernaturally, mystically, from the year it had been written—the same year I was born. Across decades, across geography, from one young man to another—a little look into the bittersweet nature of love that we had both tasted.

My friend Frank Mazetti was sitting next to me videotaping the performance, and then eventually I strong-armed him into sending me the song.

I watched that video over and over again, figuring out (most!) of the picking and scribbling down all the words. I learned it that spring.

I’m an irregular attendee of *The Songwriter’s Exchange*—I manage about once a month—and one of the last times I saw Jack was this past November. I offhandedly mentioned to Jack that I’d learned the tune and Morgan, his daughter, mentioned it was one of her favorites too. She twisted my arm a little (though it didn’t take much!) and I played it after all the songs were done that night. I pretended to forget the third and fourth verses so that Jack would have to sing them but then we all came in on the chorus...Jack, Morgan, Me, and the rest of the whole exchange singing that beautiful, sad little melody.



Jack Hardy, *White Shoes* album cover photo, 1982

## Nanci Griffith



*Jack Hardy at 20th Anniversary Fast Folk Bottom Line Photo © Theodore Lee*

I would call him “The Dean.” He helped people, and mentored people. He was to New York folk music what [Country Music Hall of Famers] Harlan Howard and Chet Atkins were to Nashville country music. Jack welcomed young writers and took them seriously. Jack wasn’t a flowery person. He’d give you grief if he felt you weren’t paying attention to your songs, but he always had people’s best interest at heart.

*© Peter Cooper reporting in The Tennessean, March 16, 2011*



## Diana Jones



*Lisa Gutkin, Mark Dann, Jack Hardy, Miranda Hardy, Morgan Hardy at Folk City 50th Anniversary. Photo © 2010 Brian Rose*

Whenever I saw Jack he asked, “what are you writing?” He had a gift for helping so many writers focus on their songs and make them the best that they could be. Discovering more of Jack’s songs and how beautiful they are is again another huge gift of inspiration.

# Jonathan Byrd

Friday, March 11, 2011, 4:36 p.m.

Jack Hardy was larger than a man. He put his shoulder against the world and pushed every day. He was a one-man army in a battle against mediocrity. He brought us all with him and shared his success, standing anonymously behind the curtain while everyone he inspired took the stage.

At the Falcon Ridge and the Kerrville Folk Festivals, Jack hoisted an enormous pirate flag upon his arrival. He woke early in the morning, made coffee, and started playing songs. No one was allowed to talk for long when there was a guitar in the circle. Jack's legacy could be summed up in his own raspy voice: "Shut up and sing the song."



Jonathan Byrd and Jack Hardy at Kerrville. Photo © 2008 Jayne Toohey

In the afternoon, Hardy could be found in the camp, singing songs and still hosting the circle. At dinnertime, he might have made his famous pasta for everyone present. At midnight, chances are you'd find him under the pirate flag, still giving an ear to the most ham-fisted, amateur songwriters in the camp. Only Jack knew how great they would be in ten years. Sometimes, he would quietly corral someone as they were leaving and say, "Hey, I like that song. You know, it could be better..." Some people didn't take too kindly to that. But most would be in the circle the next day, with a brave new knowledge of their own potential.

I've heard people claim that Jack Hardy was arrogant. They never knew him. Jack never once mentioned Fast Folk to me, a magazine and record label that practically WAS the songwriter scene in New York City for 15 years. From the Smithsonian website, "Fast Folk included established artists such as Van Ronk and launched the careers of musicians such as Shawn Colvin, Christine Lavin, Steve Forbert, and Suzanne Vega."

Jack held a song-circle every Monday in his SoHo flat for close to 30 years. The only rule was that you had to bring a new song. I went once and ate pasta, made by one of the greatest songwriters who ever lived, who then sat and listened to every clumsy, half-baked idea at the table and gave us his own.

Jack promoted everyone around him and never himself. He wouldn't even call people for gigs. Since the day I met him, he personally mailed a copy of every new Jack Hardy CD to my house. He recorded one of my songs and he damn sure didn't need anyone else's songs. I loved him deeply. I've been crying all morning. I can't fathom how much he meant to everyone he knew.

Sorry, Jack. I've gone on too long. I'll shut up and sing the song.

# Jack Williams



*Jack Williams and Jack Hardy singing the Everly Brothers at the Camp Coho Wedding of Bruce Balmer and Lisa Markley 2008. Photo © 2008 Jayne Toohey*

We learned of Jack Hardy's passing on the very morning we had been stunned by news of the earthquake and tsunami that had just ravaged Japan. We had learned from some friends who were aware of his serious illness that it was diagnosed at a very late point, so Jack didn't have to deal with imminent pain and death for very long. Meaning absolutely no disrespect to the victims of Friday's tragic disaster, but Jack's razor wit and sense of dark humor wouldn't have missed the irony that his passing was accompanied by (or was the reason for) a major earthquake.

I met Jack Hardy in either 1972 or 1973, in the park in Aspen, Colorado, where I was playing my guitar with my case open for tips. Jack came strolling across the park grounds accompanied by a motley entourage of devotees who, nightly, sat at his feet learning about the twin arts of great songwriting and the shunning of mediocrity. I first heard him perform in Aspen in a basement music room beneath Andre's Restaurant. I was taken by his powerful work and his quirky, determined personality. We didn't meet again until a Folk Alliance Conference around 1997, when I spotted him strolling the halls wearing a tall, black, pointed witch's hat.

I didn't get to know him well until sometime after I began attending the Kerrville Folk Festival in 1997. Jack spent the three-week festival at Camp Coho, which soon became (and remains) my campsite of choice for music and socializing with our songwriter friends. The first few times I participated in the nightly song-circles at Coho, I realized that Jack cast a strange spell over anyone who chose to enter the circle and sing. His demeanor suggested a



rather silent, deep, dark character, who listened intently to every song and who was never afraid to express his feelings, either about the hundreds of mediocre songs or the few great ones which were heard nightly at the Camp. His singing voice was so gravelly, soft and intense that so many newcomers to the circle, intimidated by Jack's presence, took their cue from him and often chose to play their darkest, longest, "deepest" songs. One night I decided I'd had enough darkness and, sitting in the seat next to Jack, I played an upbeat, rhythmic, light-hearted song. Afterwards, Jack looked at me out of the corner of his eye and growled, "Thank God. I was getting depressed!"

It was hard getting to know Jack. In the late '90s, he wasn't communicative with everyone, or, so it seemed, with many other people outside of his circle of friends. He was something of a closed book to me and, despite my best efforts, I couldn't really connect with him as I would've liked. In September 2001, the World Trade Center fell, taking Jack's brother Jeff with it. The loss was devastating to him. In the middle of the next year's Kerrville Festival, Jack and Pat Maloney drove non-stop from Texas to New York where Jack was to perform some task regarding his brother's death. That grisly task completed, the two returned, non-stop again, to the Festival and to Camp Coho, where a deep change in his demeanor and outlook became apparent to everyone. Where we expected a darker countenance and even depression, we found a smiling, lighter-hearted Jack Hardy than the man who left the camp a few days before. The change was astounding and permanent.

We met every year since at Kerrville, looking forward to seeing Jack, "holding court" beneath the big Coho tarp, and all of our friends who either camp there or who stop by to chat or sing a song. A few years back, two regular campers, Lisa Markley and Bruce Balmer, decided to get married at Camp Coho. Lisa is an excellent singer-songwriter in both the folk and jazz worlds, and Bruce is a fine guitarist-songwriter and long-time friend of Jack Hardy's, with whom he had performed. Although most visitors to the camp would be stunned to know it, because of their perception of the "dark" and "heavy" atmosphere they perceive in the song-circles, Jack was an avid fan of the Everly Brothers. Sometimes in the Festival afternoons, we pair of Jacks would sit under the tarp and sing as many Everly tunes as would come to mind. Because of this, he and I were invited to sing at Bruce and Lisa's wedding, a duet of the Brothers' "Let It Be Me." It was especially gratifying to see that Jack poured as much of himself into that song as he did anything else he sang—even his own songs.

RIP: Jack Hardy, a force of musical/poetic nature.

# John Gorka

Utah Philips called Jack Hardy “a great mystic poet.” People knew Jack in many different ways. Let me tell you about the Jack I knew. To me he was a hero who became a friend. I met him in June 1979 at Godfrey Daniels Coffeehouse in Bethlehem, Pa.

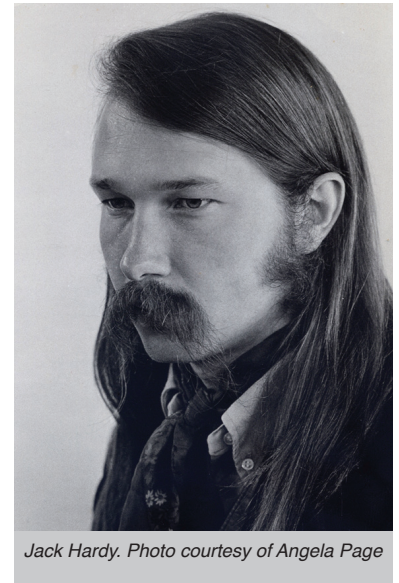
My friend Russ Rentler and I were the opening act for Jack, as the Razzy Dazzy Brothers. I got to talk to Jack that night about writing songs. At the time he was on a schedule finishing a song a week. Most of the songs he played that night he had written in the previous 18 months. I was astounded that someone could come up with that many quality original songs in that short a time. I knew that novelists would sit down and write every day but I thought songwriters waited for inspiration to strike. Jack said that night “that’s a cop out.” He said if you put yourself on a schedule and work at it you will get better as a writer. You will write more and you will get better faster. Even if you throw out 3/4 of the songs you write, by exercising the writing muscles your writing will grow stronger. That night I decided to try writing on a schedule. The first year I tried to write one song a month and ended up with more songs than months, so I tried for two songs a month and would stay with that goal for many years. After the show we went next door to the Lehigh Tavern where I tried Guinness Stout for the first time, establishing a tradition of sharing songs and “adult beverages” that would last 30 years. Jack’s records *Mirror of My Madness* and *The Nameless One* were on my turntable the whole summer of 1979.

A few years later I opened for Jack at Godfrey’s and he said that sometime when I’m in NYC I should do something for *Fast Folk Magazine*. I was familiar with *The Coop* from its very first issue with the Table of Contents taped on the side of a blank record cover. It was a thrilling idea that songwriters without record deals could be on a record and get a chance to be heard in far-flung places. I came into the city later that year but wasn’t able to connect with Mark Dann so I went to *The Cornelia Street Song Exchange* and played a song I had just written. Jack was there and afterwards said that he loved the song (“I Saw a Stranger With Your Hair”) and that there were a number of new songwriters that he wanted to help bring along and that I was one of them. I can’t tell you how much those words meant to me. No one encouraged me more when I needed encouragement the most.



John Gorka (red shirt, guitar) facing Jack in the motel parking lot at Woody Fest in 2008. (David Massengill in the white hat). Photo © 2008 Jayne Toohey

In late 1984 he asked me to be a part of the core group of singers that would back people up at the *Fast Folk* shows in Boston and at The Bottom Line in New York. The other singers were Richard Meyer, Shawn Colvin, and Lucy Kaplansky. I was in the audience for the Bottom Line show earlier that year and was knocked out by the talent on that stage. I started attending Jack's Houston Street gatherings whenever I could, driving from Easton, Pa, to the MetroPark Station in Edison, NJ, and taking the train into the city. I loved going to those little parties. Somewhere along the line I became a regular outpatient from the NY *Fast Folk* scene. It was a very inspiring bunch of people. I was glad to be a part of it. By the time we realized it was "a scene," that scene was over.



Jack Hardy. Photo courtesy of Angela Page

I would see Jack at folk festivals in the following years and I was always glad to see him and pass the guitar around the campfires at Kerrville, Falcon Ridge, or the parking lot of the hotel in Okemah, Ok, at the Woody Guthrie Festival. I'd often ask for "Potter's Field" from *The Nameless One* and Jack would oblige and I would try to sing the harmony.

I always enjoyed his music and the way he presented it both on record and live. I loved his voice and what he did with it. His guitar and mandolin playing were always very solid and musical. He always had good players—in person and on record. He would make records with everybody playing and singing, direct to two-tracks in some cases. He would make them in a day. I'm glad he made so many of them. It makes not having him around a little bit easier. The lyrics are so rich in imagery and allusions. Someone asked him once where he went for inspiration. He said: "to the library."

These are a few words about the man I knew. He encouraged and inspired a lot of young writers. He didn't have to do that. It is a very rare thing.

My guess is that it will be a long time to measure the loss. I will miss him.

I don't like the punctuation marks that say a life is over. I don't want to put a period at the end of this one. I don't believe in them...



## Ronny Cox



*Jack Hardy Photo © Brian Rose*

I met Jack in '98 or '99 at the Kerrville Folk Festival and we immediately became fast friends; whenever he was touring in California he would stay with me and I would occasionally spend a couple of nights at his place in New York. Jack's songs stood right in front of you and looked you in the eye and told the truth. He was an uncompromising curmudgeon who challenged hypocrisy and pomposity like a pin to a balloon. I loved him.

I once read a review which described Jack's songwriting as being "consciously literate"—this song is proof positive of that. We've all known for years that the title is "I Oughta Know"—yet when Jack sent me the song...there was the true title:

"I Should Have Known."

Fare Thee Well, Jack.

## Lucy Kaplansky



Jack Hardy, Folk City's Mike Porco, Jeff Hardy, Joe Henderson. Photo © Brian Rose

I met Jack Hardy in 1978 when I moved to New York City to join the New York folk music scene, which at that time revolved around Folk City. The scene steadily attracted and launched some huge talents, and it was obvious that Jack was one of the scene's leaders. In many ways I think Jack, and *Fast Folk Magazine*, which he founded, were the glue that held the scene together for many years, particularly after Folk City closed in 1985.

Jack's weekly songwriter's workshops in his apartment were legendary, and I have several songwriter friends who consider those workshops to have been hugely influential on their songwriting and careers. I wasn't writing songs at that point, but Jack always let me know that he loved my singing and musicianship, and his encouragement meant a lot to me.

Jack's song "Forget-Me-Not" is a simple, stunning evocation of lost love. I've always loved it.

## Kate MacLeod



*Dave Anthony, Kate MacLeod, Jack Hardy, Tom Duval, Mike Laureanno. Photo courtesy of Mike Laureanno*

Jack Hardy IS a metaphor, no wonder he relates to them so much. Having been always good for my songs and the music, Jack has also been a great sounding board for some of life's greatest experiences. And, how can someone so stubborn, die?



## Anthony da Costa

He called me Grasshopper.

I met Jack Hardy when I was 16 years old. It was the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, and I had just taken part in their Emerging Artist competition. I had recently become the youngest winner ever of the Kerrville Folk Festival New Folk competition down in Kerrville, TX. After writing songs and playing them live for three years, I was beginning to get a lot of notice from the American folk community. By the time I hit the Falcon Ridge

festival, there was already (apparently) a lot of buzz surrounding my name. I could hardly figure out why. Perhaps it was the fact that I was a 16-year-old songwriter playing with the big boys and girls; traveling around to folk music conferences and festivals when I really should have been trying to get laid by high school girls and drinking 40s by the aqueducts. But no...I just HAD to be a folk singer. And I apparently wasn't half-bad at it.

A couple of days into the Falcon Ridge festival, my good friend Rick Rock, a live music enthusiast and founder of *Tribes Hill* (a Hudson Valley folk music collective), told me that I just HAD to meet Jack Hardy. Jack's name had come up quite a bit in the circles I was running in. I had heard of his famous songwriter's circle down in NYC, as well as his infamous "pirate camp" that he held at the very top of the ridge at this particular festival. I had been jamming in plenty of late-night song circles and campfire jams, but was told that I really hadn't lived until I met Jack and his band of folk pirates. I figured why the hell not; I was young and eager to meet the supposed Wise One. I had no idea what I was getting myself into.

One night real late, I met with Rick, as well as good friend and songwriter Greg Klyma (the "Rust Belt Vagabond"), and the three of us made our way up the ridge. It was easily 2 a.m., and I had no intention of going to sleep just yet. With the wind in our respective sails, we finally made it to the top of the ridge, and saw the light of a campfire. There appeared to be a song-circle



Jack Hardy and Anthony da Costa at the Falcon Ridge Folk Festival, 2008. Photo © Dan Tappan

going on, and I quickly recognized the voice of John Gorka, probably singing something real pretty about being a tree. :) Sure enough, sitting at the helm was THE Jack Hardy, done up in a smart-looking baseball cap and oversized white t-shirt. We had made it.

I saw that there was an empty seat in the circle. I was overjoyed. I was going to get to play one of my songs for Jack. Though I was young, I was still aware of song-circle etiquette, and made sure to wait until after John finished his song to go over and take my seat. Just as the final note was sung, and people started to snap and clap, I started to make my way over to the circle.

JUST as I was about to sit down, Jack got up, and in his recognizable half-raspy voice, uttered those four deadly words: "I'm going to bed."

"ALL FOR NOTHING," I thought. I had walked up all this way just to see the man go back into his tent. Though I was losing hope fast, a familiar face approached me and assured me that everything was going to be okay. It was David Massengill, and he could immediately recognize the sorrow in my stare. "Aw, don't worry now, Anthony," he said. "We do a real nice breakfast here in the morning; pancakes and the whole deal. You should come back then."

"A second chance," I thought. I would get to meet Jack after all.

Sure enough, I woke up the next morning, with just a couple of hours of sleep under my belt, and made my way back up the ridge for the pirate camp breakfast. Stu Kabak was flipping pancakes. Massengill was cutting up and preparing his world-famous fruit platter ("12 different kinds, every morning," he would brag). Meanwhile, Jack, in the same clothes he had gone to sleep in, was sitting in his throne of a lawn chair as folks passed his Martin around in a circle.

I walked up and stood at the corner of the big tent, my guitar steady at my side. I waited my turn. After a couple of people sang, Massengill made the move to introduce me to Jack. He smiled and shook my hand. He asked for someone to pass me a guitar. He told me to play something.

I played what I thought was my best song at the time, "Dolly and Porter," which is a ballad about my two favorite country music stars and the love they once shared. I played the song from front to back. By the end of it, I noticed a couple of folks nearly in tears, while others smiled and snapped and clapped their hands. Jack stood there smirking.

I thought, "Oh shit, what does he think?" He quickly referenced a line of the song, which goes like this...



Jack Hardy Photo © Brian Rose

*So Porter put her on his TV show, her smile lit the screen.  
Dolly was the prettiest woman Nashville ever seen.*

Jack asked me a rather poignant question that I'll never forget...

"So when you say she was the prettiest woman Nashville had ever seen...  
You were talking about her TITS, right?"

Everyone burst out laughing. I did too. Suddenly, my big meeting with Jack Hardy had been just that: becoming acquainted with his knack for songs and his incredibly unpredictable sense of humor. I'd like to think we became friends immediately. By the end of the festival, we were swapping songs together until the break of dawn. As the months went on, I got to know him even more, and began to attend his songwriter's meeting in New York as much as I could. Though I was still in high school, I convinced my mother it was necessary for me to travel down to the city on a school night and learn from this man and those around him. My friend Steve Kirkman and I would drive down in his mini-van just in time to pick up a six-pack of Corona Light (with lime, Jack's favorite) and eat some of his absolutely delicious pasta. He even called us "the Corona Brothers," a name we would use for our sometimes-country duo.





*Jeff Hardy, Angela Page, Malcolm Hardy, Jack Hardy. Photo courtesy of Angela Page*

I learned immensely from Jack and the circle. I would bring in a song and he would proceed to critique it in the most incredibly helpful way I could imagine. I disagreed with him from time to time, but never felt the need to get protective. Jack had this remarkable way of encouraging you while he tore you apart. He surely “walked the walk,” bringing his own song in each week (a crumpled-up piece of paper kept in his front shirt pocket). That song was never exempt or immune from criticism itself. The circle was a democracy, and Jack, as always, was at the helm.

By the time I was 18, I had been accepted to Columbia University. Jack was part of the reason why I applied: His daughter Morgan had been attending there for some time, and he was always a proponent of a strong liberal arts education.

“Grasshopper,” he’d tell me, “You’ve spent years putting things out there; it’s time you put some stuff back in.” He was right. Music school wasn’t where I wanted to go. I had always learned more by doing. But it was time for me to start learning again. Jack taught me that.

Despite the fact that I started to attend school in New York, I was less and less able to attend the meeting consistently. Everything from classes on Monday nights to assignments to girl troubles would distract me and keep me away from the meeting. When Jack tragically passed away this past March, I realized that I hadn’t been to the meeting in months.

In fact, the last time I saw his face was when he came and saw me play a main stage set at the Kerrville Folk Festival. At these gatherings, Jack would usually avoid the main stage like the plague (that is unless, of course, he was playing there). That's why it was especially an honor to have him come and hear me and my band play our set. Going against what I thought he might want, I called him out from the stage. He smiled. I'll never forget that smile.

Thinking about it, I don't think Jack ever directly told me that he deeply enjoyed more than three of my songs. Maybe four. The truth is, Jack always kicked my ass in regards to everything—life, love, school, music—it was all fair game. And once in a while it would get me down, especially when it came to songwriting. He'd tell me one song was too pop. I'd play another that I'd co-written with a friend and he'd say, "See, I don't understand how it took two people to write that." (Jack was pretty consistently against co-writing.) But for those three or four times that he applauded my songs straight up, it made all the difference in the world. Those are the moments that I hold close and use to remember that I AM a songwriter.

Why did Jack's opinion matter so much? He was a role model to me—to all of us. And disagree with him or not, you can't deny somebody who wrote a song a week for 30 years and made no excuses about it. Jack did me the ultimate honor of keeping my head in check at a time when a bunch of people were telling me I was going to be the next big thing. He never kissed my ass ONCE (and I'd like to think I never kissed his). He always treated me as an adult (except for the whole Grasshopper thing, of course). The name was fitting though. He was a Zen master of songwriting.

I, like everyone else, wish I could've said goodbye to Jack. I wish I had been able to go to the meeting more often. I wish I wish I wish I wish...None of it matters now. Now, it is up to all of us who loved Jack to continue his legacy. What that means is to shut up and sing the damn song.

And that's what I plan on doing, Jack.

Love, Grasshopper

# Lisi Tribble

## NIGHT MASTER

March 11, 2011

No one knows pranks like the bright-eyed man  
Nailing just what goes into the heart of the marrow  
Waggishly skewering our best-laid plans  
With a well-aimed barb at the selfish and narrow

The long summer nights brim with music and costumes  
Gala days where we gather in dada-ist glee  
The capes, the black hats, the green velvet, the perfumes  
Hell-bent on a rococo talkative spree

Holy Moses, Jack the lad  
To you go the bragging rights  
You make us think, make us laugh, make us spar  
Who'll gather us in like the lost tribe we are  
Who'll ride with us on the back of the night  
Where are you, Jack, I'm sad tonight

Tribe we are

A man ruled by the moon and by Ireland's laments  
Will not always find shelter in arms he deserves



Paul Kaplan, Angela Page, Jack Hardy, David Massengill, Sammy Walker, Lisi Tribble, Janet Miller at Folk City. Photo © Theodore Lee

He'll be lashed by his insight, his lovers, his conscience  
Bearing up under stars by sheer faith and by nerves

But as long as that mischief, that verbal agility  
Live on in those circles where poets carve songs  
Over pasta and candle wax, mirth and virility  
We'll be where you meant us to be, all along

Holy moment, Jack's time  
Stubborn vision was worth the fights  
You made us learn, made us laugh, made us rhyme  
Made us dignity's orphan on a lonely climb  
Looking for shelter for the fugitive kind  
On the wind comes the trace of a song sublime  
And courage to stride down the spine of the night

Holy moment, here are you tonight  
I'm holding your hand in mine  
Summoned by the sly touch of a great magic man

Tribe we are



*Jack Hardy and David Seitz at the Songwriters Exchange, Houston Street. Photo © Theodore Lee*

## LISI'S CODA

The first time I saw Jack was at The Dugout in 1976, my first live folksinger outside of Virgil Sturgill of North Carolina. I had answered the subliminal call that he had broadcast to an ever-expanding crew of us, who came mostly from the Northeast, New York, New Jersey, Boston; from the South, the West, Texas, California...His songs were smart. The tunes were unusual and memorable and you'd stand and watch him and his brother all the way through the sets, because he surprised and moved you, or maybe you'd take off your shoes under the table at the end of the night to search for them longer than necessary, so no one would see you shed a tear discreetly. We were only young.

And we were the oldest bunch of youngsters I ever saw. We spent 30 years in each other's company, sometimes on a very long leash, on the Night Watch—from 10 to 60 hardcore aficionados circling his and Rod MacDonald's and Tom Intondi's and Erik Frandsen's and Dave Van Ronk's apartments, hitting MacDougal Street and Bleecker nightly, on and on 'til morning. How could Jack sing songs of such a painfully pure and primitive note, dragged up from the loch or some Shakespearian rag? Planted and plucked at first bloom from the blue-green of County Donegal or Galway, or forged from some silver ancient sword made new again, polished in the sun into something both glancing and savage? Songs you could dance to.

He'd read books. Most of us did; had immersed ourselves in lineages of blues and beat, and bop and folk. We loved or hung out with the Old Masters, Van Ronk, Paxton, Andersen, Odetta, Pat Sky, Happy Traum, Paul Siebel,



MacIndoe, Donnie White, Ed McCurdy, Bob Gibson, Arlo Guthrie, Joan Baez, David Blue, Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, Country Joe, Rick Danko, Garth Hudson, Levon Helm, John Sebastian, Ledbetter, John Lee Hooker, BB King. That was the difference. We were all gluttons for the written word and the perfect tune, for the aura of legend; we had visions of ourselves stuck in history like mica sparkles in tar roads, like dust in the wake of a flatbed truck. We thought well of ourselves, but not too well. We were more interested in each other, in the moon, and in issues.

Jack suffered bewilderedly over love that never felt resolved, though it never kept him from a punchline. As he lay dying, I was astonished he was still reading: *The Help*, a present from someone. He contributed from his bed a line to David Massengill's weekly song for *Songwriters Exchange* night, held in his absence at his own apartment on Houston Street, a ritual which he would have to miss that final month. His last contributed line: a grateful prayer to "our lady of the foot massage." It was a nod to the women who had given him so much over 30 years, sacred and profound (and I dare say vice-versa), appearing in various imaginary guises: the Faerie Muse, the Goddess, the Wordsmith, the Guitarist, Dante's Beatrice, Our Lady of Darkness, the Girl Who Baked Him a Blueberry Pie, the Queen, the Lover, the Mother, the Friend. He didn't seem ill those last three weeks, not in any alarming way, not as much as the rest of us, hovering impotently. He held hands. He laughed. He looked us in the eye. He teased his ever-present children and vice-versa: a beautiful thing to witness. He was kind. He coughed and talked about treatment, the plans to release him shortly. "It's only a flesh wound," he reassured, grinning. He told me chuckling he remembered the time David Massengill and I had accidentally run into him and Wendy Beckerman at an uptown premiere of the four-and-a-half-hour movie *Gettysburg* (none of us went uptown casually, but here we all were, surprise, surprise); and how I'd remarked that David and he were so obviously devoted to hopeless causes, they must have been jointly involved in a Civil War past life. "Maybe you killed each other," I wisecracked. Jack laughed, "And now we're killing you and Wendy by making you watch this incredibly long and violent movie."

There was no other Jack, nor will be. Many of us loved to travel in that car with him across country and ocean and years, where he never surrendered the wheel, and most of us wondered at times if our friendship would survive repeated catalytic trials by ice and fire. We were all strong-minded idealists, with a voluptuous pleasure in the self-deprecating repartee of despair and longing and the hair-raising endeavor of truth-telling, come what may. Romantics, the lot of us. I wonder if they make those anymore.

## Brian Rose

### BOULEVARDLERS AND FAST FOLK

*April 4, 2011*

In 1977 I came to New York to attend Cooper Union as a photography student. I was, however, just as serious about songwriting, though I had only begun writing a few years before. As soon as I got settled into my apartment in the East Village I set out to locate the local music scene. I knew that the punk/new wave clubs on the East Side were not the place for acoustic music—certainly not folk music—which seemed hopelessly unhip at the time.

I knew about Folk City as the club where Bob Dylan got his start, and perusing the Village Voice ads I saw that acoustic music was happening in various other clubs in Greenwich Village. In September of 1977 I went with my guitar to the hoot night, or open mic, at Folk City and pulled a number that, as it turned out, doomed me to playing well after midnight. I sat through hours of mediocrity and worse, waiting for my turn when suddenly, one after another, a string of extraordinary songwriters took the stage for their allowed two songs each. One of them was Jack Hardy. I don't remember what he played that night, but I do remember that I was stunned.

Later that week I saw him do a full set at Kenny's Castaways around the block on Bleecker Street. Jack stepped on stage in a black velvet jacket, and announced: "I'm Jack Hardy and these are a few of my tunes," with a mocking emphasis on the word tunes. The performance was spellbinding— "Houston Street," "Murder," "The Tailor," "Go Tell the Savior" and many other classic early Hardy songs. I knew instantly that I had found what I was looking for, a songwriter who had absorbed the influences of Dylan and other poetic-based songwriters and turned it into something new and exciting.

It may be hard to imagine now, but Jack at that time was not known as the songwriting oracle he became later. He was a happening. Charismatic, handsome, bristling with sardonic wit and brimming with confidence, he was 29, 7 years older than I, and seemed poised for great things.



*Jack Hardy on left. With his older brother Gordon, Jr. on far right. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose*



*Jack Hardy at early Folk City days. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose*

A few days later I found my way to The Cornelia Street Café where Jack and other songwriters were meeting to try out and critique their new songs. I played my most recent song, and then promptly broke the rules by playing something written by a songwriter friend I admired. David Massengill introduced himself and apprised me of my rights—new songs, original only, don't do it again, happy to have you here. Jack then approached, looked me up and down, and said, "Kenny's Castaways, Friday night, second set, front table."

With that introduction I became a regular of the Songwriters Exchange, which met for several more years at Cornelia Street before ending up a few blocks away in Jack's apartment on Houston Street. I also became a regular at the Folk City hoot and discovered that the numbers were not as randomly doled out as I presumed. While going full-time to school, studying, and making photographs, and working part-time as a typist in a Midtown advertising agency, I managed to hang out almost every night in the Village, dragging my guitar everywhere just in case there was an opportunity to play.

In April 1978, the *New York Times* ran a banner headline across the front page of the Sunday arts section: "Folk Music is Back with a Twang." The article written by John Rockwell focused on four acts, Steve Forbert, The Roches, George Gerdes, and Jack Hardy. This was the kind of establishment anointment that everyone had secretly hoped for, while publicly maintaining a blasé let-them-come-to-us attitude. Jack's career and stature as leader of the New York folk scene was at its peak, and as a new acolyte, I felt I had found myself at the center of the universe.

In the beginning Jack was a mentor to me, encouraging me to write and play as often as I could. I was definitely a work in progress, an unconvincing performer with a screechy off-pitch voice, but Jack never seemed to doubt that I could improve if I worked hard and kept at it. I wasn't the only one who experienced Hardy's ability to boost the morale of fledgling artists. Christian Bauman, who came to the Songwriters Exchange years later, says it well:

*"But his acceptance of me (you see, he didn't accept everyone) so early on when I wasn't all that good frankly, his ability to see the flame of something in me below all the smoke, his willingness to have me around and encouragement, meant so much to me."*

Jack didn't tell you how to write a song, he taught by example. He believed in songwriting as a process, a craft that was only learned by repetition. Jack was certainly not opposed to the idea of inspiration—for him song was also magic and incantation—but he believed fervently that one improved at writing by doing it over and over, gradually separating the wheat from the chaff. During that period when we met at The Cornelia Street Café, Jack set the standard by bringing in one brilliant song after another. I remember hearing the first drafts of songs like "All Saint's Eve," "The Guttersnipe" and "The Inner Man," as well as simpler ballads like "Potter's Field" and the Irish-inflected "Blackberry Pie" and "May Day."

Within two years of the great folk revival trumpeted by the *Times*, John Rockwell walked back his praise of Jack Hardy and delivered a staggering blow:

*"Mr. Hardy's problems are a sophomore fascination with intellectual and literary conceits, particularly Anglo-Irish ones, and a bathetic, overwrought Romanticism. The result makes his songs sound conceptually hollow; one finds it hard to believe him, which is surely the exact opposite of his intention."*

Rockwell then gives advice: "If Jack would just relax and realize that less really can be more, he'd be far better off." That evening after the review came out, a bunch of us gathered in Jack's apartment, laid him out on the top of the bathtub in his tenement kitchen, placed flowers on him and held a mock Irish wake. The review, of course, was also overwrought, written by a critic who didn't get the complex mixture of seriousness and silliness that Jack cultivated. And he wasn't the only one. Jack seemed at times to revel in making himself untouchable to the commercial music world, creating a character that was mercurial and difficult to nail down for a general audience. Sometimes, I wondered whether Jack's multi-hatted persona—his chimerical identity—actually got in the way of what really counted, the songs.





Jack Hardy, Steve Forbert, Kill Burke, recording "This Land Is Your Land", for Fast Folk (in Mark Dann's attic), May 1982. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose

There was Jack "The Nameless One." When I first met him, Jack had recently shorn his cowboy whiskers and had adopted a more severe mien, frequently wearing a black cape and going on about William Butler Yeats and the bardic tradition. But he was most interested—obsessed might not be too strong a word—with James Clarence Mangan, a brilliant, but obscure Irish poet who influenced Yeats and Joyce. He died in 1849 of cholera, an addict, penniless.

From Mangan's poem "The Nameless One.":

*And tell how trampled, derided, hated,  
And worn by weakness, disease, and wrong,  
He fled for shelter to God, who mated  
His soul with song.*

In 1978 Jack released *The Nameless One*, an album that included several of his Irish, Mangan-saturated songs including the title song:

*And she is tending them all like a shepherd with her opiate cure  
And the gull that flies from fishamble street  
In the cholera cold he dies of the heat  
Not far enough from the seed of his origin  
And she whistled him down with the wind*

She, meaning the Leanhaun Shee, described by Yeats as the mythic Gaelic muse. Yes, this stuff is Romantic with a capital R as Rockwell wrote in the *Times*, but if you dig into the songs, and weed out some of the gothic trappings, there

is a sophisticated use of language virtually unknown to the idiom of popular song. The joke about Jack was that he was not of this time—that he was a living historical artifact—and his songs were of ancient provenance rather than modern. Jack thoroughly enjoyed the image, and I think he understood that his songwriting aesthetic was out of step with most contemporary sensibilities.

There was Jack as “singing cowboy”: Despite all the dense literary experiments and excursions into Irish mysticism, when Jack came back home, home always seemed to be on a trail out west, a loner or outlaw on horseback, seeking freedom from conformity and repression. His earliest recordings like “45 Caliber Man” or “Go Tell the Savior” were about leaving and the price of freedom, about loss and disappointment. The songs followed familiar themes of country-western music, occasionally channeling Hank Williams and the brilliant songwriter Paul Siebel who in the late ’70s was semi-retired and hanging out in the Village at Kenny’s Castaways.

In the last years of Jack’s life, the singing cowboy persona returned, and fully inhabited two of his late albums *Bandolier* and *Rye Grass*. It can be argued that these albums are Jack’s finest, with elegantly shaped melodies and lyrics stripped to the essential elements, shot through with sly humor and a weathered wisdom.

*Hope springs eternal in the mind of the cowboy  
Who won’t let a sleeping dog lie  
For a good horse’ll do that – know when it’s cornered  
Then break for the wide open skies*

As my own work grew both as a songwriter and photographer, Jack and I became friends and comrades-in-song, but it would take a while longer before I would begin to understand the sources behind these self-consciously honed masks and the startlingly fluent musicality of his songs. Above all, I knew Jack as a New Yorker, an urban animal like me, despite the frequent pastoral imagery of his songs, living in a dingy railroad apartment on Houston Street, disdainful of material goods and the finer things of life. But it didn’t make sense. Not yet.

In 1980 I finished school and launched a project to photograph the Lower East Side using a 4x5 view camera. I was fascinated by the streets and architecture of the old immigrant neighborhood, now home to many artists and musicians, including lots of the folk songwriters I knew. I wrote songs about the city as if seen through a lens—I was using metaphors and images in my lyrics and Jack approved.

One evening while hanging out in Folk City I found myself at the bar talking to a slightly built, pale young woman with serious eyes and a quick laugh. She said she wanted to be a songwriter, and I replied, rather ostentatiously, given the reality of my status, that I was a songwriter. It was Suzanne Vega, recent Barnard graduate and presently a receptionist. I don't recall when she met Jack, or if I introduced them, but she was soon attending the Songwriters Exchange. She had a song as brittle as bones called "Cracking," and a gorgeously wistful song, "Gypsy," about a fleeting summer love.

Suzanne wrote many of her best-known songs over the next few years. I remember clearly the day she came over to my apartment in the East Village and tentatively picked her way through two new songs, "The Queen and the Soldier" and "Knight Moves." By then Jack, Suzanne, and I had banded together jokingly as the Boulevardiers, based on a movie I had seen about Parisian philosophers sitting all day in cafes writing and acting very puffed up and important. We must have appeared a little ridiculous to the other songwriters, if not insufferable, passing notes full of boasts and gossip to one another under the tables in The Cornelia Street Café. But the atmosphere and the chemistry were electric.

Suzanne wrote a song about us called the "Boulevardiers," which didn't make it onto any of her albums, but it catches some of the quicksilver of the moment. I'm the lover of the city and Jack is bright, quick, and fair:

*He loves the city  
With the bricks and broken bottles  
And the pretty little flowers  
As they grow against the wall.*

*He is dark,  
He is tall,  
He is the tallest one of all  
Of us.*

*You are bright and quick and fair  
And seems that you have lost some hair  
This is all right.*

*This is ok. We do not mind.  
We write and fight and sing  
And this is fine.*



Across Wyoming, Jack Hardy and Brian Rose. Photo © Brian Rose

Aside from passing notes, however, we began writing songs to and in response to one another. I found myself in “Four Ways to Frame the Spring”:

*Staring at the tenement stairs  
Carefully lining up his shot*

And much of Jack’s *White Shoes* album comes out of that period of mostly friendly sparring. From the song “Subway”:

*To be sure I only wanted to go to the upper west side  
Where I could feel nature and watch the stars shine  
And I could see that one star of first magnitude  
Somewhere in the heavens somewhere above us  
But I was never really ready for that ride  
That roller coaster, rattling, gatling-gun ride  
On that long serpentine subterranean train  
For which the Big Apple is so famous*

What a great song that is. The star of first magnitude—indeed—she and Jack one evening had a midnight picnic on the steps of St. John the Divine near Tom’s Restaurant, where Suzanne one day imagined how the scene might look through my photographer’s eyes. The result was “Tom’s Diner,” a slender



narrative sung a cappella that a few years later got remixed with a dance beat and became a worldwide phenomenon.

In the summer of 1981 Jack suggested that I come along with him on a cross-country trip to visit relatives and his new record company, which was located in Seattle. By then I knew something about Jack's background and had been several times up to the Hardy family's colonial house in Durham, Connecticut—one of several places where Jack lived growing up. Gordon Hardy, Jack's father, was the dean of Juilliard and head of the Aspen Music Festival, an important person in the classical music world. Lillian Hardy was from the Studebaker family, the defunct automobile company. I would find out more about Jack (John Studebaker Hardy) as we traveled the back roads together for a month in a tiny Subaru.

The intention was to avoid interstates and freeways all the way to the west coast and back, and for the most part we were successful. I took my view camera with me, and we stopped frequently so that I could haul the camera out and take pictures. First stop was South Bend, Indiana, and Jack's grandmother's place, which turned out to be the converted carriage house on the former Studebaker estate. Jack showed me around South Bend where he was born and spent periods of time in his youth. I took several photographs of the abandoned Studebaker factory buildings. Jack told me the details of the Studebaker story, which he chronicled in his song "Wheelbarrow Johnny," about how his great, great, great, grandfather headed west in the California Gold Rush and parlayed his skill at making wheelbarrows into one of the major American car manufacturers.

*Through the hills of Pennsylvane  
Through the state of Ohio  
As far as the southern bend  
Of the muddy old Saint Joe  
To build a home  
A blacksmith and his family of nine  
In the days we came to know as forty-nine  
Shoeing horses, building wagons for the road  
He taught his sons to build a wheelbarrow  
Oh that wheelbarrow, you're going to roll*

From South Bend we rolled on up through Chicago, and then into Wisconsin where Jack's sister lived on a small back-to-the basics family farm far, far away from the New York of her upbringing. We stayed a couple of days and

then headed off across the plains states into Denver. Rather than taking the pass directly west of Denver we drove north into Wyoming and then down the back side of the Great Divide, eventually arriving in Aspen. Jack did most of the driving because the Subaru was equipped with a stick shift, which I couldn't handle, though sometimes I took over on the straight stretches when the highway would run for hours without interruption to the horizon.

After traveling the back roads for days, Aspen was a shock—a quaint mining town transformed into a wealthy ski resort, and in the summer cultural activities like the Aspen Music Festival brought thousands of well-heeled patrons of the arts to town. The Hardy home in Aspen was nestled in the mostly undeveloped valley along Castle Creek to the south. It was a tastefully designed modern structure perched on a hillside facing the nearby mountain peaks. One morning a string quartet played for TV cameras on the deck outside, and most nights, late, Jack's father played blues and jazz on the piano. We stayed at Castle Creek for a week, and I went with Gordon Hardy every day to the festival performance tent in his vintage two-seater Porsche, availing myself of every opportunity to soak in some of the finest classical music in the world. This was the world Jack Hardy came from, and to a great extent separated himself from. This is where his musical roots developed—he actually studied opera before becoming a folksinger. And, incidentally, where he learned to ski and ride a horse.

In Aspen Jack knew some of the townies, the year-rounders who keep the place going, and we hung out with a couple of musicians at a club downtown. At the end of the week we hit the road again driving day and night across the desert through Utah and Nevada and then over the Donner Pass into California. Reaching the foothills of the Sierra we made our way down into Placerville, the Gold Rush town where Wheelbarrow Johnny made the money that he took back east to South Bend. In the town's historical museum we found an original Studebaker wheelbarrow on display and Jack posed next to it for my camera. On the one hand Jack seemed to have disowned his past and all its comforts in favor of the hand-to-mouth existence of an itinerant folksinger. On the other hand, he appeared proud of his heritage and the accomplishments of his parents, a puzzling dichotomy never resolved, as far as I could see, during Jack's life.

From Placerville we briefly touched down in San Francisco and then made the scenic drive up the Pacific coast passing through Portland before finally reaching Seattle. Jack met with his record company, a small outfit for sure, and I waited in the street sipping a cappuccino from a sidewalk vendor.



Angela Page and Jack Hardy. Photo © Theodore Lee

Seattle even then had a coffee culture. Did the meeting go well? I can't really say, but I doubt that any dealings Jack had with the music business went swimmingly. As much as Jack sneered at commercial success, I know that a part of him wanted that kind of acknowledgment—at least on his own terms—and as he got older I saw him weary at times of taking the unending high road of his own choosing.

We then drove east to Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, to visit Jack's brother Chris, another Hardy sibling who had retreated from the rarefied cultural world of their youth. Chris was living literally off the grid with his wife in a log cabin deep in the woods, an outhouse in the back and a refrigerator hooked up to a utility pole at the end of their driveway, about a half a mile from the house. From there we drove over the mountains of Glacier National Park and then on across the plains of Montana and North Dakota. One evening, while driving Route 2, known as the High Line, we pulled the car over and watched a vivid display of the Aurora Borealis. That's where Jack's song "The High Line" comes from:

*The northern lights are out tonight, they dance across the sky  
The lightning from a distant storm I can't outrun tonight  
And the foxes lying on the road, they don't know why they tried  
Running on the high line against the borderline*

Back in New York changes were afoot in the local club scene. Folk City, which had recently been sold by owner Mike Porco, was seeking to reorient its booking. Folk music was still part of the mix, but it was no longer our clubhouse, and those of us who used to breeze in for free and perch at the bar were no longer welcome. So, our community of songwriters was immediately interested when we heard about The Speakeasy, a cheesy-looking falafel place with a backroom stage and sound system on MacDougal Street. Musician Vinnie Vok and Angela Page, Jack's longtime girlfriend (whom he eventually married) had been talking to the owner, and by the fall of 1981 things were up and running—a cooperatively run club—by and for the musicians. Naturally, Jack was in the thick of things, and for a number of years it was our musical home.

Sometime at the end of 1981 Jack approached me with the idea of doing a magazine that would be an outgrowth of both The Speakeasy and the Songwriters Exchange. We would record new songs while they were fresh, press an album and include a printed insert to accompany the LP. Jack would coordinate the recording end and I would do the printed magazine. We called the first issue The Coop, the Fast Folk Musical Magazine and it came out in February 1982. From the beginning it was a crazy venture with guerrilla-style recording. Songwriters would take the subway out to Brooklyn and quietly climb the back stairs to bass player Mark Dann's attic studio in his parents' house. Flawless first takes were encouraged. Overdub fixes were not to be counted on. The magazine inserts were created in my tiny tenement apartment on E. 4th Street. There were no computers in those days, and all the articles were typed on a borrowed IBM Selectric, the brilliant typewriter with the interchangeable type balls. Everything had to be pasted up by hand, and the magazine inserts were physically slipped into the LP sleeves. At times there were 10 or 15 people working in my apartment, boxes stacked everywhere and a blizzard of paper cuttings on the floor.

Putting out a monthly magazine—music and text—was enormously time-consuming and I was struggling to make ends meet doing freelance photography. People did not submit articles on their own initiative. I had to plead and cajole to get articles written, which once received were often barely acceptable and in need of extensive editing and rewrites. People were unhappy with the editing. Jack was unhappy with any edits made to his articles no matter how well-intentioned. We even argued about our titles on the masthead. The finished magazine sold for \$2 out of a bin in The Speakeasy, which I'm convinced never covered our costs. I have little doubt that every issue of the magazine that first year was subsidized out of some invisible pot Jack had access to. Subscriptions were coveted because





*The Folk Brothers, David Massengill and Jack Hardy. Photo © Brian Rose*

we'd receive a chunk of money each time someone made a year-long commitment, but new subscribers weren't coming in fast enough to stem our losses, and I pointed out to Jack that what we were operating was basically a Ponzi scheme. At some point, the piper would have to be paid.

In the end, however, we did an amazing thing—a cutting edge thing—by putting out a record every month for a couple of years. It had never been done before, and it was greatly beneficial to many songwriters, both soon to be famous and not. In mid-1982 I stepped away from my unpaid founding editor's job. I needed to make real money, and I was burnt out, tired of the uncompensated work and tired of the scene. Although I continued to contribute songs, and Jack kept things going for a while longer, Richard Meyer eventually took over. By then LPs were replaced by CDs, and the magazine insert was downgraded in importance. In the end, all of it went to the Smithsonian as part of their Folkways record label.

Stepping back from the Fast Folk was a watershed moment for me. Jack had thrown himself into the Fast Folk at great cost to his career. Whatever window had existed a few years earlier for Jack to get beyond our local scene was no longer there, and Suzanne Vega, thanks in part to the Fast Folk and The Speakeasy, now had a manager and there was talk of a major record deal. Eventually her opportunity came, and the cozy world of the Boulevardiers and

our band of not-for-profit entrepreneurs began gradually to disperse. It was the beginning of a new era that led me to Europe and on to new photographic ventures. One thing is clear—though Jack’s career had leveled off, his songwriting did not. If anything, it grew and deepened in the following years. And he continued to reach out to new generations of writers at the Songwriters Exchange, now meeting weekly at his apartment on Houston Street.

I remained friends with Jack until he died, though we saw much less of each other than before. I photographed Jack at Houston Street for *Rye Grass*, and I photographed him with David Massengill together as the Folk Brothers holding antique typewriters, kindred spirits in song after more than 30 years.

The last time I saw him play was at the 50th anniversary of Folk City—as much a tribute to Mike Porco as to the music and those who had played there. Jack sang “Go Tell the Savior.” I photographed the event and eventually got on stage myself to sing “Roll with the Wind,” a song I had first auditioned at The Cornelia Street Café and later recorded for the Fast Folk. Jack had driven all the way up from Kerrville to be there, and at the end of the night drove all the way back.

Jack Hardy could be a difficult character, stubborn in his ideas, and one who did not suffer fools lightly. But he was respected, if not liked by most. As generous as Jack was to me and so many of us, there was pain and even anger that flickered and smoldered beneath his usually cheery exhortations to write and sing and live life to its fullest. And he certainly did all of that. As close as I was to Jack I cannot say I knew where all the dark places were—the mysterious and tragic death of his older brother deeply affected him, but I could not go there. And he never recovered from the death of his younger brother Jeff on 9/11. He struggled to find a rationale and meaning for something ultimately irrational and random. I had no answers. He went to the west coast of Ireland every year—I knew little of that Jack Hardy. And he held court every year at a folk festival campfire in Kerrville, Texas—and I knew little of that Jack Hardy.

Many others have known Jack from different times, different geography, and different relationships. This is but one story—though a special one—my story of Jack’s inspiration and friendship, and the time we shared. I am grateful for every minute of it.

## Christine Lavin



Rod MacDonald, David Massengill, Jack Hardy, Germana Pucci, Christine Lavin, Shawn Colvin, Richard Meyer, and Jeff Hardy in the back, at Clearwater festival. Photo © Theodore Lee

Jack Hardy's influence will live on for a long, long time. To prove it, here's two things you never thought you'd see in the same sentence: Jack Hardy and *Dancing with The Stars*.

I'll explain.

Back in the early 1980s I got involved with *Fast Folk*, first recording some of my songs, and then as I got more into it, producing some of the issues. Because I was struggling to make a living, whenever I got the opportunity to choose songs for a particular issue, I always wanted the songwriters also to be seriously trying to carve out careers. Although I'd hear occasional good songs at Jack's Monday night dinner or at The Speakeasy open mic by people who weren't interested in a career in music, I wasn't interested in documenting their songs on *Fast Folk* if they were just dabbling.

Jack felt differently, of course, and we banged heads. A lot. Since *Fast Folk* was his project, he did things his way and in 1989 I moved off in a different direction, producing compilation albums showcasing songs I admired in many musical styles, not just folk. I couldn't have done this without the skills and knowledge I gathered while working on *Fast Folk*, and I continued to choose songs written only by serious songwriters.

Until recently. In 2009 I started putting together a holiday compilation, *Just One Angel*, that contains Christmas, Chanukah, Solstice, and New Year's songs. At the time I was still living in New York City, and on Monday nights had gotten into the habit of going to the jazz club Birdland, for Jim Caruso's weekly open mic "Cast Party."

Jim Caruso's open mic is like no other—it starts late, 10 p.m., you get to do only one song (jazz, theater, cabaret, folk, or country style), and you don't know when you will be going on because he puts the running order together on the fly.

One of those Monday nights was in December 2009, and an actor named David Rasche got up and sang a song he wrote called "Christmas in L.A." I recognized David from his film/TV work, and he mentioned he just was experimenting with songwriting—just a fun side project for him. I thought his song would be a good fit for the compilation I was working on, but he wasn't really pursuing a career as a songwriter, so I hesitated.

I thought back to those arguments I'd had with Jack, but now I wondered if maybe I was being too rigid. So what if he has another career? It's a good song. Later that night I introduced myself to David, asked him for his contact information, and the next day I sent him an email asking if I could include his song in the project?

Now he was hesitant. At first he said yes, but he wanted another singer to sing it—he wasn't confident enough in his own singing voice. I was willing to think about that, but I put him in touch with a producer named Brian Bauers, asked him to try recording it himself. If he wasn't happy, he could have someone else sing it.

Brian worked with David, and we were all very happy with the results, so he'd be singing his own song. During the summer of 2010 I put the final compilation together that included some of my favorite singer/songwriters—Janis Ian, Lori Lieberman, Darryl Purpose, Julie Gold, Kate Taylor, Jeff Daniels, Larry Murante, among others—plus this new guy, this actor named David Rasche.

In October 2010 I was on tour on Bainbridge Island in the Pacific Northwest when I got an e-mail from Scott Dove, one of the musical directors at The John Burroughs High School in Burbank, California. I didn't know him, but he tracked me down because he wanted the sheet music to a holiday song of mine from a previous album. He told me he was putting together a holiday concert program and was gathering new and/or unusual holiday songs that haven't been "overexposed."



I told him about this new compilation that would be coming out, *Just One Angel*. I immediately sent him an mp3 file of the album, since it had a lot of brand new holiday songs on it. There might be something on it he would like.

There was: “Christmas in L.A.” I put him in touch with David Rasche—who couldn’t believe that of all the songs on that album his was chosen—and this was his very first recording. David quickly had a chart written up, a PDF of the sheet music was e-mailed to Burbank for the students to learn for the December concert. Meanwhile,

one Tuesday night during that same October, members of the John Burroughs High School Choir were special musical guests on *Dancing with the Stars* (“The Results” show) on live TV, and introduced as “The best high school choir in America.” They sang their hearts out while dancers zipped around the dance floor, keeping the audience entertained until it was revealed which couple would be cut from the show that night (anybody who’s a fan of the show knows what I’m talking about).

I remember smiling, watching that program thinking they just called them the best high school choir in America—and they will be singing David Rasche’s song “Christmas in L.A.” in a couple of months. This could be the opening of an episode of *Glee*.

David Rasche never met Jack Hardy, but it was what Jack started way back in the early 1980s that all these years later has led David to take his first tentative steps as a songwriter.

And I bet there are more stories like this out there to be told. Thanks, Jack.



Amy Speace and Jack Hardy at Falcon Ridge, 2009. Photo © Reinhard Liess

## Abbie Gardner & Laurie MacAllister (Red Molly)

Jack, where did you go? You were always there. Monday nights in NYC or under a pirate flag in a song-circle at the festivals. You always said, “Abigail... you’re good enough at that dobro – write more SONGS!” So I did. With the promise of laughter, food, wine, company, and new songs, I made it to the group whenever I could. It was a powerful thing to have you believe in me. Your presence made me write some of my best songs. And some of my worst! But they would earn me dinner just the same. A writer writes. I learned that from you. You turned this lonely art into a community, a tribe. I will do my best to continue that. I miss you Jack and wish you were still here.

– Abbie Gardner



*Jack's Camp Coho Songwriter-Circle Flag. Photo © Robert Berkowitz*

I met Jack in 2000 at the Kerrville Folk Festival; we sat and enjoyed a concert together. Over the next ten years, I ran into him, sometimes in the West Village, sometimes at festivals, and a handful of times at his Monday night songwriter's gathering. I didn't know him well, but it didn't matter; somehow we'd always joke and laugh easily. He had a way of seeming like an old friend. Just last summer at WoodyFest, we were hanging out at Lou's Rocky Road Tavern, in the sweltering Oklahoma heat. Enjoying a cold beer, with a huge smile, pink cheeks, and sparkling eyes, Jack suggested we go on a tour of Europe in 2011: Jack Hardy, Jonathan Byrd, and Red Molly. I wish we were going.

– Laurie MacAllister

# Frank Tedesso

Jack Hardy is a difficult man to put a frame around.  
The portrait is too complicated,  
too many conflicting images.  
The light refracts this way & that.

He wasn't just one thing or another,  
he was a man made of vicious paradoxes  
& they were always in play.  
Diametrically opposed concepts were  
often at war all around him,  
but almost never within him,  
because Jack always went his own way.

He was the most certain of men.  
He believed in what he believed in.  
It was sunk deep.  
There was no negotiating.  
He never let any measly inconsistency  
or blaring fact get in his way.

As that old folky, Charles Dickens, was heard  
to say on more than one occasion  
after a long night of banging down  
cognacs & concepts with Jack  
at The Speakeasy,  
*"Jack Hardy, you are indeed  
the best of men & the worst of men..."*  
And in the end maybe it really was that simple.

As a writer  
he was a craftsman of a very high order,  
an almost a peerless technician.



Jack Hardy, Odetta, Mike Porco. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose

He had both a studied & innate sense of  
the interior geometry & geography of a song."

Though he was known for a certain style of song,  
down through the years he turned out many different styles,  
and they all rang true  
and stood on their own.  
His gift was such that he could re-create  
almost any genre he chose.

Often there were elements of sly  
experimentation within Jack's songs,  
but they were always woven into the fabric of the song,  
never calling attention to themselves,  
almost hidden or disguised.  
Jack daring us to find them  
& prove ourselves to be truly worthy listeners.

On stage he was magnetic,  
he would leer like Jack Nicholson & just capture the crowd.  
And though his shows lacked a certain heart & soul,  
they had an authority.  
He was a master at claiming the stage & making it his own.

He inspired intense reactions in people,  
both good & bad.  
There was too much irony in his wake,  
too much toxic heavy metal in his opinions.  
But that was because they weren't just his opinions,  
they were the canons of his complicated &  
sometimes self-serving belief system  
and he elicited hot emotions from people because of them.

With Jack, it was never a matter of  
you could take him or leave him.  
It always seemed to involve either bloody  
murder or glorious resurrection.  
More often than not, both.

He inspired fierce loyalty & deep admiration,  
bitter disappointment & disillusion.  
He was filled with dark machinations & scheming.  
He could be a bully who practiced  
cheap psychological thuggery.  
He was all too comfortable on those terms.  
But any songwriter, folksinger, rival, former comrade in arms,  
friend or even enemy,  
who has more than a nodding interest in fairness  
has to give Jack his due  
which includes a deep sense of gratitude & respect.

He was the driving force behind *Fast Folk Musical Magazine*  
& the primary mover in the shaping of The Speakeasy,  
a folk music club in the Village during the '80s.  
Everyone played there,  
from humble folkies & hopeful songwriters  
to the folk & songwriter stars of the time.  
Townes Van Zandt, Guy Clark, the Roches,  
Rick Danko, Odetta, Dave Van Ronk,  
Nanci Griffith, Tom Paxton, John Prine & on & on.



Tom Waits, Jack Hardy, Ramblin' Jack Elliot. Photo © Theodore Lee

It was the stage where Suzanne Vega,  
Shawn Colvin, David Massengill,  
Christine Lavin, John Gorka, Richard Shindell  
all first came to prominence.  
More importantly it was a place where songs  
& songwriters were taken seriously.  
It drew folksingers & songwriters from all over the country.

For me, I had the times of my life at The Speakeasy,  
& met the friends of a lifetime there,  
singing, drinking, fighting, laughing, listening,  
dreaming, living.

And of course, there were the songwriter meetings  
at Jack's apartment on Houston street every Monday night.  
It was a weekly convention of mad scientists,  
the place throbbed with invention & reckless abandon.  
I'm sure if it was photographed from space  
some Monday nights that building would  
have been glowing like a nebula.  
From time to time the joint almost went up in flames as it was,



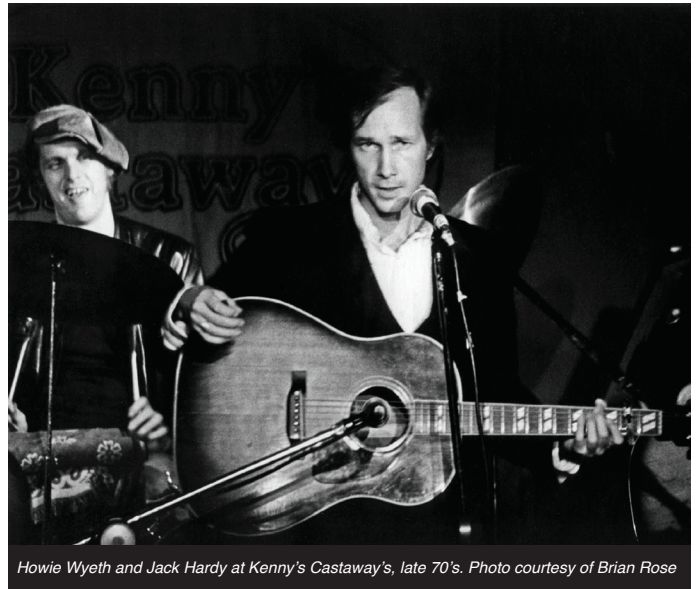
what with all the singing, drinking, laughing, listening, fighting,  
inventing, & dreaming.

With Jack spontaneous combustion was always a possibility.  
Times of a lifetime.  
The times of a lifetime.

There were the yearly *Fast Folk* shows at The Bottom Line.  
The tours in Europe.  
The Fast Folk Cafe.  
The Gathering of the Bards Festival each summer.

Jack laid all that track.  
He was the engine,  
his magnetism drew us all down those different paths,  
even if we weren't always aware of it.  
He was the magnetic pole that held sway for those years.

I had difficulty with the image of himself  
that he worked so hard  
at consciously creating & cultivating all these many years.  
But it was a constant & consummate labor of love for him.  
In many ways it was his masterwork.  
His image was as important to him as his songs were.  
He knew exactly what he was doing,  
constructing his legacy,  
laying the groundwork for the books that he was  
certain should, & would, be written about him.  
His ego was Godzilla-size,  
but it had to be  
to take on & accomplish so many of the battles he fought,  
and won.  
That he fought both the good fights & the  
bad fights with equal passion



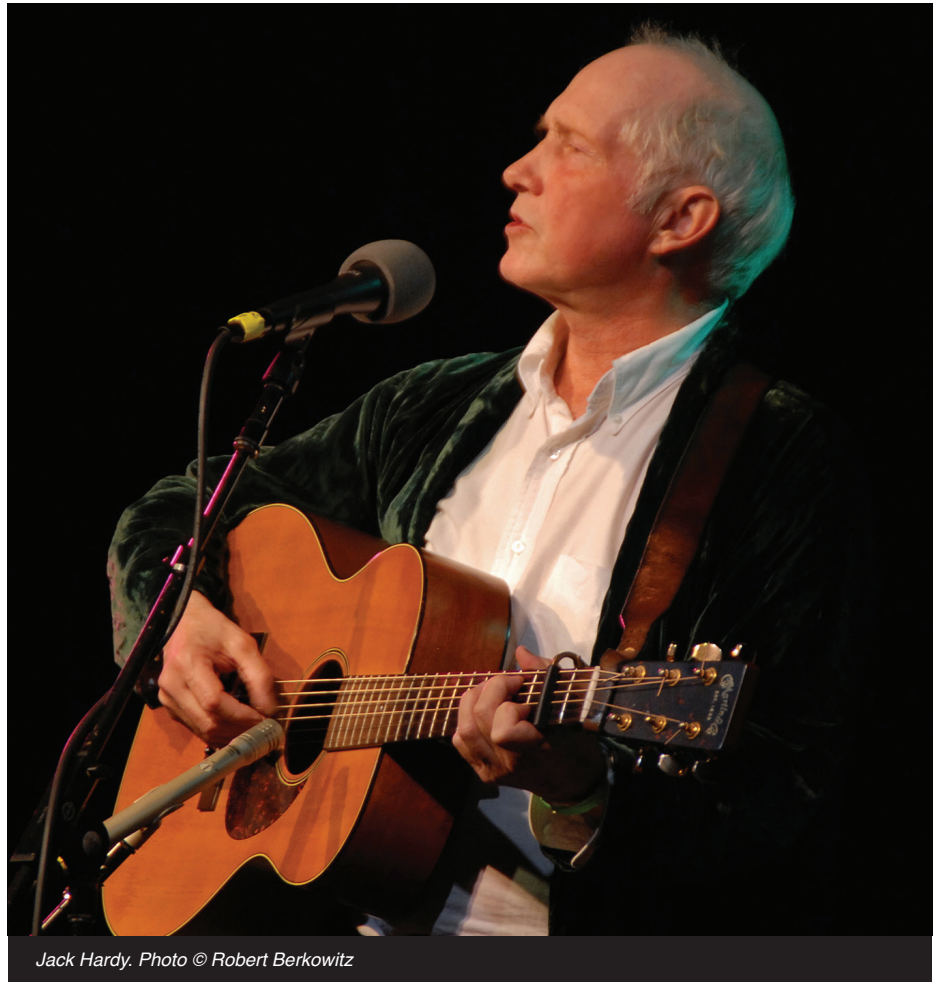
Howie Wyeth and Jack Hardy at Kenny's Castaway's, late 70's. Photo courtesy of Brian Rose

& too often confused friends with enemies,  
is undeniable.

But up 'til the end  
whether I would see him at the meetings  
or watch him on stage  
there were times when I would be startled  
by how proud I felt of him,  
still fighting the good fight.  
Still singing the good song.  
He never ceased championing the idea  
that being a songwriter was a noble calling  
& that we should take it seriously, work hard & be proud.  
His gift to us is undeniable.  
I will always be gratefully & proudly in his debt.  
Always.

Fare thee well you old shit-kicker, good luck in Eternity....

## Paul Sachs



Jack Hardy. Photo © Robert Berkowitz

Jack Hardy lived and breathed songs and the craft of writing them. He wasn't into waiting for a song to happen. His belief was to write, and write more (at least a song a week believing that it would make you a better writer). When someone was playing his or her song for the first time he would listen with such concentration that it was as if nothing else in the world mattered. The importance of the art and craftsmanship of songwriting poured out of him. Like countless others who passed through the *Songwriters Exchange*, I couldn't help but feel inspired by his passion for it. He inspired me and made me a better songwriter for it. In a world where everything is transient, there was a sense of something eternal about Jack that can't be put into words. My life and art were forever changed by his tutelage.

## Richard Shindell



Jack Hardy, Howie Wyeth, Richard Shindell, at NY's Bottom Line. Photo © Theodore Lee

The first Jack Hardy song I ever heard was “Dover to Dunkirk,” expertly performed by Johnny and the Triumphs in a bar in the Adirondacks sometime during the summer of 1979. Back at school that September, I mentioned the song to bandmate John Gorka. Way ahead of me, he walked over to a stack of LPs and pulled out *The Nameless One*, containing Jack’s original version.

Several years later, I would write my first song very much in the shadow of that record, and then find myself playing it in Jack’s presence one Thursday night at Houston Street. It was something I’ll never forget. Naturally, I did exactly what newcomers did: that is, come in guns a-blazin’ with a finished song—no need for revision, thank you very much. (Jack had a good nose for this phenomenon). When the circle came around to me, I played it with foolish certainty that it would go through unchallenged. It did not. When the song ended, everyone snapped their fingers in appreciation. Then Jack chimed in: “I think I understand what you’re trying to do. But with all those pagan images, I wonder if bringing in Peter Pan might be anachronistic—too modern a reference.” I don’t think I let on, but I was crestfallen, though the sting was lessened somewhat by the fact that he had clearly been listening carefully. Still, I really liked that Peter Pan verse! Jack was right, and I knew it. But it’s never easy to murder your darlings. It took a couple of weeks to do the deed. When I returned to the circle and played the revised version, Jack said, “Much better. But next time bring something new.” And so it began. His attention to the song has been with me ever since.



## Nels Andrews



*Jack Hardy at his Songwriter's Exchange. Photo © Brian Rose*

I first heard Jack do “The Last of the O’Neills” one late evening around a campfire at Camp Coho at the Kerrville Folk Festival, where Jack was holding court late into the evening. The next day, the melody was haunting me, so I went back and asked him to sing it again, this time into a video camera. I was going to learn it. Afterwards, Jack went into the historical significance of the song; he talked about how its parts are derived from various canons. He described how songs are created by and then pulled from history. While I’d initially been hypnotized by the tune, there was so much more underneath, if I cared to look. And how it didn’t matter, you can take the tune with or without the backstory—it’s a good tune. If only I’d had schoolteachers with such easy erudition.



## Erik Frandsen



*Jack Hardy at University of Hartford. Photo courtesy of Angela Page*

Jack Hardy was my friend and colleague for almost 40 years. The song ("Potter's Field") is one of my favorites.

## Richard Julian



*Buddy Mondlock, Jack Hardy, Richard Julian. Photo © Theodore Lee*

When I arrived in New York with my acoustic guitar in 1986 at the age of 19, there weren't a whole lot of venues promoting singer/songwriters. There was The Speakeasy on MacDougal, but no one had changed the air in that place since Nixon was president. If you were a singer/songwriter looking for somewhere to connect, there was only one place to go. And that was Jack Hardy's apartment on Houston Street.

Jack was undoubtedly an over-opinionated pain in the ass, but I have to say, he was very accepting and nurturing of young songwriters. At the time, I thought I was the next Elvis Costello, and to prove as much, I brought in about five songs a week; none of which I ever made any commercial recordings of nor have remained on my set list. And Jack, who was easily far more established both at his career and craft, sat there and patiently listened to every one of them. He also frequently offered valuable advice on how to improve them. In the wake of his passing, I have to ask myself if I've ever been as generous to songwriters coming up behind my generation. And the answer is no. But Jack was.

He even hired me to play bass on his tour of Italy and Switzerland in 1989, which is pretty funny considering that I don't play bass. I blasted Van Morrison and James Brown in the car every day and, I'm pretty sure, drove Jack insane. Thankfully, there was a promoter we stayed with who owned a proper stereo and we managed to make a cassette copy of Leonard Cohen's "I'm Your Man" to establish some neutral ground on the long rides between gigs. I recall Jack really relishing in that record, even with its Euro-techno production. His appreciation of it enhanced my way of hearing it.

The idea of Jack Hardy no longer on Houston Street tossing that pasta and getting up in somebody's face is right up there with the great inconceivables. He was an important man. A huge void is left.

## Rod MacDonald

Sunday, March 13, 2011



Jack Hardy and Rod MacDonald at the Folk City 50th Anniversary Concert, June 2010. Photo © Mark Dann

The news has been bouncing around of Jack Hardy's passing, of lung cancer, on Friday morning. For anyone on this network who didn't know Jack, he was a complex and flamboyant artist, a songwriter who said "here it is..." without pandering to the market place, a champion for the Village folk scene in its post-'60s rebirth, and an important influence on the music, writing and thinking of many singer-songwriters who passed through his life, including myself. He was the first fellow folksinger I met when I hit Greenwich Village; "I hope someday we can be friends," he said.

When my guitar got stolen from my squatter apartment in the East Village, the second such burglary, Jack loaned me his Martin D-18 so I could do a scheduled concert the next night. Around that same time I had written the song "Hard Times," about the first time that very apartment had been broken into. As I returned his guitar, Jack said "Remember Rod, you have to live through your songs twice."

I've thought about this statement many times, and concluded it means seeing how things could be if they work out, instead of dwelling on what has gone wrong. I can't tell you that's what Jack intended, but it works for me, and I'm sticking with it.

He was often funny, great company in his spontaneity, and occasionally out of control, a space he cultivated and sought to arrive at. Which isn't to say he couldn't "go negative," as the pundits call it. Jack could waste you as well as anybody, and usually in fewer words, and was a friend you needed a break

from every now and then, or to stand up to at times. But you had to respect his fire, his ability to bring people together and accomplish something. It was Jack who took the ashes of the '60s folk boom for what it was, and said "We have to do this ourselves," creating the *Songwriters Exchange*, a 1977 weekly get-together of songwriters at The Cornelia Street Cafe, leading to *Fast Folk Magazine* that documented the '80s acoustic work of so many great artists, to the ongoing songwriters' gatherings at his apartment on Houston Street, all major facets of the music scene in New York.

That many have benefited from his vision and effort shouldn't obscure the fact he was also a brilliant songwriter on his own, taking on subjects well outside the mainstream of what passes for commercial music, subjects such as a dead homeless man on the sidewalk, or General Sherman's brutal Civil War march to the sea, or a journey through Ireland with a magical coin, or of a man who loses his coat, but "t's nothing to the state of the inner man." On the personal side, his songs were tough and poignant at the same time, truth-telling with no happy ending promised, a powerful mix of polished songwriting and raw emotion.

*But the last time turns into the next time  
So silently in shame  
And I find myself drunk on life again,  
I don't believe I could ever love  
Another cup quite the same.*

I worked with Jack many times through the years, and saw his concerts in the Village; it's possible I have seen more Jack Hardy shows than of any other artist. I admired both his writing and his ability to verbalize his ideas of writing, not to mention his nerve to tell people what he thought of their songs, subtly but clearly. It's a difficult task, considering that when someone plays you a song and asks what you think, the only thing they want to hear is "wow, that's great." Anything else will usually get you taken off their Christmas list. Jack took on the challenge of helping shape your craft, not by critiquing people directly but by bringing songwriters together to hear each other and share their experience. Many of us did just that, singing together, working together, falling in and out of love together, learning our songs as we lived our own soundtrack. We learned from this process the knowledge necessary to become who we wanted to be.

It was exhilarating and inspiring; and in remembrance, for all those great songs, for your vision and hard work, for your love and friendship, for being yourself, and for those in that same boat together, we'll miss you, Jack, and will try to carry on, and wish you a fine journey onward.



## Terre Roche



*Terre Roche, Lisi Tribble, Jack Hardy . Photo © Theodore Lee*

I met Jack Hardy in 1973. My sister Maggie and I were playing at Carnegie Mellon University in the Student Union building. The college kids had transformed the cafeteria into a coffeehouse which they called "A Fruity Teahouse." On our contract it said we'd be sharing the bill with someone named Jack Hardy. We arrived at the soundcheck and in came a long-haired cowboy with a handle-bar mustache. This was Jack Hardy and he told us he was from Colorado. We hit it off instantly and spent the next three days together pretty much all the time. I remember there was lots of laughing and for some reason Jack emerged with the nickname, "Vicious Jack Hardy," given to him by a college kid who'd attached himself to the three of us. By the end of the weekend, Maggie and I convinced Jack to come to New York where there was the beginnings of a Folk Scare brewing again in Greenwich Village.

After the first night of "The Fruity Teahouse" run, we lingered a bit too long for the building maintenance department (a hint of things to come perhaps?) and had a *Spinal Tap* moment when the doors to the outside were locked. We wandered around the corridors trying every door handle till we found one that opened. Turns out we emerged in the rear end of the building where the trash bins stood. Stepping out into the night air we saw someone rolling a cart of garbage toward us. "Is that going to the art school?" said Jack.

## Suzanne Vega



Jack Hardy and Suzanne Vega. Photo © Theodore Lee

I met Jack Hardy a few months shy of my 21st birthday. I remember the evening very well. I had heard of him and came down to The Cornelia Street Café to find out about the *Songwriters Exchange*. It was raining that night and our eyes met during a thunderclap. I had been smoking on and off at this time preparing for a role as Carson McCullers in school. He boldly took the cigarette from my hand, broke it in half and threw it on the floor. Ironical considering that he died of lung cancer so many years later.

Our brothers died within months of each other—his on 9/11 and mine in April the following year. Both of our brothers worked at the Twin Towers. I was at Jack's house on a Monday night (early for the first time!!) when I had a sudden urge to call home. I was told, "You better come home. Timmy's gone."

Jack was a born warrior, and he was great to argue with. I loved him. He influenced me tremendously. Many of the songs I sing today, most of all "The Queen and the Soldier," were influenced by his style of metaphor. The midnight picnic mentioned in the song "Tom's Diner"—that was his idea. I don't remember what we ate—sandwiches?—on the steps of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. He appeared in my dreams throughout the years. The last one was the night before he died. I woke up and smiled, not knowing he was in the hospital so near death. Oh, there's Jack, I thought. Part of my life.

## Frank Christian



*Jeff Hardy, Jack Hardy, Chuck Hancock, Howie Wyeth, Frank Christian. Photo © Theodore Lee*

I remember our first trip to Germany. Something like 29 performances in 31 days. We never drank too much back then (right!!).

Jack with his cape threatening to jump off some mountain...He could alienate both friends and foes alike; insulting dear hearts, family and supporters with the same venom as critics, club owners and promoters.

He will be missed for his contributions as songwriter and champion of the song, encouraging newcomers to embrace the quality of good creative work.

I will miss him.



## DISC 1

1. **Tree of Rhyme** - David Massengill 3:45
2. **Saint Clare** - Suzanne Vega 2:23
3. **Little Dove** - Richard Shindell 4:07
4. **Sojourner Truth (Ain't I a Woman?)** - Jack Williams 3:15
5. **Murder** - Christine Lavin 5:55
6. **You Only Leave Your Heart Once** - Richard Julian 4:30
7. **Prisoner** - Red Molly 4:33
8. **The Last of the O'Neills** - Nels Andrews 3:38
9. **Rye Grass** - Paul Sachs 4:41
10. **Houston Street** - Frank Christian 4:36
11. **Potter's Field** - Erik Frandsen 2:28
12. **Autumn** - Jonathan Byrd 3:08
13. **Gossamer Thread** - Jack Hardy 3:19

## DISC 2

1. **Resolution** - Rod MacDonald 3:56
2. **Forget-Me-Not** - Lucy Kaplansky 3:49
3. **Dublin Farewell** - Anthony da Costa 3:46
4. **The Tailor** - Terre Roche 5:25
5. **Down Where the Rabbits Run** - John Gorka 3:40
6. **I Ought to Know** - Ronny Cox 3:34
7. **Porto Limon** - Brian Rose 4:34
8. **White Shoes** - Andrew Rose Gregory 3:47
9. **Go Tell the Savior** - Diana Jones 4:27
10. **The Inner Man** - Frank Tedesso 4:13
11. **Before You Sing (Instrumental version)** -  
- Kate MacLeod 1:08
12. **Fare Thee Well** - Nanci Griffith 4:03
13. **Ponderosa** - Jack Hardy 4:17

*All songs written by John S. Hardy  
Published by Jack Hardy Music (BMI)*



# The Songs

## 1. Tree of Rhyme



I took a tree into the town  
 To see if it would grow  
 Not knowing I was affixed  
 To the fate of the seed I'd sown  
 My roots are solid underground  
 Fed by the warm spring rain  
 Where thunder's fierce and fickle winds  
 Find compromise insane

### **Chorus:**

I seek refuge in this tree of rhyme  
 Into its arms I climb  
 Frightened by the terror of the scythe  
 There will be peace with the wind and rain  
 The roundness of the earth and flame  
 This tree is more constant than I  
 This tree is more constant than I

My tree has flourished the same as I  
 Though invisible at times

Beneath the rubble of vacant eyes  
 The seed divides and climbs  
 As if part of a forgotten age  
 When business was a vice  
 And virtue was merely picking fruit  
 In some patient paradise

I pity those without a tree  
 As birth has doomed no one  
 For bricks are merely mud and straw  
 And canals just rivers won  
 For nature schemes in cracks and seams  
 Waiting for a time to bloom  
 Even down in that soot gray town  
 In some forgotten room

© 1982 John S. Hardy  
 David Massengill, dulcimer and vocal  
 Recorded by Mark Dann

## 2. Saint Clare



Call on that saint  
And the candle that burns  
Keeping her safe  
Until her return  
Plaster and paint  
Holding the fire  
A poor woman's saint  
Holding all man's desire

Bold little bird  
Fly away home  
Could I but ride herd  
On the wind and the foam  
All of the souls  
That curl by the fire  
They'll never know  
Of all man's desire

Watercress clings  
To the banks of the stream  
In the first grip of spring  
When the snow turns to green  
Barefoot and cold  
And holding a lyre  
By the side of the road  
Holding all man's desire

Call on that saint  
When the white candle burns  
Keeping her safe  
Until she returns

© 1996 John S. Hardy  
Suzanne Vega, vocal; Gerry Leonard, acoustic guitar  
Recorded by Gerry Leonard and Mark Dann

### 3. Little Dove



And so you fly little dove  
And so you fly  
You don't know why little dove  
You don't know why  
The water is wide little dove  
The water is wide  
So far to fly little dove  
To the other side

In time you'll know  
But for now it's touch  
and go your way

You might as well try little dove  
You're on your own  
Above the rising tide little dove  
The vast unknown  
The clouds on high little dove  
Cloud your view  
They billow white and full  
You fly in blue

As winter slows  
Ice melting froze  
on the branch you seek

The children cry little dove  
The children cry  
Their plaintive plight little dove  
Of fear and fright  
Those who bide little dove  
The fire and fight  
They cannot cry little dove  
Nor sleep at night

You must show them how  
Not then or when but now

© 2009 John S. Hardy  
Richard Shindell, tenor guitar and vocal;  
Greg Anderson, electric guitar;  
Lincoln Schleifer, acoustic bass  
Individual tracks recorded by the  
performers in their homes

## 4. Sojourner Truth (Ain't I a Woman?)



Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?  
Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?

Well I can bear the lash, I borne the lash  
When none but Jesus heard me  
I borne thirteen children seen most of them sold  
Sold off into slavery

Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?  
Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?

Well I can work as much, I can eat as much  
As any man can, when I can get it  
I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns  
And look at me I'm a woman

Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?  
Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?

If the very first woman turned the world upside down  
Then all of us woman together  
Can put this world back right side up  
And the man just better let 'em

That man over there said to shut my mouth  
'Cause Christ was not a woman  
I got only one question for that man  
Where did your Christ come from?

It came from a woman, it came from a woman  
Came from God and a woman, and there weren't no man  
Man didn't have a thing to do with it

Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?  
Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?  
Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?  
Ain't I a woman said Sojourner Truth, ain't I a woman?  
Ain't I a woman? Ain't I a woman?

© 2008 John S. Hardy  
Jack Williams, guitar and vocal;  
Recorded by Al Dawson, at Smokin' Moose  
Productions LLC, Las Cruces, NM



## 5. Murder



They say that he is crazy as he walks down the street  
To the place where the darkness  
makes your heart skip a beat  
But he's walkin' a little bit slower than all of his friends  
Perhaps he knows more than he pretends  
But it is hard to argue with a parasite fool  
'Cause he uses his memories instead of his tools  
And the game that he's playin', it's got its own rules  
And he's getting away with murder

Well there's bats in the belfry I am proud to report  
Where the clergy vacation at their midtown resorts  
But they keep them out of sight by changing their tune  
And they are dyin' of fright just a little too soon  
And there is never a word about those faraway lands  
Where another kind of hourglass has run out of sand  
And the ten-cent survivors, they've  
got holes in their hands  
While they put 'em on trial for murder

There's no sense in arguin' it is very plain to see  
About the comparative worthlessness of college degrees  
When you pay for your smiles with  
your green-stamp books  
And land jobs according to how your bottom half looks  
Yet along comes this man with his limerick jokes  
And dissertations of grandeur on the tobacco he smokes  
And his conscience is wrapped up in Edgar Allan Poe  
And other tales of murder

But I'm trying to be fair to all that is involved  
At least 'til the other half of this mystery is solved  
When the pedestal is moved and the balance is lost  
And the failures and the mistrials all add to the cost  
They got a new rule book that always says no  
To the kids who want to stay up for The Late Late Show  
But they keep them reading comic books  
'Cause they never show  
The true color of murder

## Murder (continued)



So let's say a prayer for organized crime  
As the patron saint of the commerce  
of havin' a good time  
We'll send someone out to investigate the dirt  
Though the last one, he came back just a little bit hurt  
They found him on the beach with his head in the sand  
And you know he wasn't out there just to dig some clams  
And though the suicide note was in his own hand  
To me it smells like murder

Well they run you through changes  
'til you run out of breath  
By feeding you cigarettes and gasoline  
and other forms of death  
And then they force you into buyin'  
all their worthless machines  
That can do everything better except  
for cleanin' the latrines  
But depression ain't the worry of most of these folks  
They're worried about their worth

as the butt of these jokes  
And losin' their jobs permanently as a part of the hoax  
And forcin' them to resort to murder  
  
Well Franklin and Fulton and Alexander Graham Bell  
Along with Einstein can all go to hell  
'Cause you can't ask the computers to feed you a meal  
And you can't turn on the TV set to see how you feel  
And the man who invented that horrible bomb  
Is probably as American as George Washington's mom  
And Uncle Sam's changed his name to Uncle Tom  
To avoid the rap for murder

© 1976 John S. Hardy  
Christine Lavin, guitar and vocal; Mark  
Dann, bass, electric guitar, lap steel  
Recorded by Mark Dann

## 6. You Only Leave Your Heart Once



All those people who have pieces  
Calling cards and other traces  
But you only leave your heart once

Can I get it get it back  
Can I give it once again  
Said this cowboy to his shadow  
Which was made of wind and of rain

When I touch you I feel distance  
Never know if yours or mine  
Have I left it, has it left me  
Oh my darling Clementine

The blistering heat and the hay down your shirt  
The barbed wire fences where the greenhorns get hurt  
At a campfire in Colorado  
Or a beach on some dark sea

A smoke-filled room in El Dorado  
Singing nearer my god damn to thee

Damp leather and faster horses  
And a south wind bringing rain  
Too many miles for changing courses  
Pushing on the point of pain

Left your arms in too many places  
With your eyes as big as guns  
Calling cards and other traces  
But you only leave your heart once

© 1996 John S. Hardy  
Richard Julian, guitar and vocal  
Recorded by Mark Dann

## 7. Prisoner



There's a valley filled with poppies  
 There's a mountain etched in blue  
 There's a memory that hollers  
 Where it echoes I love you

Does not look like this island  
 That is walled in by the sea  
 With the only sound the warden  
 Who is yelling at me

Little bird that I see flying  
 Do you know how far I've flown  
 Do you know how low the valley  
 Well I have sunk below

And the warden takes the prisoners  
 One by one to this room  
 Where their every hope is broken  
 'Cept that death will take them soon

And there's no one to ask questions  
 And there's no one to reply  
 To ask why I was taken  
 On the fourth day of July

Little bird that I see flying  
 Can you even hear me cry  
 Through the walls of this prison  
 Where I will surely die

And the crescent moon is shining  
 Marking time as passing by  
 And it's seven years and counting  
 Since I bid you all goodbye

In my dreams I'm dreaming of you  
 In my dreams I can fly  
 And I holler I love you  
 And the valley replies

© 2009 John S. Hardy  
 Red Molly: Abbie Gardner, dobro and  
 vocal; Laurie MacAllister, bass and vocal;  
 Molly Venter, guitar and vocal  
 Recorded by Mark Dann



## 8. The Last of the O'Neills



Sailing through the black of night  
 Lightning lights the road ahead  
 The thunders crack a cannon's roar  
 Enough to wake the rebel dead  
 My uncle lies too still in bed, and  
 I too late to say goodbye  
 The last of the O'Neills is heading  
 back to Ireland

**Chorus:**

No way to wake my uncle  
 No way to wake my uncle  
 No way to wake him now

But let us talk of brighter times  
 When men in starched white uniforms  
 Stood beside their blushing brides  
 Stolen from the rich man's house  
 And lads from Bogside equalled  
 more, climbing ivy citadels  
 And the last of the O'Neills would build  
 a thousand of those houses

But ah, for childhood's hopeful peace  
 When cousins roamed in brotherhood  
 When all that mattered was release  
 And the paneled cabins' polished wood  
 And the rum runners sailed the coast  
 chasing down the hurricanes  
 And the last of the O'Neills would drink  
 a thousand flagons

But now the sun is at the helm  
 The waves they lap the starboard bow  
 The tide has turned to overwhelm  
 And still the roar political,  
 Row past Fisher's island one more  
 time out on the outgoing tide  
 The last of the O'Neills is heading  
 back to Ireland now

© 2010 John S. Hardy  
 Nels Andrews, guitar and vocal;  
 Anthony da Costa, harmony  
 Recorded by Mark Dann

## 9. Rye Grass



I would not take that road at night  
Even if it just might save you time  
No need to put trouble on your mind  
Where the rye grass lies bent and broke

You have no idea of what has been  
Where rye grass used to wave in wind  
Trampled by hooves and hooded men  
Where the rye grass lies bent and broke

You might think this long ago  
Somewhere down south far below  
Some people are just plain slow  
To open their eyes

You could just take the road to the right  
And be back home in bed tonight  
To church in the morning hallelou  
But the rye grass is singing too

I saw the length of rope pulled tight  
I saw the preacher close his eyes

I saw the sheriff try not to smile  
Where the rye grass lies bent and broke

You might think this long ago  
Somewhere down south far below  
Some people are just plain slow  
To believe

No one reported what transpired  
These were all people who were admired  
That side of the wall the grass grows higher  
Where the rye grass lies bent and broke

Hardly a trace of it now  
That tree by lightning struck down  
That field they have filled with cows  
Where the rye grass lies bent and broke

© 2008 John S. Hardy  
Paul Sachs, guitar and vocal;  
Mark Dann, bass  
Recorded by Mark Dann

## 10. Houston Street



A man lay dead on Houston Street,  
but I could not feel the pain  
The path of least resistance is driving me insane  
And it is hard to please your conscience,  
when all of love's a crime  
And it is hard to call the police with your last lousy dime

### **Chorus:**

I know you're just laughing,  
'cause there's nothing else to do  
But you might die laughing,  
'cause the joke's on you

Crazy Alice was a would-be actress,  
until she got bored with the lines  
And started practicing insanity, when  
she got no valentines  
Now she plays the part of a lover in  
the late-night pickup bars  
And I might go on home with her,  
if I didn't mind the scars

I never had a Nathan's hotdog, until the old man died  
So you couldn't call him famous,  
you could only say he lied  
And the proof ain't in the pudding when

there ain't no pudding at all  
And it's hard to take the kidding, when  
there is nowhere left to fall

My dreams they reek of madness,  
and I try to understand  
How people can rely on sadness as  
the only card in their hand  
And you find out 'bout the weather,  
when you get rain in your eyes  
And you find out who your friends  
are as a consolation prize

A man lay dead on Houston Street,  
he'd been dead for many days  
And they all walked by with nervous feet,  
as though he was just drunk or dazed  
After all there was nothing they could  
do, like donate time or money  
But I'm going on back to Houston,  
where they don't talk so funny

© 1976 John S. Hardy  
Frank Christian, acoustic guitar, electric guitar, vocal;  
Mark Dann, bass  
Recorded by Mark Dann

## 11. Potter's Field



Thirty days has September, thirty days in the sun  
April, June and November, all those days on the run  
But you've got to stop somewhere,  
'fore you're betrayed by the wheel  
Take my love by the hand for a walk down to potter's field

Thirty pieces of silver, from a long ago scheme  
That's the price that you kill for, fulfilling Jeremy's dream  
But it's all blood money, familiar friend at your meal  
But the flowers still bloom, every spring down in potter's field

Thirty years in youth's doorway, for philosopher kings  
Thirty more that you work for, tombs retirement brings  
But you can't take it with you, every day that life steals  
Time in the end, puts us all down to potter's field

© 1978 John S. Hardy,  
Erik Frandsen, guitar and vocal.  
Recorded by Mark Dann



## 12. Autumn



Autumn was a fatal time  
Autumn was a friend of mine  
Autumn was my last hope  
To hold out 'til Christmas time  
Autumn with her bright red hair  
Autumn with her icy stare  
Turned her back on the evening news  
In a way that said she didn't care

**Chorus:**

Take the greyhound  
Take it out of town  
Take it down the highway  
Where you might have turned around  
Dig your fingernails into the naugahyde  
Let the countryside  
Slide into another time  
Another town, another season

Autumn lit a cigarette  
Said it's not the time to quit  
Ashes on the bed sheets

The remote control and the TV set  
Autumn licked the envelope  
Said it was our only hope  
The dim light slowly fading  
Down to the glow of the Marlboro

Autumn was a clean white sheet  
Covering all but the feet  
Static on the radio  
The ice bucket in the road  
Here's to what I thought was best  
Here's to your last request  
Here's to how creation  
Evolved into a holy mess

Another place, another reason  
To love autumn

© 2002 John S. Hardy  
Jonathan Byrd, guitar and vocal  
Recorded by Jonathan Byrd

## 13. Gossamer Thread



One drop of dew on a gossamer thread  
North wind blows through  
All the rushes behind the shed  
This drop of dew holds mists of autumn  
As close to truth as our troubles in the bottom  
Of the drawer that holds the memories  
Each decaying photograph  
Has lost its color as the leaves turn to brown  
And a spider shocked by frost  
We pile up the cost of this summer town

The spangled day, last warmth of autumn  
What you might say  
I find I think of so often  
I think of you and your crazy whims  
You always saw through all the  
scrims that cloud the view  
Of all the romance and the toil  
Each decaying story  
Weeds piled into soil for dormant winter nights

And the spiders moved inside  
But so have the flies of this summer town  
  
Frost on the dew was never meant to be  
And I never knew  
What you thought of me  
You hummed a tune in harmony  
No dissonance of lengthy biography  
Of all of those you left behind  
Each decaying memory  
Trying so hard to find in a gossamer thread  
And a spider who is dead  
Of fear in this frozen summer town

*© 2011 John S. Hardy*  
Jack Hardy, vocal and guitar  
Recorded by Mike Laureanno;  
Remixed by Mark Dann

# The Songs

## 1. Resolution



Each time I leave this goddamn town  
 I swear it will be the last time  
 The last time I let myself be swallowed  
 By the misery, the self-pity that surround me  
 The people all claim that they  
 don't believe in believing  
 Then they bleed you and squeeze you  
 Into believing that it is all a part of freedom  
 But the last time turns into the next time  
 So silently in shame  
 And I find myself back here again  
 I don't believe I could ever love  
 Another place quite the same

Each time I stand with my backside to your doorway  
 I swear it will be the last time  
 The last time I let your catlike independence  
 And innocence play with my insecurity  
 I don't care to let myself be taken  
 by that thief called time  
 That drags you into an unmade bed  
 To waste those tender moments  
 so far from your desire  
 But the last time turns into the next time

So silently in shame  
 And I find myself beside you again  
 I don't believe I could ever love  
 Another woman quite the same

Each time I lift this glass to quench this thirst  
 I swear it will be the last time  
 The last time I find myself drunk and disorderly  
 Unable to control my sense of time  
 I don't care to let myself be taken to  
 that all-night lost and found  
 But each time I lift this cup of life  
 I find no place to set it down  
 But the last time turns into the next time  
 So silently in shame  
 And I find myself drunk on life again  
 I don't believe I could ever love  
 Another cup quite the same

© 1976 John S. Hardy

Rod MacDonald, guitar and vocal; Bill Walach, mandolin;  
 Mark Dann, bass; Bernie Shanahan, organ  
 Recorded by Bernie Shanahan

## 2. Forget-Me-Not



And though you say that you'll be mine  
I hear another voice in time  
And that voice plays a bitter song  
Says I will stay but I won't stay long  
But who's to say who's true and who is not  
With eyes as blue as forget-me-nots

When first I held you to my breast  
I would believe that east was west  
I would believe that right was wrong,  
When first I heard your silken song  
Believe that false was true and cold was hot  
With eyes as blue as forget-me-nots

And though you stayed when lilacs bloomed  
Within the waning April moon  
And though you stayed 'til summer's end

There was no way to stay as friends  
But who's to say this love was misbegotten  
With eyes as blue as forget-me-nots

And in the still light of the morn  
You come to me in dreams forlorn  
You come to me upon the wind  
Says those who stay are born to sin  
And this I knew was true yet soon forgot  
With eyes as blue as forget-me-nots

© 1992 John S. Hardy  
Lucy Kaplansky, vocal; Mark Dann, acoustic guitar  
Recorded by Mark Dann



### 3. Dublin Farewell



I carried your memory on a chain around my neck  
As I walked the streets of Dublin all alone  
And everywhere the people asked  
what was it that you fled?  
What was it brought you here so far from home?  
But all I could tell myself was little bits of lies  
And try to build myself into a man  
There's nothing like love to cut you down to size  
And show what you can do and what you can't

I met a girl with green eyes who  
teased me for a while  
And showed me just how desperate I am  
But when all I see is blue skies for so many miles  
How can one cloud cause so much rain?  
But I am clutching to a memory  
that has no right to live  
That has no right to call itself by name  
Wanting to share my dreams with nothing left to give  
But love knows no alibis or shame

With my hands in my pockets and my collar inside out  
I walked through County Kerry in the rain  
Watching the fishing boats fight an angry sea  
A tiny dot of strength in so much pain  
There is a phantom lighthouse draws  
the sailors to their death  
But still they find a need to sail the sea,  
they're just fools like me  
I guess we never learn from our mistakes

I carried your memory like a chain around my neck  
As I bid farewell to Dublin all alone

© 1986 John S. Hardy  
Anthony da Costa, guitar and vocal; Mark Dann, bass  
Recorded by Mark Dann

## 4. The Tailor



The king's guardsman's greedy  
 He's underpaid, he knows  
 Tailor, sew me a cloak of indigo  
 That will disguise me well  
 For the highwayman's game  
 No one will suspect evil  
 And the king's cross are the same  
 I will pay you dearly with half  
 Of what I claim

### ***Chorus:***

No, said the tailor  
 The tailor said no  
 A cloak will not hide what your own eyes see  
 A cloak will not change what is hidden underneath  
 Just as mine does not confine the idea of what I am  
 I am not a tailor, I'm a man

The king's queen is hungry  
 For the pleasures adultery knows  
 Tailor, sew me a cloak of scarlet  
 That will disguise me well,  
 For courting on the sly

That will make the fever  
 Transparent to the night's eyes  
 I will pay you dearly with favors  
 And with sighs

The king he is frightened  
 With shadows behind his back  
 Tailor sew me a cloak of sable  
 That will disguise me well  
 From the daggers of my foes  
 That will keep me far above  
 Those that are below  
 I will pay you dearly if you fail  
 On the gallows

© 1976 John S. Hardy  
 Terre Roche, guitar and vocal  
 Recorded by Mark Dann

## 5. Down Where the Rabbits Run



Time is but the distance  
That we have brought between our friends  
While men are wrought of wisdom  
And violence wrought of song  
We followed long the stone walls  
When day was close to done  
Lyn' in our promise  
Down where the rabbits run

The birds that fly so freely  
Have never fought the wind  
Landing on a dogwood  
Amongst the flowers and kin  
But soon that they be hungry  
Within the search there come  
The cats that stalk the raven  
Down where the rabbits run

The path we followed freely  
It has followed into fall  
The fields we left fallow

To follow our own call  
But the colors burn so naked  
Blistered by the sun  
The mirror of my madness  
Down where the rabbits run

I hope that you will never ask  
Me to raise an arm or kill  
Nor force me to be forceful  
Nor bar my windowsill  
For the men who talk of reason  
Have reason for their guns  
But there is never talk of treason  
Down where the rabbits run

© 1976 John S. Hardy  
John Gorka, guitar and vocal;  
Mark Dann, bass  
Recorded by John Gorka and Mark Dann

## 6. I Ought to Know



I ought to know more than I know  
 I ought to know where this road goes  
 I ought to know great literature by heart  
 The history of art  
 This I ought to know

I ought to know more than 1492  
 I ought to know what the Buffalo Bills do  
 I ought to know more than the  
 quarterback's wounded knee  
 What happened at Sand Creek  
 This I ought to know, but I don't

I ought to know about the sacrifices made  
 I ought to know ration stamps, air raids  
 I ought to know more than George C. Scott  
 And John Wayne get shot  
 This I ought to know

I ought to know what the drinking gourd means  
 I ought to know more than "I have a dream"  
 I ought to know about the back of the bus  
 And the crack of billy clubs  
 This I ought to know, but I don't

### **Chorus:**

I don't know nothin' about nothin'  
 But I'm proud to stand upright  
 I don't know nothin' about nothin'  
 But my future looks so bright

Illumined by the light  
 Laugh-tracks, sound-bites  
 And a replay to get it right  
 I ought to know

I ought to know the songs of Joe Hill  
 I ought to know Trotsky, Marx and Hegel  
 I ought to know about the Haymarket hangings  
 And the H.U.A.C. This I ought to know  
 I ought to know about Oliver Cromwell  
 I ought to know about the Gnostics and St. Paul  
 I ought to know what Jesus really said  
 And who the preacher takes to bed  
 This I ought to know, but I don't

I ought to know what's buried in the landfill  
 I ought to know about the clear-cutting bills  
 I ought to know about pipelines and schemes  
 What extinction really means  
 This I ought to know

I ought to know for whom the bell tolls  
 I ought to know the pride and prejudice of polls  
 I ought to know if the grapes of wrath  
 are union-picked by Victor Jara's hands  
 This I ought to know, but I don't

© 2000 John S. Hardy  
 Ronny Cox, guitar and vocal;  
 David Ferguson, guitar; John Cox, bass  
 Recorded by Nick Kirgo at M-Pire  
 Recording Studio, Van Nuys, Ca.



## 7. Porto Limon



Oh captain, my captain, oh who is my captain  
 Can it be that there is nobody at the helm  
 Can they dare call it reason, in the growing treason  
 When the king has somehow abdicated the realm

**Chorus:**

Will they fall from the sky in the black of the night  
 Will they crawl through the jungle at dawn  
 Will they put in in the west down at Puntarenas  
 Or in the east at Porto Limon

I signed on in my youth, thinking  
 there was but one truth  
 That this mission was sent for a merciful good  
 But when the port came in view,  
 came a far darker hidden truth  
 That the cargo of business was understood

Or they'll come through the banks,  
 and the right-wing think tanks  
 Multinational only means the people they cry  
 In the face of the reaper, you know  
 the people work cheaper  
 Keep a tight grip and squeeze all the freedom dry

Oh captain, my captain, oh who is my captain  
 Can it be that nobody here is my friend  
 For this history lesson, we will pay in aggression  
 That in business the means justify the end

© 1984 John S. Hardy  
 Brian Rose, acoustic guitar and vocal;  
 Mark Dann, bass, electric guitars  
 Recorded by Mark Dann

## 8. White Shoes



Margaret wore white shoes when we first met  
They're not so white now, since she got them wet  
And all those noisy people with too much to say  
Shining up their shoes, saving for a rainy day

**Chorus:**

I'm in love is hard to say  
Come again some other day  
Will you say I'm in love

The last rose of summer is still a rose  
Bent by the weight of the late autumn snows  
Margaret took the time to take it in her room  
Counted off the days waiting for that rose to bloom

So many road signs that point in both ways  
Some follow both roads in their younger days  
'Til all they're afraid of is coming true  
Frozen in decision wondering what to do

Margaret sang a funny song  
of a girl who spilled her wine  
The neck she held too tightly, it was vinegar in time  
And all the little children who laughed at every word  
Did not hear the sadness in the words they heard

© 1982 John S. Hardy  
Andrew Rose Gregory, guitar and vocal;  
Mark Dann, bass  
Recorded by Mark Dann

## 9. Go Tell the Savior



This is the last weary road I'm gonna travel  
The last weary night in a cheap hotel  
And it is hard to kneel down and pray  
And thank the Lord for another day  
When the mornin' only means  
You missed another meal

### **Chorus:**

Go tell my mama, that I was  
wrong to break her heart  
Go tell my papa, that he was right  
right from the start  
And go tell them patron saints,  
that they forgot  
To watch out for where I roamed  
And go tell the savior  
I'm coming home

Well I must admit it was my  
childhood dream to travel

From the stories that you hear of  
wine, women and song  
But if the wine don't blur your eyes  
The women might make you realize  
That they're takin' off their clothes  
Just to put you on

This is the last weary road I'm gonna travel  
The last weary night in a cheap hotel  
And I'm feelin' all I've got  
Are my feelings all tied up in knots  
And the mornin' just might find me  
Halfway to Hell

© 1976 John S. Hardy  
Diana Jones, guitar and vocal; Mark Dann, bass  
Recorded by Mark Dann

## 10. The Inner Man



I have lost my coat on the road today  
 Cries the man of constant sorrow  
 Ruin has him in the wind at last  
 Cries the wolf of time  
 Merchant make a cloth for a sinner man  
 Finer than the one that he lost  
 But it is nothing to the state of the inner man  
 Though the wolf goes hungry again  
 Cries the wolf of time: tomorrow

My house has burned down to the ground  
 Cries the homeless man of sorrow  
 Ruin has him in the wind at last  
 Cries the wolf of time  
 Build a new house for a sinner man  
 Stronger than the one that he lost  
 But it is nothing to the state of the inner man  
 Though the wolf goes hungry again  
 Cries the wolf of time: tomorrow

I have lost my gold in the river drowned  
 Cries the wealthy man of sorrow  
 Ruin has him in the wind at last  
 Cries the wolf of time  
 But the boatman has hope for a sinner man  
 Says you still got you your health  
 But it is nothing to the state of the inner man

Though the wolf goes hungry again  
 Cries the wolf of time: tomorrow  
 I have lost my son my only son  
 Cries the worldly man of sorrow  
 Ruin has him in the wind at last  
 Cries the wolf of time  
 But he's gone to the father of all sinner men  
 In a far, far better world  
 But it is nothing to the state of the inner man  
 Though the wolf goes hungry again  
 Cries the wolf of time: tomorrow

I have lost my name my only name  
 Cries the vagabond of sorrow  
 Ruin has him in the wind at last  
 Cries the wolf of time  
 But the mirror don't frighten no sinner man  
 Blood blackens on hope's last door  
 But it is nothing to the state of the inner man  
 Though the wolf goes hungry again  
 Cries the wolf of time: tomorrow

© 1982 John S. Hardy  
 Frank Tedesso, guitar and vocal  
 Recorded by Mark Dann



# The Songs

## 11. Before You Sing *(Instrumental version)*

© 1990 John S. Hardy

Kate MacLeod, violin

Recorded by Michael Greene,

Rotosonic Sound, Salt Lake City, UT



Mike Laureanno, Tom Duval and Jack Hardy. Photo courtesy of Mike Laureanno

## 12. Fare Thee Well



There you go down that road again  
Saying all the things you said you'd never say again  
Dreaming all the dreams that you can never grasp  
Asking all those questions you should never ask

### **Chorus:**

Say so long, fare thee well, I wish you well  
Good goodbye, fare thee well, I wish you well  
I wish you well as you leave on your journey  
But as you leave, if you think of returning  
Remember me

You are young in your prime and yet old enough to see  
Not too many take you seriously  
They tell you not to question all that you're told  
Time enough for that when you'll be getting old

They say you're not old enough to be in love  
Money is the only thing that dreams are made of  
So save yourself and save your  
wealth for when you get old  
This rat-race town is going to claim your soul

© 1982 John S. Hardy

Nanci Griffith, guitar and vocal; Richard Bailey, banjo;  
Frank Christian, electric guitar; David Ferguson, bass;  
Pat McInerney, drums, percussion; producer; background  
vocals: Richard Julian, David Massengill, Red Molly,  
David Ferguson, engineer; Sean Sullivan, assistant.  
Recorded at The Butcher Shop, Nashville, TN;  
background vocals and electric guitar recorded by Mark Dann

# The Songs

## 13. Ponderosa



Ponderosa and pinyon pine  
 The high chaparral 'neath the borderline  
 Trying hard to lose, trying hard to find  
 Horse and a mule, way past summertime  
 This was my world, this was all I knew  
 Barbed wire and blankets and a steel horseshoe  
 No luck in leaving 10,000 clues  
 No one will find or follow you  
 Ponderosa, ponderosa and pinyon pine

Boarded windows, stone fireplace  
 Horse tack on shelving in a cluttered space  
 Not at all a place for calico and lace  
 Not where I thought I would ever see your face  
 My father told me this was no life  
 With the wind so bold and the frost a knife  
 But no book-learning can tell it right  
 'Bout the solitude, 'bout the snowy white  
 Ponderosa, ponderosa and pinyon pine

White the shoulders, black velvet night  
 Unlaced and cold in the flickering light  
 Warm hands fumble with the button-eyes  
 Coarse and humble fingers untie it  
 How did you find me? How did you know?  
 With the blizzard blinding pilin' up the snow  
 Shack on the edge of that borderline  
 A crackling fire of resinous pine  
 Ponderosa, ponderosa and pinyon pine

*© 2010 John S. Hardy*

Jack Hardy, vocal and guitar; Chris Hardy, violin;  
 Kirk M. Siee, double bass

Recorded and filmed in Norderstedt, Germany,  
 November 11, 2010. Remixed by Mark Dann.

Live from Jack's last tour, November, 2010. This  
 song was recorded live by Wolfgang Sedlatschek.



# Jack Hardy: DISCOGRAPHY

- Jack Hardy (1971)
- Early and Rare (1965-1974),  
Vol. 1 of The Collected Works of Jack Hardy)
- Mirror of My Madness (1976)
- The Nameless One (1978)
- Landmark (1982)
- White Shoes (1982)
- The Cauldron (1984)
- The Hunter (1987)
- Retrospective (1990)
- Through (1990)
- Two of Swords (1992)
- Civil Wars (1994)
- The Passing (1997)
- Omens (2000)
- Bandolier (2002)
- Coin of the Realm: Songs for the  
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- The Tinker's Coin – Celtic Anthology (2005)
- Noir (2007)
- The Folk Brothers – Jack Hardy and David  
Massengill: Partners in Crime (2008)
- Rye Grass (2009)
- Live Album (2010) [bonus CD included  
in Big Pink Music's boxed set]

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