

FAST FOLK

FAST FOLK *a community of singers & songwriters*



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

2-CD SET



Cabaret

**CURRENTLY APPEARING
THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FAST FOLK
MUSICAL MAGAZINE**



DISC 1

- 1 **ROD MACDONALD** *American Jerusalem* [R. MacDonald/Universal Polygram Int'l Publ., Inc., ASCAP] 5:55
- 2 **DAVID MASSENGILL** *What's Wrong with the Man Upstairs?* [D. Massengill/WB Music Corp. a/b/o itself and David Massengill Music, ASCAP] 4:34
- 3 **GERRY DEVINE** *Old Factory Town* [B. Rose/Brian Rose Music, ASCAP] 5:08
- 4 **LUCY KAPLANSKY** *You Just Need a Home (Spotlight)* [L. Kaplansky/Lucy Kaplansky Music, ASCAP] 3:34
- 5 **DAVE VAN RONK** *Another Time and Place* [D. Van Ronk/Folklore Productions Inc., ASCAP] 4:27
- 6 **SHAWN COLVIN** *I Don't Know Why* [S. Colvin/WB Music Corp. a/b/o Sacred Songs, ASCAP] 3:42
- 7 **JOHN GORKA** *Geza's Wailing Ways* [J. Gorka/Blues Palace Music, ASCAP] 3:50
- 8 **DAVID INDIAN** *Ragman!* [D. Ruderman/David Indian Music] 4:00
- 9 **TOM INTONDI** *High Times* [T. Intondi/F. Rossini/City Dancer Music, ASCAP] 4:32
- 10 **CHRISTINE LAVIN** *Don't Ever Call Your Sweetheart by His Name* [C. Lavin / ©1984 CL2-DreamWorks Songs, admin. by Cherry Lane Music Pub. Co., Inc., ASCAP/Rounder Music, ASCAP] 2:18
- 11 **FRANK CHRISTIAN** *Where Were You Last Night?* [F. Christian/Witch's House Music, ASCAP, admin. by Bug] 4:14
- 12 **GERMANA PUCCI** *Introduction to Corpo Facile* 0:28
- 13 **GERMANA PUCCI** *Corpo Facile* [G. Pucci & G. Biagi] 5:08
- 14 **LAURA BURNS & ROGER ROSEN** *Kilkelly, Ireland* [P. Jones-S. Jones/Some Sweet Music, BMI, admin. by Copyright Management Services, Inc.] 5:54
- 15 **ERIK FRANDSEN** *Introduction to The Viking Rag* 1:32
- 16 **ERIK FRANDSEN** *The Viking Rag* [E. Frandsen] 2:32
- 17 **JACK HARDY** *Forget-Me-Not* [J. Hardy/Jack Hardy Music, BMI] 4:16
- 18 **ENSEMBLE** *Vacation* [B. Bachmann] 2:41

DISC 2

- 1 **SUZANNE VEGA** *Gypsy* [S. Vega/WB Music Corp. a/b/o itself and Waitersongs Ltd, ASCAP] 4:12
- 2 **STEVE FORBERT** *Thirty Thousand Men* [S. Forbert/Rolling Tide Music, ASCAP] 4:27
- 3 **FRANK TEDESSO** *Margaret* [F. Tedesso] 4:01
- 4 **ELAINE SILVER** *Share the Failure* [J. Kruth/Zuni Tunes] 2:52
- 5 **PATRICK JOHN BRAYER** *Bourbon as a Second Language* [P. J. Brayer/Church Teeth Music, BMI, admin. by Bug] 3:44
- 6 **PAUL KAPLAN** *King of Hearts* [P. Kaplan/Paul Kaplan Music, ASCAP] 4:06
- 7 **JUDITH ZWEIMAN** *Heart on Ice* [J. Zweiman] 5:01
- 8 **RICHARD SHINDELL** *The Courier* [R. Shindell/Richard Shindell Music, BMI, admin. by Bug] 4:56
- 9 **WENDY BECKERMAN** *By Your Eyes* [W. Beckerman/Wendy Beckerman Music, BMI] 3:18
- 10 **LILLIE PALMER** *Danton* [L. Palmer/Maizery Music, ASCAP] 4:22
- 11 **MICHAEL JERLING** *Long Black Wall* [M. Jerling/Fool's Hill Music, ASCAP] 4:23
- 12 **ANDY BRECKMAN** *Railroad Bill* [A. Breckman/Andy Breckman Music Co., BMI] 3:28
- 13 **RICHARD JULIAN** *Gravedigger* [R. Julian/Slow New York Music, BMI] 3:13
- 14 **RICHARD MEYER** *January Cold* [R. Meyer/Laughing Scared Music-Shanachie Music Works, ASCAP] 5:07
- 15 **ERIC WOOD** *Disenchanted* [E. Wood/Romany Music, BMI] 4:33
- 16 **HUGH BLUMENFELD** *Raphael* [H. Blumenfeld/Hydrogen Jukebox Music, ASCAP] 3:32
- 17 **LOUISE TAYLOR** *Your Face* [L. J. Taylor/Blue Coyote Music, BMI] 3:13
- 18 **JOSH JOFFEN & LATE FOR DINNER** *Crazy Horse* [J. Joffen, BMI] 3:18

PRODUCED AND ANNOTATED BY RICHARD MEYER, JACK HARDY, AND JEFF PLACE
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KEY TO PHOTOS, PREVIOUS PAGES:

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Fast Folk: A Community of Singers and Songwriters | by **Jack Hardy**

When we put out the first issue of *The Fast Folk Musical Magazine* in February 1982, no one was concerned with history. Our scene grew up around the nightclub Folk City on 3rd Street and the Songwriter's Exchange at the Cornelia Street Café, where we dedicated ourselves to writing a song a week. Endless hours were spent discussing and debating the songs and the process of writing. We hung out, played softball, ate, drank, traveled, and caroused together. What emerged was a sense of community.

We then set out, as in a political campaign, to change the larger state of affairs. This great community of songwriters in New York's Greenwich Village, who took their writing seriously, who considered what they did an art form, needed to draw attention to itself.

In the fall of 1981, we had opened the club SpeakEasy as a musician's cooperative. Now we wanted to create a monthly journal of criticism, but each issue would contain a full-length LP of new work by predominantly unknown songwriters. The accompanying printed magazine would contain lyrics, essays, letters, bios, as well as interviews of the artists.

The first person I called with the idea was Dave Van Ronk. Dave was a well-respected member of the old guard (we had bonded at Folk City's 20th anniversary). He was a comrade of the first order. He said, "Sure, Jack," and that made the idea acceptable to everyone else I called. The criteria for the songs chosen for the recording were that they were either interesting, outrageous, quirky, or simply very good. Commercial potential did not factor into the equation. The fact that several of the artists and songs subsequently became famous merely reinforced our theory that there is always an audience for a good song.

I had been putting out my own albums since 1970 and knew exactly how to do it and do it economically. The bare-bones process took no more than two weeks from start to finish. The recording was usually done in one take, in Mark Dann's attic studio in Brooklyn. If we took a second take, we recorded over the first. When we ran out of splicing tape, we used scotch tape. We recorded all the songs, so no one song would sound better than another due to previous production. It was a "get-it-done" mentality with an all-volunteer staff. Rumor has it (unconfirmed) that my mother typed the whole first issue. But the magazine came out on schedule. Co-conspirators were Brian Rose, Gary Boehm, Frank Mazetti, Rod

MacDonald, David Massengill, Tom Intondi, Nancy Talanian, and myself, as editor, like Tom Sawyer making sure everyone had fun whitewashing the fence. Suzanne Vega was our first subscription manager; she entered each subscription by hand into a book.

At the last possible minute, we found ourselves sitting around trying to decide what we were going to call the magazine. David Massengill wanted to call it "Blast" in honor of Ezra Pound's magazine. I wanted to call it "Fast Folk." Dave Van Ronk wanted to call it "The Coop," like the Harvard Coop in Cambridge across from Club Passim. We all agreed that it should be a musical magazine: hence *The Coop/The Fast Folk Musical Magazine* was born. Everyone was sworn to secrecy until the first issue came out.

We sold the first issue at cost (\$2.00). By the time it hit the stands, we were well into production of the second issue, which focused on songwriters interpreting other songwriters' work, reinforcing our philosophy that the song was more important than the singer. We felt strongly that what we were doing was part of a longstanding tradition. Subsequent issues, to name a few, focused on songs of social commentary, traditional songs, women's songs, humorous songs, and street music.

By the end of the first year we had 400 subscriptions; by the end of the second, 700. Actual listenership was enhanced by radio airplay across the country as well as copies being passed around.

The first year, for the album, we used plain white covers marked with a rubber stamp. After a year, we started to print covers with the same graphic that was on the magazine stuffed inside. Paul Kaplan produced a songbook containing all the songs from the first year of the Fast Folk. At the end of the second year, Christine Lavin arranged with Allan Pepper at the Bottom Line for us to produce our first Fast Folk Musical Magazine Revue. The stage manager for that show was Richard Meyer, a relative newcomer who was later to take over as editor of the magazine. The show featured 12 songwriters and a house band. Each performer sang one of his or her own songs and covered a song by another writer. The emphasis was on variety and group numbers. Hundreds of posters were put up around the Village by freezing volunteers. Over the next several years, *The Fast Folk Musical Magazine* (incorporated as a not-for-profit corporation in 1984) put out more than one hundred issues, recording well over a thousand songs.

Fast Folk: For the Art of It | by Richard Meyer

My immersion in all things Fast Folk began on a Monday evening in 1982, observing from a distance a fractious meeting at “The Speak.” The membership, led by Daryll Cherney (now a leading environmentalist), was arguing the merits and legalisms of an advertising sandwich board on MacDougal Street. Calendars were being folded and stamped, guitars tuned for the open mike, the waitress Olga was breaking bottles or throwing her tips back at the few actual customers. The SpeakEasy was at 107 MacDougal, only a few steps from Bleecker Street. There was always someone writing a song. For a \$2.00 membership and some bathroom-cleaning/calendar-folding, you could see any show for free.

I had been playing open mikes and left a demo for Jack Hardy at the suggestion of David Massengill. The next week Jack walked over after 15 minutes and said, “Isn’t Communism wonderful?” He often brought half a dozen performers to the early recording sessions at Mark Dann’s attic studio in Brooklyn and urged them to keep it simple. Once there, arrangements developed and harmonies were added, making the songs more dynamic. Recording for Fast Folk taught everyone studio techniques and improved their musicianship. Often Mark would be left with a reel of solo songs to which he added appropriate parts; and yes, he ran the multi-track tape machine with his toes, so he could simultaneously record bass and guitar. The music was recorded on a home tape recorder in about 17 hours of performance, mixing, and editing time.

At the time I worked as a designer out of town and but made the two-hour drive to the Songwriter’s Exchange with a new song most Mondays, and I was not the only one.

A guiding principle of Fast Folk recordings was that the singer would have one take to commit a song to tape. He could have a second chance but had to erase the first take. This kept everyone focused. We didn’t waste time or tape.

Hardy’s apartment, the “Houston St. Hilton,” became an open forum and editing room. It was not unusual to hear someone casually mention their new song, only to have the work stop until the song was played and discussed (and often appear on the next Fast Folk). There were no rules except to honor the song. It was a place to hang and hear, and be heard, and enjoy arguably the finest \$2.00 pasta dinner in New York prepared by Fast Folk’s Editor-in-Chief songwriter, Germana Pucci.

The recording engineers who worked on later Fast Folk issues — Jay Rosen, David Seitz, David Van Der Haden, and Bill

Kollar — inherited a tradition of quick recording (some might say impatience), and added their expertise to the songs they cut. In addition to traditional studios, we held recording sessions wherever we needed to in order to get the song. The SpeakEasy, of course, was the primary location. Another, for example, was when Willie Nininger sang “The Star Spangled Banner” at Shea Stadium, and Christine Lavin recorded it on a Walkman. When the Fast Folk Revue was invited to Boston (1985–87), Jay Rosen set up his recording equipment in the basement of the Nameless Coffee House and produced three albums of Boston songwriters.

No matter where it was located, the Songwriter’s Exchange was never the place to lobby for a gig at the SpeakEasy — although we did find a fair share of songs to record between glasses of Bordeaux (the doodle of a turntable or a microphone on a napkin was a reminder to catch the writer later).

David Seitz, a doctor, took on the lion’s share of the recording sessions after 1987. He produced our first Toronto album in association with the CBC, and also produced a CD at the Postcrypt/Columbia University. We issued more Boston albums, two from Los Angeles, and one recorded in Texas by the banks of the Guadalupe River, using a sock and a park bench for a microphone windscreen. We were there in 1997 at the Maine Festival. We were there at the 25th anniversary of the Café Lena in Saratoga Springs, New York. Fast Folk had gone nationwide.

Even though our subscribers voted against switching to CD, we did so in 1990 as it allowed more songs to be included in each issue. The Fast Folk Revue shows grew more ambitious. There were exciting musical combinations that required some serious rehearsals. For our 10th anniversary we sold out six standing-room-only shows, featuring an 11-piece band and 35 songwriters on the stage. Erik Frandsen couldn’t make the 1992 show because he was appearing in his own off-Broadway musical *The Song of Singapore*, so he brought the whole cast down for one number. A van full of fans came from Chicago, and even some of our Italian fans arrived from Italy. What brought us all together was the same as it had been in 1982: the local audience coming to hear the new songs of their neighborhood songwriters.

The purpose of Fast Folk was to create the myth of a contemporary scene in the Village with a club, recordings, and press, and then live up to it. This wasn’t hard because these were prolific writers who were writing great songs, as Fast Folk’s 105-album series testifies. Songs that had been casual standards around the club became “legitimized” by national

airplay and existence on vinyl. Folk music wasn't just something that happened in the 1960s. The editors encouraged ambitious songwriting, and guided experienced as well as beginning writers toward their best material. The process built a community that had an extraordinary effect on American singer-songwriters in the 1980s and 1990s.

On this 2-CD set we have tried to catch up, years later, with those who recorded on the first Fast Folk album, as well as songs that have become mainstays of the Village community. The entire 105-album Fast Folk collection is available through the Smithsonian archives, and hopefully future anthologies like the one you have now will be produced. We hope that you will be able to explore these songs and come away with an understanding of the scene, from the Monday night Hoots to the wild and tender finales of our live recordings of the Fast Folk Revue, and to feel the collective spirit that was a regular vibe on the streets of Greenwich Village.

The Songs, the Writers, and the Performers | by Jeff Place

The singer-poet with guitar performing in a small New York venue, coffeehouse, or club is an image easily conjured up. New York, and specifically Greenwich Village, has always been a destination for artists. For most of the 20th century there was a thriving artistic community there. In 1982, a group of singers and songwriters came together in order to mutually promote their own work and to publicize its existence. Initially they referred to themselves as the Coop, eventually settling on the name Fast Folk (see article by Jack Hardy). Founded by Jack Hardy and Brian Rose, the group created their own performance space at the SpeakEasy restaurant and started on an ambitious project to create monthly a magazine that combined the publication of new and important songs with an LP (later a compact disc).

The SpeakEasy was located on MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village, which was fitting because the Village had for years been home to various artistic communities. During the early years of the 19th century, the Village was populated by wealthy residents who had moved from lower Manhattan to build new homes and offices (Groce, 1999). By 1900, the

wealthy had left, and the Village was home to a number of poor immigrants. Its low rents began to attract the "starving artist" and bohemian (Groce, 1999).

One story has it that in 1935 Dominic Parisi imported the first espresso machine into his Caffè Reggio, and the first Village coffeehouse was born. Others like the Rienzi, the Café Wha, the Lion's Head, and the Fat Black Pussycat would follow (Cantwell, 1996).

Over the years many artistic groups gravitated to the Village. The folk song revival began in New York in the 1930s and by the late 1950s was moving into the period of its greatest popularity. During the last years of the 1950s and the early years of the 1960s, folk music was the most popular music in the land. Students quit college, picked up banjos and guitars, and formed musical groups. Every record label scout signed a group to be its Kingston Trio, a group which had broken out big time in 1958 with the Appalachian mountain ballad "Tom Dooley." Important Village performance spots of the era included the Bitter End (with its famous brick wall backdrop), The Kettle of Fish, The Gaslight, and especially Gerde's Folk City. Washington Square Park became the home to large gatherings of musicians trading songs and learning from each other. Many a group formed from these loose "jam" sessions. One could encounter members of groups like the Shanty Boys, the New Lost City Ramblers, and the Greenbriar Boys in the park. Even folk music legend Woody Guthrie was known to make an occasional appearance. During the 1950s the Village was also the home to many of the Beat writers and poets who split time between there and San Francisco. Allen Ginsberg's apartment was a hub of activity.

After Bob Dylan arrived in New York in 1961, other folk singers began more and more to write their own material. The era of the singer-songwriter was born and grew over the next decade. Frequently the movement mimicked the master, Mr. Dylan. Dylan began by writing topical songs, and some, like "Blowing in the Wind," became instant standards. When he began to move away from topical songs into more poetic, introspective songs, many other songwriters moved with him.

During this period many singer-songwriters were offered record contracts. If you fast-forward to the beginnings of the 1970s, singer-songwriters were selling enough large quantities of records to earn the adoration of the press and the record companies. James Taylor's *Sweet Baby James* and Carole King's *Tapestry* albums were two of the biggest sellers of 1970 and

1971, respectively. Other writers such as Joni Mitchell, Carly Simon, Jim Croce, John Denver, Harry Chapin, and the members of Crosby, Stills and Nash were among those whose records filled record bins.

Things changed in 1977 with the emergence of New Wave and punk rock. The arbiters of popular music taste switched their allegiances to this new music. Record stores now displayed large posters of groups with big hair and skinny ties (somehow Steve Forbert managed to break through this). Most of the clubs in Greenwich Village that had catered to folk singers and songwriters began to exclusively book New Wave music. New and emerging folk singer-songwriters who five years earlier would have had a good chance at wider exposure now had difficulty finding gigs. As Jack Hardy explained in his introductory essay in Issue No. 1, "Not only is folk music cursed with a label of being non-commercial by the multi-national record corporations, but this curse has been championed in the press. Somewhere along the line critics began reviewing success or potential for success and ceased reviewing music. It no longer mattered what a performance contained or whether it was good, but rather whether it was commercial, commerciality thereby being dictated by the economics of lowest common denominator."

It was in this environment that Fast Folk was born. If they were able to create their own music scene in the Village and let it be known that the scene was thriving artistically, they felt they could publicize their work. The group worked out a deal with Joseph Zbeda at a local Middle Eastern restaurant on MacDougal Street to take over the back room and book music. They kept whatever money came through "the door," and Zbeda kept the bar profits. The SpeakEasy club became the headquarters for the group. New songs were debuted and new artists discovered there. The club lasted until 1989, when it closed. Looking for a new space in 1994, the new Fast Folk Café was opened in Tribeca to serve the same purpose.

In explaining the reason for Fast Folk in Issue No. 1 Hardy stated: "The banding together of musicians into a cooperative, musicians who are generally noted for their egotistical nature, is a significant event. To issue a musical magazine, not at all backed by profit motive is a significant statement. It is saying that this music exists, and that it is no longer being ignored. Those who continue ignoring it will be less comfortable in their ignorance. To assemble twelve musicians, all donating their talents to record an album is a significant statement. Word of mouth is where folk music began and is where it must return. Actions speak louder than words, a picture is worth a thousand words, and a song is worth a thousand pictures."

The magazine served a role within the singer-songwriter community. Members of the community spoke out, articles appeared on the craft of songwriting, and "new faces" were spotlighted. Articles were written offering advice to new writers on the scene (Vol. 1, #4), addressing problems of recognition for their work (Vol. 1, #7), advice on how to make a record (Vol. 1, #8). Other songwriters' groups elsewhere were spotlighted, and eventually the magazine and the recordings branched further out from New York and published issues on Boston, Toronto, Philadelphia, New Jersey, Los Angeles, Oregon, and other areas. Recording engineer David Seitz traveled down to the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas to record for one issue (Vol. 5, #5, 1990). Issues of the magazine were sent to radio stations nationally to further broaden the exposure of these artists.

Another important role that Fast Folk had within the music community was the Songwriter's Exchange. It began in 1977 at the English Pub on 6th Avenue and 3rd Street, then moved to the Cornelia Street Café, eventually settling into Jack Hardy's living room on Houston Street. Participants gathered each week; new songs were performed and subjected to critique from the other members, often harsh. Wendy Beckerman described it as "a weekly session of naked criticism that is not a safe place for the ego" (Vol. 6, #1, 1992). Those that survived found that it made them work harder at improving their craft.

Starting in 1984, the yearly Fast Folk Revue Bottom Line shows were very successful and helped promote the scene, playing to sold-out audiences. The shows were orchestrated, rehearsed, and used the same house band to make them run smoothly. Some of the Coop's members became well known. Suzanne Vega was the first artist to really break through with her first album in 1985. The following year she had a huge hit with the song "Luka," which included background vocals by Shawn Colvin, who has become a multiple-Grammy-winning star. John Gorka also has succeeded in becoming well known outside New York. Some famous Fast Folk alumni still feel a kinship to the group and have helped with later projects and shows, others have moved on and haven't looked back.

The magazine continued into the 1990s, but started to appear more sporadically, losing energy and regrouping. Some newer writers came along to replace others. But the world was changing. When Fast Folk started, there were not the media outlets that there are now. There were large newspapers and a few specialty magazines like *Sing Out!*. By the late 1990s, you could find *Dirty Linen*, *Folk Roots*, and later *Performing Songwriter*, as well as dozens of other smaller record

review magazines. Many of the artists now have their own websites (as in many of this CD set) which are linked to various central sites for fans of acoustic songwriting. The organization the North American Folk and Dance Alliance (or Folk Alliance for short) helps performers and culminates each year with its convention, a gathering of hundreds of singer-songwriters showcasing and performing in small rooms for radio disc jockeys, record company staff, managers, and promoters.

There are more and more independent labels whose artist rosters are made up primarily of singer-songwriters. Joining the old stalwart, Philo Records, are labels such as Signature, Plump, Brambus, Red House, Gadfly, and 1-800-Prime-CD, run by Fast Folk alumnus David Seitz. There are now other avenues which fill the roles Fast Folk and their magazine filled.

In 1997, Fast Folk suspended publishing the magazine. The Fast Folk Café has since closed down. Young professionals have been moving into Greenwich Village, and the rents no longer make it livable for those who can't afford it. Jack Hardy is fighting to keep his apartment, the home of the Songwriter's Exchange. The artists have moved elsewhere.

In 1996, Richard Meyer approached the Smithsonian about becoming the new home for the Fast Folk recordings. In 1999, Fast Folk's recordings, business records, press clippings, and magazines were donated to the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage at the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian collections already had included the materials from the Folkways, Paredon, Cook, Dyer-Bennet, and Monitor record labels. Now like these others, the 105 Fast Folk recordings will forever be available to the public on made-to-order cassettes and compact discs. It is also possible that future Fast Folk compilations will be published on made-to-order discs and in commercial anthologies like this one. It is the intention that smaller-level projects and occasional Fast Folk events continue to occur. Fast Folk makes a strong addition to our collections, which already include writers and performers from the 1940s–1980s.

Jack Hardy and Richard Meyer over their years as editors of the magazine listened to thousands of songs live and through submissions to the magazine. Those that made the cut were included on the 105 released recordings and in the 105 magazines. They sat down for this 20th-anniversary project and selected two discs worth of songs illustrating a cross-section of what was Fast Folk during its first 20 years.

1 | **ROD MACDONALD** **American Jerusalem**

Rod MacDonald, vocals and guitar

Words and music by Rod MacDonald; from Fast Folk FF104, Vol. 3, No. 4, April 1984; recorded at the Bottom Line, New York City, 28 January 1984.

Rod MacDonald (b. 1949) was an important member of the Fast Folk organization from the early years and throughout its history. MacDonald was also heavily involved in running the Greenwich Village Folk Festival. Raised in Connecticut, he attended Columbia Law School and briefly worked as a staff writer for *Newsweek*. However, MacDonald decided his calling was in music, and that is what he has pursued ever since, touring extensively. His songs have been covered by other singers such as Garnet Rogers, Dave Van Ronk, and Gordon Bok. His composition "Sailor's Prayer" has become a standard among shanty singers.

MacDonald currently lives in South Florida, splitting his musical time between playing in an Irish music group with Tracy Sands and performing his own music. He still spends time playing in Europe, especially Switzerland.

Other recordings by MacDonald include *And Then He Woke Up* Gadfly 224; *Highway to Nowhere* Shanachie 8001; *House Concert* (1999 unofficial recording) [cassette]; *Into the Blue* Gadfly 256; *Lee Harvey and the Microdots* Blue Flute A6; *Live at the SpeakEasy*, 1983–1985 Blue Flute A4; *Live at the SpeakEasy* 1984–86 [unofficial recording] [cassette]; *Live at the Uptown Coffeehouse + 3* Blue Flute A5; *Man on a Ledge* Shanachie 8011; *No Commercial Traffic* Mountain Railroad 52807; *Some Tunes from the 1970s* [cassette]; *Tunes of the 1970s* Blue Flute A1; *Voice on the Line*: Tracy Sands & Rod MacDonald [cassette]; *White Buffalo* Gadfly 211. He appears on *Songwriters'*

The first time I recorded for Fast Folk was, of course, in Mark Dann's room in Brooklyn. Mark had been playing with me regularly since 1976, so I was familiar with the place, had even recorded there on my own. Mark had his recording gear in one room, the mikes in the other. Usually he would have you sing [the songs] a couple times, just to get the recording levels, in the empty room. There was no glass, no way to know what was going on in there. So I sang "Honorable Men" once, the door opened, and Jack Hardy and Mark came walking out with their coats on.

"OK, we do a take now?" I asked, thinking he had the levels ready.

"We did that already," Mark said. "I have to go to a gig."

A week later it was on an LP, for sale in the folk club. That got my attention, so when they asked me to be in the Bottom Line show I was all for it. And the live shows were my favorite part of Fast Folk; I loved that we learned each other's songs, sang together, put on a real concert each year. Some of my own favorite versions of my songs are from the live recordings of those shows at the Bottom Line.

—Rod MacDonald, 2001

Solstice Solstice; *What's That I Hear: The Songs of Phil Ochs Sliced Bread* 71176. Two videos, *A Week in the Czech Republic* and *A Walk in the Highlands*, are available through Rod. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE102, FF102, SE104, FF104, FF106, SE108, FF110, SE111, FF205, FF301, FF306, FF307, FF309, FF404, FF406, FF410, FF502, FF503, FF508, FF510, FF603, FF609, FF810. For more information and to order recordings see www.rodmacdonald.net. Another recording of Rod performing "American Jerusalem" can be found on SE111.

2 | DAVID MASSENGILL What's Wrong with the Man Upstairs?

David Massengill, vocals and dulcimer; Wendy Beckerman, vocal
Words and music by David Massengill; from Fast Folk FF808, Vol. 10, No. 8, 1997.

David Massengill was born in raised in "the Birthplace of Country Music," Bristol, Tennessee, and grew up with an appreciation for music and local storytelling. Massengill became involved in Fast Folk from the beginning and was the subject of a number of articles written in the magazine. His lyrics and storytelling skills impressed his fellow writers in the organization. He differed from the others in that he frequently used the Appalachian dulcimer as his instrument of choice. He has continued to perform and record over the years.

Other recordings include *Coming Up for Air* Flying Fish 70590; *Great American Bootleg* Tape Bowser Wowser; *The Kitchen Tape Bowser Wowser*; *The Return Plump* 5903; *Twilight the Taj Mahal Plump* 8901. He appears on *Kerrville Folk Festival: 1995 Highlights* Silverwolf 1005; *Legacy: A Collection of New Folk Artists* Windham Hill 1086; *What's That I Hear: The Songs of Phil Ochs Sliced Bread* 71176. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE101, SE103, FF104, SE105, SE109, SE201, FF201, SE202, SE203, FF203, FF205, FF306, FF307, FF404, FF405, FF410, FF502, FF503, FF507, FF510, FF601, FF603, FF802. For more information see www.plump.com/plump/david.htm.

3 | GERRY DEVINE Old Factory Town

Gerry Devine, vocals and banjo; Mark Dann, guitar and pedal bass. Words and music by Brian Rose; from Fast Folk SE102, Vol. 1, No. 2, March 1982.

Gerry Devine was a one-time member of the Song Project. Raised in Delaware, he first met the members of the Coop at Gerde's Folk City. Devine recalled playing at various venues in the city from 1980 to 1997, alternating between playing in the electric rock band The Floor Models and his own acoustic compositions with the crew at the Coop. The Floor Models eventually evolved into the group Gerry Devine and the High-Beams, which released two recordings on the Gadfly label.

He has since moved to Kentucky, where he plays with the bluegrass band Ever Since Now and hosts a radio show.

Songwriter Brian Rose was one of the founding editors of *The Fast Folk Musical Magazine* and was a fixture at the Coop musical evenings at the SpeakEasy. In addition to being a songwriter, Rose is an accomplished photographer, with his work on permanent exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum and the Museum of Modern Art. He currently lives in Amsterdam.

Other recordings include *Fire Lane* Gadfly 206. He appears on *The Family Album* Gadfly 240; and on Fast Folk compilation SE102. Another version of "Old Factory Town" performed by Lucy Kaplansky can be found on FF404.

4 | LUCY KAPLANSKY You Just Need a Home (Spotlight)

Lucy Kaplansky, vocal and guitar; Mark Dann, bass
Words and music by Lucy Kaplansky; from SE202, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1983

Lucy Kaplansky (b. 1960) moved from her home in Chicago to New York City when she was 18. She became very active in the Coop, performing solo, as a member of the Song Project, and as a duo with Shawn Colvin. Kaplansky is a wonderful interpreter of other writers' work as well as a songwriter in her own right. Even as many of her Village contemporaries were achieving popular success, in 1983 Kaplansky decided her future lay in going back to school. She pursued and earned a Ph.D. in psychology, opening up her own practice. In 1994, her old friend Shawn Colvin offered to produce Lucy's first compact disc. She made an about-face and decided a music career was where she really belonged.

Her first album was released by Red House Records to rave reviews. She has since recorded three additional solo recordings as well as a recordings with the folk super group Cry, Cry, Cry. The group formed in 1998 also included Richard Shindell (disc 2, track 8) and Dar Williams and was known for their strong interpretations of other contemporary singer-songwriters.

Other recordings of Lucy Kaplansky include *Cry, Cry, Cry* [with Cry, Cry, Cry] Razor and Tie 82840; *Every Single Day* Red House 156; *Flesh and Bone* Red House 92; *Ten Year Night* Red House 126; *The Tide* Red House 65. She appears on *House on Fire* Red

House 58; *House on Fire*, Vol. 2 Red House 100; *Legacy: A Collection of New Folk Artists* Windham Hill 1086; *Nod to Bob: An Artist's Tribute on His 60th Birthday* Red House 154; *Refuge: a Benefit for the People of Kosovo* ARC 2473; *Root Awakening* Red House 123; *Songs of Jack Hardy*, Vol. 1: *Of the White Goddess* Beacon 10136. She appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE102, FF104, SE107, SE111, FF201, FF202, FF205, FF209, FF306, FF307, FF404, FF603, FF806. For more information see www.lucykaplansky.com.

5 | DAVE VAN RONK Another Time and Place

Dave Van Ronk, vocals and guitar
Words and music by Dave Van Ronk; from SE108, Vol. 1, No. 8, September 1982; recorded live at the SpeakEasy, New York City.

Dave Van Ronk (b. 1936) is the Grand Old Man of the Greenwich Village folk world. He has been an influence to many, from Bob Dylan and others in the 1960s to the many members of the Fast Folk Coop. A wonderful folk, blues, and jazz guitarist, Van Ronk has recorded a number of albums over the years. He continues to perform and live in New York City.

Other Dave Van Ronk recordings include *Black Mountain Blues* Folkways 31020; *A Chrestomathy* Gazell 2007; *A Chrestomathy* Vol. 2 Gazell 2008; *Dave Van Ronk and the Hudson Dusters* Verve/Forecast 3041; *Dave Van Ronk and the Ragtime Jug Stompers* Mercury; *Dave Van Ronk with the Red Onion Jazz Band* Prestige; *Folksinger* Prestige 7527; *The Folkways Years, 1959-1961* Smithsonian Folkways 40041; *From Another Time and Place* Alcazar 120; *Gambler's Blues* Verve/Folkways 9017; *The Genius of Dave Van Ronk* Prestige 14025; *Going Back to Brooklyn* Gazell 2006; *Hesitation Blues* Big Beat 84; *Hummin' to Myself* Gazell 2004; *Inside Dave Van Ronk* Fantasy 24710; *In the Tradition* Prestige 7800; *Just Dave Van Ronk* Mercury 60908; *Let No One Deceive You* Flying Fish 557; *Live at Sir George Williams University* Just a Memory 9132; *No Dirty Names* Verve/Folkways 3009; *Peter and the Wolf* Alcazar 104; *Songs, Ballads, Blues and Spirituals* Folkways 3818; *Sings the Blues* Verve/Folkways 9006; *Somebody Else Not Me* Philo 1065; *Statesboro Blues* EPM Musique 157842; *Sunday Street* Philo

1036; *Sweet and Lowdown* Justintime 166; *To All My Friends in Far Flung Places* Gazell 2011; *Van Ronk Fantasy* 24170. He appears on *Bleecker and MacDougal* Elektra 60381; *Bread and Roses Festival* 1977 Fantasy 79009; *Harry Smith Connection* Smithsonian Folkways 40085; *The Smithsonian Collection of Folk Music* Smithsonian 46; *Washington Square Memoirs* Rhino 74264; *White Blues in the 1960s* Elektra 60383; and many others too numerous to list (for additional titles see www.allmusic.com). Other recordings include *The Song Project* Folkstudio 5019. Van Ronk appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE101, FF106, SE108, FF405, FF502, FF604.

6 | SHAWN COLVIN I Don't Know Why

Shawn Colvin, vocals and guitar; Lucy Kaplansky and John Gorka, background vocals

Words and music by Shawn Colvin; from Fast Folk FF205, Vol. 4, No. 5, May 1985; recorded at Arlington (MA) Town Hall, 09 March 1985.

Shawn Colvin was born in 1956 in South Dakota, and lived in a number of locations before coming to New York in 1981, initially to join a country band (made up of musicians she had known while living in Texas). She began to be involved in the New York singer-songwriter scene, falling in with the Cornelia Street Songwriter's Exchange. She performed solo and as a duo with Lucy Kaplansky. Eventually, through Christine Lavin, she got a job in Boston opening for popular artists and within a year was starting to draw her own audience.

Of all of the Fast Folk alumni, Shawn Colvin has achieved the greatest success. As a writer she has been collaborating with John Leventhal. Her recordings for Columbia/Sony

I think the importance of [Fast Folk] has diminished a little bit; it reached a certain pinnacle a couple of years ago, but people have gone in different directions now. Fast Folk is a vehicle; their premise—and I think it's really great as a folk thing—is that they want to present songs to the public that would never be heard otherwise, because folk musicians by and large have even less of a chance of getting record deals and great songwriters don't always choose to hang in this ridiculous lifestyle and this ridiculous profession and try to make a go of it—they find other jobs, they have families, and they continue to write but you're never going to hear their songs. So Fast Folk endeavors to take songs from anyone who they think is good and is interested in recording for them and puts them out. It's a great service to anyone who appreciates songwriting and to the musicians who want people to hear what they do.

—Shawn Colvin
(Interview with Diane Addicott, Undertow, 1987, from www.vega.net)

have received three Grammy Awards (Best Contemporary Folk in 1989 and Record of the Year and Song of the Year in 1997). This song, "I Don't Know Why," was also nominated as Best Female Pop Vocal in 1992. Her 1997 recording, *A Few Small Repairs*, contained the smash hit "Sunny Came Home." Colvin continues to perform and record and is one of the top performers in popular music today.

Other recordings include *Cover Girl* Columbia 57875; *Fat City* Columbia 47122; *A Few Small Repairs* Columbia 67119; *Holiday Songs and Lullabies* Columbia 69550; *Live '88* Plump 5901; *Live tape* (cassette only release); *Round of the Blues* Columbia 61102; *Steady On* Columbia 45209; *Whole New You* Columbia 69889. She appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF102, SE103, FF105, FF108, FF205, FF209, FF306, FF307, FF406, FF502, FF503. For more information see www.shawncolvin.com. Another version of "I Don't Know Why" by Colvin can be found on FF102.

7 | JOHN GORKA Geza's Wailing Ways

John Gorka, vocal and guitar; Mark Dann, guitar, bass, and drums

Words and music by John Gorka; from Fast Folk SE207, Vol. 2, No. 7, September 1983.

One of the successful Fast Folk alumni is John Gorka. The New Jersey native has released a series of acclaimed albums since the 1980s for labels like Red House and High Street, and has attained a high degree of popularity on adult alternative radio. His career started when he became involved in the coffeehouse scene while studying at Moravian College in Pennsylvania. He then teamed up with Richard Shindell in the Razzy Dazzy Spasm Band. In

addition, he spent a period as the Assistant Editor of *Sing Out!* Magazine. He was the winner of the "New Folk" award at the Kerrville Folk Festival in 1984.

After having been involved with Fast Folk for a number of years, Gorka spent the early 1990s living and working in Nashville. He has since relocated to Minnesota to raise a family. He is still actively recording and touring.

OTHER RECORDINGS include *After Yesterday* Red House 121; *Between Five and Seven* High Street 10351; *Company You Keep* Red House 151; *I Know* Red House 18; *Jack's Crows* High Street 10309; *Land of the Bottom Line* Windham Hill 1089; *Motor Folkin'* High Street; *Out of the Valley* High Street 10325; *Temporary Road* High Street 10315. He appears on *All Ears Review*, Vol. 3 — *Singing Out: Songwriters for the 1990s* ROM 21003; *From the Heart of Studio A: The Folkscene Collection* Red House 109; *House on Fire* Red House 58; *Legacy: A Collection of New Folk Artists* Windham Hill 1086; *Live from Mountain Stage*, Vol. 8 Blue Plate 8; *Nod to Bob: An Artist's Tribute on His 60th Birthday* Red House 154; *Treasures Left Behind: Remembering Kate Wolf* Red House 114; *Tribute to Bob Dylan*, Vol. 2 Sister Ruby 12; *What's That I Hear?: The Songs of Phil Ochs Sliced Bread* 71176; *Where Have All the Flowers Gone?: The Songs of Pete Seeger* Applesseed 1024; *Winter Solstice*, Vol. 3 Windham Hill 1098. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF101, FF103, FF105, FF110, FF201, FF205, SE205, SE207, FF301, FF306, FF307, FF404, FF503, FF508, FF604, FF702, FF810. For more information see www.johngorka.com.

8 | **DAVID INDIAN** **Ragman!**

David Indian, vocals and guitar; Neil Salant, electric guitar; Mark Dann, bass

Words and music by David Indian; from Fast Folk FF109, Vol. 3, No. 9, November 1984.

New York native David Joshua Ruderman (b. 1952), from Brooklyn, is a self-taught guitarist, songwriter, and poet. He received a tip from a chance encounter with a street musician that he should check out the music happening at the SpeakEasy. He came, he found, and soon was attending the shows and the songwriter's exchanges regularly. He chose the pen name David Indian, as he became tired of hearing his given name mispronounced over and over (personal communication, 2001). Indian recorded on six Fast Folk compilations, the first being the inclusion of his song "America (The Indian's Dream of Amerika)" in 1983.

In 1986, he became a bibliographic editor of Near East materials at New York University, continuing to write songs and poetry. He feels "that most of my best material from the mid- to late 80s, when I was at my most prolific — 'American Rhythm and Blues,' 'Airwar in El Salvador,' 'Lend an Ear,' 'America,' 'Green Bird,' and a dozen others — have never been widely heard" (Ruderman, 2001). His musical life found him in a number of folk-rock bands and playing in clubs on the Lower East Side. With Steve Schwartz Indian co-produced 39 videos of local songwriters. In 1996, he moved to Hanau, Germany, where he is

married with a daughter. He works as an associate editor for an Army newspaper.

He appears on the recording NYC's Fortunes 13 Week 5001; and appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF101, FF109, FF203, SE204, FF205, FF403.

I started writing "Ragman!" on a friend's rooftop in Park Slope. My father used to support the Southern Poverty Law Center in Birmingham, Ala., with an annual contribution, and I continued to do the same after he passed away. It was from their newsletter that I learned about the firebombing of their offices. At the time the Sunday New York Times Magazine ran a feature on Ferdinand Marcos, which included a full-page photo of a mountain peak outside Manila being sculpted into a bust of the dictator. That pissed me off, I can tell you. That was the origin of "Ragman!" At the time I didn't consider it one of my better compositions, but people responded to it and continue to respond to it. It's basically a three-chord song, but maybe that's one of its virtues. I have written dozens of verses to it over the years, and I imagine anybody else could do the same. Kind of like a folk song. My old friend and musical fellow traveler from high school days, Neil Salant, played electric lead guitar on the original recording.

—David Indian, 2001

9 | **TOM INTONDI** **High Times**

Tom Intondi, vocals and guitar

Words and music by Tom Intondi and Frank Rossini; from SE106, Vol. 1, No. 6, July 1982.

Tom Intondi (1946–1994), was an important member of the Fast Folk Coop, having been featured in the magazine from the earliest issues. Intondi was a strong interpreter of others' songs as well a writer himself. Over the years he collaborated with Frank Rossini as a co-writer. Intondi wrote some of the standard tunes in Greenwich Village in the 1970s and 1980s such as "High Times" and "House of Water" (Richard Meyer, *All-Music Guide*).

Intondi was a driving force and the person who revived the group, the Song Project. The Song Project was a collaborative group of performers who specialized in interpreting some of the cream-of-the-crop of songs crafted by other songwriters in the Greenwich Village scene. The group consisted at various times of Lucy Kaplansky, Tom Intondi, Gerry Devine, Frank Christian, Martha Hogan, and others. They only released one commercial recording, so the bulk of their recorded material appears on Fast Folk. He spent his last years living in Eugene, Oregon, where he helped put together Fast Folk's Oregon issue.

OTHER RECORDINGS include *Bringing' Up the Sun* City Dancer 003; *City Dancer* City Dancer 1; *House of Water* City Dancer 2001. He appears on the following collections on Fast Folk: SE102; SE104; SE106; FF104; FF303; FF405; and FF703.

10 | **CHRISTINE LAVIN** **Don't Ever Call Your Sweetheart by His Name**

Christine Lavin, vocals and guitar; Mark Dann, bass

Words and music by Christine Lavin; from Fast Folk FF101, Vol. 3 No. 1, January 1984.

Christine Lavin is one of the most successful songwriters to come out of the Fast Folk Coop. Involved from the debut issue, Lavin is known for her lyrical commentaries of the nature of relationships and the world from a woman's perspective. Lavin has released numerous recordings since 1984 on a variety of labels including, currently, her own christinelavin.com label. She has also been involved in promoting the work of other singer-songwriters and has taught songwriting and performance courses.

In 1991, she formed a musical group, The Four Bitchin' Babes, which still exists; it is made up of an all-star cast of women songwriters, although Lavin is no longer a member. She is the recipient of four ASCAP composer awards. Lavin has recently begun to incorporate theater more and more into her performances. She lives in New York.

OTHER RECORDINGS include *Absolutely Live* Winthrop 1002; *Another Woman's Man* Philo 002; *Attainable Love* Philo 1132; *Beau Woes (And Other Problems of Modern Life)* Philo 1107; *Bellvue Years* Philo 1120; *Buy Me, Take Me: Don't Mess My Hair: Life According to Four Bitchin' Babes* Philo 1140; *Compass Philo 1142; Fax It, Charge It (with the Four Bitchin' Babes)* Shanachie 8018; *Future Fossils* Philo 1104; *Getting in Touch with My Inner Bitch* christinelavin.com 3; *Good Thing He Can't Read My Mind* Philo 1121; *Laugh Tracks, Vol. 1* Shanachie 8022; *Laugh Tracks, Vol. 2* Shanachie 8023; *Live at the Cactus Café: What Was I Thinking?* Philo 1159; *One Wild Night Live in Concert* christinelavin.com 1; *Please Don't Make Me Too Happy* Shanachie 8016;

Shining My Flashlight on the Moon Shanachie 8024; *Subway Series* christinelavin.com 4. She appears on *All Ears Review*, Vol. 3—*Singing Out: Songwriters for the 1990s* ROM 21003; *Big League Babe*, Vol. 1: *The Christine Lavin Tribute Album* 1-800 Prime CD 37; *Follow the Road—2nd Annual Vineyard Retreat* Philo 1165; *One More Song—An Album for Club Passim* Philo 1197; *Song Poets* 1-800 Prime CD 46. She appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF101, FF104, SE105, FF108, FF201, FF203, SE203, FF205, FF206, FF209, FF306, FF307, FF406, FF410, FF503, FF507. For more information see www.christinelavin.com.

I always felt that the Fast Folk recordings would eventually be “discovered” and are a much better documentation of life and music in the ‘80s than most anything released by the established music business. I think I produced two issues [Ed. It was three.] — one was all women singer-songwriters — and I was most happy to get (eventual Grammy winner) Julie Gold and another fine performer Raun MacKinnon on that issue, along with Shawn Colvin and a bunch of other really talented people who were still not widely known. I forget what the theme of the other issue was (maybe it was funny stuff). My experience with Fast Folk was the impetus for my eventually putting together compilations on Rounder and Shanachie and my own label (christinelavin.com), though when I did those I focused on singer-songwriters who were seriously pursuing careers. Jack Hardy was much more open-minded about what he included on Fast Folk—he didn’t care a whit if the writer

wanted to have a career in this or not, he was after good songs, period.

I remember stuffing the discs in the mailers alongside Michelle Shocked—her head was half shaved, half braids. Nobody even knew she was a musician; she just wanted to hang out and help. So many people passed through Fast Folk, so many wrote songs that would otherwise not have gotten written —Sally Fingerett says it’s like before we had places to record we had these pretty party dresses, but no place to wear them. Fast Folk gave us a place to put these on vinyl and get heard. Jack Hardy was (arguably) the most influential person in songwriting in the 1980s, though he would probably never say that himself. Nanci Griffith, Lyle Lovett, Tracy Chapman, Shawn Colvin, Lucy Kaplansky, and Suzanne Vega are just a few of the singer-songwriters whose early works were documented by Fast Folk, and who may not have had the careers that they do without that early encouragement.

I’m worried about what has happened to music in the 21st century—the craft of songwriting is all very much now an underground thing because good songs are not making the charts these days, not making money, so there’s little interest in it. But songwriting continues, and hopefully will flourish again.

—Christine Lavin, 2001

11 | FRANK CHRISTIAN Where Were You Last Night?

Frank Christian, vocals and guitar; Mark Dann, bass
Words and music by Frank Christian; from Fast Folk SE101, Vol. 1, No. 1, February 1982; recorded February 1982, Mark Dann’s attic studio.

Musician and songwriter Frank Christian (b. 1952) was originally from Newark, New Jersey, but moved to Greenwich Village while attending New York University, where he received a degree in music and literature. Christian was one of the early members of the songwriter’s cooperative and appears in the first magazine. He recalls having played backup guitar on 20 or 30 of the early recordings made by the Coop (personal communication, 2001). He also was a one-time member of the Song Project.

Christian has only released three recordings under his own name (two of them are in recent years) but has appeared as a coveted guitarist on a number of recordings by others. Among his credits are albums by Suzanne Vega, Jeffrey Gaines, Marti Jones, Christine Lavin, Jack Hardy, the Smithereens, Dave Van Ronk, John Gorka, and especially Nanci Griffith. Griffith recorded his song “Three Flights Up” on her acclaimed *Other Voices, Other Rooms* recording.

Christian remains active teaching music, recording as a sideman, and playing his own concerts. He continues to reside in New York City.

OTHER RECORDINGS include *From My Hands* Palmetto 2011; *Mr. So and So* Palmetto 2021; *Somebody’s Got to Do It* Great Divide; *Where Were You Last Night* Gazell 2009. He appears on *Booglerizers—Extra Crispy Orchard* 7165; *Follow That Road* Philo 1165; *Greenwich Village Folk Festival 1989–90* Gadfly 100591; *Scenes from a Scene* Gadfly 207; *Song Project Folkstudio* 5019; *When October Goes* Philo 1143. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE101, FF104, SE104, SE107, SE108, FF201, SE202, FF404, FF405, FF602, FF604.

12 | GERMANA PUCCI Introduction to Corpo Gracile (Frail Body)

13 | GERMANA PUCCI Corpo Gracile (Frail Body)

Germana Pucci, vocal and guitar; Margo Hennebach, keyboards, Lisa Gutkin, violin; Mark Dann, guitar; Howie Wyeth, drums; Nikki Matheson and Janice Kollar, vocals; Jeff Hardy, bass
Words and music by Germana Pucci and Giancarlo Biagi; unreleased; recorded at the Bottom Line, New York City, 23 April 1989.

Germana Pucci was born in 1955 and raised in Pietrasanta, Italy, in a family of singers and farmers. After the yearly harvesting of the crops, her family was asked to perform in the local peasant’s opera. She moved to New York in 1975 and was involved in Fast Folk from the beginning, doing layout and design of the magazine. She has also collaborated with sculptor Giancarlo Biagi in playwriting and dramatic performances. She continues to live in New York.

She appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF101, SE102, FF104, FF107, FF108, SE111, FF201, SE207, FF209, FF306, FF404, FF405, FF502, FF503, FF510, FF602, FF604.

"Corpo Gracile" was performed on many occasions, from the stage of the Bottom Line with the FFMM to the stage of Sanremo, Italy (the nights that Joni Mitchell performed as a special guest). In Sanremo, Germana Pucci was accompanied by Lisa Gutkin on violin, Jill Burkee on mandocello, Janice Kollar on piano, and Sam Zygmuntowicz (recently honored as one of the world's finest violin makers) on bass.

—Germana Pucci, 2001

14 | **LAURA BURNS & ROGER ROSEN** **Kilkelly, Ireland**

Laura Burns, vocals and guitar; Roger Rosen, vocals and guitar; Mark Dann, mandolin
Words and music by Peter Jones and Steve Jones; from Fast Folk SE207, Vol. 2, No. 7, September 1983.

Singers Laura Burns (b. 1953) and Roger Rosen were based in Boston and were invited to come down and play in the Fast Folk shows. Burns has worked in a number of musical vehicles, initially playing drums. Rosen, a former street singer, teamed up with Burns from 1978 to 1987 and recorded one album for Flying Fish Records, after which Burns became interested in Latin music and was a member of the group Flor de Caña from 1983 to 1994. She also performed with Flor de Caña member Willie Sordillo. Her interest in music is paired with a strong political conscience.

Maryland songwriter Peter Jones composed this song after discovering a bundle of family letters from Kilkelly, County Mayo, Ireland, which traced the experiences of his and his brother Steve's family over 130 years. Peter and Steve Jones recorded it for their self-produced album (Clouds Records).

Other recordings include *Light This Night* Flying Fish 376. Laura Burns only also recorded with Flor de Caña: *Dancing on the Wall* Flying Fish 577; *Muévete* Flying Fish 463. She appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF103, SE207. Another version of "Kilkelly" performed by Nikki Matheson can be found on FF306/7.

15 | **ERIK FRANDSEN** **Introduction to The Viking Rag**

16 | **ERIK FRANDSEN** **The Viking Rag**

Erik Frandsen, vocals and guitar
Words and music by Erik Frandsen; from Fast Folk FF205, Vol. 4, No. 5, May 1985; recorded at Arlington (MA) Town Hall, 09 March 1985.

Erik Frandsen is best known in the world of theater; he is one of the authors and songwriters of the well-known off-Broadway production *The Song of Singapore*. Although he still plays music, most of his energies go into acting. Frandsen has also accompanied other artists including Dave Van Ronk and Bob Dylan on their recordings.

He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE101, FF104, SE105, SE108, SE204, FF205, FF405, FF502, FF810.

17 | **JACK HARDY** **Forget-Me-Not**

Jack Hardy, vocals and guitar; Jenny Hersch, bass; Mark Dann, guitar; Wendy Beckerman and Louise Taylor, vocals
Words and music by Jack Hardy; from FF806, 28 January 1995.

Jack Hardy (b. 1947) is the founding and guiding force behind Fast Folk. Hardy, a songwriter and playwright, is known for his literate writing, a mix of "themes ranging

from the American West to ballads and jigs of Celtic ancestors" (www.jackhardy.com). Hardy is a major force among the songwriters in New York, through his playing, his role in the Coop, and his hosting of the Songwriter's Exchange at his Houston Street apartment. Hardy alternated with Richard Meyer as editor of the magazine.

Hardy is a major touring artist in Europe; his entry in an Italian encyclopedia of rock is larger than that of many prominent rock stars (www.jackhardy.com). He has 12 records on 1-800-Prime-CD.

Hardy's recordings have been reissued as *Collected Works*, Vol. 1 1965-1983 1-800-Prime CD 49; *Collected Works*, Vol. 2 1984-1995 1-800-Prime CD 50; he appears on *Song Poets* 1-800-Prime CD 46; *Songs of Jack Hardy*, Vol. 1: *Of the White Goddess* Beacon 10136. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE102, FF102, SE104, FF104, FF105, SE108, SE110, SE201, FF201, FF202, SE205, FF205, FF306, FF307, FF308, FF502, FF503, FF507, FF601, FF603, FF605, FF609, FF701, FF702, FF710, FF802, FF806, FF808. For more information see www.jackhardy.com.

18 | **ENSEMBLE** **Vacation**

Vocals (in order of appearance) by Lucy Kaplansky, Christine Lavin, Willie Nininger, Shawn Colvin, Jack Hardy, Richard Meyer, Nikki Matheson, David Massengill, John Gorka, Germana Pucci, Rod MacDonald, Robin Batteau; Willie Nininger, guitar; Shawn Colvin and Lucy Kaplansky, kazoos; Mark Dann, guitar; Jeff Hardy, bass; Howie Wyeth, drums

Words and music by Bill Bachmann; from Fast Folk FF306/7, Vol. 5, Nos. 6/7, Summer 1986; recorded at the Bottom Line, New York City, 10 May 1986.

Fast Folk regularly programmed theatrical performances like this into their live shows. This 1986 Bottom Line performance of Bill Bachmann's song "Vacation" features an all-star cast of members of the Coop from that period. Many of these artists have selections and biographies elsewhere on this recording, but others deserve mention. Nikki Matheson was a Fast Folk regular and one-time member of Malicorne. She moved to Paris in 1987. Willie Nininger (b. 1952) has had a varied career performing in the Boston and New York areas singing his own songs, writing songs for the television show "Captain Kangaroo," and singing the national anthem at Mets games five times. He currently lives in Switzerland. Robin Batteau (b. 1948) has performed solo and as a member of the duo Buskin and Batteau.

Writer Bill Bachmann recorded both solo and as a member of the Song Project for Fast Folk. He remembers being a member of dozens of bands in the 1980s (personal communication, 2001). He has recorded as a backup musician for Paula Lockheart, Jon Sholle, Kenny Kosek and Matt Glaser, Tom Intondi and Josh Joffen. He is no longer active professionally but enjoys playing music socially.

Bill Bachmann appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF102, SE107, SE109, FF306. Another version of "Vacation" by the Song Project can be found on SE109. Bachmann also performs with the Song Project and accompanies Paul Seibel, George Gerdes, and Peggy Atwood on tracks in the Fast Folk Collection.

1 | SUZANNE VEGA Gypsy

Suzanne Vega, vocals and guitar; John Caulfield, fiddle; Mark Dann, pedal bass
Words and music by Suzanne Vega; from Fast Folk SE105, Vol. 1, No. 5, June 1982.

Suzanne Vega is one of the early members of the Fast Folk collective who has gone on to success in the popular music field. Her albums have been critically acclaimed, and the song "Luka," about child abuse, became a hit single in 1987. Vega was born in Santa Monica, California, in 1959. As a teenager she attended the famed High School for the Performing Arts in New York and later Barnard College. She has experimented with different musical styles over the years, incorporating dance rhythms. Vega has been supportive of the Fast Folk organization, returning for shows. Her latest recording was released in Fall 2001.

Her other recordings include *Best of Suzanne Vega: Tried and True* A&M 540945; *Days of Open Hand* A&M 5293; *In Concert One World* 910068; *Nine Objects of Desire* A&M 540583; 99.9F A&M 314540005; *Sessions at West 54th* Import 32082; *Solitude Standing* A&M 5136; *Suzanne Vega* A&M 5072. She appears on *Heart of Rock* Columbia 44381. She appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE101, FF101, FF104, SE105, SE108, SE201, SE205, FF205, FF405, FF502, FF603. For more information see www.vega.net.

2 | STEVE FORBERT Thirty Thousand Men

Steve Forbert, vocals and guitar; Frank Christian, guitar; Mark Dann, bass; Jack Hardy, mandolin
Words and music by Steve Forbert; from Fast Folk FF103, Vol. 3, No. 3, March 1984.

Steve Forbert (b. 1955) was considered one of the great discoveries of the late 1970s, one of many to be saddled with the "New Bob Dylan" moniker. After signing with the Columbia Records affiliate Nemporer, he released a number of critically and financially successful albums. His song "Romeo's Tune" made the Billboard Top 20 chart. Forbert was born in Meridian, Mississippi, moved to New York at age 21, and became involved in the Greenwich Village club scene.

Learning the music business and honing his songwriting in New York, Forbert thought that that experience was a "trial by fire" and "a much needed thing" (steveforbert.com). Eventually, Forbert returned to the South and has since lived in Nashville, continuing to work as a songwriter and performer. He has continued to release new projects on various labels, the most recent being *Young Guitar Days* on Koch Records, which marked the first appearance of "Thirty Thousand Men" on record.

Other recordings include *Alive on Arrival* Nemporer 35538; *The American in Me* Geffen 24459; *The Best of Steve Forbert: What Kinda Guy* Columbia 53170; *Evergreen Boy* Koch 8054; *Here's Your Pizza* Paladin 24692; *Jackrabbit Slim* Nemporer 36191; *King Biscuit Flower Hour* Live King Biscuit Flower Hour 88011; *Little Stevie Orbit* Nemporer

36595; *Live at the Bottom Line* Koch 8227; *Mission of the Crossroad Palms* Giant 24611; *New York 1982 King Biscuit Flower Hour; Rocking Horse Head* Giant 24663; *Steve Forbert Nempore* 37434; *Streets of This Town* Geffen 24194; *Young Guitar Days* Madacy 1259. He appears on *The Best of Mountain Stage Live, V. 5* Blue Plate 5; *Exposed* Columbia 37124; *Folk Live from Mountain Stage* Blue Plate 310; *For the Love of Harry: Everybody Sings Nilsson* Music Master 65127. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF103, FF104, SE104. For more information see www.steveforbert.com.

3 | FRANK TEDESSO

Margaret

Frank Tedesso, vocals and guitar; Margo Hennebach, vocals and synthesizer, Mark Dann, guitar, Jeff Hardy, bass
Words and music by Frank Tedesso; from Fast Folk FF502, Vol. 7, No. 2, January 1990; recorded at the Bottom Line, New York City, 23 April 1988.

Frank Tedesso is a native of Chicago, Illinois, who "ran away from home at age 34" to come to New York (Richard Schere, Vol. 4, #7, 1988). Tedesso became involved with the Fast Folk Coop after his move. He recorded on nine albums for Fast Folk. In recent years he has been involved musically with the Independence Project. He has one full album, *Einstein's Violin*. Tedesso moved back to Chicago in 2001.

He is accompanied by Margo Hennebach, a classically trained keyboardist who appears on many Fast Folk recordings. A Queens, New York, native, she currently tours and records as a duo with Mark Saunders.

Other recordings include *Songs from Einstein's Violin* Polygram 532840. He appears on *Legacy II: A Collection of Singer Songwriters* High Street 10314. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF403, FF410, FF502, FF507, FF509, FF510, FF602, FF604, FF702.

4 | ELAINE SILVER

Share the Failure

Elaine Silver, vocals and guitar; Mark Dann, bass; John Kruth, flute; Pierce Pettis, guitar
Words and music by John Kruth; from Fast Folk FF109, Vol. 3, No. 9, November 1984.

Elaine Silver has been called "the Folk Music Queen of New Jersey" (Silver web page) and is a winner of a Garden State Music Award for Outstanding Folk Performer. Silver has been involved in workshops, festivals, and gatherings exploring spiritual issues. She has performed frequently at the Church of Positive Living. She conducts workshops and gives concerts for school assemblies and families on multiculturalism, the environment, race, peace, and women's issues.

Silver now records as Fairie Elaine Silver. Her schedules and more information about her can be found at www.elainesilver.com. She currently splits her time between living in Florida and New Jersey.

Songwriter and multi-instrumental John Kruth has recorded on his own and as a sideman with many others. Kruth is also a music historian and journalist, having written the biography of jazzman Rahsaan Roland Kirk. His poems

have appeared in the *New York Times* and *Rolling Stone*. After leaving New York he lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, from the late 1980s through early 1990s. He eventually went back to New York.

Her other recordings include *Divine Favorites* Silver Stream; *Echoes of Light* Silver Stream; *The Faerie Goddess Orchard* 2734; *Fairies, Dreams and Other Friends* Silver Stream; *I'm Good at Speech* Silver Stream; *Lady of the Lake* Silver Stream 10; *Open Hearts* Silver Stream; *Puckulations* Silver Stream; *Wandering Woman* Silver Stream. Silver appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF109, FF209. Recordings by songwriter John Kruth include *Banshee* Mandolin Flying Fish 602; *The Cherry Electric* Internal Combustion; *Everywhere You've Never Been* Smiling Fez; *Greasy Kid Stuff* Chameleon; *Last Year Was a Great Day* Gadfly; *Midnight Snack* Hopewell; he appears on *Moon Dog Girl* (with Elliott Sharp, Jonathan Segel, and Attila Englin) Sparking Beatnik, and *Electric Chairman* Toast (a collaboration with Camper Van Beethoven) Weasel Disc.

5 | PATRICK JOHN BRAYER

Bourbon as a Second Language

Patrick Brayer, vocals and guitar; Jack Hardy, vocals and mandolin; Jenny Hersch, bass; Mark Dann, guitar; David Hamburger, pedal steel; Jeff Berman, drums
Words and music by Patrick Brayer; from Fast Folk FF806, Vol. 10, No. 6, January 1996, recorded at the Bottom Line, New York, 28 January 1995.

Patrick John Brayer came East by invitation for the 1995 Bottom Line show. He is a longtime resident of "the Inland Empire," the area east of Los Angeles. His hometown, Fontana, was a dusty desert mill town. Brayer is a very prolific songwriter, having recorded 35 volumes of his own songs which he sells through his website.

He recorded the album *The Secret Hits of Patrick Brayer* in Dennis Hopper's kitchen and is a source of interesting

new songs to performers as diverse as Michael Hedges, Alison Krauss, Ben Harper, and John Doe. His song "So Long, So Wrong" is the title track on Krauss's Grammy-winning album.

Brayer plays more than 30 world instruments, which he puts to use on his own recordings. A writer on the arts and a radio host, he currently lives in Upland, California.

His other recordings include *Secret Hits of Patrick Brayer* Brayer Archives; *Sinner/Songwriter* Aim 72001. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF802, FF806, FF808. For more information see <http://home1.gte.net/brayer/index.html>. Brayer's recordings can be obtained through www.aimrecording.com.

6 | PAUL KAPLAN

King of Hearts

Paul Kaplan, vocals and guitar
Words and music by Paul Kaplan; from Fast Folk SE101, Vol. 1, No. 1, February 1982.

Paul Kaplan was born in Philadelphia in 1948. He moved to New York in 1968 and had some of his early songs published in *Broadside Magazine* (see Smithsonian Folkways 40130). Kaplan started taking part in the Cornelia Street Songwriter's Exchange around 1980, and was part of the Fast Folk group when it started.

He played in a band called the Darby Rams, who were the house band at the Eagle Tavern. The Darby Rams played a mixture of Scottish and Irish folk music, and this music began to have a profound effect on Kaplan's own songwriting. He remembers playing with the Darby Rams and

heading across town to play his own songs at open mikes (personal communication, 2001). He co-edited a book of Irish and Scottish Songs called *Bonny Bunch of Roses* for Oak Publications. It was at this time that he fell in with the Fast Folk group. He appeared on numerous Fast Folk albums (including the debut issue) over the years, even after he left New York in 1988. In addition he edited the *Fast Folk Songbook*. Kaplan produced the Phil Ochs releases from Broadside that came out on Folkways and has been involved in some of the Phil Ochs "song nights."

Kaplan currently lives in Amherst, Massachusetts, and continues to write songs and teach guitar. Some of his other well-known songs are "Henry the Accountant" and "Call Me the Whale?" He plans to release a new recording of his songs in early 2002.

Other recordings include *As Through This World I Go* Hummingbird; *Life on This Planet* Hummingbird; *The King of Hearts* Hummingbird; *So I Could Get to You* [available from Paul Kaplan]. He appears on *Broadside* Vol. 4 Folkways 5306c; *Broadside* Vol. 7 Folkways 5316c. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE101, SE104, FF104, SE111, FF201, SE204, SE206, SE207, FF307, FF308, FF309, FF405, FF506. For more information see www.filibert.com/PVFS/kaplan/default.htm. You can get the Hummingbird Records and Kaplan's tape from him at klh@massed.net.

The idea was simple: play good music, and they will come. It had worked in the '60s, and could work again. But people had to know it was there. So Jack, already a prolific producer of his own albums, came up with an audacious idea: put out an LP each month with twelve songs and a magazine to document and publicize the scene.

The combination was electrifying—a recording project where we could learn about making records, and get our latest song out to the world. Along with that, a club, the SpeakEasy, open every night, where we could work on our performing and writing skills while we hung out and listened to each other and some of the best touring artists. If the club didn't always work, from a fiscal standpoint, if Shawn Colvin opened for Jean Ritchie for an audience of eight people, still it was a stunning success. Some high points for me: watching a tall stranger named David Roth volunteer to play for nothing, and blow us all away; the annual Bob Dylan Imitators' Night; Jack, making beer consumption into an artistic statement while performing his "Drinking Song;" and, step by step, watching Suzanne Vega go from college student to star.

—Paul Kaplan, 2001

7 | JUDITH ZWEIMAN

Heart on Ice

Judith Zweiman, vocals and guitar; Tom Duval, electric guitar, bass; Mark MacColl, percussion; Mark Dann, synthesizer Words and music by Judith Zweiman; from *Fast Folk* FF301, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1986.

Songwriter Judith Zweiman has been a longtime fixture on the Long Island folk scene. She also was involved with *Fast Folk* throughout its history. Zweiman is a poet, songwriter, artist, dancer, and astrologist. She has been in a number of musical groups including Eli's Kitchen, Folkano, and Late for Dinner (see disc 2, track 18). She has also lent her background vocals to many of the other albums by her *Fast Folk* colleagues.

Other recordings of Judith Zweiman on *Fast Folk* compilations include: FF105, FF108, FF209, FF301, FF406, FF510, FF604, FF807, FF810.

8 | RICHARD SHINDELL

The Courier

Richard Shindell, vocals and guitar; Jack Hardy, vocals; Mark Dann, electric guitar; Lisa Gutkin, violin; Margo Hennebach, keyboards; Jeff Hardy, bass; Howie Wyeth, drums Words and music by Richard Shindell; from *Fast Folk* FF510, Vol. 7, No. 10, October 1991; recorded at the Bottom Line, New York City, 24 February 1990.

New Jersey native Richard Shindell (he professes to having been from Lindenhurst, the site of the Hindenburg

Disaster), is a master wordsmith. For a while Shindell was a seminary student, and many of his songs incorporate spirituality. Early in his career, he was a bandmate of fellow *Fast Folk* alumnus John Gorka in the Razy Dazzy Spasm Band. Starting in 1992, Shindell recorded a number of albums for New Jersey-based Shanachie Records, but his greatest exposure came when he helped form the successful folk super group Cry, Cry, Cry with Lucy Kaplansky and Dar Williams. Their recording sold well, and the group was one of top-grossing acts of the first half of 1999 (Shindell web page). Cry, Cry, Cry was similar to the Song Project in that they interpreted some of the best songs they knew by other writers. He currently lives in Argentina.

His other recordings include *Blue Divide* Shanachie 8014; *Cry, Cry, Cry* Razor and Tie 82840; *Reunion Hill* Shanachie 8027; *Somewhere Near Paterson* Signature 1256; *Sparrow's Point* Shanachie 8002. He appears on *Big League Babe*, Vol. 1 1-800-Prime CD 37; *Kerrville Folk Festival: 25th Anniversary Album* Silverwolf 1008; *The Kerrville Folk Festival: The Early Years* Signature 1019; *Main Stage Live: The Falcon Ridge Folk Festival Album* Signature 1253; *Refuge: A Benefit for the People of Kosovo* ARC 2473. He appears on the following *Fast Folk* compilations: FF501, FF506, FF508, FF509, FF510, FF603, FF607, FF702, FF806, FF808, FF810. For more information see www.richard-shindell.com.

9 | WENDY BECKERMAN By Your Eyes

Wendy Beckerman, vocals and guitar; Mark Dann, bass
Words and music by Wendy Beckerman; from Fast Folk FF601,
Vol. 8, No. 1, May 1992.

New Jersey-born singer-songwriter Wendy Beckerman began to perform in Greenwich Village in the late 1980s. Her press release reads as follows: "Wendy Beckerman is a songwriter whose uniqueness comes from the naturalness of her writing and performance. Her songs, sung in a clear, unadorned voice, leave an imprint of unpredictable melody and poetic imagery, and are accompanied by both rhythmic and finger style guitar work." Since 1993, she has released four CDs, and has toured in the U.S. and Europe. She recorded over a dozen songs for *The Fast Folk Musical Magazine* and performed annually in their revue at the Bottom Line. She was also a member of the Songwriter's Exchange, a weekly gathering where writers would compose a new song each week and critique each other's work. Her latest CD, *Canyon Heart*, was released in August 2001. Her songs have been recorded by artists Louise Taylor and Hot Soup. Wendy's harmony singing can be heard on various recording projects, including those of Louise Taylor, Jack Hardy, Annie Gallup, and Linda Sharar (Beckerman, 2001). She currently resides in California.

Her other recordings include *By Your Eyes* Great Divide 1772; *Canyon Heart*; *Mango Moon* Brambus; *Marina's Owl* Great Divide 1774. She appears on the following Fast

Folk compilations: FF504, FF507, FF509, FF510, FF601, FF603, FF605, FF701, FF702, FF707, FF802, FF804, FF806, FF808. Contact her at Wbeckerman@aol.com.

10 | LILLIE PALMER Danton

Lillie Palmer, vocals and guitar; Mark Dann, bass; Margo Hennebach, keyboards
Words and music by Lillie Palmer; from Fast Folk FF502,
Vol. 7, No. 2, January 1990; recorded at the Bottom Line, New York City, 23 April 1988.

Lillie Palmer performed at many of the Fast Folk shows both as a solo performer and as a duo with Gladys Bragg. Palmer has recorded one full album, *Butterfly Zone*, for Demon Records in England and is included on the Windham Hill compilation *Legacy*. She continues to write and perform.

Georges Jacques Danton (1759–94) was an important figure during the French Revolution. Danton urged the end to the bloodthirsty policies of French revolutionary leader Maximilien de Robespierre (1758–94) and a peaceful resolution to the Revolution. He was convicted of treason and became a victim of the guillotine.

In 1982, Polish filmmaker Andrzej Wajda made the film *Danton* starring Gérard Depardieu.

Palmer's other recordings include *Butterfly Zone* Demon 778. She appears on *Legacy: A Collection of New Folk Artists* Windham Hill 1086. She appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF108, FF110, FF203, FF209, FF306, FF310, FF407, FF502, FF503, FF507.

You don't have to know much about the French Revolution or any other revolution or sad time of tyranny to look at the people involved and realize that they're on the same side, and it's just history that tends to split us apart. I got the idea for this song when I went to see the film *Danton*. People ask me why Danton is never mentioned in the song, and the reason is that this is from Danton to his friend Camille. They are thrown in their jail cell the night before they're about to be killed, and Camille turns to him and says, "I guess this is the end, Danton, 'cause I can't think of a joke," and Danton turns to him and says, "I guess this is the end because I can't think of a song to sing." So this is from Danton to Camille.

—Lillie Palmer, introduction to song,
23 April 1988

11 | MICHAEL JERLING Long Black Wall

Michael Jerling, vocals and guitar; Bob Warren, guitar; Teresina Huxtable, casio keyboard
Words and music by Michael Jerling; from Fast Folk SE204,
Vol. 2 No. 4, 1983.

Illinois native Michael Jerling ran a coffeehouse while at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire. In his post-college days he relocated to New York and became involved with the Fast Folk group in the early 1980s. Jerling was a member of the "New Visions, New Voices" tour of singer-songwriters that took place in 1992. He was the also the winner of the "New Folk" songwriting contest at the Kerrville Folk Festival. Jerling, like some of his other Fast Folk contemporaries, released two recordings on the now out-of-print Shanachie Records songwriter's series. He still performs and currently records for Waterbug Records. He is a resident of Saratoga Springs, New York.

His other recordings include *Blue Heartland* Moonlight 1003; *Early Jerling* Waterbug 43; *In Another Life* Waterbug 27; *My Evil Twin* Shanachie 8004; *New Suit of Clothes* Shanachie 8010; *On Top of Fool's Hill* Moonlight. He appears on *Memorial Day: American Impressionists* Waterbug 29. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE111, SE204, FF207, FF506, FF508, FF509, FF603. Another version of "Long Black Wall" by Richard Meyer, John Gorka, Josh Joffen, Lillie Palmer can be found on FF503. A new recording called *Little Movies* will be forthcoming in 2002. For more information see www.michaeljerling.com.

I remember first encountering the Fast Folk Greenwich Village gang at a weekend college coffeehouse conference in upstate New York. I didn't know it then, but Jack Hardy was scouting for recordable songwriters outside their Manhattan scene. They brought an entire delegation. I recall Jack (who somehow ended up shoeless and with a torn corduroy sport coat), Rod MacDonald (up a tree outside the Student Union), Richard Meyer (retaining his dignity), and a yet to be "discovered" Suzanne Vega. A friend of mine fell in love with her, but received only a pamphlet on Buddhism for his efforts.

Richard Meyer told me that while he was editor, he got so good at auditioning the thousands of prospective submissions that he would know if he liked a song or not within the first few bars. Once, while listening to cassettes in his car, he became so enraged by some sophomore lyricist's effort that he pulled the tape from the player, stopped the car and ran over it several times. (I hope this wasn't on the FDR.)

—Michael Jerling, 2001

12 | ANDY BRECKMAN Railroad Bill

Andy Breckman, vocals and guitar
Words and music by Andy Breckman; from Fast Folk FF110, Vol. 3, No. 10, December 1984; recorded at the SpeakEasy, 1984.

Andy Breckman is best known as a comedy writer. He is a veteran of the "David Letterman Show" and "Saturday Night Live" writing staffs. Since the late 1980s, Breckman has been involved in writing screenplays for Hollywood comedies. His screen credits include *Sgt. Bilko*, *Arthur 2*, *IQ*, *Moving*, and the 2001 release *Rat Race*.

Breckman is no longer active musically but had a ten-year period when he performed in New York, including a couple of times with the Fast Folk group (personal communication, 2001). As one might expect, his specialty was humorous songs. He made two compact discs of his songs for the Gadfly label. In addition, he has a long-running radio program on WFMU Radio, Jersey City, called "Seven Second Delay," which remains his "outlet for his musical energies" (WGAE Newsletter, 23 July 2001).

Breckman's song "Railroad Bill" remains a classic. Even though much of his work these days is in Los Angeles, he and his family reside in New Jersey.

Other recordings include *Death Defying Radio Stunts* Gadfly 902; *Don't Get Killed* Gadfly 121089; *Proud Dad* Gadfly 201. He appears on *Big League Babe*, V. 2 1-800-Prime CD 39. He appears on the Fast Folk compilation FF110. Another version of "Railroad Bill" performed by Rod MacDonald can be found on FF306.

13 | RICHARD JULIAN Gravedigger

Richard Julian, vocals and guitar; Richard Meyer, Lisa Gutkin, and Margo Hennebach, background vocals
Words and music by Richard Julian; from Fast Folk FF507, Vol. 7, No. 7, February 1991; recorded 24 February 1990.

Richard Julian was raised in Arden, Delaware. When he was in his late teens, he decided to move to Los Angeles, looking for greener pastures, but only got as far as Las Vegas. He soon found himself backing up cocktail singers in local lounges, a fertile training ground for a future career in the Greenwich Village folk scene. Julian remembers discovering an article in *Ladies' Home Journal* about the blossoming Village scene while waiting in a dentist's office (Richard Julian web page) and decided to relocate to New York. He had first heard about Fast Folk from a radio DJ while still in Delaware. Julian recalled, "I showed up at the Houston Street 'office' and handed Richard Meyer a demo. I was 18 years old. He advised me to go to the SpeakEasy open stage, which I did, and ended up being employed there for a spell as a soundman and booking manager. That is basically where I fell into the scene" (Julian, personal communication, 2001).

He has recorded two albums for Blackbird/Sire Records and continues to tour both the United States and Europe. His song "Big Big World" reached number 16 on AAA radio in 1999. Randy Newman referred to Julian as "one

of the best songwriters and record makers I've heard in a very long time" (Julian web page).

His other recordings include *Richard Julian Blackbird* 62014; *Smash Palace Blackbird* 38005. He appears on *Refuge: A Benefit for the People of Kosovo* ARC 2473; *Scenes from the Scene* Gadfly 207. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF403, FF504, FF506, FF507, FF508, FF509, FF510, FF602, FF603, FF608, FF702, FF802, FF807. For more information see www.richardjulian.com.

Julian's music has since evolved, and he reflected on this early period of his career:

I wrote the song "Gravedigger" when I was 20 years old, and it was sort of my personal anthem at the time. That was a dozen years and 100-plus songs ago, and I confess that, for me, this archeological dig has unearthed a cloying, if youthful, angst in the lyric—and perhaps in the singer as well. If I'd counted off the tempo any faster, the audience may not have realized I'd even been on stage—but don't let me ruin it for you. Somebody must still like it, or it would not have been included on this compilation on which I am honored to be featured amongst many artists whom I respect. Hats off to Fast Folk for providing a nurturing environment for developing young songwriters, among their other achievements.

—Richard Julian, 2001

14 | **RICHARD MEYER** **January Cold**

Richard Meyer, vocals and guitar; Mark Dann, guitar and keyboard bass; Jack Hardy, vocals
Words and music by Richard Meyer; from Fast Folk FF105, Vol. 3, No. 5, May 1984.

Richard Meyer has been an integral part of the Greenwich Village folk music scene for the last 20 years. In addition having been the editor for *The Fast Folk Musical Magazine* for part of its existence, Meyer booked the SpeakEasy club and created a series of live radio broadcasts from these shows. He was involved in many facets of *The Fast Folk Musical Magazine* including graphic design and authoring articles. Meyer has recorded six albums, taught songwriting at Common Ground on the Hill, been involved in the restoration of historic buildings, produced radio, designed record graphics, and designed recording studios.

Meyer is also an award-winning theater lighting and scenery designer, having been involved in over 150 plays, a music historian, and a producer of almost 40 recordings. He is also a concert promoter, having put on shows at the Bottom Line and Berklee Performance Center in Boston. Meyer's entry "Piccowso" in the annual New York Cow Parade raised \$26,000 for charity. He is the winner of the BRIO Award from the Bronx Council on the Arts for Songwriting and Performance.

"January Cold" was written as a response to a challenge from Jack Hardy during the Songwriter's Exchange to go home and bring back a song about the Teapot Dome Scandal in one week (R. Meyer, personal communication, 2001). Meyer grabbed a history book and beefed up his knowledge, and he admits, "I do know that [Coolidge's] inauguration was in March, but January fit better in the song" (Meyer, 2001).

Meyer's other recordings include *The Good Life* Shanachie 8003; *Laughing/Scared Old Forge* 023; *Letter from the Open Sky* Shanachie 8012. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF103, FF105, FF109, SE201, FF202, SE202, FF205, SE205, SE207, FF208, FF306, FF307, FF308, FF404, FF406, FF501, FF502, FF503, FF506, FF507, FF601, FF604, FF605, FF609, FF701, FF702, FF707, FF710, FF806, FF807, FF808, FF810.

15 | **ERIC WOOD** **Disenchanted**

Eric Wood, vocals and guitar
Words and music by Eric Wood; from Fast Folk FF506, Vol. 5, No. 6, 1991.

Eric Wood was another songwriter associated with Fast Folk starting in 1982. His music is very innovative, blending "jazz, folk, country and rock with Brazilian and Middle Eastern idioms" (Wood web page). Wood was born in Ohio, not far from the West Virginia line. He left home at 15, and his life has been a series of ups and downs. He survived a near-fatal car accident and began to compose songs during his recovery process.

His career has included a stint in Nashville, where the music establishment failed to understand his music, and a long career in New York City playing jazz and becoming part of the growing singer-songwriter movement based in the Village in the 1980s. Wood finally released his first full-length album on Tangible Records in 1997. He has toured extensively in Europe (especially Italy) and the United States.

His other recordings include *Illustrated Night* Appaloosa 136; *Letters from the Earth* Tangible 56809. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE109, FF202, FF303, FF506, FF510, FF604 and FF609. For more information see www.ericwood.com.

16 | **HUGH BLUMENFELD** **Raphael**

Hugh Blumenfeld, guitar and vocal; Jenny Hersch, bass; Mark Dann, guitar; Jeff Tarella, Richard Meyer, and Susan Fiering, background vocals
Words and music by Hugh Blumenfeld; unreleased track; recorded live at the Bottom Line, 01 February 1997.

Hugh Blumenfeld (b. 1958) was at various times associate editor, contributor, and a member of the board of Fast Folk. He was born in Brooklyn but has long been associated with Connecticut, where he now lives. In addition to his music, he has been a university professor and has a Ph.D. in poetics from New York University.

A past winner of the Kerrville (Texas) Folk Song Competition, Blumenfeld was Connecticut State

Troubadour in 1999–2000. In addition, he spends his time editing a folk music website, *The Ballad Tree* (www.balladtree.com), and *Fenario*, a monthly MP3 ezine. He currently records for 1-800-Prime CD Recordings.

His other recordings include *Barehanded* 1-800-Prime CD 1; *Big Red Brambus* 200030; *Mozart's Money* 1-800-Prime CD 21; *Mr. Jekyll and Dr. Hyde* mp3.com/dthyde; *Rocket Science* 1-800-Prime CD 43; *The Strong in Spirit* 1-800-Prime CD 6. He appears on *Big League Babe*, Vol. 2 1-800-Prime CD 39; *The Folk Next Door* #1, 2, 4, 7; *Home for the Holidays* WWUH Records; *Memorial Day: American Impressionists* Waterbug 29; *Pastcript* 1-800-Prime CD; *The Song Poets* 1-800-Prime CD 46. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF109, SE201, FF201, FF206, SE207, FF302, FF406, FF407, FF503, FF509, FF510, FF604, FF807. For more information see www.hughblumenfeld.com.

17 | **LOUISE TAYLOR** **Your Face**

Louise Taylor, vocals; Jenny Hersch, bass; Jeff Berman, drums; Mark Dann, guitar; David Hamburger, steel guitar
Words and music by Louise J. Taylor; from Fast Folk FF806, Vol. 10, No. 6, January 1996; recorded at the Bottom Line, New York City, 28 January 1995.

Vermont Louise Taylor started on the road at 15 years of age, playing her songs on the street. Well traveled, she has picked up musical influences along the way ranging from Appalachian ballads to Celtic storytelling, incorporating many musical styles. Taylor recalled that Jack Hardy and Wendy Beckerman of Fast Folk had heard her first album, and, being impressed, invited her down from Vermont to perform at a Fast Folk show (personal communication, 2001). She still resides in Brattleboro, Vermont, records

and tours and teaches workshops on creative songwriting. She records for the Massachusetts-based Signature label.

Her other recordings include *Looking for Rivers* Coyote 77; *Ride* Signature 1241; *Ruby Shoes* Signature 1233; *Written in Red* Signature 1259. She appears on *Snow Angels: A Hear Music Holiday Collection* Compass 74237. She appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: FF705, FF707, FF802, FF806, FF808. More information see www.signature-sounds.com/louisetaylor.

18 | JOSH JOFFEN & LATE FOR DINNER Crazy Horse

Josh Joffen, vocals and guitar; Ruth Ann Brauser, vocals; Judith Zweiman, vocals and guitar; Mark Dann, bass
Words and music by Josh Joffen; from Fast Folk SE111, Vol. 1, No. 11, November 1982.

Josh Joffen was another artist who recorded frequently for Fast Folk and was involved with the organization throughout its history. Joffen won the 1987 Kerrville Folk Festival "New Folk" songwriting competition in 1987 and 1988. His songs were published in *Sing Out!* and *Broadside* magazines. Joffen released a recording *6 of 1, Half Dozen of Another* in 1987 with singer-songwriter David Roth, where each artist has one side of the cassette.

Crazy Horse (Tashunca-uitco, 1849–77) was a legendary Lakota Sioux Indian warrior and leader who was committed to preserving the cultural traditions of his tribe.

On this track Joffen performs with the group Late for Dinner, consisting of Joffen, Judith Zweiman, and Ruth

Ann Brauser. A Brooklyn native, he continues to perform, currently living in Long Island.

His other recordings include *Fast Tracks* (available from JoshJoffen@aol.com); *Josh Joffen with David Roth: 6 of 1, Half Dozen of the Other*. He appears on the following Fast Folk compilations: SE103, FF105, FF107, SE111, FF201, FF202, SE202, FF204, FF205, FF309, FF404, FF406, FF503, FF506, FF510, FF809. Another version of "Crazy Horse" by John Gorka and the Fast Folk Revue can be found on FF205.

DISCOGRAPHIES/SUGGESTED LISTENING

For a complete listing of all Fast Folk magazines and recordings, go to www.si.edu/folkways.

Anthology of American Folk Music Smithsonian Folkways 40090

The Best of Broadside (recordings from the pages of Broadside Magazine) Smithsonian Folkways 40130

Big League Babe, Vol. 1: The Christine Lavin Tribute Album 1-800 Prime CD 37

Bleecker and MacDougal: The Folk Scene of the 1960s Elektra 60381

Bleecker Street: Greenwich Village in the 1960s Astor Place 4012

Cunningham, Sis, Sundown (Broadside Ballads, Vol. 9) Folkways 5319

Fast Folk Musical Magazine (105 recordings with the original magazine) Fast Folk Musical Magazine

Greenwich Village Folk Festival 1989 Gadfly 100591

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The recordings on Fast Folk and Folkways are available on custom compact disc with their original liner notes from Smithsonian Folkways mail order. Consult www.si.edu/folkways.

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The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways from the Moses Asch estate in 1987 to ensure that the sounds and genius of the artists would be preserved for future generations. All Folkways recordings are available by special order on high-quality audio cassettes or CDs. Each recording includes the original LP liner notes.

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For further information about all the labels distributed through the center, please consult our Internet site (www.si.edu/folkways), which includes information about recent releases, our catalogue, and a database of the approximately 35,000 tracks from the more than 2,300 available recordings (click on database search). To request a printed catalogue write to the address above or e-mail folkways@aol.com.



JEFF HARDY, MARCH 31, 1955 – SEPTEMBER 11, 2001