

Reviews

Books

Whitcomb, Dr. Ed. *Mel Bay Presents Canadian Fiddle Music, Volume 1.* Pacific, MO: Mel Bay, 1998. Mel Bay Publications Inc., 4 Industrial Dr., Pacific, MO 63069, USA; <email@melbay.com>

--. *Canadian Fiddle Music, Volume II: What Is It? Who Plays It?*. 2001. 204 pp. ISBN 0-9694667-1-4. Dr. Ed Whitcomb, 2130 Dutton Cres., Ottawa, Ont. K1J 6K4; <4whitcombs@sympatico.ca>

These are two excellent volumes of Canadian fiddle tunes. Moreover, Whitcomb does an excellent job of explaining the different styles of fiddling found in Canada. His essay "Fiddle Music – What it is, where it came from" is a comprehensive history of the different styles of fiddle music in Canada and where and how they developed.

When *Canadian Fiddle Music, Volume 1*, was first published in 1990, it was a landmark book, the first comprehensive collection of fiddle tunes by modern composers from across Canada. It functioned like a national flag, demonstrating that there was such a thing as "Canadian fiddle music" and bringing together many different regional styles under that banner. A look at the index reveals that the tunes are as diverse as the country they come from. The book contains old time waltzes, Cape Breton strathspeys, Métis jigs and French-Canadian reels. It also includes compositions from well-known fiddlers such as Graham Townsend, Ned Landry and Ivan Hicks, but most of the tunes and tunesmiths found in the book were previously unpublished.

Volume 1 contains 444 tunes by 114 composers, but even in 1990 its compiler knew he had barely begun to "rosin the bow". Tunes and praise kept pouring in. Fiddlers loved the book, and Mel Bay began distributing it internationally in 1998. In 2001 Whitcomb published *Volume 2*, featuring 350 tunes by 210 composers. Whitcomb notes in the preface that the second volume was far more successful than the first in collecting tunes from Quebec, New Brunswick and Ontario. *Volume 2* composers range from famous fiddlers such as Calvin Vollarath to 11-year-old Eric Smith from Allan, Saskatchewan.

In both volumes the tunes vary in difficulty. There is everything from simple slow waltzes to dazzling doses of double stops, with most tunes accessible to the intermediate player. The notation is clear, concise and easy to read. An extra bonus is the ring binding

on *Volume 2*, which ensures that the page stays flat and you don't have to worry about breaking the "back" of the book. Whitcomb also earns high praise from accompanists for including the basic chords above the melody line for each tune. While many of the tunes were unknown when the books were first published, they quickly jumped off the page and onto the stage at many contests and concerts across Canada. Thanks, Ed, for putting together an excellent set of books preserving and promoting the diverse fiddle styles of Canada.

Keitha Clark, Halifax, Nova Scotia

CD Reviews

Barachois. *Naturel.* HPP 5. House Party Productions Ltd., RR#1, Box 24, Wellington, P.E.I. C0B 2E0; <grady@barachois.com>; <www.barachois.com>

Barachois chose well when they named this their last album *Naturel*, for it conveys a number of meanings reflecting the many layers of meaning and musicianship on this delightful album.

First, Barachois' musical selections, arrangements and performances are open and unaffected, with more than a touch of spontaneity despite their tight ensemble work. Then too there is the sense that this music springs from the normal and everyday lives and the family histories of the members of the band. This music seems not only native but almost congenital, inborn, essential to the lives of the band and more than just a piece of cultural heritage.

The last piece on this album, "Soirée avec Albin, Jaddus et Zélie-Anne", is a reconstruction of an Acadian house party, based on several field recordings by Georges Arsenault of Albin Arsenault, Jaddus Gallant and Zélie-Anne Gaudet. Producer Grey Larson does a masterful job of weaving together several reels, "Lord MacDonald's", "Pigeon on the Gatepost", "Heather Hill" and "Miss McLeod's", into an exciting and organic whole, redolent of down-east hospitality and an engaging musical tradition.

I got the sense in listening to this album that for Barachois this is not a rejuvenation of the past but a musical imperative, a music that at essence is something very much alive, a genuine and instinctive part of their lives. This sincerity is best conveyed on the three pieces that were recorded live in concert: "Suite des Îles", a set of reels, "Marine", a traditional song of courtship wedded with a lively reel that accompanies a step-dance performance, and "Suite de jigs 'live'", an engaging set of jigs that also has some

rather humorous exchanges of turluttage (mouth music). While the whole album carries the energy of a house party, it is on these three pieces that we see the artistry of Barachois at its best, in live performance where there is a palpable exchange of energy between the audience and the performer. All three selections best demonstrate the homey casual feeling that pervades this album. But if the atmosphere is casual, the musicianship is decidedly polished and skillful.

Barachois play with rhythms and with pacing on many of the songs, as for example on "L'ermite", or "Marine". On this latter piece Barachois move from sedate a cappella to full-throated and vibrant ensemble arrangements. Barachois also juxtapose jigs and reels with traditional songs to create in the weave of these pieces a seamless cloth, as for example on "J'ai mis des cordes à mon violon", where a simple traditional song is enriched by the addition of some interesting jigs.

There is in this music a sense of pride, a sense of place, a sense that the tradition is very much alive. Barachois even turned their talents to arranging a distinct Acadian version of Paul Simon's "The Boxer". I'm fairly certain that Paul never thought there'd be a day when his song would be set like a reel and accompanied by feet and fiddle. There is, even in this cover version, a sense of authenticity and of unbridled enthusiasm and passion for the history and future of the Acadian people and their music.

It is a pity that Barachois have decided to retire and that we have lost such a gem of the Canadian music scene. This, their final album, is a fitting farewell. They leave a new tradition to the next generation, one very much enriched by the passion and joy that they brought to the music they loved.

Steven Méthot, Calgary, Alberta

Rik Barron. *The Quiet Faith of Man*. Odd Sock Pro 105. Rik Barron, 5 Forest Rd., St. John's, Nfld. A1C 2B8; <www.rikbarron.com>

Here is a recording by Rik Barron that is a real pleasure to hear and to have out in the world! Included on this twelve-track CD are three equally represented categories: Canadian compositions, American-authored pieces and traditional material. Six of the tracks are songs (with vocals) and the remaining five are instrumental tunes featuring Rik on either mandolin, mandola or 5-string banjo.

One thing that impresses me about Rik's vocal presentation is that he places on each song a stamp of

gentle power, whether it be on a light-hearted offering or on something quite serious. Barron has a voice capable of soothing the ears while at the same time holding the listener's attention to the lyrical content.

The material is very effectively ordered on this recording, and the flavor of the title track, by Bill Staines ("The Quiet Faith of Man"), permeates most of the entire album. However, Rik does surprise the listener two-thirds of the way through with a powerful rendition of "No Place For Children" (by Daniel Master), which is a hard-hitting song about some of the world's more serious social and justice issues. Following this track up with an instrumental version of "Come Thy (Thou) Fount of Every Blessing" is a masterful way to carry the listener into some reflection time for the preceding song.

I was impressed by Rik's use of the 5-string banjo on three of the instrumentals – another surprise; he features the banjo on these three pieces with slower tempos, and reserves the fast playing for the mandolin and mandola on the two remaining instrumental tracks. Barron's respect for banjo player Tony Ellis is evidenced by coverage in the liner notes and the inclusion of two of Ellis's original compositions on the CD.

It was somewhat refreshing to discover a CD on which the artist did not write or compose any of the material, thereby concentrating the creative process on the arrangements of other people's works. From this practice Rik Barron makes his musical statements, and this has helped him to become a very effective song and tune agent.

The only things I didn't like about this work are minor, one being the somewhat hard-to-read and faint printing on the jacket and liner notes, and the other being the occasional low volume at the end of some of the vocal lines, specifically on "Sweet Angeline"; this was surprising, since Barron's diction and clarity are first rate everywhere else.

This album features a good balance of instruments on each track, with none of the clutter that results from overproduced recordings. The instruments used on various songs and tunes are guitar, electric bass, mandolin, mandola, 5-string banjo, tenor banjo and accordion. Barron's side musicians include Dave Panting, Brian Bourne and Geoff Panting, and they are to be commended for tasteful playing and good backup singing.

I discovered that on successive listenings, the total package of music really grew on me as new surprises

found their way into my ear. If one wants to hear terrific music by a talented music agent with great baritone power, Rik Barron's *Quiet Faith of Man* is a sure bet.

Barry Luft, Calgary, Alberta

Richard Harrow. *Best Before/Meilleur Avant.*

1716 66th Ave. SE, Calgary, Alta. T2C 1T3;
<rharrow@audiomastering.com>;
<www.richardharrow.com>

CSTM members who were at the 2003 annual conference may remember John Leeder performing a song about Jerry Potts, the Métis guide without whom the R.C.M.P. might not have survived their first winter on the prairies. The writer of that song is another Calgarian, Richard Harrow, who has, almost single-handedly it seems, produced a CD containing this and 11 other original songs.

And original they are. Every song on this album has something to say. Besides the historic "Jerry Potts", an earlier composition [see p. 22 for tune and words], there are two main themes running through this album -- a tongue-in-cheek look at some of the shams and ironies of the world, and finding peace with the trials of life on an individual basis. The first song on the album introduces the personal message with its chorus, "You can always find the answer in a song". "Direct and sincere" characterizes the lyrics and their delivery; the words can always be heard clearly.

The most strongly political song is "Up on the Hill", twistedly cynical enough to remind me of Keith Hancock (songs like "Headline News" and "Life in the System"). Another song that caught my attention was "An American on Board", which tells the story of how "14 men set sail from a northern town" with a message that gets ignored, despite the flicker of attention derived from having "an American on board". Now what incident is this referring to? I racked my brains, feeling it was something I should know about. I thought of Cree from Northern Quebec paddling long canoes to Washington to protest the damming of James Bay to produce electricity for U.S. markets; the sentiment was right, but this didn't fit the details of the song, which takes place on a ship. In the end, I inquired of Richard via email, and he told me the song is not based on any historic incident in particular, but was "an idea that grew from various sources, mostly from the media's habit of reporting the number of nation specific victims in disasters". I admit I found this disappointing, because the song is so good that I wanted it to have a real event behind it.

Looking at the liner notes, I realized that this album is the product of a composer, instrumentalist, vocalist, arranger and producer, all in one man, which is quite amazing considering the depth and creativity of the arrangements. Thus this is truly an album that purely represents one artist's vision, direct to us. From what I can gather, Harrow does this sort of thing (audiomastering/sound engineer) for a living, so perhaps it is not so surprising that it comes across as so professionally and successfully done. The variety of mood and tempo from song to song and the catchy tunes make for interesting listening.

This original and well-crafted CD definitely deserves some exposure, so I hope this review will inspire some readers to seek it out. Those who do will have a chuckle in store for them when they see its unusual cover design.

Fiona Gregory, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan

Hit & Run Bluegrass. *Beauty Fades.* HRB-01.

(970-420-5379); <www.hitandrunbluegrass.com>
<aaron@hitandrunbluegrass.com>

This is a debut release from Colorado's 2002 Rockygrass and 2003 Telluride winners. Hit & Run are enjoying success in the Western U.S., playing this year at the Telluride Bluegrass Festival and the High Sierra Music Festival, as well as bluegrass festivals in Wyoming, California, New Mexico, Utah, South Dakota, Oregon and Washington. The band consists of Rebecca Hoggan (guitar and soprano vocals), John Frazier (mandolin and tenor vocals), Erin Coats (bass and vocals), Todd Livingston (Dobro), and Aaron Youngberg (banjo), with guest fiddler Aubrey Haynie.

To my mind the best tracks on the CD are "Lonely Comin' Down", a Porter Wagoner song sung by Rebecca, with prominent banjo accompaniment and virtuoso fiddling, "Old, Old House", a song by George Jones and Hal Bynum (sung by Erin) about a deserted house and its memories, which goes at a slower pace than most and has a good balance of instruments, and "Killing the Blues" ("Someone said they saw me, swingin' the world by the tail, killing the blues"...), a Rowland Salley song sung by Rebecca which does better justice to her clear, true, high voice than some other tracks and includes some attractive mandolin playing. Unfortunately, no words are included, and you can't always hear them.

The album features a number of tracks with various instruments played at breakneck speed, which will no doubt please bluegrass aficionados who appreciate the skill required to do this. I cannot honestly say that

this recording is exceptional, but it has its moments, and there is sufficient variety of content to satisfy different tastes within the genre. All in all, this is a promising first CD by a young group that is already developing a large following on the bluegrass circuit.

Roseleen Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

Neil Hutchinson. *Songs from Halfway*. Neil Hutchinson, 1236 Stoneleigh Rd., Bracebridge, Ont. P1L 1W9

Oh, if we could all be as lucky as Neil Hutchinson, to have such musical friends to back us up on our debut recording! Produced and recorded by James Gordon at his Pipe Street Studios, and featuring backup artists including Glen Reid, Sandy Horne and Gordon himself, *Songs From Halfway* is a collection of musical vignettes from the heart of singer-songwriter Neil Hutchinson.

The "Halfway" refers to his home, which is halfway between Bracebridge and Baysville, Ontario, and which also happens to lie a few kilometres north of the 45th parallel, halfway to the North Pole. This geographic theme is relevant, since many of Hutchinson's songs portray a strong sense of both place and history. Songs such as "The Voyageur" and "Last Surviving Sister" tell the stories of history on the waterways of Canada. "The Hills North of Town" and "Snow Waltz" refer to reminiscences of earlier days in Richmond Hill and Guelph, respectively.

The arrangements are folk-rock for the most part, with a couple of a cappella offerings, including a very Stan-Rogers-like cover of "Maid on the Shore" and a ballad, "The Lost Sweater", which tells of the "perils of mislocating folklore". There's some great guitar work, as well as a lovely flute solo on "Fanny Power". Although the singer seems to struggle sometimes, especially with pitch, he still delivers from the heart, with great arrangements to support his unique and memorable songs.

Jean Mills, Guelph, Ontario

Ron Hynes. *Get Back Change*. Borealis BCD 152. Borealis Records, 225 Sterling Road, Unit 10, Toronto, ON. M6R 2B2. 1-877-530-4288; <www.borealisrecords.com>

Singer-songwriter Ron Hynes is becoming something of a Newfoundland institution. It was "Sonny's Dream" that did it, of course, but he's written many other fine songs, and this new (well, 2003) CD has some of his most recent. Hynes is maybe something of an acquired taste – I was surprised to overhear

some of the audience at an excellent concert he gave in Athabasca saying they didn't much enjoy his performance – but I confess that I'm a fan. Yet I must admit that this CD is a little uneven in quality, which is a way of saying that not all of the tracks really grabbed me.

When you hear Ron in person he's obviously a folksinger, and he mixes a *cappella* interpretations of traditional Newfoundland songs with his own creations. This CD, on the other hand, is aimed partially at the country & western market. The title song, "Get Back Change", could have come out of Nashville, and "A Western Tale" is all about Billy the Kid, Jesse James and Wyatt Earp. Still, there are some great songs here that I find I'm playing over and over again. I wouldn't want to be without two songs that powerfully evoke the Rock, "Cape Spear" and "No Change In Me". And there is a beautiful song called "The Valley Green", loosely based on Ian & Sylvia's recording of the traditional folk-lyric. There are some fun songs too, such as "1962" with its evocation of Del Shannon and pinball machines.

I guess if you don't have any Ron Hynes CDs, I would urge you to pick up *Face to the Gale* (it has "Sonny's Dream", "The Final Breath" and "Leaving on the Evening Tide", three of Ron's very best songs) rather than *Get Back Change*. But if you have that one already, then you'll want this one too. I think of Ron as the Newfoundland equivalent of Ian Tyson or Stan Rogers. It's hardly surprising that Memorial University gave this guy an honorary degree – he's unique, a very talented songwriter whose work is contemporary yet rooted in Newfoundland traditional culture. This isn't his best recording, but it's still well worth having.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

David K. *Take a Mile*. BHS 321. Blue House Songs, P.O. Box 163, Mill Bay, B.C. V0R 2P0; <davidk@condisc.com>; <www.davidk.biz>

David K. produced and engineered this CD in his own Blue House Studios. The result is a recording that demonstrates the full range of his musical abilities. *Take a Mile* is a unique and tasteful selection of acoustic music that incorporates elements from blues, traditional country, bluegrass, traditional folk, rockabilly, and swing. Instrumentally, David K. is well known as a fine slide guitar player, but on this recording he also plays acoustic guitar, mandolin and bass. He literally plays every instrument on every track. In addition, he sings all of the lead vocals and shares the harmony vocals with Eileen McGann. David wrote eight of the songs on the CD; the

remaining four include a song that he co-wrote with Cathy Miller, and his own interpretations of three older tunes.

Self-produced recordings, where one artist plays all of the instruments and performs all of the vocals, often seem over-produced and contrived. I do not get this feeling with this CD. Overall, the performances are uncluttered and appealing. David begins with an original blues-flavoured song, "Gimme an Inch", that features his soft vocal style and strong slide guitar playing against a good acoustic rhythm guitar track. David follows this song with an interesting version of Bill Munroe's bluegrass classic "Can't You Hear Me Callin'". It features nice harmonies and a tasteful slide guitar solo. One of the more produced songs is a '50s rockabilly style performance of "'55 Thunderbird", a song David wrote about good times and a vintage car. Eileen McGann delivers the backup vocals, complementing David's energetic lead vocal.

The strongest selection on the CD is "Company Town", a song that David wrote about finding one's way in life. It expresses the thoughts of a man who couldn't wait to leave a remote mining town, yet couldn't wait to return. The performance features a good vocal with strong lyrics enhanced by nicely-phrased acoustic guitar and slide guitar lines, and a pleasant harmony vocal from Eileen McGann. "Company Town" is an excellent Canadian folk song, carefully arranged and recorded. "Let Me Lead" is a political song with a distinct Canadian flavour. It has a jazz feel, and features David's mandolin playing. "Mystery Train" is a song that has been interpreted many times by artists ranging from Junior Parker to Elvis to Rick Nelson. David puts his own unique slide guitar styling into his version. "Grindin' Wheel Blues" and "Come Back Home" are songs in the blues tradition that has so influenced David's songwriting and performing.

"Who Walks In When I Walk Out" is a pop tune from the '30s with a vintage jazz/swing feel, and David covers it very nicely, with a good vocal, an interesting slide guitar solo and a nice mandolin break. "Dance You 'Round This Town" and "Rear View Mirror" are original compositions that reflect David's passion for traditional country music, and they fit his soft vocal style very well. The CD ends with "Say It Out Loud", a thoughtful song delivered in a contemporary folk style.

David chose not to include any instrumentals on this CD. However, he is a good instrumentalist, and I feel the inclusion of a couple of instrumental selections would have complemented the existing material and given the CD a little more variety. The CD booklet is

very basic, containing a few essential notes and a good colour photo of David with two of his guitars and a '55 Ford Thunderbird. Many singer/songwriters now regularly include the lyrics to their original songs in the CD booklet, a feature that is popular with most of the amateur musicians who purchase CDs. I realize that this feature adds some expense, but perhaps David will consider including the lyrics if he is planning another production run of this CD. Overall, David K's *Take a Mile* is a good acoustic music CD that deserves a listen.

Allan Kirby, Cobourg, Ontario

James Keelaghan. *Then Again*. Jericho Beach Music JBM 0401. Jericho Beach Music, 1351 Grant St., Vancouver, B.C., V5L 2K7; <www.keelaghan.com>

In the liner notes James Keelaghan claims that *Then Again* is not so much a "best of" compilation as a chance to revisit some of his older material. It is true that the recordings are new, but the songs are all to be found on earlier albums. Admittedly the first of those was an LP which, as far as I know, has never been made available in CD format, but nonetheless Keelaghan fans will find that they already possess good versions of most, if not all, of the items on this release. I did a little comparing of performances, and I can't honestly say that I find the new versions markedly better than the old ones. Nonetheless, they are beautifully performed, and the sound is fuller and warmer than on some of Keelaghan's earlier CDs.

The truth is that James Keelaghan is one of the very best Western Canadian songwriters and a fine instrumentalist to boot. If you already own all his other CDs, you'll be buying this primarily in order to have "Jenny Bryce" and "Fires of Calais" in a more convenient format. The dilemma comes if you possess some but not all of the other Keelaghan recordings. Since he has never made a bad CD, I'd be inclined to suggest filling in the gaps of your collection by buying those of his earlier releases that you missed. But if you happen not to know his work at all, this CD cannot be beaten as an introduction to Keelaghan's songwriting and his characteristic sound. I do wish room could have been found for his evocative song about the first Riel Rebellion, "Red River Rising". But all eleven songs on this CD are excellent, as are the performances.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

Enoch Kent. *I'm a Workin' Chap*. Second Avenue Records SAS 2007.

Enoch Kent. *Songs of Love, Lust & Loathing*. SAS 2009. Second Avenue Records, 12 Aldergrove

Avenue, Toronto, ON. M4C 1B2; 1-888-923-3879;
<www.secondavenue.ca> <www.enochkent.ca>

Glasgow-born Enoch Kent was one of the mainstays of Ewan MacColl's "Singers' Circle" back in the London of the 1960s. The influence of MacColl is still detectable in his singing style, and his Scottish roots are most apparent, although he has lived in Canada for many a long year. I had lost track of him and, as far as I know, *I'm a Workin' Chap* was his "come back" album, released three years ago. We received it for review along with Kent's more recent recording, *Songs of Love, Lust & Loathing*, which was made in 2003.

Both CDs are excellent, and I would have a hard time choosing between them. The material on each is mainly, although not exclusively, traditional. Several of the songs are sung *a cappella*, while the accompaniment on the others is discreet and melodious. Kent's strong Scottish accent is sometimes difficult to decipher but the words of all the songs are included in the liner booklets. I have my favourites, of course: the title song of the first album (which Kent sings to the tune of "The Parting Glass"), his powerful interpretation of "Van Diemen's Land", and that catchy 16th C. ballad written (or possibly collected) by Thomas Deloney, "The Fair Flower of Northumberland" (don't be misled by Kent's Scottish title "Floor of Northumberland" – it is Child # 9, an English ballad about a cunning and deceitful, although ultimately considerate, male from north of the border and the pretty teenager of whom he takes advantage.)

From *Love, Lust & Loathing* I could pick out Robbie Burns' beautiful "Mary Morison", two broadside ballads that make one angry, then as now, with the so-called justice system ("The Sheffield Apprentice" and "Edinburgh Maggie"), that hilarious Irish rant about the murder of "Neil Flaherty's Drake" (a song closely associated with Dominic Behan – enough said!), and, yes, the militantly feminist "Stanley's Song for the Women". But that would be to ignore the songs with those lilting melodies that you can't get out of your brain. They include "The Lichtbob's Lassie", "One May Morning" (a variant of "Seventeen Come Sunday"), and "The Three Gypsies", Enoch's very Scottish and winsome version of Child # 200 ("I didn't really mean to go with them, it was the nutmeg and ginger that did it, honest, my Lord...")

Enoch's own songs are well worth hearing as well – "No More Cod On the Banks" and "Widows o' War" are two of the best, both on *Workin' Chap* – but the main reason for buying these two CDs is that they

capture Scottish traditional singing at its finest. No drums, synthesizers, or electric guitars here. Hey, and it took a Canadian to do something this simple and this good. Thank God we are a country of immigrants and we can share in all their traditional cultures!

Dave Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

Tom Lewis. 360: All Points of the Compass.
BCD156. Borealis Recording Co. (address above);
Festival Distribution (address above); Big Daddy
Music Distribution, 162 N. 8th St., Kenilworth, NJ
07033, USA

Tom Lewis is a former British Royal Navy submariner, having spent 24 years on (in?) the seas. Born in Northern Ireland, he currently lives in Salmo, British Columbia. On this, his sixth album, Lewis sings and plays button accordion and ukelele. With Tom Lewis as the core, the album features contributions by a large number of individuals and groups, including Tanglefoot, Broadside, Daily Flash, and the combined forces of Fruitvale Elementary School and the Nelson Children's Choir.

360: All Points of the Compass is a well-traveled recording; it was recorded in Seattle, Rossland, B.C., and Toronto, where it was also mixed and mastered. The disc contains some newly-composed songs (six of the seventeen songs are composed in whole or in part by Lewis), some from Lewis's youth, and several borrowed from beyond the usual folk idiom. *360: All Points of the Compass* is touted as "a collection of singable songs from a spectrum of musical styles from traditional to contemporary, from sea shanties to comic opera, and all the way to country and western".

The songs are beautifully arranged, some thick with harmony while others are spare in their presentation. All are passionately performed, at times whimsical and at others dramatic. The disc begins with "Radio Times", which is a history of folk music, much akin to Don McLean's rock history, "American Pie". The second track, "Port of Call", includes accompaniment by guitar and crosscut saw (no, this is not a typo, and yes, it does sound good). Further into the disc, "The Land" is an epic eight-minute rendition of Kipling's poem of the same name. Lewis's unaccompanied vocal performance is simply stunning. "The Nipper" is a tongue-in-cheek look at our modern use of folk music. Back "in the day", a song was sung only until the work was done, but now we actually get to hear the song's ending! Lyle Lovett's "If I Had A Boat" is a surprise inclusion, and a personal favourite of mine in both its original and current incarnations. Perhaps the most versatile song for those seeking new

material is "One Big Ocean", which showcases a 40-voice children's choir in a musical presentation of the water cycle. This song is incredibly catchy, and the content is suitable to musicians of all ages. Finally, Tom Lewis offers his "Goodbye", a light-opera piece presented in a strong, unaccompanied solo voice (followed, oddly, by an additional "hidden" track).

Tom Lewis is that rare breed of musician who is truly a singer-songwriter, excelling in both departments. *360: All Points of the Compass* is a lively disc made noteworthy by the variety of songs and consistently excellent vocals.

Paul Guise, St. John's, Newfoundland

Shelley Posen. *The Old Songs' Home*. Well Done Music WDM01. Well Done Music, 295 First Ave., Ottawa, ON., K1S 2G7; <www.shelleyposen.com> <shelley@shelleyposen.com>

I love the title song of this album. It whimsically celebrates songs that were once popular but are now forgotten, yet long to be rediscovered and sung again. Like Shelley, I feel for those old songs and I was glad to see that someone else cares enough not only to sing them but to write an anthem for them. We could all learn "The Old Songs' Home" and sing it by way of introduction, before pulling from our musical hats our favourite traditional ballads or timeless lyrics from the long and fascinating history of folksong.

I had mixed reactions to the rest of Shelley's CD. The singing is strong and clear, with an occasional touch of roughness that I liked. There were a few songs I didn't care much for, and I'll cite just one example, "She's Chocolate Cake", which struck me as contrived and repetitive. On the other hand, there are some very interesting traditional songs that Shelley learned from Loy Gavan, a source singer of mixed French and Irish background whose forbears were pioneers on the Quebec shore of the Ottawa River, about two hours northwest of the city. These include "Far Far Away in Australia", "William O'Brian" and "The Foot of Collins Hill". Another song from the community of Chapeau, where Shelley did his field research as a folklorist, is "Case of Needles", learned from Kluana Lavalee. Some of the singer-songwriter material on the CD is good too, for example a moving lament about the fate of the Newfoundland inshore fishery, titled "No More Fish, No Fishermen". And there is a catchy cover of an old Buddy Holly song, "Every Day", which I suspect has yet to be consigned to the Old Song's Home. In short, the pluses well outweigh the minuses. This is a CD you should buy for two reasons: the song "The Old Songs' Home" is an instant classic, and the disc

provides a welcome introduction to the wealth of traditional music that Shelley discovered in Chapeau and neighbouring villages.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

Rukanas. *Encanto*. BCD155. Borealis Recording Co. (address above).

This is the first Canadian CD from Rukanas, three musicians originally from the village of Lucanas in the Ayacucho province of Peru. They perform primarily Quechua (Kechua) music of highland Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, sometimes varying traditional arrangements. Quechua was the official language of the Inca empire, and today the term generally refers to the people of the highlands who speak this language. Quechua communities are distinguished by the large number of songs in their musical repertoire, including wedding songs, carnival songs for various festivals and san juanes for the festival of San Juan (St. John). There are numerous songs with underlying political meanings.

The musicians of Rukanas have been playing together since 1998, recording their first CD in Peru. On this their second CD, there are five additional musicians for some of the numbers, including Rodrigo Chavez, well-known in Toronto for his ensembles Nazka and Cassava. This CD was self-financed, a difficult undertaking for recently-arrived immigrants -- José Orozco arrived in 1994 and Elvis Sanchez arrived in 2000. Rukanas performs at festivals and concerts in Ontario and at private events.

Quechua musical ensembles combine indigenous wind instruments such as the kena or quena (notched end-blown flute) and sikus or zamponas (pan-pipes) with stringed instruments such as the guitar and charango (small guitar) and bombo (large drum). These ensembles have become popular in coffeehouses in Latin American urban areas as well as internationally.

Of the twelve numbers on the CD, five are waynos (huaynos), the most widely-known song-dance genre in the Andes. The wayno is usually in duple meter, with phrasing AABB; it is performed in various contexts, including village festivals such as the Fiesta del Agua (Festival of Water). The first wayno is "Encanto" (Charm), also the title of the album. This traditional piece is from Altiplano, Peru, and uses panpipes, guitar and charango. Spanish lyrics are given; for those who do not speak Spanish, a brief English summary would be useful. The opening lines of this love song are:

Tu dejas que escuche la risa
Y el halar de una tierna illusion que siento
("You allow me to hear the laughter and
this tender illusion I feel.")

This performance captures the Andean folkloric sound that has become popular on the global scene and is a good representation of the traditional wayno. Other waynos include no. 5 (untitled), a fast, delicate instrumental wayno from the Apurimac region of Peru, with mandolin, quena and guitar and interesting heterophony between quenenas. "Pajarillo carcerlo" (Prison Bird), no. 8, sounds joyful, but the lyrics have a political undertone: despite the bird's imprisonment, it is still fighting. (The Ayacucho region has been viewed by the Peruvian government as a source of terrorist activity, and some inhabitants have been imprisoned.) "Tristezas y melancolias", no. 10, has a fast tempo with busy quenenas, belying its message of sorrow and melancholy. For me, the low bass (possibly electric) sounds somewhat disconnected from the other instruments. "Mi tierna flor" (My Tender Flower), no. 9, is a newly-composed wayno from the Ayacucho region that maintains its traditional roots.

The remaining seven numbers reflect a variety of genres. Related to the wayno is the San Juanito from Ecuador, often sung at festivals for St. John the Baptist. "Tobas", no. 2, a San Juanito, has political overtones, although its main message is spiritual. "San Juacum", no. 3, is a mix of two genres -- the san juanito and the cumbia. For me, the low bass notes again sound a little disconnected from the rest of the ensemble. The Peruvian waltz "Mal Paso" (Wrong Move/Misfortune), no. 4, composed by Luis Abelardo Nunez, is well-known in Lima, but has been given a new orchestration, with harp, quenenas, cajon (wooden box) and charango. The song has unusual harmonies and a nice melody and the soloist's voice is gentle and delicate. The lyrics have a dark message about unrequited love and suffering:

Pero la gente/que es tan cruel y despiudada
y que no le importa nada/se rie de tu mal
paso. ("But people are cruel and heartless
and don't care about anything; they laugh at
your misfortunes.")

"Qara Punku" (Leather Door), no. 6, is a toril, music referencing bullfights or cattle. Each year, new toriles are composed. This piece opens with a trumpet fanfare, but then the instrumentation changes to flutes and mandolin that move between polyphonic and homophonic textures and repeat a triadic dance motive. The Bolivian carnavalito "Dulce Retono" (Sweet Bloom) has syncopation and a nice blend of

instruments, and showcases the virtuosity of the musicians. The cancion "Sabes que te quiero" (You know that I love you) is a fusion with lovely instrumentals and overlapping phrases.

In summary, this CD has representative genres from the highlands of Peru, with both traditional and new arrangements. The music and the sound quality are good and the musicians are to be commended for creating this CD so soon after their arrival in Canada. Analog supporters will be interested to know that this is not a digital recording. Perhaps the vibrant and often profound music is best summed up by a quotation from Julio Humala Lema in the liner notes: "We sing and dance to make life more bearable, and in a time of globality, the individuality of our music claims a precious space on this planet."

Leslie Hall, Toronto, Ontario

Sassenach Rebellion. *The Trooper and the Maid.*
Dragonfly 101. Dragonfly Productions, 614 Brydon Court, Victoria, B.C. V9A 4Y5;
<dragonfly@pacificcoast.net>

This is a great recording for those interested in songs and ballads of Scotland -- with a little Welsh thrown in for good measure. Sassenach Rebellion is the name of duo Laurie and Nell Postans, a name chosen to reflect their shared love of Scottish folk music, despite their English -- "Sassenach" -- roots. Both are seasoned folk musicians, familiar to the folk scene in B.C. and the northwestern U.S. Their performance on this recording is polished, and their selection of songs reflects musical influences that include Archie Fisher, The Corries and The Clancy Brothers.

The title song is the Scottish variant of Child # 249, well-known in the Irish tradition as well ("Who are you, my pretty fair maid?"). It's sung with gusto, and sets the tone for the songs to follow. "Farewell to Fiunary", and Nell's original composition, "Aberfan", commemorating a Welsh mining tragedy, showcase the singers' ability to evoke a melancholy tone, but they do seem to be at their best on the more rollicking numbers, such as "The Bonnie Ship the Diamond".

The arrangements are kept simple: guitars, banjo and mando-cello laying the rhythmic foundation, with autoharp, recorder and concertina adding colour. The singing is crisp, the harmonies are tight, and the overall effect is delightful.

Jean Mills, Guelph, Ontario

Guillermo & Roberto Serpas. *The Serpas Brothers.* #202, 1333 17th Ave. NW, Calgary, Alta.

T2M 0R2; <music@serpasmusic.com>;
<www.guillermoserpas.com>;
<www.serpasmusic.com>

This is a joint CD by brothers Roberto and Guillermo Serpas. Self-produced, it features the brothers on acoustic guitars playing four of their own pieces as well as their own arrangements of three other works. The brothers were born into a musical family in El Salvador, singing and listening to tangos played on the accordion by their grandfather. Guillermo began guitar lessons at the age of 8, studying both classical and popular styles. The family moved to the rural town of San José Villanueva when their father became school principal; however, after the military took a number of civilians away, the family moved again. In 1983 they immigrated to Canada, settling in Calgary.

Roberto graduated in composition from the University of Calgary and received a Master's degree from the University of Toronto in 1995. Guillermo graduated in music from U of C in 1996. Since the release of their joint album, Roberto has produced two solo albums, *Estival* (2002) and *Morning in Eden* (forthcoming), and Guillermo has released an eponymous CD.

I loved the purity of the two acoustic guitars, and found the arrangements and compositions very musical. The first piece, "Aguafuerte" (named after a style of plate etching that depicts scenes from everyday life), composed by the duo, is a virtuosic piece with strong rhythms, syncopation and percussive effects on the guitars. The second piece is an arrangement of Carlos Santana's "Samba Por Ti" that has a slow, languid opening, with beautiful harmonies and a lovely melody. There is a sense of spaciousness that contrasts with the virtuosity of the first number and the following section of the samba.

The third piece, "Coatepec", is named for a lake in El Salvador. Unusual harmonies characterize this original composition. The fourth piece, "El Condor Paso", is well known, but this version has a faster tempo than we usually hear, and a virtuosic central section. "Primaveral", no. 4, provides a nice contrast, with a slight samba and jazz feel in the quiet opening. To me, the most beautiful opening is that of "Europa", by T. Costeric and Carlo Santana. The harmonies are exquisite, and I enjoyed the bolero/rumba rhythm (slow quick quick slow). The final number, "Jiboa", named for a river in El Salvador, has some unusual harmonies and melody patterns, and shows the skills of the performers.

The brothers switch roles between lead and harmony, illustrating their skill and versatility. The only complaint I have is that the CD is short, and I would have loved to hear more.

Leslie Hall, Toronto, Ontario

Maisie Shenandoah & Liz Robert. *Sisters: Oneida Iroquois Hymns*. Silver Wave Records Inc., P.O. Box 7943, Boulder, CO 80306, USA;
<info@silverwave.com>; <www.silverwave.com>

What a pleasure to hear these "classic" hymns, too often neglected in recent times for the swinging rhythms of the gospel songs. All fifteen hymns on the recording are sung in the Iroquoian language by twin sisters, Maisie Shenandoah and Elizabeth Robert, both Oneida, and both committed to community service, much of it carried on through their music. They are joined by Maisie's daughter, Joanne Shenandoah, who has become a singer of renown: her music has been aired on numerous television channels; she has made 12 albums, has been nominated for a Grammy; and was selected 2002 Native Artist of the Year.

The *Sisters* album reflects these backgrounds in the artistry and sincerity of the work. Their hymn style is clean and straightforward, transparently harmonized. The only hymn that deviates from this style is "Amazing Grace"; here the three women show that they can sing blues style, adding and bending notes; it too is a powerful expression of faith. The tempi tend to be slow, and this is one recording where you not only want to, but can, readily sing along.

The hymns are enhanced by clear, sweet voices that smoothly negotiate the musical phrases. The instruments (such as guitars, electric piano and autoharp) provide supportive, never dominating accompaniments perfectly suited to the simplicity of the vocal line.

The old hymns are inherited from their mother, who learned them from her father, Wilson Cornelius. This is not surprising, for hymn singing has deep roots among the First Nations of North America. As a spiritual music, it was viewed in the same way as their own music, and is considered by some as a lineal descendant of the old Native songs. Music historian Willy Ammann noted similarities between Indian music and liturgical music, such as the use of free rhythm, syllabic text (one pitch per syllable) and, importantly, the similarity of function. (*Music in Canada, 1600-1800*, Cambridge, Ont: Collier-Macmillan Canada, 1975, p. 64). The liner notes explain some of the similarities of belief. For

example, Jesus, just like the great Iroquoian Peacemaker, was considered a prophet who loved and served the Creator. The hymns were passed orally through the generations, taking on some of the Native musical qualities and usually the language. For example, in at least six of the 15 songs on this recording, the song is introduced by a soloist (vocal or instrumental) who is then joined by the others, often reinforced with harmony. This brings to mind the typical call-response patterning of the traditional music of this area. There is also some portamento (sliding) from the high to low notes, typical of Native song.

Nine of the fifteen hymns are to be found in two collections used across Canada for Native congregations: *Hymns Ancient and Modern* and Ira D. Sankey's *Sacred songs and Solos*. Sankey revolutionized hymn singing by introducing it into the worship service where previously only the metrical psalms had been sung. Not only did he change the performance context, but also he chose hymns with words that were dramatic and used everyday language, emotional melodies, and ideas, such as water imagery, that resonated with Native concepts: hymns such as "Abide With Me", "Blessed Assurance", "Nearer My God" and "What a Friend We Have in Jesus".

This album provides another source of satisfaction for me, for I have long been curious to hear the sound of Iroquoian hymns. Somehow an old Mohawk hymnary has come to the prairies and is housed in the museum in the village of Wawanesa, Manitoba. Still I wonder how this volume got to Manitoba, and was it an Iroquois fur trader who carried it the thousands of miles?

Lynn Whidden, Brandon, Manitoba

The Wailin' Jennys. 40 Days. JBM 0403. Jericho Beach Music (address above); <www.thewailinjennys.com>

The Jennys' previous release was good on quality but poor on quantity – it was an annoyingly short CD with only six tracks – so it is a relief to see that this one has a more standard number of songs, thirteen in fact. It was well worth the wait. It is beautifully sung and lovingly produced, with a sound that is at once sparse and rich. And there are some really fine lyrics.

The CD opens with a haunting piece by Ruth Moody titled "One Voice" that I know I shall play over and over again, and there is another of Ruth's songs that I also found very moving, "Beautiful Dawn". She is an inspired song-writer. The other two Jennys, Cara Luft

and Nicky Mehta, also have plenty to say; indeed Nicky's "Arlington" and Cara's "Untitled" and "Come All Ye Sailors" (among others) are great songs. The latter, although an original composition, is rooted in folk tradition, and the three women do perform one traditional ballad, "Saucy Sailor". There are a couple of covers, of Neil Young's "Old Man" and John Hiatt's "Take It Down". The album ends with a harmony version of "The Parting Glass", which is a lovely melody, but I do wish they hadn't left out the middle verse. After hearing the trio live, I knew we were in for something special when they got more of their best songs onto CD. This recording is a gem. Don't miss it.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

Joey Wright. Camp. JDW001. No address or phone number on packaging; <joey_wright@hotmail.com>

This is a most enjoyable bluegrass album by an Ontario vocalist and mandolin player whose work deserves to be better known. Joey Wright is clearly a brilliant instrumentalist and a very accomplished musician. Some of the music is fast and furious in typical, high-energy, bluegrass style, but other performances provide contrast, with mandolin solos and slow waltzes. Most tracks are by a quartet that is rounded out by John Showman on fiddle, Marc Roy on guitar, and Dan Whitely on bass. The tunes are mainly originals, most of them penned by Wright himself, although there is the occasional bluegrass standard or traditional dance tune. It's hard to single out just one or two tracks, but I particularly liked those with thoughtful and meaningful lyrics, for example "Climbing Up a Mountain" and "When Two Worlds Collide". Indeed I would have liked there to have been more songs like these two.

There seems to be a bluegrass resurgence happening these days, and there are lots of bluegrass CDs out there, all calling for your attention and your bucks. This is a good, if not really exceptional, recording. Fans of bluegrass will definitely want to check it out. Others may find they are pleasantly surprised by a well-crafted production, the creation of talented and accomplished musicians who obviously love what they are doing.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

A Peak in Darien

Books

Denis Donnelly (compiler/editor). *Ramblin' Woman: The Songs and Tunes of Becky Bernson*. Denis Donnelly, 4007 Bow Rd., Victoria, B.C. V8N 3B2; <denis@denisdonnelly.ca>; <www.denisdonnelly.ca>

Gavin James Campbell. *Music and the Making of a New South*. 2004. 222 pp. ISBN 0-8078-5517-0; University of North Carolina Press, P.O. Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288, USA; Scholarly Book Services, 473 Adelaide St. W, 4th floor, Toronto, Ont. M5V 1T1; <orders@bookscan.com>; <sbs@primus.ca>

Ken Perlman. *Mel Bay Presents Everything You Wanted to Know About Clawhammer Banjo*. 2004. 200 pp. plus 2 CDs. ISBN 0-7866-5890-8. Mel Bay Publications Inc., 4 Industrial Dr., Pacific, MO 63069-3611, USA; <email@melbay.com>; <www.melbay.com>

DVDs

Tanglefoot. *Way More Live*. BDVD001. Borealis Recording Co., 225 Sterling Rd., Unit 19, Toronto, Ont. M6R 2B2; <info@borealisrecords.com>; <www.borealisrecords.com>

Recordings

Barron & Panting. *Old Dogs New Tricks*. ODDSOCKPRO106. Rik Barron, 3 Forest Rd., St. John's, NL A1C 2B8; <www.rikbarron.com>; <www.davepanting.com> (Canada); <barndance@wanadoo.nl>; <www.barndance.nl> (Europe)

Becky Bernson. *Sagebrush and Lilies*. Denis Donnelly (address above)

The Bills. *Let Em Run*. BCD164. Borealis Recording Co. (address above)

Michael Jerome Browne & The Twin Rivers String Band. BCD163. Borealis Recording Co. (address above)

The Buccaneers. *Basement Monkey*. OCMB002. Box 935, Sta. M, Calgary, Alta. T2P 2K4; <info@bucca.ca>; <www.buccaneers.ca>

das macht Show. *Four Legs Good*. dms9627. Murray D. Evans, 416 11th St., Brandon, Man. R7A 4K1; <dasmachtdhow@westman.wave.ca>; <www.dasmachtshow.ca>

Morgan Davis. *Pain-Killer*. E-Fi3382. Morgan Davis, 6553 Rte. 329, Deep Cove, N.S. B0J 1T0; <morgandavis@morgandavis.com>; <www.morgandavis.com>; Electro-Fi Records, 40 Beaverdale Rd., Toronto, Ont. M8Y 3Y4; P.O. Box 191,

LaSalle Sta., Niagara Falls, NY 14304, USA; <info@electrofi.com>; <www.electrofi.com>

Simon Fox. *Night Fishing*. SF003, Simon Fox, 250 Springfield St., Victoria, B.C. V9A 3Y5; <simon@simonfox.net>; <www.simonfox.net> (new addresses, not on packaging)

James Gordon. *Endomusia*. BCD161. Borealis Recording Co. (address above)

High Noon. *The Way It All Began: Original Style Pow-Wow Songs Recorded Live at Napi*. CR-6374. Canyon Records, 3131 West Clarendon Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85017, USA; <canyon@canyonrecords.com>; <www.canyonrecords.com>

Tim Hus. *Alberta Crude*. SBR003. Tim Hus, 425 8A St. NE, Calgary, Alta. T2E 4J2 (no address on packaging); <timhus@timhus.ca>; <www.timhus.ca>

Monique Jutras. *Monique Jutras chante et turlute La Bolduc*. PMJ-042. Productions Monique Jutras, 932, rue St-Jean, Longueuil (Québec) J4H 2Z1; <moniquejutras@b2b2c.ca>

Eileen McGann. *Light*. Dragonwing Music, P.O. Box 163, Mill Bay, B.C. V0R 2P0; <mcGann@candisc.ca>; <members.shaw.ca/emcgann>; Festival Distribution, 1351 Grant St., Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2X7; 1-800-633-8282; <www.festival.bc.ca>

Carlos Nakai. *The Best of Nakai: In Beauty, We Return*. CR-7064. Canyon Records (address above)

Northern Cree. *Rezonate: Pow-Wow Songs Recorded Live at Saddle Lake*. CR-6369. Canyon Records (address above)

The Old Sod Band. *Grass Roots*. FAM04CD. Fallen Angle Music, 285 Spencer St., Ottawa, Ont. K1Y 2R1; <ianrobb@sympatico.ca>; <www.ianrobb.com>

Steve Pineo. *Around the Horn*. STAMP 001. 2733 17th St. NW, Calgary, Alta. T2M 3S5; <stevepineo@shaw.ca> (no addresses on packaging)

George Smith. *From School Yard to Folk Club: Songs and Rhymes Mostly From the North of England*. 34 Woodfield Cres. SW, Calgary, Alta. T2W 3W4; <bnsmith@3web.net> (no addresses on packaging)

Tha Tribe. *Best of Both Worlds -- World One*. CR-6370. Canyon Records (address above)

James Thurgood. *Handy Little Rig: Celtic & Old-Time Harmonica from the Maritimes*. Box 1655, Wabasca, Alta. T0G 2K0 (new address, different from packaging); <jthurgood@yahoo.com>

Various. *Ramblin' Woman: The Songs and Tunes of Becky Bernson*. BMCD01. Denis Donnelly (address above)

Various. *Voices Across the Canyon, vol. 6*. CR-7066. Canyon Records (address above)