

"O are we near hame now, young Donald?
O are we near hame now, I pray?"
"We are no near hame, bonnie Lizzie,
Nor yet gone the half of the way."

When they came near the end of their journey,
To the house of his father's milk-dey,
He said: "Stay still there, Lizzie Lindsay,
Till I tell my mother of thee."

"Now make us a supper, dear mother,
The best of your curds and green whey,
And make up a bed of green rashes,
A pillow and a covering of grey."

"Rise up, rise up, Lizzie Lindsay,
Ye have lain oer lang i' the day,
You should have been helping my mother
To milk her ewes and her kye."

Out then spake the bonnie young lady,
And the salt tears drapt frae her eye:
"I wish I had bidden at hame,
I can neither milk ewes nor kye".

"Rise up, rise up, Lizzie Lindsay,
There is mair ferlies to spy,
For yonder's the castle o' Kingussie,
See how it stands high and dry!"

But when they came to Kingussie,
The porter was standing hard by:
"Ye're welcome hame, Sir Donald,
Ye've been such a long time away."

It's down then came his old mother,
With all the keys in her hand,
Saying: "Take you these, bonnie Lizzie,
All under them's at your command."

Reviews

CD-ROM

British Columbia Folklore Society. *Folklore Heritage in the Pacific Northwest*. Educational CD-ROM, 2006; folklore.bc.ca; info@folklore.bc.ca

Mike Ballantyne and his colleagues in the BC Folklore Society are to be congratulated on creating this very valuable resource. It is, in a sense, part of Phil Thomas' legacy, and it is aimed primarily at teachers and students. The technical work—design and html—was the work of Tory and Shani Whitbread, Matt Barnard and Karen Kotscherofski, but the data was supplied by a variety of BC folklorists and historians, among whom special mention is understandably given to Phil, Mike, and David Lai.

The result of this collaborative effort will find a place on the shelves (or in the computers) of everyone seriously interested in the folklore and vernacular song heritage of British Columbia. While it is obviously not definitive—no pioneering work of this nature ever is—it clearly makes a very important start on the twin tasks of researching and making available to the general public the wealth of West Coast lore and song.

There is too much information here for me to canvass it systematically, so let me just give you an exploratory taste of the interesting stuff you will find on the CD-ROM. When you click on the main menu you find a choice of six options: "Our People", "Work Songs", "Monster Stories", "Lost Mines & Treasures", "Navigating BC" and "Teacher's Corner". The first of these turns out to be subdivided into

"Ocean Life", "Chinatown", "Cowichan Tales" and "Living Off the Land". Pursuing "Ocean Life" further we find a choice of five topics: "General", "Pirates & Outlaws", "Hunting & Gathering", "Shipwrecks" and "Work Songs". The "General" category includes articles on, among other things, Captain Vancouver and the Chinook jargon. "Pirates & Outlaws" has three items, including a historical account of the massacre on the *Boston*, and a piece on the legend of the Flying Dutchman and on sailors' vernacular uses of that same term. "Hunting & Gathering" is an eclectic mix: articles on individual people (Alex McLean and Bill Billeter), an account of whaling on the West Coast, tall stories about fishing, and even seafood recipes. The shipwreck section currently focuses on the fate of three sailing ships, the *Monte Cristo*, *Valencia*, and *Ericsson*—obviously it will be expanded greatly in subsequent editions. As for work songs related to the sea, we are presented with a dozen: "150 Days Out from Vancouver", "The *Oda G*", "The Doryman", "When the Tide Goes Out", "Home, Dear, Home", "Snap the Line Tight", "Fishing Grounds", "Rum Runner's Song", "Livin' on the West Coast", "Follow the Birds", "Canning Salmon" and "When the Coho Flash Silver". If you click on the latter, you find a real gem: a video-clip of Lloyd Arntzen singing his composition, and also a discussion of the song which points out that the melody is based on the English folksong "Navy Boots".

Folksong enthusiasts will no doubt find themselves following the paths that lead to other vernacular songs about BC. For example, if one takes the

“Work Songs” route from the main menu one finds the same sea songs but also a mini-collection of other industrial ballads and lyrics. They include such ranching, mining and logging songs as “The Grand Hotel”, “Taku Miners”, “Are You from Bevan?”, “The Kettle Valley Line”, “Steel Men”, “Teaming Up the Cariboo Raod” and “The Young British Rancher”. I wondered if by clicking on “Are You from Bevan?” I might be rewarded with a video-clip of Phil and Hilda Thomas performing the song, and, sure enough, there it was. So you see there are lots of treasures to be found on this CD-ROM. It takes some exploring, though—for example, I haven’t yet found very much in the way of information on the history of the forestry industry or on songs from the shanty camps—and at this point I’m not sure whether I just haven’t looked in the right place or if this is one of the major areas in which more work is required. More items from Phil’s *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* could surely have been included under the “Work Songs” rubric, I would have thought.

Anyway, although CSTM members interested in the heritage of BC vernacular song will perhaps not find everything they are looking for on this CD ROM, they will find a great deal of interest, including much information, a valuable bundle of songs, and some wonderful video-clips. You really can’t afford to be without it.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

CDs

Dave Baker. *A Portrait of the Westcoast in Song.*

Coast Country Productions; 23056 – 118th Ave.,
Maple ridge, BC, V2X 2M8; www.daveebaker.com;
dbcoastcountry@shaw.ca

Dave Baker has apparently been performing and recording for several decades and I’m a little surprised and puzzled that I’ve never come across his work before. Well, better late than never.

Baker has written a set of evocative lyrics about different places along the BC mainland and islands and some of the people who lived there. He sings them in a simple but effective manner, the music occasionally having a country & western feel to it but mainly employing the acoustic folk genre. Not quite all the songs are Baker’s own: “Summer Wages” is an Ian Tyson composition, and “The Renegade” is the work of both Tysons, Ian and Sylvia.

The other eleven compositions are by Baker himself. Some, such as “Westham Island”, are nostalgic for times long past, and several are laments for things that used to be part of everyday life but are now lost forever, such as a sunken ship (“Farewell to

the *Norsal*”) or an abandoned railway line (“The E & N Won’t Run Here Anymore”). Other songs appear to be autobiographical in nature. “Old Lady Rose”, for example, is about the decline of the salmon fishery and the need to find alternative employment. “This Land is What I Am” and “Island Bound” express a personal need to return in retirement to the islands of his youth. Baker’s love for the Queen Charlotte Islands comes through clearly in the beautiful “St. Mary’s Spring”. There are also two moving songs about departed friends: “World of Small” (subtitled “Thoughts of Emily”), about an unidentified painter-environmentalist, and “Capi”, a tribute to Muriel Wylie Blanchet.

One of the most powerful songs on the album is “Land of Maquinna”, about the loss of their traditional ways by the Native peoples of the Coast. But not all the songs are sad or angry. Others of Baker’s songs are less specific geographically but still project the love of place and people that runs throughout the album. You may look far and wide but you won’t find many songs that combine the simple sincerity and evocative images of “Winter Harbour Lullaby”:

We’ll drift across a mist bound bay
And listen to a seabird’s call
Soon we’ll be home once again to
Sing a Winter Harbour lullaby.

Sailing, sailing over the cresting waves,
Sailing, sailing onto a windswept shore.

We’ll steal through a forest glade
And walk along a rain-soaked trail,
Soon we’ll be home once again to
Sing a Winter Harbour lullaby.

Once in a while you come across an album that has something special to offer, that — at least for you—stands head and shoulders above the crowd. For me, this is one of those rare CDs. I’m glad I found it.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta.

Moira Cameron. *Sands of the Shore: Be Tricked or Betrayed.*

CeltArctic Music TMCCD07;
4505 Schooldraw Ave., Yellowknife, NT X1A 2K3;
www.celtarctic.com

A new CD by Moira Cameron is always a treat to look forward to, and this one came out handily just in time for last Christmas. An hour’s worth of fine songs and ballads, tastefully presented with a cheerful bright yellow booklet containing legible texts. Anyone who does this gets bonus points straight off from this reviewer. It’s no easy task to cram the words of lengthy traditional ballads into four pages and still include comments on the songs, introductory

remarks and acknowledgments without getting that overcrowded look, but this CD does it).

Moira Cameron is no stranger to many CSTM members who remember her live performances at various venues as well as her two previous CDs, *One Evening as I Rambled* (1993) and *Lilies in the Bushes* (1997). As with these two albums, Moira has made this recording, as she says, to “pay honour to my sources – my father, Stewart Cameron, being at the top of the list”. This CD is as fine a tribute as anyone could wish for.

Seventeen items range from traditional ballads (Child or otherwise) and songs originating in Scotland, America, Canada and England, and include three of Moira’s own compositions. The selection is varied, alternating slow and lively pieces, some sung *a cappella*, others with accompaniment on autoharp, Appalachian dulcimer, spoons and eggs, and various recorders. Choruses and refrains often enlist the services of Steve Goff, Steve Lacey (plus guitar), Dawn Lacey, Caitlin Lacey, Marilyn Morrison, Ray Bethke and Kate Tompkins. Sound quality is always clear and sharp, with no ragged edges.

Everyone will have her or his favourites on this album – my personal top choices are “In the Month of January”, “Lamkin”, “A Week before Easter” and “Tamlyn”, but there are no weak links in the chain. Since I have something to say about almost every track, that’s what I shall do.

Track 1, “M’en revenant de Bordeaux”, provides a sprightly introductory piece from French Canada and introduces the group who will join Moira on the chorus songs. It’s followed by “In the Month of January”, a haunting Scottish traditional song performed at a very slow tempo, but it works; in fact, it’s gorgeous, and really showcases Moira’s voice at her very best – clear, soaring and controlled.

Songs 3 and 4 are Moira’s own compositions in the ballad style. “Kate’s Ballad” is based on a true event that happened to a friend, “Lament of a Miner’s Wife” is set against the background of the Yellowknife Giant Mine lockout and fatal explosion of 1992, and includes dulcimer and alto recorder accompaniment. Both songs are examples of the best kind of writing in the ballad style, leaving the listener with the feeling that, without knowing otherwise, he or she would have assumed they were traditional pieces. The second ballad makes me think of another fine mining song in the ballad style by the young Bob Dylan – “North Country Blues” – which tells of the shutting down of an iron ore mine near Bob’s childhood home of Hibbing, Minnesota.

“The Whummil Bore” and “Young Benjie” take us back to Scotland, the first sung from the vantage point (literally) of a Peeping Tom, who, like the apocryphal jerk who spied on Lady Godiva riding naked

through the town of Coventry, ends up seeing less than he wanted to, the second returning us to murder, mayhem and talking ghosts – the frequent, though, as Moira points out, not the sole, theme of Scottish traditional ballads. “Down by the Willow Garden” (aka “Rose Connolly”), accompanied on autoharp, brings more of the same, this time from a North American perspective. I was tickled by the “bottle of Burglar’s wine” with which the murderer poisons his sweetheart – it sounds much more interesting than mere Burgundy!

“Wee Wee Man” is another Scottish traditional ballad – a Child one, at that – about spell-casting fairies. As with several other items on this album, I had never come across this one, although I thought I knew most of Steeleye Span’s repertoire. Moira learned it from her father.

“Dick Turpin and the Lawyer” carries on the “be tricked” part of the CD theme with a lively account of one of the infamous highwayman’s exploits. This is followed by “Lamkin”, a revenge ballad and one of the hardest traditional ballads to sing owing to its unrelenting grimness, but Moira’s interpretation gloriously succeeds, being chilling and compelling without going over the top, and driving inexorably to its gruesome climax.

“Branwyn’s Pleasure” is an instrumental piece composed by Moira for Appalachian dulcimers, tenor and alto recorders. Who could fail to be drawn to a person who writes songs for her cat? No-one in this reviewer’s family, that’s for sure. It also provides an excellent respite after the tension of “Lamkin”.

“Still Her Answer To Me Was No” is a variant of “O No John”, familiar to some of us Brits from elementary schooldays. Though the lyrics are sometimes rather coy (not so much here), it has the merit of an appealing tune, one which Moira sings in especially good voice.

“I Have Four Brothers” – I was interested to see this unusual version of “The Riddle Song”. I’ve never sung it but I know of an almost identical version which starts “O my true love lives far from me” and is entitled “Perry Merry”, in a 1915 book of songs for children collected by Percy Dearmer and Martin Shaw and titled *Song Time*. My mother gave it to me when I was a small child.

I found Moira’s rendition of “A Week before Easter” (aka “The False Bride”) just a little too slow – the lilting rhythm of this English folksong about a jilted lover needs a slightly faster tempo to keep from dragging. But it is still beautifully sung.

I think “Maid on the Shore” is one of Moira’s favourite songs; at least, I’ve heard her choose it for performance a number of times. And why not? It’s a fine story in the genre where women outsmart one or more lecherous men, and, among other things, it pri-

vileges not just resourceful women but the power of singing, as the “maid” of the title, like the Sirens who tried to capture Odysseus, sings the sailors and ship’s captain to sleep before escaping back home with their treasure. It reminds me of “The Bonny Lass of Anglesey”, a Scottish (albeit set in Wales) ballad sung by Saskatchewan ballad-singer Paddy Tutty, which has a similar theme of single girl outwitting a bunch of swaggering males, but where dancing takes the place of singing as the source of enchantment.

In “Sands of the Shore” Moira is joined by the voices of Marilyn Morrison, Kate Tompkins, Dawn and Caitlin Lacey, Steve Lacey on guitar, and soprano and alto recorders in a song composed by Harry Staunton and Henry Pether which was once (and maybe still is) very popular amongst Scottish women in pub singalongs. It basically extols female solidarity and tells men to go to hell.

The final track on the album is “Tamlyn”, another fine Child ballad and one of my all-time favourites. I well remember Moira’s ringing rendition of it at the CSTM conference concert held in Athabasca, Alberta, in 2003, which is reproduced here. I don’t know this particular version of the ballad — text or tune— though the tune does sound familiar and has no doubt been utilized for other traditional lyrics. An American version of “Oh who will shoe your feet?” comes to mind. Moira says she learned it from the English ballad-singer Frankie Armstrong; there’s another version also credited to Frankie (on *Here’s a Health to the Man and the Maid*, Living Folk LFR 103) which is quite different, so she must have performed more than one version during her career. Well, this one has some splendid words; for example, when the heroine turns to ask her bewitched seducer his name “she nothing saw and nothing heard and all the woods grew dim”. Later, when the Fairy Court notice her there, ready to do what she must to save her true-love, “the thunder rolled across the sky and the stars they blazed like day”. And Moira sings “it”, not “him”, when describing the fearsome shapes and objects Tamlyn is turned into as Margaret struggles to hold him and the Elfin Court tries to make her let go. All these bring out and emphasize the otherworldliness and weirdness of the story more than some other versions, and Moira keeps our attention through it all.

You can tell I’m going to recommend this CD highly. It’s a professional production, efficiently and effectively bringing unfamiliar and better-known traditional songs and ballads to us by way of a storytelling gift and a fine voice. The occasional shrillness I noticed in Moira’s singing earlier is now under control, so that her voice soars and sustains notes confidently. When can we expect a fourth album?

Rosaleen Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

Enter the Haggis. *Casualties of Retail.*

ETHCD504. 90 King St., Port Colborne, Ont. L3K 4E9; info@enterthehaggis.com; www.enterthehaggis.com; United for Opportunity (UFO) Music, 33 West 25th St., 5th Floor East, New York, NY 10001, USA; www.UFOmusic.org

The Toronto-native band Enter the Haggis have been around since the mid-‘90s, and kick up the Celtic music world with edgy and swinging rock beats. “Twirling Towards Freedom” is a perfect example of “hard” Celtic Folk-Rock, taking jigs and reels and meshing them with electric riffs and rhythmic drum beats. Using the fiddle, bagpipe and electric guitar together has already been exploited in Celtic Rock for a time (fans of Ashley MacIsaac: “Twirling Towards Freedom” is like a déjà vu; MacIsaac’s “To the Quick” comes to mind...), but Enter the Haggis has a way of owning it.

Rearranged traditional songs such as “Congress” are examples of how the band use world beat and incorporate it into traditional reels. The mandolin and banjo are as predominant as the fiddle throughout this release, but with the introduction of various percussion instruments we have a sense that Afro-Celtic Sound System may have influenced the world beat infusion here. It should not be assumed, however, that Enter the Haggis are a world beat band; they are definitely electric Celtic Rock and they are very contemporary in their use of traditional songs.

The band turn rural into urban and address socio-political concerns in some of their songs. “Gasoline” is such an example of a political song illustrating the “former farm-boy” vs. corporation battle against environmental and commercial pollution. The band’s convictions may be displayed in this song, but it is a particularly good example of their musical leanings and distinct sound. Fiddle breaks and fingerpicking are also found on some of their tracks. The traditional and well known Irish folk song “She Moved Through the Fair” is beautifully rendered, with acoustic guitar and fiddle softly accompanying lulling vocals.

Overall, *Casualties of Retail* is a good example of what the band are capable of in generating Celtic Folk-Rock music. This CD was released in 2005, but Enter the Haggis were quick to produce two more CDs, *Soapbox Heroes* (2006) and *Northampton* (2007), and continue to thrive popularly on tour. Keep an eye out for more on this band; they seem to tour more in the United States; hopefully, a homecoming will be in order!

Julie M-A LeBlanc, St. John’s, Newfoundland

Martin Graebe and Shan Cowan. *Parallel Strands*. Wild Goose WGS 323CD; Wild Goose Studios, May Cottage, Wherwell, Hampshire, England, SP11 7JS; martin.graebe@btinternet.com; www.wildgoose.co.uk

Martin Graebe is the leading scholarly expert on the life and work of the late Victorian clergyman, novelist and folksong collector Sabine Baring-Gould. He has also written (and performs) his own songs in the English acoustic folk tradition. His partner, Shan Cowan, is a very fine singer of both traditional and contemporary material. On this CD they have come together as performers to showcase both aspects of Martin's work, hence the title *Parallel Strands*. So we find on the CD eight songs composed by Graebe and nine traditional songs collected by Baring-Gould in the English West Country during the 1880s and 1890s.

Two of Baring-Gould's most prolific informants were John 'Ginger Jack' Woodrich of Thrushleton and Sam Fone of Mary Tavy, both hamlets on the fringe of Dartmoor. Fone is represented here by "Tyburn Hill", a variant of the execution ballad "Jack Hall", and "One Night at Ten O'Clock". Woodrich was the source for "I Had Two Ships", which Graebe believes shares a common antecedent with "The Prisoner's Song", popularized between the wars in the USA by Vernon Dalhart. He also sang "Jacky My Son", a version of the traditional ballad "Lord Randal" (Child # 12), and it is included here, as are such other traditional songs noted by Baring-Gould as "Lavender Green", "Sly Reynard", "Maiden Under Willow" and "The Maid and her Swain". "Rouse, Rouse", although it also falls in the 'traditional' category, is a Cornish carol, while "Tobacco", a popular and much reprinted broadside from the Restoration Era, was probably composed by the poet George Wither circa 1670.

The only one of Graebe's own songs with which I was previously familiar was "Jack in the Green", but on the evidence of this CD he is obviously a versatile and accomplished songsmith. I like his songs about different ways of earning a living: "Stonecracker John" about road-building, "Laying My Life on the Line" about railway track maintenance, and, above all, "Honiton Lace" about the life of a Devon lace-worker. But the stand-out song for me is undoubtedly "From Severn, By the Somme", a moving ballad that Graebe sings unaccompanied about a nurse killed in Northern France during the Great War.

There is a myth that English traditional music has less vitality and worth than Scottish or Irish folksong. This CD should help dispel that myth. Although difficult to find, it is well worth the search.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta.

Ron Hynes. *Ron Hynes*. BCD175; Borealis Records, 225 Sterling Road, Unit 19, Toronto, Ont. M6R 2B2; info@borealisrecords.com; www.hynesite.org; www.borealisrecords.com

This self-titled disc is the latest offering from Newfoundland's Ron Hynes, a truly legendary singer/songwriter. Over the course of a thirty-plus-year career, *Billboard* magazine's Larry LeBlanc has called Hynes "hands-down... the best songwriter in Canada" (let the debate begin!), while others have showered him with ECMA awards, JUNO nominations, and even an honorary doctorate (Memorial U). This latest album features Hynes singing and playing guitar, with support from a dozen other excellent musicians. The CD was recorded, produced and arranged by Paul Mills at The Millstream in Toronto, with four live tracks from the L.S.P.U. Hall in St. John's (courtesy of CBC's Terry Winsor).

Ten of the disc's fourteen tracks are brand new, all written or co-written by Hynes; his writing partners include Emile Benoit, Larry Foley, Declan O'Doherty, Johanna Rocco, Connie Hynes and Lily Hynes. The first track, "My Name is Nobody", is a simple tale of struggle that packs an elegant message into a petite 2'20" package. After four solid country-ish numbers, the next highlight for me was "Carry This Cross", which considers the thoughts of Jesus walking to his own crucifixion. For a more personal take on promise and pain, "The Mother Who Bore You In Pain (Dark Angel)" is written from the perspective of a mother whose grown son has returned, broken by the cruelties of a cold world. Any parent should be able to connect to this song – some will be up all night giving it thought.

Things ramp up again on the first live track, "Three Cheers For The Buccaneers", which features the voice of Hynes accompanied only by the audience, who whoop along like family, as they do in "Dirt Poor". Between these tracks is a live version of "Boy From Old Perlican", which tells the tale of a Newfoundlander in Nashville. The penultimate track, "Dry", is all about alcoholism, addiction, pain, anguish – it's one of the darkest songs I've ever heard. The final track is apparently the first recording of an older song, "Here Lies Lenora Jennings", and it is a stunning epic tale of love and loss. Only a songwriter such as Ron Hynes could get away with leaving this off previous albums – I'd buy this disc for this song alone.

Problems with the album amount to nit-picking – the four live tracks might seem like an afterthought, and the strong songs are *so* strong that they cast a shadow on the slightly-less-strong songs (which would seem stellar in most other contexts). *Ron Hynes* (the album) is a wonderful disc. While

craftsmanship is hard to define in words, this disc easily confirms Hynes' place as a master singer/songwriter.

Paul Guise, Winnipeg, Manitoba

Hit and Run Bluegrass. *Without Maps or Charts.*

HRB-02; www.hitandrunchgrass.com;

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Without Maps or Charts serves up a goodly helping of contemporary American bluegrass, with occasional nods to both traditional folk music and Nashville-style country & western. This young group is becoming one of my favourite bluegrass bands. I like the way they present a varied mix of traditional tunes, classics by the first generation of bluegrass pioneers, and their own compositions. And I like the fact that they have three vocalists—two female and one male—and that they feature different instruments on different tracks, both of which factors help them to avoid that certain sameness of sound that afflicts many a bluegrass group. They are fine musicians, but they do not flaunt their virtuosity, with the result that the CD thankfully lacks those lengthy and rather boring displays of instrumental prowess that characterize many bluegrass recordings (and live performances). Make no mistake, though, there is some fine five-string banjo playing here by Aaron Youngberg, Todd Livingston contributes some excellent breaks on the resonator guitar, and John Frazier is no slouch on mandolin and fiddle.

The focus, however, is on the songs, and there is some good material here. There are three traditional items: “Flying in the Wind” (sung by John Frazier), “Single Girl”, and the white gospel number “Keys to the Kingdom” (the latter two both sung by bassist Erin Coats). Erin is perhaps the strongest champion of older material in the group, as she also takes the lead vocal on a cover of the Stanley Brothers’ “Highway of Regret”. And she performs perhaps my favourite track on the CD, a country lament titled “I’ve Kissed You My Last Time”.

Guitarist Rebecca Hogan takes her share of the lead vocals; they include a cover of Bonnie Raitt’s “Any Day Woman” (actually written by Paul Seibel), “Hardwood Floor”, her most atmospheric track, “Wind Moans Under the Cabin Door”, and a self-penned, autobiographical ditty called “Why Does This Old Town Look Better Now?” John Frazier’s songs include two of his own compositions, “Home Is Where I’ll Ever Be” and “Lockdown for Your Love”, but I most enjoyed his performance of a Danny Shafer song, “Close the Bar”, a piece of country & western posturing in the honky-tonk tradition.

This CD is very easy on the ears and I had a ball listening to it, so I’m a little reluctant to confess that

– truth be told – it lacks that special something that would really lift it above all those other bluegrass CDs out there. But if this style of music is your preferred taste, you will certainly enjoy this skillfully played and well-recorded album.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

Barry Luft & Tim Rogers. *Songs of the Iron Trail.*

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www.irontrail.ca

Canadians tend to let one of a class of things stand for all, particularly when it comes to popular culture. It’s the one everybody knows about, the one that gets most air play, most mention in the press. Who’s our jazz musician? Oscar Peterson. Jazz singer? Diana Krall. Short story writer? Alice Monroe. Novelist? Margaret Atwood. What’s our train song? “The Canadian Railroad Trilogy”.

That’s why *Songs of the Iron Trail: The Canadian Railroad Experience in Song* had an impact on folks like me when it first appeared back in 1983. We had train songs? Good train songs? Good train songs not written by Gord Lightfoot? Traditional train songs? Well, fancy that!

And now the pleasure is renewed at seeing the old vinyl shrunk down to CD size and digitized. The plastic’s got the same good songs as the vinyl, performed by Barry Luft and Tim Rogers, with able backing from Grit Laskin, Patty Rogers and Roy Warhurst. The production values are high, and the cover is still the wittiest, classiest and most beautiful of any Canadian folk album ever made – even if it doesn’t whack you in the eyes any more because it’s the relative size of a postage stamp.

A reissue is a reissue, but in the case of *Songs of the Iron Trail*, it’s like a new event, because the times are different, folksong is different, and we are different from a quarter-century ago. The LP was a good idea then, but is the CD a good idea now? The answer, I think, is, yes, for both former and new listeners.

Songs of the Iron Trail is something of a time capsule, and all the more valuable for that. It stores a lovely moment in the Canadian folksong revival. The Calgary scene, where Tim Rogers was still an energizing force (he would soon have to turn his energy elsewhere), was thriving and forging links with counterparts in Toronto and St. John’s. Grit Laskin had put in 10 years’ young labour as a member of one of the Queen City’s foremost folk mafia families, the Friends of Fiddlers Green; he had absorbed its British Isles approach to the extent that he had learned to play (and later, build) the Northumbrian smallpipes. The meshing of Rogers’ and Luft’s very Canadian

voices and western style with Laskin's CanBritfolk accompaniments results in a hybrid that is a true pleasure today – like finding a long-forgotten bottle in your wine cellar and savouring once again the joy of a vintage past. This is the old Canadian folksong revival at its best, and isn't it worth listening to!

The Canadian folksong revival of the 1970s and 1980s was built on a love of traditional song and respect for what it had to say to the present about the past. The songs on *Iron Trail* aren't by any means all traditional – many have composer credits attached to them – but they sound traditional and very Canadian. The place of the individual hero one finds in American train songs (Casey Jones, John Henry) is taken in these songs by unnamed figures representing a class of ordinary people – the hobo, the railroad boy, the roving harvester – or a train line itself – the Hudson Bay, the Kettle Valley. We deal with the systems differently – by appealing to the sense of decency and sympathy in our fellows, not prevailing in epic struggles. The predominant mood of the songs in *Iron Trail* is sardonic (very Canadian), sympathetic or mournful – not boastful, worshipful, muscle-bound, sentimental or grandiose. The songs are calm, measured, straightforward, undramatic. This is a recording that could never have been made today, and I'm not just talking about style. This is the era of singer-songwriters whose works chart personal moods and stories. I doubt there's many with the knowledge of the old songs or the love of what they stand for, who could or would find the material that went into this recording and see it as valuable. And where is the community to make such an investment a commercial viability, or give it the artistic respect that might compensate for the inevitable low return?

I hope a lot of people besides us old folkies get to hear this CD, and not just in schools, though I suspect that's where it will end up. *Songs of the Iron Trail* deserves new generations of listeners who will never otherwise have the chance to make the same discovery about Canadian train songs that we did from this terrific album. *Sheldon Posen, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau, Quebec*

Various. Alberta: Wild Roses, Northern Lights. Smithsonian Folkways SFW CD 40538; Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, 750 9th Street NW, Washington DC 20560-0953; www.folkways.si.edu

In the summer of 2006 the Smithsonian Folklife Festival featured a program titled "Alberta at the Smithsonian", which provided a considerable number of Alberta folk, blues, and country artists an opportunity to promote their latest recordings in the heartland of

the USA. This compilation CD is an outgrowth of that event, and it is designed to illustrate the work of eighteen different Alberta artists. Ian Tyson gets two tracks, "Land of the Shining Mountains" and (of course) "Four Strong Winds". All the rest, who include Asani, Tim Hus, The Kubasonics, k.d. lang, Corb Lund, The Mc-Dades, and David Wilkie and Cowboy Celtic, get one cut each.

All the material is strong, so highlights will depend largely on your stylistic preferences. I'm a fan of Maria Dunn, so I'll pick out her "Do You Know Slim Evans?" and I'll also point out that "Church of the Long Grass", one of John Wort Hannam's best songs, is included here. "Half-Breed", by Laura Vinson and Free Spirit, is perhaps the most moving song on the CD, but it is closely rivaled by Terry Morrison's "Long Dusty Road". And don't miss "High Rider (The John Ware Story)", a fine cowboy ballad written and performed by Diamond Joe White.

A few artists who should have been included, such as Bill Bourne and Jim Keelaghan, are missing, so the survey of Alberta talent is not comprehensive. Yet, all in all, the album demonstrates that the quality of contemporary songwriting in Alberta is very high. If you know only the work of such big names as Ian Tyson and k.d. lang before listening to this disc, you will be amazed— and very pleasantly surprised — by what you find here.

David Gregory, Athabasca, Alberta

Various. Songs of Witchcraft and Magic. WGC-341CD. Wild Goose Records, May Cottage, Fullerton Rd., Wherwell, Hampshire SP11 7JS, U.K.; Doug.Bailey@wildgoose.co.uk; www.wildgoose.co.uk; Museum of Witchcraft, The Harbour, Boscastle, Cornwall, PL35 0HD, U.K.; museumwitchcraft@AOL.com; www.museumofwitchcraft.com

Produced as a collaborative effort by Wild Goose Records and the Museum of Witchcraft, located in the Cornish community of Boscastle, this is what one might call a compilation or sampler recording, a sort of "best of" on a specific musical theme, in this case a collection of traditional British songs and ballads centering in on the strange and ghostly world of witchcraft and magic. Here are songs and ballads that harken back to even older archetypes found in myths and folktales reaching back to an antiquity deep in the recesses of human memory and a strand of oral tradition certainly older than recorded history itself. Here are songs and ballads that range in mode and imagery from stories of brutal revenge, duels arcane and futuristic prognostications and prophecies

to bizarre transformations, haunting mysticism, and occasional bursts of wry humour and playful wit that underlie the darker and more baleful elements of magic. The themes, motifs and plots of many of the songs found on this recording can be traced through definite folklore links to very old myths and folktales found in numerous cultural traditions, ranging from Celtic legend to classical Greco-Roman mythology, and from old Norse stories to tales found as far afield as ancient Egypt and locales farther to the east.

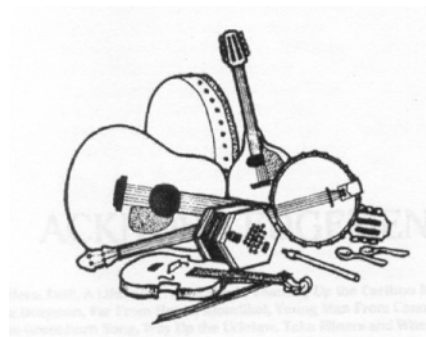
To begin with, the number of cuts on this recording is a bit of a mystery. The excellent and detailed 36-page booklet that comes with the CD officially lists 14 songs, along with their lyrics, as well as much valuable background information on the sources and origins of the songs and their folkloristic links to world folk beliefs and traditions and older narrative motifs and archetypes. But magic often is its own wonder and delight, for we learn that there is an additional cut, a bonus track, about which more later. Lovers and devotees of the canon of Child ballads will find this recording a pure delight, for ten items from Child's collection are included: numbers 1, 6, 19, 35, 36, 37, 43, 44, 113 and 295. Of the songs that are not from Child, several deserve mention. Peter Bellamy's stark rendering of the Al Stewart piece "Nostradamus" is a powerful evocation of the life and prophetic verses of the 16th-Century French mystic and visionary whose life and work have been the subject of much controversy and debate even into modern times. Alva's version of the hauntingly mystical "Bells of Paradise" is most intriguing because it conflates the birth of Jesus Christ and the Grail legend so inextricably linked to Arthurian romance. Another extraordinary effort is Tom Brown's version of the apocryphal ballad "The Bitter Withy", which contrasts the very human figure of Christ as a young boy wishing acceptance from a trio of rich children and the grimly tragic events that follow from that encounter, in which the magical appearance of a bridge of sunbeams plays a central role.

As to the great narrative story-songs found on the recording, some of the performances are truly classic and most memorable. Frankie Armstrong's "Young Orphy", a British ballad version of the ancient Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, is pure spellbinding storytelling, with the elf-king's realm taking the place of the Greek underworld of Hades. Martin Carthy's "Willie's Lady" presents us with a series of detailed magical charms and spells centering upon a woman whose pregnancy has been delayed by the evil machinations of her husband's sorceress mother. One of the most potent musical evocations of magic is Gill Berry's version of "The Brown Girl", in which a spurned maiden takes a dark revenge upon her former suitor and, at his deathbed, promises to

dance upon the summer grass while he lies beneath it in his grave. The Queen of Elfland makes appearances in several songs, such as when she restores to his own shape the luckless fellow who spurns the attentions of Alison Gross, and as the guide to Thomas the Rhymer's epic journey to Elfland. To be sure, magic also reigns supreme in the realm of shape-shifting and bizarre transformations. They are plentiful in such ballads as "The Great Selkie", "The Two Magicians" and "The Laily Worm", in which not only humans but seals, mackerel, birds, horses and hares regularly change from one shape into another as part of transformative spells. If, as in "Young Orphy", music can create its own magic, then words also have their own power, as evidenced by "Juniper, Gentle and Rosemary", with its arcane riddles propounded in a verbal duel of wits. And, last but not least, let us not forget the aforementioned bonus track, which comes in the form of a piece entitled "The Chase Song", done to the tune of another Child Ballad, "The Twa Corbies", and whose origin comes from the work of Robert Graves as found in his classic volume "The White Goddess".

This is one of those recordings that in years to come is destined to become a folk classic. It is filled with musical images of shadowy landscapes: powerfully poignant, playfully wry and witty, tragic and darkly sinister, a borderland of narrative in music and song where the everyday normal world comes into contact with the otherworldly and the eldritch in all its magical panoply and musical power. The delights of this recording will be a double positive plus, both for fans of traditional music and song of the British Isles and for those who, like myself, are fans and devotees of the ghostly, the supernatural and the bizarre. It may indeed take me a very long time to get this recording off the CD player, that's how good and wonderful it is. Very highly recommended.

Robert Rodriquez, New York, New York



A Peak in Darien

Some of these CDs will be reviewed in upcoming issues; some are outside our purview, but are included as a courtesy to the people who sent them to us, and to inform our readers.

Heather Blush. *First Blush*. HBCD2005. Stubborn Penguin Music (no postal address on packaging); heather@heatherblush.com; www.heatherblush.com

Dave Clarke. *Reunion*. CROCD1005. 1508 Gladstone Ave., Victoria, B.C. V8R 1S5 (no postal address on packaging); daveclarke@steelrail.ca; www.daveclarke.ca

Elk Soldier. *The Elk Way: Pow-Wow Songs Recorded Live in Green Bay*. CR-6431. Canyon Records, 3131 West Clarendon Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85017, USA; canyon@canyonrecords.com; www.canyonrecords.com

Thee Express. *Express Yourself: Chicken Scratch*. CR-8119. Canyon Records (addresses above)

Simon Fox. *In the Duck Shed*. Deep North Music, P.O. Box 47038, Vancouver, B.C. V6G 3E1; info@deepnorthmusic.com; www.deepnorthmusic.com (new addresses, different from packaging)

Simon Fox. *A Winter's Tale*. SF004. (addresses above)

Dave Gunning. *Christmas*. WEE2006. Gilmour Productions, 35 Quarry Road, Halifax, N.S. B3N 1X1 (no postal address on packaging); moreinfo@davegunning.com; www.davegunning.com

Dave Gunning. *House for Sale*. WEE2007 (addresses above)

Allison Lupton. *Fly Like Swallows*. LM002. Learig Music, P.O. Box 23015, Cambridge, Ont. N1S 4Z6; info@allisonlupton.com; www.allisonlupton.com

Northern Cree and Friends. *Dancin' 'Til Sunrise: Round Dance Songs Recorded "Live", vol. 7*. CR-6414. Canyon Records (addresses above)

Shelley Posen. *Menorah: Songs from a Jewish Life*. WDM03. Well Done Music, 295 First Ave., Ottawa, Ont. K1S 2G7; shelley@shelleyposen.com; www.shelleyposen.com

Paul Reddick. *Revue: The Best of Paul Reddick*. NBM0040. Northern Blues Music Inc., 225 Sterling Rd., Unit 19, Toronto, Ont. M6R 2B2; info@northernblues.com; www.northernblues.com

Kristin Sweetland. *Own Sweet Time*. AVCD002. Arbor Vitae Music, 701 Sanatorium Rd., London, Ont. N6H 3X1; kristin@kristinsweetland.com; www.kristinsweetland.com

The Swing Bridge Band. *The Early Years*. John Bird, c/o Gen. Del., Iqaluit, NV X0A 0H0; johnbird@sympatico.ca

Various. *Festival mémoire et racines: Collection souvenir, vol. 5*. Lanaudière: Mémoire et racines, 200, rue de Salaberry, bur. 123, Joliette (Qc) J6E 4G1; festival@memoireracines.qc.ca; www.memoireracines.qc.ca

Widow Maker. *The Awful Truth*. SR1007. 2004 9th Ave. NW, Calgary, Alta. T2N 1E6; info@widowmakerbluegrass.com; www.widowmakerbluegrass.com

Anthony Wakeman & Mr. Soon. *Points of Origin*. CR-7080. Canyon Records (addresses above)

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