

Comptes rendus/Reviews

Paul Haslem. *Step Out of Time. Dulcimer Traditions.* Paul Haslem, PO Box 26, Fordwich, Ontario NOG 1V0.

Step Out of Time is a collection of traditional melodies and Paul Haslem's original tunes played on hammered dulcimer, backed up by guitar, cello, and various other instruments. The traditional tunes, which include quite a few by O'Carolan (on only one of which the Irish master is given proper credit), will offer few surprises. For those of us who love this repertoire, that is just fine. The original tunes, all written by Paul Haslem, add spice and relief from familiarity to the selection.

The one surprise in the repertoire, on an otherwise totally instrumental disc, is "Blind Mary," which has been given love song lyrics; I have to admit that I would have preferred that it had been left as an instrumental. The sugary-sweet lyrics are out of character with the simple elegance of the rest of the album, and the vocal rendering by Terri Burns is unremarkable.

Paul Haslem's dulcimer style is straightforward, with ornamentation used in moderation. Much of the colour is provided by the harmonies of the backup instruments. The guitar does upstage the dulcimer melody in a few places, but for the most part, the arrangements are tasteful.

Dulcimer Traditions continues in much the same vein. A reprise of "Blind Mary" restores it to its rightful instrumental character, and Turlough O'Carolan receives proper credit for his work. The dulcimer stands out more as a solo instrument

on this recording, and Haslem demonstrates the percussive character of the dulcimer with more noticeable ornamentation. The arrangements are better balanced, with some very nice accompaniment on flute and harp. Some tunes are played solo, and the accompaniment is more restrained on the others.

The selection of music on this disc is again a mix of traditional works and original compositions, with the addition of two classical pieces, Bach's "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" and Gounod's "Ave Maria." I was disappointed with "Jesu"; this is, unfortunately, a stripped-down excerpt only. True, the full work is a challenge to play on the dulcimer (trust me!), but it is a shame to abbreviate such a well-known piece. On the other hand, "Greensleeves," a delightful duet of dulcimer and harp, is a treat to listen to.

These discs are very listenable: the listener will find a variety of both familiar and unfamiliar tunes. Their strength is in the tasteful arrangements (particularly on *Dulcimer Traditions*), which bring out the individual character of each melody. They will be a pleasant addition to any collection, especially to anyone who is not familiar with the hammered dulcimer and its repertoire.

—Keith Walker
Calgary, Alberta

Tzimmes. *A Lid for Every Pot*. Tzimmes, #12, 719 East 31st Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5W 2W9.

I love *tzimmes*, a colourful, unlikely mélange of vegetables, simmered to wondrous sweetness; a mystical marriage of flavours. I love Tzimmes, a Vancouver ensemble that concocts its own "Sephardi-klezmer" sound, combining Yiddish, JudeoSpanish, and contemporary Israeli folk flavours with, yes, a most wondrous sweetness. Their new release, *A Lid for Every Pot*, is musical heaven. "Lid," of course, is the Yiddish word for song. And everyone knows that there is a lid for every pot, a match for every bachelor, and a song for every occasion. [*Might the title pun on another level, as well, since a lid was once a common measure for another variety of pot? Just asking.... GWL*]

A Lid for Every Pot is filled with musical surprises. It opens with a most joyous celebration: a Psalm of praise, sung to sharp, Middle Eastern rhythms. In ancient Temple times, the psalms actually were sung to musical accompaniment, particularly percussion. Who knows? Perhaps Tzimmes has recreated the very sounds of those early celebrations! We move on, in manic fashion, to sweet musical confusion: a crazy marriage of Arab *Debka* with klezmer 2/4 rhythm. And then, oh, we weep sweet tears, in a typically romantic JudeoSpanish serenade, "Avre Est Abajour." Who but "Traditional" would come up with words like, "Open the shutter, jewel of my life.... I passed by your door, but I found it closed. I kissed the lock just as I would kiss you"? The harmonies are delicious in this serenade, and the melody is one of those that you find yourself coming back to again and again for more. Like *tzimmes*.

We revisit the gorgeous harmonic possibilities of this ensemble in their arrangement of "Oyfn Pripetshik." This song has become almost an anthem, recalling life in the *shetels* of eastern Europe before they were so horribly destroyed. The

Rabbi, teaching the Hebrew alphabet to the little children, sings, "Children, when you are older, you will understand for yourselves, how much pain and tears lie within these tiny letters." I thought I was done crying to that old song, but Julian Segal's accordion sings a plaintive countermelody to the traditional melody, reopening the tender sadness.

Segal, originally from Mexico City, was winning awards for his accordion playing at the age of seventeen. He is equally clever on keyboards and synthesizers. Yona Bar-Sever, born in Jerusalem with Salonikan roots, brings a Mediterranean spiciness to the *tzimmes*. Myrna Rabinovitz, raised in Montréal on Yiddish songs, seems equally at home in the traditional Yiddish conversation between a young girl and her mom, "Yome Yome," and in the decidedly Middle Eastern "Shabhi Yerushalayim." Adel Awad, from Cairo, Egypt, brings astonishingly complex drumbeats into tunes such as "Shuvi Shuvi," words from The Song of Songs sung to a compelling worldbeat rhythm.

Tzimmes delights in rhythmic surprises. "Tres Ermanikas" alternates a Greek 7/8 for the verses and a Spanish 6/8 for the chorus. "Tayere Malkele" goes along sounding typically klezmer until the Arabic belly dance episode. As my *Buby* always said when she threw some unlikely new addition into her *tzimmes*, "What's to be bad?" The crazy thing about *tzimmes* is that you can never get enough of its sweetness. You keep taking the lid off the pot and dipping in for more. The first Tzimmes release, *Sweet and Hot* was a musical delight. And *A Lid for Every Pot* begins to satisfy the craving for more of those delicious flavours.

—Nomi Kaston
Calgary, Alberta

Kyp Harness. *God's Footstool*. Amatish Music, RR#1, Markham, Ont. L3P 3J2

I got my first taste of Kyp Harness on an Amatish Records sampler cassette. Information from that company describes the artists whom they represent as "unique" and often an "acquired taste." I cannot help but agree. Although I have listened to the CD a number of times, it simply defies categorizing. The closest and probably most obviously recognizable sound is Kyp's voice itself, at times sounding like a very early Bob Dylan, so full of things to say that sometimes the lyrics are a bit rushed and subsequent listenings are not optional if you are attempting to understand the lyric content. This music is insightful at times, and can be quite poetic.

There is an obvious eclectic smattering of musical influences to this album, with guest appearances by Bob Wiseman, always an innovator and risk-taker. The CD is fast-paced, and definitely grows on you. Kyp's philosophies on our political system and his observations of the extremes that life dishes up every day to make modern day warriors of us all on the battle-field of existence and emotion. If you're tired of the tedium found in mass-produced music, and you're not afraid to try something different, this CD is for you.

—Sheree Gillcrist
Hampton, N.B.

Tanglefoot. *Saturday Night at Hardwood Lake*. Tanglefoot, Box 2263, Peterborough, Ont. K9J 7Y8.

This pioneer-styled folk group, who take to the stage in full period costume, first caught my attention when they played at Festival by the Sea in St. John, NB, last summer. As a live performance group, they are simply one of the best that I have ever seen. Their music dramatizes the fabric that the roots of this nation are made from. Their songs, a healthy

combination of "fakelore" and "folklore," are about real people, like our ancestors, whose hardships and perseverance turned the everyday act of living into a personal accomplishment. Although many of the songs are spirited, the title track laments the passing of the traditional Saturday Night square dance, a Canadian institution that has as yet found no worthy

replacement. Four fine musicians make up this group, with a great deal of the lyrics penned by Joe Grant, who also plays a very inspired fiddle. Songs about miners, farmers and sailors find their way into the traditional mix, where banjos, fiddles, guitars, penny whistles, harmonicas and bodhrans coexist in perfect harmony. The album captures snapshots of the Canadian spirit and the harsh conditions under which this country

took its first faltering steps. It is undeniably a "feel good" album and one that you will find yourself singing along with in spite of yourself. These Upper Canadians, Bob Wagner, Al Parrish, Steve Ritchie and Joe Grant, invite you along on a personal history lesson the likes of which you won't soon forget.

—Sheree Gillcrist

Tall are the Tales: Newfoundland Stories and Recitations. Pigeon Inlet Productions PIP 4-7332. Pigeon Inlet Productions, PO Box 1202, Saint John's, Newfoundland, A1C 5M9.

In the summer of 1988, I was fortunate to have attended the Country Dance and Song Society's folk music week, held at Pinewoods Camp near Plymouth, Massachusetts; as part of its staff for that week, CDSS brought in two gentlemen from Newfoundland, Jim Payne and Kelly Russell, who demonstrated various aspects of the musical, instrumental, and folkloric traditions of Newfoundland, past and present. In one of his more interesting sessions, Kelly Russell spent a good deal of time demonstrating the longstanding and strong tradition of storytelling and the oral narrative, and proved that the art of telling tales is alive and well in Newfoundland today, whether the stories be Newfoundland versions of centuries-old European jocular tales, stories from local history, or the monologues and rhymed recitations that have been staples in the local raconteur's repertoires for decades.

Thanks to Pigeon Inlet Productions, we now have a delightful sampling of the storyteller's art, and what this intriguing recording proves is that the good folks in Newfoundland are just as capable of spinning a good yarn as they are of singing old ballads or playing spirited dance tunes.

The seven tellers on this recording include John Joe English, Francis Colbert, Leo O'Brien, Baxter Wareham, Lem Snow, Ted Russell, and Ted's son Kelly Russell, himself an excellent singer and musician in his own right and, by the bye, the founder and mainspring of Pigeon Inlet Productions, which has done a great job in recording the songs, dance music, and poetry throughout the province since the late 1970s. Just as the tellers represent a variety of styles and were recorded in varying performance settings, so the tales and recitations represent a variety of material and are drawn from diverse sources: from folk stories that are from the oral tradition, to wholly original pieces composed by the teller, to reworkings of older material into new narratives.

Several of the tales show off the strong tradition of the rhymed recitation and monologue that has developed in Newfoundland, some of the most popular of which are found on this recording, including "Lobster Salad," "Saint Peter at the Gate," "Winter," and "When Summer Comes," the latter two being original pieces composed by one of the best reciters in the business, Lem Snow. While the two Snow pieces are personal reflections on the positives and negatives of both the winter and summer season, both "Lobster Salad" and "Saint Peter at the Gate" actually do tell stories. Heaven is the setting for both of these tales. In "Lobster Salad," John Joe English tells of a gentleman who, after dining on this item, has a comical dream in which he visits heaven. In "Saint Peter at the

Gate," Francis Colbert tells of a couple attempting to enter heaven and what results therefrom.

Someone once said that if you want to make history interesting, turn it into tales, and Baxter Wareham's "Yankee Privateer" proves the point quite nicely, telling the story of a group of Newfoundland sailors who cleverly outwitted a warship of the United States just after American independence. At the other end of the narrative spectrum is a tale such as "Little Dicky Millburn," told by Leo O'Brien, a story which is known and has been told for centuries all across Europe and North America, here given in the form of a *cante fable*, because of its repeated musical phrases and interludes. "Casey and the Census," another jocular tale, told by English, is the kind of piece that might have been popular in music hall circles or cabaret or vaudeville performances, done as a tandem piece by two performers. English's impersonation of the lady of the house will leave the listener laughing and chuckling all the way from beginning to end.

Three of the stories recorded come from the cycle of tales told about the doings of the inhabitants of Pigeon Inlet, a cycle of stories that became the trademark in performance of the late raconteur and storyteller, Ted Russell. In "Geese," Grandpa Walcott has an unlooked-for aerial adventure with a flock of geese heading south for the winter, thus carrying the tall tale to new heights, as it were. In "Stealin' the Holes," a magistrate must decide the unusual case of the theft of two holes, and his decision would have done a law buff proud. In "Smokerroom on the Kyle," told by Kelly Russell, the setting is a story swap in which Grandpa Walcott tells of the great catch of squid that occurred in Pigeon Inlet in 1888. While this is not the usual tall tale of the big fish that got away, it still nonetheless comes under the umbrella of tall tales in the finest tradition of this popular genre.

Most of the stories were recorded during the late 1970s and early 1980s, with two exceptions: the tales taken from Ted Russell were recorded in the mid-1950s for CBC Saint John's, while Kelly's rendering of "Smokerroom on the Kyle" was recorded in 1994. A book accompanies this cassette, in which the text of each story is included, as well as information on each teller and the date and manner of recording and performance of each story.

For a long time I have believed that it is even harder to make a good storytelling recording than of songs or dance music. A storyteller does his or her best when in front of an eager audience, and studio recordings of tellers often miss the mark.

Many of the performances on this recording were captured with live audiences to help the enjoyment even further. Just as Pigeon Inlet has excellently represented the ballads, songs, and dance music of Newfoundland these many years, so too, has this delightful recording represented the storytelling and

Richard Wood. *The Celtic Touch*. RW1995, Independent cassette and CD. Produced by Richard Wood, Skip and Kimberley Holmes. Contact: Richard Wood, 13 Westcomb Cres, East Royalty, Prince Edward Island, Canada, C1C 1B6.

For those who love fiddle music, especially the Maritime/Scottish variety, this album is a special treat. At the ripe old age of seventeen Richard has released his third album (after *Richard Wood and All Fired Up*). The twelve tracks and 45 tunes explore his Scottish heritage, though 13 of the tunes are composed by Richard himself in the tradition. Seven others are attributed to the likes of J.S. Skinner and J.M. Henderson, but most are "trad." In fact, several are titled simply "reel" or "jig," though some sport intriguing names such as "Democratic Rage" and "The Night We Had The Goat."

Most of the tracks are "sets" of tunes running to four and five minutes, and the combination of strathspeys and reels are reminiscent of Highland piping. Two tracks are airs by Richard: the lovely "Celtic Touch" and mournful "Memory of Dot MacKinnon". The album is rounded out by three sets of jigs.

The fiddling is more than lively, it downright rips a hole in the rug as you listen. Richard really "drives 'em", as they say in the Maritimes. This is a youngster playing far beyond his years with confidence and intensity. Those new to strathspeys may find those rhythms odd, and old time fiddlers may

James Keelaghan. *A Recent Future*. Green Linnet JTC 8453-4. Green Linnet Records, 43 Beaver Brook Road, Danbury, Connecticut 06810, USA.

Some months ago, I ran into James Keelaghan in the checkout line of the University of Calgary library. He was researching material for a commission from the CBC, as I recall. Not knowing him well, but wanting to express my growing admiration for his work, and specifically attempting to communicate that I prefer *his* use of certain thematic and musical materials over that of others sometimes associated with Keelaghan, whom I didn't (and won't) name, I blurted out something very stupid like, "I hope you don't start playing rock and roll." It wasn't what I intended, and I knew it.

For one thing, I don't know why I would call most of his work anything other than a sort of acoustic rock with a folkloric influence. After all, acoustic instruments outnumbered electric two or three to one in Presley's earliest ensembles, so it hardly makes sense to say that "electric = rock," "acoustic = something else." Presley's folkloric influences overlapped with Keelaghan's, though they weren't precisely the same.

I'm not going to get into a consideration of *rock* as a *folk music* (yeah, I think this sometimes can be said) or into stupid arguments about whether horses sing folk songs (as a matter of fact, I once met a shetland pony who sang Beach Boys numbers). Let's just note that Keelaghan has just released his second album for Green Linnet, a US firm, and thus may be

narrative tradition of Newfoundland. I can only and eagerly hope that there will be more of the same from Saint John's in the near future.

—Robert Rodriguez
New York City

be daunted by the relative obscurity of many of the tunes. However, every one is played with style and precision. The production is also top notch. Though this is a "fiddle" album of tunes, the superb backup musicians and the arrangements add considerably to the enjoyment. Kimberley Holmes's piano provides both rhythm and sparkling counterpoints. Skip Holmes on guitar adds wonderful intros to the sets and solid accompaniment. Dave MacIsaac, one of the top guitar players in any field, takes the melody on a couple of occasions to great effect. Greg Simm on bass and Maurice Nadeau on drums lend support a few of the tracks and Richard's foot is omnipresent in the jigs and reels.

Anyone who has seen Richard perform knows his foot. He holds the fiddle body and bow almost vertical, his upper body melting into the instrument while his step dancer legs pound out the rhythm. This is happy and intense fiddling by a teen who obviously loves and lives the music. It comes across full force on this highly recommended album.

—Gord Fisch
Regina, Saskatchewan

termed an "international recording star," and that his music and lyrics owe as much to the history of popular North American music, of all genres, as to any other tradition, and, finally, that Keelaghan has a lot to offer pop music and the world of rock.

Keelaghan's music swings like good rock should; he's also picked up the jazz harmonies that came into rock after the late '60s. He chooses his sidemen wisely and skillfully uses them and the recording studio to create moods, as well as strictly musical effects. Occasionally Keelaghan shows the influence of '60s topical balladry (Seeger, Dylan, Ochs), particularly in some of his historical items, in this set notably "Honoré." Although he denied an interest in "navel-gazing songs" in the notes to his first recording, sometimes his writing shows *that* '60s influence, as well:

In a recent future this has passed
It may not seem that way because
You're in the middle looking out
There is no will be there's just was
What is past is brightly coloured
Sharply drawn and clear
The future's sketchy
Though it's close it's never here

Some folkies liked to speak disparagingly of such self-consciously poetic effects during the '70s and '80s, particularly those who saw themselves as ballad-oriented. I myself have never been convinced that narrative was necessarily more valuable than lyric, though it does seem to me that the best introspective song (much of Bob Dylan's late '60s work, for example) is characterized by the careful use of imagery to embody emotional states in a fashion that the writer hoped could be applied by the listener. As the poet Allen Ginsberg noted, writing about his funeral poem for his mother, "Kaddish," "properly articulated personal archetype is universal." (The idea is not all that far from Eliot's "objective correlative.") If I'm uncomfortable with the stanza quoted, and with a few others throughout Keelaghan's work, it's because it seems to lack the grounding that vivid imagery can produce. (I choose the adjective "uncomfortable" intentionally, for I am not condemning the stanza, just worried about it.)

Whether or not one finds this aspect of Keelaghan's songwriting valuable, it is, I think, significant that it's present in his work, perhaps despite himself.

Keelaghan also sits squarely in the *Canadian* popular music tradition, as well; in fact, I doubt that there is currently a more able successor to Stan Rogers. Such a comparison may make Keelaghan uneasy on several counts, starting with the difficulty of reaching a high standard, on down to the implication that the writer might want to limit the younger performer to the older's esthetic school. Of course, Keelaghan does things Rogers never could, as well as *vice versa*. The obvious similarities come from the two writers' interest in historical and national themes and from their respective abilities to distill those themes into personalized ballads and appropriate imagery. There are musical similarities, as well as thematic ones, but James Keelaghan is no one's clone.

Listening to Keelaghan's music, even when the accompaniment hints of Louisiana or Newfoundland, one can never forget Keelaghan's prairie roots for very long. This is most obvious when he tells a western story ("Honoré," "Cold Missouri Waters," on this disc, but a number of examples could be chosen from earlier recordings) or when he names the western scene he evokes ("Sweetgrass Moon").

Just as Rogers sometimes went west for inspiration—though he never pretended to be anything he wasn't; he always *sounded* like an easterner—Keelaghan sometimes picks up thematic material from other parts of Canada. The donut-shop-at-midnight of "Get To You" might be anywhere north of the

Mason-Dixon Line, I suppose (in fact, I'm reminded of the play *Bus Stop*):

There's a rig spun out on 401
Closed it down to cars and vans
We're all refugees in this donut shop
I'm surprised this call got through
But some burly guy says my time is up
There must be some way I can get to you.

Another welcome aspect to Keelaghan's songwriting is the political. While he is rarely as politically explicit as, say Bob Bossin, there is a political undercurrent to much of what he writes. Interviewed at the time he ceased to write topical songs, Bob Dylan once decried the value of "finger-pointing songs," and for the most part Keelaghan avoids contemporary political specifics. (The obvious exception in the present recording is "Lazarus," a complaint about the attempts of some Republican sympathizers to rehabilitate the image of Richard Nixon.)

The absence of specifics both strengthens and weakens Keelaghan's work. He closes the very appealing "Hero and the Straightaway" (which I believe has actually received some air-play), with a verse expressing a generalized distaste for politicians. Now, granted, there are venal, self-serving politicians at all points of the political spectrum, but I'm beginning to sense a denial of responsibility in the popular claim that all of the politicians are untrustworthy. We get only what we demand, what we deserve. If we're going to make demands, we'd better be specific about them. If we're going to point, a finger will at least be more precise than a large tarry brush.

Having said that, I should add that Keelaghan is often able to provide anthems of hope, which in part work because of their generality, though surely the specific linking of Tiananmen Square and the Winnipeg General Strike accounts significantly for the success of "Never Gonna Stop This Train," as indeed similar specifics in the second verse of "Turn of the Wheel" help to drag that song from the realm of "navel-gazers" which, as noted, has worried even Keelaghan.

James Keelaghan's work continues to develop, to be stimulating and enjoyable. There's no need to call it "folk music," though obviously Keelaghan listens to folk music, nor to be afraid to call it "rock." Wouldn't it be lovely to have a pop radio dominated by this sort of music?

—GWL

Len Wallace. *Midnight Shift*. LEW -02-001. Len Wallace Enterprises, 346 Randolph, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 2T6.

The accordion is a good, honest, plebeian instrument. In his latest CD, *Midnight Shift*, Len Wallace, the self-styled "Main Squeeze of the Accordion Liberation League," uses his instrument to great effect in songs about the lives, disappointments, and adventures of working people. Wallace is a fine lyricist, too. His sincerity and commitment to working people are evident throughout the CD.

We feel that most of the songs on *Midnight Shift* fall

roughly into three categories:

- (1) Moving, no matter what your politics are
- (2) Best savoured by those involved in the cause
- (3) Celebrating the accordion's versatility.

The finest example in the first category is the title song, a denunciation of the greed that led to the Westray mining disaster. And in "Leaving the Fishing Behind," Wallace is completely credible playing the part of an out-of-work fisherman.

When you listen to this song, you can feel the misery of unemployment and the loss of a way of life.

The songs in the second category have merit but do not transport us. "Sing the Eagle Home", for example, expresses a point of view well, but is not captivating to those not active in the aboriginal movement.

The pieces in the third category are an absolute delight. In his two "Celts-Slavic Fusion" medleys, Wallace, through his trusty accordion, celebrates his own Ukrainian roots and Celtic influences. It is amazing how well the two musical traditions work together. (Wallace says Loreena McKennitt told him that all Celts may have originated in Ukraine.) And Wallace's version of "Takin' Care of Business" is a highly imaginative cover which, in our view, far surpasses Randy Bachman's original. You just can't help but dance—and laugh, as the "Beer Barrel Polka" breaks through.

There is only one piece on the CD that really does not work. "If They Come in the Morning," written by Jack Warshaw, is a song about how people "disappear" in countries with authoritarian regimes. This is a subject close to our hearts. We find the melody so cheerful and pretty that any effect the words might otherwise have is lost. Maybe this piece would work as a poem, or set to different music.

Our only other criticism is the absence of lyrics on the liner notes. It's frustrating, because a lot of the songs are worth learning. *Midnight Shift* is a distinctive, worthwhile addition to anyone's CD collection. The lyrics are solid and substantial, and it's refreshing to hear an accordion when you were expecting a guitar. What we want to know now is, how do we join the Accordion Liberation League?

—Rona Altrows and Bill Paterson
Calgary, Alberta

Stewart McIsaac. *Letting Go*. C940507. Southwood Productions, RR#1, Gravenhurst, Ontario P1P 1R1

Letting Go is an intensely personal collection of ten songs and one instrumental piece—all written and performed by Stewart McIsaac with a distinctly melancholic feel. Two main themes are loss and love. This seems to relate to the dedication of the album to the memory of Mr. McIsaac's late sister, and perhaps the album represents a cathartic "letting go" of this sorrow. Lyrics are a mixture of personal thoughts and descriptive imagery that is for the most part in free verse. Acoustic guitar is the dominant instrument, but is blended for different effects with electric guitars, hammered dulcimer, marimba, conga, bass drum, wind chimes, Euphonium horn, penny whistle, thunder, harmonica and synthesizer.

The fact that this was this reviewer's first exposure to Mr. McIsaac's music may account for the difficulty experienced in appreciating much of the lyrical and musical intent. Among the most accessible pieces is "Stewart Acres", a song of reflection on childhood memories and the relentless passage of time. The liner notes provided for "I Walk the Far North" were helpful, and one cannot help believing that notes for the other pieces would enhance appreciation and understanding.

—Mark Wonneck
Calgary, Alberta

Bill Gallaher and Jake Galbraith. *The Road West*. Bill Gallaher, #4, 1275 Pembroke Street, Victoria, BC V8T 1J7.

My tardiness in submitting a review of this offering (received in the fall of 1993) from these two talented West Coast performers must in part be due to my disappointment. I find this album not on a par with their exciting *Home to the Island*, which I heard first in 1992 [reviewed (1991), 25:4, p. 46]. The singing sounds tired, the rhymes often miss their mark or are trite, and the instrumental work is fairly predictable. This work doesn't convey what these musicians can accomplish. The entire album sounds like it was made the way most struggling independent producers and artists record—on a shoestring budget late at night after a hard day's work!

Even so, there are some great songs here, inspired by Canadian history:

"The Wind"—W.O. Mitchell's question ably investigated

"The West In Her Eyes"—the pain of loss during the settlement of the prairie

"Three Dollar Dreams"—a mining song of Vancouver Island (but why was it included on both albums?)

"The Hold Up"—an excellent song of Bill Miner's exploits

"The Chilkoot Pass"—inspired by that incredible photograph ... with narration by Jake from Robert Service's "Spell of the Yukon" (this cut has an unexplained rumba rhythm and an "El Paso" guitar fill à la Oscar Lopez!).

"The Last Battle"—Gallaher's brilliant song of Riel and the Métis' last stand at Batoche. Bill's name should be a household word in Canada for having written this song! Maybe one day it will be. C'mon you history teachers! Get Bill Gallaher's songs into your lessons. They will be a great inspiration.

Maybe this was Bill's "Eric Bogle tribute" album. I'm looking forward to more of his own stylings and more great historical songs of the Canadian West. As Bill has shown, there's a lot more to Western Canada's history than American cowboy songs!

—Jim Dauncey
Calgary, Alberta

Jiggery Pokery. Songs and Ceilidh Tunes from England. JP1. Jiggery Pokery, 1385 Paisley, North Vancouver, BC V7R 1C2.

When I was in Houston, Texas, I saw—and blenched at—the advertisement for a local establishment calling itself "a traditional English wine bistro"! Well, of course, the "bistro" is a French concept, and England developed specialist wine houses (like Yates's Wine Lodges) too recently for them to be truly styled "traditional." A similar emotion was evoked when, reading the L-card of this tape, I noted its title and discovered that Jiggery Pokery were calling themselves "a rollicking English ceilidh band." In my home country, "ceilidh" remains a word used only in Irish clubs: we have instead hoots, rants, pub sessions, parties—oh, lots of perfectly good available words for such gatherings, so why borrow one from across the Irish Sea? However, since earlier this century the Irish themselves styled such gatherings "soirées," perhaps there is precedent for such incongruous borrowings.

Jiggery Pokery tells us that they "recently emerged from the ranks of the Vancouver Morris Men," as a consequence of extended pub sessions after practices. (What happened to the others, one wonders? Are they still in the pub?) They note also that they feature "tunes learned from great English dance bands like Flowers & Frolics, New Victory, Gas Mark 5, Old Pequiar, etc.". Fair enough. The ten musicians of whom the group is comprised play fiddle, melodeon, guitar, concertina, various percussion instruments, and, less usually in such groups, trombone, tuba and flute.

This is cheerful party music, then: even "The Manchester

Rambler," really a sort of protest song against landowners who resented the weekend intrusions of walkers, is turned into a cheerful noise. Indeed, my main problem (as listener) was the fact that I found some of their musical or vocal fusions quite jarringly inappropriate: the inclusion of The Beatles' "Yellow Submarine" in a "Blaydon Races Medley," and a curious confection called "Christian Weasels on the Prowl", were especially not to my own taste. However, this is a matter of taste; and, quite clearly, Jiggery Pokery were having fun!

A greater problem is with some of the vocals. I would like to have properly heard the words to Eric Armstrong's eponymous "Jiggery Pokery," but the recording was so out of balance that I could not. Neither could I hear those of "Dingle Regatta". (Surely Dingle is near Tralee, in Ireland—not in England?) Eric's singing of "The Pick and the Malt Shovel" is strangely slow, almost lugubrious—certainly not the "wonderful drinking anthem" he calls it, in performance at least.

The fact that the group plays for morrismen is clearly evident in several tracks, but that is not a criticism; the fine English morris dances and marches are too little known in Canada. For that reason, and because this is a cheerful record, I'm sure it will be enjoyed by most folk who purchase it. Party music, yes—but please don't call it "ceilidh music," folks!

—William A.S. Sarjeant
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

The Immigrants. The Immigrants. Cassette IMM-04. The Immigrants, 3274 LaSalle Boulevard, Verdun, Québec, H4G 1Y9.

The Immigrants are a Montréal based group of flexible dimensions, apparently based around the duo of John Patrick Greider, who came to this country from Arizona, and Bob Cussen, who was born in Montréal to a German-Hungarian family. The group also includes Zbynek Bozdech (bass) from Czechoslovakia and Jonathon Moorman (violin) from England. Also on the cassette (but named without provenance in the press release) are Christophe Comte (violin) and Fethy Moughlam (percussion).

Fronting the group, Greider plays guitar and Cussen plays plectrum strings (mandolin, tenor banjo, bouzouki). The pair seem to split song- and tune-writing chores about evenly, and the recording is pretty well split between songs and instrumental pieces.

The group is well named, both for the backgrounds of the players and for the musical inspiration. Greider and Cussen bring country music influences into their work (Cussen was a founding member of the White River Bluegrass Band), but the music at times reflects the Slavic, Irish, and other homelands of band members and ourselves. One bittersweet cut, "Love is a Bubble," is Cussen's perfect match of an Andean melody and two rueful quatrains ending with the beautiful image, "Love is the north wind and you're the dead leaf."

Enough of the songs are co-authored that I would be hesitant to take my sense of the differences between the two

writers too seriously, but of the two, Cussen seems a bit more inclined to tackle traditionally "poetic" subject matter. However, both of them have drunk deeply from the wellspring of North American humor. "The Mean Old Man" is a direct descendent of "Old Joe Clark," "Old Dan Tucker," and Woody Guthrie's hilarious "Mean Talking Blues": "Old Bob's cousin was a businessman ... He cooked his books in a frying pan...." By the same token, the melody "Whack Back," a send up of the "As I was walking through Dublin one day" boy-meets-girl song (and of the semiotic weirdness of vocable choruses) is a delightful parody of "Turkey in the Straw."

For those who are extremely "bag conscious," as Andy Irvine quite properly grumped during a performance here in November, The Immigrants can be filed somewhere between The Romaniac Brothers (though, for my money, The Romaniacs' humor seemed to undercut the potential seriousness of the music in a way that never happens on this cassette) and the Austin, Texas, band Bad Livers (though The Immigrants' music strikes me as a bit less dark and is perhaps more audience-friendly than that of the Bad Livers).

I'll level with you, I like this cassette. Hmmm, it's numbered "04"—does that mean there are three others? Where can I get copies of them?

—GWL

Friends of Fiddler's Green. *The Road to Mandalay*. FÓFG 001. Friends of Fiddler's Green, 26 Noble Street, Unit 12, Toronto, Ontario, M6K 2C9.

A little over 20 years ago, at one of the annual Fox Hollow folk festivals held in upstate New York up to 1980, I was lucky enough to catch a live performance by the Friends of Fiddler's Green. It was more than just an evening of ballads and chanties, novelty songs, and some of the worst jokes and puns ever uttered in creation; it was more than an array of tunes, traditional and otherwise, from Shetland to Cape Breton and everywhere in between; it was, as a veteran folkie once put it, a cross between folk music and Monty Python's Flying Circus, and that only begins to describe it.

In 1981, Friend's of Fiddler's Green issued their debut recording on the late Stan Rogers's own Fogarty Cove Music label, and as the years progressed, some of its more well known members became excellent performers on their own right, including Ian Robb, Alastair Brown, Grit Laskin, and David Parry, whose tragic recent passing has been a great loss to the folk music world. It would be eight years until the Friends would once again record and five years between the recording of *The Road to Mandalay*—done in a quiet farmhouse in rural Ontario in April 1989—and its actual release in 1994, but as in the case of such other fine performers as Silly Sisters, Ray Fisher, and Norman Kennedy, the time in between whose record releases were often measured in years, it's been worth waiting for.

The Road to Mandalay consists of eight songs, one story, and five instrumental selections, both in solos and medleys. Along with core members Parry, Brown, Robb, Laskin, and Kearney, the recording also featured Jeff McClintoch on keyboards and Laurence Stevenson on fiddle. Along with fine vocals, the album features a plethora of stringed instruments, concertinas, and Northumbrian smallpipes, but again, that only begins to tell the story. The variety of tunes and their origins should not surprise anyone acquainted with the group's extensive repertoire. Here are marches such as "Sir Sydney Smith's," a popular tune from the northeast of England, "Blaydon Races," the Irish "Lark in the Morning," country dance tunes such as "Childgrove" and "Petronella," and the Scottish tune, "Arthur Bignold of Lochrosque," learned from

the now defunct Scottish band, Jock Tamsen's Bairns, all played with the zest, fervor, and freshness that makes a Friends instrumental what it is, fun to hear and tap one's toes to, no matter where one may be.

I myself prefer song and story selections. Those which feature the late David Parry—one story and two songs—merit special attention. The story, "One of the Old School," is a comic narrative about a man who disparages modern conveniences and progress, specifically in the form of newly-installed modern plumbing in his local village. I wish I could have heard him tell stories in person. The two songs are "We Are Three Jolly Fishermen," an occupational song from Britain telling of the joys of deep-sea fishing, and the album's title piece, Parry's rendition of the late Peter Bellamy's musical interpretation of Rudyard Kipling's poem.

The remainder of the songs include everything from an English music hall piece, "Mary Ann," the amusing tale of a garbage ship, the SS Shieldhall, and a nostalgic song from the period of World War One, "There's A Long, Long Trail," very ably sung by Grit Laskin. Alastair Brown does a fine job on Leon Rosselson's musical satire on the manners, morals, and patriotism of politicians and others in Britain and how British workers are pawns in the hands of Britain's influential people, "Coats Off to Britain." There are two memorable songs from the legendary Ewan Macoll, "My Old Man" and "Schoolday's Over," both rendered with impeccable taste by Ian Robb and Grit Laskin, bringing out all the impact Macoll's songs can engender; both songs—one in praise of a man's long service to unionism and the working trade and one speaking to a young boy's coming of age as a collier—speak volumes about Macoll's importance as a songwriter.

I can only fervently hope that it will not be another thirteen years before another Friends album is released. *The Road to Mandalay* has become one of my personal favorites in recent months; it's hard to *stop* listening to it. I sure wish we had a similar group here south of the border.

—Robert Rodriguez



The Canadian Folk Music Bulletin will enter its 30th year with the next issue. During 1996, we will include feature articles on Edith Fowke, Alan Mills, Wade Hemsworth, Gaby Haas, Stan Triggs, and new developments in la nueva cancion and its influence upon Canadian song. As usual, we will offer informative and provocative reviews and commentary, music, photographs, the Canadian Folk Festival Directory, and a voice for all the many perspectives of members of the Canadian Society for Traditional Music.

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