

ELECTRIC MUSE

THE STORY OF FOLK INTO ROCK



COMPILED BY

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AND EDITED BY KARL DALLAS PUBLISHED BY ISLAND AND TRANSATLANTIC

IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE BOOK OF THE SAME NAME

PUBLISHED BY EYRE METHUEN NOTES BY KARL DALLAS

NEITHER FOLK NOR ELECTRIC

"Music is the electric soil in which the spirit lives, thinks and invents."—Ludwig van Beethoven

When I interviewed the Young Tradition, the unaccompanied traditional-style trio back in the Sixties, Peter Bellamy insisted that they were really a pop group, not a folk group. It was, he said, the power of their performance which disqualified them from being folk in the old traditional sense, unlike the Coppers of Rottingdean from whom they drew their inspiration and much of their repertoire. This collection is the story of how that power, the power that we have come to call rock rather than pop, has come to influence the latest in the long series of folk revivals—which may, possibly, be the last. For what we are witnessing may be the final flowering of an old tradition, or possibly its replacement by a new tradition in which the new communications possibilities of electronics make possible a new kind of orality, in which, as Harry Levin has said, "the word as spoken or as sung" has been regaining its supremacy over written literature by means of electrical engineering. Folklorists have been puzzled by the fact that the post-war folk revival has achieved so much more than previous revivals in terms of mass acceptance; they notice that it appears to favour the mass media rather than shun them, and it benefits from the contact. What they fail to recognise is not so much the "massness" of the media as its nature, not its quantity but its quality. The present revival can be dated back to the time when the composer, Percy Grainger, having recorded Joseph Taylor on a cylinder phonograph, persuaded the Gramophone Company to issue a number of singles of the old man's singing. Between the wars a few older recordings of traditional music were issued, but it was not until the 1950's and the widespread use of tape, that the form as well as the

content of our folk music were able to be appreciated by city-billies for whom their own national culture had become as esoteric as the music of the Near and Far East they were all appreciating via electronics. Whether it was on your doorstep or on the other side of the world it was all one to the electronic media. Meanwhile, improved standards of reproduction in the home were giving popular music a new complexity and profundity. For the first time in its history pop music was able to compete with the folk tradition in the great elemental matters of life and death that had hitherto been its exclusive preserve. Folk and pop have lived in happy symbiosis for five centuries or more and it was only in the first half of this century that the dislocation between print-based pop and the oral tradition became so traumatic that the two lost almost all contact. "I used to be reckoned a good singer" said one traditional performer, gesturing at the pile of Tin Pan Alley sheet music on the piano with his pipe, "until these here tunes came in." As soon as the Fifties brought in rock 'n' roll, the folk revival got under way. Although many of these early revivalists were hostile to rock, carrying over uncritically the attitudes of a time when pop songs had been the last refuge of the Philistine, the factors that created rock and folk were basically the same. It was inevitable that they should get together, eventually. So, a group like Young Tradition could be folk rock even when they sang a modern composition without instruments, when they appeared to be, on analysis, neither rock nor electric nor folk. The vast tribe of acoustic guitarists who thronged Soho in the sixties were as demonstrably part of rock as they were of folk. They had the same hungry eclecticism as the rock musician, unconcerned with sources, only with effects. They had the direct

relationship with a community of their peers that is the classic stance of the folk bard. Some were better than others, but stars they weren't. There were too many of them. So these albums document the channelling of the power of musical electricity. During the war, the BBC recorded an old shantyman with a male voice choir and tried to imagine they had recreated the days of the clippers. After it, a Texan folklorist and a Salford-educated son of Scots ballad singers tried to recreate the old songs in a more rhythmic context, and imported jazz soloists to liven it up between the verses. It was less of a failure than the BBC's recordings of Stanley Slade. Later, the city kids dug into rural culture, not as a be-sandalled vegetarian antiquarianism, but because their lives lacked the stark realism of the old ways. They failed in their attempt at sounding like octogenarian ploughmen, but they did create a synthetic argot by accident that is for Britain what Dylan's synthetic Okie is for America. (And this is not an insular phenomenon. We'd have been lost without Lomax's enthusiasm, Pete Seeger's togetherness, Elliott's guitar pioneering. Perhaps Dylan learnt so many of the British folk songs he still uses as models when he was staying with Martin Carthy, who turned round and taught Paul Simon to sing of "Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme".) Along the line we've made a lot of music, acoustic and electric. We may not have created a true new tradition—yet—and perhaps the rock band is not exactly the right format. Perhaps Ashley Hutchings's English country music points a direction, perhaps it's John Martyn singing "Spencer the Rover", alone on the stage with just his electric guitar for company. Perhaps we need more electric melody, less megawatt overkill. The honeymoon with rock may be over, but the story isn't.

ALBUM I

SIDE A

FROM THE ACOUSTIC ROOTS

Introductory medley

(a) STEELEYE SPAN Robbery With Violins
Rick Kemp's bass, with ample use of wah-wah pedal, ushers in the keynote track of the entire compilation as Peter Knight's fiddle moves into the melody of "The Bank of Ireland". (The title is a double joke; get it?) Knight resists the temptation, so great in folk rock, to alter his phrasing to fit in with the funky dotted 2/4 of the bass. From Steeleye's "Parcel of Rogues" album (Chrysalis CHR 1046, 1973), their second and perhaps so far most successful project since Carthy and Hutchings left them, to be replaced by Bob Johnson and Rick Kemp.

(b) IAN CAMPBELL FOLK GROUP Tail Toddlle (extract)

Mouth music, or in Gaelic puirt a beul, is still often

used in Celtic communities when there are no instrumentalists available. Compare Les Soeurs Goadeg of Brittany (Chant du Monde, LDX 74535, 1973). Some of the songs are sung to nonsense syllables, some are based on cantarachd, the oral mnemonic method for learning pipe tunes, some, like this, are so specifically bawdy that they found their way easily into Robert Burns' "Merry Muses of Caledonia". The chorus goes: "Tail toddle, tail toddle, Tammie gart my tail toddle. At my arse wi' diddle doddle, Tammie gart my tail toddle, (Tommy made my bum waggie, etc). The tune is also known as "Chevalier's Muster-Roll". The Campbells recorded it on a Decca album of 1963, "Edinburgh Folk Festival" (LJK 4546). We have cut it after the vocal

and before the Dave Swarbrick fiddle solo which follows, to run directly into Fairport's version of the same tune.

(c) FAIRPORT CONVENTION Sir B. McKenzie (extract)

Like so many Fairport jigs ("Dirty Linen", notably), this is a medley of tunes, and the title gives us no guidance to which they are. We join the band immediately after a vocal rendition of "Tail Toddlle", taken at a typically incomprehensible, tongue-twisting pace. Good fun though. From "Live Convention" (Island ILPS 9285, 1974). Judging by the title they've given it, the recording was done at the new Sydney Opera House.



LEADBELLY The Gallows Pole

Actually recorded by Frederic Ramsey Jr off the air during one of a series of four 15-minute broadcasts over New York's WNYC-FM station towards the end of 1948, this song by Huddie Ledbetter, whose skill as a folk and blues performer,

helped him escape not one but two murder raps, is better known to folklorists as Child no. 95. "The Maid Freed from the Gallows". Child found versions from Sicily, Spain, the Faroes, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Esthonia, Russia and Slovenia,

so it's doubly surprising that the folk rock bands have neglected it so far. However, Rod Stewart did record it with Jeff Beck as "Hangman's knee" in 1969.

JACK ELLIOTT Pretty Boy Floyd

Perhaps the greatest single influence on Bob Dylan and the connecting link between the ailing Woody Guthrie and his son Arlo, Jack Elliott took the hammered-on flatpick guitar lick which Woody had learned from Carter Family records, developed it,

came to Britain and created a whole generation of folk guitarists. This Guthrie ballad about a modern outlaw was one of many which influenced the earlier British singer-songwriters, who were more socially oriented than many of their successors.

MacColl's "Tim Evans" and my own "Derek Bentley" which MacColl recorded in 1953 were in this genre. This track is from "Talking Woody Guthrie" (Topic 12T93).

MARGARET BARRY She Moves Through the Fair

Lots of people think this song is traditional, but actually the words are by the Irish poet Padraic Colum, set to a fine myxolydian melody based by the collector/arranger Herbert Hughes on a traditional Gaelic air—hence the confusion. Maggie, a fine singer in the somewhat exaggerated style of

the Irish tinkers, learnt it from an old 78 by Count John MacCormack, and taught it to a whole generation of revivalists who used to sit at her feet as she sang at the old Bedford Arms in Camden Town and the Kings Arms in Kentish Town, where she also accompanied traditional musicians like the

Sligo fiddler Michael Gorman on her 5-string zither banjo. One of the first to record it was Carolyn Hester, here at the time with her then husband Richard Farina. Later versions included performances by Anne Briggs, Davey Graham (see album I, side B), Fairport Convention and Trees.

ALAN LOMAX & THE RAMBLERS Hard Case

The Ramblers were an answer to skiffle by the pioneer revivalists—Ewan MacColl, Alan Lomax, A. L. Lloyd—though to be fair, they'd been working with guitars and clarinet some time before Lonnie Donegan hit the big time. This particular aggregation came out of a series compered by Lomax for Granada TV. Other members included, at various times, Peggy Seeger, Shirley Collins, the

calypsonian Fitzroy Coleman, guitarist Brian Daley, jazzmen Bruce Turner, Sandy Brown and Bobby Mickleburgh, and washboard player Dennis Finn and mouth-organist John Cole from John Hasted's 44 Skiffle Group. The clarinet on this track, which was one side of their only single for Decca, was Sandy Brown. The story goes that MacColl was inspired by the popularity of Negro chaingang

songs among the British skiffles to produce something with more of a British accent. Terms like "screw" for warder and "snout" for tobacco were unknown then, in the days before the seeming realism of TV programmes like "Z-Cars" had made them common currency outside users of thieves' argot.

VII

JIM, JOHN, BOB & RON COPPER The Banks of Sweet Primroses

The course of the English folksong revival has been influenced by the Copper family of Rottingdean, Sussex, not once but three times. It was the singing of James "Brasser" Copper and his brother Tom to Mrs Kate Lee in 1898 that inspired her to go back to London and found the Folk Song Society; the two old boys were made honorary members. Then, in 1948, Jim Copper, Brasser's son, heard one of "his" songs being sung on the radio so badly that he wrote and told the BBC he could do better. It was that letter, and his subsequent

appearance on "Country Magazine", that convinced someone in the BBC or the English Folk Dance & Song Society that the traditions of these islands were still living, and a joint recording project, resulting in a very popular Sunday morning programme, "As I Roved Our", was set up in the early Fifties. Then, the unusual churchy harmonies of the Coppers (not so unusual as all that: there were the two blacksmiths of nearby East Dean, Mark Fuller and Luther Hills, who sang in a very similar way, though they never met the Coppers, the

fishermen's "choir" of Cadgwith Cove, and the folk choir of Wool, with a tradition going back over 200 years) inspired people like Louis Killen and Frankie Armstrong, the Young Tradition and the Watsonsons to try harmony singing, more in emulation than straight imitation. This BBC recording of two generations of Coppers was made in 1952 by Seumas Ennis. Though the younger Coppers have recorded it several times, this is the first time the whole family's version of this song has been available outside the archives.

VIII

RAY & ARCHIE FISHER The Twa Corbies

Before she heard Jeannie Robertson show her what a Scots lass could sound like, Ray and her brilliant guitarist brother Archie used to specialise in remarkably accurate reproductions of the elusive harmony singing of the blues singers, Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry, on things like "Key to the

Highway" This song, number 26 in Child's collection, was set by Ray and Archie to a Breton folk tune, "An Alarc'h" (The Swan), learnt from Zaig Montjarret, recently popularised by Alan Stivell ("A l'Olympia", Fontana 6399 005). It was one of the first in which a Transatlantic based rhythm was married to a

traditional British text. The song is related, through a different version, to the Corpus Christi Carol, or "Down in Yon Forest". Pushkin reworked the first three verses into Russian.

VIII

A. L. LLOYD The Shoals of Herring (extract)

On July 13 1960 the BBC broadcast what was possibly one of the best of the Ewan MacColl-Peggy Seeger-Charles Parker radio ballads, "Singing the Fishing", which featured the singing and speech of Sam Lerner of Winterton, Norfolk

(whose "Alphabet Song" recently surfaced on Fairport Convention's "Babbacombe Lee", incidentally). This extract includes the first five of the seven verses of the song, with interpolated comments by Sam Lerner, as they were heard in the

programme. MacColl has himself recorded the song, as well as everyone from Bob Davenport to Nigel Denver, for it has deservedly become a folk club standard.

SIDE B

FROM REELING TO ROCKIN

IAN CAMPBELL FOLK GROUP Rocky Road to Dublin/ Drops of Brandy

With the exception of a brief extract from "Mason's Apron" on a Topic EP in 1962, terminated by a broken string, this track from the Campbells' first Transatlantic LP was our introduction to the

remarkable fiddling of Dave Swarbrick, accompanied by John Dunkerley's 5-string banjo in what was then a somewhat revolutionary amalgam of British and American styles. Interesting to

compare the phrasing of "Drops of Brandy" with the reprise of the same tune on Fairport's "Full House" as part of "Dirty Linen". "Rocky Road" was widely popularised by the Dubliners, a little later than this.

THE DUBLINERS Mason's Apron

I remember the Cecil Sharp House concert in December 1964 at which this recording was made. The tune of the reel is played first by fiddler John

Sheehan (who is notable, among other things, for never needing a single drop of the hard stuff to achieve this level of excitement) and then taken up

by plectrum banjoist Barney McKenna, to cries of joy from the audience. Michael Gaffney of Co. Roscommon was an earlier practitioner of this style

of tenor banjo-playing after he left the homeland for the United States, though I believe the adjudicators of Ceolitis still relegate the instrument

to the miscellaneous category. Gaffney recorded a fine duet with the flautist John McKenna (no

relative of Barney's, as far as I know) in the mid-Thirties.

THE CHIEFTAINS **Carolan's Concerto**

The story goes that when the blind harper, Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738) heard a violin concerto by Francesco Geminiani in Dublin, he promptly played it back in its entirety from memory. Much irritated, the Italian challenged him to do something a bit more creative, and this piece in the classical manner was the result. Or so Sheridan,

the playwright ("School for Scandal") said. According to Sean Mac Riamoinn, it was made by a Mrs Power of Co. Galway. Ah well, 'tis a good story. Geminiani died in Dublin and hardly anyone remembers him outside the ranks of classical violinists who struggle through his treatise on how to play, but Carolan's "Concerto" goes from strength

to strength. It crops up, for instance, unacknowledged, as part of Swarbrick's "Flatback caper" on Fairport's "Full House". Still, it shows that the somewhat classical approach of a band like the Chieftains has a venerable ancestry. From "Chieftains III" (Claddagh CC10, 1971).

GRYPHON **Kemp's Jig**

This is allegedly the tune to which William Kemp danced a jig from London to Norwich in 1599, accompanied by a single musician on the three-holed pipe and small tabor drum, who must have been as tired as he was at the end of the nine days it took him. Although the frontispiece to his "Nine Daies Wonder", published in 1600 as a record of the feat, shows Kemp in garb not unlike the Morris

dancers of today, complete with bells round his legs, this tune is quite different from the solo dances you'll come across in villages like Bampton, Oxfordshire, where they have been dancing since before Kemp's time (like "Greensleeves", for instance). Gryphon are a band of musicians on early instruments who have graduated via folk rock into becoming a full-fledged art rock band in the grand,

classically-influenced tradition of Yes and Caravan. After playing this tune as the overture to a concert I produced at Southwark Cathedral in aid of Sam Wanamaker's Globe Playhouse on the South Bank of the Thames in 1974, recorder player Richard Harvey subsequently played with Richard and Linda Thompson, also in the concert, on their third album.

FAIRPORT CONVENTION **Medley (The Lark in the Morning, Rakish Paddy, Foxhunter's Jig, Toss the Feathers)**

Though Scots fiddler Harvey Webb and jazz clannettist Bruce Turner had played jigs together in the earliest days of the folk revival, and Swarbrick's work with the Campbells and as a duo with Martin Carthy (notably on a splendid little EP, "No Songs", for Fontana) had blazed the trail, this track was when reeling and rocking finally came to terms with each other, halfway through electric folk's most

watershed album, Fairport's "Liege and Lief" (1969). The playing is rougher than the band was to achieve later, but rarely has a single album had more influence, notably in the remarkable affinity between Swarb's fiddle and Richard Thompson's electric guitar. The remainder of the classic personnel was Simon Nicol, rhythm guitar, Ashley Hutchings, bass guitar, and Dave Mattacks, drums.

who established a whole new repertoire of drum licks for the accompaniment of traditional dance rhythms, for instance the way he breaks up three 6/8 bars of "Foxhunter's Jig" into one long 3/4, thus giving it a heavy basic pulse without destroying the lilt of the dance.

MORRIS ON BAND **Greensleeves**

Chronologically, perhaps, Steeleye's "Robbery With Violins" ought to go here. By June 1972 Ashley Hutchings had left Steeleeye to get the Albion Country Band together with Royston Wood to pursue a less Irish-influenced brand of folk rock. Meanwhile, he assembled Barry Dransfield on fiddle, Richard Thompson electric guitar, John Kirkpatrick button accordion and Anglo concertina, Dave Mattacks drums, himself on bass, and what was then the Chingford Morris (part of which was to

split off later and become the Albion Morris) for the "Morris On" album (Island HELP 5). The tune is a solo "Bacca pipes" jig in which the dancer has to avoid breaking a pair of churchwardens' long clay pipes with his feet, from the repertoire of the great William Kimber of Headington Quarry in Oxfordshire, which supplied the stone for many of the colleges in Oxford. Kimber recorded the tune for HMV in 1948 and this version has recently been reissued by Topic (12T249). Peter Kennedy

recorded it, with an amusing anecdote from Kimber about how Sharp auctioned the pipes for two sovereigns after he had danced it, for an EFDSS Folk Classic LP in November 1956. Kimber died in 1961 aged 89, exactly 62 years to the day after the first time he met Cecil Sharp, and got an obituary in The Times. He bequeathed his 30-key concertina to Kenneth Loveless. I like the phrasing on Kirkpatrick's accordion at the beginning of this recreation.

VIII

HEDGEHOG PIE Drops of Brandy

This jig, in 6/8 time, was recorded for inclusion in Hedgehog's first album but was left off. The tune is interesting because, not only is it one of the first tunes that introduced the talents of Dave Swarbrick to the record-buying world (the version from Ian Campbell's first LP which opens this side) but it also

resurfaced as the third strain of "Dirty Linen" recorded by Fairport Convention in 1970. It also demonstrates that, even today (or perhaps especially), not all "electric" folk needs to be amplified, featuring here the acoustic flute of Mick Doonan, son of the renowned traditional

Northumbrian piccolo player, John Doonan, and the mandolin of Martin Jenkins, whose previous band, Dando Shaft, never received the recognition it deserved. A familiar story.

IX

JOHN MARTYN Eibhli Gheal Chiún Ni Chearbhaill

A beautiful Gaelic slow air, apparently put through a Leslie revolving speaker, which John may have learned from the playing of Michael Tubridy's concertina on the Chieftains' third album. It may horrify the purists (though there's nothing "pure"

about the Chieftains) but I prefer the electric version. The tune is reputed to have been collected from a blind harper of Co. Down by Edward Bunting (1773-1843) and has been variously associated with texts by Seamus Dall MacCuarta and Thomas

Campbell. The title means "The Fair and Charming Eileen O'Carroll". From John Martyn's "Inside Out" (Island ILFS 9253, July 1973).

ALBUM II

SIDE A

BLUES BAROQUE AND BEYOND

X

DAVEY GRAHAM Angi

According to Davey, he was working on the Am-G-F-E7 chord sequence of Jack Elliott's "Cocaine Bill" when he hit the wrong strings and "Angi" came out. It was included on a pioneering Topic EP with Alexis Korner on which the title track was inspired by the Miles Davis composition,

"Kinda Blue". And thus, the jazzy side of what became known as folk baroque developed in a way that ran strong through the work of Jansch, Renbourn, Pentangle and into Fairport. Licks that originated with Davey were borrowed by others of the school with and without acknowledgement.

"3/4 AD", out of "Kinda Blue", mutated into Pentangle's "I've Got a Feeling". As Bert Jansch once said, introducing the tune on TV: "I've got a feeling we stole this".

XI

DAVEY GRAHAM She Moves Through the Fair

When Davey heard the melody of this song, he realised straight away that its melodic scale, with its flattened seventh (G to G on the white notes of the piano), is similar to the Indian rag scale, khammaj (sa ga ma pa dha ni sa-sa ni flat dha pa ma ga re sa, ascending and descending), as was

"Greensleeves". At the time of these studies, he was a sometime member of the Thamesiders, a post-skiffle group that had evolved from the Hasted group, featuring Marion Gray, Martin Carthy, Pete Maynard and, later, Redd Sullivan, who used to play in the Thameside restaurant on London's South

Bank, hence the name. In the spring of 1963, Decca gathered together the Thamesiders with other London folkies for an all-night live "hootenanny" in the studios from which this track, originally included on an EP, "The Thamesiders and Davy Graham", was one result.

XII

DAVEY GRAHAM Better Git It In Your Soul

The 6/8 tempo of Charlie Mingus's exuberant piece was used by Davey, in conjunction with bassist Tony Reeves and drummer Barry Morgan

(who were unacknowledged on the sleeve, but he thinks it was them), for a series of improvisations which had a remarkable effect upon the further

development of folk baroque playing, as we shall see. From "Folk, Blues and Beyond" (Decca LK 4649, 1964).



JOHN RENBOURN
Waltz

One day a copyright expert is going to have a fine old time sorting out the complexities of cross-fertilisation in the streets of Soho in the Sixties. On his second album, John was careful to acknowledge that he got "Buffalo" from the

repertoire of Davey Graham, though he claimed composer credit for himself on the record label. Actually, it was based on Davey's improvisation on a well-known jazz piece. There was no reference to Davey on this item, though, which is even closer

to what Davey did with the Mingus tune on the previous track here. From "Another Monday" (Transatlantic TRA 149, 1966).



BERT JANSCH
Veronica

One of a number of classic instrumentals, in which Bert took the Soho guitarists' obsession with cross-tempi playing (usually, as here, three against four) and developed it. According to Bert's notes to a sampler produced in 1969, this too was inspired

by Davey's playing of "Better Git It In Your Soul"! The piece is still popular and was recorded recently for Kicking Mule by Dave Evans. From his earliest album, "Bert Jansch" (Transatlantic TRA 125, 1965) on which he also recorded "Angi", with a brief

interpolation of Nat Adderley's "Worksong" on it, and a nod at Jimmy Giuffre's "Train and the River" (also recorded recently by Dave Evans) which Jansch called "Smoky River".



RALPH McTELL
Willoughby's Farm

The fact that Ralph May took Blind Willie McTell's surname for his nom-de-folk—much as Donegan appropriated Lonnie Johnson's first name—indicates

a more robust taste in music than this sensitive piece from his first album, "Eight Frames a Second" (Transatlantic TRA 165, 1968) would seem to

indicate. But, though unique in Ralph's repertoire, it has become something of a classic and is also played today by the French virtuoso, Marcel Dadi



MARC BRIERLEY
Dragonfly

An Austin John Marshall discovery, who has now seemingly vanished without trace. The use of harmonics and the impressionistic playing are

typical of the sound of Soho right then. He made an EP, from which this was taken, and an LP, during a time when Nathan Joseph seemingly had an entire

monopoly of this kind of music, much as Elektra's Jac Holzman monopolised the singer-songwriters in the States after Dylan.



JACKSON C. FRANK
Blues Run the Game

Another classic Sixties song, from a now deleted album on British Columbia (33SX 1788, 1965) produced by one Paul Simon. An unknown Al Stewart played on another track. This one was

recorded by both Bert Jansch and Sandy Denny, and Beverley Martyn sang it in America. An American, one of several musicians who came under the religious wing of Judith Piepe in Soho in the

Sixties, Frank now lives in some isolation from his old friends in Woodstock, New Jersey, I believe. Someone should re-release the album from which this came.



ROY HARPER
Forever

Not the recent re-recording on his excellent "Flashes from the Archives of Oblivion", but the original, from his first album, "Sophisticated Beggar",

the one and only production of Strike records (1967) which promptly went bust as soon as it appeared. The album was changing hands at highly

inflated prices until it was reissued recently, but I don't think Roy has ever received a penny for it. Oh well, that's show biz.

SIDE B

SOHO NEEDLESS TO SAY

II

PENTANGLE Waltz

This is yet another reworking of the 6/8 "Better Git It In Your Soul" theme, this time in several movements.

MARTIN CARTHY Scarborough Fair

Strange are the vagaries of popular success, even for a folk singer. Martin Carthy's first album in 1965, from which this track is taken, established his reputation as a respected interpreter of traditional songs, but had no impact on the world of pop. Certainly nothing comparable to the success of the Paul Simon version, complete with the same obstinate guitar riffing of Carthy's arrangement, giving its title to Simon and Garfunkel's "Parsley Sage Rosemary and Thyme" album which the superior marketing expertise of CBS put into the British and American

charts the following year. The song also recurred on the soundtrack of "The Graduate" and on the soundtrack album which did even better, chartwise. It's an ancient song, even older than the Fair in the title, which was last held in the Yorkshire seaside town in 1788. It's a version of the second ballad in Professor Child's collection, usually known as "The Elfin Knight" from the oldest known version of this riddle song found bound at the end of a book printed in Edinburgh in 1673 and rescued by Sir Richard Maitland. Baring Gould found a version

being played as a children's game, itself an indication of ancient, possibly prehistoric lineage, since many kid's games are old rituals in decay. Martin's words are closest to those collected in Whitby, not far from Scarborough, by Frank Kidson about 100 years ago. The herbs of the chorus are believed to be charms against the devil, pointing to the magical significance of the seemingly impossible tasks the heroine must perform for her beloved.

AL STEWART Soho, Needless to Say

It had been my original plan to include here Al's "Old Compton Street Blues" (from his second album, "Love Chronicles") as being historically of a similar date to the associated tracks on this side, but Al objected, reminding me of my own critical disdain for its novelettish story-line when it first came out. But though this one is three albums later (circa 1973),

it depicts life as we all remember it from those heyday days when Paul Simon was bumming for pennies and Nigel Denver refused to let Bob Dylan sing from the floor at the Roundhouse pub in Wardour Street—the same pub, incidentally, where the Cyril Davies All-Stars with Alexis Korner gave birth to what eventually became British rock. On this

deliciously atmospheric if anachronistic song are people like Tim Renwick, lead guitar, from the excellent Quiver, with some of his associates, and Dave Swarbrick, mandolin. The acoustic guitar duet in the middle is between that remarkable American, Isaac Guillory, and ragtime picker Pete Berryman.

JOHN AND BEVERLEY MARTYN John the Baptist

At the time John Martyn was making his first album, the determinedly acoustic "London Conversation" in 1967, Beverley Kutner (no one ever called her by her second name) was making a surprise appearance at the same Monterey Pop Festival that launched Jimi Hendrix on to the world of music as a force to

be reckoned with. Two years later, John and Beverley had married and were making a really superb but surprisingly neglected joint album, "Stormbringer", in America with members of the Band. Playing on this song, which has one of my favourite first lines in all contemporary lyric, are

Paul Harris, keyboards, Harvey Brooks, bass, and Levon Helm, drums. Then followed a long silence, during which Bev occupied herself with various domestic duties and kept her splendid voice from us for too long, though John recently produced her first album in five years, a solo.

NEW HUMBLEBUMS Please Sing a Song For Us

The first Humblebums, recorded by Bill Leader in 1968, were Billy Connolly, now known to Scotsmen the world over as the Big Yin, and guitarist Tom

Harvey, and they sounded rather like a Gorbals Incredible String Band. Harvey left and was replaced by bassist Gerry Rafferty and he and

Billy became the New Humblebums and recorded the album in 1969 from which this track was taken. One album later, they split, Gerry to join (and leave

and rejoin) Stealer's Wheel, Billy to become the Harry Lauder of the North Sea oil age. Hard to choose one track to represent their joint talents at

their best, because they tended to sound like two entirely different bands, according to who was

singing, but this one blends their very different personalities better than most.

FAIRPORT CONVENTION
Chelsea Morning

When Joe Boyd came across Fairport they couldn't make up their minds whether to be a Kweskin-type jugband, a Butterfield-type bluesband, or an Airplane-type rock outfit. Boyd persuaded them the latter and got them into the studio for Polydor. Halfway through the session, Ian MacDonald (later

better known as Ian Matthews) walked in and joined Judy Dyble on vocals. Their version of Joni Mitchell's "Chelsea Morning" opened the second side of their first album; in those days they did so much of her material that the rumour went round that she had flown over specially to gig with them

at the old Middle Earth in Covent Garden, being run at that time by an unlikely alliance between Roy Guest and the musical comedy singer turned fashion photographer, John Adams. The story wasn't true, by the way.

ALBUM III
SIDE A
ROLL OVER CECIL (AND TELL
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS THE NEWS)

SHIRLEY COLLINS, DAVEY GRAHAM
Pretty Sara

In July 1964, Austin John Marshall had the unobvious idea of teaming his wife Shirley, who had been a mainstay of the British revival since the earliest Ballads and Blues days, had worked with Ewan MacColl, Peter Kennedy and Alan Lomax in the performance, collection and annotation of Anglo-American folksong, up with the guitarist Davey Graham. The idea stemmed only partly from Marshall's own eclectic tastes; partly also from the

fact that the implosive effects of cheap travel and the instant access through electronic media were causing all the world's cultures to cross-fertilise and become, not one, but an even wider variety of hybrids. The first result of the Collins-Graham collaboration was this raga arrangement of a tune Shirley had put to traditional American words. Shirley and Davey gave a concert at the Mercury Theatre and followed it with another one at Cecil

Sharp House. One wonders what Sharp, who had also collected in Britain and America and saw the two cultures as inter-connected, would have thought of it. But it was there, in that instant, that electric folk, folk rock, call it what you will, was born. From "Folk Roots, New Routes" (Decca LK 4652, 1964).

BERT JANSCH
Blackwaterside

Bert learnt the song from Annie Briggs who got it from A. L. Lloyd who, presumably, reworked it somewhat after having got it from either Mary or Paddy Doran's recordings (husband and wife had got quite different melodies, from his mother and her sister respectively) in the BBC archives. The

Dorans are Irish tinkers. This arrangement was so obviously the inspiration for Jimmy Page's "Black Mountainside" on an early Led Zep album that I found myself in the invidious position of being called as an expert witness (sic) to help sort it out legally. It comes from the pioneer album which

really established that there was a contemporary way of doing traditional material without demolishing its essence, Bert's "Jack Orion" (Transatlantic TRA 143, 1966).

THE YOUNG TRADITION
The Lyke-Wake Dirge

Though for the most part totally unaccompanied, the YT had a power that was really electric. The words of this song have been known since the antiquary

John Aubrey collected them in 1686; the tune has been lost, since the early collectors were literary gents who set little store by tunes. The YT got a

melody, however, from Hans Fried of Collets Record Shop (son of the distinguished German poet, Erich Fried) who got it in his turn from a Scottish lady,

Peggy Richards. It is this tune which Buffy Sainte-Marie used on her "Fire, Fleet and Candlelight" album; Pentangle used it, too, merely adding some

rudimentary instrumentation to the original harmonies, which recreated the sense of a deathbed

ritual with chilling effect. From "The Young Tradition" (Transatlantic TRA 142, 1966).

JOHN RENBOURN
Bransle Gay

Renbourn studied classical guitar with Tim Walker, but he didn't really get to grips with early English music until his third solo album, with a brief performance of William Byrd's "The Earle of Salisbury", transcribed from virginals for guitar and glockenspiel; though all along he'd been attracted to the music, judging by the medieval pastiche things like "Lady Nothing's Toye Puffe" and "One

for William" (Byrd, presumably?) of "Another Monday". But his fourth album, "The Lady and the Unicorn" (Transatlantic TRA 224, 1970) marked an intensive investigation of the possibilities of doing with early music rather what Pentangle were already doing with traditional music. "Bransle Gay" was composed by Claude Gervaise in 1550. The word bransle, indicating a vigorous French dance in

2/2 tempo, gave the word "brawl" to the English language, so it's not quite as sedate as it sounds. Pentangle also included this tune on their live double album, "Sweet Child" (TRA 178) which, paradoxically, was released before John's solo effort on the same tune.

MARTIN CARTHY/DAVE SWARBRICK
Our Captain Cried All Hands

This tune is also known as "The Blacksmith" (a song recorded by both the first two versions of Steeleye Span, and also by Planxty) and to hymn-singers as "Monksgate", from the fact that Vaughan Williams

collected it from a Mrs Verrall with these words in Monksgate near Horsham in Sussex, and set John Bunyan's words from "Pilgrim's Progress" to an adaptation of the same melody. This early example

of Carthy/Swarbrick, using a rather stark fiddle as sole accompanying instrument, a brilliant tour de force, is from Martin's second album, "Byker Hill" (1967).

PENTANGLE
Let No Man Steal Your Thyme

The first song Cecil Sharp ever collected, from a gardener called John England (!), was a variant of this song, in which flower symbolism is used in a

manner reminiscent of Ophelia's mad speeches in "Hamlet". (Shakespeare probably knew the song, since it is a good deal older than Sharp; it was first

noted in 1689.) This was the opening track on Pentangle's first album (Transatlantic TRA 162, 1968).

VIII
SHIRLEY COLLINS
The Wedding Song

Having enticed Shirley's sister Dolly out of virtual retirement to play flute organ on two exquisite albums, Austin John Marshall conceived the idea of getting her to write a folksong suite for Shirley, accompanied by the most eminent early musicians available. Frances Line of the BBC agreed to

broadcast it but Polydor, who had released Shirley's "The Power of the True Love Knot" turned it down as being too expensive a project with uncertain sales potential, so it came out on Harvest, EMI's "underground" label. Despite being a long way from the acid-rock mainly to be found on Harvest at that

time, it did remarkably well, charts-wise. The title of the album, "Anthems in Eden", is said to be a jibe at me, for criticising the idyllic nature of Shirley's art: I had said she sang as if in Eden before the Fall. The song is from the repertoire of the Coppers.

SIDE B
THE ELECTRIC ADVENTURE

I
FAIRPORT CONVENTION
Nottamun Town

A song from the repertoire of Jean Ritchie of Viper in Perry County, Kentucky, borrowed by Shirley Collins when Jean was collecting in England,

recorded with Davey Graham, the tune taken by Bob Dylan for his angry "Masters of War", and here sung by Sandy Denny with Fairport. The guitar-and-

drums duet is reminiscent (again!) of the things Davey was doing on "Better Git It In Your Soul" several years before. The song is more than a

nonsense song. An old Kentuckian told Jean Ritchie: "If 'twas understood, then the good luck and the

magic be lost" I've heard it said that some explicitly sexual references have been self-censored out of

the song by the folk. From "What We Did On Our Holidays" (Island ILPS 9092, January 1969).



FAIRPORT CONVENTION

Tam Lin

A truly magical ballad (Child 39) and to my mind the best thing on "Liege and Lief". The song was first mentioned in "The Complaynt of Scotland" in 1549 but no words were published until Herd put a fragment into his "Ancient and Modern Scots Songs" in 1769. It never seems to have been collected outside Scotland, though a possible relative of Tam's, Brian O Lynn (who may be a burlesqued son of the Irish god-mother Danu) crops up in comic

songs in Ireland, Scotland and America, and the first printed version of Brian's song, in 1568, called him Tom a Lin. Janet is a puzzle; on the one hand she is clearly a virgin, by virtue of the gold she wears in her hair, and the threat in the first verse is like the warning to the maiden in the analogous "Broomfield Wager". But like that maiden, she may have had magical powers herself to deal with the Fairy Queen, for more than half the convicted witches in

Scotland between 1590 and 1697 were called Janet. Carterhaugh is near Selkirk in Scotland, and it is said that three rings where grass will not grow mark the spot where three containers of magic milk or water stood, into which in one old version of the ballad Janet dipped her protean lover to change him back to human shape.



TRAFFIC

John Barleycorn

Much has been written of the influence of rock on folk; not so much of the influence of folk on rock, though it was originally a folk-based popular craft back in the Memphis days of Sam Phillips. I remember reading in surprise of Stevie Windwood's enthusiasm for the Watersons, the Yorkshire gypsy family who played a big part in popularising four-part unaccompanied singing in the Sixties revival, but was therefore less amazed when he recorded this

ballad, learnt from the singing of Michael Waterson (to be heard on Topic 12T136, recorded in 1965), one of the 14 versions Cecil Sharp collected. The song has been in print, in various versions, since the 17th Century, and with its death-and-resurrection Corn God cycle, is either very, very ancient or a clever antiquarian forgery taken up by the folk. Whatever its origin—and I tend to think it a genuine pre-Christian survival—the song is widely and

deservedly popular. The tune is a variant of the widespread "Dives and Lazarus" (also "Star of the County Down", "Maria Marten", "Brigg Fair"). It is sung here by Winwood, playing acoustic guitar and a bit of piano, with back-up vocal and tambourine from Jim Capaldi, and Chris Wood on flute. From the album of the same name (1970).



FAIRPORT CONVENTION

Lord Marlborough

Fairport V, according to numeration employed by Pete Frame on the sleeve of "A History of Fairport Convention", was a four-piece with the three Daves—Mattacks, Pegg, and Swarbrick—and Simon Nicol playing on "Angel Delight" (June 1971, an album of mixed quality but with some contemporary and

traditional songs still deserving of a place in their repertoire, including this one. The lord of the title was Col. Churchill, created Duke by William of Orange in 1688, after his victory over the rebellious Duke of Monmouth. The earliest printed version we know appeared some 100 years later, though it

seems to have originated as a broadside. Hammond collected a version with a similar sprung rhythm (in 5/4; this is in 5/8) from a man in Dorset in June 1906.



STEELEYE SPAN

The Weaver and the Factory Maid

Steeleye III (without Carthy and Hutchings but plus Johnson and Kemp) skilfully wove together a song recorded by A. L. Lloyd on his "Iron Muse" compilation of industrial balladry for Topic (yes,

that's the inspiration for the title of our collection) with a fragment from the singing of the great Robert Cinnamond and a children's rhyme to create an arresting cameo of a society plunging down into

the valley of the shadow of industrial death, with standards of craftsmanship going the way of all other ethical principles. From "Parcel of Rogues" (Chrysalis CHR 1046, 1973).

ALBUM IV

SIDE A

A NEW TRADITION

I

BOB & CAROLE PEGG Rise Up Jock

The Peggs recorded this original song for Bill Leader in the days immediately before they formed one of the most exciting of the folk rock experiments, Mr. Fox which, like the old lady who swallowed a horse, died. Of course. But not before Bob and Carole (now split from her ex-husband and calling

herself Carolanne) had made three essential albums, though many of the later and most interesting things like "The Gypsy", are really too long to be included here. With them on this opening track from "He Came from the Mountains" (Trailer LER 3016, 1971) were the people who became Mr.

Fox, together with Nick Strutt, with whom Bob worked after the band split up. Despite the later release date, this was recorded before the next track.

MR. FOX

The Gay Goshawk

This was one of Carolanne Pegg's first attempts at lyric writing and still one of her best to date. Not to be confused with the Child ballad of the same name, the

hero (villain?) of Carolanne's song is an incubus in birdlike form, who visits the heroine in bed at night. The oppressive sexuality, with overtones of death that

would do credit to Bram Stoker, is typical of the terror of the Fox songs. From "Mr. Fox" (Transatlantic TRA 226, 1970).

FAIRPORT CONVENTION

Poor Will & the Jolly Hangman

From the unissued Troubadour recordings, a hitherto unknown Richard Thompson/Dave Swarbrick song. Originally squeezed off "Full House" because Richard was dissatisfied with his vocals, it almost appeared

later when Joe Boyd edited their West Coast appearances into what would have been Fairport's first live album. Then Shirley Collins recorded it for her "No Roses" album (with an arrangement by Dolly,

which Richard describes as "Schoenbergian") but again, it was squeezed off before she had recorded a proper vocal. Oh well, fourth time lucky.

IV

LINDISFARNE Turn a Deaf Ear

Though they came from the folk scene originally, running a successful club at the Rex in Whitley Bay, Lindisfarne were unique among the folk-based rock bands in making their main appeal directly to the rock fans without any hard core of folkies to see them

through tough patches. Perhaps that's why, after a remarkably successful 1970 and 71 with the second best-selling album (beaten only, sales-wise, by Simon and Garfunkel's "Bridge Over Troubled Water"), they slid down to their slow and ignominious end in 1975.

But the spirit lives on in Jack the Lad. This Pirandellian bit of surrealism, by fellow folkie and sometime member of Stealer's Wheel, Rab Noakes, is from "Nicely Out of Tune" (1969), their first album.

JACK THE LAD

The Third Millennium

Originating as little more than a spin-off from Lindisfarne, Jack the Lad are now a powerful folk rock influence in their own right, having filched some

members from another Geordie group, Hedgchog Pie (who go on from strength to strength nevertheless).

This is from "The Old Straight Track" (Charisma CIS 1094).

RICHARD THOMPSON

Nobody's Wedding

Though Richard Thompson's song-writing talents had been evident since the days of "Meet on the Ledge", it was not until he left Fairport to pursue a solo career that we began to realise that he was not only a fine guitarist, he also had it within him to

create songs that have the feel of tradition in them, without descending to the pastiche of archaic forms which flaws most attempts to write self-consciously in the folk idiom. His first solo album, "Henry the Human Fly" (1972) was a classic in the

quality and appropriateness of its music-making as well as illustrating a fine range of lyrical attitudes, like this bitchy song with its Jimmy Shand send-up ending. Listen to Richard's bluegrass guitar runs under the last melodeon chorus.

SMITH

ALBION COUNTRY BAND
The New St. George

If Britain ever shakes off its malaise, it could well be with this song by Richard Thompson as its anthem. This again is by Albion IV, vocal by Martin Carthy, and has never been issued before. It makes an interesting comparison with Richard's own version.

The play-out instrumental is "La Rotta", an Italian dance tune which Pentangle recorded on "Sweet Child", and takes its name from the instrument on which it was meant to be played, the harp-like rotta, chrotta, crot, cruit or crwth, sometimes bowed,

sometimes plucked, the ancient ancestor of the fiddle (which a violin becomes immediately it gets into the hands of a folk musician) the instrument of the angels and the Celts, supplying an appropriate note on which to end.

P O S T S C R I P T

"Four albums," I cried. "I'll be able to get EVERYTHING I want on them." I was wrong. This compilation has become the classic quart-into-a-pint-pot syndrome, and a lot of good music overflowed: Paul Simon, the Byrds, Bob Dylan (of course), Kaleidoscope (check out their version of

Ewan MacColl's "Cruel Mother" if you can get it), Trees, Planxty, Annie Briggs (who has a fine album waiting for someone to issue it), Fotheringay and Sandy Denny's solo albums, JSD Band, and innumerable traditional recordings, notably Michael Gorman, the late, great Sligo fiddler, Joseph Taylor,

who impressed Percy Grainger and was one of the first traditional singers to appear on commercial records here (in 1908), and Harry Cox. Perhaps Island and Transatlantic will let me put together another four albums some time—because the story is far from over.

ILLUSTRATED AND DESIGNED BY SHIRT SLEEVE STUDIO
TYPOGRAPHY AND DESIGN BY PHILIP WARR
PRINTED IN ENGLAND BY ROBOR LTD

