

A Peak in Darrien

John Leeder, Review Editor

*Please send your reviews, or items to be reviewed, to
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*All the items listed below have come to us since the last
issue. Some will be reviewed in upcoming issues; others
are there so you'll know them.*

Books

Clary Croft. Helen Creighton, Canada's First Lady of Folklore. Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 3731 Mackintosh St., P.O. Box 9301, Sta. A, Halifax, N.S. B3K 5N5; <mail@nimbus.ns.ca>; <www.nimbus.ns.ca>

Richard Thomas Wright & Cathryn Weller. Castles in the Air: Music & Stories of British Columbia's 1860s Gold Rush. Winter Quarters Press, Box 15 Miocene, Williams Lake, B.C. V2G 2P3; <cwellner@grassrootsgroup.com>; <http://grassrootsgroup.com>

Recordings

Black Lodge. It's Been a Long Time Comin': Round Dance Songs. CR-6338. Canyon Records, 3131 West Clarendon Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85017, USA; <canyon@canyonrecords.com>; <www.canyonrecords.com>

Clary Croft. Still the Song Lives On: Traditional and Contemporary Songs from Maritime Canada. CCROFT 01. Clary Croft, 5959 Spring Garden Rd., Suite 1008, Halifax, N.S. B3H 1Y5; <www3.ns.sympatico.ca/cs.croft>

David Francey. Far End of Summer. LKR 1002. David Francey, P.O. Box 539, Ayres Cliff, P.Q. J0B 1C0; <www.davidfrancey.com>

R. Carlos Nakai & AmoChip Dabney. Edge of the Century. CR-7054. Canyon Records (address above)

Wyckham Porteous. Sexanddrinking. CBR-0242. Cordova Bay Entertainment Group Inc., 5159 Beckton Rd., Victoria, B.C. V8Y 2C2; <info@cordovabay.com>; <www.cordovabay.com>; PHD Canada Distributing Ltd., 1330 Main St., North Vancouver, B.C. V7J 1G4; <phdenq@phdcanada.com>

Tha Tribe. 'N Action! Pow-Wow Songs Recorded Live in San Carlos. CR-6340. Canyon Records (address above)

Richard Thomas Wright & Cathryn Weller, with Ken Hamm & The Wake Up Jacob Band. Rough But Honest Miner. Winter Quarters Press,

Box 15 Miocene, Williams Lake, B.C. V2G 2P3;
 <cwellner@grassrootsgroup.com>;
 <http://grassrootsgroup.com>
 Young Bird. Change of Life. CR-6341.
 Canyon Records (address above)

Heather Sparling

Bag o' Cats: Out of the Bag. Greentrax
 Recordings: CDTRAX193. Cockenzie Business
 Centre, Edinburgh Road, Cockenzie, East Lothian,
 EH32 0XL.

What does the name "Bag o' Cats" suggest about the music they play? "Bag" suggests a collection while "cats" calls to mind jazz. Depending on your musical tastes, it might also call to mind the skirl of the bagpipes! Such is the eclectic nature of the music found on Out of the Bag.

I'm a little confused about how to classify this CD. It is certainly not straight, traditional Scottish music, although the label, Greentrax, is known for their Celtic releases. Certainly, there are a number of instruments commonly associated with Celtic music to be heard, such as a variety of bagpipes and whistles, but there are even more non-Celtic instruments, including bass clarinet, saxophones, cittern, and djembe, to name a few. I wouldn't consider it World Beat because it's not so much pop or rock as some sort of jazz-classical-traditional music fusion. Listening to this CD is something like having a taste of various cultures at Toronto's Caravan, all blended into a single album.

Most disappointing about this CD, for me, was the accompanying information. The liner notes are minimal, limited to naming the tunes and the instruments played on each track. The CD itself is somewhat more helpful, since it also functions as a CD-Rom, providing background information about the musicians. Although it was interesting to read of the various training and experiences of the band members, I was more interested in how the music itself developed, since it is such an eclectic mix of instruments and musical styles. Unfortunately, very little is said about each piece. The technical aspect of the CD-Rom didn't meet its potential, being quite basic. Moreover, it was not well conceived for various monitor sizes – I guess I'm one of the few people remaining on the planet who still uses a 14" monitor. It's too bad, really, since the multimedia capabilities of the CD-Rom medium might have conveyed an energy all on their own.

To my ears, Scottish elements are predominant on most tracks, with a healthy dose of jazz melodic contours and syncopations. Some tracks feature different cultural sounds, such as

"Basant Muchari," which features the manditar, an instrument created by band member, Nigel Richard, combining the mandola and sitar. It has, not surprisingly, a distinctly Indian flavour. On "Raven," soprano saxes, whistle, bass clarinet, cittern, percussion, and bass perform Balkan rhythms. Each track constitutes a highly polished arrangement hung on a traditional hanger but with lots of improvisation to dress it up.

This is a CD for the musically adventuresome. It will not likely appeal to traditionalists, nor is it likely to make it big on the Billboard World Music chart. However, it is an intriguing, sophisticated and unexpected mélange of world musics and instrumental timbres. It might be the very thing for those searching for something palatable and yet different.

Craig Morrison & The Momentz. **Rocket Radio.** 7NMC-04. 7 Nights Music Communications, 183 Querbes Avenue, Outremont, Quebec, H2V 3V8;
 <music7n@total.net>; <www.craigmorrison.com>

In the 1950s and 60s, the transistor radio did a lot to bring rhythm 'n blues into the lives of young people throughout North America. Craig Morrison remembers how a little red "Rocket Radio" brought him the sounds of blues and rock as a teenager, which led him to his career as a musician, teacher and writer with a keen interest in the roots of rock. This album is, in part, a tribute to Morrison's musical heroes who sang through that Rocket radio, containing 18 songs, half of them originals, the other half cover versions of r 'n b hits and folk tunes.

The cover songs, including the Doc Pomus/Reginald Ashley hit "Boogie Woogie Country Girl," Jackie Lee Cochran's "Mama Don't You Think I Know" and the Strawberry Alarm Clock's "Incense and Peppermints," all work well. Morrison and his band create a very highly spirited and authentic-sounding rockabilly groove on "Mama Don't You Think I Know," featuring a fabulous walking bass line. John McDiarmid plays some ferocious blues piano work during "On the Road Again," which Morrison learned from a Memphis Jug Band recording. To my taste, Morrison's originals are arranged a bit thinly, and seemed to need more textural "space." However, the opening instrumental, "Rocket Radio," grooves quite well, and "Song for New Year's Day" contains some very attractive chord changes.

Morrison's guitar sings expressively throughout the album. He broaches a number of styles, from Chuck Berry-like double stop solos, chorded solos in a rockabilly style and jazzy single-note lead lines. His lead and rhythm playing is

consistently tasteful and pleasingly melodic. His vocals are more limited in expression, however, as he sticks to his middle range and to one tone colour for nearly the entire album.

The songs for *Rocket Radio* were recorded over the course of eight years (although one track dates back to 1986) and are mix of studio and live recordings. The sound and production quality is remarkably consistent from track to track, however, which is quite a feat. The production is clean and sparse, which serves some tracks well. Morrison's liner notes document the process that led him to write or choose these songs—he has interviewed many of the original performers and songwriters of his cover tunes—and this sets the context for the songs quite nicely.

This is a highly personal journey through some of the styles that lie at the roots of rock, but Morrison is careful to make sure that journey is friendly and accessible. Admirers of rockabilly and blues guitar playing will find some fine moments here.

Review by Chris McDonald, York University

In memoriam **LEON KOSSAR**

By Kevin Budd

The co-founder of Caravan, Leon Kossar, Toronto's multicultural festival, died in early August. With wife Zena, Leon started and ran the event for many years. Caravan had a significant part in making available many aspects of the the remarkable cultural variety of this city. Now referred to by some as "the world's most multicultural city", Toronto of the sixties was seemingly almost a monoculture. In an interview heard on the radio, Leon talked about how, at the time, Toronto had only a few Chinese restaurants, as its exotic part, but little else. Caravan presented not only Leon's Ukrainian heritage to the city, but, more and more, the other cultural expressions of the many groups who were previously almost unknown in the general populace. (Ask Al Gladstone for the full story as he understands it)

In the seventies and eighties I would regularly go out with friends to this annual offering, clutching my "Passport" to the many pavilions around town. According to one source, Zena was inspired to begin this "dream" after visiting a multicultural event in Pittsburgh, held in one location. Allowing it to disperse around Toronto meant that people presented dancing, music and food on their own turf. Successful as a

largely non-political cultural experience, Caravan and Toronto grew up together. Local residents could (and still can) grab a mango drink at Ivory Coast, eat debreceni sausage and watch a dance show at Budapest, have an ouzo and enjoy village dancers at Thessaloniki, hear booming taiko drums at Tokyo, have a belly dance lesson at Al Khaima, and end up with "domashno tanche graf" (homemade beans) and more music at Skopje. Sometimes a rumour of a Saturday party would circulate, and extra local folk dancers would show up here or there, (often Beograd) to dance with the locals. I had my first falafel in those days...and loved it!

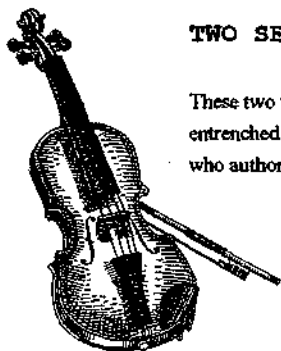
As Toronto developed, and became more proud of its mixed and changing heritage, more festivals sprang up: Harbourfront's various musical and food events, Taste of the Danforth Greek festival, Chinese Dragon Dance and Dragon Boat holidays, Caribana, and others. To some degree, these meant that Caravan became less unique and more integrated into the city's everyday personality. Other towns started their own similar events, and the amazing variety of who we have become was available for all.

Noting the passing of Leon Kossar, OFDA member Stephen Puschuk sent in the following recollection of the early days of Caravan:

I was saddened to hear of the death of Leon Kossar, co-founder of Caravan. I remember the first pavilion set up at University Settlement House in 1968. It was a three-day weekend affair at the end of June. A small group of folk dance enthusiasts helped decorate one of the rooms in a British theme. The pavilion was titled, "London". Ernie Krehm was the Lord Mayor and he looked resplendant in his gown and chain of office. The following year the event was held in the same place, but was a week long affair. I enjoyed playing my violin along with other musicians acting the part of a buskers.

Toronto now boasts an incredible collection of remarkable ethnic restaurants of all types: Italian, Thai, Hungarian, Japanese, Middle Eastern, Portuguese, Spanish, Eritrean and Ethiopian, Greek, Polish, Hispanic, Korean, South Asian, Vietnamese, and still, one of the finest Chinatowns anywhere. We can hear "exotic" music many nights of the week. Because of the diversity of our cultural make-up, at my local grocery I can buy five kinds of olives, twenty kinds of sausages, (including blood sausage) thirty kinds of cheese, kaffir yogourt, Brio (Italian soft drink) twenty kinds of coffee, octopus, squid, vine leaves, plantains, black rice and pita.

Kevin Budd edits the Folk Dancer, from which this article was reprinted. He is vice president of the Ontario Folk Dance Association (OFDA).



TWO SESSION TUNES

These two tunes of Canadian origin have, perhaps unexpectedly, become entrenched in other traditions; they come to us from Derek Lofthouse, who authored the notes.

Reel de Montréal

traditional

Reel de Montréal

My father got this tune out of a contra dance book, the *Ralph Page Book of Contras* (EFDSS, 1969). The only other person I have heard play it (aside from people we have taught it to) was an accordion/mandolin player in Calgary who used to play for a lot of contras "down east" (whether in Canada or the U.S. I can't remember). The book has no notes about the tune other than a general statement that "they have come to use French-Canadian tunes more and more".

Besides the name, the tune definitely has a French-Canadian feel to it; however, doing an on-line search for recordings, I found only

one Quebec source (Louis Beaudoin) and eight American recordings, two of which predate the Beaudoin one by 10 years. So who knows?

Because of the key change, I tend to finish on the "A" music unless following it with another tune.

The Grand Chain (La grande chaîne)

I learned this tune about five years ago at the Northumbrian pipers' gathering in North Hero, Vermont. At that time it was the

The Grand Chain

hottest new tune in Northumbrian piping circles; some of the pipers were unaware of its Quebec origins. A couple of pipers from Quebec who were there found it interesting that the tune had worked its way into the pipe repertoire. The version I learned is out of the Northumbrian Pipers' Third Tune Book (NPS, 1991); its French-Canadian origin is recognized in the tunebook, but that is all that is said about it.

Pipers play it as an English reel, slower than you would play an Irish reel, about Irish hornpipe tempo.

