

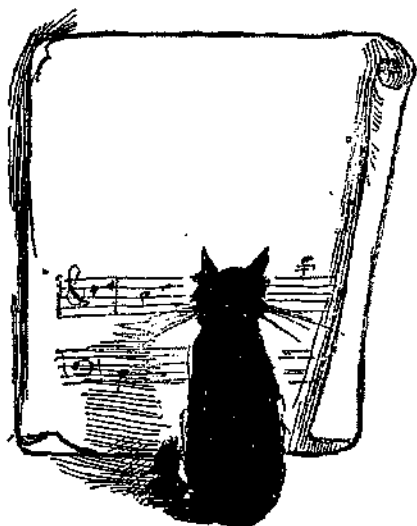
John Leeder, Review Editor

Books/Recordings

Allison Mitcham. *Ivan Hicks: Fifty Years of Fabulous Fiddle Music*. Lancelot Press Ltd., P.O. Box 452, Hantsport, N.S. B0P 1P0; 1996. 112pp.

In *Ivan Hicks: Fifty Years of Fabulous Fiddle Music*, Allison Mitcham, a self-avowed fan and personal friend of Ivan and his wife and musical partner, Vivian, provides readers with a rosy-hued glimpse into their busy lives of performing and teaching. Beginning with the stories of Curtis and Bessie Hicks, Ivan's parents, who learned fiddle and guitar respectively as young adults, Mitcham provides a chronological, biographical account of Ivan's musical development and accomplishments. Sprinkled liberally throughout the text are maps, photos and illustrations (charming pen and ink drawings by the author's husband, Peter Mitcham, that evoke scenes of local music-making, dance halls and theatres). There is also a special "picture section" at the end, showing Ivan playing with many of the bigwigs of North American fiddling, and catering to the intended audience of this book: established fans of Canadian fiddling, and of Ivan in particular.

Although the majority of the book focuses on Ivan and Vivian's musical activities (teaching, composing, performing, recording, etc.), Mitcham does discuss briefly other aspects of their lives: courtship and marriage, education, their careers as schoolteachers, and Ivan's struggle with cancer. She emphasizes their warm and generous personalities as much as their musical talents, attempting to make them into real persons, not just musical stars. And yet at times the book reads more like an annotated CV than the stories of two down-to-earth and personable Canadian musicians. Yes, Ivan and Vivian are wonderful people, and yes, they have a long list of musical accomplishments and connections with the most important traditional musicians in North America, but I was left wanting more of their human story. The several confessional tales of Ivan's minor misdemeanors as a child just don't satisfy me. While they would be funny and entertaining as stage banter between Ivan and Vivian (something at which they excel, but which was not mentioned by Mitcham), they become too moralistic when written down in Mitcham's serious and devoted manner. Similarly, the great stories of mishaps "on the road" would benefit from more of a storytelling mode, rather than the factual account of "this is what happened". Perhaps telling more of



Words and Music

the story in Ivan's and Vivian's own words/voices would create the multi-dimensionality of character that Mitcham is no doubt looking for. But this is a minor criticism, perhaps coming out of my preferred storytelling style.

More seriously, I challenge Mitcham's overly enthusiastic claims that Ivan is the best or most innovative old-time fiddler in Canada. While I in no way diminish his musicality and accomplishments, there are many, many wonderful old-time or traditional fiddlers spread right across Canada, playing different styles, in different contexts, to different audiences, but all with a love and a feel for the music that they share with Ivan and Vivian (and I'm sure Ivan would agree). Some tempering of these huge claims would add to the credibility of this book. Similarly, some rather simplistic observations, such as suggesting that Ivan and Curtis connect with Don Messer because all three have high expectations of others (there are probably many more musical attributes that they share), underscore the dearth of actual musical content in the book. This book is important as a description of one Canadian fiddler's career; musical analysis of Ivan's style and repertoire, compositional processes, musical developments and influences, etc., will have to wait for a second volume.

As an ethnomusicologist, I value the book for its descriptive history of a local music-making community. Mitcham describes local dances and dance halls that were frequented by Curtis and Ivan, and mentions, albeit briefly, other local musicians who didn't reach the same level of fame as Ivan but who were important to the music-making of their particular communities. She describes the "fiddle doos", initiated by Ivan and Vivian in 1982, which have grown and spread to become an important part of the social context for fiddling in the Maritimes and the most recent revival of traditional musics in Eastern Canada.

This small book will be much appreciated by Ivan and Vivian's legion of fans across North America and beyond. As a fan and friend myself who has performed with Ivan and Vivian on several occasions, I found this book to be the perfect little volume with which to curl up with a cup of tea (King Cole's tea, of course — one of their sponsors for the weekly summer "fiddle doo" at the Lutes Mountain Meeting House near Moncton, N.B.) and one of Ivan's many recordings playing in the background.

Sherry Johnson Toronto, Ontario

Scott Macmillan. **Scoobie Tunes (A Family Fiddle Frenzy): Cape Breton Style Fiddle Tunes Composed by Scott Macmillan.** Scojen Music Productions, 5543 Sebastian Place, Halifax, N.S. B3K 2K5; [scojen@ns.sympatico.ca]

Scott Macmillan et al. **The Minnie Sessions, Vols. 1, 2, 3.** Scojen Music Productions (address above)

Like fiddle music with a twist? Then check out a version of a fiddle tune by one of Nova Scotia's most respected guitarists. Scott Macmillan is well known for his talent as an arranger, performer and orchestrator for such acts as The Rankins, Ashley MacIsaac and Rita McNeill, but he is no slouch at a reel or jig either. Especially when you consider that he plays them on guitar!

The Minnie Sessions are well recorded, with an interesting mix of originals by Macmillan and other contemporary composers as well as some traditional tunes. Macmillan has very much earned his reputation as a top-notch instrumentalist, and this is particularly obvious on the three volumes of **The Minnie Sessions**. The recordings are a pleasurable combination of toe-tapping tunes performed in a highly skilled manner. The guest artists on all volumes enhance the quality, feel and variety of the music as well as adding at times a more familiar and traditional sound to Macmillan's innovative works.

The liner notes and tune titles are creative, at times amusing, and very well done. The overall tone of the albums is extremely professional. The music is easy to listen to, a relaxing break from traditional Cape Breton fiddle albums. Though at times I found myself wanting a bit more meat, a big fiddle sound I could sink my ears into, I enjoyed the Minnie sessions' lighter side, and welcome all the volumes into my CD collection as a refreshing change from the norm.

As a companion music book to **The Minnie Sessions** recordings, **Scoobie Tunes** provides a well-constructed, easy-to-work-with format for learning many of the great tunes heard on the albums. The layout of the book is convenient and accessible, divided into types of tunes (jigs, reels, etc.) and subdivided by key signature.

The music is written out clearly and with handy chord progressions above the notes (which is a lifesaver, because some of Macmillan's tunes feature rapid chord changes). The design is spacious and easy to read.

The tunes themselves are excellent, and it is great to have such a well-put-together resource for them. Macmillan's tunes are innovative, yet traditional enough that they will fit well into a

variety of repertoires. They add a breath of fresh air to the standard fiddler's fare. A lot of the tunes are built using the prominent notes in a chord (1st, 3rd and 5th), and I have found most of the pieces to be a great way to teach compositions based on chord progressions. The use of many even rhythms (no strange timings) makes the tunes ideal for beginners.

I admit that at first I was leery about working with fiddle tunes written by a guitar player. As a fiddler, I questioned Macmillan's arrangements and understanding of the violin. However, once I started playing the tunes, I found them enjoyable to play and teach. As a fiddler, there are a couple of the key signatures and notes that I would change for easier fingering, but on the other hand, it is great to add a bit of challenge to the usual format of a fiddle tune.

The titles of the pieces are unique, and it's worth learning the tunes just to be able to say to someone, "Hey, do you know 'The Curly Haired Ass' or 'The Bred Heifer's Trip to Newfoundland'?" Scott's explanation of the titles is amusing for musicians and non-musicians alike.

Great tunes, good book, fair price, highly recommended.

*Keitha Clark
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

Recordings

Marcel Bénéteau, *À la table de mes amis*, Vieilles chansons du Détroit, Volume III. PC003. Disques Petite Côte Records, 247 Esdras Place, Windsor, Ont. N8S 2M4; petitecote@hotmail.com.

En décembre dernier, le folkloriste ontarien Marcel Bénéteau lançait le 3^e volet de sa trilogie des *Vieilles chansons du Détroit*. Les 23 chansons du présent album s'ajoutent aux 19 du 2^e volume (PC001) et aux 18 du premier disque (PC002) pour composer une anthologie de plus de 60 chansons traditionnelles de la région du Détroit. Il s'agit d'un vibrant témoignage d'une tradition française qui confirme une présence française dont on fête cette année le tricentenaire. Comme les deux albums précédents, *À la table de mes amis* est composé de chansons traditionnelles que Marcel Bénéteau recueille depuis une vingtaine d'années dans la région du Détroit, dans de petites communautés françaises comme Rivière-aux-Canard, Tégumseh, Pointe-aux-Roches, Belle-Rivière, Saint-Joachim, Grande Pointe ou Pain Court. Il s'agit d'un répertoire qui s'est admirablement bien conservé, presque en vase clos.

Ce disque sort des sentiers battus de la production en musique traditionnelle ; il s'agit d'un disque témoignage plutôt que d'animation musicale — un disque au contenu dense et remarquable. Toutes les chansons sont proposées dans des versions originales et plus de la moitié n'ont jamais été enregistrees. Ces textes et ces mélodies nous ramènent au Moyen âge ; d'ailleurs, le folkloriste a fait bonne place aux pastourelles.

Derrière l'interprète se cache un chercheur aguerri. Dans le livret, le texte des chansons est accompagné d'une brève présentation bilingue : chaque chanson est située dans la tradition française et par rapport aux porteurs de tradition qui les lui a communiquées. Bénéteau se montre habile à faire oeuvre savante tout en demeurant accessible au plus grand nombre.

Ses arrangements sont sobres et entraînants. Ses interprétations sont justes et sensibles, sans recherche d'effets inutiles ; le rythme sûr et bien appuyé.

Les *Vieilles chansons du Détroit* constituent une oeuvre majeure et incontournable pour la connaissance de la tradition orale chantée du sud-ouest de l'Ontario. Celle-ci est à classer auprès des ouvrages de Barbeau, D'Harcourt et autres grands recueils de la tradition chantée au Canada français. Puisse cette anthologie être connue, reconnue et diffusée à travers des francophonies canadienne et européenne.

*Donald Deschênes
Beauport (Québec)*

Anita Best. *Crosshanded*. 9804-2. Amber Music, P.O. Box 156, Topsail, Nfld. A0A 3Y0; [\[abest@morgan.ucs.mun.ca\]](mailto:abest@morgan.ucs.mun.ca); [\[www.ambermusic.nfnet.com\]](http://www.ambermusic.nfnet.com)

A recording of traditional songs from Newfoundland, sung in traditional fashion by a singer who is known for having a way with traditional music — what could be better targeted for CSTM members? Although some might quibble that Anita Best is in fact a "revival" singer, she learned all the songs on this CD in "proper" fashion, many from her late husband, Pius Power Jr., and his father, from her mother, and from other source singers, including Émile Benoit, more famous as a fiddler, but also a noted singer and raconteur. The sleeve notes include biographies of all the singers from whom Anita learned the songs, as well as a page of her ruminations on the music and its place in Newfoundland's culture and in her own life. It also includes brief notes on the songs, but no lyrics — if you want to learn these songs, you'll have to spend time with your cassette

or CD player. And my guess is that you'll be doing that — many of the songs are irresistible.

In Newfoundland's old-time culture, music was for dancing, songs were for singing, and the two rarely met up. Songs were mostly sung unaccompanied. (This is true of most of the English-speaking world, lest we forget. Instrumental accompaniment of folk songs is a relatively new development, perhaps newer in Newfoundland than in many other regions.) Anita doesn't compromise on this point. "Crosshanded" is a Newfoundland term meaning "alone", and the CD *Crosshanded* is sung entirely a capella. Folks looking for hootin' and hollerin' pub songs with lots of pickin' better look elsewhere. The only variance from Anita's solo voice occurs when Pamela Morgan (who also produced the recording) joins her on one track; even then, Pamela sings unison rather than harmony. (Again, harmonized vocal leads à la England's Copper Family were very much a minority tradition until the style was popularized in the late 20th Century.) Anita has "Placentia Bay music in her veins", and she sings with absolute conviction, letting the songs tell their own story.

Variety is provided by juxtaposing various types of songs. A classic version of a Child ballad, "Lord Bateman", is followed by a humorous local song, "Tobacco" (about the lack thereof), then comes an old French song, "Blanche comme la neige", and on it goes. There's an inside look at an outport community event, "The Soup Supper in Clattice", an Irish Gaelic song, a song about a heroic rescue, another about a shipwreck where rescue failed, a lullaby, a shanty, a comic song, and a song about danger and hardship in the fishery. The songs in their totality provide a glimpse into a world which most of us will never inhabit but which seems true and real. Isn't that what we listen to traditional music for?

Obviously, Anita hasn't had an eye on the market in making this kind of CD. Do it's up to us who recognize the value of traditional music to support her courageous initiative. Let's hope her example inspires others — we need more of this kind of recording in our own worlds.

*John Leeder
Calgary, Alberta*

Maple Creek. MCR-339. 11227 - 63rd Street,
Edmonton, Alta. T5W 4E5; (780) 441-5290;
[maplecreek@sprint.ca]; [www.maplecreek.org]

Maple Creek is a new band within Canada's bluegrass world, having been formed in 1998, but none of the band members are new to the music. The band heard on this debut recording are: Brad Oviatt, fiddle, guitar, lead and

harmony vocals; Dawn Oviatt, guitar, lead and harmony vocals; Jim Storey, bass and harmony vocals; and Brian Melick, banjo and harmony vocals. Also, borrowed from Jerusalem Ridge to assist in making this recording, Craig Korth provides banjo, Dobro and guitar.

Brad Oviatt moved from Tennessee to Edmonton, Alberta, in 1997. He didn't know it then, but the singer/guitarist who was soon to become Mrs Oviatt had moved from Prince Edward Island to Edmonton in 1994. Dawn had formed a band named Blue Skies, which soon morphed into Maple Creek after she and Brad began to make music together. Jim Storey was already playing acoustic bass for whoever needed a bass man, and has been known to play rhythm guitar on occasion. Brian Melick had moved from Ontario to Calgary, and answered the call when Maple Creek needed a banjo player.

Some of Brad Oviatt's credits include being a two-time West Virginia State Bluegrass Fiddle Champion, Pennsylvania State Old-Time Fiddle Champion and Great Lakes Fiddle Champion. He has been a member of the bands Patent Pending and Beaver Creek, and has recorded with Foggy Bottom and David Grier. Dawn's musical background in P.E.I. started when she joined a church folk group and later formed a vocal trio. Jim Storey's first instrument was a Hawaiian steel guitar. That led to a turn with the blues, then he turned to bluegrass and played guitar, banjo, mandolin and fiddle. Brian Melick took up banjo in college, and considers Sammy Shelor and Earl Scruggs to be among his influences.

The music on this debut CD from the band is all bluegrass, as opposed to newgrass or old-time music. I doubt if Buck Owens knew he was writing a bluegrass song when he wrote "Where Does the Good Times Go", which leads off the recording. Thankfully, the title has been changed to "Where Do . . ." to clean up the grammar. Merle Haggard supplied "Somewhere Between" from the country world, which also sounds like it should always have been played as bluegrass. Brad Oviatt supplied 3 of the 12 cuts: "One Kiss, One Heartache" is a medium tempo love song with great harmonies and twin fiddles; "Remember My Children To Pray" is a capella gospel; and the last of the trio is "Who Will Tend the Loved Ones". Bill Monroe supplied "Is the Blue Moon Still Shining" and "The Lonesome Moonlight Waltz", which is another twin-fiddle special. To me, one of the highlights of the album is the vocal and instrumental work done on the song "Once More", written many years ago by Dusty Owens. The original vocal treatment, especially the harmony parts, was designed to resemble the "swoopy" sound a country steel guitar would make when

playing the song. Some groups (e.g., the Osborne Brothers) which have recorded it over the past few years have come up with a different bluegrass arrangement which to my ears sounds like an incredibly poor version once one has heard the original. Not only does Maple Creek do a fantastic job of the song as it was intended to be done, but the band also does the same highly competent job when performing live. This year they'll be spreading their wings a bit as they appear at several Ontario festivals in August.

The current personnel of the band is Dawn and Brad Oviatt, Jim Storey, and B.C.'s Jim Walker doing the banjo honours. The recording is a first effort to be proud of, and should not be a disappointment to any bluegrass music fan.

*Laurie Mills
Calgary, Alberta*

Lenka Lichtenberg. *Deep Inside: New Jewish Music*. SRD712. Sunflower Records, 246 Haddington Ave., Toronto, Ont. M5M 2P9; [lenkal@netcom.ca]; [www.lenkalichtenberg.com]; [www.IndieCanada.com]

Welcome Back Yiddish! And welcome back Lenka Lichtenberg! It's hard to believe, while listening to Lenka's celebration of everything Jewish, from Klezmer-backed Yiddish traditionals to the contemporary sadnesses that divide us, that she grew up in what she calls "an entirely assimilated survivor family, a true blank page in the anything-Jewish-sense". Lenka's process of filling that blank page and constructing her own Jewish identity makes an entertaining and important contribution to modern Jewish culture. She has shared the process with enthusiastic audiences at Toronto's Ashkenaz festivals, and now presents it in her masterful and richly varied CD, *Deep Inside*. The fully traditional Klezmer sound bursts through not only in Lenka's revivals of good old Yiddish riddle songs such as "Tum-Balalake", but also in her own creations, notably "Old Jewish Soul", where Daniel Hoffman's soulful violin weeps a painfully joyous parallel to Lenka's soprano. The song ends in manic, almost wedding-like, Klezmer glory. That close proximity of anguish and joy is ever so Jewish. In "Welcome Back Yiddish", Martin Van de Ven's clarinet echoes Lenka's voice deliciously as she brings back the yababababams and the chirichiribims of the Yiddish language we had almost forgotten. Lenka does well with other Jewish styles also, bringing a lovely Sephardi lilt to the rhythms of "Los Bilbilicos" and a jazzy improvisational style to some of her own compositions. Lenka Lichtenberg addresses some important issues in her songs, regarding the sad lack of communication between observant and

liberal Jews, and the heavy responsibility of survivors to keep Holocaust memories alive. She treats these issues with buoyant, melodic hope. Lenka and her fabulous musical team, with Ken Whitely's exuberant production values, have mapped Lenka Lichtenberg's return to the joys, the tears and the ageless rhythms of Jewish music, in a way that all of us can share in. *Deep Inside* is energizing proof that Jewish tradition is durable enough to take jazzy new steps into the contemporary music scene.

*Nomi Kaston
Calgary, Alberta*

Marty's Party. *Cold Corner*. Nan & Martin Colledge, 304 Oxford St., Winnipeg, Man. R3M 3J7; [martys_party@hotmail.com]

Marty's Party are a Winnipeg-based group that play (mostly) "traditional" music from the north of England. This CD was originally recorded at CBC Winnipeg for radio broadcast. The package is quite well done, with notes about each track and close-up pictures of the various instruments involved.

The group consists of: Martin Colledge (Northumbrian smallpipes, tenor banjo, cittern and mandolin); Nan Colledge (flute and English concertina); Neil Aitken (fiddle); Lindsey Bart (guitar); Dan Baseley (button accordion and whistles); Alistair Dennett (percussion and jaw harp); Daniel Koulack (acoustic bass); and Al Thomson (vocals). The CD has a good mix of songs and instrumental tracks, 12 in all, 5 of which have singing involved.

There are not a lot of recordings around (other than Katheryn Tickell, The House Band and The High Level Ranters, to name a few) that feature the Northumbrian pipes in an ensemble setting. This is mainly because the pipes traditionally are pitched $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 tone low — "G" on the pipes is "F#" or "F" on fiddle or flute. Concert tuning sets are available now, but most pipers play an "F" set. This means the rest of the group is playing a lot of tunes in F and C. This may not seem hard, but the vast majority of English, Irish and Scottish folk music is in G, D, A and associated minors, so the flat keys can be new ground for a lot of musicians. Marty's pipes seem to be an F set, but the group seems comfortable with this, and the pipes sound quite good in the band setting.

The CD starts off with an unnamed 9/8 tune from the north of England on the pipes and flute, with guitar, percussion and jaw harp backing, a little heavy on the shimmering bell trees, but nice nonetheless. The next tune set is a march and three reels that came from a 17th-century

collection of dance tunes found in the Manchester music library. The march starts off on mandolin, with flute, accordian, fiddle and bodhran joining in full bore for the reels, which, despite English origin, are played in a flat-out Irish style. We have a couple of MartinÆs tunes next, "Jim Picking Mushrooms" and "The New Winnipeg Reel", two reels on tenor banjo, accordian, fiddle and guitar. A set of tunes from the Isle of Man and Northumberland is next. A song air about a late winter snow that killed the farmer's sheep but not the lambs is followed by a cheerful tune from Northumberland. This track again features the Northumbrian smallpipes with flute and guitar.

The accordian starts us off on the next set of tunes, three Irish jigs, "Kitty Come Over/Apples in Winter/Boys of Ballymore", with the rest of the group jumping in on flute, cittern and fiddle. A set of reels is next, starting with "The Girl who Broke my Heart" on banjo, going into "IÆm Waiting for You" on flute, both with guitar and bodhran backing, then "The Crib of Perches" and "The Green fields of Rossbeigh", with the accordian and fiddle joining in.

The CD finishes off, appropriately enough, with three Northumbrian tunes on pipes, English concertina, flute and guitar: "Rothbury Hills", a waltz by the great piper/fiddler Jack Armstrong, followed by two tunes in 3/2, "Go to Berwick, Johnny" and "Three Rusty Swords".

Four of the five song sets are of Northumbrian or even Newcastle origin, the fifth being from the Isle of Man. Al Thomson is obviously from Newcastle, and his Geordie accent comes across strongly in the songs. "The Gateshead Lass", a song of romance and courtship, is arranged well, with guitar, cittern, bodhran, whistle and concertina subtly backing the vocals. "Elsie Marley" is sandwiched between two jigs, the first a recent American tune and the second an Irish jig, "The Mayo Snaps". Again the backing behind the vocals is kept fairly subtle, with guitar, flute and bodhran. Up to this point all the selections have been of English origin, and the sudden insertion of an Irish jig after a Geordie song is quite jarring, although not necessarily bad. The vocals sound a little strained on this track; they might have been better off in a slightly lower key. The next song is the non-Northumbrian one, The classic "Ennan Vannin", about an Isle of Man-based mail ship lost in a storm in 1909. Next up is a pair of Northumbrian children's songs that I would imagine almost everyone with a mother from the north of England grew up listening to: "Ca Hackey", a song about trying to get the cow (whose name is Hackey) across the stream to the cow shed, and "Dance to Your Daddy", which oddly enough is encouraging the baby to grow up and go

out and get drunk like his father. This medley is accompanied by cittern, flute and accordian. The final song is an unaccompanied mining ballad, "Gilliver", about a young boy working in the pits who is saved by his pit pony.

This is a very entertaining recording by some talented Canadian musicians. It is an interesting mix of tunes from Ireland and the north of England, with an emphasis on the latter. If you like music from this area, or are looking to expand your musical horizons a little, I would wholeheartedly recommend picking up this CD.

*Derek Lofthouse
Calgary, Alberta*

Linda Miller. *Hearts at Rest: Celtic Lullabies*. Canal 282. Linda Miller, 483 Cambridge St. S, Ottawa, Ont. K1S 4H6; [fol@cyberus.ca]

I am an expert on lullabies. I don't say this in an academic sense, never having studied the form or the many wonderful examples of lullabies in traditional, classical and contemporary music. But I'm aware of lullabies; in fact, it has been my experience that almost any song can become a lullaby if it is sung slowly and softly enough, while sitting in the dim shadows of a child's bedroom, accompanied only by the breathing of a tired little one finally drifting into dreamland. I have spent the past 11 years perched nightly on the edge of beds, singing my children to sleep, so I have to say that I know a thing or two about lullabies.

Linda Miller, judging from her delightful recording *Hearts at Rest*, knows a thing or two about lullabies also. In fact, I have heard the CD so many times now that I have most of the songs memorized and added to my repertoire.

Hearts at Rest is a collection of Celtic lullabies beautifully sung by Miller, with accompaniment by such familiar Ottawa-area traditional musicians as Ian Robb on concertina, James Stephens on strings, vocals and harmonium, and Nathan Curry on vocals, guitars, cittern, bodhran and mandolin. There's also John Geggie, Tadhg O Muiris, Frank Cassidy, Debbie Quigley, Duncan Gillis and Don Kavanagh, all lending their expertise in instruments including Celtic harp, uilleann pipes and whistles. Carefully arranged and mixed, this assortment of voices and instruments lies gently below Miller's clear lead vocal. She gives way only once, to let Nathan Curry sing melody on "John O' Dreams", a traditional lullaby that gives a nod to a theme by Tschaikovsky. The overall effect is hushed and haunting: Celtic song at its best.

The recording includes some very familiar songs (the aforementioned "John O' Dreams") as

well as that other category of "where have I heard that before?". The Welsh lullaby "Suo Gan" and the Manx tune "Little Red Bird" are among my favourites, with "Gartan Mother's Lullaby" closely in the running. My children love all these songs, and they request this CD if they're still awake after my bedside "set" is done. Unfortunately for them, they're often asleep before the last few songs play.

As a collection of lullabies *Hearts at Rest* is delightful, but it's equally delightful as a quiet and contemplative musical background to other activities such as, say, relaxing at the end of the day. I highly recommend this recording to anyone who wants a touch of the quiet side of Celtic.

*Jean Mills
Guelph, Ontario*

Celtic Colours. *Red is the Rose*. WRC4-6940. Celtic Colours, 38 Farnham Rd., Bible Hill, Truro, N.S. B2N 2X7; [www.ncf.ca/~ah370/celtic]; Greg Langille, 281 Bayswater Ave., Ottawa, Ont. K1Y 2G9

This group was formed "in the heartland of Nova Scotia" in 1994. Though avowedly devoted to Celtic music, it boasts also of accommodating components of country music and rock. Its core members are singer Jeanie MacEachern, born in Ontario but growing up in Mabou, Nova Scotia, and guitarist and singer Greg Langille, who grew up in Nova Scotia and originally devoted his musical talents to country music and rock. From such backgrounds and with such musical components, one would expect this recording to be a musical hybrid; and so it is. Positive contributions are provided by Ray Legere's mandolin and fiddle; a negative contribution by a singularly unimaginative drummer whose name, perhaps mercifully to that person, is not given. Tyson Traynor's electric guitar is unobtrusive.

The first side largely comprises Irish tracks. "Red is the Rose" is slow and sensuous, quite well suited to Jeanie MacEachern's voice; it is sung to the tune of "Loch Lomond" and, despite the claim on the J-card, I do not believe it to be traditional. Less familiar to me was "Sail Away" — "far away from the ocean", as the chorus reveals.

Unfortunately, the heavy and monotonous drumming drowns Jeanie's voice, and I did not learn much more of the lyric. Tommy Makem's sensitive lament for divided Ireland, "Four Green Fields", was rendered with appropriate solemnity and I had no trouble with the next track, Makem's "Winds of Morning". In contrast, Malvina (no, not Malvinia!) Reynoldss' "Morning Town Ride" is

much too slow, altogether forfeiting the train rhythm that should carry it along.

The second side begins with "Tyree Love Song" (no, not "Tyre", as the J-card states; Tyre was a city of ancient Phoenicia, not a Hebridean island!). I'm never very sure about sea noises as background; it gives the odd image of musicians playing away while up to their waists in water, in an incoming tide. I did like the fiddle on this track — more than a mere accompaniment — and I liked the mandolin on "Dumbarton Drums", that oddity of a love song to a martial air. Greg Langville's own "Bonny Sweet Lass" is a good song, a paean of joy to the fact that his "bonnie sweet lass is here!". The next track, "Song for Mother", written by his daughter Sharon Langville and sung by her and her sister Cheryl, is a tribute that must indeed have warmed their mother's heart, but it was too much in country-and-western style to enchant this reviewer. The last track, "Wedding Song", is an extraordinary hybrid. It is claimed to be traditional, but that is a claim I question; and, if so, what tradition? Certainly not Irish or Scottish!

Though Greg leads the singing on "Bonnie Sweet Lass", and "Song for Mother" is sung by his daughter, this is very much Jeanie MacEachern's record. Consequently, one's reaction to it must be determined by one's response to her voice and style. Neither appeal to me particularly, and certainly I do not find Celtic Colors' music "haunting", as the accompanying promotion suggests I should. However, Jeanie sings clearly and competently enough (when not drowned by that awful drum!); many listeners will surely find her voice to their taste. To determine your own response, why not listen to that Real Audio sample, if your personal computer permits? That should answer the question for you!

*William A.S. Sarjeant
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

[According to *Rise Up Singing*, "Red is the Rose" is an old song which Tommy Makem learned from his mother and popularized. Tommy suggests that the lyrics are older than those of "Loch Lomond".—JL]

Kendra MacGillivray. *Over the Waves*. Kendra MacGillivray, RR#4, Antigonish, N.S. B2G 2L2; [kendra@kendramacgillivray.com]

The latest album by 28-year-old Antigonish fiddler Kendra MacGillivray provides an enjoyable listen for fans of fiddle music of all genres. Her playing is strong and catching and, as the saying goes, "If you're not tapping your foot, check your pulse." The backup musicians provide a

solid foundation for Kendra to build on, and the arrangements of the tunes are very well done.

The addition of pipes, drums, banjo and bass, and appearances by members of the Nova Scotia Symphony, spice up the traditional fare of fiddle tunes. The extra instrumentation does not detract from the fiddle, instead adding depth. Kendra's playing is lively and crisp; however, the fiddle sounds thin at times (a recording problem, not a reflection on MacGillivray's sound). Kendra shows excellent taste in picking appropriate accompaniment for each song, and the listener is rewarded with a very clean sound.

The album showcases a variety of tunes and settings, from traditional Cape Breton medleys to the classically-arranged title cut, "Over the Waves". Original tunes are featured as well. "The Trolley", a tune composed by Kendra's brother Troy, is a great opening number; the drums and piano in the first few bars introduce a comfy groove that stays for the rest of the album.

Overall, this is a very professional album that maintains the traditional Cape Breton sound while successfully mingling other genres into the mix.

*Keitha Clark
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

Tim Readman & Fear of Drinking. In Black & White. Fear of Drinking, P.O. Box 323, 916 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1K7; [tim@timreadman.com]; [www.timreadman.com]; Festival Distribution, 1351 Grant St., Vancouver, B.C. V5L 2X7; 1-800-633-8282; [fdi@festival.bc.ca]; [www.festival.bc.ca]

This is a live recording of Fear of Drinking captured at the Atlantic Trap and Gill in Vancouver, April 1999. The group on this CD consists of Tim Readman, vocals and guitar; Allison Russell, vocals; Revellie Nixon, assorted percussion and backing vocals; and Brendan Rideout, bass and backing vocals. On a few tracks they are joined very capably by Shona Le Mottee, fiddle, or Amy Stephen, accordion and whistle.

This is the fourth Fear of Drinking release since the group was formed in 1992, and features an eclectic mix of traditional, contemporary and original songs. The band's forte has always been live performance, and therefore making a live recording is a natural. Many live recordings feel like something is missing, or the playing is stiff, with everyone afraid to ruin it by making a mistake. Fear of Drinking's arrangements are solid, with no unnecessary frills — no need for big production and ambient synthesizer fills here.

There are 15 songs here; Tim sings lead on ten of them and Allison on the other five. Tim's

songs are a mix of popular tradition songs ("Ye Jacobites", "Whip Jamboree", etc.) and originals ("Home Truths", "The Heart I Sent to You" and "The Shorts All Year Round Boys"). A lot of singers try to hide any trace of accent in their singing voices, but Tim celebrates his Tyneside origins, with his Northumbrian accent becoming more pronounced in his singing.

These roots are visited in several of his compositions, "Home Truths", "The Seaham Song" and "The Magpie Song". The later two also show his opinions of what Margaret Thatcher did to the North of England. His new home is also featured, in the song "The Shorts All Year Round Boys", which comments on that phenomenon, not restricted only to Vancouver. The sea plays a strong role in the traditional songs here: "Barrack Street", your typical "sailor meets girl, goes to room, wakes up with money and clothes gone" story, and two songs which likely started life as chanteys, "New York Girls" and "Whip Jamboree". The unpleasantness of war and rebellion are explored on "Ye Jacobites", and of course we are treated to the Geordie national anthem, "Blaydon Races".

Allison Russell sings a couple of traditional songs "The Coal Quay Market Song", all about the dangers of shopping, and the well-known Newfoundland tongue twister "Mary Mac". "The Widow" is an interesting twist on the whole Faust, false knight on the road, theme, with sex being the object here. Allison ventures into blues territory on "Ain't No Sweet Man Worth the Salt of My Tears", with good results. Of course you can't make a recording in the Atlantic Trap and Gill without at least one Stan Rogers song. It's a great song, but does the world really need another recording of "Barrett's Privateers"?

Allison Russell has a rich, powerful voice that sounds equally at home on the traditional songs as on the blues. Her voice also blends well with Tim Readman's strong Geordie accent when they are singing together. The bass and percussion are solid throughout the CD and the fiddle and accordion add a good lift and a little variation to the sound when they join in.

This is a very good introduction to the music of Fear of Drinking; their strength is the live show, and it is captured well here. There are a couple of not so great tracks, but most of this CD is pretty good.

*Derek Lofthouse
Calgary, Alberta*

Elizabeth Patterson. *Pengalleon*. EJP810. Elizabeth Patterson, 7 Marlborough Dr., Sydney, N.S. B1S 1W7; [e.patterson@ns.sympatico.ca]

Elizabeth Patterson is a flute player from Nova Scotia. This CD contains 12 tracks, which vary from "lite" jazz to easy listening to "pseudo Celtic". She is accompanied by David Burke, who is also the producer, on piano, synthesizer, guitars, bass mandolin, percussion and santur. Three of the tracks are "trad. arr.", seven written by Ms. Patterson, one by Mr. Burke, and they co-wrote one.

The cover has a picture of a ship in full sail, with Ms. Patterson standing playing her flute. The packaging seems to me to be trying to sell a "Celtic" image, which is not at all what this recording is about.

Technically the flute playing is good; the performer has intonation and control of the flute throughout its range. The accompaniment is adequate at best; the percussion sounds like a drum machine, thus rigidly locking in the tempo. The playing on the traditional selections sounds stilted and very "classical". Most of the other tracks have a jazz/Caribbean/South American "feel" to them.

If you are looking to add some flute music to your new-age music collection, perhaps this CD is for you. If you are looking for traditional or "Celtic" music, this is not a place to look.

*Derek Lofthouse
Calgary, Alberta*

Quartango. *Esprit*. JUST 142-2. Justin Time Records Inc., 5455, rue Par_ suite 101, Montr_al (Qu_bec) H4P 1P7; [jadro@justin-time.com]; [www.justin-time.com]

The four musicians who comprise Quartango are classically trained; however, their CDs mix classical, tango, folk and jazz elements. Their third CD, *Esprit*, is definitely not for purists, as the quartet continues to strengthen its fusions between different genres of music. *Esprit* was one of the five finalists for the 2000 Juno award for "Best Global Album", and its intent is certainly typical of the current interest in mixing musics. However, this CD differs from many others because of its exceptionally fine musicianship, wonderful recording quality and highly creative arrangements, most of which were by the quartet's pianist, Richard Hunt. The quartet is based in Montreal and has performed across Canada as well as at Carnegie Hall. This CD was recorded at the George Weston Recital Hall in Toronto.

The numbers on the CD vary from light-hearted arrangements to more serious pieces,

although there is almost always an undertone of humour. The group performs superbly, but doesn't take itself too seriously. There are wonderful contrasts between pieces in terms of tempo, style, harmonies and soloists. The CD opens with an exuberant and lively tango by Angel Villoldo, "El Esquinazo", arranged by Richard Hunt and featuring all four instruments — violin (Stephane Allard), piano (Richard Hunt), bandoneon (the newest member of the group, Denis Plante) and double bass (Rene Gosselin). The second piece, "La Yumba" by Osvaldo Pugliese, arranged by Denis Plant and Richard Hunt, is slightly more serious, with some contemporary dissonance in the harmonies. The third number is Astor Piazzola's sensuous "Oblivion", which is beautifully performed in an arrangement by Richard Hunt, with a sense of playfulness in the added percussion. In particular, the way the piano takes over from the bandoneon in the first section is heavenly. The fourth piece, "Milonga Celtica" by Richard Hunt, contrasts with the sensuous "Oblivion" in its fast pace and fusion of Celtic and classical music with a slight hint of tango. Perhaps more surprising than this fusion is the fifth piece, an arrangement by Simon Le Clerc of Pavarotti's signature piece "E Lucevan Le Stelle". The instrumentation shifts as each of the four instruments takes the melody, including the double bass. There are hints of polyphony and overlap which enrich the texture. The sensuous second section has a faster tempo and a tango rhythm in the piano, and alters the original rhythm of the melody. The sixth piece,

"Jalousie II" by Jacob Gade, arr. by Richard Hunt, also shows the group's light-heartedness, as other melodies appear in the middle section, almost like a medley. For yet another fusion, the eighth number features Dave Brubeck's "Blue Rondo a la Turk", arranged by Stephane Allard and Richard Hunt. Here we have an original Turkish rhythm in 9, creatively borrowed by a jazz composer and then arranged for classically-trained musicians who add a hint of tango. The ending is extremely virtuosic. The final number, "Taquito Militar", by Martinez Mariano, arranged by Richard Hunt, reiterates the Middle Eastern theme with its percussion, provided by Rick Lazar.

In short, this is not a CD for purists. It is for someone who is interested in a high-quality fusion of many musical styles. On Quartango's next CD, I would love to hear more from pianist Richard Hunt.

*Leslie Hall
Toronto, Ontario*

Fraser Union. *From There to Here*. FU 02.
Roger Holdstock, 3851 W. 22nd Ave., Vancouver,
B.C. V6S 1J8; [henryr@axion.net]

After an eight-year layoff between albums, *From There to Here* is the latest release by Vancouver-area group Fraser Union. The disc is a collection of 14 songs from various sources, including traditional songs, works by composers such as Stan Rogers and John Lyon, and one song by Fraser Union member Barry Truter. The songs reflect a variety of subject matter, with a balance between East Coast material and more recent compositions from B.C. While I admire the breadth of material on this album, I found it difficult to make links between some of the works, even after rereading the liner notes.

Several of the songs make a strong, positive impression. "Empty Nets" (by Jim Payne) combines four-part harmonies with a backing of guitar and mandolin, and is an enthusiastic group performance. I was especially impressed by Fraser Union's rendition of "Free in the Harbour" (by Stan Rogers), although a bit of reverb would help polish away the rough edges. Some plosive consonants are also heard as pops on the microphone. An original song by Fraser Union's Barry Truter, "Ships of the Deep", holds its own in the company of these other songs. The song uses Truter's experiences as an apprentice navigating officer to "draw attention to horrendous conditions on many flag-of-convenience ships". I hope Truter continues to write material for the group (and for others).

There are some problems with the harmonies being sung on this disc. Notes aren't always clearly in tune, and many songs show a tendency toward doubled fifths and unusual voicings, which throws the singing out of balance. There are also several wrong notes in the harmonies. Still, this is good singing, and Fraser Union exhibits a strong sense of ensemble. I like the recording's balance of voices to instruments, although within the vocal parts the bass is occasionally too prominent. As noted in the liner notes, this album was recorded "live" (their quotes), which can save money but also makes it much more difficult to iron out the details through editing or retakes.

The final product is a slightly disjointed collection of quality performances. Every member shows an understanding of (and passion for) the music, and the recording, while clearly made on a budget, is clean, effective and sincere. I look forward to the next release by Fraser Union — I hope we won't have to wait another eight years!

*Paul E. Guise
Red Deer, Alberta*

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