

Folks, in the June issue of Victory Review, there's a short but quality review of our Font Rob Seat 2-CD set by Tom Petersen. The article brevity is likely due to page limitations of print media. [http://www.victorymusic.org/victory_review.html]

The Rest of the Story — Frank Cuta and I had asked Bill Fisher to do a review of the album, when they were first released. Here's Bill's review.

If you haven't added our album to your collection or pick up a set for gift giving, think about it. You can buy the album at 3RFS events or on our web page [<http://www.3RFS.org>].

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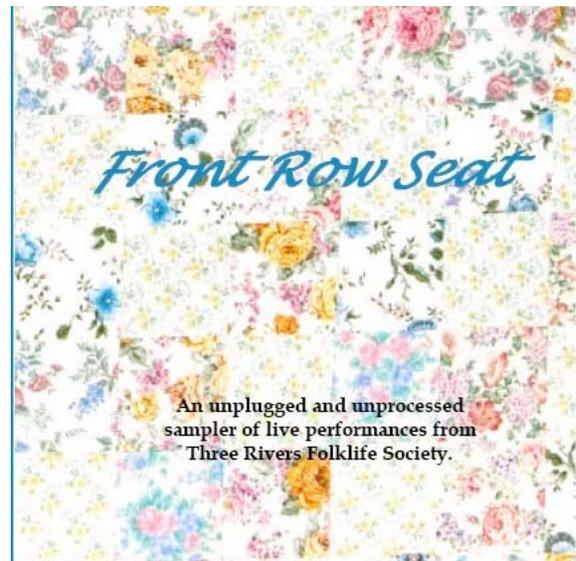
***Front Row Seat: A Compilation of Live Performances
Produced by Three Rivers Folklore Society***

CLASSIC NORTHWEST INDIE CDs
By Bill Fisher. Edited by Harry (doc) Babad

In recent years, I have written reassessments of several classic independently-produced CDs in this space. This time I write about an instant classic, filled with live performances of various acoustic artists from 1992 to the last few years. This extraordinarily generous 2-disk set of performances culled from years of concerts and coffee house sets produced by the Three Rivers Folklore offers up three obvious truths.

First, the Tri-Cities folk society has acted as loving godparents to acoustic music from all over the nation, but particularly from the Northwest. They have created wonderful venues, invited a broad array of performers, made sure they got paid and treated well—and often provided a meal or two and a place to sleep if they came from a great distance. As important as the radio king of—or perhaps the Dr. Demento of—inland empire folk music, Dan Maher, the 3rfs has kept a light burning for great acoustic music in central Washington, helping to keep it alive.

And so, the thirty tracks here—with artists ranging from Atlantic Crossing to Linda Waterfall—represent much that is truly wonderful about Northwestern music. And importantly, it reflects back on the taste and talents of the members of the 3rfs.



Second, then, this sampler serves as a rapid tour of the music to be found in folk festivals, concert halls, house concerts and elsewhere in our area over the past fifteen years or so. Not only does the sampler make a great musical experience in and of itself, it also makes us aware of specific artists we'll want to know better, people whose work may have not yet come to one of the venues we frequent.

Third, the 3rfs is blessed with a small group of zany techno-nerds who delight in recording good live folk music—just as they delight in providing great sound at the society's annual Tumbleweed Music festival. As the CD's liner notes say, "This compact disc presents our best efforts to preserve that front row presence and intimacy of the live folk concert experience." And it truly succeeds in doing that. The presence and brilliance of the sound is unusually strong. They even threw out tracks they wanted to include because the recording quality wasn't as superior as the rest of the CD. Kudos to 3RFS' Frank Cuta recording engineer and the album's guardian angel and Kendal Smith for the artwork.

It's worth strapping on your earphones, therefore, and giving this a deep listen. The quality of the sound will greatly reward your attention.

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Okay—as for the music itself... Though the CD presents a broad range of performances, special attention is paid to traditional folk forms, whether songs from the past or originals based in past formats—chantays, narratives, call-and-response, and nonsense tunes (Dan Maher's delightful specialty).

That said, I need to add that there are indelible treats of all varieties here. Here are several of them.

Janis Carper and Dan Maher join Heidi Muller in a 1996 concert performance of the swingy, humorous "Talk a Little Texan." It's a gem, of course.

A group that is all-too-seldom heard in our area, Small Potatoes (Jacquie Manning and Rich Prezioso) provide a wonderful reading of their touching story-song, "1,000 Candles, 1,000 Cranes."

The well-loved Bill Staines sings his moving, "The Miner's Song," with that gentle ease and fluid guitar backing that have long made him a great favorite among lovers of traditional singer-songwriter music.



David Maloney—of Reilly and Maloney fame—sings his well known true tale of the rather tragic life of a 1960s hippie as she lives into later years, a "panhandle lady the world has forgotten," named "Trudy," with the rich chorus that David draws the audience into: "She will rise, rise,

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rise,/ On that old road to glory/ From this sacred ground;/ She will rise, rise, rise,/ She's just takin' the long road home." This is a richly emotional summation of a phase of history most of us shared in one way or another, a great evocation of the power of folk music to tell the whole story usually missed by the historians.

The set includes Linda Waterfall's delightful singing of "Song for Erin," complete with her warm and witty introduction to this exploration of the natural mating rituals observable among birds and humans of all stripes. The entire CD set is worth buying for this one song alone.



Ellis gives a powerful performance of a harrowing song about recent war. "You won't mind being locked up, dear freedom, just for a while.... We gotta make sure we know who is on our side." It's been said too seldom over the past four years, and Ellis Bergeron says it very well.

The Cantrells, Al and Emily, sing their essay on longing and love, "See You Again," their voices weaving rich harmonies in the chorus, and Emily's very expressive voice playing off of Al's inventive mandolin.

A beautiful musical treatment of the famous "Prayer of St. Francis," written and sung by Joe Jencks follows, and it is deeply satisfying to be reminded of the ways he draws the audience into his music. His is always a music of the people, by the people, and for the people.



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The second disc—yes, all of the above is on the first disc, and I didn't even mention a pleasing ditty by Chuck Pyle or an original song with a traditional feel by the Cutters—begins with a hallmark of 3rfs gatherings, the sea chantey, in this case "Roll, Alabama, Roll," sung by Hank Cramer—he of the rich, woody baritone—and the Constellation Crew. The Tumbleweed Festival has very often ended with a gathering of wild-eyed singers who shout out chantays between slices of pizza and lubricating treatments with beer. Cramer, of course, is always there.

William Pint and Felicia Dale, appropriately, give a great rendering of "The Wreck of the Lady Washington," which was based on a true tale and written in traditional style by the wonderful Micki Perry, who with her husband John is one of the true backbones of the 3rfs. They can be found at festivals, running stages, announcing performers, handling sound, arranging schedules, and singing a set or two themselves. Pint and Dale, of course, are justly well-known as interpreters of traditional music.



Tany Opland & Mike Freeman



William Pint & Felicia Dale

What follows is a group of songs with a deeply traditional feel—from “Johnny Jump Up” by Skweez the Weezle to Tania Opland’s lusty reading of “Factory Girls” to Hawkeye Herman’s guitar lesson/song to a second offering by the Cutters and more.

The mood changes briefly when Jeff Knoch offers a James Taylor-like witty song about finding his best vacation “In My Backyard” (reminiscent, in fact, of Taylor’s song, “Summer’s Here.” If you don’t know Jeff’s work, you’ll want to.

And there is also an utterly superb rave-up with the fine group, Atlantic Crossing. The song is titled “Bonnie Highland Lassie,” and it is a challenge to listen in a sitting position, particularly if you already love to dance. You won’t want it to end.



As I mentioned, all of this was recorded with great skill, loving care and integrity, and the result is a disc you will deeply enjoy again and again. If I’ve mentioned some artists here whom you aren’t familiar with yet, this sampler will very likely make you want to get to know them better. It may also inspire a trip or two to the Tri-Cities, if you don’t live nearby. You can keep track of their schedule of concerts on their website: <http://www.3RFS.org/>.

Above all, this sampler is an affirmation of the great pleasures of acoustic music, and a roadmap to some of the best places to find it. You’ll want your own copy of this fine piece of work. [Bill Fisher]