

10 LBS OF HEADLINES Ms Baez

Regrets...

...not ditching her "phobias, panic attacks and promiscuities" a little sooner. Liz Thomson meets the former folk dowager in resilient form.

IF JOAN BAEZ IS SINGING BETTER IN THE '90S THAN SHE did in the '70s – perhaps even than she did in the '60s – it's because she's feeling physically and psychologically healthier these days. "I've ditched all the phobias, panic attacks and promiscuities – all of it. In their place is the most extraordinary feeling of the pleasure of waking up in the morning and realising the day isn't going to be interrupted by some hideous attack."

New York is wet, its skyline enveloped in low cloud. Midway through recording her new live album, *Ring Them Bells*, and conscious of the need to protect her voice, Baez is muffled against the elements. Fifty-four and trim as ever, she is dressed in shades of char-



Joan Baez with sometime paramour Bob Dylan in London, April 27, 1965. "I'm amazed at the things I did back then, and I have great admiration for the person who did them."

coal which complement her silvering hair, short except for a skinny plait dangling from the nape of her neck.

The past is another country – yet also close behind. A few blocks away, in the ballroom of the old Manhattan Towers Hotel on Broadway, the 19-year-old Baez recorded her first album. A year later, in Gerde's Folk City, "feeling like the old dowager of the folk scene", she sipped a Shirley Temple as she sat watching a new kid on the block, Bob Dylan. Their romance was played out in the Earl, "that crummy hotel over Washington Square" where a room cost \$12 a night. Now newly-refurbished as the plush Washington Square Hotel, its guests can avail themselves of a walking tour of the Village's musical shrines. Including, presumably, The Bottom Line, where Baez is spending four sell-out nights recording in the company of friends old and new: Janis Ian, Mary Black, The Indigo Girls, Mary Chapin Carpenter, not forgetting her sister Mimi Farina. So what brought her back?

"I got tired of writing songs," she replies, between bites of a large red



Remember when Jim Morrison drove past that car crash in the desert and all those native Americans' souls mingled with his? Something very similar happened to Stephen Jones,

the creative force behind compelling Sheffield-based newcomers **Baby Bird**. Except he trod on a bird. (Well, he's pretty sure it was a bird – "it was definitely squidgy, and there was a feather in it".) The spirit of that unfortunate winged creature informs his debut long-playing product, an instant no-fi pomp-pop classic called *I Was Born A Man*. This remarkable album is the first of five to be released over the coming year on the custom-built **Baby Bird** label, with *Bad Shave* next on the runway. After that quintet there will be a "greatest hits" collection, to be compiled on the basis of voting slips contained within each limited-edition run of 1,000 CDs. Jones's songs are drawn from a library of over 200 homemade four-track recordings, "They're not fragments," he insists. "They're finished."

Ben Thompson

dragnet

News from the huge, ever-growing, pulsating brain which rules from the centre of the Internet...

The death on August 9, 1995 of **Jerry Garcia** caused a national outpouring of grief in the United States unequalled since the assassination of Kennedy. The Mayor of San Francisco ordered all flags to half-mast and vigils took place across the country. As **The Grateful Dead** were the virtual founders of the on-line electronic community, Jerry was mourned in cyberspace as well as at vigils.

Tribute pages sprang up all over the Net. Within hours of his death, RockWeb at Silicon Forest Media had an interactive Tribute page and received 60 tribute messages from Deadheads and fans from Tasmania to Stockholm. By the next day there were half a dozen other sites. Since they are temporary it is best to enter via a home page such as The Well, the original Bay Area home of

Deadheads and site of so much Dead data: <http://www.well.com/user/gail/gd.html> or Yahoo at http://yahoo.com/Entertainment/Music/Artists/Grateful_Dead/ both of which have links to dozens of tribute and Dead information sites. All Dead sites were very busy last month, but a morning call put you through to the best Dead homepage which was at <http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~mleone/dead.html> and had an index of Garcia tributes with active links. The San Francisco Chronicle produced a fine tribute on their web page within hours at <http://www.sfgate.com/garcia/> and that site led to many articles and images. Kevin Bieker's

Grateful Dead page at <http://www.primenet.com/~kbieler/> recorded almost 5,000 hits in the 10 days following Jerry's death which gives a hint at the size of the on-line community of fans. To my surprise, People Magazine quickly set up an excellent Dead page at <http://pathfinder.com/people/jerry/garcia.html> which included their next issue's cover story on Jerry, details of his death, an online vigil of comments posted from the Internet, an interactive Captain Trips Memorial Wall, a live chat discussion, a photo tour through Garcia's career and

Joy Bickelberg/Rena



all the stories on him in People Magazine's archives. Among all the messages posted on the online vigil at Dead Express <http://www.nowhere.net:80/~dead123/> is Dylan's on-line tribute: "There's no way to measure his greatness or magnitude as a person or as a player. I don't think any eulogizing will do him justice... He really had no equal. To me he wasn't only a musician and a friend, he was more like a big brother who taught and showed me more than he'll ever know... There is no way to convey the loss. It just digs down really deep." The tributes and memoirs are often very

moving but to remember why everyone loved the stoned ol' hippy so much I'd suggest you ftp to the online Dead archives at <ftp://gdead.berkeley.edu/pub/gdead/> where amid forests of tape lists, tour dates and set-lists you can find postings stored from the **rec.music.gdead** newgroup like Jerry's hilarious Stoned Sunday Raps, or go straight to interviews at <ftp://gdead.berkeley.edu/pub/gdead/interviews/> and read the ramblings of the old boy himself: "I don't feel like I'm guiding anybody. I feel like I'm sort of stumbling along and a lot of people are watching me or stumbling with me, or allowing me to stumble for them." Jerry lives on in cyberspace.

The Mojo Navigator

Below: with Mary Black (left) and Janis Ian at New York's Bottom Line this summer. "My manager suggested playing a small club with different people. We kept coming back to the same ones."



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apple. "I had this conversation with Mark, my manager, and I said I wanted to write poems and prose. So he said OK, why don't you do that and I'll worry about the rest. He came up with the idea of playing a small club and sharing the singing with different people. Then we went through all the people it could be and kept coming back to the same ones." A shared sense of the fun of making music for good causes has led to Baez, The Indigo Girls and Chapin Carpenter teaming up for a handful of concerts in recent years, while Farina has vocalised with her sister both offstage and on. As to Black and Ian, an hour or two trading harmonies and riffs before showtime was all it took to produce spine-tingling performances.

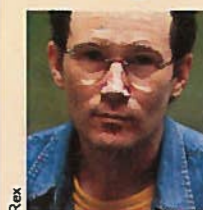
For the moment at least, politics remain on the back burner as Baez attends to her musical and emotional life. Even so, she sang amid the bomb craters of Sarajevo and recently toured Croatia; visits to Russia and South Africa are high on her agenda. As to the domestic scene, "Clinton's no worse than a lot of other people", but the New Right increasingly alarms her. "Not once have I heard anyone mention cutting the defence budget. It's always children's lunches."

Even her detractors can't deny that Baez has often shown remarkable physical and moral courage, a courage all the more remarkable in light of her own anxiety problems. "I'm amazed at some of the things I did and I have great admiration for the person who did them," she reflects without a hint of self-aggrandisement. "I'd be sick all night and terrified... sometimes I'd have a huge panic attack in the middle of a show. Yet, in a funny way, being onstage was my survival. When I got out there and felt fine, that was the finest I ever felt."

As to the famous voice, it is lower now, but richer, more sonorous, and in good shape thanks to daily vocal workouts. "I'm happier with it these days," Baez concludes. "I'll keep singing until it doesn't sound good – when the edge of the vocal cords starts to calcify the battle's over. I don't want to keep going for ever."

PHONE HOME

It's good to talk!



MARSHALL CRENSHAW

LAST SEPTEMBER I RELEASED A LIVE ALBUM, *MY TRUCK Is My Home*, on Razor And Tie Records. It's a cross-section of all the stuff I've done, a good loud rock'n'roll record with pretty cool songs on it. After that came out, I was out on the road for about four months, the first time I'd really done that in quite a long time. It was just myself and a guy named Andy York. We took a lot of instruments with us 'cos when people go to a show they like to see grandeur and affluence.

For the last year I've been doing a bunch of songs on tribute albums, including the Arthur Alexander, Harry Nilsson, and Merle Haggard tributes. I also compiled a Louvin Brothers CD for Razor And Tie and wrote a song with The Gin Blossoms, Till I Hear It From You, for the movie soundtrack of Empire.

Lately I've been spending a lot of time recording in my garage at my home in Woodstock, making another serious crack at a brand new album. Some of it's poppy stuff, some of it's more personal. At the end of 1992 I had this timetable in my mind to have it done, but I found that my heart wasn't in it. My concentration was pretty negligible and it seemed everything I put down on paper was sort of ham-fisted and half-hearted, so I bagged it. Then in 1993 I got involved in a book project, editing a reference book of rock'n'roll movies called *Hollywood Rock*, which was a good diversionary exercise. But the main thing on my plate now is this new record.

As far as staying inspired, whenever I listen to Earl Palmer play the drums or Julia by The Beatles or Good Thing by Paul Revere & The Raiders or Don't Look Back by Fine Young Cannibals or the *Can You Fly* album by Freedy Johnston – which I played on – or any one of a thousand records that I love, I realise that music is probably the most compelling thing in my life. And I've had enough success with it that even the unpleasant stuff is bearable. Interview by Richard Younger