



JESSE WHITEHEAD

**THAT'S A LOT OF MUSIC** Brenda Dalen stands before the collection of records that helped create the compilation.

## All folkways lead to Edmonton

University of Alberta researcher Brenda Dalen helps transform the personal music collection of Moe Asch into a CD filled with classic Canadian folk songs



**Classic Canadian Songs**  
Various Artists  
Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

MARIA KOTOVYCH  
Arts & Entertainment Staff

What do a 98-year-old African-Canadian man from Nova Scotia and an old bachelor homesteading in Alberta have in common? Both men's stories are featured in the new CD, *Classic Canadian Songs*, released by University of Alberta's folkwaysAlive! and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings in Washington, DC.

The songs on the CD are the best of the Canadian folk songs collected in the 1950s and 1960s by ethnomusicologists working with Moses "Moe" Asch and Samuel Gesser of Folkways Records.

Songs from all regions of Canada, and also from different cultural groups, are featured on *Classic Canadian Songs*. For instance, the song "The Welcome Table," performed by 98-year-old Charles Owens and his family in their Nova Scotia kitchen in 1956, is an example of an African-Canadian jubilee song. French-Canadian, Métis, Nootka, Cree, and a Yiddish children's song are

also featured on the album. In addition, a song called "The Ballad of Weldon Chan," while sung in English, tells the tale of a Chinese-Canadian immigrant and the hardships he faced in Canada.

"The songs give an impression of the importance of establishing connections and making friends and creating communities," says Brenda Dalen, Research Associate with folkwaysAlive! "Sometimes [connections] are within a particular cultural group or region, but also, sometimes music has a way often of making it possible for people of various backgrounds to communicate in some way—to learn each other's songs, to learn each other's dances—and that social aspect was very important."

Along with graduate students Allison Fairbairn and Jessica Keyes, Dalen compiled the record from the personal collection of music Moe Asch, which was left to the U of A before he passed away.

The '60s and '70s were a time when Canada was figuring out its national identity, and therefore, the CD tries to focus on the songs of the people who built the country.

"[The collection is] an absolute treasure trove of material that many people remember, because in spite of the fact that it's not the Top 100 on the charts, in many cases, people within their families have continued to perform this music," Dalen explains.

Dr Regula Qureshi, director of folkwaysAlive!, conducted initial negotiations for the CD and Dr R Gary Kachanoski, Vice-President (Research) at the U of A, set up the

partnership between folkwaysAlive! and Smithsonian Folkways. One of the songs in the disc also served as the subject of Fairbairn's Master's thesis.

Dalen explains that to begin the project, she, Fairbairn and Keyes sat down to listen to the 1000-plus Canadian tracks that existed in Asch's collection. From those songs, they selected the tunes they felt best represented classic Canadian folk music.

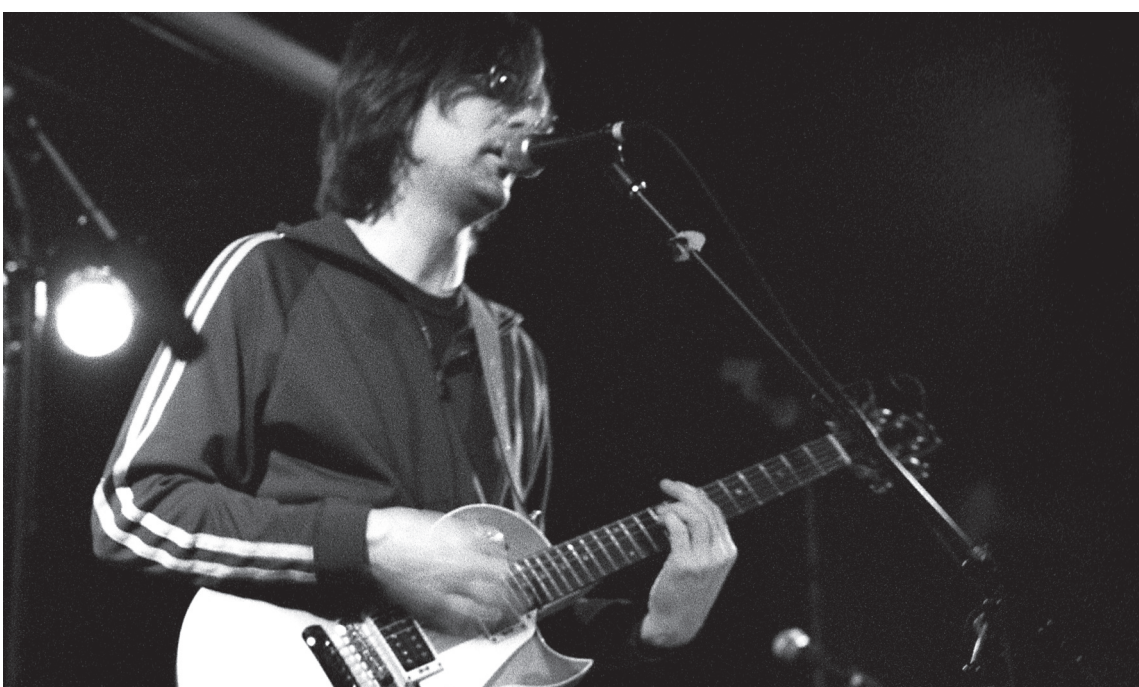
"We wanted to look at the hard work that went into building Canada and the people—not the politicians, not the big important people who created Canada—but the people who were actually working the land and settling it," Fairbairn says. "[We wanted to know] what their stories were."

Ethnomusicologists travelled across the country to record folk musicians, many of whom weren't known nationally, but who were recognized as important within their local communities. Most of the songs on the CD were collected in the 1950s and 1960s, and the CD represents songs from each region of Canada.

Dalen mentions that music and community are two important aspects of being Canadian, and that music is one vehicle through which people of different backgrounds who settled in Canada could find common ground.

While some of the songs are political, most of them feature different themes than the politically driven American folk music being performed at that same time, explains Fairbairn.

"[Canadian folk music] was about life experience, what it was like to live and build a country," Fairbairn says.



JAMES CHAULK

**HE'S GOT A BAD BITE** Mark Feduk and the rest of his Edmonton-based band played the Sidetrack Cafe on Friday night.

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