

Contemporary Folk Music

Essentially Folk Music is the traditional music of any country.

However, in the 1960's, it came to mean purely acoustic music. So we are only going to look at Contemporary Folk Music.

Contemporary folk music also became associated with the protest movement.

American

The fathers and inspiration of contemporary Folk Music were Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie.

Pete Seeger (1919 - 2014): "If I Had A Hammer", "Where Have All The Flowers Gone", "Turn! Turn! Turn!", "Kisses Sweeter Than Wine", "The Bells Of Rhymney"



Pete Seeger was previously in the folk group The Weavers

Their songs were covered by numerous other folk musicians who followed including the likes of Peter Paul & Mary, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, The Seekers etc. Some songs written by each are listed below.

[1959, 1964, 1966, 1969 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Woody Guthrie (1912-1967): "This Land Is Your Land" (1940), "Deportee" (1948)



Other more contemporary American folk music artists include

Peter, Paul and Mary; Bob Dylan (until 1965); Joan Baez; Judy Collins; The Kingston Trio; The Mamas and the Papas; Phil Ochs; Simon and Garfunkel; Tom Paxton; The Weavers; Tim Hardin; The Carter Family, Buffy Sainte-Marie; Peggy Seeger (step sister to Pete Seeger and married to Ewan MacColl)



Songs written by some of the above artists

Tim Hardin (1941 - 1980): "If I Were A Carpenter", "Reason To Believe"

Phil Ochs (1949-1976): *not so well known songs* [1964, 1966 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Peter, Paul & Mary: "Puff The Magic Dragon", "I Dig Rock'n'Roll Music" [1963, 1964, 1965 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Joan Baez (1941 -): "Diamonds and Rust" [1959, 1963, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1968 @ Newport Folk Festival]



Tom Paxton (1941 -): "The Last Thing On My Mind"; [1966 @ Newport Folk Festival]

The Kingston Trio (1957-1961 with Dave Guard, 1961-): *covered other people's songs*. John Stewart replaced Dave Guard at the end of 1961. From this moment on John Stewart originals began appearing on albums. John Stewart's most famous songs were written for others eg "Daydream Believer" - The Monkees, "Never Goin Back" - The Lovin Spoonful [1959 @ Newport Folk Festival]

The Carter Family (1927-1956): flow from folk into country; featured June Carter Cash's mother Maybelle.

Bob Dylan: A Hard Rains A Gonna Fall, Blowin In The Wind, It Aint Me Babe, The Times They Are A Changing, Mr Tambourine Man, It's All Over Now Baby Blue, Like A Rolling Stone and many many more.

[1963, 1964 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Simon and Garfunkel (1964 - 1970): "The Sounds of Silence", "Bridge Over Troubled Water" and many more

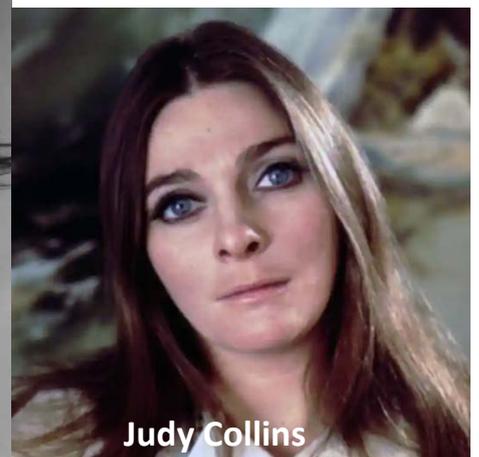
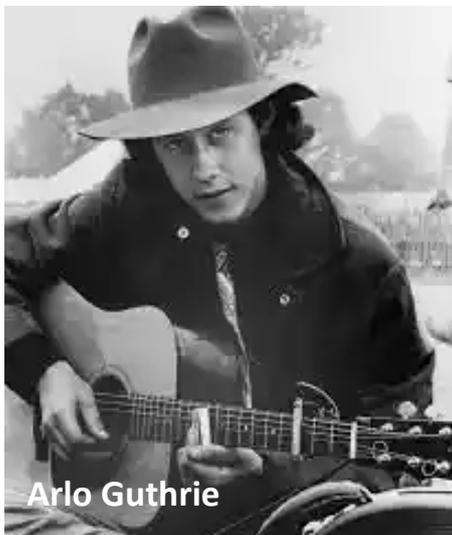
Peggy Seeger (1935 -) no really well known songs [1960 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Judy Collins (1939 -) [1963, 1964, 1966, 1967@ Newport Folk Festival] Wasn't until her 4th album that she started including original compositions. Her most famous recording is that of the Stephen Sondheim song "Send In The Clowns" from her 1975 album "Judith".

Buffy Saint-Marie (1941 -) [1966, 1967, 1969 @ Newport Folk Festival] Best known songs: "Up Where We Belong" - covered by Joe Cocker & Jennifer Warnes for the movie "Officer and a Gentleman" & "Universal Soldier" covered by Donovan.

Janis Ian [1967, 1968 @ Newport Folk Festival] Most popular songs: "At Seventeen"; "Fly Too High"

Arlo Guthrie son of Woody Guthrie [1967, 1968, 1969 @ Newport Folk Festival] famous for the album "Alice's Restaurant" (1967)



The Mamas and the Papas (formed in 1965) Line up: Mama Cass, John Phillips, Michelle Phillips (John Phillips wife) and Denny Doherty. John Phillips was the main songwriter with occasional contributions by Michelle Phillips and Mama Cass.

Their hits included "Go Where You Wanna Go" (1965), "California Dreamin'" (1965) #4, "Monday Monday" (1966) #1, "Words of Love" (1966) #5, "I Saw Her Again" (1966) #5, "Dedicated To The One I Love" (1967) #2, "Dream a Little Dream Of Me" (1968) #12, "Twelve Thirty (Young Girls Are Coming To The Canyon)" (1968) #20



Newport Folk Festival (founded in 1959, next held in 1960, Missing 1961 & 1962 and then held annually from 1963 at Fort Adams State Park, Newport, Rhode Island, USA until 1969). It resurfaced in 1985 and has been held every year since. It was and is the most iconic folk festival. They also welcomed blues artists such as B B King, John Lee Hooker, Bo Diddley, Willie Dixon, Lightnin' Hopkins, Howlin Wolf, Muddy Waters, Son House, Fred MacDowell, Memphis Slim, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee

Below are a range of other artists also invited – some country & some just acoustic singer/songwriters

Johnny Cash [1964, 1969 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Kris Kristofferson [1964, 1969 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Jose Feliciano [1964, 1969 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Tim Buckley [1968 @ Newport Folk Festival]

James Taylor [1969 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Van Morrison [1969 @ Newport Folk Festival]

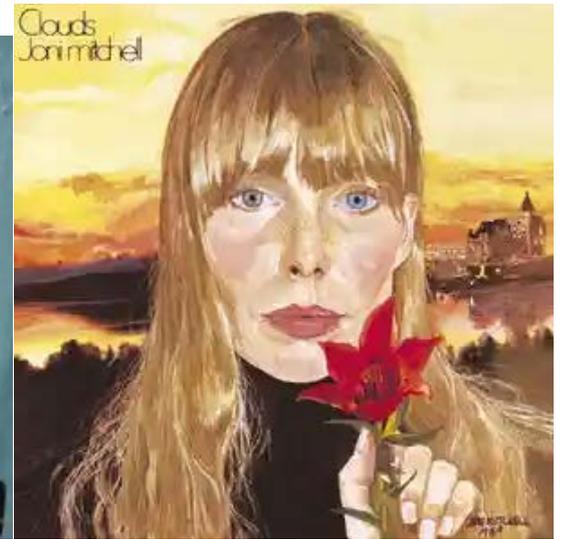
Have included in brackets, years in which artists have appeared at the Newport Folk Festival.

Canadian

Joni Mitchell (born 1943) [1967, 1969 @ Newport Folk Festival] – up there with the great singer/songwriters. 99% of songs on her albums are completely written by herself and the albums are often self produced.

Main period: 1968 - 1976

Famous songs include “Chelsea Morning” (1969), “Both Sides Now” (1969), “Big Yellow Taxi” (1970), “Woodstock” (1970), “The Circle Game” (1970), “Carey” (1971), “You Turn Me On I’m A Radio” (1972), “Urge For Going” (1972), “Help Me” (1974), “Free Man In Paris” (1974), “Raised On Robbery” (1974), “Coyote” (1976)



Her second album “Clouds” in 1969 featured “Chelsea Morning” covered by Judy Collins, Neil Diamond and Jennifer Warnes. Also on the album was the extensively covered song “Both Sides Now” – those covering the song include Frank Sinatra, Judy Collins, Neil Diamond, Willie Nelson, Clannad, Hole, Ronan Keating and many more.

“Clouds” was her first charting Top 40 album.

Leonard Cohen (1934 – 2016) [1967 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Best known songs: “Suzanne” (1967), “Sisters of Mercy” (1967), “So Long Marianne” (1968), “Bird on a Wire” (1969), “Hallelujah” (1984), “First We Take Manhattan” (1988)

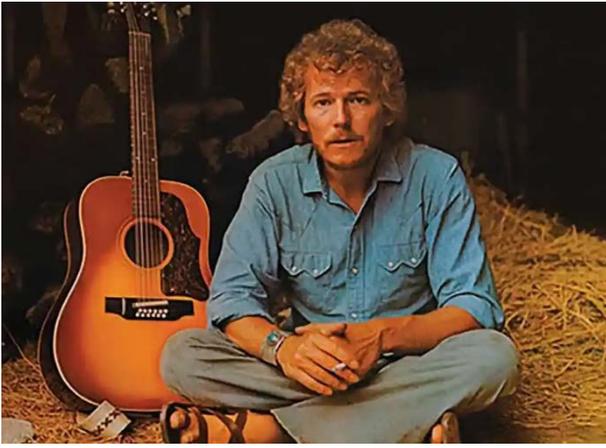


Artists to have covered Leonard Cohen songs: k. d. Lang, Jeff Buckley, Willie Nelson, Bob Dylan, Judy Collins, Joe Cocker, Roberta Flack, John Cale, Fairport Convention, Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris and many more

His most covered song is “Hallelujah”

Gordon Lightfoot

[1965, 1967 @ Newport Folk Festival]



Best known songs “If You Could Read My Mind” (1970).
“Sundown” (1974), “Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” (1976) - all three were #1 smash hits.

Irish

Clannad (featuring Enya on lead vocals). Formed in 1970 by siblings Ciaran, Pol & Maire Uí Bhraonain (Brennan). The Younger Brennan sister, Enya (Eithne Brennan), joined Clannad in 1980 and appears on their 5th album “Fuaim”. Enya left Clannad in 1982 to pursue a solo career.



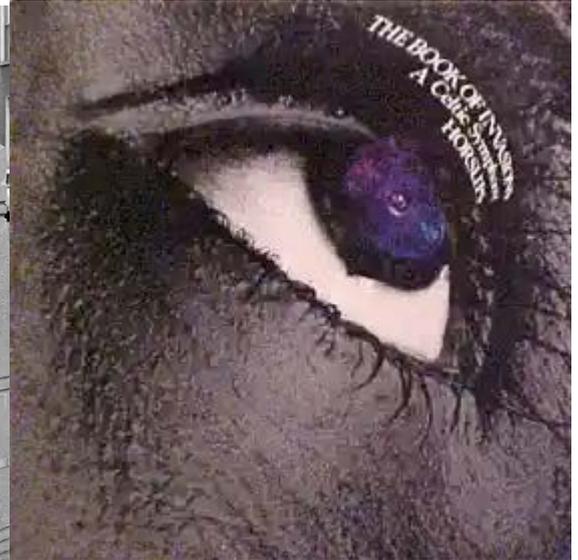
Enya born Eithne Ní Bhraonáin / Eithne Brennan. Former singer with Clannad

Most famous song “Orinocco Flow” is from her second album “Watermark” released in 1988. . Between 1987 and 2015 Enya released 8 albums om Warner Music.



Enya's second album “Watermark” (1988)

Horslips formed in 1970. Referred to as a Celtic Irish rock band. Have recorded 10 studio albums from 1972 to 2004. Can hear the Celtic influence in many of their songs. Eventually started to sound like just a rock band – eg “The Man Who Built America” from their last studio album “Roll Back” in 2004.



The Book of Invasions – 1976 (6th album)

Scottish

The Incredible String Band (formed in 1966) [1967 @ Newport Folk Festival] Mike Heron – (vocals, guitar, piano) Robin Williamson (vocals, mandolin, tin whistle, fiddle, violin), Clive Palmer (vocals, guitar, kazoo).

Clive left after the first album. Other musicians brought in included two women, Licorice McKenzie (vocals) joined for 2nd album & Rose Simpson joined for the 4th album. This lineup was stable from 1968 to 1971 when Rose departed. The group disbanded in 1974, They reformed in 1999 with the three original members, disbanding again in 2006.

“The Hangman’s Beautiful Daughter” (1968) is most often referred to as their best album.



English

Of the following Donovan, Ralph McTell, Billy Bragg, John Martyn are acoustic folk while the others are more linked in with traditional English folk music.

Four of the biggest folk rock bands in England were Fairport Convention, Steeleye Span, Renaissance and The Pentangle. All four are bands who blend traditional English folk music (and sometimes classical) with contemporary musical styles such as rock. Also, occasionally writing their own songs, in that genre. Steeleye Span were possibly the most commercially successful. Their music is not necessarily for everyone but interesting for those wanting to broaden their musical horizons.

June Tabor and Maddy Prior's work also grooves away in this genre.

Steeleye Span (formed in 1969) Maddy Prior - vocals, Tim Hart - vocals, guitar Ashley Hutchings - bass (ex Fairport Convention)

plus Terry and Gay Woods; this lineup featured on their first album "**Hark! The Village Wait**" in 1970.

Terry & Gay left after the first album and were joined in 1971 by Peter Knight and Martin Carthy. Gay Woods rejoined temporarily in 1996 for three albums starting with "Time".

The lineup Prior, Hart, Hutchings, Knight and Carthy completed the next two albums "**Please To See The King**" (1971), "**Ten Man Mop**" (1972) after the third album Ashley Hutchings left to be replaced by Rick Kemp (bass, vocals - formerly with King Crimson). Martin Carthy was replaced by Bob Johnson (guitar, vocals).

The lineup: Maddy Prior, Tim Hart, Peter Knight, Rick Kemp, Bob Johnson remained constant until 1977, with the addition of a sixth member in 1974, Nigel Pegrum on drums.

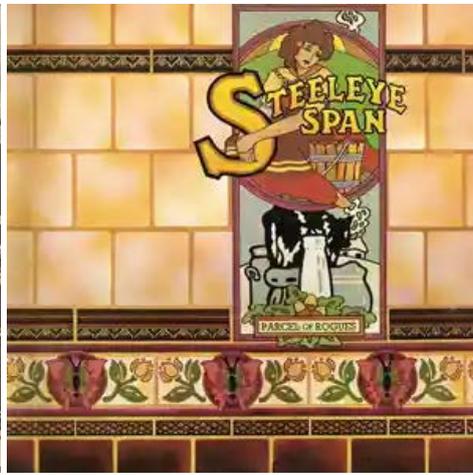
"Below the Salt" (1972); "Parcel Of Rogues" (1973); "Now We Are Six" (1974), "Commoners Crown" (1975), "All Around My Hat" (1975), "Rocket Cottage" (1976).

In 1977 Knight and Johnson left and Martin Carthy rejoined, along with a new member John Kirkpatrick.

As of 2025 Maddy Prior is the only original member. Tim Hart's last album was "Sails of Silver" (1980). Tim passed away in 2009. Bob Johnson passed away 2023.

From 1970 - 1980 they recorded 11 albums. The 11th album being "Sails Of Silver"(1980). This was their peak period. After that lineup changes began again. From 1986 - 2025 there have been about 13 albums.





"Below The Salt" (1972), "Hark! The Village Wait" (1970), "Parcel Of Rogues" (1973), "Commoners Crown" (1975) are ranked as their best albums, although "All Around My Hat" (1975) is their best selling album.

Fairport Convention - since formation in 1967 there have been over 25 different people have been members

Founding Members: Simon Nicol(left 1971 but returned - vocals, guitar, keyboards), Richard Thompson (vocals, guitar, keyboard, left 1971 not to return), Ashley Hutchings (left 1970, bass) all 1967

Then Martin Lamble (drums/Percussion) and Iain Matthews McDonald(lead vocals)

Next: Judy Dyble(1967 died 2020) shortly after replaced by Sandy Denny (lead vocals) 1968 who left in 1970 (died 1978)



Then Dave Swarbrick (1969-1979 fiddle, died 2016), Trevor Lucas (1972 - 1975 guitar, vocals died 1989),

Simon Nicol, Dave Mattacks(Joined 1969 left 1975, returned 1985 percussion, keyboards, bass), Dave Pegg (joined 1969 left 1969, rejoined 1985 bass, vocals, drums, guitar, fiddle)

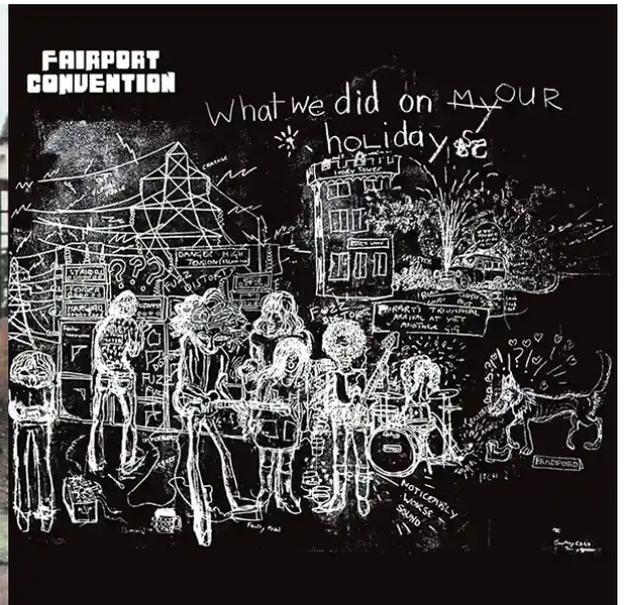
From 1968 - 1978 they recorded 13 albums. This was their peak period, although they have consistently gone through lineup changes from day one. From 1985 - 2020 they recorded 16 albums.

Lineup first album "**Fairport Convention**" - Judy Dyble, Iain (Matthews) McDonald, Richard Thompson, Simon Nicol, Ashley Hutchings, Martin Lamble

Lineup for 2nd Album **"What We Did On Our Holidays"** - Sandy Denny, Iain Matthews (McDonald), Richard Thompson, Simon Nicol, Ashley Hutchings, Martin Lamble

[1994 @ Newport Folk Festival]

People list "Liege and Lief"(1969), "What We Did on Our Holidays"(1968) and "Unhalfbricking" (1969) as their best albums.

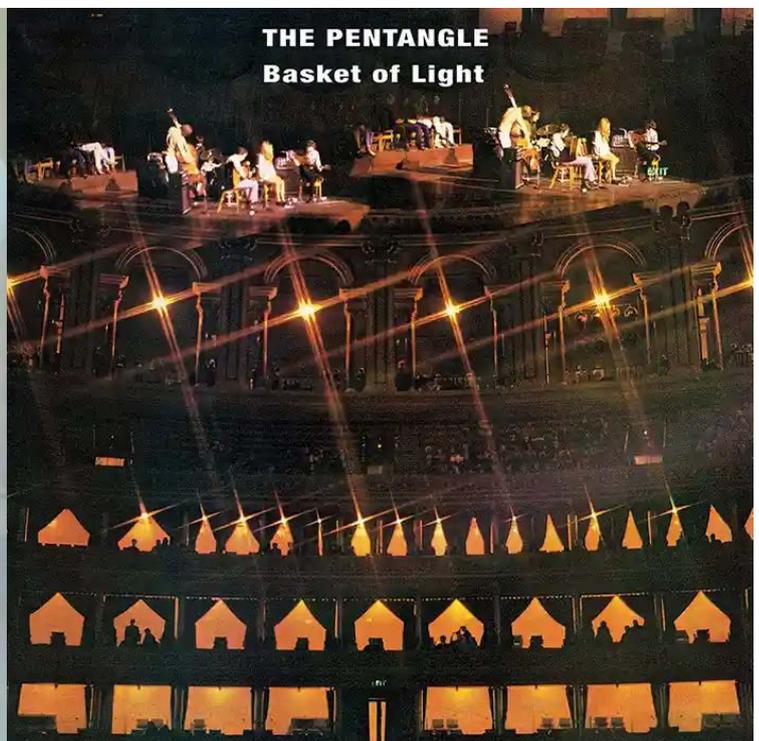
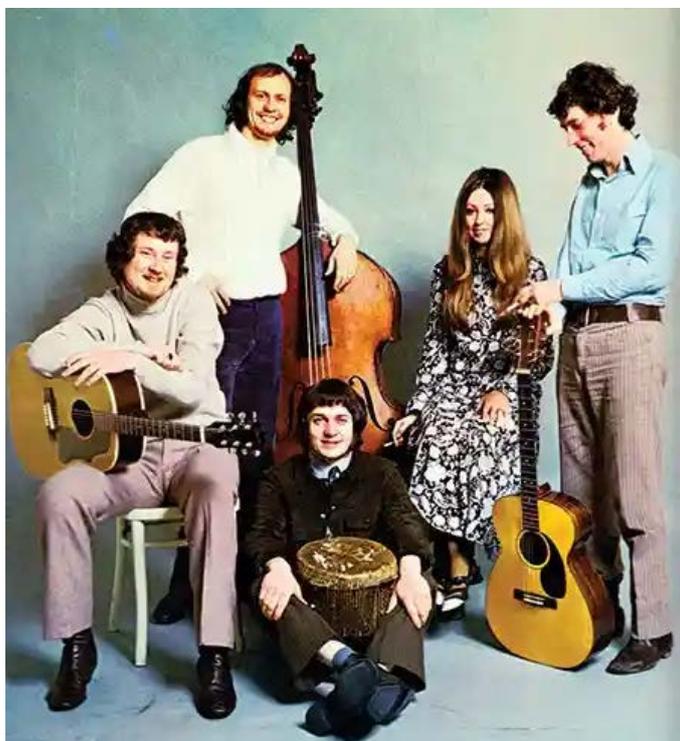


Current lineup Simon Nicol, Dave Mattacks, Dave Pegg, Ric Sanders, Chris Leslie - the first three are the only ones from the 1968 - 1978 period.

The Pentangle

[1967 @ Newport Folk Festival] Initial Lineup: Bert Jansch - guitar, vocals, John Renbourn - vocals, guitar, Jacqui McShee - vocals, Danny Thompson - double bass, Terry Cox - drums.

Recorded 22 albums since 1968. Their peak period being 1968 - 1972. And then resurfacing in 1985, still with Jacqui McShee on vocals. **"Basket of Light"** (1969) and their 3rd album, is most often ranked as their best album.



Renaissance

Initial lineup (1969 - 1971) - Jane Relf - lead vocals, Keith Relf - vocals, guitar (ex Yardbirds), Jim McCarty - drums (ex Yardbirds), Louis Cennamo - bass, John Hawken - piano this lineup appeared on the first two albums.

But for the third album the lineup completely changed and now featured Annie Haslam on lead vocals. Their peak period was 1972 - 1983. The group resurface in 2001 and then in 2013 for new studio albums, still with Annie Haslam.

Of interest, Betty Thatcher was the bands non-performing lyricist and Jim McCarty still contributed to songwriting for the next three albums after leaving.

The music was a combination of folk, classical, rock and jazz.

All members of the 2nd lineup except for Annie Haslam have died and some members of the original lineup including Keith Relf, Betty Thatcher, Michael Dunford, John Tout, John Hawken, Jon Camp, Terry Sullivan, Jim J Keyes

"**Scheherazade and Other Stories**" (1975) is usually ranked as their best album.



Maddy Prior

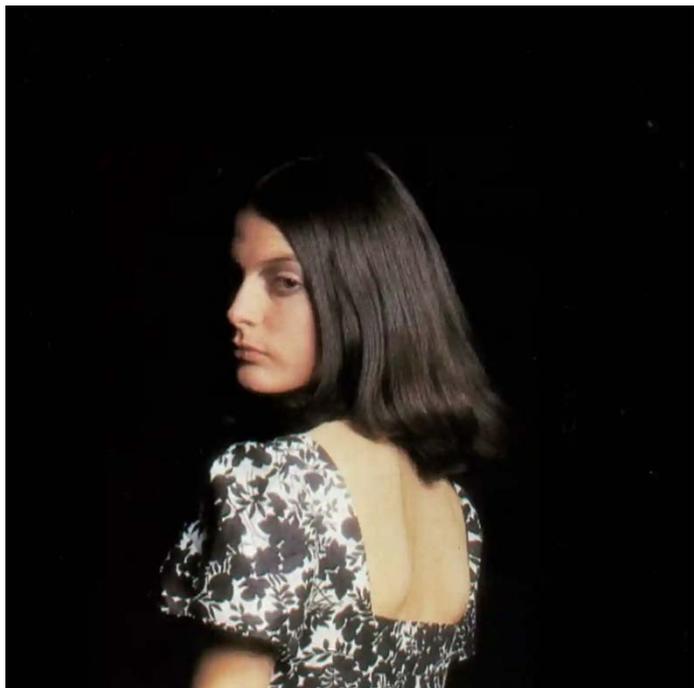
Has had a successful solo career but is primarily known as lead singer of Steeleye Span. She has released 16 solo albums. She has also released more than 20 collaborative albums with the likes of Tim Hart, June Tabor, Martin Carthy, John Kirkpatrick and The Carnival Band.



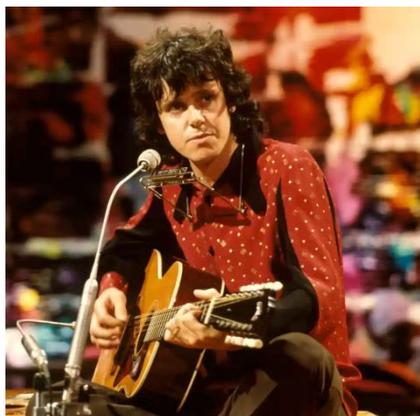
Of note "The Silly Sisters" (1976) with June Tabor.

June Tabor (b 1947) 19 solo albums. Another artist heavily influenced by traditional English folk music.

"Airs and Graces" (1976) is her debut album and features the Eric Bogle song "And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda"

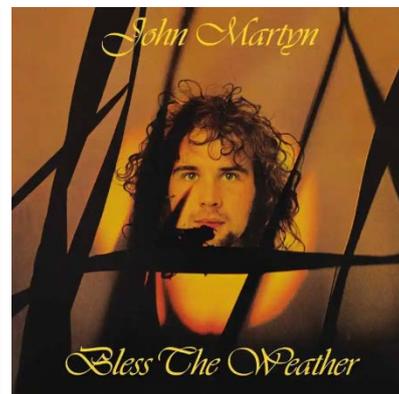
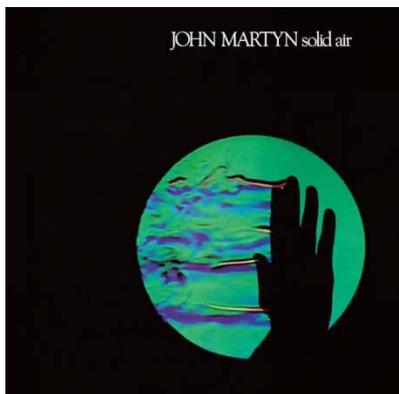


Donovan [1965 @ Newport Folk Festival]



Famous Songs: "Mellow Yellow", "Catch The Wind", "Sunshine Superman", "Hurdy Gurdy Man", "Season of the Witch", "Atlantis", "Barabajagal", "Jennifer Juniper", "There Is A Mountain", "Universal Soldier". All of which were released between 1965 and 1969.

John Martyn (1948 - 2009) - 60 years of age when he died. "Solid Air" (1973), "Bless The Weather" (1971), "London Conversation" (1967), "Sundays Child" (1975), "One World" (1977) are often listed amongst his best albums



Billy Bragg

(b 1957) is just as much a political activist as a folk singer. His music is a blend of a folk, punk and protest. This goes back to the earlier reference to the link between folk music and the protest movement.



Most famous songs "Waiting For the Great Leap Forwards" (1988), "A New England" (1983). The latter was a top 10 hit for Kirsty McColl (Ewan MacColl's daughter) in 1984. Billy is sometimes referred to as Punk / Folk.

[2009 @ Newport Folk Festival]

Ralph McTell

(b 1944 -) "Streets of London" (1969) is his most famous song.



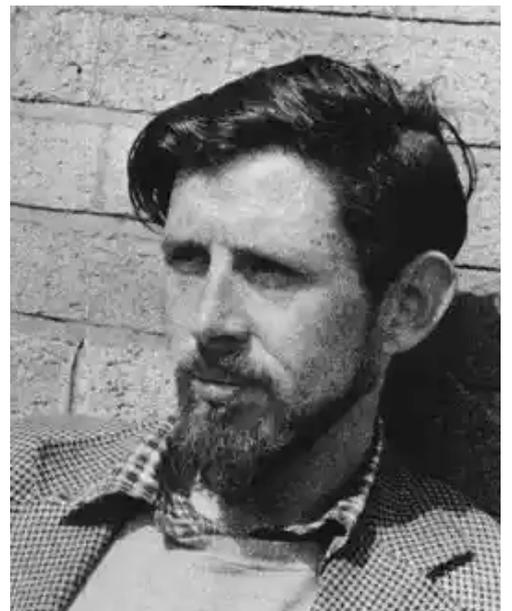
Ewan MacColl

(1915 - 1989) born James Henry Miller in Broughton, Lancashire, England to Scottish parents.

[1960@ Newport Folk Festival]

Most famous for writing "The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face" (1957) - a #1 smash hit for Roberta Flack in 1972. This song was also featured in the Clint Eastwood movie "Play Misty For Me". Another famous song is "Dirty Old Town" (1949) recorded by Donovan (1964), Rod Stewart (1969), The Pogues (1985), Simple Minds (2003) to mention but a few.

Ewan collected numerous traditional folk songs. He released dozens of albums, mostly folk music and wrote many left wing political songs.

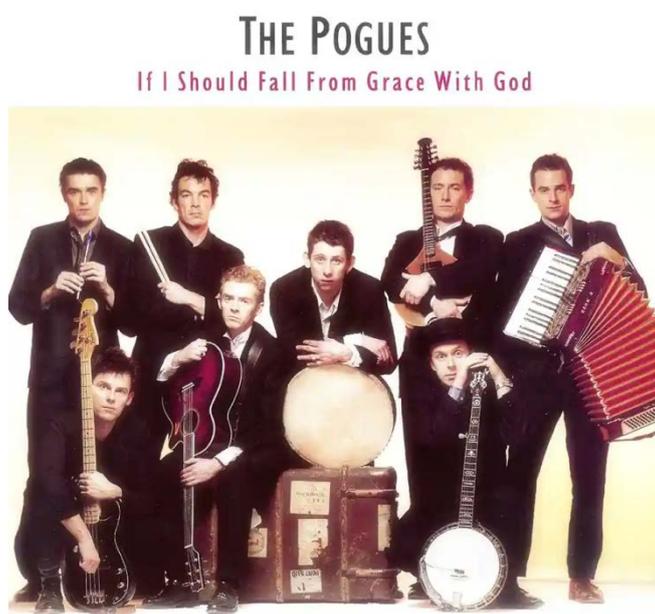


Ewan's 3rd wife was Peggy Seeger, thus making Pete Seeger his brother-in-law.

The Pogues (formed in 1982)- Shane McGowan (lead vocals) born in England to Irish parents, Spider Stacy (vocals & tin whistle) Jem Finer (banjo), James Fearnley (accordion), Andrew Ranken (drums), Phillip Chevron (guitar, mandolin), Daryl Hunt (bass, vocals), Terry Woods (lute, concertina, banjo, dulcimer, guitar, vocals)

Sometimes referred to a punk folk. Also defined as an Irish / English band.

Most successful songs "Dirty Old Town" written by Ewan McColl from their 3rd album released in 1985. Also, "Fairytale of New York) from their 4th album "If I Should Fall from Grace With God" (1988) & written by Shane McGowan.



The band broke up in 1996 and reformed in Christmas 2001. Their last performance was in 2014.

Deaths: Daryl Hunt (2022), Shane McGowan (2023), Andrew Ranken (2026), Phillip Chevron (2013)

Australian

The Bushwackers - (founded in 1970) folk/country rock, putting a hard edge on bush ballads. Often referred to as a Bush Band. Dave Mattacks of Fairport Convention performed with them for a year and Pete Farndon from The Pretenders performed with them for two years in the 1970s.



The Seekers - Australia's biggest band in the 1960s. Also big in the UK & USA. Judith Durham (vocals), Athol Guy (double bass), Keith Potger - guitar, vocals, Bruce Woodley - guitar, vocals

Their biggest hits include "I'll Never Find Another You" #1 1964, "A World Of Our Own" #2 1965, "Morningtoun Ride" #2 1965, "The Carnival Is Over" #1 1965, "Someday One Day" #4 1966, "Georgy Girl" #1 1966

All of these songs were written by Tom Springfield (Dusty Springfields brother).

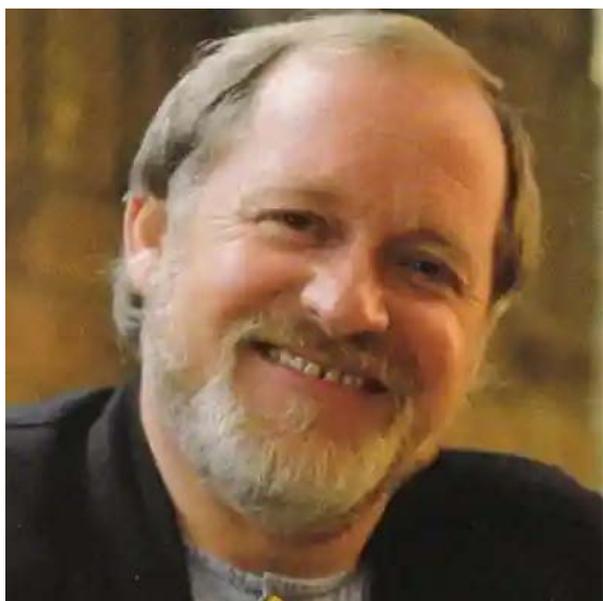


The group disbanded in 1968. The group reformed in 1976, but with a new lead singer. They went through for new lead singers (Louisa Wisseling, Cheryl Webb, Julie Anthony, Karen Knowles) before Judith Durham rejoined in 1992, remaining with the group until her death in 2022.

Keith Potger formed the New Seekers" in 1969 with completely different members. They lasted until 1974 but reformed in 1976.

Eric Bogle (b 1944) - a Scottish singer/songwriter who emigrated to Australia around 1969.

He is famous for the song "And The Band Played Waltzing Matilda" (1971)- recorded by numerous artists including The Bushwackers, June Tabor, The Pogues, Joan Baez, Slim Dusty, John Williamson, Redgum

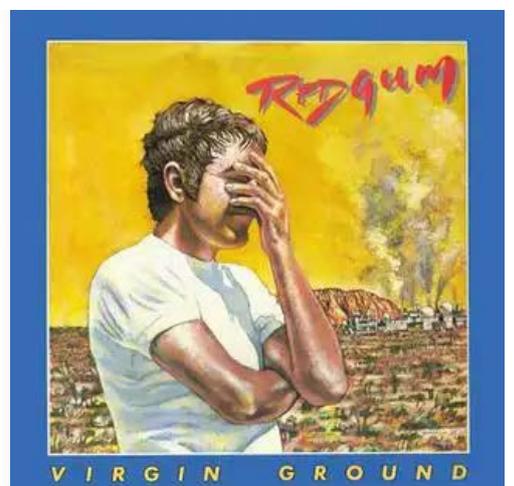
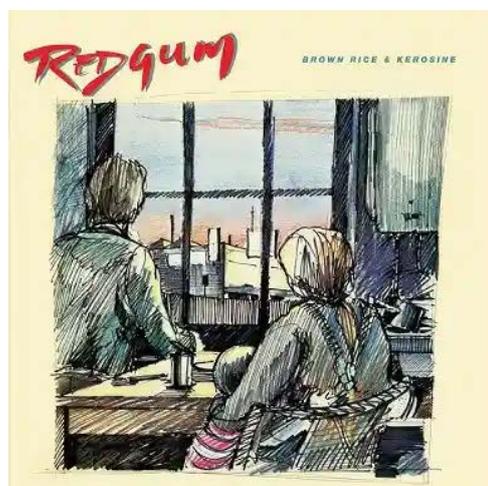


Redgum - a rock band with an Aussie edge. Folk rock, with a political slant. Formed in Adelaide in 1975.

Initial lineup: John Schumann, Michael Atkinson (guitar, vocals), Verity Truman - flute, vocals, Hugh McDonald - fiddle, Chris Timms - violin

"I Was Only 19" (1983) - from the album "**Caught In The Act**"

"I've Been To Bali Too" (1984), "A.S.I.O" (1984), "Friday Night" (1984) - all from the album "**Frontline**"



The band released 5 albums between 1978 and 1986. The band broke up in 1990 after they had paid off all their debts.

Margaret Roadknight (b 1943 -) had a hit with Bob Hudson's song "Girls In Our Town" in 1976. Is a very critically acclaimed artist. In 1963 she replaced Judith Durham in Frank Traynor's Jazz Preachers. Judith was leaving to join folk band The Seekers.

Formed a promotion company and record label "Honky Tonk Angels" which promoted acclaimed American singer and slide guitarist Ellen McIllwaine's first Australian tour.

She has released 11 albums.



Returning to post 1985, artists who might vaguely fit into the Folk Scene are the singer/songwriters with an acoustic guitar

Mostly Americans - sometimes more country than folk - the following have all appeared at the **Newport Folk Festival** in the years since 1985

Michelle Shocked	Sarah McLachlan	Alison Krauss & Union Station	Kasey Chambers (2005 -Australian)	Toots and the Maytals (Jamaica)
David Bromberg	Mary Chapin Carpenter	Roseanne Cash	Elvis Costello (UK)	<i>So it appears to have morphed into Folk, Blues and World Music Festival.</i>
Ry Cooder	Randy Newman	Mark Cohn	Teddy Thompson (UK)	
Emmylou Harris	Kate & Anna McGarrigle (Canada)	Indigo Girls	John Butler Trio (2007 Australian)	
Laura Nyro	Loudan Wainwright III	Rodney Crowell	Graham Nash	
John Prine	Joan Armatrading (UK)	Leo Kottke	Ben Harper	
John Hiatt		Rickie Lee Jones		
Luka Bloom (Ireland)		Bruce Cockburn		
Suzanne Vega				