

# IAN & SYLVIA

JOHN EINARSON with IAN TYSON & SYLVIA TYSON

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Review

"To my principal mentors Ian & Sylvia – I offer my profound respect and admiration."

-Gordon Lightfoot

"What a time, what a tale! Ian and Sylvia hit the stratosphere in the Sixties with Canadian-tinged folk songs that made them the darlings of the college dorms. Through hits and misses, marriage and divorce, and all the fun in-between, they didn't miss a thing. A beautifully detailed book that is respectful to the legend and heart-warming in its honesty. A great story well told."

-Jim Cuddy, Blue Rodeo and Jim Cuddy Band

"John Einarson is one of this country's premiere cultural writers. He gets right inside the true and remarkable story of Ian & Sylvia's rise to the elite ranks of folk, country-rock, and cowboy music, extracting the best quotes from the duo with all their humor, insight, sarcasm, and cheekiness intact. You'll know why these two belong among Canada's finest music-makers."

-Bob Mersereau, broadcaster and author, 100 Top Canadian Albums

"Emerging from Bohemian Toronto and New York's Greenwich Village in the mid-'60s, Ian & Sylvia became major folk stars in the U.S. With historical perspective and his usual love of subject, John Einarson spins an entertaining tale of two enigmatic Canadians who individually continue to create and perform today and whose story is finely woven into the multi-hued tapestry that is contemporary music."

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"They brought so much dignity to our genre of music," acknowledges Carolyn Hester, a contemporary on the folk music scene back in the 1960s. "They kind of represented the Toronto folk scene and that gave them a bit more importance to the rest of us. They didn't come down here and just become Americanized folksingers, which could have happened. And as a result a lot more of us went up to Canada to perform because of them." Adds veteran American singer/songwriter Tom Paxton, "Ian & Sylvia became as much a part of the American folk music community as Peter, Paul & Mary or the Kingston Trio or anybody. I just thought they were fantastic. It was their voices that impressed me. They both sang so beautifully."

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An acclaimed music historian brings us the long-awaited story of Ian & Sylvia - marking the first time that the legendary folk duo has endorsed a biography of their groundbreaking career.

Their classic "Four Strong Winds" is widely considered to be one of the great songs of all time. Bob Dylan, Gordon Lightfoot, Neil Young, Leonard Cohen, and Joni Mitchell count among their admirers. Their music, including hits like "You Were On My Mind" and "Someday Soon," has been recorded by everyone from Dylan, Joan Baez, and Johnny Cash to Sarah McLachlan and The Tragically Hip. Their influence on music - both in Canada and the United States - has endured over generations and surpassed genres. Yet until now, we have known little of the story behind the folk sensations Ian & Sylvia. In Four Strong Winds, John Einarson takes us back to Ian & Sylvia's early days in Toronto coffeehouses, to their experiences at the heart of the vibrant 1960s Greenwich Village folk scene, and beyond, as their personal and musical partnership continued to change and evolve. Based on Ian and Sylvia Tyson's own personal reflections as well as on the recollections of contemporaries, associates, and admirers, Four Strong Winds is the definitive account of this iconic musical duo and a window on a fascinating period in music history.

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12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. LOTS of great new info, but sloppy writing and editing at times By O

bottom line: this book is well-worth the amazon price, as the importance of ian and sylvia warrants a look back at their genesis and carreer. there is great information about those heady years for i&s in new york, and FASCINATING material on the recording years on the 4 labels. in my opinion, the biographical material on ian's earlier life is much better presented in ian's own "The Long Trail: My Life in the West," released in 2010. and of course, more complete.

the editing is not very tight, with a lot of information being repeated, particularly character introductions and re-introductions early in the book. e.g. ramblin' jack's real name, suze rotolo's relationship with bobby z. this often happens when there are lots of different authors with no-one coordinating (although i doubt that's the case here).

the book is written in an interview format, which is a problem for me early on, with so many different people interviewed. it's difficult for me to read a book in this style, which is, at times, 50% quotes at least, because i can sometimes get confused as to who's being interviewed. but, what are you going to do? you take what you're given, and a thorough job was done here, regardless. and it IS nice to hear actual quotes even if it can get confusing as to who's speaking. no skimming here.:) but who'd want to?

four misstatements jumped out at me about artists about whom i do know a great deal (which make me question the facts about others with whom i'm not so familiar). there are other partial inaccuracies.

page 18. regarding the kingston trio during the early days: "The Kingston Trio had their moment in the sun and were huge. When Bob Shane left that kind of took the wind from behind them because he was the heart and soul of that group." Bob never left the group, ever. maybe the author is speaking of Dave Guard who left the group in 1961. But the group was reinvigorated when John Stewart took dave's place, and the trio continued to enjoy tremendous success, with a number of hits (till the beatles came!!). in fact, Bob Shane retired from the trio only a few years ago. almost 50 years with the Kingston Trio. john and nick both decided to go their separate ways in 1967, but that didn't stop bob from keeping the trio going.

page 118. ian's "old corrals and sagebrush" was the lp released in 1983. the cd referred to on this page, "...

and other cowboy culture classics," was released in 1994 and includes songs from his self-titled album also.

page 64. re: peter paul and mary: "Puff" was on ppm's second album, not "..the freshly minted trio's debut album" which DID include "lemon tree" and "if i had a hammer."

page 260. chief dan george (who gained widespread fame in "little big man") was not in "dances with wolves." how did the editor miss THIS one?

but BUY the book! : a goldmine for ian & sylvia fans, and a reminder of how good they were, and that their peers, the best critics, put ian and sylvia at the very top.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.Frustrating, but a must for fansBy JerryWithaJHard core Ian & Sylvia fans are going to devour this book regardless of what anyone says about it. Yet, it's hard not to write about it nonetheless.

As others have remarked, the book is repetitious and the editing isn't all it could have been. Still, the repetition isn't all bad, as some minutiae needs repetition if it's going to stick. What I haven't seen mentioned yet is the book's index. It is WONDERFUL! Is there some detail that needs refreshing? The Index will probably get you there. You can use Amazon's Look Inside feature to see what I'm talking about.

The book is frustrating in that it often only scratches the surface in the most perfunctory way. To see what I mean, after you are done reading this book, go to Google and search on the phrase "Tyson comes clean" to find an article from the Globe and Mail that describes what Ian's life was like in 2008-2009. (Amazon will not allow links outside of Amazon, so I can't point you there directly.) I couldn't help but think how much better--tighter and more informative--the book would have been had it been written in the style of the newspaper article.

Is it a spoiler to mention something that appears on page 22 (of 312 pages)? It exemplifies my frustration with the book. It is here we learn, "In his third year at art school, Ian embarked on a star-crossed relationship with fellow art student Evinia Poulos from Vernon in the Okanangan Valley. `We were each other's first great love,' he confesses... We each met our match. We had many loves after that, but through it all we remained soul mates... `He still sees her,' Sylvia remarks ruefully. `She was the third person in our marriage... That was the spectre everyone who was involved with Ian had to deal with, the spirit of Evinia Poulos, the great love of Ian's live.'"

You would think that this is a great foreshadowing of things to come and that Evinia Poulos would resurface repeatedly. Yet, that's it. As the index shows, we never hear of how this relationship impacted Ian & Sylvia directly at any specific point in time. We never hear about it again.

Perhaps others will comment and contradict me, but a story that I expected to be largely joyous turned out to be melancholy, tinged throughout with sadness and disappointment. Ian & Sylvia came to New York and get connected with Albert Grossman, but they ended up on Vanguard, at their insistence, even though Grossman had the connections to put them on Warner Brothers. Vanguard was certainly prestigious, being Joan Baez's label, but it was poor at promotion and distribution. One can only wonder, "What if?" Their romantic relationship was not fairy tale. Reading the story of Ian's proposal, one has to wonder, if only a bit, why Sylvia said yes.

There are other trials and disappointments--one shocking beyond belief if you weren't already aware of it (page 306 can't even begin to describe it)--but in order to not spoil the book, I leave them to the reader.

I'm a die-hard fan. I have all of the vinyl save one record (the second Columbia lp) and I have everything on CD save Nashville. I learned a lot from the book. Yet, in many ways, I'd just as soon have followed the advice of the Great Oz, not looked behind the curtain, and remained in blissful ignorance. Still, what die-hard fan can pass it up?

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

All the things you always wanted to know, and then some.

By James Norstad

This is a great read for anyone who ever wondered about this enigmatic couple.Ian's last two books gave his side of this story,but including Sylvia's input this book gets both sides.

Perhaps if a lot of us old folkies buy this book someone will notice and release a live CD worth listening to. The Newport CD was too little, and didn't show them as well as it should. In the book Ian says he was drunk for the 1965 Newport, might explain the sloppy guitar work. The only live show I know of is the 1986 reunion TV special, I have that and it's great. Again in the book , Ian wasn't into it, but it doesn't show. Of course, there are plenty of Youtube videos as well. The only reason I mention live shows is that while reading this book you are reading about the life on the road , and all that which is apart from the recording process.

There are many surprises here, there is a song of which they say they are ashamed of recording!Probably not the one you think.What does the name Great Speckled Bird mean?Who was Ian having sex with, who cares?Too much information.

I have seen Ian perform several times over the last twenty years or so but some how missed Ian and Sylvia when I had the chance. This book does explain some of Ian's stage manner, maybe. When we saw him at the Gene Autry Museum, he managed to insult almost every person in the audience ,in one way or another. Although he did a great show, with one encore. After that my wife hasn't listened to a Tyson recording since. I have and still do, always will.

I have the hard cover. Unless you have to fill a library of music bio's ,the Kindle will do.

I should also say thanks to the author, John Einarson who has finally written a book so long coming, and well written. A few years ago I was in a book store and found "Folk Music Of North America", when I looked in the index under "I" all that was listed was Janis Ian. Needless to say, the book was incomplete.

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Review

"To my principal mentors Ian & Sylvia - I offer my profound respect and admiration."

-Gordon Lightfoot

"What a time, what a tale! Ian and Sylvia hit the stratosphere in the Sixties with Canadian-tinged folk songs that made them the darlings of the college dorms. Through hits and misses, marriage and divorce, and all the fun in-between, they didn't miss a thing. A beautifully detailed book that is respectful to the legend and heart-warming in its honesty. A great story well told."

-Jim Cuddy, Blue Rodeo and Jim Cuddy Band

"John Einarson is one of this country's premiere cultural writers. He gets right inside the true and remarkable story of Ian & Sylvia's rise to the elite ranks of folk, country-rock, and cowboy music, extracting the best quotes from the duo with all their humor, insight, sarcasm, and cheekiness intact. You'll know why these two belong among Canada's finest music-makers."

-Bob Mersereau, broadcaster and author, 100 Top Canadian Albums

"Emerging from Bohemian Toronto and New York's Greenwich Village in the mid-'60s, Ian & Sylvia became major folk stars in the U.S. With historical perspective and his usual love of subject, John Einarson spins an entertaining tale of two enigmatic Canadians who individually continue to create and perform today and whose story is finely woven into the multi-hued tapestry that is contemporary music." —Martin Melhuish, author of Oh What a Feeling and Heart of Gold

About the Author

JOHN EINARSON is a widely-respected rock music historian and author of more than a dozen books including critically-acclaimed biographies of Neil Young, Randy Bachman, Buffalo Springfield and The Flying Burrito Brothers. Several of his books have been ranked among the top ten best music biographies and received award nominations. In addition he has written for Mojo, Uncut, Goldmine, Discoveries, Record Collector, and Classic Rock and is a frequent contributor to the Winnipeg Free Press. John wrote the Juno-nominated Bravo TV documentary Buffy Sainte-Marie: A Multimedia Life as well as CBC TV's The Life & Times of Randy Bachman and hosting several CBC radio series. John lives in Winnipeg where he teaches a popular course on rock 'n' roll history at the University of Winnipeg.

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New York's fabled Town Hall, at 123 West 43rd Street between Sixth Avenue and Broadway, is, like Carnegie Hall (the city's other renowned performance venue), more than just a concert location or another stop on a tour itinerary. A Town Hall engagement is a milestone in any artist's career, a pinnacle, a measure of success, and a sign that you have, indeed, arrived. Spearheaded by the League for Political Education, a suffragette movement determined to create a utilitarian meeting hall, and opened in 1921, the venerable 1,500-seat venue is known for its superb acoustics. Folk artists were especially fond of performing at Town Hall because of its unique sound qualities that lent themselves to acoustic folk music. The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, and Joan Baez had all graced the Town Hall stage. Now it was Ian & Sylvia's turn.

On the evening of February 27, 1965, the Canadian folk duo, the darlings of the North American folk music circuit and heroes back home, performed to a sold-out Town Hall audience. It was a significant moment in their upward career trajectory from arriving in New York as unknowns from Toronto just three years earlier.

"This was our first solo concert at a major New York City venue," recalls Sylvia, noting that while the Canadian duo may have played Town Hall previously on a multi-artist folk bill,\* this was their unofficial coming-out event for New York audiences. "It was a big moment for us."

Having gone just about as far as one could on the largely scattered Canadian folk music scene by early 1962, Ian & Sylvia headed south to New York's folk music mecca, Greenwich Village. With no contacts or connections and armed only with their own confidence and a list of the key folk music impresarios located in the Big Apple, the two managed to charm their way into the big leagues within a matter of days. Theirs was no Cinderella story, however; Ian Tyson and Sylvia Fricker had put in countless hours perfecting their distinctive vocal blend – Ian's rich baritone combined with Sylvia's signature vibrato and gift for idiosyncratic harmonies – before dazzling folk patrons in Toronto coffeehouses and headlining the inaugural Mariposa Folk Festival. Their repertoire, drawn from obscure traditional sources, was the envy of their contemporaries, Bob Dylan among them. In short order the duo had become a top draw on the lucrative American college circuit and were regarded in folk music circles as on par with the likes of Dylan, Baez, and Peter, Paul & Mary. Now here they were at Town Hall.

"They brought so much dignity to our genre of music," acknowledges Carolyn Hester, a contemporary on the folk music scene back in the 1960s. "They kind of represented the Toronto folk scene and that gave them a bit more importance to the rest of us. They didn't come down here and just become Americanized folksingers, which could have happened. And as a result a lot more of us went up to Canada to perform because of them." Adds veteran American singer/songwriter Tom Paxton, "Ian & Sylvia became as much a part of the American folk music community as Peter, Paul & Mary or the Kingston Trio or anybody. I just thought they were fantastic. It was their voices that impressed me. They both sang so beautifully."

"Everybody in the [Greenwich] Village loved them," recalls banjo player extraordinaire Eric "Dueling Banjos" Weissberg, a member of the folk group the Tarriers at the time. "They were so good and it was so refreshing to hear that music done so well; great songs, great harmonies. They were regarded as being at the top of the folk music food chain." As Suze Rotolo, Bob Dylan's girlfriend at the time (pictured on the cover of his The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan album), points out, "There was something about Ian & Sylvia that was so compelling. Their look, their voices, and their choice of songs were unique. They had this natural charisma. Bob liked Ian & Sylvia a lot. He and Ian were good friends. And Bob thought Sylvia was gorgeous. He really admired her and thought she had a wonderful voice. There weren't a lot of folk duos at the time; so many came after them."

Having released three critically acclaimed albums and penned three bona fide folk music standards - "Four

Strong Winds," "You Were On My Mind," and "Someday Soon" – Ian & Sylvia stood poised at the top of their game. As they strode onto the Town Hall stage to a rapturous response – Ian, matinee-idol handsome in a well-tailored suit, guitar in hand, and Sylvia, slender and radiant in an iridescent shift dress, her long dark hair poker-straight, clutching her autoharp – each paused briefly to acknowledge the adulation and drink in the moment before turning to face one another. Exchanging quick glances, they opened their set singing a cappella the traditional Elizabethan ballad "The Greenwood Sidie (The Cruel Mother)," one of the many songs Sylvia had researched from her books of old English ballads. With its extraordinary parallel fifth harmonies, the opening number proved, as if it were necessary, that Ian & Sylvia were in a league all their own.

"We had a mystique being from Canada," Ian suggests. "That was a bit of a novelty. I had the whole package because I was a cowboy from the west, not like the cowboy I became much later. And Sylvia had the look back then with the long straight hair. It was like a script writer had written the whole thing."

For the next seventy-five minutes, Ian & Sylvia, accompanied by American guitarist Monte Dunn, presented a mesmerizing mix of traditional and original folk music, from two-hundredyear- old French Canadian ballads and Mississippi chain gang wails to cowboy laments and Appalachian bluegrass, all delivered in their inimitable harmonic blend. Interspersed with the traditional folk numbers was a growing cache of original songs, including Sylvia's "You Were On My Mind" (a pop hit later that year for We Five) and Ian's cowboy-themed "Four Rode By," inspired by the true story of the notorious Canadian outlaws the McLean brothers. Ian handled the between-song patter, jokes, and introductions while Sylvia, beguilingly shy, stood quietly at his side.

Having recently completed recording sessions for their yet-tobe- released fourth album, the two debuted songs by then unknown writers Gordon Lightfoot (the album's title track "Early Morning Rain," as well as "For Loving Me") and Steve Gillette ("Darcy Farrow"). Sylvia's funky "Maude's Blues" brought the house down, while "Come In, Stranger" was Ian's tip of the cowboy hat to friend and fellow traveller Johnny Cash. By the time the duo closed their set with Ian's evocative "Four Strong Winds," its Western Canadian imagery harkening back to simpler times, there was little doubt that Ian & Sylvia had achieved a level of critical and commercial success, along with peer respect, that few Canadian performers before them had attained. When they returned for a rousing encore (in the days when an encore was earned, not preprogrammed) of "Nova Scotia Farewell," it was clear that despite all they had achieved in the North American popular music pantheon, the two remained steadfastly rooted in their Canadian homeland.

That close bond with their roots would ultimately earn Ian & Sylvia iconic status, multiple awards, and accolades in Canada in later years, long after breaking up to pursue separate careers, as their groundbreaking achievements were acknowledged (Order of Canada, Canadian Music Hall of Fame, Canadian Country Music Hall of Honour, Prairie Music Hall of Fame, Mariposa Hall of Fame, Governor General's Award, and honorary doctorates). In 2005, CBC radio listeners overwhelming voted "Four Strong Winds" the most essential Canadian song of all time. Writer Bob Mersereau's The Top 100 Canadian Singles (Goose Lane, 2010) ranked the song at number 9. Beloved CBC broadcaster Peter Gzowski once declared "Four Strong Winds" Canada's unofficial national anthem. "'Four Strong Winds' is the foundation of modern day songwriting in Canada," states veteran music journalist and former Billboard Canadian bureau chief Larry LeBlanc. "There's nothing like it that has stood the test of time."

"Four Strong Winds' is an anthem," says fellow Canadian folk performer Bonnie Dobson. "Ian & Sylvia, along with Gordon Lightfoot, really set the scene for Canadian singer/songwriters. I love Ian & Sylvia's music. Even after they split up I continued to follow their music." As folk music legend Oscar Brand points out, "Between the two of them Ian & Sylvia carried a lot of beauty. They were very special people who had

great songs and performed them beautifully, which is something you couldn't say about all folksingers back then. They commented on the Canadian highways and byways to the world. They carried the banner for Canada. Ian wrote some of the greatest Canadian songs."

Whether together or individually, the two continue to inspire a whole new generation of singer/songwriters. "No woman in the music industry can say they haven't in some way been influenced by Sylvia Tyson," notes Alana Levandoski, part of a new wave of young Canadian musicians drawing attention beyond our borders. "With discipline, grace, and humour she has touched the generations." Singer/songwriter John Hiatt observes, "Ian writes great songs. He's a great lyricist and always has a good story to tell. That's my idea of a good lyric. The thing about songs is that they're really not poetry. A lot of it is the melody and the delivery and Ian knows that. He has that all put together." Dallas Good of respected roots-rock renegades the Sadies adds, "Of all people, Ian Tyson could give a rat's ass about what I think, which is something I love about the man. This is a kiss-ass business (I'm doing it now). That said, Ian never kissed an ass he didn't like (to my knowledge) and it shows in his uncompromising, stellar career. And Sylvia is a goddess. The Great Speckled Tysons made some perfect records and I thank them for it."

As for Ian & Sylvia's signature song, rock music icon and fellow Canadian Neil Young remains a fervent fan. "I've always loved it," says Neil of "Four Strong Winds." "It was the most beautiful record I heard in my life and I could not get enough of it." Muses Sylvia, "For so many people it was the first truly Canadian song that they heard that they could identify with as being a Canadian song. It's become a standard. Some people even think of it as a traditional song." Adds Blue Rodeo's Jim Cuddy, "I remember being a young person and hearing the singles, 'You Were On My Mind' and, of course, 'Four Strong Winds' and being more than a bit proud that those were Canadian songs."

"'Four Strong Winds' was before my time," notes multi-award winning Western Canadian alternative country singer/songwriter Corb Lund, "but it's definitely one of the iconic Canadian songs. I remember as a kid at camp when we'd all be sitting around the campfire singing 'Kumbaya' and 'Michael Rowed the Boat Ashore' someone would always start singing 'Four Strong Winds' and everyone would join in. Someone would write down the chords for me and we'd all do it. I didn't even know it was written by a Western Canadian. It was probably the first Canadian song I'd ever heard. It's just one of those songs in the campfire library that everybody knows." In recent years, Corb and Ian have developed a close friendship, with the latter serving as mentor to the young artist. "I tend to forget about his status when I'm around him," says Corb, "because even though he's from a different age bracket than me he's just like any one of my musician buddies. It doesn't feel any different hanging out with Ian. But every once in awhile I'll look over and see his Order of Canada medal on his dresser and I'll remember he's a legendary figure. Earlier, when I was just starting to write this kind of music, Ian was the one who showed me that it was okay to write about Canada, to put Calgary in my songs instead of Houston, and to sing about the Rocky Mountains instead of Texas. And that's become very important to my music."

Few things are more quintessentially Canadian than Ian & Sylvia. "They are a part of the fabric of this country," stresses Gordon Lightfoot, whose own career received a major boost once Ian & Sylvia brought him to wider attention by championing his brilliant songwriting. "They left a legacy of a lot of hard work and a lot of great music. They opened the doors for a lot of people and were very generous with other people including myself. And they're both still at it. I still pay attention to whatever they're doing."

Some people might be giggling when looking at you reviewing **Four Strong Winds: Ian And Sylvia By John Einarson** in your downtime. Some could be admired of you. And also some may want be like you which have reading pastime. Exactly what concerning your very own feeling? Have you really felt right? Reading Four Strong Winds: Ian And Sylvia By John Einarson is a requirement and also a leisure activity simultaneously. This problem is the on that particular will certainly make you really feel that you should read. If you understand are looking for guide entitled Four Strong Winds: Ian And Sylvia By John Einarson as the option of reading, you could discover right here.