

GREEN MAN REVIEW

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Seamus Kennedy, *Bar Rooms and Ballads* (1993)
Seamus Kennedy, *By Popular Demand, Volume 1* (1993)
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As you can see from the number of titles, Seamus has produced a sizable repertoire of CDs. So much so that I can't possibly detail all of the music here. So, I will point out the highlights of each CD.

The first song on **Bar Rooms and Ballads**, "Mary Mac" is a traditional one that is full of fun, and hits such vocal speeds that the term "tongue twister" is quite an understatement. Kennedy has the audience joining in on the chorus from the slow first verse, to the final verse which is given forth at light speed.

"Mom's Lullaby" is a song that brings back all of the memories we'd like to forget about. Written by Mike Barrett, this could possibly be the best form of birth control ever invented for those who don't have children, the best reason to really think about having another for those already happily making families, and a darn good laugh for those well past the infant/toddler years. No matter which "stage" you're at, you'll appreciate this one!

On **Seamus Kennedy Live**, "Dear Boss" is all about a construction worker writing a note to his boss to explain why he can't make it into work one particular morning. This humorous ditty was written by Pat Cooksey and must be heard to be believed! As with almost all of Kennedy's songs, it'll leave you laughing!

"Breathalyzed," written by Fred Wedlock, is performed to the famous Beatles tune, "Yesterday." It is about a drunk driver who has the misfortune to be pulled over by a policeman, running over his feet, then throwing up on the officer. It carries on from that point to leave you almost incoherent from laughter.

By Popular Demand - Volume 1 begins with the traditional "Finnegan's Wake" and involves the audience in a test of coordination and timing. They must clap along, but only during the chorus. Anyone caught clapping longer has to buy a drink, or be humiliated, or buy Kennedy a pitcher!

The Irish Rovers made Shel Silverstein's "The Unicorn" a popular song a number of years ago, and Kennedy does a grand rendition. The audience involves themselves with assorted animal calls and singing along, which adds a certain warmth.

From **By Popular Demand - Volume 2**, "The Whistling Gypsy" is a traditional ditty about a whistling gypsy rover who wins the heart of a young lady, enticing her to leave her servants and her father's castle with naught but his wondrous whistling. "McDonald's Kitchen" pokes fun at the larger fast-food restaurant chains and will make you wonder if those rumours you heard are true! Written by Carol McNelly, with apologies to Ralph McTell, this song is a surefire cure for a case of the junk food munchies!





"The Newry Highwayman" off of **Seamus Kennedy - Favorite Selections** is a dark traditional song about a man put to death for robbing people on the road in order to keep his wife in the style to which she was accustomed. Kennedy's vocals give this song real depth, while the music has your toes busily tapping at the chorus.

The pipes provide a haunting background wail for Kennedy's vocals, and a snare drum keeps time for "A Farewell to Sicily." This song was written by H. S. Robertso and H. Henderson, and is almost a dirge.

From **Seamus Kennedy in Concert**, "The Drover's Dream" is a traditional Australian song about a herder of sheep whose flock disappears while he's dreaming about odd animals. According to Kennedy, an Australian is an Irishman who got caught.

"The Writing of Tipperary" tells how Jack Judge came to write the song "Tipperary," which is now known world wide, at the turn of the century, and describes the events leading up to World War One. If you listen closely, you can find parallels between then and now. This song was written by Bill Caddick, who makes one rather reflective with his lyrics.

Goodwill To Men, a collection of Christmas songs, contains "Mary's Boy Child," a wonderful Christmas carol, played in Irish Calypso style and capturing all of the spirit of the season. Kennedy is joined by Arbie O! All-Star Calypso Conga and Steel-Drum Band.

"Oiche Chiuin" is perhaps the best known and beloved carol of all, and this rendition is possibly the most beautiful I have ever heard of "Silent Night." It was originally written by the assistant pastor, Joseph Mohr and church organist Franz Gruber to be sung only to the accompaniment of a guitar, for the organ was broken. Although the original was in German, Kennedy for his version starts in Gaelic, moves into English, then returns to Gaelic.

In **Let the Music Take You Home**, we have "General Guinness," another traditional tune, this one with a wonderful joke for an intro. The wonderful General Guinness of the Dublin Boozelers is a man who has kept spirits up, and bodies warm on cold nights. His war cry of "Guinness is good for you!" will have you toasting his health, and everyone else's, for that matter!

Alastair McGillivray's "Kitty Bawn O'Brien" is a touchingly romantic tale of a love gone far across the ocean with a last kiss to see her off. The pipes add a plaintive strain, almost bringing tears to the eyes, in this unusually sober song.

Found in **Gets On Everybody's Nerves** (The Kid's Album), "The Marvellous Toy," written by Tom Paxton, is a wonderful children's song about an almost magical toy, that "goes zip when it moves, and bop when it stops. And whirr when it stands still." The perfect toy, but nobody knows just what it is.

"Wee Willie's Lost His Marley" is a traditional tale about a young lad who lost his favourite marley (marble) down the grating. He goes through all kinds of trials and tribulations in the attempt to regain the marley, as far as involving his brother and using dynamite. The ending is rather unexpected, but laughable.

Kennedy's CDs are a wonder! They are filled with jokes in between tracks, interaction from the audience, and above all just good clean fun. Some of the songs are themselves filled with hilarity, others are actually sombre; no matter which, they are entertaining and sung from the heart with love. This is a man who would be worth travelling to see in concert, even if he was halfway round the world.