

DON OAKIE



Ball's
Blues
AND
Bluegrass

Coming Home



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Coming Home



cover: Finnanger, A. (1992) *130-1/2 Simcoe St. North*

above: Finnanger, A. (2022) *Homing*

LIFE

Joni Mitchell's *Blue* had just been released when the university in Indianapolis offered me a music scholarship but I could not see myself in their marching band environment. I declined the scholarship. So, with a guitar in hand and a knapsack over my shoulder, I set out in search of adventure!

I travelled and worked. Music was ever my envoy, the ice breaker, the common language.

I moved to Quebec City. It was the dawning of Separatism. My guitar spoke to my hesitant new Francophone friends until I could speak to them in French. They played jazz and Leclerc and Lenny Breau and the traditional melodies and rhythms of the old habitants. I played Cockburn and Kottke and Taylor. We were happy and our ties deepened.

Soon restless I moved to **Iceland**, camped on glaciers, explored volcanoes, and fished the North Atlantic. I fell in with a marauding Viking woman who took me to Norway. I worked in a music store in **Oslo**, lived in a cabin on the edge of a great fjord, and I heard the traditional Hardanger fiddle tunes from the valleys and mountains as well as the imported African piano of Dollar Brand, the home-grown genius of Jan Garbarek's saxophone, and the recordings of The University of Oslo's Red Choir. I played and I wrote and I performed in clubs with Norwegian musicians and with expats who had brought their Americana and Scott Joplin guitar melodies with them. Music was everywhere. We gathered in each others' homes and played and sang.

In this land of the long ships, I fell in love with boats and started carving a long slow arc towards a forty-year career in boatbuilding. I moved to **Prince Edward Island** where I began my boatbuilding apprenticeship. My boatbuilding mentor, John E. Williams was also a fiddle player, which is no surprise as the Maritimes were alive with traditional Celtic music and the rising voices of Gene Maclellan and Anne Murray. Kitchen parties were the center of homemade music. In the small communities of the East Coast everyone brought something to the table, be it singing, storytelling, or playing. We moved into a big turquoise bus.





That chapter of my musical education was nearly complete when my Viking bride and I moved to **Ontario** where I eventually bought my own boat shop, whose business demands left less time for music. But I did discover the Blues and soon the *'Boat Shop Blues Band'* sprung to life. With some close sailing/musician buddies I took a deep dive into BB King and Muddy Waters and Clapton. We practiced hard and faithfully did our best to respect the Blues classics and began performing locally and even in the US... and we laughed and we hauled gear and we laughed and we practiced harder ... and we laughed.

One day, in the boat shop I put my left hand into a high speed router which damaged my fingers and the music stopped...just as abruptly as my marriage had some years earlier. For the next fifteen years my mood declined, slowly and steadily. I could listen to music but I could not play. In this wistful state I gravitated to spirituals and Black Gospel, sometimes comforted by the power of the hope and perseverance I heard in the African American voices and rhythms but simple happiness would not return for me. I tried many of the standard prescribed disciplines and therapies to lift my mood but nothing helped. My ship was sinking no matter how hard I bailed. I broke down.

I stared at the scars on my left hand and flexed my fingers carefully. The pain from the scar tissue had abated significantly. I had one beater acoustic guitar left, my old Martin D18 having been stolen a decade earlier (sigh). I put on some fresh strings and awkwardly clamped my fingers down on the fret board. It sounded awful. It was going to be a long climb back.

I could remember the heat of live performances, the warmth of the kitchen parties, the joy of a well written song. I could remember the sensation of movement up and down the finger board and the rolling rhythm of Travis picking



patterns, the energetic moan of the BB string bend but I could play none of it. I collected all the resolve my spirit had left and I started to practice.

My second wife was a church choir girl steeped in the sacred music traditions. Her brother is the legendary R&B bass genius Prakash John. He and his equally gifted son Jordan smuggled fantastic music gear into my life and helped me rise again. I was in awe of their superb musicianship as I watched them on stage and in my own living room. Inspired, I determined to keep moving forward.

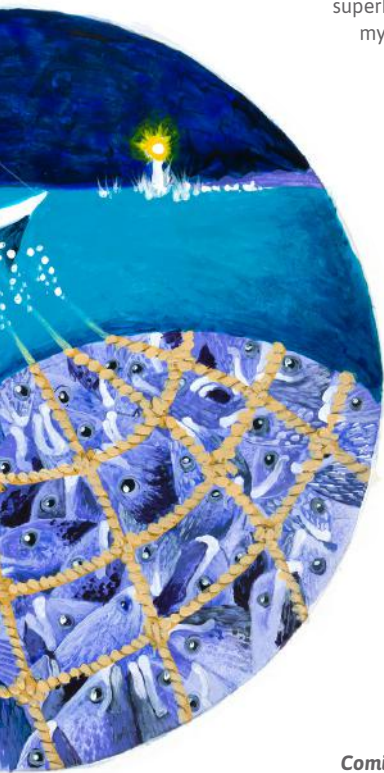
In **Dundas** I met Norm Ayerst whose tasty dobro playing you will hear on this album on *Steel Guitar Rag* and *Folsom Prison Blues*. I had found a terrific playing mate once again and we got down into it and began performing locally with a few other solid players.

By 2019 I was playing stronger than I had ever done and I was happier than I had been for decades. Norm Ayerst, John Dell (percussion) and Mick Maratta (bass) and I then mounted a concert before two hundred enthusiastic guests at the Shed Brewery in September 2019. This was the last large concert in Dundas before COVID-19 struck and closed down live performances. The music then went quiet in my life except for the online musical watch parties hosted by the feisty Dundas Music Club and its founders, the unsinkable Jay (Tuba) Burr and Danny Medakovic.

Coming Home, my first solo recording, was conceived during the pandemic. It is my journey back to the fork in the road where I had fifty years earlier decided not to make music a job...and it is a retrospective of the music and influences, which have shaped me as a player, and excited and comforted me throughout my life. To my family and friends who have encouraged me I thank you deeply. To you the listener I hope you enjoy this album. Thank you all.

Don February 16, 2022

LOVE



1 I'd Like To Find You At Home 4:14 (Don Oakie) Cymba Music Publishing (SOCAN) A song of love, work and devotion, which I wrote in Norway. A man comes home at the end of the working day and hopes to find his beloved waiting for him in the twilight, the time of day which Norwegians call "the blue hour" just before dark as the primary colours of the daytime dissolve slowly into shades of blue. Geoff Ball added his sonorous cello to this arrangement, which was skilfully woven into this song by Vezi Tayyeb. Vezi's rich piano and my Alhambra 5P classical guitar soon became soul mates in this recording. This was the first song that Vezi and I recorded together at Kensington Sound.

2 Steel Guitar Rag 2:37 (Bob Wills) Bourne Music Norm Ayerst is a wonderful dobro player and Dundasian to the core! He had mastered this old Bob Wills classic and when I eventually caught up to Norm's speed we locked in and this song became the centerpiece of our acoustic duets. Thanks Norm!

3 It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry 3:55 (Bob Dylan) M. Witmark And Sons A three chord blues poem by Bob Dylan first recorded in 1965 on his album "Highway 61". I modified this into a Delta blues piece and Vezi Tayyeb worked it into its current form with the addition of harmonica and slide guitar and his own excellent B3 playing. In the second guitar solo at 2:45 I play a riff by the legendary guitar genius the late Lenny Breau. I learned those Lenny lines from my brilliant Québécoise friend Andrée Morin in 1973.



Finnanger, A. (2022) *You Had To Be There*

Finnanger, A. (2022) *Under A Pink Sky*

- 4 Laura** 3:26 (Don Oakie) Cymba Music Publishing (SOCAN) The music in my family comes to me from my grandfather through my late mother Laura. My grandfather was a professional musician and a barber. For years I played this solo as drop D Travis picking piece. For this album my brother Rob brought the talents of the Acadian progressive trio Vishten on board ...and the sessions were magic. Emmanuelle Leblanc is driving the percussion here with her shoes pounding on a plywood board...with a pickup on it!!! Pascale is on fiddle and Pastelle is on accordion.
- 5 The Paint Is Faded** 3:35 (Don Oakie) Cymba Music Publishing (SOCAN) Myself and Anne Finnanger (whose paintings appear on this booklet) were among the families evicted from a magnificent old apartment building in Oslo that was soon to be torn down by its owner to make way for something more expensive. Two Dutch university film students filmed the whole process as a documentary and I scored their movie. This is one of the songs. It tells the age old story of housing insecurity, which has become not better but far worse in 2021 with no end in sight. Vira Solovyova created a haunting video for this song at: donoakiemusic.com
- 6 Folsom Prison Blues** 3:45 (Johnny Cash) Aberbach, Carlin Music Norm, Gordie and I take a little ride past Folsom Prison on a newgrass train. Rich and Remi are in the engine room stoking the rhythm boiler. Norm and I once played this song at the Ontario Correctional Institute in Brampton for 100 inmates. They loved it.
- 7 Kraque's Song** 3:56 (Don Oakie) Cymba Music Publishing (SOCAN) In Québec City I met the beautiful Jean Pierre Lavalée with whom I first travelled to Iceland to search for Jules Verne's mysterious passage to the center of the earth down through the Snaefellness Glacier. In the following spring we returned to Baie St. Paul in rural Québec and established the Balcon Vert provincial youth hostel on the side of a mountain overlooking the town. During that first exciting summer of operation JP died tragically after a car crash at the entrance to the hostel on a foggy night. That winter, after the hostel had closed for the season, I found myself alone with a wood stove and my thoughts. I wondered if I would ever be happy again. On the night of September 19, 2019, the audience at The Shed brewery in Dundas lifted my spirits high as they sang the chorus with us. You can hear their voices from that night's live feed cleverly grafted by Zezi Yayyeb into the studio tracks.
- 8 Angels And Devils Medley** 3:26 (Don Oakie) Cymba Music Publishing (SOCAN), with Friend Of The Devil (Jerry Garcia, John Dawson, Robert Hunter) WMG Just me and Ross Macdonald's double bass riffing a little Chet Atkins and The Dead.
- 9 Tennessee Waltz** 3:57 (Redd Stewart, Pee Wee King) Miranda Wong A country waltz is a beautiful thing. ONE ..two three...ONE ..two three. The left and right acoustic guitar tracks here are like dancers. Both guitar parts are played on my grandfather's 1929 Kel Kroydon K1 (a Gibson depression off brand) and I am sure that this guitar played plenty of Italian waltzes in my grandfather's hands.
- 10 Ain't No Sunshine** 5:14 (Bill Withers) EMI Music Bill Withers wrote and performed many of his songs on acoustic guitar. He was a factory worker when he recorded this legendary B side classic. You have to have a passion and a type of genius to be a full time working joe and a musician at his level. (Back in the stone age professional musicians would have called Wither's part time music recording adventure a "vanity project"!) Had the pleasure to trade guitar licks with my buddy Dave Wigmore on this one.

S O N G



I'd Like To Find You At Home (D. Oakie) 1977

Wait until the big red sun goes down
 Wait until there ain't no one around
 When I get you alone
 And love's the only sound
 Gonna wait until the big red sun goes down

I'd like to find you at home
 Sitting in the twilight alone
 Dusk is falling when I'll be calling on you

But the working day is dirty
 Back breaking mighty long
 It's just these thoughts of you
 That keep me hanging on

I'd like to make you my own
 Bring you flowers and precious stone
 In a silver setting love be getting its own

I want to grow old with you
 Our days one by one changing hue
 The reds to silver
 The greens into gold and blue

But the working day is dirty
 Back breaking mighty long
 It's just these thoughts of you
 That keep me hanging on
 I hang on I hang on

The Paint Is Faded (D. Oakie) 1975

The paint is faded in the stairway
From blue to aging grey
A tile or two upon the roof
Dies slowly every day
But they still keep out the rain
Old walls still stand the strain

Behind the door which holds my name
I hang my hat
I rest my bones
I call it home

The street is full of working folk
Like Margaret and me
For thirty years we've paid our rent
And raised our family
The memories these old walls contain
Of our joys and our pain

Behind the door which holds my name
I hang my hat
I rest my bones
I call it home

The man who owns it came to say
He's going to tear it down
Cuz a bright new building's
Good for business
In this part of town

His home it lies far away
He's safe at the end of the day
Not everybody can pay
His golden price

So do you know x3
Where shall we go? x2

Kraque's Song (D. Oakie) 1975

Winter hit the valley
Green pines burdened down
Snows here on the mountain
It's snowing down there in the town
Down there in the town

Chill at my window, frost at my door
Firelight on the inside
Who could ask for more? x2

Kraque old friend
You've been many miles
Kraque old friend
I see the tears between your smiles x2

Chill at my window, frost at my door
Firelight on the inside
Who could ask for more? x2

Kraque old friend
I see you on the road
Kraque old friend
Your story's quite a long one now it's told
Your story's old and now it's told

Chill at my window, frost at my door
Firelight on the inside
Who could ask for more? x4

R D





Adam



Victor



Gordie

Cam



Norm

MUSIC

DON OAKIE vocals, acoustic guitars, classical guitar, Godin nylon electric, Telecaster

VEZI TAYYEB piano, B3, Wurlitzer, lap steel, acoustic guitar on many tracks

CAM MACINNES slide guitar, track 3, 7

NORM AYERST dobro, track 2, 6

AL CROSS drums, track 1, 3, 7

JOSH LANGILLE drums, track 2, 9

VICTOR BATEMAN double bass, track 1, 7

MICK MARATTA bass, track 3

SAM LANGILLE bass, track 2, 9

ROLY PLATT harmonica, track 3

PASTELLE LEBLANC accordion, track 4

EMMANUELLE LEBLANC foot percussion, bodhran, track 4

PASCAL MIOUSSE fiddle, track 4

GORDIE MACKEEMAN fiddle, track 6

DAVID WIGMORE acoustic guitar, track 10

SUE LEONARD vocals, track 7

ROSS MACDONALD double bass, track 8, 10

GEOFF BALL cello, track 1, 5

REMI ARSENAULT bass, track 6

RICH KNOX drums, track 6

LAURA OAKIE vocals, track 9

BEN AITKEN piano, track 10

SHARON WASHINGTON vocals, track 5

THE BEAUTIFUL AUDIENCE AT THE SHED
Sept 2019 chorus on Kraque's Song, track 7

PAPA JIM FARANO
my grandfather is on all my tracks - don



Don



Ross



Rob



Vezi



Josh

Sam



VISHTÈN



Mick



Sue

Dave



Vishtèn



Sharon



Laura

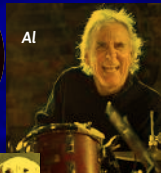
Ben



Roly



Al



Nate



Papa



Remi & Rich



Geoff



Charlottetown Production: ROB OAKIE
Engineering: ADAM GALLANT at Hill Studio

Toronto Production + Engineering:
VEZI TAYYEB at Kensington Sound



Arrangements by D. OAKIE, V. TAYYEB and R. OAKIE
Mastered by JAY LAPOINTE

*Dedicated to my dear friends Jim Drake, Greg Ressel (1951-2021),
Svante Liden (1953-2021) and Pastelle Leblanc (1980-2022)*

disk: Finnanger, A. (2022) *Embla Dreams*

ART
Paintings by ANNE FINNANGER
Design by SHARON WASHINGTON

DON OAKIE

Coming Home

Ballads, Blues and Bluegrass

- 1 I'd Like To Find You At Home (Oakie)
- 2 Steel Guitar Rag (Wills)
- 3 It Takes A Lot To Laugh, It Takes A Train To Cry (Dylan)
- 4 Laura (Oakie)
- 5 The Paint Is Faded (Oakie)
- 6 Folsom Prison Blues (Cash)
- 7 Kraque's Song (Oakie)
- 8 Angels And Devils Medley (Oakie) (Grateful Dead)
- 9 Tennessee Waltz (Stewart/King)
- 10 Ain't No Sunshine (Withers)

Produced by

VEZI TAYYEB - Toronto
& ROB OAKIE - Charlottetown



About the artist:

Norwegian artist Anne Finnanger is a painter, writer, gardener and a Viking. Her concept of "memories encapsulated in bubbles" and the haunting "blue hour" is the inspiration for the design of *Coming Home*.

donoakiemusic.com

DIGITAL EDITION



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