

Generally Eclectic Review

Reviews of book on music - all sorts. Feel free to share your comments, criticisms, and replies with my readers!

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TUESDAY, JULY 06, 2010

"Cold Pizza For Breakfast: A Mem-Wha?" by Christine Lavin (Tell Me Press)

Singer-songwriter Christine Lavin celebrates 25 years as a full-time professional contemporary-folk singer-songwriter with the publication of this book of reminiscences.

For those of you may not follow the current folk scene, Christine Lavin is a songwriter with a sly sense of humor, more than a few clever turns of phrase, a penchant for writing songs on topics few other performers dare to consider, and a generous heart for promoting the music of other performers she believes in. If her songs are often atypical of her genre, her book is hardly your average garden-variety autobiography, either.

This is not the usual dry recitation of names, dates, facts, and lists of accomplishments. Indeed, the historian in me wishes there were a few MORE names and dates. Being a kind-hearted person, Lavin will sometimes avoid last names, even first names on occasion, of people she would prefer not to identify in full. (For example, at one point, she lets slip that she was once engaged to another performer. I suppose people in the know realize whom she's talking about; I don't.) Likewise, there are times when it is a bit difficult to determine exactly when some of the events she recounts occurred.

But these are really minor quibbles in the long run. This is a very entertaining book, chock full of humorous (and true) stories, often of the laugh-out-loud variety, though even these were not always funny while Lavin was living them. Right off the bat, she tells us of her Gig From Hell, when she opened for Joan Rivers before an audience of senior citizens who had never heard of her and didn't want to hear her. In my past life as an Irish folksinger, I had a couple gigs like that, so I can empathize with the author right from the outset. Then there was the night at a regular Birdland event called "Cast Party" where she not only battled a peripatetic microphone; she also miscalculated audience reaction to the song she was attempting to perform. I should quickly

add that the book is not simply a collection of Christine Lavin's Greatest Disasters; she shares her triumphs as well.

I don't wish to give the impression that it's all humor. There are moments of sadness and tears, plenty of sound advice from her mentors (including her guitar teacher, the great Dave Van Ronk, as well as from veteran club owners), tales of growing up (in the Hudson River town of Peekskill, NY, and in Geneva, in New York's Finger Lakes region) and finding her way in the world, stories on how she encountered many of her musical associates (including the other members of her old group, the Four Bitchin' Babes), and anecdotes concerning her various obsessions (Dame Edna, knitting, individual Broadway musicals which she attends over and over again).

One of the things I like best about "Cold Pizza For Breakfast" (named after one of her best-known songs, which supplied the title for an ESPN2 show, which wound up NOT using the song on the program itself – well, you can read about that) is that you have this feeling that you're in a cozy chair having a conversation with an old friend. It's a most pleasant diversion, an easy read, yet a substantial one. You'll feel as if you've learned a few things about Christine Lavin, about the contemporary folk-music world, and a few important things about life as well.

"Cold Pizza for Breakfast" may be found through tellmepress.com as well as some of the usual online sources such as Amazon. It includes a complete discography of Lavin's many CD's and the various-artists releases she has helped compile. There is also a fascinating list of a thousand recordings she has played on her radio show.

Get this one. You can't help but enjoy it.

Labels: [autobiography](#), [Christine](#), [folk](#), [Lavin](#), [music](#)

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