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In Print

Sing Out! welcomes submissions for review consideration in "In Print" and listing in "Publication Noted." We request two copies of review material – one for the reviewer and the second for in-house editorial work and inclusion in *The Sing Out! Resource Center*; our multimedia folk archive open to members, scholars and others who want to help keep the music alive. Send books to "In Print," *Sing Out!*, P.O. Box 5460, (for shipping: 512 E. Fourth St.), Bethlehem, PA 18015-0460. Thanks to this issue's reviewers: Michael Cala, Andy Cohen, Stephanie P. Ledgin, Michael Tearson and Gary von Tersch.



Cold Pizza for Breakfast: A Mem-wha??

By Christine Lavin

Tell Me Press (New Haven, Conn.), 2010,
ISBN 978-0-9816453-6-0, 405 pages, pbk., \$21.95

For the past 25 years, Christine Lavin's life through her songs has been like an open book, often laced with humor that seems to find her even when she isn't looking. Now the acclaimed singer-songwriter has put pen to paper in a memoir, a more in-depth telling of her story – in reality many stories within her story – all laid out in that same familiar chatty tone that endears her to fans.

Lavin recreates more than two dozen interesting, sometimes introspective episodes (and subepisodes) along her life's journey. She introduces us to her family – she's one of nine children whose father taught at various military schools – and offers a look at growing up Catholic. She relates how she learned to play guitar from an instructional television show on PBS and provides insight into her entry into the world of folk performing, occasionally proffering music-business advice.

She speaks candidly about those who were pivotal in her life and career. Lavin describes enduring relationships with such friends and mentors as "Mayor of MacDougal Street" Dave Van Ronk, songwriter Ervin Drake ("It Was a Very Good Year") and Caffè Lena founder Lena Spencer. She details her involvement with *Fast Folk Musical Magazine* and the

Greenwich Village singer-songwriter folk scene that blossomed in the 1980s, going on to document how the successful Four Bitchin' Babes projects evolved.

Read the story about the night Lavin's acting career began and ended, during which fellow actress Julia Roberts polishes her shoes. Known for her onstage baton twirling and, more recently, her knitting passion, Lavin reveals her obsessions, particularly with Dame Edna, and how she attends theater productions over and over and over again, even to financial detriment. Throughout the telling, she exposes her own ups and downs, and in doing so, the self-doubts, weaknesses – and strengths – that have placed her at the top of her craft for more than two decades.

Several pages of photographs and three appendices round out the book. They include a complete discography, 1,000 "terrific recordings" she has played on radio, and a synopsis of an XM radio show on which she was joined by Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak, a "diehard folk music fan."

A special nod to Lavin's marketing team for the very clever pizza box packaging of advance review copies, which confounded mail carriers everywhere. Christine Lavin delivers as personal a performance as it gets in this memoir, a perfect companion to any Lavin recording collection. — SPL

Creative Community Organizing: A Guide for Rabble-Rousers, Activists, and Quiet Lovers of Justice

By Si Kahn

Berrett-Koehler Publishers (San Francisco,
Calif.), 2010, ISBN 978-1-60509-444-1,
212 pages, pbk., \$17.95

Si Kahn is one of those rare individuals who has synthesized a lifelong sense of mission as a community organizer and writer with creative musical expression.

Born too late to join the 1964 voting-rights movement known as the Mississippi Summer, Kahn nevertheless drove to Little Rock, Ark., the next year, at age 21, with a guitar and a strong sense of purpose. There, he was trained by Student Nonviolent Co-

ordinating Committee (SNCC) workers as a community organizer. His first assignment: voting-rights organizing in Forrest City, home of the KKK's founder.

Starting out an admitted greenhorn, Kahn had excellent teachers in local organizers and learned the basics quickly. On the agenda were voting rights, labor conditions and other issues where the white "haves" were controlling the "have-nots." Kahn had become part of "The Movement" for universal civil rights. After a while, fighting many good fights along the way, he became an expert national organizer.

For roughly 50 years, Kahn continued his work as founder and executive director of Grassroots Leadership – he retired last May – a nonprofit organization that has advocated for the Harlan County coal miners' strikes, regional battles to stop prison privatization (a practice that makes incarceration a lucrative business), overhaul of unfair immigrant-detention policies and violence prevention in communities nationwide.

At the same time, Kahn grew enamored of the music and the performers he encountered, like the SNCC Freedom Singers and southern activist-musicians, including Florence Reese, Nimrod Workman, Aunt Mollie Jackson and Hazel Dickens. Ultimately, Kahn became a professional musician, with 16 CDs currently available that are frequently musically complex, moving and lyrical – in short, everything this book suggests about the man.

Overall, *Creative Community Organizing* is a fascinating autobiography by a man who has lived and advocated for justice in many of the major political, social and civil rights movements of the 20th Century. At many points, Kahn shares anecdotes by turn funny, informative, touching and, yes, harrowing.

The "other" (main) thrust of this book is to impart proven community-organizing principles to readers still fighting the many good fights that demand our attention – locally and nationally. Here, Si provides examples that form a "dos and don'ts" list of effective organizing.

He doesn't say so, but I'd bet the young Si Kahn was moved by Henry Fonda's fare-