

# TOM PAXTON

Tom Paxton has become a voice of his generation, addressing issues of injustice and inhumanity, laying bare the absurdities of modern culture and celebrating the tenderest bonds of family, friends, and community.

In describing Tom Paxton's influence on his fellow musicians, Pete Seeger has said: "Tom's songs have a way of sneaking up on you. You find yourself humming them, whistling them, and singing a verse to a friend. Like the songs of Woody Guthrie, they're becoming part of America." Pete goes on: "In a small village near Calcutta, in 1998, a villager who could not speak English sang me *What Did You Learn In School Today?* in Bengali! Tom Paxton's songs are reaching around the world more than he is, or any of us could have realized. Keep on, Tom!"

Guy Clark adds: "Thirty years ago Tom Paxton taught a generation of traditional folksingers that it was noble to write your own songs, and, like a good guitar, he just gets better with age." Paxton has been an integral part of the songwriting and folk music community since the early 60's Greenwich Village scene, and continues to be a primary influence on today's "New Folk" performers. The Chicago native came to New York via Oklahoma, which he considers to be his home state. His family moved there in 1948, when Tom was 10 years old, and he graduated from Bristow High School and The University of Oklahoma, where he majored in drama while his interest in folk music grew and eventually predominated.

Brought to New York courtesy of the US Army, Tom remained there following his discharge. His early success in Greenwich Village coffeehouses, such as *The Gaslight* and *The Bitter End*, led to an ever-increasing circle of work. Then in 1965 he made his first tour of the United Kingdom — the beginning of a still-thriving professional relationship that has included at least one tour in each of the succeeding years.

He and his late wife, Midge, have two daughters, Jennifer and Kate. All three women have served as inspiration for many songs, and now three grandsons, Christopher, Sean, and Peter are adding to the sources of inspiration.

He has performed thousands of concerts around the world in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Hong Kong, Scandinavia, France, Italy, Belgium, Holland, England, Scotland, Ireland and Canada. That these fans still enjoy his work is a testament to the quality of his recent work, and to the enduring power of modern standards like *The Last Thing On My Mind*, *Ramblin' Boy*, *Bottle Of Wine*, *Whose Garden Was This?*, *Goin' To The Zoo* and *The Marvelous Toy*. Paxton's songbooks, critically acclaimed children's books (available from HarperCollins – see the page for children), award-winning children's recordings, and a catalog of hundreds of songs (recorded by artists running the gamut from Willie Nelson to Placido Domingo), all serve to document Tom Paxton's 40-year career.

Tom received a 2009 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Recording Academy during the 51st Annual GRAMMY® Awards. He was nominated for a GRAMMY for Comedians and Angels in 2007, and Live in the U.K. in 2006. He was also nominated for GRAMMYS in 2003 for his Appleseed Records CD, Looking For The Moon, and in 2002 for his children's CD, Your Shoes, My Shoes. He has received the Lifetime Achievement Award from ASCAP, and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the BBC in London.

Tom Paxton's place in folk music is secured not just by hit records and awards, but by the admiration of three generations of fellow musicians. An internationally recognized and loved cultural figure, he has always chosen goodwill over commercial success. His generosity has taken the shape of a benefit concert performance for a little girl fighting leukemia, or a personal note of encouragement to an up-and-coming songwriter. This is the man who wrote and lives the words, "Peace will come, and let it begin with me."

He is one of the great songwriters of the last century and will be reckoned as one of the greats in this new century, as well. He is a man we have come to regard as our friend. "Tom Paxton's songs are so powerful and lyrical, written from the heart and the conscience, and they reach their mark, our most inner being. He writes stirring songs of social protest and gentle songs of love, each woven together with his personal gift for language. His melodies haunt, his lyrics reverberate. I have sung Tom's songs for three decades and will go on doing so in the new century, for they are beautiful and timeless, and meant for every age." (Judy Collins)

"Tom Paxton embodies the spirit of folk music in the most beautiful sense. Not just in his song crafting, his work ethic, his politics and his dedication to people's music, but also in his kind and generous heart. When I first started playing folk festivals, I was all of eighteen, shaved headed and politically outspoken. Many people in the folk community at that time seemed defensive and threatened by me, but I remember Tom was a notable exception. He was nothing but warm, welcoming and supportive to me from the git go. He's the coolest." (Ani DiFranco)

"Every folk singer I know has either sung a Tom Paxton song, is singing a Tom Paxton song or will soon sing a Tom Paxton song. Now either all the folk singers are wrong, or Tom Paxton is one hell of a songwriter." (Holly Near)