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J. D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

OH 598

Transcript of

SONGLINES: ERIC BOGLE & JOHN SCHUMANN IN CONCERT & CONVERSATION

on 18 February 2001

Recording available on CD

J.D. SOMERVILLE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION, MORTLOCK LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIANA: INTERVIEW NO. OH 598

A concert event held early in the year 2001 featuring South Australian singer-songwriters Eric Bogle and John Schumann for the Songlines project of the Somerville Oral History Collection. The event took place at the Governor Hindmarsh Hotel.

TAPE 1 SIDE A

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for coming out on what's been such a hot day, but what is going to be a very hot evening. I'm the Director of the State Library, my name is Bronwyn Halliday, and on behalf of the Board and of the staff of the State Library I'd really like to welcome everybody here tonight.

Tonight's event, Songlines, is the first of a series of events designed to promote the collections of the State Library, and in particular the audio-visual collections. Our collections are much more than books. They're audio recordings, they're films, they're gramophone records – there's even some waxed cylinders out there. And we just want the rest of the community to know about our collections.

Some of you will know that we're planning a forty million dollar redevelopment at the State Library. We've outgrown and worn out our building, and now is the time to renew it, and as our building gets rebuilt around us we're going out to the community with a series of programs to show the depths of our collections. Our next event is March 14 at Adelaide Town Hall. It's a philosophical debate called 'The book is dead', and includes Phillip Adams, Ramona Koval, Brian Mathews and Alexi Wright, and details of that program are on your table tonight.

But Songlines tonight is the first of our events. Songwriting legends Eric Bogle and John Schumann will be joining us for some song and some talk, with some help from lapsed rock legend/journalist Ian Miekle, and they'll be talking about their story. And before handing over to Eric and John tonight, I'd just like to publicly thank them for their donations to the State Library from their own personal collections, which you can see at any time in the State Library. So thank you very much and welcome to Eric and John. (applause)

EB: G'day. (laughter)

JS: Hello.

EB: We'll start off with a song I wrote to celebrate Australia's Bicentenary. In 1988, if you remember, we celebrated two hundred years of white settlement in Australia and tried to forget the sixty thousand years before that. And the zenith of our democracy has elected John Howard as our Prime Minister, so we're on the way up.

JS: Hey, listen, are we going to do the long version or the short version?

EB: Yes, John produced this CD that I recorded this, and I wanted to release it as a single, and he said, 'Well, unfortunately, Eric, there's no chance that a six-and-a-quarter minute song will ever reach the top of the charts.' So, heartbroken, I lengthened it to nine minutes. (laughter)

[SONG – ??] (break in recording)

IAN MIEKLE: It feels like I'm about to read you a story. Welcome to one more Sunday night in Adelaide. My name is Ian Miekle. I'm a mid-Elizabethan rock reviewer who used to write for *The Advertiser* in the last century. As a young reviewer I worked with an older guy called – some of you may remember – Harold Tideman. Harold Tideman must have been in his seventies when I was starting my writing career and he used to tell me stories. And one of the great stories he told me, which is, I suppose, the theme of what the State Library is interested in, was Harold's early days at 5AD. Harold was an announcer, and when he grew tired of playing these large 78s he would turn to a piano they had at the studio and he would just play and sing, which seems a wonderful way to pass the time. I don't know whether he was terribly good to listen to, but it was a great way to pass the time. Anyway, new technology was catching up with Harold, and 5AD brought in from America some of these big 78 records, big plastic things, and they were very ingeniously threaded from the label out. The idea was you put the needle on the label side and it drew the dust away from the centre of the record, which in itself was brilliant. Alas, nobody told poor Harold this and he spent some desperately quiet, silent moments at 5AD one evening trying to cue the record on, and the needle would sullenly keep dropping off the side of the disk. However, Harold being Harold, he just said, 'Well, if all else fails, we'll turn to the music,' and he would reach for his piano and played his way out of the problem. That, I fear, is what we're going to do tonight.

I need to do a little bit of housekeeping because it is hot and you probably want to know when the breaks are. Well, we cancelled them all. No, not really. In a moment we'll bring Eric back, we'll have a talk to him, he'll play for a while, then there'll be a break of about twenty, twenty-five minutes. We will then do the same with John. John'll come, get a light grilling – or a toasting, in this environment – he will then go off, and then there'll be a short break and what I hope a rousing finale with both artists. So that's what's happening. Tonight we want to get behind the lyrics and do a little heartfelt emotional surgery to discover what makes these remarkable musicians tick, and to see what influence South Australia has had on their view of life. For theirs, collectively and separately, is a view that has captured the imagination of the nation and, in some senses, the world.

It would be remiss not to salute the remarkable originator of this innovative concept, the State Library of South Australia. It's hard to believe you can live in

South Australia and not, at some time in your life, be touched by the work or the resources of the State Library.

Tonight is a statistically remarkable event – I mean, it sold out breathtakingly fast, faster indeed than Michael Jackson. Faster than the Rolling Stones, faster than Paul McCartney. But, you know, statistics can, of course, be confusing. For instance, I was reading – probably *The Advertiser* – the other morning that thirty-four per cent of men kiss their wives goodbye when they leave the house, but ninety-seven per cent of men kiss their house goodbye when they leave their wives. (laughter)

Both our guests tonight have the map of Australia in their music. One a natural-born South Aussie and the other a born-again Australian from Scotland. How is their music influenced by their environment? Let's begin to find out and lift the curtain on our first guest tonight. He's a man who needs no introduction, but he's going to get one anyway. Eric Bogle, rather curiously described by one *Rolling Stone* critic as 'the Gobels [?] of folk music', was born in faraway Scotland in Peebles in September 1945. He was the son of a woodcutter. He wrote his first poem at the age of eight, blossomed as a singer in the school choir, before discovering the spotlight in the starring role in Oklahoma. Small but perfectly formed, the blond-haired teenager, fresh from losing at a talent contest, was invited to join a local rock band called The Informers, as lead singer. It was as Eric and the Informers that the Gobels Bogle got the first taste of stardom, but real fame was to be a lifetime, a continent and another fifteen strange years away. Free of rock and roll, 1969 found our hero pursuing that great Scottish sport of emigration. It was Circular Quay off the boat with thirteen dollars in his pocket. With the choice of all this great, brown land at his feet, Eric headed straight for Canberra, his sister and a job in a builder's yard. Self-improvement at night school saw him climb the corporate ladder to become an accountant. In 1980, then living in Queensland, he turned his back on corporate life, tossing it all over for no particular reason that's ever been properly documented to become a musician. Thank goodness he did. What have followed are two remarkable and creative decades that have seen Eric perform across the length and breadth of Australia and right around the world. In 1986 he was awarded a United Nations Peace Medal in recognition of his efforts through his music to promote peace and racial harmony. The following year he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia.

Now, regular visitors to the State Library would know that the dictionary defines a 'bogle' as a Scottish word for scarecrow. The only thing scary about Eric Bogle is the unswerving passion of his music. So what's behind this canny cragginess, why Australia, and why music? Celebrating his twenty-one years as a musical survivor, please welcome Eric Bogle. (applause)

Well, you know, Eric, we've got the GST now and we've got BASs, any regrets of not going back to accounting?

EB: (laughs) No, being an accountant was something I fell into, it wasn't a life's dream. That's surprising, isn't it? But I've always been fond of money, that's why I became a folk singer. (laughter)

You know, Eric and the Informers, I mean, that's the sort of band that Paul Keating might have managed. Were you a good lead singer?

EB: No, I was absolutely terrible. I've always loved singing, so I used to just stand in front of the microphone and sing and I didn't use to shake my head, sort of, or pull my crotch or do anything. That came later. (laughter) If I was lucky. So basically I was fool enough to think that that sort of music just relied on talent and voice, but of course it doesn't; it's all about movement and colour and – it's a visual art. So I looked for a music that wasn't quite so visual, where I could actually stand still and not be crucified for it, so I chose folk music, or it chose me, actually.

Okay. Now, you grew up in Scotland. Was it a happy childhood?

EB: No.

Well, we got through that one pretty quickly. Well, what was the driving force in forming your sort of musical ambition?

EB: I've never had any ambition, really, just sort of able to make some money without working too hard. That's been my main driving force all my life. And avoiding responsibility. See, music in the society I came from in Scotland, in the '50s, music was very much part of our society. I mean, making music on your own, I'm talking about, not just listening to the radio. But we used to do singing in the playground when we were kids and do all these games and sing the songs to accompany the games, my parents used to make their own music – you know, their friends used to stagger back to the pubs, Friday or Saturday nights, with accordions and whistles and tooth and combs and made music, and it was regarded as a natural part of our Scottish heritage. So that's when I started – I've been involved in music all my life because of that, and making my own music was just, to me, was always a natural thing.

I'm fascinated, listening to some of your music, that there's an influence of your parents through it. For instance, when you left Scotland and your first song you wrote in Australia was *Leaving Nancy*.

EB: Yes.

That's about leaving your mother at a railway station as the train pulled away. You also wrote *Since Nancy died*, which is self-evident, and *Scraps of paper*, which was about your father. And that's a song that I've read that occasionally brings tears to your eyes even to this day. That was also your first song in South Australia. Can you tell us something about the influence of that?

EB: Well, I mean, your family should be – those you love should be your first influence in any sort of creative endeavour, anyway. As a migrant – not as a forced migrant, I was a volunteer. I mean, I couldn't wait to pay my ten pounds and get here and start a new life. I've always regarded coming to Australia as a rebirth. That sounds over-dramatic but it wasn't. You've got to understand the place I came from was a small village called Peebles in Scotland, which Ian told you, and there's about five thousand people. Now, 'bogle', as he told you, is a scarecrow. Also in Celtic mythology a bogle is an evil-tempered goblin. However, he's got a saving grace: he's more predisposed to do harm to liars and murderers. Good people have nothing to fear from a bogle. (laughter) Good women, especially so. But for generations my family have been known as hearty drinkers and brawlers. If you wanted a fight then you'd go into the pub and find a Bogle, and he'd give you one at the drop of a hat. So I found myself sort of involved in the 'Who's the fastest gunfighter?' syndrome in Scotland. Because my antecedents – my male ones, anyway, and some of my female ones have been pretty rough people – when I started drinking in the pubs I found people came out and challenged me just because my name was Bogle and therefore they could expect a good fight. And I was born a gentle soul. Honestly, I mean, I was just a gentle soul. So to escape all that, partly, was one of the reasons I came here. Because when I got off the ship in Sydney I could be exactly what I wanted to be. What I ended up being was being myself, you know, and that's why I call it a rebirth.

But I drew on that past life for a lot of my first songs, because I was a stranger in Australia. I wrote a few songs in Australia when I first came – the *Barbecue song* and *My pal Mal*. I got stuck into politicians right from day one. I was so pleased to find out when I got here that Australian politicians are just as big assholes as the Scottish ones. I was scared that they might be actually better. And so I drew on my

past. And the older you get the more you draw on your past because the less fucking future you've got. (laughter)

I told you about – – –.

EB: This is going on tape! I'm sorry, State Library. Edit that.

But, Eric, would you have been a success anyway?

EB: At what?

At singing?

EB: No. I mean, it was never an ambition of mine to be a musician, a full-time musician. As Ian said, I worked my way up to being an accountant eventually. That was through no great intellect of mine, but because in 1969 when I first started working here there was full employment, and people changed jobs so often back in those halcyon days, so if you stayed around for two years you got a long service medal and promotion. So eventually I ended up as an accountant. Now, I got to a stage in my life, shortly after my mother and father both died, I got to a stage in my life where I started to ask myself some questions about where I was going that I should have asked a few years before, and I came to some conclusions. And one of them was I didn't want to spend the rest of my life being an accountant. Honestly, I've met some really good and lively accountants – they get bad press, just like Canberra gets bad press – but it wasn't for me. But I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I just resigned. I knew I wanted to stop being an accountant, so I did. And I came home and I told my wife and she said, 'Well, what are you going to do?' And I said, 'I don't know.' I said, 'What I'll do is we'll live on our savings for a couple of years' (laughter) – couple of weeks would be more – 'and I'll play a bit of music for pin money', because I was playing in folk clubs and all that, of course. 'And then, when my maturity kicks in and I decide what I want to do with my life, then I'll go and do it.' And gradually the music took my life over without me even realising it, you know, and two or three years down the track I suddenly found myself as a full-time musician earning a living. And I can assure you, I sit here, twenty-one years later, just as surprised as I was then. Honestly, no false modesty here at all, I just – I've never seen myself as a musician, as such. I write songs and

poems and put them to simple tunes. I've never seen myself as mainstream music. The fact I can earn my living at what I do makes me very grateful. It's not *much* of a living, but it keeps me in beer and cigarettes, as you can see.

Eric, was it serendipity, then, that brought you to South Australia?

EB: No, it was the *MV Fairstar*. (laughter) We rehearsed that. No, we didn't, we didn't. I'm not sure what 'serendipity' means, but it's something from Mark Twain, isn't it?

How did you get here?

EB: Why did I come here? Yes, that's a lot easier, yes. I've got to admit that first and foremost it was economics. When I found myself unwittingly a full-time musician I was living in Sydney. The first year I lived in Sydney I earned two thousand dollars in my first professional year as a musician. Even for Sydney that wasn't enough. I was going back, financially. The thing was that I felt a responsibility not just for myself. My wife had married a, you know, an accountant, up and coming young executive, and she found herself ended up with a mainly unemployed musician. Not that she ever complained about it, she's been very supportive all through my life. But I felt in incumbent on me to try to give her a better standard of life. We'd visited Adelaide a couple of times, liked the place, liked the look of the place, which most tourists do – they see the stone houses and thing, 'Oh, this is nice.' And also John Munro and Brent Miller, whom I was playing music with at the time, they lived in Adelaide. So given all those factors, plus it was cheaper to live here, was the main reason I came here. I'd like to say it was because of the beautiful vineyards and the weather and the wonderful society, but I've got to be dead honest. All these things I love and appreciate now and that's why I'm still here, but at the time it was economics. Yes, that was serendipity.

Thank you. But you initially went to live in Gawler, didn't you?

EB: Yes. It was amazing. You've got to realise we came from Sydney – I'd been living in Sydney for about a year and half and we had a very small nest egg, you know, the size of a sparrow's nest. And we saw this house, this cottage, in Gawler for sale – it was built in 1853 – for eight and a half thousand dollars. And

being from Sydney we thought, 'Must be a misprint. Must be four hundred and eighty-five thousand dollars.' And we rang up and it was right. The place was pretty derelict but it was a beautiful old cottage, and my wife and I spent the next seven years renovating. It was almost an accident that we ended up in Gawler. Again, we didn't go through Gawler and say, 'What a nice village, we must live here.' Economics took us there. And now, of course, I live in Malvern, and sometimes I wish I still lived in Gawler. There was no power walkers up there. (laughter) It's real dangerous. There's all these young women with all these big dogs, they're all sort of colour-matched with the dogs, and they're striding along and if you get in the way you're gone, I'll tell you.

There's bound to be a song in there somewhere for you. Could we talk about some of your music? *Singing the spirit home* was one that you've written in this SA about the other SA, South Africa. What was the inspiration behind that?

EB: Well, as most of my songs come from true events, I try to reflect life as I see it – not as everybody sees it, just as I see it, right? – and there's a white South African playwright called Breton Brechenbach. A few of you might have heard of him. He's a poet and a playwright and he's a wonderful poet and playwright, he's great. He spent a lot of time in South African prisons because he used to be against apartheid, of course, but he also married a coloured lady and that was against the law in South Africa then. So he spent a fair bit of time in prisons in South Africa. And I saw him on television one day relating some of his experiences, and he related this story about this young black man who was hanged in this prison. Now, he didn't say whether the black man was a freedom fighter or a rapist or a murder, he didn't specify. He just told the story of how he was hanged. And as they dragged him along the corridor to be hanged and he was crying and pleading with his jailers, all the other black men in the prison sang to him, started singing to him, because they'd been waiting to him. And they sang and they kept singing until this young man was hanged. It's a true story, apparently, and it happened almost every time a black man was hanged in this prison, which in South Africa in those days was a lot. So that story really affected me and I found it a very moving story and a moving image, because apparently this young black man was very, very frightened, but when he heard the sound of the singing, of his brothers in the cells singing to him, he realised

perhaps he wasn't as alone as he thought he was. It must have been the loneliest thing in the world to do. And he got some courage back and sort of managed to walk to the gallows in a reasonably dignified manner. So that's why I wrote the song.

I wrote that song many years ago and a couple of years after I wrote it my publisher was talking to another publisher in Sydney, and apparently my name came up in discussion, and this fellow said, 'Eric's a pretty good songwriter, you know, he's got a lot of potential, but he keeps writing songs about all these black men all the time and he's got no chance of – – –', you know. I've never sat down to write a song thinking, 'This is going to be number one.' If this is going to be number a thousand I'll be bloody lucky, you know. I don't write songs for the hit parade, I write songs for myself, and if enough other people like them that's great. But I've never sat down to write a commercially successful song – and by God, have I been successful at that! (laughter and applause) Bitter-sweet laugh there.

Well, Eric, you've never been a favourite of commercial radio. Are you finding it harder to tour Australia?

EB: [It's been disappointing in some respects. Seventy or eighty per cent of my songs are about Australia. Because Australia is part of the human race, a lot of people in other parts of the world can identify with the songs as well. But almost all my songs, the impetus comes from here, the people I meet and the country I live in. I regard myself very much as an Australian songwriter, but unfortunately my last publishing cheque I got from APRA – the Performance Rights Association, and they give you a cheque every six months for public performance of your songs – and eighty per cent of that particular cheque – – –.] (silence, followed by part of another interview remaining at the end of the tape)

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

EB: It's been disappointing in some respects. Seventy or eighty per cent of my songs are about Australia. Because Australia is part of the human race, a lot of people in other parts of the world can identify with the songs as well. But almost all my songs, the impetus comes from here, the people I meet and the country I live in. I regard myself very much as an Australian songwriter, but unfortunately my last publishing cheque I got from APRA – the Performance Rights Association, and they

give you a cheque every six months for public performance of your songs – and eighty per cent of that particular cheque the income was from overseas, for what was mainly Australian songs. And I find that really disappointing, that within this, my own country, I've got less acceptance in the media and the general music scene. It's partly how it's structured in this country. But as an Australian songwriter I've no intention of leaving and going back, and I'm still going to write Australian songs, but – – –. I'm trying to write a song now about the stolen generation – every songwriter's tried to write one, of course, why should I be different? – and I'm writing a song called, I'm trying to write a song called, *Imagine that if you can* and trying to get the audience to put themselves in the place of a young black kid being plucked from their parents' arms, you know, not knowing what the hell's going on. And I'm almost there. I've got another verse to go, I think. And I'm writing it and I'm thinking, 'Why am I wasting my time doing this?' You know, not many people are going to hear it, the ones who do hear it are the ones who think like I do anyway and it's got no bloody chance of ever climbing the hit parade and making me any money. 'Why am I wasting what little talent I've been given doing this shit, when I should be writing "June, spoon", "Do, screw, you"? You know, making some money out of this business?' But I'm too old to change now and too stupid as well.

Well, I would have thought – – –. (applause) One very big song that I know all of Australia takes to its heart is *And the band played Waltzing Matilda*. Why do you think that retains this cross-generational appeal?

EB: I wish I knew, then I'd write another ten. (laughter) It's a question I've asked myself many times, because in my opinion I've written far better songs, you know, lyrically, melodically, and that was one of the first songs I wrote in this country. I wrote that song in 1971. It's thirty years old. It's not a song that's haunted me at all. I mean, I'm proud and pleased I've written the song and I still get a great deal of pleasure at the reaction of other people when they listen to it, but why grab the public imagination? It was partly timing. It was a song that came along when Australia in the lead-up to the Whitlam era was beginning to find its own identity. I wrote the song during the Vietnam War as an anti-war protest. I was involved in the moratorium marches when I came to Australia – I lived in Canberra and I went on anti-Vietnam marches, because I thought the War was wrong and I

still do. What bothered me was that a lot of my fellow marchers used to heap shit on ordinary serving servicemen and women, you know, the squaddies that were sent out there – as though they had any choice. And they used to heap shit on them and I used to say, 'No, no, no, no, it's not their fault. If you want to blame somebody for this, blame the politicians, don't blame the squaddies. They're just carrying out orders, you know. They're just working-class young men sent to be shot to shit.' So I wanted a song that on one hand celebrated the courage of soldiers, but also was an indictment against the stupidity that sent them to places like Gallipoli and wasted their courage and wasted their lives. So I wanted the song to work on two levels and that's why I wrote it the way I did. On one hand it's sympathetic to the ordinary soldiers' plight. Like a lot of my songs I've written it about one person that the audience can identify with, just one ordinary soldier – not millions of soldiers, just one. And I think that's why a lot of the people can identify and like this song, and because this song does not denigrate courage but tries to indict war, and they're two separate issues, and because of the timing and because I sing it very well, that's why it's so popular. (laughter)

Do you ever get sick of playing it?

EB: Never. Never. I mean, again, it's interesting, but I was talking to Ralph McTell, wonderful English singer – Ralph's big hit was *The streets of London*, which got Ralph a very nice house in London and a small country cottage in Cornwall. So when I said did he ever regret writing it, he said, 'You've got to be joking.' There are some writers who think – as I say, I think that I've surpassed *Matilda* many times lyrically and melodically. The people who listen to my songs obviously don't think that, but I think that. But that doesn't make me value the song any less. It was a key that opened so many doors for me. It's why I'm here tonight, sitting here, it's why I got the tours in America and overseas. That one song was the key. I had to have other songs in the armoury to take advantage once the door was open, but getting the door open, as any musician will tell you, is the most difficult part, just getting the door a wee bit ajar. *Matilda* did all that for me, so I can rest – you know, when I'm buried finally in South Australia, Flinders Ranges, I hope, middle of the Wilpena Pound, and over my gravestone will be 'Here lies the man

who wrote *The band played Waltzing Matilda*'. 'Here lies the man who shot Liberty Valance', you know. I can lie peacefully beneath that. If they had 'Here lies the man who wrote *The dead cat song*' I wouldn't be happy about that. You've got a choice as a songwriter. So few of us get the chance to write a song which captures the public imagination on any level – and I'm not saying *Matilda's* a, you know, enormously world-wide known song, but it's a popular song known in a lot of countries. If you're lucky enough to get a song like that you can never, ever knock it. If you regard that as an albatross around your neck – again, talking to Kevin Johnson, I was talking to Kevin Johnson at Tamworth a couple of weeks ago, and he was saying *Rock and roll I gave you all the best years of my life*, he often wishes he hadn't written it, in spite of the fact it's his key as well. If you get to the stage as a songwriter where you regard your most popular song as an albatross instead of an eagle that soars then you shouldn't be writing songs at all, you know, and you're an ungrateful wretch.

I think on that note, Eric, it's time you put some music where your mouth is.

EB: Yes, I'm good at talking. Singing, not so good. (applause, break in recording)

Okay, I'm joined for this segment by my long-time co-author, Mr John Munro, ladies and gentlemen. (applause, sound of tuning instruments) And if you're wondering if all Scotsmen are built like this, the answer is yes. Short legs make it easier to run up hills. After all that sort of bit heavy conversation, a songwriter has many roles – that's why we're so fat – but – – –. Sorry, I just threw that one away. As well as to hopefully hold up a mirror, imperfect mirror, to the society you live in, one of the other things is just have a good laugh and a good time, and that's often forgotten in music these days or it gets terribly serious. So as well as writing those – and you'll hear some serious stuff from me tonight, don't get me wrong, but as well as that I write other types of songs just supposed to make people laugh a bit. And we'll start off with one of them. And, as you know, it's been a long, hot summer – in Adelaide it's been a long, hot summer and it's not over yet. But one thing that is over – thank God – almost is the cricket. (laughter, applause) A mixture, I thought there, John. I think fifty per cent are with us, and the men are not. As a Scotsman,

of course, cricket has always mystified me. It's a game only the English could invent and enjoy. Inventing was easy, enjoying it is something else. So I wrote this song.

[SONG – ??]

EB: I'm writing a football song which I hope to have ready for the start of the season. The real season, not this Ansett Cup shit, but the real season. When I lived in Sydney – the first time I lived in Sydney in the mid-'70s, there was an old lady called Clare Campbell who was found dead in the small cottage she lived in. She lived alone, this lady, she wasn't all that old, in her early seventies or something like that, and they found her, as often happens in a big city, they found her in her cottage one morning. But what made it particularly dreadful was when they found her they reckoned she'd been dead for maybe a year. They weren't quite sure because she was in not a great state, but they reckoned she had been dead about a year. And the hallway of the house was full of junk mail. The postman had kept pushing all this junk mail through her letterbox. In a year, not one letter, not one postcard, nothing, just junk mail. I wrote a song then called *The reason for it all*, and during the intervening years quite a few people have asked me if I've sort of exaggerated the case a bit, and I said, 'No, no, this happened, and her name was Clare Campbell.' And then about three years ago – I don't know if you remember – the song was relevant again because they found another lady in [phonetic spelling] Anandale, which is, a lot of you know, an inner-city suburb of Sydney. They found this lady called Doreen, I think, or Doris, and they reckoned she'd been there for three years, three years. They call Adelaide a 'big country town'. I hope it still is, because in a country town things like that don't happen. People are too nosy. It's true. It never happened in Peebles, you know. People always – 'Are you there, Mrs Bogle?' Bang, you know, people just taking a ….., as we say.

[SONG – *The reason for it all*]

EB: I'll hit you another heavy and Ian mentioned this song, one of these songs in the chat I was having with him. My father and I never got on very well, it was part of the reason I came to Australia just to get away from his influence and become

'my own man', I hoped. I took my wife, Carmel, back to meet my Mum and Dad in Scotland in 1974, and in 1975 my father died, a month after I got to Scotland. And when I was cleaning out his bedroom – he didn't have much, didn't take me long – but I found a pile of poems that he'd written, just little pieces of doggerel, mostly. None of them was over three verses long and it was four lines to each verse, A, B, A, B rhyme scheme. But it was interesting that in the poems he'd put down his hopes and his dreams and how much he cared for his family, including me, which was a surprise to me. He never told me that face to face, but here in these little scraps of paper was a man that I had a lot in common with, but I never knew that man. He chose not reveal that side of it to me. So I was left, as usual, with the only option I had: writing a song. And this is called *Scraps of paper*.

[SONG – *Scraps of paper*]

EB: [First time John and I have sung that together for at least ten years, and I do apologise. I used to be able to sing it in that key. (laughter) It's too many cigarettes later, I'm afraid. I should concentrate on a Nat King Cole number.]

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

EB: First time John and I have sung that together for at least ten years, and I do apologise. I used to be able to sing it in that key. (laughter) It's too many cigarettes later, I'm afraid. I should concentrate on a Nat King Cole number. Okay. This is one of my later songs. I don't dwell on the past *all* the time. I sometimes look to the future. And being a fifty-something male, looking to the future can sometimes not be too good. So I've written this song: it's called *Endangered species*, all about things on the planet that are endangered, including this one.

[SONG – *Endangered species*]

EB: Couple more songs for you. (laughs) Then it's time to go and recharge the pacemaker. That song, *Scraps of paper*, that I sang you the second or third song we sang, was the first song I actually wrote after coming to South Australia – an old song. I was living in rented accommodation in Tusmore, and I wrote that song there. This next song I wrote up in Gawler, and I'd just come back from overseas after a long tour in North America mostly, and it was just so good to get home. And so I

wrote this song to try to express how I felt. I called the song *Shelter*, and some people – John Williamson, Johnny Williamson, 'JW', recorded this song on his mega-selling *Warrego* album, which I'm very pleased about, and he calls it *Green and gold*, I think. He sings in a funny accent, but it's quite nice. (laughter)

[SONG – *Shelter*]

EB: Okay, we'll finish off our wee bracket with this. I'll be back doing a couple of songs with John at the end of the concert, or at the end of the concert-and-conversation – it's a really interesting concept. I've never been involved with anything like this before, and just a pity the night wasn't a wee bit cooler. But never mind, there's lots of cold beer in the taps, folks. No need for you to go thirsty or dehydrate too much. That's one thing I love about this country, you can drink lots of piss and not get drunk. It's amazing. I've had at least half a gallon before I came on here today and I'm all right! (laughter) Okay, this is the signature song, you know, the song that was the key for me. It's still a song that I enjoy singing, so anyway.

[SONG – *And the band played* Waltzing Matilda] (long applause)

EB: Mr John Munro as well, ladies and gentlemen. Enjoy the rest of the evening, I'll see you later.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 3 SIDE A

– – – brought to you by the inspiration of the State Library of South Australia. In this half we peel back a couple of layers of the creatively hyperactive Republican and would-be politician, John Schumann. Who is this bearded larrikin with that distinctive chainsaw singing voice? I realised only when I was researching tonight's material that I have known John Schumann since 1978. These were the first words – and I share them with some embarrassment – that I wrote about him in a Festival of Arts review of a Redgum concert for *The Advertiser* in March that year, and I quote: 'The band revolves around the nuggety brashness of bearded singer and guitarist, John Schumann, who cheerfully tilts at the conventions of everyday life as if they were overripe pimples' (laughter) 'there to be squeezed hard.' (groans) End quote. And, you know, nothing's changed.

Schumann has been hailed as one of Australia's most inspired, uncompromising, caring songwriters. There are no gratuitous lovey-dovey, kissy-kissy couplets in the poetry of his music. It bristles with raw feelings, real issues and honest emotion. From the early acoustic days fronting the political folk rock band, Redgum, Schumann has never been shy to stick his head out and usually get it

kicked. From the high school of hard knocks, this former Seaton High chalkie has travelled the world and been fêted with celebrity status, but remains totally unfazed. The relevance of his work is what matters most. Born in May, 1953, John Lewis Schumann's journey has been as varied as it's been involved. He's a Bachelor of Arts from Flinders, he's worked as a taxi driver, a furniture salesman, before taking up a passing career as a high school teacher.

In 1976 he began a long decade as front man with the incredibly successful South African – South *Australian* band (laughter, booing) – too much politics tonight! – (heckler calls 'Take him off!') – thank you – Redgum. The Gums criss-crossed Australia relentlessly and toured the UK and Europe. From this came a platinum album, five gold albums, a gold single, a couple of gold guitars from Tamworth and a Mo [?] award. Perhaps its strangest achievement for those old enough to remember Countdown was an award from a pop music television show they had never appeared on. In July 1986 Shooey [?] gave up the motel life, the Gums and came home to Adelaide. Since then it's been music on his terms, shows he's wanted to play, songs he's wanted to sing and a life in South Australia he always reflects. His solo days have been highlighted by two wonderful albums and a clutch of successful singles.

Why does he care? Why does he bother? Why does he cycle? Let's meet the Peter Pan of protest, the man who *nearly* killed Liberty Valance at the Federal seat of Mayo at the last Federal election (applause, cheering) – and will he stand again? To answer all this and more, please welcome John Schumann.

Well! What about that, eh? Do you know, if your first name had been Lewis, you would have been Lewey Shooey, have you thought about it?

JS: Just leave the rhymes to me, Miekle, okay?

Okay. I'm going to out you tonight, Schumann, because in my reading for tonight I discovered – and I don't want to embarrass you too much, yes I do –

JS: You've already embarrassed me with my middle name.

– that once, Lewis, you were a drummer for a surfie band. Were you a good drummer?

JS: I was an appalling player of the drums. My view regarding the drums was to play as much as possible and other musicians in the band didn't like it one bit.

All right, well, you were the Keith Moon of the high tide. You obviously had a good childhood, because you became a schoolteacher. Did you like teaching?

JS: I did, actually. I really enjoyed it, because essentially – you know, and I say this shamefacedly – I'm a show-off.

Oh, come on!

JS: And the way that I approached high school teaching particularly that it was eight one-act plays a day. (laughter)

Your early music influences – I mean, you were resolutely not a Beatle fan, you were more a Stones kind of guy.

JS: I was. I found the Beatles – in my more mature years I've come to appreciate their music and their arrangements and their production capacities much more – but in the early days I was very much a Stones fan because the Beatles were singing things about, you know, *I wanna hold your hand*, and the Rolling Stones were singing *Let's spend the night together*, and I was much more in tune with the Rolling Stones.

Your university days were really the ideological thrust that's taken you – it's always stamped your whole life, hasn't it? Can you tell us about what happened at Flinders?

JS: Flinders University, I was fortunate enough to be taught by a man – well, a couple of blokes, actually, and some women – but two men particularly who've, I suppose, influenced me significantly. One was Brian Matthews – you will know of Brian, of course, being the literary mob that you are – and Professor Brian Medlin who headed up the Philosophy Department at Flinders University. He was one of the reasons that I enrolled there. And Brian, I'm pleased and proud to say, remains a good friend even to this day. Brian ran a course at Flinders University called 'Politics and Art' which examined the nature of the relationship between art and politics. That course gave birth to Redgum, but it certainly opened up a view of life in Australia for me that's informed all of my work, whether it be music or otherwise since then.

You mentioned the birth of Redgum. Redgum had ten very successful years. When you left Redgum you must have known that ultimately that would be the end of the band – was it a head or heart decision?

JS: It was a heart decision. In fact, during my set I think I've got a song that I'll do which I wrote while I was in Redgum and it was for my first child at that stage, Matthew. I was broken-hearted, I was a new father, I was delighted with this

new little being in our lives, and I bitterly resented being on the road and being in hotels and motels and aeroplanes and hire cars, and so it was very much a matter of the heart. I do have to say that at the time that I left Redgum I did it with a very heavy heart, and I left behind in the music industry some friends, and some very good friends who remain friends to this day. However, I did feel that we had done all that we could do. We were in the top five bands in Australia, we had gold and platinum records and we'd headlined the Sydney Entertainment Centre in our own right and we'd travelled overseas and we'd released records overseas, and really all I could see in front of me was more of the same, which was being stuck in a Mitsubishi not so squeezy with five men burping and farting, telling the same jokes, in the middle of the night somewhere between Taree and South Grafton, and I have to tell you that that, as a prospect for the rest of your life, is not as appetising as it might be.

Let's talk about some music now. One of the big hits – well, the sort of secondary hit of Redgum was *I've been to Bali too*, which is something of a lampooning of the Australian experience in Bali, and yet your experience in Bali is profoundly more sensitive. Do you want to share with the audience what – – –.

JS: Yes, well, actually the Bali – the first version of *I've been to Bali too* was a song called *Bali blues*, which I wrote for some Balinese friends that I made up in [phonetic spelling] Ubud and Shamfon in my very first trip there in about 1976. Ubud was very much in those days off the tourist track, and particularly at half past four when the few tourist buses that went to Ubud went home, it very much reverted to a simple but thoroughly delightful Balinese village. There was a guitar at the ….. that I was staying, and I persuaded the owner to let me string it left-handed – because I'm a left-handed guitarist, like Eric – and I was doing a few Bob Dylan songs and attracted some Balinese blokes who were hanging around and wondering what was going on, and we struck up a very lively and warm friendship that I'm very proud and pleased to say exists today. They used to laugh at tourists, particularly Australians, and when I was pulled out of the tourist mainstream and began to live much more the life of a young Balinese man and less the life of a tourist I could see their amusement. So I wrote a song for them, essentially, called *Bali blues*, which they thought was just hysterical. They thought this was the best thing they'd ever

heard in their lives. And whenever I went back to see them and live with them for as long a period of time as I could afford, I always had to sing that song over and over and over again to anybody who came past. When we were doing the *Frontline* album, which I think we recorded in 1984, 1985, I told the producer that I had one more song in my drawer. I actually lied; I didn't. And we were just about at the end of the album and the producer had kept asking me about, you know, 'Where's this song, where's this song?' Suddenly I came across the lyrics in a diary to the *Bali blues* and I thought, 'Oh, good, that'll do,' and I rewrote them, turned it around a bit, and the bass player in the band at that particular time was a mad reggae fan and he gave it that calypso feel, and there it was. But what it was was an attempt to counter a television program on *Sixty Minutes*, where they had climbed, not unjustifiably, into the Denpasar Hospital, and tourist arrivals in Denpasar just went into free fall, and it was very clear to me from my Balinese friends that this was causing great angst and consternation in Bali. So the song had two objectives: one was to try to say to Australians, 'Look, this is somebody else's backyard. Please, go there, have a great time, because they're fantastic people, it's a tremendously exciting, interesting, wonderful island in any sense of the word, but it is somebody else's backyard so try to understand that you need to behave correctly. It's not a Third World play – – –.' And the other objective was to give a bit of a fillip to the tourism industry in Bali, and I'm pleased to say that it did that.

Thank you. You also have a – there's a few Balinese in the audience tonight, isn't that fabulous? – you obviously have a genuine love for children and you've been a teacher, a father and a songwriter, but there's an album here that's been largely overlooked by musicologists. You will recall it and I wouldn't imagine that too many people in the room have got it – I think it was called *Here we go Looby Loo*. The door prize to that lady over there.

JS: You were the – she was the one who bought it!

That's the one! (laughter)

JS: I always wanted to meet you!

It was a kids' collection. What possessed you to do that?

JS: Yes, well, um – – –.

You're not going to sing any tonight?

JS: No, I'm not going to sing any tonight. Look, I have been described by a very good friend of mine who is the drummer and major songwriter for Midnight Oil as the 'elder statesman of complaint folk'. I've worn this mantle with some reluctance, and when Matthew was born and then Adelaide followed shortly after, we looked around to buy the kids music. And it was shithall, it was just unspeakable. And I thought to myself, 'If I have to listen' – and with great respect – 'to Patsy Biscoe for the rest of my life (laughter) I am going to go bananas.' So at that particular time I was also doing a few songs on the Channel 10 children's program *Mullygrubs*[?], and I remember that my friends in the music industry just could not believe this at all. I remember a 'phone call I had at home from Tommy Emanuel who rang me up and said, 'Shooey, I've got to – listen – there's this guy – I'm in Bundaberg, I'm in a motel room, I'm watching this television program – there's a guy – he's singing this song about ducks or sheep or some shit, I don't know, but he looks like you – I've got to – – –.' 'But Tommy, it's me.' He said, 'No, no, no, no, no. No, no. No, it's – it can't be.' I said, 'It was.' And it was. After I did that I thought what I would do is do a children's album and take standard children's songs – because I didn't really have the inspiration to write any myself – and record them with first rate musicians and use first rate production values, so that the idea was that the kids could listen to the songs and the parents could listen to the musicians and the production values and it wasn't going to drive you around the twist. And the very few people who actually discovered that album said exactly that. So even though we didn't sell huge numbers it did achieve its objective in some way.

Can we talk about South Australia now and its influence on your music, particularly as a solo player. There are three songs I'd like to hone in on and I think they're on the list today. *Thunder across the reef*, which is based on a little-known history event, but that's got some mild family connections. Do you want to share that?

JS: Well, I would, but I must – I'm aware that I told this story on the Philip Satchell program earlier during the week. All those people who've heard that Philip Satchell say 'aye'. (many voices say 'aye')

Okay, let's move along. (laughter) Okay, come on.

JS: Okay. Very, very quickly, my great-grandfather was in Adelaide at that time. He'd sailed a very small boat on his own around from Albany to commission the building of his own boat called the *Mary Elizabeth* at the Port Adelaide shipyards. To pay for this and to supervise the building of the boat, he took a job as a coachman with a wealthy woman who owned an estate somewhere up Stirling and Crafers. He used to go down to Port Adelaide every couple of weeks to check on the progress of the boat and to pay his wages over. One time he was down there, the *Star of Greece* was in port looking for a crew, initially to go to Sydney with a load of grain from the Yorke Peninsula which was in fact bound for the UK, and he was a qualified bosun so he signed on, because he thought, well, he could get a passage up to Sydney, be at sea, get a passage back to Adelaide, be at sea – which is really where he wanted to be – all that time earning a wage, not being able to spend it, and he would end up back at Port Adelaide. That was his plan. He went back to his employer on this sort of estate in Crafers and informed her that he was going to leave the next day to join the *Star of Greece*. She was not a happy camper, we are led to believe. There might have been some sort of hanky-panky going on, we're not sure, but it's very clear that she was very unhappy about my great-grandfather leaving her home. He was – just before he was due to leave, finally, and join the *Star of Greece*, as his final task she asked him to go into the coal cellar and get some coal for the fire that evening, and he did that. When he was down there she locked him in, and kept him there until the *Star of Greece* sailed. The *Star of Greece* sailed about four o'clock that evening, and those of you who are familiar with South Australian maritime history will know that the *Star of Greece* ran aground off the coast of Port Willunga in one of the worst storms in South Australia's maritime history and almost all of the hands were lost. Had it not been for the woman in Crafers, I might not be here with you this evening. (laughter, applause)

I'll just throw that – I want to keep you moving, because there's a couple of key questions at the end and it's a hot night and we're a little behind time. *Leigh Creek Road* off *True believers*.

JS: *Leigh Creek Road* – I spent six weeks in Leigh Creek one night. (laughter) And it stayed with me. When I was living – when we were living on Pole Road, Upper Sturt, a very good friend of mine across the creek, Marshall, had been

persuaded by his wife for reasons best known to her to go back to England with her and live next door to her mother. (laughter) This sounded an extraordinarily dumb thing to do. Marshall had actually spent a fair bit of his time in Leigh Creek as an electrical engineer, and he asked me would I write a song for him about Leigh Creek, bung it on cassette that he could play on his Walkman on lonely, cold nights in the middle of England. So *Leigh Creek Road* was it.

***If I close my eyes* also off *True Believers*.**

JS: *If I close my eyes* – like Eric, the Flinders Ranges and particular Wilpena Pound area is a very important bit of country to me. In fact, I did most of my degree camping out in the ABC Range. You might remember that, in the early '90s, the then-ALP Government in its wisdom had a deal with a mob called Ophix[?], I think, that were going to build a five-star tourism development there complete with helicopter landing pads and golf links. There were people from all sides of the political spectrum that opposed that development. One of them was Jennifer Cashmore, who worked very, very hard. She was the Liberal – my politics exist quite on the other side of the political spectrum, but I certainly admired and respected her passion and shared it – and she spoke to me about it and gave me a whole lot of books. And the upshot of – no, sorry. She wrote a poem and she asked me whether I could put it to music. It was a poem, and a poem and a song are completely different forms, so I wrote *If I close my eyes* and said, 'Jennifer, your poem is sensational. This is a song, this is sensational too, what do you think?' And that was my contribution to that campaign.

Can we move to your really big hit, which is *I was only nineteen*? Most people identify you with that song. I wonder, have you become a bit of a captive of the Vietnam Vets' Movement?

JS: Not a captive. (pause) No. Yes and no. The writing and performing of *Nineteen* and the campaign that we waged with Frankie Hunt and Phil Thompson in the early days has led me into some very dear, close friendships, and I have a bond, I think, with Australia's Vietnam veterans. It's certainly not a monkey on my back; it's – like *The band played 'Waltzing Matilda'* – it's something I'm very proud to have written and if I depart this world just having done that I'll be a very happy man.

It's written through the eyes of my friend and brother-in-law Mick Storen, and it was – for me as a songwriter it was driven by a very real sense of 'There but for the grace of God go I.' And I still have a very deep sense of injustice at the way that Vietnam veterans in the first instance, but veterans generally, are treated by successive governments in this country. Look, it's *really* simple. If you send off young people to fight and die in someone else's country in someone else's war, then when they come back in whatever condition they come back, *you* look after them for the rest of their lives, and their wives, (applause) and their children if necessary, and you don't skimp and you don't stop and you don't pass legislation to whittle away this, or put tribunals in here. You just don't do it. That's the deal, and you keep the deal. And I don't think that we have, and there are times even now when I play *I was only nineteen* and I close my eyes and I think about those blokes about whom that song was written and I am still filled with anger at the behaviour of successive Australian governments in that regard. And I'm sorry to lecture. (applause)

It's good to see you've still got the capacity to get angry, because as songwriters mellow they tend to get a little over-satisfied about their particular lines of protest. What's left for John Schumann?

JS: Look, I don't know. I look back at what passes for a career and it's always been – I characterize it as a stepping stone across quite a turbulent creek, and I just hop from stone to stone, and sometimes I land on a stone and I look back and the stone that I left has gone and there's not one that is immediately apparent, and I think to myself, 'Oh, shit.' And then somehow it subsides and a stone will appear so I jump onto that one. I don't know where I'm going to get to on the other side of the creekbed. I may not. So the answer is, 'I don't know,' but I'm hoping that a stone will appear soon. (laughter)

John Lewis, you're among great friends tonight, this is a wonderful chance to make some news. What are your thoughts on Mayo for next time?

JS: Look, I'm very pleased and not a little bit flattered at the interest in my political career, and I'll answer this by saying that at this particular stage it suits me to leave Alexander Downer in this, as he is in all other things, uncertain. (laughter, applause)

Thank you, John Schumann. I think it's time you sang for your supper.

JS: Thank you very much, and thank you, Ian. I always wanted – – –. (applause) (break in recording for approximately 10 seconds) I always wanted to do Parkinson. Thank you very much, and ladies and gentlemen, could you welcome to the stage my very good mate, and when our guitar cases are unclasped we are joined at the hip, Mr Mick Wordley. So this is the song about the Flinders Ranges – not much more to say about it than I said there, except that it's a sacred site, and all those people who think we should leave the Flinders Ranges as they are say 'aye'. (many voices say 'aye') We are among friends.

[SONG – *If I close my eyes*]

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE A: TAPE 3 SIDE B

JS: All those people that have been to Leigh Creek say 'aye'. (many voices say 'aye') It's good there, isn't it? This is the John Schumann version of *Way out West*, really.

[SONG – *Leigh Creek Road*]

JS: I just want to say on behalf of all of us here this evening just how wonderful we think you are. It's a really, really hot night – nobody could have predicted this – and you've been absolutely sensational, so give yourselves a big hand. (applause) Anybody go to Womad? At least we're not sneezing. This is the *Thunder across the reef* song which is the one that I discussed with Ian. It's about a little bit of family history and the wreck of the *Star of Greece*. (pause) It's too hot to knock ourselves about. (sounds of tuning instruments)

[SONG – *Thunder across the reef*]

JS: Thanks very much. My kids are here tonight and this introduction to this song is going to mortify Matthew. He's sixteen and I don't care. (laughter) (pause) Hoffy[?], I might just check the tuning of this. Thanks very much. I'm actually very disappointed with this guitar. It was in tune when I bought it. This is a song that Ian and I referred to, it's the song that I wrote actually when I was in Redgum and it was on my first album *Etched in blue*, which I would encourage you all to go out and buy

ten or twelve of each. It's a song that I have expanded to sing about my little girl, Adelaide, as well, and in fact all the children in the world.

[SONG – ??]

JS: This is a song that I haven't done for a while, so we're going to sort of busk our way through it, as opposed to the other songs, and I was asked whether we were going to do this song as I moved through the crowd earlier on this evening. And it dawned on me that it was a pretty astute and intelligent question, given the recent re-emergence of Pauline Hanson and One Nation. It is a singularly depressing thing, Pauline Hanson.

[SONG – *It'll be all right in the long run*??]

JS: This next song, which is our last for the set – and thank you very much for being a sensational crowd, you've been really great on a very, very hot night. This one is a song that I do in the very fervent hope that never again will we send our young men off to fight and die for someone else's country in someone else's war. (applause)

[SONG – *I was only nineteen*]

JS: Thank you very much for being a lovely audience, thank you. (applause)

Ladies and gentlemen, in deference to the warm night, I think we've abandoned the second interval and we're going to bring the full ensemble back for you. Before that you're going to have to listen to the honour list of people who have made tonight's very simple show a great success in some trying conditions. I wonder if you'd just bear with me, I'd like to mention them. The workers, who are Lachie Kinnear, Elaine Nay, Daniel Jarrett, Clare James, Anita Storen, we've got a road crew of Matthew Schumann and Jethro Heysen-Hicks, we've got as musicians Mick Wordley, who you saw playing with John Schumann – isn't he fabulous? – and the legendary John Munro who, of course, helped Eric Bogle. We've got a couple of special people out the back who are losing weight with every moment of this: we've got Michael Hoffman, who's been handling the sound under some very difficult conditions and Richard Tonkin who's been on the lights. Manning the pizza oven have been Melissa and Viv Tonkin, they're from the venue. You can throw rocks at them for the air conditioning. (laughter) There's the people who organised it – we're going to thank Crystal Mex and Denny Schumann, Loni Sweeney and Rachel Haskell and Beth Robertson, and we're heading our way back up to the top of the totem pole to Bronwyn Halliday from the State Library for being such a visionary and having the confidence in putting

a show like this together. And what's the point of a show without some stars? Would you welcome back Eric Bogle and John Schumann? (applause)

EB: I've written this song called *I was only sixteen* and I think we'll do that.

JS: This doesn't surprise me at all.

EB: I'm talking about my shoe size, of course. Okay. I mentioned earlier a song called *Singing the spirit home*. We've all decided to busk it, see how we go. And it's about, as I said, this young black man being taken to be executed, and as they're dragging him along the corridor he was crying and pleading for mercy. And his brothers in the cells started singing a freedom song called [phonetic spelling] *Oshalosa*.

[SONG – *Singing the spirit home* (incomplete)]

END OF TAPE 3 SIDE B: TAPE 4 SIDE A

EB: [Okay. I mentioned earlier a song called *Singing the spirit home*. We've all decided to busk it, see how we go. And it's about, as I said, this young black man being taken to be executed, and as they're dragging him along the corridor he was crying and pleading for mercy. And his brothers in the cells started singing a freedom song called [phonetic spelling] *Oshalosa*.

[SONG – *Singing the spirit home*]]

EB: Right. We're going to finish off with – I've always wanted to sing this song in public, I've sung it in private a couple of times – badly. I've always wanted to sing it badly in public as well. And I'm just about to realise my dream! And this is the first Australian song – no, the first Australian song I ever learned was a song that went like: (sings)

My father killed a kangaroo
Wasn't that a helluva thing to do
He gave me the gristly/grisly[?] bits to chew
My father killed a kangaroo

Thank you, you're too kind.

JS: Was that necessary?

EB: I was just – I'm putting this song in its historical context. That was the very first Australian song I learned, from a Scottish folk singer called Matt McGuinn, who'd never been to Australia. (laughter) This is the second one I ever learned, and I used to sing this in Scotland, and here I am in Australia singing it.

[SONG – *Waltzing Matilda*] (long and loud applause, calls for more)

They've run out of songs, I'm sorry. But thanks for coming. (pause)

JS: Okay – Eric? Oh, okay, I thought he was going to leave me out here for a minute. (laughter) Listen, this is going to be a really serious busk, ladies and gentlemen, I've got to tell you. (pause) He thinks he's going to get away without doing this. (calls for 'Eric, Eric'. Audience member shouts 'Give us *Leaving Nancy*.') We're not doing *Leaving Nancy*, so shut up. (laughter)

[SONG – *Poor Ned*]

JS: Thank you, and that *is* good night. Thank you.

END OF RECORDING