

Betty and the Baby Boomers

... sounds like either a yuppie oriented pop group or an outfit starring Betty with some sort of backup band. As it happens, neither is anything remotely like the reality. Despite having given her name to the proceedings, Betty Boomer is just one of the equal partners in a likable and eminently folk-oriented quartet ... I enjoyed the group very much."

Bob Sherman, host of "Woody's Children"
WQXR and WFDU, New York, NY

The name seemed like a good idea years ago when Betty Boomer, Jean Valla McAvoy, Paul Rubeo, and Steve Stanne began performing together—a play on Betty's name and the fact that all four are children of the baby boom. They've had second thoughts, but two decades later, it's too late to change. "Betty and the Baby Boomers" appears on the cover of the bands' four CDs; and the name is known to folk music fans from the mountains of Connemara in Ireland to the Catskills overlooking the Hudson Valley.

The folk genre covers many styles. The Boomers' take on this music is suggested in a review of their second recording, *Tumbling Through the Stream of Days*, in the folk song magazine *Sing Out!* It described the group as "a refreshing reminder of the halcyon days of American folk music" and praised the CD as "an enthusiastic testament to the sheer joy of singing and playing music." In addition to original songs from Jean, the Boomers draw on sources including traditional tunes, contemporary artists like Bruce Cockburn and Dougie MacClean, and classic "folksingers" like Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Phil Ochs.

Whatever the source of a song, it is "Boomerized" – recast in distinctive arrangements that feature outstanding three and four part harmonies. The four voices in the band differ greatly in range and color; combined, they create a unique and resonant blend that defines the Boomers' sound. This harmonic blend is coupled to impressive instrumental work on guitars, Dobro, bodhran, and kazoo, or sometimes— "Look Ma, no hands"— uncoupled as their voices fly freely through *a capella* selections.

Betty, Jean, Paul, and Steve have been singing together for more than twenty years not to become folk stars—they all enjoy satisfying careers in teaching—but, as *Sing Out!* noted, for the love of making good music. Since 1990 they have often performed in the highly regarded Phil Ochs Song Night concerts produced by Sonny Ochs in rooms ranging from New York City's Village Gate and the Towne Crier in upstate Pawling to the Nameless Coffeehouse in Cambridge, Mass. The group is regularly booked along with the likes of the Chieftains, Paul Brady, and Dolores Keane to perform during Clifden Community Arts Week in County Galway, Ireland. During their most recent Clifden visit (#8), the Boomers gave fifteen performances in five days in September, 2008 ... not counting the late night sessions.

The Boomers' version of Jean's song "Back Bay" was included—along with selections by Pete Seeger, Tom Paxton, and others—on the 2005 recording *Songs for the Earth*, released in tribute to Rachel Carson by Musicians United to Sustain the Environment. In recent Hudson Valley concerts, Seeger has been performing his rendition of another of Jean's songs, "Down By the River."

In June 2009 the group released its fourth CD, "Where the Heron Waits," a collection of river songs marking the Boomer's long involvement with Hudson River education and advocacy.

For more information about Betty and the Baby Boomers, contact Jean Valla McAvoy at (845)266-5253, email jvmcavoy@msn.com, or Steve Stanne at (845)255-4983, email stannelee@aol.com, or visit www.bettyandthebabyboomers.com .