

TRAVELLER'S CHOICE

Lilly Drumeva picks her favourite sounds for the long road ahead...

SINCE I STARTED PLAYING BLUEGRASS MUSIC IN 1996 and formed Lilly Of the West a year later, I have been buying my favourite bluegrass albums and lived in my own fanciful bluegrass world far away from Kentucky in Bulgaria, Eastern Europe. I never dreamed that, in less than three years, our band would not only play and tour all over Europe, but would also be selected to represent Europe at the International Bluegrass Music Association's Awards and Fan Fest in Louisville, Kentucky.

I have known about the International Bluegrass Music Association and their annual awards for a long time, but it was like a dream come true, not only to be invited to perform at the biggest event in Bluegrass music and meet so many of my heroes, but also to be asked to present some of the Awards. My stomach was churning and I was very nervous, as the awards were being shown on TV and also broadcast on hundreds of bluegrass radio stations across America.

I have always loved nice fiddle tunes and I think it's a pity that we don't have a fiddle player in our band. Before we went to the IBMA Convention, one of my favourite albums was *Fiddle Patch* by Bobby Hicks. It makes you shiver when you listen to Bobby's beautiful waltzes. There is something sad but very beautiful in his tunes. I got to meet Bobby in Louisville, and he was a very nice person. It was a great pleasure when I was invited to present the award for Instrumental Album Of the Year, and it made my day when *Fiddle Patch* was chosen. I was so happy for Bobby and all the great musicians featured on it.

Since we formed Lilly Of The West we have always looked for opportunities to play abroad in order to learn about other bands and compare our musical skills. We have received invitations to play across Europe in Switzerland, Austria, Germany, France, Holland, Belgium, Scotland, Ireland, Poland and the Czech Republic, but travelling costs do not always allow us to accept these invitations. Bulgaria is a long way from these other European countries. We cannot always afford to fly and driving through Serbia has become extremely dangerous.

When we are driving long distances we always have music playing in the car. I love the music of The Rankins. It was only

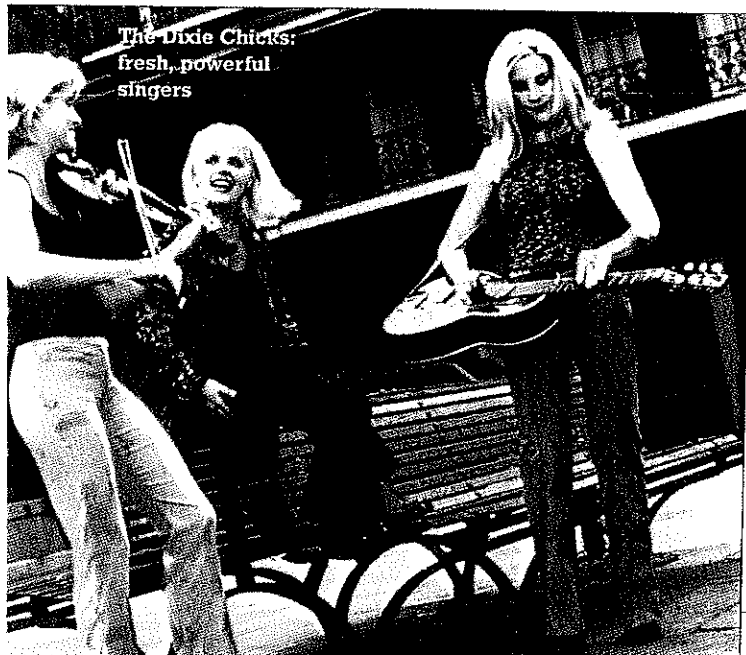


Lilly Drumeva on a recent trip to Nashville

recently that I managed to buy *Uprooted*, and I have been listening to it every day. I like the driving rhythm of *Moving On* with the different, yet powerful voices of Heather, Raylene, Cookie and Jimmy. The Gaelic instrumentals fill me with energy and inspiration. I also love Cookie's *One Day I'll Walk and Farewell To Lochaber*. She is my favourite singer and has long influenced my music. I think she is a lot better than many of the more famous country and folk singers. I could say the same about Jimmy – his rough and powerful voice always puts me on a high.

Their *Endless Seasons* is another great album and my particular favourite. The boys in the band also like this one a lot. We do a different version of their *Blue Eyed Suzie* on our *Live In Holland* album. We like to sing in the car and a popular choice is *You Feel The Same Way To*. If we had enough room, we would dance inside the car – it can get a little rowdy at times!

Another favourite of the boys is *Listen To Your Heart* by Wild Rose. When we play it on the road, they go crazy about the electric guitar and banjo solos. There is an infectious, uptempo beat that makes you want to press the accelerator a bit harder. It is such a pity that this band no longer exists. The songs are great with strong instrumental skills. You can hardly believe that they are all women playing; driving, rocking and powerful. Pam Gadd is the best. She is my hero. I met her at the IBMA Convention.



The Dixie Chicks: fresh, powerful singers

We had a lot of fun there, and I enjoyed her performance with her new bluegrass band.

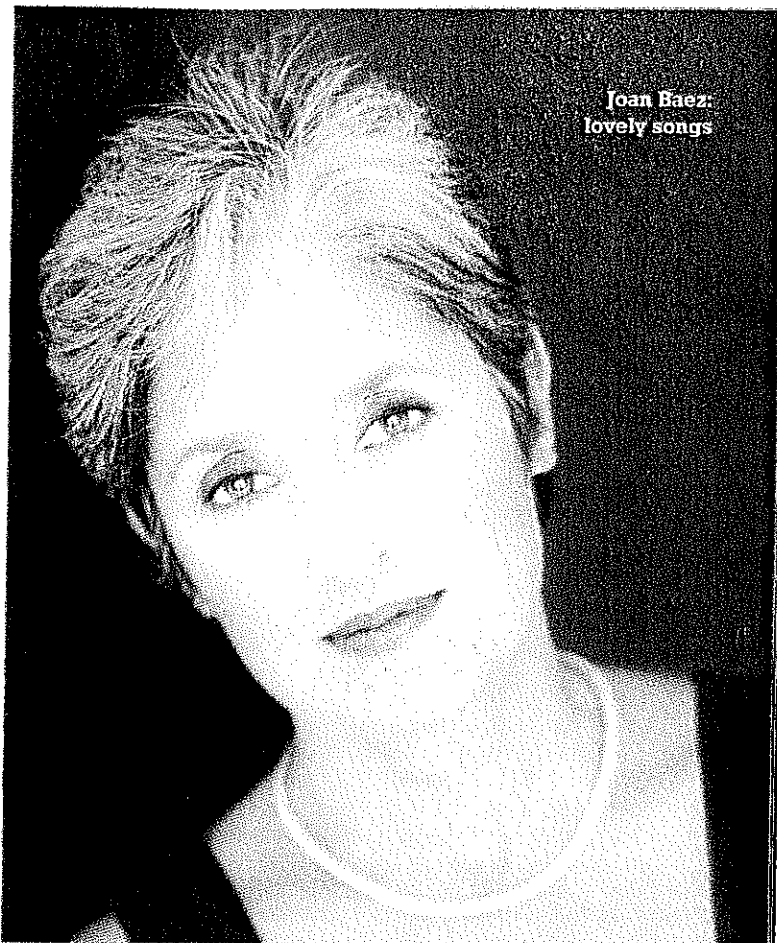
When we were driving around Nashville, every radio station was playing *Wide Open Spaces*, and we were all wondering who this fresh, powerful singer was. The whole feel of the song makes me happy and carefree... the whole world is in your hands. We soon discovered it was The Dixie Chicks and I bought the album. It is little wonder that they have had so much success. It is a fantastic record.

Quite different to The Dixie Chicks is Joan Baez's *Gone From Danger*. This has lovely songs, superb production and recording quality with brilliant sounds. Her interpretation of *I Am No Mermaid* is great. I have been trying to buy the original by Sinead Lohan, but could not find it in Bulgaria. I also like *Reunion Hill*; very sad and touching.

Lucinda Williams's *Car Wheels On A Gravel Road* also has something about it that is very moving. Her relaxed and expressive singing, the quality of the songs, everything is just so right. My favourite is *Drunken Angel*. It is ideal to listen to in the car. Much of the album reminds me of old films. Listening to some of the songs I feel like crying because they sound so realistic, and correspond to the moods in which I find myself from time to time.

I like all Lyle Lovett records, but *The Road To Ensenada* is good for the road because it has some great western swing tunes like *I'm Not From Texas* and Cajun tunes like *One Eyes Fiona*. They are all very lively and just make you feel good. I prefer Lyle's voice to all the soft and polished country singers. I met Claire Lynch in Louisville and enrolled for her songwriting seminar. It was interesting to learn about her work and she gave me some excellent advice. *Silver And Gold* is one of her very best albums. A good, interesting record featuring the cream of the crop of bluegrass musicians and lovely singing. I think the first song, *If Wishes Were Horses*, is a real stunner. We are thinking of learning it for the next tour.

I love Irish music, maybe even more than bluegrass and



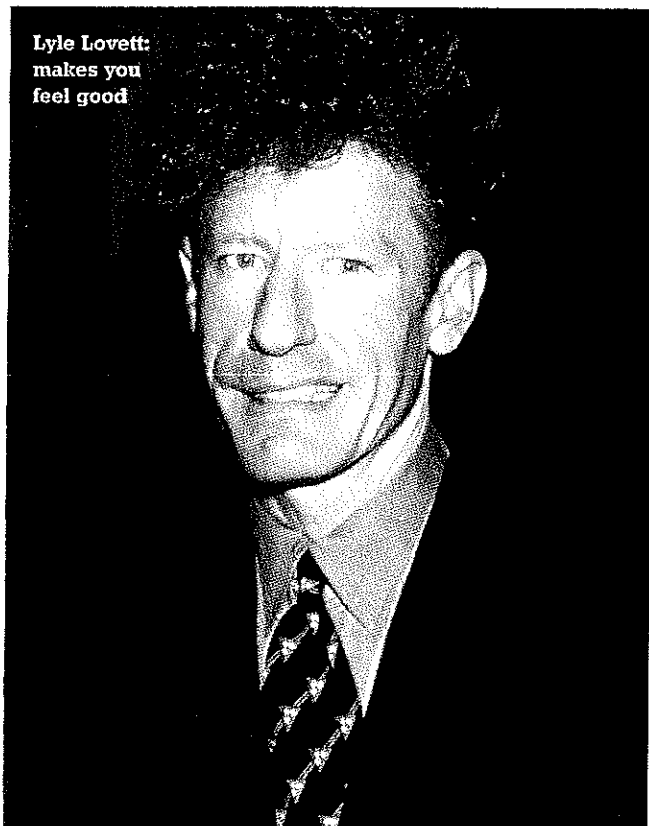
Joan Baez:
lovely songs

country or any other folk music. We play a lot of Irish tunes when performing in Bulgaria because of the growing popularity of Irish music. The Irish community organise a lot of parties and now *Lord Of the Dance* has become very well known among the Bulgarian people. Maura O'Connell's *Wandering Home*, produced by Jerry Douglas, is a good example of combining the best of the Irish and American musical heritage. I like all the songs, each one is very special and Maura sings marvellously.

We visited Bill VornDick, the well-known producer, when we were in Nashville. He has offered to produce our next album in Nashville this summer. We had dinner at his house and he talked for hours about sound, balancing instruments and achieving a really good sound in the studio. Now that I am more familiar with the recording process, I tend to listen with a slightly more professional ear, and the sound of Maura's album is quite superb. ♦

LILLY DRUMÉVA'S PICKS FOR THE TRIP

1. BOBBY HICKS – Fiddle Patch
2. THE RANKINS – Uprooted
3. THE RANKINS – Endless Seasons
4. WILD ROSE – Listen To Your Heart
5. DIXIE CHICKS – Wide Open Spaces
6. JOAN BAEZ – Gone From Danger
7. LUCINDA WILLIAMS – Car Wheels On A Gravel Road
8. LYLE LOVETT – The Road To Ensenada
9. CLAIRE LYNCH – Silver And Gold
10. MAURA O'CONNELL – Wandering Home



Lyle Lovett:
makes you
feel good