

ETCETERA

REVIEW

Folk star still singing after all these years

LIZ THOMSON drops into a gig at Crouch End's Kalamazoo Club to see song collector and folk legend Martin Carthy who inspired Dylan and Simon

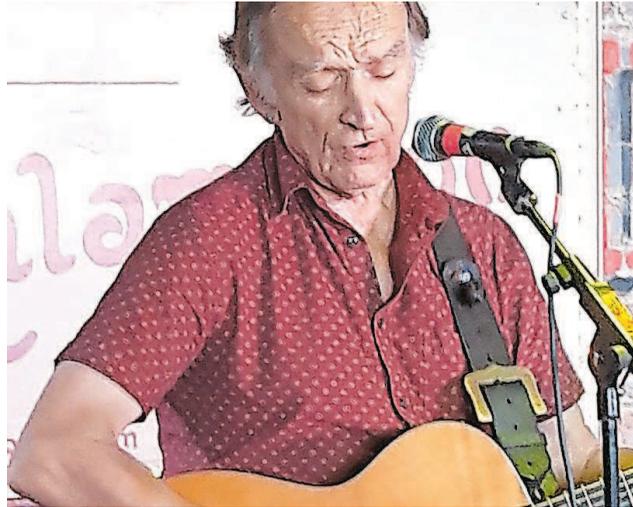
The US has the Seeger family. Britain has Waterson:Carthy. The union of Martin Carthy and Norma Waterson has given the world both great folk music and a great folk musician. Eliza Carthy, the singer-songwriter, fiddler and guitarist. Separately and together, the two generations continue to make extraordinary music, keeping the tradition alive.

Now 75, Carthy is as active as ever and earlier this month he was back at the Kalamazoo Klub at the Kings Head in Crouch End, not far from where he grew up, playing a remarkable solo set that featured songs from all corners of these British Isles: songs of work and war and love, of fair maids bedded but not wedded by duplicitous lords and masters; songs that have been passed down and preserved by those, like Carthy, who listened and learned and recorded this living history for future generations.

This is the man who inspired the likes of Bob Dylan and Paul Simon; who has played with such bands as Steeleye Span, Fairport Convention, the Albion Band and, of course, the Watersons, and, for many years, in partnership with Dave Swarbrick. Dylan, plucked by Carthy from the audience at Fitzrovia's King and Queen folk club on his first visit to Britain in 1962, has long acknowledged his debt to the Englishman but it took Simon many years to credit Carthy with the arrangement of "Scarborough Fair" he purloined for Simon and Garfunkel's debut album.

It was notable that Carthy dropped not one star name last week, but he did pay tribute to each of the singers and collectors who passed down the songs, beginning with Marina Russell, a key figure in Dorset folk music, a charwoman, whose "The Bedmaking" provided his opening number.

The evening included songs from



■ Martin Carthy who grew up in Hampstead back on his old stomping ground

locales as disparate as Sussex and Shetland, songs that chronicled the history of these islands as vividly as any period drama, and doubtless more accurately: "Sir Patrick Spens", which Carthy described as "one of the great Scottish ballads", telling of the disastrous attempt to

bring Margaret, Maid of Norway to Scotland to claim the throne in the late 13th century; "The Blind Harper", one of the celebrated English and Scottish Popular Ballads catalogued by Harvard Shakespeare professor Francis James Child in the late 19th

century; and "The Devil and the Feathery Wife", a folk tale collected and set to music by A L "Bert" Lloyd. And there was Carthy's own poignant "Company Policy", "written in a rage" as Margaret Thatcher gloated over victory in the South Atlantic and prompted by the sight of a mother weeping as she watched the victory parade on the multiple screens in a TV rental store: "There were twenty screens in the showroom window/Victors marching large and small/As they wheeled on by I heard her sigh/Oh, and oh for my darling boy".

The instrumentals had no less a tale to tell: "The Heroines of San Valery", written by a member of the 51st Highland Division that was sent to create a diversion from Dunkirk and so was captured as a PoW, and "The Downfall of Paris", its origins in the Napoleonic Wars – both sides, apparently marched to it. The encore was a version of The Harry Lyme Theme, from The Third Man.

One man and his guitar: a troubadour carrying on the great tradition. Long may he play on.

Liz Thomson is co-founder of the charity Square Roots, which celebrates Anglo-American folk music heritage.



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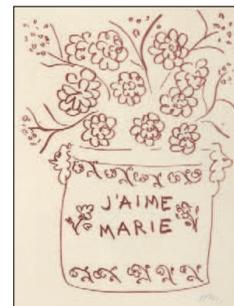
HENRI MATISSE

ORIGINAL PRINTS

FROM 17 SEPTEMBER



Le Tobogan, lithograph from Jazz & Cirque



Untitled, lithograph initialed by artist from Florilèges des Amours de Ronsard



Untitled, collotype, signed in plate from Dessins

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