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CD Review

Ian Bell

Shallow Water (Free Range Recordings, 2006)

Born and raised not far from Lake Erie's northern shore, neo-traditionalist singer-songwriter, musicologist guitarist and accordionist Ian Bell confesses in the liner notes to this wonderful collection of folksy originals that he has been fascinated for most of his life with the stories, grown taller and longer with age, of the once robust maritime culture of Port Dover, where, for the past few years, he has worked as curator of the town's Harbour Museum. Recorded in just two sessions, with two sets of musicians — most of them are familiar names on the Canadian folk roster: pianist Tom Leighton, bassists David Woodhead and Denis Rondeau, mandolin player and fiddler Geoff Somers and drummer Christopher Schiller — *Shallow Water* is at once a vivid recreation of facets of that lost life and an affectionate journey through Port Dover's musical past, embracing lyrical balladry, old-time dance-hall melodies and tavern tales. Distinguished by the quality of his melodies and his strong, engaging voice, Bell's new solo recording is testimony to the potency of Canadian roots music.