

[Page 22 - Rita MacNeil of Big Pond](#)ISSUE : [Issue 27](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1980/12/1

Rita MacNeil of Big Pond (Rita, as I go along I realize you're not just sitting around writing songs. I mean, the songs often deal with real people. Re- nee of the song was your mother.) Right. Renee was her name. (And now, OLD MAN--is it a new song?--I understand it's for your father. The one that begins: "It must be something to rise at the dawn,...") I wrote that last year. That's relatively new, I don't write that often so it's new to me. Just when something really moves me. I get really strong feelings about it. My father, he was, and still is, a car? penter. Retired now. And the story behind the song is that he spent his whole life building or fixing houses for other people, and at one point his bungalow burnt down-- and he was living at my sister's place at the time while he was trying to get it to? gether to build another one. And I just found it so ironic that he would drive through Big Pond early in the morning, and probably every house along the way he had driven a n'il into it at one point or an? other- -and it moved me to write the song, thinking how he must feel. With music and writing I just do what I feel, and try to be as sensitive as I pos? sibly can. If I feel something, it just comes out in a song, you know--and I have written a couple about people I never sang to anyone because I knew these people would be really embarrassed and really hurt, so I wouldn't. It's hard, too, be? cause a lot of people, they're very closed and are very sensitive about things, where I find most of my songs are emotional and I probably deal with a lot of things oth? ers maybe wouldn't like to touch. Like, some people might find me a bit wingy be? cause I do feel so much, and because what I feel inside is not necessarily what they feel. I often can imagine how one would feel. And I often think, Gee, wouldn't it be good if these things weren't so real- It wouldn't be so hard to deal with. (But there was a particular time when you were singing, people were really grateful to have you articulate some of the things that were happening in your life--isn't that true?) Yes, When I first started out I was writing a lot of songs for the wom? en's movement, and the response to that was really very, very,... Well, I've changed a lot of my ideas since then--you see, I hate preaching at people, for one thing, I think, you know, we're just all so different. But it was really my life experiences I was singing about. And I would get the feedback from other women-- "Well, gee, that happened to me"--and to me, and to me and to me--so the need for it was there. And the feedback is the thing that kept me going. Because you'd get women coming up to you after a show-- "That's how I feel, and I really can't be? lieve that you're saying it"--and they would get this incredible strength. And it took me a long time to realize the feel? ings they were getting from those songs, And they gave- me a lot by telling me how they really felt, because it is good to know someone else can relate to it--and they certainly did. But I would always say, you know, I'm not preaching to anyone, this is how I feel-- and I was very apologetic about wKat I was saying, (Even when you were singing for the women's movement?) Oh, yes, I was al? ways getting told off for apologizing, "If you don't come out on that stage and just sing ahd forget about it and don't worry." But I am that kind of person, you know. I don't like to offend. (It seems to me when you sang a line like: "It was more than a feeling, it



was more than in my mind"--it seems to me there must have been a tremendous number of women who heard that and were really glad to hear someone say, "Hey, you're not crazy.") Oh yes, there were, and it kept me going and it helped me write other things. I was really into the thick of it, and that's what I was really feeling--but I worked through all those feelings. They're still strong, but I put them in another place in my mind and deal with them a lot better. And I've been able to write different types of songs--and I think that's great, because I often thought, I'm going to be writing this sort of song--you know, a bit of anger there, for sure--I don't want to be writing this forever. But it didn't happen. So they gave me the courage to work through it, and I think that's great. CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE (22)