

Tom Lewis — *Sea Shanties both modern and traditional*  
By Harry {Doc Babad — eTalk Editor

If you like songs and stories of the sea, new and old, you'll certainly enjoy Tom's singing, his stories and his recordings.

Canadian singer/songwriter, currently residing in Salmo, British Columbia. (Born circa 1950), Belfast, Northern Ireland). Tom grew up in England. Tom is a 25-year veteran of Her Majesty's Royal Navy, although now he's comfortably located on dry land in **British Columbia**, Canada. His songs cover a wide range of nautical topics, from life on board HM ships, through the loneliness and lure of the sea, to the very funny tale of a randy canine ship's mascot (Bunts).

Tom Lewis knows the sea - from the bottom up! As a 24-year veteran of the British Submarine Service, he brings a wealth of experience and a



rare authenticity to the realm of nautical song. His songs are known and sung wherever great choruses ring out. With a powerful delivery anchored firmly in his native Celtic style, Tom's repertoire; from traditional shanties to songs fashioned from his own seafaring background; recruits his audience for a voyage by turns reflective, dramatic and humorous. In a word - entertaining! ••Born in Belfast, Northern Island, his Irish heritage is obvious in his clear, strong voice, evoking the quiet sorrow of a fisherman lost to the sea just as honestly as it powers out a shanty "to be heard from the gales". Tom accompanies himself on button accordion and ukulele - but it's his voice - and salty stories - that will bring you back to hear him again and again.

Northern Ireland born Tom Lewis, is an artist I have long enjoyed. His 24 years in the same branch of the military as the great Cyril Tawney - the British Submarine Service - provides him with that vitally authentic stance with which to tackle nautical song.

Thus it was that Tom was the inaugural winner of the first Stan Hugill International Shanty Trophy in 2000 in Douarnenez in France .

Tom Lewis developed his interest in [sea shanties](#) while he was serving in the Navy, Most of his songs are either sea shanties or have a nautical theme.

Lewis' first solo album, issued in 1987, was *Surfacing* and included two early favorites among his recordings, "The Last Shanty" and "Marching Inland." Those two songs later appeared on the compilation CD, *A Taste of the Maritimes* (1992), the former tune under the title "A Sailor Ain't a Sailor." In 1988 he started performing with [William Pint and Felicia Dale](#) and he continues to tour with them from time to time. His albums have been favorably reviewed in *Dirty Linen* magazine, *Living Tradition* magazine and *Sing Out!* magazine.

His American albums include: *360° All Points of the Compass, Poles Apart,*

*Mixed Cargo, Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor, Singer!, Sea-Dog, See Dog! And Surfacing.*

After the release of Tom's *360° All Points of the Compass Sing Out* (Summer 2004), in part noted

"Tom Lewis gets around. He's a former British Royal Navy submariner who now calls western Canada homeport and he won a sea chanty-singing trophy in France. While sea chanties are suddenly popular with many artists recording CDs, Lewis sets sail on a different course with this cruise. The 17 songs on the album (including a quasi-hidden track) mostly involve water, ranging from traditional to original to Lyle Lovett to an epic Rudyard Kipling poem set to music by Peter Bellamy. Thus, in the well over an hour of music on this disc, you won't grow tired of hearing one heave away maties after another."

"If you're looking for a seafaring CD that breaks from the same old, same old, set sail with Tom Lewis."

A review Tom Lewis' *Poles Apart* (Polish title - *On, My, Ocean*) added to my further understanding of Tom music. (Dirty Linen Magazine Feb/Mar 2003)

"Poland isn't exactly known as a nation of deep-water sailors, but that doesn't mean that they can't sing traditional sea chanteys there. On this unique and invigorating CD, Canadian-based singer and onetime submariner Tom Lewis joins up with a crew of seven Polish chanteymen, whom he met while performing in Europe, to have fun with a set of rousing and often bilingual arrangements of nautical songs from British and North American sources.

Imagine a classic Stan Rogers song sung in Polish translation by a hearty male chorus. That's how this disc begins. The song is "Northwest Passage", the language switches to English after a couple of verses, and that sums up the concept and spirit of this disc. Most of the rest of the material is traditional, and while many of the songs will be familiar to fans of sea music, you probably haven't heard them like this before. Lewis sings the English lead vocals, the equally strong-voiced Grzegorz Majewski handles the Polish leads, and everybody of course joins in on the vigorous refrains. **It's impossible not to sing along.** Lewis and company have made a great album of sea music. In the process, they also remind us of the cross-cultural appeal of a good song. —Tom Nelligan (Waltham, MA)

