

MAVERICK MAGAZINE

Laura Bethell

A folk singer with a soulful, expressive voice, Phyllis has written all the featured songs and she has drawn from personal experiences as well as from people she has met and places she has been.

The opening track, My Fishing Hole is a nostalgic backward glance to days of childhood when life was so much less complicated than it is today, a secret place of tranquility she recaptures so well. She manages to convey a feeling of yearning as she heads back to a place she loves in My Northern Town, as she does once again on the Melodic Encinitas while painting a vivid picture of Main Street, wholly convincing as, with the eye of a painter, she manages to take in every small detail of a typical street in just about any town, any where. A chance meeting with an elderly lady who asks for her assistance in unloading her shopping trolley is the subject of The Manicure. Far from complaining about her gnarled, and less than pretty hands, this lady holds them up as a testimony to a lifetime's toil and is proud of the many things they have turned themselves to during her long journey through a hard life. Alberta Rose recounts the life cycle of a pretty wild flower, which unattended, blooms every spring, oblivious of the perceived hardships which us mortals encounter from one year to the next. There are convincing songs of small fishing ports, busy harbours and the men who make their living from the sea, made manifest in delicately crafted songs like Wreck of The Dictator and Jewels on the Crown of Saint John. Phyllis captures the shock of receiving news of an unexpected tragedy, when there are no words express the way one feels in Lost for Words, which anyone who has had such news broken to them will well understand. It is easy to condemn someone who has struggled to cope with marriage, children, and countless other hardships all endured in silence for a long time and therefore not understood by others, who overcome by depression suddenly takes the decision to leave everything behind them and attempt to make anew start from the place they have known for years. This is the story of Mary Jo, and despite the level of the condemnation she suffers from those who do not appreciate her plight, she does at least find someone like Phyllis Sinclair on her side. Demonstrating her ability to cover a range of subjects, Phyllis relates the story of a World War II veteran who describes the harrowing time in which he was involved in The Liberation of Holland in Four Days in Groningen. Phyllis has long been a champion of an aboriginal tribe in Canada who, for centuries had lived in peaceful, nomadic existence, fishing and hunting the Caribou as they wandered from place to place. The Federal Government supposedly became alarmed at the rapid decline in the number of Caribou and so, in 1957, they forced a large group of Sayisi Dene to move to the outskirts of Churchill, Manitoba in order to live a more settled existence. For a long while these unfortunates had to live in tents and makeshift shelters until the government eventually set up a proper housing project for them, but it was reported that almost a third of the people, unable to cope with this new way of life, and desperately unhappy died. Phyllis sings about this shameful period in the moving Sayisi Song.

Wholly acoustic, FATHOMLESS TALES FROM LEVIATHAN'S HOLE, is an admirable collection of songs sung by a lady of conviction.