

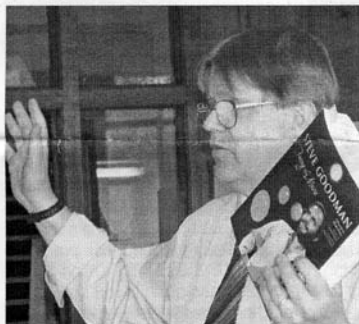
## "Ridin' on the City of New Orleans, Illinois Central, Monday morning rail..."

There isn't a folk music fan alive that wouldn't recognize the opening lines to "City of New Orleans," written by Steve Goodman, and made famous by Arlo Guthrie in 1972. While Steve Goodman wrote about 100 songs, he is most widely known for this one, which he lived to see popularized in this country before dying at age 36. But there is much more to the Goodman story than "City of New Orleans," as recounted in the newly released, weighty (4 lbs!) biography, *Steve Goodman, Facing the Music*, by Clay Eals. More information about Clay, the book and how to purchase is available at [www.clayeals.com](http://www.clayeals.com).

## Steve Goodman, Facing the Music

A Quarter Notes Interview with Goodman Biographer, Clay Eals - By Vicki Ingle

The week-end of May 18, the popular man-about-town (at least in Chicago-area folk communities) had to be Clay Eals, author of *Steve Goodman, Facing the Music*. In the course of his visit to Chicago, Clay talked to the media about his book and about Steve Goodman. He appeared on television (*Chicago Tonight*) and several radio shows including ones with Rick Hogan, Steve Cochran, and Rich Warren. He also participated in a panel discussion at Old Town School of Folk Music, and lead audience discussions as part of book signings throughout the city and suburbs. *Facing the Music* is a comprehensive biography of Steve Goodman and also, as turns out, a chronicle of the vibrant Chicago folk scene in the late 1960's and 70's.



So, why would someone spend the better part of a decade interviewing over 1,000 people to write an 800 page book about someone who isn't a household name? The primary answer to this question is that since Clay first saw Steve Goodman perform, he was simply taken with the guy. Clay said he thought Steve deserved a biography since he was the ultimate entertainer, putting into one package the best in singing, songwriting and playing. Simply said - Steve had it all. Besides, Clay said, "Who wants to write the 50th Elvis book?"

*Facing the Music* discusses the life of Steve Goodman in a comprehensive fashion. More than 2,000 people con-

tributed to the telling of Steve's story; they were thoughtfully acknowledged and carefully indexed in the book. Clay told me that the people he spoke with were insightful and it seemed they felt a visceral connection to Steve. Through these people's eyes, you experience Steve's warmth, humor, spontaneity, generosity and musical genius.

Steve Goodman was at the hub of folk music scene. Clay said that if you look up the word "gregarious" in the dictionary, you would see Steve's name. Through the book, you not only come to know Steve Goodman, but you come to know his friends, heavy weights in the music biz: Michael Peter Smith, John Prine, Kris Kristofferson, Jimmy Buffet, Tom Dundee and countless others. The book creates a sort of music reunion and you can be there, even if you weren't the first time around. And, you literally see it through the myriad of pictures throughout the book. In other words, *Facing the Music* goes a long way to chronicle the Chicago folk scene during its heyday as the "Greenwich Village of the '70's."

Clay told me that perhaps the broadest appeal to the book may be that it tells the story of how to live well, even with death on your shoulders. Steve was diagnosed with leukemia at age 20, but he defied the odds at that time and survived for another 16 years. That Steve had leukemia was an "open secret" among those he was closest to but, at Steve's request, the public did not know he was sick. He did not want to be known for his illness.

The music world was impacted by Steve's passing, as attested to by the 18-track CD of tribute songs that accompanies the book. Singer/songwriters appearing on the CD include Chris Farrell and Harry Waller.

*Steve Goodman, Facing the Music*, is a physically beautiful book written about an exceptional and beautiful person. Clay said that after a conversation with Steve you felt like a better person just for having talked with him. Funny, I felt the same way about Clay.