

# SUSAN CROWE



## PRESS KIT

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# SUSAN CROWE

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## BIOGRAPHY

Often described as a “writer’s writer”, Susan Crowe has emerged as one of Canada’s most respected singer-songwriters in the folk genre, a label that barely scratches the surface of her compelling and polished approach to music. At once complex, challenging and accessible, Susan’s intelligent and moving songs have captivated audiences and reviewers from coast to coast, continent to continent. She

possesses, in the words of Britain’s *Folk Roots* magazine, “that rare ability of crafting a lyric that bears scrutiny on its own terms.”

That rare ability has earned her two Juno nominations, nominations from both the West Coast and East Coast Music Awards, repeat performances at all of Canada’s major folk festivals, and an invitation to the prestigious Kerrville songwriters festival in 2000. Her finely crafted songs have earned her places on several compilations, including the *Kerrville 2000* CD. She has attracted an ever-growing legion of



followers who appreciate an artist who steps well beyond folk clichés and predictable melodies.

In 1994, after being away from music for more than a decade, Susan began to write again. That led to her first album, *This Far From Home*, which was chosen by Vancouver’s *Georgia Straight* as one of the top albums of the year. It was subsequently nominated for a Juno award in the Roots/Traditional category.

Now established as a recording artist of note, Susan returned to the festival circuit and recorded a second album in 1996, *The Door to the River*, receiving more high praise from critics. *Dirty Linen* magazine described the two albums as “lyrically sparse but telling, conveying a deep sense of emotion, very subtly but very powerfully...both are rewarding works, both strangely compelling in ways that will move you.”

Susan’s growing reputation as a recording and performing artist was further enhanced in 1999 with the release of her third album,

continued...

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## biography continued...

*A Pilgrim's Mirror*, which received more plaudits from the critics and a West Coast Music Award nomination.

Susan has twice toured the Czech Republic (2001, 2003) and spent last fall touring the mid-Western United States. In 2003 Susan Crowe, Cindy Church and Laura Smith, together known as **brava**, delivered a series of sold out concerts throughout Eastern Canada, culminating in last summer's main-stage performance at the internationally renowned Stan Rogers Folk Festival.

Susan's work has been recorded by John Reischman and the Jaybirds, St. John's choir Cantus Vocum, Quartette and most recently by the internationally acclaimed Aeolian Singers, for their *A Woman's Voice* CD. Susan also makes a guest appearance on this recording of the Aeolian's performance of her original composition 'When the Day is Over'.

In October 2003, Susan Crowe released her fourth CD titled *Book of Days* (Corvus/Festival). Produced by Danny Greenspoon at Toronto's Canterbury Sound studios, *Book of Days* features eleven new Susan Crowe originals, including a co-write with Cindy Church and another with John Reischman, both of whom appear on the record. *Book of Days* has met with rave reviews across Canada and has garnered her nominations from the East Coast Music

Awards and the 2004 Juno Awards, for Best Roots/Traditional Solo Recording.

In addition to recording and touring, Susan Crowe has been a resource leader for the SAC Power Songshop, a variety of other songwriting and guitar workshops throughout Canada, and hosted the Songwriters' Circle at the 2004 East Coast Music Awards and Conference, Feb.12-15 in St. John's, Newfoundland. In March 2004 Susan Crowe again joined forces with Cindy Church and Laura Smith, touring as **brava** through central and western Canada.

The *Georgia Straight* described Susan's work as offering "a sense that the singer has tapped into the collective unconscious in a way that what she is singing about is not only true for her but true for all of us."

Adds the *Vancouver Sun*: "With one of the most distinctive voices in Canada today, she is destined to become one of our lasting folk heroines."

Susan was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia, lived for many years in Toronto and Vancouver, respectively, and once again lives in Halifax.



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## SELECTED APPEARANCES

**Kerrville Folk Festival**  
Kerrville, Texas

**Winnipeg Folk Festival**  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

**Stan Rogers Folk Festival**  
(solo 2001, with brava 2003)  
Canso, Nova Scotia

**Vancouver Folk Music Festival**  
Vancouver, BC

**Czech Republic Summer Tour**  
(2002 & 2003)

**Chan Centre for the Performing Arts**  
Vancouver, BC

**National Arts Centre, 4th Stage**  
(with brava 2003 & 2004)  
Ottawa, Ontario

**2003 International Women's Day Concert**  
**Pier 21 (Special Guest with Aeolian Singers)**  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

**du Maurier Theatre (with brava)**  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

**2004 East Coast Music Awards,**  
**Host, Songwriters Circle**  
St. John's, Newfoundland

**Calgary Folk Music Festival**  
Calgary, Alberta

**Edmonton folk Music Festival**  
Edmonton, Alberta

**Lunenburg Folk Harbour Festival**  
Lunenburg, Nova Scotia

**Home County Folk Festival**  
London, Ontario

**Filberg Festival**  
Comox, B.C.

**Black Sheep Inn**  
Wakefield, Quebec

**Centennial Theatre**  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

**Old Settlers Inn**  
Moundridge, Kansas

**Folk Under The Clock**  
Peterborough, Ontario

**Margaret Greenham Theatre**  
Banff, Alberta

**St. Albert Theatre**  
St. Albert, Alberta

**Great Canadian Theatre Company**  
Ottawa, Ontario

**Beneath the Arch**  
Turner Valley, Alberta

**The Yellow Door**  
Montreal, Quebec

**West End Cultural Centre**  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

**Frostbite Music Festival**  
Whitehorse, Yukon

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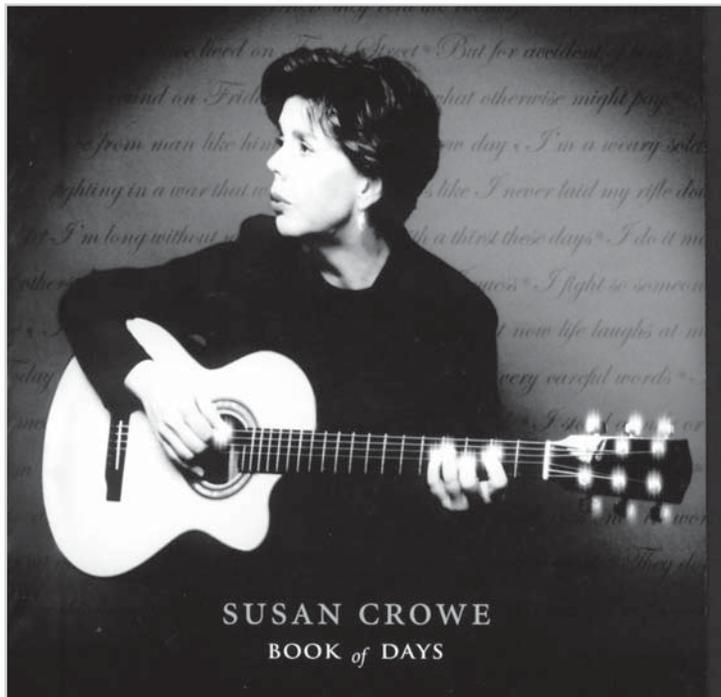
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## DISCOGRAPHY

### latest release



### Book of Days Juno Award nominee

#### TRACK LISTING

Dreamless  
Fell Back Up  
Whippoorwill  
Do You Think On Me Still Kindly  
Love's Pure Gold  
Autumn Leaves Are Blue  
She Said No  
High Street  
If I'm Spared  
Immigrant's Lament  
Same Old Moon

Corvus Records CR011  
Released in 2003

Released in October 2003, **Book of Days** (Corvus Records) is Susan Crowe's fourth CD. Produced by Danny Greenspoon at Toronto's Canterbury Sound studios, **Book of Days** features eleven new Susan Crowe originals, including a co-write with Cindy Church and another with John Reischman, both of whom appear on the record. The CD has met with rave reviews across Canada, was the focus of a recent region-wide *CBC Atlantic Airwaves* radio broadcast and has garnered nominations from the East Coast Music Awards and the 2004 Juno Awards, for Best Roots / Traditional Solo Recording.

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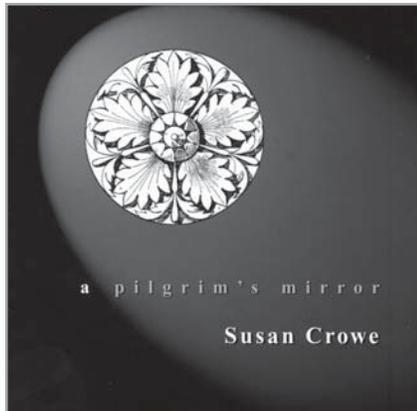
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discography continued...



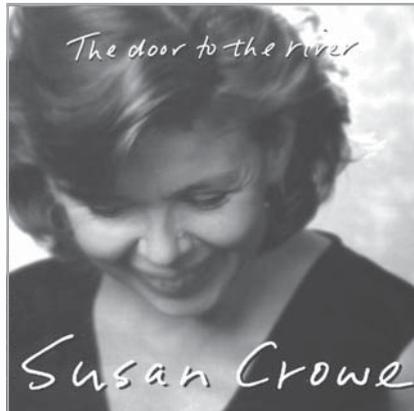
## A Pilgrim's Mirror

West Coast Music  
Award nominee

Released in 1999  
Corvus Records, CR005

### TRACK LISTING

Our Love's Return  
The First Lean Night In June  
Amalia  
Remembering Me  
Do You Linger  
I Was Handsome, I Was Young  
The Other Side  
Chained  
When The Day Is Over  
You Might Care To Know

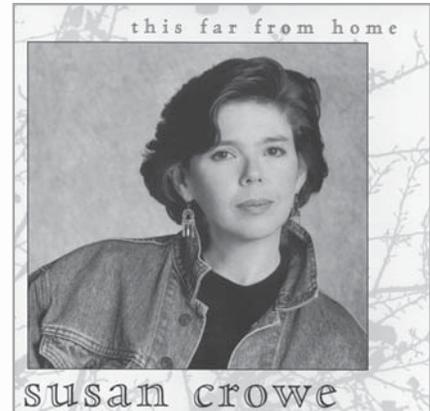


## The Door To The River

Released in 1996  
Corvus Records, CR003

### TRACK LISTING

Your One And Only Life  
Still, You Do Not Come  
The Door to the River  
I'm Not There  
In Your Loveliness  
Blue Dress  
I Stole Into A Garden  
If Without Thee I Must Dwell  
Come With Me  
Where Our Currents Cross



## This Far From Home

Juno Award nominee

Released in 1994  
Corvus Records, RR001

### TRACK LISTING

The Step Of A Long Lost Love  
Faithless  
On Your Way To Mars  
As I Come, As I Go  
I Know  
The Colour Of The Sky  
My Mother's Girl  
Let Me Stay  
This Far From Home  
They Used To Call This Sin

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## CRITICAL PRAISE

### cd reviews

#### *Book of Days*

**Robert Reid, Kitchener-Waterloo Record, 2003**

Susan Crowe's gorgeously autumnal *Book of Days*, the third release on her own Corvus Records label, is my choice for best Canadian folk album of the year. It's that good in all respects. The songwriting is mature, intelligent and deeply felt. Every melody sticks like maple syrup on a hot waffle and the harmony arrangements by Gwen Swick, who sings harmony with Cindy Church and Liz Soderberg, are spine-tlingling. Crowe's voice has never been richer or more resonant.

**Marke Andrews, Vancouver Sun, 2004**

Singer/songwriter Susan Crowe can chill you with her lyrics. In the opening track, 'Dreamless', she speaks for anyone who has experienced loneliness and separation ("I wait for the frost to leave my window / I wait for your step upon the stair") her words accompanied by John Reischman's mandolin and Kevin Breit's electric guitar. She connects winter and emotional loss again on 'Autumn Leaves Are Blue' and makes you feel a sense of loss with 'She Said No' and 'Immigrant's Lament'.



Crowe has firmly established herself as one of the leading mature voices in the Canadian folk landscape.

**Sandy MacDonald, Halifax Daily News, 2004**

Musically, *Book of Days* resonates on the strength of Crowe's clear and tuneful voice, and the mandolin playing of Reischman. The two make 'Love's Pure Gold' a heartfelt expression of joy. 'High Street', with John Sheard's evocative piano, is reminiscent of the songs Joni Mitchell recorded on her classic record, *Blue*.

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## cd reviews continued...

### **Sandy MacDonald, *Halifax Daily News*, 2004**

Mention a Halifax-born singer who departed in frustration to establish a critically acclaimed music career in Vancouver, and most would naturally think of Sarah McLachlan.

Think again; think Susan Crowe, a Juno-nominated singer songwriter who recently released her fourth album *Book Of Days*. The elegant acoustic album showcases Crowe's insightful writing, beautiful singing and impeccable production.

Like many of her songs, Crowe's own story is one of early promise, frustration, parting and finally reconciliation. Crowe was raised in rural Cow Bay, laying along the eastern headlands of the entrance to Halifax Harbour. Growing up in a musical family, Crowe took early to playing guitar and writing songs. Through the late 70s she was a regular in the coffee houses and folk clubs in Halifax.

But by 1980, frustrated with the stagnant music scene here, Crowe uprooted and moved to Toronto for eight years, then moved further west to Vancouver. She abandoned her music career, working instead as a waitress, art gallery assistant, mail carrier and even a beekeeper.

Then in 1994, Crowe was encouraged by a visiting friend to revisit her music, and she found the spark that had long been missing.

She re-embraced her music, and went into a studio in Vancouver to record *This Far from Home*, which garnered a Juno nomination as Best Roots/ Traditional Album of the year.

Crowe released two more critically acclaimed discs in the 90s – *The Door To The River* and *A Pilgrim's Mirror* – both on her own Corvus imprint. Two years ago, Crowe returned to Nova Scotia, established a home in Halifax and has played a handful of shows in metro.

With the release of this substantial new disc, Crowe has firmly established herself as one of the leading mature voices in the Canadian folk landscape. Pegging her music to a narrow definition, though, does it a disservice. Crowe breathes in light jazz, contemporary folk, show tunes, acoustic pop and trad country, then breathes out her own richly distilled sound.

Her voice has a lush worldly authority that convincingly delivers her carefully crafted lyrics. Crowe brought aboard producer Danny Greenspoon (Great Big Sea, Quartette, Jane Bunnett) to pilot the album, and his understated production lets Crowe's songs blossom on the vine.

Crowe opens the disc with the haunting 'Dreamless', a stark tale of loneliness set in a frozen landscape, where "the north wind replies to each breath that I take." Pushed along

continued...

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## cd reviews continued...

by John Reischman's mandolin, the understated guitar of Kevin Breit and the locked in rhythm section of bassist George Koller and drummer Mark Mariash, the tune is hypnotic in its urgency.

Crowe can also deliver the pretty folk melody ('*Fell Back Up*'), the Appalachian influenced '*Whippoorwill*', and the delicate piano /vocal gem, '*Do You Think On Me Still Kindly*', with the McGarrigle sisters-inspired harmonies. (Crowe enlisted Gwen Swick, Cindy Church and Liz Soderberg to sing harmony parts.)

This is subtle intelligent music that draws in the listener with its alluring complexity and keeps you listening for its rainy-afternoon beauty.

**John P. McLaughlin, *Vancouver Province*, 2003**

Following *A Pilgrim's Mirror* from 2000, Crowe left Vancouver behind for her native Nova Scotia but remains one of our nation's vital singer/songwriters no matter where she is. Crowe at her best is like eavesdropping on the internal dialogue of a literate and fundamentally loving witness to this deep vale of friggin' tears. '*Do You Think on Me Still Kindly*' is vintage Crowe, kinda formal and kinda naked, while '*Autumn Leaves Are Blue*', co-written with her pal and harmony singer, Cindy Church, is deliciously bleak.



However, for a real, beautifully crafted gem you can't beat the closing '*Same Old Moon*'.

**Stephen Pedersen, *Halifax Chronicle Herald*, 2003**

There are at least three reasons to give a listen to Susan Crowe. Her voice is uniquely low and soft, she writes appealing melodies which often imply a nostalgia that is not explicit, and her lyrics are three dimensional.

continued...

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## cd reviews continued...

When she talks of *'Love's Pure Gold'* (the fifth track) she goes beyond cliché - the gold is contrasted to the burning, blinding sun. Pure love, she implies, goes deeper than searing passion. Not even the stars, (standing in for starry-eyed lovers) tempt her, she sings. Something personal about love rises like a magnetic field brought about by the opposition of these clichés.

Love songs are usually less complicated than this. They are also more conventional. Love is a unique experience. But often its initially shocking energy is ensnared by the way our pop culture expresses it. Crowe offers a more ambiguous alternative. Not first love, perhaps, but love recollected in tranquillity.

That doesn't mean love remembered without pain. In *'Do You Think on Me Still Kindly'*, Crowe asks, "*Does a fire still glow / Does a light still burn / Have you placed your worries behind you / Do You wait and watch / For your heart's return / Does a gentle stirring remind you*"

Her low voice, and the simple accompaniments, beautifully recorded on *Book of Days*, are at the opposite end of the howling, wailing vocalisms of pop love, tainted as they are by the hard-boiled commercial strategy that exploits soft-porn and tormented vocal chords to sell CDs.

In other words, these are adult love songs and, like adult lives, not all about love either, though many deal with loneliness and love remembered.

The musicians are first rate, the arrangements having evolved naturally in the studio as the musicians listened to Crowe sing.

Guitarists Jason Fowler, Danny Greenspoon and Kevin Breit are supported by jazz bassist George Koller. Mark Mariash plays drums, Dennis Keldy the Hammond organ and accordion, John Reischman mandolin, with background vocals by Gwen Swick, Cindy Church and Liz Soderberg.

A few of the tracks are for piano and voice, with just Crowe and pianist John Sheard. In spite of the large number of players, the arrangements on *Book of Days* are minimalist, more attuned to Crowe's low-key musical approach than to instrumental overkill.

### *A Pilgrim's Mirror*

"This hushed, affecting third album from the west coast singer songwriter quite rightly focuses on her earthy vocals and foursquare songs...three cheers to the Canada Council for justifying its existence by underwriting discs as worthy as this one."

*The Record*

continued...

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cd reviews continued...



kelly clark photography

"Listening to Susan Crowe is like stumbling upon someone's open journal, her songs and singing marked by an intense, unguarded intimacy."

**Montreal Gazette**

"The ten original songs on *A Pilgrim's Mirror* are like a chain of precious stones, each individually beautiful, yet all fitting together flawlessly".

**Rambles**

"Crowe has a powerfully subtle voice and writes concise, traditional songs that sound timeless."

**Exclaim Magazine**

*The Door to the River*

"Crowe's hushed and throaty voice will wash over you, until one day you realize her songs have seeped under your skin. It'll happen as easy as breathing."

**Montreal Gazette**

"Her voice is almost a whisper at times, her lyrics sparse but telling, conveying a deep sense of emotion, very subtly but very powerfully...strangely compelling in ways that will touch you"

**Dirty Linen**

"...she possesses that rare ability of crafting a lyric that bears scrutiny on its own terms."

**Folk Roots**

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## cd reviews continued...

"...a poetic songsmith with an evocative, expressive voice. The 10 original songs she penned for *The Door to the River* ache with loss and longing...Crowe produces a series of deliciously sensual and dreamlike vocals. This is a beautiful recording."

**Joseph Blake, *Victoria Times Colonist***

"Crowe's music doesn't just stand up to repeated listening, it begs for it. There seem to be endless levels to her songs, growing complexities in her lyrics, and music that brings me back like an addict."

**Emma Kivisild, *Kinesis***

"Never one to shy away from the deep end of the thinking pool, Susan Crowe cuts and pastes a seamless landscape of beautiful sounds and spectral images on this long-awaited second album. Eternal love, loss, the transient nature of reality and ever-present sin are just a few of the stops along the way on this tender journey."

**Katherine Monk, *Vancouver Sun,***



## performance reviews

**Neptune Studio Theatre, Halifax, NS 2004  
Stephen Pedersen, *The Chronicle Herald***

Susan Crowe's fans don't just admire her low voice, her striking turns of phrase, and her melodic subtleties. They are also affectionate. It isn't only that they love her. It's that they all, to a woman or a man, think on her kindly.

She has a sense of their feeling though her fear of puffing herself up would make it difficult for her to admit it.

But it's probably what she means when she writes about 'Love's Pure Gold'.

It's a rare kind of concert Crowe gives. She's not at all about show biz. But she cares deeply for her poetry, deeply enough to present it simply and well.

She doesn't think she's much of a singer. But the way she sings could not be better suited to the style and import of her lyrics. They cry out to be sung, with their patterns of repetition and their verbal elegance. But they don't want to be driven. They just want to be.

Friday night in Neptune Studio Theatre, Crowe sang all but one of the songs on her fourth, latest and Juno-nominated CD, *Book Of Days*. It only took her one song, 'Dreamless', at the top of the show, to create

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## performance reviews continued...

the ambience of intimacy in which her songs glow.

Warm lighting, an attractive, symmetrical grouping of instruments and players, and a sound mix at the hands of sound-wizard David Hillier that was perfectly attuned to the low resonance of her voice combined to give maximum play to Crowe's philosophical approach to song-writing.

Though big, the band played lightly – the pure gold of Jamie Robinson's guitar, the subtle percussion colour of Don Chapman, the rock-like foundation of Ed Woodsworth on bass, pianist Kim Dunn's lightly sketched lines and rhythmic chords and John Reischman streaking the mix with the pungent light of his mandolin.

Crowe up front on a high stool with her own guitar, which she plays well though labours at tuning it, and next to her the final touch, and one of the prettiest, the honey gold of Cindy Church's back up vocals.

Crowe does not write messages into her songs.

But she has a knack of asking questions like "this is your one and only life – what will you do?" And can anything better express the anguish of a broken relationship than; "I asked her 'Do you remember when you held me close?' She said 'No'."

It is little wonder the show ended in a standing ovation for Crowe and her band.

### **The Stan Rogers Folk Festival, 2003, Gregory R. McGuire, *Antigonish Casket***

Readers of 'Acoustic Corner' will be well aware of the music of both (Laura) Smith and (Cindy) Church, but it was Crowe, making her 2nd appearance at the Festival, who will have opened eyes among those who may not be familiar with her work. Crowe will be releasing her 4th CD in a couple of months. This singer/songwriter continues to impress. Each did separate sets, but it was when the trio performed together that their collective talent truly made itself evident. Three writers of beautiful tunes, beautiful harmony vocals and tasty guitar brought things together rather nicely.

### **The Vancouver East Cultural Centre, 1996, Tony Montague, *The Georgia Straight***

At a time when it seems any musician who can wield an axe believes that he or she can hack out a ditty worth listening to, it's a relief to be reminded by someone like Susan Crowe that there are songwriters out there who take their audience as seriously as their art.

She has the true writer's ability to go so deeply into her particular experience that, paradoxically, she emerges with something that is universal and accessible.

Crowe's songs, and her voice, are filled with emotional resonance – above all, with an

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abiding sense of loss and gentle melancholy. But the sadness is tempered by an appreciation of beauty, and the feelings are never self-indulgent or gushing...And Crowe knows how to sustain a metaphor and draw out its symbolic value to the full.

The pleasure and interest of the evening was not restricted to lyrics. Crowe, who played acoustic guitar throughout, was backed up with great sensitivity by a trio of Andreas Schuld on electric guitar, John Reischman on

mandolin, and Brent Gubbels on bass. Koralee Tonack, who provided additional vocals, also gave a moving rendition of Crowe's *'Come With Me'* — apparently written for a dying friend. For her encore performance of *'In Your Loveliness'*, Crowe was assisted by Roy Forbes. "It's like being queen for a day" she quipped. Then, never one to miss an opportunity for a self-deprecating remark, she added: "But this queen was vacuuming at four o'clock."



"With one of the most distinctive voices in Canada today, she is destined to become one of our lasting folk heroines"

*Vancouver Sun*



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