

**This interview with  
BUFFY SAINTE-MARIE  
was conducted by the Library of Congress on  
October 20, 2016**



*Buffy Sainte-Marie*

**LOC: Can you tell me about the actual recording of the album—how many days did you have to do it? Did you know exactly what you were going to do when you entered the studio?**

BSM: I was living in Greenwich Village, singing at the Gaslight Cafe, just out of college and totally green to recording: didn't know other musicians, no recording clues, never met a lawyer or a business man. Vanguard [Records] booked a few of days of recording in New York-- Can't remember which studio, maybe the Manhattan Ballroom. Hearing myself sing through headphones to a group of businessmen was very different from singing real passion to live audiences. It felt like singing in a police station: accurate but under duress.

**LOC: Were there songs that you wanted to include on the album that you weren't able to? Were there songs that you weren't, originally, sure about including on the album but ultimately did?**

BSM: I had hundreds of songs to choose from, so the ones I recorded were the ones the record company also liked. For me, diversity was part of it and each song is itself, not trying to be part of the group. I wasn't going for homogenous.

**LOC: When you came to record "Many a Mile" a year later, did you approach that album differently than when you came to record "It's My Way"?**

BSM: No it was pretty much the same thing. Show up at the studio with my guitar. Didn't know anybody. Be polite to everyone, start recording new songs. Do them a few times. It never felt real to me. Nothing like later records with people my own age, good musician friends, broad playlist.

**LOC: Can you tell me about the role that Maynard Solomon played in producing the record? Had you known him before? Was his in the studio with you throughout the recording process?**

BSM: I didn't know Maynard Solomon before he signed me, and I'd almost signed with another company. Maynard booked the studio, booked his engineer, told me where to stand, pressed "Record." Not much producing involved as I already had the songs. There weren't any other musicians. It was like an indoor field recording. I sang, they recorded.

**LOC: Did you know you were courting controversy with some of the songs on the album? (For example, "Universal Soldier.")**

Sure, I sang it every night, but it was worth it. I really believed that if audiences were encouraged with positive information, they'd respond with positive action, and in many cases--then and now--they did and do help. Several songs—below--on the album deal with individual responsibility. I didn't think I'd last beyond one album and wanted to make my points while I had the chance.

- "It's My Way": following your own unique path
- "Universal Soldier": saying "No" to war
- "Now That the Buffalo's Gone": Helping Native Americans protect the land from big business
- "Cod'ine": avoiding opiates and peer pressure

At the time the album didn't seem very controversial but within two years a love song I wrote ("Until It's Time for You to Go") put me into big league television and magazines, and I was discussing topical issues before a huge international audience, which apparently threatened certain people in the LBJ administration, and later Nixon's as well. I had sung both "Now That the Buffalo's Gone" and "Universal Soldier" on network TV, but then things changed and a part of [my] future bookings on big shows included not singing topical songs. Although I've never broken a law, an FBI file ensued and my music disappeared from airwaves. I just thought tastes had changed in the USA.

But the songs have continued to encourage people to learn, to speak up, and to ripen in their approach to solving problems that other people might not have seen yet.

**LOC: Have you listened to the album recently? What strikes you the most about it now, listening to in 2016?**

BSM: The thing that strikes me most is that many of the songs still make sense decades later, which comes from "meaning it" in the first place and working on it until it makes sense to other people too. That makes me happy. The hidden blessing of bringing my music into the world during the folk music era was that people were being exposed to music from other cultures that had already lasted generations, and that was a great example to be crystal clear about universal values.

In listening in 2016, another thing that strikes me is the courage in the songs, which was partly a reflection of the mid-1960s when students were fed up with their parents' status quo regarding war, profiteering, colonial thinking, corruption in government. Sometimes it's socially dangerous to stick up against what everybody knows is wrong, when a powerful few are profiteering nearby. Old story and, I think, and very good to address in a three-minute song. It's only music.