

ROOTS MUSIC**Janis Ian***Folk Is The New Black* (True North Records)

Her first all-original album in 25 years, and a benchmark effort in a career in song that spans more than 40 years, veteran American folk-pop singer-songwriter Janis Ian's *Folk Is The New Black* is a bona fide jaw-dropper, a stunning achievement that embraces the zeitgeist of the age, rocks at an assured pace, oozes with satiric wit, edgy humour and barely concealed rage, flaunts her disgust of the new republic, of human greed and cruelty with intellectual muscle and a burning imagination, and wrenches the heart. With just bass, drums and a couple of acoustic guitars, Ian has constructed — apparently in a three-day session and live of the studio floor — a rich and complex musical experience, 15 songs whose lucidity and melodic potency define a composer at the peak of her abilities, all rendered in a sweet, quiet voice that urges the listener ever nearer. Both intensely personal and robustly inclusive, Ian's new songs are among the very best she has written — indeed, among the finest in the entire American folk songbook. *Greg Quill*