

Tragically Hip - Fully Completely (1992)

An Album Review by Miles Brodie

Tracklist (songs covered in bold)

- 1. Courage (For Hugh McClenنان)**
- 2. Looking For A Place To Happen**
- 3. At The Hundredth Meridian**
- 4. Pigeon Camera**
5. Lionized
- 6. Locked In The Trunk Of A Car**
7. We'll Go Too
- 8. Fully Completely**
- 9. Fifty-Mission Cap**
- 10. Wheat Kings**
11. The Wherewithal
12. Eldorado
13. Radio Show (Bonus Track)
14. So Hard Done By (OG Version/Bonus Track)



Who Are the Tragically Hip?

The Tragically Hip were a Canadian rock band that was formed in Kingston, Ontario. From 1986-2017, they consisted of singer Gord Downie, lead guitarist Rob Baker, rhythm guitarist Paul Langlois, bassist Gord Sinclair. Sinclair and Baker were students and friends at Kingston Collegiate. The band got their name from a Micheal Nesmith (of Monkees' Fame) sketch called *Elephant Parts*. They play rock music at their simplest form, but have melded in blues, folk, grunge, country, funk, psychedelia, and more in certain songs.

The History of the Tragically Hip

Their self-titled EP was released in 1987, and was successful enough to get the band working with producer Don Smith, who produced their first 2 full-length albums (1989's Up To Here and 1991's Road Apples), each of which were considered instant classics in Canada upon release, but weren't very successful in the US. The band hooked up with former Judas Priest, Concrete Blonde, and Thin Lizzy producer Chris Tsangarides for Fully Completely (Which we'll get to soon). The band continued to release quality music up until Downie's death in 2017. His death rocked the nation. Later highlights include Day For Night (1994), and Phantom Power (1998)



Gord Downie: A Canadian Icon

 Gord Downie's 2016 Interview | "I've been so lucky."

Born in 1964 in Amherstview, Ontario and raised in Kingston, Ontario, Gord Downie was originally in The Slinks, against The Rodents in a Battle Of The Bands. The Rodents featured future Hip members Rob Baker and Gord Sinclair, and soon The Hip were formed. Downie became a Canadian legend with his blend of great vocals, very Canadian lyrics, and on-stage antics. He also had a decently successful solo career, and in 2016 released an album/book/animated film called *Secret Path*, a true story about Chanie Wenjack, a young Anishinaabe boy from the Marten Falls First Nation who died in 1966 while trying to return home after escaping from an Indian residential school.



In 2015, Downie was diagnosed with terminal brain cancer. The Hip released their final album, *Man Machine Poem*, in 2016, and soon went on tour, playing an iconic show in Kingston. Downie died on October 17, 2017.

The Rest of the Band

Rob Baker, lead guitarist: Rob Baker's crunching riffs have led off some of the band's most iconic songs. His solos are melodic and solid. He's also created solid work with his side project Strippers' Union.

Paul Langlois, rhythm guitarist: backing vocalist: Great backing vocalist, and is a talented rhythm guitarist. Perhaps a slightly underrated member of the band. He also has solo projects that I like. The best one in my opinion is called *Not Guilty*.

Gord Sinclair, bass: Iconic bass player, perhaps a little underrated. Most people who aren't that into the band might underrate him a little bit. Iconic Tragically Hip songs like "Blow At High Dough" and "Grace, Too", start off with a silky smooth bass line. He's also served as a backing vocalist on some tracks

Johnny Fay, drums: He looks like the oldest member of the band, but he's actually the youngest. He's not an incredible drummer but if a band didn't have a good drummer, the band might not be able to mold together.

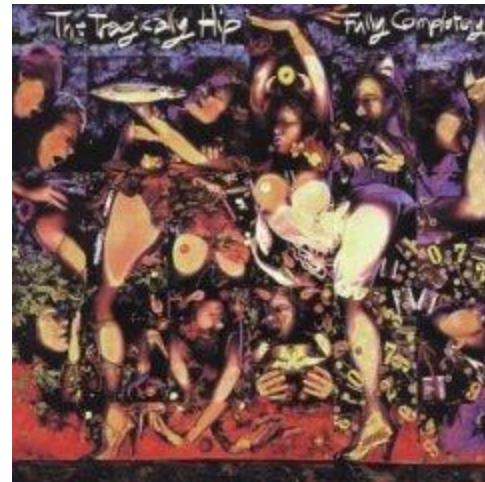
Fully Completely: The Album

The Hip wanted to create a release that would be successful in the US. Their first two albums were Canadian successes, but were not very successful in America. In order to gain more American success, they let go of producer Don Smith and replaced him with Chris Tsangarides (photo, right), who had worked with metal bands, which doesn't sound like it would be a great thing for The Tragically Hip, but it works for this one album. The production on the album is very metallic, and it helps the Canadian message get across.

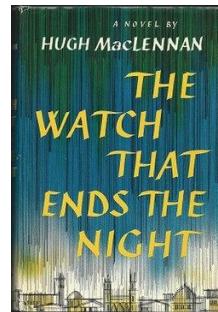


That Very Strange Cover ...

For years, I wondered what was going on in the *Fully Completely* cover. The cover was designed by a Dutch artist named Lieve Prins, who was given the idea by Rob Baker to do a “bacchanalian sort of scene – lots of decadence, decay and rebirth”. The cover consists of 30 segmented photocopied images photocopied over top of one another.



The Songs



TRACK 1: Courage (For Hugh MacLennan)

[The Tragically Hip - Courage - For Hugh MacLennan \(Official Vid...\)](#)

As discussed many times throughout the course, the first song is always very important when you're making an album. The first track and third single on *Fully Completely* “Courage (For Hugh MacLennan)” sets the tone very well. The instrumentation on this song is very rocking, and the lyrics are beautiful. The song is subtitled “(For Hugh MacLennan)” due to Downie paraphrasing some lyrics from MacLennan's book *The Watch That Ends the Night*. Downie was a fan of MacLennan and liked to write about Canada, just like MacLennan.

Song Rating: 9.7/10

TRACK 2: Looking For A Place To Happen

▶ Looking For A Place To Happen

Track 2, Looking For A Place To Happen, keeps up the same rock mood from Courage, but lyrically, the song is very interesting. It starts off sounding from the perspective of the French people discovering what is now modern-day Quebec, most likely from Jacques Cartier's perspective. Halfway through, the song switches perspective to the perspective of an Indigenous person. The song ends with a searing guitar solo by Rob Baker. The track was the fifth single, but didn't end up making as much of a dent as the rest of the six singles

Song Rating: 9.8/10

TRACK 3: At The Hundredth Meridian

▶ The Tragically Hip - At The Hundredth Meridian (Official Video)

A few songs flip back and forth as my favourite off the album, but the third song and fourth single, At The Hundredth Meridian, is a special song for a variety of reasons. The song features really great and obscure lyrics from Gord Downie, a bridge where the band slows down and Gord rap-sings iconic lyrics like "Get Ry Cooder to sing my eulogy". This song is easily one of their best songs of all time.

Song Rating: 10/10

TRACK 4: Pigeon Camera

▶ Pigeon Camera

Track 4, Pigeon Camera, is a *Slight* step down from the first 3 tracks, and when I say slight, I mean very slight. Lyrically, this isn't my favourite, but the music on this track is peak Hip. The guitar slithers along like a snake, and it has such a beauty to it. The lyrics are strange and unsettling, but it adds to the vibe of the track. A fantastic track.

Song Rating: 9.4/10

TRACK 6: Locked In The Trunk Of A Car

The Tragically Hip - Locked In The Trunk Of A Car (Official Video)

One of my favorite tracks on the album is Locked In The Trunk of A Car, the lead single, a grungy rocker. The song symbolizes one of the things The Tragically Hip we're able to do really well, and that is a great opening line to a song. The opening line of Locked In The Trunk Of A Car is "They don't know how old I am, they found armor in my belly from the 16th century." The song seems to deal in the murder of some sort, and it actually originated from a performance of their 1987 song Highway Girl, off of their live record Live At The Roxy. if you want to check out The Tragically Hip and you haven't yet, this is a great track to enter their universe.

Song Rating: 10/10

TRACK 8: Fully Completely

The Tragically Hip - Fully Completely (album version)

When I was talking about Gord Sinclair being a great bass player and underrated bass player back in the band members section, the title track off of the album is one of the examples why. A smooth, melodic bassline kicks off a track that lyrically seems to be inspired by a breakup, which is nothing new, but musically this song entralls me more than any other song on the album and it's also got some great one-liners from Gord like "Bring me back and shackles, hang me long out in the sun." The guitar playing on this track is also pretty standout, and it all adds up to one of the standouts off the record, and probably a top 10 song in this band's catalogue for me, which is impressive because there's a ton of great tracks in The Tragically Hip discography.

Song Rating: 10/10

TRACK 9: Wheat Kings

Wheat Kings

One of the sweetest songs The Tragically Hip have had in their canon is the track

Wheat Kings, which a lot of people say is the centerpiece of Fully Completely. It's a great song. The song has a very interesting backstory. In 1969, a man named David Milgaard was wrongly convicted of a rape and murder. He unjustly served 20 or so years in prison. The Tragically Hip put a track dedicated to Milgaard on Fully Completely, and as a result it's one of the most pure songs in the band's discography. The song opens up with a call of a loon, which was sampled from a CD of nature sounds that Gord Downie had. A tender acoustic guitar accompanies Gord's voice for most of the song, and the lyrics contain a lot of references to the Milgaard situation. However, the song isn't preachy despite the fact that it easily could have become preachy in another singer's hands.

Song Rating: 10/10

Track 10: Fifty-Mission Cap

What a song! This was my first favourite Tragically Hip song. I love hockey. It's one of my favourite things in life. The lyrics were inspired by Bill Barilko, a Toronto Maple Leafs hockey player who died after scoring the game-winning goal in the 1951 Stanley Cup finals. The song describes a guy who finds a Barilko hockey card in his "50 Mission cap" which is a Standard issue military cap, still commonly used in most militaries. The line "I stole this from a hockey card" What's inspired by a Barilko hockey card that came from the 1991 Pro Set hockey card pack, which included a card that told the story of Bill Barilko. It All Leads up to one of the stronger songs off of the album.

Song Rating: 10/10

Additional Track Ratings

Ratings for songs I didn't review above as well as the bonus tracks

Lionized	9/10
We'll Go Too	9.3/10
The Wherewithal	9.7/10
Eldorado	8.5/10
Radio Show (Bonus Track)	9/10

So Hard Done By (Bonus Track) 9/10 (A better version of this song on their 1994 album *Day For Night*)

Album Significance and Accolades

Fully Completely was a huge Canadian success. It didn't break the band in the US, but it really established The Hip as "Canada's Band", a band that Canadians could hang onto as one of their bands, their heroes. Here are some of the accolades that the album has received over the years.

- Runner-up for Album of the Year at the 1993 Juno Awards
- 5th best Canadian album of all time in a 2007 book
- A No.1 album in Canada and reached No. 40 in the US.
- Pitchfork gave it a 9.4 (impressive if you know anything about Pitchfork)
- The singles all charted in Canada, with "Courage" reaching a high of #10

In 2015, the band did a tour where they celebrated Fully Completely by playing the album in full at every concert on the tour.

Final Review

As you can tell, I love this album a lot. There are very few albums that mean as much to me as this album does. However, I'll let my rose-tinted glasses slip a little bit and say that this album isn't perfect. A couple quirks in the production I think could have been edited, and I think the closer Eldorado isn't quite up to par with the rest of the record, but outside of that this album is pretty much perfect.

This album is also very significant in Canada as it established The Tragically Hip as not only Canada's band, but also a band that defined an era for so many people.

Final Score: A solid 9.7/10

Top 5 Songs

1. At The Hundredth Meridian
2. Locked In The Trunk Of A Car
3. Fully Completely
4. Wheat Kings
5. Fifty-Mission Cap or Looking For A Place To Happen