

Caravan

Dec-Jan

35¢

folk music magazine



Cynthia Gooding

Editorial

News

A lot of changes have occurred around the Caravan office lately. In fact, even the location of the office has changed, so please note the new address at the bottom of this page.

In this issue, we are introducing our new Record Review Editor, Roger D. Abrahams, with the article FOLKSONG AND ITS CULTURAL CONTEXT. In future issues the regular review column will be back, under Roger's direction.

Another addition to our staff is Kenneth S. Goldstein, noted folklorist and editor of many folk records, including Riverside's fabulous collection of English and Scottish Ballads, sung by A.L. Lloyd and Ewan MacColl. Kenny will be Book Review Editor and will bring you full details on books of particular interest to the folk music enthusiast.

And beginning with the next issue, your regular editor-in-chief, Lee Shaw, will be taking a leave of absence from the editorial chair. In her place, Billy Faier will be wielding the official blue pencil.

Billy has long been known to Caravan readers as a columnist and member of the editorial staff, and to the folk music world in general as a concert and recording artist. While Lee will continue as publisher and coordinator of the magazine, Billy will be editor-in-chief of the next two issues.

A department missing from this issue is the section of folksongs. This department is undergoing extensive revision in order to bring you a large collection of rare and unusual material, including transcripts of previously unpublished material from the tape collection of Kenneth S. Goldstein. It should be back in its new, expanded form, in the next issue.

CARAVAN Folk Music Magazine
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Record Review Editor: Roger D Abrahams
Book Review Editor: Kenneth S Goldstein
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folk music magazine

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December-January

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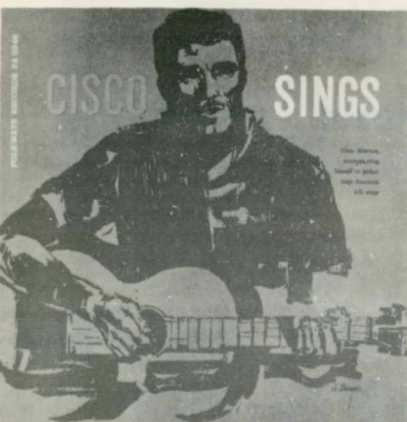
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FOLKWAYS

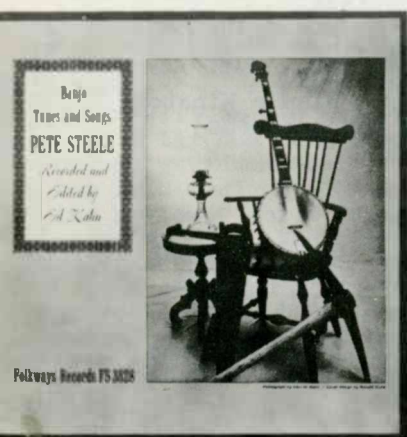
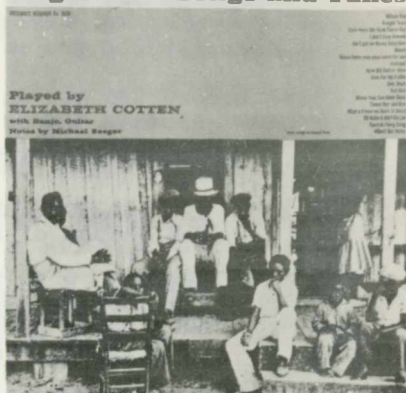
NEW AND EXCITING RELEASES



FA2346 CISCO HOUSTON SINGS. Folk songs with guitar accompaniments. Pat Works on the Railway, Blowing Down that Old Dusty Road, Drill, Ye Tarriers, Drill, Dobie Bill, Rambling Gambling Man, The Zebra Dun, Old Reilly, Old Howard, Make Me a Bed Right Down on Your Floor, The Ball Weevil, The Midnight Special, St. James Infirmary, Great July Jones. Text. 1-12" 33½ rpm longplay record **\$5.95**

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Negro Folk Songs and Tunes



FS3828 PETE STEELE, Banjo Tunes and Songs. Recorded and edited by Ed Kahn. Songs include: Ellen Smith, Little Birdie, The Train is A-pulling the Crooked Hill, Interview and Religious Songs, Shady Grave, Hard Times, Goin' Around This World, Baby Mine, East Virginia, The Cuckoo, The War is A-Raging for Johnny, Coal Creek March, Last Payday at Coal Creek, Ida Red, Pretty Polly, The Scolding Wife, The House Carpenter. Complete notes. 1-12" 33½ rpm longplay record **\$5.95**

**LATEST RELEASE BY
PETE SEEGER**

N2501 GAZETTE. Topical Songs and Ballads. Pete Seeger, with banjo and 12 string guitar accompaniment. Includes: Pretty Boy Floyd, Banks of Marble, TVA Song, Marlian Love Son, 42 Kids, State of Arkansas, Declaration of Independence, Teachers Blues, The Wild West is Where I Want to Be, Demi Song, Bird of Sherman Wu, Roll On Columbia, Reuben James, Then We'll Have Peace, The Scaler, Newspapermen, Talking Atom, Battle of Maxton Field, Doctor Fraud, There is Mean Things Happening in This Land. With complete illustrated text and notes. 1-12" 33½ rpm longplay record **\$5.95**



FOLKWAYS RECORDS • 117 W. 46th St., New York, N.Y.

Cynthia

Gooding

Louis Jouvét in Reflexions du Comedien makes a distinction between the actor and what he calls the comedien: "The actor can only play certain roles; he distorts the others in line with his personality." He defines as a comedien one who "can play all roles. The actor takes a part, the comedien is taken by it." He admits that the distinction is largely an analytical one, for in reality we find "that the line of demarcation between comedien and actor is never strictly defined." Folk singing is like acting: among folksingers there is one kind who projects his own personality and another kind who communicates the emotional content of his material. In Jouvét's words again, the one "substitutes himself for the character" in the song, the other "operates by means of penetration and insinuation." Like the actor, the singer is his own instrument (momentarily disregarding accompaniment). One kind of folksong singer shares with his audience the range and variety of his emotional and physical instrument. The other uses his instrument to pass on an emotional or musical message or mood. Cynthia Gooding, by talent and intention, is of this second kind. Accordingly, her art conceals itself.

Her latest record, LANGUAGES OF LOVE (Riverside RLP 12-827), demonstrates her repertoire and technique. It is programmed like a concert, opening with the Mexican Buenas Noches--Good Evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. Vic Messer, a skilled guitarist, assists here in lending the authentic Mexican flavor. Cynthia Gooding sings the song with a joyful vigor which is the emotional core she has found in the song. It is followed by the familiar Irish I Know Where I'm Going, meditative, quiet, intimate, with a touch of sadness in the final line, "The Devil knows who I'll marry." In Cynthia Gooding's interpretation, the song is of the melancholy of that love which, though full of happiness now, can not end happily. It is the characteristic Irish (or human) mixture of joy and sorrow. Next on the record is the classic French ballad Quand le Roi. Here Cynthia Gooding tells a story, rather than projecting an emotion only, with dignity and gravity. She carefully distinguishes the voices and feelings of the king and the marquis, who speak successively during the ballad. And so on through the record.

Each selection on the record is studied, like these, "in depth". Especially noteworthy is Johnny, I Hardly Knew Ye: the note of shock and bitterness at the beginning deepens continuously through the song, giving each

refrain an added weight of feeling. La Molinera, with appropriate guitar playing by Vic Messer, probes the florid flamenco style. One of the best is Mon Amour ("My love is gone far beyond the ocean...If he is sick, who will take care of him?"). It is a whole monologue or scene: Cynthia Gooding acts the role and projects the feeling fully.

The record is not without flaws: because the voice is husky sometimes, there is a sense of strain. The microphoning is uneven. But the huskiness doesn't interfere with the difficult intonation on the two Turkish numbers, and the recording does not hinder the deep emotion from coming to the listener.

The communication of emotion in the art of Cynthia Gooding is the result of conscious aim and effort. Her point of view is intentionally literary and emotional. Here she differs from other singers, notably Richard Dyer-Bennet, who concentrates more on musical settings. Dyer-Bennet has much artistry, but not the emotional versatility and power of Cynthia Gooding.

Her earlier records show the same intentions and the same style, but not at such an advanced level. FAITHFUL LOVERS AND OTHER PHENOMENA (Elektra EKL-107) is superbly engineered, better than LANGUAGES OF LOVE, and the voice is fresher there. Yet The Lass of the Low Countrie is serious but not sad; All My Trials is dignified but not pathetic. In The Derby Ram and The Bailiff's Daughter we see a new kind of self-effacement: we lose the awareness of the singer's sex in such songs, and she becomes the minstrel, the vehicle of the story. This is the result of the same intention, to be "taken by" the material rather than "taking" it. One song is worth the price of FAITHFUL LOVERS-- The Great Selchie of Shule Skerry (Child 113). To distinguish the two speakers in the ballad, the skilled accompanist, Erik Derling, uses no accompaniment for the girl's part and an eerie tremolo for the supernatural "selchie". The result is a very striking combination of a guitar accompaniment and a traditional a cappella ballad style. This combination is the setting or arrangement. And in this performance we aren't at all aware of the performer, only of the strange relationship between the maid and the selchie and the chill of the modal tune.

There is a purity of style and intention about QUEEN OF HEARTS: Early English Folksongs (Elektra EKL-131) which distinguishes it from the other records. It contains authentic songs sung in an authentic manner. Especially fine is Queen Eleanor's Confession. Another fine record is CYNTHIA GOODING SINGS TURKISH, SPANISH AND MEXICAN SONGS (Elektra EKL-128), rearranged from two earlier ten-inch records. Here may be heard Donde Vas Rey Alfonso, an interesting song which has largely disappeared from the live tradition in Spain, surviving only as a children's song until reconstructed by Cynthia Gooding. It is a performance of great dignity and impressiveness. This record also includes the Turkish prisoner's song, Ankaranin Tasina Bak, surely the most melancholy folksong in existence.

Perhaps less successful than these records in the artistic depth we have been noticing is A YOUNG MAN AND A MAID (Elektra EKL-104), with Theodore Bikel. This

seems to reflect an attempt at "popularization", and is less consistent than the other records. Theodore Bikel is a suitable singing partner, though, and the duets on the record are vigorous and enjoyable. The record has achieved considerable popularity--well deserved--which owes partly to Theodore Bikel's many enthusiasts and partly, perhaps, to the titillating cover art.

Two opposed tendencies among folksong singers today are the desire to develop an individual style and the desire to keep within the tradition of a given song. Various performers resolve this conflict in various ways. Cynthia Gooding does it by studying and absorbing the music and performance traditions of a culture, but resolutely refusing to imitate another performer's work. "I don't want to sing a song in the way anybody else does," she says. "People (in a folk tradition) didn't sing as their grandfathers did. Unless they wanted to imitate their grandfathers exactly, they would change their songs." But Cynthia Gooding feels entitled to change her songs only when she knows deeply the traditions from which they come. An example is Coplas (couplets), recorded on Elektra-109, and derived from the Mexican repertoire which was the first she developed and which was hence the basis for her later work. In preparing Coplas for performance, she says, "I went to the Forty-Second Street library and got verses and used them. In effect I made up a whole new song, which could have been a folk process. I can find precedents for that action. Coplas is a set form. In the same fashion we might set blues verses to old tunes."

Cynthia Gooding began singing as a child in a not very musical family. She recalls lying in bed and singing "grandma songs" in a "little-girl voice". Then during a trip to Mexico in 1944 she heard Lucia Reyes, a professional singer in the Mexican folk tradition (analogous to Bessie Smith), and tried to imitate her loud, forceful singing. Finding that she could sing successfully in this manner, she decided on a new singing style. She learned to play the guitar, began building a repertoire of Mexican songs and a few others, and came to New York. For a year she was a Greenwich Village attraction at the Soho (now defunct), where her appearances brought folk songs to a new audience.

During recent years Cynthia Gooding has gone through an internal debate on the issue, "Was I going to try to sing these songs so they would be popular? Was I going to sing in night clubs?" The answer to both these questions was no. She has to perform her songs in her own way, not arranging or decorating them for the sake of an imaginary "public". Her considerable artistic growth, traceable on her records and in the outcome of this internal debate, occurred without external influences. Fortunately the folksong market has been growing too; consequently she is heard more and more in concert and on records. She recently gave a series of concerts in the Midwest, and in December she will be heard on the West Coast. Already she is anticipating her next record. We are privileged to hear her at her peak.

--Lee Haring

the SECRET of

PERFORMING FOLKSONGS

A VISIT TO L'ABBAYE

Pete Haas

Mon Dieu, we're doing it all wrong!

No wonder our folk concerts are miserably attended. No wonder folk artists have to rely on dull jobs to keep them in food, shelter and guitar strings. No wonder folk singers and instrumentalists are having sand kicked in their faces by the rest of society. Mes amis, our approach is awful, and we have much to learn about the meaningful and successful performance of folk music.

My sermon for today is derived from an eye-opening visit this past spring, to a small boîte in Paris, where two expatriate Americans are currently and lucratively holding forth with guitars. The place is L'Abbaye, a tiny night club on the left bank of the glistening Seine. It has become, over the past few years, a "must" for visitors from all over the world, a mecca celebrated in disc and a healthy source of income for the two young men who own it, run it and sing in it nightly. Perhaps the best method to show you the error of your folksy ways is to relate the facts surrounding my few hours in this amazing place.

Several years ago, some friends in New York played for me a new recording entitled L'ABBAYE, featuring the duet from the club of the same name. The back of the record jacket told me that the two owner-singers, named Gordon Heath and Lee Payant, had been active on the New York stage before settling in Paris. The club took its name, the jacket went on, from its street, Rue de l'abbaye, and was located a cobblestone's throw from the oldest church in Paris, smack in the bohemian Latin Quarter. And as the recorded music poured forth that evening, I confess that I dreamily pictured myself in an ancient, cosy, stone-walled, candle-lit cellar in Paris, with a glass of fine wine within reach, while I played and sang ageless ballads for the beautiful long-haired mademoiselles draped adoringly around me. At that point, though, my host announced dinner, and my dream faded before the reality of a lamb chop.

The years passed, and through hard work, clean living and a friend in the right place, I made Europe last April, serving as Director of Recreation for the training program that prepared our guides for their work in the American Pavilion at the Brussels Fair. I managed, while in Brussels, to talk someone into letting me run my own daily quarter-hour program of American folk music over the closed circuit television system in our Pavilion. I mention this, not to establish my pre-eminence and international reputa-

tion in the world of folk music but simply to stress that, as a performer, I am in a position to recognize the weaknesses of our own folk-performing habits and to pass on, with feeling, the lessons contained herein. After a while, I wearied of the hot lights and the pancake makeup dripping onto my banjo, and I announced, at the completion of my duties, that I was going to Paris. Many people immediately recommended that I stop into L'Abbaye to hear the folk music, and, with the old dream still dancing in my head, I headed toward the city of Victor Hugo and Toulouse-Lautrec, Napoleon and de Gaulle, the Champs Elysees and the Left Bank.

Picture a spring night in Paris: a fresh, cool breeze blowing from the Seine; stars shining brightly from a cloudless sky; street lights glimmering through softly waving branches of fragrant trees; and couples walking by the river's edge or sitting at tables in front of countless tiny cafes. On such a night, I went in search of L'Abbaye. I found it. It was shut tight. The next night, I tried again. It was pouring rain. But finally, when I stood in front of the door to L'Abbaye (which I had passed five times the night before, since there is absolutely no identification on it) and heard the sounds of guitars and singing within, I knew my time had come. I pushed the door open, prepared to meet destiny.

Instead, some old harriidan peered out at me and slammed the door in my face. While I stood outside in the rain, puzzled, the singing inside reached a peak and then stopped, and I heard the strange sound of hundreds of little twigs being snapped or broken in quick succession. Then the harpy opened the door and let me in. I found myself in a smallish, stuffy and smoky room, roughly twelve feet square and laid out simply. The left wall was taken up by a bar, and the right wall by benches, tables and chairs. On the remaining wall, directly opposite the front door, a little staircase led down to the cellar, and built over the staircase in the right corner near the end of the benches was a platform consisting of three high steps.

As I moved in out of the rain, the ogress looked me over, muttered something under her breath, sneered, sighed, wiped her hands on her apron and led me down the small aisle to the only empty table left, flush alongside the bottom step of the platform. A sign near me proclaimed that the mandatory and only price of admission was a drink (at two dollars a throw in American money) and so, rather than incur further anger from the woman, I ordered my Scotch then and there. The drink came, and as I sipped it slowly to make it last, I spotted Heath and Payant leaning on the bar and talking to various smiling people near them, obviously friends and, just as obviously, friends who were envied by the cash customers seated around the room. Soon Heath nodded to Payant and Payant nodded to the witch; she crossed to the door, planted her buttocks firmly against it and flipped out the bright overhead bulbs. A soft glow from side lights lit the club as Heath moved commandingly to the platform, sat on one of the steps and took up his guitar.

Heath made a dramatic figure as he waited for the chattering to die down. His black hair, beard and moustache against his dark skin, and his broad chest exposed by a

white shirt open to the belt line combined to give the air of manly mephistophelean sex. He strummed a few quiet chords to himself and finally, after waiting for and receiving absolute silence, he began. At his first chords, a lady patron turned to whisper appreciatively and ecstatically to her escort. Heath stopped short. He glared at her. We followed his eyes, stared her into embarrassed silence and turned our attention back to him, whereupon he started his song again from the very beginning. The lesson was well received, for at no time during the rest of his selection was there a whisper, a sneeze or the clink of an ice-cube. Heath finished, and leaned back to receive his due.

It took me a second to lower my glass, in order to free my hands for applause. That second saved me. For just as I was about to clap, everyone else raised their hands in front of them and snapped their fingers rapidly. No one was clapping; everyone was snapping, and that, I realized, was the crackling sound that I had heard outside. Adapting the old advice of "when in Rome" to existing circumstances, I too raised my hands and snapped away to show my enjoyment of the number. I remembered (as my memory momentarily returned, since I was powerless to reach for my drink) a paragraph from the record jacket which had explained this phenomenon. It seemed that the people living above L'Abbaye had complained, in the club's early days, of the racket from old-fashioned applause. To allow them their sleep and to maintain some expression of approval, which, after all, is better than bread to the true performer, the finger snapping was initiated and had, in fact, contributed to the world-wide legend of the one and only "L'Abbaye". As the snapping continued, I reasoned that the explanation made some kind of sense, and so I stayed right in there snapping, although feeling, I must admit, a little foolish.



Heath then sang a group of lovely, quiet English and French ballads. I will not attempt herein a musical criticism of his singing. I will say only that it felt good to hear some folk music again and that, up to a slightly over-arranged point, his selections were enjoyable. But the routine between the numbers is what fascinated me. As a song was finished, the sound of snapping filled the room. Personally, I began to feel more and more uncomfortable crackling away like that, but I couldn't put my busy finger on why. Then, while Heath took a moment's rest, the banshee at the door, who had kept all hopeful newcomers standing outside in the rain, opened the floodgate and admitted a few more people. At this point there was only standing room left, and that was

quickly disappearing. Drinks were ordered and served, cigarette smoke choked up the room and patrons guzzled, laughed and chatted with each other. Heath leaned forward again and stroked his guitar, the noise subsided, the madame raised the drawbridge and only when there was neither a whisper nor a motion in the room did Heath start his next song.

At the end of his group of ballads, intermission was announced by Heath's stepping from the platform and the blazing on of the overhead lights. And after a break of twenty minutes, accompanied by the claiming of non-existent standing space by forty more arrivals, Heath twisted through the mob and took his place on the platform. This time he was accompanied by his partner, Lee Payant, who seated himself on the tier above Heath, and both took up their guitars for what promised to be the main set of the evening. The door closed, lights dimmed, talking stopped, swallowing ceased, breathing dwindled and the music began.

Mes enfants, before I bring your attention to the final ingredient of my lesson for today, allow me to refresh your memory up to this point. Recall, if you will, the difficulty of general entrance, particularly during the rite of a song; the gruff keeper of the door, who immediately inspires the attitude that, in getting inside, you have received an honor bestowed only upon the chosen few; the offering, albeit in return for a drink; the subtle but insistent demand for undivided attention to the platform; and the adherence to the rules of the establishment, in this case the replacement of applause with the snapping of fingers.

And that last item, mes petites, is the crowning touch of genius. For allow me to tell you that the singing set that followed included, among other songs, several bawdy and raucous French ballads plus lusty performances of such American songs as Run, Sinner Man, and John Henry, done at the top of two voices to the accompaniment of two guitars. The decibility was enormous, and I had a picture in my mind, as my drink splashed around in its glass, of French peasants in little villages miles from Paris being rattled out of their beds in the wee hours of a country night by the burst of music from the sinful city by the side of the Seine. And after these riotous renditions, what? Thunderous applause to match the power of the singing? No. Simply, as always and according to ancient lore, the raising of hands and the snapping of fingers. Not one soul let loose with a blast of old-fashioned enthusiastic palm-beating clapping. Not one person forgot himself or his surroundings, and bellowed or stomped. And, as the tiny, smoky, hot, crowded room was filled with the incongruous sound of hundreds of snapping fingers, the answer came to me.

The final ingredient was there: unquestioning obedience to the rules. The foot-stomping exciting numbers just concluded by Heath and Payant had been the final test in the ritual of the cult, and no one had failed the test. Everybody snapped. And I realized that, in my innocence, I had come to L'Abbaye for the same misguided reasons that a handful of camp-followers come to hear you. I had come to hear folk songs. I had come to hear the playing of a beloved folk instrument. I had expected that a singer would bring tradition and spirit to a piece of music and make it echo with the glory of days gone by. But, as the

snapping of fingers grew in intensity, I knew that such out-moded ingredients of folk music and folk performing were no longer enough. I had sought a night club, but I had accidentally stumbled onto something far greater. I had discovered a temple, where annually millions of people came, willingly denouncing the customs and habits of the outside world, and, where in their obedience to and adoration of the Greater and Lesser Lights, they were hoping to find the Way to a new Truth. And, as my eyes met those of the grand soul guarding the door, I raised my hands and I snapped.

Some of you know my name. I sing folk songs and play a warped banjo on two sides of the Atlantic Ocean, usually with little coaxing. If you should happen to come to where I'm performing, let me know you understand. While I sing, don't talk. Don't play. Don't hum. Keep your eyes on me. And when I've finished, don't clap. Just raise your arms before you and snap your fingers. I will know you. Our hearts will mingle and soar with the music, and we will be as one.

--Pete Haas

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Ozark Folk Festival

Ray M. Lawless

The eleventh annual Ozark Folk Festival was held October 16-18 at Eureka Springs, Arkansas, under the direction of Bob and Wanda Duncan. The three-day celebration included traditional ballad-singing, banjo and fiddle playing, zither and dulcimer music, some skillful square dancing, and a considerable mixture of hillbilly and pop numbers.

Among the singers of traditional ballads were the following: May Kennedy McCord of Springfield, Mo., known and loved by everyone in the Ozarks region; 80-year-old Fred High of High, Arkansas, a favorite of many years; Kathy Dagel of Augusta, Kansas, a newcomer to the Festival and a fine singer and guitarist; and a young visitor, Erik Mickelson, from Lewiston, Montana.

The Thursday night old fiddlers contest brought half a dozen skilled musicians in from the hills, several of whom, like Absie Morrison, make their own fiddles. Prizes of \$15, \$25 and \$35 brought out some hidden talents and spirited performances. Mr and Mrs Fiddler Beers, trained musicians from Lewiston, Montana, were special guests at the Festival. Beers gave an "Old Fiddler Sketch" modeled after the playing of his grandfather, country fiddler of an earlier generation. From Green Forest, Arkansas, came two elderly country musicians, the Clayborn brothers, James and Garland, the one an expert in banjo music and the other skilled with fiddle, guitar, and mandolin, and a teacher of these instruments. Vienna-born and Arkansas-adopted Adolph Kukler, as in other years, entertained with some of the loveliest zither music ever heard in the hills. (It's worth remembering that the little town of Washington, Mo., once claimed the title of "Zither Capital of the World", for some of the finest zithers were handmade there in the small Schwarzer Zither Factory in the half century from 1880 to 1930.) A Festival favorite this year and last in "banjo picking extraordinary" was Jay Bailey, young man from Cordell, Oklahoma.

The Festival also features a hobby show and art display (Eureka's full of artists, studio-trained and self-taught), a colorful parade of THE OLD and THE NEW, and always in the fall the hills are beautiful. Money prizes from \$5 to \$25 were given for best costume, store-window displays, and parade entries. Six prizes ranging from \$10 to a whopping \$150 were given in the big square dance contest on Saturday night, a bang-up lively session bringing the festivities to a close. The resort town of Eureka Springs, with scarcely 2000 population but something over two score of motels, was jam-packed for the three-day event.

Caravan's roving reporter
writes about a new record
company...

AUDIO-VIDEO PRODUCTIONS

A new record label has hit the folk music scene: A-V Records (short for Audio-Video Productions, Inc.). Jerry Silverman, vice president and co-owner of the firm, is also the performer on its debut album, FOLK BLUES Vol. I (A-V 101). This record is a companion to Jerry's new book, FOLK BLUES (Macmillan: 1958) and features material from the book.

Three more releases scheduled from A-V which should be available by the time of publication of this article are:

AV 102 - GALLOWS POLE and Other Songs, by Fred Gerlach with 12-string guitar;

AV 103 - PASTURES OF PLENTY, by The Harvesters; and an as-yet-untitled Frantz Casseus guitar recital which will include the first performance of his Haitian Suite.

Jerry first met A-V's president, George Ohye, at a party at Rutgers University, where George was a student. Some time later George called Jerry and told him that he'd just bought a pre-recorded tape company. A partnership was formed, and the new co-owners quickly decided that there was a more promising future in the folk, jazz, and educational record field. With the addition of George Bruck (formerly of Phonotapes) as technical director, they opened an office at 445 West 49th Street, in New York City, got talent together, and started recording.

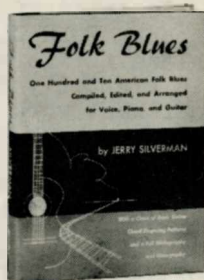
Jerry is enthusiastic about the future of the company, as well as the present. Among other things, they have planned a jazz album by Nancy Harrow, backed by a name jazz combo; a comparatively ethnic Haitian album; more blues from Jerry's book; and possibly a recorded lecture series, readings from the classics, and many other things.

A-V Records will be available in record shops handling folk discs. In New York City, and by mail, they are available from The Folklore Center, 110 MacDougal Street, New York 12, N.Y.

FOLK BLUES

BY JERRY SILVERMAN

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FOLK BLUES

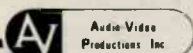
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FOLK BLUES

A REVIEW:

Folk Blues

In spite of several shortcomings, Jerry Silverman's new book, *FOLK BLUES*, emerges as a major contribution to American folklore. As a collection of Negro folklore, it is virtually unparalleled, and as such it is the most significant work since the pioneering studies of Odum and Johnson in 1929. The book includes the words and melody lines, and piano and guitar arrangements, for 110 songs. Some of them have been popularized by the concerts and recordings of Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Josh White, Jimmy Rodgers, and other singers; a good many others will be totally new to most readers. In some cases Silverman has added verses or written the music for already existing fragments in an attempt to make singable wholes out of the pieces.

On the whole, the book is a worthwhile collection of new and old blues, with some interesting piano and guitar arrangements, a useful musical description of the blues, a good discography, and some adequate, if not original, sociological commentary. In printing a number of songs by Blind Lemon Jefferson, Silverman has made a significant contribution to the study of the early blues styles, before the heavy influence of Tin Pan Alley became detectable. It is also nice to have the words and music to a number of white blues, and some of Jelly Roll Morton's compositions, all printed in the same book.

On the other hand, the biographical material is disturbingly incomplete; Woody Guthrie is left rambling through the land, instead of in the hospital where he presently resides; and the impression is given that Leadbelly was continually lionized in New York and lived a happy, contented life there, while in reality Leadbelly was subjected to continual economic frustration. It seems to me that there is no excuse for presenting someone's life as you might like to conceive it, rather than as it actually is or was. Another fault is Silverman's blues lyrics, which are contrived and unpoetic alongside the folk originals. In the case of Leadbelly's *New York City* song, there is an honest mistake--the song was recorded in full on a Bluebird 78 with verses that are rather interesting, and not so playful as those which Silverman has added. Finally there is the major drawback of the book, the omission of the words of a number of important blues singers of the past and present, such as Blind Blake, Blind Boy Fuller, Walter Davis, Jazz Gillum, Lonnie Johnson, Lightin' Hopkins, Furry Lewis, Horace Sprott, Peetie Wheatstraw, Sonny Boy Williamson, and Muddy Waters;

(continued on page 19)

folk music on STEREO records

by Lee Haring

Although folk music records are now available in stereophonic sound, folk music enthusiasts are slower than other record buyers to go along with the current revolution in the industry. Record companies issuing folk music are equally cautious about releasing stereophonic material now. These are the results of a CARAVAN survey of the current record market.

The stereo revolution began a year ago. Previously the record and hi-fi industry had enjoyed a gigantic boom as the result of the invention of the LP record in 1948. When the boom began to level off, manufacturers wondered how to create another huge demand for records and equipment. Stereo was the answer--two channels, separately recorded, which when reproduced give the illusion of a live performance. The present swing to stereo was kicked off by a daring move on the part of Sidney Frey, dynamic president of Audio Fidelity records. Frey requested the Westrex Corporation, then experimenting with two-channel disc recording, to cut for him an experimental master disc. Westrex agreed, but cautiously cut up the music into disconnected fragments to prevent its commercial use. Undaunted, Frey audaciously pressed and issued 3000 copies of this, the first stereophonic disc to be marketed. From then on, other manufacturers could only follow suit.

Frey's own company, Audio Fidelity, has specialized in high-quality sound with its issues of the *Dukes of Dixieland* and *"Railroad Sounds"*. One Audio Fidelity disc can be classed as folk music--*La Zambra*, featuring flamenco guitarist Fernando Sirvent. It has enjoyed considerable sale, but apparently more to hi-fi addicts than to folk music fans.

Why is stereo so slow to conquer the folk music field? One answer may be the price tag. The average stereo disc costs a dollar more than the same material issued monaurally. Jac Holzman, head of Elektra Records, told Caravan, "You get only half the number of clean pressings from a set of plates. The rate of rejects is higher. Quality control is more difficult. And it seems that people who buy folk records aren't willing to pay the increased cost at this time."

This opinion was echoed by Israel Young, proprietor of The Folklore Center: "Where are these kids going to get \$6 for a record?" He reported that his retail sales of folk music in stereo have been slow.

Another possible reason for the slow growth of stereo folk music is that the folk music enthusiast thinks stereo

requires a considerable additional investment even if he already has good hi-fi equipment. Manufacturers point out, however, that stereo is not synonymous with hi-fi. Stereophonic sound requires only that two channels be separately recorded and reproduced. Experiments by Bell Laboratories as far back as 1953 showed that stereo, even with limited frequency range, sounds better to the ear than the highest monaural hi-fi. The consumer doesn't need a lot of expensive equipment to have stereo in the home.

A practical way of creating stereo in the home was suggested to Ceravan by Bill Fox, head of Counterpoint Records. Fox pointed out first that stereo pickup cartridges are fairly inexpensive. (Electrovoice, leader in the field, sells a standard model for \$5.95.) Fox went on to say, "Ninety percent of table radios have phonograph input jacks. All you have to do is get the cartridge, plug it into your phonograph amplifier, and plug the other lead into your table radio. You will get stereo. And it will sound good, depending on the tone of your table radio. Of course," he added, "you must disconnect the power before doing this because of the danger of shock from an AC-DC radio."

Counterpoint was probably the first company now issuing folk music to record it stereophonically. Fox began the process in February 1955. Elektra, Riverside and Folkways began stereo recording about a year later. All four firms have recorded everything since that time using the new method.

Now many of these records have been issued for sale. Counterpoint has two--FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD, with Michel Larue and Alex Foster, and SMOKY MOUNTAIN BALLADS, with Harry and Jeanie West. Of these, Fox said, the DRINKING GOURD has sold fairly well to those who have stereophonic equipment. These are not necessarily folk music fans, though. "Folk music customers are not yet ready to buy stereo records," said Fox.

Elektra, which has built a reputation on its folk music catalogue, has issued no folk music on stereo except for part of a sampler record, according to Jac Holzman, president. Nor does it have plans to issue any stereo folk music except one record by Sabicas, coming out soon.

"The stereo market that everyone expected to materialize has not yet begun to swing," stated Holzman. "There is very little market except in shops that sell stereo records in an effort to push equipment."

Elektra has released about a dozen stereo records using other program material. "We record everything in stereo. It is no strain for us because we believe we are so advanced technologically over other companies. We always make a monaural tape along with the stereo tape. Many companies find it cheaper to make the monaural tape by mixing the stereo channels."

Holzman's overall view of the potential of stereo seemed to be, "I'll only issue it where it specifically enhances the performance."

Emory Cook, stereo pioneer and head of Cook Records, has said, "Single instruments are naturally the least dramatic subjects for stereo recordings." Folk record businessmen seem to agree. Some see in this fact a reason for the slowness of retail sales so far. A spokesman for

Sam Goody, "world's largest record dealer," has had "not too many requests" for stereo records. "The folkniks are not particularly stereo-minded as yet. Stereo isn't necessary when you are recording one person with one guitar. You don't have to get the wide spacing effect. Folk music will be the last to turn over to stereo."

Holzman agreed with Cook's idea: "Folk music does not benefit much from stereo. A Bikel record with orchestra, such as the RUSSIAN GYPSY or JEWISH FOLK SONGS--yes. But Frank Warner, not so. Stereo discs now are featuring exaggerated separation of microphones. It just ain't natural! Folk music will be the next to last to be affected by stereo. Spoken word recordings, except staged plays, will be last."

Moses Asch, head of Folkways Records and Service Corp., went farther. "I don't believe in it. Either you go for gimmicks or you go for music. I'm interested in folk music. All my competitors are interested primarily in gimmicks and gadgets." Asch, however, admitted, "I've got to go along with the industry. I will be issuing stereo, probably this year, but not folk music."

--Lee Haring

FOLK BLUES (con't)

and a number of female blues singers such as Ma Rainey or Sara Martin who composed some of their own material. Blind Blake and Lonnie Johnson were also significant figures in the evolution of Dixieland jazz, as well as blues singers of importance. A number of blues-singing pianists-composers have been ignored, such as Walter Davis or Roosevelt Sykes. Finally, the omission of Furry Lewis and some of his contemporaries also weakens the appendix on blues guitar, since it was men like Lewis and Mississippi John Hurt who contributed toward the development of interesting right hand techniques.

In retrospect, perhaps I have been overly critical. The 110 songs in this book will provide many enjoyable hours of singing for the folklorist, and for the musical amateur or professional.

The songs do give a good over-all picture of the various types of folk-blues, and the newcomer to the blues idiom will be helped by the musical introduction, and if he is a guitarist, by the guitar chords in the back.

--Dick Weissman

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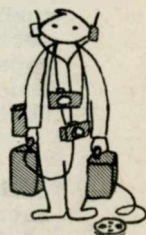
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Folksong and Its Cultural Context

Roger D. Abrahams
Record Review Editor

The city-dweller has long found it difficult to place folk songs in their proper cultural context. It is impossible to fully understand folklore without first knowing what the function of the song or the story is in the lives of those who are performing these elements of a tradition. Seen in isolation, a song may exhibit a certain beauty or humor, but with a growth of knowledge in the uses of that song, so too, appreciation will grow.

In the past, if one wished to acquire this cultural context, he had to become personally associated with the culture in question. Recently, however, a number of records have been issued that include much interesting folk material, and which also contain background material providing some sort of cultural framework.

Perhaps the most exciting record issued recently is BANJO TUNES AND SONGS BY PETE STEELE, Folkways FS 3828 -- recorded and edited by Ed Kehn, for this contains not only banjo solos by one of the best and most versatile of traditional pickers, but his own comments upon the songs which he plays and sings. To those who know Pete's work through his recordings for the Library of Congress (AAFS L 2, A 3 and B 11) his remarks upon the origin of Payday At Coal Creek and Coal Creek March will be of great interest. His little speech on the sanctity of the banjo should amuse everyone. ("The music would run the devil off...It can't be the devil's instrument...I've converted many people with my instrument, the 5-string banjo.")

The instrumentals, the songs, the commentary, strike a beautiful balance. The editor has indeed done a remarkable job. It should be noted that not only does Pete Steele play and sing, but his wife is also heard on a number of songs (including her solo rendition of an interesting version of The House Carpenter.) The Steeles' repertoire includes many of the songs associated with mountain banjo music, but also encompasses revival music that is more often associated with hillbilly performers.

It is on this score that another extremely interesting and useful record surprises the listener. When one thinks of Jean Ritchie and the Ritchie Family, he naturally associates them with a prolific and pure stream of folksong coming from antiquity, both texturally and musically. It is with great surprise that one finds the family not only has its immense store of very old traditional songs, but also a parallel tradition stemming from the sentimental songs of the late 19th and early 20th

centuries. In THE RITCHIE FAMILY OF KENTUCKY, Folkways FA 2316, we are able to visit this unique family and to hear them singing not only Lord Thomas and Fair Ellender together, but also Twilight A-Stealing, ("Twilight a-stealing over the sea/ Shadows are falling dark on the lea";) and in churchified harmony, if I may add.

In this record, we are given the unique opportunity of visiting with the Ritchies as one of the family, for this disc was put together from recordings made at the family home by Jean Ritchie Pickow and her husband, George. Various songs are pieced together with snatches of conversations about the songs, about the family life and its customs, and background on the material being presented, narrated by Jean Ritchie herself. The result is a throbbing experience, of a weaving in and out of the Ritchie life at a whirlwind pace (accentuated by the various levels of recording necessitated by the difference of locales, etc.). This record answers so many important questions. (What was the place of music, dancing, games, in the life of the family?) It also poses some interesting problems. (Jean and her sister, Edna, play a marvelous dulcimer duet in harmony. Is this learned traditionally?)

The Ritchie Family is certainly getting the coverage of the record industry, for besides the Folkways album, Riverside has issued a disc with a different audience in mind. SINGING FAMILY OF THE CUMBERLANDS, Riverside 12-653 -- edited by Kenneth S. Goldstein, is a much more literary rendition of the Ritchie Family cultural setting. In this record, Jean reads passages from her book of the same name (Oxford Press, 1955) and illustrates them with appropriate songs. The results are much smoother, perhaps even more easy to listen to, but lacking in the excitement of the field recording. The incidents described in both records have the same ring of authenticity, but the crackle of the fire, the blurred conversation, the exciting game (which would undoubtedly annoy some listeners) is conspicuously absent in the Riverside disc. It does include some of Jean's best songs, especially notable being her family's version of The Unquiet Grave.

Perhaps the most literary and most interesting of the records containing material of cultural importance is THE SINGING STREETS, Folkways FW 8501 -- edited by Kenneth S. Goldstein. The culture in this case being discussed is not that of the U.S., but of Ireland and Scotland; the performer-discussers, Dominic Behan and Ewan MacColl. Both of these folksingers are also associated with the theater, and this disc exhibits a startlingly successful uniting of folk-material with commentary straight from the stage.

This record is a reconstruction of two similar childhoods in Ireland and in Scotland. The majority of the recollection is carried through a replaying of traditional childhood games, songs, can-rhymes, skip-rope rhymes, and so forth. The recitations are done with a gusto that can only come through a knowledge and understanding of the way children react. But the reconstruction is done from an adult point of view, never stooping to cuteness or to Christopher Robinism, but often ascending to poetic heights. (It is reported that G.B. Shaw said of MacColl that "Apart from myself, MacColl is the only man of genius writing for the theater in England today.")

(continued on page 24)

The
Folklore
Center



(con't from page 21)

"In Glasgow, we lived at the toon-heid, a jungle of tenements as arab as prisons and ware-houses. But if Glasgow was a jungle then Salford was a desert...a petrified desert of blackened and decayed brick;" (MacColl)

And the humor is of the devastating, social kind:

"Like rich families we lived in a big house with a big staircase leading into big rooms; the only difference between us and rich people being that our big residence was shared by twenty other families." (Behan)

Over 100 pieces of children' folklore are included in these reminiscences, many of them calling to mind games we all have played. The power of the material might have been enough for one record.

But the impression that remains is the power of the right image, the metaphor that captures all the defiance and beauty of the childhood experience, while structurally they serve to tie together many pieces of folk-life. "Ours was the wisdom, the poetry, the music they never taught in school."

From the example of these four records, we are able to see a possible direction to be taken in future discs of folk music. The addition of material giving cultural context can heighten the enjoyment of folksongs, games, etc., and judging by these experiments, can also be entertaining and commercially sound.

--Roger D. Abrahams

Addenda: While most of the texts on Riverside's SINGING FAMILY OF THE CUMBERLANDS is taken from Jean Ritchie's book of the same name, some of it was prepared especially for this record.

To my knowledge, the first record to be issued containing commentary by the singer which provides a cultural framework for the music, is BUELL KAZEE SINGS AND PLAYS, Folkways FS 3810 -- edited by G. Bluestein. --RDA

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JOSH

FRANK WARNER

The third volume of OUR SINGING HERITAGE contains songs collected and arranged by Frank Warner. Many of them are previously unrecorded. Selections: The Jolly Tinker; Hi Rinky Dum; Lynchburg Town; Dan Doo; Johnson Boys; Jump Her Juberju; Jamie Judge; Lewiston Falls; We're Coming Idaho; Fod; The Jolly Roving Tar; 'Frisco; Bay of Biscayo; Bony on the Isle of St. Helena; Blackjack Davy; Bold Dickie and Bold Archie; Raccoon; Fresh Peanuts; Victory. Additional accompaniments are by Billy Faier. EKL-153.

ELEKTRA RECORDS

116 west 14th street, new york 11

Letters

from

Readers

Happy Traum
Bronx, N Y

Dear Lee,

While finding the last issue of Caravan quite interesting and enjoyable, I began wondering about the future of the magazine. I envisioned one of two possibilities; either the readers of Caravan would become so interested in their magazine that it would flourish with new material, letters, songs, and articles, and as a result grow and expand, or else the same people who have been writing the articles in the past will continue writing the same articles with different titles and slightly varied points of view, causing an eventual lack of interest and the decline of a fine magazine.

Up to now, I have had no complaint with the material presented, but I feel that a danger point has been reached, for how many times can one read arguments which are strictly a matter of taste and can be argued forever without any satisfactory agreement on any side? "Is Folkmusic Art?", "What is Art?", "What is Folkmusic?", "Can Folkmusic be Commercial and Art at the Same Time?", etc., etc., Of course this type of article is interesting once or twice, and is possibly interesting still, to a small group of people (mostly performers) especially close to the field. But how many people outside of a select few are truly interested in the classification of folksingers, or in the endless argument of whether or not one must be artistic in a performance?

What I'm getting down to is this: Caravan, to remain a success, must get new material. The field of folkmusic is so vast, so varied, that there should be no problem of subject matter if one is interested. Historical information on songs and instruments, not only of the U.S. but of other countries of the world as well; technical information about repairing or building folk-instruments; helpful hints to aspiring youngsters on stage presence, collecting methods, or accompaniment techniques; more personality articles, especially on the ethnic folk; interesting data on songs, or songs your

readers consider interesting and would like to send in; informative articles about a particular phase of folk-music (like Roger Lass' article on Bluegrass); sociological essays using folkmusic as the basis; and so on. This is the kind of article I feel would make Caravan a top-notch magazine, read by thousands rather than hundreds, and ranking with any mag of its kind in the country. It must be enjoyable and educational, designed to be read and appreciated by as wide an audience as possible. This is the way to make people aware of the folkmusic movement, and become interested in it. But it is all up to you and your readers.

Happy Traum

John Gross
Milwaukee, Wis

Dear Lee--

I would like some more information on the TOPIC label. Do you have a copy of their catalog? If not, what is their address? Is it possible to obtain their records here in America? Has Jack Elliott got anything else on records beside BAD MEN AND HEROS ?

John Gross

((For more information on Topic records, and your chances of purchasing them in the US, write to FOLKLORE ASSOCIATES. 421 So. Iseminger St., Philadelphia 47, Pa. They're book and record dealers and can give you full details.))

Irwin Lutzky
Brooklyn, NY

Dear Lee,

On September 13th, I attended a concert at Carnegie Recital Hall, given by Tom Paley, John Cohen and Mike Seeger. The concert was very well attended and if I remember correctly it was sold out. The concert, however, fell very short of its excellent potential, in my estimation, at least. I feel that there was entirely too much tuning of guitars, banjos, and the various assorted instruments. Is that really necessary? I realize there is a certain amount of tuning at every concert but it was overdone. It seemed as if most of the evening were spent on tuning.

Informality at a concert is a good thing but the Messers. Paley, Cohen and Seeger did entirely too much wandering about the stage and seemed very haphazard about the whole thing. This sort of stuff may be very acceptable at Washington Square but when there is an admission fee, the participants should endeavor to put forth a cohesive and smoothly run production. Informality but not looseness should be the rule.

I have noticed these faults at other concerts and do not wish to give the impression that these singers are the only ones subject to criticism. I believe that singers should pay just as much attention to the presentation of their material and relating commentary as to learning the words and music. In fact, a well-presented concert can make mediocre material enjoyable.

Irwin Lutzky

Jan Tangerman
624 Park Avenue
Wilmette, Ill.

Dear Lee,

Paul Clayton spent a few days here after giving a concert at Barat College in Lake Forest, then headed home to finish chinking around his Virginia cabin for the winter. Jimmy MacDonald was around a few weeks ago but he, too, has left for home. Guy Carawan passed through recently on his nationwide tour, and will return for a concert at Woodrow Wilson Jr College on Nov 5th.

Other concerts (past): Sept 27th Theo Bikel and Cynthia Gooding sang in Orchestra Hall, and the following week, Oct 3, Jean Ritchie, Oscar Brand and Josh White, with local folksinger Eve Lill drew a heterogeneous crowd to the same hall. Pete Seeger and Sonny Terry, on the 25th Oct, gave a good show at Orchestra Hall, but were plagued by a horrible sound system. Gerry Armstrong, Win Stracke, and Frank Hamilton, with Studs Terkel as moderator, gave one of their popular "I Come For To Sing" programs on the 16th Oct.

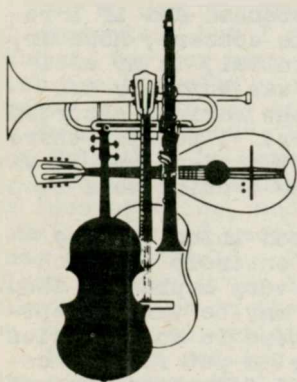
Marilyn Child and Will Holt have been playing at the GATE OF HORN during October, while the Gateway Singers have opened recently at the BLACK ORCHID.

Still to come, at this writing:

Odetta at Mandel Hall, U Chicago: Fri 31 Oct and
Sat 1 Nov

Win Stracke and Frank Hamilton at Fullerton Hall, Sun 14 December, in a program of Art Songs and Folkmusic.

A student Hootenanny at the Old Town School of Folk Music on Sun 9 Nov will feature a short film on antique automobiles, "The Glidden Tour", narrated and sung by Win Stracke with accompaniment by Frank Hamilton. This film was selected to be shown at the Brussels Fair. Singing by the students of OTSFM will follow.



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Speaking of the School, which is doing very well now, and its "Deans" -- Frank Hamilton and Sheila became parents of a 7 lb. 12 oz. boy-child on 22 October, Evan Baird Hamilton. Good news indeed! And Win Stracke's latest record SONGS AMERICA SINGS, on the Golden label, has been given a four-star rating by Billboard.

On Friday 13 Feb., The OTSFM will sponsor Mahalia Jackson and Langston Hughes in Orchestra Hall, with Brother John Sellers, Win and Frank. This will be Mahalia's first appearance in Orchestra Hall, and should be quite an event. Sometime before then the School will present Brother John in concert; details later.

That's about all I can put together now, Lee.

Y'll are doing a fine job, and we wish you success. We're still inviting wandering folksingers to stop with us if they wish...

Jan Targerman

A CRITICAL INQUIRY INTO Ye URBANIZATION OF Ye OLDE TIMEY SONGS, OR "YOU CAN"T HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT"

George Armstrong
Wilmette, Ill.

Dear Lee,

I certainly enjoyed your last issue and I was particularly intrigued by the group of articles by Barry Kornfeld, Pete Seeger, and Roger Lass, all of which revolved around the problem of the urban or "revivalist" group of folk singers. Barry's and Pete's articles took a straightforward approach and didn't attempt to get too involved. However, I think it is Roger Lass's rather sticky prose that will evoke the most controversy. First, let me say that I would agree with Roger's taste in folk music. I know exactly how he feels when he hears these cool jazz and Shoenberg passages creeping into folk song accompaniment. But he can't really claim that this is a violation of rules, because I don't think there are any valid or accepted rules to violate. Folk music is public domain. You pays your money and you takes your choice, and all one can say is "I do (or I don't) like it."

Roger Lass' argument in theory is probably quite valid, but I think in its practical application it breaks down. Folk songs are a product of their environment. For example: the "style" of folksinging found in the Southern mountains is purely an historical accident. If Wolfe hadn't taken Quebec, we might all be singing Old Joe Clarke in French.

Take a song like Pretty Polly. Versions of this song can be found not only in the Southern Appalachians, but in Minnesota, Canada, The British Isles, Australia, and it surely has its counterparts in Scandinavia, and southern Europe. Now, all these versions are different. As the song finds its way into different places it is changed and takes on the characteristics of the culture in which it finds itself. So why can't we have a cool jazz version of Pretty Polly or an Alben Berg atonal version of Pretty Polly? (In fact we do have such versions!) We may not care for them but they are an inevitable result of "urban" folk singing.

Let us take, for example, a chap whose mother came

from -- let's say -- Bulgaria, who played sax in a jazz group through high school and now that he is in college, becomes interested in the 5-string banjo and American folk music. It would be very surprising if the Bulgarian songs of his mother and the jazz playing of his high school days did not have their influence on his interpretations of Southern mountain folk songs. Indeed, unless he simply imitates note for note the singing and playing on Library of Congress records or makes a deliberate conscious effort to stay in the "traditional idiom", any "creative" expression will inevitably reflect his background.

So, "You can't have your cake and eat it too". If folk music is going to be "popular" in urban society then we must expect it to reflect (for better or worse) the myriad influences in that society.

George Armstrong

PLEASE NOTE

We are in the process of compiling a guide to folk music on radio (and TV, if any) for a forthcoming issue of Caravan. If you know of any programs devoted to folk music, or featuring it frequently, we would appreciate your sending us as much information as you can about the programs.

We would like:

City,
Station,
Frequency,
MC or KC,
Days and hours,
and any additional information

that you can supply, such as the program's slant, whether it features live performers and/or records, etc.

Even if you're positive that we already know of the shows you know about, we'd appreciate your bringing them to our attention for this listing.

Write to Lee Shaw
basement
54 E 7th St
New York 3, N Y

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A. W. AUNER, SONG PUBLISHER & PRINTER,
Tenth and Race Sts., Philadelphia, Pa.

OLD GRAY MARE.

As I was a-going to Nottingham fair,
A-riding on horse-back, upon a gray mare,
Her color 'twas black, but the devil a hair,
But what was all yellor, upon my gray mare

My baste she stood still, an' pitched me into the ditch,
My skin she did dirty, my clothes she did bruise;
But I scalded my saddle an' I mounted agnain,
And on my tip-toes I rode her over the plain.

But when I got there not a soul could I see,
The streets they were crowded a-gazing at me,
The bells they did ring, an' the people did stare.
For to see a coach an' six horses drawn by a gray mare.

There was the King, an' the Queen, and a company more,
A-riding on horse-back, an' a-walking before.
There stood a great drummer a-bating a drum,
With his heels in his pockets, before me did run.

Then it snowed, an' it blowed, an' it rained, an' I stood in
the storm,
With my hat in my hand for to keep my head warm.
I axed Madame Paul if she'd fancy me now,
As well as the day that I came from the plow,

Then I'll take my black horse, an' a-fishing I'll go;
A-fishing I'll go whether or no.
My fish turned over, an' my wagon did spill,
I'll sell my gray mare: I'll be damned if I will.

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a guide to the music of

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FAVORITE GOSPEL SONGS (Folkways 2357): This album consists of sixteen old time sacred songs - duets and a few solos by Jeanie. Accompaniments are all by the Wests. Eight selections are with mandolin and guitar, six with banjo and guitar, and two with Dobro and guitar.

SMOKY MOUNTAIN BALLADS (Esoteric ES-545): Harry and Jeanie West on banjo, guitar and also mandolin, assisted by Artie Rose on steel guitar.

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Harry and Jeanie are also heard on:

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RLP 12-617)

SHIVAREE (ES-538) with Jean Ritchie, Oscar Brand and Tom Paley

They also have one 78 rpm release available on "Country Church" label. The titles are What Would The Profit Be/Sunny Side of Life.

Any of these records can be ordered from

The Folklore Center
110 MacDougal Street
New York 12, N.Y.

or

F-L Music Company
c/o Harry West
2680 Heath Avenue
Bronx 63, N.Y.

banjo skins...

an analysis

--Winnie Winston

"There's more than one way to skin a banjo--"
--Folk saying

The type of skin selected for use on a particular banjo is dependent upon the player's needs and the instrument itself. In general, a skin which is tightly stretched will give a brilliant tone, particularly if it is a thin skin. The thicker and looser the skin is, the more the sharpness and brilliance of the tone will decline. The Scruggs-picker who requires a brilliant tone with the emphasis on individual notes is best off with a thin and tightly stretched skin on his banjo. The skin used for frailing can afford to be thicker and somewhat looser, since this type of skin will maintain chords as well as individual notes.

Until recently, all banjo skins were made out of calf skin. The price depended on how evenly the hide was cured. Much to the dismay of many banjoists, a plastic skin is now coming into popular use. Each type has its advantages.

Calf skins come either ready-mounted on a skin ring or flat, to be stretched and mounted by hand. Both are affected by moisture in the air, and both can stretch considerably throughout their life. The ready-mounted skins are generally more expensive than the unmounted ones and since a considerable amount of slack is found in these skins they usually have to be tightened more than properly hand-stretched skins. This sometimes results in a lowering of the tension hoop so that the skin cannot be tightened any more. This disadvantage far outweighs the advantage of having the skin already mounted. Actually an unmounted skin can be put on a banjo within half an hour.

All calf skins will lose some of their brilliance in damp weather since the hide absorbs moisture from the air, stretches slightly, and loses tension. This is not true with the plastic heads.

Plastic banjo heads come ready-mounted in standard sizes, but can be had, custom made, in other sizes at additional cost. These heads, made of mylar plastic,

have to be tightened just once or twice. They will not stretch and are not affected by weather conditions.

They are quite thin and can be put under more tension than most calf skins, which makes them especially suitable for Scruggs-style picking. There is very little, if any, loss in tone over a calf skin. At present all new Gibson banjos are being factory-equipped with plastic skins.

Don't think, though, that these skins are only good for Scruggs-picking. Depending on their tension, they can be used for frailing and other types of picking with excellent results.

Since the plastic skins are not porous like calf skin, they tend to stay much cleaner. Whether this is an advantage or disadvantage is a matter of personal opinion. I have heard that plastic skins tend to flake when struck repeatedly with fingerpicks, but I have found nothing to back up this statement. (A word of caution: if you are used to applying a dab of glue to hold the bridge in place, be sure that you are using a glue that won't harm the plastic skin.)

Here is a listing of a few brands of skins and the sources from which they can be purchased:

JOSEPH ROGERS skins are fairly good, although not as good as they once were. The three grades in descending order of price are The Joseph Rogers Three Star, The Rogers Two Star (Union Brand) and The Rogers Minstrel Brand. The prices range from \$6 to \$15. These skins may be purchased in many music supply stores, including the following shops in New York City:

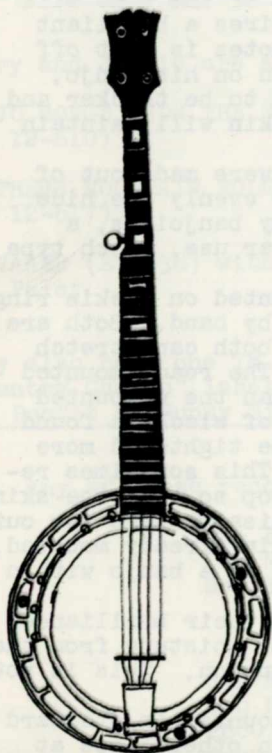
Harry Newcorn
140 Park Row

Silver & Horland
110 Park Row

John D'Angelico
40 Kenmare St.

The VEGA Company (155 Columbus Ave., Boston, Mass.) has banjo skins similar in quality to the Rogers hides. The 11" VEGA 5 STAR lists for \$15.50 regular and \$16.50 ready-mounted. The 11" VEGA 2 STAR is \$7 unmounted and \$9 mounted. The skins for a 12" head are around \$15-18.

The AMRAWCO "Professional" skins (American RAWhide CO.) are at present slightly better in quality than the Rogers



skins and can be purchased for about \$6 to \$10 at Harry Newcorn's.

Harry Newcorn also sells a NEWCORN Brand hide for about \$2. This skin gives a fairly good tone, but is not as fine in quality as the more expensive hides. If you prefer tight calf skin to plastic and break many skins because of the tension on them, the NEWCORN might be of special interest to you.

If you are willing to depart from convention and want an excellent buy, the plastic skin is available from

Eddie Bell
101 West 46th St
New York City

These skins come ready-mounted. The 11" will fit most banjos (Gibson, Vega, Bacon, etc.) and will cost about \$8. A larger size is available for \$10, which will fit the larger size Paramount banjos. Eddie is also having some skins made up in the 10-3/4" size for such instruments as the small Dobsons and Stewarts. The price of these is not known as of this writing. It is recommended that, if you go to buy a plastic skin, you take your banjo along to be sure of getting a proper fit.

If you're buying an unmounted hide and stretching it yourself, get a size larger than the rim of the banjo; i.e., if the rim of the banjo is 11" get a 14" hide.

--Winnie Winston

(A future issue of Caravan will include an article on mounting your own banjo skins. --ed.)

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An Important Announcement
For Students of American
Labor Songs...

I.W.W.

Song Collection

On June 29, 1958, John Neuhaus, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, died in San Francisco. He had devoted much of his life to collecting the songs and folklore of the labor movement. He left a unique collection of I.W.W. songbooks which he wanted to make available to students of American society.

Twenty-nine songbooks were printed between 1909 and 1958. Neuhaus had obtained all except the 2nd, 11th, and 12th. From The University of Washington, San Francisco's labor folklorist, Archie Green, obtained for him a microfilm copy of an unnumbered, undated book which is either the 11th or the 12th. It was his hope that individuals and institutions holding Wobbly song material not found in his collection might make their data available on microfilm to supplement his gathering.

Due largely to the efforts of Archie Green and Page Stegner, the Neuhaus collection is now available to scholars on microfilm through the Stanford University Library. In addition to the songbooks, the collection includes three brochures and three song cards printed previously to edition one of the LITTLE RED SONGBOOK; an earlier Joe Hill songbook; a Butte miners' songbook showing the Wobbly influence; and copies of the L.R.S.B. in Swedish, Finnish and Russian. Some more recent material is included; a Labor Arts phonograph record brochure done by Billy Friedland and Joe Glazer, and a Stavis and Harmon Chapbook, and also some peripheral data--a group of Wobbly stickers, a quantity of sheet music, and an original sheet printing of Father Hagerty's Wheel of Fortune.

For students of American labor songs, this collection represents one of the most valuable and complete gatherings of its kind in existence.

Copies of the microfilm can be obtained from:

F.J. Priddle
Asst. to Director
Stanford University Library
Stanford, Calif.

at a cost of approximately \$8. #ML548 - I 556.

Folk Music

Scene

NEW ENGLAND SCENE:

Pete Seeger and Sonny Terry (concerts)

Dec 5th - BOSTON - 8:30 PM at Symphony Hall - tickets
\$3, 2.50 & 1.80

Dec 6th - SPRINGFIELD - 8 PM at Tech H.S. Auditorium

Dec 14 - PROVIDENCE - 2:30 PM at Alumnae Hall

In Boston a concert series is scheduled at Central YMCA, 316 Huntington Ave., a concert to be given the second Friday of each month. Admission is by series ticket. If space permits, single admissions will be sold at the door for 90¢ each. Scheduled performers are:

Dec 12th - 11 PM - Rev Gary Davis and Barry Kornfeld

Jan 9th - 8:30 - Paul Clayton

Feb 13th - to be announced

Mar 13th - 8:30 PM - Frank Hamilton

April 10th - Songfest
for members. Artists
to be announced.

Also scheduled in Boston:
March 20th at Symphony
Hall - The Weavers.

For details on all
of the above concerts,
contact:

FOLKLORE PRODUCTIONS
P O Box 227
Boston, Mass.



SATURDAY NIGHT

FOLKWAY CONCERT SERIES

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JEAN RITCHIE -BARRY KORNFELD

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NEW YORK SCENE:

The Metropolitan New York Council of the American Youth Hostels presents two series of concerts. One, a series of weekly informal concerts given at the AYH headquarters, 14 West 8th St., is scheduled Friday nights at 11:15. Admission is \$1. Featured performers will be:

- December
5 - The Shanty Boys
(Mike Cohen, Lionel Kilberg & Roger Sprung)
12 - Pete Haas
19 - Dan Isaacson
26 - Tom Paley
- January
2 - The Shanty Boys
9 - Jimmy MacDonald
16 - Arun Foxman
23 - Helen Dunlop
30 - To be announced
- February 6 - The Shanty Boys

For full details on AYH's SATURDAY NIGHT FOLKWAY CONCERT SERIES see page 40.

At the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association's KAUFFMANN CONCERT HALL, a series of folk music concerts is scheduled by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York. Series tickets at \$10 and individual tickets at \$2.50. The concerts will begin at 8:30 PM.

- Dec 13 - ODETTA
Jan 17 - JOSH WHITE
Jan 31 - TURKISH FOLKSTERS
Feb 7 - MARAIS AND MIRANDA
Feb 21 - SIDOR BELARSKY
Feb 28 - WILLIAM CLAUSON
Apr 4 - RICHARD DYER-BENNET

For regular announcements of the series of monthly concerts scheduled by the FOLKSINGERS GUILD, send your name and address to BOB BRILL, 59 W 8th St., New York 11.

NEWS NOTE FROM ELEKTRA RECORDS: CHAIN GANG sung by Josh White will be ELEKTRA's featured December release. This unique album presents the well-known folksinger in a program of unusual material with strong dramatic impact. Mr White is supported by chorus and instrumental backing.

Also scheduled for Dec 1st release are The Randolph Singers in THE CATCH CLUB, a collection of provocative catches, rounds and glees. This outstanding STEREO DISC is packaged with a 36-page book of words and music.

ELEKTRA's president, Jac Holzman, announced that the company's new expanded quarters have been completed.

Included on the premises are executive offices, production department and shipping facilities. A major improvement has been the addition of extensive recording and studio space which is being rented to the Trade. All ELEKTRA recording sessions are held in the new 14th Street Studio.

Jac Holzman stating that the company plans to issue about 30 LP's next year, commented that ELEKTRA preferred to issue a smaller number of really worthwhile recordings and concentrate on exploiting these to the fullest.

ELEKTRA RECORDS -- 116 West 14th Street -- New York 11

RECORD NEWS: New releases and discs to be released soon by FOLKWAYS RECORDS include SONGS WITH GUITAR by Walt Robertson; CISCO HOUSTON SINGS; GAZETTE by Pete Seeger; NEGRO FOLKSONGS by Elizabeth Cotton; AMERICAN GUITAR by Ed Badaux; PETE STEELE; and an AMERICAN ANTHOLOGY edited by Harold Courlander, with notes by Charles Edward Smith. In preparation at FOLKWAYS for future release are a disc by Sonny Terry, J.C. Burris and Sticks McGhee; a record by the New City Lost Ramblers (John Cohen, Tom Paley and Mike Seeger); Folksongs of Maine by Sandy Ives; and a collection of newly composed Gospel songs to be titled TAMBOURINES TO GLORY.

From A-V RECORDS: Fred Gerlach's GALLOWS POLE is now available.

From RIVERSIDE: Billy Faier's TRAVELLIN' MAN should be available within the month.

MORE NEW YORK NEWS: A concert by BARRY KORNFELD and MIMI SEGAL is scheduled Friday, Feb 6th, 8:30 PM at McMillan Theatre, Columbia University (116 E Broadway). Nominal admission.

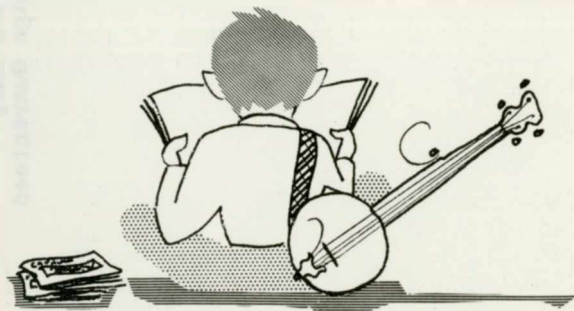
A concert by HAPPY TRAUM and DICK WEISSMAN is planned for mid-December. Check with The Folklore Center for details.

An unexpected change in performers was necessary for the Folksingers Guild concert of November 21st, when Luke Faust was suddenly drafted. The concert was originally scheduled with Dick Rosmini, Luke Faust, and Margo Schnee. Fiddler Danny Z., and banjoist-guitarist Dick Greenhaus filled in for Luke.

WISCONSIN NEWS: Concerts scheduled in Milwaukee include THE GATEWAY SINGERS and the KAVKAZ DANCERS OF MILWAUKEE (Dec 27th & 28th); SONNY TERRY and BROWNIE MCGHEE (Feb 15th); and THEODORE BIKEL (Feb 20th). For details, contact TOPPING & CO., 736 N. 2nd St., Milwaukee 3, Wisc.

The Bay Area's ROLF CAHN will be singing at Cosmo Alley in Los Angeles during the month of December. On Jan 17th, he will begin a concert tour with an appearance in Portland. From there, he will travel to Minnesota, Chicago, and New England.

IMPORTANT!



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