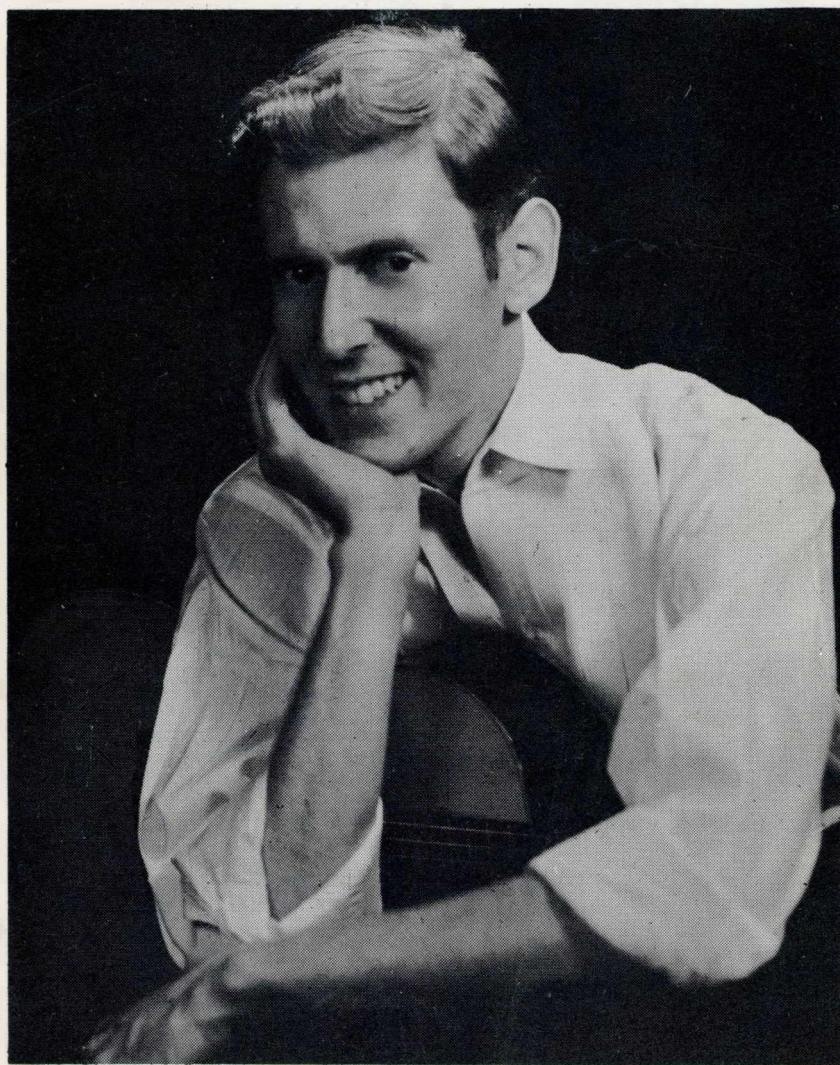


Oct-Nov

35c

# CARAVAN

folkmusic magazine



Frank Hamilton

# EDITORIAL NOTES

**PLEASE NOTE:** By October 1st, 1958, Caravan, like the boll weevil, will be looking for a home. That is to say, the editor will no longer be living at the old address, and as of this typing, no new home has been found. Therefore, until further notice, please address all mail to

Lee Shaw  
c/o The Folklore Center  
110 MacDougal Street  
New York 12, N.Y.

Speaking of addresses, if you move, and you're a subscriber, you have to send me your change of address, for (unless you advise the post office to forward third class mail) your subscription copies are returned to me. And it is just impossible to send out duplicate copies, or re-mail your returned copies when they've been returned for this reason.

Last month copies were returned from Dave Sternlight, Don Brown, and Mike & Jo Wernham. Sternlight has been located in the wilds of Brooklyn, but if anyone knows the whereabouts of Brown or the Wernhams, please have them send us their correct addresses.

CARAVAN needs material. There are a lot of you reading this whom we don't know personally and therefore cannot contact personally. But you have ideas, and because of that we need you. We need articles, news notes, songs, letters and photographs. We want articles that contain new information, express fresh points of view, add to discussions under way, or might start fresh discussions. If you have something to say pertinent to the field, write it and send it along. We want news notes about everything that's happening in the field. While we may not print them all, we like to know what's going on. We especially want songs that you have collected outside of the urban folksinging crowd. Send them along and tell us where you got them. As to letters, they're the life-blood of the magazine. It is your letters, your comments on each issue, that will guide us in planning future issues. If Caravan is to grow editorially as well as physically, it will be through your comments, your suggestions, your ideas. (All letters are considered for publication unless they're clearly marked otherwise.) Whatever you have to say, even if you want to blast off our individual or collective heads, please write. And if you want to beat the deadline on the next issue, please write soon.

If you have friends who might be interested in Caravan, send us their names and addresses and we'll send them sample copies.

--Lee Shaw

## Caravan

## folkmusic magazine

October-November 1958

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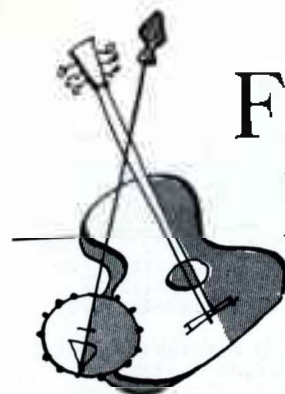
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## Frank Hamilton

An Impression  
by Mark Morris

Frank Hamilton has managed a remarkable feat: he has become at the age of twenty-four something of a legend. He is that rarity which many folksingers claim to be and few are -- a folksinger's folksinger. His praises are loudly sung -- at least by those who have been around long enough to know him personally. For, if one didn't know Frank, one would have little chance to hear him. He has been in that remote but receptive outpost of folk music, Chicago, for nearly a year and a half. Except for accompaniments on a couple of albums (ART OF THE 5-STRING BANJO, THE LEGEND OF ROBIN HOOD and one band on BANJOS, BANJOES AND MORE BANJOS) he has managed to remain unrecorded. That is until last month when Elektra Records managed to get a few selections down on tape. These numbers will be included in Volume II of OUR SINGING HERITAGE, to be released shortly.

At first sight Frank Hamilton appears a slightly disheveled basketball player. He has an easy, smiling gait. His strong, well-formed hands are punctuated by the cuffs of his white shirt jutting out below the sleeves of his sweater. At first he seems distant, reserved, difficult, but the moment something real happens -- a song, a remark, anything -- Frank responds with a directness and an openness almost frightening. If he likes a singer, a song, a bit of guitar work, he announces it immediately and un-self-consciously with a grin that slashes across his face and a nodding of his head to himself. "Yes, yes." Something sloppy or wrong or tasteless will bring an equally spontaneous grimace.

Frank was born in New York City in 1934. He attended Los Angeles City College as a "Commercial Music major" and played what he describes as "fourth trombone in a dance band". He was married in November, 1957. His lovely wife, Sheila, a painter, expects a baby this Fall. When asked if it would be a son or a daughter, Frank replied, "Actually, we're expecting a stork."

His interest in folk music dates from about 1950. The original impetus was provided, as for so many others of the current crop of folksingers, by Burl Ives. Frank put in the traditional apprenticeship of a folksinger, touring the South (with Jack Elliott, and Guy Carawan), singing and playing on street corners and in bars, venturing into the Greater Smokies (you know, the ones folkier than the Lesser Smokies) to gather material. Here he met up with a sturdy denizen of the greeny woods who bought bootleg liquor from a High Sheriff and claimed

to have written Little Maggie. Since every distaff member of his family was named Maggie, Frank is inclined to believe him.

In November, 1957, Frank founded, with Win Stracke and Gertrude Soltker, the Old Town School of Folk Music. The name isn't quite as quaint as it seems, for it derives from the Old Town district of Chicago in which the school is located. Peak enrollment was 175. Frank teaches in the instrumental department. The purpose of this highly imaginative experiment is "to develop a social teaching method for folk music". Teaching is done in groups, with provision for song swapping at coffee breaks. Lectures and concerts are also part of the curriculum.

Frank's voice is rather ordinary, with a slight vibrato, but he has developed it into a well-controlled instrument, variable enough to meet the demands of many types of songs and expressive enough to sing them movingly. However, his principal reputation is as an instrumentalist. He plays six-string guitar, twelve-string guitar, banjo, harmonica, and -- I'll wager -- would try his hand at any other type of folk instrument that happened to be lying around. Negro music -- work songs and the blues -- seems to be his chief pre-occupation, but he also does songs from the Southern mountains, England, Africa, Israel -- and whatever else happens to catch his interest.

Frank's aims for the future? He says, "Ultimately, concert work as a performer. I would like to get into a good group -- or form one. For now, I'll go on teaching at the Old Town school until it can stand on its own two feet and I can take off."

--Mark Morris



# Frank Hamilton

An Appreciation  
by Erik Darling

Just being around Frank Hamilton, talking to him and listening to him play and sing, is an inspirational experience. One of the exciting things about much of Frank's work is the influence of jazz. This influence shows up in Frank's choice of chords and in much of singing. His voice at times will sound like the wail of a trombone or the blast of a trumpet. His choice of notes often reminds one of the type of down-to-earth feeling found in Negro gospel singing. However, Frank's high regard for the value of "delving deeply into the traditional roots of all kinds of music" makes even the most wild of his arrangements more true to the traditional aspects of a particular song than most of our so-called purists, and at the same time gives his material a freshness and life so necessary for folk music.

Frank has travelled through the South of the United States collecting folk songs and absorbing the culture and history that have gone into the growth of much of American folk music. He has spent much time specifically in the Great Smokies, where he has lived with mountain people.

Frank's banjo playing has the wildness and often that wonderful lonely quality found only in Southern mountain music. He has a very imaginative style which is definitely his own, even though many of the pickings and pluckings he uses are technically the same as those used by most other banjoists in the folk field. His use of intricate-sounding but simple rhythms and harmonies makes one conscious of the fact that there is a creative mind at work.

Frank is equally at home on the guitar. When he plays a blues, or one of his arrangements, or a simple four-four background, it is evident that he has control over his instrument and that his choice of notes and chords comes from Frank, not the guitar. The guitar is merely a tool he is using to express himself. He plays primarily with his fingers (much three-finger-picking stuff), but he is also very handy with a flat pick. I believe Frank has a greater interest in



the guitar at this point because of its greater musical possibilities.

Frank's singing has strength and honesty. His range seems to be tenor-baritone, depending on what notes he happens to be singing. One of the interesting aspects of his voice is a very quick vibrato (similar to the vibrato found in flamenco singing) that appears now and then. This adds an unusual and wonderful texture to his voice. Frank can be very gentle in his singing, but his voice is not what you would call sweet. I would say that Frank sings with balls.

I would like at this point to quote Frank's own words, from which I stole a line earlier. "I would like to see more people delving deeply into the traditional roots of all kinds of music. Imitation from recordings is a dangerous thing if it stops just there. In the new tradition of folk music there is an improvisational feeling that is becoming more and more apparent."

Good luck to you, Frank Hamilton, you are very important to us.

--Erik Darling.

## FOLK MUSIC

## AS ART

by Barry Kornfeld

While leafing through the Fall 1957 issue of SING OUT I ran across this quote from Richard Dyer-Bennet: "More tripe than sense is currently being written and spoken about folksong singers. Bear in mind that the word 'folk' comes from a time when there was a peasantry. 'Folksinging', therefore, does not necessarily mean the same thing. Most so-called folksingers today are metropolitan reared intellectuals pretending to be peasants... There is the true folksinger, who is a real primitive; and there is the minstrel, who is a trained musician not aping the folk. Those in between are quacks."

In my earlier years in folksong Dyer-Bennet's comments along these lines always infuriated me (as they did many of the SING OUT readers who furiously objected with letters to the editor). However, if one considers folksong singing as an art, and if one thinks upon the basis of any art, one will find more sense than tripe in Dyer-Bennet's views. Not that I am in total agreement. Mr Dyer-Bennet and I would probably have great disagreement on the kind of training a folk artist should have. Though I'm not sure, I'm under the impression that concert-style singing and instrumentation are the "correct" training advocated by Dyer-Bennet. My own view is somewhat clearer.

Before I launch into a discussion of the disagreements, let me expand the points of agreement. (from my own point of view, naturally). A tree may be very beautiful but it is not art. Natural objects in natural settings are beautiful (or ugly) through no act of their own, or anyone else's. In order for something to be art it must be the end result of a conscious (therefore human) process. Art must be an artifact. Ethnic folk music may be very beautiful, but it is comparatively unselfconscious and the result of a comparatively unselfconscious process. To the ethnic folk, their music was almost as natural as their speech. Just as the tree, the songs, were naturally beautiful...but not art.

Sheer and unquestioning imitation of the product of someone else's culture is not the job of an artist, it is the work of a kind of historian or keeper of the archives -- like a phonograph record. It rules itself out as art because it isn't self-expression; it isn't selective; it uses the bad, good, and indifferent parts of the raw materials, of nature, of the ethnic music. It makes a sacred cult of tradition which prevents change

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and stagnates growth, without which no art can exist. There is a place for the purist, the ethnologist, the imitator, but it is not on the stage as an artist.

The folk artist uses folk music as a basis for his art. He has selected the folk idiom to express himself. He uses those parts of the idiom with which he can successfully build upon and express himself. The artist can't be a purist for he must discard those sacred elements which do not speak for him artistically. Then he grows upon his basis. He creates new things with his folk tools. He expresses the material in a way that answers for him in New York, 1958, not a Kentucky field worker in 1848. This is one of the beauties of folk music. It is solid, yet it is elastic.

Many readers, at this point, will be clamoring to cry out at me that they have magnificently artistic recordings of ethnic folksingers. Yes -- I don't doubt or deny that. But think on this: ethnic folksingers were not recorded at random. They had to be good enough for the scholar to consider taping them, for the producer to consider releasing their work on a commercial disc. Essentially what I'm saying is that the particular folk who were recorded were conscious folk artists for the most part. Their approach was usually quite typical of the individual. That their individual approach was very much in a particular folk idiom is no surprise since they lived in the culture from which the idiom sprang. If the modern urban folk artist is not quite in the idiom, it is because he is a product of a different environment.

Let me now get to what I would guess my disagreement with Dyer-Bennet would be. Leadbelly is a folk artist -- a minstrel -- to me. I don't think that Dyer-Bennet would think so, because Leadbelly's training wasn't so precise. Leadbelly is the prime example of an ethnic folk who undoubtedly was a conscious artist. His technique, feeling, and concern for his music went far beyond that of his fellow folk. His music was, without a doubt, "in the idiom". Yet it was without a doubt his own.

The non-ethnic folksinger often cannot stay strictly within the folk idiom and remain artistically expressive. Some folk musicians, like Dick Weissman, can stay very much within folk bounds and still make very far out music which is artistically satisfying. Others, like Erik Larling, often go beyond traditional limits, borrowing from jazz, classical music, etc., to satisfy their artistic pursuits. Both approaches are valid because both are conscious art. It is important for the folk artists who reach beyond tradition to recognize and acknowledge their bases -- and most of them do.

--Barry Kornfeld

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# British Record Scene

## No. 1. The "Topic" label

This was originally a private organization issuing its records in totals of 100 of each copy -- a procedure made necessary by the peculiar British tax laws. (It is allowed to sell records of an 'educational or cultural' value, of which not more than 100 are pressed, without paying purchase tax -- normally 60%. This makes it just possible to produce for enthusiasts in spite of the high costs of pressing in small quantities.)

At first a sub-section of the Workers Music Association, recently Topic decided to 'go commercial' (without altering their musical policy) and discs are now pressed in quantity -- and where British vocalists are involved it is intended to make the records available in America.

On the current small catalogue are various Paul Robeson items such as TRC 95 & 96, Joe Hill/John Brown's Body, and Kevin Barry/Four Immigrant Generals and an LP recorded in London -- whilst Robeson was still in America -- of a trans-Atlantic private broadcast, LOT17 containing eleven songs.

Some American artists who recorded for Topic whilst on visit to London are Peggy Seeger (TRC 107 & 108 Freight Train/Cumberland Gap and Child of God/Pretty Little Baby; 1019 -- An LP -- with eight folk songs of the type The Lady of Cardale, The Fair Maid By The Shore, etc.; and a seven inch LP -- 137pm, not an LP -- of 'folky' children's songs), her brother Pete Seeger on TRC 92 Talking Union Blues/Dark as a Dungeon, and Pete with Robeson and The Weavers on TRC 28, Our Song Will Go On/The Peerskill Story. All these are 'folk-folk' music, genuine untouched stuff with no effort to modernize or impose a beat. In the same category also comes another seven inch LP by a Scottish artist who made her reputation in a different sphere. Ex-skiffler Nancy Whisky chants very prettily a selection of six titles originating from various parts of Great Britain on 7T10. (N.B. In the commercial world Nancy is singing very much this sort of music on her TV appearances, but on the stage "Nancy Whisky and her Feetollers" are definitely a beat-type skiffle group of the Freight Train era. Like Rory McEwan and Lonnie Donegan -- both Scots by the way -- she is getting the best of both worlds singing the real-folk for pleasure whilst maintaining her money-valuable public reputation playing the beat-stuff (skiffle, etc.)).



The next category of Topic records is Irish Polk. Now they do have one shellac TAC 99, by Margaret Barry, If You Ever Go To Ireland The Barmy Song, which is the usual sort of sentimental rubbish the unsophisticated think of when you mention Irish music, but their best issues are two eight-inch LPs (yes, 8" -- they certainly do experiment, this bunch) entitled Parts I & II of "Irish Songs of Resistance" (numbers are T3 and T4). These are all ballads or sagas of the various revolts made by Ireland in the period of its subjugation to English tyranny, or of the various actions taken by the English military to maintain itself and are the stuff and salt of the history of Ireland -- its real tradition in song. The singer is Patrick Galvin, accompanied -- mainly musically -- by Al Jeffery (giving an instrumental accompaniment of none, one or two of banjo and guitar to different songs). Titles are Kelly The Boy From Lillan, The Massacre at Belle-en Green, Bold Robert Emmett, The Men of the Sea, The Pair at Curlewmore, The Landing of the Men (on T3 and on T4), The Bold Fenian Men (Sort of the British Brotherhood -- not the commercial song Glory-O), Glavin's Dragoon, The Fuggy Dew (the Irish rebel song, not Josh White's Fuggy Puggy Dew), Whack Pol Diddle, The Smashing of the Van, The Soldier's Song.

Now some some earlier issues -- once more on eight-inch LPs. First there are some 'ships music'. Although sea-shanties, most of these are unlike anything you have heard before. There are some 'heave-ho, me hearties' verses, but not many. Most of the songs are genuine sailors' oratory -- straight from the fo'c'sle (not from the decks of penpushing landlubbers). The famous Scottish folk-singer Ewan MacColl is joined by A.L. Lloyd and chorus on T7 & T8. ROW BULLIES ROW contains Row Bullies Row, The Quail Ship's Captain, Johnny Todd, The Dreadnought, Paddy Davis, Santy Anna, Blood Red Roses. THE BLACKBULL LINE contains The Blackbull Line, Do Me Ama, The Handsome Cabin Boy, A Hundred Years Ago, Stymalongo, The Coast of Fog, The Dancer, and Santy Anna. THE SHUTTLE AND CAGE is a collection of yet another kind of folk music, a kind that can possibly be compared to Topic's IRISH SONGS OF RESISTANCE in a way. For these songs come from the day-to-day struggle of the worst treated part of the working nation to carry out their daily labours and to keep body and soul together whilst avoiding the dangers of their employment, failing WIM passages, crashing trains, fires, explosions, foul weather, etc. Incidentally MacColl has edited a book of words and music of these songs which has been published very cheaply by the Workways' Music Association (the organisation that originally spawned 'Topic'). The titles on the LP are The Wark of the Weavers, The Plantyre Explosion, Moses of the Mill, Fourpence A Day, Champion at Keeping Them Rolling, The Four Loom Weaver, The Flooded Bean, Coaster Bailor's Engine, The Grosford Locomotive, Cannally Cannally, The Coal-Owner and the Pitman's Wife, Poor Paddy Works On The Railway.

Only just issued is another of the Topic innovations, the seven inch LP (LP, not EP -- 13cm) which should have been included in the first section of this article, 'folksy' music. The items chosen are less obscure than those in Nancy Whiskey's seven-inch LP, in fact not only in Britain, but throughout the English-speaking world: I Gave My Love A Cherry, or the Irish Country, The Kitchen are Wing. Other titles are the Irish Wakes at Malin, The Cockney Poor and Ragging Boy, the North-

continued on page 14.

# Too many people listen to me - AND NOT TO THE PEOPLE I LEARNED FROM

by Pete Seeger

When an audience applauds me for some little banjo piece like Arkansas Traveler I get a funny feeling inside me. I feel like telling them: "You should hear Robert Smith of Virginia play that; he makes great music out of it". Or when someone writes that they like the way I play Coal Miner's March, I write them and suggest they listen to a man who really knows how to play it: Pete Steele, of Hamilton, Ohio. He recorded it for the Library of Congress twenty years ago, and I can't imagine it ever being done better by the greatest musicians on earth.

Frankly, it's embarrassing to think of the number of people listening to me, when they should be listening to the kind of people I learned from. Write to the Folklore Section, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. They'll send you a list of the recordings they have available. Or get hold of the Folkways Records 'Anthology of American Folk Music' with eighty-four sides dubbed from the early country music recordings of Victory, Columbia, Brunswick, et al. And I'm looking forward to the day when some company releases a whole 12" LP full of nothing but the singing and banjo picking of the late Uncle Dave Macon.

Perhaps the role of performers such as myself should best be thought of as that of an intermediary. We can introduce music to audiences to whom the straight stuff would seem too raw, crude, or unintelligible. We also have the advantage of being able to present a broader picture of folk music than any true folk musician could. A true folk musician may be a genius at his or her own kind of music -- but that one kind is liable to be all he knows.

However, having been introduced to folk music, the listener should go on and hear it done by people who have been raised on it since they were knee high, who have it in their bones, whose music blends in with their lives, the way music always ought to.

Thanks to LP records we can do this. I've just been listening to some of the world's greatest choral music: "Murderer's Home", an LP put together by Alan Lomax of field recordings of Negro work songs, which he took down at a Mississippi prison farm fifteen years ago. Some day a young composer will make a great opera out of this music (but I

doubt if it will be any greater than the original singing on this record).

Of course, when it comes to making music yourself, I don't think it's possible or desirable to imitate slavishly and mechanically, any more than it is desirable to have anyone slavishly imitate me. We are all in the process of building up new traditions out of many old ones, and as folks change, folk music will. But we will do a better job of building up new traditions when we take time to learn the best of the old. How else can we pass it on?

--Pete Seeger

\*Nixa Record NJL 11 - Order from Dye Group Record Sales Ltd.  
66 Haymarket  
London SW 1, England  
Price? - it's a 12" lp

(See also Tradition TLP 1020 Negro Prison Songs From The Mississippi State Penitentiary collected by Alan Lomax --ed)

#### BRITISH RECORD SCENE

continued from page 12.

umberland Keep Your Feet Still, Geordie Hanny, and included for good measure is the Australian The Drover's Dream. The disc is called ROUND AND ROUND WITH THE JEFFERSONS -- who are folk singer Al Jeffery (with acoustic and electric banjos), arranger-guitarist Ted Ward, guitarist-vocalist Ted Andrews, and singing actress Barbara Young.

The rest of the 'Topic' records currently available are by the citizen of the world who is claimed by both America and Britain, Rambling Jack Elliott, who sings, plays harmonica and strums guitar, two at a time!

Solo, Jack has introduced three shellacs, TRC 98/103/104 Talking Miner Blues/Pretty Boy Floyd, Old Blue/Rambling Blues, Streets of Laredo/Boll Weevil. Also two LPs, the eight-inch WOODY GUTHRIE'S BLUES and the ten-inch JACK TAKES THE FLOOR. The former, T5, like his Talking Miner Blues, is very down to earth working man stuff: Talking Columbia Blues, Talking Dust-bowl Blues, The 1913 Massacre, Hard Travelling, The Ludlow Massacre, Talking Sailor Blues. (A talking blues is what it says, talking in rhythm to the accompaniment of a guitar blues played 'riff-style'). 10T15 is city folk music: San Francisco Bay, Ol' Riley, Boll Weevil, Red Bug Blues, New York Town, Black Baby, Grey Goose, Mule Skinner's Blues, Dink's Song, Cocaine. Also, together with his current buddy Darrell Adams -- another string plunking singer -- Jack has the ten-inch LP 10T14 THE RAMBLING BOYS, mainly Texas-style American folk. Rich and Rambling Boys, Buffalo Skinners, Wish I Was A Rock, State of Arkansas, Mother's Not Dead, East Virginia Blues, The Old Bachelor, Danville Girl, The Death of Mr Garfield, Roll On Buddy.

In somewhat similar style is 10T11, another ten-inch LP, by guitarist-vocalist John Gibbon with titles of the type John Henry and Stackolee.

--G.P. Stanton  
Glasgow, Scotland



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# With My Ear To The Ground

One of the biggest things that's happened in radio recently - it's attracted a lot of favourable notice from reviewers and others - was a programme called THE BALLAD OF JOHN AXON, which I should have said something about earlier. Unfortunately, I didn't get around to hearing it broadcast until it was aired for the second time.

Effectively, John Axon did a Casey Jones. He was an engine-driver (engineer in American parlance) for British Railways. He was driving a heavy goods train along a steep rise near Burton, the other side of which was a dangerous downward run for which it was essential to have good brakes. As his train reached the top of the hill, a faulty connection in the brake system blew out, pulling the cab of the engine with scalding steam and preventing either Axon or his fireman from reaching the regulator to slow the engine down. Axon told his fireman to jump for it, and himself remained with the train until it crashed into the rear of a slow-moving freight ahead of it on the downward gradient, trying to stand the pain of the steam long enough to shut down the power. For this, he was posthumously awarded the George Medal - posthumously, because both he and the guard (brakeman) for the train in front were killed in the collision.

THE BALLAD OF JOHN AXON was a forty-five minute programme narrating and commemorating this event. It was largely the work of Evan MacColl, who wrote the words of the songs which were blended together to tell the story, and Charles Parker, the producer who actually put it on the air. It was as fine a piece of pure sound radio as I've ever heard - the use of sound effects and the recorded voices of Mrs Axon and of people who knew and worked with Axon himself were brilliantly combined into a vivid and powerful whole. Toward the end, the high standard which had been kept up from the opening lapsed a little; the tension wobbled dangerously near the edge of pomposity and conscious "literariness". But altogether it was an excellent broadcast, unique in its field and fascinating to listen to.

MacColl sang the part of the narrator; Peggy Seeger looked after the musical direction and played banjo, and the cast of singers was pretty well a folksong "who's who" of the London scene - Bert Lloyd, Isla Cameron, Stan Kelly, Colla Dunn, Dominic Behan, Charles Mayo and Dick Loveless. Instrumentalists were Jim Gray (bass), Fitz Coleman (guitar - he also sang one of the highlights of the programme, a fireman's calypso, sparked off by the remark of one of Axon's workmates that he'd been on the footplate with a West Indian who was as good a fireman as he'd ever worked with), Terry Brown (trumpet), Bob Clark (fiddle), John

Cole (harmonica), Brian Daley (guitar), Billy Loch (drums), Bob Mickleborough (trombone), and Bruce Turner (clarinet). Remarkable; I only hope they can find something else of the same kind again soon.

News is general of the London scene: The old Princess Louise, home of skiffle and folksong since for a long time now, has decided to turn the former clubroom into a bar and grill. Consequently, the Ballads and Blues Association, sponsors of the Meets at the Louise, has moved to the King and Queen in Edgware Road, and started up again after the summer recess on 24th August. Evan MacColl is the resident host; regular visitors include most of the well-known singers around town. The Ball Ass., incidentally, is going great guns with its 1958/9 programme, and I hope to report on occasional outstanding events of theirs in future columns. (Regular night: Sunday.)

Tuesday night is now folksong night at the Celler (formerly the Skiffle Celler) in Gresh Street. The menu for this week included Steve Benbow's Four, Bert Lloyd, Maggie Barrie, Michael Gorman, Sylda Sims, Jim McGregor and Shirley Bland, Michael Myer, and Peter Kennedy.

Wednesdays sees Folksong Unlimited in operation at the Cranbourne, Upper St Martin's Lane, under the aegis of Stan Kelly, and Thursdays has the long-standing Blues and Barrel-house sessions at the Roundhouse, Wardour Street, just restarted after the recess. Then - darn it, there are lots of other functions.

By the time this sees print (sorry - photo offset), London will have lost one of American's nicest temporary exports: the Paton couple, Sandy and Carolyn. We'll be very sorry to see them go - they've brightened sessions around town (including, I'm delighted to say, a goodly number of the ones I've managed to get to lately) for many months. They are of course returning home not strictly as the Paton couple but as the Paton family, David Alexander having joined them in the course of their visit. (If there's anything in that prenatal influence theory, young Dave's first words are going to be "Child Ballad"! ) Our very best wishes go with them.

Nice people...

Taking Folksong to the Folk: Marjorie (who since the last WNETG was written, has become my wife) has some friends who live way outside London, in Bedfordshire. They run the occasional subscription ball for charity. Knowing that she and I are associated with the International Folk Music Centre (now rapidly emerging from the embryo state - see later), they put up a suggestion:



they would organise one of their dances, we would supply the entertainment. Percentage of the proceeds to be devoted to the IFMC as a worthy cause.

Good idea, we said immediately. And we very nearly broke our hearts over laying it on at short notice. However (late, but not too late), we provided for the extremely "country" audience at this ball a show which they are still talking about several weeks later!

Thanks to the kind services of a number of friends, who organised transport from London for us, we managed to deliver one complete Trinidad steel band - The Tropicana Boys, whose work I've previously referred to in CARA - Sandy and Carolyn Paton, Joy Hyman (currently in the Channel Islands singing her way around the place, I gather), and our secretary himself, Hyam Morris.

I acted as compere, after much persuasion, and am delighted to report that it was a howling (literally, at one point) success. (The "one point" was when Sandy and Carolyn were doing their Hound Dog song...) (Not you, Elvis - fold at the knees.)

The following day Michael Myer, Marjorie and myself went to a nearby village which goes under the beautiful name of Newton Blossomville, (and which previously I'd never dared to visit in case it wasn't as charming as the name implied). We set up in business in the bar of the local pub, hoping for someone to come song-swapping with us - only to find that most of the local singers are testosall. What do you do in a case like that? Except do what we intend to do - go back there sometime.

The International Folk Music Centre: I've referred to this brainchild of Hyam Morris's before in WMETTG. I'm delighted to report that it is proving to be a practical project. If anyone cares to drop by at our inaugural public function, we shall be pleased to welcome him - that's an International Folk Dance at 7:30 P.M. on 18th October, 1958; venue - the Holborn Hall, corner of Grays Inn Road and Clerkenwell Road, London.

Anyone visiting London and wishing to know what's going on is cordially invited to contact myself, or secretary Hyam Morris, if he/she wants to find out what's happening around town; and anyone who cares to become a member (subscription 5/- or \$1 US) will be helping to further a highly promising undertaking.

For the benefit of readers who haven't previously seen our name mentioned, I should explain that IFMC is a body exactly the right shape to fill a long felt want. Its objects, to quote from our membership card: (1) to provide a centre for the interchange of folk music and dancing knowledge; (2) to provide facilities for the study of folklore and allied subjects; (3) to promote concerts, demonstrations, lectures and exhibitions.

Both in the folksong and folk dancing fields, London is a pretty lively place. Unfortunately there's a lack of liaison between the various functioning bodies, although many of them are doing excellent work. Predominantly, therefore, the IFMC is intended to be a link - object (1) of our aims is the most important. It also happens to be the most expensive to implement, and since we are dependent on our membership at present we are concentrating largely on objects (2) and (3), with the avowed intention not of trespassing on fields already covered by existing bodies, but rather of opening up new audiences. (An instance of this is the country dance in Bedfordshire which I referred to above.) Owing to this same lack of co-ordination between existing bodies, a large potential audience for folk music of all kinds is

going untapped. We're doing our best to put that right.

Soon, I hope, we shall be able to establish a physical centre -- an office, conveniently situated in London -- where we propose setting up a sort of permanently available information centre, giving details of events, facilities for library work, for listening to records, finding out about different branches of folklore (instance: the skiffle fan who wants to know about English folksongs, the ancestors of his own favourites, should come here; the dancer wanting to find out why the same steps occur in different areas would likewise drop by).

It's a major undertaking; it's a sparetime venture. In New York The Folklore Center provides a good many of the services we hope to supply, but in London there's no equivalent -- and we feel there should be. That's why we're sinking so much time and energy into it, and wishing like hell we didn't have to go out to work...

See you next time around.

John K.H. Brunner  
38 Sarre Road,  
London NW 2, England  
GULLiver 6016

September 1958

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# Art of the Urban Folksinger

by Roger Lass

## I

A clear dichotomy exists between folk music and "art" music, but it is not, as commonly misconceived, the separation between "conscious" and "unconscious" or "pre-conscious" art. The gulf is that which lies between art-forms conceived in different symbolic languages.

The logical result of this difference in symbols is a different esthetic, a canon of style that is folk music's own, and a sense of drama, of expressiveness, of harmony, or euphony consistent with this canon, and not with the esthetic of art-music. Folk music, any folk music (and they are all different), is a highly wrought and internally consistent art form, as rigidly formal and self-contained as any other music. And in order to be true to its spirit and meaning, we must not try to put it into our terms, but we must accept it on its own. Barbara Allen is, in essence, no closer to a Schubert lied or a song by Irving Berlin than an Indian Raga is to a Bach Toccata. The value systems are different, the interplay of symbolic forms takes place on different levels. Parallel, perhaps, but parallel lines meet only at infinity, which is to say, for all practical purposes, not at all.

Now this does not mean that folk music does not have value for us who are outside its place of origin, who have not grown up impregnated with the value-statements which give it its complete intelligibility. Not at all. For it is precisely the difference in symbolic expression which gives folk music its greatest value (and potential for pleasure) for us. Even though none of us, really, can ever grasp the total and innermost meaning of a folksong, that meaning which would be immediately and instinctively apparent to Texas Gladden or Jean Ritchie, we can, nonetheless, after listening and re-listening, come quite close to the message of an expressive form which is not our own. And this is the essence of the sort of enrichment which we can gain through exposure to different ways of thinking and expression; the more levels of consciousness we open and expose to stimuli, the more paths of human creativity we learn to follow, and the richer we are for it.

So that the great value of folk music for us not of the

folk is obtained only if we let it speak to us in its own terms, not in ours. For if we force it to conform to our preestablished artistic ideals, we not only rob it of what is uniquely its own to offer, we also bring it close to meaninglessness, if we do not actually cross the line. For a symbolic form worth anything (as folk music certainly is) is made consistent to a very specific set of symbolic referents and is coherent and meaningful only in reference to them. A work of musical, or any, art is a self-bounded entity, and very rigidly defined by its own symbols. If we try to express it with others, we lose its meaning. This is especially true of music, which is the most tenuous of all arts, having its existence only in time. Music does not exist outside of sound and time, it is essentially unstable, so that the preservation of its symbolic consistency (especially if it be unwritten) is a highly delicate matter.

## II

This brings us to the folksingers, by which I mean the professional (or amateur) person from outside the folk culture who devotes himself to the performance of folk music. He is under a great obligation, because he is the intermediary between the folk culture and the urban audience, and the main channel through which folk music can reach the public. He is virtually under a sacred trust to bring the message of the music to his audience, as is any recreative artist. He is also under an obligation not to permit his personality to eclipse the music -- he expresses himself through the music, not instead of it. He should, ideally, be a Toscanini, not a Stokowski.

This is a difficult job, indeed, for the urban performer must learn, as best he can, what is second nature to the true folk singer from the folk culture. The singing and playing of folksongs is a skill and a discipline (not to mention an art) which highly talented people within the folk societies have spent their lives learning and perfecting, which they have been surrounded with from birth, and for an outsider to try to learn this is a challenge of an extremely high order. The folksinger must be not only a musician of sensitivity and talent, but a student of culture as well, most especially the musical aspects, but also the others. It is not sufficient for him to be merely sensitive to his material as music; he must feel it also as folksong, and more specifically as folksong of a particular folk milieu. He must learn to think and feel in the terms of the creators of the music. Otherwise he is false to its spirit.

## III

This brings us naturally to the criticism which is always thrown, and always has been, at purists: If you bind yourself fast to dictates of a tradition, how can you be creative? This, of course, is as nonsensical now as it has always been. When I say that a folksinger should be true to the tradition he is working from, I do not mean that he should play or sing something note for note, nuance for nuance exactly as Hobart Smith or Rufus Crisp played it, or as Sara Carter or Blind Lemon sang it. What I do mean is that he must understand the tradition so well that any changes he makes, any innovations

he creates, are consistent with the internal harmony of the traditional esthetic, are, to put it simply, not incongruous. For example, Dyer-Bennet's John Henry or Green Corn, the Weavers' singing of African songs, the singing of a ballad as a group song, the use in folksongs of popular or jazz harmonies -- these are incongruities. They are the sort of thing that would produce laughter, revulsion, or utter puzzlement in a member of the folk from which the song came.

This is really the ultimate test of the accuracy and validity of a folksong performance, a test which can be conducted only through the exercise of a highly-developed artistic sensibility and intuitive knowledge of what in a particular context, fits, and what doesn't. Just as one would not (or should not) use a Carter Family accompaniment for a song of Thomas Morley or Dowland, so one should not use their sort of accompaniment (or vocal manner) for a folksong. Unfortunately, most cases of incongruity in folksong performances are not so grossly clearcut.

The folksinger must be a highly discerning and discriminating musician to fulfil properly his obligation to his music, which, in essence, is: he must use no vocal or instrumental style, harmony, chord, progression, technique, or any other musical device which would not be conceivable to a member of the culture in which the song he is performing originated. He has only his knowledge of the music and the culture, and his sensibilities, as a guide.

The folksinger is a slave of tradition much in the same manner as the harpsichordist playing Scarlatti, or the conductor conducting Beethoven; he has a certain debt to his material, and to himself. And in its own way, his opportunity for creative enterprise is neither less or greater than theirs.

#### IV

I would, by way of conclusion, like to bring up a point secondary to, but very much related to, what has gone before. I have stressed mainly the artistic death that folk music can die if it is mishandled, if its inner symbolic consistency is violated. Minor attempts to "smooth out" the roughness in folksongs, to make them comprehensible to a larger audience, may not do any great violence to the songs, may be perfectly

(continued over)

in harmony with folk style, but there is always lurking in any attempt at popularization or making the unfamiliar familiar by any means other than repetition, this danger: that these minor alterations do not occur once and then stop, but are incremental, occurring one after the other and building up to grotesque results -- e.g., the popular recordings of Deep Blue Sea. This sort of travesty should be avoided at all costs. What it all comes down to, actually, is a little maxim, paraphrasing a bigger and more famous one. The paraphrase is:

Popularity corrupts; absolute popularity corrupts absolutely.

It is only a fairly short distance from the refinement of a melody to make it more "singable" to the point at which the mass media take over. I love folk music very deeply, and I should hate like hell to see what happened to Deep Blue Sea happen to any song I like. Or any folk song, for that matter.

To pursue this somewhat snobbish point a bit further, into a generalization: The only real hope for continuing purity in an art form lies in keeping it the property of a coterie. This coterie should, of course, be large enough to make the art remunerative to the performers, to give them enough financial stability so that they will not be tempted, or be forced, to go a-whoring in order to eat. But it should be a coterie, a devoted group, as distinctly un-"mass" in quality as possible. In this it would more closely resemble the autonomous and relatively homogeneous folk society than the unwieldy and externally manipulated society that is America's today. Perhaps this is all Utopian and rather naive, but for me, anyway, it's a very pleasant idea. One can dream, after all, and with a certain amount of application some dreams can come true. It's a nice thought, anyhow.

--Roger Lass

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# Problems of a College Folk Music Group

--Ron Radosh

We feel that the developments mentioned in this article are of interest to Caravan readers, particularly because it shows the scope and actual growth of the folksong revival, and indicates problems facing folk performers out of NY and San Francisco.

Two years ago, when this writer was the only banjo and guitar player at the University of Wisconsin, and an average of ten people enjoyed folk music and wanted to sing, there was no outlet for those of us who enjoyed the music and wanted an opportunity to hear leading artists who were touring the area. By the end of that year, however, things started to bounce when a now defunct political group sponsored a concert by Pete Seeger. He received a standing ovation from the 300 people in attendance, who came despite a Young Republican picket line and much adverse publicity. (Does this sound strange to those who think of at least a few thousand for a Seeger concert?) After this, those of us who were folk fans decided to try and brave the elements and form the University of Wisconsin Folk Arts Society.

We started off the last week of the season with an exchange with the U of Chicago group, sparked by the excellent instrumentalists Moe Hirsch and Bob March. The attendance by nearly one hundred people filled us with spirit, and we immediately set onto what turned out to be our major problem, and one which is still not entirely settled. Our small group arranged to book Pete for the following year, and successfully presented a concert with him which by next semester got 500 to attend. At this point the University administration began their crackdown, which has hindered our building a large group devoted to folk singing and American folklore. The school booking agency, the Union Theatre, claimed that the presentation of events for admission purposes by our group was outside of the prerogative of the Folk Arts Society, since it meant competition with their already scheduled program of entertainment, and would limit the available student dollars going into their pockets. With this decision came a prolonged two-year series of hearings before various school bodies, and a general run-around on all our efforts to expand our activities. By this time however (1956-57) our local sings were attracting a larger audience, and the addition of new banjo and guitar pickers aided things greatly. Our club now offered discounts on folk records to members, banjo and guitar lessons at reduced rates, and regularly we mimeed a newsletter and a song sheet.

The school administration by now decided to cash in on the new current for themselves, and after refusing to allow the Folk Arts Society to bring in an entertainer, booked Pete Seeger them-

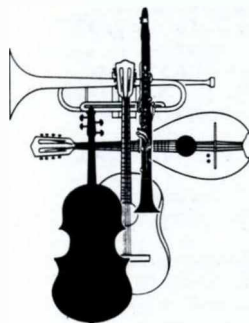
selves and drew 850 people. With this new spirit, we again attempted to present talent, and went through school channels, booking Guy Caravan for an appearance in April. Expecting no trouble because of the new popularity gained largely by our initial efforts, we went ahead with publicity, and at the last moment were prevented from sponsoring a concert with Guy.

This move led to what was actually our biggest success, and has not only put our Folk Arts group on its feet, but has finally resulted in the school's changing their rules to allow any student group to present an admission event. After contacting Guy, we arranged to present a NY style Hoot, in which the local talent would perform with Guy as the featured attraction. Unable to charge for this because of school regulations, we opened it only to members, and hence got a membership of over 150. Our Hoot afforded the much needed rest from the usual group singing which we are pretty tired of, and gave us a chance to perform solo. Besides Guy, our Hoot featured Marshall Brickman, who won the Gold Medal with Guy and Peggy Seeger at the Moscow Youth Festival, and Eric Weissberg, whose Scruggs picking may be heard on Judson's BANJOS, BANJOS AND MORE BANJOS. Along with these two fine musicians we brought in Rick Neff from the U of C club, who specializes in Flamenco guitar. And we had many other singers from our school on the program. This Hoot, in effect, presented a versatile concert of folk music to the campus and gave us all a chance to express ourselves. The Hoot was the catalyst to putting folk music on the campus map, and as stated, resulted in the much desired change of rules.

Since then we have had an attendance of 200 at a regular sing, held in the local student hangout. Other organizations have also gotten on the bandwagon, and from the situation where nobody at the school either sang or wanted to hear folk artists, we now have appearances at the University by Pete Seeger, Odetta and Theo Bikel, all in one year. Besides this, a local radio station, WMPN, now broadcasts folk music, live and on records, Wednesday and Saturday nights from 10 to 12, on Mark Berns' Midnight Special show.

We would sincerely appreciate it if members of other groups would write in and tell how and what they are doing to keep their clubs going, and if they face any difficulties with their school administrations, and what they are doing to overcome them.

--Ron Radosh



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## Letters from Readers

### A NEW FOLK MUSIC CENTER

Dorothy Chase  
FOLK MUSIC CENTER  
120 Harvard Ave.  
Claremont, Calif.

Dear Caravan,

Here is news of another folk music center...just opened in Claremont, California, by my husband, four daughters and myself. This just sort of grew by itself out of the interest we met on the part of the colleges and local townspeople. When we first arrived in Claremont I began teaching a few people how to play the few things I knew on banjo and guitar. Before long I was over my head in requests for 'Where can I get a banjo' or 'How can I learn to sing and play folk songs?' and 'Where can I find those wonderful records you have?' People were constantly bringing broken guitars and banjos for my husband to mend (which he does very nicely when he has time) and thus the FOLK MUSIC CENTER was born. We have some guitars that are old, a couple that are rare and some new...a few banjos, one being fretless which we brought from Boston. What is the history of this kind, anyone know?

Our Center will probably be open evenings and Saturdays and we hope to encourage any young folk-singers to come in and play, talk and just meet each other.

Besides new releases and old standbys on familiar labels, we'll be having 'Folk Dancer' and 'MacGregor'...also kids records on YFR and CRG...song books...also strings, parts and repairs.

Anyone finding himself around Pomona College, or Scripps, or Claremont Men's, drop around to the Center and meet

Charles, Dorothy, Susan, Joanne, Ellen and Sally CHASE

Dorothy Chase

### OVER-CROWDED

Joe Glazer  
Akron, Ohio

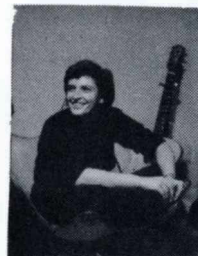
Dear Lee:

Congratulations on the fine job you have done with the first printed issue of CARAVAN. It looks very good, and, I am sure, you and your colleagues worked your heads off to get it out.

I have only one suggestion -- try to do a little bit of spacing where you have crowded pages. This can be done easily with better paragraph spacing, and it would make the whole thing a lot easier to read.

Why don't you put your picture in the next issue? All the time I have been thinking you were a man.

Best Wishes,  
Joe Glazer



• Lee Shaw

### ERIK DARLING RECORD

Anonymous  
Bronx, N Y

Dear Lee,

Your coverage of Erik Darling's record ((Elektra 154, reviewed last issue by Lee Haring and by Erik himself)) made me so curious that I bought a copy, sound unheard. The first time I played it, I was only listening with half my attention and it didn't sound like much. Then I sat down and really listened to it, straight through. Man! Can that man play the guitar! And his singing...well, it is unusual. Your reviewer is wrong when he calls it "uninteresting". It is one of the most fascinating voices I've ever heard. Erik's story-telling on the Cumberland Mountain Bear Chase is utterly charming. He should be making children's records or doing a kids' TV show like Ed McCurdy used to do.

I found the whole record wonderful, except for one thing that was a very jarring note. That was the piece of the banjo medley which was a take-off on Billy Faier's florid banjo playing. I have heard most of Billy's records and I saw his concert with the Kossyos recently, and while I do feel that his playing isn't always in musical good taste, it hardly seems to warrant such an attack on a commercially-released record. If these two banjo players disagree about music, let them fight it out in private or in the pages of Caravan, but it is not good for either of them to put satires of each other on public records.

Do let us hear more of Erik Darling playing and singing solo on records in the near future.

If you want to publish this letter, go ahead, but please don't reveal who wrote it to anyone.

#### CALIFORNIA NEWS

Barry Olivier  
Berkeley, Cal.

Dear Lee,

The issue looks terrific! We are very happy that you published a full story of our Cal Festival. I think Billy (Paier) did a fine job of writing on that.

With the Fall coming on there will be many outstanding concerts coming to Berkeley--and the Bay Area. With the creation of a Folk Music Society there promise to be many new activities beginning by the time your next issue is out--if those interested drop by the "Barrel" (2506aste St., Berkeley) or phone me (Landscape 5-1343) we will be glad to inform them of any and all current activities.

The Cal Festival was completely covered photographically by my brother, Phil--and an exhibit of over one hundred photographs of the Festival taken by him are on display at the "Barrel" and will be on display various places on and around the campus here at Berkeley. Folk guitar classes in Berkeley are sponsored by the Recreation Department (of Berkeley) and taught by myself. We have had great success--over 350 students enrolled in the past year. Our classes are set up to run one hour weekly for ten weeks and the cost is kept down to five dollars. Classes meet in a beautiful, brand new recreation center (Live Oak Center) here in Berkeley. There are two types of classes--one for beginners, the other a workshop for intermediate to advanced. The Fall classes will have already begun by the time your next issue is out (they begin September 24), but other classes may be starting is the demand is great enough. Cal is sponsoring a terrific series of concerts with Jean Ritchie, "Cisco" Houston, and Sandy Paton during October. The series is called "American Traditional Song" and Jean Ritchie leads off Friday, October 10 with "Kentucky Folk Songs and Their Old-World Forebears"; "Cisco" Houston follows with a program entitled "Frontier Ballads"; and Sandy Paton returns from England to present "Brittish Balladry in America and Britain". Odette Fellus and Theodore Bikel are giving a concert at the Berkeley Community Theater Saturday Evening, October 11.

--Barry Olivier

Please remember, until further notice address Caravan as follows:

Lee Shaw  
c/o The Folklore Center  
110 MacDougal Street  
New York 12, N Y

#### RECORD



#### REVIEWS

SONNY TERRY - BROWNIE MCGHEE (Fantasy 3254): It is unfortunate that more records of this type are not recorded and made available. The difficulty with the previous records of Brownie and Sonny (LPs) is that they were recorded by people who had no real connection with this type of music. The records just did not swing. (If you have a chance, pick up the original 78's of these tunes, recorded anywhere from 10 to 20 years ago on a variety of small labels, as the addition of bass and piano really makes a tremendous difference in the sound. Of the 14 tunes on this album, I own 8 that have been recorded earlier.)

The things about this record that sell it to me are the lyrics to most of Brownie's tunes. Very often in this material lyrics come off second best to the feeling and drive of the music, but not so with these. Some of the alliterations used will surprise you.

Buy this album, if for nothing else than Brownie singing Sportin' Life Blues and Thinkin' and Worryin' (if I'm not mistaken the latter was recorded under the title Weepin' and Cryin' Blues about 10 years ago.)

Large credits to Stan Page and Bernie Lieberman for good engineering and tasteful A & R work.

--Dick Rosmini

RUN COME HEAR (Elektra 157) by The Folk Singers, under the direction of Erik Darling, with Dylan Todd, Don Vogel and Carly Wilcox: "When you hear an album of finely constructed and arranged songs, do you marvel over the long patient hours of rehearsal, change, editing, experiment, which have gone into the final selections?"

With this question, Lee Hays begins the liner notes to RUN COME HEAR. He then devotes the rest of the introductory notes to lauding the group for picking that name because it "leaves you free to consider what is important, the songs themselves, and how you like them and the way the Folk Singers perform them."

The most striking feature of the album is its complete lack of humor. Lee Hays refers to the "comedy of this story" in writing about Peter Gray in the notes. Hallelaloo (Belay) he calls an "Irish comic song". There's A Hole In The Bottom Of The Sea is described as a "nonsense song". Nonsense is not necessarily funny but have you ever heard it sung without the slightest



trace of a smile in the voice (or at least tongue in cheek); especially at the end when the going gets rough? Here's your chance.

At the other end of the scale, in the songs where one would expect a quality of emotion or feeling, we are again disappointed. Silvy sounds like a college glee club singer in "In The Evening By The Moonlight". So does Deep Blue Sea. Lee Hays credits Dylan Todd with having "done a service by writing new verses which give clear meaning to a song which has been a mysterious fragment". I heard Roy Lovaday, a sailor from Asheville, N.C., sing at least one of those "new" verses, words and music, in San Diego in 1953. The Carter Family recorded it in the middle or late thirties and Harry West contributes the following which may be compared with the record:

Oh Captain, can you tell me  
Where my Darling he may be?  
Oh yes, my little maiden,  
He drowned in the Deep Blue Sea.

Evidently Lee Hays hasn't heard Dylan Todd on his Judson album if he feels that his singing of Little Maggie is "Todd at his best". In Run Come See we have a convincing breath of life in Erik Darling's singing which is killed aborning by the chorus.

In fact, the only number on this record that I found exciting was Room Enough, a spiritual which the group seems really to have felt. On the other hand, Keep Your Hand On The Plow seemed too loud, too fast, and unconvincing. Poor Howard and Peat Bog Soldiers would be okay if only they sounded like they meant it. Pay Me My Money Down is very listenable but Michael Row The Boat Ashore is offensive in that the group uses a kind of jump beat. If it is meant to be a new approach to the song, I don't dig it.

The second most striking feature of this album is Erik Darling's singing and playing. Whenever he or his banjo appear in solo or together the whole thing suddenly comes alive and sparkling. In his very few solo spots I feel that he is better than he was on his own album. I get a warm feeling every time he sticks his voice out, only to be chilled again by the entrance of the rest of the "Folk Singers".

The group works extremely well together as far as mechanics of group singing are concerned. They are obviously very well rehearsed -- to a fault. Elektra Records does not go in for the scholarly approach of Folkways or the Riverside Folklore Series of Kenneth Goldstein in the presentation of album notes. This is a perfectly understandable position in the commercial record world. But it is sad to see a folk song record accompanied by notes which do little more than praise the artists on the record. I would have expected more from Lee Hays despite his aversion to scholarship in folk music.....

--Billy Faier

ERIK DARLING (Elektra EKL-154): This record was reviewed thoroughly in the last issue, but I'd like to add my two-cents worth. I think it's a great record, and I heartily recommend that you give it a listen.

--Lee Shaw  
(who sneaked in here on the strength of being editor)

PEGGY SEEGER - FOLKSONGS AND BALLADS (Riverside RLP 12-655): Anyone who has heard Peggy Seeger in person is bound to have been entranced by her warm, artistic delivery and beautiful accompaniment of Anglo-American ballads (which are the mainstem of her repertoire). Her latest disc for Riverside is a well-done sampling of her work.

According to her notes (which say a lot about her concepts of the "new folk music") she is a product of the new tradition in folk music. This new tradition tempers the "pure folk" with the personal likes of the artist. To quote: "But a new music comes out, with its feet still recognizably (though sometimes shakily) placed on the old foundations. There is nothing less legitimate about it, and it is often more meaningful in present day life, especially if the users are conscious of how the music came into their hands and are careful in their treatment of it."

Without a doubt Peggy is very conscious of her music, its origins and where she diverges. What she does to it lyrically, vocally, and instrumentally, is done with great artistry and beauty. Her instrumentation diverges somewhat more than her singing (a statement of opinionated fact rather than a value judgement).

Most of these songs are uncommon versions of known Anglo-American ballads, which accounts for all the "fol-dig-a-dido"s, etc., on the record. Many were beautifully put together (a tune from here, verses from here and there) by Peggy. Her singing is beautifully listenable (though on one or two her pitch isn't quite accurate, which is slightly annoying). Her accompaniment is original, beautiful, and appropriate. Those things which particularly flipped me were: the rippling banjo on The Chickens They Are Crowing, the warm, gentle guitar (special tuning) on Hangman Slack Your Rope, and the beautiful version (melody and lyrics) of The Rumbling Grumbler (Wagoner's Lad).

The notes are well written, erudite, and have a lot to say. The cover is strange.

EASTER MONDAY - 1916 - SONGS OF THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY sung by Dominic Behan (Riverside RLP 12-820): The hatred of the English by the Irish is deep, from years of British rule. On Easter Monday, 1916, a revolution started (which is still going on for many). The Irish, being a proud and eloquent people, set much of their resentment to music.

Riverside has just released a disc of some of the best of these songs, sung by Dominic Behan, an active rebel and singer.

Most of the songs have composed lyrics, set to traditional tunes. Some of them sorrow for the dead with a bitter, intense hatred of the English. Others are sarcastic as only eloquent Irish songs can be. Mr Behan sings with a brogue which is very captivating. He is a master of sarcasm and bitterness, which is exactly what this record calls for. It is quite obvious that each song has a personal meaning for him.

The accompaniment (John Basted on banjo, guitar, concertina, and 12-stringer) is always tasteful and sometimes quite exciting. The notes, by Behan, are a good background to the period and to each song. The cover photo is gorgeous in an eerie sort of way.

Two reviews by Barry Kornfeld  
(more reviews on page 35)

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## BOOKS

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## Five reviews by Lee Haring

AMERICAN FAVORITE BALLADS, Vol II. Pete Seeger (Folkways FA 2321): Apparently volume I under this title was successful enough to encourage Folkways to issue this record. The two together include the best known and most popular American folksongs. A similar album was issued years ago by Folkways' predecessor, Disc (American Favorite Songs, Disc 607). Folkways is well advised to offer this record as "Folk Music for People who Love Folk Music."

The songs, or these versions of the songs, are of course not new and do not seek freshness or novelty. But *Oh What A Beautiful City* and *Poor Boy* are especially interesting. Most of the album is devoted to songs deliberately familiar. To sing this kind of material is a challenge to the performer. Pete Seeger meets the challenge well, most of the time. The performances have varying degrees of freshness. The tasteful banjo-playing we expect from this artist is present here, along with some interesting accompaniments on the twelve-string guitar.

Technically the record is very poor and uneven. It is unfortunate that America's greatest folksinger continues to be hindered by the poor recording of the Folkways studio.

GOLD RUSH SONGS. Pat Foster and Dick Weissman (Riverside RLP 12-654): In the attempt to gather related songs for their records, the record companies have sometimes produced works of genuine scholarship. Such a one is this record, for which the material was carefully selected and annotated by Kenneth S. Goldstein. Not all of the songs were actually sung by "fortyniners", but they are all of the period. The popularity and origin of each are carefully indicated in the notes. Some interesting new material is brought to light in the process. *Then Hurray for Home* and *Arrival of the Greenhorn* are fine samples which reflect the feelings and attitudes of pioneers at a crucial time in history. And for the familiar, there is a fine *Sweet Betsy From Pike*.

Pat Foster's voice is pleasant and attractive and versatile. Sometimes his performances of these songs could be more vigorous or atmospheric, but they are satisfactory. Dick Weissman's accompaniments are better than on his previous records--sensitive, even poetic--but sometimes he seems to be reaching for harmonic patterns not present in Foster's guitar playing (see *Sweet Anna*). A slight sense of strain may result for some listeners. Altogether, though, the record is entertaining and worthwhile.

JEAN NITCHIE: Songs and Stories of her Singing Family of the Lumberlands (Riverside RLP 12-653): For several years Jean Nitchie has been the only professional white American folksinger with an ethnic background associated with the songs she sings. She has made a number of records for different companies, but until now none has attempted to make use of this background except in the album notes. This record includes not only songs but spoken text to indicate the place of the songs in the lives of the people from whom they came. Kenneth Goldstein's claim in the notes is justified: "This recording is a unique one, the very first recording that seeks to place folk songs in their original cultural context." There is a growing trend among folklorists (e.g. Ellen Stokert) to take account of the context in their collecting. Of this trend this recording is a milestone.

It contains eight songs, each introduced by a portion of Jean Nitchie's book *SINGING FAMILY OF THE LUMBERLANDS*. The singing is of course authentic and also very lovely. The accompaniments by Erik Darling are tasteful and appropriate--this noted accompanist has never been better. The spoken text is funny and sad and joyful and pathetic. The blend of songs and text is



excellent. The total effect is breathtakingly impressive. One observation of it: the impression is not of an individual personality--such is Jean Ritchie's modesty--but of a whole way of life. Her stories and songs convey more of the flavor of mountain life than could be gained from years of study. It would be hard to find a better record in the whole of recorded American folk music. Unreservedly recommended.

PETE SEEGER SINGS AMERICAN FOLK SONGS FOR CHILDREN (Folkways EPC #1, 2, 3): Folkways initiates a series of 45 rpm children's records with these three. They are re-issues of the songs on FP 701, AMERICAN FOLK SONGS FOR CHILDREN, released several years ago. The songs were drawn from Ruth Crawford Seeger's book of the same title published by Doubleday and Company. The performances on the 45 rpm singles are the same ones as on the 33 rpm original, somewhat enhanced technically by a process which lends both more body and more brilliance to the sound. Those who remember the original know this as superb of its kind. Pete Seeger is at his best when dealing with children or their songs, and his children's records are outstanding. Recommended for ages 2 to 6, and for folk song enthusiasts who have lost sight of the simple communicativeness which lies at the heart of all folk music.

THE MINSTREL BOY. Geoffrey Moore sings Irish Melodies of Thomas Moore (Judecca J 102): Thomas Moore (1779-1852) is the most notable successor of Burns, in one important respect at least. Though not equal to Burns in genius, he emulated the Scot in penning numerous lyrics to folksong melodies. This record gathers the best-loved and most familiar of Moore's folksong lyrics, with the original tunes. Those who feel tempted to condemn Moore's lyrics should remember that it was by means of them that some of the richest treasures of Irish folksong have been preserved. No one remembers the Irish words to Bend Sinew's Swain, Oft In The Stilly Night, or Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms. But one does remember some at least of Moore's words.

The idea of gathering Moore's songs for a record is a good one. The result is pleasant but not very exciting. Geoffrey Moore, the soloist, has a fairly conventional tenor voice which he uses in a fairly conventional way (including the conventional long high notes that tenors love, all too frequently flat in these performances). The settings for harp by Ruth Kelly are a bit old-fashioned, like the singing--and, indeed, the music itself.

It is not enough in performing this music to let it speak for itself. The performer has to convey something of himself. Perhaps these performers are not enough greater than the music to warm the listener's heart. A Fritz Kreisler or an Mileen Parrell could do it.

--Lee Haring

ON THE ROAD TO ELATH, Songs of the Negev, featuring the Oranim Zabar Troupe (Elektra EKL 156): This album is one of the very few that I have ever heard in which the language barrier was no problem. The arrangements are so wonderfully rich musically that one can listen as if they were instrumental compositions without worrying about the meaning of the words. (Complete text and English translations are included in booklet form with the album.)

The album consists of some traditional material and original songs by Dov Seitzer, a member of the group.

I don't see how anyone could resist the voice of Oula Gill, the soloist. It is warm and compelling and has an exhilarating dry quality which is surely a reflection of the Negev, the desert of Israel that has inspired this music.

The only jarring note of the entire album is a quick fadeout at the end of an unaccompanied humming solo by Oula Gill, which should certainly have been left to its own completion. The engineers seem to have left the rest of the album alone.

The singing of the rest of the troupe is never really great but it does serve as a more than adequate framework and background for Oula Gill's voice.

The instrumental accompaniment is excellent, mainly accordion and hand drum.

--Billy Paier



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### PLEASE NOTE

We would like to compile 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 frequently featuring it we would appreciate your sending us as much information as you can about the programs.

We want  
city  
station  
frequency  
mc  
days and hours  
any additional information you can supply, such as the program's slant, whether it features live performers and/or records, etc.

Even if you're positive 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  
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Big Bill

## BIG BILL BROONZY



On August 15, 1958, the world's greatest country-blues singer, Big Bill Broonzy, died in Chicago. Bill was born in Mississippi in 1893. Both of his parents were born in slavery and his mother just died about a year ago at the age of 102. Bill started work on the farm when he was ten years old - strong enough to guide a plow. He worked as a roustabout, railroad track layer, lumberman, janitor, foundryman, and innumerable other occupations, in his lifetime. But he always considered his profession as singing the blues.

He started his musical career with a gourd fiddle and learned many of the old songs from his uncle, who played 5-string banjo. In the early 1920's Big Bill moved to Chicago and took up the guitar. Here in Chicago, Bill was a part of that generation that transformed the folk music of the Negro people - field hollers, work songs and spirituals - into a new idiom, American jazz and popular music. Big Bill didn't learn the blues, he created them! - over 360 of them. He was not a trained musician but played by ear and incorporated the sounds he had heard as a boy in the fields and at the country dances into the music he composed and sang. He started recording the blues in 1926 and has made over 200 records.

Most of the songs he sang were blues he had written himself, such as MAKIN' MY GETAWAY, OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN and BLACK, BROWN, AND WHITE (GIT BACK, GIT BACK). Or those composed by his friends, such as Bessie Smith's BACK WATER BLUES, or LeRoy Carr's IN THE EVENIN' WHEN THE SUN GOES DOWN, or Leadbelly's GOODNIGHT IRENE. Among the traditional songs Bill sang were SEE SEE RIDER, GLORY TRAIN, CRAWDAD, JOE TURNER BLUES and JOHN HENRY. (On JOHN HENRY, Bill used a flat pick and played the melody on the bass strings of his guitar, mandolin style!)

Bill was aware of his role in the development of American music and he would often say sadly that he was just about the



only one left who still sang the blues in the old way. I've heard Bill sing some of the same songs many times over, but each time I discovered something new that I hadn't heard before. There was a depth and subtlety to Big Bill's blues that I've never heard in any other singer. Bill's music had a solid rock foundation of rhythm and on top of this, he laid a complex pattern of melody, rich in variations and embellishments. The guitar became almost an extension of his voice and as one critic commented, it seemed to "dot the i's and cross the t's". I know of no other folk artist whose vocal and instrumental work were so intricately woven together. Big Bill also had about half a dozen guitar solos and on rare occasions he would play one of them. Bill's guitar was a one man band and just hearing him play CAPTAIN JOHN HAS YOUR PAY COME? or HOUSE RENT STOMP was enough to establish him as one of the greatest of folk guitarists.

But talking about music isn't enough. You have to actually hear it yourself. Fortunately many of Big Bill's songs have been preserved on record, notably on the Folkways label and on a recent Columbia LP. For anybody who is interested in the blues, Big Bill is to the blues what Euclid is to geometry. If you've never heard Big Bill Broenzy, you've never really heard the blues.

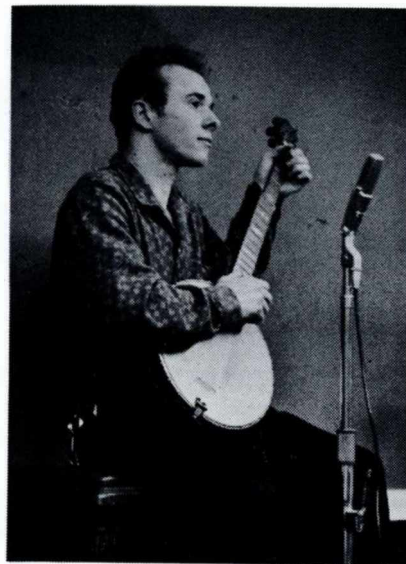
I've described as well as I can some of the aspect of Bill's music. I'd like to give you some idea of Bill as a person. I got to know Bill when I had an opportunity to perform with I COME FOR TO SING for several months. It was my first professional appearance and I was awed and delighted to share a stage with Big Bill. I never lost that feeling. I only knew him about five years, but he impressed me greatly and I grew to love him. Bill was always a gentleman -- considerate and kind.

I remember one incident -- a small thing but it's typical of Bill's thoughtfulness. I was appearing on a show with Big Bill. I had tried to learn a new song but I hadn't really learned it, I guess, and I forgot the lyrics not once but four times during the song. I finally got through it but I returned to my chair covered with rue. It was Bill's turn next. He started to sing but halfway through the second verse, he paused, looked around and asked, "What comes next?" The audience laughed and then Bill sang the rest of his song. Of course, Big Bill had composed that song himself and had sung it hundreds of times and I've never known him to forget the lyrics before or since.

Although Bill had very definite ideas about how folk music should be performed, he was too kindhearted to criticize anyone. The closest he ever came to it was once at a Hootenanny. We were listening to someone who had a real wild, jazzy arrangement for some simple song and I asked, "What do you think about that, Bill?" "Well," he answered, "you know, with a folksong, if you put too much into it, you take something out."

The reason I'm writing this article is that the more you know about a person, the better you understand his music. And Big Bill was very anxious that the country blues shouldn't die with him.

--Gerry Armstrong



## Luke Faust

There have been many banjo players in the past few years, but there have been few like Luke Faust. He plays with a depth of feeling and an understanding of his material that many other banjoists have tried to achieve but have rarely managed to attain.

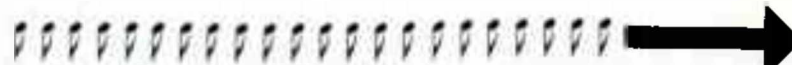
Luke has travelled across country twice, working at various jobs and collecting songs. It is only this year that he has begun to make his presence felt on the New York folk music scene. He has appeared here on radio and in four concerts.

Luke is a Southern mountain-style instrumentalist and singer. Primarily he is a frailer, playing both fretted and fretless banjo. Certainly he is one of the most traditional in style of the young urban folksingers. And one of the best.

--Pete Goldsmith

Luke has contributed two songs to this issue of Caravan. Of the first, We Are Three Bums, he says:

"This song I learned from my Pa who picked it up burning after work in the Great Depression."



## We Are Three Bums

Oh, ear-ly in the morn-ing when the dew is on the ground the  
bum a-ris-es from his nest and gaz-es all a-round. From the  
hay stacks and the box cars like a swarm of bees he comes, he  
sleeps in the dirt and wears a shirt that's rag-ged and full of crumbs.

(melody of the chorus is the same as the verse)

Chorus:

Oh, sleeping in the pokey, Ogey ogey ogey  
Smoking snipes and stogeys, hurra hurree hurrum  
We are three bums, three jolly old bums  
We live like royal Turks  
We have good luck and bum our chuck  
And we never bother to work.

Verse 2:

I met a man the other day I never had met before.  
He asked me if I wanted a job shovelling iron ore.  
I asked him what the wages were, he says "Ten cents a ton".  
I said, "Old feller, go \_\_\_ yourself, I'd rather be  
on the bum."

Chorus:

Oh, sleepin' against the station, trala lalala lation,  
That's our recommendation, hurra hurree hurrum  
We are three bums, three jolly old bums...(etc)

Verse 3:

Standing on the station smoking a cheap segar  
Waiting for the next freight train to carry an empty car  
Goin' east they're loaded, goin' west sealed tight  
I guess we'll have to jump aboard a fast express tonight

Chorus:

(First two lines not known)  
We are three bums, three jolly old bums...(etc)

If you know the missing two lines, or additional verses, or an interesting variant of this song, why not send it along?

## Five Nights Drunk

"This song I learned in Oregon from an itinerant logger, in the Willamette Valley, the summer of 1954."

Oh the very first night when I came home  
drunk as I could be -- I found a  
mule in the sta-ble where my mule ought to be --

I called to my wife, my pretty little wife, "Explain this to me,  
How come this mule in the stable where my mule ought to be."  
She says, "You old fool, y'damn old fool, can't you plainly see,  
That's nothing but a milk cow my granny sent to me."  
Well, I've travelled the wide world over, a thousand times or more  
And a milk cow with a saddle on I never saw before.

The second night...I saw a hat upon the wall where no hat...  
She says... "It's nothing but a chamberpot my granny sent to me."  
I've travelled this wide world...a chamber pot with a sweat-  
band I never saw before.

The third night...I found a pair of boots behind the bed...  
She says... "They're nothing but some slippers my granny sent..."  
I've travelled this wide world...hobnail slippers I never saw  
before.

The fourth night...I found ahead upon the bed...  
She says... "It's nothing but a cabbage head my granny sent..."  
I've travelled this wide world...cabbage head with a moustache  
I never saw before.

The fifth night...I found a baby in the crib...  
She says... "It's nothing but a ragdoll my granny sent..."  
I've travelled this wide world...a ragdoll with an appetite  
I never saw before.

do ra mi fa sol la ti do

transcribed with the aid  
of Happy Traum and Lee  
Haring. Chorded by Lee  
Haring

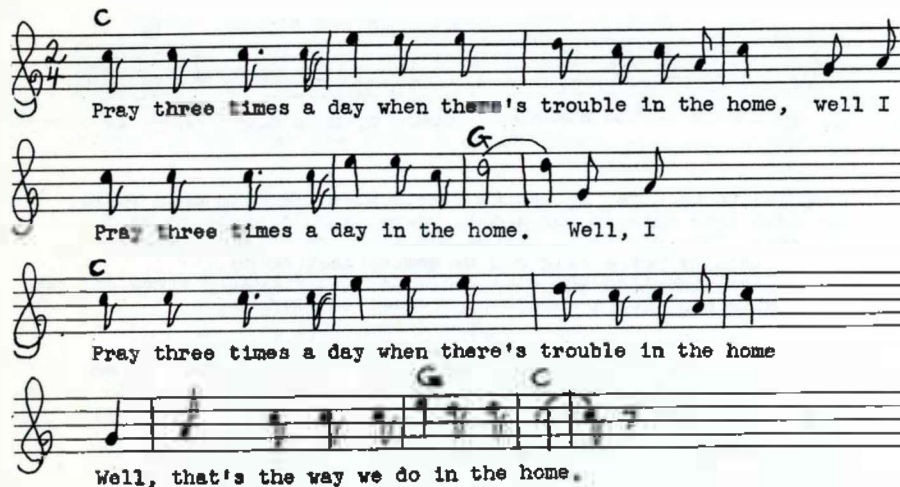


Since Billy Faier has been in New York since the publication of the last issue of Caravan, he has no "Message From The West" for this issue. In its place he has contributed the following:

In the fall of 1951, while living in San Francisco, I made many trips to Modesto, California, for the purpose of hearing and recording Will Calvin, one of a few elderly folksingers living there.

Mr Calvin spent most of his life in Alabama. He told me that he was a constant churchgoer and played and sang these two songs in church every Sunday for many many years

## Trouble in the Home



Pray three times a day when there's trouble in the home, well I

Pray three times a day in the home. Well, I

Pray three times a day when there's trouble in the home

Well, that's the way we do in the home.

2. Call upon my Lord when there's trouble in the home, etc.

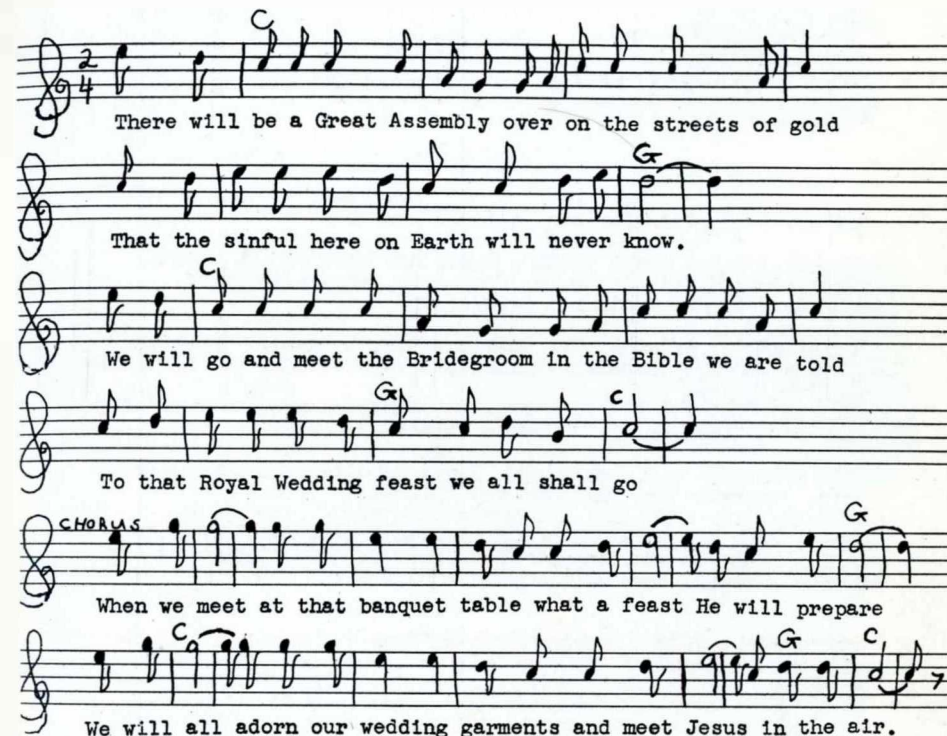
3. Fall upon my knees when there's trouble in the home, etc.

Will Calvin played both these songs on the banjo, utilizing a simple frailing strum with occasional double-thumbing. He used the raised C tuning (G C G C D) and played frequent instrumental solos between verses.

The G chord was held thus, without silencing the open C on the 2nd string.



## The Great Assembly



There will be a Great Assembly over on the streets of gold

That the sinful here on Earth will never know.

We will go and meet the Bridegroom in the Bible we are told

To that Royal Wedding feast we all shall go

CHORUS

When we meet at that banquet table what a feast He will prepare

We will all adorn our wedding garments and meet Jesus in the air.

2. They will come from all the Universe, the prophets of our Lord

To be present on that Royal Wedding day,  
When the sinful hear the judgement of His everlasting word  
In a moment they will all be cast away.

3. Oh, Brother, now get ready to be present on that day,  
Saints and angels from all nations will be there,  
There will be no more sad parting and no more we'll preach and pray  
But rejoice in all the saints and angels fair.

--Billy Faier

# folk music scene

## Concert tour plans for the Fall

PETE SEEGER and SONNY TERRY - Upper New York State, Canada, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Pennsylvania and New Jersey

GUY CARAWAN - Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky and Tennessee

FIDDLER BEERS and MRS FIDDLER - the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon, California, Nebraska, Kansas

PAUL CLAYTON - D.C., Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Illinois

SONNY TERRY and BROWNIE MCGHEE will cover the East and Midwest in Feb 1959, Canada and the West Coast in March 1959, and the Central States, East and New England in April 1959.

WEST COAST SCENE: Coming concerts, Berkeley Campus, University of California - Oct 10, Jean Ritchie - Oct 15, Cisco Houston - Oct 20, Sandy Paton. On radio, MIDNIGHT SPECIAL on KPFA (2207 Shattuck, Berkeley) Sat night from 11 to 12 PM. Singing around at THE BARREL 2506 Estate, Berkeley, (7-10 PM Thurs nights). Occasional singing at THE ONE-LEK (Berkeley Way near Shattuck) Sunday afternoons. For more info on all this, drop by THE BARREL or call Barry Olivier (LA 2-1343) in Berkeley.

Bud Hill writes that there's a new place in L.A., THE A&M GROVE which is a real swinging place, folkmusicwise. It is on Melrose out near Beverly Hills. Other places in the L.A. area are THE UNICORN on Sunset Strip, and Cosmo Alley. For full data on the Los Angeles scene, contact BOULEVARD BOOK HOUSE, 10634 W Pico, LA 64.

If you have any news of coming events, places, people, etc., on the West Coast, please drop up a line.

MIDWEST SCENE: The OLD TOWN SCHOOL OF FOLK MUSIC, 333 West North Avenue, has begun its 1958-59 season. For details on classes, etc., call WHITEHALL 4-7475. For more information on the Chicago Area contact Jan & Jack Tangerman, 624 Park Avenue, Wilmette, Ill (AL 1-3234). Also The Drinking Gourd Society, Philip Green (business manager), 7644 South Euclid Ave., Chicago. (RUEgent 4-4010)

If your travels take you through Madison, Wisc., and you are looking for folksingers, banjo pickers, and shelter, contact Eric Weissberg, Marshall Brickman, and Ron Radosh, at 1028 Clymer Place, (AL 6-2338) from September through June.

NEW YORK SCENE: Coming up is a series of informal concerts presented by the Metropolitan Council of The American Youth Hostels at their headquarters at 14 West 8th Street, Friday nights at 11:15. These are scheduled weekly. Admission will be 90¢ to non-members, 75¢ to AYH'ers. They will feature:

- October 3 - The Shanty Boys
- 10 - Barry Kornfeld with guest artists Erik Darling and Tommy Geraci
- 17 - Billy Faier
- 24 - Mike and John Cohen and friends
- 31 - Sylvia Del Villard
- November
- 7 - The Shanty Boys
- 14 - Dave Van Ronk
- 21 - Barry Kornfeld
- 28 - Irwin Harris and others
- December
- 5 - The Shanty Boys
- 12 - To be announced
- 19 - Dan Isaacson
- 26 - Tom Paley



The Shanty Boys

AYH is also planning a series of six large folk music concerts, to begin in November. For further information on these concerts and on the folk instrument classes which AYH will offer this year, contact Mike Cohen or Barry Kornfeld. OR 4-1510

For concert news and other information on the New York Folk Music Scene, check with The Folklore Center, 110 MacDougal Street, NY 12. GR 3-7590

RECORD NEWS: Riverside will be releasing a new Billy Faier record, TRAVELIN' MAN soon. Folkways is recording Tom Paley, John Cohen and Mike Seeger whose recent concert jammed Carnegie Recital Hall to the rafters with eager audience. A new company will be releasing a disc (as yet untitled) featuring Fred Gerlach and his 12-string guitar. The second volume of OUR SINGING HERITAGE should be out from Elektra soon. By the time you are reading this Elektra's MURRY MUSEL sung by Paul Clayton and Tradition's TEXAS FOLK SONGS sung by Alan Lomax should both be out. Recent Folkways issues to be reviewed in the Dec-Jan Caravan are Songs with GUY CARAWAN (accompanied by John Cohen and Ollie Phillips), and THE RITCHIE FAMILY OF KENTUCKY, Jean Ritchie interviews her family, with documentary recordings.



Tom Paley  
← Fred Gerlach



John Cohen  
Billy Faier →





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