

# THE RAMBLER

Edited and produced by Mike J. Moorcock. 36, Semley Road, Norbury, London, S.W.16 ENGLAND. This issue is free. For January 1958.

CONTENTS NO. 10

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## JAZZ IN PERSPECTIVE

by RAY NELSON

## BOOK, MAGAZINE, AND RECORD REVIEWS.

by Mike J. Moorcock.

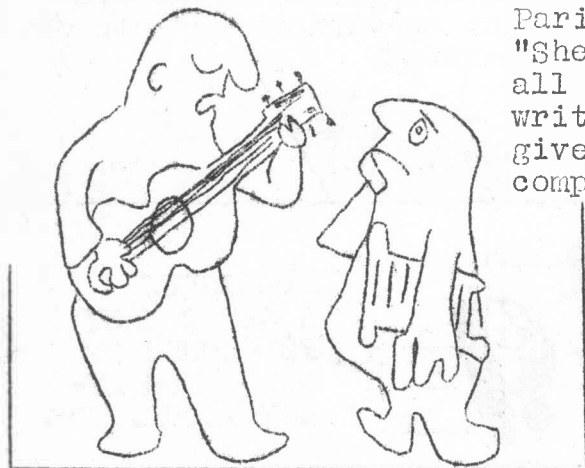
## GETTING THE MESSAGE.

Regular lettercol by the Readers.

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Special 10 page only issue due to funds being short and time being scarce.

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WE PRO-AMATEUR SKIFFLE PLAYERS  
DON'T PLAY WITH YOU AMATEUR-  
AMATEUR SKIFFLE PLAYERS.

10th January 1958.

Dear Readers,

This little issue is rather an anticlimax to me after the plans I had had for a large 40 or 50 page issue.

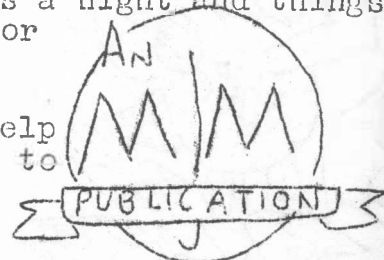
However, I won't feel it quite so much if I bring RAMBLER out in-little-but-often doses rather than large-but-rare doses.

This issue is also a bit top heavy. Ray's article was originally scheduled for JF before it became RAMBLER and it rather overlaps the rest of the material. However, when you've read it I'm sure that you'll agree that it was worth featuring. Next ish, Ray begins a regular column with MAKING THE SCENE ON NORTH BEACH in which he talks about several aspects of the folklore field.

Ray is, himself, a very competent blues singer and guitarist - he is also, as you will see by the two cartoons (on this page and the next) an extremely good artist.

Ray's travelled most of the States and the Continent and is at present living in Paris where he has discovered Saga Schorberg "She sings in nightclubs" he says, "but is all but unknown outside of Scandinavia. I'll write her up for RAMBLER, meanwhile could you give me the names and addresses of any record companies in England or America who might be interested in her. She sings and plays like an angel in almost every language.. even Japanese, but her best numbers are Scandi folksongs. This singer is supporting herself and her ten-year old son on about 3 bucks a night and things are getting tense for her."

If anyone can help Ray here, write to him c/o Me.



As these issues are so irregular, don't expect to see any up-to-date news here. If you want to keep in touch with current folkmusic activity on both sides of the Atlantic I'd advise you to get CARAVAN from Lee Shaw (c/o John Brunner, 144, Fellowes Road, N.W.3 at 6d. per copy) and SING, advertised below. Both these magazines are a must for anyone genuinely interest in the folk music field.

Although we have lots of material in hand, we will always be grateful for any articles on folkmusic, skiffle or jazz - even rock and roll as long as it's constructive analysis.

Artwork, too, is in demand and I am always grateful for contributions.

**FOLKSINGERS!** When in Paris drop in on Ray Nelson, 27, Rue de Tournon, telephone DANTON 07-07, for a little song trading and perhaps a tour of the folksong scene.

Naturally contributions can't be paid for in money - only in thanks.

There are several contraversial articles lined-up for publication in future issues of RAMBLER and if you want the next issue and all issues thereafter, drop me a postcard - letters of comment are welcome too.

The title is a bit hackneyed, I know, but at least it's one connected with folkmusic and an apt title in many cases as most of the contributors are rambling types both when writing and living.

I should like to wish all exponents of folkmusic a very happy new year - one full of good times.

Our policy, for 1958, should be established now - we are primarily a folkmusic fanzine but other articles on various aspects of the modern music scene will sometimes be featured.

That's all.

I'll see you around, maybe ?



*Sing*

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ALL KINDS EV-  
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# JAZZ in PERSPECTIVE GIVE

A NEW COLUMN BY RAY NELSON.

I THINK YOU'LL AGREE IT'S  
WORTH READING.....

+++++

In each age there is one dominant form of music which is the natural expression of the time. It is characteristic of such a living form that it crowds all other forms into the sidelines, or absorbs them. It penetrates the minds of everyone, from the highest to the lowest class, it spreads out over all the culture complex, it is sung and played in palaces and in the streets. No-one who listens to music at all remains untouched by it.

At one time this music was the Gregorian chant, at another polyphonic singing, at another, Italian opera. To attempt to create music outside this dominant form is to doom yourself to self-imposed obscurity or to an artificial support from that ever-present minority who wish to turn back the clock. The living music of our age is jazz (and include in this category American jazz's bongo-thumping sisters, calypso and afro-cuban jazz).

Outside of jazz there is no living music today, and until some new form appears, there will be no living music

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NELSON

outside of jazz. Living music cannot be played by 'competent sight-readers'. If there is written music, it must form only a sort of short-hand notes for the actual improvised performance, like the 'Head arrangement' of the jazzman, the chord symbols on which organists in Bach's time were expected to improvise a complete accompaniment, the written arias in Italian operas which served only as a springboard for the spectacular vocal improvisation of the prima donna. The raga on which the sitarist of India improvises endless variations, the short, childishly simple theme on which a Bolinese ganelan can play improvised variations continuously for six or eight hours without a single exact repetition. The reason for the crucial importance of improvisation is not hard to find - music is an art of organized sounds, not an art of writing notes on paper. Musical notation can express only a small portion of even a 'composed' classical piece. When faced with a Sidney Bechet solo or a bella canto from an Italian opera, it breaks down into a bable of marginal notes which mean, as a whole, "play with feeling."

The basic materials of music are sounds, vibrations of the eardrum - as such they are fixed, permanent, and subject to universal mathematical laws. A perfect fifth is a perfect fifth, a major chord, a major chord,  $\frac{3}{4}$  time is  $\frac{3}{4}$  time here, or in China or on the planet Mars - in the time of the first primitive musicians or 2000 years in the future. A lot of nonsense about alien music from other worlds has been written in science-fiction as a result of ignoring these facts. It is the mathematic basis of music which accounts, in part, for its universality. It also in part accounts for its infinite potential for development and diversity. In the music of the Western world there has been an intensive development in harmony, the use of ever larger small-number ratios between simultaneously sounded pitches.

Our development in rhythm has been relatively limited, taking in only two and three beat rhythms, but the harmony has been largely limited to the use of the open 5th drone. You pays your money and you takes your choice.

Jazz, as it exists today, takes from this infinite storehouse of sounds, the rhythms of  $\frac{2}{4}$ . And  $\frac{4}{4}$  for intensive development, and the major and minor triads, sometimes with added sixths, sevenths, sometimes diminished and augmented. Modern jazz has toyed with other rhythms and chords, but with no marked success. The bulk of the style rests on one chord, the major triad, and one rhythm, the two beat. Further, the patterns into which these major triads are arranged and two beat rhythms ordered are very limited. Two of them, the blues progression and the "pops" progression of Blue Moon, Stormy Weather etc. have been used for perhaps 75 percent of the Jazz music composed since New Orleans. The forms used are similarly limited. The blues form, whether it is called Boogie Woogie, Rhythm and Blues, Rock and Roll or Race Music is as fixed and unchanging as the rock of Gibraltar - it has not changed in any significant way since it was first popularised in The St. Louis Blues of the Dixieland era. The 32 bar "popular song" is equally

fixed and unchanging, whether it backs the painfully beautiful "Stormy Weather" or the painfully trivial "Earth Angel". Theme A is twice repeated, with very little variation over a progression which moves from the tonic triad to the relative minor, then progresses by way of the circle of fifths back to the tonic, shifting on the heavy first beat of every two beat pair. Then comes theme B, in a semi-modulation to the dominant or sub-dominant, with the inevitability of sundown. This theme B is so familiar it has a "trade-name" all its own, "The bridge". After the bridge, without fail, we return to theme A in the original key, exactly repeated.

One may point to the few brilliant exceptions to these formulae, such as "Stardust" and "September Song", but the point I wish to make here is that tho' these progressions and forms are used over again it does not wear them out. They are used over and over again for one reason and one reason only - they work. Until some other forms and progressions are invented with the force, persuasiveness, and drive these "cliches" possess, they will continue to be used.

Modern so-called 'serious' composers have made an obsession out of originality. Anything that had been done was said to be "exhausted" - some went so far as to read an obituary over the diatonic scale and the whole idea of tonality, on the grounds that Wagner had done all that could be done with them. It is somewhat the same sort of thing as a novelist swearing off the themes of love and death because they had already been used too often.

The real aim of art, including music, is not mere novelty, but meaning. So you compose music in a 12 tone system, using no note twice until all have been used. So what? So you add a few dozen extra notes to the scale. So you change rhythm every few bars. Like it says in the song, "It don't mean a thing, if it ain't got that Swing."

You can't compose real music by writing it down first, then playing it. That is doing things ass-backwards. To compose real music, you play it first, and keep playing it until it sounds right, then maybe you write it down. If it contains parallel fifths in movement, that is just too bad.

If it is full of 'blue notes' that don't exist in musical notation, that is tough on you. The one and only point which has the slightest importance is, "how does it sound?" Perhaps if some of these square teacher-composers played their glittering mounds of grey noise over as many times as Duke Ellington has played Mood Indigo, they would come up with something, maybe.

I don't know.

When the new sounds come, they won't come out of the schools. It'll be the card-carrying musicians who put down the new sounds - good union men like Bach or Brubeck, or some bad nobody like Moon-dog or Kid Ory or Mouseorgsky.

They'll come just the way they always have, out of improvisation. A couple of centuries of crazy cats wandering over Europe, singing about lords and ladies - making it up as they go along and playing the chords the church won't allow - no-good gypsies putting together bits and parts from every culture in the known world and making Flamenco and the incredible folk-music of Hungary - a bunch of non-musical dandies in Italy with too much time on their hands cooling up the sound a fat Italian bitch makes while the crowd goes nuts and the composer weeps over his murdered score - a lot of working musicians playing for so much a night, feast or famine, because they are no good for anything else - savages, right from the jungle, singing while they pick cotton - murderers on the chain gang, bums riding the rods, cowboys and sailors and hillbillies and highwaymen, niggers in a New Orleans whorehouse, Buddy Bolden dead from booze and trying to play the note the Bird later was trying to reach for with an arm full of heroin, one generation on booze, another on reefers, today's cats on the needle, Bessie Smith and Billy Holiday giving the drunks a hard-on, that's how the new sounds will come.

Thad Monk making obnoxious noises on other people's pianos and Satchmo forgetting the words in the middle of a recording session and inventing skat-singing without skipping a beat. Renton's kids getting indigestion from listening to too much Bartok, going to L.A. to make movies and babies, a high school in Chicago and a garage in Kansas City, a bongo in Cuba and a pair of spoons in London and Django Reinhardt with a crippled hand in Paris playing anyway the world's best guitar, Hank Snow and a hillbilly named Willis laying a bottom for Elvis to wave, Tin-pan alley and Porgy and Bess and that turncoat "serious" composer and red, Kurt Weil, with his low-down German opera. That's how the new sounds come.

You want to know how the new sounds come ?

Well, look, man, I got this here guitar see, and like you get a horn or a drum or a piano or a harmonica or a jew's harp or a washboard - you can even get a violin if you want to, but nobody has been able to do much with one of them things. Like you get this horn, man, and blow. You know ? And I whang away on the old git-box and we make some sounds here. Yeah, daddy! Invite your friends - everybody sit in. If they can't make the scene we'll just drown them out. We'll do "Careless Love", man.

I know it's been done before. You ain't delivering the news, boy, but it's never been done my way. One chorus straight and then we drop the Hell bomb.

You with it, dad ?

Okay.

One, two.

# REVIEWS

MJM

THE BOSSES' SONG BOOK 25 cents. Lithoed. 32 pages. Recommended. Details from Dick Ellington, 98, Suffolk St., Apt. 3a. New York 2, N.Y. U.S.A.

This is a book which has obviously been compiled with tongue in cheek. Taking off People's Artists and their publications. They do it perfectly.

You don't have to be American, neither do you have to agree with the ideas expressed in the songs to appreciate them.

I especially liked JESUS CHRIST (A parody of JESSE JAMES) and THE TWELVE DAYS OF MARXMAS. Also liked the take-off of WRECK OF THE OLD '97 called the BALLAD OF PETE SEEGER. Altho' I could only guess at what it implied. THIS LAND IS THEIR LAND (another take-off - of Woody Guthrie's famous song). Other songs I enjoyed were WHICH SIDE ARE WE ON?, BOSSES' LIFE GUARD, I DON'T WANT YOUR UNION MISTER (sung, I should think to I WAS BORN IN WEST VIRGINIA).

There are approximately 20 songs in this book - well-worth app. 2 bob.

The Hints for Beginners (especially the 'chord charts') are genuinely funny. Get this book, now, man!

CARAVAN 10/- a copy (6d.) Dupered. App. 16 pages per issue. From: Mrs. Lee Shaw, Apt. 5P, 780, Greenwich Street, New York 14, N.Y. Or from British Agent John Brunner, 144, Fell-owed Rd., N.W.4. Subscriptions of \$1.00 or less will be accepted.

A monthly magazine full of interest to everyone in any part of the folkmusic scene. Columns deal with both sides of the Atlantic (including regular columns on London and New York by John and Lee respectively). All issues packed (and I mean packed) with Good Things. No. 6 out Jan 58. Send your money to John now.

SING 1/- a copy. Lithoed/Dupered/Letterpress (depends on what issue it is). 20 odd pages per issue. From Eric Winter, 38, Westberg Road, London, N.W.2.

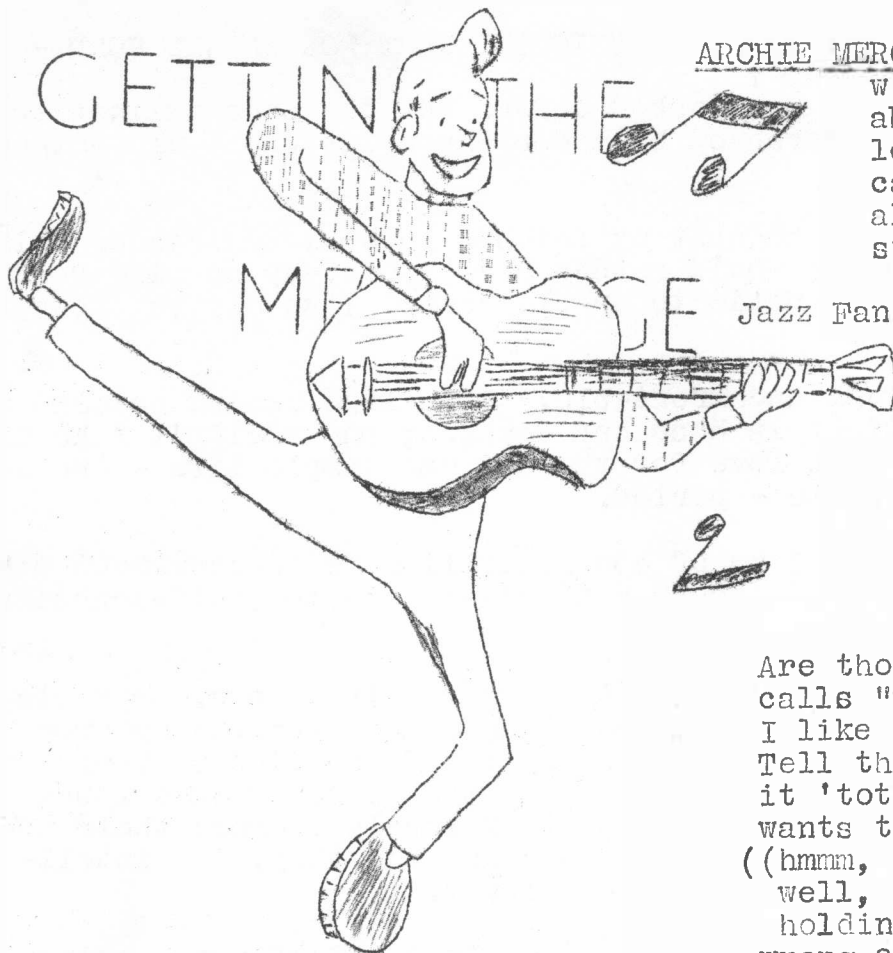
Most British fm fans know about SING already. It can be bought in London from Colletts, Dobells or Les Flood's BOOKS AND MUSIC shop in Sicilian Avenue or direct from Eric. SING prints news, lots of songs, letters, columns and articles all concerned with folkmusic, here, in Europe, the States and the whole of the world.

You won't regret buying it. It is a really excellent magazine which is certainly good value. Reviewd in JF 10. May yet see print.

- MJM.







ARCHIE MERCER starts off which will be, I suspect, about the shortest lettercol ever. I can't afford to buy all those tuppenny stamps.....

Jazz Fan.

Which has a magnificent cover - worthy of a far better cause, if you see what I mean (No, Mercer, I don't see what you mean, explain yourself).

Are those barges what one calls "walking shoes" ? I like the bacover, too. Tell the man he wants to hold it 'tother way round if he wants to play it thataway. ((hmmm, let's have a look - well, he looks as if he's holding it right.... what's wrong ? This little boy who is, apparently, getting the message with Alda's help is holding HIS git the right

way around.)) The Paul Oliver article was certainly an idea - I'd thought he was an American, as a matter of fact. Otherwise thish was a bit flimsy, with cruder artwork than usual nowadays - even though that jiving couple on P.4 ((top or bottom, there are two)) are worth it for the expressions on their faces alone. Particularly the female. I'm intrigued by this tuba in a string band, too - though I'm a tuba-supporter, most definitely. A real gone instrument. Hey - I've got that FF+2 record Alan Dodd mentions - now everybody'll be thinking I'M Alan Dodd, I suppose. (Who isn't these days, anyway ?)

Still my favourite Moorcockzine, anyway, even though I am of course duly insulted by your mention on the back. You could read THE RIFT VALLEY PART 8 OK, couldn't you ? The secret is to use white petroleum jelly instead of yellow. Easy when you know how.

THE GIDDY-UP DINGDONG MERRILY ON HIGH SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO A HEART THAT'S TRUE..... Amercer

BALLADS from Britain and the U.S.A. will not appear for at least another four months due to money being almost nonexistent.

IS THE CURRENT INTEREST IN FOLK MUSIC INTEREST FOR AN ART FORM -  
OR JUST A FASHIONABLE FAD ?

This question has been asked before but the case against the current boom is ably expressed by a correspondent who would rather remain anonymous.

"Although I count amongst my friends several addicts of folk music, rabbit enthusiasts who'd rather have a beat-up genuine Rocky Mountain guitar than an ultimate angelic harp, I've always fought shy of the enthusiasm.

"It makes me feel uncomfortable. It's like seeing someone walking down a city street in hose and doublet; one wouldn't take this as an exhibition of pure love for the old and simple life - one would take it for exhibition - period.

"It seems to me - I am of course willing to be convinced otherwise - that a number of modern enthusiasts are too self-conscious of their professed love.

"Folk music is not sung for the sake of its words, or music, or the sentiments it expresses; who amongst the present-day crop of folksingers gives a damn how John Henry lived and died? They have found an art form which is dying because the simple folk culture which produced it is also dying, and they loudly express their admiration for the naive, home-spun songs because they, the intellectuals, can only be simple by being clever.

"As I understand it, folk songs evolved out of three principle needs; that sentiment which could not be written by the illiterate could be expressed in the memorised words of a song; a rhythm simple enough for working men to work by and to remember; a means of livelihood for wandering minstrels.

"These are definite objectives; the attainment of them was achieved time and time again, but - they were as fitted to their environment as the Tin Pan Alley ephemerae fit as a background noise to a crowded cafeteria.

"A bearded youth playing folk ballads in a London pub is as misfitted to his environment as a Rocky Mountaineer would be spreading his hobnailed boots on a City desk.

"Enthusiasm for an art form for its own sake is to be admired and emulated.

"Enthusiasm for an art form because it is a fashionable intellectual fad is abominable.

"I saw a 'folk song' about a sputnik recently. I could have retched."

(( Er... comments welcome)).