

1959  
april - may

# CARAVAN

the  
magazine  
of  
folk music



folksing  
at the  
unicorn

35c

## EDITOR'S PAGE

Our old printer (bless his soul) really fixed us on the last issue. He took five weeks to deliver a one week printing job which is why the Feb.-Mar. issue was four weeks late. This issue is being printed by Peter Strauss of Pilgrim Press who also does printing for Elektra, Tradition, Riverside, and Izzy Young's Jazz Review. We are confident that you will be reading this somewhere between the first and fifteenth of April rather than the middle of May.

The May issue of MADMOISELLE magazine will feature an article by Miss Grace Waldman on the subject of Folk Music. To our knowledge this is the first time that a magazine of national distribution has devoted any space to a serious consideration of what is happening folk-music-wise in this country.

Aside from being late the last issue carried some misinformation about our staff. Lee Haring, far from being the director of advertising, will edit the concert review section. This issue carries a review by Lee on the A.Y.M. Andrew Rowan Summers-New Lost City Ramblers concert.

### CARAVAN IS YOUR MAGAZINE

Again in the last issue, we italicized a part of Bob Coulson's letter; where he said, "I suppose you have to depend on the material you receive." Allow us to re-emphasize a very important point. CARAVAN is, in every sense of the word, YOUR magazine. We run it because we believe that you, the folksinger, folk listener, the reader, whoever you are, should have a voice with which to express your feelings about folk music. On the surface the casual observer might very well feel that there isn't anything to get hot about--you sing or don't sing--listen or don't listen.

But people do get hot and emotional about folk songs, and singers. CARAVAN is the place to air these feelings, opinions and arguments. It is great to prepare a magazine; it gives one a feeling of really doing something to plan an issue, decide who would be good to write what, and then badger them into getting it in on time. It gives one a fine feeling of importance to think about one's favorite subject in the field and sit down and

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# CARAVAN

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CARAVAN  
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the  
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folk music

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APRIL - MAY  
No. 16





# FOLK MUSIC, *Los Angeles*


Since the advent of the coffee shop in Los Angeles folk music has been thought of hand in glove with the beat generation.

The first coffee shop in the Los Angeles area was started by a young man by the name of Herb Cohen. His enterprise, the UNICORN, was an immediate sensation in the Hollywood area.

Previous to the opening of the UNICORN, Herb Cohen was an impresario in the folk music line. He sponsored many small concerts in Los Angeles featuring such people as Odetta, Guy Caravan, and Frank Hamilton, to name a few. With the opening of the UNICORN Herb naturally encouraged folk singers to frequent the place and the UNICORN soon became known as a place where folk music could be heard.

Like the Bagel Shop in San Francisco, the UNICORN has become known as the headquarters of the Beat Generation which accounts, in part, for the above mentioned association.

Soon after the success of the UNICORN, Cohen opened a night club-coffee house in the heart of Hollywood by the name of COSMO ALLKY. Here, such performers as Theo Bikel, Leon Bibb, Barbara Dane, and others are featured on the stage. The atmosphere is fairly commercial, as is the



music, and the quality of the entertainment is the best available in the line. The UNICORN caters to tourists, "beat" types (whom the tourists come to see), and the following of whatever folksinger happens to be singing there at the time. Logan English, Dick Rosmini, Jimmy Gavin and myself are some of the singers that have, from time to time, been at the UNICORN. When I left Los Angeles at the beginning of March a young fellow with a big voice by the name of Bob Grossman was singing there.

COSMO ALLKY, on the other hand, caters to the Hollywood night club set mainly, and is fairly expensive.

Los Angelenians who liked their folk music fairly straight had a place called the ASH GROVE to go to until a couple of weeks ago. Entertainment license difficulties closed them temporarily but Ed Pearl, the owner, expects to be open again in the very near future. It would be a shame if the ASH GROVE does not reopen because it was the only place in Los Angeles where folk singers could present their material without any commercial coating. The ASH GROVE audience came to hear ethnic type sounds.

Many other coffee shops in Los Angeles (there are about fifty of them now; they all rose up in the last two

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# A Note On SINGING STYLES

by Peter Feldman

Recent articles in this magazine on art and folk music have opened an important area of discussion. However, they ignored what must be undertaken by anyone writing commentary on, or criticism of, folksinging: an analysis and appreciation of the specific elements of the artistic singing of folksongs. If we cannot talk about folk music in terms of *lieder*, we can talk about certain elements of singing which exist in both forms of music and, indeed, in all art. Folksinging can be, and frequently is, a genuine form of first-rate artistry, even when practiced by unschooled singers. But what makes art? No one has answered this question, and yet several people have written about the art of the folksinger or folk music as art. Perhaps this is due to a certain confusion about what a folksinger is. This confusion is, I think, sown by all this "urban folksinger" and "metropolitan reared intellectuals pretending to be peasants" talk. The young singer doesn't know what standards apply to him, and neither do those who would write about him. The individual singer who decides to be a performer of folksongs and something of a folklorist must realize that he is a performer and must be judged as one, to some extent. He must adopt some of the standards of the performer and the conscious artist, in order to create a decent performance and an artistic experience out of his material. He cannot be judged by the same standards as, say, a farmhand singing in a field. It has been pointed out that you can't judge folk music in quite the same way as other musical forms. Neither can the folk performer look to his material in quite the same way as the concert, *lieder*, opera, or oratorio singer for that which is the stuff of art. But he will find simplicity (well, usually), sincerity (but sometimes, sarcasm), and direct appeal (never mind to whom; that's a study in itself). What this music lacks of the artistic ingredient, as it were, is the intellectual musical values, the profound musical ideas, to go along with its emotional values. And since I suspect that these two elements cannot really be separated from each other except for discussion, the lack of profound musical

ideas probably means a lack of profound emotional values. This may come as a surprise to anyone who has been moved by a folk song of emotional force, whether a love song, song of protest, or what have you, but I believe it is true: in the abstract form of art that is music, the most direct emotion, the one most easily understood, is not necessarily the most profound. Sincerity, emotion, poetic words, and an attractive melody do not alone make great art.

However, the folksinger's material will yield, in addition to those elements I mentioned above, something which will be just as valuable to him as the composer's artistry is to the concert singer: at the basis of every work of art (even in potentia) is the human experience from which it has come. The achievement of the artist is to order and transform that experience into a statement or action of significance, as men from Aristotle to John Devey have taught us. Some forms of art, such as that of songs, require an interpretive artist whose job is to recreate that statement or action, and to interpret it (their practices over the years have shown that it is possible to recreate the same action or experience with differing interpretations). The folk singer must begin his work by discovering exactly what is the experience behind the song. He must see what is the relationship of the song to that experience; that is, what kind of expression of, or comment on, the experience the song is. He must track down the experience and learn how it affects the human condition. All this can be done by studying the song carefully for all the thoughts expressed in it, and for all its emotional values. Investigation of any background material that is available on the song, reference material on the region and time from which it comes, and other songs from that time and place are helpful. This often is a kind of mood, almost an atmosphere: the feeling for life which was behind the song.

Now that he has come this far, the singer should have a pretty good idea of why the song exists at all; that is, an idea of what is the action behind the song. Armed with the experience and the statement, he then can proceed to his next problem: how is he going to sing it?

I will not discuss the matter of the "authentic" rendition versus the doctored version, for what I write of can apply to either form. Even if the performer's version is not the true folk version, he has a responsibility to a higher kind of truth.

I suggest that the folksinger is going to sing with the greatest effect and the highest degree of artistry, will in fact create a work of art where, probably, none existed before, if he is able to recreate the basic emotional experience and action behind the song. Only if he

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# FOLK AND HILLBILLY MUSIC

## THE BACKGROUND OF THEIR RELATION

by Fred G. Hoepfner

Part I

There is a field of American music which has been either heavily condemned or totally ignored in the past by most musicologists, folklorists, and other students. It is just now beginning to be discovered by these groups. This is the field of hillbilly music. This type of music is certainly much more important as a factor in our culture than has been recognized, and it should be examined as such. On what basis should an examination be set? Since the field of folksong is already an established, recognized field of study, the integral relation of hillbilly music with folksong should be shown, and past and present ideas about this relationship studied.

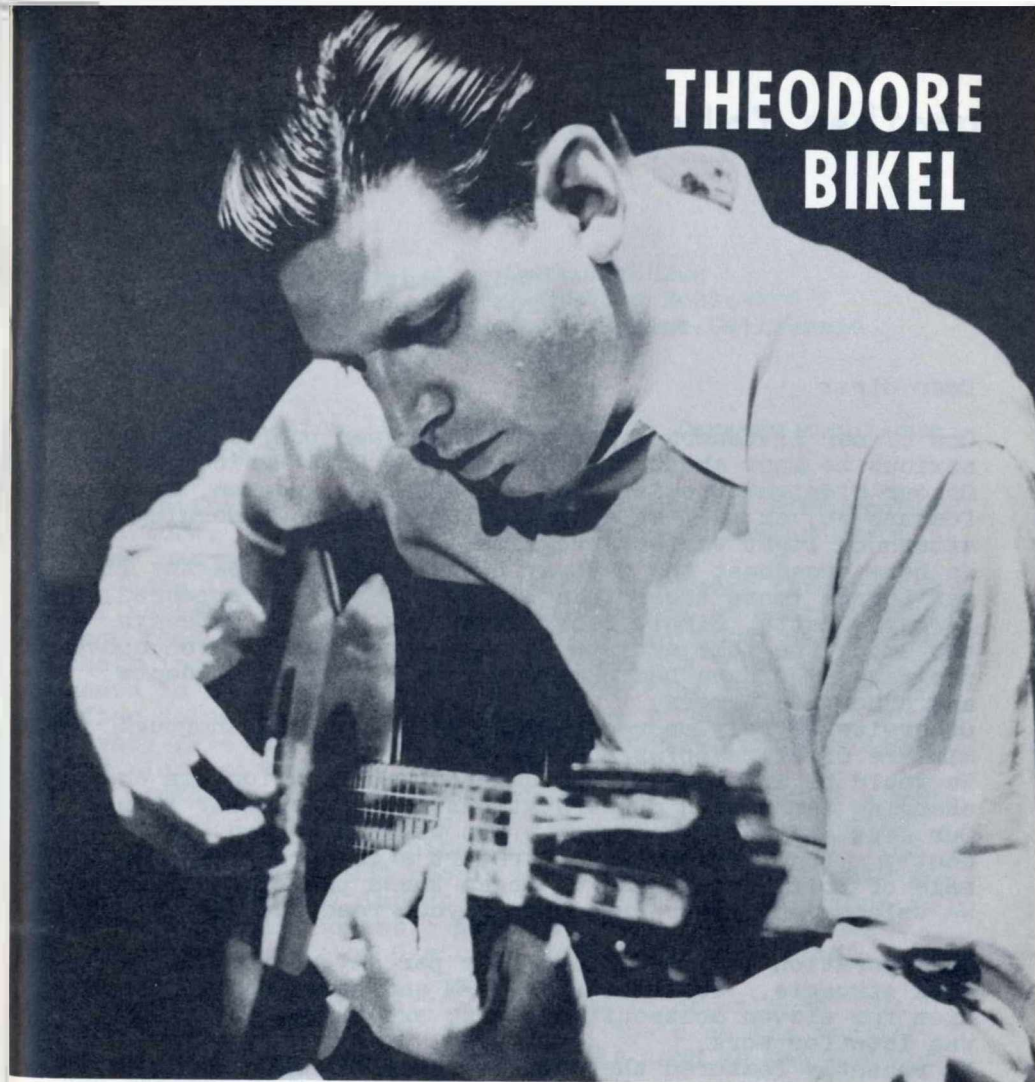
First of all, what is "hillbilly" music? It is generally understood to be a branch of the field of country music. "Country" is the word used in the music industry today to describe the whole field of music, various aspects of which are or were known as "hillbilly", "mountain", "cowboy", "western", "rockabilly", and so forth. The major divisions of country music, in the nomenclature most used today, with examples of artists still active recently, might be listed as: (1) hillbilly: Flatt and Scruggs, Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys, Roy Acuff and his Smoky Mountain Boys, Reno and Smiley, Jimmie Osborne, etc.; (2) western: Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys, Bill Boyd and his Cowboy Ramblers, Leon McAuliffe and his Cimarron Boys, Tex Ritter, Sons of the Pioneers, etc.; (3) modern country music (for want of a better terminology): Eddy Arnold, Hank Williams, Patsy Young, Don Gibson, Webb Pierce, etc.; (4) rockabilly: Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, etc. Of course, the lines drawn between these styles cannot always be precise, and since some developed from others, there is some overlap. But in the light of past development, the above classification is by far the most logical. The examples were chosen at random from the better known artists. This will serve to show how hillbilly music stands in the overall scheme of music styles.

Now it is important to examine this word "hillbilly". It was first applied to a style of music by Ralph Peer, then recording head for the Okeh record company, in the mid 1920's, perhaps 1926. It was done out of a matter of necessity, for a class name had to be formulated under which the records of this newly discovered type of music could be marketed. Having been raised in Kansas City, Peer was familiar with the Ozark Mountain area. The word had apparently

1. The standard academically-accepted definition of "folksong" will be followed.

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## THEODORE BIKEL



### THEODORE BIKEL recordings on Elektra

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(orchestra under direction of FRED HEILFERNAN)	EKL 165

another folk music program-----

Radio Station WMFM  
2047 Winnebago Street  
Madison 4, Wisconsin

Dear Sirs:

One of our listeners informs us that your publication is anxious to know about stations playing Polk Music. We do. On our Midnight Special show and Nite-lite program, we feature it, as well as a sprinkling during our morning and afternoon light variety programs.

We have broadcast the Gateway Singers remote from the Tiger Lounge (more tiger than lounge) where they appeared. Seeger, Odetta, Bikel, Bibb, Weissberg and the Gateways are among the folk artists who have appeared live on above programs. We have had numerous local artists, students and other performers.

Otherwise we rely on records and play a pretty thorough mixture of all samples and types. We would be interested, through your publication, in exchanging tapes with other stations using a similar format. Our Jazz and Folk Music shows are well sponsored, incidentally. Local record stores report a sharp increase in sale of Folk Music since we began these programs. We welcome any ideas from you or your readers.

Our operation is a seventeen hour per day, seven days a week struggle. We are strictly FM and have been in operation for eleven consecutive years, except one day when I was late for work.

We recently featured the Salt-Robinson SANDHOG, which drew considerable mail comment. The State Radio Council and other surveys indicate an approximate audience of between 6000 and 7500 on nights we highlight Polk Music.

No, the station is not for sale.

Best Wishes  
Mark Burns  
Program Director



and a new folk music center

Gerald McCabe  
3015 Pico Boulevard  
Santa Monica, California

Dear Billy,

At your suggestion I'm writing to tell Caravan about our new Polk Music center.

My vocation is the design and manufacture of contemporary furniture. I jointly own a shop in Santa Monica where I do my own manufacturing.

I became interested in folk music four years through the influence of Bess Haves. Because people in Bess' classes knew that I worked with wood they often asked me to repair their instruments. I would, on occasion, find old instruments in Goodwill Stores etc. and restore and sell them. After doing this for about two years I found myself with twenty-five guitars, about eight or ten 5 string banjos, and misc. mandolins.

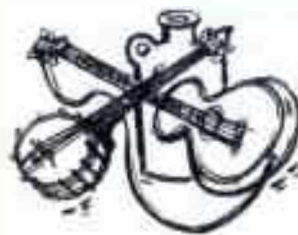
Two months ago I found both businesses had reached a proportion where they were no longer compatible with each other. I opened the guitar shop on December 12th, 1958 and greeted about 200 people with hard cider and folk music. At present I import guitars from Spain, Germany and Mexico plus any domestic guitars of any worth. I also have a good stock of 5 string banjos and mandolins.

Ed Kahn is in charge of the Folk Music department. We have a very complete stock of Polk Music on the popular labels plus some lesser known labels such as Bay Concerts and others.

Guitar and banjo instructions are given both in groups and individual lessons.

It is my hope to make the store a center for Folk Music in the Southern California Area.

Sincerely  
Gerald L. McCabe







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110 MacDougal St. N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

offers the largest, most varied collection of old and new books on folklore, folkmusic and jazz in America.



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### The Folklore Center

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Please send me your free April list ☐

CARAVAN's tiny library has been enriched with a copy of the Joe Hill Memorial Edition of the I.W.W. Songbook. Last month I sang "Pie in the Sky" on Les Claypool's radio program in Los Angeles. Mr. N. J. Osborn heard the program and attended a concert I gave in Claremont the next week.

He brought along a copy of the I.W.W. Songbook and when I expressed an interest in it he said he'd send a microfilm of it. His letter follows.

--Editor

N. J. Osborn  
2445 South Kathryn  
Pomona, California

Dear Mr. Falter,

I decided to do what for me is the generous thing--keep the photo copy. The reason I attach value to the original and have kept it for several years is that I am a kind of posthumous Wobbly myself, having been on the bum for a couple of years as a kid and then later on marrying into a family which was graced from time to time by the visits of a bedroll missionary of the IWW, a truculent but delightful bachelor uncle who would stay a week or two during which time we sang the Wob Songbook backwards and forwards and listened to his toothless but enthusiastic sermons on behalf of the One Big Union. (It was only later that I found out the IWW had been dead for at least twenty years.)

The particular booklet came to me through the hands of a New York lawyer who investigated the lynching and shooting "incident" that took place in Centralia, Washington on November 11th, 1919. His report was published in 1930 by the Federal Council of Churches. I have the materials he saved from this on-the-scene investigation (on-the-scene ten years after the event, that is), and the song book was one item included. Since he picked up his materials on the scene (several home snap-shots, different sizes and shapes show this) the song book was likely used in Centralia or Seattle before or after the Armistice Day Tragedy. (I wish I knew who M.E.B. was--the person with the practical note on the Toreador Song as a tune for militant singers.)\*

We owe you a great deal for our tape theft of "Pie in the Sky". What a thrill to hear it over the air--and when the recorder was working! That length of tape will never be erased.

Hope to see you next year if you return to Pomona.

N. J. Osborn

\*On page thirteen of the booklet by a song "to be sung to the tune of the Toreador Song" is a pencilled inscription: "Too hard to sing. M.E.B."

# Letter To The Editor...

# WOODY GUTHRIE:

## *Lessons he taught us*

by Pete Seeger



"Why are you guys scared to be serious?" Woody Guthrie once asked his friend, Walter Lowenfels, when Walter was trying to put together some parodies and songs for a political campaign. Walter says it was an important lesson he didn't forget.

Woody taught us all a lot. Of course, he always claimed that he could not theorize, that he couldn't keep up with us and our booklearning. He'd bow out of an argument rather than get tangled up in four-syllable words. But he had a number of sound theories about song-writing, and I only wish we had been able to learn them better. Because we need more songs written today, of the kind Woody could have written.

For one thing, Woody had outspoken contempt for mere cleverness. A joke was fine, a pun, a gag -- he put plenty of humor into his songs. But humor was not enough by itself. There had to be some solid meat there. So in some of his most humorous songs, like TALKING DUSTBOWL, there is an undertone of bitter reality. In this respect Woody's songs are like the poems of Robert Burns.

Also, Woody had a deep respect for the ballad form. He knew enough about other song forms to choose many others, but he felt that the old four-line stanza, which told a story and slowly unfolded a moral, was as good as any he could possibly use. Many of his most famous songs used the melodies of earlier songs. SO LONG used the tune of BILLY THE KID. TOM JOAD used the ballad of JOHN HARDY. THE PHILADELPHIA LAWYER used the tune and basic framework of THE JEALOUS LOVER OF LONE GREEN VALLEY. Woody said, "I'm not saying some of your tunes from other countries aren't good. But I wasn't raised to them, and neither were the people I'm trying to sing to. So I'm going to use the kind of tunes we understand."

Woody was not adverse to having his songs sung on the Hit Parade, but to my knowledge he never wrote a song with the Hit Parade in mind. He considered most commercial

music men as slick people who didn't really know what folks wanted, but who foisted their own idea of music upon the country. He thought of them the way an Oklahoma farmer thought of Wall Street bankers. So Woody put out of his head the idea of making a lot of money from his songs. He'd write and sing them himself, and mimeograph copies from time to time, and trust that if he put together a song which hit the spot, people would take it up as their own.

And since he frankly agreed that he couldn't tell which of his songs would be good and which would be soon forgotten, he adopted a kind of scatteration technique -- that is, he'd write a lot of songs, on the theory that at least some of them would be good. For example, when he went to work in 1940 as a "Research Consultant" for the Bonneville Public Power Authority, he wrote several dozen songs. Nearly all of them have some special charm. But it was one of them, ROLL ON, COLUMBIA, which seems destined to last for generations.

Each "unsuccessful" song was not a waste of time, moreover. He could learn from it. Woody understood the old axiom: "There is no such thing as an unsuccessful experiment." (Reason: you get either a positive or a negative result. In either case you learn.) Hence out of the many attempts he made, he learned enough to write good songs.

Woody had a devouring curiosity. I'll never forget the week he discovered Rabelais, and read through a two-inch thick volume, a relatively unexpurgated edition, in a couple of days. During the following weeks I could see Woody experimenting with some of the techniques of style that Rabelais used, such as paragraphs full of images, adjective after adjective, getting more and more fantastic.

At the same time he fought to retain his own identity as a representative of Oklahoma and the dustbowl. People thought he was being consciously bohemian, wearing blue jeans in New York City, shaving only when it was convenient. But he was just being like Popeye: "I yam what I yam."

I'll never forget the time he was hired for twenty dollars to sing for a lawn party, for a wealthy lady in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He sang one song amid all the cocktail chatter. He sang another, but the chatter still didn't subside. In the middle of the third song he stopped and quietly slung his guitar on his back, and on his way out grabbed up a whisky bottle in each hand. Without saying a word he strolled out the door while the hostess stood open-mouthed. I understand she has still not gotten over it.

"That man!" she said.  
Wish we had more like him.



## FOLK AND HILLBILLY MUSIC: THE BACKGROUND OF THEIR RELATION

(continued from page 8)

been in use previously to describe natives of that area.<sup>2</sup> The word was thought of as degrading by many, especially the performers, from the very first. Bradley Kincaid, for one, who will be recognized as an important commercial hillbilly performer, wrote a sincere denunciation of the word which he published in one of his songbooks, with the suggestion, in effect, that "mountain" be used instead of "hillbilly".<sup>3</sup> But, while sometimes used, it never displaced "hillbilly". While not all recording companies used the word, most of them did at one time or another, and it became by far the best known class descriptive word, primarily because of lack of a better substitute. Most of the other phrases used were inept or cumbersome, to say the least.<sup>4</sup>

An attempt to define the word "hillbilly" has never been made. This is understandable, as the commercial interests who promoted the word had little interest in definition. The public now attaches a rather vague meaning to the word, but usually has in mind that style of music native to the culture of the common or folk class of white people in the United States, and played by stringed instruments. The more thoughtful person would probably change it to "... people in the southeastern United States", thus distinguishing it from western music, which had a separate development in many respects. This distinction should be kept, because it is necessary to have words limited enough to describe those styles if a study of this music is to develop without bogging down because of semantic difficulties.<sup>5</sup> So, then, while most people might not make the distinction between hillbilly music and "modern country music", it is believed that this should also be done. Hence, the completed definition might be taken as "that style of music native to the culture of the common or folk class of white people in the southeastern United States, played by stringed instruments,<sup>6</sup> and relatively little influenced by musical developments

2. R. Orlan, "There's Gold In Them Hillbillies," Colliers, April 30, 1938, p. 24.

3. Bradley Kincaid, Bradley Kincaid Song Book #3, c. 1930.

4. Examples: "Old Time Singing and Playing," "Old Familiar Songs", "Native American Songs", "Old Time Dixie Songs", "Old Southern Tunes".

5. Most of the performers of past and present have kept it, although record companies have not. The styles were quite different.

6. The only exception is the harmonica, and perhaps the kazoo if that is considered an instrument.

occurring after 1941." This definition restricts the term to that idiom of music to which it was first applied, and direct developments therefrom. The significance of the year 1941 will become evident from later discussion.

Now that the separation between hillbilly and the rest of country music has been shown, the most common differentiation between "hillbilly" and "folk" should be examined for validity. How have the record companies related the two? This is important, for the record companies relation was bound to have much influence on public thought. Their use of "hillbilly", "country", "folk", and whatever other descriptive terminology they used rested strictly along commercial lines. In was in the early 1940's that record companies first started releasing records for "people who like folk music". And it was not until around 1950 that this type of material began to be released in quantity. By "people who like folk music" is meant those, generally of urban background, who simply enjoy listening to folk music, or who like to study it, and consequently who buy the records. The record manufacturers have marketed this type of music under the heading "folk music". While the songs are nearly always really folk songs, the performances on the more commercialized labels are more often than not far from authentic. Even on the folk specialty labels, non-folk material and performances, while clearly stated as such, have a tendency to become confused in the public mind with folk material. It has been shown that the record industry used the word "hillbilly", "country", or whatever substitutes the particular firm chose under which to market records produced for the common or folk class of people. The use of this differentiation, while probably natural and necessary from the record companies' standpoint, can cause much confusion. The reason becomes obvious when it is realized that most early "hillbilly" records are much closer to true folk in style than the so-called "folk" records issued today, and at least nearly as close in content. If for no other reason, this is because the "hillbilly" records were performed by people in whose culture the material (i.e. songs) existed; whereas most "folk" records are performed by urban folk singers who imitate folk style. This is an important concept to understand, and will be discussed further later. But this is not the only reason this differentiation can cause confusion. In many cases the very same master was released in the late 20's and 30's for consumption of the folk, and then the same master was re-released under the heading "folk" for "people who like folk music".<sup>7</sup> To make this distinction on the basis of intent of the manufacturer leads only to absurdity. Yet this is standard in the industry today, and will probably continue to be out of necessity. (continued on page 42)

7. Examples: Brunswick LP "Listen to Our Story", Folkways LP "Anthology of American Folk Music".





## Message

### FROM THE WEST

February 28, 1959

The Northern California Folk Song Society is the newest addition to the Bay Area folk music boom. Its purpose is "to promote interest in folk song and to establish a better understanding among the general public of folk song, its functions, history and significance." Headquarters are in Berkeley with regular activities scheduled in Palo Alto and Sacramento. The Society began with a folk song concert on February 22 in Berkeley. The program featured the largest number of singers to be presented in one concert in the Bay Area: Jim Stein, John Michell, Ray Price, Dave Frederickson, Miriam Stafford, Jo Wernham, Godeane Engle, Don Zwelp, Janet Smith, Deena Zonlight, Rita Weil, Barry and Helen Olivier, Wayne Smith, Charlie Stivers, Connie Bowen and B. J. Dennis. Five hundred people turned out for the concert. In a week's time the Society membership has grown to about forty. Proposed activities for members include monthly jam sessions, special concerts, publications, social events and workshops. The Society will also sponsor "big name" concerts open to the public. Dave Van Ronk will conduct the first workshop on March 8.

Grace West Newman has been drawing overflow crowds for her bi-weekly hootenannies at the Panpipes Music Shop in San Francisco. The first series of hoots will end on March 18 with Sally Davis as guest singer. Ida Hodes and Angelo Salvador will begin the second series on April 15 in Studio Q in the Fugazi Building. Hoots to follow will feature Page Stegner and Stoner Haven, Mike and Jo Wernham, Pat Searies and her son, and Jim Stein, Zonweise Hubbard and Noni Wells.

Barry Olivier held two informal jam sessions at the Barrel in Berkeley this month. Miriam Stafford, Jo Wernham and Jim Stein performed at the first session. Dave Van Ronk dropped in at the Barrel quite unexpectedly this week and was enthusiastically recruited for last night's jam session.

Barry and Helen are making a number of concert appearances this season. February 18 they did a concert of songs from around the world for the University of California's foreign language organization. April 12 they will do one of the series of Palo Alto Youth Concerts and May 2 they will sing at the College Woman's Club in Berkeley.

Miriam Stafford and Dave Frederickson will do a concert at Los Angeles State College in April.

Mary Ann Pollar has three concerts scheduled for next month. On March 14 she will present Sonny Terry, Brownie McGee and Barbara Lane in Berkeley. Theo Bikel will sing in Palo Alto on March 19 and in Berkeley on the 21st. Mary Ann's February 14th concert was a very special treat. She brought Billy Faier back to Berkeley and he was at his best. It was the finest performance he has ever given in the Bay Area.

Folk music continues to be featured at a number of night clubs in and around San Francisco. At the Anxious Asp Charlie Goodwin sings folk songs and plays guitar and the Coachmen continue at the Purple Onion. At the Kerosene Club in San Jose a new trio, The Wayfarers, are making some fairly spirited music in the Gateway Singers vein.

San Francisco's educational station, KQED, is starting a folk music program on March 17th. Laura Weber will instruct and teach folk songs to children much in the same manner that she does on her KPFA radio program.

Zonweise Hubbard and Page Stegner

## FOLK MUSIC, LOS ANGELES

continued from page 5

years) have folk singing of some type or other. Club Renaissance on Sunset Blvd. usually has a folk singer on Thursday nights. Jack Elliott was filling the bill when I left. They also have pantomime acts and a jazz group on weekends.

CARAVAN can be obtained from many bookstores associated with coffee houses in L. A. These coffee shops have been described as Supermarkets of Culture. The reference is unfair, I feel, because I think that this is the first time the Supermarket idea has been put to a really creative use. The Unicorn, the Ash Grove (if it reopens) and the Club Renaissance all have book stores associated with them on the premises. (Cosmo Alley's book store is across the street.) They carry the latest in avant-garde paperback novels, art books and literary and poetry reviews. These establishments (excepting Cosmo Alley) have theaters in the back or the basement where more formal entertainment takes place. The Renaissance theater is in the process of construction now. Ben Shapiro, an ex-New Yorker,

continued on page 20



who owns the Renaissance expects the theater to be in operation late this spring. Needless to say, all these places have paintings on the walls and the Ash Grove had an honest-to-goodness Art Gallery in the same room as its tables. You could also get guitar lessons and acting classes at the Ash Grove.

Folk music then, is only a part of the atmosphere of these places. Each place handles it differently and no one of them seems to have struck an ideal way of presenting it. Having a folksinger sitting around with the patrons can be an easy, relaxed way of doing it unless the patrons don't feel like listening, in which case the folksinger is left to sing or not, as he wishes. A favorite story at the Unicorn concerns Logan English who in a fit of pique on a rather noisy night, stood up on a table and demanded, in no uncertain terms that everyone shut up and listen to him sing. Accounts vary as to the effectiveness of this measure. Dick Rosmini says that his vocal volume increased tenfold under the necessity of making himself heard in the Unicorn. So did mine. More ideal conditions exist at the Ash Grove where a singer is usually met with eager silence from the audience. (This is in the front rooms of these places. People pay to get into the theaters where the formal entertainment is presented and their deportment is comparable to any theater audience.)

Aside from the coffee shop scene there are many folk groups and clubs in L. A. that meet more or less regularly. But like Los Angeles itself, they are sprawled out over an immense area and in the six weeks I was there I could hardly begin to find out about them, much less visit them. One very promising note concerns Bess Hayes who is teaching an extension course in folk guitar at U.C.L.A. and, I think, another school. Bess told me that a good folk guitar teacher could get more students than he, or she, could handle in a short time, which, of course, indicates that folk music is a thriving activity in the area.

This issue contains a letter from Gerald McCabe about his new folk music center in Santa Monica. I would like to add that his place is the most beautiful I have seen. McCabe builds all the furnishings himself (as well as repairing instruments).

Dorothy and Charles Chase's Folk Music Center in Claremont, California, is a tiny, back-of-a-real-estate-office enterprise. They carry instruments, records, books, etc. Charles Chase repairs and builds guitars and banjos.

I confess that I didn't get to see or hear as much folk music activity in Los Angeles as I would have liked to. There is undoubtedly much more going on than I spoke of here. If anyone from Southern California can add to, amplify, or correct what I have said about folk music in Los Angeles, write it down, and send it in and we'll print it.

Billy Faier

# THE JOHN T. SCOPES TRIAL OR The Old Religion's Better After All!

A Song By Carlos D. McAfee

Before many of the present crop of pickers and bangers were old enough to travel to the microphone, Vernon Dalhart had recorded a tremendous crop of folk and topical songs. It is one of the small ironies of history that Dal (his real name was Marion Fry Slaughter, but that is another story) and Huddle Ledbetter learned their songs and ballads from the same sources and possibly the same singers. They were born close to each other in Caddis Parish, Louisiana, and Harrison County, Texas. The farm hands and field laborers who followed the crops and sang as they worked didn't stop at the state line.

--Archie Green  
from Caravan, January 1958

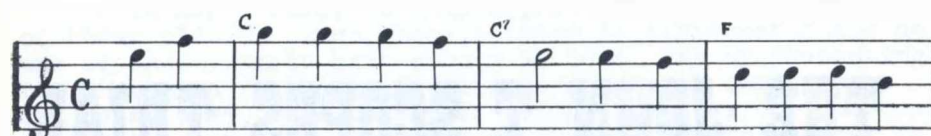
Here is a song that was popular among the followers of William Jennings Bryan during the famous "monkey trial". Clarence Darrow lost the case and Scopes was given a token sentence for teaching that Man descended from monkeys.

When the furor had died down the song was forgotten as is the case with many songs of a topical nature.

On the other hand perhaps this song does linger in the memory of some oldtimers. If you know or have ever heard of this from another source, write it down and pass it along to us-----

over

# THE JOHN T. SCOPES TRIAL OR The Old Religion's Better After All



All the folks in Ten-nes - see are as faith-ful as can



be, And they know the Bi ble teaches wrong from right. They be-



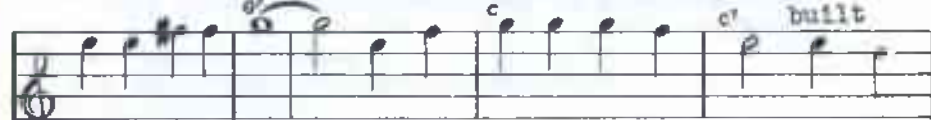
lieve in God a - bove and his great un-dy-ing love, And they



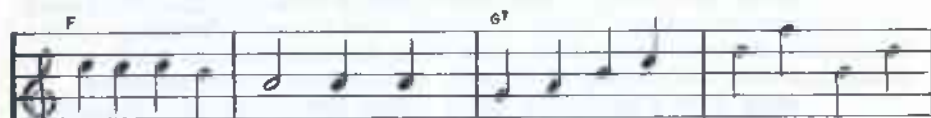
know they are protected by his might. You may find a new be-



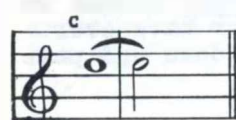
lief, it will on-ly bring you grief, For a house that's on



sand is sure to fall. And where ever you may turn there' a



less-on you may learn, That the old re-lig-ion's bet-ter after



all.

transcribed from EDISON Record #51609-R  
Singing, Violin and Guitar.  
Vernon Dalhart and Company

From the collection of Lee Shaw

All the folks in Tennessee are as faithful as can be,  
And they know the Bible teaches wrong from right.  
They believe in God above and his great undying love,  
And they know they are protected by his might.

Chorus:

You may find a new belief, it will only bring you grief,  
For a house that's built on sand is sure to fall.  
And wherever you may turn there's a lesson you will learn  
That the old religion's better after all.

Into Dayton came a man with his new ideas so grand,  
And he said we came from monkeys long ago.  
Now in teaching his belief Mr. Scopes found only grief,  
For they would not let their old religion go.

Chorus:

And the folks throughout the land saw his house was built on  
sand.

And they said, "We will not listen any more."  
So they told him he was wrong and it was not very long,  
'Til he found that he was barred from every door.

Chorus:

Oh, you must not doubt a word that is written by the Lord,  
For if you do your house will surely fall.  
And Mr. Scopes will learn that wherever he may turn  
That the old religion's better after all.

## American Folk Guitar Styles . . . . .

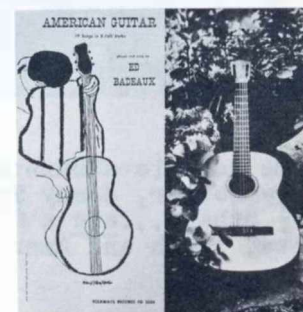
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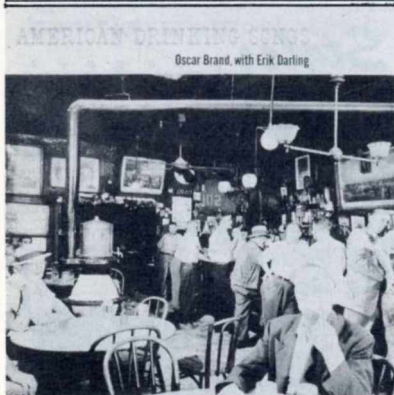
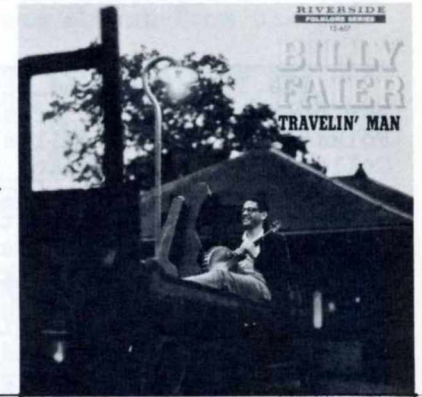
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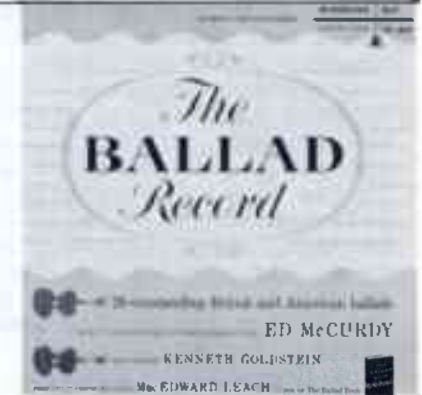


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# CONCERT REVIEWS



LEE HARING  
---- EDITOR

The Tarriers, and other performers. Benefit of the Folksingers Guild. Mills College Theatre, January 30.

Eight acts made up the program of this benefit concert. The Tarriers (Erik Darling, Bob Carey and Clarence Cooper) were headliners who attracted a large and sympathetic audience. Their performances of spirituals and work songs were not only deeply felt but highly polished and assured as well. The blend of voices and instruments is agreeable and effective. The group made a good impression, and their part of the program could well have been longer.

Winnie Winston, opening the evening, showed himself to be a skilled and sensitive performer of promise. Niela Miller sang original songs and arrangements of considerable interest. Roy Berkeley demonstrated versatility and variety in his choice of material and his performances. Dick Weissman was especially well received for his complex and haunting arrangements. Happy Traum, a bit nervous, was not up to his usual high standard but grew in assurance while on stage. Lori Holland contributed interesting Scots songs. Pat Foster and Doris Stone closed the program with three duets. The whole program was conceived and directed by Dick Greenhaus.

Cynthia Gooding and The Shanty Boys. Public School 41, January 31.

Folk music makes strange bedfellows. For her major New York appearance this season Cynthia Gooding appeared in a joint concert with The Shanty Boys (Mike Cohen, Roger Sprung and Lionel Kilberg). Her songs were, as usual, drawn from her world-wide repertoire of English, French, Turkish,

Spanish and Italian. She was in especially good voice and spirits, showing her characteristic power and concentration from the beginning of her program. Her devotion to her work and her respect for her audience were worthy of notice.

The Shanty Boys, from an unpromising beginning, have developed into a very entertaining group deriving their charm largely from their stage antics. While their music is pleasant and lively, their humor is the keynote of their act. One listener hoped in vain that they would join Cynthia Gooding in their one concerted number, a beer commercial recorded last year; but it was absent from the program.

The singer originally scheduled for this date was present in spirit when, after the concert, a member of the audience approached one of The Shanty Boys with the question, "Say, which one of you is Theodore Bikel?"

Dick Weissman and Happy Traum. Chapter Room, Carnegie Hall, February 6.

The fifth-floor Chapter Room at Carnegie Hall was filled to overflowing by the enthusiastic supporters of Dick Weissman and Happy Traum, who have been gaining popularity recently as teachers and performers of folk music. The program opened with three duets; then each of the performers sang by himself; then they came back together to conclude. Especially noteworthy were K.C. SPECIAL and EAST VIRGINIA by Dick Weissman and the instrumental duet I FEEL SO LONESOME. Happy Traum performed MARY ANN and other songs he is associated with.

The program also included one of Dick Weissman's extended compositions in folk style, PINK PATH SUITE for banjo and voice. This is an interesting work which seems to suffer from the difficulties of large-scale construction in this style, which lends itself to little but repetition. The words of the sung part are unsatisfactory.

The audience at this concert, many of them former campers, was enthusiastic, though a bit noisy. More than anything else this concert indicated how much demand has grown up for folk music concerts in New York, especially when presented so conscientiously and interestingly.

Andrew Rowan Summers and The New Lost City Ramblers. Public School 41, February 28.

The opportunity to hear Andrew Rowan Summers in one of his infrequent appearances as a singer was insufficiently appreciated by New York's enthusiasts of folk music, few of whom turned out for this concert. Those who did were treated to some of the best performances of Child ballads available today, as well as some incisive commentary on the



songs and the singers by Mr. Summers. He sings perfectly straight, with utterly simple dulcimer accompaniments which, he admitted, were untraditional. Since most of his songs are slow and melancholy, his wisely-chosen comments were long enough and amusing enough to prevent any monotony. From the scholarly point of view, it may be noted, some of what Mr. Summers said was at least questionable. One song, which he referred to as a rare Virginia song found nowhere else, proved to be a variant of PRETTY BARO, one of the most widespread songs in the Southern tradition. Perhaps ignorant of scholarly findings, Mr. Summers must yet be given credit for having honestly studied and collected these songs in their original culture. And he is a real performer.

Sharing the program were the equally authentic, though totally different, trio The New Lost City Ramblers (Tom Paley, John Cohen, Mike Seeger). After the expectations raised by their superb Folkways record, the group proved to be a bit disappointing in performance. Their repertoire is drawn from the country music recorded by numerous small groups in the period 1920-1935 - what we may call "pre-bluegrass" music. The performances by the trio had great accuracy and the authentic sound of the records on which they model themselves. One could only have wished for more enthusiasm or vitality in the concerted numbers. Among the solo songs, Mike Seeger astounded some listeners with an accompaniment on the twelve-string guitar in the complex Travis style, usually thought impossible on this instrument.

Both parts of the program were thoroughly enjoyable.

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#### FOLKSINGERS GUILD SYMPOSIUM SERIES

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The Folksingers Guild has begun 1959 by introducing a new series of informal lecture-concerts on various aspects of folk music held at the Old Chelsea School, 13 West 17th Street. The first of these was held on January 2nd and featured Ellen Stekert, folklorist of Indiana University and assistant editor of the Journal of American Folklore. With her guitar and her relaxed, friendly manner she discussed and performed songs she has collected from various informants and sources. She especially emphasized the role played by folk songs in the lives of people and mentioned children's songs and games as examples. The general intention seemed to be to introduce the audience to some of the scholarly aspects of folksong.

Tony Schvartz, the folklorist of New York, presented the second program in this series on February 13, speaking on the subject, "Collecting in New York." He presented a group of his amusing, tape recordings of the sounds, songs and sayings of the people of New York. Beginning

with the Lincoln's Birthday season, he illustrated people's idea of Abraham Lincoln. Other groups of material showed the life of a dog owner, sayings of New York taxicab drivers, and other funny and touching pieces of folklore-in-the-making. These Mr. Schvartz referred to as "grape juice" which might some day become the wine of folklore. He echoed a theme touched on by Ellen Stekert when he said that in his opinion folklore is not closely related to people's lives, even those who profess an interest in it. To illustrate how close this relation can be, he played Big Bill Broonzy's account of the genesis of BLACK, BROWN and WHITE, followed by a children's song. Children, it seems, have the true "folk" ability to make up songs about everything in their lives.

The third program was presented on March 6th by Marshall Stearns, professor of English at Hunter College and historian of jazz. He began by presenting a definition of jazz drawn from his recent book, THE STORY OF JAZZ. Then by playing excerpts from a number of records he illustrated the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic links from folksong to blues and jazz. So much ground was covered in this program that the listener might have been left a little breathless. Not only vocal but also instrumental styles and influences were treated. It was, however, a suitable introduction to the subject for the benefit of those who knew only the folk music field.

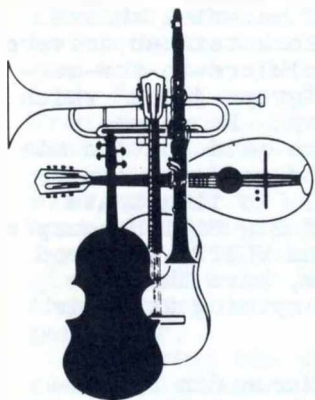
Later programs in this series will feature Ephraim Segerman, Walter McKibben and instrumentalists performing Elizabethan music (April 10), Jean Ritchie discussing her British trip (May 15), and Margot Mayo describing her collecting in the Southern Mountains (June 5)

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#### FOLKSONG '59

Jimmy Driftwood will headline a "panorama of contemporary folk and folk popular music" at Carnegie Hall Friday, April 3 at 8:00 P. M. If you didn't know about it already we hope you get this in time.

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## THE **BOSSSES' SONGBOOK**

In the year 1948 People's Songs published the People's Song Book, a collection of songs, mainly of social content. Many of these songs used old religious tunes, the words adapted to express the struggles involved in various causes usually (and many times unjustly) associated with left wing endeavors.

The **BOSSSES SONGBOOK**, published by Richard Ellington and collected and edited by Richard Ellington and Dave Van Ronk (of "Blind Rafferty" fame to early CARAVAN readers) as its name implies, is, in a broad sense a parody of the People's Song Book. There, however, the similarity stops. Included in it are songs expressing every possible shade of left wing and radical sentiments (that is, starting from where the People's Song Book leaves off).

A much less conservative People's Songs might have printed the **RIBALD REBEL'S SONG**, known, up to now, to very few people as "Slaves of Wall Street" (which, by the way, I feel is a much better title). The rest of the songs, however, reflect anarchistic, pacifistic, socialistic, Trotskyite and other similar points of view.

Most of the material in the **BOSSSES SONGBOOK** is direct parody of union songs, "pro" negro songs, and other similar outpourings of the People's Artists school of folk singers. Use is also made of a few old pop tunes; namely the **STALIN-GRAD**, **ODESSA AND THE VLADIVOSTOK** (Atoheson, Topeka and the Santa Fe), and the **RADICAL WHIPPENPOOP SONG**.

The 'Wearin' of the Green' becomes the **HANGIN' OF THE BLACK**; 'This Land is Your Land' becomes **THIS LAND IS THEIR LAND** (the politicians etc.). One song in the book is directed straight at People's Artists; **HOLD THE LINE** to the tune of 'Hold the Fort' gently chides,

Cho. Sing a song for People's Artists  
Balladiers unite!  
Buy your latest People's Song Book  
There's a hoot tonight.

The songs run the gamut from intensely serious statements all the way to light satire, the majority of them being the kind of songs that will be interpreted differently by every person that hears them, depending on their personal political persuasion. Dick Ellington starts the preface

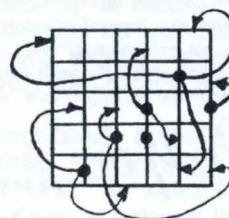
"A few slow thinking people seemed to get pretty shook up by the first edition of this little booklet, so maybe we better start off this one by saying in loud letters:

**THESE SONGS ARE SATIRES!!"**

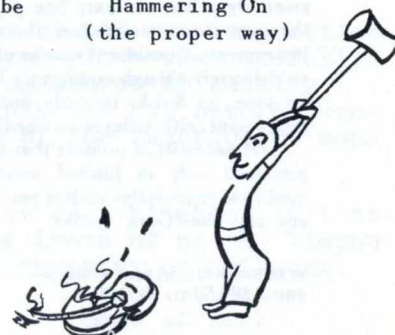
A tremendous humor pervades the book. It is subtitled "Songs to Stifle the Flames of Discontent". It is dedicated to "Our Constant Companion--J. Edgar Hoover". The final touch is a classic. The last two pages contain "Hints for Beginners" and "Basic Chord Patterns". One of each follow.

This chord pattern is movable. It can be played in any key by moving fingers as indicated.

Hammering On  
(the proper way)



(B to mate in 5)



The book is available for 50¢ from Richard Ellington, P. O. Box 104, Cooper Station, New York 3, New York.





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Archie Green, who has left San Francisco to continue his studies at the University of Illinois, sends this letter to our record review editor.

Archie Green  
402 Van Doren M.R.H.  
Champaign, Ill.

Dear Roger,

Your selection of the Ritchie, Behan, MacColl, Steele and Kazee recent LPs as examples of folksong in cultural context is very good. My personal emphasis might be that these five performers in 1957-58 were all consciously presenting folksong. For them instruction was as important as entertainment.

Quite early in the history of hillbilly recording a number of traditional performers presented a series of records combining song, skit, instrument, and diction. The blend produced raw humor. It is unlikely that any of the participants used the terms folksong or folk process. Each of these records was a rich cross section of culture.

In a series they were called "Columbia Rural Drama Records". Such titles as: A CORN LICKER STILL IN GEORGIA, KICKAPOO MEDICINE SHOW, TAKING THE CENSUS, HOO KILLING TIME, A NIGHT IN A BLIND TIGER, THE COUNTRY PAIR, FIDDLERS CONVENTION IN GEORGIA, etc. were used. Artists were: Old Tanner, Love Stokes, Clayton McMichen, Riley Puckett, Hugh Cross, etc. (A complete and accurate list of these pieces with recording place and date would be a splendid project for CARAVAN.)

I must stress that the early performers were not commenting on their environment, but were re-enacting it, even though the form was ribald or burlesque.

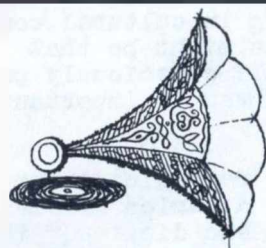
A good transitional cultural context album was made in 1947 by Merle Travis, FOLKSONGS OF THE HILLS, recently reissued on Capitol LP. T.891. Travis, of course, included songs of his own composition with traditional material, but each piece was carefully introduced by a concise comment on source or setting. Travis cannot be praised too highly for his natural conversational style, and awareness of the function of song in his own Kentucky childhood.

It's a long haul from Old Tanner to Jean Ritchie. All together they are a fine crew. For those of us who listen they can tell us much about the framework of folksong.

Best of Luck  
Archie

over

(Mr. Green was certainly right on point in his remarks, though the "cultural context" of which he speaks is of a different sort than that on which I was commenting. I would like to mention the one outstanding omission on my part, the fact that **LEADBELLY'S LAST SESSIONS**, (Folkways FP 241-42) contain much material from the mouth of Huddie that explains where he learned the song or how it fit into his life. RDA)



## RECORDS

ROGER D. ABRAHAMS  
REVIEW EDITOR

**NORWEGIAN FOLKSONGS** (Folkways FW 8725) sung by Pelle Joner give a fairly representative sampling of "folkviser" from Norway, and in addition the songs are performed with due regard to the nature of the material. Many are from various localities and have been changed in pronunciation, since until recently - and to some extent still - Norwegian has been sharply divided into various dialects of an extremely diverse sort.

This group of songs ranges from the well-known 13th century "riddleviser" (ballad of nobility, esp. knights) **BERNDIK OG AROLILJA** and **ALLE MANN HARDE POT** which were influenced by the introduction of the dance from France in that period to such later songs as **HAN IARA SKULLE TIL SKYTTRI GA** and **OLA OLUMSTULEN**.

Perhaps the best known Norwegian folksong is **JEG LAGDE MBG SA SILDIG** which was oft-sung because Norway purposely revived her folk-culture during the 19th and early 20th centuries as a means to encourage nationalism.

Other songs, such as **HAVARD HEDDE** and **EG RODDE MET UT** are dateless, the latter having a rhyme reminiscent in places of Eddic poetry, rather than folkviser verse.

Joner's singing is pleasant, although lacking in local pronunciations. He sings a national language set up to overcome the local barriers. As these songs were and are sung in the greater part of Norway, this is acceptable. The listener is left with the problem of comprehension. Norwegian, as all other Scandinavian languages, uses consonants in spelling which become vowels in pronunciation.

Fred Oskanian

Italian folk music has always been something of a musicologist's headache. The material has no clear-cut national profile of its own, and it reflects the style patterns of practically every musical current within the past 700 or 800 years. One of the great virtues of **MUSIC AND SONG OF ITALY** (Tradition LP 1030), field recordings made by Alan Lomax in collaboration with Diego Carpitella, is its judicious selection of material which proves these points. The 22 items on this disk range from current near urban area "hillbilly" styles (band 1, side 1) strongly influenced by Neapolitan sentimental song to the vestigial remains of medieval polyphony (side 1, band 6) as found in remote country towns.

It must be said that the only drawback to the package is Lomax's somewhat confused jacket annotations. He has a way of making a statement which, because of his great reputation, will be taken literally by many despite the questionable validity of much that he says. He is inaccurate at times, especially when he writes on "folk polyphony" and its relationship to the history of polyphony in general. This is particularly true of his observations on an "alla campagnola" from Ferrolotto. He says the style "may represent an imitation of the bagpipe or an influence from nearby Albanian communities." What he failed to notice is the similarity of the music to certain types of organum or to the conductus (polyphonic forms) of the 11th and 12th centuries.

I disagree when he says the Southern Italian "folk-musicians have found a way of playing the pestiferous accordion so that it supports rather than damages their old tunes." Where the instrument damages the material is where it is used to accompany non-harmonic musical ideas. This particular item (side 1, band 4) is completely harmonic in nature and I, therefore, think this makes his comment rather superfluous.

Among particularly noteworthy items on the disk are **SULFATARA**, a Sicilian song of Moorish origins (side 1, band 2), a **TRALALERI** (side 2, band 7) for unaccompanied male voices which sounds for all the world like one of Henry Cowell's **Hymn and Fuguing Tunes**, and a delightful collection of bagpipe and shepherd's flute and oboe playing (side 1, band 5 and side 2, bands 2 and 9). The **Tralaleri**, sung by six voices, is strongly reminiscent of certain early-renaissance Italian madrigalists.

The sound throughout is quite good, and the disk, but for the notes, can be recommended wholeheartedly to anyone who would like a comprehensive selection of Italian folk music in their record library.

Though Canada is our closest neighbor, both geographically and culturally, how precious little we have known about their folk-tradition until very recently. Some of



the outstanding folksong collections have been made in Canada (notably the works of Barbeau, Creighton and Mackenzie) but these have mainly been limited to the Maritime Provinces (Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, etc.) and French Canada. Few thought that such a highly populated and city-oriented province such as Ontario would prove good hunting for song-seekers. Edith Fowke, who has been running a folk-music program on CBC for a number of years, began exploring this region recently, mainly through leads supplied by letters occasioned by her program. By report, her results have been phenomenal. If the songs and singers included on her **FOLKSONGS OF ONTARIO** (Polkways FM 4005) are any indication, the reports are completely correct.

It is hard to say which are more exciting on this record, the singers or the songs. Mrs. Letys Murrin's singing of **MARY OF THE WILD MOOR** is an experience comparable in its pure simplicity to the singing of Jeannie Robertson. Joe Kelly's **GOLDEN VANITY** is not only a unique text, but is also a marvelous performance. One could go on like this for many similar performances.

This record is divided into songs of Old World origin and songs of Canadian beginnings. In many ways the Canadian songs are of greatest interest, though the older songs are the more beautiful. In addition, the notes supplied by the collector are easy to read, and important to an understanding of the music.

We look forward to future releases of more of Mrs. Fowke's gatherings.

RDA

Jewish Life "The Old Country" Ethnic Recordings Collected and Edited by Ruth Rubin (Polkways FS 3801)

This record is a good collection of unadorned secular Yiddish folksong, a mirror of the social patterns, religious upheavals, and Czarist oppression of 19th century Eastern European Jews. "The Old Country" is shown in children's rhymes, love ballads, lullabies, street songs, topical songs, Chassidic melodies, and wedding dances. Though Mrs. Rubin collected these songs in the United States and Canada, they are well representative of the Eastern European Pale. The informants were born in the towns and villages of White Russia, Galicia, Poland, Ukraine, Bessarabia, and Russia. A most interesting feature of this collection is the varied pronunciation of the Yiddish.

Because the songs on the record were collected over a period of approximately seventeen years, the quality of the sound varies from good to rather poor. The words of the songs, however, are never obscured even on the worst band of the disc. The accompanying booklet contains the song texts in Yiddish, English, and transliteration.

The notes written by Mrs. Rubin give further explanation of the songs and list the town from which the informant came.

All of the selections except 5 **WEDDING TUNES ON A FIDLE** are unaccompanied and a few of the singers, because of their age, have rather unsteady voices. Many of the songs will be unfamiliar even to the person who is well-acquainted with Yiddish folksongs. If these facts seem to deter your buying the record, you will probably want something more "commercial" - Mrs. Rubin's own singing of **YIDDISH LOVE SONGS** (Riverside RLP 12-647) or Martha Schlamme's **JEWISH FOLKSONGS** (Vanguard VRS 9011). But for an authentic and comprehensive picture of Jewish life in 19th century Eastern Europe, **THE OLD COUNTRY** is first choice.

Linda LaBove

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## A NOTE ON SINGING STYLES

(continued from page 7)

can make this experience specific enough to believe in it himself can it have any meaning and life for his audience. Framed by this emotional situation, by the other factors of the song's existence that he has studied, and his knowledge of the possibilities of vocal technique, will appear the right phrasing of the song for its singer. By phrasing I mean what the singer does with his words. An infinitely varied art, phrasing begins with the breaths, elisions, and slurs, goes on to the dynamics, rhythm and metrical values, emphases, and all the nuances and turns of phrase which can be the vocabulary of the singer who chooses to employ them. It is their phrasing, and the human experience behind it, that can make the singing of Marian Anderson and Mahalia Jackson, when they sing the same spiritual equally moving. For the experience shapes and gives life to their phrasing, even though each approaches the song so differently.

Mentioning Miss Anderson brings to mind another much-neglected point. In the preceding paragraph, I used the words, "knowledge of the possibilities of vocal technique." Here is an area of folksinging which has been sadly neglected by our local singers and our critics.

It has been said that folk singers needn't have good voices in order to be pleasing or exciting in their singing but that it helps. Actually, that statement is not entirely realistic anymore, and contains at least one ambiguous point: does the statement apply to a performer on a New York concert stage as well as a prisoner at Sugarland singing into a tape recorder microphone? There are people who seem to think that the statement applies to both. There are those who turn their noses up at any singer of folksongs who has a trained voice, and therefore deprive themselves of the joys of listening not only to a Madeline Grey or Elsie Houston, but even to someone like Buell Kazee.

My own feeling on the subject is prompted by the lack of musicality and technique in the voices of so many of our local folk performers. (Indeed, this whole article is prompted by certain deficiencies in their work, as well as in folk music criticism.) Too many of them emit ugly sounds at uncalled-for moments, a circumstance which could be corrected by the proper training and/or practice. Too few of them are aware of the variety of tonal textures that are within their capabilities. Is this area of singing unimportant or verboten to the variety of tone qualities in the recordings of Reverend Davis, or Bascom Lamar Lunsford, for example? The folk performer who neglects these possibilities is limiting his expression even further than it is limited already, whereas it seems to me that the artist is one who is always looking for greater freedom, variety, and the means to throwing off his limitations. I

think the young singer owes it to himself and to his art to explore every means to that end. Is he afraid that no one will take him seriously as a folk singer if he is too "polished"? Quite possibly. If so, he is deluded, for he should know that today no one takes him seriously as a folk singer anyway. The amateur social scientists have taught us that the gulf between "folksingers" and "urban folksingers" is unbridgeable.

Of course, I don't propose that the singer sing folk songs in operatic style, or even in Iyer-Bennet style. Nor am I blind to the fact that a singer can be an artist without consciously developing his vocal art, or even in spite of his voice and his ignorance of vocal refinement. I do say that the voice can be used to much greater effect by the young folksong performer than it is now, if he will learn how to produce a melodious tone, and learn the exciting possibilities of a variety of tonal effects.

Actually, it isn't quite that easy; there's much more that is important to know. I would have the singer bring to folk music a personal background in all aspects of music. I would have him learn certain things which come under the general heading of "musicianship" and carry over into the instrumental, as well as vocal, area of folk music. Most important is the recognition of the musical line or phrase, and what to do with it. Music that has a strong beat, as so much of our folk music does, has a tendency toward the vertical, repetitive, stuttering effect. The way to overcome this is to be aware of, and to emphasize, the horizontal line which moves in opposition to this throbbing effect, while keeping the beat as a pulse. The musician who does not do this produces music which is clumpy and has no direction or flow. When we say of a singer or instrumentalist that his music doesn't go anywhere or that it doesn't swing, this is usually what we mean.

To be aware of the phrase means also that you are aware of its beginning and end. This brings our attention to the question of attacks and releases in singing. A recent recording featured a local singer whose voice sounded flat even when he was hitting the right notes. Careful analysis reveals why this is so. While it is true that his voice lacks any tonal color or variety, that there was no emotional intensity or exploration of human experience in his work to give it any life, and that he didn't swing, the flatness of his voice has a much simpler explanation. His attacks and releases were sloppy, so much so that they were flat, even though the middle of the note was on pitch. This gave a flat edge to his notes, precisely because his notes were flat at both edges. This kind of fault can be corrected. Moreover, there are many different kinds of attacks and releases which can change



the effect of what is being sung to a large degree. Knowledge of this sort of thing is as important to the critic as to the performer.

Mention of the beginning and end of a phrase brings us back to the subject of phrasing, for that is the narrow use of the word. A musical phrase or a single thought expressed in the words of a song can be destroyed if the singer breaks up his singing in the wrong place in order to breathe. This should be one of the first things a singer learns, along with when to crescendo or ritard, and so on. But my ear tells me that very few critics care about this whole subject.

But I am led back to the broader use of the word, "phrasing," what the singer does with his words and notes. Phrasing that sensitively expresses the human emotional experience is what the great artists of opera, oratorio and lieder have had, as well as untrained artists such as Bessie Smith or Leadbelly. It is a rare gift that can come accidentally, can be helped along and developed, or can come in spite of oneself. In order to express an emotional experience you need not actually have gone through it, if you can imagine it specifically enough to make it real for yourself without going through it (don't shoot President Eisenhower just because you want to sing MY NAME IS CHARLES GITEAU). And to actually go through the experience may not necessarily help you if you don't know how to use it afterwards, just as education doesn't help those who don't know what to do with it. There is no doubt in my mind that genuine artistry is, in the long run, something which comes from the soul and cannot be taught. That is the one area of the artist's creativity from which the critic is barred. But in all other aspects, he can go much farther, indeed, than our folk music critics have gone, to this date.

## editorials (continued from page 2)

write about it knowing that you will all read it. But in the last analysis this is just padding.

If you feel that CARAVAN is worth the money (we assume you bought it) then you can make it worth ten times what you pay for it by contributing your ideas, gripes, opinions, whatever they may be. Did you see a concert last week? Send us a letter describing it, what was wrong with it, and also what was right with it.

Have you a pet project that you have been working on? Write a short (or long, if you want) piece describing it. You will be amazed at the number of people that will respond in terms of suggestions, criticism, or just plain interest when they read about it.

Have you discovered a new banjo or guitar strum that you would like to share with other players? Let us know about it. Like comets, it will bear your name forever.

Do you think that you are the only person in your community interested in folk music? Ten to one there are more and they are probably getting together once a week singing their heads off. Let us know who and where you are. CARAVAN can serve you in any number of ways. Let us know what you want in a folk music magazine.

Here is a good example. For the past few months a few individuals have been urging us to have a Hillbilly record department in CARAVAN. It is a fine idea. We need biographies of hillbilly performers of the 20s and 30s. We need discographies of their recordings. Do you know any old time record collectors in your area? Find out if they have any material of this nature that they could send in for publication. You will probably find that they have had stuff lying around, or easily prepared because they have been thinking about it for years but never had any place to send it.

For those who wonder why we care about Hillbilly music see Fred Hoeptner's article in this issue.

CARAVAN IS YOUR MAGAZINE. WE GET NO PAY TO RUN IT. IF YOU LEAVE IT TO US ALL YOU WILL FIND OUT IS WHAT WE THINK. WE WANT TO KNOW (and so do the rest of our readers) WHAT YOU THINK.

### Further Comment by Lee Haring

In our last issue, one of our regular correspondents, Robert Coulson, took issue with what he saw as an increasing emphasis in CARAVAN on a kind of folk music he does not like. Because others too may not understand our new editorial policy, we have restated it above. We believe folk music is our heritage from the past, which we want to keep alive through study and performance. Most of our readers, at least occasionally, contribute to this goal by performing in one way or another. But we also believe that the peculiar nature of folk music demands a clear understanding of its variety, its cultural milieu and its traditions. To this understanding, we suggest, any tools are appropriate--scholarship and intellectual study as much as intuitive sympathy. Further, folk music is worth all the effort we can bring to it, of whatever kind that effort may be. Far from excluding what anyone has to say on folk music from the magazine, we wish to represent everyone, the scholar as well as the fan. Consequently, we welcome an ever broader variety of contributions from our readers on any aspect of folk music.

LR

## FOLK AND HILLBILLY MUSIC

(continued from page 17)

It has been noted that little attention has been paid to hillbilly music by students in any field. One might wonder why this situation exists if hillbilly music is in fact intimately related to folk music. There are several reasons. Let a comparison be drawn with the field of jazz. Here is a field quite far removed from the field of folk music or any other line of academic investigation. Yet, starting in the mid 30's, a steady stream of material concerning it has emanated from many sources all over the world. Today college courses are devoted to it. Apparently the reason is that a great number of people like to listen to the music. Some of them have been interested enough in it and intelligent enough to do the required research and to write about it. This has not yet occurred in the field of hillbilly music to any degree, and is just beginning to do so now. Those in its main area of appeal usually (though certainly not always) lack the requisite intellectual curiosity, or were not educated enough to be able to do so. Others who might have liked the music were often dissuaded by such general opinions as that "it is only for 'hicks'", "it's degrading and beneath your dignity," and the like. This social pressure is stronger than might be imagined.

Another reason for this lack of interest is probably an accident of time. In the early days, even up until about 1941, record companies marketed these records very covertly and primarily in one area only, that of the southern United States. They were not even listed in the general catalogues, but only in supplementary ones. This type of music was not even generally known to exist outside of this area. A Brunswick executive once wrote: "There is in the Brunswick catalogue a type of record unknown to many people. We call them Songs from Dixie." So, in the early days of folksong study, the students, in many cases although certainly not always, were probably not even aware of what hillbilly music was. In more recent times, the general surge of interest in folksong has led more and more people to study it. But they probably never heard the early hillbilly music and had no conception of its development. Those who might have studied it probably confused it with modern country music, which in recent years has pushed hillbilly music into the background. As they did not understand this development, and it was so foreign to their personal likes, they dismissed it as, for example, "worthless commercialism". And thus they would have the tendency to think that all hillbilly music, from the first, was also far removed from folk music. Thus it is seen that lack of study in this field is not at all related to its basic worth or connection with folk music, but is due to many accidental factors.

Mr. Moepfner's article, because of demands of space, is being presented in two parts. The second will appear in the next issue.



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## SHE WAS A TEEN-AGE URBAN FOLKSINGER



The White Rabbit, velvet collar on his coat upturned to fend off the arctic blasts in Washington Square, fastidiously tightened his gloves about his fingers.

Inevitably, he reached into his vest for his watch, and upon referring to it, exclaimed "Dear me, it's nearly 7:30 and Alice hasn't shown!"

No sooner had he made this easily predictable and compulsive utterance than Alice appeared. She was wearing tennis shoes, a simple print skirt, and an athletic shirt. Her hair, as was her custom, was in a golden uncombed cascade down her back. Under one arm she carried her raincoat though the sky was clear. Under the other was a guitar.

"Child", said the Rabbit, "this is no way to dress for a musical." Pausing for a second, he added an "Oh, what would the Duchess say?", which didn't sit well with Alice.

"My dear Rabbit, we are not going to a musical, we are going to a Folksing, and that is entirely another matter", scolded Alice, who after all these years was beginning to tire of his carping on proprieties.

"Folksing?", queried the Rabbit, as they strolled off into the direction of 17th street. "Yes", said Alice, "and our host, the Mad Hatter, will be absolutely furious if you pull out that watch of yours." "Why, pray tell?", enquired the Rabbit, somewhat taken aback. "Because he's of the opinion that folk music is timeless, so watch your Ps and Qs," Alice replied.

The house at which they stopped was a tall brownstone, its top floor audibly their destination. As they climbed the five flights of steps Alice mused that it was very like her fall down the well, only in reverse. Once at the top, a familiar voice fell on the Rabbit's ears. He exclaimed "Dear me, the Red Queen's in there and she's having everyone executed."

"Gracious, no," said Alice. "She's singing."

"Thank heavens," sighed the Rabbit. "For a moment I thought I'd have to tell Aunt Rhody that her old Gray

Goose was really dead."

Alice opened the door, unannounced, which upset the Rabbit. She threw her guitar and raincoat onto a heap at the bottom of which seemed to be the Dormouse. "Alice, dear," said the Red Queen, "You're just in time. The Jabberwocky and the Gryphon are going to sing us some of the Child Ballads. Won't that be nice?" "Yes," replied Alice who had promptly fallen to smearing what seemed to be a cream cheese dip on what looked like the missing tarts. The Rabbit walked off into another room, found a curious looking little chair, sat himself in it, and fell asleep.

When the two soloists had finished, the Mad Hatter took it into his head to say "Those are very nice, but a bit too Child-ish for me." "They are not!" barked the Duchess, whose dungarees were a bit faded. "They are very old, and therefore, quite adult." Piqued, the Hatter retorted "That's not what I meant in the least. I was saying that they were more like their editor than the Scotts Ballads I knew."

"Fough," interjected the Red Queen, "that's simply textual hairsplitting, and besides you can't even read."

Suddenly from out of the pile of clothes, guitars, recorders and paperback books near the door came a gentle voice. There was no doubt that it was the Dormouse. "What about the cultural context?" he queried, "and wake me up when the discussion is over."

"I say," said the Red Queen, "won't Rabbit favor us with a ditty?" Her question was like a command. Rabbit bolted upright in the other room and immediately began singing,

"They told me you had been to her,  
And mentioned me to him;

She gave me a good character....."

"No, no, no," screamed the Duchess. "That's much too literary to be a folksong. Any fool knows that the words never rhyme, or hardly ever." At this point the Mad Hatter began to serve tea in cunning little Japanese cups without handles and while everyone was gingerly trying not to burn their finger ends, he put a Leadbelly record on the phonograph, complicating matters. It became very hard for the now fully awake Rabbit to tell whether the "oohs" and "aahs" were reactions to the music or the result of cups without handles.

The Rabbit edged over to Alice, who was cross-legged in the middle of the room, and said, "I think these songs are very much of a muchness." "So do I," said Alice. "Let's go to Carnegie Hall. We can just make the Philharmonic."

"Well, of all the rudeness," said the Mad Hatter. "I think this was the stupidest tea party I've

ever been to," said the Rabbit as they went down the stairs. "That's my line," said Alice, "and it was a folksing, not a tea party."

Peter Chrisafides

# NEWS

Lionel Kilberg reports that all is straight at the Square. He has the permit required by the Police Dept. and, weather permitting, the first Sunday in April will see Washington Square overflowing with folksingers and instruments.

## POLK MUSIC AT HOFSTRA COLLEGE

Hofstra College (Hempstead Long Island) will conduct, as part of a four day music festival, a folk music workshop and concert on Sat. May 9th.

Alan Lomax, Jean Ritchie, Frank Warner and Billy Faier will be the four panel participants in the workshop which will be held in the morning (10:30 to 12 noon). The public is invited to attend and contribute questions and comments to the panel.

At 1 pm the four singers will present a concert in the Hofstra Playhouse. At this writing we were unable to ascertain the price of admission but it will certainly be quite nominal.

ELEKTRA announces a new release, SONGS FOR WEE FOLK, a collection of folk songs for children by Susan Reed. Miss Reed and her actor husband, James Karen, have just become the parents of a boy, Reed Karen.

The world of "do-it-yourself" has been invaded by the ELEKTRA CORPORATION and their new release THE POLK SONG KIT. The kit contains an illustrated guitar instruction course, a songbook of 25 favorite folk songs and a 12" LP recording. The kit will be reviewed in our next issue.

Harold Newman of Hargail Music Press announces that Pete Seeger's Goofing Off Suite for five-string banjo (with guitar and mandolin pieces) has just been released. This is a selection of instrumentals, mostly banjo, from Pete's Folkways Recording, THE GOOFING OFF SUITE as well as a few other tunes that were not on the record.

Also of some interest to folk music lovers, John R. Runge's Early English Lute Songs with guitar accompaniments is also available from Hargail.

Jac Holzman of ELEKTRA RECORDS reports that Elektra

has just signed the SARA ACQUAYE GOLD COAST BAND. We look forward to their first recording. Elektra has also re-signed Josh White and the ORANIM ZABAR Israeli group.

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