

THE

RAMBLER

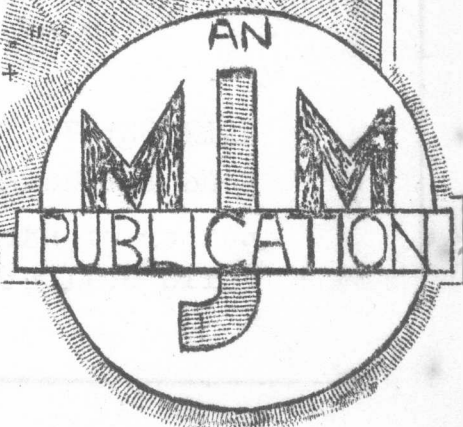


"Get this bloke out of here. You know
 what we think of eccentrics in the 'F' "

+++++

INSIDE: "He Was A Bad Man" - Brunner.
 "Dominic Behan at the Unity"
 JAZZ Book Review - Sandfield.
 etc.

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number of hard-to-obtain books on folkmusic including the
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RAMBLINGS

-MARCH

AN 'MJM' PUBLICATION.
36, Semley Rd., Nor-
bury, London, S.W.16.
ENGLAND. Price 2d.

It's been quite a gap since the last issue appeared, I know.

Due to you lot letting me down.

It's taken me this long to gather together enough material to make an issue. Now that I have at last got something ready I can go ahead.

I haven't been altogether inactive, though, neither has Al. We've produced a book of Talking Blues plus a broadsheet or two. Details of these elsewhere in this issue.

I'd like to thank all my American readers for their help in sending me PEOPLE'S SONGS, SING OUTS and similar publications in return for RAMBLER.

To me this seems a rather one-sided swap so I think I'd better say now that four RAMBLERS per other magazine is, to my mind, more than generous on the part of the reader.

Money is, however, always acceptable for that money goes into more paper and stencils for the next issue.

Folk music, especially British, is on the up and up everywhere in London. But more of that later.

ART-WORK THIS ISSUE:

Cover cartoon:

Jim Cawthorn.

Editorial Heading:

Ray Nelson.

Lay-out, headings,
pictures etc:

Al Graham.

(Art Editor).

Edited by Mike Moorcock
and Alistair Graham at
the above address.

This issue for April.

Articles and other
material always des-
perately required for
publication.

A non-profit making
magazine.



Ray Nelson

RAMBLINGS Continued

Last issue's cover was very badly produced, I know, due to the cover breaking up on the machine and having to be pieced together by hand. Don't think it'll happen again.

CARAVAN seems to be growing and growing and growing - last issue I saw (No. 7 - dated, I noticed, February 1598 - rather more behind schedule than R ?) was 32 large pages.

Eric Winter, editor of SING, asks all those who haven't yet received copies after seeing the Ad. in Rambler not to panic as he has been very busy of late.

London's coffee-bars. Those like the Gyre and Gimble rather than the neon-emblazoned 2 's, seem to be having many more British songs sung in them of late. A few nights back we had a session which is becoming typical. First we started off by singing Irish Rebellion, Black and Tan and Orange songs, carried on through to Scots songs and English songs, went on with sea shanties, sung some of the more melodic American songs, had Union and Depression songs and wound up playing jazz numbers and a long TIGHT LIKE THAT. This sort of thing gives me and others like me a great deal of Hope for the Future.

In the PEOPLE TODAY series, run by the BBC, Stan Kelly, well-known singer of folksongs - originally hailing from Liverpool-- was the subject. Stan is a fairly regular client of the G and a few nights before this programme came on (on St. Patrick's Night) he sung and played down there.

John Hasted had his long-necked, large vellumed, banjo pinched from his van recently - it was decorated on the vellum with triangular designs in blue. It's a five-string, American style and one of the few in this country. So if you see anyone with one - you'll know who it belongs to.

Er - to whom it belongs.

John Foreman of 15, Mortimer Place, Highgate Road, London, N.W.5 have produced many well-printed and illustrated broadsheets recently. These include: TURPIN HERO, GO DOWN YOU MURDERS (By Ewan MacColl about Evans, hung for the murders committed by Christy), SMITHFIELD MARKET FIRE etc. Sheets and details are available from John. Sheets a penny each - send a shilling and S.A.E. for 12 of their latest issues. Recommended.

See you around!

Mike

WE'RE TALKIN' TO YOU. A book of topical talking blues, mainly in the American idiom. Produced by Mike Moorcock and Al Graham. Price 3d (plus post) a copy. Others in preparation. 5¢ in U.S.A.



Mike Moorcock.

Dominic Behan -

AT THE UNITY THEATRE

A talk on Irish street ballads and balladmakers, on Sunday, February 23rd. Unity Theatre's address, 1, Goldington Place, Kings Cross, N.W.1. Off Midland Road (behind King's Cross Station).

Dominic, as usual, gave an interesting talk, illustrated with many Irish songs. He was suffering from 'flu but still managed to sing well. He talked about the growth of the Irish song through the centuries.

Describing the various rebellions and resurrections in Ireland and the songs to which they gave birth, he mentioned songs like FATHER MURPHY and the 1916 Rebellion FOGGY DEW as good examples.

Dominic started by dealing with the original Gaelic songs and telling how the Irish, under the English, found it necessary to alter their songs into English. Later songs from England and Scotland became integrated into the Irish singer's repertoire until at last the Irish began to sing their own English-language ballads.

These ballads, Dominic said, could be divided into two categories - political and music-hall. Examples of political songs are known to everybody, as are the songs of Percy French and his predecessors.

He also refuted many of the statements of well-known ballad collectors very logically. I am inclined to agree with his statements.

As Dominic promised to write up his talk for RAMBLER as soon as he has time, I shan't go on here.

After the talk, John Foreman and the Smoky Cities Skiffle did some numbers. First time I've heard the group and I found them a lot better than the run of the mill groups currently performing. In between numbers, members of the audience were asked to do something - Eric Winter did Johnson's Motor Car and Rotheray-O. A girl called Wendy did a very fine John Hardy and I did a talking version of Silver Jack.



NEXT MONTH: Alex Korner on Blues. Sunday March 30th.

topic

LATEST L.P. S

17, Bishop's Bridge Rd. London, W.2.

THIS LIST IS PUBLISHED
FOR THE CONVENIENCE OF
READERS OF "RAMBLER".

JACK ELLIOTT

JACK TAKES THE FLOOR San Francisco Bay, Ol' Riley, Boll Weevil,
Bed Bug Blues, New York Town, Black Baby, Grey Goose, Mule Skinner's
Blues, Dink Song, Cocaine. 10 in. T15.

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THE RAMBLING BOYS Rich and Rambling Boys, Buffalo Skinners, Wish
I was a Rock, State of Arkansas, Mother's not Dead, East Virginia
Blues, The Old Bachelor, Danville Girl, the Death of Mr. Garfield
Roll on Buddy. 10 in. T14.

PEGGY SEEGER

With Barbara and Penny Seeger.

COME ALONG JOHN (American Children's Songs) Come Along John,
All Around the Kitchen, Billy Barlow, Old Aunt Kate, Little
Bird, Lula Gall, Rissolty Rossolty, The Derby Ram. 7 in. T18.

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Singing Spain

There's a saying in Spain that the people sing when they are unhappy.

BY
ALISTAIR
GRAHAM

In that case they've plenty to be unhappy about - the country is overflowing with song. In the dust grey villages huddled beneath the scorched red rocks or in the vivid green of the orange groves, you hear the people singing.

They sing about their worries and cares, about the Guardia Civil, or about their love affairs.

Mostly, the rhythm is Flanenco, with that strong streak of Moorish influence coming out in the strong, vibrant voices of the men and women, although in northern Spain the music becomes more Latinised.

Strictly speaking, the Spanish haven't got beautiful voices.

Their singing hasn't the sweetness or beauty of, say, a German choir. But there is expression in their voices, and power. Voices that can ring out joyfully at fiesta time, or express the ruined hopes of a bad harvest.

In Spain, everyone is either rich or poor.... and if you are rich, you can afford a guitar. I heard some incredible guitar playing while I was in Spain - the pounding beat of some Flanenco tune or the liquid, flowing notes of a Spanish melody. It is still common for a young man to go out to serenade his lady love at night (although any good guitar playing will soon collect a crowd who join in with shouts and handclaps).



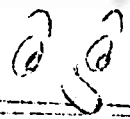
THE ORIGINAL FOLK GRAMAM

ment is the clapping of hands and the pounding of feet? Boy, there's rhythm in that music.

* - OLAY

It's odd, but put a guitar in the hands of a Spaniard, whether he's seen one before or not, and he'll be able to strum something out on it. And have you heard those records of Spanish singing where the only accompani-

- Alistair Graham.



JAZZ BOOK REVIEW

Handwritten signature

J U S T J A Z Z

Edited by Sinclair Traill and the hon. Gerald Lascelles.

This book is, in effect, an anthology of opinion. Informed opinion, too. It is illustrated plentifully with photographs, mostly by Flair. The frontpiece is the immortal Satchmo in characteristic pose. The endpapers are close-ups of Armstrong, Mulligan, Condon and Big Bill. For the pictures, the book's very nearly worth it.

An intro by Lascelles surveys the Jazz scene in Britain and elsewhere in 1956, the year of writing. His comments on R&R are trenchant and penetrant and, thank heavens, disinterested. He devotes about six pages to information for beginners, which is something that most Jazz books don't have and should.

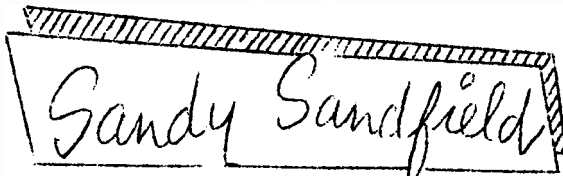
The first contribution is by Traill and consists of a transcription of a tape made when Satch was over for his gig with the London Phil. Among other things, this shows that Louis is quite aware of his position in the world of Jazz, and has neither illusions or false modesty about it.

Anyone who has been as good as Louis for as long as he has, ought to know it. He would be a fool if he didn't. But few of them could keep their heads as well-proportioned as Satch.

Ernest Borneman gives us a history and analysis of boogie woogie that is authoritative and at the same time quite emotional. He expresses himself without inhibition and TELLS you about boogie. And you stay told.

Benny Green gives us Jazzmen - The Legend and the Source. This is a much needed debunking of the silly fancies (his words) that have grown up around the profession of making Jazz. He explodes the most popular myths and points out that the jazzman of fiction is as stylised as the tough private dick or the cowboy with nerves of steel and a resolve to stay faithful to his boss.

Under his pen Jazzmen come to life as what they are - artistically aware professionals trapped in a world of money-grabbing commerciality, which feeds incessantly and voraciously upon



Sandy Sandfield

BOOK REVIEW 2

the vital body of jazz - the whole article is a vindication of the creative artist, and could be true of practically any sphere of human artistic endeavour.

The article NEW ORLEANS MUSIC is in the capable hands of Berta Wood, and she writes with intense feeling about a native American art-form for which she has obviously a deep and understanding love. Quoting from a television show, she asks "What's the future of Jazz, Is it going to die with the men who originated it?" And the answer comes from the Jazzman who is being interviewed: "Jazz is essentially a negro product." A little thought and understanding will reveal that this apparent non sequitur is a full and complete answer to the question. She covers George Lewis with great sensitivity and describes the music of Slow Drag with a depth of emotion I wish I could command. Kid Ory comes under her benign, yet merciless, pen and emerges both a giant and a victor. I've never liked Ory and now I know why. And it's my fault, my own lack of understanding - after twenty solid years with the music I love more than anything - and I must bow before the power of this American woman and the golden joy of Edward Ory.

Stanley Dance has THE VANISHING GIANT. The first giant of whom he speaks is Art Tatum and I can't go along with him. However, he does point out the main difference between the Jazz which is trad and main and the tortuous path of the bop influenced moderns. Not only this, but he makes it obvious without saying so that no music in the twentieth century has produced so many giants as Jazz between 1900 and 1950. It is also evident that giant producing has tapered-off considerably since '38.

NEW YORK TODAY AND MODERN JAZZ TODAY, by Jerome Shipman and Ira Gitler respectively are both revealing and analytical.

Yannick Bruynoghe's BLUES TODAY is a mine of (to me) unexpected information about the living Blues, the Big City Blues that certain rather bigoted folkologists in this country think that Englishmen shouldn't sing.+ I'll write at length about this some other time. He categorises the Blues into three broad divisions - Country, City, and Jazz Blues. I think the dividing line between the last two is very misty, or even non-existent. However, Bruynoghe puts up a good case for it, and does succeed in telling you about the blues. He speaks with knowledge of such people as Dinah Washington and Little Walter and makes it quite obvious that the city blues groups are similarly constituted to the British skiffle groups. The washboard, however, does not seem to be de rigueur.

Then we have BRITISH JAZZ RECORDS AND AUSPICES, 1956. This is by Charles Woodford. Woodford, making a quite disinterested comment, states of Lonnie Donegan: "He has lived down the easy sneers 'anything Josh can do, he can do worse,' and has indeed

+ Are you there Ewan? Ed.

BOOK REVIEW 3

proved that some of the things Josh can do, he can do better." I couldn't agree more. On the whole, Woodford gives British jazz a good thorough going over, and isn't afraid to say that there is much good in it, and points up all the good things he finds. Including Humph.

Humph himself gives us Louis Armstrong - Jazzman or Dance Musician? and goes on to prove him both. Jazz, points out Humph, has always been dance music. I quite agree. And always, Jazzmen make the best dance musicians, either in the tradition, in the mainstream, or in the lousy commercial field. As Humph says, practically every period of Louis' career has at some time or tber been pointed out as a period of decline. Humph tears to pieces all the arguments of the ardent revivalists and shows what arrant nonsense they are. The greatest mistake the traditionalists make - I mean the fans, not the Jazzmen - is that they divorce Jazz from its position as a functional and entertaining art growing naturally from the people and try to make something serious and almost academic out of it. Then when a genius of Armstrong's calibre comes along with the witty hokum which was and is part of New Orleans, they don't like it. Louis doesn't play any more, they sob. If Satch isn't playing Jazz now, says Humph, then he never has. I'm inclined to agree. If Satch doesn't play Jazz, then it logically follows that the music which came from N.O. was not Jazz either. This leaves us with the question: just what should the music be called?

Of course, the music from N. O. was and is Jazz and the bigoted trads are out on a limbe carefully sawn through by their own ignorance, and serve them right. You see, their attitude leaves them with the lesser products of the British Jazz club and brother they can have them.

The whole point is, of course, that the 'pure' Jazz demanded by these 'purists' doesn't and never has existed. They are spending their lives chasing a myth, poor fellows. Humph's contribution, although he doesn't say so in so many words, proves over and over that Jazz, like any other musical style, is a complex of differing musics and a matter of mood and tradition. I use the word tradition here to mean a line of development from a common source, not a lot of stifling rules the effect of which is to stultify artistic endeavour.

The book finishes with a very comprehensive discography which takes a lot of wading through but which would be of inestimable help as a reference.

My advice to you is read this book - and learn from it!

- Sandy Sandfield.

HE WAS A BAD MAN *

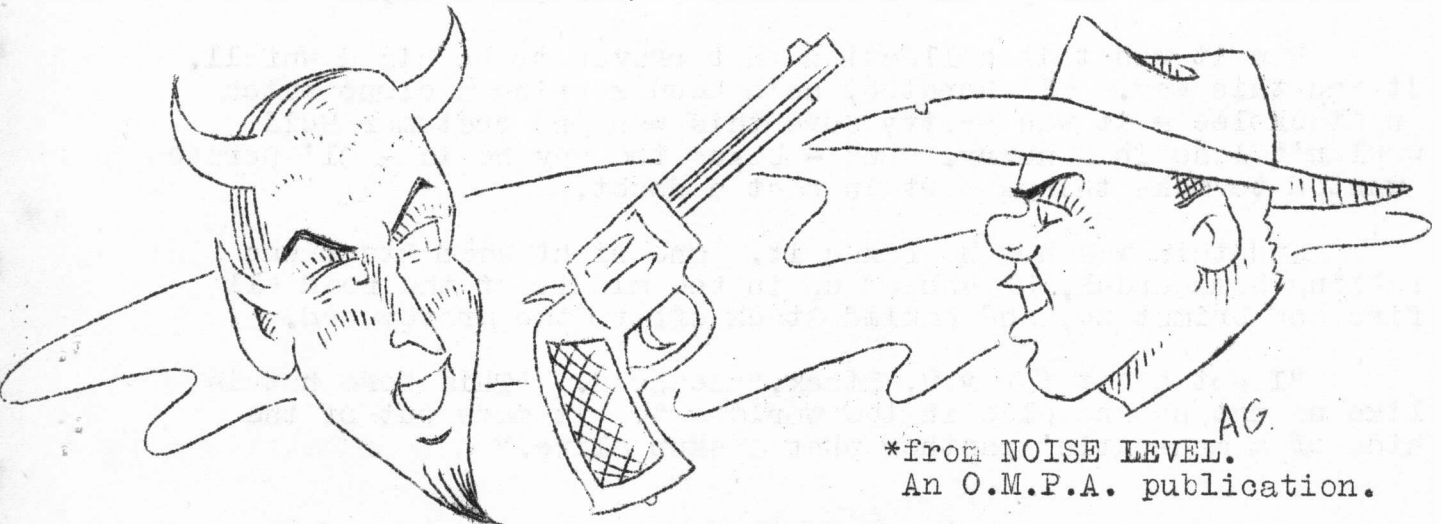
- John Brunner -

Stackolee, Stackolee, he was a ganlin' nan,
As ev'ybody ought to know!

- I think it was Tennessee Ernie who put that one in the juke boxes some years back - before he recorded "Sixteen Tons" - and therefore long before the public really came to associate him at all with a folksong tradition.

Speaking of "Sixteen Tons", did you know that record sold a million copies in a shorter time than any of its predecessors, and that it and a derivative imitation called forth a vituperative counterblast from the editors of the Oil and Gas Journal, who maintained that it gave a false and misleading impression of the American Way of Life ?

I wonder why so many people went for it, then.... I suspect that rather a lot of them know what it was to sell your soul to the company store.



*from NOISE LEVEL.
An O.M.P.A. publication.

HE WAS A BAD MAN 2

But this particular story isn't about a guy who sold his soul over that counter. No, Stackolee, he wasn't that kind of man at all. He sold his soul all right, so they say - but he got a higher price on it than just a grub - stake. He went to the right market.

The way they tell the story, he was born some time in the middle of the last century. Where he got his name no one rightly knows. There was said to be a steamboat on the Mississippi called that - Edna Ferber used that idea in Showboat. Then again there was said to have been a boy who was the son of one of the riverboat captains; his sur-name was Lee and his given name Stacker, and supposedly a coloured boy who worked aboard admired him so much he took over the name.

A lot of coloured folk, around Emancipation time, borrowed the name of their boss, or were given it, or adopted that of a man they admired. So any way out of these, or maybe some other way, a kid came to be brought into the world who went under the name of Stackolee.

Now right from the start people knew he was going to be something special. He was born double-jointed and with a mouthful of teeth, and even that wasn't the half of it. He also had a caul over his face.

He grew up to be a hellion. He was popular with the women because he was so big; he got along all right with all folks, because he could play blues guitar and boogie piano. So he didn't waste his time earning an honest living. Not when he could be drunk half the time and sleeping around the other half.

He settled down - if you could call it that - on Market Street in St. Louis, with his girl friend (by all accounts she was as much of a hellion as he was, and she was known as Stack o' Dollars) and his prized collection of Stetson hats.

Now it was this collection that proved to be his downfall. It was this way. Ol' Scratch, he'd been keeping a close watch on Stackolee - it was pretty sure this was one customer Hell wouldn't lose in a hurry. But - being the way he is - Ol' Scratch wanted to make things certain past a doubt.

And this was how he fixed it. One night when Stack was rolling home drunk, he showed up in the middle of the road all fire and brimstone, and hauled Stack off to the graveyard.

"I got a hat for you, Stack," he said. "This here hat is like no hat no one else in the world got. It made out of the hide of a man-eatin' panther what I skun alive."

BAD MAN 3

So he showed Stack the hat, and it was an ox-blood Stetson and Stack knew he just had to have it.

"It's a magic hat, Stack," said Ol' Scratch, friendly. "So long as you wear it you can do all sorts of magic, and you'll never come to harm."

And that settled it for Stack. Right there and then he traded his soul, put the ox-blood Stetson on his head, and went off into the world to raise twice as much hell as ever he could before. After all, didn't he have something from down there along with him?

They tell how he could eat fire, and walk on red hot slag and make himself all kinds of shapes and sizes - they even say he used to go outwalking at night in the shape of an animal. It was about that time they started to tell about him in a song:

Stackolee didn't wear no shoe -
Couldn't tell his track from horse or mule.

Now it isn't quite clear how it was that he and Stack o' Dollars came to break up. Seemingly, it was because all the time before, he'd been fooling with these no-account women all over (his favourite, the song tells, was a voodoo queen from New Orleans' old French Market quarter). But before ol' Stack sold his soul, when he came home Stack o' Dollars could whup him even for rambling where he oughtn't to. She was so tough herself she had her teeth stopped with diamonds, and no man dared try taking them off her because she could have mauled him so badly.

So when Stack got his ox-blood Stetson off Ol' Scratch, he couldn't come to any harm, and that included being beat up by Stack o' Dollars. He always used to say that he liked her so much because she was the only woman who could do that. The way I see it, life got boring for them.

Anyway, however it was, some time about 1905 Stack left St. Louis and lit out across country. He hadn't been West for a long time - didn't think it was healthy, because once when he was very young and very foolish, he'd gone looking for Jesse James and Jess had just naturally tied him in knots. Now, though, he reckoned the coast was clear.

So he headed for San Francisco, and when he'd been in that part of the world for a month or so, he dropped in at a bar one day and ordered a drink. Barman said he wasn't going to wet a glass till he saw the colour of Stack's money, and that made Stack so mad he just grabbed hold of the taps on the bar and pulled.

BAD MAN 4

Well, all the water piped were connected together, of course, and Stack, he hauled on them so hard the whole city fell down. Afterwards, they said something about an earthquake and Stack was pretty pleased about that. He didn't want to get into trouble just because he didn't know his own strength.

But he didn't seem so happy anywhere else but St. Louis, so after a while he went back there, and he headed right straight into the trap Ol' Scratch had laid for him. You see, Ol' Scratch was getting impatient - this magic hat was working too well, and Stack was overripe for hellfire.

So one time he changed himself into the likeness of an innocent married man, friend of Stack's, called Billy Lyon, and when Stack was sitting in on a poker game, he walked up and stole that ox-blood hat.

That made Stack but mad. So he got his .44 and he went off looking for Billy. Of course, it wasn't really Billy who'd taken it, but Ol' Scratch in disguise. Stack didn't know that.

"Have mercy!" Billy cried. "Please don't take my life - I got two li'l babies, yeah an' a innercent wife!"

But Stack wasn't listening. He just shot Billy three times and looked around for his Stetson. But Ol' Scratch had it, and when the police came by looking for him, they took him inside.

So in spite of everything, they got him for the killing. Stack o' Dollars came back to him and got him out on five thousand dollars' bail, but when the trial came up, Ol' Scratch thought he had Stack nailed down.

So did the judge!

Judge looks over his glasses, says, "Mr. Stackolee, Jury finds you guilty of murder in the fust degree."

As for the way it all ended, no one seems to be quite sure. Some folks say the judge gave Stack seventy-five years, and Ol' Scratch had to sit around and bite his nails before he could collect Stack's soul. Other people say not, although they agree on one thing - that Ol' Scratch's plan fell down, and he didn't get what he wanted in spite of his scheming.

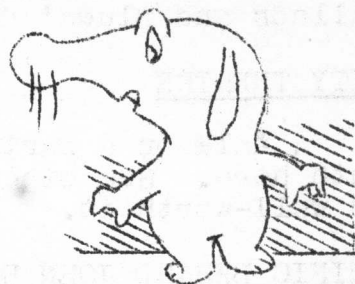
They tell it this way, that Stack had got to be so bad, when he reached Hell he ordered Ol' Scratch himself about!

"Got off your throne, Tom Devil, put your pitchfork on the shelf!

I'm Stackolee, Mr. Devil, gonna rule Hell by myself!"

MIKE MOORCOCK

The London Folk-Music Scene.



I'm trying to keep this as brief as possible so here's a few short reviews of some of the bigger events on the Scene. Lack of money has, naturally, stopped me from travelling around as much as I'd like but I think I've managed to cover most of the events at the Louise at least once.

HOOTENANNY

These are as popular as ever. Regulars include Ewan MacColl Peggy Seeger, Bert Lloyd, Dominic Behan, Dean Gitter, Fitz Coleman and lots more. Be there by 6.30 sharp if you want a seat.

A Ballads and Blues presentation, seats are, as usual, 4/-.

SINGABOUT

Every Wednesday at the Louise. Seats 4/-. Starts at 8 sharp, ends between 10.30 and 11 pm.

Regulars include the above-mentioned people, also Sandy Paton, Robin Hall etc.

This Ballads and Blues presentation enables the up-and-coming folksinger to have a bash at doing his stuff in front of an audience. First week it opened Mike Myer was there, Rory MacEwen, Denniss Gifford and John Foreman and his group. Worth going to as it has an even more informal atmosphere than at the Louise.

I generally make a date of it.

I'm not sure how long these will last so I'd go as soon as possible if I were you.

PERSONAL CHOICE

These have ended now but the four shows were PEGGY SEEGER, AN EVENING OF AMERICAN FOLKSONG. Very nice. EWAN MACCOLL.

LONDON SCENE cont.

DOMINIC BEHAN and SHEAMUS ENNIS. All very fine shows. Let's hope 'Ballads and Blues' decide on running some more of these.

UNITY THEATRE

A talk on a particular aspect of folkmusic is given every month here. See other page for details. Very cheap to get in and well-worth it.

DOMINIC BEHAND JOHN HASTED FOLKSONG NIGHTS

Every Friday at the Louise. 4 bob admission. WMA presentation.

The one I went to (that money problem again) was packed choc-a-bloc with folksingers.

Artistes appearing were THE SOUTHERNERS, MARTIN WINDSOR, ROBIN HALL, FITZROY COLEMAN, DAVY STUART, MARION GRAY, ZIMRA ORNATT, a bloke with the unlikely name - tho' his own, I believe, of PADDY O'TOOLE, SANDY AND CAROLYN PATON.

Dominic was excellent as Master of Ceromonies. It was worth going along just to hear him talk.

I liked Zimra Ornatt, a really beautiful Israeli girl with a fine voice.

Fitz sang a calypso with a chorus I thought rahter good:

"Fitz - don't look so sad, I may join you,
back in Trinidad.
I have made up my mind to go - you cannot
support me on Calypso!"

These nights, also, are recommended.

WHERE ELSE TO HEAR FOLKMUSIC

The Troubadour. The Breadbasket and The Roundhouse.

DIRECTIONS OF HOW TO GET TO THE LOUISE

Tube to Holborn Station - turn right towards Oxford Circus and keep walking. Can't miss the red neon sign.

'Buses - many. 25 from Victoria. No. 22, 7, 8, 19 etc. etc.

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