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**OLD TIME MUSIC
Booklet 2**

Old Time Music

26 Autumn 1977

33 Brunswick Gardens,
LONDON W8 4AW, England.

EDITOR: Tony Russell.
PROPRIETORS: Simon A Napier,
Tony Russell.
Printed in England.
UK ISSN 0048-1653.
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SUBSCRIPTION RATES: £2.40 (USA \$6.00) per year surface. Single copies £0.60 (USA \$1.50). Airmail rate: £4.00 to Europe and 'A' and 'B' zones; £4.50 to 'C' zones (e.g. Australasia, Japan); USA \$9.00. Unless otherwise stated by the subscriber, a subscription will be taken as beginning with the then current issue. A subscription implies that the magazine will be sent to the subscriber until one of the three expires.

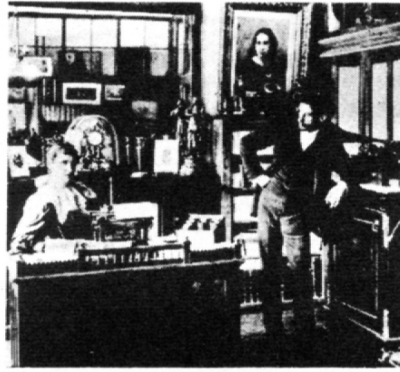
BACK ISSUES: @ £0.45 (USA \$1.00) each:
1 to 10, 14 to 25
NB: issues 11-13 are out of print.

AGENTS: USA County Sales, PO Box 191, Floyd VA 24091. Rounder Records, PO Box 474, Somerville MA 02144. Australia John Boothroyd, 7 Hart Ave, Greensborough, Victoria 3088. Japan B.O.M. Service Ltd, 6-5-18 Kawamo, Takarazuka, Hyogo 665. Germany Teddy Doering, Schellingstr. 74, 7080 Aalen. Belgium Jef Van Gool, Acacialaan 52, 2300 Turnhout. Netherlands Berry Selles, Spuistraat 6, Kampen. Canada Buck Dancer's Choice Music, 330 10th St NW, Calgary, Alberta T2N 1V8.

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FRONT COVER: Joe Lee (fiddle) and his brother Jim Lee (guitar), date unknown. (See page 4 for further details.)
Picture courtesy of Charles Wolfe.



●A while ago we promised a survey of magazines on otm and related music. After some preparatory work, however, it began to seem uncongenial to sit in judgement of our contemporaries, and tedious merely to list them. Until a change of mind, then, we would mention just a few journals that genuinely call for the attention of the OTM reader (in addition, that is, to OTM itself).

The JEMF QUARTERLY continues to offer a wide range of valuable stuff, including features of a length which OTM could scarcely encompass, and it is essential to anyone with a serious historical/discographical interest in otm. Write for details to the JEMF, Folklore & Mythology Center, UCLA, Los Angeles CA 90024.

THE DEVIL'S BOX, though nominally tied to the world of ot/bg fiddling, includes pieces of more general appeal and numbers among its regular contributors such luminaries as Charles Wolfe. Its correspondence pages feature lively exchanges among both musicians and collectors. Enquiries should be addressed to the Editor, Route 7, Box 205-A, Clarksville TN 37040.

It should be unnecessary to mention the monthlies BLUEGRASS UNLIMITED and PICKIN', widely available in the US and procurable without too much difficulty in Britain. (Try Mike's Country Music Room or Collet's Record Shop.) In our view BU leads in the quality of its reviews, whereas PICKIN' contains more for the instrument buff; both have plenty of news and reports of festivals and other events.

THE RECORD SPECIAL (from Bullfrog Publications, POB 635, La Habra CA 90631, bimonthly) contains only reviews - of British and American folkmusic, otm, bg, blues, jazz, rock 'n' roll and ethnic music. It keeps one well up-to-date with new releases.

Several new magazines have appeared in the past year; we shall try to mention them before long.

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COVER STORY

JOE LEE

A Further Note

Charles Wolfe



● In the last issue of OTM, in the article on Georgia fiddler Bill Shores, I touched rather briefly on the career of Shores' mentor JOE LEE. I noted at the time that Joe Lee had also been singled out by Lowe Stokes as one of his prime influences on learning the "long bow" technique, and that Stokes in turn passed on much of the technique to Clayton McMichen. Since writing that piece, I have been able to talk with Joe Lee's widow, who still lives in Silver Creek, Georgia, and have discovered more about this elusive, influential fiddler.

Joe Lee was born in Etowah County, Alabama, in 1884, and died in 1964. His brother Jim, who played guitar with him for many years (see photograph), was also born in Etowah County, in 1895. Jim died only recently, in June 1976. Neither brother ever made any records. Mrs Lee remembers that Joe once went with Lowe Stokes to play in Nashville, but doesn't remember if they made any records. In any event, this would have been before Nashville was a recording centre.

According to Mrs Lee, Joe's band was "rated as the best band in the area"

(northwest Georgia) and "much in demand for dances in the 1920s and 1930s and early 1940s". Other informants recall that Joe also played in Bud Silvey's band for a while. Mrs Lee recalls Joe winning fiddling contests at Rome, Lindale and Birmingham.

Other musicians Lee played with include fiddler Charlie Prophet, Clayton McMichen, Walter Morris (who recorded for Columbia), banjoist Land Norris, gospel singers Grady & Hazel Cole, and lesser-known local artists like Oliver Bridges, Bob Stephens (cf OTM25/5), Charlie Roberson, Tom Pritchett and Delmas Franklin from WLAL radio.

It is quite possible that Joe Lee recorded tapes before he died, but so far I have been unable to recover any. Even if none is found, though, Lee retains a small but secure niche in the history of Southern fiddling. □

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News

● **ROUNDER** schedule for 1978 bulging with interesting projects. The SS section, which has already put out leased items by FLATT & SCRUGGS (ex-Columbia) and THE LILLY BROTHERS (the Prestige LPs), promises reissues of OSBORNE BROTHERS material from MGM, including 'Country Pickin' & Hillside Singin' (SS03) and more (04), and the LOUVIN BROTHERS' first MGM LP (SS07). More Louvins stuff, ex radio, on 0090 in the regular series. Other regulars projected: J D CROWE & NEW SOUTH 0096, BLUEGRASS CARDINALS 0097, JERRY DOUGLAS 0093, ALLEN BROTHERS 0079, TONY TRISCHKA ('Banjoland') 0087, BYRON BERLINE 0100, JOHN HICKMAN 0101, RED ALLEN 0102, BUTCH ROBINS 0104, RIO GRANDE BAND 0105. Lastnamed is a new WS outfit, with Doug Jernigan and various session vets.

On the reissue front expect JOHNNIE LEE WILLS (from radio tapes) 1027, SOL HOOPII 1024, and an anthology of women in otm, 'Banjo Pickin' Girls', 1029.

Ethnic City: from Cape Breton, LPs by JOE CORMIER 7004, CARL MACKENZIE 7005, DOUG MacPHEE 7009 and the BEATON family of Mabou 7011. MacPhee's is a CB piano record, others feature fiddle. The AMERICAN SWEDISH SPELMANS TRIO - fiddling - on 6004. Two vols of Irish trad music in US (6005/6) from field-recordings by Mick Moloney, Miles Krassen and Larry McCullough.

The 8000 series comes into being, music for children by MIKE & PEGGY SEEGER 8001/2/3 and BESSIE JONES 8004.

Imminent also are the third HIGHWOODS STRING BAND LP (0074) and a RICHARD GREENE record (0075).

■ **COUNTRY**, by Nick Tosches, published November 25 by Stein & Day (£10.95). Announced as "... more than history. Motel-room whispers and warm, wet gossip will slake the thirst of anyone in search of a Nashville Babylon." Roll over Bob Shelton, tell Bill Malone the news.

▲ **DOC WATSON** excellently received at a single British concert November 10. Report next issue.

△ **DUBLIN OT/BG MUSIC CLUB** now meets Thursday nights at Tailors' Hall, Christ Church Place. Residents: the Sackville String Band. KENNY HALL and his companions appeared there this summer.

▲ **RED CLAY RAMBLERS** for Cambridge Folk Festival 1978, at new location. See our next for details.

NOT VERY ARISTOCRATIC

by Gene Wiggins



● "NOT VERY ARISTOCRATIC" was the wryly understated description Mrs Jewell Simpson gave recently of the recordings of her brothers, the Cofer Brothers, who were also at least half and probably two-thirds of the Georgia Crackers. "Crackers" may be the very word that comes into the mind of a person who listens to their recordings, most of which evoke a vision of carefree, amoral poor whites or blacks - fugitives from an Erskine Caldwell novel - always at odds with their creditors and with the law. The truth is that the Cofer Brothers were not that sort of people at all; but people they knew as friends were that sort, and the most special kind of music the Cofers had to offer the recording industry was the music of those friends.

Their father, Pleasant Asbury Cofer (the middle name that of a famous Methodist bishop), was born March 3, 1869. He was a Methodist minister, a songwriter, a singing-school teacher and a sawmill owner. As a sawmill owner he "followed the timber" and as a Methodist minister, too, there was some tendency to move around. His family at various times lived in Jackson County (this is where the sons who recorded were born), in Atlanta, in Clarke County and in Hancock County. The last setting - Hancock County, about 12 miles from Sparta - is most important. This is where the children of P.A. spent their formative years. Leon was born in Jackson County May 12, 1899, and Paul July 4, 1901; but it was in Hancock County that Paul grew up, and it was home for Leon.

According to their younger brother, P.A. Jr, "about 98 percent of that county was niggers." The term is for him purely denotative. Throughout much of his experience there wasn't any alternative

denotative term. Here P.A. Sr owned a 700-acre farm and, at one time, as many as three sawmills. Here he built an "academy" which is still standing. In it he taught singing-schools, and it was also used as the public elementary school.

It was after Leon had started the first grade that he was blinded. There was some sort of festive occasion, felt to call for fireworks. Since Leon was in school, learning his ABCs, it wasn't the Fourth of July. A lot of fireworks had been shot along the Oconee River, back of the Cofer house. Leon found an unshot Roman candle, and he and another little boy got into a fuss over it. Leon started for home. At the backyard gate he turned to look back and was taken in the corner of one eye by a rock thrown by the other boy. Many years later, in 1946, Leon was to tell a newspaper reporter that it was "accidental." Perhaps he felt it was almost so. In the old days country boys would chuck rocks at one another with little or no animosity. Dodging a rock thrown from a distance, if you are looking, is no great feat. But Leon looked only at the worst possible moment, and the result was tragic. Months later, when he was seen bumping his face against a table top at his eye level, it was realized that a connector between his eyes had been damaged and he had become totally blind. He was about 12 when his family managed to get him into the Macon Academy for the Blind.

It should not be assumed that Leon spent all the next period of his life away from home. The administrators of the Macon academy believed that it was good for the blind boys to get around, so Leon often came home and often brought other boys to visit. And whenever there was a dance anywhere round the Cofer home, Paul, Leon and Leon's visitors would attend.



The school that P.A. Cofer Sr built, and his children attended, in Hancock County. Right, P.A. Sr.



Meanwhile Paul had enjoyed a more normal school experience in his father's "academy". His sister remembers an occasion when Paul and a little girl named Annie were caught chewing wads of paper. Along with rock throwing, this was a source of pleasure in old country schools, mainly because it was frowned on. Paper is not really very good. The schoolmarm, hoping to shame them out of chewing paper, declared, "I want you to go over to Mrs Hamilton's /Paul's aunt who lived nearby/ and tell her to give you something to eat!" Whether or not she meant it, whether or not Paul even thought she meant it, he took off, trailed by Annie. They returned bearing excellent baked potatoes, which they sat and ate with exaggerated gusto, among an envying group of children. Having ordered the essentials of the thing, the teacher could hardly protest. Mrs Simpson says, "You didn't get anything on Paul. Paul just wasn't the sort of fellow you get things on. Paul was a cutter."

P.A. Sr was an exceedingly busy man with a farm to oversee, sawmills to supervise, timber to gauge, singing-schools to teach, sermons to preach and songs to compose. Usually he strode around afoot, taking time to hitch horses to a wagon or buggy only when there was some load larger than one of his children to convey. P.A. Jr, the youngest of the eight children, recalls, "He always had his coat on his arm, but he would never put it on. He'd get me on his shoulder, and he'd take off. He'd walk over to Sparta, 12 miles away, and do whatever he had to do and walk back. He'd come to a pine tree and hold out his thumb at it and tell you exactly how many feet of lumber he was going to get out of it."

In addition to the two songbooks he published, several unpublished songs of P.A. Sr still exist, all on wide-spaced score paper, all folded the way he carried the sheets in his pocket in his peripatetic course, pausing to work at them when he got an occasional moment to do so. Generally speaking, his songs take off from a biblical text, which is often stated at the head. Generally they are less flowery in diction than other sacred songs of the period. As with other sacred songs of the period, they are strong on death and might seem a little morbid to moderns, the present tendency in gospel songs being to talk a lot about heaven and to mention death only as a step toward getting there.

He found time to teach his eight children shapenote music and to see that they did it right. Jewell recalls, "Daddy would stick right with us till we got our parts down pat." P.A. Jr recalls duets of Jewell and their father as being favourite offerings at services, and sometimes there was a larger ensemble. Sometimes one of Jewell's sisters sang soprano and Jewell alto. Paul sometimes sang bass, and Leon, when at home, tenor. There was a music-loving

neighbour, a Mr Ferguson, whose daughter Leon eventually married, who was always driving up to the Cofer home in his wagon and urging them to go to singings with him.

P.A. Sr played the organ but never got into strings or secular music. He had nothing against it; he just didn't have time. P.A. Jr readily grants that the sort of music his brothers eventually recorded had the music of certain blacks as a dominant influence. "Those niggers that lived down there - Jim and Sam Clark, Peg Darden - they'd sing all kinds of songs, and Leon and Paul would sing the same songs. And there were the Roaches. That was a bunch of niggers that lived about a mile from us. There were two boys about the age of Paul and Leon. One was named Pete, and the other's name I can't remember. Paul and Leon would sing the same songs those two nigger boys would sing."

There was also Alfred Thomas, an old black fiddler who smoked Brown Mule tobacco in a clay pipe. Brown Mule chewing tobacco (which presumably inspired the tune "Brown Mule Slide") comes in a syrup-laded plug, impossible to smoke unless cut up and laboriously dried out. P.A. Jr says, "Alfred would come to our house. I remember my mama would fix him supper, or if he came in the morning she'd fix him breakfast. He'd cut up his Brown Mule and lay it on the stove and let it get dry. Then he'd stuff it in that old pipe. That was the stinkiest thing you ever saw. He'd sit down and lay the fiddle down in his lap and play it. I'll never forget that fellow."

What would have been the origins of the music of an old black fiddler in a predominantly rural area in middle Georgia in the early 20th century? There were some fiddle tunes of British origin, no doubt. There probably was stuff of minstrel-show origin. Whatever we might guess a priori, the evidence is that such stuff was heartily accepted by blacks. Collections of black songs are full of it, and are the easiest place to find verses which have racial derogation as their very essence. There would, no doubt, have been some vagrant "heart songs". But the most interesting possibility is that there would have remained

some African influence, in style if not in substance.

It should be remembered, too, that Leon often brought visitors from the Macon Academy, boys who because of their blindness had turned strongly toward music, who at home might have heard almost any kind of music that flourished in the US, and who at the Academy received a good deal of musical instruction.

The spectrum of possible influence on the Cofer repertoire is broad, and in the songs they recorded later there are echoes, coincidental or not, of a great variety of other songs. "I've Got a Gal in Baltimore" is essentially the same tune as the verse to "Ta-ra-ra-boom-der-e". ^{/A more oblique version of the same piece was recorded by Fiddling Bob Larkan as "The Women Wear No Clothes At All" (OK 45349). Ed./} The unissued "Because He Loved Her So" has a tune strongly suggestive of Fosters "Camptown Races". The unissued "Rock That Cradle, Lucy" (shortly to be included on a County LP) is a variant of "Soldier's Joy". But the style of them all owes much to Hancock County blacks.

P.A. Jr remembers the blind boys who came home with Leon, sometimes in rather large groups, as "hardheaded and independent," rejecting any help they could do without, and as "a bunch of comedians." A staple of their humour was stories related to their blindness. One told of how, in Macon, he had walked up to where he heard the sound of breathing to ask directions and having done so was answered by a horrendous snort. He had been talking to a mule.

P.A. Jr has a feeling that the recording "The Georgia Black Bottom" (an early example of the "Deep Elm Blues" melody) was a song learned from one of the blind boys. However, he is not sure, and it is the sort of thing that could have been learned from some of his father's sawmill workers. Now 63, he remembers that they were singing the "Titanic" song when he was three or four years old.

P.A. Sr "worked anybody that wanted to work" in his sawmills. On some rainy days mill operations had to stop, and the workers, black and white, would spend the day on the Cofer porch, according to Jewell, "singing and carrying on" with Paul and sometimes with Leon and the blind boys. When night fell, the workers would ride away, still singing, and Jewell would listen until they couldn't be heard any more. "Some of those black boys had beautiful voices," she says, "and Paul and Leon loved them."

It is pleasant to imagine P.A. Sr, in the house on those rainy days, working on his hymns while such contrasting stuff went on outside, fretting somewhat because he couldn't do it while striding the woods and fields, but writing under the head "Isa. 35:8-9":

I'm sanctified and on the highway,
The way the Prophet hath told,
No lion there, no ravenous beasts,
Could e'er destroy my soul.

(Crowning Jewels, p10)

I like to think that at that very time, out on the porch, an old black fiddler was leading Paul and Leon and some sawmill workers and some blind boys in a different sort of commentary on one "ravenous beast".

I got a woman, she's long and tall,
Got a hump on her back would make a panther
How long? Oh, how long? /squall.

Exactly this irony never occurred at any moment in time, I fear, but such scenes, and such a general contrast, did. The imagined irony is even stronger if the "How Long?" of the Cofer Brothers, like their father's song, derives ultimately from Isaiah. I suspect it does. It may be that their father's song is older than others in what we might call the "Hesitating Blues" Complex, and that the original refrain was no more than that cry of real or mock



Paul and Leon Cofer.

despair. I feel that those re-composers went wrong who had to go on and tell who was asking how long he or she had to wait for what.

Jewell remembers that Paul was in minstrel shows while in high school. This was probably an influence secondary to that of the more genuine black music he had learned from the sawmill hands; but, as I have suggested, the line between songs sung by blacks and songs sung in minstrel shows was not an impenetrable one. We can separate songs such as "Diamond Joe", which might be a black folksong in the sense of having no literate elements whatsoever, from such songs as "Riley the Furniture Man", which is in a sense not as pristine but well may have been popular with blacks. "Riley" is a rather puzzling song. It states at one point "Riley was a white man," as if the singer is supposed to be black, but has stated earlier:

Makes no difference /if/ it's a white man,
White as the crystal snow,
If you don't pay Mister Riley,
He'll take your furniture sho.

Here it sounds as if the singer is white. We can say that the "white as the crystal snow" does not sound like the diction of a field black, and that such a person would be unlikely ever to have brought home in the first place the "rosewood bed" Riley takes back. Such distinctions as we can make between "Diamond Joe" and "Riley the Furniture Man", though, may never have entered the minds of Paul and his minstrel-show audience. We can assume, though, that he learned that songs of a very different sort than "Where the Morning Glories Grow" (the only Cofer recording that might be called prissy) were enjoyed more broadly than on the Cofer porch.

It was in 1916 that his father bought Paul a fiddle.

Leon, who was learning piano tuning from a C W Johnson at the Macon Academy, could play piano and almost any string instrument. So could Jewell. She was something of a tomboy. Except for one especially wild mule, she rode everything on the farm, even the milk cows. As a tomboy, she may have been a little more favourable toward the music of the sawmill hands than most young ladies of the period would have been.

P.A. Sr died in 1921. By this time Leon was out of the Macon Academy, having done 10 years work in nine. He tuned pianos in Hancock County for four years before he moved to Atlanta, where there were more pianos to tune. He moved to Atlanta in 1922 and the rest of the family moved there in 1923, Paul going into sheet metal work.

Paul and Leon did some shows in Atlanta for clubs and lodges and tried to get Jewell to play with them, even offering to buy her a new guitar. She was too shy at the time, at least to do the kind of music they did. She married and went to Florida in 1926, thus eliminating the last chance for the recordings to be of the Cofer Family rather than the Cofer Brothers.

In 1926 Paul was in a head-on collision between his new Ford and a street car and was almost killed. His

collarbone and the bones of one arm were broken into fragments. He could never again play the fiddle as well as before. The fiddler we hear on the records is a damaged one.

The first recording session was on March 21, 1927. First Paul and Leon recorded as the Cofer Brothers, then they were joined by Ben Evans to record as the Georgia Crackers. P.A. Jr remembers that the band usually also included a Billy Jack, whose full name probably was Billy Jack Evans and who was probably a brother to Ben. He doubts, however, that Billy Jack was on the recording session. The records sound as if there may be only three men at most, but it is often true that people supposed to be playing on the old records were not audible. Despite the fact that "The Georgia Hobo" came out as by the Cofer Brothers rather than the Georgia Crackers, P.A. says Ben did the whistling on it.

One of the numbers recorded at the October 1927 session (as by the Georgia Crackers alone), "Stockade Blues", was one the Cofers learned from Ben.

There was a final session, limited to the Cofer Brothers, in March 1929.

It should be noted that Paul and Leon did not abandon the religious music of their father, though they never recorded any. There exist manuscript pages of songs composed by P.A. Sr and arranged by Paul, as well as one sacred song labelled "Anon." and "Arranged by Rex Cofer", Rex being Paul's middle name. Of course these religious

DISCOGRAPHY

COFER BROTHERS: Paul Cofer-f/v, Leon Cofer-g/v, with Ben Evans-whistling on 80586.

Atlanta GA, March 21, 1927

80581-A	Where The Morning Glories Grow	OK 45137
80582-A	The Great Ship Went Down	-
80583-	?	
80584-B	The All Go Hungry Hash House	OK 45099
80585-	?	
80586-A	The Georgia Hobo	OK 45099

GEORGIA CRACKERS: prob.: Paul Cofer-f/v, Leon Cofer-bj/v, Ben Evans-g/v. Vocals by two or three persons, as indicated.

80593-A	Riley The Furniture Man	v2(3?)	OK 45111
80594-	?		
80595-B	The Coon From Tennessee	v3	OK 45098
80596-B	The Georgia Black Bottom	v2	OK 45111
80597-B	Diamond Joe	v3	OK 45098
			Cy 514

Atlanta GA, October , 1927

81758-B	I've Got A Gal In Baltimore	v2	OK 45192
81759-	?		
81760-	?		
81761-A	Stockade Blues	v2	OK 45192

COFER BROTHERS: Paul Cofer-f/v, Leon Cofer-g/v. Speech by both on 402302.

Atlanta GA, March 13, 1929

402299-	?		
402300-	Because He Loved Her So		OK unissued
402301-	?		
402302-	Keno, The Rent Man		OK 45486
402303-	?		
402304-	How Long?		OK 45486



BLIND PIANO TUNER—Leon J. Cofer, blind since the age of six, makes adjustments on a piano he is tuning. His boss says he is the best piano tuner he knows.—Journal Photo.

songs were not what was wanted in places where the recorded songs were in demand.

There also exist manuscript pages of a few secular songs, written in round notes. Shaped notes are used on the religious songs, and this difference suggests that Paul was not putting the songs on paper for his own use in playing, but rather for purposes of teaching, copyright or publication. Of the recorded output the only song I have seen in MS is "Keno, the Rent Man". There the title is merely "Keno", but the guitar part is written note for note, and there is a note at the head that it sounds an octave lower than written. This sheet was found in a box along with an "E Z Method for Guitar". The family does not remember how Paul related this music writing to his playing. It seems probable that the Cofer played the recorded numbers entirely by ear and that Paul put "Keno" on paper with some thought of publication, using the "E Z Method" merely as a check on how to put it down. It is of course possible that it was published. A lot of material published in Atlanta by Polk Brockman and others has been lost and forgotten.

Some people may have guessed from the length of time that the Cofer Brothers remained unidentified by old time music buffs, and from the difference in their sound, that they were not of the Atlanta area and had no connection with other old time musicians there. P.A. Jr freely admits that in the old days Hancock County people had a speech pattern all their own, and they did sound different. But they were intimate with the McMichens (Clayton's mother

lived close), Fiddlin' John Carson and other Atlanta musicians. Paul's wife was related to Rob Stanley and his daughter Roba of Lawrenceville, and through them the Cofer got to know the Tanners of nearby Dacula.

A lot could be said about the post-recording lives of the Cofer brothers, but I feel that it is a story rather separate from the one



P.A. Cofer Jr today.

already told, and I shall tell only a little of it. Paul continued with his sheet metal work and Leon with his piano tuning. Leon worked for

some smaller companies, but his longest and final service was with Cable Piano Company. Mainly a stockroom tuner until World War 2 created a shortage of around-town tuners, he finally became a sort of symbol, a blind man who got about nearly as well as anyone. When the Cable building burned, he rescued some sighted fellow workers, breaking a rib in so doing. By way of Braille books and "talking" books in the Carnegie library for the blind on Piedmont Avenue, he was a very well read man.

A newspaper write-up of 1946, intended to encourage men physically handicapped in World War 2, makes no mention of the fact that Leon had ever been a recording artist. All that was in the past.

In Leon's later years, when he was reputedly the best tuner and repairman in Atlanta, he was well known to musicians of all sorts all over the city. One would like to think that at least once, after tuning the piano in some ultra high-tone setting, he startled his "serious" music friends by testing his tuning, chording a little and singing,

I'm gonna buy me a jug of whisky,
I'm gonna make my baby frisky,
Diamond Joe, you better come
get me,

Diamond Joe.

But I am afraid he never did. Probably most of his musician friends had no idea that this dignified, impeccably dressed blind gentleman once recorded some of the gamiest, most pungent country music ever recorded.

Paul died of throat cancer on December 29, 1967, and Leon of a heart attack less than a year later, November 22, 1968. □

OTM BACK ISSUES (IN PRINT) SUMMARY

1 Frank HUTCHISON, Clayton McMICHEN interview (cont'd 2-4), WLS & National Barn Dance, Milton BROWN, Fiddlin' John CARSON, SCOTTDALE String Band (what a debut!). 2 Kelly HARRELL, White Top Festival 1935, Smithsonian Festival 1971. 3 Clark KESSINGER i/v, National Folk Festival 1935. 4 Georgia Stringbands, Patsy MONTANA, the ALLEN Brothers, Basic Bluegrass Library. 5 Uncle Bunt STEPHENS, Jimmie RODGERS, cowboy music, Milton BROWN disco. 6 Buell KAZEE i/v, New Lost City RAMBLERS, Fred STANLEY, Harry CHOATES, "Spanish Fandango" tab. 7 Sleepy JOHNSON i/v, more on Jimmie RODGERS, Preston YOUNG, Dewey & Gassie BASSETT. 8 ROANE County Ramblers, Eef WOODIE i/v, FREENY'S Barn Dance Band, Mississippi Stringband Music, Cowboy Recordings, Mariposa 1972. 9 Fiddlin' John CARSON, Richard BURNETT i/v, CARTWRIGHT Brothers, Del McCOURY, Norman EDMONDS, yet more on Jimmie RODGERS. 10 DIXON Brothers, NATIONS Brothers, more on Richard BURNETT (+ songs), Jules ALLEN, DELMORE Brothers & Wayne RANEY disco. 11 Bert LAYNE i/v, PERRY County Music Makers, Knocky PARKER, Iry LEJUNE. 12 Johnnie Lee WILLS i/v & disco, Jesse RODGERS, more Knocky PARKER, more Bert LAYNE. 13 Bill MONROE i/v, more on Harry CHOATES, CALLAHAN Brothers. 14 Lonnie AUSTIN, Norman WOODLIEFF, H M BARNES, Walter SMITH (+ disco). 15 Goebel REEVES (+ disco), Sam McGEE, Galax 1975. 16 Melvin ROBINETTE, Music from Round Peak, BAILLES Brothers, Rare Labels. 17 FIFTH BIRTHDAY DOUBLE ISSUE - MISSISSIPPI (Leake County Revelers, Carter Brothers & Son, Hoyt Ming, etc), Record Review Index 1-20. 18 Buddy THOMAS, MOUNTAIN Ramblers, Buell KAZEE, Everett LILLY. 19 Al DEXTER, Ray WHITLEY, more MOUNTAIN Ramblers, Tom DOUCET, Grover RANN & Harry AYERS. 20 Country Music & the Depression, Emmett LUNDY, Eldon SHAMBLIN i/v (cont'd 24-25). 21 BLACKARD/SHELOR Family, TAYLOR-GRIGG'S Louisiana Melody Makers. 22 PEANUT SPECIAL NO. 1: OTM IN GEORGIA (Bill Shores, Georgia Yellow Hammers, Lester Smallwood, Uncle John Patterson, etc).

THE SKILLET-LICKERS

GID TANNER AND HIS SKILLET-LICKERS WITH RILEY PUCKETT: Gid Tanner-f, Clayton McMichen-f, Riley Puckett-g, Fate Norris-bj. Bert Layne-f prob. also present on at least some items. Vocals as indicated after each item; customarily Puckett singing lead with Tanner the high voice, but third parts are audible on some items, and both McMichen and Norris occasionally sing lead or joint lead. Unk. harmonica on 142041, asserted by some sources to be Frank Walker.
Atlanta GA, Saturday, April 17, 1926

142034-2	HAND ME DOWN MY WALKING CANE vCM-RP-GT	Co 15091-D, 19004; FSSMLP15001-D
142035-1	BULLY OF THE TOWN vRP	Co 15074-D; Cy 526
142036-1	PASS AROUND THE BOTTLE AND WE'LL ALL TAKE A DRINK vRP-GT	- ; Rd 1005
142037-2	ALABAMA JUBILEE vRP-GT	Co 15104-D
142038-1	WATERMELON ON THE VINE vFN-RP-GT	Co 15091-D, 19004; Rd 1005
142039-1 (100576)	DON'T YOU HEAR JERUSALEM MOAN vRP-GT	Co 15104-D, VT 2493-V, Cl 5433-C; FSSMLP 15001-D, Rd 1023
142040-1	YA GOTTA QUIT KICKIN' MY DOG AROUN' vRP-GT	Co 15084-D; Rd 1023
142041-3	TURKEY IN THE STRAW vRP-GT	-

NOTE: VT 2493-V, Cl 5433-C as JACKSON PAVEY AND HIS CORN SHUCKERS.

Atlanta GA, Tuesday, November 2, 1926

143019-1	POLLY WODDLE DO	Re/RZ G20666
143019-3	POLLY WODDLE DO	Co 15200-D, 19011
143020-	ROCK ROAD TO MILLEDGEVILLE	Co unissued
143021-	UNCLE BUD vRP-GT	Co 15134-D

NOTE: Re/RZ G20666 (Australian issue) as GID TANNER AND HIS SKILLET-LICKERS only. Co 15200-D as GID TANNER AND HIS SKILLET-LICKERS WITH RILEY PUCKETT AND CLAYTON McMICHEN.

Wednesday, November 3, 1926

143026-1 (100595)	DANCE ALL NIGHT WITH A BOTTLE IN YOUR HAND vRP	Co 15108-D, VT 2516-V, Cl 5456-C; Vc LP107
143027-1	SHE'LL BE COMING 'ROUND THE MOUNTAIN vRP-GT	Co 15200-D, 19011
143028-1	I DON'T LOVE NOBODY vRP-GT	Co 15123-D
143029-	HOP LIGHT LADIES	Co unissued
143030-	I GOT MINE vRP-GT-?	Co 15134-D
143031-2 (100575)	SHORTENING BREAD vRP-GT	Co 15123-D, VT 2493-V, Cl 5433-C; Cy 526
143032-1	OLD JOE CLARK vRP-GT	Co 15108-D

NOTE: Co 15200-D as GID TANNER AND HIS SKILLET-LICKERS WITH RILEY PUCKETT AND CLAYTON McMICHEN. Velvet Tones and Clarions as JACKSON PAVEY AND HIS CORN SHUCKERS.

GID TANNER AND HIS SKILLET-LICKERS WITH RILEY PUCKETT AND CLAYTON McMICHEN: as for initial session.

Atlanta GA, Monday, March 28, 1927

143785-2	CASEY JONES sp-intCM/vRP-GT	Co 15237-D; Vc LP103
143786-1	THE WRECK OF THE SOUTHERN OLD '97 vRP	Co 15142-D

Tuesday, March 29, 1927

143795-2 (100557)	DIXIE vRP-GT	Co 15158-D, VT 2484-V, Cl 5424-C; Cy 526
143796-1	RUN NIGGER RUN vRP-GT	Co 15158-D; Rd 1005
143796-2	RUN NIGGER RUN vRP-GT	Co 15158-D; Cy 526
143797-2 (100558)	THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME vRP-GT	Co 15170-D, VT 2484-V, Cl 5424-C
143798-2 (100596)	THE OLD GRAY MARE vRP-GT	- , VT 2516-V, Cl 5456-C
143799-2	JOHN HENRY (THE STEEL DRIVIN' MAN) vRP-GT	Co 15142-D
143800-2	DRINK 'ER DOWN vFN-GT	Co 15188-D
143801-2	THE DARKTOWN STRUTTERS' BALL vCM-RP	-
143802-	PETER WENT A FISHING	Co unissued

NOTE: VT 2484-V, Cl 5424-C as CHARLIE NORRIS; VT 2516-V, Cl 5456-C as JACKSON PAVEY AND HIS CORN SHUCKERS.

A COLUMBIA DISCOGRAPHY 1926-31

ON RECORD

compiled by
Tony Russell

Layne possibly not present; Lowe Stokes-f prob. on at least some items.

Atlanta GA, Monday, October 31, 1927

145047-2	OLD McDONALD HAD A FARM vRP	Co 15204-D
145048-3	BILE THEM CABBAGE DOWN vRP-GT	Co 15249-D; Vc LP107
145049-1	BIG BALL IN TOWN vRP	Co 15204-D; Cy 506
145050-3	IT'S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY vCM-RP	Co 15249-D; Vc LP107
145053-2	BUCKIN' MULE no v/sp by all	Co 15237-D; Vc LP107
145054-2	UNCLE BUD vRP-GT	Co 15221-D; Roots RL-701, Rd 1005
145055-	POLLY WOLLY DOODLY	Co unissued

NOTE: matrices 145051-2 by Lowe Stokes & His North Georgians.

Tuesday, November 1, 1927

145058-2	JOHNSON'S OLD GRAY MULE sp-intGT/vRP	Co 15221-D
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Stokes seems certain to be present henceforward.

Atlanta GA, Tuesday, April 10, 1928

146000-	HEN CACKLE	Co 15303-D
146001-	CUMBERLAND GAP vRP-GT	- ; Rd 1005
146002-2	COTTON-EYED JOE vRP-GT	Co 15283-D; Cy 506
146003-2	BLACK-EYED SUSIE vRP-GT	- ; Vc LP107
146004-3 (16943)	PRETTIEST LITTLE GIRL IN THE COUNTY sp-intCM-RP/vRP-GT-CM	Co 15315-D, Vo 02917; Vc LP102, 104
146005-3 (17133)	SLOW BUCK sp-intCM-RP/hvGT	Co 15267-D, Vo 02985; Rd 1005
146006-1 (16944)	SETTIN' IN THE CHIMNEY JAMB vRP-CM-?	Co 15315-D, Vo 02917; Rd 1005
146007-2 (17132)	SAL LET ME CHAW YOUR ROSIN sp-intCM-RP/vRP	Co 15267-D, Vo 02985; FSSMLP 15001-D, Vc LP107

Atlanta GA, Monday, October 22, 1928

147253-1 (17139)	LIBERTY sp-intCM/spRP/no v	Co 15334-D, Vo 02948; FSSMLP 15001-D, Cy 526
147254-2	NANCY ROLLIN no v/sp by all	Co 15382-D; FSSMLP 15001-D, Rd 1023
147255-1	OLD DAN TUCKER vRP-GT	-
147256-2	DEVILISH MARY vRP-GT	Co 15709-D

Tuesday, October 23, 1928

147263-2 (17138)	PRETTY LITTLE WIDOW sp-intCM-FN-RP/vRP-GT	Co 15334-D, Vo 02948; Cy 526
147264-2	FLY AROUND MY PRETTY LITTLE MISS vRP-GT	Co 15709-D; Vc LP107, DU DU33032

NOTE: Co 15709-D as GID TANNER AND HIS SKILLET-LICKERS only.

Whistling duet on 148209.

Atlanta GA, Monday, April 8, 1929

148200-1	MISSISSIPPI SAWYER sp-intCM/sp by all/no v	Co 15420-D
148201-2	IT AIN'T GONNA RAIN NO MO' vRP-GT-CM	Co 15447-D; Vc LP107
148202-2	GOING ON DOWN TOWN vRP-GT	Co 15420-D; Vc LP107
148203-2	FLATWOODS sp-intCM-RP/vCM-GT	Co 15472-D, Re MR20; Rd 1005
148208-1	NEVER SEEN THE LIKE SINCE GETTIN' UPSTAIRS vCM-GT	- ; Rd 1023
148209-1	SHOW ME THE WAY TO GO HOME vRP-CM (+ 3 or 4 vv chorus)	Co 15404-D
148210-2	COTTON BAGGIN' sp-intCM/hvGT	- ; Vc LP102, 106
148211-2	THE ROVIN' GAMBLER vRP	Co 15447-D

NOTE: matrices 148204-7 by Mr & Mrs Hugh Cross. Re MR20 as ALABAMA BARNSTORMERS; reverse, under same credit, by Earl Shirkey & Roy Harper.

Atlanta GA, Tuesday, October 29, 1929

149276-	ROCKY PALLET no v	Co 15516-D; Cy 526
149277-2	SOLDIERS JOY sp-intCM/vRP	Co 15538-D; Cy 506, Co CS9660
149278-1	ROCK THAT CRADLE LUCY vRP	- ; Cy 506
149279-	THERE'LL BE A HOT TIME IN THE OLD TOWN TO-NIGHT vRP-GT	Co 15695-D
149280-2	BONEPARTE'S RETREAT sp-intCM-RP/no v	Co 15485-D; Vc LP102, 106
149281-	HELL'S BROKE LOOSE IN GEORGIA no v	Co 15516-D; Cy 526
149282-	GIDDAP NAPOLEON vRP	Co 15695-D
149283-2	CRIPPLE CREEK vRP	Co 15485-D; Vc LP107

Tanner may play bj, replacing Norris, on this session.

150200-	; 194976-2	LEATHER BREECHES	no v	Co 15623-D;	Cy 506
150201-	; 194977-2	NEW ARKANSAW TRAVELLER	sp-intCM/no v	-	
150202-	; 194978-2	SUGAR IN THE GOURD	VRP	Co 15612-D;	Rd 1005
150203-	; 194979-2	GEORGIA WAGNER	no v/sp & v effects by several vv	-	; Vc LP107
150204-		SAL'S GONE TO THE CIDER MILL	VRP-GT	Co 15562-D;	Cy 506
150205-		NIGGER IN THE WOODPILE	VRP	-	; Cy 506

Tuesday, April 15, 1930

150222-	; 194875-	DEVILISH MARY	VRP-GT-?	Co 15589-D;	Cy 506
150223-	; 194874-	SOLDIER, WILL YOU MARRY ME	VRP-GT	-	

Norris certainly absent, and bj prob. by Tanner. Bert Layne-f poss. present. (Three f are clearly audible on most items from this session.)

Atlanta GA, Thursday, December 4, 1930

151024-		RIDE OLD BUCK TO WATER	VRP	Co 15665-D;	Cy 526
151025-		DON'T YOU CRY MY HONEY	VRP	-	; Cy 514
151026-2		CAKCLIN' HEN AND ROOSTER TOO	no v	Co 15682-D;	Cy 506
151027-2		RICKETTS HORNPIPE	no v	-	

Tanner plays jews-harp on 151043.

Friday, December 5, 1930

151041-		HAND ME DOWN MY WALKING CANE		Co unissued	
151042-2		BULLY OF THE TOWN NO. 2	VRP	Co 15640-D	
151043-2		BROKEN DOWN GAMBLER	no v	-	; Cy 526
151044-		POSSUM UP THE GUM STUMP		Co unissued	

Whistling duet on 151921.

Atlanta GA, Saturday, October 24, 1931

151916-1		MISS McLEODS REEL	no v	Co 15730-D;	FSSMLP 15001-D
151917-1		FOUR CENT COTTON	VRP	Co 15746-D;	Cy 506
151918-1		MOLLY PUT THE KETTLE ON	VRP	-	; FSSMLP 15001-D, Cy 506
151919-1		SLEEPING LULU	no v/sp by several vv	Co 15777-D;	Rd 1005
151920-1		McMICHEN'S BREAKDOWN	no v	-	; DU DU33032
151921-1		WHISTLIN' RUFUS	no v	Co 15730-D	

●THE DISCOGRAPHY of the entire Skillet-Licker circle is a massive project, and it seems sensible to break it up into individually useful sections, for the time being at any rate. Above, therefore, I have essayed a discography of the supposedly central group, that which was billed as GID TANNER AND HIS SKILLET-LICKERS, in its Columbia period from 1926 to 1931. I have rigidly excluded all other recordings involving the same musicians, even the sketches performed (in many cases) by similar or identical groupings. I have also ruled out the Bluebird session of 1934, which though nominally a Skillet-Licker enterprise did not involve some of the musicians I have regarded as nuclear.

The sources of information on the above recordings are extraordinarily confused, inasmuch as different informants give different reports of any particular item. I have used with profit and gratitude the research (some of it unpublished) of Norm Cohen and Richard Nevins, though not always agreeing with their conclusions. As has been remarked by Charles Wolfe (whose investigations also I am grateful to draw on), numerous musicians outside the known "core" have been said to have played on Skillet-Licker recordings, and my discography is not to be regarded as final. In outline, however, I believe it accords well enough with what may be heard on, and reasonably guessed about, the actual recordings.

Other helpers included Frank Mare, Joe Bussard, Steve Davis, David Crisp, Mark Wilson, Dave Freeman, Bert Wyatt, and Bob Pinson and the resources of the CMP. Also useful was John Edwards' preliminary discography, provided

and informatively annotated by Norm Cohen. I extend my thanks to all these co-workers and their informants.

I have made no very rigorous attempt to record the incidental speech, background noises and other odds and ends of Skillet-Lickerana. Where these were of special interest, e.g. spoken introductions (abbreviated sp-int), they have been noted.

Standard abbreviations for record-labels have been used. All issues following a semicolon are LP reissues, and abbreviations employed in this respect are as follows: Cy=County, DU=Davis Unlimited, FSSMLP=Folk Song Society of Minnesota LP (a limited-edition issue, deleted), Rd=Rounder, Vc=Vetco.

Parenthesised master-numbers appearing in some 1926-28 sessions are controls allocated to non-Columbia issues; the 100000-series numbers apply to the Velvet Tone and Clarion releases, the five-digit numbers to the Vocalion releases. The Vocalion remasterings were made in February and April 1935.

►Additions and corrections to this discography are solicited. In particular, reports of alternative takes will be welcome. All takes cited here have been derived from inspected pressings, during which research a couple of instances were discovered of more than one take of an item being issued (143019, 143796). There may well be more.

In subsequent issues of OTM will be published discographies of other Skillet-Licker-related groupings.



ROBA STANLEY

The First Country Sweetheart

●THE HISTORY of women in country music is by no means as simple as many brash young writers of today would make it. Kitty Wells was not the first significant female star, nor was Patsy Montana; some girl singers in the 1930s were in fact brought along to dress up the scenery, but just as many were important in their own right. Both Kitty Wells and Patsy Montana were working out of a minor but well-established tradition of women performers in the music that extends back to the very dawn of the recording and radio industries. Except for a few rare instances, though, this tradition has been almost totally undocumented, and information about these early pioneering performers is scattered, spotty and unreliable. Moreover, what information there is has not been codified into ways that would define the characteristic feminine roles of the performers. But the history is there, waiting to be recovered, and one important chapter of it is the career of ROBA STANLEY.

By **Charles Wolfe**
with assistance from **Peggy Bulger, Gene Wiggins**

■ To the casual observer Roba Stanley's career might seem an unimpressive footnote to the overall history of country music. Her performing career extended only about three years, and her recorded repertoire consisted only of nine sides. What makes Roba important, though, is the quality of her work and historical period she worked in. A good case can be made for Roba Stanley being the first solo woman singer to broadcast on radio and to record country music - when she cut "Devilish Mary" for the General Phonograph Company in Atlanta in August 1924. To be sure, the team of Eva Davis and Samantha Bumgarner had recorded four months earlier, in April, for Columbia, and Eva Davis did record two vocal solos, "Wild Bill Jones" and "John Hardy". But Davis and Bumgarner were primarily a fiddle and banjo team, and much of their vocalising was only incidental to their instrumental music. Roba Stanley was first and foremost a singer, and she used full, splendid texts of solid traditional songs and ballads. She was only 14 when she made her first records but they remain even today fresh, vital examples of rural Southern singing at its best.

Today Roba Stanley lives in Gainesville, Florida, chipper, alert and vivacious. Her story presented here is based on a number of telephone interviews with her, as well as a personal interview taped by Florida state folklorist Peggy Bulger. Gene Wiggins visited the Stanley family in Dacula and helped piece together the story of Rob Stanley's career. In the truest sense, this has been a cooperative effort.

● Really to understand Roba Stanley's love for the music, we have to know something of her father and his doings. R M Stanley - he was called Rob - was one of a number of fine fiddlers from the Dacula area that were overshadowed by the rather spectacular success of Dacula's most famous son, Gid Tanner. (Another was a man named Blind Pool, who recorded with Smith's Sacred Singers, but that's another story for a more pious occasion.) Rob was born in 1858 and lived to the ripe old age of 88. In fact, the entire Stanley clan was musical and long-lived. Family legend has it that Rob used to say:

My father lived to be 90. My grandfather lived to be 100. My great-grandfather lived to be 110. My great-great-grandfather never did die, that anybody ever heard tell of.

Most of these ancient peers lived in the same Dacula-Gwinnett County area for most of their tenure, and the family can trace its ancestry here from the time the country was settled. Roba's musical traditions were honestly come by.

The front porch of the old Stanley house was a gathering spot for all manner of local musicians during the late '10s and throughout the '20s. Rob had a brother Early who played a lot, and the children in both families played: Roba had three brothers who helped teach her and encouraged her to perform. Several members of the Tanner family, including Gid his son Gordon, and his brother Arthur, routinely played with the Stanleys, as did Riley Puckett, John Carson, Earl Johnson, L D Snipes and others.

Along with Carson and Tanner, Rob Stanley was also a participant in some of the earliest Atlanta fiddling contests. As early as 1914 newspaper accounts mention him as one of the leading contenders at the annual contest in Atlanta. In 1920, when he was 62, Rob actually won first place, beating a "Miss Anita Soers", second, and the well-known A A Gray, third. The Atlanta Journal reported:

R M Stanley, one of the oldest of the fiddlers attending the annual convention of the Old-Time Fiddlers' Association of Georgia, won the state championship at the final session Saturday. Mr. Stanley, white-haired and wrinkled, played "We Will Follow Jesus," when his turn came to take the chair. Fiddlin' John Carson, presiding, stated that since the death of his son in the World War, Mr. Stanley played nothing but sacred music. He was awarded the championship by unanimous vote.

Mrs J D Williams, Rob's other daughter, says that the family did indeed have a son killed in World War 1, but that it was not true that Rob thenceforth played only sacred songs. In fact, there was apparently talk at this convention of disqualifying Rob because he played a hymn.

Rob's favorite fiddle pieces included "Whoa Mule" and "Nellie Gray" (both of which he later recorded), "Alabama Gals", "Turkey in the Straw", "Bile Them Cabbage Down" and John Carson's favorite, "Little Mary Phagan". In fact, there seems to be more overlap of Stanley's repertoire with Carson's than with Gid Tanner's, even though Tanner lived closer to the Stanleys. In fact, the family believes it was Carson who first interested Rob in going to fiddling contests. Rob later got to record three examples of his fiddling for Okeh, two of them released as The Stanley Trio (see Discography). Rather little of his fiddling comes through on these records, though; certainly not enough to allow any generalisations about his style.

By 1923-4, as Carson began to make his first records for Okeh, Rob began playing out some with his daughter Roba. Roba was born in Dacula in 1910 and was around the family's music all through her childhood. She began to play by learning to pick her brother's guitar.

My brother would be down in the field at work, and I'd take the guitar - I couldn't tune them for the longest time - and I'd go down in the field and get him to tune it for me.

Soon she was helping her father play for square dances in the area, both in private homes and at the local Legion Hall. It tickled her father (who was by this time 65, actually old enough to be her grandfather) to have her playing with him, and she soon became his favorite pardner. Was it unusual to see a teenaged girl playing at rural Georgia dances in the early '20s?

Yes, I guess so. I know I was the only girl playing - at least, I don't remember seeing any more girls.

About this time two other events occurred which were to point Roba and her father in the direction of the recording studio. One, Rob decided to help out in the political campaign of one Sam Brown, who was running for US Congressman from the 9th District. Gid Tanner played for him too during this campaign. Roba recalls touring quite widely around the district in support of Brown, and feels it was

during such a tour that she was heard by a Mr Polk, who had a number of furniture stores in Atlanta and connections with the then-fledgling station WSB. Polk was impressed with what he heard and asked Roba and her father to play for him on the air. They accepted. As it turned out, it was probably the best thing to come out of Sam Brown's campaign: he lost the election and took it rather hard - he killed himself.

But the second event was under way, and sometime in early 1924 Rob and Roba made their debut over WSB. Polk's furniture store sponsored the program and Mr Polk himself did the announcing. "We got telegrams - lots of them, some from other states." (WSB, the most powerful station in the South, could easily be heard throughout the eastern US in 1924.) Back home in Lawrenceville (a few miles from Dacula) their appearance on radio generated quite a stir. One of the Stanleys recalled:

There was one radio in Lawrenceville. The sheriff had that in the jailhouse. Everybody from miles around here went. The yard was full; they couldn't get in the house. The man would use earphones to get it when it was coming in; and then when he would get it as best as he could get it, he'd switch it on to speakers so folks out in the yard could get it.

Roba and her father went on to make several appearances on WSB, but in the meanwhile Mr Polk (who, incidentally, is not to be confused with Polk Brockman, John Carson's patron) had contacted the General Phonograph Company and arranged for the Stanleys to make records on the Okeh label. Okeh engineers had visited Atlanta in July 1923 to make the first hillbilly record (by John Carson) and had

visited the city again in March 1924; now they were scheduling a third session for August. Roba and her father began rehearsing numbers, and to augment their duo added William Patterson, a Lawrenceville native who played guitar and harmonica on a wire rack. (Patterson is now dead, and apparently was considerably older than Roba when they made their records. His son also played music and for a time entertained professionally at the mountain resort town of Gatlinburg TN.)

Thus in August the three drove to Atlanta and reported to the company's studio on Whitehall Street. Okeh was at this time using some newly designed portable recording equipment, but the process was still basically acoustical.

There was one big old room, high upstairs in this building. We sang into a big horn, and they had this big old piece of wax turning, just like a record, cutting grooves in the wax. I remember that we had to get pretty close to the horn. It was pretty hard work.

The group recorded four numbers, two featuring Rob and two Roba and Bill Patterson. Rob put on his specialty "Nellie Gray" and fiddled and sang a duet with Roba on "Whoa! Mule". Roba and Patterson did "Devilish Mary" and "Mister Chicken", Roba singing and Bill playing harmonica.

Roba remembers getting a lump-sum payment for the sides and recalls that when the records came out they sold very well locally. She feels "Devilish Mary" was perhaps her best-selling record, and although sales figures for early Okehs are missing the relative frequency with which "Devilish Mary" is found by collectors today bears this out.

Mr and Mrs R M Stanley.



Apparently Ralph Peer, Okeh's hillbilly director at that time, was impressed enough to get the group back into the Atlanta studios four months later. Six sides may have been recorded but only three were released: Roba and Bill doing "All Night Long" and "Little Frankie", and the Stanley Trio doing "Railroad Bill".

By early 1925 it seems obvious that Roba, even at the tender age of 15, was on the threshold of a unique career. Her voice was strong and clear and deeper than many of the other women singers, like Connie Sides, who were trying to record during this time. It was ideally suited to the limitations of the acoustic sound of the time, and it had a pronounced North Georgia arch that no city singer could fake. Being solidly rooted in a rich and largely untapped North Georgia vocal tradition (most of the recordings in Atlanta before this had been fiddle music), Roba had access to a great number of local songs.

Further evidence of her increasing popularity came in 1925 when she received a visit from Henry Whitter. Whitter, a Virginia mill-hand who had been active in some of the very first country records (cf Norman Cohen's piece on him in JEMFQ 38), had apparently seen Roba's picture in a studio in Winston-Salem, and had heard her records. He wrote her father asking to come down and play with them on occasion; Rob was always glad to have another guitarist, and agreed. Whitter played with the group on a number of occasions in 1925.

Whitter's motives in doing this are obscure. He was apparently not formally affiliated with a company at this time, and he was certainly not courting Roba (she remembers distinctly that he was married at the time). It might have been that Whitter was toying with the idea of using the Stanleys as the core of a new string band to replace his Virginia Breakdowners that had successfully recorded a year earlier. Or it might have been that Whitter was simply travelling with Peer as a sort of an all-purpose accompanist; he was with Peer when he moved on to Asheville immediately after the August Atlanta session. We must remember that Whitter, who had had over a dozen records already released by Okeh, was a "star" by the standards of the day, and was aggressively pursuing a career in music.

For whatever reasons, he accompanied Roba on her last session, which probably yielded four titles, only two of which, "Old Maid Blues" and "Single Life", were issued. Whitter presumably plays harmonica and guitar on the latter. While Roba remembers playing with Whitter, she does not remember recording with him; the label credits bear his name, though. Roba made more of an impression on Whitter; in later years he used her picture on a promotional flyer listing some of the more noted musicians he had been associated with. (See JEMFQ 38 for a reproduction of this poster.)

A few months after her last session Roba met a young man from Miami and decided to get married. "It was love at first sight. I just quit everything and got married. My parents were a little concerned about how young I was, but then they liked Mr Baldwin a lot." After her marriage Roba moved to Miami.

My husband didn't like for me to play out in public much. There was no way to keep recording - they were up there in Georgia and I was in Miami, and lucky to get home once a year. They kept playing, but when I left it almost broke things up. I carried my guitar with me but I played very, very little, and in just two or three months I wasn't playing at all.

Discography

THE STANLEY TRIO: R M (Rob) Stanley-f/v, Roba Stanley-g/v-1, William Patterson-g
Atlanta GA, August 1924

8696- Nellie Gray OK 40271
8697- Whoa! Mule-1 -

ROBA STANLEY - WILLIAM PATTERSON: Roba Stanley-v/g, William Patterson-h/g

8698-A Devilish Mary OK 40213
8699-A Mister Chicken -

ROBA STANLEY & BILL PATTERSON: as last
Atlanta GA, December 1924

8847- All Night Long OK 40295
8848- Little Frankie OK 40436

ROBA STANLEY, BOB STANLEY, BILL PATTERSON: Roba Stanley-v/g, Rob Stanley-f, William Patterson-g

8852- Railroad Bill OK 40295

NOTE: matrices 8849-51 possibly by these artists also

ROBA STANLEY: Roba Stanley-v/g, Henry Whitter-h/g
Atlanta GA, July 1925

9213-A Old Maid Blues OK 45036
9214-
9215- Single Life OK 40436

NOTE: rev. OK 45036 by Ernest V. Stoneman. Matrices 9212 and 9216-9 are untraced and may include further recordings by this artist.

Roba soon started her family - she was to have three children - and eventually gave her old guitar away to some nephews who showed an interest in music. She kept none of her records, and until Peggy Bulger visited her in Gainesville, late in 1976, she had not heard any of her records in years.

After listening to tapes of her old songs Roba was able to provide me with accurate transcriptions of the lyrics of most of them. A close study of these songs is beyond the scope of this essay, but some of the lyrics are exceedingly interesting and very early examples of important traditional songs. Roba does not recall ever learning songs from printed or phonographic sources; virtually all were picked up orally from sources in northeast Georgia. Like most good folk composers, Roba localised some of her songs; "Railroad Bill", for instance, is full of references to people and places in Gwinnett County. In other cases she combined stanzas from one song into another, as in "Single Life", where she adds to the more basic text an incongruous quatrain from the "Bald Headed End of the Broom" song-family. Roba recalls: "I made up a lot of this, but to tell which one or what ---. I'd take me a piece of paper and write and get things to rhyme. . . . I'd hear a few lines somewhere else and then I'd add to it, and make 'em like that."

As might be expected, few of Roba's songs express a distinctly feminine point of view. "Mister Chicken", "Railroad Bill", "Devilish Mary" and "Whoa! Mule" all have

obviously masculine speakers; "All Night Long" switches point of view halfway through. Only "Frankie and Alvin", "Old Maid Blues" (not printed here, but a version of "I Ain't Got Nobody") and "Single Life" have a clearly defined woman's point of view. Indeed, "Single Life" can be read as a strongly assertive feminist stance even by today's standards. It is perhaps ironic that it was Roba's swansong as a recording artist.



Had she continued in her career as a singer, she might have done much to preserve countless old songs, and to help even more to define the potential for women performers in the music. As it is, she made a small but noticeable contribution to the music, and her career, short though it was, casual though it was, was a symbolic milestone on the road to Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt and Emmylou Harris. □

Whoa Mule

The saddest time I wonder,
My heart is filled with woe,
With all my grief I ponder
What I do and do not know.

Cruel fate is on me bound,
Trouble I seem to be,
There's another feller in this town
just the image of me.

Whoa mule I tell you,
Whoa mule I say,
Keep your seat Miss Liza Jane
and hold on to that sleigh.

Last evening as I had started
a narrow street of town,
A policeman grabbed me by the arm,
and he wanted Mr. Brown.

You've escaped me twice but this time
I'll see you don't flee,
So I was arrested and dragged to jail
for the fellow that looked like me.

Whoa mule I tell you,
Whoa mule I say,
Keep your seat Miss Liza Jane
and hold on to that sleigh.

Last evening as I went sparking
a girl who's very fine,
A lady who had just stepped in
Said, "Brown how's your wife".

In vain I says I'm a single man
Tho married I wish to be,
He called me a swindle and kicked me out
for the fellow that looked like me.

Whoa mule I tell you,
Whoa mule I say,
Keep your seat Miss Liza Jane
and hold on to that sleigh.

Now keep your seat Miss Liza,
Quit acting such a fool,
I ain't got time to kiss you now
I'm bothered with my mule.

Whoa mule I tell you,
Whoa mule I say,
Keep your seat Miss Liza Jane
and hold on to that sleigh.

Devilish Mary

When I was young and in my prime,
Thought I never would marry,
Fell in love with a pretty little girl
And sure 'nuff we got married.

A Rink tome dink tome dearie,
Prettiest girl that ever I saw,
her name was Devilish Mary.

We was both young and foolish,
Got in a powerful hurry,
We both agreed upon one word
And the wedding day was Thursday.

A rink tome dink tome dearie,
Prettiest girl that ever I saw,
her name was Devilish Mary.

We hadn't been married but about three weeks,
She got as mean as the devil,
Every time I'd look cross eyed,
She'd knock me in the head with a shovel.

A rink tome dink tome dearie,
Prettiest girl that ever I saw,
Her name was Devilish Mary.

She washed my clothes in old soap suds
and back was full of stitches,
She let me know right at the start,
She's gonna wear the britches.

A rink tome dink tome dearie,
Prettiest girl that ever I saw,
Her name was Devilish Mary.

We hadn't been married but about six months,
She decided we better be parted,
She up with her little duds
and down the road she started.

A rink tome dink tome dearie
Prettiest girl that ever I saw
Her name was Devilish Mary.

If ever I marry the second time,
Won't be for the love nor riches.
It'll be a little girl about two feet high,
So she can't wear my britches.

A rink tome dink tome dearie,
Prettiest girl that ever I saw
Her name was Devilish Mary.

Mr. Chicken

Says I went down to my chicken neighborhood,
Them chickens all know what I mean,
The old hens commence dodging 'round,
and the pullets hadn't ever been seen.

The old rooster said to the fryers,
We just as well to fly,
There's chicken thieves in our town,
and I know we can't roost too high.

Mr. Chicken, Mr. Chicken,
Them two brown eyes I see,
Mr. Chicken, Mr. Chicken,
Won't you come down outa that tree.

Mr. Chicken, Mr. Chicken,
Them two brown eyes I see,
Ten Thousand 'ward for the chicken,
That roost too high for me.

That old rooster called me a nigger,
That's sumpen don' lou fowl to do,
He had an ol' brother,
That called me Shanghai-blue,

I knocked that scoundrel beast over,
And I didn' find him so fat,
Carried him right down to the railroad track
and layed him right flat of his back.

Mr. Chicken, Mr. Chicken,
Them two brown eyes I see,
Mr. Chicken, Mr. Chicken,
Won't you come down outa that tree.

Mr. Chicken, Mr. Chicken,
Them two brown eyes I see,
Ten Thousand Dollar 'ward for the chicken,
That roost too high for me.

Says I went down to my honey's house
to get some chicken stew,
She says I'm glad you mentioned it,
'cause I believe I want some too.

She reached up behind that door
and handed down a croker sack,
says leave here nigger don' come back here,
till you bring some chickens back.

Mr. Chicken, Mr. Chicken,
Them two brown eyes I see,
Mr. Chicken, Mr. Chicken,
Won't you come down outa that tree.

Mr. Chicken, Mr. Chicken,
Them two brown eyes I see,
Twn Thousand Dollar 'ward for the chicken,
That roost too high for me.

Frankie and Alvin

Frankie woke up one morning,
She heard old Rover bark,
I bet you half a hundred,
Poor Alvin in the dark.

He's my man, but he's done me wrong.

Frankie went to the barroom,
applied for a glass of beer.
Says Mr. Bartender,
Has Alvin been in here,

He's my man, but he's done me wrong.

My beloved Frankie,
I won't tell you no lie,
He hasn't been left an hour ago,
With a gal named Alice Fry.

He's your man, but he's done you wrong.

Frankie went to the barroom,
With a forty-one in hand,
Stand back my loving people,
I'm looking for my man.

He's my man, but he's done me wrong.

Alvin saw her coming,
He turned around and run,
She ran her hand in her pocket,
Pulled out her forty-one.

You're my man, but you're bound to die.

She shot the poor boy once,
she shot the poor boy twice,
The next time she shot him,
She took that poor boy's life.

Your're my man, but you're bound to die.

She shoot him in the body,
She shoot him in the breast,
The next time she shot him,
She killed that poor boy dead.

He's my man, but he's bound to die.

Turn me over mother,
Turn me over slow,
got shot in the breast with a forty one,
And the bullets pain me so.

I'm your son, the only one.

A rubber tire buggy,
A double seated hack,
Carried poor little Alvin to the graveyard,
And brought little Frankie back.

He's my man, but he's dead and gone.

And when they tried little Frankie,
They placed her on the stand,
Says Frankie you're a free woman,
Go kill you another man.

And there she stands, a raising sand.

Railroad Bill

Railroad Bill, ought to be killed,
Got my home in Lawrenceville,
Oh, Drive on you Railroad Bill.

Railroad Bill, got so mean,
walked all the way from New Orleans,
Oh, Drive on you Railroad Bill.

Railroad Bill, got so fine,
Shot nine holes through a silver dime,
Oh, drive on you Railroad Bill.

Drink up your whiskey, crossed to the bar,
Pistol a shinning like a morning star,
Oh, Drive on you Railroad Bill.

Two dice in Cuba, three craps in Spain,
Spend all my money for gasoline,
Oh, Drive on you Railroad Bill.

Ought to been there when I got paid off.
Had more money than a Walking Boss,
On, Drive on you Railroad Bill.

Went to Dacula to get me some Meat,
Stanley Brothers sell 'em cheap,
On, drive on you Railroad Bill.

Went to Dacula to get me some flour,
Pool and Pounds they sell 'em higher,
On, Drive on you Railroad Bill.

Going to Atlanta, I'm on the nine,
Call up my honey a way down the line,
Oh, drive on you Railroad Bill.

Going to Atlanta, I'm going on the train,
Talk to my honey until she changes her name,
On, Drive on you Railroad Bill.

Went down on the creek to take off a run,
First man I seen was Henry McClung,
On, Drive on you Railroad Bill.

Went down on the creek to stay out of trouble,
First man I seen was John D. Tuggle,
Oh, Drive on you Railroad Bill.

Went up on the mountain to get me a load,
Met Sheriff Garner in the middle of the road,
Or, ride, ride, ride.

--as sung by Roba Stanley, Okeh 40295

In Re; #7
There was a Stanley Bros.
store in Dacula at this time
8

Poole and Pounds Store in
Dacula at this time
#11 Henry McClung was
a constable in Dacula at
this time.

#12 John D. Tuggle was
deputy in Dacula at this
time

#13 Sheriff Garner was sheriff
in Lawrenceville at time

I don't know if this might
be of interest in the
project you are doing

Single Life

Do not care for pretty little things
Always felt like dancing
Streets all lined with one dollar bills
Girls all sweet and dainty.

Single life is a happy life,
Single life is lovely,
I am single and no man's wife
And no man shall control me.

Some will come on Saturday night,
Some will come on Sunday,
And if you give them half a chance
They will stay till Monday.

Single life is a happy life,
Single life is lovely,
I am single and no man's wife
And no man shall control me.

Cupid came last Saturday night,
took him in my parlor,
Every time he'd hug my neck,
He'd say now don't you hollar.

Single life is a happy life,
Single life is lovely,
I am single and no man's wife
And no man shall control me.

Boy fall in love with a pretty little girl,
He'll talk as gentle as a dove,
He'll call her his honey and spend
all his money
And show'er he's solid on his love.

Single life is a happy life,
Single life is lovely,
I am single and no man's wife
And no man shall control me.

Would not marry a red-headed boy,
Would not marry for money,
All I want is a brown-eyed boy
to kiss and call me honey.

Single life is a happy life,
Single life is lovely,
I am single and no man's wife
And no man shall control me

Boys keep away from the gals I say,
And give 'em plenty of room,
For when you're wed they'll bang you
till you're dead
With the ball headed end of the broom.

Single life is a happy life,
Single life is lovely,
I am single and no man's wife
And no man shall control me.

Roba Stanley Baldwin

Q·R·S

Tony Russell

● Less is known about QRS than about most of the "Golden Age" record-companies, so it's perhaps fortunate that their involvement with Southern music was brief. About 1928/9 they operated an R.7000 series of race records, which ran to 90-odd issues, mostly original recordings in a 3-digit master series that probably began at 100, but including some material apparently leased from Gennett. At approximately the same time the company created a numerical series for hillbilly records, the R.9000s. Alongside these notes will be found a partial listing of this catalogue.

The earliest known 9000s are leased items from the Plaza organisation, which, like QRS, was based in New York. The blanks in this early part of the listing may reasonably be assumed to be further items by the Pickard Family and the Hobbs Brothers, such as appeared about this time on Paramount (as did the items listed here). The first known QRS-originated master (i.e. the first that bears only a QRS matrix and was therefore presumably recorded in the company's Long Island studios) is 391 by Hoke Rice's Southern Stringband, which seems to have initiated a block of mainly hillbilly masters by an intriguing group of artists.

As nearly as we can date them, these recordings seem to belong to March/April 1929. About this time a number of Georgia musicians appeared at Gennett's Richmond IN studios, among them Bill Shores' Southern Trio, Hoke Rice, the Brock Sisters and others. Rice seems to have been a central figure in QRS's hillbilly sessions of this period, and he may have been led to the company through his dealings with Gennett (or, of course, vice versa). A native of Gainesville GA, Rice was a brilliant guitarist, and had already appeared on record with Lowe Stokes' North Georgians on Columbia and other North Georgia bands. On his Gennett sides he had occasionally joined the ranks of the Jimmie Rodgers imitators, and this trend is also observed on his QRS records.

The circle of surnames around Hoke Rice in the adjacent listing includes few artists we can certainly identify. The Southern String Band on 9010 sounds much the same as the Davis-Rice-Thomas trio of 9019 - but also, confusingly enough, as the Chumber-Coker-Rice trio of 9017. Davis may be Claude Davis, who recorded with Stokes, Bert Layne and other musicians with whom Rice was certainly familiar. If so, he is presumably the guitarist on the Davis & Nelson recordings; but if Rice plays guitar on the trio sides above-mentioned, one must suppose Davis to have been also capable on fiddle or mandolin. This theory would perhaps be supported by 9013, credited to a Davis Trio and featuring fiddle lead over mandolin and a very Rice-like guitar. However, the evidence of Davis's other recordings (which are quite numerous) suggests that he too was an adept guitar-picker in a style not unlike Rice's, so the true formations of these QRS groups remain mysterious.

It was probably at these sessions that Rice recorded a couple of instrumental duets with pianist Catherine Boswell, "New Sweet Petunia"/"I Just Can't Wait", issued in the race series (R.7069). Boswell is believed also to ▶



- 9001
- 9002 PICKARD FAMILY
8400 (504) Down In Arkansas
8401 () Get Away From That Window
= Pm 3214, Bw 8149 (and other issues)
- 9003 HOBBS BROTHERS (Elmer & Jud)
8298 (506) Turkey In The Straw
8299 (507) Hell Among The Yearlings
= Pm 3224, Bw 8165 (and many other issues)
- 9004
- 9005
- 9006 PICKARD FAMILY
8515 (505) The Little Red Caboose Behind The Train
8554 (514) Thompson's Old Grey Mule
= Pm 3231, Bw 8179 (etc)
- 9007 FRANK LUTHER
8567 Oklahoma Blues
8568 My Little Old Home Down In New Orleans
= Bw 8103 (etc)
- 9008
- 9009 ROBISON & LUTHER
8600 (520) Open Up Dem Pearly Gates
8601 (521) Goin' Back To Texas
= (8600) Pm 3225, Bw 8166 (etc)
- 9010 HOKE RICE & HIS SOUTHERN STRING BAND (f/m/g)
391 Chinese Breakdown
392 Macon, Georgia Breakdown
= Pm 3229, 3308, Bw 8178
- 9011 DAVIS & NELSON (2v/m/g)
394 Charming Betsy
395 When The Flowers Bloom In The Spring
= Pm 3227, Bw 8177
- 9012 HOKE RICE (v/g)
393 Waiting For A Train
401 Lullaby Yodel

9013 DAVIS TRIO (f/m/g)
 402-A The Only Way (Waltz)
 403-A Sleepy Hollow (Waltz)
 = Pm 3238, Bw 8191

9014 DAVIS & NELSON (2v/g)
 410 I Don't Want Your Greenback Dollar
 411 Meet Me Tonight In Dreamland
 = Pm 3188, Bw 8243

9015 HOKE RICE (v/g)
 417-A Ain't That Kind Of A Cat Yodel
 418-A Down In A Southern Town
 = Pm 3239, Bw 8192

9016 CHUMBLER'S BREAKDOWN GANG
 2916-1 May I Sleep In Your Barn Tonight Mister
 2915-1 Tennessee Blues
 = Pm 3200, Bw 8146 (actually THE HIGHLANDERS)

9017 CHUMBER, COKER & RICE (f/m/g)
 397-B Alabama Square Dance Part 1
 398 Alabama Square Dance Part 2
 = Bw 8234

9018 DAVIS & NELSON (2v/f or m/g)
 399 Every Little Bit Added To What You Got
 400 I Don't Bother Work
 = Pm 3187, Bw 8195

9019 DAVIS, RICE & THOMAS (f/m/g/v*)
 404 Circus Day Rag
 405-A Brown Mule Slide*
 = Pm 3309

9020

9021 NELSON & NELSON (2v/f/g)
 415 Oh Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight
 416-A Work For The Night Is Coming
 = Pm 3219 (415-A) or 3220 (416-A), Bw 8160

9022 HOKE RICE (v/g)
 412 Way Down South By The Sea
 413 I'm Lonely And Blue
 = Pm 3212, Bw 8164

9023 DAVIS & NELSON/*NELSON & NELSON (2v/f or m*/g)
 414-A I Shall Not Be Moved
 421-A Death Is No More Than A Dream*
 = Pm 3186, Bw 8189

9024

9025 PECK'S MALE QUARTETTE (4v/p)
 There's Sunshine In My Soul Today
 Everybody Will Be Happy Over There

9026 KATHERINE BAXTER & HARRY NELSON (2v/p)
 452 I Need Thee Every Hour
 453 God Will Take Care Of You

9027 PECK'S MALE QUARTETTE (4v/p)
 Because I Love Him
 Happy All The Time

9028 PECK'S MALE QUARTETTE (4v/p)
 435-A Do Your Best And Wear A Smile
 436 Eternity
 = Pm 3189, Bw 8244

9029 PECK'S MALE QUARTETTE (4v/p)
 442 Sing Of His Word
 448-A The Home Over There
 = Pm 3207

9030 PECK'S MALE QUARTETTE (4v/p)
 449-A There Is Power In The Blood
 450-A Since Jesus Came Into My Heart
 = Pm 3307

►be the "Catherine" (sans surname) who recorded "Do Something"/"I'm The Last of the Red Hot Mamas" (v/p) on R.7074. One might propose that she is also the Katherine Baxter of 9026 and 9035 (note that all of these items are piano-accompanied). What certainly links her with another QRS group of this period is a note in Art Satherley's ARC files (held in the CMF) that one C. Boswell was the pianist on ARC's September 1930 session by Peck's Male Quartette. It would follow that she plays the same role on the quartet's QRS sides. Other PMQ recordings that probably belong to these sessions and may fill some of the blanks herein are "When Jesus Came"/"Working For the King of Heaven" (Pm 3191), "Pressing Along"/"A Wonderful Time" (Pm 3193, 3263) and "Way to Glory Land"/"Cheer Along the Way" (Bw 8258).

The lover of hypotheses might like to consider the notion that Peck's Male Quartette hides some of the Rice-Davis-Nelson-Thomas circle; and the wilder possibility that the group's name was a humorous sanctification of "Peck's Bad Boys". . . .

It would seem probable that all these recordings were made at one or two sessions, and furthermore that QRS had a Georgia contact who rounded up this group of performers; for the black artists who came to QRS's studios about this time were from similar areas: Curley Weaver, Eddie Mapp (both Atlanta residents at this time). It has been reported that Art Satherley was scouting for QRS at one stage in its career - which would neatly account for the reappearance, soon afterwards, on ARC (to which Satherley moved) of QRS-tried musicians like Weaver and, as noted above, Peck's Male Quartette.

QRS probably terminated both race and hillbilly series at the same time, as the Depression struck the record business. (The company still exists, as a manufacturer of piano rolls, which is how it started out in the late 'teens.) It may be assumed from the rarity of the records that neither series was commercially very successful; but even the pop output on QRS's Q-1000 series is infrequently seen nowadays (least of all the Gene Autry sides which appeared therein!) and it may be that the company's whole catalogue suffered from the independent's bugbear of poor distribution. It has been jocularly suggested that the initials stand for "Quite Rarely Seen" - a joke with some point, since to this day no one does know the meaning - if any - of those letters. □

●ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: CMF, David L Crisp, JEMF, Frank Mare, E S Turner, Max Vreede, Bert Whyatt. See also "QRS: Past and Present", Storyville 7 (October/November 1966) 19-27.

9031

9032

9033

9034

9035 KATHERINE BAXTER & HARRY NELSON (2v/p)
 444-A Dwelling In The Beulah Land
 445-A Let The Lower Lights Be Burning

9036 BOOZIN' BATCHELORS
 Too Much Party Part 1
 Too Much Party Part 2

9037 HOKE RICE (v/g)
 478 The Dirty Hangout Where I Stayed Part 1
 481 The Dirty Hangout Where I Stayed Part 2

Reviews

GRAYSON & WHITTER
GOING DOWN LEE HIGHWAY
Davis Unlimited DU33033

Train No 45/On the Banks of Old Tennessee/Sweet Rosie O'Grady/I Have Lost You Darling, True Love/Nobody's Darling/Going Down the Lee Highway/ Handsome Molly/Shout Lula/The Red and Green Signal Lights/Cluck Old Hen/Tom Dooley/Sally Gooden/My Mind Is to Marry/Old Jimmy Sutton

The noble singing of G B Grayson distinguishes several songs into which other old time singers have breathed little life, often lending them an air of melancholy deeper than their words can convey. And it was as a singer that his records, of which he made 30-odd in scarcely more than two years, predominantly displayed him. He made a mere half-dozen fiddle-tunes, mostly with enough singing to bring them close to the category of songs. They were good, sturdy, virile, but by the side of his songs with fiddle accompaniment they were inconsiderable, almost superfluous.

His finest pieces were so good that he recorded them twice. On the County LP is found the Victor version of "Handsome Molly", and Old Timey X-100 has that of "Train 45". This new LP provides the slightly earlier Gennett readings, arguably superior except in terms of recording quality. There was also a Gennett version of "Red and Green Signal Lights" before the Victor one, but it is the latter, I believe, that DU have used, as on the RCA album 'The Railroad in Folksong!' (though this last is a better transfer and fractionally slower).

There are nine Gennett-derived items here, one of them, "My Mind Is to Marry", from an unissued test. The remaining five Victors were not readily available until now (unless you count "Red and Green"), and their inclusion here leaves just one Victor side to be reissued, "Barnyard Serenade", a passable "Old Hen Cackle". There is more still on Gennett, but not much, and none of it superlative.

Among the particular virtues of the new record are the first "Tom Dooley", the sombre "Nobody's Darling" ("On Earth", that is, not "But Mine"), and "Lee Highway", which shows some finely controlled fiddling. The breakdowns give the record a breadth and representativeness that the County LP has

not quite got, but in fairness it should be pointed out that the County is acoustically superior, inasmuch as Victors are usually better pressings than Gennetts. Some of the DU cuts are rather noisy, probably unavoidably. (Note also that the County LP has lately had a facelift: new jacket design, photographs, decent notes. The DU album has adequate notes, but its jacket design is wretched.)

This is all sterling music and otm lovers will not wish to be without it. The cautious may need to be assured that it is not only as good as the LP they probably already have, but interestingly different.

DESMOND BELL

THE CALLAHAN BROTHERS
Old Homestead OHM90031

Gonna Quit My Rowdy Ways/St Louis Blues/Corn Licker Rag/She's Killing Me/On the Banks of the Ohio/Little Poplar Log House on the Hill/Take the News to Mother/Rounders Luck/Maple on the Hill/Way Out There/The Dying Girl's Farewell/I Want to Be Where You Are/She's My Curly Headed Baby/She Came Rollin' Down the Mountain/I Got Her Boozy/John Henry

Following in the steps of such salty predecessors as the Allen Brothers or Fleming & Townsend, the Callahan Brothers had some success in the middle '30s with numbers like "She's Killing Me" and "Gonna Quit My Rowdy Ways", though this part of their repertoire was balanced by numerous sentimental songs like those the other brother acts were doing: "Banks of the Ohio", "Poplar Log House", "Curly Headed Baby". These they sang in close harmony, often with duet yodelling, accompanied by their

own guitars, on which they were skilled enough to produce some striking raggy breaks now and then. Old Homestead have selected, from nearly 100, a fair 16 tracks, all but one from ARC (and two of those never issued hitherto), spanning 1934-41.

It is pleasant enough stuff, but doesn't stir one much until "Way Out There", which, like the four succeeding cuts, has the sprightly mandolin of Roy "Shorty" Hobbs. Even when denied solo space, Hobbs brightens the corner where he is, especially in "Rollin' Down the Mountain", which is also a remarkable slice of hillbilly salacity. Hence, one supposes, its unissued-on-78 state, shared by "I Got Her Boozy", which is naughty after a fashion, but rather tender too. (It suffers from some very peculiar acoustic faults as well; I'm not sure if they are of 1939 or recent vintage. The transfers are all noisy.)

The close-harmony-with-guitars format could be constricting. The Carlisles escaped it by being superior guitarists, the Delmores by being good songwriters, but the Callahans were a little shackled, possessing neither a stock of original songs nor the inventiveness, vocal or instrumental, that would variegate a fairly prolific recording career. A faint air of the missed opportunity, the not-quite-inspired, hangs over many of their recordings, to be dispelled usually only when a more vivacious player joins in, like Hobbs, or Paul Buskirk, whose mandolin-playing decorates the final track.

TR

Homer/Bill and Walter/Joe Callahan.





CLAYTON McMICHEN
THE TRADITIONAL YEARS
Davis Unlimited DU33032

McMichen's Reel/Fiddlin' Medley/Sweet Bunch of Daisies/McMichen's Breakdown/My Carolina Home/Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss/Devil's Dream-Rickett's Hornpipe-Fisher's Hornpipe/Hog Trough Reel/Honolulu Moon/Wild Cat Rag/Georgia Wildcat Breakdown/Yum Yum Blues/Soldier's Joy-Arkansas Traveler-Mississippi Sawyer/Fire on the Mountain -Ida Red-Sally Gooden (45 $\frac{3}{4}$ m)

An overdue and quite well selected record, this portrays many of the musical circumstances in which Mac found himself in the '20s and '30s. By the '30s, of course, he was firmly set in his country-swing mould, which DU plan to document in a second album. So the '30s tracks here are either from Mac's last days in the old time ranks or from the 1939 session at which he abruptly returned to the warhorses of his younger days and rode them through some new and chancy country. (These are exemplified here by the three three-tune medleys.)

It's highly instructive, as well as enjoyable, to trace the growth from old time contest fiddler, as in the unaccompanied "Fiddlin' Medley", to assured champion a decade later; there is even a recurring tune ("Soldier's Joy") that allows you to make a direct comparison of '27 and '39. The backbone of the record is fiddle showpieces from Columbia - duets with Puckett, a couple with the Skillet-Lickers, a few with the 1931/2 Georgia Wildcats, and three McMichen's Melody Men sides. Since the Skillet-Licker connection has been demonstrated plentifully on the several S-L reissues, here the emphasis is on the move towards the mid-'30s swing sound, by way of such preceding

hot combinations as the '31 Wildcats of "Wild Cat Rag" and "Yum Yum Blues", with the young Slim Bryant tearing off some astute guitar solos.

Largely very well remastered, this LP also carries very good notes, by Charles Wolfe. Highly recommended. (NB: a further title must be added to the track-listing above, which DU omit in theirs: "Cumberland Valley Waltz", after "Fly Around...") TR

LAKE HOWARD
County 409

Little Annie/It's None of Your Business/New Chattanooga Mama/Grey Eagle/Lover's Farewell/Walking in the Light/I've Lost My Love/Forsaken Love/Streamline Mama/Love Me Darling, Love Me/Chewing Gum/Duplin County Blues/Within My Father's House

This came as a great surprise. The County 400 series is reserved for the somewhat less commercial names from the past, but still. . . . Howard was a North Carolina singer and guitar-player who recorded in 1934-35 as a solo, in duets with Bill Wakefield (such as "Walking in the Light"), and with the fine fiddler Roland Cauley, of the Cauley Family, with whom Howard shared one of his sessions. He was then in his early 20s, and certainly accomplished beyond the average.

"Little Annie" is a well chosen starter. Neither a beautiful nor a demonstrative singer, Howard injects a thoroughly convincing sadness into the piece which many better-equipped singers would be unable to discover. Other tracks of similar emotional weight are not always as successful; Howard tended to hurry songs along in step with his busy guitar-playing. This briskness, however, suits well the humorous or sly pieces, like "None of Your Business", the Allen Brothers-derived "New Chattanooga Mama" and the blue yodel "Streamline Mama".

The two fiddle-guitar duets are "Grey Eagle" and "Duplin County Blues" - the latter a unit of the "I Ain't Got Nobody"/"Goin' Crazy" family, but possessed of only the first strain.

Produced by Frank Mare, annotated by Howard's daughter Ruth Howard Hughes, and (for the most part) quite satisfactorily transferred from the scarce originals, this is a good sort of record - optional to all but the comprehensive collectors, I think, but worth the doing. TR

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THE FARR BROTHERS
SOUTH IN MY SOUL
Cattle LP1

Cow Across the Road/South in My Soul/Blues in E/Jack of Diamonds/Gambler's Blues/Boggy Road to Texas/Over the Santa Fe Trail/Long, Long Ago/"A" Rag/Fire Alarm Blues/Tom and Jerry/Kelly Waltz/Spanish Cavalier/Indian Scout/Riddle Rhythm/Churmin' Butter/The Outlaw/Carlen Stomp/Cagen Stomp/Darkness on the Delta/Limehouse Blues

The instrumental underpinning of the Sons of the Pioneers, for most of their prewar period, was Hugh and Karl Farr on fiddle and guitar. At times during their broadcasts space would be found for an instrumental featuring them: a fiddle breakdown, or a two-guitar workout by Karl and whoever was playing second guitar with the group at the time. On a few occasions these instrumentals were committed to record ("South in My Soul" was on Victor, "Boggy Road" and "Cajun Stomp" on Decca), but the storehouse of them is the mass of radio transcriptions the SotP made throughout the '30s and '40s. From 1934/5 Standards and 1940 Orthacoustics comes this collection, which apart from three vocal items involving the group's full lineup is all fiddle-guitar or two-guitar stuff. (Excellent recorded for the time, too.)

Both men were technically extraordinary. Hugh's fiddling anticipated the Texas contest style of today, but had a vitality many current fiddlers lack, as well as a jazz sensibility beyond all but the finest of Western Swing fiddle-players. There are times when I find their facility almost tiresome, a mere display, but many of the pieces are remarkable and exciting. In their line, they have probably never been surpassed.

The LP is a German production, available from Reimar Binge, Muehlenstrasse 12, D-4006 Erkrath 1, West Germany. TR

THE BAILES BROTHERS
EARLY RADIO VOLUME II
Old Homestead OHCS104

Thank God For a Mother Like Mine/Come to the Saviour/The Letter I Never Mailed/Has the Devil Got a Mortgage on You/The Gloryland Way/My Heart Echoes/John Henry/I Saw the Light/Pretty Flowers/You Can't Go Half-Way and Get In/Sinner Kneel Down and Pray/Tramp on the Street/Will the Angels Have a Sweetheart? (37m)

Like OHCS103 (Volume I) this offers the Johnnie and Homer version of the

Bailes Brothers, from KWKH transcriptions made about 1948/9. Shot Jackson on steel, Ernest Jackson on mandolin support the brothers' guitar (Johnnie) and fiddle (Homer) in a programme of chiefly sacred and heart songs.

A programme, in fact, is not quite what this is - in distinction to the earlier reissue. Whereas 103 had whole shows, with all the spoken bits and theme-song repeats, this LP has just a series of songs with short fragments of introduction or signing-off attached. The difference, then, is very much the difference between County's two Charlie Monroe LPs from transcriptions. For this reason the second record is maybe better for beginners, though some of the songs on the first are stronger. Until the reissue of the brothers' commercial recordings, however, either of the OH records is a good introduction to the fervent oldfashioned style which most of the Bailes combinations shared. TR

MADDOX BROTHERS AND ROSE 1946-1951

VOLUME 1

Arhoolie 5016

Midnight Train/Move It On Over/Careless Driver/Whoa Sailor/Milk Cow Blues/Mean and Wicked Boogie/Brown Eyes/Honky Tonkin'/New Mule Skinner Blues/Time Nor Tide/Philadelphia Lawyer/George's Playhouse Boogie/Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain/Sally Let Your Bangs Hang Down/I've Stopped My Dreamin'/ About You/Gonna Lay My Burden Down/Water Baby Boogie

VOLUME 2

Arhoolie 5017

Oklahoma Sweetheart Sally Ann/I'm Sending Daffydills/Mule Train/It's Only Human Nature/Step It Up and Go/Dark as the Dungeon/(Pay Me) Alimony/Don't Bother to Cry/I Want to Live and Love/Shimmy Shakin' Daddy/I Wish I Was a Single Girl/South/Eight Thirty Blues/Your Love Light Never Shone/Texas Guitar Stomp/Detour No. 2/Hang-over Blues/I'd Rather Have Jesus/I Still Write Your Name in the Sand

Until these records, I'd never paid much mind to the Maddox Brothers & Rose. Evidently the 78s I happened to know were thoroughly unrepresentative, for these are LPs of almost continuous charm and spirit, and therefore a revelation of what was, rightly, billed "The Most Colorful Hillbilly Band in America". It is fantastically heterogeneous music - some mainstream country songs, some galvanised old time music, a little West-Coast swing and more than a smattering of proto-rock 'n' roll. What unifies it all is the comic upheaval going on through

all but the most serious numbers: Rose cackling with mad laughter, various brothers throwing Willish asides into every available gap, and hot solos by anyone with a mind for one.

There were certainly enough musicians to give variety. The brothers included Cliff (mandolin), Henry (lead guitar or mandolin), Don (fiddle), Cal (rhythm guitar and harmonica) and Fred (bass and some lead vocals). They were complemented by Bud Duncan on steel and by such electric lead guitarists as (successively) Jimmy Winkle, Roy Nichols and Gene Breeden. The takeoff instrumental numbers, for example the boogie titles on 5016 and "Texas Guitar Stomp" on 5017, have a rough-and-ready vigour which the large WS bands of the region and time had put behind them.

Though Rose was the vocal focus of the band - and a startling one at that with her extraordinarily flexible voice - there was, on certain songs, attractive harmony singing. The sacred selections are especially fine in this regard, particularly "I'd Rather Have Jesus".

In his informative notes Keith Olesen remarks on the band's "extremist attitude toward showmanship", which may for some listeners be rather too rich. Few numbers are not decorated with one or another kind of the foolishness described above (usually several kinds), and the serious-minded person may find it all too flippancy. Indeed Columbia, with whom the family recorded for some years from 1951, objected to their "unrefined" approach. Readers with no taste for the unrefined will have to stay away from these records, but heartier souls can enjoy a feast of comedy, high jinks and craziness - and some excellent country songs - on two of the best records of '40s music to have appeared in a long time. TR

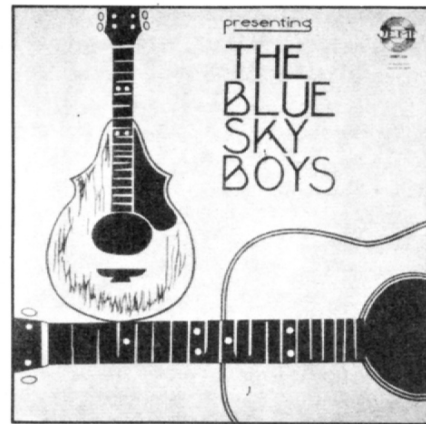
THE BLUE SKY BOYS

PRESENTING THE BLUE SKY BOYS

JEMF 104

Corrina, Corrina/Wild and Reckless Hobo/Midnight Special/Who's Gonna Shoe Your Pretty Little Feet/Poor Boy/Oh, Those Tombs/I Don't Want Your Greenback Dollar/Jack o' Diamonds/The Unquiet Grave/Cotton Mill Colic/Oh, Marry in Time/Will the Circle Be Unbroken (42m)

Five years ago it was virtually impossible to obtain a Blue Sky Boys record outside the collectors' market. Now one can browse amongst "official" reissues (the Bluebird and Camden doubles and the Japanese Victor LP),



the three Pine Mountains, ex-Starday, the new and old sets from Rounder, the recent County LP, an even more recent Provincia collection (reissue: mainly '40s Victors) . . . and this latest set, which is a straightforward reissue of the long-deleted Capitol album (ST2483).

This range of recordings affords a fair view of the Bolicks' repertoire at different stages in their professional career, but, as David Whisnant observes in a thoughtful essay in the JEMF LP's booklet, neither repertoire nor career have been correctly perceived. The anti-commercialism stand which has been represented as the reason for the brothers' break with the music business is argued to be a misconception; they were both aware of, and to some extent prepared to accede to, commercial demands during much of their career. (They also thought the 1963 Starday LP with Nashville accompanists to be one of their best, though folkloristic reviews were dismissive.) Even the '60s "comeback" brought pressures, albeit new ones: the Capitol/JEMF LP is thoroughly traditional, heavy on the Child/Laws material, more than the Bolicks' records or shows had perhaps ever been. About the only fault I can find with the extensive and useful booklet is its not having gone into the background of the Capitol LP more fully, or reprinted the original notes by Ed Kahn.

The record is a satisfactory example of the Blue Sky Boys at their most traditional and in good singing and playing form. Its contents are unique to it. So far as accompanying documentation is concerned, it is clearly the best equipped Blue Sky Boys LP on the market, though also the most drably presented. The reader who seeks more definite recommendations in the reviews he consults must be content with what is offered above. The present record is not the first BSB set I would suggest to the beginner, but it would be suitable for anyone particularly interested in their traditional background. TR

FRAZIER MOSS
ALL FIDDLER!
Davis Unlimited DU33023

Paddy on the Turnpike/Over the Waves
Waltz/I'm Leaving with a Smile/
Washington and Lee Swing/Festival
Waltz/Champagne Polka/Grey Eagle/
Roxanna Waltz/Rubber Dolly/Dark
Hollow/Kiss Me Waltz/St Anne's Reel

WALLY BRYSON (30½m)
JUST JAMMIN'
Davis Unlimited DU33026

Ragtime Annie/Roxanna Waltz/Champagne
Polka/Cherokee Shuffle/Blue Sky Waltz/
Gray Eagle/Cincinnati Rag/Last Chance
Waltz/Foolin' Around/Billy in the
Lowground/Sally Johnson/Bill Cheatum/
Whistler's Waltz (30½m)

ROY CRAWFORD
ALABAMA FIDDLING: ROY CRAWFORD STYLE
Davis Unlimited DU33027

Blackberry Blossom/Beautiful Dreamer
Waltz/Jack of Diamonds/Holt's Horn-
pipe/When You Hear the First Whippoor-
will Call/Coon on the Rail/Maiden's
Prayer/Lee Hiway Blues/Cincinnati
Rag/Silver Bells/Rutland's Reel (25½m)

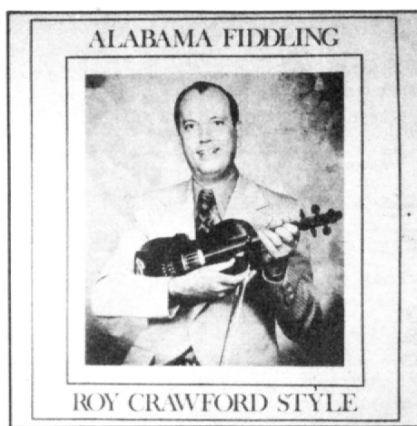
ERNIE HODGES
NORTH CAROLINA FIDDLING
Davis Unlimited DU33031

Deer Walk/Heel and Toe Polka/Cincinnati
Hornpipe/Speed the Plow/D.C. Reel/
Rickett's Hornpipe/Chicken Reel/
Devil's Dream/Garfield Funeral March/
Wake Up Susan/Hanna's Hornpipe/Mocking
Bird/Done Gone (25½m)

It is a commonplace in reviews of this kind of record that the critic observe "of course, this was not made for the average reader" or words to that effect. Fiddle records on regional labels, the theory goes, are somehow exempt from "standard" critical approaches. They are so plainly for their local audience that outsiders cannot get any sort of adjudicative grip upon them.

Well, this is hokey. If the music is any good at all, it can certainly weather the storm in some critic's teacup a few thousand miles away, and it is merely condescending to imply that the locals for whom the record is made are too narrow-minded to view it dispassionately.

Naturally, one needs have heard a bit of contest fiddling to understand the ideals which Moss, Crawford and the rest may be supposed to have in mind. It is today a discrete discipline (the word is not too strong) and some passing recognition must be paid to the high technical standards that the musicians set themselves. That



said, it is legitimate to maintain that technique is no substitute for spirit or individuality. Frazier Moss has a decent technique - nothing remarkable, but sufficient for his purposes - and a good spirit, a combination which makes his record pleasant, though perhaps not so much so as to outweigh the dullness of the selection. Wally Bryson casts a few unusual tunes before his listeners, but balancing them are a quota of predictables, several of which Moss anticipated on his record. That aside, I thought it a rather colourless set, competent and anonymous, or at any rate studio-benumbed.

Roy Crawford has come somewhat more recently to prominence on the Tennessee Valley fiddle circuit. This is, so far as I know, his first record, and it would not seem to do him justice. No call for another "Maiden's Prayer", nor for some of the other jaded choices. None, that is, if the pieces are played merely adequately-to-well. Good enough for a contest, but not for one's first record. The unexpected choice of the air "When You Hear the First Whippoorwill Call" is downgraded by studio artifice - echo effects and double tracking - which are just vulgar.

These three are very typical Davis Unlimited records. The fiddlers are local contest favourites, the backup bands regularly composed of two guitars, banjo and bass, the repertoire such as would come out at contests. (One may add that the notes vary from the quite informative to mere flimflam.) The fourth album I've chosen is in sharp contrast and may well represent another side of the company altogether.

Ernie Hodges is not a contest fiddler, his only accompanist is his wife on guitar or piano, and his repertoire is quite unusual - *en masse*, at least, and on one record as it is here. The flavour of the album is distinctly unlike that of most Southeastern records. Hodges has the trained style and the bookish, old-world repertoire of

another time and place. There are no displays of speed - everything is taken at a measured, even stately tempo, with attention clearly being given to the getting of clean notes and fine tone. The consequence is an almost Scottish respectability.

The notes to Hodges' record were done by Charles Wolfe (who has written on the fiddler more lengthily in *The Devil's Box*) and I would guess that issuing it at all was something that Wolfe may have had to talk DU into, a little. This company seems to walk a rather risky line amongst records of genuine worth or interest and those that, whatever their virtues, appear to be taken on simply as custom-jobs. Several of their fiddle records are in the second category, and more than once DU have put their name on an LP that did little for their reputation. Without further particularising, I would at least say that collectors might look first, among the recent releases, at the reissues DU have put out (reviewed elsewhere in this OTM). There is nothing of comparable merit in the albums discussed here.

HENRY TROWTE

OLA BELLE REED
MY EPITAPH
Folkways FA2493

High on the Mountain/I've Endured/Sing Me a Song/My Epitaph/Springtime of My Life/Fortunes/+ interviews

Originally a native of the Blue Ridge, now a resident of Rising Sun MD, Ola Belle has committed to record a set of her own songs and conversation that is a reflection of the down-to-earth, philosophical and sincere person that she is. I enjoyed this LP immensely, although I feel that those people unfamiliar with her music might enjoy it less, for I suspect that the lengthy spoken thoughts might be difficult to relate to unless one is a devotee of Ola Belle and her music.

All the songs, though original, have a very familiar traditional ring, a case in point being "Fortunes", which resembles "Life's Railway to Heaven" in both melody and sentiment. The instrumental sound (featuring Ola Belle on guitar and banjo, David Reed on guitar and banjo, and Bud Reed on harmonica) is generally very pleasant, with a gently loping old-time banjo, and guitar backup with solid, clear bass runs, though the finger-style banjo on "Sing Me a Song" is frequently inaccurate. In the normal Folkways manner, all lyrics are reproduced in an illustrated booklet. My advice is simple - if you're an enthusiast for Ola Belle, then buy it; otherwise,

have a good listen to it first, then, if you can relate to the views on life, love, death, politics, etc, that she expounds, perhaps you will agree with me that this record is a fine monument to the music of a great lady.

MIKE FENTON

ELDIE BARBEE

THE ELDIE BARBEE TAPES

Pine Breeze PBK-903

Cripple Creek/Old Citico/Rock the Cradle Loose and Keep the Baby Warm/Black Mountain Rag/Sugar in the Gourd/Buckin' Mule/Soldier's Joy/Carroll County Blues/Give the Fiddler a Dram/Three Little Birds/Jeff Davis/Alabama Girl/Cacklin' Hen/Smoke Behind the Clouds/Kitty Waltz (37½m)

Eldie Barbee is a 66-year-old fiddler from Soddy, near Chattanooga TN. He plays vigorously and well. Much of his repertory is common, but there are tunes of more local distribution like "Citico" and "Smoke Behind the Clouds". He is accompanied by banjo and guitars and generally the recording favours his accompanists rather too much, a fault that can to a degree be remedied by resetting one's equipment somewhat. Among the drawbacks that cannot be corrected are some too heavy accompaniments, such as the guitar on "Carroll County Blues", some abrupt finishes where the tape-recorder was turned off too quickly, and some uninteresting passages of chitchat, tuning and so forth. Though not an outstanding LP, it has its rewards: oldfashioned vivacity and individual touches upon familiar tunes.

HENRY TROWTE

SIMPLE GIFTS

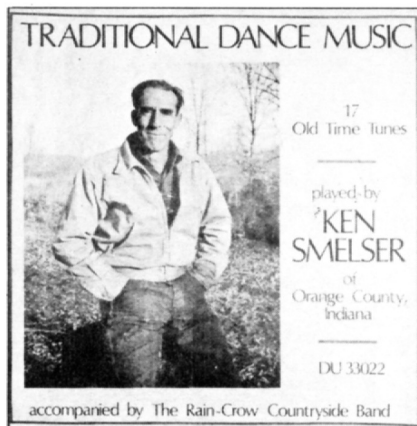
Pine Breeze 475577

Copper Kettle/Sally Ann/Poor Ellen Smith/Go Tell Aunt Rhody/Molly, Darling/Go in' Back to Harlan County/Chicken on a Limb/Muddy Road to Duck-Town/Barbara Ellen/Hickman's Boys/Come on into My Kitchen/Cocaine Blues

Like the preceding LP, this was produced by the Pine Breeze Center, and it presents the work of both traditional performers from the Chattanooga area and students and staff of the Center. Eldie Barbee contributes "Sally Ann" (fiddle) and "Poor Ellen Smith" (vocal/banjo), Lee Trentham (fiddle) plays "Harlan County", a variant of "Fly Around My Pretty Little Miss", and Homer and Calvin Chestain (fiddle and banjo) do "Ducktown" and "Chicken", the latter an interesting banjo solo. Russ Vandergriff sings exuberant but rough versions of "Barbara Ellen" and the local song "Hickman's Boys". The

final two tracks are by the Knoxville blues-singer Sparky Rucker. The remaining pieces, by young people of the Center, are no doubt appropriate in this context but do not have the quality of the surrounding material.

HENRY TROWTE



KEN SMELSER

TRADITIONAL DANCE MUSIC

Davis Unlimited DU33022

Wooden Shoe Clog/Poor Old Woman/Flowers of Edinburg & Temperance Reel/The Campbells Are Coming & Haste to the Wedding/The Mountain Ranger/Old Rosen the Beau & Go Rosin Your Bow/Sally's Got a Wooden Leg/Billy in the Lowground/Ken Smelser's First Tune/Forked Deer (Ladies on a Flatboat)/Cindy & Old Joe Clark/Grey Eagle/My Own House (31½m)

Ken Smelser of Orange County, in southern Indiana, plays fiddle and banjo. Apparently he has many tunes of local and of Northeastern origin, the latter from a grandfather. Here he is accompanied by a young group, the Rain-Crow Countryside Band, who add fiddle, whistle, hammer dulcimer and other instruments to create a group sound that seems essentially revivalist and tends to obscure whatever local characteristics may be evident in Smelser's music. This flimsy and soporific styling, which at moments is not even particularly well performed, is so far from any traditional approach that it casts doubts upon the value of the whole project.

NIGEL CARSTAIRS

GLENN OHRLIN

COWBOY SONGS

Philo 1017

The Dying Ranger/The Top Hand/Zebra Dun/The Tenderfoot/Santa Fe Trail/Mexican Tune/Wild Horse Charlie/The Sporting Cowboy/Cole Younger/The Burial of Wild Bill/Gol Darn Wheel/The Cowboy in Church/Short Creek/The Cowman's Prayer/

Billy Venero/Varsouviana/High Chin Bob/The Cowboy (52m)

Anyone charmed by Ohrlin's book THE HELL BOUND TRAIN will be further beguiled by this record. It contains a large number of the better cowboy songs and poems, delivered with a simplicity that allows them to speak for themselves, but at the same time with a sufficient amount of character. The notes are colourful and detailed, as you would expect after the book. Ohrlin accompanies himself mainly with just his own guitar, his wife Kay joining in on second guitar here and there. A little instrumental variation or augmentation - for example, Ohrlin does play the fiddle a bit - would have helped the album, which as it is is rather monotone, but listeners sympathetic to the cowboy idiom will perhaps not mind this.

NIGEL CARSTAIRS

FRANK WARNER

COME ALL YOU GOOD PEOPLE

Minstrel JD204

Buffalo Gals/Cumberland and Merrimac/Sweet Betsy from Pike/Springfield Mountain/Doodle Dandy/The Dying British Sergeant/Paul Jones/Black-Eyed Susie/Sweet Willie/Away Idaho/Days of Forty-Nine/You Can Take Me Away from Dixie/A Good Man Is Hard to Find/If You Don't Like My Peaches/Freight Train Blues/Asheville Junction/Hold My Hand, Lord Jesus (39½m)

Piety alone can justify this record. Warner's repute as a folksong collector is considerable; he worked with Frank C Brown, recorded artists like Frank Proffitt, and has lectured and published. His experience in the field qualifies him, in his wife's phrase, to "reflect (the) different styles, accents, and traditions" of American folksong. On the record this ability produces a harsh and at times eccentric way with traditional ballads and broadsides. The encomia, printed on the jacket, from Alan Lomax and Carl Sandburg I find incomprehensible; though framed with an understanding of traditional singing, Warner's own is often ugly and sometimes borders on pastiche, particularly in the minstrel pieces. The instrumental content - Warner and his two sons on various stringed instruments - is quite undistinguished.

Except to those whom friendship or loyalty may move to own (whether or not to listen to) this record, I can find no grounds at all for recommending it.

TR



CAJUN HOME MUSIC
Folkways FA2620

DENNIS MCGEE & SADY COURVILLE La Danse Carree/La Reel a Fruge/La Valse des Amities/La Valse a Fruge/Le Two Step a Frere Devilliers/La Valse du Coteau de Laurier/LORICIA GUILLORY Oh Si J'Aurais des Ailes/Derriere Chez Nous y a t'Une Jolie Fontaine/CYPRIEN LANDRENEAU La Valse de Choupique/La Valse de Cherokee/Chere Mom/PIERRE DAIGLE Renaud le Tueur de Femme/La Danseuse Noyee/ELISABETH LANDRENEAU Saute Crapaud/Un Petit Bonhomme/Ti Galop pour Mamou/La Valse a Adam/NARCISSE CORMIER Madeleine/La Valse du Grand Marais/AGNES BOURQUE Tite Fille de Quinze Ans/La Delaissee/MARC SAVOY La Gigue a Savoy

CAJUN SOCIAL MUSIC
Folkways FA2621

MILTON MELANCON, MARC SAVOY, LURLIN LEJEUNE Jolie Blonde/La Valse de Lawtell/Mamou Two-Step/(with ADAUSAS THIBODEAUX) Tout Ca C'Est Dur a Croire/J'Etais au Bal Hier au Soir/Osson Two-Step/NATHAN ABSHIRE, ALLIE YOUNG, ARMAND BABINEAUX Chere Toutou/ABSHIRE & BABINEAUX Courtableau/ALLIE YOUNG, HECTOR & BESSYL DUHON Midnight Special/Un Homme Marie/La Valse d'Amour/YOUNG, BESSYL DUHON & RODNEY BALFA Bosco Stomp/HADLEY FONTENOT, SADY COURVILLE, PRESTON MANUEL 'Trape Mon Chapeau

The purpose of 'Cajun Home Music' is to document, as far as may still be possible, the songs and dance-tunes of 19th- and early 20th-century French Louisiana - what was existing before the record companies entered Louisiana, lay partly hidden for a half-century or more, and can occasionally be recovered from old

people even today. Excepting Pierre Daigle and Marc Savoy, no performer on FA2620 is under 60; Dennis McGee is over 80.

In a recent JEMFQ essay Norm & Anne Cohen distinguished between a home and a public tradition of music-making in the Southeast, arguing that folklorists naturally experienced the former and recording talent-scouts the latter; hence the often striking differences between the traditional music of a region as documented in text-collections, and its recorded old time music. Cajun music offers similar divisions: the old songs that Guillory, Bourque and Elisabeth Landreneau sing both predate and stand outside the cajun "recording tradition", being suitable for home much more than for public use, and being thought of as pieces requiring no accompaniment.

The fiddle and accordion tunes, on the other hand, though played at home for amusement and for the smallest of private functions, fitted equally the public necessities of the community, and most of the tunes heard on FA2620 have been put on record before, in some cases many years ago. The very first track, indeed, "La Danse Carree", was one of Dennis McGee's first recordings, in 1928. Why it is appropriate to include them on a record of this title is because few public opportunities occur nowadays for single musicians, or couples, and to hear them at all in Louisiana it is usually necessary to visit someone's home.

Gerard Dole, who recorded and put together both these albums, has done

a great deal of this kind of house-visiting and has collected hundreds of performances. The McGee-Courville fiddle duets are characteristically fine, and the old-fashioned accordion tunes of Cyprien Landreneau and Narcisse Cormier are also good. The singers are uneven - Daigle is really not much of a singer at all - but it is evident that Dole was looking for old songs as much as he was for good singers. Of such accommodations and compromises, after all, is fieldwork made.

'Cajun Social Music' exemplifies the public, i.e. band music of the present. Not that it is particularly easy to catch this sort of old-styled trio or quartet playing, unamplified, on many occasions now. Dole recorded the bands (there are basically four here) not at dances, or at any rate not at dance-halls, but at suppers or house-parties. (Whatever that may suggest, the sound quality is excellent.) For a really fair portrayal of cajun music, there ought properly to be a third volume in this series, containing the dance-hall bands with their pedal steels and drums. However, Swallow and other companies are documenting that enough. Dole has accomplished his goal very well indeed in his two LPs and the notes thereto, not least because he compiled them with enthusiasts in mind rather than academics. TR

DEWEY BALFA, MARC SAVOY & D L MENARD
LOUISIANA CAJUN MUSIC: UNDERNEATH THE
GREEN OAK TREE
Arhoolie 5019

Jolie Blonde de Bayou/Petite Fille de la Campagne/En Bas d'un Chene Vert/Port Arthur Blues/J'Ai Fait un Gros Erreur/J'Etais au Bal/Mardi Gras Jig/La Porte Dans Arriere/J'Ai Passe Devant Ta Porte/Cajun Reel/Je Peux Pas T'Oublier/Mon Bon Vieux Mari/Lake Arthur Stomp

Though never unhappy to see another record of Dewey Balfa - or Marc Savoy - I did stifle a small yawn or two at the sight of the track-listing. There are three or four versions of "J'Etais au Bal" around by Balfa groups, and as many of "J'Ai Passe Devant Ta Porte". These and other popular tunes ("Back Door", par excellence) are in some danger of overexposure.

Nevertheless, it remains a record cajun specialists will be pleased with and casual buyers will enjoy as well as many another. The contrast of Balfa's typical cajun singing and Menard's mournful Hank Williams tones is an intriguing one. Balfa and Savoy play tremendously well together - Marc

not confining himself to the accordion but playing some fiddle - and Menard is both a classically solid guitar man and a great lonesome singer, notably in his own compositions "Chene Vert" and "Je Peux Pas T'Oublier".

This is a group put together for folk festivals and the like, rather than for the weekly dances, and it does sound that way - a little studied, chamber-cajun if you like - from time to time. A supergroup, yes, but not exactly a superband. Still, that hardly detracts from this record, which I liked very much most of the time, and would certainly commend to the hardcore Acadiaphiles. TR

ALLIE J YOUNG

BAL CHEZ BELISAIRE: L'ACCORDEON CAJUN
Expression Spontanee No. 24

Belisaire/L'Accordeon Cajun/Jolie Blonde/Ton Papa M'A Jete Dehors/La Valse Criminelle/Les Danses/Colinda/Dis Bye Bye a Ton Pap'/Allons a Lafayette/Les Tits Yeux Noirs/Mamou Two Step/Chere Alice/La Valse a Reno/Madeleine/Tit Maurice/Madame Sosthene/La Branche du Murier/J'Etai au Bal/C'Est Dur a Croire (51m)

This French release, another concu et réalisé by Gerard Dole, is designed for the would-be accordionist. Allie Young of Basile is a good old time player and here he is given the microphone for a programme of accordion tunes with spoken introductions. He sings too, and there is some guitar and fiddle by Bessyl Duhon, as well as an anonymous triangle player.

Young is old enough to recall early accordionists like Mayuse Lafleur ("Ton Papa M'A Jete Dehors", "Valse Criminelle") or Lawrence Walker ("Chere Alice"). He can provide, then, some of the ingredients of a musical history for the cajun accordion. Treated as this kind of music lesson, the record could be helpful to players; the tunes are played carefully at manageable tempos, and no doubt fiddlers and guitarists too could learn from playing along. Simply for listening, however, the record is too sedate and uneventful.

The gatefold jacket carries notes on the accordion and cajun dances. TR

THE BALFA BROTHERS

J'AI VU LE LOUP, LE RENARD ET LA BELETTE
Rounder 6007

Originally issued in France as Cezame CEZ1008 and reviewed in OTM20/50, where you may find track-listing and other data. Now differently packaged. Still a charming, unhackneyed and perfectly recommendable record of the first family of cajun music. TR

TRADITIONAL CAJUN FIDDLE

Instruction by Dewey Balfa &

Tracy Schwarz

Folkways FM8361

Tuning/Unisons & Octaves/Doubling/
J'Etai au Bal Hier au soir/Jolie Blon/
Perrodin Two Step/Grandpa's Waltz/La
Valse de Gran Bois/Indian on the Stump/
2nd Fiddle Bassing/Gran Mamou/Mademoiselle, Quoi Tu Veux Manger?/More 2nd
Fiddle Bassing

CAJUN FIDDLE OLD & NEW

with DEWEY BALFA

Folkways FM8362

The Port Arthur Blues/Ma Chere Maman Creole/My Pretty Little Christine/Les Bars de la Prison/Grand Mamou/La Valse des Bombocheurs/Grandpa's Waltz/La Valse de Gran Bois/Indian on a Stump/Mardi Gras Song/La Valse de Reno/Madeleine/The 99 Years Waltz/The Cajun from Church Point/Allons a Lafayette/J'Aimerai Te Pardonner/Jolie Blon/Johnny Can't Dance

The first of these is pure instruction, from tuning through double-stopping, playing a simple two-step ("J'Etai au Bal"), then a waltz ("Jolie Blon"), the lower G tuning (i.e. a whole tone below standard, to go with the usual C accordion), more two-steps and waltzes, 2nd fiddle bassing and so forth as summarised above in the track listing. Dewey Balfa and Tracy Schwarz share the spoken instructions, but it is Dewey who does the playing, except when demonstrating 2nd fiddling, where Tracy takes the lead and Dewey the 2nd parts. Anyone who has used Tracy's 'Learn to Fiddle Country Style' LP (Folkways FI8359) with success will find this a comparably helpful first course in cajun fiddling. There are adequately full notes.

The second album is a lesson in history as much as music. On the first side Dewey demonstrates various techniques as they occur in tunes which he plays in full and at normal speed. The techniques include sliding notes, rolls and trills. Then there is a section on the Mardi Gras song, which is heard both from Dewey and from a group of Mardi Gras musicians in action (in 1975).

The second side is location music, at a broadcast of the Basile Cajun Hour on KEUN - five tunes, with introductions and commercials - and at a dance in Eunice. The broadcasting band includes Allie Young (accordion) and Rodney Balfa (guitar), the dance band Ray Abshire (accordion), J W Pelisia (steel guitar) and Dale Breaux (guitar), with Weston Bergeaux (drums) throughout. These tracks illustrate cajun fiddling

in typical modern band contexts, but are perfectly satisfactory for ordinary listening. Again, there are detailed notes, including some interview material that is not on the record.

While FM8361 is clearly a record for one purpose, the second LP could well go on the non-playing enthusiast's list, for as well as the band sides it has a lot of solo fiddle by Dewey (with Rodney on guitar) which cannot be found elsewhere.

I might add a word on the radio programme, since it was an interesting event. At the time Tracy recorded it, in February 1975, it was held at C.C.'s Lounge in Basile and broadcast live via KEUN Eunice, for an hour (5-6pm) every Saturday. When I was in Basile this September the show had moved down the road to the Avalon Lounge but was otherwise much the same, though evidently the personnel might change; on September 24 it was Ira Fontenot who played accordion, and there weren't any drums. This turned out to be the last "Happy Hour" broadcast the station was putting out, and if Dewey cannot find another means of getting it on the air a characteristic part of cajun life will have been lost. Local people regarded the show primarily as a dance, and danced throughout the first hour on the air and the succeeding hour off. For the visitor it was a fascinating combination of the informality of a dance and the formal structure of a radio programme, but for people who live there it was an uncommon chance to dance to an old-fashioned band and hear some of the songs of which younger musicians are often ignorant. TR





JOE VAL & THE NEW ENGLAND BLUEGRASS BOYS
Rounder 0025

Freight Train Blues/Sing Me Back Home/
Changing the Words to My Love Song/When
the Golden Leaves Begin to Fall/Sally
Goodin/A Legend in My Time/You'll Be
Rewarded Over There/My Old Kentucky
Home/Oh So Many Years/Fireball Mail/
Stepping Stones/The Last Thing on My
Mind/Mississippi Shore

Joe Val-m/v, Dave Dillon-g/v, Herb
Applin-g/v, Bob French-bj, Bill
Hall-bj, Herb Hoooven-f, Bob Tidwell-
bs

Bluegrass music is in danger of becoming over-sophisticated. There is bluegrass jazz, bluegrass concertos, bluegrass treatment of pop songs, and a proliferation of remarkable virtuosos and unexpected combinations. Sometimes these experiments develop the tradition but often, when they depart from it, they get lost.

This criticism could not be levelled at Joe Val and the New England Bluegrass Boys. They manage to explore the music without straying beyond its limits. The sound of the song is never sacrificed for the sake of a clever riff or an astonishing solo. Their playing is good because it fits the music.

Joe Val's voice is at once troubled and reassuring. The harmonies are tight and exciting and this gives a consistency and integrity to the record. The country and western songs are made to sound appropriate in a collection of mainly traditional numbers, and the one original number - "My Old Kentucky Home" - also combines bluegrass style with old time flavour.

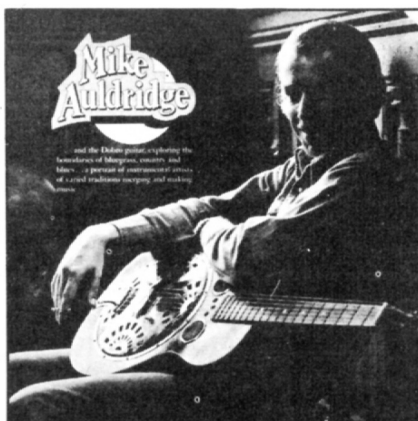
Most of the material on the album is traditional - little-known songs from some of the finest old time groups: the Louvins, the Delmores, the Bailes Brothers. And they come off best. The sturdy sweetness of the originals is enhanced by the injection of tension and energy, so that you can

hear how bluegrass came to be. It is an extension, not an extraction.

The part-singing on "You'll Be Rewarded Over There" (the Louvin Brothers) retains the devotional aura of the earlier version, while the bluegrass pace and instrumentation add a refreshing urgency and impetus. "Oh So Many Years", a Bailes Brothers song, offers a good opportunity for the band to dwell upon the finely-spun, almost tearful harmonies in which they excel.

The inclusion of Monroe's "When the Golden Leaves Begin to Fall" is, I think, significant. It is a homage to one of the great bluegrass pioneers whose innovation rests on tradition.

Like Monroe, this band offers a link between old time music and bluegrass. They are not startlingly inventive, but they are very good. The album deserves attention, and could well recruit a few old time devotees who find bluegrass too technical, as well as bluegrass fans who have lost touch with its roots. SALLY FELDMAN



MIKE AULDRIDGE
Flying Fish 029

Southern Rain/Tennessee Traveler/Mountain Slide/Blues for Barbara/Last Train to Clarksville/California Dreamin'/Dreaming My Dreams/Indian Summer/Carolina Sunshine Girl/All Thumbs/Spanish Grass/Lloyd's of Nashville/Georgia on My Mind (364m)

This is Auldridge's third solo album, and again he follows the formula of surrounding himself with fellow 'super pickers', although this time he puts himself more up-front than on his two Takoma albums, where at times he completely integrated himself with the group. Auldridge's claim to fame is quite simply that aside from being a member of the successful Seldom Scene he is arguably the best dobro player in the world today. The only serious contender, Buck Graves, may have at

times played in more aesthetically pleasing company, but technically Auldridge is a way ahead.

The album throws an awful lot into the first three tracks (all, incidentally, Auldridge compositions which show he has more strings to his dobro than just playing the thing) and if I never hear better played dobro again I suspect I will not have missed too much. Superlatives abound, and even the presence of Vassar Clements, who usually grates on my ears, adds rather than detracts. Full marks even to him for his flatpicked fiddle break on "Tennessee Traveler" and to Bobby Thompson for not picking with that muted sound that is another usual deterrent. Also the choice of Dave Bromberg on lead guitar throughout is excellent value, since he is one of the few who has the ability, as opposed to mere ambition, to play further afield than three-chord bluegrass.

Side 2 also gets off to a pulsating start, with "Indian Summer", which features some nice interplay between Auldridge and Bromberg, and has some nicer subdued moments, in particular "Lloyd's of Nashville", which is essentially an exchange between Auldridge and Lloyd Green. Green displays the lighter touch, but I suspect neither he nor his contemporaries could have matched Auldridge on this form.

Instrumental albums, for me, aside from fiddle albums, which I can take by the score, need to be outstanding in some characteristic. I think this one just makes it, on the strength of the first three tracks on side 1 and the first on Side 2, whereas I think his last two LPs just didn't quite get there. Exciting, nice listening, true, but only for a short time, but I feel this album will last for a long time and will certainly long be a bible for other dobro pickers. As Keith licks were once the acceptance mark of the amateur banjo picker, Auldridge licks must have a similar seniority status for the dobro. My only reservation is that no matter how many times I play this album it just does not hold my attention throughout. That may be a result of the programmer throwing a lot of strength in early on, or it may simply be that, not being a dobro player, not everything comes through to me beyond the superficial listening level. You will need to see which category you fit into, but I do think that for a dobro album this will take a long, long time to be surpassed. JOHN ATKINS



THE RED CLAY RAMBLERS



THE RED CLAY RAMBLERS
TWISTED LAUREL
Flying Fish 030 (US)
Sonet SNTF731 (GB)

Blue Jay & The Girl I Left Behind Me/
Twisted Laurel/The Hobo's Last Letter/
Rockingham Cindy/Mississippi Delta
Blues/The Telephone Girl/Will You Miss
Me/The Ace/The Corrugated Lady/When
Bacon Was Scarce & Ryestraw/I Was Only
Teasing You/Fifty Miles of Elbow Room/
Flying Cloud Cotillion/The Beale
Street Blues (37 $\frac{3}{4}$ m)

Though it shows some of the same range
of interests displayed in 'Stolen Love',

their previous LP, the Ramblers' new record pulls the wraps off several fresh models. Together with the Carter Family and Tommy Jarrell, whom one would have expected, there appear names like Arville Reed and the Tobacco Tags: sources, respectively, of the wonderful "Telephone Girl" and "I Was Only Teasing You", songs whose crisp sense of fun fit very well the mildly scholarly highjinksiness for which the band is celebrated. Among the other names given as sources appear several of the Ramblers themselves: they composed, among them, four pieces. Those on Side 1, Thompson's "Twisted Laurel" and Hicks' "Last Letter", are entirely old-time and serious. On the other side are "The Ace" and "Corrugated Lady", both Ramblers-and-company collaborations, both sparkling performances, and both highly idiosyncratic assemblages of old-timey style and present-timey matter. "The Ace", in fact, wrenches the world of "American Graffiti" into a stringband frame, with, as they say in the blurbs, hilarious consequences, while "Lady" puts a not dissimilar teenish-fantasy theme into a faintly corny Dixieland dress.

It is not all tongue-in-cheek stuff by any means, though. There are some

no-nonsense fiddle tunes, Bill Hicks twinning with himself in "Ryestraw", and the Carter pieces are outstandingly rendered by Mike Craver, whose angelic singing is only one of several talents he has brought to the group; listen too for the rinkydink organ in "Teasing" and his guitar and autoharp playing elsewhere. Jack Herrick, the new horn man, blows some airy trumpet in "Beale Street Blues" and "Mississippi Delta" - his tone a little studiofied and clean, by contrast with how he sounds in person. This is in general a small deficiency in the record, that it confers a little collar-and-tie neatness upon an essentially open-necked music, but it does it less than most such do, and there is no other cause for disappointment to be seen or heard.

You could put it this way: the generation of the NLCR and their few peers has left its lessons, and here is the next generation, with some of that tuition under its belt, some lying discarded in the dust behind. The Red Clay Ramblers stand out in their ability to pick and choose from several vernacular traditions - an eclecticism that only demonstrates how much those traditions picked, chose, borrowed and filched from each other all along. TR

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 for Paula



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 ball/Soldier's Joy/Kentucky Mandolin/
 Blues Stay Away from Me/Stoney Creek/
 Blackberry Rag/Turkey Knob/Daybreak in
 Dixie

Beyond doubt these are the first worth-
 while European contributions I have
 heard to bluegrass and country music.
 Ironic that the musicians come from
 France, a non-American-speaking country,
 and not well known for its enthusiasm
 for otm in general. Only one of the
 albums, by Bluegrass Long Distance,
 features singing in any quantity, and
 amazingly this is virtually accent-free
 and certainly does not suffer from
 trying to sound American, as all parti-
 cipants seem well-versed in phrasing and
 natural pronunciation essential to blue-
 grass.

The album by Dadi was actually
 recorded in Nashville and features the
 Travis/Atkins picker in a freewheeling
 selection of his own tunes supported by
 Nashville alumni: McCoy, Emmons, Gimble,
 Spicher etc etc. The tunes are all well
 constructed, if not entirely memorable,
 and this is really the sort of album

Nashville can make by the truckload.
 However, Dadi leads and fronts superbly
 well and his European origins are not
 even slightly audible.

Mick Larie goes one less, and while
 his album was cut in France he did have
 on hand Wendy Miller and Mike Lilly,
 former Sparks sidemen, who right from
 the opening "Bluegrass Breakdown" leave
 no doubt about their mastery of the
 idiom, as they have that little extra
 attack and authority that none of the
 European participants yet have.
 However, that is not in any way to
 deprecate the efforts of Larie & Co.,
 as they play incredibly well, and Mick
 in particular should be more than proud
 of an extremely well thought-out album.
 Production and packaging are both first
 class. The sound is 100% correct, both
 the open mix and an extremely fine
 balance, and the album, as they say,
 looks a million dollars, with gatefold
 sleeve, tablature to many of the tunes
 and a nice collection of photographs.
 The latter probably is indicative of
 why the album is so good, as Larie is
 well aware of bluegrass music in toto
 and has pix of Monroe, Duffey, McRey-
 nolds, Skaggs etc., to be proud of
 where the music came from, rather than
 the usual European ego-trip of
 completely obscuring the origins so
 that the dim-witted can appreciate how
 clever they all are. . . .

Lastly Bluegrass Long Distance,
 which minus Lilly and Miller is pretty
 much the participants of Larie's album.
 I confess that this is by a long way
 the best non-American bluegrass-
 oriented album I have ever heard, and
 aside from the Echo Mountain Band,
 makes the infantile contributions of
 other British bands, in particular, ten
 shades less than pale. Firstly the
 sound is exactly right. All of the
 participants play extremely well, and
 most amazingly the singing is also
 exact. Even the ambitious choice of
 material like "Rank Stranger" doesn't
 collapse, and while purists may frown
 on choices like Commander Cody's "Mama
 Hated Diesels" I applaud the move to do
 more than copying other bluegrass
 groups. Almost without exception I
 have in the past been totally embarras-
 sed to receive European bluegrass
 albums for fear the participants may
 subsequently solicit my opinion (the
 end, certainly, of many beautiful
 friendships), and for the first time I
 am more than pleased to welcome and
 heartily applaud an effort that lacks
 for nothing. Vive la France.

JOHN ATKINS



WAYNE HENDERSON & RAY CLINE
 GUITAR PICKIN'
 Heritage IX

Liberty/Mule Skinner Blues/Forked
 Deer/Denver Belle/Wildwood Flower/
 Sweet Bunch of Daisies/Saint Ann's
 Reel/Put My Little Shoes Away/Cannon-
 ball Blues/Sweet Georgia Brown/Billy
 in the Low Ground/Old Joe Clarke/
 Black Mountain Rag/Rosewood Casket

Although unknown on record, these two
 guitarists are both held in high
 regard in the Blue Ridge "convention"
 belt. Both men are supreme "lead"
 pickers, although with very contrast-
 ing styles. Henderson, a fine maker
 as well as player of guitars, and a
 many times 1st-place winner at the
 Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention, uses
 a thumb-and-forefinger method known
 as "pinch-picking" - what sounds like
 a straight flatpick style is Wayne's
 unique personal style. Cline (not the
 Ray Cline of Lonesome Pine Fiddlers
 fame) is the more flamboyant picker
 of the two (Henderson stays much
 closer to the main melody) with an
 ability to play the same tune in many
 different ways.

The great thing about this record
 is that both men complement each other
 perfectly, and there is never the
 feeling that each is trying to out-
 pick the other. The playing is firm,
 crisp and very clean and clear.
 Cline's inventiveness is best illus-
 trated on "Rosewood Casket", while
 the furious duetting on "Old Joe
 Clarke" is a joy to hear. I find it
 amazing that Henderson obtains more
 speed and clarity with his fingers
 than many people can manage with a
 flatpick! This album should find a
 ready home in the record collections
 of all aspiring guitar-pickers.

MIKE FENTON

CATHY FINK & DUCK DONALD
 KISSING IS A CRIME
 Likeable LK-01

Honey Babe I'm Bound to Ride/Kissing
 Is a Crime/Old Weary Blues/Ballroom/
 Mistreated Mama/Hard Hearted Hannah/
 Frosty Morning/Rambling Away/Mother
 in Law/Jealous Hearted Me/Train on the
 Island/Backroom Lady/Blackberry
 Blossom

A Canadian duo who sing and play, on
 guitar, banjo, mandolin and dulcimer,
 and with fervour, fair skill and a
 rare absence of wimpiness, a sound
 selection of good old-timey songs.
 Some astute harmonising - is it
 Donald singing high or Fink duetting
 with herself? - and an altogether
 honourable, well-recorded album. NC

TRADITIONAL MUSIC

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TRADITIONAL MUSIC No.2 featured articles on Paddy Taylor, Irish flute player; Jimmy Power, Irish fiddler; Frank Lee's Tara Ceilidh Band; long interview with Percy Webb, Suffolk singer, etc. TM3: exhaustive inter-

view with Bob Copper, Sussex singer; a directory of English music on record; long interview with Fred Kilroy, Lancashire concertina player, etc. TM4: Michael Turner, 19thC. Sussex fiddler; Scan Tester, Sussex concertina player; the Seaman family, melodeon players of East Suffolk, etc. TM5: taken up largely with a detailed study of instrumental music of Sliabh Luachra on the Cork/Kerry borders of Ireland; with the Clifford family, Padraig O'Keefe, Denis Murphy etc. TM6: record and book reviews including details of the Wood family, Welsh gypsy harpists. TM7: Phil Tanner, singer of Gower, South Wales; Bob Smith's Ideal Band (Glasgow); Jimmy Cooper, dulcimer player (Coatbridge, near Glasgow); Widnes Star Novelty Mouthorgan Band, etc.

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the Life of Jimmie Rodgers

In the 44 years since his death, no man has come to represent the origins of country music more vividly and completely than Jimmie Rodgers. Even in his own day he was called "America's Blue Yodeler" - today he is widely recognised as "The Father of Country Music".

Until now, there has been no full and balanced study of the life and music of Jimmie Rodgers. Paris & Comber's pioneering book, based on years of research and a deep acquaintance with Rodgers' music, tells the story - from the railroad yards of Meridian to the plush hotels of New York. The authors reveal the background of the enigmatic first recordings, the astute development of Rodgers' disc career, the problems and the fluctuating fortunes of the first Southern country singer to reach out for nation-wide popularity.

The fascinating account is contained in a 211-page book, with over 100 illustrations, many hitherto unpublished. The text is supplemented by notes, bibliography and index. There is also a complete Discography, including original and LP release data - the finest and most detailed discography of Rodgers' recordings ever published.

No country music enthusiast can afford to be without this book.

***An EDDISON MUSICBOOK, published by Eddison Press (Cambridge), in collaboration with OLD TIME MUSIC.

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£3.95
USA: \$8.95
postpaid