

Caravan

OCTOBER 1957

The Folkmusic Fanzine

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If you have news of forthcoming events; if you have items pertinent to the folk field for sale (such as banjos, books, back-issues of SING OUT, or tape recorders) or want to buy such items; if you are offering expert instruction on folk instruments at a nominal fee; if you left your sweater at the fountain in Wash Sq last Sunday; or have any other notices of interest, we'll be glad to run them, no charge. We particularly want news of coming events, such as folksings.

Deadlines for the next issue:

Articles - October 20th.

News items - October 25th.

And on a street corner in old London, UK, with a guitar in one hand and a typewriter in the other, stands John Brunner, listening to the contemporary British scene:

"WITH MY EAR TO THE GROUND"

If you didn't know about it, you'd pass it without a second glance. That's the Bedford Arms, in Arlington Road, Camden Town.

Camden Town (which is not far from where I work by day, in Kentish Town) is one of London's dingier quarters: Arlington Road is in a not-quite-slum area, but it's one of the innumerable streets running parallel to a main thoroughfare which few people who don't live there ever visit. It is not on any bus route, so you don't notice it in passing, and it has very nearly no attractions whatever.

Except the Bedford Arms.

If you go in on a Tuesday or a Wednesday, you see only an undistinguished and extremely ordinary London pub. The saloon bar has a tiny stage in one corner, with a piano marked with beer-rings, and Radio Luxemburg babbling from a relay speaker overhead.

If you go in on a Saturday, you see the same pub - but you have to fight your way to the bar through a press of people - mostly men, and mostly expatriate Irish.

It could be just another, very ordinary public house. Except for one thing.

This is where, five nights a week, Margaret Barrie holds forth.

There's a big sign up on the wall: NO DANCING ALLOWED IN THIS HOUSE. PLEASE ASSEST THE PROPRIETOR BY REFRAINING. THANK YOU.

And the moment you get inside, on any evening bar Tuesday and Wednesday, you know why.

The sound is like a blow as soon as you enter. On the stage in the corner the trio is sitting and blasting away at traditional Irish jigs and reels with a fervour and power you need to travel a long way to find. On the left is youthful Keiran Collins - a fair-haired man in his early twenties - delicately fingering his button accordeon, which he hardly draws in or out at all, to first appearance, or bending over with an expression of concentrated vigour so that the thin, piping sound of his flageolet shall be picked up by the microphone lying on his right knee and thrown out at double colume by the small amplifier on the rail overhead.

On the right sits Michael Gorman, an older man with a country fiddler's talents, bowing out a swift rhythmic boil of melody or gently echoing the flageolet.

And between them, in the far corner of the little dais, is Margaret Barrie herself.

Brunner (2)

She looks the part perfectly; she has a strong, mobile face framed by dark hair which is drawn at the sides into two short plaits. She has a silk handkerchief at her neck. Across her knee is an elderly-looking banjo, on a sling of ordinary coarse twine.

At first, one may not see what makes her so remarkable. She picks out the simple chord sequences of the dance tunes, competently, effectively, but the spotlight is on the other two - until suddenly the emphasis changes, and the hard, ringing tone of her banjo charges through the thick, acid-sweet accordeon chords and the sharp-edged tone of the fiddle, and one suddenly thinks: she plays a whole mess of banjo!

And then, after about three or four of the gay, lilting jig tune she picks her introduction out at maximum volume, so that it can just be made out over the talking of the fifty or sixty customers in the bar, stands up as she plays, throws back her head and lets go.

Now that is a voice. It's hard, flexible, vibrant, instinct with the kind of natural power you associate with Bessie Smith or Leadbelly. Your ears automatically readjust; the babble of talk hardly drops at all - for, of course, to most of the clientele this phenomenon is just something laid on for the benefit of the pub's customers, and could as well be Radio Luxemburg again - yet you don't notice it anymore.

And she tells an otherwise long-forgotten story, twisting and re-making the simple line of the ballad's tune with fiddle-like drops and raises and distortions of words to fit new melodic phrases very reminiscent of the most primitive country blues artists. There is Eileen MacMonaghan, and the sudden, extraordinary sidewise twist of Margaret's mouth on the low notes gives shape, and form, to this wandering Irish colleen...

She comes of tinker stock, from County Cork, and she has had many ups and downs. The second song she sings this Saturday, and my girl friend Marjorie - listening fascinated alongside me on the hard, red-leather bench near the stage - whispers, "I've heard her going along the street! It was a long time ago, but I remember her now. You couldn't easily mistake that pair of lungs."

Yes, she's been a street singer in her time - and I wish I'd managed to catch her, invite her in and stand her in front of a tape recorder back in those days. It would have been a prize worth having, a tape of this fabulous voice.

She finishes one of her songs, and the man sitting next to me turns blindly and tells me, "It's like a breath of home sweet home, isn't it?"

He's Irish, of course. So are many of the customers, though not all. The labourers on the other side of us get up unsteadily and begin to weave into the steps of a jig; the big man with a battered face and a bright brown suit who keeps order in the bar reaches over and taps the shoulder of the nearer one, pointing to the NO DANCING sign.

Brunner (3)

"Outside," he says crisply. "If ye want to do that." So they go out.

But they come back.

There's a strange mixture here in this bar. Glassy-eyed workmen intent on going to bed with their bellies full of good Irish Guinness mingle with business-suited men who plainly go to expensive barbers and drink their pints of bitter beer slowly, and with young, neatly-dressed men in double-breasted blazers and quiet ties. There are hardly any women, which prompts Marjorie to remark that she didn't know the menfolk still went off to the pub on a Saturday leaving their women at home. But old traditions die hard in an area like this; the few girls ranged along the benches sit quietly the whole evening with their boy friends and mostly with a single drink whose level descends slowly, slowly.

Around twenty past ten, when the pub is at its fullest, Margaret comes down off the stand with her little grey bag and begins her tour of the room.

"Mrs Barrie! Have you done She Moved Through the Fair yet this evening?"

"No! But I will!"

And she does - when she has finished her slow round of the bar, exchanging greetings with all her friends and feeling that grey bag get steadily heavier and heavier with the chinking coins.

This is one she does superlatively. Her thumb hammering the strings of her banjo, she drives that voice into the opening notes, and I sit back with sheer delight, listening to the intrinsic power of the song. I should like to be able to convey the effect of her treatment of it in words - but it's impossible. *

And then a round of applause and the trio goes back into one of the endless series of Irish dances, with a tall lean man who has borrowed Keiran's flageolet piping the melody along with Michael Gorman's fiddle. And I have to remind Marjorie that we're going to a party the following night - given by Joy Hyman, the folk singer I mentioned in my last column - and reluctantly we push out through the crowd and into the drab, ordinary streets of Camden Town.

The Fifteenth World Science Fiction Convention was held in London over the first weekend in September; myself, I was there. In fact, I was on the committee responsible. Round about half past eleven on the Sunday night, when the greater part of the proceedings were over, Marjorie and I thought it a good idea to relax a little and adjourn to one of the room parties.

* footnote: Margaret Barry can be heard singing She Moved Through the Fair, and others, accompanying herself on the banjo, on Riverside record RLP 12-602 "Songs of an IRISH TINKER LADY" (recorded by Ewan MacColl in March 1955)

Brunner (4)

In the party which we picked we found Sheldon Deretchin of New York ((well known to frequenters of MacDougal Street)) perched on the end of a bed, and we proceeded to discuss the situation on the folk music front in London, with particular reference to skiffle, and thereafter got onto the subject of moonshiner's songs - for no logical reason.

While Shel was working over Mountain Dew and The Old Copper Kettle, one of our most distinguished and remarkable delegates tapped me on the shoulder from behind. This was Mrs Rory Faulkner, a sixty-nine-year-old great-grandmother from California. "You're interested in American folksongs?" she said, I told her yes, and she promptly proceeded to sing me some negro worksongs I had never heard before, which she had learned while her husband - an engineer - was working on a job down South many years ago.

Before I quit the party, I made her promise that she'd sing a few of them into my tape recorder for me some time. I also promised to play her my tapes of the series of six programmes Alan Lomax recently broadcast over the BBC - two on the music of America, the West Indies and Britain, two on Spain and two on Italy. They run to five and three-quarter hours' solid listening, but they contain some of Lomax's most trenchant and interesting material.

And that's about it, if I'm to make the deadline this time around. Be seeing you.

John Brunner
London, England
September 1957

ATTENTION - MANDOLIN LOVERS

Barry Kornfeld advises us that he has for sale, two mandolins:

Italian Round-back & case	- \$15
Gibson Flat-back	- \$20

contact:

Barry Kornfeld
105-10 65th Road
Forest Hills 75, NY

phone IL 9-0204

The Singing I.W.W.

Sooner or later every collector of folksongs runs across that body of industrial ballads which was composed in and around the I.W.W. of the early 20th century. The Industrial Workers of the World (not 'International') or Wobblies, as they were called, were certainly the most rip-snorting and musical labor movement in the history of the Republic. Their songs were mostly of a topical nature and many of them have not well withstood the ravages of time, but a glance through the Wobbly "Little Red Songbook" can be a profitable and rewarding experience.

The songs included in the Wobbly chapbook cannot for the most part stand apart from their context and a casual knowledge of the movement and its times can be helpful in understanding the contents of the book. The I.W.W. was founded in 1905 and was composed largely of dissident miners from the far west, lumberjacks, migratory workers, railroad men and factory workers of all kinds. The Wobs recognized no division of labor and maintained that all wage earners had common interests. As you may have guessed they were a pretty radical outfit and the persecutions that set in were fierce. The history of this movement could be given as a long series of strikes, imprisonments, lynchings and sometimes, in some areas, what almost amounted to civil war. Altho the I.W.W. was usually more sinned against than sinning, the violence was rarely one-sided and public opinion at best took a dim view of the whole tendency.

The I.W.W. made its basic task to "organize the unorganized" and it was chiefly in this capacity (as with the C.I.O later) that songs and ballads were written. The Little Red Songbook presents a pretty big selection of tunes --or words, actually-- and most of the authors are listed thus excluding the whole field from "folk music" according to some.

Many of the tunes here used are lifted from revival songs of the day and altho tradition has been followed in union songs up to the present time, the Wobblies' reasons for appropriating rise-and-shout melodies were rooted in immediate necessity. It seems that the Salvation Army, who worked around the same people as the I.W.W. had a nasty habit of drowning out Wobbly street speakers with brass bands. The Wobs retaliated by writing radical songs to Salvation Army hymns and using the bands for accompaniment. Many of the Wobbly songs written to popular music of the day also fall into this category, since the "Starvation Army" used popular song tunes for many of their hymns. "Why should the devil have all the good tunes?"

As for the value of the songs themselves, the reader must judge for himself. I like most of them, but frankly I'm prejudiced. It might be said that such songs have no meaning for us in our time. Maybe so, but there is something idealistic in them. Something strange for our time -- maybe it's hope.

Rafferty (2)

P.S.

You can get a copy of the Little Red Songbook from Folklore Center, 110 MacDougal Street, New York City, for 35¢. As to records, some of the songs of Joe Hill are available in a Folkways album by Joe Glazer. An obscure company called "Labor Arts" in Detroit, has released an LP of Wobbly songs, also sung by Joe Glazer. Other I.W.W. songs can be found on the Riverside albums by John Greenway, "The Great American Bum" and "American Industrial Ballads". There is a Folkways "Talking Union" album with Pete Seeger and the Almanac Singers. There are other recordings, particularly on Folkways label, but I can't recall them.

--Rafferty
Sept 1957

P.P.S.

While you're buying all these records, give a listen to the Kossoy Sisters album, "Bowling Green" on Tradition TLP 1018. They are really good.

-R.

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Department of Requests Answered:

DON'T ROLL THEM BLOODSHOT EYES AT ME

(Dave Van Ronk version)

Chorus:

Don't roll them bloodshot eyes at me,
I can tell you've been out on a spree.
It's plain that you are lyin' when you say that you've been cryin',
Don't roll them bloodshot eyes at me.

I used to spend my money to make you look real sweet,
I wanted to be proud of you when you walked down the street,
Now, don't ask me to dress you up in satins and in silk,
Your eyes look like two cherries in a glass of buttermilk. (chorus)

I guess our little romance has finally simmered down,
You should go join a circus; you'd make a real good clown,
Your eyes look like a roadmap and I'm scared to smell your breath,
You'd better shut your peepers before you bleed to death. (chorus)

Note: technically this is no folksong, but to my way of thinking, it represents the best of the country and western tradition -- that is to say, it's so bad that it's good. Altho I seldom sing it save by request, it amazes me how many requests I get for it.

--Dave Van Ronk

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RECOMMENDED LISTENING:

The FOLKSONG FESTIVAL with Oscar Brand, WNYC AM & FM
Sundays at 6 PM

This show features both records and guest performers, as well as Oscar himself, singing and playing folk music from all over.



"Kafka"

I've been observing, with interest, a controversy over the quality of folk music on Elektra records. Tho I hate to belabor a point, I too have great interest in this subject. What I have to say concerns not so much Elektra's efforts but a whole philosophy of folkmusic.

My colleague, Mr Rafferty, has well stated the case against folk music which is pretty but has no real feeling (or "guts" as he puts it). Of course Mr Rafferty's statements were bound to be misread by many.

One Mr Lefkowitz interpreted Mr Rafferty's words as saying: anything that is pretty is false. This is obviously not so. Mr Rafferty has a great appreciation for such "easy-on-the-ears" performers as Pete Seeger, Buddy Stern, the Weavers and all others who combine "prettiness" with true feeling. Messrs. Rafferty and Lefkowitz are even in agreement on the idea that "psuedo-guts" are worse than no guts at all.

Anyone such as Mr Coots, who can call Blind Willie Johnson, Lead-belly, and Woody Guthrie "unmelodical shouters" and "clods" has no interest in folk music, has no business inserting his opinions on the subject, and does not deserve an answer.

This brings us to the crux of the controversy -Commercialism- a hard term to define. I shall make an arbitrary definition and we shall work in the context of this definition.

Commercialism is the attempt to please an audience.

Of course anyone who performs must have elements of commercialism or he could not reach his audience at all. Unfortunately today's general public does not wish to share an emotional experience with a performer; it wants to be entertained. As a result the artist who goes completely commercial ceases to be an artist and becomes an entertainer only. The entertainer's material is "pretty" but "gutless".

A commercial folksinger has a lack of confidence in folk music's audience appeal so he elaborates upon it and adds all sorts of saccharine-sweet icings: novelty (Oscar Brand), sex (Josh White), elaborate arrangements (Marais & Miranda), and slickness (Clarence Cooper). These people are all talented and enjoyable to watch and hear, but none are folk singers. None share an experience with their audience. Such performances leave one with the feeling of coldness and sterility.

-- "KAFKA"
14 Sept 57

\$ COMMERCIALISM IN FOLKMUSIC

A large number of folkmusic fans -- whose spokesman in CARAVAN seems to be "Blind Rafferty" -- demand "authentic" folkmusic. They would have you believe that the greatest sin a folksinger can achieve is to sound professional. Since most present-day folksingers are professionals, this seems a bit off, but we'll go into that later. Now, I don't intend to direct my statements to Rafferty -- who, I suspect, is writing tongue in cheek -- but to those people who actually believe the sentiments he expresses.

To start with, how did you -- you, the reader -- become interested in folk music? I suppose it's possible that some reader became enamoured of the art by listening to Blind Lemon Jefferson on a street corner, but it's hardly likely. There are undoubtedly readers who become fans due to hearing a recording or concert of a real genuine, unmelodious folksinger, and I suppose a few people enter "the field" by way of various historical and folklore societies. But the majority -- the large majority -- of folksong enthusiasts developed their first interest in the field by listening to Burl Ives or Harry Belafonte, or some other "commercial" folksinger.

When I started buying folk records, I discovered that there weren't many around to buy. There was, of course, Folkways Records -- high priced, poorly distributed (even today I know of no place in the state of Indiana where they can be purchased regularly, though a few stores handle perhaps one or two releases and the jazz series), and generally, rather poor listening. It was a major event when another company issued a folk record. Oh, it wasn't unknown -- Decca put out an occasional folk album along with their hillbilly works, and Victor was issuing the John Jacob Niles albums. But they were pretty rare. Then came Burl Ives, and folkmusic became "respectable". Ives was blatantly commercial -- and has become moreso, with the passing of time -- even though he knew enough about the field to sing as authentically as Leadbelly, if he wanted to. He didn't want to -- authenticity didn't buy meals, and Ives' brand of commercialism made him a very good living. He was the first really popular folksinger -- others had achieved some fame among enthusiasts, or on the night-club circuit, but Ives was the first to make a hit with the general public. For a long time he was the only one.

All the time, however, he was developing the market for folkmusic. The public wanted more, and the Weavers came along in time to cash in on the demand. And to increase the market still more. Then Harry Belafonte made his appearance, and practically revolutionized the record industry. Suddenly there were folkmusic records all over the place. Elektra, Riverside, Tradition, Dyer-Bennett, Stinson, Folkways ...there will be more before the boom is over. The big companies began to be interested. Victor, having Belafonte, didn't need much else, but

Coulson (2)

they did revive the old Niles albums (for which I am everlastingly grateful). Columbia began boosting Ives and looking around for more. Decca tried a variety of albums, and new companies just entering the recording field began offering folk records, some of them quite good. (Particularly Win Stracke's offering from Bally, Terra Lea's from HiFi Records, and possibly the Glory record featuring the Tarriers.

You may sneer at "commercial" folkmusic, but it has done more to preserve the field than all of your authentic singers and authentic societies put together. Without it, folkmusic would still be in the dying-on-the-vine condition it was in twenty years ago.

There is still another side to commercialism. The "purists" seem to regard a bad voice as a prime requisite to authenticity. (They may make an exception of Pete Seeger, but I suspect a lot of them secretly believe that his voice is too good to be really genuine.) The only criticism of Dyer-Bennett that I have ever heard is that his voice is too good for his material. Now this is definitely odd. In no other field is a poor singer acclaimed simply because he is a poor singer. The standard excuse (I won't dignify it by calling it a reason) for this is that good voices aren't "authentic". True, the average hill-billy who went about his work singing "Barbary Allan" didn't have much of a voice, and somebody like Artus Moser or O Bray Ramsey probably sounds pretty much like him. But the excuse misses one point. The singer did as good a job as he could. In a songfest it was the best singer who led the songs (except for the times when a poorer singer knew the songs better). At any rate, while the result might not have been very musical, it was the best that could be done. The wandering minstrels of Elizabethan England may not have had much musical training, but they had more training and better voices than the people around them. There were the best that could be obtained.

The person who objects to a good voice and new arrangements, in folkmusic, is simply saying that the entire field isn't good enough to compete with modern composers. The man who says that Dyer-Bennett's voice is too good for his material is saying that the material isn't worth doing well. Personally, I don't feel that way. I like folk music, and I'm interested in hearing it done as well as possible. If Dyer-Bennett, or Josh White, or the Norman Luboff Choir, can present the songs more musically than Woody Guthrie or Leadbelly, then they should be applauded. Naturally, arrangements -- in any musical field -- can be overdone, and some commercial versions of folksongs destroy the basic beauty of the song, turning it into just another pop song. But condemning a singer just because he sounds professional is idiotic. It's like refusing to support Stan Kenton because he doesn't play "authentic" jazz. Every singer "arranges" the songs he sings to fit his voice. The "authentic" folksingers may not do this consciously but they do it, if only because it is physically impossible for one singer to exactly duplicate the performance of another. "Commercial" arrangers merely do a better job of it than the average.

I have very little regard for the "expert" who tells me in one breath that folkmusic is music which has been sung, changed, and added to, by generations of singers, and in the next breath objects to a

Coulson (3)

present-day singer who makes changes and additions.

And there are still a lot of folksong lovers who prefer music to hog-calling.

--Robert Coulson
Wabash, Indiana
September 1957

LETTER EXCERPTS

Steve Werdenschlag
WKCR-FM
Columbia University
NYC 27

Dear Lee,

Since December 1954, I have been singing host on my own weekly "Folk Music Around the World," over Columbia University's campus radio stations: WKRC-AM...and WKRC-FM (89.9Mc) which transmits by "city-wide" FM, as far as our 9.9 watts pushes the signals (north as far as Westchester; south as far as the Village-if you have a good set...)

We fans and students of folkmusic love it not only for the music itself, but also because it's a reflection of the traditions, attitude, and culture of a group of people. We enjoy the interpretation of folk music by a traditional singer (e.g., Jean Ritchie, Frank Warner), because it has a meaning to the singer. Yet should one of our moitie who is not a traditional singer attempt the same thing, we judge the performance by how he has adopted, for the duration of the song, the culture of the original singer. For this reason, we'll praise the work of Theo Bikel, and not of William Clauson; for this reason, we'll praise Richard Dyer-Bennett's and even possibly Mantovani's interpretation of Greensleeves, but not Guy Lombardo's. Dick Dyer-Bennett told me how he and Huddie Ledbetter used to trade songs - how Dick would sing Green Corn (and he still does), and how Huddie would sing Binnorie - and they'd both have a whale of a time doing it - but quite obviously, we wouldn't, listening to it. What folk music lovers label and criticize as "creeping commercialism" is actually, instead, a repudiation, by the performer, of the cultural context of the song.

Now, to examine the question of genuine commercialism; a question I'm faced with, since 1/3rd of my audience consists of folk music lovers and the other 2/3rds begin and end their knowledge with Blue Tail Fly. The latter just don't dig ethnic stuff. And to them, instrumental breaks are dead air. And other treasures, like the magnificent African choral chants from the repertoires of Salitan, Seeger, and Darling - we can listen to them all night, but the millions of people who belong to the milieu garde must stop after three minutes.

To be sure, we can try to teach them to grow a liking for it, but we can't throw the entire works at them at once. It took two years to

Werdenschlag (2)

do a Leadbelly Memorial program, and even then I had to sandwich in a Harry Belafonte record (Sylvie, showing how Belafonte assembled it from Huddie's Silvy and Midnight Special). Also, although I have sung in twenty-four different languages on the program, there are always at least five songs in English per show - with non-English songs I have to take it slow.

Then, how do I cope with the problem of having two distinct audiences? I couldn't, with any intellectual integrity, play the Lombardo records and call them folk music. Instead, I just choose the folk music that I consider genuine, good and commercial - and there is so much to choose from, I cannot understand why some people consider this a hard task. Of course, one must start with the sophisticated, white-tie-and-tails-on-the-concert-stage folk music - and with patience, work toward the more traditional material. The too-purist may justifiably say he doesn't like high-class folk music, but he is a musical snob if he declares that a trained voice or talented arrangement cannot be associated with 100%-real folksong. (And why is it that he is the same person who longs to hear Lead, Niles & Lunsford in hi-fi?)

To change the subject: you desire information from my private files about a record that is guarded by my private Burns detectives twenty-three hours and ten minutes per day (I play it through twice a day). It is a 10" LP, Fantasy 3-15, and its full title is "The Tin Angel Presents Odetta and Larry". Larry is Larry Mohr, and Odetta - well, it seems to me that people are trying to keep her last name a secret so I won't spill it - but, sh! it's mentioned on the back of the jacket. There are solos by each, and some duets; they were recorded in regular studios as well as at the 'Frisco waterfront's Tin Angel night club. There songs are Car Car, I'll Tickle Nancy, Rock Island Line, John Henry, Cotton Fields at Home, Old Blue, Payday at Cold Creek, Cane on the Brazos, The Tailor Boy (i.e., The Chandler's Wife, The Thing), Water Boy, and Ten Thousand Years Ago-The Biggest Thing. My favorites are Odetta's Cane on the Branzos, and the duet of Cotton Fields. Larry can't compare to Odetta, but then who can?

Steve Werdenschlag

A postcard inquiry from

Lionel Coots
Richmond Hill
Queens, NY

Blind Rafferty:

Is SING OUT being published in Braille now, or is the appellation "Blind" based solely upon your critical acumen?

Lionel Coots

Letter excerpts



Robert Coulson
Wabash, Indiana

Dear Lee,

I will say that Rafferty stuck his foot in his mouth at one point, though. He commends Pete Seeger because "He is not 'preserving' folklore but living it..." Yet at the end of the column he expresses appreciation of Tom Paley and Frank Warner, who most certainly are "preserving" folklore, in every way. Warner, especially, is quite consciously attempting to record the songs exactly the way they sounded to him -- preserved on, if not in, wax. What Rafferty seems to mistake for authenticity is merely an authentically bad voice.

R.C.

Tom Condit
NYC

Lee:

I found Lefkowitz' comments anent Rafferty mostly valid, but for pure, sickening, "genteel, sophisticated and even false" hogwash with regard to folkmusic, Lionel Coots takes the cake -- all frosted with little candies in the shape of "Spanish classical guitars". I am afraid that I cannot see and never could see this viewpoint, anymore than I can see the opposite view that musical education and skill disqualify a man in folkmusic. A pursuance of this sophisticated view of folkmusic would eventually lead us to something as emasculated as modern jazz and produce a school of singers making feeble attempts at imitating John Jacob Niles and possibly Ewan MacColl -- neither of whom is apt to be matched by the average exponent of this viewpoint.

I don't have much to say on Rafferty's column except that I agree on Pete Seeger's stature as a folksinger -- I think the most outstanding thing about his is his unity with what he is singing, not thrusting himself forward, singing with a "style" but identifying himself with each song seperately, individually, so that the listener says to himself: "This is the way this song should be sung." A Seeger album often sings like 4 or 5 different singers -- compare on Darling Corey, for instance, the title song, "Ida Red", and "Skillet Good and Greasy" with "Danville Girl."

Brunner's Zom sounds like a London edition of Roy Berkeley.

Incidentally, I hope my remarks on Brother Coots didn't give the impression that I am a member of the school of folkmusic purists who reject anything that isn't real folksylike or a product of rough, untutored musical geniuses from the backwoods -- I'm mostly in agreement with Lefkowitz on such matters, tho I also like Tennessee Ernie, Harry Belafonte and Roy Acuff.

Condit (2)

Just one question before I close--why is it that no one in the NY area is familiar with that fine folksinger Pick Temple?

Tom Condit

((You mean the Pick Temple who, after recording for the Library of Congress, made an album of folksongs on "X" label, containing a ballad of his own composition called THE RUNAWAY LOGGING TRAIN? -Ed))

Mary Corby
East Keansburg, NJ

Dear Lee:

I was quite intrigued by John Brunner's anecdote about Jim McGreg and his comment about what the children of Glasgow sang in the streets at play. I understand that these days they sing mostly parodies of "Davy Crockett". When I was a child in the streets of Pollokshaws, a Glasgow suburb, we sang all kinds of songs--the old Scottish folk-songs, Irish songs, popular songs of the day, but mostly singing games like "We Are The Rovers", "There Stands a High Prison", "Down In Yonder Valley", and my favorite, "The Three Sisters". Singing, in the streets at play, and at home around the fireplace, was an important part of our lives. Admittedly, though, that was a long time ago!

John also asks about "We are three brethren out of Spain". That is, I believe, a singing game called "Three Knights From Spain". Like most singing games it probably is evolved from an old ballad. I am trying to find out more about the game and if I learn anything, I'll pass it on.

I don't know if the following words for the Three Ravens are those sung by Richard Dyer-Bennet, but they are the ones I know. There are a number of variations of this and a similar old ballad (Scottish) with a different tune called The Twa Corbies (The Two Crows). Burl Ives sings a song called The Two Crows with the tune from The Three Ravens, and there is another called The Three Crows sung to the tune of Johnny Comes Marching Home.

The Three Ravens

There were three ravens sat on a tree,
Down a-down, hey down, hey down,
They were as black as they might be,
With a down.
The one of them said to his mate,
"Where shall we now our breakfast take?"
With a down, derry, derry, derry down, down.

Behold, alas! in yon green field,
There lies a knight slain under his shield,
His hounds lie down beside his feet,
So well do they their master keep.

Corby (2)

His faithful hawks so near him fly
No bird of prey dare venture nigh.
But see, there comes a fallow doe
And to the knight she straight doth go.

She lifted up his ghastly head
And kissed his wounds that were so red.
She buried him before the prime
And died herself ere eventime.

The "down a-down, and derry down's" are inserted between each line as in the first verse.

Also, did you know there was a Scottish version of The Golden Vanity? In this the hero, being a resourceful Scot, doesn't die, and all ends happily, not like the supine Saxon in the English version. (Now that should start a lovely battle for you!)

Sincerely,

Mary Corby

((Raven fans note: versions of The Three Ravens, The Twa Corbies and an American version, The Crow Song (Billy Magee Magar) are all on one record, Riverside's THE BALLAD RECORD sung by ED McCURDY, RLP 12-601))

Sandy Sandfield
London, England

Dear Lee:

The skiffers of London have made "Rock Island" their very own by creating a version called "Piccadilly Line" named after one of the London Underground lines. The burthen is "...The Piccadilly Line's a mighty fine line, You can go anywhere for fourpence on the Piccadilly Line..." Which isn't quite true, of course. The fourpence is a sort of sidelong glance at the world famed whores of Piccadilly, the cheapest of whom are supposed at one time to have charged four pennies (1/3 of a shilling) for their wares. Rather like the famous ones of New Orleans, who would lay a blanket on the sidewalk for 10¢.

Do you know of a 1914/18 song something like this:

"Outside a Belgain estaminet,
When the smoke had cleared away,
Underneath a busted Camel
It's former pilot lay...etc."

Sincerely,
Sandy

((Sounds like another version of the Dying Aviator or Handsome Young Airman, which we've run in earlier issues. Is there more to it?))

Dave Van Ronk

now hear this...

JEAN RITCHIE FIELD TRIP - Collector Limited Edition #1201
NEGRO PRISON SONGS - Tradition TLP 1020

Since both of these albums are field recordings dealing with aspects of American folkmusic, I think that it might be a good idea to review them together. To begin with, I like them and I think that they are both "musts" for the serious listener in the folkmusic field.

The Ritchie album for its format alone would make a welcome addition to the collection of any folkmusic fan. Miss Ritchie, on a Fulbright grant, spent a full year traipsing around the British Isles with a tape recorder, and these recordings are the outcome of that trip. By now, just about everyone knows that the bulk of American folkmusic is descended from tunes brought over by settlers from the British Isles, but the way this album puts this across is far more forceful than all the learned treatises on the subject strung together.

Miss Ritchie simply takes a song and presents us with versions of it from the Old World and juxtaposes these with an American version. The English, Irish and Scotch songs are sung by people of those countries while Miss Ritchie sings the American versions herself. Apart from the format, the songs and the singing to be heard in this collection are of the highest calibre. Damn it, the folk can really sing! And Jean Ritchie is at her best, which is pretty good.

The most wonderful thing about this album is the impression of homogeneity which is given. English, Irish, Scotch and American songs sung by native musicians fitting together with not the slightest bit of discontinuity, and driving home with direct freshness that musically we belong to the same tradition and are no mere "offshoot".

The album of Negro prison songs is no less enlightening or entertaining. In 1947 Alan Lomax took a tape recorder and some of the paper recording tape then in use, to Parchman State Farm in Mississippi, where he and his father had found such a fertile field in the '30's. The resulting recordings were transcribed for release just in time, in the last few months, as the paper tapes were disintegrating from age.

The force and power of these songs have to be heard to be believed. Here are work songs as sung by men while actually working. I've played them for a great many people and the universal reaction is one of awe. There is a massive quality to this entire record, which stirs the listener, and there is a grim kind of humor in the words -- "When she walks she reels and rocks behind/ Ain't that enough to worry a convict's mind..." or "Mattie, don't you marry no convict man/ I declare, every day be Monday, hoe handle in your hand..."

Van Ronk (2)

The recordings of soloists cannot compare in intensity to the choral work songs, but believe me, they're intense enough, and well worth listening to.

The enclosed booklet of notes has Alan Lomax's characteristic attention to detail, with full texts of all the songs, and much in the way of information about the songs, the singers, and the recordings. This record is a document of a vivid part of America.

--Anyway, I hate to talk about records in this way...it's worse than trying to describe a painting. Go buy them and write your own review -- you can't lose on either of them.

---Dave Van Ronk

P.S. I doubt if you can obtain the Ritchie album through most record stores; it's a limited edition (I have no idea how limited) but you might try writing to "Collector Limited Editions"

43 W 46th St.
New York 19, N.Y.

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NOTE: The record the JEAN RITCHIE FIELD TRIP is available in a very small quantity from FOLKLORE CENTER, 110 MacDougal St., New York City, for \$5 per record, mail orders add 25¢ for handling and postage. This record is highly recommended by the staff of CARAVAN. Tradition's NEGRO PRISON SONGS is also available from Folklore Center, as are the records listed below. You can write to them for prices and further information.

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YEDITOR: HERE:

Speaking of records, I want to mention several of the recent additions to my own collection. First, IRISH TRADITIONAL SONGS on Folkways 10" FW 861, sung by Sorcha Ni Ghuarin, in Gaelic. This is one of the most beautiful records I've ever heard. I recommend it without reservation. THE BONNIE BUNCH OF ROSES on Tradition TLP 1013, Uilleann pipes, tin whistle and folk songs of Ireland sung and played by Seamus Ennis, may be limited in its appeal. Some people don't care for the uilleann pipes. But to those who do, and to those of you who enjoy traditional Irish music, this one is highly recommended. If you've heard Seamus Ennis (he's on the Jean Ritchie Field Trip record) I don't need to go into further detail for you. You've probably bought this record already. KENTUCKY FOLK SONGS AND BALLADS as sung by Logan English on Folkways 10" FA 2136 is an important collection of folk music. Most of these songs are unusual (to me, at least) variants of more familiar items. It is a very entertaining and listenable record.

-----yed

Rumor has it that the fabulous songs of the Bosses' Artists have been collected for release in chapbook form. The same rumor has it that the book will be available at the price of 25¢ per copy, from FOLKLORE CENTER. More information will be given in the next issue of CARAVAN, if available.

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NEW YORK SCENE

COMING EVENTS seem to be coming thick and fast this month. For instance on FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11th, Montoya will be playing at TOWN HALL. Curtain is at 8:30, tickets are \$1.80, \$2.80 and \$3.30 (tax inc.) You can get tickets to this performance at Folklore Center, if you hurry.

The same evening, OCTOBER 11th, at 8:40, there'll be a HOOTENANNY at CARNEGIE HALL, all seats \$1.80 (tax inc.) On the program will be Theodore Bikel, Earl Robinson, Sonny Terry, Leon Bibb, Betty Sanders, Jerry Silverman, Israeli Singers, Bhaskar & Sasha Hindu Dancers, and many others. Again, tickets are available at Folklore Center. If you plan to attend this Hoot, bear in mind that, by the hour of the last Hoot tickets were at such a premium that the entrance to the hall was surrounded by people hopeful of persuading ticket-holders of parting with their tickets at almost any price.

The following evening, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 12, Folklore Center is presenting an evening of folksongs, ballads and instrumentals with Dave and Phyllis Berk, Pat Foster, and Dick Weissman. If you've been around the local folk scene long, you'll know Dick as one of the best 5-string banjo pickers to have come out of the woods in a long time. The show will be at Provincetown Playhouse on MacDougal St. Curtain time is 8:45 PM, and tickets are \$1.50 & \$2.00 (all seats reserved). Naturally, tickets are available at Folklore Center.

FOLKLORE CENTER is available at 110 MacDougal Street from 2PM to Midnight, phone GR 3-7590. Folklore Center (in case you've missed the first two issues of CARAVAN) is just as the name implies, the center of folklore activity in NYC. It is a shop dealing in books, records, folk instruments and what-have-you pertinent to the field, and occasionally items having no connection whatsoever with the field. For information on anything in the folk field in NYC, Folklore Center is the place to go. And when you go there, you're likely as not to run into an impromptu session of folksinging and picking in the back of the shop.

FOLKDANCERS, take note: There is a great deal of information on various folk dance groups posted at Folklore Center. I'm sorry I haven't room here this issue to give listings of activities, but whether you're a folkdancer, or would like to become a folkdancer, or just want to watch folkdancers, there's something going on you'd be interested in. Drop by the Center and have a good look at the bulletins on the wall.

New group active in NYC is the outfit sponsoring the INTERNATIONAL MUSIC SESSIONS. They've given two sessions so far, and will probably be underway with a third very soon. They feature "creative sounds & rhythms, vocal and instrumental" with such rare fare as saxophone solo accompanied by drums; flamenco guitars; steel bands; exotic dancers; and such performers as Jay Scarlatti and Pat Foster. Check with Folklore Center for more information on the INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC SESSIONS.
