



Various **“There Is No Eye: Music For Photographs”** Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

The twenty-three tracks on this compilation recording are drawn from the Smithsonian’s extensive sound archive and are accompanied [in the liner booklet] by photographs of the artists involved, taken by celebrated lensman, archivist and musician, John Cohen. In a career spanning the past fifty years, Cohen has photographed [and also recorded in the case of some of these tracks] the internationally acclaimed as well as the irrevocably obscure. This disc includes a previously unissued 1962 rendition of “Roll On John” by Bob Dylan, and “Ramblin’ Round” cut fifteen years earlier by Dylan’s mentor Woody Guthrie, as well as contributions from Rev. Gary Davis, Muddy Waters, Doc Watson and Alan Lomax. The material featured is not exclusively American in origin. For instance, Mary Townsley’s contribution, the tender ballad “Young But Growing,” was cut in her home town of Dundee, Scotland. Elsewhere, “Paloma Blanca” was recorded in the village square of Sacsamarca, Peru, while the set opens with a Harlem, New York church choir literally rocking their way through the spiritual “Thank You, Lord.” Back in 1958 Cohen was a founding member of The New Lost City Ramblers, along with Mike Seeger [mandolin] - Pete’s half brother, and Tom Paley [fiddle]. When Paley left in 1962 Tracy Schwarz replaced him and while the trio was initially prolific in the recording studio, they have only occasionally reunited in recent decades. Towards the end of the collection the Ramblers contribute a 1996 rendition of “Buck Creek Girls,” while an element of nepotism surfaces in this collection with the inclusion of “So Long: Go,” a 2001 track from John’s son, Rufus accompanied by Wade Patterson. Plus, Sonya Cohen, John’s daughter, along with Dick Cornette [spinnet] performs “Who’ll Water My Flowers?” This truly wonderful compilation not only gives witness to the preservation of the folk music tradition in the latter half of the twentieth century, it is accompanied by a well annotated, 36-page, liner booklet that traces and explains the continuing relevance of that heritage.

Folkwax Rating 7out of 10

Arthur Wood

Kerrville Kronikles 04/02