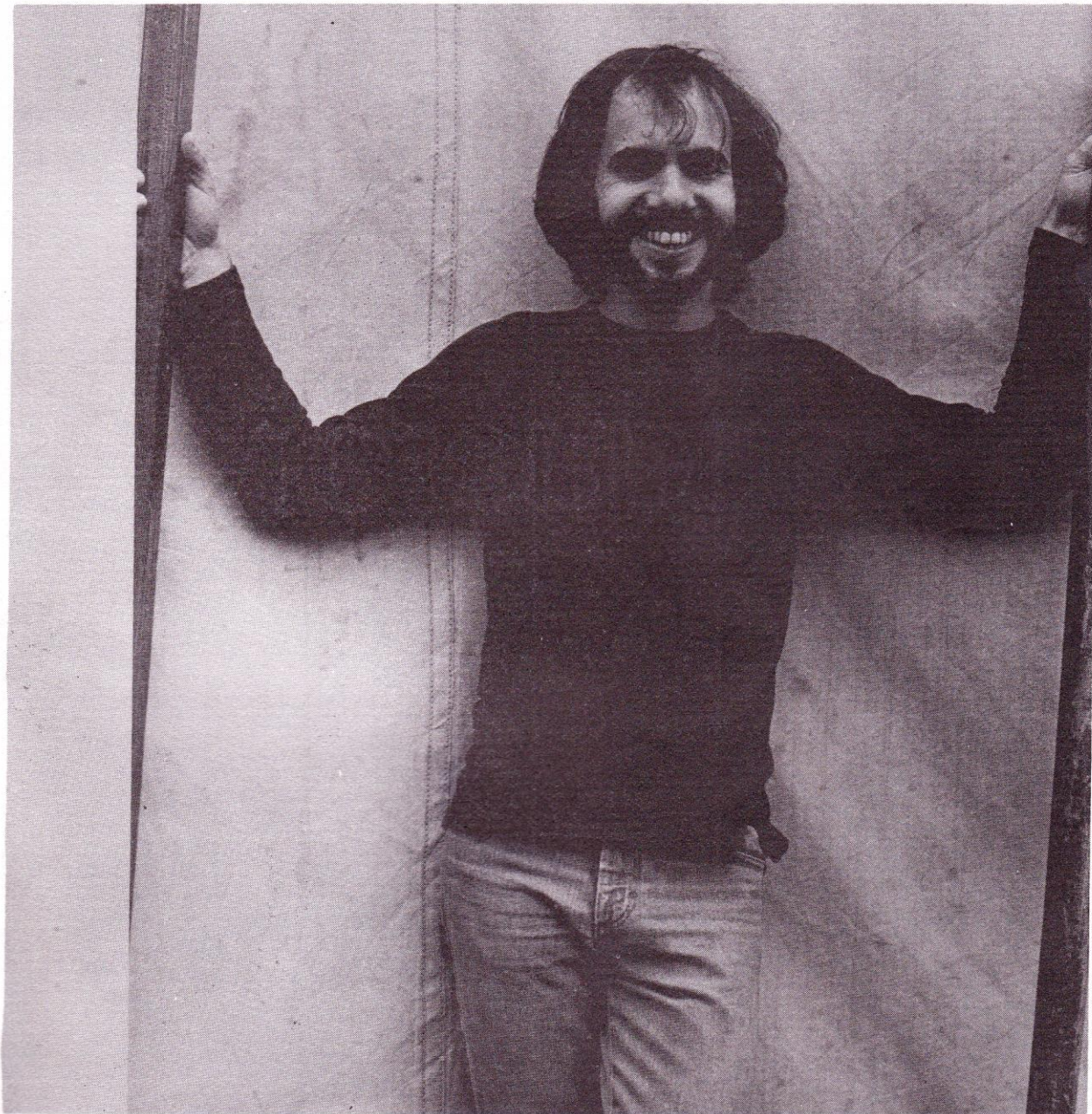


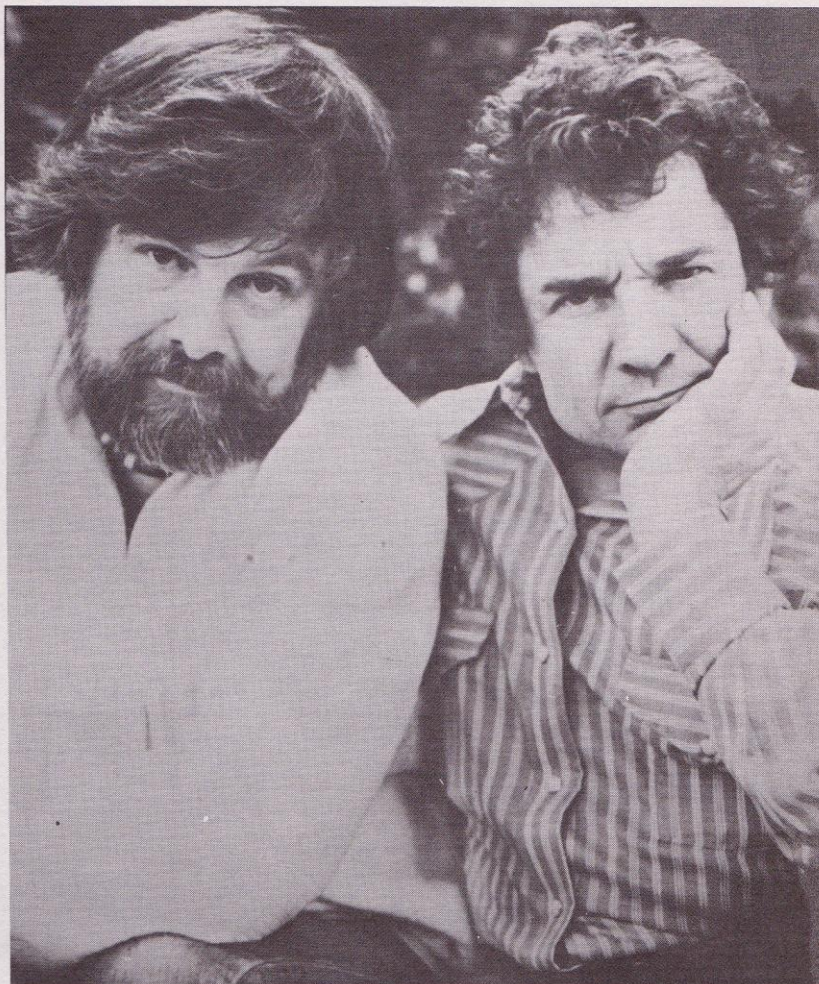
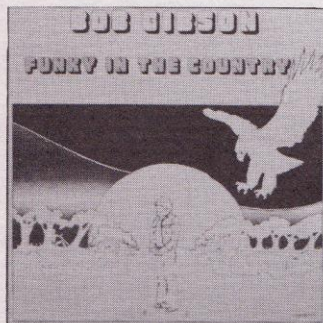
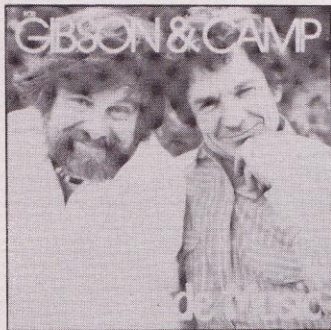
OMAHA RAINBOW

39



**BOB GIBSON PETE SEEGER
ROXY GORDON JOHN STEWART
STEVE GOODMAN RICHARD DOBSON
SPRING 1987 £1 \$2**

BOB GIBSON



GATE OF HORN by Jacques Levy and Roger McGuinn

Recorded by Roger McGuinn on his album, "Peace on You".

CBS 80171 - Released in 1974.

Goin' to the Gate of Horn / In my memory / Red light
flickerin' on the tablecloth / Big, dark beer in front of me
How I wish that I was there / Standin' at the bar
Listenin' to Mr. Gibson play / On his fine guitar

It's a big old twelve-string / And it went like this

Gate of Horn, Gate of Horn / Glad I was Chicago born
Gate of Horn / Meant everything to me

I was barely seventeen / Little salty, and a little green
Gate of Horn / Meant everything to me

Once in a while they'd play a little jig

There was Judy and Peter and Josh and Odetta / The Clancies
and Mary and Paul made it better / Grossman and Tommy and
Dickie and Lou / And when no one was looking / McGuinn was
there too

Then they came and tore it down / Songbirds scattered and we
all left town / Gate of Horn / Meant everything to me

In Omaha Rainbow 4 (all those years ago) Barry Ballard spoke
to Roger McGuinn.....

Tell me about 'Gate of Horn'. Would you say that Bob
Gibson was a hero of yours?

Bob Gibson was an early influence in my folk career. He came
to my high school and I used to hang around the Gate of Horn
which was a very good folk club. Jacques (Levy) said, "Let's
write a song about something nostalgic. What is there in

your memory that you'd like to go back to?" and so I told
him about the Gate of Horn, and we took it from there.

Twelve years later, Arthur Wood spoke to the truly legendary
Bob Gibson at the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas, thereby
providing an interview I had long hoped to see in an issue
of Omaha Rainbow. Like all good stories, he began with.....

So we start off on the 16th November 1931 with Mr. and
Mrs. Gibson's little baby boy, Bob Gibson.....

That's right, on Jane Street in Greenwich Village in New
York City. My parents lived there at that time, although I
was actually born in Brooklyn across the river. My mother
happened to be visiting my aunt, so that's how I happened to
be born there. It took me 30 years to return to the Village,
for the folk music boom, but I started out there.

I believe your father was a singer.

As a hobbyist, he was. He did that a lot. Gibby Gibson was
his nickname. Sam Gibson Snr., was his real name. He'd had
an opportunity as a kid to be a singer.....when he came back
from the First World War he had his own radio show. His
family urged him to become a chemical engineer, which is
what he became. He got into the field of market research and
was one of the early guys in that. He'd sing at the
gatherings at home when friends of my mother and father
would come over. My father would sit down at the piano and
sing 'Makushla' and 'Mother McCree'. He had that kind of a
pure Irish tenor voice, it was wonderful. I got the message
early and was imprinted with the idea that people like it
when you make music. He never worked as a professional
singer once he chose to be in the world of commerce. That's
what he stayed with.

When did you become serious about music?

Professionally much later. When I was in school I always liked the chorus a lot better than algebra. I liked song better than science so I tended towards any of those kind of things and stayed away from as many of the others as I could. For my last three years I went to school in a city that had a very very active catholic church kind of community theatre programme. Very ambitious. It was a city, only 30,000....Peekskill, New York, was the name of it. The Guardian Church. For instance, they had a mixed chorus for the 9 o'clock Mass. Then for the 11 O'clock High Mass they'd have men and boys. Boys singing soprano and alto, men bass and baritone. Singing all early liturgical music, Palestrina and Gregorian Chants, stuff like that. At the time I didn't realise what a wonderful exposure I was getting. The organist who put these choirs together was real far out because he also did a lot of community theatre; again, for the parish and the community generally. We did Bertold Brecht. We did "Down in the Valley" which was my first taste of folk music....I can't think of the guy who wrote that. It was an operetta based upon traditional songs. We did "HMS Pinafore", stuff like that, so again a lot of exposure to a lot of good music.

What age were you at this time?

About 15 to 16, right in there.

I know you did your first TV work in 1954, so what were you doing between 1947 through to 1954?

I was in the Merchant Navy for a couple of years, sailing coastal tankers out of New Jersey and down to Texas ports... Corpus Christi, places like that. Trying to avoid the draft. In those days if you sailed as a merchant seaman you didn't have to go in the army. I thought I'd be in trouble if I went in the army, I thought I'd be in the brig all the time. I kept sailing as a merchant seaman because of this. Whenever we went down to New Orleans, though, I never made the ship on time. I never got back to it. Finally I got a notice from the Draft Board that I'd been off the ship long enough to qualify for a Draft Board interview. I think you were only given 29 days on shore. If you spent 30 days off the ship you had to show up for the draft. I showed up but I was unfit anyway. It was an interesting experience being a merchant seaman in the black gang below decks. You know, a wiper. (Laughs)

Then I did....I was in business for a while. I had a few jobs. Then I heard about a guy who had a speed reading programme. He called it The Reading Laboratory and, of course, he didn't call it speed reading. We called it development reading and tried to sell it to business executives, with a certain amount of success as a matter of fact. They did so much reading anyway that if we could double their reading speed they'd end up being much better executives. Climb the ladder of success faster and achieve 'The American Dream' sooner. Enough of them bought it and we made a living. Of course, you had to sort of convince people that they really needed it.

Were you keeping up with music as a hobby?

Not really much. I got to fooling around in the business world there. How I got back into music is kind of through Pete Seeger in a way. A friend of mine was writing some articles from France. He was going to the Sorbonne on the GI Bill. One of the people he wrote about was Big Bill Broonzy, the blues singer from Chicago. Big Bill kept talking about Pete Seeger and my friend, Dick Miller, got real interested in doing an article on Pete Seeger. Coincidentally, while Dick was writing his articles he would send them to me and I was syndicating in the States. They would go on what was called the Op. Ed. page of a number of newspapers and they'd pay us something like \$15 each. The first time Dick sold one to the Cleveland Plain Dealer, which was his home town, he immediately said that if we syndicated them and sold them to ten papers, we'd get \$150, and if we could get thirty in, so the money would just keep increasing....so that's what we were trying to do, with a certain amount of success, I might add. When he came back to the States the first thing he wanted to do was to go to Pete Seeger's and interview Pete. In total naivete, we set out one day. We never called, we never wrote him a letter to say we were coming or find out if he was home. We just went there.

I'd been raised not far from where Pete grew up....I mean, I was living at the time. That was Beacon, New York State. I grew up in Putnam County. I started out in the Village but the family kept moving further and further out of the city. I knew the territory and I knew how to get there and all. So up we went, and we arrived at Pete's house and he's working on this....it was a field stone addition to this cabin. He

had built a log cabin on this hill overlooking the Hudson River. His whole thing was "go back to the land". He was going to build his house that he and his family could live in, from materials off the property. The first section was logs that he'd cut down. Then he wanted to add more, like for a studio and another bedroom, so he was building it out of field stone.

He was working on this little chimney section, and he had sort of a home made scaffolding that he was up on. Dick said, "I've come up to interview you". He said, "I haven't got the time. I've got to go to Detroit and sing in a Union Hall day after tomorrow, and I've got to build this chimney and I'm really too busy. Could you hand me that stone?". So what really happened was we ended up helping him out, the three of us, me, Dick Miller and John Revis. John was our staff photographer but he carried the beer mostly, that was his function. We spent the day helping Pete build his chimney. Real fascinating guy.

In the evening Toshi, his wife, called us and she'd made some food. Round the other side of the house, overlooking the river, there was this little patio thing. She was a Japanese woman and she'd made this wonderful food. Her father had grown most of it on this garden they had. They'd cut out some steps, these terraces, so there was cultivation going down the side of the mountain. After dinner....nice folks....nice view....nice everything. Pete took the banjo off the wall, and I remember the song he played was 'The Leather Winged Bat'. I was enchanted. He played other stuff. By the time the evening was over and he'd played a few songs, I knew I was going to get a banjo. I was going to find out more about those kind of songs because I was fascinated.

That was on a Saturday. On the Monday I went into a pawn shop and bought my first five string banjo. Spent the rent for that month and my wife was appalled. I said, "We can always find somewhere to live, but I've got to get a banjo today". She never understood my compulsion. This was about 1953. I was doing it for my own enjoyment for a little over a year and then I turned professional. The first album that was ever recorded of mine, by Stinson, was really an audition tape. I went across the river to Jersey to a little studio that was owned by this guy, Bob....I don't know his name.

This was "Folk Songs of Ohio"?

Right. I auditioned for his record company and that's why it was 22 minutes of recorded music. He told me later, "No thanks, we don't want a record of it." As soon as I started releasing records on the Riverside label, Bang!, Stinson comes out with it. Well, he never had a contract. I've never gotten a penny for it and never talked to the man since that day. At first he released 22 minutes of music on a 10" LP with big bands between the tracks. Later, when everything went to a 12" format, he re-released it. Now the bands between the songs were bigger than the songs. It's appalling but it's also of interest to me to hear where I was. I had a very high voice then and all. Really singing way up high. I had always been told and convinced that I was a tenor, so I was always trying to sing high.

Had you met Kenneth Goldstein by this stage?

I hadn't met him when I made that audition but shortly thereafter I met him. He was a very wonderful guy, very involved. He still is a good friend. Very involved as a folklorist. His interest in folk music had led him to Oren Keatnews and Bill Grower of Riverside Records and they said, "Do a catalogue for us". He began to assemble a catalogue. Fabulous stuff. The original Riverside catalogue was really great....Ewan McColl, A.L. Lloyd....some wonderful records. I did four albums for Riverside, the first one was called "offbeat Folksongs".

Were any of your own songs on that album?

No, but at that time I was already fixing songs. At that time the interest everywhere was in traditional music. I would do stuff to songs, but you never said, "I rewrote 'th's or changed anything". No, no, no. You just didn't say that. Adding words, or fixing them, or adding a last verse. What I found was that a lot of the traditional songs came out of a culture that was the grandmother teaching it to the grandchildren while they dried the dishes. Or sitting round the front porch of a cabin swapping songs. There was no time limitation then. When you're singing in a saloon and people are coming in, paying a couple of bucks to forget their lives of quiet desperation, then you don't have the same kind of freedoms. You've got to communicate and they're not family and friends. You've got to communicate something to them. That was the period when John Jacob Niles, when asked

about a song called 'Black is the Colour of My True Love's Hair', said it was something he collected in the Appalachian Mountains. When he found out that it had been recorded a number of times and that it had earned quite a bit, then Niles said, "No, I didn't collect it, I wrote it...." and write it he did, and prove it he did. That was at a time when it was not the thing to write your own songs. Traditional was the thing then. I immediately began to find fault with traditional and began to rewrite and make it work better for the audience I was singing for. I love traditional, I love the elements of it. I love the songs but sometimes for the audience, and as an entertainer, I felt I could make them work a little better. There were references, historic and words and phrases, that didn't have any meaning to a contemporary audience. They didn't know what they meant. One could be a purist and sing those songs, and some chose to be, but I need to communicate with an audience.

Let me see now, the other Riverside albums were....about that time I also started to work some of the saloons. I got real lucky. There used to be some like the Village Vanguard, which is still there in New York, it's a famous old club. The Blue Angel, which was an avant garde club on the Upper Eastside of Manhattan. I worked with a lot of great cabaret performers. The Lennie Bruces, you know. The people I got to work with were incredible because you could learn so much. I got to compete on the Arthur Godfrey Talent Show. I was a winner there. He had a morning....what they called a simulcast, it was on radio and television, and I would often make the simulcast section. He had a huge audience. In those days it was huge, a lot of exposure. Then the clubs for folk music began to arrive. I was working in Chicago when Al Grossman, the guy who started The Gate of Horn, heard me. My first job there was on the third night the joint was open. That first job there turned out to be eleven months long. That's how it used to be. You worked places two weeks minimum. It was nothing to work some places four weeks. Now it's one nighters. It's crazy you know. In those days I'd go to Cleveland and start working in a joint for two weeks. The first night nobody would be there. The second morning I'd be on the phone calling up the television stations and the newspaper reporters and saying, "Come down" or "Do you want to have lunch?" or "Let me tell you my story", trying to get some press. I tell you, by the end of two weeks there were lots of people coming to see me. You can't do that on a one-nighter. It just isn't there. If you don't have an audience, it's almost nearly impossible to build one.

How did you end up doing the TV show, "Hootenanny"?

I started what we called a hootenanny at a place called The Bitter End. I was very involved with that club. As a matter of fact, it was a coffee shop having poetry readings and bongo drum players when I said, "Hey, let's put some folk music in here", to the owner, Fred Weintraub. He's gone on to be a big movie producer. He does a lot of those Kung Fu kind of exploitation flicks. We started with folk music and then I said, "Let me do a hootenanny". Weintraub said, "Everybody's got a hootenanny. Mike Porco's got one at Folk City and there are another couple of coffee houses with them". I said, "Stick with me Fred. I haven't steered you wrong so far. I'll put a hootenanny in here. It's going to go somewhere". I started it. I asked Ed McCurdy to be the host. Ed was well respected, but not in any particular genre. He wasn't a blues singer, a ballad singer or a banjo picker, he was just something else. He worked real well, real erudite guy. That way the host didn't put any particular stamp on the occasion, like it was going to be this kind or that kind of show.

Then I would go around and say to all the artists things like, "We had a hoot Tuesday night at The Bitter End but you probably wouldn't like it. I know you wouldn't because there are a lot of agents and managers all looking for new acts. They're a real pain in the ass". Then I'd tell the publishers, "Aw, you wouldn't have liked it, man. Nothing but new writers, nobody you guys would know. They're all a bunch of kids just got off the bus with their guitars". Tell the agents and managers the same thing. Well, it became a meat market, everybody went there, everybody was there. It was where it was happening. You know, the Theo Bikel and Pete Seegers and Jean Ritchies coming in to do their acts.

Finally Fred got the guys from Ashley Famous Artists, which was an agency that was beginning to produce television, to come down and I put together a one hour hootenanny for them. It was a Tuesday night hootenanny, but a very special one. They saw it and said, "This would be a great television show. We'll do it with a live audience, just this way". So of course, I appeared a number of times on Hootenanny. Never really liked it. Was at great odds with the management and the producers all the time because they blew the most

important concept of all. This was not to book an artist and turn over to him and say, "Do whatever you want in your slot", but rather ask a guy, "Why don't you do that song", so that the producer....the person who is creating the show is working with a known palette, rather than, "We'll give him seven minutes. I don't know what he's going to do. After that we'll do that. I don't know what's going to happen next, maybe we'll have a commercial". Instead it was a case of, "Let's ask the artist to duplicate moments that we know about". No spontaneity.

For instance, once in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Josh White is there along with the musical director, Fred Weintraub and Josh's manager. They're all sitting down and Josh is coming up with some suggestions and they're going to decide what songs Josh is going to do. He does a little bit of 'Strange Fruit'. I don't know if you ever heard Josh White, but he would absolutely put an audience away with that song. His voice also wavered a little bit. It was a very difficult song for him to sing and he'd been drinking and smoking a lot of cigarettes and stuff over the years. It was mesmerising but all they could hear was that his voice wavered, it wasn't a pure clean tone. They said, "Well, that won't do". The impact, almost invariably on an audience, from that song from Josh was something you could really work with. So they said, "No, let's not do that one, let's do something else", and they listened to a song called 'Scarlet Ribbons' which Josh used to do. The same one Harry Belafonte recorded and made famous. It's a ballad. It starts here, develops completely and ends there. The producer said, "That's wonderful, it's exactly what we want. Could you cut a little bit out?" I couldn't believe the guy asked him to do that. He obviously hadn't heard what the hell Josh was singing. Those guys used to make me nuts.

Something I used to do at the end of hootenannys was that I evolved this thing about, let's all get together and we'll do a 'come all ye' type of song. It's a nice thing when there are several different artists who can get together to try something different. It's great when artists are willing to try and make music together. They instituted the singalong as a standard with the damned show. So they're doing 'Kumbaya' one time and they had it in a terrible key and they're doing it too fast. They would shoot somebody doing a verse and then they'd back off and show a whole shot of the assembled cast singing it. They'd roll the credits over it, then they'd zoom back in again, all this shit. I got to my verse and I didn't think they were zoomed in, so I sang, "Someone's kidding, Lord, Kumbaya". I was just pissed off with the whole issue. Well, don't you know, that's what made the final cut. The producer saw it and I didn't work there again.

When did you meet Jac Holzman?

I met Jac before I went to work for Elektra. There were only a couple of small record companies back then that were doing folk music. There is a parallel, in a way, between what was happening in the late 50s and what has happened in the last few years. A lot of similarities. Second four years of a Republican President, terrible recession that the country went through. Lot of major record companies went under..... Dot, Decca completely ceased to exist. Some very small offbeat labels like Atlantic, which was a jazz label, Elektra, which was a really esoteric folk label, began to do well. Riverside came and went. Jac was doing folk music, Theo Bikel and a couple of things like that, so you couldn't not know who was in the field. He asked me if I would do an album for him. He wanted to do me and Hamilton Camp. Gibson and Camp was like a meteoric thing. A shooting star. Burned ourselves out just about that quickly, as well.

I thought the first album you did for Elektra was "Ski Songs".

I think it was "Ski Songs". You see, I was living in Aspen. I moved up to Aspen in 1957 and stayed there till 1961. I was skiing there all the spare time I had but I was also travelling a lot. I'd go to Dallas and Chicago and New York to work, but I'd always be real happy to get home to Aspen. When it was ski time and the snow was good it was real hard to get me out of that town. You had to pay me more than when there was no snow. I started to write some songs with a couple of gals who worked for the Denver Post. We were trying to do a musical about skiing. Nothing came of that but a couple of those songs were real keepers. I began to sing them in my show and I progressively wrote more and more ski songs. People would be out on the slopes all day and come in and be drinking and they'd love those songs about skiing. The next thing I knew there was enough songs for an album. By the way, it was the biggest selling album I've ever cut. It seems a little isolated subjectwise but, no, there are a lot of skiers and I made a lot of money from

that album. A song called 'Super Skier', which the Chad Mitchell Trio recorded and had a big hit with.

Was that the original Chad Mitchell lineup or the one with.....

With John Deutchendorf. The only time Denver ever recorded one of my songs was when he first joined the Chad Mitchell Trio and was still calling himself John Deutchendorf. Yeah, "Ski Songs" was the first one for Elektra, and then "Gibson and Camp" followed by "Yes I See". Jac Holzman couldn't believe it because we spent \$1600 to produce that third album. We had five of the hottest gospel singers in LA along with their band, which included a piano player and a bongo player. I had guitar players, guys like Tommy Tedesco, he played on that album. I mean, the playing was hot. I love that album and it was one of the first times where a white guy sang with black chicks. It was great. Everything in those days went right to two tracks. I was really the producer of that album. I had all the conceptual stuff and all. Somebody wrote some sheets for the girls and the other musicians. Half the album was them, half of it wasn't. Some of the songs were written by me, some by Shel Silverstein, and I also wrote with Fred Neil.

Where did you first meet Shel Silverstein?

At The Gate of Horn. He was living over at the mansion then....at the Playboy mansion. He'd come to The Gate. A lot of the bunnies would also come to The Gate. It was different, a lot of creative energy around there. They'd be working at the Playboy Club all night, being hit on all the time, and they'd come over to The Gate because nobody would hit on them there. After the show there was a lot of sitting around singing at the bar. That's where I started to sing with Camp. The month I was there with Camp in '60, I brought Judy Collins in from Denver and introduced her to Jac Holzman. Got her her first recording deal there.

Was Silverstein still working as a cartoonist at this point?

He was exclusively doing cartoons. The first song he ever wrote was with Bobby Camp. A thing called 'The First Battalion'. It's part of what is known as 'The Civil War Trilogy' on that first album Camp and I did together. The next song he wrote was 'You're Wasting Your Time Trying to Make Me Settle Down With Me.' He had never written a song before then. How that song came about was I was playing a riff on the guitar and he said, 'What is that?' I said, "I don't know, it's just a riff." So I then walked onstage.... I was backstage warming up. When I came off he'd taken a shirt cardboard and written all these words out, and the song was complete. Then I recorded it on "Where I'm Bound".

How did you meet Hamilton Camp?

Al Grossman heard him in New York. Albert was my manager and owner of The Gate of Horn and the first producer of the Newport Folk Festival. He'd heard Bobby sing with a guy named Jimmy Gavin in New York. I came back from Colorado to do the month of June at The Gate of Horn, which had become a kind of tradition. I walked in the apartment which Albert Grossman and I shared when I was in Chicago. This guy was standing there and he said, "Hi, I'm Bobby Camp. Albert sent me". I had not heard anything about this, so it took us two or three days before we quit circling each other like two strange dogs. Then we started singing and I've loved singing with him ever since. Real high energy and all. We chose not to have Albert manage us two or three months later. We were just very nuts and very paranoid about it. Albert wanted the two of us to get together with a girl and make a trio. I felt like that was an insult. In my own insecurity I thought Albert didn't believe in me....that he'd lost faith in me, and subsequently in me and Camp. He knew what he wanted. He wanted Peter, Paul and Mary. He wanted a trio. He knew it would be commercially viable. When Camp and I left him he went to Peter and said, "I'm going to try and form a trio, how about this and this and this...."

Had Grossman a girl in mind for you and Camp to sing with?

Oh yeah. Now, a few days later I called him in New York and said, "You were right. Camp and I are singing together and it's wonderful". Then he drops the trio thing on me and says, "Okay, well, I've got a girl I want you two guys to get together with. Neither one of you are going to like it. She's taller than both of you". I was at Albert's house a couple of years ago and said, "Albert, who was the girl? I don't remember". He couldn't remember who she was either. It wasn't Mary, it wasn't Judy Henske, and were at a loss to know who he had in mind. When he said a girl to sing with the two of us when we'd just discovered the magic of singing together, and who was taller than us....forget it!

How quickly did you record the live album at "The Gate of Horn"?

We didn't do that till the following Fall. We started singing together in June '60, did the Newport Festival in July that year, and I then think made that album in November if I remember right. Finished it the following Spring. We didn't finish it till maybe February or March when the new Gate of Horn opened. We still needed a track or two. We went in and recorded at the new location. "The Gate of Horn" had been at two different places.

There seems to be a gap of a few years before you released "Where I'm Bound" in 1964.

Big gap. Yeah, by then I was getting very nuts. I mean, I was real self destructive. I was really crashing and burning and all that.

"Where I'm Bound" has lots of your own songs on it.

Tons of them. By then I was writing and I wasn't interested in doing traditional too much - or the traditional I was doing was so grossly arranged. On "Where I'm Bound" there's a version of 'Nora's Dove', and the credits on it are me and the Lomax's. Because it was such a distinctive arrangement the Lomax's said for this arrangement you can put your name on it. For the arrangement only. It was a hard estate to crack. You could make a lot of changes on their songs without them getting upset. You could go ahead and make them but they'd still take all the royalties. In this case, however, they were very co-operative.

There's a gap of about eight years before the Capitol album, "Bob Gibson". What happened to you during that period?

You see, I quit the business and quit playing and doing anything for three years. I just never picked up a guitar in the period between 1967 till late 1969....almost three years. I'd gotten burned out, burned up a lot in the music business. It was just a lot of crazy self destructive stuff. I thought the music business was bringing it all to me. I thought, well, if I quit the business then everything would be all right. I found out you can be just as nuts and not be in the music business. I was living out in the country but I eventually took another shot and went back and did what it was easiest for me to do, which was make music.

So you started playing the clubs again....

Yeah, in 1970. By 1971 I was out in LA making that album for Capitol. That was like a reunion. I hadn't seen any of those folks in ages....you know, David Crosby and Roger McGuinn and Spanky McFarlane, that whole gang. They were all beginning when I was already established in the early 60s, so it was great to see them. They had all gone on to do great things.

Roger McGuinn started his career at The Gate of Horn and later formed The Byrds. Jim Dickson was their first manager and producer. Was this the connection whereby Jim produced your Capitol album?

No, he was also Camp's producer. I picked him. Roy Silver was the manager who put it together. Roy and I and my brother had started a talent agency in 1961 in New York City. The artists that were trying to book, very unsuccessfully, were the likes of Richie Havens, David Crosby, Fred Neil, Bob Dylan....that was only a few of them. There were many more. The gigs we could get them were like \$125 a week. That's all there was. Up in Canada, and a lot of other places in the United States as well.

Was Grossman managing Dylan at this point?

Yeah, he was with Grossman as a manager. We had some gigs and some of the clubs up in Canada said, "Can you get us Dylan?" and we said, "We'll give it a try". So we called Grossman. I then went back to Grossman's office myself as an artist in the early 60s - probably '62 to '64. Somewhere in there.

Where did you meet Jim Dickson?

Oh, I'd known him out on the West Coast. I'd been working out there for a long time. Places like The Troubadour and the Ash Grove. I met him first in the early 60s. I started in the Ash Grove about 1958 and The Troubadour in 1960.

There's a particularly strong selection of songs on your Capitol album. For instance, there's an early John Prine composition, 'Sam Stone'.

I had a John Prine demo tape when I went out to LA. Through Roy Silver we had a deal going with A&M for John Prine, where I was going to produce the album. John knew I was doing 'Sam Stone' and my album eventually came out two weeks

before his. We were getting a lot of airplay on the album. Then Jerry Wexler enjoined the album in court, which took the roll off it entirely. Prine's version was so different. Prine himself, to this day, says he's sorry that happened because he knew I was recording the song. He knew the whole thing and Jerry Wexler said, "Oh my God, we can't have this copy going out before John's original sung version". John was the only singer on his version. I had all these people singing on it and it was a great version. The FM stations were playing it like crazy but....a moment of nearness to it, but it didn't happen.

In choosing to record that song you had obviously spotted Prine as a talent.

It was real apparent in Chicago, you couldn't miss it. One of the things that's attributed to me is spotting Joan Baez as a talent in 1959. That's a little like taking credit for having discovered the Grand Canyon. I mean, it's very hard to miss. If you hadn't been the first one to point it out then the next guy along certainly would have done so. She had that kind of talent, as did Prine. They were very talented people.

There's a number of songs on the Capitol album that you co-wrote with Shel Silverstein. You obviously had an ongoing relationship there.

Yeah, we'd spend some time together every so often. He was by that time living in the Playboy mansion on the West Coast. By then he was concentrating on songwriting and would go to Nashville a lot. We'd get together and write a few songs. He had made a couple of albums by this stage. His first one was on Atlantic, but his albums were like novelty records. It was shortly after that that he constructed Dr. Hook, because he was writing all that great stuff and had nowhere to go with it. Nobody in Nashville was recording that kind of stuff. For instance, the story about how Johnny Cash happened to record 'A Boy Named Sue' is like off the wall. Johnny loved the song and wanted to record it. His producer and his manager had a meeting about what songs they were going to record for his next album. John said, "Well, there's this song". They loved it and they laughed but said, "You can't record it". He said, "Why?" and they said, "John, you're a country artist. You'll lose your country following. You can't do that. It's a cute song, it's a novelty song, but with your kind of image - 'Ring of Fire' and all - you can't do that. You can't sing a song about faggots, no matter how funny it is. You just can't, John. Anyway, nobody has ever heard of this writer". John said, "Well, he's the guy who wrote 'The Unicorn'". The song had been a big hit for the Irish Rovers. They said, "Oh, he wrote that song?" Well, that song was a novelty item. It came off an album of theirs that was totally Irish, just like The Clancy Brothers. The one song that wasn't Irish was 'The Unicorn' and it became a hit. T-ey said, "Well, maybe you could do that song on an album. Maybe 'A Boy Named Sue' would work on an album". He put it out and it was the one that really took off. It opened all the right doors then for Shel. For instance, Bobby Bare records whole albums of his songs. Every major country artist has done his songs, from Willie Nelson to Dolly Parton. All of them, they've all recorded his songs.

Was the deal with Capitol just for one album?

They pressed 17500, they went, and that was it for the Capitol album. That was not successful from their point of view and they didn't want to go any further with me.

The next album I'm familiar with is "Homemade Music" by you and Camp on Mountain Railroad Records.

I moved up to Mendocino in late '71, early '72 and spent a couple of years up there. As before, I'd go out and work in Chicago and LA and other cities. I'd go back there and spend a lot of time just hanging out because I liked the area. Shel would come up there and we'd write songs. It was up in the redwoods on the ocean. It was very colourful and very nice. It wasn't till I made the decision to move back to Chicago, because I needed an audience again, that I did an album titled "Funky in the Country", which I produced. It was a live performance album which was distributed by Mountain Railroad. The album was really on the Legend label. The Legend label was me and Ray Tate and another guy. Me and Ray mostly put it together and we owned the label.

So "Funky in the Country" predates "Homemade Music"?

Yes, absolutely. "Homemade Music" not only reunited me with Camp, but with an old friend of mine called Dick Rosmini. One of the reasons we called it "Homemade Music" was, of course, as I'm sure you know, that he took the cover picture. Dick is an engineer and a musician....he can do just about everything. He played on all the tracks besides

Camp and I. Bass, mandolin, synthesiser and everything, you name it, he played it, and he recorded the album. I mean, it was definitely just him and me and Camp, that was all. It was literally made in his home, too. The picture was taken on his front porch.

Can you tell me something about a couple of people who wrote the song, 'Self Satisfaction', namely Monte Dunn and Karen Cruz. I have an album by them on the Cyclone label. Who are they?

Okay, Monte was a guitar player who played for people like Ian and Sylvia. I think he also played for Gordon Lightfoot. He was a pretty accomplished guitar player. He married Karen Cruz and they wrote 'Self Satisfaction', which I always thought was a wonderful song. I taught it to Camp and we did it on "Homemade Music". He still lives up in northern New York State. Monte's still around. He was the sideman for a lot of people. They may, as you said, have made their own album, but Monte played on a lot of other people's albums.

What about the song, 'Billy Come Home'. Is there a story behind the song?

Well, it's about always looking for greener pastures and they're really not there. You've got to stay where you are. To go somewhere else is an illusion. Sort of a poetic treatment about the young man who goes off looking for "it", and "it" was there where he had been in the first place.

Are many of the songs you've written been based on personal experience?

Everything that you write comes out of your own experience on one level or another. You may be trying to fabricate how it would be if, for instance, you were a spaceman but I can only fabricate it out of my own experience. Any situations I put a spaceman into are only going to be something that I know and have experienced. It may therefore be a somewhat limited spaceman in some people's eyes.

Can we talk a little about the writer of the song, 'Spoon River'? It's one of my all time favourites. Have you played much with Michael Smith?

I play all the time with Michael Smith. Michael and I are embarked currently on a project. We're writing an evening of songs and the title of it is "The Women in My Life". We have a premiere date for it in early October 1986 in Chicago, which gives us a deadline. This is as a performance. It should be 14 or 15 songs long. It may be a theatre piece. It may be anything. Right now we are exploring where we are about this subject. It's really awesome, you know. A couple of men talking about it is to have women in your life, mothers and daughters and everything. The first song that Michael wrote was he remembered the name of every nun who taught him in Catholic school. The first line goes, "Sister Cecilia was eleven foot tall". It's a great song, it's up to the calibre of 'Spoon River' and 'The Dutchman'. We're going in from there, collaborating on a bunch of stuff. He started working with me about a year and a half ago at a place called Hobson's. I had this little club, Mike was playing bass for me, this is in Chicago, and then he'd do a little vignette in the middle. Like a little cameo in the middle of my set. I'd leave the stage and Mike would do three songs. Pretty soon it was four songs, and now he's doing nights of his own at Holstein's and all. He's got a new album he's just finished that's -retty damned good. It's all his own stuff.

Will it be on the Hogeeye label?

We're not sure yet. I think Hogeeye paid for the production but nobody stood up and said, "We'll release it". They really should. Actually, he was going to come down here with me this year but he wouldn't fly. He wanted to take a train but the way the trains run he would have had to leave on a Tuesday and arrive on the Thursday. It would have taken him a whole week to just play with me one night. It would have been real nice to have him play bass with me and then do a few songs. He'd have killed them. About three songs and then bang, he'd have knocked them out.

Then we get to "A Perfect High" which has a message on the back cover that two songs on the album shouldn't be played on the radio.

Oh yeah. Well, you know what happens if you put the word 'motherfucker' or 'shit' in a song. Of course, to put a disclaimer like that on the back, all the kids that play records at college radio stations would just run out and play it right away. But no, it's....I really don't want to rattle anybody's cage who really wants the opportunity to avoid that. Since I don't normally do that kind of thing on an album, I really wanted to warn somebody unless they just blindly played all my songs. But you know that poem has been

picked up by the Archdiocese of Chicago and played in all kinds of Catholic schools for the kids and all. They think it has a great message. I'll stand behind it and I think it's wonderful. If anybody's going to be offended by it, I certainly am not trying to change anybody's opinions.

Obviously you'd met Tom Paxton many years ago, but on the "High" album you co-wrote a song with him, 'A Box of Candy (and a Piece of Fruit)'.

Yeah, we started writing together around that time. I started producing his albums. I've produced the last six. We're going to go in the studio in Chicago next Monday (2nd June '86) and record his next album.

Who is Marv David who co-wrote 'The Pilgrim Song' with you on that album?

Marv is a writer in Chicago and we were commissioned to write a particular song for a medical facility, Parkside Medical Services. They had a substance abuse programme and wanted a song that would be used on a film they were making. So it is a theme song really. I liked that song a lot. Marv wrote a lot of scripts for television and film. When he finished the script he said to the Parkside people, "This needs a song. I know the guy that can write it." He and I wrote....we brainstormed and did all the things I was talking about today. Went through all those steps.

(Note: This is a reference to the Songwriters School which Bob ran at Kerrville '86 in association with Steven Fromholz and Nanci Griffith.)

We spent a lot of time manicuring the song. We wanted to make it right. Every word wanted to be just right on that. It meant a lot to both of us. That was the only thing we ever wrote together.

You mentioned the other day you actually had a share in the Hogeye label. How did the label come into being?

Tom Paxton was doing the "Bulletin" album which was originally on Hogeye and is now distributed by Flying Fish. I've never been satisfied as Tom's producer with the number of records he sells compared to the number of people who show up for his concerts. Of course, he sells some albums off the stage, he does quite well doing that. I've always felt there's a bigger market for Tom than is reflected in his album sales. What it is, the older affluent market just don't go to record stores and buy a lot of records regularly. A younger audience would. My thought was, maybe we should advertise Tom in some of the more avant garde or politically conscious magazines. We have one publication in the States called Mother Jones and we have our local city magazine which is Chicago Magazine, much like Texas Monthly or New York Magazine. We tried it, we spent a lot of money on the advertising, and did not particularly gain from it. I've never known why. Maybe we did it in the wrong month. We did it in the month before Xmas, trying to tie in with the Xmas sales. It didn't work. Tom went on to sell the same quantity of that album as he has a lot of others, but it's one of his great albums. There are three that I like real well. One was called "The Paxton Project", the other was "Bulletin" and the last one was called "A Million Lawyers and Other Disasters". They're real topical and they're real funny stuff. We founded Hogeye to do that. Hogeye was set up to do Paxton albums, Gibson albums and to begin to record and release Ann Hills' albums.

It seems an incestuous relationship, where you're producing Tom Paxton albums, while Ann Hills produced your Hogeye album, "Uptown Saturday Night".

I turned to her and said, "You ought to produce it. It would be a good credit for you". I'd have produced it but gave her a shot at producing it instead. She's got good ears, she had some good input.

Ann Hills had worked with you on "A Perfect High".

It was either that or Tom's album, "Up and Up" where we first worked together, one of those two. She used to sing with her husband, Jan Burda. I heard them singing and always thought she was a good singer. What they did was real cute, a very traditional kind of thing. Everything they did was off records. It was a nice rendition of something you could hear somebody else do, or another duo do. She began to do back-ups, she and Cindy Mangson, on some of the Tom Paxton stuff. Those two voices with Tom's made a real nice blend, nice effect. Then somewhere along the line, Tom's manager said, "Tom, why don't you and Bob go out as a duo?" Tom said we should sing as a trio with Ann. It seemed like a good idea, it was interesting music to make. We tried that for a while. We chose not to release an album of our trio. We called ourselves The Perfect Friends. There never was a commitment from any of us to do it sufficiently, and you've

got to make a real commitment for something like that to succeed. What we'd do was we'd do gigs every couple of months. We'd arrive in Phoenix, Arizona, in the afternoon. Start rehearsing like crazy to try to remember our parts and all. It wasn't much fun at times. If you do it in a trio and do that format regularly you can start to have fun with the music, because you know the parts.

You took up acting at one stage.

I certainly did. A couple of years ago I wrote a play called "The Courtship of Carl Sandburg", which was very favourably reviewed and ran for 14 weeks in Chicago in two different theatres. It was a play with music. One of the newspapers, The Reader in Chicago, described it as a folk music concert with acting. It was two people doing music. In the original cast there happened to be Ann and I and an actor playing Carl Sandburg as a young man. It is literally about that period, the courtship of Carl Sandburg, the time he was courting and writing wonderful love letters to Lillian Stiken. About half the music came from his compilation of traditional American songs called "The American Songbag". The other half I wrote. Theme music, and I put in that song, 'Let the Band Play Dixie', and stuff like that. I had originally written that song....it grew out of my doing some research on Sandburg. That's where I first heard that story about Lillian and Sandburg. So yes, I've been an actor, too. This would be about two summers ago.

In Britain I recently saw Hamilton Camp on TV in an episode of "Cheers".

Yes, he's doing a lot of acting.

Are you planning to get back together with him in the near future?

On the 7th June 1986 we're going to record in Chicago. We're going to re-record the material from the original album. We are going to try to recreate it all, plus some of the songs we were singing around that time, like 'Well, Well, Well', 'You Can't Tell the World' and 'Stella's Got a New Dress'. Some of those tunes that we're known for. Since we did that original album, they were half the tunes people would ask for and we didn't do them. We've decided we're going to do them all, and we're going to record it digitally. If it is great we can release it.

Will that be on Hogeye?

We don't know, we may do it ourselves. The sale of it will completely depend on what we do after that. We'll probably go out and do The Great American Music Hall in San Francisco, McCabe's in Los Angeles and all. There's no real money in it at all but once we've got up the speed to do it then it's fun to kind of do a couple of dates around it. We're certainly not going to stick with it.

What about another Bob Gibson solo album, any plans for that?

Not right now. I'm working on children's stuff a lot now, that's what I'm writing most right now. I don't know what's going to come out of this thing with Mike. I'm writing songs like crazy and as soon as I've got a body of them, then the next thing I always want to do is either take them out on the road or record them. Do something with them, you know. It's too early right now to know what that will be.

Will you do an album of children's songs?

I'm hoping to do a children's television show. I'd really like to do children's video cassettes more than anything. Real good stuff that kids would want to see over and over again. It really is that much fun, that interacting with them.

From an educational point of view?

No, just having fun. There might be a couple of little underlying things, points of view that I couldn't help but sneak in. I'm really trying to get away from any kind of traching or telling them where it's at. They don't want to hear where it's at, not 4 to 9. That's the group I'm targeting. Their parents need to be told a lot of stuff. You see, what I do is I get rid of all the tables and stuff and have the kids all sit on rugs and cushions on the floor and come up to me. I'm just part of them. I work with wireless microphones, they're just little transmitters, so I'm totally free to move around among the kids and do whatever I want to do. It's really freeing, I'm not pinned to a place or a microphone or anything. I'm out among them, right among them.

Your music seems to be giving you a lot of satisfaction these days.

Yes, it does, it really does.

Lots of plans for Sunstorm Record releases but nothing to report definitely this time around, so I'll take this opportunity to tell you about releases from elsewhere, beginning with.....

JOHN STEWART - "THE TRIO YEARS" - Cassette only on Homecoming HCC-0500. You can get this by sending \$10.00 (plus \$5.00 p&p if you live outside North America) to Homecoming Records, PO Box 2050, Malibu, California 90265-7050, USA.

The songs on this cassette were written between 1959 and 1967 and subsequently recorded by The Kingston Trio. John did them all over again in October 1986 with help from Nick Reynolds, John Hoke, Dave Batti and Dennis Kenmore. They were mixed and mastered digitally and recorded on Cr02 tape. The track listing is: Side One: Hit and Run/Those Who Are Wise/Road to Freedom/Run the Ridges/The New Frontier. Side Two: One More Town/Lock All the Windows/Green Grasses/Chilly Winds/Children of the Morning.

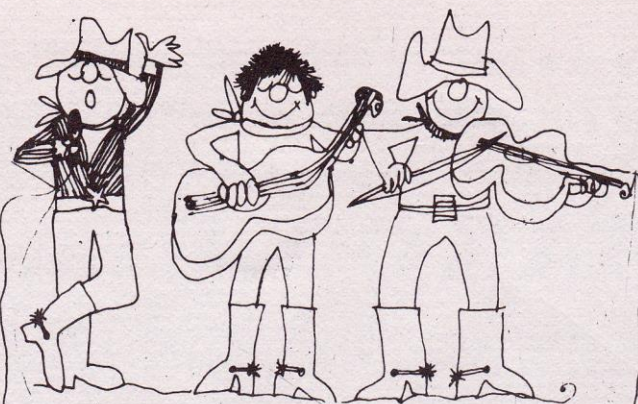
How can you resist it?!!??

*n the last O'Bsessions I recommended Jeff McDonald's "Thank You Lonesome Picker". Now he has another cassette only release.....

JEFF McDONALD - "CHARACTERS" is available for \$9.00 inc p&p Hoot Mon Music, 1469 E 1200 N Hwy. 114, Roanoke, Indiana 46783, USA. Jeff wrote me: "This is a 'concept' piece with the common thread being that all the songs are about different people - I think it has a better overall feel than the first tape, though it is not as highly produced. Hope you enjoy it!" I did.

On to CHRIS VALLILLO - "THE WESTERN ILLINOIS RAG". Another cassette only release, this is available for \$9.00 inc p&p by writing to Chris at Gin Ridge Records, PO Box 144, Rushville Illinois 62681, USA. When he sent the tape, Chris wrote, "It's a collection of ten original songs written about rural America. It is a concept recording similar in style to John Stewart's 'The Last Campaign' (from which I drew a great deal of inspiration). The album was recorded this past August at the University of Illinois and features Rounder Records fiddler Alison Krause on several cuts." It is a beautiful recording and will greatly be enjoyed by all those, like me, who enjoy evocations of rural America so well done.

Before I run out of space, I must tell you that everything available from Kingston Korner Inc. can now be purchased by using you credit card if it is part of either the MasterCard or Visa groups. Send for their catalogue to Kingston Korner, 6 S. 230 Cohasset Road, Naperville, Illinois 60540 USA. You will be amazed!!!!!!



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5...STEVE GOODMAN, interviewed by John Tobler (with Peter O'Brien on back-up vocals) at the Montcalm Hotel, Great Cumberland Place in London on Thursday 5 August 1976. Special thanks to Monty Smith. Brief extracts from this interview appeared in OR11 in December 1976, but this is the first time it has been published in its entirety. The cover photograph of Steve Goodman was taken by Tom Sheehan, the photograph on page 5 is courtesy of the Asylum Press Office and the Lomax Gold Collection.

15...BOB GIBSON, interviewed by Arthur Wood at a picnic table in the frontstage area of the Kerrville Theatre, Texas on Thursday 27 May 1986. Arthur says, "Hi and thanks to my friend W.L. 'Rick' Woolley for the introduction, and for the guided tour of Luckenbach. You are a true gent." The photo by Dick Rosmini of Bob Gibson with Hamilton Camp on page 15 is from the inner sleeve of their album, "Homemade Music", released in 1978 by Mountain Railroad Records on MR-52781. The interview is dedicated by Arthur to the memory of Kate Wolf who died of leukaemia in December 1986.

21...PETE SEEGER, questioned by Spencer Leigh in August 1986 for his BBC Radio Merseyside series "On the Beat". You should definitely read the Pete Seeger biography, "How Can I Keep From Singing" by David King Dunaway. Published in the UK by Harrap in paperback at £8-95 ISBN 0 245-54261-2, and in the USA by McGraw Hill in hardback at \$14.95 ISBN 0-07-018150-0.

24...ROXY GORDON - "Physical Education". The sporting illustrations on page 24 are from an advertisement by A.G. Spalding & Bros., Putney, London SW15 in "Recreation and Physical Fitness for Youths and Men", published by His Majesty's Stationery Office for the Board of Education in 1938, price two shillings and sixpence.

26...RICHARD DOBSON - Don Ricardo's Life and Times. The eleventh in a continuing series. Richard's album, "True West", is available direct from RJD Productions, PO Box 120042, Nashville, Tennessee 37212, USA. Send \$10.00 or \$12.00 if living outside the USA. Make your cheque or money order payable to RJD Productions.

27...The LOMAX GOLD Record Collection. Almost every US release detailed here is available from Mike's Country Music Room, 18 Hilton Avenue, Aberdeen AB2 3RE, Scotland. Send two 13p stamps for his latest mindboggling list.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - A four issue subscription to OMAHA RAINBOW costs £4-60 in the UK, £5-50 in the rest of Europe and by surface mail elsewhere. A subscription by air mail outside Europe is £8-00 or \$12.00 (US). Please make all cheques payable to 'Peter O'Brien'.

BACK ISSUES - At the time of going to print, OR's 9-17, 22-34, 35-36 & 38 are available at a total cost of £15-00. Single copies: OR's 9-17/50p; 22-24/70p; 25-27/75p; 28-30/85p; 31-32/95p; 33&35/£1-05; 36/£1-15; 38/£1-25.

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