



Various **"Gaelic Songs Of Scotland"** Rounder Records

Sub-titled **"Women At Work In The Western Isles,"** this sixty-five minute long, thirty-eight track collection of "field recordings" was made in 1951 by folklorist Alan Lomax during recording sessions he held in Glasgow, Northern Scotland and in the Western Isles. The collection is split into three sub-sections, respectively, "The Shielling And The Milking," "Wool Work - Spinning" and "Wool Work – At The Waulking," and captures in song and spoken narrative how the people on the isolated Outer and Inner Hebrides, and the adjacent Scottish mainland, made their living as crofters [small self-sufficient farmers] and home based weavers of cloth. What is captured on this recording is a way of life and an oral tradition that, sadly, in the ensuing half-century has all but disappeared. The CD is accompanied by a forty-page booklet that includes insightful notes on the subjects featured, written by recording compiler Dr Margaret Bennett [currently Lecturer in Folklore, Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama]. All the spoken narratives are reproduced in English, plus the song lyrics are reproduced in Gaelic accompanied by an English translation.

With regard to the opening segment it's probably worth explaining that a "The Shielling" is a summer pasture, transhumance having been practiced on the islands. The shieling narratives, recorded in Glasgow, feature Lomax and Kitty MacLeod, while many of the accompanying songs, performed a cappella, were captured in the Western Isles as the singer milked a cow. As for the weaving segments, Harris Tweed is probably the best known cloth to come from the Hebrides, and in "Wool Work - Spinning" and "Wool Work – At The Waulking," the listener is given insight into the occupation – from shearing the sheep, through spinning the wool, to making coloured dyes from indigenous plants and then weaving the cloth. As an aid to whiling away the hours as they plied their trade, weavers would perform rhythmic work songs [aka waulking songs] mostly concerning love - won and lost.

Folkwax Score 6 out of 10

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 03/06.