

# Del McCoury

I Wonder Where You Are Tonight

1. **HEY HEY, BARTENDER** (Betty Sue Perry)
2. **WILLIE ROY** (P.D. arr. by Del McCoury)
3. **PRISONER'S SONG** (Carruthers & Lockton)
4. **I'M COMING BACK BUT I DON'T KNOW WHEN** (DAR)
5. **I WONDER WHERE YOU ARE TONIGHT** (Johnny Bond)
6. **FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN** (P.D.)
7. **YOU'RE A FLOWER IN THE WILDWOOD** (P.D. arr. by Del McCoury)
8. **USED TO BE** (Bill Monroe)
9. **DREAMS** (Del McCoury - Tradition Music Co., BMI)
10. **WHOSE SHOULDER WILL YOU CRY ON** (Billy Wallace & Kitty Wells)
11. **SWEETHEART YOU DONE ME WRONG** (Monroe - Flatt)
12. **ROLL IN MY SWEET BABY'S ARMS** (P.D. arr. by Del McCoury)
13. **BLUE YODEL** (J. Rodgers)
14. **A BEAUTIFUL LIFE** (P.D. arr. by Del McCoury)

**Del McCoury**  
vocals & guitar

**Billy Baker**  
fiddle & vocals

**Bill Emerson**  
banjo & vocals

**Wayne Yates**  
mandolin & vocals

**Tommy Neal**  
bass (December 9th)

**Dewey Renfro**  
bass (December 10th)

Recorded by Chris Strachwitz on portable equipment in Glenrock, Pa., on December 9 & 10, 1967. Produced by Chris Strachwitz with assistance from Tracy Schwarz.

Cover photo by Chris Strachwitz. Cover colorized by Beth Weil and Morgan Dodge. Graphic design by Morgan Dodge.

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## I Wonder Where You Are Tonight

Evolved by Bill Monroe around 1945, Bluegrass music has steadily gained in popularity, and today is known throughout the U.S. and the world. Bluegrass is basically old-time Country music played in a modern fashion. The main elements of old-time breakdown and blues styles are combined in polished and exciting arrangements, accompanied by five acoustic stringed instruments: guitar, five-string banjo, fiddle, mandolin, and bass fiddle. A more recent addition has been the Dobro guitar. Originally, Bluegrass was regionally heard extensively on radio and

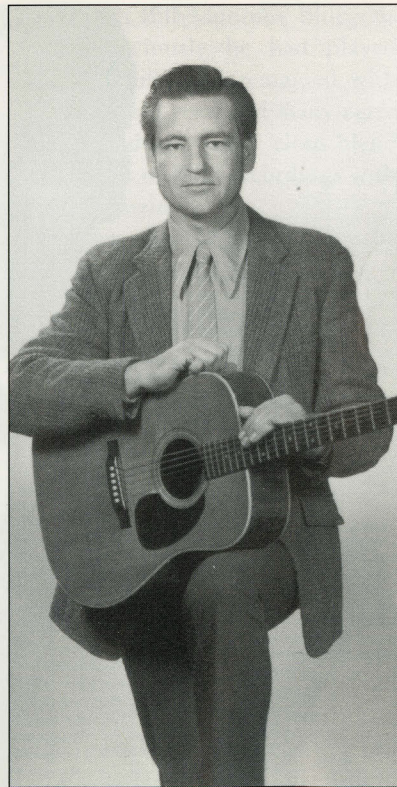
records, but during the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, was forced underground to the grass roots level by the pop trend of Country-Western music.

Although it is found in the mountains and backwoods of the Southeast, Bluegrass seems to flourish mainly in the migrant communities and surrounding areas of Detroit, Columbus, Dayton, Cincinnati, Washington, and Baltimore. It has also infected people of many other backgrounds, and is no longer purely regional, or even purely rural. Its old-time orientation accounts for much of its tremendous

attraction. This, and its powerful drive and practiced virtuosity make it very exciting and dynamic, equally appealing to both musician and audience. Today, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, this "rootsy" musical style is perhaps more popular than ever before.

In early 1941, a truck pulled out of Bakersville, North Carolina, and headed for York County, Pennsylvania. In the cab rode Del McCoury, with his mother, brothers and sisters. In the back, with the livestock, rode his Dad. Two days later they arrived at their new farm in Thomasville, and thus began Del's life in York County.

He met many other transplanted Southerners like himself in Pennsylvania and returned to North Carolina for visits. His mother played piano, mouth harp, and guitar. His uncles on his Dad's side played banjo and fiddle, and one of his aunts sang



December, 1971





© by Chris Strachwitz

old ballads. His background is rich in musical tradition.

As with so many musicians from the country, Del sang hymns at an early age and in his teens took part in a church quartet. He played guitar at home with his older brother, and after discovering Bluegrass, concentrated on learning this new sound from records and radio. Later, he met and played with others who shared his fascination, and soon began making rapid progress.

Although he first performed before a church audience at fourteen years of age, Del started playing professionally in 1957 at the age of eighteen, playing banjo with a band led by Keith Daniels. Del gained considerable vocal experience in this group singing tenor to Keith's lead. For six years he played part-time and held a day time job.

In March, 1963, he began his full-time musical career playing

guitar with Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys. (Previously he had played banjo for Bill.) Del remained with the band for a year, and many agree that their duets had a close blend reminiscent of Bill's recordings with Jimmie Martin.

After his stay with Bill Monroe, he set out on his own, and played for a short time in the Los Angeles, California, area with Billy Baker. He now lives near Glen Rock, Pennsylvania, which is his base for weekend appearances in Baltimore and Washington, as well as local jobs in York County.

Del would strike you as the most easy-going guitar picker you'd ever met, with his big grin and a ready laugh that wins him friends wherever he goes. However, his accomplishments unmask his nonchalant air. He's been both an instrumentalist and lead singer under the tutelage of Bill Monroe. He's developed his voice into

a pleasing but intense medium, borrowing style, but not mimicking. He has taken the best elements of Bill Monroe, Jimmie Martin, and Bobby Osborne, and molded them into the kind of Bluegrass that rings true. Del

is one of those chosen people who are born to sing Bluegrass.

Tracy Schwarz – 1968  
(with some up-dating by Chris Strachwitz – 2002)



I first heard Del McCoury in May of 1963 here in California when Bob Pinson and I produced several programs with Bill Monroe and his Bluegrass Boys. Del was a Bluegrass Boy at the time and sang lead on several songs which just knocked me out – especially *I Wonder Where You Are Tonight*. I was just a fan trying my hand at promoting musics I loved and was trying to run my then barely surviving fledgling record label, Arhoolie.

The first night (Friday May 10) we rented the old C & W venue Napredak Hall in Santa Clara (on

Lawrence Station Road). I remember Berkeley fans sitting down on the dance floor in front of the stage, eager to absorb every note from Bluegrass' founding father, while the "Country" audience, who had come to dance at the old hall, complained about the music not being really "danceable!" The next night we booked the band into a school auditorium in Berkeley and everyone was comfortably seated. My first lesson in why Bluegrass was never very popular with Country audiences in the West; they were mainly from Texas and Oklahoma

where music was played for dancing!

Del's voice continued to haunt me and in 1967 when I drove east via Chicago on a recording trip – I finally was able to put his music on tape. The session was arranged by Tracy Schwarz and took place at his house out in the country. Del did not have a regular band at the time but brought together some fine players. I especially enjoyed Billy Baker's fiddling. I was using a Magnecord 2-track tape recorder, an Ampex 4-channel mixer and 4 Electrovoice mikes and tried my best to catch the music I heard. I am delighted to be able to issue this fine music now on CD just the way it was recorded. The original LP was

issued in what I called "B.S." stereo and compressed at a time when the industry would stock only records in "stereo" and I had to oblige. On this CD the two tracks of the original tape are slightly separated and no compression. I recorded Del and the bass on one track and the rest of the band on the other track. I hope you will enjoy Del's very first album as much as I enjoyed recording it. Today Del has become one of the leading voices in the Bluegrass field and has many fine records out. Listen to him at one of his appearances – his sound will surely stay with you. Keep up the good work Del!

Chris Strachwitz – 1992 & 2002

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His landmark  
first recording as  
a band leader!!!

**Del McCoury** – vocals & guitar

**Billy Baker** – fiddle & vocals

**Bill Emerson** – banjo & vocals

**Wayne Yates** – mandolin & vocals

**Tommy Neal** – bass (December 9th)

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