



**UNION
TRAIN**
JOE GLAZER

MIKE AULDRIDGE, Dobro
ALAN BENNETT, Banjo

UNION TRAIN

Are we approaching the day when all that remains of the great railroad passenger era will be memories, songs or stories, and kids asking, "Daddy, what's a train?" In 1929 two million men and women worked on America's railroads. By 1975 the number had dropped to something over half a million. Every month, it seems, another railroad run goes down, another train is yanked off the track, another station disappears.

During a brief visit to Sweden in 1975 I took eight different trains. Each was fast, comfortable, pleasant. Each started on time and arrived on time at a central, well-appointed station. Japanese right-of-ways are so good that their trains can make time about twice as fast as U.S. trains and they run about ten times as often.

Recently, there has been a slight revival in the American railroad industry so perhaps we won't have to go to the Smithsonian Institution in the future to see a "live" train. Our American railway system will be kept alive only if we are determined to do so. Perhaps this good cause can be helped along if we pause to recall some of the rich songs or stories treasured by railroaders.

Archie Green points out that Americans who spanned mountain, prairie, forest, and desert to hack a new nation out of the wilderness always had a tremendous affection for their tools of transport — ox team, covered wagon, canal boat, clipper ship, locomotive, motor truck. Of all these machines, writes Green in the notes for his RCA Victor LP, *The Railroad in Folk-Song*, "none attracted more songs and stories than the iron horse... Countless folksingers honed texts and tunes against the edge of experience at the round-house and boarding-house, depot and water tank... the train became a symbol for escape, freedom and salvation..."

Here's how Alan Lomax put it in his book, *Folk Songs of North America*:

What a ship on the sea is to an Englishman, a droshky on the snow to a Russian, a horse on the desert to an Arab, the iron horse became to the men of North America... The muleskinner in the Mississippi bottoms timed his long days by the whistle of the passing trains. The mountaineer, penned up by his southern hills, heard the trains blowing down in the valley and dreamed of the big world 'out yonder.' The blue-noted whistles made a man miss pretty women he'd never seen.

In *The Treasury of Railroad Folklore*, a rich collection of songs and stories about railroaders, B.A. Botkin talks of the days when freight cars had to be coupled by hand with link and pin couplers. When a gang of boomer (transient) brakemen and switchmen were looking for work, the yardmaster would ask them to hold up their hands in lieu of references. If the applicants had several fingers missing, the yardmaster knew they were experienced workers.

This album is dedicated to all the workers who lost limbs and lives on the railroads, to the John Henrys who built the Big Bend tunnels and the Casey Joneses who drove the big eight wheelers, to the waymen and the brakemen, the telegraphers and the firemen, the conductors and the switchmen, the clerks and the craftsmen, the planners and the builders; and, yes, to the hoboes who rode the rods and the empty boxcars. It is also dedicated to the railroad unions that helped to make "working on the railroad" a better job for all.

Joe Glazer

JOE GLAZER

Joe Glazer has long been known as "Labor's Troubadour." His voice and his guitar have been heard on scores of picket lines and in a hundred union halls. He has performed at numerous labor conventions, including the historic merger convention of the AFL-CIO in 1955.

He has sung many times for railroad and transportation workers — for the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way, the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks, the United Transportation Union, and others.

He has recorded fifteen albums. His most recent albums for COLLECTOR RECORDS include *Joe Glazer Sings Labor Songs*; *Textile Voices — Songs and Stories of the Mills*; *Down in a Coal Mine*. He is the star of a documentary film, *Songs and Stories of Labor*, produced by Parker Film Associates, Inc. He has performed in almost every state, in most provinces of Canada and in fifty countries around the world.



COLLECTOR RECORDS



JOE GLAZER

MIKE AULDRIDGE, Dobro

ALAN BENNETT, Banjo

SIDE ONE

1. **BYE BYE BLACK SMOKE CHOO CHOO** was recorded in the 1950's by Don Reno and Arthur (Guitar Boogie) Smith. It was brought to Joe Glazer's attention by the New Lost City Ramblers, who recorded it on a Folkways Album, *Modern Times*.

2. **DANVILLE GIRL** is one of the great, traditional hobo-train songs. It has many versions, this one by Joe Glazer.

3. **PAT WORKS ON THE RAILROAD** is well over a hundred years old and comes from the era when Irish immigrants were building America's first railroads in the 1840's.

4. **MANY A MAN KILLED ON THE RAILROAD** is a poignant fragment of a folksong discovered by Carl Sandburg and first published in his great collection, *The American Songbag*.

5. **THE BALLAD OF EUGENE VICTOR DEBS** was composed by Joe Glazer at the urging of Archie Green, who pointed out that the great Debs had never been honored in song. The ballad covers Debs' early life as a labor leader. He later became head of the Socialist Party, running for President five times.

6. **UNION TRAIN** is based on the spiritual, *The Old Ship of Zion*. It was made popular during World War II by the Almanac Singers.

SIDE TWO

1. **CASEY JONES** (Blues version) is sometimes called the Southern Casey Jones. It was made up by blacks and sung in the South before the popular commercial version was written in 1909. Glazer learned it from the man who knows everything there is to know about folksongs, Joe Hickerson, head of the Archive of Folk Songs, Library of Congress.

2. **DADDY, WHAT'S A TRAIN?** is one of the many fine train songs written by U. Utah Phillips, a singer, composer, story teller, freight hopper and train buff of the highest order.

3. **THE WRECK OF THE ROYAL PALM** was composed by Andrew Jenkins while the newspapers and radio were reporting the tragic wreck of the Royal Palm, a Southern Railways passenger train. The Royal Palm crashed into the Ponce de Leon, two days before Christmas, on December 23, 1926, near Rockmart, Georgia. The song can be found in the fine Library of Congress collection, *Railroad Songs and Ballads*.

4. **CASEY JONES** (Union version) is a parody of the popular song about the brave engineer who died in the famous train wreck in Mississippi on May 1, 1906. Joe Hill, the famous poet of the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies) is the author. The S.P. strike mentioned in the song took place in 1911.

5. **HOBO'S MEDITATION** was made popular by the "Singing Brakeman", Jimmie Rodgers. The second verse is by Glazer.

6. **THIS TRAIN'S A CLEAN TRAIN** is an old gospel hymn with some union words added by Joe Glazer.

Notes on the other performers: **MIKE AULDRIDGE**, who plays regularly with the bluegrass group, *The Seldom Scene*, and has made his own solo records, has been called the best dobro player in the country by the New York Times. **ALAN BENNETT**, who plays banjo and lead guitar, is a folk and jazz musician in the Washington, D.C. area. Bennett produced and mixed the album for Collector Records. **BILL McELROY** was the engineer.

Also: Tom Gray, bass, (ten selections); Paul Duff, bass, (two selections); Bruce Hartley, harmonica; back-up voices by Maggie (Mark Cozy, Terry Leonino, Greg Artzner) and Bruce and Ann Hartley. Thanks for special help to Harold Closter, Dan Glazer, Archie Green, Ruben Levin and Dick Spotswood.

(Some of the songs on this album were first recorded for *Singing BRAC*, an album produced by Collector Records for the 75th anniversary of the Brotherhood of Railway and Airline Clerks.)

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