

SAM ESKIN'S

SONGS OF ALL TIMES

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"He has the old touch, the touch of the troubadour and minstrel, the mark of the eternal vagrant who believes in the good gold of friendship and song. . . . There is no clear-cut boundary between Sam and song."

—HAROLD MAINE



SOUNDS *of our* TIMES

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Songs of All Times

HERE COMES SAM

SONGS IN THIS ALBUM

WHEN I was younger and knew the old Skidrows,—Skid Roads then,—and hobo jungles, the whole of America seemed more like a neighborhood than a continent. Over a can of mulligan stew, or around a flophouse stove, geography melted. Place names and men's names mingled as weathered travelers told of distant meetings with men who were known to most present. Whether the news had traveled on the "blinds" of a fast continental passenger train, or ridden a slow freight it was intensely personal, warm, real. While I have never regretted leaving behind the cold nights spent out in the wind on oil cars, or the crumby jails, I always regretted the loss of the intimate form of communication that went with this way of life.

And then I met SAM ESKIN. Once again the continent that had frozen into long distance circuits, postal routes and remote areas off the main thoroughfares, became as intimate as a village main street. Sam had news of mutual friends from coast to coast, from border to border. That Sam traveled in a silver trailer made no difference. He had the old touch, the touch of the troubadour and minstrel, the mark of the eternal vagrant who believes in the good gold of friendship and song.

When I first heard Sam sing, I knew that folk singing would remain authentic for his lifetime, at least. Here was a man who felt his way up from the source of song. He had enough simplicity and humbleness to feel the joys and sorrows of the "least of people," enough of the wisdom of the ancient wanderer in him to understand a song's place in time. A migrant folk song collector in his own time, he was able to understand the migrations of songs through all time. *There is no clear-cut boundary between Sam and song.* There is nothing enigmatic to me in the fact that Sam can be totally at home among migrant workers and at the same time be a profound scholar in the field of folk music.

Sam Eskin, himself, seems to me to be living proof of the purity of his songs,—the songs which he has collected from the purest of sources. I know no man who is so little befuddled or befuddled by modern life.

The quantity of miles Sam has covered to collect the songs in this album is huge, but it counts for little beside the quality of spirit he brings with him. I have seen the most unlikely group of people gather to hear him sing, people who seemed immeasurably distant from the old folkways. Then as Sam sang and talked a magical change took place; he had reached the songs that live in almost everyone's memory. An old judge was recalling songs he had heard beside the Chisholm Trail in his boyhood, a dowager remembered a song she had heard in a turpentine camp. As these songs were faithfully recorded, Sam was also jotting down the addresses of friends of these people who would remember other songs.

This album is Sam passing by on his quest for more songs, and to me that is a great experience. If you'll tell him where to stop or where to look for a song, the chances are that you'll have joined the continental community of Sam's friends. Even though I have been discovering Sam Eskin every three months for the past several years, I still have it in me to envy everyone who will have the joy of this discovery for the first time.

HAROLD MAINE

Writer and author of IF A MAN BE MAD

SONGS

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SOUNDS of our TIMES collects for you authentic originals of sounds which are off the beaten path of records. They are not studio productions, but are made on the road,—on location in their natural habitat. For example, organ recordings are made in the church or auditorium, not in an organ studio.

SOUNDS of our TIMES specializes in recording the unrecorded. Sounds old and new will find a prized place in your record library. Besides being popular collectors' items, these records supply musical background in the home, creating a pleasant atmosphere to underly conversation or other activities.

SOUNDS of our TIMES records actually transmit a fuller frequency range than ever before on long playing records. Their superior recording quality is due to the fact that all recordings are engineered exclusively by Cook Laboratories, manufacturers of feedback disc recording cutters and fine recording equipment.

For the interesting, for the unique, for the highest quality, and for sounds unobtainable elsewhere, look for the distinctive yellow "clock-dial" label.

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"another Sounds of our Times documentary recording"

by Emory Cook & Mildred Emody Cook, COOK LABORATORIES, Stamford, Conn.

Who Killed Cock Robin

Who Killed Cock Robin? (repeat)
I said the sparrow,
With my little bow and arrow,
It was I, O it was I.

Who caught his blood? (repeat)
I said the fish,
In my little silver dish,
It was I, O it was I.

Who made his shroud? (repeat)
I said the beetle,
With my little thread and needle,
It was I, O it was I.

Who dug his grave? (repeat)
I said the snake,
With my little spade and rake,
It was I, O it was I.

Who lowered him down? (repeat)
I said the crane,
With my little silver chain,
It was I, O it was I.

Who preached his sermon? (repeat)
I said the rook,
With my holy little book,
It was I, O it was I.

Mary and Martha

Mary and Martha just gone 'long,
Mary and Martha just gone 'long,
Mary and Martha just gone 'long,
To ring them charming bells, -
Cryin'...

(CHORUS) Free grace undyin' love,
Free grace undyin' love,
Free grace undyin' love,
To ring them charming bells!

Preacher and the teacher just gone
'long, (3 times)
To ring them charming bells,
Cryin'...
(CHORUS)

Way over Jordan roll,
(3 times)
To ring them charming bells,
Cryin'...
(CHORUS)

Jesus call, we all gone 'long
(3 times)
To ring them charming bells,
Cryin'...
(CHORUS)

The Tailor and the Crow

As I was a-walking down to the spring,
Come a-lean down, Billy down, ki-o-may,
I saw those small birds whistle and sing,
Come, etc.

CHORUS: Ki fa nee-ro, gilt a-gee-ro,
Ki fa nee-ro, up jump Billy down,
Crawl down Billy-lilly,
Lean down Billy down, ki-o-may.

I spied a crow a-sitting on an oak,
Come, etc.
A-laughing at a tailor making of his coat,
Come, etc.
(CHORUS)

I told my wife to bring me my gun,
Come, etc.
I'd shoot that crow before he'd run,
Come, etc.
(CHORUS)

I banged away and I missed my mark,
Come, etc.
Shot our sow smack through the heart,
Come, etc.
(CHORUS)

I told my wife to come here quick,
Come, etc.
For our old sow's in a terrible fix,
Come, etc.
(CHORUS)

I said to my wife, "Let's take her to the house,"
Come, etc.
"She'll make good pudding, hash and souse,"
Come, etc.
(CHORUS)

I'll make me a saddle all out of her skin,
Come, etc.
I'll have that pommel right up to my chin,
Come, etc.
(CHORUS)

My saddle and bridle are all on the shelf,
Come, etc.
If you want any more you can sing it yourself,
Come, etc.
(CHORUS)

You Can Dig My Grave

You can dig my grave with a silver spade,
You can dig my grave with a silver spade,
You can dig my grave with a silver spade,
'Cause I ain't gonna be here no longer.

There's a golden harp in that heaven for me, (3 times)
Cause, etc.

You just touch one string and the whole heaven rings, (3 times)
Cause, etc.

I'll just lift my hem up and walk down the street, (3 times)
Cause, etc.

All my friends will be there to welcome me home, (3 times)
Cause, etc.

Green Grow the Lilacs

Green grow the lilacs, all covered with dew,
I'm lonely, my darling, since parting with you,
And by the next meeting we'll hope to prove true,
And change the green lilacs to the red, white and blue.

I wrote my love a letter all bounded with pain,
She wrote me an answer all bounded the same,
Saying, "Keep your love letters and I will keep mine,"
Saying, "You write your sweetheart and I'll write to mine."

I passed my love's window both early and late,
The look that she gave me, it made my heart ache,
The look that she gave me was painful to see,
For she loves another, one better than me.

I oftentimes have wondered how women love men,
And sometimes I wonder how men could love them,
They'll love you a little, and give your heart ease,
And when your back's on them, they love who they please.

On top of yon mountain where the green grass doth grow,
And down in the valleys where the cool waters flow,
I met with my old love and she had proved true,
So we changed the green lilacs to the red, white and blue.

My Children Are Laughing Behind My Back

My children are laughing behind my back,
My children are laughing behind my back,
They roll in the coffin that stands at my bed,
They blow out the candles that stand at my head,

My children are laughing behind my back,
My children are laughing behind my back,
They bare their teeth and they roll their eyes,
And they laugh like hell when their old ma dies.

But I'll not die for a long, long time,
'Cause I'm going to live for a long, long time!
I'll sit by my window and drink me gin,
And I'll be as old as me old ma been;
I'll sit by my window and I'll not cry,
And I'll laugh like hell when my children die!

Roll the Old Chariot

(CHORUS) Roll the old chariot along,
Roll the old chariot along,
Roll the old chariot along,
And we'll all hang on behind.

A fried plum duff wouldn't do us any harm,
A fried plum duff wouldn't do us any harm,
A fried plum duff wouldn't do us any harm,
And we'll all hang on behind.

(CHORUS)

A fresh sea pie wouldn't do us any harm, (3 times)
And we'll all hang on behind.

(CHORUS)

A glass o' whisky hot wouldn't do us any harm, (3 times)
And we'll all hang on behind.

(CHORUS)

Who Killed Cock Robin -- is a traditional English children's song and story. A fairy tale of forest justice, it mourns the loss of a murdered friend. This version, with its exceptionally beautiful melody, was collected by Sam from Mickey Miller in Los Angeles.

Mary and Martha -- is a white spiritual coming from Mickey Miller in Los Angeles. The learned it from Tasker Howard in North Carolina. The last verse is Sam's own. He added it because the song seemed short.

Roll the Old Chariot -- is an old Salvation Army song that went to sea. It is quite likely that the Army got it from an even older hymn. Whether it is a negro or a white spiritual, we can not say.

The Tailor and the Crow -- has been collected by Sam in several places. Lannis F. Sutton said in 1949 that he learned it from his father in Texas; his father had it from his father, who was born in 1818. A similar version came from an old man in Oklahoma who, says Sam, obviously knew a lot of songs, but had trouble remembering them. As Sam sung to him, in order to "prime his pump," the old man started to remember and sing. The more he sang the more he remembered, and finally he broke down in tears. "I haven't had so much fun in years," he cried, "My daddy used to sing me these songs, and I thought I'd forgotten them all!"

You Can Dig My Grave -- was collected from a girl in North Carolina who said she heard it from a negro when she was child. It may originally have been a white spiritual.

Green Grow the Lilacs -- was sung a great deal in Texas before she became a part of the United States. The story has gone around that the word "gringo" came from the "Green Grow" of this song. That the Mexican's way of addressing the newcomers grew out of a song is fanciful and romantic, and makes a good story, but the real truth of the matter remains buried along the banks of the Rio Grande. Still other riddles remain with this highly nostalgic song, such as that of the original significance and meaning of the "Green Lilacs."

My Children Are Laughing Behind My Back -- is almost a psychiatric treatise, with its many nuances and flights of fancy. The origin of the song is unknown, but it was collected by Sam from Geena Godwin in Central City, Colorado several years ago. Central City is an old ghost town that has been revived, and seems a peculiarly appropriate setting for this psychological song in which a mother thinks her children laugh at her and want her to die.

Sounds of our Times presents in this record a feature new to long-playing records. The inner area of a record is ordinarily used for the grooves which cause record changers to operate automatically. On side "B" however, this space is occupied instead by Sam Eskin, himself. Listen to what he

has to say. It may be controversial, so write and tell him what you think about it. He will be glad to hear from you. Address SAM ESKIN, in care of SOUNDS of our TIMES, Box 5, Ridge-way Station, Stamford, Conn.

Texas Rangers

Come all you Texas Rangers, wherever you may be;
A story I'll relate to you that happened unto me,
My name it's nothing extry, you I shall not tell,
You men all are strangers, and I'm sure I wish you well.

When at the age of seventeen, I begun to roam,
I marched from San Antonio into the Rio Grande;
Our Captain he informed us, perhaps he thought it right,
"Before you reach your station," he said, "boys, you'll
have to fight."

I saw the Indians coming, I heard them give their yell;
My feelings at their charging no human tongue can tell;
I saw their glittering arrows, all around my head they fell;
My heart sank low within, my courage almost failed.

We fought for nine long hours, before the strife was o'er;
The like of dead and wounded, I've never seen before;
As bold as Texas Rangers, as ever reached the West,
Lay dead beneath their comrades, sweet peace may be their rest.

I thought of my old mother, and what she had to say,
"To you they all are strangers, with me you'd better stay."
I told her she was old and foolish, and the best she did
not know,
My mind was bent on rambling, and I was bound to go.

Now if you have a mother, likewise a sister, too,
And maybe so a sweetheart who'll weep and mourn for you,
If this be your condition and you have a mind to roam,
I'll tell you by experience, you'd better stay at home.

Cryderville Jail

Old Judge Cryder has got us in jail,
'Tis hard.
Old Judge Cryder has got us in jail,
Father and mother refuse us bail,
'Tis hard.

(CHORUS) With the doors all locked and barred,
Old log chain bowed down to the floor,
So damn their poor souls, what could they do more,
'Tis hard times in the Cryderville Jail,
Hard times, I say.

Old Judge Cryder will read us the law,
'Tis hard.
Old Judge Cryder will read us the law,
The damndest fool judge you ever saw,
'Tis hard.

(CHORUS)

They'll put us in jail for a year or two,
'Tis hard.
They'll put us in jail for a year or two,
For making a gallon of mountain dew,
'Tis hard.

(CHORUS)

Negro Hammer Song

This here hammer (Hu!) killed John Henry (Hu!)
This here hammer (Hu!) killed John Henry (Hu!)
This here hammer (Hu!) killed John Henry
But this old hammer can't kill me.

This here hammer (Hu!) killed my partner (Hu!) - 3 times
Somebody dyin' every day.

Take this hammer (Hu!) carry it to the Captain (Hu!) - 3 times
Tell him I'm goin' - tell him I'm leavin'.

If he asks you (Hu!) was I walkin' (Hu!) - 3 times
Tell him I was runnin' - tell him I was flyin'.

Rocks an' mountains (Hu!) all around me (Hu!) - 3 times
Got me down, yes Ford got me down.

The Texas Rangers -- is properly termed a ballad, and as cowboy songs go, it is an important one. A Texas farmer Lloyd Fowler sang this song for Sam a number of years ago. He said he had heard it from an uncle in Mena, Arkansas 30 years before. It portrays the life and feelings of the Texas pioneer in fine spirit. Sam tells us that Lloyd then had fifteen children, and looked as though he was capable of having at least fifteen more.

Cryderville Jail -- has been a perennial song in various parts of this country for forty or fifty years, and this particular version came from Willa Freeman in Arden, Delaware in 1940, who said she heard it first in the Tennessee Smokies from a Sue Willet. Sam was once singing it before a group of people when a man jumped up and cried, "I know that song! -- But it's not the Cryderville Jail, -- it's the Marysville Jail!"

John Henry -- is a legend as well as a song, and has come down through the whole history of the American negro. It is a work song, and songs like this helped them to carry the burden of their toil. It was probably first heard about the time when the railroad tunnels at Swannanoa, North Carolina and Big Ben in West Virginia were being dynamited out of the mountain rock. The hammer was used for "driving steel" or drilling holes in the rock for placing the charges. A lot of stanzas have drifted in and out of this song during the years, and it is now a mosaic. Sam says he no longer remembers where he got the pieces.

The Gambler

Well, I went down to the country, I didn't go for to stay,
And there I met with a pretty little girl, and I couldn't get away.

She took me in her parlor, she cooled me with her fan,
She whispered low in her mother's ear, "I love that gamblin' man."

O daughter, O dear daughter, how can you treat me so,
To leave your kind old mother, and with a gambler go?

O mother, O dear mother, you know I love you well,
But the love I have for the gamblin' man is more than tongue can tell.

I wouldn't marry a fireman, who works amongst the coal,
I'll marry a gambler who carries a purse of gold.

I wouldn't marry a farmer who works amongst the dirt,
I'll marry a gambler who wears a silken shirt.

My father was a gambler, he gambled all over town,
And the last words I heard him say was, "High-low, Jack and the game."

There's father, there's mother, little sister, she makes three,
They'll follow me to the gallows, and see the last of me.

The Farmer's Cursed Wife

O the Devil he came to the farmer's gate, (whistle & repeat)
Saying, "One of your family I must take,"
Singing too-ra-la-loo, singing too-ra-la-loo.

Wife, O wife, what have we done, (whistle & repeat)
The Devil has come for our eldest son!
Singing, etc.

'Tis not your eldest son I crave, (whistle & repeat)
But your scolding wife I'm bound to have,
Singing, etc.

Take her, O take her, with all of me heart, (whistle & repeat)
May she and the Devil never part,
Singing, etc.

The Devil he hoisted her on his back, (whistle & repeat)
And straight to hell went clinkety-clack,
Singing, etc.

And when he came to Hell's great gate, (whistle & repeat)
There sat the King in his robes of state,
Singing, etc.

There sat the King in his robes of chains, (whistle & repeat)
And she took up a club and she whacked out his brains,
Singing, etc.

Nine little devils peeped over the wall, (whistle & repeat)
Cried, "Take her back, daddy, she'll murder us all,"
Singing, etc.

The Devil he got her up on his back, (whistle & repeat)
And like an old fool went waggin' her back,
Singing, etc.

Farmer, O farmer, we treated her well, (whistle & repeat)
If we kept her she'd kill all the devils in hell,
Singing, etc.

The 24th of February

On the twenty-fourth of February, the weather being clear,
We spied seven sail of Turkish men-o-war, all belonging to Algier.

CHORUS: With my right fol leather-ol, right fol leather-ol,
Right fol leather-ol day,
Roddle diddle dee, roddle diddle day, right fol leather-ol day!

Now the first that came to our ship's side, it was the Pink so clear,
Commanded by the big Bashaw, and belonging to Algier.
(CHORUS)

And the next that came to our ship's side, it was the Rose and Crown,
We fired into her a good broadside, and quickly she went down.
(CHORUS)

So two we took, and one we sunk, and the rest they run away,
And one we brought to old England's shore, just to show we'd won the day.
(CHORUS)

The Gambler -- who woos a purty girl is often the subject of song, and this lusty fellow was first heard from Woodson Tyree a few years ago at Colorado Springs. He first listened to it from a horse trader in Durant, Oklahoma, who worked down his rows of corn, hoeing and singing all day long.

The Farmer's Cursed Wife -- many a man finds himself saddled with a shrewish wife. When the Devil himself steps into the scene and comes out second best, though, then it is news, and provokes a song or ballad. This version of an old English ballad comes from Frances Frost, who sang it for Sam in New York City. The verses give no inkling of just why the farmer's wife was such a wild-tempered creature, but the natural implication is that she became that way as a result of hearing one of Sam's attempts to whistle.

The 24th of February -- comes originally from Sea Songs and Shanties, a collection by W. R. Hall, Master Mariner, and published in 1927 by Brown, Son & Ferguson, Ltd., in Glasgow. It is a fo'c's'l song, and such songs were sung on shipboard not at labor, but at leisure. Like a ballad, it has a story to tell; it mentions date, name and place, and perhaps portrays some actual episode during the pirate wars.