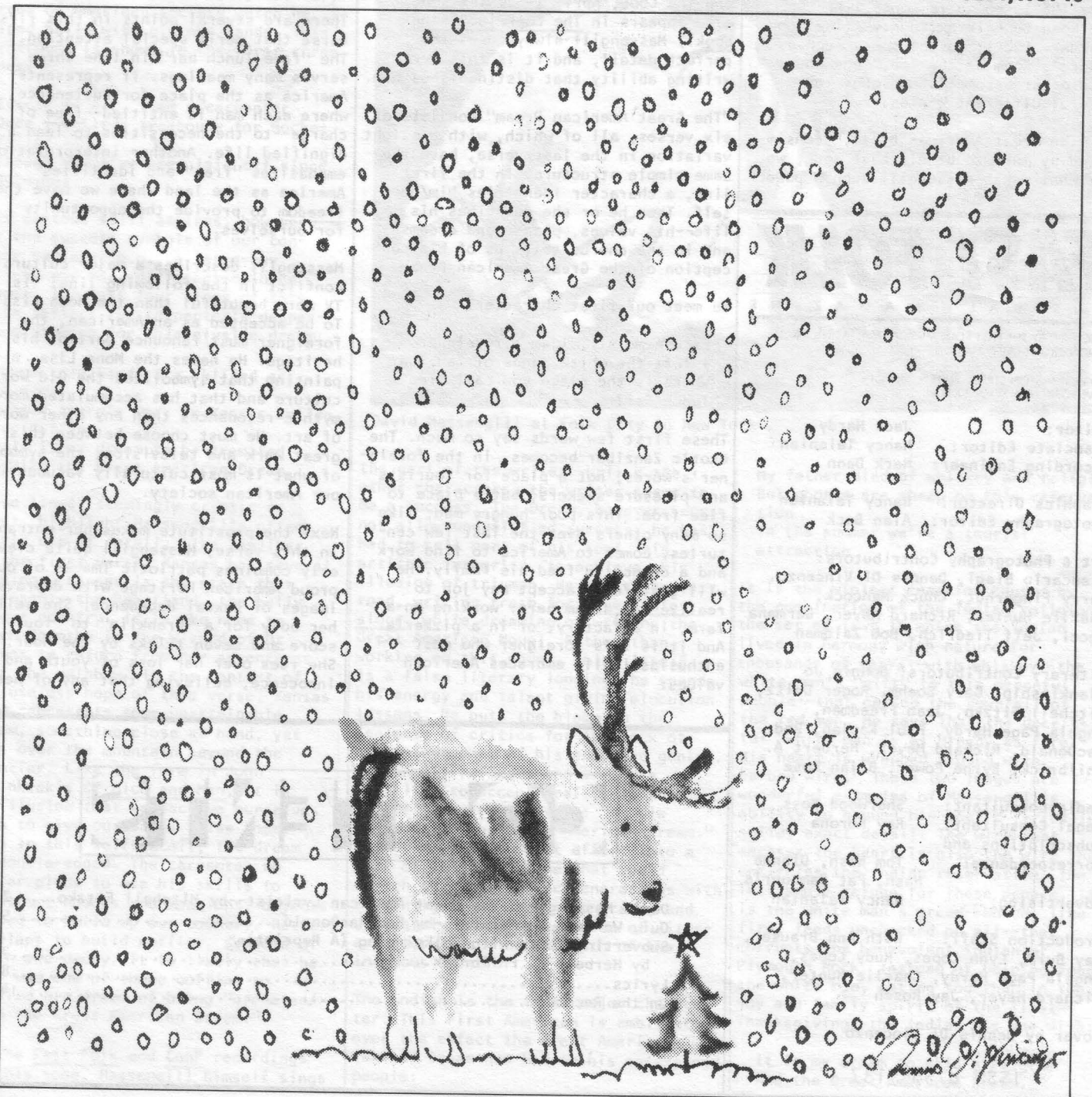


FAST FOLK

M U S I C A L M A G A Z I N E

DECEMBER 1984

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the great American Lyricist
DAVID MASSENGILL

by Mitchell Fitzko

David Massengill is one of America's most versatile and prolific songwriters. He has written bawdy songs such as "The Eunuch's Lament" (The Coop, June 1982), romantic songs like "On the Road to Fairfax County" (The Coop, February 1982), gospel songs such as "There's Room at the Top," and countless other accomplished songs in several different genres.

In "The Great American Dream," considered by many to be his best song, we see what makes Massengill such a power-

ful artist. It is not clever arrangements and flashy accompaniments; his simple chords and unassuming dulcimer accompaniment enhance rather than overpower the song. (For a recording of this song, see *Fast Folk*, April 1984, and *The Coop*, April 1982. The song also appears in *The Coop 1982 Songbook*.) Massengill always uses the perfect detail, and it is this lyric writing ability that distinguishes him.

"The Great American Dream" consists of six verses, all of which, with a slight variation in the last verse, have the same simple structure. In the first line, a character identifies him/herself. Then he or she describes his life--his values, plans, and dreams--and in the chorus tells us of his conception of the Great American Dream.

We meet our first character:

Excuse me sir, I am a foreigner
I left the white sands of Zanzibar
Where is the place you call free
lunch bar?

These first few words say so much. The exotic Zanzibar becomes, in the foreigner's words, not a place for tourists and pleasure seekers, but a place to flee from. This poor hungry man, like so many others over the last few centuries, comes to America to find work and a chance to feed his family. He will gratefully accept any job to realize his dream here: working on a farm, in a factory, or in a pizzeria. And it is this foreigner who most enthusiastically embraces American values:

Someday my sons will fight for the eagle
My daughters will never be ashamed
of me

It is my dream to be a citizen
It's the Great American Dream.

There are several points in this first verse that merit special attention. The "free lunch bar" in line three serves many meanings. It represents America as the place for sustenance, where each man is entitled--free of charge--to the necessities to lead a dignified life. Another interpretation emphasizes "free" and identifies America as the land where we have the freedom to provide the opportunity for ourselves.

Massengill describes a major cultural conflict in the following line: "Is TV more beautiful than the Mona Lisa?" To be accepted as an American, the foreigner must renounce part of his heritage. He names the Mona Lisa, a painting that symbolizes the Old World culture and that has accumulated more mythic resonances than any other work of art. He must choose between this great work and television, the symbol of what is most culturally vacuous in our American society.

Next the prostitute makes her entrance. In this verse, Massengill quite cleverly combines patriotic images of our proud American heritage with depraved images of sexual decadence. She sells her body for a "Franklin" to "four score and seven tricks by the hour." She rues over her loss of youth and innocence, believing that any of her

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tricks could be her father. She is disillusioned with her life. Her dream is to get away, to cleanse herself of her impurities by taking a "bubble bath in the fountain of youth." She has squandered her chance of succeeding in the Great American Dream, and she can only uselessly wish for another opportunity "to be a girl again."

The carpenter is also an outsider, cast out, like so many workers, by the very forces of American society which he helped build with his own hands. This turnaround is shown in the first three lines:

Excuse me sir, I am a carpenter
Once I built a treehouse for Rockefeller
Though now I've been laid off since December.

This castout still aspires, however, for the success symbols of our consumer society, e.g., a laz-e-boy throne, and many different-colored phones. The last four lines of this verse reflect the carpenter's desperate clutching for this elusive dream:

These torn hands are skilled as spiders
I hear there's work in Kansas building coffins
It is my dream to be cremated
With the Great American Dream.

These lines, seemingly cryptic at first, highlight Massengill's often poetic use of detail. Like Zanzibar in the first verse, Kansas has several meanings. Kansas is the state that represents the heartland, the belly of our country. It is the home to which Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* yearns to return from her adventures over the rainbow. In the context of the useless hope of this verse, Kansas also represents some unattainable dream, something close at hand, yet just over the mountain beyond the frontier. Like the farm in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, it is an illusion that we deceive ourselves with to give ourselves false hope. Even in this self-deceit, the dream is double-edged. The carpenter no longer plans to use his skills to construct houses and mansions, objects needed to build up our country. Rather, he plans to build coffins, symbols of death and decay. It is likely that he will use one of these coffins to realize his dream of being "cremated/ With the Great American Dream."

On the *Fast Folk* and *CooP* recordings of this song, Massengill himself sings



David Massengill at Folk City in New York

the part of the writer. Unlike the other characters, the writer seems to be a success. The Dream, however, does not allow unqualified success; he has had to sell part of his soul, his artistic integrity, to achieve this illusion of triumph. He takes the easy road, writing trash for *True Confessions*, while dreaming of writing the *Great American Novel*. Rather than working on this novel, which itself is a false literary longing, he spends his energy and talent giving elocution lessons. He puts the blame on the jealousy of critics for the lack of acknowledgement of his supposed genius. Massengill reflects the writer's inability to accept reality in the writer's choice of Dream: "to die infamous/As the Great American Dream." Rather than put honest effort into a work of integrity, one that would enrich this and future generations with its insight, he dreams up grand, and ultimately blind, categories of literary glory based on the myth of the infamous writer.

The Indian is the final major character. This First American is embittered over the effect the *Great American (White) Dream* has had on his once-proud people:

My father died of whiskey and religion
But ghosts are cheap on this reservation
In the summer we're a tourist attraction

It is the violent reaction caused by the combination of the Indian religion--the set of laws in which the Indian lived in harmony with nature for thousands of years--with whiskey--the white man's "gift" to this peaceful people--that caused the downfall of the red man. He says that the deceitful "white man is as greedy as fire/ His heart is wrapped around with barbed wire." These two images are wonderful examples of Massengill's ability to ground his poetic lyrics in solid, exact detail. The wire that encases the heart is also the wire that encircles the Indian reservation, the last small refuge for these people. It is the white man's greed--which, like fire, feeds unchecked on all--that corrupts the benevolent Indian of Plymouth Rock. Instead of helping feed the white man, eating together in the joy and family spirit of the first Thanksgiving, the Indian has one wish:

It is my dream to skin a Pilgrim
And the Great American Dream.

He wants revenge against the white man and against the white man's futile Dream that transformed the Pilgrim into a pillager.

Massengill varies his basic structure in the sixth and final verse. He writes one powerful poetic image after another:

Excuse me sir, I am Everyman
I'm the good thief of Jekyl and Hyde
I'm the social climber on a mountain of pride
I'm the deaf, the dumb, and the debonaire
I'm the mouse, the monk, and the millionaire
I'm the Great White Hope riding on an old grey mare
I'm the sad-eyed girl as young as the earth
I'm the mother who died giving birth
To the Great American Dream.

In using such imagery, there is a risk in making the song into a bad, preten-

tious pseudo-poem. Massengill, however, does not abuse this tool, and succeeds brilliantly, using this verse both as a summary and as an expansion of the thematic ideas of the previous five verses. The people who find a degree of success are linked to those who fall victim to the pursuit of the Dream. This interdependence of success and failure bursts forth in the middle two lines. Massengill joins those who do not enjoy the trappings of success--the deaf, dumb, mouse, and monk--with those who do--the debonaire and the millionaire. He accomplishes this linkage poetically--by using alliteration, by giving each line the same structure, and by having an effective rhyme.

In this final verse, Massengill uses a device several times that he has used occasionally throughout the song: lifeless phrases, often cliches by themselves, which take on fresh meaning in combination with each other.

We saw earlier how the prostitute wants to purify herself, to reawaken her youth and innocence, by taking a "bubble bath in the fountain of youth." Massengill employs two of the most overused cliches, the Great White Hope and the old grey mare. He constructs one superb line, creating a poetic explosion by linking the cliches.

The song ends simply:

I love freedom
I hope freedom loves me.

These two lines reflect the ambivalence we all feel as we pursue the Great American Dream. We can only hope, and as the six verses of the song indicate, there is no guarantee that we will be rewarded for our efforts; if we are rewarded, there is no guarantee that the reward will live up to our expectations.

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OUI, WE HAVE NO FELAFEL

by Rod MacDonald

Paris, France--July 14. It is Bastille Day in France, the national holiday when (like July 4 in America) anyone with a firecracker can be a patriot. If I had thought the bridge-and-tunnel crowd that comes to the Village to set off their petit bombs was anything, I must admit it pales in comparison to Paris, where the lonesome males throw them into crowds, at each other, even into sidewalk cafes. Everywhere, in fact, there is a steady machine-gun-like rattling of celebration that numbs the mind. Along with a washtub bass player from Louisiana, I have been singing in the street for the stream of restless tourists, racking up the francs until my ears and head are sore.

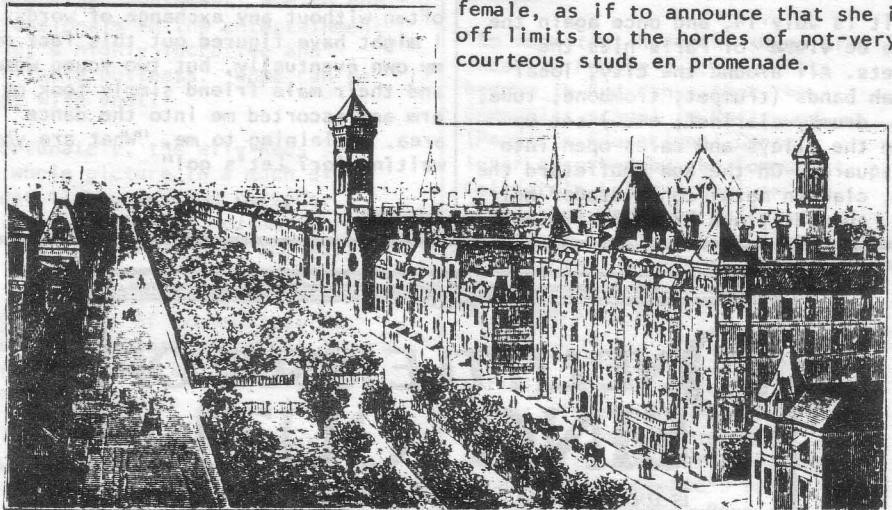
Paris is a beautiful city, from its ribbon-like streets of shops lined with little cars parked with their wheels on the sidewalk to its gargantuan monuments and cathedrals. Having swapped apartments with touring Parisien Gabriel Yacoub, I am in residence in the Left Bank for a month. (Gabriel toured North America with his band, Malicorne.) My apartment is a lovely, sepia-tinted room on a courtyard two blocks from the Seine and the Sorbonne.

The Left Bank (Rive Gauche) is, however, not the hub of artists and music that its reputation claims. It is, in fact, a university neighborhood. A few of its maze-like alleys are filled with Middle Eastern restaurants that, like SpeakEasy in New York, serve couscous and shish kebab (but no felafel) through open windows filled with the smell of burnt lamb.

On one such alley is the Memphis Melody where I will be singing for the next three Monday nights, a 20' x 20' basement open from 10:30 p.m. to 6 a.m., mostly supplying jazz. At my audition I explained a song in French, then sang it in English. The owner said, "Don't bother explaining. Your French is too awkward anyway."

Having a gig in a club is rare, it seems. If there is a music scene in Paris it is on the streets, in Les Halles, a neighborhood in the Right Bank anchored by the massive and modern Centre Pompidou. It is an area of pedestrian walkways and outdoor cafes; thousands of tourists wander through it each day. (Paris seems to be a "city of voyeurs," where everyone either walks around or sits in cafes where all the chairs face the street.)

Here the musicians set up shop, with virtually no regard for each other, so that a guitarist may work very hard to build up a crowd, only to have a six-piece combo with amps and saxophones settle in thirty feet away. Others, especially accordion players and folkies who sing in French (most sing in English) maintain a hit-and-run regimen on the sidewalk cafes, performing two songs and passing a hat, then moving on, trying to hit the ready-for-the-show audiences before the other performers get there. It is chaotic and very competitive, but then anyone with two good songs (energy is very important in this context) could do well.



The two most successful acts I have seen are the Village's own Jane Byaela and a Japanese acoustic guitar duo. The duo gets big crowds for such classics as "Kharma Chameleon" and "I Can't Get No Satisfaction" and is actually very funny.

Jane's act is a lot more unusual in this setting: she wears a headset-microphone and plays it and her guitar into a mixer, then a "Mouse" battery-powered amp, enabling her to sing and play at normal levels of physical effort and still reach a large audience. Meanwhile, fellow musician's cooperative member Matthew Rodenheim "bottles" the crowd; that is, he walks up to people with a shoebox and collects the francs. Unlike most of the other street acts, Jane is actually listenable, since she isn't screaming or beating her strings out of tune to be heard. While playing her own songs she gets an appreciative crowd. The only problem is the police, who force

her to stop from time to time. The other musicians are fascinated by her amplifier, which, they say, is not available in France.

Another facet of the street scene is the male/female ratio, which must be 20 to 1. Any attractive woman, even if accompanied by a man, is immediately besieged by salivating males, a large number of them fellow tourists from various areas of the Mediterranean. "Laissez-moi tranquille" ("leave me alone") is a familiar refrain here, and this may help explain why Paris is so often portrayed as the city of love: Parisian couples always walk with the male draped around the female, as if to announce that she is off limits to the hordes of not-very-courteous studs en promenade.

I have also had a couple of interviews with French record companies, who tell me that the industry is not doing well (but then, when does the record industry ever say anything else?). As in America, the companies seem wedded to the idea of only making records for the teenage rock fans, though it was much easier to get an audience.

(Warner Brothers actually listened to my album while I was there, an unheard of opportunity in America.) But I can't help thinking that any truly smart and well-organized company could make a fortune by catering to the other 85 percent of the population.

There does not seem to be a "music scene" here, however. I have not, even by reading the entertainment papers, turned up any places comparable to the dozens of rock, dance, folk, or what-have-you clubs in New York, though there are movie theaters on practically every block. The jazz clubs are tiny,

seating 25 or 30 patrons in basements that make SpeakEasy seem like an auditorium (SpeakEasy seats about 65). Except for a few lounge acts in cafes, where the patrons sit facing the street (and away from the band), there are almost no places to go to see live music at all, a strange situation for a city with the cultural reputation of "the city of light."

I did find one small place, high up behind the Sorbonne on the Rue Mouffetard, a narrow passageway snaking its way through the old stone houses to the hilltop. There, in a glass-fronted room with a single microphone, a bald-headed, bearded folksinger shepherds a hundred or so patrons in choruses of "Ja, la," "mars oui, oui, oui," strumming the old French tunes in the pub.

But it is July 14, and once again the "joie de vivre" of Paris hits the streets. All around the city, local oompah bands (trumpet, trombone, tuba, bass, drums, clarinet, etc.) set up where the alleys and cafes open into the squares. On the Rue Mouffetard the band, clad in metal conquistador helmets, epaulets, and brocaded red and

blue uniforms, swings through its repertoire of French classics, mostly rousing instrumentals, plus such international standards as "Roll Out the Barrel" and "It's a Long Way to Tipperary." Now, this is no early-evening function for the benefit of the local fireman's widows association, folks. The band plays from about 10 p.m. until five in the morning, and during most of the time, it is raining very hard, a fact that makes not the least bit of difference to the hundreds of people dancing up a storm, forming long lines and having a party.

A word about dance etiquette in Paris: as I found from both experience and observation, a man asking a woman to dance will almost certainly be refused. The women simply get on the floor, and if a man wishes to join them, he does, often without any exchange of words. I might have figured out this fact on my own eventually, but two young women and their male friend simply took my arm and escorted me into the dance area, explaining to me, "What are you waiting for? Let's go!"

One could go on and on, for around each corner is another little world, held in precise suspension as if it were miniaturized into a glass bottle. A guitar player and (would you believe?) a comb player lead a 5 a.m. crowd of fifty through "Guantanamo" with such passion that even the de rigueur wino could not drool on them, right in front of Notre Dame (yes, there is a Cafe Quasimodo, as well as La Derniere Tango). A guitar strummer meanders through "They've all come to look for America" in a passageway directly beneath the Arc de Triomphe where the Allied armies marched into Paris, all coming to look for France.

The dance school downstairs wakes me up to Jerry Lee Lewis's "Great Balls of Fire," and inside the Arthur Murray look-alikes are doing the rumba. It is Sunday, July 15. The streets are quiet, and firecrackers are illegal again for another 363 days. The Bastille, now just a stone monument surrounded by traffic, was torn down 195 years ago to start a revolution. Today, as in America, there is no king. It is Sunday, a day to eat cake.

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SUBVERTING YOUTH WITH FOLKSINGING

by Herbert A. Philbrick

It is well known that music can be used to charm snakes. Not so well known; music can be used by snakes to charm people.

During the course of my frequent lecture tours, come Sundays, I usually drop into a church; whichever church happens to be closest to the hotel. In so doing, it has been my pleasure to attend a number of Lutheran services, and thus to become acquainted with a number of Lutheran pastors. I have been most favorably impressed by the high caliber of the excellent sermons I have been privileged to hear. I can report that I have never at any time heard a single sermon which approached anything that might be called pro-Communist or anti-American; indeed, many of the messages were decidedly and pointedly anti-Communist.

Also, researchers who have probed the matter of Communist infiltration in the churches have found that the Lutheran Church has one of the cleanest records of any of the various denominations. Although I have not queried him specifically as to this matter, I am sure that Dr. J.B. Mathews, unquestionably the leading expert in the nation in his field, would confirm that the list of Lutheran Pastors with records of Communist front affiliations is among the smallest of the various lots.

It is, therefore, with a sense of genuine sadness and dismay that I read of a very foolish and needless controversy among and between my Lutheran friends because a notoriously known, publicly identified member of the Communist apparatus had been engaged as a paid performer for the Walther League International Convention which was held in (July) at Squaw Valley, California. The Walther League is an association of Lutheran young people, with headquarters in the Lutheran Youth Building, 875 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois. It boasts a membership of several thousand of the finest youth of our land.

The resulting--and predictable--uproar has not only produced the old

familiar charges and countercharges, but has tended to focus attention upon an area not often discussed in the fight for freedom; that of Communist infiltration and subversion in the field of folksinging. Hence, it seems appropriate at this time to deal with a few facts relative to this matter.

why folksinging?

At first glance, the folksinging field would appear to be a most unlikely target for communism. After all, folk songs are almost as old as history; they are today a major form of fun, entertainment and amusement; and to the professionals in the entertainment world, a highly lucrative and profitable business. What can be wrong with that?

Unfortunately, the wily Reds see the whole picture in a much different light, for two reasons: music is a powerful medium to reach the emotions of people; and music can be used not merely to entertain, but to convey a message; it is another means of "communication," hence of immediate practical interest to the agit-prop division of the Communist network.

And indeed, since the dawn of mankind, music has been part of his "language." Neither can there be any question as to the emotional appeal of music. All of the great religions of the civilized world--the Protestant and Catholic Churches, the Jewish Synagogues--include music as a part of their worship to God. Anyone attending a Billy Graham crusade rally can attest to the powerful emotional impact of the musical section of the program.

The same impact is to be found in the great national anthems of the civilized world. Tuckerman has pointed out that "explain it as we may, a martial strain will urge a man into the front rank of battle sooner than an argument, and a fine anthem excites his devotion more certainly than a logical discourse."

enter the Communists

How did the Reds get into the act? According to the State of California Senate Fact-finding Committee, which conducted an extensive investigation

in the field, the two major mediums have been "People's Songs, Inc." and "People's Artists." Their report, published in 1951, said (in part):

"People's Songs, Inc. was incorporated on January 31, 1946, in New York City. It has injected itself into Communist fronts, and Communist Schools, and left-wing trade union and political activity.

"Advertisements and press notices for its activities are to be found in the Daily Worker, New Masses, The Worker, Chicago Star, Michigan Herald, People's Daily World, and Salute.

"So important have the songs produced by People's Songs, Inc., become in Red ranks that the Communist school in Hollywood (People's Educational Center, later absorbed by the Communist California Labor School in San Francisco), and the Jefferson School in New York have inaugurated classes in the science of agitation--song writing. They are taught by leaders of People's Songs, Inc.

"People's Artists is also an affiliate of People's Songs, and it has offices in with the latter group. It supplies special talent to organizations for the purpose of promoting 'people's songs' shows, and entertainment. People's Artists also supplies the entertainment for Communist Party gatherings. It took charge of the entertainment at a party meeting which was held in New York.

"The Committee finds that People's Songs is a vital Communist Front . . . which has spawned a horde of lesser fronts in the field of music, stage, entertainment, choral singing, folk dancing, recording, radio transcriptions and similar fields.

"It especially is important to Communist proselytizing and propaganda work because of its emphasis on appeal to youth and because of its organization and technique to provide entertainment for organizations and groups as a smooth opening wedge for Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist propaganda."

(continued on page 12)

Reprinted from Your Church--Their Target, 1966, Better Books Publisher.

PRISONERS OF BEAUTY

Refrain:

Prisoners of beauty
born to be pampered
raised to the symbols of others' success
diamond lace collars
gold woven leashes
keep them contented as least of the best
least of the best

I saw a beauty
she was showing her wares around
with her head held high
she received the stares without a sound
and you know she reminded me
of an entry in a fair
bred only to win
and only good for a few short years (refrain)

I saw a beauty
she was walking her afghan dog
with their heads held high
they glided down the chic promenade
and you know she reminded me
of a Persian saphrat's wife
only good for one thing
and bound by it for life (refrain)

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THE CRUEL MOTHER

There was a lady lived in York
It was all alone and aloney
She fell in love with her father's clerk
Down by the Greenwood sidie

He courted her for a year and a day
It was all alone and aloney
Til he the young girl did betray
Down by the Greenwood sidie

She leaned her back against a thorn
And there she had two little babes born

She took her penknife keen and sharp
And pierced those two babes to the heart

She washed the penknife in the brook
But the more she washed, the redder it looked

As she was walking her father's hall
She spied two babes a'playing ball

Oh babes, babes if you were mine
I'd dress you up in silk so fine

Oh mother dear, when we were thine
You did not treat us then so kind

Oh babes, babes it's you can tell
What kind of death I'll have to die

Seven years a fish in the flood
And seven years a bird in the wood

Seven years a tongue in the morning bell
And seven years in the flames of Hell

Welcome, welcome fish in the flood
And welcome, welcome bird in the wood

Welcome, tongue in the morning bell
But God spare me from the flames in Hell

Traditional Scots Ballad

SIDE BYRIGSONE

NICKEL & DIME

Baby baby can I please come home
do you promise not to be too mad?

I went away to try and make a little money
and a little money is all I have.

But I subscribe to the old belief
for what you pay you deserve to get.

But if I was to buy your love
I would only go deeper in debt.

Well I don't know exactly what you want
I would like to know what you need
if you want the things that the rich life brings
then whatever did you see in me?

I would like our lives to be a little bit easy
must it be so bad to survive?

When they cut the cords to decide my fate
who the hell dealt me Nickel & Dime?

Chorus:
Nickel & Dime, Nickel & Dime
It seems to almost suit my style
Nickel & Dime
Nickel & Dime, Nickel & Dime
and if I were rich I would still be
Nickel & Dime

You can't judge a man by the clothes he wears
you can't judge a man by his shoes

But I treat you better than I treat myself
what the hell have you got to lose?

And I like to gamble, like to take a chance
I like to lay my money on the line
but if you raise that bet I'm going to have
to drop out
'cause all I got are Nickels and Dimes (Chorus).

I can't believe you're ashamed of me
this is the way that I've always been.

You're a fool to listen to what they say
'cause I'm doin' the best I can.

So why did you give me that new nickname
'cause I like my old name just fine?
Now when I pass the window at the automat
they shout there goes Nickel & Dime (Chorus).

You can dress me up I'd still be Nickel & Dime.

© 1984 by Cliff Eberhardt

RAILROAD BILL

Railroad Bill was a hard-living man
He used to take his women two at a time
Everyone agreed he was the baddest engineer
That had ever driven down the Santa Fe line

His name was known from the folks back home
To the tipee-top of Telegraph Hill
And all the little boys when they were sneakin' cigarettes
They used to dream about the Railroad Bill

Oh one day Bill was walkin' along
And he saw a kitten stuck in a tree
When he saw what was the matter he ran to get a ladder
To set that kittycat free

And Bill said, "No, ain't gonna do it
Ain't gonna climb up no tree
This is a stupid stupid song and no folksinger's
Gonna make a fool out of me"

I said one day Bill was walkin' along
And he saw a kitten stuck in a tree
When he saw what was the matter he ran to get a ladder
To set that kittycat free

And Bill said, "No, ain't gonna do it
Ain't gonna do what you said
This is a stupid stupid song
And as far as I'm concerned
That cat can stay there till it's dead"

I said, "Wait a minute Bill
You can't argue with me
For God's sake I just made you up
I got the pen in my hand
I want you up in that tree
I want that cat unstuck"

Bill said, "No, I hate cats
Ain't gonna climb for no cat"
He said, "Why don't you have me save
some beautiful girl
Who'd been tied down on a railroad track"

I said, "Maybe there'll be room in the eighth
or ninth verse
But right now I want you up in that tree
I'm the writer goddamn, I got the pen in my hand
And you're supposed to listen to me"

He said, "Why should I listen to you?
You should be listenin' to me instead"
He said, "I'm a railroad man and if I was real
I would separate your face from your head"

"You ungrateful brute," I cried
"You pushed me too far
I gotta show you I can do as I please"
So an earthquake came and it shook the whole terrain
And it brought Railroad Bill to his knees

And then a tidal wave broke and everything got soaked
And Bill was almost completely washed away
Then a big green monster from the planet Neptune
Landed and bit Railroad Bill on the leg

I got the pen in my hand, I can do what I want
I'm a bright new young talent on the rise
So get your ass up that tree or I swear you ain't
Gonna get out of my folk song alive

He said, "You don't scare me
You might be funny but you don't scare me
And if you don't leave me alone
I'm gonna tell everybody
Where you stole this melody"

But before he could speak his tongue fell out
And he could not make a sound
Suddenly he jumped on top of me
And he grabbed me by my neck
And he pulled me to the ground

And he hit me in the stomach
And he hit me in the face real hard
And I think he almost broke my nose
But just then a lightning bolt came out of nowhere
Hit him right between the eyes
And killed him instantly

The cat came down from the tree
Had a bowl of warm milk, went to sleep for the night
Railroad Bill is survived
By a wife and three small children

Dear God, I love to write

© 1984 by Andy Breckman

JANE

Refrain: You made a mistake
That brought you to pain
You made a mistake
Didn't you, Jane?

There by your side, pretending to love you
There by your side, standing above you
You made a mistake, don't know what it is
If the baby is yours or the baby is his
(Refrain)

You don't like his baby fat
You don't like his favorite hat
When the sun goes down, I'll bet you are sad
I bet you are missing your mother and dad
Your sister's heart, and your brother's head
And your own room, with a private bed (Refrain)

He's the first man who told you he loved you
He's the first man who told you he loved you
Who are you to tell people apart?
Who are you to break a man's heart?
You could've said no, but you didn't know how
You did not tell him then, and you can't tell
him now (Refrain)

Who can explain? Who can say why?
Who is the spider and who is the fly?
Who is the liar and who is the lie?
Count on the baby to teach you to cry
Count on the baby to fill up your mind
To lead you to forests, and leave you behind
In clouds of dust, in pouring rain
You made a mistake, didn't you Jane?

© 1979 by Andrew Calhoun

Lyrics to "Seams and Dreams" by Martha P. Hogan were not available at press time, but will appear in a subsequent issue of Fast Folk.

SIDE BY ROSTWO

MOON DANCER

Moon dancer, moon dancer, I'll be a moon dancer
Glide as I waltz on my clumsy old feet
Once I was conscious of every false step
Now I dance in the moonlight with no one to see.

I have a friend who was awkward and shy
He was not like the others but he didn't know why
When all that he wanted was just to be cool
He tried playing the hero, but he just played the fool.

Moon dancer, moon dancer, now he's a moon dancer
Glides as he waltzes on clumsy old feet
Once he was conscious of every false step
Now he dances in moonlight with no one to see.

My little girl is so lovely and free
At ease with her body, she's nothing like me
No one has taught her to be someone else
At this tender age she takes joy in herself.

Moon dancer, moon dancer, she is a moon dancer
Glides as she waltzes on graceful young feet
She's never been conscious nor watched every step
So she dances in moonlight with no one to see.

Moon dancer, moon dancer, I'll be a moon dancer
Glide as I waltz on my graceful old feet
And I'll not be conscious nor watch every step
And I'll dance in the moonlight with no one to see
I will dance in the moonlight with no one to see.

by Lui Collins © 1984 Molly Gamblin Music (BMI)

OUT OF MY MIND

You're out of my mind
Guess that makes two of us...
Being led by the blind
It can't be true of us
Taking lessons from the man
Who sells the pencils on the corner
Baby please where do I sign
To prove you're out of my mind

Forgetting with wine
But that's not the half of it
I'm crossing the line
With one more carafe of it
But really sheriff sir
I wasn't doing over 50...
Oh, you mean it was your car
I took from Merle's Grill & Bar

So I'm doing time
And making license plates
You're catching dimes
Just off the Interstate
Things could have been worse
We could be cursing would-be children
So how've you been I've been fine
Since you've been out of my mind
Out of my mind

© 1984 by John Gorka

BY THEN

Just thought I'd drop you a little note
Did you get our check?
Your brother's birthday is coming up
Please don't forget.
The crocuses are blooming
It's my favorite time of year--
Sitting on the patio
Wishing you were here...
Here...

Jim just got another promotion
He made your father so very proud.
Too bad you never finished college
You'd have a decent job by now...
Not that we mind giving you money
When it's ours to give
What will you do when we're not here
How do you expect to live?

They all missed you at the reunion
It was quite a feast.
Won't you drop a line to Grandma
She seems to be getting so weak
She still asks for you and walks through
The orchard when the weather is fair
I read her the Bible but sometimes
It's as if she isn't there...
There...

Your father is in the rock garden
He's having trouble with his back
I wish he'd be a little more careful
He might die of a heart attach
You were the easiest one to be born
Did I ever mention that?

Carolyn just had a new baby
She and Bob moved into their home
I picture you there in the city
In that cold apartment all alone
The last time we saw you
You were so skinny
You were nothing but bone
I'm sending the sweater I've been knitting
for you
A check for the telephone...
Phone...

Whatever happened to that young man
Who seemed so crazy about you
Did you say his father was a doctor or
have you
Found someone new

I think I better start dinner
Call your father in from the yard
He needs to keep so very busy
What will we do when he retires?
Sell the house and we'll travel
Visit our far away friends
We'll sleep well at night 'cause I know
in my heart
You'll be married by then...
By then...

Lyrics by Palmer & Bragg; Music by Lillie
Palmer © 1984 Palmer & Bragg

DON'T LET ME COME HOME A STRANGER

As I walked out one evening, to breathe the air and sooth my mind
I thought of friends and the home I had and all the things I left
behind. Wo Oh!

As silent stars shone on me, my eyes sought the far horizon
As if to pierce this veil of time and escape this earthly prison.
Wo Oh!

Chorus:

Will there come a time when the memories fade, and pass on with
the long, long years
When the ties no longer bind, Lord save me from this darkest fear
Don't let me come home a stranger, I couldn't stand to be a stranger.

In this place so far from home, they know my name but they don't
know me.
They hear my voice, they see my face; but they lay no claim on me.
(Chorus)

As I walk this universe, I free my mind of time and space
I wander through this galaxy, but never do I find my place.
Wo Oh! (Chorus)

by Robin M. Williams & Jerome Clark © 1983 The New Music Times, Inc. (BMI)

NIGHT SHIFT

The bar was packed for a Tuesday night
the Bruins were on TV
everybody in the place was tight
make no exception for me
I've been drinking to my traveling days
I should have been at work long ago
but tonight I'm just not coming in
tonight I just can't go

Chorus:

I should be making shoes on the night shift
but I can't drive in through the snow drifts
that's what I told them at the factory
I wonder how the boys on the night shift
ever got along without me

Well the guys I work with are lifers here
they talk shotguns and TV
they can call me names in French or English
and they do it frequently
and their wives, they don't smile much
but their hearts are made of gold
they run their families but make it look
like they do what they are told (Chorus)

So bartender pour me another shot
and back it with a beer
tonight I am thanking heaven
I can still get out of here
because for a while I thought I could settle down
then I called my own bluff
well the road gets longer as I get older
but I've still got the stuff (Chorus)

© 1985 by Bill Morrissey

IF WE'D NEVER

if we'd never come to know it
we'd have wandered through the years
while the dreams we vainly searched for
ever faintly disappeared
all the words carved on the mountains
would have never said enough
if we'd never come to know it
we'd have squandered all our love

oh i wonder are there many
who must live their lives alone
as they search the years and vainly
for some dream to call their own
in the prisons of their bodies
every day another test
if we'd never come to know it
we'd have been like all the rest

oh i wonder is there any
who will share this heart of mine
who will hold me in her arms
and guide me when i'm blind
who will be as one beside me
when the sunlight makes me whole
if we'd never come to know it
i'd have not known you at all

i awoke in a room of mirrors
as i wondered what to write
as i saw my face reflected
all these songs have their price
i can take the tears and the laughter
there's two sides to every door
if we'd never come to know it
i'd have never loved you more

by Rod MacDonald © 1980, 1984 Blue Flute
Music/ASCAP

(continued from page 7)

enter Pete Seeger

When it came to setting up the program for the Walther League Convention in Chicago, for some strange reason, out of the literally hundreds of highly talented performers in the folksinging field, the one man selected by the adult leaders of the Lutheran youth organization was none other than Pete Seeger, whose cooperation and support for Communist causes has received extensive coverage in the Annual Reports of the House Committee on Un-American Activities (page 124, 1959 Report; pages 51 and 117, 1960 Report; and page 43, 1961 Report) as well as in other official reports.

Although the President of the Missouri Synod, Dr. Oliver R. Harms, advised against following through with the convention program plans, and was upheld in his suggestion by the Vice Presidents and a majority of the District Presidents, the militant minority leaders at the Chicago Walther League headquarters have chosen to retain Mr. Seeger on the program.

Even worse, however, is that they published an enormous amount of false statements and allegations in defense of Mr. Seeger, and have further bitterly attacked and defamed their own Lutheran pastors who objected to the employment of the identified Communist entertainer.

As could easily have been predicted, the powerful Christian Century magazine also took the pro-Communist side of the controversy, as it almost always does, and launched a bitter attack against Lutheran ministers and leaders. Those Lutherans who objected to the appearance of Seeger were smeared by the Christian Century as "hate-makers," "rightists," "right wing agitators," and "orthodoxists" (the last term apparently another dirty word in the Christian Century dictionary).

The Christian Century has followed a long-standing policy of devoting a great deal more attention to attacking members of the Protestant Church than it ever seems to be able to direct against the Communists. If they criticize the Communists--which is seldom--it is always in the mildest terms; but when it comes to criticism of

ministers of the Gospel, they do not hesitate to indulge in name calling and smears, and in so doing to use caustic and vehement language.

Tragically, the pro-Seeger minority in the Walther League adopted the same tactics, and in so doing have carried out a campaign of vilification against members of their own Church far more extensive than anything I can recall in the Communist press. It is for sure that the ten thousand Communists in this country watched this spectacle with smug satisfaction.

bunkum

In addition, the defenders of the Seeger appearance have, in support of their position, used many arguments which have done nothing except to expose their abysmal ignorance about communism and the laws having to do with the Communist conspiracy, thus giving support to the adage, "It is better to remain silent and let people think you are a fool, rather than open your mouth and prove it."

Here are some samples, for their published statements:

BUNK: "Why disturb the church over the appearance of a folksinger?"

FACT: Hundreds of prominent Lutherans have protested, not the appearance of a folksinger, but the paid employment of a publicly identified Communist. If the adult officials of the Walther League are unable to discern the difference between the two, they should be relieved from positions of responsibility and be given employment more in keeping with their limited mental capabilities.

BUNK: Thorough investigation does not substantiate accusations that Mr. Seeger is a Communist or a Communist sympathizer."

FACT: So far as I can discover, no other entertainer in America has been linked with more Communist and Communist front organizations in the past 15 years, either as a speaker, member, official, teacher, participant or performer, than has Pete Seeger. Indeed, his record is one of the longest of any person, in any profession, in the entire United States. The Church League of America compiled a list of only the publicly announced affiliations

and found that they filled twenty-four printed pages.

As for membership: Herb Romerstein, in his book Communism and Your Child, points out that Mr. Seeger has been identified as a member of the Communist Party by a number of sources including the Communist Daily Worker of May 4, 1949, which identified Seeger as a member of the Music Section of the Cultural Division of the Communist Party.

BUNK: (a) "Mr. Seeger has been charged with being a Communist. (b) He declined before a Congressional Committee to answer the charges. (c) He has not been convicted in a court of law."

FACT: (a) As we have already pointed out, Seeger was not merely "charged" or "accused to be," a Communist; he was identified as a member, by the Communist Party's official newspaper, as well as by others. (b) Because he obviously possessed information about the activities of the Communist Party, he was called before the House investigating committee and given an opportunity to present in sworn testimony, such information which would aid Congress in any necessary remedial legislation. Seeger contemptuously refused to reveal any of the factual data he was known to possess.

(c) Convicted of what? Being a Communist? Seeger has never been charged with being a Communist in any court of law, for the simple reason that it is not illegal to be a Communist in the United States; hence, no person has ever been so convicted. Such a statement is as ludicrous as to allege that, since no one has ever been convicted of being Lutheran, there are no Lutherans in the United States.

BUNK: "He (Seeger) was cited for contempt but was cleared by a higher court of law."

FACT: Seeger was not merely "cited" but was indicted and tried before a Jury, and was found guilty of contempt and sentenced by the Court to one year in prison. Later, on appeal, the conviction was reversed on the legal technicality that the indictment was faultily drawn. In no way does this mean that he was "cleared."

Such are some of the arguments; many more, equally inaccurate and

untrue, have been used in a stubborn attempt by the Walther League officials to defend an untenable policy. Indeed, these attempts have done far more to damage the prestige and honor of the Walther League than the original invitation itself, and have only served to degrade the organization in the eyes of thoughtful people.

the messages

A study of the lyrics in the so called "folk songs" enjoyed by the Communist would make a book in itself. Many of them are in the guise of "humor," but a very sick kind of humor: snide, bitter denunciation of all things based upon love of country or love for God. Many of the slanted lyrics are in the form of protest; and, of course, they protest all things that normal people are against: war; the atom bomb; hunger; poverty; slums; discrimination. Crime, they are not against; indeed, the criminal, the jail bird or the thief is frequently glorified. Also glorified, of course, are "the peepul" . . . but not all people; only the "working class peepul." The "little man" is pictured as the hopeless, hapless pawn of the capitalist system; he is a victim of the existing social order; and the only way out (naturally) is for a socialist government to come to his rescue, to provide for his wants and needs, and propel him into a bright new world without war, without poverty, without greed--truly, a paradise on earth, equalled only by the Soviet Union.

One of the so-called folk songs, currently very popular in Communist circles, is called "Cod Liver Oil." (*)

(*) Disclaimer: I have no knowledge of the origin of this, or the other songs mentioned; nor do I have any information as to their authors/composers; nor do I allege that they are Communist or pro-Communist. The fact that the Communists may like a particular lyric does not constitute evidence that the author or composer is a Communist. At the same time, it would seem reasonable to suggest that songwriters should take pains NOT to write lyrics that can be used against us.

The verses begin, "I'm a might poor man with a worrisome life; ten years I've been wedded to a sickly wife." The poor wife, it develops, is in such bad shape that all she does is "nothing all day but sit down and cry and a-wishin' to God that she would die."

Ah! But this is not just a "blues" song. It has a message. The answer to this horrible state of affairs, it turns out, is Medicare; "It's government sponsored and they pay the bill."

Of course, the song does not point out that the government can't pay for anything unless it takes the money away from the people first; or, if the original song did contain such a verse, somebody should tell the composer that the Communists aren't singing that part.

At a recent Communist sponsored meeting held in New York, one of the songs contained the lines, "If you want progress, then join with CORE; it's been a long time since the civil war;" and, "Nothing could be finer, than to crash an all-white diner, and land up in the jail on time." (*)

Still another, now going the rounds in Communist bookstores, is called "The Draft Dodger Rag" (*). It begins with the lines, "I'm just a typical American boy from a typical American town; I believe in God and Senator Dodd and in keeping old Castro down."

As the verses go on, however, it turns out that the alleged typical American boy has a yellow streak a yard wide and the spine of a jellyfish. It contains the message: "But one thing, Sarge, you gotta see; that someone's gotta go over there, and that someone isn't me; if you ever get a war without blood and gore, well, I'll be the first to go."

The Communists are very selective in their "humorous" songs. Many people will recall "The Preacher and the Bear" as a song which was funny, not foul; it was laughable, but not sacrilegious. But those in Party favor, such as "Plastic Jesus" (*) and "On God's Side" (*) are sarcastic and bitter. They are not "funny" or "humorous;" they are simply hateful.

to summarize

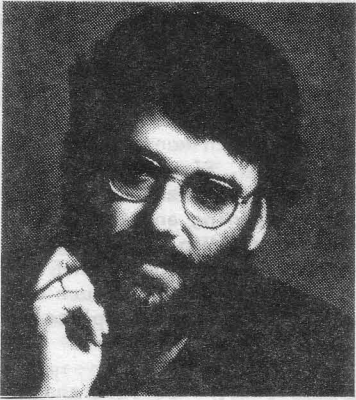
It would be utterly insane to allege that modern folk singing is one great big Communist plot; or that folk singing is evil, or subversive; or that "all" folk singers are secret Communists, hiding behind the frets of their guitars. I would hope (but do not expect) that witch-hunters Forster, Epstein, Janson, Eismann and company will have the decency not to distort the meaning and intent of this report into "an attack against folk singing." Let the record show that I have not made such an attack, either by word, implication or innuendo.

At the same time, I believe that it is vitally important for people to know that members of the Communist criminal conspiracy have, beyond any shadow of doubt, endeavored to infiltrate, manipulate and use the field of folk singing, in order to serve the cause of Communism, by means of clever and vicious attacks against the cause of freedom, liberty, justice and independence as exemplified by the United States of America, the last hope of the down-trodden and oppressed peoples of the world today.

If any lessons are to be learned from the Lutheran controversy, it is to point up the great need for accurate information as to the machinations and methods, as well as the aims and goals, of the Communist conspiracy in this country. I am sure that if the leaders of the Walther League had been aware of these facts, the idiotic plans for their July program would never have been made.

Herbert A. Philbrick worked nine years with the Communists while counter-spying on them for the FBI. His testimony at the trial of the eleven top U.S. Communists before Judge Harold Medina in 1949 cracked the Communist defense and helped convict them of conspiring to overthrow the U.S. Government.

ON THE RECORD



Andy Breckman

ANDY BRECKMAN performed quite a bit around New York City in the mid-70's, then stumbled into writing for television. He is currently working for Saturday Night Live.

ANDREW CALHOUN, songwriter, lives in Chicago with his wife and son. His latest album, The Gates of Love, is on Flying Fish records.



Andrew Calhoun

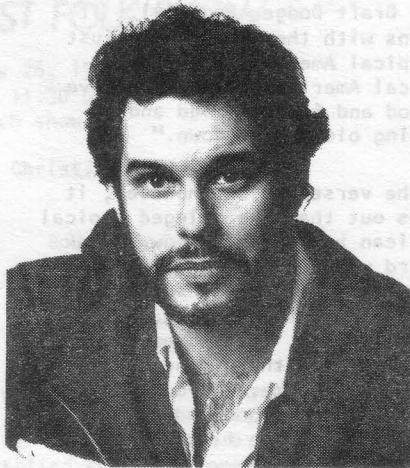
LUI COLLINS writes much of her own material, drawing heavily from her New England background. She has two albums to her credit, Made in New England and Baptism of Fire. Her third album is planned for release early in 1985.



Lui Collins

CLIFF EBERHARDT's biography was unavailable at press time. It will appear in a subsequent issue of Fast Folk.

JOHN GORKA, raised in Colonia, New Jersey, now lives in Easton, Pennsylvania, where he works for Sing Out! magazine. He was a New Folk Award winner in the 1984 Kerrville Folk Festival in Kerrville, Texas. He will be touring with Jerry Jeff Walker in February 1985.



John Gorka

MARTHA P. HOGAN moved to New York from New Mexico in 1980. She has performed in Chicago, California, Oregon, and New Mexico. While in New York City, she was a member of the Song Project and contributed to the "Cornelia Street" album. She returned to New Mexico in 1983.

CINDY MANGSEN is a singer of traditional and contemporary folk songs and ballads. Her album, Long Time Traveling, was released on the Hogeye label in 1983. It was chosen one of the top folk albums of the year by the Chicago Reader.



Mark J. Van Wormer

Cindy Mangsen



Brian Rose

Rod MacDonald

ROD MACDONALD is a folksinger/songwriter from Connecticut. Rod lives in Greenwich Village and tours in the South, Midwest, and New England. His first album, No Commercial Traffic, is available through the Up for Grabs catalog. He is currently working on a second album.

BILL MORRISSEY is from New England, where he still lives. He performs mostly around New England and occasionally comes to New York.



Lillie Palmer and Gladys Bragg

LILLIE PALMER and GLADYS BRAGG met in the spring of 1983 and began to write songs one year later. They could have become Mrs. Nathaniel Pease Harrison III of Darien, Connecticut, and Mrs. John Hosfort Sutcliff-Morgan of Upper Saddle River, New Jersey. Instead, they live in the East Village of New York City.

ROBIN RUSSELL, the daughter of a traveling salesman, and a native Nashvillian, began singing Bob Dylan songs with her father at the age of six and wrote her own first song at eleven. Now a dedicated New Yorker, Robin has performed her own material at colleges and coffeehouses throughout the Northeast.

ROBIN & LINDA WILLIAMS, country-folk singers, have appeared together for more than a decade. The couple's musical roots encompass a wealth of American popular music: old-time country and gospel, blues, bluegrass, and rock-a-billy. To this they add their own songs and those of other contemporary songwriters. They have recorded six albums, most recently, Dixie Highway Sign and Harmony for June Appal of Whitesburg, Kentucky, and their latest, Close As We Can Get, on Flying Fish. A live concert album recorded during December 1984 in Minneapolis will be released on Flying Fish.



Robin & Linda Williams



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- | | |
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| *4. Cruel Mother (Traditional)
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Mark Dann/Bass |

All songs on this issue were recorded live at SpeakEasy, 107 MacDougal Street, New York, New York.

Recording engineers: Jay Rosen on all songs except (*), which was recorded by Sandy Simon.

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