



Bread and Butter Series

FSI-35

MICHAEL COONEY

or: "The Cheese Stands Alone"



FOLK-LEGACY RECORDS, INC.

SHARON, CONNECTICUT 06069

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Michael Cooney first appeared in my world in probably much the same way that he first appeared in yours—at a meeting of the San Diego Folk Song Society. And then again in a concert at San Diego State College. And then at a coffeehouse, and then in a folk festival. Throughout America, and recently, through parts of Europe, where people are singing, Michael Cooney is there, singing. And singing in the best tradition: not to be heard for himself, but to share the songs he has heard, and his pleasure in them.

Michael's presence where the singing is seems so natural that it really does seem irrelevant to ask him where he's from. And in fact, he is less a son of Tucson, Arizona, than of the entire English-speaking world, especially those places in it where there are people who live with, and in, their music. Not raised in, or bound to, any particular tradition, Michael sings songs he likes, songs he has learned from people he likes, songs which have become part of him—as they become part of us, hearing him sing them.

And the singing is only part of it. The carload of instruments which go with Michael wherever he goes are there for more than simple accompaniment; he can, and often does, play up a storm, or a swarm of mosquitoes, or a whole landscape. And when the occasion—and the song—demands, he is capable of becoming a back-country one-man band, harmonica, kazoo and all. And for all the instruments which go with him, he has a nearly equal number at home which will start travelling only when he feels he can play them well enough to do justice to the music they belong to.

There's a reason why it seems so natural to find him where the music is: that's where he's from and where he's at and what he's all about. As far as I know, he's never even considered doing or being anything else but what he's doing and being right here. And not because it's a natural gift for him—I've heard him practice for twelve hours to master a run exactly the way Leadbelly did it, and known him to stay up all night to memorize all 55 verses of Tam Lane so he could sing it on Hallowe'en. And Michael Cooney is an expert on the taste of Kool-Aid. He's here because he really wants to be, and therein lies much of his charm; he sings these songs because he really likes to sing them, and therein lies much of their charm for us.

Clyde Tyndale
East Falmouth, Massachusetts
November, 1968

Side 1:

Turkey in the Straw
Worried Blues
Fannin Street
Jim Crack Corn
Rigs of the Time
Creole Belle
John Henry

Side 2:

Nu Grape
Apple Picker's Reel (Hanks)
That Crazy War
Red Cross Store Blues
The Bankers and the Diplomats
Are Going in the Army
(Reynolds)
Cumberland Mountain Bear Chase
The Engineer (Milne/Rainey)

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**Notes by Michael Cooney
Recorded by Sandy Paton**

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WANTED, DEAD or ALIVE:

folk music

Who cares if folk music (Folk Music) is dead? Who is it dead for? Who held the funeral? Who's mourning? Certainly not the vultures.

Who cares if another "boom" is coming? The money-men and the folk-boom predictors. I come under the predictors heading. It's sometimes fun to talk about, but not important enough to argue about. Ban the boom.

If you like folk music then it's not dead. If you have to, join a folk music club or form one. You don't really have to, though. You can sing songs to your kids and/or your friends. (If you want them to listen, however, you'll have to be able to sing the words in the right order and in an agreeable fashion. There's no extra obligation to listen just because they're "folk-songs." You don't have to learn to inject the right amount of "drama" into your songs. It just means learning to sing the songs you like, without worrying about whether or not you're "going over." The truly great singers are just as happy singing to one person as to one thousand.)

There are thousands and thousands (at least 16) definitions of Folk Music. I sometimes grumble about what's called a folk song and what's not. Sometimes I get up on my high horse and refuse to acknowledge a song as a folk song unless it has been in and out of the ears and mouths of lots of people and gotten reconstructed and variated and its parents are lost or put away in the closet. Other times I'll carry on about how all songs are folk songs because any song must reflect some of the culture from which it springs. I can talk about it for hours. But other times I just like to sing. And listen to Jim Griffith or to Derek Elliott or to Barry O'Neil or to Helen Schneyer. There are thousands of people I'd like to listen to. Most of them I haven't met yet.

So you don't have to sing authentic folk songs. You can sing any old song you like. Try to remember to sing the songs you like and not the songs you think fit well on you.

There are a number of great living rooms left where people gather now and then to sing without charging admission or anything. As long as they remain, folk music is alive.

I would like to thank Dale Cooney (to whom I'm related by marriage) for flogging me into writing this down. To have over-

come my inertia without arousing my ire is an incredible feat of tact and love.

I would like to thank Joseph Hickerson of the Folksong Archives, Music Division, Library of Congress, for the invaluable help in the researching of these notes. I would also like to apologize to him and to Ken Goldstein and to you for doing such a cockamamie job of them. I'm not very academically disciplined. I even left out the footnotes. And I do realize the necessity of footnotes and bibliographies. In fact I like them. But now it's too late to go back and find the names and pages of all those books out of which I wrote myself those cryptic notes. I promise I'll do much better next time.

I think part of the enjoyment of folk songs is knowing from whence they came. If Malvina Reynolds writes about little boxes on the hillside, we recognize with a chuckle (and a sigh) all of her references. Many folk songs make references to things about which we no longer know, or no longer know by the same name. Often, having some of the name changes cleared up, we see that the ideas in some very old songs are as good as new. (See *John Henry* or *Rigs of the Time* or *Red Cross Store Blues* or *That Crazy War*, etc.) We owe a tremendous debt to the folklorists.

When I'm having a really good time singing in a club or in a concert, I will explain the songs at great length. The less fun I'm having, the less I explain. It's fun to know.

If you like the songs on this record, I'm glad. I like them also. I hope you will listen to them and realize that you don't need a nice voice to sing folk songs. At the same time — although I don't mind hearing myself from the inside (that's like singing in the bathroom — the acoustics are so good) it is somewhat painful for me to listen from the outside. (So I hope you like this record more than I do.)

This record is because I promised I would.

Michael Cooney

Side I, Band I. TURKEY IN THE STRAW

This is one of the many "little songs" that I have learned. I'm always searching for more and if you know any, I'd be happy if you'd send me some. The two verses in this one are both traditional American folk songs. The first I learned from a friend named Bob White who is from Michigan (we met in San Diego and he now resides in Boston); he learned it in camp when he was a kid. The second verse I learned in Triangle-Y Ranch Camp outside of Tucson, Arizona, when I was a kid. There are probably many more such verses.

The tune is older than the words. It is said to be related to a whole raft of British Isles fiddle tunes, among them: *Glasgow Hornpipe* (which is Irish), *Haymaker's Dance* (English), *The Post Office* (Irish), *Lady Shaftsbury's Reel* (Scottish), *Rose Tree in Full Bearing* (Irish), *Old Mother Oxford* (a Morris dance tune known in England and Scotland), and *Kinnegad Slashers* (Irish).

It was first copyrighted in this country in 1834 by Endicott & Swett of New York. They had words with it, and called it *Zip Coon*. In 1861 a fellow named Dan Bryant copyrighted a song called *Turkey in the Straw* with his own words and tune, but the end included the "old melody" which was *Zip Coon*, and I guess somehow the title *Turkey in the Straw* stuck. Which is nice. I really like fiddle tune titles. Just to think of the images: *Turkey in the Straw*, or *The Devil's Dream*, or *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*. There are thousands of them. There's even one called *Cooney's in the Holler* (hollow).

If you want to learn how to play this on the banjo, John Burke, a fancy banjo player and a member of the Old Reliable String Band, has put out a book of fiddle tunes for the banjo called *John Burke's Book of Old Time Fiddle Tunes for Banjo* which contains a lot of nice tunes and how to play them, and *Turkey in the Straw* is one of them. We do it very similarly. His book is available at the Folklore Center, 321 Sixth Avenue, N.Y.C. 10014, and the Denver Folklore Center, 608 East 17th Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80203. Art Rosenbaum also has a book of old time mountain banjo styles that ought to be great. (I haven't seen it yet.) Buy it in the same places.

Oh, we had a little chicken and it wouldn't lay an egg,
So we poured hot water up and down its leg.
And the little chicken cried
And the little chicken begged,
And the little chicken laid a hard-boiled egg.

Oh, I went to Cincinatti and I walked around the block,
And I walked right into a bakery shop.
And I picked three donuts out of the grease,
And I handed the lady a five-cent piece.
Well, she looked at the nickel and she looked at me.
She said, "This nickel's no good to me.
There's a hole in the middle and it's all the way through."
Says I, "There's holes in the donuts, too.
Thanks for the donuts. Goodbye."

Side 1, Band 2. WORRIED BLUES

This is related to a lot of other songs. If you've ever heard *Lonesome Road Blues*, or *Look Down That Long Lonesome Road*, or *Going Down That Road Feeling Bad*, you'll recognize some of this one.

I heard it first on a record called *Texas Folksongs* by Hally Wood (Stinson SLP-73). She evidently learned it from an old Columbia 78 r.p.m. record (Col. 166D) of Samantha Bumgarner which was *Worried Blues* on one side and *Georgia Blues* on the other. Hally sort of took the words from *Worried Blues* and the tune from *Georgia Blues* for her song; but not completely because *Georgia Blues* has a lot of the same verses as *Worried Blues* anyhow. (For instance, *Worried Blues* has a verse: "I'm going down this long, lonesome road." In *Georgia Blues*: "I'm going down this long Georgia road.") So what she really did was take the tune and some of the words from *Georgia Blues* and the title and some of the words from *Worried Blues*.

I heard Hally Wood's record once or twice and when I wanted to learn it completely, I had to add a couple of lines from *Going Down That Road Feeling Bad* to replace the ones I couldn't remember.

I've got the worried blues,
Oh, I've got trouble on my mind.
I've got the worried blues, oh my Lord.
I've got the worried blues,
Oh, I've got trouble on my mind.

I'm going down that long, lonesome road,
I'm going where I've never been before.
Going down that long, lonesome road, oh my Lord.
Going down that long, lonesome road,
I'm going where I've never been before.

Honey baby, don't leave me now,
Oh, I've got trouble on my mind.
Honey baby, don't leave me now, oh my Lord.
Honey baby, don't leave me now,
Oh, I've got trouble on my mind.

I'm going where the climate suits my clothes,
I'm going where the water tastes like wine.
I'm going where the climate suits my clothes, oh my Lord.
Going where the climate suits my clothes,
I'm going where the water tastes like wine.

I've got the worried blues,
Oh, I've got trouble on my mind.
I've got the worried blues, oh my Lord.
I've got the worried blues,
Oh, I've got trouble on my mind.

Side 1, Band 3. FANNIN STREET

This is a Leadbelly song, and if you've never heard of

Leadbelly, I have to tell you a little about him. His real name was Huddie Ledbetter and he was born near Shreveport, Louisiana, in 1885. He acquired his nickname by being incredibly strong and tough, and because his last name sounded like that.

Huddie Ledbetter is responsible for the twelve-string guitar being popular today. The reason so many kids are playing twelve-strings is not just because he played it, but because he played it the way he did. A twelve-string guitar can be played just the way a normal six-string is played because the strings are arranged in six pairs of strings: each pair on a twelve-string taking the place of each single string on a six-string. The old time bluesmen and songsters who played the twelve-string (like Blind Willie McTell, Barbecue Bob, Charlie Turner, etc.) for the most part played them like six-strings; that is, they played the same sort of licks on them that they would have played on six-strings and they played them in essentially the same way.

Leadbelly took advantage of the fact that he had a twelve-string. He concentrated on the tremendous bass notes the twelve-string can produce. He said that when young, he had been fascinated with pianos and would sit on the bass side of pianos in barrel houses listening to those bass runs pounded out by boogie-woogie piano players. He also devised the tremendous chunk-a-chunka (I call it) steam locomotive sounds which he used so well. These things can't be done nearly so well on a six-string, and they are part of why Leadbelly could call himself "The King of the Twelve-String Guitar Players of the World."

Here's a Reader's Digest Leadbelly history. He learned to play Acadian accordian (he called it a windjammer) at an early age, and then the six-string guitar. He played at local dances and the like and began to get into trouble, mostly with women and their men. Women would fall all over him — sometimes with knives. He left home at sixteen because of some of that trouble and wandered Louisiana, eastern Texas and other parts. He worked in barrel houses for money, picked cotton, did all number of other things, including horse-breaking (learned a few cowboy songs), played for a while in a small ragtime serenading street band for "rich white folks" and learned songs, and got into trouble.

In 1917, at the age of 32, he met and travelled with 21 year old Blind Lemon Jefferson, perhaps the most well-known of the early recorded street blues singers. With him, Leadbelly played and sang; sometimes he danced while Lemon played and sometimes he played mandolin behind Lemon. They were together for perhaps a year, facts are hard to come by, but we do know that in June of 1918 Leadbelly entered Shaw State Prison Farm in Texas to serve his first big prison term for "murder and assault to kill."

In the Texas State Penn he was "the number one man in the

number one gang on the number one farm in the state — the man who could carry the lead row in the field for twelve or fourteen hours a day under the broiling July and August sun, and then cut the fool for the guards all evening." Leadbelly would set the pace for the work in the fields. He worked so hard the other prisoners begged him to slow down, and then played his guitar so well that word finally got to Governor Pat Neff who began to visit the farm and listen to Leadbelly play. Leadbelly made up a song for Governor Neff that had verses like "If I had you Governor Neff like you got me, I'd wake up in the mornin' and set you free." Neff had sworn never to pardon anybody, but shortly after his term ended he saw to it that Leadbelly was paroled after serving 6 1/2 years of a thirty year term. Five years later he was sent up to Angola Penitentiary in Louisiana for "assault with intent to murder" on a ten year term. It was there in 1932 that he was discovered by John Lomax and later recorded for the Library of Congress Folksong Archives by Mr. Lomax and his son, Alan. Leadbelly asked the Lomaxes to take a recording of his to Governor O. K. Allen (the song being a reworked rendition of the same song he'd sung to Pat Neff) for which Leadbelly claimed the Governor would set him free. It didn't work, but on August 1, 1934, Leadbelly was released on "good time." He was just under 50 years old.

The Lomaxes brought him north and put him on display, sometimes dressing him up in overalls or prison clothes for dramatic effect and sometimes billing him as "The Sweet Singer from the Swamplands." He worked as their chauffeur and also went with them to other prisons where they used him to stimulate other prisoners to sing for them. They also copyrighted all of his songs at that time.

Leadbelly recorded for several recording companies between 1935 and 1948, spent a year in Hollywood, a year in France, and a year on Riker's Island, New York, for third degree assault. He appeared on many radio programs (and even had his own programs on CBS and on WNYC in New York City), in a number of nightclubs and in some concerts, but not enough. He died a pauper in Bellevue Hospital in New York City in December, 1949, of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a disease which strikes only extremely strong and active men. A year later, "Irene Goodnight," a song he wrote, made number one on the charts and remained there for thirteen weeks. A number of people made a lot of money from that and from a lot of his other songs, among them: *Rock Island Line*, *Take This Hammer*, *Midnight Special*, *On a Monday*, *Pick a Bale of Cotton*, *Bring Me a Little Water*, *Sylvie*, *Black Girl (In the Pines)*, *When I was a Cowboy*, and many, many more.

If you've never heard a Leadbelly record, I want to warn you about something. It's easier to like Peter, Paul & Mary or some other such music than a field recording of some old bluesman,

mountain singer or Leadbelly. The effort required of you is relatively negligible. With a Leadbelly record, you might listen fifty or sixty times before you begin to like it. It's hard to understand what he's saying through his accent and the primitive conditions under which he was sometimes recorded. He didn't have an Andy Williams crooner voice, but he had a voice much greater, much more powerful. You try to learn to sing like that — you'll find it as hard as learning to sing opera (and most people have to listen to opera a long time before they begin to like it). But what I'm getting at is: after a given time you'll tire of the P.P.&M. record, but you'll never tire of the Leadbelly record. You get out what you put in.

About this song, *Fannin Street*. It was also called *Mr. Tom Hughes' Town* (Tom Hughes was the sheriff of Shreveport, Louisiana, when Leadbelly was first going down there), and sometimes *Cry For Me* by people who heard it and remembered only the part where Leadbelly said, "Cry for me!" just before he launched into a particularly impressive instrumental. (Just as some people ask me for *Cumberland Mountain Bear Chase* by the name of "Old Blue" which happens to be the name of an entirely different song.)

Fannin Street was (and is) the barrel house district of Shreveport, Louisiana. Leadbelly used to talk about his papa taking him into Shreveport in the back of a wagon and going down through Fannin Street when he was just a little boy — "knee-high to a duck," he said. Leadbelly said he loved to look at the barrel houses and at the chippies dancing and singing and having a good time, and sometimes at night his papa would leave him asleep in the wagon in the wagon yard and go down to Fannin Street and Leadbelly told himself that when he grew up he'd go down to Fannin Street by himself. Well, when he was about fifteen or sixteen and he had his first pair of long pants on (in those days, you were a man when your papa let you wear long pants), his papa gave him forty dollars and sent him to the fair in Shreveport by himself for the first time. (His papa was rather well off.) His papa told him five times, "Son, don't go down on Fannin Street." Leadbelly said, "No, papa. I wouldn't go down there." He said he couldn't sleep that night for thinking about going to Fannin Street. They sent him to the fair five times and he never got there.

So, this is my (wishy-washy) version of *Fannin Street*. Pete Seeger says the opening notes are equal in power to Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. I tend to agree. I think that this and a lot of folk songs point out that you don't need a license or a degree or any of that b.s. to make great music.

My mama told me,
My sister, too,
Said, "The Shreveport women, son,
Will be the death of you."

Said to my mama,
"Mama, you don't know,
If the Fannin Street women gonna kill me,
Well, you might as well let me go."

Follow me down,
Follow me down,
Follow me down
By Mr. Tom Hughes' town.

I went to my mama,
Fell down on my knees,
Said, "Oh, Mama, won't you forgive me please?"

She started to cry:

Follow me down,
Follow me down,
Follow me down
By Mr. Tom Hughes' town.

I got a woman,
Lives on Stony Hill,
She used to sit down and gamble with
Mr. Buffalo Bill.

He's a bad man.

You got a woman
Gamble with Buffalo Bill,
Two chances in one, babe,
You ain't done got killed.

Follow me down,
Follow me down,
Follow me down
By Mr. Tom Hughes' town.

I got a woman
Lives back of the jail,
Makes an honest livin'
By the wigglin' of her tail.

Cry for me.

Anyone should ask you
Who made up this song,
Tell 'em Huddie Ledbetter
Done been here and gone.

Follow me down,
Follow me down,
Follow me down
By Mr. Tom Hughes' town.

P. S. If you listen to Leadbelly do this, and a lot of his other songs, you will notice that he tends to do a lot of explaining of the stories in the beginning and as he goes along. A number of young white blues singers have started doing this lately (most of them following in the style of John Koerner) only they treat it as a sort of black-face minstrel show, Amos & Andy thing, making the introductions as comical as possible. My feeling is that the songs and the singers are good enough without having to resort to that in order to get people to listen.

The best recording of Leadbelly singing *Fannin Street* is on Folkways *Leadbelly's Last Sessions, Vol. 11* (FA 2942). In fact, the last sessions albums are the best records available of him, although there are a lot of great Leadbelly records on the market (the Elektra Library of Congress recordings and the RCA Victor Vintage series records which are reissues of some early Bluebird 78 rpm recordings, and the other Folkways records, to mention a few).

Side I, Band 4. JIM CRACK CORN

When I was in grade school, we used to sing folk songs and I remember them: corny, crummy, rotten songs. I hated them. Later, in high school, when I began to sing folk songs for fun and profit, I said, "I'll never sing those corny old songs we learned in grade school. Crummy, rotten songs." A while after that I finally began to realize that most of those songs were pretty nice songs, and that some of them were great songs. It was grade school that was corny and crummy and rotten.

I think we have to be careful what we dislike in this world. Too many times we dislike things for what they're wrapped up in and not for the things themselves. The same goes for people and the opposite is also true (we like things for their wrappings).

This is a song we've heard one version of for too long. One of the great things about folk music is that there is usually another version to point out that it still is a good song and that we're just tired of the same version. (In England, a lot of people are pretty sick of some songs that we are just beginning to hear and like over here.)

This version is easy to follow around. I learned it from a Pete Seeger record (*American Folksongs for Children*, Folkways FP 701, a ten inch LP released in 1953) and he probably learned

it from the book *American Folksongs for Children* by Ruth Crawford Seeger (Doubleday & Co., New York, 1948; illustrated by Barbara Cooney — no relation). Mrs. Seeger, wife of Charles Seeger (eminent musicologist and father of Pete), got the song from a Library of Congress recording of it by Eck Dunford of Galax, Virginia (L.C. #1365 A3, recorded by J. A. Lomax in 1937). There.

Big old owl with eyes so bright,
On many a dark and stormy night,
I've often heard my true love say,
"Court all night and sleep all day."

Jim crack corn, I don't care,
Jim crack corn, I don't care,
Jim crack corn, I don't care,
The master's gone away.

Said the shell drake to the crane,
"When do ya think we'll have some rain?
The creek so muddy and the farm so dry,
If it wasn't for the tadpoles, we'd all die."

Said the jaybird to the crow,
"Down to the meadow let us go.
Pullin' up corn has been our trade
Ever since Adam and Eve was made."

When I was a boy, I used to wait
On the master's table and pass the plate,
And hand around the bottle when he got dry,
And brush away the blue tail fly.

Big old owl with eyes so bright,
On many a dark and stormy night,
I've often heard my true love say,
"Court all night and sleep all day."

Side I, Band 5. RIGS OF THE TIME

This is one of many, many interrelated hard times songs. Rigs, in this instance, refers to tricks, as in cheating. This is one of many great "living room" songs sung by people like Joe Hickerson (from whom I learned it). I'd like to say a little about Joe, but what I have to say applies to many, many people all over the country. People like Harry Tuft in Denver, Grady Tuck in San Diego, the Tricketts in Palo Alto, the Armstrongs in Chicago, Larry Hanks and Jenny Haley in Berkeley, the Keppels in Omaha, the Rainey in New Zealand — and for every person I name, a thousand go unnamed. Joe, and people like him, sing the songs they sing because they genuinely like these songs and hope that the people to whom they sing will like the songs as much as they

do. The vast majority of "professionals," if you care to notice, sing the songs they hope will make themselves look good. They hope the audience will like their voices and their sense of drama; they sing the songs they think will fit well on themselves. I once sang in a place with another young man who sang very well and was really a good guitar picker. He came up to me on the first night and said, "You have some nice songs. Would you teach me some of them?" I said, "Sure. Which ones do you want to learn?" He said, "I don't remember them exactly, but there were several. Which ones got the most audience reaction?"

Joe Hickerson is my favorite singer. He can make any song sound good. There are many songs that a lot of us thought were plain old everyday songs until Joe learned them and then all of a sudden we realized how neat they were. Pete Seeger is the only other person who ever did that consistently.

The songs Joe sings aren't the kind that bring people mobbing the stage, but then Joe doesn't sing on boo-wah (my word for show biz) stages. He sings in living rooms, and he sings living room songs. And I get very angry sometimes when I realize that while I consider songs like this to be beautiful (and in the case of this song, powerful), they aren't boo-wah so very few people really appreciate them.

This is one of those songs that, although being quite old, speaks for all times. People have asked me who wrote it. It could have been written a thousand years ago or yesterday. It's probably a hundred or two years old. I don't know much about it. It's English. Joe learned it from an old Columbia World Library of Folk Music record. It has also been recorded by Robin Roberts on her Prestige record, *The Best of Robin Roberts*. (I took the verse about the butcher from that record — the rest are from Joe.)

*No wonder that butter's a shilling a pound,
Seein' the rich farmers' daughters, how they ride up and down.
When you ask them the reason, they cry, "Oh, alas,
There's a war on in France and the cows have no grass."*

*Singin', honesty's all out of fashion.
These are the rigs of the time,
Time, my boys,
These are the rigs of the time.*

*'Tis of an old butcher, I must bring him in,
Charges two bob a pound and he thinks it's no sin,
Puts his thumb on the scales and makes 'em go down,
And he swears it's good weight though it wants half a pound.*

*Now, next comes the publican, I must bring him in,
Charges four pence a quart and he thinks it's no sin.
When he brings in the quart, well, the measure is short,
The top of the pot is popped off with the froth.*

*Now, the very best plan that I ever did find
Was to puff them all off on a huge gale of wind,
And when they got up on a cloud, it would burst,
And the biggest old rascal comes tumblin' down first.*

Side I, Band 6. CREOLE BELLE

This is not a folk song, but that's okay. I used to feel guilty about it, but recently (with a little help from my friends) I've realized that it's traditional for me to sing anything I hear. (If you catch me grumbling because I hear other people singing non-folk songs, it's usually because they persist in calling them folk songs.)

A lot of composed songs had what were known as "vamp introductions," introductions that set the scene before the actual song began. This sort of practice goes on today. Sometimes the vamp introductions were longer than the songs themselves. Anyway, I like them. This song is almost one big vamp. The chorus is often all that gets remembered when the song gets popular. In this case, it was remembered by Mississippi John Hurt who made his own song out of what he remembered of the chorus.

This is a mish-mash version of the original song. I first heard it by the Times Square Two, who do an incredible wicked/proper English vaudeville act in which they include a lot of these old popular songs. (They're a truly great act.) I learned the song from the *Ragtime Songbook* (by Ann Charters, Oak Publications, New York), but since I only barely read music, I of course learned it basically incorrectly. Someday I'll get better about that.

The song was originally copyrighted in 1900 and published in 1901. The words are by George Sidney and the music by J. Bodewalt Lampe. It was published by Whitney-Warner Publishing Company, in Detroit.

*"What is more livelier than a March, Jig, or
Reel? Look at the fun you can have in the
parlor, on the lawn, on the deck of a yacht,
or on the roof of a tenement."*

- 1900 sheetmusic

All folks are prancing,
Singing and dancing,
Go wild with glee.
I'm as happy as happy can be;
Fill my heart with ecstasy.
All over the nation
A celebration
Surely will be,
'Cause married I'm going to be
To my Creole Belle.

My Creole Belle,
I love her well;
All around my heart
She's cast a spell.
When stars do shine,
I call her mine,
My darling baby,
My Creole Belle.

The parson tied the knot
And said, "You've both just been made one."
It was a sight to see,
Them folks all cheering me.
My heart never knew
Such joy, this moment of my life,
When the parson said to me,
"The Creole Belle's your wife."

My Creole Belle,
I love her well;
All around my heart
She's cast a spell.
When stars do shine,
I call her mine,
My darling baby,
My Creole Belle.

See them rehearsing (rehoising)
For this rejoicing
That's gonna be
At the wedding 'tween Baby and me,
Oh, my, what a jamboree.
Congratulations
And presentation
Is to be made;
Wine, beer, and lemonade
At this wedding will be.

My Creole Belle,
I love her well;
All around my heart
She's cast a spell.
When stars do shine,
I call her mine,
My darling baby,
My Creole Belle.

The parson tied the knot
And said, "You've both just been made one."
It was a sight to see,
Them folks all cheering me.
My heart never knew
Such joy, this moment of my life,
When the parson said to me,
"The Creole Belle's your wife."

My Creole Belle,
I love her well;
All around my heart
She's cast a spell.
When stars do shine,
I call her mine,
My darling baby,
My Creole Belle.

Side I, Band 7. JOHN HENRY

This was the most widely recorded folksong sold to the public in 1962. That year the phonolog index listed some 50 current renditions on the market. It is perhaps the most widely recorded folksong of all time.

John Henry has been copyrighted over 100 times since 1916 (eighty of these copyrights were registered between 1955 and 1963) by people ranging from Aaron Copeland to Leadbelly. It has been the subject of intense research for fifty years. John Henry has been the subject of several books and novels, many articles, and even a Broadway play.

The song has been used by both white and negro singers and instrumentalists as a dance tune, work song, street song, as a hammer song (one that has short lines punctuated by the swinging of a hammer:

This old hammer [chop]
Killed John Henry, [chop]
Can't kill me, [chop]
Can't kill me. [chop]

and as a ballad (as in this version, it more or less tells a complete story, from beginning to end).

The popular legend has it that John Henry was employed as a steel driver by the C&O Railroad on the building of the Big Bend Tunnel in West Virginia in the late 1800's. A steel driver drove big spikes into the rock to make holes in which were inserted charges of dynamite, and in that way the tunnels were blasted through the mountains. There are incredible tales of many, many people dying during the building of these tunnels. The heat was incredible, the smoke and dust so thick one could hardly breathe, and there was an ever-present danger of cave-ins and falling rock. During the building of the Hoosac tunnel in Massachusetts in 1873, the Kanawha Chronicle of December 7th reported that "136 men have been killed by casualties." The records of the C&O Railroad covering the building of the Big Bend Tunnel were "destroyed by fire," so no one will ever know just how many people died there. During the 2 1/2 years of the construction of the Big Bend Tunnel, members of the press and public were not allowed to visit the site.

There are no sure records to indicate that there ever was a real John Henry at the Big Bend Tunnel. By the time anybody decided the John Henry legend was really worth investigating, most of those who had been at the Big Bend Tunnel during those days were aging and their imaginations had augmented their memories. He has been described as white-skinned and brown-skinned, weighing 240 lbs. and 150 lbs., and a variable number of other sizes and shapes. There are no records to positively establish that there ever was a steam drill at the Big Bend Tunnel, most of them having been brought into use after its completion. John Hardy, about whom there is a relatively well-known song

*(John Hardy was a desperate little man,
Carried a razor every day.
Shot down a man on the West Virginia line.
You ought to seen John Hardy gettin' away.),*

was real, and there are records that show he was employed at the Big Bend Tunnel and that he did kill a man for which he was tried and hanged.

MacEdward Leach has uncovered some interesting evidence of songs about John Henry which predate the earliest American version by about ten years. These songs deal with the death of a steel driver (called John Henry) who was killed in the building of the number nine tunnel (and evidently there they called them tunnels whether they were tunnels or just passes cut through mountains) on the Kingston to Garden City, Jamaica road in the 1890's. Most of these songs were hammer songs and dealt with John Henry's death as one more of many deaths: "Good men dyin' every day."

There are almost as many verses to this song as there are people who sing it. As Pete Seeger put it, "No two people sing this alike, unless they're roommates." Mine is a sort of Reader's

Digest version. I know lots of verses and someday I'll sit down and sing all of them and see how long it takes.

This is a mighty song and a great legend. I think of it as one man's fight against automation.

*When John Henry was a little baby
Sittin' on his mama's knee,
Said, "The Big Bend Tunnel on that C&O Road,
Mama, 's gonna be the death of me,
Mama, 's gonna be the death of me."*

*Well, the captain said to John Henry,
"Gonna bring me a steam drill down.
Gonna bring me a steam drill out on the job,
Drive that steel on down,
Drive that steel on down."*

*John Henry says to his captain,
"A man ain't nothin' but a man.
Before I let your steam drill beat me down
I'm gonna die with my hammer in my hand,
Gonna die with my hammer in my hand."*

*John Henry hammered on the mountain
Till his hammer was strikin' fire.
Last words I heard that poor man say,
"Gimme a cool drink of water 'fore I die,
Gimme a cool drink of water 'fore I die."*

*John Henry hammered on the mountain,
But the mountain it was so high,
Yes, the mountain so tall, John Henry so small,
Lord, he laid down his hammer and he died,
Lord, he laid down his hammer and he died.*

*They carried John Henry to the graveyard,
They buried him in the sand.
Every steam locomotive comes a-roarin' by
Says, "Yonder lies a steel drivin' man,
Yonder lies a steel drivin' man,
Whoa, yonder lies a steel drivin'"*

*Now, every Monday mornin',
When the bluebirds begin to sing,
You can hear John Henry a mile or more,
Hear his hammer ring,
Hear his hammer ring.
Whoa, listen to that cold steel"*

Side II, Band 1. NU GRAPE

I don't know a thing about this. I learned it from a tape. The tape was owned by Barbara Dane, the great blues singer, good cook, and good friend. The tape was of old 78 rpm records, primarily blues and jazz. All the paper with the tape said about Nu Grape was that it was done by the Nu Grape Twins. They did it in a fantastic harmony that has caused me to wish, on occasion, that I was part of a group. There was also a fine church-like piano break in the middle of the song and, I think, at the end.

I don't know whether Nu Grape really has all of those magical properties ascribed to it in the song, but I do think that the song has some of them.

*I got a Nu Grape
Nice and fine;
There's plenty imitations,
But there's none like mine.
I got your ice cold Nu Grape.*

*I got a Nu Grape
Nice and fine;
Three rings around the bottle
Is a genuine.
I got your ice cold Nu Grape.*

*Little children in the back yard
Playin' in the sand,
A-run and tell your mama
Here's the Nu Grape man.
I got your ice cold Nu Grape.*

*Way down yonder
In the promised land,
A-run and tell your mama
Here's the Nu Grape man.
I got your ice cold Nu Grape.*

*What's that makes your lips
Go flippy-de-floppa?
When you drink a Nu Grape
You don't know when to stop.
I got your ice cold Nu Grape.*

*When you feelin' kinda blue,
Do not know what's ailin' you,
Buy a Nu Grape from the store,
Then you'll have the blues no more.
I got your ice cold Nu Grape.*

*Sister Mary has a beau,
Says he crazy, loves her so.
Buys a Nu Grape every day,
Knows he's bound to win that way.
I got your ice cold Nu Grape.*

*When from work you come home late,
Rolling pin waits at the gate.
Smile and bribe her with Nu Grape,
Then you'll slip through in good shape.
I got your ice cold Nu Grape. (*)*

Side II, Band 2. APPLE PICKER'S REEL

One of the great results of the Folk Music Re- (Arr-, etc.) vival was that many people began to realize that folk songs had been made up and changed around by just plain people and not by "professionals" and were inspired to try it themselves.

This song was made up by Larry Hanks of Berkeley, California. Larry is in the same category as Joe Hickerson, as far as I'm concerned. I would rather listen to them than almost anybody. I sometimes wish Larry were out here in the East, and then I realize that he and Joe sort of stabilize the country and if they were both out here it might make the country lopsided and we all might slide off into the sea.

Larry made this up when he was employed as an apple picker, so I guess it's authentic. It's not a bona-fide ethnic folk song, but if as many people learn it and sing it and teach it to other people as I think will, it could become one. I have already had people tell me verses they have made up for it.

This song sure feels good to sing.

*Hey, ho, makes you feel so fine,
Lookin' out across the orchard in the bright sunshine.
Hey, ho, makes you feel so free,
Standin' in the top of an apple tree.*

*Up in the mornin' before the sun,
I don't get home until the day is done.
My pick sack's heavy and my shoulder's sore,
But I'll be back tomorrow to pick some more.*

Hey, ho, makes you feel so fine, etc.

(*) I would like to thank Mike Rivers, Jon Eberhard and Andy Wallace for my Nu Grape bottle.

Start at the bottom and you pick 'em from the ground,
And you pick that tree clean all the way around:
Then you set up your ladder and you climb up high,
And you're lookin' through the leaves at the clear
blue sky.

Hey, ho, makes you feel so fine, etc.

Three-legged ladder's wobbly as hell,
Reachin' for an apple (whoops!) almost fell.
Twenty pound sack hangin' 'round my neck
And there's two more apples that I can't quite get.

Hey, ho, makes you feel so fine, etc.

Hey, ho, you lose your mind
If you sing this song about a hundred times.
Hey, ho, you feel so free,
Standin' in the top of an apple tree.

Hey, ho, you feel so fine, etc.

P.S. I left out one verse for a number of reasons (excuses), but
if you want to put it back in, it goes:

Hey, ho, you feel so down,
Pickin' up windfalls, crawlin' on the ground.
Hey, ho, you feel so free,
Standin' in the top of an apple tree.

It comes just before verse 4 (it is verse 4).

Side II, Band 3. THAT CRAZY WAR

This is usually called *That Bloody War* or something similar.
The earliest versions refer to the Spanish-American War:

McKinley called for volunteers
And I got my gun;
First Spaniard I saw coming,
I dropped my gun and run.
It was all about that Battleship of Maine.

This is an excellent example of a song that has roots all over.
The tune is related to all kinds of country songs: The Carter
Family's *Cannonball* (*Solid Gone*), Charlie Poole's *If I Lose, Let
Me Lose* (which has some of the Spanish-American War verses). It's
related to a song about the assassination of President McKinley
(*White House Blues*), and even to *Frankie and Johnny*.

Here's a nice verse to the *Battleship of Maine* that I learned

from a fellow in Kansas City who said his grandfather had sung it:

The Captain says they got our flag,
To get it if I could;
I says to let 'em keep it.
We've got others just as good.

This version I learned from the New Lost City Ramblers and
they learned it from a Lulubelle and Scotty record of it made some-
time in the early 40's which marked the beginning of the *Crazy War*
titles. To that version, the Ramblers added the last two verses
from the singing of Stringbean, a banjo playing comedian on the
Grand Old Opry (who, I have heard tell, is still singing the song,
slightly updated; he calls it *That Vietnam War*). I have added the
verse about the beans and potatoes from the singing of Joseph Able
Trivett (Folk-Legacy FSA-2).

What I like about this song is that it shows that there were
people who thought that war was ridiculous long before this gener-
ation came along. This is a folk song. It's nice to realize that
somebody didn't get up one morning and say to himself, "Hmmm, what
shall I write a song about today?" Rather, the song probably hap-
pened because people who did other things for a living besides
writing songs had the thought on their minds persistently enough
to make up verses about it. There's a big difference in motivation
there.

Now, over there, across the sea,
They've got another war
And, oh, I wonder if they know
Just what their fightin' for
In that war, that crazy war.

I was a simple country lad,
I lived down on the farm.
I never even killed a gnat
Nor done a body harm
Until that war, that crazy war.

One day the sheriff caught me,
Says, "Come along, my son.
Your Uncle Sam is a-needin' you
To help him tote a gun
In that war, that crazy war."

They took me down to the courthouse,
My head was in a whirl,
And when them doctors passed on me,
I wished I'd been a girl,
In that war, that crazy war.

They took me out to the rifle range
To hear the bullets sing.
I shot and shot the whole day long
And I never hit a thing,
In that war, that crazy war.

The Captain said to fire at will
And I said, "Which is he?"
The old fool got so ragin' mad
He fired his gun at me
In that war, that crazy war.

They fed me on potatoes
And beans three times a day.
I thought the hogs must all be dead
And the hens had ceased to lay,
In that war, that crazy war.

And when we got to sunny France
I looked around with glee,
But rain and kilometers
Was all that I could see,
In that war, that crazy war.

A cannonball flew overhead,
I started home right then;
The Captain he came right after me,
But a General beat us in,
In that war, that crazy war.

Now, I run all over Europe
Just tryin' to save my life;
There will come another war,
I'll send my darlin' wife
To that war, that crazy war.

Now, wars may come and wars may go,
But get this on your mind,
There will come another war,
And I'll be hard to find,
In that war, that crazy war.

Side II, Band 4. RED CROSS STORE BLUES

Another Leadbelly song. He recorded this first in 1935 (in Wilton, Connecticut) for the Library of Congress.

It was recorded for Bluebird and for the Hot Jazz Club of America labels on June 15, 1940, and that recording has been re-released by RCA Victor on their Vintage series record of Leadbelly (a really good record with some previously un-released

songs on it). It's also on the Leadbelly's last sessions records on Folkways.

This is related to a number of songs, among them *Welfare Store Blues*, recorded in 1932 by Speckled Red, a blues and rag-time piano player.

This song is a comment on a practice that seems to have occurred in the rural south, probably during the first World War. There were Red Cross or Welfare Stores that dispensed free food and other things to poverty stricken people. These places evidently also served occasionally as Army recruiting centers; a fellow would go in for a little something to eat or drink, sign his name, and come out in the Army.

This morning (October 26th, 1968) I received word that my draft board has sent me an induction notice. My answer to them is fairly well embodied in the chorus of this song.

I told her, "No,
Baby, you know I don't want to go.
Yes, and I ain't goin' down to no Red Cross Store."

She said, "Daddy, I just come down to tell you so,
You better go runnin' down to that Red Cross Store."

I told her, "No,
Baby, you know I don't want to go.
Yes, and I ain't goin' down to no Red Cross Store."

She said, "Them Red Cross people are feedin' mighty fine;
They're fixin' everything up with whiskey and wine."

I told her, "No,
Baby, you know I don't want to go.
Yes, and I ain't goin' down to no Red Cross Store."

She come down here talkin' to me about the war;
I told her, "Baby, I ain't got nothin' to go there for."

I told her, "No,
Baby, you know I don't want to go.
Yes, and I ain't goin' down to no Red Cross Store."

She come down here and she shook my hand;
She said, "Daddy, I want you to go down there and fight
for me like a man."

I told her, "No,
Baby, you know I don't want to go.
Yes, and I ain't goin' down to no Red Cross Store."

She come down here, she said, "Daddy, I'm goin' to talk
with you for just a little while.
Ain't you goin' down there and fight for your wife and
child?"

I told her, "No,
Baby, you know I don't want to go.
Yes, and I ain't goin' down to no Red Cross Store."

She come down here and she fell down on her knees.
I said, "Baby, you better look someplace else for your
butter and cheese."

I told her, "No,
Baby you know I don't want to go.
Yes, and I ain't goin' down to no Red Cross Store."

Side II, Band 5. THE BANKERS AND THE DIPLOMATS ARE GOING
IN THE ARMY

This is not a folk song. It was composed by Malvina Reynolds, of Berkeley, California, who has written as many good songs as anyone I know of. You've heard some of them, songs like *What Have They Done to the Rain?* and *Little Boxes*. I know about twenty of her songs and someday I want to make a whole record of just them. Her songs cover almost any subject, from songs she made up for her daughter to songs on subjects of national interest. When the Colgate-Palmolive workers in Oakland, California, went on strike a few years ago, she wrote a song for them. Part of the chorus went: "Come clean, Colgate-Palmolive, come clean..."

She made up a song about a fire in Sausalito, California, which was mostly about friends of hers and how their pottery shop got burned down, the punchline of which was: "And they'll have to burn the boatyard to get that glaze again."

She made up a song about the water shortage in New York City called *The Faucets are Dripping*.

She writes the most wonderful topical songs inside the guise of stories like "The Pied Piper" (Hamelin) and *The Emperor's Nightingale*.

Malvina has two records out: one on Folkways called *Another County Heard From*, and one on Columbia called *Malvina Reynolds Sings the Truth*. She also has three books: *Tweedles and Foodles for Young Noodles*, published by Schroder Music (2028 Parker Street, Berkeley), *Little Boxes and Other Handmade Songs* (published by Oak Publications, 701 7th Avenue, New York City), and *The Muse of Parker Street* (also published by Oak).

This one was written around ten years ago and is probably my favorite, although I really hesitate to say that (I have so many favorites). During the big button fad there was a store in Philadelphia that sold buttons and custom made buttons for people with slogans. They had a bulletin board for suggested slogans and it was well covered. The suggestion that stuck with me was: "Old soldiers never die; young ones do." That's partly what this song is about. What do you suppose would happen if the guys who started the wars also had to go fight them? Maybe they'd settle it by playing checkers or arm-wrestling or something. If you think about it like that long enough, you might begin to realize how impossible the whole concept of war is.

I wish this song would get spread around. I wish people would go around humming it and singing it to themselves and then maybe someday they would have a war and nobody would come.

Last night I had a lovely dream;
I saw a big parade,
With ticker tape galore,
And men were marching there, the like
I'd never seen before.

Oh, the bankers and the diplomats are going in the army.
Oh, happy day, I'd give my pay
To see them on parade,
With their paunches at attention
And their striped pants at ease,
They've gotten patriotic
And they're going overseas.
We'll have to do the best we can
And bravely carry on,
And we'll just keep the laddies here
To manage while they're gone.

Oh, we hate to see 'em go,
The gentlemen of distinction in the army.

The bankers and the diplomats are going in the army.
It seems a shame to keep them
From the wars they love to plan.
We're all of us contented
That they'll fight a dandy war;
They don't need propaganda,
They know what they're fighting for.
They'll march along with dignity
And in the best of form,
And we'll just keep the laddies here
To keep the lassies warm.

Oh, we hate to see 'em go,
The gentlemen of distinction in the army.