

The Asch Recordings, 1939-1947

VOLUME 1, BLUES, GOSPEL, AND JAZZ

MUGGSY SPANIER
PEE WEE RUSSELL
OMER SIMEON
JAMES P. JOHNSON
JOE SULLIVAN
SIDNEY BECHET
ART TATUM
COLEMAN HAWKINS
STUFF SMITH
MARY LOU WILLIAMS

Compiled and Edited by Samuel Charters

ASCH RECORDINGS AA 2

ASCH RECORDINGS AA 2

MUGGSY SPANIER - You're Driving Me Crazy
PEE WEE RUSSELL - Pd Climb The Highest Mountain
PEE WEE RUSSELL - Take Me To The Land Of Jazz (Pee Wee vocal)
OMER SIMEON TRIO - Harlem Hotcha
JAMES P. JOHNSON - Hesitation Blues
JOE SULLIVAN with SIDNEY BECHET - Sister Kate
ART TATUM - Topsy
COLEMAN HAWKINS - Leave My Love Alone
STUFF SMITH - Desert Sands
MARY LOU WILLIAMS - Roll 'Em
JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC - Blues Part 3

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COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE
DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

THE ASCH RECORDINGS, 1939-1947

ASCH RECORDINGS AA 2

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LATEST

FOLKSAY #432
instrumental and vocal
432-1 Good Morning Captain — 900 Miles. 432-2 Streets of Glory — Dead or Alive. 423-3 Don't Lie Buddy — Biggest Thing. 432-4 Cindy — Who's Gonna Shoe Your Pretty Little Feet. ARTISTS Woody Guthrie, Josh White, Leadbelly, Pete Seeger, Sonny Terry 4—10" records \$3.50

BLUES #550
instrumental and vocal cover by David Stone Martin
350-1 Careless Love — T. B. Blues by Josh White
550-2 Until My Baby Comes Home — Too Evil to Cry. 550-3 Lonesome Train — Ain't Gonna Be Treated This way. ARTISTS Nora Lee King, Mary Lou Williams, Jack Dupree, Woody Guthrie, Sonny Terry 3—12" records \$5.00

SONGS BY LEADBELLY #343
guitar and vocal acc. by harmonica
343-1 Good Morning Blues — How Long Blues. 343-2 Irene — Ain't You Glad. 343-3 John Henry — On a Monday. ARTISTS Leadbelly, Sonny Terry 3—10" records \$2.75

WOODY GUTHRIE #347
guitar and vocal
347-1 Talking Sailor — Gypsy Davy. 347-2 Ranger's Command — Couleas Dam. 347-3 Jesus Christ — N. Y. Town 3—10" records \$2.75

BURL IVES, the WAYFARING STRANGER
guitar and vocal story by ALAN LOMAX #345
345-1 Wayfaring Stranger, Buckeye Jim — The Bold Soldier. The Sow Took the Measles. 345-2 Foggy Foggy Dew — Black is the Color. 345-3 Blue Tail Fly — Henry Martin 3—10" records \$2.75

JOSH WHITE #348
guitar and vocal story by Langston Hughes
348-2 Outskirts of Town — One Meat Ball. 348-1 Work Blues. Coffin Eye Joe — Fare Thee Well Blues. 348-3 When I Lay Down and Die Do Die — The House I Live In (Earl Robinson) 3—10" records \$2.75

ASCH LABEL

COUNTRY DANCES #344
instrumental and vocal and call book
344-1 Parlez Vous — Turkey in the Straw. 344-2 Darling Nellie Gray — Lightfoot Bill. 344-3 Little Brown Jug — Virginia Reel. ARTISTS (caller) Tiny Clark, Mr. and Mrs. Siller, Wallace House 3—10" records \$2.75

SONGS FOR VICTORY #346
instrumental and vocal
346-1 Hold the Fort, We Shall Not Be Moved — Hold On. 346-2 UAW-CIO — Dollar Bill. 346-3 Sally Don't You Grieve — Jim Crow. ARTISTS Woody Guthrie, Cisco Houston, Josh White, Brownie McGhee, Sonny Terry, Tom Glazer and The Union Boys 3—10" records \$2.75

POEMS BY LANGSTON HUGHES #454
recitation by LANGSTON HUGHES
4—10" records \$4.50

RELEASES

MARY LOU WILLIAMS TRIO #351
exclusive artist
351-2 Russian Lullaby — Blue Skies. 351-2 Persian Rug — Night and Day. 351-3 You Know Baby (vocal) — I Found a New Baby. ARTISTS Mary Lou Williams, Al Hall, Bill Coleman 3—10" records \$2.75

MARY LOU WILLIAMS and her Chosen Five #450
story by CHARLES E. SMITH
1002 Little Joe — New Drag. 1003 Roll 'Em — Mary's Boogie. 1004 Lullaby of the Leaves — St. Louis Blues. ARTISTS Mary Lou Williams, Frank Newton, Edmund Hall, Victor Dickinson, Al Lucas, Jack Parker 3—12" records \$3.50

STUFF SMITH TRIO #353
353-1 Midway — Look At Me. 353-2 Stop—Look (vocal) — Skip It. 353-3 Don't You Think — Desert Sands. ARTISTS Stuff Smith, John Levy, Jimmy Jones 3—10" records \$2.75

ART TATUM TRIO #452
452-1 Soft Winds — Topsy. 352-2 Boogie — If I Had You. ARTISTS Art Tatum, Tiny Grimes, Slam Stewart 2—12" records \$3.50
Single records, each \$1.50

JAMES P. JOHNSON #551
Harlem Jazz
Euphonic Sounds — The Dream. Hesitation Blues — Four O'Clock Groove. Hot Harlem — The Boogie Dream. ARTISTS James P. Johnson, Al Casey, 'Pops' Foster, Frank Newton, E. Dougherty 3—12" records \$5.00

JAZZ VARIATIONS #350
350-1 Milneberg Joys — 12th Street Rag. 350-2 Jess Stay Blues — Noni. 350-3 I Never Knew — Snowy Morning Blues. ARTISTS Fletcher Henderson, Son's Connie's Inn Orchestra, Jess Stacy and His All Stars, Pecks Bad Boy, James P. Johnson 3—10" records \$3.50



JAZZ LISTINGS

MEADE LUX LEWIS #352
story by CHARLES E. SMITH
352-1 The Denapas Parade — The Boogie Tidal. 352-2 Randin's Boogie — Lux's Boogie. 352-4 Yancey's Pride — Glendele Glide 3—10" records \$3.50

First Asch Catalogue

Volume 1. Blues, Gospel, and Jazz

An Introductory Note

Samuel Charters

Like most men who spend their lives creating, Moses Asch never throws anything away. In his office at Folkways Records there are bookshelves from floor to ceiling piled with the newest European literature, with articles on music from almost anywhere in the world in obscure scientific journals, with large books on Japanese or Indian art, with small books on Oriental poetry, with magazines on today's music, with monographs on western outlaws. All of it is in almost hopeless confusion, but there is a rough order in the arrangement. At least he can usually find what he's looking for after a few moments of moving things from one shelf to another. Across the room from the bookcases is a long shelf with tapes, test pressings, records from Afghanistan or Indiana, photographs someone has sent from Senegal, designs for new Folkways covers, and usually near the door a pile of tapes that he has to listen to.

Down the street from the present Folkways offices he has still kept an office in the building where Folkways was first located, a block off Times Square in New York City. In this old office there is the same heaped disorder, even though he's tried from time to time to get the hundreds of books and records arranged on the wooden shelves he had built. But disorder isn't really the word to use. Everything is related in some way or other to

his serious interest and concern with the music, the art, the literature - with the entire creative expression of the World's peoples. With an interest so far reaching it would be too much to expect that every record and every magazine would get onto its expected shelf. Boxes carefully labeled "Jazz, American" turn out to contain copies of a Ukrainian folk dance record. Old acetate recordings on a shelf labeled "Spoken Arts" turn out to be the missing masters for a Coleman Hawkins recording session. On one shelf there was a box of records that had been sent Air Mail Special Delivery from King Records in Cincinnati in 1953. It was still sitting there unopened. In the Folkways catalog there is music from almost every part of the world, and on the shelves of the other office are the tapes and photographs and notes of the music from the few areas still not represented in the catalog.

Even the relative coherence of the material he has kept around him to use has been made possible only by the most drastic moves. A few years ago Moe found himself so nearly engulfed by the records he'd accumulated that he had to get additional storage space, and there are dozens of cartons of records in a warehouse behind Madison Square Garden. There is the same disorder - or larger order - in the cartons, but the records that he has kept are an extended documentary of nearly fifty years of American folk and blues recording. Mixed in with them are more Ukrainian dance records, one box is filled with empty record albums, old magazines, and a letter dated 1946, but the larger interest is still evident.

Included in the material he's kept are records by nearly every small company that was active in any kind of American music, but there are more copies of records on Asch and Disc label than there are of most of the others. Folkways has been part of the American folk scene for so long - since 1948 - that a lot of people have never realized that Folkways grew out of Moe's earlier beginnings. In first Asch Records and then Disc Records he had already begun, as early as 1939 - to develop some of the concepts that emerged in Folkways, and the records still left in cartons and on shelves in his old offices represent his efforts to keep an archive of his early work.

The earliest catalogs of Asch Records already show some of the musical areas that he was to explore in Folkways. A catalog from the early '40's - it was in a pile of old letters on a window sill - lists his first albums in the field of American music, Burl Ives, "The Wayfaring Stranger," "Songs By Lead Belly," "Country Dances," "Frontier Ballads," and "Woody Guthrie Album." The other album that he listed on the catalog page was the first Asch album, a group of stories from the Bible written by his father, Sholom Asch. There was an International series, and a group of Jewish releases, and, on the last page of the four page catalog, his "Jazz Section," which already included Jess Stacey, Billy Butterfield, James P. Johnson, Mary Lou Williamson, Vic Dickenson, and Edmund Hall. The war, the shortage of shellac, and the ban on recording that the Musicians Union imposed from 1942 to 1944 limited the activities of all the record companies in the United States, but Moe continued to record. He had begun as a sound engineer and he had a recording studio on 46th Street; so he had facilities to do his own recording, despite the ban. Many musicians came to depend on him for the sessions that he did, and for some of New York's best jazz musicians, like James P. Johnson, the Asch studio became an informal gathering place, with music going on at all hours of the day and night.



James P. Johnson

It was not so much the musicians themselves that were to have so much of an influence on the development of Folkways - though with artists like Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, and Pete Seeger (who began recording for him when Asch Records expanded into Disc Records) he had already given the company a strong identity. The dominating influence was Moe's feeling that this music was not for the minority groups where it had always been kept before, on "hillbilly" or "race" records, but that it was for the entire American people. Instead of selling his blues records in stores in the Negro ghettos or in the backcountry South he packaged them in albums designed by artists like David Stone Martin and Ben Shahn and shipped them to stores all over the country. A lot of the albums came back, but enough of them were heard to begin the slow change in America's musical interests that was to lead to the almost complete acceptance of American folk music in the late 1950's and the 1960's. His square dance records were sold in little record shops in California suburbs, instead of country general stores, his jazz records were sold to schools and to educational collections as well as to the usual jazz enthusiast audience. He caused a stir in the schools by releasing an album of children's songs sung by a murderer, Leadbelly. As Disc Records expanded between 1945 and 1947 he put out records in nearly every area of American music and expression - except of the kind of "popular" music that now clutters up the shelves of Salvation Army Thrift Shops.



Sidney Bechet

The Disc Catalog had come a long way from the four page leaflet of Asch Records. It is probably the handsomest record catalog any company in America had published up to that time. David Stone Martin designed it and filled it with his own drawings. There was a foreword by Charles Edward Smith, and a double page frontispiece using a Skippy Adelman photograph. On the first page was his photo of a record cutting stylus with the words "recording is" below it. On the facing page was a picture of a man plowing with a two horse team and the words "like cultivating." The

albums and single records listed in the forty six pages that followed were a clear indication of how much "cultivating" had been done. The blues artists included Leadbelly, Sonny Terry, Lonnie Johnson, Brownie McGhee, and Josh White. Cisco Houston, John Jacob Niles, Hobart Smith, Texas Gladden, Frank Warner, and Richard Dyer-Bennet had joined Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie in singing folk songs. There were ethnic records from Haiti and the Wisconsin encampment of the Sioux and Winnebago Indians. The spoken arts catalog included Orsen Wells narrating the liberation of Paris, Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivering his first Inaugural address, and Paul Eluard and Albert Camus reading their resistance poems and essays in German occupied Paris. The jazz listings were now expanded by the Norman Granz "Jazz At The Philharmonic" concerts as well as releases by Coleman Hawkins, Muggsey Spanier, Art Tatum, Omer Simeon, and the Joe Sullivan-Sidney Bechet Quartet.

The growth of Disc had been so rapid, and there was so much confusion in the American record industry that it became necessary to reorganize the Asch and Disc activities in 1947, but the groundwork had already been laid for the growth and the development of the Folkways concept in the work that had already been started. The Disc catalog was not only a rich foretaste of what was to come after it, but it also clarified and strengthened the direction that the new work was to take. On the cover of the catalog, below a reproduction of Moe's Disc label, was the phrase, "The Folkways Of The World."



WORK SONGS of the U.S.A. as sung by LEAD BELLY with his 12-string guitar
 "Take This Hammer", "Haul Away Joe", "Ol' Riley", "Rock Island Line", "Old Man", "Corn Bread Tough".
 Three 10" records, with prefaces and text DISC Album 735

5085A—"Diggin' My Potatoes" (Lead Belly, with Brownie McGhee, Pops Foster, and Willie-the-Lion Smith.
 5085B—"Defense Blues" (same artists as first side, with Sonny Terry)
 One 10" record DISC Single No. 5085

Page from Disc Catalogue

THE ASCH RECORDINGS, 1939 to 1947

Volume 1. Blues, Gospel, and Jazz

All of the material for these albums has been taken from original records in the Folkways archives. Every effort was made to find the best copies or the original masters, but the wartime restrictions on shellac forced every company to release records that sometimes had a high degree of surface noise. Some of this has been left on a few of the selections to keep the presence and the fidelity of the original recording. Volume Two in this series will document some of the folk and country releases on Asch and Disc labels.

SIDE ONE

- Band 1. LEADBELLY - Defense Blues
- Band 2. LEADBELLY - Keep Your Hands Off Her
- Band 3. CHAMPION JACK DUPREE - Too Evil To Cry
- Band 4. JOSH WHITE - Careless Love
- Band 5. LONNIE JOHNSON - Drifting Along Blues
- Band 6. BROWNIE MCGHEE - Pawnshop Blues

SIDE TWO

- Band 1. SONNY TERRY - Lonesome Train
- Band 2. THE GOSPEL KEYS - Precious Lord
- Band 3. THE GOSPEL KEYS - You've Got To Move
- Band 4. THE THRASHER WONDERS - Moses Smote The Water
- Band 5. SISTER ERNESTINE WASHINGTON with BUNK JOHNSON'S JAZZ BAND - Does Jesus Care?
- Band 6. SISTER WASHINGTON with BUNK JOHNSON - Where Could I Go But To The Lord?



Pee Wee Russell

Moses Asch

SIDE THREE

- Band 1. MUGGSY SPANIER - You're Driving Me Crazy
- Band 2. PEE WEE RUSSELL - I'd Climb The Highest Mountain
- Band 3. PEE WEE RUSSELL - Take Me To The Land Of Jazz (Pee Wee, vocal)
- Band 4. OMER SIMEON TRIO - Harlem Hotcha
- Band 5. JAMES P. JOHNSON - Hesitation Blues
- Band 6. JOE SULLIVAN with SIDNEY BECHET - Sister Kate

SIDE FOUR

- Band 1. ART TATUM - Topsy
- Band 2. COLEMAN HAWKINS - Leave My Love Alone
- Band 3. STUFF SMITH - Desert Sands
- Band 4. MARY LOU WILLIAMS - Roll 'Em
- Band 5. JAZZ AT THE PHILHARMONIC - Blues Part 3. (Les Paul, guitar)

VOLUME ONE, SIDE ONE

1. Leadbelly - "Defense Blues"

I had a little woman workin' on that
national defense, (repeat)
That woman got to the place act like she
did not have no sense.

Just because she was workin', makin' so
much dough, (repeat)
That woman got to the place where she
didn't love me no mo'.

Every payday come, her check was big
as my arm, (repeat)
That woman thought that defense was
gonna last all the time.

Now the defense is gone, listen to my
song, (repeat)
Since that defense been gone, that woman
done lose her home.

I will tell you the truth, and it's got to be
the fact, (repeat)
Since that defense been gone, that woman
lose her cadillac.

I'm gonna tell you people, tell you as a
friend, (repeat)
I don't believe that defense will ever be
back again.

2. Leadbelly - "Keep Your Hands Off Her"

Keep your hands off her. (five times)
Do you hear what I said?
You know she don't belong to you.

She's a heavy-hipped mama, she got great
big legs (three times)
Walkin' like she walkin' on soft boiled
eggs.

(Repeat first verse)

Her name is Josie, and she's so noisy
(three times)
But boy, she's so cozy.

(Repeat first verse)

She's a heavy-hipped mama, and she's
built up straight (three times)
But she's got just what it takes.

(Repeat first verse)



Illustration from Disc Catalogue

3. Champion Jack Dupree - "Too Evil To Cry"

My woman's mean and evil, evil as she
could be, (repeat)
She's so low-down and evil, she's too
much even for me.

She's a mean mistreater, and she
mistreats me all the time, (repeat)
I try to tell her I love her, but she won't
pay that no mind.

My woman is evil, too damn evil to cry,
(repeat)
She bends down with her head hung down,
never wanna say goodbye
Play it for me now.

(Spoken):

Ain't no use bein' so evil, mama.
You're black and evil, that's all
right baby, I just love you so,
mama, it ain't no use.

So bye, bye, baby, listen to your daddy
say goodbye. (repeat)

You're gonna miss me when I'm gone,
'cause you're too damn evil to cry.

4. Josh White - "Careless Love"

Well, it's love, love oh love, oh careless
love, (repeat)
It's caused me to weep, and it's caused
me to moan,
And it's caused me to lose my happy
home.

Well, it's sorrow, sorrow, sorrow to
my heart, (three times)
When me and my true love have to part.

I cried last night and the night before,
(three times)
Gonna cry tonight and I'll cry no more.

5. Lonnie Johnson - "Drifting Along
Blues"

I'm drifting and drifting just like a rolling
stone, (repeat)
No one to love me, no place to call my
home.

Life is a lonely thing when you have to
travel all alone, (repeat)
I long for happiness, that's something
I've never known.

True love is something that money can't
ever buy, (repeat)
Day after day you walk, day after day you
walk and cry.

I had someone to love me, but they was
called away, (repeat)
If they was only alive now, I wouldn't
have to drift this way.

That's why I'm drifting and drifting just
like a rolling stone, (repeat)
Until I find someone to love me, I'll just
keep on drifting along.



Illustration from Disc Catalogue
By David Stone Martin

6. Brownie McGhee - "Pawnshop Blues"

I was walkin' down the street this mornin',
Heard someone call my name and I
couldn't stop.

Hey, hey, call my name and I could not
stop,
Well, you know I was broke and hungry,
On my way to the old pawnshop.

Well, I went to the pawnshop just to pawn
my radio,
Hey, hey, just to pawn my radio.
Well, the pawnshop man told me
We don't take them in anymore.

I went to the pawnshop with my last suit
in my hand,
Hey, yes, my last suit in my hand,
And I said, give me a loan,
Help me, mister pawnshop man.

Well, I lost my job, the man come and
took my car, (repeat)
I'm goin' to the pawnshop in the mornin',
See if I can pawn my old guitar.

I ask the pawnshop man, what were those
three balls on the wall, (repeat)
Well, he say, "Two for one, buddy,
you won't get your stuff out of here
at all. "

VOLUME ONE, SIDE TWO

2. The Gospel Keys - "Precious Lord"

Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am old.
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light,
Take my hand, precious Lord,
And lead me on.

(Repeat first verse)

On my way to Glory,
Precious Lord,
When my life is o'er,
Hear my cry, hear my call,
Hold my hand,
Take my hand, precious Lord,
And lead me on.

(repeat first verse, second verse, first verse)

3. The Gospel Keys - "You've Got To Move"

Chorus:

You've got to move (four times)
When the Lord gets ready,
You've got to move.

You may be high, you may be low,
You may be rich, you may be poor,
When the Lord gets ready
You've got to move.

Chorus

You may be crippled, you cannot walk,
You may be blind, you cannot see,
When the Lord gets ready
You've got to move.

Chorus

(Repeat first verse, then chorus)

You may be deaf, you cannot hear,
You may be blind, and you cannot see,
But when the Lord gets ready
You've got to move.

Chorus

I've got to move (four times)
When the Lord gets ready
You've got to move.

Chorus

4. The Thrasher Wonders - "Moses Smote the Water"

Moses smote the water
And the children all passed over.
Brother Moses smote the water
And the sea give away. . .

5. Sister Ernestine Washington with Bunk Johnson's Band - "Does Jesus Care?"

Does Jesus care
That I'm a friend,
I know my Jesus He cares.
(Repeat)

Oh yes, oh yes, I know He cares. (four times)

Well yes, oh yes, you (I) know He cares.
(five times)

6. Sister Ernestine Washington with Bunk Johnson - "Where Could I Go But To The Lord?"

. . . in this old sinful world,
I need a comfort and a friend. . .
Where could I go but to the Lord.

Chorus: Where could I go,
Tell me where could I go,
To seek a refuge for my soul,
In need of a friend to seek a
happy end
Tell me where could I go but to
the Lord.

Life is grand with friends I love so dear,
Comfort I get from hearts on earth,
But yet when I think. . .
Tell me where could I go but to the Lord.

Chorus

VOLUME TWO, SIDE ONE

3. Pee Wee Russell - "Take Me To The Land of Jazz"

Take me to the land of jazz,
Play the kind of blues that Memphis has,
I want to step to a group that's full of
ginger and pep,
. . . teach me to do the razzmataz,
Let me give you fair warnin'
I won't be home until mornin',
Everybody's full of jazzbo,
In that lovin' land of jazz. (repeat)

5. James P. Johnson - "Hesitation Blues"

Hello, Central, what's the matter with
this line,
I want to talk to that brown gal of mine,
Tell me, how long will I have to wait?
Please give me two-nine-eight
Why do you hesitate?

What's it take
To talk to my brown?
Storm last night,
The wires all down;
Tell me, how long will I have to wait?
Oh won't you tell me now,
Why do you hesitate?

. . . Now I'll be hers
And she'll be mine,
And I'll be feelin' gay,
Left alone to grieve and pine
My best friend's gone away,
She's gone and left me the hesitation blues.

FOLKWAYS Records

AND SERVICE CORP., 701 SEVENTH AVE., N.Y.C.
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ RPM

THE ASCH RECORDINGS, 1939 to 1947

Volume One: Blues, Gospel, and Jazz

Side 1

33 $\frac{1}{3}$ RPM

AA2 A

- Band 1. MUGGSY SPANIER - You're Driving Me Crazy
Band 2. PEE WEE RUSSELL - I'd Climb The
Highest Mountain
Band 3. PEE WEE RUSSELL - Take Me To
The Land Of Jazz (Pee Wee Russell, vocal)
Band 4. THE OMER SIMEON TRIO - Harlem Hotcha
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Side 2

33 $\frac{1}{3}$ RPM

AA2 B

- Band 1. ART TATUM - Topsy
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