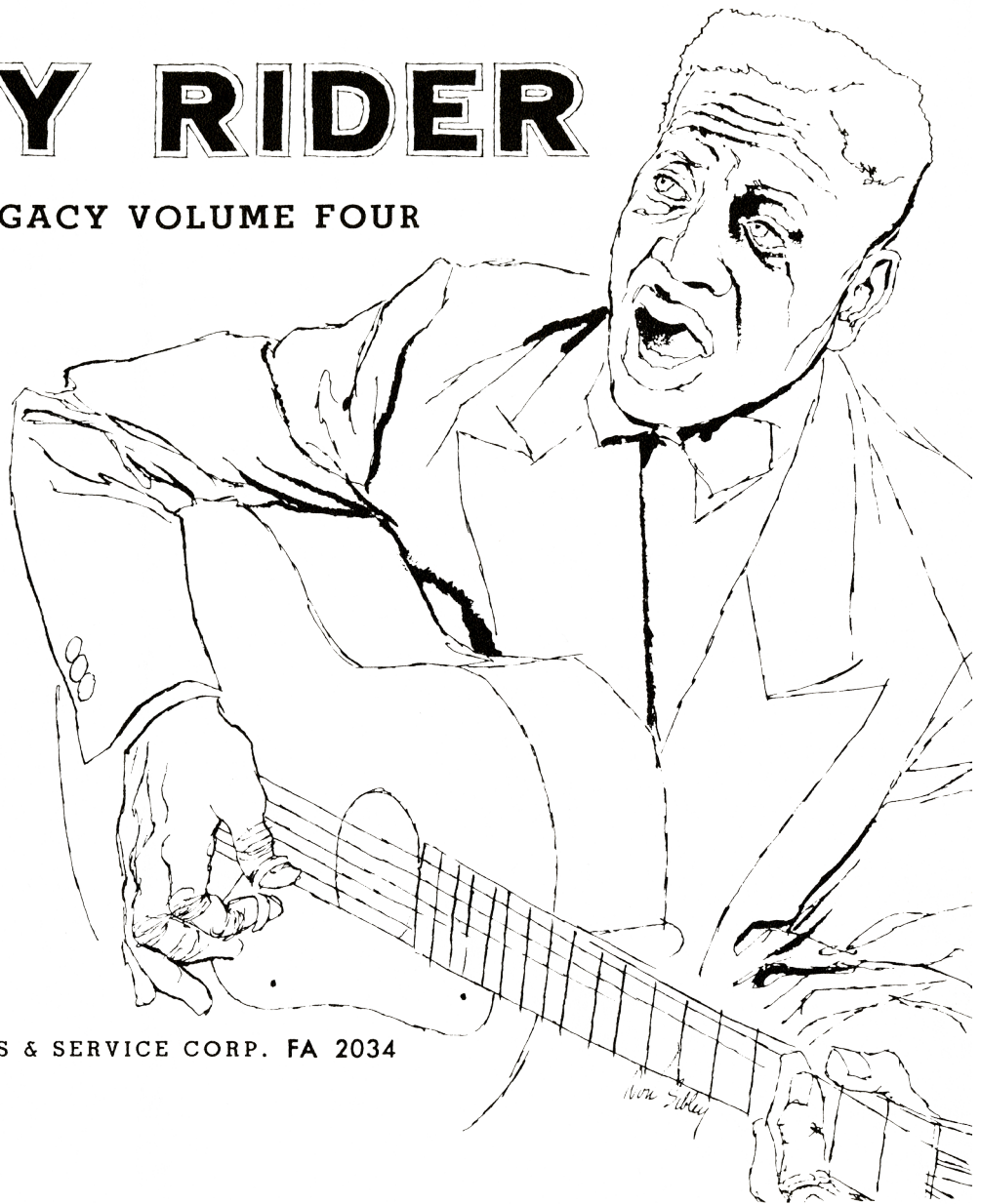


EASY RIDER

LEADBELLY LEGACY VOLUME FOUR



FOLKWAYS RECORDS & SERVICE CORP. FA 2034

SIDE 1

- Band 1. THERE'S A MAN GOING AROUND
TAKING NAMES
(Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- Band 2. EASY RIDER
(Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- Band 3. RED BIRD
(arr. Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- Band 4. LINE 'EM
(Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- Band 5. T. B. BLUES
(Victoria Spivey/Edwin H. Morris & Company,
ASCAP)

SIDE 2

- Band 1. JIM CROW
(Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- Band 2. BOURGEOIS BLUES
(Huddie Ledbetter-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways
Music Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- Band 3. ARMY LIFE
(Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- Band 4. HITLER SONG
(Huddie Ledbetter-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways
Music Publishers, Inc., BMI)

Introduction by Frederic Ramsey, Jr.

The songs Lead Belly sang were a chronicle, not only of his own life, but of all Americans who lived in his time. This writer once asked him where he got them all. "I just take 'em an' fix 'em," he replied. "But you got to keep your mind together." He went on to explain that he took a melody from any given song, put it with words of another or of his own free rhyming, and then had the piece he wanted.

Not long after, he gave us an illustration of the process. We had been playing Bessie Smith's record of "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out." Lead Belly sat quietly, taking in both melody and words. By the time Bessie had got to her second chorus, Lead Belly was humming along with her. Then, as soon as the record came off the turntable, he sang it through. Every word was there, every bit of the melody. But that was just one part of the process. Two weeks later, Lead Belly came back, announced that he really "had" the song, and went through it again. This time, it sounded different---farther from Bessie's style, and closer to Lead Belly's own way of singing.

His method is worth noting, because a great deal of Lead Belly's material was not "original," if we accept the idea that to be original a work must be wholly "created" by an artist. His greatest contribution was his ability and his willingness to perform---to take any words and melody, however hackneyed they might sound coming from other performers, and make something of this material that he "took and fixed." His desire, as far as we can guess, was always that of the professional showman, to give his audience, what it wanted. In the early years, it had been the world of the South---somber spirituals, rough, yet poignant blues; of back searing work on the plantations and prison farms; of the relief that came on Christmas Day; and of a young prostitute who had "the TB," yet whose only complaint was, "TB's all right to have, if your friends didn't treat you so low down."

After 1934, when he was released from the Angola Prison Farm and came north, his audience as well as his life, was different. When he had been singing in the honky tonks and barrel-houses of Fannin Street, in weather gray shanties on the other side of the tracks, up and down the Red River Valley and in and out of the Black Lands of Texas, Lead Belly's audience of negroes had understood every word of his songs. There was no need to say, as he later had to explain to white audiences, that a "Sweetback man" was a pimp **TB Blues**, or that **Line 'Em** was a song about laying down railroad ties.

Sterling Brown has told the story of those earlier audiences in his poem about another blues singer, Ma Rainey:

"Dey comes to hear Ma Rainey from de little
river settlements,
From blackbottom cornrows and from
lumber camps;
Dey stumble in de hall, jes' a-laughin' an'
a-cacklin'
Cheerin' lak roarin' water, lak wind in
river swamps.

...

O Ma Rainey,
Sing yo' song;
Now you's back
Whah you belong,
Git way inside us,
Keep us strong . . .

O Ma Rainey,
Li'l an' low;
Sing us 'bout de hard luck
Roun' our do';
Sing us 'bout de lonesome road
We mus go . . ."

Here was a direct, intimate knowing and sharing between audience and performer. Lead Belly drew his songs from his people, and he, like Ma Rainey, was one of them. "An Ma lef' de stage," Sterling Brown tells us toward the end of his poem, "an' followed some de folks outside." But when Lead Belly came to sing before undergraduates at Harvard and Bryn Mawr, he couldn't "follow the folks outside" when his "lecture" was over.

The folks, many of them, were if anything confused by his songs, and remote from their meaning. So he made brave efforts. He talked to his audiences, trying to explain as much as possible what it was all about. But the warm pulse of understanding was lacking, and Lead Belly knew it as well as any undergraduate born in New England or Michigan.

Sensitive as performer, he knew he had to find new words. Out of trial and error came the songs **Jim Crow**, **Army Life**, and **Hitler Song**. The **Bourgeois Blues** stands midway between them---it is the story of an episode in his northern life, as told by the Lomaxes: "One rainy night in Washington he and Martha were unable to find a room in any of the inexpensive negro hotels and were finally forced to spend the night in the apartment of a white friend. The next morning the white landlord made a scene about the fact that a negro spent the night in his

house. Lead Belly overheard the discussion and on his return to New York composed this blues-narrative."

There is a highly personal note of tragedy in this song; in the others Lead Belly set personal tragedies aside, and dealt with larger issues.

Extract from the poem, "Ma Rainey" printed with

kind permission of the author, Sterling Brown. It first appeared in Sterling Brown's *Southern Road* published 1932, by Harcourt Brace and Company, New York.

Sterling Brown reading his poem "Ma Rainey" is also available on Folkways Records in an album of *Negro Poets* edited by Arna Bontemps.

SIDE I, Band 1: There's A Man Going Around Taking Names

There's a man go-in' round tak-in names— There's a
man go-in' round tak-in names. - He has tak en my fa-ther's
name, And he's left my heart in vain. There's a man go- in
round tak - in names.

There's a man goin' 'round takin'	...He has taken my sister's name...
names,	
There's a man goin' 'round takin'	...He has taken my brother's name...
names,	
He has taken my mother's name and	
has left me here in vain;	
There's a man goin' 'round takin'	
names.	

SIDE I, Band 2: Easy Rider

Eas- sy Ri- der See what you done done.
Ea - sy Ri-der. See what you done, done You made me love you
Now your man done come. — Hey, hey, hey, hey.—

If you catch me stealing please don't	I would set all you women diving after
tell on me	me (3x)
If you catch me stealing please don't	Hey, hey, hey, hey.
tell on me	
I'm stealing back to my old times used	Easy Rider, hear me calling you (3x)
to be.	You're three times seven and you
Hey, hey, hey, hey.	know what you're gonna do.
If I was a catfish swimming in the	
deep blue sea (3x)	
Hey, hey, hey, hey.	

SIDE I, Band 3: Red Bird

Chorus

Red Bird soon in the morn-ing, Red Bird soon in the morn - ing.

Red Bird soon in the morn: ing Red Bird soon in the morn - ing *Fine.*

Red Bird, Red Bird soon in the morn - ing - Red Bird, Red Bird

soon in the morn- ing Red Bird, Red Bird soon in the morn-ing

Versa

Red Bird, Red Bird Soon in the morn-ing what's the mat-ter with the Red Bird

Soon in the morn-ing, What's the mat-ter with the Red Bird

soon in the morn- ing, What's the mat - ter with the Red Bird

soon in the morn- ing, What's the mat - ter with the Red Bird

soon in the morn- ing.

Cat got the red bird soon in the morning,
 Cat got the red bird soon in the morning,
 Cat got the red bird soon in the morning,
 Cat got the red bird soon in the morning.

Hog got the red bird soon in the morning...
 Red bird gonna - soon in the morning...

SIDE I, Band 4: Line 'Em

Freely
C

Ho boys is you right? Done got right.

A Tempo fast
C

All I hate a-bout lin-in' 'track These old bars 'bout to

G7 C *Chos.*

break my back — Ho boys can't you line 'em (Jack - a Jack - a)

G7 C

Ho boys can't you line em (Jack - a Jack - a) Ho boys can't you

G7 C

line 'em. See El o - ise go lin ing track.

Moses stood on the Red Sea Shore
Smotin' that water with a two-by-four.

Mary and the baby lying in the shade
Thinking on the money I ain't made.

If I could I surely would
Stand on the rock where Moses stood.

SIDE I, Band 5: T. B. Blues

E E7 A7 E

It's too late, too late, too late, too late, too late —

E7 A7 E

It's too late, too late, too late, too late, too late. —

B7 A7 E

I'm on my way to Den ver, then ma- ma must I hes-i- tate —

TB is alright to have but your friends
treat you so low down
TB is alright to have but your friends
treat you so low down
Don't you ask them for a favor, they'll
even stop coming around.

Mmm - TB is killing me
Mmm - TB is killing me
My mama I'm like a prisoner, always
wishin' I'm free

Versed

When I was on my feet, I could-n't ev-en much walk down the
 street for the men all look-in' at me from my head to my
 feet, But it's Oh now. T. B's a kil-lin' me
 I wish that I was bur-led, And in the deep blue sea.

SIDE II, Band 1: Jim Crow

Intro.

Bunk John-son told me too — This old
 Jim Crow is - m's — dead bad luck to — me and you. —

Verses

I've been trav- 'lin I've been - trav- lin' from sho' to sho'-
 Ev- 'ry where I have been I found some old Jim Crow.

One thing people, I want everybody to
 know
 You gonna find some Jim Crow
 everyplace you go.

Down in Louisiana, Tennessee,
 Georgia's a mighty good place to go.
 And get together and break up this old
 Jim Crow.

I told everybody over the radio
 Make your mind and get together and
 break up this old Jim Crow.

I'm gonna tell you people something
 that you don't know
 It's a lotta Jim Crow in a moving-
 picture show.

I'm gonna sing this verse - I ain't gonna
 sing no More,
 Please get together - break up this old
 Jim Crow.

SIDE II, Band 2: Bourgeois Blues

Look a here peo - ple, Lis - ten to me -
 Don't try to find no home down in Wash - ing - ton D. C. Lord it's a
 bour - geois town. — ooh, it's a bour - geois town.
 I got the Bour - geois Blues I'm gon na
 spread the news all — a - round

Me and Martha was standin' upstairs,
 I heard a white man say, "Don't want
 no colored up there".

Chorus

White folks in Washington, they know
 how.
 Throw a colored man a nickel to see
 him bow.

Chorus

Home of the brave, land of the free -
 I don't want to be mistreated by no
 bourgeoisie.

Chorus

Tell all the colored folks to listen to
 me.
 Don't try to find a home in Washington
 D.C.

Chorus

SIDE II, Band 3: Army Life

The clothes that they give you they say are might - y fine, But
 me and my bud-dy could both fit in-to mine I don't want no more of
 Ar - my life. Gee but I want to go home.

The shoes that they give you, they say
 are mighty fine;
 Ask for number seven boys, they will
 give you number nine.

Chorus

The hot dogs that they give you, they
 say are mighty fine;
 One rolled off the table and it started
 marking time.

Chorus

The coffee that they give you, they say
 it was mighty fine;
 It tastes like something else and it's
 just like iodine.

Chorus

The biscuits that they give you, they
 say are mighty fine;
 One jumped off the table and knocked
 out a pal of mine.

The money that they give you, they say
 was mighty fine;
 Ask for fifty dollars and they take back
 forty nine.

Chorus

When you go out to vote tell me who
 you gonna put on your mind?
 When you go out to vote just register
 and take your time.

Chorus

We don't want no more war, boy, and
 I got it on my mind;
 And when you go out and register you
 better take your time.

Chorus

They food is getting higher - getting
 higher every day,
 But, boy, the money I'm getting it
 ain't enough to pay.

SIDE II, Band 4: Hitler Song

Hit-ler start-ed out — in nine-teen hun-dred — and
thir-ty two. Hit-ler start-ed out — in
nine-teen hun-dred — and thir-ty two When the
start-ed out he took the home from the Jew.
Cho. faster
We're gon na tear Hit-ler down, — We're gon- na
tear Hit-ler down, — We're gon-na tear Hit-ler down
some day — We're gon- na
bring him to the ground. — We're gon-na bring him to the
ground. We're gon-na bring him to the ground some day. —

When Hitler started out he took the Jews from their home	You ain't no iron and you ain't no solid rock,
When Hitler started out he took the Jews from their home	You ain't no iron and you ain't no solid rock,
That's one thing Mr. Hitler you know you done wrong. <i>Cho.</i>	But we American people say, "Mister Hitler, you is got to stop!" <i>Cho.</i>

CREDITS

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Remastered by Pete Reiniger

Notes by Frederic Ramsey Jr.

Smithsonian Folkways executive
producers:

Huib Schippers
and John Smith

Reissue album design by
Natalia Custodio

Proofread by Lillian Selonick

Production managed by:
Mary Monseur
and Fred Knittel

Production assistant: Chloe Joyner

Smithsonian Folkways is:

Madison Bunch, royalty assistant;
Cecille Chen, director of business affairs
and royalties;
Logan Clark, executive assistant;
Toby Dodds, technology director;
Claudia Foronda, sales, customer service,
and inventory manager;
Beshou Gedamu, marketing assistant;
Will Griffin, licensing manager;
Meredith Holmgren, program manager
for education and cultural sustainability;
Fred Knittel, marketing assistant;
Helen Lindsay, customer service;
Mary Monseur, production manager;
Jeff Place, curator and senior archivist;
Huib Schippers, curator and director;
Sayem Sharif, director of financial
operations;
Ronnie Simpkins, audio specialist;
John Smith, associate director;
Sandy Wang, web designer and developer;
Brian Zimmerman, fulfillment.

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from around the world. In this way, we continue the
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the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways
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ing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and
increased understanding among peoples through the
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ination of sound.

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Phone: (800) 410-9815 or
888-FOLKWAYS (orders only)
Fax: (800) 853-9511 (orders only)

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about Smithsonian Folkways Recordings go to:
www.folkways.si.edu

Please send comments and questions to
smithsonianfolkways@si.edu