

# SON HOUSE & J. D. SHORT

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Blues from the Mississippi Delta / Folkways Records FA 2467



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House, Son & J. D. Short  
Son House and J. D. Short



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## Blues from the Mississippi Delta / Folkways Records FA 2467

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

### SIDE ONE

#### J. D. SHORT

Recorded by Samuel Charters July 3, 1962; St. Louis, Missouri

- Band 1. SO MUCH WINE
- Band 2. TRAIN, BRING MY BABY BACK
- Band 3. YOU BEEN CHEATING ME
- Band 4. CHARLIE PATTON
- Band 5. FIGHTING FOR DEAR OLD UNCLE SAM

### SIDE TWO

#### SON HOUSE

From the Archives of the Library of Congress

- Band 1. MY BLACK WOMAN
- Band 2. SUN GOIN' DOWN
- Band 3. I AIN'T GOIN' TO CRY NO MORE
- Band 4. THE KEY OF MINOR
- Band 5. THIS WAR WILL LAST YOU FOR YEARS
- Band 6. WAS I RIGHT OR WRONG?
- Band 7. COUNTY FARM BLUES

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE / PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID GAHR



# J. D. SHORT and SON HOUSE

## The Blues of the Mississippi Delta

Samuel Charters

Northwest Mississippi is beautiful in the spring and the fall. There is a softness to the air, a distant haze that colors the horizon a faint purple. The grass covers the earth with a deep, rich green; the dried grass of autumn a mottled brown. There are stands of trees left beside the road, and clumps of dogwood and rhododendron that mingle with the blossoming magnolia in the early weeks of March and April. It is only in the towns and along the rutted country roads that the ugliness of the countryside becomes obvious. At the edges of the towns are the run down shacks of the "nigger towns," that the white southerner has left to the colored men and women of the town as places to live. Out on the country roads, lining the flat fields are the ramshackle cabins of the "sharecrop" labor and the hired hands who work long hours for low pay in the cotton fields. In the small towns a Negro will never lift his head if he's talking to a stranger, and he keeps his eyes on the ground if it's a woman, even if it's someone he has known for most of his life. Northwest Mississippi is one of the most vicious areas of human intolerance and brutality on the face of the earth. It is vicious because it is the white southerner's revenge for his defeat at the hands of the North in the Civil War. The white Mississippian, poorly educated, living in a area of poverty and disease, and crippled with the attitudes of the English servant class from which he has come, tries to overcome his awareness of his own inadequacies by forcing the Negroes of Mississippi into a social pattern uglier than his own. It is a system which has left deep scars on both sides, on the Negro in the poverty and helplessness in which he is forced to live, and on the white in the hysteria of fear in which he spends most of his life. At the edge of the towns is the poorer Negro neighborhood, but in the center of the towns is the nervous and frightened white society which imposes its system on the men and women around it. A stranger in a town like Avalon or Port Gibson is followed as he goes down a street. If a car is left outside of a store a sheriff is leaning against it waiting to ask questions when the driver comes back outside. Someone with a camera will be run out of a shack area, someone asking questions will be forced to leave the county. In towns where a stranger is able to move more freely it is the Negro who is seen talking with him who suffers. Out in the country, where there is a long established pattern of violence, both the Negro and someone seen with him will suffer together. It is a system which has so warped the white Mississippian that he can assure himself that his colored neighbors "like the life here," and that he has had Negro "friends," as he calls the relationship, "all of his life"; and then use dogs on Negro children with the courage to protest against the system and to murder any Negro who raises his voice against him.

Much of northwest Mississippi is a flat area of flood-

Yazoo River. It is good country for cotton. The soil is rich, the fields are flat and easy to work, and the area is near Memphis, with its facilities for marketing and shipping. The delta has long been one of the sections of the country with the highest percentage of Negro population, and because of the brutality of the social system there has been a gulf between the life of white and colored that is almost impossible to bridge. Because of these factors, the large Negro population, the poverty, and the lack of interrelationship between the two groups, the delta has been a rich area for the most intense styles of Negro music. The delta may even have been the area which produced the blues. The earliest memory which anyone has of hearing a blues, a blues as a distinctive style growing out of the work song and holler, was W. C. Handy's recollection of hearing what became the first verse of his "Yellow Dog Blues" on a street in Cleveland, Mississippi in the 1890's. From the delta came some of the greatest of the country singers, and the delta blues have left a deep mark on both American and European popular culture. In the South the delta is a term loosely applied to the cotton area of northwest Mississippi, and it includes towns and counties that are not within the drainage system of the Yazoo River, but there is a distinctiveness to the singing styles, even between someone like Frank Stokes, from the northern edge of the delta and J. D. Short, who grew up in the country to the south of it; then spent his youth in Clarksdale and moved away from Mississippi to St. Louis.

The singers who have come from the delta have been a dominant force in the blues, and no other area has contributed so much to the development of the style. From the delta, or the counties around it, came Charlie Patton and Son House, who lived near Robinsville, a neighbor, Willie Brown, and a young field worker, Robert Johnson. Frank Stokes was raised near Senatobia, Bukka White still lives in Avondale, Mississippi John Hurt was found tending cattle in Avalon. J. D. Short, Muddy Waters, Bo Diddley, and John Lee Hooker all spent their younger years near Clarksdale. Tommy McClennan was from Yazoo City. Even the jug bands had roots in Mississippi. Gus Cannon was born in Red Bank and learned to play when he was living near Belzoni. Some of the men are only names in old record catalogs; Ishman Bracey, Tommy Johnson, Mississippi Kid Bailey, the great Skip James. Others, like Big Joe Williams and his cousin J. D. Short, took their music to cities out of Mississippi, somehow keeping themselves alive as musicians through the long years of the depression and the war. The list of Mississippi singers is almost endless, and all of them have the strength and the virility of the delta style in their playing and singing.

The delta blues style is one of the most intense expressions of the country blues. The voice is heavy and dark, the tone forced through the clenched throat, as though the singer were forcing himself to speak. A phrase becomes a choked growl, a deeply felt verse



becomes a tightened falsetto. The guitar strings are pulled until they sting the finger board with their vibration. A bottleneck is broken off and slipped on the little finger to slide along the top string in a disturbing singing tone. The rhythms are the insistent, rushing beat of J.D. Short as he flails at the strings, or the intricately patterned phrases of Son House as he sets his voice against the guitar in an interplay too deep for words. This is the blues at its most musical and emotional limit of expression. A few singers from other areas like Lemon Jefferson and Willie McTell, have left as deep a personal imprint on the blues, but no other group of singers has given as much to this rich strain of American music.

#### SIDE ONE: J.D. SHORT

Recorded by S.B. Charters, July 3, 1962, St. Louis, Missouri

- Band 1: SO MUCH WINE
- Band 2: TRAIN, BRING MY BABY BACK
- Band 3: YOU BEEN CHEATING ME
- Band 4: CHARLIE PATTON
- Band 5: FIGHTING FOR DEAR OLD UNCLE SAM

When I last saw J.D. Short it was a blindingly hot summer day in St. Louis and we had to record out on the sidewalk in front of the shabby brick building on Cole Street where he and his wife Lola Belle were living. He sang in the heat, the sun beating on him as he played his guitar and harmonicas, working a contraption he'd built out of a red bass drum and a green rubber ball with his foot. When we'd finished he wiped his face with a handkerchief, smiled and stood up to go into the shade of the house saying, "That sun just won't let you rest." He was a heavy man, already suffering from bad circulation in his legs, but he had never lost his gentleness or his sincerity. As we sat having a drink he and Lola Belle began teasing each other, talking about what they were going to do with the money he was being paid for recording.

J.D., or Jaydee, as his name was spelled on his early Paramount releases, was born and raised in the Mississippi delta, and even though he had lived in St. Louis for many years he had never lost the style of singing that he had learned when he was still young. Because he left the delta his style is more archaic, less developed than the singing and the accompaniment styles of Son House, and it is an insight into the sources of the music that became the classic delta blues. J.D. was born in Port Gibson, a small, drowsy town in the tree shaded hills of the lower delta area, on the 26th of December, 1902; then moved with his family from one poor farm to another, working on shares. They left Port Gibson in 1909; then lived in places like Hollandale, Mirthy Bow, and Sholes, Mississippi, before settling down for eleven years in Clarksdale. He learned his blues from a number of men, beginning with a Willie Johnson in Hollandale, and he remembers Charlie Patton stopping by the cabin in Mirthy Bow to play on the guitar that J.D.'s father always kept hanging from the wall. In 1919 he started learning the piano

from Son Harris in Sholes, and by the time he left Clarksdale he was already regarded as one of the best of the younger blues men. He came to St. Louis on April 16, 1923, and within a few months became part of the intense musical activity that still is part of St. Louis life. He worked days at Mueller's Brass Foundry and played at little clubs and backyard parties. In the 1930's he even learned the clarinet, taking lessons from the veteran recording musician Douglas Williams, and played for a few years in William's large swing band, but his blues style remained unchanged. His cousin was a blues singer, the great "Big Joe" Williams, and Joe had settled into St. Louis by the late '30's. The war took J.D. out of town again, and he served with the 92nd Division from October, 1942, to March, 1943, when he was injured on an obstacle course and given a medical discharge. It was his old injury that had begun to bother him, and had already led to the amputation of two of his toes when I first met him in 1960. When he returned to St. Louis he and Big Joe worked whenever they could, Joe playing his big nine-string guitar and J.D. playing guitar, harmonica, and his bass drum. They were together for the record which Big Joe did for Delmar in the mid-1950's, and it is still perhaps Joe's most affecting record.

Like his cousin J.D. did not sing very clearly, and entire verses are difficult to understand. "So Much Wine" is a richly personal song, but many of the words are lost.

#### So Much Wine

Knees got the rickets, head got to rolling,  
Keep on drinking, Sweet Lucy, life won't last me long.  
I drink so much wine.  
Yes, so much wine,  
I drink so much wine . . .

Well keep on drinking that no good wine,  
Doctor liable to shoot you right square in the spine,  
I drink so much wine,  
Yes, so much wine. . .

"Train, Bring My Baby Back," was a freely improvised blues that J.D. played and sang with harmonica interjections in the back room of his small rented house. It was cooler there, and there was less noise from the street. Behind him I could see through the window into the small yard with its rusting corrugated iron fence and its wilted sumac tree that was scarred with old nails and tears in the bark. The blues had a touching naivety in its attitude that all he had to do to please his woman was to go into town and get a new stetson hat.

#### Train, Bring My Woman Back

Bye, bye, train, now, bring my woman back. . .

I'm going uptown now, baby, I'm going to buy me a stetson hat.  
I'm going uptown now, baby, I'm going to buy me a stetson hat.  
I'm going to satisfy my baby, I know just what she like.



Well, I'm going to come down through town with my  
band new stetson hat.

Well, I'm going to come down through town with my  
brand new stetson hat.

Well the people tell me how I'm dressed, it's going  
to make my baby come right back. . .

Nearly all of "You Been Cheating Me" is difficult to  
understand, except for the lines,

You been cheating me for another man,  
It seems like all my life in vain,

and there is as much difficulty with his wartime  
blues "Fighting For Dear Old Uncle Sam," when  
he sings,

. . . I'm going down swinging, boys, I'm  
going down fighting for dear old Uncle Sam.

So dark was the night now, people, cold cold  
was the ground,  
So dark was the night now, people, cold cold  
was the ground.

Me and my buddies in two foxholes, we had to  
keep our heads on down.

In the fall of 1962, three or four months after these  
recordings were done, the trouble he had been hav-  
ing with the circulation in his leg became worse. He  
woke his wife late one night, sitting up in bed to tell  
her that he felt sick, but he was dead before she could  
get help.

## SIDE TWO: SON HOUSE

From the Archives of the Library of Congress

Band 1: MY BLACK WOMAN  
Band 2: SUN GOIN' DOWN  
Band 3: I AIN'T GOIN' TO CRY NO MORE  
Band 4: THE KEY OF MINOR  
Band 5: THIS WAR WILL LAST YOU FOR YEARS  
Band 6: WAS I RIGHT OR WRONG?  
Band 7: COUNTY FARM BLUES

In the early 1930's the Federal government began its  
long and difficult struggle to subdue the Mississippi  
River, and along its banks were strung out the  
shacks and the tents of the gangs of workers brought  
in to work on the levees. The pay was low and the  
work was back breaking, but for the men who  
straggled in from the farms or from the back of town  
cabins in places like Yazoo City or Greenwood or  
Clarksdale it was at least a job. In the chronic pov-  
erty of the Mississippi countryside even ten or twelve  
hours a day with a shovel in the sweltering sun was  
better than the nothing that most of the men faced.  
Usually they tried to bring a woman with them, or  
they picked up with one of the women living along  
the river, but it was a hard, lonely life. In the  
ramshackle bars that sprang up outside the work  
camps there was always music, a hard, mean music  
that suited their anger and their loneliness. The

music was the blues of the Mississippi delta, and  
nearly every blues singer that came out of the delta  
worked in the roadhouses along the levee sites. Big  
Joe Williams, Charlie Patton, Robert Johnson,  
Willie Brown; Memphis Singers like Memphis Willie  
Borum, Memphis Minnie, Son Joe, all of them were  
drawn to the money that went through the hands of  
the work gangs on pay nights. Willie Borum was  
working a roadhouse in Walls, Mississippi, with  
Memphis Minnie and Son Joe, and at the towns' other  
roadhouse was a three piece blues band that included  
some of the greatest figures of the Mississippi blues.  
The three men were Willie Brown, Son House, and  
a young singer who was learning from them, Robert  
Johnson. Towards midnight, when the crowd was  
getting noisy and he'd had too much to drink, Son  
House would crawl up on a table, put on his wide  
brimmed hat and begin to give an unsteady sermon  
until he was shouted down and his guitar was shoved  
back in his hand.

Son's early recording career was short, only a  
handful of records in the late releases of the old  
Paramount company, but he was recorded again  
by the Library of Congress early in the second  
World War, and in this archive material there is  
one of the most extended portraits that can be  
drawn of one of the great delta singers. Even in  
his voice, as he describes a guitar tuning, there  
is a deep melancholy and an almost withdrawn  
hesitancy. It is only as he sings that he begins  
to express the anger and the unhappiness and  
the loneliness that have filled his life. In his  
intensity words are slurred, lines forgotten as  
he broods. He seems to be desperately trying  
to say something in his blues, and in a sensi-  
tive and beautiful blues like MY BLACK WOMAN,  
which he also recorded for Paramount in 1930,  
his anguish, and the vivid blues poetry which he  
uses to express it, become a searing musical  
expression. It is the torment which fills the  
blues of Charlie Patton, Willie Brown, Skip  
James, Bukka White, and Robert Johnson.

### My Black Woman

Well, did you get that letter I mailed in your back  
yard.

Uumm - that I mailed in your back yard.  
It's mighty sad to say that your best friend, we  
have got to part.

Well, I got a letter this morning, how do you  
reckon it read?

Got a letter this morning, how do you reckon  
it read?

"Better hurry, hurry, 'cause the gal you love is  
dead."

You know I got my suitcase and I took on down the  
road,

Uumm, took on down the road,

But when I got there she was laying on the cooling  
bo'd.

You know I walked up close and I looked down in  
her face,

Uumm, I looked down in her face.



You a good old gal, but you got to lay down to judgement day.

You know, I fold my arms and I slowly walk away.  
Uumh, I slowly walk away.  
You a good old gal, I just can't take your place.

His "Sun Goin' Down" is a loosely held together group of conventional verses complaining about his mistreatment at the hands of a woman, but he manages to give it a distinctiveness with the richness of his voice and the sensitive guitar accompaniment. He is using a bottle neck or a metal ring to slide on the top strings.

#### Sun Goin' Down

Hey, you know the sun is going down, I say behind that old western hill.  
Uumm, I say behind that old western hill.  
You know I wouldn't do a thing, not against my baby's will.

Hey, you know that's bad. I declare that's too black bad.  
Uumm, I declare that's too black bad.  
You know my woman done quit me, it looks like the whole world's bad.

You know she stopped writing, wouldn't send me no kind of word.  
Uumm, I said she wouldn't send me no kind of word.  
She turned her little back on me, on some low down thing she heard.

Well, I'm going away, baby, I'm going to stay a very long time.  
Uumm, I say I'm going to stay a great long time.  
You know I'm not coming back, baby, 'til you change your mind.

I woke up there this morning feeling sick and bad.  
I say soon in the morning I be feeling mighty sick and bad.  
Thinking about the old times, baby, that I once have had.

Uumm, if I don't go crazy, I say I'm going to lose my mind.  
Uumm, I believe I'm going to lose my mind.  
'Cause I stay worried, baby, pretty near all the time.

Looky here, baby, set right here on my knee.  
Uumm, now just set right down on my knee.  
Gal I just want to tell you just how you been doing me.

Uumm, what you want poor me to do.  
Uumm, I say what you want me to do.  
I've been doing all I can now, just trying to get along with you.

Sometimes his blues become so personal that it is nearly impossible to understand what he is singing as with J.D. Short. The last verse of "I Ain't

Goin' To Cry No More" is almost lost. The subtle rhythmic emphasis in the staccato guitar accompaniment is a evocative response to the restraint of the voice.

#### I Ain't Goin' To Cry No More

I went to the depot and I looked up on the board.  
I went to the depot and I looked up on the board.  
Well, I couldn't see no train, I couldn't hear no whistle blow.

Engineer blew the whistle and the fireman he rung the bell.  
Uumm, the fireman he rung the bell.  
You know my woman's on board, she was waving back fare you well.

I had the strength I would set this train off the tracks  
Uumm, I'd set the train off the tracks.  
'Less you make me a promise you goin' bring my baby back.

Uumm, she ain't coming back no more.  
I don't believe you ever coming back no more.  
You leaving now, baby, but you hanging crepe on my door.

Uumm, I going to miss you from rolling in my arms.  
Uumm, I going to miss you from rolling in my arms.

"This War Will Last You For Years" suggests that Son House, in other circumstances, might have emerged as a folk artist whose range extended into other areas besides the blues. This composition is a rough song in a 3/4 rhythm that responds to the emotionalism of the first months of the second World War. The first verse, and a phrase in the opening line of the second verse were unclear.

#### This War Will Last You For Years

No use to shedding no tears, no use to having no fears.  
This war may last you for years.

Well, the red white and blues (?) at you,  
You ought to do everything that you can.  
Buy war saving stamps, young men go to the camps,  
Be brave and take this stand.

No use to shedding no tears, no use to having no fears,  
This war may last you for years.

Oh the struggle sometime will upset your mind;  
So you won't know just what to do.  
Just keep pushing keep shoving, don't be angry  
be loving,  
Be faithful and honest and true.  
No use to shedding no tears, no use to having no fears,  
This war may last you for years.



You can say yes or no, but we got to win this war;  
Because General McArthur's one friend.

There won't be enough japs to shoot a little game  
of craps;

Because the biggest of the all will be dead.

No use to shedding no tears, no use to having  
no fears.

This war may last you for years.

This was sure do bother our mother and father,  
Our sisters and brothers, too.

Dear friends and relations, the war's end creation,  
Don't let this worry you.

No use to shedding no tears, no use to having  
no fears,

This war may last you for years.

Although there is little direct protest in his blues,  
the concern with skin color that is evident in  
"Was I Right Or Wrong", even though he sings the  
song without a serious emphasis, is a reflection  
of the attitudes of the white society, which judges  
a man by the blackness of his skin. The "black"  
man has to beg a woman to take him back; the  
lighter skinned woman, the "yellow" girl expects  
his last dollar.

#### Was I Right or Wrong?

Uumm, was I right or wrong?

You may think because I'm black,  
I'm going to beg you to take me back.  
Now babe, was I right or wrong?

I'm going in the spring,  
I got messed from shaking that thing.  
Now babe, was I right or wrong?

Up the hickory, down the pine,  
I lost my britches right behind,  
Now babe, was I right or wrong?

You needn't think because you're brown,  
I'm going to let you dog me 'round.  
Now, honey, was I right or wrong?

You needn't think because you're yellow  
I'm going to give you my last dollar,  
Now babe, was I right or wrong?

Now look here, honey, what you want me to do?  
Done all I could to get along with you.  
Now, honey, was I right or wrong?

(repeats the first two verses)

In his "County Farm Blues," with its bottleneck  
guitar accompaniment, Son House sings his only  
protest at the harsh farm gang system that has  
brutalized the lives of himself and the men in the  
lonely countryside around him. In it is the reality  
that hung around the poor cabin where he lived,  
like the drifting smoke from a dying autumn fire.

#### County Farm Blues

Down South, when you do anything that's wrong,  
Down South, when you do anything that's wrong,  
Down South, when you do anything that's wrong,  
They'll sure put you down on the county farm.

Put you under a man called Captain Jack.  
Put you under a man called Captain Jack.  
Put you under a man called Captain Jack.  
He'll sure write his name up and down your back.

Put you down in a ditch with a great big spade.  
Put you down in a ditch with a great big spade.  
Put you down in a ditch with a great big spade.  
Wish to God you hadn't been made.

#### A NOTE

It is possible now to hear the delta blues in all their  
variety and depth for the first time in the thirty  
years that have passed since Paramount and  
Vocalion records began using the delta singers for  
their blues lists. A number of blues collectors and  
enthusiasts have produced several long playing rec-  
ords which are currently available and which include  
these singers and their music. The first volume of  
the Origin Jazz Library, a project of Pete Whalen  
and Bill Givens, was a reissue of Charlie Patton re-  
cordings from 1929 to 1932, and their volumes 2 and  
5 have included a number of other delta singers.  
Volume 5 is entirely Mississippi men and is a care-  
fully chosen and particularly valuable anthology for  
someone interested in an introduction to the Mis-  
sissippi styles. Their records are available through  
the Origin Jazz Library, 39 Remsen Street,  
Brooklyn Heights, N. Y.

In March, 1963, a collector named Tom Hoskins  
found Mississippi John Hurt in Avalon, Mississippi,  
and he and a young collector named Dick Spottswood  
began a record label to make John's music a part of  
the living musical scene. Their first recording of  
John's singing, Piedmont lp 13157, Mississippi  
John Hurt, is a charming and very satisfying collec-  
tion of material. It is available through Piedmont  
Records, 2023 N. Woodstock Street, Arlington 7,  
Virginia. Another collector, John Fahey, has re-  
cently found Bukka White, and his recordings of  
White should be available in the near future. Also  
of interest are the excellent recordings of Big Joe  
Williams on Bob Koester's Delmar Label, Delmar  
602 "Piney Woods Blues", with Jaydee Short, and  
a recent release of Joe by himself, "Blues On High-  
way 49."

This collection of material by Short, and the Li-  
brary of Congress recordings of Son House, is  
intended to supplement these other recordings,  
and to help fill in a little more of the outlines of  
the delta blues style.



# COUNTRY MUSIC on Folkways Records

## old time & bluegrass by John Cohen

This is to serve as an introduction to one segment of the Folkways catalog which represents something of the seeds and sources for a dynamic aspect of American folk music which has found a voice in the cities and colleges in recent years. For the most part, this is mountain music derived from the rural south.

There is now an excitement about this music throughout the colleges and cities, amongst young people who are finding a voice in this music, and who are making it their own voice.

There are a great range of approaches to this music, and a great many styles involved; yet inherent in this movement is a desire to remain close to the traditional ways of playing the music.

The movement, diverse as it is, has taken on a structure which has its heroes, artistic leaders, legendary characters, as sort of language of its own, and several senseless confusions and stereotypes applied to it.

Much of the clamor about this music has come from banjo pickers & guitar singers who have brought the music to everyone's attention by their very enthusiasm. It is their excitement about the music which has communicated first. But there is much more to be heard and understood.

These spirited musicians are often 'put down' for being merely 'ethnic imitators' by the very same people who recognize that traditional folk music is the only aesthetically complete folk music to be heard.

Although it is relatively new in its present situation, this music is part of one of the oldest American traditions. It has its roots in the music of the early settlers, and has received fresh vigor over the years from developments in American culture which have introduced new sounds and new instruments to this tradition, as well as new rhythms and harmonies to accompany the changing social functions the music has performed.

It is part of an active and progressive tradition, yet it has always maintained a terrific sense of respect and preservation for its own past. In this way elements from years ago still considered as significant to the present day music by those who perform and live with this music.

Within old time string band music, bluegrass and just home performances, are found trances of the old ballad styles of singing, of bagpipe and fiddle sounds from the British Isles, as well as sounds of the sentimental songs from the 19th century, minstrel stage songs, early Negro blues, rhythms from jazz as well as those now found in rock-and-roll.

One significant and important aspect of the current city trend towards this music is that it has presented a way to enjoy and understand the popular music, without sentimentality and without losing the perspective of culture as a whole.

It is only in the nature of this perspective that the urban interest differs from the country tradition. This can neither be praised nor lamented, nor can it be overlooked. It must be recognized, for it is the basis upon which an intelligent approach can develop to the many ideas which are being encountered in the current investigation of folk music.

The importance of academic scholarship can not be denied: neither can an excited emotional involvement. It is only when folk music becomes only a form of entertainment, in the more commercial sense of that word, that it is being abused.

That the investigation has become more like an involvement of love or art, is to the credit of the investigators. If city people have found that country music is meaningful to them, then this is a genuine enrichment of their lives.

The more one gets involved in this music, the more one realizes the character of an old tradition at work, and the astonishing directness and simplicity in the approach of the traditional artist. An understanding of the music opens up the possibilities for us all to get the most pleasure and reward from these old songs, and from the people who sing them.

In various college campuses and cities now, folk music societies and festivals are emerging which incorporate active research with song collecting, concert producing, and music playing. At one school, on the event of a New Lost City Rambler concert, the folk music society increased its membership by 100, a panel discussion was held with university faculty and visiting musicians participating, a student string-band was formed, and a local Bluegrass band of country kids was 'discovered' and incorporated into the general university folk song scene. In addition to this, a regular publication was started. At another place, serious discographical research is being done and a record of rare re-issues of early hill music was released. Concerts are being produced employing traditional artists; this is no longer a unique situation. The University of Chicago Folk Festival, the Berkeley Festival, the Friends of Old Time Music, and the Ash Grove in Los Angeles, are all pointing the way towards and intelligent enjoyment of traditional folk music.

Within the Folkways catalog is a group of recordings which present the scope and nature of the various facets of this music. Folkways has been consistent in its presentation of this music as it is traditionally and authentically performed.



- FA2040 Smoky Mt. Ballads
- Bascom Lunsford
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