THE NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS

Rural Delivery Number One

Folkways Records FA 2496

FOLKWAYS RECORDS FA 2496

| SIDE ONE | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Band 1 Band 2 Band 3 | Going Down The River (2:37) The Cyclone of Rye Cove (3:00) Sweet Willie (2:02) |
| Band 4 | I've Always Been A Rambler (3:12) Mike- guitar Tracy- fiddle and voice John- banio |
| Band 5 Band 6 | Old Joe Bone (1:57) Durham's Bull (1:33) A fiddle tune that we learned from the radio and the playing of other musicians. John beats the straws in this one, a rhythm |
| | accompanyment done with long straws or a suitable substitute, like knitting needles. Mike- banjo Tracy- fiddle & foot stomping Penny- spoons |
| Band 7 Band 8 | John- straws Automobile Trip Through Alabama (3:15) Bachelor Blues (3:00) Mike- mandolin Tracy- fiddle and voice John- guitar |
| Band 9 | Train on The Island (2:30) |
| SIDE TW | 0 |
| | |
| Band 1 | Pretty Polly (3:08) Mike- mandolin |
| | Tracy- banjo and voice John- guitar |
| Band 2 Band 3 | Soldier And The Lady (2:43) Gold Watch And Chain (2:55) |
| Band 4 | The Days Of My Childhood Plays (2:00) |
| Band 5 | Fishing Creek Blues (Tracy Schwarz) (1:58) |
| | Mike- banjo Tracy- fiddle |
| | John- guitar |
| Band 6 | Hungry Hash-House (3:00) |
| Band 7 Band 8 | Rubber Neck Blues (2:15) Twenty-one Years (2:30) |
| Danuo | Mike- mandolin and lead voice |
| | Tracy-banjo and tenor voice |
| Band 9 | John- guitar Rosa Lee McFall (2:35) |
| Dana J | Mike- mandolin |
| | Tracy-lead guitar and voice |
| | John-backup guitar |
| Credits: | SMATTE GALLATE |

Folkways Records: Moses Asch, Director Recorded and Edited by Peter Bartok Photograph by John Cohen



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RURAL DELIVERY NO. 1 THE NEW LOST CITY RAMBLERS

TRACY SCHWARZ / MIKE SEEGER / JOHN COHEN

ON FOLK MUSIC, URBAN PERFORMERS, AND VALIDITY

The influence of traditional folk music upon urban performers has been at its most dynamic stage during the past two years as traditional singers have been heard often in the larger Northern cities.

However, many of us, somewhat like the children of the traditional singers we admire, have not been able to clarify our place with the urban folk song world. We have tended to divert attention from ourselves and the music and direct it instead to a cause-in our case, to the cause of traditional folk music. To understand our role as Northern city dwellers performing primarily Southern traditional folk music, we must draw some parallels.

Any musician must basically learn his idiom by ear. His success, finally, is based on choice of repertoire (both song and style), technical skill, and the ability to bring emotion to his music.

A traditional folksinger is, to a greater or lesser extent, his own composer and arranger. At opposite ends of the scale from imitation to innovation would be Almeda Riddle or Eck Robertson (fairly stable transmitters of folklore) and Bill Monroe or Early Scruggs (creators within or mixers of tradition).

We in the city generally have a wider range of musical experience, but must usually learn from one single performance, a recording. Out of all the diverse musical fields, we have chosen to play Southern Mountain music, although we are not generally parentally connected to it. But our grandparents or their parents knew folk song long before the establishment of the notion that the only music worthy of serious consideration was European art music. It seems logical to me to sing an old art (or classical) song in classical style and a folk song in folk style. Since everyone accepts the validity of folk song, it seems natural to accept the validity of folk song style as well.

In learning our music, we choose material from musicians that appeal to us and mix our esthetic with theirs. We may copy closely or rearrange completely, but in nearly all cases, the outcome differs from the original. In our extension and exploration of many areas of traditional music, I believe we can achieve an even wider range and individuality than those who follow the popular or art form approach alone.

It is unfortunate today that many believe the urban folksinger must create a new song or style, bad or good, or else be branded an imitator. This mania for wanton change is similar to that of tearing down fine old buildings to put up faceless new ones under the rationale of progress. The importance is in deciding where and how to progress.

It is not only important today that we preserve and create among the old forms and make room for the best of the evolving forms, but that we also develop a mature criticism of folk and folkbased music built on a knowledge of and a feeling for good text, tune and style.

> Awh Soeger MIKE SEEGER

The survival of old time music to the present day is seen mainly in a few persistent sounds that are a result of the strongest influences. In the early history of recorded mountain music one could hear a great variety of styles, some being represented by only a few records, while others by a large supply that the companies knew were popular. As time went by, professionalism became prevalent due to the effect of radios and victrolas, and the scope of styles narrowed down to where today the Country and Western field is dominated by a Nashville sound which is pure showbiz, produced by a large array

of stars in Nashville, Tenn. Somewhere in all of this one can trace the route back to the roots. In dealing with Bluegrass, of course, it's much easier, this being a style which is old time oriented. Starting with Grayson and Whitter, through J. E. Mainer's Mountaineers and the Monroe Brothers, to Bill Monroe himself, and the Stanley Brothers, just to mention some examples. But with the modern Country and Western Music, the beginnings are much more elusive, although they appear to have occurred more recently. When I first started listening to this music on the radio in the forties, it was still pretty much a pure style by itself, with stars like Ernest Tubb, Eddy Arnold and Hank Williams setting the pace. But now Country and Western has taken on many aspects of pop music, including the often times obnoxious chorus of singers in the electrical background. Today, most programs give us a lot of tearfull earfulls, like: "They can lock me in jail for loving you but they can't keep my face from breaking out." I used to be able to find a country music program on the Radio with a flick of the dial, but nowadays I need to listen to at least two songs to be sure. I'm not bemoaning the loss of the good old days however, because there is still a lot of interesting and just plain good music on the country stations yet, and I like to keep up with what's going on. Inasmuch as I came to old time music via modern country music, many times I'm amazed to find that some song I knew before really was an old time song. I'm sure that this would be an inter esting subject for a thesis or paper, and I look forward to reading such a work someday.

TRACY SCHWARZ

RURAL DELIVERY #1

By the time this record is released, all three of the New Lost City Ramblers will be living in the country-although we were all born in New York City. However, the title of this record is not so much about how we get our mail, but about how we present our music. This music can't be separated from the style in which it is played, and by now, after seven years of performing, the NLCR play in a great many country styles. We have each developed our own individual preferences, so one will recognize greater polar ties here, from old time music to some of the more modern sounds. In this music, one encounters sudden shifts from death-like serious songs to absolute crazy ones. This seems to be an essential aspect of the country perspective. In effect it says that in the midst of hard times and the struggle for existence, there is a terrific outlook which permits one to look difficulties straight in the face and then laugh about it all anyhow.

Recently I learned that this idea is somewhat foreign to the city outlook on old time music. While looking at photos in the NLCR Songbook (Oak Publications), someone said, "people will be disturbed by this book-to think that such lively and fun music comes from such a seemingly grim atmosphere." Another person researching an Educational TV program about poverty in the US was logically lead to the mountaineers and their music, but the songs about hard times were all too funny for the program, and the researcher couldn't accept the way these people come to grips with their greatest hardships.

Besides having the music for ourselves and our families, perhaps one of the most gratifying aspects of our singing and travelling has been to hear the other bands who play this music around the cities. This is being done largely in an honestly homey atmosphere-without the pressures of the commercial music scene, and with no ambition about the music other than to enjoy it, make it heard, and get it better. None of the bands who play old time music have any idea that they might make a "hit". More likely, this music serves many of them as a means of social criticism-as an indication of real values which are within easy reach in an oftimes frantic urban society. This distance from modern society is the only controversial aspect of our music.

Still, the challenge before us is not so clearly marked-How does one grow with this music? How does one develop it and push this expression another step farther along? One way is to play and practice more- to get the craft and technique under finer control. Another approach is to live the life of the music-either as a professional full time musician or, on the other extreme, as a farmer. Or one can dig in deeper from the academic study side of the folklorist. One can see many meanings in this music, and it is not enough just to start the strings trembling on a banjo. For us, it has become a personal and handmade statement in the midst of mass produced mass culture. It is a way of dealing with the past and present, a connection with people faced with similar problems- a simple statement of basic human needs, or a highly sophisticated and stylized expression of an old tradition which is still at work.

Old time music is all these things and more.

As Roscoe Holcomb, the singer from Kentucky, has said about his travels to folk festivals, "They tell me I'm doin' all kinds of things which I didn't even know about."

JOHN COHEN

From FOLKWAYS RECORDS: Moses Asch, Director Recorded and Edited by Peter Bartok Photograph: John Cohen

Other records by The New Lost City Ramblers:

- 2395 The New Lost City Ramblers, Vol. 5
- 2396 The New Lost City Ramblers, Vol. 1
- 2397 The New Lost City Ramblers, Vol. 2
- 2398 The New Lost City Ramblers, Vol. 3
- 2399 The New Lost City Ramblers, Vol. 4
- 2491 The "New" New Lost City Ramblers With Tracy Schwarz
- 2492 The New Lost City Ramblers, Instrumentals.
- 2494 New Lost City Ramblers "Sing Songs of the New . . . "
- 5263 American Moonshine and Prohibition, N.L.C. Ramblers
- 5264 Songs from the Depression, New Lost City Ramblers
- 31015 The New Lost City Ramblers with Cousin Emmy
- 31027 New Lost City Ramblers, Modern Times
- 31035 Remembrance of Things To Come/New Lost City Ramblers
- 31041 On the Great Divide/New Lost City Ramblers

Other records by Tracy Schwarz:

- 2419 "Look Out! Here It Comes" An album of fiddle by NLCR Tracy Schwarz
- 6524 Dancing Bow: Clogging dances, bluegrass
- 8359 Learn to fiddle country style. Tracy Schwarz
- 8361 Traditional Cajun Fiddle
- 31052 Down Home; C. & T. Schwarz

Other records by Mike Seeger:

5273 Tipple, Loom and Rail, Mike Seeger. Songs of Industrialization of the South ulture. It is a way of dealing with the past tell me esent, a connection with people faced with didn't cooblems- a simple statement of besic

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FOLKWAYS RELEASES

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