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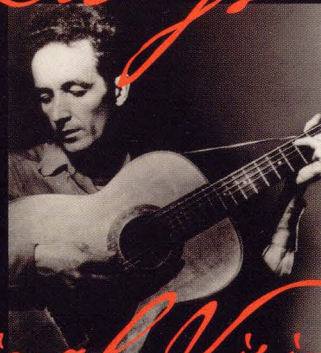
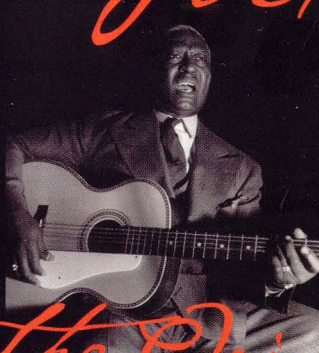
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Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

*Folkways*



*The Original Vision*

SONGS OF WOODY GUTHRIE AND LEAD BELLY



# FOLKWAYS THE ORIGINAL VISION

## *Songs of Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly*

**1 Bring Me a Little Water, Sylvie**  
Lead Belly 0:49

Words and music by Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI

**2 Pretty Boy Floyd**  
Woody Guthrie 3:00

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
Fall River Music, Inc., BMI

**3 Do-Re-Mi**  
Woody Guthrie 2:31

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
TRO-Ludlow Music Corp., BMI

**4 I Ain't Got No Home in This World Anymore**

Woody Guthrie 2:45

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
TRO-Ludlow Music Corp., BMI

**5 Jesus Christ**  
Woody Guthrie 2:37

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
TRO-Ludlow Music Corp., BMI

**6 Cotton Fields**  
Lead Belly 2:07

Words and music by Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI

**7 Rock Island Line**  
Lead Belly 2:02

Arranged by Huddie Ledbetter/  
TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI

**8 Grand Coulee Dam**  
Woody Guthrie 2:10

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc., BMI

**9 4, 5, and 9**  
Lead Belly 2:34

Words and music by Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI

**10 Will Geer Reading Woody Guthrie**  
Will Geer 0:56

**11 Hard Traveling**  
Woody Guthrie 2:31

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
TRO-Ludlow Music Corp., BMI

**12 Fannin Street**  
Lead Belly 3:02

Words and music by Huddie Ledbetter, John A. Lomax, and Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI

**13 Philadelphia Lawyer**  
Woody Guthrie 2:29

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
Woody Guthrie Publications, BMI

**14 Hobo's Lullaby**  
Woody Guthrie 2:24

Words and music by Goebel Reeves/  
Fall River Music, Inc., BMI

**15 Bourgeois Blues**  
Lead Belly 2:18

Words and music by Huddie  
Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music  
Publishers, Inc., BMI

**16 Gray Goose**  
Lead Belly 1:25

Arranged by Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-  
Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI

**17 Irene**  
Lead Belly 1:53

Words and music by Huddie  
Ledbetter and John A. Lomax/  
TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc., BMI

**18 Vigilante Man**  
Woody Guthrie 3:23

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc., BMI

**19 Gallis Pole**  
Lead Belly 2:45

Arranged and adapted by Huddie  
Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music  
Publishers, Inc., BMI

**20 This Land Is Your Land**  
Woody Guthrie 2:17

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc., BMI

**21 Talking Hard Work**  
Woody Guthrie 3:23

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
Sanga Music, Inc., BMI

**22 Midnight Special**  
Lead Belly 2:02

Arranged by Huddie Ledbetter;  
collected and adapted by John  
A. Lomax and Alan Lomax/TRO-  
Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI

**23 In the Pines**  
Lead Belly 2:07

Arranged and adapted by Huddie  
Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music  
Publishers, Inc., BMI

**24 Pastures of Plenty**  
Woody Guthrie 2:25

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc., BMI

**25 Car Song**  
Woody Guthrie 1:50

Words and music by Woody Guthrie/  
TRO-Folkways Music Publishers,  
Inc., BMI

**26 We Shall Be Free**  
Lead Belly, Woody Guthrie 2:33

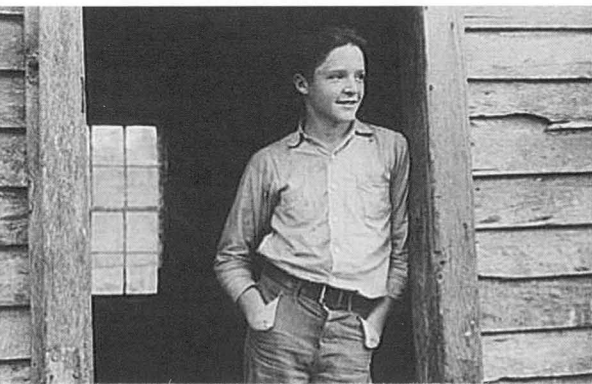
Arranged by Woody Guthrie and  
Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways  
Music Publishers, Inc., BMI

## INTRODUCTION

Anthony Seeger  
Curator Emeritus  
October 2000



Originally prepared in 1988, this Smithsonian Folkways recording was a complement to the Columbia Records album, *Folkways: A Vision Shared* (Columbia 44034), in which well-known musicians of the late twentieth century performed fourteen songs written in the first half of the century by Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly. *Folkways: A Vision Shared* was conceived as a benefit album for the Smithsonian Institution to incorporate the Folkways Record Company into the national collections. It received wide acclaim and a GRAMMY® Award in 1988 for Best Contemporary Folk Recording; a companion videotape (*A Vision Shared: A Tribute to Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly* [Columbia VH 19V 49006]) was also released. The recording allowed the Smithsonian to recover many of the costs of acquiring Folkways Records. What was missing on the Columbia album were the voices of the celebrated artists themselves, and at the Smithsonian we decided that our first release on the



new Smithsonian Folkways Recordings label would be a companion release of the original performers, called *The Original Vision*.

These songs of Guthrie and Lead Belly were taken from Folkways masters at the Smithsonian. Only one song on the Columbia Records album is not on this record: there is no known recording of Woody Guthrie singing "East Texas Red." Instead, an additional twelve songs provide further evidence of the artistry of Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly.

Huddie Ledbetter (1881–1949), a Louisiana-born African American, and Woody Guthrie (1912–1967), an Oklahoma-born Anglo American, grew up hearing and playing very different kinds of music. They were both fine musicians and masterful performers—songwriters who could put their own experiences into vivid musical images as well as interpreters of songs they learned from others, and great communicators of their respective musical traditions. Both appeared on Alan Lomax's national radio show in 1939; both were recorded by John and Alan Lomax for the Library

of Congress; and both also recorded extensively for Folkways Records. In the 1940s they met and played together in New York City with a number of other musicians. Through their influence on younger musicians Guthrie and Lead Belly contributed to the Folk Music Revival of the 1950s and 1960s, and they indirectly influenced other traditions as well. In 1988 they were both inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as influences.

If you listen to the songs on *Folkways: A Vision Shared* (Columbia) and compare them with the same pieces on this CD, you will be struck by the differences as well as the continuities. The original performances are shorter, more direct, with fewer instrumentals, and are largely performed solo. The 1980s performances weave a more complex texture with a variety of electric and acoustic instruments as well as many musicians; they have more instrumental breaks, and are longer. These changes are partly the result of technological advances—in the 1940s recordings were made with only one microphone,

and the sophisticated mixes possible today were not even imagined. These differences in the performances also reflect stylistic changes in popular music.

The new interpretations reveal how fine musicians can take an older song in directions never imagined before and create stunning new interpretations that preserve or even increase the strength of the original. That, of course, is what Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly did themselves: many of Guthrie's melodies came from songs that people already knew, and many of Lead Belly's songs were ones he learned from other musicians. Both Guthrie and Lead Belly added something new: new words, new instrumentation, and a new intensity. Moses Asch recorded them for his Asch, Disc, and Folkways labels (see Goldsmith, 1998).

The original performances stress the telling of a story: the story of a preacher going hunting on Sunday, of a philandering Philadelphia lawyer, of hobos who take their revenge on a tough railroad policeman, or of homelessness

or discrimination. Many of these stories are as current today as they were when Guthrie and Lead Belly sang them. Racism has not disappeared; there are still many uprooted and homeless; it is still big news when a man kills his girlfriend's lover; some preachers still don't practice what they preach; people still miss their companions; and we still hope this land is made for all of us—you and me. The original vision of Woody Guthrie and Huddie Ledbetter continues to have relevance. And the founding vision of Folkways Records continues today at the Smithsonian Institution. The music of these and other great performers of the past continues to stimulate artists and public alike, and is part of the accumulated knowledge and tradition of this country. The Smithsonian Institution purchased Folkways Records in order to keep these great traditions available and to amplify the use of recorded sound in realizing its mission for the increase and diffusion of knowledge.



## THE SONGS

This recording is a new, expanded reissue of *Folkways: The Original Vision* (1989) that includes song annotations. With the exception of track 26, these annotations were taken from *The Asch Recordings* series of Woody Guthrie and *The Lead Belly Legacy* series. In the seventeen years since the first release of *The Original Vision*, more recordings of Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly have been discovered in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives at the Smithsonian, and more has been learned about them, with most of them having been released on additional Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

The annotations of songs by Woody Guthrie were written by Guy Logsdon, and we thank Dr. Logsdon for his permission to reuse them here. The Lead Belly annotations were written by Jeff Place. Each listing includes variant titles, the date the song was recorded, which Folkways recording it comes from, followed by a list of other commercial releases of the song on Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and those issued by Moses Asch on his Asch, Disc, and Folkways labels.

### ① **Bring Me a Little Water, Sylvie**

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar; Anne Graham, vocal

(Also known as "Sylvie"; recorded 1941, from *Folkways* 2004)

Lead Belly's aunt was named Sylvie, and his Uncle Bob would holler at her to bring water while he was plowing. Lead Belly based this song on this memory (Alan Lomax, *Folk Songs of North America*, 1960).

Disc 660 [3001A]; *Folkways* 4, 804, 2004, 31019; Smithsonian Folkways 40001, 40044, 40068

### ② **Pretty Boy Floyd**

Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar

(Recorded 19 April 1944, from *Folkways* 2485; first issued on *Asch* 360)

This is one of Woody's best-known ballads; he made an American Robin Hood out of an Oklahoma murderer. Of course, the reason Floyd, Robin Hood, and other thieves did not steal from the poor is because the poor had nothing to steal, but Pretty Boy Floyd did have many friends who helped him elude the law. He was born Charles Arthur Floyd on 3 February 1904 in Georgia to parents who were hard-working, honest, illiterate rural laborers. Not long after his birth, the family moved to eastern Oklahoma near the small town of Akins in the Cookson Hills, where numerous outlaws had hidden during the late 19th century. At the age of eighteen he married, but he did not want to farm as a living to support his wife and son. In 1925 he joined migrant harvesters

working northward, and along the way robbed a \$12,000 payroll in St. Louis, Missouri. He was arrested, sentenced to five years in the Missouri penitentiary, and was paroled in 1929.

The name "Pretty Boy" was given to him by a gangster madam in Kansas City, and his robberies and killings ranged from Oklahoma to Ohio. Indeed, he did share some of his loot with relatives and friends and Cookson Hills farmers who during those early Depression days hated banks and bankers, but his killings overshadowed any generosity. By 1934, Floyd was listed as "Public Enemy #1," and on 22 October 1934 near East Liverpool, Ohio, he was killed by FBI agents led by Melvin Purvis. It continues to be believed that 20,000 people attended his funeral. Not all Oklahomans believed Floyd to be a Robin Hood.

Woody's story as related in his song is mostly incorrect, but it follows the plot of a Robin Hood-type folk hero. Possibly Woody had heard an uncle of his tell of being wounded by gunfire late one night while returning to Seminole, Oklahoma, where he was an oil field worker; an automobile stopped, and a man helped him into the car and took him to the Seminole hospital. Since there were a submachine gun and other weapons in the car, his uncle always believed that it was Pretty Boy Floyd who had helped save his life. When Woody wrote the song is not known, but he did record it during his 1940 Library of Congress sessions.

*Asch* 360; *Folkways* 2485; Smithsonian Folkways 40025, 40103, 40112

### ③ **Do-Re-Mi**

Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar

(Also known as "If You Ain't Got the Do Re Mi"; recording date unknown, from *Folkways* 2481)

Written in 1937, this is one of Woody's early songs about Dust Bowl migrants; it is the first song in his *Woody and Lefty Lou's Favorite Collection of Old Time Hill Country Songs* (Gardena, CA: Spanish American Institute Press, circa 1937). He wrote:

For years people have been pickin' up  
and leavin' out of the drought country and  
dust bowl parts...a-comin' to California....  
I ain't a-discouragin' nobody...but to those  
who are just a-comin' to be comin'...I  
present the above song.... It ain't so much  
on poetry, but it tells a LOT of truth.

In 1941, with the guidance of Alan Lomax, one of Woody's many fake books was copied (typed) by staff members at the Archive of Folk Song, Library of Congress; this song was dated as an original song by Woody in that collection. He recorded it for the Library of Congress during his first session with Alan Lomax, 21 March 1940, and one month later recorded it for Victor Records as a selection in his *Dust Bowl Ballads, Vol. 1*, side 26620-A. He probably recorded it for Asch in late April 1947, but it was not issued by Folkways until it appeared in 1956 on *Bound for Glory* (*Folkways* FP 78/1, reissued as FW 2481). It remains one of Woody's most popular Dust Bowl migrant songs.

*Folkways* 2481; Smithsonian Folkways 40100, 40112



#### ④ **I Ain't Got No Home in This World Anymore**

**Woody Guthrie, vocal with guitar and harmonica**

(Also known as "Can't Feel at Home," "I Can't Feel at Home," and "This World Is Not My Home"; recording date and matrix not found)

This Southern gospel song was recorded as "Can't Feel at Home" by the Carter Family on 25 May 1931, in Charlotte, North Carolina, for Victor (matrix 69351-2; Victor 23569), and was included in their song book, *The Carter Family Album of Smoky Mountain Ballads* (New York: Southern Music Pub. Co., 1935, p. 44). The Monroe Brothers recorded it in 1936 with the title "This World Is Not My Home," and western swing artist Hank Thompson recorded it with the same title in the early 1950s. Woody knew the song and sang it with his adapted words and melody while broadcasting over KFVD, Hollywood. He changed it into a Dust Bowl migrant song, and included it in his manuscript collection "Songs of Woody Guthrie," pp. 2 and 87, in the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song. There are four different manuscript copies in the Asch/Folkways collection, and on one he wrote:

This old song to start out with was a religious piece called, "I Can't Feel At Home In This World Any More." But I seen there was another side to the picture. Reason why you cant feel at home in this world any more is mostly because you aint got no home to feel at.

Smithsonian Folkways 40102, 40112

#### ⑤ **Jesus Christ**

**Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar**

(Also known as "They Laid Jesus Christ in His Grave"; recorded April 1944, from Folkways 2481)

Woody was a religious man, although not in the conventional sense. He was well read in biblical scriptures as well as in Oriental religions and philosophies. There are three manuscripts of this song in the Folkways Archives, and on an early version he wrote:

I wrote this song looking out of a rooming house window in New York City in the winter of 1940. I saw how the poor folks lived, and then I saw how the rich folks lived, and the poor folks down and out and cold and hungry, and the rich ones out drinking good whiskey and celebrating and wasting handfulls of money at gambling and women, and I got to thinking about what Jesus said, and what if He was to walk into New York City and preach like he use to. They'd lock Him back in Jail as sure as you're reading this. "Even as you've done it unto the least of these little ones, you have done it unto me."

On 5 February 1947 he added four additional verses; he made his first recording of it on 22 March 1940 for Alan Lomax and the Library of Congress (see: *Woody Guthrie: Library of Congress Recordings* Rounder Records 1041/2/3), and recorded it for Asch in late April 1944. It was included in *Woody Guthrie* (Asch Records 347, three 78 rpm discs), released in the fall of 1944, side 347-2B.

Asch 347-2B; Folkways 2481; Smithsonian Folkways 40100, 40112

## 6 Cotton Fields

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(Also known as "Cotton Song"; recorded summer 1947, from Folkways 2014)

This is an autobiographical song about Lead Belly's childhood near Shreveport, Louisiana. It became a hit song for the folk group the Highwaymen in 1962.

Folkways 14, 2014, 31046



## 7 Rock Island Line

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(Recorded 1949, from Folkways 2942, SFW 40068 [1994])

The Rock Island line. These boys cuttin' with pole axes. One man's cutting right handed. He's standing on the opposite side of the other man. The other man cut left handed. He's standing the other side. And these boys gonna sing about the Rock Island line which is a mighty good road to ride. And in that road the man gonna talk to the depot agent when he's comin out of the cut with that Rock Island line train freight coming back from Mullaine (sic) this a way. That man blows his whistle down there different than people blow whistles here. He's gonna talk to that depot agent and he's gonna tell him something. When that switch falls over the line, means for that freight train to go into the hole. Man's gonna talk to him.

This is another of Lead Belly's best-known songs. After leaving prison, Lead Belly accompanied the Lomaxes on many of their recording trips, acting as their helper and their driver. In October of 1934 the Lomaxes recorded a group of convicts singing this song at the Cummins State Farm in Gould, Arkansas. Lead Belly learned the song there (Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell, *The Life and Legend of Lead Belly*, 1992). It later became a big hit for Lonnie Donegan during the late 1950s British skiffle music craze.

Asch 101; Asch 102B; Disc 735 (6090A); Folkways 14, 2014, 2941, 2942, 7020, 7533, 31019; Smithsonian Folkways 40001, 40044, 40068/71



## 8 Grand Coulee Dam

Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar

(Also known as "Big Grand Coulee Dam" and "Ballad of the Great Grand Coulee"; probably recorded in 1944, matrix MA-17; Smithsonian Acetate 118, 10" shellac disc, issued as Asch 78 347-1B)

Woody included this song in his mimeographed songbook, *Ten of Woody Guthrie's Songs: Book One* (3 April 1945); he wrote:

...The rich ones hired airplanes full of entertainers and stars to come up to Oregon, Washington, Montana and Wyoming and tell the people that they didn't need no Coolee

(sic) Dam at all; that is, not for the next couple of centuries.... The world didn't need no more houses with electricity in them.... Then I sung another little song to sort of put these airplane loads of fones back in their place.

Manuscripts indicate he originally composed at least eight verses to this song (see: Woody Guthrie, *Roll On Columbia: The Columbia River Collection*, Bill Murlin, ed., Sing Out Corp., 1991), but later cut it to six verses. He wrote that he recorded it for the Bonneville Power Administration and for the United States Office of War Information as well as for the Asch Record Co.

Asch 347-1B, Folkways 78/1, 2481; Smithsonian Folkways 40100, 40112

## 9 4, 5, and 9

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar; Sonny Terry, harmonica; Brownie McGhee, guitar; Pops Foster, bass; Willie "The Lion" Smith, piano

(Also known as "Hollywood and Vine"; recorded ca. June 1946; matrix D384; Smithsonian acetate 293 shellac disc)

This is an outtake from an interesting session Asch held in his studio in June 1946 bringing together Lead Belly, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, and two jazz musicians, Willie "The Lion" Smith and Pops Foster. It takes on the feel of a loose jam. Asch released four of the songs from this session as two 78s ("Diggin' My Potatoes" paired with "Defense Blues" and "Easy Rider" paired with "Pigmeat"). Lead Belly spent some time living in Los Angeles in the mid-1940s during a time he was trying to break into the movie business as an actor.

Folkways 2941; Smithsonian Folkways 40001, 40044, 40068/71; Verve/Folkways 3019

## 10 Will Geer Reading Woody Guthrie

Prose written by Woody Guthrie

Will Geer met Woody in California during the late 1930s. It was Geer who encouraged Woody to move to New York. Alan Lomax decided to record Woody after seeing him perform as part of Geer's 3 March 1940 "Grapes of Wrath Evening." Geer and Woody became lifelong friends, and Geer was involved in many posthumous tributes

to Woody, including an LP tribute released on Folkways called *Bound for Glory* (Folkways 2481). Geer read Woody's prose between Woody's songs. This narration comes from that collection and led into the following track.

## 11 Hard Traveling

Woody Guthrie, vocal and mandolin; Cisco Houston, guitar; Sonny Terry, harmonica

(Recorded 1947, from Folkways 2481)

The first printing of this song appeared in a typed and mimeographed collection, *Ten of Woody Guthrie's Songs: Book One*, dated 3 April 1945; he sold it for twenty-five cents, or less. He wrote:

This is a song about the hard traveling of the working people, not the moonstruck mystic traveling or of the professional vacationist. Song about a man that has rode the flat wheelers, kicked up cinders, dumped the red hot slag, hit the hard rock tunneling, hard harvesting, the hard rock jail, looking for a woman that's hard to find.

He referred to it as a "Dust Bowl" song, but wrote it while working on his Columbia River project in 1941. It remains one of his best-known songs.

Folkways 2484; Smithsonian Folkways 40007, 40046, 40102, 40112

## 12 Fannin Street

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(Also known as "Mr. Tom Hughes Town" and "Cry to Me"; recorded 1949, from Folkways 2942)

But anyhow when I got to Shreveport I never did forget how to go down on Fannin Street. 'Cause there's a little hill you drop off I knew exactly where that big place was on Texas Avenue, guess it was a church, I don't know what it was. I never did pay it much mind. When I get ready to go down the little hill I wasn't studying about no church, but I knowed how to go down there. So I went down on Fannin Street, that's where I'd go everytime I'd leave home. So I learned how to play a guitar by a piano. I'd sit by the bass side with my guitar—a six string guitar at that time.

(From an interview with Lead Belly by Frederic Ramsey, Jr., in Folkways 2942)

Turn-of-the-twentieth-century Fannin Street in Shreveport, Louisiana, was a dangerous place, the home of gambling and prostitution. To young Huddie it was a fascinating place full of music and dancing. It was there that Lead Belly first started to play for money. Naturally, as the song says, his mother was none too pleased about the prospect of Huddie spending time on Fannin Street. Tom Hughes was the sheriff of Shreveport at the time and was known for his autocratic rule.

Folkways 2942, 31046; Smithsonian Folkways 40001, 40045, 40068

## 13 Philadelphia Lawyer

Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar; Cisco Houston, harmony vocal

(Recorded 19 April 1944 from matrix MA 36; Smithsonian Acetate 025)

In the fall of 1937, Woody Guthrie and his cousin Jack Guthrie landed a radio show over KFVD, Hollywood, California. Jack left the show, and a mutual friend, "Lefty Lou" Crissman, became Woody's singing partner on the "Woody and Lefty Lou Show." One day she showed Woody a newspaper article about a jealous cowboy shooting a Philadelphia lawyer in Reno, Nevada (during Woody's time, the term "Philadelphia lawyer" meant a shyster lawyer—an ambulance-chaser or lowlife lawyer looking for a client); Woody thought it was funny—a cowboy shooting a lawyer. Originally calling it "Reno Blues," he set his words to the traditional native American ballad, "Jealous Lover (Florella)" (Laws F1); and included it in the song book *Woody and Lefty Lou's Favorite Collection of Old Time Hill Country Songs* (p. 8).

Woody and Jack Guthrie sang it in bars up and down the California coast; as a young singer listening outside bars, Rose Maddox learned it from hearing them. She and her brothers entertained and recorded as "The Maddox Brothers and Rose," and "Philadelphia Lawyer" became a popular song when they recorded it with Rose doing the vocal (Four Star 1289, 1949).

Smithsonian Folkways 40100, 40112



#### 14 **Hobo's Lullaby**

Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar

(Recorded 25 April 1944; matrix MA 109; Smithsonian acetate 055)

This has been reported to be Woody's favorite song; it was recorded by its composer, Goebel Reeves, 13 August 1934, in San Francisco, but apparently not issued. Later that month, 31 August, he recorded it in Chicago (Champion 45181); when or where Woody learned it is not known, but he included it in his unpublished manuscript *Woody & Lefty Lou's One Thousand and One Laffs and Your Free Gift of One Hundred and One Songs*, dated April 1938. Woody wrote:

....A hobo's life moves swiftly, broadly, talking and moving in terms of states, countries, seasons; instead of the narrow, suffocating, life of City Living so hemmed in on every side.... Friendless, and alone he dwells among us, drifting like a tumbleweed across the earth...seeking a freedom that you have only dimly felt at times.

Reeves's life was similar to Woody's except that Reeves did not write social protest songs. He was born 9 October 1899 in Sherman, Texas; his mother was a musician, and his father was a salesman who later was elected to the Texas House of Representatives. After serving in the army during World War I, he started performing with his guitar and traveling across the country, eventually performing over small radio stations; when



he tired of that life, he would ship out as a merchant seaman. He became known as "The Texas Drifter" and also sang and recorded under other names. In the 1930s, he was appearing on radio shows nationwide, often using his songs and poems about hobo life, but he became disillusioned with the entertainment world and left it. Reeves died 26 January 1959 in Long Beach, California (see: *Goebel Reeves: Hobo's Lullaby* Bear Family BCD 15680, notes by Fred Hoepfner).

Smithsonian Folkways 40100, 40112

#### 15 **Bourgeois Blues**

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(Recorded May 1944, from Folkways 2034)

This is among Lead Belly's best-known songs. According to one story (Ahmet Ertegun from an interview during the film *Folkways: A Vision Shared*), Lead Belly first heard the term "bourgeois" during a discussion of racism in Washington, D.C. He was fascinated by the word and used it to craft a song about the racism he had experienced in Washington. He first recorded the song in December 1938 in New York. The original recording is now part of the Library of Congress collection.

Folkways 2034; Smithsonian Folkways 40001, 40045

#### 16 **Grey Goose**

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(Recorded 1947, from Folkways 2004)

Now this is a preacher. Down in my home, Baptist people go to church on a Sunday. Well, they had a preacher who was supposed to be a reverend. Well, instead of the preacher going to church that Sunday, he went out and tried to kill a grey goose, and the grey goose is still laughing at him. When the sisters found out the preacher had tried to kill him a grey goose, they said "Lord, Lord, Lord." That's where that "Lord, Lord, Lord" come in.

Moses Asch recorded this song at various times with different personnel. In the 1940s, Asch released what he called his *Folksay* series. On these recordings he would record whatever group of musicians happened to be in the studio that day in loose arrangements of folk songs. One such group consisted of Lead Belly, Woody Guthrie, and Cisco Houston, who performed this song. However, this version is solo. "Grey Goose" was also a song known to convicts. Versions of this song were recorded by John and Alan Lomax for the Library of Congress in three separate prisons in Texas. They recorded Iron Head in Sugarland (1933), Augustus Haggerty (Track Horse) in Huntsville (1934), and Washington (Lightnin') in the Barrington State Farm (1933).

Disc 6044; Folkways 4, 804, 2004, 2941, 7020, 31019; Smithsonian Folkways 40001, 40044, 40068/71, 40105



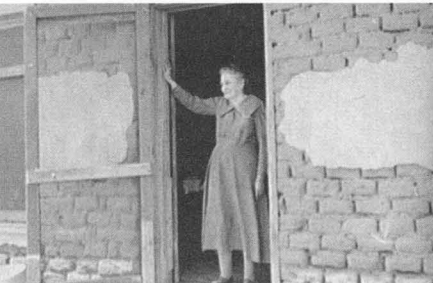
## 17 Irene (Goodnight Irene)

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar; Sonny Terry, harmonica

(Also known as "Goodnight Irene"; recorded possibly August 1943, from Folkways 2004)

This is undoubtedly Lead Belly's most famous song. According to Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell, the song could be of Tin Pan Alley or minstrel show origin. Lead Belly apparently learned it from an uncle while a child and was performing it as early as 1909 (Wolfe 1992). It became his theme song, and he began and ended many of his radio programs with "Irene." Unfortunately for Lead Belly he died a year before it became a nationwide hit in 1950, recorded by the Weavers. Lead Belly died on welfare, and the fame he had so long worked for had eluded him. Many of Lead Belly's other songs were also recorded by various popular groups of the Folk Song Revival of the 1950–1960s.

Asch 343; Disc 734; Folkways 4, 804, 2004, 2942, 7533, 31019; Smithsonian Folkways 40001, 40044, 40068/71



## 18 Vigilante Man

Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar with harmonica

(Recording date and matrix unknown, from Folkways 2481)

The movie version of *Grapes of Wrath* had a tremendous influence on Woody; he sat through it a few times, went back to his room, and wrote most of his "Dust Bowl Ballads," including "Vigilante Man." Later he wrote:

For a long time I heard about the Vigilante man, but didn't never know for sure what he was. One night in Tracy, Cal., up close to Frisco, I found out. About 150 of us found out. It was cold and rainy that night. It was in the month of March. A car load of them rounded us up and herded us out into a cow pasture. Some of the boys stayed out there in the rain and some of us went back to town. They caught us a second time. This time I pulled a joke on the cops and it made them mad. They took me off alone and made me get out in front of the car in the head lights, and walked me down the road about 2 miles. They left me out in the rain by a big bridge. I crawled down under the bridge and got in a big wool bed roll with a Canadian lumber jack. I aint advertising the Canadian army, but them lumber jacks is about as warm a feller as you can sleep with.

(Manuscript in the Asch/Folkways Archives; also printed in *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People*, compiled by Alan Lomax [New York: Oak Publications, 1967], p. 234)

The "vigilantes" in the labor movement were groups of men paid by company officials to intimidate workers who were attempting to organize, and in the westward migration during the Great Depression, they kept migrants "moving on" away from their towns. This is what Woody experienced. For his melody, he adapted the Carter Family's version of "Sad and Lonesome Day"

Folkways 2481; Smithsonian Folkways 40102, 40112

## 19 Gallis Pole

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(Also known as "The Maid Freed from the Gallows," "Hangman," "Gallows Pole, Gallows Tree"; recorded October 1948 by Fredric Ramsey, Jr., from a radio broadcast; from Folkways 31030)

From Lead Belly to Led Zeppelin, this old ballad has appeared in many forms over the years. It is a descendant of the English ballad, "The Maid Freed from the Gallows," and shares many of the same verses. It is included in Francis James Child's famous ballad collection, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, originally published in 1882. Child categorized ballads by plot line so that related ballads were classified together by number. He listed this song as Child Ballad No. 95.

Folkways 31030

## 20 This Land Is Your Land

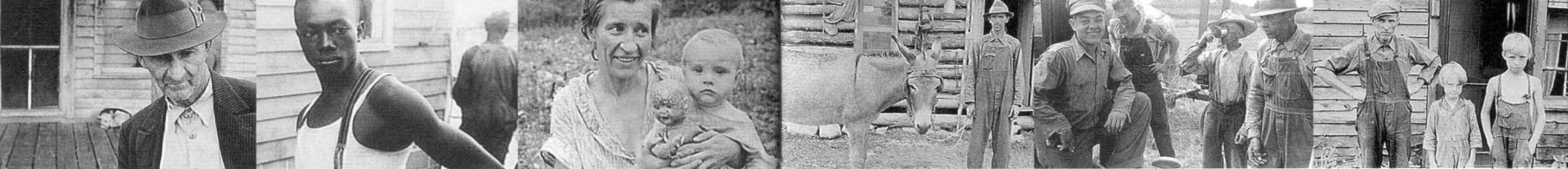
Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar

(Recording date unknown, from Folkways 2481)

Written 23 February 1940, this song's social significance lies in its inclusive statements, and its popularity is derived from a simple melody that can be sung by all. Woody wrote it because he was tired of hearing Kate Smith, one of the nation's most popular singers during the 1930s, sing "God Bless America." So he voiced a different perspective on the United States. His lyrics contrasted the beauty of the national landscape with lines of hungry Americans standing outside relief offices. He ended each verse with "God blessed America for me." Later he changed the last line to "This land was made for you and me." Critics called both the song and its writer "un-American." Despite the criticism, "This Land" became Woody's best-known song and is one of the most widely sung songs around the world; it has even been championed as a new American national anthem.

The melody is an adaptation of the Carter Family's version of the gospel song "When the World's on Fire"; it was a popular melody that also was adapted for the tune of "Little Darling, Pal of Mine."

Woody wrote six verses, two of which recounted Great Depression experiences and were not heard when the song was first issued in 1951 on the 10" LP *This Land Is My Land* (Folkways FP 27, reissued as FC 7027, 1961). They were:



Was a big high wall there that tried to stop me  
A sign was painted said: Private Property.  
But on the back side it didn't say nothing —  
God blessed America for me.

One bright sunny morning in the shadow  
of the steeple  
By the Relief Office I saw my people —  
As they stood hungry, I stood there wondering  
if God blessed America for me.

When the manuscript was made public, the  
"Private Property" verse became a part of  
Arlo Guthrie's and Pete Seeger's renditions of  
the song (a version with the "Private Property"  
verse can be found on Smithsonian Folkways  
40100); also, on the manuscript there was no  
indication of a chorus, but on that first issue  
of his recording Woody repeated his first  
verse, and it became the chorus. A seventh  
verse, was added when he mimeographed his  
songbook, (3 April 1945); the verse is:

Nobody living can ever stop me  
As I go walking my freedom highway  
Nobody living can make me turn back  
This land was made for you and me.

Folkways 27, 7027, 31001; Smithsonian Folkways 40100, 40112

## 21 Talking Hard Work Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar

(Recording date unknown, from Folkways 2484)

Pete Seeger wrote that, when he and the  
Almanac Singers met Woody, they were  
"mightily impressed with his 'Talking Blues' form:  
two lines that rhyme, two more that rhyme, then  
two or three irregular, free-form lines following  
as a comment, before the next stanza" [*Talkin'  
Union 6* (April 1983): 4]. It is generally believed  
that this form of musical expression came from  
African-American tradition, or that Woody  
created it; however, the "talking blues" form is  
credited to an Anglo-South Carolinian—Chris  
Bouchillon, who in April 1926 recorded the  
original "Talkin' Blues" (see: Charles Wolfe's  
notes on Chris Bouchillon, *The Original Talking  
Blues Man* Old Homestead OHCS 181). The  
recording director thought that Bouchillon had  
a good voice with limited singing ability, so he  
asked him to try talking while playing the guitar.  
The result was the "Talking blues" with the  
often-copied opening line:

If you want to get to heaven, let  
me tell you how to do it...

However, this line is also reported to be from  
a "Negro minstrel show" heard in 1915 in  
Louisburg, North Carolina (Newman I. White,  
*American Negro Folk-Songs* [reprint Hatboro, PA:  
Folklore Associates, 1968], p. 135).

Bouchillon's recording sold over 90,000  
copies, and numerous folk, country, and blues  
entertainers such as Woody Guthrie and Robert  
Lunn embraced the style and often adapted  
the lyrics (see: "We Shall Be Free" in *Lead Belly  
Sings Folk Songs* Smithsonian Folkways 40010,  
with Woody Guthrie, Cisco Houston, and Sonny  
Terry). Woody used the "talkin' blues" as a  
musical vehicle to express his thoughts about  
many, many topics. For additional information  
about the "Talkin' Blues," see: John Greenway,  
*The Talking Blues*, notes by Kenneth S. Goldstein  
(Folkways FH 5232, 1958). One of many "Talkin'  
Blues" songs that Woody composed, this one  
was not released until 1964 on *Woody Guthrie  
Sings Folk Songs*, Vol. 2 (Folkways 2484).

Folkways 2484; Smithsonian Folkways 40100; 40112

## 22 Midnight Special Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(Recorded 1948, from Folkways 2942)

According to Alan Lomax, this song was created  
in Sugarland Prison in Texas and referred to a  
railroad train which ran by the prison at night.  
The "Midnight Special" came to represent  
freedom (Lomax interviewed during the film  
*Folkways: A Vision Shared*). If written in Texas, the  
song certainly spread quickly, for the Library  
of Congress recorded prisoners singing it in  
Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana all during  
the 1930s. Lead Belly's arrangement of the song  
became the standard one for many of the folk  
groups of the 1960s and for the rock group  
Creedence Clearwater Revival in the early 1970s.

Disc 6043; Folkways 2941, 2942, 31046; Smithsonian Folkways  
40001, 40045, 40068, 40105; Verve/Folkways 3019

## 23 In the Pines

Lead Belly, vocal and guitar

(Also known as "Black Girl" and "Where Did You Sleep Last Night"; recorded possibly summer 1947; from *Folkways* 2014)

This is an old folk song which is found in both Anglo- and African-American tradition and is amazingly widespread. Versions have been recorded by such artists as diverse as Roscoe Holcomb, Cisco Houston, Bascom Lamar Lunsford (see *Smithsonian Folkways* 40076), Bill Monroe, Pete Seeger, Ralph Stanley, Rod Stewart and John Baldry, Doc Walsh, and, most recently, the rock group Nirvana.

*Folkways* 14, 2014, 31019

## 24 Pastures of Plenty

Woody Guthrie, vocals, guitar and harmonica

(Probably recorded in late April 1947, from *Smithsonian* reel to reel tape #31- take 2, matrix D-199, *Smithsonian* Acetate 0033)

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) sells and distributes the electricity generated by the hydroelectric dams along the Columbia River system. When created by Congress in 1937, the BPA, along with other rural electric administrations in the nation, faced public

relations problems. Individuals ranging from laborers working on the dams to farmers were skeptical of the value gained by providing electricity to most homes in the nation. Large power companies waged a public relations war against rural electrification the same way that insurance companies fought Social Security; therefore, the BPA decided to make movies to sell the value of the dams and electricity, and hired Woody to write songs for the movie eventually titled *The Columbia*.

Woody stated that he wrote twenty-six songs in twenty-six days. Even though this may be somewhat exaggerated, the fact is that he did write twenty-six songs about the project and events that drove families to the Northwest in the 1930s. He listened to migrants and other laborers and transformed their stories, problems, aspirations, tragedies, loves, and work experiences into first-person narratives that still evoke emotional responses from those who read and listen to them. "Pastures of Plenty" is one of those lasting, powerful statements that came from Woody's short time with the BPA and that he included in *Ballads from the Dust Bowl* (Disc 610, side 5010 A). He wrote at least ten verses; however, the most popular variant has five quatrain verses.

Disc 610; *Folkways* 2481, 31001; *Smithsonian Folkways* 40100, 40112



## 25 Car Song

Woody Guthrie, vocal and guitar

(Also known as "Riding in My Car" and "Take Me Riding in My Car"; no recording date or matrix number available, *Smithsonian* Acetate 073, 10" glass acetate)

This is one of the best examples of Woody's ability to put himself in the role of a child and create songs; he was an adult child. He stated that all of his children's songs were the efforts of his daughter Cathy; however, he wrote a few children's songs for his first family in the late

1930s as well as for Cathy's brothers and sister. His 1946 and 1947 children's songs were issued under the Disc label and earned commendations from the Parent-Teachers Association and the National Education Association, but this song was released only after Asch issued records on the *Folkways* label.

*Folkways* 5, FOL 105, FC 7005, FC 7705, and FC 7675; *Smithsonian Folkways* 40100, 40112, 45036, 45043

## 26 We Shall Be Free

Woody Guthrie, vocal; Cisco Houston, vocal; Lead Belly, vocal; Sonny Terry, harmonica

(Recorded 1944, from *Folkways* 2488)

"We Shall Be Free" features Lead Belly and Guthrie using the body of the classic original "Talking Blues" recorded by Chris Bouchillon in the 1920s. Robert Lunn was later to re-record it, and that is where Woody Guthrie picked it up, adding it to his repertoire. Many of the verses in "We Shall Be Free" come from "Talking Blues," but others, especially Lead Belly's, seem to be made up on the spot.

Guthrie also recorded a fiddle tune for Asch that he called "Chicken Sneeze." In that tune he used some the same lyrics as in this one. Bob Dylan borrowed the idea for his "I Shall Be Free" and "I Shall Be Free No. 10" from this song.

*Folkways* 2488; *Smithsonian Folkways* 40010



### Related Recordings

*Anthology of American Folk Music*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40090

*The Best of Broadside, 1962–1988*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40130

Bragg, Billy, and Wilco, *Mermaid Avenue*  
Elektra 62204

\_\_\_\_\_, *Mermaid Avenue, Vol. 2*  
Elektra 62522

*Folkways: A Vision Shared*  
Columbia 44034

Guthrie, Woody, *The Asch Recordings, Vols. 1–4*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40112

\_\_\_\_\_, *Bound for Glory*  
Folkways 2481

\_\_\_\_\_, *Buffalo Skinners: The Asch Recordings, Vol. 3*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40103

\_\_\_\_\_, *Columbia River Collection*  
Rounder 1036

\_\_\_\_\_, *Dust Bowl Ballads*  
Buddah 99724

\_\_\_\_\_, *Hard Travelin': The Asch Recordings, Vol. 3*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40102

\_\_\_\_\_, *The Library of Congress Recordings*  
Rounder 1041

\_\_\_\_\_, *Long Ways to Travel: The Unreleased Folkways Masters*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40046

\_\_\_\_\_, *Muleskinner Blues: The Asch Recordings, Vol. 2*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40101

\_\_\_\_\_, *Nursery Days*  
Smithsonian Folkways 45036

\_\_\_\_\_, *Poor Boy*  
Folkways 31010

\_\_\_\_\_, *Songs to Grow on for Mother and Child*  
Smithsonian Folkways 45035

\_\_\_\_\_, *Struggle*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40025

\_\_\_\_\_, *This Land Is Your Land: The Asch Recordings, Vol. 1*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40100

\_\_\_\_\_, *Woody Guthrie Sings Folk Songs*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40007

Houston, Cisco, *The Folkways Years, 1944–1961*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40059

Lead Belly, *Alabama Bound*  
RCA 9600

\_\_\_\_\_, *Bourgeois Blues: The Lead Belly Legacy, Vol. 2*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40045

\_\_\_\_\_, *Go Down Old Hannah*  
Rounder 1099

\_\_\_\_\_, *Gwine Dig a Hole and Put the Devil In*  
Rounder 1045

\_\_\_\_\_, *King of the Twelve String Guitar*  
Columbia 46776

\_\_\_\_\_, *Lead Belly*  
Columbia 30035

\_\_\_\_\_, *Lead Belly Sings Folk Songs*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40010

\_\_\_\_\_, *Lead Belly's Best*  
Capitol 92075

\_\_\_\_\_, *Lead Belly's Last Sessions*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40068

\_\_\_\_\_, *Lead Belly Legacy, Vol. 3: The Early Recordings*  
Folkways 2034

\_\_\_\_\_, *Let it Shine on Me*  
Rounder 1046

\_\_\_\_\_, *Midnight Special*  
Folkways 31046

\_\_\_\_\_, *Midnight Special*  
Rounder 1044

\_\_\_\_\_, *Nobody Knows the Troubles I've Seen*  
Rounder 1098

\_\_\_\_\_, *Shout On: The Lead Belly Legacy, Vol. 3*  
Smithsonian Folkways 40105



\_\_\_\_\_. *Sings Folk Songs for Young People* Folkways 7533

\_\_\_\_\_. *Sings for Children* Smithsonian Folkways 45047 (includes much of Folkways 7533)

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Titanic Rounder* 1097

\_\_\_\_\_. *Where Did You Sleep Last Night: The Lead Belly Legacy, Vol. 1* Smithsonian Folkways 40044

*Music from the South, Vol. 10: Been Here and Gone* Folkways 2659

*Ring Games, Line Games and Play Party Songs of Alabama* Folkways 7004

*Rural Blues* (an anthology of country blues) Folkways RBF202

*That's Why We're Marching: World War II and the American Folk Song Movement* Smithsonian Folkways 40021

Further information about these performers can be found in a variety of sources. Woody Guthrie's life is documented on film, records, and in books. *Bound for Glory* is his autobiographical novel; two full-length biographies exist, Joe Klein's *Woody Guthrie: A Life* and Ed Cray's *Ramblin' Man*. There is also a full bibliography,

*A Woody Guthrie Bibliography, 1912-1967*, by R.A. Reuss. *Hard Traveling: Woody Guthrie* is a 70-minute video documentary of Guthrie's life and songs (MGM/UA release 600884); more recently Billy Bragg produced a video called *Man in the Sand* about his work with Guthrie's lyrics. An expansive source for information on Guthrie is the Woody Guthrie Archives, 250 W. 57th Street, New York, NY 10107.

The presentation of Huddie Ledbetter's life has sparked considerable controversy. Aspects of it are described in *Negro Folksongs As Sung By Lead Belly*, edited by John A. Lomax, and *The Lead Belly Songbook*, edited by Moses Asch and Alan Lomax. A good biography is the *Life and Legend of Lead Belly* by Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell (1992).

For additional information on Moses Asch and Folkways Records see *Making People's Music: Moses Asch and Folkways Records* by Peter Goldsmith (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1998).

## Credits

SFW CD 40001 was originally issued by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings in 1989. It was compiled by Anthony Seeger and Jeff Place.

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Annotated by Jeff Place, Guy Logsdon, and Anthony Seeger

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Compilation mastered by Pete Reiniger

Previous mastering by David Glasser, Lee Ann Sonnenstein, Charlie Pilzer, and Eric Conn at Airshow Mastering and Joe Gastwirt at OceanView Digital Mastering

Analog tape and disc transfers by Jack Towers, David Glasser, Joe Gastwirt, Pete Reiniger, Jeff Place, and Tom Adams

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Smith, marketing and radio promotions; Stephanie Smith, archivist; Norman van der Sluys, audio-engineering assistant.

## About Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948 to document "people's music," spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world.

The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding.







Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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## FOLKWAYS THE ORIGINAL VISION

*Songs of Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly*

**ORIGINAL VISION**, the milestone 1989 recording of classic roots Americana, launched the nonprofit Smithsonian Folkways label. To celebrate the 15th anniversary of this historic album, Smithsonian Folkways expanded the original CD with 6 bonus tracks, enhanced packaging, and extended notes. *Original Vision* now provides even more insight into the impact of Woody Guthrie's and Lead Belly's music over the last half century. 28-page illustrated booklet, 60 minutes.

1 **Bring Me a Little Water**, Sylvie Lead Belly 0:49

2 **Pretty Boy Floyd** Woody Guthrie 3:00

3 **Do-Re-Mi** Woody Guthrie 2:31

4 **I Ain't Got No Home in This World Anymore** Woody Guthrie 2:45

5 **Jesus Christ** Woody Guthrie 2:37

6 **Cotton Fields** Lead Belly 2:07

7 **Rock Island Line** Lead Belly 2:02

8 **Grand Coulee Dam** Woody Guthrie 2:10

9 **4, 5, and 9** Lead Belly 2:34

10 **Will Geer Reading Woody Guthrie**  
 Will Geer 0:56

11 **Hard Traveling** Woody Guthrie 2:31

12 **Fannin Street** Lead Belly 3:02

13 **Philadelphia Lawyer** Woody Guthrie 2:29

14 **Hobo's Lullaby** Woody Guthrie 2:24

15 **Bourgeois Blues** Lead Belly 2:18

16 **Gray Goose** Lead Belly 1:25

17 **Irene** Lead Belly 1:53

18 **Vigilante Man** Woody Guthrie 3:23

19 **Gallis Pole** Lead Belly 2:45

20 **This Land Is Your Land** Woody Guthrie 2:17

21 **Talking Hard Work** Woody Guthrie 3:23

22 **Midnight Special** Lead Belly 2:02

23 **In the Pines** Lead Belly 2:07

24 **Pastures of Plenty** Woody Guthrie 2:25

25 **Car Song** Woody Guthrie 1:50

26 **We Shall Be Free** Lead Belly, Woody Guthrie 2:33



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings



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