

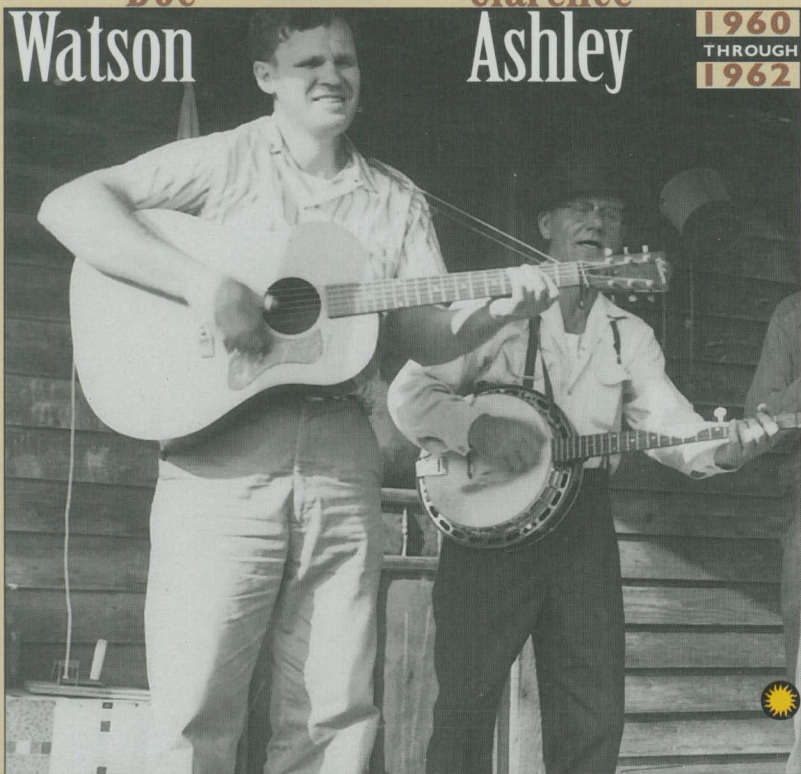
THE ORIGINAL FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS OF

Doc
Watson

AND

Clarence
Ashley

1960
THROUGH
1962



Smithsonian
Folkways

Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley

The Original Folkways Recordings: 1960-1962

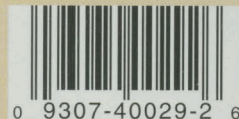
SMITHSONIAN/FOLKWAYS CD SF 40029/30

featuring Gaither Carlton, Clint Howard, Fred Price, Jack Burchett, and others

contains 20 previously unreleased selections

Executive Producer: Ralph Rinzler

Some of these tracks were issued between 1961 and 1963 as Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's, vols. 1 and 2 (Folkways 2355 and 2359)



Disc I

1. Crawdad Song 3:33
2. I'm Sitting on Top of the World* 3:05
3. Lee Highway Blues 1:41
4. Free Little Bird 2:06
5. The Coo-Coo Bird 2:33
6. Rising Sun Blues 2:56
7. Looking t'ward Heaven* 2:27
8. Rambling Hobo* 1:27
9. Rambling Hobo* 1:36
10. Shady Grove 1:28
11. Cumberland Gap* 2:18
12. Tough Luck 2:26
13. Humpbacked Mule 1:26
14. My Home's Across the Blue Ridge Mountains 2:47
15. Way Down Town 2:29
16. Banks of the Ohio* 4:11
17. Little Sadie 2:19
18. Carroll County Blues* 1:39
19. Cluck Old Hen* 1:45
20. Chilly Winds (Lonesome Road Blues)* 2:37
21. Sweet Heaven When I Die* 2:37
22. Fire on the Mountain* 1:22
23. Will the Circle Be Unbroken* 3:20
24. Daniel Prayed 2:54
25. Amazing Grace 3:56

Disc II

1. Sally Ann 2:31
2. Richmond Blues 1:33
3. Old Ruben 2:00
4. Willie Moore* 3:31
5. Walking Boss 1:49
6. Shout Lulu* 1:23
7. Skillet Good and Greasy 2:05
8. Pretty Little Pink 2:26
9. Run, Jimmie, Run* 3:05
10. Hicks' Farewell 5:22
11. The Old Man at the Mill 1:54
12. A Short Life of Trouble* 3:18
13. Brown's Dream* 1:41
14. Footprints in the Snow 2:42
15. I'm Going Back to Jericho 1:51
16. Peg and Awl 2:11
17. Maggie Walker Blues 2:53
18. God's Gonna Ease My Troublin' Mind 3:03
19. I Saw a Man at the Close of Day* 2:37
20. Handsome Molly 2:13
21. John Henry* 3:42
22. Honey Babe Blues 3:43
23. Wayfaring Pilgrim* 5:05

* previously unreleased

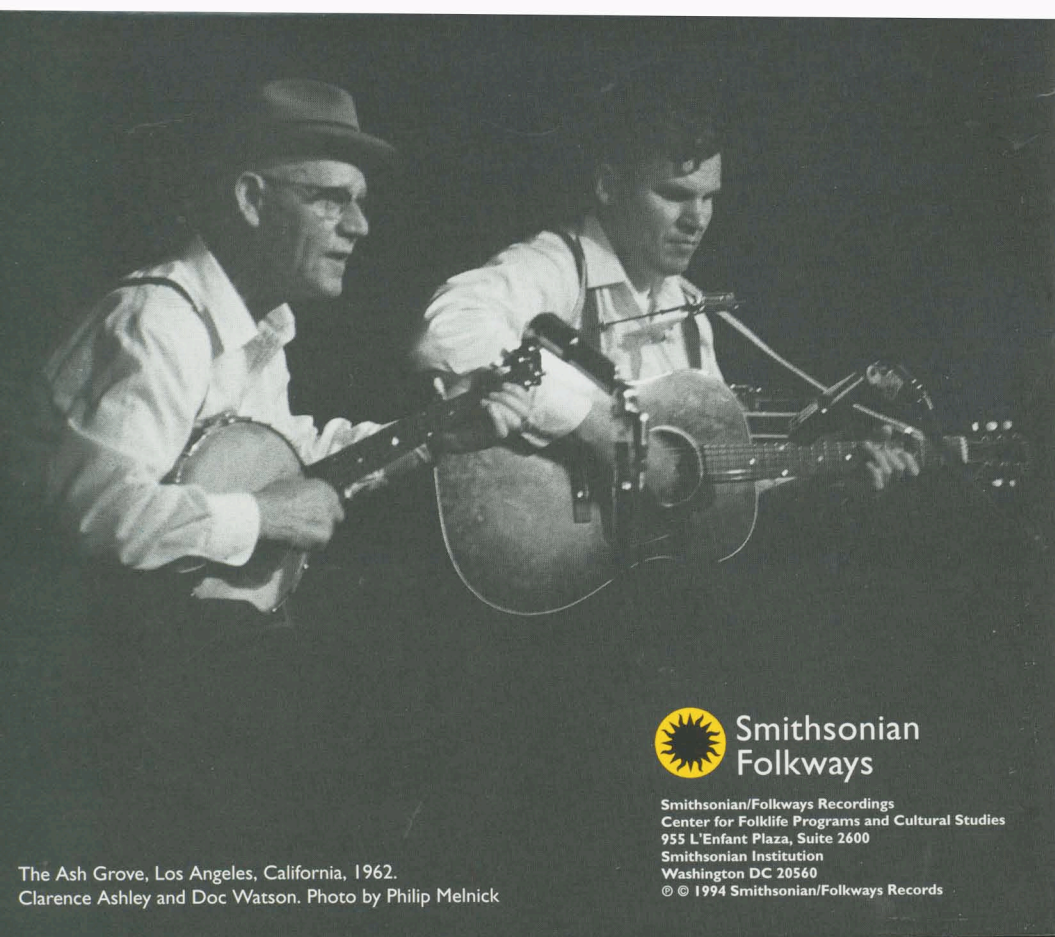
The *Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's Folkways* albums unveiled an incomparable grouping of musicians with a staggering repertoire. In a variety of settings, they produced a singularly essential set of recordings.

Featuring twenty previously unreleased performances, many rare photos, and producer Ralph Rinzler's comprehensive notes, this new set is even more extensive. This is the definitive collection of their enduring music.



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Center for Folklife Programs and
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955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600
Smithsonian Institution
Washington DC 20560



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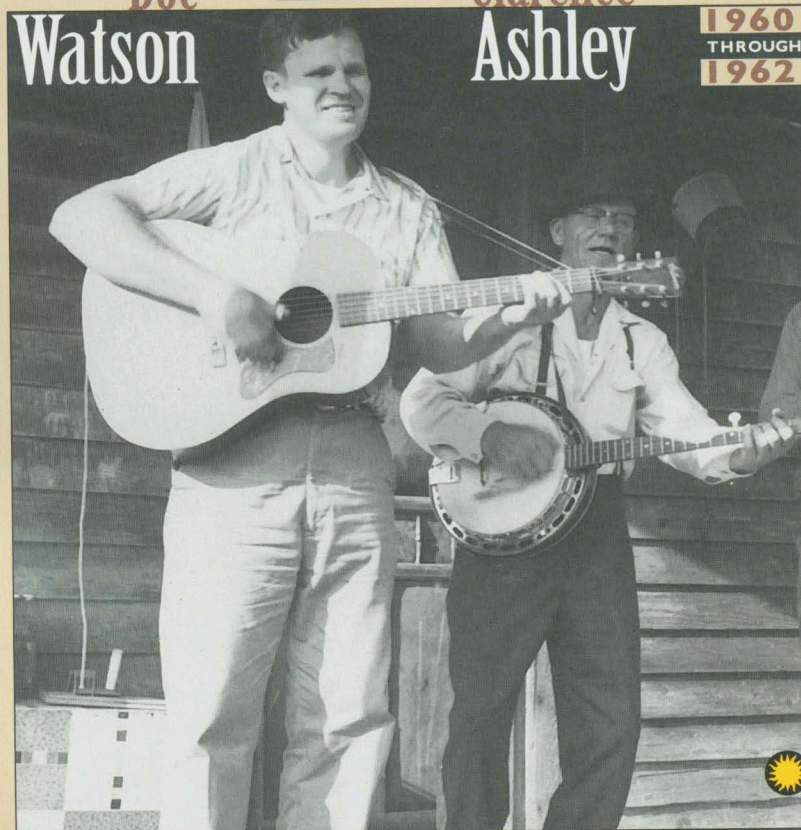
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The Ash Grove, Los Angeles, California, 1962.
Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson. Photo by Philip Melnick

THE ORIGINAL FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS OF

Doc AND Clarence
Watson Ashley

1960
THROUGH
1962



Smithsonian
Folkways

The Original Folkways Recordings of Doc Watson and Clarence Ashley: 1960-1962

featuring **Gaither Carlton**, **Clint Howard**,
Fred Price, **Jack Burchett**, and others

contains 20 previously unreleased selections

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Some of these tracks were issued between 1961 and 1963 as Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's, vols. 1 and 2 (Folkways 2355 and 2359)

Disc I

1. **Crawdadd Song** 3:33
(Trad. arr. and adapt. D. Watson/Hillgreen Music, BMI)
2. **I'm Sitting on Top of the World*** 3:05
(W. Jacobs-L. Carter/Mayfair Music, ASCAP)
3. **Lee Highway Blues** 1:41
(Traditional)
4. **Free Little Bird** 2:06
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
5. **The Coo-Coo Bird** 2:33
(Traditional)
6. **Rising Sun Blues** 2:56
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
7. **Looking t'ward Heaven*** 2:27
(Luther G. Presley)
8. **Rambling Hobo*** 1:27
(Traditional)
9. **Rambling Hobo*** 1:36
(Traditional)
10. **Shady Grove** 1:28
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)

11. **Cumberland Gap*** 2:18
(Traditional)
12. **Tough Luck** 2:26
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Storm King Music Inc., BMI)
13. **Humpbacked Mule** 1:26
(Trad. arr. and adapt. F. Price-D. Watson/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
14. **My Home's Across the Blue Ridge Mountains** 2:47
(A.P. Carter-T. Ashley/Peer International Inc., BMI)
15. **Way Down Town** 2:29
(Trad. arr. and adapt. D. Watson/Hillgreen Music, BMI)
16. **Banks of the Ohio*** 4:11
(Traditional)
17. **Little Sadie** 2:19
(Trad. arr. and adapt. D. Watson/Hillgreen Music, BMI)
18. **Carroll County Blues*** 1:39
(Trad. arr. and adapt. D. Watson/Hillgreen Music, BMI)
19. **Cluck Old Hen*** 1:45
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley-D. Watson/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
20. **Chilly Winds (Lonesome Road Blues)*** 2:37
(Trad. arr. and adapt. J. Burchett/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
21. **Sweet Heaven When I Die*** 2:37
(Trad. arr. and adapt. D. Watson/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
22. **Fire on the Mountain*** 1:22
(Trad. arr. and adapt. D. Watson/Hillgreen Music, BMI)
23. **Will the Circle Be Unbroken*** 3:20
(Traditional)
24. **Daniel Prayed** 2:54
(G.T. Speer)

25. **Amazing Grace** 3:56
(Traditional)

* previously unreleased

Disc II

1. **Sally Ann** 2:31
(Traditional)
2. **Richmond Blues** 1:33
(C. Ashley/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
3. **Old Ruben** 2:00
(Traditional)
4. **Willie Moore*** 3:31
(Trad. arr. and adapt. D. Watson/Hillgreen Music, BMI)
5. **Walking Boss** 1:49
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Storm King Music Inc., BMI)
6. **Shout Lulu*** 1:23
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
7. **Skillet Good and Greasy** 2:05
(Traditional)
8. **Pretty Little Pink** 2:26
(Traditional)
9. **Run, Jimmie, Run*** 3:05
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Howard-F. Price-D. Watson/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
10. **Hicks' Farewell** 5:22
(Traditional)
11. **The Old Man at the Mill** 1:54
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Storm King Music Inc., BMI)
12. **A Short Life of Trouble*** 3:18
(Traditional)
13. **Brown's Dream*** 1:41
(Trad. arr. and adapt. G. Carlton-D. Watson/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)

14. **Footprints in the Snow** 2:42
(Miller-Elliott/Tree Publishing Co. Inc., BMI)
15. **I'm Going Back to Jericho** 1:51
(Trad. arr. and adapt. G. Carlton-D. Watson/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
16. **Peg and Awl** 2:11
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
17. **Maggie Walker Blues** 2:53
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
18. **God's Gonna Ease My Troublin' Mind** 3:03
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley-D. Watson/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
19. **I Saw a Man at the Close of Day*** 2:37
(G.B. Grayson/Peer International Inc., BMI)
20. **Handsome Molly** 2:13
(Traditional)
21. **John Henry*** 3:42
(Traditional)
22. **Honey Babe Blues** 3:43
(Trad. arr. and adapt. C. Ashley/Smithsonian Folkways Pub., BMI)
23. **Wayfaring Pilgrim*** 5:05
(Traditional)

* previously unreleased

Clarence Ashley: banjo and vocals; **Doc Watson:** guitar, banjo, harmonica, and vocals; **Clint Howard:** guitar and vocals; **Fred Price:** fiddle and vocals; **Jack Johnson:** banjo; **Arnold Watson:** banjo, harmonica, and vocals; **Gaither Carlton:** banjo and fiddle; **"New River Jack" Burchett:** banjo and vocals; **Dock Walsh:** banjo and vocal; **Garley Foster:** harmonica, guitar, and vocal; **Tommy Moore:** washboard; **Jean Ritchie:** vocal; **Ralph Rinzler:** guitar

Old-Time and Bluegrass Music on Smithsonian/Folkways

Folkways Records has the largest and richest catalogue of traditional music of any independent record company in the twentieth century. Every one of the more than 2,000 recordings issued on the Folkways label is available with the original album notes on audio cassette by mail order. For a free catalogue write to: *The Whole Folkways Catalogue*, Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, 955 L'Enfant Plaza Suite 2600, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560; send a fax to 202/287-3699; or call 202/287-3262.

Part of the Folkways catalogue has been reissued on the Smithsonian/Folkways label on CD and cassette formats. Many of these releases include previously unissued music and extensively revised notes. The old-time and bluegrass releases include:

- SF 40004 *The Country Gentlemen: Country Songs Old and New*
- SF 40005 *Jean Ritchie and Doc Watson at Folk City*
- SF 40009 *Elizabeth Cotten: Freight Train and Other North Carolina Folk Songs*
- SF 40012 *The Doc Watson Family*
- SF 40022 *The Country Gentlemen: Folk Songs and Bluegrass*
- SF 40036 *The New Lost City Ramblers: The Early Years 1958-1962*
- SF 40037 *American Banjo Scruggs Style*
- SF 40038 *Mountain Music Bluegrass Style*
- SF 40040 *The New Lost City Ramblers, Volume II*
- SF 40063 *Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys: Live Recordings 1956-1969*
- SF 40064 *Bill Monroe and Doc Watson: Live Duet Recordings 1963-1980*

Others will be issued in the future. Look for them at your local record store or order them from Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, 955 L'Enfant Plaza Suite 2600, Washington, DC 20560; phone 202/287-3262; fax 202/287-3699.

The Background of These Recordings

Ralph Rinzler



Labor day 1960. Doc Watson, Gaither Carlton, Merle Watson (age 11), Blackie. Photo by Eugene Earle.

These recordings tell the story of a banjo-picking medicine show comedian, Clarence "Tom" Ashley, and of a regionally known country musician who rose to world renown, Doc Watson. The story begins in 1960, twenty years after Ashley had given up his music because the entertainment industry had no place for him. In 1960, Doc Watson had no entree to the world of professional performance beyond playing electric guitar as a sideman in country and rockabilly ensembles at community clubs

within an hour or two of his home. The traditional music of Doc's childhood presented here was only a memory.

This Smithsonian/Folkways release includes Doc Watson's first commercially issued performances and spans a three-year period (1960-62) from his first recording session with Ashley through his emergence as a soloist. These recordings document Watson's transition from a brilliant ensemble musician to a leading guitarist, singer, and musical spokesperson of his time; they also document Ashley's successful "comeback" as a singer and instrumentalist. The music itself is stirring. It is part of a personal repertoire and style that might never have been heard beyond the region but for the advocacy and audience support of the urban folk revival.

Clarence Ashley's story provides an ironic example of the impact of the recording industry on traditional singers during that short period between the two world wars. Ashley and one of his younger co-workers, a teen-age Roy Acuff, had been musicians on the medicine show circuit after World War I. The later Depression years saw the medicine show circuit yield to a Nashville-dominated national country music market. Within a year or two of Roy Acuff's 1939 appearance with the banjo-picking comedian Uncle Dave Macon in the

Hollywood film *Grand Ole Opry*, Ashley was forced to give up touring.

In the twenties, talent scouts for both Columbia and RCA Victor had contracted with Ashley—the former under his legal name, Clarence, and the latter under his nickname, “Tom.” In the thirties, he was dropped by both labels. His recordings had not sold in the hundreds of thousands like those of the Carter Family and Jimmie Rodgers. Fortunately, even when the recordings were first issued, there were collectors in urban centers and on college campuses who sought out, admired, and discussed the discs. Musicologist Charles Seeger recalled that in the early thirties he and artist Thomas Hart Benton, along with others at the New School for Social Research in New York, would gather to listen to and exchange views on recordings of little-known southern musicians. Less than a decade after their initial appearance, recordings like Ashley’s were rereleased for the urban folk song market. Both John and Alan Lomax edited and annotated reissue packages for Decca and Victor in the early forties, giving rise to a modest flurry of activity which encouraged, around the country, a handful of ardent collectors and discographers of early jazz, blues, and string band material.

One such collector was Harry Smith, a brilliant, innovative documentarian of community art, both visual and musical. His three-volume six-record set, the *Folkways Anthology of American Folk Music* (Folkways 2951, 2952, 2953), had a decisive impact on the urban folk song

revival movement. Young people nationwide, mostly urban college students, heard it. Some, like the members of the New Lost City Ramblers, formed groups to play the music as faithfully as they could (*The New Lost City Ramblers: The Early Years*, Smithsonian/Folkways SF 40036 and Vol. 2, SF40040). Others—Joan Baez and Peggy Seeger, for example—reshaped the material to their own tastes and styles (*Peggy Seeger: The Folkways Years—Songs of Love and Politics*, Smithsonian/Folkways SF 40048; *Songs of Courting and Complaint*, Folkways cassette 2049.)

I was one of the college students to be culture-struck by the splendor of regional vocal and instrumental styles on Smith’s *Anthology*, which accounts for the fact that I recognized Ashley when I encountered him at Union Grove



Carnegie Hall, December 1962. Fred Price, Clint Howard, Doc Watson. Photo by Dan Seeger.



“Amazing Grace.” Fred Price, Clarence Ashley, Clint Howard, and Doc Watson at the first New York performance of the group, sponsored by the Friends of Old Time Music, 1961. Photo by John Cohen.

in 1960. This serendipitous meeting led to the recording of the material on these discs (see Mike Seeger’s 1961 recording, *The 37th Old-Time Fiddlers’ Convention at Union Grove, North Carolina*, Folkways 2434).

In 1961, after an unsuccessful attempt to get the material released by mainstream record companies, a recording including some of the material on Disc II of the present set was released by Folkways Records. Within a few weeks of this release, the five principal musicians made their first appearance outside their home region at a concert in New York City. Robert Shelton of the *New York Times* gave a glowing review, making specific mention of Watson’s instrumental skill. The program was

the second to be produced by John Cohen (of the New Lost City Ramblers), Israel Young (proprietor of the Greenwich Village book store and hangout, The Folklore Center), and myself under the rubric of “The Friends of Old Time Music.” The rented, 450 seat auditorium of a Greenwich Village public school was sold out. Backstage, a few minutes after the final applause, two invitations were extended to the group: The University of Chicago Folk Festival for February 1962 and the Ash Grove (a Los Angeles coffee house/cabaret) for March–April 1962. Disc I includes several performances recorded during these two extremely successful engagements.

The obvious appeal of these artists to a new and as yet undeveloped audience led me to explore possibilities for concert management. Among established impresarios and agents, as with the record companies, there was little interest in taking on a group of unknown southern musicians. So I determined to learn the skills of a booking agent. Fortunately, a basic synergy emerged to link the new booking and promotion responsibilities with my work at that time as a member of an urban bluegrass band, the Greenbriar Boys, who were then recording and touring with Joan Baez. Working the campus and metropolitan concert hall circuits, I gained access to concert producers, student union directors, and folk music organizations across the nation. These contacts served the Ashley-Watson-Howard-Price ensemble from the outset. The popularity of their Folkways albums (and *The Doc Watson Family*, Smithsonian/

Folkways SF 40012) helped further to build their reputation among campus and community impresarios—and among younger musicians. The same network supported Doc Watson's emergence as a soloist.

From 1963 on, these contacts helped introduce Watson and Bill Monroe, as a package, to the college and festival circuit which, in the bluegrass field, had been dominated by Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs since the late fifties. Doc, by then a brilliant soloist whose popularity had spread rapidly, helped the long-established Monroe gain access to new audiences at colleges and festivals. In turn, collaboration with Monroe extended Doc's following beyond the "folk music" circuit to include his southern neighbors at bluegrass concerts and festival events which proliferated following Carlton Haney's historic 1965 Labor Day bluegrass festival at Fincastle, Virginia. (See *Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys, Live Recordings 1956-1969*, Smithsonian/Folkways SF 40063, and *Bill Monroe and Doc Watson, Live Duet Recordings 1963-1980*, Smithsonian/Folkways SF 40064.)

Disc I of this album presents the recordings of the Ashley-Watson-Howard-Price ensemble as they emerged a year or more after the initial field recordings were issued. This sound will be familiar to those who have enjoyed the group's music over the years. Two ideas shape Disc I: first, the group's adaptation to performing for folk revival audiences, and second, the continuity of tradition exemplified by the back-porch picking sounds.

Disc II moves back in time. These earlier recordings were made when Doc had not played the acoustic guitar on a regular basis for some time and did not even own one. Ashley had not played the banjo for twenty years and he, also, did not own his instrument. Their playing here represents the beginning of a process, the initial effort to recapture repertoire and style. Thus, Disc I presents a perspective on the interaction of traditional musicians within the context of the folksong revival and Disc II documents an earlier stage of the process.

What emerged from the fertile interaction as we travelled and swapped ideas about songs? Interesting and varied repertoire came to light. Ashley's banjo picking was revived and polished. Among all members of the group, fresh ideas about instrumental combinations prompted memories and led to an active quest for songs and new combinations of voices and instruments. Immediately following the 1961 New York City concert, and aided by the *New York Times* review, Doc began to be recognized as a star performer. This phenomenon snowballed as the public acquired his albums and attended his performances. The February, 1962, University of Chicago Folk Festival performance was a decisive triumph. The audience had responded enthusiastically during the first festival a year earlier when Richard Chase introduced Horton Barker and Frank Profit, and the New Lost City Ramblers demonstrated the new interest of urban musicians in the old sounds. The festival audience's acclaim bolstered the confidence of the Ashley ensemble, but it was the Ash Grove booking that per-

manently changed their performing style. During visits to their homes, I had always probed to determine the parameters of the individual and group repertoires.

On the road to Los Angeles, Doc made a significant commitment to share the automobile driver's responsibility. He kept me awake and attentive for forty-eight hours at the wheel by singing unaccompanied songs and regaling me with stories of his family and music. We rolled straight through from Dallas to Los Angeles, barely arriving in time to climb on the stage for the first night's performance. After that, I felt as though Doc and I had grown up together from early childhood, and the group's repertoire substantially benefited from Doc's remarkable memory.

The Los Angeles gig set Doc on the road to becoming a soloist. Early in the first week, the Los Angeles smog afflicted Tom Ashley's vocal chords and a bout with laryngitis forced him to stay home for the first few nights of the second week. Habit suggested Clint Howard for trio spokesman, but armed with a newly acquired braille watch and writing equipment, Doc agreed to share those responsibilities with him. Fred Price began to sing solo on a few songs, but shunned a more active role as co-host. In any case, by the time Ashley returned for the weekend sets, Clint and Doc had emerged as Tom's equals in the emcee role. The music reflects the flush of their new assertiveness.

Disc I's opening, "Crawdad Song," with Doc's relaxed

commentary on Clint's verses and his superb guitar backup, glows with this fresh, interactive style. "I'm Sitting on Top of the World" shows Doc as the unique soloist that he is, and "Fire on the Mountain" reveals Doc's hallmark: brilliant flat-picking on fiddle tunes. This prompts Tom's competitive spirit, to which his "Free Little Bird," "Coo-Coo Bird," and "Rising Sun Blues" bear witness. Songs like "Looking t'ward Heaven" and "Daniel Prayed" cropped up while driving cross-country, as well as in Los Angeles as we traversed the city to and from nightly sessions at the Ash Grove.

Traditionally, "Amazing Grace" was never sung as a vocal solo with a chorus—nor, I suspect, was "Banks of the Ohio"—but whoever had been performing that evening joined in on the last song or two. Disc I of this set includes material recorded in both Chicago and Los Angeles and is programmed to reflect these developments in repertoire, instrumentation, and style.

Doc was active in the quest for repertoire. Together we visited and recorded numerous members of his immediate and extended family. Doc refreshed his memory on verses through these family visits and recording sessions, and through our joint review of major folksong collections, which we perused while on the road or visiting each other's homes. Independently, Doc established productive relationships with record collectors and discographers who sent him tapes of vintage recordings, some of which he had heard as a child; others were either new or only vaguely familiar to him.



Shouns, Tennessee. Clarence Ashley, 1961. Photo by Bob Yellin.

Within eight months of the first Ash Grove appearance, Doc began his career as a soloist at Gerde's Folk City in New York's Greenwich Village while continuing on occasion to perform nationwide with the group. It was to be another four years before my booking and promotional responsibilities were assumed by a professional and another three beyond that before Doc became the internationally recognized artist he is today. Despite the passing of Tom Ashley in 1967, Clint, Fred, and Doc continued to perform together upon request until Fred's death.

Encounter in the Mountains

Clarence Ashley was a medicine show performer—an exceptional banjo picker and singer, sharp-witted and humorous. From 1913 until 1943, he wandered through the coal mining and sawmilling camps, the farming villages and market towns of the southern Appalachians. “Busting,” he called it. The British say “busking”—tossing your hat on the ground and singing for what you can bring in. At age 16 he joined a medicine show as roustabout and performer, but busting always supplemented his sawmilling and farming income when the show was not touring.

Between 1929 and 1933, Columbia and Victor recorded him as both soloist and ensemble musician. Several of these early recordings were reissued in 1952 on Folkways' *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Within a short time, a small but dedicated group of young city musicians was singing the repertoire and learning the

instrumental styles to be heard on that anthology. During Easter weekend, 1960, Ashley was at the Union Grove Old Time Fiddlers Convention, coaching some East Tennessee neighbors to perform the rich repertoire he'd acquired in his youth. He had given up banjo picking in the forties, and in the sixties he still performed occasionally, but as a comedian, not a musician. The Greenbriar Boys had gone down to compete in the Fiddlers' Convention. I was astonished to encounter this extraordinary musician who had been recorded before I was born. He agreed to do a recording once he'd brushed up on his banjo picking. The session took place four months later—during Labor Day weekend, 1960.

To make good on my promise, I travelled to East Tennessee with Eugene Earle, collector and discographer of early southern music. On arrival at Ashley's home, we were introduced to Doc Watson. Ashley had not taken up the banjo again. Instead he had asked Doc to join him and agreed to sing to Doc's electric guitar accompaniment. Although he was unknown beyond the immediate area, Doc was highly regarded locally and played with a country music/rockabilly group in nearby Johnson City, Tennessee. In response to my expressed concern about recording Tom Ashley with an electric guitar accompaniment, Doc had made it clear that he had his own professional standards. He owned no acoustic guitar, and if he were to borrow one, he wouldn't be accustomed to it. Recording under such circumstances appeared to be unacceptable to both of

us. Without having heard the Ashley-Watson rehearsal, I drove three hours to Mt. Airy, North Carolina, in quest of Jack Johnson, the banjo picker who had been with Ashley, Howard, and Price at Union Grove.

Gene Earle stayed behind and talked with Ashley and Watson. He even recorded some items. I returned late that night with Jack Johnson and, early next day, was surprised to see Doc among the musicians in the Ashley entourage. On the way to his daughter's house where Tom had arranged for us to do the recording, I rode on the back of an open bed pick-up truck playing old time hoedowns on a five-string banjo. Within fifteen minutes, the truck stopped and Doc hopped in back saying, "Let me see that banjo, son." I handed it over. To my amazement, he deftly played and sang a local version of "Tom Dooley." The Kingston Trio's 1958 hit record was still resonating across the nation. Doc's version, unlike theirs, would have been compelling to anyone enlightened by Harry Smith's *Anthology*. In fact, I had brought the six-record collection with me to give to Ashley as a way of making clear to him why I understood his importance. Doc and I reviewed the list of performers and songs on the album covers. To my astonishment, he was familiar with many of them, having heard the recordings and some of the performers themselves in his childhood and having known others as neighbors. We talked about the growing audience for this music in colleges across the nation. He told me about his occasional radio shows and public performances with Ashley's crew and with Jack Williams and his rockabilly

ensemble. He talked of his family version of "Tom Dooley" and then reeled off a host of old-time songs still current in the area.

This seemed to me remarkable. An electric guitar player who was also deeply versed in the repertoire and styles of the *Anthology* and the Lomax Library of Congress recordings. Doc was only eleven years older than I, but this was his living tradition. For me it was an archival treasure; hardly the music I expected to hear from a near contemporary who played Nashville hits on an electric guitar.

The rest of the two-hour truck ride produced insights for both of us. As he systematically laid out his range of formative musical models and repertoire; past and present, I came to understand Doc's sense of family and community culture. Doc immediately understood that his community's disinterest in old-time music was not characteristic of the rest of the nation.

At Ashley's daughter's home in Saltville, Virginia, we spent the day recording Tom and his family and neighbors. Doc and the crew provided vigorous instrumental and occasional vocal support. Tom Ashley's grandson, Tommy, participated. Much of that session was included on the first edition of this recording.

The next day was devoted to Doc's family. Present were his wife, RosaLee, children Nancy and Merle, and RosaLee's father, Gaither Carlton. After meeting the family, Gene Earle and I explained our interest in the

traditional music of the area. From the *Anthology* we played an archaic-sounding recording of the ballad "Omie Wise." All listened intently. Gaither, in his denim bib overalls, had come straight from his garden. As the song ended, tears were streaming down his face. No one spoke. Gaither sighed and said quietly, as though to himself, "Sounds like old times." The vocal had been accompanied only by a solo, reedy fiddle. The performance, recorded in 1927, was by George Banman Grayson, a blind fiddler who had died in an auto accident a few years after the recording session. G.B. Grayson was kin to Sheriff Grayson who had captured Tom Dooley not far from where we were sitting at that moment. Members of Doc and Gaither's family had known the principals in the Dooley case, and Banman Grayson himself had been a friend of Gaither's.

The meaning of these experiences was clear and powerful. Here was the context of the folk music I had heard in recorded and concert performances for twenty of my twenty-six years. The distinction between traditional and urban revival performances had long been obvious to me, but never had I been in a community whose music—repertoire, vocal and instrumental styles—was part of its everyday life. Never had it been possible to hear a brilliant, innovative, traditional stylist—like Doc, for example—alongside his own as well as another generation of musicians from whom he had absorbed both style and repertoire.

Once back home, Gene Earle and I collaborated on editing and documenting the recordings. I approached several record companies. One record company owner, a friend, smiled apologetically saying of Doc's material, "It's nice, but it won't sell." There was no interest in the tapes—except at Folkways, where Moses Asch agreed to issue the edited material promptly. In retrospect, the existence of a record producer like Asch was of decisive importance. Via Folkways, he provided what the major labels no longer did: access to old-timers like Ashley and to brilliant younger artists like Watson. Of equal importance, Folkways reissued and kept in print well-documented collections of early commercial recordings. Through these, new generations of musicians continue to be enlightened by the music of preceding generations. Many of the musicians heard on Harry Smith's *Anthology* were located, recorded again, and in turn, began to make concert appearances. Dock Boggs, Mississippi John Hurt, Buell Kazee, Furry Lewis, and Gus Cannon are but a few examples.

The older generation of singers heard here has passed away, but not before most of them had accepted invitations to perform outside of their home communities. Stories like this one explain why today we are increasingly aware of the importance of historic sound recordings—and why we perceive a growing, globally shared commitment to the conservation of cultural variety.

Biographical Notes

Clarence "Tom" Ashley (b. September 29, 1895, Bristol, Tennessee; d. July 2, 1967).

The Ashley family came over from Ireland before the turn of the eighteenth century and settled in eastern Virginia. They later moved west to Ashe County, North Carolina, and later to Mountain City, Tennessee. Like the renowned banjo picking comedian, Uncle Dave Macon, Clarence grew up in a boarding house atmosphere learning music, jokes, and instrumental techniques on banjo and guitar from boarders. In addition, he learned songs and banjo from his mother's two older sisters. At age sixteen, he joined a medicine show as roustabout, comedian, and musician. During the years prior to the First World War, he recalls travelling in a prairie-schooner-type covered wagon along with the platforms, lanterns, and rigging for the stage while "the Doc" rode in a smart little horse-drawn buggy. In later years, a couple of trucks and a trailer replaced the horse-drawn conveyances.

In 1914, Tom married Hettie Osborne and settled just outside of Mountain City in Shouns, Tennessee. When he was not travelling with medicine shows, he sang in the streets, on the edge of carnivals, and outside of the pay station of the mines on payday. As a medicine showman, he had come to know fine musicians in all of the neighboring states—many of them recognized today as the cream of the region's old timers. These included fiddler G.B. Grayson from Laurel Bloomery, Tennessee;



The Carolina Tar Heels, around 1930. Clarence (Tom) Ashley, Dock Walsh, Gwen Foster.

Hobart Smith from Saltville, Virginia; and Dock Walsh from Wilkesboro, North Carolina.

Tom worked with a number of ensembles over the years: The Blue Ridge Mountain Entertainers, Byrd Moore and His Hot Shots, and, the best known of these, the Carolina Tar Heels, which featured Tom on guitar and lead vocal, Dock Walsh on banjo, and either Gwen or Garley Foster on harmonica and, occasionally, second guitar.

In 1943, when he finally gave up the medicine show circuit, he and his son, J.D., purchased a truck and hauled coal, furniture and lumber. In the ensuing two decades, he occasionally travelled as comedian with Charlie Monroe's band and with the Stanley Brothers. From 1960 until his death, he performed on the college and



Deep Gap, North Carolina. Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton, 1962. Photo by Eugene Earle.

coffee house circuit throughout the United States and in England as well.

Gaither Wiley Carlton (b. February 3, 1901, Wilkes County, North Carolina; d. June 24, 1972, Deep Gap, North Carolina).

Together with his father and brother, Gaither played for dances and church socials in neighboring towns and, occasionally, they were joined by the Hopkins brothers, whose band, the Hillbillies, recorded in the mid-twenties with great success and gave their name to the term used in the recording industry from the mid-twenties until the fifties for traditionally-based country music.

Gaither was a farmer and day laborer throughout his life and rarely ventured far from home except to accompany his son-in-law, Doc Watson, at a festival or concert performance in the early sixties.

"New River Jack" Burchett (b. August 21, 1917, near Piney Creek in western North Carolina; d. May 7, 1967, Chilhowie, Virginia).

At the time we recorded him, Burchett was performing with a string band on a Mt. Airy radio station. As a local radio personality on WBBJ, Abingdon, Virginia, he played recordings and performed both as a soloist and with guest performers whom he interviewed. His singing and banjo style show little if any influence of bluegrass and contemporary country music.

William Clint Howard (b. October 30, 1930, near Mountain City, Johnson County, Tennessee).

Both of Clint Howard's parents sang old-time ballads and songs to him from the time he was an infant. His mother was also a dulcimer player. Clint worked as a farmer and welder while raising his three children.

Samuel Johnson (b. June 15, 1923, Surrey County, Tennessee).

Sam Johnson has done sawmilling and raised tobacco, corn, and grain on his farm at Pilot Mountain, near Mount Airy, North Carolina. Broadcasting from radio station WAYN in Rockingham, he picked up the nickname "Happy Jack" and played guitar, banjo, and mandolin as a member of a local string-band, the Richmond County Ramblers.

Fred Price (b. July 16, 1915, Shouns, Tennessee; d. September 13, 1987, Shouns, Tennessee).

Fred Price grew up in a musical family. He received a fiddle at age fifteen from his father, and benefited from the coaching of an older cousin who was an accomplished fiddler. In his early thirties, he married and took over the family farm where he raised tobacco and corn. His farm was adjacent to Clint Howard's and so the guitar and fiddle never collected dust. Fred also frailed the five-string banjo and occasionally led hymns with the Tom Ashley ensemble.



Shouns, Tennessee. Fred Price, Clarence Ashley, Clint Howard.

The Watson Family: Doc Watson (b. March 3, 1923, Stoney Fork Township, Watauga County, North Carolina); RosaLee Carlton Watson (b. February 5, 1931); Merle Watson (b. February 8, 1949; d. October 23, 1985).

Doc Watson was one of nine children born and raised on the family farm. His father picked the five-string banjo and taught him to play at an early age. Doc's parents and grandparents had a repertoire of old-time songs and ballads and were active singers in the church congregation. An older brother, Arnold, plays the harmonica and five-string banjo and a younger brother, David, used to play the fiddle. Doc taught himself to pick both the guitar and mandolin. He was educated at

the State School for the Blind at Raleigh, North Carolina.

When we met in September 1960, Doc was already a professional musician playing old-time and popular music in a variety of groups. His wife, RosaLee Carlton Watson, is the daughter of Gaither Wiley Carlton. At the time this recording was made, Merle was eleven years old. It was in 1964 that Merle took up the guitar, very much inspired by the playing of John Hurt, and within a year or two, he had learned the banjo from the playing of both his grandfather, Gaither, and from Tom Ashley.

The earliest influences on Doc's music derive from the singing of his parents and grandparents as well as from the instrumental music of his family and community. Doc acknowledges the significant impact of his grandfather, Smith Watson, on his hymn singing style; guitarists Riley Puckett, Frank Hutchison, Maybelle Carter and Charlie Monroe; banjoists Uncle Dave Macon and Dock Walsh; and the ensemble singing of the Carter Family, the Delmore Brothers, and the Monroe Brothers. These influences were supplemented by exposure to radio and phonograph recordings in his pre-teen years.

Notes on the Songs

Disc I

1. **Crawdad Song**

Clint Howard, vocal and guitar; Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Fred Price, fiddle
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

The Library of Congress Archive of Folk Culture's collection holds numerous African-American and Anglo-American variants, and published versions from the first half of the twentieth century indicate that this song was popular in both black and white communities. Commercially recorded performances by Anglo-American singers include Grandpa Jones, Lulu Belle and Scotty, the Girls of the Golden West, and Woody Guthrie. See Brown, vol. III, pp. 482-3 and 550-1 for North Carolina texts.

2. **Sitting on Top of the World**

Doc Watson, vocal solo with guitar
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

The song first appeared on the 1930 commercial recording by Walter Jacobs Vinson with the Mississippi Sheiks. There appear to be no earlier printed sources. Within six months of the Vinson release, three more artists recorded the song. A few years later, it was introduced to country music audiences with the appearance of Bob Wills's western swing version. Doc's bluesy instrumental embellishments are consistent with the song's African-American origin.

3. **Lee Highway Blues**

Fred Price, fiddle; Doc Watson and Clint Howard, guitars
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

This was one of Fred's favorite show pieces and he played it nightly at the Ash Grove to Doc's remarkable accompaniment. G.B. Grayson, a blind fiddler from Laurel Bloomery, Tennessee, is credited with authorship; he and guitarist Henry Whitter recorded the piece in the 1920s. Fred Price knew and learned from G.B. Grayson, and Doc heard Grayson's recording as a young boy.

4. **Free Little Bird**

Clarence Ashley, vocal and banjo; Doc Watson, harmonica and guitar; Clint Howard, guitar; Fred Price, fiddle
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

Like "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms," this song is a derivative of the nineteenth-century British broadside, "Kitty Clyde." The Ashley version draws verses from many sources, while sharing with the parent piece the basic tune structure. See Belden, Brown, and Randolph for variants.

5. **The Coo-Coo Bird**

Clarence Ashley, vocal and banjo; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded February 1962, Chicago, Illinois

Here Ashley demonstrates the instrumental confidence and vigor he had mustered between the time of the first

recording sessions sixteen months earlier and this initial touring period of his renewed career. Doc deftly avoids playing full minor chords behind Ashley. With his creation of linear, non-chordal guitar accompaniments for Ashley's pentatonic banjo pieces, Doc set a fresh standard for guitar adaptation to modal airs.

Ashley's finest performance of this piece is his 1929 Columbia recording reissued on the Folkways *Anthology*, volume 3. British origin is certain, though this eclectic version contains verses found variously in "The Wagoner's Lad," "The Unconstant Lover," "Pretty Polly," and "On Top of Old Smoky." The banjo is in "sawmill" tuning—DCGDG from the first string to the fifth.

6. **Rising Sun Blues**

Clarence Ashley, vocal; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

Ashley claimed to have taught this song to Roy Acuff shortly after World War I when they worked the medicine show circuit together. From the sixties on, it was a standard in the repertoire of folk and, eventually, rock performers—most notably Eric Burdon and the Animals. The Ashley-Watson rendition is noteworthy for the intensity of Ashley's vocal delivery and Doc's brilliant yet unintrusive instrumental dialogue with the vocal line.

Roy Acuff recorded this in the mid-thirties, as did Woody Guthrie, Leadbelly, and Josh White in the 1940s. Alan Lomax, in *Folk Songs of North America*, offers a text similar to this one.

7. **Looking t'ward Heaven**

Fred Price, lead vocal; Clint Howard, tenor; Doc Watson, bass
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

Clint and Doc recall hearing this song in church. They refreshed their memory by consulting the hymnal *Heaven's Banner* (Stamps-Baxter Music, Dallas, Texas, 1955), where it is attributed to Luther G. Presley.

8. **Rambling Hobo**

Jack Burchett, plucked-style banjo
Recorded July 1961, Saltville, Virginia

In the nineteen-sixties, old-time western North Carolina banjo pickers would play this tune when I asked if they knew something in the unusual tuning employed here. The piece rarely cropped up by chance, however, and I know of no commercially recorded versions from earlier years. The banjo tuning, also used for the song "Train on the Island" (Folkways *Anthology*, volume 3), is, from the first string to the fifth, DCFCE.

9. **Rambling Hobo**

Gaither Carlton, rapping-style banjo
Recorded June 1961, Deep Gap, North Carolina

Gaither's rendition of this tune reflects his peaceful, centered nature. He double-thumbs the banjo freely throughout.

10. **Shady Grove**

Clarence Ashley, vocal and rapping-style banjo; Jack Burchett, plucked-style banjo
Recorded July 1961, Saltville, Virginia

"Shady Grove" has been widely collected throughout Appalachia but it was not correspondingly represented in the recorded repertoire of the 1920s and 1930s. The text draws from the hoedown tradition, and bluegrass performers frequently sing "Shady Grove" to the tune of "Pretty Little Pink" as heard on Disc II of this set. The pentatonic tune performed here by Ashley is accompanied on the banjo in "sawmill" tuning.

11. **Cumberland Gap**

Jack Burchett, vocal and banjo
Recorded July 1961, Saltville, Virginia

Both a banjo and fiddle tune in Appalachia, "Cumberland Gap" appears in the Library of Congress field recordings collection performed by Bascom Lamar Lunsford of North Carolina, Kentuckian Rufus Crisp, and Indiana Fiddler Luther Strong among many others. Burchett's banjo is tuned DBEAD. Cumberland Gap itself is the tri-state juncture point where western-bound prospectors passed through the Kentucky and Virginia mountains into Tennessee.

12. **Tough Luck**

Clarence Ashley, vocal and banjo; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded February 1962, Chicago, Illinois

Old-time musicians talk about "making one song off another." "Tough Luck" does not appear in any of the published Appalachian collections to my knowledge, but it does provide us with an insight into the song-making process through its interesting example of phrase shifting or phrase interchange within a melody. The basic melodic and textual elements indicate that this song derives from "Chilly Winds" or "Lonesome Road Blues," as it is also known. Both melodic and textual factors suggest African-American origin. The banjo uses standard G tuning.

13. **Humpbacked Mule**

Fred Price, fiddle; Doc Watson, banjo
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

Superb musical interaction offers a fine testimony to Doc's up-picking banjo technique. His light touch, precision, and rhythmic sense mirror his approach to guitar. Fred's "dish-rag" wrist on the fiddle and driving lilt are reminiscent of Appalachian music of an earlier era. The piece is more frequently performed as a song than a dance tune. It incorporates elements of slave song and minstrel show traditions. Brown, vol. III, p. 567 ff., has excellent texts and bibliographic references.

14. **My Home's Across the Blue Ridge Mountains**

Clarence Ashley, vocal lead; Garley Foster, vocal harmony, harmonica, guitar, and bird call; Dock Walsh, vocal harmony and banjo; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded July 1961, Saltville, Virginia



The Carolina Tar Heels, 1962. Clarence Ashley, Dock Walsh, Garley Foster.

Depending on the singer, North Carolina's Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains are exchanged as the subject of this song. This performance resulted from our successful July 1961 effort to assemble the remaining members of the original Carolina Tar Heels for the first time in almost thirty years. Excellent examples of the group's vintage sound may be heard on the Folkways *Anthology*, vol. I. Also recorded by Bascom Lamar Lunsford (Library of Congress), the Carter Family, the Delmore Brothers, and Ashley with the Carolina Tar Heels on Victor. Also see Bascom, *Journal of American Folklore* XXII, p. 245 (1909).

15. **Way Down Town**

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Clint Howard, vocal and guitar; Fred Price, fiddle
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

Doc heard Uncle Dave Macon's Opry broadcast and recorded performances of this tune as a boy, but his verses for the song were learned from his cousin Dudley Watson, a fiddler and guitar player. Doc's brilliant guitar runs here and on "Crawdad Song" are based on a "riff" he began to use frequently during the initial Ash Grove booking, though he may well have developed it earlier. This recording marks one of the times, perhaps the first, that he used the run in public performance. I felt a shiver of amazement pass through the audience the night this recording was made. On such evenings, the audience generally included young musicians in their formative years, such as Ry Cooder, the brothers Roland and Clarence White, and the Dillards. After a set, they would come back to the dressing room to get acquainted and enlightened.

16. **Banks of the Ohio**

Clarence Ashley, vocal; Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Clint Howard, vocal and guitar; Jean Ritchie, vocal harmony
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

This performance offers a lesson in vocal narrative style and instrumental accompaniment. Here Ashley is telling a story, just as in "The Rising Sun Blues." On stage, he would gesture with his hands, visibly scan the audience

to maintain eye contact with the listeners, and seem to speak some of the vocal lines. The parlando singing technique involves the use of familiar conversational intonation while remaining within the melodic line. The tone and dynamics are conversational and relaxed, and Ashley pushes the music towards speech at the same time that he emphasizes the poetic nature of his text by toying with the metric scan of a given line.

Derived from English broadside balladry, the song was widely collected throughout the southeastern and mid-western United States, but no particular British antecedent seems to have been identified.

See Randolph for texts.

17. **Little Sadie**

Clarence Ashley, vocal and banjo; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded February 1962, Chicago, Illinois

Ashley originally recorded this in 1929 for Columbia. Many versions of this song have been published and recorded under a variety of titles. They come from musicians of African-American and Anglo-American origin throughout the South. Ashley sings and plays this much as he did in 1929, albeit at a slower pace.

See Malcolm Laws for bibliographic references, comparative tunes, and texts.

18. **Carroll County Blues**

Fred Price, fiddle; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

When Okeh released this tune by Willie T. Narmour and S.W. (Shell) Smith in 1929, it was so popular that the fiddle and guitar duo recorded a second and a third version. In succeeding decades, Byron Parker's Mountaineers and Fiddling Arthur Smith, among others, kept the tune in their recorded repertoires. Doc's spectacular guitar lead distinguishes this from the earlier recordings.

19. **Cluck Old Hen**

Clarence Ashley, banjo; Clint Howard and Doc Watson, guitar; Fred Price, fiddle
Recorded June 1961, Shouns, Tennessee

This performance exemplifies Tom Ashley in a role sometimes called "the banjo fool"—cutting up as vocalist and banjo lead on a traditional hoedown. Doc, who modestly avoided stepping forward as a guitar virtuoso during the first weekend we recorded the group, reveals his virtuosity on this recording, made at Clint Howard's home well after Doc had emerged as an independent soloist and emcee.

Compare this recording with the version by Al Hopkins and his brothers from the mid-twenties (*The Hillbillies*, County Records 405).

20. **Chilly Winds (Lonesome Road Blues)**

Jack Burchett, vocal and banjo
Recorded July 1961, Saltville, Virginia

Known as the "Lonesome Road Blues" or "Chilly Winds," this is among the most widespread of southern

songs. Woody Guthrie used it to forge his "Blowin' Down this Road" (*Dust Bowl Ballads*, Folkways 5212) chronicling the Okies' dispossession by the dust storms of the 1930s, and Steinbeck cited it in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Burchett's version is what his southern neighbors would call a "crooked" tune—one in which the musical lines are not of equal length. He does, nonetheless, play each line with consistent irregularity, verse after verse. The rippling, up-picked banjo technique is reminiscent of the pre-bluegrass style of such artists as Pete Steele and Justus Begley, both of whom may be heard on Library of Congress recordings.

21. **Sweet Heaven When I Die**

Doc Watson, vocal, harmonica, and guitar lead; Clint Howard, vocal chorus and guitar; Fred Price, fiddle
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

The song was originally recorded by the Teneva Ramblers in the thirties. Doc learned it from their recording as a young boy. The group added it to the repertoire during the April 1962 date at the Ash Grove.

22. **Fire on the Mountain**

Fred Price, fiddle; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

The phrase "fire on the mountain" appears in published sources from nineteenth-century England as a nursery rhyme verse and in a widely collected American play-party tune, "Jim Along Josie." The earliest recorded version of the tune is from Clayton McMichen and Riley

Puckett in the thirties. The performance here is an early example of Doc's widely imitated practice of picking out the subtle intricacies of fiddle tunes on the flat-top guitar.

23. **Will the Circle Be Unbroken**

Tom Ashley, vocal; Doc Watson and Clint Howard, guitars and vocal; Fred Price and Jean Ritchie, vocals
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

Library of Congress archivist Joe Hickerson cites a 1907 copyright notice for this song; Randolph (volume IV, p. 74) provides Ozark versions. The Carter Family's mid-thirties recording probably accounts for the song's popularity among country musicians.

24. **Daniel Prayed**

Fred Price, lead vocal; Clint Howard, tenor vocal; Doc Watson, bass vocal
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

Doc, Clint, and Fred recalled singing this at church in their younger days and refreshed their memory from *The Best of All*, a shape-note hymnal (R.E. Winsett Music Co., Dayton, Tennessee, 1951, song 119, attributed to G.T. Speer, 1936).

25. **Amazing Grace**

Doc Watson, lead vocal; Clarence Ashley, Jean Ritchie, Fred Price, and Clint Howard, vocals
Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

This untraditional arrangement evolved at the 1962 University of Chicago Folk Festival where the Ashley group and Jean and Edna Ritchie all appeared. A few months later, it provided a convenient finale for the evenings when Jean appeared at the Ash Grove with the Ashley ensemble. The earliest published version is attributed to the *Virginia Harmony* of 1831 (see Jackson, p. 153 ff.). It has been included in countless hymnals since that time.

Disc II

1. Sally Ann

Clint Howard, vocal and guitar; Doc Watson, guitar; Fred Price, fiddle; Jack Johnson, banjo; Tommy Moore, washboard; Clarence Ashley, introductory statement
Recorded March 1962, Los Angeles, California

The musicians, except for the washboard player, knew the Hopkins brothers' music either through personal friendship with the Hopkins family or via recordings. Prior to this first recording session, Ashley told me that he had known Al Hopkins. This prompted us to discuss the particular approach the Original Hillbillies had taken to instrumental breaks. The recorded performance here with its banjo-fiddle break minus all other backup instruments recalls the mid-twenties Hillbillies recording of "Sally Ann." The day after this song was recorded, Ashley took Eugene Earle and me to meet Al Hopkins's brother, Bill, one of the Original Hillbillies, who lived near Doc Watson's home.

This popular southern hoedown is sometimes coupled with "Sally Goodin" to form "The Two Sallies." Cecil Sharp published a close variant from Burnsville, North Carolina, in 1918. Al Hopkins and the Hillbillies recorded it in the 1920s (County 405).

2. Richmond Blues

Clint Howard, vocal and guitar;
Fred Price, fiddle
Recorded Labor Day 1960, Shouns, Tennessee

Under the title, "Baby, All Night Long," Tom Ashley, Gwen Foster, and Clarence Green recorded this song for Vocalion Records in the twenties. Tom passed it on to Clint and Fred, taking great pains to preserve the vocal and instrumental nuances.

3. Old Ruben

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Gaither Carlton, banjo
Recorded July 1961, Deep Gap, North Carolina

This variant is common to bluegrass and old-time music throughout the South; its variant titles include "900 Miles," "Train 45," and "Ruby, Are You Mad at Your Man?" Gaither Carlton learned "Old Ruben" from his brother. Here, his rapping or frailing style employs the same right hand stroke as Ashley's, but the left hand has fewer pull offs and more decisive slides between frets producing a sound more like a fretless banjo. Doc's melismatic vocal echoes Gaither's instrumental style.

4. Willie Moore

Gaither Carlton, fiddle; Doc Watson, vocal and banjo
Recorded July 1961, Deep Gap, North Carolina

In a sense, Doc is a catalogue of the rich array of older regional and idiosyncratic personal styles to which his keen musical ear was exposed from birth. His renditions constitute sensitive adaptations of the subtleties of the musicians of an earlier era as heard on records.

This song was recorded by Burnett and Rutherford in 1927 and reissued on the Folkways *Anthology*.

5. Walking Boss

Clarence Ashley, vocal and banjo
Recorded July 1961, Shouns, Tennessee

Ashley recalled learning this track-lining song while "busting"—playing for coins—outside of pay shacks in the West Virginia coalfields. I am aware of no other field recordings of the song. Ashley's singing here is distinguished by uncharacteristic melismatic style on several notes. This may derive from an African-American vocal style that adhered to the song from its origin.

Newman Ivey White and Odum and Johnson include identical texts for this African-American work song. White's text was collected in Alabama in 1906. "Walking Boss" appears in Herbert Halpert's hand-written field notes from his 1939 collecting trip to Mississippi.

6. Shout Lulu

Clarence Ashley, vocal and banjo; Jack Burchett, banjo
Recorded July 1961, Saltville, Virginia

The earliest recording of this popular Appalachian hoedown was made for Gennett Records in 1927 by G.B. Grayson and Henry Whitter. Ralph Stanley notes that this is one of the first tunes he learned to pick on the banjo from his mother. While widely known among old-time pickers throughout the Southeast, the tune was not commonly performed as a duet.

7. Skillet Good and Greasy

Doc Watson, vocal and banjo; Ralph Rinzler, guitar
Recorded September 1960, Deep Gap, North Carolina

Doc recalls learning this song from Uncle Dave Macon's recording. His rendition testifies to his affection for Macon's impetuous vocal style and distinctive plucked—as opposed to rapped—banjo technique. The Macon version has been reissued on *Keep My Skillet Good and Greasy* (Old Homestead Records 148).

8. Pretty Little Pink

Clint Howard, vocal and guitar; Doc Watson, guitar; Fred Price, fiddle; Jack Johnson, banjo; Tommy Moore, washboard
Recorded September 1960, Saltville, Virginia

This tune, with surprisingly little variation, appears under numerous titles with diverse texts as a play-party game

(Botkin p. 296), hoedown (Rufus Crisp, "Blue Eyed Girl," Library of Congress AAFS 20), courting song (sung by Jean Ritchie), and Mexican War song. Everyone was cooking at this point in the performance, and Doc discreetly stepped forward for the only hot flat-picking break he was to offer that first day. When I returned home, I played this for a fifteen-year-old neighbor who was just starting to learn the mandolin. Young David Grisman asked me, about Doc, "Hey, where'd you find that guy? He's great!"

9. Run, Jimmie, Run

Clint Howard, vocal and guitar; Gaither Carlton and Fred Price, fiddles; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded March 1961, New York, New York

This recording was made at the New York City rehearsals for the first concert appearance of the Ashley-Watson group in March 1961. The double fiddles of Carlton and Price are reminiscent of the Gid Tanner/Clayton McMichen fiddle-duo style heard in early recordings of Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers.

This song is sometimes known as the "Patteroller's Song." Randolph (vol. II, p. 264) provides published references back to 1851.

10. Hicks' Farewell

Doc Watson, vocal; Gaither Carlton, fiddle
Recorded June 1961, Shouns, Tennessee

While we were recording this performance, a calm settled on the room—as though immediately present were

some who had been summoned from the past. After the last notes faded, an enduring silence was sustained before the recording machine was turned off or anyone spoke. Thirty years have passed, but the experience is rekindled each time I hear the recording. Like many items on the album, this performance engulfs the attentive listener with the sound of another era—as Gaither said, of "old times." This is one of the most powerful pieces of recorded music I know.

William Walker (*Southern Harmony*, 1855) attributes this tune and text to Rev. B. Hicks of South Carolina (Jackson, *Spiritual Folk Songs of Early America*, p. 31). Doc learned it from family singing; *Southern Harmony* was likely the source.

11. The Old Man at the Mill

Clint Howard, vocal and guitar; Fred Price, fiddle; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded July 1961, Saltville, Virginia

Ashley knew this song from childhood. It bears the modal tonality without the starkness of the foregoing hymn. The artful fiddling and vocal treatment preserve the tune's archaic quality and the verses provide leavening.

This represents a happy combination of two separate songs: a well-known play-party piece, "The Jolly Miller," and "The Bird Song" or "The Leather-winged Bat." An 1883 version of the former is reported by Newell (pp. 102-3), and both Botkin and Randolph include it in their collections. "The Leather-winged Bat" can be found in

Lomax's *Folksong U.S.A.*, and Sharp provides two modal tunes and humorous verses for "The Bird Song" in the second volume of his *English Folksongs in the Southern Appalachians*.

12. A Short Life of Trouble

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Arnold Watson, tenor vocal and harmonica
Recorded February 1962, Chicago, Illinois

As a youth, Doc learned this piece from a Burnett and Rutherford recording. It was also recorded by Grayson and Whitter, reissued on Grayson and Whitter, *Songs and Ballads 1927-30* (County 513).

13. Brown's Dream

Gaither Carlton, fiddle; Doc Watson, guitar
Recorded July 1961, Deep Gap, North Carolina

This tune is still current among fiddlers and banjo pickers on the border of western North Carolina and southwestern Virginia. Gaither learned it from fiddler "Uncle" Ben Miller, several years his senior and a childhood favorite of Doc's. The wonder of Gaither's music is its revelation of a guileless, tender man of deep intelligence and infinite kindness. Gaither always had an irrepressible sparkle in his eye. Sometimes austere, he was a thoughtful person who spoke sparsely and always very softly. Gaither's very presence bore the singular lilting quality of fiddle tunes like this one.

"Fiddling" Ben Jarrell and his son Tommy both recorded

this tune, shouting fragmentary verses about John Brown's dream.

14. Footprints in the Snow

Clint Howard, vocal and guitar; Fred Price, fiddle; Doc Watson, guitar; Jack Johnson, banjo

As I walked into the room where I first met Ashley, Clint, Fred, and Jack were rehearsing this piece for the Union Grove fiddler's competition. The sound was enigmatic; it held me there. The song said "bluegrass" but the fiddle and banjo carried another message.

The best-known recording of this is from the mid-forties by Bill Monroe and His Bluegrass Boys. It was also cut by Cliff Carlisle in 1939. Earlier versions were released by a number of artists including Bradley Kincaid.

15. I'm Going Back to Jericho

Doc Watson, vocal and banjo; Gaither Carlton, fiddle; Ralph Rinzler, guitar
Recorded September 1960, Deep Gap, North Carolina

Gaither learned the tune as a young boy from a neighboring fiddler, Tom Hodge, and Doc learned it from his father. Doc's plunky, precise up-picking has drive equal to the rapping-style banjo of his older neighbor, Dock Walsh, who actually raps at least 30 to 40 percent faster! Walsh is dazzling, but not more musical. The added dimensions of Gaither's fiddle and Doc's vocal make the pace seem slow until you try to fit all the words in yourself.

The Carolina Tar Heels recorded this tune as "Back to Mexico" in 1931. Also in the thirties, Dock Walsh recorded a banjo/vocal solo similar to this rendition. Reissued on *Mountain Banjo Tunes* (County 515).

16. **Peg and Awl**

Clarence Ashley, vocal and banjo; Doc Watson, vocal and guitar

Recorded June 1961, Shouns, Tennessee

This is one of several fine examples of Ashley's parlando singing style. He infuses the melodic line with his speech inflections—a modest version of Appalachian "scat" singing.

"Peg and Awl" was recorded in 1921 on Victor by Ashley and the Carolina Tar Heels. It appears in Alan Lomax's *The Folk Songs of North America*, and Cecil Sharp provides fragments in *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*.

17. **Maggie Walker Blues**

Clint Howard, vocal and guitar; Fred Price, fiddle; Doc Watson, guitar

Recorded September 1960, Deep Gap, North Carolina

This song has been widely collected in the southeastern, midwestern, and western United States. Ashley taught this version to Clint and Fred.

Belden's Missouri texts appear under the title "Peggy Walker." Buell Kazee calls the song "The Roving Cowboy," and the majority of collections use "The Girl I

Left Behind" as the title. See also "My Name Is John Johanna" by Kelly Harrell on the Folkways *Anthology*, vol. 1.

18. **God's Gonna Ease My Troublin' Mind**

Clarence Ashley, vocal; Doc Watson, guitar and vocal

This tune popped into Tom's memory the day we first recorded the Watson Family. I had the feeling he and Doc had never before played it. Doc sang out the response lines as an ostensible afterthought.

The African-American origin of this tune is unmistakable and the text is eclectic. Tom did not remember when or where he learned it but explained the significance of the second line, second verse—"there laid the long rail as well as the short"—saying that it was common practice to use two rails, one to measure the length, the other the width, when digging a grave.

19. **I Saw a Man at the Close of Day**

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Fred Price, fiddle

Recorded April 1962, Los Angeles, California

While we were in Los Angeles for the first Ash Grove appearance, Doc refreshed his memory of this song by listening to a tape dub of Whitter and Grayson's recording—the only source I am aware of for the piece. Both he and Fred recalled it from their youth.

20. **Handsome Molly**

Doc Watson, vocal and banjo; Gaither Carlton, fiddle

Recorded July 1961, Deep Gap, North Carolina

George Banman Grayson, the blind fiddler, and Henry Whitter, with whom he played after travelling for some years with Tom Ashley, recorded this song (1927) in a version identical to the one performed here. It was Grayson who taught it to Gaither. Doc learned it from his father. The beguiling lilt of Gaither's fiddling is matched by the ease with which Doc slips from one crackling banjo technique to another.

21. **John Henry**

Doc Watson, vocal and guitar; Gaither Carlton, fiddle; Arnold Watson, banjo

Recorded July 1961, Deep Gap, North Carolina

Doc's performance of this old chestnut is keenly sensitive to the traditional accompaniment of his kinsman. The guitar is consciously spare, providing subtle, unobtrusive support to the two gently played lead instruments, neither of which vies with the other for dominance during the breaks. Arnold's banjo style is a personal adaptation of the plucked, two-finger technique.

For an interesting background note on the song, see Guy Johnson, John Henry (*Tracking Down a Negro Legend*).

22. **Honey Babe Blues**

Clarence Ashley, vocal; Doc Watson and Clint Howard, guitars; Fred Price, fiddle; Jack Johnson, banjo

Recorded September 1960, Saltville, Virginia

Characteristically, Tom used this vocal style when belting out a song with the support of a strong backup band. In the process, he gestured with his hands and moved about the stage, all the time maintaining visual contact with those before him.

Dock Boggs's "Sugar Baby" on the Folkways *Anthology*, vol. 3, is a close variant. Related versions were recorded by Charlie Monroe ("Red Rocking Chair") and Bascom Lamar Lunsford ("Red Apple Juice"). In *A Song Catcher in the Southern Mountains* (pp. 122-4), Dorothy Scarborough notes that fragments of this text derive from Child ballad no. 76, "The Lass of Roch Royal."

23. **Wayfaring Pilgrim**

Clarence Ashley, unaccompanied vocal

Recorded June 1961, Shouns, Tennessee

Ashley frequently employed this song as a means of pulling back from a clutch of lively, opening novelties and establishing his deeper artistic credentials. He never failed to draw effectively on his considerable emotional resources when singing it.

Annabelle Morris Buchanan, *Folk Hymns of America* (pg. xxvii), cites two early published versions, one in the 1780s and the other in Ananian Davisson's *Kentucky Harmony* (1816) under the title "Judgement." This is one of the most widespread of American spirituals. It is found in both Anglo-American and African-American communities.

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Selected Discography

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The Doc Watson Family, Smithsonian/Folkways SF40012.

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Will the Circle Be Unbroken, Liberty CD-46589, LP-51158.

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Riding the Midnight Train, Sugar Hill 3752.

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Ballads From Deep Gap, Vanguard 6576.

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Bluegrass at Newport 1959, 1960, 1963, Vanguard 121.

Recordings of early, commercially issued, southern traditional music can be ordered from Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings, 955 L'Enfant Plaza Suite 2600, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560; County Sales, P.O. Box 191, Floyd, VA 24091, 703/745-2001; Roots and Rhythm, 6921 Stockton Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530, 415/525-1494; Roundup Records, P.O. Box 154, Cambridge, MA 02140, 617/661-6308; Old Homestead Records, P.O. Box 100, Brighton, MI 48116, 313/227-1997. Field recordings commercially available from the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Culture may be ordered by writing for a catalog or a specific recording to MBRS Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC 20540.

A video cassette providing guitar instruction by Doc Watson, *Doc's Guitar: The Finger Picking and Flat Picking of Doc Watson*, catalog #VD-DOC-GT01, was produced by Smithsonian/Folkways in cooperation with Homespun Tapes and may be ordered from Smithsonian/Folkways Mail Order, 414 Hungerford Drive, Suite 444, Rockville, MD 20850 (Visa and Mastercard accepted).

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Annotated by Ralph Rinzler

Production supervised by Anthony Seeger and Matt Walters

Recorded by Eugene Earle and Ralph Rinzler with assistance from Ed Kahn, Danny and Mike Seeger, Peter Siegel, and Richard Rinzler

Archival assistance by Jeff Place

Reference assistance by Joe Hickerson and Gerry

Parsons, Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress

Editorial assistance by Ed O'Reilly and Leslie Spitz-Edson

Cover photo by Eugene Earle

Cover photograph: Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson on Doc Watson's porch following Doc's first recording session

Design by Carol Hardy

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About the Producer

Ralph Rinzler began doing fieldwork in the mid-1950s for Folkways Records. He joined the Greenbriar Boys in 1959. From 1960 on he worked closely with musicians he had encountered in Appalachia: Clarence Ashley and Doc Watson. This experience led him to develop a strategy for bringing important traditional musicians into the "folk song revival" by serving as their business representative and documentarian. He used what he learned from working with Ashley and Watson to bring Bill Monroe's music to an urban audience. In 1963 he became Field Programs Director for the Newport Folk Foundation, and in 1967 became founder and Director of the Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife.

About Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings

Folkways Records was founded by Moses Asch and Marian Distler in 1947 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. In the ensuing decades, New York City-based Folkways became one of the largest independent record labels in the world, reaching a total of nearly 2,200 albums that were always kept in print.

The Smithsonian Institution acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987 to ensure that the sounds and genius of the artists would be preserved for future generations. All Folkways recordings are now available on high-quality audio cassettes, each packed in a special box along with the original LP liner notes.

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