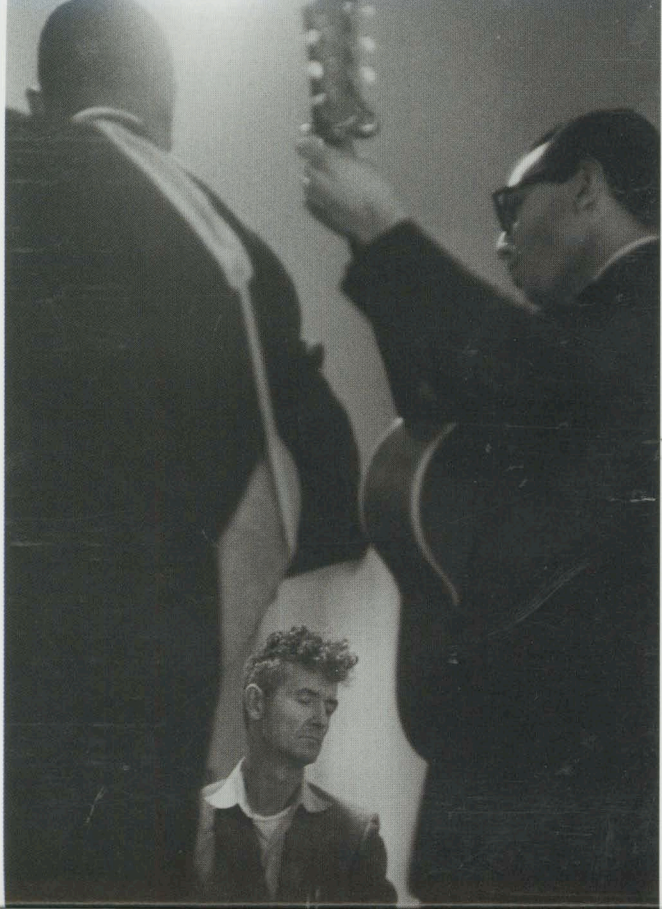


there is no eye:
music for
photographs

recordings
of musicians
photographed
by john cohen



Smithsonian Folkways Records



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

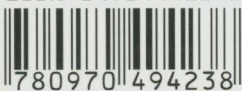
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In *Music For Photographs*, photographer, film maker, folklorist, and musician John Cohen (of the New Lost City Ramblers) presents some of the finest American roots recordings ever made. On their own, these songs are authentic and captivating. Yet, they are only one half of a conceptual whole—Cohen has also released a book of photographs, *There is No Eye*, showcasing the musicians featured here as well as many others. Experienced together, the music and the photographs create new dimensions of possibility in our collective drive to understand and appreciate people's music. Includes unreleased music from Rev. Gary Davis and Bob Dylan, as well as classic tracks from Woody Guthrie, Roscoe Holcomb, Bill Monroe, Carter Stanley, Muddy Waters, and many more. 32-page booklet, exquisite photos, extensive notes, 68 minutes.

1. **THANK YOU, LORD** 4:25
Gospel Church, Harlem
2. **IF I HAD MY WAY** 4:42
Reverend Gary Davis
3. **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN MISTREATED** 1:35
Yvonne Hunter
4. **I CAN'T BE SATISFIED** 2:41
Muddy Waters
5. **ROLL ON JOHN** 3:23
Bob Dylan
6. **MAN OF CONSTANT SORROW** 2:55
Roscoe Holcomb
7. **HICKS FAREWELL** 4:27
Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton
8. **COME ALL YOU TENDERHEARTED** 3:34
Carter Stanley
9. **YOUNG BUT GROWING** 3:26
Mary Townsley
10. **TB BLUES** 3:26
Alice Gerard and Hazel Dickens
11. **JOHN HENRY** 1:31
Bill Monroe
12. **SALLY GOODIN** 3:38
Eck Robertson
13. **TWIN SISTERS** 0:53
Sidna Myers
14. **SALLY JOHNSON** 2:11
Wade Ward and Charlie Higgins
15. **PULL MY DAISY** 4:31
David Amram Quartet
16. **SO LONG: GO** 2:58
Rufus Cohen and Wade Patterson
17. **WHO'LL WATER MY FLOWERS?** 2:33
Last Forever
18. **OH BABE, IT AIN'T NO LIE** 2:03
Elizabeth Cotten
19. **RAMBLIN' ROUND** 2:14
Woody Guthrie
20. **LOVE MY DARLING-O** 1:52
Alan Lomax
21. **BUCK CREEK GIRLS** 2:57
New Lost City Ramblers
22. **PALOMA BLANCA** 2:16
Huayno stringband, Sacsamarca, Peru
23. **KITCHEN GIRL** 4:42
Sweet's Mill Band (The Arkansas Shieks)

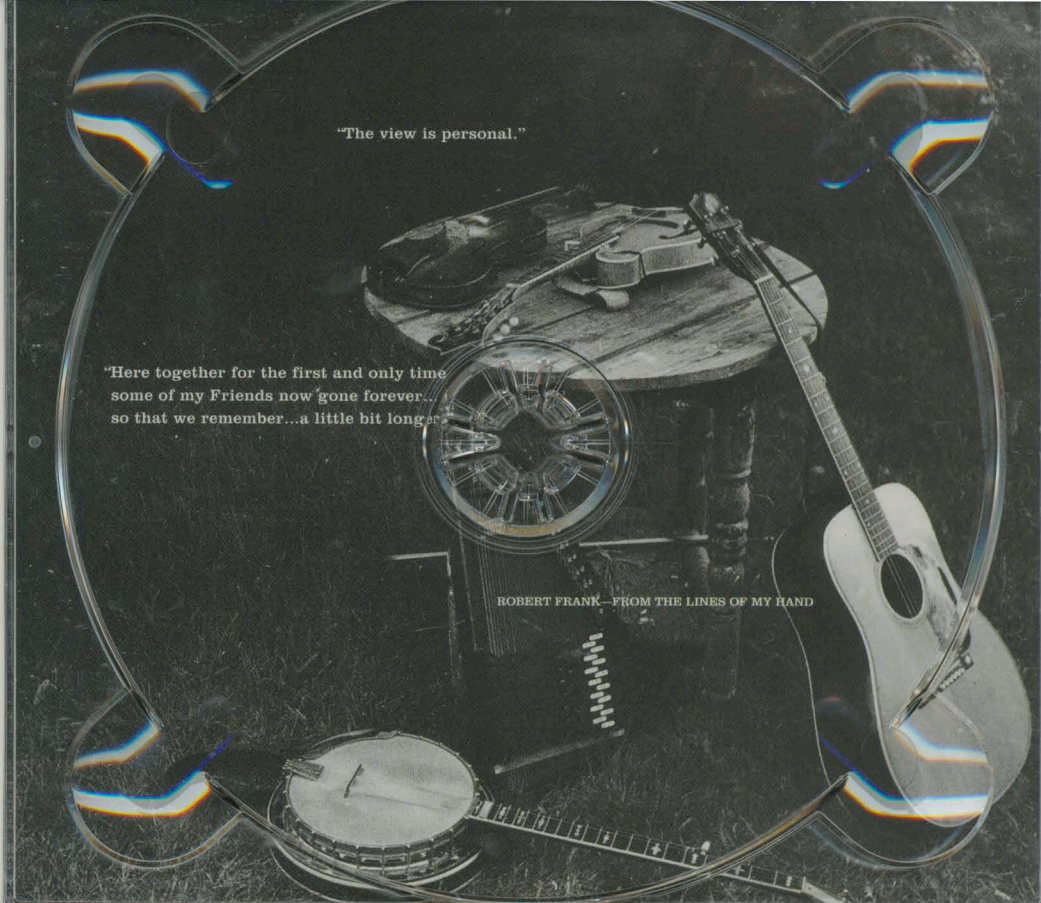
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FRONT COVER: WOODY GUTHRIE | BACK COVER: ELIZABETH COTTEN



"The view is personal."

"Here together for the first and only time
some of my Friends now gone forever...
so that we remember...a little bit longer"

ROBERT FRANK — FROM THE LINES OF MY HAND



there is no eye: **music for photographs**

recordings of musicians photographed by john cohen



1. **THANK YOU, LORD** 4:25 Gospel Church, Harlem
2. **IF I HAD MY WAY** 4:42 Rev. Gary Davis (Rev. Gary Davis/Chandos Music, BMI)
3. **HAVE YOU EVER BEEN MISTREATED (FIVE LONG YEARS)** 1:35 Yvonne Hunter (Eddy Boyd/Embassy Music Corporation, BMI)
4. **I CAN'T BE SATISFIED** 2:41 Muddy Waters (Muddy Waters/Watertoons, admin. by Bug, BMI)
5. **ROLL ON JOHN** 3:23 Bob Dylan (Trad., arr. Bob Dylan/Special Rider Music SESAC)
6. **MAN OF CONSTANT SORROW** 2:55 Roscoe Holcomb (Carter Stanley/Peer International Corp., BMI)
7. **HICKS FAREWELL** 4:27 Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton (Trad., arr. Doc Watson, Gaither Carlton/Hillgreen Music, BMI)
8. **COME ALL YOU TENDER HEARTED** 3:34 Carter Stanley
9. **YOUNG BUT GROWING** 3:26 Mary Townsley
10. **TB BLUES** 3:26 Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard (Walter Callahan)
11. **JOHN HENRY** 1:31 Bill Monroe
12. **SALLY GOODIN** 3:38 Eck Robertson (Trad., arr. Eck Robertson/Peer International Corp., BMI)
13. **TWIN SISTERS** 0:53 Sidna Meyers
14. **SALLY JOHNSON** 2:11 Wade Ward and Charlie Higgins
15. **PULL MY DAISY** 4:31 David Amram Quartet (David Amram-Jack Kerouac-Allen Ginsberg/Remsen Music Corp., BMI/May King Poetry Music, BMI/Duluo Publishing)
16. **SO LONG: GO** 2:58 Rufus Cohen and Wade Patterson (Rufus Cohen-Wade Patterson/Pride Cracker)
17. **WHO'LL WATER MY FLOWERS?** 2:33 Last Forever (Janie Hunter/Two Fourteen Music, BMI)
18. **OH BABE, IT AIN'T NO LIE** 2:03 Elizabeth Cotten (Elizabeth Cotten/Vastopol Music, BMI)
19. **RAMBLIN' ROUND** 2:14 Woody Guthrie (Woody Guthrie/TRO-Ludlow Music Inc., BMI)
20. **LOVE MY DARLING-O** 1:52 Alan Lomax
21. **BUCK CREEK GIRLS** 2:57 New Lost City Ramblers (Arr. John Cohen)
22. **PALOMA BLANCA** 2:16 Huayno stringband, Sacsamarca, Peru
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MUSIC FOR PHOTOGRAPHS

introduction | john cohen I just heard an old-time string band playing "Cluck Old Hen." The band is young, and its members are too. They were performing the same dance tune I listened to half a century earlier when I first began with this music. I am still impressed at how such music can continue on for so long.

Looking back over years of my photographs and music, things which meant a lot to me back then still remain vital today. Old scratchy hillbilly records that excited me long ago generate new fiddle bands now. The gospel music I heard as a child has grown and changed into soul music and popular music. The blues, Cajun music, bluegrass, and other American roots forms continue to work their magic today. More spirit, less style. The Beat Generation poets (whom I met in 1959) continue to be felt by one generation after another.

I've tried to report on this in my work. I can see my life as a search, and music and photographs marked the journey. This record is a companion to my book of photographs *There Is No Eye* (Powerhouse, 2001). This CD presents the sounds of the musicians pictured in the book. *Music for Photographs* is roots music, community music, family and homemade music in all kinds of circumstances.

Along with Appalachian music, there is early bluegrass, Andean music, English ballad singing, gospel, blues, and Beat jazz: a survey of the music I photographed in my life.

musical reflections Can the photographer's eye be a guiding filter for music? Can music affect the photographer's eye? Can you see music or hear photographs? Or is there a more fundamental resonance that responds to art and music?

Music is not an escape, photographs are not documents. There is no escape. Dylan wrote, "there is no eye, there is only a series of mouths, long live the mouths."

It is overwhelming to consider that every period of music ever recorded is now accessible through CDs and the Internet. Time collapses under this weight; everything of the past and the present is available all at

once—if only there were enough time to listen to it. Who can steer a path through this tangle of music? Alan Lomax suggested his “Global Jukebox” as one approach. This record offers another, personalized solution.

Making photographs of musicians was a way for me to get closer to the music, to occupy and remember it, and to let the photograph convey the feeling that music generated. It would only be half-true to say the photos documented the look of the musicians; the other half is that the camera could reveal how music existed in its own environment. The best way to experience this music fully was to hear it in its own setting, and that required traveling great distances to the musicians in their communities and at their homes.

Many of the images in the book are from the late 1950s and 1960s when music and art crossed paths: it was a convergence of creative imaginations in Greenwich Village that included the Beat Generation (Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg), the art world of the Tenth Street galleries in New York and the Cedar Bar where the painters hung out, to MacDougal Street, the Folklore Center, Alan Lomax and Pete Seeger, and the coffeehouses when Bob Dylan arrived. It was a yeasty mix of characters then, who remain as cultural icons now.

The book also shows photos done during my collecting trips to the Appalachians and to Peru, and presents images of seminal figures of American music such as Muddy Waters, Rev. Gary Davis, Libba Cotten, Roscoe Holcomb, Bill Monroe, Flatt & Scruggs, and the Stanley Brothers, Bob Dylan, Harry Smith, and others.

When I started to actively pursue music, it was a many-sided involvement: I photographed it, performed it (with the New Lost City Ramblers), presented it (with the Friends of Old Time Music), recorded it, and made films about it. While some collectors of music were out looking for stars and innovators, I was seeking music that was still in direct touch with its roots, and I only photographed things which connected to my search.

In the early 1950s there was a vast divide between what was available on radio or records heard in New York City and what was going on in the remote regional enclaves of America. From the Long Island suburbs where I was raised, the rural voices, blues, and early rock ‘n’ roll sounds of America were virtually inaccessible. The suburbs were sheltered, protected from and deprived of these sounds and the messages they conveyed. The musical landscape of that time wasn’t just a matter of urban/rural contrasts, though, it was a minefield of racial segregation, ethnic compartments, and class distinctions. In this atmosphere,

the folk song movement offered an alternative route to the prevalent commercial pop music of the time. For me, folk was a breath of fresh air. I found the smooth radio crooners suffocating my spirit. Moe Asch’s Disc Records and then Folkways Records introduced the voices of Lead Belly and Woody Guthrie. The Weavers sang of social justice and world peace...but the voices of the blues, hillbilly, Cajun, and old-time fiddle bands were not represented.

In this respect, the phrase “folk music” created a difficult legacy, limited by the purposes of its creators. The term generated strong critiques. For example, Ann Powers from the *New York Times* wrote, “The academics and activists who formed the genre known as folk from the elements of the American popular imagination that suited their ideals created a vision of democracy that’s more utopian (and somewhat smoother around the edges) than the real thing.”

I remember being unprepared for the advent of rock ‘n’ roll. When I first heard Elvis Presley’s music, it was blaring out from a record store in New Haven, Conn. From a block away it sounded like Lead Belly to me, and I wondered why they were playing it out in the street. In 1952 Harry Smith’s *Anthology of American Folk Music* opened a new door and made the cultural connections. The only problem was that this anthology presented music from the late 1920s that was already gone.

The 1960s brought a wider recognition of American vernacular music, and that feeling of musical isolation no longer prevailed, especially with the rise of the counter-culture and the rediscovery of forgotten musicians from the past. Today the diversity of American music can be celebrated and is really accessible to anyone who seeks it.

sound decisions This CD is arranged so that each piece of music flows into another: they may be joined by a sound, a texture, a meaning, or a cultural connection. The decision to bring different musics together in this way may seem subjectively personal rather than objectively documentary; that is the risk I have taken. However, the listener is advised not to look for any particular purity in these selections. Contradictions and tangled relationships abound: Roscoe Holcomb influenced by Ralph Stanley, Sea

Island Gullah children singing blues learned from the radio and Kung Fu from the TV, Swiss graphic designers seeking roots in gospel music, pop singers inspired by back-porch home musicians, traditional Appalachian singers learning from folk song collections, and a young photographer raised in the suburbs devoting all his creative energies to a crusade for this music.

While sequencing this record, I felt a curious tension between past and present: on one hand the direction of the music gravitated towards early sources—such as Doc Watson singing a song composed by a frontier preacher in the 19th century, or even earlier to a Scottish Gypsy singing a medieval ballad that lives on today. On the other hand there were performances like Bob Dylan's, where he reaches into the traditional styles of the past to create his new music. Or Alice Gerrard and Hazel Dickens continuing a sad message of love and tragedy which permeates both the old ballads and the bluegrass sound. And as Alan Lomax emulates the singing style of an Afro-American chain-gang singer (James "Ironhead" Baker), in a roundabout way he is setting the stage for the ebullient excitement of the fiddle revival as heard at Sweet's Mill. In this musical anthology the avant-garde bumps into back-porch musicians, Beat Generation literary improvisations echo jazz, Afro-American blues feed rock 'n' roll, while the most recent generation (my son) reaches out to Africa for his musical inspiration.

message from the photographer In 1952 I purchased my first tape recorder (a Pentron) in order to record Reverend Gary Davis. I traveled by bus and subway lugging the cumbersome machine from my parents' house to the Davises' South Bronx home. I was attending art school at Yale when Herbert Matter created the photo program there, and he was doing a film project about dancing in Black churches. He came by to hear the recordings I had made and invited me to run the tape recorder for his film. I got my first camera and shot my earliest photos at those gospel sessions. In this way, the act of recording Gary Davis was crucial to why I became a photographer. I have been pursuing this path between music and images in my art for almost fifty years.

When he heard of this proposed project, Tony Seeger, then director of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, assured me to go ahead. He said, "You put music together in unusual ways."

SELECTIONS

1 THANK YOU, LORD Gospel group. Recorded by John Cohen in Harlem, New York, November 1953.

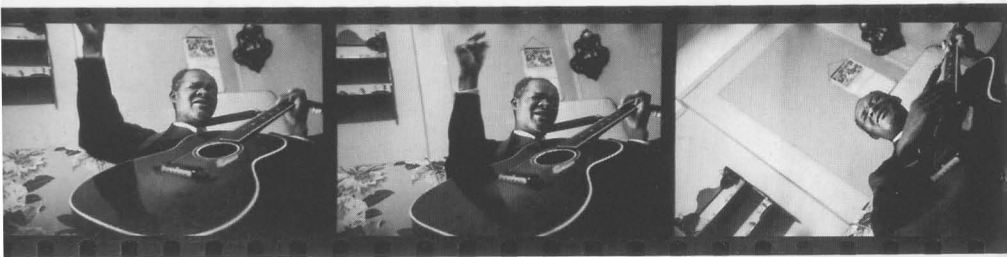
During the course of an afternoon and evening at the Paramount Hall on 116th Street, many singing groups visited, performed, and departed to do other performances elsewhere in the city. We made other recordings in Harlem and in the East New York section of Brooklyn.

At the Paramount Hall, Herbert Matter was making a film about the roots of Afro-American dancing. He had already done a film of jitterbug contests in the Savoy Ballroom (his films are available at the Lincoln Center Dance Library) and was now looking for his subject in the Black churches when people go into trances and start dancing in that state. I recorded the sound for him—a matter of turning on the recorder and monitoring the levels. This live recording is a mix of amplified sounds from the speaker system and the room sounds.



2 IF I HAD MY WAY Reverend Gary Davis, guitar and vocal.
Recorded by John Cohen in Harlem, New York, December 1954.

Rev. Davis's first performance before a largely White New York audience was at the Lead Belly Memorial Concert in 1950 at Town Hall. I started visiting Davis at his home in 1951, and followed him around as he played on the street and sometimes at local grocery stores. In Manhattan, he could be found at Eddy Bell's music store in midtown, where he would often sleep in a chair during the day. They recognized the excellence of his guitar picking. Davis was originally from North Carolina and had made 78 rpm records as Blind Gary. In Harlem he invited me and my parents to church services and testimonial performances. By the late 1950s he became part of the folk song and blues revival, and a series of young men led him to concerts and learned his guitar licks. Eventually he became a regular performer at folk festivals. I was privileged to know him before he became so famous, and the afternoon visits to his small apartment were overwhelming. I got my first reel-to-reel tape recorder in order to record him. Initially we were only impressed by his guitar playing, and later we realized what a powerful singer he was. Compare his performance to Blind Willie Johnson's "If I Had My Way, I'd Tear This Building Down."



3 HAVE YOU EVER BEEN MISTREATED Sung by Yvonne Hunter, John's
Island, South Carolina. From the film *Musical Holdouts* by John Cohen, 1976.

Yvonne is a daughter of Janie Hunter—who appeared at festivals during the 1960s singing shouts and church songs with complicated rhythmic patterns. The book *Ain't You Got a Right to the Tree of Life* by Guy and Candie Carawan is about her community. I made a short film (*Musical Holdouts*) about Janie and her children doing their African-rooted dance games and included Yvonne's unaccompanied singing of a favorite blues song she learned from radio or records. The melody she sings is pentatonic: it is the same scale used in many ballads and fiddle tunes. Her singing has stayed in my memory for decades, evoking a common source for the blues and the ballads—a sort of musical Rosetta Stone.

This song is better known as "Five Long Years" and has been recorded more than fifty times by artists including B.B. King and Eric Clapton. It is credited to Eddy Boyd. Yvonne's performance took place in her home setting, and this recording can be seen as a young girl's response to a commercially distributed blues. As sung in a female voice, the text takes on some odd meanings.





4 I CAN'T BE SATISFIED Muddy Waters, guitar and vocals; Willie Dixon, bass. From *The Best of Muddy Waters* Chess Records 1427.

Muddy Waters came from Chicago to New York in 1959 to perform at Alan Lomax's "Folksong '59." This Carnegie Hall concert presented a wide range of American music that was very different from the commercial sounds of "folk" groups like the Kingston Trio which dominated the folk song revival back then. Lomax had first recorded Muddy Waters (McKinley Morganfield) in Mississippi in 1942 for the Library of Congress. One of the songs Muddy recorded with acoustic guitar was "I Be Troubled." This is that same song done with electric guitar, drums, and with Willie Dixon on the bass, recorded for Chess Records when Muddy came north to Chicago. Muddy's style of music subsequently had an enormous effect on musicians such as Paul Butterfield, Mike Bloomfield, and Bob Dylan.

I photographed Muddy Waters and Isaac Washington in a rehearsal room on Second Avenue in New York City in 1959. My photo is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.



5 ROLL ON JOHN Bob Dylan singing on Cynthia Gooding's radio program on WBAI in New York, 1962.

This performance was done about a year after Dylan came to New York, around the time he was making his first record for Columbia. I photographed and filmed him on my rooftop and in my loft in the spring of 1962. On the radio show with Cynthia Gooding, Dylan is heard inventing a fabulous history of himself—sort of a wish list of the adventures necessary to fulfill the image of a folk singer rooted in an American landscape. Bob announced that he learned this song from Ralph Rinzler. Ralph at that time was a member of the Greenbriar Boys, and a friend of mine. Together with Izzy Young we formed the Friends of Old Time Music to put on concerts by traditional musicians in New York. Dylan's performance here has never been released on record (although it has circulated for years on underground tapes). His singing of "Roll On John" reveals how deeply he had absorbed traditional singing styles. His performance exaggerates the turns and twists of this music with great relish. He also has done his own transformation of the traditional words to this song and makes it into his kind of love song. The original source version of "Roll On John" came from Rufus and Palmer Crisp of Allen, Kentucky (heard on Folkways 2342). The song is also known as "Roll On Buddy" and as "Nine Pound Hammer." It can also be heard as "Go Down Old Hannah," a prison song on a Library of Congress record (AASSL8 James "Ironhead" Baker at Sugarland, Texas, 1933, recorded by John and Alan Lomax).

6 MAN OF CONSTANT SORROW Roscoe Holcomb.
Recorded by John Cohen in New York City, 1961.

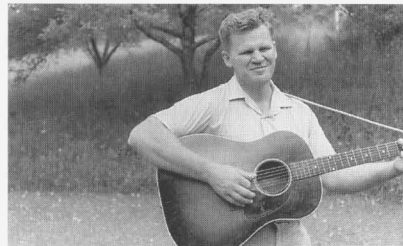
Roscoe was one of the last traditional singers whose music took shape before the influence of radio and phonograph, and he never had aspired to perform on radio or records. His sound was a mix of Old Baptist singing, blues, and old-time songs. I first encountered him in Daisy, Kentucky in 1959. He was a home musician and his singing was the epitome of the high lonesome sound—tense, high pitched, emotional, mournful, and always moving. His 1959 recordings were respectfully received, but when they were re-issued on CD twenty-five years later, reviewers called his music “straight from the bone, with high, at times harsh vocals that make no concession to popular clichés.... The listener is left with a thick residue of emotion expressed in pure, stark music” (R. Underberger, *All Music Guide*); “As bone-chillingly intense as Robert Johnson’s. Holcomb shapes every song to his own haunted, stoic personality, projecting a tightly wound passion that Dylan described as ‘an untamed sense of control’” (Larry Bernbaum, *Santa Fe Sterophile*); “A voice that bypasses the head and shoots straight for the soul.”

Roscoe learned this version of “Man of Constant Sorrow” from Ralph Stanley’s 78 record for Columbia. Over the years Ralph’s rendition became more ornamented, like Old Baptist singing. Eventually, Roscoe and Ralph sang old hymns together informally—they shared the same background.



7 HICKS FAREWELL Doc Watson, vocal; Gaither Carlton, fiddle.
From their first trip to New York City, 1961. Recorded by Peter Siegel.

When Doc Watson got off the bus at the Port Authority Terminal in New York City in March 1961 along with Clarence Ashley, Clint Howard, Fred Price, and Gaither Carlton, he was completely unknown to us. The Friends of Old Time Music were presenting a concert by Ashley, who was known from his recordings on the Harry Smith *Anthology*. The rest of the band were presented as “farmers and neighbors” from North Carolina. During rehearsals the week prior to the concert, Ralph Rinzler and others plumbed the repertoire of the group. It was several months later that Doc Watson emerged as a giant of guitar flat-picking. The impact of his singing “Hicks Farewell”—done with just fiddle and voice—was powerful and had a spareness and mournful truthfulness that conveyed the sense of morality and love in the rural life on the frontier more than a century earlier. My appreciation for Doc and Gaither was established at that moment; all the fame and hot guitar licks that have happened since have never shaken this first impression that Watson knew the roots of American music through the experience of his family and community. “Hicks Farewell” is found in *Southern Harmony* (1855); it is also in *English Folksongs in the Southern Appalachians* (Cecil Sharp, 1917) and in the *New Baptist Songbook* (Song no. 79) as “The Time Is Swiftly Rolling By.”





8 COME ALL YOU TENDER HEARTED Carter Stanley (of the Stanley Brothers). Recorded at the first University of Chicago Folk Festival, 1961.

"Come All You Tender Hearted" is Song no. 20 in the *New Baptist Songbook*. In his spoken introduction to the festival audience Carter Stanley announced, "I saw an old songbook last night." He was referring to a copy of the *New Baptist Songbook* which Roscoe Holcomb had backstage at Mandel Hall at the University of Chicago. The Stanley Brothers were familiar with this collection from their own religious upbringing. The *New Baptist Songbook* is small enough to fit in your pocket. It only contains the words to the songs, but different congregations throughout the South have their own individual melodies and styles for performing the songs. The texts go beyond strictly religious messages; "Come All You Tender Hearted" is about a tragic and touching event. Over the years, the Stanley Brothers included more of these songs in their concerts, and in recent years Ralph Stanley has regularly performed unaccompanied, ornamented Old Baptist vocals as part of his shows.

9 YOUNG BUT GROWING Sung by Mary Townsley (occasionally joined by Jean MacFee), Dundee, Scotland, 1981. Recorded by John Cohen in their home as part of his film *Gypsies Sing Long Ballads*.

The Travelling people of Scotland have also been known as Tinkers and as Gypsies. Although none of these names sits comfortably, the Travellers have always retained their independent identity on the margins of proper society. They have also been staunch preservers of ancient local traditions, which include unaccompanied ballad singing. I was making a film about the Travellers to complement an earlier film I had done (*The End of an Old Song*) about ballad singers in North Carolina. The artist/folklorist/musician Art Rosenbaum had told me about Jean MacFee, so I searched for her in Dundee, and filmed this performance in the midst of a family gathering in a Council Flat. Mary Townsley (pictured below) stood up to sing while the men, women, and children continued with their everyday life in the room around her.

Folklorist A.L. Lloyd wrote, "This curious ballad is common all over the British Isles. Child betrothal and early marriages were common enough in the Middle Ages and later, especially among noble families marrying for convenience. Most singers sense there is something hidden, something untold, behind the fate of the pathetic little boy, so early a husband, a father, and a corpse" (*The Foggy Dew Tradition* TLT 1016).



10 TB BLUES (ALSO KNOWN AS "THEY SLEEP TOGETHER NOW AT REST")
Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerrard. Recorded by Peter Siegel in 1967.

Hazel and Alice were part of the Washington/Baltimore music scene in the 1950s and 1960s, and their recordings had a big impact because they were such passionate, excellent musicians and revealed how women could do bluegrass music, a field that had pretty much been a male-only domain. Hazel is from a West Virginia mountain family (her father sang Primitive Baptist hymns), and Alice came from a middle-class family from California and Washington. She was introduced to old-time and bluegrass through the early folk song revival. The bluegrass band assembled on this recording included a young David Grisman on mandolin, Lamar Grier (father of David Grier) on banjo, and Billy Baker playing bluegrass fiddle.

This tragic tale of young lovers destroyed by TB resonates with the story of the British Isles, "Young but Growing." The styles of music may be at the opposite ends of this singing tradition, but the sentiments expressed remain strongly the same.

I photographed Hazel and Alice in 1965 returning from a field recording trip with my family.



11 JOHN HENRY Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys. From the 1962 film *The High Lonesome Sound* by John Cohen.

Bill Monroe had been contracted to sing at the Coal Celebration on Labor Day in Hazard, Kentucky, in 1962. At this time (according to Ralph Rinzler's notes) Bill's career was at a low point; it was before he was recognized by the public as the Father of Bluegrass. At that show his Blue Grass Boys were members of a Kentucky band called the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers. I was filming near Hazard that summer, and drove into town with Roscoe Holcomb's family to hear the show. The previous night Bill Monroe performed at a school gym in Hazard, where admission was charged. The next day he performed out on the steps of the Perry County Courthouse for the public celebration. I filmed and photographed him there, and later when we would see each other he always talked about "that film we made together" as the only free concert he ever did.



12 SALLY GOODIN Eck Robertson, fiddle. Recorded in his home in Amarillo, Texas, 1963, by Tracy Schwarz and John Cohen.

Eck Roberson was the first person to make a country music record. In 1922, on his own initiative, he traveled to New York City from his home in Texas (via a Confederate Soldiers Reunion in Tennessee) to persuade the RCA Victor people to make a record of him. There was no category in their catalog for his kind of music, but when they heard him fiddle, they made recordings which were issued the following year. Those earliest records were astounding performances of solo fiddle and twin fiddles. His performance of "Sally Goodin" is one of the most stunning and unique things in American music. He took the melody high and low, into major and minor keys, with a constant string of variants. On the high part he played way up the neck and introduced drones and dancing ornaments to the melody that transform the tune into a trance-like experience.

In 1963, when I learned that Eck was still alive, I drove to Amarillo (with Tracy Schwarz of the New Lost City Ramblers—we were on our way to Los Angeles via Dallas) and recorded him playing "Sally Goodin" as he had done it in 1922. In the intervening years, many of his variants on the tune had been taken up by Texas fiddlers as key elements in western fiddle contests. Mike Seeger recalls that when Eck played at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965, Bill Monroe, Arthur Smith, and the McGee Brothers huddled over him backstage, fascinated to hear him play his fiddle.

13 TWIN SISTERS Played on five-string banjo by Sidna Myers of Hillsville, Virginia. Recorded in his home in 1965 by John and Penny Cohen.

Sid Myers lived in a small farmhouse out in the country in Virginia. I went to visit him because I was told (by Mary Vernon) that he used odd banjo tunings. He was very generous, sharing his well-turned music with me and my family on very short notice. Apparently much of his music had been worked out as banjo and fiddle duets with his brother Fulton. But heard as banjo solos, they revealed a complex and original interpretation of the tunes.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the five-string banjo is the many different ways it is tuned. The five-string is often called "America's Instrument," and though it is widely known in bluegrass through the artistry of Earl Scruggs, and in the folk revival through the musicianship of Pete Seeger, continued probes into the banjo's history have revealed many African sources for the rhythms and structure of the instrument. Yet in the Appalachians it is played in conjunction with Anglo-derived ballads and fiddle tunes. And so, for those of us who play old-time music, the banjo has provided a gateway to the rich and diverse evolution of American cultural life.

Sid Myers tuned his banjo GFGBC for "Twin Sisters." I learned it from him and have performed it for years. When the great Appalachian fiddler Tommy Jarrell heard me play it at a fiddle convention, he commented on what a good tune it was. And when I told him whom I learned it from, he said that he knew Sid Myers from a long time ago.



14 SALLY JOHNSON Charlie Higgins, Wade Ward, and Dale Poe playing fiddle, banjo, and guitar. Recorded by Mike Seeger and John Cohen at a land auction in Galax, Virginia, 1961.

Charlie Higgins, Wade Ward, and Dale Poe were old-timers from around Galax, Virginia, who played these well-worn tunes together for years. In this performance Uncle Charlie Higgins played a jiggly version of Arthur Smith's long-bow fiddling, while Wade Ward accompanied him with Charlie Poole-style banjo picking. Dale Poe played a solid guitar behind them. The interaction of these instruments in a string band shows the characteristic sound of old-time music. All the instruments play along all the time; in bluegrass music, in contrast, individual instruments take breaks. The auctioneer that day was Luther Davis, an excellent old-time fiddler who played a distinctive Galax style of bowing which was very different from that of Charlie Higgins.

In spring 1961 Mike Seeger and I drove around the South recording and photographing old-time musicians playing their music at fiddle conventions and in their homes. This recording was made in Galax, Virginia, in a shed by the barn at a land auction, where old-time music evoked the past while neighbors and investors bid on the property and farm machinery.



15 PULL MY DAISY Played by the David Amram quartet. Original theme song from the film *Pull My Daisy* by Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie, 1959.

David Amram plays piano, improvises words, and does the scat singing here. The text was by Neal Cassidy, Jack Kerouac, and Allen Ginsberg—central figures of the Beat Generation. Amram wrote the music in 1959 for the film *Pull My Daisy* by Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie. The film captured the look, sound, and feel of the Beat Generation and became an influential milestone in American independent film, full of unrehearsed acting and clowning, daring camera work, and a free-style narration improvised by Kerouac. I shot the still photographs of the entire production. In the original soundtrack, jazz singer Anita Ellis did the vocals. David Amram, who played a part in the film, still performs the song today and keeps the memory and spirit of the Beats alive. David lives just down the road from me in Putnam County, New York. Although he is a symphonic composer and incidental farmer, spontaneity guides his style of lyric invention.



16 SO LONG: GO Rufus Cohen and Wade Patterson, improvisation for guitar and percussion. Recorded in Albuquerque, New Mexico, 2001.

This recording is from a work tape by Rufus (pictured) and Wade. It is part of their music-making process which combines guitar ideas from Elizabeth Cotten (Track 18) with the Ugandan music of Bernard Kabanda (Real World Record Co. WSCD 106). Wade learned to play this rhythm pattern while in Uganda. Rufus (who is my son) has encountered a lot of music through family and friends. Formerly an environmental activist and presently a textile craftsman, he doesn't perform his music in public. He hosts a folk music show on New Mexico public radio. He and Wade Patterson have been creating compositions based on African and American traditions which go into New Age dance and Brazilian jazz as well. In uncharted ways, their music transcends boundaries of place, culture, and time, to carry its meaning on to another generation.

Recently, as Rufus was preparing hundreds of tamales for a music party at this home, I commented that what he was doing was very repetitive and handmade. He said, "So is my work, and so is my music."

17 WHO'LL WATER MY FLOWERS? Sonya Cohen, vocal; Dick Connette, spinnet. From *Last Forever* (Nonesuch 79447-2), recorded and mixed by Scott Lehrer in New York City, 1996.

This song comes from the family of Janie Hunter of John's Island, South Carolina. Bits of the Gullah language still persist there, and some of the children's ring games retain African patterns. The text says, "We are young ladies, and we will surely die. All but Miss Yvonne, she is a nice young lady..." You can hear Miss Yvonne singing on Track 3 of this record ("Have You Ever Been Mistreated").

Composer Dick Connette heard "Who'll Water My Flowers?" sung by Janie Hunter on a Folkways record, and adapted it for his project *Last Forever*. On his record (Nonesuch 79447-2) the singer is my daughter Sonya. Their recording represented an intersection of musical paths that moved from avant-garde music of the 1920s to traditional American folk songs, to the downtown experimental music scene of New York in the 1990s, and back to folk songs.

In the early 1930s Ruth Crawford Seeger shifted the focus of her music composing from avant-garde experiments to traditional American folk music. In the 1990s Dick Connette made the same move in his music. His affinity for contemporary music is still heard in the spinnet accompaniment to this song. The singer Sonya Cohen is a granddaughter of Ruth Crawford Seeger.

Sonya declared it would be considered nepotism if she and her brother Rufus were included on this record. I said "Well, you are my children." Photographs of Sonya, Rufus, and my wife Penny appear in the final chapter of my book.



18 OH BABE, IT AIN'T NO LIE Sung and played on guitar by Elizabeth Cotten. Recorded by Mike Seeger in 1958.

Elizabeth Cotten composed songs and guitar tunes from the time she was a child in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Her best-known composition, "Freight Train," has been performed by everyone from Nancy Whiskey to Peter, Paul & Mary. Libba, as she is called, kept her African-based ragtime guitar style to herself, until Mike and Peggy Seeger learned it from her when she was a domestic servant in their childhood home, and encouraged her to perform. Her early recordings, including "Oh Babe, It Ain't No Lie," affected guitar pickers throughout the folk revival, and Jerry Garcia became a big fan of her music, which he performed at Grateful Dead shows. Libba was left-handed and figured out how to flip the guitar over and devise her own two-finger technique of guitar picking, which nobody can duplicate precisely.

I photographed her at her home in Washington, D.C., in 1959.



19 RAMBLIN' ROUND Woody Guthrie vocal, guitar, and harmonica. Recorded by Moe Asch for Folkways in 1947.

Woody Guthrie's first recordings were songs about the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma and its effect on the land and the farmers. The environmental disaster of the dust storms set off huge migrations from the rural southwest to California.

Woody's ideas and his way of singing stood in marked contrast to the popular music heard on network radio. They carried a message of struggle, and described the plight of the little man through the voice of an individual. From the 1940s on, he gave us another way to look at the world, and inspired singers and songwriters (especially young Bob Dylan, and Jack Elliott as well as Pete Seeger) to find their own voices, and to look for truths beyond the cities.

Back in 1948 when I first heard Woody Guthrie's songs, they revealed to me a tougher world and harder way of living than the one I knew. I got to know Woody towards the end of his life, visited him at the hospital, brought him to concerts in New York, and made photographs of him. In the pictures I tried to convey his strength showing through as his disease was destroying him.

20 **LOVE MY DARLING-O** Alan Lomax, vocal and guitar. From Asch AA 2/3 vol 2., 1967.

Alan Lomax originally made a field recording for the Library of Congress of this song sung by James "Ironhead" Baker at the Sugarland Prison Farm. According to Charles Edward Smith, "It's a Negro version of a Scots ballad, 'The Wily Old Carle.' [Alan] recorded this song for Moe Asch to illustrate aspects of American tradition." The melody is the same as the Kentucky miner's union song "Which Side Are You On?"

Always an advocate for singing style in folk music, Alan Lomax emphasized the way a folk song is sung as being an essential part of the song's meaning, and he conveys the vocal decorations used by Ironhead in this performance.

Alan Lomax asked me to photograph his production "Folksong '59" concert at Carnegie Hall (see notes to Track 4). During a run-through at a rehearsal room on Second Avenue, Alan and Pete Seeger sang together as they did years earlier. Pete recalls that Alan used to sing in a very loud voice when walking with him through the streets of New York City.

For seventy years, Lomax has listened to and documented exceptional music by traditional artists, and his vision has shaped the definition of the term "folk music" that is used today.



PHOTO: ED GRAZDA

21 **BUCK CREEK GIRLS** The New Lost City Ramblers; Mike Seeger, mandolin; Tracy Schwarz, fiddle sticks; John Cohen, banjo. 1996.

In 1959 I met and made recordings of Banjo Bill Cornett in Hindman, Kentucky. I was led to him by the United Mine Workers Union, and he played many tunes for me with great energy. He died a few months later and never heard the recordings. His music was full of jagged rhythms and odd interpretations of well-known songs, along with some original compositions. His version of "Buck Creek Girls" was brief and full of complicated patterns which I've attempted to figure out over the past forty years. The New Lost City Ramblers' arrangement represents one of the ways to look at Banjo Bill Cornett's music. The old man's original recording can be heard on *Mountain Music of Kentucky* (Smithsonian Folkways 40077). I learned the impossibility of entering into his musical sense, but it allowed me to find my own from the search.



22 PALOMA BLANCA Mandolin, guitar, and flute by village band from Sacsamarca, near Huancavalica, Peru, 1964. Recorded by Penny and John Cohen.

Having traveled through the mountains of Peru in 1956 and 1957 to get an understanding of how Andean people made their weavings, I returned in 1964 to record the music of the small villages. It was usually played on saints' days or on ritual occasions.

In the public square of Sacsamarca, school kids and villagers danced the *Huayno* to the music of mandolin, guitar, and flute. Although this was only part of the local band, it was what we heard that day. *Huayno* music is like hillbilly music to the Andean people. It is used for songs (in Spanish and Quechua) and for dancing, and is heard on radio and recordings as well as in live performances in villages or in stadiums. It is heard in isolated mountain regions and in the city of Lima, where millions of Andean people have migrated. The melodies, being mostly pentatonic, reflect an Andean, Inca heritage. String instruments such as guitar and mandolin were introduced by the Spanish. Pentatonic music (five-tone scales) was not part of Spanish tradition.

We hiked up to this village at 12,000 feet carrying the Nagra tape recorder, and my pulse went up to 180 beats per minute. In Peru, I've made many photographs, produced six films and five CDs of the music.

23 KITCHEN GIRL Sweet's Mill Band (The Arkansas Shieks) with Karana Hattersley, lap dulcimer; Barbara Mendelson, hammer dulcimer: Laurie Lewis, fiddle; Kenny Hall, fiddle; Hoyle Osborn and others. Recorded and filmed at Sweet's Mill Camp, California. From the film *Musical Holdouts* by John Cohen, 1976, with Chris Strachwitz at the tape recorder.

Old-time music, folk music, bluegrass, and Irish music were all taken up by the counter-culture of the 1960s and 1970s. Along with the fun and the highs, playing this music meant paying careful attention to the traditional sources. Studying how to do it right was a lot of work. Chris Strachwitz from Arhoolie Records pointed out that the musicians put in as much time learning to play the fiddle as medical students do on their studies. Sweet's Mill was a summer gathering place for musicians from up and down the West Coast. In my film *Musical Holdouts*, it looked like a commune. Here they'd swap tunes, recharge their batteries, and dance freely. Few of them made any living from the music, but they did a lot of street busking in the cities with their instruments. Most all of them have continued with their music to this day. Laurie Lewis is a notable fiddler and songwriter who was part of this community.

I knew of this scene from my annual West Coast tours with the New Lost City Ramblers, and included it in *Musical Holdouts*. Although the film included Sea Island kids, Appalachian and bluegrass as well as cowboy and Native American music, young people who saw the film always asked how to get to Sweet's Mill. "Kitchen Girl" is one of the wonderful tunes that folklorist Alan Jabbour collected from the West Virginia fiddler Henry Reed.



sources/discography

(*** previously unissued)

1. THANK YOU, LORD Gospel Group ***

RECORDED BY JOHN COHEN IN HARLEM, NY, NOV. 1953.

2. IF I HAD MY WAY Reverend Gary Davis ***

RECORDED BY JOHN COHEN IN HARLEM, NY, DEC. 1954.

3. HAVE YOU EVER BEEN MISTREATED Yvonne Hunter ***

FROM JOHN COHEN'S 1976 FILM *MUSICAL HOLDOUTS*.

4. I CAN'T BE SATISFIED Muddy Waters

FROM *THE BEST OF MUDDY WATERS* (1957) CHESS RECORDS 1427.

COURTESY OF MCA RECORDS UNDER LICENSE FROM UNIVERSAL MUSIC ENTERPRISES.

5. ROLL ON JOHN Bob Dylan ***

FROM CYNTHIA GOODING'S RADIO PROGRAM ON WBAI IN NEW YORK, NY, 1962.

BOB DYLAN APPEARS COURTESY OF COLUMBIA RECORDS.

6. MAN OF CONSTANT SORROW Roscoe Holcomb

RECORDED BY JOHN COHEN IN NEW YORK CITY, 1961. FROM *THE MUSIC OF ROSCOE HOLCOMB AND WADE WARD* (1962) FOLKWAYS 2363.

7. HICKS FAREWELL Doc Watson and Gaither Carlton

RECORDED BY PETER SIEGEL IN 1961. FROM *FRIENDS OF OLD TIME MUSIC* (1964) FOLKWAYS 2390.

8. COME ALL YOU TENDERHEARTED Carter

Stanley RECORDED AT THE FIRST UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO FOLK FESTIVAL, 1961. FROM *FRIENDS OF OLD TIME MUSIC* (1964) FOLKWAYS 2390.

9. YOUNG BUT GROWING Mary Townsley ***

RECORDED BY JOHN COHEN IN 1981 FOR HIS FILM *GYPSIES SING LONG BALLADS*.

10. TB BLUES Hazel Dickens and Alice Gerard

RECORDED BY PETER SIEGEL IN 1967. FROM *PIONEERING WOMEN*

OF *BLUEGRASS* (1996) SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS 40065.

(ORIGINALLY ISSUED AS *WON'T YOU COME AND SING FOR ME?* (1973) FOLKWAYS 31034).

11. JOHN HENRY Bill Monroe and His Blue Grass Boys

*** FROM JOHN COHEN'S 1962 FILM *THE HIGH LONESOME SOUND*.

COURTESY OF MCA RECORDS UNDER LICENSE FROM UNIVERSAL MUSIC ENTERPRISES.

12. SALLY GOODIN Eck Robertson ***

RECORDED BY JOHN COHEN AND TRACY SCHWARZ IN AMARILLO, TEXAS, IN 1963.

13. TWIN SISTERS Sidna Myers

RECORDED BY JOHN AND PENNY COHEN IN HILLSVILLE, VIRGINIA, IN 1965. FROM *HIGH ATMOSPHERE* (1974) ROUNDER 0028.

14. SALLY JOHNSON Charlie Higgins, Wade Ward, and Dale Poe ***

RECORDED BY MIKE SEEGER AND JOHN COHEN IN 1961.

15. PULL MY DAISY David Amram Quartet

FROM THE 1959 FILM *PULL MY DAISY* BY ROBERT FRANK AND ALFRED LESLIE. COURTESY OF DAVID AMRAM.

16. SO LONG: GO Rufus Cohen and Wade Patterson ***

RECORDED IN ALBUQUERQUE, NM, 2001. COURTESY OF RUFUS COHEN.

17. WHO'LL WATER MY FLOWERS? Sonya Cohen

and Dick Connette RECORDED BY SCOTT LEHRER. FROM *LAST FOREVER* (1996) NONESUCH 79447-2. PRODUCED UNDER LICENSE FROM NONESUCH RECORDS.

18. OH BABE, IT AIN'T NO LIE Elizabeth Cotten

RECORDED BY MIKE SEEGER IN 1958. FROM *FREIGHT TRAIN AND OTHER NORTH CAROLINA FOLK SONGS AND TUNES* SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS CD 40009. (ORIGINALLY ISSUED IN 1958 AS FOLKWAYS 3526).

19. RAMBLIN' ROUND Woody Guthrie

RECORDED BY MOE ASCH FOR FOLKWAYS IN 1947. FROM *THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND* SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS CD 40100.

(ORIGINALLY ISSUED IN 1962 AS FOLKWAYS 31001).

20. LOVE MY DARLING-O Alan Lomax

FROM *ASCH RECORDINGS/1939-1945 VOLUME 2* (1967) FOLKWAYS AA 2/3 LP

21. BUCK CREEK GIRLS New Lost City Ramblers

FROM *THERE AIN'T NO WAY OUT* (1996) SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS CD 40098

22. PALOMA BLANCA Huayno stringband,

Sacsamarca RECORDED IN 1964 BY JOHN AND PENNY COHEN.

FROM *MOUNTAIN MUSIC OF PERU VOL 1* (1991) SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS CD 40020. (ORIGINALLY ISSUED IN 1966 AS FOLKWAYS 4539).

23. KITCHEN GIRL Sweet's Mill Band (The Arkansas

Shieks) *** RECORDED AT SWEET'S MILL CAMP, CALIFORNIA BY CHRIS STACHWITZ AND JOHN COHEN. FROM JOHN COHEN'S 1976 FILM *MUSICAL HOLDOUTS*.

(TRACKS 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 12, 14, AND 23 COURTESY OF JOHN COHEN)

photography

John Cohen's photographs are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Neuberger Museum. He is represented by Deborah Bell, N.Y.

His photographs are published in *There Is No Eye—John Cohen Photographs* (Powerhouse, 2001) as well as in *Vanity Fair*, *Aperture* magazine, the *New York Times*, *Natural History*, *Rolling Stone*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Sing Out!*, and *The Old Time Herald*, as well as on record covers, and in the forthcoming book, *Hidden Threads of Peru: Qero Textiles* (Merrell, 2002). He was professor of Visual Arts (photography) at Purchase College, SUNY, from 1972 to 1997.

films

John Cohen's films include *The High Lonesome Sound*, *The End of an Old Song*, *Sara & Maybelle (The Carter Family)*, *Fifty Miles from Times Square*, *Musical Holdouts*, *Q'eros: the Shape of Survival*, *Peruvian Weaving: a Continuous Warp*, *Post Industrial Fiddle*, *Gypsies Sing Long Ballads*, *The Ballad and the Source*, *Mountain Music of Peru*, *Choqela: Only Interpretation*, *Pericles In America*, *Carnival In Q'eros*, and *Dancing with the Incas*. They are distributed by the Media Extension Service, University of California at Berkeley, and on home video by Shanachie Video and Mystic Fire Video.

recordings

John Cohen has produced and annotated field recordings of traditional music including: *Mountain Music of Kentucky* (SFW CD 40077),

The High Lonesome Sound of Roscoe Holcomb (SFW CD 40079), *High Atmosphere* (Rounder CD 0028), *The Music of Roscoe Holcomb & Wade Ward* (Folkways 2363), *Old Love Songs and Ballads* (Folkways 2309), *Close to Home* Roscoe Holcomb (Folkways 2374), *Dillard Chandler* (Folkways 2418), *When Kentucky Had No Union Men* (Folkways 2343), *Mountain Music of Peru, Vols 1 and 2* (SFW CD 40020 & SFW CD 40406), *Huayno Music of Peru 1 and 2* (Arhoolie CD 320 & 338), *From the Mountains to the Sea: Peruvian Music* (Arhoolie CD 400).

He has written liner notes for *Shady Grove: music of Jerry Garcia and David Grisman* (Acoustic Disc ACD 21), and for *Hobart Smith and Texas Gladden* for the Alan Lomax portrait series on Rounder (11661-1799-2). Along with Ralph Rinzler and Israel Young, he formed the Friends of Old Time Music.

music He is a founding member of the New Lost City Ramblers, having recorded many LPs and CDs with them (which received two Grammy nominations) as well as of The Putnam String County Band (Rounder), and has his own record *Stories the Crow Told Me*, on Acoustic Disc ACD 34. He co-produced *The Old Time String Band Project* and *The Old Time Banjo Project* for Elektra.

credits

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LEFT TO RIGHT: LARRY RIVERS, JACK KEROUAC, DAVID AMRAM, ALLEN GINSBERG, GREGORY CORSO (HAT), BEAT GENERATION, 1959.



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