



malvina REYNOLDS

EAR TO THE GROUND

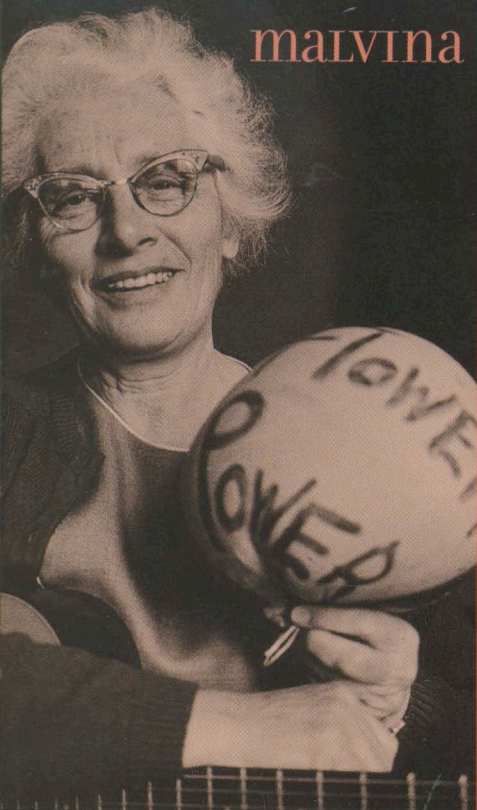
Smithsonian Folkways Recordings



malvina REYNOLDS

EAR TO THE GROUND

Topical Songs 1960–1978



Malvina Reynolds, the well-known songwriter and activist for social justice and the environment, performs some of her most famous songs in this compilation of studio and live recordings from the 1960s and 1970s. Reflecting the cultural and political turmoil of the day, her powerful, sometimes somber, sometimes lighthearted songs address issues still pertinent today: environmental deterioration, women's rights, workers' rights, social justice, and the homogenization of culture. Extensive notes written by musician friend Rosalie Sorrels. Instrumentation ranges from acoustic guitar to richly orchestrated pieces with bass, drums, piano, harmonica, organ, cello, violin, steel guitar, and harp. 62 minutes, 32-page booklet.

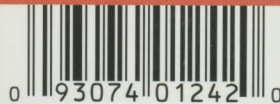
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|--|---|
| 1. It Isn't Nice 2:19 | 12. The Little Mouse 3:14 |
| 2. On the Rim of the World 3:20 | 13. Rosie Jane 3:09 |
| 3. What Have They Done to the Rain? 2:14 | 14. The Money Crop 1:27 |
| 4. Look on the Sunny Side 2:45 | 15. Magic Penny 1:57 |
| 5. The World's Gone Beautiful 2:51 | 16. The Albatross 3:42 |
| 6. Spoken Introduction to Little Boxes 0:53 | 17. Skagit Valley Forever 3:26 |
| 7. Little Boxes 2:07 | 18. Spoken Introduction to The Judge Said 0:57 |
| 8. Little Red Hen 2:08 | 19. The Judge Said 2:42 |
| 9. Dialectic 1:32 | 20. Mario's Duck 5:43 |
| 10. Bury Me in My Overalls 2:49 | 21. Carolina Cotton Mill Song 3:38 |
| 11. There's a Bottom Below 3:01 | 22. Boraxo 2:46 |
| | 23. This World 2:01 |



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage | 955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 7300 | Smithsonian Institution |
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LC 9628



A black and white photograph of Malvina Reynolds. She is an older woman with short, curly, light-colored hair. She is looking upwards and to the right, with her mouth slightly open as if singing. She is wearing a dark, long-sleeved top. She is holding an acoustic guitar, with her left hand on the fretboard and her right hand near the soundhole. The guitar has a light-colored body and a dark neck. The background is dark and out of focus.

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(Words and music by Malvina Reynolds/
MCA Northern Music Corp., ASCAP)
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(Words and music by Malvina Reynolds/Schroder
Music Co., ASCAP, unless otherwise indicated)
- Lyrics available at www.sisterschoice.com



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CURATOR'S INTRODUCTION

Songwriters have been writing barbed, angry, or witty songs about current events for centuries. Almost every social movement has encouraged its members through its own songs—the American Revolution, political campaigns, union organizing, proponents of women's vote and feminism, the Civil Rights movement, pro-war and anti-war movements, to name just a few. Activists and poets have repeatedly looked at the events around them and been inspired to create new songs. Over time, many of those once-new songs become part of the common repertoire, and are thought of as anonymous "folk songs."

One of the great songwriters of the 20th century was without a doubt Malvina Reynolds (1900–1978). Inspired by the daily papers, stories she heard from friends, and her own involvement in the social issues of her times, her best songs will endure because they touch on broadly experienced emotions or enduring problems. In this CD she presents her own songs in her own voice, on recordings from the 1960s and 1970s.

Born Malvina Milder, of Jewish socialist immigrant parents in San Francisco, Malvina was refused her diploma by Lowell High School because her parents were opposed to U.S. participation in World War I. She entered the University of California at Berkeley anyway, and received her B.A. and M.A. in English. She married William (Bud) Reynolds, a carpenter and labor organizer, in 1935. They had one child, Nancy, that year. Malvina completed her dissertation and was awarded her Ph.D. in 1936. It was the middle of the Depression, and Malvina was Jewish, socialist, and a woman. She could not find a job teaching at the college level. She became a social worker and a columnist

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for the *People's World* and, at the start of World War II, an assembly-line worker at a bomb factory. When her father died, she and her husband took over her parents' naval tailor shop in Long Beach, California. There, in the late 1940s, she met Earl Robinson, Pete Seeger, and other singers and songwriters and began writing songs.

She returned to Berkeley and to the University of California, where she took music theory classes in the early 1950s. In contrast to such influential songwriters as labor organizer Joe Hill and the prolific Woody Guthrie, Malvina usually wrote her own melodies as well as verses. She wrote songs for many causes, and composed for children as well. She recorded many of them on LPs produced by Folkways Records, Columbia Records, and especially on her own label, Cassandra Records (see discography). She contributed dozens of songs to *Broadside Magazine*, *Sing Out! Magazine*, and her own *Sporadic Times*—publications that brought the songs to the attention of thousands of performers who sang them all over the world.

The period in which Malvina wrote and performed the songs on this CD was one of social, political, and cultural turmoil. Opposition to the Vietnam War was widespread, as was repression of it. Youth seeking alternative lifestyles flocked to certain neighborhoods, like Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco, or created communes in rural areas. Social groups of all kinds struggled for more power and recognition, and individuals found themselves questioning many of their assumptions about life, society, and culture. The passion and events of these times are captured in the 1990 video *Berkeley in the Sixties* by Mark Kitchell and in many biographies and memoirs. They are also

expressed in Malvina's songs. She had her "ear to the ground" (if you put your ear to the ground, you can hear things far off before they arrive) and wrote wonderful songs about what she heard, and felt, and wondered about.

Malvina is remembered for her songs, her tough mind and quick wit, and the help and inspiration she gave so many of those who were fortunate enough to meet her. One of those was Rosalie Sorrels, a songwriter in her own right, who became friends with Malvina Reynolds in the 1960s, performed with her, and cherishes both her songs and the memories of Malvina's impact on her life. She has assembled this collection from Malvina's many recordings and written the notes for it.

Anthony Seeger

Curator, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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INTRODUCTION: ROSALIE SORRELS

"Her songs sing of...who we are and what we might be: of a thousand ways to say yes."
(From Malvina Reynolds's obituary in the *Santa Cruz Independent*, 1978)

In her unfinished, unpublished autobiography, *A Spoonful of Sea Water* (largely written between 1971 and 1976), Malvina Reynolds wrote: "I never willingly look back, the past is grown into my blood and bones, my molecules and my genes. Everything I do is habit; every word I say is a heritage. But I do not look back deliberately into my own life. I only write about what I remember, to set the record straight in case there should be a record that involves me."

She tells us that her parents were Jewish immigrants—her mother from Russia, her father from Hungary. Her father, who did a stint in the navy, became a naval tailor. She was born in San Francisco in August of 1900, but as long as I knew her she lived in Berkeley, California, on Parker Street. She called herself "the Muse of Parker Street." Some people called her "the Saint of Parker Street," and some people called her dirty names. Her parents were socialists, and she said that always made sense to her. She had a very good education which included music. Her parents gave her violin lessons, and she said whenever she could get to a piano she would fool around with it. She went to the University of California at Berkeley and graduated with "every possible degree" including a Ph.D. in English Language and Literature, but could not find employment as a teacher. She worked for a while as a milliner (said she hated it) as well as a factory worker, steelworker, tailor, and newspaper editor.

She says in Susan Wengraf's beautiful film on her, *Love It Like a Fool*, "When folk music

came to the front, I knew that was where I belonged. Here was my head full of poetry and music and everything I thought came together in song. And because my thinking was political and social, many of my songs had that character."

According to Pete Seeger, who met her then, Malvina began actively writing songs in 1946. She attended meetings of the Los Angeles branch of the politically active People's Songs Organization and became a songwriter. She was always very shy (though you might not know it seeing her on stage), and it must have been excruciatingly painful for her to put herself out in front with her first efforts. But she never gave up, and she became one of the best songwriters of her time. Her songs were recorded by Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Harry Belafonte, the Limelites, Judy Collins, Marianne Faithful, The Searchers, and many others not so well known, but just as important to her. Victor Jara wrote a Spanish version of "Little Boxes," and it has also been sung in Russian, in French, and in Japanese. Some of her songs, like "Magic Penny," are so well known most people forget that anyone wrote them at all and think they just grew like mushrooms.

The influences on her music were almost too various to describe—Jewish, Irish, and Russian, among others. She listened to everything, including folk music from all folks, classical music, and theater tunes. Eisler and Brecht influenced her writing, and some of her songs seem like complete plays to me. She also liked the popular music of her times.

Her songs came from her ideas. She used tune models that fit the time and place she was describing and drew them from a remarkable pool of memory. She describes her technique best in her own words:

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What should a song be, then, if it can't say anything? Well, it can be pure music, that's great, we like that: you know, like jazz, symphonic music... music. But when I'm talking, I'm singing. My voice is singing. You can make a melody line of it. It has rhythm. And I feel that this is a part of music. That's why music of different peoples has a different characteristic sound, so that even without words you can tell it's Greek, it's Italian, it's Oriental. It's following the melody line of the spoken word.

So what should you say? You should say something amusing and entertaining. That would be, you know, acceptable. But people who think are not even amused by something that doesn't have some relevance to their lives. And the songs that I sing that are funny, and that make people laugh and entertain them, are a commentary....

Well, it [the song] is just a little lecture, but it's a song. How good it is, is a question. But it's a song. And if it's a good song, I don't care what it says. If it hits home with you and you agree with it and it belongs, it's good and belongs and I say it's good enough.... It's part of what we have and what we can use. (Excerpted from a University of Michigan Folklore Society Workshop at The Ark in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Nov. 13, 1971. Transcribed by Nancy Katz. Published by Schroder Music as a pamphlet called *When I'm Talking, I'm Singing*.)

In *A Spoonful of Sea Water* Malvina wrote:

Every month or so I have a spell of listening, with the little radio next to my ear when I lie down for a nap. The new songs knock me out. They are on a new high level every time. I get to feel very modest about mine and try to do better.

But mine have their place. My experience of the world is in them, and there is an audience that seems to accept them with all their heart. I string them like beads on what I have to say, and they make a pretty thing, a thing with meaning. As much meaning as possible in these muddy times.

I felt I was living "on the rim of the world" when I started living in the San Francisco Bay Area in 1967—almost out on the street with four of my five children in tow, only able to survive because of the generous nature of the time and the kindness of strangers. I was lucky in my choice of friends, too. There were a lot of us cut loose from our moorings in the 1960s and the 1970s, trying to reinvent our lives and build a new community to replace the one that was falling apart beneath our feet. Not many people understood what was happening to our lives and our world, but I know Malvina Reynolds understood, and I think she knew what to do.

When I was troubled and desperate, I often went to Malvina instead of my mother, who was always so distressed by my circumstances that she would just fall apart right along with me. Malvina, on the other hand, would look around and find someone who was having a much harder time than I was and put me to work helping. Pretty soon I would see that my problems were not that hard and not that interesting, and I'd find myself involved in something really useful that would fill me with energy and hope.

The songs on this CD are from the time I was closest to Malvina, from 1964 to 1978. They have largely been taken from recordings on her own Cassandra Records label, released between 1970 and 1980. I have added two pieces of spoken word (tracks 6 and 18), taken from the soundtrack of Susan Wengraf's film, to give Malvina a chance to speak for herself.

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Julie Thompson produced some of Malvina's best albums on Cassandra Records (*Malvina, Held Over* CR 3688, 1975; *Magical Songs* CR 040, 1978; and she also assembled the posthumous *Mama Lion* CR 050, 1980), from which many of these songs have been selected. Julie knew that the producer's job is to remove the barriers and stumbling blocks and let the artist shine through. Malvina sounds most like herself on the recordings Julie produced. In 1980 Julie wrote:

Malvina wanted to make another album. *Purely Political*, she wanted to call it. Twelve songs that might shake some cages, vent some rage, or make you ache a little...an album that could be used by the spirited folks who knew how to put a song to work like a plough or a saw. [When Malvina died] I mourned her loss but especially the loss of those few precious creative hours we would have found working together on our third album.... [Malvina's songs on *Mama Lion*, assembled after her death] are the kind of pull-no-punches, accept-no-substitute M. Reynolds' work we've heard since she started writing. Feisty, compassionate and strong...the sweetness always mixed with the bitters. Songs to get your ass back into the street. Or whatever your political equivalent may be. Organize!

(Excerpt from the liner notes to *Mama Lion*, 1980)

ABOUT THE SONGS

1. **It Isn't Nice**

From *Malvina Reynolds* Cassandra CFS 5100.

The 1960s were a time of mass demonstrations against the Vietnam War, sit-ins, the occupation of university buildings, and the courageous marches for civil rights in the South. Government officials, many representatives of the press, and many businesses denounced these generally peaceful but certainly obstructive activities as "undignified" and "not nice." This song reflects the militant feelings of the times. The song has a more general application than the 1960s, however, as union organizing and civil disobedience continue to be employed to change aspects of social life. As many movements have discovered, part of the definition of "niceness" is that it doesn't upset the way things are currently done.

Malvina didn't just look in the newspaper for an idea and write a song. She was on the line...in the thick of it...shoulder to shoulder with the people she was writing about. I know this because sometimes I went with her. She knew that "nice" doesn't always get it. This one was for everybody on the line for civil rights.

2. **On the Rim of the World**

From *Malvina, Held Over* Cassandra CFS 3688.

On Haight Street at Ashbury, down the street at the I Thou, or at the Straight Theater, or in the Panhandle and all over the Golden Gate Park, at the Fillmore and the Avalon, you would see the young women "on the rim of the world"—on the very edge—in the

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1960s. Bright and beautiful, like exotic butterflies, always at the center of the strobe lights, they were called "Hashbury Queens." Their theme song was "I Am Woman, W-O-M-A-N." They took care of everything and everyone, aflame with energy and hope. Flashing colors, rock and roll (and some chemicals) made them incandescent—reeling and dancing, fearless. Fearless? This song comes uncomfortably close to my own situation in those years, and I was scared to death.

Where have all those young women gone? Did they just flame out? Are they bag ladies now? Barflies? Attendants in bus station washrooms? Or maybe wives and mothers, librarians, computer programmers, teachers, writers, editors, actresses, folk singers? Maybe they're you and me...and our daughters. And so on down the line. Maybe some others are songwriters as well.

3. **What Have They Done to the Rain?**

From *Malvina, Held Over* Cassandra CFS 3688.

Malvina's songs about environmental issues are among her best known. This one has been sung by many artists and had a profound effect on me. I believe it saved my life. Malvina was the first person to make me aware of what we were doing to our environment with our nuclear experiments and testing, and what chances we were taking with our water and the air we breathe. She was the first person to tell me about the danger of breast cancer and how important self-examinations are. I remembered her advice, and almost 20 years after her death, I was still following it religiously when I found the lump that could have finished me off...and I *did* have a mammogram every year after I was 50. I could almost feel her hand on my shoulder. Her songs reached far beyond her circle of friends and probably influenced the growth of the environmental movements.

4. Look on the Sunny Side

From *Malvina, Held Over* Cassandra CFS 3688.

Here is a song attacking some bad habits (sugar, driving, and men) with a healthy attitude. Robert Shelton, a critic who mostly wrote about rock and roll and the pop world, once wrote: "Clearly, Malvina is not just another protest singer. A little too much wit, too much urbanity and maturity irradiate her lyrics. Too much whimsy and humanity poke through to make her just a protest singer. Too much love and affirmation temper her righteous indignation to wrap her in the protest bag alone. She has a world view that her songs transmit with polychrome fidelity, the vibrancy and color of reality." (From liner notes to *Malvina Reynolds Sings the Truth*)

5. The World's Gone Beautiful

From *Malvina Reynolds* Cassandra CFS 5100.

1967 to 1969 was a fabulous time, even though everything was tearing apart at the seams. The young people were so awake and aware...so alive...so hopeful...and the edge they danced on was so narrow...the fall so precipitous. Malvina captures the flamboyance and the danger of this period in this song.

6. Spoken Introduction to Little Boxes

Pete Seeger and Malvina Reynolds. From Susan Wengraf's film about Malvina Reynolds, *Love It Like a Fool*, used with permission.

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7. Little Boxes

From *Malvina* Cassandra CFS 2807.

Millions of people know Malvina through this song. "Little Boxes" has gone all around the world. It has been sung in Russian, in French, in Japanese. She nailed many of us dead center with a song, and we can't resist the humor of the description, or the enduring idea of a ticky-tacky and predictable world.

Pete Seeger had this to say about the song, in addition to his comments on track 6:

Because I recorded "Little Boxes" in 1963 and it was even on the Top 40 very briefly, some people thought I had written it. But all I did was sing it like [Malvina] wrote it.

Her life should be an inspiration to many people in many places. She refused to be discouraged, and if she thought she had a song worthy of being sung somewhere, she'd get on the telephone and ask to sing. She would not be put down, even though some people called her "pushy."

I once joked that she made up a new song before breakfast every morning. She looked at me severely and said "You know it's not that easy."

(From Pete Seeger, *Where Have All the Flowers Gone*, Sing Out! Corporation, 1993, p. 107)

8. Little Red Hen

From *Malvina* Cassandra CFS 2807.

Here is a "children's" story, with a grown-up punch line that puts the whole thing in a different perspective. The Little Red Hen is also the logo for Malvina's record label,

Cassandra. Like many artists today, she found that it was more satisfying to produce her own recordings than to work with record companies who did not always appreciate what she was trying to do.

She named the label after a prophet who could see the future but was not believed. In ancient Greek tradition, the god Apollo fell in love with Cassandra and gave her the gift of prophecy.⁹ But she wouldn't have him. He couldn't take away her power, he just fixed it so no one would believe her. Cassandra warned the Trojans not to mess with Helen; she told them what would happen if they did. They didn't believe her, and Troy fell. Malvina's record label is filled with prophetic songs that people have taken far too long to believe.

9. Dialectic

From *Malvina Reynolds* Cassandra CFS 5100.

This is a song about how the wealth of the rich is made possible through the suffering of the poor. Drive up any canyon that leads to a high-class ski area and you'll see that the "little boxes" have become huge, and inhabited by a few people who "are all made out of ticky-tacky and all look just the same." And in the flood plains and the landfills the small, crowded houses or apartments of the poor stand in mute witness to the social differences that characterize life in the United States. The increasing differences between the rich and the poor marked the 20th century, and no lessening of the differences is in sight.

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10. Bury Me in My Overalls

From *Mama Lion* Cassandra CR 050.

This song was written for Malvina's husband, Bud Reynolds, the love of her life. They were partners, too. He managed her business until Ruth Pohlman, who still manages Sisters' Choice Press and Schroder Music (named after the late Charles Schultz's piano-playing character in *Peanuts*), joined in. Bud's whole life was dedicated to the working class. He was a carpenter, a labor organizer, and a fighter for the rights of us all. His daughter, Nancy Schimmel, wrote this wonderful poem for him:

My father was an optimist/he knew the revolution would come and should;/
thought he could convince anyone of that/even a Republican/and/since he
was persuasive/as well as optimistic/he sometimes could/if they were as
smart and curious/and relentless and sure of themselves/as he was.

11. There's a Bottom Below

From *Malvina* Cassandra CFS 2807.

Malvina spoke about this song.

...Now ["There's a Bottom Below"] is a sad song. It reflects some indescribably sad situations. But when you discover, as you do in a big crowd of good young people, that this is an experience that touches them so that they laugh and sing about it, [your low feeling] suddenly is lifted out of your individual scene so everyone is holding it up. And, as you see, it is carried by everybody.... It makes it possible to do something about it.

(From *When I'm Talking, I'm Singing*, p. 6)

I know that a lot of people think Malvina wrote a song every day—and if you could see the piles and files of songs and starts of songs, you'd think so, too—but I know sometimes she felt so overcome by the follies of this world, so tired of trying to get around to more than could be faced down, that she couldn't write at all. "Like walking into a stone wall," she said. She wrote about this feeling:

Too much, too much, well it's just too much for me./The good Lord must have been out of his mind/When he made the creature Man/The world was doing all right, all right/"Til the human race began.

Too much, too much, well it's just too much for me/So many things are coming at me/I don't know what to worry first/I read the papers every day/And I don't know what's the worst.

(From *When I'm Talking, I'm Singing*, p. 9)

12. The Little Mouse

From *Mama Lion* Cassandra CR 050.

This selection, taken from a concert, shows Malvina's masterful stage presence and the way she would present her songs to large audiences. Her humor, her love of poetry and song lyrics come through here, and the audience is loving it.

The song was actually inspired by the following notice in the *San Francisco Chronicle* of Wednesday, July 7, 1976:

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MOUSE HOLDS UP ALL THE BANKS

Buenos Aires (Reuters)

A mouse loose in the Central Clearing House, nibbled through a computer cable yesterday, causing a short-circuit that paralyzed check clearing operations for Buenos Aires banks and stock exchange.

The song is still relevant in the new century. Every time I heard about Y2K, I thought of the little mouse—and isn't it even funnier that the gizmo that runs the computer is called a mouse?

The song has a four-letter word in it that has taken at least one condescending AM radio announcer by surprise. Here was this white-haired woman he had patronized, talking sweetly about a song she wrote about a mouse, suddenly singing "fucked up the clearing house" on the air. But like many of her songs there is a lesson being given: if we don't like what computers (or other things) are doing to our lives, we can do something about it—in this case sue, hack, or chew the wires ourselves.

13. Rosie Jane

From *Malvina, Held Over* Cassandra CFS 3866.

This song was written in 1973 to support the Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion in the United States. There are so many women over 50 who could never talk about things they knew from personal experience, and many of them never knew—and still don't know—anyone cared about their problems, let alone wrote songs about women's health issues or issues of choice. You should see women's faces when I

sing this song and "The Judge Said."...*Lights* come on.... *Camera* memory sends the women back to the streets again and again to protest injustice.... *Action* takes place. Damn, she was good!

14. **The Money Crop**

From *Malvina*, Cassandra CFS 2807.

To me, this is one of Malvina's most powerful songs. It sounds like an old, old ballad on an old, never-changing subject. I've been told by experts, including Malvina: "If you want to find the source of the trouble, war, famine, pestilence, homelessness, sorrow and death...follow the money." The growing wealth of investors and the erosion of the minimum wage in the 1990s only make this song more contemporary than ever.

15. **Magic Penny**

From *Malvina, Held Over* Cassandra CFS 3688.

This is a wonderful, lively song that all children seem to know. Nancy Schimmel (Malvina's daughter) says it was in the Brownie Scout handbook for years. But it's much more than a children's song. I've heard it sung with grace and authority by jazz singers and country singers.

16. **The Albatross**

From *Malvina* Cassandra CFS 2807.

Malvina's songs can teach you about compassion. She wrote "The Albatross" for the recovering drug addicts at Delancey Street. Many were casualties of the war in Vietnam

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which entered into every part of our lives during that period of time. The war left so many of the men and women who fought there deep in drugs and alcohol and trying to blot out the horrors they had witnessed. Some are now well-known figures who still publicly express their thanks that someone would lend a hand and a heart to help them back away from the edge and put their lives together.

17. **Skagit Valley Forever**

From *Mama Lion* Cassandra CR 050.

This is a great example of one of her songs written in the moment. Malvina was in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, doing a radio show. Art Finley, the interviewer, told her there was a situation that needed a song for a rally for the next day. She wrote this song on the spot but had to travel on, so someone who lived there sang the song at the rally.

There are "Skagit Valleys" everywhere. The spread of outlying settlements surrounding large urban areas, and the demand for energy and water, are gobbling up farmland and finishing off natural refuges throughout the world. If something is going to be preserved to enjoy in the future, it must be fought for today.

Malvina spoke about the environment in one of her lectures.

Nobody intended that the sea should be destroyed deliberately. Nobody intended that the earth should be paved over, and that the air should be eaten up by the airplane that carried me here. Nobody intends this. But a momentum has started. The machinery's been set up that nobody can

stop.... I think nobody can stop it, but I'm not sure. It may stop itself. It may choke itself. This may happen before we are destroyed. I don't know.

18. *Spoken Introduction to* **The Judge Said**

Malvina Reynolds talks about songwriting; from Susan Wengraf's film, *Love It Like a Fool*, used with permission.

19. **The Judge Said**

From *Mama Lion* Cassandra CR 050.

Malvina and I were on tour in the Midwest and arrived in Madison, Wisconsin, just as Judge Archie Simonson was saying terrible things about the rape of a 15-year-old high school girl. He was sentencing the third man accused of the rape when he ruled that the rapists were "reacting normally to prevalent sexual permissiveness and to women's provocative clothing" (in this case blue jeans, turtleneck sweater, and sneakers). Simonson went on to say: "This community is well known to be sexually permissive. Should we punish a 15- or 16-year-old boy who reacts normally to it?" He was later quoted in *Rolling Stone Magazine* as saying: "Whether we like it or not, women are sex objects."

Malvina was outraged by these words. She wrote this song immediately. She sang it all day in interviews and at our concert. Soon afterwards she went to Chicago, where Steve Goodman produced this version of it. They put a song called "Young Moon"—a mother's or father's song for a young girl—on the other side of a 45 rpm single (the popular music format of the day), inserted the recordings in an envelope with a recall petition,

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and sent it out as that month's issue of Malvina's newsletter, *Sporadic Times*. The judge was recalled. He was replaced by a woman.

Malvina, partly by her own life's experiences and partly by her acute sense of the injustices around her, was especially aware of sexism in its many forms. She wrote a number of songs championing women's rights in different circumstances.

20. **Mario's Duck**

From *Mama Lion* Cassandra CR 050.

This story about a boy and his duck was told to Malvina by a Chilean friend. Malvina spent a lot of time at La Peña in Berkeley, where there was a theater, a store (La Tienda), and a restaurant called Violetta, in honor of the Chilean singer Violetta Parra. The theater is still there. In telling the story in song Malvina created a first-class *corrido*-style ballad. Her friend Suni Paz made a Spanish version of the song.

21. **Carolina Cotton Mill Song**

From *Mama Lion* Cassandra CR 050.

Malvina had no use for "New Age" ways. People trying to usurp other people's spirituality without putting in the time and thought, trying to take on old ways by buying them in a store rather than doing the work, and the idea of improving one's image by wearing fine cotton or even denim without knowing who makes it or what goes into the making of it made her downright mad. This is a song about conditions in a cotton mill that Malvina visited when it was on strike, and the song grows out of her commitment to labor organizing and anger at the mistreatment of workers.

22. Boraxo

From *Malvina Reynolds* Cassandra CSF 5100.

This song was written when then-Governor Ronald Reagan was dealing with conflict surrounding the People's Park in 1969. Mass demonstrations to protect a small, unofficial "park" were met with military might, tear gas, intimidation, and violence. The idea for the song came from Reagan's statement that he would wash his hands with Boraxo, a brand of strong soap, to remove any blood that might be on his hands from his handling of the events in Berkeley. Here is a letter from the newsroom of KQED-TV Channel 9, in June 1969, describing the statement:

NEWSROOM / KQED-TV CHANNEL 9...23 June, 1969

Dear Malvina:

The woman who came up to me in tears at the end of the Regents' meeting is Dorothy Walker...Mrs. Robert Walker...who is a member of the Berkeley City Planning Commission. She had just spoken to the Governor [Ronald Reagan], saying, "Let the blood of the people of Berkeley be on your hands," and [said] that he replied, "Fine, I'll get some Boraxo to wash it off." It seems she didn't tell other reporters about the shocking remark. Thanks for the song and good luck with it.

Regards,

Jim Benet

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23.

This notice appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*:

San Francisco Chronicle...Wed., July 2, 1969

RALPH J. GLEASON

Malvina Reynolds made the houses of Daly City famous with her "Little Boxes." She may be about to do the same with Ronald Reagan's hands (and by implication, his moral sensibilities).

23. This World

From *Malvina* Cassandra CFS 2807.

There was a light inside Malvina, a true flame of life and a desire to take on the whole world and give back as good as she got. The title for Susan Wengraf's film about Malvina, *Love It Like a Fool*, is a line from this song:

This old world is mean and cruel/Still I love it like a fool

This world, this world, this world.

And she meant it when she said/sang to all of us: "Don't weep for me when I am gone, just keep this old world rolling on...." We'd better get busy. Malvina might come back, even though she swore she didn't believe in an afterlife. After the huge wake at the Berkeley Community Theater attended by thousands, none of whom agreed with each other about anything except that we all loved her, Petria MacDonnell went back to Malvina's house and sat in her big blue chair in the dark. "Any messages?" she asked. And after listening to the crashing silence for several minutes, Petria said, "Oh well, if you were out there, you wouldn't say anything. You wouldn't want to admit you were wrong."

BOOKS AND RECORDINGS BY MALVINA REYNOLDS

Another County Heard From Folkways Records FN 2524, 1960. Available from

Smithsonian Folkways Mail Order (1-800-410-9815) (CS, CD)

Malvina Reynolds Sings the Truth Columbia Records CS 9414, 1968. (out of print)

Malvina, Held Over Cassandra CFS 3688, 1975. (out of print)

Malvina Reynolds Cassandra CFS 5100, 1970. (out of print)

Love It Like a Fool (video by Susan Wengraf) available from Red Hen Films/
1404 LeRoy Ave./Berkeley, CA 94708.

The following are available from Sisters' Choice / 703 Gilman Street / Berkeley,

CA 94701 / (510-524-5804) / <www.sisterschoice.com>

RECORDS AND CASSETTES:

Artichokes, Griddlecakes and Other Good Things Pacific Cascade LPC 7018, 1970. (CS)

Funny Bugs, Giggieworms and Other Good Friends Pacific Cascade LPC 7025, 1972. (CS)

Malvina Cassandra CFS 2807, 1972. (LP)

Mama Lion (posthumous) Cassandra CR 050, 1980. (LP)

Malvina and Friends Sing Magical Songs (from the book *There's Music in the Air—Songs for the Middle Young*) Cassandra CR 040, 1978. (CS)

SONGBOOKS:

Malvina Reynolds Songbook (Berkeley: Schroder Music Co. revised 1984).

Tweedles and Foodles for Young Noodles: Children's Songs by Malvina Reynolds (Berkeley: Schroder Music Co., 1961).

There's Music in the Air—Songs for the Middle Young (Berkeley: Schroder Music Co., 1976).

ABOUT THE COMPILER: ROSALIE SORRELS

Rosalie Sorrels was born in Idaho. She grew up in and around Boise; her mother ran the town's book shop, and her father was a civil engineer. She became interested in folk music and began collecting and singing old songs from the area. She has compiled a book of Idaho folk traditions, and appears on 22 albums. Her first recording, *Folk Songs of Idaho and Utah*, was made for Folkways Records (F 05343). She recorded *The Long Memory* with Bruce "Utah" Philips (Red House RHR CD 83), and on her forthcoming album, *No Closing Chord* (Red House RHR CD 143), to be released in summer 2000, she performs songs by Malvina Reynolds, including several that have never been recorded before.

OTHER TOPICAL SONG COLLECTIONS ON SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS

Best of Broadside SFW CD 40130 (due in summer 2000), five-CD set of topical songs written between 1960 and 1987, most of them issued as Broadside Records on Folkways, and published in the *Broadside Magazine*. Includes performances by Phil Ochs, "Blind Boy Grunt" (Bob Dylan), Janis Ian, Malvina Reynolds, Pete Seeger, The Fugs, and many others.

Woody Guthrie, *Ballads of Sacco and Vanzetti* SFW CD 40060.

Woody Guthrie, *Struggle* SFW CD 40025.

Phil Ochs, *The Broadside Tapes 1: Broadside No. 14* SFW CD 40008.

Bernice Johnson Reagon, *Give Your Hands to Struggle* SFW CD 40049 (originally issued on Paredon Records, 1975).

Pete Seeger, *American Industrial Ballads* SFW CD 40058.

Pete Seeger, *If I Had a Hammer: Songs of Hope and Struggle* SFW CD 40096.

Pete Seeger, *Headlines and Footnotes, A Collection of Topical Songs* SFW CD 40111.

Various artists (recorded in the 1940s), *That's Why We're Marching: World War II and the American Folk Song Movement* SFW CD 40021.

Various artists, *Don't Mourn, Organize! Songs of Labor* Songwriter Joe Hill SFW CD 40026.

TOPICAL SONGS ON FOLKWAYS AND PAREDON RECORDS

Two independent record companies, Folkways and Paredon, issued what is probably the largest collection of topical songs in the English language. Every LP originally released on these labels is now available on custom order compact disc, along with the original liner notes, from Smithsonian Folkways Mail Order. The catalogue is online at <http://www.si.edu/folkways>. You can search the *World of Sound* online catalogue by artist or genre. For recordings of American topical songs of struggle and protest see <<http://www.si.edu/folkways/genrez.htm#struggle>>.

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CREDITS

ALBUM CREDITS:

Tracks 1, 5, 9, and 22 from *Malvina Reynolds* Cassandra CFS 5100: produced by Alex Hassilev; John Horton, engineer; Malvina Reynolds, vocals; Clark Maffitt, guitar; Brian Davies, guitar; Dick Rosmini, guitar; John Horton, guitar; Gene Parsons, drums and harmonica; Steve Le Fever, bass; Mike Lang, piano; Alex Hassilev, piano and organ.

Tracks 2, 3, 4, 13, and 15 from *Malvina, Held Over* Cassandra CFS 3688: produced by Julie Thompson; Jeff Koch, engineer; Malvina Reynolds, vocals; Clark Maffitt, guitar; Brian Davies, guitar; Steve Goldstein, piano; Tholow Chan, bass; Rob Moitoza, bass; Michael Botts, drums; B. Simpson, violin; Janet Bergano, cello; Richard Rosmini, steel and harp; Bobbi Thomas, vocals.

Tracks 7, 8, 11, 14, 16, and 23 from *Malvina* Cassandra CFS 2807: produced by Alex Hassilev; Dick Rosmini, associate producer; Malvina Reynolds, vocals and guitar; Clark Maffitt, guitar; Brian Davies, guitar; Dick Rosmini, guitar; Steve Le Fever, bass; Michal Botts, drums; Alex Hassilev, piano.

Tracks 10, 17, and 20 from *Mama Lion* Cassandra CR 050: Kim Kuusi, producer, recorded in Finland; Malvina Reynolds, vocals; Antero Jakoila, guitar; Nono Söderberg, guitar; Ilkka Willman, bass; Ronnie Österberg, drums; Kim Kuusi, harmonica.

Tracks 12 and 21 from *Mama Lion* Cassandra CR 050: Recorded live at Bread & Roses Festival, 1977; Malvina Reynolds, vocals; Julie Thompson, guitar and background vocals.

Track 19 from *Mama Lion* Cassandra CR 050: Steve Goodman, producer; Malvina Reynolds, vocals; Steve Goodman, guitar, 12-string guitar; Howard Levy, piano, harmonica, Arp strings; Sidney Sims, Fender bass; Angie Varias, drums; Bob Hoban, violin; Jethro Burns, mandolin; chorus: Katherine Barber, Sally Fingerett, Lee Hartz, Nancy Schimmel, Amanda Tucker.

Compiled and annotated by Rosalie Sorrels

Spoken word selections from *Love It Like a Fool* courtesy of Susan Wengraf

Photos by: Alejandro Stuart, Courtesy of Schroder Music (cover and booklet back cover); Diana Davies (back and inside panels); Eunice Militante (booklet inside cover)

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Additional Smithsonian Folkways staff: Heather Berthold, financial officer; Lee Michael Demsey, fulfillment; Kevin Doran, licensing; Brenda Dunlap, marketing director; Scott Finholm, audio assistant; Sharleen Kavetski, mail order accounts manager; Matt Levine, fulfillment; Helen Lindsay, customer service; Michael Maloney, product manager; Nakieda Moore, fulfillment; Jeff Place, archivist; Ronnie Simpkins, audio specialist; John Smith, marketing assistant; Stephanie Smith, assistant archivist.

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ABOUT SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

Folkways Records was founded by Moses Asch in 1948 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 Moses Asch estate in 1987 to ensure that the sounds and genius of the artists would be preserved for future generations. All Folkways recordings are available on high-quality audio cassettes or by special order on CD. Each recording is packed in a special box along with the original LP liner notes.

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings was formed to continue the Folkways tradition of releasing significant recordings with high-quality documentation. It produces new titles, reissues of historic recordings from Folkways and other record labels, and in collaboration with other companies also produces instructional videotapes and recordings to accompany published books and other educational projects.

The Smithsonian Folkways, Folkways, Cook, Paredon, Monitor, Fast Folk, and Dyer-Bennet record labels are administered by the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. They are one of the means through which the Center supports the work of traditional artists and expresses its commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding.

You can find Smithsonian Folkways Recordings at your local record store. Smithsonian Folkways, Folkways, Cook, Paredon, Fast Folk, Monitor, and Dyer-Bennet recordings are all available through:

Smithsonian Folkways Mail Order

955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 7300,

Washington, DC 20560-0953

phone (202) 287-7298

fax (202) 287-7299

orders only 1 (800) 410-9815

(Discover, MasterCard, Visa, and American Express accepted)

For further information about all the labels distributed through the Center, please consult our Internet site (www.si.edu/folkways), which includes information about recent releases, our catalogue, and a database of the approximately 35,000 tracks from the more than 2,300 available recordings (click on *database search*).

Or request a printed catalogue by writing to the address above, use our catalogue request phone, (202) 287-3262, or e-mail folkways@aol.com