Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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BACK ROADS TO COLD MOUNTAIN

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1860s Tintype with image reversal

BACK ROADS TO COLD MOUNTAIN

1. **FIELD HOLLER*** *1:06* T. J. CHESSER
2. **I WISH MY BABY WAS BORN** *1:02* DILLARD CHANDLER
3. **LOOK DOWN THAT LONESOME ROAD*** *2:22* BILL CORNETT
4. **MORNING SUN** *1:56* (S. M. DENSON) SACRED HARP SINGERS, STEWART'S CHAPEL, HOUSTON, MS
5. **CAMP CHASE** *2:53* FRENCH CARPENTER
6. **JOHN BROWN'S DREAM** *2:38* DACOSTA WOLTZ'S SOUTHERN BROADCASTERS
7. **BRIGHT SUNNY SOUTH** *3:37* (LEE HUNSUCKER) DOCK BOGGS
8. **THE BATTLE OF STONE RIVER** *4:06* OSCAR PARKS
9. **SWEET GLORIES RUSH UPON MY SIGHT** *4:36* OLD REGULAR BAPTISTS, DEFEATED CREEK CHURCH, LINEFORK, KY
10. **ROUSTABOUT** *1:22* DINK ROBERTS
11. **FOX RACE*** *1:18* JOE PATTERSON
12. **JIM AND JOHN*** *2:06* ED, LONNIE, AND G.D. YOUNG
13. **THE DAY IS PAST AND GONE** *1:54* (JOHN LELAND) DOROTHY MELTON
14. **OMIE WISE** *4:32* ROSCOE HOLCOMB
15. **THE SILK MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER** *1:56* DELLIE NORTON
16. **HICKS FAREWELL** *3:49* DILLARD CHANDLER
17. **THREE LITTLE BABES** *2:15* (ARR. TEXAS GLADDEN/GLOBAL JUKEBOX PUB., BMI) TEXAS GLADDEN
18. **WAYFARING STRANGER** *4:29* BILL MONROE
19. **RANK STRANGER** *3:08* (ALBERT E. BRUMLEY/BRIDGE BUILDING MUSIC INC., BMI) THE STANLEY BROTHERS
20. **CHRISTMAS TIME WILL SOON BE OVER** *2:50* FIDDLIN' JOHN CARSON
21. **AND I AM BORN TO DIE** *3:35* DOC WATSON AND GAITHER CARLTON
22. **PULLIN' THE SKIFF** *1:06* ORA DELL GRAHAM
23. **PUMPKIN PIE** *2:50* JOE AND ODELL THOMPSON
24. **GIVE THE FIDDLER A DRAM** *2:11* JAMES CRASE
25. **ANGEL BAND*** *3:28* E. C. AND ORNA BALL
26. **THE OLD MAN BELOW** *1:32* GAITHER CARLTON
27. **WHEN SORROWS ENCOMPASS ME 'ROUND** *4:11* TOMMY JARRELL AND FRED COCKERHAM

** denotes previously unreleased track*

COMMENTS FROM CHARLES FRAZIER

AUGUST 2004

Years ago, just after the dawn of the CD age, I used to make an annual pilgrimage to Floyd, Virginia, where I would spend an hour or so in the basement of County Sales going through the bins of old-time and bluegrass records. Back then, it seemed to me that the old music was not likely to survive the new technology. The rural Southern Appalachian culture out of which the music grew was nearly gone, and I suspected that the physical objects carrying the music would also become increasingly antique and rare. So I would buy as many records as I could afford, then have lunch at the diner up the street and drive home. It was an all-day outing.

Now, the stacks of old-time CDs scattered across my worktable are proof that I was wrong. The music has probably never been more widely available, in both digital reissues of old 78s and LPs, and new music by young players carrying the tradition into the future.

Particularly when I'm writing, I most often find myself shuffling through my stacks for disks of non-commercial musicians—in particular those voices that would have disappeared forever had they not been preserved by the field recordings of Alan Lomax, Ralph Rinzler, Mike Seeger, John Cohen, and others. Their work has been an important act of cultural preservation. When I have needed to put myself in contact with the lost world of the mountain South, this music has taken me as close as I'll ever get.

A few personal notes on some of the tracks:

"Morning Sun" is a fine example of sacred harp singing, but no recording can give more than a suggestion of the sonic power generated by a full congregation of shape note singers at the top of their voices in the acoustic of a small country chapel. The first time I heard the real thing, fifteen or twenty years ago, I thought the roof was going to lift off and sail away.

Oscar Parks's comments at the end of "The Battle of Stone River" are a reminder of the strength and vividness of the old American language, sadly almost gone, replaced with bland corporate monkey talk.

Narrative songs like "Omie Wise," "The Silk Merchant's Daughter," "Hicks Farewell," and particularly Gaither Carlton's surreal "The Old Man Below" have been worth more to me in understanding narrative technique—particularly tone and voice—than a semester in an MFA writing program.

Bill Monroe's version of "Wayfaring Stranger" puts all others in the shade. My parents saw him many times at the Ryman in the late 1940s. I recently asked my mother who she particularly liked to see back then, and she said, "Hank Williams was good." I saw Monroe play only once near the end of his life, and he still danced till his hat fell off.

One day a dozen years ago or more, in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, I sat with a small group of people and watched Ralph Rinzler interview Joe and Odell Thompson. Bright lights, cameras, and microphones bristled all around the three seated men. The Thompsons—Odell on banjo and Joe on fiddle—played a song that they said had come down through their family from a couple of centuries ago, and they swore they had not added anything or taken anything away. I don't remember the song, but like all their work it was driving and hypnotic. When it was over, Rinzler, then Assistant Secretary for Public Service at the Smithsonian Institution, asked how the fiddle was tuned for that particular song. Joe, completely deadpan, gestured up the neck of his instrument and said, "You twist these little pegs here."

My wife's grandmother—a wonderful woman whose ride down the wide banister of the North Carolina Governor's Mansion at the end of a party in the 1920s (astraddle, not sidesaddle, she said) will have to serve here as the briefest suggestion of her bright life—chose "Angel Band" to be sung at her funeral. The choir of a suburban church fought a losing battle with the unfamiliar lyric and rhythms. Nevertheless, though I've known "Angel Band" as long as I can remember, it was like I had never heard it before. "Bear me away on your snowy wings" meant something real, and dark, and hopeful.

To my mind, Tommy Jarrell's singing and playing on "When Sorrows Encompass Me 'Round" constitute one of the most powerful expressions of despair I know of in any genre.

INTRODUCTION: JOHN COHEN

COLD MOUNTAIN MUSIC REINTRODUCES AMERICA TO ITS FORGOTTEN PAST, AND OFFERS SOME WONDERFUL OLD SOUNDS THAT WE DIDN'T KNOW WE HAD.

Back Roads to Cold Mountain provides a documentary link to the Civil War period, through traditional vocal and instrumental styles of western North Carolina and the Appalachian South. Performed by people who learned it directly from their ancestors, this music from the wilderness frontier was captured on field recordings and old phonograph records. There is a continuity between the 1860s and these recordings: people remembered how the songs and styles sounded, and passed them on. It was such music that provided the setting for the novel *Cold Mountain*. This CD presents the sources for music heard in the film as well as recordings that inspired the author of the novel and the director of the film.

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In Charles Frazier's novel (and the film) *Cold Mountain*, a wounded Civil War soldier called Inman leaves his hospital bed and begins his long journey back to the mountains, to his home, and his love. He must travel the back roads and trails through woods and rivers, passing the far side of farms and settlements. He is considered a deserter from the Confederate army and if caught would be arrested, jailed, or killed by the "home guard" who patrol the countryside.

Back Roads to Cold Mountain portrays the kind of music Inman would have heard on such a journey through North Carolina, a sound-landscape of rural American music in the 1860s. In this setting, far from urban centers, people made their own music and told their own stories. The long ballads, long church songs, and long dances shaped the time and reflect a slower pace of life. In the wilderness, easily carried instruments such as the banjo and fiddle accompanied dances and sacred songs. Unaccompanied ballads were the narratives people listened to. Home-made music nourished the spirit and served as entertainment.

In selecting music for this record, sentimental songs from the Civil War were omitted along with the piano and pump organ music played in parlors where Steven Foster's music was popular. Patriotic music and military marches played on brass instruments and flutes and drum have been left out, along with the music of minstrel shows. The Civil War is remembered for its stereotypes, prejudices, and the patriotic sentiments that they engendered. This legacy is not celebrated in the novel or in the film, which are more about the horror of war, the hardships of life, and the treachery of self-appointed home guards. In keeping with the novel, these recordings depict the actuality of common people living their lives in the near-wilderness.

Faithfulness to traditional styles was a decisive factor in determining the selections for this project, and so raw and authentic sounds were favored, along with remnants of African-American music from the same era. These are recorded performances by people who had learned tunes and songs from parents or grandparents who were alive during the Civil War. Although no sound recording devices existed in the 1860s, the styles of singing and playing music persisted and were passed on within families.

The mountain people heard on this collection are largely non-professional musicians. They are full-blown characters, descendants of 19th-century frontier families. Dellie Norton not only sang—she made and consumed great cordial from the cherries around her house. Dillard Chandler had a solitary log cabin way off in the woods; Gaither Carlton had a fifteen-minute radio show on Sundays in Boone, North Carolina, where he would perform unaccompanied hymns on the fiddle. Tommy Jarrell ran a road grader and became the hero-guru for many old-time musicians from the cities who

would camp out at his home for days. Roscoe Holcomb was a coal miner and construction worker who lived at the far end of a Kentucky holler; Dock Boggs also was a miner. The congregation of Sacred Harp Singers were farm people from Mississippi, and Banjo Bill Cornett was a state legislator. Doc Watson, blind from childhood, made his living playing music in local bars around Johnson City before he became a professional.

One thing all these people had in common was the wish that their old music should not die out, and they all found ways to pass it on to the next generations.

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BACK ROADS TO COLD MOUNTAIN: INSPIRATIONS

Before starting to write his novel *Cold Mountain* in the winter of 1998, author Charles Frazier listened to music that guided him and shaped the characters in the book. From murder ballads he developed ideas about storytelling, and from the Stanley Brothers' "Rank Stranger" he heard the inner thoughts of a man who returns home after many years away. In the novel, the fiddler Stobrod is presented as a man who would rather "dance all night with a bottle in [his] hand"—a line from the song "Give the Fiddler a Dram." Gaither Carlton's "The Old Man Below" gave Frazier a vivid description of backwoods living. A phrase from a Bill Monroe song, "come back to me is my request" ("Sweetheart of Mine, Don't You Hear Me Calling"), became a central element in the love story that drives the novel. Frazier listened to field recordings of voices from long ago: fiddlers, banjo players, and ballad singers. He also heard African Americans Joe and Odell Thompson play banjo and fiddle in person. Frazier says they are the only old, traditional musicians he experienced in person. They all conveyed the feelings and musical styles of backwoods North Carolina in the 1860s. Frazier himself is from a family who came from the mountains of western North Carolina.

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The mountains had been settled largely during the 1840s, and the prevalent music in this environment was old love songs, murder ballads, and church music. Fiddle and banjo were the instruments played for dances and song accompaniment. Jew's harps and

dulcimers were also heard then. Mandolins, guitars, autoharps, and mouth harp came later. Guitar, blues, ragtime, Tin Pan Alley compositions, and jazz were not part of the Appalachian mountain tradition in the 1860s, although a few photographs from the war show soldiers with flutes, drums, triangles, bones, (and an uncharacteristic guitar) along with fiddle and banjo.

A few songs on this CD portray the Civil War in the language of the day. These are not historical ballads, but actual descriptions of what went on. Oscar Parks sings "The Battle of Stone River" in an impassioned voice that tells how vividly the events remain in his memory. The fiddle tune "Camp Chase" is performed by French Carpenter from Clay County, West Virginia. It was a piece of music that had its origins in a jail during the Civil War and has been passed down through his family.

Many of the recordings presented here come from the Smithsonian Folkways Collections. Other independent record companies such as Rounder and County, and the Library of Congress American Folklife Center provided significant material as well. Most are field recordings, made over the years by dedicated collectors who went out into the countryside to record music in its natural setting. A few commercial studio recordings (from 78 rpm records made in the 1920s) provide another link to the 1860s.

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SOUND AND FILM

With the making of the film *Cold Mountain* from the novel came a hope that the film would be saturated with the sounds of Appalachian instruments and voices, and especially the lonesome music of the fiddle. Music would establish the atmosphere, setting the story in time and place.

I was a music consultant for the film and was credited as Old Time Activist. I was asked to assemble "raw and authentic sounds" for the director Anthony Minghella and music producer T-Bone Burnett. Anthony Minghella added musical elements which were not in the book, such as the sacred harp singing juxtaposed over the tumult of a battle. With the awareness that all the music would be "adapted and arranged" for the screen

production, the idea of doing a separate album of the actual source music made sense.

It is always fascinating to see how traditional music is depicted in popular culture. Many adjustments were made to accommodate the intimate scale of authentic traditional music to the needs of a Hollywood epic. Fragile Appalachian performances didn't always fit the large screen, and a Hollywood score was added to "dramatize" many scenes. Yet there was always the intent to convey the sound of this authentic music to a large audience, and incorporate its emotional power as part of the story.

T-Bone Burnett's success with the music of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* had shown that a popular film could reawaken interest in old-time music, and reinvigorate the tradition itself. *O Brother* was amplifying the voice of traditional music. It was Burnett's intention with *Cold Mountain* to continue this process and widen the musical horizons. The music that was so much part of the 1860s frontier could give an insight into the roots of country, blues, folk, and gospel—sort of the 19th-century DNA of American music.

* * *

AMERICAN MUSICAL IDEAS

The image of the Civil War has been set by historians, and ritualized in re-enactments. However, using music as a point of departure reveals another perspective. In the frontier setting, distinctly American musical ideas were being worked out. These ideas are embedded in the sounds presented in this collection.

1. The relation between the Old Baptist lined-out singing, and the appearance and growth of sacred harp music and singing schools in backwoods America.

2. The music of fiddlers and banjo players, which was built on the cultural exchange between black and white folk musicians. African banjo and the English and Scots-Irish fiddle traditions came together in secular dance music and created the distinctly American rhythms that persist today.

3. A stylized vocal tradition created around the unaccompanied ballads, murder, and story songs. That sound has almost totally disappeared today.

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LINING-OUT THE OLD BAPTIST SONGS

In the music of many 19th-century rural churches, the text was "lined out" or chanted by a solitary singer reading from a hymn book. The congregation repeated his words, singing in long, extended phrases. Their high notes stood out with a powerful force, and the entire room of singers joined together in jumbled unison to make a complete sound—a whole congregation singing as one large breath. The meandering, ornamented melody followed no regular rhythm.

This was a tradition dating from 17th-century England. Today this type of singing persists in parts of the Appalachian South. Ralph Stanley has become increasingly known for his unaccompanied Old Baptist singing (it's what he was raised on), and the Kentucky singer Roscoe Holcomb also was from this church.

Old Baptist singings provided a means to get an illiterate chorus to participate in the religious songs. Only the leader had to be able to read as he lined out the text. Since everyone knew the melodies already, this arrangement was particularly well suited for the American pioneer communities where literacy wasn't so common. A musically trained visitor would not be able to comprehend the seeming lack of order.

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SACRED HARP CONVENTIONS AND SINGING SCHOOLS

Sacred harp services and singing schools competed for the attention of the rural settlers during the 19th century. The singing schools were special community events, consisting of a few intense weeks of "music lessons" given by traveling singing maestros. They took place in isolated communities, and the itinerant teachers sold song books. It was all sacred music, with texts drawn from biblical sources. There were millions of sacred harp songbooks sold throughout the countryside, and publishers who specialized in printing these books. The singing schools brought musical literacy to the rural countryside. However, the teachers had difficulty with traditional ballad singers, whose sense of music didn't yield easily to the conforming forces of written choral music.

Around 1800 an ingenious system of shape notes was devised to make it easier to sing in any key, using squares, triangles, and circles to represent the notes of the scale. This style of singing is often called "Fa, Sol, La" or shape note singing because the separate vocal parts are sung as syllables rather than as words. The initial verse in a sacred harp performance consisted of a babble of sung syllables, followed by a soulful and harmonious religious text, lasting for only one or two verses. Listening to the first verse of a sacred harp song, you would hear "do re me fa fa, fa sol la la ti, do re do, me sol la" sung by the tenors, while the altos sang a different set of syllables.

Sacred harp conventions would go on for hours, and sometime extend over several days. They were called "all-day singing and supper on the grounds." Many songs would be done in succession with the congregation closely following their parts in the song books, everyone singing at full volume. Some waved their hands to set the rhythm. The room was divided into four sections; basses sat together, as did altos, tenors, and sopranos. Each singer had the opportunity to select and lead his or her favorite selection, while another person selected the key to sing in. The entire congregation was the chorus, and everyone participated—there were no listeners. Someone once commented, "You couldn't pay me to go across the street to listen to a sacred harp session, but I'd walk five miles to sing in one of them."

Field recordings of sacred harp were recorded by: Alan Lomax (Rounder, Atlantic), Fredric Ramsey, Jr., and Sidney Robertson Cowell (Folkways). In the 1920s commercial recordings were issued on 78. Some of these can be heard on Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music,* and others on Yazoo *(How Can I Keep From Singing?)*. Today there is a revival of sacred harp singing in urban situations.

The performances of shape note singing which are heard in the *Cold Mountain* film soundtrack were recorded in 2001 in rural Alabama. T-Bone Burnett and Anthony Minghella attended the singing session, which was recorded with high-quality equipment. Tim Eriksen—who sings in the film—arranged for this meeting of the traditional singers of Alabama and the best of Hollywood.

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BANJO AND FIDDLE MUSIC

Throughout the period of the Civil War, the fiddle and the banjo were the most common and widespread instruments in American music. Charles Frazier's descriptions of fiddling present an insider's view.

> *He plucked the strings and retuned. He set the fiddle to his neck and struck the bow to it and was himself surprised at the sounds that issued. The melody he spun out was slow and halting, and it found its mood mainly through drones and double stops. He could not have put a name to it, but the tune was in the frightening Phrygian mode.*

In the early days of bluegrass, Lester Flatt would often say, "It used to be that a banjo and fiddle was a square dance band." He was referring to a musical form that was already in place by the 1860s. The evolution of this distinctly American sound brought together elements from African and Anglo traditions: it was the meeting of Northern fiddle tunes (played in Irish, Scottish, and English styles) with the new rhythmic patterns that were carried from slave culture on to the five-string banjo (which had its roots in Africa.)

Although there are few precise historical descriptions of this musical interchange, it worked like this: old Northern fiddle tunes such as "Soldiers Joy" were performed in a straightforward manner. But when accompanied by the banjo, new syncopations and rhythmic stresses appeared. In order to play these fiddle tunes on the banjo, they had to be converted into banjo style. This was done with finger picking or with frailing (also known as rapping the banjo, drop thumb, down picking, stroke or sawmill style).

Now the roles would reverse, and the fiddler would be influenced by the banjo version. To accommodate these new patterns, the style of bowing the fiddle had to change. At this point the fiddler started to use short syncopated strokes, sort of jigging the bow, creating an entirely new style of fiddle playing so that the banjo and fiddle would sound together and share the new rhythms. The new basic beat could be described as "boom-chick-a- boom," or, as Pete Seeger describes it, "bump, ditty, bump-a-ditty." It was a new

pattern that was created in America between the fiddle and banjo; it was the sound that came to characterize Southern instrumental dance music. From the novel *Cold Mountain:*

> *He had throughout the war, spent as much time as he could afford, in such places [Richmond's taverns], but the difference now was that his main interest became the musical niggers that often played for the customers.... Stobrod wandered from place to place until he found a fellow working at a stringed instrument with authority, some genius of the guitar or banjo. Then he'd take out his fiddle and play until dawn. And every time he did, he learned something new.*
>
> *He first spent his attention on matters of tuning and fingering and phrasing. Then he began to listen to the words of the songs the niggers sang, admiring how they chanted out every desire and fear in their lives as clear and proud as could be. By now he knew nine hundred fiddle tunes, some hundred of them being his own compositions.*

For many years, banjo and fiddle provided the music used in square dances. It was later that the guitar was added for a steady bass. These old-time string bands existed in both black and white traditions—although recordings of black old-time fiddle bands are rare. (Hear the Frazer-Lusk band from central Tennessee, who resemble Uncle Dave Macon & the Fruit Jar Drinkers, also from Tennessee.)

M.T. Judge, a Confederate veteran from Alabama, was asked about life on antebellum plantations in Alabama. He remembered in great detail the "amusements of slaves during holidays." He wrote of foot races, wrestling, possum hunting, singing, and dancing. He explained that

> *the dancing was done for the most part to the music of the fiddle and banjo, but I have seen some very fine dancing done to patting—clapping the hands and thighs alternatively. The tunes were... "Cotton Eyed Joe," "Sally Goodwin," "Turkey in the Rye Straw," etc.... The playing, like their songs, was improvised and I never yet knew a violin player who studied music that was able to play anything on their instruments. They had a peculiar way of tuning their fiddles, so that two of the strings were being played at the same*

time.... White men, sons of the overseers or neighboring people, learned from the darkies to play, but could never imitate them successfully.
(from Joyce Cauthen, quoting a letter from M.T. Judge to H.C. Nixon in 1913, Alabama Department of Archives and History)

The banjo was also used to accompany songs. 78 rpm recordings from the 1920s and 1930s show an incredible diversity of ways to use the banjo. Each individual performer could be identified by their approach to the banjo. Although limited to either up-picking (finger picking) or down picking (frailing), the variety of patterns were seemingly limitless. This rich array had been developing throughout the 19th century, and some regional styles could be identified (such as the two-finger up-picking used in western North Carolina—heard in the banjo accompaniments used by Bascom Lamar Lunsford, George Landers, and Doc Watson).

As Charles Frazier wrote:

It [the banjo] *was somewhat ugly, lacking as it did the expected symmetry in its round parts, but the head was of cat skin, and the strings of gut, and it had a fine mellow tone.* [Stobrod gave the banjo to Pangle] *and showed him what little he knew of its working: how to twist the pegs to make a few tunings, how to frail it with the thumb and forefinger, sometimes strumming, sometimes grabbing at the strings like a barred owl grabbing at a rabbit.*

Clearly, black and white musicians were influencing each other, and there are a few wonderful recordings of banjo-fiddle music with a black fiddler and white banjo player. These musical approaches were in place by the time of the Civil War. Ragtime, jazz, and blues didn't emerge until 50 years later.

Curiously, the 20th-century invention of the phonograph, which allowed accurate preservation of musical performances, also served as the basis for the commercial recording industry that sold these local and regional styles to a broad audience. This effectively destroyed the integrity of isolated communities at the same time as it preserved them. [But

the record industry's practice of creating musical markets *segregated* music markets by race or culture.] At the start of the music business, there were separate catalogs of hillbilly records and "race" records. White audiences bought hillbilly records, black audiences bought race records. The blues originated as a form within the race category. Initially there were few white performers of the blues, and there was neither place nor purchasers for black square dance fiddle bands.

In this musical exchange, valuable traditions were buried, rendered meaningless as commodities in the view of the music business. It became the role of the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress, and Folkways Records, and Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music,* and Alan Lomax's long collecting career to serve as the custodians of lost and disappearing musical traditions. But today, so many years later, these sounds have an appeal to contemporary ears, not as antiquities or as history, but as archetypes and roots that tell us where American music comes from. Ralph Stanley sang "Oh Death" unaccompanied at the GRAMMY awards, Hollywood recorded the sacred harp singing session in Alabama, the old-time music of *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* sold millions of records. These surreal juxtapositions have become cultural realities.

Recently, at a small gathering of surviving ballad singers, out in a field away from any public, there was a hilarious exchange of "dirty" and erotic versions of the old ballads which have been passed on in oral tradition, parallel to the classic ballad versions studied by academics. After the singing came the realization that these bawdy versions have not been recorded, and some present worried that the young generations don't even know of their existence. They are disappearing more rapidly than the ballads themselves. One ballad singer said she was afraid to send them across the internet because of John Ashcroft's surveillance of everything.

* * *

OLD LOVE SONGS AND BALLADS: SINGING STYLE

The tradition of ballad singing came with the settlers from the British Isles, and these long narrative songs were heard all across the United States. In the Appalachians

people called them "old love songs" and sometimes would write the texts down on paper. They called these "ballets." In western North Carolina (the setting of *Cold Mountain*) the singers developed a particular way to sing these songs, which included long extended phrases, embellishments, and vocal yips. This distinct musical style took hold, and in this isolated place developed into a recognizable sound. Many of the ballad singers were women, who would pass the songs on to their children.

Dellie Norton's singing "The Silk Merchant's Daughter" contains some of the most pronounced and fundamental Appalachian vocal elements: hear how she throws her voice up at the end of a line, or how she holds on to a phrase beyond the rhythmic structure. Hear Dellie's neighbor Dillard Chandler sing "I Wish My Baby Was Born" and encounter similar vocal embellishments. Listen to how Ralph Stanley ornaments his unaccompanied singing, and how that connects to the way Roscoe Holcomb and the Old Baptists approach their singing. This was a form of music that was rarely recorded on the early 78s of the country music industry but could be heard on field recordings of home musicians.

In a broader sense, singing styles can outlast specific songs and tunes, and cross racial and geographic boundaries as well. Until the invention of the phonograph, the only way to document music was with notes written on paper. This time-honored approach was good for people who could read music. The other way to transmit music was directly from one person to another, through imitation, teaching, or joining in an admired performance. When a song was passed from generation to generation in this manner, more than text and melody were transmitted—the feeling, the setting, the human connection, and the spirit were conveyed. All the elements of style and context were transmitted in the sound of the music which was performed within the warmth and setting of a family, or a local community.

It may be called the folk process, or the oral tradition, or just an old-timey song handed down from grandma...but it is what makes this collection seem distinctive, strange, and familiar at the same time.

1. FIELD HOLLER

SUNG BY T. J. CHESSER OF FOLKSTON, GEORGIA

Recorded in August 1944 for the Library of Congress by Francis Harper

Out in the country, people would holler to communicate over long distances. The shouts were a way to keep in touch with neighbors—using different sounds for warnings, alarms, and to announce that someone was coming, or just to say "Hello! I'm here."

2. I WISH MY BABY WAS BORN

SUNG BY DILLARD CHANDLER OF SODOM, NORTH CAROLINA

Recorded in 1965 by John Cohen. From High Atmosphere *Rounder 0028.*

In 1917 English folk song collector Cecil Sharp was searching for English folk songs that existed in the Appalachians. In Madison County he encountered "a community in which singing was as common and almost as universal a practice as speaking." Dillard was a descendant of that community, and his unaccompanied voice presents a style which has largely disappeared today. Without a permanent home, he would just "show up" and sing. He is featured in the documentary film *The End of an Old Song.*

3. LOOK DOWN THAT LONESOME ROAD

VOCAL AND BANJO BY "BANJO" BILL CORNETT, HINDMAN, KENTUCKY

Recorded in 1958 by Bill Cornett. Courtesy of the Estate of Bill Cornett.

This home recording came to light in 2003, forty years after Cornett had died. Although the overall sound is traditional, there is something unpredictable in the way the banjo echoes the vocal line. Banjo Bill was a Kentucky legislator, and performed for the State Assembly. He can be heard on *Mountain Music of Kentucky* SFW CD 40077.

4. MORNING SUN

(#436) SACRED HARP SINGING AT STEWART'S CHAPEL, HOUSTON, CHICKASAW COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

Recorded in 1970 by Frederic Ramsey, Jr., and Amelia Ramsey. From Fasola: Fifty-three Shape Note Folk Hymns: All Day Sacred Harp Singing at Stewart's Chapel in Houston, Mississippi *Folkways 4151.*

In sacred harp conventions there are no listeners; everyone in the congregation sings. The spiritual qualities of these sacred songs create a sense of community.

The songs use musical scales that are no longer common, favoring strident sounds of fourths and fifths instead of sweet harmonies. The author of this tune was partial to fugue tunes, where the parts overlap. (A similar sacred harp performance—"Present Joys," recorded in Alabama in 1928—is heard on Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music.*) Shape note singing is still done in parts of the Appalachians, and currently is enjoying a nationwide revival in cities and colleges.

5. CAMP CHASE

PLAYED ON FIDDLE BY FRENCH CARPENTER OF CLAY COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

Recorded in 1962 by Ken Davidson. From Elzic's Farewell: Old-Time Songs and Tunes from Clay County, West Virginia *Kanawha 301. Courtesy of County Records.*

Old-time fiddle tunes were a distinctive part of frontier life throughout the 1800s. This tune was played in a Civil War jail by French Carpenter's grandfather and won him his freedom. Such fiddling was not for dancing or songs, but was heard in fiddle conventions and contests. Derived from British Isles melodies, in the Appalachians the tunes acquired a distinctly American sound, with special open tunings. They are sometimes known as crooked tunes for their unusual timing. French Carpenter's fiddling influenced many West Virginia fiddlers. Alan Jabbour believes this melody is an old tune called "George Booker," with added irregularities.

6. JOHN BROWN'S DREAM

BY DACOSTA WOLTZ'S SOUTHERN BROADCASTERS FROM GALAX, VIRGINIA, AND SURRY COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA WITH DACOSTA WOLTZ ON BANJO AND BEN JARRELL ON FIDDLE

Recorded in 1927 for Gennett. From DaCosta Woltz's Southern Broadcasters County *524.*

This energetic banjo and fiddle performance represents a high point of Appalachian music recordings. The reference to "John Brown" in the title connects this tune to the Civil War, although its meaning has never been clarified. Tommy Jarrell sometimes sang, "John Brown's dream, the devil is dead." The banjo is played in the clawhammer style and interlocks with the vigorous fiddling, while the shouted square dance calls evoke how this music was used in the mountains. The fiddler Ben Jarrell was the father of Tommy Jarrell (heard on track 27 of this CD), and DaCosta Woltz was a promoter of

patent medicine, the mayor of Galax, and a first-rate banjo player. The tune was widely heard across the Appalachians, and remains popular in the old-time music revival today.

7. THE BRIGHT SUNNY SOUTH

VOCAL AND BANJO BY DOCK BOGGS IN NORTON, VIRGINIA

Recorded in 1963 by Mike Seeger. From Dock Boggs: His Folkways Years 1963–1968 *SFW CD 40108.*

Dock Boggs was a Virginia coal miner who made unique commercial recordings in the late 1920s that were widely admired. An unaccompanied version of this song was collected in the Catskill Mountains of New York in the 1940s. The final verse said,

Time points to the hour, when will it be
When the North and the South will forever agree
War will be over, fighting will be done
We'll haste to our loved ones, now waiting at home.

8. THE BATTLE OF STONE RIVER

SUNG BY OSCAR PARKS IN ALTON, INDIANA

Recorded in 1964 by Art Rosenbaum and Pat Dunford. From Fine Times at Our House: Music of Indiana *Folkways 3809.*

Singing with great intensity in the traditional ballad style, Parks relates events of the Civil War battle at Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in much detail. He was an old man when this recording was made, and recalls singing it to a 90-year-old veteran of the war who exclaims he was "the very goddamn man who shot General Sills." This direct link to the Civil War spans 150 years via oral tradition and field recordings.

9. SWEET GLORIES RUSH UPON MY SIGHT

SUNG BY A GROUP OF OLD REGULAR BAPTISTS AT THE DEFEATED CREEK CHURCH IN LINEFORK, KENTUCKY. LED BY TOBY BREEDING.

Recorded by Jeff Todd Titon in 2002. From Songs of the Old Regular Baptists: Lined-Out Hymnody from Southeastern Kentucky, Vol. 2 *SFW CD 50001.*

The Old Regular Baptists continue a way of singing that was in place long before sacred

harp music: one person "lines out" the text, reading it a line at a time from a book of words. Then the entire congregation sings these words in unison with vocal ornaments and unusual timing. Sometimes a note is extended beyond any regular beat. These vocal qualities are also heard in the old styles of ballad singing. This intense spiritual music is performed without an outward display of emotion. For more of this kind of music, listen to *Gaelic Psalms from Lewis* Tangent Records 78RPM and *Mountain Music of Kentucky* SFW CD 40077.

10. ROUSTABOUT

SUNG AND PLAYED ON FIVE-STRING BANJO BY DINK ROBERTS, NORTH CAROLINA

Recorded by Cece Conway. From Black Banjo Songsters *SFW CD 40079.*

African-American banjo players shaped the creation and course of this American instrument, yet very few recordings of black banjo players were made. In this performance the banjo presents a more complex set of rhythms than is usually heard, and the singing is full of expressive irregularities and improvisations. The five-string banjo originated with African Americans during slavery. Black musicians delighted in a wider array of percussive sounds than their white counterparts. According to Cece Conway, "This song is a reminder of the older uses…when Whites first learned the banjo from Blacks in the 1830s…when the banjo appeared."

11. FOX RACE

PLAYED BY JOE PATTERSON ON QUILLS (PANPIPES) IN ALABAMA

Recorded April 20, 1964, by Ralph Rinzler. Reel 0764 from the Ralph Rinzler Collection, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Institution.

The quills consist of five or more pieces of hollow cane of different lengths. When blown into, they produce different scale tones. The pipes are bound together with rawhide or string, and held vertically against the mouth. In this performance Mr. Patterson (an African American) interjects occasional whoops in imitation of hounds baying in a fox chase. The use of panpipes was limited to the South, and mostly to African Americans. The instrument is virtually extinct today. The percussive instrument heard on this recording consists of bottle tops nailed loosely onto a small board, played by shaking it.

12. JIM AND JOHN

PLAYED ON CANE FIFE BY ED YOUNG OF COMO, MISSISSIPPI,
WITH BASS DRUM BY LONNIE YOUNG AND SNARE DRUM BY G.D. YOUNG

Recorded in July 1967 by Mike Seeger at the Festival of American Folklife in Washington, D.C.
Courtesy of Mike Seeger and the Young Estate.

African-American Ed Young played a variety of tunes from old frolics to blues and religious tunes. He walked slowly while playing, or sometimes crouched down and patted the ground with one hand while playing fife. Mike Seeger points out, "With this and other motions and movements he suggests dark and mystical, other-world feelings." The use of fife and drums evokes the sound associated with battles from the Revolutionary and the Civil Wars. The Mississippi fife and drum corps played at social occasions like parades and outdoor dances. This music has had great appeal to folk festival goers, and has recently been heard in the film *Gangs of New York*.

13. THE DAY IS PAST AND GONE

SUNG UNACCOMPANIED BY DOROTHY MELTON IN PLANTERSVILLE, ALABAMA

Recorded on April 28, 1954, by Frederic Ramsey, Jr.
From Music from the South, Vol. 8: Young Songsters *Folkways 2657*.

Dorothy Melton, a twenty-year-old woman, sings in the beautiful extended and ornamented vocal style which is at the root of African-American church singing. This text is also found in sacred harp collections. Dorothy Melton's vocal style differs from the sound of spirituals of slavery times, and anticipates the vocal style of blues and gospel singing. Nineteenth-century American music traditions were shaped by the pentatonic scales of the ballads, the fiddle tunes from the British Isles, and the rhythms, improvisations, and soulfulness of Africa.

14. OMIE WISE

SUNG AND PLAYED BY ROSCOE HOLCOMB OF DAISY, KENTUCKY

Recorded in 1961 by John Cohen. From Roscoe Holcomb: The High Lonesome Sound *SFW CD 40104*.

According to courthouse records, Omie Wise was murdered by a man named John Lewis in North Carolina in 1808. The song lives on in many versions throughout the Appalachians. All give the same details of her death, but there are many different melodies used for the song. There seems to be no original version. Roscoe's banjo is tuned in an unusual way (ECGAD), and his sense of timing is equally singular. He said his family was originally from North Carolina but moved to Kentucky way back. Roscoe's performance gave Charles Frazier ideas about murder ballads.

15. THE SILK MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER

SUNG BY DELLIE NORTON OF SODOM, NORTH CAROLINA

Recorded in 1965 by John Cohen. From High Atmosphere *Rounder 0028*.

Appalachian ballad singing comes close to the heart of the tradition. Old love songs (as they are called in the mountains) are famous for their ancient texts and English origins. The elaborate way some singers used their voices is becoming more appreciated, even as the ballads are becoming rare. Dellie Norton had one of the most exaggerated styles of ballad singing, rich with ornaments and yips at the end of her melody lines. Dellie was a lively and feisty woman who shared her music freely, and made wonderful brandy from the cherries around her house. Her singing remains an inspiration to many singers in her community.

16. HICKS FAREWELL

SUNG BY DILLARD CHANDLER IN SODOM, NORTH CAROLINA

Recorded in 1963 by John Cohen. From Old Love Songs and Ballads *Folkways 2309*.

Just before the Civil War, a man named Reverend Hicks set off to Tennessee to do some missionary work. While he was there he took sick, wrote this song, and sent it home to his wife so that it might be published. It is also known as "The Time Is Swiftly Rolling By." Dillard sang ballads as if they were intended to last forever. The words evoke the ultimate relationship between the lovers in the novel *Cold Mountain:*

I cannot come to you
Let this not grieve your heart
But you can sometime come to me
Where we shall never part.

17. THREE LITTLE BABES

SUNG BY TEXAS GLADDEN IN SALEM, VIRGINIA

Recorded in 1959 by Alan Lomax. From Southern Journey Vol. 10 *Prestige 25004/Rounder 1702. Courtesy of the Lomax Archives / Rounder Records.*

This story of a conversation between a mother and her three dead children is as much about the supernatural as it is the religious. The song is sometimes called "The Lady Gay," and it tells how a woman sends her children off to the north country "for to learn their grammary." After their death, they return to her and refuse her burial offerings. Texas Gladden was one of the best singers and collectors of ballads.

18. WAYFARING STRANGER

PERFORMED BY BILL MONROE, MANDOLIN AND VOCALS; PETER ROWAN, GUITAR AND VOCALS; RICHARD GREENE, FIDDLE

Recorded in 1966 by Ralph Rinzler. From Bill Monroe and The Bluegrass Boys: Live Recordings 1956–1969 Off The Record, Vol 1 *SFW CD 40063.*

This song was composed in 1840 and has been sung continuously over the years in mountain churches. Bill Monroe's performance here didn't take place in a studio or on a stage. According to Ralph Rinzler, "It was sung in a small room. Monroe seems to be singing into one's ear with conviction and intimate intensity." Rinzler writes, "His [Monroe's] sensitive ear for what he terms "old tones" prompted him to preserve the modal characteristics of both Anglo-Scots-Irish and African-American folk tunes which he performed in his own arrangements and from which he borrowed in creating new compositions. He has skillfully infused country music with a substantial quotient of archaic tonal subtlety."

19. RANK STRANGER

SUNG AND PLAYED BY CARTER AND RALPH STANLEY (THE STANLEY BROTHERS) IN 1960

From The Stanley Brothers: The Early Years 1958–61 *Starday / King KBS 47000. Courtesy of King Records.*

After many years away, a man goes back to his childhood home in the mountains and doesn't recognize any of the inhabitants. Charles Frazier talks about this song as shaping the character of Inman in the novel: it shows the interior thoughts of a person returning after a long absence. The Stanley Brothers are known as one of the early "bluegrass" bands, but never used that term; rather, they wanted their music known as old-time mountain music.

20. CHRISTMAS TIME WILL SOON BE OVER

PERFORMED BY FIDDLIN' JOHN CARSON AND EARL JOHNSON IN ATLANTA, GEORGIA, 1927

Issued commercially as a 78 rpm disc for Okeh Records. Courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment, Inc.

Fiddlin' John Carson's recording of the "The Old Hen Cackled and the Rooster's Going to Crow" from 1923 was the first country music record to sell in the thousands, informing the record industry that there was a market for this kind of music. Fiddlin' John Carson was an old man when he started recording in 1923, perpetuating sounds from the 1800s. This energetic performance includes guitar, an instrument which was not yet used for fiddle dance tunes during the Civil War. "Christmas Time Will Soon Be Over" was heard in the film, and is related to the bluegrass fiddle tune "Christmas Time's a Coming" by Tex Logan and Bill Monroe.

21. AND AM I BORN TO DIE

SUNG BY DOC WATSON AND GAITHER CARLTON

Recorded June 30, 1961, by Ralph Rinzler. Reel 0034 from the Ralph Rinzler Collection, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections (appears on Watson Family Tradition *Rounder 0219).*

As an old sacred harp song, it is also known as "Idumea" and asks the most existential and profound religious question. In the film it is sung during the church service. In the novel it is the theme of the preacher's sermon, giving the religious-moral setting of the story of *Cold Mountain.* Doc Watson learned it from the 1866 hymn book *Christian Harmony.*

22. PULLIN' THE SKIFF

SUNG BY ORA DELL GRAHAM IN DREW, MISSISSIPPI

Recorded October 24, 1940, by John Lomax. From The Archive of Folk Culture, Library of Congress (appears on A Treasury of Library of Congress Field Recordings *Rounder 1500).*

This schoolyard song was sung by a young African-American girl, who says she made it up. The recording of her performance for the Library of Congress provided the director of the film *Cold Mountain* with a clue to the character of Ruby.

23. PUMPKIN PIE

PLAYED ON FIDDLE AND BANJO BY JOE AND ODELL THOMPSON FROM MEBANE, NORTH CAROLINA

Recorded by Wayne Martin in Carrboro, North Carolina on January 5, 1989. Courtesy of North Carolina Arts Council, Dept. of Cultural Resources

There were hundreds of black and white musicians playing banjo and fiddle music for dances in the seventy years after the Civil War. Only a few of the black musicians were ever recorded. "Pumpkin Pie" preserves a style of singing and rhythmic patterns that was often reported in collections of slavery dances and early minstrel shows. Joe and Odell Thompson were among the last surviving practitioners of this type of music.

24. GIVE THE FIDDLER A DRAM

VOCAL AND FIDDLE BY JAMES CRASE OF HYDEN, KENTUCKY.

Recorded in 1959 by John Cohen. From Mountain Music of Kentucky *SFW CD 40077.*

This song defined the character of Stobrod in the novel, a man who preferred to "dance all night with a bottle in [his] hand." The fiddle, known also as the devil's instrument, was the key provider of dance music. Old-time fiddlers also exchanged tunes at fiddle contests. These events honed their musical skills, and gave the fiddler something to work on during his life, which didn't always fit into other family needs. The daring music of the country fiddler was a lively force in frontier life.

"Who's been here since I've been gone
Pretty little girl with a red dress on
She pulled it off, I put it on
In came Sally with the new boots on."

25. ANGEL BAND

PERFORMED BY E. C. AND ORNA BALL OF RUGBY, VIRGINIA

Recorded in 1965 by John Cohen. From John Cohen's personal archive.

On the final page of the novel *Cold Mountain,* after the killings and reconciliation, a sense of regeneration emerges. As the family gathers with the children:

Stobrod took his fiddle down from his chin. He wanted to sing a gospel, and the fiddle was after all the devil's box and universally prohibited from such songs. Nevertheless, he held it preciously, cradled against his chest, the bow depending from a crooked finger. He sang Angel Band, a new tune. The girl sang behind him on the chorus, her voice clear and high and strong. Bear me away on your snowy wings.

"Angel Band" was composed around 1860 and has remained dear to mountain singers. The Stanley Brothers' recording of it was used as the final song in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* E.C. Ball and his wife Orna had been singing "Angel Band" over the years from an old songbook on their weekly gospel radio show.

26. THE OLD MAN BELOW

SUNG AND PLAYED ON FIDDLE BY GAITHER CARLTON OF DEEP GAP, NORTH CAROLINA

Recorded May 27, 1965, by Ralph Rinzler. Reel 0057 from the Ralph Rinzler Collection, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections (appears on The Watson Family *SFW CD 40012).*

Gaither Carlton was Doc Watson's father-in-law. He jigged the fiddle bow, producing this distinctive sound. His wrist is held loosely and bounces along in a motion that classical violinists can't duplicate. The song is also known as "Come All You Virginia Girls," or "Cornbread, Molasses, and Sassafras Tea." Although it depicts rough living conditions in the mountains, the song was used as comedy.

"The girls all married with their hair not combed.
Children, children a-crying for bread
Go build a fire, just as high as the head
Rake in the ashes for to lie in the dough.
Name that you give 'em was dough boy dough.
I stood right there just as brave as a bear.
And I wiggled my fingers in the old man's hair."

27. WHEN SORROWS ENCOMPASS ME 'ROUND

SUNG AND PLAYED ON FIDDLE BY TOMMY JARRELL WITH FRED COCKERHAM ON FRETLESS BANJO

Recorded in August 1973 by Ray Alden. From Tommy & Fred: Best Fiddle-Banjo Duets *County 2702. Courtesy of Ray Alden.*

The song conveys a feeling which pervades the entire novel. It reflects the sentiment of people living close to the edge of survival. Deep religious belief provided an explanation of their fragile existence. This song is found in song books from 1844. Tommy Jarrell was an inspiring fiddler from Toast, North Carolina, who inherited the old-time music from his father and from friends, some of whom were Civil War veterans. Jarrell's raw, emotional singing and fiddling join with the intense banjo accompaniment. Fred Cockerham's banjo has no frets (its fingerboard was covered in formica). Fretless banjos, developed by slaves before the Civil War, allowed the player to slide from note to note, getting at tonal and pitch nuances that are more like the human voice. An earlier version of this song with Tommy Jarrell playing fiddle was recorded in 1968 by Richard Nevins and Charles Faurot and released on *Back Home in the Blueridge* County 723.

CREDITS

CONCEIVED, COMPILED, ANNOTATED, AND PRODUCED BY John Cohen
MASTERED BY Pete Reiniger
COVER PHOTO BY John Cohen; DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY BY Roger Haile;
COVER COLLAGE BY Leonard Stokes; REAR CARD PHOTO BY Roger Haile;
SPECIAL THANKS TO Cece Conway for the use of her Civil War banjo in the cover photo.
PHOTOS: inside front cover, pp. 6, 14, and inside back cover courtesy of Jim Bollman Collection. From *America's Instrument: The Banjo in the 19th Century.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina. Pages 11, 19, 30, and back cover courtesy Jeff Green
SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS PRODUCTION SUPERVISED BY Daniel Sheehy & Atesh Sonneborn
PRODUCTION MANAGED BY Mary Monseur and Margot Nassau
PRODUCTION ASSISTANCE BY Emily Gremlich
DESIGN AND LAYOUT BY Visual Dialogue, Boston, MA
EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE BY Jeff Place
"Field Holler" DISC TRANSFER BY William Haley, Jr., at the Library of Congress; "John Brown's Dream" DISC TRANSFER BY Christopher C. King at Long Gone Sound Productions; "Pumpkin Pie" transfer and mix by Thom Canova at Overdub Lane.
FOR MUSIC IDEAS, FILM INSIGHTS, AND ASSISTANCE, THANKS TO: Albert Berger, T-Bone Burnett, Charles Frazier, Anthony Minghella, Tim Bricknell, Mike Seeger, Ray Alden, Richard Nevins, Joyce Cauthen, Aylette Jenness, Dick Connette, Tom Rankin, Wade Patterson, and Philip Gura.
MORE THANKS TO: Dan Brescoll, Brode Cornett, Don Fleming, David Freeman, Jackie Fuchs, Judith Gray, Stephen Hawkins, Susan Jacobs, Chris King, Wes Lachot, Wayne Martin, Beverly Patterson, Theodore Rand, Shaleen Tethal and Steve Weiss.
ADDITIONAL SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS STAFF: Carla Borden, editing; Richard Burgess, marketing director; Lee Michael Demsey, fulfillment; Betty Derbyshire, financial operations manager; Toby Dodds, technology manager; Mark Gustafson, marketing; Ryan Hill, fulfillment; Helen Lindsay, customer service; John Passmore, fulfillment; Ronnie Simpkins, audio specialist; John Smith, marketing and radio promotions; Stephanie Smith, archivist; Norman van der Sluys, audio-engineering assistant.
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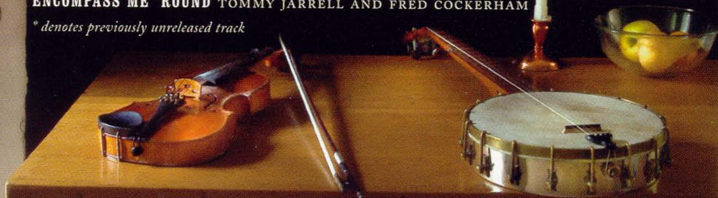
SFW CD 40149

BACK ROADS TO COLD MOUNTAIN

Charles Frazier's novel and the film *Cold Mountain* opened the door to a world of Appalachian history, life, and music. Now, John Cohen and Smithsonian Folkways take you all the way home to the source and the spirit of Appalachia in the signature sounds of its musical elders. Descendants of the 19th-century Appalachian frontier families perform traditional music they inherited from their Civil War-era ancestors. 70 minutes, 36 page booklet, historic photos.

1. FIELD HOLLER* T. J. CHESSER **2. I WISH MY BABY WAS BORN** DILLARD CHANDLER **3. LOOK DOWN THAT LONESOME ROAD*** BILL CORNETT **4. MORNING SUN** SACRED HARP SINGERS, STEWART'S CHAPEL, HOUSTON, MS **5. CAMP CHASE** FRENCH CARPENTER **6. JOHN BROWN'S DREAM** DACOSTA WOLTZ'S SOUTHERN BROADCASTERS **7. BRIGHT SUNNY SOUTH** DOCK BOGGS **8. THE BATTLE OF STONE RIVER** OSCAR PARKS **9. SWEET GLORIES RUSH UPON MY SIGHT** OLD REGULAR BAPTISTS, DEFEATED CREEK CHURCH, LINEFORK, KY **10. ROUSTABOUT** DINK ROBERTS **11. FOX RACE*** JOE PATTERSON **12. JIM AND JOHN*** ED, LONNIE, AND G.D. YOUNG **13. THE DAY IS PAST AND GONE** DOROTHY MELTON **14. OMIE WISE** ROSCOE HOLCOMB **15. THE SILK MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER** DELLIE NORTON **16. HICKS FAREWELL** DILLARD CHANDLER **17. THREE LITTLE BABES** TEXAS GLADDEN **18. WAYFARING STRANGER** BILL MONROE **19. RANK STRANGER** THE STANLEY BROTHERS **20. CHRISTMAS TIME WILL SOON BE OVER** FIDDLIN' JOHN CARSON **21. AND I AM BORN TO DIE** DOC WATSON AND GAITHER CARLTON **22. PULLIN' THE SKIFF** ORA DELL GRAHAM **23. PUMPKIN PIE** JOE AND ODELL THOMPSON **24. GIVE THE FIDDLER A DRAM** JAMES CRASE **25. ANGEL BAND*** E.C. AND ORNA BALL **26. THE OLD MAN BELOW** GAITHER CARLTON **27. WHEN SORROWS ENCOMPASS ME 'ROUND** TOMMY JARRELL AND FRED COCKERHAM

** denotes previously unreleased track*



COMPILED, ANNOTATED, AND PRODUCED BY JOHN COHEN

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