WASHBOARD BAND
COUNTRY DANCE MUSIC
Recorded under the supervision of Pete Seeger / Folkways Records FA 2201

Cindy • Bottle Up and Go • Cripple Creek
John Henry • Old Joe Clark • Skip to My Lou • Green Corn
WASHBOARD BAND / COUNTRY DANCE

MUSIC

Cindy Bottle Up and Go
Cripple Creek
John Henry
Old Joe Clark
Skip To My Lou
Green Corn

NOllnlllSNI
S3tOrus lYHOlln3 ONV
SVMfOOHd 3Jrnno.:l
HO.:l H31N33

FOLKWAYS RECORDS
FA 2201

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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NOllnlllSNI
S3tOrus lYHOlln3 ONV
Washboard Country Band

Dance Tunes

Cindy
John Henry
Old Joe Clark
Bottle Up and Go
Skip to My Lou
Cripple Creek
COUNTRY DANCE MUSIC WASHBOARD BAND
Recorded under the supervision of Pete Seeger

With: William Edward Cook, washboard; Pete Seeger, 5-string banjo; Sonny Terry, harmonica; Brownie McGhee, guitar; Frank Robertson, bass guitar.

SIDE I (FP 601 A):
Band 1. Cindy - 130 bpm., speed 6:00 time
Band 2. Bottle Up and Go - 120 bpm., speed 5:10 time
Band 3. Cripple Creek - 155 bpm., speed 5:00 time

SIDE II (FP 601 B):
Band 1. John Henry - 133 bpm., speed 4:00 time
Band 2. Old Joe Clark - 150 bpm., speed 3:15 time
Band 3. Skip To My Lou - 110 bpm., speed 3:05 time
Band 4. Green Corn - 145 bpm., speed 4:12 time

Photographs by David Gahr
THE COUNTRY WASHBOARD BAND

Introduction by Peter Seeger

Styles in country dance music change from generation to generation. In Thomas Jefferson's day most dancers were accompanied by a solo fiddle. Later on in the nineteenth century banjos and guitars were added.

Just as there are many varieties of popular dance instrumentations using wind instruments, there are many regional varieties of country dance orchestras. In the north the tendency is to the use of pianos; in the south, electrified string instruments, particularly the (electrified) Hawaiian guitar. Louisiana has a distinguishing feature in its country dance music -- the old-fashioned "wind jammer" accordion, the kind that you push in to get one note and pull out to get another. In the southwest, among Spanish-speaking people whole orchestras are composed of nothing but guitars. One guitar will carry the melody, another guitar takes just the bass obligatos and a third guitar will only the the chords. In the north central states, such as Minnesota, you can still hear the Scandinavian technique of several fiddlers playing at once.

The Negro people in America carried on in many forms the African tradition that the "rhythm is the thing." "Plantation parties" often used nothing but clapping and the rattling of 'bones' to accompany dancing. Today, in the streets of New York City you can hear teenage rhythm bands composed of a bongo drum (taking the solo) and a cokebottle and a waste basket (taking the accompaniment).*

Who it was that invented the first washboard rhythm section we don't know. Probably in the nineteenth century some ingenious man or woman tried accompanying a dance with the rattling of tin pans and found that the rippling sound of thimbles on a washboard worked well with it.

In the 1920's a number of country style commercial recordings were made of washboard bands using kazooos or harmonicas to take the melody. In this half of the 20th Century they can still be found in many corners of the country, but especially in the south. Various instruments will take the melody -- fiddle, harmonica, guitar, mandolin - but note that the washboard, carrying the rhythm, still remains the central instrument.

A well equipped washboard is shown in the picture. Nailed to an ordinary tin washboard, with wooden frame, might be a tin pie plate or a cheap tin frying pan and a few tin cups or even a brass cowbell. It is amazing how the "clankety, tick, pling clunk, plunk, clonk" can cut through all the noises of a crowded dance floor.

Unfortunately, at the present time, there is no music school in the nation that gives instruction in washboard playing. All we can do is highly recommend the technique for anyone wishing to accompany square dances. To assemble one, go to the local hardware store and buy an old fashioned washboard. If they don't have one you can order it from Sears Roebuck et al. Attach a few tin plates and cups of the right tone and pitch. Get a set of thimbles (metal, not the plastic kind). Be sure to buy some extra ones, since a night of hard playing will dent them considerably. Every state in the union has people in it who can play the washboard and could give instruction. Conscientious searching would locate them.

One nice thing about the homemade character of the washboard as an instrument is that it encourages other homemade instruments. The washtub bass (see illustration to the right), or the jug which will give off a bass throb when "beeped" into; don't forget tissue paper on a comb, penny whistles and tablespoons rattled on the knee.

Vivat floreatque sympsalma trabe lavatorum rusticorum compacta!* Long live the country washboard band!

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*Folkways Records Albums No. FP 703, FP 58, FP 60

*Latin, courtesy of Moses Hadas.
Drawings by Pete Seeger
Production Director, Moses Asch
Recorded by Moses Asch and Mel Kaiser
FOLKWAYS Records
AND SERVICE CORP., 701 7th Ave., N.Y.C.
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 1/3 RPM
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COUNTRY DANCE MUSIC WASHBOARD BAND
Recorded under the supervision of Pete Seeger
William Edward Cook—washboard; Pete Seeger—
Banjo; Sonny Terry—harmonica; Brownie
McGhee—guitar; Frank Robertson—bass
SIDE II FA 2201 B
Band 1. JOHN HENRY
133 bpm. speed 4:00 time
Band 2. OLD JOE CLARK
150 bpm. speed 3:15 time
Band 3. SKIP TO MY LOU
110 bpm. speed 3:05 time
Band 4. GREEN CORN
145 bpm. speed 4:12 time