Going Down the Valley: Vocal and Instrumental Styles in Folk Music from the South
New World NW 236

The history of vernacular music in the United States is the chronicle of successive encounters between the various diverse cultural elements of this so-called melting pot. In particular, it is the story of the encounters between the Anglo-American tradition and the Afro-American. Almost every new musical form since the Civil War—vaudeville, ragtime, jazz, rock and roll—owes a debt to both heritages, with the Afro-American legacy generally the predominant one. Music thus achieves more peacably what other manifestations of culture have struggled over violently: integration. But while the music may play to a beat insensitive to the drums of conflict, the musicians themselves, alas, do not always do the same. Some hillbilly musicians openly acknowledged their debts to black musicians; others denied vehemently any possible influence, even when the musical evidence for it was ineluctable. Through the 1930s the record industry itself of course promoted total musical segregation. Separate categories were allocated to "hillbilly" on the one hand and "race" or "blues" music on the other. (There were also, at the same time, separate series devoted to other ethnic enclaves in the United States: recordings made by and for Yiddish-speaking Americans of the Northern cities, for Finnish- Americans in Michigan, for Polish-Americans in the Midwest, for French-speaking Cajuns of Louisiana, and so on.) The different series were advertised separately and marketed separately, in accord with the socio-economic facts of life of a still largely segregated United States. But whereas the record series were either black or white, and the performing groups were either black or white, the music itself was both black and white and somewhere in between. This blending becomes apparent in the recounting of the backgrounds of the principal musical instruments of the string band.

The seventeenth-century emigrants to the New World left the British Isles at a time when the fiddle was beginning to replace the hornpipe and tabor as standard accompaniment for rural dances. Thus, it is not surprising that the fiddle has been the backbone of American string bands (and hillbilly music in general) until very recently. Although physically the country fiddle of the Southern mountains is nothing but a violin (sometimes with modifications), there is more evidence than just the name to suggest that the instrument is far closer to the medieval predecessors of the modern violin than the violin itself is. The "peculiar" characteristics of the country fiddler—holding the fiddle against the chest, using some strings as drones (i.e., playing a steady tonic or dominant on an unstopped string), flattening the bridge so three or more strings can be played simultaneously, and, in some regions, using the "Tennessee bow" (which resembles an archer's bow more than a modern violinist's implement) to facilitate bowing several strings simultaneously—all recall traits of early European fiddlers prior to the invention and standardization of the modern violin toward the end of the sixteenth century. It is highly likely that these traits are survivals (like the medieval musical modes) rather than backwoods idiosyncracies.

While the fiddles were brought over by the British colonists, and doubtless used to play jigs and reels at Colonial balls, they soon found their way into the hands of musically gifted black slaves. Nicholas Creswell, an eighteenth century diarist, noted in 1774 that "a great number of young people met together [in Virginia] with a fiddle and banjo played by two negroes." (The Journal of Nicholas Creswell 1774-1777. New York: Dial Press, 1924.) Thus we learn that over two centuries ago European and African elements were already combined into a genuine native American form of musical expression—the string band. By the 1930s the sliding, syncopated, bluesy styles borrowed from black musicians were as widespread in the Southeast as the crisp, metronomic rhythm of the Anglo-Celtic settlers.

A great deal has been written about the origins and spread of the banjo; particularly illuminating are the articles by Epstein (1975) and Winans (1976) (see bibliography). There is little doubt that the instrument, or its immediate predecessor, was brought to this country by slaves from Africa. Epstein has found references to a banjo-like instrument in Africa in 1621, in the French West Indies in 1678, and in Jamaica by 1689. Creswell's 1774 Journal entries are the earliest known references in the United States proper. The banjo was popularized in the middle of the nineteenth century by white blackface minstrels, who adopted the instrument in imitation of black plantation slaves and doubtless also copied their styles of playing—at least initially. Winans has argued convincingly that the minstrel style of banjo playing was basically the style known to present-day Southern mountain whites as brushless, dropthumb "frailing" (no chording), and that the mountain whites probably acquired the style from the minstrel shows and other forms of public entertainment between 1865 and 1880, rather than directly from plantation blacks. The other principal style of banjo playing—that of finger-picking (i.e., picking upwards on the strings, rather than "frailing" or striking downwards with the backs of the fingernails)— probably derives, Winans contends, from the "classical" or "guitar" banjo-playing styles that originated around 1870 and became more popular later in the century. It had long been thought that the fifth, or drone chanterelle, string (it is struck by the thumb but never fingered to change the pitch) was added by the white minstrel musician Joel W. Sweeney in the 1830s or 1840s and later became standard, giving the five-string banjo its distinguishing characteristic. More recent evidence (Bailey, 1972) proves that some banjos, not necessarily of American make, had a fifth string before the end of the eighteenth century; so that now it seems best to attribute to Sweeney a role in popularizing and standardizing the five-string banjo, but certainly not in inventing it. In any case, the significance of the fifth string from our perspective lies in the fact that it made the banjo admirably suited to the fiddle tunes of the Scots and Scots-Irish settlers of the Southern American highlands, where drones were a prominent stylistic feature.

As early as the middle seventeenth century the guitar became accepted in court and in polite society. John Playford wrote in 1666 that "not a [London] city dame ... but is ambitious to have her daughter taught. . . on the Gittar...." In the eighteenth century it was used as a parlor instrument on both sides of the Atlantic. Though today the association between "folk music" and "guitar" is so close that it is difficult to imagine it otherwise, collectors in the Southern mountains generally found that old-timers reported the instrument first appeared toward the end of the nineteenth century, not long after it became an instrument of mass appeal. Its prevalence among black folk musicians does not seem to have been much older; the guitar and blues music both became widespread toward the turn of the century. Before then, blacks, like whites, played primarily fiddle and banjo. It has been argued that the appearance of the guitar in the Southern mountains was largely at the hands of black railroad- and road-construction workers; indeed, we have many accounts of white guitarists learning from blacks around the turn of the century. The guitar supplanted the banjo and fiddle as the most popular instrument for accompanying singers for the same reason that it had replaced the lute some two centuries earlier: it was easier to play. But the price paid was a definite loss of flexibility. The guitar, basically a chorded instrument, made it difficult for the older modal folk music (i.e., in modes other than the major, or Ionian) to survive.

These three instruments—fiddle, banjo, and guitar—account for most string bands through the 1920s. In the 1930s other instruments began to play important roles: the harmonica—a European invention of the 1820s; the mandolin— like the guitar, a parlor instrument in the nineteenth century; and the various forms of Hawaiian or steel guitar, played by stopping the strings with a hard object such as a piece of steel, rather than by pressing the strings against the frets with the fingers.

A few other instruments are heard on selections on this recording that were quite uncommon in stringbands. The kazoo, more usual in black skiffle or jug bands, was probably of late-nineteenth-century invention. The zither, a folk instrument in Austria and Bavaria, was found only rarely in the United States as a folk instrument, though in the nineteenth century it did seem to be popular in German-American communities. The piano is often a folk instrument among black musicians (consider jazz, blues, boogie, and ragtime), and among whites in the Northeast and Southwest, but rarely among whites in the Southeast. It seems to have been more common among whites in southern Virginia than elsewhere. The organ was more widespread in the Southeast around the turn of the century. At that time, one could purchase a four- or five- octave organ from large mail-order firms like Sears Roebuck for twenty to thirty dollars, less than half the price of a piano. Furthermore, some models weighed less than fifty pounds and folded up in a carrying case, offering a portability unthinkable with a piano of almost any description.

String-band music, as it emerged on records in the 1920s (see New World Records NW 235, Maple Leaf Rag: Ragtime in Rural America), then, represented a blend of old and new musical influences as well as a confluence of Afro- American and Anglo-American traditions. Most of the songs and ballads recorded by string bands were rendered in the common major (Ionian) mode. In Anglo-American folk music, different modes have been found to survive into the present century, though in classical music they disappeared with the baroque era, driven out by the advent of harmony based on major or minor tonality. Also still surviving widely in folk music are gapped scales—pentatonic or hexatonic —in which not all seven notes of the full scale are used. Gapped scales survived, but with decreasing frequency as the influence of pop music became stronger and stronger through the 1930s. Vocal harmonies and instrumental accompaniments also tended to fill in the lacunae of the once gapped scales. Instruments generally played together; the practice of different instruments taking a solo, as in later bluegrass music, had not yet been borrowed from jazz. One voice was often sufficient; a second voice would generally sing a conventional harmony that followed the contours of the melody at least approximately, often in parallel thirds or nearly so. If more than two singers were present, their harmonies were heavily influenced by the conventional four-part church harmonies that almost every country singer was exposed to in his or her youth. Often the lead singer would sing the verses solo and would be joined by the other voices on the choruses. In string band music of the 1920s and 1930s, as in bluegrass music since the 40s (see New World Records NW 225, Hills and Home: Thirty Years of Bluegrass), it was rare for a band to have a singer who did not play an instrument. This is quite unlike mainstream country-western music of the last decade or so.

One of the striking features about modern country music is the nearly ubiquitous insistence on the simple I-IV-V7 harmonic vocabulary. This characteristic was already apparent in the 1920s. It is responsible for the facility with which a novice can pick up a guitar and strum along, accompanying a song he has never heard before. Occasionally songs are cast in a minor mode, requiring minor chords, i, iv and v7 (or V7). Another pattern frequently encountered is a partial circle of fifths: I-VI7-II7-V7-I. Older fiddle tunes often require more complex chording. In some geographic regions, in particular the Northeast and the Southwest (Texas-Oklahoma), it is customary to provide a much fuller chorded accompaniment. In both areas the piano enjoys currency as a folk instrument, and the elaborate chord patterns may be the result of a more vigorous tradition of musical literacy.

Many of these general statements are illustrated by the selections heard on this album. However, one must not expect this dozen and a half numbers to reflect all the features of early string band music: that could barely be accomplished with a sampling ten times this large.

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T H E R E C O R D I N G S

Side One
Band 1
I Truly Understand, You Love Another Man
Shortbuckle Roark and Family: George Roark, Sr., George, Jr., Robert, and Oda Roark; banjo by George, Sr.
Recorded November 4, 1928, in Bristol, Tenn.-Va.
Originally issued on Victor V-40023.

Unlike ballads, which tell (or strongly imply) a story, lyric folk songs are mood pieces that are not even always consistent in their choice of verses. The suitability of tune, rhythm, and meter seems to be a more important criterion for inclusion or exclusion than narrative content. "I Truly Understand" is a remarkably coherent lyric that pours out the singer's emotions in response to the unfaithfulness of his onetime sweetheart. I know of no other texts quite like this one (save for a 1938 recording made by Roark himself for the Library of Congress Archive of Folksong), though there are some close relatives. One of the most striking of these is "The False Young Man" (No.94 in Sharp and Karpeles), which appears to be a derivative of the older British ballad "The House Carpenter" (Child, No.243). The melody of the first half of the stanza of "I Truly Understand" is very close to that of "The House Carpenter," but without benefit of the intermediate "The False Young Man" at hand, there is no obvious textual relationship.

The scale for the stanzaic portion of Roark's song lacks the fourth degree and has a flatted seventh; the scale of the chorus also lacks the fourth. On the chorus, Roark is joined by two voices—presumably his children—one of which supplies the fourth that is absent from the melody. This is a good example of the general statement made above that the harmonies and accompaniments in the string bands tend to obliterate any traces of nonmajor or gapped scales.

Roark's banjo playing is characteristic of the frailing or clawhammer banjo style which thrived in eastern Kentucky (he lived in Pineville, in the southeast corner of the state).

I wish to the Lord I never been borned,
Or died when I was young;
I never would have seen them two brown eyes,
Or heard that clattering tongue, my love,
Or heard that clattering tongue.

Chorus
I truly understand that you love another man,
And your heart can no longer be mine.

Who will shoe your little feet,
Who will glove your hand;
Who will kiss your red rose cheeks
When I'm in the foreign land, my love,

When I'm in the foreign land.
(Chorus)

Remember what you told me, dear,
As we stood side by side;
You promised that you'd marry me
And be no other man's bride, my love,
And be no other man's bride.
(Chorus)

I never will listen what another woman says,
Let her hair be black or brown,
For I'd rather be on the top of some hill
And the rain a-pourin' down, down,
The rain a-pourin' down.
(Chorus)

My father will shoe my little feet,
My mother will glove my hand;
And you will kiss my red rose cheeks
When I'm in the foreign land, oh love,
When I'm in the foreign land.
(Chorus, twice)

Band 2
Old Joe Clark
Ben Jarrell, accompanied by DaCosta Woltz's Southern Broadcasters: vocal solo with banjo and fiddle accompaniment.
Recorded C. May 1927, in Richmond, Ind. Originally issued on Gennett 6223, Challenge 333, and Herwin 75565.

"Old Joe Clark" was for many decades one of the most popular dance tunes throughout the South. It is so widely spread, and sports such a great variety of stanzas, that it is impossible to determine its place of origin or its original lyrics. The song would seem to date from the last third of the nineteenth century; yet there are no references in print to occurrences prior to 1905, when folk-song collector E. C. Perrow heard it from mountain folk in east Tennessee. Although many of the verses occur in traditional black folk songs, I am not aware of any mention of Old Joe Clark himself outside of the white tradition. (For extensive references, see Botkin, 269-284; Randolph, vol.3, 324f.; and Brown, vol, 3, 120f.)

This rendition, probably played by Ben Jarrell and Frank Jenkins, is a good example of the older banjo-fiddle string-band style before the advent of the guitar into the Southern mountains. Jarrell and Jenkins, both born in Surry County, North Carolina, in the 1880s, were brought together for a recording session by their friend, DaCosta Woltz, at one time mayor of Galax, Virginia (just north, over the border), and a talented banjoist himself. Jarrell and Jenkins were outstanding musicians on both banjo and fiddle. The scale for "Old Joe Clark" is a little unusual in that the chorus is hexatonic (lacking the sixth), while the verse part has the full major scale with a flatted seventh as well. Some versions lack the natural seventh, giving considerable Mixolydian character to the tune.

I went to see my honey babe,
She's standing in the door;
Shoes and stockin's in her hand,
And her feet all over the floor.

Chorus
Fare you well, old Joe Clark, goodbye, Betsy Brown;
Fare you well, old Joe Clark, I'm bound to leave this town.

Never marry an old maid, boys,
I'll tell you the reason why;
Her neck's so long and stringy, boys,
I'm afraid she'll never die.
(Chorus)

Old Joe Clark's [indistinguishable]
I'll tell you the reason why;
[Dashed through?] my field the other day,
And [throwed down?] all my rye.
(Chorus)

Band 3
Billy Grimes, the Rover
The Shelor Family: Vocal solo accompanied by piano, banjo, and (possibly 2) fiddle(s).
Recorded August 3, 1927, in Bristol, Tenn.-Va. Originally issued on Victor 20865.

In the eighteenth century or earlier, the proposed alliance between a young maid of some social station and a rude livestock drover (a comparison of other texts suggests that "rover" was originally "drover") would have been the occasion for a tragic ballad, for the outcome of such a situation, according to the conventions of folk verse of the day, could only have been unhappy. (See "Katie Dear," Side Two, Band 4, for a ballad about parental opposition to two young lovers, though there the issue of a misalliance does not appear.) But later, in the nineteenth century, the subject could be treated more lightheartedly, and "Billy Grimes" seems to be a spoof on the foibles of a once rigidly stratified social order that has been corrupted by the rise of a mercantile ethic. Social station can now be bought by wealth.

Though the song has been widely collected in the United States (practically three dozen versions have been reported from Canada to Florida, and as far west as Nebraska), it has not been found in Britain. This is strange, since the song is almost surely the product of the English music hall. (In some American versions, the sums of money are in pounds or shillings, lending support to the assertion of British origins.) The song must date to the first half of the nineteenth century, because it appeared several times in sheet music or broadsides in the United States by 1870, and one singer recalled having learned it before the 1850s. It is tempting to speculate that the writer of "Billy Grimes" had in the back of his mind Albert Gordon Green's comic poem, "Old Grimes" (1827), which opens, "Old Grimes is dead— that good old man, we ne'er shall see him more." Compare the penultimate stanza of the version heard here.

The Shelor Family comes from Meadows of Dan in southwest Virginia, where, as I have noted

above, the piano as a folk instrument is not uncommon. “Billy Grimes” has sometimes been reported as sung in a pentatonic or hexatonic scale, but the Shelor Family employs the full major scale in their rendition.

Tomorrow morn I’ll be sixteen,
And Billy Grimes, the rover,
He’s popped the question to me, ma,
And he wants to be my lover.

And he’ll be here in the morning, ma,
To see me here quite early;
To take a pleasant walk with me,
Across yon fields of barley.

Oh, daughter dear, you shall not go,
There is no use in talking;
You shall not go with Billy Grimes
Across yon fields a-walking.

Just think of such presumption, too,
The dirty ugly rover;
I wonder where your pride has gone
To think of such a lover.

Oh, mamma dear, I must confess,
That Billy is quite clever;
But a nicer beau could not be found
In this wide world all over.

Oh, Jennie [?] dear, I am surprised
At your infatuation;
To think of having Billy Grimes
Would be ruination.

Oh, mamma dear, old Grimes is dead,
And Billy is the only
Surviving heir of all that’s left,
About six thousand yearly.

Oh, daughter dear, I did not hear
Your last remarks quite clearly;
But Billy is a nice young man,
And no doubt loves you dearly.

Band 4
George Washington
Pope’s Arkansas Mountaineers: Chism Brothers, fiddle and guitar;
John Sparrow, guitar; Tip McKinnie, banjo and vocal; second voice on harmony not identified.
Recorded February 6, 1928, in Memphis, Tenn. Originally issued on Victor 21469.

Parson Weems's charming fabrication about young George Washington's chopping down the cherry tree has endeared itself to the hearts of Americans ever since the good parson included it in the 1806 edition of his The Life and Memorable Actions of George Washington. In the version heard here a somewhat earthier response by George's father is suggested. A minstrel song titled "Old Zip Lize" and credited to one John Kelly appeared in The Four Comets Songster in the 1860s; its format was the same as that of our song, and it included a similar stanza about Washington:

> George Washington was a great man,
> A lie he'd never tell;
> But when he got that hatchet,
> Didn't he give that cherry tree hallelujah!

Other stanzas have no relation to the remainder of the song heard here. This type of song, where we are led to expect a naughty or suggestive word but then are cheated of it, achieved its greatest successes with the numerous parodies, some bawdy, of the 1882 sentimental hit "Sweet Violets."

Pope's Arkansas Mountaineers, perhaps the most popular Arkansas string band on record in the 1920s, was organized by J. D. Pope and his son Milton, who owned a piano store in Searcy, Arkansas. Unlike their other recordings, on "George Washington" there is a strange irregularity to the rhythm, due partly to an extra half-measure inserted at the end of certain lines, and partly to an apparent indecision on the group's part during the instrumental section as to when to repeat a chorus and when to move on to the next stanza.

George Washington's a nice young man,
A lie he wouldn't tell;
But when he cut the cherry tree,
His father gave him

> Hallelujah, hallelujah,
> Hallelujah, got glory in my soul.

My mother takes in washing,
She does it very well;
But when they fail to pay her,
You bet she gives them hallelujah, etc.

I taken my girl a-walking,
Down on the prairie dale;
And when the old folks find it out,
You bet they give us hallelujah, etc.

Oh, the engineer-man whistled,
The fireman ring the bell;
The conductor hollered, "All aboard,"
And away we go to hallelujah, etc.

Band 5
Little Maud
Bela Lam and His Greene County Singers: vocal quartet accompanied by banjo and guitar.
Recorded July 7, 1927, in New York. Originally issued on Okeh 45177.

Whereas "I Truly Understand" (Side One, Band 1) is exemplary of a fairly cohesive lyric song,

“Little Maud,” on the other hand, seems on first examination to be a collection of verses so loosely held together that it is fairly falling apart at the seams. As if to emphasize further the disjointedness of the piece, the banjo break before the first and third stanzas is to a distinctly faster tempo than the sung portions of the recording, from which it is set off by a rest beat.

What we have here is a fragment from a popular song of 1865, “Little Maud,” words by Thomas B. Aldrich, music by Joseph P. Webster, supplemented by the unrelated first and third stanzas. If we add here some of the other verses from the original we get a better picture of Aldrich’s text:

> The little short steps on the entry,
> The silver laugh in the hall;
> Oh, where is our dainty, our darling,
> The daintiest darling of all.

And:

> Oh, where are the lips full and melting,
> That looked up so pouting and red;
> When we dangled the sun-purpled bunches
> Of Isabells over her head.

We have, then, a typical Victorian sentimental ballad about a departed (most likely in death) little girl mourned by her family. However, as was often the case in these early-Victorian ballads, the circumstances of her departure are so circumspectly treated that the untrammeled imagination can conjure up any image from bubonic plague to elopement with a cattle drover. Lam’s very uncommon first stanza must come from some jailhouse ballad, as do the more familiar verses of the final stanza.

The four voices are distributed among a melody, a bassline type of harmony, and two high harmonies, the last occasionally in unison. The verse melody is sung to a very simple four-note scale (5, 1, 2, 3), to which are added 6 and 7 (below the tonic) for the chorus. The result bears little resemblance to the complex and dramatic melody that Webster composed.

Bela Lam and his Greene County Singers, from Greene County, Virginia, consisted of Lam, his wife and son, and J. Paul Meadows. They recorded eighteen songs at two sessions for Okeh, all but two or three of which were religious or homiletic pieces. No other examples of their music are available on LP at present.

One night I was sleeping on some lumber,
As quiet as any little mouse;
The policeman awoke me in my slumber,
And he took me to the city station house.

Chorus
Little Maud, little Maud, she’s the dearest darling of all. (repeat twice)

There is peaches ripe in the orchard,
There is apple red in the fall,
There is grapes hanging large in purple bunches,
She’s the dearest darling of all.
(Chorus)

I lost my pocketbook and money,
Likewise my gold watch and chain;
My crops [indistinguishable] are damaged,

And I haven't got a red cent to my name.
(Chorus)

Band 6
Cotton-Eyed Joe
Carter Brothers and Son: George Carter, fiddle and vocal; Andrew Carter, fiddle; Jimmie Carter, guitar
Recorded November 22, 1928, in Memphis, Tenn. Originally issued on Vocalion 5349

In their company ledgers, Vocalion executives described the several selections by the Carters as "fiddling records with guitar accompaniment and vocal effects." From this family trio came one of the most unusual string-band sounds to have been captured on disc. Two rather archaic features account for its strange quality. First is that the final note of the tune (which is hexatonic, lacking the seventh degree) is the fifth below the tonic, giving the tune a strong Mixolydian character. (It would be Mixolydian, lacking the third, if we regarded the final note as the tonic; but the rest of the tune, and the fact that the guitar returns to the I chord even while the fiddle plays the low fifth, leaves the strong impression of a conventional Ionian mode.) The other archaic characteristic is the "mouth music" or "diddling" in George Carter's vocal—the use of nonsense syllables almost as if to make the voice into another musical instrument. There are parts of the world where this device still survives—for example, in the Hebrides Islands off the coast of Scotland; but it has been found only rarely in the United States. The Carter Brothers and Son recorded altogether thirteen selections in 1928; on most of them George used some mouth music, and many had a strong Mixolydian character either because of the final note on the dominant, as here, or because of a flatted seventh.

The song "Cotton-Eyed Joe" has been widely reported throughout the South from both blacks and whites, though in recent decades it has disappeared from black tradition. In 1925 folk-song collector Dorothy Scarborough described several persons who recalled hearing the song from antebellum plantation slaves. The text is usually rather skimpy—the Carters' version is an extreme case—but Scarborough recovered enough words to suggest a rather complete story: Cotton- Eyed Joe was a black slave who stole the narrator's girl and carried her off to Tennessee, luring her away with the aid of hoodoo. (See Scarborough, 68- 70.)

The Carters were from Monroe County in northeastern Mississippi; George was born about 1869, and Andrew probably in 1878. The elder Carters were primarily cotton farmers whose love for music brought them before the microphone) only a few times, but enough to have preserved for posterity their wonderful legacy.

Had not been for the cotton-eyed Joe,
I'd a been married just forty years ago.

Dum-da-di-la-di-da-da-dee-dila-di-da-da,
Ya-da-da-da-doo-di-da-da-deedi-lam-day.

Note: For another version of this song see New World Records NW 287, Country Music: South and West.

Band 7

Going Down the Valley

Ernest V. Stoneman and His Dixie Mountaineers: Stoneman, vocal and guitar; Kahle Brewer, fiddle; Irma Frost, organ; vocal chorus by Hattie Stoneman and two or three others.
Recorded September 21, 1926, in New York, Originally issued on Victor 20531.

Though the passage of half a century has blurred some of the distinctions between pop and country music, the two forms have remained dissimilar in their use of religious music. Unlike most pop singers, country singers have always included sacred songs in their repertoires, and generally the musical style of presentation has not been greatly different from that employed with secular numbers. "We Are Going Down the Valley" was written about 1890, words by Jessie H. Brown, music by J. H. Fillmore. The original melody lacked the seventh degree, but had two accidentals (sharped second and fourth). It is generally the case that folk and hillbilly singers, when adapting the elaborate melodies of nineteenth- century songs and sentimental ballads to their repertoires, pare away any chromatic notes and considerably simplify the melody. The rendition heard here is a good example of this tendency: the accidental notes have been eliminated (as well as the natural fourth in the verse melody). In this particular case, however, this reduction has by no means made the melody less interesting or varied; on the contrary, other changes introduced in Stoneman's rendition considerably enliven the original. The text used here is identical with the original, save for the replacement of "river bank" by "river brink" toward the end of the second stanza. The four-part harmonies agree generally with the standard gospel hymnals, except that the lead male and female voices sing the melody in octaves.

Ernest V. "Pop" Stoneman was one of the patriarchs of early country music. Born in 1893 in Carroll County in southern Virginia, he earned his living variously in the mines, in the mills, and as a carpenter until 1924, when the phonographic successes of a fellow Virginian, Henry Whitter, prompted him to try his hand at the new medium. Between 1925 and 1929, Stoneman, sometimes joined by his wife or other musical friends from the Galax area, recorded over two hundred selections. Stoneman and his wife Hattie reared thirteen children, all of whom learned to play one or more instruments, and starting in the 1950s several of them turned to music as a principal profession. The Stonemans still constitute a successful Nashvillebased modern country-music aggregation, despite the fact that Pop himself died in 1968 and the personnel of the group has changed several times.

We are going down the valley one by one,
With our faces toward the setting of the sun;
Down the valley where the mournful cypress grows,
Where the stream of death in silence onward flows.

Chorus
We are going down the valley, going down the valley,
Going toward the setting of the sun;
We are going down the valley, going down the valley,
Going down the valley one by one.

We are going down the valley one by one,
When the labors of the weary day are done;
One by one, the cares of earth forever past,
We shall stand upon the river brink at last.
(Chorus)

We are going down the valley one by one,
Human comrade you or I will there have none;
But a tender hand will guide us lest we fall,
Christ is going down the valley with us all.
(Chorus)

Band 8
By the Cottage Door
The Perry County Music Makers: Nonnie Smith Presson, vocal and zither; Bulow Smith, vocal and guitar.
Recorded March 29, 1930, in Knoxville, Tenn. Originally issued on Vocalion 5443.

Although most of the selections included in this collection are considerably older than the performers themselves, we must not overlook the important contributions of the folk poets and folk musicians who enriched the early countrymusic repertoire with their own original creations. "By the Cottage Door," both in words and music (except for the apparently intrusive yodel), seems in every respect to he a sentimental lyric from the 1870s or 1880s; yet it was written in the late 1920s by Nonnie Presson, one half of the brother-sister team that constituted the Perry County Music Makers. She recounted to country- music histrorian Charles Wolfe the circumstances surrounding its composition:

> Bulow [her brother] and I had been running around with Henry Bone [their former manager] all winter, froze out and everything else, so he was boarding us...down here at Bakersville. Well, It was getting sort warm like, in March, and we'd been out all winter. Bulow and Miss Thornton, the lady that run the house, and her two daughters, had got out in the yard and were kind of cleaning up the yard. I had been writing on something else, and I was tired and stepped out and there was the warmest breeze hit me in the face. And I just got so homesick all of a sudden I thought I'd bust. I began to think of how I was drug around all winter in the cold. . . so when that warm breeze hit me in the face, another song hit me right there. (From "'We Play to Suit Ourselves': The Perry County Music Makers," by Charles Wolfe—see bibliography.)

Nonnie wrote one other stanza that the duo did not sing on this 1930 recording:

Softly and gently the south winds,
Bring us the spirit of spring again:
Waking the sleeping violets,
Down in the narrow glen.

Nonnie and her brother Bulow were born in Perry County, Tennessee, about 1897 and 1909, respectively. Nonnie began to play the zither rather by accident: when she was eight years old it was given to her father by a family friend of German descent. Fascinated by the strangesounding instrument, the young girl soon learned to play it, and stayed with it for seven decades.

Nonnie's theme—longing for home—was a widely recurrent one in the popular music of the last century. It has fallen from favor in the pop music of the last fifty years but lingers on in country music with a tenacity that would require a volume on the sociology of the South to be explained. The melody is simple but charming; the scale for the verse part of the song has one accidental note (a sharped fourth) and lacks the seventh; the chorus includes a full diatonic octave and a high second as well. The sharped fourth occurs on the second accented beat of the last line of the verse (on the word "home" in the first stanza), requiring the chorded accompaniment to go to the fifth

of the fifth, which makes the common chord sequence II7--V7-I. For the most part, Nonnie sings the melody and Bulow harmony— generally in sixths below the melody. But for the first half of the chorus they switch, and he sings the melody line while she sings harmony.

Sweetly the songbirds are singing,
Springtime is in the air;
Nature in all of her splendor
Tells me my home is not near.

Chorus
Oh, let me linger,
By the cottage door;
Oh, let me wander,
When the evening sun is low.
O-lee-o-laydee,
Take me home again.

Now as I gaze at the sunset,
Thinking of days gone by;
When I with playmates of childhood
Wandered beneath the blue sky.
(Chorus)

I can hear mother, dear mother,
Sing, "My child come home
Now I'm returning with springtime,
Never again to roam.
(Chorus)

Band 9
Carve That Possum
Uncle Dave Macon and His Fruitjar Drinkers: Macon, lead vocal and banjo; Sam McGee, guitar and vocal; Kirk McGee, fiddle and vocal; Mazy Todd, fiddle.
Recorded May 7, 1927, in New York. Originally issued on Vocalion 5151.

This rollicking dance tune by the effervescent Uncle Dave Macon dates back to the minstrel shows of the 1870s. It was written by the popular black minstrel Sam Lucas. The son of Ohio free blacks, Lucas began to tour as a minstrel about 1869 at the age of nineteen. He wrote this song, one of his most requested numbers, probably in the early 1870s. An 1875 newspaper claimed that he borrowed the melody from a black spiritual (after all, why should the angels have all the good tunes?), but at present this is difficult to verify. Macon surely does not sing the original melody; in fact, the first part of the tune sounds very much like another dance tune that Macon and the Fruit Jar Drinkers recorded on the same day—"Sail Away Ladies." Macon's melody is hexatonic, lacking the seventh. He is joined on the verses by the other members of the band, whose singing provides a calland- response pattern traceable to both Afro-American work songs and Anglo-American hymnody.

Out of his bottomless bag of banjo styles, Uncle Dave chooses a three-finger picking style for this number. Kirk McGee and Mazy Todd play fiddles mostly in unison, while Sam McGee provides rhythm foundation with the guitar. Macon's words differ somewhat from Lucas' text as it

appeared in his Careful Man Songster (Boston, 1881). In particular, his last stanza is not in Lucas' version at all and may be Uncle Dave's own creation.

Uncle Dave Macon was one of the giants of country music.Born in Warren County, Tennessee, in 1870, he was reared in Nashville, where his family owned a hotel that catered to theatrical people. There the teenager was thoroughly exposed to the songs, stories, and banjo styles of the minstrels and vaudevillians. He made his first recordings in 1924 at the age of fifty-four, and put some two hundred selections on disc between then and 1938. Nevertheless, records were a secondary career; like most artists in his field, Macon was better known through his personal appearances and his radio shows, in particular the Grand Ole Opry, on which he was a featured star for many years.

"Carve That Possum" will perhaps offend a few sensitive souls; yet it is important to note that Lucas was black, because it demonstrates that not only whites exploited the stereotyped images of blacks that minstrelsy relied upon so heavily.

My dog treed, I went to see (Carve him to the heart),
Dar was a possum up dat tree (Carve him to the heart);
And dat possum begin to grin (Carve him to the heart),
I reached up and took a pin (Carve him to the heart).

Chorus
Oh, carve that possum carve that possum children,
Carve that possum, children, oh carve him to his heart.

Carried him home and dressed him off (Carve, etc.),
Hung him out that night in the frost;
But the way to cook the possum sound,
First parboil, then bake him brown.
(Chorus)

Possum meat am good to eat,
Always fat and good and sweet;
Grease potatoes in the pan,
Sweetest eating in the land.
(Chorus)

Some eat early and some eat soon,
Some like possum and some like coon;
That possum just the thing for me,
Old Rattler's got another one up a tree.
(Chorus)

Side Two
Band 1
Molly Put the Kettle On
Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers, with Riley Puckett and
Clayton McMichen: Puckett, lead vocal and guitar: accompanied by
banjo and 2 or 3 fiddles
Recorded October 24, 1931, in Atlanta, Ga. Originally issued on Columbia 15746-D.

“Molly [or Polly] Put the Kettle On” has been a wellknown British country dance and nursery song since the 1790s, if not earlier. The more usual words are:

> Polly put the kettle on (repeat three times)
> We’ll all have tea.
>
> Sukey take it off again (repeat three times)
> They’ve all gone away.

The tune was known as “Jenny’s Baubee” at least as early as 1778. In the Skillet Lickers’ rendition the lyrics are combined with some familiar square-dance calls. This vigorous version is a good example of old-time stringband dance music at its wildest.

The Skillet Lickers were a north Georgia aggregation that revolved around three immensely popular musicians: Gid Tanner, Riley Puckett, and Clayton McMichen. Among them, in various combinations, they recorded some seven hundred numbers between 1924 and 1941. Several representative LP reissues of their work are currently available (including New World Records NW 235, Maple Leaf Rag: Ragtime in Rural America).

The salient characteristics of the Skillet Lickers’ sound were the powerful, distinct bass runs of guitarist Puckett; the twin fiddling (often in unison) by Clayton McMichen and either Lowe Stokes or Bert Layne; falsetto singing by Gid Tanner; and the banjo, generally played by Fate Norris, used primarily as a rhythm instrument. Although recordings may not be representative of the live sound that the band projected, to the listener the music is essentially just fiddles and guitar. As was generally the case among north Georgia string bands, the fiddles are played with rather short bow strokes, which helps to emphasize the rhythm. The guitar bass runs are built around the three basic chords, seldom played above the first position. By contrast, further to the west, and largely as a result of the influence of jazz and swing, country guitarists used much more sophisticated chords and did less singlestring picking, which tended to emphasize the rhythmic aspect of the guitar rather than its role in laying down a bass line.

Molly put the kettle on,
Jenny blow the dinner horn,
Molly put the kettle on.
We’ll all take tea.

Swing Sal, swing Sue,
Swing that gal with the run-down shoe.

Swing maw, swing paw,
Swing that gal from Arkansas.

Take a chew of tobaccer, promenade all,
Pull that calico from the wall.

Molly, etc.
Swing Sal, etc.
Molly, etc.

Band 2

Milwaukee Blues
Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers: Poole, vocal and banjo; Roy Harvey, guitar; Odell Smith, fiddle.
Recorded September 9, 1930, in Johnson City, Tenn. Originally issued on Columbia 15688-D.

It is difficult to imagine two more dissimilar string bands than the Skillet Lickers and the North Carolina Ramblers, though both were exceedingly popular through the 1920s in the Southeast. The Skillet Lickers are wild and vigorous; one can almost feel the fiddlebows slicing frenetically through the alcoholic atmosphere as band members shout, talk, sing, joke. and scream at one another without ever losing a beat. On the other hand, the North Carolina Ramblers are cool, carefully controlled, and dignified; each instrumental pattern is seemingly carefully prearranged so that none of the instruments gets in the way of another. Indeed, it is the chamber music of string bands. In contrast to the Skillet Lickers, the Ramblers use the banjo as a lead instrument on equal footing with the fiddle. The guitar in both bands provides a complex sequence of bass runs, but Harvey's tempo is more regular, without the double-time and quadrupletime runs that Puckett favors. And perhaps most responsible for the wonderfully bluesy sound of "Milwaukee Blues" are Smith's smooth, long bow strokes, sliding easily in and around the notes of the heptatonic melody, now lingering here, now syncopating there.

"Milwaukee Blues" is a difficult song to discuss in isolation; it is part of a large complex of hobo and railroad songs and ballads that were in vogue around the turn of the century. It was out of this family of songs that the original ballad of "Casey Jones" was first fashioned. "Milwaukee Blues" is closest to the vaudeville version of "Casey Jones" in the final stanza, but the first and fourth stanzas also recall lines in other variants of "Casey Jones" that have been collected.

"Milwaukee Blues" is not a ballad in the sense that the term is most often used (see John Pankake's introductory notes to New World Records NW 245, Oh My Little Darling: Folk Song Types), but it has considerably more narrative content than most lyric songs. The folklorist D. K. Wilgus has applied the term "blues ballad" to such pieces. There is indeed a story implicit in the lines of such a composition, but, in blues fashion, the words comment upon the drama more than expose its details. The blues ballad is the editorial to the broadside ballad's front-page story. Sometimes the underlying story is not so deeply hidden; in this case, however, one must examine related texts and fragments for a story, and even then, a great deal must be inferred.

Charlie Poole was born in 1892 in Alamance County, North Carolina, and learned to play banjo at an early age. Like many North Carolina banjo players, he used a three-finger picking style. Also, he greatly admired and was influenced by the classical and ragtime banjoists of his youth, such as Ves Ossman and Fred Van Eps. Guitarist Roy Harvey was born in Monroe County, West Virginia, in 1892, and most of his life, when he wasn't playing music professionally, he worked for the railroads.

One Tuesday morning and it looked like rain,
Around the curve come a passenger train;
On the blinds sat old Bill Jones,
Good old hobo and he's tryin' to get home.
Tryin' to get home, he's tryin' to get home;
He's a good old hobo and he's tryin' to get home.

Way down in Georgie on a tramp,
Roads are gettin' muddy and the leaves are gettin' damp;

I got to catch a freight train and leave this town,
'Cause [they] don't allow no hoboes a-hangin' around.

Hangin' around, yes, a-hangin' around;
'Cause they don't 'low no hoboes a-hangin' around.

I left Atlanta one morning 'fore day,
The brakeman said, "You'll have to pay
"Got no money, but I pawn my shoes,
I wanta go west, got the Milwaukee blues.
Got the Milwaukee blues, got the Milwaukee blues;
I wanta go west, got the Milwaukee blues."

Ol' Bill Jones said before he died,
"Fix the road so the 'boes can ride;
When they ride, they will ride the rods,
Put all trust in the hands of God.
In the hands of God, in the hands of God;
They'll put all trust in the hands of God."

Ol' Bill Jones said before he died,
There's two more roads he'd like to ride;
Fireman said, "What can it be?"
"Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe.
Santa Fe, yes, Santa Fe;
Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe."

Band 3
Corrina, Corrina
Ashley and Abernathy: probable personnel are Tom Ashley, lead vocal and guitar; Will Abernathy, harmonica and vocal; Gwen Foster, guitar and/or harmonica and vocal; Clarence Greene, fiddle and vocal.
Recorded December 2, 1931, in New York. Originally issued on Banner 32427, Oriole 8129, Romeo 5129, and Perfect 12800.

"Corrina" is the only song in this collection in the format of the blues stanza: three lines of eight (musical) beats each, in contrast to the usual English poetic stanza of four lines of four beats each. The first two lines of each stanza are textually identical, or nearly so; the third line is almost in the nature of a response. One might almost regard the three-line unit in terms of tension, reiteration, and resolution. Each of the three lines is divided approximately in half: the first four beats are taken up by the voice, the last four by the chorus or the instruments. The alternation between voice and response recalls the antiphonal character of many nineteenth-century black spirituals and worksongs, and it is from both of these musical gardens that the roots of the blues emerge.

Mountain whites adapted the blues format to their own musical needs early in the twentieth century; white blues, however, are characteristically more regular, less imaginative, and less brooding than their black counterparts. Furthermore, white blues are often performed by an ensemble, whereas black blues are more likely to be the product of a solo performer.

“Corrina” has long been a standard of hillbilly, blues, and jazz musicians alike. Yet it has not turned up in any scholarly folk-song collections. To my knowledge, the earliest appearance of “Corrina was on a 1926 recording by Blind Lemon Jefferson, but his version bore little resemblance to the familiar song as exemplified by the recording heard here. The earliest recordings of the standard version date from 1928-29; evidently the song rapidly rose to great popularity within a very short time of its first appearance on disc.

Thomas Clarence Ashley was born in 1895 in Bristol, on the Tennessee-Virginia border. He spent much of his youth as a musician, partly traveling with medicine shows, partly “busting” (i.e., busking, or street singing) by himself. The advent of phonograph records opened up another medium to him, and he made numerous recordings between 1928 and 1933. In the 1960s he enjoyed a second successful career with the then new revival of interest in folk music on college campuses across the country.

Positive identification of the accompanying musicians is not possible, as all played several instruments with facility. In any case, the prominent instruments on this piece are harmonica for lead melody and guitar for back-up rhythm. Ashley and his musical associates were generally able to do quite well without a fiddler in their band, letting either harmonica or banjo take the lead when necessary. On a slow, bluesy song like “Corrina” it is difficult to find a comfortable niche for a banjo. Ashley’s melody, like most versions of “Corrina,” is sung to a hexatonic scale (no seventh).

I left Corrina far across the sea
(Repeat Twice)
Wouldn’t write me no letter, doesn’t care for me.

I love Corrina, tell the world I do
(Repeat Twice)
A little more loving, let your heart be true.

Corrina, Corrina, what’s the matter now
(Repeat Twice)
Don’t write me no letters, don’t a-love me no how.

Corrina, Corrina, where’d you stay last night
(Repeat Twice)
Got in this morning, sun was shining bright.

Corrina, Corrina, it’s fare you well
(Repeat Twice)
I may be back here, may never tell.

Band 4
Katie Dear (Silver Dagger)
Callahan Brothers: Homer Callahan and Walter Callahan, vocal duet and guitars.
Recorded January 3, 1934, in New York. Originally issued on Banner 33103, Melotone M-13071, Oriole 8353, Perfect 13017, and Romeo 5353.

This ballad had its origins in an ancient pagan custom that once was widespread throughout Western Europe (see Baskervill). It was at one time the practice for a young lad to visit his

betrothed secretly and spend a night with her prior to marriage. This custom, called the Night Visit, was the subject of songs as early as the sixteenth century. Usually the sequence of events in such a ballad would be: (a) the arrival of the youth at his sweetheart's home, (b) his rapping at the window requesting admittance, (c) her refusal, on account of her parents' presence, (d) his threatening to leave, and finally (e) her capitulation. In each of these details the ballad mirrored actual practice. Opposition of the parents, if any, was evidently only token in nature, as in reality they endorsed the custom—despite strong opposition on the part of the Church.

"Katie Dear" is an amalgamation of such a Night Visit ballad with a native American ballad, "The Silver Dagger," a story of real parental opposition to marriage that ends in a double suicide. The concatenation of two separate stories may be accounted for by the fact that when the Night Visit custom fell into disuse, and all memory of it faded, the simple story of a young maid acquiescing to her lover's importunings was too bland to be interesting.

Family groups constituted an important element in country music from its earliest days, strongly reflecting the folk roots of the new genre. Half of the selections in the present collection are by family groups; husband-wife, parents- children, or siblings. In the 1930s large family groups became less common, but groups of siblings continued to play an important role. Such teams were generally marked by a careful blend of precisely timed vocals that could he achieved only after years of constantly singing together. Walter and Homer Callahan were one such duet. Born in 1910 and 1912 respectively, in Madison County, North Carolina, they began playing together in 1924 and made their first recordings a decade later. In recent decades the family unit has diminished in importance in Nashville-based modern country music, but in bluegrass and gospel music it is still an important element.

The Callahans' melody for "Katie Dear" is pentatonic, lacking the fourth and seventh degrees, but these notes are supplied in the vocal harmony. The text has a very nice symmetry to it, which tends to heighten the sense of inevitability in the development of the plot.

Oh, Katie dear, go ask your mama,
If you can be a bride of mine;
If she says yes, come back and tell me,
If she says no, we'll run away.

Oh, Willie dear, there s no use in asking,
For she's in her room a-taking a rest;
And by her side lies a silver dagger,
To slay the one that I love best.

Oh, Katie dear, go ask your papa,
If you can be a bride of mine;
If he says yes, come back and tell me;
If he says no, we'll run away.

Oh, Willie dear, there's no use in asking.
For he's in his room a-taking a rest;
And by his side lies a golden dagger,
To slay the one that I love best.

Then he picked up the silver dagger,
And stove it through his troubled heart;

Says “Goodbye Katie, goodbye darling,
I’ll die for the one that I love best.”

Then she picked up the bloody dagger,
And stove it through her lily white breast,
Sayin’ “Goodbye papa, goodbye mama,
I’ll die with the one that I love best.”

Band 5
A New Salty Dog
The Allen Brothers: Austin Allen, vocal and tenor banjo; Lee Allen, kazoo and guitar. Recorded November 22, 1930, in Memphis, Tenn. Originally issued on victor 23514, Bluebird B-5403, Montgomery Ward M-4750, RCA Victor 20-2132, and RCA LPV 552.

Even the folks back in the hills could not escape the lure of the jazz age. The Allen Brothers, of Franklin County, Tennessee, were so successful at assimilating the jazz and blues styles from the other side of the color barrier that Columbia decided to release two of their songs in its Race Records series. Some artists would have taken that as a compliment; the Allen Brothers, however, threatened to sue, and stopped recording for that label.

When they switched to Victor they rerecorded several of the numbers they had done for Columbia, including “Salty Dog Blues” which they renamed “A New Salty Dog.” Lexicographers have not provided a satisfactory account of the meaning and evolution of the phrase “salty dog.” As early as 1785, “salty” meant lecherous (or, literally, salacious); “salt bitch” was a dog in heat. In black slang of the twentieth century the phrase has been used with various implied meanings: sometimes, in the general sense of a sexually active person; other times, in connection with specific kinds of sexual behavior. To Lee Allen a salty dog was a “common person…who had a good time and did it in the wrong way.” The earliest use in a musical context was in blues singer Clara Smith’s 1926 recording “Salty Dog,” a considerably more outspoken piece of bawdry than the Allen Brothers’ relatively tame lyrics. Two other locutions in the text deserve comment: in the penultimate stanza, “bum” may be used in the same sense that we use it today, but there was a more specific meaning in the 1920s- a cheap prostitute. In the final stanza the word “nigras” is used. The first time the Allens recorded the song, in 1927, the word used was “niggers.” Quite likely there was a conscious attempt in the second recording to eliminate what some regarded as an offensive term. It should be noted, however, that these terms have not carried the same connotation at all times and in all areas. Many white mountain folk had used these terms without any intention of slurring, slighting, or offending. It is instructive to recall, in this connection, how much the connotative meaning of the word “colored” has changed in the past decade.

In lyrics, tune and instrumentation, “A New Salty Dog” is a good example of how much jazz and blues influences could alter string-band music. The partial circle of fifths chord pattern (I-VI7-II7- V7- I) has been used since the Baroque era, but to modern listeners it is perhaps more closely identified with ragtime music than any other style. In country music, almost every tune that uses a circle of fifths is labeled a “rag.”

Come here, mama, what’s on your mind?
Daddy wants to love you but you won’t give him time,
You ain’t nothin’ but a salty dog.
Oh, salty dog, ha ha ha, ha ha ha, hey hey hey.

I got a gal, she's six feet tall,
Sleeps in the kitchen with her feet in the hall,
She ain't nothin' but a salty dog,
Oh, salty dog, ha ha ha ha.

I got a gal, she's raised in the sticks,
She does her lovin' in a Packard Twin Six,
She ain't nothing but a salty dog,
Oh, salty dog, ha ha ha ha.

I got a gal, she rides a riverboat,
She'd make a good mule just leave his oats,
She ain't nothing but a salty dog,
Oh, salty dog, ha ha ha ha.

I got a gal, she looks so bum,
But she's got more ways of loving than Wrigley's got gum
She ain't nothing but a salty dog,
Oh, salty dog, ha ha ha ha.

Two little nigras layin' in the bed,
One rolled over and the other said,
"Ya ain't nothin' but a salty dog,"
Oh, salty dog, ha ha ha ha.

Band 6

Nancy Jane
The Fort Worth Doughboys: Milton Brown, lead vocal; Bob Wills, fiddle; Durwood Brown, guitar and vocal; C.H. "Sleepy" Johnson, tenor guitar. Recorded February 9, 1932, in Dallas, Texas. Originally issued on Victor 23653, Bluebird b-5257, Elctradisk, 2137, and Sunrise 2-3340.

By the mid-1930's there had emerged in the Texas-Oklahoma area, largely under the leadership of Bob wills and Milton Brown, a new type of dance music that combined many of the distinct musical genres that were current in the Southwest: country string band, jazz, swing, blues, Cajun, and Tex-Mex border music. The men who created this new musical hybrid called Western Swing grew up steeped in the older Anglo-American musical traditions of the Southwest but were acutely sensitive to the other musics around them. In the midst of an agricultural near-wasteland, a musical paradise flourished. Ten thousand Tom Joads who fled the Depression dustbowl for the lure of Edenic California, followed by a second wave of migrations to newly opened defense-plant jobs during World War II, spread the audience for this music into every Southern town and metropolis from the Mississippi to the Pacific. (More information and examples can be found on New World Records NW 287, Country music: South and West).

"Nancy Jane" was cut at Milton Brown and Bob Wills's first recording session (for a 1946 Wills recording, see New World Records NW 287, Country Music: South and West). In many respects it resembles "A New Salty Dog": both treat, in carefully expurgated lyrics, the sexuality of the "red-hot mamma" (before the term came to be applied specifically to female jazz singers); both utilize the circle of fifths chord progression; both have a heavy "uptown" temp and jazzy feeling.

But in “Nancy Jane” we can begin to hear the emerging sound that three or four years later would be recognized as Western Swing.

The line “She don’t go auto riding” in the penultimate stanza reminds us that the automobile- the most significant effect of which, in the first decades of the twentieth century, was near-eradication of class distinctions in America- had become, in the age of F. Scott Fitzgerald, the plaything of thrill-seeking teenagers.

I got a gal long and tall,
Sweet as she can be;
What she got nobody knows,
But it goes all right with me

Chorus
I’m crazy about Nancy Jane, (repeat twice)
Oh, when she starts lovin’ sure makes a hit with me.

Now, she don’t start to squabble,
She don’t raise no cain;
When she starts to do her stuff
It makes a bulldog break his chain.
(Chorus)

Now, she don’t have no girl friends,
She don’t run around;
When she starts to do her stuff
She makes a mule kick the stable down
(Chorus)

Now, she don’t wear no fine clothes,
She ain’t fine to see,
What she got nobody knows,
But it goes all right with me.
(Chorus)

We tell to you no stores
We tell to you no tales;
When she starts to do her stuff
She makes a tadpole hug a whale.
(Chorus)

She don’t go auto riding
She don’t take no chance’
When you go out with that gal
You got to wear asbestos pants.
(Chorus)

We went out walking the other day,
Sit down in the dirt;
My heart got jumpin’ and it got so hot,
Burned a hole in my undershirt.

(Chorus)

Band 7

Sweet Rose of Heaven

The Taylor-Griggs Louisiana melody Makers: vocal (duet?) accompanied by fiddle, guitar, mandolin, string bass. Recorded September 13, 1928, in Memphis, Tenn. Originally issued on Victor 21768.

An advertisement for early hillbilly records referred to the rural Southeast of the 1920s as the land where the fox-trot had not yet supplanted the waltz. Indeed, an album of string-band music such as this, with only two selections in three-quarter time (the present number and "By the Cottage Door," Side One, Band 8) does not give proportionate representation to waltz music which continues to be favored by fiddlers and string bands of the South even today.

Like most Southern waltzes, "Sweet Rose of Heaven" is performed to a thirty-two-bar tune, twice the length of most American folk tunes. But this rendition is atypical in its lack of any syncopation or melodic ornamentation. In these respects the performance is more reminiscent of a northern American or European group. The melody is in a major scale but lacking the fourth degree.

With this music filling the air, one can visualize that favorite rural American institution, the Saturday-night dance, at its most dignified. Part of the stateliness of this rendition owes to the bowed legato on the string bass, a rather uncommon sound in old-time string bands.

Sweet rose of heaven, you seem forever,
Blushing in the noonday sun, ah, the light of everyone;
And may your sweet lips fill life completely,
With your fragrance and your love of your home in heaven above.

Band 8

Banjo-Pickin' Girl

The Coon Creek Girls: Lily May Ledford, vocal and banjo; Rosie Ledford, guitar; Violet Koehler, bass and vocal. Recorded May 30, 1938, in Chicago. Originally issued on Vocalion 04413 and Okeh 04413.

This hard-driving banjo song conjures up the image of another fun-loving, wanderlusting mountain girl- the Appalachian equivalent of the jazz age's flapper. But the song's family tree has some far-reaching roots. The unusual verse form has been traced by ballad scholar B.H. Bronson to the middle of the sixteenth century and has provided the setting for such diverse pieces as the religious ballad "Captain Kidd" ("Oh my name is Captain Kidd, as I sailed, as I Sailed"); the criminal's lament "Sam Hall" ("My name it is Sam Hall, it is Sam Hall"); an Irish potato-famine song of the 1840's ("Oh, the praties they are small over here, over here"); the hymn "Wondrous Love" ("Oh, what wondrous love this is, O my soul, O my soul"); and, perhaps most familiar to modern American audiences, the World War I soldier's song "Mademoiselle from Armentiers":

Mademoiselle from Armentiers, parlez-vous? (repeat once)
Mademoiselle from Armentiers,

She hasn't been kissed in forty years,
Inky-dinky parlez-vous.

"Banjo-Pickin' Girl" is melodically and structurally also related to another group of American mountain banjo songs, including "Crawdad Song," "Sugar Baby," and "Red Apple Juice." Like many of these, "Banjo-Pickin' Girl" is cast in a gapped scale (pentatonic, lacking the fourth and the seventh).

Another antecedent of our song is a pop song from the 1870's titles "Baby Mine," the first stanza of which (as printed in Wood and Beasley's King Music Makers Songster, 1879) is:

I've a letter from thy sire, baby mine, baby mine,
I could read and never tire, baby mine, baby mine;
He is sailing o'er the sea, he is coming back to me,
He is coming back to me, baby mine, baby mine,
He is coming back to me, baby mine.

The Coon Creek Girls were organized around Lily May Ledford of Powell County, Kentucky, in the mid-1930's. Between 1937 and 1939 the quartet (the fourth member was Daisy Lagne, fiddler) was very popular on the Renfro Valley Barn Dance radio program, broadcasting out of Cincinnati. The career of this foursome culminated in a June 1939 performance (they were the only professional country to group to be invited) at the White House for President and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt and their guests, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. Lily May still performs occasionally at folk festivals and concerts and is one of the most memorable performers I have had the pleasure of hearing.

Oh, I'm going 'round the world, baby mine (baby mine);,
I'm going 'round the world, baby mine;
I'm going round this world, I'll be a banjo-pickin' girl,
I'm going 'round this world, baby mine.

Oh, I'm goin'to Tennessee, baby mine (baby mine),
I'm goin' to Tennessee, baby mine;
I'm goin' (to) Tennessee, don't you try to foller me,
I'm goin' (to) Tennessee, baby mine.

Oh, I'm goin' to Arkansas, baby mine (baby mine),
Oh, I'm goin' to Arkansas, baby mine;
I'm goin' to Arkansas, you stay here with maw and paw,
I'm goin' to Arkansas, baby mine.

Oh I'm goin' to Chattanooga, baby mine (baby mine),
Oh, I'm going to Chattanooga, baby mine;
I'm goin' to Chattanooga and from there on (to) Cuba,
I'm goin' to Chattanooga, baby mine.

Oh, I'm goin' to North Carolina, baby mine (baby mine),
I'm goin' to North Carolina, baby mine;
I'm goin' to North Carolina, and from there on to China,
I'm goin' to North Carolina, baby mine.

Oh, I'm goin' 'cross the ocean, baby min (baby mine),

I'm goin' 'cross the ocean, baby mine;
I'm goin' 'cross the ocean if I don't change my notion,
I'm goin' 'cross the ocean, baby mine.

Oh, if you ain't got no money, baby mine (baby mine),
If you ain't got no money, baby mine;
If you ain't got no money, get yourse'f another honey,
I'm goin' 'round this world baby mine.

I'm goin' 'round this world, baby mine (baby mine),
I'm goin' 'round this world, baby mine;
I'm goin' 'round this world, I'll be a banjo-pickin' girl,
I'm goin' 'round this world, baby mine.

Band9

Little Maggie
Wade Mainer, vocal and banjo; Zeke Morris, vocal and guitar; Steve Ledford, fiddle. Recorded August 2 (?), 1937 (location unknown). Orginially issued on Bluebird B-7201 and Montgomery Ward M-7309.

The western North Carolina nucleus of musicians revolving around the brothers J.E. and Wade Mainer of Buncombe County (Wade Mainer may also be heard on New World Records NW245, Oh My Little Darling; Folk Song Types) was an important link in the evolution from the older string-band sounds of the 1920s to the new bluegrass style of the 1940s. The Mainers also pioneered the new approach to music in that they were one of the earliest groups to fill out their repertoires with songs learned from phonograph recordings. An inevitable effect of radio and phonograph was the breakdown of musical regionalism. It became as easy to learn from a fiddler six states distance as from one in the next holler.

This rendition of "Little Maggie" was learned from a 1928 recording by G.B. Grayson and Henry Whitter (available on Old Timey LP 102), or possibly from Grayson in person. The song as both of these groups perform it is a collection of lyric stanzas similar in overall mood to "I Truly Understand" (Side One, Band 1). However, other versions of "Little Maggie" indicate a close relation to another Southern mountain blues ballad, "Darling Cory," a collection of stanzas focusing on a hard-drinking, fast-shooting mountain girl defending a moonshine still against the federal revenuers. (See Wilgus for a fuller discussion.)

The scale of "Little Maggie" is unusual. Basically it is a major scale but without a sixth and with a flatted as well as a natural seventh. The flatted seventh requires the accompaniment to go to the flatted VII chord, which imparts to the song one of its distinctive musical characteristics. The bluesy fiddle gives an imprecise quality to some of the notes, in particular the fifth, so much so that the pitch varies from a natural almost a fully flatted fifth.

Oh, yonder stands little Maggie,
With a dramglass in her hand;
She's a-passing by her troubles,
And a-courtin' another man.

Oh, how can I ever stand it,

For to see those two blue eyes,
They're shining like a diamond,
Like a diamond in the skies.
[Spoken: Poor little Maggie.]

Well, it's march me down to the station,
With my suitcase in my hand;
I'm goin' away for to leave you,
I'm going to some far and distant land.

For I'd rather be in some lonesome holler,
Where the sun don't never shine,
Than for you to be another man's darlin',
And no longer a darlin' of mine.
[Spoken: Little sweet thing.]

Sometimes I have one nickel,
Sometimes I have one dime;
Sometimes I have ten dollars,
Just to pay little Maggie's time.

Pretty Flowers was made for bloomin',
Pretty stars was made to shine;
Pretty girls was made for boys to love,
Little Maggie was made for mine.

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Albums featuring the performers heard on this recording

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The Callahan Brothers. Old Homestead OHM 90031.
Can't You Remember the Carolina Tar Heels. Bear Family 15507.
Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers, Vols l-4. County 505, 509, 516, and 540.
The Coon Creek Girls. County 712.

DaCosta Woltz's Southern Broadcasters—1927. County 524.
Echoes of the Ozarks, Vol.1. (Four selections by Pope's Arkansas Mountaineers.) County 518.
Ernest V. Stoneman and the Blue Ridge Corn Shuckers. Rounder 1008.
Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers—Hear These New Southern Fiddle and Guitar Records! Rounder 1005.
J. E. Mainer's Mountaineers, Vols 1 and 2. Old Timey LP 106 and 107.
Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's, Vols. 1 and 2. Folkways FA 2355 and 2359.
The Skillet Lickers, Vols. 1 and 2. County 506 and 526.
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Side One Total Time 25:45
1 I TRULY UNDERSTAND, YOU LOVE ANOTHER MAN 2:45
Shortbuckle Roark and Family

2 OLD JOE CLARK 2:41
Ben Jarrell, accompanied by DaCosta Woltz's Southern Broadcasters

3 BILLY GRIMES, THE ROVER 2:43
The Shelor Family

4 GEORGE WASHINGTON 3:32
Pope's Arkansas Mountaineers

5 LITTLE MAUD 2:44
Bela Lam and His Greene County Singers

6 COTTON-EYED JOE 2:38
The Carter Brothers and Son

7 GOING DOWN THE VALLEY 2:32
Ernest V. Stoneman and His Dixie Mountaineers

8 BY THE COTTAGE DOOR 2:35
The Perry County Music Makers

9 CARVE THAT POSSUM 2:54
Uncle Dave Macon and His Fruit Jar Drinkers

Side Two Total Time 26:59

1 MOLLY PUT THE KETTLE ON 3:13
Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers

2 MILWAUKEE BLUES 3:11
Charlie Poole and the North Carolina Ramblers

3 CORRINA, CORRINA 3:00
Ashley and Abernathy

4 KATIE DEAR (SILVER DAGGER) 2:56
The Callahan Brothers

5 A NEW SALTY DOG 2:34
(publ. Peer International Corporation)
The Allen Brothers

6 NANCY JANE 3:10
(publ. Unart Music Corp.)
The Fort Worth Doughboys

7 SWEET ROSE OF HEAVEN 3:11
Taylor-Griggs Louisiana Melody Makers

8 BANJO PICKIN' GIRL 2:48
The Coon Creek Girls

9 LITTLE MAGGIE 2:17
Wade Mainer, Zeke Morris, and Steve Ledford

Full discographic information and a complete list of the performers for each selection may be found within the individual discussions of the works in the liner notes.

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