

## ***Country Music: South and West***

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Early country music has long had the reputation of being a pristine folk music, an archaic holdover from a past deeply obscured by time. This reputation was powerfully reinforced by English folklorist Cecil Sharp's 1916-18 trip to the Appalachians, where he found ancient ballads far better preserved than in Britain. It has been further enhanced by the genuine folk songs found on early recordings done by field men and talent scouts for major record companies in the 1920s who scoured the hills and plains for what was then called "hillbilly music."

Although this supposition is based on substantial fact, it is on the whole not true. From its earliest documentation (made a great deal easier by the advent of recordings) the folk music that was to become commercial country music displays an exceedingly wide and rich variety of sources.

There were fiddle tunes reminiscent of highland bagpipes, and English ballads that survived their journey intact. There were Irish tunes that were transplanted but transmogrified and became the basis—with new lyrics—for the cowboy songs of the West. And there were the sentimental parlor songs of the 1880s and 1890s, which have composed a large part of country-music repertoire from "Wildwood Flower" to "I'll Be All Smiles Tonight." There was the blues of the black man, and the guitar and the banjo, instruments that he introduced to the mountaineer. There was a score of other ethnic strains: polkas and their attendant accordion from central Europe; Norteño songs and the Mariachi brass from Mexico; Swiss yodeling; the striking fiddling and rich dialect of the Cajuns (Acadians) of southwest Louisiana; the dreamy tunes and the steel guitar from Hawaii; the pomp of small-town brass bands; the foursquare harmony and melody of Protestant hymns; and heavy borrowing from jazz and swing. Country musicians have always been quick to adapt other music to enrich their own.

Records and then radio accelerated this crosscultural phenomenon. The first country record is said to have been made on June 30, 1922: Eck Robertson's recording of an old squaredance fiddle tune, "Sally Goodin," for Okeh Records in New York. Although this was coincidental with the beginning of the radio age (the first radio barn dance came the same year on WBAP in Fort Worth, Texas), the technology and equipment for receiving the radio signal were new and expensive, while the record player had been available through mail-order catalogues, since the early 1900s and was firmly established throughout the nation. In time, of course, radio was sold throughout the United States the same way.

With the coming of records and radio, some singers and players found that a living could be made in a field that had for so long been a pleasurable hobby for entertaining friends at country house parties, where rugs were rolled back and square dancing lasted late into the night. And when Vernon Dalhart, an aspiring light-opera singer, recorded the million-selling "Prisoner's Song" in 1925, the vast market for this music was dramatically exposed, and a flood of new talent and new hits followed: Carl T. Sprague's cowboy ballad of the following year, "When the Work's All Done This Fall"; Dalhart's "Death of Floyd Collins" and "The Letter Edged in Black"; and, in 1927, the remarkable discovery of Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family, among the most important figures in country-music history. The same era also saw the founding of the two major radio barn dances—variety shows simulating old-fashioned get-togethers in the house-party tradition—of country music's early period, the "National Barn Dance" over WLS in Chicago and the still extremely popular "Grand Ole Opry" over WSM in Nashville.

Within the first five years of commercial country music, then, the main traditions that have shaped country music to this day were recorded: the instrumental/fiddle-band tradition of Eck Robertson, the solo-singer/saga-song tradition of Vernon Dalhart, the cowboy song of Carl T. Sprague, the mountain harmony of the Carter Family, and the blues of Jimmie Rodgers.

Before the professional demands of the barndance stage and the Victrola, musicians had been content to perform hoary versions of ancient ballads or pretty much the same set of fiddle tunes at parties and dances. Now they were compelled to come up with new songs, tunes, and ideas. Some—like A. P. Carter of the Carter Family—reworked and adapted folk material, while many others used popular songs for additional repertoire. Jimmie Rodgers both adapted folk blues and wrote his own sentimental songs in a semi-popular vein, and many other entertainers began writing their own songs. The 1920s gave birth to the professional songwriter. Bob Miller and Carson J. Robison (a Kansan transplanted to Tin Pan Alley) became the best known; their specialty was topical event songs, a contemporary continuation of the British broadside tradition, which dates back well over two centuries. "The Morro Castle Disaster," "The Death of Kathy Fiscus," "The Death of Floyd Collins," and many more became extremely popular for brief periods after the events they celebrated. They were the first hits of a music that was to become increasingly ephemeral, increasingly dependent on popular rather than traditional music.

The early 1930s saw the rise of a far greater number of singer-writers, but primarily on the east and west coasts; in the Southeast the string bands and ever more popular mandolin-guitar duets remained extremely traditional in repertoire until well into the 1940s. The coasts were more progressive because country writers, singers, and players there were close to the mainstream of popular music and the popular music business.

But why Texas musicians evolved in such a radically different way is more puzzling. Early in the century the music of Texas resembled that of the Southeast: the fiddle was the predominant instrument, with guitar, five-string banjo, or occasionally piano providing rhythm. Repertoire, too, was similar, stemming largely from the same pool of fiddle tunes. This much is not surprising, for a great many Texans, from Sam Houston and Davy Crockett to the fiddling relatives of Bob Wills and Bill Boyd, were transplanted Tennesseans who had made their way west in search of opportunity.

In the 1920s and 1930s, however, while the music of the Southeast remained quite conservative, the fiddle bands of the Southwest began assimilating pop music, blues, ragtime, Norteño and Mariachi, and Cajun styles to develop western swing, country music's answer to the national dance-band craze of the era. Although the big western bands resembled the dance bands—both had horn sections, drums, and the like—western swing was still country, with the sound of fiddles and electrified Hawaiian guitar (which became known as the steel guitar) predominant.

The dance-band boom gave western swing its greatest boost. As small roadside taverns opened, smaller dance bands sprang up. But the bands in these honky-tonks played a different music from the dreamy swing-band style—their focus was on lyrics and a steady beat, and they performed songs of increasingly harsh honesty on the formerly taboo subjects of alcohol, infidelity, and divorce. Honky-tonk style is still thriving today.

World War II brought about the most dramatic changes of all, for war-weary veterans, hardened by the grimness of armed combat, returned to a far different America, a harder and colder nation that demanded reality, however painful, from its songs. Left behind were the swinging dance bands, the romantic songs of the singing cowboys, the plaintive songs of nostalgia for mother, home, and land of the traditional singers of the Southeast.

But for all the changes country music was forced through at the time and ever since, it remained true to the sources exposed in that initial recording period of 1922-27. It has remained a traditional music able to accept a wide variety of musical influences without losing its identity, without losing its appeal to those who find beauty and truth in straight-forward and deeply felt music and lyrics.

Regardless of region, race, or income we all share certain emotions at one time or another: love of family, the pain of lost love, fascination with dramatic events, devotion to deity, wanderlust, the joy of happy times. These universals are the foundation of country music, as displayed in these songs of the music's early period and as demonstrable today. As long as human beings continue to feel basic and powerful emotions there will be country music, for beyond all the stylistic, regional, and ethnic variations in which it exists, it has always been music of the heart.

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## **Side One**

### **Georgia Wildcat Breakdown** (Clayton McMichen)

Clayton McMichen and His Georgia Wildcats: Clayton McMichen and Bert Layne, fiddles; Hoyt "Slim" Bryant, Pat Perryman, and Jack Dunigan, guitars; Perry Becketl, banjo. *Recorded August, 1932, in New York. Originally released on Crown Records, number unknown.*

Clayton McMichen (1900- 1970), from Altoona, Georgia, both led and was a member of several important early string bands of the Southeast. A constant experimenter, he added a clarinet to his band as early as 1925, yet he was quite capable of first-rate old-time music such as "Georgia Wildcat Breakdown," which he also recorded with the Skillet Lickers as "McMichen's Breakdown." It is a dance tune that vividly captures the genuine flavor of a square dance, complete with calls, hollers, and off-the-cuff comments among the musicians.

An early member of the Skillet Lickers, one of the most important old-time string bands, McMichen also played and recorded with Jimmie Rodgers and for years led his own band, the Georgia Wildcats. He was one of country music's most influential fiddlers, and one of the most durable—he won his first national fiddle championship in 1926, his last in 1952—and continued to display his remarkable versatility throughout his long life, leading a Dixieland band in Louisville in his later years.

## **Band 2**

### ***Blue Yodel No. 11*** (Jimmie Rodgers)

Jimmie Rodgers, vocal and guitar; Billy Burke, guitar. *Recorded November 27, 1929, in Atlanta. Originally released on Victor 23796.*

In 1927 a tubercular exbrakeman named James Charles Rodgers (1897-1933) recorded a song called “Blue Yodel” in his second session for Victor. Few at the time would have thought that this song would launch the most celebrated career in country music until that of Hank Williams some two decades later. “Blue Yodel,” which due to its popularity became the first of thirteen songs with that title, was simply a traditional twelve-bar blues with the addition of Rodgers’ unique yodel tagging each verse. Unlike the athletic Swiss yodel, Rodgers’ “blue yodel” was a moaning expression of pain and loneliness. It was imitated to some degree by virtually all country singers, from Gene Autry and Jimmie Davis in Rodgers’ day to Merle Haggard in the present. “Blue Yodel No. 11,” like all other blue yodels, is earthy, graphic, pungent, and ironic yet expresses sorrow as well. Jimmie Rodgers’ career was brief —six years—but explosive, and his record sales continue strongly to this day.

I’ve got a gal, I give her presents by the score  
I’ve got a gal, I give her presents by the score  
No matter how many presents I  
give her, she’s always wanting more.  
(Yodel)

Now lookahere, sweet baby, you sure  
don’t treat me fair  
Lookahere, sweet mama, you  
sure don’t treat me fair  
‘Cause the presents you want  
would break a multimillionaire.  
(Yodel)

You want furs and diamonds, a  
fur coat made of seal  
You want furs and diamonds, a  
fur coat made of seal (Spoken:  
Killin’ me!)  
But everything you want, you  
want an automobile.  
(Yodel)

I believe to my soul, somebody’s  
been riding my mule  
I believe to my soul, somebody’s  
been riding my mule  
(Spoken: It’s the truth,  
honey!)  
‘Cause every time I want to  
ride, she acts such a doggone  
fool.  
(Yodel)

You may call yourself the  
meanest girl in town  
You may call yourself the  
meanest girl in town  
But let me tell you, baby, I’m  
gonna turn your damper down.  
(Yodel)

Listen here, baby, that's all I  
got to say  
Listen here, sweet mama, that's  
all I have to say (Spoken:  
That's all, honey.)  
I know you're gwine to leave  
but you'll miss your daddy  
someday.  
(Yodel)

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### **Band 3**

#### ***Sweet Fern*** (A. P. Carter)

The Carter Family. Sara Carter, lead vocal and rhythm guitar; Maybelle Carter, vocal harmony and steel guitar; A. P. Carter, vocal harmony. *Recorded February 14, 1929, in Camden, N.J. Originally released on Victor 40126.*

Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family were both discovered by Ralph Peer, a Victor talent scout, and both first recorded in Bristol, Virginia, during the same week in August, 1927.

In many ways the music of the Carter Family is at the opposite end of the country-music spectrum from the bluesy side of Jimmie Rodgers (although "Sweet Fern" shows Rodgers' influence in its yodeling chorus). The Carters' music was as haunting, mournful, and beautiful as the Appalachians from which it came, and as tense and repressed as the mountain people themselves. The Family consisted of A. P. Carter, leader and bass singer; his wife Sara, whose low, powerful voice is one of the most distinctive in country-music history; and his sister-in-law Maybelle who, still active after a career of half a century, now tours with the Johnny Cash show.

While they were together (1927-43), the music of the original Carter Family (Maybelle later led a group of the same name consisting of herself and her three daughters) was steadfast in its adherence to the old-time mountain sound. This and the wealth of folk material A. P. Carter went to great pains to collect have made them a favorite group among folklorists and musicologists as well as fans.

Springtime is coming, sweet  
lonesome bird;  
Your echo in the woodland I  
hear.  
Down in the meadow so lonesome  
you're singing  
While the moonlight is shining  
so clear.  
Chorus  
But I know he's away in a far  
distant land,  
A land that is over the sea.  
Go fly to him singing your  
sweet little song  
And tell him to come back to me.  
Sweet Fern, Sweet Fern  
Sweet Fern, Sweet Fern  
Oh tell me is my darling still  
true.  
Sweet Fern, Sweet Fern  
Sweet Fern, Sweet Fern  
I'll be just as happy as you.  
(Yodel)

Oh tell me, Sweet Fern, is he  
thinking of me  
And the promise he made long  
ago?  
He said he'd return from over  
the sea.  
Oh why do the years go so slow?  
(Chorus)

Upon my finger he placed a  
small ring  
On the day he was leaving his  
home.  
I promised I'd be his own dear  
little girl  
And love him where ever he'd  
roam.  
(Chorus)

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#### **Band 4**

#### ***Dreaming with Tears in My Eyes*** (Jimmie Rodgers and Waldo L. O'Neal)

Jimmie Rodgers, vocal and guitar.

*Recorded May 18, 1933, in New York. Originally released on Bluebird B-7600.*

Jimmie Rodgers' nonbluesy side was expressed in sentimental songs, many of which he wrote or cowrote in a style not unlike the popular music of the preceding decade. The combination of the warmth of his voice and the direct simplicity of his songs accounted for as much of his popularity as did his blue yodels and is a large part of his claim to the title of father of modern country music.

The intimate quality of his voice, a model for many who followed, was in a sense made possible by technology. Before the advent of an electrical recording process in 1925, only big-voiced stagy singers whose volume and tone fell into the range most readily recordable on acoustical equipment, where the singer literally bellowed into a horn, recorded well. The infinitely more sensitive electrical recording and the microphone made possible accurate and pleasant recordings of singers with soft, subtle voices like Jimmie Rodgers.

Jimmie recorded "Dreaming with Tears in My Eyes" only eight days before his death from tuberculosis. His voice was remarkably strong, given that physically he was so weak by this time that he had to rest on a cot in the studio between takes.

My heart is longing for you.  
dear;  
I cared for you more than you  
knew.  
Though you have broken each  
promise  
And yesterday's dreams are  
untrue,  
Alone I'll be yearning tomorrow  
When sunshine brings  
mem'ries of you.  
My sunshine will turn into  
sorrow  
As I dream of the love we once  
knew.

**Chorus**

Why should I always be lonely  
When sunny and blue are the  
skies?  
While shadows of loneliness  
linger  
I'm dreaming with tears in my  
eyes.  
(Yodel)

Why did you promise me,  
sweetheart,  
Never to leave me alone?  
Yesterday's sunshine has faded;  
Your love was not true like my  
own.  
Alone I'll be yearning tomorrow  
When sunshine brings  
mem'ries of you.  
My sunshine will turn into  
sorrow  
As I dream of the love we once  
knew.  
(Chorus)

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**Band 5*****Gospel Ship*** (A. P. Carter)

The Carter Family: Sara Carter, lead vocal and rhythm guitar; Maybelle Carter, vocal harmony and lead guitar; A. P. Carter, vocal harmony. *Recorded May 6, 1935, in New York. Originally released on the American Record Company labels (Melotone, Banner, Oriole, Romeo, and Perfect) 60756.*

Much of the old-time groups' repertoire consists of hymns or religious songs. This recording exemplifies not only this but also the clear harmony singing (a direct outgrowth of church music) that typified southeastern country music after the Carter Family popularized it. It also beautifully illustrates the distinctive guitar playing of Maybelle Carter, a shy mountain girl who was to create a style, called the Carter Family lick, that influenced every other country guitarist. Instead of simple strumming or picking the melody on the upper strings as in blues style, she picked the melody on the lower strings with her thumb while brushing the higher strings with her index finger for rhythm. Merle Travis' blues finger style is the only other style that approaches it as a major influence.

**Chorus**

I'm going to take a trip in that  
old gospel ship.  
I'm going far beyond the sky.  
I'm going to shout and sing till  
the heavens ring  
When I bid this world goodbye.  
I have good news to bring, and  
that is why I sing;  
All my joys with you I'll share:  
I'm going to take a trip in that  
old gospel ship  
And go sailing through the air.  
(Chorus)

I can scarcely wait; I know I  
won't be late:  
I'll spend my time in prayer.  
And when the ship comes in I'll  
leave this world of sin  
And go sailing through the air.  
(Chorus)  
If you are ashamed of me you  
ought not to be.  
Guess you'd better have a care:  
If too much fault you find you  
will sure be left behind  
While I'm sailing through the  
air. (Chorus)

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## **Band 6**

***Fais Pas Ça (Don't Do That)*** (Richard M. Jones)

The Hackberry Ramblers. Probable personnel: Luderin Darbonne, leader and fiddle; Lennis Sonnier, vocal and guitar; Edwin Duhon, mandolin; Joe Werner and Lonnie Rainwater, guitars; Floyd Rainwater, bass.

*Recorded 1937. Originally released on Bluebird B-2040.*

Cajun music is one of country music's richest subgenres, a musical stew as thick as gumbo, a music that has both influenced and been influenced by mainstream country music. The Hackberry Ramblers made the most of this cross-cultural pollination and consequently became the first really popular Cajun band in recording.

The influence of the blues is most evident here ("Fais Pas Ça" is a version of the old blues classic "Trouble in Mind"). Yet in instrumentation the Hackberry Ramblers were very much in the southeastern string-band mold, while later in their career the feel of western swing permeated their music. The peculiar and charming Cajun patois adds strongly to the flavor of this exotic ethnic mix.

The Hackberry Ramblers broke up in 1939. The leader, Luderin Darbonne, re-formed the band in the 1960s to record and to perform at folk festivals and at weekend dances in small taverns.

Chère, 'tite fille, fais pas ça  
Faut pas tu pleure et misérer  
Faut pas tu m'fais t'aimer  
Si tu aimes un autre.  
Chère, 'tite fille, fais pas ça  
Faut pas tu pleure et moi  
t'aimer  
Faut pas tu m'fais t'aimer  
Un jour quand tu aimes un  
autre.

Dear little girl, don't do that  
You must not cry and suffer  
You must not make me love you  
If you love another.

Dear little girl, don't do that  
You must not cry and I must not  
love you  
You must not make me love you  
One day when you love another.  
*(Transcribed and translated Dorothy Horstman)*

## **Band 7**

### ***The Last Roundup*** (Billy Hill)

Gene Autry, vocal, with studio orchestra. *Recorded October 9, 1933, in Chicago. Originally released on Conqueror 8191.*

Up to this time Gene Autry (born in 1907 on a ranch near Tioga, Texas) had recorded carbon-copy blue yodels and sentimental songs; the early influence of Jimmie Rodgers is still apparent here on Autry's first hit record with a western theme. But records like "The Last Roundup," in his own emerging style, led the handsome young singer to a film career of major proportions in the character he pioneered and popularized: the singing cowboy. This character was to create a film and music genre of its own and build an industry around it.

Few country musicians have had as much world-wide acclaim or influence as Autry. He became one of the best and certainly the most popular country singer in the years before World War II. Quick to realize the changing American mood (and the importance of television) after the war, Autry concentrated more and more on business after his return from the Army Air Corps and became a multimillionaire in the process.

His success in accumulating glamour and wealth has tended to obscure his powerful effect on country music. With the heroic yet good-guy image of the movie cowboy, he and the singing cowboys who followed him added dignity to a music too long held in undeserved scorn as "hillbilly."

(Yodel)

I'm headin' for the last roundup,  
Gonna saddle old Paint for the last time and ride.  
So long, old pal, it's time your tears were dried.  
I'm headin' for the last roundup.

### **Chorus**

Get along, little dogies, get  
along, get along,  
Get along, little dogies, get  
along.  
Get along, little dogies, get  
along, get along,  
Get along, little dogies, get  
along.

I'm heading for the last roundup,  
To the faraway ranch of the boss up in the sky.  
Where the strays are roped and branded there go I.  
I'm headin' for the last roundup. (Yodel)  
I'm headin' for the last roundup.  
(Chorus)  
I'm heading for the last roundup,  
Gonna saddle Old Paint for the last time and ride.  
So long, old pal, it's time your tears were dried.  
I'm headin' for the last roundup.

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## **Band 8**

### ***The Forgotten Soldier Boy*** (Bert Layne)

The Monroe Brothers: Charlie Monroe, lead vocal and guitar; Bill Monroe, vocal and mandolin.

*Recorded October 12, 1936, in Charlotte, N.C. Originally released on Bluebird B-6829.*

The Monroe Brothers, Charlie (1903-1975) and Bill (born 1911), of Rosine, Kentucky, were among the most influential country musicians, both together and in separate careers with their own bands after they dissolved their partnership in 1938. Bill's fiery mandolin work brought that relatively obscure instrument of Italian origin into the country-music mainstream, and his soaring tenor voice was to be the source of the country-music subgenre called bluegrass, in which he has been famous since the 1940s. Charlie's high, straightforward lead voice is a classic in the southeastern country-music mold, and his strong, solid rhythm-guitar playing also contributed to bluegrass.

"The Forgotten Soldier Boy" is atypical of the Monroe Brothers' repertoire, most of which consists of earnest hymns and rousing fun tunes played at breakneck speed. The moderate speed of "The Forgotten Soldier Boy," and especially the explicit social commentary, are anomalous to the Monroe Brothers' style.

Charlie Monroe's Kentucky Pardners became one of the most popular country bands of the 1940s, while Bill Monroe's Blue Grass Boys became one of the handful of genuine country music innovators, developing a style more popular today than ever before.

I'm just a poor ex-soldier boy  
that's broken down and blue;  
I fought out in the great World  
War for the old red, white, and blue.  
I left my parents and my girl I  
loved, to France did go  
And fought out on the battlefield  
through hunger, sleet, and snow.

I saw my buddies dying, and  
some shell shocked and torn  
Although we never faltered at  
the battle of Amarn  
And we were told when we left  
home we'd be heroes of the land,  
So we came back and found no  
one would lend a helping hand.  
They promised gold and silver,  
and bid us all adieu.  
They said they'd welcome us  
back home when the terrible  
war was through.

We fought until the war was  
o'er, they said we'd won the fight,  
But we have no job nor money,  
no place to sleep at night.  
They called us wandering boys  
bums, asking for shelter and  
bread  
Although we fought in no man's  
land and a-many poor boy is  
dead.  
So listen to my story and lend a  
helping hand  
To the poor forgotten soldier  
boy who fought to save our  
land.

### **Band 9**

#### ***Ida, Sweet as Apple Cider*** (Eddie Leonard)

Milton Brown and His Brownies: Milton Brown, vocal; Cliff Bruner and Cecil Brower, fiddles; Bob Dunn, steel guitar; Durwood Brown, rhythm guitar; Ocie Stockard, banjo; Fred "Papa" Calhoun, piano; Wanna Coffman, bass.

*Recorded March, 1936, in New Orleans. Originally released on Decca 46002.*

Both Milton Brown and Bob Wills apprenticed in a band called the Light Crust Doughboys, each man eventually leaving to form bands that better reflected their experimental approaches to what was to become western swing. In Brown's day his influence was as strong as Wills's, but his career and life were cut short by an auto accident in 1936.

This recording of a pop hit dating back to 1903 (and the theme song of the vaudevillian Eddie Cantor) exemplifies early western swing; putting country swing to old pop songs; Brown's smooth, clear, precise tenor voice; a larger band than had been common in older country music; the exciting sound of twin fiddles in harmony; and the daring, jazzy playing of Bob Dunn, the first country musician to electrify his steel guitar. His hot solos imitate the syncopated blasts of horn players in the thriving jazz bands of the time.

Western swing was easily the most exciting, experimental popular music of the 1930s and 1940s, and was country music's melting pot for two decades, as well as the home of its most innovative musicians. It slumped in popularity after World War II and virtually died with the onslaught of rock 'n' roll the late 1950s, but is currently undergoing a tremendous resurgence of interest.

Ida, sweet as apple cider,  
Sweeter than all I know.  
Come out in the silv'ry moonlight,  
Our love will whisper so soft  
and low.  
Seems 'though I can't live  
without you,  
Listen, oh, honey do.  
Oh Ida, I idolize ya,  
I love you Ida, love you 'deed I do.  
Ida, sweet as apple cider,  
I love you, Ida, love you 'deed I do.

### **Band 10**

#### ***There'll Come a Time*** (Charles K. Harris)

The Blue Sky Boys: Earl Bolick, lead vocal and guitar; Bill Bolick, vocal and mandolin.

*Recorded June 16, 1936, in Charlotte, N.C. Originally released on Bluebird B-6538.*

Bill and Earl Bolick, of Hickory, North Carolina, were only eighteen and sixteen respectively when they recorded "There'll Come a Time," but their musical integrity always displayed a maturity beyond their years. Rock-ribbed devotees of genuine old-time country music, they recorded several of the finest versions of British broadside ballads ever preserved. Yet their repertoire included hymns, love songs, and sentimental songs of the 1890s like "There'll Come a Time" (1895), which is a fine example of the plaintive, haunting quality of their singing.

World War II interrupted their career for five years, and although they were successful after the war, they split up in 1951. Since then they have come together only infrequently for recordings and folk-festival appearances. Still only in their late fifties, they sound as good today as they did in their youth. They are among the finest, if not the finest, examples of the sincerity and dignity of mountain music.

Why are you sad, papa my darling?  
Why are those tears falling  
today?  
Have I done wrong, pray, please  
tell me,  
Have I been naughty? Tell me I  
pray.

Oh, no, my child, you are an  
angel;

There's not a heart that's truer  
than thine.

I was just thinking someday  
you'll leave me  
Just as your dear mother did.  
There'll come a time.

Chorus

There'll come a time some day  
When I've passed away.

There'll be no papa to guide you  
From day to day.

Tell me about Mama, my darling,  
Tell me about her I pray.

Why did she go? Why did she  
leave us?

Why is her name never mentioned  
today?

Listen my child, I'll tell you  
about her:

Your mother, child, left home  
one night.

She fled, alas, fled with another.  
'Tis an old story, faded from  
sight.

One year ago back to the old  
home

She came to die, yes, baby  
mine.

That's why I fear some day  
you'll leave me

Just as your mother did.

There'll come a time.

(Chorus)

Second chorus

Think well of all I've said:

Honor the man you wed.

Always remember my story.

There'll come a time.

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## **Side Two**

### **Band 1**

#### ***I Wanna Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart*** (Patsy Montana)

Patsy Montana and the Prairie Ramblers: Patsy Montana, vocal and guitar; Willie Thawl, clarinet; Tex Atchison, fiddle; Chick Hurt, mandolin; Salty Holmes, guitar; John Brown, piano; Jack Taylor, bass.

*Recorded August 16, 1935, in Chicago. Originally released on Vocalion 03010.*

A member of a "National Barn Dance" group, the Prairie Ramblers, Patsy Montana (real name Rubye Blevins; born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1914) became country music's first woman to make a millionselling record, "I Wanna Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart." The fascination with the life of the cowboy inherent in this catchy song symbolized the nation's renewed interest in the romanticized West of singing cowboys and cowgirls.

Patsy Montana was for years one of the most popular stars, both with the Prairie Ramblers and by herself, on "National Barn Dance." She left the program in 1959 and moved to California, where she is still active.

The Prairie Ramblers, originally from Kentucky, were an adaptive and progressive string band that over the years went from an old-timey sound into cowboy material, and from there into western swing. With “I Wanna Be a Cowboy’s Sweetheart,” Patsy Montana and the Prairie Ramblers opened the door for women solo singers in country music: before, most women singers had worked only in family groups.

(Yodel)

I wanna be a cowboy’s sweetheart,

I want to learn to rope and to  
ride,

I want to ride o’er the plains  
and the desert

Out west of the Great Divide.

I want to hear the coyotes  
howlin’

As the sun sinks in the west.

I wanna be a cowboy’s sweetheart:

That’s the life that I love best.

(Yodel)

I want to ride old Paint a-goin’

at a run;

I want to feel the wind in my  
face

A thousand miles from these  
city lights,

Goin’ a cowhand’s pace.

I want to pillow my head near  
the sleeping herd

While the moon shines down  
from above.

I want to strum my guitar and a  
yodel-lay- hee-too,

For that’s the life that I love.

(Yodel)

(Repeat first stanza)

(Yodel)

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## **Band 2**

### ***The Rescue from Moose River Gold Mine*** (Wilf Carter)

Wilf Carter (Montana Slim), vocal and guitar. *Recorded April 23, 1936, in New York. Originally released on Bluebird B-6380.*

A staple of country music has long been the event song, composed immediately after some newsworthy or dramatic occurrence. It is a tradition dating back to the broadside ballads of England, poems on current events sold in the streets. Country music is filled with such songs, such as “The Wreck of the Old 97,” “The Death of Floyd Collins,” “Amelia Earhart’s Last Flight,” and Wilf Carter’s “The Rescue from Moose River Gold Mine,” recorded within weeks of the disaster. Such songs simply used the media of radio and records instead of the broadside ballad’s printed lyric sheet.

Wilf Carter (born 1904), known in the United States as Montana Slim, was the first Canadian to achieve great popularity in country music. His style—straightforward, earnest, letting the words themselves, not vocal mannerisms, tell the story in the old ballad tradition—suits this song well.

Carter, who now lives in Florida, still appears at folk festivals and makes occasional tours of Canada.

Way down in old Nova Scotia,  
Moose River, it seems, is the  
name,  
Three Canadians on Easter  
Sunday  
To the tumbledown gold mine  
they came.  
They descended the mine for  
inspection  
Never dreaming Fate trailed  
them close by.  
With a crash that gave them no  
warning;  
Entombed in that mine there to  
die.  
Brave men from all over the  
country  
Volunteered to give up their  
lives.  
They slaved with unceasing  
efforts;  
It seemed that death they defied.  
Long days and nights they had  
labored,  
Turned back when great caveins  
fell,  
While far below patiently  
waiting  
Three men were in one living  
Hell.  
Many times turned back when  
near rescue  
It seemed all was blocking their  
way.  
With a prayer on their lips  
they worked onward:  
We must win, we must win,  
pray we may!  
On Sunday they got their first  
message  
From the men prisoned far far  
below:  
“Can you help us?” they heard  
the men calling,  
“Our sufferings God above only  
knows.”  
Next message filled all hearts  
with sorrow  
As they heard them say “One  
pal is gone.  
We are trying our best for to  
hold, boys,  
Do your best. Don’t make it too  
long.”  
At last the great strain it was  
broken:

A miner out of breath brought  
the news.  
'We have won the great fight!'  
he was calling,  
"At last we have dug our way  
through!"  
That great fight against the  
Dark Angel:  
It was one fighting heart all the  
way.  
Still a tragedy came with the  
rescue  
From the tomb of those terrible  
days.  
Now friends, this story is ending  
With hardships of many a day.  
But this rescue will go down in  
hist'ry  
Of the gold mine down Moose  
River way.

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### **Band 3**

#### ***Railroad Boomer*** (Carson J. Robison)

Roy Acuff and His Smoky Mountain Boys: Roy Acuff, vocal and fiddle; Beecher Kirby ("Bashful Brother Oswald"), Dobro; Lonnie Wilson, guitar; Jess Easterday, bass. *Recorded July 5, 1939, in Memphis, Tennessee. Unreleased by Columbia Records.*

No other symbol captures the essence of country music like the romantic image of the railroad. It is a tradition that began in country music with its first recorded song, "The Wreck of the Old 97," and survives today in Johnny Cash and Merle Haggard. It is a compelling image that holds continual fascination for singers and fans.

"Railroad Boomer" is one of many such songs in the repertoire of Roy Acuff ("Wabash Cannonball" is the most famous), leader of the most popular string band of the 1940s. Acuff (born 1903 in Maynardville in the mountains of eastern Tennessee) preserved the string-band sound in an era when musical trends were toward slickness, and popularized his mountain-style singing in an era of popular crooners. Although in that sense he was an anomaly, his ingenuous, sincere manner is in many ways typical of the best of traditional country music.

Long known as the king of country music (which seems to have a propensity toward royalty), Acuff has mellowed into an elder statesman for country music, "Grand Ole Opry" in particular. Around 1974 a minor bit ("Back in the Country") made him, at seventy-two, the oldest performer ever to have a record on the charts.

Come and gather all around me,  
Listen to my tale of woe.  
Got some good advice to give  
you,  
A lot of things you ought to  
know.  
Take a tip from one who's traveled:  
Never start to ramblin' 'round.  
You might get the wand'ring  
fever  
And never want to settle down.  
And never want to settle down.  
I met a little gal in Frisco,  
I asked her if she'd be my wife.

I told her I was tired of roaming,  
That I'd settle down for life.  
Then I heard a whistle blowing;  
I knew it was the Westport  
train.  
I left her standing by the railroad.  
I never saw that gal again.  
I never saw that gal again.  
I've traveled all over this  
country,  
Guess I've traveled everywhere.  
I've been an every branch and  
railroad  
And never paid a nickel fare.  
I've been from Maine to  
California,  
Canada to Mexico.  
I never tried to save no money:  
I've got no place to go.  
Got no place to go.  
Now listen to a boomer's story,  
And don't forget the things I  
say.  
I hear another train a-coming,  
And I'll soon be on my way.  
If you want to do me a favor:  
When they lay me down to die,  
Dig my grave beside the railroad  
So I can hear the train go by.  
So I can hear the trains go by.

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#### **Band 4**

##### ***Born To Lose*** (Ted Daffan)

Ted Daffan's Texans: Ted Daffan, steel guitar; Leon Seago, vocal and fiddle; Buddy Buller, lead guitar; Chuck Keeshan, rhythm guitar; Ralph Smith, piano; Freddy Courtney, accordion; Johnny Johnson, bass; Spike Jones, drums.

*Recorded February 20, 1942, in Hollywood. Originally released on Okeh 06706.*

Through both his performing and his songwriting, Ted Daffan (born 1912) bridged the gap between western swing and honky-tonk. His big band didn't swing but presented his lyrics of hard drinking and lost love in a candid manner that was to become standard in country music.

"Born to Lose" became an anthem among transplanted southerners thrust into wartime defense work in the industrial North and West. It articulated their feeling of helplessness in an unfamiliar, difficult society and mirrored the self-image of the poor, the ill-educated, the homesick, and the emotionally and socially repressed. Because it seemed to symbolize the depression and fatalism of the dispossessed southerner, "Born to Lose" became much more than a song of lost love. It is a country music landmark.

Daffan wrote many other classics of the 1940s—among them "No Letter Today," "Worried Mind," "Heading Down the Wrong Highway," and even the first truck-driving song. "Truck Driver's Blues." He lives in his native Houston in genial semiretirement.

Born to lose, I've lived my life  
in vain.  
Every dream has only brought  
me pain.  
All my life I've always been so  
blue.  
Born to lose, and now I'm losing  
you.  
Born to lose, it seems so hard to  
bear.  
How I long to always have you  
near.  
You've grown tired, and now  
you say we're through.  
Born to lose, and now I'm losing  
you.  
Born to lose, my every hope is  
gone.  
It's so hard to face that empty  
dawn.  
You were all the happiness I  
knew.  
Born to lose, and now I'm losing  
you.  
There's no use to dream of happiness.  
All I see is only loneliness.  
All my life I've always been so  
blue.  
Born to lose, and now I'm losing  
you.

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## **Band 5**

### ***It Won't Be Long*** (traditional)

Harry Choates, vocal and fiddle. Personnel unknown.

*Recorded 1949 in Houston. Originally released on Gold Star 1388.*

Harry Choates died in an Austin, Texas, jail in 1951 at the age of twenty-eight, his frail body unable to withstand the shock of alcohol withdrawal. His short, brilliant, Hank Williams-like life expressed the continuing dynamism of Cajun music. Best known for "Jole Blon," his hit of the mid-1940s, Choates drew together the strains of traditional Cajun music and the more popular western swing, and his audience reached far beyond his native bayou region.

*Moi, J'connais, petite, mais, quoi t'a fais ton*

*Pauvre vieur negre*

*Tu m'a laisser, chere, s'ra pas longtemps*

*J'merite pas ca*

*Oh, cherie, pourquoi t'a fais, mais, quoi t'a fais?*

*Oh, chere, mais, moi j'connais tu va du r'gret*

*Oh, mais, moi j'connais malheureuse, cherie*

*Oh, chere, moi j'connais s'ra pas longtemps.*



I know, little girl, what you've done to your poor sweetheart!  
You left me, dear, it won't be long  
I don't deserve this.  
Oh dear, why have you done what you've done?  
Oh dear, I know you'll regret it  
Oh, I know, miserable girl, dear  
Oh dear, I know it won't be long.  
(Transcribed and translated by Dorothy Horstman)

## **Band 6**

### ***Chant of the Wanderer*** (Bob Nolan)

The Sons of the Pioneers: Bob Nolan, Tim Spencer, Lloyd Perryman, Ken Carson, and Pat Brady, vocals; Hugh Farr, vocal and fiddle; Karl Farr, vocal and guitar. With Country Washburn's Orchestra: J. H. "Country" Washburn, leader; P. Shuken, flute; M. Friedman, saxophone; C. Hunt, M. Russell, and W. Callies, violins; D. Sterkin, viola; L. Roundtree, guitar; E. LePique, piano; A. Shapiro, bass; O. Downes, drums. *Recorded August 15, 1946, in Hollywood. Originally released on RCA Victor 20-2076.*

The authentic songs of the cowboy and the West quickly became mixed with the romance of the singing cowboy of the movies as country music became commercial, and no other group managed to mix the two as well as the Sons of the Pioneers. And no one comes closer to being the finest poet in the history of country music than the Pioneers' lead singer Bob Nolan, the writer of much of their material, including "Cool Water," "Tumbling Tumbleweeds," and hundreds of other haunting songs of the West.

Nolan (born 1908), a Canadian, formed the Pioneer Trio in 1933 with a Missourian named Tim Spencer (1908-1974) and a young singer from Duck Run, Ohio, named Len Slye (born 1911), who became better known as Roy Rogers after leaving the Pioneers years later. When two Texans, Hugh and Karl Farr, who were largely of American Indian descent, joined the group, the name was changed to the Sons of the Pioneers.

Lloyd Perryman (born 1917), who sings tenor on this late (and atypically orchestrated) version of "Chant of the Wanderer," joined the Sons of the Pioneers in 1936 and leads the still extremely active group today.

The Sons of the Pioneers set the sound and the style for all western singing groups that followed. Rarely has one group been so dominant in a major sub-style of country music.

## **Band 7**

### ***Dark as a Dungeon*** (Merle Travis)

Merle Travis, vocal and guitar. *Recorded August 8, 1946, in Hollywood. Originally released on Capitol 48001.*

Although songs of actual social protest are uncommon in country music, it often contains social commentary simply because of its predisposition toward graphically honest songs of work. Merle Travis' "Sixteen Tons" and "Dark as a Dungeon" are perfect examples.

Travis (born in 1917 in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky) became best known in the mid-1940s for his songwriting and his innovative, compelling, bluesy three-finger guitar style, one of the most influential in country music's history. He is a man of seemingly limitless talents (singer, songwriter, musician, cartoonist, author), and the extent of his vast contribution is only now beginning to be recognized.

## **Band 8**

### ***Cotton Eyed Joe*** (Bob Wills and Tommy Duncan)

Bob Willis and His Texas Playboys: Tommy Duncan, vocal; Alex Brashear, trumpet; Bob Wills, Jesse Ashlock, Joe Holley, and Louis Tierney, fiddles; Lester Barnard, Jr., lead guitar; Les Anderson, steel guitar; Harley Huggins, rhythm guitar; Bill Mounce, banjo; Millard Kelso, piano; Billy Jack Wills, bass; Johnny Edwards, drums. *Recorded September 4, 1946, in Hollywood. Originally released on Columbia 37212.*

The meeting of frontier fiddle and big-band swing is perfectly exemplified in Bob Wills's "Cotton Eyed Joe," an old fiddle tune with semi-nonsense verses (typical of square-dance fiddle tunes) that starts out very much in the style of a house party of around 1900 and eventually gives in to a swingy feel, hot licks, a well-rehearsed twin-guitar break that imitates a big band horn section, and Wills's infectious whoops, hollers, and asides. Wills and his Texas Playboys came straight out of the fiddle-band tradition but in the early 1930s began to experiment with jazz, pop, and blues and pioneered the use of horns, drums, and electric instruments in country music.

Wills was born in eastern Texas in 1905 and raised on a hardscrabble farm in the Panhandle. He became the most charismatic and influential proponent of western swing for some forty years. Late in his life he was able to see it rise again in the hands of reverential young musicians.

The texts for these songs are available from the publisher (see back of album for listing).

## **Band 9**

### ***Fat Boy Rag*** (Bob Wills and Lester Barnard, Jr.)

Johnny Gimble, fiddle; Bill Joor, trumpet; Buddy Emmons, steel guitar; Eldon Shamblin, guitar; Tiny Moore, mandolin; Bob Moore, bass; Monte Mountjoy, drums. *Recorded November 13, 1975, in Nashville. Unreleased.*

Although there was little commercial recognition for western swing in the late 1950's, the musicians who pioneered and helped create it kept in practice. With the current major revival, they and their superlative musicianship are appreciated once more, and many have returned to the profession they had been forced to leave.

Ex-Texas Playboy and premier Nashville studio musician Johnny Gimble assembled three other ex-Playboys-Tiny Moore and Eldon Shamblin, both now with contemporary country-music star (and swing buff) Merle Haggard, and Monte Mountjoy- and several other superb musicians long associated with western swing for a good old-fashioned jam session. The result here, on an old Bob Wills tune, is impressive: loose, jazzy, melodic, swinging, exciting, the players' spontaneous creativity and interaction and genuine good humor are living proof of the timelessness of country music.

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**Side One**

Total time 30:05

**1 GEORGIA WILDCAT BREAKDOWN** (Clayton McMichen) . . . . . 3:02  
 (publ. unknown)  
 Clayton McMichen and His Georgia Wildcats

**2 BLUE YODEL NO. 11** (Jimmie Rodgers) . . . . . 2:57  
 (publ. Peer International Corporation)  
 Jimmie Rodgers and Billy Burke

**3 SWEET FERN** (A. P. Carter) . . . . . 3:04  
 (publ. Peer International Corporation)  
 The Carter Family

**4 DREAMING WITH TEARS IN MY EYES** (Jimmie Rodgers and Waldo ONeal) . . . 2:56  
 (publ. Peer International Corporation)  
 Jimmie Rodgers

**5 GOSPEL SHIP** (A. P. Carter) . . . . . 2:55  
 (publ. Peer International Corporation)  
 The Carter Family

**6 FAIS PAS ÇA [DON'T DO THAT]** (Richard M. Jones) . . . . . 2:29  
 (publ. unknown)  
 The Hackberry Ramblers

<b>7 THE LAST ROUNDUP</b> (Billy Hill) . . . . .	3:17
(publ. Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc.)	
Gene Autry, vocal with studio orchestra	
<b>8 FORGOTTEN SOLDIER BOY</b> (Bert Layne) . . . . .	2:40
(publ. unknown)	
The Monroe Brothers	
<b>9 IDA, SWEET AS APPLE CIDER</b> (Eddie Leonard) . . . . .	2:57
Milton Brown and His Brownies	
<b>10 THERE'LL COME A TIME</b> (Charles K. Harris) . . . . .	3:02
(publ. ABC/Dunhill Music, Inc.)	
The Blue Sky Boys	

**Side Two**

Total time 27:05

<b>1 I WANNA BE A COWBOY'S SWEETHEART</b> (Patsy Montana) . . . . .	3:04
(publ. MCA Music)	
Patsy Montana and the Prairie Ramblers	
<b>2 THE RESCUE FROM MOOSE RIVER GOLD MINE</b> (Wilf Carter) . . . . .	2:22
(publ. Gordon V. Thompson, Ltd.)	
Wilf Carter (Montana Slim)	
<b>3 RAILROAD BOOMER</b> (Carson J. Robison) . . . . .	2:33
(publ. Peer International Corporation)	
Roy Acuff and His Smoky Mountain Boys	
<b>4 BORN TO LOSE</b> (Ted Daffan) . . . . .	2:40
(publ. Peer International Corporation)	
<b>5 IT WON'T BE LONG</b> (Traditional) . . . . .	
<b>6 CHANT OF THE WANDERER</b> (Bob Nolan) . . . . .	
<b>7 DARK AS A DUNGEON</b> (Merle Haggard) . . . . .	
<b>8 COTTON EYED JOE</b> (Bob Wills and Tommy Duncan) . . . . .	
<b>9 FAT BOY RAG</b> (Bob Wills and Lester Barnard, Jr.) . . . . .	

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