The Anglo-Saxon and Celtic traditions endured a sea-change in this way to their land, and survived in modified form in our own Appalachian hills, as well as in the enclaves of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The entirely authentic Jean Ritchie, Elektra, Westminster, Folkways, and a fine song swapping old trip in Ireland, on Tradition), the messe. Ed McCurdy and Oscar Brand (each on Elektra), Peggy Seeger, you-name-it, Richard Dyer-Bennett (on his own label), John Jacob Niles (Tradition), Andrew Rowan Summers (Folkways), Paul Clayton (Folkways) and the incredible Pete Seeger have enriched the catalogues with the songs of this tradition.

The darling of the current crop is most certainly Joan Baez, whose first two magical LP's for Vanguard ran away with the popularity polls in the folk field, and are the most versatile of all the American distaff folk singers is Jo March, whose recordings for Kapp are only a slight indication of her remarkable ability to sing almost everything, in every style of our folk, jazz and pop, as well as anyone alive. More of her records should be forthcoming soon.

Pete Seeger is a man who believes all men are his brothers, and all songs belong to all men. And Pete practices his preachership musically as well as offstage. The Folkways catalogue is full of gospel, and its sheer variety would be staggering, even if the quality were not so high. Surely if any talent can be singled out as great in our folk world, Pete's must lead all the rest.

Don't neglect Burl Ives. His earliest recordings remain my favorites. Here is the most complete synthesis of the new and old world traditions in balladry. His singing has been the most permanent, and grows. Folkways has the most and the best of jass, and its sheer variety would be staggering, even if the quality were not so high. Surely if any talent can be singled out as great in our folk world, Pete's must lead all the rest.

At this point I would strongly suggest you expose yourself to the giants of yesterday whose influence on other singers is permanent, and grows. Folkways has the most and the best of Woody Guthrie, the 20th Century Villon, and of Leadbelly, an elemental proponent of blues and work and chain gang songs and of happy songs for kids, out of the core of the Negro experience. Brownie McGhee and Sonny Terry on a batch of bels continue this fundamental expression, as well as the edition of Big Bill Broonzy, whose name underlines his size an interpreter of this country's brand of Welttschmerz (Columbia, Mercury, Verve, Folkways).

As chief exponents of the Guthrie mystique have been Jack Scott, who shows a fair sampling of Woody's songs on Prestige (better on some EMI releases made in England), and the late Cisco Houston, whose songs have been right, in all his honesty and warmth, by Vanguard on a series of recent recordings, including an immanent release of a session at New York's Folk City.

As weavers, of course are the most beloved group of all. And, too, the range of song, with a strong down-home feel, and whether the group is the original, with Pete Seeger, the current one, with his replacement, Erik Darling, the key persists, featuring the rich hurrah of folk music's most swinging female voice, Ronnie Gilbert, as well as the ascetic charm of folkdom's first accompanist and arrager, Fred Hellerman, and the profound bass and gentle satire of ex-singer Lee Hays.

Erik's professional apprenticeship was spent with the Tarriers, respected by their peers as the hardest-swinging solid-singing bunch around. The original group can be heard on Glory records from their "Swingingest" (on the album, which preceded the Kingston Trio version by a few years). They were Erik Darling, Alan Arkin and the harp-playing member, handsome Bob Cary. Alan was also replaced by Clarence Collins, a great singer — potentially, perhaps, the greatest of all in the American tradition. His ability to infuse truth and feeling into ballads, blues and spirituals lifts the Tarriers into an unapproached realm of artistry. Some idea of their second metamorphosis can be heard on United Artists' "Hard Travelin'." A highly quizzical eye is cocked at life at large, and the inevitable pretensions of Folk Song, by two delightfully civilized human beings, Gene and Francesca. Husband and wife, a rare beauty and a man of accomplishments (a graphic artist, songwriter, parodist, architect and professor thereof at Columbia University), they bring a smiling, urbanse satire to the foibles of us all, and their own special gift to the prettiest songs of a bunch of cultures. (Elektra)

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Gene Raskin's special material is part of the armament of the Limeliters, currently the number one draw in the commercial folk field. This group has the richest combined sound of any trio short of the operatic stage, getting its main coloration from the golden throat of tenor Glenn Yarbrough. This chubbily handsome nature boy has the reputation of possessing the most beautiful male voice of all the folk, but with the exception of an hour of live singing on my program a few years back) the sheer virile loveliness of his singing at parties or in coffee-shops (for the heck of it) has never been captured on record. Limeliters Alex Hassilev was an aspiring actor, who combines an emigre Russian heritage from his musical family (not speaking the language, he used to do a stirring "Two Guitars" in double-talk Rusky, which absolutely scandalized his mother when she first heard him do it in a club) with a love for the Flamenco guitar and everybody's folk song. Alex brought these to the Limelites, a night club in Aspen, Colorado, which was being run at the time by Glenn. Then they got together with Lou Gottlieb, a Doctor of Music (University of California) whose mock professional style of introductory humor was a mainstay of the original Gateway Singers. This proved to be a highly entertaining combination, irresistible to those who prefer folk music in a solidly professional package, and who don't insist on a maximum of conviction. Their sound, however, is the price of admission, any- time. (Victor, Elektra)

Bud and Travis, who sing together no more are, another pair who combined solid musicianship in a neat and funny act. (Liberty. Best disc: B & T in Concert.) Travis Edmonson's voice and hip-shooting wit were also a feature of the Gateway Singers. Teamed with Bud Dashiell (now with the Kingston Brothers) he also discovered he could be as outrageously funny on stage as he could be around a table with friends, these two created their brand of satirical non-sequiturs as widely copied, with generally unfortunate results. The Frank Sinatra of the folk world is Bob Gibson, the darling of the Gate of Horn in Chicago, of Aspen and, with his All-American boyish good looks and the devilish twinkle in his eye, the darling of susceptible females anywhere. This is another husky throat, whose deceptive simplicity has a foundation of musicianship behind every note. He has been tremendously influential on those other singers who recognize the complete organization behind his seemingly casual gallantry.

Therein lies the true measure of this part of our recorded history. You can have any of these artists for company, at any time, and you don't have to wonder when they're going to ask for their hats, when the hour grows late, or your mood changes. Furthermore you get the best of these people, and the truth of them, at the drop of a needle: and Genghis Khan could not have commanded them so much. A further article by Skip Weathers covering other parts of the folk world will appear in a subsequent issue.