

ALBUM SLEEVE

Cover



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Rounder Record 0129

## The Watson Family Tradition

**T**his album is not a showcase for Doc Watson. Indeed, it offers a rather modest sample of his skills. What it sets out to do is implicit in its title, that is, to give a view of the kind of tradition, local and family, on which the musical culture of a great rural popular entertainer is founded. The album is a document, then, but we believe it is as pleasurable as it is instructive.

The Watson family know some of the big folk ballads, but others were fading from the memory. When Doc was enlarging his folklore repertory in the 1960s, at one time when most of his living came from folk song revival clubs and campus concerts, his father-in-law, Gaither Carlton, recalled the tune of the old ballad called *George* (Child 209), and played it to Doc on the fiddle. Gaither could only recall scraps of the words, but Doc had verses read to him out of Vance Randolph's *Great Folk Songs* and the *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore* and Cecil Sharp's Appalachian work, and a good 'complete' version was formed.

Other venerable ballads of British origin, such as *Early, Early in the Spring* and *One Morning in May*, came to the Watson family from Tina Green, a distant cousin but near enough neighbor. *Early, Early* dates from the eighteenth century and in some versions the disappointed sailor is present at the bombardment of Cartagena, Colombia, during Admiral Vernon's expedition in 1740 when he boasted that he would destroy the Spanish settlements in the Caribbean. *One Morning in May* is somewhat older, for it was printed on a broadside in 1679, under the title of *The Nightingale's Song*, or the *Soldier's rare Musick and Mad's Recreation* (which just about covers the story).

Another distant cousin, Dolly (Mrs. Len) Greer, contributed, with some giggles, the little group of children's songs. In 1918, Cecil Sharp noted a version of *Julie Jenkins at Cane River*, N.C., about a couple of hours drive south along the mountains from Deep Gap. *Handy* is a widespread lullaby throughout the Southeast of the United States. Some say it originated among Negro transmigrants during slavery time. Perhaps.

Another of Dolly Greer's songs, which Doc took into his own repertory with good success, is *A Warning on a Winter's Night*, sometimes called *The Fake Duet*. It is made up of a sequence of lyrical verses like *Apophthegms*, *Take it Easy* from song to song. In this case the 'foolsters' are grouped round the famous shoe glove father dialogue that is such a memorable part of the old Scots ballad, *The Fan of Bosc Royal* (Child 79), a dialogue that forms the center point of so many American love lyrics from Maine to Mississippi.

Dolly Greer also brought *Omie Wise* back into the Watson family tradition. Doc had known the song (perhaps from the performance on a *Victor* record by the local minstrel G. B. Grayson) but he had forgotten it till Dolly sang it to him and refreshed his memory. The ballad is historical, telling of Jonathan Lewis, who solicited a poor orphan field hand, Naomi Wise, but being too proud to marry her, he drowned her instead. He was arrested for the murder, and might have been hanged, but somehow contrived to escape. Guilford County, N.C., is said to be the scene, and the year, 1808.

Another of Dolly's ballads based on a local crime is *Bill Banks*. Doc had never heard this one till his cousin sang it, though the events took place in the neighboring

county to Doc's name 'Wataga'. It seems that Bill Banks was a black. He had a crusty neighbor, Mr. Macmillan. Banks's young son was friendly with Macmillan's mistreated boy, and when Banks went to West Virginia to work in the coal mines, the two youngsters went with him. However, the Macmillan boy robbed Banks, and when the black returned to claim his property, he was attacked by Macmillan, whom he shot in self-defense. Banks was hanged at Jefferson, Ashe County, N.C. The ballad was made by Ed Miller, a composer of other local songs including *The Tipton Prophecy*, a *Wataga* County murder in 1890. Dolly Greer says the Banks tragedy happened on 20 August 1907, a date fixed in her memory because it was on the handwritten ballet sheet from which her mother first learned the song.

Another of Dolly Greer's favorites is *Pretty Sara*. Like *A Warning on a Winter's Night*, it's one of those agglutinated songs, of which nearly every verse turns up in other songs. Yet it's a sweet love song in its own right. Gaither Carlton knows this one, and he prized it as a happy piece. He once had a powerful voice but lost it through an attack of measles, and for several decades he never sang. Indeed, his daughter Rowa Lee, Doc's wife, hadn't heard him sing since early childhood. But one day late on in his life, to general surprise and pleasure, he raised his voice again. Doc took *Pretty Sara* into his own repertory, but he reckoned he could never manage Gaither's special baritone; so he sang it unaccompanied. On this record, we give Gaither's original performance.

It is said from Gaither Carlton that Doc also got *Little Maggie*, a forerunner of the powerful 'Blues ballad'

**The photograph shows (front row) Violet Carlton, Nancy Watson, (middle row, seated) Maggie Dins, Gaither Carlton, Gaither Carlton, Annie (Mrs. General Dixon) Watson, (back row) Rowa Lee, Doc, Merle and Arnold Watson.**

**Charles Corey.** In Corey, a bowdlering lady is warned that revenue officers are coming to hear down her well-known but heretical. So the song is indelicate enough, but as Gaither sings it to his grandie fiddle, it takes on a great melody. This is another song that Doc prefers to sing unaccompanied, perhaps because with banjo or guitar he can't quite match Gaither's grandiose.

**Banking Hours**, which Gaither plays here out of the banjo, has long been in the Watson family. Indeed, it's the first tune Doc's father taught him, when Doc was eleven years old and struggling with a homemade, cane-headed banjo. Several of the other how-down and rag tunes came from Gaither, who at one time played on and off with a country professional group, the Hopkins Brothers. **Barben's Train**, under a dozen different titles, is among the best-known and most characteristic of mountain dance tunes. **Woody Guthrie** popularized a version of it in the cities, with the title *900 Miles*. It is also a favorite harmonica program piece, and has passed into the blangran repertory in a nervous up-tempo form quite different from the easy relaxed atmosphere that oldtimers such as Gaither impose on it. **Give the Fiddler a Dram** is another classic mountain tune, cast in a four-meal pattern, the sort of tune that can go on for hours without becoming wearisome. Cecil Sharp heard a version of it in Clay County, Kentucky, with the words: *Dance all night with your bottle in your hand, And long before day give the fiddler a dram.*

I heard *My Mother Weeping* in a sentimental courtesan song of the kind that was composed abundantly in the Southern uplands in the early years of the present century, and that comprised a staple nourishment for the rural professional entertainers who began to flourish particularly from the 1870s onward, with the growth of the county record market and the spread of small radio stations offering at least casual employment to so-called 'hillbilly' singers and instrumentalists.

Finally, an important part of the Watson family music tradition, as well as many mountain families and communities, two samples of sacred song from a level very near to folklore. *And Am I Born to Be?* and *Faithful Soldier* are both known to the Watson family from a hymnbook called *Christian Harmony*, compiled by William Walker and published in 1866 (though in fact both hymns appear in several other, earlier, frontier hymnals). The words of *Am I Born to Be?* are by Charles Wesley. The tune, first published in *Kennedy's Harmony*, a Baptist book of 1815, is a variant of a melody used for the ballad of *Lord Lovel* (Child 79). William Walker himself claimed authorship for the tune of *Faithful Soldier*, which Doc sings here with his brother Arnold and his mother. The words are by John Keble (1784-1841), and are reckoned to be far and away the most widely sung of all folk sacred tunes throughout the whole Southeast and Middle West. The hymn was one of Abraham Lincoln's favorites, so it's said.

A. L. Lloyd

**Side 1**

**George**  
Gaither Carlton, fiddle  
Gaither Carlton, fiddle, Doc Watson, guitar

**Fish in the Mill-pond**  
Gaither Carlton, fiddle, Doc Watson, guitar

**Children's Songs**  
Dolly Greer vocal

**(1) Julie Jenkins (2) Handkerchief**  
(3) *Handkerchief* (4) *Shopsy and the Goat*

**I Heard My Mother Weeping**  
Rowa Lee, Watson vocal, Doc Watson, vocal, guitar

**Barben's Train**  
Gaither Carlton, fiddle, Arnold Watson, banjo, Doc Watson, vocal, banjo

**Blowin'**  
Gaither Carlton, fiddle, Arnold Watson, banjo, Doc Watson, vocal, guitar

**Trucker's Barn**  
Gaither Carlton, fiddle, Doc Watson, guitar

**Give the Fiddler a Dram**  
Gaither Carlton, fiddle, Doc Watson, banjo, Merle Watson, guitar

**And Am I Born to Be?**  
Doc Watson, vocal, Gaither Carlton, fiddle

**Side 2**

**Marthy, Won't You Have Some Good Old Cider?**  
Doc Watson, vocal, Gaither Carlton, fiddle, Merle Watson, guitar

**A-Roving on a Winter's Night**  
Dolly Greer vocal

**Arnold's Tune**  
Arnold Watson, banjo, Doc Watson, guitar

**Pretty Sara**  
Gaither Carlton, vocal, banjo

**Early, Early in the Spring**  
Tina Greer vocal

**Little Maggie**  
Gaither Carlton, vocal, fiddle

**Bill Banks**  
Dolly Greer vocal

**Handy**  
Gaither Carlton, banjo

**One Morning in May**  
Tina Greer vocal

**The Faithful Soldier**  
Doc Watson, Arnold Watson, Annie Watson, vocal

**Omie Wise**  
Dolly Greer vocal

**Jimmy Sutton**  
Gaither Carlton, vocal, banjo

Produced by Ralph Brinker. Recorded by Ralph Brinker and Daniel Senger in September 1964 (side 1, tracks 4, 6, 8, and side 2, tracks 1, 10, 11 and May 1965 (remaining tracks). Edited by Peter Siegel and Ralph Brinker. Notes by A. L. Lloyd and Ralph Brinker. Front cover photograph by Daniel Senger. Art Direction and cover by Mel Green Design.

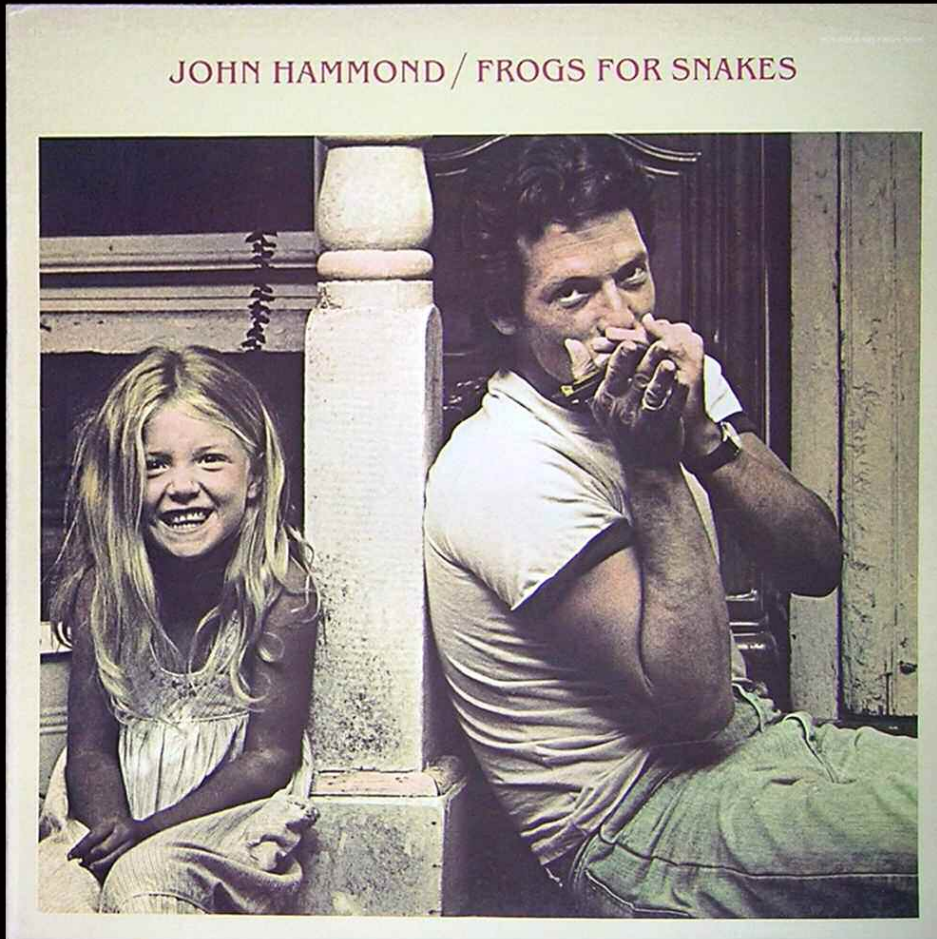
Rounder Records, 186 Willow Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144

Rounder Records acquired the license to re-issue the Watson Family recordings and as became the norm for me, all I was given at the design brief was a couple of pages of typed text and one old print of the original photograph which had been used on the old LP, and the open invitation to design whatever I wished. This is the result.

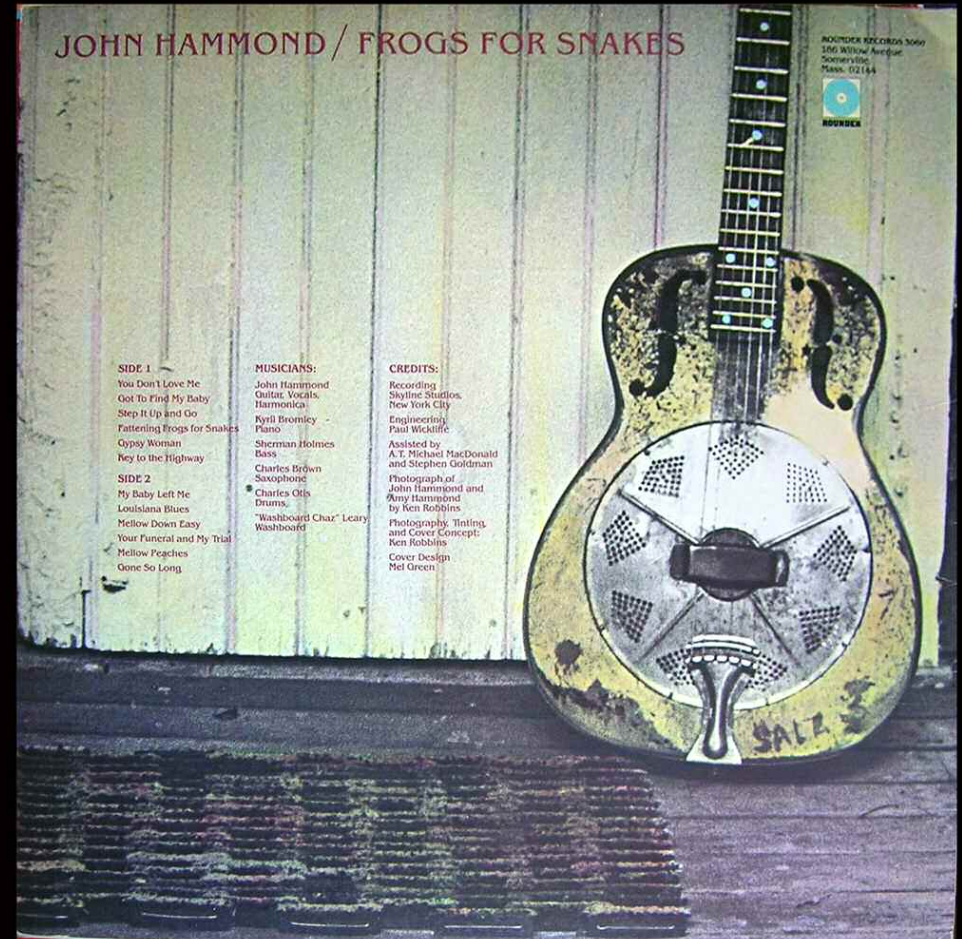


## ALBUM SLEEVE

Cover



Back Cover



After recording for Vanguard for many years, John Hammond Jr. signed onto the Rounder label for a few albums... this one was unusual if only because of the lovely photographs supplied. The sepia tones were an invitation to design a very simple and evocative cover.

# ALBUM SLEEVE

Cover



Back Cover

## JIM & JESSE

# In the Tradition

## JIM & JESSE & The Virginia Boys

**Out** on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry, the glitter-spangled stars of country music were shining one night not long ago. While the steel guitars and fiddles wailed, an unmistakable sound came from behind the curtains where performers wait to go on stage. Jesse McReynolds was crosspicking the mandolin.

Since the late 1940s, Jesse's graceful, complex mandolin style has been one of several trademarks of the sound unique to him and his tenor-singing big brother, Jim. Their sibling light vocal harmony, high-level instrumental technique and adventurous choice of material have earned the brothers a place all their own in American acoustic music.

After Jim and Jesse came off stage that night, they talked in a backstage Opry office about some of the styles that have contributed to their sound. They also discussed their current Virginia Boys band and this record, both of which recreate their classic Allen Shelton-Jim Buchanan outfits of more than two decades ago.

"It's about as close as we ever have been to what we had back in the '60s," Jesse said. "That was the era we established the Jim and Jesse sound."

Banjo king Shelton rejoined the Virginia Boys a couple of years ago after working for 14 years as a pipefitter in Louisiana and later on the now-defunct Hartsville, Tenn., nuclear power plant. The TVA atomic-power program's loss has been bluegrass fans' gain, as this record shows. Shelton today is every bit the hard-driving, inventive banjoist he was when he recorded and toured with Jim and Jesse. Jim Eanes and others more than 20 years ago.

Glenn Duncan, formerly of Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys, has taken over fiddle duties in the modern-day Virginia Boys. Duncan is emerging as one of the outstanding fiddlers in bluegrass today; his swoops, bluesy slides, thoughtful backup playing and breakdown-style fiddling on this record show why.

Veteran Roy Acuff sideman Charlie Collins joins in on acoustic guitar and creative, rock-solid session musician Roy Huskey appears on acoustic bass for this record. Jesse's son Keith remains on electric bass and vocals in the touring version of the band. Basically, the sound reproduced here is of the driving, melodic ensemble that fans have greeted enthusiastically for the last couple of years.

"It's been great," Jesse said. "It seems like what everybody's been hoping that we'd do."

The McReynolds brothers, who began their major-label career with early 1950s Capitol releases, are usually grouped with Bill Monroe,

the Stanley Brothers, Mac Wiseman and other leading lights of traditional bluegrass. They deserve that high ranking, but they also merit looking at in the context of other types of music important to their performances.

"If you were going to judge it for a stage show, it'd be far from being strictly bluegrass," Jim said. "Jesse plays 'El Cambarero' and 'Somewhere My Love' as instrumentals. Allen'll pick 'When You're Smiling' and 'Whispering,' and then Glen'll play 'Sally Goodin' and knock an audience out."

Jesse McReynolds is 57 years old as of this writing; Jim is 60. Like most musicians of their generation, they've listened to all sorts of different music live, on records and over the radio. They started out as kids playing downhome country music they learned from family members in the Clinch Mountain region of Virginia. Another clear influence they cite is that of earlier singing brother teams—the Delmore Brothers, the Bailey Brothers, the Blue Sky Boys, the Monroe Brothers, the Louvin Brothers and the York Brothers.

"We probably listened more to the Delmores and the Baileys. Brothers than anybody else," Jim said.

The lucid, unforced, Delmore-style sound emerges less slickly in the McReynolds' music, but is strong enough to separate them from the starker, more mountain-influenced Monroe and Stanley Brothers approaches. The tight Jim and Jesse harmony sound when

we started recording for Capitol Records," Jesse said. "We were hesitating on whether we'd even feature the five-string banjo, but it turned out that [producer] Ken Nelson was expecting us to record as a bluegrass band, so that's what we did."

Jim and Jesse's forays into different styles within a bluegrass context are well known. They've recorded Chuck Berry songs, truck-driving music, gospel, folk, bluegrass, country songs and novelty material. "When we did the Chuck Berry album, people said, 'You're going to lose every bluegrass fan you ever had,'" Jim said.

But Jim and Jesse fans have proved to be an openminded lot, approving the group's core of musical honesty through all experiments and changes of direction.

"We've always tried to have our own style of bluegrass, even when we were using steel and electric guitar," Jesse said.

This LP the brothers said, probably represents the music closest to their hearts. The element of traditional or hard-core country music is heard on several tracks—the toothy "All the World is Lonesome Now" comes from Roy Acuff; "You Are the One" was a 1956 hit for Carl Smith, and "Stony Mountain West Virginia" was the B-side of a 1970s Buck Owens hit. The brothers call "Did You Ever Go Sailing?" and "Dear Old Mother" mountain ballads; the songs recall the early country music

that started the McReynolds off in music. Jesse's new compositions "Tennessee Lonesome Blues" illustrate his expertise at the tremolo style of mandolin as well as a lyrical and melodic song-writing gift.

The music on this album, which also includes some of their classic hits, "Hard Hearted" and "Nobody But You," showcases Jim and Jesse as many fans like them best—performing without drums or electric instruments and sticking with material that adapts readily to the bluegrass style. Within this traditional context, the brothers make apparent the eclectic skills and versatility they've learned over the years.

Although nothing could be simpler or more familiar than the two choruses of "Chicken Head," the old fiddle tune is brought back to elegant life by the performances of Jesse, Allen and Glen.

"I try to do something different about every time I play," Jesse said. Added Jim, "You've got to do that if you want to stay ahead of the game." —Thomas Goldsmith

**Side One**  
 You Are The One  
 Did You Ever Go Sailing?  
 Tennessee Lonesome Blues  
 Stony Mountain, West Virginia  
 Hard Hearted  
 I'm Gonna Love You One More Time

**Side Two**  
 I'll Love Nobody But You  
 Dear Old Mother  
 All The World Is Lonesome Now  
 Chicken Head  
 Gotta Travel On  
 Bringing In The Georgia Mail

Produced by Jim & Jesse McReynolds  
 Jim McReynolds—guitar & vocals  
 Jesse McReynolds—mandolin & vocals  
 Allen Shelton—banjo  
 Roy Huskey—acoustic bass  
 Glen Duncan—fiddle  
 Charlie Collins—guitar

**Credits**  
 Recorded by Scotty Blevins at AMI Recording Studios, Hendersonville, TN  
 Mixed by Jim Rooney at Jack's Tracks, Nashville  
 Mastered at Georgetown Mastering by Denay Purcell  
 Photography by Dan Loftin, Nashville  
 Design by Mel Green

ROUNDER RECORDS—ONE CAMP STREET—CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02145—© 1987 ROUNDER RECORDS CORPORATION—JACKET MADE IN CANADA

Jim & Jesse were big on the bluegrass scene and this album for Rounder had good new photography available... as in many projects I analyzed the visual content of the photographs and realized that white tans, yellows and ochres would be the perfect color scheme. The fun typography only emphasized the band's star status.



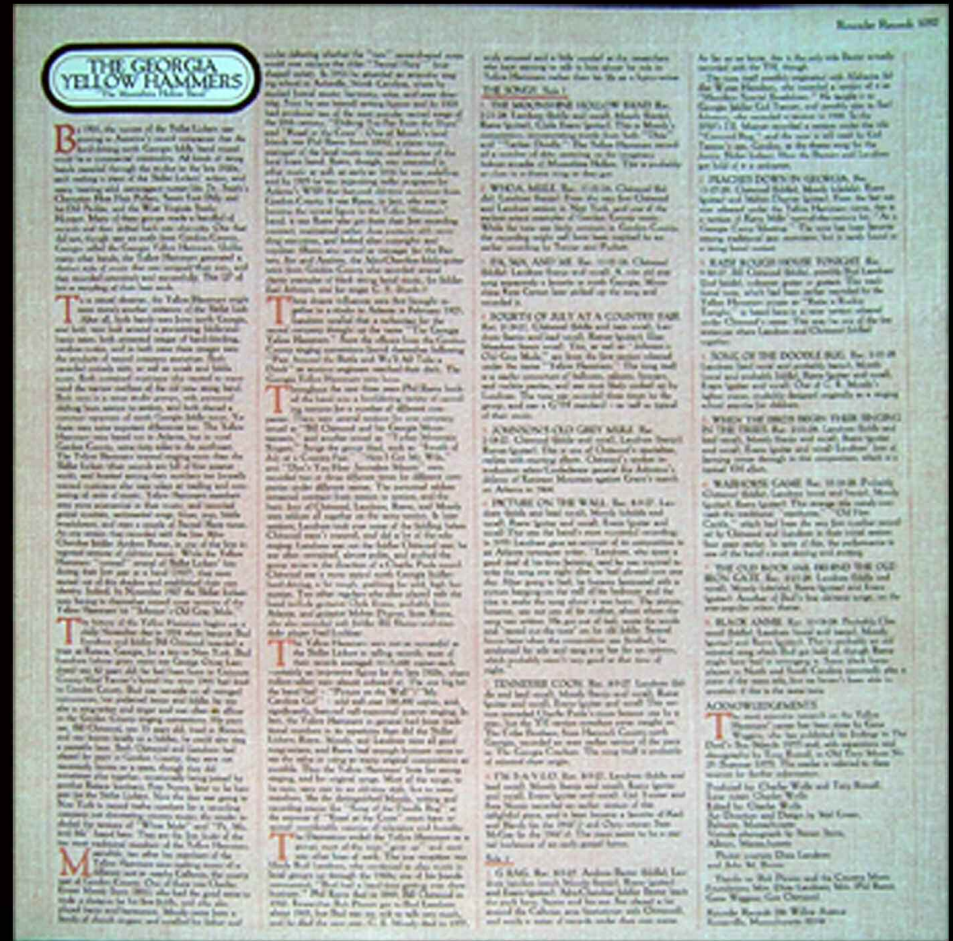
ALBUM SLEEVE

Cover



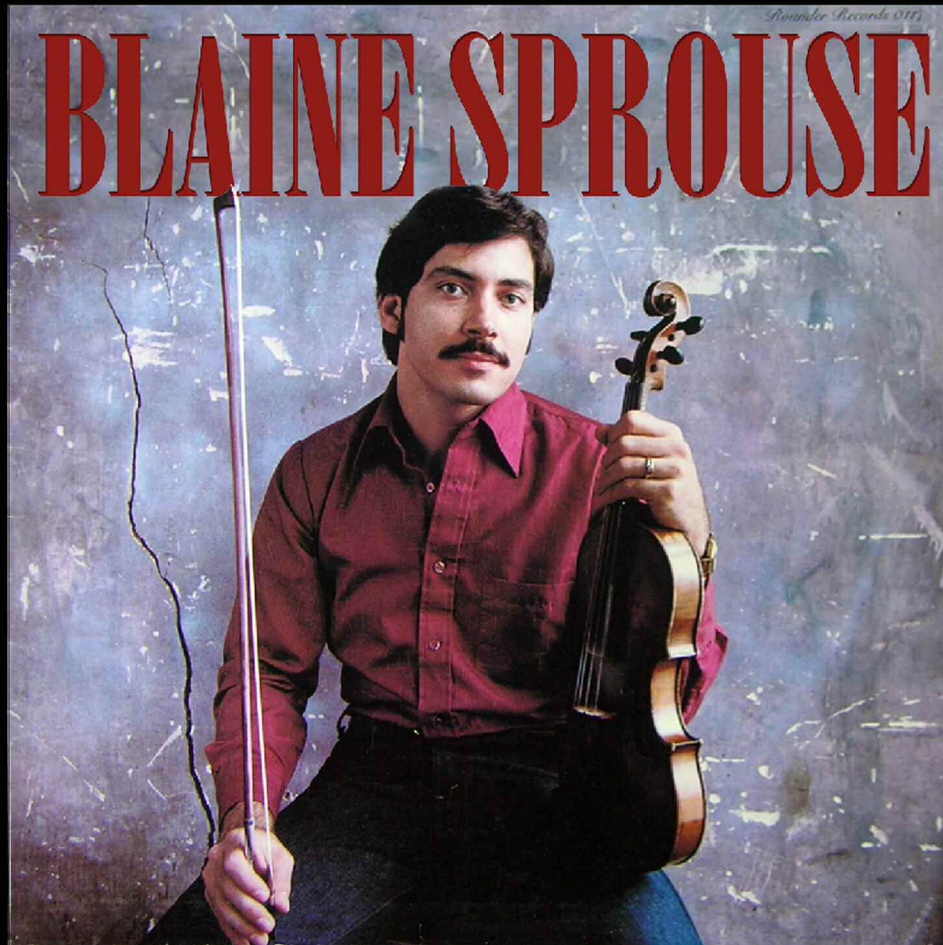
Here is another case of "another batch of not so good photos of a band of varied old-timey musicians... so I talked it over with Bill Nowlin at Rounder and I suggested we commission a special photograph of an old record player, by Steve Stone, and I superimposed the photos of the old-timey musicians. A solution which looks old and appropriate.

Back Cover



## ALBUM SLEEVE

Cover



Back Cover

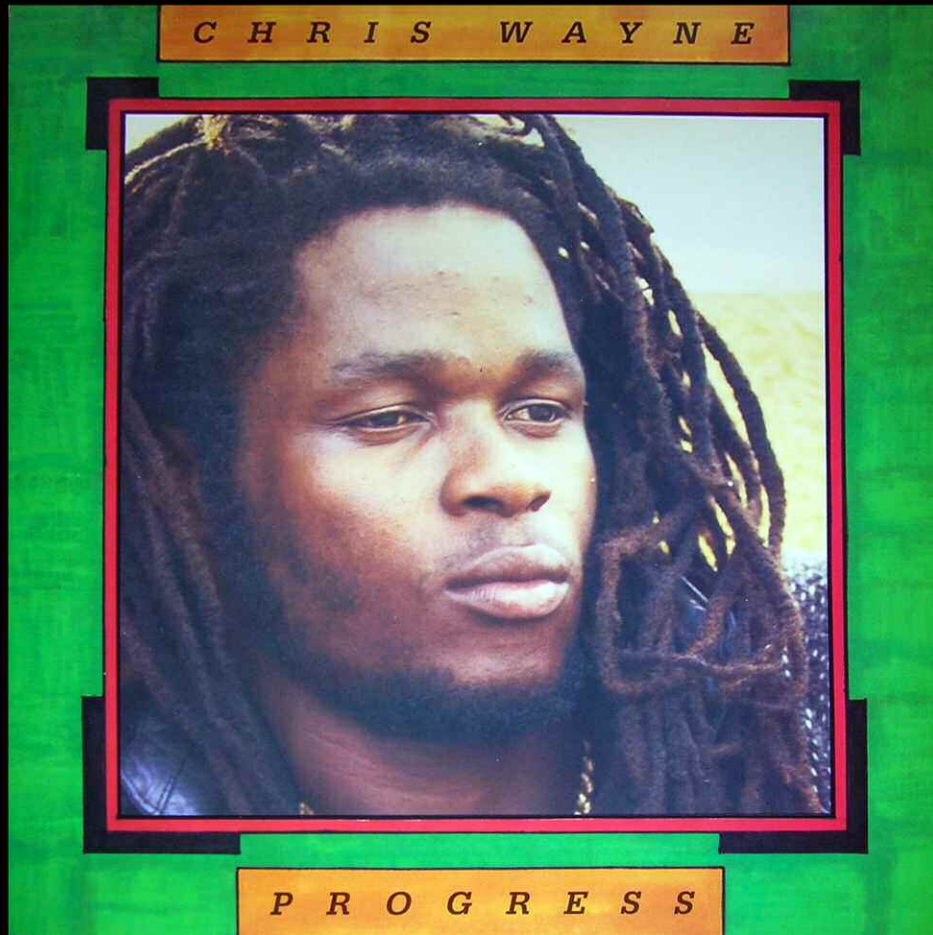


A rare case of the artist providing two really good large-format shots for the cover. All I did was use them with some bold typography in complimentary colors with sparse notes on the back to produce a clean cover.



## ALBUM SLEEVE

Cover



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Combining a really good color photograph along with vibrant colors in an illustrated frame, and simple typography resulted in a very colorful cover... I wanted the cover treatment to look hand-made so I drew the background artwork with markers on very absorbent watercolor paper.

# ALBUM SLEEVE

Cover



Ten photos of South African groups and the realization that no one group should get the "star" role photo on the cover – a designer's dilemma! My 10-year old son, Jesse Aron Green drew an asymmetric design with markers which was the perfect

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inspiration! He redrew a tighter version with graph paper to guide him, over a flopped stat of his earlier design for symmetry. The LP was nominated for a Grammy!



# ALBUM SLEEVE

Cover



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A cool photo of a Rockabilly band needed an unusual typo-graphic approach, especially since the background was so unusual... this is what I came up with... obvious perhaps, but fun!



# ALBUM SLEEVE

Cover



Back Cover



A cult movie with really cool music from that time... the illustration and the typography were adapted from the movie poster... the back cover called for an unusual approach so I used photos from the movie publicity package.





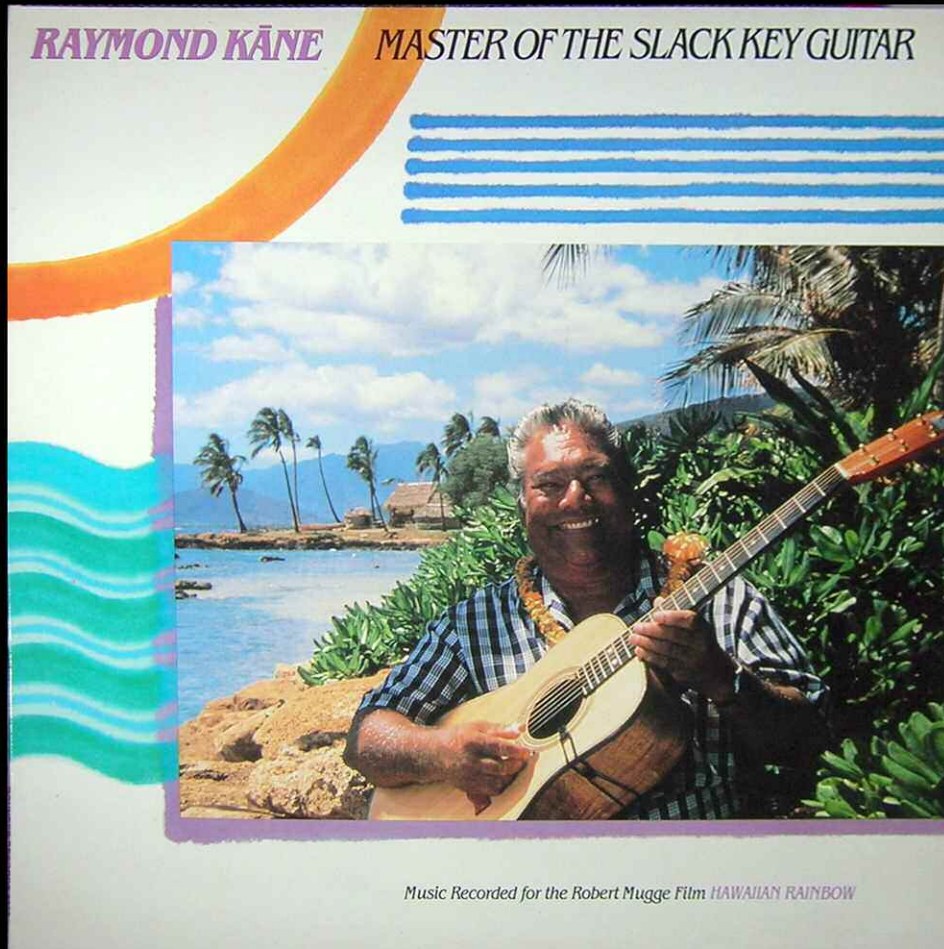




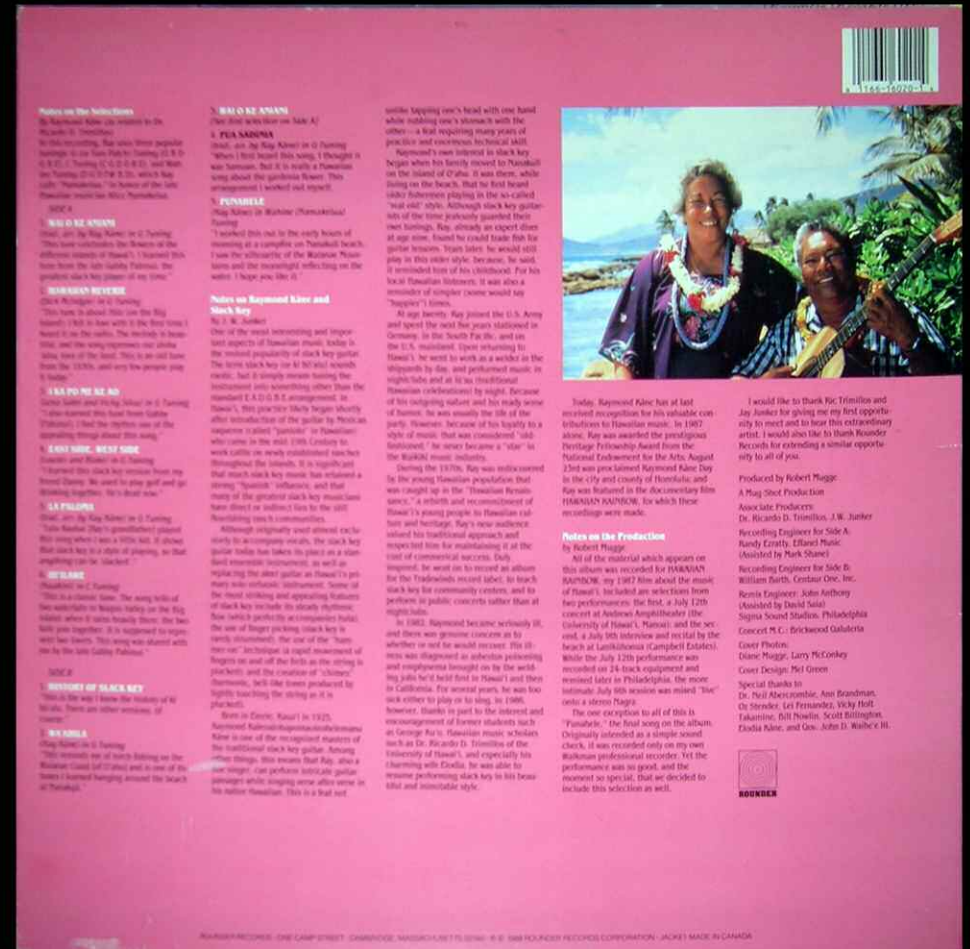


ALBUM SLEEVE

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Back Cover



Ray Kane is one of the renowned elders of the Hawaiian guitar community and this album of his “slack key” instrumental with a few vocals is really wonderful. My proposal to Rounder to design something with a different feel resulted in this design... a hand-drawn magic marker background on watercolor paper resulted in the soft edges seen here. A simple and enjoyable project.

