KIOSK 1
SIDE A

TITLE

New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music
#

QUOTE

"American roots music is at the center of this country's soul."
– BONNIE RAITT, SINGER AND GUITARIST
#

INTRO TEXT
(revision 4)

American roots music rises out of America's story, carrying our history and cultural identity in its songs. The music reflects essential American values: freedom, democracy, and diversity. It is a connecting force between the immigrant experience and the process of "becoming an American." Nothing expresses the tensions and triumphs of the immigrant journey like music.

Much of American roots music came to us from two groups: immigrants from the British Isles and slaves from West and Central Africa. Over time, European and African music traditions blended to create a variety of roots music forms, including folk ballads, country, blues, and gospel. As new waves of immigrants came to America, they added their music traditions to the mix. Eventually roots music would evolve into American popular music: jazz, bluegrass, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, rap, and more.

With its many sounds and styles and its centuries-old tradition, American roots music is this nation's cultural soundtrack.
#

background photo 1.1:
hands on guitar
(Bashful Brother Oswald)

Background:
Photograph by Jim Herrington / www.jimherrington.com
#

photo 1.2: NMAI powwow drummers

Photograph by Walter Larrimore / National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution
#

photo 1.3: woman fiddler (Audrey Hash Ham)

Photograph by Jake Jacobson / Northlight Atelier
#

photo 1.4: blue-robed gospel choir

© David Redfern / Redferns Music Picture Library
#

photo 1.5: zydeco band

Photograph by David Simpson / Louisiana State University, Eunice
#

photo 1.6: Romare Bearden painting

Romare Bearden, *Folk Musicians*, 1941–42
Curtis Galleries, Minneapolis, Minnesota
#

photo 1.7: playing music in the field, South Carolina

Pickens County Museum of Art and History
#

photo 1.8: gamelan player (Chan Syna Soch)

Photograph by Jake Jacobson / Northlight Atelier
#

CREDIT PANEL

New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music
is a Museum on Main Street project organized by the
Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service
and brought to you by [state council name].
Funded by the U.S. Congress.

[state credits TBD by state humanities council]

Curated by
Robert Santelli

Exhibition designed, edited, and produced by
Office of Exhibits Central, Smithsonian Institution

#

KIOSK 1 - SIDE B

SIDEBAR

What Is "Roots Music"?
"Roots music" is a relatively new term. It first appeared in print and conversation in the early 1980s. Originally it meant "roots of popular music or rock and roll," but today the term has come to mean all music that has grown out of older folk traditions.

Roots music is sacred and secular, rural and urban, acoustic and electric, simple and complex, old and new. Performed by one musician or by an entire band, in concert halls and on back porches, roots music is America's sound.
#

graphics: album covers of roots-music greats

group credit for albums

Album covers courtesy of Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Institution

flip-open label for Lydia Mendoza album

Lydia Mendoza
The first star of tejano — the music of Spanish-speaking Texans — was Lydia Mendoza, called *la alondra de la frontera* ("the lark of the border"). As a child, she sang with her family in the plazas of San Antonio. In 1934, at the age of 18, she began her solo career, crooning songs like "Mal hombre" (Evil man) and "Pero hay qué triste" (But, oh, how sad) in her deep, soulful voice.

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Lydia Mendoza at the Listening Station.
#

flip-open label for Mahalia Jackson album

Mahalia Jackson

Many consider Mahalia Jackson the greatest gospel singer of all time. Growing up in New Orleans, she absorbed the blues of that city but dedicated her talent to her faith. She made her name with such powerful hymns as "Precious Lord, Take My Hand."

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Mahalia Jackson at the Listening Station.
#

flip-open label for
Lead Belly album

Lead Belly
Huddie Ledbetter, known as Lead Belly (1888–1949), survived brutal poverty and stretches in prison to become a master singer of folk ballads, folk blues, and spirituals. His recordings in the 1930s introduced the riches of black roots music to white America and helped to preserve this legacy.

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Lead Belly at the Listening Station.
#

flip-open label for
Bill Monroe album

Bill Monroe
In the 1940s Bill Monroe created bluegrass, a style of country music that recalled the old-time songs of the southern mountains. With his high tenor voice and rapid-fire mandolin playing, he gave bluegrass its "high lonesome" sound.

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Bill Monroe at the Listening Station.
#

flip-open label for
Robert Johnson album

Robert Johnson
In the 1930s Robert Johnson made himself a legend as a singer of Mississippi Delta blues. His guitar skills were amazing; his songs of lost love and hard luck were

haunting. His recordings continue to influence blues and rock musicians today.

“listen” icon

LISTEN
to Robert Johnson at the Listening Station.
#

KIOSK 2

SIDE A

SECTION INTRO

The First Sounds: Sacred Songs

The foundations of American music lie in the religious yearnings of Native Americans, European settlers, and Africans brought to the colonies in bondage.

Music has magic: it can express a distinct cultural identity while connecting across cultural lines. Among the three major cultures that populated North America in colonial times, people traded music as they traded guns, pelts, corn, and tobacco. The music that came out of this process is an expression of America's diversity.
#

SUBTEXT 2-A

Native America
The chant of a human voice, the pulse of a drum — the first music heard in the Americas was probably sacred song. For Native Americans, music was communication with the Creator. In a number of Indian languages, "to sing" also means "to pray." Native Americans have struggled to preserve their communities, their traditions, and their very existence against white aggression. Today they continue to celebrate their cultures and religious beliefs through music.
#

photo 2.6: flute player
LC-USZ62-62971

Native American flute player, about 1908.
Library of Congress
#

photo 2.8: Native American Church

Everette Red Bear and Sandor Iron Rope chant a hymn, Kyle, South Dakota, 2000. They are members of the Native American Church, a denomination that blends Christian beliefs with Native traditions.
From *American Roots Music* compact-disc box set (Palm, 2001)

#

photo 2.7: ceremony

Ceremony at Taos Pueblo, New Mexico, 1900–1910.
Photograph by H.S. Poley / Denver Public Library, Western History Center
#

photo 2.9: Carlos Nakai

R. Carlos Nakai
A musician of Navajo and Ute descent, R. Carlos Nakai (born 1946) breathes new life into Native American flute traditions, adapting the traditional flute melodies of Plains and Woodland Indians to his own unique style.
Photograph by Timon Harper
#

NATIVE LYRIC

Wakan Tanka
Wakan Tanka
Pilamaya
Wichoni heh

[Great Spirit
Great Spirit
Thank you
For my life]

– OGLALA SIOUX HYMN
#

SUBTEXT 2-B

British America
Many of the first white settlers in the New World left Europe to escape religious persecution. They brought with them songs and hymns steeped in the Protestant religious tradition. The first book published in the English colonies was the *Bay Psalm Book* (1640), a collection of psalms rendered into rhythmic verse that could be sung to familiar melodies. Early hymnbooks dictated how the songs were to be sung, leaving little room for interpretation or improvisation.
#

graphic 2.2: procession
into church, 1740

Background:
Colonists sing on their way to church, 1740.
© Bettmann/CORBIS
#

graphic 2.5: page from
Bay Psalm Book

Page from *Bay Psalm Book*, 1640.
#

LYRIC

Clap hands, all people, shout for joy
To God with voice of singing mirth
– *BAY PSALM BOOK*
#

FOCUS LABEL

William Billings
A tanner by trade, with no formal music training, Boston-born William Billings (1746–1800) became the father of American choral music. His *New England Psalm-Singer* (1770) was the first book of purely American music by an American composer. His hymns and anthems for unaccompanied voices touched off a nationwide enthusiasm for singing in three- and four-part harmony—a style that still resounds today.
#

graphic 2.3: frontispiece of
New England Psalm-Singer

Right:
Frontispiece from William Billings, *New England Psalm-Singer* (1770), engraved by Paul Revere (detail).
#

FOCUS LABEL

Shape Notes
With shape notes, people with no musical training could read music. Notes were represented by different shapes. Invented in New England around 1790, shape notes became the basis for hymn-singing traditions throughout the young nation—traditions that still remain strong in the South.
#

photo 2.4: shape notes

Above:
The hymn “Amazing Grace” in shape notes.
Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

SUBTEXT 2-C

Out of Africa
Enslaved Africans were first brought to North America in 1619. Most came from West and Central Africa, where music was the root of almost all cultural expressions. In the American colonies, Africans tried to retain as many of their music traditions as possible. Drums and other percussion instruments underpinned African religious music, and these rhythms would soon have an impact on American music, both sacred and secular.
#

color graphic 2.1:
African American drummer, banjoist, dancer, et al.

Detail from *The Old Plantation*, artist unknown, late 1700s.
The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation
#

OBJECTS FOR KIOSK 2
Anglo-American hymnal
(1) *The Service Hymnal*
(2) *Songs of the Sanctuary*
(3) *Hymns of the Living Faith: Hymnal of the Free Methodist Church*
(4) *The Lutheran Hymnal*
(5) *Methodist Hymnal*
African drum
Native hand-carved flute

Objects, from top to bottom:
American Protestant hymnal
African drum from 18th-century Virginia (reproduction)
Native American flute
#

SIDE B

SUBTEXT 2-D

The Great Awakening
A wave of religious revivalism swept across the American frontier in the late 1700s and early 1800s. White missionaries reached out to black slaves for the first time, and from these encounters, a new kind of music emerged.

In churches, tents, and open fields, white farmers and black slaves gathered to hear the preaching and to sing. At first, new black Christians were taught to sing hymns in the European tradition, but in time they created their own songs with an African spin, called "spirituals." Black Christians often stayed to sing long after a camp meeting ended, and white Christians stayed to listen.
#

QUOTE

"The people came in crowds . . . singing as the old-time Methodists used to sing. . . . The negroes are out in great crowds, and sing with voices that make the woods ring."
– LUCIUS BELLINGER, METHODIST PREACHER, SOUTH CAROLINA, ABOUT 1830
#

graphic 2.11:
camp meeting (white)

Camp meeting, about 1835.
Harry T. Peters "America on Stone" Lithography Collection, National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution
#

graphic 2.10:
camp meeting (black)

African American camp meeting, early 1800s.
From Bernard Katz, *The Social Implications of Early Negro Music in the United States* (Arno Press, 1969)
#

SUBTEXT 2-E

Spirituals
Sung with deep emotional intensity, spirituals cried out with the pain of slavery and the hope of freedom. Developed from work songs and improvised call-and-response forms of African heritage, this was sacred music driven by powerful feelings.
#

photo 2.14: river baptism

Baptism in the James River, Virginia, 1907.
Photograph by Bayard Wootten / North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina Library at Chapel Hill
#

LYRICS

Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home
#

Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land,
Tell old Pharaoh, let my people go
#

photo 2.32:
water background

photo 2.12:
Fisk Jubilee Singers

Fisk Jubilee Singers, 1870s.
Photograph and poster: Special Collections, Franklin Library, Fisk University

Background water images: © 2006 JupiterImages Corporation
#

FOCUS LABEL

The Fisk Jubilee Singers
Spirituals gained another dimension when the choral group called the Fisk Jubilee Singers performed the songs with the polish and formality of European classical music. Formed in 1871 at Tennessee's historically black Fisk University, the Fisk Singers performed throughout America

and Europe to raise money for their college. For the first time, audiences outside the American South were made aware of the breadth and artistic vitality of African American religious music.
#

photo 2.13:
Fisk Singers poster

#

photo 2.15: Bible quilt

African American bible quilt, made by Harriet Powers, about 1886.
National Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution
#

photo 2.16: singing
in church

Church of God in Christ, Clarksdale, Mississippi, 1968.
Photograph by William R. Ferris / Southern Folklife Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
#

photo 2.17:
Marian Anderson

Easter Sunday morning 1939: Marian Anderson sang a concert of spirituals on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, after she had been barred from performing at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., because of her race.
Library of Congress
#

SIDE C

SUBTEXT 2-F

The Glory of Gospel
In the 20th century, black church music collided with the blues and jazz, and the result was called gospel — a music more joyous in nature than the spiritual, and more improvisational in musical design. Meanwhile, white churches in the South had created their own brand of gospel, sometimes called "southern gospel," which grew out of country music traditions. Energetic, emotional, and full of the promise of salvation, both threads of gospel music provide a hopeful view of the rugged journey through life.
#

LYRIC

Going to walk and never get tired
Going to fly, Lord, and never falter
– "MOVE ON UP A LITTLE HIGHER," SUNG BY MAHALIA JACKSON
#

photo 2.18: Mahalia Jackson

Mahalia Jackson
Her vibrant, all-embracing contralto voice and deep-rooted faith made Mahalia Jackson (1911–72) the queen of gospel.
Photograph by Les Leverett
#

photo 2.19: two women singing in church
LC-USF34-038774-D

Pentecostal church service, Chicago, Illinois, 1941.
Photograph by Russell Lee / Library of Congress
#

photo 2.20: gospel quilt

"The Gospel According to the Choir," quilt by Rebekka Seigel, 1994.
Photograph by Reba Rye, © Rebekka Seigel
#

photo 2.21: churchgoers

walking to church

Country church, Mississippi.
Photograph copyright © Val Wilmer
#

photo 2.22: singing in church
(inside cut-out window)

#

4 portraits on fans:
photo 2.23: Clara Ward

Clara Ward
#

photo 2.24: Soul Stirrers

Soul Stirrers
#

photo 2.25: Marion Williams

Marion Williams
#

photo 2.26: Golden Gate Quartet

Golden Gate Quartet
#

photo 2.27: purple choir

Men and Women of the Gospel Mass Choir, Washington Performing Arts Society, Washington, D.C., 2003.
Photograph by Guy Noffsinger / Landsdale Associates & Global Rights
#

photo 2.28: Thomas Dorsey

FOCUS LABEL

Thomas Dorsey
The "father of gospel music," Thomas Dorsey (1899–1993) began his career in the blues: as "Georgia Tom," he played piano in Ma Rainey's band. But illness and disaster led him back to the church. After the deaths of his wife and infant

son, he wrote the moving "Precious Lord, Take My Hand," adapting the melody of a white hymn, "Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?" From the 1930s, based in Chicago, Dorsey wrote hundreds of songs—such as "Peace in the Valley"—that helped gospel music grow constantly in popularity.
© Ted Williams / CORBIS
#

LYRIC

Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn
– THOMAS DORSEY
#

photo 2.29: Jordanaires with Elvis

The Jordanaires
#

LIFT-UP LABEL

The Jordanaires
In white gospel music, close-harmony quartet singing was a favorite format, and the Jordanaires were one of the best groups around. Formed in Springfield, Missouri, in 1948, the Jordanaires were a leading gospel quartet before becoming back-up singers for Elvis Presley. Gospel was Elvis's favorite music, and he recorded a number of gospel albums himself.
Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
#

photo 2.30: choir

The Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, conducted by Kevin Lewis, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music Opera House, Brooklyn, New York, 2005.
© Jack Vartoogian / FrontRowPhotos
#

AUDIO
Gospel songs, Precious Lord

FREE-STANDING ITEM

MUSIC STAND
holding flip-book of
photos of gospel singers
and song lyrics

photo 2.22: singing in church
(same as image in window
on panel)

First Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama.
Photograph by Joe Alper, courtesy of Jackie Gibson Alper
#

photo 2.23: Clara Ward

Clara Ward
Clara Ward (1924–73) was one of gospel's greatest soloists. As leader of The Ward Singers in the 1940s and '50s, she brought glamour to gospel with flamboyant costumes and a passionate singing style.
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM
#

photo 2.24: Soul Stirrers

Soul Stirrers
Formed in Texas in 1935, the Soul Stirrers popularized the quartet style of gospel. By dividing the lead singer's part between two voices, one high and one low, they created a sound that would evolve into rhythm 'n' blues and doo-wop.
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM
#

photo 2.25: Marion Williams

Marion Williams
With her powerhouse voice and the sheer drama of her performance, Marion Williams (1927–94) could drive an audience to a fever of religious emotion. Williams's style was shaped by the full-throttle musical traditions of the Pentecostal church.
© 1988 Linda Vartoogian / FrontRowPhotos
#

photo 2.26: Golden Gate

Quartet

Golden Gate Quartet
The Golden Gate Quartet came out of Virginia to become the most popular black gospel quartet of the late 1930s and '40s. Their highly syncopated trademark sound was shaped by the rhythms of blues and jazz.
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM
#

photo 2.34: Blackwood

Blackwood Brothers
This southern gospel group had a run of more than 60 years, beginning in Mississippi in 1934, when Pentecostal preacher Roy Blackwood formed a quartet with his brothers Doyle and James and his son R.W. Singers came and went over time, but the quartet remained one of the greatest in gospel.
Photograph by Bill Webb, 1958 / Collection of Miriam Blackwood
#

photo 2.35: Statesmen

The Statesmen
The Statesmen bowled over audiences with their flair for showmanship and jazzy piano accompaniment. Formed in 1948 by Hovie Lister, they were one of the longest-running quartets in southern gospel, and one of the most influential.
Courtesy of Wallace Nelms
#

photo 2.36: Oak Ridge

Oak Ridge Quartet
The Oak Ridge Quartet was founded in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1945. As with many long-lived quartets, its roster of singers changed often. In the 1970s, as the Oak Ridge Boys, their focus shifted from gospel to country, and they became country music megastars.
Oak Ridge Boys, Inc.
#

photo 2.37: Swanee River

Swanee River Boys
The Swanee River Boys sang a soft harmony that sounded more black than white. Stacy Abner founded the quartet in

1938 in Lawrenceburg, Tennessee, with two of his nephews in the original line-up. Over the years, the personnel changed, but the sound remained the same.
Georgia State University Library, Special Collections and Archives, Popular Music Collection
#

photo 2.38:
Blind Willie Johnson

Blind Willie Johnson
A gruff-voiced gospel singer from Texas, Blind Willie Johnson (about 1902–47) was also one of the greatest slide-guitarists of all time. Intense and soulful, his music straddles the line between blues and spirituals.
#

photo 2.39:
Chuck Wagon Gang

The Chuck Wagon Gang
This close-harmony gospel quartet from Texas was formed in 1935 by D.P. "Dad" Carter and three of his nine children. The present incarnation of the group maintains its original musical style—pure, old-time rural Southern harmonies.
Courtesy of Harold Timmons, former member of the Chuck Wagon Gang
#

sheet music:
God Don't Never Change (Blind Willie Johnson)
I'm a Soldier in the Army of the Lord (Soul Stirrers)
I'm Saved (and I Know That I Am) (The Statesmen)
In the Sweet By and By (Blackwood Brothers)
Jesus Is the Reason (Oak Ridge Quartet)
Jezebel (Golden Gate Quartet)
Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho (Clara Ward)
Mansion Builder (Marion Williams)
Shall We Gather at the River (Chuck Wagon Gang)
Wade in the Water (Swanee River Boys)

KIOSK 3

SECTION INTRO

From the Hills, Hollers, and Plains:
Country Music
European settlers brought folk music with them from the Old World to the New: ballads, musical tales of love gained and love lost, and songs that reflected the cultures of the countries they left. Gradually, this music took on American traits, and European folk music was transformed into American folk traditions with American themes. As it evolved, it was called by many names—old-time music, mountain music, hillbilly music—but after World War II it matured into the sound known as "country."
#

photo 3.1
LC-USF33-006258-M2

Musicians, Asheville, North Carolina, 1937.
Photograph by Ben Shahn / Library of Congress
#

photo 3.1A
LC-USF33-006139-B-M1

Street musicians, Maynardville, Tennessee, 1935.
Photograph by Ben Shahn / Library of Congress
#

photo 3.2: Jimmie Rodgers

Jimmie Rodgers
#

LIFT-UP LABEL

Jimmie Rodgers
Country music's first star was Jimmie Rodgers (1897–1933). Nicknamed the Singing Brakeman (because of his railroad job) and the Blue Yodeler (because of his vocal style), the Mississippi-born Rodgers learned to play guitar from a black neighbor and picked up a bluesy way with a song.

From his first recordings in 1927, Rodgers' yodels and warm voice were a hit, with such tunes as "In the Jailhouse Now" and "Blue Yodel (T for Texas)." By the time of his

early death from tuberculosis, Rodgers had laid the foundation for modern country music.
Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Jimmie Rodgers at the Listening Station.
#

photo 3.3: Carter Family (Maybelle. A.P., Sara)

The Carter Family
Country music's first successful group hailed from the hills of southwest Virginia: A.P. Carter, his wife, Sara (right), and Sara's cousin Maybelle (who married A.P.'s brother Ezra). Their recordings, beginning in 1927, helped popularize Appalachian mountain tunes such as "Wildwood Flower" and "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?"

Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
#

photo 3.4:
extended Carter Family

Below:
The extended Carter family, Clinch Valley, Virginia, 1941.
Photograph by Eric Schaal / Time-Life Pictures / Getty Images
#

LYRIC

Will the circle be unbroken
By and by, Lord, by and by?
– SUNG BY THE CARTER FAMILY
#

SUBTEXT 3-A

Appalachian Mountain Music
In the rugged mountains of the Appalachian region, many musicians and songs remained relatively free of outside influence for generations. Songs and performance styles retained much of their original forms until new musical

styles began to infiltrate the region by way of radio and phonograph in the 1920s.

Appalachian music contained English ballads and other folksongs from the British Isles and Ireland, "made American" by self-taught yet highly artistic rural mountain musicians.
#

OBJECTS
fiddle, mandolin, dulcimer
[label inside case]

The first white settlers in the Appalachian Mountains came from the British Isles. Along with the folk songs of England, Scotland, and Ireland, they brought the musical instruments—the fiddle and the dulcimer—of their homeland. The mandolin, originating in Italy, would later add its own distinctive sound to country music.

(1) Fiddle
(2) Dulcimer
(3) Mandolin
#

photo 3.24: misty mountains

Appalachian Mountains
National Park Service
#

<u>three cut-out figures</u>
photo 3.25: fiddle player

photo 3.26: mandolin player

photo 3.27: dulcimer player

Musician cut-outs:
Photographs by Dan Loftin
#

SUBTEXT 3A-1

Getting Wired: Radio and Recordings
With the rise of phonographic recordings and radio in the 1920s, American roots music—particularly country music, gospel, and the blues—began to reach broader audiences, making itself heard in the most remote hills and valleys as well as the fast-growing cities. Technology sped up the process of musical cross-fertilization: gospel singers listened to "hillbilly" music, country singers listened to the blues, and everyone adapted the sounds that they liked.
#

FOCUS LABEL

Grand Ole Opry
With the creation of the Grand Ole Opry radio program in 1927 on Nashville's WSM radio station, country music saturated the South and eventually other parts of America. Artists such as Uncle Dave Macon, Minnie Pearl, Roy Acuff, and later Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, Chet Atkins, Merle Haggard, and Willie Nelson made country music one of America's most popular roots music forms.
#

photo 3.10: Grand Ole Opry (Roy Acuff on stage)

Top panel:
The Grand Ole Opry, 1939.

Bottom panel:
The Grand Ole Opry, Ryman Auditorium, early 1960s.

Grand Ole Opry Archives
#

OBJECT: radio

AUDIO (selections from Grand Ole Opry)

[audio label TBD]

photo 3.5: Uncle Dave

Uncle Dave Macon
The Grand Ole Opry's first star was Uncle Dave Macon (1870–1952), a banjo-player and comic who traded his

hauling business for show business at the age of 50. Nicknamed the "Dixie Dewdrop," Macon specialized in crowd-pleasing old tunes such as "Keep My Skillet Good and Greasy" and "Take Me Back to My Carolina Home."

Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
#

photo 3.6: Willie Nelson

Willie Nelson
With a rebel streak and an outlaw attitude, singer-songwriter Willie Nelson (born 1933) bucked against the trends of mainstream country music. In the 1970s he reinvigorated country music with deeply personal songs that harked back to honky-tonks and cowboy days.

Grand Ole Opry Archives
#

photo 3.7: Chet Atkins

Chet Atkins
A master of the guitar, Chet Atkins (1924–2001) helped to create the smoother, pop-oriented brand of country music known as the "Nashville sound."

Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
#

photo 3.8: Hank Williams

Hank Williams
Hank Williams (1923–53) wrote songs of heartbreak and honky-tonks. Alabama-born, and frail his entire life, he sang from the heart in a haunting voice. His songs — such as "Hey, Good Lookin'," "Your Cheating Heart," and "Cold, Cold Heart" — have influenced three generations of country singers and songwriters.

Grand Ole Opry Archives
#

photo 3.9: Patsy Cline

Patsy Cline
A mainstay on Grand Ole Opry broadcasts in the late 1950s, Patsy Cline's (1932–63) rich, supple voice was ideal

for heartfelt love ballads. Cline died in a plane crash near Camden, Tennessee.

Grand Ole Opry Archives
#

LYRIC

Oh there's nothing to do but sit down and sing
And rock about, my Saro Jane
– SUNG BY UNCLE DAVE MACON
#

photo 3.28:
Opry exterior
[caption on top panel]

#

SUBTEXT 3B

Bluegrass
With breakneck tempos and complex rhythms, bluegrass barreled out of the mountains in the 1940s. This music was a direct response to the "citified" country sound of Western swing, reaching back to the style of old-time mountain music while adding instrumental solos as a jazz band would do. Bill Monroe, the father of bluegrass, along with the Stanley Brothers and the duo of Flatt & Scruggs, brought their exciting sounds to country audiences immediately after World War II, using the guitar, banjo, fiddle, mandolin, and seamless vocal harmonies.
#

photo 3.19: musicians
and Eleanor Roosevelt

Mountain musicians with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, White Top Mountain, Virginia, 1933.
The Library of Virginia
#

photo 3.21: Bill Monroe

Bill Monroe
#

LIFT-UP LABEL

Bill Monroe

Kentucky-born Bill Monroe (1911–96) had a sound like no one else's. His high tenor voice and lightning-quick mandolin playing embodied the "high lonesome" sound — the traditional sound of the southern mountains that became the hallmark of bluegrass. In fact, the style takes its name from Monroe's band, the Blue Grass Boys.

Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Bill Monroe at the Listening Station.
#

photo 3.22: Ralph Stanley

Ralph Stanley
Bluegrass pioneer Ralph Stanley (born 1927) formed the Stanley Brothers band in 1946, with Ralph on banjo and his brother Carter on guitar. Ralph achieved surprise stardom in 2001, when his songs were featured in the movie *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
#

photo 3.20: Flatt & Scruggs

Flatt & Scruggs
Lester Flatt (1914–79) played guitar. Earl Scruggs (born 1924) played banjo. As members of Bill Monroe's band in the 1940s, their high-speed picking helped to create the bluegrass sound.

Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
#

LYRIC (Bill Monroe)

Blue moon of Kentucky,
keep on shining.
Shine on the one that's gone and left me blue.
– BILL MONROE
#

SUBTEXT 3B-1

Western Swing

Out west, in the 1930s, musicians combined traditional country sounds with elements of jazz, Mexican music, and the pop music of the day to create a new sound—Western swing—that put Texas and Oklahoma on the American music map. No artist was more influential in creating the style than Bob Wills. Wills and his band, the Texas Playboys, played uptempo dance music and used a new instrument, the electric "steel" guitar, to make its sound unique.
#

photo 3.16: Bob Wills band

Bob Wills
Bob Wills (1905–75) and His Texas Playboys became the first stars of western swing, playing country-western music with a jazzy 1930s rhythm.
Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
#

photo 3.14: Spade Cooley

Spade Cooley
Oklahoma-born fiddler Donnell Clyde "Spade" Cooley (1910–69) got his nickname from his poker-playing skills. He formed his western swing orchestra in California in 1942 and soon rivaled Bob Wills in popularity.
Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
#

[3 Hatch Show Prints --]

graphic 3.15: Bob Wills poster

graphic 3:17: Flat & Scruggs poster

graphic 3.18: Bill Monroe poster

group credit for prints

Posters from Hatch Show Prints, Nashville, Tennessee,
a division of the Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum,
American Letter Press since 1879
#

SUBTEXT 3B-2

Singing Cowboys
In California, country singers put the “western” into country-western music. Singers like Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Tex Ritter wore cowboy clothes, sang in a plaintive style, and created a powerful American roots music persona, the Singing Cowboy. Over the years, the singing cowboy maintained his presence in country music. Descendents of the style include George Strait, Alan Jackson, and Dwight Yoakam.
#

photo 3.11: cowboy painting
LC-USZC4-4081

Library of Congress
#

photo 3.12: Gene Autry

Gene Autry
Most famous of the singing cowboys was Gene Autry (1907–98). A Texas boy, but not a cowboy, Autry patterned his singing after the “blue yodels” of Jimmie Rodgers. After four years of radio jobs in Chicago and New York, he became a star of radio and western movies in the 1930s, singing songs that celebrated cowboy life.

Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum
#

graphic 3.13: Gene Autry
songbook cover

#

LYRIC

Where the longhorn cattle feed
On the lowly jimson weed
– GENE AUTRY, “BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN”
#

OBJECT (banjo)

TEXT for banjo

Banjo
The banjo originated in Africa. In America, enslaved Africans re-created the familiar stringed instrument to console themselves with the sound of home. In time the banjo evolved to play a key role in an array of uniquely American root-music styles—particularly the lightning-quick banjo picking of bluegrass.
#

graphic 3.23: 18th-century banjo player

Early version of the banjo, detail from *Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences*, painting by Samuel Jennings, 1792.
The Library Company of Philadelphia
#

KIOSK 4

SECTION INTRO

Can't Be Satisfied: The Blues
A mournful song rises from a tenant farmer's shack in Mississippi—or from a dim and smoky Chicago bar, or from an upscale jazz club in New York City. The singer might be male or female, black or white. It's all blues.

Blues is the single most influential black music of all. Simple in form yet infinitely adaptable, the blues left its mark on country and gospel, and gave rise to jazz, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, soul, and rap. The blues was so deep and so wide, it made room for everybody and touched nearly everyone in American music.
#

background photo 4.1:
guitar player silhouette

Photograph copyright © Val Wilmer
#

OVERHEAD QUOTE

"Blues is the roots. Everything else is the fruits."
– WILLIE DIXON, BLUES MUSICIAN
#

OBJECT
acoustic guitar ("Stella")

guitar label

"Stella" guitar
The guitar (along with the harmonica) was the essential instrument of the blues. In the rural south, this meant an acoustic guitar, and the instrument of choice was often a "Stella" guitar mail-ordered from a Sears, Roebuck catalog.
#

SUBTEXT 4A

Roots of the Blues
Nobody knows for sure where the blues were born. They seem to have taken shape in the Mississippi Delta in the 1890s, a response to poverty, oppression, and out-and-out racism. The music is rooted in the rhythms and tones of "field hollers," work songs, and sacred music. It is the music of black working people, a raw music that most often consisted of voice and guitar. Black people used the blues to sing away their sorrows, provide comic relief in the face of intolerable social conditions, and celebrate black culture at juke joints, fish fries, and Saturday-night house parties.
#

photo 4.2: prison work crew
LOT 7414-F, no. N13

Work crew, Darrington State Farm, Texas, 1934.
Photograph by Alan Lomax / Library of Congress
#

photo 4.3: picking cotton
LC-USF34-052269D

Picking cotton, Mississippi, 1930s.
Library of Congress
#

photo 4.4A: poverty, shacks, cotton field

Shacks on the outskirts of Gretna, Louisiana, 1892.
Photograph by Mrs. M.K. Farrier, from Samuel Barclay Charters, *The Country Blues* (Da Capo Press, 1975)
#

photo 4.5: girls in church
LOT 7414-B, no. N45

Baptist congregation, False River, Louisiana, 1934.
Photograph by Alan Lomax / Library of Congress
#

graphic 4.6: Horace Bradley illus., picking cotton

In a Cotton Field, drawing by Horace Bradley, 1880s.
Library of Congress
#

QUOTE

"[Blues] come from slavery time, holler songs in the field and things like that. They don't know nothing to do but sing, and they called it the blues."
– DAVID "HONEYBOY" EDWARDS, BLUES MUSICIAN
#

graphic 4.30: John Henry

Steel-Drivin' Man
African American folk songs were one source for blues lyrics—such as the songs celebrating the black folk-hero John Henry, the "steel-driving man." In a contest against a steam-powered hammer, John Henry died while proving that he was faster and stronger than any machine.
Drawing by Evan Keeling, Smithsonian Institution
#

LYRIC (John Henry)

This hammer'll be the death of me, lord, lord,
This hammer'll be the death of me
– "JOHN HENRY"
#

OBJECT/INTERACTIVE:
spoons

Spoons
In the poverty of the rural south, musical instruments were often homemade from local materials. Since the early 1800s, some pretty fancy rhythms have been beaten out of a pair of old spoons. Pick them up and give them a try!
#

photo 4.33: playing spoons

#

SUBTEXT 4B

Rural Blues
From the Mississippi Delta, East Texas, southern Virginia, and North Carolina—places where black sharecroppers struggled to survive—came the early sounds of the blues. Anonymous musicians mapped out the basic style: the three-line verse, the themes of heartbreak and hard times, the guitar "answering" the singer's voice. Recordings by

early bluesmen such as Charlie Patton, Son House, and Blind Lemon Jefferson popularized the music throughout the black South. When their fans migrated north, they took their love of the blues with them.
#

photo 4.8: juke joint
LC-USF351-173

Juke joint, Belle Glade, Florida, 1941.
Photograph by Marion Post Wolcott / Library of Congress
#

photo 4.9: Blind Blake

Blind Blake
In the Southeast, every blues musician developed his own special style. Florida-born Blind Blake (about 1893–about 1933) played guitar with a rapid-fire picking that incorporated jazz and ragtime and could handle two rhythms at once.
John Tefteller / Blues Images (www.bluesimages.com)
#

photo 4.10: Charlie Patton

Charlie Patton
One of the first stars of Mississippi Delta blues, Charlie Patton (1891–1934) was known for his hoarse voice and showmanship—playing his guitar between his knees or behind his back, drumming on his instrument, jumping around as he played.
John Tefteller / Blues Images (www.bluesimages.com)
#

photo 4.11: Son House

Son House
Known for his furious guitar work and intensely emotional vocals, Son House (1902–88) was one of the creators of the Delta blues style. In his youth he was torn between preaching and “the devil’s music,” and his songs often turn into a battle between good and evil, sin and redemption.
Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 4.12: Lemon Jefferson

FOCUS LABEL

BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON
One of the first great rural blues performers, Blind Lemon Jefferson (1893–1929) came out of Texas. Born blind, he scratched out a living by singing for tips on Dallas street corners until the mid-1920s, when his blues recordings made him a household name among black Americans. He died on a Chicago street, freezing to death in a blizzard after missing his ride home.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM
#

LYRIC

My feets is so sore, can't hardly wear my shoes
My feets is so sore, can't hardly wear my shoes
Out last night with wild women
and it left me with those big night blues
– BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON, "BIG NIGHT BLUES"
#

object 4.13: Robert Johnson book in vitrine

FOCUS LABEL

ROBERT JOHNSON
Most famous of the Mississippi Delta bluesmen, Robert Johnson (1911–38) was a legend in his own short lifetime. People said that he had acquired his amazing guitar skills by going to a crossroads one dark night and selling his soul to the devil. Johnson fed the legend with such haunting songs as "Cross Road Blues" and "Hellhound on My Trail." Johnson's recordings are few, but they still influence musicians today.
#

LYRIC (Robert Johnson)

I got to keep moving, I got to keep moving
Blues falling down like hail
And the days keep on remindin' me

There's a hellhound on my trail
– ROBERT JOHNSON, "HELLHOUND ON MY TRAIL"
#

photo 4.14A: cotton field

U.S. Department of Agriculture
#

OBJECT/INTERACTIVE:
diddley bow

Diddley Bow
Some early bluesmen got started in music by playing the diddley bow. This homemade instrument was a piece of wire (usually from a bale of cotton) stretched between two nails. A player plucks the string while sliding a bottle or knife along the wire, producing a whining bluesy sound. The diddley bow is easy to make, but hard to play; it takes real skill to make it sing.

Photograph by Cheryl Thurber
#

photo 4.31: man playing
diddley bow

SUBTEXT 4C

Urban Blues
When rural African Americans moved to the city, they carried the blues with them. By the 1920s, big-city nightclubs and record companies were spreading the sound, especially in New York City's Harlem and Chicago's South Side.

The blues became fully urbanized in the 1950s after a vast migration during World War II brought hundreds of thousands of African Americans north in search of jobs. In the big cities, technology changed the music: electric guitars and amplified harmonicas made a bigger, brasher sound that could be heard across a noisy club. Urban blues grew and prospered in black sections of Chicago, Detroit, Memphis, St. Louis, and Atlanta, and in cities throughout the Northeast and Far West.
#

photo 4.19: Beale Street

Beale Street, Memphis, Tennessee.
Courtesy Memphis Press-Scimitar
#

QUOTE

"[Blues is] life's way of talking. You don't sing to feel better. You sing 'cause that's a way of understanding life."
– AUGUST WILSON, *MA RAINEY'S BLACK BOTTOM*, 1981
#

photo 4.20: Williamson #2

Sonny Boy Williamson
Sonny Boy Williamson (Aleck "Rice" Miller, 1899–1965) may have been the best harmonica player in the blues business. A legendary and colorful character, he was also radio's first blues star. In 1941 he began a daily blues show called "King Biscuit Flour Time" with guitarist Robert Lockwood Jr. on station KFFA in Helena, Arkansas, which broadcast across the South.
© Jan Persson / Redferns Music Picture Library
#

photo 4.21: B.B. King

B.B. King

With his guitar “Lucille” wailing under his hands, B.B. King (born 1925) became one of the greatest blues guitarists of all time. The initials stand for “Blues Boy,” a nickname that Riley King picked up when he left Mississippi in 1947 for the blues clubs of Memphis.
Photograph by Dick Waterman
#

OVERHEAD QUOTE

Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man’s soul.
– LANGSTON HUGHES, “WEARY BLUES”
#

photo 4.22: Muddy Waters

FOCUS LABEL

MUDDY WATERS
The “father of the Chicago blues,” Muddy Waters (1915–83) helped transform the raw sounds of Mississippi Delta blues into the electrified Chicago style. Born McKinley Morganfield in Mississippi, Waters moved to Chicago in 1943 and traded his acoustic guitar for an electric one. His innovative guitar and vocal work preserved the spirit of the Mississippi Delta tradition while ushering in a golden age of the blues in the years after World War II.
Photograph copyright © Val Wilmer
#

LYRIC (Muddy Waters)

Woman, I’m troubled, I be all worried in mind
Well baby, I just can’t be satisfied
And I just can’t keep from cryin’
– MUDDY WATERS, “I CAN’T BE SATISFIED”
#

photo 4.23: Howlin’ Wolf

FOCUS LABEL

HOWLIN’ WOLF
A big man with a huge voice, Howlin’ Wolf (1910–76) sang like a man possessed: he shouted and wailed, stomped and tumbled around the stage in a high-voltage blues performance. He had started life in Mississippi as Chester

Arthur Burnett. As Howlin' Wolf, he joined the Chicago blues scene in the early '50s.
Photograph by Dick Waterman
#

LYRIC (Howlin' Wolf)

We gonna romp and tromp till midnight
We gonna fuss and fight till daylight
We gonna pitch a wang dang doodle all night long
– "WANG DANG DOODLE," SUNG BY HOWLIN' WOLF
#

photo 4.24: Little Walter

Little Walter
Little Walter (Walter Jacobs, 1930–68) revolutionized the blues harmonica. Tired of being drowned out by electric guitars, he hooked up his "harp" to an amplifier and blew out gutsy new sounds.
Photograph by Ray Flerlage / Chansley Entertainment Archives
#

graphic 4.25: Romare Bearden collage

Spring Way, collage by Romare Bearden, 1964
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Bequest of Henry Ward Ranger through the National Academy of Design
#

photo 4.26: train tracks

Chicago railway yard
© Royalty-Free / CORBIS
#

photo 4.27: Otis Spann

Otis Spann
Otis Spann (1930–70) played a mean blues piano. When he joined Muddy Waters's band, the group took on a rocking, piano-driven sound.
© Jan Persson / Redferns Music Picture Library
#

photo 4.28: T-Bone Walker

T-Bone Walker

The first blues artist to take up the electric guitar was Aaron Thibeaux "T-Bone" Walker (1910–75). His smooth, jazz-inflected, groundbreaking style is echoed in the music of countless blues and rock guitarists.
© Jan Persson / Redferns Music Picture Library
#

photo 4.29:
Chess Records building

CHESS RECORDS
If you couldn't get to Chicago, recordings could bring Chicago to you. Between the '40s and '60s, brothers Leonard and Phil Chess recorded the best in Chicago blues, making their modest studio the creative home for such blues stars as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Sonny Boy Williamson.

Photograph by Bob Thall
#

OBJECT
U.S. Marine harmonica

harmonica label

Harmonica
Some call it a "harp." Some call it a "Mississippi saxophone." Whatever the name, the harmonica is a basic blues instrument. Invented in Germany in 1821, the harmonica quickly became popular around the world. It was inexpensive, easy to play, and small enough to carry in a pocket. Musicians have favored the "U.S. Marine Band" model, manufactured by Hohner, for its tone and simple beauty since 1896.
#

photo 4.32: James Cotton

The great blues "harpist" James Cotton throws heart and soul into his harmonica.

Photograph by Kenji Oda
#

QUOTE

I got those sad old weary blues.
I don't know where to turn.
I don't know where to go.
Nobody cares about you
When you sink so low.

– LANGSTON HUGHES, "TOO BLUE"
#

SUBTEXT 4D

Blues Divas
Somebody once said, "Blues ain't nothin' but a good woman feelin' bad." Somebody else said, "Blues ain't nothin' but a bad woman feelin' good." Either way, women made their mark as blues singers as early as the 1920s. In beaded gowns and elegant hairstyles, divas such as Bessie Smith and Gertrude "Ma" Rainey headlined at theaters and boasted hit records. They brought urban sophistication to the blues.
#

big photo 4.15: Bessie Smith

Bessie Smith
The "empress of the blues," Bessie Smith (1894–1937) combined glamour with the earthy realism of her songs.
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM
#

photo 4.16: Ma Rainey and band

Ma Rainey
#

LIFT-UP LABEL

Ma Rainey
Gertrude "Ma" Rainey (1886–1939) was billed as "the mother of the blues." Her piano player, Thomas Dorsey (right), would later earn fame as "the father of gospel music." In the 1920s, Rainey toured the country as one of the top blues stars, traveling in her own private railroad car.
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Ma Rainey at the Listening Station.
#

photo 4.17: Mamie Smith

Mamie Smith
Mamie Smith (1883–1946) recorded "Crazy Blues" in 1920, the first blues recording by a black singer. It was a smash hit, and record companies scrambled to sign up other blueswomen.
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM

#

photo 4.18: Ida Cox

Ida Cox
Blues songs weren't always about being downtrodden. Ida Cox (1896–1967) sang, "Wild women don't worry / Wild women don't have the blues."
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM
#

LYRIC (Ma Rainey)

Goin' away, baby, won't be back 'til fall
If I find me a good man, I won't be back at all
– "C.C. RIDER," SUNG BY MA RAINEY
#

KIOSK 5

SECTION INTRO

Other Sounds, Other Songs
Virtually every immigrant group has contributed to America's music treasury. As a result, American roots music draws from many sources, blending songs with origins from around the world.

Music draws a community together. Whether to celebrate a birth or a marriage, to mourn a death, to socialize on a Saturday night, or to remember rituals and customs from the old country, music is a uniting force that all immigrants to America have known. Often, music is accompanied by dancing, another way of remembering one's roots.
#

photo 5.1: accordion player

Zydeco accordionist Curley Taylor.
Photograph by David Simpson / Louisiana State University, Eunice
#

QUOTE

"Put an accordion in his hands, and those big clumsy-looking fingers could do some magic and make your feet dance."
– MARC SAVOY, CAJUN MUSICIAN AND ACCORDION-MAKER
#

OBJECT: accordion

Accordion
The versatile accordion is an essential ingredient in a wide range of American roots music styles, from polka to tejano, and from Cajun and zydeco to klezmer. Invented in Austria in 1829, the accordion came to the United States with German and Italian immigrants. Musicians and dancers appreciated its loudness in noisy dancehalls, and its lack of strings was an asset in remote settlements, where strings were hard to come by.
#

photo 5.3 (background):

close-up of accordion

Accordion keyboard.
Photograph by Robbie Davis, Smithsonian Institution
#

photo 5.4: immigrants with guitar and concertina

Immigrants on shipboard en route to America, early 1900s.
Photograph by Lewis Hine, © Bettmann/CORBIS
#

photo 5.5: Marc Savoy

Cajun musician and accordion-maker Marc Savoy.
Photograph by Philip Gould
#

SUBTEXT 5A

Cajun
In 1755 the British expelled French settlers from Nova Scotia, which the French called Acadie. Some of these Acadians settled in southwest Louisiana, where they formed tight-knit French-speaking communities. In time, "Acadian" became "Cajun," and the Cajuns created a new music form from French lullabies and folk songs, black creole music, dance tunes, and, later, country music. The fiddle and the accordion are the principal instruments of the irresistibly danceable Cajun music.

Bottom panels, below and below left:
Cajun/zydeco dancers.
Photographs by Marty Katz / Washingtonphotographer.com
#

photo 5.11: Balfa Brothers

The Balfa Brothers
Dewey, Will, Rodney, and Burke Balfa were born of a long line of fiddlers. Beginning in the 1940s, they kept traditional Cajun music alive when it was in danger of vanishing, and many of their waltzes, reels, and two-steps have become Cajun classics.

Photograph by Philip Gould
#

photo 5.12: BeauSoleil

BeauSoleil
Led by fiddler Michael Doucet, the band BeauSoleil has spearheaded the revival of Cajun music since 1975.
Photograph by Scott Suchman, 2000 / Rhino Records
#

photo 5.13: Huval and Matte

Fiddler Terry Huval and accordionist Reggie Matte of the Jambalaya Cajun Band.
Photograph by David Simpson / Louisiana State University, Eunice
#

CAJUN LYRIC

Travailler c'est trop dur et voler c'est pas beau
. . . j'vis sur l'amour et j'espère de viv' vieux!

Work is too hard and stealing is wrong
. . . I live on love and I hope to live long!

– "TRAVAILLER C'EST TROP DUR," TRADITIONAL CAJUN WALTZ
#

SUBTEXT 5B

Zydeco
In French-speaking black communities in southwest Louisiana, musicians gave Cajun dance tunes a syncopated spin. In the 1920s, they added a bit of blues and called the sound French LaLa. Rhythm and blues entered the mix after World War II, and the rocking result became known as zydeco. The name can be traced to the song "Les haricots sont pas salés." (Run the first two words together and pronounce it "zadico.") The French title means "The snap beans aren't salted," a Louisiana saying meaning "flat broke."
#

photo 5.8: Clifton Chenier

Clifton Chenier
Clifton Chenier (1925–87) lived up to his billing as the "king of zydeco," often performing in a crown and cape. He heated up the sound in the 1960s by throwing rock and

roll into the mix, and his high-powered performances pulled in legions of new fans.
Photograph by Philip Gould

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Clifton Chenier at the Listening Station.
#

photo 5.6: Boozoo Chavis

Boozoo Chavis
Zydeco pioneer Wilson "Boozoo" Chavis (1930–2001) recorded zydeco's first hit song, "Paper in My Shoe," in 1954. His trademark cry was "Boozoo! That's who!"
Photograph by David Simpson / Louisiana State University, Eunice
#

photo 5.7: Rosie Ledet

Rosie Ledet brings a sly, sultry, female approach to the mostly male world of zydeco.
Photograph by Morris Ledet
#

photo 5.9: Nathan Williams

Accordionist Nathan Williams leads his Zydeco Cha Chas in a Mardi Gras parade, St. Martinville, Louisiana.
Photograph by Philip Gould
#

ZYDECO LYRIC

One day, sweetheart,
You're going to cry.
Ça m'fait du mal, catin.
Chère jolie Bassette.

– BOOZOO CHAVIS, "JOLIE BASSETTE"
#

photo 5.10A:
Cajun/Zydeco dancers
(bottom panel)

photo 5.10B:
Cajun/Zydeco dancers
(bottom panel)

SUBTEXT 5C

Tejano
Tejano means "Texan." Tejano music evolved in Texas and other places in the Southwest from the cross-pollination of traditional Mexican dance and folk music with American country music, jazz, polka, and Cajun music. *Conjunto* (bands playing accordion-based dance music) and *orquesta tejana* (larger, ensemble dance bands that play waltzes and polkas) became the rage among Hispanic Americans in the Southwest in the mid-20th century.
#

photo 5.18: Flaco Jiménez

Flaco Jiménez
One of today's most important conjunto musicians, Leonardo "Flaco" Jiménez (born 1939) comes from a long line of innovators in tejano music.
Arhoolie Productions, Inc., www.arhoolie.org
#

photo 5.16: Lydia Mendoza

Lydia Mendoza
The first star of tejano music was Lydia Mendoza (born 1916), called *la alondra de la frontera* ("the lark of the border").
Lydia Mendoza and The Arhoolie Foundation, www.arhoolie.org
#

photo 5.17: N. Martínez and S. Almeida

Narciso Martínez
#

LIFT-UP LABEL

Narciso Martínez
Narciso Martínez (1911–92) took up the accordion in his teens, absorbing the style of German and Czech musicians in Texas. In the 1930s he created a new sound—the conjunto sound—by teaming his accordion with the *bajo sexto* (Mexican 12-string guitar) of Santiago Almeida. Fans called Martínez *el huracán del valle* ("the hurricane from the valley") for his fast and furious playing.
The Arhoolie Foundation, www.arhoolie.org

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Narciso Martínez at the Listening Station.
#

photo 5.15: fiesta at Taos

Spanish-American musicians, Taos, New Mexico, 1940.
Photograph by Russell Lee / Library of Congress
#

photo 5.19: conjunto band

Eva Ybarra y Su Conjunto at the Mercado de Paz, San Antonio, Texas, 2000.
Courtesy of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center
#

graphic 5.20–5.26:
bumper stickers

Bumper stickers:
Bumper stickers from tejano radio stations
#

photo 5.27 (at bottom):
dancers (3 photo panels)

Bottom panels:
Tejano dancers.
Photographs by Marty Katz / Washingtonphotographer.com
#

TEJANO LYRICS

Pero hay qué triste
Y es amar sin esperanza.

But oh, how sad it is
to love without hope

– "PERO HAY QUÉ TRISTE," SUNG BY LYDIA MENDOZA
#

Cantamos nuestras canciones
con bastante corazón
es la música texana
bajo sexto y acordeón.

– "BAJO SEXTO Y ACORDEÓN"
#

SUBTEXT 5D

Polka
Up north in heartland industrial cities such as Cleveland, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh, and Indianapolis, European immigrants from Germany, Austria, Poland, and other Eastern European countries brought the sounds of polka that reverberated in working-class communities there. Polka's rhythms made their way into a number of other roots music forms, along with its chief instrument, the accordion.
#

graphic 5.28: polka poster

Polka festival poster:
Minnesota Historical Society
#

photo 5.38 at bottom: dancers

Bottom panels, below and below right:
Polka dancers.
Photographs by Svatava Strnad
#

photo 5.30: Lil Wally

Li'l Wally Jagiello
#

LIFT-UP LABEL

Li'l Wally Jagiello
Li'l Wally Jagiello (1930–2006) was Chicago's polka king. The son of Polish immigrants, he taught himself to play drums and concertina (a small accordion) and was leading his own band by the age of 14. He created Chicago-style polka, a slower version of the sound that was easier to dance to and left room for musical improvisation.
Photograph courtesy of Mrs. "Li'l Wally" Jagiello

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to Li'l Wally Jagiello at the Listening Station.

#

photo 5.32:
Frank Wojnarowski

Frank Wojnarowski
Born in Poland, Frank Wojnarowski (1912–94) came to America with polka in his heart. A singer, songwriter, and bandleader, he organized a dance orchestra in the 1940s, and is best known for his song "Matka."
From *The Best of Frank Wojnarowski* (Lyra Recordings/America)
#

photo 5.31: Polka Teers

Li'l LeRoy and the PolkaTeers, about 1958.
Minnesota Historical Society
#

photo 5.29: tuba player

Tuba player Tony Kaminski of the polka band Karl and the Country Dutchmen, Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Washington, D.C., 1998.
Photograph by Hugh Talman / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 5.33: accordion guys

Accordionists at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Washington, D.C., 1998.
Photograph by Richard Strauss / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

POLKA LYRICS

O ja, das ist die Liechtensteiner Polka, mein Schatz

Oh yes, it's the Liechtensteiner polka, my sweet . . .
– "LIECHTENSTEINER POLKA"
#

Oh there's music and there's dancing
And a lot of sweet romancing.
When they play the polka,
they all get in the swing.
– "BEER BARREL POLKA"

#

SUBTEXT 5E

Klezmer
Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe brought America a folk music called klezmer. (The name comes from the Hebrew words for "musical instruments.") The distinctive celebratory sound, often led by clarinet, accordion, and fiddle, still kicks off the dancing at many a Jewish celebration.
#

photo 5.34: Klezmorim

Klezmorim
The Klezmorim, based in California, were one of the first bands to launch a klezmer revival in the 1970s.
Arhoolie Productions, Inc., www.arhoolie.org

#

photo 5.35: Dave Tarras

Dave Tarras
Clarinetist Dave Tarras (1897–1989) absorbed klezmer in his native Russia. After emigrating to the U.S. in 1921, he formed his own band and became the best known klezmer musician in America.
Shanachie Entertainment Corp.
#

photo 5.36: New Orleans Klezmer All-Stars

New Orleans Klezmer Allstars
The New Orleans Klezmer Allstars give klezmer a Louisiana flavor, mixing Old World melodies with Cajun, jazz, funk, and rhythm and blues.
© Reuters/CORBIS
#

photo 5.37: Jewish wedding

Dancing at the wedding of Allison Sherman.
Photograph by Jim Sherman
#

INTERACTIVE

rub-board

Rub Board
Zydeco and Cajun bands often include a rub board. (Its Cajun French name is frottoir — pronounced frah-twah.) This rhythm instrument evolved from an ordinary washboard, developing "wings" that fit over the shoulders. The rub board artist strums the ridges with fingers, spoons, or bottle-openers to accompany the accordion with a rhythmic metallic scritching sound.
#

photo 5.40:
rub board player

Photograph by David Simpson / Louisiana State University, Eunice
#

labels for
AUDIO SELECTIONS:

CAJUN
Balfa Brothers
Lacassine Special, traditional, 1965

ZYDECO
Boozoo Chavis
Paper in My Shoe, 1954

TEJANO
Flaco Jiménez
El Guero Polkas, 1960s

POLKA
Frank Wojnarowski
Matka Waltz, 1950s [selection may change]

KLEZMER
Klezmer Plus
Ot Azoy, traditional, 1993

KIOSK 6

SECTION INTRO

Come Gather Round, People: The Roots Revival
After World War II, American music was increasingly dominated by star-powered, commercialized, homogenized pop music. Some people began to long for something simpler, rawer, more authentic, more “rooted.” By 1960 enthusiasm was growing for a return to roots music.
#

QUOTE

“American roots music expresses the joys and sorrows and all the in-betweens in our lives.”
—DOC WATSON, SINGER AND GUITARIST
#

photo 6.1: folk singers and Freedom Singers on stage

Newport Folk Festival, 1963: Peter, Paul and Mary, Joan Baez, and Bob Dylan join the SNCC Freedom Singers on stage.
Photograph by John Byrne Cooke
#

graphic 6.2:
Jonathan Shahn sketch

Newport Folk Festival program cover, 1965.
Sketch by Jonathan Shahn
#

photo 6.14: Kingston Trio

The Kingston Trio
#

LIFT-UP LABEL

The Kingston Trio
With their clean-cut college-boy style, the Kingston Trio didn’t look like folk balladeers. But when their catchy, calypso-flavored version of “Tom Dooley,” a l9th-century ballad, became a hit in 1958, they made a place for folk music on America’s pop charts and paved the way for the folk revival of the 1960s.
© Ted Williams / CORBIS

"listen" icon

LISTEN
to the Kingston Trio at the Listening Station.
#

photo 6.13A: John Hurt

Mississippi John Hurt
The roots revival brought some old-timers back into the spotlight. Mississippi John Hurt (1893–1966) had last recorded in 1928, but he could still bowl over festival crowds with his warm, gentle renditions of traditional country blues, folk songs, ballads, and rags.
Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 6.15:
New Lost City Ramblers

New Lost City Ramblers
The New Lost City Ramblers believed in authenticity. They based their sound and style on vintage hillbilly and blues records of the 1920s and '30s, accompanying themselves on banjo, guitar, autoharp, fiddle, and other old-time instruments.
Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 6.6: Newport Festival,
audience on lawn

Newport Folk Festival, 1960s.
Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

LYRIC
(Blowin' in the Wind)

How many roads must a man walk down
Before you call him a man?
– BOB DYLAN, "BLOWIN' IN THE WIND"
#

SUBTEXT 6A

The 1960s Revival

In the early 1960s a folk and roots music revival began in America, led by the success of such artists as the Kingston Trio, Burl Ives, Joan Baez—and especially Bob Dylan. Folk music became the preferred music form on many college campuses, and Dylan's protest song "Blowin' in the Wind" became a huge hit for Peter, Paul and Mary in 1963. Many of the folk revival artists played folk festivals around the country, the biggest and most important being the Newport Folk Festival in Newport, Rhode Island.
#

photo 6.5: Bob Dylan

FOCUS LABEL

BOB DYLAN
A leading light of the 1960s folk revival, Bob Dylan continues to write compelling music in folk, country, gospel, blues, and rock styles. Born Robert Zimmerman in Duluth, Minnesota, he patterned himself after the folk singer Woody Guthrie. In 1961 he arrived in New York with a new name and quickly made himself known, writing songs that sounded both old and brand-new. Some say Dylan also ended the folk revival when he played electric guitar at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. Purists were outraged, but he was ushering in a new sound: folk rock.

© Bettmann/CORBIS
#

photo 6.4: Peter, Paul & Mary

FOCUS LABEL

PETER, PAUL AND MARY
The trio of Peter Yarrow, Paul Stookey, and Mary Travers was the most popular folk-singing act of the 1960s. Formed in 1961, Peter, Paul and Mary made folk music a national phenomenon with hits such as Pete Seeger's "If I Had a Hammer" and Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind."

Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 6.7: Ochs & Andersen

Folk singers Phil Ochs (left) and Eric Andersen, New York City, about 1964.
Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 6.8: Washington Sq.

Washington Square, New York City, early 1960s.
Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

LIFT-UP LABEL
under photo 6.8

New York Folk
New York City was a prime center of the 1960s folk music revival. Toting guitars, banjos, and dulcimers, musicians gathered in Washington Square Park to sing, to listen, and to swap music. Greenwich Village coffeehouses showcased young talents singing old songs.
#

photo 6.9: Arlo Guthrie

Folk singer Arlo Guthrie, 1960s.
Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 6.3: Joan Baez

FOCUS LABEL

JOAN BAEZ
Singing folk ballads, blues, and laments in a pure, clear soprano, Joan Baez (born 1941) stood at the forefront of the folk revival from her first appearance at the Newport Folk Festival in 1959. Passionate for causes of social justice, she lent her voice to the civil rights and peace movements of the 1960s.

Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 6.10: Pete Seeger at rally

Folk singer Pete Seeger at an antiwar rally, 1969.
© Bettmann/CORBIS
#

photo 6.11: Odetta

Odetta
Odetta's powerful stage presence and deep contralto voice turned folk songs into dramatic events.
Photograph by Robert C. Malone / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 6.12: Poor People's March

Poor People's March on Washington, 1968.
Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

LIFT-UP LABEL under photo 6.12

Soundtrack of the Sixties
Roots music helped to propel the social movements of the 1960s. Folk-flavored protest songs filled the air at antiwar rallies. Gospel music and folk spirituals rang out at civil rights marches. The music powered the movements, and the movements fed the songs.
#

SUBTEXT 6B

Festivals
Each summer, festivals big and small celebrate American roots music all over the country. The National Folk Festival has been traveling around the U.S. since 1934. Celebrations such as the Newport Folk Festival, the Chicago Blues Festival, and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival not only keep American roots music alive, but also pass it on to new generations.
#

background graphic: posters

photo 6.16A: Maybelle Carter
and NLCR at Newport

Newport Folk Festival
Inaugurated in 1959, this annual festival in Newport, Rhode Island, helped to drive the roots-music revival. Newport showcased more than folk music; organizers also sought out blues, bluegrass, gospel, and Cajun artists. The festival was a proving ground for young performers and presented old-timers to a new audience.

Maybelle Carter sings with the New Lost City Ramblers, Newport, 1963.
Photograph by John Byrne Cooke
#

photo 6.18: Chicago Blues
Festival

Chicago Blues Festival
The blues has been a Chicago sound since the 1940s, and Chicago celebrates that link at an annual festival on the shore of Lake Michigan. Dozens of blues artists play during the day, while headliners perform every evening, and hundreds of thousands of fans gather to soak up the music.

Photograph by Paul Natkin / Photo Reserve
#

photo 6.19: SI Folklife

Smithsonian Folklife Festival
Every summer, the Smithsonian Institution brings hundreds of musicians, singers, and dancers to the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Since it began in 1967, the festival has showcased roots music from every region of the U.S.—and from around the world—along with programs of dance, storytelling, and traditional crafts.

Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

QUOTE	“A synthesis of traditional sounds with new ideas and perspectives was put into motion at Newport.” George Wein, organizer, Newport Folk Festival
CASE containing tickets, flyers, other ephemera	

SUBTEXT 6C

Powwows
The oldest American roots music is Native American. And that music is the heart of the powwow, a gathering of American Indians to celebrate Native pride and culture.

The term powwow, from the Narragansett *pau-wau*, originally referred to healing ceremonies. In time it came to mean a secular event, featuring singing and dancing, within a single Native community. During the 20th century the powwow grew to become a gathering of many Indian nations. Powwows take place all over this country, some on reservations, some in big-city arenas. Participants wear traditional dress, dancers compete, old wars are recalled, today's veterans are honored, and the constant accompaniment of drumming and song connects the present to the distant past.
#

photo 6.20: background

photo 6.21: drum group

photo 6.22: musical group

photo 6.23: powwow dancers

Background and photos on left:
Scenes from the National Museum of the American Indian National Powwow, Verizon Center, Washington, D.C., 2005.
Photographs by Walter Larrimore, Katherine Fogden, and Cindy Frankenburg / National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution
#

POWWOW LYRIC

Tunkasilayapi tawapi kinhan
Oihanke sni he najin ye
Iyohlate k'un oyate in wanyan
Wicicagin kte ca hecamun welo

The flag of the United States
Shall fly forever without end
Beneath it the people shall flourish
That is why I do this

#

SUBTEXT 6D

Re-energizing Roots
As new audiences discover roots music, new musical groups form to renew and refresh the old traditions of country, gospel, folk, and blues.

Immigrants continue to come to America, bringing sounds and songs from their homelands. These songs, too, will gradually be "Americanized" and integrated into the nation's diverse music heritage. Today, music from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Central and South America are the latest influences on the American roots music tradition. What is contemporary roots music like? What will roots music sound like in the next hundred years?
#

photo 6.24: Peruvian street musicians
(Corbis JL001786)

Peruvian street band on Fifth Avenue, New York City.
© James Marshall / CORBIS
#

photo 6.25: ~~Emory Gamelan Ensemble~~

~~The Emory Gamelan Ensemble performs traditional Indonesian music, Emory University, Atlanta.~~
~~Photograph by Steve Everett~~
[replacement photo TBD]
#

photo 6.26: steel drums

The Urban Steel Band makes a joyful noise on Caribbean steel drums, John Marshall High School, Rochester, New York, 2005.
#

photo 6.27: Basque band

The Mercedes Mendive Band, Basque musicians from Elko, Nevada. The Basques come from the border region between France and Spain.
Photograph by Meg Glaser

#

photo 6.28: Alison Krauss

Singer and fiddler Alison Krauss, together with her band Union Station, is revitalizing bluegrass.
Photograph by Dick Waterman
#

photo 6.29: Keb Mo'

Blues singer Keb' Mo' (born Kevin Moore) updates the old-time country blues style of Robert Johnson.
Photograph by Robin Hynes
#

photo 6.30: Los Lobos

Los Lobos gives Tex-Mex music a distinctive spin, mixing tejano with blues, rock, and rhythm and blues.
Photograph by Mark van S.
#

photo 6.31: Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys

Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys rock the house with their brand of Cajun music.
Photograph by Jillian Johnson
#

photo 6.32: The Klezmatics

The Jewish roots music called klezmer is enjoying a revival led by such groups as The Klezmatics.
Photograph by Joshua Kesler
#

LYRIC

For the times, they are a-changin'
– BOB DYLAN
#

SUBTEXT 6E
CONCLUSION

One More Time!
American roots music, like America itself, continually renews and reinvents itself. We discover new sounds. We rediscover old sounds. As long as we Americans sing our songs, roots music will thrive.
#

photo 6.33: father and child with guitar

Blues guitarist Willie D. Warren and son, 1982.
© David Turnley / CORBIS
#

FREE-STANDING UNIT 7
on political songs
SIDE A

TEXT

Stand Up and Sing Out
When Americans call out for rights and justice, they often use roots music to make their point. Ballads, folk songs, and gospel have rallied people to stand up for civil rights and peace. Labor organizers used songs to list their grievances and call for action. In the 1930s, Oklahoma singer Woody Guthrie created a new type of folk song, brand-new songs that sounded as old as the hills and carried a message of social change.
#

LYRIC ("Joe Hill")

From San Diego up to Maine,
in every mine and mill,
where working-men defend their rights,
it's there you'll find Joe Hill
– EARL ROBINSON AND ALFRED HAYES, "JOE HILL"

Joe Hill (1879–1915) was a labor organizer and songwriter. His execution for murder, based on murky circumstantial evidence, made him a martyr of the labor movement.
#

photo 7.2: The Weavers

The Weavers
The first popular folk group was The Weavers, formed by Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, Ronnie Gilbert, and Fred Hellerman in 1948. They had a surprise hit in 1950 with an old Lead Belly tune, "Goodnight, Irene." But right-wing groups denounced them as subversive for singing protest songs and for supporting labor unions.
Photograph by Robert C. Malone / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 7.3: Almanacs

The Almanac Singers
Woody Guthrie (left), Pete Seeger (third from right), and a changing roster of like-minded musicians formed the Almanac Singers in 1940. They sang old songs with newly minted lyrics about the issues of the day, from injustices against workers to fascism in Europe.
MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM
#

photo 7.4: Pete Seeger

Pete Seeger
Folk singer and political activist Pete Seeger (born 1919) was a pioneer of protest music and a constant presence at civil rights rallies, antiwar protests, and labor strikes. He wrote such songs as “If I Had a Hammer,” “Turn, Turn, Turn,” and “Where Have All the Flowers Gone?” And, together with black singer-activists, he helped to turn “We Shall Overcome” into *the* American anthem of social protest.
Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

photo 7.5: Aunt Molly

Aunt Molly Jackson
Hard times made Aunt Molly Jackson (1880–1960) a fierce woman. The wife of a Kentucky coal miner, she became a singer, songwriter, and labor activist during the bitter and violent coal miners’ strike of the 1930s. In songs like “Hungry Ragged Blues,” she depicted the desperate poverty of miners’ families.
From Shelly Romalis, *Pistol Packin’ Mama: Aunt Molly Jackson and the Politics of Folksong* (University of Illinois Press, 1998)
#

background photo 7.6:
workers on strike
LC-USZ62-126870

Photograph by Dick DeMarsico / Library of Congress
#

political songs
SIDE B

photo 7.1: Woody Guthrie

FOCUS LABEL

Woody Guthrie
In the 1930s and ’40s, Oklahoma folk singer Woody Guthrie (1912–67) showed that music could be a call for social and political change. He penned thousands of songs, many of which drew attention to the powerless, to that section of society unable to secure the American Dream. In songs such as “Talkin’ Dust Bowl,” “I Ain’t Got No Home,” and “(If You Ain’t Got the) Do Re Mi,” Guthrie documented the plight of poor Americans struggling in the grip of the Great Depression.

Photograph by Robert C. Malone / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections
#

LYRIC (Guthrie)

Nobody living can ever stop me,
As I go walking that freedom highway . . .
This land was made for you and me.
– WOODY GUTHRIE, “THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND”
#

CENTRAL MUSIC STATION 8
SIDE A

text

I Hear America Singing

Put on a set of headphones and listen to the songs and sounds of American roots music. From blues to zydeco, there's a little bit of everything.

#

photo 8.1: farmer and kid listening to radio

Library of Congress
#

photo 8.2: people in record store

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES.COM
#

photo 8.3: listening to ipod

© 2007 JupiterImages Corporation
#

labels for music selections

CENTRAL MUSIC STATION 8
SIDE B

TEXT

Preserving Roots Music
Driven by a passion for the authentic sound of home-grown American music, a number of collectors made it their mission in the 1930s and '40s to track down and record as many of these songs and sounds as they could find.
#

photo 8.5: Alan Lomax

Alan Lomax (right) with banjo player Wade Ward. Alan Lomax and his father, John, traveled the backroads of rural America, collecting thousands of roots-music songs. Seeking out unknown singers in the bayous and backwoods, on dirt farms and in southern prisons, the Lomaxes preserved music that might otherwise have been lost. During one prison visit, the Lomaxes discovered Huddie Ledbetter, better known as Lead Belly, one of this country's greatest folk-blues artists.
Photograph by Shirley Collins, courtesy of Alan Lomax Archives
#

photo 8.4: Lomax's trunk

Recording equipment in the trunk of John Lomax's car, late 1930s.
The American Folklife Center, Library of Congress
#

photo 8.6: Moses Asch

Moses Asch, a collector of folk and roots music, recorded many artists for his Folkways Records, which he founded in 1948. A rich treasure trove of American music, the Folkways catalogue is now part of Smithsonian-Folkways Recordings, a musical division of the Smithsonian Institution that preserves American roots music in all its variety.
Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

#

QUOTE

"By taste and political conviction, Asch was attracted to the raw and the otherwise unheard."
– TOM PIAZZA
#

OBJECTS: tape recorder, reel-to-reel tapes

photo 8.7:
recording Indian
LC-USZ62-107289

Anthropologist Frances Densmore records Mountain Chief (Blackfeet), 1916.
Library of Congress
#

BANNER 1
[on Kiosk 3 – Country]

Freedom

“Just play what you believe in.”
– Dewey Balfa, Cajun musician

American music is about freedom—freedom to choose, to change, to hang on to what’s important to you. Country singers borrow from the blues. Blues musicians pick up a thing or two from country. In music, barriers fall.

photo 3.29 – credit

Charles Wolfe Collection
#

BANNER 2
[on Kiosk 2 – Sacred]

Democracy

“This land was made for you and me.”
– Woody Guthrie

American music is about democracy — people making their voices heard. And everyone is invited to join in.

photo 2.31 – credit

Library of Congress
#

BANNER 3
[on Kiosk 5 – Other]

Independence

“I learnt my own way. I did what I liked, and I learnt my own style.”
—Clifton Chenier, zydeco musician

American music is about independence — every musician finding his or her own way.

photo 5.39 – credit

Photograph by David Simpson / Louisiana State University, Eunice
#

BANNER 4
[on Kiosk 6 – Revival]

Diversity

“American roots music is the sharing and blending of different kinds of musics, like a brotherhood thing.”
– Flaco Jimenez, tejano musician

American music is about diversity. It comes out of a mix of many different peoples from many different parts of the world.

photo 6.34 – credit

Photograph by Diana Davies / Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections

#

BANNER 5

Ingenuity

“I just make it sound like I think it ought to.”
– Mississippi John Hurt, blues musician

American music reflects American ingenuity. Singers swap songs and rhythms. Spoons and washboards become musical instruments. Americans can’t resist playing around with something and making it new.

photo 4.7 – credit

Photograph by Bill Steber, www.steberphoto.com
#

END OF SCRIPT