changes, and a sameness is unfortunately appearing on a superficial level. Blank does not seem to be preaching for this Utopian life portrayed in his film, but does present a slight view of the lighter side of Cajun culture.

Records

Music From True Vine, by Mike Seeger.
Mercury SRM 1-627 $5.98.

by Douglas Rutherford.

A name by this time synonymous with the New Lost City Ramblers—along with Cohen and Schwarz/Paley—is Mike Seeger. Although a veteran of commercial recordings for 14 years and 23 recordings, Seeger has had few solo discs prior to this one. Yet, even those are not completely one-man presentations because of their inclusion of other performers. On this album, Seeger chose to be alone.

The curious title of this album brings up an interesting question: What is "True Vine"? No answer to this question is expressed on the album cover. There is the material found on the disc that might give us some clue as to what is meant: the tunes have a representative geographical spread covering five states. Four of those are clustered around the Southern Appalachians with one tune, "Lost Indian", from northern Texas. The tunes come from three different sources: the Library of Congress, and Seeger's personal record collection and field recordings. Instrumentally, the range of performance is diverse. Side 1 presents solo guitar on "Birmingham Tickle", composed by Seeger; solo autoharp instead of the usual guitar on Sam McGee's "Buckdancer's Choice" (re: Arhoolie 5012, "Sam McGee, Grand Dad of the Country Guitar Pickers"); a fine arrangement of fiddle, harmonica, and voice on Fiddlin' John Carson's version of "Don't Let Your Deal Go Down", where fiddle doubles voice and harmonica; and voice, with either dulcimer, banjo, or guitar accompaniment on the remaining four tunes.

Side 2 opens with a solo jaw's harp introduction to the nonsense song, "Old Blind Drunk John." The use of jaw's harp with voice, one alternating the other, helps to bring out the buffoon-like character of the song. Three other songs that brightly decorate this side are a lyrical version of "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair", sung a cappella; another fiddle and voice song, "Roving Cowboy", with more harmonic complexity in the fiddle part than on the last; and finally, "Lost Indian", a fiddle tune with occasional voice doubling in unison, thirds, and fourths.

The one marked "anemia" that this record suffers is inadequate documentation. It might be argued that commercial recordings by "folk artists," i.e., musicians whose training was not acquired traditionally, need not supply informative notes about the record's contents. For many so-called folk artists this might be the case. However, Mike Seeger, although not born into a folk tradition, has certainly been deeply influenced by tra-
ditional music from his early days by the extensive work of his father. In any case, the man we hear on this album has a style shaped by both commercial recordings and long-term contact with persons of indigenous musical styles. The few notes on the record jacket, instrumentation of the tunes and the names of the people who originally played and sang them, are far inferior to those on the earlier Seeger recordings. The question is, why the change of labels and was it worth it? Possibly later releases, if still on Mercury, will show improvement in this area.

Aside from this lack of documentation, the album is one of the most complimentary reports of the versatile talent of Mike Seeger yet to appear. An appropriate final word on the album's quality should come from Paul Nelson whose assistance was vital in keeping the album free from the cumbersome and distorting additions of studio recording mania. This is a quote from his intended album notes that never made the jacket: "True Vine is anywhere you'd like to imagine, but the music from there is as real and as honest and as eloquent as is Mike Seeger."