cowboy ballads and folksongs, including an especially interesting "The High-Toned Dance," and "The Tenderfoot" (which appeared in Jack Thorpe's 1908 collection). Billy Simon sings "Old Roaney's (sic.) Calf's A Bawlin'," and "Border Affair," and

is an 81-year old cowboy who owns and operates a horse camp outside Prescott, Arizona. He rides daily and gives riding lessons. For a period of time in the past he traveled the rodeo circuit showing quarter horses and two of his won national "Best in Class" awards. He "rapped out a tune" to "Border Affair," and set Bail Gardner's "Tying Knots in the Devil's Tail" and "Moonshine Steer" to music and introduced them into tradition by singing them to other cowboys while he was on the circuit.

Van Holyoak is a fine traditional singer whose "The Gol-Durned Wheel" is familiar to collectors from the singing of Arkansas cowboy Glenn Orhlin (the subject of a forthcoming Illinois University Press book by Judy McCulloh).

Cowboy Songs, Volume Two very conveniently continues the fine efforts made by the Arizona society. This recording is highly recommended to all, but particularly to the random disc-buyer needing a strong representative sample of cowboy instrumental and vocal material, excellently recorded and annotated.

Bottle Hill: A Rumor in Their Own Time.
10 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo, liner notes.
BLP-RC6006, Biograph Records, Box 109, Canaan, New York 12029, 1972. $5.98.

Reviewed by Neil V. Rosenberg

Nearly ten years ago Toni Brown described the then small group of northern urban "folknik" bluegrass musicians and asked "Can Blue Grass Grow in City Streets?" in American Folk Music Occasional (No. 1, 1964). The question is, it now appears, rhetorical - records such as the one reviewed here testify to the proliferation of bluegrass music in a new ecological niche. In the past decade the music has flourished in regions and among people whose values and cultural background differ considerably from those of the predominately southern and rural peoples who patronized the music in its former years (1945-1955). Though history never really repeats itself, what has happened to this music in the last decade is similar to what happened to jazz in 1935-50 and more recently to blues: a "committed" (I borrow this usage from Charles Keil) regional folk audience has been supplemented and to some extent superseded by an "appreciative" (again, Keil's terminology in Urban Blues) national popular audience. And, like the college jazz bands of the fifties and the white blues groups of today, citybilly bluegrass bands play mainly for their peers.

Readers will have to take my word that this recording does in fact contain bluegrass music, for the "bluegrass" appears nowhere on the cover of the record. The record jacket tells us mainly that Bottle Hill is a funny bunch of guys - for example, the cover picture is a gag-type shot taken in a stable. The liner notes vaguely describe the recording session and related events, unsuccessfully attempting to show the absurd humor of it all. Similar attempts at humor appear several times on the record itself. Why, if this is a bluegrass band, does the record advertise the group in terms of its oblique humor?

In the past few years Biograph Records has established itself as one of the
leading blues and jazz companies, concentrating on reissues of pre-World War II 78s. They have also published a few hillbilly reissues from the same era. Recently they initiated a series of recordings of contemporary folk revivalists. Bottle Hill appeared on one such recording, a collection of performances from the venerable Saratoga Springs coffee house Caffe Lena (Bob Dylan bombed there back in 1961), where they shared the stage with U. Utah Phillips, Hedy West, the High Level Ranters and other recent folk revival luminaries (Biograph BLP 12046, Welcome to Caffe Lena). I suspect that Biograph conceives of this record as another entry in the revival market rather than a new venture into contemporary country or bluegrass music.

Nevertheless, in terms of vocal and instrumental style, Bottle Hill has been considerably influenced by a bluegrass band from the Washington D.C./Baltimore area, the Country Gentlemen. In 1960-64 this group, basically of "country" origins, were issuing identical recordings on a Nashville hillbilly label (Starday) and a New York folk music label (Folkways). Enthusiastic audience response at New York hootenannies and favorable reviews in the folk revival press, coupled with envy at the success of the Kingston Trio, led them to a decision to seek bookings in coffee houses and colleges rather than hillbilly bars and country jamborees. As a result, they introduced bluegrass to more northern middle-class folk music fans than any other single bluegrass band. Hence, Bottle Hill's use of their style is no surprise.

Their repertoire also resembles that of the Country Gentlemen in that it is much more eclectic than the country-Appalachian mix of downhome bluegrass. The songs on the album come from a number of musical genres in addition to bluegrass - rock (Rolling Stones, Flying Burrito Brothers), Bakersfield country (Merle Haggard), Nashville country (Kitty Wells), Nashville bluegrass (Osborne Brothers), contemporary folk revival (Bruce Phillips, Paul Siebel) and Hollywood movie themes ("Over the Rainbow," "One Tin Soldier"). An instrumental medley featuring two hammered dulcimers (along with the rest of the band) is another sign of the group's folk revival leanings, for this instrument is currently a favorite on the folk festival/coffee house circuit. However, the use of two hammered dulcimers, playing in harmony, is an idea which draws from precedents in country bluegrass - the twin banjos of the Osborne Brothers, the multiple fiddles of Bill Monroe's recordings, etc. Unfortunately this arrangement, like most on the record, is too heavy-handed to be completely successful as a bluegrass performance. In addition, the somewhat muddy sound found throughout the recording does the most damage on this cut, where two dulcimers and a mandolin compete for our attention at about the same pitch.

It is easy to dismiss this music as poorly recorded, second-rate, non-traditional bluegrass, performed in a style which depends rather too heavily upon borrowings from another band. But it would be a mistake to view the record solely in the context of country bluegrass as performed by the heirs of the Appalachian tradition. The record is tailored to appeal to the fans and regular audience of Bottle Hill. To those who have seen the band in person, the obscure cover is evocative of the band's zany onstage antics, and the liner notes reminiscent of their stoned-country sophisticated off-the-cuff humor. Likewise the music no doubt reminds sympathetic listeners of performances whose spirit, intensity, and sincerity make up for a lack of finesse. There are "bluegrass bands" like this all over the U.S., doing the same sort of thing in coffee houses for people who prefer "spirit" to professional polish, who don't "dig" serious country music and therefore don't care about the traditional pedigrees of the musicians. They can laugh at the "camp" country songs, enjoy the rock songs without being subjected to high decibel counts, relate to the counter culture relevance of songs about the trials and joys of country living, and appreciate the instrumental virtuosity of the musicians. So this is a significant record
for what it tells us about the way in which our national culture translates an artifact of regional folk culture into a usable instrument of contemporary popular culture.

June Apple: Old-Time Fiddling & Clawhammer Banjo. Tommy Jarrell, Kyle Creed, Audine Lineberry, and Bobby Patterson.
11 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo, liner notes.

Reviewed by Thomas Adler

This record album is the second in a series produced by Kyle Creed, one of the best of the few well-known contemporary old-time banjo players. Sharing the limelight with Creed is his equally well-known friend Tommy Jarrell, a 72-year-old fiddler from Mount Airy, North Carolina. The banjo and fiddle are supported capably by the guitar and string bass of Bobby Patterson and Audine Lineberry; the eleven tunes on the disc are all played by the same four people on the same four instruments. Surprisingly enough, this lack of personnel/instrument change does not at all cause the listener to become tired or bored. Rather, one finds oneself becoming more aware and appreciative of the similarities, differences, and character of such tunes as "Policeman," or "Breaking Up Christmas." Somehow the aesthetic of Jarrell and Creed's music survives the impersonality and distance imposed by recording, and the result is at the very least delightful.

The album is not without flaws. The presence of a string bass on all the cuts may be questioned in terms of its appropriateness. Perhaps the use of a bass throughout is the result of influence from some other type of hillbilly music, such as bluegrass. Moreover, the level at which the bass was recorded is occasionally intrusive, and in these instances the fine claw-hammer banjo picking of Creed is almost drowned out. Though it is audible throughout most of the album's cuts, the banjo never comes to the fore and plays the lead. Perhaps the desire for an occasional banjo lead really only reflects my own taste, conditioned by bluegrass, and yet I do feel that these lovely old-time licks deserve to be more easily heard.

The jacket notes also make me a bit unhappy. I feel that it would be a marvelous thing if we could do away with the usual testimonial by the manager - in this case the assistant manager - of a nearby radio station. It would be a far, far better thing to have Jarrell's and Creed's own commentary on the tunes. I want to know much more about these men and their music than a carbon-copy encomium can tell me; the thoughts of each musician on each tune would be a more appropriate use of the limited jacket space. Note that I am not calling for the usual sort of scholarly trappings. It is not difficult for the academic to find the published analogues of the tunes on this record, for many of them appear to be "standards": the album comprises "Sally Ann," "Kittie Clyde," "Sugar Hill," "Reuben," "Rockingham Cindy," "John Brown's Dream," "Susanna Gal," "Ducks on the Pond," and "June Apple," in addition to the two already mentioned. Indeed, those who are familiar with the music of Jarrell and Creed may feel that they have chosen tunes that are too well and widely known. Had they chosen some of the rarer tunes in their mutual repertoire and interspersed these among the "chestnuts," those of us who love this music would have been given the added treat of some old-time novelty. In this event, their own verbal