"documentation" of tunes would be even more a necessity. Another overlooked matter is that of the instruments and instrumental styles per se. It is not clear from the jacket whether or not Mr. Creed is playing one of his own handmade fretless banjos (which are distinctive in that he uses formica to create a perfectly smooth fingerboard). More importantly, how would Creed and Jarrell themselves describe the styles in which they play? One could imagine a very effective set of short paragraphs on this subject in the musicians' own words.

Taken as a whole, the album must be considered a success. The quality of the recording is nothing short of superb; it is what one should expect of the major recording companies, but what one rarely gets on any label presenting old-time music. The record is recorded in stereo, yet the amount of channel separation is, for once, not excessive. So often old-time music (as well as bluegrass and country-western) is subject to the "listen-to-the-ping-pong-game" school of production, which is wholly inappropriate to traditional music. Mountain 302 demonstrates that the small-label production of hillbilly music does not necessitate poor quality.

One other notable aspect of the album is the fact that every one of the eleven tunes has its respective vocal part. This should make us sit up and take notice as folklorists; we should, perhaps, be more aware of the vocal accompaniments to pieces which are usually thought of as instrumentals. The words to such tunes may be carried, at least passively, by many fiddlers who consider them secondary and not normally worth bothering with. If so, it has been our loss as scholars in every case where we have not taken the time to elicit such texts. We may have missed many such gems as these:

"Way back yonder, a long time ago
The old folks danced the do-si-do."
"Hoo-ray, Jack, and hooray, John,
A-breakin' up Christmas all night long."

The value of these albums (for I feel I can speak of the whole series of which Mountain 302 is but a part) is great for the scholar, the instrumentalist, and the lover of old-time music; I commend June Apple to all most heartily.


Reviewed by W. K. McNeil

Although many of the types of American folk music available in the 1920's and 1930's were featured on major record labels one of the most intriguing sounds of that era, that of the Negro jug bands, was rarely recorded. Only a few groups, notably the Dixieland Jug Blowers led by violinist Clifford Hayes, Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers, and Will "Son" Shade's Memphis Jug Band, made more than one recording session. In recent years Origin Jazz Library (now known as Origin) reissued several early performances under the title The Great Jug Bands. The present Historical album, concentrating on performers from Memphis & Louisville, supplements the Origin reissue.
Only six groups are represented here, three from Memphis and three from Louisville. In actual performances, though, the Tennessee bands predominate since they provide eleven of the sixteen cuts. Probably the first successful jug bands were from Louisville since printed sources indicate that groups from this area were active as early as 1915. In 1924-1925 Clifford Hayes directed several aggregations that recorded for Okeh and Vocalion but his most popular efforts came in 1926 and 1927 when he was leader of the Dixieland Jug Blowers. The present album contains two instrumentals and one vocal by the DJB. Singer on the latter number is Earl McDonald who later split with Hayes and formed his own group which he called the Original Louisville Jug Band, represented here by "Rockin' Chair Blues." About Phillips's Louisville Jug Band, the third Louisville ensemble, there is little information. Only the names of the leader, a jugist and kazoo player, and altoist Hooks Tilford are known. The latter's saxophone recreation of the "Assembly" bugle call, which is the basic theme of the group's 1930 recording "Soldier Boy Blues," was earlier featured by Tilford on Gertrude "Ma" Rainey's 1925 recording "Army Camp Harmony Blues."

That Memphis groups dominate this album is justifiable since musicians from the Tennessee city provided the finest recorded examples of jug band music. The three groups represented here are the most famous ones associated with Memphis: Jed Davenport's Beale Street Jug Band, Will Shade's Memphis Jug Band, and Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers. The personnel of the latter two bands is well known but there is almost no information available on Jed Davenport's ensemble. Only one member, Davenport, a harmonica player who made Memphis his home in between medicine-show tours, can be definitely identified, although in the liner notes Richard Spottwood speculates that Wilber "Kansas Joe" McCoy may be Davenport's lead singer. But regardless of who these musicians were their performances are exciting and what popularity they achieved was well deserved. Their verve and gaiety is displayed on the bawdy pieces "Save Me Dome" and "You Ought To Move Out Of Town," the classic "Beale Street Breakdown" and an instrumental version of Speckled Red's (Rufus Perryman) barrelhouse masterpiece "The Dirty Dozen."

As far as can now be determined the first jug group in Memphis, certainly the first to be recorded, was Will Shade's Memphis Jug Band which was in existence until the mid 1930's and was recorded several times during the years from 1927 to 1934. The present album contains two selections from one of their last sessions, the rollicking "Memphis Shakedown" and "Mary Anna Cut Off" and one of their earliest recordings, "Papa Long Blues." As the liner notes indicate, Charlie Pierce's fiddling on "Shakedown" is similar to the style of playing later popularized by western swing fiddlers and is one indication that perhaps the westerners owe a greater debt to black musicians than is generally recognized.

Cannon's Jug Stompers, the third Memphis group represented here, is perhaps the best known of the jug bands today, their fame resting mainly on the publicity they received after their song "Walk Right In!" was popularized in the 1960's by the Rooftop Singers (It must be noted, however, that the folknmk group did not willingly give them credit since two members of the Rooftop aggregation, Erik Darling and Bill Svane, initially claimed the number as their own composition.). That Cannon's group performed many other outstanding numbers is indicated by the four cuts reissued here. The great prison song "Viola Lee Blues" is sung by the late Noah Lewis. Hosea Woods, Cannon's friend from the medicine show circuit, probably is the lead singer on the other three selections. He is definitely the vocalist on "Bring It With You When You Come," a dance tune whose one verse is reminiscent of Jimmie Rodger's "Waiting For A Train." This may indicate a borrowing from Rodgers, since his song was recorded two years before the Jug Stompers cut "Bring It," or, it may simply show that both numbers derive from the mid-nineteenth century recitation which is known to the prototype of Rodger's piece. An even stronger resemblance to the "Singing Brakeman's" style is evident on "Prison Wall Blues" which, in both tune and
singing, is remarkably similar to Rodger's "Nobody Knows But Me." "Money Never Runs Out," the fourth number given here, seems to be derived from a set of lyrics common to three or four "coon songs."

The Great Jug Bands 1926-1934 lives up to its title for it presents a representative sampling of the recorded work of the best of the groups from Louisville and Memphis, the two cities which produced the most important jug bands. Furthermore, most of the musicians known to have recorded with these bands are represented here. Ashley Thompson, the original guitarist with Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers, is the lone exception. This reissue successfully illustrates the point that Louisville groups were jazz oriented while the Memphis aggregations were blues musicians. The former used the jug as a novelty, frequently featuring it on solos, while the latter primarily employed it as a bass instrument. Beyond this, the present album indicates how little research has been done in this specific area for, in most instances, even the personnel of these, the most successful, jug bands is unknown. The information which exists is provided in the liner notes by Richard Spottswood. Perhaps the best feature of this record is the sound reproduction, which, considering the age of the originals, is excellent. In short, this is in every way a good production and is also more evidence that Biograph and other small record companies are doing a better job of documenting and making available the various forms of American folk music than their larger and financially better endowed competitors.