Irish regional styles in a series of recordings (promised are recordings of the Sligo and Kerry fiddle styles) is a pioneering one as far as I know. I for one wish him well. The recording of Paddy Carty is a worthy beginning for the series.

NOTES


2. To compare Carty's style to that of a Sligo player, try Seamus Tansey's recording on Leader, LEA 2005, or Outlet 1022.

9 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo.

Reviewed by Philip Fusbaum

Back in the days of what was called “the blues revival” (despite its dominance by English rock bands), I spent an afternoon listening to some import blues records with a friend, during which I noticed a bass line so dissonant that it practically seized me by the shirt collar in its demand for attention. My friend, a pretty fair guitarist for a college punk explained that the bassist had truly “transcended the need to play in a key.”

While such a "cosmic" interpretation of playing style may not be the most convincing explanation or evaluation in the pages of Folklore Forum, I find myself driven to such obvious subjectivisms when I consider this latest release by Hound Dog Taylor. I mean that there "really is" a lot of "raw energy" put out by Hound Dog and the Houserockers, and intangibles such as "drive" or "power" tell a lot more about the performance than a dissection of the structure of the songs would.

By "drive" or "power," I mean the music seems as if it propels itself through not-altogether-known territory like an icebreaker,
rather than negotiating a pre-cut channel in the manner of a canal barge; that is, such devices as Hound Dog's striking a dissonant and distorted (by amplification) tone not in passing—but as an insistantly repeated and focal point of a solo—creates a sense of "drive," "power" or "controlled wildness."

The reference to "controlled wildness" comes from the lexicon of professional baseball players, and is descriptive of the kind of fastball pitcher epitomized by Bob Gibson, who had many great seasons with the St. Louis Cardinals. Gibson was known to throw a hard fastball, but with unpredictable placement as to the strike zone. He was known to sometimes pitch unusually close to opposition batters, treading the line between a pitch which accidentally "got away" and a pitch deliberately thrown close to unnerve the batter and move him away from the plate. Similarly Hound Dog's blues continually shifts the emphasis from the expected to the unexpected, continually playing with the boundaries of the blues form, leaving the impression that he is taking a musical idea as far as it can be stretched. A case in point is his instrumental treatment of "Comin' Around the Mountain," where the melody is recognizable—barely—through the slide technique and insertion of phrases of what sounds like "Steel Guitar Rag."

In the direction of "drive" or "power," the interplay of Hound Dog and second guitarist Brewer Phillips could also be pointed to as a propellant, since neither stays within a specific playing pattern. Brewer's playing often shifts back and forth from backing with chords to single noting on the bass strings, while Taylor alternates between single noting to chording in his lead playing. Thus, Brewer is really more than a rhythm guitarist, and Hound Dog is more than a lead guitarist. The total effect is of a full band, as the presence of lead, rhythm, and bass parts is affected alternately by the guitarists and given a unity by drummer Ted Harvey. The guitarists' use of amplification adds another dimension to "drive." That is, amplification is another aspect that can be varied, and the deliberate use of amplifier distortion and feedback are used to create a "wall of sound." But it is not the kind of "wall of sound" one comes to associate with the music of rock emporiums, where bands fire a steady barrage of sound at their delirious aficionados. Rather, the intensity swoops up and down, its variance manipulated as part of musical expression.

If spontaneity is the key to blues playing, then Hound Dog Taylor and the Houserockers would seem to have truly mastered the art. And if we consider "spontaneity" or "variation" as part of the academic notion of the tendency for "indirect statement" as characteristic of the blues, then I can give this disc an outstanding recommendation as art that pleases me, and as music that is well representative of the blues.
On the latter point, it should be noted that the teacher in need of a recording which shows the formal aspects of the blues would do well to acquire this disc, as the usual blues conventions are out in force here: chord progressions, stanzaic structure, and themes are as usual, and Mr. Taylor is featured on slide guitar throughout, except for a Brewer Phillips instrumental, "Kitchen Sink Boogie," and some of the songs—like "Dust My Broom" and "Rock Me"—are standard electric blues fare.

If this recording has a failing, it is that the liner notes are not very informative. However, Alligator records should be commended for an excellent job of recording, and for "editing in" some of Hound Dog's commentary before and after the songs.

"Beware the Dog" presents the last music Hound Dog Taylor will ever record: He died of lung cancer at the age of 59 on 17 December 1975. Perhaps it is appropriate that his final record, cut before several live audiences, captures best the raucous spirit of Hound Dog Taylor and the Houserockers.

Cantos Costenos: Folksongs of the Atlantic Coastal Region of Colombia. Recording and commentary by George List. Produced in cooperation with Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music. 20 selections, one 12" 33 1/3 rpm disc, notes, 16 pp., map, musical examples, photos. Ethnosound EST-8003, 1973.

Reviewed by Gloria Young

For almost a decade, reviews of recordings of South American coastal music have included complaints about lack of detail and accuracy in the accompanying jacket notes. One reviewer, not content with complaints, has moved to alleviate the situation himself. George List, with the aid of Delia Zapata Clivella and Winston Caballero Salgado, has produced a recording of folksongs from Colombia's Atlantic coast region accompanied by detailed and voluminous documentation and explanatory notes. Besides text transcriptions and translation, the notes include ethnographic data, photographs of performers and related activities, a map of the region, and a discussion of stability and change in songs transmitted orally, including an analysis of two versions of a children's game song.

The album offers twenty selections of "songs and chants which are most functionally related to costeno rural life" (p. 1). These are arranged by type: lullabies and dandling songs, children's game songs, men's work songs, and songs of the wake (velorio).