

While the music is swell and there are lots of obscure tunes here, Christeson's failure to fully explore the background of the music, if perhaps excusable, remains lamentable. The records come in a handsome double-sleeve jacket, a layout normally devoted to extensive notes. Here we get only a short descriptive statement on the back cover and nothing but mail-order catalog reprints on the inside--a disappointing use of potential space. The front cover photo is a good one, a 1925 picture showing a large group of Missouri fiddlers, but it cannot make up for the neglect of the fellows on the record. Both the scholar and the enthusiast alike are robbed of insights into the fiddlers' world which only the collector can provide. Christeson's comments on the music and the performers are confined to casual asides between cuts. Such banter might make for easy listening, but adds little to the appreciation or understanding of the music.

Christeson explains that it will be left for others "to research parallels and antecedents," but one feels disadvantaged for not having firsthand contextual information. I keep getting the feeling that Christeson's output to date only scratches the surface of his knowledge of fiddling. He seems willing to tell us so little. Enough perhaps for the beginning fiddler, but those who are going to research the Midwest further will want to know more about the total repertory, tune distribution, significant influences, and so forth. Christeson has given us a book and a record which no one interested in American folk music should be without. We must wait and hope for more.

Ray Lum: Mule Trader. Ray Lum

Fifteen selections, liner notes by William Ferris, transcript: 13 pp., essay: 14 pp.

Center for Southern Folklore SF102-11-76, 1216 Peabody Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, 1977, \$7.50.

Reviewed by Simon J. Bronner

The media concept in folkloristics emphasizes the use of media techniques and materials in field research for investigative and pedagogical purposes. A process, event, or artifact can be recorded through the use of cinematic film, recording tape, video tape, and photographic film, media which

can be easily disseminated to audiences usually not reached by folklorists. The challenge for folkloristic methodology lies in incorporating these media in the research stage in addition to the interpretive stage. Of particular importance to these research efforts is John Collier's **Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method**. Application of modern recording methods as a tool of field research has recently been utilized by various ambitious folklorists, but not to the extent or degree of success of Bill Ferris, Judy Peiser, and their associates at the Center for Southern Folklore.

The Center's recording of **Ray Lum: Mule Trader** is one segment of a documentary media package which includes a highly acclaimed film, film transcript, record transcript, essay, and a forthcoming book. In addition, Bill Ferris has published an article on Lum in **North Carolina Folklore Journal** and **Mid-South Folklore** and has lectured extensively, for example introducing Lum to the American Folklore Society as the keynote speaker of their 1975 meeting in New Orleans. Rarely has any folk performer outside the realm of historical scrutiny received such scholarly attention or publicity.

Considering the plethora of documentary materials on Ray Lum offered by the Center, what contributions are these materials making? I divide the evaluation of **Ray Lum: Mule Trader** into two considerations: first, the information it provides, and second, its media implications.

Ray Lum impresses me as a garrulous individual on the record. He prolifically presents narratives and memorats of his trading career, and offers a representation of an integral figure of American life--the horse trader. The trader figure can be found in literature from James Fenimore Cooper's **The Pioneers** to rube recordings of the twentieth century. A recent **Classic** article devoted to the oral circulation of trader stories in Texas declared, "You can't trade horses or keep bees without getting stung." Despite such indications of the persistence and importance of the trader figure in the American experience, few published studies exist. By presenting historical background in addition to the details of Lum's life, the narratives on the record become a significant wellspring of knowledge about the American livestock trader. If the listener has difficulty with Lum's rapid-fire delivery, he or she can follow the carefully prepared transcriptions which are accompanied by appropriate and impressive photographs.

The essay enclosed with the album answers many questions left by the recording and asks novel questions as well. Ferris pays particular attention to Lum's context, performance, tales, and speech. A bibliography is included along with a provocative comparison of an early illustration of a typical trader and a photograph of Lum. Ferris also touches on the importance of mules in American history, thereby rounding out an introductory examination into all aspects of a trader in his cultural milieu.

The record and supplementary materials are all handsomely packaged. The attractiveness of the package may draw audiences not usually compelled by folklore-oriented material. Behind the gloss, the Center had bypassed no avenues for elucidating the subject. Some may feel that the point is being drummed too long and loud but I appreciate the completeness of the documentary package.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of **Ray Lum: Mule Trader** will be its signalling of the possibilities for distributing narrative albums. Many more resources for recordings of multifarious narrative traditions are available, but have not been tapped. With proper production, not only will folklorists have examples of genres not readily available, but students can also understand and obtain the experience of unfamiliar verbal traditions. **Ray Lum: Mule Trader** shows the promise which such albums can fulfill.

Bill Ferris has also moved beyond documentation to employ media as part of the research on Ray Lum. Recently Ferris told me of asking Lum to respond to photographs and recordings that pertained to horse trading and Mississippi history. An additional method involved photographic inventories of rooms, walls, and other boundaries in contextual situations. Thus, Ferris and his associates have explored new potentialities for folkloristic methodology by using media as an integral part of the interview process rather than as a supplement. To the Center's credit, they have carried through their projects from research to distribution in amazing frequency, thereby contributing to folkloristic knowledge and pedagogy.

Considering Lum's recent death, the release of such extensive documentary evidence is a timely and invaluable addition to folkloristic research in a discipline where depth collecting of this sort is often pursued but rarely realized. With the completion of an analytic discussion, which I assume

will be included in Ferris' forthcoming book, **Ray Lum: Mule Trader** will become a monumental work of media documentation and interpretation. The media concept has been shown to be an effective and productive method in folkloristic research partly through the commendable efforts of the Center for Southern Folklore.