

Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers. **A Corn Licker Still in Georgia.** Voyager Recordings CD 303, 1997. One compact disc, liner notes, definitions of terms.

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In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the humorous musical skit was a popular genre of phonographic entertainment. Popularized by Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers, these skits were often based in the concerns of rural life and were commonly released as a series of 78 rpm records. The plots were interspersed with excerpts from songs from the old-time and folk traditions, exhibiting the musical virtuosity that infused many rural communities.

The material on this compact disc is typical of the genre and, according to the liner notes, was one of the most popular skits released at the time. Gid Tanner and His Skillet Lickers are one of the big name string bands from North Georgia and, while the recordings are not exactly “hi-fi,” the music reflects their talents. Listening to the disc is like listening to a radio play—all the action is depicted through dialogue and sound effects. Over thirty songs are contained within the fourteen tracks on the compact disc, with each track equivalent to one side of the original 78 rpm format. The songs are rarely performed all the way through, as a variety of characters constantly interrupt Gid and the boys.

The plot of *A Corn Licker Still in Georgia* centers around a group of bootleggers who spend much of their time sitting around sampling their product and playing music. Constant run-ins with the law eventually land them in front of a judge, but a jail sentence proves to be ineffective. Eventually they are paroled because the judge is besieged with letters from community members who miss the band’s music at local dances. They are forbidden to bootleg, but continue anyway lest their corn supply needlessly rot in the backyard. Throughout the skit, Gid and the boys sing: they sing while running the still, they sing when the police show up, they sing on the road during deliveries, they sing in front of the judge, they sing in jail, and they sing when they get out.

As a music recording, this compact disc is of marginal interest; more complete examples of vintage country music can easily be found elsewhere. As a record of regional humorous commentary, however, reflecting local cultural concerns and social criticisms, the disc provides a significant glimpse of Prohibition-era popular entertainment.