

## RECORD REVIEWS

Tell It To Me. Ebenezer (Nancy McDowell, George Wilson, Allan Block).

17 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo.  
Biograph Records RC-6007, P.O. Box 109, Canaan, New York 12029  
No price given.

Fox Hollow Lodge String Band Festival, vol. 1, Comin' Home.

Various performers.  
14 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo.  
Biograph Records RC-6008, P.O. Box 109, Canaan, New York 12029.  
No price given.

A Place to Be. Various performers.

14 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo.  
Biograph Records BLP-12051, vol. 1, P.O. Box 109, Canaan, New York 12029. No price given.

Now Is the Time. Dan Smith, with Nicky Seeger.

11 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo.  
Biograph Records BLP-12053, P.O. Box 109, Canaan, New York 12029.  
No price given.

Reviewed by Joseph P. Goodwin

These five albums vary considerably in quality. There are good traditional "new grass" and folk revival performances, as well as a few renditions which do not really offer anything exciting to the listener. Ebenezer's album includes a number of fine traditional songs, but is somewhat marred by forced nasality and an artificial singing style. The singers imitate old-time music, rather than perform it. All three members of the group play fiddle for various pieces on the album, and do so quite well. George Wilson's back-up guitar playing is good, but not exceptional. The other instrumentation never exceeds mediocrity.

Comin' Home includes performances by six string bands: Hotmud Family, Delaware Water Gap, Wretched Refuse String Band, Bottle Hill, and Ebenezer, as well as one unnamed group and a harmonica solo by Dave Burgot. Hotmud Family gives superior performances, but like Ebenezer and some other performers, imitates a country vocal style, and imitations generally fail to come across. Delaware Water Gap employs banjo, guitar, and mandolin. The band has a nice sound, but lacks the depth provided by a string bass. Wretched Refuse excels with their performances of "Hell Among the Yearlings" and "Down Yonder." I find Bottle Hill difficult to classify; their music tends toward new grass, but sometimes seems to be strongly influenced by rock music. Ebenezer's performance

is about as good as those on their own album.

More familiar names appear on A Place to Be. On this album are selections by Roger Sprung, Pat Sky, Sandy Paton and the Golden Ring, Joe Hickerson, and Bob and Evelyne Beers. This album is a good sampler, ranging from old-time and bluegrass to gospel and blues, including classical guitar, jews harp, and bagpipe solos in between; for anyone desiring more, there are folk revival performances as well (notably those by the Golden Ring and Joe Hickerson).

Jean Ritchie, Johnny Shines, and Gordon Bok are among the performers on You Got Magic. Like A Place to Be, this disc is a sampler of several types of music. In addition to the various forms found on A Place to Be, the listener is presented with yodeling, steel drums playing "Scotland the Brave," and more string band music. (The two records are Fox Hollow 10th anniversary albums.)

By far the best album in this group is Dan Smith's Now Is the Time. Smith is a native of south Alabama. He plays jews harp, bottles, harmonica, and guitar on the album, as well as singing. His guitar and harmonica playing are versatile and beautiful. "The Train" is an excellent example; the harmonica bounces as the train rumbles down the track, and becomes a blues moan when the whistle blows in the distance. Included in the album are game songs, work songs, and blues, all vibrant and moving.

The other albums in this series have very little in the way of liner notes. Now Is the Time, on the other hand, gives the listener a biography of Dan Smith, as well as information about several of the songs, mostly in Smith's own words. These notes provide further insight into the music. They are greatly missed on the other albums.

The over-all effect of this set of albums is pleasant. Most of the performances are strong and enjoyable, overshadowing those pieces which fail to measure up for various reasons. The variety of musical forms and styles provides something for just about every listener.