

ethnographic films which might have some interest to folklorists, especially those engaged in teaching. The editors solicit any reviews of films from the readers of the Forum, films which should be brought to the attention of the readership.

Spend It All, Producer: Les Blank. Produced and distributed by Flower Films, Box 311, Disney, Oklahoma 74340. Running time: 41 minutes. Rental: \$60. Purchase: \$500.

by Richard Sweterlitsch.

It is obvious from this film that producer Les Blank (The Blues Accordin' to Lightnin' Hopkins, along with Skip Gerson; The Sun's Gonna Shine; others) has fallen in love with Cajun culture. This forty-one minute color film presents without any narration, but lots of Cajun music, a view of the Cajuns, chiefly having fun. The film is very smoothly put together, although at times I had a little difficulty in understanding the interviews on the sound track and I do not believe it was entirely due to dialect problems.

The film spends a great deal of time watching the Cajuns enjoy themselves, be it at race tracks, barbecues or dance halls. While the prologue to the film indicates that there has been an acceptance of blacks by the Cajuns, there are few if any places in the film showing any mixing of the races, at any of the social events. The scenes shot at the race track are especially ambiguous in this respect.

I sense that a day-to-day view of the life of the Cajuns is missing in the film. There are some scenes of commercial fishing, crabbing and so forth, but these are left to a minimum while the camera views the fun-making times.

Cajun music is present throughout the film. Perhaps, according to the film, this is what makes the Cajun lifestyles different, for the most part, from other ethnic areas. At least that was my final impression. One other viewer of the film commented after it was over, "They're just like people from Missouri, except they talk a little different." I would add that their music is a little different, too.

Aside from the music (Blank has informed me that he hopes to have a film on Cajun/Zydeco music completed soon), there are few folklore items in the film. There is an all too brief scene involving a touch healer; there are some glimpses of local architecture and gravestones; some shots of local cooking.

The final interview in the film is with an accordion maker who describes his life as an almost Utopia. The film somehow seems to run along these lines, and fails to present a wholly balanced view of Cajun life. But a man in love with his subject may be somewhat blinded.

The film does, however, have use in the classroom, perhaps for an introductory American folklore course. First of all, besides Flaherty's monumental Louisiana Story and some very short films, there is little on Cajun culture. Along with a balanced picture of Cajun life which may be presented by an instructor, the film would serve to show that some cultural differences among ethnic groups in the United States are undergoing

changes, and a sameness is unfortunately appearing on a superficial level. Blank does not seem to be preaching for this Utopian life portrayed in his film, but does present a slight view of the lighter side of Cajun culture.

Records

Music From True Vine, by Mike Seeger.
Mercury SRM 1-627 \$5.98.

by Douglas Rutherford.

A name by this time synonymous with the New Lost City Ramblers--along with Cohen and Schwarz/Paley--is Mike Seeger. Although a veteran of commercial recordings for 14 years and 23 recordings, Seeger has had few solo discs prior to this one. Yet, even those are not completely one-man presentations because of their inclusion of other performers. On this album, Seeger chose to be alone.

The curious title of this album brings up an interesting question: What is "True Vine"? No answer to this question is expressed on the album cover. There is the material found on the disc that might give us some clue as to what is meant: the tunes have a representative geographical spread covering five states. Four of those are clustered around the Southern Appalachians with one tune, "Lost Indian", from northern Texas. The tunes come from three different sources: the Library of Congress, and Seeger's personal record collection and field recordings. Instrumentally, the range of performance is diverse. Side 1 presents solo guitar on "Birmingham Tickle", composed by Seeger; solo autoharp instead of the usual guitar on Sam McGee's "Buckdancer's Choice" (re: Arhoolie 5012, "Sam McGee, Grand Dad of the Country Guitar Pickers"); a fine arrangement of fiddle, harmonica, and voice on Fiddlin' John Carson's version of "Don't Let Your Deal Go Down", where fiddle doubles voice and harmonica; and voice, with either dulcimer, banjo, or guitar accompaniment on the remaining four tunes.

Side 2 opens with a solo jaw's harp introduction to the nonsense song, "Old Blind Drunk John." The use of jaw's harp with voice, one alternating the other, helps to bring out the buffoon-like character of the song. Three other songs that brightly decorate this side are a lyrical version of "Black is the Color of My True Love's Hair", sung a cappella; another fiddle and voice song, "Roving Cowboy", with more harmonic complexity in the fiddle part than on the last; and finally, "Lost Indian", a fiddle tune with occasional voice doubling in unison, thirds, and fourths.

The one marked "anemia" that this record suffers is inadequate documentation. It might be argued that commercial recordings by "folk artists," i. e., musicians whose training was not acquired traditionally, need not supply informative notes about the record's contents. For many so-called folk artists this might be the case. However, Mike Seeger, although not born into a folk tradition, has certainly been deeply influenced by tra-