

The Alan Lomax Collection

If you want a cheap one-way ticket into global folk music, a path that continues a long way, you want the Alan Lomax Collection Sampler disc. For a few dollars you can buy the best of a national treasure. In the 1950s folklorist Alan Lomax began the systematic field recording of folk songs in the US, Europe and the West Indies. His microphone picked up sea chants, dance reels, peddler calls, hymns from the American Deep South, calypsos, Negro spirituals, and a dizzying variety of European folk styles (which are not at all what you'd expect—they sound oriental and medieval).

Lomax's peerless ethnomusic archive was until recently difficult to access. Now Rounder Records has reissued his collection as a massive forty-CD series, The Alan Lomax Collection. The quantity and quality of this achievement is vast and world-class.

For most humans, the Sampler is a good start—an amazing, ear-tickling gathering of thirty-seven pieces of highly evolved, but sadly ephemeral, culture.

A Romance singer in Asturias, the most mountainous province of Spain. Austurians sing the classical romances(ballads) of central Spain, retaining lyrics dating from the fifteenth century.

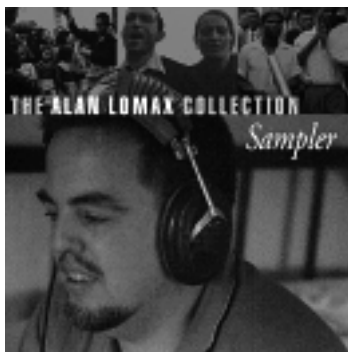


Further wonderfulness can be found in the other forty discs dedicated to say, Prison Songs (two volumes), or the ballads of black cowboys known as Black Texans, or the sacred harp music of white Baptist churches. Boredom will not be a problem; Epiphany will be likely.

—KK

The Alan Lomax Collection Sampler

1997
CD, \$16.97
Rounder
rounder.com



Day after day I turned up ancient folk song genres totally unknown to my colleagues in Rome. By chance I happened to be the first person to record in the field over the whole Italian countryside, and I began to understand how the men of the Renaissance must have felt upon discovering the buried and hidden treasure of classical Greek and Roman antiquity. In a sense, I was a kind of musical Columbus in reverse. Nor had I arrived on the scene a moment too soon. —Alan Lomax, from the inside booklet of "Folk Music and Song of Italy; A Sampler"

Jean Shepherd

When I was growing up as a kid in the 1960s, I listened to legendary storyteller Jean Shepherd spin wild, maniacal yarns every night for forty-five minutes on our local radio station near New York City. Shepherd told outrageous tales from his experiences working in the steel mills of Gary, Indiana, of his teenage exploits with hot rod cars, of the crazy boredom of his army life, and of his life as swinger in Greenwich Village. Imagine Walt Whitman as a comedian, or Garrison Keillor as a beatnik, and you might come close, but you'd miss the way Shepherd creatively hacked the medium of radio, doing things with it that would not be commonplace until the talk show era decades later. (Shepherd once got his audience to force a fictional book onto the New York Times's best seller list.) I kept thinking over the years, "I sure hope someone out there is recording these." Well, many people were. Jean Shepherd died last year, but now his stories live on via the Web and cassettes.

With thousands of broadcasts, it's hard to know where to start. Shepherd was at his peak in the mid-1960s, and his "Live at the Limelight" shows are always great, but you can get a feel for what it was like listening to him through the evening static of WOR-AM by clicking on the weekly re-broadcasts of his show on the Web. Check out the fabulous Shepherd fan site, www.flicklives.com (Web radio: www.flicklives.com/mass_back.htm), or see the catalog of tapes at www.oldtimeradio.com, which also has a steady stream of other old-time radio shows.

—KK

Jean Shepherd Tapes

Free catalog
Max Schmid
PO Box 3449
Astoria, NY 11103
www.oldtimeradio.com
www.flicklives.com

"Can you imagine 4,000 years passing, and you're not even a memory? Think about it, friends. It's not just a possibility. It is a certainty."

—Jean Shepherd, 1975



Listen to This!

Leading Musicians Recommend Their Favorite Artists and Recordings

I'm such a wimp when it comes to exploring pop music I don't know. This great idea helps a bit: about 100 leading pop musicians recommend their all-time favorite artists and albums, and why they love them. The unfamiliar (to me) names that come up again and again are the ones I'm looking for. The best aspect of this approach is that one can glimpse something rare—artists talking about their musical influences. Who wouldn't want to study the record collection of say, Herbie Hancock, or Pat Metheny?

—KK

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Leading Musicians Recommend Their Favorite Artists and Recordings

Alan Reder and John Baxter
1999, 466 pages
\$17
Hyperion

