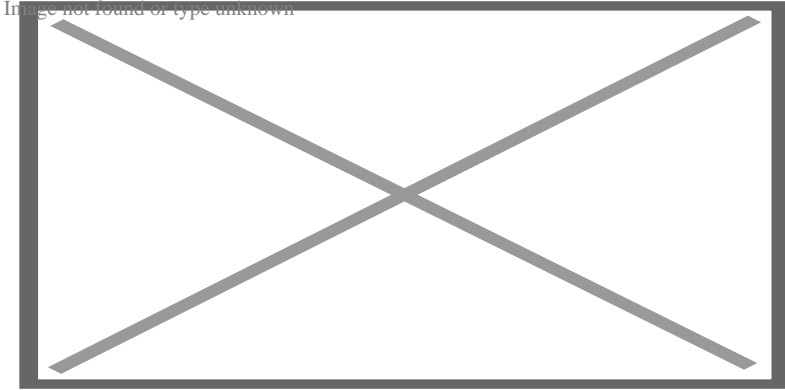


# Topical and Traditional Folk Music: Leadbelly's Last Sessions, Program 1



## Identifier

TNT.1965.02.27

## Description

Roy Trumbull presents the first of four programs dedicated to Leadbelly's last recording sessions, in which the singer and musician performs many of the songs he had learned or written during his life. Huddie Ledbetter, better known as Leadbelly, was born to a poor African American family sometime in the waning years of the 19th century, (ca. 1888). A large, strong man with a booming voice, and an ability to play the 12 string guitar, Leadbelly spent much of his early life, working hard, drinking, getting into fights, and having run-ins with the law. Yet despite all the hardships his passion for music got him through the most difficult of times, even purportedly charming a law and order Governor into releasing him from prison early, after he heard one of Leadbelly's musical appeals for clemency. It was during one of his several stays in prison that Leadbelly's singing caught the ears of the famous musicologists John and Alan Lomax, whose recordings of his music led to his eventual recognition as one of the finest and most authentic blues and folk singers of all time. In addition to his voice and musicianship, what truly made the man remarkable was the enormous repertoire of songs he had learned or written during his long and difficult life. Although he never achieved the sort of critical success that he desired when alive, (that would come after his death when bands such as The Weavers began covering his songs, most notably "Goodnight Irene"), Leadbelly's later life did include extensive touring, radio appearances, and considerable fame, if not fortune. However, while a number of his most popular songs had been recorded for commercial release it was not until 1948, just a year or so before his death, that any attempt was made to record his full repertoire. In a series of four sessions recorded over a number of months, and utilizing the then revolutionary magnetic tape recorder which permitted the capture of a continuous sound for up to half an hour, allowing Leadbelly to sprinkle his songs with stories about where he learned them, Leadbelly filled a number of reels with over 135 takes, thus preserving songs that might otherwise have been forgotten forever. The further insistence of Frederic Ramsey Jr. and Charles Edward Smith, who made the recordings, in collaboration with with Moses Asch of Folkways Records, insured that the recording sessions would be preserved and presented to the public in their entirety just as they were recorded.

**Musical Selections**

Yes, I Was Standing in the Bottom (1:40) -- Yes, I'm Going Down in Louisiana (0:42) -- Ain't Going Down to the Well No More (1:23) -- Dick Ligger's Holler (0:43) -- Liza Jane (2:08) -- Dog Latin Song (0:52) -- Leaving Blues (:31) -- Go Down, Old Hannah (4:59) -- The Blue Tailed Fly (Jimmie Crack Corn) (2:20) -- Nobody in This World is Better Than Us (1:26) -- We're in the Same Boat, Brother (2:18) -- Looky Looky Yonder (1:33) -- Jolly O the Ransom (0:57) -- Old Ship of Zion (1:51) -- Bring Me a Little Water, Silvy (1:27) -- Mistreatin' Mama (1:24) -- Black Betty (1:52) -- Ain't Going Down to the Well No More (2:45) -- Yes, I'm Going Down in Louisiana (0:28) -- I Don't Know You, What Have I Done? (3:11) -- Rock Island Line (1:03) -- Old Man, Will Your Dog Catch a Rabbit? (1:29) -- Shorty George (0:46) -- Stewball (2:34) -- Bottle Up and Go (1:25) -- You Know I Got to Do It (0:52) -- Ain't It a Shame to Go Fishin' on Sunday (1:21) -- DeKalb Blues (Ain't Gonna Drink No More) (2:37) -- Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues (2:18) -- My Lindy Lou (1:08) -- I'm Thinking of a Friend (3:22) -- He Never Said a Mumbling Word (2:28) -- Gee, But I Want to Go Home (Army Life) (3:59) -- In the World (2:01) -- I Want to Go Home (1:26)

**Artists**

Trumbull, Roy (features)

Leadbelly, 1885-1949 (features)

Ledbetter, Martha (features)

Ramsey, Frederic, 1915-1995 (features)