



BURL IVES



**ORIGINAL
1941-1950
RECORDINGS**

Troubador

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Original Recordings 1941-1950

He was America's avuncular folk balladeer. For more than a half-century, Burl Ives' rotund, goateed figure and honey-voiced tenor re-taught America its oldest and most valuable musical resource: its folk songs. Burl Ives learned folk music the way it should be learned: from family members and from the American people themselves. In the process, he helped found the explosive folk music revival of the 1950s and '60s, only to have his disciples turn their backs on him when he dared testify for the dreaded House Un-American Activities Committee at the risk of destroying his career.

Burl Icle Ivanhoe Ives was born to tenant farmers on 14 June 1909 in Huntington Township, located in Jasper County in southern Illinois. Like most other Americans, Ives learned his first folk songs through oral tradition, mostly from his grandmother, Kate White. At family get-togethers, Ives played his banjo and learned the ancient songs that his English/Irish ancestors had brought with them when they immigrated to America in the 1600s.

Ives' style was formed, in part, by Bradley Kincaid, the sweet-singing folk minstrel of WLS Chicago's National Barn Dance. In 1929, Ives auditioned for Gennett Records in Richmond, Indiana, but his test record was rejected. He enrolled in a teachers' college, but was bored with his studies and quit after his first year. He wanted to see America and seek out more songs of the people, and so in 1929, Burl Ives left home

to become, in his words, "a wayfaring minstrel."

For the next two years, he hoboed around the country, seeing America from the inside out. In those years, the oral tradition was still strong and the country was rife with ancient and beautiful songs, just waiting for an eager young song collector like Ives to gather them up. By the time he returned home, Ives had collected a virtual treasure trove. In his 1948 autobiography, Ives recalled, "I realized I possessed a tremendous repertoire. I had cowboy songs, railroad songs, love songs, work songs; I knew hundreds."

Ives tried finding work as a balladeer, but found resentment, not towards his velvety voice, but towards the songs he sang, which were deemed pedestrian and even vulgar. In Terre Haute, Indiana, he sang on the radio for \$10 a week, billing himself as "The Blond Tenor with his Guitar", and even worked in a jazz orchestra to save up money to go to New York, where he thought he could get better paying jobs and learn the acting trade.

In 1933, Ives arrived in New York and hired a voice teacher named Ella Töedt. When she heard him sing, she was enraptured, and told him that "the minstrels of old must have sung that way." At Töedt's urging, Ives registered at New York University, and learned harmony and music theory, using his knowledge to smooth out the rough edges of his folk songs. Although this was anathema to the purist folk community, Ives felt that by doing so, the songs would be more likely

to be preserved. “Some I discarded, some I changed,” Ives wrote in his autobiography. “I would change words when I knew I had better ones. I would change the tune when I thought it would help the song. Often I changed a whole story or wrote new verses. At night, their melodies would keep me awake until I rose to work on them again. I had to share them, sing them for people.”

In 1938, folklorist Alan Lomax interviewed and recorded Ives for the Library of Congress in Washington. Ives also met actor/activist Will Geer, who landed him an audition in a show Geer was appearing in called *Sing Out the News*, produced by Max Gordon. It was the beginning of a promising secondary career as an actor.

In 1940, Burl Ives got his first big break when he landed his own network radio programme at CBS. With the media savvy Alan Lomax’s help, Ives crafted a personality to make the show more marketable, nicknaming himself “The Wayfaring Stranger”, after the religious ballad that he felt represented, in Lomax’s words, “the poor, the dispossessed, the illiterate, and the socially unacceptable.” Ives’ idea was “to sing of the sorrow and bravery and love that is among all people”; the song “Poor Wayfaring Stranger” summed up his travails during the Depression:

*I'm just a poor wayfaring stranger,
A-traveling through this world of woe;
But there's no sickness, toil nor danger,
In that bright world to which I go.*

Ives’ passion for folk songs rang true and touched the hearts of rough-edged New Yorkers. In 1941, after the show became a hit, CBS

hustled Ives into their Columbia recording studios to cut an album of 78s, which would be released on Columbia’s subsidiary label, Okeh. The twelve songs issued on the album included some of the oldest and most cherished folk songs he had learned, including **On Top of Old Smoky**, **Darlin’ Cory**, and **The Riddle Song**.

In 1942, Ives enlisted in the Army, but when he returned, he made records for Asch and Decca, and was a smash hit in the musical play, *Sing Out, Sweet Land*, starring Alfred Drake.

On the Fourth of July, 1949, Ives made a second album of folk songs for Columbia, entitled *The Return of the Wayfaring Stranger*, which featured more traditional ballads, including **Lord Randall** and **On Springfield Mountain**, which counted as some of the oldest brought over to America centuries before.

On Ives’ next two sessions for Columbia, in October 1949 and February 1950, he was joined by a talented CBS staff musician, guitarist Tony Mottola, who livened up Ives’ ballads with innovative and jazzy accompaniments that included non-folk instruments such as clarinet and flute. Ives’ arrangements on these numbers were as tasteful and lively as they were sophisticated, bringing the plaintive folk ditties to a new level and a new audience (listen, for example, to the sprightly version of the modal murder ballad, **Pretty Polly**).

In 1952, Burl Ives was faced with the most difficult decision of his life when he was subpoenaed to testify in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Unlike other folk singers, like Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie, Burl Ives’ musical activities were never

politically motivated. But he faced a choice: either cooperate and resume his career, or refuse and be blacklisted. He chose the former; in the process, implicating his old friends Will Geer and Pete Seeger. From that point on, Ives was *persona non grata* to the folk music community. Even when the folk revival emerged, and groups such as the Kingston Trio began doing versions of songs they had learned from Burl Ives' records, Ives was reviled as a traitor by the folk community (in later years, Ives would make peace with both Geer and Seeger).

Ives' acting career flourished; he won an Oscar for his role in *The Big Country*, and had other memorable roles in *East of Eden* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. On television, Ives starred in *O.K. Crackerby* and *The Bold Ones*. His fading singing career took on a new life when he went to Nashville and had a string of pop/country

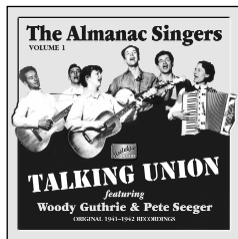
hits, beginning with "A Little Bitty Tear" in 1962. A highlight of his later life was his work as the voice of the snowman/narrator in television's animated *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer* that has since become a holiday classic. Burl Ives retired to Anacortes, Washington, where he died of cancer on 14 April 1995 at the age of 85.

Burl Ives' love for the traditional folk songs of the American people is evident in these vintage recordings. Despite his success as an actor, author, and star of Broadway, film, and television, Ives will be best remembered as the 20th century's most famous troubadour.

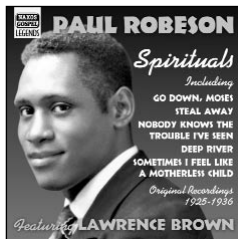
— Cary Ginell (folklorist, radio broadcaster, and award-winning author of four books on American music. He lives in Thousand Oaks, California)

Burl Ives' quotes are from his autobiography, *Wayfaring Stranger* (Whittlesey House, NY: 1948)

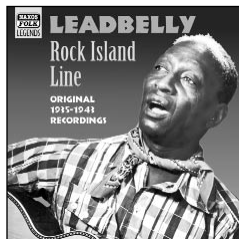
Also available from Naxos ...



Naxos Nostalgia 8.120567*



Naxos Gospel Legends 8.120638*



Naxos Folk Legends 8.120675

* Not available in the USA

1. **Wee Cooper O' Fife** 1:30
2. **Riddle Song** 1:33
OKeh 6315, mx CO 29678-1
Recorded 11 February 1941
3. **Cowboy's Lament (Streets Of Laredo)** 2:41
OKeh 6315, mx CO 29622-1
Recorded 31 January 1941
4. **Tam Pierce (Widdicombe Fair)** 2:17
OKeh 6316, mx CO 29676-1
Recorded 11 February 1941
5. **I Know Where I'm Going** 1:32
6. **I Know My Love** 1:42
OKeh 6316, mx CO 29846-1
Recorded 3 March 1941
7. **Peter Gray** 2:33
OKeh 6317, mx CO 29844-1
Recorded 3 March 1941
8. **Sweet Betsy From Pike** 1:44
9. **On Top Of Old Smoky** 1:39
OKeh 6317, mx CO 29677-1
Recorded 11 February 1941
10. **Darlin' Cory** 3:17
OKeh 6318, mx CO 30566-1
Recorded 28 May 1941
11. **Leather-Winged Bat** 1:21
12. **Cotton-Eyed Joe** 0:51
OKeh 6318, mx CO 29621-1
Recorded 31 January 1941
(Tracks 1-12 issued in OKeh Album K-3,
The Wayfaring Stranger)
13. **On Springfield Mountain** 2:27
Columbia 38482, mx CO 40323-2
Recorded 4 July 1949
14. **Little Mohee** 3:07
Columbia 38482, mx CO 40325-2
Recorded 4 July 1949
15. **Troubador Song** 2:34
Columbia 38483, mx CO 40327-2
Recorded 4 July 1949
16. **Lord Randall** 3:16
Columbia 38483, mx CO 40329-2
Recorded 4 July 1949
17. **Bonnie Wee Lassie** 1:58
Columbia 38484, mx CO 40324-2
Recorded 4 July 1949
18. **Colorado Trail** 0:50
Unaccompanied
19. **Rovin' Gambler** 1:44
Columbia 38484, mx CO 40328-1
Recorded 4 July 1949
20. **John Hardy** 2:36
Columbia 38485, mx CO 40326-2
Recorded 4 July 1949
21. **The Devil And The Farmer** 2:09
Columbia 38485, mx CO 40330-2
Recorded 4 July 1949
(Tracks 13-21 issued in Columbia Album
C-186, *The Return Of The Wayfaring
Stranger*)

22. **High Barbaree** 3:17
(Arr. Burl Ives–Tony Mottola)
With two guitars and bass
Columbia 38935, mx CO 42871-1
Recorded 17 February 1950
 23. **Pretty Polly** 3:13
(Arr. Burl Ives)
With flute, guitar and bass
Columbia 38935, mx CO 42870-1
Recorded 17 February 1950
 24. **Pueblo Girl** 1:17
(Arr. Burl Ives)
With Flute only
 25. **Baby Did You Hear** 1:55
(Arr. Burl Ives)
Columbia 38936, mx CO 42872-1
Recorded 17 February 1950
 26. **Old Blue** 1:54
 27. **Ballanderie*** 0:31
*Unaccompanied
Columbia 38936, mx CO 42873-1
Recorded 17 February 1950
 28. **Robin, He Married** 1:27
(Arr. Burl Ives)
With guitar & bass
 29. **Lavender Cowboy** 1:20
(Arr. Burl Ives)
With clarinet, guitar and bass
Columbia 38937, mx CO 42876-1
Recorded 17 February 1950
 30. **I've Got No Use For Women** 3:09
(Arr. Burl Ives)
With clarinet, guitar and bass
Columbia 38937, mx CO 42804-1
Recorded 14 October 1949
 31. **Old Paint** 2:16
(Arr. Burl Ives)
Columbia 38938, mx CO 41812-1
Recorded 14 October 1949
 32. **Green Broom** 2:57
(Arr. Burl Ives)
With two guitars and bass
Columbia 38938, mx CO 42875-1
Recorded 17 February 1950
(Tracks 22-32 issued in Columbia Album
C-213, *More Folk Songs*)
- All songs traditional, with guitar accompaniment
except as noted
Burl Ives, vocals and guitar
Tony Mottola, lead guitar (tracks 22-23, 29-30)
Toots Mondello, flute
Paul Ricci, clarinet
Bob Haggart, bass
- All selections recorded in New York
- Transfers & Production: David Lennick
Digital Noise Reduction by Arthur Ka Wai
Jenkins for K&A Productions Ltd.
Original monochrome photo of Burl Ives from
Michael Ochs Archives / Redferns

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| 5. I Know Where I'm Going 1:32 | 21. The Devil And The Farmer 2:09 |
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Transfers and Production by David Lennick · Digital Noise
Reduction by Arthur Ka Wai Jenkins for K&A Productions Ltd.

NOTES AND FULL RECORDING DETAILS INCLUDED

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Design: Ron Hoares

Total
Time
66:38

ADD

