

side one

- 1. HALF BREED ASCAP 2:10
- 2. THE ACE OF SORROW ASCAP 3:02
- 3. JOHNNY, I HARDLY KNEW YE ASCAP 4:00
- 4. SINNER MAN ASCAP 2:38
- 5. SANTIANNO ASCAP 3:07
- 6. GATHERIN' FLOWERS ASCAP 1:55

side two

- 1. IT WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR ASCAP 2:50
- 2. BELLS OF RHYMNEY ASCAP 2:53
- 3. WANDERIN' ASCAP 2:50
- 4. JOSHUA (Fit The Battle Of Jericho) P.D. 2:15
- 5. BLUEGRASS BANJO (Instrumental) ASCAP 1:15
- 6. LET ME FLY ASCAP 1:37

Cover Photograph by Chuck Stewart
 Recording Engineer: Phil Ramone
 Director of Engineering: Val Valentin
 Produced by

Cruel Taylor



Garrett Brown and Al Dana, introduced on this album, are representative of the kind of singer on whom the continuance of folk music will depend more and more strongly from now on. It is a safe bet that they have never pushed a plow, manned a sailing vessel, or shot a false-hearted lady. Still, they are more than capable of singing about these things. They have not gone into the bush with tape-recorder to capture the sounds of authenticity. The songs performed here were learned from sheet music, recordings, and, in one instance, the radio.

Whether or not this is accepted practice forms the basis of a hot debate among those to whom folk music is of prime importance. As its practitioners tend more and more to become big business, appearing on television, in concert, and at the swankiest supper clubs, the lines are becoming more clearly drawn.

Brown and Dana frankly consider themselves performers, not archaeologists. Both in their early twenties, Garrett Brown comes from Philadelphia, and Al Dana from Old Lyme, Connecticut. They met while attending Tufts College, near Boston. Formerly, young men used to go off to college with their life goals pre-set, and would then spend four years studying whatever it was, so that they could then earn a living at it. Today, it is much more common for young men like Brown and Dana to go to college in order to *find out* what it is they want to do. As is the case here. Both boys had an interest in music, although neither of them had considered it professionally. They found, at Tufts, that they enjoyed singing together, so much so that they decided to try and make a career of it. At the end of the 1961-2 academic year, they left school, figuring that it made more sense to do what they wanted

than to spend another year studying.

Within a year, Brown and Dana have appeared at such bastions of the new folk movement as The Bitter End in New York, The Second Fret in Philadelphia, and The Golden Vanity in Boston, in addition to giving college concerts and appearing at folk festivals. Obviously, they had good reason to decide to make their living from music. And now here they are, with their first MGM LP.

Al Dana's account of how and why he came to folk music may give added insight into the music to be found here. His interest in folk music had been largely limited to singing with choral groups and appearing in talent shows. Then, through friends, he began to hear recordings of folk music; the first performer he remembers hearing was Odetta. It struck him that here was an entire range of musical expression with which he was unfamiliar, an expression that would allow him to do what he wanted in music more than anything he had previously heard.

"We have no desire," he says now, "to reproduce the song as it was originally sung. If we think that a glockenspiel would make a song more effective, we'll use it, even though the cave man who first sang the song may not have used a glockenspiel." Behind the wisecrack is his opinion that a performer cannot get outside himself to decide how others may have performed a song, or to decide how others might like to hear a song performed. It is his job, Dana believes, to make his own comment and express his own personality through the material.

Garrett Brown and Al Dana do just that, on the twelve selections presented here. Unlike many performers, they feel that the whole world is their province; they will use any material, from whatever source, that can be adapted to their style. Further, as their repertoire increases, they would like to add more songs from more sources, some with a jazz flavor. One of the charms of their approach, to them, is the opportunity of doing as many different kinds of songs as possible. This first collection amply illustrates that desire.

SIDE ONE

HALF BREED relates the "plight" of the halfbreed in the early American Southwest. Couched here in the traditional melodramatic style of the plains story ballad, it is relentlessly exaggerated in the driving B&D version.

THE ACE OF SORROW is a "classic" ballad of considerable antiquity, and is supposedly analogous to one of the first games using playing cards. Fortunately, for those who appreciate excellent ballads, the song outlived the game.

JOHNNY, I HARDLY KNEW YE is a song of homecoming from 15th century Ireland. Given here a jarring deadpan treatment by B&D, its intensity brings the listener face to face with all the horror of that distant day.

SINNER MAN is a timeless standard that has become a B&D epic with variations on the original theme. Like nearly everything else that B&D perform, it is completely flexible and is continually being altered, revised and experimented on.

SANTIANNO is a folk classic that has appeared in many forms. The new Spanish lyrics that fit this melody so well were written by the duo's great friend and ex-traveling-singing companion: David Namerow; writer, comber of Puerto Rican beaches, yachtsman, composer and poet.

GATHERIN' FLOWERS is country music rendered in the soaring harmonies of the bluegrass style. The lyrics were contributed by Brown, Dana, anonymous, and Bob Hyder of the Ivy League Trio.

SIDE TWO

IT WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR—Written by well-known Irvin Drake, this song defies classification beyond stating that it is a sophisticated ballad of a man's women. The duo's treatment is a study in mood and instrumental-vocal "imagery" as the song builds inexorably through the ages of a man to his unregretted, unstated death; yet each verse seems to linger and call up its own host of memories.

BELLS OF RHYMNEY is a Welsh miners protest poem fashioned after the children's rhyme; "Oranges and lemons say the bells of St. Clements." It was set very fittingly to music by Pete Seeger. Possibly the first group to record the song, B&D achieve a stirring integrated version.

WANDERIN' was learned by Al as a child, and he sings it now with the suppressed power, sensitivity, and straight gutsy "feel" that characterizes all his singing. He is described by one reviewer as having "a beautiful, compelling, fluid vocal quality, excellent control, and most important, a natural understanding that has given him an impressive command of everything from ballads to blues to jazz scat. Mary Travers of Peter, Paul, and Mary says: "He has a wild voice."

JOSHUA a wild version of this favorite. The bridge comes from the days when B&D sang briefly with the Nomads V, a now defunct group that had, as Garrett explains it, "the biggest line, the fastest backfield, and the most fun of any group in the business."

BLUEGRASS BANJO—Garrett Brown is a completely self-taught, "natural" artist on the guitar and banjo, and plays both with unique and often dazzling style and power. Banjo pickers note that he plays Scruggs bluegrass with a completely backwards rotation, using thumb, ring finger and first finger on the right hand; and incidentally, he has been called the fastest bluegrass banjoist in the country. He can play well integrated, effortless Scruggs at an incredible fifteen notes per second.

This selection is the instrumental version of *Gatherin' Flowers* one side one. It incorporates, particularly, one of Garrett's contributions to the banjo art which he calls, for want of a better name, the "synchronized run." (In *Bluegrass Banjo*, he is coasting at roughly 9 notes per second.)

LET ME FLY—a spiritual. One minute and 37 seconds of pure swing!

Notes by JOE GOLDBERG