



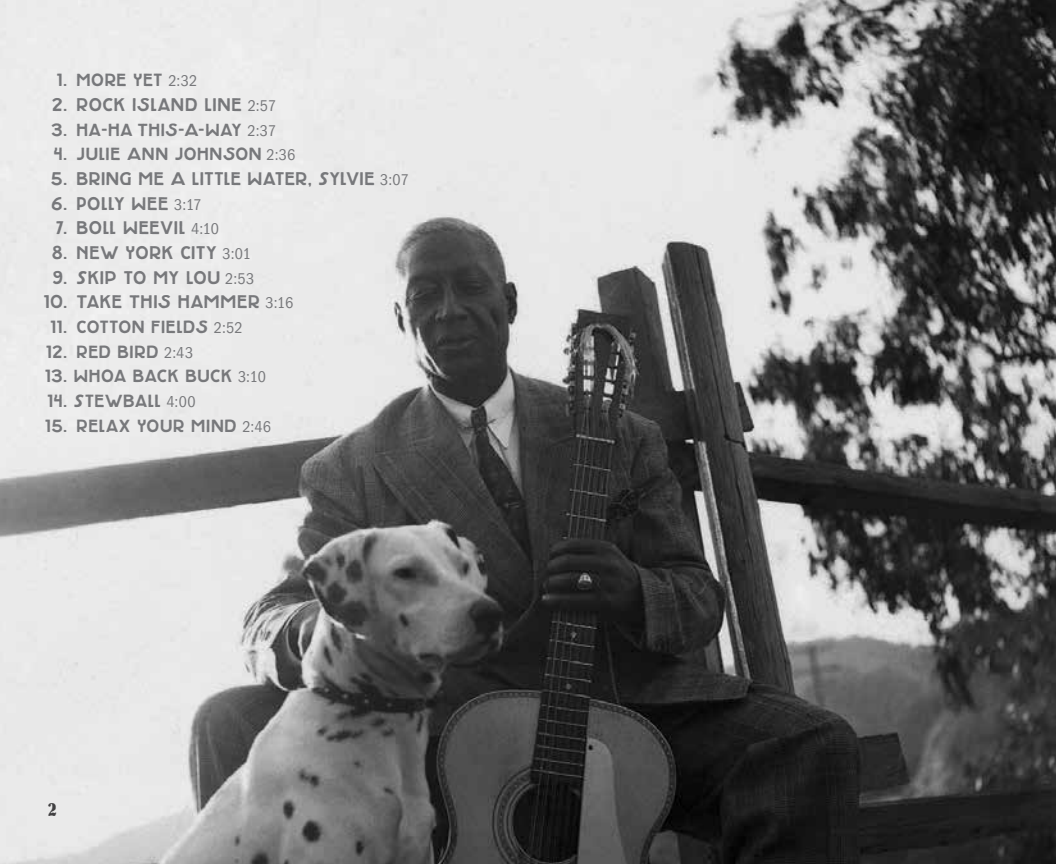
LEAD BELLY, BABY!

DAN
ZANES
AND
FRIENDS



Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

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LEAD BELLY, THE GREY GOOSE, AND ME

W

hen I was seven years old, I applied for a card at the Concord, New Hampshire, public library. The day it came in the mail I put on my little coat and hat and walked down the street to see what I could find. On the top floors of the library there were books and magazines, but in the basement there were vinyl records. Shelves and shelves of them! Flat, black circles the size of dinner plates in colorful cardboard sleeves decorated with artwork and photos. Those records were where the music came from, and those were what I cared about. I told the librarian I was interested in the guitar, and she suggested that I look through the Folk section.

It was there that I found an LP with a picture of a handsome man wearing a beautiful suit and bow tie, holding a guitar that had 12 strings. His skin was dark and his eyes seemed to be looking right at me. He had a powerful name: Lead Belly.

I TOOK THE RECORD HOME BECAUSE THERE WAS A GUITAR ON THE COVER

and because Lead Belly seemed to be inviting me to listen. I really had no idea what it was going to sound like. As it turned out, it didn't sound like anything I'd ever heard before, not in Concord, New Hampshire! When he sang about a train known as the Rock Island Line or a racehorse called Stewball or people with names like Ella Speed, Julie Ann Johnson, Blind Lemon, and Shorty George, I could picture Lead Belly playing the guitar in my kitchen—that's what it sounded like—and I could picture myself right there with him! Sometimes the 12 strings jangled like waves of the ocean, and other times they rocked like a parade, and occasionally they seemed to be strummed faster than a person's hand could actually move. When I listened to Lead Belly, he made me feel I could play guitar too, although maybe not in the same way (I couldn't imagine anyone else playing like that, especially a seven-year-old). In my heart I knew that music-making was for me.

I found out later that Lead Belly loved to sing for children. He wanted us to know about his life. Some of his songs were made with young people in

mind, and others were meant to tell stories about what happened in everyday grown-up life, stories he felt kids should hear. I always had the feeling that Lead Belly knew we could grab hold of anything he was offering. We might be young, but we could still imagine big things from other places. In my favorite song, Lead Belly sang about a grey goose that couldn't be killed. No matter what anyone did to the goose—and they tried just about everything—it survived, and in the end, the goose flies over the ocean with a long string of goslings! There was nothing like that on TV.

Lead Belly's songs were from all over the place: old songs, new songs, cowboy songs, work songs, sea songs, play party songs, story songs, love songs, political songs, nonsense songs, and church songs. There was magic and mystery in Lead Belly's music that was undeniable, even to a seven-year-old.

My mother had an old guitar, and she gave it to me. A woman in town showed me how to play a few chords (once upon a time she had showed the same chords to Tom Rush, another guy who played guitar and grew up loving Lead Belly). I learned more as I grew older. I listened to Hank Williams and Chuck

Berry. For a while I thought maybe I should try to become a professional hockey player, but the music of Lead Belly brought me back again and again. I played in a rock 'n' roll band. We tried to sound like Lead Belly with electric guitars, but really we just sounded like what we were—teenagers who couldn't sing or play very well but wanted to jump up and down and feel wind in our hair.

Lead Belly had no idea when he was alive how many people would love his music for years and years. He had no idea how many lives would be changed by the sound of his powerful voice and 12-string guitar or how his songs would be passed from one person to another through the generations. But he did know that music is a way we can make sense of this world. I'm pretty sure that's how he looked at it. And I guarantee that's the way it was for me....

So now you know. When I was your age I loved Lead Belly. And today I still love Lead Belly, and I have a daughter and she grew up loving Lead Belly too. I wanted to make this CD for you as a way to bring these older tunes into modern times. Sometimes the streets near my house in Brooklyn sound like rocks rolling down a hill—loud and chaotic—and I need to



**Lead Belly gave me
the inspiration.
My mother gave me
her Airline guitar
and a sheepskin vest.**

carry a head full of comforting and inspiring songs with me at all times. I may meet people who have crying babies. I may be walking to the subway and feel a need to relax. I may be in a classroom and want to tell a story with music. I may run into friends who want to put their phones down and take their minds to another place, if only for a few minutes. Wherever I am and whatever I'm doing, there's a Lead Belly song for the occasion. These songs help remind me that whether things are challenging or joyful or sad or confusing or glorious, when we sing, especially when we sing together with gusto and determination, we can all fly over the ocean with a long string of goslings.

DAN ZANES

KING OF THE 12-STRING GUITAR

Huddie (pronounced *hue-dee*) Ledbetter, “The King of the 12-String Guitar,” was a big man who loved to sing for children. If he ever heard a song that he liked, he memorized it, changed it around a bit, and made it all his own.

Huddie spent most of his early years picking cotton on his father’s farm in northeast Louisiana. It was a tough life, and money was scarce. He was given a small button accordion as a young child, and that sparked his passion for playing music. He loved performing for children’s ring games and country dances called “sukey jumps,” and he soon learned that he could make money at it.

When he was older, he moved to the city of Shreveport. Musicians would often come through and perform there, and so Huddie heard a variety of songs. He also learned to play the guitar and some piano. He figured he could make a living playing music. He ended up traveling with another singer, a blind man named Blind Lemon, helping him get around. The two performed for people on streets and trains. It was during these years that Huddie Ledbetter’s friends started to call him “Lead Belly,” a southern variation of his last name.

In 1934, when Lead Belly was 45 years old, a Texan named John Lomax and his son, Alan, were collecting folk songs for the Library of Congress. They met Lead Belly in Louisiana and realized that he was the exact musician they had been looking for! He knew hundreds of folk songs. They hired him to be their driver, and eventually they formed a friendship. Lead Belly moved to New York City with them.

During this era, the Deep South was a very hard place to live in you had dark skin because of segregationist Jim Crow laws. African Americans were not allowed to eat, live, or stay in the same hotels as white people. In New York, Lead Belly found a

different world in which people from everywhere could gather together. He met other singers, both black and white, who welcomed him and considered him their friend. They were amazed by his talent and, partly because he was a bit older, they looked up to him.

His new friends included Pete Seeger, Josh White, Sonny Terry, Brownie McGhee, and Woody Guthrie. People began to hear about “Lead Belly, The Sweet Singer of the Swamplands,” as he was sometimes known. In 1942, he released his first record—a collection of songs for children called *Play Parties in Song and Dance for Young People*.

At this time, Lead Belly lived in a New York City apartment with his wife, Martha. His friends would come by to sing and play music with him, often keeping Martha awake late at night. His niece, Tiny, lived at the apartment with her son, Alvin. Alvin remembered Uncle Huddie as the best babysitter in the world, letting him and his friends run around the apartment. When they would do something naughty, Lead Belly would quickly make up a song about it.

He began to perform for children in New York schools. Although he looked like a big football player, he was gentle with the kids, and they loved him. He

seemed to enjoy singing for them as much as they enjoyed listening to him. Along with other kinds of music, he would include work songs like “Take This Hammer” and “Whoa Back Buck.” They were easy to sing, and he felt it was important to share many aspects of his life in the South with young people living in the northern city of New York.

Lead Belly died in 1949. The following year his song “Goodnight, Irene” was recorded by a group called The Weavers. It became the most popular tune in America. He was gone, but his friends made sure he was not forgotten. His songs found their way into many school and summer camp songbooks. People began to sing them without even knowing where they came from.

Dan Zanes and his group of wonderful friends have spent a long time living with the joy and mystery of Lead Belly’s music so that they may now present it here to you, the new generation.

JEFF PLACE, CURATOR

**Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections,
Smithsonian Institution
November 2016**

GUEST ARTISTS

DONALD SAAF is a painter, children's book illustrator, tenor banjo and guitar picker, and my sister Julie's husband. In addition to playing and singing on all of the Dan Zanes and Friends records, he's created the artwork for them!

GANESSA JAMES plays bass, guitar, sings, *and* writes beautiful music. And as if that wasn't enough, she also has an amazing band with her twin sister Tiffany called Onliest.

ASHLEY PHILLIPS has played many shows with me in the past few years. You can find her music under the name "AP Soul" —and soul is the right word! She's also doing wonderful musical work with young people in the Philadelphia area.

CHUCK D. is leader of the rap group Public Enemy. I really appreciate that Chuck came to the party; I've been a fan of his for such a long time and have no doubt that, if Lead Belly were alive today, he'd be a fan of Chuck D.'s too.

MEMPHIS JELKS joins the track "Skip to My Lou" at Chuck D.'s suggestion, for which I'm so grateful. Memphis grew up outside of...Memphis! and he brought a lot of love for the Lead Belly legacy to this track.

VALERIE JUNE and I finally met backstage at a Blind Boys of Alabama concert—I've loved Valerie's music since the first day I heard it so you know this duet was exciting for me.

JOSÉ JOAQUIN GARCIA has inspired me since 1999, when I took my daughter to see his Rubí Theater production of "The Myth of the Minotaur" at the Henry Street Settlement in New York. There was rapping, breakdancing, and singing! In other words, I saw the future....

GEORGE RUSH has played tuba on all the Dan Zanes and Friends CDs. Even when he was just a beginner, he was the perfect player for my music.

ELENA MOON PARK does so many different things in the world of music and culture! And she's been able to elevate us with her fiddle, trumpet, and spoons for ten years now. Elena recently released a beautiful record of East Asian music for families called *Rabbit Days and Dumplings*.

PATRICK DOUGHER is a sharp dresser with a head full of jokes. He played drums on one of the top-selling reggae records of all time—*Dub Side of the Moon*. He's also a wildly creative visual artist working with paints and collage (the cover of this CD, for example).

TAMAR KALI has been making exciting rock 'n' roll music (that's a very narrow term for it, though) in New York for a while now. It seems like she's constantly becoming a deeper and more

unlimited artist, and it was a big deal for me to sing with her on this CD.

BILLY BRAGG is not only a gifted songwriter and performer, he's a skiffle music expert (with a book on the subject coming out soon). Lead Belly was the main man for the skiffle crowd back in 1950s England. I've been a fan of Billy's since his 1988 record, *Talking With the Taxman About Poetry*.

ISAK AND OLAF SAAF are my oldest two nephews! I've watched them grow up playing music, building tiny houses, baking bread, and living natural, creative country lives, and it was a treat to have them come down from Vermont to visit me in Brooklyn with their dad, Donald.

CLAUDIA ELIAZA is an incredibly gifted Haitian-American jazz vocalist *and* a music therapist. I met her when she came over with Pauline Jean to sing some tunes last summer. Now we're creating a Sensory Friendly folk opera called *Night Train 57* for the Kennedy Center.

PAULINE JEAN gave me her latest jazz CD called *Nwayo*, and it was so beautiful that I asked if she would sing on this CD. A week later she was here belting out "Boll Weevil" and "Red Bird."

CEDDYJAY is the founder of the rap collective RAAA heroes just out of high school. And he's Madame Laurent's great-grandson! "Bring Me A Little Water, Sylvie" is a family affair in the Flatbush style.



SHAREEF

ELENA

WILU

OLE

MARLEY

ROB

CLAUDIA

AV

SAGE

MARPLE

COLIN AND BABY ISAAC

CEDDYJAY

VALERIE

JOSE

PATRICK

AIDE BLACC

GEORGE

GINNESSA



DONALD

PAULINE

MME LAURENT

CHARLES

BOBICA

MEMPHIS

LITTLE GOOSE

FATHER GOOSE

EDIE

NEHA

SONIA

BILLY

JENDOK

CHUCK

YOSHI

TAMAR

LEO

LEO

ASHLEY

GUEST ARTISTS

NEHA JIWRAJKA was one of everybody's favorite teachers in a pre-school music education program that I helped develop for the Brooklyn Conservatory a few years ago. She sings, plays ukulele and guitar, writes songs, and teaches music.

YOSHI WAKI has been playing family music with me longer than anybody, and I'm always so happy when I hear what comes out of his bass, either onstage or in the basement during a recording session. In his other life, Yoshi is a successful jazz musician.

COLIN BROOKS has played more family shows with me than any other musician, I think, and nobody knows how I like songs to *feel* more than Colin. He and Yoshi are the architects of the Dan Zanes and Friends rhythmic sound. Everybody loves Colin!

ALOE BLACC has had some huge worldwide hits like "I Need a Dollar" and "Wake Me Up When It's Over." I've loved his voice and songwriting for many years, and it was a blessing to sing with him here. I appreciate that he took the time to honor Lead Belly and bring "Boll Weevil" to life.

SONIA DE LOS SANTOS has been playing in my band for almost ten years. Last year she released her first record of Spanish-language family music, *Mi Viaje: De Nuevo Leon to the*

New York Island. She helps pay tribute here to Lead Belly, king of the 12-string guitar, and Ramón Ayala, king of the *norteño* accordion.

FATHER GOOSE has been bringing his unique sound from the Jamaica/Brooklyn axis to young audiences for almost two decades. We made our first recording together back in 1999; 15 Dan Zanes CDs and 4 Father Goose solo CDs later, we're still up to our same old tricks. The next generation, Little Goose, steps in here to lift it up a few notches.

LEO OIWA has been coming to Dan Zanes and Friends' shows since before he was born! His mother used to listen to us when she was pregnant. He started playing ukulele, fiddle, and mandolin when he was about four

years old. He's ten now and a deep musician and lovable guy.

ROB FRIEDMAN has helped create every Dan Zanes and Friends record except the first one, *Rocket Ship Beach*. That includes most of the engineering and mixing as well as co-producing and playing organ, piano, and lap steel on most of them. He sings and plays bass on this record.

JENDOG LONEWOLF has a style I love because she's talking about the here and now in such an artful and emotional way. It's connected to Brooklyn and it's global all at once! It was an honor to have Jendog rap on this CD, and I hope there are many more collaborations to follow.

SHAREEF SWINDELL and his brother Jacob SS were freestyling at the dining room table, and it felt like bluegrass music—energy and creativity beyond my comprehension. If Lead Belly were alive today, he'd probably be hanging out with rappers, and I think Shareef would be one of them.

MADAME MARIE JEAN LAURENT trained as an opera singer in Haiti and has taught me so many older Haitian songs. I met her and her daughter, Martine, outside their house as I was walking through my neighborhood one day. We started talking about music, and before I knew it we were *making* music!

GASTON JEAN-BAPTISTE AKA "BONGA" is the person who introduced me to Haitian roots music. He used to play with Foulá and Boukman Eksperyans! That makes him "roots royalty" in my book.



MORE YET

Lead Belly sang this joke song about someone who makes a seat out of a piece of wood. How many people can fit on that seat? No matter what number the kids sing, it's always "more yet." The punchline is at the end, right before the rap ... do you get it?

I was walking down the road
And I picked up a little board
I made me a seat
And everybody that I meet
They want to know how many can fit on that seat.

Some say one, I said "More yet!"
Some say two, I said "More yet!"
Some say three, I said "More yet!"
Some say four, I said "More yet!"
Some say five, I said "More yet!"
Some say six, I said "More yet!"
Some say seven, I said "More yet!"
Some say eight, I said "More yet!"
Some say nine, I said "More yet!"
Some say ten, I said "More yet!"
Some say eleven, I said "More yet!"
Some say twelve, I said "More yet!"

That is the end of this story, my friends
And if you want to know how many can fit on that seat
The only one who can fit on that seat
Her name is More Yet!
That's right, More Yet!

RAP:

Come on down, there's room for everybody
As long as you've got two feet
Then come on, move your body
Got a little piece of board with some space for more
If it feels right, clap your hands and stomp the floor
We'll give you more yet
You like the way that it sounds
Then have some more, yes
Bring one, two, three, and even four, yes
We're going to rock the town
Me and Lead Belly giving you a place to get down
So, be on the vibe
There's space on this ride
As long as you've got a smile on your face a surprise
We're going to keep on moving to the rhythm, the rhythm
And keep on telling you there's...More yet!
So come downtown and bring some...More yet!
We're ready for you, as cool as can be, as cool as can be
Ready for more yet with whoever we see.....

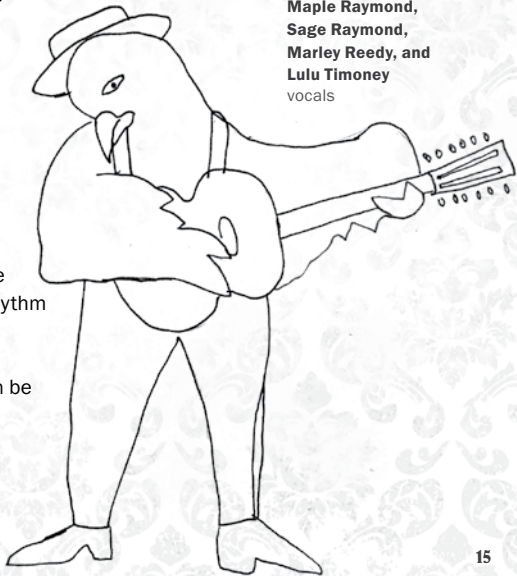
Dan Zanes
guitar, organ, drums

Ganessa James
electric bass

Cinnamon Wishbone
tambourine

Shareef Swindell
rap

**Edie Abrams-Pratt,
Maple Raymond,
Sage Raymond,
Marley Reedy, and
Lulu Timoney**
vocals



ROCK ISLAND

LINE

The Rock Island Line runs from Chicago to Rock Island, Arkansas. Lead Belly heard some working men in Arkansas singing the tune and found his own unique way to sing it. It's one of those that he played most often. In the early days of English rock 'n' roll the music was called skiffle, and this song was practically an anthem for most skiffle bands.

Dan Zanes
guitars, bass,
vocals

Billy Bragg
vocals

Claudia Eliaza
vocals

Leo Oiwa
ukulele

Colin Brooks
drums

Friendly One
cowbell



CHORUS:

**Well, the Rock Island Line is a mighty good road,
Yeah, the Rock Island Line is a road to ride,
Oh, the Rock Island Line is a mighty good road,
And if you want to ride, gotta ride it like you find it,
Get your ticket at the station for the Rock Island Line.**

Well, I may be right / I may be wrong,
I know you're going to miss me when I'm gone!

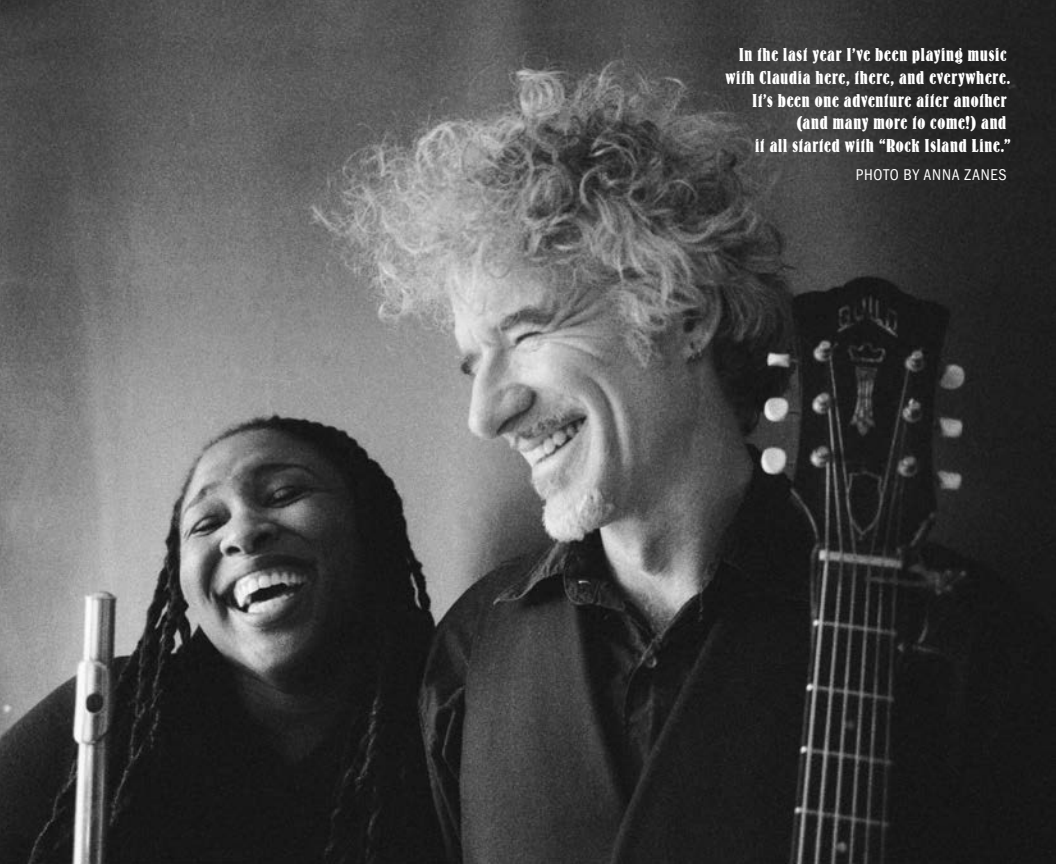
CHORUS

A, B, C, double X, Y, Z
Cat's in the cupboard, but he can't see me!

CHORUS

Well, the train left Memphis, half past 9
Rolled into Little Rock at 8:49

CHORUS



In the last year I've been playing music
with Claudia here, there, and everywhere.
It's been one adventure after another
(and many more to come!) and
it all started with "Rock Island Line."

PHOTO BY ANNA ZANES

THIS-A-WAY

When Lead Belly was young, the children all played singing games. Many of them were played in a ring, and this is one of those. Lead Belly loved singing “Ha-Ha This-a-Way” for people and always encouraged them to sing along. Years later it’s still one of his most popular tunes for children.

Dan Zanes
vocals, guitar

Tamar Kali
vocals

Rob Friedman
bass, organ, vocals

Gaston “Bonga” Jean-Baptiste
percussion

Frederick Wheel O. Fortune
percussion

Patrick Dougher
drums

When I was a little one, little one, little one
When I was a little one, a few years old
Know my papa loved me, loved me, loved me
Papa really loved me, so I was told

CHORUS:

Ha-ha this a-way! Ha-ha that a-way!

Ha-ha this a-way! Man oh man!

(repeat all)

Mama came and got me, got me, got me
Mama came and got me, to save my soul
Mama never left me, left me, left me
Mama never left me, so I was told

CHORUS

Sitting in the school, the school, the school
Sitting in the school, just to save my soul
I obeyed the rules, the rules, the rules
I obeyed the rules that I was told

CHORUS

Well, I went to a teacher, a teacher, a teacher
Went to a teacher, just to save my soul
I learned my lesson, my lesson, my lesson
Wasn't that a blessing? So I was told!

CHORUS

4 Julie ANN JOHNSON

Dan Zanes
vocals, guitar,
Casio, mandolin

Jendog Lonewolf
rap

Donald Saaf
vocals, tenor banjo

Isak Saaf
bongos

Olaf Saaf
bass drum,
finger cymbals

George Rush
tuba

Wiffle Ball
percussion

Lead Belly said this song was sung by a group of men chopping wood. They sang together and used the song to time the swings of their axes so they would chop in unison.

CHORUS:

**Julie Ann Johnson, oh Lord (4x)
I'm going to leave you, oh Lord (4x)**

CHORUS

Goodbye Julie, oh Lord (4x)

CHORUS

RAP:

Julie Ann Johnson, you know I had to dip
Looked up the first thing out of here
and put it on my list

You know I had to do it, 'cause it led me to my next it
I got on the ramp, Julie Ann, I took my exit
Hands and sands of time have both called me
I bid you farewell, Julie Ann *arrivederci*
When spirit calls me I'm off on my adventure
I look forward to the day when we both can venture
Julie Ann Johnson, oh Lord...



Lead Belly plays
guitar while his wife
Martha accompanies
him on piano.

BRING ME

A LITTLE WATER, SYLVIE

Lead Belly's uncle had a wife named Sylvie. When he worked outside in the very hot fields, he would call to Sylvie, hoping she would bring him something cold to drink. The song is really a conversation between two people, and that's why Dan recorded it here with his neighbor, Madame Laurent.

CHORUS:

Bring me little water, Sylvie
Bring me little water now
Bring me little water, Sylvie
Every little once in a while

Can't you hear me calling
Can't you hear me now
Can't you hear me calling
Every little once in a while

Can't you see me coming
Can't you see me now
Can't you see me coming
Every little once in a while

Every little once in a while (4x)

Every little once in a while (4x)

RAP:

Been working day and night
Yeah, that's for starters
Four words please
"Bring me little water"
Oh, 'cause my back is hurting
Oh, 'cause the sun is out
It doesn't matter
'cause my family's
what I care about
An all-day job
Bring me water, Sylvie
So that I never fall
Bring me water, Sylvie
It takes a lot of patience
It takes cooperation
It takes a little time
But I know that we'll make it

CHORUS

Can't you see me coming
Can't you see me now
Can't you see me coming
Every little once in a while
Every little once in a while...

CHORUS

Dan Zanes

vocals, guitar, organ

Madame Marie Jean Laurent

vocals

Ceddyjay

rap

Ganessa James

bass

Little Mozz

percussion

POLLY

Dan Zanes
vocals, mandolin

Ashley Phillips
vocals, guitar

Father Goose
vocals

Matthew Durrant
AKA Little Goose
vocals and comedy

Yoshi Waki
upright bass

Wishful
percussion



This was also called the “Frog Song.” It’s about two frogs talking to each other in a pond. Lead Belly liked nonsense songs, and this is one of them. And now there’s even more foolishness: a comedy routine with Little Goose!

Polly, Polly, Polly Wee (7x)

CHORUS:

**Polly-olly-olly-olly, Polly-olly-olly
Polly Wee, Polly Wee, Polly Wee
Polly-olly-olly-olly, Polly-olly-olly
Polly Wee, Polly Wee, Polly Wee**

I like her mighty well (2x)
Ain’t that swell?
I like her mighty well

CHORUS

I can tell (He can tell)
I can tell (You can tell)
Oh, I can tell / I can tell

CHORUS

I don’t know
Baby, I don’t know
And that ain’t so.
Baby, I don’t know

CHORUS (2x)

Well, he holler at her,
And she holler at me,
And what is to be,
Surely will be.

CHORUS (2x)

WEE

Lead Belly playing and singing for a group of San Francisco school children.



7

BOLL WEEVIL

Dan Zanes
vocals, guitar

Aloe Blacc
vocals

Pauline Jean
vocals

Claudia Eliza
vocals

Patrick Dougher
drums

Lady
percussion

Rhonda
percussion

Yoshi Waki
upright bass

Boll weevils are little bugs that traveled from Mexico into the United States. They feasted on the cotton crops, nearly destroying them. Here Dan, Aloe, Pauline, and Claudia sing one of the many boll weevil songs of that time that tell about problems farmers were having trying to deal with millions of these pests.

Have you heard about the latest,
the latest of the songs
About the Boll Weevil,
they've been here and gone
Looking for a home,
just looking for a home
The first time I seen the Boll Weevil,
he was sitting on the square
The next time I seen the Boll Weevil,
he had his whole family there
Looking for a home,
they're looking for a home
Looking for a home (4x)

The farmer took the Boll Weevil,
and put him in the sand
The Boll Weevil said to the farmer,
“Now, you’re treating me like a man!
And I’ll have a home,
and I’ll have a home.”

So, the farmer took the Boll Weevil,
put him on the ice,
The Boll Weevil said to the farmer,
“Now, you’re treating me mighty nice.
And I’ll have a home,
and I’ll have a home.”

I’ll have a home... (4x)

The old lady said to the old man,
“Been trying my level best
to keep these old Boll Weevils
out of my brand new cotton dress
It’s full of holes, it’s full of holes.”

The old man said to the old lady,
“What do you think of that?
These Boll Weevils in my
brand new Stetson hat
It’s full of holes, it’s full of holes.”

It’s full of holes...(4x)

The farmer said to the merchant,
“I never made but one bale,
Before I let you have the last one,
I will suffer and die in jail
And I’ll have a home, and
I’ll have a home.”

If anybody asks you people
“Who sang this song?”

Tell them “It’s Huddle Ledbetter,
he’s been here, he’s gone looking
for a home, he’s looking for a home.”

Looking for a home...(4x)



NEW YORK CITY

In the 1930s, Lead Belly moved north from Louisiana to New York City. He was amazed by big city life and liked to sing about the marvels he found there. This song is all about the underground subway system, which still runs day and night taking people to Harlem and beyond.

New York City, babe,
I've got to know my line!
There's one thing, folks,
I'd ask you to do
Catch a bus ride up
Fifth Avenue

CHORUS:
In New York City! Woo!
Ain't that a city!
New York City, babe,
I've got to know my line!

When you ride that bus,
keep it on your mind
Ride that bus, it's going to
cost you a dime

CHORUS

When it gets cloudy and
it looks like rain
Just step downstairs,
catch a subway train

CHORUS

Dan Zanes vocals, guitar, harmonica **Claudia Elliza** vocals
Cleo tambourine **Yoshi Waki** upright bass

If I ever go to Georgia,
I'll walk and tell
Train on top of town here
and it's called the L

CHORUS

Another thing, folks,
that I likely forgot
On Lenox Avenue
doing the Turkey Trot

CHORUS

Train running underground,
it won't keep still
I'll catch a train and
ride to Sugar Hill

CHORUS

When I go back to Louisiana,
I'm going to walk and talk
Tell everybody about
the city of New York

CHORUS (3x)

SKIP TO My LOU

This is a famous country dance song from the mid-19th century. The dancers keep switching partners until they end up with their favorite one. Like many songs that are sung for young people today, this one started out as an adult amusement.

CHORUS:

Hey hey skip to my Lou (3x)

Skip to my Lou my darling

Lost my partner what'll I do? (3x)

Skip to my Lou my darling

CHORUS

I'll get another one
prettier than you (3x)

Skip to my Lou my darling

CHORUS

RAP:

Which way did she go?

Have you seen my boo?

We was dancing, romancing

She disappeared out the blue

All of a sudden, I'm skipping,
dipping with somebody new

If you see her, please tell her
Memphis said he got the blues
I really need her to come back
And skip with my Lou
I mean, skip with my love
Before I skip with my crew
Hold up, Mr. Chuck
Here's what I wish you would do
She won't listen to me
Maybe she'll listen to you
Young man, I'm her daddy
Trying to take her home
You spent enough time
Time to leave her alone
Sorry, Memphis,
I'm also going to take her phone
No FaceTime, Skype, texts
You can skip right on

Fly's in the buttermilk,
shoo fly shoo (3x)
Skip to my Lou my darling

CHORUS

Little red wagon,
painted it blue (3x)
Skip to my Lou my darling

CHORUS

Dan Zanes
vocals, guitar

Chuck D.
rap

Memphis Jelks
rap

Ashley Phillips
vocals, guitar

Patrick Dougher
drums

Ganessa James
electric bass

Spunky
percussion

TAKE THIS

HAMMER

Dan Zanes
guitar, vocals

Valerie June
vocals

Colin Brooks
drums

**Charles
Dougherty**
saxophone

George Rush
tuba

Doreen X
percussion

Lead Belly sang this from the point of view of a man working very hard while the captain, the boss man, keeps driving him harder. Men would frequently sing these songs together, making up verses about what they would love to say to the captain. Like many work songs it was used to coordinate the efforts, in this case the swinging of hammers.

Take this hammer, carry it to the captain (3x)
Tell him I'm gone (2x)

If he asks you, was I running (3x)
Tell him I was flying (2x)

If he asks you, was I laughing (3x)
Tell him I was crying (2x)

I don't want no cornbread and molasses (3x)
It hurts my pride (2x)



Playing Lead Belly music with Valerie June on a late summer evening isn't something a person is likely to forget. Certainly not me!

PHOTO BY LATOYA DUNCAN

Dan Zanes
vocals, guitar

Sonia de los Santos
vocals,
jarana guitar

Elena Moon Park
vocals, fiddle

José Joaquín García
vocals

Rob Friedman
bass, lap steel

Country Woo Woo
percussion

*Spanish lyrics
by **Ramón Ayala**
from the song
"Cuando Yo
Era Jovencito"

Lead Belly grew up in northern Louisiana near Texas. He made up this song about the cotton fields in that area. A Mexican *norteño* singer and accordion player named Ramón Ayala translated this song into Spanish and had a hit with it several decades ago. Sonia and Elena sing some of that version here.

*Cuando apenas era un jovencito
mi mamá me decía cuidadito
si un amor tratas de encontrar
Cuando apenas era un jovencito
mi mamá me decía mira hijito
un amor pronto has de encontrar
Le pregunté como podría
saber lo que la amaría
me miró, luego se sonrió
no la busques hijo muy bonita
porque al paso del tiempo se le quita
busca amor, nada más que amor*

When I was a little bitty baby
My mama used to rock me in the cradle
In them old cotton fields back home
It may sound a little bit funny
But you didn't make me very much money
In them old cotton fields back home

And when those cotton balls got rotten
You couldn't pick very much cotton
In those old cotton fields back home
It was down in Louisiana
Just about a mile from Texarkana
In those old cotton fields back home

(break)

*Le pregunté como podría
saber lo que la amaría
me miró, luego se sonrió
No la busques hijo muy bonita
porque al paso del tiempo se le quita
busca amor, nada más que amor (3x)*

COTTON FIELDS

Red BIRD

Lead Belly imagined children, all in a ring, swinging around faster and faster and singing about “that red bird soon in the morning.”

“Red Bird” is a song he heard growing up.

Lead Belly loved playing with words, and many people believe that if he were alive today, he would love hip-hop—so it is important to have rappers on this CD.

Dan Zanes
mandolin, banjo,
vocals

Ashley Phillips
vocals, guitar

Shareef Swindell
rap

Pauline Jean
vocals

George Rush
tuba

Windy Weathers
percussion

Claudia Ellaza
hand claps,
foot stomps

Atesh Sonneborn
hand claps,
foot stomps

CHORUS:

Red bird, soon in the morning (3x)

Red bird, red bird, soon in the morning.

What’s the matter with the red bird,
soon in the morning? (3x)
Red bird, red bird, soon in the morning.

Cat got the red bird, soon in the morning (3x)
Red bird, red bird, soon in the morning.

RAP:

Look there right up in the tree
There’s a little something singing now
for you and for me
It’s got two wings, a beak, and a beautiful voice
And if you want to sing along,
that’s a beautiful choice
With the red bird, it sings in the morning
Red bird, sings in the morning
Red bird, as fine as can be
It’s as easy as this, like 1–2–3
If you want to clap your hands, make them clap
If you want to stomp your feet, do just that
And if you want to do a dance, come along
’Cause there’s a bird we got to talk about
while singing this song

Hawk got the red bird, soon in the morning (3x)
Red bird, red bird, soon in the morning.

WHOA BACK BUCK

This song is about a man riding his ox while working in the field. He's calling out for it to slow down. The Cunningham referred to here was a man known to be one of the meanest bosses in Texas. The rider is singing about places he would rather be instead of driving his ox.

Dan Zanes
vocals, guitar,
Casio

Donald Saaf
vocals,
tenor banjo

Isak Saaf
concertina,
bongo

Olaf Saaf
drums

Elena Moon Park
fiddle

Yoshi Waki
upright bass

Yeller
percussion

(...1...2...3...4)

CHORUS:

**Whoa Buck—gee by the lamb
Who made the back band
—oh, Cunningham**
(repeat all)

Oh, Ham, and oh, Cunningham
Who made the back band
—oh, Cunningham
18, 19, 20 years ago
I took my gal to the country store
I took my gal to the country store
And I bought my gal some calico
(Ty-ya-ho-ho-gee! Back up, yeah!)

CHORUS

Took my gal to the country store
I bought my gal some calico
Taking my gal to the party, oh
Thinking we can dance,
will it settle our souls?

(Ty-ya-whoa-whoa-hey-gee!
Back up, yeah!)

CHORUS

You take Sal, and I'll take Jane
Both good-looking
but they ain't the same

You swing Sal and I'll swing Sue
Mighty little different
between the two

(Ty-ya-whoa-whoa-hey-gee!
Back up, yeah!)

CHORUS

Me and my gal come walking
down the road
Her knees knock together
playing "Sugar in the Gourd"
Sugar in the gourd
and the gourd on the ground
Want to get the sugar,
got to roll the gourd around

(Ty-ya-whoa-whoa-hey-hey-gee!
Back up, over there, yeah!)

CHORUS

(Ty-ya-whoa-whoa-hey-gee!
Back up, yeah!)

“Stewball” is a song about a famous Irish racehorse. For his version of the song, Lead Belly changed the location of Stewball’s birth to California and tells of a big race in Dallas. As always, Stewball wins the race, and the other horses, including his rival Molly, are left behind.

Way down in California
Where Stewball was born
All the jockeys in the country
Said he blew there in a storm

CHORUS:

**You bet on Stewball
you might win, win, win
Bet on Stewball,
and you might win**

It was a big day in Dallas,
Don’t you wish you were there
You could bet your last dollar,
On that iron gray mare, gray mare

CHORUS

Well, that kettledrum
was banging
And the word was given “run”
Old Stewball was trembling
Like a criminal to be stung

CHORUS

Well, the horses were saddled
And the word was given “go”
Old Stewball he shot out
Like an arrow from a bow

CHORUS

Old Stewball was a racehorse
And Molly was too
Old Stewball run Molly
Right out of her shoes

CHORUS

The young folks they hollered
The old folks did bawl
All the children said
Look, look at that noble Stewball

CHORUS

Dan Zanes
vocals, guitar,
bass

Agnes B.
cowbell

Rob Friedman
vocals, organ

**José Joaquin
Garcia**
vocals

Mary Mack
percussion

Leo Oiwa
ukulele

Elena Moon Park
vocals

Marley Reedy
vocals

**Sonia de
los Santos**
vocals

STEWBALL

Relax Your Mind



Lead Belly wrote this song to be an advertisement for the National Automobile Safety Council. He tells people to relax your mind when you're behind the wheel. The council decided not to use the song, but it lives on as very good advice to all drivers!

Relax your mind (2x)

It'll make you live a great long time
Sometimes, you've got to relax your mind.

When the light turns green
Push down on your gasoline
One time, you've got to relax your mind.

When the light turns red,
Put your brakes down to the bed,
One time, you've got to relax your mind.

Relax your mind (2x)
Oh it'll make you feel so fine
Sometimes you've got to relax your mind.

When you're driving that automobile,
Keep your eyes down through the windshield.
That's the time you've got to relax your mind.

Relax your mind (2x)
Ooh, it'll make you live a great long time.
Sometime you've got to relax your mind.

Dan Zanes
vocals, ukulele

Neha Jiwrajka
vocals, vibes

Elena Moon Park
trumpet

Sonia de los Santos
jarana guitar

Yoshi Waki
upright bass

**Lead Belly and Josh White
singing and playing
for family and friends**



CREDITS

Produced by Dan Zanes with Rob Friedman

Recorded by Dan Zanes and Rob Friedman

Mixed by Rob Friedman

Mastered by Rob Friedman

Annotated by Dan Zanes and Jeff Place

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For booking information contact Nicole Borelli-Hearn at Opus3
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LEAD BELLY, BABY! DAN ZANES AND FRIENDS

- 1. MORE YET 2:32** Dan Zanes feat. Shareef Swindell
(Huddie Ledbetter-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI;
additional lyrics by Shareef Swindell)
- 2. ROCK ISLAND LINE 2:57** Dan Zanes feat. Billy Bragg (arr.
Huddie Ledbetter-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- 3. HA-HA THIS-A-WAY 2:37** Dan Zanes feat. Tamar Kali
(arr. Huddie Ledbetter-John A. Lomax-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMIGlobal Jukebox Publishing, BMI)
- 4. JULIE ANN JOHNSON 2:36** Dan Zanes feat. Jendog
Lonewolf (arr. Huddie Ledbetter-John A. Lomax-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways
Music Publishers, Inc., BMIGlobal Jukebox Publishing, BMI; additional lyrics
by Jendog Lonewolf)
- 5. BRING ME A LITTLE WATER, SYLVIE 3:07** Dan Zanes
feat. Madame Marie Jean Laurent & Ceddjyay (Huddie Ledbetter
-John A. Lomax-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI-Global
Jukebox Publishing, BMI; additional lyrics by Ceddjyay - Cedric Preval)
- 6. POLLY WEE 3:17** Dan Zanes feat. Father Goose and
Little Goose (Huddie Ledbetter-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- 7. BOLL WEEVIL 4:10** Dan Zanes feat. Aloe Blacc and Pauline
Jean (Huddie Ledbetter-John A. Lomax-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMI-Global Jukebox Publishing, BMI)
- 8. NEW YORK CITY 3:01** Dan Zanes feat. Claudia Eliaza
(Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- 9. SKIP TO MY LOU 2:53** Dan Zanes feat. Chuck D. and
introducing Memphis Jelks (arr. Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music
Publishers, Inc., BMI; additional lyrics by Chuck D - Carlton Ridenhour)
- 10. TAKE THIS HAMMER 3:16** Dan Zanes feat. Valerie June
(arr. Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- 11. COTTON FIELDS (THE COTTON SONG) 2:52** Dan Zanes
feat. Sonia de los Santos, Elena Moon Park & José Joaquín
García (Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- 12. RED BIRD 2:43** Dan Zanes feat. Ashley Phillips (Huddie
Ledbetter-Alan Lomax/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI; additional
lyrics by Shareef Swindell)
- 13. WHOA, BACK, BUCK 3:10** Dan Zanes feat. Donald Saaf
with Isak and Ole (arr. Huddie Ledbetter-John A. Lomax-Alan Lomax/
TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMIGlobal Jukebox Publishing, BMI)
- 14. STEWBALL 4:00** Dan Zanes feat. Marley Reedy
(arr. Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI)
- 15. RELAX YOUR MIND 2:46** Dan Zanes feat. Neha Jiwrajka
(Huddie Ledbetter/TRO-Folkways Music Publishers, Inc., BMI)

ALOE BLACC APPEARS COURTESY OF XIX RECORDINGS/
INTERSCOPE RECORDS

VALERIE JUNE APPEARS COURTESY OF CONCORD RECORDS

THANK YOU, BABY

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I could never adequately express my gratitude for the **inspiring musicians and singers** who have joined me here to celebrate the music of Lead Belly. This project could not have made it out of the basement without you.

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Father Goose, Elena Moon Park, John Foti, Elizabeth Mitchell, Daniel Littleton, Storey Littleton, Claudia Eliaza, Pauline Jean, Simi Stone, Ashley Phillips, Patrick Dougher....

It's been a dream come true to make this CD honoring my main inspiration, Lead Belly. Thank you to everyone at **Smithsonian Folkways** for your support and encouragement

during this exciting process. I'm honored to be working with you all.

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**FOR ANNA Z AND CLAUDIA
IN MEMORY OF QUEEN "TINY" ROBINSON
1923-2017**

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Lead Belly seated with his great nephew Alvin Singh on his lap, and his wife Martha seated.

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PHOTO BY ANNA ZANES



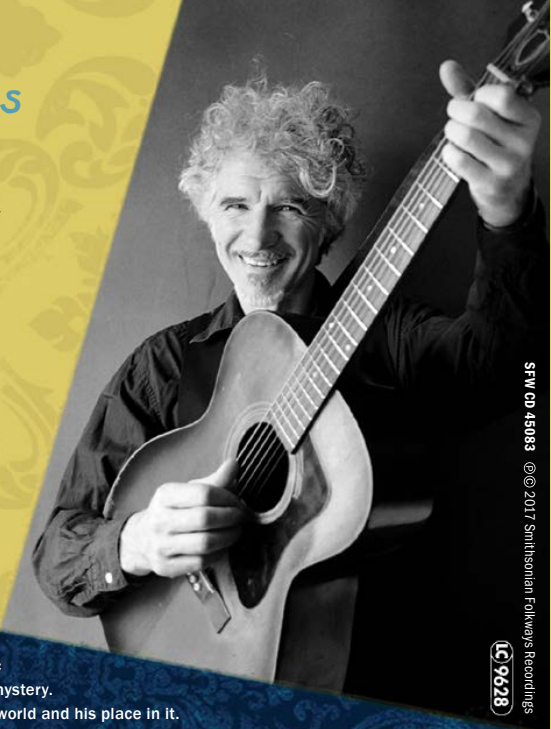
Smithsonian Folkways

LEAD BELLY, BABY!

DAN ZANES AND FRIENDS

1. **MORE YET** feat. SHAREEF SWINDELL
2. **ROCK ISLAND LINE** feat. BILLY BRAGG
3. **HA-HA THIS-A-WAY** feat. TAMAR KALI
4. **JULIE ANN JOHNSON** feat. JENDOG LONEWOLF
5. **BRING ME A LITTLE WATER, SYLVIE**
feat. MADAME MARIE JEAN LAURENT & CEDDYJAY
6. **POLLY WEE** feat. FATHER GOOSE & LITTLE GOOSE
7. **BOLL WEEVIL** feat. ALOE BLACC AND PAULINE JEAN
8. **NEW YORK CITY** feat. CLAUDIA ELIAZA
9. **SKIP TO MY LOU** feat. CHUCK D. & MEMPHIS JELKS
10. **TAKE THIS HAMMER** feat. VALERIE JUNE
11. **COTTON FIELDS** feat. SONIA DE LOS SANTOS,
ELENA MOON PARK & JOSÉ JOAQUÍN GARCÍA
12. **RED BIRD** feat. ASHLEY PHILLIPS
13. **WHOA BACK BUCK**
feat. DONALD SAAF WITH ISAK & OLE SAAF
14. **STEWBALL** feat. MARLEY REEDY
15. **RELAX YOUR MIND** feat. NEHA JIWRAJKA

AS A YOUNG BOY, GRAMMY-winning children's artist Dan Zanes was drawn to the music of Lead Belly in all of its magic, imagination, and mystery. This discovery completely changed his view of the world and his place in it. Zanes now presents a fresh vision of Lead Belly's music for a new generation with a little help from his friends. Experience Lead Belly's songs through a new lens as Dan Zanes and Valerie June, Chuck D., Billy Bragg, Aloe Blacc, and many others celebrate an American musical icon. 45 MINUTES, 40-PAGE BOOKLET WITH LYRICS.



LEAD BELLY, BABY! DAN ZANES AND FRIENDS

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