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Pete Seeger

Sing Out America! The Best of Pete Seeger

Review by G. W. Hill

I've never been a huge fan of Pete Seeger, but you really have to admire the influence he has had on music over the years. Additionally, he's got some great music. This collection doesn't have a lot of liner notes, but it does have a good variety of music and there is enough here in terms of notes to get a decent understanding of what's up. In addition to Pete Seeger solo pieces, there are songs he recorded with the Almanac Singers (Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Lee Hays and Millard Lampell) and The Weavers (Seeger, Lee Hays, Ronnie Gilbert and Fred Hellerman).



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Track by Track Review

CD 1

Turn! Turn! Turn! (Live) – Pete Seeger

This live recording is stark and potent. Seeger's voice is trademark here. The audience sings along on the later choruses.

Wayfaring Stranger – Pete Seeger

Here we get an acappella song that's quite strong.

John Henry– Pete Seeger

This classic folk song works really well here.

Union Maid – Pete Seeger with the Almanac Singers

As you might guess from the title, this bouncy number is a pro-union anthem. It has female backing vocals.

Deliver the Goods – Pete Seeger with the Almanac Singers

This song is a 'join together for the war effort" song. It has backing vocals and is another energetic folk tune.

Liza Jane– Pete Seeger with the Almanac Singers

Another pro-union song, this is more of a country folk number. The funny thing is, the main message on this of the working man getting crushed by the system seems just as relevant today.

The Coast of High Barbary – Pete Seeger with the Almanac Singers

An old world sea shanty styled piece, this is fun.

Teeroo Teeroo – Pete Seeger

More of a Celtic folk tune, this is good, but not one of my favorites.

Erie Canal– Pete Seeger

Bouncy and fun, this is an old world styled folk song.

All I Want – Pete Seeger with the Almanac Singers

This is very much a bluegrass type song.

Casey Jones – Pete Seeger

An uptempo folk song, this one doesn't do a lot for me.

Talking Union – Pete Seeger

This is a more stripped back number that's another pro-union one.

The Sinking of the Reuben James – Pete Seeger with the Almanac Singers

Old timey folk music is the order of business here.

Wimoweh - The Weavers

This is definitely different. It's a full on jazz treatment. It's also the same song as The Tokens "The Lion Sleeps Tonight."

Midnight Special - The Weavers

Another jazzy arrangement, this is a fun rocking piece.

So Long - The Weavers

A bouncy cut, this has a more full arrangement, too. It has almost a zydeco kind of vibe.

Lonesome Traveller - The Weavers

Another fully realized piece, this has a lot of country music in the mix, along with jazz and more. This gets incredibly powerful.

The Wreck of the John B. - The Weavers

This is a familiar tune. This version, with a jazzy arrangement, is different. I like it a lot.

Kisses Sweeter than Wine - The Weavers

Although this arrangement is more full than those on the first tracks, it's more of a pure folk sound. It has several voices and some strings adding flavors.

The Roving Kind - The Weavers

This feels very much like musical theater. It's a fun and bouncy piece. It definitely gets some jazz treatment.

I Know Where I'm Going - The Weavers

Another with a musical theater vibe, I can't stand the warbling on the female vocals on the first half of this. It's kind of a two-fer, though because it works out into the old traditional "Mockingbird Song." That section is great.

On Top of Old Smokey - The Weavers

Here's another classic old time song. The arrangement here works really well.

Tzena,tzena,tzena - The Weavers

The first time I heard this song, it was being done by Arlo Guthrie. It's a bouncy and fun one.

Hard, Ain't It Hard - The Weavers

Hard, Ain't It Hard - The Weavers – With a full arrangement, this is a real bluegrass number.

When the Saints Go Marching In

This is a fairly traditional Dixieland styled arrangement of the tune. It's not my favorite thing here, though.

CD 2

If I Had a Hammer – Pete Seeger

One of the songs for which Pete Seeger is best known, this is a great performance of it.

Where Have All the Flowers Gone? – Pete Seeger

This is a familiar piece. The arrangement is sparse on this one.

Red River Valley – Pete Seeger

Here's another song that's a traditional one. This treatment is stripped back and pure folk.

This Land is Your Land – Pete Seeger

A patriotic classic, this is a powerful folk song.

Shenandoah – Pete Seeger

This is a very stripped back folk arrangement.

Molly Malone – Pete Seeger

Another song that gets a traditional folk arrangement, there is a bit more to this one than there was to the last couple.

Talking Blues – Pete Seeger

Here we get a tune that's more or less a bluegrass rocker.

Oh Susanah – Pete Seeger

Another traditional piece, this has a bluegrass meets folk sound to it.

Barbara Allen (Live) – Pete Seeger

This is an acapella song.

The Big Rock Candy Mountain – Pete Seeger

Stripped back, traditional folk music, this is bouncy and fun.

What Shall We Do with a Drunken Sailor? – Pete Seeger

More traditional folk, I'm not a fan of this song.

Time's a Getting Hard – Pete Seeger

There is a bit of a country edge to this. Whistling is heard later in the piece. It's a better tune than the previous one as far as I'm concerned.

Foggy Foggy Dew – Pete Seeger

Intricate folk music, this works well.

Johnny Has Gone for a Soldier – Pete Seeger

There is an old fashioned blues element to this piece.

Rifleman of Birmingham – Pete Seeger

This is an energetic piece.

The Wreck of Old 97 – Pete Seeger

Here's another superior folk song.

Delia's Gone – Pete Seeger

I'm familiar with Johnny Cash's version of this tune. I prefer that one, but this is pretty good.

Around and Around Old Joe Clark (Live) – Pete Seeger

There is some amazing banjo playing on this thing. It's very much a bluegrass like number.

I've Been Working on the Railroad – Pete Seeger

This traditional tune gets a traditional performance.

St. James Infirmary – Pete Seeger

A stripped back folk song, this one is rather fun.

Blue Tailed Fly (Jimmy Cracked Corn) – Pete Seeger

Speaking of fun, that's what this traditional number more than anything else.

Wagoner's Lad – Pete Seeger

More traditional folk music, this is okay, but not all that special to my ears.

Living in the Country (Live) – Pete Seeger

This is quite pretty. It has a lot of energy and is an instrumental. It includes some whistling.

Ida Red – Pete Seeger

Energized folk that's bluegrass related, this is kind of fun.

We Shall Overcome (Live) – Pete Seeger

The final song here is a live one. The audience puts in quite a vocal performance along with Seeger.



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