



**CONTEMPORARY INDIAN SINGING:
A Review of Recent Drum Group Recordings**

By Ray A. Young Bear
© Copyright 1983

When Raymond Boley of Canyon Records honored my review request last year by sending twelve recent recordings of various drum groups, I thought the task of determining what appeals to me musically, physically, and emotionally would be a simple matter. I couldn't have been further from the truth.

With plenty of time to scrutinize the factors which have contributed to my likes and dislikes, I have come to the conclusion that although we share the American Indian or Native American name, we are still separated by distance, region, language, history, and culture. Therefore, it is inevitable that music will be different from one tribe to another. So, rather than assume the critical and objective view as a judge, I will simply preface with a statement that there is no such thing as a "bad" drum group.

In other words, what may be considered by one person in the Southwest to be good round dance singing may be contrary to another person's opinion in the Northwest. Essentially, both people would be right because they are accustomed to their own particular style of round dance singing. As a collector of Indian music, ranging from peyote songs to Navajo riding song, I am fairly comfortable with round dance songs from the Mosquito and Red Pheasant Reserves in Saskatchewan and Taos Pueblo, New Mexico. The drumming may be different, but the songs are still Indian. I appreciate both styles.

I have listened to these drum group recordings in the same manner. The musical qualities I have looked for in these sections are: a) vocals; b) harmony; c) consistency; and d) continuity. Being a singer myself with the Woodland Drum, as well as being a listener, I tend to have more discriminating demands and needs when I am about to make an album or cassette tape investment. Unfortunately, since I am not familiar with all drum groups in the United

States and Canada, I sometimes take a gamble and make a blind buy. As a result, half of my record collection takes up space and collects dust in my study. It isn't because of bad music; it's because my standards are rigid. In the past, I have wisely invested in recordings by the Ft. Kipp, Mandaree, Rocky Boy (Haystack Ramblers), Badlands, Battleford (Greene, Kennedy, & Scalplock), and Chippewa (Smith, Bellangers, Cumminghay, & Leith) Singers. Yet, there are new drum groups to consider. Hence, the reason for this review.

I find no fault with these recent recordings. I cannot complain; I have thoroughly enjoyed all the recordings, for we have incorporated a song or two in our Woodland repertoire from each of these unique and distinguished singing groups. In a sense, this is the highest compliment one drum group can give to another.

I have arranged these recordings according to what I listen to the most and the least. But keep in mind that simply because the Omak and Fraser Valley tapes are the last two doesn't mean they are inferior recordings. I may not listen to them with much frequency, but I do use two of their songs every time I get a chance. In no way should this arrangement disparage any of these drum groups. I have come to look upon all singers with equal respect because they contribute, in part, to the preservation of tribal culture. More so, if they sing in the language of their forefathers. All drum groups -- represented here and those destined to be -- deserve our support and encouragement through the patronization of their efforts. Long live these fine drum groups!

1. Two Medicine Lake Singers, Blackfeet, Montana--CR 6176.
2. Sarcee Broken Knife Singers, Alberta, Canada--CR 9011 C Vol. 2.
3. Two Nation Singers(Round Dance), Saskatchewan--CR 9005 C.
4. Oklahoma Round Dance (with English Lyrics)--IS 1002 Vol. 2.
5. Rock Creek Singers, Hunkpapa Sioux, South Dakota--CR 8032 C.
6. Heart Butte Singers, Blackfeet, Montana--CR 6177 C.
7. Kicking Woman Singers, Blackfeet, Montana--CR 6178 C.
8. Hopi Sunshield Singers of Arizona--CR 6180 C.
9. Denver All Nation Singers, Colorado--NAM 801.
10. Ironwood Singers, South Dakota--CR 8030 C.
11. Omak Pow Wpw 1980. (Six Drums), Washington--CR 6175 C.
12. Fraser Valley-Spotted Lake, British Columbia--CR 9006 C.

All these recordings can be ordered from Canyon Records, 4143 North Sixteenth Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85016



**ROUNDPOINT
CONSTRUCTION**



CORNWALL ISLAND, ONTARIO

- * FILL
- * TOPSOIL
- * CRUSHED STONE
- * EXCAVATING
- * BACKHOE WORK

- * HAULING
- * SEPTIC TANKS
- * DOZING
- * TRUCKING



BRUCE ROUNDPOINT
PHONE 933-5885



A & A ELECTRIC

Home & Farm Wiring

SPECIAL ON ELECTRIC HEAT, COME AND SEE US
FOR ALL YOUR ELECTRICAL NEEDS NOW.

Available White Pine Log Homes for simple
cabins
or luxurious Log Homes.



SOLD IN PACKAGES OR FROM YOUR PLANS AT A
FRACTION OF NORMAL CONSTRUCTION COSTS.

Main St.
No. Bangor, N.Y.

518-483-5730

**St. Regis
Mohawk
Federal Credit
Union**

Community Building -- St. Regis Reserve

HOGANSBURG, NEW YORK

- Money Orders
- Saving Accounts
- 15% Loans
- Christmas Club
- 6% Dividend per year
on Savings
- Share Drafts



**Jane Tarbell
Beautician**

Specializing in Perms and Unisex Hair Styling

For appointments call
518-358-4481 State Road, Hogansburg, NY

**Cook's Gas Bar
&
Auto Repair**

State Rd - Hogansburg, NY

Telephone: 358-2575 Prop. Wm. Cook

"BEARS DEN TRADING POST"

MAKERS OF MODERN MOHAWK JEWELRY AND
ARTS AND CRAFTS

- * MOCCASINS
- * LEATHERCRAFT
- * WOODCRAFT

Texaco Service Station
St. Regis Mohawk Indian Reservation
Hogansburg, N.Y. 13655 (518) 358-2220 358-9933



FABRIC BAZAAR

Rt. 2 - 87 Highland Rd.
Massena, New York

COME SEE OUR
NEWLY ARRIVED SHIPMENTS

JOE COVIELLO'S

AT TRUCK STOP #9



- PIZZA
- GROCERIES
- A DELI

NOW OPEN 24 HRS.

- RT. 37

**AHNAWATE
CORNER STORE**

GENERAL STORE SUPPLIES
TAX FREE CIGARETTES
REGULAR, UNLEADED
GASOLINE
DIESEL FUEL
Featuring Chippewa Shoes
518-358-9902



DISCOUNT TAXI SERVICE
PHONE
518-358-9518 - 315-769-6447
7 DAYS 24 HOURS SERVICE
SERVING
HOGANSBURG • FT COVINGTON
MASSENA • CORNWALL
RADIO DISPATCH

DENTAL HOURS

7:00 - 5:00
MONDAY - FRIDAY

518-358-2272



CLINIC HOURS

8:00 - 4:00
MONDAY - FRIDAY

315-769-9242

A COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH DELIVERY SYSTEM TO ELEVATE THE
HEALTH STATUS OF THE ST. REGIS MOHAWK PEOPLE.

CLINIC - DENTAL - OUTREACH
CONTRACT MEDICAL CARE
HUMAN SERVICES
PARTRIDGE HOUSE

SUPPORTIVE: HEALTH EDUCATION - NUTRITION - ENVIRONMENTAL