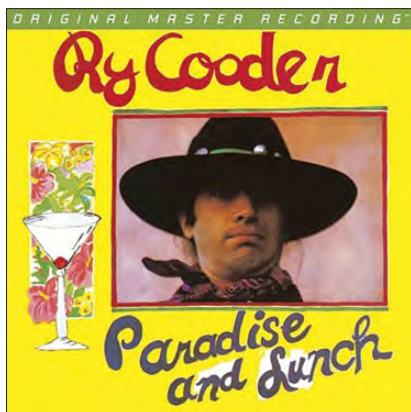




MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●●

Ry Cooder: *Paradise and Lunch*. Mobile Fidelity (SACD).

It's like a postcard from Weird Old America. Working with compositional sources as diverse as Burt Bacharach ("Mexican Divorce") and Blind Willie McTell ("Married Man's a Fool"), roots-rock guitarist Ry Cooder stitches a folksy quilt that depicts a bold vision of the American songbook. Blues, gospel, trad-jazz, Tex-Mex—it's all there, yet there's a cohesiveness to this laidback classic, thanks to Cooder's rootsy guitar skills, his command of vernacular music, and rich vocal harmonies. Faith, infidelity, and the battle of the sexes inform many of these tracks, including the Ry Cooder/Washington Phillips original "Tattler" and Little Milton's "If Walls Could Talk." The traditional spiritual "Jesus on the Mainline" gets a Salvation Army band treatment that stands comfortably alongside Cooder's mellow reggae-inflected rendition of Bobby Womack's "It's All Over Now." At times, *Paradise and Lunch* sounds like a lost Little Feat album—co-producer Russ Titelman also helmed Little Feat's debut. Remastered from the original master tapes, MoFi's hybrid SACD features a vibrant recording that packs a lot of punch when the Salvation Army band marches across the soundstage. **GC**

Further Listening: Ry Cooder: *Boomer's Story* (Mobile Fidelity); Little Feat: *Dixie Chicken*



MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●●

Flying Burrito Brothers: *Gilded Palace of Sin*. Intervention (LP).

In 1969 two ex-Byrds, Gram Parsons and Chris Hillman, put together a band along with Chris Ethridge and Gumby animator "Sneaky Pete" Kleinow. The poppies and pot leaves on Gram's Nudie suit; Sneaky Pete's wailing, fuzzed-out steel guitar on the opener; the loping, twangy draft-dodging song "My Uncle"; the aching blue-eyed soul of "Dark End of the Street"; and the gospel-tinted talkie "Hippie Boy"—they all achieved Gram's goal of synthesizing rock, R&B, and country into what he called Cosmic American Music. *Gilded Palace* is mind-opening, fragile, compelling, and unique, a critic's favorite and a guiding light for musicians since its release. Intervention Records' source is a safety copy of the analog master, and their reissue, remastered by Kevin Gray, blows the competition (4 Men with Beards and A&M's *Hot Burritos* CD anthology) out of the water. The soundstage here is richer, the vinyl is dead quiet, and there are details I've not heard before. The harsh edge is gone from the vocals, and the instruments, especially the bass, sound more integrated. Intervention should have a *Gilded Palace* SACD coming out this summer, and I can't wait to see what else they have in store.

Stephen Estep

Further Listening: International Submarine Band: *Safe at Home*



MUSIC ●●●●● SONICS ●●●●●

Clarence Ashley: *Live and in Person: Greenwich Village 1963*. Jalopy (LP).

Legendary folklorist Ralph Rinzler recorded Clarence Ashley between 1960–62 for Folkways' classic *Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's Vols. 1 and 2*, introducing a young Doc Watson. But Ashley was the star, a colorful veteran of medicine shows and rural vaudeville, the perfect mix of authenticity and professionalism. Vividly recorded at Gerde's Folk City by master folk engineer Peter K. Siegel, this previously unreleased 14-song set features old English ballads ("House Carpenter"), 19th-century pop ("Bully of the Town"), and gems from the dawn of commercial country recording ("The Wreck of the Old 97," "May I Sleep In Your Barn Tonight Mister"). Joined here by Larry "Tex" Isley on guitar and autoharp, the 67-year-old Ashley continues to play banjo and sing with authority. And *Greenwich Village 1963* is a lovingly produced package, with wonderful liner notes by folklorist John Cohen, a founder of the New Lost City Ramblers, an old-time revival band. Folkways-style, an enclosed booklet by Siegel delineates each song. Anyone who loves that old-time sound needs this LP. And by all means, get Folkways' *Old Time Music at Clarence Ashley's* as well. **Larry Nager**

Further Listening: Clarence "Tom" Ashley: *Greenback Dollar*