



Smithsonian

National Museum of Natural History

Guide to the John Cohen films, 1963-1992

Human Studies Film Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Human Studies Film Archives
Title:	John Cohen films
Date:	1963-1992
Identifier:	HSFA.1993.20
Creator:	Cohen, John, 1932-2019
Extent:	Film reels (black-and-white color sound; 17,136 feet; 16mm) 4 Videodiscs (DVD)
Language:	Undetermined .

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Received from John Cohen in 1993.

DVD copies of *Visions of Mary Frank*, *Josef Albers at Yale*, *Josef Albers at Home*, *Bob Dylan: On My Rooftop*, and *The Legacy of Roscoe Holcomb* received from John Cohen in 2019.

Preferred Citation

John Cohen films, Human Studies Film Archives, Smithsonian Institution

Restrictions

The collection is open for research. Please contact the archives for information on availability of access copies of audiovisual recordings. Original audiovisual material in the Human Studies Film Archives may not be played.

Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

Scope and Contents

Collection consists of edited films by John Cohen of music and crafts in the United States, Peru, Greece, and Scotland.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or Anthropology Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged in chronological order for titles held in their original film format by the Human Studies Film Archives, followed by titles held only on DVD copies.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aymara
- Inka (Inca)
- Music
- Singing

Cultures:

- Aymara
- Inka (Inca)

Types of Materials:

- Sound films

Places:

- Europe
- Greece
- Kentucky
- Maine
- New York
- North America
- North Carolina
- Peru
- Scotland
- South America

Container Listing

[The High Lonesome Sound, 1963](#)

1 Film reel (30 minutes; black-and-white sound; 1080 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film records the songs of religious worshippers, miners, and farmers of eastern Kentucky. The music and religion of these people are presented as mainstays by which Kentucky mountaineers retain their dignity and tradition. Featured are old ballads and church songs as well as popular hillbilly and country music.

HSFA 1993.20.1

Musical Holdouts, 1969

Film reels (color sound; 1692 feet)

Notes: Edited film is a survey of traditional music which has survived in the face of pressure from the mass media and popular culture. Included are music of front porch banjo players, groups at Bluegrass festivals, Black children on the Carolina sea islands, cowboys, and Cheyenne and Comanche Indians.

HSFA 1993.20.6

[The End of an Old Song, 1972](#)

1 Film reel (30 minutes; black-and-white sound; 972 feet; 16mm)

Notes: Edited film revisits the North Carolina mountains where in the early 1900s English folklorist Cecil Sharp collected British ballads. The film contrasts the nature of the ballad singer with the presence of the jukebox and the impact that this has had on retention of this singing style. Featured is balladeer Dillard Chandler.

HSFA 1993.20.2

Fifty Miles from Times Square, 1972

Film reels (color sound; 1548 feet)

Notes: Edited film is a portrait of life in the filmmaker's home territory of Putnam County, New York. Footage shows old-time fiddlers, farmers, commuters, and hippies celebrating an older, more relaxed lifestyle.

HSFA 1993.20.7

Q'eros: the Shape of Survival, 1979

Film reels (color sound; 1908 feet)

Notes: Edited film depicts the way of life among the Q'eros Indians of Peru who have lived in the Andes for more than 2,000 years. Film presents Q'eros music in its religious and shepherding functions and shows weaving as an elemental part of everyday life. Footage also includes scenes of farming, herding, and playing music.

HSFA 1993.20.3

Peruvian Weaving, 1980

Film reels (color sound; 900 feet)

Notes: Edited film examines the ancient Andean Indian tradition of warp pattern weaving in Peru. Footage features detailed demonstrations of the weaving technique on back-strap and four-stake looms and includes an interview with Dr. Junius Bird from the American Museum of Natural History.

HSFA 1993.20.4

Sara and Maybelle, 1981

Film reels (black-and-white sound; 360 feet)

Notes: Edited film is a rare, filmed performance of two members of the Carter family whose music and recordings helped establish the country music industry. Sara and Maybelle are shown demonstrating their famous guitar picking and singing harmony.

HSFA 1993.20.5

Post Industrial Fiddle, 1982

Film reels (black-and-white sound; 828 feet)

Notes: Edited film explores the importance of music-making in the life of a paper mill worker in rural Maine. The film demonstrates how the "Down East" fiddling style is influenced largely by local traditions and suggests that music is valued as an individual creative act and as a form of communication through which people sustain friendships.

HSFA 1993.20.8

Gypsies Sing Long Ballads, 1982

Film reels (color sound; 1080 feet)

Notes: Edited film presents traditional music of gypsies who travel throughout Scotland. Film focuses on the long unaccompanied British ballads that date back hundreds of years and are passed on through memory to each new generation.

HSFA 1993.20.10

The Ballad and the Source, 1983

Film reels (color sound; 576 feet)

Notes: Edited film is a musical portrait of Walter Pardon, one of the few remaining singers of traditional, unaccompanied English ballads.

HSFA 1993.20.9

Mountain Music of Peru, 1984

Film reels (color sound)

Notes: HSFA 1993.20.15

Choquela: Only Interpretation, 1987

Film reels (color sound; 432 feet)

Notes: Edited film presents the Choquela ceremony, a traditional oral song cycle of the Peruvian Aymara Indians with interpretation by the Aymaras and by outsiders. The contrasting

interpretations illustrate the dilemma between anthropology and self representation.

HSFA 1993.20.11

Pericles in America, 1988

Film reels (color sound; 2520 feet)

Notes: Edited film is a musical portrait of immigrant clarinetist Pericles Halkias. Film includes footage shot both in Queens, New York and in northern Greece of the Epirot community and their traditional music.

HSFA 1993.20.12

Carnival in Q'eros, 1991

Film reels (color sound; 1152 feet)

Notes: Edited film documents the Carnival celebrations of a remote community of Q'eros Indians in the Peruvian Andes. The Q'eros play *pincullus* (flutes) and sing to their alpacas to promote fertility. Singing and playing separately from each other, they produce a distinctive heterophonic sound which exemplifies a key connection between Andean culture and that of the Amazon jungle. Film also records negotiations between the filmmaker and the Q'eros for compensation for their participation and the distribution of that compensation.

HSFA 1993.20.13

Dancing with the Incas, 1992

Film reels (color sound; 2088 feet)

Notes: Edited film documents the role of Huanyo music and its migration from the Andes mountains in Peru to the capital city of Lima. Combining Andean musical structures with Spanish musical instruments, Huanyo music is the most popular music in Peru as well as being the only recorded music that is based on native tradition. Also featured is the process of disseminating Huanyo music back to the Andean villages by way of radio broadcasts. Interviews with Julia, a performer and singer of Huanyo music, reveal the crucial role of smaller studios in recording Huanyo music. Footage includes marketplace and street scenes in Lima, recording studios, Huanyo performances in radio stations and Peruvians in the Andes listening to Huanyo.

Legacy Keywords: Music appreciation of in religious ceremonies aesthetic thrill in Peru ; Musical instruments production industry Peru ; Military forces operations leaders posts Peru ; Guerrilla warfare Peru ; Mobilization wartime Peru ; Migration Peru ; Emigration Peru ; Emigration and immigration ; Settlement patterns Peru ; Resettlement organized Peru ; Songs Peru ; Singing Peru ; Domestic servants Peru ; Musicians Peru ; Performances dancing on stage Peru ; Dancing in religious ceremonies performances on stage Peru ; Religious activities ceremonial ceremonies, dancing in music music in ceremonies paraphernalia Peru ; South America ; Peru ; Peru Lima Andes Mountains

HSFA 1993.20.14

Visions of Mary Frank, 2013

1 Videodiscs (DVD)

Notes: HSFA 1993.20.16

Josef Albers at Yale, 1954

1 Videodiscs (DVD)

Notes: HSFA 1993.20.17

DVD also contains the title *Josef Albers at Home*, 1968-1969, by Sedat Pakay.

Film prints held by the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation.

Bob Dylan: On My Rooftop, 1962

1 Videodiscs (DVD)

Notes: HSFA 1993.20.19

A silent film of Bob Dylan playing guitar on a rooftop in New York City.

The Legacy of Roscoe Holcomb, 2010

1 Videodiscs (DVD)

Notes: DVD compilation by Shanachie Entertainment Corp. released in 2010 contains two films by Cohen featuring Roscoe Holcomb, including *The High and Lonesome Sound* (1963), and *Roscoe Holcomb from Daisy, Kentucky* (2010) as well as six additional outtakes of Holcomb shot by Cohen.

HSFA 1993.20.20