

Two Late-2013 Movies and Their Music

By Allan French

October 18 will be the release date for **Twelve Years A Slave**, which features a fiddler in the title role. Brad Pitt plays a small but key role in the movie; it also features Paul Giamatti and Michael Fassbender. You can learn more about it through all of the usual online resources. It is based on the true story of a freed black Northerner (a literate man, a carpenter and fiddler/violinist) who was kidnapped and sold into slavery in 1841. The movie is rated R due to violence and strong language. For those who can stomach the cruelty and vulgarity depicted, you will be rewarded with some fiddle music, and maybe the sounds of a pre-War banjo. (You know, from prior to that much-earlier war!)

Inside Llewellyn Davis is a new movie directed by the Coen brothers; and it stars John Goodman and Justin Timberlake. IMDb describes it as “a week in the life of a young singer as he navigates the Greenwich Village folk scene of 1961.” This one too is quite violent and is rated R. It will be released on December 20. I won’t be watching that one, but it might appeal to some of the folkies and ex-hippies among us.

Some Older Movies Featuring Music (Adapted from Allan French’s column in the May 2010 CBA *Bluegrass Breakdown*)

I did not see **The Fantastic Mister Fox** in the theater as I’d planned in 2009, but I did enjoy the trailers I found on YouTube and IMDb. This isn’t exactly a music-oriented film, but it does include a lengthy scene of folk music being played around the campfire. (The campfire scene alone is enough to warm my cynical heart; it was such a setting that introduced me to the concept of amateurs singing and playing music in a big group, just for the pure joy of it.) [Also, as I recall, much of the background music features banjo – ed.]

Another fox that is worthy of your movie-watching time is Jamie Foxx, starring in 2009’s **The Soloist**. It is based on the true story of a homeless man who was once a Juilliard cellist and violinist. Again, I’ve only seen the trailers, but it seems compelling enough, and it features a whole bunch of talented axe-players (though not a single banjo or dulcimer).

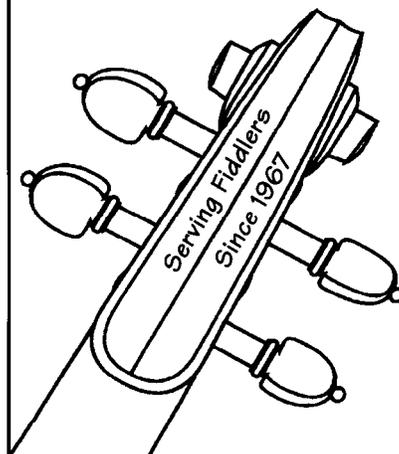
And speaking of foxes, if not movies: “*He did not mind the ‘quack, quack, quack’ and the legs all dangling down-o,*” from the traditional song “The Fox.” I just looove that imagery! According to the “Bluegrass Picker’s Tune Book” by Richard Matteson, the earliest version of this song appears to have been a Middle English poem from the 15th century.

Looking through a rack of videos on display, several years ago, I was drawn to the movie **August Rush** by its cover image: a guitar-playing street kid and his unusually-decorated acoustic guitar. Robin Williams plays the bad guy who tries to make money off the young man’s prodigious talents. When I later watched the trailer online, I got thinking of some of the teenaged musicians I’ve come to know. How would they have showcased their own skills while busking, out on the mean streets somewhere?

Some other films I’ve seen or have considered seeing if the occasion arises: **Oh Brother Where Art Thou** [30s rural chain gang comedy]; **A Mighty Wind** [60s folk music comedy]; **Deliverance** [all readers are surely acquainted with this gritty, violent drama]; **Bound For Glory** [Woody Guthrie story]; **Walk The Line** [Johnny Cash story]; **Walk Hard: The Dewey Cox Story** [a Johnny Cash parody].

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Two "Crooked" Old-Time Tunes

Rose in the Mountain

Key: D major

♩ = 80

Traditional, from John Salyer's playing

Crooked: a 17-measure 'B' part, plus an extra lead-in measure before each 'B'.

Arr. and typeset in ABC by Pete Showman 2/21/12; rev2 4/20/13. Sources: John Salyer recording (high part first, 125 bpm) and "Old Time Kentucky Fiddle Tunes" #138, Jeff Todd Titon

Santa Anna's Retreat

Key: A dorian

♩ = 90

Traditional, arr. Pete Showman

A bit crooked: an extra half-length measure at the start of 'A', and a half-length 'B' part.

Arr. and typeset by Pete Showman 2/26/12, based on melodies from John Chambers, the Fiddler's Fakebook and "what I hear." Chambers says: "Henry Reed reported this tune was played in 1848 by retreating Mexican forces. The c notes are mostly indicated as slightly sharp."

