

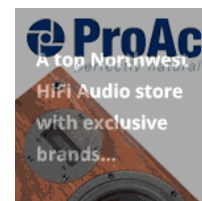
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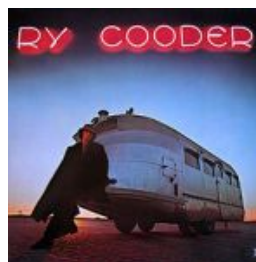
## Ry Cooder – Reprise – Speakers Corner Records

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### Ry Cooder – Reprise RS 6402 (1970)/Speakers Corner Records (2021) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 33:28 \*\*\*\*1/2:

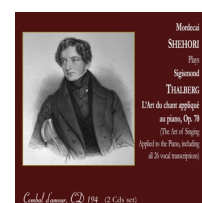
*Speakers Corner releases a re-mastered 180-gram vinyl of Ry Cooder's debut album.*



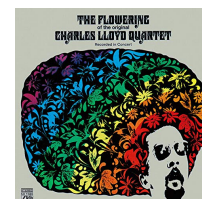
(Ry Cooder – guitar, mandolin, banjo, vocals; Van Dyke Parks – piano; Bobby Bruce – violin; Chris Ethridge – bass; Roy Estrada – bass; Max Bennett – bass; John Barbata – drums; Richie Hayward – drums; Milt Holland – drums, percussion; Gloria Jones – backing vocals)

When the name Ry Cooder comes up, it may seem familiar to casual listeners. But in music circles, this roots-based guitarist is revered by fellow artists. As a sideman, he has recorded with The Rolling Stones, Randy Newman, Linda

**Cembal d'amour**



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**Cedille**



Ronstadt, Van Morrison and Little Feat. His slide guitar imprint on rock history is significant. Additionally, Cooder has scored many films, including *Paris, Texas*, *The Long Riders*, *Streets Of Fire*, *Johnny Handsome*, *Performance*, *Primary Colors* and *Trespass*. He dubbed many of the guitar parts in the movie, *Crossroads*. Over the last five decades, Ry Cooder has released several recordings, showcasing his unique eclecticism and virtuosity.

Speakers Corner Records has released a 180-gram re-mastered vinyl of Ry Cooder's self-titled 1970 debut. With the assistance of several contemporaries, *RY Cooder* represents an auspicious debut as a solo artist. He is presenting a modern connection and appreciation to blues. Side 1 opens with the humorous tune, "Alimony" (co-written by Robert Higgenbotham of "Hi-Heel Sneakers" fame). With electric slide and a lower-voice register, Cooder pleads his case before the judge. Touches of gospel backup singing (Gloria Jones) and barrelhouse piano (Van Dyke Parks) liven this up. "France Chance" (originally written and recorded under the title "Love Me Baby Blues" by Joe Callicott) is also sprightly with a syncopated tempo. Digging into another Americana genre *tin pan alley*, "One Meat Ball" has a pop-jazz resonance with an exotic melody line, again enunciating regrets for lack of money ("...get no bread with one meatball...") with coyness. On "Do-Re\_Mi", Cooder shifts into social commentary from Woody Guthrie. It was an alarm bell to "dust bowl" migrants heading to California to escape poverty. A warning to not come here..."if you ain't got the do-re-mi" is chilling 30 years later. The arrangement is modern with violins and feels like late 60's early 70's groups like The Band. Drawing on a then present-day musical source, "Old Kentucky Home" (from Randy Newman's *12 Songs* LP) is slowed down to back porch rhythm, but Cooder's vocals effectively tell a heartfelt, funny story He is a natural conduit for Newman's deadpan-infused irony. One of the highlights of this album is a cover of a 1929 protest song ("How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live") written by Blind Alfred Reed. Cooder maintains the authenticity of the song, but with a folk-rock sensibility. His guitar licks are concise and visceral.

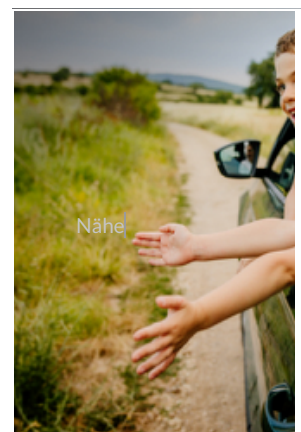
Side 2 has a laid-back vibe. Cooder's lone composition, "Available Space" is a stirring instrumental. A great slide guitar brings some funkiness to this country-blues format. If you're going to select material from great American composers, then Hudie Ledbetter (a.k.a. Leadbelly) seems like an obvious choice. "Pigmeat" is performed with old-school laconic articulation. Hudbetter's wry observations on "country versus city" always seem topical. The brass accents emulate Louisiana musical styling. There are also a number from lesser-known blues artist Arthur "Blind" Blake. "Police Dog Blues" is acoustic Delta-inspired social reflection with classic lyrical imagery of "gamblin'", "travelin' man" and "police dogs". But "Sleepy" John Estes is renowned and has influenced rockers like John Lennon, Bob Dylan and Robert Plant. "Goin' To Brownsville" has become a standard. Cooder executes some of his finest work here with mandolin and electric slide in multi-tracking production. The finale is an instrumental, "Dark Is The Night" by the legendary Blind Willie Johnson. This blues man has been credited with popularizing slide guitar. Cooder's pared-down arrangement (on slide) is atmospheric and translates the innate forlorn character of blues.



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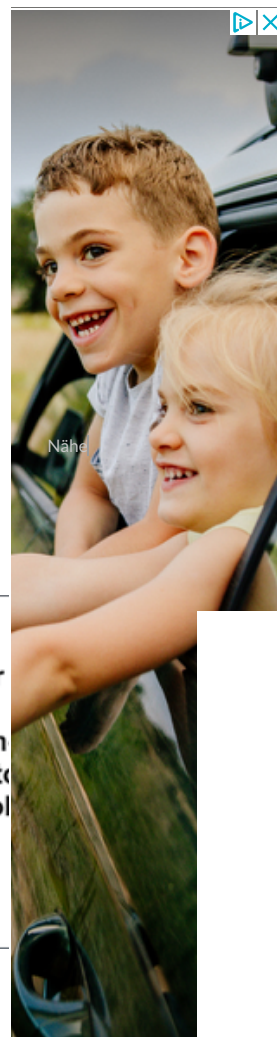
Speakers Corner Records has done an excellent job in re-mastering *Ry Cooder* to 180-gram vinyl. The overall mix is balanced with good stereo separation. Both acoustic and slide guitars sound natural with little distortion.

**TrackList:**

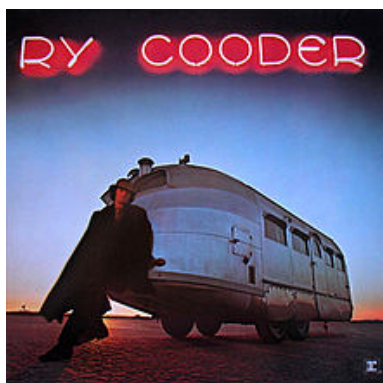
*Side 1:* Alimony; France Chance; One Meat Ball; Do Re Mi; Old Kentucky Home; How Can A Poor Man Stand Such Times And Live

*Side 2:* Available Space; Pig Meat; Police Dog Blues; Goin' To Brownsville; Dark Is The Night

—Robbie Gerson



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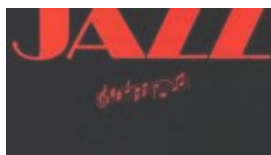
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