



## Wake Up Dead Man: Hard Labor and Southern Blues

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Making it in Hell, says Bruce Jackson, is the spirit behind the sixty-five work songs gathered in this eloquent dispatch from a brutal era of prison life in the Deep South. Through engagingly documented song arrangements and profiles of their singers, Jackson shows how such pieces as "Hammer Ring," "Ration Blues," "Yellow Gal," and "Jody's Got My Wife and Gone" are like no other folk music forms: they are distinctly African in heritage, diminished in power and meaning outside their prison context, and used exclusively by black convicts.

The songs helped workers through the rigors of cane cutting, logging, and cotton picking. Perhaps most important, they helped resolve the men's hopes and longings and allowed them a subtle outlet for grievances they could never voice when face-to-face with their jailers.

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