

«ACOUSTIC BLUES»

NO.4

£1.00

SUMMER 1993



DELTA
BLUES
TOUR
SPECIAL

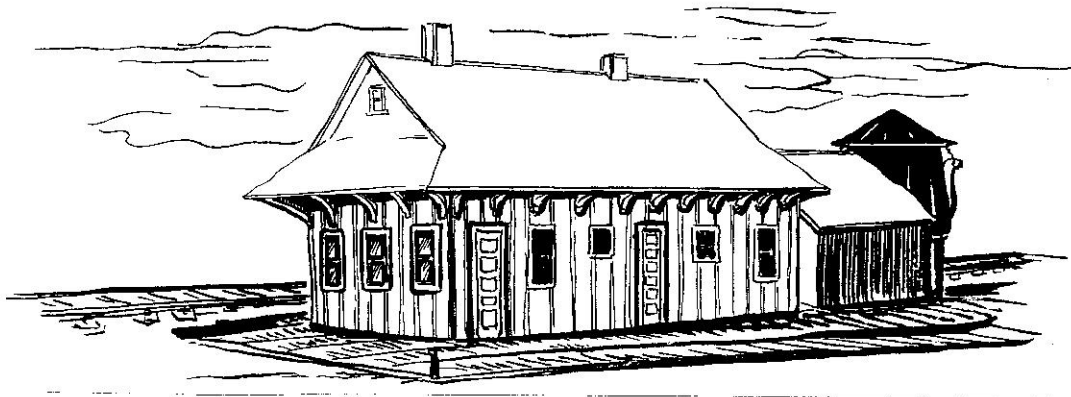
LUCILLE BOGAN (Bessie Jackson)

8256 SEABOARD BLUES
TROUBLED MIND
8263 HOUSE TOP BLUES
T N & O BLUES
8122 SLOPPY DRUNK BLUES
ALLEY BOOGIE

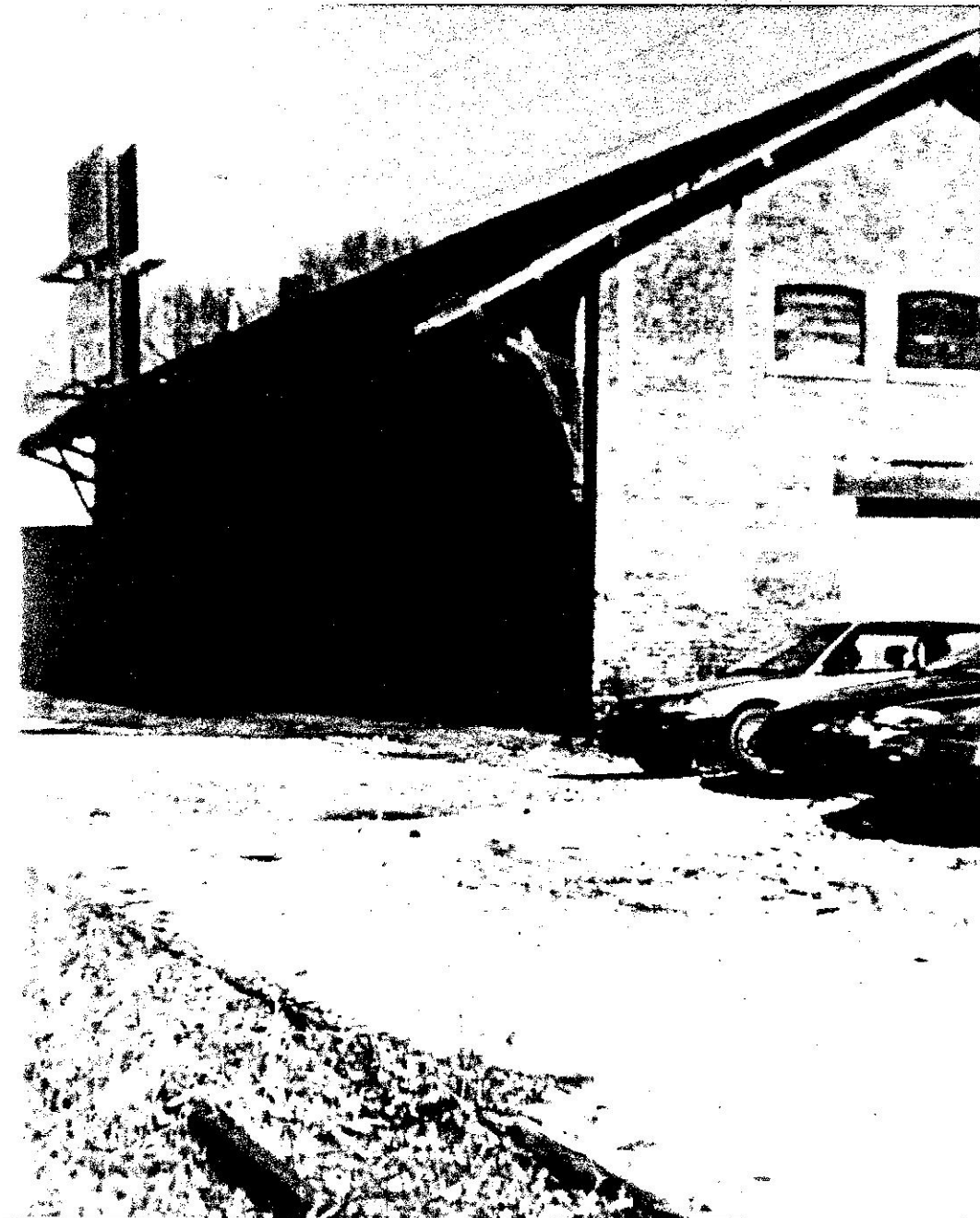
8257 EARLY THIS MORNING
(Bout Break Of Day)
HOUSE LADY BLUES
Vocal—Piano Walter Roland

Oriole Records

GENUINE NEGRO RECORDINGS



Old-style rail-
-road station
(or "dee-po");
seen all over
the South as
well as the
Old West-c.1870
Building next
to it would
have been an
eating house.



Not much has
changed ex-
-cept brick-
-work has re-
-placed the
wood in this
station at Ox-
-ford, Miss.--
Jan.1993. Once
trains of the
Mississippi
Central and
then the I.C.
stopped here--
sadly the depot
is now disused.

THIS ISSUE OF
"ACOUSTIC BLUES"
IS DEDICATED TO
THE STAFF & STUD-
-ENTS AT THE CEN-
-TER FOR THE STUDY
OF SOUTHERN CULTURE
at THE UNIVERSITY
of MISSISSIPPI in
OXFORD, MISS.

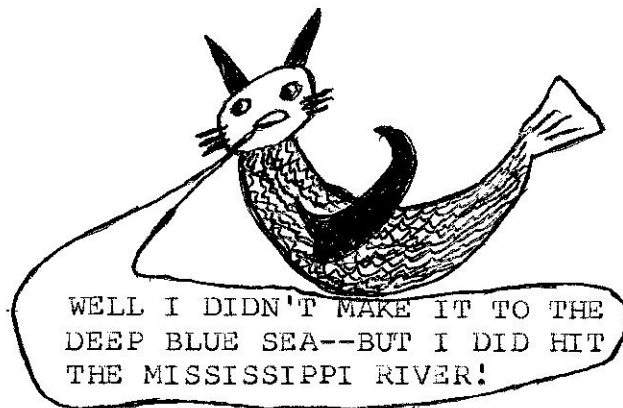
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Lancaster LA1 1DB.
Tel:(0524-64679).

EDITORIAL

Well,runnin' a whole lot late, here is No.4! I managed to last 6 months in Mississippi before I ran out of money--now that IS the blues. But I met some beautiful people,great blues and gospel singers and went down in the Delta.(see article on Delta Blues Tour in this issue). Mo' on Mississippi in future Acoustic Blues.

While the mag. remains the same price (£1.00), p&p has been increased to 40p. per issue. All current subs will be honoured,otherwise check sub details. PLEASE NOPE NEW ADDRESS ABOVE! Would all overseas subscribers please remember payment should be in pounds(£'s) sterling--ta!

Despite statements to the contrary from our "leaders",the recession goes on and live blues venues are feeling it too. However,acoustic blues seems to be weathering the storm(shades of "T-Bone"!)and I am featuring blues once a week at the Yorkshire House--a great early 19th. century pub. So far we've had Pete Oakley & Robin Walton,Ray Stubbs,Hell hound Blues,Gypsy Bill Williams,Perry Foster,amongst others. Portsmouth Blues Weekend(28-30 May) although predominantly electric did feature some acoustic blues including Chicago star Snooky Pryor with slide guitarist John Nicholas from Rhode Island--black and white blues,well alright! Colne & Barnsley Blooze are featuring acoustic blues again this year and I hope to be at both. And I'm floating the idea of Britain's 1st Acoustic Blues Breakdown/Bash or whatever. 12 hours of solid blues in Lancaster--I am looking for sponsors. Also in a 2-day event at Wallingford nr.Oxford on June 11-12 will be featured some acou-



-stic blues.

Due to lack of finances I could only pay a fleeting visit to Burnley's 5th. National Blues Festival on the Friday. I paid £3.00 to get in the Acoustic Bar and ended up organising the music(which ran out around 3.00!) 'til 6.30. The usual high standard I have come to expect from Raphael Callaghan and Allan Jones who included material from Skip James,Blind Joe Taggart,Arthur Pettis and Tampa Red--all sung with the feeling,boys. I was also impressed by a young piano player called Aaron who belted out the blues with an impromptu group I dubbed "The Blacksnake Moans"; and the rockin' twin harps of the Midnight Specials tore the place up.

And yes I got my money back!!

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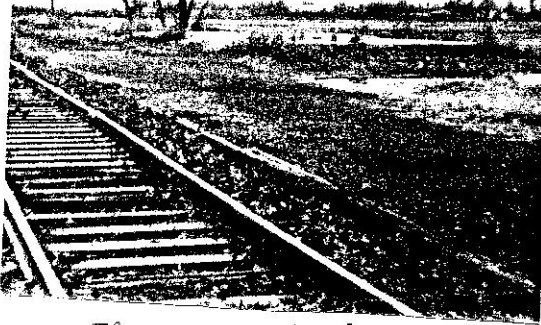
T H E D E L T A B L U E S T O U R --

20th. Jan. 1993

We left Oxford, Miss. around 8.00 a.m heading for Highway 6 after picking up some cans of Dr. Pepper and Coke from Krogers and swung left at Marks onto Highway 3. By now we had entered the Delta driving along under grey Mississippi skies.

Community Education Center just down the road. This is the only obviously new building on Hancock and we were greeted by a young white woman who offered us much information of the happenings in Tutwiler; and believe me this is a very socially aware Mississippi town. Predominantly black and in desperate need of an injection of cash (like many places in the Delta), Tutwiler is not hanging around for their boat to come in. They are making things happen for themselves. As well as an ongoing rug quilting operation, a great facet of Southern culture, there is an ever-growing adult-education programme and a positive attempt at preventing child abuse with the slogan "Keep The Kids Safe". Across the street from the Center (which is run by a multi-racial group of Catholic nuns) there is live music every week, including blues, at the "Mad Dog Disco".

Our first stop was at Tutwiler which comes out as "Tutwalla" when Jimmy (from Mississippi) and Bill (from Georgia) referred to the town. Tutwiler seems to nestle around the old I.C. railroad



The concrete base-remains of Tutwiler depot-1993.

tracks, the old Yellow Dog line, where W.C. Handy first reported hearing the rural blues, at the railroad station in 1903. A marker gives the

date as 1895 but the important fact is that a marker is there denoting the historical significance of this spot, not only in the history of the Delta but the history of the blues. Most of the buildings along Hancock Street (the main drag) are pretty run down and while there is a sense of poverty, the place has a great atmosphere and the people we met were really friendly. A group of four or five young black guys were hanging around on the street and came over and introduced themselves and wanted in on the pictures we were taking! I remember Andrew, Larry and 'little' Larry' (around 3 or 4 years old) and they pointed out the Tutwiler-

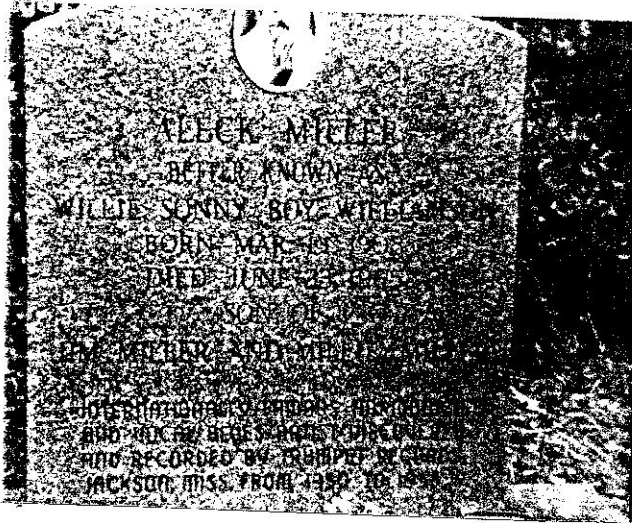
On our way out of Tutwiler we visited Sonny Boy Williamson



Hancock St.-Tutwiler, Miss

aka Rice Miller's grave, which oddly enough is in Coahoma County (just!). Sonny Boy coming from Tallahatchie County

next door. Standing in front of the headstone looking at the great blues



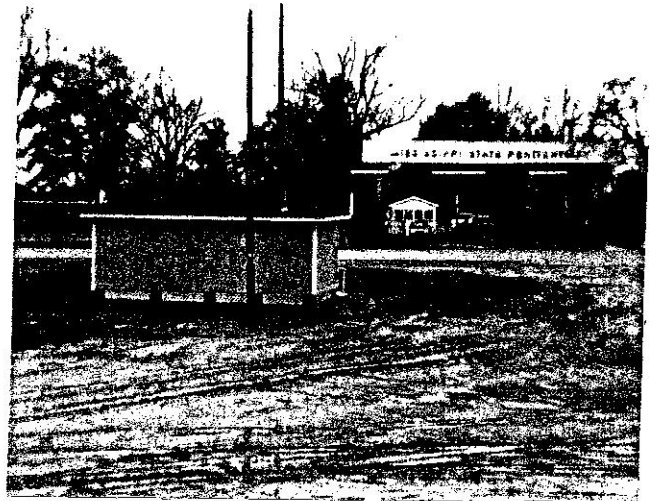
Sonny Boy's grave-1993

singer's picture on it and at the rusting harps (placed at the foot of the grave with loving care), I felt very near to tears as I recalled a far-off day in 1964 back in England. We were late for the start and my first sight of Sonny Boy, who was already on stage, is burned in my memory. Wearing a suit divided down the middle (one half white and one half black) and sporting THAT bowler hat, he was blowing some of the meanest blues I have ever heard. Sonny Boy you are one cool dude.

We joined the famous "blues highway" 49 and stopped briefly at Rome, Miss. which was really tiny, population less than 250, with a scattering of worn, mostly timber-framed shacks lined out against the Delta sky. Rome is celebrated in a couple of 1935 recordings by Delta bluesman Otto Virginal (whatever happened to HIM?). A little further along we arrived outside the notorious State Penitentiary at Parchman. As 'Parchman Farm' it was first immortalised in the blues by Bukka White in 1940; and over 2 decades later by white singers Mose Allison and Bob Dylan. After some dis-

-cussion we figured it would be O.K. to park outside the main gate while we took some pictures. We had all got hungry by now, but after a few minutes munching decided that the armed guards might suspect we were either planning an escape or a break-in!! So we lit out for Rosedale where Robert Johnson once sang he could 'barrelhouse by the riverside'.

On the way we stopped at Drew, Ruleville and Cleveland. Oh! how these names and places brought me close to the presence of Charlie Patton and other great Delta blues singers. In Drew we checked



Parchman Farm, Miss.

out a little record shop which didn't have much blues but some great memorabilia on the walls which included the photo of Charlie Patton's headstone at Holly Ridge, Miss. Outside Drew we pulled up by Will Dockery's famous plantation. It was kind of eerie and almost a sense of de-ja-vu as I read the familiar legend on the front of the main entrance which also included son Joe Dockery's name. Almost like being in a time-machine! The spirits of Patton, Willie Brown, et al. seemed to loom very large here 'shining



The no.1 icon of
the Delta!

down thru'
the trees'.
Leaving
Drew we
headed on
down to
Ruleville,
a fair-
-sized town.
It was sad
to see just
a few sleep-
-ers(cross-
-ties if
you're Amer-
-ican) at
the depot
but at
least this
was still
intact.
Leaving
Highway 49

and joining 8 we decided to look for a soul food joint in Cleveland, which Jimmy remembered. But after driving up and down the main street a couple of times we discovered it had closed down as the owner had got too old to run it. So we pulled up at an old-fashioned general store run by a Chinese family who had been there since 1953. A mixture of black and white customers were so friendly and we bought a few beers for the road passing through Pace (reputed birthplace of 'Hi' Henry Brown) on the way to Rosedale.

At Rosedale we met Jimmy's father, "Tee", a very nice guy who runs a vid-
-eo shop there. After a very pleasant interlude we bid our goodbyes and found that the heavens had opened up! Bill brought the car up as close as possible without entering the shop! and we continued smokin' on down the road. All the while we're travelling down through the Delta, the home of the blues, one of my tapes is playing Patton, Garfield Akers, etc. giving an almost surreal feel to the whole trip. For instance, outside Parchman, Rube Lacy's "Mississippi Jailhouse Groan" (1927) was playing in the car!

On leaving a very wet Rosedale, we picked up on Highway I passing through Benoit and Scott (birth-
-place of Big Bill Broonzy) on track to Greenville. Just before we reached Scott, the seemingly eternal rain eased up and over on our right we could see a large cypress grove shrouded in a mist which hung around the big water-
-bound trees adding an ethereal atmosphere to the scene; you could almost see Skip James playing "Cy-
-press Grove Blues" in his spine-
-chilling style in the middle of the swamp!

The weather by now was getting atrocious and a boat was beginning to look the best bet! It was in this soggy scenario that we made for Jimmy's home on Lake Ferguson just outside Greenville; fortunat-
-ely the very picturesque building was on stilts! as part of the pro-
-tection against flooding from the lake. Through the rain we could see across the half-mile expanse of water to the Arkansas side; Lake Ferguson running into the Mississippi River. While at Jimmy-'s house Bill phoned Delta blues-
-man James 'Son' Thomas in Leland. Bill was no stranger having visit-
-ed the blues singer three or four times already. On getting the O.K. from 'Son' Thomas for a brief vis-
-it we all got back in the car and struggled back to the rain-washed highway heading for the Greenville Bridge and the Mississippi River. But unfortunately the rain and mist all but hid that mighty stream from view. Turning around in the state of Arkansas we left Highway 82 for 454 and on back to Greenville.

We headed down Nelson Street which pianist Willie Love had made famous in his 1952 recording of "Nelson Street Blues". Where as Love said "you can have a lotta

fun with 'most everybody you meet". Having purchased a hip suit from the "Sharp Shop" and had it cleaned and pressed at the Snow White Laundry, he goes into the Silver Dollar Cafe where the eternal beaten-up piano awaits:

"I'm all dressed up now from my, from my head to my shoes;
Now sit back an' relax whilst I play these Nelson Street Blues."



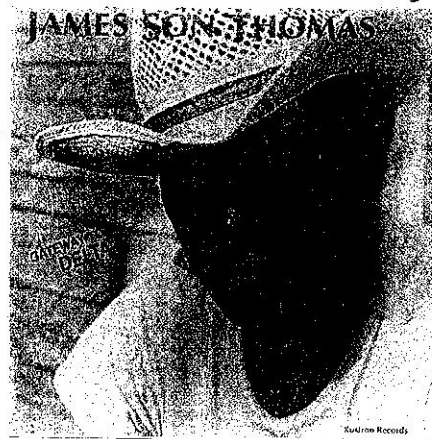
Some of the places he described were still there over 40 years later, including the Snow White Laundry. But we didn't get out to investigate as Jimmy told us Greenville is a pretty violent place. Apart from having 12 murders every month (on a par with New York!) there is also a heavy scene concerning smack, on Nelson Street in particular. While we cruised past we saw a 'sale' taking place on a street corner involving a small group of blacks, standing in the rain! Gangs are organised from Northern cities like Chicago to peddle the dope and initiation into a gang usually involves a 'random killing' to prove the applicant's "credentials"! Bearing this in mind and the exchange taking place before our eyes--we decided to keep going!



Back to comparative safety of Highway 82 we made for Leland to see Son Thomas. We were welcomed into the singer's small but neat little home on Hudson Street by his son Pat. James Thomas, a small-framed man of some 74 years, greeted us warmly. He looked very frail and is in obviously poor health but his spirit was very much alive and after giving us some quest-

-ioning looks we soon settled down into a relaxed conversation. In fact we knew we had been accepted as soon as Son told Pat to "give me my old guitar". This was totally unexpected a treat as he went into his "Bull Cow Blues" which he had first recorded in 1980 here in Leland, Miss. A stomping version of "Good Morning Little School Girl" followed and then Son picked up his slider. "Uh oh" said Jimmy as the blues man went into "Steel Guitar Rag" playing beautifully sensitive bottleneck. This was followed by another vocal on Tampa Red's "It Hurts Me Too". There was something magical in the air as we watched the blues man performing his art--magical and at the same time deeply intimate. He then played part of one his recent cassette releases and then autographed my copy "to Max" after I had bought it, which I will always treasure. He also signed a blues poster we had picked up along the route.

When I asked Son how were things going now, he replied that he had not received any royalty payment from a record company, whose name he couldn't remember, in Dallas and Fort Worth



"Gateway To The Delta". cassette

Texas. This is an oh so familiar story from the past and the cheaters still seem to rule in the 1990s. Luckily his other talent as a sculptor helps keep the wolf from the door. What he needs is paid recognition as one of the last of

the old-style Delta bluesmen-and a damn fine ~~one~~ to boot. He proudly showed us a photo of him with James Brown and told us he had visited Europe to sing the blues at least 7 times. This included one trip to Norway for a 30 minute gig for which he got \$500.00! But ill-health and a major operation have left Son near the poverty line. Such an international blues artist deserves a whole lot more than this.

Sadly, all too soon it was time to leave as we had to get back to Oxford--James 'Son' Thomas thank you for an hour of your precious time; it was sheer magic and a fitting climax to our 14-hour Delta Blues tour.



Coal oil (kerosene) cans were used by jug bands in the earlier part of the century--in 1928 the Memphis Jug Band recorded "Coal Oil Blues".

"Womens' Blues"

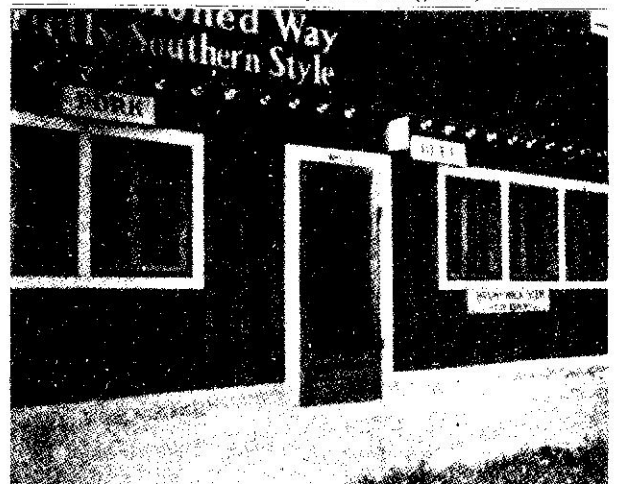
"Spotlight On Lucille Bogan--I"

Lucille Bogan is a name which should be familiar to "Acoustic Blues" readers, as it has cropped up in the last two issues! One of the finest and toughest of all blues singers, Bogan (nee Anderson) was born in Amory, Miss. in Monroe County in 1897. Her family soon moved to Birmingham, Ala. which was to remain her base until the late 1920s. At this time she moved northwards to Chicago; returning to Birmingham in the 1930s. Sheldon Har-

-ris(I) tells us she moved out to the West Coast in 1948 and died there the same year, of coronary sclerosis. Survived by a son who might still be living, this is just about all we know of this great blues singer.(2).



15. Colored entrance, café, Birmingham, Alabama.



16. White entrance to same restaurant, Birmingham.

Note that although written by a sympathetic white observer, c.1928, he still can't help referring to the "cafe" for blacks and the "restaurant" for whites. The latter's entrance of course, was always at the front.

Thankfully, we have a series of excellent records (over 90 sides) made between 1923 and 1935, to

which we can refer to for some possible clues to fill in at least a part-sketch of the woman and blues singer known as Lucille Bogan and also as "Bessie Jackson". While looking for facts based on blues lyrics can sometimes be of dubious value, nevertheless a part of the singer's character and personality comes across to the listener; indeed some blues lines can be taken literally as the truth.

One of the recurring subjects in Bogan's blues was prostitution. The most famous of these being "Tricks Ain't Walking No More". Mistaken by U.S. black feminist writer, Michele Russell in 1982, as a moral stand on the part of the singer, who refuses to further degrade herself even though she's 'broke an' hungry'; in fact "Tricks" is clearly a prostitute's lament because of a dwindling supply of customers or 'tricks'. Poor blacks were hit by the Great Depression long before it became 'official' as Bogan moans:

"Times done got hard, money's done got scarce,
Stealin' an' robbin' is goin' to take place.

Ref: 'Cos tricks ain't walkin',
tricks ain't walkin' no more.
I said tricks ain't walkin',
tricks ain't walkin' no more.

An' I'm goin' to rob somebody if I don't make me some dough."

"I'm goin' to learn these walkin' tricks what it's all about,
I'm goin' to get them in my house and ain't gonna let them out.

Ref: 'Cos tricks ain't walkin',
tricks ain't walkin' no more.
I said tricks ain't walkin',

tricks ain't walkin' no more.
An' I can't make no money, don't care where I go."

"I got up this mornin', with the risin' sun,
Bin walkin' all day an' I ain't caught a one.

Ref: 'Cos tricks ain't walkin', tricks ain't walkin' no more;
I said tricks ain't walkin',
tricks ain't walkin' no more.
An' I can't make a dime, don't care where I go." (3).

Bogan recorded this song three times during 1930 and she obviously felt a strong affinity with poor, black women driven by desperate social and economic conditions to the "oldest trade in the world" only to find that the Depression had hit that too. Things didn't seem much better by 1935:

"I credit one man, it was to my sorrow,
It's cash today, credit tomorrow."
(4).

But even in those hard times there was an alternative to being a street-walker in the South; selling illicit booze or being a bootlegger. This was another popular theme in Bogan's repertoire, as titles such as "Sloppy Drunk Blues", "Bootlegger's Blues" and "Cravin' Whiskey Blues" testify. On another of her blues "Whiskey Selling Woman", she wants to set up her own "booze society" which quite naturally excludes policemen!

"I feel superstitious, something's goin' wrong, (x2)
I've got my house full of beer, and my backyard full of corn."

"I've got four cases, tomorrow at that county jail, (x2)
And two is for my whiskey, and two is for my forfeit-bail."

"The judge he said, 'put a padlock on my door', (x2)
And I can't sell whiskey, and I can't give parties no more."

"If I had a thousand dollars,I'd taken my way,
If I had a thousand dollars,I'd taken my way."

Spoken:"Hey-hey!"

And I would make this whole town sloppy drunk one day."

"I would build me a still on every street in this town.(x2)
And I wouldn't allow police,fifteen miles around."(5)

She recorded this again in 1933 as "Superstitious Blues", with Walter Roland on piano, and substituted one verse with these lines:

"Next time you arrest me,you better put me in a cell,
Next time you arrest(me),jailer, put me in your cell.
'Cos the more you arrest me,more whiskey I can sell."(6)

Tell 'em,gal,tell 'em!



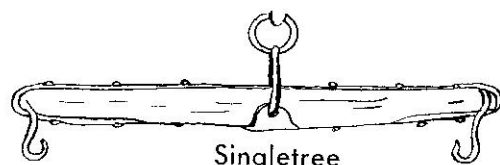
"SLOPPY DRUNK"

An advert. for "Perfect Race Records", c.1933; depicting a Lucille Bogan recording, "Sloppy Drunk Blues".

References

1. "Blues Who's Who". Sheldon Harris. Da Capo. N.Y.1989(Reprint).
2. An article appeared in "Living Blues" No.44 in 1979(p.p.25-28) which I have yet to locate. And this year Guinness have published a "Who's Who Of Blues" but adds nothing new under the entry "Lucille Bogan".
3. "Tricks Ain't Walking No More".

- Lucille Bogan vo.;Eddie Miller or prob.Frank James pno. c.mid-Dec.1930.Chicago.
4. "Stew Meat Blues" Lucille Bogan, as "Bessie Jackson", vo. Walter Roland pno.8/3/35. New York City.
 5. "Whiskey Selling Woman" Lucille Bogan vo.;Charles Avery pno. late March,1930.Chicago.
 6. "Superstitious Blues" Lucille Bogan, as "Bessie Jackson", vo.; Walter Roland pno. 20/3/33. N.Y.C.
 7. I include the following title although less than ten pages actually concerns blues:
"But Some Of Us Are Brave". Michele Russell. 1982.The Feminist Press. N.Y.
Next time Part 2.



Part of a harness which linked to the main spar(the double tree)with a corresponding single tree the other end. Used for teams of horses and oxen.
A floating verse used by boastful male blues singers,runs:

"I whipped my woman with a single tree.
You oughta heard 'er holler,
"Daddy doncha murder me".

Coming in "ACOUSTIC BLUES" No.5: Interview with Ry Cooder,remembered; by Roger Higgins-mo' from the Delta in '93-Southern recipes,yew-all!- Lucille Bogan Part 2-record reviews,etc.etc. ++ An appreciation of Georgia Tom Dorsey who died in Jan. of this year. See pic. on p.15.

RAGTIME DUET

BY: PETE FLANAGAN

1st GUITAR

2nd GUITAR

C A7 D7 G7 C

1 2 3 4 — 1 2 3 4 — ETC.

C A7 D7 G

C C7 F Ab(T)

C A7 D7 G7 C G7 C

Album Reviews

"Gateway To The Delta"
James 'Son' Thomas.

Rustron Records LPIOOI

Side 1: I LOVE THE WAY SHE WALKS/
SUGAR MAMA/GOOD MORNING LITTLE
SCHOOLGIRL/ROCK ME/IT HURTS ME TOO.
Side 2: I WALKED ALL NIGHT LONG/
TRAINFARE BLUES/COAL BLACK MARE/
AFTER THE WAR/THREE DAYS I CRIED/
BULL COW BLUES.

Recorded in Holly Springs, Miss. in 1988, this is a beautiful and very personal statement of the blues by Delta artist James 'Son' Thomas. Featured are strong expressive, guitar and a unique vibrato in his vocal which takes unexpected turns in a line such as "like my sugar in the mornin', also like it late at niiii--ght". And is devastating on another old 'Sonny Boy' John Lee Williamson standard "School-girl"; the best version of this overworked number since the original from 1937.

While many of these sides draw on other singers as well as traditional material, Son makes them sound fresh--no mean feat. As well as 'covers' of blues by John Lee Hooker, Sonny Boy, etc. Son Thomas also includes original lyrics. On "Rock Me" he sings:

"My baby got drowned in the deep blue sea. (x2)

Album Reviews

You know that woman got drowned swimmin' along after me."

Using unexpected and unusual imagery while boasting of his superior sexual staying power over his woman. White harp player, Walter Liniger, blowing his instrument on some excellent and sympathetic blues; as he does for half the sides on this record. This includes the first 4 tracks on side 1. On the last one on this side, Son plays alone as he accompanies his vocal with eerie slide guitar, which interestingly takes the post-war format of Elmore James' version rather than Tampa Red's original from 1940.

Featured mainly on his own on side 2, our hero opens with a few words reminiscing about early days (1930s) in the South when there "few cars" and you had to walk to the juke joint which could be quite a ways down that old dusty road. A unique (as far as I know) theme in blues is featured in "Train-fare Blues". The singer is asking to borrow his fare out of town so that he can sort his own life out and stand on



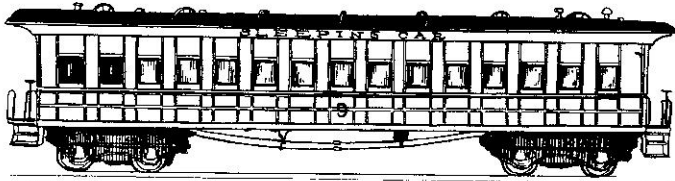
A lbum R eviews

his own two feet. A complete antithesis of the "meal-ticket woman" syndrome of most early blues on the subject. After getting his woman to "let me trainfare away from here", Son sings:

"I'll mail back your money when your trouble be like mine."

with strong guitar backing. There is more of the latter on his great version of Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup's "Black Pony Blues" from 1941, here titled Coal Black Mare".

Next is a surprise item, not listed on the "sleeve" (but is on the side of the cassette) called "After The War". Not blues but a rather sentimental ballad heavily influenced by white country music complete with tasteful slide guitar. It is interesting that the singer thought to include it on this album.



Back with the blues, there is some great harp from Walter as Son sings this fine blues, "Three Days I Cried", held together by mostly traditional or 'floating' verses. He winds this album up with its best side "Bull Cow Blues". After announcing the title, he says "it got one true verse in there--when I get to the true verse I'll let you know". He hangs his head and commences to singin' an' cryin' with some hot Mississippi guitar. Sure enough, when he gets to the "true verse" he says "you better believe this" and sings:

"I said you may be beautiful, baby, you sure gonna die some day. (x2)

A lbum R eviews

But I need a little more of your lovin', just before you pass away."

The stark reality of his words give the listener a glimpse (as with the rest of this album) through the Gateway To The Delta. Even if James 'Son' Thomas was not one of the very last of the old-style Mississippi Delta bluesmen, I would recommend this record as one of the best examples of the genre. To obtain a copy of this cassette (not on C.D.) write to me in the first instance, SEND NO MONEY. If I get a good enough response (say an order for at least ten) I will be able to hopefully negotiate a deal with Rustron Records in Holly Springs, Miss. and get some copies shipped over here.

From an elder black U.S. male blues singer we now turn to a young ~~white~~ ^{female} English white one.

"Angelina Grimshaw"

Root Sap.

Village Bike 4.

Side 1: CHAUFFEUR BLUES/HARD TIMES/NOBODY KNOWS YOU/ADVERTISE YOUR LOVE/KANSAS CITY/HEAVENLY SUNSHINE.
Side 2: VIOLA LEE BLUES/OH PAPA/LOTUS BLOSSOM/CHATANOOGA (sic), PAPA/LONESOME DAY/DO YOUR DUTY.

This is a 1992 recording and Root Sap bring women blues singers back to the front--and now, Angelina Grimshaw on vocals and rhythm gtr. together with brother John-Claude on slide/lead gtr., lap-steel, mandolin, hca., and Lord knows what else, bring a freshness to an assortment of blues, gospel, jazz/swing and 'Hot Hula' on this release.

A R Album Reviews

Hailing from the Deep South of England in Ryde, I.O.W. (you don't get much Souther than that!) Angelina has an almost unique vocal approach, most telling on blues items. Although I cannot hear any Memphis Minnie in her voice, as has been implied by at least one blues writer, she has the same 100% commitment to singing that Minnie portrayed.

On the 3 Bessie Smith songs, Angelina displays an uncanny feel, especially the classic, and much recorded, "Nobody Knows You" with very fitting piano and clarinet by Barkley McKay and Terry Sears respectively. She incorporates the Smith 'growl' superbly. While her version of "Oh Daddy" from 1923, compares well with Chicago's Angela Brown's (1987), even J.C.'s lap-steel solo works!



Angelina
Grimshaw

But it is on the more rural blues sides she really impresses. On "Chauffeur", to the accompaniment of 2 gtrs., hca. and mand., her strange intonation on the words "down" and "town" for example, is very compelling--a cross between a Hampshire accent and a dialect from the Southern states! And

her intuitive but sparing use of falsetto (not normally featured by British blues singers) on the phrase "Vee-Eight Ford" is great blues singing. As well as being topical, her version of "Hard Time Killing Floor Blues" is a moving and original interpretation of this 1931 Skip James classic; on a par with the Blue Goose cut by Jo Ann Kelly, one of Angelina's main sources of

A R Album Reviews

inspiration. Cannon's Jug Stompers' "Viola Lee Blues" comes in for very sympathetic treatment from Angelina and includes fine slide guitar, harp and some good old-fashioned Delta-style slapping on the bass strings; supplied by Rich Stokes and J.C. But the stand-out track, for me, is her version of "Lonesome Day Blues" which was first recorded in 1932 by Ruby Glaze and Blind Willie McTell. This beautiful blues receives such original treatment as to be almost unrecognisable with Angelina's unique vocal approach and Rich Stokes' sensitive slide guitar.

Also included here are some jazz-tinged tunes like the self-penned "Advertise Your Love" and Bessie's "Do Your Duty". A gospel item "Heavenly Sunshine" and a hillbilly-cum-blues "Chattanooga Papa" fairly belt along, adding variety along with an intriguing non-blues item "Lotus Blossom" with fiddling by Donal O'Riain.

A great debut, and I would love to hear some "Angelina-fied" versions of old country blues by singers like Rosie Mae Moore, Nellie Florence and Bessie Tucker. Maybe on Root Sap's forthcoming C.D.? (The cassette under review cost £6.00 incl. p&p. from J.C. Grimshaw, Poet's Cottage, 14 Reed St., Ryde, I.O.W.)

Slightly(!) older is John Dixon who is another excellent British blues singer.

"Skin And Bone"

Blunck Records 060

Side 1: REGAL RAG/THE NEW MOJO
BOOGIE/SKIN AND BONE/THE GRANULATED
MAN/ONE MORE WHISKY.
Side 2: FLIES IN THE KITCHEN/SIXTY
MINUTES/WISHFUL THINKING/JUST CAN'T

GET ENOUGH OF YOU/THE HONKY TONK WALTZ.

Regal Rag" is a great opener and like the rest of this album (1992-93) is self-penned. Unusual in that John plays slide on a rag-gy item, the only instrumental present. One of the reasons the bottleneck is not often employed for rags is the difficulty of combining complex finger-picking with the slide. Even master-picker, Blind Willie McTell from Georgia, did not attempt this on his "Atlanta Strut" (1929), "Georgia Rag" (1931), or "Kill It Kid Rag" (1940); and McTell is one of the finest bottleneck players of all time. There is only a hint of any influences here, Sylvester Weaver, Tampa Red and Frank Edwards come to mind; which is more power to John's elbow.



As the title indicates "Mojo" is a re-working, of a J.B. Lenoir side made in 1960 but with original lyrics. More bottleneck on this one as with "Skin And Bones". On the latter, the standard of slide playing brings the great Blind Willie Johnson to mind! Although John has a fine blues voice, his vocals on these two sides sound a little subdued--but then I have his great live performances of these songs in my head.

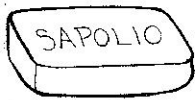
But he sounds right at home singing on "The Granulated Man" sans slide but fine single-string guitar and boogie patterns on the bass strings. In fact from here on John sounds totally relaxed

and offers up as fine a blues as you are likely to hear today. Preaching blues ("Whisky") with a Mississippi Delta feel in the guitar work and a Furry Lewis-style "Flies In The Kitchen" with more superb slide. There is variety here with the excellent jazz-inflected "Sixty Minutes" and a country-style narrative "The Honky Tonk Waltz" where the locale is a bar in a Sheffield pub with a juke-box and "I had 50p."

But the stand-out tracks are "Wishful Thinking", with expert bottleneck fill-ins to his own lyrics--a model for many would-be acoustic blues people; and a beautiful "Just Can't Get Enough Of You" played with "naked fingers", as they say. John reminds me, on the last-named track, of Matt 'Guitar' Murphy playing acoustic and Memphis Slim on his heart-felt, wistful vocal here. A gentle number but ESSENTIALLY BLUES. Great stuff.

A couple of minor points of criticism. "Skin And Bones" fades out--an unnecessary ploy as the rest of the album demonstrates. And "Flies" would have been a 10-out-of-10 job but is downgraded a couple of notches by the repetition of the refrain no less than 6 times. Really only needed to be included twice (beginning and end?). All the great bluesmen from the 1920s and 30s called on floating verses when inspiration started to run dry--even unrelated verses! I only mention this in some detail as the contrast, lyric-wise, with the rest of the album (which is of a very high order) is quite noticeable.

But don't let my carping put readers off this recording, which though a little short on playing time (approx. 30 min.), makes up for this with a really great set of vocal/guitar blues with top quality sound too. Recommended. (see John at one of his gigs-check guide, or phone him on 0532-752854).



"Mother of the Blues", Ma Rainey, refers to Sapolio in

"Those Dogs Of Mine" (1924)

And now for something completely different: a guest review by Rex Haymes of a gig in London. Rex is half of the HellHounds Blues or should that read 'HellHow-oh-ooooh!

Dave Peabody & Rob Mason at the COUNTY ARMS, Highams Park, Chingford.

“**T**hey looked a bit dubious when I took the amps and mikes in”, said Dave in the bar before the gig as he slurped his lager. But even this reminder of the hallowed atmosphere of the “folk club” didn't stop me getting 'ssh-sshed' as I walked into the upstairs room and inquired of the entrance fee.

It had been a long time since I'd been in a folk club and I'd forgotten the pin-dropping silence required, and supplied, to the totally “unplugged” acoustic performer. Here only the most hushed of whispers were permitted. How would a raucous, miked up blues duo go down? I wondered. I looked around the audience and felt young for the first time in many-a-year!

“**W**e normally play in bear pits”, Dave told the audience (trying to chip away at the ice), “so feel you can relax and let your hair down a little”. I waited, not

not without some trepidation, but as soon as they swung into their first number I knew my fears were groundless. The blues, as performed by two such denizens of the art, can cut through any atmosphere. As they stomped through their repertoire of Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, Fred McDowell and Robert Johnson (amongst others), the atmosphere gradually warmed. This change was hastened by some drunk in the audience who kept whoopin' and hollerin' after each number (oh dear!...I've just remembered...it was me).



Unfortunately, I missed Rob Mason's "Sonny Terry Stomp" harp solo due to the unhappy coincidence of there being no bar upstairs and the barrel of Directors being changed downstairs (interminably slowly). I was assured, however, by my "partner in blues", MR. RICH T. PINN, that I missed a great performance. This same gentleman, a harp player in his own right, wept openly when he heard that not only could Rob Mason play brilliantly in the style of both Sonny Terry and Will Shade, (of Memphis Jug Band fame--Ed.), but also did a pretty good "Hammie Nixon" during a version of Sleepy John Estes' "I Ain't Gonna Be Worried No More". The banter and repartee exchanged between Rob and Dave after a number, also helped to warm the "folkies" to the blues and in the end they were stompin' and whistlin' and hollerin' (or was that just me?). All of which goes to prove, you just can't keep the good blues down. Nice one guys.

Rex Haymes.



GIG GUIDE

Lancashire:--MAX'S BLUES CLUB,
at the Yorkshire House, 2 Parl-
-liament St., Lancaster. (0524-
64679).

June 4th.--HOT LICKS COOKIES.
(Sat.) 12th.--SWAMP STOMPERS.
18th.--JIVE ASS.
25th.--PIGMEAT PETE & GIT-
-FIDDLE JOE.

July 2nd.--RAPHAEL CALLAGHAN.
(Sat.) 10th.--HELLHOUND BLUES.
16th.--ROGER HIGGINS.
23rd.--DELIA.
30th.--JOHN DIXON.

Aug. 6th.--BIG MAN CLAYTON (Mr. C).
(Sat.) 14th.--GYPSY BILL WILLIAMS
20th.--NEW SOUTH MEMPHIS JUG
BAND.

27th.--GYPSY DAVE SMITH.
(sure seem to be a lotta gypsies
around in' the blues!)

Wagon & Horses, 27, St. Georges'
Quay, Lancaster (0524-846094).

June 5th.--HOT LICKS COOKIES.
12th.--STREET CORNER BLUES.
July 17th.--STREET CORNER BLUES.

John O'Gaunt (now "BLUEJOHN"!),
Market St., Lancaster. (0524-
65356).

June 16th.--JOHN DIXON.

Unicorn, Preston.

June 27th.--ROGER HIGGINS.

Staffordshire:--LICHFIELD JAZZ
FESTIVAL.

June 13th. (lunchtime)--PETE OAKLEY

Top Bell, Barton Under Needwood.

July 4th.--PETE OAKLEY.
11th.--ROGER HIGGINS.
Aug. 22nd.--PETE OAKLEY.

Yorkshire:--BRADFORD FESTIVAL,
Midland Hotel.

July 7th.--ROGER HIGGINS.

Northumberland:--Railway Hotel, Roth-
-bury.

June 5th.--JOHN DIXON.

Co. Durham:--Peterlee Blues Festival.

June 26th.--JOHN DIXON.

Worcestershire:--Robin R'nB Club,
Dudley.

July 11th. (lunchtime)--ROGER HIGGINS

Kent:--Broadstairs Folk Festival.

Aug. 8th.-9th.--PETE OAKLEY.

Cumbria:--Butcher's Arms, Maryport.

June 13th.--ROGER HIGGINS.

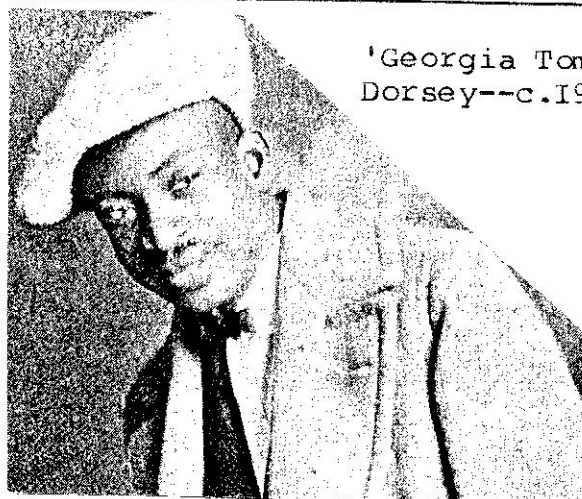
Edinburgh:--Festival at Caledonian
Brewery Hall.

Aug. 13th.--JOHN DIXON.

Edinburgh Festival Workshop.

Aug. 14th.--JOHN DIXON (T.B.C.).

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by August 1st for the next issue--
covering the period Sept. 1st-Nov.
30th.



'Georgia Tom'
Dorsey--c.1930.

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Rex Haymes.
Cartoon: Rich 'T' Pinn.

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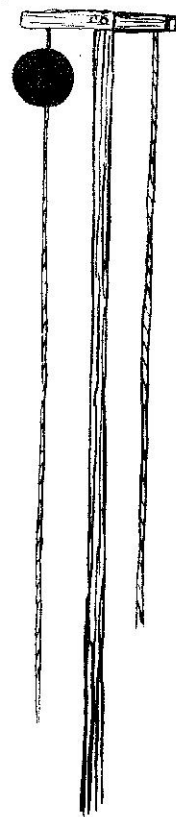
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Illustration
below: Early
U.S. railroad
signal. When
the ball was
in an upright
position, the
train could
go "full steam
ahead". Engines
were known as
"jacks (a throw-
-back to the
jack mule the
locomotive re-
placed.

Hence
the
phrase

"ball
up
the
jack"



Highball



Original trademark-1866.



One of the greatest of blues artists from the Carolinas--Blind Boy Fuller c.1935. He spent much of his adult life in Durham N.C. which was a blues centre in the 1930s as well as a tobacco town. One of Fuller's washboard players recorded as "Bull City Red".



The famous "Bull Durham" bull of the early twentieth century.