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AUTUMN 1993

NO.5

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I'M AN OLD BUMBLE BEE

AND

I'VE GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN MY HAND

~ Vocals: Guitar Accom. ~

Sung by... **Bo Carter**

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EDITORIAL

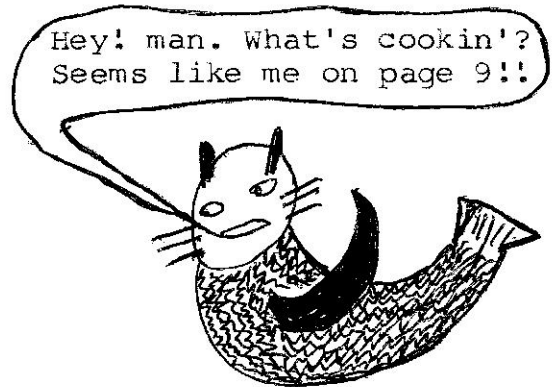
people, Well,hello,blues-lovin'

These blues jus' keep roll-
-in' along. We've recently lost an-
-other great bluesman; Jame 'Son'
Thomas of Leland, Miss. Sadly, the
account of my visit to his home and
my review of his album "Gateway To
The Delta" (see "A.B." No.4.) will
have to serve as my tribute and
last respects to the man. I only
met you for one hour 'Son', on a
winter day in the Mississippi Del-
-ta. But I will never forget it--
I'm proud of the fact we met. James
Thomas died on 25th. June. But like
I said-his Blues keep rolling along

And they certainly do. At
the Colne British R'nB Festival
this year they are running a main
Acoustic Stage hosted by my fr-
-iend and ace blues artist, Perry
Foster. And I will be in charge of
an 'Over-spill Acoustic venue' at
the famous Jim's Acoustic Cafe, from
Sat.28th. Aug.-Mon.30th. Aug. It's
all free an' there's gonna be loads
of blues--the best in the U.K. See
you-all there?

On top of this Festival, on
21st. Sept. I am teaching a course
"Towards A Deeper Understanding Of
The Blues--from beginnings up to
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-ey Institute, Lancaster LA1 1TH, on
0524-849494. Keep them blues a-roll
-in' along.

"Just-in news"--new all solo/acous-
-tic album by Catfish Keith, "Cherry
Ball"; released even as you read!!



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A
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Blues Oh Lawd, "I Mean," Sam cries and weeps out loud, does he make his old Git-fiddle weep and moan "And how!" Go to your dealer, and ask him for--

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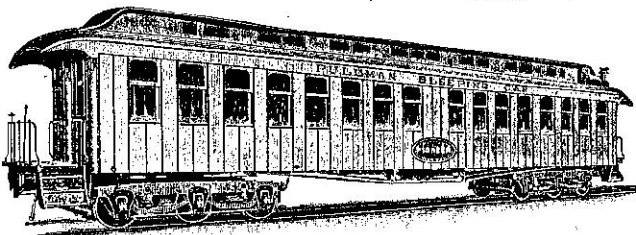
First advertisement of Red Cap service, 1896. Just try the lower line on your Red Cap today!

1. This initial poster for Red Cap porters, depicts a white employee.



2. But porters were almost 100% black-like this fore-runner of the Red Cap. c.1880.

3. They served on Pullman trains not too dissimilar to the first Pullman car c.1867. below.



4. While working on trains of the New York Central and other railroads, they often carried boxes of Paramount records and other blues labels to sell down in the southern states. Like the 1924 Papa Charlie Jackson release. right.



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| 12213 I'm a Poor Old Man | 12212 I'm a Poor Old Man |
| 12211 I'm a Poor Old Man | 12210 I'm a Poor Old Man |
| 12209 I'm a Poor Old Man | 12208 I'm a Poor Old Man |
| 12207 I'm a Poor Old Man | 12206 I'm a Poor Old Man |
| 12205 I'm a Poor Old Man | 12204 I'm a Poor Old Man |
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"Spotlight On Lucille Bogan--2"

The theme of making her own booze (see Pt.1), and her love of liquor generally, was a very prevalent one in Lucille Bogan's recorded output. Very early on in her recording career and a month or so after cutting "Cravin'-in' Whiskey Blues (see Pt.1) she declared:

"I have sold corn whiskey, done everything a woman could do,
I have sold corn whiskey, done everything a woman could do.
I've even robbed other men an' give their money to you."

She pleads with her man to treat her right—a man she has already left her husband for:

"Cryin', don't quit me daddy,
just try an' get along,
Cryin', don't quit me daddy,
let's try an' get along.
You took me from my husband,
brought me 'way from home."

But the man's love for her has grown cold and he becomes totally insensitive to her feelings and brings another woman into the home. Bogan reacts with the only solution open to her:

"I ain't gonna be, I ain't gonna be your darky no more,
Cryin', I ain't goin' to be your darky no more.
Treat me like a dog every-
-where we go." (1).

Behind Ms. Bogan's rich vocals some fine barrelhouse blues piano can be heard; probably played by a Louisiana man, Will Ezell, probably from Shreveport.

Interestingly, one of the few facts we can glean from Sheldon Harris (2), is that after marrying Nazareth Bogan Lucille later married (presumably after a divorce) a James Spencer. This second marriage, if it ever took place, might well have been in the mid-1930s when Bogan left Chicago to return to Birmingham, Ala. (see

Pt.1). In the meantime, Paramount talent scout, Harry Charles who was responsible for Bogan's recording debut, alleged in later years that she had an affair with Will Ezell when the latter pianist was working with her in Birmingham. "He came down here to 'practice' the songs—that was his excuse", Charles said." (3).



Fig.1
A 1933 re-
-cording as
"Bessie Jack-
-son".

When Bogan's husband started divorce proceedings she appealed to Charles for his support to prove her fidelity, but Charles said "No, I'd be swearin' lies!—I knew she was runnin' around with Ezell". (4). This would have been c.1927 before Lucille Bogan left for Chicago (see Pt.1). This was the same year that she recorded "Doggone Wicked Blues" and "Cravin' Whiskey Blues". Will Ezell had accompanied her on the last title and three others in a batch of six. Quite possibly, it was Ezell who had "took me from my husband, brought me 'way from home".

Another main theme featured by Bogan, as with many blues singers, was the railroad. But in her case there seems to be so much more involvement than a passing reference to a train. Some 15 months after her last record with Ezell, she teamed up with ace slide guitar-man, Tampa Red and probably the innovative boogie pianist, Cow Cow Davenport. One of two titles she did at

this session was "Pay Roll Blues". Back in her role as a prostitute, she wants to meet the payroll car on the Southern railroad:

"Pay day on the Southern, pay day
on the Yaller Dog,
Pay day on the Southern, pay day
on the Yaller Dog.
An' I want to meet that payroll
an' try to make a water-haul."

"Mens out on the Southern they
make dollars by the stack,
Mens out on the Southern they
make dollars by the stack.
An' I have money in my stocking
when that payroll train gets
back."

"I'm leavin' here broke an'
ain't got no money at all,
I'm goin' to leave here broke I
ain't got no money at all.
But I will bet my life I will
make a water-haul."

"I will be steady-rollin', rollin
from sun to sun,
I will be steady-rollin', rollin
from sun to sun.
An' I will have a-plenty money
when that fo' day rollin' done!"

"You hear me, baby, money's what
I've got to have,
You hear me, baby, money's what
I've got to have.
I've got to get me fifty
dollars, if I have to make a
midnight grab." (5)



The payroll train (often a single car-i.e.coach) was a phenomenon of railroads in the earlier part of this century and travelled many miles, stopping at various points so that workers could make their way to it and pick up their wages. As the money could be for a month's work (or more!), the payroll train was often almost literally stuffed with banknotes! Although "steady-rollin'" can refer to a regular job, as in Robert Johnson's "I'm A

Steady Rollin' Man", here the reference to "fo'(before) day roll-in'" leaves little doubt that Bogan's "sun-to-sun" period starts at sundown and finishes at the break of day. Also use of the phrase "water-haul" where "water" refers to semen rather than Adam's ale! As the famous bluesologist Paul Oliver said: "...clear water, being in itself a sexual metaphor" (6). In the last verse the singer seems desperate enough to mug one of her 'clients'.



Bogan imparts more than a casual knowledge of railroads in this blues. The Southern covered much of Alabama and shared the I.C.(Illinois Central) tracks from Birmingham, Ala. to Jackson, Tenn. The "Yaller Dog" refers to the Yazoo & Mississippi Valley R.R. which was not far from Bogan's birthplace in Amory, Miss.(see Pt.1). She would seem to have been involved with a railroad man (James Spencer?) on another line, the M.&O. this time:

"When he was leavin', I couldn't
hear nothin' but that whistle
blow,
When he was leavin', I couldn't
hear nothin' but that whistle
blow.
An' the man at the throttle,
Lord, he wasn't comin' back
no more."

"He had his head in the winder,
he was watchin' those drivers
roll,
He had his head in the winder,
and he was watchin' those
drivers roll.
'Say, I'm goin' away, baby, an
doggone your bad luck soul."

Since it was virtually unknown, at the time(1934) for a black railroad employee to reach the position of engineer (engine driver) due to strong racist attitudes from the dominant white

rail unions, it seems likely that Ms. Bogan's man was a fireman. Certainly, the latter should be the only one in the cab watching "those drivers roll" (large driving wheels on the locomotive—see fig. 2). Lucille Bogan delivers one of her most powerful vocals on this blues. The moving poetry of her words cannot fail to strike you. The concept of the cab window filled in by her lover's figure when he is actually sticking his head out to watch the train wheels roll. Also the different levels of meaning in the phrase "I couldn't hear nothin' but that whistle blow,". Obviously she would be standing next to the front of the train for the last glimpses of her man. But in her upset emotional state she might as well be at the other end of the platform, as that whistle blowing is her lover's final farewell. She ends this blues with these emotion-torn lines:

"I was sorry, I was so sorry to my heart,
I was sorry, I was so sorry to my heart.
To see that M.&O. train an' me an' my daddy part." (7).

Although the M.&O. (Mobile & Ohio) didn't run to Birmingham at this time, the railroad also shared the I.C. tracks that did; as too, did the St. Louis-San Francisco (the Frisco).



A year earlier, to a wicked, slow piano boogie figure, Bogan admits that indeed he is "a railroad man":

"He's a railroad man an' he sure do love to ride,
He's a railroad man, sure do love to ride.
If he don't ride that T.&N.O. he sure ain't satisfied." (8).

"T.&N.O." is probably a corruption of the New Orleans and Texas Pacific R.R. (9), which in a shortened form could have the initials N.O.&T. Perhaps Bogan thought her title 'scan-

-ned' better; which it certainly does.

The Frisco is a railroad featured in many blues and was part of a large network of lines which never got within 1000 miles of San Francisco but connected Chicago to the Gulf of Mexico and many points on the eastern seaboard including Birmingham, Ala. Recorded in the same period, "Forty-Two Hundred Blues" paints an even more detailed picture. The title referring to the number on the side of the steam locomotive running on the Frisco line:

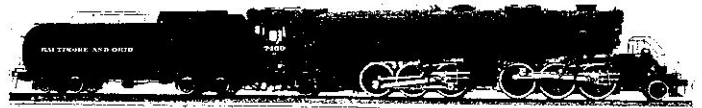


Fig. 2 Mallet loco of the B.&O. Similar but only 12 drivers long. c. 1930.

1. "Did you hear, did you hear, did you hear that Frisco whistle blow?
Did you hear, did you hear, did you hear, hear that Frisco whistle blow?
And she blowed just like, she ain't never blowed before."
2. "I was standing at the station when that 4200 left town,
I was standing at the station when that 4200 left town.
Burnin' down in oil, and that train was Kansas City bound."
3. "I never felt so sorry, till the fireman ring the bell,
I never felt so sorry, till the fireman ring the bell.
Put his head in the winder, said 'fare thee, fare thee well'."
4. "That 4200 is sixteen drivers long,
That 4200 is sixteen drivers long.
Lord, and the man I love, is on the train and gone." (10).

Walter Roland supplying a good

imitation of a train whistle at the end of the opening lines in the first verse while playing skilful piano runs which weave in and around Bogan's raw-edged vocals, where she confirms the suspicion that her lover/husband was a fireman. In the second verse there is a reference to oil-burning locomotives which were replacing coal-burners on some roads; being seen as more economical as well as safer. The fourth verse refers to the wheel formation of the engine. (see fig.3).

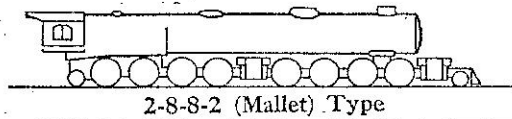


Fig.3 By counting the drivers on one side & x2 you get 'sixteen drivers'

This sort of detail in her blues indicates a more than average interest/knowledge in railroads and the lines of the last three blues quoted more than suggest that, we the listeners are getting a glimpse of the evolution of a particular blues, which was surely an actual and traumatic incident in the life of Lucille Bogan.

References

1. "Doggone Wicked Blues" Lucille Bogan vo.; prob. Will Ezell pno. c. July, 1927. Chicago.
2. "Blues Who's Who". Sheldon Harris. Da Capo. N.Y. 1989 (Reprint).
3. "Paramount-Part 4". Stephen Calt & Gayle Dean Wardlow. From "78 Quarterly" Vol.1 No.6. 1991.
4. Ibid.
5. "Pay Roll Blues" Lucille Bogan vo. Tampa Red gtr.; prob. Cow Cow Denport pno. 8/10/28. Chicago.
6. "Screening The Blues". Paul Oliver. Cassell. London. 1968.
7. "I Hate That Train Called The M.&O". Lucille Bogan, as "Bessie Jackson", vo.; prob. Bob Campbell gtr.; Walter Roland gtr. 31/7/34. N.Y.C.
8. "T.&N.O. Blues" Lucille Bogan, as "Bessie Jackson", vo.; Walter Roland pno. 17/7/33. N.Y.C.
9. Actually the Alabama, New Orleans, Texas & Pacific Junction Railway, which was taken over by the Southern in 1916. From "History Of

Mississippi-The Heart Of The South -Vol.II". Rowland Dunbar. The S.J. Publishing Co. Chicago & Jackson, Miss. 1925.

10. "Forty-Two Hundred Blues" Lucille Bogan, as "Bessie Jackson", vo.; Walter Roland pno., vo. effects. 18/7/33. NYC.

(to be continued)



Right now we have an article on an early slide guitar genius by Bradford-based Roger Higgins, who is a pretty mean bottleneck man in his own right!

BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON - MASTER OF THE SLIDE GUITAR

It often surprises me that while many people have heard of Robert Johnson, very few know his namesake Willie, who appeared a decade earlier than Robert and who has been at least as big an influence on many contemporary blues guitarists.

After one of my gigs in Lancaster I mentioned this to Max (your friendly editor) and we started to discuss Willie's technique which I have studied and analysed in the process of learning to play some of his songs. I also remembered reading an interview in an American guitar magazine in which Ry Cooder had offered some interesting ideas on how this pre-war guitarist achieved his remarkable sound.

Here then are some thoughts on one of the greatest acoustic slide guitar players. The first question to consider is how did he physically play the instrument?

Did he hold it in the normal way or did he play it flat on his lap? The answer is that we don't really know. There is only one photograph of him playing a guitar but it only shows the body of the guitar and not the neck. Although he is holding the guitar in the normal position we don't know if he was playing regular guitar or slide when the picture was taken.

you imagine you are hearing more than you actually are.

When I first started trying to work out the chords to a Johnson song, I eventually realised that he was playing two or three notes and suggesting a chord and I was supplying the rest in my head. Ry Cooder experienced the same effect listening to Reverend Leon Pinson; he was playing quarter-notes in a style that was actually dissonant. He wasn't playing the pure notes we're used to in normal triads with regular harmonic intervals.

Although it seems likely that this is partly how Blind Willie achieved his unique sound, analysis is also made extremely difficult because of the poor sound quality of the only recordings which exist. (Ed's footnote 3). These were made in the late 1920s on very primitive machines which eliminate all but the most spiky sound, so you're not hearing any of the real aural ambient effect at all. What they reveal above all else, however, is his absolute mastery of the technique of playing slide guitar, which puts him on a different plane to other players. The lightness of his touch and the speed and dexterity of his syncopation set him apart from anyone else both then and now.

The most memorable and evocative song Blind Willie produced is "Dark Was The Night-Cold Was The Ground" which has a haunting, beautiful quality, with its sad, single note slide runs and Johnson's voice moaning as if in the depth of the night.



Columbia Records' pic. of Johnson. 1927.

Ry Cooder believes he held the guitar in the normal way and played slide with a bar or knife. (Ed's footnote 1). In 1990 at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival he saw a blind preacher from Mississippi, Reverend Leon Pinson, play slide guitar holding a bar between the finger and thumb of his left hand, reaching around underneath the neck of the guitar like a player with a bottleneck on his finger would. Cooder thought Pinson achieved a very similar vibrato to that of Blind Willie, as it had that quality of coming up to the note without ever quite hitting it.

When Pinson played slide, Cooder also noted that he didn't fret the strings at all. This could also throw some light on Blind Willie's technique. Usually, slide players who hold the guitar in the normal position do fret the strings as well, like Willie McTell or Robert Johnson. (Ed's footnote 2). However when nothing but the bar or knife is touching the strings, the guitar will ring more as the strings stay released and open. In addition, when the sound is so busy



The chilling "Dark Was The Night" by Blind Willie Johnson. 1927.

If you never listen to anything

else by Blind Willie Johnson, this is definitely the track to search out and can be found on the LP/CD "Praise God I'm Satisfied" (Yazoo 1058). More recently this song was used as a basis for the soundtrack of the film "Paris, Texas" (Ry Cooder-Warner Brothers 925 270-1).

Although I've written in some detail about Johnson's technique, as with all music, it's how the technique is used that makes the difference. This ultimately depends on what motivates someone to play. In the case of Blind Willie Johnson we know very little about him other than sparse biographical details.

It's thought he was born in Marlin, Tex. c.1900, and that he grew up in a deeply religious community. Even at the age of five he had decided that he wanted to become a preacher, and when his father made a guitar for him out of an old cigar box, it was only natural that he should learn to play gospel songs. His blindness occurred at the age of seven, when his stepmother threw lye (an alkaline detergent for washing dishes) in his face. Although this could have been the cause of much bitterness, Johnson was somehow able to come to terms with this tragic event. Perhaps his religious belief gave him a sense of dignity and purpose in the face of his own suffering, and the terrible social injustice, which occurred daily in the 20s and 30s, if you were a black American.

Samuel Charters who unearthed most of the known facts about Johnson, believes that his singing style was derived from an elderly blind gospel singer named Madkin Butler, although Johnson did not actually meet Butler until 1925. Compared to other recordings of the late '20s, however, his guitar-playing style contained some revolutionary elements. There was no bottleneck tradition, as such, associated with Texas, and although

guitar bottleneck gospel numbers had been recorded by Sam Butler and Rev. Edward Clayborn over a year before Johnson's commercial debut, neither of them played percussively. Johnson's rhythmic qualities are even more amazing in view of the fact that the Baptist sect to which he belonged did not allow dancing to religious music (Ed's footnote 4).

However, although he played mainly gospel music, it's interesting to note that he travelled and played with Blind Willie McTell, which would have provided a fascinating contrast in terms of musical style and lyrical content, and demonstrates that he was not the religious recluse we might otherwise have imagined him to be.

It is perhaps not surprising that he did not achieve a high degree of commercial success, (Ed's footnote 5), although four of the sides he cut in the late '20s were reissued in the mid-1930s, which was an unusual occurrence and shows his later popularity. He was still playing in the '40s, on the streets of Beaumont in southeast Texas, and at the local Mount Olive Baptist Church, but died tragically from pneumonia in 1949, after a hospital refused him admission because of his blindness.



BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON

"Mother's Children Have a Hard Time"

Sung by **BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON**

Columbia advert-1927: using the only known pic. of Blind Willie Johnson.

For me the quality of the sound he achieved when playing slide has never been surpassed. The sensitivity he displays and the incredible tone he produces reveal a man who is totally at one with his chosen instrument. Unlike other blues performers Blind Willie Johnson appears neither complex or contradictory. He had deep, religious convictions which in turn brought a tremendous power and energy to his playing, and which transformed his gospel songs into a moving testament of his faith.

In conclusion, although he achieved some recognition when he was alive, the unique quality of his slide playing has only really been appreciated long after his death. As with all great music it is possible to reach some understanding of how he played through studying his technique, but in the final analysis, there is a quality in his slide playing which many strive for but very few ever achieve.

Editor's footnotes

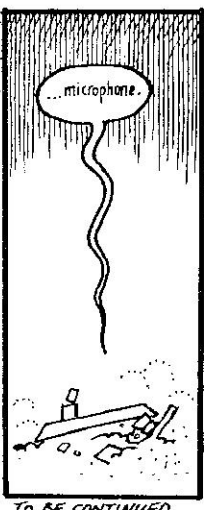
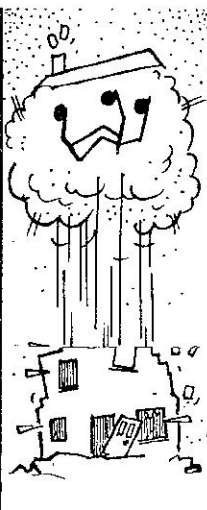
1. Blind Willie McTell, in an interview with John Lomax for L.ofC. in 1940, said of Johnson that he was "a very good friend of mine" ("Monologue on himself". On "Blind Willie McTell 1940-The Legendary Library Of Congress Session". Stor-yville 670 186). McTell, who showed a remarkable memory for details of his recording sessions starting in 1927 (with the specific date for his first one for Victor records!) claimed, to have played with Blind Willie Johnson up and down the Eastern seaboard from "Maine to Mobile Bay" and told Lomax that Johnson was a "notable

singer", an "excellent guitar picker" and played slide "with a steel ring" (ibid.).

2. A contemporary of Johnson, and his musical equal in the early part of his career, was Tampa Red. John Miller said of his bottleneck technique: "Tampa played his slide pieces in Open E (Vastopol) tuning. He used a small glass bottleneck on his little finger. His style was based upon single-string melodic runs (like Blind Willie Johnson) as opposed to the chordal approach of a Robert Johnson." (notes to "Tampa Red Bottleneck Guitar 1928-1937". L.P. Yazoo L-1039. John Miller).

3. Poor quality for musical analysis maybe-but from a listener's viewpoint all 30 of Johnson's numbers, recorded in the Columbia 14000 series, have a clarity of sound which makes blues fans wish that all those scratchy Paramounts by Blind Lemon Jefferson, Charlie Patton, etc. had been recorded on the same label! Check out the "Complete Blind Willie Johnson" (2x cassettes or C.D.) on Roots 'N Blues--see "Album Reviews" in this issue.

4. Johnson did most of his singing and playing on the streets and Adam Booker told Charters that on Saturdays when the farm workers came to town: "Blind Willie Johnson sang on one corner and Blind Lemon Jefferson sang blues on another". (notes to "The Complete Blind Willie Johnson". Sam



TO BE CONTINUED.

Charters). Coupled with his travels "from Maine to Mobile Bay" this is the probable source of his rhythmic influences--i.e. hearing other street singers performing blues. Johnson's first wife, Willie B. Harris, said in 1977 in Marlin, Tex. that Blind Willie "...wasn't no preacher, just a songster." (ibid.).

5. Apparently, in the initial period (prior to 1929) Johnson was one of Columbia's strongest selling artists: "...the initial pressing for the first 78--"I Know His Blood Can Make Me Whole" and "Jesus Make Up My Dying Bed" was 9,400 copies. Fewer copies--9325--were pressed of a new Bessie Smith released ten days earlier, and the additional pressing for Willie's record was 6000 copies, as against 5000 for Bessie's." (ibid.). Although Godrich and Dixon state by 1929 his records "sold no better than the average disc in the Columbia 14000 D series", they add that by June, 1930, Johnson was still selling 5000 copies on average--over 2000 more than Bessie Smith at that time (for the same label). (Recording The Blues". R.M.W Dixon & J. Godrich. Studio Vista. 1970.)

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Notes to "Blind Willie Johnson 1927-1930". L.P. RBF 10. Sam Charters. 1965.

Fig. 2. Notes to "The Complete Blind Willie Johnson". (2xcassettes). Roots 'N Blues Col 472190 4. Sam Charters. 1993.

Fig. 3. Ibid.



Well now, blues isn't the only good thing that came out of the southern U.S.A. They got some pretty good grub down there too! On a drive through Mississippi forests Wanda and I arrived at Taylor, Miss. A little old country town that just 'happens' along the meandering highway. The only eating place there (the Taylor

Grocery and Restaurant) is pretty basic decoration-wise and has an old-world charm all of its own; the walls (and ceiling) feature graffiti of past visitors. Described as "a genuine country store with a tin roof and a wooden sidewalk (actually a verandah-Ed.) and gas pumps out front" ("Southern Food". John Egerton. Alfred A. Knopf. Inc. New York. 1987.), by one writer, Taylor's is justifiably mentioned in the National Geographic magazine recently, as a famous catfish restaurant. We sampled their speciality; catfish with hushpuppies. This is a classic dish in the South, akin to the popularity of fish and chips in the U.K. This recipe is "one of the oldest and simplest" (ibid.).

CATFISH (Pan-Fried)

Select fresh catfish, whole or fillets; wash well in cold water and pat completely dry with paper towels. (This recipe is for fillets, preferred because they are easier to clean, fry, and eat; allow about 1/2 pound per person.).

In a heavy iron skillet (or frying pan), melt enough lard or shortening to reach a depth of 1/2 to 1 inch.

Rub the fish with salt and black pepper and coat with white cornmeal, shaking off any excess.

When the fat in the skillet is hot (but not smoking), lay the pieces of fish in gently (spaced so as not to touch) and fry for about 4 minutes, or until they are crisp and well browned on the bottom side.

Turn carefully and fry to the same crispness on the other side.

Then lift the pieces out carefully and drain on a platter covered with absorbent paper.

An ample supply of lemon wedges will provide ideal seasoning, though some people prefer

tartar, hot pepper, or catsup-based sauces.

Now for the ^{corn} half of the dish. A hush puppy is "a deep-fried ball of cornmeal batter and seasonings that has become an all-parts companion of fried fish." (ibid.). Some accounts say the name came from Florida "...in the general vicinity of St. Marks (the term being what camp cooks supposedly shouted to the barking hounds when they tossed them batter-ball scraps from the fish skillets)," (ibid.).

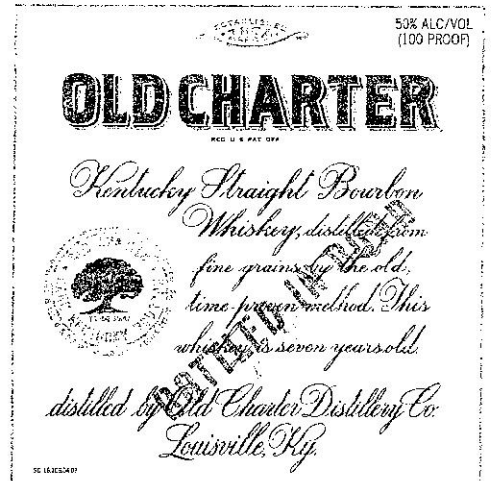
HUSH PUPPIES

In a mixing bowl, combine 1 cup of self-rising white cornmeal, 1/2 cup of self-rising flour, 1/2 teaspoonful of salt, and 1 teaspoon of sugar (or use regular meal and flour with the salt and sugar and add 1/2 teaspoon each of baking powder and baking soda).

Blend in 1 egg and add enough buttermilk (up to one cup) to produce a thick batter that will drop slowly but easily from a teaspoon. (Finely minced green onion and garlic, black or red pepper, or a few drops of hot-pepper sauce may be added to suit your taste.). To make golf-ball sized pups, drop teaspoonfuls of the batter into fat that is hot enough and deep enough for the morsels to float (about 375 degrees and 3 inches, respectively).

Fry to a golden brown and drain on absorbent paper, keeping the cooked ones warm in a 150 degree oven until ready to serve with a platter of fish. The recipes makes about 2 dozen or more hush puppies.

(both recipes from "Southern Food ibid.).



"an thish wine goes with thish wine (sorry bourbon) --one of the "good whisk-eyes" monitored by the federal government. Maybe be the one that Charlie Patton refers to on his "Elder Green Blues" in 1929. Maybe Prohibition wasn't so tight in the Mississippi Delta. That's a good bourbon too!!

GIG GUIDE

- Lancashire:--MAX'S BLUES CLUB, at the YORKSHIRE HOUSE, 2, Parliament St. Lancaster. (0524-64679).
- Sept. 3rd.--PETE OAKLEY & ROBIN WALTON.
- (Sat.) 11th.--GYPSY BILL WILLIAMS.
- 17th.--HELL HOUND BLUES.
- 24th.--THE BLUESMEN.
- Oct. 1st.--PETE BOLTON & MIKE JACKSON.
- (Sat.) 9th.--DAVE SMITH & SIMON.
- 15th.--PERRY FOSTER.
- 22nd.--PETE OAKLEY & ROBIN WALTON.
- 29th.--MIDNIGHT SPECIALS.
- Nov. 5th.--RAPHAEL CALLAGHAN.
- (Sat.) 13th.--SWAMP STOMPERS.
- 19th.--ROOT SAP.
- 26th.--HOT LICKS COOKIES.

THE CASTLE HOTEL, China St., Lancaster. (0524-32136).
(cont'd on p.12.)

THE NEW YORK RECORDING LABORATORIES
33 PARAMOUNT BLDG. NEW YORK 17, N.Y.

Paramount

[Combined with Black Swan] AND THE NAT. REC.

The Popular Race Record

MINOR PENTATONICS IN OPEN TUNINGS:

Minor pentatonic scales do not explain the Blues but they are an essential ingredient. These patterns are meant for slide but I usually advise my students to finger them first.

Open G tuning
DGDGBD

G minor pentatonic.

T
A
B

As a fretboard diagram.

In standard notation.

Open D tuning
DADF#AD

D minor pentatonic.

T
A
B

Fretboard diagram.

Standard Notation.

GIG GUIDE(cont'd)

Sept.2nd.---PETE OAKLEY & ROBIN
WALTON.
9th.---PETE BOLTON & MIKE JACK
-SON.
16th.---HELL HOUND BLUES.
23rd.---GYPSY BILL WILLIAMS.
30th.---SAM PAYNE.
Oct.7th.----T.B.A.
14th.---"SHAVE 'EM DRY" LIZ
JACKSON.
21st.---T.B.A.
28th.---RAPHAEL CALLAGHAN.
Nov.4th.----T.B.A.
11th.----T.B.A.
18th.----ROOT SAP.
25th.----HOT LICKS COOKIES.

WAGON & HORSES,27,St.George's Quay,
Lancaster.(0524-846094).

Sept.4th.---RAY STUBBS.
(lunch/
time)5th.--RAY STUBBS.
11th.---STREET CORNER BLUES.
(lunch/
time)12th.--STREET CORNER BLUES.
(lunch/
time)19th.--EDDIE WALKER.
25th.---GYPSY BILL WILLIAMS.
(l/time)26th.--GYPSY BILL WILLIAMS.
Oct.2nd.----RAY STUBBS.
(l/time)3rd.---RAY STUBBS.
9th.----STREET CORNER BLUES.
(l/time)10th.--STREET CORNER BLUES.
(l/time)17th.--DELIA.
23rd.---PERRY FOSTER.
(l/time)24th.--PERRY FOSTER.
30th.----CARL "SONNY BOY" LEY-
-LAND.
(l/time)31st.--CARL "SONNY BOY"
LEYLAND.
Nov.6th.----HOT LICKS COOKIES.
(l/time)7th.---HOT LICKS COOKIES.
13th.----STREET CORNER BLUES.
(l/time)14th.--STREET CORNER BLUES.
20th.----RAY STUBBS.
(l/time)21st.--RAY STUBBS.
(l/time)28th.--DELIA.

Hampshire:--WINCHESTER ARTS CENTRE.

Oct.15th.---JOHN DIXON.

ALDERSHOT ARTS CENTRE.

Oct.16th.---JOHN DIXON.

Cumbria:--THE BREWERY,Highgate,
Kendal.

Nov.14th.---JOHN DIXON.

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1st.Dec.-28th.Feb.1994 TO ME
BY 10th.Nov.1993.--message ends.

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Well,look-a-here. They ain't
writing adverts no mo'-they're
singing 'em!!

"I woke up this mornin',
Gotta tell you some news.
It'll put an end to ya troubles
and that "no singer" blues."

"See I'm a fab female singer,
I do songwriting too.
You want your band to go places?
Well,here's what to do..."

phone Zena on 0782-747789.

"GEORGIA TOM" DORSEY(1899-1993)

Born in Villa Rica,Ga.some "thi-
rty miles west of Atlanta"(1),Thom-
-as Dorsey is often accredited with
being the "father of gospel" when he
applied the word when describing any
sacred song in 1932. A prolific com-
-poser (over 200 songs),his gospel
numbers include "Precious Lord,Take
My Hand" and "Peace In The Valley".
The latter being covered by white as
well as black singers; in the 50's
for example,country star Red Foley
did his version and towards the end
of the decade,no less a personage
than Elvis Presley would record
"Valley" on the album of sacred
songs dedicated to his mother. Dor-
-sey's gospel songs were covered by
black groups in the '20s,30s and
'40s,such as the Norfolk Jubilee
Quartette of Virginia,the Heavenly
Gospel Singers,the Blue Jays and
the Golden Eagle Gospel Singers.

But in this tribute to the man,
in "Acoustic Blues",I will concen-

-trate on his secular material from 1928-1931. Thomas Andrew Dorsey is a name that has been familiar to me since I first got into the Blues 30 years ago. As co-composer of the reputedly million-seller "It's Tight Like That" with Tampa Red, his most popular and well-known pseudonym (he had others like Smokehouse Charley, Texas Tommy, Barrelhouse Tommy etc.) "Georgia Tom" came to my attention very early on. Actually, it wasn't this big blues hit which came my way first. Back in the early '60s, a British label called 'Jazz Collector' (referred to in an earlier "A.B.") issued a series of E.P.s (with 4 tracks on each) called "The Male Blues" and Volume 2 was issued as by "Tampa Red and Georgia Tom". On "My Texas Blues"



Tom, accompanied by ? Jones rather than Tampa, features one of his most moving blues; both vocally and lyrically. Never a striking singer, here he gets an incredibly 'blue' and low-down feel as he relates an apparently mega-traumatic break-up with a woman he loves:

"I'm leavin' this mornin', keep goin' for a long, long time, Mama, I'm leavin' this mornin', be gone for a long, long time. Now, I'll be gone forever if my gal don't change her mind."

"I'm goin' back to Texas,
'cause I'm feelin' sad an'
blue,
I'm goin' back to Texas,
'cause I'm feelin' sad an'
blue.
Mama, I go back to the grave
-yard, get myself away from
you."

After contemplating a suicidal option, Tom concludes desperately:

"Aaaaah! don't care if I win
or lose,
Aaaaah! don't care if I win
or lose.
I'm goin' back to Dallas,
singin' these Texas blues."
(2)

Another low-down blues, written by Tom, is called "Been Mistreated Blues" which includes a beautifully sympathetic instrumental break by Big Bill Broonzy, backed up by a solid left hand from Georgia Tom. General mistreatment by women seems to be the main theme but also included is one of his several references, on record, to the pathetic Prohibition Act (1920-1933):

"Now I had a speakeasy, but when the police come and closed it down.
Now it sho' is a hard thing to sell booze around this town."

The last verse, probably unique in blues, comes back to his main problem:

"Now the angels keep singin',
the moon shines down at
night.
But the good Lord knows that
the women don't treat me
right." (3)

The first line was a pointer to Tom's direction in life from 1932 onwards--as a purveyor of gospel songs and working with the Baptist church. He was later on to operate his own music pub-

-lishing Company in Chicago.

Another very moving blues is "Mississippi Bottom Blues" (1930) which inexplicably, remained unissued until Yazoo put it out in the 1970s. It seems the singer fell heavily for a woman in that state too!

"Mississippi Bottom, filled with mud an' clay,
Mississippi Bottom, filled with mud an' clay.
A Mississippi woman, she stole my heart away."

"M.i.s.s.---i.s.s.i.p.p.i,
M.i.s.s.---i.s.s.i.p.p.i.
That Mississippi woman, love 'er 'til the day I die." (4)

Presumably, Scrapper Blackwell providing some stinging guitar fill-ins to Tom's full-blooded piano.

But Georgia Tom composed a variety of music, not just gospel and country blues numbers. He wrote many vaudeville-blues items for singers like Monette Moore, Ma Rainey, and Trixie Smith. The latter had a hit with Dorsey's "Freight Train Blues" in 1924, which she re-did in 1938. He recorded with singers as diverse as the fine Bertha 'Chippie' Hill and vaudevillian Stovepipe Johnson. He also wrote and performed a lot of hokum blues. These were 'good-time' blues but often with an undercurrent of a sense of sorrow, anger and protest. These songs were also in a more urban style of blues and together with Papa Charlie Jackson, Dorsey was one of the early precursors of the genre--Jackson had started recording as early as August, 1924, and cut the original "Shake That Thing" (see "A.B." no.3). Dorsey had moved to Chicago in 1916, ahead of Big Bill Broonzy (1920), Tampa Red (1925), and Washboard Sam (1932) and Jazz Gillum (1923); therefore he could also be considered as a "father of Chicago blues".

Tom was a child prodigy and was

one of a few blues players, in the early days, who could read music and was a professional musician. His skill enabled him to play with various guitarists of the highest order; Big Bill, Scrapper Blackwell and Tampa Red among them. His piano style included barrelhouse, low-down blues, boogie and a hint of rag-time. On "Selling That Stuff" he plays rocking piano with superb slide supplied by Tampa Red; issued under the name of "The Hokum Boys", this was yet another blues about Prohibition.



Thomas Dorsey as a "sharp cat" c.1928.

It was with this 'group' he did "Better Cut That Out" in 1929 which inspired Sonny Boy Williamson No.1 in the 1940s and indirectly, Junior Wells in the 1950s. As part of another group, the "Famous Hokum Boys", he cut "Come On In" in 1930. About five months later, he teamed up with Jane Lucas who was also known as Hannah May and Kansas City Kitty. As the "Harum Scarums" they did another version of this Dorsey tune as "Come On In (Ain't Nobody

Here But Me)". A belting number with Georgia Tom really hammering the keys in the breaks. Probably an urbanised form of "Come On Around To My House, Mama" (1929) and "Over To My House" (1930) as recorded by rural blues singers Elvie Thomas and Blind Willie McTell, respectively. Chicago bluesman Washboard Sam was to record his excellent "Come On In" in 1936.



Scrapper Blackwell with his regular pianist—the famous Leroy Carr, c.1928.

Georgia Tom's "Do It By Myself" (1930), a duet and scat vocal with Lucas as 'Kansas City Kitty', was later to evolve into "All By Myself" as sung by Big Bill in 1941 and Fats Domino in 1955 (for whom it was a hit in the U.S.). One of Dorsey's classic records in the hokum blues genre is "Terrible Operation Blues". Another duet with Jane Lucas as the 'patient' and Big Bill picking in and around Georgia Tom's piano. The double-entendre phrases on the 'doctor theme' would inspire St. Louis pianist Walter Davis a few years later to record the famous (infamous?) "Think You Need A Shot". After the "Operation" with his "long knife", he sings:

"Your ribs was kinda loosened, they moved about,
If I hadn't sewed you up, everything would fell out,
I put in new tubes, tightened up the exhaust,
Went into your hood and cleaned your sparkplugs off.
Your bodies's kinda weak, don't be hard,

From now on you be careful with them there connection rods."

Jane Lucas (spoken)

"All right, doctor."

"The doctor knows to fix it, the doctor knows just what to do." (5)

After stating she felt better, Lucas started to do "a little messin' around" (dancing). "Doctor" Tom comments "That's the way patients do that come to this doctor, they don't die."

But even in the mood at these sessions with Lucas/May/Kitty there would be a sensitivity in the piano work and vocal on "How Can You Have The Blues?" which belied the humour of the singing; and on "The Doctor's Blues" which was not on a sexual theme, surprisingly. This still had humour but was also a piece of social commentary on the loyalty of victims of wife-beaters to their partners.

English blues writer, John Stiff, said in 1974 in the "Jazz Journal" mag. that Dorsey was "one of black music's great men" (6). I can only add that Georgia Tom Dorsey was and is one of the most important and influential figures in both the world of gospel and that of the blues. Perhaps the spirit of the blues is epitomised in one of his early blues compositions—"Freight Train Blues" which he recalled in 1963:

"I'm goin' to catch a freight train, ride to the end of the line,
Gonna catch a freight train an ride to the end of the line.
Don't care where I'se goin', jest tryin' to find that man o' mine." (7)

Dorsey chuckles in fond remembrance of those times (1920s) when "everybody was aspiring to be a blues or jazz singer" and

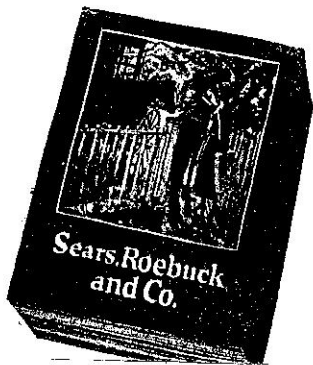
as he quite rightly put it with no sense of false modesty: "I began to write more prolifically an' one blues after another fell from my pen". (8)

Thomas Andrew Dorsey died on Sunday, 24th. January, 1993. His spirit is still "riding on to the end of the line."

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1. Notes to "Come On Mama Do That Dance" 1928-1932. L.P. Yazoo L-1041. Stephen Calt.
2. "My Texas Blues" Georgia Tom vo. pno., speech; ? Jones gtr. 8/7/29 Richmond, Ind.
3. "Been Mistreated Blues" Georgia Tom vo. pno., speech; Big Bill gtr. 20/11/30. Richmond, Ind.
4. "Mississippi Bottom Blues" Georgia Tom vo. pno.; prob. Scrapper Blackwell gtr. 5/2/30. Richmond, Ind.
5. "Terrible Operation Blues" Georgia Tom vo. pno., speech; Jane Lucas, as "Hannah May" speech, moaning; Big Bill gtr. New York City.
6. John Stiff quoted in "Blues Who's Who". Da Capo. 1989. Reprint.
7. Commentary: Thomas Dorsey speech. 1963. Quoted from "Georgia Tom & Friends". L.P. Riverside RLP 8803 c.1964.
8. Ibid.

Much of the biographical detail was taken from "Blues Who's Who". Ibid.



Sears Roebuck mail order cat. c.1935. Along with the rival Montgomery Ward catalogue, this was where blues singers often obtained a cheap guitar for under

\$5.00 and a harp for 50 cents! President Roosevelt, at the time called Sears' book the "Thrift Book of the Nation".

"THE COMPLETE BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON"

(2x cassettes)

Roots N' Blues 4721904.

This release by Columbia, in 1993, is THE definitive collection of Blind Willie Johnson; including all 30 of his recorded sides from 1927-1930. Not a blues singer, but a master of slide guitar in the idiom (see Roger Higgin's excellent article elsewhere in this issue) and a vocal intensity to match the greatest of Mississippi Delta artists. His normal singing voice was tenor, but he employed a false bass from the back of his throat which often became positively savage on his finest numbers. Coupled with his beautiful and eerie bottleneck guitar to no more telling effect than on "Nobody's Fault But Mine", "You're Gonna Need Somebody On Your Bond" (recorded earlier by Charlie Patton), "I Know His Blood Can Make Me Whole" and "Mother's Children Have A Hard Time". Roger has already covered the unique "Dark Was The Night".

But Johnson also played without the steel ring/knife. On "If I Had My Way I'd Tear This Building Down" his roaring vocal threatens to jump out of the grooves as he plays a "hammering, driven, staccato..." in standard tuning, as Charters say in the excellent and updated sleeve notes. In this tuning, Johnson is also featured on the incredible "Let Your Light Shine On Me". This starts in a sedate mood with Johnson's normal voice and then he breaks into his growling bass, thumping his box a la Delta blues style.

As with his second version of "Bond", the fine soprano vocal of his first wife, Willie B. Harris, can be heard on the ferocious "Jesus Is Coming Soon" and "I'm Gonna Run To The City Of

Refuge". The contrast in their voices gives an incredible 'bittersweet' atmosphere. Elsewhere, Harris sings antiphonal style--in the old call and response manner; as on "Keep Your Lamp Trimmed And Burning" using Johnson's delicate slide guitar in addition to his gruff vocal for this purpose. Like "Lamp" some of the recordings were of a more gentle nature and one of the most moving is "The Rain Don't Fall On Me" with Johnson in 'Sebastopol' tuning this time. An unknown female singer take Harris' place on the 19 29 sessions which includes the most superior version (in my opinion) of "Take Your Burden To The Lord And Leave It There"; almost hypnotic in its effect.

The sound is crystal clear and if you only buy one black gospel record--this should be the one--BUY IT NOW!



"SHAKE THAT SHIMMY" 1935-38
by Blind Boy Fuller
(L.P. Magpie PY 1807)

Side 1: BABY, I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY/
LOOKING FOR MY WOMAN/SOMEBODY'S BEEN
PLAYING WITH THAT THING/MAMA LET ME
LAY IT ON YOU/BOOTS AND SHOES/TRUCK-
-IN' MY BLUES AWAY No.2/MY BEST GAL
GONNA LEAVE ME.

Side 2: OH ZEE ZAS RAG/TOO MANY WOMEN
BLUES/OOZIN' YOU OFF MY MIND/SHAKE
THAT SHIMMY/HEART EASE BLUES/GEORGIA
HAM MAMA/JIVIN' WOMAN BLUES.

Blind Boy Fuller is the main man for the blues of the Carolinas and is often termed, along with Bo Carter, a 'salacious' singer who made 'party records'. But most of his records of this nature are quite openly sexual. In this category is the beautifully melodic "Georgia Ham" with a young Sonny Terry on only his second session (1938). One of the 3 slow blues included, despite the title, is a very sensitive number about

being in love with another man's woman:

"Says, it may be your woman, but she come to see me some time, I say, heyyy-hey! come to see me some time.
Yes she be around me so often, I begin to call her mine."

Sexual? Certainly, but not salacious. The man's falling in love, dammit! His admiration for the lady is expressed in a poetic compliment:

"Sometime my baby wears a hat, then again, she wears a tam,* Heyyy-hey! sometime she wears a tam.
Yes, she got great big legs an' they shaped just like Georgia hams."

*=a tam o'shanter--a hat with a tassle, very popular in 1930s.

Terry blows skilful and sympathetic harp in the break behind Fuller's soulful guitar solo.

Other frankly, sexual items include "Heart Ease Blues" with rocking twin guitars (Floyd Council on the second instrument), "Somebody's Been Playing" about a suspected unfaithful partner, and "Mama Let Me Lay It On You". The latter coming from a Kansas Joe & Memphis Minnie record in 1930: "Can I Do It For You?" The lyrics of which can be traced back to 19th. century England! On "Baby, I Don't Have To Worry", Fuller sings the refrain "I can lay, I don't have to worry, baby, 'cos the stuff is here" to his swinging and very bluesy National steel guitar.

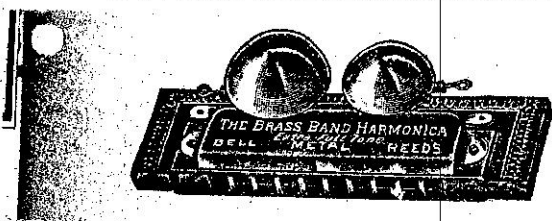
On "Trucking" he is joined by a rollicking washboard played by Bull City Red. Like the majority of tracks on this album, this is a fine up-tempo tune made for dancing (how else would you shake your shimmy??). Trucking was a popular dance with working-class blacks in the South during the 19 30s. You could certainly shake to the frenetic "Oh Zee Zas Rag" com-

-plete with scat ~~scat~~ vocal--and also to "Jivin' Woman" where Bull City Red is again "beating the boards" to a great melody. Council fills out the rolling rhythm in a favourite tune of Fuller's on "Ooz-in' You Off My Mind"; as he does on the dance-oriented but obviously sexual title piece ("if you can't shake your shimmy, shake your yes-yes-yes").

On another slow blues "Looking For My Woman", a version of Blind Willie McTell's "My Baby's Gone" (1933), Fuller includes the poignant lines:

"She can't be long (gone), all
her clothes in pawn,
She can't be long, all her
clothes is in pawn.
An' I know she will be back,
winter time has come."

In similar mood is the very fine "Too Many Women" (1937) which Fuller re-made some 3 years later as "Thousand Woman Blues". The title used here is based on a verse from a 1928 Rube Lacy blues: "Mississippi Jailhouse Groan". Changing back to a higher gear, "Boots And Shoes" is Fuller's version of "Oh Lawdy Mama" a semi-traditional piece and recorded by McTell, again, and Curly Weaver, amongst others. Blind Boy Fuller ingeniously omits the traditional refrain "oh! Lawdy, mama" and thereby puts his own stamp on this blues. I know L.P.s are harder to get nowadays, but if you want Fuller in a juke joint mood, it's worth seekin out.



c.
1905.

Could imitate
flute,

church organ or trumpet--last one was on "Harmonica Blues"-Blues Birdhead 1929

COMING IN "ACOUSTIC BLUES" No.6. News of blues at the Colne Festival-Luci-

-lle Bogan Pt.3-guest feature on a British blues duo-news, reviews, etc.

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