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WINTER 1994/1995

NO.10

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in late 1930s.

"ACOUSTIC BLUES"

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£1.00.

EDITOR---MAX HAYMES

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EDITORIAL

Hi there,blues lovers. I'm afraid we're running late again. But better late than never.

The Blues seem to be going from strength to strength around this planet,and acoustic styles are more than holding their own. Blues clubs are featuring both and are located in various places in the U.K. such as Hull,London,Douglas(I.O.M.), Scunthorpe,Saltburn,the West Country and of course here in Lancaster at MAX'S BLUES CLUB. (Check gig guide).

And more people want to learn about the earlier blues,their roots and socio-historical background. I'm running new courses on the Blues,for Lancaster University, from January through to August. I also have a potential slot in the American Studies department from September,1995. Other unis have expressed interest in these and 1-day courses,that I ~~also~~ teach. The one in January is for 10 weeks,called "Just Got To Ride"(Transportation & The Blues) and starts on 24th. at the Storey Institute in Lancaster, for the Adult Continuing Education programme. This is an accredited course and the Credits go towards a Certificate in Open Studies. Ring the Storey on 0524-849494 for detail of enrolment,if you're interested.

The more people learn of the roots of the Blues,the more understanding will be spread amongst people of different races and cultures. This can only lead to more harmony in this trouble-torn world. For me,that is what the Blues is all about.

Hope Christmas is good for you;and all the rest of 1995. In the great Charlie Patton's words "a brand new year" ("34 Blues". 31/1/34. Charlie Patton vo.gtr.).

Stay alive,cool,and happy!



Ah! Them Blues will make you pick a fight with a - circular saw!:

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As it was in the beginning: When the musical genre was first called "Blues", around the turn of the century, the 12-bar format was but one of many played by guitarists, and later pianists. As many of these early blues singers were solo performers, they did not have to adhere to a rigid musical structure, as seen through Anglo-Saxon/European eyes. Indeed many early blues guitarists sang blues which featured only one chord. U.S. authors Stephen Calt & Gayle Wardlow discuss these subjects in their generally excellent book on Charlie Patton. ("King Of The Delta Blues". Rock Chapel Press. 1988.) Now read on:

"IS THERE LIFE AFTER 12 BARS
OF BLUES?"

(Piano-Man, Lawrence Pickup investigates alternative arrangements available for the budding Blues-man)

I remember the intense frustration I felt when I first got the bug and started trying to work out exactly how this musical magic we call the blues, worked. Just how could B.B. King make twelve identically structured songs all sound so different? I had learnt without too much difficulty, how to play a twelve bar blues in almost every key; and yet for some reason, each rambling piano boogie number I played, sounded very much like the last. Some musicians seem content to do this, but I had the funny feeling that all I was doing was playing lots of different versions of "Blue Suede Shoes" with only a slight variation in the lyrics. (just how many songs can start with something about "my baby" leaving me, being skint, or getting out of bed with a thumping hangover). But of course I was young and green, and it wasn't too long before I was experimenting with different rhythmic patterns and making my own contribution to that great mass of blues lyrics about "babies" leaving me and Rent Men bothering me for money. (although, at fifteen I was living at home with my parents and had never once been asked to con-

-tribute towards my upkeep).

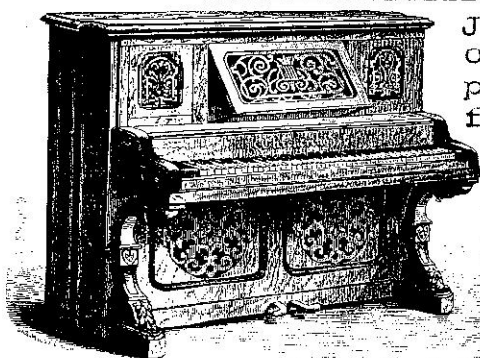
Apart from altering the rhythms and speeds of my 12-bar blues songs, I also found that applying a little discipline to the instrumental as well as the vocal melody of a song, can mean that you don't cram every little riff you have learnt, into every single number that you play. So you can exhibit a little variation in your technique from song to song. This keeps your set sounding interesting, despite the fact that you are still being a bit of a three-chord wonder, and in all honesty, are not doing anything particularly new with your numbers.

However, even though I have now worked out enough different rhythmic and melodic patterns to keep me playing for a good while before I start repeating myself in quite the same way that I used to, I still have this nagging feeling that I am playing the same song over and over again. Wouldn't it be nice, just once in a while, to play something with more than three chords in it, or to play those chords in a slightly different order?

Well, hopefully, salvation is at hand, because I have also spent quite some time investigating just a few of those elusive alternative arrangements to help give the music that added extra dimension. Firstly, who says, you've always got to play your three chords in the traditional order? The standard chord sequence is normally 1st. Chord to 2nd. Chord to 1st. Chord to 3rd. Chord to 2nd. Chord to 1st. Chord again, with perhaps a return to the 3rd. Chord, just before the next verse. However, you don't necessarily have to play your chords in this order. If you continue to play your 1st. Chord for another couple of bars, instead of turning to your 2nd. Chord, you can quite comfortably go from

your 1st. Chord to your 3rd. Chord and back again, before playing your 2nd. Chord. Then it's back to the 1st., then to the 2nd., and then returning to the 1st. I hesitate to suggest how many bars of each chord you should play, because the idea that you must have 12 bars in your blues number is also a myth I should like to dispel. A little experimentation in this department should be quite fruitful, as well as it can vary depending on the speed and rhythm of your song. Repeating your end phrase for example, is often a firm favourite with many boogie players. Often playing that first chord for just a bar longer than you might expect to do, can be quite tantalising, although with some rhythm scheme it can be a complete spanner in the proverbial works. An important aspect of playing the Blues, is improvisation, many artists never play the same song twice, but this can have as much to do with the structure as the melody. One trick I sometimes use, is changing my 3rd. Chord. Normally, the 3rd. Chord is just a tone above the second, but if you replace this chord with one which is a tone below the 1st. Chord, you can get some interesting variations on your standard 12-bar blues. However, it is, after all, a matter of taste.

So there you have it. There is life after the 12-bar blues. The application of just a little experimentation with variations on this traditional form, can produce some quite stunning results, and can add an extra dimension to your set. One word of warning though, use the more successful results of your experiments sparingly. Otherwise you'll be right back to square one in no time!



Jonas Chickering of Boston, Mass. put his iron-framed piano on sale in 1823- soon to replace wood-framed pianos in U.S. and Europe.

"ORAL TRANSMISSION IN VAUDEVILLE BLUES"

Part 2.

In most cases where rural/traditional blues lyrics have appeared in vaudeville-blues in the early 1920s, it has been mainly a one-way traffic which influenced the latter. As was probably the case with Ma Rainey and her 'matchbox verse', and Coot Grant's "Now, I stole my sweet man", line. (see Part 1). But I suspect that rural blues men (who recorded later) sometimes picked up a phrase, a line, or even a whole song from early female vaudeville-blues records.

In late April, 1923, one of the more obscure of the latter singers, Lillian Harris, recorded 3 takes of "Mama's Got The Blues", 2 of which were issued. This was a 'cover' of a Sara Martin song from the previous year. Although possessing a fine voice, with a slight vibrato, Harris recorded only 6 titles in 3 sessions during the first half of 1923, which were issued on the Banner and Regal labels. To a jaunty accompaniment by the "Original New Orleans Jazz Band", Ms. Harris sings with infectious enthusiasm, and you can imagine the 'hip' dancers of the time doing a slinky version of the "Black Bottom" while she sang:

"Some people say that the weary blues ain't bad,
Oh! some people say that the weary blues ain't bad.
But it's the worst old feeling that I ever did have."

"Woke up this morning, with the blues all round my bed,
Oh! I woke up this morning, with the blues all round my bed.
I didn't have no daddy to hold my achin' head."

"Never can tell what's on a brownskin daddy's mind,
Oh! you never can tell what's

on your poppa's mind.
He can kiss an' leave you, an' be
leaving all the time."

"Brownskin's deceitful, but a yell-
er man is worse,
Brownskin man's deceitful, a yell-
er man is worse.
I'm gonna get a black man an' ~~not~~
play safety first."

"Never can tell what's on a brown-
skin daddy's mind,
Oh! you never can tell what's on
your papa's mind.
He'll hug an' kiss an' pet you, an
he's leavin' all the time."

"Brownskin's deceitful, but a yell-
er man is worse,
Brownskin man's deceitful, a yell-
er man is worse.
I'm gonna get a black man an'
play safety first." (1)

Presumably just after Harris
recorded "Mama", the great Bessie
Smith entered Columbia's studios to
put her version on wax, on either 28
or 30 April.



Bessie Smith
on stage -
c. 1928.

By contrast, Bessie's "Mama" was
sung at a slow pace and her majest-
ic vocals seemed to almost over-
power Fletcher Henderson's piano-
playing. After singing the same 2
verses as Harris (substituting
"jinx" all around my bed"), Smith
goes on to the 4th. and then shifts

the tempo up a notch to end the
song as a sexual boast:

"I got a man in Atlanta,
Two in Alabama,
Three in Chattanooga,
Four in Cincinatta, (sic)
Five in Mississippi,
Six in Memphis, Tennessee.
If you don't like my peaches,
Please let my orchard be."
(2)

Interestingly, Sara Martin's
original version of this song,
recorded in December, 1922, also
featured just piano accompani-
ment; in the shape of Fats Wall-
er (unheard by me). Martin is
credited as co-writer along with
another pianist/composer, Clarence
Williams, who played on many of
Sara Martin's records. The lat-
ter's penchant for a 'doomy'
sound and tempo, would seem to
indicate that Bessie Smith uti-
lised Martin's approach and that
Lillian Harris offered the only
different arrangement and accom-
paniment.

But Sara Martin also rec-
orded with more rural-style mus-
icians such as Clifford Hayes'
jug band, and more importantly,
guitarist Sylvester Weaver. Born
in 1884 in Louisville, Ky. (3), where
Hayes and Weaver were based,
Martin was a contemporary of Ma
Rainey and Charlie Patton. Like
Rainey and scores of other vaud-
eville blues singers, she travell-
ed to sing. From 1915 onwards she
toured the U.S. including the T.
O.B.A. circuit (see Part 1) in
the South. "Mama's Got The Blues"
recalls a 1927 recording "Deceit-
ful Brownskin Blues" (also un-
heard by me) by Blind Lemon Jeff-
erson, who was probably also a con-
temporary of Martin.

As with "Matchbox Blues" and
Ma Rainey, it is debatable as to
what came first, the vaudeville or
rural blues version. Virtually
all the verses in Lillian Harris'
"Mama" reappeared in rural blues
by Charlie Patton, Blind Lemon

I love my jelly, and I'm a fool
about my jelly roll;
And when you taste my jelly, it
will satisfy your weary soul."

"You can talk about your jelly
roll, but look what it's done,
Done made an old lady marry the
youngest son.
Crazy about her jelly roll, she
was a fool about her jelly roll.
An' when you taste my jelly", etc.

"Jelly roll, jelly roll, you ain't
no friend o' mine,
Jelly roll killed my father an'
run my poor brother blind.
He loved his jelly, he was a fool
about his jelly roll;
And when you taste my jelly. Lord
Lord, Lord Lord Lord".

"I don't know how to cook no pies,
or cakes,
But you just wanna see the jelly
rolls that I can bake.
I love my jelly, and I'm a fool
about my jelly roll;
An' when you taste my jelly, it
will", etc. (10)

Around 5 years later, George
Carter entered a recording studio in
Chicago to make 4 sides accompanying
himself on jagged 12-string guitar.
One of these titles was "Hot Jelly
Roll Blues". Carter dispensed with
any pretense at cooking!

"Jelly roll, jelly roll, you can see
it on the fence,
If you don't go git it, you ain't
got no sense.
I'm wild about my jelly, mama's
sweet jelly roll;
When you taste my jelly, mama
can't keep you at home." (11)

and:

"I went up on the mountain, looked
down in the sea,
A good-lookin' woman winked her
eye at me.
'Cos she's wild about jelly", etc.
(12)

And whereas Edmonia Henderson makes
reference to the horrendous and also

fatal results of syphilis, concern-
ing her father and brother,
Carter claims exactly the oppo-
site. His blues is a declarat-
ion of joy and an advert. for
his woman's sensuality and art
at love-making, who by implicat-
ion is in her early/mid teens.

"Can make a blind man see, a
lame man walk,
It'd make a deaf woman hear
and a little baby talk.
Wild about my jelly", etc. (13)

He changes the "old lady" verse
to one of incest:

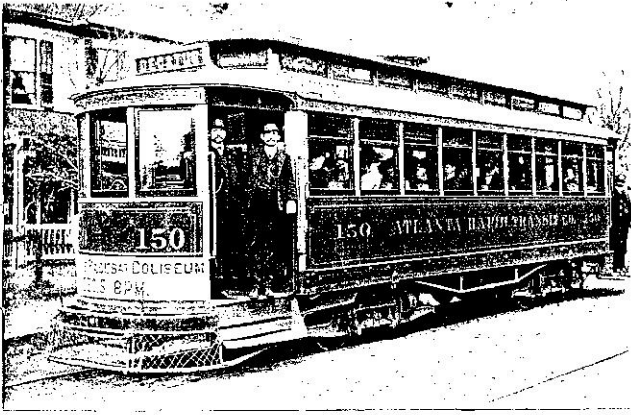
"Gonna tell all you people,
what jelly roll done, done;
Made grandmama marry her
youngest grandson.
She wild about her jelly", etc
(14)

Nothing is known of George Car-
ter, except that he played in the
style of other Atlanta 12-string
guitarists such as Charlie Lin-
coln, Willie Baker and Barbecue
Bob. The fact he was a resident
of this city, for a while at
least, is born out by his last
verse:

"If you don't believe my jelly
roll 'll do,
You can ask anybody on Auburn
Avenue". (15)

Auburn was in the black section
of Atlanta, and together with
Decatur Street "were the 'main
stem' in Atlanta's Negro sector,
bright, colourful with the lights
of theatres, the music of the
joints... Here the bluesmen gath-
ered," (16).

Precious little has been
written on Edmonia Henderson,
apart from a paragraph by
vaudeville-blues champion, Derr-
ick Stewart-Baxter, who said
that she leaned "heavily on
the vaudeville fence" (17). As
usual, nothing is known of her
origins. But one of her songs,
"Georgia Grind", might indicate



Headed for Decatur, a suburb of Atlanta, in 1901 & these trolleys were still running in the 1920s.

some time spent down on Auburn Avenue, or Decatur Street; as well as the fact that she recorded a session in Atlanta as "Catherine Henderson" in 1925. "Georgia Grind" was the last blues she recorded, in a batch of 15 titles, which Baxter rated as "excellent". This is probably the same song Lucille Bogan recorded twice as "My Georgia Grind" (see "Acoustic Blues" No.6). Bogan spent some time in Atlanta and cut her first session there, in 1923.

So Edmonia Henderson could have written "Jelly Roll Blues". Godrich & Dixon state that the 2 "Catherine Henderson" titles' "...composer credits are to Edmonia Henderson".(18). She would perform her songs live at places like Bailey's 81 Theatre on Decatur Street, where George Carter could have picked up her "Jelly Roll Blues". A variation of Henderson's refrain would appear in the distantly-related "Good Jelly", made in 1935. To a rocking guitar and pounding piano rhythm, Big Bill sings:

"You got to keep good jelly, if you wanna satisfy your poor man's soul."(19)

In conclusion, it seems highly likely that songs by vaudeville-blues singers such as Clara Smith, Sara Martin and Edmonia Henderson, were transmitted by record, or more likely by the oral process, to rural blues singers who adapted them accordingly, or some-

-times imitated them; as did "Bo Weevil" Jackson. Similarly, the melody, if not the lyrics of Ma Rainey's "Booze And Blues" probably inspired the Delta's Charlie Patton on 2 occasions, when later recorded "Tom Rushen Blues" and "High Sheriff Blues". It could also be said, with less certainty, that phrases used by singers in the early 1920s, such as Coot Grant, Rosa Henderson & Ethel Ridley (see Part 1) influenced later rural singers like Skip James, Robert Johnson and Peg Leg Howell.

In spite of Oliver's quote (Part 1), and his belief that "Cross-fertilization...does not seem to have been a particularly marked phenomenon."(20), I feel this shades the picture too lopsided. The oral transmission process, by definition, is a 2-way process, and is reflected in the influence of vaudeville-blues on the repertoire of the rural singers.

End.

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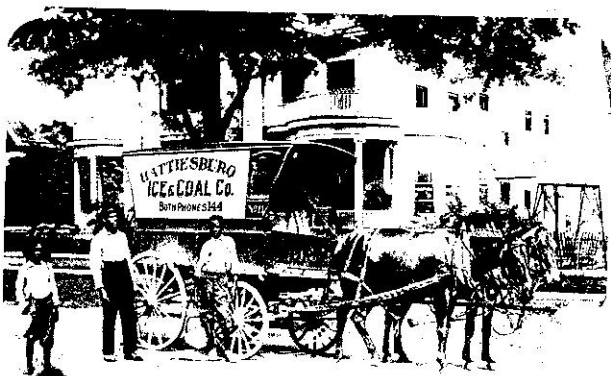
"THAT'S ALRIGHT, NOW MAMA, THAT'S ALRIGHT FOR YOU"

(A Blues route - 1)

Back in the 1950s, around 1954 I think, the above lines became familiar to British teenagers (like me!) via a new rock 'n roll sensation; Elvis Presley. It was to be several years before I came across Presley's direct source for "That's Alright". This was in the shape of a blues singer named Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup (pronounced 'Crood-up') who had started recording back in 1941 for Victor. He started the session with the magnificent "If I Get Lucky"; as country blues as you can get, with a hollering vocal that goes right back to the cotton fields in the Mississippi Delta. In fact Crudup was born in Scott County, Miss. on the Illinois Central line, some 60 miles southeast of the Delta, "in 1905 at Forest, a small Mississippi farm community set midway between Jackson and Meridian." (1).

Accompanying himself on simple but effective guitar (Calt suggests a National Steel), he was backed up by a bluesman who had first recorded in 1929, Kansas Joe McCoy. McCoy usually played superbly laid-back guitar, often with Memphis Minnie, to whom he was married for a time in the early '30s. But on Crudup's 1st. session he played an imitation bass. Almost exactly 5 years later, now on electric guitar, Crudup would record what was to become Presley's meal-ticket, that commenced with that familiar refrain:

"Well, now that's alright, now
 mama,
 That's alright for you.
 That's alright, now mama,
 Anyway you do.
 But that's alright,
 That's alright.
 That's alright, now mama,
 Anyway you do." (2)



The ice-man-c.1914, Hattiesburg, Miss. A familiar figure before fridges were more accessible. Sometimes seen as the "back-door" man in blues, like the wayward preacher.



Elvis not only used the same instrumentation and tempo, but even

parroted Arthur Crudup's scat vocal break! The theme of the song being that the singer's lover could treat them anyway they wanted, that would be O.K. by them; or "You can break my heart, baby. That's cool." Illustrating the tough exterior of the blues - otherwise the 'survival factor'.

But Crudup's opening refrain goes back-a-ways yet. Around November in 1926, Texas blues supremo, Blind Lemon Jefferson recorded his version of Victoria Spivey's "Black Snake Blues", made some 6 months earlier.

"Mama, that's alright, mama, that's alright for you. (x2)
Mama, that's alright, most any old way you do." (3)

1928 ad. of 'cover' by the original artist who rec.
"Black Snake" & Lonnie Johnson

Lemon sang in a high, plaintive tone decorated by arpeggio runs on the treble strings of his guitar. A slow-tempo blues whose vocal had links with the field holler, from slavery days; it was in complete contrast to Crudup's "That's Alright". Yet Presley's mentor used the Texan's verse as the basis of his own 1946 recording. Jefferson's "Black Snake" was on the Paramount label, the one he was contracted to. But this didn't stop

him from cutting 8 sides for Okeh records in Atlanta, Ga. the following year. Only 2 sides were issued, due to threatened legal action I suspect, one of which was "Black Snake Moan". Basically the same as the one on Paramount. He concludes the "mama verse" substituting "Say, baby, that's alright", etc. otherwise this is the same powerful performance - and more clearly recorded!

Another Texan, Ida May Mack, incorporated Lemon's phrasing into her "Mr. Forty-Nine Blues", in 1928:

"I woke up this morning, walked to my front door,
There's a letter from my daddy, said he didn't want me no more.
But that's alright, that's alright for you,
Daddy, that's alright, any old way you do." (4)

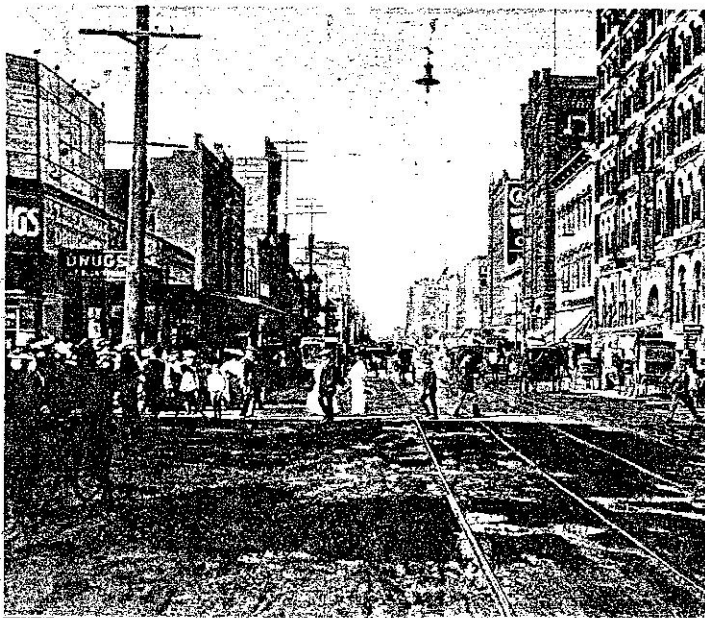
The title refers to the nickname of the pianist who plays a more ragtime style against the low-down rural singing of Ida May (or Mae). Apart from speculation that she might have been a blues-singing prostitute who "sang with the brothel pianists between turning tricks." (5), and that she probably came from Dallas, there is little or no information on her. A far cry from most of her female vaudeville counterparts, Ida May Mack was one of the finest women singers to record blues. As Dallas was a big blues centre in the 1920s, she might have heard Jefferson at first-hand.

In any event, Blind Lemon Jefferson (now back in the Paramount fold!) recorded a third version of his "Black Snake" in early 1929. In a seemingly concentrated effort to ring the changes, when the black snake "occupied my living room", he introduced new verses, omitting the "that's alright" one, and playing a less complex guitar accompaniment. But

it didn't stop a fellow Texan guitarist from using the lines on his own first record, later the same year.

"I'm makin' my own money, I don't need you 'round,
I'm makin' my own money, mama, I don't need you 'round.
'Cos when I didn't have nothin', that's the time that you turned me down."

"But you know, that's alright, that's alright for you,
That's alright, mama, that's alright for you.
You low-down an' dirty, an' I know the way you do." (6)



Main Street, Dallas-1900

Also recording in Dallas, Gene Campbell had some of the "moaning" quality of Texas Alexander, while playing a more sophisticated guitar part, and completed the last verse with a fresh "answering line".

Up until now, the "That's Alright" verse has been featured by mainly Texas blues singers. But around the time that Campbell made his recording debut, a variation "crossed over the separation line" into gospel song in the form of a quartet from Virginia. To a rousing and archaic-

sounding harmony, they sang:

"You can talk about a-me just as much as you please,
Good Lordy! That's alright, that's alright.
You can talk about a-me just as much as you please,
That's alright. Lord! But tnat's alright." (7)

The same theme persts as in the secular songs with "Mama" being replaced with "Good Lordy!" and "Lord!"

Meanwhile back with the Devil; in February, 1932, famous blues singer, Big Bill Broonzy cut "Alright Mamma Blues" for Gennett which remained unissued. However, later the next month for various A.R.C. labels this time, he did "Mistreatin' Mama Blues" which was released. To some frenetic flat-picking similar to his phenomenal "How You Want It Done?" from the same session, Bill uses a tempo similar to Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup' in 1946!

"Lord! I feel so worried, mama
I don't know what to do,
Lord! I feel so worried, baby
I don't know what to do.
Lord! My wife done quit me,
Lord, an' my sweetie too."

"Baby, that's alright, mama, br
baby, that's alright for you,
Mama, that's alright, baby,
mama, that's alright for you,
You gwine want me some morn-
in', Lord, an' I won't want
you." (8)

Bill, like Gene Campbell, supplied a new answering line in the last verse. This is almost certainly a variation of "Alright Mamma Blues" and a remake of "Mistreatin' Mama" from the same session. So enamoured was Bill by the "that's alright" verse, he seems to have recorded it on 2 more occasions by 1942. (end of the pre-war era).

Broonzy, although originally from Mississippi, had been in Chicago for some 12 years when he did "Mistreat-in' Mama Blues" and was "heavily into the blues scene of the Windy City". (9), where he was to become one of the major figures of pre-war urban, Chicago blues.

But back down in the Deep South, a Florida bluesman recorded his own strange version of "Black Snake Moan" in 1934. Tallahassee Tight (real name Louis Washington), sang in a heavy, gruff voice which was a virtual monotone, in an irregular fashion with an attacking guitar-style so much loved by Memphis Minnie and later Tommy Mc Clennan and Robert Petway. Here he sticks to the original lyrics of Jefferson's first "Black Snake Moan" and revives the Texan's "that's alright" verse.

"Now, mama, that's alright, mama,
that's alright for you,
I mean, mama, that's alright, mama,
that's alright for you.
I mean that-at's alright, pretty
mama, most any old way you do." (10)

He ends his blues with a single line:

"I'm cryin' ohhhhh! now, black snake
crawlin' all in my room-mmmmm."
(11)

One of the very few recorded blues singers from Northern Florida, Tallahassee Tight cut 22 sides (nearly half of which were gospel numbers), over 3 sessions in January, 1934, and that was the last anybody heard of him!

The following year, Leadbelly brought the song back to Texas, or at least the Texas-Louisiana border, with his honestly titled "New Black Snake Moan". Playing an up-tempo, rolling 12-string guitar, on those way-down low bass strings, his version lost the plaintive, sensitivity of Lemon's song while his 'monologue trade-mark' added some originality. After singing "that's alright" etc., he extends the verse with some spoken commentary:

Spoken: "I walked up to my baby. An' I know any thing she done was alright with me. It was O.K. with me. Jus' anythin' she done would satisfy me." (12)

Leadbelly claimed to have played with Lemon on the streets of Dallas, Fort Worth, and other Texas towns, probably between 1912 and 1917 (13). During this period, it transpires that Lemon & Leadbelly would sing outside the railroad terminus in Dallas, and include blues like "Fort Worth And Dallas Blues", when according to Leadbelly: "the women would come running. Lord, have mercy! They'd hug and kiss us so we could hardly play." (14) and "More evocative, more suggestive", (15), they would also feature "Black Snake Moan", which they later recorded commercially." (16). So it is likely that Blind Lemon Jefferson first popularised the song over a decade prior to Victoria Spivey's first recording of it. The latter most probably heard Jefferson sing it in person, as she did not only "worked as pianist at Lincoln Theater, Dallas, TX?" (17) when just starting her teens, but also worked with Lemon and others in gambling joints "in Galveston/Houston, TX, area, early 20s;" (18).

Moving to yet another state, Georgia, bottleneck guitar ace, Kokomo Arnold, recorded "I'll Be Up Someday" in 1936, with the now familiar lines reshaped in his own original style and adding a note of revenge:

"Says, I asked my baby to take me back once more,
She said "You ain't got no money, sweet papa, there is the door".
I said, that's alright, mama,
I'll be up someday,

And just like you did me baby, I'm
gonna do you the same old way."
(19)

Big Bill used the phrase "Yeh! But that's alright, baby, I will be up someday" (20) on an unrelated blues, the same month-6 days before Arnold made his record, in fact. As I said earlier, Bill seemed to like the "that's alright" format and in 1939 he cut "That's Alright, Baby" (unheard by me) with urbanised accompaniment including piano, clarinet, and bass. This would set the scene for the session, within the next seven years, for Crudup's historic "That's Alright". But it started down in Dallas and a blues singer known nationally in the U.S.A. as "Blind Lemon Jefferson".

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Track-laying on the L&N in Robertsdale, Ala. 1941. Apart from porter, track labourer was the chief occupation for blacks on Southern railroads in the first part of this century.

SOUTHERN RECIPE BLUES-4

Unlike coon (see "A.B." 9) hogs, or pigs, were easy to come by. In the 1920s, poor black families would favour the cheapest cuts of meat such as pigs' feet. As indeed poor white ones did elsewhere. In Britain the dish is usually called pigs' trotters. Celebrated in the

blues by Bessie Smith on her "Gimme A Pigfoot And A Bottle Of Beer" at her last session in 1933, and also by the Memphis-based Cannon's Jug Stompers. Headed up by banjoist/jug blower, Gus Cannon, they recorded an instrumental "Pig Ankle Strut" in 1928 for Victor records.

1. PICKLED PIGS' FEET (SOUSE)

- 4 good-sized boiled pigs' feet with uppers
- 1 quart strong vinegar
- 4 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon whole cloves
- 1 tablespoon broken cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup salt
- 2 teaspoons pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ onion, cut into eighths
- 1 blade mace

Clean feet carefully and cover with hot water. Simmer until meat will separate from bones, then remove carefully with skimmer. Place in stone jar, taking out the largest bones. Save water for later use. Heat

vinegar with bay leaves, cloves, cinnamon, salt, pepper, onion and mace. Simmer slowly for 45 minutes, but do not boil at any time. Remove cake of fat from top of cooking water from feet. Add about 1 quart of the water to vinegar; if vinegar is not very strong, use less water. Strain liquid through a sieve and pour over meat in jar. Chill 2 days. ("The American Woman's Cook Book". Ed. Ruth Beroizheimer. 1947 (Rep.). Culinary Arts Institute, Chicago. P.261.)



2. "PANAMA LIMITED" FRENCH TOAST

- 2 eggs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
- 3 cups shortening
- Confectioners sugar (sic)
- 2 slices bread, cut $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick, crusts trimmed, then cut diagonally to form tri-



-angular shaped pieces

Beat eggs well, then mix in the milk and beat again. Dip bread slices in egg and milk mixture. (It is not necessary to soak the bread, although this can be done according to preference.). Fry in hot shortening (about 3 cups of shortening in medium sized fry pan.). Brown on both sides. Drain the cooked toast. Sprinkle liberally with confectioner's sugar. Serve hot.

Simple but superb!

ILLINOIS CENTRAL RR
("River Road Recipes". The Junior League of Baton Rouge, Inc. Baton Rouge, La. 1971. (Rep.). P.42.)

The Panama Ltd. was a famous I.C. express train and also a title of a Bukka White blues from 1930. Of course the I.C. was the subject of many blues in the first half of the 20th. century.

GIG GUIDE

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Dec.30th.---LYNN BREEZE & THE DEL RIOS.

1995

Jan.6th.---DELIA & SUN ST. MOANERS.
13th.---HARRY GUREVITCH.
20th.---SWAMP STOMPERS.
27th.---ROUSTABOUTS.
Feb.3rd.---PETE OAKLEY & ROBIN WALTON.
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Album **R**eview"THE BEST OF KANSAS JOE Vol.1 1929-1935"

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 HUNDRED/ONE MORE GREASING/THE PRO
 DIGAL'S RETURN/IF I BE LIFTED UP/
 LOOK WHO'S COMING DOWN THE ROAD/
 THE WORLD IS A HARD PLACE TO LIVE
 IN.



From the opening sounds of the twin guitars of Joe and Memphis Minnie, you know you're in for a blues session of the highest order. Inevitably, that 'Memphis sound' gets compared to the Beale St. Sheiks, Frank Stokes & Dan Sing(Sane) who seem to have been the innovators down in Memphis, Tenn., at least on record. This is especially true on "That Will Be Alright", a superb example of laid-back guitar and musical discipline.

Minnie's acid vocals can be heard on 2 tracks: "Hole In The Wall" which is as hard and low-down as any blues from the Delta, and an update of an old English ballad ("The Silver Pin" and others) from the 18th. century, "Can I Do It For You?-Part 2". She also plays some beautiful slide on "Washwoman" and "Shake Mattie". The latter introduces the phrase "shake, rattle and roll" (1931) some 23 years before Big Joe Turner & Bill Haley.

(cont'd on p.18)

"LITTLE TOE RAG" - P. OAKLEY.
 FROM THE ALBUM "BACK PORCH BLUES"
 PETE OAKLEY.

TAB: EADGBE
 TUNING

(E) G A

(D7) (E7) (D7) G P P P P P P P P P P

G A (D7)

(Eb7) (D7) G HARMONIC (Dmaj7) P

(C) (D) (C) SLIDE (D) (Dmaj7)

(C) (D) (C) SLIDE (D) 1 2

(C7) (D7) (D7) (E7) (A7) 5 D7 2 G HARMONIC

3 2 4 3 5 4 7 6 6 5 0 2 SLIDE 12 12 X 3.

3 10

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One of the two all-black minstrel/tent/medicine shows still travelling the South in 1920s. Where Frank Stokes, Jim Jackson ^{etc.} came from.

(from p.16)

Kansas Joe's effortless vocals are as tight as his guitar-playing, and sometimes recalls the great Mississippiian, Tommy Johnson. As in "Going Back Home", Joe's version of Johnson's "Cool Drink Of Water Blues", with brother Charlie on soulful mandolin. While his "Pile Drivin' Blues" is a classic example of blues-singing at its best; so controlled but hard hitting. Just as fine is "You Know You Done Me Wrong" which borrows the tune of Blind Lemon's "See That My Grave Is Kept Clean"/"One Kind Favor" and Joe's 'cover' of "Devil Got My Woman" which he titled "Evil Devil Woman Blues". Shades of "Prison Bound Blues" by Leroy Carr and "Viola Lee Blues" from Cannon's Jug Stompers can be heard, and yet most of his lyrics sound fresh and original.

By contrast, on the 2 gospel

items, under the pseudonym of "Hallelujah Joe", he preaches with an intensity to rival some of the best captured on record! He rasps and growls his way through "The Great Change In Me" (here called "The Prodigal Son") which could have inspired Blind/Rev. Gary Davis on his disc of the former title, over 6 months later, for A.R.C. Backed by a small mixed group and an unknown piano player, this is the real thing-sho' nuff!

Another name used by Joe was "Georgia Pine Boy". Yet he is not present on "One In A Hundred"! It is Charlie McCoy who takes the vocal with lovely bottleneck (sounding like Tampa Red) and probably Chuck Segar on sympathetic piano. But Joe is on "One More Greasing" including some imaginative sexual symbols.

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-ism using the automobile for imagery and the butcher shop in "Meat Cutter Blues". The other 2 titles under this pseudonym, feature taut vocalising and rocking guitar from Joe ; + some fine fiddle from an unidentified musician. His "Road" is inspired by Tommy Johnson's "Maggie Campbell Blues" while part of "The World Is A Hard Place To Live In" runs :

"Because this world's hard place to live, before you gone."

A neat summary of the Blues.

The sound on this album is generally good and has a generous playing time. Discographical details are included, as always, and unless you've got Kansas Joe on Yazoo, Blues Classics, Origin, etc. you won't find many duplications. Highly recommended, and if you can't find the L.P. check the contents of 4 C.D.s on Document which is part of the same record company. The nos. are DOCD5028-5031 and feature both Kansas Joe and Memphis Minnie.

"THE COMPLETE BUKKA WHITE"

Columbia Roots 'n Blues CT 527
82 Cassette.

PINEBLUFF, ARKANSAS/SHAKE 'EM ON DOWN/
BLACK TRAIN BLUES/STRANGE PLACE BLUES
/WHEN CAN I CHANGE MY CLOTHES?/SLEEPY
MAN BLUES/PARCHMAN FARM BLUES/GOOD
GIN BLUES/HIGH FEVER BLUES/DISTRICT
ATTORNEY BLUES/FIXIN' TO DIE BLUES/
ABERDEEN, MISSISSIPPI BLUES/BUKKA'S
JITTERBUG SWING/SPECIAL STREAMLINE.

One of the more recent reissues (1937-1940) in the series, and straight away, let me say this is an essential buy for all lovers of the Delta blues. It is of course, by no means the "complete" set of Bukka's recordings, any more than other reissues using this illusory description. The possible exception is the "Complete Blind Willie Johnson" from the same series (see review in "A.B." No.5), and even then, there are the 2 unissued/untitled secular sides by "Blind Texas Marlin" from 1928, which could be Johnson.

But the important thing is the music. It's great to hear all these songs in such excellent sound and it really adds that extra dimension. This is certainly true if, like me, you've only been used to rougher reissues from earlier years. Every nuance of "Pinebluff, Arkansas" (with stinging bottleneck) and "Black Train Blues" can now be heard.

White's voice on these pre-war sides, still had a heavy vibrato which added to the intensity of such pieces as the spine-chilling "Strange Place Blues" about his mother's burial, and the awesome power of "Snake 'Em On Down"; which was covered by singers such as Tommy McClennan, Robert Petway, Big Bill and Mississippi Fred McDowell. Although, in his excellent notes, Mark Humphrey states that this was "Bukka's only hit...", several of the other blues presented here have gained a wider recognition. "Parchman Farm" was to be popularised in the 60s by white U.S. jazz singer, Mose Allison who inspired Britain's Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames to do a similar rendition (to Allison), and "Fixin' To Die Blues" was lifted by Bob Dylan for his debut L.P. in 1962, as Humphrey says. Much later, in the 1990s, "Bukka's Jitterbug Swing" would be featured by U.S. country blues guitarist, "Catfish" Keith, who in turn inspired the "Hellhound Blues" to include it, on this side of the water. "Swing" is a rollicking blues with Washboard Sam punching out the "lickety-split" rhythm; as he does for 12 of these selections.

Unlike the Kansas Joe L.P. this has little variation other than tempo, which produces a semi-hypnotic effect as you get deeper into what Bukka is singing about. The harrowing "When Can I Change My Clothes?" referring to the degradation of

Album **R**eviews

wearing a prison uniform, and the incisive "Sleepy Man Blues", a rare reference to mental depression in the Blues. The last track is a superb train-imitation referring to an Illinois Central express. "The hoboes don't fool with this train, they stand on the track with the hat in the hand", Bukka says, indicating the speed would blow the hoboes' hats off their heads. He imitates air brakes and the train whistle as well as the pounding rhythms of the wheels on the iron road. "Sam's washboard riding right along there with him. This is in fact a re-make of a side Bukka did solo in 1930, called "Panama Limited", and along with a similar train item by Georgia's Blind Willie McTell, "Travelin' Blues" (also in 1930) is unique in the Blues.

On a carping note, the playing time is a bit short, under 45 minutes. I feel that Columbia could have included the 2 Library of Congress nos. from 1939 and the 4 issued Victor's from 1930. But perhaps contractual problems were the stumbling block. Also, the last ringing note of Bukka's slide guitar is once again cut off by Columbia's sound engineer, from his beautiful "Fixin' To Die". (see my comments on the same thing in a compilation review in an early issue of "Blueprint").

But these "faults" are completely overshadowed by this album's majestic power, personified by Mississippi's Bukka White. Get it from any good record shop; on C.D. too!



"Barbecue Blues"
by Barbecue Bob

These three are also listed in a list. Artists who have the right to make use of a name are given priority of total members in this record.

Barbecue Blues
"Crazy Sky Blues"
"You're Back in the Saddle"
Record No. 1485-D, Black 26.
Columbia Phonograph Company
1410 Broadway, New York City



Columbia ad. in May, 1927, for the first recording by Barbecue Bob (Robert Hicks). Note that the pic. is still a caricature with "Bob" on banjo-he played 12-string guitar.

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Under construction-Atlanta in 1901. Blues & railroad centre

