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Long-Playing Record L59

NEGRO BLUES AND HOLLERS

Edited by

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Preface

The house of blues has many mansions. The kind of blues on the present recording, made in the early forties before they disappeared, have come to be called "country" blues--a name which has led to endless argument. Their general nature, however, is beyond dispute: they are archaic in the best sense; they are sung by men usually to the accompaniment of a stringed instrument (guitar preferred); and they are gnarled, rough-hewn, and eminently uncommercial. Only recently have they come to the attention of a small public. The interest in country blues in the 1960's is roughly parallel to the discovery of New Orleans jazz in the 1940's.

Blues first began to circulate in the South, as John and Alan Lomax observe in their book on Leadbelly, after the Civil War when the Negro was thrown upon his own resources. Negro men were the first itinerant blues singers. In a sense, country blues preceded this development or, perhaps because of their isolation, never played a major part in this evolution, although they established the fundamental form and idiom once and for all. For country blues are fixed in time and space, language and custom; they are tied down to--and unerringly reflect--the geographical area, the local manners, and the exact vernacular of a specific place and person. They are not necessarily rural, but they are altogether native.

Three of the singers in this album made fugitive recordings with the big companies in the thirties, when portable recording equipment investigated the nooks and crannies of the deep South--as well as the big cities of the North--in an omnivorous search for material that would sell to the Negro market. Willie Blackwell made four sides for Bluebird, Willie Brown four for Paramount, and Son House five for Paramount. Because the Depression was in full swing, few copies were pressed and they are either exceedingly rare or non-existent today. That was enough, however, to alert a few discerning collectors and the search was on. The sum total of data on the star of this recording, Son House, is that his full name is Eugene House; he was born in Lyon, Mississippi, outside of Clarksdale; and he is remembered as a "part-time preacher who wore a white cowboy hat." The rest are unidentified, their whereabouts unknown.

Other blues singers--good and not-so-good--became relatively successful for a variety of reasons and, inevitably, modified and regularized their styles to accommodate the market. The result was not always better or worse, but different, and it led to the urban and instrumental blues of jazz. Country blues singers remained oblivious of the market, immersed in obscurity, and their style also remained unchanged and unpretentious, vital and immediate, earthy and expressive. These singers, as Bill Givens and Pete Whelan write, are the ones who never left town and recorded least--if at all--and they belong to the first generation of recorded country blues singers. Their music documents the birth of the blues.

When, in the early twenties, the market for reasonably authentic blues began to boom, the singers were women--Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie, Clara, Mamie, and the other Smiths, and so on--because the commercial stereotype had hardened. Women entertainers dominated a good part of vaudeville and the current blues themes ("My man's got a heart like a rock cast in the sea") were tailored for women. Later on, particularly during the Depression, blues about hard times, prison life, and more realistic subjects--sung by men--became acceptable and commercially successful. By the early forties, the most popular blues singers were men.

Clarksdale, Mississippi, as James McCune, the dean of country-blues fanciers observes, seems to be the geographical center of the style. (And by chance, Bessie Smith died there in an automobile accident.) Charlie Patton, Robert Johnson, Henry Sims--and Son House, Willie Brown, Charley Berry, and David Edwards of this album--as well as the more modern Muddy Waters and John Lee Hooker, are all associated with this area of the Yazoo delta.

To complete the picture, this album also includes field hollers by House and Brown--the major source of blues melody--and examples of early gospel singing--the major source of blues harmony. Each selection is a superb example of its genre and can stand on its own feet as illustrations of the authentic, archaic style and idiom. Here are the bedrock, tap-root complements of country blues, the hard core of things to come.

Literature on the country blues is hard to come by. In The Country Blues, Samuel B. Charters makes a beginning: in The Blues Fell This Morning, Paul Oliver surveys many of the lyrics at length; and in Big Bill Blues, William Broonzy, who was not a country blues singer, touches upon aspects of the subject. To get to the heart of the matter, one has to dig deeper: beginning in the April, 1961, issue of a British jazz magazine entitled VJM-Palaver (the "VJM" stands for Vintage Jazz Mart, the auction section of the publication), James McCune has a series of unique articles on the artistic merits of country blues singers, while a private label, The Origin Jazz Library (39 Remsen Street, Brooklyn Heights, New York) has recently initiated a series of re-issues of the rarest country blues with informative liner notes.

Sung by an unidentified singer at Clarksdale, Mississippi, 1941. Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.

1. Well, if I hadduh followed, boys, my old second mind,
I say I'd a been up the country my old second time.

Spoken: Yes, yes!
Boy, I'm feelin' low down today.
I know you is, son, go sing old levee camp blues --
I know you got 'em. You sing 'em.

2. Oh, Mr. Charlie, Mr. Ludlow Jones.
I done decided, oh boy, I won't work no more.

Spoken: Boy, look a'here!

3. Oh, I'm gon' get levee camp, boys, dough share,
Lawd, for to hold my head.

Spoken: Get yo' own, boy!

4. I'm goin' to get both dose women, lord, for to make up my bed.

Spoken: Hey, get up here, will ya!? Well, look a'here, boy.
That ole mule ain't gonna get back ... You ain't gon'
driv'em no more.
I see he ain't.
Well, look a'here. You gotta

5. Hey, I've done walk this old levee, boy,
Till my feet got numb.

Spoken: Oh, boy!

6. If you see Mr. Charlie,
Ask him: 'Did his money come?'

Spoken: Oh, boy!

7. Oh, my hamstring is poppin', boys, is my collar cry!

Spoken: Get up!

Ain't nothin' breakin', boy, but the long sight line.

Spoken: Yea, hey! Get over there, Charley.
Boy, look a'here!
I tell you one thing--we gotta build that levee
way up yonder ... Man!
Slaughter House, you don't fit in your guitar
workin' on this levee, but I'm gon' try it out.
Well, you know ... ain't nothin' for us nohow but
(yeah) livin' and killin'.
Yeah. Yeah.
Come on in there. (Yeah). Drive on in there, you
old son, 'cause I'm gon' spot 'em. C'mon now.
Yeah.
Mmmmmmmmm.

8. Mmmmm, I looked at the captain, boy, and I walked away.
I asked the straw bossman,
What's the time of day.

Spoken: Lawd, boy, oboy, oboy -- Look a'here -- I tell you
'bout 'im.
I'm goin' on down the river.

O Lawd

Spoken: Lucy, get on over there. Wha' you gonna do there?
Man, look a'here! I tell you one thing, I gon'
pull that old mule.

9. Oo-oh, boy, for to pack some slack.
Oh, babe, I'm gon' bring you some money when I come back!

Spoken: Well, took yuh ... Cat spit, and Jones, you know, boy.
I'm bound to do what I say I am.
I heered you when you first driv up.
Come on, son, you know --
You know, son, we got to go.
Got to see 'bout Willie Brown!
Yes suh!

Okay.

Sung by Charley Berry at Clarksdale, Mississippi, 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.:

1. Oh oh oh baby, what you want me to do?
But to give you my money and die for you?
2. Well, I was waitin' for my summer train.
I was awaitin' on my summer train,
An' just as soon as the wind rise again
I'm gon' go away.
3. I take my-ah- 32-20 and lay you in your grave.
And the day of resurrection,
You gon' rise again.
4. One of dese old days ...
I hope it don't be long,
I'm gon' start to singin', hey, one morn,
I'm gon' blow my horn.
5. Everybody keep ahollin' 'bout dose dangerous blues.
I get my 32-20, I'm gon' be dangerous too.
Well, my 38-40 do very well, but my 4 Catch-0 5,
It's a burnin' hell.
6. Now baby, just as soon as the day rise again,
I'm gon' make my livin' on some old other place.
Yea, Lordy, on some old other place.
7. I been layin' oh-round, Mama, all day long,
Just settin' and thinkin', must I blow my horn?
I settin' here a'talkin' to dis little old woman,
Beggin' for a kitty-tone.
Law, lawdy, beggin' for kitty-tone.
8. Well, I was wonderin', if I go down in Louisiana-o,
Oh-oh-oh, would my woman be there?

9. Can you hear, Mr. Charlie, I bound Mr. Blair.
Mr. Charlie paid off,
Mr. Blair give a drink.
Where I bound, now, woman,
Would you want to be?
I be workin' for Mr. Charlie,
I go to Mr. Blair.
10. Just as soon as I make a hundred dollar-o,
I gave my woman fifty dollars-o ...
I throw the rest away.
11. O lord, you just keep on a'hollin'
About the times have been,
And dese uh--blues I'm singin',
Oh, I've been here and gone.
12. I'm gon' change my home one of dese days,
And my woman she told me to change my home.
And my daddy he told me, son you all right.
Now, when I was a little kid
At home with no bed,
My father, he tell me, took the bed away.
I'm gonna tell my woman what the man told me,
I'm gonna pay you your money when the man pay me.

Spoken: Well, all right, then.

A3

I'M A SOLDIER IN THE ARMY OF THE LORD

Sung by the congregation of Silent Grove Baptist Church with trombone and guitar at Clarksdale, Mississippi, 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomas, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.

1. Army of the Lord,
In the army, in the army,
Just a soldier, just a soldier,
In the army of the Lord.
Just a soldier,
In the Army,
Just a soldier,
In the army of the Lord,
Just a soldier,
In the army.

2. I'm gonna keep on the top
 In the army of the Lord.
 I'm gonna keep on the top
 In the army.
 I'm gonna keep on the top
 In the army of the Lord.
 I'm gonna keep on the top
 In the army.
 I'm gonna keep on the top
 In the army of the Lord.
 I'm gonna keep on the top
 In the army.

3. In the army, army of the Lord,
 In the army,
 Just a soldier,
 Just a soldier,
 In the army of the Lord,
 Just a soldier,
 In the army.

INSTRUMENTAL, WITH VOCAL INTERJECTIONS.

Verse 2 repeats, in part.

Verse 1 repeats, in part.

Al

I'M GONNA LIFT UP A STANDARD FOR MY KING

Sung by the Congregation of the Church of God in Christ at Moorehead Plantation, Lula, Mississippi, 1941. Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.

1. Refrain (1st)

I'm gonna lift up a standard for my King
 Everywhere.
 I'm gonna lift up a standard for my King
 Everywhere.
 Oh, Lordy, Lord, Lord, I'm gonna sing.

2. Refrain (2nd)
 I'm gonna lift up a standard for my King.
 I'm gonna lift up a standard for my King. (Everywhere)
 I'm gonna lift up a standard for my King.
 Oh, Lordy, Lord, I'm gonna sing.
3. Verse 1
 Oh, the captain put Daniel in the Lion's Den,
 Daniel was starved, and feelin' no God,
 Lawdy knows, and Lawd, but now,
 I'm gonna lift up a standard for my King.
4. Refrain (2nd)
5. Verse 2
 I'm pained with trouble, all night long.
 Woke up at three o'clock, Daniel gone.
 Looked out early in the mornin' to see-- (Daniel)*
 Lawd, I'm starvin' for the newborn King.
6. Refrain (2nd) TWICE (with solo voice)
7. Repeat Verse 1
8. Refrain (1st)
9. Repeat Verse 2
 *Daniel): Spoken, at this point only.
10. Refrain (2nd)
 Ends with shouts over instrumental playing.

A5

WORRIED LIFE BLUES

Sung by David Edwards, with guitar at Clarksdale, Mississippi, 1942.
 Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly
 sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville,
 Tenn.

1. Oh lordy, lord, oh lordy, lord,
Hurt me so bad for us to part.
But someday, baby,
You ain't gonna worry my life anymore.
2. So many nights since you been a gone,
How much I'm gonna worry myself along,
But someday, baby,
You ain't gonna worry my life anymore.
3. So many days since you went away,
How much I'm gonna worry both night and day.
But someday, baby,
You ain't gonna worry my life anymore.
4. So dat's my story,
All I have to say to you----
Bye bye, baby,
Don't care what you do.
But someday, baby,
You ain't gonna worry my life anymore.

REPEAT VERSE (2)

A6

RAGGED AND DIRTY

Sung by William Brown, with guitar at Clarksdale, Mississippi, 1942.
Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly
sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville,
Tenn.

Spoken: Nothin' but a cryin' shame, you know that?

1. Lawd, I'm broke and hungry, ragged and dirty too --
Broke and hungry, ragged and (I'm) dirty too.
If I clean up, sweet mama,
Can I stay all night with you?

2. Lord, I went to my window, baby -- I
 Couldn't see through by blind ...
 Went to my window,
 Couldn't see through my blind.
 Heard my bed-springs uncovered, ...
 I threw down,
 Heard my baby cryin'.
3. Now, if I can't come in, baby,
 Just let me set down in your door.
 I can't come in, baby,
 Let me set down in your door.
 Lord, I will leave so soon
 That your man would never know.
4. Lord, how can I live here, baby,
 Lord! and feel at ease?
 How can I live here, baby,
 Lord! and feel at ease?
 'Cause that woman that I got me,
 She do just what she please.

Spoken: I can't help myself, you know that?

5. Lord, you shouldn't mistreat me, baby,
 Because I'm young and wild ...
 Shouldn't mistreat me, 'cause I'm young and wild.
 You must always remember, baby,
 You was once a child.
6. Lord, I'm leavin' in the mornin', baby,
 If I have to ride this line.
 See ya' in the mornin',
 Have to ride this line.
 Mmm, mistreat me, baby,
 And I swear I don't mind dying.

B1

SPECIAL RIDER BLUES

Sung and played by Son House with guitar at Robinsonville, Mississippi, 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.

1. Well, I'm goin' home,
I won't be back no more.
When I leave this time
I'm gon' hang grief on your door.
2. Now look a'here, honey,
I won't be your dog no more.
Well, look a'here, honey,
I won't be your dog no more.
Excuse me, honey, for a'knockin' on your door.
3. I say your hair ain't curly,
And your doggone eyes ain't blue.
You know your hair ain't curly,
And your doggone eyes ain't blue.
Well, if you don't want me,
What the world I want with you?
4. Hey, look a'here, baby,
You ought not to dog me around.
I say, look a'here, honey,
You ought not to dog me around.
If I had my belongins',
I would leave this old bad luck town.
5. You know that's a shame,
What a low down dirty shame,
Don't you know that's a shame,
What a low down old dirty shame!
You know, I'm sorry today
That I ever knowed your name.

B2

DEPOT BLUES

Sung and played by Son House with guitar at Robinsonville, Mississippi, 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.

1. Well look a'here, honey.
I ain't gonna cry no more.

2. I went to the depot, and I --
 I looked up on the board.
 I went to the depot:
 I looked up on the board.
 Well, I couldn't see no train,
 I couldn't hear no whistle blow.
3. Engineer blow the whistle and the --
 Fireman he rung the bell.
 Oh oh oh, the fireman he rung the bell.
 You know my woman's on board,
 She's a waving back fare-you-well.
4. (If) I had the strength,
 I would set this train off the track.
 Mmmmmmm, I would set this train off the track.
 Yes, you make me a promise,
 She gon' bring my baby back.
5. Mmmmmmm, she ain't comin' back no more.
 I don't believe you evuh comin' back no mo'.
 Mmmm, you leavin' now, baby,
 But you hangin' grief on my door.
6. Mmmmmmm, I'm gon' miss you from rollin' in my arms.
 Oo-oo-oo, I'm gon' miss you from rollin' in my arms.
 I can't get no sassin', baby, on the tele --telephone.

B3

MISSISSIPPI BLUES

Sung by William Brown with guitar at Sadie Beck's Plantation, Arkansas, 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.

1. Goin' down to the delta,
 Where I can have my fun.
 Goin' down the delta,
 Where I can have my fun.
 Where I can drink my white lightnin', gamble ...
 I can bring my baby home.

2. Don't the delta look lonesome
When that evenin' sun go down?

Spoken: Just 'bout good an' dark.

- (2) Don't this delta look lonesome
When that evenin' sun goes down?
Well, you been lookin' for your baby
Don't know where she could be found.

Spoken: Boy, I was lookin' all over town for her, you know dat?

3. Goin' back to my use-to-be,
Although that she have done me wrong.
Goin' back to my use-to-be,
Although that she have done me wrong.
Well, I think I'll have to forgive her
'Cause I'm tired o' driftin' through this world alone.

Spoken: Ain't that a cryin' shame? 'Cause I started to think
about her a whole lot o' times. And she way down
Mississippi, and here I am up here!

4. She treats me dirty,
But I love her just the same.
Well, she treats me dirty,
But I love her just the same.
Well, it just breaks my heart to hear ...
Lord, some other men call her name.

Spoken: They better not do that!

Now goodbye, I'm gon' leave you,
An' I won't be back no more.

Spoken: I ain't gon' be gone all that long, you know --

5. Now goodbye, I'm gon' leave you,
An' I won't be back no mo'.
Man, my mind gets to ramblin' --
See you in nineteen and forty-fo'.

Sung and played by Willie Blackwell and William Brown with guitar at Sadie Beck's Plantation, Arkansas, 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.

1. Four o'clock flowers bloom out in the mornin'
And close in the afternoon.
Four o'clock flowers bloom out in the mornin'
And close in the afternoon.

Well, well, they are only summer beauties.
Hoo, hoo, Lord, boys, so have my little baby June.

2. If you be a little more lovely,
And just a little more true.
If you'd only be a little more lovely,
And just a little more true.

Well, well, all the love I have to spare, hoo, hoo --
Lord, baby, then it would be for you.

3. I'm a hard workin' man,
And I never gets my lovin' home.
I'm a hard workin' man,
And it's true, I never gets my lovin' at home.
And when I think about it in the mornin',
Well, well, boys, it makes my heart ache in the afternoon.

Spoken: Summertime is lovely.

4. I'm not jealous, but I'm superstitious;
The most workin' mens that way.
I'm not jealous, but I'm superstitious;
The most workin' mens is that way.
If I catch you playin' hookey,
Hoo, hoo, Lord, baby June, what a day, what a day!

B5

EAST ST. LOUIS BLUES

Sung by William Brown with guitar at Sadie Beck's Plantation, Arkansas, 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.

1. I walked all the way from East St. Louis,
St. Louis to here ...
2. Got nobody, Lawd,
No one to feel my pain.
3. Well, I had a sweet woman,
Called her Angeline.
4. Well, every time I looked, babe,
She'd be on my mind.

B6

LOW DOWN DIRTY BLUES

Sung and played by Son House with guitar at Robinsonville, Mississippi, 1942. Recorded by Alan Lomax, Lewis Jones and John W. Work for a study jointly sponsored by the Library of Congress and Fisk University of Nashville, Tenn.

Mmmmmmm, Mmmmmmm.
Mmmmmmm, Mmmmmmm.

1. Well, you know the sun is going down ...
I said behind that old western hill.
Mmmmm, I said behind that old western hill.
You know I wouldn't do a thing,
Not against my baby's will.

2. Mmmmm, well, you know, that's bad.
I declare, that's too black bad.
Mmmmm, I declare, that's too black bad.
You know, my woman done quit me,
Hoo, man, look like the whole round world is bad.
3. You know, she stopped writin',
Wouldn't even send me no kind of word.
Ooo-hoo, I said, she wouldn't even send me no kind of word.
She turned her little ole back on me,
'Bout some old low down thing she heard.
4. Mmmmm, well, I'm goin' away, baby,
I'm gon' stay a very long time.
Oooh, I say, I'm gon' stay a great long time.
You know I comin' back now, honey --
Whooo, babe, until you change your mind.
5. Mmmmm, I waked up every mornin', feelin' sick and bad.
I say, hoo-oo, every mornin', I been feelin' mighty sick and bad,
Thinkin' 'bout the old times, baby,
That I once have had.
6. Mmmmm, if I don't go crazy,
I say I'm goin' t'lose my mind.
Mmmmm, I believe I'm gon' lose my mind.
'Cause I stay worried, hoo-hoo, baby,
Bothered, honey, all the time.
7. Mmmmm, lookah here, baby,
Set right here on my knee.
Mmmmm, I said, set right down on my knee.
Well, I just want to tell you
Just how you been doin' me.
8. Mmmmm, what do you want for me to do?
Mmmmm, --hoo-ooo -- I say, what do you want me to do?
I been doin' all I can, honey,
Just tryin' to get along with you.

HUMMING.

