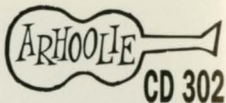


Lightning Hopkins

"Texas Blues"



1. ONCE WAS A GAMBLER
2. MEET YOU AT THE CHICKEN SHACK
3. BALD HEADED WOMAN
4. TOM MOORE BLUES
5. WATCH MY FINGERS
6. LOVE LIKE A HYDRANT
7. SLAVERY TIME
8. I WOULD IF I COULD
9. BUD RUSSELL BLUES
10. COME ON BABY
11. MONEY TAKER
12. MAMA'S FIGHT
13. MY WOMAN
14. SEND MY CHILD HOME TO ME
15. HAVE YOU EVER LOVED A WOMAN
16. BLACK AND EVIL

Total time: 63:04

Sam "Lightning" Hopkins

vocals & guitar on all selections.

#1 & 3: with Geno Landry—bass; Victor Leonard—drums; Berkeley, Ca. Nov. 26, 1961; #2: with Spider Kilpatrick—drums; Houston, Tx. Jan. 23, 1962, original release: ARH LP 1011; #4-9: Houston, Tx. Dec. 18, 1967, original release: ARH LP 1034; #10-13: with Harold "Frenchy" Joseph—drums, Houston, Tx. March 18, 1965, original release: ARH LP 1039; #14 Berkeley, Ca. Dec. 8, 1969, original release: ARH LP 1063; #15 & 16: with Francis Clay—drums; Geno Scaggs—bass; Berkeley, Ca. May 20, 1969, original release: Poppy/Tomato Records & ARH LP 1063.

All songs by Sam Hopkins & © by Tradition Music Co. (BMI) administered by BUG Music.

Cover by Wayne Pope

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Produced & recorded by Chris Strachwitz

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Lightning Hopkins

TEXAS BLUES





Photo: Bill Carter

LIGHTNING HOPKINS *"Texas Blues"*

Sam "Lightning" Hopkins, born March 15, 1912, raised in the piney woods of east Texas (Centerville) and steeped in the traditions of Blind Lemon Jefferson and Texas Alexander, developed a unique, sparse, but effective guitar style to underscore his very personal, emotional, and largely improvised blues lyrics. He became a popular and prolific recording artist in Houston in the late 1940s and early 50s, for what was then known as the Rhythm & Blues market. In the early 1960s, when the recordings on this CD were made, Lightning Hopkins had just begun to be heard outside his own cultural community via recordings and appearances at folk music clubs and festivals. These selections are pure Texas country blues but with Houston as a new home and podium. Sam Hopkins died in Houston, Texas January 30, 1982.

Many of Lightning's contemporaries like T-Bone Walker, Lowell Fulson and Gatemouth Brown were sophisticated enough to take advantage of the commercial opportunities which presented themselves as a result of the popularity of their recordings. They became professional entertainers and toured widely, performing for audiences who came to hear them as a result of their successful recordings. Lightning Hopkins on the other hand remained the "country boy moved to town" and preferred to stay and play in the Houston neighborhoods which were inhabited by African-Americans from the farm belt of central and east Texas and southwest Louisiana. He remained the neighborhood griot or folk poet although not always as positive in his views of his neighbors as his African counterparts. Lightning would often ride the city buses playing his guitar

and sing about his world as he saw it or he would play at neighborhood taverns to earn a little change or a few dollars to keep his car in repair, pay for his room, buy food, drink, gamble, go fishing and have some fun with his buddies. Lightning's poetry remained pure and true to his emotions. He had little desire to cater to the requests of people who came just to hear him sing a certain song he had recorded. Those recordings generally captured and froze in time but moments in his life, a thought or an observation which came to him in the three minutes or so it took to make em', yet they were extraordinarily well-crafted songs, and often vernacular masterpieces!

It was during the Folk Music and Blues boom of the 1960s and 70s that a largely white and international audience eventually discovered Lightning Hopkins and made him famous. I personally had been an avid fan of Lightning's ever since I first heard one of his records over a Los Angeles radio station in the early 1950s. Being a fan

turned into an obsession for me. Collecting records and the music heard in their grooves became my prime interest. A few years later I met Sam Charters in Berkeley and we'd listen to records. He had found a lot of blues and jazz 78s from the 20s and 30s on his trips to the South, discs I had never seen or heard before. I guess my enthusiasm for Lightning Hopkins helped to raise Charters' interest and about a year later I got a post card from Houston, Texas, stating: "I found Lightning! He lives in Houston." Signed Sam Charters. I had begun to record blues musicians locally here in California on a very amateur basis, but now my desire to explore this vast and apparently infinite field of southern blues became intense! In 1959 I took a bus to Houston to meet Lightning Hopkins in person. During that visit I heard him at neighborhood beer joints and taverns singing his heart out and I decided to start a record label primarily to document this extraordinary folk poet. That was the beginning of Arhoolie Records. Due to my

limited earnings from my job as a high school teacher I was unfortunately never able to record Lightning in those beer joints.

The recordings on this CD did not happen that first summer in Houston but eventually came a few years later in studios and at Lightning's apartment and luckily retain some of that street vitality and emotional rawness which made Lightning Hopkins an American music legend. The songs pretty well speak for themselves and on the whole are autobiographical with the exception of "Tom Moore Blues" and "Bud Russell Blues" which are based on powerful traditional regional ballads. Tom Moore, whom I met in 1960 when Mack McCormick and I went to Navasota, Texas, was the owner of a large plantation. This ballad was composed about him sometime in the 1930s by one of the field hands who worked for him. Tom Moore was also the man who actually told us how we could find the songster whose record was to be the very first Arhoolie release in 1960: Mance Lipscomb. Variants of the song were well-

known to almost every blues singer from central-east Texas and Mance Lipscomb recorded probably the most complete version (heard on Arhoolie CD 398). Lightning's original 78 on Gold Star (heard on Arhoolie CD 330 as "Tim Moore's Blues") was the record heard on many juke boxes in black sections of many a Texas town. "Bud Russell Blues" also known as "Penitentiary Blues" or "River Blues" was widely heard in the early 1950s via recordings by Texas blues singers Lowell Fulson and Smokey Hogg and tells of the ways of the notorious Bud Russell, also known as Uncle Bud (songs about him are usually obscene). Bud Russell was chief transfer agent for the Texas State Prison system from about 1915 to 1944. He collected convicted prisoners from all the 254 Texas counties and took them to Huntsville, where they were assigned to the various work camps along the Brazos bottoms. Leadbelly in his "Midnight Special" gives us further details about this man who has become one of the most notorious

characters in Texas folklore. "Slavery Time" Lightning made up just after he had sung about Tom Moore and Bud Russell. Lightning told me "you better catch this one" and I felt that he wanted to contribute his very own thoughts about the status of his people especially after he had rendered me the two old songs which were however very much a part of his own experience.

By the late 1960s Lightning Hopkins and his music began to change. He started to travel, reluctantly most of the time, but he nevertheless went to New York after Sam Charters made his first album in Houston. On that trip to New York, while making his first major album for Candid Records, Lightning was enticed to record for Bobby Robinson (of Fire/Fury Records) as well and taped what was to become his biggest hit ever: "Mojo Hand"! Folk festivals and nightclubs were finally able to get the services of Lightning Hopkins, appearing now however in a formal setting on a stage with an audience which applauded his recreations of earlier records. Absent

were the tavern patrons, gamblers, hustlers, peers from the country, women who would egg him on and give him that important response from the dance floor. Lightning and his music became less spontaneous except when the setting was just right which was often the case when he went to record. Lightning knew well what the public wanted—they wanted a part of him and he usually obliged with various levels of emotional involvement.

Lightning's earlier and more brooding or introverted recordings from the late 1940s (for Bill Quinn's Gold Star label) are now available on Arhoolie CDs 330 and 337. Filmed footage does exist of Lightning Hopkins and some of the best of it can be seen in Les Blank's film/video "The Blues According To Lightning Hopkins."

(Chris Strachwitz—1989)

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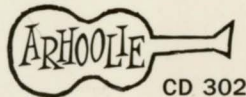


With Cleveland Chenier, New Orleans, La.

Photo: Chris Strachwitz

Lightning Hopkins

TEXAS BLUES



Over 60 Minutes of Classic BLUES

1. Once Was A Gambler
2. Meet You At The Chicken Shack
3. Bald Headed Woman
4. Tom Moore Blues
5. Watch My Fingers
6. Love Like A Hydrant
7. Slavery Time
8. I Would If I Could
9. Bud Russell Blues
10. Come On Baby
11. Money Taker
12. Mama's Fight
13. My Woman
14. Send My Child Home To Me
15. Have You Ever Loved A Woman
16. Black And Evil

All songs by Sam Hopkins and © by
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Sam "Lightning" Hopkins, born and raised in the piney woods of east Texas and steeped in the traditions of Blind Lemon Jefferson and Texas Alexander, developed a unique, stylized, but effective guitar style to underscore his very personal, emotional, and largely improvised blues lyrics. He became a popular and prolific recording artist in Houston in the late 1940s and early 50s, for what was then known as the Rhythm & Blues market. In the early 1960s, when these recordings were made, Lightning Hopkins had just begun to be heard outside of his own cultural community via recordings and appearances at folk music clubs and festivals. The selections on this disc (or cassette) are pure Texas country blues but with Houston as a new home and podium.

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CD 302



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