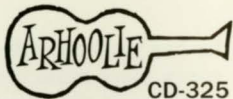


JOHNNY YOUNG

"Chicago Blues"

Over 60 Minutes of Classic Chicago Blues



1. Wild, Wild Woman
2. Keep Your Nose Out of My Business
3. I'm Having A Bail
4. My Trainfare Out of Town
5. I'm Doing All Right
6. Stealin'
7. Keep On Drinking
8. Hot Dog!
9. Come Early in the Morning
10. Moaning and Groaning
11. Cross-Cut Saw
12. Slam Hammer
13. Strange Girl
14. Ring Around My Heart
15. Sometimes I Cry
16. Don't You Lie to Me
17. On the Road Again
18. Walter's Boogie
19. Stockyard Blues
20. Drinking Straight Whiskey

Total time: 65:23

Selections #1-12 Johnny Young – vocals, guitar, and mandolin; Otis Spann – piano; James Cotton – harmonica; Jimmy Lee Morris – bass S.P. Leary – drums

Produced by Chris Strachwitz
Recorded by Pete Welding Chicago, IL,
November 22, 1965 at Sound Studios; Stu
Black-engineer

#13-20 Johnny Young – vocals and guitar;
Walter Horton – harmonica; Jimmy
Dawkins – lead guitar; Lafayette Leake –
piano; Ernest Gatewood – bass; Lester Dor-
sie – drums

Produced by Chris Strachwitz & Willie
Dixon
Recorded in Chicago, IL, on November
27, 1967, at Stereosonic Studios.

Cover by Wayne Pope
Cover photo by Chris Strachwitz
Copy editing by Dix Bruce

All songs by Johnny Young (except #18 by
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JOHNNY YOUNG CHICAGO BLUES

With Otis Spann, James Cotton,
Big Walter, Etc.



OVER
60
MINUTES
OF CLASSIC
BLUES



Johnny Young

Though it was a scant 17 years ago that the first examples of the hard, vigorous style of electrically-amplified ensemble blues developed in the postwar years in Chicago began to be heard in the small clubs and taverns there, the music gained its ascendancy very rapidly. First it dominated the black popular record field — the so-called “race” record market of the prewar years — and in the years since has had an overwhelming, enlivening impact on the course of popular music both in the U.S. and, more recently, throughout the world.

The mean, tough blues of Muddy Waters, Little Walter, Howling Wolf and others perfectly mirrored the fast, brutal life in the Northern ghetto, and it is little wonder that they took over so rapidly and so completely. It is hardly surprising that much of the

modern blues style is solidly based in the older Mississippi Delta blues traditions when one considers the strong country orientation of the postwar Chicago blues audience, composed mainly of blacks who had migrated there to staff the war industries during the 1940's from the rural South, primarily Mississippi and Louisiana.

This album contains strong, earthy, honest blues, full of drive and good spirits. Its leader, singer-guitarist-mandolinist Johnny Young, had been a prominent fixture of the Chicago blues scene since he arrived in the city from his native Mississippi in 1940, though only the most diehard of blues collectors are familiar with his few, and exceedingly rare, recordings. Johnny Young was typical of a vast number of excellent blues performers whom fortune treated shabbily. He was

a fine, expressive singer with a ringing, shouting delivery, an inventive, agile guitarist, and a fluent performer on the mandolin, one of the handful of masters of this instrument in the blues. It wasn't until late in his life that Johnny began to receive the recognition he deserved as a moving, individual interpreter of the modern blues style.

Johnny Young was born in Vicksburg, Miss., on January 1, 1917, the third of seven children. His education was brief, Johnny having only gone as far as the fourth grade. “I can read a little and write,” he says, “but it hasn't held me back too much — not having much schooling. I've been able to go through life on mother-wit. And I always did have the gift of music.”

The Young family moved from Vicksburg to Rolling Fork in the Delta area when Johnny was about twelve years old. It was at this time that he first turned his

attention to music, starting on harmonica, which he played for about a year. Then, inspired by the playing of an uncle, Anthony Williams, who was a gifted performer on guitar, mandolin, violin and banjo, Johnny switched to guitar — “My uncle had an old guitar he let me have,” he said. “I didn't do too much on it . . . just flailing on it,” — and shortly afterwards mandolin. It was this instrument to which he devoted all his energies and he soon gained a measure of proficiency on it. “I just taught myself,” he asserted. “My uncle didn't show me nothing on it except how to tune it right. See, I had been playing it in cross-tuning; just picked out tunes on it that way. Then my uncle came by and he tuned it properly for me. Really, though, I taught myself to play. I used to go to sleep and his playing would be running through my head, how he played things, phrases. And I

would work it out by myself."

While still a teenager Young absorbed quite a bit from the playing of the Mississippi Sheiks (the Chatman brothers — violinist Lonnie, mandolinist Ed, guitarist Bo — and Walter Vinson), who lived in nearby Grace, Miss., and often played in the Rolling Fork area.

At fifteen Johnny was playing for house parties in the area, often earning as much as five or six dollars a night. Soon he moved on to Vicksburg and played at the Blue Room, a large black club there, with his cousin Henry Williams for a short while. Both played guitar and mandolin, taking turns on the instruments. They often made as much as \$25 a night there, Johnny recalled.

After a brief visit in 1939, Johnny moved to Chicago the next year. In 1943 he and Muddy Waters, who had also come North from Mississippi were working with the late John Lee

(Sonny Boy) Williamson. Johnny remained with the singer-harmonica player for about five or six months and they performed at such places as The Spot in nearby Gary, Ind., and The Plantation, at 31st and Giles Streets in Chicago.

Johnny gave up music for awhile, but was back playing with harmonica player Snooky Pryor, guitarist Moody Jones and singer Floyd Jones in 1947 in the Maxwell Street open-air market area, where they were approached to record by the proprietor of a radio store there. This resulted in Young's recording of "Money Taking Woman," with Johnny Williams' guitar backing Johnny's singing and fierce mandolin playing. (Williams had the vocal on the other side, with Young's mandolin in accompaniment). In that same year Johnny recorded two numbers, "My Baby Walked Out" and "Let Me Ride Your Mule" for Chester Scales' Swing Master

label. Young then recorded as guitar accompanist on six sides Snooky Pryor made for Vee Jay. He didn't record again until the 1960s when a renewed interest emerged in the honest, earthy blues he played so persuasively, though he performed steadily in various clubs and on Maxwell Street. His selections on the Testament, Vanguard and British Decca labels, in addition to this exciting collection, find him in the best of blues company. At that same time, through blues "revivals," he began to appear in concert at colleges and over concert venues.

The four men with which Johnny is heard here on the first part of this disc, comprise two-thirds of that smooth, powerful blues machine known as the Muddy Waters band. Pianist Otis Spann, one of the most sensitive accompanists in all the blues, has been a member of the Waters aggregation for more than ten

years, and the subtlety and rock-ribbed strength of his instrumental work are well illustrated in the four mandolin-piano selections in this set — Keep Your Nose Out of My Business, I'm Doing All Right, Moaning and Groaning, and Stealin', an old dance piece that Johnny has refurbished as a blues.

Harmonica chores are handled with slashing drive and complete authority by James Cotten, the latest and longest-tenured in a long string of great harp players in Muddy's nonpareil band. And bassist Jimmy Lee Morris and good-natured drummer S.P. (call me Kelly; that's what everyone does") Leary round out an exemplary rhythm section, providing the thrust that drives this group so unerringly.

In this fast company, Johnny more than holds his own. He sings with good-natured abandon, plays powerfully and economically, and demonstrates convincing-

ly, happily and unequivocally that the Chicago blues are far from moribund. In his hands — and in the four other pairs active here — the blues have rarely been more exuberantly alive and kicking.

Sharing the second part of this disc with Young is the veteran performer Big (or Shakey) Walter Horton, the blues harmonica player's harmonica player, one of the handful of men who have brought this simple instrument to astonishing levels of virtuosity, as he repeatedly demonstrates throughout this deeply satisfying session (listen especially to his harmonica feature "Walter's Boogie"). Born in Horn Lake, Mississippi, in 1918, Walter learned to play harmonica when he was five or six and has been a professional musician since the age of twelve, at which time he moved to Memphis and became actively involved with its busy blues scene. Walter re-calls having

recorded with the celebrated Memphis Jug Band in the early 1930's and with Memphis singer-guitarist Little Buddy Doyle. He also traveled through-out the South with a number of bluesmen through the 1930's, among them Big Joe Williams and Floyd Jones, with whom he moved to Chicago in 1937, remaining for several years before returning to Memphis.

In 1949 Walter was a member of the singer-guitarist Eddie Taylor's group, performing in Chicago, but after several years he again returned to Memphis, where in 1952 he cut his first records as featured soloist. Walter went back to Chicago in 1953 to take over the harmonica slot in Muddy Waters' great band, leaving the following year to work with singer-guitarist Jimmy Rogers, who had departed Waters' band at the same time. Walter later formed his own group and since the late 1950's

he has worked with virtually every blues musician of any importance in the Windy City.

Supporting the two men on this invigorating program of deep-dish Chicago blues are several blues stalwarts. Pianist Lafayette Leake, bassist Ernest Gatewood, and drummer Lester Dorsie — and a relative new-comer to recording, Jimmy "Fast Fingers" Dawkins, an extremely proficient and inventive lead guitarist. While only in his mid-20's, Dawkins has been performing in Chicago night spots for several years and worked briefly with singer-harmonica player Charlie Musselwhite a few years ago. Leake is one of the unsung heroes of the blues, veteran of countless recording sessions, and a tastefully propulsive and imaginative pianist whose inventions reveal both restraint and intelligence (listen, for example, to his beautiful, chimes-like fills towards the end of the coyly-

titled "Fumbling Around" — there's no fumbling on Leake's part). The rhythm section, incidentally, was rounded up and "conducted" by veteran Chicago bassist, composer, and recording director Willie Dixon. That's probably why it's so tight.

(Pete Welding – 1966 & 1968)

Copy editing by Dix Bruce and Chris Strachwitz

Note: Johnny Young died on April 18, 1974 in Chicago

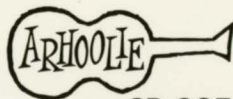
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JOHNNY YOUNG

Chicago Blues

Featuring Otis Spann, James Cotton & Big Walter



CD-325

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Total time: 65:23

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Otis Spann – piano, James Cotton – harmonica,
Big Walter Horton – harmonica, Jimmy
Dawkins, gr., S.P. Leary – drums, etc.

Cover by Wayne Pope

Cover photo by Chris Strachwitz

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All selections previously released on Arhoolie
1029 & 1037

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