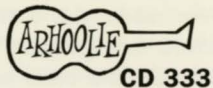


Joe Turner

"TELL ME PRETTY BABY"



1. WINE-O-BABY BOOGIE
(Joe Turner)
2. B & O BLUES (Joe Turner)
3. ROCKET BOOGIE "88" (Pt 1)
(Jack Lauderdale)
4. OLD PINEY BROWN'S GONE
(Joe Turner)
5. BABY, WON'T YOU MARRY ME
(Joe Turner)
6. SKID ROW BOOGIE
(Pete Johnson)
7. CHRISTMAS DATE BOOGIE
(Joe Turner)
8. RADAR BLUES (Horace Owens)
9. TELL ME PRETTY BABY
(Howd'ya Want Your
Rollin' Done) (Joe Turner)
10. ROCKET BOOGIE "88" (Pt 2)
(Jack Lauderdale)
11. TROUBLE BLUES (Joe Turner)
12. HALF TIGHT BOOGIE
(Pete Johnson)
13. MARDI GRAS BOOGIE
(Joe Turner)

14. MY HEART BELONGS TO
YOU (Arbee Stidham)
15. SO MANY WOMEN BLUES
(Joe Turner)
16. MESSIN' AROUND
(Floyd Hunt)
17. I DON'T DIG IT
(Williams-Cadrey)
18. RAINY WEATHER BLUES
(Joe Turner)
19. BOOGIE WOOGIE BABY
(Tate-Williams)
20. MARRIED WOMAN BLUES
(Jackson-Turner)
21. FEELIN' SO SAD
(Tate-Williams)
22. MOODY BABY (Joe Turner)
23. AROUND THE CLOCK BLUES
(Pt 1)
24. AROUND THE CLOCK BLUES
(Pt 2)

(Recording data and personnel information
continued on page 5)



Joe Turner

With PETE JOHNSON'S Orchestra

*Tell Me
Pretty Baby*



JOE TURNER

"Tell Me Pretty Baby"

This is an album of Kansas City music. The selections on these tracks have a beat and blues coloration strong enough to be recognized easily as a definite jazz style, yet they remain elusive enough that the usual descriptive terms, such as boogie-blues, rhythm-and-blues, and even boogie-woogie, all fail to describe them adequately. For this reason some critics have argued in favor of the broader term **Southwestern Music** to describe what is heard here. Yet that does little to help. Listening to these tracks with Joe Turner's magnificent blues voice and what one Kansas Citian called Pete Johnson's "crusade of clefs" will show why. What appear at first to be broad, powerful musical strokes contain infinite detail of shading that no name tag could possibly cover.

These recordings were made in Los Angeles during the years immediately after Joe Turner won Esquire's Silver

Award as male vocalist in that publication's 1945 All-American Jazz Band. That was a real honor in those days. (Louis Armstrong won the Gold Award that year.) It was in that 1945 contest, too, that a long-time connoisseur of Kansas City jazz, Dave Dexter, Jr., nominated Pete Johnson as one of the year's top piano players on the American jazz scene that was visible to Esquire. To that Dexter added a forecast pointing to the end of all such awards. Jazz, he said, had become a mature art which no longer slid easily into neat sets of categories. In fact, good music seldom fits easily into any category.

Yet Kansas City music definitely was a product of its times and territory. Joe Turner's work among the blues vocalists demonstrates that fact, as does Pete Johnson's piano playing on these tracks. Although polished as showmen by their exposure to New York prior to going to the West Coast where these recordings

were made, this Arhoolie collection reflects through these two Kansas City musicians the blues and beat of that fabulous era of mid-America that is only a memory today.

Kansas City in the depression years of the 30s was a wide open playground. The house rules were extremely liberal—considerably more relaxed than in Las Vegas today. Presiding over this playground on the banks of the Missouri was "Boss Tom" Pendergast, a politician's politician. This hulking powerhouse of a man fulfilled the popular image of a big city political boss as few such figures in U.S. history have. With this lush political atmosphere, it was natural that Kansas City streets should be lined with scores of bars, taverns, night clubs and rathskellers. These places seldom hired big bands, but almost every establishment had live music of some sort for dancing and entertainment. Among the musicians who supplied it were Pete Johnson and Joe Turner, who made an otherwise undistinguished cafe—known as the Sunset—down on the 12th Street

borderland, their main base of operations. It did have "separate but equal facilities" for white patrons, however.

In such night spots physical power naturally headed the list of qualifications for every bartender. Tall, powerful Joe Turner met that requirement. Born in Kansas City May 18, 1911, he gigged around town as a singing waiter—no more of a novelty than the singing waiter was in Jersey City. In addition to his size, Joe Turner had a voice that could cut through and carry over the racket of a hard-drinking, noisy crowd that sometimes worked into near frenzy dancing to the rocking, driving music.

Pete Johnson had the powerful shoulders, arms and hands that enabled him to play all night at a tempo to match the crowd's fast-living mood. He also had the musical facility to underscore the jamming of the ever-shifting collection of musicians who visited the bandstand during the long night sessions. This was remarkable flexibility for a musician who began his musical education playing drums in

hometown schools, then learned piano by teaching himself and sitting close enough to watch some of the old-timers who brought ragtime, boogie-woogie and blues to Kansas City from down river.

One fact no one listening to this record should forget—all this is fundamentally dance music, not primarily a form of entertainment. Boogie-woogie was the name for a dance step long before it became the tag for a type of music. Transferring the basic blues guitar style to the piano simply made it possible to stomp off the blues with a percussive beat for dancing that no guitar player ever could equal. All Kansas City music—even vocals—had that basic dance beat because the customers expected it. The fact both Turner and Johnson also had extraordinary musicianship was purely happy coincidence. Their first obligation was to meet the cafe patrons' demands, and that they did. The music produced in response to the familiar shout, "Roll 'em, Pete!" had excitement and reality—

caught perhaps for the last time in the original mood here on the Arhoolie recordings that Chris Strachwitz dug from the files of a businessman whose interests long ago moved away from the field of music.

In later years, during the early 1940s, nobody except an occasional midwesterner ever seemed to think of dancing to the boogie beat on New York's Sheridan Square. Pete and Joe had been presented on the New York jazz scene at the now historic "Spirituals to Swing Concert" at Carnegie Hall in 1938. Both had become major figures in the entertainment world of Cafe Society Downtown. Eventually they went their separate ways.

Yet Pete Johnson and Joe Turner never lost touch with their musical backgrounds. This music by Turner and Johnson, like all authentic blues, offers an emotional release as well as musical excitement—a catharsis, if you like. In this day of stylized chamber music jazz and synthetic rhythm-and-blues,

authentic blues played in any tempo has this to offer anyone who will listen. Today's burgeoning interest in all the authentic blues forms stems from this as a natural development of these times, just as Kansas City jazz was a natural development of another era. "Boss Tom" is dead—after having served a federal prison term. Kansas City has become a staid old matron more interested in civic betterment than boogie or the blues.

This is perhaps the last time the curtain will be lifted for this greatest of all Kansas City blues teams. For that reason, "Tell Me Pretty Baby" makes a worthwhile addition to any record collection, whether the collector's own emphasis rests upon vocal blues, piano jazz, jump band music—or simply an occasional yen to hear the good times roll the K. C. way just one more time.

—ROLPH FAIRCHILD

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Joe Turner – vocals & **Pete Johnson** – piano, plus:

#1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11: **James Ross & Art Farmer** - trumpets; **Frank Sleet** - alto; **Pete Peterson** - tenor; **Milburn Newman** - baritone; **Addison Farmer** - bass; **Robert Brady** - drums. (Los Angeles, 1948/1949)

#3, 6, 10, 12: **Herman Mitchell** - guitar; **Jesse Sailes** - drums; **Ralph Hamilton** - bass; **Maxwell Davis** - tenor; **Jewel Grant** - alto. (Los Angeles, 1948/1949)

#13 - 22: **Kirkland Bradford** - alto; **Maxwell Davis** - tenor; **Jewell Grant** - baritone; **Ralph Hamilton** - bass; **Jesse Sailes** - drums. (Los Angeles, 1949)

#23 - 24: (San Francisco, ca. Nov., 1947)

Cover by Wayne Pope

Original recordings (#1–12) produced by Jack Lauderdale. Reissue produced and edited by Chris Strachwitz. Sound restoration by George Morrow of Echo Productions using the NoNoise system.

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"TELL ME PRETTY BABY"



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20. MARRIED WOMAN BLUES
21. FEELIN' SO SAD
22. MOODY BABY
23. AROUND THE CLOCK BLUES (Part 1)
24. AROUND THE CLOCK BLUES (Part 2)

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