

# Lightning Hopkins

## Po' Lightnin'



1. ICE STORM BLUES (7:15)
2. SPEEDIN' BOOGIE (3:05)
3. WINE DRINKING WOMAN (4:50)
4. DO THE BOOGIE (1:45)
5. MY BABY'S GONE (4:30)
6. WAKE UP OLD MAID (2:24)
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14. CALIFORNIA SHOWERS (7:35)
15. BURNIN' IN L.A. (4:25)
16. SELLING WINE IN ARIZONA (3:00)
17. BRAND NEW LOCK (3:10)
18. I'M LEAVING YOU NOW (3:04)
19. GOIN' OUT NUMBER (3:00)

Total Time: 76:08

All songs by Sam Hopkins and © by Tradition Music Co./  
BUG Music Co. - BMI

**Sam "Lightning" Hopkins** - vocals and guitar  
(piano on # 4, 7, & 8; organ on # 5 & 6) with:

#2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 15, & 19: solo or with Victor Leonard - drums and "Gino" Henry Landry - bass; Sierra Sound Studios, Berkeley, Ca., 11/26/1961. Bob DeSousa-engineer, at whom Lightning's comments are directed.

#14: solo, at Chris Strachwitz's apartment, Berkeley, Ca., November 1961.

#1: "Spider" Kilpatrick - drums; ACA Studios, Houston, Tx., 1/23/1962.

#9 & 18: solo, at Sam Hopkins' apartment, Houston, Tx., 12/18/1967.

#11, 12, 13, 16, 17: solo, at Chris Strachwitz's house, Berkeley, Ca. 12/8/1969.

# 1, 2, 4, 14, 15, & 19 previously released on Arh LP 1011.

# 3 previously released on Arh LP 1012.

# 5 & 8 previously released on Arh LP 1087.

# 6, 7, 9, & 18 previously unreleased.

# 10 previously released on Arh LP 1017.

# 11, 12, 13, 16, & 17 previously released on Arh LP 1063.

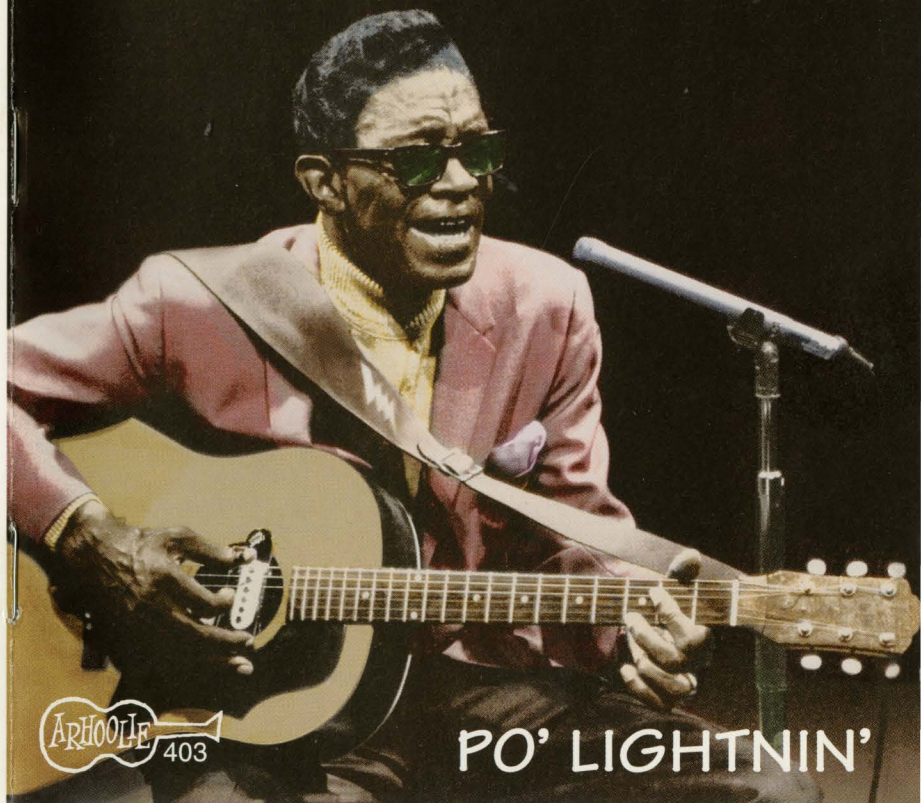
Produced by Chris Strachwitz

Cover by Wayne Pope

Cover photo © Chris Strachwitz

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# LIGHTNING HOPKINS



## PO' LIGHTNIN'

# Lightning Hopkins

## *Po' Lightnin'*

I had been a fan of Lightning's since hearing "Hello Central" and several other of his juke box hits on Hunter Hancock's "Harlem Matinee" program over Los Angeles radio station KFVD in the early 1950s. At the time I was still a poor student and had no idea where this man was from or that I would ever meet him. When some years later my friend, Sam Charters, suddenly sent a postcard informing me that he had found Lightning Hopkins in Houston, Texas, and that he had recorded just enough songs for a Long Play record, I felt a tremendous urge to head for Houston and find out what Lightning and his blues were all about.

Shortly after arriving on a Greyhound bus and after meeting and hearing the emotional and expressive Sam "Lightning" Hopkins in person at several Hous-

ton juke joints in the summer of 1959, I dreamed about recording this genius of the blues "live" on location, where he was at his improvising best. A year later I finalized plans to start Arhoolie Records with the hope of realizing that dream but it didn't turn out quite that way. Those dreams never materialized although I made one unsuccessful attempt which almost led to a fight outside Houston's Sputnik Bar between Lightning and his then agent/manager, Mack McCormick who had introduced me to him! The main problem was my lack of money and good recording equipment. Lightning's extraordinary nightly improvisations at various taverns were unfortunately never documented by anyone, although each of his recordings of that period are musical images from this man's life. Those



Photo by Chris Strachwitz

1960: Lightning Hopkins at Houston's Sputnik Bar with L.C. "Lightning Jr." Williams on drums.

performances in beer joints depended not only on Lightning's highly variable moods, which ranged from brooding and introspective to very outgoing and up, but also on the reaction of the usually small but vociferous crowd attending the gigs. Lightning would often turn his nightly job into a party which he very much dominated often resulting in a personal, secular, call and response "rap" or "sermon." Patrons were usually as much interested in conversing, rapping, or responding to Lightning and each other, as in dancing, talking, drinking, listening, or just having a good time. However, each time Lightning Hopkins went into a recording studio, he would usually have several "numbers" ready and on his mind. Images and verbal exchanges would follow him from the streets and taverns into the studio and with the help of a little gin, Lightning would create his poetry, put music behind it, and leave the "record man" with a few

permanent audio snapshots in exchange for several hundred dollars.

The very first selection on this CD is one of the best examples of Lightning's creative and poetic genius. He wanted to give me a few more "numbers" for the first album I was producing. We had already spent an afternoon at Berkeley's Sierra Sound studio the previous November while Lightning was making personal appearances in California. I had recorded Lightning in various combinations: with just his acoustic guitar; at the piano; organ; and with an electric guitar accompanied by drums and bass, the way I fondly remembered him sounding so powerful in Houston's beer joints. Barbara Dane was along for the fun but somehow we just did not get enough "takes" for a full LP album (Arhoolie LP 1011). Once back in Houston, Lightning wrote me saying he was ready to "make" me a few more numbers. Mack McCormick agreed to take him to Bill Holford's ACA studio and

with "Spider" on drums they made me a tape which included the haunting "Ice Storm Blues," an improvised gem from that cold January day just after a terrible freeze had hit Houston. The balance of this collection was recorded in California and in many ways reflects Lightning's observations during those trips to the West Coast when he performed increasingly for young and mainly white audiences. Several, however, including "Wine Drinking Woman" and "Selling Wine in Arizona" hark back to the days when Lightning was living the hustler's life, like so

many rural blues singers of his generation. As a young man Lightning was exposed to a religious environment and learned to play piano and organ at a church in his native Centerville, Texas. A lot of the material is based on traditional, rural, southern themes and verses but the California life style and the strong anti-Vietnam war sentiments of that period also became subjects for Lightning's wonderful poetic talent. The title of this CD comes from the term Sam Hopkins used almost daily to introduce himself to the world.

*(Chris Strachwitz -1995)*

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*Other releases on ARHOOOLIE by Lightning Hopkins:*

CD/C 302 **Texas Blues** (1960s)

CD/C 330 **The Gold Star Recordings – Vol. 1** (from 78s: 1947–51)

CD/C 337 **The Gold Star Recordings – Vol. 2** (from 78s: 1947–51)

CD/C 340 **The Hopkins Brothers – with Joel and John Henry** (1964/65)

CD/C 390 **Lightnin'** (1967 & 1969)

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*Left to right:  
Long Gone Miles,  
L.C. Williams,  
"Spider" Kilpatrick,  
Lightning, 1960.*



*Left to right: unknown,  
Long Gone Miles,  
Lightning, Chris  
Strachwitz, 1960.*



*Lightning Hopkins recording in Berkeley, Ca., November 1961*

Photo © by Bill Carter

# Lightning Hopkins

## "Po' Lightnin'"



### Up to 78 Minutes of Historic TEXAS BLUES

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19. GOIN' OUT NUMBER (3:00)

Total Time: 76:08

Sam "Lightning" Hopkins - vocals and guitar (piano on # 4, 7, & 8; organ on # 5, & 6) solo and with various backup.

*This CD contains selections Lightning Hopkins recorded for Arhoolie Records in the 1960s which were not included on either CD 302 or 390. They were previously available as follows:*

- # 6, 7, 9, & 18 previously unreleased.
- # 1, 2, 4, 14, 15, & 19 previously released on Arh LP 1011.
- # 3 previously released on Arh LP 1012.
- # 5 & 8 previously released on Arh LP 1087.
- # 10 previously released on Arh LP 1017.
- # 11, 12, 13, 16, & 17 previously released on Arh LP 1063.

Produced by Chris Strachwitz  
Cover by Wayne Pope  
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