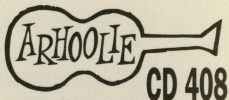


Whistling **ALEX MOORE**
From North Dallas to the East Side



1. WHISTLING ALEX
MOORE'S BLUES
2. PRETTY WOMAN WITH
A SACK DRESS ON
3. RUBBER TIRED HACK
4. YOU SAY I AM A BAD FELLER
5. FROM NORTH DALLAS
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18. ALEX'S BLUES
19. ALEX'S WILD BLUES
20. SOMETIME I FEEL WORRIED
21. I LOVE YOU BABY
22. ROCK AND ROLL BED
23. BOOGIEIN' IN STRASSBURG

Total playing time: 77:00

Alexander H. Moore – piano,
vocals, and whistling (on #1 & 14).

Cover photo by Paul Oliver (1960)
Cover by Wayne Pope
Produced by Chris Strachwitz
Re-mastered by Mike Cogan at Bay Records

#1 - #13 recorded July 30, 1960 in Dallas, Texas
by Chris Strachwitz and Paul Oliver using one
EV 664 microphone. #1 - 12 originally issued as
Arhoolie LP 1008.

14 - #21 recorded in 1947 at the studios of
radio station KLIF in Dallas, Tx.; produced by
Walter E. Wilden. The master acetates were
provided by Alan Govenar and Documentary
Arts (who purchased them and released them
on cassette DA 105. Govenar recorded Moore on

(Continued inside on page 7)

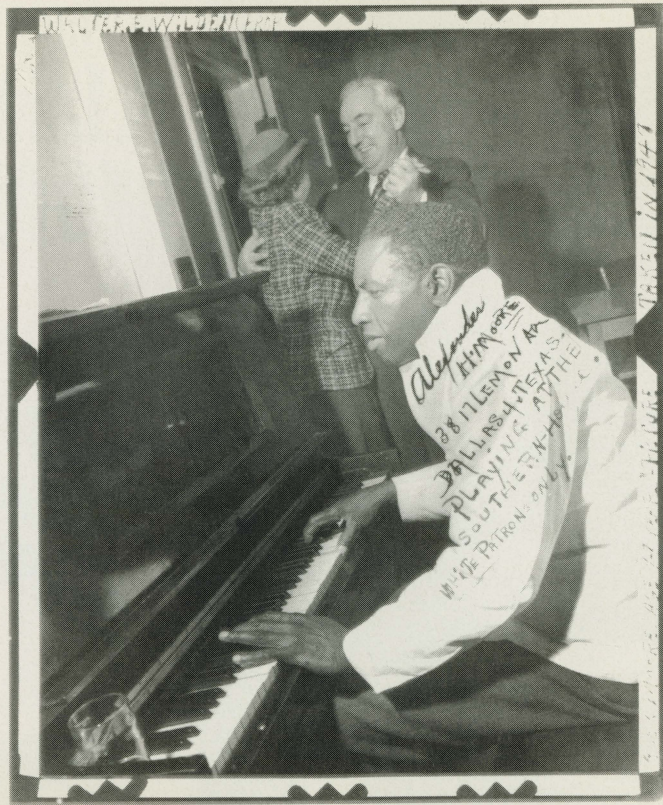
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WHISTLIN'
ALEX
MOORE

**From
North Dallas
to the
East Side**





Alex Moore, 1947, on the day of his KLIF recording session.
Photo courtesy of Alan Gowenar & Documentary Arts.

Whistling **ALEX MOORE** "From North Dallas to the East Side"

"I just sit down, sing and play them, unaware to any knowledge or idea or thoughts of them until I sit down at the keyboard and begin playing and making them up on the piano."

His own unassuming words explain the nature of his blues. He is a true original, a folk blues singer of the city who can sit at the piano and improvise endlessly piano themes and blues verses that are sometimes startling, sometimes comic, sometimes grim and very often are pure poetry. Though his first recordings were made in 1929 barely a dozen items have appeared on record under his name, Alex Moore, but amongst these are some of the most profound, moving and poetic blues that have ever been issued. When I first heard his records, a dozen years ago, I was attracted by their unique quality and hoped that I might one day meet the man whose

memorable blues had so enriched the Columbia and Decca catalogues. After pursuing many false leads and encountering a number of setbacks I finally found him seated on the screened porch of a small bar situated scarcely a hundred yards from the street where he was born in North Dallas, Texas.

It was a sweltering, burning hot day and the sun beat down on the dusty, rubble-strewn, unmade roads of the black sector of Dallas. It was a district where no white people — except a policeman or a rent collector — were to be seen at any time, and the silent streets, the screened and shuttered fronts of buildings presented a formidable appearance. When I had overcome Alex Moore's bewilderment at being approached about his blues singing by a white man with an "English accent," we strolled out into the street and considered where a piano

might be found. The notorious Central Tracks district which once housed the honky-tonks and chock-houses was now a vast stretch of red-brown rubble a matter of yards away; the bulldozers had arrived before us and had swept away the clapboard shacks to make room for a new Expressway. Chris Strachwitz, who would be doing the recording, and my wife, joined us. We thought that Alex Moore might need time to practice and to think up ideas for blues, but he dismissed the suggestion with scorn. He played at different places in the district frequently and he had more blues in his mind than he could find time to play. But he did not own a piano; those that he played were generally out of tune and, somehow, we had to find one.

Together we walked towards the area that had once been Central Tracks and in a bar still standing nearby there was a good piano. A few moments were all that were necessary to prove that Alex Moore was a finer blues player than, on the evidence of his records, at any time in his life. But the

bar had a regular blues band which was shortly to appear and though the owners were quite willing to let us record there, we felt that time was limited. We tried one place after another and as we walked and drove Alex Moore talked of the great singers of the past who had made Dallas one of the major centers of the blues: of Blind Lemon and Rambling Thomas, Blind Norris and Willie Reed .

Sixty-one years of age at the time, Alex Moore had spent his life in the blues world of Deep Elm and Central Tracks, Froggy Bottom and East Side. His conversation was the story of the blues. But to hear him sing and play...still no piano.

"STRICTLY FOR COLORED ONLY" read a warning notice on the black wall of a large, rough Negro hotel overlooking a vacant lot. Here Alex Moore had played for years and he and I went in. The big rooms were almost empty of furniture but in three of them pianos were standing. Alex sat down at each and started to play as one who had spent long hours at

these same piano stools. He rolled a fierce boogie on one; shouted a hoarse, eccentric blues at another. His playing was superb, but the pianos were grossly out of tune. Disappointed, we left.

"You don't know of a music teacher in Dallas, do you Alex?" asked my wife suddenly.

"Madame Pratt!" he exclaimed, and cursed himself for not thinking of her before. So we drove 'round to Madame Pratt's Music School which was identified by a little sign on the grass in front of her house. It was not going to be an easy day: a neighbor informed us that Madame Pratt was at the dentist. So, we sat on the wall and waited until she came. To our relief she was delighted at the idea when Alex explained our reason for calling.

"She doesn't just play piano; she can play any instrument!" Alex whispered. It was no exaggeration; her house was crammed with instruments and on the walls were faded pictures of some of her past pupils — mem-

bers of the Troy Floyd Band and that of Alphonso Trent. In a moment Alex Moore was at the keyboard and to the approval of Madame Pratt and our delight poured forth his blues...

Alexander Moore had boundless ideas. Betraying hardly a hint of any influence from other singers, he played with great variety and sang in a throaty, husky voice. A man rich in worldly wisdom he was yet a man curiously limited in his knowledge of the world. Only once in his life had he left Texas; most of his life had been spent in a small section of Dallas. So his blues reflected a very personal, singular view of life, and because he is an eccentric man his words are often unexpected and manifestly original. The immediate circumstances of his environment are reflected in *Going Back To Froggy Bottom* or *From North Dallas To The East Side* but his sharp eye and neat wit led to such highly unconventional blues lines as "Sack dress is all right but I'd rather see you in a pair of pants..."

Interspersed with his playing were

reminiscences of playing at "Minnie's Tea Room" or of police raids in district chock-houses; memories that would lead him to new blues improvisations. He talked of the years when he had driven his horse and cart through the streets of Dallas; years when life was wild and cheap and money scarce — and broke into *Black-Eyed Peas-and Hog Jowls*. Such blues as *Rubber Tired Hack* or *Miss No-Good Weed* were spur-of-the-moment creations played and sung with feeling and pleasure in his own music. His bass figures were varied and intensely interesting and he took an off-beat pride in his sudden flashes of inventiveness and flurries of right-hand creations. Then he doubled back his lip and shrieked a piercing whistled blues by which he had gained his name of Whistling Alex Moore but which had in the past, as now, presented problems of recording.

It was after many hours, much perspiration and innumerable beer cans that we finally turned on the cartwheel of a fan again and prepared

to leave. Within a few hours we had to point the car south towards the steaming bayous of Houston, and so we left him to talk over his old times with Madame Pratt. We drove in silence, speculating on the bitterness of segregation, the apathy and disinterest of the public in the blues, the pressure of the business managers and the ironies of a music entertainment world that would permit a man of the original talent and stature of Alexander Herman Moore to scuffle through half a century, creating his blues from the viewpoint of a carter and hotel porter. We thought of him as he had described himself in his deep, husky voice, softly laughing between his phrases:

*"Old Alexander...at the pianner
...sober...lonesome...hard-headed ...but
good-natured..."*

(Paul Oliver - 1960)

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Editor's note:

Alexander H. Moore was born November 22, 1899 in Dallas where he died on January 20, 1989. He was one of the most unforgettable persons I've had the pleasure of meeting. His letters were long, factual, detailed and filled with remarkable observations. Arhoolie's file folder on Alex Moore is thick with his wonderful correspondence and I know Paul Oliver and others were also fortunate in receiving many such hand written documents. When we toured Europe together in 1969, Alex Moore's hope and prime desire was to record the song he felt would be his monster hit: *Rock And Roll Bed*. Although we recorded it in Stuttgart and Arhoolie released the song as part of an album, Lady Luck unfortunately never did shine on Alex Moore during his long lifetime. However, the song is now on this CD for the whole world to hear. Perhaps someday someone somewhere will revive Alex Moore's songs and in the meantime let his music, poetry, wit and sarcasm enlighten and delight future generations and may his

spirit live on! (All of Alex Moore's commercial recordings made between 1929-1951 are available on Document CD 5178.)

(Chris Strachwitz - 1994)

(Credits continued from back cover)

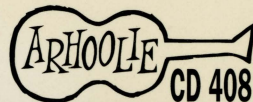
several occasions between 1981 and 1988 and directed the documentary film, **Black on White/ White and Black** on Moore's life and career. The film and cassette are available from Documentary Arts, Inc., Box 140244, Dallas, Tx. 75214).

On the original acetate discs, the selections had no titles, only the numbers 1 through 8 were written on the labels. Chris Strachwitz assigned the titles as given on this CD. Sound restoration of acetates by George Morrow of Echo Productions using the NoNoise system.

#22 & #23 recorded October 23, 1969 at Jankowski Studio (Claus Reisser - engineer), Stuttgart, Germany by Chris Strachwitz with help from Horst Lippman and Fritz Rau who sponsored and produced the annual American Folk Blues Festival which in 1969 featured Alex Moore, Clifton & Cleveland Chenier, John Jackson, Earl Hooker, Magic Sam, Juke Boy Bonner, & Carey Bell. Originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1048.

Whistling **ALEX MOORE****From North Dallas to the East Side****Almost 78 Minutes of Classic Blues**

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#14 – 21 recorded in 1947 at KLIF in Dallas, Tx., produced by Walter E. Wilden, courtesy Alan Govenar.

#22 & 23 recorded 10/23/1969 in Stuttgart, Germany, and originally issued on Arhoolie LP 1048.

Cover photo by Paul Oliver
Produced by Chris Strachwitz
Cover by Wayne Pope



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