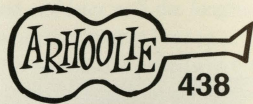


# BLIND JAMES CAMPBELL

*And His Nashville Street Band*



1. HAVE I STAYED AWAY TOO LONG
2. I'M CRAZY ABOUT YOU BABY
3. BUFFALO GAL
4. WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN
5. THE MOON MAY RISE IN BLOOD
6. JOHN HENRY
7. BABY PLEASE DON'T GO
8. JIMMY'S BLUES
9. MONKEY MAN BLUES
10. THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE
11. DETROIT BLUES
12. BEAUFORD'S BREAKDOWN
13. GAMBLING MAN
14. SITTING HERE DRINKING
15. JAM PIECE (*George's Boogie*)
16. I NEVER HAD NOTHING
17. DO YOU REMEMBER (*theme song*)
18. MY GAL GOT EVIL
19. BEAUFORD'S BOOGIE WOOGIE
20. WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN
21. I AM SO BLUE WHEN IT RAINS
22. PICK AND SHOVEL BLUES
23. DETROIT JUMP

*Total time: 64:00*

## James Campbell's Friendly Five:

James Campbell - *vocals and guitar*  
Beauford Clay - *fiddle, banjo on "John Henry"*

Bell Ray - *second fiddle, guitar, vocal*  
on "*This Little Light of Mine*," *banging*  
of bow on tuba on "*Baby Please Don't Go*"

George Bell - *trumpet*

Ralph Robinson - *bass horn/tuba*

Cover left to right: Bell Ray, James Campbell,  
Ralph Robinson, & Beauford Clay.

All photos © by Chris Strachwitz.

Produced by Chris Strachwitz.

Cover design by Wayne Pope, Dix Bruce, & Tom  
Diamant.

Recorded by Chris Strachwitz in Nashville, Tenn.:  
#11, 16, 17, & 18 on October 25, #1, 2, 3, 5, 7,  
8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, & 23 on October  
26, 1962 and #4, 6, 9, & 20 on April 14, 1963 with  
one Capps condensor microphone and a  
Magnecord tape recorder.

Selections #15-23 previously unissued.

All songs or arrangements by James Campbell and ©  
by Tradition Music Co. / Bug Music

Copyright © & © 1963 & 1995 by Arhoolie Productions Inc.

# BLIND JAMES CAMPBELL

*And His Nashville Street Band*







*On the street in their Nashville neighborhood.*

## BLIND JAMES CAMPBELL

### *His Nashville Street Band*

In the early 1960s, shortly after I had released my first Arhoolie LPs, a young fan of southern music (whose name has unfortunately escaped me) stopped by my house in Los Gatos, California, where I was working as a school teacher at the time. He had me listen to several tapes which he had recorded on a recent trip through the south. One of the tapes was by a wonderfully loose and bluesy group of street musicians from Nashville, Tenn., who played a most fascinating hybrid of blues, hillbilly, jazz, old time popular, minstrel, skiffle, and jug band elements. I was fascinated by the band's sound and on my next trip to the south I headed for Nashville where I soon met Blind James Campbell and his Friendly Five, as he sometimes called his group. I had little trouble persuading him to gather his fellow musicians and make some recordings for me. Most of the performances, however, were a bit rough and I was reluctant at first to issue the material. About six months later, while on another trip through the south, helping German film maker Dietrich Wawzyn make a

documentary about various regional American folk music traditions, we visited Nashville to film country music at the Grand Ole Opry and other locations and we included Blind James Campbell. I also took the opportunity to make a few more recordings and eventually released the best from those sessions on Arhoolie LP 1015.

Today, over 30 years later, as I listen to these tapes again, I find that this rough and somewhat chaotic African-American country band had a spirit, authenticity and vitality seldom, if ever, evident among Nashville's legions of slick and polished super stars. There are some rough starts and they are not always playing in tune but I think this band is absolutely unique and deserves to have their remarkable blend of black and white American roots music represented on a record.

The recordings were made with one omnidirectional condenser mike which I hung from the ceiling in Mr. Campbell's living room. He, as the main singer and lead guitarist, was right under the mike for maximum presence. The rest



of the band was in a circle around the mike with the fiddles closer than the trumpet. The tuba was someplace in there, close enough for one of the fiddlers to bang his bow on! Bell Ray enjoyed using the bell of the tuba as a cymbal! For some of the pure country selections we used only the string band and left the horns out.

Street musicians were a common sight on most southern street corners before World War II but today city ordinances have made it difficult if not impossible for many of them to earn a living. However, exceptions seem to be frequently made for those who are blind. Groups similar to this one, like the jug bands in Memphis and Cincinnati, the Mississippi Jook Band, and various washboard bands, made records in the 1920s and '30s. Today this tradition has just about died out and James Campbell's group was perhaps one of the last of this genre.

Leader James Campbell was born in Nashville, Tenn. on September 17, 1906. Although he had toyed with the guitar ever since he was 13 years old, he did not turn to it for his livelihood until 1936 when an accident at the fertilizer plant where he worked, left him permanently blinded. James Campbell, however did not despair and soon formed a five to six piece band which he called the Nashville Washboard Band. It con-

sisted of himself on guitar and vocals, a second guitar, mandolin, lard can (or tub bass), and a washboard. They worked road houses, on the streets of Nashville, at parties, as well as a lot of other functions. Many of their jobs were for white audiences but occasionally they performed at a "colored" road house. They played square dances and at Vanderbilt University they were often hired to appear at fraternity parties. When I met the group, they were still playing on the streets of Nashville, usually on Friday nights, outside the Legion Hall downtown. The group by this time had added a fiddle, sometimes two, as well as trumpet and tuba. Since the washboard player died, James Campbell usually called his band The Friendly Five but I took the liberty to call them the Nashville Street Band on their first record album.

James Campbell, who did almost all the singing, had a large repertoire which included many standard blues, country breakdowns, jazz, pop songs of the past, gospel songs, and ballads. He also composed and improvised verses as well as entire songs. On these recordings, the blues dominate because the group knew that my interests were biased in that direction. The band's repertoire on the street and at social functions apparently included a lot more sentimental and



*Left to right: George Bell, Beauford Clay, Bell Ray, James Campbell, and Ralph Robinson*



popular numbers which I was not too keen about!

James Campbell, as well as most of the other members of the band, learned a great deal from one of the oldest members, Beauford Clay. Born in Franklin, Tenn., on February 7, 1900, he is heard as the main fiddler on this recording (and banjo on "John Henry") but he also played guitar and piano. He was no doubt one of the most important singers or "songsters" in the area during his prime and recalled a long list of others who had since died, but who had taught him. Names which never got on record but which hark back to an earlier era when the local songster was an important part of rural communities: L. B. Scrugg, The Nightingale, Charlie Brown, "Big Jack" Cider, John Gibson, were just a few around Franklin who handed down the tradition. Unfortunately Beauford was not able to sing because of troubles with his throat and teeth.

On trumpet was George Bell who came from a brass band tradition. He played in the high

school brass band and later with the Ringling Brothers circus when they came to Tennessee in the 1930s. On other occasions he played with the "colored" brass band of Nashville to perform at parades and other civic functions. Although George Bell denied any interest in jazz, it is evident from his playing that perhaps even in Nashville, jazz was an influence during the 1920s and '30s. In recent years his experience with the James Campbell group has also made him more aware of the blues tradition.

On second guitar, and sometimes second fiddle, is Bell Ray. Born in Franklin, Tenn., on July 30, 1909, he was also taught by Beauford, although his father, who was a country fiddler, no doubt taught him a few things. Bell Ray usually made his living as a plumber's helper.

Finally there was the bass horn (or tuba) player, Ralph Robinson, born in Franklin, Tenn., on November 16, 1885 and the oldest member of the group. He also played in the colored brass band in Nashville and had known James Campbell since the 1930s.

*(Chris Strachwitz - 1995)*



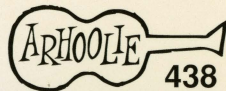
*Beauford Clay on banjo and James Campbell.*

---

*Down Home Music Since 1960: Blues • Cajun • Tex-Mex • Zydeco • Country • Jazz • Regional & World Music*  
For our complete 116-page illustrated catalog of CDs, Cassettes, Videos, & more, send \$2.00 to:  
**ARHOOLIE CATALOG, 10341 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530**

# BLIND JAMES CAMPBELL

*And His Nashville Street Band*



1. HAVE I STAYED AWAY TOO LONG
2. I'M CRAZY ABOUT YOU BABY
3. BUFFALO GAL
4. WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN
5. THE MOON MAY RISE IN BLOOD
6. JOHN HENRY
7. BABY PLEASE DON'T GO
8. JIMMY'S BLUES
9. MONKEY MAN BLUES
10. THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE
11. DETROIT BLUES
12. BEAUFORD'S BREAKDOWN
13. GAMBLING MAN
14. SITTIN' HERE DRINKING
15. JAM PIECE (*George's Boogie*)
16. I NEVER HAD NOTHING
17. DO YOU REMEMBER (*theme song*)
18. MY GAL GOT EVIL
19. BEAUFORD'S BOOGIE WOOGIE
20. WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN
21. I AM SO BLUE WHEN IT RAINS
22. PICK AND SHOVEL BLUES
23. DETROIT JUMP

*Total time: 64:00*

## James Campbell's Friendly Five:

James Campbell - *vocals and guitar*

Beauford Clay - *fiddle (banjo on "John Henry")*

Bell Ray - *second fiddle or guitar, vocal on "This Little Light of Mine," & banging of bow on tuba on "Baby Please Don't Go"*

George Bell - *trumpet*

Ralph Robinson - *bass horn/tuba*

Cover left to right: Bell Ray, James Campbell, Ralph Robinson, & Beauford Clay.

All photos © by Chris Strachwitz.

Produced by Chris Strachwitz.

Cover design by Wayne Pope, Dix Bruce, & Tom Diamant.

Recorded by Chris Strachwitz in Nashville, Tenn.: #11, 16, 17, & 18 on October 25, #1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, & 23 on October 26, 1962 and #4, 6, 9, & 20 on April 14, 1963 with one Capps condensor microphone and a Magnecord tape recorder.

Selections #15-23 previously unissued.

All songs or arrangements by James Campbell and © by Tradition Music Co. / Bug Music



9629-70438-2

Copyright © & © 1963,  
1995 by Arhoolie Prod., Inc.