

Adolph Hofner & his South Texas Swing

ARHOOLE
FOLKLYRIC
CD 7029

1. BETTER QUIT IT NOW
2. HOW I MISS YOU TONIGHT
3. DIRTY DOG
4. WE PLAYED A GAME
(Adolph Hofner)
5. DOES MY BABY LOVE ME,
YES SIR! (Adolph Hofner)
6. I'LL KEEP MY OLD GUITAR
7. BROWN EYED SWEET
(Adolph Hofner)
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MAN (Walter Donaldson)
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(Chatwell - Hofner)
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Shop, a.k.a.: Andulka Waltz) (*)
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(On Little Mary Polka) (*)
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(The Ghost) (Happy Go Lucky Polka) (*)
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 - a) Theme & Pearl Beer Commercial,
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- (*) = vocals in Czech

Re-issue edited and produced by Chris Strachwitz
Cover by Wayne Pope
Cover photo courtesy Adolph Hofner
Sound Restoration of all 78s by George Morrow of
Echo Productions using the NoNoise System.

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ADOLPH HOFNER



SOUTH TEXAS SWING



Adolph Hofner 1945

Adolph Hofner & his Texans

South Texas Swing

South Texas has one of the great melting-pot cultures of America; its music is a meeting-ground of Old World and New. Nobody personifies this in a single life more vividly than Adolph Hofner—sultan of swing, prince of polka and erstwhile country Crosby.

Adolph Hofner was born on June 8, 1916 in Moulton, a small town in Lavaca County just south of US 90, between Houston and San Antonio. His father was part German, his mother Czech; Czech was his first language, and polka music the sound of his boyhood. Many famous polka bands came from the towns around about — Shiner, Schulenberg, Yoakum, La Grange. Adolph took them in, but other sounds also claimed his attention, especially records of Hawaiian music. ("That's what got me started on strings, Hawaiian guitars.") With his brother Emil, born in 1918, he made his first steps in music on a Sears Roebuck uke. Soon they graduated to duets on

steel (Emil) and standard guitar (Adolph), and by their mid-teens they were playing in the clubs of San Antonio, where in 1926 their folks had moved to live. Emil soon became known as "Bash" Hofner who formed a trio in the early 30s and played for 40 cents a night.

But "my main object," says Adolph, "was to sing." He listened avidly to Bing Crosby, and came to enjoy Jimmie Rodgers, particularly his records with accompanying musicians. Then he heard Milton Brown and his Brownies. "Now that's what sold me on western music—because they had a band." He liked the lineup, the rhythm and most of all Milton's singing. ("I even changed my style of singing to try to sound like Milton.") And he saw which way a successful career lay in music. "I got into this western, naturally, because that's what was paying off. But I kept my popular right along with it."

Adolph first recorded with Jimmie

Revard's Oklahoma Playboys in 1936. The band, which he'd joined the year before, had been having some rough times; thinking to make a killing in unexplored territory, they took their swing stylings down to the Rio Grande Valley. "But the Valley wasn't ready for western music, man! Not at all!" Guy Lombardo, or the local Mexican music, held its sway.

Back in San Antonio they had better fortune, but Adolph still hadn't decided upon a professional career in music, and he held on to a job as a mechanic. He continued to record, with Revard, under his own name, and with Tom Dickey's Showboys. "It Makes No Difference Now," sung by Adolph with Dickey's band, was a regional jukebox hit. One of the recording scouts, Eli Oberstein, saw potential in Adolph as a Southern Bing, and things began to move. He bought a P.A. and on May 13, 1939, began his full-time musical career, at a barbecue stand outside Leming.

"Maria Elena" was a hit record of 1940, and afterwards the jobs and sessions came easier. He had some setbacks

during the war—his name was a strike against him—but as Dolph Hofner & the San Antonians he had a few good years playing swing for Foreman Phillips out on the West Coast. Hofner believes he was the first one to record "Cotton-Eyed Joe," an old fiddle tune which he says he learned from an old man in New Braunfels.

After the war Adolph returned to the Czech music of his youth, which he had recorded as early as 1936 with Jimmy Revard as well as with his own band in 1940 but apparently with little success, if we can judge by the rarity of those discs (note: # 19 through 22.) During the late 1940s and early 50s, polka music experienced a strong wave of popularity all across the country and the music of south Texas Czech bands was suddenly in demand. Adolph Hofner recorded "Julida Polka" (#23) and a number of other Czech standards (five of which are heard on Arhoolie CD 7026: **The Texas Czech Bohemian-Moravian Bands 1929-1959**). But Hofner kept up with swing and country music too. By 1950 he was sponsored by Pearl Beer and performed regularly

on "live" radio broadcasts over several regional stations. Thirty years later his Pearl Wranglers bus is still a familiar sight around San Antonio.

Adolph plays swing, country, and polka music interchangeably—he even puts out records with the two types coupled back-to-back. He's regarded with loyalty and affection across a territory any band leader would envy. This CD presents some of the milestones of his fascinating career—waltzes and pol-

kas, swing music and sweet pop, vocals in English and in Czech, all touched with the warmth of a man whose aim has always been to give people good dance music and a good time. This CD also celebrates Adolph Hofner's 55th anniversary in Country Music which was held in 1994 at his favorite dance hall, The Farmer's Daughter, in San Antonio.

(Tony Russell – 1980; with some editing for the CD release in 1994 by Chris Strachwitz)



Left to right: Ernie LaBarde, Connie Galvan, Neal Ruff, Johnny Reeves, Elroy Gerdes, Chet McIntyre, Smiley Whitley, Leon Seago, Adolph Hofner.

Personnel:

#1, 2, 7: (022122, 022126, 022133) Adolph Hofner & His Texans: Johnny Williams-fiddle, Eddie "Smiley" Whitley - steel gtr, George Pennington-piano, Adolph Hofner-guitar/vocal, Neal Ruff (?) - banjo, Buck Wheeler-bass. San Antonio, TX, April 5, 1938.

#3: (02807) Jimmie Revard & His Oklahoma Playboys: Bell McKay-fiddle; Emil Hofner-steel guitar; Eddie Whitley-piano; Curly Williams-guitar; Adolph Hofner- vocal & guitar; Cotton Cooper-banjo; Jimmie Revard-bass. San Antonio, Tx. Texas Hotel, October 22, 1936.

#19 & 20: (02941, 02942) With Jimmie Revard's band: vocal by Hofner Brothers. San Antonio, Tx., October 26, 1936.

#4 & 5: (014136, 014141) Jimmie Revard & His Oklahoma Playboys: Leonard Seago-fiddle; Emil Hofner-steel guitar; Cal Callison-accordion; George Timberlake-piano; Curly Williams- guitar; Adolph Hofner- vocal & guitar; Cotton Cooper-banjo; Jimmie Revard-bass. San Antonio, Tx. Blue Bonnet Hotel, September 14, 1937.

#6: (028583) Adolph Hofner & His Texans: possibly Johnny Williams or Leonard Seago-fiddle, Neal Ruff (?) -clarinet, Emil Hofner-steel guitar, Bill Pennington or Bert Ferguson-piano, Adolph Hofner-vocal & guitar, Dudley Frazier-bass. San Antonio, TX, October 25, 1938.

#8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 21, 22: (047679, 47680, 47673, 47677, 47678, 47675, 47676) Adolph Hofner & His

Texans: Leonard Seago-fiddle, Johnny Reeves-fiddle/drums, Emil Hofner-steel guitar, Bert Ferguson-piano, Adolph Hofner -vocal & guitar, Buck Wheeler-bass, Dallas. TX, February 13, 1940.

#13, 14, 15, 17, 18: (DAL 1198, 1195, 1201, 1197, 1206) Adolph Hofner & His San Antonians: J.R. Chatwell-fiddle, Emil 'Bash' Hofner-steel guitar, Bert Ferguson-piano, Adolph Hofner-guitar, Buck Wheeler-bass, Johnny Reeves-fiddle/drums. (On "Jessie Polka" Reeves plays 2nd fiddle.) Dallas, TX, February 28, 1941.

#16: (H 690) Adolph Hofner & His San Antonians: J.R. Chatwell-fiddle, Johnny Reeves-fiddle/drums, Walter Kleypas - accordion/piano, Emil Hofner-steel gtr., Adolph Hofner - electric gtr, Dudley Frazier - bass. Hollywood, Ca. February 28 - March 1, 1942.

#23, 24, 25: (IF 47, 30, 69) Adolph Hofner & His Orchestra: with probably Slim Wallace & Charlie Gregg - fiddles, Dave Frazier - electric guitar, Emil Hofner - steel guitar, Adolph Hofner - guitar, Charlie Poss-piano, Eddie Duncan-bass, Jimmie Blankenship-drums; San Antonio, Tx. ca. 1948/49.

#26: Theme ("Sun Bonnet Sue")-Intro-Pearl Beer Ad-You Can't Break My Heart, Draggin' the Bow, Hang Your Head in Shame (*) Theme: J.R. Chatwell-fiddle, Emil Hofner-steel guitar, Charlie Poss-piano, Adolph Hofner-guitar, Leon Merrit-bass & vocals, Eddie Bowers-drums. Radio station KTSA, San Antonio, TX. early 1950's.

(Discography courtesy of Bob Pinson of the Country Music Hall of Fame Library,

Tony Russell, and Adolph Hofner.)

Cover photo, circa 1940-KTSA San Antonio, left to right: Atlee Frazier-bass, Johnny Reeves-

drums, Walter Kleypas-piano, David Frazier-guitar, J.R. Chatwell-fiddle, Adolph Hofner-guitar, Emil Hofner-steel.

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Left to right: Eddie Bowers, J.R. Chatwell, Charlie Harris, Adolph Hofner, Emil Hofner, Leon Merrit, Charlie Poss

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Up to 78 Minutes of Historic TEXAS SWING

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