

THE COUNTRY BLUES

THE COUNTRY BLUES

EDITED BY SAMUEL B. CHARTERS



MATCHBOX BLUES (BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON) • CARELESS

STOMPERS) • LOW DOWN ROUNDER'S BLUES (PEG LEG

STEALIN', STEALIN' (MEMPHIS JUG BAND) • YOU GONNA NEED SOMEBODY ON YOUR BOND (BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON) • ALABAMA WOMAN BLUES (LEROY CARR)

SPECIAL AGENT (SLEEPY JOHN ESTES) • KEY TO THE HIGHWAY

• KING (TOMMY MCCLENNAN) • PREACHIN' BLUES (ROBERT

LOVE (LONNIE JOHNSON) • WALK RIGHT IN (CANNON'S

HOWELL) • STATESBORO BLUES (BLIND WILLIE MCTELL)

(BIG BILL) • FIXIN' TO DIE (BUKKA WHITE) • I'M A GUITAR

JOHNSON) • I BEEN TREATED WRONG (WASHBOARD SAM) •

THE COUNTRY BLUES

SIDE 1

MATCHBOX BLUES
(BLIND LEMON JEFFERSON)
CARELESS LOVE
(LONNIE JOHNSON)
WALK RIGHT IN
(CANNON'S JUG STOMPERS)
LOW DOWN ROUNDER'S BLUES
(PEG LEG HOWELL)
STATESBORO BLUES
(BLIND WILLIE MC TELL)
STEALIN', STEALIN'
(MEMPHIS JUG BAND)
YOU GONNA NEED SOMEBODY
ON YOUR BOND
(BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON)

SIDE 2

ALABAMA WOMAN BLUES
(LEROY CARR)
SPECIAL AGENT
(SLEEPY JOHN ESTES)
KEY TO THE HIGHWAY
(BIG BILL)
FIXIN' TO DIE
(BUKKA WHITE)
I'M A GUITAR KING
(TOMMY MC CLENNAN)
PREACHIN' BLUES
(ROBERT JOHNSON)
I BEEN TREATED WRONG
(WASHBOARD SAM)

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

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THE COUNTRY BLUES

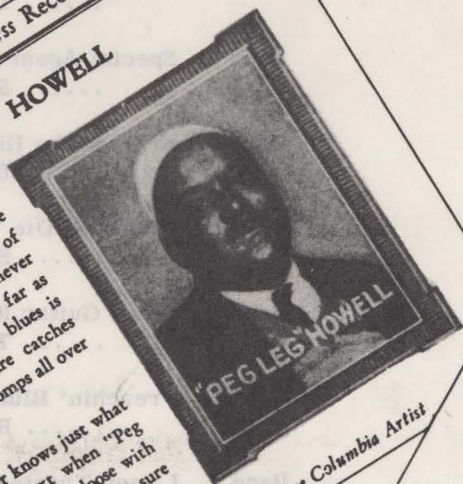
Columbia New Process Records

"PEG LEG" HOWELL

WHEN "Peg Leg" Howell lost his leg, the world gained a great singer of blues. The loss of a leg never bothered "Peg Leg" as far as chasing around after blues is concerned. He sure catches them and then stomps all over them.

Nobody ever knows just what will happen next when "Peg Leg" Howell is let loose with a guitar, but it always is sure to be good.

"Peg Leg" Howell is an Exclusive Columbia Artist



BLIND WILLIE JOHNSON

This new and exclusive Columbia artist, Blind Willie Johnson, sings sacred selections in a way that you have never heard before. Be sure to hear his first record and listen close to that guitar accompaniment. Nothing like it where else.

Record No. 14276-D, 10-inch
I Know His Blood Can Make Me Whole
Jesus Make Up My Dying Bed

Ask Your Dealer for Latest Race Record Catalog
Columbia Phonograph Company, 1819 Broadway, New York City

Columbia
NEW PROCESS RECORDS
Made the New Way - Electrically
Vine-tonal Recording - The Records without Scratch

SOUTHERN FLOOD BLUES

PERFECT RECORD
7-04-68

TERRIBLE FLOOD BLUES
SOUTHERN FLOOD BLUES

Sung by **BIG BILL**

EDITED BY SAMUEL B. CHARTERS

Paramount Records



Blind Lemon Jefferson
No wonder these two blues aces "Blind" Lemon Jefferson and Charlie Jackson are so popular, they sing a big hit for you every time. Blind Lemon Jefferson is real blue in CHINCH BUG—sings an honest to goodness blues—and how!

Charlie Jackson
12551—Chinich Bug Blues—Vocal-Guitar Acc. Lemon Jefferson
12552—Decatilla Brownsville Blues—Vocal—Guitar Acc. Lemon Jefferson
12553—Look Out Papa Don't Tear Your Pants—Vocal-Guitar Acc. Charlie Jackson
Baby Don't You Be So Mean—Vocal—Banjo Acc. Charlie Jackson

Sacred Songs and Sermons

12527—The Scarlet Thread In The Window—Sermon—Son of Thunder... Johnnie Blakey
On This Rock I Will Build My Church—Sermon—Son of Thunder... Johnnie Blakey
12529—Where Were You Job—Sermon... Rev. W. A. White
Many Rags—Sermon... Rev. W. A. White
12542—Wait Till I Put On My Robe—Vocal... Famous Jubilee Singers
There's No Hiding Place—Vocal... Famous Jubilee Singers
12555—John Doe Saw That Holy Number—Sermon... Rev. M. L. Cipson and Sanctified Congregation
Sympathetic Christ—Sermon... Rev. M. L. Cipson and Sanctified Congregation

THE COUNTRY BLUES

Side 1

- Band 1. Matchbox Blues
..... Blind Lemon Jefferson
- Band 2. Careless Love
..... Lonnie Johnson
- Band 3. Walk Right In
..... Cannon's Jug Stompers
- Band 4. Low Down Rounder's Blues
..... Peg Leg Howell
- Band 5. Statesboro Blues
..... Blind Willie McTell
- Band 6. Stealin', Stealin'
..... Memphis Jug Band
- Band 7. You Gonna Need Somebody On Your Bond
..... Blind Willie Johnson

Side 2

- Band 1. Alabama Woman Blues
..... Leroy Carr
- Band 2. Special Agent
..... Sleepy John Estes
- Band 3. Key To The Highway
..... Big Bill
- Band 4. Fixin' To Die
..... Bukka White
- Band 5. I'm A Guitar King
..... Tommy McClennan
- Band 6. Preachin' Blues
..... Robert Johnson
- Band 7. I Been Treated Wrong
..... Washboard Sam



Samuel B. Charters

During the years that I was doing research for the book THE COUNTRY BLUES, recently published by Rinehart & Company, one of the difficulties was always the rarity of the early blues recordings. Most of the recordings were released during the period between 1927 and 1931, when the sudden popularity of the radio was already beginning to seriously effect record sales, and they never were sold in large quantities. Often local distributors, like the Hauk Company in Memphis, arranged for Victor records to press small quantities of blues performances by local favorites and the initial pressing, usually 5,000 copies, was sold within a small area. The companies were often frankly speculating on the possible reception of many of the releases. The artist was recorded once, a small pressing was released, and if it didn't catch on with the unpredictable blues audience both the record and the artist were dropped from the catalog. As a result many of the blues records from this period are among the rarest collectors items.

The singers who were popular favorites, like Leroy Carr, Lemon Jefferson, Lonnie Johnson, or Tampa Red, were a little more fortunate; their records sold by the hundreds of thousands. But even with their recordings there were factors contributing to their rarity. Most of them were sold through mail order houses to southern Negro homes. By the time a record arrived everyone in the neighborhood wanted to hear it and the copies were played hundreds of times. Usually the machines were of poor quality and the needles were very worn. Within a few weeks the record was so worn that it had to be discarded. By the time the copies had reached southern junk shops where collectors were able to pick them up there was little left to them besides the labels.

Despite a new emphasis on blues recordings by many of the companies in the Thirties it is almost as difficult to find many of these records as it is to find the earlier ones. Big Bill sold very well, and his Vocalion releases are still easy to find. There were the well advertised Bluebird recordings by Washboard Sam, Tampa Red, and two or three others. But the Depression years were poor and hard, and even with many of the records retailing for 25 cents or 35 cents sales were still very poor. The Vocalion releases of a lesser known singer like Robert Johnson are as rare as many of the local releases of the Twenties. And again there is the problem of poor condition. As a result of all these factors building a blues collection is an exasperating and expensive job.

When the book was in its final stages Rinehart and Company suggested that a long playing record with a selection of some of the most interesting blues mentioned in the text might be of considerable help to the general reader who is being introduced to the country blues for the first time. Moses Asch of Folkways Records, who has already re-issued many of the early records and for whom I have done a number of documentary recordings, seemed to be the most logical person to approach with the idea. He felt it was an excellent idea and this documentation of the early blues recordings is the result. It is intended as an appendix to the Rinehart book, THE COUNTRY BLUES, where the lives and the songs of the artists are discussed, but it is of considerable value in itself as a musical survey of the blues idiom.

My own collection was inadequate in many areas, usually because of the poor condition of many of the records I have found in "junking" trips in southern cities. My records were alright



Standing - Scrapper Blackwell
Seated - Leroy Carr
Photo by Henry DeLowlal Green,
courtesy RCA-Victor

for research purposes, but not good enough to re-issue. Three New York collectors, Pete Whalen, Pete Kaufman, and Ben Kaplan, have lent me a number of items from their personal collections and I would like to express my thanks for their help. The "Preaching Blues" of Robert Johnson was taken from a test-pressing in Pete Whalen's collection and seems to be a different take from the one finally used by Vocalion for their release. The selections by Bukka White and Big Bill are from the collection at Folkways. (Harry Smith's original)

An effort was made, in the selection, to include some of the finest blues recordings of not only the Twenties, but also the Thirties, and the fourteen records finally chosen include nearly every style of the Country Blues. It should be noted that I have tried to use selections which

have not been used on the Folkways series, AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC, (edited by Harry Smith). Anyone who is interested in hearing more of the early recordings of singers like Sleepy John Estes, Lemon Jefferson, the Memphis Jug Band, Cannon's Jug Stompers, Rabbit Brown, Mississippi John Hurt, or Charlie Patton will find this set of re-issues very valuable.

In recent years there has been a tendency on the part of many of the larger record companies, who control many of the blues recordings, to try to prevent their re-issue, even though they have no intention of re-issuing the recording themselves. In this regard I would like to quote Frederic Ramsey's comments in the notes to Volume 11 of the series of jazz re-issues that he did for Folkways in 1950-1953. They apply just as much to blues recordings as they do to jazz recordings.

"The 33 1/3 long play microgroove record had been successfully introduced and, by early 1950, was well on its way to universal acceptance. Yet there was no indication on the part of any major record company, among catalogs redundant with musical comedies, popular singers, popular orchestras, and popular personalities, that the artistically valid jazz material in its archives would be re-issued. The reason given most frequently for holding back was that jazz of this sort 'wasn't commercial enough'....

Yet because a demand existed, at least among collectors and serious students, for re-issues of classic jazz performances, several small companies had already, by 1950, challenged the legality of what constituted an arbitrary withholding of material. Through research into laws concerning copyright of mechanical reproductions, they had unearthed the pertinent fact that there was 'no provision in the copyright law covering a particular interpretation or rendition of a copyrighted work.' This discovery, which might never have been made if record companies suppressing significant renditions had not persisted in that policy, heralded a sort of wildcat era of jazz re-issues.

All these, and the many other complications that ensued, might have been avoided had members of the still-young, still arrogant record industry turned for guidance to a comparable field, that of publishing, and sought from it a reasonable solution. One has only to pick up an anthology of poetry, almost any anthology, to find that poems (the parallel holds precisely, for poetry, although admittedly 'non-commercial,' has a small but steady following among literate audiences) are traded about on a 'permission' basis from one publisher to the next, all without threat of suits, and all on a friendly and constructive basis.

The solution, for large record companies weighted down with heavy commercial commitments, would seem to be that matrices from their archives that have artistic but unsaleable merit ('unsaleable,' that is, when placed on the same counter alongside 'South Pacific'

or 'Wonderful Town'), could be licensed to independent companies for reproduction at a small but reasonable fee. This would allow the operator to maintain a sort of 'reprint' business (again, the parallel to book publishing is obvious), and would not cramp the style of the major company with other matters on its mind.

Several companies, both large and small, seemed willing to proceed on such a basis. Accordingly, a system of licensing was worked out. Cooperating organizations gave full contractual consent and were paid for each reissued performance. Others, while not entering into contract, gave tacit consent by refraining from further restraint. It began to look as if the first anthology of recorded jazz could at last appear...

As of mid-1953, it is becoming apparent that the stimulus of this, the first anthology of jazz, has made several record companies aware of the small but persistent public that clamors for authentic jazz. Further, one or two smaller companies have since changed hands, and now that a demand has been created, are reconsidering their original willingness to cooperate with permissions, even for the non-commercial purpose of creating an anthology which is distributed for the most part to students and educational institutions....

The problem of re-issues is no closer to solution in 1959 than it was six years ago, but we have felt that this documentation was too important to wait for the inevitable change in attitude by the larger companies.

In addition to this record and the AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC series it is hoped that the serious student of the blues and their development will have an opportunity to make use of other Folkways documentations which were recorded during the research trips for the book. "Blind Willie Johnson" (FG3585) "American Skiffle Bands" (FA2610) and "Lightnin' Hopkins" (FS3822) will be of considerable value and interest.

LITHO IN U.S.A.



Gus Cannon and Charlie Burse

FOLKWAYS Records

AND SERVICE CORP., 632 BROADWAY, N.Y.C. 10012
Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ RPM

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THE COUNTRY BLUES

Compiled and edited by
SAMUEL B. CHARTERS

Side 1

RF-1A

- Band 1: MATCHBOX BLUES (Blind Lemon Jefferson)
- Band 2: CARELESS LOVE (Lonnie Johnson)
- Band 3: WALK RIGHT IN (Cannon's Jug Stompers)
- Band 4: LOW DOWN ROUNDER'S BLUES (Peg Leg Howell)
- Band 5: STATESBORO BLUES (Blind Willie McTell)
- Band 6: STEALIN', STEALIN' (Memphis Jug Band)
- Band 7: YOU GONNA NEED SOMEBODY ON YOUR BOND
(Blind Willie Johnson)

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Long Playing Non-Breakable Micro Groove 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ RPM

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THE COUNTRY BLUES

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Side 2

RF-1B

- Band 1: ALABAMA WOMAN BLUES (Leroy Carr)
- Band 2: SPECIAL AGENT (Sleepy John Estes)
- Band 3: KEY TO THE HIGHWAY (Big Bill Broonzy)
- Band 4: FIXIN' TO DIE (Bukka White)
- Band 5: I'M A GUITAR KING (Tommy McClennan)
- Band 6: PREACHIN' BLUES (Robert Johnson)
- Band 7: I BEEN TREATED WRONG (Washbeard Sam)