

THE JUG BANDS



COMPILED AND EDITED BY
SAMUEL CHARTERS
RF RECORDS 6

THE JUG BANDS

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

BLUES, JUST BLUES, THAT'S ALL
HATCHET HEAD BLUES
The Old Southern Jug Band
BILL WILSON
The Birmingham Jug Band
RISING SUN BLUES
WHAT'S THAT TASTES LIKE GRAVY
King David's Jug Band
MULE GET UP IN THE ALLEY
Canon's Jug Stompers
STREETIN' THE BLUES
Clifford's Louisville Jug Band

OVEREAS STOMP
WHITEWASH STATION
SHE DONE SOLD IT OUT
Memphis Jug Band
FLORIDA BLUES
BANDONERO
CARPET ALLEY
HOUSE RENT RAG
The Dixieland Jug Blowers

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FOLKLIFE PROGRAM
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

THE JUG BANDS

Compiled and edited by Samuel Charters

Samuel Charters

One of the most distinctive sounds in the rich variety of American folk music is the sound of the jug band, the small country "breakdown" bands that developed in the 1920's into a colorful and exciting aspect of both the country blues and classic jazz. Although in the present revival of jug band music there has been a great deal of confusion as to what a jug band should sound like there was little of this confusion in the years when the jug bands were beginning to record. The characteristic sound of the jug band was the sound of the jug, low and hoarse below the higher pitch of the violin, the harmonica, or even the clarinet and saxophone. There were other social reasons for the use of the jug - it was cheaply available and easy to carry around, as well as being similar to earlier African blown instruments - but it was the sound of the jug that set the bands apart. There was no use of instruments like the wash tub bass, which were part of the blues rather than jug band music. The tub bass, an Afro-American derivation of the African earth bow, is only a substitute for the more expensive and fragile string bass, without the distinctive tone of the jug.

The distinctiveness of the jug gave a special quality to the music as well, and there developed with the bands a large body of music suited to the jug bands. Usually it was country dance music and breakdowns, some of it related to the songs of the old minstrel theatre, but the greatest of the bands, like the Memphis Jug Band or Cannon's Jug Stompers could play intensely moving blues as well. There were actually two jug band styles that grew up together in the twenties, just as there were two styles in the blues. In the cities there was another jug band tradition that mingled with the classic jazz styles of the twenties; the greatest of the city jug bands Clifford Hayes's Dixieland Jug Blowers.

As with the blues, it was the city jug bands that recorded first. Clifford Hayes, who came from Louisville, Kentucky, recorded as early as 1923 or 1924 with his Old Southern Jug Band, a group that included a jug, a violin, tenor banjo, 6-string banjo, and muted cornet. When Will Shade, a young guitar player working along Beale Street in Memphis, decided to put a jug band together it was because he wanted to get a band like the Hayes's Jug Blowers. His band didn't sound at all like the Louisville group, but American folk music is the richer for it. His "Memphis Jug Band" was one of the most successful of the country jug bands, and stayed together for a number of years, not only as a recording group, but as a novelty band for dances in the country areas near Memphis. It was the success of the Memphis Jug Band that led Ralph Peer, the most important of the early American folk collectors, to ask Will if there weren't more bands in Memphis. Will told him to get in touch with Gus Cannon, a medicine show banjo player and entertainer, and with Cannon's Jug Stompers the country jug band reached some of its highest musical levels.

The jug bands have almost entirely disappeared from the South, although until recently there were still

occasional skiffle groups entertaining tourists that used a jug or a piece of pipe for novelty numbers. There are ugly social memories that are part of the life that produced jug band music and for many younger Negroes the music itself still has some of this stigma. From time to time there have been efforts made to revive the jug bands by city folk singers, in California in the late 1940's and in New York and Boston in the early 1960's, but they have been somewhat less than successful as a musical expression. Some of the early jug band music was casual and seemingly unconcerned with anything very serious, but the city singers somehow have managed to confuse this with the atmosphere of the vaudeville show and the dixieland band. In an important sense, however, the jug bands and their music will always be part of the American musical scene. They flowered at a moment when American folk music was being recorded, when country music and city music of every kind was being released by nearly every record company. On the early recordings there is still the sound of the jug band, with all of its swagger, all of its sensitivity, and, in a sense, all of its musical grandeur.

SIDE 1.

- Band 1. THE OLD SOUTHERN JUG BAND
Blues, Just Blues, That's All
- Band 2. Hatchet Head Blues
- Band 3. THE BIRMINGHAM JUG BAND
Bill Wilson
- Band 4. KING DAVID'S JUG BAND
Rising Sun Blues
- Band 5. What's That Tastes Like Gravy
- Band 6. CANNON'S JUG STOMPERS
Mule Get Up In Th Alley
- Band 7. CLIFFORD'S LOUISVILLE JUG BAND
Struttin' The Blues

SIDE 2.

- Band 1. THE MEMPHIS JUG BAND
Overseas Stomp
- Band 2. Whitewash Station
- Band 3. She Done Sold It Out
THE DIXIELAND JUG BLOWERS
- Band 4. Florida Blues
- Band 5. Banjoreno
- Band 6. Carpet Alley
- Band 1. House Rent Rag

Band 1. and Band 2. Blues, Just Blues, That's All and Hatchet Head Blues by The Old Southern Jug Band. Clifford Hayes, violin; Cal Smith, tenor banjo; Earl McDonald, jug; unknown six string banjo and cornet. Late 1923 or early 1924.

This is probably the earliest jug band recording, and it is appropriate that it was a recording by Clifford Hayes and the group that was to become the Dixieland Jug Blowers. Here is a jug band with much of the rhythmic drive of an early jazz group, even including a dimly recorded cornet. The jug solo by Earl McDonald is particularly skilled, and already the young Cal Smith, on tenor guitar, demonstrates some of the brilliance that was to make him an important transitional figure in the development of modern jazz guitar. He was a nephew of Hayes', and remained with him for the rest of his long recording career.

Band 3. Bill Wilson by The Birmingham Jug Band. Jug, two harmonicas, mandolin, and guitar. Recorded in Birmingham, Ala., December 11, 1930.

Big Joe Williams remembered recording with a jug band in Birmingham about this time, and some of the men in this group may be the ones he has mentioned working with. Bogus Ben Covington was playing guitar and Jay Bird Coleman, the great blues harmonica player from Bessemer, Alabama, was one of the other musicians. It was a medicine show band working through the countryside in northern Mississippi and Alabama. Bill Wilson is another version of John Henry, even though his name has been changed, and in an early verse he is described as "... a wagon drivin' man."

Band 4. Rising Sun Blues and Band 5. What's That Tastes Like Gravy by King David's Jug Band. Jug, mandolin, and guitar. April, 1931.

King David's Jug Band is one of the shadowy country groups who were recorded and forgotten; their names lost somewhere in a company file. The music, however, is not shadowy, but is in the best country tradition of rough "breakdown" dances. The jug, in this case, may be a piece of pipe, and it is interesting to notice that it is being used as a lead instrument. The singer, who also seems to be playing the jug, alternates choruses between the instrument and the voice.

Band 6. Mule Get Up In The Alley. Cannon's Jug Stompers. Gus Cannon, jug and 5-string banjo; Hosie Woods, kazoo and guitar; Noah Lewis, harmonica. Memphis, October 3, 1929.

When Gus Cannon recorded with his Jug Stompers for the last sessions he was working again with his old medicine show partner Hosie Woods, and Mule Get Up In The Alley was one of their favorites. Gus still remembers most of the words, and if he's in the mood he plays it on his banjo when someone drops by his small house on the outskirts of Memphis.

Band 7. Struttin' The Blues by Clifford's Louisville Jug Band. Clifford Hayes, violin; Cal Smith, tenor banjo; Earl McDonald, jug; unknown 6-string banjo and cornet. 1924.

This group is, of course, the Old Southern Jug Band, under a different name. The tune, as with most of their recordings, was one of Hayes' compositions.

SIDE TWO

Band 1, 2, and 3. Overseas Stomp, Whitewash Station, and She Done Sold It Out by the Memphis Jug Band. The personnel varies, but Will Weldon plays guitar on the first two selections, along with Jab Jones, jug and vocal, Ben Ramey, kazoo; Vol Stevens, guitar; and Will Shade, harmonica. On the third selection Charlie Burse is playing tenor guitar, Robert Burse, washboard; Jab Jones, piano; and Will Shade, harmonica and vocal. 1927, 1928, and 1934.

The Memphis Jug Band is perhaps the best known of the country jug bands, and their records still turn up in junk shops everywhere in the South, usually so enthusiastically played and replayed that it is impossible to hear much more than a dim scratching over the surface noise. The band was led by Will Shade, and in its later years by Will and Charlie Burse together. It was a haphazard group, but there was an exuberant enthusiasm in most of the recordings, and they even were able to perform moving slow blues like the well known "K. C. Moan" that was included in the Folkways' American Folk Music Anthology and the "Stealin', Stealin'" that was included in the RBF "The Country Blues" anthology. The group was casually organized when Will decided that he wanted to have a band "... like the boys in Louisville," the Clifford Hayes band. He was able to hold a group together for a number of years, as well as compose or arrange almost any number of songs and blues for a recording session; so the band is the most extensively recorded of any of the early jug bands. Often the songs were nondescript, like the She Done Sold It Out, but there were occasional moments like Overseas Stomp, when their material was richly humorous. The song begins as a tribute to Lindbergh's flight, but takes a number of turns by the time Jab Jones has finished singing it.

Band 4, 5, 6, and 7. Florida Blues, Banjoreno, Carpet Alley, and House Rent Rag by the Dixieland Jug Blowers. Clifford Hayes, violin or alto saxophone; Cal Smith, tenor banjo or tenor guitar; Earl McDonald, jug; Henry Miles, violin; Hess Grundy, trombone; Dan Briscoe, piano; unknown six string banjo, unknown plectrum banjo on Banjoreno, unknown second jug. The clarinetist on Carpet Alley and House Rent Rag is Johnny Dodds. Recorded in Chicago December 10, 1926 (bands 4 and 5) and December 11, 1926 (bands 5 and 6.)

The Dixieland Jug Blowers were the greatest of the city jug bands, and in their music can be heard a brilliant fusion of the rough country jug music with the most highly developed jazz of the middle twenties. The band was able to move from one mood to another without hesitation, and their recordings are of a high level of excellence. Florida Blues is remarkable for the fine jug solos of Earl McDonald, who is perhaps the finest jug player ever to record, and on Banjoreno, a tour-de-force for tenor, plectrum, and six string banjos, it is Cal Smith who drives the band. Carpet Alley is an imaginative orchestral blues for which the greatest jazz clarinetist of the 1920's, the New Orleans musician Johnny Dodds, has been added; and at the same session House Rent Rag was recorded, with its "sermon" on the shortening of women's skirts and women's hair. All four performances were recorded in two winter days in Chicago in 1926, but they manage to demonstrate not only the fullness of the jug band's range, but also the tonal richness which the jug can give to a band.

Clifford Hayes kept his band together for many years, recording as Clifford Hayes Louisville Stompers when the jug bands had lost their popularity. It was in these later recordings in which Cal Smith, playing tenor guitar, was to develop a highly influential jazz style on pieces like Blue Guitar Stomp and Tenor Guitar Fiend. The band stayed together until Hayes' death early in the 1940's, and during the war

the piano player and the trombone player, Dan Briscoe and Hess Grundy, were still playing for debutante parties and society dances. The Dixieland Jug Blowers, or - more properly - the various jug band groups led by Clifford Hayes, have left a deep imprint not only in the music of the jug bands, but in American popular music itself.

DIXIELAND JUG BLOWERS, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, 1927.
Personnel of this early rhythm band still remains to be identified.

photo courtesy RCA Victor Records



BLUES, JAZZ, GOSPEL AND OFFBEAT

Numerical Listing and Order Form

- _FA 2004 TAKE THIS HAMMER, Leadbelly Legacy, Vol. 1
 _FA 2006 SONY TERRY'S WASHBOARD BAND, Country Blues
 _FA 2014 ROCK ISLAND LINE, Leadbelly Vol. 2
 _FA 2024 LEADBELL'S LEGACY Vol. 3, Early recordings
 _FA 2028 GET ON BOARD, Jump Blues with Terry, McGhee
 _FA 2030 BLUES BY BROWNIE MCGHEE, Blues with guitar
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 _FA 2035 SONY TERRY HARMONICA & VOCALS
 _FA 2038 SPIRITUALS, with Dock Reed and Vera Hall
 _FA 2201 COUNTRY DANCE MUSIC with washboard band (gubbecker)
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 _FJ 2292 MARY LOU WILLIAMS, Record session, rehearsal
 _FJ 2293 ART TATUM TINO, Rehearsal session, recordings
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 _FA 2327 BROWNIE MCGHEE & SONY TERRY, Folk-blues
 _FA 2328 BIG BILL BROONZY, All-time great blues, ON THE ROAD, Sonny Terry, Street McGhee, etc.
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 _FA 2422 TRADITIONAL BLUES, Vol. 1, Sung by Brownie McGhee
 _FA 2422 TRADITIONAL BLUES, Vol. 2, Ten more blues by McGhee
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 _FA 2463 MUSIC OF NEW ORLEANS Vol. 3, Music from Dance Halls
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 _FA 2653 MUSIC FROM THE SOUTH Vol. 4, Horace Spott No. 3
 _FA 2654 MUSIC FROM THE SOUTH Vol. 5, Song, play & dance
 _FA 2655 MUSIC FROM THE SOUTH Vol. 6, Elder songsters No. 1

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 _FA 2658 MUSIC FROM THE SOUTH Vol. 9, Song & worship
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 _FJ 2803 HISTORY OF JAZZ Vol. 3, Dixieland
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 _FJ 2807 HISTORY OF JAZZ Vol. 7, New York 1922-34
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 _FJ 2809 HISTORY OF JAZZ Vol. 9, Piano
 _FJ 2810 HISTORY OF JAZZ Vol. 10, Boogie, Jump, K.C.
 _FJ 2811 HISTORY OF JAZZ Vol. 11, Addenda
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 _FJ 2863 JAZZ OF TODAY, Brian Browne Three
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 _FA 2842a/LEADBELL'S LAST SESSIONS Vol. 2, Pt. 1
 _FA 2842c/LEADBELL'S LAST SESSIONS Vol. 2, Pt. 2
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 _FJ 3527 LITTLE BROTHER MONTGOMERY, Country blues piano
 _FJ 3529 TWELVE-STRING GUITAR, Folk songs and blues
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 _FJ 3538 TAMBOURINES TO GLORY, Gospel songs on Broadway
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 _FJ 3623 FURRY LEWIS, Famous blues singer in song, interview
 _FJ 3624 ARBEE'S BLUES, Arbee Sudham and Memphis Slim
 _FJ 3625 WOMEN BLUES OF CHAMPION JACK DUPREE
 _FJ 3626 BLUES BY JAZZ GILUM, with Sudham and Memphis Slim
 _FJ 3627 BLUES BY ROOSEVELT SYKES, All-time blues great
 _FJ 3639 LITTLE BROTHER MONTGOMERY PLAYS CHURCH MUSIC
 _FJ 3657 PLANO PIECES OF KERN, GERSHWIN, YOU-MANS, etc.
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 _FJ 4474 NEGRO FOLK MUSIC OF ALABAMA Vol. 6, Ring games, play
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 _FJ 5589 DAVIS, M. Larue
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THE JUG BANDS

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BAND 1. BLUES, JUST BLUES, THAT'S ALL

RF-6A

SIDE 1
33 1/3 RPM

RBF



- BAND 2. HATCHET HEAD BLUES
The Old Southern Jug Band
- BAND 3. BILL WILSON
The Birmingham Jug Band
- BAND 4. RISING SUN BLUES
King David's Jug Band
- BAND 5. WHAT'S THAT TASTES LIKE GRAVY
Cannon's Jug Stompers
- BAND 6. MULE GET UP IN THE ALLEY
Clifford's Louisville Jug Band
- BAND 7. STRUTTIN' THE BLUES

47 N.Y. 36

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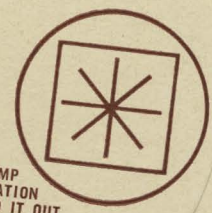
THE JUG BANDS

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SIDE II
33 1/3 RPM

RF-6B

RBF



- BAND 1. OVERSEAS STOMP
- BAND 2. WHITEWASH STATION
- BAND 3. SHE DONE SOLD IT OUT
Memphis Jug Band
- BAND 4. FLORIDA BLUES
- BAND 5. PANJORENO
- BAND 6. CARPET ALLEY
- BAND 7. HOUSE RENT RAG
The Dixieland Jug Blowers

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