

STEREO:DISC

MES 335

monitor
high fidelity recordings

Brother John Sellers

Baptist
shouts!

& Gospel Songs

with introduction by
Thomas A. Dorsey

This stereophonic long-playing (33 $\frac{1}{3}$ rpm microgroove) record is made for playback on "45/45" dual-channel systems. It should be played only with cartridges designed for stereophonic reproduction. The use of a monophonic (or monaural) cartridge may permanently injure this record.

STEREO DISC

MFS 335

monitor
high fidelity recordings

THIS RECORDING IS ALSO AVAILABLE MONAURALLY: MF 335

BROTHER JOHN SELLERS

BAPTIST SHOUTS and GOSPEL SONGS

RETURN TO ARCHIVE
CENTER FOR FOLKLIFE PROGRAMS
AND CULTURAL STUDIES
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Side One

1. I'M COMING BACK HOME TO LIVE WITH JESUS
2. PRECIOUS LORD
3. HE'S MY ROCK
4. WADE IN THE WATER
5. GOD IS COMING ON THE CLOUDS
6. I HAD A DREAM

Side Two

1. SINNER MAN
2. ONLY BELIEVE
3. HE TOOK MY FEET OUT OF THE MIRY CLAY
4. LITTLE WOODEN CHURCH ON THE HILL
5. SING ON MY SINGER
6. HOW COME ME HERE

With Ernest Hayes, Piano and Organ; Herman Stevens, Piano; Mickey Baker, Guitar; Panama Francis, Drums; Haywood Henry, Flute and Tenor Sax; Lloyd Trotman, Bass

INTRODUCTION

by THOMAS A. DORSEY

Internationally Known Gospel Songwriter

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING issue from the soul as the flowers turn their faces to the sun. Nothing so prepares the heart and mind for the reception of God's word as gospel songs, spirituals, and Baptist shouts sung with the spirit and with understanding.

Brother Sellers is a singer of a great variety of songs — gospel, spirituals, folk, and Baptist shouts. In 1940 he linked up with Mahalia Jackson and travelled with her and this writer to many gospel singing programs where he was given a chance to present his authentic style of singing to the public.

Some of the songs Brother John Sellers sings in this particular collection were written by the writer of this note, namely:

PRECIOUS LORD: In 1932 I was singing in a church service in St. Louis, Missouri, when I received a telegram stating that my wife had just died in Chicago. When I arrived home the next morning I found that my newly born son had also died during the night. Out of this ordeal *Precious Lord* was written. The singer breathes his very soul into this song.

COMING BACK HOME: This is a song that bespeaks real action and joy. Shouts, loud cries, with vociferous hallelujahs and Amens, are found almost predominantly among the Baptists. It is said that other sects who exhibit fiery fervor and glorious spiritual exaltation were Baptists at some time or other. Being familiar with the styles and moods of many different religious connections, Brother Sellers came in contact with not only the quiet, serene congregations but was often in the midst of the shouting, jumping, and hand-clapping type of meeting.

WOODEN CHURCH ON THE HILL: This is in memory of boyhood days down in Georgia, where we would put chairs into the old country wagon and drive five miles to this little church on the hill. We didn't have much, but we were happy.

For a singer like Brother Sellers, other songs in this album such as *Wade in the Water*, *He's My Rock*, and *Only Believe*, were born out of real conditions.

Gospel songs bring joy, peace and happiness. They edify men and glorify God. They find their places in the hearts of men. They come into being by special divine impress and not as ordinary songs.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE BY BROTHER JOHN SELLERS

I'm called "Brother John" because it's part of my church custom — the same church that Sister Rosetta Tharpe belonged to.

I was born in Clarksdale, Mississippi in 1924, and was raised in Greenville, on the Mississippi River. My father was a railroad man, and I was raised mostly by my godmother. She owned a building and two acres of land in a place known as Herman's Addition, and she ran a sporting house there. My job was to run errands for the people in the house. Clarksdale, by the way, is the place near where Bessie Smith died in an automobile accident. It's the place also where Alan Lomax found Muddy Waters working as a field hand.

In 1930 when the drought came, we were poverty stricken. Many times we used to go fishing for little crawfish in the small ponds and lakes. When a pond would go dry, the crawfish would build a kind of little bank of dirt on the side of the pond, and when we saw these little piles we knew the crawfish were there and we would go and fish there. We would eat these little fishes — we also ate a wild green that smelled like pepper grass.

At that time minstrel shows came to our town and I danced and sang for them. They gave me money for this — sometimes \$2.00, sometimes \$5.00 — always some little prize. Many times this money was used for the family to live on.

I started attending church when I was six years old. This was the Church of God and Christ, but most people in those days called them the Holy Roller or Sanctified Churches because they used drums, horns, cymbals, and tambourines, which I play myself. They were also known for a dance they called the Holy Dance.

When I was a young boy, I would kind of steal down to the barrelhouse on Saturday nights, and peep through cracks in the wall to hear Le Roy Carr. The barrelhouse was in Burdette, Mississippi, where the terrible flood destroyed so many houses and people.

Later on my aunt came to take me to Chicago — that was in 1934 — to further my education. I went to school and followed the same churches there. That was the year that I met Mahalia Jackson. She was singing with the famous Johnson singers and I was inspired through listening to her and the group of singers which was led by Prince Johnson. I also met Big Bill Broonzy that year, and he was very important in my life. He taught me a great many songs, and encouraged me and was a good friend.

The minister of my church at that time was the late Rev. Bobby Williams, and the first time my name was printed on a handbill was in something he said about me — "*Fire falls from Heaven when little Brother John sings*".

Then my career ventured out to travelling through Chicago and outlying districts with Mahalia Jackson and the late Emma Jackson. I went out on my own as a soloist in 1941. Then I went to New York in 1945 and in 1946, John Hammond got me my first job, at the Apollo Theatre, with Dizzy Gillespie. For some years after that I made recordings for various companies, I worked in clubs throughout the United States and Canada, and kept busy until I went to Europe early in 1957.

I sang in London, Brussels, and Paris, where I also did some TV work, and made a movie under the direction of Maurice Blettery called "*Ethnic Folk Songs of the Southland*".

After my European appearances I came back to the U.S. in January, 1958 and have been singing in churches and at festivals throughout the country.



MP 505 Brother John Sellers
(Also in stereo: MPS 6002)

For complete catalogue write:
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For the care of your records check needle periodically; store away from heat; wipe with a damp cloth before playing. For playback on wide-range equipment use RIAA curve.

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