Mance Lipscomb

Live! at The Cabale

1. Baby Don't You Lay It On Me (2:25) (L-83)
2. Meet Me in the Bottom (2:30) (L-33)
3. You Gonna Miss Me (2:50) (L-40)
4. Keep On Truckin' (1:15) (L-41)
5. Trouble in Mind (R.M. Jones) (3:00) (L-27)
6. Tom Moore Blues (3:40) (L-29)
7. Mance's Short Haired Woman (3:45) (L-45)
8. Tra-La-Ra-La Doodle All Day (2:20) (L-97)
9. Shine On Harvest Moon (2:20) (L-63)
10. Run Sinner, Run (2:30) (L-66)
11. Key To The Highway (W. Brown) (3:30) (L-98)
12. Rock Me Mama (3:45) (L-111)
13. Wonder Where My Easy Rider Done Gone (3:20) (L-115)
14. Late Night Blues & Boogie Woogie (3:40)
15. Early Days Back Home - talking (12:10)
16. Cocaine Done Killed My Baby (2:20)
17. I Wonder Why (4:40)
18. It Ain't Gonna Rain No More (2:25)
19. You Gonna Quit Me Baby (2:30)
20. When The Saints Go Marching In (2:20) (5-17)
21. Mother Had A Sick Child (2:25) (5-18)

Mance Lipscomb - guitar & vocals

Recorded, produced and edited by Chris Strachwitz.

Cover photo by Kelly Hart

Graphic design by Morgan K. Dodge

#1 - #19 recorded at The Cabale, Berkeley, California in 1964.
#20 & 21 recorded in Sacramento, Ca. in 1972.

All performances previously unreleased (Except selections #8 & 9 which were issued on Arhoolie LP #1026 and #10 on Arhoolie LP #1033)

Letter and number following the time refers to the Arhoolie matrix numbers as found in BLUES RECORDS 1943-1970 - "The Bible of The Blues" - Volume Two, by Leadbitter, Fancourt & Pelletier (Record Information Services - London - UK)

Except where noted most songs composed or arranged by M. Lipscomb © by Tradition Music Co. (BMI) adm. by BUG Music Co.

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Mance Lipscomb Live! at The Cabale

Texas blues guitarist, songster, sharecropper, gentleman, and carrier of a remarkably rich rural African American heritage, Mance Lipscomb made his first appearance outside his home state of Texas in June of 1961. He performed for thousands alongside Pete Seeger and other major names of the folk music world at the Berkeley Folk Music Festival organized by Barry Olivier. Mance soon became a regular visitor to the Bay Area and was always making his main emotional songs as well as humorous and light hearted material by Mance on top of his remarkable personality obviously impressed these young turks. In Los Angeles, The Ashgrove run by Ed Pearl was the prime venue for authentic folk music, a place where you could hear Lightning Hopkins, the Stanley Brothers, Cousin Emmy, Doc Watson, and of course Mance Lipscomb. Taj Mahal and Ry Cooder were just two of the many youngsters who would congregate there and absorb these incredible American roots traditions and hear and meet these virtuosos in person.

I have edited this collection from tapes I made that day. The version heard here has always been one of my favorites and compliments the versions heard on Volumes 2 & 3. The wonderful talking sequence (#15) was taped by The Cabale and was recorded just before I had set up my equipment. Lack of fidelity has never been a problem for me especially when it comes to superb performances!

Some of the blues heard on this CD are especially moving as Mance would seldom render them in this way without an audience or in the vacuum of an empty room or studio. Several items (#7 & 17) were inspired by Lightning Hopkins whom Mance had met on several occasions back home and who had just been at The Cabale or was scheduled to soon appear there. I also tried to present once again the amazingly wide ranging repertoire of Mance Lipscomb ranging from powerful topical protest songs, old pop songs, blues and boogies. It seems to me that the opening tune "Baby Don't You Lay It On Me" has strongly influenced Bob Dylan's "Baby Let Me Follow You Down."

CHRIS STRACHWITZ - editor July, 1999

“Just wait. We've got something for you to hear will set you back on your ears!” Exasperatingly, Mack McCormick and Chris Strachwitz would say very little else about their newfound “discovery” but their ill-suppressed excitement was assurance enough that we were soon to hear something special.

British blues historian and aficionado, Paul Oliver has been an inspiration and guiding light in my own work ever since I began Arhoolie Records. I met Paul and his wife Valerie in Memphis, Tenn., shortly after meeting Mance Lipscomb in Texas and we all paid Mance a visit on our trip back to the West Coast. Here are Paul's original liner notes to Arhoolie LP 1026 written in 1965, just a year after the passage of the Civil Rights Act which finally ended official racial segregation in this country. The generally accepted term for African Americans or Blacks at that time was still Negro and I have left Paul's original terminology as it was appropriate then. When you listen to Mance Lipscomb talk about “Early Days Back Home” you should keep the date in mind as well: when his monologue was recorded segregation was still in force in his home town of Navasota, Texas.

MANCE LIPSCOMB TEXAS SONGSTER - in a Live performance
by Paul Oliver (1965)

It was August, 1960. A few weeks before, Chris and Mack had been on a search for songsters and blues singers in Central Texas. A man named “Peg Leg” at the Navasota railroad depot told them that the best guitar picker around was Mance Lipscomb, an opinion that was confirmed by others in the area. Their
inquiries led them to Lipscomb's home and to the man himself as he returned from cutting grass on the State highway. Much of the music that Mance played for them that evening was recorded and issued on Arhoolie F 1001 "Mance Lipscomb Texas Sharecropper and Songster" (now available on Arhoolie CD 306); the balance of the record was taped when Mack and Chris took my wife and myself to visit him on the eleventh of the month.

We drove out from Houston west towards Sugar Land and the prison farms familiar to collectors of the famous Library of Congress penitentiary recordings made by the Lomaxes in the early 'thirties; crossed the Brazos River at Richmond and struck north through the flat, featureless and unlovely country the long lines of the sad telegraph poles defined the route against a Santa Fe railroad runs between the road and the prison farms familiar to town. Outside one we stopped and a

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a continual interest in the music that he heard around him and drew freely on the songs, the ballads, the dance tunes and blues which constituted the popular musical entertainment of the Brazos Bottoms. He was, and is, a "songster," in other words he did not restrict himself to a particular idiom as many blues singers have done, but coming from a generation of musicians who prided themselves on their versatility, embraced many forms of which the blues was just one. Mance’s life spans the history of blues and the formative years of his musical development are well rooted in the older traditions. At this point in time it is important to realize that this seventy-year-young man is a living embodiment, and genuinely one of the last great exponents of the Southern Negro folk song forms before the blues and the mass media which popularized songs, the ballads, the dance tunes and blues entertainment of the Brazos Bottoms. He was, for he is, as much a part of his time as Mance Lipscomb’s work is of special interest for it reveals many facets of the folk spirit which he plays with, such consummate skill.

For the student of Negro song in its various forms, Mance Lipscomb’s work is of special interest for it reveals many facets of the folk process. It is interesting to note for instance, how the song “Little Brown Jug” (heard as “Heel And Toe Polka” on Vol.3 - CD 465), which was first published nearly a century ago, has been modified to suit new circumstances. Mance’s version has verses which have come from many sources with the “some folks say a preacher won’t steal” theme of the minstrel show, the rural detail of the broken wagon wheel, and the in-group racism of "monkey sittin’ on a pile of straw, He was waggin’ his eye at ole grandmaw."

With this in mind it is possible to appreciate to the full the range of Mance’s repertoire and to get a better perspective on the dissemination of popular music and its cross-fertilization with the folk forms. It is something of a shock to hear a Texas songster hit song, popularized by Jack Norworth and Nora Bayes in Folllies of 1908, when Mance was a lad just beginning to maintain a family and to feel his way round the guitar, had a success which cut right across all notions of “folk” or Negro music. It does in fact give an added dimension to the recollections of the early examples in Mance’s repertoire which do properly fall in such categories. When he says “Here’s about the oldest number that I could recall back in the days when I was learnin’ and heard people play ‘Take Me Back’ “ (heard on Vol.1 - CD 306), we have a specific frame of reference in which to place these important yet now almost totally forgotten themes.

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This serves to emphasize that Mance Lipscomb’s music is first and foremost entertainment, to be enjoyed with the heart and the body, rather than to be subjected to academic analysis however much it is informative in this respect also. It is the secret of his contentment in playing to coffee-house and folk club audiences, for, an old man now, he has the infinite satisfaction of passing on his heritage to a younger generation. For those of us who have been fortunate enough to know Mance Lipscomb and to hear him in person the privilege is a rare and valued one; for all of us with whom he shares his music on record the experience of hearing him is infinitely rewarding.

Paul Oliver - 1965

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Also available by Mance Lipscomb on ARHOLIE RECORDS:
Presented before a “live” audience is MANCE LIPSCOMB, Texas songster, blues guitarist, share-cropper, gentleman, and carrier of a remarkably rich rural African American heritage.

Here is his amazingly wide repertoire: ranging from powerful topical protest ballads like “Tom Moore” to spirituals, children’s songs, old pop songs, blues, boogies and stories.

All Performances
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