BLUES REDISCOVERIES

Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters
For nearly thirty years the great country blues recordings of the 1920's were usually considered a root source for early jazz, rather than as an important musical expression on their own terms. Since the mid-1950's, however, there has been an increasing interest in the colorful, rich styles of the country blues. For the first years most of the interest was in the old recordings; then in the field documentaries done in the rural areas of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, and finally, in the late 1950's, and into the mid-1960's, in the blues men themselves. Most of them had been young men when they first recorded, and when they were rediscovered a lot of them were still hardly touched by age, and their music was almost as expressive as it had been when they'd first sat down to record in a hotel banquet room or a small town theatre twenty or thirty years before. There were changes. Few of them were still playing, and they'd heard a lot of music as they'd gotten older. The blues is a young man's music, too, with a young man's sexual concerns or the bleak record of his wanderings looking for jobs or someone to love. For many of them, when they were first asked to play again, there were times when they seemed to be confused about what they were doing, and they were often reluctant to even pick up a guitar again.

But for some of the other blues rediscoveries the years only seemed to have given their music a new seriousness and maturity. They could still play in the old complex finger styles that had made their early records so exciting, and their singing was still vibrant and alive. They began to find a new audience and a new generation that was interested in their music. At folk festivals young guitar players came up to them to ask about pickings and tunings, at club appearances people stopped by back stage to tell them how much they'd liked the old records. They've found themselves major figures in a country blues renaissance, and they've begun new musical careers at a point when they'd thought that their days as blues men were just about over. Their original recordings, the recordings that brought them to the attention of the blues audience, have taken on a new dimension since recent recordings of nearly all of them have become available. For many of the blues men the style of the old recordings has stayed almost unchanged, though there often isn't the intensity that they had when they were twenty or twenty-five. On the early recordings there are finger pickings that are a little too fast for fingers that have had thirty years more work, or falsetto tones that a rougher voice can't catch. But even for the men whose blues are just as vital today the old recordings help to give a rounded picture of them as artists, as major figures in the development of one of America's most important musical styles.

Samuel Charters
"When a man gets troubled in mind he want to sleep all the time ..." or the sexual fantasy of "Aberdeen, Mississippi Blues"- "The women in Aberdeen want to buy my gasoline ..." Bukka, whose name is Booker T. Washington White, wasn't living in Aberdeen at the time he was sent to Parchman, and after his release he went first to Chicago, then to Memphis. A letter sent to him in Aberdeen, however, was forwarded by relatives and he was found in a rooming house in Memphis. Since his rediscovery he has spent several months playing in California folk clubs and has begun to appear at eastern folk festivals. He is still a strong, vibrant performer, with much of his old harsh vocal quality and the insistent rhythm of his accompaniments.

Band 5. HENRY TOWNSEND
Poor Man Blues

Henry Townsend was only seventeen when he recorded "Poor Man Blues" in St. Louis in the late 1920's. He remembers that he was most influenced by Lonnie Johnson when he first started singing, but these early performances have a unique rhythmic quality that is very different from anything that Johnson had recorded, and Townsend's vocal style also had a personal plaintiveness. He went on to become a conventional singer and guitarist in the 1930's; although he still can play in his old style if he stops to think about it for a moment. He is working as an insurance collector in St. Louis and he still plays occasional weekend jobs with his close friend Roosevelt Sykes.

Band 6 and 7. SLEEPY JOHN ESTES
Poor Man's Friend
Liquor Store Blues

For years Big Joe Williams kept saying that John Estes was still living in Brownsville, Tennessee, but Big Bill Broonzy wrote in his book "Big Bill Blues" that Estes had been dead for several years; so no one made an effort to stop by Brownsville. He was finally found by a photographer working with a Civil Rights group, who filmed John and the shack he was living in on a country lane a few miles outside of town. John was in very poor health when he was rediscovered, completely blind and almost helpless physically. He had been blind for a number of years and he had been living in a ruined wooden building on Winfield Lane with a young wife and five children. He was paid a small pension by the state, but he was unable to keep track of the money and was living in squalor. He still has his great, expressive voice, and as he's appeared more and more at clubs and concerts he's gotten back some of his skill on the guitar, but he was always a very limited instrumentalist and he's accompanied by small groups - just as he was on his original recordings - when he sings in public. These two earlier performances were recorded in the 1930's, when John's records were selling rather well and he was popular enough to have his picture on advertising leaflets and catalogs. They have a loose, swinging beat that offsets the almost crying quality of his voice. As with many of John's blues the songs are concerned with the people and the places, even the automobiles, "Model T, sure is the poor man's friend..." of his everyday life.

Side B
Band 1 and 2, BLIND GARY DAVIS
Oh Lord, Search My Heart
You Got To Go Down

Gary Davis is now known to folk music audiences in the United States as Reverend Gary Davis, but when he recorded these two gospel songs in 1935 he also recorded two blues pieces; so he was called "Blind" rather than "Reverend" on the record labels. It has always been difficult to "set" Gary Davis into any kind of musical category, and he is, in some ways, out of place in a group of blues rediscoveries, but he was a blues singer as a young man and his style still has strong blues elements. He's so difficult to categorize because of his great talent. He's from the Carolinas, and like most young Carolina blues men he learned the basic techniques of his style from the playing of Blind Blake. Blake was from northern Florida but he toured a lot and made a great number of widely sold recordings in the late '20's. Gary, however, went beyond any of the others who have recorded, and local blues men still living in Gary's area don't remember hearing anyone else who had his inventiveness or his dexterity. He is one of the great country guitar players, a great singer, and a strong personality. After he recorded in New York in 1935 he went back to South Carolina and lived as an itinerant preacher, but during the 1940's he finally settled in New York City, living first in Harlem; then the Bronx, and now in a home of his own on Long Island. He made his living in New York as a street singer and as the pastor of a small church, and he was heard singing around New York by local folk enthusiasts. He has had a successful career as a folk performer, and through his playing and teaching has influenced nearly every young guitarist playing blues or folk music in New York. He's now in his seventies, but he has still lost none of his skill or his rich singing style.

Band 3. PEG LEG HOWELL
Doin' Wrong

When he recorded 'Doin' Wrong" in Atlanta in the late 1920's Peg Leg had already lost one leg, and he made his living as a street singer on Atlanta's Decatur Street, the center of the Negro commercial district just off Preachtree Street. When he was rediscovered in 1964 he had lost the other leg and was living in helpless poverty much as John Estes was doing in Brownsville. In his mid-seventies Howell was able to play and sing with only an occasional suggestion of his old emotional strength, but he was able to fill in the historical background of the Atlanta blues scene. His early recordings, like those of the other Atlanta singers, the Hicks brothers, Robert and Charlie, and Blind Willie McTell, had an almost halting rhythmic quality, with a wistfulness to the singing. The Atlanta blues style didn't have the emotionalism of the Mississippi delta music, but, as in a blues like "Doin' Wrong," there was a deeply felt emotional sincerity.
Band 4 and 5. FURRY LEWIS
Jelly Roll
Sweet Papa Moan

When he was a young man Furry Lewis had lived for a few months with a girl named Jennie Mae Clayton in Memphis, and it was Jennie Mae, who had later married Will Shade of the Memphis Jug Band, who knew where to find him. She'd seen him near the Memphis City Workers Depot, and thought he was still working for the city, as he had been for most of his life. Despite a wooden leg - the result of a railroad accident in 1917 - Furry was working as a city street sweeper, a small, gray-haired man who still played a few pieces on the guitar for friends. He doesn't have the speed in his fingers that he used to, and he's forgotten some of his complex pickings, but he's still an effective performer, and he's appeared in concerts in Chicago and New York in recent years. He still keeps his sweeping job; so he'll be eligible for his pension. A small, nervous man Furry had a fiveeper, a few pieces on the guitar for friends. He doesn't have the speed in his fingers that he used to, and he's forgotten some of his complex pickings, but he's still an effective performer, and he's appeared in concerts in Chicago and New York in recent years. He still keeps his sweeping job; so he'll be eligible for his pension. A small, nervous man Furry had a small voice even when he recorded "Jelly Roll" and "Sweet Papa Moan" in the late '20's, and his style was an almost spoken, sometimes tentative vocal accompanied by a more involved guitar pattern. Some of his early records were done with a mandolin player, but in recent years he's preferred to work alone.

SIDE A

Band 1. Mississippi John Hurt -- "Ain't No Tellin'"

I don't know what her name is, (repeat)
She might shoot you, may cut and stab you too,
Ain't no tellin' what she might do.

I'm up the country where there's cold, sleet and snow, (repeat)
Ain't no tellin' how much longer I may go,

Eat my breakfast here, my dinner in Tennessee, (three times)
I told you I was comin', still won't you look for me, (repeat)
The way I'm sleepin', my back and shoulders tired, (three times)
Gonna turn over, try it on the side.

Don't you let my good girl shoot you again, (repeat)
She might shoot you, may cut and stab you too,
Ain't no tellin' what she might do.

Band 2. Mississippi John Hurt -- "Avalon Blues"

Got in New York this mornin', just about half past nine, (repeat)
... can't hardly keep from cryin'.

Avalon is my home town, always on my mind, (repeat)
Those mornings in Avalon, want to be there all the time,
The train left Avalon she's throwin' kisses and weepin' at me, (repeat)
Sayin' come back daddy, stay right here with me.

Avalon is a small town, have no great big range, (repeat)
But in my little Avalon, you're sure goin' to spend your change.

New York is a good town, but it's not for me, (repeat)
Goin' back to Avalon where I'll spend all the time.

Band 3. Bukka White -- "Sleepy Man Blues"

When a man is troubled in mind, he want to sleep all the time,
(repeat)
He want to sleep all the time,
He's got trouble in mind, oh worried mind,
I'm feelin' worried in mind, and I'm tryin' to keep from cryin', (repeat)

I'm standin' here feelin' the sunshine,
To keep from weakenin' down, keep from weakenin' down.

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I'm standin' here feelin' the sunshine,
To keep from weakenin' down, keep from weakenin' down.

Band 6 and 7. JOE WILLIAMS
Highway 49
Someday Baby

"Big" Joe Williams has been so much a part of the new blues revival that it's difficult to think of his ever dropping out of sight, but for a number of years he didn't make any commercial recordings and no one knew where to look for him. Despite the success of the pieces like "Highway 49" and "Someday Baby," that he recorded in the 1930's, the change to large, electrified blues bands during the war left him behind, and when he turned up in St. Louis in the early 1950's he was playing in neighborhood taverns for what he could pick up in tips. A large, emotional man, Joe's style has always been musically erratic, the rhythms stopping and starting, the guitar accompaniment made up of disconnected phrases and notes, but he sings with such emotional assurance, that his music can be very exciting. His voice has darkened a little since he first began recording, but the other elements of his style have changed very little, and despite a recent slight stroke Joe can still be one of the most powerful blues men singing today.

I want somewhere to go, but I hate to go to town,
I want somewhere to go, to satisfy my mind,
I would go to town, but I hate to stand around, hate to stand around.

I wonder what's the matter with my right mind, my mind keep from weakenin' all the time, (repeat)
But when I had plenty of money,
My friends would come around, would come around.

If I had my right mind, I would write my woman two lines,
(repeat)
I would do most anything,
To keep from weakenin' down, keep from weakenin' (weeping?) down.

Band 4. Bukka White -- "Aberdeen, Mississippi Blues"

I was over in Aberdeen on my way to New Orleans, (repeat)
Those Aberdeen women want to buy me a gallon of gasoline.

They were two Aberdeen women that I ever seen, (repeat)
Those two Aberdeen women, they from New Orleans.

I'm sittin' down in Aberdeen with New Orleans on my mind,
(repeat)
Lord, I believe these Aberdeen women goin' to make me lose my mind.

Aberdeen is my home, but the women don't want me around,
(repeat)
You take these women, take them out of town.

Listen, you Aberdeen women, you know I ain't got no dime,
(repeat)
You can have this poor boy all of the time. (?)

Band 5. Henry Townsend -- "Poor Man Blues"

And it's never mind, never mind, baby, (repeat)
I've got my eyes on you.
And some old day...

Do like I want you to do.

When I was sick and down, you drove me from your door,
(repeat)
Now you know I was a poor man,
Sleepin' out in the ice and snow.
I'll see you, baby, when you do somethin' that's very wrong, (repeat)
When you mistreat me, baby,
I won't send you all the way back home.

That's all right, baby, I'll pawn my watch and ring, (repeat)
I'll give you my money,
I'll give you most everything.

Band 6. Sleepy John Estes -- "Poor Man's Friend"

Well, probably next spring,
I'm goin' to rig up my cheap model again.

Well, well, the T model Ford, I say is the poor man's friend, (repeat)
Well, it will get you there
When you've money to spend.

Well, well, one thing about the T model, you don't have to shift
no gears, (repeat)
Well, well, just let off the brake and feed the gas,
And the stuff is here.

Well, well, the people, they done took the style, (repeat)
Well, they raised it from ninety
Down to a hundred miles.

Well, well, somebody done stole my wine out on the road, (repeat)
Got a T model Ford.

Band 7. Sleepy John Estes -- "Liquor Store Blues"

Now, ... tell you what you do,
Let me see... get acquainted with you,
Well you won't have to go, (repeat)
You can get what you want
Right here in my liquor store.

You got a little whiskey, got a little gin,
All you got to do is step right back in,
Well you won't have to go, (repeat)
You can get what you want
Right here in my liquor store.

I met Mister Peter comin' down the street,
Come to... run around with me,
Well you won't have to go, (repeat)
You can get what you want
Right here in my liquor store.

Got some on the floor, got some on the shelf,
All you got to do is just help yourself,
Well you won't have to go, (repeat)
You can get what you want
Right here in my liquor store.

Mister Peter Albert, the discount man,
You ask me for it, baby, it won't make you ashamed,
Well you won't have to go, (repeat)
You can get what you want
Right here in my liquor store.

SIDE B

Band 1. -- Blind Gary Davis -- "Oh Lord, Search My Heart"

Oh Lord, search my heart, (three times)
So I'll know just when I'm right and when I'm wrong.

When I'm in trouble search my heart, (three times)
So I'll know just when I'm right and when I'm wrong.

(Repeat first verse)

When I'm in mourning search my heart, (three times)
So I'll know just when I'm right and when I'm wrong.

Band 2. Blind Gary Davis -- "You Got To Go Down"

You better learn how to treat everybody
Or you got to go down, you got to go down, (repeat)
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust

The life you're livin' won't give you trust,
You better learn how to treat everybody
Or you got to go down.

Some of the people don't realize it,
Takin' the world by storm,
Don't even know how to treat your family,
Doin' all kind of ways,
Livin' all kind of lives,
Say anything before your children,
Treat your wife all kind of ways,
Treat your husband every kind of way.

You better learn how to treat your husband
Or you got to go down, got to go down, (repeat)
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust
The life you're livin' won't do to trust,
You better learn how to treat your husband
Or you got to go down.

... God tell you how to raise a child,
You got to place everything before the child,
And do everything before,
God says

You better learn how to live before children
Or you got to go down, you got to go down), (repeat)
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust
The life you're livin' won't do to trust,
You better learn how to live before children
Or you got to go down.

If you're travelin' through the world
You better know how to treat your wife,
And give everybody everything they give to your wife,
God says

You better learn how to treat your companion
Or you got to go down, you got to go down, (repeat)
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust
The life you're leadin' won't do to trust,
You better learn how to treat your companion
Or you got to go down.

As you're travelin' through the world
... you will meet
People who take liquor and cut up and raise sand
... but God says you can suggest they save themselves (?)
God says

You better learn how to treat that drunkard
Or you got to go down, you got to go down, (repeat)
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust
The life you're leadin' won't do to trust,
You better learn how to treat that drunkard
Or you got to go down.

Ashes to ashes and dust to dust
The life you're livin' won't give you trust,
You better learn how to treat everybody
Or you got to go down.

Band 3. Peg Leg Howell -- "Doin' Wrong"

Treat me, sweet mama, allow me one more sho', (repeat)
I swear to the Lord that I w'n't do wrong no mo'.

I don't love no woman if she ain't got easy (?) ways, (repeat)
I'm crazy about my lovin',
It's always been my crave.

I woke up this mornin' just before the day, (repeat)
I looked at the pillow where my good gal used to lay.

I hung my head, I cried just like a child, (repeat)
I say the way I'm treated, mama,
I sure ain't satisfied.

If you ever go to Memphis, stop by Jessie's (?) hall, (repeat)
You'll see my peaches hanging on the wall.

I got the blues so bad, mama, my poor heart is sore, (repeat)
Can't rest... mama, no where I go.
Well, I feel like the blues
Catchin' highway 49,
Gonna find my sweet woman,
Yes, boys...

Well, I get up in the mornin'
I believe I'll dust my room, (repeat)
Out on highway 49,
Well, boys, got rockets through my head,

Blues this mornin',
Well, I be rollin' back to town, (?)
Lord, I'm tired of layin' round,
Well, boys, on highway 49.

Band 7. Joe Williams -- "Someday Baby"

... But someday, baby,
You won't worry your Joe's mind anymore.

Aint' but the one thing
Why Big Joe has the blues,
I got on my last pair of shoes
Well someday, baby,
You ain't goin' to worry my mind anymore,

Yes, keep on bettin',
Dodge on past,
You goin' to leave Chicago runnin'
Runnin' much too fast,
Well, someday, baby,
You ain't goin' to worry my mind anymore.

I like everybody in the neighborhood
'Cept my good woman,
She don't mean me no good,
Well someday, baby,
You ain't goin' to worry my mind anymore.

Don't care when you go,
How long you stay,
Just ..., come back home someday,
Well someday, baby,
You ain't goin' to worry my mind anymore.

You can feed my chickens, boys,
You can't make 'em lay, (repeat)
You can steal my best woman,
But you sure can't make her stay.

ADDITLONAL TITLES IN THE RBF CATALOGUE

RF 1 THE COUNTRY BLUES, Volume 1. Early Rural Recordings of Folk Artists Edited by Samuel B. Charters, Blind Lemon Jefferson (Matchbox Blues); Leon Johnson (Careless Love); Cannon's Jug Stompers (Walk Right In); Peg Leg Howell (Low Down Rounder's Blues); Blind Willie McTell (Statesboro Blues); Memphis Jug Band (Stealin', Stealin'); Blind Willie Johnson (You Gonna Need Somebody On Your Bond); Leroy Carr (Alabama Woman Blues); Sleepy John Estes (Special Agent); Big Bill (Boy To The Highway); Bukka White (Fixin' To Die); Tommy McClennan (I'm A Guitar King); Robert Johnson (Preachin' Blues); Washboard Sam (I Been Treated Wrong), 1 - 12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes ......... $ 5.79

RF 2 (FJ 2823) HISTORY OF JAZZ; THE NEW YORK SCENE. Documented Recordings Edited by Samuel B. Charters. Europe's Society Orchestra, 1914 (Too Much Mustard); Original Dixieland Jazz Band, 1917 ($ensation Rag); Manzie Smith accompanied by Perry Bradford's Jazz Journeys, 1920 (Crazy Blues); Fletcher Henderson and his Orchestra, 1925 (Sugar Foot Stomp); Clarence Williams; Washboard Five, 1928 (Log Cabin Blues); Charlie Johnson's Paradise Orchestra, 1928 (Boy In The Boat); Miff Mole's Little Moleers, 1929 (Shim-me-sha-wabble); Louisiana Sugar Babes, 1929 (Thou Swell); Duke Ellington and his Orchestra, 1928 (Harlem River Quiver); The Missourians, 1929 (Ozark Mountain Blues); Cab Calloway and his Orchestra, 1934 (Keep That Hi-De-Hi In Your Soul); Jimmy Lunceford and his Orchestra, 1934 (Jazzmoorchray); Cole­man Hawkins Quartet, 1944 - with Thelonius Monk, piano (Flyin' Hawk); Dizzy Gillespie and his Sextet, 1945 (Groovin' High), 1 - 12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes ......... $ 5.79

RF 5 AN INTRODUCTION TO GOSPEL SONG, Compiled and Edited by Samuel B. Charters, Fisk University Jubilee Quartet (Roll Jordan Roll); Tuskegee Institute Singers (I've Been Baked and I've Been Scorned; Most Done Travelling); Peace Jubilee Singers with Hattie Parker (Leave It There); Rev. J. M. Gates and Congregation (You Mother Heart Breakers; Jesus Rose From The Dead); Rev. F. W. McGhee and Congregation (I Locked Down The Line and I Wondered; Jesus The Lord Is A Savior); Sister Ernestine Washington with Bunk Johnson's Jazz Band (Did I Wonder); Elder Lightfoot Solomon Michaux and his "Happy Am 1st Choir and Orchestra (I Am So Happy); Rev. Utah Smith and Congregation (I Got Two Wings); Mother McCreese and her sons (Psalm for Confusion); The Spirit of Memphis (When Mother's Gone; He's A Friend Of Mine), 1 12" 33-1/3 rpm, notes ......... $ 5.79
BLUES REDISCOVERIES
Original Recordings by Today's Rediscovered Bluesmen
Compiled and Edited by Samuel Charters

1. MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT - Ain't No Tellin'
2. MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT - Avalon Blues
3. BUKKA WHITE - Sleepy Man Blues
4. BUKKA WHITE - Aberdeen Mississippi Blues
5. HENRY TOWNSEND - Poor Man's Friend
6. SLEEPY JOHN ESTES - Liquor Store Blues
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