THE RURAL BLUES
A Study of the Vocal and Instrumental Resources

Compiled and Annotated by Samuel B. Charters

Cover design by Ronald Clyne

RBF Records, New York, RF 202
Will Shade: I Can't Stand it
Hamblen Willie Newburn: Shelby County Work House Blues
Robert Johnson: From Four Until Late
Furry Lewis: You Can Leave, Baby
Sleepy John Estes: Sloppy Drunk Blues
L'il Son Jackson: Roberta Blues
Lightnin' Hopkins: Bad Luck and Trouble
Blind Boy Fuller: Thousand Woman Blues
Arthur Crudup: If I Get Lucky
Charlie Pickett: Down the Highway
Kokomo Arnold: Milk Cow Blues
Blind Willie Johnson: "Take Your Burden to the Lord"
Tenney McClellan: New Highway '51
Lightnin' Hopkins: Penitentiary Blues
Blind Willie McTell: Mama Taint Long Fo' Day
Charlie Burse: Take Your Fingers Off It
Charlie Lincoln: My Wife Drive Me From My Door
Peg Leg Howell: Skin Game Blues
Lightnin' Hopkins: Come Go Home with Me
Lightnin' Hopkins: Goin' Back to Florida
Robert Johnson: Standing at the Crossroads
Lightnin' Hopkins: One Kind Favor
Furry Lewis: John Henry
Blind Willie Johnson: Nobody's Fault But Mine
Furry Lewis: Warm Up
Bukka White: Bukka's Jitterbug Swing
Furry Lewis: Casey Jones
Peg Leg Howell: Cool Man Blues
John Hurt: Frankie
Blind Willie McTell: Southern Can Mama
Papa Charlie Jackson: Airy Man Blues
Skip James: Little Cow and Gulf Is Gonna Die Blues
Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell: New How Long Blues
Bert Blythe: Mohana Blues
Sonny Terry and Oh Red: Harmonica Stomp (with Blind Boy Fuller)
Frank Stokes: Shiny Town Blues
Virgil Perkins: Trouble in Mind
Arthur Crudup: Mean Old Frisco
Brownie McGhee: Sporting Life Blues
Virgil Perkins: Solo
Charlie Burse: Tippin' Round
Ham Gravy: Mama Don't 'Low It
Moochie Reeves: Key to the Highway
THE RURAL BLUES

A Study of the Vocal and Instrumental Resources

Compiled and Annotated by Samuel B. Charters
This material is intended as a study of the musical resources of the rural blues. It is not often recognised that Afro-American music is marked by considerable variation within its various styles and that a style like the blues is a unique musical idiom. It is hoped that this study will clarify these idiomatic characteristics.

The rural blues is a highly personal, expressive idiom, and its vocal and instrumental resources have been shaped by the effort to intensify this personal quality. It is this that has given the rural blues its distinctiveness. The use of a vocal growl, a sudden falsetto, irregular rhythms, or a complex accompaniment is an expression of this effort to communicate personal emotion. A great blues artist brings to his singing a consciousness of this idiom and its styles. This study is concerned with the rural blues as a distinctive expression and with the musical characteristics that give it this distinctiveness.

(The material is in part from unissued material in the author's collection, in part from material on the author's Folkways releases, and in part from early blues recordings.)
GUITAR AS COMPLEX RHYTHMIC ACCOMPANIMENT

Band 5. Bukka White "Bukka's Jitterbug Swing"
Band 6. Furry Lewis "Casey Jones"
Band 7. Peg Leg Howell "Coal Man Blues"
Band 8. John Hurt "Frankie"

OTHER INSTRUMENTS

Band 9. 12 String Guitar
Blind Willie McTell "Southern Can Mama"
Band 10. Banjo
Papa Charlie Jackson "Airy Man Blues"
Band 11. Piano
Skip James "Little Cow and Calf is Gonna Die Blues"
Band 12. Piano and Guitar
Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell "New How Long How Long Blues"

SIDE FOUR

ADDED MELODIC INSTRUMENTS

Band 1. Harmonica
Bert Bilbro "Yohannah Blues"
Band 2. Sonny Terry & Oe Red "Harmonica Stomp" (with Blind Boy Fuller)
Band 3. Violin
Frank Stokes "Shinney Town Blues"
Band 4. Kazoo
Virgil Perkins "Trouble in Mind"

ADDED RHYTHMIC INSTRUMENTS

Band 5. Bass - Plucked
Arthur Crudup "Mean Old Frisco"
Band 6. Bass - Bowed
Brownie McGhee "Sporting Life Blues"
Band 7. Washboard
Virgil Perkins - Solo

LARGER ACCOMPANIMENT GROUPS

Band 8. Charlie Burse (Jug) "Tippin' Round"
Band 9. Ham Gravy "Mass Don't Low It"
Band 10. Moochie Reeves (tub) "Key to the Highway"
THE RURAL BLUES

A MUSICAL STUDY

Samuel B. Charters

One of the most significant developments in the understanding of the music of the Negro in America has been the increased awareness, in recent years, of the variety and range of this musical expression. Within the Negro sub-culture there has developed an integral body of music with marked stylistic similarities, but with a considerable range of emotional and stylistic forms, from the sacred singing of the slave song to the instrumental improvisation of jazz. Within the Negro group probably the greatest emphasis has been placed on the sacred vocal music, and the non-Negro enthusiast has tended to over-emphasize jazz, but there is a growing interest in other areas of this musical idiom.

The rural blues is one of the most vital of these other forms. The blues, as a distinctive musical form, is probably less than fifty years old, but the musical material and attitudes of the blues was in a large part developed from the work song material that was an integral part of the lives of the slaves of the ante-bellum South, and of the "freedmen" of the Reconstruction. An English traveler to a Georgia plantation in the winter of 1839 noted a doleful chant sung over and over again by a slave who had just been sold from the relatively easy labor area of Virginia to the brutal economy of the Georgia rice plantations.

"Oh my massa told me, there's no grass in Georgia." 1

This is probably the earliest blues to be described. The work songs, the gang songs, and the field holler continued to develop the musical phrases and rude poetry of the first blues, and collector working in eastern Alabama in the early 1900's heard phrases that were at the heart of the early blues.

"If de blues was whiskey
I'd stay drunk all de time."

"I got de blues
But I'm too damn mean to cry." 2

With the publication of the first blues songs in 1912, the first of them Bert Wand's "Dallas Blues", published in March, 1912, in Oklahoma City, this rich background material, the ballad began to take on harmonic and melodic characteristics. The first recordings of blues material with a strong Negro emphasis were done in New York City in late 1912 by a Cincinnati-born colorless named Waits, and his popularity led to a widespread imitation and exploitation of her blues songs by a number of other women singers. This music quickly became a standardised musical style, using, with rather monotonous regularity, a twelve bar verse form with the first two lines of the verse repeated, and the third completing the idea of the first two and rhyming at the final word. The rhyme scheme was a simple A-A-B. The melodic material became nearly as standardised, with a harmonic scheme of tonic for the first line, ending with the tonic 7th, dominant to tonic for the second line, two measures of each, and dominant 7th to tonic in the final line. The accompaniment was usually played by a pianist who accompanied a great number of singers and, again, there was a sameness to the accompaniments, despite the occasional use of one or more additional instruments in the accompaniment group. The characteristic four bar melodic phrase reached a resolution at the first beat of the third measure; then, while the singer held the final tone for an additional two or three beats, the accompanying instruments played what were called during this period "broken chords", usually melodic material freely improvised to fill the interval before the start of the next vocal phrase. There were thousands of these blues, the early "city" blues, recorded and their popularity left a deep impression on the more varied forms of the blues being developed in the rural South.

A record company in Chicago, the Paramount Record Company, did a large mail order business with the southern rural market in this period, and the company sensed the commercial possibilities of recordings by blues singers who were performing in the rural styles. In 1919 the first country blues recording, "Lawdy Lawdy Blues" and "Airy Man Blues" by Papa Charlie Jackson, was released on Paramount 1229. The first recordings of the Texas blues singer, Blind Lemon Jefferson, were made for Paramount in 1925, and the first recordings of the St. Louis singer, Lonnie Johnson, released on OKeh the same year, were very successful. These styles have been a distinctive and vital part of the music of the Negro in America since this early period.

Despite the influence of the first city blues recordings, the rural blues represent such a wide range of musical expression that it would be misleading to discuss the idiom in anything other than the broadest terms. The music was such a personal expression of the singers themselves that a stylistic generalization describing one man successfully would be almost completely inaccurate in describing another. It is even difficult to develop generalizations based on singing styles in different areas of the South without having to make embarrassing omissions of very successful singers. To speak of a "Texas style", for example, would mean including singers as diverse as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Willie Johnson, "Fame Texas" Alexander, and Lightnin' Hopkins. It is possible to make some broad generalisations on instrumental and vocal styles within a few areas in the South, but it is important to remember that individual singers will have styles that vary considerably from these general descriptions.

Despite these variations, however, there is an artistic unity to the rural blues that make it a distinctive musical style. It is a unity that is best described by considering the emotions and attitudes that have shaped the music. The blues developed as an expression of deeply personal emotions; disappointment, jealousy, anger, desire; strongly aggressive emotions, and it is the effort to express these emotions that has given the music its uniqueness. In its purest form the rural blues is sung by a man, accompanying himself on a guitar. There have been a number of successful singers using more elaborate accompaniment groups, but the accompaniment style colored by the musical elements of the guitar styles to such an extent that the guitar remains the dominant element. The development of the music. Because the blues was an attempt to express emotion there are few blues which develop a narrated incident. Instead of a connected narrative the usual blues is a blues with related verses developing a single emotional attitude. And since there is usually no effort to develop a narrative there is no emphasis on clarity of enunciation. A ballad style, such as that developed by the white musical culture in the southern mountain areas, is an excellent example of the emphasis on vocal clarity, with a sameness of tone, a distinctive nasal quality, and a repetitiveness in melodic patterns, all emphasized to make the narrative clearly audible. The Negro blues singer, on the other hand, is trying to express emotion, and an entire range of vocal expression is used, from the harsh growl, or the sudden outcry, to the most starkly unornamented declamation.

The guitar, as well as the voice, is used to develop this intense expressiveness, and the accompaniments often develop extended melodic patterns or complex rhythmic variations. In this, too, the accompaniments to the accompaniments of a ballad style, which are intended to be unobtrusive and are usually little more than a simple reiteration of the harmonies. The Negro blues guitar is used for melodic ornamentation to a high point of virtuosity and the greatest singers used the guitar accompaniment as an integral part of their musical style. In the accompaniments
it is often easier to associate a singer with a particular area than it is with a vocal style. In the Negro rural community nearly everyone sings, but a technical skill, such as a guitar accompaniment style, has to be learned from other guitarists, and it is impossible to isolate influences in the playing of many blues singers. The use of melodic extension and an irregularly free rhythm is to an extent a characteristic of the guitar styles of the Texas singer, use of a rapid ostinato in the bass strings with melodic figures played on the upper strings, often with a bottle neck on the little finger characteristic of musicians from the Mississippi delta area, and Georgia singers often use an irregularly rhythmical series of chords during the vocal phrase and highly ornamented melodic phrases of irregular length to mark the "paragraphical phrase." These are, however, only the most tentative of generalisations.

There are, too, certain stylistic characteristics which make the rural blues distinctive from other Negro vocal styles. The melisma, the extension of a syllable over several musical tones, is almost never used in the blues singer. It is a technique developing out of the religious surge singing and its use is considered to be the characteristic style of a distinctive type of religious singer. The use of portmanteau, the sliding tone marking the end of a word or short phrase, on the other hand, is closely associated with the blues style, and the dropping of the tone, usually to one of indefinite pitch marking the phrase ending, is a very characteristic of the style. The spoken interjection and the recitative verse are usually distinctive to the blues. As is the entire range of guitar accompaniment styles. But within these broad limitations the artistic problem of the blues singer is the expression of personal emotion, and it is this expression that shapes his music.

The vocal tone most used by the blues singer is a heavy one, with a marked emphasis on the heavier tones developed in the throat, the so-called "chest tones" of the European musical vocabulary. The vocal tone of the first example (Side I, Band 1.), Will Shade, a Memphis singer, shows the typical rough expressive qualities of this tone. The example by "Hambone" Willie Newbern (I, 2.) shows the more resonant quality of a voice using more marked throat. The example by Robert Johnson (I, 5.), a Mississippi singer, shows the more brilliant quality in a tone using the so-called "head tones." Johnson's voice is an excellent example of the usual range within the blues melodic phrase.

There is considerably more variation within the vocal rhythms. Furry Lewis's "You Can Leave, Baby" (I, 4.) shows the rhythmic style at is most simple, with the accents within the phrase falling regularly at the bar and the rhythm pulses closely related to the simple accompaniment. The contrast between this example and Will Shade's singing (I, 1.), even though both of them are Memphis musicians, should make clear the difficulties of making generalisations based on a style within a particular area. The singing of Sleepy John Estes, also recorded in Memphis, further emphasises this difficulty. His "Drunk Blues" (I, 5.) uses an accompaniment in 8/4 meter against vocal line in a very free 4/4 meter. Estes had been a caller on a track lining crew for many years and it is probably the free rhythm of the vocal line which influenced his rhythmic style. The use of the 6/8 meter in accompaniment seems to be limited to Estes, but it was very successful. The mandolin, played by Yank Rachell, adds a further distinctiveness to the performance. The pianist is "Jab" Jones, and the limited guitarist is Estes himself, who never seemed to be very concerned with developing much facility on the instrument.

The next three examples are intended to show the extension of the more regular rhythmic styles into a more freely expressive extension. Each of them has a regular beat, but each develops a little further an irregularity in phrase length. L'il Son Jackson's "Robert's Blues" (I, 6.) is irregular in the accompaniment patterns within the paragraphical phrase.
of the spoken interjection used to add color to his performance. He catches some of the dreams of the skin game, a gambling game popular in the Georgia Turpentine camps, with a few phrases that might be overheard as the dealer works the cards around the table. Younger blues singers have used spoken material in their songs. One is the kind of half spoken, half sung blues narratives evoking much of any nature, as in Lightnin' Hopkins' "Come Go Home With Me" (II,1) an extended comic performance about how he tried to impress a girl at a dance. The other is a kind of "recitative" verse, usually rhymed narrative material finishing with a sung phrase. Hopkins, one of the best of the Texas singers, is particularly skillful with these verses, and his "Goin' Back To Florida" (II,10) is an excellent example of this device. As in this example the verse is usually half sung, half chanted in a rhymed four line pattern. The four lines are done in a kind of stop time, following a sharp chord in tonic harmony in the guitar, and usually replace the first four measures of a twelve bar blues chorus. The progression, again as in this example, is usually to a subdominant harmony.

It is important to remember that even though examples of this or that type of ornamentation or spoken interjection may be singled out in the blues of a particular singer these musical resources are part of the vocabulary of every major blues singer. Robert Johnson's superb "Standing at the Crossroads" (II,11) is a brilliant demonstration of an entire range of vocal, harmonic, and accompaniment devices used to develop and communicate the intense emotion of his performance.

A description of blues accompaniments has to be prefaced by some description of the harmonic material of the rural blues. In part the singer uses the guitar as a rhythmic instrument, and as a melodic instrument, but it is of equal importance in its role as an harmonic instrument. Using European harmonic concepts the blues is either very simple or very complex, depending on the emphasis placed on the harmonic material used by nearly every singer. If the harmonic melodic material is interpreted as a chromatic alteration of a simple tonic harmony then the blues harmonies are very simple, using little more than a tonic dominant relationship. If, however, this harmonic material is interpreted as a definite modulation in key then the blues harmonies become discouragingly complex. Often blues are described as in a minor key or even in a particular mode. Dorian mode is a favorite. Despite the popularity of these descriptions they are not very accurate. The European musical vocabulary cannot adequately describe the Afro-American musical idiom. The blues is perhaps most successfully described as a complex harmonic fabric with elements that suggest both the European major and minor scales but with a use of implied progression and considerable equivocation at the third and seventh tones of the scale. Since a singer's harmonic patterns are as individual as his vocal style it is almost meaningless to suggest that any particular harmonic style is typical of the rural blues.

Many singers developed their own tunings, and there is considerable variation in accompaniments played with these tunings, but one of the most successful accompaniment styles is that of the "Spanish" tunings in which the strings were tuned to play an open chord, often A or E. This meant the left hand was free to play continuous accompaniment material; since the open strings, played with the right hand, outlined the tonic harmony. The well known "Seastopol" or "Spanish" tunings were in this style. The difficulty in playing in this style was very difficult to play either subdominant or dominant harmonies. Many singers worked out partial chord patterns and used these, but often the singer simply emphasized his feeling by using a similar melodic line in the guitar and usually succeeded in developing considerable musical excitement with the resulting dissonance. The technical problems created by this uncompromisingly complicated the harmonic structure of much rural blues singing.

The harmonic relationships in the blues are demonstrated in every example in this study so there has been no attempt to include specific examples. Purry Lewis's "You Can Leave Baby" (I,4) is an excellent example of a clearly defined harmonic structure and Charlie Pickett's "Down the Highway" (I,10) shows a harmonic structure of considerable complexity. The other examples fall somewhere within this broad range.

One of the most exciting characteristics of the blues guitar style is the use of the instrument to play extended melodic passages, either as a solo or in close relationship with the vocal material. The contrast in tone between the heavy blues voice and the biting guitar is very effective. Lightnin' Hopkins's "One Kind Favor" (III,4) uses the guitar in unison with the voice, then in a solo variation of the same melody. Hopkins's is an excellent guitarist and sustains a high level of dramatic excitement with the guitar solo. He is playing the guitar in the standard E tuning without picks, but his exceptionally supple technique enables him to play a melodic line of great expressiveness. An even more flexible melodic line can be obtained when the guitar is tuned to an open tuning and the singer is using either something held in the left hand or a bottle neck on the little finger to slide along the strings. It is a complex technique combining the older flat picking styles with the Hawaiian style introduced into the United States about the time of the first World War. In his "John Henry" (III,2) Purry Lewis uses a pocket knife held between the third and fourth fingers of his left hand, sliding it on the top two strings, and frets the lower strings with the first two fingers. The solo passages are enriched by means of open strings. Blind Willie Johnson's "Nobody's Fault But Mine" (III,3) develops a much more dramatic interplay between the voice and guitar, using the same technical device of the pocket knife. The guitar begins a phrase only to have the voice finish it, the voice drops a phrase, leaving it for the guitar, the two voices join in a near unison, all of it in a moving development of the tonal contrast between the singer's voice and the guitar. Johnson was one of the greatest rural singers of the Twenties and "Nobody's Fault But Mine" was one of his successful records. The warm up by Purry Lewis (III,4), using a glass bottle neck on his little finger, shows the similarity in tone and technique between something like the knife, held in the hand, and the bottle neck on the little finger.

Not only did guitar accompaniments reach a high stage of development in the use of printed material, but many singers developed the plans for strongly rhythmic accompaniments of considerable complexity. These rhythmic patterns, usually unvarying finger pickings, closely resembled the European ostinato and were played without break through the harmonic progressions in the verse. There were so many of these pickings, all of them highly personal, that it is, as in harmonic patterns and vocal styles, almost meaningless to try to describe a specific style as typical. Bukka White's "Jitterbug Swing" (III,5) and Purry Lewis's "Casey Jones" (III,6) show two of these styles used as a complex background to a
more or less extended vocal line. Peg Leg Howl's "Coal Miners Blues" (III, 7.) and John Hurt's "Frankie" (III, 8.) use styles in which the melody is outlined in the upper notes of the rhythmic pattern. Both singers have altered the harmonic line and the voice until it more closely follows the more limited melodic line of the guitar.

Although the six-string guitar has always been the most popular accompaniment instrument for the rural blues other instruments have often been used and often highly influential blues styles have resulted from their use. The twelve-string guitar, or mandolin-guitar as it is sometimes called because it is a heavier double string instrument, was used by several singers and the Georgia singer "Blind Willie" McTell was particularly skilled with it. On the "Southern Can Mama" (III, 9.) a six-string guitar is accompanying the lead on the twelve-string. Two very popular instrumentists in the category, "Leadbelly" and Jessie Fuller, were also very successful with the twelve-string; so much so that the instrument is often identified with "Leadbelly." The banjo had been popular with the southern Negro for much of the 19th Century, but it had considerably declined in favor by the time the first blues recordings were made. Not only was it exasperating to use; since the skin head was very sensitive to weather conditions, but it did not sustain a tone sufficiently to be very effective at a slower tempo. Papa Charlie Jackson's "Airy Man Blues" (III, 10.), the first recording of a rural blues to reach a commercial market, shows very clearly the limitations of the banjo in blues accompaniments, despite the melodic charm of Jackson's performance.

One of the difficult instruments to classify in the blues accompanying styles is the piano. Early boogie-woogie styles developed in much the same environment as the rural blues and the two musical styles are very closely related. When the record companies began using larger accompaniment groups for their blues recordings the boogie pianists were almost immediately brought into the studios, and by the late Thirties the guitar had almost been eclipsed by the heavier sound of the piano. It was not until the guitar could be electrically amplified that the older balance was restored. Despite this close relationship both styles have remained highly individual, and the musical elements of boogie-woogie should not be confused with the rural blues. Skip James seems to have been the only musician to develop a piano style that is closely within the rural blues idiom. "Little Cow And Cali' Is Gon' Die Blues" (III, 11.) is a highly individual and extremely successful performance. James also recorded accompanying himself on the guitar and he seemed to play either instrument with the same facility. He was one of the most exciting and one of the least known singers of the Twenties.

No description of blues accompaniments is complete without the famed piano-guitar duets of Leroy Carr and Scrapper Blackwell. Their recordings sold widely and were very influential. They were so sensitive to each other's playing that the highly developed interplay between the emotionalism of Scrapper's guitar style and the thoughtful restraint of Leroy's piano style seemed to be almost a single musical statement. The "New Royal Baby Blues" (III, 12.) is one of six recordings they made of this most successful of Leroy's compositions.

The southern Negro musician, especially in rural areas, is always in demand for local dances and parties and blues singers are especially popular. The jobs, however, are long and hard, often from early in the evening to the next dawn, and even a strong singer can't keep it up all night. Lemon Jefferson was well known around central Texas for his ability to sing and play all night for the outdoor suppers that were given every weekend, but even Lemon often brought a second musician along to help him through the long hours. Usually a singer brought a small instrumental group with him for these jobs and instruments like the harmonica or the washboard became closely identified with the rural blues. One local style of this instrumental music was popular around Memphis in the late Twenties and the "skiffle" music of these Memphis musicians was a very distinctive development of the blues style. Of the numerous melodic instruments added to these small groups the most popular has always been the harmonica. A skilled player can duplicate the vocal tone of the Negro blues singer with considerable success and the greatest blues harmonica players soon became almost platonists on the instrument and technique. Bert Bihr's "Moham Blues" (IV, 1.) shows the instrument as an unaccompanied melodic voice, and the "Harmonica Stomp" (IV, 2.), with Sonny Terry on harmonica, "Oh Red" on washboard, and Blind Fiddler Fuller on guitar, shows it as a leading voice in a small instrumental ensemble. There were two versions of this piece recorded at the same session. Terry and Oh Red used the harmonica note from the blues of Blind Boy Fuller, but did occasional solo recordings and the first version of the piece was the duet by Terry and Oh Red that was included in the first volume of the Folkways Anthology of Folk Music. The second version has Fuller on guitar and the technical brilliance of his playing seemed to challenge the other two to an even more excited performance.

The violin was still used in many rural areas and there were several recordings using a violin as a second melodic voice behind the singer. On Frank Stokes' "Shiney Pewter" (IV, 3.) the violinist is Will Estes. The mandolin was also used widely and the "Sloppy Drunk Blues" of Sleepy John Estes (I, 5.) is an excellent example of the instrument in a blues accompaniment. As for the kazoo, the lead kazoo piece or pipe with a small hole near one end covered with a paper diaphragm, was often used by singers who either didn't have a "rock" to hold a harmonica near their mouth while they were playing or who weren't able to play a harmonica. Since the tone is produced by humming into it the kazoo is one of the most simple musical instruments and it was very popular with young blues enthusiasts. In this "Trouble In Mind" (IV, 4.) Virgil Perkins is playing kazoo and washboard and the twelve-string guitar is played by Sam Charles. The kazoo was used extensively in rural areas because of its expense and the difficulty of carrying it around. Homemade one-string instruments were used, and the jug was popular around Memphis, but it was not until the commercial exploitation of the music in the Thirties that the string bass became part of the blues instrumental group. It was very effective with the guitar and a number of very successful recordings were made with accompaniment by these two instruments. On Arthur Crudup's "Mean Old Frisco" (IV, 5.) the bass player plucks the kazoo and jug and Slim Brownie McShee's "Spor ting Life Blues" (IV, 6.) the musician bows the instrument, one of the few examples of the bowed bass in a blues accompaniment.

Next to the bass the washboard has been the most widely used rhythm instrument in the rural blues. Virgil Perkis' unaccompanied performance (II, 7.) shows the tonal variety the instrument is capable of, and the "Harmonica Stomp" (IV, 2.) shows the instrument in its more usual role of an unobtrusive addition to the blues group. Perkins has mounted his washboard on a rough stand so that he can play it from both sides at once and a number of pans and metal lids have been nailed to the frame. Using thimbles on his fingers he plays on the metallic washboard. The "Green Down Home Blues" (II, 8.) used small pieces of metal nailed to it with considerable enthusiasm.

It is important to emphasize that these instruments are used very casually in the blues and that groups are often liable to completely change their instrumentation before a dance is over. Charlie Sarge's "Tippin' Round" (IV, 8.) the instrumentation includes the tenor guitar that Charlie is playing, the six-string guitar of Will Shade, and Gus Dannon's jug. Camper Downie had a split mouth kazoo and was in the strict sense of the word. A jug player simply makes a buzzing sound with his mouth and holds the jug close to his mouth to resonate the sound. The "Mean Don't 'Low It" by "Mama'' Sliade" (II, 9.) Robert Brown on washboard and vocal, Bill Brooman, guitar; and Bob Cole, piano. The performance is similar to hundreds turned out by a small group of blues musicians working in the Chicago recording
Since the second World War a number of older blues singers have been performing as concert artists for an intellectual white audience that has usually confused the style with American folk music. The result has been the development of a rather pretentious "folk blues" style that borrows heavily from the mannerisms of popular night club entertainment. Perhaps with this new interest will come a new awareness in the Negro audience of the richness and creative expressiveness of the rural blues.

The example by Will Shade and Charlie Burse were recorded by S. B. Charters in Memphis, Tennessee, in December, 1956. Side I, Band 1 is from unissued material in the author's collection. Other material from this session was issued on Folkways Record FA2610, "American Skiffle Bands."

The examples by Furry Lewis were recorded by S. B. Charters in Memphis, Tennessee, on February 24, 1959 and October 3, 1959. (III,2.) and (III,6.) are from the first recording session, when Furry used a pocket knife; (I,4.) and (III,4.) are from the second session, showing the use of a bottle neck. All these examples are from unissued material in the author's collection.

Lightnin' Hopkins was recorded by S. B. Charters in Houston, Texas, on February 4, 1959. (III,1.) is from unissued material in the author's collection. Other examples are issued on Folkways Record 3469, "Lightnin' Hopkins."

The examples by Virgil Perkins were recorded by S. B. Charters in Houston, Texas, in November, 1955. This material, and the example by Mochie Reeves, recorded by S. B. Charters in Mobile, Alabama, in July, 1954, is previously unissued and from the author's collection; as is all other material in this study. The booklet How To Play and Sing The Blues Like The Phonograph Artists is the property of Record Research Magazine and grateful acknowledgement is made to the magazine's two editors, Len Kunstadt and Robert Colton, for its use. A further acknowledgement is made to S. B. Charters III, Mary Paccetti, and Frederic Ramsey Jr. for their assistance in the preparation of the material in this set.


2. Ibid: Page 30

THE RURAL BLUES

SIDES 1 & 2
33 1/3 RPM RF-202A

Band 1: I CAN'T STAND IT (Will Shade)
Band 2: SHELBY COUNTY WORK HOUSE BLUES (Ramblin' Willie Maebro)
Band 3: FROM FOUR UNTIL LATE (Robert Johnson)
Band 4: YOU CAN LEAVE BABY (Furry Lewis)
Band 5: SLOPPY DRUNK BLUES (Deek John Estes)
Band 6: ROBERTA BLUES (Lil' Son Jackson)
Band 7: BAD LUCK AND TROUBLE (Lightnin' McKinzie)
Band 8: THOUSAND MILE BLUES (Blind Boy Fuller)
Band 9: IF I GET LUCKY (Arthur Crudup)
Band 10: DOWN, THE HIGHWAY (Charlie Patton)

Edited by SAMUEL B. CHARTERS
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