

ROOTS OF RHYTHM AND BLUES

A TRIBUTE TO THE ROBERT JOHNSON ERA



BABY DON'T YOU WANT TO GO In 1991, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival commemorated Robert Johnson, a Mississippi blues artist who lived and died over 50 years ago. Toward the end of his short life he recorded a remarkable body of records which were twice reissued, once in the early 1960s, and then almost 30 years later as *Robert Johnson: The Complete Recordings*. The 1990 reissue earned a Grammy and generated a flood of biographical speculation and critical commentary concerned with the blues, Johnson, and his role in American musical history. Regrettably, most of what has been written perpetuates stereotypes of the blues and of Johnson as a traditional artist. This recording seeks to correct these misconceptions by reconnecting the blues and Robert Johnson to their social and musical roots.

Drawn primarily from the Smithsonian Folklife Festival's "Roots of Rhythm and Blues: The Robert Johnson Era," this recording explores the soundscape of the rural Southern African — American community in which Johnson shaped his artistic vision. It also demonstrates how his accomplishment shaped the history of American music. Simply stated, it deals with tradition and creativity — how Johnson's music incorporated the sounds that surrounded him, and how it changed the music that came after him.

The blues is most likely encountered by today's casual listener as packaged entertainment. Because blues is the wellspring of American popular music, its roots in African American community life are often convenient to overlook. But over the past 100 years, blues has been a living part of community rituals and institutions — house parties, jook joints, church meetings, and work places — which continues to the present day. This record demonstrates the close connection between the music of everyday life and the blues.

The artists who perform this material have lived it. They include a handful of active blues players who knew and worked with Robert Johnson, some musicians who performed types of music common in Johnson's home community, and, finally, the current inheritors of his legacy, contemporary artists who continue to reinterpret his compositions and musical innovations.

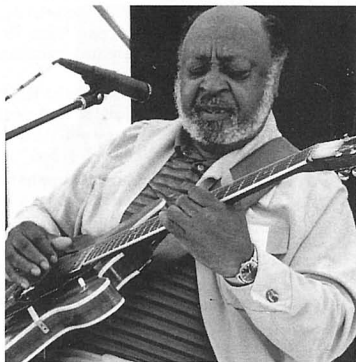
Our emphasis on community tradition in no way diminishes Johnson's reputation as a creative artist or a musical genius. Rather, it locates his genius within the community whose aesthetic he shared, not in the world of contemporary rock criticism. He was clearly a master of his idiom, a poet composer whose work endures in tradition. As his one time co-worker, St. Louis pianist Henry Townsend, put it: "He was one of those people, if you played it

right he could play with you. If you played it wrong, he could play with you, and whatever you would do, it was right for him — because he's just that bright. I thought he was a brilliant man."

Johnson was a gifted member of a fraternity of blues musicians who were members of a larger cultural community and were exposed to a shared musical heritage. The musical building blocks Johnson used so creatively and effectively came from a broader community-based musical culture. His work echoes a range of styles shared by church and jook house alike, and it clearly shows the influences of other musicians he learned from face to face or through the medium of phonograph recordings, a medium he obviously understood. This recording should help us better understand and appreciate Robert Johnson and his music. Each selection connects with the others, and together they demonstrate the shared tradition that links his music to its African American sources, to the music of his contemporaries, and to the current keepers of the blues tradition.

If you have had the opportunity to hear and be moved by Robert Johnson's blues, this recording is an invitation to learn more about his background and to hear other music that shares its power and feeling.

SINGING THE BLUES Blues is a state of being, a condition, a mood, a state of mind and spirit. Singing the blues, on the other hand, is a way of treating the condition. I have always admired the courage of blues singers who operate on themselves in the presence of their community and strangers. Blues songs scan the personal horizon. The lyrics obey no boundary that we can experience, and what cannot be conveyed by lyrics is carried on the wings of sound, of voice and guitar, harp and piano — the black keys that is. The sound of a blues song finding the air sometimes makes me feel as if something in my soul which I had never heard before has started to sing. When blues songs are most powerful, they resonate with intimacy, they feel like unrestricted exposure; thus, they are open to also touch anyone who stands in their sound. And I guess therein lies the genius of the treatment of the condition. If you can sing about a situation, you are not ruled or owned by that situation. You can sing about being down and the very act of that song filling the air represents you on your way up; and if you can stand in the sound of an honestly crafted blues song and let it find its true place within your soul — you, the participant listener, can be more whole.



Robert "Junior" Lockwood

Photo: Michael Berns

It was Robert Johnson who said:

Blues ain' nothing but a lowdown shaking chill
If you ain' never had 'em I hope you never will
or then there is the line:

I'm a stranger here, I'm a stranger everywhere
Lord I would go home, but I'm a stranger there

There is the sound of the blues and what it wakes up inside. I owe my sensibilities in the area to my brother Jordan Warren Johnson. I grew up in a house where 'reals' (blues) were not allowed; however, every night, my brother would go into my parents' room, get the radio, and turn it to Randy, a late night show out of Nashville. Between midnight and day, even while I slept, the songs of Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Lightnin' Hopkins, T-Bone Walker, Big Mama Thornton, and Screaming Jay Hawkins rocked my dreams.

Then one day I sat on a hill at a Philadelphia Folk Festival, and I heard the opening strains of a guitar, and I felt myself opened up by the cry of Son House's bottle-neck style guitar. I sat up and allowed myself to be treated by his "Death Letter Blues."

Got a letter this morning, how in the world do you reckon it read
It said, "Son, you'd better hurry, cause the girl you love is dead."

That day on that hill, I recognized Son House from the opening strains of his guitar, and the who he was for and in me was confirmed when I heard the sound of his voice. Now I don't really believe that I had actually ever heard Son House before, but when I heard his music, I knew who he was. I remember thinking... They are alive! They are not dead! They are not just memory! They walk among us.

I actually got a chance to sit down with Son House and talk to him. He had a Baptist preaching style to his song delivery and the texts of his songs were filled with things of the spirit. He had been one of those who needed to be in church and needed to sing the blues, but there was this line within the African American church community that was drawn artificially within people's lives that said if you sing the blues, you are doing the devil's work. Church people forced these musicians to chose between what they called the world's music and the accompanying rough life, and the way of the saved, walking in the way of the Lord. For musicians like Son House, Thomas Dorsey, Mable Hillery, it was an impossible and unnatural split and they moved across it back and forth looking for

peace and honesty and paid a terrible personal price. That day Son House was on the blues side, he even had a blues about the church.

I gon' get good religion, I gon' join the Baptist church
I gon' start to preaching, so I don't have to work

Bob Wernick had played Robert Johnson records to me several years earlier. I still remember the discovery of the personal inside experience his sound, voice and guitar, broke into my life. I do believe there are places inside yourself that blues go that cannot be reached in any other way. When I talked to Son House, he talked about Robert Johnson and how great he was, but added that he didn't last long — meaning he died early.

All blues are not about trouble, and all blues are not about loving and leaving, and loving and being left, but a lot of them are. It is a good place to deal with heartache:

I got up this morning, blues all in my bed
I tried to eat my breakfast, blues all in my bread

Then there is downright out-and-out protest. The blues song is a brilliant vessel for moving frustration and anger out into the air where it can tell the news everybody knows...

I'd rather drank muddy water, sleep on a holler log
Than to stay in Mississippi, being treated like a dirty dog.

or:

Ain't it hard to stumble ain got no place to fall
If the wolf man's knocking at your door, may not have no place at all

Then, no matter what the subject, all blues are about survival and going on, whether they sing of being mistreated or things going wrong, or being left; or the lines celebrate finding the right woman or man to rock you just so, things going right, and making a change — singing the blues is about survival and transforming the quality or your life. It is self-treatment. And with this recording, the Smithsonian becomes participant in the tradition, passing on and transmitting needed songs for 'needy' times and, to those of us who have courage, another way of knowing and sharing about the most personal side of things. ... Listen and feel better.

— Bernice Johnson Reagon

1. SWEET HOME CHICAGO

Johnny "Ned" Shines (Accompanied by Kent DuChaine) & Ensemble (Robert Johnson) — Publisher Pending

Born in Frayser, Tennessee in 1915, Shines was inspired by his brother and mother, both competent guitarists. By the 1930s he was working in Arkansas and befriended Robert Johnson. They worked streets, jooks, or house parties as far off as Detroit. Shines recalls: "I guess him and I were the first hippies because we didn't care when, where, or how. If we wanted to go some place we went. We didn't care how. We'd ride, walk, and if you asked us where we were going we didn't know. Just anywhere." After Johnson, Shines worked throughout Arkansas, Tennessee, and Missouri, eventually moving to Chicago. Shines' slashing slide guitar carried more of Robert Johnson's spirit than did any other traditional artist. Yet he was not a Johnson imitator. At the Festival his guitar work was hampered by an earlier stroke, but his voice carried him and was without a doubt the most powerful blues instrument at the Festival. In April 1992, Shines died from circulatory problems. This recording is dedicated to his memory.

The Jam Session Ensemble has two generations of blues players: those who knew Robert Johnson — Shines, Townsend, and Lockwood — and a younger trio, who know Johnson's music through recordings: Wiggins, Pitchford, and DuChaine. The group as a whole never practiced or worked together, but were interconnected. Lockwood and Shines knew each other and recorded together; Lockwood taught Pitchford bass; Shines and DuChaine were partners; and finally, Shines inspired Wiggins in 1976. Despite the spontaneous format, the music holds together in an exciting improvised sequence of vocal and instrumental verses. Their sound characterizes Memphis and Chicago electric ensemble blues of the 1950s and 1960s, which served as dance music and as the immediate source of rock and roll.

The third song Johnson recorded is a reworking of Kokomo Arnold's "Old Original Kokomo Blues" (Decca, September 10, 1934). It employs two musical innovations Johnson is credited with inventing: the constant moving bass figure derived from the piano and the turnaround, a means of negotiating the musical interval between verses. One of the most recycled blues ever written, the song extends an invitation Mississippians accepted, bringing blues to Chicago, where, electrified, it went on to become world-popular music.



Johnny "Ned" Shines

Photo: Richard Strauss/

2. COME ON IN MY KITCHEN

Lonnie Pitchford

(Robert Johnson) — Publisher Pending

Born in the 1950s in Lexington, Mississippi (30 miles from where Robert Johnson died), Pitchford learned by constructing a one-string instrument with African antecedents, locally known as a “diddle bow.” He plays acoustic and electric guitar and bass, both as a soloist and in a gospel ensemble and band format. Having worked with Robert Junior Lockwood over the years, Pitchford is part of a direct chain of tradition from Johnson to Lockwood to Pitchford.

Pitchford’s stark reading of Johnson’s evocative classic exemplifies a younger generation of Mississippi musicians reclaiming their traditional inheritance. During the festival, older artists who knew Johnson continuously remarked on the resemblance between Johnson and Pitchford. Townsend noted: “Speaking about Robert’s personality, we got a man out here that is very much like him in a lot of ways, and it’s none other than Lonnie Pitchford.” The song shares a traditional melody with the blues standard “Sitting On Top Of The World” and the folk spiritual “You Got To Move.”

3. YOU’VE GOT TO MOVE

Moving Star Hall Singers

(Traditional) — Public Domain

Taking their name from a small “praise house” located on the South Carolina sea islands, the group consists of Janie Hunter, Benjamin and Ruth Bligen, Mary Pinckney, Christina McNeil, and Loretta Stanley, along with other family and friends who frequent the hall for prayer services and other social events. Singing is important in these meetings to praise the Lord, bolster each other’s spirits, and for enjoyment. Sea island traditions of spirituals, anthems and ring shouts incorporate call-and-response forms, body movement and percussive accompaniment, all echoing African traditional preferences. Their repertoire of praise songs and shouts harkens back to the very first spirituals collected from the same region in the 19th century. These striking religious songs, far removed from the slickness of contemporary gospel, are as intense as any music — including the deepest blues.

Sacred and secular song share musical traits rooted in a common aest: ic connected to shared African heritage. Janie Hunter leads the singers with strong call-and-response interaction. At the end, the group breaks into a shout and stomp, quickening the tempo and adding percussive hand clapping. Mississippian Fred McDowell’s 1960s recording inspired the Rolling Stones to record the piece.

4. ALL MY MONEY’S GONE

Henry Townsend

(Roosevelt Sykes and Henry Townsend) — Publisher Pending

Born in Shelby, Mississippi in 1909, Henry “Mule” Townsend’s musical education began in the river towns of Cairo, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri. Inspired by guitar great Lonnie Johnson, who also deeply influenced Robert Johnson, Townsend first learned guitar and was soon accompanying local piano players. Eventually he concentrated on piano as well. His music represents a distinct and historically important regional blues style. St. Louis was a major blues town in many ways more important than Chicago during the 1930s. During that time Robert Johnson came to St. Louis and worked with Townsend. He now lives in St. Louis and is an active spokesman for the St. Louis Blues Society.

Townsend’s piano style and hard-edged vocal capture the spirit of St. Louis’ distinct regional sound. (See Roosevelt Sykes, “All My Money Gone Blues” [OK 8727 June 14, 1929])

5. HOW LONG, HOW LONG BLUES

Robert Junior Lockwood with Gene Schwartz, bass

(Leroy Carr) — MCA Music Publishing (a div. of MCA, Inc.) (ASCAP)

Born in Marvell, Arkansas in 1915, Lockwood grew up in Helena. Inspired by his stepfather, Robert Johnson, he began an unparalleled career as a working musician. From the 1930s on, he participated in almost every chapter of blues history as a central character and a major musical influence. Wherever the blues flourished, in Clarksdale, Mississippi; Helena, Arkansas; Memphis, Tennessee; St. Louis, Missouri; or Chicago, Illinois, Lockwood plied his trade working with Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller), Howlin’ Wolf, Muddy Waters, Little Walter, B. B. King, and most of the other major figures in Delta and Chicago blues history. Lockwood can be credited with introducing a jazz-inflected sophistication to the Chicago bar band sound. He now works in Cleveland, Ohio.

Lockwood credits Carr, but this song may have already been traditional when Carr and Scrapper Blackwell recorded it in 1928 (Vocalion 1191). The eight bar structure parallels other standards “Key To The Highway,” “Crow Jane,” and “Red River Blues.”

6. THAT’S ALRIGHT

David Honeyboy Edwards

(James Lane) — Publisher Pending

Edwards was born in Shaw, Mississippi in 1915. He began to play guitar and harmonica as a teenager, and soon travelled the

South playing street corners, vacant lots, store porches, house parties, and jooks. He met Robert Johnson shortly before Johnson's death in 1938 and was with him the night he was poisoned. Throughout his long career, he worked with many major figures including The Memphis Jug Band, Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller), Little Walter, and Jimmy Rogers. In the 1940s he settled in Chicago and is an active member of the bar band scene.

Edwards' familiarity with this classic dates back to his days with Little Walter and Rogers. Songwriter/vocalist Larry Wise offers sympathetic harmonica accompaniment, and, like Phil Wiggins, is another gifted young Washington bluesman.

7. TRAIN, TRAIN

Jessie Mae Hemphill
(Traditional) — Public Domain

Jessie Mae Hemphill carries on the traditional music of Senetobia, Mississippi's Hemphill family. Her grandfather and musical inspiration, Sid Hemphill, was a fiddler and guitarist recorded by folklorists Alan Lomax and George Mitchell. Her mother Bertha Lee and aunt Rosa Lee were also guitarists. A flamboyant stage personality, she has toured Europe and recorded for several labels.

Hemphill's song exemplifies the connected themes of separation and travel. In blues tradition, images of trains dominated the very first blues collected and throughout blues history trains have worked as sexual metaphors, symbols of escape, or agents of mistreatment. Musically this song employs a typical repeated rhythmic melodic figure, a trait with pronounced African origins.

8. THIS TRAIN

Elder Roma Wilson
(Traditional) — Public Domain

Wilson left Mississippi for Detroit in the 1940s to earn a living as a street corner preacher and gospel musician. In 1948, he recorded several test pressings with his three sons who played the harmonica. Two cuts were later released, which spread Wilson's reputation, but by then he had returned to Mississippi. Now 80-plus years, he remains a forceful vocalist and a harmonica virtuoso.

"This Train Is Bound For Glory" was recorded as an unaccompanied spiritual by the Biddleville Quintette (Paramount 12448, 1927). Its prevalence in folk song collections shows it was traditional. During the folk revival, it lent its name to Woody Guthrie's autobiography *Bound For Glory* in 1943. Elder Wilson takes



Henry Townsend

Photo: Michael Berns

advantage of the song's rousing melody and its train imagery to blend the spiritual with an equally spirited train imitation.

9. SILVER COMET TRAIN

Phil Wiggins

(Traditional) — Public Domain

Wiggins, a Washington, D.C. native, was influenced by Johnny Shines and John Cephas. He is one of the most influential harmonica players active today. Cephas and Wiggins have worked together for 16 years.

Wiggins' harmonica solo reflects an African tradition in which musical instruments imitate natural or typical community sounds. African American harmonica players alter the European scale to one in keeping with African-derived musical values by playing the instrument backwards or inside out — playing in the key of the draw note rather than the blow note, bending and choking notes, and altering pitch and timbre through throat constriction, tongue placement, and hand movements. It becomes an instrument capable of all the emotional nuances of the human voice. African transverse reed instruments employ many of the same techniques. Wiggins takes us on a trip shared by countless harmonica players, including Robert Johnson.

10. CAPTAIN CAN'T READ

Railroad Maintenance Crew

(Traditional) — Public Domain

Beyond agriculture, railroad and lumber camps were major employers of African American labor in the South. The railroad work gang, now retired — Cornelius Wright, Ernest Carrington, John Henry Mealy, Abraham Parker and Elder Brown — are from the Birmingham Alabama area. The songs coordinated work like straightening railroad tracks which had been bent by heavily laden freight haulers. Similar track lining gangs were common during Robert Johnson's lifetime.

Big Bill Broonzy and Sleepy John Estes, who recorded blues for four decades, were Mississippi track liners. Broonzy recalled: "I was in a gang called the lining gang. There were eight of us and we all had bars. The bars was six and a half feet long. We called them lining bars and John Estes would do the calling for us to line track every morning — when we would get to the place where we had to work at John Estes would holler: 'Hang around me boys like flies around sugar'" and we would, and then he would yell: 'All men to their places like horses to their traces.' That meant put your bar

under the rail. There was a white man about 100 feet ahead of us showing John Estes which way he wanted the track to move and John Estes would sing it to us and we moved the track." (*Big Bill Blues: Big Bill Broonzy's Story As Told to Yannick Bruynoghe*. New York: Oak Publications, 1964. p.109) Ernest Carrington sings lead on this two-verse work song and, like John Estes, hollers:

Captain can't read, captain can't write
Captain don't know when the track ain't right
Oh move, oh move
Ten and ten is double ten
I got my learning from the L and N

These words combine a humorous protest theme (making fun of the boss) and an occupational reference to the Louisville and Nashville line.

11. SATISFIED

Johnny "Ned" Shines

(Traditional) — Public Domain

Children's ring games and play party songs were yet another part of the soundscape which combines song, dance, and competition. Such games taught basic skills. Although Johnny sings it solo, its usual format would include a call and group-response vocals.

12. WATERMELONS

Johnny "Ned" Shines

(Traditional) — Public Domain

Street cries hawking fresh fruit, vegetables, or fish can still be heard in Baltimore, Maryland, where fruit peddlers called "Arabbers" work from horse-drawn carts. Johnny Shines' father used similar calls as a fruit vendor in Memphis, Tennessee in the 1920s.

13. I'M GOING HOME

David Savage

(Traditional) — Public Domain

Born in a rural farming community near Rosedale, Mississippi, Savage learned work songs, hollers, and blues while plowing with mules and working cotton fields. Imprisoned in Mississippi's notorious Parchman Farm, he learned prison work songs which helped convicts survive a merciless forced labor system. He now lives in Greenville.

Travellers' accounts from the 18th and 19th century comment on work-related songs for rowing, chopping, hoeing, spike driving, hauling, and rice threshing. Song, as a component of daily life,

parallels traditions found in Africa and throughout the diaspora. Work songs coordinated and paced collective work and commented on conditions and common problems. "I'm Going Home" is a cutting or chopping song.

14. THE BROWNSVILLE BLUES

John Cephas and Phil Wiggins
(Sleepy John Estes) — Publisher Pending

Cephas was born in the Foggy Bottom section of Washington, D.C. His guitar and vocal skills were family-rooted. Cephas is equally at home with gospel songs learned travelling with a Washington quartet and with house party blues learned in rural Virginia.

Sleepy John Estes first recorded this song in 1929 as "The Girl I Love, She Got Long And Curly Hair" (Victor 38549, September 24, 1929). Cephas learned it from a Furry Lewis recording and plays it on a National guitar tuned to an open G chord. Musically it is similar to Johnson's "If I Had Possession Over Judgement Day," "Travelling Riverside Blues," and the Delta anthem "Rolling And Tumbling."

15. LOVED AND LOST

Johnny "Ned" Shines & Ensemble
(Johnny Shines) — Joliet Music (admin. by Bug Music)/Taliesin Music (BMI)

Classic blues poetry, this song pairs the blues' most potent time frame, "early in the morning," with its most traditional subject, competition and loss in the arena of love. It also demonstrates Shines' capabilities as a deep blues singer and Wiggins' vocal tonalities.

16. WALKING BLUES

Lonnie Pitchford
(Robert Johnson) — Publisher Pending

Johnson recorded "Walkin' Blues" November 27, 1936. The song shows ties to Son House, one of Johnson's obvious inspirations. Like Johnson, Pitchford plays in open G, a tuning shared with the banjo, an African-derived instrument.

17. TELL ME DADDY, HOW YOU WANT YOUR ROLLING DONE

Johnny "Ned" Shines
(Traditional) — Public Domain

Free-form hollers were common in the South. Shines' blues vocal style incorporates many characteristics associated with the holler tradition including mid-line yodels and falsetto breaks. Blues



David "Honeyboy" Edwards

Photo: Michael Berns

drew on hollers, and once blues achieved their tremendous popularity, the songs and verses were commonly sung as hollers. Shines' verse is a traditional blues verse. "Rolling," a common sexual term as in Robert Johnson's composition "Steady Rollin' Man" or in the blues line "rock me baby, roll me all night long," eventually lent its name to the musical category "rock and roll."

18. BERTHA

David Savage

(Traditional) — Public Domain

"Bertha" is a fragment of another chopping song, part of the tradition which formed one of the primary roots of the blues. Joseph Savage, David's brother, offers vocal support reminding us of the song's call-and-response structure.

19. IF YOU MISS ME

Moving Star Hall Singers

(Traditional) — Public Domain

This simple folk spiritual, led by Mary Pinckney, treats the subject of death as communal loss and personal gain. Its repetitive lyric and the moaning nature of the sparse support correspond to 19th century travellers' accounts, which often described such pieces as "eerie" or "weird" yet "strangely moving." Perhaps of all the songs on this recording it best expresses the power and feeling shared by both spirituals and the blues.

20. THE MOON IS RISING

Johnny "Ned" Shines & Ensemble

(Johnny Shines) — Publisher Pending

Narrative blues such as this are relatively rare. Most blues focus on feelings or reactions to situations more than storytelling. The core of this song — a love triangle, attempted murder, and revenge — ironically connects with the actual events which led to Robert Johnson's death. He too played the part of the "kidman" and was allegedly poisoned by a jealous husband. The theme of reversal, in which the poisoner becomes the victim, does not show up in blues tradition, although allusions to poisoning sometimes do.

21. KIND HEARTED WOMAN

Robert Junior Lockwood

(Robert Johnson) — Publisher Pending

As the first recording of Johnson's first session, November 23, 1936, we can assume Johnson considered this piece to be among his best. When Johnson stayed with Lockwood's mother during the

1930s, Lockwood learned directly from him. The song's lyrics juxtapose kindhearted and evil-hearted, attraction and leaving, and are an outstanding example of blues poetry. Gene Schwartz plays bass.

22. I HATE TO SEE THE SUN GO DOWN

Toshi Reagon

(Memphis Minnie McCoy) — Wabash Music Co.

Toshi Reagon was raised in a profoundly musical environment. Both of her parents, active in the civil rights movement, were founding members of the Original Freedom Singers, and her mother founded Sweet Honey In The Rock. Toshi was born in Atlanta, and currently lives in New York City. She grew up in Washington, D.C. and is no stranger to the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Like Wiggins and Pitchford, she speaks for the younger generation, the current caretakers of the blues tradition. Toshi is a fine guitarist whose contemporary style shows the influence of Memphis Minnie and Delta and Chicago artists. Unable to participate in the Festival, she recorded her contribution at a later date.

This selection is a tribute to the legendary blueswoman and all-time woman guitar hero Memphis Minnie, whose prolific recording career spanned three decades. Her work would have been known to Johnson as she was the more popular artist at that time. This song (Vocalion 04356) was initially recorded June 23, 1938, less than two months before Johnson's death.

23. TERRAPLANE BLUES

Lonnie Pitchford

(Robert Johnson) — Publisher Pending

The seventh song Robert Johnson recorded on his first session, "Terraplane Blues," coupled with "Kindhearted Woman Blues," was his first release. Recordings brought an artist more prestige than money, helping to promote live performances. Honeyboy Edwards recalls: A Delta woman offered Johnson a dime to play "Terraplane Blues" on a street corner in Greenwood. Johnson complied, stating: "Miss, that's my record." The crowd rewarded him with a shower of nickels and dimes, proud to be in the company of a recording star. The piece falls in a long line of automobile-related blues; many are similarly sexual metaphors.

24. MILK COW BLUES

Johnny "Ned" Shines & Ensemble
(Kokomo Arnold) — MCA Music Publishing (a div. of MCA, Inc.)
(ASCAP)

See Kokomo Arnold, "Milk Cow Blues" (Decca 7026, September 10, 1934). The milk cow and calf theme serves as the subject for Johnson's own "Milkcow's Calf Blues" and Kokomo's song may have inspired Johnson's composition. Like many downhome blues, it employs rural agrarian images as sexual metaphors, a trait common to blues. The song, a staple of the blues tradition, also served western swing artist Johnnie Lee Wills and Elvis Presley.

25. FAT MAMA

Johnny "Ned" Shines & Ensemble
(Johnny Shines) — Publisher Pending

This praise song, a Johnny Shines composition, draws on a popular 1960s dance rhythm which transcends the traditional repertoire of blues rhythms.

SELECTED READINGS

- Baraka, Amiri. *BLUES PEOPLE*. New York: William Morrow and Co., 1963
- Guralnick, Peter. *ROBERT JOHNSON*. New York: Dutton, 1989

SELECTED RECORDINGS

- Moving Star Hall Singers. *BEEN IN THE STORM SO LONG* Smithsonian/Folkways 40031
- *ROBERT JOHNSON: THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS* Columbia C2K/C21 46222
- *THE ROOTS OF ROBERT JOHNSON* Yazoo 1073

ROOTS OF RHYTHM AND BLUES: A TRIBUTE TO THE

ROBERT JOHNSON ERA

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Produced by Don DeVito, Worth Long,
Barry Lee Pearson and Ralph Rinzler
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Drawn from a program at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife: "Roots of Rhythm and Blues: A Tribute to the Robert Johnson Era." Recorded at the Folklife Festival, National Mall, Washington, D.C., July 1991, and Produced by Columbia Records/Sony Music Entertainment Inc. and Smithsonian/Folkways Recordings.

This recording is dedicated to the late Johnny "Ned" Shines.

COLUMBIA

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