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Hillbillies and Sharecroppers:
An introduction to East coast and Mississippi blues styles

By John Wesley Taylor

Master's thesis and Performance
Marshall University Department of Music
Dr. Paul Balshaw graduate advisor
Spring 2002

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ABSTRACT

In his thesis, *Hillbillies and Sharecroppers: an introduction to East coast and Mississippi blues guitar styles*, along with the accompanying CD performance, John Taylor discusses pre-WWII blues. The discussion includes regional guitar styles as well as physicalities involved in the performance of early acoustic blues in Appalachia and Mississippi. There is a chapter devoted to subjects covered in early blues songs with a list of lyric examples as well as a biography section devoted to both white and black performers in these styles. The live performance utilizes stories behind the songs and historical information of the performers discussed in the thesis. As Taylor performs, he also reveals the elements such as chord progressions, chord types, etc... that are involved in the performance of rural blues. The writing and performance when coupled present an introduction to early acoustic blues performance and history.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many thanks to give. First to Leslie Petteys and Lynda Ann Ewen for getting me started and for being my biggest supporters, so thanks. Next I have to thank Geoff and Susan Eacker who trained me for oral history and transcription. I thank Linda Tate for introducing me to Nat Reese and Melvin Wine. A big thanks goes to Nat Reese who encouraged me to follow my instincts as a performer and a person. Big ups to John Jackson and Trish for bringing me one step closer to the magic. Extreme thanks to Timmy Chambers for giving me a place to play anytime I get the notion. Thanks to Rob McNurlin, the Beatnik Cowboy, for letting me play on his radio show. The same thanks go out to Wallace Horn for letting me do the same. Thanks to all the people that have encouraged me, given me a ride to gigs, and basically everyone whose names I haven't mentioned. Thanks to Mary Thomas at CSEGA for her patience with me. Thanks to Dean Deutsch for making sure my paper work was always in order. Thanks to Jeff Bosley my partner and friend for making my recordings sound great. Finally, a special thanks to Kim for putting up with me while I was pulling my hair out over the idea of putting words on paper. Thanks to all, I do appreciate it. I hope this little paper is beneficial to those who read it.

INTRODUCTION

This paper and the accompanying CD are meant to serve as a practical introduction to the Blues of the East coast and Mississippi. This thesis contains chapters on the regions, the physicalities of the playing styles, as well as a biography section of six performers, white and black, who made significant contributions to the idiom. The CD features discussion and performances in the East coast and Mississippi Delta styles of the six performers mentioned in the thesis as well as stories and tunes of other players in these styles who recorded between 1926 and 1940. It is my hope that anyone who reads or listens to this material will be able to pull something useful from it.

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Part One

WHAT ARE THE BLUES?

"The Blues is a feelin'."¹ Many Blues artists have given this explanation when asked to explain the Blues. While abstract definitions give a hint of the emotional content that pervades the music, there are many practical aspects to the Blues that can be easily discussed. These aspects would include the structure of the music, including lyric content, chord progressions and types, verse length, etc. Thanks to the work of scholars and folklorists such as Jeff Titon, Bruce Bastin, Howard Odum, Paul Oliver, and of course John and Alan Loma, there is a broad base of historical information about the emergence of the Blues. Since there is so much written about the birth of the Blues, there will be little mention of it here. Instead, the focus of these essays will be on the musicians and regional styles of the music itself, concentrating on the East coast and rural Southern pre-World War II styles.

The Blues seem to have emerged from the Mississippi Delta area around the turn of the century. The racial climate in America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries caused white writers to ignore this development, and the early decades of the Blues cannot be accurately documented.

Through the use of oral history many scholars have attributed some of the earliest known Blues performances to Charlie Patton on the Dockery plantation in rural Mississippi.² One of the earliest written accounts of a proto-

Blues performance was supplied by W.C. Handy in 1892.³ Handy described "shabby" guitarists on the street singing a tune called "East St. Louis," which had "endless" repeated three line verses.⁴

Like much of the early rural African-American music, the Blues in Mississippi consisted of short, independent but interlocking rhythmic/melodic phrases.⁵ Corey Harris, in the liner notes to his compact disc Greens from the Garden, offers up a culinary analogy to the elements of African American musical experience, Blues or otherwise:⁶

The three main greens are collards, mustard, and turnip.... Just like people have different ways to prepare greens, ditto, different ways to play the Blues.... The three main sonic forces (in the music) are voice, strings, and rhythm. Like I said, collards, mustard, and turnip.... Collard green vocals are tough, rough, and full of grit.... The sing of the mustard strings are sharp and tangy with the vigor of pot liqueur...It is the zestfully tart turnip rhythm sounds distinguishes this collard of mixed greens.

While Harris' description of the music is vivid and seductive in "sense memory," it describes little, in practical terms, of what is happening musically. Essentially, the Blues is a song form consisting of three chords accompanying a three line verse covering roughly twelve bars. This generalization can be misleading, however, because the Blues is Folk music. In Folk music there are no rigid rules. All one has to do is listen to determine that there are as many 13, 8, and 16 bar Blues as there are twelve bar Blues.

Nevertheless, the 12 bar Blues is a good starting point from which to understand the Blues idiom.

The 12 bar pattern is made up of an AAB verse, with changing chords accompanying each line. The verse consists of a statement, restatement, and antecedent. An example would be:

- A) I woke up this mornin' feelin' round for my shoes
- A) I woke up this morning' feelin' round for my shoes,
- B) You know about it I got these old walkin' Blues.⁷

The accompaniment of the verse usually consists of the I, IV, and V chords in a major and/or minor key. The I, IV, and V chords represent the chords built on the first, fourth, and fifth scale degrees of a major or minor scale. In the key of C major, the I, IV, and V chords are C major, F major, and G major (CDEFGABC). The chord types tend to be dominant sevenths, which are being formed by adding a minor seventh to a major chord. So in the key of C, the "Walkin' Blues" would look like this:

C7
I woke up this mornin' feelin' round for my shoes,
F7
I woke up this mornin' feelin' round for my shoes,
G7
Know about it I got these old walkin' (C) Blues G7

As stated earlier, this is a twelve bar pattern, so the verse is roughly four bars per line. Many players add/added two beats and sometimes a full 4/4 measure at the end of each verse presumably to catch a breath between verses.⁸

There are other elements to playing the Blues that should be discussed, including string popping or snapping. Snapping is achieved by digging the thumb into one of the three bass strings of the guitar and pulling it out the string to snap back against the fretboard thereby adding a strong percussive

effect to the pitch sounded. Roy Bookbinder⁹ said legendary South Carolina Blues man Pink Anderson¹⁰ used the snapping technique quite often.¹¹

Another technique in Blues is string bending. Bending is a very literal description. While the finger is pressed on the string, on the fretboard, it pushes or pulls the string which raises the pitch. The change in pitch differs depending on the effect desired. The most common bends are the quarter-step and half-step bends. A recording with distinct examples of the bending technique would be Robert Johnson's "Hellhound on my Trail."¹² The Johnson tune also reflects one of the reasons why the bending technique was used: to imitate the voice.

An additional technique is slide. A slide is usually a metal, glass, or bone cylinder that is slipped onto either the middle, ring, or little finger of the fretboard hand. The guitar is tuned from standard (EADGBE low to high) to an open tuning or chord usually A/G (EAEAC#E low to high) or E/D (EBEG#BE low to high). The G and D tunings are the same intervallically. They are just a whole step lower. Most contemporaries favor G and D because the higher tunings put undue stress on the neck of the guitar. When the slide is placed over the fret wire and the strings are strummed, the sound is very metallic with a ringing or buzzing. One of the advantages of slide playing is that it only takes one finger to play a chord due to the open tuning.

Finally, another element, but not necessarily a technique, heard in early rural Blues is the addition or the dropping of beats. Again, an example would be the playing of Robert Johnson. Johnson would sometimes play measures of five or six in a 4/4 tune. However, the emphasis or accent or grouping of the beat would not change; there would just be an extra beat.¹³ Alan Jabour in his notes on the Hammons Family of Pocahontas County, West Virginia, discussed the same addition of beats to the fiddling of Burl Hammons as well as other rural performers. Jabour concluded that since these performers played mostly by themselves they did not count measures like ensemble players.¹⁴ This makes sense when one listens to the music. The emphasis is on the steady pulse instead of how those beats are grouped.

To summarize, the Blues are more than an ethereal feeling that emerged out of the Mississippi Delta at the turn of the twentieth century. The Blues is also a rural song form containing its own structure and technical devices more of which will be discussed in succeeding chapters. With this background the discussion of region and style begins.

YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A RIGHT HAND AND THIS IS WHAT IT DOES

By 1920, recording technicians and scholars began to notice rural southern music performed by black and white musicians. According to Ivan Tribe in his book Mountaineer Jamboree:¹

The scholars sought to preserve the tunes and texts of the mountaineers before modernization could change their vanishing way of life. The technicians, propelled by the American capitalistic spirit and scientific innovation, sought to reproduce and distribute the music via phonograph recordings and radio....

While Tribe refers directly to the Appalachian, mainly white, performers, the same thing was happening to the rural black musicians. The resulting commercial recordings led to a rise in record labels and to the concept of hillbilly and race records. As one might expect, hillbilly records were recorded by and marketed to rural white people; likewise, race records were marketed to black community.²

Most scholars at the time were interested in the English-Irish connection to balladry and fiddle tunes through the white performers and how, through worksong and gospel music, the Blues developed. The scholars and record companies discovered many common tunes and styles between white and black performers whether they were fiddle tunes, banjo songs, or Blues to name a

few. The scholars were also surprised by the number of Broadway show tunes and Tin Pan Alley tunes in the artists' repertoire. Ivan Tribe provides insightful commentary:³

While the West Virginia mountaineer retained much of his British ballad heritage and sometimes supplemented it with lyrics of his own creation, he also enriched his musical knowledge with songs of commercial origin. Minstrel shows attained popularity from the 1840s and some of their folk-derived and folk like material found its way into the hearts and heads of rural and hill people. So too did songs from the Broadway stage and New York music publishers. Sentimental numbers that told of tragic love or nostalgia for mother and home in particular retained popularity in the backwoods long after they had been forgotten by their professional and urban creators. The professional folklorist in later years might draw a great distinction between the sad, romantic tales of unfortunate love found in such antiquated ballads as "Barbara Allen" or "Fair Ellen and Lord Thomas," and the lyrics of Tin Pan Alley origin like "The Little Rosewood Casket" or "Two Little Girls in Blue," but the rural Appalachian did not. The true "folk" music lover had no use for academic criteria in his choice of favorites. He could-and did-incorporate both types of songs into his heritage without seeing any inconsistency.

Again, this quote refers to the white mountaineer, but the Blues had already permeated what was becoming hillbilly and later country music. Many white performers such as Frank Hutchison from Logan County, West Virginia were recording Blues by 1926.⁴

Scholars also started to notice that different areas or regions of the east coast and rural South had different ways of playing some of the same styles and even the same tunes. The concepts of regional styles will be discussed here using the Blues in which the main instrument was and still is the guitar. The guitar arrived on the rural American landscape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The guitar's availability at this time is attributed to

the completion of the railroad system and the advent of the mail order catalogue.⁵ Black musicians chose the guitar over the banjo mainly because of the ridiculous way they were portrayed in the minstrel show.⁶ So the banjo, whose ancestry goes back to Africa, was seen by the black community of the early twentieth century as a degrading instrument. When the guitar arrived, many banjo players, both black and white, transposed songs to guitar from the banjo using a variety of finger picking styles. "It was Maybelle Carter who introduced the idea that the guitar could pick melody as well. She did this by having the thumb pick out the tune on the lower strings while the index finger brushed up and down across the high strings, articulating both chords and rhythm."⁷ By the late 1920's, however, recorded evidence such as the music of Mississippi John Hurt showed a more pianistic accompaniment, with the melody played on the treble strings and straight 4/4 time kept in the bass.⁸

The subject of finger picking suggests the title of this section: Yes, Virginia, there is a right hand. What this means is that the regional styles of guitar playing could in scholars' eyes be divided roughly by the way the right hand plucked the tune. Two prominent regional styles are the Mississippi Delta style and the East Coast or Piedmont style.

The Delta style, which refers to the floodplain of the Mississippi River, is characterized by the dead-thumb bass. The dead-thumb is an ostinato played on the bass strings, sometimes the root of the particular chord and sometimes not. While the thumb keeps the beat, licks (short, melodic phrases or fragments) are played on the treble strings many times echoing the voice.⁹ The rhythm of the Delta style is full of string snapping and intense driving energy. The vocal melody as well as the rhythm are both at times quite erratic.¹⁰ The harmony in Delta style generally follows the twelve bar I, IV, V form.

The Piedmont style, named after the rolling foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, differs quite a bit. First of all, the right hand which defines style uses an alternating bass. This means the thumb alternates between bass strings, and usually plucks on the beat, thus providing a marching band feel. Based on ragtime piano, which itself was based in part on syncopated

marching band style, the Piedmont style utilized the alternating bass in conjunction with syncopated melody licks on the treble strings. The Piedmont style is similar in picking style to older pre-blues performers like John Hurt (to be discussed later). The Piedmont style takes the piano style out of the boom-chuck sound of early alternating bass styles and introduces ragtime elements such the cycle of fifths: the I, III, VI, II, V, I changes. In the key of C this would be C, E⁷, A⁷, D⁷, G⁷, C. An example of this type of progression can be found on Blind Boy Fullers' recording of "Baby Gotta Change Your Mind."¹¹ By and large, the Piedmont style is much smoother/legato than the Delta style. The Piedmont also sounds more uptown than the Delta style. The term "slick" comes to mind. The Piedmont style differs from Ragtime mentioned earlier in that the Piedmont style is part of an oral tradition as is the case with the Delta style. Due to the nature of oral transmission, phonograph records, and the migration of many southern blacks to the north, there was an overlap or blend of styles that occurred most notably in the white players that learned Blues in the coal and lumber camps and the train yards.¹²

In conclusion, the efforts of early scholars and recording companies have given musicians and Blues fans the opportunity to absorb many regional styles, including the Delta and the Piedmont styles. These styles are defined by the difference in the use of the right hand and also belong, like most folk music, to the oral tradition.

HARD WORK, GOD, AND NASTY LOVE: COMMON THEMES

If gospel music gives spiritual counsel, the Blues speak for the physical world. Hard labor tales-- whether farming, factory work, or chain gang related-- permeate the Blues, as do questions of getting right with God or the love good/no good woman/man. Despite such heady topics, the Blues in lyric form are cathartic. A common misconception about the Blues is that it's a sad music that depresses people. Nothing could be further from the truth. The

Blues liberate the singer or listener by owning their pain and troubles and working them out through song.

To understand Blues lyrics, one must realize that the Blues differ from balladry in that ballads have a narrative. Blues songs may have a theme but each verse could stand independently. In fact, early Blues performers were valued more for the number of verses they could make up on the spot.¹ Many early Blues performances consisted of the same accompaniment all night with the singer improvising verses all evening.² With this in mind, it's not hard to believe that many recorded Blues songs share verses. As time went on, improvisation in the accompaniment became prized as well.

In keeping with the subject of this section, the following sets of song lyrics were picked to represent different topics and are grouped by theme:

Hard Times

Hard time killin' floor³

Hardtime here and everywhere you go
times harder than ever been before

and the people are driftin' from door to door
can't find no heaven, I don' care where they go

hear me people, just before I go,
these hard times will kill you just dry long so

well, you hear me singin' my lonesome song
these hard times can last us so very long

if I ever get off this killin' floor,
I'll never get down this low no more.

Religion/Damnation

Me and the Devil Blues⁴

Early this mornin', when you knocked upon my door
Early this mornin', when you knocked upon my door
I said Hello Satan I believe it's time for me to go

me and the Devil, was walking side by side.
me and the Devil, was walking side by side.
I'm goin' to beat my woman 'til I get satisfied

She said "You don't see why," that I will dog her 'round
She said "You don't see why," that I will dog her 'round
Must be that old evil spirit, so deep down in the ground

You may bury my body on the highway side
You may bury my body on the highway side
So my old evil spirit can get a Greyhound bus and ride.

Heartache/Cheating Spouses

You Can Never Tell⁵

Say you can never tell, what's on these women's mind
Say you can never tell, what's on these women's mind
Keep you huggin' and kissin' you and treatin' you all the time

I went home this mornin', 'twixt nine-thirty and ten
I went home this mornin', 'twixt nine-thirty and ten
I met that second man, right back in my den

She's a dirty mistreater and she drove me from her door
She's a dirty mistreater and she drove me from her door
The good book says mama, you got to reap just what you sow

A woman's just like a dollar, dollar go from hand to hand,
A woman's just like a dollar, dollar go from hand to hand,
Some of these low down women just run from man to man

My woman said she loves me, been lovin' me all her life
My woman said she loves me, been lovin' me all her life

She met a second man on that corner, she told him that same lie twice.

Risque

Cigarette Blues⁶

Since I'm out here baby, since I'm all alone
I haven't got nobody to carry my smokin' on
Smoke my cigarette baby smoke it all night long
Smoke my cigarette baby, 'til you make my good ol' ashes come.

Goin' up the country to get my ashes hauled
women round this part of town wanna let my ashes fall
Smoke my cigarette baby smoke it all night long
Smoke my cigarette baby, 'til you make my good ol' ashes come.

Goin' up the country to get my hambone boiled
women 'round this part of town wanna let my hambone spoil
Smoke my cigarette baby smoke it all night long
Smoke my cigarette baby, 'til you make my good ol' ashes come.

One thing I want you to know 'fore I leave for home,
You know my cigarette it ain't too big and you know it
ain't too long
Smoke my cigarette baby smoke it all night long
Smoke my cigarette baby, 'til you make my good ol' ashes come.

To summarize, Blues lyrics speak to the trials and tribulations of life in the physical world. They are a vehicle for catharsis. Some common themes in Blues lyrics are hard times, religion, and relationships.

Part Two PERFORMERS

This part consists of biographies of six paradigmatic Blues performers.

Two Blind Men On a Train

Blind Boy Fuller and Reverend Gary Davis have quite a history together. Fuller was one of the most recorded and popular Bluesmen of the 1930s. Davis became known as one of the most innovative Gospel/Blues performers in the history of East coast playing. Both players entered the world in North Carolina around the turn of the century; Davis in 1892, Fuller in 1907.¹ Facts about the early lives of both men are sketchy at best. Davis seems to have been blind from an early age, yet Fuller did not go blind until complications from snow-blindness caused him to lose his sight permanently in his twenties.² Davis also had played guitar seriously from an early age while Fuller did not start playing seriously until he went blind in the late 1920's.

Davis and Fuller were taken by J.B. Long, a Durham, North Carolina record retailer, to New York to record in 1935.⁴ Davis recorded two tunes and backed Fuller on several tunes including "Truckin' My Blues," and "Baby You Gotta Change Your Mind." Davis did not record again until the 1950's due to his belief that he was getting ripped off. Indeed, even Davis' welfare records note that Davis believed he was being taken advantage of and regularly carried a knife with which he reportedly stabbed a boy several times, when the boy tried to steal his tips.⁵

After Davis left the studio, Fuller kept going back and recorded some eighty tracks from 1935-40.⁶ There seems to have been some confusion during the 1930's over Fuller's role as an originator of the Piedmont style.⁷ This was

probably due to his large record sales. By the 1940's the fact that Fuller learned to play initially from Davis, then from other recordings, was known.⁸ Fuller died in 1941 and Davis went on to be one of the most celebrated performers of the folk revivals of the 1950's and 1960's.⁹ Fuller and Davis both left some well-known songs to the Blues and Gospel Blues repertoire. Fuller's most popular titles include, "Truckin My Blues Away," "Weeping Willow," and "Step It Up and Go," just to name a few. Davis, being a reverend, left many gospel songs behind such as "Samson and Delila," and "Let Us Get Together." Davis also left behind some Blues that have been recorded by many other Blues artists most notably "Hesitation Blues" and "Baby Let Me Lay It On You."

You Mean White Guys Played Blues Too?

Two of the earliest white performers to record blues were Frank Hutchison and Dick Justice. Like Davis and Fuller, Hutchison and Justice were born around the turn of the century and in the same state of West Virginia, Hutchison in Raleigh County in 1897, and Justice in Logan County in 1905. Like many rural performers recorded in the 1920's, there is only scant information about either one. The living bearer of the most information about Hutchison and Justice is Tony Russell.¹ According to Russell:

In the history of hillbilly Blues, Frank Hutchison dominates the first chapter. Making a record in September, 1926 not only gave him nearly a year's lead on Jimmie Rodgers, but even put him ahead of black contemporaries like Big Bill Broonzy and Memphis Minnie.²

The first two singles Hutchison recorded were "Worried Blues" and "The Train Carried My Girl From Town."³ Hutchison reportedly learned these two slide tunes from a disabled, black railroad worker named Bill Hunt.⁴ As can be seen on the cover of Vol. 1 of Hutchison's Complete Recordings, he played slide with the guitar flat on his lap, a style that apparently was popular among white players. Between 1926-1929 Hutchison recorded thirty-two tunes ranging from Blues to fiddle and guitar breakdowns and novelty songs.

Historian Ivan Tribe had this to say about Hutchison's recorded output: "Frank Hutchison, who became known as the pride of West Virginia, attained a degree of individuality in his stylings that marks him as one of the most unusual old-time musicians in the entire spectrum of the 1920's".⁵

Hutchison worked mainly as a musician during the 1920's and early 1930's playing at local school and coal camps and also on river boats.⁶ Hutchison was also known to perform medicine show numbers and comedy routines. Musicians such as Bob Dylan, Doc Watson, and younger players such as Kelley Joe Phelps have covered Hutchison's songs.

Dick Justice worked as a miner and music was only a sideline, which probably accounts for the lack of information on his life.⁷ What does exist are his eclectic recordings from 1929. Justice recorded only ten tunes, including "Black Dog," "Brown Skin Blues," and "Cocaine." Justice also recorded some breakdowns and two songs from the Childe Collection of English Ballads that made their way to Appalachia: "Henry Lee" and "One Cold December Day."⁸

Hutchison died in obscurity in Columbus, Ohio in 1940.⁹ Justice seems to have disappeared and is believed to have died in 1953 or 1954.¹⁰

Wow, They're Both from Mississippi?

Robert Johnson and Mississippi John Hurt-- no two folk/blues performers could be more different in musical style or lifestyle.¹

Robert Johnson is arguably the most written about and celebrated Bluesman of any era. This is amazing given that there really is less known about him than probably any other folk performer. Born in Hazelhurst, Mississippi, around 1911, Johnson seems to have had a tumultuous family life.² Not much is known about how Johnson learned to play, but he was one of many Blues artists who exploited the old crossroads myth. It was believed that a man could go to a crossroads at midnight and make a deal with the Devil to learn the Blues.³ There was a belief in the black community that the Blues was the Devil's music and many itinerant Blues players used this myth as a marketing tool.

Johnson recorded twenty-nine songs between 1936-37 and hitched rides on trains, traveling extensively while playing music in a sophisticated Delta style. Johnson's love of women and whiskey apparently led to his demise at the age of twenty-seven in 1938. According to legend, Johnson was messing with a married woman and her husband fed him some poison whiskey. Johnson was said to have died on his hands and knees howling like a dog.⁵

Mississippi John Hurt, on the other hand, was a farmer most of his life. Born in 1893 in Teoc, Mississippi, Hurt played in what Reverend Davis called an old-timey style.⁶ Hurt played an alternating bass style that included Blues themes, ballads, and light rags.

In 1928 Hurt recorded thirteen songs and returned to the farm where he remained until 1963, when a folk fan named Tom Hoskins brought him to Washington, DC. Hurt went on to record three more studio albums, and many live albums have been released posthumously since his death in 1966.

Hurt became a favorite during the American folk/blues revival of the 1960's. He traveled and played coffee houses and colleges where his soft voice

and front porch persona left an indelible mark on younger players, including Roy Bookbinder, John Jackson, and Leo Kottke, among others.

Summary

Blues music is, for lack of a better word, a cathartic, orally transmitted song form. Although its origins are sketchy, Blues music is believed to have come from Mississippi. Structurally, Blues songs fit roughly into three line twelve bar verses. The lyric themes deal with varied topics from religion and relationships to drugs and hard times, and lines follow an AAB pattern. As recording grew, scholars also started to notice that regional styles existed in not just Blues but all types of folk music. Two of these regions were the Mississippi Delta and the Appalachian Piedmont. Both had distinct styles defined by the use of the right hand in the guitar accompaniment. While there were countless Blues musicians recorded in the 1920's and 30's, a fine starting point for listening would be the ragtime blues of Reverend Gary Davis and Blind Boy Fuller; the hillbilly blues of Frank Hutchison and Dick Justice; the front porch bluesy folk of Mississippi John Hurt, or the tormented Delta rambler Robert Johnson. In conclusion, regional style is a generalization because Blues music is folk music. Playing styles were/are as varied as the individuals who play the Blues. We know that Blues music is not necessarily a race issue because, since Blues appeared, as many white musicians were playing it, only it was called hillbilly or old-time even though many of the songs were contemporary. These concepts are very important because American history is glossed over with two-dimensional portrayals of the people and events that make us what we are. The truth is, every society is as fluid as the ocean. Language, culture, technology, all these things and more are the sum of us and gaining a better understanding of that can do nothing but help us in the long run instead of relying on antiquated myths.

There is, of course, much more to cover. There is general acknowledgement from scholars and musicians that Blues and other folk

music has a multi-ethnic background yet much more work needs to be done to understand and document intersecting points of class, gender, and race/ethnicity. With Blues and folk being traditionally an orally transmitted music, we must also find ways to preserve the tradition as well as correct or standardize a method of transcription/notation that better explains what one hears on a recording or live. All this having been said, there is nothing more to do except keep working.

Notes

What are the Blues?

1. Muddy Waters, quoted by Jeff Titon, p.75 Early Downhome Blues
2. Titton, p.76
3. W.C. Handy Father of the Blues, quoted by Bruce Baston, p.142 Red River Blues
4. W.C. Handy Father of the Blues, quoted by Bruce Baston, p.142 Red River Blues
5. Cecelia Conway notes from Black Banjo Songsters
6. Corey Harris notes from Greens from the Garden
7. Robert Johnson "Walking Blues" from Complete Recordings
8. After talking and listening to blues players, as well as performing the music myself, this seems true.
9. Roy Bookbinder has been touring the country for the past thirty-five years playing the Piedmont blues. Bookbinder got his start as Reverend Gary Davis' driver.
10. Pink Anderson was from Spartanburg, South Carolina and recorded five songs in the 1930's. Anderson also has the dubious distinction of being the Pink in Pink Floyd.
11. Conversation with Roy Bookbinder 5/2/98 Athens, Ohio
12. Robert Johnson "Hellhound on my Trail" Complete Recordings
13. Johnson is known to add beats in most every song. One needs only to listen to the Complete Recordings.
14. Alan Jabour notes to the Hammonds Family Recordings

Yes, Virginia there is a right hand, and this is what it does.

1. Tribe, p.25
2. Titton, p.80
3. Tribe, p.25
4. Hutchison September, 1926 records "Worry Blues" and "Train Carried my Girl from Town"
5. Baston, p.275
6. Titton, p.83
7. Baston quotes Mike Seiger, p.12
8. John Hurt from 1928 Sessions
9. Due to ease and access to his music I would suggest the recordings of Robert Johnson in particular "Come on in my Kitchen" or "Hellhound on my Trail" should be consulted for examples of the Delta style of accompaniment

10. Johnson's "Terreplane Blues" and "Preachin' Blues" should be consulted
11. Blind Boy Fuller the most recorded Piedmont bluesman of the 1930's
12. Hutchison's "Miner's Blues" and "West Virginia Rag" should be consulted

Hard Work, God, and Nasty Love: Common Themes

1. Titton, p.125
2. Titton, p.125
3. Skip James "Hard Time Killin' Floor" from Blues from the Delta
4. Robert Johnson "Me and the Devil" from the Complete Recordings
5. Blind Boy Fuller "You Can Never Tell" from East Coast Piedmont Style
6. Bo Carter "Cigarette Blues" from Roy Bookbinder's Bookeroo

Two Blind Men on a Train

1. Santelli, p.224
2. Bastin, p.275
3. Bastin, p.277
4. Farris from notes East Coast Piedmont Style
5. Bastin, p.277
6. Santelli, p.258
7. Bastin, p.280
8. Bastin, p.281
9. Duck Baker notes from Blues and Ragtime

You Mean White Guys Play Blues

1. Russell wrote the liner notes to the Document Records releases of Hutchison and Justice. He also wrote two known articles about Hutchison in particular. I have spent two and a half years making trips to Logan County, West Virginia only to find very little additional information about the two.
2. Russell notes Complete Recordings of Frank Hutchison
3. Russell notes Complete Recordings of Frank Hutchison
4. Russell notes Complete Recordings of Frank Hutchison
5. Tribe Mountaineer Jamboree, p.19
6. Tribe Mountaineer Jamboree, p.19
7. Russell notes Old Time Music of West Virginia
8. Tribe, p.20
9. Russell from Old Time Music of West Virginia
10. Russell from Old Time Music of West Virginia

Wow, There are both from Mississippi?

1. This difference can be heard on the lecture CD's accompanying this paper.
2. Scott Ainslie, p.12 of At the Crossroads
3. Santelli, p.223
4. Ainslie, p.13
5. Ainslie, p.14
6. Santelli, p.223

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