

that several blues singers indulged in during the 1940s; a short discussion between House and Lomax entitled "The Key Of Minor," in which House explains and demonstrates the tuning of his guitar; and an unaccompanied piece entitled "Camp Hollers." This last piece was attributed to an unidentified singer on the AAFS L59 album, and there has always been a question in my mind as to whether House is singing this or just adding comments behind the singing of Fiddlin' Joe Martin. Both Martin and House have similar voices which makes identification difficult, however it is more likely that House is doing the hollering and Martin the commenting. Although the album notes state that Willie Brown is also commenting during the holler, I don't think this is the case.

Although the album is an important, and indeed a necessary, addition to the library of the blues scholar, there are some complaints to be made. Other than the good discographical notes taken from Godrich & Dixon, there are no other liner notes at all. A small discussion by either Lomax or House on aspects of the recording sessions would have been an excellent touch, or barring that, at least reprinting Lomax's field notes (see Al Wilson, "Son House." Blues Unlimited Collector's Classics #14, October, 1966) would have been informative. Also, unfortunately, one cut from the 1942 session has been omitted from the album -- entitled "Demonstration Of Concert Guitar Tuning" -- which, if included, would have been a useful companion piece to "The Key Of Minor." Perhaps a last wish would be the inclusion of Fiddlin' Joe Martin's "Fo' Clock Blues" and "Going To Fishing" (both now available on Roots 313) and Willie Brown's "Make Me A Pallet On the Floor" (available only on the rare Herwin 92044 single), all recorded during House's 1941 session at Lake Cormorant, Mississippi. But, as any blues scholar knows who deals with reissues, beggars can't be choosers.

Lightning Hopkins "In Berkeley". Lightning Hopkins with Francis Clay and unknown bass player.

12 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo.

Arhoolie 1063. Arhoolie Records, Box 9195, Berkeley, California 94709, 1973. \$5.98.

Reviewed by Michael Taft.

Here is another album by one of the finest post-war blues lyricists and musicians. Despite Hopkins's large output of LPs in the last ten or fifteen years, he has displayed a consistently high quality of performance and a marked individuality that, to this reviewer's ear anyway, makes every album esthetically pleasing. If it is granted then that Hopkins is a fine artist, what is distinctive about this LP which would make it a candidate for a less than comprehensive library of Hopkins recordings? There are many fine pieces on the album, such as "Have You Ever Loved A Woman" and "Black And Evil," which are in the traditional blues structure, using

traditional linguistic patterning, and most of the songs aptly demonstrate Hopkins's skill with a guitar. But the same comments can be made of any Hopkins' recording.

However, there are two songs on the album which are of special interest because they are thematically different from most traditional blues in Hopkins's repertoire. One is "Please Settle In Vietnam." Because the theme of the song concerns a relatively recent event, Hopkins as a traditional blues lyricist must shape an old structure around a new topic. How he succeeds is of interest to the blues scholar. Although he creates a few, apparently innovative, lyrics, most of his lines are traditional and can be found in older pre-Vietnam War songs. Perhaps the most interesting example of this is Hopkins's line, "Uncle Sam wasn't no woman, little girl; tell me, didn't he take your man." A similar line can be found in the 1926 recording of Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Dry Southern Blues": "Uncle Sam wasn't no woman, but didn't he grab your man." (Paramount 12347 reissued on Biograph BLP-12000). A line used by Jefferson (whom Hopkins claims to have known), who no doubt had World War I in mind, also suffices for Hopkins's description of the war in Vietnam. In another song on the album, "Up On Telegraph (Avenue)," Hopkins again uses traditional structures to describe what is to him a strange place -- Berkeley, California -- and a strange culture -- hippies, short skirts, marijuana.

But if Hopkins is above criticism, the album is not. There are no liner notes. Of course, much has been said about Hopkins elsewhere, but perhaps a word or two on the songs on the album, or, to be a bit more innovative, a description of the recording session(s), how and why the songs were chosen, who governed the time length of each song (they are mostly around three minutes, as if taken off of 78s), how much rehearsing or other preparation was done, or anything else of interest could have been written on the cover. Instead, the information they do give us is incomplete. The drummer is given credit, but I distinctly hear a bass player on "Annie's Boogie," who is not mentioned. The song, "Brand New Look" should, judging from the content of the song, really be entitled "Brand New Lock." I know I'm being picky, but with so many Hopkins LPs available, a reviewer can afford to be picky.

One final beware: Because the title of the album is Lightning Hopkins "In Berkeley", one may be led to believe that this is a live college concert. It is, in fact, a session (or sessions) in a recording studio situated in Berkeley, California. If one is looking for a live album by Hopkins, he recorded one at the Bird Lounge in Houston (Guest Star 1459, entitled, I believe, At the Bird Lounge), on which one can hear coughs, ice cubes rattling, and the shifting of chairs. The sound quality on the Arhoolie album is excellent.