

"Mama Ain't Nobody's Fool" by all the instrumentation. The notes tend to be a bit too romantic for this reviewer's taste, but they do give us a fair idea of who Esther Mae Scott is. The record company should be thanked by all discographers for giving the dates of recording and mixing, the places of recording, and all personnel and instrumentation.

Born in Texas. Thomas Shaw.

11 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo, liner notes by Frank Scott. No. 2801. Advent Productions, P. O. Box 635, Manhattan Beach, California 90266, 1973. \$7.98.

Feel Like Blowing My Horn. Roosevelt Sykes, with King Kolax, Oett "Sax" Mallard, Robert Lockwood, Dave Myers, Fred Below.

10 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo, liner notes by Susan Koester. DS-632. Delmark Records, 4243 Lincoln, Chicago, Illinois 60618, 1973. \$7.98.

I Want a Little Girl. T-Bone Walker, with Hal Singer, George Arvanitas, Jackie Sampson, and S. P. Leary.

8 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo, liner notes by Jim O'Neal. DS-633. Delmark Records, 4243 North Lincoln, Chicago, Illinois 60618, 1973. \$5.98.

Reviewed by Melvin Wade and Margaret Wade.

A number of record companies have re-released individual albums by early blues artists and albums featuring multiple artists which attempt to serve as a reconstruction of the history of the blues. In general, the artists featured in these collections are dead. However, three recently released albums by living artists serve as concrete proof that the blues tradition is still very much in existence. The pressing question, though, is "For how long?" Thomas Shaw, Roosevelt Sykes, and T-Bone Walker are each well over sixty as are other important bluesmen such as B. B. King, Howlin' Wolf, Son House and Mance Lipscomb. The younger bluesmen have developed styles which reflect more diverse musical traditions. Only a few, such as Taj Mahal, have dedicated themselves to the rediscovery and preservation of the blues tradition.

These three albums, taken as a unit, are illustrative of gradations of living blues styles. Thomas Shaw represents the country blues tradition. Typical of country blues, Shaw's style evidences a rough and throaty voice quality, free associational lyrics, vocal patterns similar to ordinary speech and a spare guitar style. Roosevelt Sykes, father of the modern blues piano style, typifies early city blues. His lyrics are more standardized than those of country blues, but an improvisational quality remains in his work chiefly because of his vocal phrasing, spoken endings, interludes and shouts. T-Bone Walker, king of the electric guitar, represents post-war urban blues. It is characteristic of this style to

feature the electric guitar with piano and bass, saxophone and drums, free vocal phrasing and arrangements, and standardized lyrics. Improvisation is minimal.

Born in Texas, the first recorded album of Thomas Shaw, ironically reveals him to be heir to the Mississippi country blues tradition. The method of vocal and instrumental attack and the selection of materials indicate a link to Blind Willie Johnson, another Texan influenced by the Mississippi blues style. The wide variety of blues forms in the album range from the plaintive blues hymnal, "Motherless Children," to the prison narratives--"The Original Penitentiary Blues" and "Tom Shaw's Penitentiary Blues," and the dozens-playing "Dirty Mistreater." In between are laments, such as "Born in Texas," a personal odyssey; "Stop and Listen," a recollection of lost love, and the "Worried Blues." These selections easily compensate for the "Hungry Wolf," which evokes unfavorable comparison with the Howlin' Wolf; the narratively underdeveloped "Richard Nixon's Welfare Blues"; and the pedestrian version of the double entendre, "Let's Rock."

On selections such as "Born in Texas" and "Worried Blues," Shaw's originality in guitar phrasing is a superb complement to the free associational singing he occasionally employs. This album is the purest of the three.

Roosevelt Sykes's Feel Like Blowing My Horn takes you back to the good days--jump blues, barrelhouse, boogie woogie--when Black music was a little closer to nature than it is now. Sykes's vocal shouts and piano techniques are on the level of spiritual techniques. Of the three albums, this one features the most creative set of vocals.

The title song, "Feel Like Blowing My Horn" is mindblowing. Sykes at his "meanest." The gutbucket, man-lost-woman lyrics provide an ironic soul-searing contrast to the Honeydripper's contagious, soaring vocal. Other highlights of the well-balanced album are the barrelhouse blues version of "My Hamstring's Poppin'," and "Rock-A-Bye Birdie," and the jump-blues "Eagle Rock Me, Baby." The first two have some of the toughest man-to-woman innuendo you will ever enjoy. "Movin' Blues" and "Blues Will Prank With Your Soul" feature superb mining of the moanin' blues lode.

There are two solid instrumental period pieces, "Sykes Gumboogie," a straight boogie woogie, and "Jubilee Time," which dips into early New Orleans jazz, the boogie, and elsewhere. The band gets on down with it, particularly Robert Lockwood on guitar. Even "I'm A Nut," with its self-deprecating tone given dimension by the rueful, self-reflective monologue at the end, is a noteworthy experiment in mood variation. You can't go wrong with Roosevelt.

In case you didn't know, the urban blues tradition is still being ruled by T-Bone Walker and his "somethin' else" single-string solos and leads. One strong piece of evidence is the album I Want A Little Girl.

Four of the selections are classic variants of the familiar "dirty mistreater"

theme. "Someone's Going to Mistreat You," a rhythm-and-blues; "I Hate to See You Go" and "Leaving You Behind," both "jump blues"; and "Ain't This Cold, Baby," with idiomatic 1940's jazz instrumental and vocal phrasing of the blues formula, are all reflections on man-mistreated-by-woman. T-Bone evidences a relaxed but husky quality of the vocals, generally complemented by the "wailing" guitar in a richly textured background featuring Arvanitas on piano, Singer on sax, Samson on bass and Leary on drums. The two instrumentals on the album are designed to showcase a major strength of the album--the well-blended talents of the ensemble.

The title song, "I Want A Little Girl," and "Baby Ain't I Good to You" fill out this beautifully balanced collection. Both counter the "dirty mistreater" theme with a "pretty baby" theme, featuring T-Bone in the slow, relaxed tempo established by the ensemble. To be sure, this collection has the most limited range of the three, but for most listeners it compensates by being the most professional.

As a unit these three albums provide a good starting point for those who wish to begin developing blues collections, or a qualitative addition to the album repertoire of those who already have.

Music from an Equatorial Microcosm: Fang Bwiti Music with Mbiri Selections.  
 One 12" 33-1/3 rpm disc. Recorded and annotated by James W. Fernandez.  
 Descriptive note, 11 pp., map, photos.  
 FE 4214. Folkways Records, 701 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10036,  
 1973. \$7.95.

Reviewed by Ruth Stone.

James Fernandez's recording is somewhat unique among ethnic music discs. Rather than being a sampling of many types of music from a particular country or culture, it consists solely of songs used in the Bwiti and related Mbiri cult of Gabon, West Africa. And Fernandez brings good credentials to the task, as he has studied and written extensively about these cults in the past.

As explained in the notes, the Bwiti cult is a syncretist religious cult combining aspects of the Fang ancestor cult and Christianity. The related Mbiri cult is more specific in purpose and directed towards curing. While the Bwiti cult was well established by the 1920's, the Mbiri cult appeared after World War I. The psychotropic plant, known as eboga among the Fang, is used in small amounts during ritual cycles and in large doses during initiations when initiates experience visionary reunions with ancestors.

Stylistically, the music provides a fascinating example of call and response with solo and chorus each having long segments. Also, as the notes indicate,