

numbers, McDowell's secular repertoire is well represented by performances of "Good Morning Little School Girl", "Levee Camp Blues", "I Heard Somebody Calling", and "Little Girl, Little Girl". The sacred selections are rendered with the characteristic intensity and depth of emotion that made McDowell such a compelling and memorable artist. His version of "Amazing Grace", in particular, is one which won't be heard on your local AM radio station.

Six of the album's ten cuts are solos by McDowell. On "Levee Camp Blues" he is joined by harmonica player Johnny Woods, and on "Dig My Grave With A Silver Spade" Mike Russo (guitar) and John Kahn (bass) provide a solid and unobtrusive backup. His wife and other members of the Hunter's Chapel Singers assist him on two spirituals, adding increased fervor to the performance.

There is enough documentation to satisfy all but the most insatiable scholar, as the who, what, where, and when of the recordings are given in full. The notes consist of personal reminiscences by Chris Strachwitz on McDowell's career as a re-discovered country bluesman and provide yet another perspective of Fred McDowell and his music.

All things considered, Keep Your Lamp Trimmed and Burning is an excellent album by which to remember (or become acquainted with) the late Mississippi Fred McDowell.

Country Negro Jam Session. Butch Cage, Willie B. Thomas, Robert Pete Williams and Others.

14 selections, vocal and instrumental, stereo.

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Reviewed by Patty Hall

Country Negro Jam Session, as the liner notes indicate, represents the high point of jam sessions held in several country sections of Louisiana. These sessions took place in homes, at the Angola State Penitentiary, and at the State Mental Hospital in Jackson, La.

The recordings, done on portable equipment by Dr. Harry Oster, are of excellent quality. Many of the cuts include conversations and comments which serve as important preludes and postscripts to the music itself. Butch Cage's fiddle style is turn-of-the-century fiddling, and Willie Thomas's guitar, kazoo and vocals combine with the fiddling to create excellent and varied numbers,

which range from country jumps, religious shouts, blues, and an improvised session of vocals, sticks and coke bottles.

Many performers appear on the album besides Cage and Thomas, usually in a vocal capacity, although Robert Pete Williams and others play guitar on several numbers. "Who Broke the Lock" and "I've Got Religion" are two of the best cuts, the former being a humorous story song, and the latter, an a capella shout, rhythmically supported by intricate clapping. "Your Dice Won't Pass", sung by Sally Dotson, Smokey Babe, and Hillary Blunt, is an incredible blues number, in which Sally and Smokey Babe take turns on strong lead vocals. The guitar work on this particular cut is outstanding.

The most moving number, by far, however, is "Foxhunt", which was recorded at the Louisiana State Mental Hospital at Jackson. Done with percussive sticks, and using a coke bottle along with vocal techniques, the product is an eerie hooting effect in 6/8 time, which is strongly reminiscent of the moaning sounds of hounds on a hunt.

For those who are interested in a varied selection of Black music from the rural South, this recording is highly recommended. One must remember that both recordings and liner notes were done nearly fifteen years ago, and with the view that much has changed since then, it is good to note that even fifteen years ago, when many collectors of blues or other rural music were still caught up in the "country bumpkin" or even "noble savage" conception of their informants, there were some collectors, such as Harry Oster, whose attitudes and collection techniques were not at all condescending or culturally biased. Rather the music and musicians were recorded with an ear to the excellent music and musicianship that existed in rural areas, without any quaint comparison to an urban norm.