

Peg Leg Sam featuring Louisiana Red - Early In The Morning (1996)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Joshua Fit The Battle of Jericho* 02. *Navaho Trail* 03. *John Henry* 04. *Going Train Blues*
05. *Mr. Ditty Wa Ditty* 06. *Strollin'* 07. *I Got A Home* 08. *Dog Chase* 09. *Early In The Morning*
10. *Poor Boy* Peg Leg Sam (vocals, harmonica) Louisiana Red (guitar)

An enigmatic wisp of an entertainer, Arthur "Sam" Jackson, a.k.a. Peg Leg Sam, was an old time medicine show performer and harmonica virtuoso who worked and traveled across the US, Cuba, Haiti, Jamaica, and the Bahamas before finally being recorded in the early seventies. Born December 18, 1911 in Jonesville, S.C., he taught himself how to play the harmonica and ventured out on the road at the age of twelve. Over the years he learned to play a wide range of music and became a versatile entertainer who danced, told bawdy stories, and performed tricks by playing several harmonicas at once. While traveling in the multitude of medicine shows that employed him for much of his life, Peg played with the likes of Pink Anderson and Elmon "Shorty." During later tours of the festivals and blues clubs circuit, he played with Rufe Johnson, Sugar Blue and Louisiana Red when he wasn't performing solo. He returned to Jonesville near the end of his life and passed away on October 27, 1977.

"Early In The Morning," is Labor Records re-release of Peg Leg Sam's last recording. Consisting mainly of traditional blues and gospel, this is the classic, laid back, "front porch blues."

Louisiana Red, (Iverson Minter) provides guitar accompaniment on seven of the ten songs and lends his powerful voice to "Going Train Blues." His restrained guitar playing gives Peg Leg Sam the space to proceed with his old-fashioned, country brand of delivery wherein his harmonica and voice answer and play off each other. "Dog Chase," (recorded elsewhere as "Peg's Fox Chase") is a prime example of this interplay. A highlight of the CD is "Strollin," where Sam's vocal inflection is reminiscent of Joe Callicott. Other traditional blues songs in this set list

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are "John Henry," "Mr. Ditty Wa Ditty," "Poor Boy," and the title track, "Early In the Morning."

The variety of his influences is evident by the inclusion to his set of a "western" song titled, "Navaho Trail." A regular part of his repertoire, his personality assumes ownership of this and all the songs he plays. Also included are the gospel songs, "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho," and "I Got a Home," his mother, a church organist, would've no doubt been happy about that.

The coda of a long lifetime of travel, "Early In The Morning" is a prime example of the type of music one might have encountered at a traveling medicine show. Containing a variety of music from piedmont blues to gospel, delta blues to western, the versatile Peg plays it all. The sound quality is great and the mix is good. Red plays the consummate sideman and allows Peg to take the reins and entertain us the old fashioned way. His performance may not be quite as energetic as earlier recordings but his individual personality still shines brightly and this CD is very enjoyable. --- Stephen T Davidson, folkstreams.net

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