

Butch Cage - Old Time Black Southern String Band Music (2011)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)

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1 Bugle Call Blues 4:02 2 Some Day Baby 4:55 3 Mean Old Frisco 4:13 4 The Piano Blues 6:41 5 Hen Cackle 1:22 6 The Dirty Dozen 2:45 7 Rock Me Mama 3:16 8 It Ain't Gonna Rain No More 2:42 9 Easy Rider Blues 3:44 10 Whoa Mule 1:31 11 I Had A Dream Last Night (All I Had Was Gone) Guitar, Vocals – Robert Jenkins 3:39 12 Careless Love Blues 4:20 13 Sneaky Ways 2:27 14 Since I Layed My Burden Down Lead Vocals – Rosalie Wilkerson 3:54 15 You've Gotta Move Lead Vocals – Rosalie Wilkerson 2:42 Vocals, Fiddle – James "Butch" Cage Vocals, Guitar – Willie B. Thomas

Louisiana fiddle and guitar duo Butch Cage and Willie B. Thomas were recorded in 1959 by folklorist Harry Oster, who sought to capture a record of the fast-vanishing tradition of string bands who played dance and worship music for parties and church services. Primitive-sounding yet compelling, Cage and Thomas's versions of rarely heard ancient country blues songs like "I Had a Dream Last Night" and "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More" are a window into a bygone age, while their performance of "The Dirty Dozen" brings to light a song that, like the blues itself, has been constantly evolving for generations. ---AllMusic Review

Fiddler James "Butch" Cage was one of the last exponents of the 19th century black string band tradition, and his wild, kinetic playing represents a world that is all but lost in the current century. Born on March 16, 1894, in Hamburg, MS, Cage's first real instrument was a cane fife, and he also became a credible guitar player, but his musical soul mate was to be the fiddle, and his wild, energetic lines on the instrument had a truly African feel. He moved to southwest Louisiana following the devastating Mississippi floods of 1927, eventually settling in Zachary, where he worked a succession of menial jobs while playing string band music at house parties and church functions, often in conjunction with guitarist Willie B. Thomas. Musicologist Harry

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Oster heard the pair playing in Zachary in 1959, and Oster's field recordings of Cage and Thomas became a wonderful glimpse at the pre-blues black string band tradition. The duo was also a huge hit at the 1960 Newport Folk Festival, no doubt appearing to most of the audience as if they had stepped right out of the haze of a vanished era. Many fans and reviewers have called Cage a Cajun fiddler, but his approach was really from an older tradition, the African one that led to the Mississippi string band. This marvelous and haunting fiddle style can be heard on the phenomenal Country Negro Jam Sessions (Arhoolie 1961), Raise a Ruckus Tonight (Flyright 1979), and Old Time Black Southern String Band Music (Arhoolie 2006). Butch Cage died in Zachary in 1975. ---Steve Leggett, allmusic.com

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