

Shake 'Em on Down Blues (Bukka White)

Written by bluesever

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"Shake 'Em on Down" is a country-style blues song recorded by Bukka White in 1937. What does the phrase *"shake 'em on down"* mean?

Although there doesn't appear to be any definition of this phrase online, there seems to be no doubt in traditional Blues songs, the phrase *"shake 'em on down"* means having sexual intercourse with another person. That meaning of "shake em on down" is used in several blues songs that have different lyrics overall...

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The phrase *"shake 'em on down"* is closely related to the phrase *"shake that thing"* a blues euphemism for engaging in sex, popularized by

Papa Charlie Jackson's

1925 hit

"Shake That Thing".

it now has a more socially acceptable meaning of "getting down" on the dance floor.



Shake 'em on down in juke joint

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"*Shake em on down*" is probably also closely related to the exhortations "*Get [on] down to the [real] nitty gritty.*" The phrase

"get down to the nitty gritty"

originated or was popularized by African Americans in juke joints and other dance halls in the early 20th century. The phrase derived referred to reaching nits at the bottom of a barrel but referred to the custom of women -and men- shaking their bodies down close to the floor. That form of "funky" sweat inducing dancing can certainly be said to be a public imitation of the sex act.



Shake 'em on down

Generally, if you aren't certain what a term in a blues song means, it means sex.

Bukka White (true name: Booker T. Washington White) was born in Houston, Mississippi in 1906. When Bukka White was 14 he spent some time with an uncle in Clarksdale, Mississippi and passed himself off as a 21-year-old, using his guitar playing as a way to attract women. Somewhere along the line, White came in contact with Delta blues legend Charley Patton, who no doubt was able to give Bukka White instruction on how to improve his skills in both areas of endeavor.

