

Harmonica Shah – Raw and Acoustic – The Detroit Sessions Volume Two (2014)

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01 – Short Haired Woman [00:07:16] 02 – Good Morning Little Schoolgirl [00:03:29] 03 – What’s On Your Mind [00:04:30] 04 – Ship Made Of Paper (Alternative Version) [00:05:20] 05 – Miss Ida Bea [00:05:19] 06 – It Shouldn’t Be That Way (Alternative Version) [00:02:50] 07 – Long Distance Call [00:02:42] 08 – I Want To Love You Baby [00:04:26] 09 – Ship Made Of Paper [00:05:46] 10 – Miss Ida Bea (Alternative Version) [00:03:55] 11 – It Shouldn’t Be That Way [00:02:50]

Harmonica Shah’s roots are planted firmly in three pivotal blues regions. The West Coast, where he was born in Oakland, CA. on March 31, 1946. The Texas badlands, where he spent time in his youth with his grandfather, guitarist/harpist Sam Dawson (whom Alan Lomax recorded) and his equally beloved and despised adopted hometown of the Motor City, deep in the industrial heartland. His beautician mother, set him up as a JET magazine salesman in the late 1950’s, which opened up both the doors of Oakland’s bars and clubs and the enterprising young Shah’s ears to the music of Lowell Fulson, Jimmy McCracklin, Juke Boy Bonner and Big Mama Thornton, all of whom he found behind those doors.

Shah credits his love of hard blues to his grandfather who farmed his own land with a mule named Stonewall, as he recalled to Scott Barretta in Living Blues “Well see I picked it up from him, he’d be out in the fields singin’ all that (Sings in a slow moan) “Tell me how long, whoa, tell me how long it’s been since you’ve been away from home” Well, that’s raw! That’s a big damn difference from “Good Golly Miss Molly”. At 17, given the choice between time inside and the Job Corps, Shah signed on the dotted line and was soon stationed in Battle Creek, Michigan. For the first time Shah could take in the sights and sounds of traveling Chicago Blues bands like J.B. Hutto and Buddy Guy. A permanent move to Detroit led to a 10 year stretch as a shop rat at Ford Motors, where Shah wracked up an impressive 150 medical leaves of absence before a parting of ways with the automaker. Now celebrating the bicentennial amongst the unemployed, Shah was inspired by a street musician named Little Bobby to purchase a pawn shop harp and begin a serious study of the Blues. His timing couldn’t have been better as Detroit was then as

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now a city rich in blues talent. Bobo Jenkins, Eddie Burns, Robert Richard, Little Sonny, the Butler Twins and Little Junior Cannaday all plied their trade in the Motor City. While driving for Checker Cab, Shah was introduced to guitarist Peter Rabbitt, who brought him to the legendary jam sessions held at Uncle Jesse White's house. "Hell, that was it, no turning back then" Shah recalls. ---Andrew Galloway, electrofi.com

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