

ROBERT SHAW

WE ALMOST missed this one.

All the others who made this music are dead.

Or quit.

Except Fud.

He was one of the 'Santa Fe group' who rambled between Fort Bend County's Brazos River bottoms and next-door Houston's Fourth Ward, singing these blues, playing these stomps and belly-rubs for sweaty crowds who moved in response to his fingers, soaked up by the hard blues a workingman likes to hear ("Whores is funky," he sing to a bunch of men as they were being hustled), building up to the moment when he ripped *The Ma Grinder* out of the piano.

We almost missed it. The juke box and the law killed off the barrelhouse. Spirits and exposure killed off the piano players. ("Some of them died real young and some of them lived to be 35 or 40.")

Fud saw it happening. Went into the barbecue and grocery business. Now he's a celebrity around Austin, Texas. Ask anyone in town, ask the secret service men who've been trotting out to Shaw's Food Market, or ask Lyndon Johnson: Who makes the best spare ribs? Who sells the best 'hot guts' sausage around here, Mr. President? Anyone'll tell you.

But he never stopped playing piano. 30 years, he stayed in practice, playing just for himself.

And here it is: an entire body of music, previously unknown, hardly suspected, created in one corner of Texas by the great professors of the chock joint and barrelhouse that taught all the women when to shake it and when to hold it back, played still by one of the innovators.

An American document: a bit of undergrowth from the elegant houses of The Reservation and from the sporting tonks of Mud Alley down in Richmond, Texas. Squat low, mama, let your daddy see . . . you got something keeps on worrying me.

Texas barrelhouse piano.

TEXAS BARRELHOUSE PIANO

. . . a tradition that stands midway between country blues, ragtime piano, and early jazz . . .

Recorded &
annotated by Mack McCormick



ROAD HOUSE POINT BLANK, TEXAS

WHORES IS FUNKY (The Fives)
THE COWS
HERE I COME WITH MY DIRTY,
DIRTY DUCKINS ON
THE CLINTON
BLACK GAL

HATTIE GREEN
THE MA GRINDER
PEOPLE, PEOPLE BLUES
PUT ME IN THE ALLEY
PIGGLY WIGGLY BLUES

Robert Shaw, piano and vocal, recorded at Austin, Texas,
March 8, June 10 and August 9, 1963, using an Ampex
354 console and Telefunken microphones.

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Who are you indeed who would talk or sing to America?
Have you studied out the land, it's idiom and men?
—Walt Whitman

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