SNOOKY PRYOR

SIDE 1

Telephone Blues
Boogie
Kansas Band
Boogy Poor
I'm Getting Tired
Going Back On The Road
I Want You For Myself

SIDE 2

Crossroads Blues
Crystal Shadow
Eighty Nine Ten
Someone To Love Me
Judgement Day
Uncle Sam Don't Take My Man
Boogie Twist

"Through the heavy amplification, the static, the echoes heard, could be discerned still a line of descent which was plain in the music of Charley Patton, Son House and Robert Johnson. It was a thrilling, direct's substitution of a remarkable tradition exemplified in numerous Delta bands led by Snooky Pryor or J.B.Hutto, Walter Horton or J.B. Lenoir all over the South and West Side'..... And to these few words did Paul Oliver cover Snooky Pryor in his rare book, "The Story of the Blues". One could hardly expect more, for Pryor cannot rank as a major blues artist. In fact, little is known about Pryor, the man and his music. The only quote of substance to be found is "Blues Unlimited"one in a September 1965 feature on Johnny Young."Young was playing with harmonica player Snooky Pryor, guitarist Moody Jones and Floyd Jones in 1947 in the Maxwell Street area, where they were approached to record by a Mr. Bernard, who operated a shop in the street..... On the same day Snooky and Moody recorded "Boogie Poor" and Keep what you got" (sound Floyd Jones)", in a previous issue, July 1964, we were blandly informed that "Snooky Pryor has quit music". Subsequent rumour has it that he joined the Black Muslim sect.

A further interview may be lurking, out ever at least survive a little from the sparse evidence before us. James "Snooky" Pryor was probably born in the Delta Country around 1920, with a traditional Negro childhood. We know that he was in Chicago in 1947 and that he was on friendly terms with Floyd and Moody Jones. Floyd came to Chicago in the immediate post war years from the South and it seems reasonable to assume that Pryor did the same. His harmonica playing is closely allied to the style which is linked with Memphis through Sonny Boy Williamson R, Howling Wolf and Junior Parker,the overriding influence is Sonny Boy (John Lee) Williamson.

Snooky Pryor seems to have been most active in the early Fifties, when the bulk of his recordings were made. His work is also to be found as accompanist on recordings during this period with Sunnyland Slim,Floyd Jones,Eddie Taylor, Moody Jones, Johnny Young and Jimmy Rogers.

This album represents Pryor's entire recorded output under his own name, covering his first recording in 1948 to his last in 1960. The selection are set out in strict chronological order, thus presenting to a microcosm the musical development of Chicago post war blues. Pryor, for simple country based harmonica and guitar line-up, through the small combo stage to the final swinging effective power of "Boogie Twist".His harmonica has a pleasant direct approach, where most simplicity is perhaps a little deceptive. There particularly the spine chilling accompaniment to the haunting "Crystal Shades". Likewise his vocals are equally economical,probably to conserve his breath for the frequent extended solos. Another noticeably feature of Pryor's records is the marvellous "deadbeat" backing on every one.

Deep analysis of his material must rest on individual interpretation. Suffice to say, that for the malcontent the songs are his own, the content traditional. Maximum titles in 18 years hardly reflects a prolific output. It is clear from the systematic release that he has not had a big hit. In fact, the rarity of his records today suggests that sales were indeed very small.

Snooky Pryor is a man who produced a remarkably consistent output of good clean blues records over a long period of time. There seems to be no prospect that he will record, or indeed work again, in the immediate future. But surely his album has added, at the very least, another line to the Story of the Blues.

John J. Brown, August 1969

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