

Yank Rachell - Yank Rachell (1973)

Written by bluesever

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A1 Tappin' That Thing A2 Pack My Clothes And Go A3 Skinny Woman Blues A4 Matchbox Blues A5 Texas Tony A6 Des Moines, Iowa B1 Shotgun Blues B2 Sugar Farm Blues B3 Diving Duck Blues B4 Wadie Green B5 Peach Tree Blues Yank Rachell – vocals, mandolin (tracks: A1, A5, B1, B3), guitar (tracks: A2 to A4, A6, B2, B4, B5) Backwards Sam Firk – guitar (tracks: A1, A5, B1, B3)

This is the first time that "Yank Rachell" has appeared on CD, and it's long overdue. Originally issued on vinyl in 1973 on the Blue Goose label (Blue Goose 2010), the aim was to record James "Yank" Rachell recapturing his days of playing solo. The idea seemed obvious, but had somehow been overlooked since his rediscovery in the early part of the 1960's. The ultimatum behind the original recording may be rather questionable--effectively "play them old country Blues or we don't set the tapes rolling"--but the results are never in doubt.

Mostly self-taught, Rachell played and recorded with Sleepy John Estes and with Hammie Nixon played as a jug band in the South. After returning to farming, and then working on the L&N during the Depression, Rachell later worked closely with (John Lee) Sonny Boy Williamson. After the war, Rachell eventually ended up in Indianapolis where he lived up until his death in 1997.

Rachell was more influential than he usually gets credit for, with a number of his songs being used as the basis for other tunes. Perhaps the most famous tune included here, after the version of Blind Lemon Jefferson's "MatchBox Blues," is "Divin' Duck Blues", which has become something of a Blues standard.

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When you consider that Rachell had difficulty recalling any of these tunes immediately before the recordings, his standards of playing and singing are exceptional. Although more renowned as a mandolin player, he was equally at home on guitar, as can be heard on "Wadie Green." Although there can often be a sameness to the sound of the mandolin in less capable hands, Rachell's exploits the instrument's capabilities more fully on songs like "Shotgun Blues" and "Sugar Farm Blues." Rachell was also a fine singer, capable of adapting his vocals to fit the requirements of the song.

"Yank Rachell" is especially recommended for those who like their Blues acoustic. It belongs in the collection of any discerning Blues listener, because Rachell was an original and unique artist, who didn't follow the conventional styles of playing. A prolific songwriter, Rachell was an artist's artist, and it is perhaps fitting to leave the last word to B.B. King, who was a fan, and told Rachell that "It's people like you that made people like me possible." –Gordon Baxter, mnblues.com

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