

Babe Stovall – The Old Ace: Mississippi Blues And Religious Songs (2003)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)
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1 Good Morning Blues 3:03 2 Candy Man 2:52 3 Going Away To Wear You Off My Mind 3:44 4 The Ship Is At The Landing 3:19 5 Baby Let Me Follow You Down 2:00 6 Worried Blues 3:35 7 Will The Circle Be Unbroken? 4:16 8 How Long How Long Blues 2:17 9 Dirty Mistreater 3:57 10 Good Morning Little School Girl 3:18 11 God's Word Shall Never Pass Away 1:50 12 Kansas City Blues 2:07 13 Medley: Big Road Blues And Careless Love 6:57 14 Interview 1: Family 2:33 15 Interview 2: Playing In New Orleans 4:24 Babe Stovall - primary artist

The late Babe Stovall, who died in 1974, was one of music's colorful characters, an excellent and adaptable blues guitarist who could move from Delta blues to folk to gospel. With some stunning picking, he was a New Orleans fixture. Indeed, he was the Mr. Bojangles of the Jerry Jeff Walker song. This album, recorded live in the Crescent City in 1968, gives a good indication of his talents. He could be wonderfully soulful, as on "Big Road Blues," but also quite playful, as his ragtime version of "Candy Man" proves. As the booklet reveals, he was obviously a showman -- playing guitar behind his head, for example. But he also offered plenty of more sacred material, like "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" and "The Ship Is at the Landing." This is a great historical document, made even more valuable by the inclusion of interviews with Stovall, who reminisces about the past, his family, and his career. ---Chris Nickson, allmusic.com

Jewell "Babe" Stovall was a Mississippi-born songster whose style fell somewhere between the deep Delta sound of Tommy Johnson and the fingerpicking technique of Mississippi John Hurt. Born in 1907 in Tylertown, MS, Babe was the youngest of 11 children, most of them musicians. Stovall learned guitar when he was around eight years old, and was soon playing breakdowns, frolics, and parties in the area, even meeting and learning "Big Road Blues" from Tommy

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Johnson. He moved to Franklinton, LA, in the 1930s, and split his time between there and Tylertown for several years, picking up whatever work he could as a farmhand.

In 1964 he moved to New Orleans, where he was "discovered" working as a street singer in the French Quarter, his act featuring crowd-pleasing antics like playing his National Steel guitar behind his head and shouting out his song lyrics in a voice so loud that it carried well down the street. He recorded an LP for Verve in 1964, simply titled Babe Stovall (re-released on CD by Flyright in 1990), and did further sessions in 1966 (released on CD by Southern Sound as The Babe Stovall Story) and with Bob West in 1968 (which form the basis of The Old Ace: Mississippi Blues & Religious Songs, released on Arcola in 2003), and became active on the folk and blues college circuit, as well as holding down a house gig at the Dream Castle Bar in New Orleans.

Because he hadn't recorded in the 1920s and 1930s like his rediscovered contemporaries John Hurt, Skip James, and Son House, and was thus harder to package to the media, Stovall had a somewhat less lucrative time of it on the blues circuit, a situation that wasn't helped much by his legendary drinking exploits. Said by some to be the character inspiration for Jerry Jeff Walker's "Mr. Bojangles," Stovall died in 1974 in New Orleans. His rough-edged voice, hybrid picking style, and use of the National Steel guitar made his personal blues style unlike any other bluesman of his day. ---Steve Leggett, allmusic.com

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