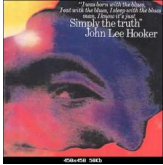


John Lee Hooker - Simply the Truth (1969)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 08 December 2009 14:37 - Last Updated Thursday, 11 March 2021 20:48

John Lee Hooker - Simply the Truth (1969)



1. *I Don't Wanna Go To Vietnam* 2. *Mini Skirts* 3. *Mean Mean Woman* 4. *I Wanna Bugaloo*
[play](#) 5. *Tantalizing With The Blues* [play](#) 6. *(Twist Ain't Nothin') But The Old Time Shimmy*
7. *One Room Country Shack* 8. *I'm Just A Drifter*

John Lee Hooker (Guitar and Vocal) Wally Richardson (Guitar) Ernie Hayes (Piano and Organ) William Folwell (Fender Bass) Hele Rosenthal (Harmonica) Pretty Purdie (Drums)

John Lee Hooker's music has been called "primitive" by some, meaning, I Suppose, "close to the roots, basic." It is all that, but Hooker - unlike many bluesman of his generation - has never settled for basic blues alone. As times and audiences have changed, he has found a way to keep pace, while always infusing everything he does with the music and bone that typifies all of the bluesman of the Mississippi Delta. Recently he told Pete Welding that he divides his musical time into folk, blues, and "jump" music. Hooker often finds himself playing unamplified guitar in the coffee house circuit where he is expected to be "authentic", or in the "tough" bars of Detroit, playing the hard electric music of dance and drink. With this record, Hooker takes one more step forward. Here he is in perhaps the most modern surroundings he has yet found himself, and he is extraordinarily at home. For John Lee is not only a blues singer, he is also a guitarist with fine jazz qualities.

This session was born of an idea of Hooker (who brought only a mouth harpist with him) and producer Bob Thiele, who gathered together a group of sympathetic New York musicians. On the night of the first recording session, Hooker and a small group of friends gathered at the studio, where the other musicians - some of whom did not know each other - began to assemble. John Lee - dressed in red shirt and smart green suit and hat - sat down, and impatiently began to strum his guitar and introduce the mood he wanted to set. While the others unpacked instruments and exchanged pleasantries, he started a quiet bluesman's moan, softly accompanying himself with that simultaneous combination of rhythm and lead guitar that only a few musicians can manage. Soon he found himself reciting the outlines of *1000 Miles From Nowhere* (retitled by the whole group as *One-Room Country Shack*), a blues he reshaped from

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vintage stock.

Around this seated figure, the musical landscape took shape: mouth harpist Rosenthal, a big block of a man (who had never been in a recording studio before), began blowing tentative responses to Hooker's narrative; Ernie Hayes, a scholarly-looking pianist, settled himself at the keyboard and began silently fingering arrangements; bassist Fowell and rhythm guitarist Richardson fell in behind John Lee as though they had both been classmates in the Detroit school of blues. Off to the side, a small ritual got under way: Pretty Purdie, drummer on countless R'n'B and pop recordings, began setting his shop in order. Cymbals and pedals arranged, he erected two small candy-stripped signs... --- John F. Szwed

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