Hopkins, Sam "Lightnin"' (1912-1982) Encyclopedia Article

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Blues guitarist Sam "Lightnin"' Hopkins enjoyed a six-decade career that took him from the streets of Houston to festival stages around the world. As a youngster, Hopkins worked with guitarist Blind Lemon Jefferson as a "guide boy" before striking out on his own in 1946. For the next several years, he had a string of national rhythm and blues hits for the Aladdin, Modern, and Mercury labels, including "Katie May," "Shotgun Blues," and "Lightnin's Boogie." As musical styles changed, however, Hopkins found himself out of vogue, and eventually landed back in Houston.

"Rediscovered" in the early 1960s and repackaged as a folk-blues artist, Hopkins found a role in the forefront of the blues revival, starring at university coffeehouses, on television programs, and on European tours. He continued to record for a variety of labels including Vee-Jay, Arhoolie, and Verve. In 1967, filmmaker Les Blank captured Hopkins' eccentric lifestyle in the documentary *The Blues Accordin' to Lightnin' Hopkins.* Hopkins died in Houston in 1982.

Further Reading:

Oakley, Giles. *The Devil's Music: A History of the Blues.* New York, Da Capo Press, 1983.

Palmer, Robert. *Deep Blues.* New York, Viking, 1981.