

## **JAMES BOOKER – CLASSIFIED – George Winston notes**

James Booker

CLASSIFIED: Remixed And Expanded

1. Classified
2. If You're Lonely
3. Warsaw Concerto\*
4. Lawdy Miss Clawdy (solo piano alternate take)\*
5. Medley: Tico Tico/ Papa Was a Rascal/ So Swell When You're Well\*
6. Grits Ain't Groceries
7. Angel Eyes
8. Lonely Avenue\*
9. Professor Longhair Medley: Tipitina / Bald Head
10. King of the Road
11. Theme from The Godfather\*
12. Lawdy Miss Clawdy
13. I'm Not Sayin'\*
14. Hound Dog
15. All These Things\*
16. Yes Sir, That's My Baby\*
17. Baby Face
18. If You're Lonely (solo piano alternate take)\*
19. Madame X
20. One For the Highway
21. Three Keys
22. Amen

\*previously unreleased

Produced by Scott Billington and John Parsons

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### **George Winston notes:**

James played in at least seven different styles, and he played four of

them here on this extended version of his last studio album from 1982

1. James' most influential style, an R&B band style, with a single note moving bass line influenced by his bass pedal work on the organ, and a partial chord played with the thumb and first finger on his left hand, all played within a hand span of an octave or a 10th interval (see more about this in the notes to James organ track, song # 16, *Yes Sir That's My Baby*).

On this album you can hear this style on song #5, *Tico Tico*, song #9, *Bald Head*, and song #21, *Three Keys*. Other great examples, all on his album JUNKO PARTNER, are *Pixie*, *Good Night Irene*, *Make a Better World*, *Junco Partner*, *Blues Minuet* and *Pop's Dilemma*.

2. A medium tempo, hard swinging stride style (stride piano basically means the left hand plays a bass on the "on" beats of 1 & 3 and then "strides" or jumps up to a chord on the "off" beats of 2 & 4). James played the root note and the 5th below that played simultaneously as a push beat just before the 1st beat, and then played the lower root note on beat one. He played both standards and R&B pieces in this style. A great example is in James' versions of *Sunny Side of the Street* on his albums JUNKO PARTNER and NEW ORLEANS PIANO WIZARD: LIVE!
3. A slow and medium slow stride style with 10ths in the left hand, preceded often by a fast chromatic roll, and the right hand playing bluesy fills and occasionally jazz lines. On this album see songs #18 and #2 in the solo and band versions of *If You're Lonely*. Other examples, again all on his album JUNKO PARTNER, are *Until the Real Thing Comes Along/Baby Won't You Please Come Home*, and *I'll Be Seeing You*; and also especially his piece *Gonzo's Blue Dream*, from his live instrumental album SPIDERS ON THE KEYS.

4. A rock stride style (not represented on this recording). An example of this is on James' composition *Put Out the Light*, again on his album JUNKO PARTNER.
5. A romantic, classically-influenced style. On this album see song #3, *Warsaw Concerto*, and song #19, *Madame X*. Another example of this is on *Black Minute Waltz*, again on his album JUNKO PARTNER.
6. Another organ-influenced style with the octave bass line sparse and the right hand consistently going, often with choppy rhythms. On this album James played this style on the second part of the medley in song #5, *Papa Was A Rascal*. Another example is on one of the ways he played *Junco Partner*, on his live album RESURRECTION OF THE BAYOU MAHARAJAH.
7. A speeded-up version of his R&B band style (not represented on this recording), again with the bass line and partial chord in the left hand within a hand span. He sometimes used this style to play older popular songs, such as *Sweet Georgia Brown*, and sometimes he played his composition *Pixie* very fast this way.

\* previously unreleased

1. Classified - (key of E flat)

(James Carroll Booker/Bookends Publishing Co., BMI)

One of James' signature and autobiographical compositions. This version features a long instrumental section in the beginning, as he often did when he played this song. His first recording of this song was on his live German album, THE PIANO PRINCE OF NEW ORLEANS.

2. If You're Lonely - (key of F)

(James-Gibson/Tee Pee Music Co., ASCAP)

Played and sung in James incredibly soulful ballad style (also see song #18).

3. Warsaw Concerto \* - (keys of C minor and C Major)  
(Richard Stewart Addinsell /G. Schirmer, Inc., ASCAP)

James plays this piece from the 1941 film DANGEROUS MOONLIGHT, in his unique classical-influenced style.

4. Lawdy Miss Clawdy (solo piano alternate take) \* - (key of B flat)  
(Lloyd Price/Sony ATV Songs, LLC, BMI)

This version of Lloyd Price's classic piece features great instrumental variations for the whole second half of the song, and a poignant impressionistic ending (and also see song #12). In 1963 James was featured playing four organ instrumentals that he composed on Lloyd Price's album THIS IS MY BAND: *Ooh-Pee-Day*, *Pan Setta*, *Number Four*, and *Soulful Waltz*. Lloyd had been impressed by James' earlier 1960 organ instrumental hit 45 RPM record of *Gonzo/ Cool Turkey*.

5. Medley: Tico Tico / Papa Was A Rascal / So Swell When You're Well \* - (keys of A minor, and C [for *So Swell When You're Well*])  
(Jose Gomes de Abreu-Aloysio de Oliveira/ARPS, BMI- Irmaos Vitale SA, BMI/James Carroll Booker/Bookends Publishing Co., BMI/ James Carroll Booker/Bookends Publishing Co., BMI)

James very often played medleys live, sometimes arranged, and sometimes spontaneously. The first 2 songs of this medley, two more of his signature pieces, are played in James' R&B band style that was influenced by his own organ playing (also see the notes for song #16, *Yes Sir That's My Baby*).

A longer version of *Tico Tico* is on James' live German album

BLUES & RAGTIME FROM NEW ORLEANS (and the three signature arrangements of James' that are most often played by others pianists are *Tico Tico*, *On the Sunny Side of the Street*, and *Keep On Gwine*, as well as occasionally *Let Them Talk*, *Pop's Dilemma*, *Pixie*, and *Good Night Irene*).

James usually sang his composition *So Swell When You're Well*, and he often played in the key of E flat, as on his live instrumental album SPIDERS ON THE KEYS; he also played it on the organ as instrumental in the key of F on his live album UNITED, OUR THING WILL STAND; and he played another fantastic version of it, with a long wild instrumental break in the keys of A flat, A, and B flat on his album THE LOST PARAMOUNT TAPES.

James also usually sang his composition *Papa Was a Rascal*, as he did on his albums RESURRECTION OF THE BAYOU MAHARAJAH, and A TASTE OF HONEY Volumes 1 & 2. An interesting fact about his vocals on this song, is that in it he originally sang the line, "You know we all better watch out, for the cia", that he later got paranoid about and changed to "You know we all got to help, help the cia". In fact in New Orleans this song of James is still colloquially often called "cia".  
===[put "cia" in lower case] James also borrowed those three letters for the name of group of friends that he considered his personal support group Creative International Associates, and that he documented on his business card.

6. Grits Ain't Groceries (aka All Around the World) - (key of F)  
(Titus Turner/Bro N Sis Music, BMI-Rockland Music, BMI)

R&B songs from the early and mid 1950s were a big part of James' repertoire. This song was a hit for Little Willie John in 1955 with the title *All Around the World*, and Little Willie was soon to have his biggest hit, *Fever* in 1956 (in 1959 James also first heard Little Willie's version of *Let Them Talk*, another piece that became a signature song for him). Note James' great playing accompanying his vocals, and his great instrumental section before the last vocal chorus.

7. Angel Eyes - (key of C minor)

(Matt Dennis-Earl K. Brent/Music Sales Corp., ASCAP)

A heartbreaking instrumental rendition of this standard, inspired by Frank Sinatra's version, and played in James' soulful ballad style (also see song #13, *I'm Not Sayin'*). Here he most effectively uses both blues and jazz right hand variations. Standards from the 1920s, the 1930s and the 1940s, especially ballads, were also a significant part of James' repertoire, such as his signature versions of *Baby Won't You Please Come Home*, *Until the Real Thing Comes Along*, *Come Rain or Come Shine*, as well as the medium tempo piece *Besame Mucho*.

8. Lonely Avenue \* - (key of G)

(Doc Pomus/Pomus Songs, BMI-Unichappell Music, BMI)

James usually sang this piece, and here is a rare instrumental version, played as a blues, and with great tenor playing by the renowned New Orleans jazz and R&B musician Alvin "Red" Tyler (1925-1998), who was also featured as a studio musician on many recordings from the late 1940s on, including on some of Professor Longhair's early recordings for Atlantic Records from 1953. James also recorded a great vocal version of this song on his live German album *BLUES & RAGTIME FROM NEW ORLEANS*.

9. Professor Longhair Medley: Tipitina/ Bald Head - (keys of B flat and E flat)

(Roy Byrd/Professor Longhair Music, BMI)

Professor Longhair (1918-1980) was one of James' biggest piano influences and inspirations, as he was for many, many New Orleans pianists from the late 1940s to today. James plays Professor Longhair's signature piece *Tipitina* in his ballad style, using soulful hesitations and his liquid rolls, especially near the end. So much is said in the two verses he plays of this song. Another especially great example of this style of

James is on *Gonzo's Blue Dream* on his live instrumental album SPIDERS ON THE KEYS. James usually played *Tipitina* in the key of F, and he usually played it in his up tempo R&B band style, often after playing a medium slow tempo intro, as on his albums KING OF THE NEW ORLEANS KEYBOARD, and MANCHESTER 1977.

He then plays Fess' *Bald Head* in the up tempo R&B style that was influenced by his own organ playing (see the notes for song # 19). Note the great chord voicings in the intro part before the first verse and later before the last three verses, going from the E flat to the B flat chords, with the progression of E flat, G minor 7, A flat 9th, A7 flat 9 (keeping the high left hand notes of B flat and E flat in all of those four chords), to the B flat7. And note the great drone feeling in much of the song when he is playing the B flat chord, and often with the quick chromatic left hand four note roll, a staple technique of his, here with the notes G, A flat, A, and B flat, just before he plays the low B flat note.

(for more about Professor Longhair, also see the second paragraph in the notes for song #17, *Baby Face*).

#### 10. King of the Road - (key of G)

(Roger Miller/Sony ATV Tree Publishing, BMI)

James listened to many kinds of music, and was a master interpreter of other composers' music, often deconstructing the song and putting it back together his own way, and often expanding many of the musical principals in the songs. The great New Orleans R&B/ jazz pianist Henry Butler is also a great master of this in his own way, and James was one of his inspirations. They got to know each other when they played opposite each other for a while at the Toulouse Street Theater in New Orleans in the late 1970s.

#### 11. Theme from The Godfather (aka Speak Softly; aka Love Theme From The Godfather) \* - (key of D minor)

(Nino Rota-Parti Siae/Sony ATV Harmony, ASCAP)

James starts this song from the 1972 film by with a brief interlude in

the key of G minor, before quickly switching to D minor. He sometimes played this song live with *If It Takes Forever (I Will Wait For You)*, by Michel Legrand, from the 1964 film THE UMBRELLAS OF CHERBOURG, also playing it in the key of D minor.

12. Lawdy Miss Clawdy - (key of E flat)  
(Lloyd Price/Sony ATV Songs, LLC, BMI)

Here James plays in a different key from the earlier version (also see song #4), and using the classic New Orleans piano riff played in composer Percy Mayfield's *River's Invitation*. Percy Mayfield also composed another song that became a signature song for James, *Please Send Me Someone to Love*, from James' live German album THE PIANO PRINCE FROM NEW ORLEANS, and also on his album NEW ORLEANS PIANO WIZARD: LIVE!

13. I'm Not Sayin' \* - (key of G)  
(James Carroll Booker/Bookends Publishing Co., BMI)

This jazz blues is a rare track played in James great modern jazz style, that he occasionally played songs in (also see song #7, *Angel Eyes*). Note the unique intro starting with the V chord D augmented 9th chord, to the IV chord, a C augmented 9th chord. These chords were a bit unusual in James' playing, as he usually used the V augmented 9th chord with the augmented 5th note in it.

14. Hound Dog - (key of B flat)  
(Jerry Lieber-Mike Stoller/ Sony ATV Songs, LLC, BMI)

Note James' great left hand descending bass lines played with his right hand riffs at the end of the verses, and his great playing in general behind his vocals in this definitive interpretation.



15. All These Things \* - (key of F)  
(Allen Toussaint/Screen Gems-EMI Music, Inc., BMI)

James plays this classic Allen Toussaint piece composed for Art Neville in 1962, again in his soulful ballad style.

16. Yes Sir, That's My Baby – (ORGAN) \* - (key of B flat)  
(Walter Donaldson-Gus Kahn/Donaldson Publishing Co., ASCAP-Gilbert Keyes Music Company, ASCAP)

James' great organ playing was one of the big influences for his up tempo R&B piano style:

1. On the piano the little finger of his left hand played the same kind of moving bass lines that his left foot played on the organ bass pedals;
2. Accompanying chords played with his left hand on the organ were played as partial chords on the piano with the thumb and index finger of his left hand in between (and sometimes at the same time as) the bass line notes in his left hand;
3. His right hand phrases on the piano often used 2, 3, or 4 notes played at the same time to get a full sound like the organ; and his right hand chords and phrases on the piano sometimes have a common tone in all of them, also to have a full and somewhat drony tone like the organ, especially noteworthy in his versions of *Sunny Side of the Street*, on his albums JUNKO PARTNER, and NEW ORLEANS PIANO WIZARD: LIVE!

Especially also see songs #5, *Tico Tico*, song #9, *Bald Head*, and song #21, *Three Keys*, for great examples of this style. For James' piano playing, besides the inspiration from the organ, some of his piano influences were: Professor Longhair, Isidore "Tuts" Washington, Jelly Roll Morton, Meade "Lux" Lewis, Albert Ammons, Pete Johnson, Clarence "Pine Top" Smith, Ray Charles, and Chopin, Rachmaninoff and Beethoven, as well as the jazz pianists Erroll Garner and Art Tatum.

Many New Orleans pianists have been influenced and inspired by James, such as Dr. John, Allen Toussaint, Henry Butler, Jon Cleary,

Tom McDermott, Joshua Paxton, Amasa Miller, David Torkanowsky, Harry Connick, Jr., Larry Sieberth, Joe Krown, Davell Crawford, Tom Worrell, Sanford Hinderlie, Marcia Ball, Cynthia Chen, and more.

James plays this piece mainly an instrumental, before spontaneously singing part of a verse near the end.

### 17. Baby Face - (key of B flat)

(Edward Buzzell-Bert Kalmar-Harry Ruby/Bughouse, ASCAP-EMI Mills Music, ASCAP-Ruby Harry Music Co., ASCAP)

James also loved playing older up-tempo standards, such as *Baby Face*, *Yes Sir That's My Baby*, and *Sunny Side of the Street*. Note his great alternate New Orleans style chord progressions in the last third of the song, reminiscent of the repeated progression that the jazz saxophonist Rhasaan Roland Kirk, very inspired by New Orleans traditional jazz (and when he was in town he sometimes played with the Preservation Hall Jazz and also the Olympia Brass Band), sometimes played live in his song *Volunteered Slavery*, as on his album *I, EYE, AYE - LIVE AT THE MONTREUX JAZZ FESTIVAL, SWITZERLAND 1972*. I saw Rhasaan play it at a jazz club in New Orleans in late 1970, but James wasn't around at that time due to unfortunate circumstances, but possibly he heard Rhasaan play it at an earlier time. What an incredible live concert phenomenon Rhasaan was, like solo performers James Booker, Henry Butler, and guitarist Pierre Bensusan became, and they were all probably inspired and influenced some by Rhasaan .

The New Orleans R&B scene was at a low ebb at that time, and I never heard James' name mentioned once, nor Professor Longhair's, in the six months that I lived there in mid to late 1970. That was to change in 1971, and one of the large factors for this was because George Wein, Quint Davis, and Allison Minor (she was later Allison Kaslow, and she was Professor Longhair's last manager) produced the first New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival in 1971 - and Quint Davis also found Professor Longhair that year and helped him to start recording again (Fess hadn't recorded since his 1964 song, *Big Chief - Parts 1 & 2*) - (and the British

Blues scholar and editor of Blues Unlimited magazine, Mike Leadbitter had paved the way by first finding Fess in 1970 and documenting to the outside world that he was still alive).

Other factors creating the re-emergence of New Orleans R&B locally, and in the rest of the world, were the national emergence of Dr. John, and also the greater recognition that Allen Toussaint had been the composer (and often the studio producer) of many songs that had been popular in the general American culture (the extent of Allen's work is still being discovered to this day).

18. If You're Lonely (solo piano alternate take) \* - (key of F)  
(James-Gibson/Tee Pee Music Co., ASCAP)

A wonderful solo version of this song (also see song #2).

19. Madame X (Swedish Rhapsody) - (key of D minor)  
(James C. Skinner/USI A Publishing, ASCAP)

James sometimes called this piece, from the 1966 film MADAME X, by the title *Swedish Rhapsody*, and it is again played in James' classical-influenced style.

20. One For the Highway - (key of B flat)  
(Antoine Domino/Domino Publishing Co., BMI-Warner Tamerlane Publishing, BMI)

Starting in the mid-1950s James sometimes sat in playing piano for Fats Domino when studio tracks were being recorded for Fats to sing to when he got back off the road. James also later played on Fats' 1968 album FATS IS BACK.

21. Three Keys - (keys of B flat, B, C, and C#)  
(James Carroll Booker/Bookends Publishing Co., BMI)

This piece, which could be called *Four Keys*, and with the same

structure as *He's Got the Whole World In His Hands*, is actually in four keys: B Flat, B, C, and C#, and this is the only documented example of him playing in the rarely played key of B Major (the current pianists Tom McDermott, David Thomas Roberts, and Steve Ferguson also sometimes compose and play in the key of B, and actually in all of the 24 keys). The key of C# Major is also rare, and James also played in it on *Good Night Irene* and *Black Minute Waltz* on his JUNKO PARTNER album. The only keys out of the 12 Major and 12 minor keys that I never heard James play in (although of course he could), were: E Major, F# Major; and C# minor, E minor, F# minor, A flat minor, and B minor (the most common keys pianists play in are C, E flat, F, G, A flat, B flat; and C minor, D minor, F minor, G minor and A minor).

James' again plays this song in his uptempo R&B style that was greatly influenced by his own organ playing (also see the notes for song #16).

## 22. Amen \* - (key of F)

(public domain, arr. James Carroll Booker/Bookends Publishing Co., BMI)

A long odyssey-style version of this song, with spontaneous different tempos, and vocal and instrumental sections.

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James Booker piano, vocal and Hammond B3 organ

- with (on songs 2,5,7,8,12,13,15,16,17 & 20):

Alvin "Red" Tyler tenor saxophone

James Singleton bass

Johnny Vidacovich drums

