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SAM HINTON

MASTER OF THE SOLO DIATONIC HARMONICA

OVER 120 Songs and Stories on Two CDs.

Celtic, American and European Folk Melodies -- Reels, Jigs, Double Jigs, Airs, Fiddle Tunes, Yiddish Melodies, Hymns, Hoedowns, and Hornpipes and more -- by one of the Greatest and Most Innovative Harmonica Players of All Time!

Played on the standard diatonic harmonica, the harmonic minor diatonic harmonica, the *chordomonica*, the pipe harmonica, guitar, ukelin, accordion, and the pennywhistle.

“Here is a wonderful document of the beautiful solo harmonica playing of Sam Hinton. He is my main mentor on harmonica and he’s such a unique, joyous and soulful innovator on the solo diatonic harmonica, as well as the rarely played *chordomonica*. This recording is an encyclopedia for posterity of what can be done with the solo harmonica.”

– George Winston

Eagle's Whistle Music (EWM – 1001)

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Produced by George Winston and Adam Miller

INTRODUCTION

[Sam Hinton](#) is perhaps the greatest solo diatonic, non-blues (first position) harmonica player of all time. A longtime resident of La Jolla, California, Sam is a man of many talents. An accomplished aquariologist, author, calligrapher, educator, folklorist, cartoonist, and illustrator, he is also one of the most respected folksingers in the world, and has recorded some 13 solo albums.

Yet not many people living outside of southern California have heard of Sam Hinton. And fewer still have ever heard Sam's truly amazing harmonica playing. Of the some 200 songs Sam recorded commercially between 1947 and 1992, only two tracks contain any harmonica playing. Three obscure, long out-of-print 33 1/3 rpm records from the 1962 [National Folk Festival](#), the 1963 Newport Folk Festival, and the 1974 San Diego Folk Festival, contain a few live tracks of Sam executing breathtakingly beautiful harmonica and *chordomonica* solos.

Over the course of three decades, Lou Curtiss, the proprietor of [Folk Arts Rare Records](#), has produced a local folk music festival, annually, in San Diego, California. Sam Hinton has performed almost every year since its inception. And in the vaults in the back room of his store, among the thousands of tapes and discs, Lou still has dozens of carefully preserved reel-to-reel tapes of many of Sam's live performances. In May 2000, I spent a week in the vaults of Folk Arts Rare Records, crouching in the shadows of the towering, looming, floor-to-ceiling record shelves stuffed full of irreplaceable tapes, 33s and 78s. There, with a DAT deck balanced on an upside-down waste paper basket, Lou and I transferred all the tapes of Sam concerts.

The stunning harmonica music on this CD set is unlike anything ever recorded by any other harmonica player. Many of the solo harmonica performances on this album were recorded in the studio when Sam Hinton was well into his 80's, after he'd been playing the harmonica for three-quarters of a century. Although the recording quality on some of the live concert tracks leaves something to be desired, I'm sure the listener will agree - the performances are outstanding and singularly unique.

THE SCALES

Most 21st century listeners are familiar with an African-American diatonic harmonica style called "cross-harp" or "second position." This technique -- where the harmonica is played a fifth interval above the key stamped on the harmonica -- is employed universally throughout American Blues, Country, Cajun, and Rock. In the cross-harp technique, a C major diatonic harmonica is used to play a song

in the key of G major. Ironically, the earliest recorded example of cross-harp playing is on a December 1923, Okeh 78 rpm of "Rain Crow Bill" by a white harmonica player named Henry Whitter.

Sam Hinton plays what he calls "square style harmonica," better known as "first position" or "straight harp" -- playing the melody in the key that's stamped on the side of the harmonica. That is to say, a C major diatonic harmonica would be used to play a song in the key of C major.

The major diatonic scale for "straight harp" consists of seven notes which are familiar to most people's ears. To hear the diatonic scale, sit at the piano keyboard, start on the C key and play the next six white keys going up the scale: "do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti."

To hear the diatonic scale employed for the "cross-harp" style, sit at the piano keyboard, start on the G key and play the next six white keys going up the scale. In this scale, which is known as the "[mixolydian mode](#)," the seventh note of the scale is flatted.

The [chromatic scale](#) is probably less familiar to non-musicians. To hear the chromatic scale, start on the C key and play the next eleven black *and* white keys going up the scale.

HISTORY OF THE HARMONICA

The history of the harmonica and the accordion are forever intertwined. Both instruments began being mass-produced in Europe in the mid-1800's. Both instruments belong to the family of [aerophones](#) and are sounded by a so-called "free reed" -- a metal tongue that is affixed over a specifically sized aperture in a metal frame and vibrated by air pressure from a bellows or breath. Unlike the "beating reed" of the clarinet, the free reed is made exactly the same width as the hole, so it's free to move back and forth through the hole without being stopped by its edges. The pitch of each free reed is determined by its length and thickness.

The Italian name for the accordion is *fisarmonica* -- a word derived from the Greek words *physa*, which means bellows, and *harmonikos*, which means harmonic. Like the saxophone (which was invented in 1840) the harmonica and accordion are relatively new instruments compared to flutes, violins or brass. Again, like the saxophone, it was not until nearly a century after its invention that a definitive solo style of playing emerged, especially in the hands of African-American virtuosos.

The saxophone found a solo voice in jazz music in the mid-1920's in the playing of [Coleman Hawkins](#), whose style was expanded and evolved over the next few decades by such innovators as [Lester Young](#), [Charlie Parker](#) and [John Coltrane](#).

Similarly, the harmonica found a solo voice in the same decade, in the hands of such blues and old-time country harmonica virtuosos as [DeFord Bailey](#), Henry Whittier, El Watson, William McCoy, Kyle Wooten, Gwen Foster, Freeman Stowers, George "Bullet" Williams, Palmer McAbee, and Artelius Mistic. A generation later, their innovations were refined and developed by modern blues "cross-harp" masters including [Little Walter Jacobs](#), [Sonny Terry](#), [John Lee Williamson \(Sonny Boy Williamson I\)](#), [Rice Miller \(Sonny Boy Williamson II\)](#), [James Cotton](#), and [Paul Butterfield](#).

* * *

The mouth organ of the Far East, the *sheng* (literally "sublime voice") is the ancient ancestor of the harmonica and the earliest free reed instrument. It probably originated in Southeast Asia around 3000 BC and later spread to China, Korea and Japan. It was first recorded in literature in 1100 BC. Beautifully lacquered *shengs* have been excavated from tombs in China dating back to the 5th century BC. By the 6th century AD, the *sheng* was being played across Central Asia and as far west as Persia.

The *sheng's* sound chamber was originally made out of a gourd. The gourd has since been replaced by a lacquered bowl (made of wood, and more recently metal), from which projects a circular arrangement of 13-36 bamboo pipes. Inside each pipe there is an aperture at the lower end covered by a thin metal tongue -- a free reed. The player covers a hole in the side of the bamboo pipe with his finger and blows into the mouthpiece, sounding the same note when blowing or drawing.

Although the *sheng* probably arrived in Europe centuries earlier, it was first mentioned by the French writer [Marin Mersenne](#) in 1636. In 1648, a *charivari* played a *sheng* for the amusement of [King Louis XIV](#). The German violinist, Johann Wilde (the inventor of the nail violin), lived in St. Petersburg from 1741-1764. During this period, he acquired *die liebliche Chineser Orgel* ("the charming Chinese organ,") and popularized it by playing it for the Russian Court Society. But the importance of the *sheng's* free reed was not fully realized until Father P re Amiot, a Jesuit Missionary in China and the author the first European volume on Chinese musical instruments, sent several *shengs* to the minister of arts in Paris in 1777.

* * *

The *sheng* received much attention in St. Petersburg. There, the Danish physicist, [Christian Gottlieb Kratzenstein](#) (1723-1795) heard Wilde's playing and became fascinated with *sheng*. He believed the free reed could revolutionize the organ. He told a St. Petersburg instrument maker named Kirsnik of his idea for installing free reed stops in small organs. Inspired by Wilde's suggestion, [Kirsnik](#)

built a full-scale organ register of free reeds that was used in the *orchestrion*, an organ designed by George Joseph Volger in 1792.

It's hard to assess to what degree early harmonica and accordion inventors were influenced by existing instruments in which a metal tongue is plucked rather than blown -- specifically consider the Jew's harp (or *guimbarde*) and the African *sansa* or thumb-piano. In 1814 [Eschenbach](#), a Bavarian instrument maker started experimenting with a keyboard version of the plucked reed, but, like other organ makers of his day, ultimately resorted to using a bellows.

The free reed organ came to be known as the "bellows harmonica." Up until this time the word "harmonica" had referred to the [Glass Harmonica](#) an instrument invented by [Ben Franklin](#) and for which Mozart wrote Quintet K.617 in 1791. The Glass Harmonica isn't a harmonica at all, but rather a series of tuned glass bowls rotated on an axle by a treadle and are sounded by touching the rims of the bowls with a moistened finger.

Pipe organ designers eventually abandoned the idea of the free reed, but the principle was successfully employed by smaller keyboard instruments, such as the *Terpodion*, which was built by Joseph Buschmann, a famous instrument builder in Thuringia, Germany in 1816. Five years later, Buschmann's 16-year old son, Christian Freidrich Buschmann registered the first European patent for a single experimental free-reed mouth organ -- the first harmonica --, which he called the *aura* or *mundaeline*. It was composed of a series of steel free reeds joined together horizontally, in small channels. It offered only blow notes and these were arranged chromatically.

Freidrich Buschmann told his brother that he had created, "...a new instrument that is truly remarkable. In its entirety it measures but four inches in diameter... but gives me twenty-one notes, and all the pianissimos and crescendos one could want without a keyboard, harmonies of six tones, and the ability to hold a note as long as one would wish to."

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In 1822 Freidrich Buschmann added an expanding bellows to a small, portable, diatonic keyboard, with free reeds inside and called it a *handharmonika* or *handaeoline*. Seven years later a Viennese instrument maker named Cyrillus Damian patented a variation of Buschmann's "handaeoline", which he called the "accordion."

Around 1826 a Bohemian instrument maker named [Richter](#) developed a variation on Buschmann's mouth organ. Richter's design featured ten holes and twenty metal reeds, with separate blow and draw reed plates attached to either side of a cedar comb. Richter's tuning, using the seven-note diatonic scale -- and with the same fifth note of the scale occurring twice: on hole 3 blow and hole 2 draw --

became the standard configuration for the modern ten-hole diatonic harmonica and is still in use today. This instrument is capable of playing two chords: a tonic major chord on the blow, and the relative dominant seventh chord on the draw.

Christian Messner, clockmaker in Trossingen, Germany started a business building harmonicas by hand, with his cousin, Christian Weiss in 1827. In the early 1850s a young Trossingen clockmaker named [Matthias Hohner](#) (1833-1902) visited their factory and took a harmonica lesson from Christian Weiss. In 1857, at the age of 24, [Hohner](#) (opened his own harmonica factory and, using Richter's design, managed to produce some 650 instruments in his first year in business. These early harmonicas were made by hand and the combs were carved of wood.

An examination of many of the earliest pre-Hohner harmonicas at the harmonica museum in Trossingen reveal that the reeds were not made from wire hammered flat, but rather from wire rolled flat and then hand cut or filed to achieve the correct shape. The term, "hand hammered reeds" that one often finds printed on old harmonica covers probably refers to the reeds being riveted to the reed-plates by hand hammering, rather than the actual hammering of the reed wire, itself.

* * *

Hohner introduced the harmonica in Canada in 1857. Distribution in the United States began around 1860. President [Abraham Lincoln](#) is said to have carried a harmonica in his pocket during the Lincoln-Douglas debates in 1858. During the American Civil War the harmonica was a popular instrument among soldiers on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line. So great was the demand that for nearly a decade Hohner sold his products exclusively to the American market.

In 1878 a new invention, developed by Julius Berthold made it possible for metal reeds to be stamped out by machines, rather than by hand. By 1887 Hohner was producing more than one million harmonicas each year. Ten years later, production had tripled. By 1911 Hohner was making eight million harmonicas a year, and was the largest manufacturer of accordions in the world.

In the United States in 1923, a Philadelphia philanthropist named Albert Hoxie began organizing harmonica contests and harmonica bands, complete with full marching band uniforms. This resulted in a national harmonica craze. Even Boy Scouts could garner merit badges for achieving proficiency on the harmonica. By the end of the decade, Hohner's harmonica sales reached 25 million, worldwide.

In his book [Harmonicas, Harps and Heavy Breathers, Kim Fields](#) succinctly observed, "Less than 200 years after its debut, the harmonica has become transcendent, arguably the most popular instrument in history. It has been to both poles, down the Amazon and to the summit of Mt. Everest. In its most

spectacular field trip it became the first instrument to serenade us from outer space.”

MEET SAM HINTON

In the 1920s J.W. Jenkins & Sons Music at 417 South Main Street was a popular music store in downtown Tulsa, Oklahoma. Arlie Cripe, the store manager, stocked a full line of Hohner harmonicas. One day in 1922, Nell Hinton, a local piano and elocution teacher, came into Jenkins Music with her five-year old son, Sam, and bought him a [Hohner “Marine Band” diatonic ten-hole harmonica](#). Nell loved to tell the story of how little Sam was already playing “Turkey in the Straw” before he was out of the building.

Nell Duffie Hinton (1888–1978) was a gifted pianist who shared her love of music with her children. She could improvise and play by ear, and her repertoire -- which was very eclectic for that time and place -- included, fiddle tunes, folk songs, ragtime, popular and classical music. She was raised in Gatesville, Texas and took piano lessons throughout her childhood. As a teenager, she had wanted to attend music school. Her parents, however, felt that a young “Suth-eren” lady should go to a finishing school and sent her to [Kidd Key College](#) in Denton, in northern Texas. At Kidd Key, she was selected to be the state representative piano soloist in Chautauqua, New York.

Sam Duffie Hinton was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on March 31 1917, the third of five children born to Nell and her husband Allan F. “Hint” Hinton (1886–1957.) Hint worked as a civil engineer and the family lived in a rented house on Tulsa’s North Boston Street. Sam remembers, “We always had a piano in the house when I was growing up, but I never played anything I had to take lessons on.”

In 1922, the Hinton family moved to a little yellow house at 512 South Zunis Street in Tulsa. Sam Hinton’s childhood ambition was to learn every song he heard. (Today he has over 2,000 songs in his repertoire.) As a boy, the harmonica was his favorite instrument and he carried one with him wherever he went. “I would go to Jenkins Music and buy a new harmonica every month.” he remembers. “They cost fifty cents apiece then.”

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When Sam was six, his teenage brother Allan brought Floyd Bowles, one of the boys in his Scout Troop, to the house. “I remember Allan or somebody got me to play the harmonica for Floyd. Floyd asked me: ‘Don’t you use your tongue?’ And I said, ‘What do you mean?’ And Floyd demonstrated. Up until this time, I had just been blowing and drawing chords with the melody note on top. I didn’t know about tongue blocking.” (Tongue blocking is a harmonica technique in which you push your tongue up against the holes in the instrument to cover or “block” all but

the desired note, then, you remove the tongue to sound all of the notes in the chord.)

Sam remembers, "I used to have a recurring dream. I think it lasted just about through high school. I dreamed I could play the harmonica on just about anything including my own finger. I really enjoyed that dream."

In 1925 Sam's maternal grandfather, Matthew "Judge" Duffie (1861–1936) gave him a diatonic push button accordion for his eighth birthday. This instrument was capable of playing more than the two chords available on the ten-hole harmonica. "I fooled around and discovered the sub-dominant chord -- the G [major] chord in the key of D [major] -- on 'Home on the Range,' " says Sam.

While still in elementary school, Sam began performing in public, playing the button accordion, Jew's harp, harmonica and pennywhistle. He joined a local harmonica band at Jenkins Music Store. "They also had a fife and drum corps and I started to learn the fife." remembers Sam. "I was already playing the pennywhistle."

Shortly thereafter, he played his harmonica in a Saturday afternoon amateur contest at the Strand Theater in Tulsa and won three dollars. Although the Strand was in a rough part of town that his parents had forbidden him to visit, they were supportive of his winning the contest. As Sam remembers it, "They congratulated me. And they let me keep the three dollars!"

In the 1920s there was still quite a bit of [Vaudeville](#) in Tulsa and Sam saw a lot of performers. "I was always entranced by performers and performing," says Sam. "And I was never shy about it. I would do things in public that I really didn't know how to do."

Employing the tongue blocking technique, he would sound and hold the lowest blow-hole note on the instrument with the left hand side of his mouth, while simultaneously playing the blow-hole notes with the right hand side of his mouth until his breath ran out. As Sam explains, "It's what I call a 'bagpipe imitation,' using bugle calls as the melody -- bugles play only part of the scale and those notes are available as blow notes on the diatonic harmonica. Much later I discovered that one note -- the fifth tone in the diatonic scale -- is available as both a blow tone at hole three and a draw tone on hole two [*see diagram*], and I applied that to the fiddle tune, 'Bonaparte's Retreat,' which fiddlers often play with a drone effect on an open string." (*See disc two, tracks 26, 27 and 28, for three different versions of this tune.*)

Sam's interpretation of "Bonaparte's Retreat" features melody, rhythmic chords and Sam's marvelous invention of playing a drone note throughout the parts of the melody (listen for this on the first and third verses). Sam achieves this

technique by blocking the middle holes of the harmonica with his tongue, and playing the fifth note of the key -- the B flat note on an E flat diatonic harmonica -- on the low end of the harmonica (on both the hole two blow note and the hole 3 draw note) all while playing the melody on the right side of his mouth. Listen for the rhythmic, pulsing breathing and the beautiful counter melody in the second verse.

Chart for the Standard Ten-Hole Diatonic Harmonica in the Key of C Major

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
blow	C	E	<u>G</u>	C	E	G	C	E	G	C
draw	D	<u>G</u>	B	D	F	A	B	D	F	A

For his twelfth birthday, his older sister, Mary Jo (1909-1983), gave Sam a copy of *American Songbag*, [Carl Sandburg's](#) then new collection of American folksongs. "When I read *American Songbag*," says Sam, "that was when I first realized that what I did was 'folk' music."

A MUSICAL CHILDHOOD

A few months later, Sam's family moved further south to Crockett, a small town in east Texas. This area was rich in wildlife, the study of which, along with folk music, has been the dominant force in Sam's life. In Crockett, Sam heard music from the traditions of the Cajun French, the American West, the Anglo-Celtic mountain tradition of the Ozarks, and the black and white cultures of the American South. Sam befriended local black sharecroppers along Crockett's Hurricane Bayou and collected a number of African-American folksongs that became staples in his performance repertoire.

Sam wasn't exposed to many harmonica players in Tulsa or Crockett. Consequently, he developed his own original harmonica style, influenced by his mother's piano playing and the music of the diatonic accordion -- incorporating bass notes, chords and syncopation into his diatonic harmonica arrangements.

During summer vacations, Sam worked for the traveling carnivals and circuses that came through Crockett. Sam loved to help feed and carry water for the animals. And one can hear the echoes of the circus calliopes in Sam's harmonica playing -- especially on the pipe harmonica, which was invented by his friend, the late Ted Folsom. (See "*The Glendy Burke*" on disc one, track 28; "*Farewell to Whiskey*" on disc one, track 29; "*Some Folks Do*" on disc one, track 31; and "*Merry-Go-Round-Medley*" on disc two, track 8.)

In Crockett, Sam and his younger sisters, Nell (1919–1991) and Ann (1923–), sang in the local Methodist Church choir. “We went to both Sunday morning service and Sunday evening service,” says Sam. “I liked the evening services better -- they sang mostly lighter things, gospel songs.” (See “*Medley of Three Gospel Songs*” on disc one, track 60.)

Sam continued to perform at PTA meetings, church parties and dances, and to develop his harmonica and accordion styles. In 1934, at the age of 17, he graduated from Crockett High School. The following year he enrolled in Texas A&M College in College Station, Texas, majoring in Zoology. At the end of his freshman year, Rollins Colquitt, one of his dormitory roommates lent him an old six-string guitar.

Not unlike his unique harmonica style, Sam developed a highly original style of guitar picking as a result of his lack of exposure. “I had hardly heard any guitar players in Tulsa or Crockett,” says Sam. “I went into a music store in Houston. I was lucky they gave me a book on fingerpicking. I’d be a flatpicker if I’d gotten the other kind of book!”

Sam lightly fingerpicks the guitar strings with his fingertips, while achieving a backbeat strum with the back of the nail of his middle finger. He uses few barré chords, favoring the open strings and the same kind of moving bass lines that populate his harmonica arrangements. (See “*Downfall of Paris*” on disc two, track 38.) His syncopated guitar style is immediately recognizable as his own. He mainly plays in the major keys of C, G, D, A and E; as well A minor, E minor, D minor. Sam uses a guitar capo to play in other keys.

According to Sam: “My mother loved to play ragtime, one of my favorite pieces was [Scott Joplin’s ‘Maple Leaf Rag](#). It gave me the feeling, I think, for syncopation, but I didn’t know that at the time. I think what I sensed in ragtime was that the left hand was doing a pretty steady beat, and the right hand was playing a lot of offbeat things. And I think that carried over into my voice as one part and the guitar as another, doing some offbeat things with one or the other.”

Therein lies the essence of the musical duality of Sam Hinton, the solo performer: Sam, the accompanist, is always doing something a little different and complementary to what Sam, the performer, is doing. Whether he’s accompanying his voice or harmonica with the guitar, or whistling and humming two parts simultaneously -- these two musical voices find a syncopated and joyful duet. And the fingerprint of this musical duality is consistent throughout his harmonica arrangements; the left side of his mouth is playing an accompaniment that is reminiscent of his guitar bass lines, while the right side of his mouth is playing the melody. (Sometimes there is even an audible *third* element in Sam’s playing, such as a rhythm chord along with the melody and bass notes in his harmonica playing, or a bass line with the rhythm chords on the guitar when Sam is accompanying his harmonica.)

Sam worked his way through college as a musician, sign-painter, calligrapher, scientific illustrator, and supplier of snake venom “By that time I had quite a repertoire of songs. I used to accompany myself on the two-key push button accordion, but that was limiting because I couldn’t play minor pieces. So the guitar came as great liberator. I seemed to have developed a reputation for knowing a lot of songs. At the beginning of my second year at A&M I was invited by Professor J. Frank Dobie to give a program of East Texas folk songs at the University of Texas in for the [Texas Folklore Society](#). I’ve dated my professional folk singing career from that date.”

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“When I was at Texas A&M,” Sam remembers, “I met a fellow who told me that once he’d been to a carnival and he saw a guy play a harmonica without using his hands, by sticking one end in his mouth – like a cigar. And I said, ‘I don’t believe it! Like this?’ And I tried it, and it worked.” This technique allows Sam to play a harmonica solo without using a harmonica rack, while accompanying himself on the guitar. (*See disc two, tracks 31-39.*)

Sam explains, “To do this, I use the tongue blocking technique and move the harmonica around with my cheek muscles. I’d already learned to do a bass note and a chord -- the bass note on the left-hand side of the mouth -- while blocking the holes in the middle. Then I’d lift the tongue to get the chord in the middle, meanwhile playing the melody on the higher notes out of the right side of my mouth. It was pianist [George Winston](#) who, many years later, first told me that this was a ‘stride bass’ technique.” Although other harmonica virtuosos, most notably DeFord Bailey, had played melody and rhythm chords, Sam was the first to create a technique that offered simultaneous melody, rhythm and alternating bass, as well. (*See “Ach, Du Lieber Augustin” on disc two, track 4; “Haste to the Wedding” on disc two, track 14; and “Simple Gifts” on disc two, track 43.*)

THE MAJOR BOWES ORIGINAL AMATEUR HOUR

In 1936, having completed his second year at Texas A&M, Sam hitchhiked north to join his family, who had recently relocated to Riverdale, Maryland, seven miles from Washington, DC. There had been a terrible automobile accident that had killed both Sam’s bother Allan and Allan’s young wife, Hattie Belle. Sam’s mother had been in the car and the collision left her partially disabled for the rest of her life.

In Riverdale, Sam was reunited with his sisters Nell and Ann. There they formed The Texas Trio and began performing for tips in some of the F street saloons. Sam played guitar and they worked out a three-part harmony, singing both popular and folk songs. Sam remembers, “Dad was with us. I was 19, Nell was 17 and Ann was about 13.” Sam’s father championed his musical children and

was always willing to chauffeur them in the family car to and from their various gigs.

“At that time the most popular radio program in the country was the [“Major Bowes Original Amateur Hour”](#) and Dad thought we ought to be on it,” says Sam. In the spring of 1936 Hint wrote to the Major Bowes program on behalf of the Texas Trio.

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One cold morning in early February 1937, Hint and his wife drove their three youngest children to New York City for their audition at Major Bowes’ Capitol Theater. Sam remembers, “The old guitar -- the one I ‘borrowed’ from my roommate at Texas A&M – came apart in the car; the bridge came off somewhere between Riverdale and Baltimore. My sister, Nell suggested that we go to the nearby home of one of her friends and borrow his guitar. Luckily he was home and suggested that instead of borrowing the guitar, we might buy it for five bucks. So we did.”

At the Capitol Theater, a woman named Bessie Mack listened to The Texas Trio’s rendition of “Buffalo Boy” in and decided to include them in the February 18, 1937 Thursday night Major Bowes broadcast. “On the broadcast I played seven instruments,” Sam recalls. “Jew’s harp, zither, ukelin [a hybrid instrument, part violin and part ‘ukulele], accordion, harmonica, pennywhistle, and guitar.”

It is remarkable to hear the recordings from this broadcast on disc two of this album. Sam displays his ease before an audience and his wit as he chats with master of ceremonies, “Major” Edward Bowes (1874-1946), and clearly demonstrates that he is an accomplished multi-instrumentalist. At age 19, he had already mastered the harmonica technique of simultaneously playing melody and “stride” bass, using only his cheek muscles to hold the instrument -- while playing accompaniment on the button accordion. One can hear the first-ever recorded example of stride bass on the harmonica in the opening bars of “Swanee River,” before the piano accompaniment comes in. (*See disc two, track 59.*)

During the live, coast-to-coast broadcast, “The Major” announced that Sam was being hired to join one of the transcontinental performing units in Danville, Illinois. These units toured a series of one-night-stands in Vaudeville houses and movie theaters across the nation.

As Sam tells it, “Major Bowes did give me the job right then and there – right in the middle of the broadcast – and I left the next day. I was accepting it very happily; I was just delighted. I’ve often felt guilty about it because my sisters were too young to go on the road. I think they might have been terribly disappointed.”

THE LAST VAUDEVILLIAN

Thus began a two-year tour, which took Sam through all but two of the 48 continental United States. Within 43 days Sam had given over 150 performances with his “seven instruments.” He was billed as “Texas Sam Hinton, Folksinger and Novelty Instrumentalist,” years before the word “folksinger” came into popular usage. He received \$40 a week and sent a portion of his pay home to his parents. The job of stage manager was added to his duties and his pay was raised to \$50 a week.

One of the acts that toured with Sam in the transcontinental revue was the Mimicking Melodiers. In 1937, the Melodiers’ guitarist, George “Russ” Russell, sold Sam a turn-of-the-century arched top Washburn guitar, which Sam has used on all of his recordings, including this album.

While Sam was on the road, the Department of the Interior relocated Sam’s father to Glendale, in southern California. The Major Bowes tour finally came to Los Angeles, where, on the loading dock of the Orpheum Theater, Sam, the greatest stride harmonica player, met Thomas “Fats” Waller, the greatest stride pianist.

In Los Angeles, Sam left the Major Bowes units and enrolled in the University of California (UCLA). “I had never given up the idea of becoming a naturalist and doing something with animals and nature,” Sam remembers.

In December of 1937, while studying zoology at UCLA, Sam met Leslie Forster, an artist, ceramicist, weaver, and classically trained professional violinist. Sam and Leslie have been happily married since 1940 and have spent the past 45 years at their coastal home in San Diego County. They have two children, Leanne, born in 1941, and Matt, born in 1946, as well as two granddaughters and one great-grandson.

Sam graduated from UCLA with a degree in zoology in 1941. For three years he was Director of the Palm Spring Desert Museum, and in 1944 he was hired as an Editor/Illustrator for the University of California Division of War Research in San Diego, California. He worked as the Director of the Aquarium-Museum at the University of California Scripps Institution of (Oceanography for nearly two decades.

In 1947 Sam recorded 54 songs for the Library of Congress in Washington DC. 48 of these songs are now available on [Bear Family Records BCD 16383](#) (Germany). Sam’s first commercial recording, “Old Man Atom” (aka: “The Talking Atomic Blues”) -- the original, 1949 recording of that controversial folksong -- has been re-issued on [Bear Family Records](#) BCD 16065 “Atomic Platters – Cold War Music from the Golden Age of Homeland Security. (Germany).”

In the early 1950's Sam had his own radio and television programs in San Diego, California. During the 1950's and 1960's Sam appeared at every major American folk festival, performing folksongs, as well as a few harmonica solos.

FOLKSINGER, NATURALIST AND FAMILY MAN

Throughout his career as a naturalist he has simultaneously worked as a part-time teacher of college-level courses in art, folklore, music, geography, science, and as a calligrapher and artist; and as a performer of folksongs for audiences of both children and adults. As an educator he regularly taught University of California courses for more than 35 years, and spent 16 years as Director of Relations with Schools for the University of California, San Diego.

In the early 1960's, the chromatic harmonica virtuoso Cham-Ber Huang, then an employee at the Hohner harmonica factory in Glen Allen, Virginia, invented a six-chord harmonica called the *chordomonica*. It has two buttons controlling metal sliders that open combinations of three sets of reeds. The C Major *chordomonica* can play the following chords: C major, F Major, G7th, F# diminished 7th, A minor, and D minor 7th. This unique instrument is terribly obscure and hasn't been manufactured for decades. But Sam plays it masterfully and uses the six available chords to great effect on 12 of the tracks on this album. (See "About the *chordomonica*" on disc one, track 16; "Morality Play in Four Tune Titles" on disc one, track 58; and "Fisher's Hornpipe" on disc two, track 15.)

In 1980, Sam retired from his job at the University of California, devoting himself to performing full-time, and continuing to develop and refine his harmonica technique. For his annual Christmas Concert for the San Diego Folk Heritage group in 1985, Sam prepared a diatonic harmonica arrangement of the Shaker hymn, "[Simple Gifts](#)," which involved the simultaneous playing of melody and countermelody. Like the bagpipe-drone and the stride bass harmonica styles described earlier, simultaneous playing of melody and counterpoint melody on the diatonic harmonica is Sam's third major achievement in the advancement of first position diatonic harmonica technique. To do this, he plays melody on the right side of his mouth and a simultaneous counterpoint melody on the left side of his mouth. (See "Mississippi Sawyer" on disc one, track 2; "Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be?" on disc one, tracks 4 and 5; "Au Clair De La Lune" disc one, track 50; "Pufferbillies Round" on disc one, track 22; and "Simple Gifts" on disc two, track 43.) This counterpoint technique has been prominently used by the Japanese harmonica player Hidero Sato, on his 1984 album *Harmonica No Uta* (*Songs of Harmonica*), very often played in the Harmonic Minor Tuning or the Standard Major Tuning, to suit the traditional Japanese songs; and also occasionally by Howard Levy.

Until 1997, Sam worked as many as 120 days a year presenting grade school assembly programs. In the course of his long career he performed for over two

million school children in southern California. In 2000, at the age of 83, just before he began recording the studio tracks on this album, Sam retired from performing classroom and school assemblies. A few years later, he retired from public performance entirely. His farewell appearance was May 11, 2002, at the San Diego Folk Heritage Festival, a festival that Sam founded half a century ago. The festival has since changed its name to the [Sam Hinton Folk Heritage Festival](#).

In recent years, Sam has concentrated his efforts on projects both literary and musical. In 2002, Sam spent months revising and updating the text and illustrations of his book, [Seashore Life of Southern California](#); a second edition has been published by the [University of California Press](#).

Sam's latest project is perhaps his most ambitious: to transcribe the more than 2,000 folksongs he has in his head. Sam refers to this as the "Songs I Know" project. At the age of 88, Sam modestly admits, "This might take several years to complete."

[-Adam Miller](#)

Woodside, California

April 1, 2005

It is wonderful to have this document of Sam Hinton's harmonica playing available. I have been working on this project in my mind ever since I first heard him play "Bonaparte's Retreat" live on April 16, 1975 (see *disc 2, track 27*). The series of songs (# 13-28) shows how Sam evolved this marvelous harmonica version of "Bonaparte's Retreat". He has been my main harmonica mentor ever since (along with the great harmonica player and inventor [Rick Epping](#) (who helped get Sam's chordominicas repaired for the recording sessions.) Sam also inspires me in all other aspects of music and life.

Sam has invented three major innovations for solo, first position harmonica playing:

1. "Stride bass" harmonica, created by Sam around 1935, where he is playing the bass, chord, and rhythm simultaneously. (See the songs "*Haste to the Wedding*" on *disc two, track 14*, "*Ach Du Leber Augustin*" on *disc two, track 4*, "*Simple Gifts*" on *disc two, track 43*, "*Bobby Shaftoe*" on *disc one, track 52*, the third version of "*Bonaparte's Retreat*" on *disc two, track 28* and the 1937 version of "*Swanee River*" on *disc two, track 59*.)

2. Playing a drone note through part of the song, invented by Sam in the late 1930s. (See the songs “Bonaparte’s Retreat” “Bobby Shaftoe” on disc one, tracks 26-28 and “Bobby Shaftoe” on disc one, track 52.)

3. Playing counterpoint melodies -- two melodic lines played at the same time, -- invented by Sam in the 1970s. (See the song “Simple Gifts” on disc two, track 43, “Oh Dear, What can the Matter Be” on disc one, tracks 4 and 5, Pufferbillies” on disc one, track 22, “Mississippi Sawyer” on disc one, track 2, “Au Claire De La Lune” on disc one, track 50, and some on “Mr. Tunstall’s Hoedown” on disc two, track 12, and “Hick’s Hornpipe” on disc one, track 40; as well as moving bass lines on, “Oh Dear, What can the Matter Be” on disc one, tracks 4 and 5, “Mississippi Sawyer” on disc one, track 2, and “Downfall of Paris” on disc one, track 7.)

-George Winston

* * *

STUDIO RECORDINGS – DISC ONE

DISC ONE:

1. Spoken introduction. 0:25
2. **Mississippi Sawyer** - Old-time American breakdown. 0:52
Featuring a great moving bass line and rhythmic chords accompanying the melody.
Diatonic harmonica, key of Eb major.
3. Spoken introduction. 0:50
4. **Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be?** - English waltz. 2:33
This rendition features a beautiful moving bass line and rhythmic chords accompanying the melody, and many variations. Notice the rapid 16th notes in the bass lines at the end of the fourth verse, the beginning of the tenth verse, the middle of the eleventh verse, and near the end of the thirteenth and last verse (as he also does in the version of “Mr. Tunstall’s Hoedown”, on disc 2, track 12.) There are also some beautiful counterpoint bass lines in the sixth, eighth, and tenth verses.
Diatonic harmonica, key of D major.
5. **Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be?** – Another version with 1:53
different variations.

Again, notice the rapid 16th notes in the bass lines in the first, third, fourth, and the ninth verses, and the counterpoint bass line in the sixth verse. throughout the fourth verse and near the end of the seventh verse.

Diatonic harmonica, key of A major.

6. Spoken introduction. 0:42
7. **The Downfall of Paris** (*Ceimsios Parais*) - Irish set dance. 2:02
Features the melody with rhythmic chords and an occasional moving bass line.
Diatonic harmonica, key of Ab major.
(Sam also plays this song as a harmonica and guitar duet on disc two, track 38.)
8. Spoken introduction. 1:23
9. **Flop Eared Mule** - Canadian/American schottische. 1:06
Played in two keys, on two diatonic harmonicas: a standard C major for the main part, and a standard G major for the bridge.
10. Spoken introduction. 0:25
11. **By the Light of the Moon/Ukrainian Hopak Melody** – 1:15
Medley of Eastern European folksongs.
Played on two diatonic harmonicas: a C major and a G major – making it possible for Sam to modulate from the key of C to the key of G in the first song, and to modulate from the key of G to the key of C in the second song.
12. Spoken introduction. 0:53
13. **Rebbe Elimelech/Pseudoslavian Rhapsody** – 2:00
Yiddish folksong/Sam Hinton.
*Played on two harmonicas: a harmonic minor diatonic in the key of A minor, and a C major diatonic -- making it possible for Sam to play all the chords in the first song (in the key of A minor), and for him to modulate from the key of A minor to the key of C major and back, in the second song. On the harmonic minor harmonica the third notes of the scale (holes 2, 5 & 8 draw) are flattened one half step lower than the major diatonic harmonica, and the second notes of the scale (holes 6 & 10 draw) are also flattened one half step. The chords on this harmonica are A minor (the *i* minor), and the E7th [with a flat 9 note] (the V7 [or the V7 flat9]).*

Here is a chart for the harmonic minor harmonica in the key of A minor:

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
blow	A	<u>C</u>	E	A	<u>C</u>	E	A	<u>C</u>	E	A
draw	B	E	G #	B	D	<u>F</u>	G #	B	D	<u>F</u>

And in the key of A major, for comparison:

SAM WEB NOTES

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
blow	A	<u>C</u> #	E	A	<u>C</u> #	E	A	<u>C</u> #	E	A
draw	B	E	G #	B	D	<u>F</u> #	G #	B	D	<u>F#</u>

And in the keys of C minor and C Major, for reference:

C minor:

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
blow	C	E <u>b</u>	G	C	<u>E</u> <u>b</u>	G	C	<u>E</u> <u>b</u>	G	C
draw	D	G	B	D	F	<u>A</u> <u>b</u>	B	D	F	<u>Ab</u>

C major:

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
blow	C	<u>E</u>	G	C	<u>E</u>	G	C	<u>E</u>	G	C
draw	D	G	B	D	F	<u>A</u>	B	D	F	<u>A</u>

14. Spoken introduction. 0:31
 15. ***Ot Azoy Neyt A Shnayder*** - Yiddish folksong. 0:46
Played on a harmonic minor diatonic harmonica, key of A minor
 16. About the *chordomonica*. 2:49

The chromatic harmonica virtuoso [Cham-Ber Huang](#) invented the *chordomonica* while employed by Hohner in the early 1960s. He also invented and produced in the USA for Hohner the CBH2016 and CBH2012 chromatic harmonicas in the late 1970s. Production stopped when he left Hohner in 1982 to found Huang Harmonica Production and Marketing.

Sam Hinton is probably the greatest *chordomonica* players of all time. This unique and inventive harmonica has 2 buttons and 3 sets of reeds, creating six chords. (illustrated here in the key of E Major):

On the reeds played without pushing the buttons - the blow chord is the I chord, the tonic (E Major), and the draw chord is the V7 chord, the dominant 7th (the B7th).

When the lower button is pushed in, the blow chord is the subdominant IV chord (A major), and the draw is the #iv diminished 7th (the B flat diminished 7th).

SAM WEB NOTES

When the upper button is pushed in, the blow chord is the minor vi chord, the relative minor (the C# minor), and the draw chord is the subdominant IV6th chord (the A6th), or it also could be called the ii minor 7th chord (the F# minor 7th).

When both buttons are not depressed, there is a set of blow and draw reeds exposed. When the lower button is pushed, there is second set of blow and draw reeds exposed. When the upper button is pushed it opens a combination of both sets of reeds -- holes 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, and 10 of the top reeds, and holes 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12 of the bottom reeds.

Here is a diagram or the *chordomonica* in the key of E major, and also for the keys of C and G major for further reference. (Sam also plays in those two keys on this recording.)

IN E MAJOR (the lowest note is E below middle C)

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	CHORD
No button-blow	E	G#	B	E	E	G#	B	E	E	G#	B	E	E Major [I] chord-tonic
No button-draw	F#	A	B	D#	F#	A	B	D#	F#	A	B	D#	B7 th [V7] chord-dominant 7 th
Lower button-blow	E	A	C#	E	E	A	C#	E	E	A	C#	E	A Major [IV] chord-subdominant
Lower button-draw	G	Bb	C#	E	G	Bb	C#	E	G	Bb	C#	E	B flat diminished- [biv Diminished]
Upper button-blow	E	G#	C#	E	E	G#	C#	E	E	G#	C#	E	C# minor-[vi]chord
Upper button-draw	F#	A	C#	E	F#	A	C#	E	F#	A	C#	E	A6 th [IV6] chord-Subdominant 6 th /or can be called F# minor 7 th [ii7] chord

IN C MAJOR (the lowest note is middle C)

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	CHORD
No button-blow	C	E	G	C	C	E	G	C	C	E	G	C	C Major [I] chord-tonic
No button-draw	D	F	G	B	D	F	G	B	D	F	G	B	G7 th [V7] chord-dominant 7 th
Lower button-blow	C	F	A	C	C	F	A	C	C	F	A	C	F Major [IV] chord-subdominant
Lower button-draw	D#	F#	A	C	D#	F#	A	C	D#	F#	A	C	F# diminished- [biv Diminished]

SAM WEB NOTES

Upper button-blow	C	E	A	C	C	E	A	C	C	E	A	C	A minor-[vi]chord
Upper button-draw	D	F	A	C	D	F	A	C	D	F	A	C	F6th [IV6] chord-called
													Subdominant 6 th / or can be D minor 7 th [ii7] chord

IN G MAJOR (the lowest note is G below middle C)

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	CHORD
No button-blow	G	B	D	G	G	B	D	G	G	B	D	G	G Major [I] chord-tonic
No button-draw	A	C	D	F#	A	C	D	F#	A	C	D	F#	D7th [V7] chord-dominant 7th
Lower button-blow	G	C	E	G	G	C	E	G	G	C	E	G	C Major [IV] chord-subdominant
Lower button-draw	A#	C#	E	G	A#	C#	E	G	A#	C#	E	G	C# diminished- [#iv Diminished]
Upper button-blow	G	B	E	G	G	B	E	G	G	B	E	G	E minor-[vi]chord
Upper button-draw	A	C	E	G	A	C	E	G	A	C	E	G	C6th [IV6] chord-Subdominant 6 th / or can be called A minor 7 th [ii7] chord

Sam also has a smaller *chordomonica* (he did not play it on this recording) in the key of G with 10 holes and one button. The tuning would be the same as the chart above, except without holes 11 and 12, and without the upper button.

IN G MAJOR (the lowest note is G below middle C)

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	CHORD
No button-blow	G	B	D	G	G	B	D	G	G	B	G Major [I] chord-tonic
No button-draw	A	C	D	F#	A	C	D	F#	A	C	D7th [V7] chord-dominant 7th
Lower button-blow	G	C	E	G	G	C	E	G	G	C	C Major [IV] chord-subdominant
Lower button-draw	A#	C#	E	G	A#	C#	E	G	A#	C#	C# diminished- [#iv Diminished]

- 17. Spoken introduction. 0:55
- 18. **Off to California** - Irish hornpipe. 1:14
Played on the chordomonica, key of C major.
- 19. Spoken introduction. 0:31
- 20. **Reedsdale Hornpipe** - Irish hornpipe. 0:55
Played on the chordomonica, key of E major.
- 21. Spoken introduction. 0:36
- 22. **Pufferbillies Round** - English folksong. 1:16
This song features Sam's beautiful counterpoint technique, playing two melodic lines at once in the style of a round.
Diatonic harmonica, key of Eb major.
- 23. Spoken introduction. 1:05
- 24. **Skye Boat Song/Laird of Drumblair** – Medley of Scottish airs. 1:45
Played on the chordomonica, key of E major.
- 25. Spoken introduction. 1:42
- 26. **Three Irish Double Jigs: The Ruins of Killmallock/
The Glens of Mayo/Daniel O'Connell.** 1:58
Played on the chordomonica, key of C major.
- 27. About the pipe harmonica. 1:34
- 28. **The Glendy Burke** (Stephen Foster) 1:16
Played on the pipe harmonica, key of G major.

Here is a diagram of the two pipe harmonicas that Sam plays on this recording, invented by his friend Ted Folsom. The tuning is the same as the standard diatonic harmonica tuning except that holes two and three blow are lowered two half-steps. This, coincidentally, is the same tuning that the great harmonica player and inventor Rick Epping devised to play in the first position (as Sam does) and to play in the third position (as Rick often does) in the Dorian mode, with the first hole draw as the root bass note.

Tunings of the Pipe Harmonicas – notes tuned down from the Standard harmonica tuning are in red:

THE BARITONE PIPE HARMONICA IN KEY OF G

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Blow	G	B	D	G	B	D	G	B	D	G
Draw	A	C	E	A	C	E	F#	A	C	E

THE SOPRANO PIPE HARMONICA IN KEY OF C

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Blow	C	E	G	C	E	G	C
Draw	D	F	A	B	D	F	A

- 29. **Farewell to Whiskey** – Irish air. 1:31
Played on the pipe harmonica, key of G major.
(This song is also featured as part of a medley on disc one, track 58.)
- 30. Spoken introduction. 0:06
- 31. **Some Folks Do** (Stephen Foster) 1:15
Played on the pipe harmonica, key of G major.
- 32. Spoken introduction. 0:23
- 33. **Cloone Hornpipe** (*Crannciuil Cluain*) - Irish hornpipe. 1:49

Note how in the lowest octave of the harmonica how Sam bends the hole three draw note, which is the major seventh note of the scale, bending it down after playing the major seventh note to also get the sixth note of the major scale, which is not available on the lowest octave without bending it. A bend is produced on five of the draw notes by drawing in the breath in a certain way to lower the note a semitone or more, as well as three of the blow notes.

Diatonic harmonica, key of C major.

As Rick Epping explained in the Spring/Summer 2003 issue of Hohner’s Easy Reeding newsletter: “Bending is accomplished by partially isolating the air in your mouth cavity from the rest of the vocal tract and adjusting its resonant frequency to that of the desired bent note. The back of your tongue is raised up against the palate in the same way you change the mouth’s vowel shape to make the sounds from AHH to EEE, without actually vocalizing. The tongue is then slid backward or forward to a position that will pull down the pitch of the unbent note being played. High-pitched notes are bent with the back of your tongue placed toward the front of the mouth and lower notes are bent with your tongue farther back.

“For example, the 4-blow C reed on a regular key of C harmonica, being two semitones below the 4-draw D reed, enables the D draw note to be bent down a little more than a semitone. The 5-draw F note, however, cannot be bent a complete semitone, because the 5-blow E reed is only one semitone lower than the 5-draw F reed. Furthermore, the notes of the lower pitched reeds in any reed cell, that is, 1 through 6 blow and 7 through 10 draw, are prevented by the higher pitched reeds in their cells from significantly bending at all. Thus, on a standard diatonic harmonica, the following notes may be played through bending”:

Standard diatonic harmonica, Key of C:

Hole	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Blow bend										a#3
Blow bend								d#3	f#3	b3
Blow note	c1	e1	g1	c2	e2	g2	c3	e3	g3	c4
Draw note	d1	g1	b1	d2	f2	a2	b2	d3	f3	a3
Draw bend	c#1	f#1	a#1	c#2		g#2				
Draw bend		f1	a1							

Draw bend			g#1							
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Incidentally, Rick Epping's wonderful invention for the Hohner Company of his XB-40 Harmonica overcomes these limitations by allowing *all* of the 10 blow and 10 draw notes to be bent.

<http://www.hohnerusa.com/hdiatonic.htm>

- 34. Spoken introduction. 0:21
- 35. **Hull's Victory** - New England hornpipe. 0:59
Played on the chordomonica, key of E major.
- 36. Spoken introduction. 0:24
- 37. **Rickett's Hornpipe** – British Isles/American hornpipe. 1;12
Note the beautiful 6th intervals at the end of the verses, with the notes A and the higher F together, then C and the higher A together, then A and F together again.
Diatonic harmonica, key of F major.
- 38. **Rickett's Hornpipe** - British Isles/American hornpipe. 1:05
On this rendition, at the end of the verses Sam plays beautiful C and F chords, similar to the way he does it on the diatonic harmonica on the previous track, except that the full F chord is available on the chordomonica.
Played on the chordomonica, key of C major.
- 39. Spoken introduction. 0:30
- 40. **Hick's Hornpipe** - Irish hornpipe. 1:03
This version features beautiful counterpoint melody in the chorus, with two melodic lines played at once.
Diatonic harmonica, key of A major.
- 41. Spoken introduction. 0:41
- 42. **Harvest Home** - British Isles/American hornpipe. 1:11
Diatonic harmonica, key of F major.
(Sam plays this song on the pennywhistle on disc two, track 45.)
- 43. Spoken introduction. 0:53
- 44. **The Eighth of January** - Old-time American breakdown. 1:01
Diatonic harmonica, key of G major.
- 45. Spoken introduction. 0:33
- 46. **Putty Up the Nail Holes** (Sam Hinton) 1:14
American harmonica hoedown.
Diatonic harmonica, key of A major.
- 47. Spoken introduction. 0:42
- 48. **Liverpool Hornpipe** (*Crannciuil Liberpuil*) 1:11
British Isles/American hornpipe.
Diatonic harmonica, key of A major.
- 49. Spoken introduction. 0:24
- 50. **Au Clair De la Lune** (*Tune of the Moon*) - French folksong. 1:16

- This version features some beautiful octaves and other voicings in verse two, and some counterpoint melody at the end of verse three.
Diatonic harmonica, key of A major.*
51. Spoken introduction. 0:37
52. **Bobby Shaftoe** – English reel. 0:40
*Listen for the stride bass in verse two, and in verse three for the beautiful voicings, as well as the drone note on the 5th note of the scale. This is the G note on the C diatonic harmonica -- which is played on both the hole two draw and the hole three blow.
Diatonic harmonica, key of C major.
(See also, notes about “Bonaparte’s Retreat” on disc two, track 36).*
53. Spoken introduction. 1:24
54. **Lonesome Train** - American old-time country. 1:59
*This song features the melody and rhythmic chords, when Sam is playing in the first position (key of A). In the second position (key of E), he bends the hole three draw note, G#, down to G to achieve the train-whistle effect.
Diatonic harmonica, key of A major.*
55. Spoken introduction. 0:46
56. **Roll Her on the Rye Grass** – Irish reel. 1:52
Diatonic harmonica, key of A flat major.
57. Spoken introduction. 2:20
58. **Morality Play in Four Tune Titles:** 3:42
Whiskey Before Breakfast (Old-time American breakdown)/**Whiskey, You’re the Devil** (Irish hornpipe)/**Farewell to Whiskey** (Scottish strathspey) /**Teetotaler’s Fancy** aka: **Temperance Reel** (Irish reel).
*Played on the chordomonica, key of G major.
(Sam also plays “Farewell to Whiskey” on the pipe harmonica on CD #1, track 29.)*
59. Spoken introduction. 2:06
60. **Medley of Three Gospel Songs:** 2:45
Beautiful River (Robert Lowrey)/**Are You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?** (Elijah Albright Hoffman)/**God Be with You till We Meet Again** (Jeremiah Rankin & William Tomer).
*Played on the chordomonica, key of C major.
Note the moving bass lines, and the beautiful 10th intervals between the bass and melody notes in the verses of “God Be with You...”*

STUDIO RECORDINGS – DISC TWO

1. Spoken introduction. 2:29
2. **German Folk Song Medley:** 2:04
Balt Grass Ich Am Neckar/Drunten Im Unterland/Fasching Tune/Ach, Du Lieber Augustin/Fasching Tune/Besitz Und Bildung/ Fasching Tune
Played on the chordomonica

Note the beautiful counterpoint melody in “Besitz Und Bildung.”

Key of G major.

- | | |
|---|------|
| 3. Spoken introduction. | 0:08 |
| 4. Ach, Du Lieber Augustin - German folksong. | 0:55 |
| <i>This rendition has Sam’s great stride harmonica playing, with the bass, chord and melody (also see “Haste to the Wedding”, disc 2, track 14.</i> | |
| <i>Key of D major.</i> | |
| 5. Spoken introduction. | 0:10 |
| 6. Bantry Bay - Irish hornpipe. <i>Played on the chordomonica.</i> | 1:08 |
| <i>Diatonic harmonica, key of G major.</i> | |
| 7. Spoken introduction. | 2:48 |
| 8. Merry-Go-Round Medley: | 8:48 |
| Turkey in the Straw (American Reel)/ Irish Washerwoman (Irish double jig)/ The Sidewalks of New York (Lawlor/Blake)/ Animal Fair (American folksong)/ Ten Little Indians (Old-time American breakdown)/ Alouette (French folksong)/ Bonaparte’s Retreat (American reel)/ Turkey in the Straw (American Reel). | |
| <i>Played on two pipe harmonicas – all the songs are in the key of G major pipe harmonica, except for “Animal Fair,” which is played on the C major pipe harmonica. (Also see the chart for the pipe harmonica tunings, disc 1, track 28).</i> | |

LIVE RECORDINGS

- | | |
|---|------|
| 9. Spoken introduction to concert recordings. | 0:43 |
| 10. Spoken introduction. | 4:37 |
| 11. Spoken introduction from 1977 concert. | 0:52 |
| 12. Mr. Tunstall’s Hoedown (Barker Tunstall) | 0:44 |
| Old-time American breakdown. | |
| Recorded Friday, April 22, 1977, San Diego Folk Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA. | |
| <i>This performance features a moving bass and chords with the melody. Note the rapid 16th notes in the bass line of the second verse (as he also does in the two versions of “Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be”, on disc 1, tracks 4 & 5).</i> | |
| <i>Diatonic harmonica, key of C major.</i> | |

Next is a series of songs (*tracks 13-28*) showing how Sam evolved his marvelous harmonica version of “Bonaparte’s Retreat.”

- | | |
|---|------|
| 13. Spoken introduction from 1974 concert. | 0:23 |
| 14. Haste to the Wedding – British Isles/American jig. | 0:46 |
| Recorded Sunday, April 28, 1974, San Diego Folk Festival, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA. | |
| <i>This is the premier example of Sam’s “stride bass” harmonica playing. The bass note is played with the left side of his mouth;</i> | |

melody is played on the right side. His tongue is blocking the holes in the middle of the harmonica, separating the bass and the melody -- and he's playing the middle rhythm chords on beats two and four of the measure, which sound when he lifts his tongue. Note the powerful effect when he stops playing the bass in the chorus and then brings it is again for the last verse. (Also see "Bobby Shaftoe" on disc 1, track 52).

Diatonic harmonica, key of Eb major.

15. **Fisher's Hornpipe** – English/American hornpipe. 0:50
 Recorded Sunday, April 28, 1974, San Diego Folk Festival,
 San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Played on the chordomonica, key of E major.
This version features the melody, chords, and occasional counterpoint melody.
(Sam also plays this song as a guitar and diatonic harmonica duet on disc two, track 39.)
16. Spoken introduction from 1974 concert. 0:16
17. **Swanee River** (Stephen Foster) - American folksong. 1:28
 Recorded Sunday, April 28, 1974, San Diego Folk Festival
 San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Played on the chordomonica, key of E major.
(Sam also plays this song using two harmonicas, on disc two, track 59.)
18. Spoken introduction. 1:03
19. **The Eagle's Whistle** (*Fead an Iolair*) - Irish march. 0:24
 Recorded Thursday, April 26, 1979, San Diego Folk Festival,
 Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Played on the six-string guitar, in the key of C major.
20. Spoken introduction from 1979 concert. 0:37
21. **The Eagle's Whistle** – Irish lullaby. 1:54
 Recorded Sunday, May 6, 1973, San Diego Folk Festival,
 Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Unaccompanied vocal, key of D.
22. **The Eagle's Whistle** - Irish lullaby. 2:15
 Recorded Thursday, October 11, 1984, San Diego Folk
 Festival, Old Globe Theater, Balboa Park, San Diego, CA.
Vocal with guitar accompaniment, key of D.
23. Spoken introduction from 1975 concert. 0:21
24. **The Eagle's Whistle** - Irish March. 0:44
 Recorded Wednesday, April 16, 1975, San Diego Folk
 Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University,
 San Diego, CA.
Played on the pennywhistle, key of B flat major.
25. Spoken introduction from 1974 concert. 0:21
26. **Bonaparte's Retreat** - American reel, Version one. 0:59
 Recorded Thursday, April 26, 1974, San Diego Folk Festival,
 San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

This performance features melody, rhythmic chords and, in the first and third verses, examples of Sam’s “drone note” invention. The drone note is achieved by tongue blocking the middle holes on the diatonic harmonica, while playing the 5th note of the scale on the low end -- on both the hole two draw note and the hole three blow note -- all while playing the melody on the right side of his mouth. The first and last verses have the melody mainly played with the 5th note drone, but also features a beautiful low sixth interval with the 3rd of the scale as the low note and the higher first note of the scale, which is played in between the fifth intervals with the lower 5th note of the scale with the higher 2nd note of the scale. This has the effect of baroque style trumpet voicings that were also used by the late jazz pianist Vince Guaraldi for the main melody of his famous composition “Linus & Lucy”. Also listen for the beautiful counterpoint melody and voicings in the second verse. Sam’s subtle yet powerful breathing technique pulses throughout this piece. Diatonic harmonica, key of Eb major.

Chart for the Standard Ten-Hole Diatonic Harmonica in the Key of E flat Major:

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
blow	E	G	<u>Bb</u>	Eb	G	Bb	Eb	G	Bb	Eb
draw	F	<u>Bb</u>	D	F	Ab	C	D	F	A	C

Chart for the Standard Ten-Hole Diatonic Harmonica in the Key of C Major for reference:

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
blow	C	E	<u>G</u>	C	E	G	C	E	G	C
draw	D	<u>G</u>	B	D	F	A	B	D	F	A

27. Bonaparte’s Retreat – Version two.

0:52

Recorded Wednesday, April 16, 1975, San Diego Folk Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

This version has the same structure as the previous version, and it has slightly different variations. Note the low bass note at the beginning of the

chorus, showing how Sam varies his pieces in different ways each time he plays them.

Diatonic harmonica, key of C# major.

Here is a chart for the standard diatonic harmonica in the key of C#, as played here:

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
blow	C#	F	Ab	C#	F	Ab	C#	F	Ab	C#
draw	Eb	Ab	C	Eb	G b	Bb	C	Eb	G b	Bb

28. Bonaparte's Retreat - Version three. 0:53

Recorded Sunday, March 8, 1987, Backdoor Coffee House, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

This version has the same basic structure as the previous two, except for the addition of a moving bass line in the third verse, and adding an extra verse at the end.

Diatonic harmonica, key of A major.

Here is a chart for the standard diatonic harmonica in the key of A, as played here:

Hole #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
blow	A	C #	E	A	C #	E	A	C #	E	A
draw	B	E	G #	B	D	F #	G #	B	D	F#

29. Spoken introduction. 0:12

30. Texas Gales - Old-time American breakdown. 1:07

Recorded Thursday, April 20, 1972, San Diego Folk Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

Played on the chordomonica, key of C major.

LIVE HARMONICA AND GUITAR DUETS

31. About playing guitar and harmonica at the same time. 1:03

32. Spoken introduction. 1:04

33. Spoken introduction from 1975 concert. 0:35

34. Arkansas Traveler - American reel. 3:37

Recorded Wednesday, April 16, 1975, San Diego Folk Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University,

San Diego, CA.

Played on the piccolo diatonic harmonica, with guitar accompaniment and vocal the key of C major.

Key of C major.

35. **Arkansas Traveler** – American reel. 0:45
 Recorded Sunday, May 6, 1973, San Diego Folk Festival, Peterson’s Gymnasium, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Played on the piccolo diatonic harmonica, with guitar accompaniment and vocal the key of G major.
36. **Hog on the Mountain** – American reel. 1:39
 Recorded Saturday, May 13, 1967, San Diego Folk Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Played on the piccolo diatonic harmonica, with guitar accompaniment in the key of C major, capoed up five frets to sound in the key of F.
37. **Chicken Reel** - American reel. 0:43
 Recorded Friday, April 22, 1977, San Diego Folk Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA
Played on the piccolo diatonic harmonica, with guitar accompaniment, in the key of F major, with the guitar fingered in the key of C major and capoed up five frets to sound in the key of F.
38. **The Downfall of Paris** (*Ceimsios Parais*) - Irish set dance. 1:26
 Recorded Thursday, April 26, 1979, San Diego Folk Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Played on the piccolo diatonic harmonica with guitar accompaniment in the key of C major.
(Sam also plays this song on the diatonic harmonica on disc one, track 7.)
39. **Fisher’s Hornpipe** – English/American. 0:41
 Recorded Wednesday, October 10, 1984, song-swap, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Played on the piccolo diatonic harmonica, with guitar accompaniment, in the key of E major, with the guitar fingered in the key of C major and capoed up five frets to sound in the key of E.
(Sam also plays this song on the chordomonica on disc two, song 15.)
40. Spoken introduction. 0:21

LA PALOMA THEATER CONCERT, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, DECEMBER 1985

41. About playing counterpoint melodies on the harmonica. 0:33
 42. Spoken introduction from 1985 concert. 0:23
 43. **Simple Gifts** - American Shaker hymn. 1:21

This performance features some “stride bass” harmonica playing on the melody with bass and chords in the first and third verses, and Sam’s beautiful invention of using counterpoint melody – played here in the second verse of the second verse.

Diatonic harmonica, key of B major.

44. Spoken introduction from 1985 concert. 0:36
45. **Champion of the Seas** (*Harvest Home*) 0:49
 British Isles/ American hornpipe.
Played on the pennywhistle, key of Bb major.
(Sam plays this song on the diatonic harmonica on disc one, track 42.)
46. Spoken introduction from 1985 concert. 0:59
47. **Old Christmas** - Old-time American breakdown. 0:47
Played on the pennywhistle, on a whistle in the key of B major, and in the key of F# mixolydian mode (with the seventh note of the scale flatted.) This is much like playing a B major diatonic harmonica in the key of F# (or, similarly, like playing a C major diatonic harmonica in the key of G).
48. Spoken introduction from 1985 concert. 0:22
49. **Christmas Eve** - Irish air. 0:56
Played on a homemade flute Sam made from a stick of bamboo, in the key of Ab major.
50. Spoken introduction. 1:14

LIVE PERFORMANCES OF SIMULTANEOUS SOLO WHISTLING AND HUMMING

51. **Freres Jacques Round** - French folksong. 0:43
 Recorded Thursday, April 22, 1982, San Diego Folk Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Sam hums one part of the round while simultaneously whistling the other, in the key of C# major.
52. Spoken introduction from 1973 concert. 0:50
53. **Yankee Doodle/Dixie** – American folksongs. 0:17
 Recorded Sunday, May 6, 1973, San Diego Folk Festival, Montezuma Hall, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.
Sam hums one American folksong while simultaneously whistling the other, in the key of A major.

“MAJOR BOWES ORIGINAL AMATUER HOUR” LIVE RADIO BROADCAST THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 1937, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

54. About touring with the Major Bowes Units. 1:55
55. Spoken introduction. 2:46
56. Conversation from 1937 broadcast. 1:18
57. **Twelfth Street Rag** (Edward L. Bowman) / **Polly Wolly Doodle** 0:53

*Played on the diatonic harmonica in the key of C major, with Sam's own accordion accompaniment, as well as piano accompaniment.
Key of C major.*

58. Conversation from 1937 broadcast. 0:13
59. **Swanee River** (Stephen Foster) 1:04
*Played using two diatonic harmonicas in the keys of C major and F major, with piano accompaniment.
This is the first recorded example of Sam's "stride bass" harmonica playing, where he is playing the bass, rhythm chord, and melody at the same time.
(Sam also plays this on the chordomonica on disc two, track 17.)*
60. Conversation from 1937 broadcast. 0:18
61. **La Paloma** (Sebastian de Iradier y Salaverri) 0:52
Played on the ukelin with piano accompaniment, in the key of C major.
62. Conversation from 1937 broadcast. 0:58
63. **Nola** (Felix Arndt) 1:09
Played on the pennywhistle with piano accompaniment, in the key of F major.
64. Conversation from 1937 broadcast. 0:26

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CREDITS

Produced by [George Winston](#) and [Adam Miller](#)

Studio Tracks Recorded by Dan de la Isla at DLI Productions in Pacific Beach, California.

Mixed and Mastered by Howard Johnston, assisted by Justin Lieberman, Jon Meyer, Colin Gradek, and Matt Silveira.

Photography by Peter Figen.

CD Graphic Design by [Ivan Stiles](#), Graphic Design & Illustration.

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Liner notes by [Adam Miller](#), with technical assistance by [George Winston](#).

Editorial assistance by Chris Orrall

www.Samhinton.org/harmonica

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DISCOGRAPHY

SAM HINTON DISCOGRAPHY

IN PRINT:

Bear Family Records BCD 16383 AH (Germany)
The Library of Congress Session (1947)
<http://www.bear-family.de/>

Smithsonian/Folkways Records FA-2400
The Song of Men (1961)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/>

Smithsonian/Folkways Records FA-7530
Whoever Shall Have Some Good Peanuts (1961)
Traditional folk songs for children
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/>

Smithsonian/Folkways Records FA-2401
The Wandering Folksong (1967)
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/>

Smithsonian/Folkways Records FA-7548
I'll Sing You A Story (1972)
Traditional folk songs for children
<http://www.folkways.si.edu/>

Sam Hinton Enterprises G-1
From an East Texas Childhood (1986)
Folk songs Sam learned in East Texas before 1935
www.samhinton.org

Sam Hinton Enterprises C-1
Of Frogs and Dogs and Such (1991)
Songs kids like!
www.samhinton.org

Sam Hinton Enterprises G-2
'Tis the Season (1992)
Traditional songs of the Winter Holidays
www.samhinton.org

Sam Hinton Enterprises
Midwinter Holiday Concert (1992)
Live holiday concert featuring Sam and Johnny Walker
www.samhinton.org

Bowmar 1711
Folksongs of California and the Old West (1951)

Decca DL-8108
Singing Across the Land (1955)

Decca DL-8418
A Family Tree of Folksongs (1956)

Decca DL-8579
The Real McCoy (1957)

RCA Victor 6070
How the West Was Won (1960)
Sam sings eight songs

Vanguard VRS 9144
The 1963 Newport Folk Festival, Volume One
Sam sings one song

Vanguard VRS 9148
The 1963 Newport Folk Festival, Volume Two
Sam sings three songs

Time-Life Publishers
The Life History of the United States – The Sounds of History (1963)
Record One: The New World Pre-history – 1774
(Sam sings one song with Salli Terry)

Philo 1028
Good Time Music (1972)
1962 National Folk Festival at Wolftrap Farm National Park, Virginia

Public Radio Station KPBS 101
San Diego Folk Festival 1974
Sam plays four songs on harmonica and *chordomonica*

National Geographic Society, American Adventure Series.
Cowboy Songs (1976)
Sam sings three songs

1949 (released 1950)

Recorded 16 songs for ABC Eagle Records in Los Angeles, California

ABC 230 (Re-issued as Columbia Records 38929 in 1950)

Old Man Atom

Long John

“Old Man Atom” has been re-issued on Bear Family Records (Germany) BCD 16065 “Atomic Platters: Cold War Music from the Golden Age of Homeland Security.”

ABC 231

This Morning This Evening So Soon

Old Blue

ABC 232

Beer for the Privates

When We Gonna Marry / There Was An Old Soldier

ABC 233

Barnyard Song

Three Foolish Piglets

ABC 234

Night Herding Song

Goodbye, Old Paint

ABC 235

Frankie and Johnnie

Gambler's Blues / Our Goodman

ABC 236

Groundhog

Boll Weevil

1952

The Barnyard Song, Decca K-79, Children's Series 78 & 45 rpm, 3 songs

Three Little Pigs

The Barnyard Song

Crawdad Song

1953

Country Critters, Decca K-125, Children's Series 78, 4 songs

Later reissued as 45 rpm record, Decca L-6544

Crow Song
Tune the Old Cow Died On
Twenty Froggies
Night Owls (by Sam Hinton)

1954

The Frog Song, Decca Children's Series L-222, Children's Series 78, 4 songs
Later reissued as 45 rpm record Decca 9-88135

The Frog Song
The Green Leaves Grew Around

1955

The Greatest Sound Around (Story Song)
Decca Children's Series K-129, Parts One and Two, 78 & 45 rpm
Words and music by Susan Otto and William Mayer.
Later reissued as 45 rpm record, Decca 9-88166

1960

All Time Hootenany Folk Favorites, Volume 2, Decca DL-4485, 12" Lp
(Contains recording previously issued on 'Family Tree of Folksongs. Other performers on this record: The Weavers, Josh White, The Gateway Singers, The Osborne Brothers, Bill Monroe, Ivy League Trio, The Tarriers, Bob Gibson, the Wilburn Brothers, Tompall and the Glaser Brothers.

BOOKS BY AND ABOUT SAM HINTON

["Seashore Life of Southern California"](#)

University of California Press, 2002, by Sam Hinton

"A Handful of Songs" by Adam Miller

"A Naturalist in Show Business – or I Helped Kill Vaudeville" by Sam Hinton
Autobiography of Sam Hinton, by Adam Miller (unpublished)

INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO

Sam also appears in [a 60-minute instructional DVD on YouTube](#) in which he teaches his original harmonica techniques.

BONUS TRACKS AND AUDIO LIFE STORIES

Bonus tracks:

1. ***Muleskinner Blues*** (vocals & harmonica)
2. ***Eagle's Whistle*** (vocals & guitar) – from 1963
3. Introduction (to Bonaparte's Retreat) - from 1963
4. ***Bonaparte's Retreat*** (harmonica) – from 1963
5. ***Hog On the Mountain*** (harmonica and guitar)
6. ***Hog On the Mountain*** (harmonica and guitar)
7. ***Harvest Home/ Off to California*** (on pennywhistle) - [even though he says the second song is "Whiskey You're The Devil"]
8. ***Temperance Reel*** (on the chordomonica) - at the San Diego Folk Festival on April 25, 1975, when Sam was the MC for the Sunday morning concert
9. ***Going On the Mountain*** (aka ***Sowing On the Mountain***) - from the Lou Curtiss Collection

Life Stories:

1. Sam's Grandfather (5:09)
2. Sam's Family (3:18)
3. Tulsa in 1923/Jenkins Music Store (2:43)
4. The Strand Theatre (3:14)
5. Sam's Washburn Guitar (1:44)
6. Harmonica Player First (1:08)
7. Irish musician and song collector Chief O'Neil (4:36)