

The Depression Blues

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As with Ken Hamm's "Fishing Grounds," one might argue that "The Depression Blues" is a rag rather than a blues, but Mance Lipscomb, of Navasota, Texas, or Tampa Red, of Atlanta and Chicago, would have had no trouble playing along with it, and Sonny Rhodes (the Berkeley-based "Ayatollah of Rock-and-Rollah") quickly sat down to sing it on Johnny V.'s recent CD, *If Daddy Could See Me Now* (Blow Your Top Productions 71391, available from Festival Records—make your local dealer stock it!). Guitar tracks on the cut were by Johnny himself, who

was careful to recreate the sound he and his father made together in the old days. The CD was nominated for a Juno, Blues and Gospel category, in 1996, and "The Depression Blues" was named Best Blues Song by *Real Blues* magazine in the same year.

We hope to feature a reminiscence from Johnny in a future issue, to share his memories of the rich musical environment in which he grew up.

Verse:

It was back in the thir-ties news was all a-round, Old Man De-pres-sion
 just rolled in to town. Thou-sands of peo-ple felt the pinch and the squeeze, To
 have then and to have not brought the na-tion to its knees. De - pres-sion, De - pres-
 -sion, stay a-way from my door. I know you from old, you've been here be-fore
 You've made my kids hun-gry, and you made me a thief. I got
 pinched twen-ty times, and then I went on re - lief. *DC*

It was back in the Thirties, news was all around,
 Old man Depression had just rolled into town.
 Thousands of people felt the pinch and the squeeze,
 To have then & to have not brought the nation to its knees

Hard luck and no job, no time for the poor.
 Those who had plenty kicked you from the door.
 Boxcars were loaded, and the jails were just as full.
 Those who were getting fed were those were the ones who had
 pull.

"Work for five good men," I heard the pit boss say.
 There must have been 300 good men there that day.
 I was number three, things were looking fat,
 And, oh, by the way, have you seen the neighbor's cat?

Late in the evening, and my kids were all in bed.
 I was gnawing and chewing on an old crust of bread.
 The bread it was hard, but eat it, I vowed,
 'Cause when you are hungry, your stomach's not proud

Chorus

Depression, Depression, stay away from my door.
 I know you from old, you've been here before.
 You made my kids hungry, & you made me a thief.
 I got pinched twenty times, and then I went on relief.