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**AVAILABLE NOW**

*Roosevelt Sykes*

**BLUES**

**THE HONEYDRIPPER**

**Classic Blues Recordings**

Roosevelt Sykes, born in Elmar, Arkansas, on 31 January 1906, was a graduate of the barrelhouse circuit. In the late 1920s he was in St Louis working with Lonnie Johnson's wife Mary, among others, and in the 1930s was based in Chicago.

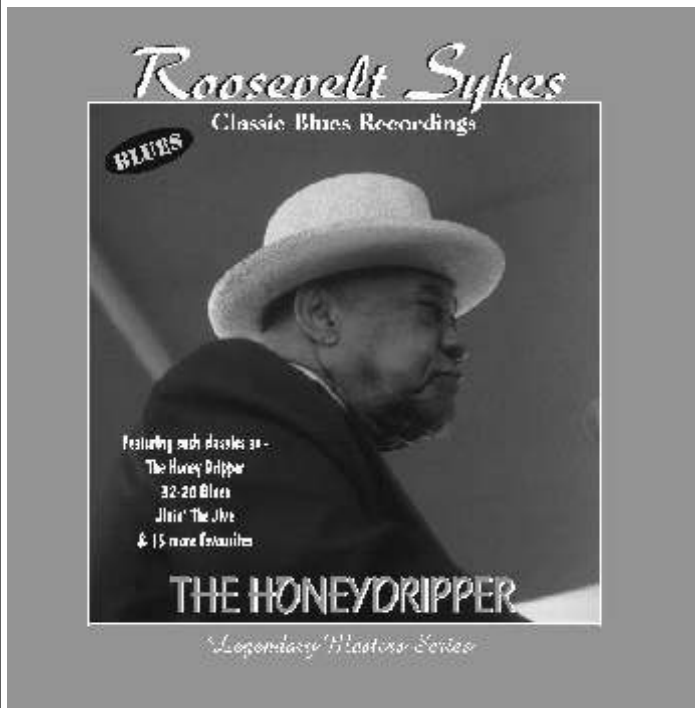
There was absolutely nothing downbeat about this roly-poly, effervescent pianist (nicknamed "Honeydripper" for his youthful prowess around the girls), whose lengthy career spanned the pre-war and postwar eras with no interruption whatsoever. Sykes's romping boogies and hilariously risqué lyrics included 'Dirty Mother for You,' 'Ice Cream Freezer,' and 'Peeping Tom', characterising his monumental contributions to the blues. He was a pioneering piano-pounder responsible for the pieces such as '44" Blues,' 'Driving Wheel,' and 'Night Time Is the Right Time.'

Sykes began playing while growing up in Helena. At age 15, he hit the road, developing his rowdy barrelhouse style around the blues-fertile St. Louis area and started recording in 1929. After relocating to Chicago, Sykes signed up with Bluebird in 1943 and recorded prolifically for the RCA subsidiary with his combo, the Honeydrippers, scoring a pair of R&B hits in 1945 (covers of Cecil Gant's 'I Wonder' and Joe Liggins's 'The Honeydripper'). Following on with 'Sunny Road', he also often toured and recorded with singer St. Louis Jimmy Oden.

In 1951, Sykes joined Chicago's United Records, cutting more fine sides over the next couple of years. In 1955 he released a rollicking version of 'Sweet Home Chicago'. A slew of albums for Bluesville, Folkways, Crown, and Delmark kept Sykes on the shelves during the 1960s. Eventually, he moved back south to New Orleans where he died in 1983.

Precious few pianists could boast the thundering boogie prowess of Roosevelt Sykes, and, even fewer could chase away the blues with his blues as the rotund cigar-chomping 88's ace did.

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