

KOKOMO BLUES

I heard a version of this old song from Chris Aliffe who played guitar with Jacqui McShee in the sixties before Pentangle came together. Where he got it from I don't know. It may have been from a recording by Jim 'Kokomo' Arnold made in the early thirties.

The story is that Arnold was a bootlegger who was more interested in selling his moonshine than spending time in the studio recording blues. But he was a great singer and slide player none the less. Kokomo is a town in Indiana that had a reputation for hospitality during the prohibition era. It was known as the 'eleven light city' and would have been a good stop off point for musicians coming up from the south on their way to Chicago.

In his song 'Old Original Kokomo Blues' Arnold sings about 'that eleven light city --- sweet old Kokomo' and it appears that he got his name by association with that recording which was very popular at the time. Arnold's playing had a big influence on subsequent bluesmen to get recorded, not least Robert Johnson, and the song provided the blueprint for Johnson's immortal 'Sweet Home Chicago.'

Well' that's the story. As it is here it is probably practically unrecognizable. The verses are made up mostly of 'floaters' and the guitar accompaniment is played in open-g tuning --DGDGBD-- capo'd at the second fret. The right hand thumb maintains a solid, partially damped, bass and at the change to the IV chord at bar nine the middle finger brushes down across the treble strings --a bit like old-time banjo playing.

I don't think I have a straight acoustic version record but there is one with bass, drums and wah-wah on the Faro Annie cd which should be listed on the discography link.

John Renbourn 2004

kokomo blues

Guitar

DGDGBD



T
A
B

First system of musical notation. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Below the staff, there are three lines of text labeled T, A, and B, representing different parts or instruments. The text contains numerical values and musical symbols (e.g., 0, 0, 0, 2, 3, 2, 0, 3, 0, 1, 0, 2, 2, 0, 3, 0, 2).

Second system of musical notation. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The bottom staff is a bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals.

Below the staff, there are three lines of text labeled T, A, and B, representing different parts or instruments. The text contains numerical values and musical symbols (e.g., 0, 5, 3, 0, 3, 2, 0, 2, 0, 0, 0, 3, 0, 0, 3, 0).

vocal line

Ko-ko-mo me Ba-by Ko-ko-mo me right Ko-ko-mo your dad-dy

like to mor-row night don't you hear me crying ba-by dont ya want to

go down to that 'leven - light - ci-ty sweet old - Ko - ko

mo.

If you don't want me woman you don't have to stall
I can get more women than a passenger train can haul
Don't you hear me crying 'Baby don't you want to go
Down to that eleven light city -- sweet old Kokomo'

I went down to the station, I looked up on the wall
Said there's good times here but they're better on down the road

Went down to the station, looked up on the wall
My money was too light didn't go no place at all

Don't want no other lover, guess I never will
A lover's proposition's gonna get somebody killed