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Exclusive! ERIC CLAPTON
plus: Kenny Neal and Brian Knight

TALKIN' BLUES

BRITISH BLUES



Facts are facts, however difficult they may be to obtain. That Sunnyland Slim outlived our premature attempt to publish a respectful obituary, is a fact. Such a fact is easier to confirm in these days of modern telecommunications, than those facts which have to be dug out from the past. Facts of this kind are subject, directly or indirectly, to individual perception, to individual memory and to individual bias. To discern the facts, under such circumstances, requires an omnipotence which is beyond us mortals. The fact is... we can only try to discover the facts as nearly as possible, and where possible. Which brings us to one of the aims of this magazine.

When people started playing the blues in this country, they did so without any further motive than a love and admiration for the original American music and performers. Certainly, there was little, if any, belief that the music in it's British form, would spread beyond its small groups of enthusiasts. For that reason at least, the incentive to record, make notes, write down dates, keep names - all the various ways of agreeing the facts - was mostly absent from the coterie of blues enthusiasts in the early days. Without such confirmed evidence, we can only establish the probable facts of who did what, when, where, why, and with whom. Even to do that years after the events, requires that we get as many accounts as possible of the early days of the blues scene in Britain. Invariably, some of these will differ in detail. What was remarkable to one person may have been insignificant to another. We hope, over the course of time, to get as many of these accounts as possible.

Which is not to say that we are concerned only with what happened

the day before yesterday... or was it the day before that... or last week... last month? Last year? Well some-time ago, certainly.... We can't take ourselves too seriously for too much of the time. We can't even start sorting the facts about the present - day blues scene, until we get them from wherever they are being established, but we can do our best, with the continuing help of our contributors, our readers, our blues players and whoever else is involved. In this issue, we haven't intentionally ignored what is going on now, but even that requires time which is in short supply in this age. However, we will get around to that, as indeed we will get around to more accounts of the development of the British Blues Scene. Our contributors might even find the time to get their material in earlier, or is that wishful thinking? In referring earlier to modern telecommunications, I obviously didn't mean the Postal system. That is a historical system which we have to rely on, though it is often portrayed as being somewhat modern... more wishful thinking.

Of course, somewhere between the beginning and the present or future of British Blues, there was a considerable middle, even, dare we say it, an alternative scene which never got much written about in comparison with the commercially luckier people. But that's another story, one which we shall no doubt get around to as well.

One of the pleasurable discoveries that this magazine has brought about is that there is life outside London. We suspect there always has been.

Sorry, we'll have to stop now... we've got a gig to go to... if we can remember where it is... and which band we're in tonight...

ADVERTISERS PLEASE NOTE:

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Artwork should be in by 9th September.

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CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE NOTE:

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Letters

Dear B.B.R.

Thank you for your quick and informative letter, which I received a couple of weeks ago. I apologise for not writing sooner, as you will see I lead a reasonably hectic life style.

Reading your letter I see the first issue came out in April, hopefully my contribution will cover that edition as it sounds quite interesting. I am very interested in becoming a Network member for a few reasons, but mainly because I am a musician, writer and record collector. Which brings me to my reasons for not writing sooner.

I am working with a band called Smokehouse Brown (plug, plug) which seems to have an influx of gigs at the moment. As you can imagine, the band gets to play a lot round the Birmingham, Hereford and Worcestershire regions. We have just finished an open-air R&B festival in aid of 'Telethon 88'. It was held at Telford Town Park on the 30th May bank holiday weekend, which turned out to be a very wet occasion, sadly for the organisers and fans. Headliners were Tony McPhee's Groundhogs.

Anyway, back to the British Blues Review. Hope you have plenty of correspondence and plenty of sales, all the best for Network members.

Yours Rick Lambe,
Redditch.

Dear B.B.R.

Great stuff! count me in as a member. I play in a four piece band, Friday/Saturday night stuff, bass, drums, lead and me on harp, slide & vocals. Down here in Cornwall/Devon, we've also noticed a bit more interest, blues being well represented in the area, especially in Exeter and Plymouth. In fact on September 30th, we are booked to back the legendary (not to say infamous) Screamin' Lord Sutch at the Golden Lion, Ashburton, Devon, at the Annual General Meeting of the Monster Raving Loony Party!! Of course we're doing our own set as well - straight ahead blues only. If you want an article on the blues scene down here in the sticks, drop me a line, it's richer than you may think. Everywhere we play, you get the odd geezer who actually 'saw' Sonny Boy Williamson, or the original Yardbirds or, in the case of the above mentioned Golden Lion, the landlord, as well as being an avid record collector, is a former singer in Jeff Beck's first band (pre-Yardbirds) and toured with Sonny Boy, John Lee Hooker and Chuck Berry, (or so he say's!).

Any chance of an article on Billy Boy Arnold? - maybe Tony McPhee, from that Red Lightnin' album? (Checkin' it out).

Jeff Fuller,
Launceston.

Keep those letters coming in! We want to hear from your neck of the woods. What's going on out there? What do you think of B.B.Review? What would you like to see in future issues? Don't forget - we want to hear from YOU. Write to Letters, B.B.Review, 41 Bramley Road, London W10 6SZ.

Calling All Blues Bands!

Why not send us your gig guide - we'll try to include it in B.B.Review's listings. Don't forget we'll need the info by the 19th August. Wherever your gig's are in Britain, we want to know about them! Send details to BANDS, Gig Guide, B.B.Review, 41 Bramley Road, London W10 6SZ.

Jo Ann Kelly: Part Three

The third and final part of the Jo Ann Kelly feature has been held over until the next issue (October). Other articles and features have also been held back. We apologise to all concerned.

Got a guitar to sell? Need a new amp - or a new bass player? Or maybe you want to swap albums. For 6p per word you can advertise in the forthcoming classified section. Send cheque or postal order, with your ad to British Blues Review, Classified, 41 Bramley Road, London W10 6SZ.

What's the Blues news in your area? Is there a lively scene where you live? Lot's of bands, lot's of venues, or just a great record shop where they really know how to look after their blues customers? Why not write to us at B.B.Review so we can spread the word. Send to Blues News, B.B.Review, 41 Bramley Road, London W10 6SZ.

- ERRATUM -

* In issue One, the Bass player with 'Duster Bennet' was Tony Mills, NOT Tony Williams.

* In issue Two, Gerod should read Jerod.

THE TWELFTH BAR...



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KENNY

T: "May I welcome you to the UK."

K: "Thank you."

T: "And thank you for granting us an interview for *British Blues Review*. I'd like to say what a stunning performance you gave the other evening. It was your first performance here and we're going to nickname you 'Mr. Dynamite' after such a stunning thing."

K: "Oh good."

T: "But in your own words, of the other night, I wonder if in the interview we can go way down in the alley and you can go right back to the beginning so we can learn where you started and how you started. So you were born in New Orleans."

K: "Yeah I was raised in Baton Rouge, with my father playing music."

T: "So what age did you move to Baton Rouge?"

K: "Well immediately, when I was two months old. My birth place is about sixty six miles south of Baton Rouge. That was one of the bigger hospitals back in 1957, so that's where most people would go to deliver their children."

T: "And were you one of a large family?"

K: "Oh yeah, I'm the eldest of ten."

T: "That's a big family."

K: "Seven boys and three girls in my family."

T: "That's quite a handful."

K: "I'm telling you I don't know how my parents put up with all that noise around them because everybody plays music around there."

T: "So we're going to see other Neals on the way?"

K: "For sure! I'm just trying to lay a foundation down right now, but they'll definitely be over."

T: "Are they all into Blues music?"

K: "Yeah, they're all playing the blues. As a matter of fact I have one brother who has been with James Cotton for the last three, four years, Noel Neal, he's living in Chicago, and another brother Gralon, who is on my album playing drums; he's with Fenton Robinson doing a few jobs around. He's been with him for a year or so. The rest of my brothers are at home working with my father in Baton Rouge. Once I get things rolling here then I'll come back with the Neal family."

T: "A big band. That's some pedigree it really is. Can I ask you... when you were little, obviously because your father was a musician, you must have heard other blues musicians of the area and perhaps they even came to your house?"

K: "Oh yeah, like Rudolph Richard, James Johnson, Roy Lee Shepherd, they had a guy by the name Chewing gum... Whispering Smith..."

T: "I remember Whispering Smith, I had records of him."

K: "We lost him a couple of years ago, and the strangest thing about him was he was supposed to play the Blues



(Photo: Angela Morse)

interviewed by TOP TOPHAM

Festival at four o'clock and he died at the same time they scheduled him to play at the festival. He was real close to the family. My father's like really well known down in the South and all the blues guys who came up with him... he must have been a nice gentleman... because everybody still relates and comes back to the family and feels at home and we're all like one big family with all the old Slim Harpo musicians. They're always coming to the house enjoying themselves and playing guitars and we sit around the yard and play you know. So it's one big happy family."

T: "And when you were smaller can you remember the kind of records you used to play?"

K: "Yeah when I was smaller, oh man I hate to say this but I used to play frisbie with John Lee Hooker '78s, BB King '78s. I didn't know man. We used to get out on the football field and play frisbie with it you know. Now I have the records."

T: "It's about £50 a time!"

K: "As I got older I thought about it. We used to have these old gramophones. Matter of fact I still have one of them and my friend gave me a Christmas present about four or five years ago in

NEAL

Toronto, when I was living there, he gave me this old "School Days" Chuck Berry '78. I didn't realise how much they were worth now, and I started to think about when I used to play frisbie with BB King's first record. But we had them all around in those days and I was a kid and didn't know any better, so I was more excited on seeing the way they was flying through the air."

T: "It's funny you should talk about that record... do you remember the reverse side of it?"

K: "BB?"

T: "School Days."

K: "Oh man I got it, I can't think. It's... I can't remember the flip side of it."

T: "It might have been different in the States..."

K: "I can't remember the reverse side of it, but I have it."

T: "Was it Mad Lad?"

K: "No it was more like a 'Raining In My Heart' type of song."

T: "Yes it would have been different from the English one which was a slow slide blues... which he made a few of."

K: "I was surprised at what they're worth now, we had tons of that thing, had enough to play with."

T: "So I suppose one of the record labels you would have come across at times would have been Excello?"

K: "Excello yeah... Peacock. You know! My dad used to record on Excello. Matter of fact I met a guy here I did an interview with, he had my dad's 45 from 1959 and I've been searching for one for years. I'm trying to find it so I can take it home and frame it. If I see this record I'll go 'That's my dad's record, I want it.' but they won't turn them loose. I found two guys so far that have the record."

T: "We'll have to see if we can follow that up. I have the old original Slim Harpo Excello LP: 'Raining In My Heart'."

K: "I have an Aunty back home in Baton Rouge and she has all of them. All of his Excello recordings, also Guitar Kelly Excello recordings. Yeah she just kept them back from way back. But Slim Harpo, he was a great guy. He was a big guy too, I mean he could have easily have been a line-backer. Yeah he was like six something you know like two hundred and thirty pounds, but all muscle, no fat."

T: "You can't get that impression by looking at the photographs."

K: "Yeah he was a real big man."

T: "Well back in '69 he was due to come to England and I was working with Blue Horizon Records then and I was going to do an LP with him, and play guitar. And while I was in the studio at CBS, we had a phone call and he'd died."

K: "Yeah? Do you know how he died?"

T: "I don't... no."

K: "He was always into scrap metal. Even though this guy had a record out, but in Baton Rouge this guy had three or

...From Baton Rouge

four sugar cane trucks where, in the season for grinding the sugar cane, he would put all his trucks in to work for the plant. He would drive and have other guys drive and so, when the sugar cane season was over with, he put a different bed on the back of the truck and he would go to the scrap iron place and sell scrap iron. And he picked up on an engine block... a car engine block... and he bust a blood vessel in his stomach. Instead of going and checking it out, he thought he was just feeling bad and he laid down and slept overnight and he lost most of the blood. When they got to hospital with him, his wife said he woke up gagging and when they got there he had just lost too much blood. He was out there showing his strength, showing the guys he could pick up this engine block and he said 'Get out the way... watch this.' and he grabbed the engine block and put it in the truck."

T: "That's very sad isn't it."

K: "Yeah because he was on his way. I remember the days when Slim Harpo got up to making \$500 a night. That was a big thing around town. I remember my dad talking about it. 'You know Slim is making \$500 a night?' because 'Scratch My Back' had started to move, and it got better and better."

T: "Well 'Raining In My Heart'... People covered that here, and 'King Bee' of course, obviously was very good. I remember a number 'What A Dream', do you remember that? I loved that song."

K: "Oh yeah. What about 'Tee Na Nee Na Noo'. I think that was on the flipside of 'Scratch My Back'. Actually I used to like that record better than 'Scratch My Back'. And I remember when they used to play it on air when I was a kid. I used to sit there, right beside the radio and listen because I knew all the guys who were playing so I felt real close to the record, because I heard Rudolph and James Johnson and a guy by the name of Geese Ranson. He's from my home town where I was brought up. There were two brothers, Harry Ranson and Geese Ranson. Geese was playing bass on 'Scratch My Back'."

T: "Ah yes, because he mentions on the record, something about Rudolph... about playing the guitar... I remember that on one of the tracks."

K: "Well Geese was brought up in the same little town I was brought up in, Urbanville, West Baton Rouge. they're still out there playing in the church house right now. And the guy's not even aware how big the record has ever been. He just played on the record and he's a really calm guy, it don't even phase him you know."

T: "Do you ever remember Hop Wilson?"

K: "Hop Wilson... no."

T: "Hop, Hop, Hop!"

K: "No, you may have to ask my dad that one."

T: "I'm sure he knows him... he was a nice slide player. There was Lonesome Sundown, around at the time and Lightning Slim."

K: "Yeah, Slim came from a town called Tipedo, Louisiana; that's where he came from, and he died at a very early age - thirty three years old."

T: "He really burnt it out."

K: "Yeah. You know I guess certain people can handle success and some of them can't, because that's what happened, as soon as his record went big he just drunk himself out."

T: "Can I ask you about when you actually first started to play. I mean what you started to play?"

K: "Well my first song that I really thought I was playing was 'Tell Me What I Say' by Ray Charles, on the piano. My dad had brought a piano from the church house for about twenty five, thirty dollars. I think if I had had a portable piano I probably would have been playing today, but I could never take that big thing on the gigs. I started playing a string instrument, like the bass guitar."

T: "So obviously you were a bass guitarist and then that led you to a job with Junior Wells was it? Was that your first main job?"

K: "Yeah and Buddy Guy. Well for me it wasn't really a main thing, I mean it was a good break, but there's a guy by the name Bobby Powell back in Baton Rouge. He's a blind guy who played keyboards he did the 'CC Rider' and he did a bunch of real hits that did really well in the South and he's from Baton Rouge and when I took that job, well I thought that was..."

T: "How old were you?"

K: "I was about fifteen years old, because I was seventeen when I started with Buddy. So I must have started doing my gigs in clubs around twelve or thirteen. My dad used to take me and be responsible for it if a policeman would want to come in and check my ID or whatever, because it was totally illegal but I managed to do it. It helped around the house as well because you know with ten kids..."

T: "You were bringing in money."

K: "Yeah that's right, and if you get another guy to work for you that's more money because you have to pay him and he didn't have to pay me that much I mean... I really got my lesson. I used to come home crying at night to my mother, saying: 'he paid them guys more than I got'. That's when I got big enough to know what money was all about. I thought I deserved more money. Now I look back at it all, I understand what he was doing. He was just providing for the home. I think he probably was hoping he'd have three or four of us around so he could take the whole band out like he does now."

T: "That's a good earner."

K: "But he pays up now."

T: "So you had your first big break obviously with Buddy Guy and Junior Wells, and that presumably took you on tour all over."

K: "Yeah and the weirdest thing about that one is the first time I ever got on an aeroplane, I went to Europe for one day! It was Nancy, France - we played with Otis Rush and that was in 1976. I went for one day! I'd never been on a plane before so I flew from Chicago to New York, so that kinda eased me up a bit and then I had to get in the air for about six hours and I go 'Oh no'. And we flew over and got there early morning, checked into the hotel, played the gig about seven or eight that evening. Went back to the hotel, got some sleep and got back on the plane the very next morning."

T: "Oh no."

K: "So I would see my friends on the streets in Chicago and they would go 'Oh hey kiddy, how you doing?' and I'd go 'Oh I'm kinda jet lagged, I've been to Europe.' He'd say 'I just seen you the day before yesterday! You're putting me on.' So it was hard to convince him I'd really been to Europe."

T: "That's quite an experience."

K: "Yeah. I'd say just my luck."

T: "Were you happy playing with them?"

K: "Oh I was very happy. It opened up a whole other area to my sense of thinking about the music business, because you know, when you come from a small town, to get to the biggest club in town is reaching a goal... so you don't really think outside of Louisiana, or outside of Baton Rouge. You get kind of narrow minded about the whole business concept, because you're in a little world of your own, just playing around one town all your life. And so for me to get out there and really travel around and exactly see what's happening in the business - because I was only seventeen years old - to experience that then, I think that really helped me a lot - for my years like now, and my years to come, because I learned; it was a good experience for me to really check out: 'wait a minute... it's a really big world out there', and if you want to get a record out, you've got to move around, you've got to really get out there and sell it and not sit in one place."

T: "What I was amazed at when I first heard your record, and heard your voice, and then I met you, I found that your voice sounded much more mature, your singing voice, then when I met you I thought 'This guy's really young'. The voice is not like an old man, but like someone with experience."

K: "People come to my gigs and they go 'I thought you was a big old fat black guy... about sixty years old. What are you doing... you sure that's you?' I say: 'Yeah that's me, that's me.' They come there ▶

and expect totally the opposite.”

T: “But I guess that’s because you really started so young. That’s amazing.”

K: “So young, yeah. A lot of times it upset me when guys... when record companies... used to write back to me and say: ‘Well you’re not quite old enough’, and you know they figure just because I’m young, I’m not really playing the real blues. But they don’t realise, I’ve got over twenty seven years experience. I’ve been in it since I was... from day one.”

T: “It’s extraordinary. I was really heartened when I went to the States, it was fulfilling an ambition of many years and when I found there was blues in town, I was really overjoyed because you thought it had actually kind of died. But it hadn’t. It was really alive. But I realised that there’s a real big difference between the States and here. I mean as you know there’s been a lot of very sincere blues people in this country. A lot of sincere players and it’s obviously very different from us because our whole thing is the records.”

K: “You know, living in Canada, I found that as well. It’s like, being brought up in the South like that – because most of the musicians in Chicago are from Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas – I mean it’s just the South has migrated up to the centre part of the United States. But being brought up in the South under different conditions people sing it with the emotional feeling at the time. You get a guy who worked all day and barely made a pay check all week and he’s got an old guitar around, so he’ll pick it up and start banging on it and singing to where he feels inside, deep inside. And it’s kinda carried on... and being brought up around it, it’s hard... like the guys in Canada, they used to get the records from the South and then they would sit down and learn it exactly like the record. But it’s hard to duplicate somebody’s inner emotions, their inner feelings.”

T: “But that is actually the big difference between the white player and the black player. I mean its something... all I know is when I walked into your rehearsal on Sunday, you played these notes and I have to go ‘Yeah’ and whistle. I’ve immediately got it there... and one of the questions I was going to ask you... okay there’s a lot of players around, a lot of people have nice techniques, they’ve got all the licks... but you can listen to them for three hours and you don’t get one feeling in there. And yet you can get a guy that’s actually quite simple, but if he’s... I don’t know if it’s to do with suffering or what it is. What do you think it is?”

K: “Well it’s a lot of times, it’s just like last night I wasn’t in a very good mood yesterday, but when I stepped on stage I can get everything out of me and then when I played my notes I squeeze hold of them, it’s like me showing my affection, how I really feel.”

T: “I sussed that out on Thursday. I mean you know you were pretty fed up in the middle of the break.”

K: “I guess that’s what you call the blues, when it’s really coming out to you.”

T: “But you didn’t let it get to you. You

went out there and you gave it some balls. But how do you find it, there’s this guy here playing and he’s giving it every ounce of his being and yet he’s playing in front of a guy, like he’s playing in front of a plank of wood. How does that feel? It’s hard isn’t it?”

K: “It’s not that easy. I just have to find another way to play my couple of notes I know how to play.”

T: “You hung out there and you won through in the end.”

K: “Yeah I usually make it work and I like to get with my audience and make them feel a part of the show as well. Because it’s like some guys come up and they try to do a show and I see too much of this stardom stuff. ‘I’m a star’... and they come on and they don’t have time to shake somebody’s hand in the audience, and they don’t have time to say hello. It’s like, I get to my dressing room, and I love people you know I was raised up around a bunch of people and I love meeting people and sharing whatever I can share with them. Just try to make it a better world and happiness you know.”

T: “Well I think it’s often if you come from a very large family, you get a kind of openness about things and people and one’s a good mixer.”

K: “We had to share when I was growing up. If you would go to the store and get a candy bar, which didn’t do you much good, when you had to share it with ten kids. But you had to give it. You had to be Jesus Christ man... you had to feed ten people with that one candy bar. That was my parents... they’d go: ‘Give that kid a piece, give that kid a piece.’ By the time I’d finished I had nothing but the wrapper. You had to share it! I guess that’s why, with people, I just sit there soaking wet, signing autographs you know, at the end of the night, because I enjoy it and I like them to leave happy. I see too many times where people try and meet other guys and they come over and they just don’t have the time of day for them.”

T: “That’s right, and people feel cheated you know. I think the thing is that if you have that attitude of heart, especially in this country, it will touch people. English people are very reserved. You have to work very hard to pull them out, but once they’re out they’re heart...”

K: “Once they’re up they appreciate it. I should show them how much I appreciate it as well. Sometimes you do get in situations where you play in a bigger hall, but like, if I’m doing night clubs and I’m right there with them, I like to join them. But sometime I might do, like a concert hall, and then the ones that do make their way to the dressing room, still find time to share with them. As they’re kind enough to get out and enjoy my music and buy my records, I mean I should show my appreciation as well.”

T: “Well you have a very generous nature. Can I ask you, just to get slightly off track, if you were say to pick five all time favourite blues records of yours. Or all time favourite records.”

K: “Five out of the ten I own?”

T: “I mean I’m just interested what sort of thing touches your taste”.

K: “Um... ‘Bio On The Bayou’...”

T: “Now where have I heard that before?”

K: “That’s number one. Number two... man I never play the records. I love the Albert Collins one, he just did his album and he gave me an album about three or four years back. I have a James Cotton album. I have a Lefty Dizz album, out of Chicago. But it’s hard for me to say because I never listen to them. I probably played them about three years ago. That was it.

T: “No I was thinking like... specific numbers.”

K: “Oh um... okay I’ll tell you one I really feel every time I do the song which I don’t do it that often, but every time I do it I really feel something there and that’s: ‘The Things I Used To Do’. Yeah I love that. I can play it over and over and never get tired of it. Jimmy Reed... Now I just have to say Jimmy Reed. I can’t pick a song, because I don’t care what that man sang, I just love it! I could listen to him all day long.”

T: “I started on Jimmy Reed.”

K: “Oh yeah.”

T: “He was like, the first EP I ever got. It was ‘You Got Me Crying’.”

K: “Yeah, anything by Jimmy Reed, I just love it. Muddy Waters, one of my favourites... let me see who else... there’s got to be one more guy there. Oh you know we got old Hook there, that’s my old buddy John Lee Hooker. And Howlin Wolf. And all other blues players but I’m saying people that really touched me because it’s like...”

T: “That’s what I wanted to know really because everybody has like a few favourite paintings or something, you know you have a few favourite records.”

K: “Well I like Jimmy Reed and Muddy Waters and Little Walter too. I shouldn’t leave him out. You see that’s the stuff I grew up on because Little Walter was my dad’s idol.”

T: “Oh what a player he was.”

K: “I’ll tell you a story. My father and Buddy Guy was playing together at this place called Temple Roof. That was the hot spot where Little Walter, Muddy Waters, Lightning Hopkins, John Lee Hooker...”

T: “Was that in Chicago?”

K: “No this was in Baton Rouge, on North Boulevard Street. It’s still there. The place is still there. And my dad and Buddy Guy, they was young kids at the time and they were playing together, about nineteen to twenty years old. They went up to see Muddy Waters with little Walter. They were brave enough to ask could they sit in with their band. So they had no bass player; just Buddy on guitar, Charles Cross on drums, and my dad Raful Neal. And Muddy then let them way up and sit in. So my dad say he was doing this harmonica thing and Buddy was chunking on the guitar and they thought they was really knocking him out and the people loved it. So little Walter came back up and do ‘Juke’. Fred Below, who was the drummer at the time, he took a twenty minute solo on the drums he just wiped my dad’s drummer out. But after the show Little Walter invited my dad and Buddy Guy up to Chicago. My dad didn’t take him up on it because, you know, I was here



Photo: Angela Morse

Kenny Neal, 'really coming out' at the Half Moon, Putney

and a couple of my little brothers were here, there was two or three of us. And my dad stayed home and Buddy left about eight, nine months later. And he's been up there ever since. But that's how that came about. That's how Buddy ended up in Chicago."

T: "That's an interesting story. I remember when I was sixteen, seventeen, Jimmy Reed coming over and John Lee Hooker and Muddy Waters. I remember feeling very disappointed when I saw Jimmy Reed because all he wanted to do was watch the television in his dressing room. But it was great to hear him."

K: "Well the television was a big thing for black folks back then, he was happy to see that TV. He'd been sitting around as usual, he'd got tired of listening to the radio. The guy was excited. He was a pretty neat character too."

T: "Very smooth wasn't he."

K: "You know, we lost a lot of the blues players in weird ways back then, you know they would.. a lot of them died young. From alcohol or they get killed. It's like Little Walter, he was like, constantly getting into different things, and fights. He got hit across the head with a baseball bat and stuff. Did you notice on his pictures the big scar?"

T: "He was a big tough... I did bump into him in the American Embassy in London one day, with Paul Oliver - who is a blues... sort of historian here - with Brother John Sellers and Langston Hughes, who was a poet... and he looked like he'd had a really hard life."

K: "Oh yeah it was hard."

T: "Tough characters, you know."

K: "Oh yeah, non-stop man and you wonder, it makes me confused because I don't know where I can find the time to try and be bad like he is... and still get a hit record out there!"

T: "I think everybody has to be like that - I don't feel BB King's like that - but I mean... Can I ask you some of your future plans? Have you been able to make any plans after this?"

K: "Well this is my first album here and I'm going to be releasing three or four more albums, hopefully they'll do well enough to get to where I want to be - as far as producing new artists from Louisiana."

T: "This is something you want to do?"

K: "Yeah this is my plan. This is what I'm starting, I'm putting it together now because we have the studio down in Florida. Yeah we have a twenty four track down in Florida and that's where my record was recorded. That's in Sanford just outside of Orlando. We have a beautiful studio down there, real nice. We just did Lazy Lester's new album down there. We just finished Rufus Thomas there. We did the Noble 'Thin Man' Watts. Let's see, we've got my father's album down there. So now, since my album is really selling well over all the other albums, and me and my producer and manager have become real close - we're really team partners - so my project in the studio will be producing newcomers... and dig up some of the guys out of the closet, like Slim Harpo's old band, and bring all the guys down and do a session with them."

T: "I think that will be very nice to do."

K: "Yeah well that's where I'm heading now. And then after I guess, if my record dies out or something like that I'll go back and I'll do the Neal family. I'll start brand new again."

T: "So your plans then... are you going to Europe at all from here?"

K: "Oh I'm sure yeah. We've been getting calls in the office. Just by moving back from Toronto to the United States,

I'm moving faster than I really expected. I didn't think it would take off this fast, but it seems like I hit it at the right time."

T: "I think you have."

K: "Because like Robert Cray come along and he's doing like, to me it's more like a Stax, sixties type of soul music, than what I'm getting across, like with Howlin Wolf and Muddy Waters and I'm getting more to that style of music. And he's almost like a pop type of thing and he's crossing over more and more as he goes. I like to keep the traditional blues going. I wouldn't like to come here next year and sound like I'm trying to turn pop - top 40 or something like that. It's something very special to me and I'd like to keep it going. And pass it onto youngsters, newcomers."

T: "How do you feel about those that have made success out of the blues - a lot of the white players?"

K: "I feel good if they are successful with it you know, because all it does is... it helps the traditional thing to keep going. If they go and make a hit out of it then more people are listening to it. The only thing I hope out of it is just that the audience that they reach, can really understand the roots of it too. The background. Because, just a few days ago, I was talking to some kids in the dressing room, and they was naming off records that was by Muddy Waters and Lightning Hopkins - but they knew them by other bands. And I was trying to explain to them who really did the songs and they didn't understand what I was really talking about. They're going 'No, no that's done by Eric Clapton'... something like that."

T: "It's embarrassing actually. I mean those of us that do know."

K: "Well that's only because they don't know better. The younger ones. But I think in a way we should try to reach them and let them know a bit of the history."

T: "I quite agree with you actually. In fact there are quite a number of us that have made very strong efforts to actually do that. One does feel embarrassed about it."

K: "You ever heard that record about the 'Blues Got Soul', Muddy Waters. 'The blues had a baby and they named the baby rock and roll'."

T: "That's nice... Well I hope that... I'm sure you've got a very important role in crossing that bridge, actually."

K: "Yep it's looking really promising now and I'd like to go ahead and keep it on. And I'm surprising a lot of the younger kids, the younger audience, because they I think - the ones who do know a little bit about blues - they're expecting an old guy to turn up out of the dressing room. I come out there looking younger than them and they go 'Wait a minute this is not the guy.' It's just a kick to it. It's fun."

T: "I think that's the business. Well Kenny can I thank you very much for giving us this interview?"

K: "Thank you very much."

T: "We hope that you will be back on many, many more occasions. It's been a joy to see you and a joy to speak to you."

K: "Thank you it's been a pleasure." ■

It's just as well that this publication is restricted to the Blues, because to cover all the acts I saw would take a volume the size of War & Peace.

Having said that, it would be hard for me to think of any act or artist that didn't play the Blues at some point or another, especially the local performers, be they Soul, Cajun, Zydeco, R&B, Rock & Roll or the various forms of Rock & Jazz, they all seemed able to play the Blues with feeling, so I think it's worth reeling off a few names that are considered non-Blues artists, whose Blues I enjoyed.

Here goes: Cissy Houston, James Brown, Irma Thomas, Marva Wright, Bobby Marchan, Ernie K. Doe, Allen Toussaint, Jean Knight, Hank Ballard, Walter Washington, Oliver Morgan, Jessie Hill, Johnny Adams, Buckwheat Zydeco, Bo Diddley.

While we're into lists, here's a short one of acts seen that may be considered strictly as Blues artists in the UK, but are rather more versatile (whether you like it or not):- Taj Mahal, Snooks Eaglin and Mighty Sam McClain.

One more list to annoy the Editor.

These are artists who performed that would probably be of interest to readers of the mag, but I managed to miss them!:-

Doc Watson, Earl Palmer, Spider John Koerner, Moses Rascoe, Big J. Monque'd, Rockin' Dopsie, Charles Brown, Earl King, Boogie Bill Webb, Ironin' Board Sam, Mose Allison, Lazy Lester.

That's all the rejects out of the way, now here's what I did see and do.

Wednesday 20th April

New Orleans was like a Mecca for me, and this was my first pilgrimage, but by no means my last.

Just walking around the place makes all the songs you've listened to for years suddenly come to life.

Just seeing all the street names (Rampart, Basin, Saratoga, Esplanade etc.) makes you want to delve into the history books for a spot of revision.

Imagine my surprise to find our hotel was on Rampart, just a few doors away from the corner of Dumaine, the same corner the Fess sang about, and the same corner that Cosimo Matassa had his little studio that recorded all that good stuff.

Enough history, back to the present.

Got off plane and went to Tipitinas to see the Lonnie Brooks Blues Band. The band came on minus Lonnie for a few numbers and played in a what I call "70s white boy plays the blues" style, even though half of them were black.

Lonnie came on and continued in the same vein, then just as my preconceptions were beginning to be confirmed, he went "down home" on us. From that point on he played a very entertaining set, in a variety of different styles.

I didn't know it at the time, but this would become the case with a lot more of the artists I would see.

Managed to have a word with Lonnie in the interval, and gave him a copy of British Blues Review, he was very interested in it, and was the first of many to ask why there is not a facility for foreign

Booze, Blues and Chuckaluck!

Wolfie Witcher's diary of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, 1988

subscriptions, (or is £10 p.a. a global price?) anyway, a very amiable bloke, and keen to come to Britain, as were many others. (Good agents and promoters please note.)

Thursday 21st April

Played tourists all day.

Evening a bit vague because there was a barbecue at the hotel and the beer was free!!

Rubbed shoulders with Taj Mahal, and a lot of other celebrities that I was too drunk to recognise.

Friday 22nd

First day of the festival proper.

This festival is nothing like the debacles we have here, everything runs like clockwork.

The festival is held in the local horse-race track known as the Fairgrounds. There are five open air stages and four tents, all featuring live music simultaneously, plus another tent featuring children's entertainment, (saw some good African dancing in there) and finally the Heritage tent, featuring workshops, discussions and lectures.

Throughout each day there were periodic brass band parades by bands with amazing names like "The Monday Wasters Social Aid and Pleasure Club", the second line on these parades gets so big, you're lucky if you get a glimpse at the actual band.

In addition to all this there are dozens of craft stalls, food stalls, (had my first taste of alligator here) and beer, soft drinks, and snowball vendors.

A bit like a gypsy fair without the games and rides, just brilliant music of all kinds, and an emphasis on local culture and heritage.

Taj Mahal seemed to be the main attraction this day, and anyone who liked any particular period of his would not have been disappointed because he ran through the whole lot.

He also ran an informal workshop in the Heritage tent early in the day, but I missed it. (hangover)

Another good act caught this day was Shine Robinson with Li'l Sonny Jones, a seven piece outfit, 3 horns, piano, bass, drums, and guitar, who did a particularly good version of Guitar Slim's "Things I used to do".

Not much Blues featured this day but some good Soul and Jazz.

Worth mentioning is the Gospel tent where I entered frequently during the six

festival days, but never stayed too long, (too emotional) more than ten minutes of exposure to the likes of the Olive Baptist Church Young Adult Choir would have me converted, and then I would miss all that good Devil's Music.

Friday evening

Now picture this, B.B. King, Stevie Ray Vaughn, John Hammond, all playing on a riverboat cruising up the Mississippi!!

Sounds great, but wait.

The Mississippi river, no matter how much you read about it, cannot be put into perspective until you see it.

This goes for the craft that navigate it too.

I must have seen too many Sunday afternoon jazz band cruises up the Thames, because that's the cosy pre-conceived idea I had.

This thing we went on was like a floating Albert Hall!!

Three thousand punters, two trips per night @ 25 dollars per head plus a buffet and four bars, (well that's all I could find) I wouldn't mind a slice of that cake.

It's called the Riverboat President and I believe it is the largest river-going pleasure cruiser in the world.

Back to the music.

B.B. King and Stevie Ray both played to their normal high standard and jammed together at the end, but because of the vastness of the place I was a bit disappointed and thought B.B. was better when I saw him at Baily's nightclub in Watford, that being a better environment for this type of music. (In my opinion.)

John Hammond is someone whose musical stance I have admired for a long time, and have been trying to get to see him since the mid sixties.

It's ironic that I should have to go all that way to see him for the first time, considering the amount of visits he makes to these shores.

What shores? Oh thanks, I'll have a pint of Guinness! Ah that's better, thirsty work this writing.

Anyway it was worth the trip because I was lucky enough to meet John in the bar (where else?).

Imparted to him a copy of B.B.R. and he was well chuffed to see his new album advertised in it.

I promised to mention that he is playing at the Mean Fiddler Acoustic Room in the summer, and I'll do my best to be there too.

It's now midnight, the boat has docked,



Wolfie – drunk in charge

and Jackie and I alight from it "Rat Arsed".

New Orleans is wide awake and we are too drunk to think straight.

Then a brilliant idea!!

Let's do a bar crawl back to the hotel. (about a mile)

Dear reader, no matter what route you take, there are a lot of bars in one mile of the French Quarter....

Saturday (Oh me 'ead)

Got to the festival late and managed to miss the "Frog Island Jazz Band of England". (what a stroke of luck)

Saw some good Soul, but of more interest here, Albert Collins and the Icebreakers, (fairly predictable stuff I thought).

Silas Hogan and Guitar Kelly who even at their age, looked a bit peeved at only being allowed to play for one hour.

I thoroughly enjoyed their set, they have still got that old Excello sound. Here's one that really impressed me, "Sam Myers" playing with an all white Texan band that he has been recording and gigging with since 1984, called "Anson Funderburgh and the Rockets".

Sam Myers, who goes back a long way, having played harmonica with Elmore James, played and sang a spellbinding set and Anson Funderburgh and the Rockets gave me one of the most complimentary backups I've ever seen for a blues artist.

You could tell they loved Sammy and it looked like the feeling was mutual.

Saturday night (played at being tourists.)

Here I must tell you about Bourbon Street.

A real tourist trap, it's a bit like having all the gaudy and raunchy bits of London crammed into one end of a mile long street, but with one slight difference, you can hear all kinds of music (mostly live) coming from almost every doorway.

The place is full of hustlers, like shoe shines, (if you don't keep your shoes on the move he'll shine 'em, and then "you gotta pay") bar bouncers, (throwing people in) and even waiters, (smooth talking you into the restaurant). A lot of dancing in the street occurs here.

One day we were walking by a bar with all its doors and shutters open so that the whole interior was exposed, it's 11-30am and an incredible band starts playing, the bar is empty but the street is packed with local black people, all dancing. I

found out why one night.

Same bar different band (still great) and three of us decide to go in. Doorman plucks us from the dancing street crowd, guides us to table, get served overpriced warm watery beer and told not to stay if our glass was empty.

Take my tip, if you ever go to Bourbon Street, (which you must) take a hipflask and do your dancing in the street.

Sunday. The third day of the festival and a lot of good soul music to see, but one blues artist I could not afford to miss was Cousin Joe. Cousin Joe, a native New Orleanian now in his eighties, has played the Jazz & Heritage Festival every year since its inception in 1969. Joe had the audience in stitches from the start with his wonderful comic delivery.

I have long been an admirer of Joe's lyrics (I first saw him in 1964 on TV) and on this occasion he even managed to make some of his blues topical, with references to Jimmy Swaggart among others. He recited a marvellous poem cleverly constructed from New Orleans street names, and a similar story using names of popular American soft drinks. At one point Joe sang a soulful sounding ballad which gave us a glimpse of the sweet voice he must have had in his youth, before he got "this whisky voice" as he puts it.

Pleasant Cousin Joe Joseph is a real hark back to the distant past, and indeed still sings about the Titanic as though it were yesterday. I felt honoured to be in the audience.

Another artist seen this day who would probably hate being put into any particular musical bag though was Snooks Eaglin. A most underrated musician who I later saw in a club, so more about him presently.

Sunday evening. We were on our way to Storyville Jazz Hall when we heard some live Chicago style blues coming from a small bar called Cosimo's. In we went and saw a great little harmonica-led band called "Jumpin' Johnny and the Blues Party". They were so enjoyable that we were late getting to Storyville and missed "Moses Rascoe" a blues singer/guitarist who has been playing for over fifty years, but who only turned pro last year upon his retirement from a day job. I wasn't too disappointed at missing him because Moses was staying at our hotel and I had heard most of his set while he was practising around the swimming pool. (this is the life eh?)

At Storyville we saw Luther Kent, a white Blues singer whose band was an ever changing lineup as the evening wore on.

One of the bass players I managed to get acquainted with was Erving Charles (Fats Domino Band), who said he's available to work in Britain very cheap, all you need to do is pay his air fare, (band leaders please note), and he can sing too! (very wide range).

The piano player with Luther Kent was well surprised to see me in the audience, he was our own 'King' Cleary.

From that point on, Jon seemed to be playing in every band we went to see. I got an ironic quote from Jon when I asked him what the work situation is like for musicians in New Orleans. "Well it's not easy because there are so many good players here, but I do alright because not many people can play New Orleans style piano".

On the way back from Storyville guess what? Jumpin' Johnny and the Blues Party were still playing in Cosimo's, so in we went. It was now 3am on Monday, and by my reckoning they had already been playing for six hours. Jackie made a note that at 3.25am there were 17 punters in there (all dancing). At 4.15am they finished a Howlin' Wolf song and put an open guitar case on the bar, announcing that if the audience wanted more, (which they did) that they should put money in it.

Jackie and I had full glasses and empty wallets at this point, so we put some ten pence pieces in. The band must have thought they were worth ten dollars each, because this kept them playing until 5am.

Jumpin' Johnny is sending me his latest album and is determined to come over to England, so keep your eyes on British Blues Review for more news.

Monday morning (Lateish)

Saw some good buskers around Jackson Square, particularly a blues duo that I would love to see playing somewhere like the Station Tavern, they were made for it.

If anyone wants to buy me a pint, I'll tell them what I did in the evening!

Tuesday

Saw Ernie K. Doe at Storyville, good show but not blues so...

Wednesday

Tipitinas for the New Orleans R'nB revue featuring Johnny Adams, Snooks Eaglin, Walter "Wolfman" Washington, John Mooney, and Jon "King" Cleary.

This was a more or less continuous show with most of the artists accompanying one another.

King Cleary opened the set with some good singing and playing and backed by a 3 piece band, got a very warm reception, (lot of Brits in the audience).

Soon they were joined by John Mooney, a white Blues/Rock guitarist in the modern idiom.

Next was Snooks Eaglin whose guitar style fascinates me, what his fingers are doing doesn't seem to correspond to the

sound he's making. Snooks again played a varied and interesting set with little bits of showmanship (not easy for a blind man) and verbal ripostes to the audience such as "Y'all sound like the price is right out there". Snooks played material ranging from Professor Longhair to Wilson Pickett plus a few of his own songs like "Drop the Bomb" "Oh Sweetness" and "Nobody Knows".

Snooks can play a Professor Longhair tune such as "Big Chief" or "Tipitina" with little need for a piano in the ensemble, by faithfully reproducing the piano parts on guitar, an obvious mark of respect for the "Fess" who he played with for so many years.

The rest of the evening although brilliant, was not strictly blues, so I'll move on.



Jackie and Wolfie, living it up

Thursday Bo Diddley at Storeyville.

Nothing like the shows he does in England where he just bangs out all his hits. I never heard one "Tum Titty Tum Tum" number all night. Instead we got some blues, a comedy song about a little boy bringing a "Roach" home in a matchbox, (involving various members of the audience), a great send up of himself on "I'm Sorry" where he sang all the different Moonglows type harmonies on his own.

He did a reggae number, he did a comic/political song with the approximate title of "What's Wrong With America" which incorporated the reply of "too many brown noses" among others. Finally he relieved the drummer of his position and played the kit with astonishing precision, kicking the band into a higher gear and working them flat out for four or five minutes.

Then he did something that he usually does here, i.e. no encore.

This was the midnight show and by swapping notes I found out that the early performance was almost entirely different again, which is a credit to the man.

Oh by the way, Jon Cleary was the piano player.

Friday

Fourth day of the festival and the only blues I saw this day was "Mighty Sam McClain and the Thunder Blues Revue", I also saw them in a club, so more of them later.

In the evening I had an interesting experience of the "it's a small world variety", buy me a pint and I'll tell you about it!

Saturday

Was a literal washout as far as the



Wolfie and Bourbon St Voodoo shop proprietor "Chicken Man"

festival was concerned. It had been raining all night and it kept raining all day.

Armed with our plastic macs (sold on Bourbon Street as Body Condoms) we went anyway, because Charles Brown was scheduled to play on the "Fess Stage". As it turned out none of the stages were operating but apparently Charles Brown did perform unannounced in one of the tents, after we had left.

The rain didn't stop the parades though, and we particularly enjoyed the "Downtown Jammers Social Aid and Pleasure Club".

While sheltering in the WWOZ local tent (and getting my tape played on air) the following conversation occurred:-

Lady - Are you from London?

Me - Yes.

Lady - Do you know Diz Watson?

Me - Yes, I know Diz.

Lady - Well he's standing behind you!

The upshot of this was that we flogged our Riverboat President tickets (Robert Cray/Neville Brothers/Dirty Dozen Brass Band) and went to see Diz play at the Columns Hotel on St Charles Avenue, very posh, a bit different from the Dublin Castle. (I had to wear a whistle & flute).

Said goodbye to Diz before his third set and made it to Tipitinas in time for Hank Ballard and the Midnighters, (definitely the best act of the whole two weeks) and Buckwheat Zydeco who I enjoyed much more than I thought I would, the big horn section really surprised me.

Sunday

This was to be our last full day in New Orleans so wanting to savour every moment we decided not to sleep until we got on the plane at 5pm on Monday.

Sunday was the last day of the fest, saw Hank Ballard again, (even better than the night before) who held a real baby in his arms as a prop for "Annie had a Baby".

Earl King suffered from a bad sound, this was the first blot on the festival's copy book, (except for James Brown being late).

Most of the bands on the fest were probably a bit larger than normal, 8 to 10 pieces being average, but Earl King went over the top with three guitars which

made things very jangly.

Went to one of the tents to see a band called Hezekiah and the House Rockers, a three piece who I at first thought had a shy harmonica player because I couldn't see him, then I realised that the drummer, who was also the singer, was playing the gob-iron too! Gaffer taped to a mike on a boom stand it was.

Anyway they were a real down home blues outfit, but with one or two surprising deviations, (Stand By Me, and Don't Mess With My Tu Tu).

I'd love to see them in the Station Tavern, they'd tear it apart.

Left the festival to the sound of Dr John closing the show, (apparently Professor Longhair closed it every year until his death) and went to the hotel to prepare to stay awake all night.

First stop was a club called Muddy Water's to see Mighty Sam McClain and the Thunder Blues Revue. Sam has a voice that can be a dead ringer for Bobby Bland if he wants it to. His band is lead by Cranston Clements who is the guitarist, arranger, and also composer of some of the material; they sounded superb even though the trumpet player was obviously not well and the drummer had his arm in a sling and had to play one-handed all night, even managing to do a great drum solo.

The trumpet playing was perfect and must be commended.

If he can play like that when he's ill, what's he like when he's fit? The standard of trumpet players in New Orleans generally seems very high. (I blame Louis Armstrong myself.)

The first set was 1½ hours long, then I managed to have a quick chat with Sam in the interval. Apparently they have been trying to get over to England for quite some time but haven't managed to make the right connections yet. (I promised to tip him off about the wrong ones.)

The second set was over 2½ hours long and at only five dollars cover this is real value for money. (Apart from the riverboat gigs, none of the venues charged more than ten dollars.)

Muddy Water's was a particularly nice club, serving good food, recommended. At 3.15am we caught a cab to Storyville for an all night jam session.

We were well pissed by the end of this, but I remember Luther Kent closing the show and Jon Cleary sleeping in the corner.

Back to the hotel for more beer and a quick dice game called "Chuckaluck" with George the night porter (won eight dollars) before breakfast.

No more music to talk about except to say that when in New Orleans keep your radio tuned into WWOZ twenty four hours a day.

Having got to know the place we will probably make our own travel arrangements next time, but if you are going to the Jazz & Heritage Festival for the first time, I can thoroughly recommend Festival Tours; 01-431 3086.

Finally, if anybody wants 3,000 words on any of the following subjects, I'll be happy to oblige. New Orleans Soul, New Orleans Jazz, New Orleans Food, New Orleans Alcohol.

The phone rings. I answer it. It's Graham.

'Hi Al. How would you like to review a couple of albums for the next issue of British Blues Review?'

'Graham, I know nothing about reviewing and even less about music.'

'I know, Al, but you're the only person left in the world who owes me a favour...'

Oh well, here goes.

GOOD TIME DOWN THE ROAD

— Brian Knight, Jon McLoughlin, Steve Bray & Ray Bailey.

(Precision Records and Tapes Ltd. PRT 13)

This studio album is very much one of those 'blues-but-not-blues' releases that seem to be recorded only by white musicians. It consists of well-known blues songs ('Hi heel sneakers', 'Hoochie Coochie man', '99 years', 'My babe, Meet me at the bottom', 'Honey bee', 'She caught the Katy', 'Any way you want me to do', 'Tired broke and busted') plus one Brian Knight composition — 'Good time down the road'. The execution, however, is generally heavy and guitar-oriented and quite a way removed from the spirit of the originals. As a Blues-with-a-capital B album, then, this is not one for the collectors. On the other hand, if you like your music at the rocky end of the blues/rock spectrum, give this one a spin.

Brian Knight's rough, nasal, and unmistakable voice takes care of all the vocals on the album (with some nice backing from Carmen Manley on tracks 9 and 10), and he sings with gusto throughout. His strong, direct harmonica style is well exposed on 'My babe' and 'Meet me at the bottom' where he solos to very good effect. However, Brian first made his name as a guitarist in Blues Incorporated with his talented and now much-missed friend, Cyril Davies. Here, his slide-playing is especially satisfying, and particularly in his atmospheric contribution to the album title-track.

The other guitarist, Jon McLoughlin (no, not THAT one), is an experienced and regular session musician who takes the lion's share of the soloing, getting his oar in on all but two of the tracks. His style is very much that of a rock guitarist, with lots of amplifier overdrive, giving bags of sustain and plenty of

RECORD REVIEW

with Al Vincent

balls! Good, fluid runs and crunching chordwork result from his accomplished technique but, perhaps excusable in view of his youth, he seems a bit lacking in 'soul'.

The rhythm section, Steve Bray (drums) and Ray Bailey (bass), lay down a solid and steady backing for the rest of the band to build on, although the bass gets a little overwhelmed from time to time when the guitars really get going.

The band as a whole has a tight, unified sound and certainly packs a wallop — just the thing to attract the public to the sort of pubs, clubs and 'two-bit sleazy dives' that seem to be the blues fans' natural habitat. Bitter experience tells me that a 'light' approach to the music, while appreciated by a few, does not bring sufficient attendance at one-nighters to keep a band on the road in the long run. This album is obviously aimed at a wider audience and hopefully signals the return to regular gigging of one of Britain's longest-standing blues musicians.

MODERN DAYS LONELY NIGHTS

— Norman Beaker Band
(JSP Records JSP 1120)

This studio album is a showcase for a band playing true contemporary British blues. Norman Beaker, who composed all the songs, has written about emotions and problems that people experience here and now — love, rejection, social injustice etc., with not a word about sharecropping, steel mills or riding the rods. In doing so he has not allowed himself to be constricted by conventional blues-format arrangements. OK, there is a 12-bar or two but the majority of the songs have an individual approach that is really quite refreshing. When making a deliberate attempt to break free of a sometimes limited musical form there is a temptation to go too far in terms of complexity. Norman Beaker has restrained himself well and the results are offerings that sound different but at the same time,

natural.

Such a project can come to grief in many ways, not least by using musicians who are not up to it. I am pleased to say that the whole band perform with that apparently effortless competence that is the mark of really professional players. Norman Beaker himself, on vocals and guitar, leads the band well and allows ample space for his sidemen to show their mettle. Kevin Hill on bass, and the drummer, Tim Franks work as a rhythm section should — holding it all together tightly, and when required to, altering the whole mood by changes of emphasis, as during the piano and sax solos on the title-track. In charge of the keyboards is Dave Bainbridge who, on the basis of this album at least, prefers using organ/synth for backing and piano for his refined style of solos (the right way round, in my view). The saxophonist, Lenni, plays a workmanlike part, filling in the riffs and blowing the occasional and all-too-short solo. Tony Whalley and Ian Brooks (trumpets), Helen Watson (added vocal) and John Brett (slide guitar) all guest on the album but mostly play only subsidiary roles.

In spite of all I have said so far the album is not faultless, although the shortcomings are few and reflect my personal view of it. (Everyone is entitled to their opinions but, after all, I'm the one on the business end of the typewriter!) For instance, I feel that the track 'No feeling in this love anymore' goes on a bit too long after there is nothing more, musically or lyrically, to be said.

My minor quibbles aside, this album shows that the British blues scene is capable of producing good-quality, well-arranged material that derives its substance from life and love — exactly the things that inspired the originators of the music. Albums such as this encourage the belief that blues can be successfully home-grown and that we do not have to rely on the USA for material, however good, to re-interpret.

TOM NOLAN'S BLUESCASTERS



"You are talking a fine slide blues guitar player..."

Look out for his fiercesome trio." Capital M, March '88



Tel: Graham Vickery, 01-289 6394

One evening in the early sixties, at Richmond's now legendary *Crawdaddy* club, I was handed a Kay electric guitar and a Gibson amplifier. I wanted to play R&B, but had no suitable equipment and the offer about to be made to me was a God-send.

"No need to pay me any money now, just take over the HP payments and we'll call it quits."

The speaker was the lead guitarist with the fast-rising Yardbirds and a future star. He was the young Eric Clapton.

I can't recall how or when I first met Eric – he just appeared on the Richmond/Kingston scene in the summer of 1961. Keith Relf and I soon came to cross guitars with him in the various pubs and clubs in the area. It soon became apparent that he had immense talent, yet somehow he was reluctant to realise this, saying he was "just a blues player of sorts."

Just after Eric joined the Yardbirds and let me take over his old equipment, I met Pete Moody and we then formed our own band, the "Grebbeles", to play interval to the Yardbirds' pyrotechnic sets at *The Crawdaddy*, with Eric often giving encouragement to our efforts.

The last time I'd seen Eric to speak to, was some twenty years ago, after a John Mayall gig in Chelsea. That was in 1966. When I wrote to him recently, requesting an interview for *British Blues Review*, to my surprise and great pleasure, he readily agreed.

Accompanied by Pete Moody, I visited Eric at his home in Surrey, where he greeted us as old friends. In the course of a very interesting afternoon, we learned much about his early years as a blues performer, including some things which haven't been mentioned previously.

Eric is now celebrating 25 years on the road and in August/September undertakes an extensive U.S. tour, probably using the same musicians from his recent Albert Hall triumphs. However, he hopes to feature some raw blues playing this time, to contrast with his commercial hits.

RP: "Eric, can you tell us your first influences – the first time you became aware of the blues – and what records you were listening to at that time?"

EC: "Well, I think to encapsulate it all, I was listening to Rock'n'Roll on a very broad spectrum. I think that was what attracted me first of all – Rockabilly and R&B – because that was what was being played on the radio during that period.

"But it wasn't until Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee first of all – and then Big Bill Broonzy – that I was aware of the deep root and of where Rock'n'Roll came from and everything.

"In fact, I almost started out as a musicologist in a way... I approached it with a great deal of curiosity... I wanted to study the whole thing, but really I was

ERIC CLAPTON

In The Beginning

by Roger Pearce

intrigued by first of all Big Bill Broonzy – bending notes and things like that – which I don't think actually I would have realised if I hadn't seen this thing of him on T.V. Where you could actually see him playing – on the 'Tonight' programme – which is a great piece of film of him in a Paris nightclub playing – 'Hey Hey' I think he does, and 'When Did You Leave Heaven?' – and really I idolised him for a long time and learned to play a few pieces of his and then was interested, through him, in other players and gradually got into the whole scene of it all and started buying records by all kinds of people, ending up really with Robert Johnson. I think that brought a full stop to it all and I had kind of come back to the modern day.

"Because I think if you're going to research the Blues for your own benefit, you can't really go any deeper than that, you know – Robert Johnson or Son House – that's as heavy as it gets, really. "I mean I started out with really what you'd call Folk Blues, and worked my way back deeper and deeper until I got to Robert Johnson... I found that almost unbearable to listen to at first... being a player, being a rank amateur at the time, it was too much for me to contemplate.

"I had a friend, Clive (Bush?) – we were at Kingston Art School together – he was my... kind of cohort... at the time and he was always trying to 'one-up' me you know. He was the first to get the Robert Johnson album and I don't know, maybe for the sake of it, he was *pretending* to be impressed by it, but he seemed to know all about it and he lent it to me. I played it and I thought: 'God, I've got to like this because he likes it.'

"First of all I was really intimidated by it, especially the technique, it didn't make any sense to me at all – not only him, but Blind Lemon Jefferson I found very difficult to assimilate – because it didn't seem to have any pattern, you know. It was very random – he'd sing a

line then play a line, then do bits underneath – and it took me a long time to understand the depth of the Robert Johnson records.

"When I finally did, I could never play that way, that was the hardest part... having to swallow that... it was something I never ever could emulate, you know. I've heard people do it... John Hammond does a pretty good version, and Ry Cooder can do those Robert Johnson things pretty well, but it never comes *that* close.

"So I started out lightweight and got heavier and heavier. And as I went along, I got quite purist and stopped listening to R&B or Rock'n'Roll and then kind of worked my way back to it through Chicago Blues.

"The interesting thing was that without really knowing about the regional aspects... was that I was always mainly attracted by people from the Delta – before I even knew they were from the Delta. There was something about the quality, that style, that set them apart for me, from any other region, you know, like anywhere in the South... even, you know, say Florida or you know, Mississippi... I mean Louisiana... or Texas... anywhere like that. But I didn't realise at the time, I just was drawn to the Mississippi Delta sound in whatever form it came – even when it got electric, when those people moved up to Chicago, it was still them that I wanted to hear. Yeah!"

RP: "Would you like to tell us your reasons for deciding to learn to play and what were the first guitars you used, both acoustic and electric models?"

EC: "Well I suppose... I mean, the simple answer to that is these people had become my heroes and..."

RP: "You wanted to emulate them?"

EC: "I wanted to look like them, I wanted to play like them, I wanted to live like them, you know, although that's pretty difficult to do in Surrey! (laughter) So I started trying to recreate



Eric Clapton, 25 years on. (Photo Roger Pearce)

a similar lifestyle, you know – hanging out on the road, leaving home at an early age, bumming around and doing all the things that a bluesman should – you know what I mean?”

RP: “Hitching lifts, thumbing from Ripley to Kingston – vast distance...”

EC: “Yeah... and the guitar playing was just an incidental part of that whole routine, and it wasn’t long, as you know, that I got a job doing it professionally, really... and though a lot of it was as I said before – bluff and front – I was very happy.”

PM: “During that period, did you try and sing?”

EC: “Yes, I did, actually I think I did. I sang at home an awful lot, my grandmother will tell you this, it would drive her mad, I’d stay up all night, singing at the top of the stairs, I don’t know why...”

RP: “Because it echoed?”

EC: “Because it echoed. In fact, that’s right, yeah! Dead right – it got a great sound.”

RP: “I used to do the same thing at home...”

EC: “Yeah, in the stairwell, but I would bottle up in public even if it were just a pub.”

RP: “But I can remember you singing in Kingston...”

EC: “Really?”

RP: “Sort of outside the Crown pub. We all used to sit outside on the grass by the church and you’d sing for everyone.”

EC: “I think I used to sing ‘San Francisco Bay Blues’, when Jesse Fuller became flavour-of-the-month. Yeah.”

RP: “I can remember you teaching me the chords to ‘Down and Out’ the Bessie Smith song, on a train coming back from Wittering...”

EC: “Yeah?”

RP: “Yes, but you were definitely singing. To me, you weren’t afraid of singing in public – you were entertaining us! Everyone used to sit and listen.”

EC: “Oh well that’s interesting, because I don’t have that recollection – I remember it as being completely different – but maybe you’ve got a more objective point of view. I think what it was... I ran into Dave Brock (later to join Hawkwind). When I ran into Dave Brock he was such an outward, gregarious person he would always take the front and I would back off, you know?”

RP: “So the first guitars you got, presumably these led to your first band, The Roosters? Would you like to cover that point?”

EC: “Yeah, well I tried playing with the acoustic and I don’t think I got very far with that, except when I bought this little ‘George Washburn’ for the amazing price of two quid in a market in Kingston. It had a picture – a drawing of Brigitte Bardot glued on the back of the guitar and I had to peel that off and everything, but then I went through the

whole thing of playing in the pubs and everything.

“I can’t remember what it was... I think it was probably Muddy – listening to Muddy and the ‘Best of Muddy Waters’ album that prompted me to get the electric guitar... and also that ‘Jimmy Reed At Carnegie Hall’ album – that really had a profound effect on everyone that heard it, I think.

“And... having conned my grandma into getting my first acoustic, I persuaded her to buy me that Kay which you inherited and it wasn’t long after that really that I think first of all I did a little show in Richmond, with just me and someone else. I can’t remember who the drummer was now.

“I’d by this time met the ‘Stones’ and was watching them play so they gave me a lot of feeling that it was worth doing in the end.”

RP: “You were never afraid to go up to speak to someone – like musicians – seeking advice... never intimidated?”

EC: “Oh no, I was quite confident about what I was doing.”

RP: “Yes, I always remember you talking to other people... being quite gregarious amongst other musicians. Okay then: your practice methods... can you enlighten us on how you practised?”

EC: “Well in those days I think I practised with records – I listened constantly to records – and was absolutely devoted, and would just try by my ear alone... not only techniques, but sound as well... to use whatever technique was involved, like fingers or pick or whatever it seemed to sound like... just to match it, you know?”

“But outside of that, I never practised, because I was frightened that I might learn the wrong things – I might learn to play in another style, or pick up something that I didn’t want, you know? So I stuck very closely to being as simple as I could and just copy my idols, and never stepping off that path.”

RP: “So would it have been Chuck Berry or someone?”

EC: “It was Chuck Berry and Jimmy Reed really... those two and a bit of Bo Diddley... and then later, Freddie King.

“Funnily enough, although I was incredibly influenced by Muddy, I never really picked up a lot of his style, because it was so simple and confined, you know? I mean if you’re into Muddy – you can understand – you only need to know how to play three or four things and that’s it... but no-one knows how to do it... no-one!” (laughter)

RP: “He was very much more a vocalist than a guitar player...”

EC: “Well I disagree in a way, because you’re right – yeah he was an accompanist to himself – but what he did on the guitar, with the slide and just the little chord shapes he would make, is so simple that it evades most players.

“I mean, I don’t know anyone that can actually play those figures... ‘I Can’t Be Satisfied’... I mean, I’ve heard Johnny Winter do it... and he overdoes it... it’s so hard not to overdo it... and he overdoes it... everyone plays it too much.

“So I kind of bypassed that, because, being a bit ambitious, I wanted to play ▶

more and that's how I got into the Freddie King thing... He was the first person I could actually see was going somewhere, outside of just playing accompaniment. He was playing lead, you know, and so that really attracted me."

RP: "Then later it would be B.B. King or Otis Rush?"

EC: "Yeah... B.B. King was much later for me because I thought he was too commercial to begin with. I bought an album by him that had... you know... saxes on it, and that was... ooh dear..."

RP: "Getting into the realms of show business."

EC: "Yeah it was – then, anyway – it wasn't basic enough."

RP: "Yes – he would 'appear' – rather than 'play' – somewhere."

EC: "Yeah..."

PM: "Wasn't downhome, was he?"

EC: "Not at all... No!"

RP: "We'd like to ask you about your first band."

EC: "Well... 'The Roosters' was the first band."

RP: "Was that with Tom McGuinness?"

EC: "Tom McGuinness and Ben Palmer and Terry... oh I can't remember... oh God what was his last name? Brennan – he was the singer... and a drummer... And the drummer's Mum owned the car that we travelled in... so the whole band hinged on that, really... that's how we got to gigs. There was this convertible Morris Minor that we packed everything into – it was just doomed from the word go... 'cos we didn't have the funds, and we were far too dedicated, real purists... and Ben especially was very self-critical... and critical of the band, too."

"And it was too passionate to last long, you know, and when it did fold, Tom

– you see the one photograph and a brief paragraph – nothing's ever said about what the band did, or what numbers you played.

EC: "Oh we did... 'I'm A Man'... then we would do a Larry Williams song, you know, like 'Slowdown' or... something like that, and then a Bo Diddley... I mean a real broad spectrum of music inside the R&B thing and... 'I Loved A Woman'... a Freddie King song... and actually, a great deal of credit has to go to Terry – for he would bring to each rehearsal... he would bring his new singles and these were the things we would cover, you know, and he was really quite a purist."

"And we would try to get as dedicated as we could and it was much more of a blues band than anything I played in afterwards until John Mayall."

PM: "Can you remember some of the venues you played at?"

EC: "Phew, crumbs! I just remember the rehearsals being above a pub in Kingston. I think we played 'The Cellar'... maybe a couple of seaside places, but it was so, so chaotic and amateurish... I don't know how we got it together at all, really, I had the 'Kay' then and I had..."

RP: "The Gibson amp?"

EC: "I had... no... I had... did I? Yes, I did have the Gibson amp, but we started off all going through the one Selmer (amp)... the whole band, and the vocals as well. (laughter)"

RP: "Pretty authentic..."

EC: "But even then, we had our heroes. The band, then, we were all trying to sound like... was it The Wild Ones... what were they called... with Carlo Little and Nicky Hopkins?"

RP: "Oh... The Savages – Lord Sutch's band."

you in the Yardbirds when you joined, the first few months were really happy times. I used to travel about with you all in the van and watch all the looning around, the playing about."

EC: "Yeah."

RP: "And then it all changed.. it all became serious."

EC: "Yeah, it did, didn't it? I think that recording did that, you know. It's like the first time you look in the mirror and you've had all this illusion about how good looking you are, and you get the horrible truth and that was what happened... I think when we first did that live album, did it to me."

"It was just like... oh dear, it was quite a shock that we were so kind of rough, but everyone loved it, and that was confusing for me."

RP: "I still love it... it takes you back to those days."

EC: "Yeah, so do I now, in retrospect, yeah but I think that was when we started taking it seriously, which is what you do when you start to become self-conscious."

RP: "I remember those first weeks, when you joined the band, were very very happy times – I remember them with great affection."

EC: "Likewise."

RP: "You seemed very very contented."

EC: "Well, there was that great period with the flat..."

RP: "In Kew?"

EC: "Yeah, that was fantastic... well I remember that as being one of the best periods of my youth you know 'cos everyone was just having fun."

RP: "I remember you all used to rig up a tape recorder to make ghost noises!"

EC: "Yeah, yeah... it was fantastic, sharing that bedroom with Dreja... hilarious! Hilarious times! But it was the recordings, I think, that made us start to evaluate everything and try to be serious – much too early on – we just lost our carelessness."

RP: "I can remember Keith Relf sort of becoming very professional – almost overnight. When it first started, it was all a laugh... then suddenly he became very serious – almost unapproachable at times... always worried, that's when for me, the fun stopped."

EC: "I remember Samwell Smith had that problem. I think that he – no... I've always blamed him for everything, poor guy – but he was the studious, serious one, you know."

RP: "So... I think that's as far as we can go, really, because I didn't want to cover the later years with The Yardbirds, Mayall or Cream, because it's all been so well documented before... what we really wanted were your formative years."

EC: "Okay, right!"

It was at this point that we broke for lunch in the pub at the top of Eric's drive.

Over drinks and sandwiches, we discussed old times... and the present... and Eric recounted some hair-raising stories about Chuck Berry. These, and other tales of Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf and Buddy Guy, will have to wait until the next issue.



The Roosters 1963, (left to right Eric Clapton, Robin Mason, Terry Brennan, Tom McGuinness, Ben Palmer)
(Photo: Tom McGuinness)

McGuinness and I got a job in 'Casey Jones'. I mean, you make your bones in all these things – I learnt a lot about touring, even on a small scale, with those bands."

RP: "Were you still with Ben in 'Casey Jones'?"

EC: "No, Ben had 'retired' at that point, completely, and became a woodcarver full time – which I think he still is... But it was a great little band to begin with, because the enthusiasm, the dedication, was all there."

RP: "This would be the 'Roosters'?"

EC: "Yeah... it had to be dead right."

PM: "All the things I've read about that period... the Roosters are never discussed

EC: "The Savages... that's it, yeah. They were the band of the day, they were the band to emulate, because they used to do, you know, before Lord Sutch came on, they would do like... a little blues set... and there was that fantastic Andy Rand, who was a keyboard player, who would sing 'Worried Life Blues'. It was astounding... that was our hero at the time... yeah... Carlo Little with the leopard skin drum kit!" (laughter)

RP: "Really 'savage' stuff. Do you want to discuss the Yardbirds, or do you want to leave that out?"

EC: "No... let's talk about it all... whatever you want."

RP: "Really I mean, what I remember of

ZOOT MONEY

by Mel Wright



Zoot Money and Big Roll Band

Zoot Money's Big Roll Band were a popular R&B band of the sixties. Originating from Bournemouth, their roots lay in the Jazz/R&B field alongside Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames, Graham Bond Organisation, Herbie Goins Nightimers etc.

A firm favourite of the Flamingo club Mods, Zoot's gregarious and humorous style was sharply contrasted by the ivy league "cool" image of the Big Roll Band. Their finest hours for me were the steaming sessions held at Klooks Kleek club in West Hampstead. 1964 to 66 was probably their peak. Major record success eluded them. Their most popularly known singles 'Big Time Operator' and 'Star of the Show' pandered to Zoot's 'loon' image, encouraged by the Gunnell agency's eye for a profit. However the album 'Zoot' (live at Klooks Kleek) remains a classic, capturing something of the band's subtle R&B sound.

The Big Roll Band were an enthusiastically hard-gigging combo. Between 1963 and their break-up in 1967 they rarely had a night off. The band also had few changes in personnel during their existence:- Zoot Money: vocals & keyboards; Paul Williams: vocals & bass guitar; Andy Summers; guitar; Colin Allen: drums; Clive Burrows: baritone sax (later replaced by Johnny Almond); Nick Newall; tenor sax; Geoff Condon: trumpet (1966/67).

My interest and research in writing 'Zoot Money - Scrapbook Of A Band' stemmed from an enjoyment of the band's live gigs. I was keen to record something about the group; how the band originated; the relationships with-

in the group; how gigs were organised etc. In the process of writing, I contacted and interviewed most of the original band members. The following extracts for The British Blues Review briefly charts the band's transition from Bournemouth to London.

Zoot was born George Bruno Money on 17th July 1942. His parents came from Italy, migrated to Britain and finally settled in Bournemouth during the war.

Zoot's interest in music developed at school during the 1950's in a local traditional jazz band skiffle group 'The Four Ales' and early Rock and Roll groups, 'The Black Hawks' and later the more sophisticated and jazzy 'Sands Combo'. As the early sixties beat boom occurred, Bournemouth produced a wealth of groups eg: The Avengers, The Vulcans, Tony Angelo & The Bandets, The Dictators etc. Playing at local venues like the Downstairs Club, Picardy Jazz Club and the Lansdowne Club. In contrast to the basic guitar, bass and drums approach, Zoot, with a friend Roger Collis formed, in 1961, a prototype Big Roll Band. The music blended the fusion of R&B and jazz. Zoot's own musical influences during this period were expanding from early rock and roll of Bill Haley and Elvis Presley to the bluesy jazz orientated material of Ray Charles.

Even though the early Big Roll Band was full of youthful enthusiasm it was not without its frustrations as was painfully evident with their sometimes sub-standard musical equipment. One show at Southampton pier had to be cut short by about ten minutes due to the bass

player Johnny King's amp breaking down. This led to certain antagonism within the band, particularly from Roger Collis (guitar) who had been demanding that Johnny buy a new amp.

Zoot: "After the gig we all put our equipment on to a trolley in order to take it back to the pier. Roger Collis put the defunct bass amp on the pier rail and said, 'You see John, this is it. If you can't be bothered, I'm not putting up with anymore'. He then tipped it into the sea! Johnny King bought a new amp". (Several years later it was rumoured that the old amp was recovered from the sea.)

By spring 1962 the line up of the Big Roll Band was fluctuating whilst Zoot's extrovert reputation grew. An advert was placed in Don Strike's music shop in Bournemouth: "Drummer wanted for band, must be able to put up with Zoot Money". Zoot was keen to find new musicians to play with and develop his musical ideas, he also found a local source for musical inspiration:

Zoot: "I knew a girl in a record shop and got a lot of obscure singles: Jerry Butler, Aaron Neville, Bobby Parker and Ray Charles. She would play them to me so that I didn't have to buy them. When I got a record player I only bought Ray Charles albums, they encapsulated all the things that I needed to hear".

In his restless search for new musicians Zoot visited the Bluenote Jazz Club which held weekly modern jazz sessions at the Tralee Hotel. The Alan Kaye Quintet were the resident band. It was here that Zoot met Andy Summers, Colin Allen and Nick Newall. Their interest was engaged in the Big Roll Band and they subsequently joined Zoot in the local R&B scene. Their enthusiasm was fuelled by a trip to London's Flamingo Club, as Nick Newall recalls:

Nick: "We used to get in a car and go up to London to Ronnie Scott's club. The turning point in a way was when we saw advertised in the Melody Maker, Georgie Fame and the Blue Flames, which to me sound like a terrible rock and roll band, so I wasn't the slightest bit interested. Anyway they were playing at the Flamingo club which was about 100 yards away from Ronnie's. Andy Summers went down to see what it was like, with his customary curiosity and came rushing back saying what a fabulous band it was. So we all went down. As far as I was concerned it was a real eye-opener. The club was really hip. It was what you imagined a club ought to be like. It had a great atmosphere. The band was tremendous: Georgie on vocals and organ, John McLoughlin: guitar; Mick Eve: tenor; Red Reece: drums; Boots Slade: bass. Very tight".

Shortly after this trip Georgie Fame came to Bournemouth and played the Downstairs Club. He reflected what Zoot, Colin, Andy and Nick were trying to do. There were strong influences from black American blues and jazz players, like Charlie Mingus, Cannonball Adderly, Bobby Timmons, Jimmy Smith, Brother Jack McDuff, Jimmy McGriff and John Patton. This blues/jazz style ►

laid the roots for further development in popular music.

For many provincial bands at the time, London was seen as the centre of R&B. Clubs like The Marquee, The Flamingo, 100 Club, Studio 51, The Scene, were the places to be heard. It was also the base for many important agencies, promoters and record companies. The Big Roll Band were no different in their aspirations towards what the capital seemed to offer.

An opportunity arose for Zoot to play in London via pop singer Jackie Trent who introduced him to Peter Burman, Alexis Korner's manager; Jackie saw Zoot play at a club. Alexis needed a singer temporarily for The Blues Incorporated, whilst he awaited the availability of Herbie Goins to join the band. Zoot accepted the offer to join Alexis in London and the Big Roll Band members also encouraged Zoot; seeing opportunities opening for them all.

Zoot: "I was ready for London. I'd done all the gigs that there were to do in Bournemouth. I was known in Southampton and around the south coast. Played the best gigs with local players hating the shit out of you".

Zoot was determined to make his arrival in London a memorable occasion so he persuaded a friend to drive him up in his Buick and create a stylish entrance.

Zoot: "We drove up and parked outside Alexis' house. That very night I was on stage at The Six Bells in Chelsea. The talk that we had between his house and the pub was as much of a rehearsal that I ever had with Alexis".

Zoot spent two months with Alexis Korner. The band had regular work around the country and, within the first week, Zoot found himself at The Marquee in London and The Cavern in Liverpool. He and Alexis immediately hit it off. Alexis quickly recognised the potential in Zoot and encouraged him to play solo spots in between the Incorporated's sets. Zoot grasped this opportunity and invited Andy and Colin up from Bournemouth to join him.

Zoot's two month stint with Alexis came to an end by late October with the arrival of singer Herbie Goins to the band. However, he decided to remain in

London, committed to continue with music full time. ("I wanted to play twenty four hours a day".) The following few weeks were difficult because although Zoot had made some contacts in London, gigs were sporadic. Occasional half-hour interval gigs at El Toro Club in Finchley Road fetched £2 per session but the lack of regular income was made more acute by the need to pay an exorbitant rent for his newly found bed-sit in Finchley.

A short spell with R&B band Wes Minster Five filled in the 'starvation gap' before Zoot was able to get some work in London for the Big Roll Band. One of the first was at The Marquee on 23 December 1963 which was advertised as 'Zoot Money's R&B group'. In the absence of a regular bass player they recruited Danny Richmond for the session. The gig went well and with the growing popularity of Manfred Mann whom they supported, the group enjoyed an enthusiastic reception.

Less can be said of a late booking held the following night, Christmas Eve at a deserted dance hall at Southend-on-Sea, Essex. The prestige of playing at The Marquee faded as they played to a handful of people in the cold hall. Feeling demoralised they packed their instruments away in the borrowed van and headed back to London.

Arriving back at their flat in Gunterstone Road, Fulham, in the early hours of Christmas morning Zoot, Andy and Colin splashed out on a double helping of eggs and beans – looking forward to the New Year.

During 1964 things really started to happen for the band. Now London based, they recruited a permanent bass player and second singer: Paul Williams, baritone Sax player: Clive Burrows and manager: Bob Hind (all ex Wes Minster Five).

An important break occurred when they secured a residency at The Flamingo Club at which they began to build a steady following. Alongside Georgie Fame they played the infamous 'all nighters' to 5am with a mixture of R&B, jazz and Ska. This led to other gigs and interest from promoters, particularly Rik and John Gunnell who ran The Flamingo and band agency.

As Zoot and The Big Roll Band became more established in London, Bob Hind negotiated an audition with Decca Records. The band's retrospective view was that the session was uninspiring, producing two demo tracks: "Get On The Right Track Baby" and "Walking The Dog". (These were later released on various compilation albums.) However a single record deal was struck and "The Uncle Willie" released – an up-tempo song which, it was hoped, would create a new dance craze like the Hulley Gully.

Clive Burrows: "For several weeks after 'The Uncle Willie' release, we showered our audiences with facsimiles of a one pound note bearing the inscription 'Zoot Money', as a special treat. 'The Uncle Willie' was destined never to appear in the charts, it didn't even bother to bubble under, it sank like a stone".

The Big Roll Band continued to present excellent live music in clubs right through to July 1967. "The Uncle Willie" was followed by several singles on Columbia. Some were good like "Please Stay" and "Gin House". Increasingly though there was unsuccessful managerial attempts to follow the success of Georgie Fame by persuading the band to record less bluesy material. The band never achieved great notoriety in terms of record success but, perhaps more importantly, their legacy lies more in people's memories of their great club gigs.

In 1967 Zoot, Andy and Colin formed the psychedelic group 'Dantalian's Chariot'. There then followed a close liaison with Eric Burdon's Animals. More recently Zoot has concentrated on acting coupled with music ventures. He arranged the music for the TV series "Tutti Frutti" and earlier this year, toured with Spencer Davies's R&B all stars. Andy Summers notably went on to mega-success with The Police. Colin Allen played with John Mayall, Stone The Crows and during the 80's Bob Dylan. Paul Williams was with Alan Holdsworth's IOU band. Nick Newall has since toured with The Kinks as well as continued to play sessions and clubs.

Mel Wright

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MORE RECORDS

– reviewed by Top Topham

Phil Guy *JSP Records 1114*

This is a good album, side one being a BBC recording made in Stockport in 1986, with side two live from the 100 Club, 19th May, 1985. I had to play it twice to get into the groove; however, I got there and I like the album.

Side one has Norman Parker on second guitar, Lenni (?) on sax, Dave Bainbridge keyboards, Kevin Hill bass and Timmy Franks drums: a good band.

Phil lays into "I Once Was A Gambler" followed by a rocker "Love Is Like Quicksand". "Texas Flood" the Larry Davis number is next and has excellent guitar including 'freak out' at the end. Lastly "Tina Tu" the famous Slim Harpo number (Phil played on the original version) is a strong powerful rendering, with a nice solo from Lenni. Side two, live from the 100 Club, opens with a solid band: Professor Eddie Lusk on Hammond and piano; Fred Barnes, bass; Michael Scott, drums – a great sound and foundation for Phil's strong guitar.

First track is "Talk To Me", followed by Hound Dog Taylor's "Sadie". I loved this one. Next is brother Buddy's "Let Me Love You" and finally, Little Walter's "Everything's Gonna Be Alright". This is a good solid blues album. Thank you Phil Guy. Let's have more like this.

The International Blues Duo. *Crosscut Records CCR 1007*

The International Blues Duo consists of Christian Rannenburg (Pno) and Detroit Gary Wiggins (Tenor sax). This album was recorded live at "Stubu", Bremen, West Germany, 17th April 1984.

This is a very tasty album and why have we not heard it, or them, before?

The first track on side one, "Blues For Real" makes you immediately realise that you're listening to "Class", and it's like that all the way. A superb long slow piano introduction leads on to the sweetest, breathiest, bluesiest horn. I'm hooked!

"Stanley T" is a good funky blues track, "Saxophone Sermon" is a beautiful and very sensitive blues. The classic "Night Train" is followed by "New Town", a chunky, New Orleans feeling number.

Side two opens with a horn intro to "Summertime", containing some very sensitive togetherness (seldom heard) – two players in total harmony – no battles. "Hot Cha" (Junior Walker) is a lightweight relief. The following track, "Please Send Me Someone To Love" is one for 2 a.m. Great – I could listen to this all night – and will! Finally, "426



West Briar", has a very unusual horn intro, followed by an unexpected jump beat that finalises in a honking shuffle.

I can strongly recommend this album to any blues player, especially anyone who wants "the Business". All the influences and heredity are here. The phrasing and feel are first class – a must to any musician or lover of good music. Gary and Christian have a rare partnership.

Charlie Musselwhite. Cambridge Blues. *Blue Horizon BLUH 005*

To quote from the album cover: "It goes like this... Musselwhite, Peabody and Hall toured Belgium." They sound like a stuffy old firm of solicitors. Well one thing this album is not, is stuffy. It grooves from beginning to end.

Recorded at the Cambridge Folk Festival, 1st August 1986, it rocks with all the live feel you can experience at one of these occasions. Side one kicks into a strong shuffle "Miss Bessie", followed by "Big Legged Woman" with a slightly more New Orleans feel. The classic "Key To The Highway" has some of Bob's great piano, interwoven with Dave's guitar, working real hard by now and 'cooking'. Charlie interweaves tastefully with the harp and his vocals have a lot of feeling.

The Robert Junior Lockwood number, "Take a little walk with me" or "Sweet Home Chicago" if you prefer, has Dave singing and working that National steel of his, with some good slide on the number.

Side two begins with "Up and Down The Avenue", a good up-tempo number, with Bob's exceptionally solid piano. Big Walter Horton's "Need My Baby" follows and finally "Skinny Woman" a track which is a really fast mover – a strong rolling blues capturing all the flavour of a good live gig.

This is a pleasant album, strongly reminiscent of all the best qualities in

the 40's or the great Bluebird era. All three work well together and you can feel that enjoyment emanating throughout. A must for fans of Charlie, Dave and Bob – well done!

Snatch It Back. Live On Broadway. *Snatch It.*

Well done lads; the Band is Snatch It Back. An honest-to-goodness live album from the Royal Oak, Cardiff. It seems they got it together and did their own thing on an eight track at the local.

Chris on harp and sax, Dave guitar, Paul on bass, Ian on drums, no surnames on this album. In fact no information on this album for those outside of South Wales (lucky I come from Brecon isn't it). However it's great. Recorded on 25 and 27 October 1987 Side A strikes with "Checkin On My Baby", and "Honey Hush" and has a very good feel as does "Stormy Monday". I like the way "Stone Fox Chase" leads you from side A to B. "My Babe" and "Caledonia" are followed by "Telephone Blues" with a "Diddle Beat", I liked this one especially. We end up with "Mercury Blues" the proverbial end of the evening closing time shambolics. That's not a criticism. Yes buy this album, it's real. Good harp and guitar, strong vocals and tight band. We look forward to the next one and Good Luck.

Mouth Harp Blues. Shakey Jake. *Ace CH236*

This album is a re issue of his second Prestige/Bluesville album of the '60s. Although an interesting album it does not come up to his first previous Prestige long player "Good Times".

The sidesmen with reputations, sound very sloppy and one feels nobody was particularly wild about playing on the session in the first place. They included Jimmie Lee (gtr), Robert Banks (pno), Leonard Gaskin (bs) and Junior Blackmon (dms).

The Jimmie Lee is Jimmie Lee Robinson of "All My Life" fame. A superb blues on Starlight in 1962. He also visited Britain on the 65 Folk Blues Festival on bass guitar. He also played for Eddie Taylor and Freddy King but I'm sure it must have been on bass judging by the guitar on this record. Well I like Shakey Jake's voice and harp. Numbers include "Mouth Harp Blues", "Jake's Cha Cha", "My Broken Heart", "Angry Love" and "Easy Baby". This album is worth a listen but do hear "Good Times" if you are considering buying a representational Shakey Jake Album.

BRIAN KNIGHT: Blues Survivor

by Graham Vickery

Brian Knight is a bluesman who has been around for many years, right from the early days of Cyril Davies and Alexis Korner, so it's good to see that he's still playing and indeed has a new album out. Brian has certainly seen life, both in and out of the music business and it is reflected in his lined features and ironic outlook. Yet the irony doesn't rule Brian's life, and his enthusiasm is still strong enough to be the dominating factor. I visited him at his home, which also contains another of his projects, a recording studio business, in Bushey, North London, where we talked about the new album and, of course, about the start of the British Blues scene. The album came out in June, on PRT Records. It's called *Good Time Down The Road*, with Brian Knight, Jon McLoughlin, Steve Bray and Ray Bailey. Jon is not the John McLaughlin, though he comes from the same county - Yorkshire.

BRIAN: "He's a beautiful guitarist. It's heavy blues in a way. It's not purist... I find, that if I stand up and play pure Muddy Waters, the kids don't understand it. I tend to heavy it up a bit, so that they get more with it... make it more exciting..."

John McLoughlin has toured with Shakin' Stevens and Bonnie Tyler. He's 26 and is pretty much in demand.

After a phone call from Richard Newman, the album was put together in Berry Street Studio and was engineered by Ian Caple.

BRIAN: "He's a nice engineer, tries to get what you want. I've been in studios with the harmonica... 'Oh you won't need your amp...' you know! Ian is very sympathetic, so it was done mainly live - with a few overdubs on harmonica - in three evenings."

Brian considers that the British public have not been well served by journalists... "They tend to write things down that will sell stories, and mention names which will sell stories, which have got nothing to do with the music... so it all gets twisted around and in the end, blues isn't mentioned in the right context... a lot of young bands do think they are playing blues, because of the education they've had about it.

"I mean, Cyril and myself, we came up through listening to black American stuff... you couldn't easily get hold of the records then... We've still got loads of Cyril's records that he used to have to write away for. I've got quite a few Howlin' Wolf singles that were taken off juke boxes in the States... they've got the

centre missing from them... and all his Leadbelly stuff, which is nearly worn out, the records are grey with wear, but we don't very often play those now. We were listening to all the American blues stuff. I used to love all the piano... I really regret not learning how to play the piano, because that is the instrument I would really have loved to have taken up. Cyril and Alex (Alexis Korner), of course, brought quite a few people over here, with the help of Chris Barber and so on."

I asked Brian about how he got interested in the music.

BRIAN: "I was training to be a panel-beater after I left school and I went to work at a place where Cyril worked. He brought his guitar in one day, to repair it during the lunch hour. I can't remember the actual conversation but the result was that I went to the Roundhouse to see him and Alex play... that was how I got involved. I then went and got myself a Rosetti cello guitar and showed it to Cyril. 'What did you get one of them for? Not one of them... you want one with the round hole!' So I had to take that back and get a round hole guitar... I wish I still had it... I had a butterfly engraved in it..."

Brian joined the Merchant Navy shortly afterwards and while on board ship, met someone who offered to teach him guitar, in return for the use of his guitar during the voyage... "It wasn't the sort of music I wanted to learn so he couldn't teach me much. I virtually taught myself. I had a book which taught plectrum playing but decided to learn using fingers, not plectrum. So I learned mostly from memory of what Cyril was doing... Leadbelly and that stuff."

Brian came out of the Navy when he was about eighteen and did his first gig when Gerry Loughran let him get up and do a floor spot in a Southall pub. "What a nice bloke he was, Gerry... he could have snubbed me, you know. I only did about three songs and went down well and he was very complimentary, a very nice person, and he invited me along to any of his gigs I wanted to... just to sit in! I didn't get any encouragement from Cyril... he must have rated me... when the Blues Incorporated started he wanted me to be the singer, but he'd never say: 'That's good!' or anything. He used to say the opposite, which just made me more determined."

Brian remembers some good sessions at the Roundhouse, though... "Big Bill Broonzy was there, Muddy was there, Speckled Red, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee... but some of the later people were really bad in the way they treated other musicians..."

Brian played with a number of Americans: "In fact, the last gig we ever did with Blues by Six was with Sonny Boy Williamson... at Grimsby... and I remember Scotty, my pianist, had his back to Sonny Boy, couldn't see the signals and was playing away in the breaks. Sonny Boy wasn't pleased and gave Scotty some stick... Anyway during the interval some little dolly bird came up to me and asked me if I could get him to play 'Smokestack Lightning'... can you imagine? I said: 'It's not his song.' 'Well will you ask him?' and, being the daft idiot that I am to keep somebody happy, I said to him: 'There's some young lady wants you to play it.' He went berserk. 'That ain't my song man!'... well insulted he was - a funny guy..."

Little Walter was another of the American artists that Blues By Six backed. "He was a lovely little guy. He was the gov'nor, wasn't he? He paid me my biggest compliment, but again he used to get so drunk all the time. Yet he was such a clever player."

Brian has pleasant memories of two other Americans: "Memphis Slim... he'd drink a bottle of scotch on stage and still be able to handle it and he was never rude to us, always polite and we always used to look forward to backing him. I always kept saying to myself over the last few years that I should go down and see him again before he goes - you always leave it too late, don't you?"

"John Lee Hooker is another one... he is really nice, but he's like Memphis Slim... they had a kind of charisma; you always knew what they were going to do... it might be a little movement of the shoulder or something just before a change, but you always knew when they were going to change."

Asked when he first got a band together, Brian replied: "Well Cyril asked me to join Blues Incorporated... they were in a hurry, obviously... and asked me if I was ready. I misunderstood him, thinking he meant did I have a programme together, but he only meant ready to rehearse. Anyway I told him no way was I ready, so consequently they went with Art Woods. So missing the boat there, I thought: What am I going to do?"

"Then Brian Jones, who I'd known through Alex and Cyril, came up to me



Brian Knight

in the Ealing Club and asked if I would sing with a band that he was getting together and did I know of any guitarists. I suggested Geoff (Bradford) and Brian asked him and we started rehearsing at the Bricklayers Arms. Ian Stewart was on piano, Dick Taylor on bass and a different drummer every rehearsal.

"Well I got fed up after a while, because Brian kept trying to get me to do Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry stuff, when I wanted to do Muddy stuff... Brian was a very good slide guitar player – in those days slide players were unheard of. Brian was playing Muddy Waters style slide, Elmore James, and so on, and he was doing it well. When I started Blues by Six, I used to play a bit of slide, Muddy style, but Brian had it off pat! The one thing we *could* do was play Elmore James songs – because we both liked them. Eventually, I split from Brian on musical policy."

Brian continued: "This is something that annoys me. I never get a mention in forming The Rolling Stones, but Geoff does, because he was still there when Mick Jagger and Keith Richard came along. Then when Geoff eventually followed me and left, I decided to start

Blues By Six, with Geoff on guitar, a guy called Andy on bass... I can't ever remember his real name... he was a mate of Charlie Watts, Charlie was on drums and Keith Scott on piano. We used to use Art Themen on tenor and when Art couldn't make it... Dave Gelly or Donald Zec's son, Paul Zec. So that was the band and we were travelling up and down the country.

"Really, the saxophone was to keep Geoff happy. I didn't think, and I don't think even today, that saxophones really go with harmonica but having said that, I learnt a lot. We used to get a lot of work, we had a residency at the Marquee on Monday nights. Geoff left then, to join Cyril, so it was Cyril Davies on Thursday nights and us on Mondays. Charlie had already left and joined the Stones because he didn't want to lose his day job. We were doing sometimes as much as nine gigs a week, including a Sunday lunchtime and a Saturday allnighter. God knows how we kept going...."

"So then there was another Blues by Six, with Lawrence Scott on piano, a guy called Peter Willis on guitar, who went to Australia in the end, Mick Earliman on drums... I've been friends with his brother since schooldays. Joe someone

on bass, again I can never remember his second name. By this time we had the residency at the 100 Club about twice a week. We got quite a lot of work, really. I had to pack it all in eventually, I couldn't keep going, what with dope and booze. I was a physical wreck. I used to drive the van, deal with the agency, I used to have to do everything. We were doing too many things really, popping pills and things..."

Brian then forced himself to come off drugs. "I'm fairly anti-drug now... I needed help to climb the stairs when I came off it all..." Cyril Davies died in 1964. Brian carried on until 1965/66, before giving it all up.

In 1967, Brian married Marie Davies, Cyril's widow. "So we were bringing up Cyril's kids. I thought they'd had enough hassles, not having a dad. If I'd stayed in the music business it wouldn't have been really good for them, so I didn't touch a guitar for about seven years."

In 1973, when things were more settled and the children grown up, Brian started playing again, this time with Johnny Joyce, a twelve-string guitarist, doing duo work. Through Johnny, Brian met Richard Newman, who became a catalyst. A blues fanatic, Richard got people together, spending a lot of energy with press and record company people. Brian did a radio programme for Capitol Night Flight and after this, Richard instigated the first album: *Hard Travellin'* (now deleted). This was followed by another album, which had Charlie Watts, Ian Stewart, Charlie Hart on bass, Peter Green on guitar, and included Art Themen, Dana Gillespie and others. "I'm not happy with it – it had Peter Green playing the best since his Fleetwood Mac days – but there are too many people on it, really."

Brian rates Eric Clapton the best blues guitarist to come out of this country because he came up listening to people like B B King but developed a style of his own. Brian thinks that today's bands don't go back to the roots for their sources, but listen instead to people like Clapton, whereas Clapton went to the roots and developed his own style.

"Peter Green seems to have given up, doesn't seem to concentrate for long, his bands don't last five minutes. If he was just to put his mind to it, it would all come back... but the thing is that it's all really rock and roll – if you went out and called yourself a Rock and Roll band, people would listen to you, but if you call yourself a blues band, they won't – but it's hard to say what is Rock and Roll and what is blues. That's what annoys me most of all is how blues has got such a bad name that people won't even come and see you. It's a lot to do with the press, Clapton is getting older so it's now okay for him to play blues, though he used to be called a rock and roller. It's not that I think everybody should be keen on blues because I am, but that I know there's more balls in blues than in any other kind of music."

Amen to that! Check out Brian Knight, he's been there.

Graham Vickery

NOT NIGEL SMARMAN

The thing I love most about Shane is the way he looks at me sometimes and says, "Trace, I've really got the Blues. Know what I mean?" And I go all squashy inside because I do know what he means and I know he really, really means it. Not like the rest of the band that he's in. Like Shane says, they're just in it for the money, (I'd like to ask Shane about that one day). Shane is the best bass player in the business and everyone knows it. You can tell that they know it because every time Shane tells them, they just walk away.

It was my older brother Nigel – yes, Nigel Smarman the very famous A & R man – who brought us together. I'd always wanted Nigel to take me with him to a gig but he's a terribly popular person and, as he kept telling me, he'd be talking with other people all night ('doing the business' as he puts it) and wouldn't have time to look after me. Then our Mum said, "For God's sake, Nigel. Get her out of the house just for one night. It won't kill you!". So off we went and later on he said, "Here's someone you should have a lot in common with – he's a dickhead too." And there was Shane. Naturally, we fell in love there and then.

Julian, he's the band leader, is an awful tease to Shane. For instance, he's always telling the others in the band how good they are and with Shane he just says, "Look, it's your P.A. and your Mum's car. Otherwise it would be different – right?" And Shane, who knows a compliment when he hears one, and doesn't want the others to get jealous, just smiles and gently punches Julian's shoulder in a – you know – brotherly, all-blokes-together sort of way.

What Shane's got, which the others definitely haven't, is 'stage presence'. On stage, it's him the audience watches all the time. You can see them pointing and asking who he is, and what he's doing there. It makes me very proud. Last night, for instance, when he wore half of his new suit (the other half, Julian said his sister would alter the length of the trousers and now she says she's lost them – I ask you!). So anyway, there he was in his lurex jacket and his old school trousers and I must say, I was a teensy bit worried, but I needn't have been. Shane just got up there and played, like only he can, and moved about like he does and I'm sure no-one noticed, even when he tripped over some wiring and knocked the cymbals

over, and Bret, the drummer, threw his sticks in the air (pretending to aim at Shane, of course) and the audience loved it!

I thought that Bret carried the joke a bit too far, though. Afterwards, when the gig was over, he pretended to go for Shane's throat (with some rather unpleasant language, I might add). Julian joined in then and there was a bit of a scuffle, but it was all in good fun. Unfortunately, the promoters threw us out there and then and wouldn't give them another booking, saying something about "Get rid of that pratt". I was shocked, and I said to Julian, "You can't get rid of Bret." But Julian just changed the subject to it being about time he got his own P.A. together once and for all.

Anyway, they've all bought identical black sunglasses now, and they're also buying black fedora hats. Trouble is, Shane and I have been into every Charity shop in Camberley and we just can't find one. So in the end, we bought a brown cheese-cutter for £3.50. As Shane says, the way he plays, no-one will notice.

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The Harmony Meteor

Harmony were in the production of stringed instruments since 1892. They were large suppliers of guitars during the 1930's '40s and '50s, specialising in selling through large departmental stores. In 1939 Harmony bought out the Stella guitar company and others. Of course Stella is a famous name in blues guitars.

During the 1950's 45-50% of their guitars were sold through Sears, while their rival company, Kay, retailed through Montgomery Ward another huge chain of stores.

This guitar is a Harmony Meteor. A semi-acoustic equipped with De Armond pickups, it is sunburst with a tortoise-shell plastic pickguard. A very pleasant guitar to play with a thick warm rich tone, (excellent for boogies). Keith Richards played one of these for quite a long time in the early days of the Stones and used a Harmony amplifier.

U.S. Harmony's huge output ceased in the middle '70s under the pressure of far eastern competition. The name was then sold off to Japan and later other countries who used the logo.



BLUESNEWS

Kenny Neal completed a successful introductory tour of Britain and is sure to be back to build on an excellent start. He arrived on a Saturday and hotfooted it down to the Station Tavern to sit in with Big Joe Louis' Blues Kings. His first gig was at Acton and he turned in a strong performance, leaving no doubt about his intentions. His next visit to London saw him sitting in with the Shakey Vick Band, at the Carnarvon in Camden, where he was immediately at home, picking up supporters for the following gig at the 100 Club in Oxford Street. The house

Blues". Look out for his visit.

Both Screaming Jay Hawkins and Jimmy Cotton blew out their gigs apparently. Still, Magic Slim more than compensated. He had the audience dancing in the aisles at Birmingham Town Hall, though I can't say that disco dancing has done much to threaten any potential jive or jitterbuggers out there. I didn't see any evidence that youngsters can groove to blues. Fortunately there are enough committed dancers around to set my mind at rest. It's just a pity none were in Birmingham on that night.

Photo: Angela Morse



Joe Louis Walker joins Kenny Neal at the Half Moon, Putney

responded to his all out efforts here. His support band on the tour, Junkyard Angels, were augmented for part of the Putney Half Moon gig, by another very welcome bluesman, Joe Louis Walker, who reversed the sitting-in roles with Kenny, and in the process took the gig up into high pressure areas. Both visitors gave us the taste of real blues-power-playing, club style.

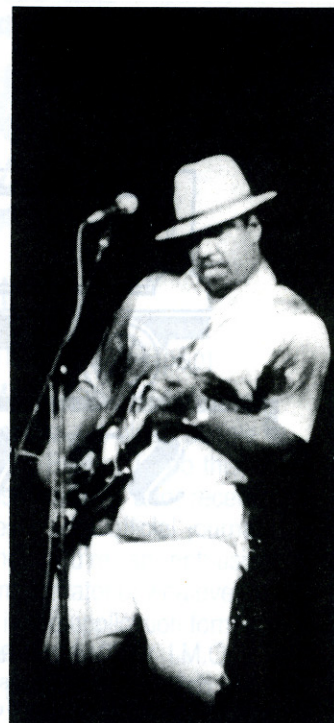
Joe Louis Walker is over here to record with Otis Grand. Joe will be back for a two week tour in October.

Blues South West, who brought Kenny Neal over, are also bringing in Tabby Thomas. He has a new album out in the States, called "King Of The Swamp

This didn't seem to worry Magic Slim, because he certainly gave the crowd the chance to dance. The Teardrops, his backing band, opened the set, and proved that Chicago Blues can transfer from Maxwell Street to Birmingham Town Hall without losing anything. A basic, effective approach, had the crowd toe-tapping immediately and the warm up was already overheating by the time Slim joined them. He proceeded to convince many of the audience, though not all, who had come to hear Spencer Davis and Co.

By the time Slim had got into an up tempo "I'm Ready", a solitary dancer had started in the aisle. Before the number was ended, dancers were coming down from the balcony to join in. Slim knew a good thing when he saw it and concentrated on the dancers by including "Reeling and Rocking" in the set and keeping the tempo up and the beat strong. He kept control by switching to a slow blues, which left most of the dancers bewildered, but they stayed up front and Slim gave them another opportunity to panic the stewards.

The evening had started off with Spencer Davis, Zoot Money and friends recreating the sixties British R and B scene, including a



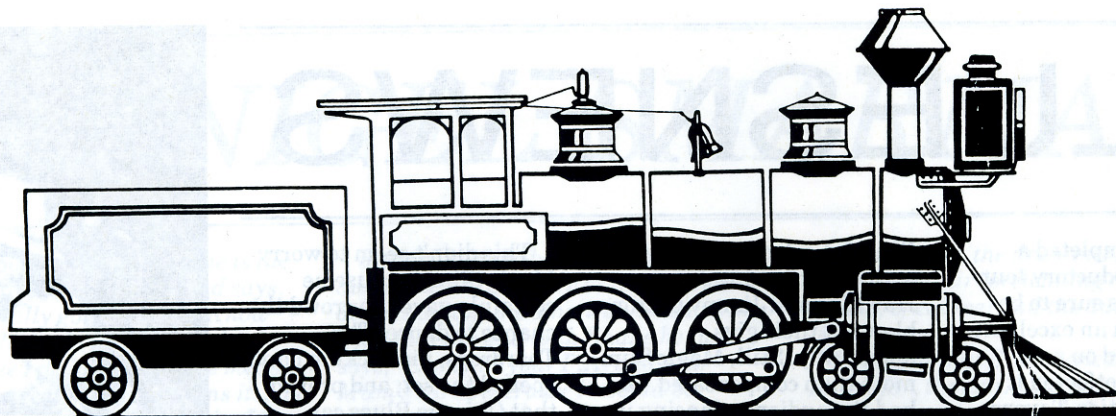
Magic Slim (above and bottom of page) at Birmingham Town Hall (photos: Graham Vickery)

few blues in the act. The evening ended, for me, back in the sixties with Magic Slim and the Teardrops reminding me of how great an impact real Chicago Blues had upon a generation. I think it is already repeating that impact upon a new generation.

With Otis Rush and John Lee Hooker in the country, I feel that our cover line on the first Issue got it right... It's happening now...

Sad to hear of the death of Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, whose song Mr. Cleanhead still sums him up for us. Let's hope there will be more sax blowing bluesmen to keep the music rolling.





STATION TAVERN

AUGUST GIG GUIDE

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...MORE LETTERS

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for the two issues of BBR April and June. I like your magazine and I enjoy the articles looking back in history and information of today's tendency in British Blues.

Please publish more band discographies and contact addresses with phone numbers from British Blues Bands in the future.

It's very difficult for

collectors on the continent to get their releases (records or tapes) because the small labels mostly have no distribution on the continent.

I think these activities through you help the bands to sell their releases and brings more publicity for them.

Friendly regards and good wishes for your future success,

Ulf Wichern,
W. Germany.

Dear All,

I ordered issue No 1 of your magazine with my latest order from Red Lick Records. Thoroughly enjoyed it. The gig guide makes me a bit envious, though Brisbane has a fairly vibrant Blues scene going at the moment.

Champion Jack Dupree and Clarence 'Gatemouth' Brown were recent visitors and played to fairly good audiences.

When I came out to Australia from Scotland about five years ago I was concerned there would be no Blues music shows on the radio (I had really enjoyed the late Alexis Korner's shows).

Fortunately there was a weekly Blues show which has been going since 1975. I now present one of the shows every third week and just by

chance, next Tuesday, I'll be featuring a programme on British Blues so your magazine will be getting a mention on the news section.

By the way, is there any chance of a feature on the born again Blue Horizon label and a review of recent albums by British Blues Bands?

Keep up the good work!

Regards,
Dave McEwan,
Queensland, Australia.

Subscribers who have won albums in this month's draw: Tony Jacobs, Poulton le Fylde, Lancs & Allen Mortimer, London E.17

BRITISH BLUES

BB
Review

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THE FUTURE OF BLUES!



MAJOR HANDY

"Wolf Couchon"

Bedrock BEDLP 7 LP/CD

In which downhome Louisiana Zydeco meets The Modern World and finds itself comfortably at home. 36-year-old Vietnam vet Joseph "Major" Handy is yet another seeker after the vacant crown of the late Clifton Chenier, but he tips some contemporary spice into the traditional gumbo cauldron, including modern dance beats and a winning way with a deep soul melody. Turning Point — in which he comes on like Al Green at his most plangently seductive — makes Handy's accordion the most natural thing to find alongside an aching soul groove, and the result could well garner serious airplay if Bedrock release it as a single. Take It Easy runs it a close second, Keys To The Road is a persuasive slow blues, and elsewhere there's certainly no shortage of traditional zydeco fun: a hopping rhythm section and gleefully polyglot lyrics. "Attention! 'Ey amigos! Aw-rah!" Proof, if any were needed, that a traditional music can keep its roots in the swamp and send its branches anywhere it damn likes. The title, by the way, refers to a mythical beast (I hope it's mythical, anyway) with the head of a wolf and the body of a pig; so now you know. ★ ★ ★ ★

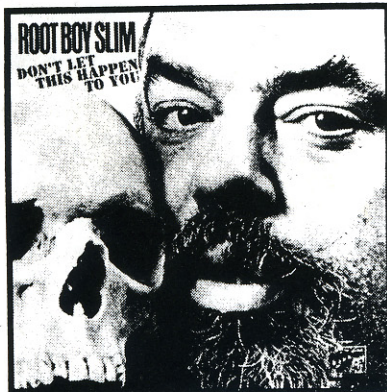
Charles Shaar Murray — Q Magazine.

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Daytona Blues
BEDLP2



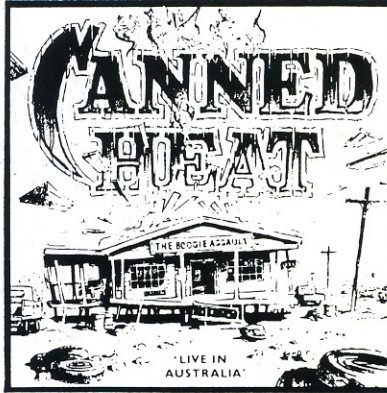
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