

ISSUE No.9

BRITISH BLUES

AUGUST 1989

BB *review*

£1.20

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH BLUES NETWORK



*Inside: South Bank
Blues Festival*

TALKIN' BLUES

The blues can come in a multitude of styles, and as is appropriate with what has been called The Devil's Music, can cover a multitude of sins. There is always going to be an argument about what is blues and what isn't.

Fortunately for us, there never has been any consistency in the definition or delineation of blues. The music is personal as well as public, so that tastes determine bias.

For some people, blues will always be black, American and locked in a time and place gone forever. We who continue to support live music, do not accept that the blues is only for museum curators. We may concede that there was a heyday for the music, but even then, who can precisely say when that was?

The blues has changed over the years, and continues to change, though it is possible to stay within one particular idiom, if that is what you want.

It is all too easy to sneer at certain kinds of enthusiast, in any sphere, but to do so without being slightly uneasy as to one's

own particular beliefs, may be likened to walking a tightrope – you know where you've come from, you know where you're going, but isn't it great to have a safety net if you drop your balancing pole.

For some people, the safety net is spread wide enough to encompass a wide range of music, with blues an important, vital, but not exclusive, part. They are probably doing alright out of the music scene at present and will continue to do so.

For others, who tend to be more 'purist' in their approach, there must always be a nagging thought at the back of their minds: How long can this interest in blues last? Of course, some people don't care much whether there is anyone else interested in their music, or whether there isn't and it is possible to go on playing regardless of audience potential.

It would be interesting to know which, if any, black American bluesman had that attitude. Answers on the back of a postage stamp (unused) please.



CONTENTS

<i>Mick Abrahams</i>	page 4
<i>New Orleans Fest</i>	page 6
<i>Burnley Fest</i>	page 10
<i>Lucky Lopez</i>	page 12
<i>Downliners Sect</i>	page 15
<i>Record Review</i>	page 18
<i>Bluesnews</i>	page 20
<i>Network</i>	page 22

*Publishers: Robert Bravington
Graham Vickery*

Editor: Graham Vickery

Art/Production

Editor: Angela Morse

Assistant

Editor: Pete Moody

Editorial Assistant: Moran Yates

Advertising: Jessica Vickery

Subscriptions: Elinore Vickery

Front cover photo: Honey Boy Edwards, courtesy of Business Arts

Contributions to B B Review are welcomed.

© Copyright of all material remains with the author/contributor. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior permission.

Published at 15 Chippenham Road, London W9 2AH
Tel: 01-289 6394

Typeset by Graphac Typesetting, Enterprise House, 181-191 Garth Road, Morden, Surrey.

British Library No: 0953 8769

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note our change of address for all correspondence, including Advertising, Editorial and Subscriptions.

BRITISH BLUES REVIEW,
15 Chippenham Road, London W9 2AH.

For Artwork
113 Holmesdale Road, Reigate, Surrey RH2 0BT.

n.b. additional telephone numbers for all enquiries: 0737 241458 & 01-289 6394

CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE NOTE:

The deadline for material submitted for publication in October's B.B. Review is 25th August. Unsolicited material must be accompanied by a S.A.E. The editor's decision on copy is final.

ADVERTISERS PLEASE NOTE:

Advert's for the October issue should be booked by 30th August
Artwork should be in by 9th September

B.B. Review is published on the 1st February/April/June/August/October/December.

Please call 01-289 6494

Letters

Dear BBR

In your June issue, you published a letter from a John Mayall fan in Australia.

I like to think that I am the biggest Mayall fan in the UK, having over eighty albums by him, plus many tapes. (I know he only released thirty odd, but different covers, compilations, etc., soon add up.)

Two points:

1. Why no reviews of Mayall's last album, "Chicago Line"?
2. Why so many issues without mentioning the guy?

I know he wasn't the most popular man in the English Blues scene, but it does owe him quite a lot, don't you think? Plus, with a bit more publicity, we might get to see him more often than once every two or three years in England, best wishes.

**Richard Brown,
Luton,
Beds.**

Ed: That's at least four points, Richard. Here are mine:

1. Are you the guy who keeps coming up to me at gigs and asking for Mayall numbers? If so could you pack it in?

2. We're having enough trouble reviewing albums already, without having to go out and buy them. Why don't you write to his record company and get them to send us one - not that they need the publicity.

3. There is no great conspiracy to not mention him, but you are correct in that we have lapsed a little. However, I'm sure that we'll get around to it, probably before he gets around to bringing his concert prices down.

4. If you would like to write an article or ten, on him, without too much bias and too many outrageous claims on his behalf, I will be more than happy to consider it. If it's suitable, I will certainly publish it in the mag. If you can provide some photographs as well, we will use them if

possible and then return them. Any chance of you beating the next deadline? Hang on... how many points is that?

5. Why doesn't anyone write to me any more?

Dear BBR,

HELP! I've been commissioned to write a biography of Fleetwood Mac by a major publisher. (I was the first bass player, went on to play with Savoy Brown, formed the Brunning Sunflower Blues Band and now play in The De-Luxe Blues Band.) If anyone out there has got photos, memorabilia, or anything interesting, I'd love to hear from them on 01-540-6652. Naturally they'd get a credit.

Thanks,
Bob Brunning

BACKSTREET BLUES

AT THE
VICTORIA TAVERN
WORPLE ROAD ♦ ISLEWORTH ♦ MIDDLESEX

Best London's cosiest venue for COUNTRY BLUES

EVERY MONDAY NIGHT

TOP TOPHAM AND GUESTS

ADMISSION FREE

RING 01-892 3536
FOR DETAILS

Sunday Night & Saturday Morning

SHAKY VICK AND WOLFIE WITCHER



Live at The Carnarvon Castle

CASSETTE AVAILABLE NOW!

UK £3.50, Europe £4.00, USA £5.00
(inc. p&p)

Make cheques/POs/IMOs payable to:
G. Vickery, and mail to:
113 Holmesdale Road, Reigate,
Surrey RH2 0BT.

PLEASE NOTE! NEW ADMISSION
PRICES
at the following residency

CARNARVON CASTLE
7 Chalk Farm Road
LONDON NW1
(nearest tube Camden Town)

Presents

high energy rhythm & blues/
goodtime fun

from

**WOLFIE WITCHER and his
BREW**

Every Saturday Afternoon
Middy - 4.30/5pm

Admission price £2.00p/3.00p after
2pm

(featuring 3 audience shattering
1 hour sets (at least). So don't
be late!)

(residency now in its 7th year)

A RAP WITH MICK ABRAHAMS...

WITH INTERRUPTIONS FROM CLIVE BUNKER.

It's twenty years since the unbridled humour of Mick Abrahams first saw the light of day in its own right with the powerful, jazz-tinged, blues/rock band BLODWYN PIG.

Anybody who bought the bands debut album, "Ahead Rings Out", was confronted with some irreverent, but highly amusing, sleeve notes – the like of which consigned the notion of serious album liner notes, to the dustbin.

Twenty years on, and the Mick Abrahams school of slapstick lives on, aided and abetted by former Jethro Tull colleague, and sometime Blodwyn Pig drummer, Clive Bunker. Any notion of a serious interview was jettisoned in the first five minutes; yet between the two musical comics' jovial jousting, both Mick and Clive came up with a few choice anecdotes and reminiscences, besides coming as close as possible to talking seriously about the present and future of the reformed BLODWYN PIG.

For make no mistake, 1989 is the year of the return of the Pig, and with Dick Heckstall-Smith joining original bass player Andy Pyle, plus Bunker, and superb boogie woogie jazz and blues pianist Bruce Boardman, Blodwyn Pig under the "tutelage" of Mick Abrahams are all set to ride again.

"Funnily enough", according to Mick, the 20 year anniversary has nothing to do with the current reformation. For a start Mick and Clive have been playing together, off and on, for 24 years, and as Mick explains the time was right.

"I've been playing with the old bastard for years now and we've always kept in touch. We actually started playing together again on a regular basis round about last December. Like a lot of other guys we just plugged in and started playing the blues again, just like we used to years ago. It was great, and I think Clive was into it, and it just developed from there".

But before Mick went on to explain how he ended up (to coin a phrase) "Getting To This" latest line-up of the band, I wondered about his early influences and first pro bands. "Well it was down to me mum, who went out and bought me a 78rpm record of Bill Haley. Together with Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Bo Diddley and later Herb Ellis (who I played with recently). As well as the usual blues guys, Haley's rock & roll and a modicum of r&b were my earliest influences. But having said that I've



Mick Abrahams.

always loved good boogie piano, Winifred Atwell in particular. She was just about the only British (well West Indian) pianist I had heard play so convincingly. Her playing introduced me to the different musical world of Albert Ammons, Pinetop Perkins, Jimmy Yancey etc. and all those guys. Just about all the records were available at the time, and unfortunately I've just about managed to lose all my original collection as well."

So when did Mick Abrahams the would be guitar star first take to the boards?

"Originally (way back) possibly around 1959/60 I was in a band called The Jesters, later to become THE HUSTLERS. The set was built around The Shadows material, interspersed with some rough Chuck Berry material. I was a rhythm guitarist in those days. A three piece evolved from that line up, rejoicing under the name(s) of THE ORIGINAL HUSTLERS and SON OF THE HUSTLERS etc. and a hundred permutations thereof."

Mick by now is already chuckling his way through some personal stories too complex and spontaneous to recall at great length. But with a little help from Clive Bunker, Mick remembered being approached by one Neil Christian, and being asked to become THE CRUSADERS...

"We were working with Screaming Lord Sutch's drummer and did about 3 or 4 gigs with David Sutch himself. We'd always kick off with Lucille, wiggle around in tight trousers, orange shirts with turned up collars, white high heeled boots, and yer man himself with white peroxide hair, the complete image.... He's still out there today and good luck to him."

Mick's blues-based association with Clive Bunker started somewhere around Mick hooking up with a Manchester band called THE TOGGERY 5. Clive recalls the band winning a "Ready Steady Win" competition, and upon receiving a van as a prize, promptly went out and wrecked it within a couple of weeks. Clive took over the drum stool,

and a little known singer called PAUL YOUNG was just starting to practice using his tonsils.

The next project also featured Clive and gave Mick and Clive the chance to earn a few quid playing some well appreciated blues. Mick takes up the tale.

"Probably around 66/67 we became JANSEN'S TRIALS, me Clive and Andy (Pyle) were in the band, in fact that band folded because of TOGGERY. It became a bit of a Luton based thing, but the reason we were able to play blues was really down to the German scene at the time. Our set was an equal mix of soul and blues, and we had a great following. It was a real disappointment when we came back home to virtually nothing. Neither the music nor the band was held in any regard. Clive's mum told him to go back to Comet Cars, and my mum told me to behave myself and get a proper job" (laughs all round).

"Our collective disappointment was heightened by the fact that of course Hendrix, Clapton and Mayall were all about, and doing well with the blues. So we decided to have another go and the result was MCGREGOR'S ENGINE."

In retrospect the band was an early version of the Mick Abrahams band with Pete Fenson on bass, and Clive on drums, it lasted one year and one night found itself playing opposite a combo called JOHN EVANS SMASH. Clive remembers the time well. John Evans had this soul band with a harmonica player, Ian Anderson and Glen Cornick on bass. To cut a long story short, it became Ian's band and we joined, jumping at the chance to play in a blues band. Clive recalls the time with great affection.

"Smash was a soul band but there was always a blues feel to the project and with Mick joining on guitar, and Ian playing some blues harp, it really became a good blues band. We were playing Folk clubs and the like, it was a great time."

Mick interrupts. "Oh yeah we were playing places like Jimmy's in Stein Street, Brighton, Henry's Blues Club in Birmingham and Mothers also in Brum, as well as the Marquee of course. What about the material? Mick continues...

"Well I was always into the three Kings, B.B. Freddie and Albert, but as to what the band was playing...it evolved around T-Bone Walker, Elmore James, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee etc. I still play "So Much Trouble" in the current set, it's something I've always enjoyed - and still do. Ian Anderson used to feature on a long version of "Stormy Monday" which we always enjoyed."

As if to prove the point, the said track pops up on the 20 years of Jethro Tull compilation, and is as fine a version as I've heard. Blues was still a major ingredient in the Tull band, and prompts the question whether Mick's bluesy direction was ultimately incompatible with Anderson's more whimsical doodlings.

"I basically found myself in a position that I could no longer write with Ian. He



Clive Bunker and friends.

had his own exciting direction, and I was clear where I wanted to go, so I left."

And so to Blodwyn Pig, how did Mick view the original band? "Well Blodwyn Pig was really a rock band with blues players...with a leaning towards jazz. We liked all those things...in fact the current band is probably more blues based than ever, which is great because that's where my heart is."

Mick went on to make a point about the audiences liking the strong blues feel, and upon being asked to compare the crowds then and now, Clive, with his usual impeccable timing, chipped in.

"There's a big difference, both people have enjoyed our first couple of gigs with the new Pig (much laughter)...The main difference between then and now was that everyone from us to Led Zeppelin and T. Rex used to play to the same crowd. In fact we all had the same crowd, so I suppose you could say the audiences were more receptive years ago."

"Blodwyn Pig for example played Philadelphia with Jethro Tull...it was closed!" (more laughter) "But seriously both bands were different but equally well received."

Mick went on to talk about his own band in the post-Blodwyn Pig period, including an eventful association with drummer Richie Dharma. After two mixed albums, Mick actually quit the business under a cloud of disappointment, as Chrysalis failed to get behind the band. A spell of demonstrating guitars for Yamaha ensued, including an instructional album on how to play the guitar.

Mick, to all intents and purposes spent some years thereafter, living the blues, with a number of jobs - and a dose of religion. His love of music and the blues in particular remained undiminished. One major reason for this was that all-pervasive figure behind the British scene Alexis Korner.

"Alexis was like a father to me. It wasn't as if we played together an awful lot either, but when we did, the man was a giant. He had the knack of encouraging the best out of people, and he undoubtedly gave me back my enthusiasm. I got to enjoying my playing

again, and he opened my eyes to some of the great blues artists of the past. I even ended up naming my oldest son after him."

Mick and Clive featured in occasional bands, playing stuff like "Mystery Train", "Some Sunny Day", "Over The Hill" and of course the enduringly popular "Cat's Squirell". The Alexis Korner connection extends to the current band with the presence of Dick Heckstall Smith, one of a number of major talents that Mick is quick to point out.

"Well the present band is so good I'm basically just the singer (and guitarist). These guys are so good that we have so many options every night, that I have trouble just keeping up. We've basically got around 12 numbers to work from, plus all the blues stuff I'm into at the moment. I'm into Bobby Bland's "Black Night's" at present, whilst Dick is contributing a few things and Bruce some boogie woogie. I'm also toying with the idea of a new arrangement of "See My Way", which features a mid number horn part."

Clive was quick to agree with the musical policy of the new band.

"Mick wants to record "Black Nights", and to me blues is the collective springboard of the band, before we leap into the unknown. When we all get into playing longer sets, trying out new things, some more tunes will emerge. Until then it's a leap into the future, and we're enjoying it."

Back to the present with Mick, and 20 years on from the first Pig album, I wondered who he enjoyed listening to today?

"Well that Jeff Healey's a bit special isn't he? And even Eddie Van Halen is a fine guitarist of all styles, but the man for me - talking in terms of blues, jazz and even a touch of country - is Albert Lee without exception. He's dynamite, such a good player...I love the guy. There's also the technical brilliance of people like Adrian Legg, Jerry Donahue etc... The really great thing though is my oldest lad is now playing and he keeps introducing me to new stuff. Some of it is really interesting but I must say I prefer people like Clapton and Robert Cray to the modern school of guitar theory complete with a million notes a minute."

Clive offers his six-pence worth, and, pressed for a contemporary guitar stylist, comes up with Gary Moore.

Blodwyn Pig looks set to move on confidently into the future with a blues based style and enough influence to create an interesting and varied set. Either way it's great to see one of the major forces of the progressive British blues scene back on the boards, fit, jovial and raring to go. I left both Mick and Clive joking the night away minutes before going on stage, with Clive pondering the possibilities of counting in "Night Train", and Mick retorting, "When you learn to count we'll give you a go". Blodwyn Pig are well-and-truly back; look out for a forthcoming August tour.

Pete Feenstra

BACK TO THE "BIG EASY"

Wolfie Witcher in New Orleans

Whilst waiting for the "bluesmobilski" to be repaired, I found myself with time to kill in Croydon. The date was 31st of March 1989 and the weather was freakishly hot! "Phew", beatin' down like it's supposed to in August. I could feel it burning my scalp through the freshly mown number three haircut, so I sought refuge in the nearest record shop.

Half an hour later I was coming out of the Whitgift Centre in the still blazing sunshine with a Dave Bartholomew album under my arm when the sound of two buskers (amplified guitar & string bass) drew me like a magnet. They were thrashing out a really spirited version of Bo Diddley's 'Who do you love'. Grinning like the proverbial Cheshire moggie I dropped my last pound into their guitar case and said to myself "I feel good". (My last pound! I must have done.)

Walking back to the Skoda dealer it slowly dawned on me that the last time I felt like that was in New Orleans. For one mad moment I toyed with the idea of saving a few bob this year and going to Croydon instead, (the sun frying my brains probably) but doubted whether Croydon would sustain that feeling day and night for two whole weeks, which I knew the 'Big Easy' could.

For my exploits and first impressions of the "Crescent City" see "Blues Booze & Chuckaluck" in issue No 3 of BBR. As for this year, read on...

This year I've decided not to do a chronological piece, but if you did read last year's article it goes without saying that the drunken debauchery on a daily (and nightly) basis remains.

Before we even get to New Orleans I want to get controversial and get on an old hobby horse of mine. Those of you that know me well will appreciate my attitude towards the more puristic type of Blues connoisseur (we call 'em "Train Spotters"). So before stating my full intentions and at the risk of boring, I would like to quote some of the beginning of "Blues Booze & Chuckaluck".

"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... especially the local performers, be they Soul, Cajun, Zydeco, R&B, R&R, or the various forms of Rock and Jazz, they all seemed able to play the Blues with feeling..."

Bearing that in mind, I'm going to really stick my neck out and cover whatever I feel like (editor's scissors permitting) whilst still trying to keep as close to the Blues (and Britain for that matter) as I can. Here goes.

O.K. "Train Spotters" prepare to ignore this article because here are some of the artists I shall be referring to that may not be in your notebooks: Johnny J & the Hitmen, Henry Butler, Ben E. King, Clarence Frogman Henry, Allen Toussaint, Jon "King" Cleary, Jessie Hill, Oliver Morgan, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, John Fred & the Playboys, Backsliders, Johnny Adams, Fats Domino, Rebirth Jazz Band, and more....

I may appear to gloss over some artists of importance but this is merely because I have covered them in last year's article and want to avoid too much repetition.

Here they are. Lonnie Brooks, Sam Myers, Anson Funderburgh, Ford "Snooks" Eaglin, Jumpin' Johnny, Luther Kent, and "Mighty" Sam McClain.

With around 500 quality acts appearing within two weeks, albeit in the same city, and even with some making more than one appearance, (sometimes several), it is still inevitable that we should miss a few, so here is my final (editor-annoying) list of those: Willie Cole Blues band, Boogie Bill Webb, Willie Tee, Henry Gray, Little Freddie King, Deacon John Blues Revue, Hezekiah & the House Rockers, Mojo Collins*, Robert Cray featuring the Memphis Horns*, Guitar Slim Jr*, Johnny Winter, Marva Wright, John Mooney and Bluesiana, Dave Bartholomew Big Band, Silas Hogan, Rockin' Dopsie, Clancy "Blues Boy" Lewis, and that's just the relevant ones!!

NOTE, artists marked * did not appear at the festival due to cyclone damage.

While still on the subject of missing people but trying to avoid another list, it was sad to hear about the death of Alvin "Shine" Robinson whose show I enjoyed last year. Likewise Bobby Mitchell, scheduled to play (and I was hoping to see him for the first time) but who died in March from an illness that he had endured for many years. Guitar Kelly whose gig I reported last year, is seriously ill, and Jack Dupree on return to his native city for the first time in over thirty years and was due to make several appearances, had been admitted to hospital and as far as I know, did not play at all.

Not being quite so in awe of the place as last year, my wife (Jackie) and I were able to do, see, eat and drink much more this time, are still deeply in love with the place and are currently planning a grand larceny to finance a return visit.



The Jazz & Heritage Festival itself was pretty much as described last year but I'll swear there were twice as many punters, perhaps we caught it before it turns into a monster like Mardi Gras.

Having spent five days at the festival proper, which runs from 11am till 7pm, you can imagine the amount of space needed to write about everything we saw, so I intend to keep it selective as there are other aspects I would like to cover, such as the clubs, the city, the weather etc.

The Clubs. With about 200 venues in and around New Orleans (pronounced, Nawlins) presenting some sort of live music on a regular basis, it would take a large liquor allowance to cover them all, but I think we managed a fair selection of the R&B type.

Tipitinas, on the corner of Napoleon & Tchoupitoulas (pronounced, Chopitoolus) is a sort of living shrine to Henry Roeland "Professor Longhair" Byrd, (and quite right too). The bill was so strong in Tipitinas that we spent four consecutive nights there!

The first one was billed as follows, Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, Lonnie Brookes and Kenny & Rafal Neal. Rafal didn't show but the Neal's were well represented with two of Kenny's brothers on bass & drums. Here is evidence of the power of BBR. On the strength of last year's article, Jackie and I were invited backstage by Kenny Neal where we met Buddy & Junior and re-acquainted ourselves with Lonnie Brooks. So elated was I with hobnobbing with my heroes that I clean forgot to ask Kenny where his dad was. (Just call me scoop.)

Next night at "Tips" was a very different atmosphere because about twenty rows of seats were installed at the front, giving the place a concert feel. Billed as "A Piano Night" featuring Dr John, Champion Jack Dupree, and several others, the gig was in aid of the "Professor Longhair Foundation". As mentioned earlier Jack Dupree did not perform. Third man on was that boy from the deep south (Kent) Jon "King" Cleary, who really woke up what at that point was a flagging show. Jon tore the place up so much I began to feel sorry for whoever was on next. I needn't have worried, Henry Butler, a Jazz musician, sounded to me like a cross between Scott Joplin and Tchaikowsky and had the audience spellbound. The whole evening's musical theme was N.O.L.A. (pronounced, Noo Awlins Loo-ee-zee-anna) and Henry played some surprisingly tenuous ones, like "Old man river" and "You are my sunshine" which was composed by a former governor of Louisiana, Jimmie Davis. Now, "Train Spotters" are probably wondering why I'm reporting about Henry Butler and I must confess that I was going to have a bit of fun at their expense by pretending that he deserved a mention here because he's black and blind!! But then he went and spoiled the joke by playing the Blues, and I mean Blues. So believe me when I say that Henry Butler is a major talent, not just as a pianist, but also as a superb vocalist, and he should not be ignored for ANY reason.

The following night at Tipitinas was a live recording session entitled "BLACK TOP BLUES-A-RAMA 89" and if you want to know what it was like, just buy the album when it comes out. Here's who played, and for only \$10. Anson Funderburgh & the Rockets, Ronnie Earl & the Broadcasters, Earl King, Snooks Eaglin, Sam Myers, Hubert Sumlin, Ron Levy, Bobby Radcliff, Grady Gaines, James "Thunderbird" Davis, Joe Medwick, Big Robert Smith, & Joe Hughes. We only managed to see about eight or nine of these acts so, for all I know there could have been more.

The fourth consecutive night that we spent at Tip's was another good one featuring Roomful of Blues and The Dirty Dozen Brass Band, a local act who should at last receive deserved wider acclaim having recently recorded with Elvis Costello. An unusual guest with the Dirty Dozen was Mr Bones, playing (you guessed it) the bones. Mr Bones is famous for having played with just above everyone from Bob Dylan downwards. (Or upwards, depending upon your view.)

That was four nights at one club, and now for four clubs in one night! But first the piss-up. There was a barbecue at the hotel, and not having learned their lesson from last year, the beer was free again! A very foolish thing to do with one Witcher about, never mind two. So this year I thought we'd teach them a real lesson by inviting a couple of locals as drinking reinforcements. I use the term "locals" loosely because Ben Maygarden, singer, harmonica player, former and future contributor to BBR,



lives in New Orleans and has been working in the Tulane Jazz Archives, is originally from Virginia. And Carl Leyland, pianist, currently trying to settle in N.O. is from Southampton, (yes, the one in Hampshire U.K.). There was a 50's New Orleans style R&B disco at the barbecue, hosted by Duke-A-Paducah who I had just been listening to on radio WWOZ (a pre-recorded tribute to Bobby Mitchell). It took us till about 11.00pm to polish off the free beer and Jackie was the first casualty (retired drunk) of the evening. First port of call was a club called the Maple Leaf bar, where I saw one of the best cajun/zydeco bands I'm ever likely to see in Fernest Arceneaux & The Thunders. Then we went to see Spencer Bohren, a folk/blues singer/guitarist who called up several guests, one of which was Mr Bones. A short chat with Mr Bones and his friend (a harp player) revealed that they are acquainted with my old mate Sammy Mitchell (now living in Denmark). Small world innit. This all occurred in a bar/music club called Carrollton Station which sells beer in English pints, and I fear this was my undoing because although I remember seeing the tail end of the Radiators at Tipitinas there was a venue we visited between there and Carrollton Station that remains locked in the dead cells of my memory (perhaps Ben will remind me in his next article).

One venue we never got around to was Blues Ally, which you may have anticipated has a Blues policy. It seems to have a reputation as a "dive" but Ben assures me that this is merely because some of the regulars have no teeth and don't shave very often.

Jackie and I had a good evening at a bar called Benny's even though Benny's IS a dive. And I mean dive. Nothing more than a shack, this place makes the Hare & Hounds, Islington, look like the Ritz!

The Economy Bar is a large warehouse with a bar in the corner and no stage, the band sets up on the floor in another corner. The band we saw was Johnny J & the Hitmen, a 3 piece specialising in the rockabilly end of RnB. They have already toured Scandinavia, so it probably won't be long before we see them here. The sparseness of the venue allows maximum space to squeeze punters in, (a few hundred easily) but there is only one W.C., which is used exclusively by females. Males use the parking lot next door (there generally seems to be very relaxed hygiene regulations in N.O. establishments). Muddy Waters is a club run by an Australian, a nice clean club with good food etc, and we patronised it several times seeing a wide range of acts including The Backsliders, (featuring Ben Maygarden) Walter "Wolfman" Washington, (re-

acquainting ourselves with "Mighty" Sam McClain, drinking on a rare night off) and J. Monque'd who I last saw at the Cricketers, Kennington Oval, about eight years ago.

That was some of our nighttime musical activities, now for some daytime ones. A late night drink (4am) in a bar hosting a jam session, (Jazz) resulted in being told by a local tuba player about a jazz funeral at 10.30am. The address was in an area that we had been advised to avoid, therefore, slightly hungover and trying not to look like tourists, (no cameras, bags or tell tale motif T-shirts) we set off. On the way, a dude walking in the other direction came straight up to us and said "Hey, there's a really good jazz funeral goin' on down there" and proceeded to give us (short cut) directions (so much for not looking like tourists). We caught up with the funeral and joined the second line for a couple of blocks. At the end of a side street the band came to a halt and split into two halves, one on either side of the road, (pronounced, pavement) and the second line stood behind them on the pavement, (pronounced sidewalk) the party atmosphere temporarily disappeared as the band (Rebirth Jazz Band?) played a really slow dirge whilst the hearse and cortege "marched" past. As the hearse car drove slowly through the parade, various friends of the deceased (second liners & musicians) came forward and by way of paying their last respects, stroked, patted or kissed the vehicle before it sped away to the cemetery. Then the band went straight into top gear and with umbrellas waving and everybody dancing, suddenly it was party time again. At that point Jackie saw the tears rolling down my cheeks and asked me if I would like to leave. "Your bloody joking! I wouldn't miss this for the world!" Probably because of the sudden mixture of emotions, I can safely say that it was *the* most moving experi-



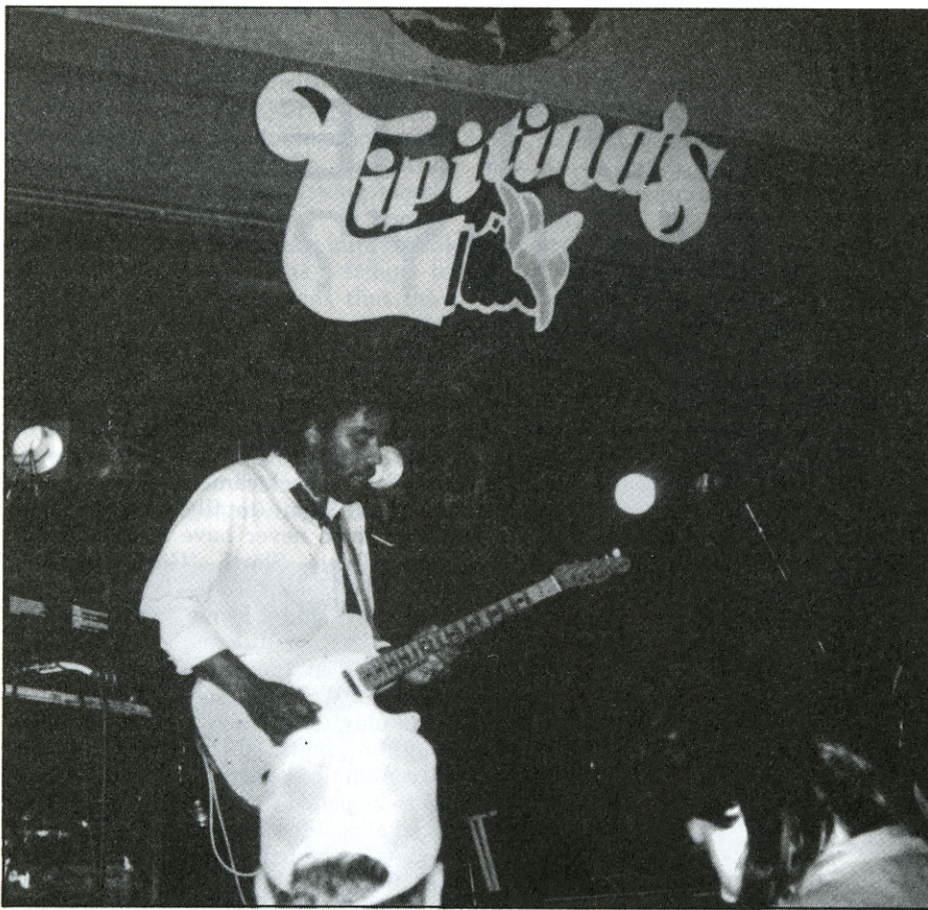
ence of my life so far. But there's more. Everybody moved out into the main road, taking up all three lanes and backing up the traffic to who knows where. The band marched and played and we all danced along with them. The arrangements seemed to be timed to perfection for certain breaks that occurred requiring us (pronounced, y'all) to leap in the air and shout as we travelled under an echoing underpass. We stayed with it until we hit the edge of the "projects" (pronounced, ghetto) and I noticed that the other half dozen white faces in the crowd had disappeared.

Suddenly I felt like a spot on a domino, (even my wife is Afro English) so we dropped out at that point, watching the procession disappear and marvelling at the enormous and enormously respectful traffic jam that timidly followed.

What we witnessed is unique to New Orleans, and even people that have lived there for decades have not had the same privilege, so I don't know who died but I shall be eternally grateful to him/her for the experience.

One afternoon we tagged along with a bunch of Brits going to see Sea-Saint studios. Piling out of a couple of cabs we strolled up to the door and were surprised to discover that we were not expected, and even more surprised to be warmly invited in, served coffee, and generally fussed over. (Southern hospitality.) I got chatting with a local soul singer, now turned D.J. called Lee Bates. I must confess that the name didn't ring a bell, but luckily one of the Brits was a "Train Spotter" who along with his cameras, video recorder, tape machine and who knows what else, had a copy of the N.O. RnB bible, (I Hear You Knock-in' by Jeff Hannusch) and Lee turned out to be the lifelong friend and partner of Chris Kenner, (my hero). While engrossed in conversation with Lee, out of the corner of my eye I saw someone that did ring a bell, Allen Toussaint had just walked in the room and Jackie was acting strange, (her hero). He had just popped in to make sure that we (uninvited strangers) were comfortable, (more southern hospitality). Then we met Marshall Sehorn who enquired as to whether we might be able to deliver some hickory wood to Paul McCartney. (It's a different world, innit?)





hope somebody brings him over here, *with* his great band.

Next we moved to the WVUE Burger King Stage where we saw the whole of Clarence "Frogman" Henry's set. Instead of playing piano, he spent most of his set "fronting" the band and giving us a solid hour of New Orleans hits, (a lot of them his own) during which he pointed out and named what seemed like half of the massive crowd, most of whom were his relatives but even if they weren't he knew where they lived, naming several Europeans from Germany, France, and "There's Paul Harris from England" or "I know you, you're that bad cat from the Ninth Ward". He even managed to get a policeman to dance! All in all a good humoured and enjoyable hour.

Blind Willie's is a blues club in Atlanta, Georgia; named after Willie McTell, Blind Willie's Blues Revue featured some of the leading blues artists from that neck of the woods and guess what? I missed nearly all of it, and can't tell you a thing about it except that they finished on a great version of "Sloppy Drunk" that made me quite homesick for the Carnarvon Castle, Camden.

The second weekend of the festival was reduced to two days due to a cyclone on the Thursday night which blew the stages over and blew away the tents. Limited space here restricts a full weather report, but if you buy me a half (pronounced, Pint) I'll tell you all about it.

Meanwhile back at the festival John Lee Hooker and the Coast to Coast Blues played to a BIG crowd on the RAY-BAN WWL-TV stage, but I have to admit to enjoying more the Reggie Hall Band on the Y96-FM stage, who played to a much smaller crowd.

Fronting Reggie's band at various intervals were Jessie "Ooh Poo Pah Doo" Hill, Oliver "La La" Morgan, Albert "Dog Man" Smith, Li'l Sonny Jones & Chairman Neville, among others.

Last year I bumped into Diz Watson in the WWOZ broadcasting tent, and this year it was Jon Cleary in almost identical circumstances. Jon was there with Snooks Eaglin who he had just finished a set with.

The obvious candidate for the final set of the final day was Fats Domino, who gave his usual consistent best, but earlier highlights of the day for me were Johnny Adams, (The Tanned Canary) whose voice defies belief, Allen Toussaint, and John Fred & the Playboys. John Fred, born in Baton Rouge was raised with and is deeply in love with New Orleans Music in particular, and R&B in general, which was obvious when we heard his set, (obligatory hits excepted). As he was thrashing out a really spirited version of Bo Diddley's "Who do you love" I said to myself "I feel good", then it slowly dawned on me that the last time I felt like that was in Croydon. For one mad moment....

Now for some of my personal highlights from the 20th New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, (pronounced, the Fest).

One of the first acts we saw at the Fest was Tabby Thomas & Blues Box Revue. As with Bo Diddley last year, I had seen Tabby in England (backed by British musicians) and here was my chance to see him perform on his home turf. Blues Box Revue is named after Tabby's Baton Rouge club, Tabby's Blues Box & Heritage Hall. Tabby's sound was not dissimilar to his English gigs (all credit to the Junkyard Angels) apart from being bigger, with the addition of harmonica & sax. Definitely different though, was the sexual orientation of the drummer, and a depth of guest artists including guitarist Will Jackson who sang Lonely Tears, and W. W. Woodfall, who interestingly combined the "down home" style of singing with the "jump blues" style of song, i.e. Shake Rattle & Roll, and Flip Flop Fly.

On the same afternoon we saw Katie Webster, twice! First in the Music Heritage Tent performing solo at the piano, giving musical interjections to Ice Cube Slim's lecture on her life/career. We were treated to a wonderful diversity of styles, of which the highlight for me was her tribute to Otis Redding. Less than an hour later she was on the WVUE Burger King Stage dancing about in front of a big band, screaming soul and shouting the blues.

Once a frequent visitor to Britain & Europe, Cousin Joe is a frail looking 82 now, but the moment he sits at the piano, he's 30 years younger. Still delivering those clever lines with brilliant comic timing, he had me in fits of

laughter once again. Due to the fact that I owed him some royalties, I had the privilege of meeting Joe after his set and he seemed pleased to receive the money.

On the same day as Cousin Joe, we saw the aforementioned Buddy Guy & Junior Wells, and Lonnie Brooks. Also, Ben E. King did a similar dual performance to Katie Webster the day before.

On the first Sunday of the Fest, we arrived a bit later than planned, and made a beeline towards the Ray-Ban WWL-TV stage where Bobby "Blue" Bland was due to perform, but we kept getting drawn like magnets to various tents and stages en route. First we were drawn to the Music Heritage Tent by the Mississippi delta blues sound of James "Son Ford" Thomas which took me back about twenty years to when I played on the same bill as Son House. As we left Son Ford I was wondering how many other old guys were still playing in the original authentic style, when from the tent next door came the melodic ragtime blues picking sound of John Jackson. We finally made it to Bobby Bland but we were a long way from the front; nevertheless, the band sound was still excellent, but I felt that he went a bit over the top with his (trademark) snort or whatever it is. (Sounded like a chunder from where I was standing.) After that we took in a bit of Zydeco from Boozoo Chavis who, unlike most music served up as Zydeco these days, (R&B with accordion) is the real thing, and I haven't heard anything like it since seeing Clifton Chenier at the Albert Hall in 1969. All this fell logically into place when I learned that Boozoo Chavis gave up music for twenty years to pursue his other love, training race-horses. Lets

BURNLEY 89 THE FIRST OF MANY?

By Brian Smith

If the Mechanics Institute of a Northern English industrial town seems an unlikely setting for the finest Blues Festival seen here in many a year, then the Leisure Services Department of the local Borough Council is perhaps no less unlikely as a promoter.

In my ignorance, I discovered Burnley Mechanics only a year or so ago. Despite being brought up in nearby Manchester, Burnley remained one of those small towns I had visited only through 50's football, so the image I had retained of it was thoroughly undeserved and outdated. Even though I had seen ads in recent years for the Mechanics, I actually thought that this was a Pub!

I couldn't have been more wrong and trips to see the likes of Louisiana Red, Carey Bell, Ted Hawkins and others have shown the Mechanics to be the culture centre of the region. The range of musical and other artistic activities, concerts, recitals and workshops available seven nights a week is astonishing. In fact, the more I see of places like Burnley, it is clear that the smaller towns are leaving behind many of their larger city neighbours in this respect; whether this results from more men of vision or budgetary constraints I leave to the politicians and economists to resolve.

Anyway, it was against this background that Gary Hood decided to organise what was ambitiously called, from the outset, the FIRST Burnley National Blues Festival. Where others had failed financially, even with one-nighters, he and his team simply went out and got the necessary sponsorship and lined up a varied and impressive array of talent, from American Blues legends through to home grown pub bands.



Little Willie Littlefield photo Brian Smith



Playboy Sanchez photo Brian Smith

Blues Festivals are however a lot more than a series of unconnected concerts. They are an occasion where like minded people can meet to see a wide range of different types and styles of the blues. As such, Burnley this Easter was a resounding success on just about every level. Every night we had over four hours of music from up to four good acts, all for only five or six quid. There were workshops and master classes, record and instrument fairs, lectures, many free performances in the bars and even buskers outside. The whole weekend was an object lesson in quiet, efficient organisation, with helpful smiling faces everywhere, effective but totally hassle-free security (larger venues please copy), excellent sound and lighting, all rounded off with good beer, good food and accommodation all at refreshingly non-rip-off prices!

So much for the setting and presentation – now to the music. **Day 1** of the Festival opened with a bang, with a typically storming set from the incomparable Big Town Playboys. This band have to be the most authentic purveyors of 40's and 50's R and B since the original artistes themselves were performing the songs. Close Your Eyes and You Are There! Outstanding musicians and, in any other field, Mike Sanchez would be a superstar – what a performer!

Next on was Little Willie Littlefield, in terrific form with his usual infectious blend of blues and good humoured, good time boogie. First on his own, with

classics like "Let the Good Times Roll" and "Stormy Monday" and his own "Cheerful Baby" and "Once I was Lucky"; then back came the Playboys to accompany him (totally unrehearsed, though you'd never have known it) on "Going Down Slow", "Good Rocking Tonight", "Honky Tonk Train Blues", "KC Lovin'" and a lovely "Shake Rattle and Roll" with Willie and Mike Sanchez alternating at the piano with never a note lost. Welcome encores (including Willie playing the piano with his shoe) brought a great night to a close. Surely this couldn't be bettered? It could!

Day 2 opened with breakfast with the Littlefields, then on to the first of the freebies in the bar, with a solo performance from Sanchez, doing some of his Playboys material plus instrumental boogies and even a thundering boogie version of "Spanish Eyes".

Then a stroll round to the hotel where we'd heard Fenton Robinson had arrived. He turned out to be asleep so we sat having a jar when Champion Jack Dupree walked out of a lift and someone shouted "fancy a beer Jack?". Without even looking who was calling, Jack shouted back, "Not beer, wine!", sat down and nattered non-stop for over an hour as though we were next door neighbours. A wonderful set of yarns – some of them probably even true! (Watch "Blues and Rhythm" later for more on this).

The night's proceedings kicked off with the always excellent Jo Ann Kelly. I have loved her, Man and Beast for twenty years since someone tricked me with supposedly a Memphis Minnie record (he'd even added scratches!) and she's lost none of her power, even though her voice has mellowed a touch. Raphael Callagan joined her with some nice sympathetic harp on several numbers.

Then it was back to the Playboys – a similar set but, if anything, even more into their stride. I hear Ace are about to remedy the barely credible lack of recorded material from this band.

After becoming one of the real hits of the entire weekend, the Playboys also backed the second set from the night's top of the bill, Champion Jack Dupree. I last saw Jack in about 1970 and the afternoon's chat and his appearance before going on stage showed that he was physically pretty frail – now in his late 70's, how would he be on stage? Forget all doubts – the years melted away and the old voice, the piano attack and the wonderful dry humour were all there in abundance and he was, in fact, as good as I've ever seen him.

After a lovely solo set, with the likes of "Too Late Blues", "Junkers Blues" and "Mean Old Frisco", he too was joined by the Playboys. Like Willie and other piano men now used to playing mostly unaccompanied, rehearsal is pretty pointless (as well as usually impractical on this time scale) so it is a tribute to Andy Silvester and the lads that they blended in so effortlessly. A terrific set, including "Low Down Dog", "Drinking Wine", "One Scotch, One Bourbon, One Beer" plus yards of others, many of them hybrids and ad libs from his long career, but none the worse for that. At that age, he could realistically retire at any time, so you've got to feel privileged to see the

Before that we'd had an excellent set from Steve Phillips and Brendon Croker and the real surprise of **Day Four**, the new Kevin Brown band. Always competent and entertaining, his tour with Joe Louis Walker has apparently put the last brick in the wall. There was more than a touch of Joe Louis in his excellent act, without being in any way derivative, including a (self penned?) fulsome tribute called "Joe Louis" as well as "Talk To Me Baby", "High Ground", "Melt Down" (with great slide) "Don't Quit, Just Do It", and some well deserved encores. Well worth looking out for (and he clearly remembered his earlier BBR review, too!).



Fenton Robinson photo Brian Smith

man on such good form, for what could always be the last time. Wonderful stuff.

I couldn't make Saturday and by all accounts missed a splendid "party night" with Otis Grand and the Dance Kings.

Back on Sunday afternoon for fascinating workshops with Steve Phillips and Johnny Mars, with Johnny demonstrating his full range of special effects. He did the same that night with his now very slick, entertaining act, accompanied by a predominantly rock-based band of top class session men including the excellent Ray Fenwick. The highlight for me was probably "Born Under a Bad Sign", though the masses loved every encore including a version of "Amazing Grace" straight out of "Journey Into Space"!

Day 5 – some great blowing at the harmonica championships including a fourteen year old kid, with an unbelievable lack of nerves, who so impressed judge Johnny Mars that he threw in some lessons along with the third place prize. Deservedly won, though, by Clive Mellor from the Lonesome and Penniless Combos, with a lovely controlled spot using the full range of his instrument.

Then upstairs to Fenton Robinson's master class. In truth, I'm not sure Fenton fully realised what he was there for and it turned out to be more a performance than a class, but nonetheless a nice relaxed introduction to the man and his voice and guitar, mingled with a bit of chat and later some jamming with a few appreciative young guitarists.

The final evening's concert was kicked-off by the ever-improving Norman Beaker Band and then a thoroughly entertaining Country Blues and Gospel spot from Hans Theesink, including songs drawn from Broonzy, McTell, Sam Chatman and Robert Johnson. He has a good strong voice and a very aggressive guitar style (with some particularly fine slide work) and the handsome sod caused a few female flutters around where I was sitting!

So to the climax to the weekend – Fenton Robinson again. He did two spots accompanied by the Beaker Band, the first for the TV, then a longer one. The afternoon's class had perhaps lived up to his "Mellow Fellow" tag rather too well and had been a bit on the jazzy side. The night was something altogether stronger with a very satisfying soulful voice and some terrific guitar in the T-Bone Walker mould. Indeed, he did T-Bone's "Stormy Monday Blues" (nice) as well as a wide range of songs taking in his own material like "Somebody Loan Me a Dime" (though regrettably for me perhaps not enough of his old Duke sides) as well as the likes of "My Girl" and Sonny Boy Williamson's "Help Me". After the barnstorming of the previous days, this was a pleasant mellow end to the most enjoyable weekend I've spent in a long, long time. There will surely be more.

May I be permitted to add my personal thanks to Gary Hood and his Press Officer Ashley Bramwell for access and facilities extended to myself, which were absolutely unparalleled.

Brian Smith

Postscript

Sorry to end on a slight "Down", but the Granada documentary of the Festival, since seen (only in the North so far?) was pretty unsatisfying. Though beautifully FILMED (film is invariably warmer than the usual harsh video we tend to get these days), had it been the first of two one hour shows, I would not have argued over much. But in including some of the footage at the expense of some incredible omissions, the editing was inexplicable. The programme already imposed its own limitations by only covering the first and last night. It then dwelt on the harmonica championships out of all proportion, even including an additional song, performed in a bar and seen by no-one but themselves! None of the Fenton Robinson Master Class (though part of it was filmed) and in deciding to show only one of his songs from the concert, they sloppily chose "Stormy Monday", which Willie had only sung five minutes before! Most astonishing of all was the total omission of the biggest single acknowledged hit of the entire weekend, The Big Town Playboys. Rather a wasted opportunity then, unless they can be persuaded to show some of the actual individual performances in separate shows. Get writing!

“No Rattlesnake Beads”

Lucky Lopez Evans talks to John Wilson

It's curious how reputations are made. It doesn't seem to matter which areas you look at, there are puzzles. Football, cars, music you name it, there are grossly over-inflated reputations (Butch Wilkins and the Volvo P1800) and the undervalued (John Gregory and the Panhard Tigre?).

Picking out the overestimated is relatively easy, although sometimes surprising – try playing the Presley and Little Richard versions of Tutti Frutti back to back. No contest.

All of which brings me, in my own roundabout way, to Lucky Lopez Evans, currently on his second UK tour. Hearing him play quickly establishes him as one of those bluesmen who clearly deserves, and is probably going to get, an even wider following.

Lucky was in Brighton, my home town and base for Dave Minns who's setting up the tour, staying with Frank Doubleday of The Snakemen, the group providing the backing over here.

Now I don't claim to be an expert, but I have been a blues fan for... well ever since a reasonably early Cyril Davies gig. Lucky Lopez/Lucky Evans were names that I associated with Howlin' Wolf and I admit that I wasn't too sure as to just how many bluesmen they covered. Before I went round I had a look at my Wolf albums for guidance, the three with sleeves that is, no mention. So, uneasily ignorant, off I went.

Lucky is a very easy man to talk with, relaxed, quiet, alert and with a sweet sense of deadpan humour. His early years are almost a Chicago Bluesman's prototype. Born in Mississippi in '37, nine miles north of Harrisburg in a town called Estabudine, he went up North to Wisconsin to stay with his eldest sister when his mother died. His father, a farmer, was also well known locally as a guitarist – “he was pretty good too” playing picnics and fish fries – and moonshiner.

Lucky played trumpet and french horn in the school band, but didn't really switch from being a music fan to being a musician until he joined the army in '54.

In the 7th Division there were some C&W musicians, and Lucky played some USO concerts with Ernie Bradshaw and, later, Lowell Price.

“After the army I went back to Milwaukee and then back down to Mississippi. I had an old busted Gene Autry guitar, but it was good and loud. I remember a guy in the Haymarket in Milwaukee told me to put some rattlesnake beads in it to make it sound better. I looked around some, but I never found any.”

After working in a sawmill, Lucky signed on with the circus, not playing, putting up and striking the big top. At

\$1 an hour casual or \$24 a day room and board it seemed too good to miss. So he stayed on.

Come pay day he found that the

money wasn't that good after all; two dollars a day was the rate after adjustment. So with \$3.65 he quit. “At the bus depot I found that a ticket back to Mississippi was 19 dollars, so I went back to the Circus and saved. We were heading South through Florida and each week I was farther from home, and I never had enough for the fare. I made up a shoe shine box and was shining shoes for extra cash. That was in winter quarters at the Winter Gardens in Florida.

“I was making more money, and spending it – bought a real sharp suit – I was travelling around – not too worried



about getting home – I got so I was content to stay with it. I was starting to work with the Lion and Tiger act, I was helping drive them back down the tunnel after the act was over. Clyde – it was the Clyde Bee & Co Circus, they later sold out to Ringlin’ I think it was – anyway Clyde decided I should have a go at the training. Real easy it was, most of the time. Then one night I was driving them back down the tunnel. There was one tricky one, and he got behind me, and I was trying to get this big lion off the stool. The sonofabitch behind me made a move and started making a noise and the other came off the stool and pinned me to the bars of the cage. Clyde had to shoot him right there – and that was the end of taming.”

Lucky left the Circus and met up with William Boyd out of Peoria Illinois, a trick horse rider. They lived out in a trailer on the Wintergardens Racetrack at Orlando and started playing C&W round the local Hillbilly joints, or anywhere else that would pay.

“He had a big nice convertible, a ’52 Buick I think it was – anyway it was a real nice car. He had flair you know?”

Trouble came when some locals got wound up about white women visiting the trailer. Boyd was white but “Folks started paying attention. We were just living loose. They didn’t like that. I came back to the trailer one time and it was wrecked. By this time we had the trailer out on a piece of farmland. I saw the farmer and he said that I’d better get out. I figured that I couldn’t do anything for Bill, some of his women would’ve helped him. I got out. I figured somebody Klu Kluxed him, or he was in jail, something bad.”

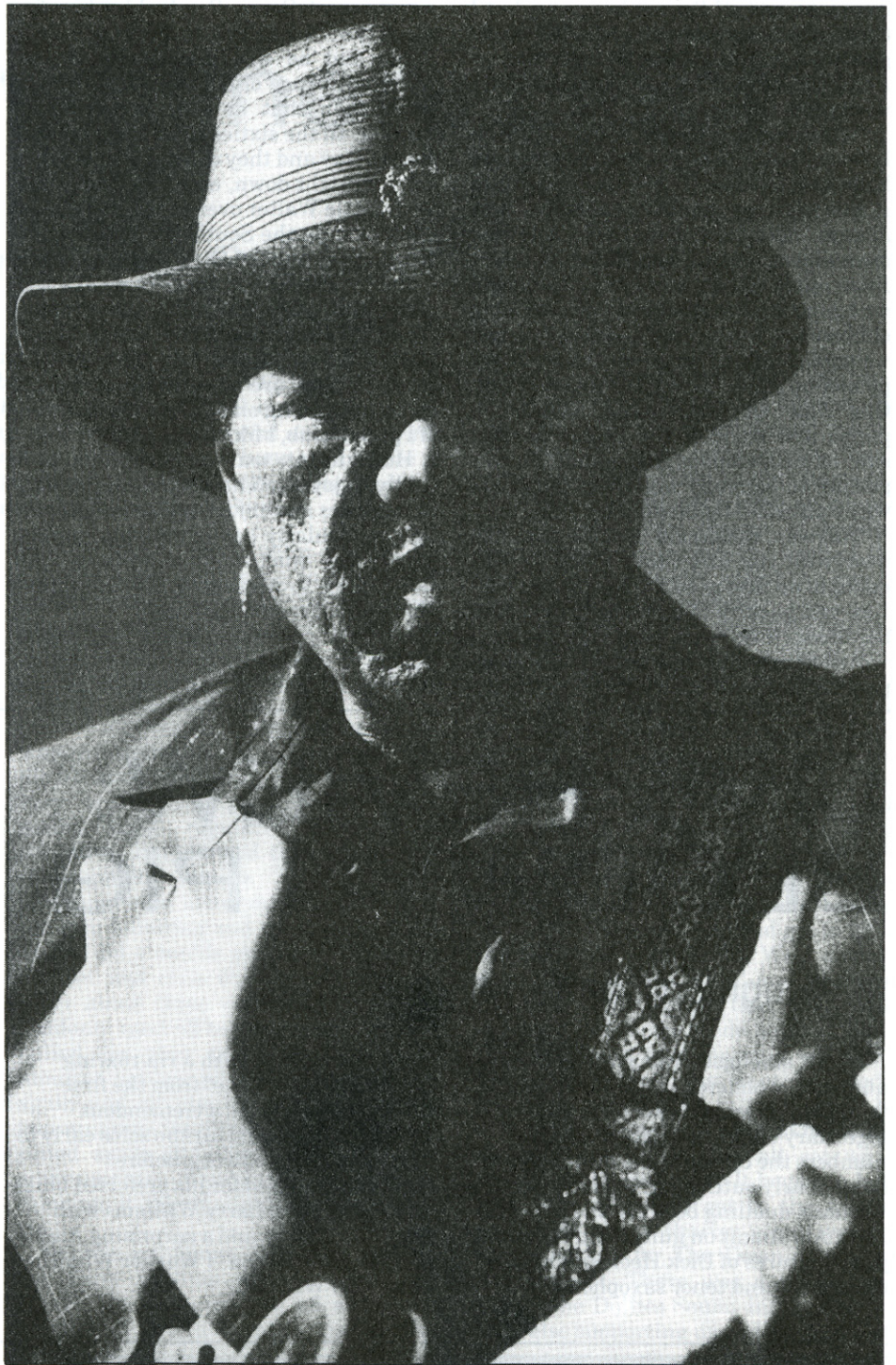
After another spell up North, Lucky went back to Mississippi and joined the Rhythm X Band, meeting up with Martha Strudeman who joined the group as a pianist and singer.

“We got on real well – I was a player in those days. She gave me a real nice Silvertone guitar for my birthday – the first good electric guitar I ever had.”

Lucky had got himself a wide range of experience, playing R&B, Be Bop, C&W – “I’d play anywhere anyone wanted a singer, guitar player. See I don’t really consider music as a profession. I never decided to play for a living, I just sort of found myself doing it.”

He went to college for a while and believes it helped him a lot. “I learned more about the theory and it made me able to do more, I could compose after that.”

When he was 28 he left the South, went to Chicago, got married and met Howlin’ Wolf. “I used to go the Silvio Nightclub on Lake and Holman out on the Westside of Chicago. I went out there one night when Wolf was working. He was sitting on the front of the stand. I’d never seen him before. I’d paid \$2 entry. I just wanted to talk to him. I asked him for a tune, and I asked him to howl and he said ‘I don’t feel like howling’. He wasn’t feeling too good and



we talked and then he asked me to sit in and play and sing. ‘I’m going to sit down and listen’ and he did. And he really didn’t feel good, you know he had about six heart attacks in all?”

“I considered it an honour and things just went on from there. I had no guitar again and so I had to buy a guitar but he was paying me double set because I was singing and playing. Hubert was going to teach me to play like Wolf, but I couldn’t hook it up. Everytime there was variations – that’s when I decided to go to music school. I was with them for seven years.

“I’ve heard the stories (about Wolf’s reputation for a quick and effective temper) but never seen any of that. He was a good man, good to me. Always paid good. I used to be up at his house and we’d go hunting or fishing some-

times. There weren’t nothing.

“Mind you there are some real dumb cats. Like Wolf was big – he took a size 15 shoe. You’d have to be pretty dumb to take up with that. He’d tighten up if someone messed up a set. If after two or three numbers and folks had paid to see you and things just don’t sound good I’d tighten up myself. Wolf was a serious fella. He was a thinker, within himself a great deal. If you don’t have no death in your personality you lose meaning, lose reality. You’re turning your performance into a show.

“Anyway, then I was in hospital for six months with TB and I got replaced by Eddie Shaw.”

I asked him why he didn’t go back to the band after he’d recovered and he replied quietly “Well I was the best thing that happened to that band, I was

really jumping. They didn't want me back." Then, realising how that could sound, he added "I'm not bragging, but I think it was my lifestyle, I LIKED to be good - I'd steal the show. So from then on I had no choice, I formed a band and we went off to California.

"We thought we were going into Hollywood, but we ended up playing the little smoke holes for five dollars and so it was back east again to Chicago. I was always ready for the road. Anytime anyone was getting something together, I was ready. When we went to California we has a lot of sleeping out. We had a big old bus you know, like a school bus and we sort of filled her up on the way. We picked up hitch hikers 'till we were full. One time we just parked and had a party, and some of the people passing saw us and stopped and joined. It was getting to be really big when the Highway Patrol finally broke it up.

"Anyway, California in those days was nearly all jazz and C&W so we weren't going to do that good anyway. After that I moved back to Wisconsin. I preferred the life style anyway, more relaxed."

Just about that time there was a short partnership with Sonny Boy Williamson

(the second) in a club. They had first met much earlier, when Lucky had had a paper round. Sonny Boy had hit him for a quarter. "I was out by Mr. Lee's Pool Room and he was playing up at the Playboy Lounge on 12 and 19th. I didn't know then that he was that kind of drinker. In the sixties I ran into him and Buddy Guy and they drink a pint of gin a set - straight down, each set. I sat some with Little Walter over at the Red Onion Club over on the South side and Freddy King - that was the High Heaven time."

Lucky doesn't get down to what's left of the club scene in Chicago these days. "Most of them don't use bands. They have DJs or just a juke box, boogie heads. There are places where there's something going on but I don't fret none. If I go to a club, I like to get paid."

His current tour is something he's really enjoying. The people are coming in numbers and enjoying themselves and he's particularly happy with his support group, The Snakemen, so much so that he's trying to arrange a recording session and subsequent album.

Lucky's currently using an Artist guitar. "Probably the best I've ever had. It holds a line and does a good job. Before

that I had a S G and then a Firebird. Now once I had a Jaguar but someone stole it, a real Fender Jaguar, I couldn't afford it then, and I couldn't now but I'd like to find a real authentic one." The loss of the Jaguar clearly rankles still.

The first guitar, the Gene Autry was no accident, for Lucky always was a C&W fan as well as a bluesman, as happy talking about Johnny Cash or Ernie Ford as much as Percy Mayfield or Jimmy Reed and while we were talking Frank Doubleday had put Lucky's "Chinamen's Door" album on the machine. This was helpful, since I haven't heard Lucky play live and can't recall having heard him on record before. This is probably the only one of his records that you can buy easily over here currently, but another is due to be released later this year, having been recorded just before the start of the tour. I was away for Lucky's last tour and am still trying to work out how I managed to miss the last Brighton gig. However, I'm in luck in that I will be at the Zap Club in Brighton on the 18th of July. Having heard the album, and met the man, I just know it's going to be a good time.

LIVE REVIEW: BLODWYN PIG

at Woughton Centre, Milton Keynes.

Many, amongst a remarkably diverse audience, wondered just what to expect from this revamped, late 60's, semi-legendary outfit. In truth after two numbers the course of the evening had been clearly outlined by some fierce, virtuoso, duelling between the powerful Mick Abrahams on guitar and the subtle jazzy textures of Dick Heckstall Smith on soprano and tenor saxophone.

The Pig opened with a rip-roaring "Know It's Only Love" from the first album, and received a tremendous reception. The band hit the solos early to blow away any cobwebs, before Abrahams headed for his preferred blues domain, mixing Larry Williams with Big Bill Broonzy and a surprising Alexis Korner composition "I Wonder Who The Next Fool Will Be".

The band, with Andy Pyle and Clive Bunker laying down a fierce back beat, almost intuitively slipped into some bluesy jams, before taking the set up a pitch with a well-received guitar tour de force "Cat's Squirrel". This old show-stopper has jettisoned some of the drums for a mid-number country blues interlude by Mick Abrahams on his own. The interlude nicely offset the thundering tenure of much of the set, and Blodwyn Pig managed to get everyone on their feet for two hugely enjoyable encores. Comebacks often disappoint, but this one was hugely enjoyable and augurs well for the future, as a talented band looks set to reclaim its place on the Euro circuit.

Pete Feenstra

UNAMERICAN BLUES ACTIVITIES

Bedrock Records BED LP9

Produced by erstwhile blues aficionado Mike Vernon this interesting compilation record from Bedrock records takes a great step in re-establishing a credible roster of British live acts.

For too long now several talented bands and individuals have had to put up with being mis-labelled as purely pub rockers. The truth of the matter is that although many of the featured bands can be caught in a pub, the reason is down to a pitiful lack of purpose-built venues, especially in London. That said, not all the featured artists represent the best in their field, but at least they do collectively represent the diverse nature

of some of the current bands on offer.

Funnily enough it's a blast from the past that opens side one. Chris Farlow is in surprisingly good form on a funky work out, "Don't talk to Me", whilst the much touted Blues & Trouble clatter along like a contented train on a rolling blues number, which suggests a piece of contentment rather than inspiration.

The Balham Alligators offer two examples of their rock-and-roll-influenced Cajun, whilst Roma Pierre just fails to cut it on two tracks, which suggests she has some way to go before she can do so in an intuitive manner which might stop people in their tracks. Newcomer Mick Pini from Leicester, offers a couple of refreshing highlights with two highly original funky blues workouts. I just wonder how his clipped guitar style sounds over 40 minutes

rather than on just two tracks.

Guitar freaks will find themselves admirably catered for by the abrasive Mick Clarke Band (who contribute two tracks) and also by the very interesting UK Blues Buster's. The latter number ten personnel and sound for all the world like Peter Greene.

With further efforts from the jaunty Red Hot Pokers and a rather introspective number from Juice On The Loose, this Un-American Blues Activity augurs well for the future and I hope the producers come up with volume 2.

Pete Feenstra

The Downliners Sect

The Band From The Sixties

During the early sixties, many bands sprang up in and around London, following the lead given by Chris Barber, Alexis Korner and Cyril Davies, so, for a while, there was a healthy club circuit where R&B could be heard. Among the groups gaining a following and some commercial success, were The Downliners Sect. One of the founders, Don Crane, whose real name is Mick O'Donnell, had been in a social club band, The Vigilantes, before joining up with Keith Grant in an early version of the Downliners Sect.

Keith got a phone call from Don's father, whom he already knew, and was invited to join Don.

Keith: "The funny thing is, I was playing drums at the time – and I played guitar – but I'd never really got into bass, because this other fellow in the band was so good, I got the invitation to go over and have a meeting, so I went, and Don asked me whether I fancied playing bass and I said yes okay, and gave it a go from there".

It was already known as the Downliners.

Don: "I was starting to get into ritual magic at the time and as for the sect bit, you could see that, like a good religious ceremony, a good bit of rhythm and blues made people really happy and forget all their troubles, without any morality being involved. We just found we had quite a few things in common, interests and horror movies, whatever, searching out all these obscure strange horror films, 50's black and white, you know tack of the 50's, stuff like that. I think I had John Sutton in the band. I'd already sacked the previous drummer. My mother saw this guy pushing a Boys' Brigade cart, with a big drum on it, past the house so she rushed out and said 'Can you play that thing?' When he said yes, she offered him a gig that night. John Sutton was a trainee butcher at the time and he was just about to qualify and I talked him into turning professional and giving up his career. A fortnight after that I sacked the singer and the bass player and John was getting worried, which is when Keith entered to save the day.

"We got this character, Melvin in. He was a fine lead guitarist but unfortunately had designs on becoming a doctor so when university cropped up he had to leave, which was unfortunate because we were doing really well then.

Don, who was just about seventeen at this stage, had started off at fourteen, playing the two I's coffee bar. One of the new band's first gigs was at the Flamingo, working for Rick Gunnell.

Don: "What gave us the best break of all was when the Stones were going on their first tour – they were second on the bill – and for the first time since the

Station Hotel days, they weren't in London. They were going to be out and about around the country for about two months and while they were out on tour, we got booked in at Studio 51 and it took off so that we became identified with the Sunday afternoon gig, then we got booked all over the country because we were promoted as being from Soho Studio 51. Funnily enough, some people got very anti-Stones, people who'd been seeing them regularly before they started to happen and then didn't like them getting famous. Their followers felt they were being deserted. We had our own following and when we and the Stones did a double gig down 51, we did our set and then the Stones went on. After about three numbers, the power suddenly went off because somebody had pulled the plug on them. Jagger got annoyed but we got the power back on again and off they went again. About two numbers later the same thing happened again and they were all going crazy up there. Anyway the third time it came on, it stayed on and it was a good gig.

"Melvin went back to college and we got Terry in from a band called the Hoods. He answered the ad and came along and did a scratch gig at the

Pantiles in Tunbridge Wells. He was great and I've never heard anyone else like him. He's one of the fastest guitarists that I've ever come across. Terry joined and Keith used to play harmonica. After a while, each time we played the 51 there were strains of another harmonica coming from the back of the hall so we eventually asked the guy to join us, That was Ray Sone."

They recorded their first EP at Studio 51, Night in Great Newport Street (this is about to be reissued in Germany). They left the Gunnell agency and went on Malcolm Nixon's books, with Long John Baldry, Jimmy Powell and the Dimensions and Manfred Mann.

Don: "So all of a sudden this Swedish guy asked if we'd like to play in Stockholm for something like £150. We thought this was great as we were on £40 or £50 a night. We'd already recorded for Columbia and had got to 29 in the charts for a fortnight. We'd already done 'Baby Whats What' and we'd just released 'Little Egypt', that was hovering about 49 in the trade papers. When this guy came into the club we didn't know who he was, just another Swede. He came and started talking to us; he asked if we'd like to go to Stockholm and we said yes, so it was all set up – unbelievable you know. It began to look suspicious when we got to the airport and there was a charter plane waiting for us booked for The Downliners Sect and support. There was a chick band called The Dollies Sound Inc. and somebody else supporting us and we got £150.



We played the ice hockey stadium and when we got there this place was massive 30,000 people waiting to get in we knew there was something up and there was about 500 screaming we had the whole police escort. 'Little Egypt' was going up their chart. We were in the top ten and going out for one hundred and fifty quid; but the experience was phenomenal. We haven't been in the top ten since – and definitely not for £150. We spent a lot of time in Sweden. We did a decent six week tour which was a classic – nothing went wrong. The guy assessed how good the gig was by the number of broken seats and everything went perfectly, in fact its probably the only tour that did before or since...there's always been a problem.

They made a couple of albums including a live one and a country album, but this caused a few upsets in the band. A rock and roll album followed, then soul music started to arrive. From the Downliners point of view there was nothing to be gained in using saxes and keyboards seriously.

Don: "We saw no point in bringing saxes in, though we'd done it on the old records, jokey records. There were other people doing it a lot better, like Georgie Fame, and everybody was doing it infinitely better and they always have done. Alexis used to take the trouble to find out what was happening in America. Although we didn't realise it, we were about five or six years behind what was happening in the States, so in 1963 Alexis was bringing in saxes and he had Graham Bond and Dick Heckstall Smith and people, but we didn't bother with all that and then it was too late. We had an image as The Downliners Sect. We didn't lose gigs, we were still working, but

there was nowhere to go...there was no direction...it was stay where you were. When you stay where you were, you go backwards, so I split the band up and told everybody that that was the end of it. Keith claimed he was leaving to do something else, Terry and John actually did leave. I formed a new band immediately and Keith was back in it and we cut a single for Pye under the name Don Crane's New Downliners Sect. We used that name for about six weeks then it became The Downliners Sect again. There was sort of hippy element...there was a very strong mod element...and there was a soul element...and it hadn't quite coalesced. We jogged along for about a year and got the odd complaint about not being the original band but a lot of people liked it."

By 1967, Don was getting involved in Celtic music after a Swedish tour which went wrong, due to accidents with hire vehicles and an expensive court case. He and Keith had been running the band and paying the musicians wages. Don decided to quit and Keith continued for a year or so. Don started playing at folk gigs and eventually ran a folk club.

The success of the Canvey Island R&B bands, such as Dr Feelgood led to renewed interest in the Downliners, who had inspired the Feelgoods. Other publicity followed and eventually the band were back in demand again.

Don and Keith met up again and a few weeks later, Terry got in touch and suggested they reform the band. They decided to do so, adding harp player Paul Tiller, formerly of the Black Cat Bones and got a ten day tour. They went on to record for Raw Records and got into the alternative charts with 'Showbiz'. Charley records then re-released the Sect

album and that also did well in the alternative charts and this was followed by a John Peel Show broadcast.

Another album was in the offing but didn't get released as there were financing problems after two thirds of the recording was done. The tapes remained in the studio, though they were later recovered by the Sect.

They were then approached to do a tape lease deal of some previously unissued material and this led to a German album deal. Since then Charley Records have been reissuing all their material and the band successfully toured Scandinavia, making a live tape in the process.

Don: "That's running at the moment, 'The Downliners Sect Live In The 80's', then we were contacted by an American company, Inner Mystique, and we did a limited edition single for them, out at the moment, 'Colour Coded Red' and that's running. That brings us pretty much up to date except that we parted company with our lead guitarist as of day before yesterday.

We recently did a video with Jim McCarty of the Yardbirds* which is out now. 'Newport Street' is two thirds to being paid for coming out again soon, so at the moment we've got two albums and two videos in the offing. We've got a lot of material between us, and really its a matter of getting together and sorting through it."

So Don and Keith, despite all the hassles, remain optimistic, and seem determined to keep The Downliners Sect bandwagon rolling for some while yet.

* Available from Brisk Productions, 27 Old Gloucester Place, W1. Price £24 inc. post and packing.

Graham Vickery

BRITISH BLUES

BB
review

at 100 CLUB

100 OXFORD STREET, LONDON W1

BLUES SESSION

Monday August 14th

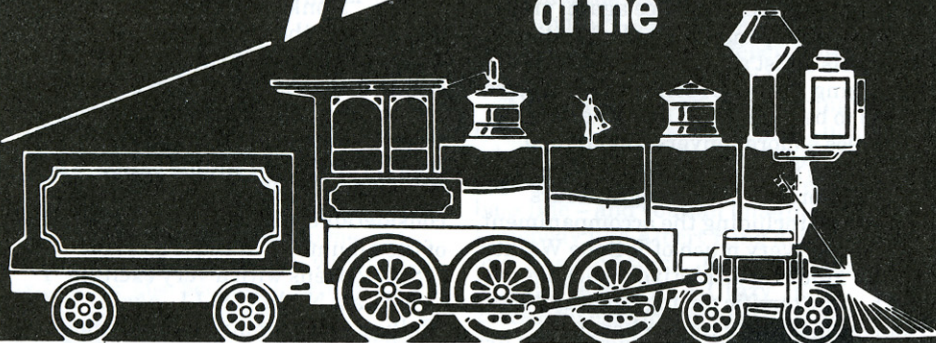
The Shakey Vick Blues Band

8pm – midnight

Admission £4. (Concessions £3)

Bob's Goodtime Blues

at the



STATION TAVERN

Europe's only 7-nights-a-week
Blues venue

(Plus—Sunday lunch-times too!)

LIVE & FREE

**41, Bramley Road, Nth Kensington
(opposite Latimer Road tube)**

AUGUST

- 1 Paul Lamb Band
- 2 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 3 The Jumpin' Catfish
- 4 Shout Sister Shout
- 5 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 6 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 7 T Model Slim (evening)
- 7 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 8 Paul Lamb Band
- 9 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 10 The Skywalkers
- 11 Shout Sister Shout
- 12 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 13 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 13 Giles Hedley/Really The Blues (Eve)
- 14 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 15 Paul Lamb Band
- 16 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 17 Screamin' George & Rhythm Rascals
- 18 Shout Sister Shout
- 19 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 20 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 20 Giles Hedley/Really The Blues (Eve)
- 21 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 22 Paul Lamb Band
- 23 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 24 Bluer Than Blue
- 25 Shout Sister Shout
- 26 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 27 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 27 Mike Messer Band (Evening)
- 28 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 29 Paul Lamb Band
- 30 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 31 The Jumpin' Catfish

SEPTEMBER

- 1 Shout Sister Shout
- 2 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 3 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 3 Giles Hedley/Really the Blues (Eve)
- 4 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 5 Paul Lamb Band
- 6 Top/Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 7 The Diplomats
- 8 Shout Sister Shout
- 9 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 10 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 10 The Jumpin' Catfish (Evening)
- 11 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 12 Paul Lamb Band
- 13 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 14 The Hotshots
- 15 Shout Sister Shout
- 16 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 17 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 17 Big Road Blues Band (Evening)
- 18 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 19 Paul Lamb Band
- 20 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 21 The Diplomats
- 22 Shout Sister Shout
- 23 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 24 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 24 The Bloodhounds (Evening)
- 25 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 26 Paul Lamb Band
- 27 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 28 Screamin' George & Rhythm Rascals
- 29 Shout Sister Shout
- 30 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings

RECORD REVIEW

with Chris Youlden

The Original Memphis Blues Brothers

(Little Junior Parker, Earl Forest, Bobby Blue Bland, Johnny Ace)
Ace (Chad 265)

Well, any recording featuring names like these has got me sold before I even play it and when you add players such as Mat Murphy on guitar and Ike Turner on piano, you can't go far wrong. The seventeen tracks on this album were recorded by the Bihari brothers in Memphis in the early fifties and most were released on Modern, Kent, Meteor and Flair; five of them however are previously unreleased items.

Aside from the fact that I like these people anyway, this album attracts me because it gives a very good representation of the styles current in Memphis at the time and also some idea of the early influences on artists like Bland, Parker and Ace who later went on to make their reputations working in different styles. The way these tracks were recorded also appeal to me – the band sounds as if it's in the corner of the room with the vocalist not far away getting a very intimate sound on the microphone – in other words to all intents and purposes you're there in the studio or the bar.

Side 1 consists mainly of tracks by Bobby Bland although Junior Parker contributes two sides. All show the influence of Roy Brown, one of the most popular blues artists of the period, particularly so in Bland's case. I especially liked "Good Lovin" and found "Dry up Baby" interesting because it's probably furthest away from anything I've heard Bobby do before – a jump blues complete with handclapping. There are also no less than three versions of "Drifting from Town to Town", only one of which I've heard before. All are of interest to the listener however because of the subtle differences between them – compare takes 1 and 2, the first previously unissued.

Bland and Parker join forces to exchange choruses on "Love Me Baby" and Junior ends side 1 with two of his own performances of which I prefer "You're my Angel". These are not perhaps radically different from the later Sun material he recorded but the vocal styling definitely is. Parker's voice seems rougher here and some of his phrasing is unfamiliar. Unlike the Bland tracks, where Bobby is backed up by Ike Turner on piano and Mat Murphy on guitar, Junior is supported by his own

band, the "Blue Flames" but his contributions are none the worse for that.

Side 2 of the album is largely devoted to the work of Earl Forest who sings and plays drums and who also incidentally, is the drummer on the Bland tracks on Side 1. Forest is new to me and a pleasant surprise. He has a distinctively plaintive vocal style which shows up well on the slower numbers and is backed up by a typical "Three a clock in the morning" type band. They also know how to move a bit though and of the faster items, I really liked "I Can't Forgive You", which has a tremendous sax riff.

The last two items on this side come from Johnny Ace and once again, prove to be an eye-opener. I'm only familiar with this artist's later work such as "Pledging My Love" etc. where the voice tends to be higher and smoother. Here, Ace uses a more conversational tone with some rougher inflections. The whole approach of "Midnight Hours Journey", including the accompaniment, remind me very much of T-Bone Walker.

The album is attractively packaged with some terrific photographs and also some wonderfully comprehensive sleeve notes by Ray Topping who compiled the tracks and thought of the whole idea. All in all, definitely one for the vaults – for the bluesicologist or the blues listener. "Enjoy! Enjoy!"

Big Joe Louis & His Blues Kings *Blue Horizon, Bluh 008*

Here we have a welcome first album from a band which has been making a big noise in the London area over the past year. Big Joe spent most of his early years in Jamaica and heard more blues than the popular music current at the time and it certainly shows – in fact the whole band are obviously steeped in the downhome/Chicago tradition. Like say Paul Butterfield however, they are creating within the idiom rather than just recreating it.

It's probably unfair to single out any particular musicians as all of them are excellent and know just what they're doing. While good individual performances abound, they also combine very well as a unit displaying the ensemble work typical of the genre. There are two things however, that make this band stand out from most of the others playing this kind of music. The first is Joe's voice which has all the right inflections but is still recognisably his own so it sounds like the real thing

rather than an imitation. The second is the drum sound of Martin Deegan for whatever else he happens to be playing, he keeps that heavy backbeat going, a la Freddie Below, Earl Palmer, Tom Whitehead et al, throughout.

Another of the band's strengths is in their choice of material – they don't do the obvious things, the ones you've all heard before. Joe contributes five originals and the rest come from sources as diverse as Arthur Crudup, Walter Davis, Floyd Jones and Z.Z. Hill. In fact, I can think of only one track that I'm overly familiar with – that being the Crudup title "Mean Old Frisco" but then again nobody else plays it much these days.

Side 1 attacks you straight away with one of Joe's songs, "What's the matter with you" – a fast Big Boss Mannish effort with overtones of "Keep Your Hands Out My Pocket". This is followed by one of my favourites, "Down Home Blues" a song originally performed, though not written, by Z.Z. Hill and taken at a lovely rolling tempo with some mean, lazy vocalising from B.J.L.

We then get a slow to medium "Now She's Gone", (J.B. Hutto), a fastish shuffle, "Monkey Motion", (Houston Baines) and then a wonderfully evocative version of the Floyd "Dark Road" Jones song "You Can't Live Long" – another of the stand-out tracks on this side. Another of Joe's things, an appropriately fast shuffle called "These Young Girls" and played with considerable venom, closes the first half of the album.

Side 2 opens with a very exciting "I Cried Last Night", (B.J.L. again). In the "Rolling and Tumbling" vein – some great original harp playing from Little Paul on this and Big Crawford or Willie Dixon couldn't have done any better than Tony Hilton does on upright bass. The rhumba rhythm of Joe's "Hey, Hey Now Baby" signals a clever change of mood and then the band groove into a truly inspirational selection – Walter Davis's "I Think You Need a Shot" – some marvellous piano from Jamie Rowan here.

Jimmy McCrackin's "She Felt Too Good" – a fast, rocking shuffle allows Rowan to contribute some more particularly good piano and B.J.L. to show us how deftly he can handle a wordy but (like so many of McCrackin's songs) a very witty lyric. The band revert to a slower tempo with Joe's "Bloody Tears", (What a title!) – which features some impressive vocal and slide guitar work – and then end the album with a belting version of "Mean Old Frisco".

It only remains for me to mention the tremendous production work of Mike "The Hardest Working Man In Show Business" Vernon who manages to do that most difficult of things, to capture in studio conditions, the live, vibrant sound of a good working band and the suitably soulful sleeve photography of Dave Peabody – as Bo Diddley would

say, "What More Could a Man Want"?

The Marauders
"Red Hot and Rocking"
Blue House Music

Yet another band new to me, the Marauders are a five piece augmented on occasion with sax and keyboards and hail (rhyming not intentional) from Rochdale. Really the title of the album says it all for that's precisely what they are. In fact their approach is reminiscent of the early "Thunderbirds" with much of the material being powered by those hard-driving guitar riffs. However within the idiom, the band have more than a few interesting variations of their own which is not surprising as eleven of the fourteen tracks here are originals. This reliance on their own material enables the Marauders to present a range of song structures eg. sixteen bar verses, eight bar verses with a bridge and to throw in the odd key change – all of which allow them to avoid the charge of being "Samey". They do also draw upon other sources, Jimmy Witherspoon's "Times are Getting Tougher Than Tough" being one example, so that you get an interesting diversity.

Well, what about the individual tracks? On side 1 I particularly liked "Maybe It's True", a Chris Gee song, not because it's especially different but because it's played with such a good "Feel" – the band really get into a groove on this. The afore-mentioned "Tougher Than Tough" also appealed to me, not only because it's played well with a nice sax solo but also because it brings back to your venerable reviewer, fond memories of John Baldry doing it with the "Hoochie Koochie Men". "Head to Toe", (a Gee song again) has an interesting structure and a slide guitar. "Ridin on the L & N", which ends the side, pounds along and also has an intriguing opening sequence which I won't reveal to you (Which sound archive did you raid to get that one lads?)

Side 2 opens very effectively with an up-tempo rocker with shades of Chuck Berry's "I'm Talkin About You" (Mess It Up). "Fourtime Boogie" engages the ear because it's a complete departure from the band's usual line of country – a fast, swingy jump blues with very good harp and a great guitar solo – the sound and phrasing absolutely right for that late forties/early fifties style. "Another Day" presents us with a piece of imaginative arranging – it begins as a slow gospel song with a plaintive voice over a soulful organ and then transmutes into a good-rocking shuffle – not an easy thing to bring off.

Side 2 ends with a fast instrumental, ("Duke") which contains a key modulation and gives the harp, guitar and sax men respectively, a chance to show their paces. Although a very enjoyable album; I bet that if you wanted to hear a good noise on a good night, this band would make you very

happy.

Lucky "Lopez" Evans
"Chinaman's Door" Borderline
Bord 001 – 1989

Lucky Evans is operating in that area of the blues perhaps the most successfully exploited in recent years by Robert Cray ie. the no-man's land between traditional blues and late 60's/early 70's soul music. Thus on this album we get bluesy vocal and lead guitar lines superimposed upon moody/funky bass figures and ably supported by keyboard and brass arrangements. It's a synthesis of many influences in fact and one of the pleasures of listening to a recording like this is in trying to detect them.

There are only three tracks per side but they're all longish (circa five minutes each) and this gives the band time to establish a groove and set a bluesy mood, for mood music this most definitely is. The performances on all tracks by Lucky and the band are uniformly excellent so it's difficult to single out any particular one on this basis. He has an individually soulful voice and the lead guitar work is outstanding – sensitive and delicate or biting and aggressive, depending upon the demands of the material.

"Chinaman's Door", the opening track on side 1 is interesting in that Lucky adopts an almost Howling Wolf type approach to the vocal – this over a funky bass line – and you can imagine somebody like Albert King doing this one. The next track, James Browns's "If You Leave Me I'll Go Crazy", is a successful example of how a standard can be rearranged so that it sounds completely different. Here the tempo is slower and the song is presented in a lyrical way with a lovely guitar figure and vocally, J.B.'s impassioned pleas are replaced by Lucky's sad statements of fact. "Hard Workin' Woman" closes this side – another funky thing – good sax work here and the whole track has subliminal echoes of Marvin Gaye.

Side 2 begins with "Hail To The King", one of Lucky's own compositions and features some really good guitar. The band then give the B.B. King song "How Blue Can You Get" a workout (a slow blues played in the traditional manner) and the album ends with an interpretation of Bobby Bland's "Dreamer" – another slowish, moody piece with a surprising but completely slide guitar solo. I liked this record a lot – it certainly demonstrates how the blues can absorb other influences and yet retain it's identity and perhaps gives an indication of where the music is heading in the future.

Dana Gillespie
"Sweet Meat"
Blue Horizon Bluh 007

Well here's an entertaining recording – an album devoted to the euphemistic qualities of the flesh and right in the blues tradition. Really you might almost

call this one a "Concept album" – but seriously folks, it's a lot of fun and containing as it does, amusing lyrics, tight playing from all involved and some excellent vocal performances from Dana, it's a really good listen.

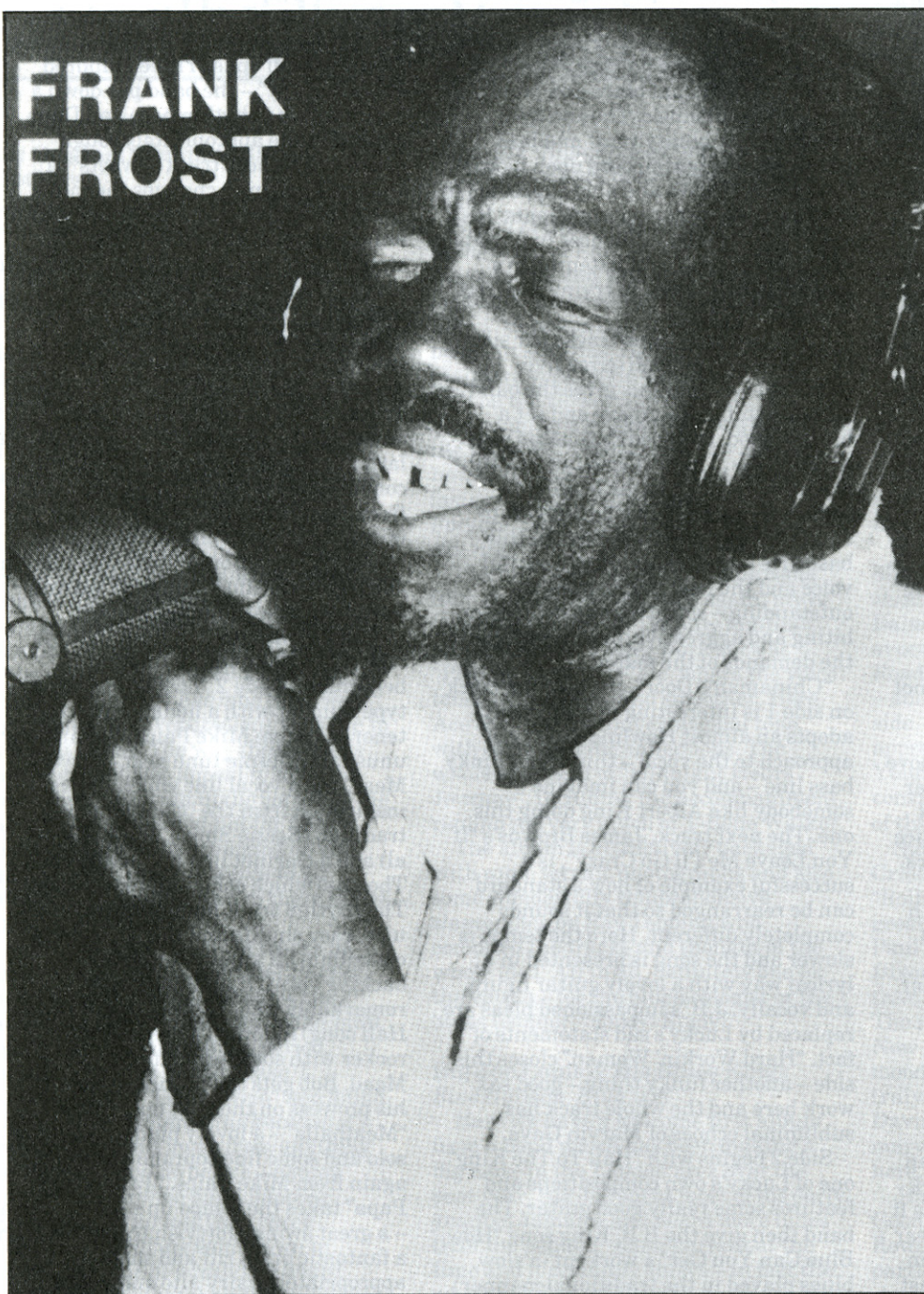
Side 1 gets off with a bang (nb. dear ed. this was not premeditated) with the Howling Wolf opus "Three Hundred Pounds of Joy" – the band put down a really socking rhythm here and Dana sings it in the appropriately tough manner. The next track "Sweets" (a Gillespie original) changes the mood agreeably. It's a nice, easy roller with a seductive vocal and an unusual structure in that it has 12 bar verses and also a 12 bar bridge with some interesting chord changes. The band then rock into "Pencil Thin Papa" (written by Bob Hall and Mike Vernon) – a paean of praise to anorexic manhood. Tracks 4 and 5 are standards from the swingy fortyish, jump blues period – the latter comes off particularly well with a conversational vocal and a guitar solo from John Bruce that's right in the idiom. Another strong Gillespie song "Meat on Their Bones" ends this side – a Chicago style effort this with roaring harp from guest Paul Sarjantson.

"Big Fat Mamas Are Back In Style Again"; so Dana tells us on the beginning of side 2. This is another 40's type number with a honking raucous tenor solo from Mike Paice. Yet another unusual Gillespie tune next – "Sweet Meat" has a vocal line which draws inspiration from the "Classic" blues tradition (Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey et al) and a clarinet line and solo (Pete Thomas) which echoes the same source. The rhythm track however lays down a nice, easy shuffle and the "Dewdrops" contribute an almost Jordanairish backing vocal. It all fits together remarkably well. "Long, Lean Baby" (a Hall song) follows – a mellow, rolling rocker with some nice alto from Frank Mead. Bob gets the chance to show off his prowess on the next one, the classic "Meatballs" – a lovely piano figure and solo and some fine soprano sax work, again from Mike Paice. "Tall Skinny Papa" takes the tempo up a notch or two – a great swingy fortyish thing this with a fantastic brass riff and some appropriately hairy alto and guitar solos. The side ends with another Wolf song, "Built For Comfort". Here the band groove out in style with Dana toughening up once more and John Bruce and Paul Sarjantson contributing blistering solos.

Although a highly enjoyable album – I must mention that Dave Rowberry also played piano on some tracks and that Charlie Hart (upright bass) and Chris Hunt (drums) made up the rhythm section. When you put all that together with the excellent Mike Vernon production, then you know that you've got something that's worth listening to. (nb. to ed. As I've refrained from making any allusions to "Big Maccs" etc. do I get to keep this one)

BLUESNEWS

FRANK FROST



With an absolute glut of blues in July, we might be forgiven for thinking that we'd had more than our fair share, but the icing on the cake is surely to come, with the **South Bank Blues Festival** introducing a number of first time visitors from the American scene.

The festival runs from 2nd to 5th August in The Queen Elizabeth Hall on London's South Bank. Seats are £8.50 from the Royal Festival Hall Box Office on 01-928-8800 and each concert will start at 7.45.

It's almost like getting to tour the current blues scene in the States without having to pay the air fare.

Each day's concerts are as follows:

Wed. Aug 2, Big Daddy Kinsey and the Kinsey Report, Archie Edwards, Little Willie Littlefield & The Big Town Playboys.

Thurs. 3rd, Big Daddy Kinsey & the Kinsey Report, Honey Boy Edwards, Jimmy Nelson & The Big Town Playboys.

Fri. 4th, Joe Hughes, Archie Edwards, The Jelly Roll Kings, The Big Town Playboys.

Sat. 5th, The Jelly Roll Kings, Honey Boy Edwards, Little Willie Littlefield, Jimmy Nelson & The Big Town Playboys.

From Chicago, the six piece Kinsey Report, led by Big Daddy Kinsey, will bring the Muddy Waters influenced Chicago blues to our doorstep. Most of the Band are members of Big Daddy's family and we were advised not to miss them,

in an earlier issue of the mag.

From Maryland, Archie Edwards brings us the Deep South influences via his mentor, the great country blues guitarist/singer, Mississippi John Hurt. It's good to see the fine tradition of country blues given a share of the bill.

Houston, Texas, sends us Joe Hughes, whose guitar playing should straighten a few short hairs if he emulates his Southern Blues circuit reputation. He follows in the tradition of T-Bone Walker and B B King, so expect some fireworks.

B B King would certainly approve of another Texas man on the bill - Jimmy Nelson, whose songwriting and singing influenced B B. himself. A player who has done it the hard way, through a lifetime working the Bar room circuit of Texas, Jimmy will be a welcome addition.

You can find Honey Boy Edwards working and living in Memphis, bringing us the traditional Mississippi Delta country blues influence. A fine guitar picker, with a deserved reputation.

Little Willie Littlefield is no stranger here, but his Boogie woogie piano has won him many friends, and will balance a fine festival, with the backing of the Big Town Playboys, who get better and better, if that is possible, and will also fully deserve their own spot, as well as backing Little Willie, Jimmy Nelson and Joe Hughes.

Finally, another coup, The Jelly Roll Kings from Memphis, making a long overdue first visit to Britain.

The Kings are Frank Frost, Jack Johnson and Sam Carr, who are going to add some downhome spice to the proceedings. Despite having been sidesmen to Muddy Waters and many others, they are no back numbers, and will certainly enhance their solid reputation, given half a chance. They should set the seal on the festival and who knows, they may be as influential to a new generation of blues players over here, as Jimmy Reed was in the sixties. What else is there to say, except be there!



The Kinsey Report

Talking about first time visitors, by now some of you will be familiar with the music of **The Paladins**, after their tour. A three piece from San Diego, who actually started out as a four piece bar band, they established a healthy reputation in southern California, blending Rockabilly, Blues, Swing and R&B with verve and a powerful approach to playing, that comes from a unique attitude to touring. They hit the Austin scene in the mid eighties and have since toured with Los Lobos, Stevie Ray Vaughan and The Fabulous Thunderbirds. They have a debut album on Alligator Records, *Years Since Yesterday*, which will be reviewed in the next issue, when we hope to have more time to do them justice.



Another combo to spread the gospel are **Little Charlie and the Night Cats**, again we shall cover them in the October mag. They had their debut album out in '87, *All The Way Crazy*, which helped to break them on a bigger circuit. A Hot blues band, this one and they successfully promoted their new album, again on Alligator Records, *Disturbing The Peace*. Both records will get space next issue. The band really cut it and the music is top quality power blues.

BRITISH BLUES

BB network

We recently received from the USA, details of the happenings in St. Louis, via The Bluesletter of the **St. Louis Blues Club**. They certainly seem to have organised the blues scene there, with various local musicians, record companies, music stores etc. sponsoring their activities and The Bluesletter demonstrates that the blues is live, and doing very well thank you, in the St Louis area. As well as brief articles on **Little Milton**, **Big George Brock**, radio Blues shows, record news, they list about forty clubs where blues can be heard, either regularly or reasonably often. Anyone visiting the area might do well to contact The St Louis Blues Club, P.O. Box 21652, St. Louis, MO 63109.

Closer home, we get news from Birmingham that **King Pleasure** have a debut EP out, *Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens*, which is a new cut, although it appeared on their first album. Also on the same side is *Chicken Rhythm* with *All Night Long* on the flip. We'll review both the EP and the album soon.

East Anglia's **Mean Red Spiders** also have a new album out which we'll review. Incidentally, they have done recent gigs in company with **Duffy Power**. Their August dates are: Thurs. 17th, Farnham Maltings; 18th, Pinner, Whittington Hotel; 19th, Kings Langley, Rose & Crown; 21st Putney, Half Moon and 26th, a private party at Fulham's King's Head.

Andy Schemet of Rochdale's **Marauders** has the following listings. Aug. 3, Glossop, Fleece; 12th, Rochdale, Gabs Football Club; 16th,

Manchester, Band On The Wall; 18th, Birmingham, Breedon Bar; 19th, Farnham Maltings; 23rd, Werneth, Black Horse; 25th, Burnley, Town Mouse; 27th, Compstall, The George. Sept. 26th, Ashton Under Lyme, Witchwood; 28th, Manchester, Withington Ale House.

Further details from Andy concerning the north west are: Most Fridays and Mondays on the coast at Fleetwood, Kemp Street Catholic Club is taken over by the **Fleetwood Blues Club**, which is run by Ian and Elaine Carbay and Mark Sharples, who between them, book the bands and make sure that everyone pays their £1.50 - £2.00 admission. Most bands booked cater to every type of blues or R&B tastes, from one man and his guitar acoustic blues, to hard rockin' R&B, with a very warm reception from a discerning audience. Bands interested in a booking should contact Ian on Fleetwood - 03917 70680. Bands booked for August: 11th, Bare Wires; 21st,

Previous Good Character. September: 1st, Harpbreakers; 11th, Switchdoctor; 25th, The Hustle.

Booked at **Burnley Mechanics** is **Lowell Fulson** on Fri. Sept 22nd. There are also plans under way for a two day event at New Year. Already booked are The Big Town Playboys. We'll bring you more details later.

At Manchester's **Band On The Wall**, wednesday nights through August are given up to R&B; 2nd, Gags; 5th; Victor Brox; 9th, Blues'n'Trouble; 12th, Bogus Brothers; 16th, Marauders, 19th, A&B Boogie Band. September sees the return of The Paul Lamb Band on 30th. There is also a Samaritans' Charity gig on the 25th with Victor Brox plus special guests.

Bill Rowe sends details of the rise in interest in blues around the Southampton and Portsmouth areas, with the Onslow in Southampton still heading things. Don't forget **Bob Pearce's** Friday nights.

The Mean Red Spiders



Other news from the area is not quite so good. Salisbury's Bishop's Mill have stopped their successful Monday night Blues sessions for no apparent reason, though there is new management there, which is often the prelude to change. The other bad news is that Radio Solent's **Blues In The South** programme is now off the air. The only consolation is that the newsletter of the same name continues to flourish.

In London, **Wolfie Witcher** has recorded another live album, this time at 100 Club, Oxford St. and **Pete Smith** has another Casette album out, which we'll review in a forthcoming Mag.

We must apologise to all the people who've sent us tapes and albums, and CD's. We will get around to it as soon as possible. Have patience.



Talking of CD's, JSP Records continue their releases with **Nappy Brown** and **Big Jay McNeely**, The Paul Jones Rhythm and Blues Show

featuring **Rockin' Sydney**, **Carey Bell**, **Katie Webster** and **Bill Dicey**. There is also coverage of the **Burnley Blues Festival**.

Ace also have a CD list with one of their recent releases, featuring **Arthur Alexander**, which we'll review probably in the next issue.

IS YOUR
SUBSCRIPTION
DUE FOR
RENEWAL?

IF SO DON'T
FORGET TO
FILL IN
SUBSCRIPTION
FORM
ALONGSIDE ▶



JOIN NOW!

1 YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION: £10 (inc. p&p)
(OVERSEAS: IMO Sterling – Europe £15. Rest of
World £18) Back issues available at £2 per copy

The British Blues Network aims to put blues people in touch with one another – all over Britain! To do this, we need you to join us in disseminating and receiving information, through the pages of the official journal – British Blues Review. Whether you're an enthusiast, promoter, performer, writer, commentator or whatever we want to hear from you. Just fill in the application form and enclose a cheque/postal order for £10 (or I.M.O. £15/£18 sterling for overseas) made payable to: British Blues Review and post it to: British Blues Review, 15 Chippenham Road, London W9 2AH. (British Blues Review is published bi-monthly).

Note: 1 years subscription covers 6 issues

Subscription Order Form

Please send me, for one year, British Blues Review. I enclose cheque/postal order for £10 inc p&p
(or I.M.O. £15/18 sterling) payable to: British Blues Review

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

.....Post code.....

Signed.....Date.....

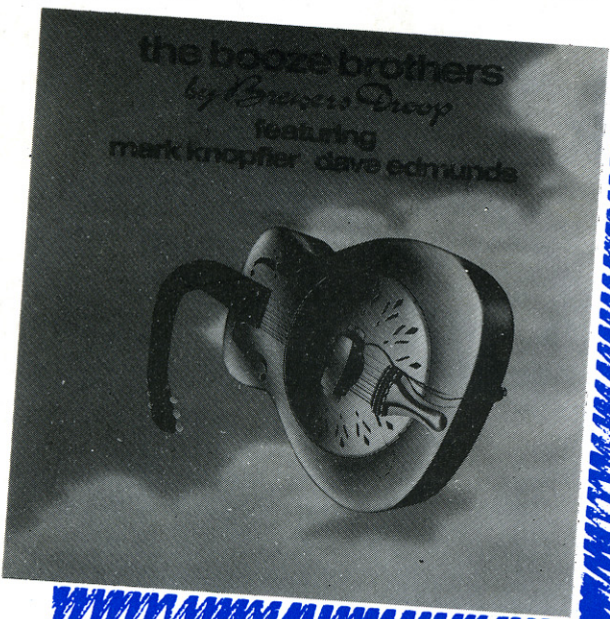
DIVERSE WE ARE, NORMAL WE ARE NOT, BUT QUALITY IS WHAT WE GOT!!

For new albums representing the geography of the blues, from Texas, St. Louis, Scandinavia and England. Now read on — you will be rewarded.....



**U.P. WILSON — "On My Way" —
THE TEXAS GUITAR TORNADO. RL0078. —**

The hottest thing to come out of Texas since Albert Collins strapped on a guitar. From Fort Worth, Texas, this is U.P.'s debut LP even though he has been playing since the early fifties. A Martial arts expert of the guitar strings, his playing is hot, loud and ferocious, almost like a Black Johnny Winter. If you like the axe, then this is a MUST — you will not be disappointed.



**BREWERS DROOP — "The Booze Brothers" —
RL0077; RLCD0079:**

Unissued material from the English blues-rock-cajun band of the seventies BREWERS DROOP, featuring the one and only MARK KNOPFLER, who made his first major appearance with this band, also partially produced by DAVE EDMUNDS who guest's/musically, this is a collectors treasure trove. Listen and enjoy this disc and hear the fledgling MARK KNOPFLER cultivate the sound that made DIRE STRAITS a world wide success story.

Available in good record shops or direct from:
RED LIGHTNIN', The White House, The Street, North Lopham, Diss, Norfolk, England, IP22 2LU.
Telephone: (0) 379 88 693. Telex: 97203 BLUE G.
Wholesale, distributor, trade, export, etc enquiries invited.
TERMS: INLAND £5.50. OVERSEAS: £6.50. (Air mail available upon request). Prices include p+p.
Send for a free list, or for our fully illustrated catalogue, add £1.00. Inland or £1.50. Overseas.



**CHICAGO BLUES MEETING —
"Snake In My Bedroom" — RL0073.**

Replete with a sleeve that owes a little to Blind Lemon Jefferson's "Black Snake Moan", this is an astonishing session, mixing, Scandinavian musicians with some Chicago bluesmen, producing a stunning selection of blues. Calling on the styles of Otis Rush, Buddy Guy, Walter Horton, Eddie Taylor, etc and delivering the goods is no easy feat, these guys have done it. Listen and marvel.....



CONDITION YOUR HEART — Vintage R & B from St. Louis — RL0069.

Following in the footsteps of our previous collections from St. Louis, this album features familiar artists, not so familiar and the downright obscure! The period covered is 1957-1963 with an emphasis on R & B and vocal groups. Artists include: The Rockers; Clayton Love; Oliver Sain, Ike Turner; Fontella Bass, Art Lassiter, etc.