

ISSUE No. 15

BRITISH BLUES

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 1990

BB *review*

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH BLUES NETWORK



TALKIN' BLUES

BRITISH BLUES



It must be hard for bands that never made it on the Heavy Metal scene. The new bands are all that much younger, the competition that much harder, now.

Fortunately for those aging failed musos, there is an alternative . . . and they've taken it. No, they haven't gone home - far from it. They've decided that there is a blues boom - and they've joined in. The good old fail-safe, the good old standby for depressed musicians, is around as always. The blues is here to stay.

Ignore, if you can, the fact that these musos weren't good enough to make it on the rock scene. Their determination not to make it on the blues scene has to be admired (from as far away as possible). The truth is that they aren't good enough to make it on any scene.

They are experienced enough to be able to get it together and do gigs, usually with all the left-over, corny, trappings of years on the circuit - all the corny jokes and patter, the 'star' image and affected lifestyle. But the music is, to quote the late Howling Wolf, "Dogshit". Because of this, their acts just aren't good enough to make it to the top, though they are good enough to attract a following, and in the process, give the blues a downturn.

There are a few people however, who have the ability to play the blues, even if they haven't always chosen to. Such people will always get a welcome on the blues scene, because they are able to inject something into it.

As for the others, the failures from other scenes, there is no real danger that they will sap the goodness out of the blues, because to do that, you have to be able to tap into it, and that's

something they'll never be able to do. Fortunately, such people will jump, or hobble perhaps, onto the next scene where it looks like something may be about to happen. The blues circuit will be well rid of them.

With half a million people attending the Chicago Blues Festival recently, the blues appears to be going into orbit. There really is no need to carry any unnecessary cargo when there are such positive signs around.

So where do we go from here? Chicago this ain't, so we have to try harder. Musicians have got to learn to listen to themselves as much as to anyone else. They don't need to just settle for more re-hashing of the blues of the fifties, though that would seem to be a very necessary base from which to lift off. They've also got to add something new to the blues if they hope to keep up with what's happening in the States, not that the majority over there are doing any such thing.

Blues continues to develop, as it always has, but it must also retain the deep feeling which no amount of skill can compensate for. It must still be a vehicle for reinterpretation rather than rehashing, for emotion rather than posturing, for reaching out to audiences rather than battering them down. Above all, it must contain that necessary amount of humour which alleviates the cynicism of bluestyle.

Finally, it must be contemporary, for that way it can become timeless.

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:

Adverts 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 071-289 6394

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Publishers: Em Vee Productions
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Subscriptions: Elinore Vickery

Front cover photo of John Mayall by Jimmy Appudurai

Contributions to B.B. Review are welcomed.

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*Published at 15 Chippenham Road, London W9 2AH
Tel: 071-289 6394*

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

British Library No: 0953 8769

Letters

Dear Ed,

I may be a boring old fart (aged 42), but does your mag really need that silly and completely utter tripe (that's what we eat up here, sometimes with onions) of a cartoon, Blind Willie McTool. It's a waste of a full page. If you're short of something to print, why not an interview with Chris Youlden about his days with Savoy Brown – a great singer with a great band – I used to watch them when they came to the Manchester area.

Also is he likely to be recording again? It's a long time since I've heard a voice which suited the blues as well as his. That's all for now. Hope you will read this load of tripe (with onions) and perhaps act on it. It would be nice to read about Chris's life after Savoy Brown days.

Keep up the good work with BBR – an excellent journal. Long may you print it.

**Mick Moores,
New Mills,
Near Stockport.**

Ed: so there is life out there after all. I see that you share Rick Lyon's view of the strip cartoon. It's nice to know that someone has an opinion on it. Chris has just been over to the States and recorded some tracks, which may be coming out as a CD on Line, the Hamburg based label. He'll be at the 100 Club, London on 14th August. I will get around to an interview with him sometime, no doubt.

Dear Graham,

Thank you for the review of the Second Burnley National Blues Festival – virtually everyone seems to have enjoyed themselves as much as Brian Smith did. I actually lost my voice due to a solid stint of telling late callers "Sorry, we're sold out!"

All of us at The Mechanics wish Gary Hood well with his new venture in Pendle. No one festival can cater for all tastes and Gary has shrewdly identified a

different niche. The R&B festival builds on the strength of Blues interest in NE Lancashire and the Greater Manchester area, and skilfully utilises the different facilities available in the Borough of Pendle.

However, I do think that Gary has gone over the top in stating "organised by the same team" as the Burnley National – that is, unless he's using team as a synonym for

himself. One key player is hardly the whole team.

I hope everyone dances the whole weekend of August Bank Holiday in Pendle – and still retain the energy to pop back to The Mechanics to buy tickets for Louisiana Red (supported by John Pearson) on Saturday September 29th.

**Ian Wells,
Publicity,
Burnley Mechanics.**

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The Recording Scene

Crossover Blues ...

the rise of Point Blank

It's well over two decades since the original progressive blues movement took the blues out of its ghetto and into mainstream consciousness as a host of British bands broke big and crossed over to the rock markets. 1990 promises a similar resurgence of sorts except that the names are a mixture of established and new artists who are widening their musical horizons but remain ever conscious of their blues roots. It's more of a case of the blues becoming more all embracing and less reliant on previous musical structures and subject matters.

At the core of the Nouveaux guitar-led blues is the new Virgin Point Blank blues label which has become the home of ALBERT COLLINS, THE KINSEY REPORT and newcomer LARRY McCRAY. I caught up with the musicians and the man behind the new blues outlet JOHN WOOLER. But it was with former heavy rocker and Virgin recording artist GARY MOORE that the whole thing apparently began.

"My background has involved BBC TV," explains John Wooler. "I did the Whistle Test, but always tried to keep involved with blues and r&b and I've worked in a cross section of A&R, everything from 'It Bites' to Johnny Hates Jazz so I've a fair idea about the commercial side.

"The blues side of things came about through being asked to work on Gary Moore's new album. Gary was a little fed up with the record/tour/next record, rock syndrome and decided he wanted to go back to his blues roots. The reaction to the demos he came up with was very positive, and he was full of enthusiasm again. Due to the interest I suggested to Virgin, that there was a lot of up and coming cross over blues acts. At this point I had a few ideas in mind, and when Virgin took my proposal seriously I was able to follow them up."

Larry McCray

"I had already met Larry McCray some nine months previously. A producer had called me from Detroit and asked whether there was any interest in blues. He sent me some of Larry's stuff and I flew from Boston to Detroit to check him out, but it wasn't until he came up with a few more songs that I followed it up. At that stage I



Larry McCray

had him in mind for the mainstream label, so it was very much a wait and see situation. But when Point Blank came up he was the perfect candidate for the new label. The emphasis was to be artists whose roots were in blues but whose music was open to development. It wasn't me who wanted to do this, but very much the artist's idea."

With a new label in mind John duly signed Larry, but I wondered how he intended to find an audience that might very well alienate blues purists and be too diverse for rock audiences?

Out of the ghetto

"I see it very much as like the old days when we had a number of bands whose

artistic development led them from a blues source to a much wider repertoire, without leaving their blues roots behind. The idea with Point Blank is to capture a wider audience than the traditional blues market. There's little point in my view ghettoising blues to the point that a record buyer will not buy anything by an obscure blues player who he doesn't know. Larry was the obvious choice and his blues, soul, funk and rock influences can be marketed towards the mainstream. Being blues – based we'll separate the label and marketing slightly, and get the attention that it deserves first of all, but as regards the overall picture there will be just as much backing as for a mainstream act."

Ambition

One of the first decisions Point Blank took as part of its marketing strategy was to get behind at least three singles from each album they put out. It's a situation that pleases Larry.

"Personally, I think it absolutely great. I think I've got a number of strong songs ... I took nearly 18 months out to work on my songwriting and I've got plenty more. 'Ambition' which was actually written by Chris Wheatley is a stage favourite and we always open with it so it should be hitting audiences strongly. It obviously helps us to do our job if the record company is getting behind the record on the promotions side."

'Ambition' is in fact the perfect example of the crossover blues influenced number. It's a hard driving composition with an abundance of energy, sparkling guitar lines from the off, and is topped by Larry's emotive vocals that manage to tell a story in less than 4 minutes. John Wooler actually sees a negative side to targeting particular fans too closely.

"It can be dangerous to do that because there are a number of elements involved, particularly in Larry's work. And if we send it out as an across-the-board album, different people might pick up on his songs, his playing or his voice." Larry agrees, explaining "I was working blues bars around the Mid West for a few years, and held a job down on the car plant. I did get a shot at the Chicago Blues Festival a couple of years ago, but compared to now that wasn't very serious. The record company have brought me to England and Europe for three months and I'm getting to play to a whole cross section of people, opening up for Gary Moore & The Midnight Blues Band across Europe. It's a full time commitment, and we're just pleased to get the opportunity to play to so many people."

So far Larry has enjoyed a 7", 12" and CD single as well as five TV appearances and radio airplay. Not bad for a blues fan who modelled himself on Albert King. John Wooler sums up the strategy behind Larry. "People sometimes are apprehensive about the term crossover, but psychologically we'll probably open up a bigger market doing it this way, by promoting the music like any other act, without the Pigeonholing. With 'Ambition' (the album) having sold around 5,000 copies in

the first week of its release in Virgin shops, Wooler appears to be right. We wait with baited breath for a hit single.

Gary Moore returns to his blues roots

Significantly, perhaps, since writing the opening piece of this article, the ebullient Mr Moore has charted with his self-penned 'Still Got The Blues'. He's opened a lot of doors over here in the way Robert Cray did in the States, and with 45,000 copies sold in 4 weeks in Holland alone, Moore's return to his predominantly British influenced 60's blues, with a significant bow to messrs Albert Collins,

following and healthy sales in the independent field. But he's equally excited with current events as he explained to me at the conclusion of a late night jam at the Hard Rock Cafe.

"I'm having a ball man, and its all due to Gary. I'm playing on all his dates, and he played on my London

It's great playing to a bunch of young kids as well as the blues fans and everybody seems to be getting off on it. I only did stuff like this years before on the West Coast, but this is different because the blues is growing to a bigger audience in the way Robert Cray did it."

In effect, the crossover of styles and



(Photo: Darren Hughes) Gary Moore with Albert King

Albert King, and Otis Rush, has provided him with success that he never actually achieved with his heavy guitar slinging. John Wooler is impressed with Gary's album 'Still Got The Blues' proves there's an audience out there wanting an album like this. He's now being treated as a good guitarist (which he always was) with good songs. He's also got on Radio 1's play list for the first time ever! He's already crossing over to a wider audience schooled on stuff like Chris Rea and Dire Straits. 'Oh Pretty Woman', the first single, actually got to number 52, and 'Still Got the Blues' has eclipsed that. It will be very interesting to see if the album happens in the US given the popularity of Jeff Healey, Stevie Ray Vaughan and of course Robert Cray. But a lot of this is down to Gary because it is well over a year ago that he floated the idea of a blues album, long before the current upsurge of interest. He's changed his style, he's playing better and obviously enjoying it."

The renaissance of Albert Collins

ALBERT COLLINS may be considered the exception to the other artists. In the blues field he's already a giant with a loyal

audiences is having a beneficial effect on both Gary and Albert, as John Wooler explains.

"It's an opportunity for audiences in the US to get to know Gary better, and like wise for Gary's rock audience to get to know Albert, particularly in Scandinavia and Europe. With people hopefully having heard Gary's record, or caught Albert's show, they might just want to check the other artist out. After all, Albert did as well as he could have on Alligator and cut seven records for them, but it might be argued that the albums helped with the gig money as much as with breaking him to a bigger market. We are looking for sales well in excess of 50,000, and I believe Albert is enthusiastic and excited enough to come up with his best yet album. So it's not so much a relaunch for Albert as getting the best album out of him through artistic development. He's got the right attitude, wants to expand, and can still retain his own sound, introducing it to a whole new audience. I think he's going to make a great album. The initial blues boom created its own artistic development of its own volition, but I think with the same input from us, anyone who signs to this label should be able to feel uninhibited about the direc-

tion they take, although we are looking for a couple of singles."

Albert: "I was a bit nervous about it at first. I've been involved in a few record deals along the way, but since I've been over here things have been better than I could have foreseen. Playing with Gary and the guys on this tour has done us all good. I've not recorded for three years so I'm itching to go..."

The Kinsey Report from reggae to Chicago Blues

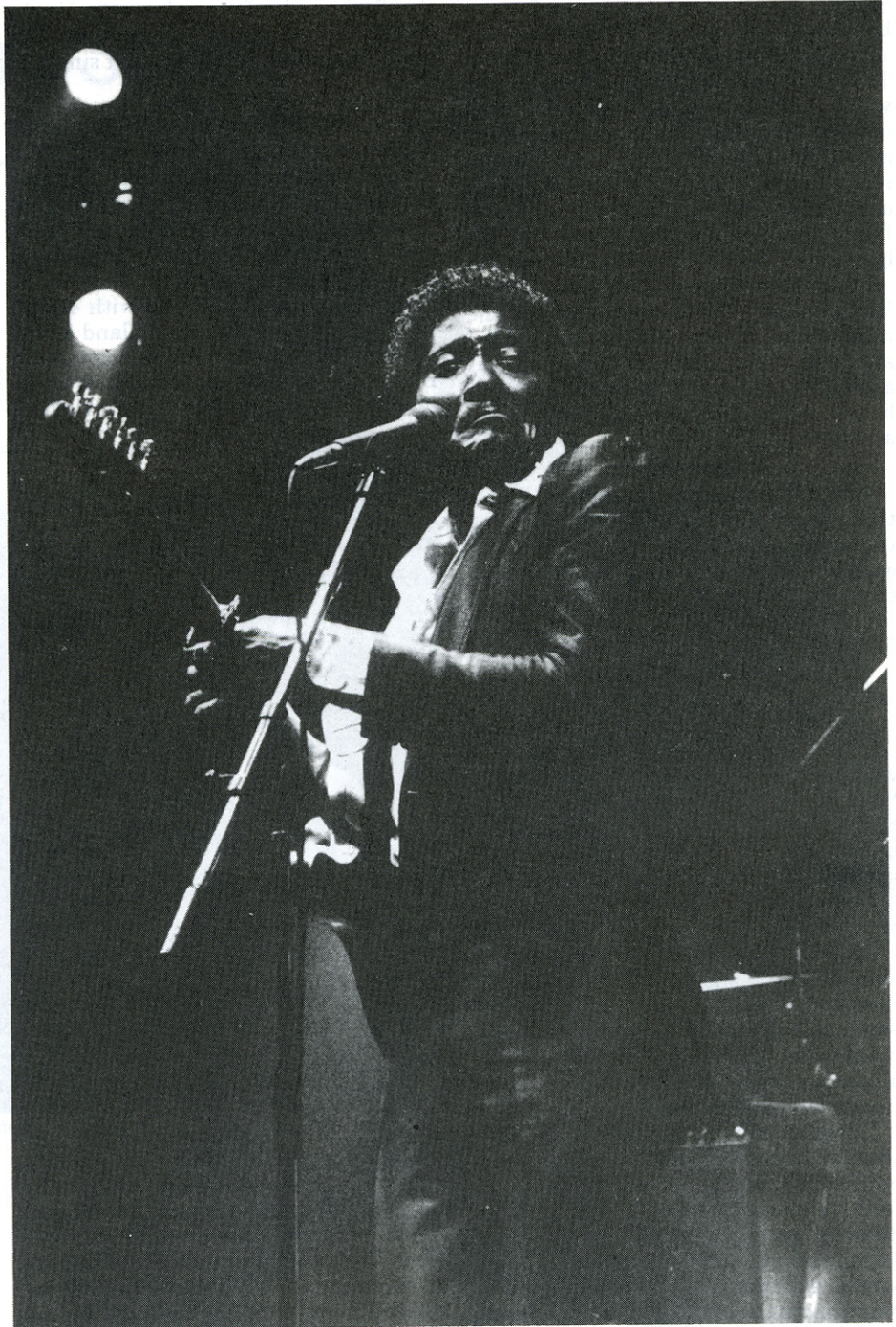
They don't come much more diverse in their musical history than THE KINSEY REPORT. Donald Kinsey, guitar whiz kid, accomplished song writer, and he of the sultry voice, was schooled in the Bob Marley/Peter Tosh school of reggae on the one hand, and Big Daddy Kinsey's Urban Chicago blues on the other. Of all the label's roster of artists the development of The Kinsey Report is probably the most eagerly awaited, if only to witness how this band's stylistic diversity will be resolved or, perhaps, accommodated.

Guitarist Ron Prince is very non committal on the subject, as I grabbed a few seconds at the Town & Country Club. "We've always had a wide range of influences. Back home a lot of people call us a reggae band, whilst over here I think a lot more people know us as a Blues/Funk or Blues rock act."

Whatever your personal preference, The Kinsey Report brought their pedigree to the public's attention with the excellent *Midnight Drive* on Alligator last year. The complete diversity of styles was carefully honed in to a successfully balanced album that lost none of the band's spark and vitality.

"The Kinsey's have a massive crossover potential" agrees Wooler. "Midnight Drive" should have been a hit single, but was never released of course. The new album will be pretty much the same with the band rooted firmly in the blues but allowing for their blues-funk and reggae styles. This band crossover from Marley to Albert King and in contemporary terms could be another Living Colour (who they recently toured with). In the US I suppose they will appeal to the rock audience, a sort of Stevie Ray Vaughan meets Living Colour, whilst Larry McCray might attract a more r&b/soul/pop audience, and Albert Collins will just be Albert Collins, but better known with a bigger audience."

Whatever the future holds for this exciting batch of blues players, the least that can be said is that the blues in whatever form stands to be better distributed. Starting with Europe and Japan, and working towards the US, the new crossover blues has already taken effect. As Wooler noted at the time of the interview, John Lee Hooker's "The Healer" was at number 8 in the US charts. He also feels blues-based artists can compete with rock, and he finds it an exciting proposition that the gap left by Jimmy Hendrix over twenty years ago might



(Photo: John Wooler) Albert Collins

soon be bridged by a new generation of younger black players with blues roots, successfully crossing over.

To be honest, much as I love Stevie Ray Vaughan and Robert Cray, their continued success (aside from the excellent music) is probably given such a lot of precedence because too many other artists play in the old style - highly derivative - even if some do write their own stuff. There hasn't been an awful lot of competition, but hopefully that gap will be bridged by people like Larry and the Kinseys.

Finally, a last question concerning future signings and the apparent bias towards the guitar.

"I travelled to just about every blues club of note, and received reports of the ones I didn't get to in the US, and frankly there wasn't a whole lot of people doing anything original. We're aiming to be sel-

lective in our signings. I'm open to any kind of player, harp player; women singers etc, but apart from a guy named Wolfman Jack in New Orleans who I've looked at, we're going to just try and break what we've got first. The same applies to the UK. I'm not exclusively looking for US bands."

With the likes of Larry, Albert and The Kinseys on Point Blank, as well as Gary Moore on the mainstream Virgin label, the blues is apparently already well represented.

Discography:
LARRY McCRAY 'Ambition' Point Blank VPBCD1/GARY MOORE 'Still Got The Blues' Virgin CDV2612/THE KINSEY REPORT 'Midnight Drive' Alligator ALCD4775

Peter Feenstra

King of the guitar: LONNIE MACK

Interviewed by Pete Feenstra



The term blues-rock has too often been used as a vague catch all term by which rock musicians frequently disguised their paucity of material by throwing in the occasional 12 bar blues. LONNIE MACK is a notable exception to the rule. In many people's eyes it was his amplified guitar sound and measured use of the tremelo that made the original connection between 50's Country/rockabilly and the 60's progressive blues rock, or roadhouse rock if you prefer.

The keystone to the meeting of styles was Mack's 1963 hit 'Memphis'. The instrumental reworking of Chuck Berry's 'Memphis Tennessee' and the later minor hit 'Wham', excitingly fused Country, blues and what we now call rock. It was a new stylistic exploration that was further developed in his 1968 'Glad I'm In The Band' album for Elektra records.

Over two decades on, Lonnie and his excellent band finally made it to London with a date at the Town and Country club. Looking around at the audience it wasn't hard to see that Lonnie remains 'a player's player' as a number of familiar faces jostled for room on the dance floor.

With a pedigree that includes having been a virtual house guitarist for the famous KING studios in Cincinnati, as well as working on a number of Doors tracks, (Roadhouse Blues, what else!) this modest and ever enthusiastic guitarist finally hit the home straight to solo success with a brace of albums for the Chicago based Alligator label. Both 'Strike Like Lightnin' and 'Second Sight' impressed with the vigour of Lonnie's playing and an almost forgotten talent for

writing blues based rockers like 'Satisfy Suzy'. And, after a thoroughly enjoyable T&C set, the Whammy Man took some time out to tell me about his meandering career.

"I was raised in Aurora, Indiana. We were a poor family and we never had access to a record player or anything like that. But, luckily, just about everyone at home from my mum down played something.

"Country music was an obvious starting point. Just about all the good players, and especially pickers, played Country or at the very least Bluegrass. Specifically, people like Merle Travis played a big part in influencing my playing. He was one of the first people to pick up on the black Delta blues stuff. As a matter of fact, the acoustic piece I played tonight 'Oriol Cooking Blues' was played in the exact same style that Merle used to do it. There was also the black radio stations that used to play stuff you didn't hear anywhere else. There was a wide mix that included Gospel, R&B and Blues. There

was a lot of Freddie King on the radio at the time. But you have to realise that most of this stuff was regionalised. We're talking about a limited area bordering the three states of Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. So right across the Mid West and deep south you could have different things going on. So a record might end up on the radio and be something of a hit in one place, and 200 miles up the road, nobody ever heard of you.

"Being a jumble of different things, the black radios in particular suited my style, because the thing I could do well was to play with versatility. You had to, to keep the work coming in!"

Lonnie went on to pick up some well documented session work at King Studios in Cincinnati. It's a time Lonnie remembers very well.

"The King label was the one to play for because the King studios were the music scene, period. As a label it picked up a lot of black stuff, people like Roy Brown and Wynonie Harris. I played with the guitarists on the label such as Albert and Freddie King, and a bit of gospel with James Brown, and more up tempo rock & roll with Hank Ballard. When Sid Nathan died I moved on."

Fraternity records beckoned and the influence of label boss Harry Carrlsson came to prevail over over Lonnie's career, not always in the most direct way.

"Harry was an ex horn player who had his roots in the old time travelling bands and big band scene. We ended up recording some pretty way out crazy stuff for that label. We did things like 'I Left My Heart In San Francisco', and a batch of instrumentals. Harry was THE label. I liked him and you just fell in line with his ideas. He ended up almost being like a second dad to me."

Lonnie of course went on to record 'Memphis' at the end of a session and he was initially unaware of its chart success. Apparently, the interest was stirred because the mack guitar style sounded not unlike the in-vogue West Coast surf sound. And before he could complete another run of gigs across the Mid West, the sound of Lonnie's 'Flying V' was heading for the top 5.

"It all started with the regional thing again and broke out into a national thing. The same happened with the single 'Where There's A Will There's A Way'. That number was based on a gospel vocal by The Five Blind Boys. It picked up a lot of action on the predominantly black stations in the South. I think it was big on some station in Birmingham, Alabama where it eventually went to number one. A number of radio stations wanted some personal appearances to help plug the record, and they freaked when they ▶

realised I wasn't black. I guess the soulful vocals must have fooled them, because they took one look at me and hollered 'Boy your the wrong colour!' Now I know all about racial prejudice back home but this was the other way round. The record was pulled off the air and, despite some interest in the occasional Northern city radio, it disappeared."

Lonnie's reputation as father of the Roadhouse blues is mostly due to his consistent gigging over the years on the back of the kind of regional success we talked about. Lonnie and his band worked from state to state, varying the live diet of blues, r&b and gospel with occasional forays into soul and back-to-the-roots Country.

"In many ways, not much has changed over the years except perhaps that the radio stations' predilection for Heavy Metal and Pop has taken a firm grip and probably makes it less likely for kids to hear the blues live. But on the positive side there are still pockets of areas crazy about the blues and r&b, like Austin, Texas for example."

Through the 70's Lonnie continued to work but recorded only intermittently.

"I recorded some stuff for Capitol which is pretty hard to find now, and I also did some session and A&R work for Elektra before they got swallowed up by Warner Brothers. I did keep writing most of the time, and even now I guess I must kind of like it cause I'm still doing it. I wrote a couple of hundred tunes in all styles, and I may still use some of them."

Hard to find or not, the Capitol material involved some heavy-weight names including Don Henley, Graham Nash, David Lindley and even former King Crimson member Ian Wallace. Alongside brother Billy McIntosh and long time associate drummer Ted Drummond, Lonnie's musical output was as strong as ever it was. The solo break came after eight years without a vinyl outing, and an invitation from Alligator Records.

"I had been working on another project with Ed Labunski, who tragically died. We set out to build a studio and put together a Country oriented band called South. We came across this unknown called Stevie Ray Vaughan, and after things came to a halt because of Ed, I headed up to Canada and worked with Ronnie The Hawk Hawkins, before Stevie invited me to Austin. Things started to happen musically and the record resulted. I really enjoyed working with the guy. it was very exciting for me."

'Strike Like Lightnin', the resulting album, received almost universal praise. Lonnie and Stevie Ray swapped licks voraciously, and Lonnie's soulful voice perfectly complemented his long drawn out notes. There was also a rehash of Whammy with Stevie Ray, called Double Whammy, which was a delight. It pleased new fans and carried favour with Mack's older followers.

The follow up 'Second Sight' proved Lonnie was still a major talent in the blues rock field, and this summer looks good for his first live shot.



Jim Daly with Sunnyland Slim

"Yeah, I think it's time for a live album. I've got plenty of material but it will probably be a mixed set, a combination stuff... plenty of guitar work and some extended pieces that you heard tonight. 'If You Have To Know' will be on there and we'll probably segue it with an instrumental. I'm also doing an old Wilson Picket number I like called 'I Found The Love', and a newie I just wrote with Tim (Drummond) called 'Natural Disaster'. Then again, I've been asked to include 'Satisfy Suzie' — so I guess I've pretty well got it covered already."

Surprisingly, perhaps, Lonnie didn't know what to expect on his first London appearance. As he explains, "We were a little worried about how we would be received over here because I didn't know how many people knew our stuff. But it's turned out OK, and people appear to like the bluesy feel to the music over here. As a matter of fact, pleasing an audience has never really been a problem. We usually get the guitar freaks at the front going wild. Maybe getting the pretty girls to the gig has been a bigger problem!"

One of the reasons for Lonnie's growing audience over here was a video he did with the late Roy Buchanan and Albert Collins at the Carnegie Hall.

"That was a lot of fun, but there's so many new talented kids coming along you have to keep on your toes. There's blues bands opening up for us that are just dev-

astating. A lot of people tell me they enjoyed the video, which is great, but there's a whole new bunch of players coming through, and that's great too. I caught a kid called DANNY GRATTEN who is just about the most exciting thing I've seen for a long time. As a matter of fact Roy (Buchanan) used to disguise himself and go check out some of his gigs to steal a few licks from him." (laughs).

Playing wise Lonnie still uses his '58 Flying V serial number 7 (although his record company reckon number 5). I was impressed with the tone of it at the T&C gig. Lonnie disagrees. "The reason I got that weird sound had little to do with my playing. It was because all my amps etc were rented. Generally speaking I'm a sustain man, always have been, although years ago I did once try and play too fast. Now I'm content to give the solo's space, let 'em breath. Albert Collins is the same and he's doing well over here and in the States, so there's hope for us yet."

Of the other up-and-coming players Lonnie cites Stevie Ray and Jeff Healey as impressive, and is astounded by the sheer technique of Stanley Jordan. In truth he needs no further than his own efforts which after three decades are still leading the field. That Whammy man has come a long way since first hitting the first of a thousand roadhouses.

Pete Feenstra

BELFAST'S BLUES LEGEND:



Jim Daly and Bob Koester

The Jim Daly story by Trevor Hodgett

Blues music in Belfast is enjoying a boom unprecedented since the mid sixties, with upwards of a dozen bands plying their magical trade locally and rocking the rafters of the city's pubs and clubs. Blues Agency, The Jim Armstrong Blues Band, Sam Mahood, Tyrone Shoelaces, Fat Ali's Blues Band and Patsy Melarkey are just some of the enthusiasts who have, in the last few years, been thrilling local punters with the power and passion of American blues. But the greatest of them all is piano ace Jim Daly who, almost unbelievably, has been playing Chicago blues in Belfast for a continuous period of 30 years.

Jim's career began with '50s jazz bands like Jimmy Compton's The Saints, The Crescent City, and The White Eagles, but he increasingly became besotted with blues music. Blues records were totally unobtainable in Belfast, so Jim got his from a famous collector in France, Bert Bradfield. Passionate to learn more about the music, Jim was crafty. "When I knew that the American Folk Blues Festival was on tour I used to find out what London hotel they were staying in, and I'd book into the same hotel." His enterprise was spectacularly rewarded. "I remember sitting in a hotel room talking to Otis Spann. Sonny Boy Williamson was lying drunk on the bed, and Victoria Spivey was trying to wake him up. Then a knock came to the door and Big Joe Williams came in, and we all went down to

the Crawdaddy with Lonnie Johnson..."

Phew! Jim also met Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. "They said, 'You from Ireland? We played a gig with guys from Ireland! I was racking my brains for all the names I could think of. It turned out it was the Clancy Brothers!'"

Jim struck up a particular rapport with Muddy Waters. "He was a great guy; he became like an old friend. When I first met him in London he could hardly believe that I had a 78 record of him from the Library of Congress. He wanted to buy it off me!"

On his visits to London Jim got to know Alexis Korner. "Alexis and I became quite good friends and I sat in with his band, with Dick Heckstall-Smith, at the Marquee."

For Jim, these experiences were invaluable. "It was all laying a foundation

– trying to get as close to the roots of the music as possible. Meeting the legends."

Enthusiasts like Dougie Knight began to bring the legends to Belfast. Mississippi Fred McDowell, Memphis Slim, Jesse Fuller, Champion Jack Dupree and Juke Boy Bonner were amongst the earliest visitors. "Did you know there was a blues out called The Belfast Blues? 'When I first got to Belfast boy was I surprised to see all those happy people and those big laughing Irish eyes.' Juke Boy wrote that after his visit."

Jim, guesting with Brewers Droop, also backed Arthur Crudup. "His voice was great. He played everything in one key – G. He used to refer to Elvis Preston – I didn't know who he was talking about!"

Another visitor, Little Brother Montgomery, came to grief. "Somebody had taken him out that afternoon and fed him Bushmills and he could hardly see the piano. I had to sit beside him on the stool otherwise he'd have fallen off!"

Jim also has cause to remember Curtis Jones' visit. "He was staying with me. We'd just about reached our house when he started peeing up against my neighbour's car, much to my horror."

Jim's own blues band began its career with a residency in the Jubilee Bar in Cromac St. One night a young local blues fanatic, Van Morrison, performed with the band. "Van was always a great singer," recalls Jim. The two blues buffs became friendly. "He used to ring me up at work and play John Lee Hooker records over the phone!" Van's family was musical. "His mother used to get up and sing with the band in the Jubilee Bar. She was a good singer and a very lively woman. She would jump on the tables and dance! Van wanted us to make a record with her but we never got around to it. He came along to the Belfast Midsummer Jazz and Blues Festival recently and we were gossiping for quite a while. He was very talkative."

The highlight of Daly's career came on 9th December, 1970, with the visit of Muddy Waters to Belfast. Jim was invited to sit in with Muddy's band, on Blues Before Sunrise. "I said to the piano player Pinetop Perkins (who had replaced the great Otis Spann) 'What key is he in?' Pinetop said, 'Just watch his fingers, man' It's a nice memory!" Afterwards Muddy enthused about Jim, declaring, "You play more like Otis than Otis did!" Jim has one regret about the night though. "They asked me to go with them to Dublin for the next gig, but I said no – I had to go to work the next day!"

In 1984 Jim fulfilled another dream by visiting Chicago. "Chris Barber had told me about Bob Koester who owns a record shop out there and who had recorded many of the famous blues artists, and he was able to show me around." On his first

night in Chicago Jim jammed with Big Daddy Kinsey and the Kinsey Report. "It was great to be a white face in a Chicago club, playing with a black, Chicago band. The thrill of that was terrific. Magic Slim came and sat in ... and Big Sara ... and B.B. Jones ... and Sugar Blue. I heard all of these people play in one night, which was bloody incredible." Sugar Blue had played with the Stones after reportedly being discovered by Mick Jagger busking in the Paris Subway. "Sugar Blue said that was a load of ... 'What would Mick Jagger be doing in the subway in Paris?!'"

In Chicago Jim met another of his influences. "I heard Sunnyland Slim in Lily's. I asked him to listen to me playing and give me some tips. He said, 'Man, you don't need any tips - you play good down home piano'."

The Jim Daly Blues Band backs all the blues performers who visit Belfast, including, recently, Lowell Fulson, Fenton Robinson, Mojo Buford, Byther Smith and Phil Guy. "There's never time



to rehearse with any of these guys. frequently we never see them 'till they come on the bandstand. You just have to cross your fingers and hope it comes out all right. But I've never known any of them to be difficult to work with."

Jim has no hesitation in stating his favourite. "I can say without reservation that the most thrilling one to play with - outside Muddy - was Carey Bell. He gave my band the feeling of being a Chicago band. I could see him playing in Maxwell Street in Chicago with a hole in his pants, for nickels and dimes. The guy is completely unpretentious. he just lifted me off the seat of the piano. He was great."

Belfast now has more blues performers than ever before, all of whom owe a debt, not only to the black originators of the music, but to our own blues legend, the remarkable Jim Daly. After 30 years Jim is playing as beautifully and passionately as ever, continually proving that the searing emotional truths of Chicago blues are timeless and irresistible. We are lucky to have him!

Trevor Hodgett

Rust Never Sleeps

Pete Feenstra meets up with KEVIN BROWN

With a brand new album entitled 'Rust' on Hannibal records exciting a number of critics, the West Coast influenced Roots bluesman, KEVIN BROWN is at last beginning to be taken seriously for his blues work. For, like a number of stylistically diverse players before him, Kevin has too often been peripheralised because of his wide ranging approach to the blues. 'Rust' looks set to change all that and usher in a new era of KEVIN BROWN the blues man.

Having headlined the main stage at Glastonbury with the likes of Dr John and Curtis Mayfield, Brown's ascent to the ranks of respected performer has been slower than might have been supposed. In truth, his debut album 'Road Dreams' emphasized his American Roots feel - a kind of Ry Cooder meets the Caribbean - rather than a straight ahead blues approach. Yet even in this interesting collection of songs gathered from a five year period spent working with a number of bands, teaching and travelling, Brown's majestic slide and Hawaiian guitar style were an eye opener, and his unique fusing of those guitar styles with the timeless Hammond organ sound render Brown's work instantly recognisable.

The Guardian called Kevin's work a "Subtle and gentle mixture of white blues, reggae and country, with fine, unpretentious slide and Hawaiian guitar work ..." Its a description that Kevin is quite happy with, but as he makes clear he would always stress the blues base underlying all his work.

"My first major musical experiences were tied up with the blues and to this day

the blues remain the most important influence in my music. I was brought up on Fats Domino, Ray Charles, Sons Of The Pioneers, Kitty Wells, Little Richard etc - a real mixture, but something that, had it existed today as a music scene, might have been called World Music. The major difference would have been the obvious blues input into all those artist's' respective styles."

Kevin's earliest exposure to the blues was down to his dad who called him out of bed to catch an early Granada TV programme that featured Sony Boy Williamson and Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee.

"I didn't know much about any of these people but I immediately liked the raw edge to the music. It was a complete contrast to much of the chart stuff of the time, although I think I had an inkling of where some of this stuff was coming from having heard the early Pretty Things, Stones etc on TV. They all had this mysterious air about them. And by the time Fleetwood Mac's first album came out, I was hooked ... this was quickly followed by Jon Mayall's Blues Breakers album."

To this day, the interesting thing about Kevin Brown's approach to the blues in his wide-ranging use of styles. Thus, Peter Green's influence can be found on a quite beautiful ballad called 'If I Had My Way', whereas the use of space and tone on the guitar sound on 'Don't Quit' are pure B.B. King. Refreshingly, Kevin Brown adds that extra instrumental touch to make the piece his own. He also has a fairly distinct voice, a fact that led to his making up his mind years ago that the only way to achieve the sound in his head was to write his own songs.

"I've always had the feel for rhythm in music, and always knew the kind of sound I wanted - particularly from my guitar. Now, I am the first to realise I have a limited vocal range, so I had to make the best of what I had and write my music around that fact. It all comes down to knowing what you want, and then gathering a team of musicians around you who you know are going to be able to come up with what's required."

If Kevin's approach sounds painstaking, then I suggest you check out the album. For, apart from the influences mentioned, you will find Joe Louis Walker and band in full swing on the self explanatory titled 'Hey Joe Louis' whilst 'Bible Of My Own' captures that drifting languid Hammond sound tucked in behind some funky guitar lines, as crisp and clear as the man's talent itself.

The unsuspecting blues fan may be taken aback by a change in style on side

two as a Calypso beat and the occasional reggae back beat beef up the solos on Hawaiian guitar. It's a style that perfectly expresses the versatility of the blues . . . other influences may come to predominate but the underlying feel is always close to hand.

"Being interested in the blues, it was only a matter of time before I was going to stumble over this guitar sound. I'd listen to players like John Fahey and his Blind Joe Death album, and heard a couple of early Johnny Winter pieces played on a National Steel guitar. I loved the tone and of course this was about the time when everyone was aiming to perfect that finger vibrato style of playing.

"But the first person I ever heard play the thing properly and achieve the sound I had in my head was Sammy Mitchell. I had come down from Preston and went to Portobello Road. I think I tried to see Brett Marvin & The Thunderbirds - who were an excellent band. In between sets Sammy came on, and he had all the vocalisations, rich with emotion and, of course, his superb guitar style. I thought THIS IS IT!"

Rust has plenty of lush sounds embellishing some very strong material and, overall, it carries the Brown trademark of
Kevin Brown

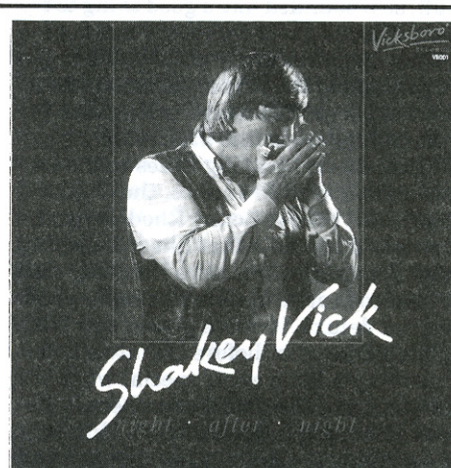
an American Roots feel. Yet despite having wandered the States for 18 months and having settled in Austin, Texas's musical community, Kevin feels his musical tastes were already formed before the US sojourn.

"Tracks like 'Telephone Tears' were undoubtedly a result of my experiences. It's a kind of lyrical sketchpad of my travels. Generally, I found my musical heaven, a musical melting pot that mixed the blues with influences as far afield as Chicanos, Red Indians, Hispanics, Blacks and even Scottish Country Dancing. With a mixture of Cajuns, Cowboys and even Germans you are bound to pick up a variety of influences. But I've always been attracted to rhythm and I think it's the American rhythmic tradition that I tapped into rather than anyone particular style; everything from West Coast Blues and Swing to those incredible vocal bands that put on a show and use instruments from ukeleles to double bass."

'Rust' finishes with a lovely, gentle instrumental called 'Sunny Side' up. It's a jaunty and optimistic piece, simple in its composition but colourful in its musical suggestion. It's the kind of piece that might attract Country blues fans - a long way from the funky West Coast sound of

'Hey Joe Louis' for example, but it's a splendid example of Kevin Brown's musical philosophy. As he explains; "Basically my music is all about songs with a particular rhythm in mind. I am a kind of mirror, or sponge that soaks up different musical influences. I'll pick up on something, push it around a little and usually throw in a bit of guitar. I aim to make people feel the way I did when I first heard some of the old blues guys and, later, people like Lowell George or J.J. Cale."

Kevin's final thoughts centre on his band which he is at pains to credit for having stuck with his musical explorations. Step right up Clive Deamer on drums ("a great brush player"), Jerry Soffe on bass, Adrian Uttley guitar ... ("they know I mean it"). "Musicians like that are hard to find" says Kevin. He might have added that a superb guitar player who can write imaginative songs in the blues vein is also hard to find. And Kevin Brown and his new album 'Rust' look set to open the doors for further explorations in the blues field. I look forward to checking them out.
Rust is available on Hannibal Records HNBL 1334



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"It all comes down to the shuffle"

An interview with Steve Griffith

by Norman Darwen

Steve, what are you doing in Britain?

Well, I'm the imported American Blues drummer for the engine-room of the Otis Grand organisation.

The last time I saw you, you were with Joe Louis Walker ...

That's how I first met Otis and then his band, on the English tours with Joe – we'd mix and mingle and have a fun time. So, when Joe and I parted ways back in December of '88, I settled back in San Francisco, did some day work, played some gigs. Otis had always expressed an interest in playing together; there was nothing really good on the horizon in the Bay Area, I was playing the same old stuff, so it sounded like a good thing to try and work out. I told Otis to try and get me a work visa, the agency pulled it through, we negotiated the proper channels and so now I'm a legal Bluesman in England.

How did you get into the Blues?

I first started playing Blues in the late seventies in San Francisco, the Oakland Bay Area. I believe Sonny Rhodes was the first one of any note that I heard, playing some *downright* Blues at a tiny, tiny club in Oakland called The Deluxe Inn – which was not deluxe, it was a greasy pit! With bands I'd been in before, I'd always felt something a little extra special when we did certain of the shuffle numbers; I discovered from playing a lot of different types of music that what really grabbed me most was the bluesy stuff, so that's all I started playing and listening to. I played with Robert Cray back in 1979 for a while, I learned a lot from Robert Cray and his bass player Richard Cousins. Robert is a friend and he has remained to me one of the major gentlemen of the Blues, and the music scene. Floyd Dixon just before them, I really learned from his left hand on the piano, that really clued me into a lot of the different possibilities of shuffles, so thank you, Floyd. After that it was mostly people that were playing around the Bay Area: Sonny Rhodes, Little Frankie Lee, Mark Naftalin, Troyce Key and J.J. Malone at Eli's Mile High Club, Buddy Ace, Little Joe Blue. I played some gigs with Maurice McKinnies and The Electrifying Galaxy Band – Maurice is a BAD mamma-jammer, he plays a little more on the soul side – Wilson Pickett, James Brown – and Buddy Guy style you know.

You were on the San Francisco Blues Festival '82 tour – can you tell me about that?

Oh boy! That was Henry Oden on bass and I, and a guitar player named Roy Rogers – he plays some guitar! He was



Back in issue 6 of *'British Blues Review'*, Otis Grand talked about his difficulties in finding a drummer to provide the right sound for his band; his problems now seem to be over, as last year the drum stool (and M.C. role) was taken over by Steve Griffith. In March this year I sat down with Steve to listen to his story:

really good at bucking everybody up. His position had been filled by Ron Thompson on the first tour and Ron is really a master of accompanying – Roy had to step into those shoes and he did great. We always started every show with Henry, Roy and I doing a couple of Roy's tunes – one of his specialties is slide guitar and as I recall most of the time it was a tune of his with a New Orleans style beat to it. Since then Roy's gone on to back up John Lee Hooker for years and to have his own highly successful band and albums and he's just produced John Lee's latest album. He's very, very active on the music scene. Anyway, the tour was basically a revue in fact (*others on the bill were Sonny Rhodes, Troyce Key and J.J. Malone, Little Frankie Lee, Little Joe Blue and Guitar Mac*). Roy and I were the only people that lived in San Francisco, it really should have been called the Oakland Blues

Festival. That was seven weeks, my first overseas tour and in fact I felt pretty good about it. I got to see lots of places that I'd never been to before and we were treated very well, played in some highly unusual locations. We played in some castle ruins in Belgium. At the time Luther Tucker was living nearby and he came and sat in – I'm not saying he jinxed anything, probably he just had so much power and juice that the fuses blew; it was twilight, the sun had gone down and we're in these castle ruins with jagged ramparts, Luther was playing and all of a sudden the power went out. Everybody lit matches or lighters, it was like "What century am I in?" – fire and castles! So that European tour was something else. Got exposed to the Northsea Jazz festival, had a lot of little arguments on the bus, herded together for seven weeks in tight corners, everybody got a little snappish every now and

then, but overall it was a great experience.

You mentioned bass player Henry Oden – how did you get with him?

Oh, just through backing up the same people over the years in Oakland and the Bay Area. I think I met him initially when he was a member of Mark Naftalin's Blue Monday Band. I sat in a couple of times, then I subbed a few times and did the gig.

ing with this new guy; new to me, he's been playing for years and years. As a matter of fact, Nancy blows some beautiful sax on Joe's new album, she really does (*Joe Louis Walker, "Blue Soul", Demon FIEND 159?*) I learned a lot playing with Joe and I got to see a lot of the world. We all in the band paid our dues, making the long hauls for short change. God bless and keep him and major success to a major tal-



Otis Grand, left, with Steve Griffith (photo: Stewart Allison)

We always had good fun together, we were running buddies on that '82 tour and through the years. We always did a lot of playing with Bobby 'Goodfingers' Murray – another helluva guitar player, he's with Etta James now. My main period with Henry, three years steady, was as part of Joe Louis Walker's Boss Talkers.

Tell me about Katie Webster ...

My sweetheart .. that was through Hot Links, a New Orleans style, horn based R'n'B band I was playing in. She was being booked by Ice Cube Slim of Bon Ton West Productions on the West Coast. Ice Cube is a New Orleans fanatic and so it was natural for him to know and hang out with Hot Links – he carried us on a few bookings and then the leader of Hot Links, John Lumsdaine, arranged a recording session for Chris Strachwitz, Arhoolie Records. In fact, Joe Walker and I did a lot of accompaniment, a lot of gigs with Katie. She is a professional and a delight.

How did you join up with Joe Louis Walker?

Well, I played with Hot Links for close on three years, and as that band started to disintegrate, Nancy Wright, one of the sax players, started bringing this guy that she had met at a club around to our gigs – as Hot Links wound down I started play-

ent.

You also appear on the new album by Paris Slim ...

Paris Slim, his new album, which has been like several years in the making ... he lives in Oakland, real name Frank Goldwasser. The first time I met Frank was on that 1982 European tour because he was first assigned by the promoters to be the road manager for that tour since he spoke English and French of course, and he had already met a lot of the cats on the tour during a couple of his trips to Oakland. He had a big interest in the blues, so it seemed natural. He was road manager until the business end of things took a different direction – I think they pared down their employees or something. So that's where I first met him and then when he moved full-time to the West Coast, you just naturally play with the new guys around. I actually was in one of his bands for a while and had a great time.

What are your opinions on the British Blues scene?

I haven't been able to see enough of it, I've been trying. The music scene in general is real different ... I'm still a little thrown by the early hours, starting a gig early and ending early and usually only playing one set. I like playing a little more

music if possible, two sets under the circumstances sometimes is my favourite. British Blues? ... playing with Otis is pretty much full-time, I haven't had a chance to get out and see a lot of it. I saw Paul Lamb, he and his band have a real nice groove, they take their time; Howlin' Wilf I haven't seen since two years ago – I understand he's doing some New Orleans stuff now so I've got to go and check him out. The Big Town Playboys, those guys burn ... but to tell you the truth, I haven't heard anyone else do the honest Texas and West Coast R'n'B style blues like Otis does. I like the drum chair in this band.

What do you think makes a good blues drummer?

You've got to be crazy! No, really, it all comes down to the shuffle, doesn't it, and how many different shades of shuffle you have. The shuffle is one of the easiest things, and yet it is one of the hardest. For some reason, I don't know where the hell it came from but I would consider my sense of shuffle one of my strongest points, although there's all kinds of grooves that I love. A good blues drummer? – strength with groove, that's what it is.

Last question – how did you get the MC job?

Well, I'm shameless, I'll say almost anything! Just kidding! I've always been comfortable talking to an audience, but we're cutting back on that anyway because it is pretty awkward to have the drummer trying to MC especially with a big band where you're hidden behind the horn section and all the front row – it made sense for a band that's playing American style music to have an American doing the announcing but we've cut back on the talk so we can have more music.

Steve Griffith can be heard on the following records:

Various Artists: "San Francisco Blues Festival In Europe Again", Paris Album (Fr. C3343/4 (double album)

KATIE WEBETER WITH HOT LINKS; "You Know That's Right", Arhoolie 1094

JOE LOUIS WALKER: "Cold Is The Night", Ace CH208

PARIS SLIM: "Blues For Esther", Blue Sting 014

In addition to the above, Steve also played with "a couple of earlier bands that had home-produced albums that were only regionally distributed, 500 copies or so, they won't turn up ... and that's all right, they were early, early stuff". He will of course also be on Otis Grand's new album Norman Darwen

Reviews

Anson Funderburgh and The Rockets, Featuring Sam Myers *The Town & Country 2, London* 3rd May 1990

Anson's aggregation is one of that very rare breed, a band that satisfies both the Blues purists and the crowd out for an evening of relevant, modern-sounding, rocking blues — without making any concessions to Rock itself. Anson himself, from Plano, Texas, is a guitarist's guitarist with his own style, though drawing liberally on such masters as B B King, Freddie King, Otis Rush and the innovators from his home state, and in Sam Myers the band has a frontman who is not only a bonafide legend (he blew harp on Elmore James's "Look On Yonder Wall") but who is probably now singing better than ever; the band is rounded out by pianist Matt McCabe (check your records on Pee Wee's and Black Top), and the powerhouse rhythm section of Mike Judge on bass and Marc Wilson, drums. All the ingredients necessary to produce a wonderful night's music...

And that's just what they did. From the opening notes of the guitar instrumental that began the evening right through to the very end, the band couldn't do a single thing wrong. Anson's solos were generally short, sharp and to the point, with not a note wasted — and when he did stretch out, as for example on B.B.'s "How Blue Can You Get", the cheers and roars of appreciation summed it up better than words can do. Sam Meyers sang with soul and authority on a wide variety of songs, drawing from band originals, covers of classics (a stunning version of Otis Rush's "All Your Love", a rocking rendition of Earl King's "Let the Good Times Roll", the slow burn "One Room Country Shack" and "Yonder Wall", of course) and his own back catalogue ("My Love Is Here To Stay" which he first made in Jackson, Mississippi in 1957)... and the tone that Sam coaxed from his harp was just wonderful.

The club wasn't quite jam-packed, though it should have been and undoubtedly will be whenever the band returns. A strong contender for Gig Of the Year; as Otis Grand was heard to mutter at the end: "Just awesome, man!"

Phil Guy & The Bob Pearce Blues Band *The West End Centre, Aldershot* 5th May 1990

Phil Guy likes to dance — at home in Chicago, if he's not working, he does the rounds of the Blues clubs — and so he wasn't really happy this evening until he'd got the dancers up on the floor. he needn't have worried though, as prior to this we were content just to listen to his fine guitar work with its echoes of his elder brother Buddy, T-Bone Walker and Guitar Slim.

Earlier in the evening Bob Pearce and his band had warmed up the crowd with their customary excellent set of modern blues, before Bob stepped down to relinquish the vocal and guitar chores to Phil. Phil had just come from a live session on GLR's Mary Costello Show and was in a very loose mood, opening with "Everyday I Have The Blues", though he threw in appropriate verses from elsewhere too. A few more numbers, including a lovely, quiet version of "Stormy Monday", and then the tempo picked up when Bob Pearce came on to supply some harmonica with the band. The showpiece "Real Martha" kept the dancers up; next Phil turned to the band and asked if they knew Clarence Carter's "Slip Away" — "we'll try", was rhythm guitarist Pete Harris's reply, and a very creditable effort it was too. Back to the blues with a rocking version of "The Sky Is Crying", then a switch to James Brown, with Phil remarking on Soul Brother Number One's incarceration. To round that evening off, Phil pulled out "Miss You", the Rolling Stones number that was so popular in Chicago a few years back, for a high energy finale to leave the audience shouting for more.

This was another excellent evening's worth of Blues from Phil Guy. If you missed him on this tour, make sure you catch him when he returns; in the meantime, console yourself by checking out Bob Pearce and his band.

The Blues Brothers Band *Town & Country Club, Kentish Town, London NW5 23rd May 1990*

Most definitely a cult evening! Shades and pork-pie hats were very much the order of the day, there was even a dodgy looking guy outside (I don't think it was Wolfie Witcher) selling these vital

accessories at a fiver each, in case you'd forgotten to bring yours along. Such an adoring audience isn't always the most critical however...

I've no complaints about the rhythm section, particularly guitarist Steve Cropper and bassman Duck Dunn; they showed just why they already enjoy legendary status on the very first number — "Green Onions", of course. Matt 'Guitar' Murphy shone on "The Thrill Is Gone" and Leon Pendarvis on keyboards provided just the right fills to push things along. however, things were definitely lacking in the horn section, at least from where I was standing at the back. The Atlantic/Stax soul sound that made up a large part of the band's repertoire demands a FAT horn section, but this bunch could hardly be heard, and when one or other took a solo, the result bore little relevance to what was going on. Also vocalist Larry Thurston, a musical chameleon who was Otis Redding one minute, Wilson Pickett the next and then Sam & Dave, seemed to spend as much time shaking hands with the crowd and imploring them to say "Yeah" as he did singing; Stax singer Eddie 'Knock On Wood' Floyd replaced him after forty minutes or so but little changed.

You should read these comments in the knowledge that well over two thousand people who were sharing the Town & Country with me were going totally bananas at just about every number. For me there were highs and quite a few lows, but there can be no dispute that this band have got *something* — and I can only describe as amazing the moment when after a very familiar introduction, Larry Thurston sang the first line of "Sweet Home Chicago" and a couple of thousand people proceeded to sing the rest of the song back to him!

Norman Darwen

Belfast Midsummer Jazz and Blues Festival *Europa Hotel Belfast*

The blues portion of the annual Belfast Jazz and Blues Festival may have been small beer compared to recent extravaganzas in Burnley and Clwyd (drool) but there were nonetheless several outstanding performances to delight local diehards.

The eight piece Chris Barber Jazz and Blues Band somewhat amazingly (well it amazed me) were a huge draw, absolutely stuffing the Europa. The fanaticism of Barber's Belfast fan club is mindboggling, and it was wondrous to behold so many fifty somethings jiving like there was no tomorrow to tunes like Bourbon St. Parade and Battersea Rain Dance. The band's version of Ellington's sombre Immigration Blues was beautiful, but the best blues playing of the set came on Coming Up The River,

with a long superbly constructed and atmospheric guitar solo from John Slaughter.

The Bryan Day Blues Bash from Dublin impressed on their first foray in to the Black North. Day is a blues shouter, although only one third in the size of role models such as Big Joe Turner, and while his voice is not of the highest quality he performed the likes of C.C. Rider and Every Day I Have The Blues with feeling and personality. And when his guitarist, saxophonist, double bassist and drummer took a break, Day and pianist Malcolm Gooding produced an excellent version of Jelly Roll Morton's Michigan Water Blues.

Local heroes the Jim Daly Band, with their twin strike force of Daly on electric piano and Ronnie Greer on Gibson 335, performed mightily, with full tilt versions of Carey Bell's When A Woman Gets In Trouble and Mercy Dee Walton's One Room Country Shack. English visitor Norman Beaker, another Belfast debutante augmented the band for part of the set, proving himself an adequate vocalist and an outstanding guitarist, firmly from the British school of blues guitar playing. "It's our first rehearsal," announced Beaker, but on songs like Five Long Years and That's Unnatural (from his new l.p.) the combination proved lethal.

The quality of many festival performers was high, but Belfast's best recent blues singing occurred elsewhere, during the performance by the J.B. Allstars (sadly without James Brown, who was otherwise engaged) in front of 150 people in the Errigle Inn, when the pride of East Belfast, Van The Morrison took the stage for an incendiary twenty minute set, featuring extended versions of It's A Man's World and Gloria. Truly the stuff of dreams!

Howling Wilf and His Band The Limelight, Belfast

"Hello Belfast: be kind to us — this is our first time here," pleaded Howling Wilf at the start of his debut Northern Irish tour, in what was either a touching display of first night nerves, or a cunning ploy to ingratiate himself with the punters, depending on how cynically one regards these things.

Either way it did the trick, with much bopping and stomping of feet from the 150 or so late night bluesers and late night boozers in the Limelight.

Wilf's band currently features string bass, drums and keyboards, with baritone and tenor saxophones adding mucho muscle and Wilf himself on guitar and vocals. His guitar playing, as on excellent versions of Guitar Slim's Things I Used To Do and Sleep Around, attributed to Buddy Guy, is characteristically crisp and punchy, with no flashy heroics.

His singing was often impassioned and always sincere, but perhaps lacked a little individuality, his voice being most effective on the slower Sam Cooke type

material such as I Want To Get Old With You and the solo encore I Am Just A Country Boy.

It's hard to impress a Belfast audience with Baby Please Don't Go, a song dear to the hearts of all local bluesers since Van Morrison and Them rampaged through it twenty five years ago, but Wilf and his merry men hit the spot with a truly intense rendition.

So, Wilf: was Belfast kind to you, or was Belfast kind to you? And does that mean we'll see you over here again soon?
Trevor Hodgett

Howlin' Wilf and The New Band Newport, King's Hotel, 25 / 5 / 90.

Despite the likeable punning of the name, Wilf's howling was always closer to the soulful falsetto of a Sam Cooke or a Jackie Wilson than Chester Burnett's animal growl. Unsurprising then, to find him outgrowing the limited instrumental possibilities of the Vee Jays' guitar-harp-bass-drums set-up and opting for this expanded 'New Band', with its keyboards, baritone and tenor bringing it far more into line with the 'sixties soul influences its leader displays so winningly.

Sadly, the harmonica has fallen by the wayside, even on previously recorded numbers like 'Baby, Please Don't Go' which, in the Vee Jays' version, featured the harp quite heavily. Here yer man was heard merely on guitar and very fine vocals.

The composition of the set was similar to before however, with good, Will-penned originals interspersed among an interesting crop of cover versions which mostly managed to avoid those most frequently heard rattling the windows of smoke rooms up and down the country. Of the handful whose familiarity occasionally flicks the listener's response switch to 'contempt', they tended to redeem themselves either by the novelty of the arrangement ('Baby, Please's unusual rhythmic accompaniment being a good example), or by relying on Wilf's exceptionally able vocal skills.

Re: the latter, one needed look no further than 'Hallelujah, I Love Her So'. This young man's mastery of Ray Charles' soul-blues idiom is astonishing, his cries and screams are The Genius to a T. Despite his youthful, chirpy-Londonder persona, this is no punky, Nine Below Zero approximation of the blues: turn your back and this guy is black.

He can also do a fair James Brown, as was attested to by 'Good, Good Loving' early in the set. That splendid rendition followed briskly on from a spirited version of Fats' 'Be My Guest', which was the first clue to Wilf's obvious obsession with New Orleans. Thus, we got two Guitar Slim numbers, 'I Done Got Over It' and of course, 'Things I Used To Do' and indeed the Crescent City feel also spilled over to the self-professed 'sloppy' original, 'I Wanna Get Old With You'.

The new brass section was showcased in 'Every Time I Hear That Mellow Saxophone' (not up to the Big Town Playboys recent cover) and there were other inventive choices: Brook Benton's 'A New Love' and T.V Slim's 'Flatfoot Sam', for instance. I gather Wilf is a bit of an R'n'B buff, and if this evening did not impress quite as much as some of the later Vee Jays stuff, it's surely just a matter of time before this combo is fine-tuned to its leader's satisfaction. As the name states quite categorically, it's still, after all, a 'new band'. They were also unfortunate in having to follow local boys 'The Red Hot Pokers', whose explorations of roughly the same area are imbued with years of experience gained from being one of the country's top pick-up bands. Some gentle ribbing from Wilf showed that he was also aware of his own misfortune in this respect.

But overall, an entertaining and most hopeful glimpse of one of the country's finest young singers in a new and potentially even more fruitful setting than ever before. I await recordings with interest.

Paul Lewis

Gary Moore St. David's Hall, 6 / 5 / 90

Following smartly after his recent best-selling album, here was the 'Still Got The Blues' tour, the latest stage in Gary Moore's exploration of his musical roots. As with Eric Clapton's much-lauded Albert Hall shows recently, Moore was joined for the occasion by both a young contender (for Robert Cray, read Larry McCray) and an old master (for Buddy Guy, Albert Collins) in his attempt to turn his regular hard-rock audience onto that altogether more rewarding of musical styles, the blues.

McCray and his band were first up, this 28-year old Detroit based guitarist looking every bit the bluesman from the red bandanna around his head to the excess poundage around his waist. Playing a selection of songs from his excellent debut LP 'Ambition', McCray's busy guitar work and hard, funky soul-influenced material were to fall victims to the terrible acoustics which curse most amplified events at St. David's Hall. Despite an obvious talent, what we got here unfortunately was more muddy sound than Muddy Waters.

Moore was much clearer, although as feared, the man chose to play far too loudly. Backed by a seven-piece band including a four-man brass section, he was constantly in danger of overpowering them and seemed to me to have lost any ground gained by his recent work as far as subtlety goes. From the opener, a version of Albert King's 'Oh, Pretty Woman', it was obviously he was taking things at far too rocky a clip. 'walking By Myself' which followed was similarly hampered, and although this Jimmy Rogers classic is given a fairly heavy treatment in Moore's recorded

version, here it descended into a noisy grunge.

Running through a few which didn't make it onto his album — 'The Sky is Crying', taking a line of descent through Albert King (again) and Stevie Ray Vaughan rather than Elmore James and George Thorogood; Otis Rush's 'All Your Love' (the Bluesbreakers treatment of this was evidently a major influence); Freddie King's 'The Stumble'. On this last-named instrumental, Moore hit rock bottom. He claims a mentor in Fleetwood Mac's Peter Green, but compare Green's beautiful playing of this piece with Moore's breakneck version at this show. No contest.

He was much better on slower self-penned compositions like 'Midnight Blues' and the tour's title song. Although chock-full of 'Parisienne Walkways'-style clichés — all gypsy violin romanticism — this was undeniably effective and the obvious favourite with the sell-out crowd.

Thrown into confusion by the delayed arrival of Albert Collins a couple of numbers later, Moore dragged the band through a sloppy 'Born Under a Bad Sign' (A. King again), but it was clear from the initial tentative picking of the Texas master, that things would take a turn for the better.

Moving briskly through 'Too Tired', during which Moore's juggernaut playing virtually drowned him out, Collins then took centre stage for what was undoubtedly the high point of the evening, a beautiful rendition of 'Cold, Cold Feeling' from his landmark 'Ice Pickin' album. This was truly great playing, showing at first hand that what makes a blues master is not just what they play, but what they don't. Collins' cool, spacious solos were the very antithesis of Moore's constructions in fuzz and sustain.

There seems to be an unwritten law that whenever two or more lead guitarists are gathered on the same stage, then 'Further On Up The Road' shall be performed. Heaven knows, Clapton has traded licks often enough on this one, and the set proper was finished

here in time-honoured tradition. It was worth staying for the encores however, particularly the second, when Moore dragged Collins back out to Jam on a version of Louis Jordan's 'Caldonia'.

A mixed night then, Moore showing that he'll always be a rock musician first and foremost, despite his affection for this style. But if for nothing else, he should be applauded for giving Collins a chance, however brief it may have been, to show a Cardiff audience that there's certainly finer players about than the gruesome collection of names screaming back at him from several hundred-T-Shirted chests.

1st Norwich MEC Blues Festival U.E.A. Sunday 3rd June 1990

The Musicians Emergency Committee, founded by bass player Roger Bunn, followed up its sell-out Chiswick Blues Festival with an even stronger bill of names to please an eager East Anglian blues audience.

Despite the rain and the fact that it was a Sunday night a good crowd turned out to suggest that given future such blues related events, an audience will exist out there to support the blues.

Due to illness K Passa, a Bristol Cajun band, had to cancel. Happily this led to an extended set by PETE JAGGER and a fiery harp player by the name of MISSISSIPPI ALAN RICHARDSON a lunch time gig with the resourceful Mr Jagger led to his appearance at the festival. If this is what talent spotting is all about then Pete Jagger hit the bullseye, for seldom have I experienced such feel from a harp player. With only the duo on stage, Richardson was allowed to give full reign to a technique and style of playing that would leave many a 'name' player lagging behind.

Jagger himself is a great believer in pure blues, drawing on the works of Slim Harpo, Jimmy Reed and Walter Horton to pad out a fine batch of originals like Honey Please, Who's That Girl, and the Reedish Going To New York. Both players received a fine hand and an encore.

THE NORWICH JAM BAND turned out to contain a wide variety of styles and names. I doubt whether SNOWY WHITE, JIM MULLEN and PETE BROWN have ever played together before (save for the Brown/Mullen Piblokto affair of several decades ago). All three were joined by the vibrant vocals of ELLIE LAWSON, ROGER BUNN on bass and GEOFF ALLEN on drums. The hastily assembled Norfolk horns also did a great job punching out some brusque chorusses and the occasional solo.

The scratch band set consisted of a number of standards such as Willy & The Hand Jive, Let the Good Times Roll etc, and Ellie Lawson in particular impressed on the ballad You Don't Know What Love Is. Pete Brown livened things up with a growling version of Politican and messers Mullen and White intermittently lived up to their reputations with some dazzling but clipped solo's.

Due to running times etc, the band played little over an hour but, in the spirit of the event, finished with a flourish.

RAY MINHINNETT'S UK BUSTERS wrapped things up with a powerful set that showed just why then have been approached by the Texan blues label Antones. Ray Minhinnett himself wrings every last drop of anguished blues from his guitar to admirably match a firebrand vocal style. Mick Paice doubling on sax and harp similarly impressed and by the time the band had surged through a number of predominantly Chicago style material, like the self-penned I'm Leaving, and having paid homage to their mentor Otis Rush, they closed this highly enjoyable east Anglian blues festival with energetic aplomb.

Here's to the next one.

For further details of the MEC's activities, please phone Roger Bunn on 081 994 5462 (24 hours)

Pete Feenstra

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Rory Gallagher FRESH EVIDENCE (CAPO LP14)

'Kid' Gloves / The King of Zydeco / Middle Name / Alexis / Empire State Express / Ghost Blues / Heaven's Gate / The Loop / Walkin' Wounded / Slumming Angel.

It's been 25 years now since Rory Gallagher broke free of the suffocating Irish 'Showband' circuit to form the successful power trio, Taste. During the intervening years, he has pursued an admirably singleminded course, seemingly ignorant of, or at least not appearing to care a fig about, such vanities as fashion or musical trends.

He knows what he likes, and Gallagher 1990 is not noticeably different from Taste, 1965: no frills, blues-based rock, passionately sung and superbly played.

'Fresh Evidence' finds him once again working within that basic three-piece set-up — indeed bass player Gerry McAvooy was on his first solo album, way back in 1971; nothing changes very much with Gallagher — helped out here and there by such luminaries as Mark Feltham on harmonica and Geraint Watkins on accordian. As usual, Gallagher himself is excellent, his guitar playing supplemented by touches of dulcimer, sitar and other exotica.

Nine of the tracks here are self-

penned, and whilst some are straight rock material, there's still much to interest the blues buff: 'Ghost Blues', an exciting boogie, with its wailing harp and terrific propulsive drumming by Brendan O'Neill; a fine instrumental, 'The Loop', containing hints of Gallagher's frequent Sonny Boy covers as well as displaying some Freddie King influence (in fact B.B., Albert and Freddie must have appeared a virtual magi, albeit come from the West, to the impressionable young blues freak back home in Cork, so pervasive have their various styles been on the makeup of Gallagher's own performances); the Clifton Chenier tribute, 'King of

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Zydeco', which is quite engaging despite the fact that it seems a bit unsure as to whether it wants to adopt the style itself.

Best of all though, is one of those occasional forays into country blues territory – a solo performance of Son House's 'Empire State Express', complete with stinging slide guitar which completely justifies ROLLING STONE's assessment of him as the best British blues player.

Rory will probably never again achieve the level of success which saw him hit the top ten with his 'Live In Europe' album (1972), indeed his 'Eighties releases have met with increasingly diminished returns, but he has a strong hardcore following which he rarely disappoints. This latest batch of Hooker-esque foot-tappers and power chord rockers is well up to standard.

Etta James **STICKIN' TO MY GUNS** (Island ILPS 9955)

Whatever Gets You Through The Night / Love To Burn / The Blues Don't Care / Your Good Thing (Is About To End) / Get Funky / Beware / Out Of The Rain / Stolen Affection / A Fool In Love / I've Got Dreams to Remember

Ol' Jamesetta Hawkins has certainly come a long way since she first impeached Henry to roll with her way back in '55. The voice has deepened dramatically - indeed it's probably better now than its ever been – but there's no denying that along the way it's been a little ill-served by her choice of material from time to time. Driven, no doubt by her oft-quoted desire to 'crossover' into mainstream 'pop' territory, her constant genre-hopping and string of wasted albums full of deadweight material has left her thirty-five year career looking like Aretha Franklin's Columbia period in extremis.

Which is why her 1988 Island release, 'Seven Year Itch' came as such a nice surprise. Here at last, was a big, punchy, soulful record full of great R 'n' B cuts worthy of comparison with the best of her early hits. It also managed to sound contemporary, but not to the extent where the studio becomes the star, rather than the performer. Sadly her follow up set, 'Stickin' To My Guns' is nowhere near as good.

Despite boasting largely the same cost and crew (notably absentees: Steve Cropper & Art Neville), this is a bombastic collection of stadium-sized soul-rockers which wouldn't even be regarded as anything other than a lame entry in Tina Turner's recent discography. The songs – on Side 1 particularly – are dull, the production crass and the drums metronomic and at jackhammer volume. The few bright spots are on the flip side; 'Beware' has a nice groove and 'Out of The Rain' is a

big ballad which shows off the Jamesian tonsils to particularly fine effect, and which has a nice 'humanising' slice of harmonica (by Jimmie Pugh) among the sufeit of space-age instruments which generally dog this album. It must be said however that Etta gets closer to Ike's Ex on this latter track than anywhere else.

But it's strictly a 'formula' package, an attempt to recreate its predecessor's success by reproducing its basic framework – even down to the copycat inclusion of a token Otis Redding cover (for 'I Got The Will' last time, read 'I've Got Dreams To Remember' now). The material here is undeniably inferior though, and the presence of rapper Def Jef on 'Get Funky' is a financial rather than an artistic decision, I'm sure. With several other grizzly bear-voiced ladies (Valerie Wellington, Katie Webster) currently producing fine work, it's time Miss James started looking to her laurels. No one really wants rap from such a potentially great blues performer, and I think mama should be told.

Paul Lewis

Lenna And The Snakemen **SOMETHING'S COOKING** (Wizard Records WIZ 001) **NO BLOW BLUES** (Wizard Records WIZ 002)

This sounds like a young band. How did you take that, positively or negatively? I guess that depends on how old you are. Actually I'm also going by the pictures on the sleeve, although these look as if they may have been taken just after the invention of the pin-hole camera, making this band about 160 years old. Each.

"Something's Cooking" is Lenna And The Snakemen's first album, recorded April '88. "No Blow Blues" was recorded twelve months later, and it's interesting to note a difference. Both Lenna and her Snakemen sound more confident on the second album. Not that "Something's Cooking" doesn't cook; it just does so on a slow heat. Occasionally reminiscent of The Doors, "Something's Cooking" recorded a band who, despite a dry, lightweight sound, obviously enjoyed their time in the studio. Lenna's voice has power and poise, although I find the American affectation a bit overwhelming at times. There's a good range of songs and styles – the slow jazzy 'I Don't Worry 'bout A Thing', the mournful 'Four Walls', the Doors-rock title track and the fast and furious 'I Don't Know'.

I prefer the layed-back tracks; they swing nicely, with good piano from guest John Bryant and jazzy melodic solos from Adrian on guitar. On faster

tracks Adrian falls off the Swing, his guitar becoming too heavy to balance. (Sorry).

Let's put the second LP on. It says here 'PLAY LOUD', always good advice, and I'm rewarded by a clear recording. The opening track 'Had It With You Baby' is that 12 bar with introductory breaks we know and love, but there are a variety of unnecessary chord changes here which upset me, if not the song. The next track, "Never Going Back" is better. Good slide guitar from 'Sleez' and blues harp courtesy of 'Dheeresh "Mad Professor" Turnbull'. Things get funky in 'Red Light Zone' with plucked strings abound: but something still lacks. Could it be that experience that comes with age?

Snatch It Back/DYNAMITE (Tramp Records TR 9904)

I like this Rhythm and Blues record. I know this because I've been singing a couple of the tracks to myself, after playing the record once.

A trip to Cardiff may well be necessary, for it is here that you will find this band playing. This is one of those records that inspires you to catch the band live. The record breathes the blues and you feel that you're missing out just staring at your record player.

Side A opens with "Little Miss Pleasure". There's big drums here and vocals with that dirty 'Green Bullet' Harp microphone sound. It's a sort of Boogie/Stomp which benefits from a recording that keeps the band together as a coherent group, rather than setting instruments coldly apart. The second track keeps the feet tapping and the neighbours annoyed. "Kind of Loving I Need" it's called. Nextline?...better than Coke, Amphetamine or weed. Well done Boys, sheer poetry.

After these two heavy Blues which leave a vague Texan flavour in the air, things mellow down, hitting a low with "Ballad Of Edward Johnson", possibly the weakest composition here.

Elsewhere on the album the band get down to more boogie and Rock 'n' Roll, yet never really get away from the Blues. I wonder how much the bus to Cardiff costs...

Mitch Landry and The Cajun Ramblers **Pays Des Cajuns** (Homeland of Cajuns) (Bedrock BED LP 12)

Yeeehah! On this hot summer evening the sound of Mitch Landry And the Cajun Ramblers brings with it a certain wood dust and mud swamp smell that could be psychosomatic, or it could be that my room needs cleaning ...

Cajun music is of course from Louisiana, the subsequent home of French settlers who, in 1755, were booted out of Nova Scotia, Canada, by

the British. Most made home in South Louisiana after a luke-warm welcome and, amongst this inhospitable swampland and with reason to feel soulful, the music developed.

Mitch and the guys are the genuine article. All were born and still live in or around Baton Rouge, about 80 miles upstream from New Orleans, on the Mississippi River. And 'Pays Des Cajuns' is a lovely record. Steel, Accordion and Fiddle swing to the 3:4, 6:4 and other rhythms provided by soft rhythmic bass and good trashy drums. Mitch's nasal-French lyrics are fairly incomprehensible to me, but *cela n'a pas d'importance*, for his is an entertaining, melodic and expressive voice and whatever the words are saying, we can be sure that Mitch means it. In fact you can hear the whole band smile as you listen to this record which, incidentally, is what I'm suggesting you do.

Mark Homer

MORE RECORDS

Andy Story Natural Blues Spivey LP 1038

New York label Spivey has been in operation for round about thirty years now; it is probably best known to the public at large for recording Bob Dylan back in the very early sixties, but it has always been willing to give promising new talent a chance. This album continues that tradition.

Singer/guitarist Andy Story was born in West Virginia in 1943, and began playing guitar when he was thirteen, inspired by B.B. King and Chuck Berry. He moved to New York in 1964, where he performed in innumerable clubs and he remembers working with Rufus Thomas, Eddie Kirkland and Faye Adams, among others. His affiliation with Spivey began in 1976, and the final number here is in fact a test he made at that time, it features his fleet guitar lines behind the vocal of label boss and Blues veteran (first recorded in 1926!) Victoria Spivey. The rest of the album presents Andy upfront as leader.

Album opener "The Sky is Crying" sets the mood nicely, with its quiet approach; Andy's playing throughout this record reminds me of a laid-back Buddy Guy. His vocals are gentle, relaxed and soulful; he is backed on the majority of the tracks by just fellow Big Apple musicians Johnny Allen (guitar) and Jerry Dugger (bass) – no drums! This line-up works well, whether rocking away on "Man or Mouse", stretching out on "Blues Shadows Falling" (incidentally the running order on the sleeve is wrong), getting lowdown on the standard "Things That I Used To Do", with an accurate imitation of Guitar Slim's style, or producing the toughest guitar work of the album on the instrumental "Andy's Natural Blues". "Call it Stormy Monday" is from a live concert in Austria, with Andy backed by

guitarist Fritz Svacina (editor of the magazine *Blues Life*), bassist Peter Wollner and drummer Michael Klein; there is some lovely T-bone Walker-ish playing on this one.

This may not be an easy album to track down but if you are looking for some quiet, late-night blues, then you should make the effort. A welcome change of pace.

Norman Darwen

Larry McCray Ambition Pointblank VPBCD 1

Ambition is a pleasing debut album by a new name on the blues scene, but ultimately its a frustrating album that promises much but delivers too varied a repertoire to warrant a five star rating.

Larry McCray hails from Detroit – or thereabouts – and represents one of a number of new artists on Virgin's excursion into the blues. Larry was apparently found playing bar rooms around the mid West, still working in the day to make ends meet.

Ambition is certainly packed with enough energy and ideas to suggest the man has enough in his locker to sustain a useful recording career. From the off, on the opening tracks, Ambition and Count On Me For Love, McCray explodes into action with a thousand guitar notes accompanying, his powerful soulful voice. But its a case of a lack of producers cool ear to direct the power and space the solo's. There's too much going on too soon. The end result is still impressive but tends towards repetition because of a lack of dynamics.

That said Larry is a good song writer,

as *Keep On Walking*, *Sally's Got A Friend...* and *One More Lonely Night*, prove. This is a fine debut and I look forward to Larry McCray harnessing his blues hunger and combined playing and vocal power into a more clearly defined mould. Crossover blues music, after all, doesn't have to consist of a complete hotchpotch of styles.

Here's to the next album.

The Walter Trout Band "Life In The Jungle" Bozz/Electra BOCB 5014

The Great Walter Trout debate starts here. For, make no mistake, this ebullient guitar slinging former John Mayall employee looks set to make the same kind of impression that Stevie Ray Vaughan did, but without the Hendrix trappings. Ironically Walter does include a show stopping version of Hendrix's "Red House" in an explosive live set, a few snippets of which are caught on this his debut album.

From the opening rock & roll licks of "Good Enough To Eat", Trout fires on all cylinders, playing with an awesome passion and enthusiastic energy that is a tribute to the man who usually gets through over 250 tour dates a year. Big in Scandinavia, and known only for his Mayall and Canned Heat connections over here, this debut album will provide an immediate talking point about the latest in a long line of blues rockers. Yet before the groans start to get to loud, I'll wager there is not a more expressive and committed blues player on the live circuit at present.

What Walter offers is a full range of

The Walter Trout Band



rocking blues compositions that at times comes close to the Southern rock sound of The Allman Brothers or even dare I suggest Lynrd Skynryd. But ultimately, as this set suggests, Trout is merely keeping his options open. Self penned material such as the title track may lack the power of the live version to be found on his excellent "Live At The Belly Up" set but even within the studio confines, you can't keep a man with this much energy down.

Predictably enough the album contains some live out takes from his recent Scandinavian tour, that includes a bruising "Serves Me Right To Suffer" and a fierce version of "Cold Cold Feeling" which along with a blistering version of "Red House" is performed in front of a crowd that for once sounds real. And here in essence lies the kernel of Trout's work. The man needs an audience. He has a great voice, a belligerent approach to playing that frequently goes over the top, but is saved by an underlying sensitivity that either manifests itself in his vocals or occasional clever use of harmonics.

In sum "Life In The Jungle" is some achievement, marrying Trout's ability as a live performer with a studio environment, to produce some sizzling contemporary blues.

Joe Turner/T-Bone Walker Bosses of The Blues/ Bluebird/ND88311

Recalling a re-issue presents a few problems to the schooled reviewer. Recalling the circumstances of the musicians on the session is something entirely more difficult.

However, the personnel on both these sets comprises a hard core of Frank Zappa sidemen circa the Hot Rats era with a peerless rhythm section of Paul Humphrey on drums and Max Bennett on bass. In the context of a blues session, and appended by an unknown orchestra, even the most accomplished of players are likely to be a shade circumspect. And so it proves on *Bosses Of The Blues* that Big Joe Turner and T-Bone Walker spends most of their respective sets feeling out the band before finally offering glimpses of what might have been had the aggregation had more time to rehearse.

Max Bennett's heavy bass lines for example perfectly complement a bluesy, funk-laden rock band, but are not immediately conducive to blues shouting vocalists. Thus while a funky arrangement of *Shake Rattle & Roll* provides no problems, its not until the swinging Honey Hush that Big Joe really comes into his own. A big band arrangement of *Lonesome Train* suggests better things, but on the Turner staple *Corinne Corinne* guest harmonica player George Smith sums up the rather tentative approach to the whole session.

T-Bone Walker's less brusque vocal style takes roughly half the set to find its

niche, with a passable *Every Day I Have The Blues* and the suitably solemn *Vietnam* rarely inspiring the kind of fiery performance he is capable of.

Not until some crisply swapped licks with session guitarist Louis Sheldon on the inevitable *T-Bone Special* does the great man start to cook. As on the later instrumental for B.B. King, Walker teases out the notes, and offers a neat

contrast with Sheldon's more manic fuzzed tones. With the band finally coming into its own on the concluding *Sail On*, this album has to be cautiously recommended perhaps for those blues fans who want to transfer previously enjoyable sessions on to the new CD format.

Pete Feenstra

BOOK REVIEW

The Blackwell Guide To Blues Records

Edited by Paul Oliver
Published by Basil
Blackwell Ltd.

ISBN 0-631-16516-9 £14.95
Hardback.

Any publication carrying the name Paul Oliver will immediately identify a worthwhile and essential reference to the blues enthusiast. Paul's works have always received full merit from both critic and reader and since his now legendary "Story of the Blues" exhibition in London in 1964, he has remained in the hearts of the bluesmen, their music, their roots and traditions, helping to give them the recognition that they deserve.

But here is a book not just for the hardened blues enthusiast and record collector. Here is a book aimed to sit on the bookshelves in every main town bookshop and library, to be the standard reference guide to the newcomer, and the interested listener who, finding such a book, will find a way into this world of blues safely in the hands of professionally documented knowledge and advice. It is without doubt a well timed publication, and with the current "Blues-revival" in 1990's fashion, this book can introduce the newcomer, listening to today's sounds, to the music on record.

Oliver has selected 11 authoritative writers and authorities, each with their own specialist areas of blues on record, history and tradition, as follows:

David Evans: Early Deep South and Mississippi Valley Blues
Bruce Bastin; Texas and the East Coast
Daphne Duval Harrison; 'Classic' Blues and Women Singers
Mike Rowe; Piano Blues and Boogie-Woogie
John Cowley; The 1930's and Library of Congress
David Penny; Rhythm and Blues
Paul Garon; Postwar Chicago and the North
Bob Groom; Down-Home Postwar Blues
Dick Shurman; Postwar Texas and the West Coast

John Broven; Louisiana, New Orleans and Zydeco

Jeff Hannusch; Soul Blues and Modern Trends

All of the above, along with Paul Oliver's own introductory chapter on the earliest recorded forms of blues "Songsters and Proto-Blues", provide the reader with just about every style of blues to read up and refer to. Each contributor has selected 10 records to be their essential choice, plus supporting these 10 with reference to another 30 each in their respective Chapters. With the amount of music currently available, the selection was possibly a difficult one, but in the concept of the book in its introductory role, any blues record collector will be able to identify the definitive ones to remain in one's collection, and deserve an entry in the 480 albums chosen.

The British and European scene has added to the roster of Blues artists since the early sixties. The contributors have not included their works in their selections. A view for discussion, but if you consider the history of the blues from earliest recording to date, the regional and traditional styles have slowly melted together with the advent of radio, television communication and, of course, the gramophone record. The product of Europe is a stage again into meeting these styles and now, after 30 years of its own development, can justify standing 'on its own', and, no doubt, equal reference could now be written and published on the European scene.

The records selected are, in the main, available if not from your 'High Street Record Store', certainly through the Specialist Shops or Mail Order dealers. The book will become a standard reference and if I may quote Paul Jones from his own review on his R and B show - "The book is probably more essential than almost any single long player that you may have in your collection."

A selection of photographs would have complemented this excellent publication, but put the book alongside Oliver's "Story of the Blues" and you have them!

The veteran collector will find a lot of information of interest, the newcomer has the perfect start. Thoroughly recommended to anybody and everybody who has an interest in the blues.

Pete Moody.

RONNIE EARL, pictured at his T&C2 gig is interviewed by the Editor in the October issue of *British Blues Review*.

Also not to be missed – Alex Dmochowsky's reminiscences of life on the road with Mayall, Dunbar and Zappa.

Plus: all the Blues news, views and reviews. Don't miss it!



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Duster Bennet – Tony 'Top' Topham remembers his friend.
'The Blues' – An Enduring British Problem by Peter Feenstra.
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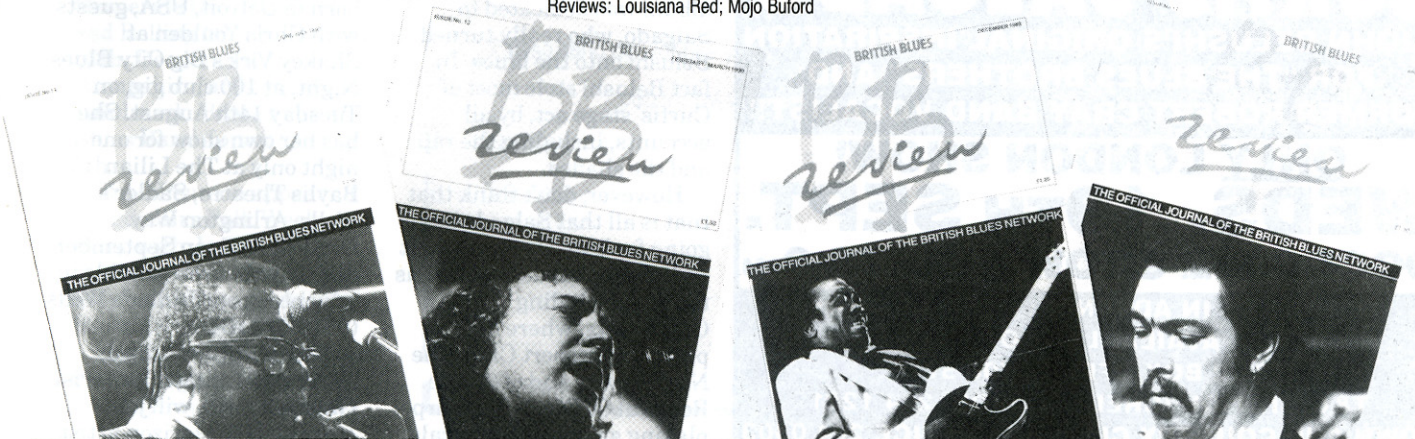
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Bluesnews Bluesnews Bluesnews

The bill for The Great British Rhythm and Blues Festival has been enhanced by the addition of country blues from Jo Ann and Dave Kelly on Sunday evening.

Although the main programme has been settled, Gary Hood informs us that he is still seeking Street Blues artists to play on Saturday, 25th August, so if any of you out there are interested in giving it a whirl in Colne's main street that afternoon, give him a ring on 0282 864721.

Incidentally, we must congratulate Gary's designers, typesetters and printers for producing such a good looking brochure for the festival. It is these sort of touches which ensure that blues gets taken seriously by the rest of the media.

British Blues Review has been going for over two years now and was set up to give a British perspective to the blues scene and encourage musicians, promoters and fans to appreciate just what is on their doorstep, if only



Curtis Salgado, joining forces with Otis Grand.

they bother to get out and look around. The Colne festival is certainly going to give another big push to the cause. We urge you all to be there.

Someone from the States

who's been giving things a big push is Otis Grand with his band The Rhythm Kings. He's persisted with his big band for a couple of years now in an inhospitable climate and has succeeded in proving that it can be done, even over here, though how long he can afford the day-to-day hassles of running a band that size, anyone knows. It's difficult enough running a small combo, never mind about one that size.

He's going on the road with another American who knows something about being in big bands and small ones — Curtis Salgado. There is to be a "Joining Of Forces" for the tour. This should really be worth catching, because Salgado was the inspiration for John Belushi's film *The Blues Brothers*, and in fact the first album was dedicated to Salgado, who really turned Belushi onto the blues. In fact Belushi stole most of Curtis' stage act, by all accounts, including the rap and the shades.

However, don't think that that is all that Salgado has going for him. He has a great pedigree of bands that he has fronted, including Crayhawks, where he partnered Robert Cray, The Nighthawks and of course Roomful Of Blues. His harp playing and amazing vocals

add to the intensity of real live power blues playing. He was always too good to take second place to others and finally got it together with his own band The Stilettoes. However, teaming up with Otis Grand for this tour, will add more power to his elbow. It promises to be a great tour.

They kick off at London's T&C 2 on September 19th, followed by Reading's After Dark Club, 20th, Wickham's Boarhunt Blues, 21st, Kendal's Brewery Arts, 22nd, Lichfield, 23rd, Sheffield, 24th, York (Barnum's) 25th, and Cambridge's Junction on the 26th. Be There!

The Blues Band tour in August and September, starting with Mildenhall Rock & Blues Festival on Sat 14th August, London's Mean Fiddler, 5th, then off to Belgium for the 11th and 12th. They're at the Edinburgh Festival (Assembly Rooms) on 21st 22nd and 23rd. On Bank Holiday Monday, 27th, they're at the Great British R&B Festival. In September they're at London's Town and Country Club, on the 8th before flying to Budapest between the 14th and 17th. On the 19th, they're at Bradford, St George's Hall and on 27th, Swindon's Wyvern Theatre.

Howlin Wilf dates in August are: 3rd, London, Weavers Arms, N1; 4th, Manchester, Band On The Wall; 5th Birmingham, Breedon Bar; 11th, London, Mean Fiddler Acoustic Room, NW10; 17th, Amersham Arms, SE14; 19th, 100 Club, W1; and 31st, Plough, SW9.

Marsha Raven, who was born in Detroit, USA, guests with Chris Youlden at Shakey Vick's Big City Blues Night, at 100 club gig, on Tuesday 14th August. She has her own show for one night only at The Lilian Baylis Theatre, Sadler's Wells, Arlington Way, London, EC1, on September 8th. Tickets are available in advance, from Sadler's Wells (071 837 4104).

Former Blue Horizon (60's) artist, singer guitarist Gordon Smith, will join current Blue Horizon artist

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Big Joe Louis, as guests with Shakey Vick for a downhome blues night at 100 Club on Monday, 6th August.

Shakey Vick's regular Sunday Night residency at Camden's Carnarvon Castle, 7 Chalk Farm Road, London, NW1 is no longer free, but at only £2 entry, is still doing all right. In fact, both Marsha Raven and Chris Youlden have guested there recently.

Wolfie Witcher also continues his residency at the Carnarvon on Saturday afternoons and the last Saturday evening in every month he plays the Hare and Hounds 181 Upper Street Islington, N1. He's also gigging at 100 Club on August 9th.

Wolfie also features on Kit Packham's album LP/Cassette, "On The Shady Side Of The Street" Spotlite Records No. SPJ 903, available from record dealers. You can also buy it for a fiver direct from the band who will be at the following gigs: August 3rd, London, Roberto's Nightclub, 23 King's Road, Chelsea; 5th, Ide Hill, Kent, Frog and Bucket (noon till 3pm); 7th, London, Dover Street Wine Bar; 23rd, London, Brahms and List, Russell Street; 25th Roberto's; 29th, Dover Street Wine Bar; Sept 1st, London, Royal Festival Hall Foyer, 12.30-2pm and Sun 2nd, Kent, Ide Hill, Frog and Bucket.

The Wednesday night 'hop' at the Toad and Stumps has blues and folk regularly. It's on Reading Road, Eversley Cross (A327) but I don't think there's a frog or toad crossing there. Skyport Ade has details on 07348 33705.

Farnham's Maltings has The Poorboys on August 2nd, Desperate Dan Band, 9th and Rolling Drunks on the 16th. Deeper into Hampshire, at Portsmouth's Landmark, Busted Fender Blues Band appear on Aug. 5th.

John Pearson appears at Broadstairs Folk Week, along with Jo Ann Kelly on 14th Aug. He's also at the Edinburgh Fringe, Acoustic Music Centre on 29th.

The Beneficial Blues Band have written a flattering letter about the magazine,



Marsha Raven, 100 Club 14th Aug., Sadlers Wells 8th Sept.

but we'd have published their gigs anyway, honest! Aug, 23rd, Stratford on Avon, Three Witches; 24th, High Wycombe, Nag's Head; Sep 1st, High Wycombe, Flint Cottage; 8th, Peterborough, Peacock; 14th, Moreton Pinkney, Red Lion; 20th, Great Missenden, Gate; 21st, Stratford, Three Witches; 23rd, Bicester, bell; 26th, Botley, George; 29th, Oundle, Ship Inn (That's funny, I thought the phrase was Ship out).

Finally, Max's Blues Club, every wednesday at the John O' Gaunt, Market Street Lancaster (0254 65356) has the following August gigs: 1st, Mama's Blues; 8th, Jet Martin; 15th, Perry Foster; 22nd, Hoochie Coochie Band and 29th, Shakey Vick Blues Band.



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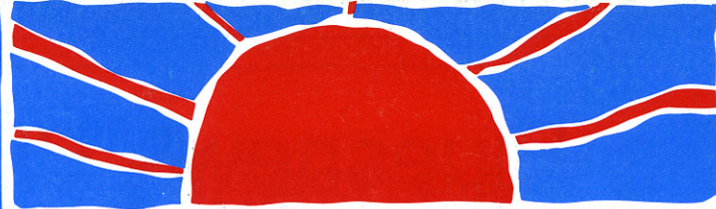
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