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COUSIN JOE OBIT, SOUTH BANK PICS., PAUL LAMB BAND

TALKIN' BLUES



It's reasonable, in this season of so-called goodwill to all men (but not women, presumably), to look tolerantly beyond the narrow confines of the blues world, to the (in the words of Willie Dixon) history-making time, of the larger world. Willie was talking about a particular time and place, during a live recording, way back when. The events that are unfolding at present in the world at large, do so at such a pace that time and place can become irrelevant overnight.

The recent elections of a black Governor of one of those United States, indeed the state where slavery was first rife, and the elections of black mayors in New York and other cities without a black voting majority, seem to demonstrate the improving conditions for blacks in America. Unfortunately there are also white racists being elected still, so the progress isn't that great.

The cry for Freedom seems to be spreading elsewhere, witness the European communist states and the turmoil there. The Berlin wall becomes news again, though for very different reasons than when it was built. Now the dream of a united Germany becomes a clarion call for

some - not all - Germans. Breaking down walls, while emotionally satisfying, doesn't necessarily improve the conditions of the deprived and certainly isn't without it's dangers.

Breaking down the walls of racism in the States has been going on for a long time, will go on for a long time yet, has been full of danger, and is still strewn with danger for the victims. The return of racists in the southern states, like the return of Pol Pot in Vietnam, show that human nature's evil side is still rampant and that people still don't care enough to stop it. The usual plea of the defence is that ordinary people can't do anything about their situation and that only governments and administrators have sufficient power. Well, history proves that this is a feeble excuse, and recent history shows that it's untrue anyway. People can change things at such a pace that governments and administrators have to go along with popular feeling. This would be great if all popular feeling were benign. That is blatantly not the case.

Christmas time is here again, but the Blues isn't going away.

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Letters

Re: "Bowing The Blues",
Issue No. 6, February
1989.

Dear Fellow Bluesfans,

I know I'm more than a bit late, but maybe this information is interesting for Mike Piggott and/or your readers. I found the article about blues fiddle very interesting, I also think that it is a good blues instrument which is unfortunately very seldomly used in modern blues. There are, however, many recordings by black

string bands who also played a lot of blues and often featured a violin as lead instrument, most notably the various Chatman Brothers' lineups (Mississippi Sheiks), with either Bo or Lonnie Chatman on fiddle. Also, the great Henry Sims accompanied Charley Patton on fiddle as well as recording under his own name with Patton on guitar. Sims also played on Muddy Waters' first recordings in the early 40s for the Library of

Congress.

Bo Diddley's first instrument was violin. He switched to guitar, however, because his friends at school thought it was an instruments for "sissies". He did, however, record a great Blues violin instrumental for Checker, "The Clock Strikes Twelve". The only Chicago Blues violinist I know about is Remo Biondi, who recorded behind Jimmy Reed ("Odds And Ends") and with a group called "Johnny

Wicks' Swinging Ozarks", whose Jazz-Blues mixture can be heard on a Pearl/Delmark LP. And of course let's not forget Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, as much a virtuoso on the fiddle as he is on guitar.

Keep up the good work, and keep on featuring facets of the blues others are neglecting!
Bluesingly,
Klaus Kilian
West Germany

Bluesman from New Orleans COUSIN JOE

Pleasant Joseph, better known as Cousin Joe, the piano player and singer, died in his sleep. The date of his death, October 2nd, also happens to be my birthday, but, as Joe would have said, I didn't feel a thing.

This might seem an irreverent way to mention his passing, but the point is that he was quite an irreverent guy, when he wanted to be, and he certainly gave me plenty of laughs during a week or so in the mid seventies when I travelled around Britain with him.

I drove him to various gigs, ate in various restaurants, drank in various bars, stayed in various hotels, and only once saw him get annoyed. We'd got to Bradford and booked in at a hotel, checked with the venue, then, as our hotel didn't do an evening meal, we'd gone across the road to another hotel, a place recommended, at the time, by Egon Ronay, so they claimed. We went in and were told that we couldn't eat there because we weren't wearing ties. This didn't worry me too much as I didn't fancy the place anyway, but as we were leaving the waiter came after us and offered to loan us a tie. "Which of us get's to wear it?" I asked. He wasn't amused, but we decided to borrow their ties (no not the waiters') and went to the bar while we waited for a table in the practically empty dining room. By the time we'd consumed a few whiskeys, the

clowns had found a spare table and we were ready to eat. They wheeled in a trolley with all the trimmings and we tucked in - well I did. At those prices I wasn't leaving a thing on my plate. Joe however decided that he'd been offended and after picking at the meal for about two seconds, summoned the waiter and suggested he take away the offending steak. "That ain't what we call a T-Bone steak back home." I'm still not sure whether Joe was offended by the steak, or at the tie, or at being beaten to the punch line about the tie, but he happily waited for me to finish my un-American meal, and off we went to the gig. The gig was great, but Bradford has never seemed the same to me since, even though I remember, on another visit there, getting the tastiest fish and chips I've ever eaten. Mind, this was after one of my own gigs when we came across this one lighted place in the middle of what appeared to be a bombsite. And we didn't need to wear a tie.

But to get back to Joe. It was during this tour that he told me something about the scene in Louisiana, reciting many stories about some of the gangsters who owned clubs he'd played in. He also told me that he was going to save the money he earned in Europe and eventually buy a boat and "Jus go out fishin' whenever I feels like it." I don't know whether he ever got his boat, but I like to think he did.

He was born in Louisiana just before

Christmas 1907 and grew up in New Orleans, starting his musical career with church music, moving on to guitar for his first professional gigs. By early 1930's he had his own band. He later got a regular radio gig. He first started playing piano in public in the early 1940's, when Alton Purnell, his trio pianist, failed to show for a gig.

He went to New York to audition for the Ink Spots, but didn't get the job. However he stayed in New York where he began to record and was hired by Sydney Bechet. In 1946 and 47 he broke through with his own recordings then returned to New Orleans in 1948, where he continued to gig and record on a number of labels. He first came to Europe in 1964 on one of the package tours, as I remember, and returned often during the following years. His last album, Relaxing in New Orleans, was released in 1985, but there are plans for a posthumous album. In 1988, the University of Illinois published a book, written by Harriet J. Ottenheimer, called Cousin Joe: Blues From New Orleans, which details his career.

He had been ill recently, but his death was still a surprise. His many friends in New Orleans and throughout the world will mourn him, but his humour still survives in his many recordings. He will not be easily forgotten.

Graham Vickery

THE RECORDING SCENE

BIG BEAR – COMING OF AGE

November 1989 saw the twenty-first birthday celebrations of Birmingham's longest running successful independent record company.

Edgbaston's Big Bear Records, now based in the Hagley Road, was originally founded in November 1968 to release "Rudi The Red Nosed Reindeer" by Steamshovel (a nom de disque for the hitmaking Locomotive, moonlighting from EMI who had refused to see coin in a seasonal follow-up to the band's "Rudi's In Love"). The record sold well over the Xmas season and has seen reissue several times during the ensuing two decades.

Big Bear had been the first to see the potential of heavy metal group Black Sabbath and, signing them to management, had overseen their first record releases, pacting them with Vertigo. At the time of Sabbath walking out on the deal in August 1970 their second album "Paranoid" was top of the album charts, while their first self-titled "Black Sabbath" was at position 16 after six months on the listings and the Paranoid forty five was number two single.

Big Bear managed the careers of many of the top local groups of the late sixties "progressive rock era. Locomotive, Tea and Symphony, Bakerloo – featuring guitarist Dave Clamson before he quit to join Jon Hiseman's Colosseum – The Dog That Bit People and Hannibal were among the best known who flourished under Big Bear's guidance and were signed to major label deals.

Big Bear ran Birmingham's most renowned blues club, named Henry's Blueshouse at the Crown Hotel in Station Street. On any night the dedicated would crowd in to catch an American Blues Legend or London headliner – Jethro Tull, Duster Bennett and Rory Gallagher were regulars – after sitting through a support band (often the emerging Black Sabbath). So successful did the clubs become that another Henry's was opened in Worcester.

Big Bear Records gained an international reputation with the establishment of regular UK and European tours under the American Blues Legends banner, cutting a series of albums, with label boss Jim Simpson in the producer's chair, on many of the US artists including Lightnin' Slim, Homesick James, Eddie Playboy Taylor, Cousin Joe from New Orleans, Doctor Ross, Gene Mighty Flea Connors (still signed to the Big Bear Music Agency and a regular UK

visitor – his next tour is in March '90), Johnny Mars, Willie Mabon, Mickey Baker, Snooky Pryor and many more. This activity led America's Down Beat magazine to report in January 1980 that the "best-produced series of American Blues albums came out of Big Bear Records, a small independent British record label".

Big Bear did deals with American companies, one of which assured acquisition of ex-Basie and Ellington trumpet giant Clark Terry's Big Bad Band album, which was recorded at New York's Carnegie Hall.

Big Bear's frequent trips to the American continent continued to gain repertoire for the label including a pair of albums produced by Jim Simpson – an all star blues session cut at the old Chess Studios in Chicago and featuring Eddie C. Campbell, Billy The Kid Emerson, Jimmy Fast Fingers Dawkins, Little

Smokey Smothers, Good Rockin' Charles, Chico Chism and Lester Davenport – "American Blues Legends 79" (BEAR 23) and a swinging fiddle date from Claude Williams, the 1936 Downbeat Pollwinner, and his own Rhythm section, laid down in Kansas City (BEAR 25).

Big Bear was the first UK label based outside of London with National then International distribution. The label's output appeared throughout Scandinavia through Sonet; Holland, Germany, Belgium and Australia through separate deals with the local EMI companies; with Metronome in Switzerland; Carosello in Italy; Pathe Marconi in France; Odeon in Spain and Portugal; Wizard in Australia; Quality in Canada and independent product deals in the U.S.A.

By the late seventies, Big Bear had expanded into the contemporary marketplace as a hot singles label with successful pop releases from local groups Muscles and the Quads whose "There Must Be Thousands" became a chart hit in September 1979. The label was the first to see the star quality of local songstress Ruby Turner and inked an early contract with a young Carol Decker, then fronting a pre T'Pau line up called The Lazars.

Big Bear set up the tape recorders in downtown Digbeth in June 1980 to record and release the land-marking



F o u n d e d 1 9 6 8

"Live At The Barrel Organ" double album. Shining the spotlight onto a baker's dozen of local rock outfits including Dansette Damage, The Playthings – featuring Rick Jones and Maggie D'Mond, later of Swansway and then Scarlet Fantastic, Willy and The Poor-boys (the blues group who, nearly a decade later and minus their Willy were the perfect choice to back new label and Agency signing Shuggie Otis for his Birmingham Jazzfest appearance at Blues On A Summer's Day in Cannon Hill Park, Reggae band Eclipse, The Thrillers, The Quads and Carol Decker and The Lazars who contributed a pair of self-penned titles "Headache" and "Rivet" which they brought to the Bear-songs publishing arm. The far-sighted Birmingham journalist Mike Davies was moved to exclaim "forget Little Miss Dynamite – this is Little Miss Nuclear Bomb! – The Lazars are going to be stars – Carol Decker is going to be a whole bloody solar system!" With the entrepreneurial move of selling advertising space on the record cover, the price of the album was kept affordable and the disc became a huge local seller.

By the end of the decade the label had built up a catalogue of more than 70 albums from more than thirty blues giants and jazz stars as well as creating a comprehensive series of recordings of local rock talent.

Big Bear founded the free monthly Brum Beat rock magazine in March 1980 which now has distribution of over 40,000 copies per issue throughout the Midlands area. As a forum for local acts, the paper was the first to give column inches to home-grown stars The Wonderstuff, UB40, Ruby Turner, Pop Will Eat Itself, The Mighty Lemon Drops and And Why Not, while Midlands-born superstars such as Jeff Lynne, Robert Plant, Black Sabbath etc continue to be featured. Artists making live appearances in the area are also included and advertising revenue is prolific, from record labels, studios and equipment suppliers and concert promoters.

Back in the jazz vein, Big Bear revitalised the old Jam Session concept and with sponsorship from brewers Mitchells and Butlers organised and released the M&B Jam Session album (BEAR 26) capturing the cream of the UK's jazz and swing musicians including Humphrey Lyttelton, Dick Morrissey, Digby Fairweather, Bruce Turner and more in a sparring tussle of jumping live jazz.

The very success of the Jam Session led to the setting up of the annual Birmingham International Jazz Festival, now a ten-day event in its sixth year. The festival has grown into the UK's "most prestigious" (Jazz Times, USA) and presents a stellar selection of instrumentalists and bands from all over the world featured throughout the event in a variety of settings including international superstars the MJQ, Count Basie Orchestra and Buddy Rich orchestra, Miles Davis, Cab Calloway and his Orchestra, The Blues Brothers Band,

Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers and Robert Cray.

Out of this sprang another publication, the bi-monthly Jazz Rag, which calls on the talents of the UK's best writers (including leading jazz musicians) to produce a superior national periodical which enjoys a position of respect amongst jazz fans.

Through Big Bear's flourishing Music Agency, in 1986 the company scooped the franchise to provide the street entertainment for the annual Halford's Birmingham Super Prix. As the city centre echoes to the roar of supercharged machinery, bands and groups on the open-air stages compete to be heard while the streets jostle with jugglers, marching bands and children's entertainers.

Big Bear founded the annual British Jazz Awards, a black tie occasion held in the formal splendour of Birmingham's Grand Hotel. Hosted by the venerated broadcaster and author Benny Green, the Awards recognise the achievements of the top jazz players on their chosen instruments. A poll-winners album, recorded at the 1987 presentations (BEAR 27) represents a pinnacle of UK jazz playing, featuring Humphrey Lyttelton, Roy Williams, Peter King, Dick Morrissey, John Barnes, Brian Lemon, Dave Green, Martin Taylor and Allan Ganley, with special guest, American piano legend Sir Charles Thompson.

Seeing the astonishing pianist Duncan Swift construct one of his jazz epic sets of Harlem stride piano at the 1987 Jazz Festival, Big Bear took Swift into the recording studio to cut a solo album. Issued in summer of 1988 as "Out Looking For The Lion" (BEAR 28) the title is a reference to the godfather of stride Willie "The Lion" Smith.

In January 1989 Big Bear Records acquired a new national distribution deal with Conifer Records of West Drayton, ensuring that the existing catalogue is readily available from record shops throughout the country. An exhaustive reissue programme from the Big Bear vaults is planned for the near future.

In a unique deal with drinks company Southern Comfort, Big Bear acquired marketing and distribution of the new album from the veteran jazz and jump outfit Groove Juice Special; Groove Juice Comin' To Town (BEAR 29).

The latest act to be fostered and nurtured by Big Bear and making their mark on the international stage is local Rhythm & Blues band King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys. The group were signed to the label following a knock-out performance at the Birmingham International Jazz Festival and released their debut long-player at the end of 1988, King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys (BEAR 30). The current year has seen their career take off in a big way with a bulging date-sheet which includes regular sorties into France, Belgium and Holland with more countries beckoning and interest from America and Canada,

Japan, Scandinavia as well as the rest of Europe. The first King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys single Aint Nobody Here But Us Chickens (BB40) saw the group appearing on half a dozen TV shows, to parade their irresistible brand of 40s jump jive. The summer festival season caught them in action at Womad and Reading while the Birmingham Festival found them opening for the legendary Cab Calloway and his Orchestra and, two nights later, two slots with the mighty Blues Brothers Band. Their own end-of-the-week show at the Copthorne Hotel had them joined onstage by a sax-wielding Courtney Pine, in town with the Pet Shop Boys, causing Pleasure's classic enquiry "Is he somebody famous? Only he didn't know any of the songs!" King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys have cut a new album for release at the beginning of 1990.

Big Bear Music gave birth to Lady Sings The Blues, the record-breaking celebration of the music of jazz legend Billie Holiday. The show stars Val Wiseman and features a stellar cast of top British jazz musicians: Digby Fairweather, Al Gay, Roy Williams, Brian Lemon, Len Skeat, Jim Douglas and Eddie Taylor. Born out of two successive years' sell-out successes at the Birmingham International Jazz Festival, 1989 has seen the show established as a top-line concert attraction with shows at London's Barbican Hall, Sheffield's Crucible Theatre, Farnham's Maltings, a live BBC broadcast from Wavendon's Stables plus appearances on TV, radio and a string of summer festivals.

The 1989 Birmingham International Jazz Festival brought virtuoso trombonist Bill Allred and his Good Time Jazz Band from Rosie O'Grady's Club in Orlando Florida, USA to show British audiences why they are universally regarded as the finest dixieland band in the world. Signed without delay to Big Bear Records, the Allred band cut a red-hot live album of their festival appearances to be released in early 1990.

From one-off single to major independent label for twenty-one years, via management, artists agency, publishing and promotion – all with an unbridled enthusiasm for the music. Big Bear is unique in Birmingham – maybe in the UK. Happy anniversary Big Bear – long may you growl the blues!

Rowdy Yeats

RAMBLING ON MY MIND

The opinionated excursions of the editor in search of Blues, booze...and news

If all those people who promised to do things for this magazine, had done them, I wouldn't have been forced to write this, but ain't life a bitch – if I have to suffer, then so can everyone else. Of course, if I were better organised, then I wouldn't have had to pin my hopes on them anyway. It just shows, you're never too old to learn... about others, I mean... not about oneself. So here is some account of what I've been doing during the last few months. If the account is slightly befuddled, you can form your own opinions about it, but don't write to me with your moans.

The South Bank Blues Festival

This was a four day event for some of us, but a three day event for me. I went happily along to the first night, found the right entrance but not the right bar. Bernie and I then went to hear the concert but had to wait before we could enter the hall as the usherette was determined that we would somehow interrupt events by entering whilst the performance was under way. So we dutifully waited until a burst of applause announced the end of a song, crept in with a few other unfortunates and then settled down for the entertainment. Archie Edwards had opened the proceedings and sounded good enough for these ears. A tasty singer and guitar player, he did the hard work that first acts always have to do, and he was well received by the audience, though the place was only half full. Archie deserves to get booked back here soon. It made a really good change to hear some country blues played and sung like this, and the acoustics and sound balance were encouraging. What optimists we can be at times.

The second act was Little Willie Littlefield accompanied by the Big Town Playboys. I get more and more cynical



Saxy Playboy. Pic: Jimmy Appuduai

about slicked-back hair, cool suits and swing band routines, so I wasn't too impressed by the Playboys. I preferred them when I first saw them a couple of years back, just before I entered my dotage. However, they certainly couldn't be blamed for the godawful sound that came over the PA speakers. It entirely ruined any enjoyment I might have got out of the performance and Littlefield and the band deserved better. Fortunately we escaped to the bar during their last number and so avoided the interval rush by getting served first and buying both rounds at the same time. Damn me if we didn't miss the first number of the second part of the performance, because the usherette was still insisting that we would disturb things if we entered during the Kinsey Report's opening shot. The fact that nothing would have disturbed the row that was coming out through the closed doors hadn't dawned on the poor unfortunate woman.

Undaunted we led a march to the other door where we found an usherette who had no objections to our entry – in

fact she wished us luck. When we got inside, I realised why she felt so sorry for us. The Kinsey Report were strutting around the stage and blasting away at the audience and I doubt if they were aware of how it sounded out front. Or maybe they were and didn't care anyway. In the end we decided to leave, along with many others, in fact it must have looked a bit like that night on the Titanic, the difference being that the band continued playing even though they knew that the ship was in trouble. I doubt if the Kinsey Report would even have noticed the collision with the iceberg.

The next night was better, not just because I found the correct bar. The sound system was slightly improved, though not that much. It was all right for Dave "Honeyboy" Edwards, as it had been for Archie Edwards, and in retrospect these two gave me more satisfaction than the others. Unfortunately, Honeyboy was brought off too soon, in my opinion, but that's showbiz. He was sounding great and getting a warm

response from the audience and I wonder why both he and Archie Edwards don't get to tour here every year. They can't be as expensive to book as a full band would be. Still, that may be remedied in future, who knows? They could do a lot for blues musicians in this country who missed out on Son House, Bukka White, Gary Davis and so on. There's nothing more inspiring for potential blues musos than to hear people like both Archie and Honeyboy in the flesh, preferably in a small sweaty club.

The Playboys did another support spot, this time for Jimmy Nelson. Again the sound wasn't worth the bother, and probably contributed to the singers' vocal problems later in the week. He paid the expected tribute to Big Joe Turner and put on an experienced show, was well enough received, but I still didn't enjoy things as much as I wanted to do. Mind, I wish I could sing like that. The Playboys, I'm afraid to say, did not impress me this night either. They pleased their fans though, so what the Hell!



Little Willie Little Field. Pic: Jimmy Appudurai

The last act was once more The Kinsey Report, with Big Daddy Kinsey and I decided that I'd been a bit unfair to leave the previous evening without hearing the whole set, so I sat through this one. I was glad I stayed, because Big Daddy Kinsey came on after the Kinsey Report had done their stuff and I started to enjoy the band, not just because I'm a Muddy Waters fan either. They didn't have too good a time of it, so I suspect the onstage sound wasn't so hot, but they persevered and I very much doubt if I heard the best of either the band or Big Daddy. The pleasant part of the evening was when Big Daddy brought Frank Frost on to help out, as he later put it. Frank ambled to the front of the stage and strutted his stuff and, although the music wasn't anything to write home about, it was, warts and all, better than staying at home and being written to. Big Daddy ended the evening with an apology for the cock-ups, so he obviously wasn't too pleased with the show. I refuse to judge them on this performance and look forward to seeing them again. Mind, I could do without the note for note rendition of the end of Long Distance Call – it's acceptable for Muddy to have done it that way, but sounds too contrived when reproduced by anyone else, and certainly unnecessary. I think Big Daddy is good enough to do his own thing.

I missed the next night, through a prior commitment – a cheap gig, I expect – and was told that it wasn't up to much, though this particular person, who shall remain nameless (I've got to try and keep some friends, after all) was probably trying to justify the fact that he didn't cover the concert for the mag, though he was supposed to be doing just that. Naturally I asked for a second opinion and was told that the night was probably the best of the four. Isn't the world a marvellous place when we can all have such different perspectives and such varied subjective pleasures.

I would certainly have liked to catch Joe Hughes, as Jimmy Appudurai, our friendly photographer/guitarist, thoroughly enjoyed the show. Thanks once again for the pics, Jimmy!

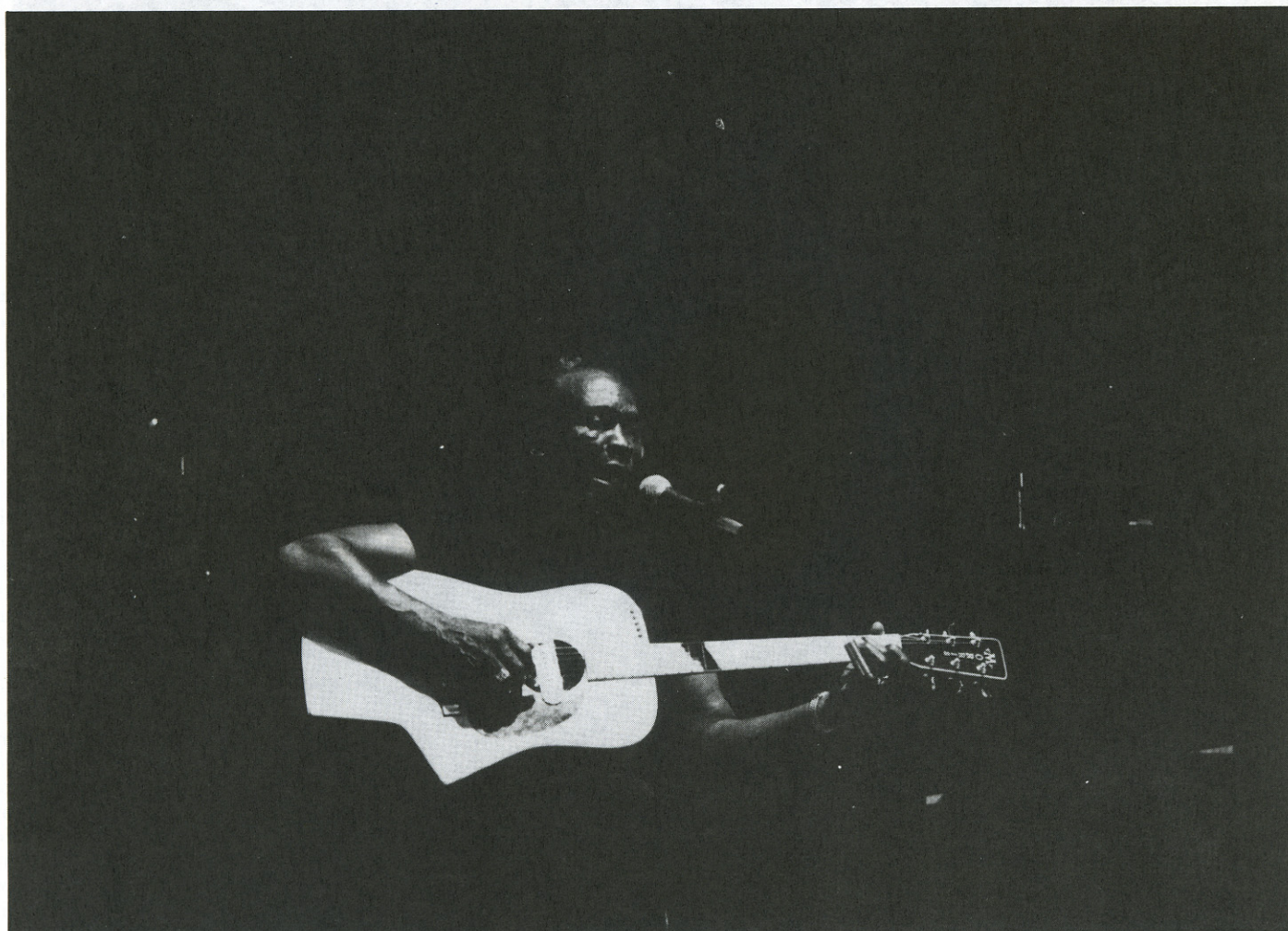
The last evening started off better because the sound was vastly improved and there was a decent-sized crowd. Willie Littlefield and the Playboys sounded happier and much better, and Honey Boy Edwards again did himself justice. It was unfortunate that Jimmy Nelson was having hassles with his voice, laryngitis ruining the pleasure, but he was still the consummate showman, giving away blues magazines left, right, and centre. Is this the way forward for this magazine, I wonder. There were certain interesting little cameos offstage which I shall not go into,

because I like the people concerned, too much.

It was annoying to find that the Jelly Roll Kings weren't all present and with due respect to the substitute bassman, I think he should have stayed within his own sphere of music and he'd probably have been happier too. Frank Frost, despite the problems, sounded all right, though he didn't always seem too happy. I went away feeling that the event had been well-intentioned but had not been the success it should have been.

It deserves to continue, perhaps in another venue – I mean, the Festival Hall has a lot going for it, with plenty of facilities for the artistes and press, but the actual concert hall didn't seem conducive to blues music, and with all due respect to the staff, it would help if the venue managers realised that blues music is very different from most of their promotions and attracts a different kind of crowd, with different demands, or should do. There were all kinds of problems too with the publicity and it seems to have been put together in a rush. Despite all this, Tony Russell and the organisers should be given credit for their efforts. Do it again and do it better. Isn't it great to be a self-proclaimed expert on these things, but more of that later, when I get around to my own problems.

And now to my own problems. After



Dave "Honey Boy" Edwards. Photo Jimmy Appudurai

Opp: Jimmy Nelson. Photo: Jimmy Appudurai



Photo: [unreadable]

Mojo Buford at 100 Club

Ensnared once more at the 100 Club bar with Joe, another potential alcoholic, the first thing I managed to learn was that the support band was Richard Studholme's Blues Connection, and not the band I'd been led to believe would be there, not that it worried me too much. The next thing I learned was that they had more connection with the rock scene than with the blues scene, but that didn't worry me too much either, because I'd come to hear Mojo Buford, not the backing band. As far as I'm concerned, any reasonable rock band should be capable of supporting a blues singer – if they just concentrate on supporting, which often doesn't happen. It didn't happen this night either, but it wasn't all tragedy.

They did an adequate set of their own, getting into things by the second number, though they were too loud and not bluesy enough for my taste. They dispensed with the club's grand piano in favour of keyboards – not a good omen for a Muddy Waters acolyte. As it happens, the keyboard player was all right on his instrument, so he probably made the right decision, for himself, if not for us blues fans. The drummer, being a rock drummer, had one of those kits which contain everything but the kitchen sink, and – being a rock drummer – probably felt the need to use everything... just as well he hadn't brought along the kitchen sink.

Mojo Buford was introduced during the second set and proceeded to run through Muddy's repertoire. The band

were too loud, so that Mojo's voice and harp were not as positive as they might have been, but he sang with an apparently effortless approach and has a good blues voice. When he did Baby Please Don't Go, the band appeared to prefer their own arrangement, but Mojo cut the number short and suggested the audience give a hand for the band. He then resumed his rightful role by doing his own numbers and the band got the message and did an adequate job, which is more than I can say for the sound engineer. Are there any sound men or women who understand blues, I wonder? I've yet to meet them. Still, my resolution to give up drinking beer, temporarily, wasn't undermined too much by the sound. It does take a lot of gin, though, to make up the requisite amount of drink through the night. Perhaps giving up beer wasn't such a good thing, or perhaps I'm just getting old and miserable.

I've no doubt that the onstage sound was different from the offstage sound and I've certainly had my own problems with the sound there, but then I'm not a sound engineer, am I? Perhaps I was... in a previous reincarnation... assuming that previous incarnations are lower down the scale. I mean, if they're not, I may well come back as a deaf sound engineer, and you wouldn't like that, would you? Come to think of it, there's probably a lot to be said for the job – just think how many people I could irritate, at the touch of a button!

And now to my own problems. After all my carping about poor sound and indifferent sound engineers, I must now

confess my sins. A couple of recent gigs with my band has caused me to regret thinking such bad thoughts on the subject of sound.

The first was at the Crawdaddy Blues where I took along a minimal PA and found that it wasn't adequate for the job. Despite being a self-proclaimed expert, I still have to resort to excuses, the excuse in this case being that the venue needs an expert sound engineer...is there no justice. It was raining, of course, and this added to the feeling that we were playing in a fish tank with the water on the outside rather than inside. There is a row of glass along one side of this long hut, so that people can sit in the dry and watch all those Rugger chappies running around in the mud. Unfortunately the demands of Rugger watching do not gel with the demands of amplified music making, though some curtains would help; still, with the reputation for boisterous behaviour that rugby chaps have, I've no doubt the curtains would be torn down within minutes of their appearance.

The other chastening experience was at a recent Carnarvon Castle gig (the pub, not the pad), where the brewery have replaced the old PA with some state of the art stuff. We're still trying to get it to sound half as good as the previous gear, but for some reason it all went haywire at this particular gig and to cap it all my amp packed in, then later on, one of my mikes gave up the ghost. I wonder if this is retribution of some kind? I suppose I'll just have to be more tolerant of sound engineers in future, won't I? Perhaps there's more to them than meets the eye – or ear?



Mojo Buford, 'Falcon' Bunnley. Photo. Brian L. Smith

Albert Collins at the Town & Country

I arranged to meet Chris in the pub next door, before the gig, and on the way there I passed the T&C, checked out the time Albert Collins was due on stage and noticed that the support act, Gary Moore, had cancelled. I found this slightly amusing, to say the least because the Top Topham/Jim McCarty band had expected to be supporting at one stage, then later this was changed and the support band was going to be the Paul Lamb Band, who were then pulled out to make way for Gary Moore. Isn't it nice to know that the old boy network still exists on the blues scene, even if most of the old boys had written off blues long ago.

In the pub, one drink led to another, but as far as I was concerned there was only going to be the main act, so we finally ambled along in time for the gig to start. We tried going upstairs onto the balcony but there wasn't room so we stayed in the bar for a while and the band sounded okay, as did Albert Collins when he came on. I was then told that the projected interviews with Albert, carefully arranged for the next day were

all cancelled, except of course, the BBC interview. There was going to be an attempt to re-schedule the, however. As I'd already changed my plans to do an interview, I resigned myself to yet another alteration... isn't life tough at the bottom?

Chris and I decided to go downstairs and catch the act, which we did, along with about 2000 others. The audience seemed to be enjoying the gig, or most of them did, and I did my usual soapbox bit about the overamplified sound of bass and bass drum. Someone actually had the temerity to disagree with me, claiming that that is the way it is and the way people seem to want it. Well I don't... but that isn't going to change things, is it? The opinion among critics and musos was varied. Some people thought that Albert wasn't on top form, others thought everything was as it should be. The drummer seemed to get a bit of stick, but then he should be able to handle that - yes, it gets worse as it goes along, doesn't it?

My opinion, for those of you who don't want it, is that Albert Collins is still one hell of a guitarist and deserves the acclaim he's getting, including the awards and rewards, although an

interview or two with the hoi-polloi wouldn't go amiss.

I thought the band were good, of their kind, which is not 100% my kind. It was also good to see that a guitarist of the stature of Albert Collins was prepared to give his other guitarist plenty of opportunity. This doesn't happen too much with most stars. I enjoyed some powerful horn playing (hush your mouth) although I'm not so sure about the main man lying down on the job, still it didn't stop him playing some rich guitar. I was just a bit concerned that he might not have been able to get up again.

My concern faded a bit the next day when I learned that the interview was definitely not up for re-scheduling. I was slightly mortified to learn later that there had been another change of plan and the Paul Lamb Band had been reinstated for the support spot, in lieu of Gary Moore who'd broken a finger, apparently. That's the trouble with telling people to get their finger out - you never realise where it might lead and whom it might inconvenience, but then if you're a big star, why care?

Anyway, Merry Christmas and a quiet New Year to you all.



Albert Collins; Photo: Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

THE PAUL LAMB BLUES BAND

Harp player Paul Lamb and guitarist John Whitehill, who had been busy with northern band The Blues Burglars, moved to London, and have succeeded in establishing themselves down South, from where they also foray into Europe. I caught up with them at the Station Tavern, for a pre-gig interview.

John Whitehill started listening to blues by John Mayall and Peter Green in 1967 at the age of fifteen. After about eighteen months, he decided to play blues rather than just listen to it and he started to learn piano. He soon gave that up – scale practice and the usual approach to piano playing was not going to turn him into the kind of blues player he was interested in becoming. He turned to guitar when his mother won one, but that was short-lived as the guitar got broken, by his old man. “He said it was an accident, but I’m not sure about that.”

Paul Lamb started around about the same time, again by listening to John Mayall. He got hold of an old Sonny Terry EP from a junk shop. “When I heard that style, that just knocked me. I studied his style for about ten years and then I moved on to the Chicago players”.

Paul moved down to London and entered a harmonica competition, which he won, and then went to Germany and came second in the finals. “It was country blues style. I made a bit of money off that and I thought it would help me to get into other bands, but it didn’t. I had to move away from that country style to start to play with electric bands, to get work, because there wasn’t much in the folk clubs, you couldn’t make much in them. I used them as stepping stones to get to where I am now.”

He moved back to Newcastle and met John Whitehill in the seventies. John was in a band doing a mix of blues, rock and soul music and the bass player brought Paul along.

John: “I met Paul in the pub and we talked and had a drink and he joined the band. It wasn’t long before he had all the soul and rock stuff out of it and we introduced more blues.” The band changed personnel as the music policy changed. They played in pubs around Newcastle, where they met most of the other people who later formed the Blues Burglars. The band was called Smokestack Lightnin’ and Paul became a dominant figure in it with his choice of material and determined approach to the music. The band became Barfly and then that split up. Paul formed the Blues Burglars in 1979 with completely diffe-



Paul Lamb. pic: Jimmy Appudurai

rent people and as people left they were replaced. Eventually John and Eddie, who’d both been in Smokestack Lightnin’, had joined The Burglars. They built up a good following around the Newcastle area, but after some while, John and Paul wanted to move in a different direction from the others, to more of a swing approach. They were also both spending more time in London while the rest of the band were still based in Newcastle. Inevitably it broke up. John and Paul then formed the Paul Lamb Blues Band whilst the others continued for a while as The Burglars.

Paul: “When we went back up to Newcastle with the new band, they expected us to sound like The Blues Burglars. Quite a few people were shocked because it didn’t sound like the Blues Burglars... I didn’t intend it to sound like the Blues Burglars.”

They gave up their day jobs, but had a bit of a struggle until the band started to become established. Paul was teaching harmonica and John was working with other bands when possible, so they survived and the gamble began to pay off. They now headline at The Mean Fiddler and 100 Club, and recently did a support

spot at the Town & County club on the Albert Collins gig, where they went down well. They're also now doing a fair amount of work on the continent. It may be that they will end up living on the continent along with many American and British blues players, but that's very much in the future.

Paul: "I think the blues scene is a lot healthier now. The young kids are all into it now, whereas... take just two years back... it was pretty quiet."

John: "Yes, just a few years back the audiences were like refugees from the sixties... thirty and forty year-olds, but now there are a lot of young students... kids of nineteen and twenty..."

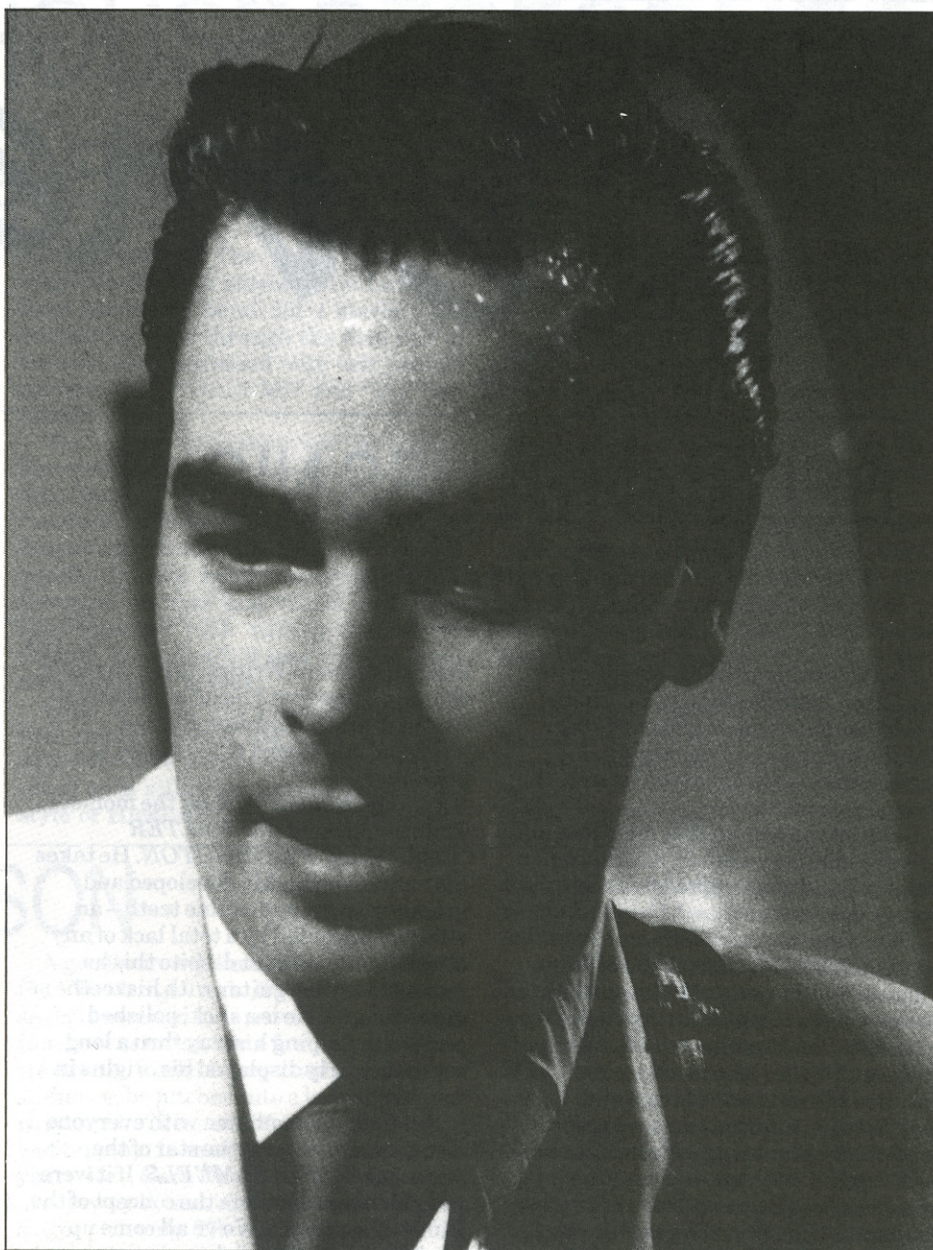
I asked why they decided on a swing approach to their playing. Paul answered: "Well I've always had a swing approach to harp playing and I like those swing bands. I suppose I was influenced as well by the likes of Rod Piazza and William Clark, and those guys, that West Coast sound... not playing their style exactly... I still have my own style... but in the way they put it over. Bands like the Thunderbirds and Anson Funderburgh, they have a sort of swing style. There are a lot of those bands coming out. They've influenced me a lot."

John: "It suits me a lot because most of their guitarists are basing their stuff on people like B B King and so on."

On the subject of influences, John admitted to being originally influenced by Peter Green and then worked back to B B King, who's still his favourite but adds Gatemouth Brown and T Bone Walker to his list. Others are Ronnie Earl and Albert Collins. John works on developing his guitar playing on emotional lines... feeling lines.

Paul: "There's one thing that Sonny Boy Williamson said, being dissatisfied was probably the best thing. I'm never happy with my sound, I'm always striving for something else. My influences are basically starting from the country styles, like Sonny Terry and the old jug band player, Noah Lewis. Great Style. They've got that tone, you see... acoustically. Then listening to Chicago players it was straight on to Big Walter Horton, he had that tone acoustically as well. Most people go for Little Walter... a creative player but he relied on his amplification a lot... Walter Horton had that tone sewn up acoustically. That's why I tell people I'm teaching, who want to play that amplified stuff, you must study the acoustic players first. They think that if you just use a bullet mike, you're going to sound like Little Walter."

John: "I used to think like that when I first started. Because I had cheap amps and cheap guitar, I thought I'd never get to sound like those guys until I had a Les Paul, but it doesn't make a difference at all. A good player will get a sound out of anything. I don't think anybody these days gets straight into black blues, they always seem to get into white blues first, because they've never been exposed to it."



Vocalist Johnny Dee. pic: Jimmy Appudurai

Paul: "I can't see how it's not more popular because most pubs you go into these days have bands playing blues."

John: "The thing is, that they like it and don't realise what it is. We were at the Mean Fiddler and there were these women dancing away... we were doing an Elmore James number... and they came up afterwards and said they really enjoyed it, but they won't go out and buy the records, they'll go home and play Duran Duran records."

Paul: "I blame the radio stations, myself. If they were to play blues all day, like they play the other stuff, people would enjoy it just as much."

John: "Some people are just into the latest fashion. They change their musical interests every six months. It's so called World music now. If they came out and listened to what's going on in the pubs and clubs, they'd know what's going on. They just have this idea that blues is all slow stuff. There's some people who'll come in once every three months and the band will be playing a slow blues, perhaps the only slow blues

of the set, and these people will say it's all slow blues. I like slow blues myself, anyway. What a lot of people don't understand is that there's all kinds of blues. There's too many people playing blues without any feeling."

Paul: "We did The Band on The Wall recently and we finished up with a slow blues, and it went down a storm."

John: "There's too many people playing a slow blues... they play a fast blues slowed down. It's a completely different thing but they don't seem to understand, it's an emotional thing."

They had an album out with The Blues Burglars on Red Lightning and are now doing some recording with a possible deal coming up so things are definitely on the up. With plenty of work coming in, and with the band settled the way they want it, both John and Paul are justifiably optimistic about the current scene, and about their chances in the future. The Paul Lamb Blues band is on the road again.

Graham Vickery

Review

BELGIAN BLUES NIGHT *Brugge*

This was to have been a review of the years first major festival in Belgium – five bands for a tenner and cheap beer. But the night was eclipsed by one performance – you could say he stole the show single handedly.

But first the honourable mentions and one why-did-they-bother. *Avalanche* – a Belgian band were impressive high energy openers.

Then came two very different Texan bands. *CHRIS THOMAS*, son of Tabby Thomas and 24 years old. I'd seen him two years ago when he seemed to be a cross between Hendrix and Michael Jackson. Now he is more of a cross between Hendrix and Marley and displaying an unusual amount of social consciousness for an American, or as he would call himself an African. He acknowledges Eric and Jimmi as early influences (The first of a generation of Black Americans who discovered the Blues via British Bands?). He seems quite determined to be a STAR. One day, no doubt, he will bring a big pop package to Wembley, but remember beneath it all he is an excellent blues guitarist.

Next on were the *TAILGATORS*. The concept of the band – ex LeRoi Brothers ex Thunderbirds – appealed to me and they were the band I most wanted to see.

disappointment. Writing this a day later the only thing that I recall about them was that Keith Ferguson was too jetlagged, too stoned or too pissed to play. Pity.

I'll skip the next band for the moment. The closing band was *WALTER 'WOLFMAN' WASHINGTON*. He takes his name from highly developed and grossly mis-shapen canine teeth – an effect accentuated by a total lack of any other front teeth! Yet despite this he managed to play guitar with his teeth/gums/tongue. He is a slick, polished performer, lipping his way thru a long set that clearly displayed his origins in soul bands.

But for me, in common with everyone else there that night, the star of the show was *STEVE SAMUELS*. If it were possible to encapsulate the concept of the Blues this guy is it. We've all come up against the Old Black American thing, which really only means *MISFORTUNE*. It does leave out the most essential element – *TALENT*. Steve Samuels fulfills both these criteria.

Born with a gross deformity which should have precluded him from even picking up a guitar let alone playing it, let alone being a master of it. His left arm ends about 2 inches below the

elbow. So not only did he face the problem of playing one handed, but also wrong handed. When I read the press before the show I thought he'd just be strumming – especially as the band had a 2nd guitarist. But the hell he was. Maybe his only stroke of luck was that this vestigial forearm was so heavily calloused that he was able to pick with it in an upward motion.

This guy is a phenomenon. He is in spite, or maybe because of his disability, original – his style dictated by the constraint of his disability rather than progressing from copying his influences (B B changed my Life). But why is he virtually unknown in Britain? Where's the A&R from Demon? Blind and deaf in Brentford? Where's Star-Maker Kershaw? Slumming in West Africa? And is it really possible given his 'family' connections with the Mighty Flyers that they were not singing his praises to all and sundry when they were over? Are we really such a spent musical force that we can't make these discoveries any more?

About the only reason I can think of is an English sensibility – a reticence to exploit his disability. But, at the risk of seeming extremely maudlin, it is not an exploitation of disability but a display of courage, an indomitable spirit refusing to give in against overwhelming odds. A man who refuses to see a problem where he doesn't see that one exists.

'HOW DOES HE DO IT' he said between numbers *'HELL I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW ANYONE CAN DO IT WITH TWO HANDS'*

David Cooper

LOWELL FULSON

*The 100 Club, London
14th September 1989*

"I enjoyed it" – Lowell speaking about this gig as he sat relaxing in the dressing-room afterwards. Not that I needed verbal confirmation; his second set had made his pleasure readily apparent.

Lowell has been a regular visitor since 1984, but he is no less welcome for that. He has played many styles throughout his long career and although the predominant sound of his sets was the smooth, modern blues approach of his Kent material, there were nods to his forties work with Lloyd Glenn with

"Blue Shadows" and "Sinner's Prayer", the fifties Chess recordings with "Reconsider Baby" and a lovely "Hung Down Head" and the seventies with "Stoop Down Baby".

The first set was marred by some sloppy work from the backing band, who contrived to ruin Lowell's fine Jimmy Rushing styled vocal on "Goin' To Chicago" by consistently lagging about five bars behind the leader. However, it did end on a high note with the ever satisfying "Guitar Shuffle". The second set was a vast improvement; Lowell

broke sweat on "Too Many Drivers", playing some fierce guitar between verses and he pulled out several songs he does not often perform – "Blues Pain" was especially nice. After he finished with "Tramp", the jam-packed crowd called him back for a couple of well-deserved encores.

Lowell is nearer seventy than sixty, but his show would do credit to a forty-year old. His restrained West Coast sounds are more than a match for the high energy, high volume merchants, and as this night showed, he can still pull a crowd . . . and yes, Lowell, we enjoyed it too.

Norman Darwen

POWER HOUSE PERFORMER

Steve Marriott at Feltham

Feltham Rox, the new monthly rock & blues club at the Feltham Assembly Hall reverberated to one of the most powerful rock shows of the year when STEVE MARRIOTT and his NEXT BAND took an appreciative audience through one of rock's most illustrious back catalogues.

The former Small Face and Humble Pie front man mixed his rocking with some solid r&b and the occasional 60's memory to good effect and left little doubt that he can still rock with the best of them.

THE BOP BROTHERS BLUES BAND opened proceedings with a true blues set that featured some superb tenor sax embellishments from the talented Ed Jones and some impassioned blues shouting from the remarkable AL EASTWOOD. Mr. Eastwood is obviously a devoted fan of the great Jimmy Witherspoon as his classy vocal phrasing

quickly proved. The band coped well with two dep bass players (Jim Leverton from Marriott's band did a sterling job on keeping time through the first half of the set) and impressed with self penned material like "Thrill Me" and "Big Bad Beautiful Blues".

The stage was then set for Steve Marriott, and he was not about to let his fans down.

Joined by Ginger Baker's son Kofi on drums and Simon Hickling on harp and vocals, the new band was completed by Leverton on bass and vocals, and from the opening r&b interpretation of "Watch Your Step", it was obvious Marriott was ready to rock.

What followed was a well balanced set that shared around the work with Steve's evocative vocals frequently juxtaposed with either Leverton's gruff blues style or Hickling's jaunty r&b approach.

Some Kind Of Wonderful rocked along and was cleverly segued with Got To Get A Witness before Marriott revived the Humble Pie rocker Fool For A Pretty Face.

"Uncle Simon's gonna play his harp whilst Uncle Steven lights a snout" shouted out a grinning Marriott before he reminded all and sundry that he's still an exciting guitarist.

Surprisingly the band only played a couple of tracks from Marriott's new album, of which Knocking On Your Door had the kind of chorus that immediately had you singing along.

As the set fairly rolled along, more chestnuts were unfolded like the classic Big Train Stops At Memphis, What Ya Gonna Do About It and the chart topper Natural Born Boogie from the Pie repertoire. With an engaging onstage East End patter, a voice that can shake houses and a tight band, the Marriott legend lived up to its billing. Two encores followed to wrap up a great night's rocking.

PETE FEENSTRA

LARRY JOHNSON

Islington Folk Club at The George,
Liverpool Rd London
July 20th 1989

It's been eighteen years since Larry Johnson last toured Britain; he was a rare phenomenon then, being a young, black musician keeping alive the tradition of American East coast blues. Afficionados were delighted; not only could he play his instrument with sparkle, he was also a fine singer. (In those days it tended to be one or the other in blues performance, with the exception of the older black artistes.) And most of them are now gone.

A goodly crowd therefore, (including Peta Webb right up in the front row) eagerly awaited his arrival. No matter that he was late; after a few loping standards, whilst Larry sized up his audience, he pitched into a jaunty jump rhythm for "Mean old 'Frisco" that set feet tapping. Like his mentor of many years, Rev. Gary Davis, he plays guitar (a cutaway Washburn) with thumb and finger pick only. Though lacking Davis's complexity, his guitar work is percussive and compelling. Instrumentally he'll pick some nice melodic runs; once into the song, it gets honed down to more of a 'Southern' – reminiscent of Blind Boy

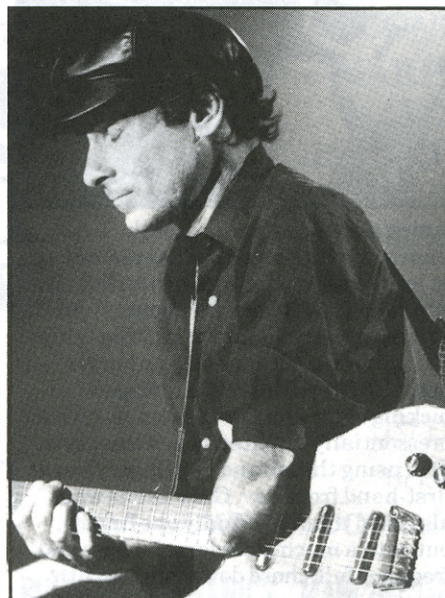
Fuller – feel. And the voice, soaring above damped bass strings, is still sublime.

On Davis's "Bring the whisky, John", he yodels and falsettos; slurs off his words, scats along with guitar like a jazz singer. I liked the audacity of "Railroad Man", bars and bars of it, entirely on one chord, keeping the attention through sheer dynamics. But it was the old Blue Goose LP material that brought down roars of approval – his "Charley Stone", loosely based on Bessie Smith's "Trombone Cholly" ("I wrote this song – somebody told me that I didn't but I did")! and "Pick Poor Robin Clean" which remain his real trademark, and reveal his individuality.

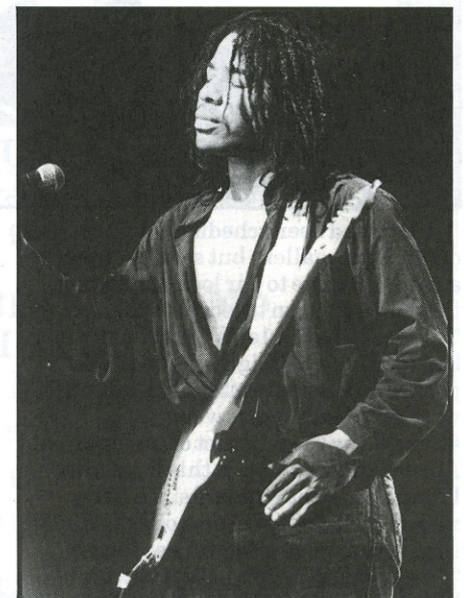
Jo Ann Kelly.



Walter Wolfman Washington. Pic. D. Cooper



Steve Samuels Brugge. Pic. D. Cooper



Chris Thomas. Pic. D. Cooper

THE ROGER HUBBARD BAND

YPRES CASTLE INN, RYE,
EAST SUSSEX
1ST October 1989

Some readers who saw Roger Hubbard on the blues circuit in the early 1970's or heard his excellent solo LP "Brighton Belle Blues" on Nick Perls' Blue Goose label, may have wondered what happened to him. In actual fact he has not stopped playing the blues here in East Sussex and has indeed gone from strength to strength and is now without doubt one of the finest slide guitarists around – anywhere.

For a few years now Roger has used drummer Liam Genockey and bassist Colin Gibson who must be one of the best rhythm sections in the business. The Ypres is very much "home ground" to the band and they always draw a good crowd. Like so many locals I have seen them countless times, but never tire of their exciting music.

They tore straight into a storming version of Robert Johnson's "Travelling Riverside Blues" and immediately the place was rocking. Throughout the evening Roger dipped into the Johnson songbook several times to bring out his own stylings of such classics as "Walking Blues" and "Stones in my Passway" on his amplified 1930's National Duolian steel guitar. Other notable songs included Bo Carter's "Cigaret Blues", Blind Willie Johnson's "Nobody's Fault

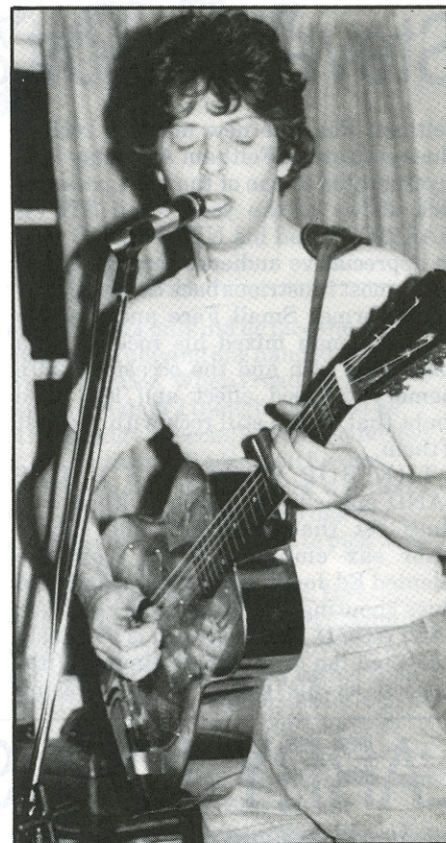
But Mine" (with Liam and Colin providing an atmospheric doomy backdrop to Roger's immaculate slide) and the eerie Skip James song "Cypress Grove Blues".

Early country blues are not the band's only fare – they do a couple of Dylan songs (Roger takes a slide to "From a Buick 6" and tears its throat out!). "Out of Luck" was the one Hubbard original they did tonight and they did their version of Eric von Schmidt's "Joshua Gone Barbados" which for me is the definitive one.

Towards the end of the evening they included a heart-rending version of "Blues Before Sunrise" (Leroy Carr) with a stinging bottleneck solo, as well as a driving "Statesboro Blues" song – this time "Crossroads Blues", not played with a slide but in a funky picking style in standard tuning, allowing the band to then slip effortlessly into a thumping "Not Fade Away" with National guitar, bass guitar and tom-toms hammering out that 'Bo Diddley beat'.

The band have recorded an album which will hopefully be out before too long and they've started to gig further afield. Look out for them – you won't be disappointed!

Michael Prince



Roger Hubbard, photo: Michael Prince

LARRY JOHNSON

YPRES CASTLE INN, RYE,
EAST SUSSEX
6th October 1989



Larry had been scheduled to appear at our local art gallery but security meant a move of venue to our local music pub, the Ypres (known to locals as the "Wipers" like the 1st World War battleground in Belgium) which was packed out. Some punters knew Larry's work of old and others were just attracted by the prospect of seeing a real American bluesman in this little town. It must be about 18 years since Larry recorded what has become one of my all-time favourite country blues albums "Fast and Funky" and I was naturally keen to see how he is playing now.

I was very impressed by his voice

which has undoubtedly greatly improved since he made that record – or at least it seemed so seeing him live. His singing was stronger and richer than I'd ever expected. His guitar picking is also still first rate, although he no longer uses the same "East Coast" finger-picking style – but he does employ what is essentially an extension of this style. Still using thumb and forefinger (learnt first-hand from Rev. Gary Davis who also used thumb and only one finger), but with a much more forceful bass and frequent full-chord downstrokes with the thumb.

Larry applied his individual style to a

variety of songs – some original like "Cab Driver" and others (rather hackneyed) standards like "Trouble in Mind", "Mean Old Frisco" and (believe it or not) "When the Saints Go Marching In". His treatment of Jimmy Reed's "Big Boss Man" worked particularly well. Very different were a couple of blues in the Lightning Hopkins Texas style of single-string playing.

It was great to hear live versions of some of the "Fast and Funky" pieces played by the man himself – such as "Charley Stone", "Keep it Clean" and one of my personal favourites, Luke Jordan's "Pick Poor Robin Clean" – even though the raggy fingerpicking had gone in favour of the more percussive style.

This percussive style came into its own on what turned out to be the last number of the evening. Titled (I believe) "Railroad Man" it had a driving rhythm which suited the subject matter admirably, with Mr. Johnson singing better than ever and sounding uncannily like a reincarnation of Leadbelly. Attacking his guitar not unlike Mr. Ledbetter, Larry used such force that not one but two bass strings snapped mid-song, bringing the evening to a somewhat sudden ending. He went off – we thought to change the strings – but in fact did not and would not (in spite of much persuasion from several people) return to what would undoubtedly have been a rapturous send-off.

It was a pity that such fine evening had to end in this rather flat way.

RECORD REVIEW

with Chris Youlden

THE PENGUINS **ACE CH 249**

Another collection from the vaults of Dootone Records here, devoted to the Penguins, perhaps one of the archetypal Doo Wop groups. Their biggest hit was of course, the massive "Earth Angel", which leads off side 1 of the album but the Penguins worked in a variety of the styles which were to be found in the idiom, during their long and sometimes troubled stay with Dootone (circa 1954 to 1959 with intermissions).

Consequently the interpretation and choice of material is a little more varied than you would expect from the average Doo Wop group and probably reflects the group's influences and also what was most popular at any particular time.

Apart from the opening title, side 1 (for me the best side) finds the Penguins working in a style very reminiscent of the early Clyde McPhatter & the Drifters – some good stuff here particularly "Hey Senorita", a twelve bar rhumba-type thing; "Kiss a Fool Goodbye" a relaxed L.A. blues ballad which has some fine tenor, guitar and piano work; "Ookey Ook", a rolling twelve bar boogie with another good tenor solo and, "Love Will Make Your Mind Go Wild", which is gospel-influenced and has some marvellously churchy backing vocals. The rest of the side consists of more conventional Doo Wop material; a rocker and two ballads and ends surprisingly, with a country song, "If your Mine".

Side 2 doesn't quite live up to side 1 but still has some reasonable things, the best of which is the first track, "Be My Lovin' Baby" – a good rocker – and two others in a similar vein. "Cold Heart" and "Sweet Love". "Butterball" and "Money Talks" also deserve a mention as again they're a little bit different, being vaguely "Coasterish" in approach. The remaining tracks are mostly typical Doo Wop ballads (C,Am,F,G structures with variations) – a genre I'm not particularly fond of – but I'm sure that stone Doo Wop enthusiasts will love 'em. All in all, a good collection (18 tracks) and definitely one for the Doo Woppers.

KING PLEASURE AND **THE BISCUIT BOYS** **BIG BEAR RECORDS BEAR 30**

Ah! we're back in the forties once again with King and the boys (and one girl). The period, has of course, been extensively mined by a number of bands in recent years the Chevalier brothers, big Town Playboys etc. – so the sound (and some of the material) may not be new to you. Still, the band put down a powerful line of groove and are worth giving a listen to.

Actually, Rowdy Yeats imaginatively informative sleeve notes tell me that the King's big break came when he was signed to Middern Records who swiftly marketed the bluesboy's first big R & B hit, "That's a Groovy Thing" (The first track on side 1). All the sidemen in the band have track records as long as your

arm so the only mystery is . . . how have these venerable musos managed to retain their youthful appearance for so long and how come they're still very much alive and working the lengths and depths of the UK? Well! I've been reliably informed by an impeccable source that some time in the fifties, the band encountered Dr. John in a roadside bar just outside of New Orleans, who hearing of their justified fears of premature senility, (due to their 650 a year gig schedule) introduced them to various New Orleans folk remedies which obviously did the trick – fortunately for us.

However! Enough of the foregoing and back to the album. Side 1 continues with "Ain't Nobody Here But Us Chickens" and then the two best tracks (for my money) on this side "Quiet Whiskey" a la Wynonie Harris I think and an explosive "Shotgun Boogie". "Pretty Eyed Baby" and "Ain't Enough Room here to Boogie" complete the side – all good rockin', swinging boogie.

On side 2 we've got more of the same – "Steppin' Out", "Reet Petite & Gone". "Look Out Mountain" (an unusual cut this, almost Cab Calloway) and then the two I liked the most on this side, "Hide And Seek" (a great Joe Turnerish feel here) and "Voo-it" (a medium-paced sensual effort with a good vocal from "Sugar" Lee.) The band rock out with "Flirting With The Blues" – a suitable finale.

If your into jumpin' Jive and such like stuff you'll probably like this one.

LENNA AND THE SNAKEMEN **"SOMETHING'S COOKING"** **WIZARD RECORDS**

This Brighton based five piece outfit vcls. two gtrs, bass & drums augmented with keyboards & harp for this recording) lean heavily in the direction of the sixties blues-boom style eg.

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Canned Heat, Yardbirds etc., although also doing some more traditional things. One of the latter opens side 1 – “Bottleneck Blues” – a fast Chicago shuffle with a steel solo. “I Don’t Worry ‘Bout A Thing” is taken at a medium 4/4 walking pace and has some tasteful lead guitar. “I Don’t Know” is a fast “Yardbirdy” type-thing with organ and harmonica additions – and then the band move onto the best track of the album “Four Walls”. This is a very good slow eight bar blues and features a really excellent melismatic vocal by Lenna – a fine, sensitive interpretation. The side ends with the second best track – “Something’s Cooking” – an up tempo rock-boogie opus notable for its unusual chord construction and generally imaginative arrangement.

Side 2 opens with “Alcohol” – a rocker and is then followed by The Canned Heat song “Amphetamine Annie”, “Have I Got News For You”, the Ray Charles thing and “Jesus Was a Revolutionary” – a country style number with a fast two/ four beat and steel solo. The side is climaxed by an amusing, feminist rewrite of “7th Son” entitled “7th Son Revisited”. All in all, I think I preferred the first side but obviously it’s a matter of taste. One to listen to before buying but it grows on you.

**THE SECOND ACT “LESS IS MORE”
WOODEN MAC PRODUCTIONS AWM LP1**

Well, here we’re talking about late 60’s/early 70’s soul for the most part, by a British band and it’s not bad at all. The material is completely original and mainly written by the vocalist Andrew Wood Mitchell. He can write a good song and also has a very good voice – as well as being technically proficient he also manages to prevent his influences from smothering his individuality. The Second Act are all obviously good players and interpret the tight and sometimes intricate arrangements well. The recordings on the album cover the period 1986 to 1989 and so you get some variation in style, approach and sound – the metamorphosis of the band if you like.

Side 1 consists of the most recently recorded material (1989) and for me it’s the better side. The best tracks are probably the opener, “Dying By The Sword” – a late 60’s mover, “Less is More” – a similarly uptempo thing and “What Paradise” a slow soul ballad. However all the others on this side have something to recommend them; the rolling boogie piano pattern of “Send Him To Detroit” for example, but this is combined with an almost uptown R&B feel, it reminds me somehow of Chuck Jackson – the thing about much of this material in fact is how well the various influences are meshed together so that you can’t say “That’s a David Ruffin or a Marvin Gaye-type song. The very adept brass arrangement on “Termite City” must also be mentioned – and it’s tight performance by the section.

Side 2 I didn’t like as much – it’s stuff recorded earlier in the band’s life (86-88) and it’s not perhaps so consistent or self assured. The best track this side is probably “The Devils Hymn” – a slow, gospel-type song with overtones of Donny Hathaway. I’m not saying that this is the greatest record of all time or anything remotely like that, but I do think that if somebody gave the band some money they just might come up with something pretty damn good.

Personnel:- Andrew Wood Mitchell (vocal), Neil (Veneer) McDougall (keyboards, brass arr.) Austen (Razors) Hornbrook (gtr.) Rami (Superb) Armon (bass), Sam (Allo) Kelly (drums), Steve & John (brass).

Tracks: Side 1. Dying By The Sword, Less Is More, The Yuppie Song, Send Him to Detroit, Termite City, What Paradise.

Side 2. Goosestep Blues, Love At First Lech, Young Republicans In Love, Rome Wasn’t Burt In A Day, The Devil’s Hymn, Ode To The New Year. Wooden Mac Productions, 2, Union St, Barnet, Herts EN5 4HZ.

**MATCHBOX BLUESBAND
“FLAMETHROWER”
L&R RECORDS**

More blues here from a German band.

They’re a six-piece outfit; Klaus Kilian (vocal, harp) Tillman Suhr (gtr), Thomas Schilling (bass), Georg Viel (drums), Doris Assenheimer (tenor) and Thomas Feldman (baritone); although several guest players have been brought in to provide assistance. The music is a mixture of basically Chicago blues and a few funky things. The material is, with one exception, all original and is notable for it’s localised context, ie. the lyrics stem from the thoughts and experiences of the writers (mainly Kilian & Viel).

Side 1 begins with the title track “Flamethrower” – this is not perhaps typical of the album as a whole – it’s a powerhouse, funky piece with Wah-Wah guitar and a drum machine accented off-beat. D 27 follows – a fast Chicago shuffle with lyrics devoted to the shortcomings of an obviously notorious Corsican highway. Then we have “Smalltalk” patterned on “Help Me” or “Green Onions”, “Pile of Shit” – a funky thing which allows Klaus to tell us what he thinks of German Yuppies, “I wonder” – a slow eight bar blues reminiscent of “Cherry Red” and “Come back To Me Baby”, – a rolling number with an Excello-type guitar figure.

Side 2 opens with Amos Milburn’s “Chicken Shack Boogie” and then the band get into a funky “What Is This Thing Called Love” – a very good riff on this one. “Plenty Fat & Plenty Unhealthy”, a slow blues, relates the singers losing battle with food, nicotine, caffeine and other bad habits while “Down At The Store” (the best track for me; I rather liked the idea behind it) has a “No Money Down” arrangement with a lyric concerning the frustrations of a hard-up record collector when faced with the temptations of the local specialist record store – the conversation piece at the end adds to it’s appeal. The side draws to a close with another Excello-ish track – “Chock-Full Of Nuts” and “Fill The Void” – a moody funkier – rounds the album off. There’s some good playing here and I guess you could say that it’s a creditable attempt by a band who obviously believe very much in what they’re doing.

MORE RECORDS

**MICK (WILDMAN) PINI
MICK PINI
BLUE HORIZON BLUH 009.**

Possibly one of the best British Blues Albums in a long time, featuring A.B. Burns, Paul Jones and Chris Youlden as guest vocalists . . . I’ve heard reports of Mick Pini and he is definitely an excellent guitar player. From the first track ‘The Collector’ a Chris Youlden original through Freddie King’s ‘Onion Rings’ to ‘You Can Make It’ with it’s moody intro the record goes on from

strength to strength . . .

Paul Jones sings his own ‘It’s Got To Be The Blues’ and takes a couple of hot harp breaks . . . I don’t see why Mick didn’t sing the whole album himself (no offence to the guest singers) but it would have served as a better vehicle for his enormous talent . . . Nice to see my old mate Les Morgan credited on drums with a great band which sports Tony Robinson on keyboards and Jon Southgate on bass . . . I wonder what happened to the drummer Dave

Anderson? . . . I loved all the tracks and will try to catch Wildman live any time . . . a Blues man who as they say ‘Kicks Ass’ . . . BUY IT . . .

**MIDNIGHT DRIVE
THE KINSEY REPORT
ALLIGATOR AL4775**

This one’s a ‘Stomper’ that makes you move from the start. A fine band, especially guitarist/vocalist Donald Kinsey. As an example of contemporary Blues with a heavy edge, the album is a

winner, capturing the feel and emotion of earlier Blues artists . . . 'Nowhere To Go, Nothing To Lose' has great lyrics and could be a standard in years to come. In fact the band is tight and well rehearsed with some great arrangements that complement their songs . . .

On 'See Her Again' Kenneth and Ralph Kinsey lay down a groove that would make a dead man boogie. I only wish that I had caught them with Big Daddy when they did the South Bank Festival in August . . . 'Hit Woman' is a funky number that harks back to Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf . . . A party album. Buy it and enjoy . . .

**LIVE FROM AUSTIN
DELBERT McCLINTON
ALLIGATOR AL4773**

What can I say? I've been a fan of the man for years and he really delivers the goods on this album which was recorded for KLRU-TV AUSTIN TEXAS . . . With his ten piece band rockin' like the clappers this must've been a hell of a gig . . . Kicking off with 'Maybe Someday Baby' followed by 'Lipstick Traces' and with a sprinkling of ballads like 'Sandy Beaches' and 'I've Got Dreams To Remember' right through to 'You Are My Sunshine' and 'Givin' It Up For Your Love' this is a brilliant record but then again I am biased . . . BUY IT BUY IT . . .

**PROFESSOR STRUT
(PROFESSOR'S BLUES REVUE)
DELMARK DS650**

Professor Eddie Lusk, sideman for the likes of Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, Mighty Joe Young and others over the last 10 years or so, has a new vocalist in the band, namely Karen Carroll. She has a strong deep voice that oozes with soul. The Album has a Gospel/Jazz feel which is set on the opening track 'Come on Down to the Blues Bar' with the Professor and Karen sharing vocals. 'Jealous Kind of Woman' is next with Lusk taking lead vocals ably supported by Bassist Al Mann on lead guitar - good slow Blues. This record makes me curious to see the Revue live because I think that's where their strength is. The title track cooks along in a monstrous groove, to be followed by the soulful 'You're Leaving Me' on which Karen's voice stretches out and grabs at you.

Side 2 opens with 'Everything is You', a cool swinger featuring some excellent 'Scat' vocals from Karen.

Next up is Guitar man Joe Woolfalk with 'Stormy Monday', a favourite of mine sung with a large nod in Bobby Bland's direction. The last two tracks 'I Wanna be With You' and 'This Little Light of Mine' end an Album that was enjoyable and well worth a listen.

**OTIS RUSH 'TOPS'
(DEMON RECORDS - FIEND 143.)**

A good live album, recorded at the San Francisco Blues Festival in Sept. 85,

from a man who has influenced a host of young Blues Artists.

Although overshadowed by the more flamboyant players on the Chicago scene of the late 50's and early 60's eg BUDDY GUY, Otis survived into the 80's with a dignified show which for me was a pleasure to listen to . . . Tracks like his own 'Right Place, Wrong Time' and 'Keep on Lovin' me Baby' prove that despite and probably due to ups and downs in his personal life he still delivers the Blues with an emotive strength and honesty . . .

Superb backing from Bobby Murray . . . guitar, Jimmy Pugh . . . Keyboards, Leonard Gill . . . Bass, Kelvin Dixon . . . Drums, Larry Jones . . . Trumpet and Julien Vaught . . . Sax, numbers like 'Crosscut Saw' and 'Feel so Bad' must have had people on their feet Boppin' at the gig, which also had moments of pure Blues from the heart, with Rush's slow vibrato guitar style showing a master's control and authority on 'Gamblers Blues' and Earl Hooker's 'I Wonder Why'.

Finally on a down note, I thought the weakest track was the title track 'Tops', an instrumental which didn't go anywhere and serves as a 'Filler' on what is otherwise a fine album, from a sometimes maligned, Legendary Blues Artist . . . worth a place in anyone's collection.

**Rod Demick.
(Turkey Leg Johnson) . . .**

**ON THE SHADY SIDE OF THE
STREET
KIT PACKHAM & THE SUDDEN
JUMP BAND
SPOTLITE RECORDS SPJ903.**

On the Shady Side of the Street*/ Filthy McNasty/You Oughta Steer Clear of the Water*/Outskirts of Town/Is there a Doctor in the House*/Honey just allow me one more Chance/Mary Ann/Ain't that just Like a Woman/3 Cool Cats/ Bloodshot Eyes/Romance Without Finance/Dr Jump & Sister Jive*.

People familiar with the band's repertoire will recognise the twelve tracks here as being a representative selection from a typical live set. For those not acquainted, they play in a jump jive style, incorporating a hefty slice of blues and mainstream jazz along the way.

Overall production is crisp and trouble has been taken to try and provide definitive recorded versions of these numbers, ranging through the boogie woogie of 'Just like a Woman' to the exciting twin sax riff of 'Honey just allow Me', which has had some extra changes inserted, so disguising the fact that Bob Dylan is the composer. An attempt at harmony vocal has been made on '3 Cool Cats' but my favourite has to be 'Romance Without Finance', which boasts a fine guitar solo from Brian Bull.

Soloing is concise, with Packham and Bullman Reed sharing the sax chores

well. Guests Roger Beaujolais (Vibraphone), Raoul D'olivera (Trumpet) and Don Lang (Trombone) crop up here and there to add extra variety.

The four tracks (marked*) composed by Packham show him to be a fine lyricist, with interesting use of language and good rhyme. They blend well with the covers to produce a pleasing consistent role.

Criticisms? Well, 'Outskirts' has an out of place harmonica solo from the fourth guest Wolfie Witcher, a double tragedy because live we normally get a superlative guitar break. This track and 'Mary Ann' in places show the limitations of Kit's vocal range. Lovers of a good old fashioned cock up can also savour the moment, on 'Bloodshot Eyes', when he says: "Roll that old tenor Saxophone there, Bullman". Unfortunately a Trumpet solo ensues.

If bands on the London gig circuit were football teams we would see Kit Packham in division 2. However with the right breaks and the success of this LP, I hope to see him promoted soon!
Peter Skinner

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JOHN LEE HOOKER
The Healer
SILVERTONE Records OREL P 508

Side 1. The Healer:

John Lee Hooker vox; Carlos Santana gtr; Chepito Areas timbales; Armando Peraza congas; Ndugu Chancler drums; Chester Thompson Keys/synths.

I'm In The Mood;

John Lee Hooker vox/gtr; Bonnie Raitt vox/slide gtr; Roy Rogers gtr; Scott Matthews drums.

Baby Lee;

J.L. Hooker vox/gtr; Robert Cray gtr; Richard Cousins bass; Scott Matthews drums.

Cuttin' Out;

J.L. Hooker vox/gtr; Henry Vestine gtr; Larry Taylor bass; Fito De La Parra drums; Charlie Musselwhite harp; Roy Rogers slide.

Think Before You Go;

J.L. Hooker vox/gtr; Cesar Rosas; David Hildago gtr/accn; Louie Perez drums; Conrad Lozano bass; Steve Berlin sax.

Side 2. Sally Mae;

J.L. Hooker vox/gtr; George Thorogood gtr.

That's Alright;

J.L. Hooker vox/gtr; Charlie Musselwhite harp; Roy Rogers gtr; Steve Ehrmann bass; Scott Matthews drums.

Rockin' Chair;

J.L. Hooker vox/national steel gtr.

My Dream;

J.L. Hooker vox/gtr; Fito De La Parra drums; Larry Taylor bass.

No Substitute;

J.L. Hooker vox/12 string gtr.

The original crawling King Snake is back with a vengeance. Though to be honest I hadn't been aware he'd been away. No matter, this latest album from the incomparable Mr Hooker – Sir John as Tony McPhee proudly called him – is a gem.

Perhaps the "comeback" notion relates to the stylistic departure in the material which sees John Lee embrace a host of different arrangements in the company of an array of star names. Happily it is the winning combination of Hooker's compositional work and his brooding voice that make this set an essential purchase for any blues fan.

In short the album matches the plaudits, note for note. The 10 track set opens with a familiar Santana guitar burst – a mixture of Latin rhythms and sustained notes before the voice of the blues slips perfectly into the work-out and transforms a promising opener into a crucial cut.

Bonnie Raitt follows with a duo with John Lee over some rough-house slide guitar. Its a mellow version of I'm In The Mood, but the effort contains enough intensity to make this a laudable

arrangement of a Hooker classic. Undoubtedly much credit for the success of the whole album must go to producer and accomplished guitarist Roy Rogers. Roy has been working with John Lee for several years now and appears to have encouraged the great man to greater things in the twilight of his career. Shades of the Muddy Waters/Johnny Winter sessions.

Robert Cray puts the album in perspective on a laid back Baby Lee in which his unfussy backing allows Hooker to make the most of his expressive vocal range. Canned Heat similarly slip into a sympathetic groove, but a careful listen to 'Cuttin' Out suggests Henry Vestine, on guitar, along with the redoubtable harp of Musselwhite and Hooker's rhythm are blowing a fuse. Significantly Rogers is credited with slide guitar, but his contribution at no time overshadows the basic form of the song.

Side one closes with a clever musical contrast as Los Lobos join the fray, and surprise everyone – possibly including themselves – with a splendid burn out, full of tough solos and sprightly accor-dian.

If all this sounds frenetic, George Thorogood joins Hooker for a sparse, but compelling, guitar-led blues duet, Sally Mae. George's usual trebly slide works well, before Hooker takes the tempo down further with a slow blues. Musselwhite blows a mean harp, and Rogers guitar fills in nicely behind Hooker's brooding vocals.

John Lee takes centre stage on a kind of post-party lament Rockin' Chair. Just him and a Steel guitar a rambling like only he can. Canned Heat's rhythm section make one more appearance on the blues ballad My Dream. It's a moving number that warmly illustrates Hooker's imaginative writing ability, and an excellent album closes with John plus twelve string guitar quietly bringing a rivetting set to a close.

Most albums with guest artists plastered across the front, are a disaster. The Healer is the opposite in that respect, being John Lee's best album for years, and proving his writing skills, let alone his performing talent remain remarkably undiminished. Go out and buy it.

SUGAR RAY & THE BLUE TONES
"Knockout"

SPECIAL DELIVERY SPDCD 1021

Side 1. Sally Sue Brown; I'm Your Professor; Talk To Me; Lucy Mae Blues; Mouth On Fire; I'm Tortured; Hope Valley.

Side 2. Radiates That Charm; I'm Not Ashamed; He's Gone Away; Bite The Dust; I Could Have (Loved You); What Can It Be; Country Boy.

(Note: last 2 tracks on CD only).
Sugar Ray Norcia vox/harp/squeeze box; Kid Bangham gtr; Anthony "R.B." Geraci pno/organ; Michael Mudcat Ward

bass; Neil Gouvin drums. Also; Greg Mazel ten. sax/baritone sax; Tom Mahfood baritone sax; Monica Lauderdale backing vox; Gail Parker

There appears to be fresh life in the arguments concerning the perennial question about whether white men can sing the blues? Well as this album goes some considerable distance to prove, the question is something of a red herring as the blues has moved on and encompassed a hybrid of influences.

Led by (Sugar) Ray Norcia on vocals, harp and squeezebox, The Blue Tones burn from the off, and ultimately leave me puzzled by their West Coast mixture of blues, boogie and swing, as the band hail from 3,000 miles to the East.

Whilst Knockout is a perfect title for the album, the band steal your blues with a blistering rhythm section, some original compositions and a willingness to take risks.

Influences abound from the late great George Smith – in the case of Norcia's harp – to some cleverly disguised Be Bop and even rockabilly influences, courtesy of Ronnie Earl's rhythm section. Neil Gouvin on drums and Michael "Mudcat" Ward, play with such immense power of suggestion that at one time the band can shift from a swinging tempo to a Texan dance hall Blues without so much as a skipped beat. Sally Sue Brown and Lucy Mae Blues might not sound the stuff of great blues, but make no mistake the band are cooking. Kid Bangham on guitar adds a very personal style to the proceedings, never wasting notes when suggestion through tone will do.

Predictably Sugar Ray is let loose for a solo foray on Mouth On Fire, and the band only really miss the mark on the curiously old fashioned sounding I'm Not Ashamed and the semi balled What Can It Be Norcia's harp playing is matched by his inventive compositional skills. With bursting arrangements like this, harp-led blues is very much in the ascendancy, and my only puzzle remains the geographic origins of the band. This album is highly recommended.

BLUES EXPERIENCE VOLUME I
Conifer Records CDRR 301

Side 1. Buddy Guy She Suits Me To A T (note: no band details available) John Lee Hooker; Roll Your Daddy Right.

Prof. Longhair; Baldhead, Jimmy Witherspoon; You Got Me Running, Phil Guy; Garbage Man Blues; Jay McShann; Hello Little Girl Lowell Fulson; Well Oh Well. Eddie Kirkland; Pick Up The Pieces. Louisiana Red; Grease Me Babe. Carey Bell; Pretty Babe.

Eddie C. Campbell; I'm In Love With You Babe.

Ernest Arceneaux & His Louisiana French Band; Bye Bye Lucille

Nappy Brown & Big Jay McNeely; Things Have Changed; Johnny Mars; Horses & Places

Blues Experience is certainly an apt title for this varying collection of erst-while blues men

You get the impression that the 15 tracks have been put together in a kind of scissors and paste affair that finds the inspired mixed in with the tame and the plain ordinary. However, I've never been one to knock a blues compilation outright and happily this album has plenty of highlights to warrant a cautious recommendation.

John Stedman provides an informative sleeve note accompaniment, albeit some of his observations are at times a little over generous.

Buddy Guy offers a cut from back in 1981 when as far as I know he played much the same as now – at times inspired, other times undisciplined. Happily this opening cut is a fine example of his undoubted talent. His later appearance with brother Phil offers some frenetic guitar jousting, the level of intensity of which is not quite matched by the empathy mentioned in the sleeve notes. John Lee Hooker needless to say smoulders as ever and offers a clue to the delights to be found on his new *The Healer* album.

As I mentioned this set does contain some individual parts that don't match up to the whole. Longhair's *Baldhead*, Johnny Mars's *Horses and Places* sound no more inspired than when heard first time around on their respective solo albums. However, the set does benefit from the Witherspoon interpretation of *You Got Me Running* and more notably still, from the Bop inspired Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson's *Meat's Too High*.

Carey Bell impresses with his warm harp sound whilst the major surprise for me is Eddie Kirkland who surpasses all expectations on the very confident funky workout *Pick Up The Pieces*.

As an introduction to black blues in particular, you could do worse than this set. My main reservation remains the somewhat curious bedfellows. On the one hand it gives the set a spicy variety; yet on the other I get the nagging feeling that we are being offered a few fillers.

**TENTH ANNIVERSARY ANTHOLOGY:
VOL. 1 – VARIOUS ARTISTS LIVE FROM ANTONES
Bedrock Records BEDLP8**

Side 1. Snooky Prior; How'd You Learn To Shake It Like That
Eddie Taylor gtr; Jimmy Rodgers gtr; Sunnyland Slim piano; Bob Strogher bass, Timothy Taylor drums; Derek O'Brien gtr.
Eddie Taylor gtr/harp; If You Don't Want Me Babe; Personnel as above.
James Cotton harp/vox; Cotton

Crop Blues.

Luther Tucker gtr; Jimmy Rogers gtr; Pinetop Perkins pno; Bob Strogher bass; Ted Harvey drums.

Sunnyland Slim pno-vox; Built Up From The Ground.

Personnel as cut 1.

Albert Collins gtr/vox; Cold Cold Feeling.

Jimmie Vaughan gtr; Denny Freeman pno; Mel Brown org; Mark Kazanoff sax; Pat Whitfield bass; George Rains drums; Joe Sublett sax.

Side 2. Buddy Guy; Look On Yonders Wall;

Buddy Guy gtr/vox; Things I Used To Do.

Derek O'Brien gtr; Denny Freeman pno; Mel Brown Organ; Mat Kazanoff & Joe Sublett saxes; Sarah Brown bass; George Rains drums.

Pinetop Perkins pno/vox; Caldonia.

Personnel as Side One, cut 3

Otis Rush gtr/vox; Double trouble.

Personnel as Side 2 cuts 1 and 2. Jimmy Rogers You're Sweet
Personnel Jimmie Vaughan gtr; James Cotton harp; Bob Strogher bass; Timothy Taylor drums.

The key to this album lies in the assembled personnel above. For what better idea than to bring together some of the undoubted giants of the blues to celebrate a decade of good rocking at Antone's Blues club, in Austin Texas. However, as often happens with a great idea the theory proves to be stronger than the practice.

On the positive side, this live blues compilation is well recorded, nicely balanced and embellished with some superb photos taken by Rachael Gibson and Susan Antone.

The set opens with a rugged cut from Snooky Prior whose growling vocals nicely add a world weary inflection to a powerful beat. Snooky drives the all star band along quite nicely and is a worthy opening to the proceedings.

Former Jimmy Reed guitarist Eddie Taylor follows with an up tempo and unsurprisingly Reed-influenced number, that features some nice harp, and gentle playing from Eddie. Fans of the man might want to further explore his still *Not Ready For Eddie* release on *Bedrock*.

James Cotton provides a tough juxtaposed rendering of *Cotton Crop Blues*, and his gruff vocals match his earthy harp playing, whilst Sunnyland Slim slips into a well-received *Lazy Lester* groove on the Louisiana sounding *Built Up From The Ground*. His mumbled vocals hover nicely over his steady piano style, and proves that Sunnyland is still in there enjoying his blues.

Side one closes with the familiar sustain of Albert Collins stratocaster, wailing over a sonorous horn section. In-

terestingly enough Jimmy Vaughan not noted for his thoughtful solos, offers an introspective contrast to Collins powerhouse approach. As in his guitar style so in his arrangements Albert offers a welcome dynamic excursion but loses much of the passion of the song.

My real quibble with the album focuses on Buddy Guy's contribution. Sure enough Buddy kicks off with an exciting version of *Yonders Wall*, complete with his inimitable fevered guitar style. Its an all action opening that takes risks and leaves no doubt where Stevie Ray Vaughan got his ideas from. Some rolling piano from Denny Freeman provides colourful fills, and the listener is on the threshold of a hot sweating blues session in the heart of Texas. Unfortunately Buddy blows the opening of *Guitar Slim's Things I Used To Do*, and his vocals rarely improve thereafter.

Pinetop Perkins impresses with a lively version of the much covered *Caldonia*, but the next landmark for me, the Otis Rush slot, turns out to be a disappointment – *Double Trouble* losing much of its former glory in this laid-back arrangement. The album closes with a passable *You're Sweet* by Jimmy Rogers. I have to say however, he appeared happier when I last heard him in the company of the *Mighty Flyers*.

A mixed album then with the major disappointments being the heavyweight names who don't really match their pre-gig billing. But the album is a cause for celebration, and lets hope the splendid Antone's Blues Club come up with many more volumes of live blues.

(PETE FEENSTRA.)

PRICE RISE

We have held the price of BBR at £1.20 for two years but now, due to inflation and interest rate rises, we are increasing the cover price to £1.50 from the next issue.

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BLUESNEWS

Albert Collins, who visited here in November, was presented with his **W.C. Handy** award at the Town & Country, Kentish Town, London, during his gig there.

The awards, "The Handys" are named in honour of **W.C. Handy**, so-called Father of the Blues, and are made each year to artists, record producers and other contributors to the blues scene, in fact to people who help in the perpetuation of the blues. Award winners are selected by the **Blues Foundation Awards Committee** with an international balloting system.

U.K. representation and organisation of the balloting for the Blues Foundation is through **The British Blues Connection**, which is operated by Scott and Susan Duncan, 13 Waverley Road, Reading, Berks. Through this connection, British Blues fans are able to register their ballot for the awards.

The awards winners were announced on 5th November, at the 10th annual blues show in Memphis, at the Cook Convention Centre. The show was hosted by **Willie Dixon** and as Albert Collins was unable to be there, his award was presented by The British Blues Connection organisers. Albert won awards in three categories, Contemporary Male Blues Artist, Blues Instrumentalist of the year (Guitar) and Blues Band of the year, with the Icebreakers.

Incidentally, one of the 1988 Handy award winners was the **Mississippi Valley Blues**

Society with its regular Blues News, more evidence that the blues is getting plenty of support in the US.

The St. Louis Blues Society have also sent their latest Bluesletter and again the scope of blues, live and on the air, is mouthwatering.

We've also received **Antone's** newsletter from Austin, Texas, which obviously is concerned with their product, but still makes interesting reading.

On this side of the water, **Ace** are also producing their own newsletter. Where will it all end. By the way, they do mention a massive release, all the Little Richards.

A selected discography of British Blues has been published by Leslie Fancourt. **BRITISH BLUES ON RECORD (1957-1970)**, attempts to compile the releases of artists who were involved in the British Blues scene, from the pioneer recordings of Alexis Korner and Cyril Davies of the late fifties, to the end of the 'Blues boom' in the late sixties. Whilst dance/R&B artists such as Georgie Fame and Zoot Money are excluded, as indeed are The Rolling Stones, who, suggests Fancourt, deserve a book of their own, he has attempted a wide listing. It is certainly a very useful start on the discography of blues in this country and will settle many arguments concerning the recording scene vis-a-vis British Blues in the early days. It will be updated in future editions. **The booklet is available at £3.50, from Leslie Fancourt, 11**

Front Brents, Faversham, Kent, England, ME13 7DH.

Burnley Mechanics are already getting the next **National Blues Festival** together. It will run from Thursday 12th to Monday 16th April 1990, and full details will be announced towards the end of December, at the year's final two blues gigs. These will be on Saturday 30th with **The Harp Breakers, Mr 'C'** and **The Mighty Houserockers**. On Sun 31st the bill is The Norman Beaker Band and Steve Phillips.

Also in the North, **Manchester's Band on The Wall** changed their R&B night from Wednesday to Monday in October. **The George, Compstall**, near Stockport, continue their nights on Mondays and Fridays with many Manchester bands doing business there, including **Bare Wires, Gags, Bamford Blues Band** and **The Marauders**, among others. In addition to all this, there is good food available and plenty to look at with 60's R&B and Soul posters. Bands looking for gigs can contact Paul and Helen Quinn on 061 427 1299. BBR is on sale behind the bar too.

At **Stoke on Trent, Signals Jazz and Blues Club**, which feature local band Off The Wall on the last Saturday of every Month, as well as many other Jazz and Blues bands each week, are having a Christmas party on Saturday 23rd December with two bands.

The Busted Fender Blues Band have the following December Gigs: Fri. 1st, Black

Horse, Shedfield near Wickham; Sat. 9th, 'Landmark' Portsmouth; Thurs 14th, Maltings, Farnham; Sat 23rd, Thorngate Hall, Gosport; Sun 24th, Ship and Bell, Horndean; Fri. 29th, The Railway, Gosport.

Wolfie Witcher and his Brew are at The Plough, Stockwell, London, on Fri. 8th; Swan, Fulham Broadway, Thursday 14th; and at 100 Club for his Christmas party on Thurs. 21st. and of course, every Saturday afternoon at the Carnarvon, Camden.

Another Christmas party at **100 Club** is the **BBR** gig on 18th, more of a pre-Christmas party really, with **The Shakey Vick Blues Band, The Mick Clarke Band**, plus **Chris Youlden**, and **Jon Digby**. Other Shakey Vick gigs are: every Sunday night at The Carnarvon, Camden, including Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, Custom House Working Men's Club, London E. Fri. 8th. Cambridge, Flambards, Fri. 15th. Also Shakey is resident on Sunday lunchtimes at the Station Tavern, Bramley Road W10, with his **Sunday Joint**, and with the **BBR house band** on Mondays, also at the Station. **Shakey Vick's Downtown Bluesmen**, will be doing some out-of-town gigs in the new year. This features Shakey Vick, vocals and harmonica, Jon Digby, Vocals and guitar, Bernie Pallo, guitar, and Sam Kelly on Drums. The bass has yet to be finalised, but Alex Dmochowsky is helping out where he can. They will be at London's 100 Club on January 8th.

BBR at 100 CLUB

100 OXFORD STREET, LONDON W1

CHRISTMAS BLUES PARTY – Monday December 18th

THE SHAKEY VICK BLUES BAND plus

THE MICK CLARKE BAND plus special guests

Chris Youlden, Gordon Smith, Mike Piggot, Jonathan Digby.

8pm - midnight

Admission £5. (Concessions £4)

DETROIT BLUES

London based guitarist John Page took a brief trip to Detroit and records some of the blues he managed to find on his travels.

Oct. 12th. – On visiting my father in Detroit, I decided to search out some blues venues and found Scully's Bar in Greenfield Road, Dearborn, North of Michigan Avenue. We returned in the evening to see Ian Moore, a 21-year-old guitarist (advertised as the next Stevie Ray Vaughan), playing with his band from Austin, Texas – "Moment's Notice". The following week, Kim Wilson, Fran Christina, Duke Robillard, Luther Tucker and Sarah Brown were due to play there, but I was back in England by then.

Guitarist/vocalist Ian Moore proved to be very talented, as did bassist E.R. Shorts and Drummer Ian Bailey. This

was just two weeks into Ian's first U.S.A. tour. he is in a similar style to Stevie Ray, but he is playing his own thing and has a good understanding of, and feel for, the blues.

At the end of the evening, a talented black singer/guitarist, by the name of Larry McCray, was invited on stage and played some good driving blues. His band has just landed a recording contract with Virgin Records and the first album is entitled "Ambition" – unfortunately he didn't have a copy at the time. I believe he will be coming over here at some time.

On Friday 13th, I decided to go to Ann Arbor on the Chicago Highway from Detroit, to see Otis Rush at the Blind Pig – only a small night club!

The first band on were the Steve Nardella Band, comprising drums, bass

guitar, sax and guitar/vocalist Steve Nardella. They were an excellent band and Italian-born Steve had T Bone Walker off to – excuse the pun – a T. It turned out that they were the backing band for Mr. Otis Rush, who stepped on at midnight and played probably the best I've ever heard him, standing just a couple of yards away, in a small night club!

An older black gentleman was invited on stage to sing with him and said that the last time that he and Otis met was in 1959. He was Willy D. Warren. He is in fact on the Detroit Blues Factory, Vol. 1, album, which I purchased. He plays guitar and sings with his own band on the album. During the 50's he was for a time Muddy Waters' bass player!

Well, I didn't quite make Chicago... maybe next time!
John Page

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DECEMBER

- 1 Shout Sister Shout
- 2 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 3 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 3 Big Road Blues Band (Eve)
- 4 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 5 Paul Lamb Band
- 6 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 7 The Radiators
- 8 Shout Sister Shout
- 9 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 10 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 10 to be confirmed (Evening)
- 11 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 12 Paul Lamb Band
- 13 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 14 The Roadrunners
- 15 Shout Sister Shout
- 16 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 17 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 17 T Model Slim (Evening)
- 18 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 19 Paul Lamb Band
- 20 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 21 The Jumpin' Catfish
- 22 Shout Sister Shout
- 23 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 24 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 24 T Model Slim (Evening)
- 25 Closed
- 26 Paul Lamb Band
- 27 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 28 Turkey Leg Johnson
- 29 Shout Sister Shout
- 30 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 31 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 31 New Years' Eve Blues Party
(open until 12.30)

JANUARY

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