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THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH BLUES NETWORK

**DETROIT'S
MARSHA RAVEN**

Plus:

**Graham Bond
Johnny Mars
and all the Blues
Festival News**



TALKIN' BLUES

The larger cities around the world, have always attracted rural immigrants hoping to improve their lot. This has usually led to overcrowding and deprivation, indeed to a lifestyle less hopeful than the one a rural existence might have provided. Squalor, homelessness, poverty and starvation might have given cause for regret and doubt among any aspiring countryman or woman who had made the leap, mental as well as physical, between country and city. Yet, once the divide was crossed, many stayed in their new surroundings, rather than go back.

Apart from an admission of defeat, to return home could have meant acceptance of even worse conditions than those which had caused the move in the first place. The powerful – and in rural areas that usually meant the landowner and chief employer – would need no urging to victimise the unfortunate who had tried to escape the system, if only to make an example to any others who might have considered leaving. Yet the migration continued.

Such a migration was made by many American blues singers. Chicago was one city that attracted its share of the itinerant and gave a new dimension to song. The main routes into the city, rail or road, added further to the repertoire and gradually the music took on a harsher, more aggressive, more bravado

tone. Amplification added a further veneer to the music, one seemingly suited to the new lifestyle of the blues singer. No longer did one have to take a back seat, but through music, a power of sorts could be wielded. Yet, like all outsiders, the musician could only go so far in the system. Acceptance of the situation was the norm.

The swing away from blues to funk and soul, was as much a rejection of the old system, the old acceptance of powerlessness, as was the new power of militancy, the new belief in rights for those black people who were prepared to fight for them.

Rioting, burning and looting, gave immediate gratification, let off steam in a definite manner and led to a new way of expressing feelings about the black condition and to a new feeling of common righteousness.

Yet, with the passage of time, the apparent gains in status gradually lost ground in the face of the power of the establishment to give as little as possible, for as long as possible, in the safe knowledge that people can't be rioting all and every day. They have to eat. They have to sleep. They have to stay warm. Their frustration can, on the whole, be contained by simple bureaucracy – the art of stalling for time until boredom sets in.

So the blues survive...



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Erratum

The caption to the photograph on top of page 11 in issue no 5 should have read: Geoff Bradford and Cyril Davies, not Brian Knight and Cyril Davies.

Please note that BBR has a new number for advertising, editorial, and distribution enquiries. The number is now: 01 792 9419 (24 hour answering and calls will be returned by the next day.

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Letters

Dear Friends at Blues Network

It was with great delight that I received copies 2 & 3 of BBR (I still need No. 1). A mature and informative magazine that jumps with blues, its people and the various music scenes up and down the motorways. A real pleasure to read, written with enthusiasm and passion, broadcasting a fabulous and honest music.

My contribution is to inform yourselves and your readers about the blues music being played in various venues (the chitlin' circuit) in North West and East Lancashire. The first really exciting development to have happened in these parts is the opening of Burnley's Mechanics Hall, a huge dance auditorium in Burnley town centre, to blues personages. Early this year, entertainments Manager Gary Hood and enthusiastic staff and friends payed blues enthusiasts a great service by putting on four days of Blues. Among the musicians who appeared on stage were: Otis Grand with Bob Hall, Climax Chicago Blues Band and Spencer Davis. Because of the enthusiastic support for the blues, Gary and company opened the doors of the Mechanics to other bluesers during the year.

Manchester's Norman Beaker, Joe Louis Walker, Louisiana Red and Carey Bell Harrington have all played and been pleasantly surprised that their brands of blues are appreciated in these parts. So Burnley Town has become a real focus for blues.

There is also a thriving pub scene, small venues for blues musicians and blues aficionados. Still in Burnley, there's a boozier called the "Town Mouse" which puts on blues bands regularly on Friday nights. Down the road in Preston there is the, now justly famous, "Lamb Hotel" which has sessions six nights a week. Featured are Blues, Jazz and Folk musicians and there's always a lively and responsive crowd. How landlord and landlady, Eric and Sylvia keep up their enthusiasm, I don't know... must be something to do with the voracious appetite for beer that the Lamb's clientele have.

The "Queen's Hotel" in Ravenstall also caters for blues freaks, but does not have a strict music policy; often you can get a Heavy Metal band on stage. "Minstrels" in Blackburn also has a policy of featuring R&B and Jazz acts. A friendly bar with lots of photographs of Jazz and

Blues greets hung on the pub's walls. Thus we have a thriving music scene in the area, catering for Blues.

The bands that play regularly on the circuits in the area are: "Shakedown", a seven piece blues/soul outfit that drive with their upbeat, original, swing material numbers. "Atlantic Roots" are a very fine four piece, who had the fortune to support Carey Bell when he played Burnley. Also, a band that works out of Preston, The "Fully Qualified Blues Survivors". One hell of a blues band, fronted by blues shouter Joe Williams, they are an inspiration to any blues lover. You can catch them regularly at the Lamb Hotel, Preston.

Finally there are four crazy blokes of no tender age, who claim the name "Hoochie Coochie Band". They do justice to a sweaty style of '60s' Chicago Blues. They even crank out Z.Z. Hill numbers with some verve. Oh yes, there are also the "Diving Ducks". I only caught them once, but they had me stompin' and jumpin'. With a woman lead vocalist (don't know her name) they cook on Amos Milburn and Alberta Hunter numbers - an exciting bunch of bluesers.

Gary Hood should be thinking of booking all the local bands I've mentioned, for the 1989 Blues Festival in Burnley. More communciations and ramblings will follow. Keep up the licks and keep struttin' the blues.

All the very best.

Les Scott, Blackburn

p.s.

I should also mention that Steve Barker's "On The Wire" - Radio Lancashire's finest music programme - regularly reviews blues and other related music. It's broadcast every Sunday, 2pm to 5pm. That Steve Barker's a "Good 'un", as Otis Rush would say.

Many thanks for your information Les. The Burnley Mechanics Blues Festival should also be a "Good 'un". See details in this issue - Ed.

CONTRIBUTORS PLEASE NOTE:

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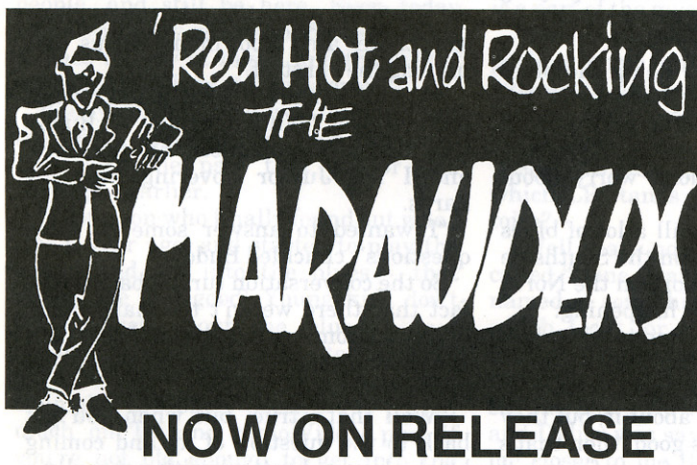
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SOME JIVE WITH JUNIOR: SOME BLUES WITH BUDDY

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The interview started with a mean rap with Junior Wells, before Buddy finally was able to give his version of the blues.

With a three week tour of Europe arranged, Junior was positively looking forward to the stint.

"I've been coming to Europe since 1966, but we have to limit the number of times we come here, else we might outstay our welcome. I like being here because I'm doing what I love, playing the blues . . . I'm a blues FANATIC."

However, as Junior went on to explain, the blues scene was not always as receptive to visiting artists as it is now.

"Right now the audiences are very exciting and we get all kinds of people come to see us, but that wasn't always the case. They weren't very exciting to begin with. I came over to Germany to do one of the early Folk Blues Festivals, playing with people like Sleepy John Estes, who wasn't exactly young, and didn't jump around. I took one look at the crowd and said to the promoter . . . 'You can keep your money, just give me my ticket home' . . . the promoter said 'what's wrong?' I said 'It's not happening', and he said 'Keep on doing what you're doing', which I did, and I guess they came to like it as I've been coming ever since."

But as Junior had already indicated, things were not great in those early days, either with the audiences or in just surviving.

"It was hard, I didn't even know how to order any food etc, but by observing things I got wise in a week – it was tough. It was better in the UK but both Germany and France was tough. For one thing the audiences were very cool. In Germany they were very strict on how you played the blues! They would even tell ya how to sit down and play. As a matter of fact if you didn't follow what they wanted they would BOO YA". (Junior nearly jumped out of his chair to make the point.) "They love it now though."

Junior chose to elaborate the difference in audiences.

"First time I went to Japan they didn't boo you, but it took some time to get the audience going. But now we go there a lot and really get the kids going."

The Buddy and Junior connection was the next topic of discussion, and as Junior was at pains to point out, they go back a long way.

"We've played together since 1958, but not always in the same band, but first recorded together in Chicago in the mid

The Junior Wells/Buddy Guy interview at the Town & Country Club, London, October 1988.

As far as interviews go, this one was something else. The usual problems of tongue-tied, bleary eyed and sometimes downright boring interviewees just doesn't apply to either Junior Wells or Buddy Guy. In fact, interviewing these two wonderful exponents of Chicago Blues was the equivalent of trying to hold a serious conversation when all around you the biggest party in town is in full swing. Not only did both Junior and Buddy offer a welter of opinions on the current scene and times past, but both seemed to be positively jockeying for a pole position in front of the mike. The up-shot of the meeting was a stream of blues consciousness unparalleled anywhere. What was really eye opening was that everything the two characters observed about the blues was channeled, some 20 minutes later, into a powerful and joyful set of the real thing and, to be honest, despite a poor PA and average to middling band, I was awe struck by two powerful and unsurpassed performers who, given the death of Muddy Waters and the Vegas feel of B B King are now, in my book, leading exponents of the blues.

sixties and toured all over since."

Both Junior & Buddy were close at hand to catch the first stream of British Blues bands to tour the US, and Junior saw it as a very positive sign.

"They were trying to learn the blues, and I figured if they liked the blues and tried to play it then it was great. As a matter of fact when the STONES first came over, they were trying to play the blues."

On the question of black kids playing the blues today, Junior was not as positive.

"There's not as many doing the blues today, they're too busy looking for the dollar. Personally I gotta play what I feel, and the other thing is if you're a true blues man you don't worry about the dollar . . ."

"In Chicago there's still a lot of blues clubs, but not as many on the Southside as before. But there's more on the North Side, so there's a lot still happening."

So who does Junior listen to when he's not working?

"All sorts of stuff. Take Country & Western, I'm not crazy about it, but they can play, and if it feels good, then that's OK because it's another form of musical expression. My daughter comes in and shouts . . . 'What are you listening to?' well really I'm listening for the feel, that's what it's really all about."

Back in the US Buddy and Junior still work incessantly, both around the colleges and clubs, sometimes with the current band, sometimes with a different format. Do they still fall into Jam situations?

"Oh hell yeah, it's the greatest thing to be someone's guest; Sonny Boy, John Lee . . . great . . . I still see John Lee every other night!"

On the recording front, Junior is as hungry as ever, as he was quick to explain . . .

"We're negotiating all the time, but we wouldn't record anything that didn't have any blues on it. The last thing old Muddy said to me fore he died was DON'T LET THE BLUES DIE . . . and we won't. We got to keep the music alive, 'cos there ain't too many of us left playing the old stuff."

At which point a loud jocular voice boomed over "What'd he say –" Buddy Guy has just announced his presence, and I left Junior hovering over his harps.

"I wanted to answer some of those questions", chuckled Buddy.

So the conversation turned back to the fact that there weren't too many black bluesmen coming through, and that both Buddy & Junior continue to work most of the year round.

"Well that's true, but when you get back to the question of up and coming black players, I gotta say it's not really a question of colour. In response to your question regarding influencing white kids or black kids . . . it's really a question of ability. Well let's just say guitarists' music doesn't have any colour. Its like Junior says, if you got the feel, that's the main thing."

So does Buddy know much about the new generation of Texas blues players like Stevie Ray Vaughan and Anson



Photo: Greg Roberts

Funderburgh?

"Sure we're real close friends - I go down to Texas every so often and sit in with the guys and jam with Kim Wilson, and Jimmy and Stevie, it's like a reunion and we get to play the traditional stuff. Me an' Junior are popular down there because not too many people still play the old stuff like Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, Jimmy Rogers, Arthur Crudup etc. We're fortunate enough to have played with these people, and still be here. Even today we're still busy riding round looking for a place to stay at night, and the pull of the blues is still as strong as ever."

Buddy undoubtedly was talking from the heart, and touched upon the same link with the past that Junior had developed earlier.

"I got a son who finally found out who I was a year ago, and started to play the guitar and get into the blues - that makes me feel good! Young kids don't know much about the blues... not because they're not interested to start with but for a variety of reasons. For example, the blues doesn't get played much on TV and radio/Video, plus if you're not old enough to get into the places we play, then you still don't know. It's just not THERE for them to learn about it."

So does Buddy feel he can still get the message over by playing live?

"- NO, we need some help. TV & Video can help, and I would be lying if I said they were not important."

Nonetheless, despite the severe lack of media attention, I put it to Buddy that

his style of guitar playing had influenced many players over a couple of generations.

"Thank you - I think it's true to say a lot of guys have given us credit and acknowledged us - we're close friends... but basically wherever I go it comes back to keeping the blues alive. Every city I go to from New York to Texas, from London to Manchester, I try and drive that message like a nail. I make sure I'm still alive and that blues is a part of the music.

"There's no particular place more important than any other, like I said wherever I go I want to be 110% into the blues, I don't even need an album - it's in the show."

Since Buddy mentioned an album, which LP stands out in his own repertoire?

"Well that's no problem, in the US its called 'Stone Crazy', and over here they named it something like 'Blues Giant', which I cut for Didier (the promoter), over in France on a label named after my mother - who never got the chance to see me play. We wanted it to be right, and Didier was saying, your playing got me closer to me than I ever had, but I wished we could get one rehearsal right" (at which point everybody collapsed laughing), but seriously I would like to do some new things and have a major do it. I mean those guys like Johnny Shines, Arthur Crudup down through the years suffered from not having the right people in the right places at the right time. I'd make an album for whoever, as long as it was done properly, I

mean we're not babies anymore, especially Junior you know... we can't wait much longer (laughter)."

"I mean we didn't do it 'cos we were going to make a lot of money, we did the whole thing in 3 hours! Well, 5 hours if you add the whole thing up. We were quite happy with the studio, in a little place called Toulouse, France, and it was a chance to prove my point, and lay down the whole thing raw. I had my brother, and Ray Allison and the bass player who'd been working with me for years... no keys or anything like that. I love the album for the feel and the way it was made."

True blues indeed, and talking to both Buddy and Junior made a refreshing change from other interviews. Both would undoubtedly have talked all night, each asking the other questions about the validity of a point, or just chucking out some fleeting anecdote. Two hours or so later, both Buddy and Junior gave a quick wave before embarking on three encores to an adoring crowd; great live Chicago blues from the masters, Buddy Guy & Junior Wells.

Pete Feenstra

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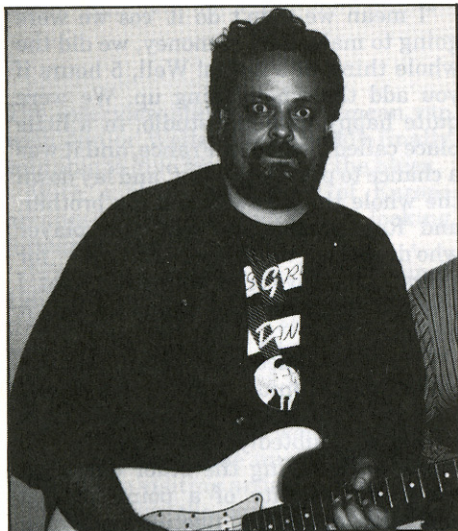
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OTIS GRAND

A man with a mission

Interview by Norman Darwin



Otis Grand (photo: Stewart Allison)

Well, my Blues influences go back to the real Chicago roots. I can name Buddy Guy as my major influence, I remember listening to him when I was fairly young, fifteen or so – Otis Rush was another great guy, and Magic Sam of course. I listened to all these guys religiously. T-Bone Walker was a great influence too, I love that guitar player, man, I think he's just about one of the greatest influences on just about every guitar player. The funny thing is, when we were kids, a lot of us thought he can't play guitar because he had a weird style. He would just hang around the chord region, but he was a great player with great taste. I'd love to do a lot of T-Bone Walker stuff but the horn players don't know the riffs yet. All the Kings too were influences, and in particular B.B. now shows up in my style more than anybody else. My love at that age was Buddy Guy and nobody else, I never figured out how he got that tone – of course later on I knew he was using a Four-Ten old Bassman with a Fender Stratocaster with new strings on it and he sounded incredibly good. It was that album with Muddy Waters that turned me on. "Folk Festival Of The Blues", it came out on a cheap label so it was freely available. I got into Robert Johnson too, and picked up the slide for a while, but I don't do that any more nowadays. I think there are too many slide players that are good. I'm just not that type, I've got more B.B. King into my style of playing, big city bands, you know.

What about the country Blues guys?

No, I never got into Country Blues that much aside from Robert Johnson. I remember listening to great people like Josh White, he was very good and totally neglected, but Robert Johnson may be

Otis Grand is out to show people that the R'n'B sound of the late forties and early fifties, with a hot guitarist urged on by a powerhouse horn section and propelled along by a rocking rhythm section, is just as exciting and relevant now as it was then – and he's succeeding. Over the past eighteen months or so, Otis has established a steadily growing following both in Britain and Europe with his exciting stage show and now with the release of his first album, "Always Hot" on Special Delivery Records, he is riding high. Otis is no Johnny-come-lately though; he has covered a lot of ground since he was born in 1950:

the only guy I listened to. I couldn't get into Son House and people like that, I was more into wanting to break loose, electric Blues rather than any of that stuff. I had the strength in my arms and felt that sitting there with an acoustic guitar and slide was a little too mellow for me.

Where were you living then?

Well, we moved around a lot. I lived in Paris, France... my earliest influence where I heard the Blues was Oakland. My old man used to work in San Francisco and we lived on the other side of the Bay, and that's where I heard it. We had lots of Blues stations then, right now I think there is only one Blues station there which is any good, on FM radio. Wherever I went, I turned in and listened to all the radio stations and bought as many records as I could. I had an album by B.B. King which was one of the early ones, just before "Live At The Regal". I don't know what it was called, it came out on a French label, kind of like 'Johnny Hallyday Presents B.B. King' in 1965 or so. I learned that record riff by riff. I've spent a lot of time doing that stuff. Right now, I've got to admit my influences go right to the white kids who like me listened to the old greats, the black guys and then amalgamated them and they have their own tone, their own sound. I've got to name Anson Funderburgh as one of the best guys around who managed to do something with that sound. He took B.B. King and Albert Collins and mixed them together and came up with his own feel and tone. I think it's wonderful what he's doing. Other guys are like Ronnie Earl, a great player, a little too rocky for some people but I think he's a wonderful player. If you listen to him doing a slow Blues, you just close your eyes and you think, "Where's this guy coming from?!" When those two guys are around, pack up the guitar and go home. There's another great guy who is really under-estimated; people should listen to him a lot, he's got his first album coming out soon, and that's Junior Watson, he used to be with The Mighty Flyers but he's now with Canned Heat. I learned a lot of stuff from him, in particular he took me back to the

old styles of Teddy Bunn and Tiny Grimes, those old be-bop players who influenced the Blues a lot. I think mixing everything together, I've come up with my own sort of rough style that fulfils whatever I need to do. I still try to play completely modern and then I shift back to the fifties B.B. I idolise that guy.

Johnny Otis is obviously an influence on your big band sound...

Yes, you can't not mention Johnny Otis. I saw him a long time ago but he had vibes with him, so I didn't really like that. His influence on me is mainly through his records of the forties and fifties – a great bandleader, I borrowed his name. He's somebody I look up to. He surrounded himself with great musicians in the seventies when everybody hated Blues and wasn't listening to it. He went out there with The Johnny Otis Revue and he brought back Big Joe Turner – another great influence – and Roy Brown and all those guys. He gave them a chance to resurface. The whole scene owes him a lot. Right now I think Johnny has got like a year long residency in some hotel. In ten years time, I'd like to be like Johnny Otis and carry a Revue, seeing as I don't sing. I'll just have to surround myself with a lot of the best players and carry a Revue around Europe.

Tell me about Oakland – I know you sit in with people when you're there...

Yes. Right now I try and go back to Oakland once a year and hit the same old spots. I go back to Eli's (Mile High Club), which is like my roots. I used to play with a guy called Eddie Ray, and sit in with people like Beverley Stovall. Her guitar player, Teddy Butler, is a great player in the old Freddy King style. He can play! Nobody knows the guy, he's a taxi-driver by day and at night he's one of the best Blues guitarists. I used to sit in with those guys, and J.J. Malone of course, he can sing slow, slow Blues so good and soulful. I play at Larry Blake's, these are all places I'm guesting in. Tim Kaihatsu is a great friend of mine, he gave me a lot of opportunities out there at Larry's. There's a lot of Blues clubs in



Otis Grand and The Dance Kings

Richmond: The Grand, which is great, with Bobby Webb on tenor saxophone and Maurice McKinnies, all those guys. Maurice is a guy who should be brought over here, he has one of the best original, black sounding Blues bands. He's a young guy who plays and sings like Jimmy Reed, great rhythm section, I think he's got one of Joe Walker's cousins on bass. Of course, Joe Walker's another guy who influenced me, my style, my direction, everything. We have been friends ever since I met him one night - I just walked into a record store one night in Oakland. We didn't know each other but we were going through the record bins, he picked out a record and said, "Hey, you'll like this!" We met each other, went down, we played and ever since we've had a good relationship. He produced my new album - I think Joe Walker's one of the greatest guys around now, and that's not just because I have some interest in it. Listen to his guitar playing and you know that man's happening. His singing, his direction... he knows what he wants and he's going for it. I used to love Robert Cray and I think

Cray's a great guitar player, but somebody out there is messing with his career, saying, "Hey Robert, we can make much more money if you do this and that". But I know Joe, I know his mind. He's got his ideas and they've all got to do with Blues.

O.K. Tell me about the Dance Kings.

The Dance Kings - I've been putting it together and they're still in shaping-up form right now. I stole everybody! When I decided to get that big band together, I went around clubs every night to check out the bands and if I liked anybody, I'd steal them! Earl Green, the singer, I found him in a soul band and I just thought he was being wasted doing Eddie Floyd numbers, so I just nicked him and they haven't forgiven me yet. The horn players are mostly from the jazz circuit - if you go for the best, you go for the best. I even tried to steal Jimi Bott from The Mighty Flyers. I've still got a problem with the drum seat. Ever since Jimi left because his mother died, we got Mickey Waller, who I think is the best Blues drummer around, but he's

Joe Louis Walker (photo: Brian Smith)



getting a little tired. I have a few guys in mind. Jimi Bott has indicated that he would be happy to come back - it would be an honour to get him here. That period he was with us, two months, that was my ultimate dream. We were happy, we were cooking. If you don't get that rhythm section right for a big band like this, you'll fall flat.

You've mentioned the album already - how is it doing?

The album is doing really well now, and it's doing very well in Holland and Belgium, I checked that out in Utrecht. It's something I've always wanted to do. We did a mixture of five original tunes, some written specifically for us by Joe Walker and his bass player Henry Oden and the rest are tunes that I've always loved and wanted to do. We recorded it in nine days and mixed it in three. That's running a very tight ship. I had Joe Walker to help out a lot, so I think it's pretty good for what we had available to us. A lot of people say it's a very American album.

What are your thoughts on the current scene with the Blues in Britain?

I think it's what is happening right now. It's great that it is coming back with a vengeance and there's lots of good players around. I just hope that everyone stays on the right track and keeps it going. I've seen some very good young bands, I think they are in the right direction and I just hope they stay with it.

Finally, what plans have you got for the future?

Well, we're working on our next album, and this one's going to be all original tunes with the exception of a couple of B.B.'s tunes that I've got to do. And, we're hopefully going to be doing the San Francisco Blues Festival for Tom Mazzolini. We are working a lot in the UK and we'll be working Europe. Next year (1989) is jam-packed with gigs everywhere. We've got a Channel Four feature, a half-hour feature, I think we're going to record that in February. I'm happy because it's happening for us. We do a lot of college gigs and the kids seem to really get into it - eighteen, nineteen year old girls. We play R'n'B, Blues, then they come up to us after the gig and say, "That was the best music I ever heard. What do you call that?". It's been with us for a long time and hopefully they catch on with it.

OK, Otis, I know you're ready to go on stage. Thanks.

Norman Darwen

BOWING THE BLUES

with Mike Piggott

Mike Piggott is a guitar and violin player who has been on the British music scene for a long while. Although he is well-known for his guitar playing, recording with the likes of Jo Ann Kelly, Bert Jansch, Ralph McTell and Denny Lane, he is probably less well known for his fiddle playing.

"There's not too much call for blues fiddle players" he says, "which is a pity, because it's a great instrument for playing the blues."

Four years with the re-formed 'Pentangle' have recently come to an end and Mike is now busy playing jazz fiddle wherever there's an opportunity.

In-between gigs, Mike spends time at Potters Music Shop in Merstham, Surrey, owned by friend and musical soul-mate Dave Newton, repairing violins in Dave's magnificent workshop. Here, Mike gives us some historical background to the blues fiddle.



One String Sam; Ralph 'Shrimp' Jones; Emil 'Stalebread' Lacoume; Amos Octave, etc, etc. Unfamiliar names, except perhaps to those familiar with that rare breed — the 'Blues Violinist'.

Big Bill Broonzy said, in his autobiography, of the black blues fiddlers: "They didn't call what they played 'blues'... they called it Negro reels." The first twelve-bar blues to be published was written by a white violinist called Hart Wand, a dance-band leader, in Oklahoma. Hart avidly listened to black music and played a tune called 'Dallas Blues' which was published in 1912, shortly before W. C. Handy published the 'Memphis Blues' in the same year. These tunes were extremely popular and entertainers everywhere began using them in their acts. Hundreds of songs were composed in the style of the 'Dallas Blues' and the 'Memphis Blues'. Black musicians, violinists in particular, benefited from the popularity of the

blues, and could now get work and make money playing in orchestras, dancebands, and smaller groups. The fiddle featured in many of these and on many recordings — rarely as top billing.

The violin and guitar have been alongside each other historically in many musical forms: Classical, gypsy, folk music, country, bluegrass, etc. Often associated with the romantic side of things, and used to good effect as 'knives and forks' music, it has great potential for the blues, given the right player.

Vocalist and fantastic blues violinist, Stuff Smith who died in 1965 recorded some excellent live gigs at the Onyx Club in New York in the 1920's, and more recently, Live in Copenhagen, in 1965. He played with a sensitivity and energy which would be hard to equal. He was the first to amplify the violin and got a sound which has been described as like 'a bee trapped in a jar'. He literally almost sawed the instrument in half one minute and the next, one note would say it all. From the same era, Eddie South,

born in Louisiana in 1904, was an outstanding blues violinist. He worked in Chicago most of his life and was formally trained at Chicago Music College. Due to his colour he found it impossible to get the orchestral jobs he was aiming at, and decided to channel his considerable talent into jazz. He worked the jazz clubs in Chicago, Harlem and Europe, accompanying blues singers like Marian Harris. He also recorded with Django Reinhardt in Paris.

Coming more up to date, Sugarcane Harris recorded some fine blues fiddle with, amongst others, John Mayall and Frank Zappa. Papa John Creach suddenly found exposure with Jefferson Airplane, and recorded an album called 'Filthy', which incidentally includes some good words on 'Give Me an Hour in Your Garden Baby and I'll Show you How to Plant a Rose'.

Like the guitar, the fiddle has become amplified in various ways, due to being inaudible in certain line-ups. This has brought about various changes in style — although where is the B. B. King of the violin? Up to this point all the musicians mentioned have been American, but where are the British blues fiddlers? At this point I must put this into some sort of personal perspective. Being a blues fan in the Sixties blues boom I regularly went to many of the regular venues to see British blues bands and visiting American artists. Violin-wise it was very sparse. I do remember the John Dummer Blues Band getting a good bit of air-play with 'Nine by Nine' which featured Nick Pickett. I also remember seeing Victor Brox at the Marquee. He was (and still is) featured on Hammond organ and occasionally, cornet (which I believe was run over by the Aynsley Dunbar Retaliation van). This particular night, he suddenly jumped on top of the Hammond clutching a violin which he sawed violently for several choruses, bringing the house down.

I can think of many a night spent listening to E. C., John Mooreshead, Stan Webb, Freddie King, Peter Green, but not a fiddle to be seen. The guitar is a natural way of accompanying a vocal and filling in with a solo, a harmonica is a powerful lead instrument alternating with the voice. The reasons why the fiddle has not taken off in a big way are fairly obvious — it does take a fairly long time to acquire sufficient technique to actually produce a note or two that doesn't sound like a cat being sawn in half. Most people who have some degree of musical training on the violin are in a situation that is hard to adapt to impro-

Review

JOE LOUIS WALKER & THE BOSS TALKERS

100 Club, London W1
7th November 1988

Not so much a gig, more like a party! This was Joe's farewell to London after a long and exhaustive tour of Britain that has seen the band playing to sell-out crowds all over. So, we were there to celebrate Joe Walker's success and perhaps also to acknowledge that next time around, he won't be playing the smaller venues. His rise from being a virtual unknown here just a year previously to the point where he is now able to fill clubs to their seat capacities has been achieved through a combination of excellent musicianship and very hard work, and it is now begin-

ning to pay off for Joe.

Joe plays a lot of original material – always tight, relevant, and it usually boogies like crazy – and he sings in a strong, gospel tinged voice, whilst his guitar playing touches several bases, including B B King, Magic Sam and Mike Bloomfield. His slide work is inspired by Elmore James, Early Hooker, Muddy Waters and country Bluesmen like Fred McDowell and R L Burnside, and it is fascinating to see how Joe is beginning to build on the work of these masters rather than just re-cycling them. Couple this with Joe's commitment to the Blues and the fact that he so obviously enjoys being on stage, and it is little wonder he has established such a formidable reputation in such a short space of time.

The Boss Talkers also have a large part to play in all this. Bassman Henry Oden (who also writes excellent songs) and drummer Steve Griffiths are a powerful and versatile rhythm section, and Joe trades ideas off keyboards maestro Kevin Zuff; it was a real treat to hear Kevin on the 100 Club's old steam piano, showing great familiarity with the work of Elmore's pianist Johnnie Jones.

The evening was an object lesson in how to pace a set. It opened with material from the two Ace albums, building quickly to an incredible energy level within the first half hour. Later, Joe switched the focus with some slide numbers, "Shake your Moneymaker", "Dust My Broom" et al. Then there were a couple of guests sit-

ting in: Otis Grand, whose album was produced by Joe, and Kevin Brown, who had earlier played a fine set as support, were invited on stage for lengthy and satisfying versions of "Every Day I Have The Blues" and "Hoochie Coochie Man", before Joe finished off the evening with a couple of slow Blues to prepare us for the cold night air outside.

My only reservation might be that now Joe has found a successful formula, he'll fall into a rut, but he does seem to be aware of this potential pitfall and is already considering where he goes from here. As for this particular night, it was quite simply a stunning example of the power of the Blues in the late eighties.

Norman Darwen

vised playing. Although any reasonably accomplished blues guitarist could find a fingering technique to express themselves adequately. As regards amplifying the instrument – in most band situations, a microphone is not enough. Electric violins are available, but are usually cheap Chinese instruments painted bright colours, with a built-in transducer, and very overpriced. A more practical way is to preserve the acoustic quality as much as possible by having a removable pick-up. Taped-on 'Seducer' pick-ups work, but anything fixed to the body produces feed-back problems,

although at reasonably low volume, the D'Armond contact mic. with a volume control is the most effective. Bridge transducers are best though and the Barcus Berry bridge unit is very good. The bridge is fitted permanently and the instrument loses little of its acoustic qualities. There is also the detachable B. B. bridge transducer which is stuck on as required. These are best used with a pre-amp although they work very well without.

So, get up in that attic – find that old fiddle, and 'Scrape Your Moneymaker'!



Dave Newton keeps an eye on Mike Piggott (photos: Angela Morse)



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GRAHAM BOND: LOOKING FOR FREEDOM

By Harry Shapiro

Alexis Korner first met Graham in the office of Ed Michel, A & R man for Riverside Records. Alexis had heard Graham on the 'Roarin' album and was suitably impressed.

"I'd got this broadcast to do and I asked Graham whether he'd like to do it. He thought for a moment and then said, 'As long as my name isn't used, because I don't think my jazz friends would approve of me playing this kind of music'. 'This kind of music' was R&B, blues with a powerful accented offbeat. The history of R&B in Britain goes back to the late Forties, and the musician who deserves most credit for giving the music its first public airing is Chris Barber, a man more likely to regard R&B as complete anathema.

Barber had a regular working band from 1947 with Ken Colyer and Alexis played half-hour blues sets during the intervals, when his unamplified guitar did not have to compete with two cornets in the front line.

Alexis was stranded in a musical no-mans land at the time, "I had great trouble in the late forties and early fifties because I like King Oliver and Charlie Parker which meant nobody wanted you. The earliest reboppers as they were first known, called you a 'mouldy fig' for liking King Oliver and the trad guys froze you out because you thought Charlie Parker was a great musician."

Chris Barber was an ardent blues fan of many years' standing and boasted a substantial record collection. Having made trad commercially viable, he could afford to become actively involved in promoting a music close to his heart; the threat this music posed to Barber's own scene was fully realised in the early Sixties when many trad jazz clubs switched to R&B. Chris Barber was also instrumental in introducing Alexis to another blues fanatic, the moody, complaining, yet astonishing Cyril Davies. In 1955 they played folk blues on Thursday nights at the London Blues and Barrelhouse Club upstairs the Roundhouse pub in Wardour Street.

Barber's greatest achievement as a blues evangelist was to introduce British audiences to the real thing when he promoted a series of visits by American blues artists. Bill Broonzy came, so did Jimmy Rushing, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Otis Spann and Sonny Terry with Brownie McGhee. The most significant visitor was Muddy Waters who came in 1958 at the invitation of the Leeds Music Festival. Expecting a down home Mississippi rural roots sound, the purists were

Harry Shapiro's biography of Graham Bond, as yet unpublished, covers Graham's life from his earliest days. Bond had already made an impact on the Modern Jazz world, working with Don Rendell's quintet, among others, though his efforts to get accepted by the 'Cool' players hadn't been completely successful. He put a lot of noses out of joint, but his alto playing was rated by much of the establishment, however reluctantly. He decided to cross over from the jazz field into R&B at the time when Blues was breaking through the barriers of acceptance by jazz practitioners. His decision to switch from alto to piano, and to sing blues, was reinforced by Ray Charles' success with 'What'd I Say'. The following extract takes up the story of this part of Graham's life.



Graham "digging the spotlight" (photo: Brian Smith)

shaken to hear brash, loud urban blues played by Sharp Blacks wearing equally sharp suits. Some critics fled the hall with their hands over their ears. Dylan got the same treatment in 1965. Ironically, Cyril Davies, King of the Purists quickly picked up the electric guitar and audiences at the Barrelhouse were soon hearing amplified blues. All the visiting musicians played the club, and got a better reception than they ever got in Chicago. British blues musicians and audiences helped to introduce White American rock audiences to their own roots music. Muddy Waters played at the Barrelhouse receiving the standard payment – a bottle of scotch.

Phil Robertson, Barber's manager persuaded Alexis and Cyril to turn professional. Alexis' wife thought up the name Blues Incorporated and they recorded a fourtrack E.P. for Tempo Records in July 1957 with Mike Collins (washboard) Chris Capon (bass) and Dave Stevens. To cash in on the skiffle boom of the day,

the record label announced the Alexis Korner Skiffle Group. Alexis was not pleased. He was willing enough to defend skiffle because it encouraged discovery of the blues and could be played at home without expensive equipment. But Alexis was playing blues not skiffle. After manifest threats from Alexis, the group's proper name appeared on their next recording in April 1958.

Although shunned by the jazz clubs who refused to have blues played on the premises. Alexis was still to be seen at the Nucleus, not playing jazz, but folk, using a mandolin in a Woody Guthrie style country band with Ramblin' Jack Elliott and Davey Graham. Alexis cut an E.P. with Davey in 1961, called '3/3 AD', a particularly advanced record for the time because of its eclecticism, drawing from Indian Sitar music, Irish modes and blues.

But if Alexis and Cyril were going to be able to play their heart music and encourage others to do likewise, they

would need a regular venue of their own and they eventually found it in Ealing.

The Ealing club was a pub which allowed trad jazz once a week, a gig that was fairly well established. So the jazz fans were less than happy with this new breed that invaded the place; pitched battles between traddies and blues fans had already ended more than one Blues Incorporated concert. Alexis recalls, "We did a gig at the Civic Hall, Croydon with Acker Bilk and there was a near riot. We played loud and very electric and the Acker Bilk fans did not like it AT ALL. But it really started the whole thing for us because people wrote in apologising for the trouble makers and saying how much they supported us".

That was not the last time Acker Bilk was upstaged by the 'new wave'. He was top of the bill at one of the Richmond Jazz Festivals, playing on the main stage. A group started up in one of the side tents and virtually the whole audience ran across the field to see what was going on, leaving Acker Bilk playing to the birds. The group turned out to be the Rolling Stones and together with Alexis' band and its offshoots, they overtook the trad scene in this country in a very short space of time. There was, however, a fundamental difference between the two bands. Many of the R&B bands were made up of musicians who had come from jazz. There were modern jazzers looking for more freedom, trying to break down the barriers stopping them from recording and getting gigs. Other musicians were dissatisfied with the bland sterility of pop and the dated jazz sounds of the Forties, and underlying much of this feeling was 'if you can't beat them join them'. This was fast becoming the music that filled the clubs and attracted the money. Nobody could afford to turn down gigs. Thus what Alexis helped to inaugurate was a musical revolution rather than the youth orientated social upheavals represented by bands like the Stones and the Who. Musicians such as Graham Bond and Ginger Baker were born rebels, unashamedly individual and not part of any social movement.

At the Ealing club, Alexis arranged with the guy who was running the place that he would have the bar takings and the band would get the money from the door. The club opened its doors on St Patrick's night, 17th March 1962 right opposite the biggest Irish pub in West London, but the humour was good that night and there was no trouble. The musicians who took the stage on that first night were Alexis and Cyril, Art Wood on vocals, Andy Hoogenboom on bass, an advertising trainee on drums



The Velvettes at the Bodega, Manchester. (photo: Brian Smith)

called Charlie Watts and Dick Heckstall-Smith. All kinds of people came in; converted jazz fans, folk lovers, even rock 'n roll. A few came, heard the sound, ran out and never came back, but inside a month, the club was packed out, far more than the 200 maximum were cramming their way in, from all over the country, some offering a pound to get in, just to hear the last number.

By July, there were some important personnel changes thanks largely to Dick Heckstall-Smith who, incidentally, has never received due credit for being probably the first jazz musician to cross over into R&B. He inspired Graham to carry on playing and persuaded both Jack Bruce and Ginger Baker to join, replacing Hoogenboom and Charlie Watts respectively. Charlie decided he didn't want to give up his £14 a week job to turn professional.

With the basic band established, there was a procession of young hopefuls appearing side by side with men who had already been playing music for about twenty years; Brian Jones bashed out some mean Elmore James inspired slide guitar, singer Paul Jones, and a renegade Chuck Berry freak from the London School of Economics called Mick Jagger. He sidled up on stage with his school mate Keith Richards and sang a very nervous version of Chuck Berry's 'Around and Around' and then left the stage while a few hundred humid bodies looked on in stony silence, bemused by this kid who was screaming and shaking his head and the 'other one' clanging out Berry riffs at full volume. Alexis revelled in this exciting environment.

"A tremendous atmosphere developed because we all met up, all digging the blues, but all believing that each of us had been the only one who had been listening to the music before."

News of what was happening in Ealing reached the ears of Harold Pendleton, then manager of the Marquee, who

was wrestling with the problem of how to fill the club on Thursday nights. No matter who was on, the takings were sparse, because most people were paid on Fridays, and so the day before pay day, they were broke. Not liking the music, but being a businessman, he offered Alexis the gig at the Marquee to fill the Thursday night spot. Blues Incorporated opened on 3rd May. Fortuitously, within the next few months, there was something of a tourist boom in London and the beginnings of a change-over to Thursday pay days. This all helped to fuel the fires of enthusiasm that were already blazing for the band and so although the first gig was played to the entire contents of the Ealing club, by Christmas 1962, the band were attracting a thousand people twice a week and breaking every fire regulation in the book. On the other hand, Cyril and Alexis were no longer on speaking terms and their seven year working relationship was at an end. Mick Jagger was the band's regular singer but decided to throw in his lot with Brian Jones and Keith Richards, when Cyril Davies made it clear he no longer wanted Jagger in Blues Incorporated even though Davies was the one to encourage Mick to sing in the first place. However, the basis of the Korner Davies split was more fundamental, Alexis sees it like this; "Squirrel believed that jazz ceased to exist as a vital force with the arrival of the Fletch Henderson Orchestra in 1922. He didn't like Ellington, he didn't like any of the arranged jazz and he also hated saxophone - if anything was the Devil's music for Cyril, it was the saxophone. We didn't agree on jazz at all. He wanted to recreate the Muddy Waters Chicago Sound of 1956. Actually despite our differences, Cyril was happiest when Blues Incorporated was just me and him. We were a really good working mismatch."

Alexis' idea was more broad based; a

four piece rhythm section with two horns playing all kinds of blues – the Chicago sound, slow blues and Louis Jordan jump band style with lots of original material.

“It didn’t have any particular musical direction, there were so many influences in it, except that everyone was into playing the blues in their own way.”

Cyril’s way was the Muddy Waters sound of 1956 and he recreated this in November 1962 blending together Nicky Hopkins, Carlo Little and Ricky Fensen from Screaming Lord Sutch’s Savages, Long John Baldry and a black vocal trio, the Velvettes into Cyril Davies’ All-Stars. Tragically, Cyril died of leukemia in January 1964, and Britain lost a very fine blues singer, twelve string guitar player and its finest ever harp player. In a radio interview, drummer Carlo Little related a story about the highly volatile Davies.

“We finished playing a gig and there was an almighty crash of glass from the dressing room. We all rushed in and found Cyril standing there a mirror smashed to bits on the floor. I don’t know what he saw in that mirror, but a few months later he was dead.”

Wisely, Alexis did not try to replace Cyril with another harp player and singer. What he did was to replace one forceful personality with another. Graham Bond joined Blues Incorporated.

As pioneers in the field, the band were on a hiding to nothing. The jazz musicians and critics who railed against this ‘betrayal’ as they saw it, could not see the stupidity of a purism that sought to draw hard and fast distinctions between jazz and blues, musical forms that had been linked since their inception. Graham and Dick were among the first not to have the old complex that held back musical development in this country; they felt more part of an international scene, part of a burgeoning European development and they were ready to fight English conservatism. They moved into what they felt was right; Dick wanted to be recognised as the first true blues saxophonist and Graham had been involved in listening and playing the blues some time before joining Alexis. It seemed like a natural progression for him to make and of course, from a financial point of view, however great an alto player he was, he would still be earning only £4 for a pub gig. Jon Hiseman believes that Graham’s career... “reflected the way playing jazz music went from the sixties through to the seventies. By the time the early sixties came, he had established himself as a technically proficient musician well able to cope with the typically complex changes and all that meant and as artistic popular music for musicians only, to put it simplistically, and became more universal in its use of modes and simpler chord sequences, he reflected this... a master musician in many ways, he followed these trends, became involved with them and the vehicles for his playing became simpler. He realised that the circular blues chord sequences

were much easier for an audience to follow. You could do lots of thing on it – singing, improvise and all the time you could stay in touch with your audience. Blues was ideal for making the cross-over from jazz to rock and was used as such.”

Graham was clearly moving towards the blues idiom before he joined Blues Incorporated, but his association with Alexis helped to crystallize his attitude toward playing the blues. Sounds spoke to Graham on this in January 1971, “We all learnt a lot from Alexis... he’s still the number one starter of what became known as rhythm and blues. (When all the various bands split away from Blues Incorporated)... it was like the birth of a completely different form of art. In a sense that period in England was very similar to the bop period in America, because it really changed the whole face of British commercial music.”

Nevertheless, the music business regarded the London R&B scene as a crude hiccup in the system, a temporary aberration offering no viable alternative for those agents streaming up north to Liverpool with open cheque books. Nobody was interested in recording Blues Incorporated, but Jack Good, a rock intellectual and something of a visionary when it came to musical trends, finally badgered Decca into recording ‘the lost session’ over two days at West Hampstead Studios in January 1963.

They started at 11pm and went on until 5am, recording eleven titles. The session is lost, because these tracks never appeared together on one album. They ended up dispersed on a Decca compilation album called ‘R&B’ and a ‘history of Alexis’ album put out by RAK called ‘Bootleg Him’ in 1971. So much did Decca prize this piece of rock history that they allowed the master tapes to go missing from the studio. Rumour had it that Graham finished up with one of the tapes, but it never surfaced. Decca actually refused to release ‘The Night Time is the Right Time’ from that session, because they said Graham’s solo was out of tune. In fact, it slid around and around and sounded marvellous. The report in Melody Maker of the recording session called it ‘ribald’. One can only feel how much of an understatement that much have been. Alexis’s band rubbed raw against each other, as he was only too aware.

“Everyone had evil habits – it was a band full of evil habits. Nobody’s total sum of evil habits coincided with anybody else’s – so you had permanent friction going on”.

Most of the band were into cannabis and speed, one or two preferred booze and already Ginger had a sizeable heroin habit. It did not take Graham long to join “the junkie elite”, the tribe within a tribe, a world of whispered conferences in dark corners. For any outsider it was impossible to know what was really going on from day to day.

Part of the reason for all this ‘nonsense’, as it was euphemistically called, was the sheer necessity to stay awake or

go to sleep as the occasion demanded, and it did not always have much to do with day or night. The band started out in London but, as Alexis points out’... we were the first London R&B band to play the Cavern regularly. Later we had a flat in Cheetham Hill Road in Manchester, because we were up there two nights a week.”

Blues Incorporated were one of the first trailblazers of the new age up and down the highways of Britain in clapped out vans usually held together with a song and a prayer which often went unheard and unheeded. For Alexis, “It was all about after the gig – coming offstage and staggering around to the only Indian restaurant that was open in Manchester at 3am and pouring some incredibly hot vindaloo down your throat, having the shits all the way home in the van, falling into bed, meeting the next day and doing the whole thing again.”

Getting to the gig was everything. Christmas 1962, a whole schedule of gigs lined up and Alexis had flu, the musician’s nightmare. No Alexis, no gigs, no money. Alexis got himself shot full of penicillin by his doctor to make the gigs and every evening he’d burn it out, helped by Graham. “Graham really looked after me, bringing me bourbon and grass several nights running. It was really nice of him. This was Graham as a friend and not worrying about not being in the limelight or worrying about being a sideman. I do feel that very strongly about Graham. Nobody else was *that* concerned as long as I made the gig and we got paid. Dick showed concern – he didn’t *do* anything, he just showed concern.

“It was the same night that I fell flat on my face at the end of the second set – I did the second set sitting down because I was incapable of standing up anymore. After the encore, I bent down to pick up my guitar and fell flat on my face. Ginger said, ‘ere, you alright, Alexis... ‘perfectly Ginger’... so he didn’t bother anymore.”

Alexis also testifies to Graham as, to coin Dr. John’s phrase, “a spotlight digger.”

“He compulsively tried to grab every piece of pie that was going and stuff it all into his mouth at the same time... he could not help himself... if you tried to restrict him musically, he would expend all his energies in doing you down... his eyes glittered as he planned the devilish blow that he was going to land on some one. He could never stop planning – it was all fantasy. As soon as he got to B he would immediately start thinking about point C instead of consolidating his position and giving things a chance to work out properly, or rather, give himself a chance to make them work out. He didn’t have the self control to be a good businessman and neither did he trust anyone in the business. He was sure everyone was ripping him off, but he did trust the ‘hangers-on’ too much as if they *always* had your best interests at heart.” Increasingly, too, Graham was trying to

compensate for what he saw as 'his lot', and his main source of defence was attack. In earlier days, this 'attack' was primarily his boisterous sense of humour, now it took on many faces. Because of his success as a musician, his confidence and ego had grown enormously. He was actively cultivating the star image especially with the young girls at the clubs, doing the 'come with me and I'll make you a star' routine. Alexis recalls; "Four African chicks joined us for a while, two were singers and two danced, Graham once said to Penny Phango, 'Why don't you try me, I could show you a really interesting time'".

Despite the fact the band were pulling in two thousand paying customers a week to the Marquee, Alexis took the decision to move the band to the other most famous club in London, the Flamingo. This move was based solely on his desire to play to the predominantly black audience from the US airbases that frequented the club, so that he could learn from them and play to a generally more knowledgeable audience. It is likely that he would have lost some musicians from the band if they had cottoned on to this, the real reason why he left the Marquee.

"I wanted to play to an audience who could dance naturally to the music that I wanted to play, who knew the songs instinctively and who could shout responses lines at you without you having to train them for ten minutes beforehand."

But wherever they played, Graham was playing the star, offstage and on and this was bound to cause conflict especially when he wanted to introduce the ultimate weapon in his armoury of stage domination, the mighty Hammond organ, this final and most important piece in the jigsaw puzzle that transformed him into a fully fledged rhythm and blues man.

Between R&B and pop and between bands within R&B itself, one of the main distinctions was the choice of lead instruments – guitar on one hand, and organ with brass on the other. In the hey-day of skiffle and rock and roll, the guitar was king, likewise when the middle sixties guitar heroes emerged – Clapton, Hendrix, Beck and Peter Green, in the wake of the interest among white musicians in black American blues guitarists like B.B. and Freddie King. But in between, the organ established itself as the major instrument of the London R&B scene, thanks largely to Jimmy Smith. In the period between his visit to the Antibes Jazz Festival in 1962 and his first visit to Britain in May 1965, many keyboard players were seduced away from the piano. One reason was that the pianists were fed up with playing terrible out of tune house pianos and thus being written off as bad musicians. The most important of these musicians in Britain were Brian Auger, Zoot Money and Graham Bond. And it wasn't just any organ; only the Hammond L100 produced the gutsy soul-based sounds which became the

trademark of clubs like the Flamingo. Using a Leslie Cabinet which had a rotor arm to produce a 'doppler effect' and swell pedals, the Hammond sound was a deep pulsating rich vibrato. The first to use a Hammond in Britain in this way, Graham also introduced the idea of splitting the organ in half and fitting grab handles for easier transportation.

As Alexis had played blues sets during the intervals with the Chris Barber band, so Graham played organ in the Jimmy Smith vein with Jack and Ginger completing the trio that he had talked about back in 1961, 'supporting' Blues Incorporated. The other vehicle for Graham and his Hammond was the Johnny Burch Octet, their last link with traditional British jazz, in which Graham, Jack and Ginger continued to play on nights off from Blues Incorporated gigs.

The Octet played regular gigs at the Plough in Ilford, Essex and although they never went into a recording studio, there is in existence a tape of the band recorded live at the Plough on the 21st March, 1963. As one might expect, the quality is not wonderful, but it is a fascinating piece of rock history, and marks the band as important, if obscure.

The music was very varied with a Johnny Griffin Big Soul Band feel about it, but covering all the many influences at work in the band. Bud Powell/Red Garland/Horace Silver piano from Johnny Burch, blues strains, convoluted string bass solos from Jack, and Graham's Jimmy Smith-John Patton influenced organ pieces, including the song destined to become his anthem, Ramsey Lewis' 'Wade in the Water'. One of the most interesting features of this number were the introductory swirling Bach-style cadenzas, which called upon Graham's classical training. In later days, this intro could last several minutes, a great build-up to what became by 1969, a song played at a blistering speed. In 1963, it was more sedate.

Graham was never powerstruck by the organ, he tamed it and made it his personal mode of expression. Loud and violent, Graham forced audiences to hear his music filling the cracks in the wall of any club with sound. So why did Graham desert the alto sax as his main instrument in favour of the organ? He could have made the switch from jazz to R&B and remained a saxophonist like Dick Heckstall-Smith. The truth was, with the organ, Graham could play everybody's part. The Hammond was a one-man band; using the pedals, one could play melody and rhythm simultaneously and the sheer power of the instrument made it the focal point of the stage. Graham knew exactly what he wanted to play, how he wanted to play it and how it should sound. The Hammond was the perfect complement to his own dynamic presence and nobody commanded a stage better.

With the Octet and his own trio sessions, Graham got away with it, but when he tried to introduce the organ into Blues Incorporated, he came up against Alexis. There was no chance of featuring

an organ in that band; with the horns in the front line it was unnecessary. It did not fit into the music that was being played and it would have meant Graham upstaging everyone the whole time, something Alexis would not allow.

Another bone of contention was Graham's disappearing act when it came to carrying the organ up and down the stairs at the Flamingo, although people do report seeing Graham carrying it on his back singlehanded.

As a separate trio, Graham, Jack and Ginger landed themselves a date at a club in Manchester, playing to about 300 people crammed into an area the size of the average sitting room. The gig was very successful and they got paid the huge sum of £70, something for Ginger to mark on the wages chart he kept on his wall. "Graham was a great enthuser in those days; he did everything, including driving the bandwagon everywhere – on the way back from this gig, he said, 'this is it, lads, we've won the pools!'"

Like the others, Jack thought they had hit the bigtime, "we celebrated and blew all the bread on dope".

This was the proof that Graham needed that he could branch out on his own with the musicians that he wanted to join him. Lurking in the background was Ronan O'Rahilly whose Radio Caroline hit the airwaves on Easter Sunday 1964 as the first pirate radio station. In 1963, he still had his feet on dry land; he was the Blues Incorporated manager, but he fell in with Graham's plans to leave Alexis and form a new band. Alexis with a wry smile, recalls that Ronan was interested in the psychological development in his band, "He wanted to send people to psychoanalysts to make them into supermen and psyche out the audiences. We got little lectures about how 'you musn't be down-key, you must be up-key, meanwhile here's an exercise book...'"

Needless to say, Graham had all that under his belt long before Ronan came onto the scene and was ready to make decisions for himself and everyone else, even Ginger Baker, so great was his self confidence.

"We had a rehearsal with Alexis at the Flamingo and I arrived late as usual and Jack arrived even later and we were met by this heated exchange of words on stage between Alexis and Graham. He (Graham), saw me about halfway along the Flamingo, came up to me and said, 'That's it, we've all left the band'. He left for me and Jack!"

It was time for Graham to go his own way and although he split from Alexis under a cloud, there was no real ill-feeling, they had a great respect for one another and played together when the opportunities arose in subsequent years. But in February 1963, Graham, Ginger and Jack struck out on their own, to carve for themselves a special piece of rock history.

JOHNNY MARS:

Straight from the harp by Steve Jennings

Part one

Introduction by Graham Vickery

Johnny Mars came to Britain in the early seventies and I was introduced to him at the 100 Club, just after he arrived. As neither of us was gigging there, we had a brief word, before the band started their second set. He seemed an easy going guy, though he wasn't too pleased about not being allowed to sit in with the band. We immediately had something in common, as I wasn't invited either.

My feelings about his arrival were mixed, to say the least. On the one hand, here was the real thing, an American harmonica-playing blues singer who could do the business and influence the British Scene by being here, but on the other hand, here was more competition. I was envious as well as pleased. When I did get to hear him play for the first time, the envy disappeared through enjoyment of his performance.

Some time after that, he had some Sunday lunchtime gigs at the Kensington in Russell Gardens, near Olympia. I used to go there regularly, so it was good to hear a band I appreciated. That residency came to an end and I caught his gigs less frequently from then on.

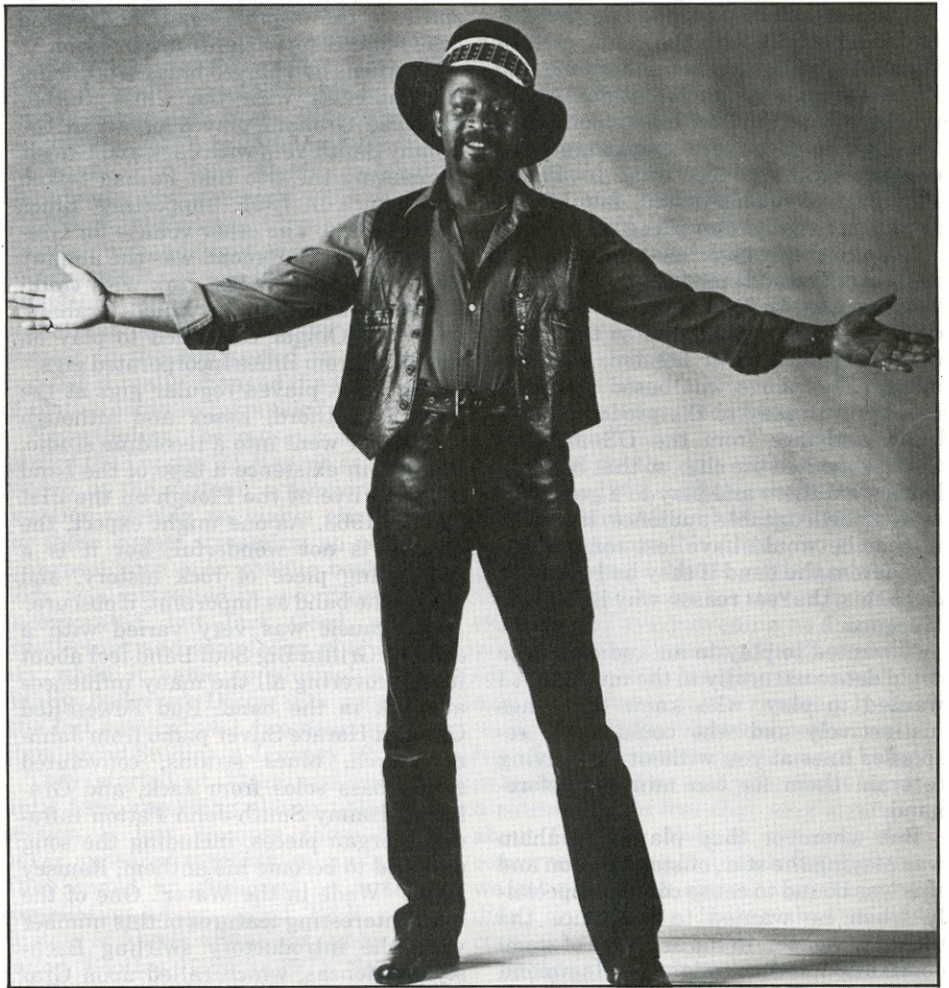
Since his first days here, he's been in and out of the country, working in Europe frequently. His approach to harmonica playing has developed very much the way he wanted it to. He's not afraid to experiment and to stretch his technique to the limit. He now uses an array of effects gear to enhance his already individual sound. He's a trier, without doubt.

Some people don't like the way he's going, but can't argue with his reasoning that there wouldn't be the present sounds that we take for granted, if there hadn't been people prepared to experiment and push for new sounds and techniques. He's done enough recording in the past as well as presently, for us to make our choice about what we want to retain of his playing, so no-one can complain.

In the end, it's his prerogative to play how he wants, if some of us can't keep up with it, too bad! The reality is that he knows where it's at – effects can only enhance a good basic technique, not compensate for lack of one. He's got the feel, the control of tone and attack, that is essential for good bluesharp playing. We have had the benefit of that for some years now. It ain't going away! Get some while you can.

He recently came to a party of mine and played in the way most suited to the band that was backing him, proving that he is still able to do the appropriate job. He decides: that's how it is and that's how it should be.

He was born on December 7th, 1942, in South Carolina, but when he was about



three, his family moved to Florida, the first of a number of moves. He heard the blues sounds of Jimmy Reed, Little Walter, Muddy Waters and other and was given a harmonica when he was about thirteen. Apart from the influence of Little Walter, there was the added inspiration of Sonny Boy Williamson, not just on Johnny's harp playing but also upon his approach to lyrics. With such a spur, his playing developed into his own style and has progressed ever since.

His singing hasn't lagged behind. He's got a powerful bluesy voice and uses it well. In fact, he started off in his first band mainly as a singer, and it wasn't just blues, but rock and roll, in a High School band in New York State. Then he was in California and soon formed his first blues band. He did the rounds and eventually ended up in Britain fronting the Sunflower Blues Band. Later he used different line-ups, as his search for new ways of using the harp continued.

He's a man who knows where he's going, or at least as far as knowing what he wants to be doing. Sometimes this has caused a few problems, but he isn't a guy to be pushed around. It shows in his playing and what more could you want? Count me among his fans.

Graham Vickery

STEVE JENNINGS: Tell us about John Mars, his history in England and how he thinks the British Blues scene has changed or developed or altered or whatever.

J: In May '72 I first came to England, did my first LP for Big Bear Records and 'Blues from Mars' was released on Polydor.

S: That was with Bob Brunning's lot, wasn't it?

J: Er, yes.

S: Is it true what it says amongst the... that you stepped off the plane and walked into the 100 Club and were fronting that band by the following morning?

J: When I first played with them, I jammed with them for the first time. They then asked me to join that band and I went an' joined the band. Yeah, something like that, yeah! The first two albums were with them, er, 'Sunflower Boogie Band' or 'Brunning Hall Band' – it was called Brunning Hall Band – Brunning Hall Sunflower Band I think it was called. 'Oakland Boogie' was also with them... they were good for the time... I was playing a lot like other people then.

S: There were a lot of straight Little Walter copies on the first album?

J: Yeah, there was... I mean I play like

myself now.

S: Well, people complain about that.

J: Well, that's up to them you know... I'm me... I'm myself.. I play like that to please myself and in the process I'm hoping I can please a lotta other people... usually the people that complain are the people who probably don't like changes... can't bear any kinda changes because they wear the latest clothes, and they all drive the latest cars and, you know, buy the latest CD Recorder but they don't like changes you know, they put labels on you and they sort of shackle you with chains. They keep you right there... they know what's best for you, you know... why do you need that! Usually those people are... it's only a few of those people, really.

S: Did you get a lot of that when you first started using electronics?

J: Oh yeah, "Why do you need all that?" "Why do you need this, why do you need that?" "Why don't you just play keyboard?" My answer to that is that I do it because I like it – I'm sorry for those people if they don't have any imagination, especially if they are, quote, "musicians": "Why do you need this one?" ...you know. You take the guitar for instance, and if you want a keyboard, you know... Look at the state of the guitar was in from being acoustic, I mean, it's certainly nothing like that now.

S: The thing is, that with the guitar now, people think of it as an electric instrument.

J: Of course they do. I mean, the guitar had the same problems as the harmonica you know: the harmonica's still in the same state it was from the beginning down to when Little Walter started and, you know, I'm sure there was a lot of people thought, God, what's Walter doing, you know... We don't hear about it now because we weren't back there at the time but people must have thought. It's like when Muddy Waters first started to play electric... the moans and groans... I was told that people here didn't like Muddy Waters when he came over with an electric band...

S: Because it wasn't proper Blues?

J: Yeah, they thought it wasn't proper Blues, you know... electric guitar, Muddy Waters. Oh my God, I mean the times I've seen Muddy here and crowds that he drew, you would think that people never ever moaned about him. You win a few and you lose a few... well, he gained more than he lost... so if a few people complained about Muddy Waters turning electric, so what the hell you know... what's Muddy supposed to do? My answer to that is, Little Walter died a long, long time ago. He died before he physically died. Being a creative musician as he was, once he stopped concentrating on his music for whatever reason, and he didn't advance, and stayed doing his own... playing a type of music and playing it the same way, instead of going into whatever he felt he wanted to do, instead of getting side-tracked by, maybe, drugs or drink or

whatever he got side-tracked by, because he was a brilliant musician. I think he died creative-wise long before he died physically, because that's one of the things that kept him alive, that's one of the things that kept him off of drink, and I'll quote what I read Muddy said, "Little Walter was the best. He was a young kid, he only drank pepsi cola and he used to be in the studio switchin' harps and getting different sounds. Never got in anybody's way. He was creating new things. All those things you hear on his albums, Little Walter, he was creating all sorts of new things. He created them. All those different positions he got from other people – he took it further – he was

some great backing bands, Chicago Bands you know... – he had to get away from those people and play with completely different musicians, so which means he'd have been criticized like hell but he would have completed his ideas

S: Yeah, but that leads inevitably to the question How far do you see yourself being in that position because whether "the Blues experts" define what you're doing at the moment as Blues, it still sort of very much falls into that sort of area, although what you're doing with the instrument doesn't necessarily... Are there directions that you wanna go and that wouldn't fit that Band?

J: I've got one.. two.. three, I've got 4



Johnny Mars and Ray Fenwick

happy, you know. He was happy with it himself. So once the music scene changed, and guys sat around moaning about the music scene changing you know, he died long before... he got himself in a hell of a state. What would he have been doing now, if he'd kept on going?

S: Do you think that's because people wanted him to carry on playing the blues, or because he was having ideas that he couldn't quite pull off because there's a track of his – quite late – where he's trying to play a Bossa Nova type rhythm and it doesn't quite come off but they were trying to get into the new modern dance type rhythms of the time, and it didn't really work. So was it because he was getting creatively frustrated by the fact that what he'd been doing for the past 10 years or whatever it was, just didn't work any more, he wasn't gonna have to re-invent the whole thing, or because people wouldn't let him re-invent. Do you see what I mean?

J: Well, yes I do see what you mean. My answer to that is I think if Little Walter really really would've wanted to, then you have to sacrifice, I mean he had to get away from the people he was playing with, the great of the era – there were

LP's – straight Blues – the fourth LP where I slightly change a bit, – I'm counting the 2 Polydors, the JSP and the Lhambourghini one, but I don't see, in the post everyday, huge cheques coming from those people buying my records you know. You know, I'm just Blues, you know. A lot of people tell me – a lot of Blues purists – will tell me that's your best records, you first one or your second one or whatever, but I don't see a lot of people buying those records, and they've been around for years.

S: It says on the CD sleeve that they reckon that might be the best you'll ever do.

J: That's what they think. Yeah, but I don't see those people running out buying all those records, so Johnny Mars can pay his bills a bit better and live a bit better, but I guess those kinda people probably say "Well, what do you need all that money for. What do you need this for?" People look at B.B. King and say BB don't know how to play the Blues: he drives a Rolls Royce. Look at his silk suits, what does he know about the Blues? An' who the hell are those people? I mean, really? Those people – what do they know? What do they know about the fucking Blues? It's a joke, absolute

joke. I was playing in a Club somewhere and some kid standing there watching me play and he was hollering out "Blow the back off it" and he'd heard it from some record or movie or something, and I looked at this kid and he's standing there shaking his head as if to say "Well he's not blowing the back off it" but what the fuck does he know about blowing the back off it? He doesn't even know what it means. Absolutely... well, if you listen to those kinda people, you stay in and... a lot of people think I should go to Chicago and play with the Aces and make an album and fucking starve to death you know. It's great! You have to laugh at it because it's... Oh God... if the Wright bros. hadn't carried on with the ideas and told those people to go off and... you know, piss off somewhere, how would we go from here to America in such a short time? We'd still be going on fucking ships made out of wood!

S: *We wouldn't even know America existed.*

J: It's a joke! There wouldn't even have been the wheel; would it have been invented if those kinda people had had their way you know...

S: *Is that attitude peculiar to Britain? Because obviously you've been aware of that sort of approach from the heart of the Blues-loving, Blues-consuming public over here probably since you've arrived, but is that true all over the world?*

J: Oh I think you get that all over the world; there's a certain amount of people will think that way. I mean you can't say it's not, but it must be; it's not one group of people in Britain doing that, it's got to be all over the world; certain amount of people think that way.

S: *But Britain's the only country in the world outside the States which has really sort of produced, I mean there's a sort of specific British Blues thing, isn't there, as opposed to an American Blues thing.*

J: Yeah, but the whole thing is that I never get that from young kids that's just trying to enter the Blues. Now we got a lot of people saying Oh great the Blues is really great and why do you need to do this, why don't you stay in the state it is? but the whole thing is, when you see young kids coming up to me and

saying they like the sound, they like the new sounds and you're gaining more people that like your music, I mean that's good. I mean OK I can understand and if somebody wanna be a fuddy duddy and say the only real Blues is the Blues that the guys sing in the Cottonfield. Fine. That's his opinion. He's only gonna buy one of my records anyway. He might not ever come to see me because he'll think "Oh Johnny Mars is not playing Blues," you know, I couldn't really give a damn really it's the young people, when you get young people come up and they're fascinated. Those people are living in today's world and they know about electronics and they know modern music and they turn onto Blues which is really fantastic. That means you keep gaining - You gain more than you lose. Of course you gotta lose some along the way, because people want you to... like Dizzie Gillespie for instance. I've heard a lot of people say how Dizzie doesn't play like he used to play. You know. And Miles Davis doesn't play like he used to play.

S: *Well, Miles Davis has never played like he used to play and that's the great thing about it.*

J: That is. Yes.

S: *There's never been two Miles Davis albums that you can sit down and listen to and say it's the same guy.*

J: I think he would've died if he'd played the same way for years. You know, if you don't have any desire, if you have the same desire - the one desire - you die. You gotta have new desires no matter what it is.

S: *With your writing and all that, are you actually conscious of... 'cause there's loadsa sociological studies have been made of Blues and the origins and all the rest of it and talking about the cottonfields and I mean you've got personal experience of that. I mean you don't actually sit and write about the cottonfields, presumably because you don't see that as relevant.*

J: No, I look at life around me as it is. If I was in the cottonfields I'd be writing about the cottonfields but not being in the cottonfields then of course it'd be stupid of me trying to write about the cottonfields you know. I remember the

cottonfields... seeing my father picking cotton. I never really, as a kid... I've never worked in a cottonfield. I used to pick cherries as a kid, you know, I used to work, in the summer, on building sites and stuff, you know, fitness to play American football. If I did that, I'd probably write about that, but I write it as it is...

S: *Which is all women trouble.*

J: If you got women trouble you write about women-trouble. If you don't, you don't! Or you write about whatever, you know. Whatever inspiration; a creative musician doesn't always have to write about things that are in the present. You write about things that are in the past. You might be messing about on a piano or harmonica or guitar and come up with something and "Ah" - a song starts to come. Musicians that like to stretch themselves very creative when they get an idea, for instance, let's go back to Miles Davis, if he gets an idea in the old vein, in a style that he used to play when he was just starting out let's say, and he was just playing with a lot of those other great guys before he really established himself, he'd probably, he might write in the old vein, all depends how he's feeling and he needs that much flexibility and otherwise he's gonna be like he's in prison, he can't get out. He wants to get out and do things on the other side, he knows he'd be able to do better, but he has to deal with things just within his surroundings, within the four walls which is like a prison, he can't live like that, he can't play like that. Some musicians can do that. If they happy that way then that's fantastic, that's great you know, and Muddy Water's Blues changed. Muddy didn't always play the same. People look at it and say well that the only real Blues, but you look at Muddy's Blues. You look at anybody's music - B.B. King or whatever, Robert Cray you know. It doesn't matter what it is, their music changed from the first time they started to play their music changed and I think it's ignorance when people can't see that. **Part 2 of the Johnny Mars interview with Steve Jennings in next issue (April).**

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Joe Louis' RECORD ROUND UP

Walter Horton
"Mouth Harp Maestro"
 (ACE CHD252)

Just when you thought that the Best Blues Record Of The Year was settled, Ace Records rush this monster into the shops and snatch the top slot! What we have here are 13 tracks by (in my opinion) the greatest harp player ever, recorded in Memphis in early 1951 with some of the finest of that city's Blues musicians, like Willy Johnson, Joe Hill Louis and Willy Nix. Horton's vocal talents were somewhat less skilful than his harp playing, but he could 'get inside' a song and the feeling, rather than the technique, of his performances is shown well on both sides of his first modern 78 – "Little Boy Blue" and "Now Tell Me Baby". (It's worth pointing out that the version of the latter title that appears on this LP is an alternate take with a different band. For the (superior) ISSUED version, you'll have to get the Nighthawk LP "Lowdown Memphis Harmonica Jam" [103].)

Amongst the up-tempo tracks here, "Jumpin' Blues" is a marvellous stomper with the original version of "Hard Hearted Woman" (which Big Walter recorded as a slow Blues some two years later on States) coming close second.

The latest three tracks on this LP are by two rather obscure artists – Jim Lockhart, whose "Boogie Woogie

Woman" rattles along, helped by some great primitive percussion – and Alfred 'Blues King' Harris. Harris only ever had one record issued, as Harmonica 'Blues King' Harris, on Ebony – a record of legendary rarity – and the two tracks (one unissued) show him to be a talented singer and harp player. "Miss Darling" has a wonderful 'juke joint' feel to it, and is the same track as "Miss Darlene" (the correct title?) by Johnny Harris on the Kent LP "Blues From The Deep South" (KST 9004) which was issued almost 20 years ago.

In conclusion – wonderful sound, super packaging – and some of the finest music around. The perfect record!

Homesick James
"Blues From The South Side"
 (ACE CH 257)

Fellow slide guitar player Elmore James is often linked with 'Homesick' James Williamson and, indeed, in addition to being distant cousins, Homesick regularly backed Elmore live and on record.

Musically, however, any similarity becomes less obvious. While Elmore's style owed much to Robert Johnson, a lot of his influences come more from 'city-field' players like B.B. King and Robert Nighthawk; on the other hand, Homesick has always been more rural and downhome.

Some of his recordings have been marked by his 'individual' sense of timing, and this LP, by teaming him with a rock-solid band consisting of Lafayette Leake (piano), Eddie Taylor (bass) and Clifton James (drums), overcomes many of his idiosyncracies.

There are some familiar tunes here – Robert Johnson's "Stones In My Passway", Elmore's "Got To Move" and "The Cloud (Sky) Is Crying", and the Tommy Johnson-derived "Lonesome Road" – and "Johnnie Mae" and "The Woman I Love", both songs that he recorded in the early 1950's for Chance Records.

As one might expect, the band provides good, tasteful backing, helping to make this probably the best Homesick James LP to have.

"Good Rockin' Charles"
 (Rooster Blues/Double Trouble R-7601)

While not exactly a household name, 'Good Rockin' Charles Edwards is a well respected Chicago harp player who made his UK debut on the 1979 "American Blues Legend" tour. This LP was cut for the Mr Blues label in 1975 and features a great little band. Particular mention should go to guitarist 'Big Guitar Red' Smith, highly praised to me by Lucky Lopez Evans on his recent UK visit.

There's a great downhome feeling on this LP and, a rarity nowadays, the musicians actually seem to be ENJOYING themselves.

If I had to criticise this LP it would be on the grounds of song selection. Of the ten songs on the record, eight are covers – do we need another "Eyesight To The Blind?" – and judging by the one original vocal track, "Five Years In Prison",

Charles is certainly capable of writing a good song. Buy this record, and enjoy some REAL Blues!

Also Available

Phillip Walker
"Blues"

(Demon Fiend 128)

Disappointing, to say the least. Take a very talented singer and guitarist and shove him into the 'Cray Blues' formula, and this is what you get!

This record is so anonymous, and has no hint of his thirty-year-plus career with the likes of Clifton Chenier and Lonesome Sundown, and his fine backing work on 1960's recordings by artists as varied as Eddie Taylor, Johnny Fuller, Model T Slim and Johnny Shines. The choice of songs don't help either: apart from Lonesome Sundown's "I Had A Dream" and Howlin' Wolf's "How Many More Years", the songs seem contrived and have been manufactured by 'songwriters', rather than composed by the singer.

Robert Nighthawk
"Black Angel Blues"

Chess Greenline GCH 8180

Absolutely ESSENTIAL collection of all (bar one) of Nighthawk's Aristocrat and Chess recordings between 1948 and 1964. Sidemen include Willie Dixon, Pinetop Perkins, Walter Horton and Buddy Guy and Robert Nighthawk's girlfriend at the time, Ethel Mae, who sings on four of the fourteen tracks.

This record should be in EVERY collection!

Various Artists
"Knights of the Keyboard
(Chicago Piano Blues 1947 – 1956)"
 (Chess Greenline GCH 8105)

A reissue of the Japanese P-Vine LP "Chicago Pianology", this LP has a selection of issued and unissued Aristocrat and Chess recordings, from the likes of Otis Spann, Henry Gray, Little Johnny Jones, Eddie Ware and Sunnyland Slim. By my reckoning, six of the fifteen tracks are fairly easily available elsewhere but, maybe like me, you can listen to songs like "Big Town Playboy" (Johnny Jones) and "It Must Have Been The Devil" (Otis Spann) over and over! The four songs by Spann have an unbelievable collective personnel of Walter Horton, Robert Jr Lockwood, Willie Dixon, George Smith, B.B. King and Jody Williams, and are truly wonderful.

Jimmy Rogers' piano player Eddie Ware recorded in a very different style from that of Rogers and is clearly influenced by the smoother West Coast singers like Lloyd Glenn and Charles Brown. It's interesting too, to hear Little Walter – on guitar! – here.

The LP is closed by Sunnyland Slim's (and Muddy Waters') first recordings for the Chess brothers.

B.B. King aside, there are no wailing lead guitar breaks, just excellent singing and playing by some of the unsung heroes of Chicago Blues.

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CALL IN AND SEE US

Chicago: Another Twenty Years?

by Jim McCarty

As I hadn't been to Chicago in around twenty years, I was quite pleased to be invited to open a record store - in Peoria, Illinois - by my friend Craig Moore, taking in Chicago on the way.

We spent two days at the McCormick Inn on Lake Shore Drive, right next to the McCormick Auditorium where we once played with The Lovin' Spoonful. (It was burnt down afterwards.)

Chicago seemed a lot cleaner than before, probably due to the lead-free petrol on sale everywhere and the fact that there was no litter to be seen.

The '50's and '60's seems to be pretty much in vogue with the kids. We went to a diner called DeBevick's, where they played Buddy Holly and Everly Brothers records, and the waitresses wore bobby-sox! Nearby, MacDonalds is like a museum for Kitsch memorabilia.

Regarding the blues scene: as we were there on a Monday and Tuesday, there wasn't too much happening.

Monday evening, there was nothing going on on South Side, so we ended up in a club called Blues Etcetera, on North Halsted Street, which is evidently in new premises. This is a nice club in a bar-type setting.

Playing that night was Big Time Sarah, with a young backing band who were very competent. The Friday and Saturday before, Albert King had played there and Son Seals was due there the following weekend.

Tuesday night we went there again and caught Byther Smith and the Nightriders, an older band that seemed to play mainly instrumentals (very tightly).

Following this, we walked round the corner to James Cotton's club - Cotton Chicago - which had a very impressive programme!

Doctor John was going to be appearing there the following weekend and I was going to be 150 miles away (damn it!).

That particular night, a guy named Sid Wingfield - who my friend knew - was playing piano. Evidently he plays with people like Otis Rush, and is such a nice guy! That night, he was playing on his own - to about six people.

There had only been about ten people in the other club, and it wasn't until we went to see the Surfing band that we found a large audience. This club was right across the street from where Dillinger had "bought it" in the 1920's, and it seemed to be very popular. Unfortunately we'd missed all the bands (of the young white variety) and were in time only to see a "Jam", which wasn't really my thing.

On October 4 a thief broke into our Bloomington location, stole \$11.00 and then burned nearly \$100,000 worth of used and collectible records, tapes, rock 'n roll memorabilia and 1 1/2 years worth of hard work. But...every cloud has a silver lining so they say. Thanks to the fast thinking and quick organization on the part of my wife, Mary Lou, and the hard work of her and my faithful and dependable store managers, Mike Husler and Bob Platon, we just might come out of this okay (with a little help from our insurance company). We appreciate all of the support and encouragement from our Bloomington/Normal area customers, and hope this message comes as good news to them, as they are the reason we didn't just count our losses, take the insurance and call it a day. We're in business, obviously, to try and make a profit, but also - and more importantly - because we thoroughly enjoy it. As of this writing, the following announcement seems more than a little ambitious, but we don't know the meaning of "can't." Besides, we'll have a little help from a rock 'n roll legend...and hopefully, you'll join us on a very special day!

Thanks,
Craig Moore, owner

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Jim McCarty will make the following appearances in addition to the Bloomington Grand Re-Opening:
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Sunday, December 11 - Peoria Record Company, Peoria.
He will also co-host WBZM 94.3 FM "Yes" on...
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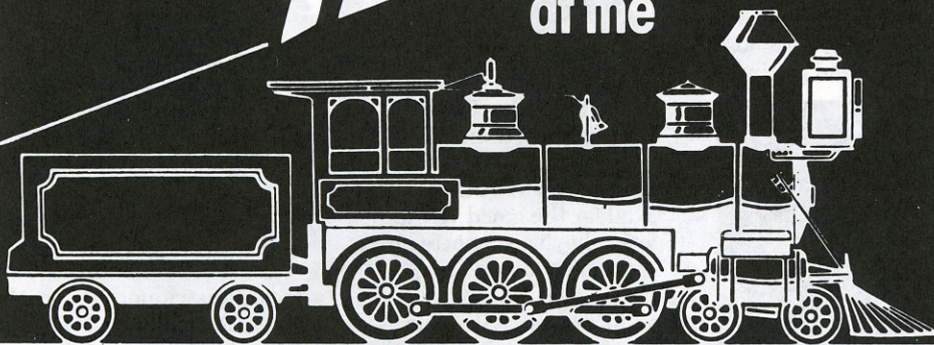
DECEMBER 1988

Thurs	1	Otis Clay Review
Fri	2	Albert King
Sat	3	
Sun	4	Billy Branch and The Sons of Blues
Mon	5	Big Time Sarah
Tues	6	Byther Smith and The Nightriders
Wed	7	Blues Jam w/Glen Davis & Straighthooter
Thurs	8	Robert Covington Record Release Party
Fri	9	Son Seals Blues Band
Sat	10	
Sun	11	Billy Branch and The Sons of Blues
Mon	12	Big Time Sarah
Tues	13	Magic Slim and The Teardrops
Wed	14	Blues Jam w/Glen Davis & Straighthooter
Thurs	15	Employee's Night with Son Seals
Fri	16	Lonnie Brooks
Sat	17	
Sun	18	Tribute To Theresa Needham
Mon	19	Big Time Sarah
Tues	20	Magic Slim and The Teardrops
Wed	21	Blues Jam w/Glen Davis & Straighthooter
Thurs	22	Cicero Blake and The Masheen Company
Fri	23	Magic Slim and The Teardrops
Sat	24	
Sun	25	Billy Branch and The Sons of Blues
Mon	26	Big Time Sarah
Tue	27	Magic Slim and The Teardrops
Wed	28	Blues Jam w/Glen Davis & Straighthooter
Thurs	29	Melvin Taylor
Fri	30	Otis Clay
Sat	31	Jimmy Johnson & John Watkins

So the next day, we moved on, stopping at the museum on the way - a fine building built at the turn of the century - and I was left thinking: would it be another twenty years?

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FEBRUARY

1. Top Topham, Jim McCarty, Detroit John.
2. Harrold Juana.
3. Shout Sister Shout.
4. Big Joe Louis & His Blues Kings.
5. Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint. (Noon).
5. T. Model Slim. (Evening).
6. B.B.R. Jam.
7. The Lizards.
8. Top Topham, Jim McCarty, Detroit John.
9. The Brian Knight Band.
10. The Marauders.
11. Big Joe Louis & His Blues Kings.
12. Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint. (Noon).
12. The Diplomats. (Evening).
13. Radio 5.
14. Zumzeaux.
15. Top Topham, Jim McCarty, Detroit John.
16. The James Derby Band.
17. The Big Road Blues Band.
18. Big Joe Louis & His Blues Kings.
19. Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint. (Noon).
19. The Paul Lamb Band. (Evening).
20. Alfie Noakes And The Bison.
21. The Lizards.
22. Top Topham, Jim McCarty, Detroit John
23. Dig Your Wig.
24. Shout Sister Shout.
25. Big Joe Louis & His Blues Kings.
26. Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon).
26. T. Model Slim. (Evening).
27. B.B.R. Jam.
28. Zumzeaux.

MARCH

1. Top Topham, Jim McCarty, Detroit John.
2. The Paul Lamb Band.
3. The Big Road Blues Band.
4. Big Joe Louis & His Blues Kings.
5. Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint. (Noon).
5. Giles Hedley Really The Blues.
6. The Roadrunners.
7. The Lizards.
8. Top Topham, Jim McCarty, Detroit John.
9. The A.M. Blues Band.
10. The Michael Messer Blues Band.
11. Big Joe Louis & His Blues Kings.
12. Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint. (Noon).
12. Giles Hedley Really The Blues.
13. B.B.R. Blues Jam.
14. Zumzeaux.
15. Top Topham, Jim McCarty, Detroit John.
16. The Diplomats.
17. T. Model Slim.
18. Big Joe Louis & His Blues Kings.
19. Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint. (Noon).
19. Giles Hedley Really The Blues.
20. B.B.R. Blues Jam.
21. The Lizards.
22. Top Topham, Jim McCarty Band.
23. Boogie Chillun.
24. Big Road Blues Band.
25. Big Joe Louis & His Blues Kings.
26. Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint. (Noon).
26. Giles Hedley Really The Blues.
27. B.B.R. Blues Jam.
28. Zumzeaux.
29. Top Topham, Jim McCarty Band.
30. Radio 5.
31. The Paul Lamb Band.

BLUESNEWS

On Boxing Day, BBR started a regular Monday night blues jam at the Station Tavern, London W10, which went well. The following night at the 100 Club, Oxford St. W1, the BBR party gig was a great success and a good omen for 1989, when we intend to do a "Special" on the promoting side (but you'll have to wait for news on that - it will be a good one, but later in the year). There are a few 100 Club nights in February and March which involves BBR, on Feb 7th and 14th, Mar. 14th and 28th.

February also sees the welcome return of **Phil Guy**. Gigs are as follows: Feb. 1st, London, 100 Club. 2nd, Northampton. 3rd and 4th, Northern Ireland. 8th, Birmingham, Bredon Bar. 9th, Shrewsbury, Butter Market. 10th, Norwich Arts Centre. 11th, Aldershot,

with plenty of opportunity to hear American, British and European blues performers, plus workshops, harmonica competitions, record and book fairs, plus an open stage for performers who drop by.

The festival presents **Fenton Robinson** on his first and only appearance in the UK, and should be worth the trip, for him alone, but there are the added attractions of **Champion Jack Dupree**, **Little Willie Littlefield**, **Johnnie Mars**, **Otis Grand** and the **Dance Kings**, **Jo Ann Kelly**, etc. BBR will be there of course and we look forward to meeting some of you there too.

The proceedings start with an evening concert with **The Big Town Playboys** and **Little Willie Littlefield**.

Little Willie was born near Houston, Texas and got into

music. He was "rediscovered" in the mid 70's, did some more recording and moved to Europe, where he now operates from. He plays real good time boogie woogie and is certain to make a great start to the festival with

On Saturday 25th the Shuttle Bar noon - 5pm presentation will be **Kevin Brown**, **The Marauders** and the **Festival Open Stage**. The foyer will have a record/instrument fair and the Tudor Room presents at



Champion Jack Dupree



Fenton Robinson (photo: JSP Records)

West End Centre. 12th, Cardiff, Four Bars Inn.

The end of March should be a humdinger, at least if you're in the Burnley area, because from Thursday the 23rd to Monday the 27th, Burnley Mechanics, Manchester Road, Burnley, Lancs. will be the venue for **The First Burnley National Blues Festival**,

piano playing at an early age. He got turned on by pianists like the great boogie woogie masters, Pete Johnson, Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis. He recorded in the late 40's and remained a star in the R&B field during the 50's. Though his success diminished during the 60's and early 70's, he continued to work in

numbers like his big hit "Kansas City".

The Big Town Playboys with Michael Sanchez and ex-Chicken Shack Andy Silvester, will be the perfect band for the mood Willie sets. They've supported him in the past, as well as working on tours and performances with Eric Clapton and Robert Plant. A band that oozes professionalism laced with conviction, they will certainly do the business.

On Friday 24th, events start at noon with a book and record fair in the foyer and, in the Shuttle Bar, between noon and 5pm there will be the festival open stage in addition to **Mike Sanchez'** boogie piano and also **The Diving Ducks**. The Mechanics Theatre has **Champion Jack Dupree**, **The Big Town Playboys** and **Jo Ann Kelly**.

Champion Jack is another piano player who started very young and became a professional, but took time out to become a boxer - lightweight class. He returned to music and recorded during the 40's and 50's. He moved to Europe in 1959 and settled in England, working the European circuit very successfully. He's no chicken, nor are his jokes, but he's irrepressible and will be in his usual good form.

2pm A lecture/presentation: **Blues in Jazz** with **Digby Fairweather**. In the Mechanics Theatre will be the Festival Party with **Otis Grand** and the **Dance Kings** and **The Blues Bunch**, Wales Co-op band.

Sunday 26th, has the record/instrument fair in the foyer, the Festival Stage and **Atlanta Roots** in the Shuttle bar from 12 noon. In the Tudor Room: 1pm, **Slide guitar workshop** with **Kevin Brown**; 2pm, **Country pickers guitar workshop** with **Steven Philips** and from 3.30pm a **blues harp workshop** with **Johnny Mars**.

In the Mechanics theatre will be **The Kevin Brown Band**, **Steve Philips** and guest, and **The Johnny Mars Blues Band**.

Finally on Monday 27th March, in the Shuttle Bar: **Bare Wires** and **Mr C**; in Theatre Bar: **National Blues Festival Harmonica Championships**; in the Foyer: a **Book, Record and Instrument Fair**; in the Mechanics Theatre are **Hans Theesink** and finally **Fenton Robinson**, backed by the **Norman Beaker Band**. **Hans Theesink** is a Dutchman who has played throughout Europe and also in the USA. He's developed his acoustic guitar playing to a degree where he's acclaimed as one of the best.

Fenton Robinson is one of those American bluesmen who have been working for years, getting acclaim from the initiated yet never really getting proper recognition further afield. His visit here should start to improve things. A great songwriter as well as guitar player, his voice soaring with his modern lyrics, or even with his older local hits, he is a musician who keeps trying

to expand technically. A great way to end what looks sure to be an excellent beginning to the year.

From Birmingham comes news that **Jim Simpson**, whose Big Bear Records celebrated its twentieth birthday last year, has signed up Walsall band **King Pleasure And The Biscuit Boys**. King Pleasure have released their first album (Bear 30) after a relatively

short existence. They play R&B in the swing jump style favoured on America's west coast in the 40's and have had great initial success, and were support to B B King at the Belgian Blues Festival. Expect to hear a lot more of them. **Mike Vernon** writes that two new albums from Brand New Records are planned for March/April '89 featuring **Dana Gillespie** and **Big Joe Louis & His**

Blues Kings. Also, from Bedrock Records, a compilation in March entitled "Un-American Blues Activities" featuring **The Balham Alligators, Roma Pierre & Her Backdoormen, Mick Clarke Band, Juice On The Loose, Chris Farlowe & The Thunderbirds, Red Hot Pokers, The Mick Pini Band, Ray Minhinnett's UK Busters** and **Blues 'n' Trouble**. Mike Vernon also writes that he has cut some demos with **Elisha Blue** (featuring ex-Roachford sidemen Paul Bruce and Darren Abraham) and that, shortly to be confirmed, Blues 'n' Trouble have signed a major recording deal with CBS International in Hamburg. Work starts on a new album in March with Mike at the helm.

The "Mystery" **Blues Club**, Harefield (between junctions 16 & 17 - M25) have the following Sunday lunchtime gigs:

February

5th - Shout Sister Shout
11th - T-Model Slim
19th - The Blues Burglers
26th - The Crayfish Five

March

5th - Bob Bros Blues Band
12th - Big Joe Louis and The Blues Kings
19th - Really the Blues
26th - Phoenix Blues Band



King Pleasure and The Biscuit Boys (photo: Big Bear Records)

BRITISH BLUES

*BB
review*

at 100 CLUB

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Feb. 7th Top Topham/Jim McCarty/Detroit John Blues Band, (onstage 9.30) + T Model Slim (10.45) + Blue Duke (8.30)

Feb. 9th Elefantztrunk Records promotion. Shakey Vick Blues Band + Wolfie Witcher's Brew

Feb. 14th Marsha Raven Band (onstage 9.30) + Mick Clarke Band (10.45) + Bluebird Bluebird (8.30)

FARNHAM MALTINGS BLUES FESTIVAL

The second Farnham Maltings Blues Festival, (20th. Nov.88) saw a vast array of bands and musicians assembled under one roof. Any attempt by one person to review the event, would be impossible, as bands were performing simultaneously in different rooms, within the complex.

In the Great Hall, heading the bill, from the U.S.A., was JOE LOUIS WALKER, who can never be other than superb. With Joe's playing of the purest kind, he is, without doubt, one of the finest contemporary players.

OTIS GRAND and the DANCE KINGS provided us

with a stirring reminder of the 50's with string bass, five-piece horn section, fine vocals from Earl Green and stunning guitar from Otis himself. The largeness of the sound being particularly suited to the vaulted roof of the Great Hall, though this curiously high ceiling, was less flattering to the smaller bands.

The BLUES BURGLARS treated us to an excellent set (sadly their last, in this line up). With Paul Lamb's harp playing seeming to have no confines, and John Whitehill's guitar in delightful sympathy. Though I have heard the band play better, I

can only assume that the fact that it was their last gig together may have caused them to play less exuberantly than usual.

Newcastle based HOT LICKS COOKIES, conjured up their unique style of jug-blues, to the delight of a packed room - their second Farnham Festival, and unlikely to be their last.

JOHNNY MARS appeared in the rockier vein to good crowd rapport, while T. MODEL SLIM provided the smoother side, to an excellent crowd response.

The BLUES BUNCH, from South Wales, appeared in two sessions, displaying

their versatility. THE POORBOYS provided the Cajun texture to the day and had the audience in the Barley Room roaring for more. They were followed by SONNY BLACK'S BLUES BAND. This new three-piece is more than capable of bringing Sonny back to the fore, as he has been sadly less in evidence of late. Sprog, the bass player, seemed to be everywhere, and was still playing in the Tannery long after the doors were locked for the night.

Altogether an excellent day! We look forward to next year's offerings.

KEVIN BROWN

In a late addition to the programme at the Farnham Blues Festival we were treated to a sample of the talents of Kevin Brown. Having seen his name appear, throughout the past few months, as support on Joe Louis Walker's British tour, I was naturally interested to see what he was about.

Normally backed by his band, he appeared solo at Farnham, playing in the Dance Studio to a crowd of two hundred or so. It would be easiest to describe him by likening him to some other artist, but I can think of no one covering precisely the same ground (though Kevin maintains that Frank White and Sally Barker occupy similar territory, if only Londoners would listen).

His material appears to be chosen, not by its ancestry or by conformity to any particular genre, but by personal taste. Most of his lyrics bear testimony to individual events, whether historical or personal, which he deems worthy of recording, as in 'Lancashire Blood on a Texas Floor', and in 'Don't Quit', the title track of his last album.

His guitar style is a positive delight, varying nimbly from the indolent to the manic, as he displays his ability to convey his emotions through his instrument. Blues, Folk, Reggae and Country all combined into an enigmatic and highly personal thing. A talent probably better appreciated by foreign audiences - who do not suffer from the British disease of 'labelling', which supposes that conformity to one genre is an indication of quality.

He is currently touring in Italy and upon his return will be touring here to promote his forthcoming album 'Road Dreams' which includes 'Hey Joe' which was recorded with Joe and the Boss-talkers whilst on tour.

Whilst the plaudits at such festivals are generally reserved for the larger and better known bands, there can be little doubt that Kevin Brown acquitted himself with honours.

GYPSY DAVE SMITH

Distinctly in evidence at the Farnham festival was the ubiquitous Gypsy Dave Smith, (readers of B.B.R. will be aware that the good fellow has recently married - by all accounts the blues wedding of the year, several hundred people having been regaled at their reception by the dulcet sounds of many a Geordie bluesband - remnants from which, are still filtering back to London with tales of ferocious northern beer.) However, at Farnham, still but a waif, he performed to his usual high standard, doing amazing things with his Dobro, though his good lady may, in future, censor his more provocative issuings.

Earlier in the day, he played for an hour with the Hot Licks Cookies and went down very well. His own set, later

on, was extremely well received by the Dance Studio crowd and he is certain to be back there next year.

ADVERTISERS PLEASE NOTE:

Advert's for the April Issue should be booked by 19th February.

Artwork should be in by 9th March

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

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MORE BLUESNEWS

BBR will be covering the 1989 AMSTERDAM BLUES FESTIVAL on Friday 17th and Saturday 18th March, which will be held in the "MEERVAART" Osdorppelein 205, 1068 SW Amsterdam.

Proceedings start on Friday at 8pm when the bill is: THE PALADINS, KOKO TAYLOR & THE BLUES MACHINE, MAURICE VAUGHN BLUESBAND, LIL' ED & THE BLUES IMPERIALS. On Saturday afternoon, at 2pm there are solo spots from: TERRY MANN (guitar/vocals) USA, DETROIT JUNIOR (piano/vocals), ROB AGERBEEK (piano blues & boogie woogie). Saturday evening sees the finale of the festival with: TOM PRINCIPATO BAND, JOHNNY MARS BLUESBAND, DETROIT JUNIOR & HIS BLUES AND BOOGIE SHOW BAND, LONNIE BROOKS BLUES BAND. In addition to the live acts on both days, Paul Duvivie of the Blues Record Centre will present his unique record show. Master of ceremonies is Martin Van Olderen, who is also organising everything once more. The booking office opens on Wednesday 1st February (phone Meervart: 020-107393 11.00am-4pm). Prices for the whole event are 50 guilders. Individual concert prices are as follows: Friday evening, 30 guilders; Saturday afternoon, 10 guilders; Saturday evening, 30 guilders.

Should be a great festival of live blues. John Stedman, who is handling Phil Guy's tour informs us that Louisiana Red returns in April and that Lurrie Bell will be rejoining Carey Bell here in May.

Lancashire's Marauders, busy plugging their album, are gigging as follows: Feb. 2nd, Glossop, Fleece; 3rd, Compstall nr. Stockport, George; 9th, Farnham, Maltings; 10th, London, W10, Station Tavern; 11th, Trowbridge, Lamb; 18th, Heywood, Con Club; Mar. Compstaff, George; 9th, Oldham, Kirkstyle; 24th, London, Brentford Fountain Leisure Centre, supporting Climax Blues Band; 25th, Burnley Blues Festival (noon)

MARSHA RAVEN

MARSHA RAVEN is the latest vocal talent from the US Motor city Detroit. However, unlike many of her predecessors, reared on a background of Tamla Motown, Marsha has taken only some elements of that musical lineage and added it to her own inimitable bluesy style.

Marsha is in fact the third generation of a musical family that has seen her trumpet playing uncle WILBUR BASCOMBE as a mainstay of the famous DUKE ELLINGTON BAND and WILBUR JUNIOR as a member of the powerful JEFF BECK US touring band. MARSHA herself has led an exciting and varied career, building up her own repertoire and confidence with a stunning voice. Her

original talents lay on the stage and on majoring successfully in 'Performing Arts' at the Cass Technical School in Detroit she went on to receive "The Radio Speaker", the "Best Dancer Awards". A "Ruth Murray Scholarship" followed and a career on the stage was an obvious option. However, Marsha's love of the blues was never far away and she subsequently jumped at the chance of appearing on Woodstock veteran RICHIE HAVEN'S off Broadway production of "ELECTRIC GOD", the first staged musical of the life of Jimmy Hendrix.

Rave reviews led to international tours with Marsha heavily in demand for commercial singles with her strident voice and powerful stage image. She quickly achieved chart

success in over 10 countries, but chose to follow her preferred bluesy approach. Work followed with Birmingham's own vocal sensation RUBY TURNER and HELEN TERRY.

Marsha then took the decision to front her own band THE PERFECT STRANGERS and the results have been excellent to say the least. With a mix of self penned material and a smattering of Bo Diddley and Bessy Smith, Marsha has quickly attracted record company interest. Her forthcoming British blues tour should add an extra dimension to the current live circuit as Marsha sets out to blaze a trail in '89 with her own Detroit soul injected blues. Catch her while you can, the lady is a major talent. *Pete Feenstra.*



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