

ISSUE No.2

**BRITISH BLUES**

JUNE 1988

# BB *review*

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THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH BLUES NETWORK



TIME TO GOODTIME....

# TALKIN' BLUES

The positive response shown to the first issue of this magazine, should not give us too much cause for complacency. The only way to get increased interest in any music, is to encourage support for live music. That applies particularly with Blues, which continues to lose the originators (see page 17).

The irony here is that one of the main ways to promote live performances, is through advertising the ability of performers before the occasion. One sure way to do this is to get recordings of those artists out in advance to people who might be interested enough to attend a live performance. So we're back to recorded rather than live music.

The reality is, that live music is sustained by recorded music, certainly in the blues sphere. The fountainhead of the various

"booms" in blues music in this country has always been the records which have reached us from the US. The original recordings which seemed to have set the once-for-all standards, are now easily available through reissues, yet the present interest can't all be credited to those recordings, however essential they remain. As with every other rekindling of the music here, it has been sparked off by live appearances of black Americans.

Even so, the embers continue to smoulder, waiting for that spark, for that gust of fire-raising wind. Those embers have been, are, and will continue to be, the determination of people here, not just to collect records, not just to delve into history, but to get up and actually play the music. I feel a distinct draught, don't you?

## BOB'S EYE VIEW

*Slightly Drunk:* "Who's playing tonight then? - Oh them! - not a bad band - shame about the bass player. 'Ere, why isn't it in 'Time Out'?" (Pushing grubby copy of same up nose of disinterested barman)

*Barman:* "Here it is sir - listed under Rock and Pop. Are you aware sir, that there is not one blues section to be found in any gig guide? - though possibly this is to the advantage of blues music, as the attention of the media is about as healthy as a vulture's interest in a digestible carcass - to be consumed and regurgitated in unrecognisable form, at no expense to the predator and no effort save the evolutionary propensity to consume."

*Slightly Drunk:* "Wha?"

*Barman:* "Not one bloody blues section, squire."

*Slightly Drunk:* "Oh - I see - yes."

*Barman:* "Has it ever occurred to you why any music scene should be so ignored?"

*Slightly Drunk:* "No it hasn't son. Where's the Gent's"

*Barman:* "Over there, but hang on a moment - the reason they appear to ignore the scene is because there isn't one, only the pretence thereof. In truth, there are no more than twenty blues bands in the country, the remainder are simply utilising the title as a sincecure and as a means to obscure their incompetence - and are only too ready to drop the title upon the first smell of commercial success."

*Slightly Drunk:* "I must have a piss."

*Barman:* "Yes, yes - but have you considered why such a paucity of blues exists? - No - well I'll tell you - No decent vocals - How often have you heard a musically competent band reduced to mediocrity by no-balls-eunuch vocals? Why should this be?"

*Slightly Drunk:* "I don't know son, perhaps you'll tell me."

*Barman:* "Of course I will. The human voice produces the purest and most

evocative music, the evocation being dependent upon the strength of the emotion. If you remove the social circumstances which created this emotion, you necessarily remove the music. We in Britain live in a distinctly different society from that which created blues - blues is the musical evocation of a no-hope existence. For this music to be transferred to Britain it demands that the underlying philosophy be widened to incorporate the general malaise of human existence rather than the specific disenchantment of the southern American black population."

*Slightly Drunk:* "Pretentious crap."

*Barman:* "Oh really - how many blues classics have come from this country? We may have reasons to cry, but do we? No. We content ourselves with the occasional scream - not the subtle sustained cry of the Delta. Johnson, Hooker and co. could never be British; they are the product of their own environment. Nevertheless, we can appreciate and sympathise and - to some degree - emulate. The survival of this music in Britain depends on the ability to create our own blues - culturally relevant, yet embodying the basic tenets of its ancestry"

*Slightly Drunk:* "And how do you propose we achieve this?"

*Barman:* "Simple, squire - fewer covers - no affectation, just the truth, and if it can't be done like this - then we are truly blessed - we don't need blues."

*Slightly Drunk:* "You may well be right son - but my god, you are boring."

*Barman:* "Second door on the left, sir."

BRITISH BLUES



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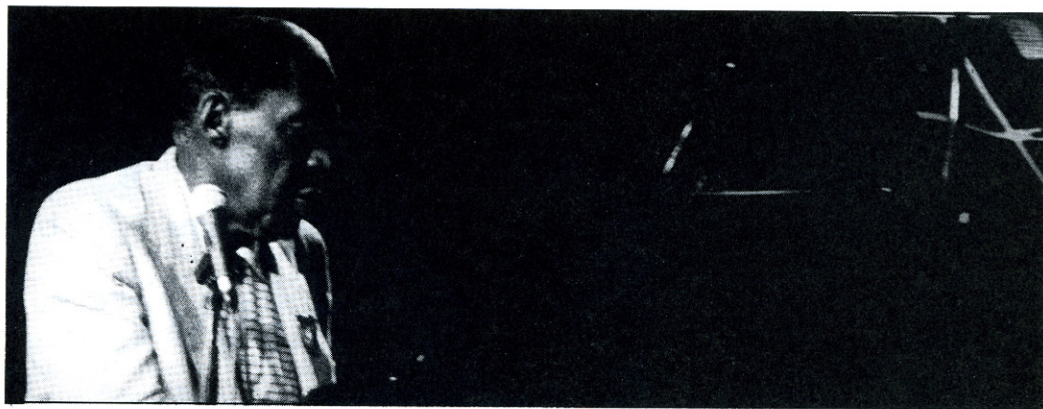
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# MEMPHIS SLIM

I was saddened to hear of Memphis Slim's death.

I saw him, for the first and last time, at the Belgium Rhythm & Blues Festival in July 1987. The whole event was marked (and to some extent marred) by encores. Ted Hawkins preceded Slim and took three or four encores. He deserved maybe one. Slim came on (late) accompanied by a jazz drummer. I must admit to not being able to recall what he played, but after initial in-



Memphis Slim at the Belgium Rhythm & Blues Festival, 1987. Photo David Cooper.

difference on the part of the audience, he received a tumultuous reception.

Encore? The audience went crazy, but he had left the stage, on walking sticks and shuffling. From where I

was standing I could see into the wings. I saw that he had been helped down some steps and after his sixty minutes set it was obviously difficult to get back up onto the stage.

What I remember most is

something he said. "Once upon a time I had a good woman, but once upon a woman I had a good time."

Trite. Corny. But I wish I'd thought of it first.

David Cooper

## Hello people,

Just got issue no. 1 and read through it in one sitting – congrats people, I really enjoyed the articles on 'Duster' Bennett and Jo Ann Kelly. You really don't know how lucky you are in London – or maybe you do. I'm no writer but I had thought about submitting an article on being blue in the North of England, where you can expect to see a decent Blues band about once a month, also to describe what it's like to be young and blue, as you all were/are at heart.

Hopefully, I heard there might be a jazz 'n blues club opening in Leeds – tentative name is Milliways – so this might go some way to alleviate the shortage of venues/discotheque-type places in West Yorkshire.

Oh yeah, I took your advice 'n bought a bluesman a drink – me – I figured I needed it.

Keep up the good work,  
Johnny Shivering,  
Leeds.

(Send in an article by all means. Please type it, with double spacing and wide margins each side. I'll gladly consider it, if suitable for publication – Ed.)

## Dear B B R,

Thanks for pilot copy of B B Review – here's a subscription fee for one year, plus a Barts Blues Club newsletter to give you some idea of what you're into.

Our main Blues/R & B night is a Thursday, with the odd special promotion on Fridays or weekends. We're only a small venue but enthusiastic, and keen to forge links with Blues (or any other interesting) musicians

all over the country.

Keep up the good work and I'll try to keep you in touch with what's going on.

Cheers,  
Ben Ballin,  
Gorilla Promotions.

(Bart's Tavern, is at 53 Bartholemew Street West, Exeter. Tel: (Pub) 0392-75623. (Club/enquires) 0392 35302).

## Hello,

Thanks for British Blues Review no. 1 April '88 issue. I've decided to subscribe for 6 issues starting with issue no. 2.

From a purely selfish point of view I would like to see articles sorting out the history and record releases of John Dummer, Brunning Hall Sunflower Band, Dave Kelly, Mike Cooper, Tramp, and Jo Ann Kelly with particular regard to her appearances on other people's records as well as the few under her own name.

Best wishes,  
Allan Russell,  
Fleet, Lincs.

## Dear B B Review,

Thanks very much for the invitation to your launch party last night. It's a shame I was unable to stay longer but, as I told you, I had to get to Johnny Mars' gig in the West End by closing time. Everyone I spoke to seemed to agree with me that you've hit on a good, workable idea and I'm certainly impressed by your first issue.

Congratulations, and with all good wishes for your future success,

Steve Jennings,  
Editor, Harmonica World.

## Dear Sirs,

While listening to the Paul Jones Blues programme on Radio 2 I caught something about a new Blues magazine on the market, as well as your address. I would like to obtain a regular copy of the Blues mag and would be very grateful if you could let me have a few details such as where I can purchase it, whether it's weekly or monthly, or even quarterly,

and the price.

I've been looking for a good Blues mag for years and hope your mag helps to fill the gap in the market.

I look forward very much to hearing from you, assuming you are in a position to afford me the details I require.

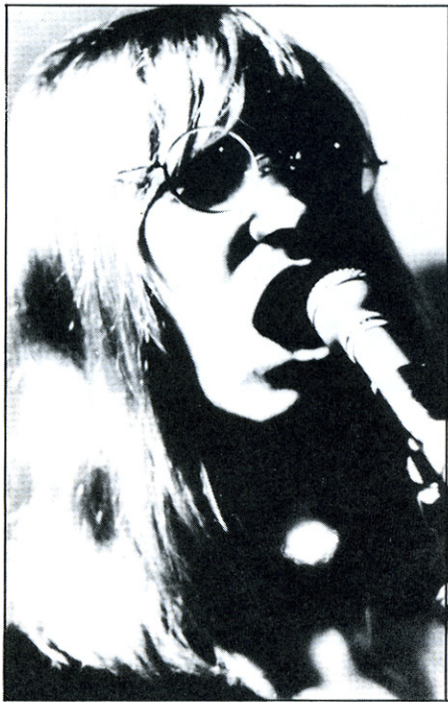
Yours faithfully,  
R.H.,  
HM Prison, Scotland.

# Folk ROOTS

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*Manchester Sports Guild folk club, 1968  
(Jo Ann Kelly collection)*

During 1965, amplified R&B was competing well with both Jazz and Beat music. Acoustic Blues was also successful in competing with unamplified music in Folk clubs, which had strong traditions in English folksong, ballads and poetry.

One such club, Bunjies Folk Club and Coffee House was steeped in these traditions but gave the “new music” a chance. An established resident, Les Bridger, was keen for Jo Ann Kelly to perform, and it soon became a regular event, with both Jo and Les doing sets on the same night. Jo’s repertoire included numbers by Lil’ Green, American standards “It Ain’t Necessarily So”, “Summertime” and “Saint James’ Infirmary”.

Les, keen to play twelve string guitar, suggested that Jo “would sound good on one” and introduced her to Watkins of Balham, a music store run by Chris Ayliff. Jo purchased a Framus twelve string, to the immediate delight of Les and, later, to the delight of her new following. Gigs at Bunjies continued until 1970.

Chris Ayliff became a good connection because he knew such folk luminaries of the day as John Renbourne, Bert Jansch and the like. He also introduced Jo to Leadbelly and Jesse Fuller tunes. Fuller’s “Working On The Railroad” and Leadbelly’s “Black Girl” and “Ella Speed” were added to the repertoire. Jo was also digging deeper into the Swing Shop’s stocks with the continuing aid of Bob Glass. It was at the Swing Shop that Jo met Steve Rye. She had previously seen Steve passing her home, playing blues harp while walking along the road.

# JO ANN KELLY

by Pete Moody

## Part two: Memphis Bound

Part One covered the formative years. Part Two continues the story from the mid-sixties to the hey-day of early success in concert and on record.

By 1966 more clubs were featuring blues. In addition to Bunjies, Jo and Les would play at “The Scots Hoose” at Cambridge Circus and “The Hole In the Wall” at Swiss Cottage. They were also offered more residencies at other clubs, so that in any given week, Jo was working most nights.

Jo was one of the first blues artists to be booked for Surbiton Folk Club at The Assembly Halls – at a fee of £6. “Les Cousins” in Greek Street, often frequented by Davy Graham and Alexis Korner, was a regular spot in Jo’s working week.

Jo, following the Yardbirds experience, still fancied sitting in with

bands and would do so with John Lee’s Groundhogs at any opportunity – “Not too much” Jo recalls “John Cruikshank was not too keen to have me fronting the band... he enjoyed the singing role”.

In 1966, the Folk Blues boom took off in towns up and down the country, such as Bristol, Newcastle and Reading, where clubs were run with great success. Jo became a regular act at the Bristol Club, often leaving for the gig immediately after the Sunday afternoon sessions at London’s Studio 51 Club. College and University gigs were also entering the diary and in 1966 too, Jo often sat in with another band – Brett



*Steve Rye and Jo Ann, 1968*

Marvin and the Thunderbolts.

The themes of '66 were continued into 1967, with blues riding high. Dave Kelly joined the ranks of the long-serving John Dummer Blues Band – his first such band venture – and by 1968 the scene had really opened up.

Jo did a radio show with Alexis Korner on the BBC Third Programme in July, guested with Fred McDowell in London's Mayfair Hotel and recorded for Matchbox and Liberty. She performed at the First National Blues Convention in September and a London Blues Society concert in December, both at The Conway Hall. Ron Ede and Mike Gavin, who ran the Bridge House Club at the Elephant and Castle, gave Jo a Wednesday night residency. Among the acts appearing were John Lee Hooker, Big Boy Crudup, Big Joe Williams and Fred McDowell. Tony McPhee was a frequent visitor, as was Bob Hall, with whom Jo would, on occasion, rekindle the Kelly/Hall duets. It was at the Bridge House that Jo met Nick Perls when Simon Prager brought him round following a session at Bunjies. Nick was looking for talent to record and Simon knew "just the person".

Nick and Jo met up again at the Blues Convention and struck a deal to record an LP. Fourteen sides were recorded in London in March 1969. Nick's idea was to sell to a major label, which he did, signing a contract with CBS-Epic. The album was issued in both the UK and the USA. On the strength of the American release, Jo performed at the Memphis Blues Festival in June, working alongside Furry Lewis, Fred McDowell, Bukka White and Sleepy John Estes. Here too, she met up with Johnny Winter.

More success followed with gigs at the CBS Convention in Los Angeles in August, the Second Farnham Blues Festival in September, a con-

cert in Oslo and a ten-day Melody Maker tour up and down the UK, commencing at the Albert Hall. Three more Liberty records featured her and with two albums on Immediate's Blues Anytime series, appearances on three albums with her brother ("Tramp", John Dummer's "Cabal" album and Dave Kelly's "Keep It In The Family") 1969 was a hard year to follow.

CBS thought that a Jo Ann Kelly/Johnny Winter tour would be a commercial success. When Winter had met Jo at Memphis and Los Angeles, he "liked what he saw" so in January Jo Ann travelled to the States to make plans; the idea for the tour was that each would do an acoustic set, then duet, after which

Winter's band would back Johnny with Jo sitting in.

The culture was different – Rock had swallowed the Blues in the States and turned heavy. Winter's band sounded alien to Jo's ears. It wasn't what she wanted, so after a four-day stay, Jo declined the offer and returned home.

The remainder of 1970 was a busy time, with gigs throughout the UK, many on the strength of her album, though she took time off for a USA holiday, in upstate New York with Nick Perls. Her music was now spreading into Europe as well as the States. Solo work was still the theme, but not for long...



1968 (Valerie Wilmer)

MELODY MAKER, November 29, 1969—Page 33

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Melody Maker, Nov 29 1969

From this period, Jo's story is full of musical experiment and change. In our next issue, the final part brings her story up-to-date.

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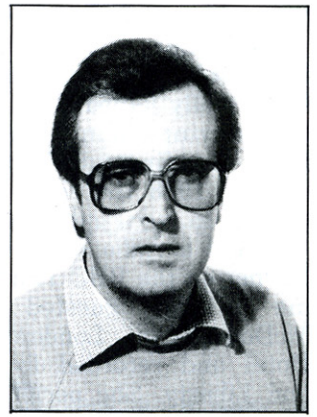
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# BLUES NEEDS NO "DEATH LETTER"

by Pete Nickols, Radio Blues presenter



I am lucky enough to have complete control over what I play on my show – no “playlist” regimentation for me – and I hope I have used that freedom wisely over the years. That’s not to say that I even aspire to the impossibility of pleasing all of the people all of the time, but I really do critically listen to everything before it earns its place in the show. I try to feature a wide spectrum of blues sounds and that includes “White” blues, both British and American. I think it’s important to mix the great blues records of yesteryear, with the contemporary blues performances of today, whether it’s Robert Cray, Joe Louis Walker, Ted Hawkins or Roomful of Blues from the States; or the Blues Burglars, Blues ’n Trouble or perhaps the latest tape from a good local band here in the UK. Ageing purists may prefer the “old” sounds, but we should remember that a whole new generation is tuning in and turning on to the Blues and it’s they who will ultimately determine whether the music lives on.

Most of what they – indeed all of us – hear in pubs and clubs up and down the country, is Anglicised blues, and by that I don’t mean an inferior product but simply a somewhat different one, distilled over the years since Humphrey Littleton, Chris Barber, Cyril, Alexis, Mayall and co. first infused the British music scene with a love for and an appreciation of the blues. Blues always was about entertaining people; itinerant pre-war delta bluesmen may have played for their own molification in order to improve technique, but it was the whorehouse, Saturday-night fish-fry or the street market which provided them with

an “easy” woman, some free booze, and nickels and dimes in the hat – and you only got those if you entertained, including, more often than not, playing for dancing.

Reward motivated these roving blues story-tellers just as much as it motivates today’s much better-known recording artists. Of course, a love of music comes into it too – I’m sure many of today’s regularly gigging British bands remember only too well the many times they’ve come away from a set with little to show in the way of profit for their evening’s work, yet they still play the circuits because they love the music. In the end though, aesthetic considerations don’t pay the gasman, and those lucky enough to cut records are trying at one and the same time to show us how well they play the blues, while hoping to obtain some useful remuneration by way of royalties. I always try to remember that, when I’m tempted to cursorially “slag off” someone’s recorded work. Nonetheless, I do try to play on air, only those tracks which sound good to me. Apart from listener feedback, what other criterion can I use? Any one-man show is bound to reflect personal preferences.

One of the problems of being an avid collector of records is that it tends to blinker you to the fact that it is live performance which keeps any musical form to the fore. What’s more, performers – even famous ones – will always remember a successful, well-attended gig, while they will struggle to come up with any kind of orderly discography of their own recorded work – that’s not for them, that’s for those of us with the time to pour over back-catalogues. With the

need for a healthy live scene, I’m glad that British Blues Review is aiming to keep readers informed of gigs in their areas: I regularly do this for my own area on my show and I know that my listeners appreciate it. The problem is often that the bands themselves, though enthusiastic, are poorly organised; they forget to tell local DJ’s, music-page reporters, etc. what their gig dates are, or else tell them so late that there is no time to incorporate them into schedules. I always say on air, “if you’ll tell me in good time, I’ll put it out” – but many strangely ignore the chance of that most valuable commodity, free publicity. Owners of pubs and clubs featuring the music could do more too. After all, it’s very much in their interests to publicise events as widely as possible.

I believe, through exposure of this kind, both on air and in magazines like British Blues Review, we can help keep a great musical form a living, if somewhat changing thing – not merely an anachronism from the past to be analysed and re-analysed by so-called “purists” who have far too narrow a view of what the Blues is about and do the music’s chances of global survival – often threatened at various times in the past – no favours at all. So, let’s pull together to keep Blues alive and kicking, whether it’s black, white, “classic”, Delta, Chicago or UK pub-vintage 1988!

*PETE NICKOLS, has had a blues show going out over the Bournemouth-based TWO COUNTIES RADIO airwaves for the past five years. Catch it on Tuesdays 7-9pm 97.2 FM/828 MW.*

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The following is a long-overdue interview with one of the mainstays of the British Blues scene for well over 20 years, pianist Bob Hall.

For a man who has recorded on over seventy albums it is surprising that he's escaped the attention of blues aficionados over the years. What is staggering is that despite having been one of the most active bluesmen on the British circuit, Bob is still only a part-time musician, as he spends his daytime hours applying his legal expertise to Patent Law. However, with a career that has seen him take his place on record and stage with the likes of John Lee Hooker, Little Walter, Lightnin' Hopkins and Homesick James, Bob Hall is one of Britain's most respected blues performers.

One of the more pleasing aspects of spotlighting Bob Hall is the fact that the contribution of piano-playing to the blues (long overlooked in this country) can be given due recognition. Bob states that some of his very early influences were Winifred Atwell, Johnny Parker and Clarence Lofton & the Boogie Woogie Brothers. His admiration for that style remains undiminished, despite having to become more versatile himself on joining John Lee Hooker's Groundhogs back in 1968. BOB: "In those days we were terrible purists, we wouldn't dream of playing any Chuck Berry or anything like that."

As a twenty-one-year-old eager Blues and Boogie Woogie-playing pianist, Bob had the usual aspirations to go full time, but never really found a band that he thought would be successful enough. The Groundhogs were, after all, essentially a back-up band at that point, before finding fame in their own right.

BOB: "I thought that I had never stumbled on a band that could make the break and I was only wrong once – that of course, was Savoy Brown who became enormous."

Bob recorded four albums with Savoy Brown between '67 and '69 plus a couple of singles and toured the UK with the band. Other characters that stick in mind from around the same period include of course the Kellys – Jo Ann (see Page 4) and brother Dave – and John Dummer's band. It's hardly surprising that Bob should choose the Kellys, having played on most of Dave's output and been in a musical partnership with Jo Ann for some eight years. The clubs at the time included "Klooks Kleek", "The Bromley Court Hotel", the still-popular "100 Club" and an interesting place called "Beat City". BOB: "I think the place was called

# BOB HALL: Keys to the Highway

by Pete Feenstra



Photo: Bob Hall

was doubling in the daytime as something like a bookmakers, before the bands hit it at night. Looking back, there were more places to play then and a band could, to a certain extent, make its own judgement whether a place was worth playing or not. Audiences were as now a mix of good, bad and indifferent – depending on the place."

Comparing then with now, Bob thinks the musical as well as the technological standards are higher today. Pressed on contemporary British Blues music, he thinks The Big Town Playboys are great and he likes The Chevalier Brothers and of course Big Diz Watson ("even though he doesn't play these shores too often nowadays"). As Bob is an Amos Milburn fan, his choice is hardly surprising.

Of his own recording career so far, Bob goes back to Savoy Brown as the first highlight and particularly the two albums "Blue Matter" and "A Step Further".

BOB: "Those two albums are highlights because at the time the level of creativity of that band was very high. The direction was also quite

unique, very different from most British bands. The American feel was very obvious and the band soon leapt to stadium level in the States, whilst unbelievably still playing pubs in the UK. The last time I went to see them was at the Albert Hall. I would probably have played but the Albert Hall didn't have a piano! The line-up at that time was the classic one including Chris Youlden, Kim Simmons, Dave Peverett and Roger Earl."

Going down his list of ever-expanding recorded works, Bob pointed out Tramp's second album on Spark – "Put The Record On". The band comprised Mick Fleetwood, Dave and Jo Ann Kelly, Danny Kirwan and Bob Brunning. Bob Hall's involvement on that project ran to co-writing all the material which, he confidently maintains, was ahead of its time. Looking back at the line-up, it was probably true. BOB: "Tramp was a musical mixture of New Orleans-style songs and Jump Jive. The latter as a musical form did not catch on until some ten years later."

That record, like a good few other



worthy British blues ones, was recorded on the Spark label, a subsidiary of Southern Music and, much like its musical compatriots, saw the light of day mainly in specialist record shops and cut-out bins.

BOB: "I must have made more collectors' albums than anyone else you're ever likely to meet."

Moving down the Hall discography, we came to Homesick James and Snooky Prior album on Caroline, which Bob remembers with great affection. The story has already been documented by Bob Brunning in his "Blues, The British

is the "De-Luxe Blues Band" currently out on Blue Horizon, about which Bob comments "I'm astonished how well it's turned out".

Bob's involvement with both bands has a story attached to it. The Charlie Watts' project, later to become Rocket 88, emanated out of a gig that Bob did on his leaving Swindon for London with fellow piano player George Green, who asked if he could "bring along a mate on drums". Charlie showed up and a project was born.

The De Luxe Blues Band came about through Cilla Huggins' sug-

that brought Danny into the band.

Reams have been written about Alexis. In regard to the Bob Hall story, Bob like so many before him is quick to praise the encouragement offered.

BOB: "He was the first person to record me for the radio, and all through my life popped up to give me a boost, and we eventually played together in Rocket 88."

Another pervasive character in Bob's musical output has of course been Dave Peabody who has recorded with Bob in the past. He figures in future plans which include a possible project with J.C. Burris who turns out to be the cousin of one Sonny Terry. Dave Peabody warrants a piece on his own and no doubt we will get around to covering him; in the meantime, I asked Bob why his undoubted popularity in Europe (he has sold ten thousand records in Germany alone; and that of Blues in general is not reflected in the UK?

BOB: "There are plenty of good players over here, but there's little access to the media. The suffocating influence of the BBC in general, and Radio One in particular, prevents a broader range of music being played. The Europeans enjoy a much more liberal policy and have good local radio stations."

Ironically perhaps, the BBC is belatedly going to broadcast some of Bob's magical Boogie Woogie along with German virtuoso of the keys Axel Swengelberg on Radio Two! It's a beginning I suppose, for a man who, since 1974, has enjoyed a solo career in parallel with his guest appearances on other people's albums. A new album "Left Hand Roller" and even a CD entitled "Number Twenty Nine", available in Germany on Jet On, bring home the point that too often it is outside Britain that so many of our living blues practitioners are appreciated, let alone heard.

For the future Bob is aiming his prolific output of the music he loves at a Euro-tour for the De Luxe Blues Band with Dick Heckstall-Smith, a solo appearance at the Birmingham Jazz festival and a possible involvement in a new band that might mark a return Bob Hall's songwriting.

Whether it be blues or boogie woogie, band or solo piano, Bob Hall remains a stylish exponent of all the forms with barely pause for breath as he races from Otis Grand's big band to the De Luxe Blues Band complete with new album and tour (see Review). You can be sure that Bob will be adding to his reputation as one of Britain's great blues pianists.



*Bob Hall with the De-Luxe Blues Band.*

Connection", but is worth a recall as it went a long way towards indicating the efforts of the erstwhile British bluesmen (Bob included) in on the session.

BOB: "We started off the session with a row, as Homesick James made his feeling apparent at the outset - 'You white boys can't play the Blues...' or words to that effect, greeted the band to be used for the session. By the end of the session, Homesick was wanting more and it turned out a special day for me."

Further recording took place in between countless live sessions around the world. Bob is a lucky man - whilst being paid to go around the globe for his work he finds time to work his musical sessions into his itinerary. A recent trip to Belgium saw him playing with a fine Belgian R&B/Jump Jive-influenced band, The Sultans; however, it's back to 1977 for one of "two other records I would play to people". The first is Charlie Watts' project "Jamming the Boogie" which was vitually recorded in one take, on the first night that the band had played together. The second album

gestion to form a band to back Eddie Clearwater for a gig at Dingwalls (see BB Review number one). The story goes as follows...

BOB: "Eddie was over in Britain for the first time with Carey Bell and asked the band if we couldn't do a warm up set for him before his big entrance. We said 'You must be joking' as we had never played together before. On Eddie's insistence that we 'do something', Danny Adler said something like 'No problem, we'll do six songs'.

"Sometime later that evening a guy came up post-gig and offered the incredulous band an opportunity to record. The guy turned out to be, not a nutter as we had supposed, but from Virgin Records with a new digital mobile studio to try out. With no gigs in the book we had to scurry round to arrange one, and some years later, the live recording at the Half Moon finally saw the light of day."

The Danny Adler connection came through Ian Stewart but like much of Bob's career had an Alexis Korner connection, only on this occasion it was Alexis' absence from Rocket 88

Whilst London has seemingly always been well served by a plethora of blues artists, the rest of the UK might appear to have lagged behind. This is a common misconception perpetrated in the main by the media. More accurately, it is the lack of media coverage with the resultant disinterest of record companies and consequently promoters, that has led to the situation in which many a fine band has been left in geographical isolation.

From the South Coast of England to the North of Scotland and all points East and West, there has never been a lack of credible talent, though London has gained, and almost inevitably always will gain, from being the "home" of the country's music industry. That said, as the first part of this series sought to illustrate, there are some fine blues performers who were never given the chance to break out of the pubs. What follows is a brief look at some of the individuals outside the Metropolis who have also served to strengthen the British Blues tradition.

Perhaps as good a starting point as anywhere is on the South Coast, Southampton to be precise, the home of a diverse network of blues gigs and bands, all apparently in some way connected with or indebted to **BOB PEARCE**.

Bob recorded his "Blues Crusade" EP back in 1968 on the Avenue label and, as Southampton's own son of "Chicago Blues", made his first splash. Pearce led from the front on vocals, guitar and mouth harp with **GLEN "JUDGE" LEE** on drums. Lee stayed with him over ten years. Twenty years on, Bob has

# THE BLUES:

recorded a clutch of EP's and records, including the solo album "Let's Get Drunk Again", and it was good to see the **PAUL JONES R&B SHOW** give Bob airtime recently. While such programmes are a small step in the right direction, the fact is that the Southampton area's fine live circuit played a significant part in retaining a rich blues tradition. Gigs like the **JOINERS' ARMS** and **THE ONSLOW** have firmly kept the faith with blues, in distinct contrast to those "grey listings areas" which sometimes can find only a few lines for the blues. With Bob Pearce about to embark on his twelfth year of an ongoing residency and with somebody outside the faithful finally beginning to take notice, the blues from Southampton to Salisbury seems to be (dare we say) "nearly in vogue".

South Wales on the other hand, has always had a reputation for song, even if the blues doesn't readily correspond with every Welsh person's idea of cultural heritage. While it is fair to note that there has always been a strong beat and - later - rock scene in the valleys, the Welsh Blues experience has continuously been tinged by a dash of national individuality. Looking back at the Cardiff scene over the years, the name of **TOMMY RILEY** is bound to crop up as he almost single-handedly pioneered the

R&B/Blues Big band, **RED BEANS AND RICE**. Riley's sizeable ensemble turned out to be rooted in the soul end of the blues spectrum, willingly mixing **AMOS MILBURN** with **IKE TURNER**. Although the band reforms for the occasional get-together, drummer Riley appears to have settled into his Roth specialist record shop, performing only at local gigs.

Not least among their achievements, Red Beans spawned the great soul-tinged blues voice of **LAVERNE BROWNE** who, like blues compatriot Bob Pearce, has also recently received unprecedented radio airplay. Further down the coast, Swansea is the home of Britain's only mobile "Blues Co-op", namely **THE BLUES BUNCH**. The Bunch take their blues from a variety of sources ranging from **T-BONE WALKER** through **WYNONIE HARRIS** to **BIG JOE TURNER** and, being a big band, they have scope for everything. Ironically perhaps, the much needed support for their long-awaited debut album "Looped", came from North Wales via the premier mail order blues company, "Red Lick". Just like Red Beans, the Bunch have kept the blues alive through good organisation and a couple of residencies in between tours. Catch the band any Tuesday night at the Singleton in Swansea to hear fine big-

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band blues played in a great atmosphere.

Whilst Lutterworth may not rank in the annals of blues and R&B as the home of legendary bands or musicians, it can proudly point to the DT's as evidence that a quality band can base itself outside London or even a big city.

Led by diminutive vocalist and harp player **SIMON HICKLING**, the DT's have gradually built up their staunch Leicestershire following, expanded it into the West Midlands and finally, after a few near misses with a batch of singles, have cut their debut album.

The band formed around December 1980 and quickly established themselves as one of the most popular bands in the Midlands, interspersed with occasional forays into London to play 100 Club and Dingwalls. In recent months the R&B aspect of their act has undoubtedly become more rocky and a current liaison with **STEVE MARRIOTT** suggests a further step in that direction. However, they are a fine band in their own right with a Canadian Tour under their belt and having worked dates with **MAIN-SQUEEZE**, **STEVE GIBBONS**, **BO DIDDLEY** and **DR. FEELGOOD**, they have established a fine reputation that extends to being invited to play with **EDDIE C. CAMPBELL** on his last visit over here. So next time you set out to catch Steve Marriott, make sure you get there early and get a dose of those DT's.

Meanwhile, many miles away, the North East boasts its own hero of several years standing. The Newcastle blues and R&B scene has long been toasted since the emergence of the **ANIMALS**. Gigs such as the **CORNER HOUSE** have hosted many a passing US bluesman whilst the **BROKEN DOLL** has provided a regular diet of fine homegrown blues. One man who has been active through all changes on Tyneside is **RAY STUBBS**. For more years than he cares to remember Ray and his **R&B ALL-STARS** have flown the flag. Stubbs is Mr. Versatility himself as he is equally happy fronting his band, backing the likes of **LOUISIANA RED**, or appearing solo as a one man band. Certainly **DR. ROSS** was mightily impressed when he joined Ray on one memorable session. Whilst Ray and band have probably missed out on the recording front through plying their trade in the unfashionable North East, the solid reputation of the man has led to TV and radio work and above all, the compliment of visiting US bluesmen searching out the Corner House residency.

Probably better known to the blues fan over the years is **VICTOR BROX**, who remains a mainstay of the North West, along with some of the fine "newer" blues players such as **NORMAN BEAKER**.

Brox often worked on the London



*Ray Stubbs, still making his own outlets.*

scene in the late '70's and early '80's, complete with woolly hat forever perched on his head. A short period followed with **MAINSQUEEZE**, in the company of **JOHN O'LEARY**, **DICK HECKSTALL SMITH**, **ERIC BELL**, etc. The band cut one album, having played together for some months as **BO DIDDLEY'S** band. Brox seemed to disappear from view for a while, but is to be found alive, well and kicking up a storm in and around Manchester with the **VICTOR BROX BLUES TRAIN**.

For a man who once appeared in the doomed "Jesus Christ, Superstar", Brox appears to have retained his credibility as a bluesman. To be fair, it's hard not to be reverential after a guy has been around for over two decades and in the

case of Victor, his latest Blues Train is packing them in at Liverpool's **HARD-MAN HOUSE HOTEL** on Monday nights as well as the Oldham **BLACK HORSE** and **ZOLLY BOSHER'S**. The name of the gigs may send you running to your local blues directory, but the music is as classy as ever, the audience is well fired up... Step north of Watford Gap young man and dare to mention that the Brits can't sing the blues.

Undoubtedly the music is there, the venues are still just about there and all that's missing is the media attention, but that's another story.

To be continued.

*Peter Feenstra.*

# Interview with GEROD

by Top Topham

*The following dialogue took place between Top Topham and Gerod, a guitarist from Memphis, who has sat in a couple of times with the Shakey Vick Blues Band at the 100 Club. Rather than edit the transcript down, as is usual, I have deliberately included everything, except ums and ahs, and laughs. The dialogue is, as near as possible, what went onto the tape. I hope that this will give a better feel for the kind of people Gerod and Top are.*

Editor

**Top:** Gerod, could you tell me when you were born and about your family?

**Gerod:** Yeah, I was born in Memphis Tennessee and I was born and raised in Memphis for most part of my childhood. I grew up in a duplex in the Southwest area of Memphis near the downtown area, in a place called Sentier street(?). I lived there with my grandparents and my mother and my two brothers.

**T:** And how many of your family have been involved with music or played instruments, like yourself?

**G:** Only my older brother, my older brother was a drummer.

**G:** Did he work with some interesting people or just for the love of it?

**G:** He worked with a lot of professional people. He used to play with Albert King – he was a drummer with Albert King. He played with a lot of the Stax people – he recorded for Stax Records – like Rufus Thomas, The Soul Children... he just played with many people man, Percy Sledge, just a lot of those old R&B and Blues people, I can't even begin to think of all, just a lot people though. O V Wright, he played with, you ever heard of O V Wright?

**T:** Yes I have, very good... brilliant. So, because of that, you obviously must have been fairly close and did you ever get to hear him with these bands or was he away, or were you introduced to the music through him?

**G:** Some of the times I used to actually see him rehearse with some of these people because the band that he was with they used to rehearse at the High School that we went to in the neighbourhood which is Booker T Washington High. A lot of people went to that school... like, Rufus Thomas went to that school.

**T:** It sounds very familiar.

**G:** Does it? Really?

**T:** Its the name.

**G:** Yeah, Booker T Jones, Booker T and the MGs and Al Jackson the drummer with Booker T and the MGs... a lot of these cats went to that school, so everybody went through that high school in the neighbourhood... many of them went out and became professional musicians. Some of the Memphis Horns went to this school too. I used to go up sometimes and listen to the rehearsals. I used to go up and watch O V Wright, Percy Sledge and these people, you know? It was very interesting to watch... there'd be those little snotty-nosed kids sitting on the side, checkin' it out, yeah.

**T:** So roughly how old were you when you were able to go and see something like that?

**G:** I was about thirteen, fourteen years old at that time.

**T:** The right age...

**G:** Yeah...

**T:** Well I'll have to ask what was the first time you were, kind of, aware of blues music? Were you aware that it was blues, how did you hear it, or was it stuff you heard on the radio?

**G:** Well basically, you see my grandparents used to own a restaurant, used to own and operate a restaurant on Beale Street, and my mother she was like... going to school, secretarial school or something, so my grandparents used to

keep us at the restaurant everyday and there would be musicians out on the street playing... this was when I was a little kid, I was like, well three or four years old and you would just see guitar players on the street...well my grandmother would take me walking up the street right? and I would just pass by all the pawn shops, I'd see all the guitars, I'd see all the musicians coming in and out, I'd see guys standing on the corner playing, I remember as a kid even when I was three or four years old I'd always stop when we were near a guitar player, I would stop to watch and listen and she'd be draggin' me on, like you know: "Come on, let's go, let's go." you know, so I think that's when I was aware of the blues as a form of music... besides that, in the cafe we had a juke box – in the cafe – and these people would come in and party, and they would play the juke box all night long man, so I just grew up hearing the stuff, music all the time.

**T:** So is it too much to ask you to remember any names that you would have seen at that time, or been aware of?

**G:** I don't remember any names of that time, I just remember seeing musicians – you know – on Beale Street. Passing by clubs you could hear them playing, though I was just three and four years old... I wasn't allowed to go in. That's why I don't remember any names.

**T:** Was there a player called Blind Arvella Gray that played a steel guitar, like a National steel guitar... was that Beale Street in Memphis?

**G:** I don't know that I ever heard of him, but I've heard of National steel guitars, my first guitar was a National, out of the pawnshops. Before my grandparents had this cafe on Beale Street you know, there was another cafe on East and Moreland (?) and they eventually moved onto Beale street where they had the juke box; so I used to be there at night and you know, the place would be packed, filled with smoke, people having a good time, dancin' or whatever, and this song would come on, this song called "Money" and I would be by the juke box and whenever this song came on I would just run, man.

**T:** How does it go?

*(A brief vocal demonstration accompanied by tabletop drumming quickly identified the song)*

**G:** So I would freak out man, I would just run to the bathroom and my grandfolks would have to come and get me out and

say: "What's wrong with you son?" and I would say: "I'm scared of that song."... I was, you know, three or four years old and I remember that, and I've had a problem with money ever since.

**T:** Well that's very interesting, in fact do you know the Beatles recorded that. It must have been about nineteen sixty three or four, because I can remember when that came out, in fact talking about being frightened of things... somebody came into the shop yesterday and gave me that!

**G:** What is that man, it seems like some kind of pottery or something?

**T:** They call them Mojo Hands...

**G:** Yeah, (Singing) I got my mojo working'

**T:** Apparently they still sell them in Louisiana. This guy came in and said: "I've bought you a little present" and he gave me that.

**G:** I'll tell you, if I can see it. Let me see that.

**T:** Apparently they're supposed to bring you good luck.

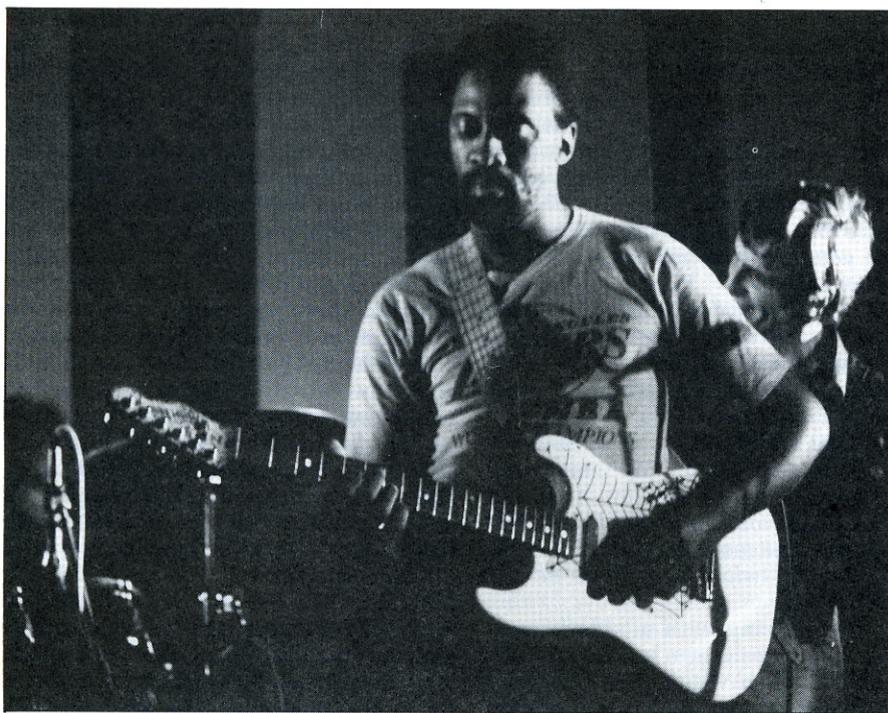
**G:** Oh yeah man, My grandmother used to have one of these. My great grandmother had her keys on this... I forgot all about that stuff.

**T:** Just one last question about old things... Do you remember any old records, any old seventy-eights your grandparents would have had, great grandparents would have had?

**G:** In fact in our house we had one of those old record players man, one of those old record players that played... the only speed it played was seventy-eight and we had loads of records like that... my grandfather had a collection of 'em, I can't remember just what they were but I used to fool around with them all the time, as a kid you know.

**T:** Can I ask you when you first were aware that people in England were playing Blues... and some of the white players, obviously the well known ones, can you remember them?

**G:** I can remember exactly, I'll tell you when it was... it was like one summer, the summer of nineteen sixty seven or sixty eight. I think it was nineteen sixty eight. My older brother I told you about who plays drums, he brought some albums home – he was like four years older than me – so he used to go downtown on his own and do some shopping and stuff and he brought these albums home. He was playing these albums... he was playing these records



*Gerod at the 100 Club, London*

*Photo: Jon Frost*

and I was just sittin' there listening... he put the record on "Oh man, I ain't heard a blues played like this before," and I just listened for like a few days before I even asked him. He said "Oh this is 'Led Zeppelin' man" – I think it was "Led Zeppelin Two" – and I looked at the album and I thought it was kind of strange man... weird and so at that point in time is when my style kind of changed, because before that I had been like kind of straight black blues from the South and then when I heard this heavy stuff that's when I turned heavy. Next fall when I went back to school, you know and I was playing with this band they noticed that my style had changed. They said: "Gerod, your style has changed man, you sound like one of those white boys now, you know." So Led Zeppelin was the first British blues band, blues artists or whatever, that I came in contact with. Later it was Cream, because my brother let me hear some of his Cream albums too, later on.

**T:** So at this point you were actually playing the guitar, Can you remember your first reminiscences of playing guitar?

**G:** Yeah, I was eight years old at the time I started playing guitar. I was interested prior to that before I actually started playing, but I didn't know what I wanted to do. My brother and I used to sit around and beat on the bed, playing rhythms and that, you know, and what happened was that my mother and father separated a lot and my father was out in Los Angeles and he sent out for us, so we went out there and – you don't mind me telling you this whole story do you – Okay, so when we moved out to Los Angeles it was totally different from Memphis. My brother and I, we just freaked out. It was really strange, I remember that when we arrived in Los Angeles and we left the train station we were lookin' at all the palm trees – it was different, totally different from the South – so we went to the apartment

that our father had waiting for us, so anyway, our first week livin' on this street, Ninth Avenue, there was a young guy he used to walk up and down the street, you know a young black guy, used to walk from one block to the other block, playing the flute, so my brother and I we'd just sit on the porch and watch this dude just walk from one end of the street to the other just playing the flute, then after that he'd go and put the flute up and then walk back and forwards playing a guitar, all way down strummin' and then he'd come back. We watched this for several days, because this was quite strange. Anyway, we got to know this guy, his name was Johnny, and everybody that lived on the street they had guitars – you know there was this kind of thing in LA about playing guitar, so everybody on the street had a guitar – but Johnny was the hero on the street because he could play, so everybody looked up to him.

**T:** It must have been quite unusual then for a family such as yourself being brought up partly in Memphis and partly in LA. That must have had quite a different influence on you as a person, rather than somebody else who stayed in Memphis all the time.

**G:** Definitely so. Los Angeles, Southern California, you know is somethin' that's stuck with me you know even though we moved back to Memphis afterwards, about three or four years later, but I definitely think it made a difference to me.

**T:** Perhaps that made a difference to you even contemplating a way out, yeah?

**G:** I don't know about that.

**T:** I mean, coming to England for example.

**G:** Yeah maybe so. But I never did finish answering the other question. You know, I asked Johnny to show me a couple of chords on the guitar and Johnny tried to show me something but it was just too big, too much to take in, right? So I said "Okay I'll carry on". I

said: "This is really interesting Johnny, I really love the way you play guitar, you know," and so what happened was – a friend of mine who lived on the same street, named Terry, he had a guitar and I just used to fool around with his guitar all the time and just did what was natural to me, you know, an eight year old kid took the guitar and turned it upside down and didn't think anything of it, just felt feeling comfortable that way and everybody on the street saying "Gerod, what you doing? That's wrong man. You playin' backwards, you can't do that" and I used to say "No man, this feels comfortable to me, like, it feels comfortable", so I just ignored them, it was just a natural thing for me to do and that's how I started playing... and I still hadn't got a guitar of my own because my father didn't want me to have one, he didn't want me to have anything to do with music and all...

**T:** You were telling me a story about your father catching you on the porch playing... would you tell us that?

**G:** Yeah right, I was sitting out there playing one day and my father came out and said: "What you doing, what you playing, what is that you playing?" and I said: "Well, it's a song by Muddy Waters, Dad, called 'I'm A Man'" and he says "Oh I don't know about that kind of stuff, that Blues. Look, if you're going to play music you don't want to play that kind of stuff... come in the house and let me show you what kind of stuff you need to be playing with." My father was a Muslim, so he put on some Eastern music, all Eastern scales and stuff, then after that he put on a couple of Jazz albums... I liked the jazz stuff, thought it was quite good, 'cos he used to play Jazz around the house all the time, I kind of picked up on that.

**T:** What sort of people would they have been?

**G:** Oh, Thelonius Monk, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Wes Montgomery...you name it. That's all he had in his collection.

**T:** With him being a Black Muslim, it must have been quite a strict upbringing.

**G:** It was strict...very strict.

**T:** You couldn't get away with very much.

**G:** Couldn't get away with much at all.

**T:** I wonder if we could go on to another question. Presumably, you're a young person, you're jamming with friends, you want to form a band, so what happened at this stage, in your early teens?

**G:** Well my first band that I ever joined was when we moved back to Memphis. We had been back in Memphis about a couple of years and the band was put together at this Junior High School that I was going to and actually, if it wasn't for my mother, I wouldn't be talking to you here today, because I wanted to join the school band, but I was too shy to go up and register for the band, so my mother forced me to go up to the school dragged me up to the school and said: "My son wants to be in the band, right." "Oh, what does he want to play on?" "Oh I want to play the saxophone, whatever." So that originally led me to getting into my first band, The band director, his 13

name was Harry Winfield, he was putting a band together, he wanted to call it The Junior Junior Combo, 'cos he was always putting bands together...he put the original Bar Kays together, the guys that jived with Otis Redding, he put these together...so he wanted to put this group together called The Junior Junior Combo so he was saying that anybody that's interested and this and that, write your name down or something, and I really wanted to get into the group, but I was too shy to volunteer for the band so I just kept it inside but I was really eager to get into this band...so they virtually chose another guy for the band and the next couple of days he had all the names announced, you know, so-and-so on Bass, so-and-so on drums...oh wow, I should have said something...so what happened was that the guy he chose for guitar, eventually he didn't come to rehearsals, he wasn't in 'cos he didn't show up, so that what happened was: I eventually let the bass player in the band know that I could play, I just walked in one day and I just started playing guitar. He said: "Wow, you can play, I'm going to tell Mr Winfield that you can play 'cos we need a guitar player," and that was it, that's how I got into the band called The Junior Junior Combo. The name was eventually changed to The Soulful Seven and did a lot of television shows and stuff around Memphis.

**T:** Can you remember what sort of stuff you were playing in those days?

**G:** Yeah, we were doing a lot of Stax tunes, like we really admired Booker T and the MGs, we were doing a lot of that stuff, a lot of Sly and the Family Stone, James Brown, lots of James Brown and stuff like that.

**T:** Papa's got a Brand New Bag...

**G:** Oh yeah, we used to do that, all that kind of stuff.

**T:** So at that point were you professional, were you full time, or were you still doing it as a college student?

**G:** No this was in Junior High School, I was thirteen years old.

**T:** Thirteen...that's an early start.

**G:** It was an early start. We were doing television shows around Memphis, we were doing a lot of talent shows at other schools. We were quite well known because we were on television every week. There was a television show called Swing Shift and another one called Summer Showboat which Harry Winfield presented for both these shows...the guy that put me in my first band. You could say that we were professional because we used to get paid for these gigs, but of course Harry wasn't going to give us money, you know, just little kids..."Oh you don't need Money"... you know, he used to buy us a few doughnuts, whatever.

**T:** Sounds like quite a cheap payer.

**G:** Yeah, definitely so, definitely so.

**T:** When you went on from this point, can you tell us about it...did you record at that time?

**G:** Yeah...we didn't make any records, but when we did the television shows we had to go to the recording studio, to record the backing tracks, because we used to mime to the tracks, and we used

to record in one of Chips Mormon's (?) studio's, he recorded a lot of hits.

**T:** This wasn't in Sun Studios?

**G:** No we never recorded in Sun Studios, but Chips had something to do with Sun though, used the studios eventually, something like that, I'm not really sure.

**T:** So at this point can you just fill in for a little bit the gap between here and when you decided what you were going to do for a living?

**G:** I'd already decided that I was going to do that for a living, even before I joined that band I decided when I was in the sixth grade, when I was about twelve years old and the teacher asked everybody what we wanted to do in life and I put down musician. My mind was already made up.

**T:** Can I ask you were you playing with all black musicians, or was it a mixture of black and white musicians at that time?

**G:** I was playing with all black musicians until I was grown up. I'm trying to remember when was the first I played with white musicians...that's a good question. Well the first time I ever played with a white musician on a steady basis was 1984 actually, a drummer from Memphis, we had a band together.

**T:** Is that just how it is in a place like Memphis?



Gerod sitting in with Shakey Vick's Blues Band

Photo: Jon Frost

**G:** Huh, yeah, I guess you could say that to a certain extent. It's still pretty divided to a certain extent...not fully, which is quite strange, really you know.

**T:** Obviously when you are in that situation, living in that situation, perhaps it's something you might never think about. What are your feelings about that?

**G:** Well actually, you know it's...I think you know...just take the city of Memphis, for instance...I think they lose out on a great deal by not mixing together, I mean a lot more could come out of the situation if the musicians could just play together. It would be just better for the industry, period! By getting people together, there's no telling what they might come up with, you know, so I think it's a loss, it's an actual loss really.

**T:** And that's how it still is right now, or has it got better?

**G:** It's getting better but it's not like it should be.

**T:** I remember you telling me a small story, perhaps you could fill in between this as well...there was one time when B B King came up and played with you...or perhaps you could let us know if there were any other performers that you might have played along with or seen when you were eventually on the road.

**G:** Well, I've seen a lot of people on the road...I'll tell you the encounter I had with B B King...the first time I ever saw B B King live was 1974, I was a teenager, I was playing with a band called The Freedom Express and there's this thing they have down in Mississippi called the 'Homecoming'...what's this guy's name? I can't think of the guy's name, but he invites bands around from the South and stuff like that to come and play for this thing so he invited us to come and play and B B King was on the same show. That was the first night I ever saw B B King play live. I was like you know, really in awe...sat on the side of the stage and just watched him play. He just tore into this black Gibson, gold pick-ups; he just burned. You know, he played nothing like he played on records... it's almost like a rock player live.

**T:** Something else.

**G:** Yeah and I was, you know, absolutely amazed. I remember meeting his saxophone player after, this saxophone player was from Memphis. I asked him a lot of questions and stuff. Yeah, I didn't see B B King again until, hang on, yeah next time I saw him I was in London, my first time coming over here. I was playing with Al Green. We had played, well we were playing The Capital Music Festival 1984, so we played our night, or whatever and the next night B B King

was playing somewhere and we were invited to go and see B B, so myself and Al Green and the drummer we all went to see B B and it's like you know, a lot of years later and I'm standing on the side of the stage just checkin' him out, you know and I met him after the show, because this was around the time that he had brought his book out, his biography and I asked him for a copy and he gave one and he signed it. He asked me what did I play and told him I play guitar. He said: "Oh, you play guitar" I says "Yeah, Yeah," and we chatted for a couple of minutes, or whatever.

**T:** He's a very nice man...a real gentleman.

**G:** Yeah...Oh, I got it, I got it...that was the third time I saw him. The second time I saw him...I've gotten it back now...the second time I saw him was in Memphis in about 1981 we were doing a gig at a place called The Club Paradise and I was playing with this blues band, we were doing a blues number and, that same night they had had a show at the Coliseum, all these blues players, Bobby Bland, Z Z Hill, B B King and they, I guess, well B B, I know he came down to the Paradise after they finished the gig, so we were playing this number...well actually we were getting ready to start

this number...somebody – one of the people in the band – said, “Yeah, Ladies and Gentlemen, we have Mr. B B King in the house tonight, everybody give Mr. B B King a hand,” and everybody stood up and there he was sittin’ right down in front. They counted the number off...I’m the only guitar player with this band and I’m sayin’ we did this thing in rehearsals and they’re goin’ to call me for a solo ‘cos I’m the only guitar player so I’m about to fill my pants. I’m looking out and I’m sayin’: “Oh God, man, there’s B B King out there, what the Hell am I going to do here?” It was a terrible feeling...I was shakin’...my legs started shakin’ and I’m sure he knew what I was goin’ through ‘cos he’s just sittin’ out there, just chekin’ it out, so when it came time for me to play, man, I was shakin’ and that, and I closed my eyes and just played, man and so when my bars... when the few bars were over I just thanked God it was over...and it was a hell of an experience...a lot of pressure there.

**T:** Absolutely...Could you tell us a little bit more about the bands that you’ve been in?

**G:** There was a group called Freedom Express I did a lot of touring around the States with; we used to play behind Denise LaSalle, Rufus Thomas, people like that. Another band called Changing Scene that I was a part of with my brother... we did a lot of travellin’ and stuff... played with a lot of people at Stax before it folded. There was another group called the Dealers that I played with...did a couple of 45’s with them around Memphis...a group called Sure ‘Nuff and I played with in Jackson, Mississippi...did a couple of albums with them, we went to Japan, did a lot of touring around the States and after that we came back to Memphis and I was just kind of freelancing. I was just gigging, you know, as a hired guard, really... and then I put my group together with the first white musician that I had a relationship with, we were really close, it was a band called Ante Up, the drummer his name was Duane Cleveland Jr. and the bass player was Victor Cox, both of ‘em white guys...they lived on the other side of town – East Memphis – which is like the white side of town, or one of the predominantly, white sides of town; it’s always been that way, and I came from the other side of town, South Memphis.

**T:** So is that a very unusual situation?

**G:** It’s a very unusual situation because I’m a black guy from the other side of town playin’ really heavy rock and I’m playing it with these guys and it was a good thing because we...we actually broke some ground...we actually broke a lot of ground.

**T:** Could you go and perform with that band in Memphis?

**G:** Did we perform?...Oh yes, we performed all over Memphis, we were doin’ the Rock Clubs – we had a very good following and the good thing about it is that by me playing with these guys I made a lot of friends with a lot of white people in East Memphis...it didn’t hit me, until then, that I didn’t know what was on the other side of town, man. You know I would...I’d say: “How’d you get to

your house Duane?” “Well you go here Gerod, you go there,” you know. I’d say: “Wow, I didn’t know much about this side of town”...it was completely different and I got a chance to meet a lot of people, made friends with a lot of people and vice versa...the same with them... they didn’t know much about my side of town – I started bringin’ ‘em over my side of town; they began meeting a lot of black guys, a lot of black musicians and people...I got to go to his family, he got to go to mine and it was quite good...it really opened me up to a lot – it opened them up to a lot.

**T:** Yeah...So from that point can you go on from there as to where the bands progressed?

**G:** Right...well after that...well actually I was playing with Al Green at the same time as I had Ante Up goin’...it was like whenever Al wasn’t on the road and I didn’t have any gigs to do with Al Green, we would book the gigs around Memphis and actually I got...I eventually got Duane the gig with Al Green too, on drums... a white guy with drums...because the other drummer quit. So what happened was that I eventually came over to England for the first time with Al – that gig I was telling you about where I met B B King, and that was the first time I came over here and we did a gig at the Albert Hall, a one-off...the Royal Albert Hall...

**T:** A big gig for a first one...

**G:** Yeah, very big gig and there were a lot of people there, a lot of musicians came by to see us: I think Mick Jagger was there that night and the people from Dexy’s Midnight Runners, they were there and they saw me playin’ there with Al and that’s how I ended up coming back, ‘cos when I got back to Memphis, they got in touch with me some kind of way and offered me a job...they wanted me to come back over and play with them a year later. I came back and I’ve been over here ever since...it’s been two years. I was with them for a few months, whatever and the group kind of dissolved because they...the record that I did with them, it didn’t do too well and then that eventually led to me putting my own band together in London.

**T:** Right. Could you just tell us how you see things in the future, for yourself now?

**G:** It’s very hard to foretell the future isn’t it? I feel quite positive...I’m hoping things will be successful with my band and the project that I’m doin’. I feel quite positive...I’m just a hard worker, I’m just takin’ one day at a time. I just do the best that I can do.

**T:** Times are a little tough, now?

**G:** Very tough.

**T:** And I understand that you’ve... you’re... you married?

**G:** Yes I am married.

**T:** And you married an English girl?

**G:** Right. Right.

**T:** Do you have any desire to go back to the States and play again?

**G:** Yes, I have, I have a very strong desire to go back to Memphis and live actually, because it’s like, it’s home for me, it’s home, but like, England is a big part of me now, ‘cos I’ve been here...it’s like, my second home...It’s a place that

I’ll always come back to.

**T:** Can I – to get back to the blues again – can I ask you what you feel about the English blues scene, or what was your reaction, for example, when you came down and jammed with a band that was playing blues over here? What’s your feeling about that?

**G:** Well actually when I walked in the door, I saw Tops, Tops said: “Yeah, come on Gerod, have a drink, whatever, this is Graham” and I met everybody and then I started watchin’ the band, you know, gettin’ a sound check and what I felt was that I mean...what I said was: “Isn’t this great, like isn’t this amazing, like these people really love his form of music this much and they’re really really into it and they play it really well” and I just felt a great appreciation for it because actually people in...not only in England, but across Europe, they appreciate blues more than the people where I come from...in Memphis they don’t cherish it as much as they do there...it’s a sad thing...and it just made me feel really good because I saw these cats playing the music that...I saw them playing music that I’ve lived, man...in the neighbourhood...well I mean...I lived it. Its a picture that’s hard to describe, but I saw these cats playing like...it was an eye-opener to me.

**T:** I noticed, that night, when we were in the dressing room and they started to play a slow blues, it was like...it was like turning a key. There’s a key which turns within you, which is a feeling. Can you describe to me what that feeling is for you?

**G:** Yeah it’s...I don’t know...it’s something that’s very hard to describe, really...it’s something that’s inside of you... when you come from the South...a place like Memphis...there’s just something about it, man, just like...it’s unconscious really, it’s just like, inside. That’s all I can say, it’s just inside.

**T:** It’s also...that feeling is something which...as you heard the other night, also...it seems that white players can feel as well. Did you think...do you think that white people can play the blues?

**G:** Oh yeah, Oh definitely, yeah...anybody can play the blues...you want to play it, you play it. The music is open to anybody who wants to play it.

**T:** Can I ask you just a couple more final questions? One, can you just tell us about the different instruments you play, because I understand you really play quite a lot of instruments, plus your vocals as well.

**G:** Yeah, I play all saxophones, which I started playing in Junior High School, alto, tenor, baritone, soprano, all saxophones; I play flute, I played bass guitar and I play drums and I sing.

**T:** That’s quite a collection.

**G:** A collection huh? Yeah right.

**T:** Right, I think just to close up now, is there any other kind of story, or reminiscences you’d like to add to the interview?

**G:** Yeah, I got to tell you a story, but first of all the most...the person that influenced me the most musically...the most influential person in my life, was James Brown...I liked a lot of things, but James Brown was what I used to dance

to, what I used to eat to, I mean James Brown was the business, man. So it's like James Brown came from Memphis, you know he used to come to Memphis I guess, once a year...we used to always go see him; my mother would take us to go see James Brown, that was... oh man that was it man. So like there was this woman that lived down the street, that was like a friend of my mother's and she was like...well I hate to say...I hope she never reads this, she was a real pretty lady, she was a groupy, right, so she used to go out with Bobby Bland and B B King, all those cats they come to town, you know, they'd hang out with her...she was like, she was a fiery fox, right - I hope she doesn't read this man - she'll kill me man. So like, James Brown was in town right, so after he finished the gig, he came over to her house, which was like a stone's throw away from where I lived, it's like maybe about thirty yards away and so, you know, women are nosy, so my mother and grandmother like they off seeing if Jean's really goin' to bring James Brown, because she had like hollered that she was going to bring James Brown tonight, so my mother and grandmother said to us: "Come on, want you all to get out of bed and come over here, Look at this, James Brown is comin' down the street." Well we came to the window, and there we was all in pyjamas an' everythin' we was looking over the fence, right, and there he was - his big Rolls Royce was like parked in front of the house, and he got out you know...

**T:** He wasn't in his pyjamas then, yet?

**G:** No he wasn't...not yet! Yeah he got out and he walked down and my brother and I are saying "Hey man, that's James Brown. Can you believe it?" you know. This is a good story you know...

**T:** That's a pretty exciting band to see live, isn't it?

**G:** Yeah. It's quite a performance.

**T:** You really got your money's worth.

**G:** Yeah, definitely so, Yeah I'll tell you of Otis Redding too, he was a hard worker, too, yeah.

**T:** He had a...a really touching voice.

**G:** Yeah...yeah...They got killed...the guys that got killed in the plane crash - the Bar Kays - they came from my neighbourhood. They died...it was a terrible shock really, because the group, the first band that I joined, we wanted to be like that. Actually...we wanted to follow in their footsteps...we couldn't get the proper push from Harry because... Harry Winfield felt that it was his fault when these guys died, because he put them together, just like he put us together, and he vowed that he would never push anybody else like that, because...That's why he didn't push us like we needed to be pushed because he felt that...if anything happened...he would be responsible.

**T:** That sounds pretty tough. What about Harry Winfield...is he still alive now?

**G:** Yeah, he's still around Memphis.

**T:** And he's like a promoter, is he?

**G:** Yeah, he's done many things...he was a school teacher, music teacher, he was a promoter, had television shows, did

gigs...Jack-of-all-trades, really.

**T:** You were also telling me some more about the Sun studios and some of the people involved in that. Would you like to tell us about that, Gerod?

**G:** Well actually, my grandmother and my mother, they grew up in the neighbourhood where I grew up at, you know, long before I was born and it's the same neighbourhood that Elvis Presley...when they moved up from Mississippi, and my grandmother and my mother told me they used to...you know Elvis lived up on Eleventh(?) street - he used to be sitting' out in front of the apartment with his mother in summertime, playing his guitar and drinking lemonade. At that time white people...poor white people and black people lived in the neighbourhood that I grew up in till eventually I think most of the white people moved out...and I'm livin' round the corner from Sun studios - I grew up round the corner from the studios so I was just a stone's throw away. I didn't know it was around the corner, I was too young you know, but it was there.

**T:** Do you ever see yourself consciously saying I'm going to perhaps play some blues in England?

**G:** Yeah, of course.

**T:** Really getting down to it...

**G:** Actually I'd like to do just a pure blues album to be frank.

**T:** That sounds like a really good idea, perhaps we should talk about that...Well Gerod, I'd like to thank you very much for making this interview for British Blues Review.

**G:** Thank you...it's been a pleasure.

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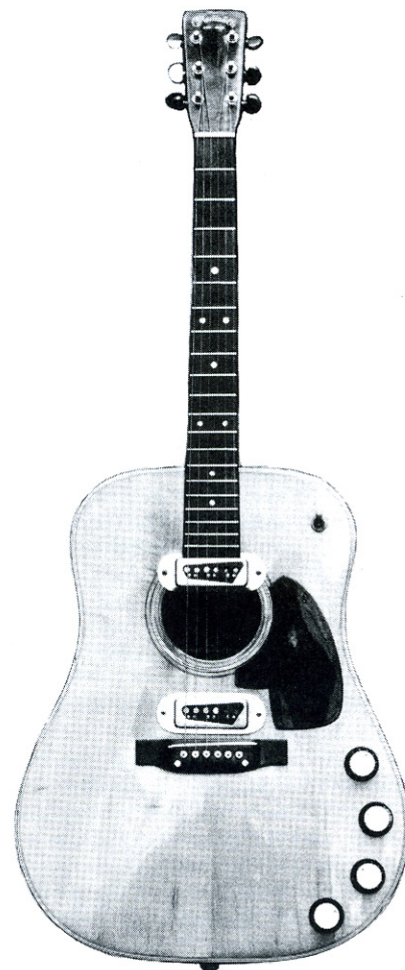
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# GUITAR: MARTIN D28-E

Top Topham

The guitar illustrated is a Martin D-28E. It was first introduced in 1959. This model is a regular D-28 construction with two De Armond pickups, four controls, a three-way toggle switch and gold-coloured Grover machine heads. It was first catalogued in 1960 and last shown in 1965.

To my knowledge, Elmore James played one of these models. I have only seen - and had the chance to play - this model once, but the sound it produces, amplified and with a slide, is "the business".





## BIG JOE DUSKIN AT 100 CLUB

Top Topham



Sunday, 17th April, at the 100 Club, Oxford Street, London, saw the farewell UK performance of "The Mighty Man of Boogie Woogie", Big Joe Duskin. The evening was well attended and was opened by stalwart Dave Peabody performing excellent country blues on acoustic and National Steel guitars.

Joe began after the interval with great warmth and solidity of that

left hand which kept the joint rocking for the next two hours. I felt slightly disappointed that Joe, with those rich vocals, did not play a longer solo set. I feel that the guitar accompaniment would have been better served by the National Steel (which was designed specifically for the purpose) than by the ordinary acoustic instrument. I felt also that the harmonica was an unnecessary

addition.

Later in the evening, when Stan Greig joined in on the second piano, memories of Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis and Pete Johnson flooded back. Joe stood up and sang a Joe Turner number, then he and Stan swapped pianos. Finally, a young piano player joined in with Stan as well and the place resounded with the combined effects of all three.

## SUNNYLAND SLIM

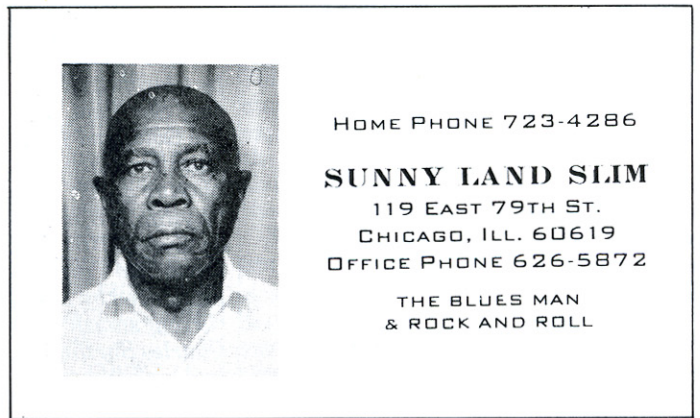
(Albert Luandrew) 1907-88

News of the recent passing of Albert Luandrew, better known as Sunnyland Slim, must have come as a great blow to Blues lovers worldwide particularly as it was so soon after the death of another legendary pianist, Memphis Slim.

One of the most important figures in the postwar Chicago Blues scene, Slim was born in Vance, Mississippi on September 5th, 1907. Having started playing the organ (his father was a preacher), he soon switched to piano, and moved to Memphis where he played with the likes of Doctor Clayton, John Lee 'Sonny Boy' Williamson and Rice Miller ('Sonny Boy Williamson'). Like many musicians of the time, Slim made the journey north to Chicago, the centre of the Blues recording industry, and in 1946, he made his first recordings there, for the West Coast based Specialty Records, with drummer Jump Jackson's band. In that year, Doctor Clayton died, and his record company RCA Victor, eager to find a replacement for him, recorded Slim in late 1947, issuing 4 records, credited to 'Doctor Clayton's Buddy'.

Sunnyland has the distinction of being the person who first introduced the future 'King of Chicago Blues', Muddy Waters, to the Chess brothers. Following the RCA record date, he was approached by the fledgling Aristocrat (later Chess) record company, and it was then that he made the momentous decision to invite Muddy to play on the session. Muddy had, at that time, been in Chicago for about 5 years, and it was while backing John Lee Williamson that he and Slim started to play together, working in the Southside bars and clubs. Aristocrat issued two records from the session, one by Slim, the other, by Muddy, and it was at a second session in 1948, that Muddy Waters recorded his first hit - 'I Can't Be Satisfied'.

For the next 15 years or so, Slim recorded for almost



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twenty different labels, ranging from major labels like Mercury, Regal and Apollo, to the smaller ones, such as Hytone, Tempo Tone, JOB and his own 'vanity' label, Sunny. While it is true that the quality of these recordings varies, his finest moments are some of the best Chicago Blues records made, and recordings like 'Going Back to Memphis', 'Back To Korea', 'Highway 51' and 'Train Time' can be wholeheartedly recommended. Later years found him touring extensively, and recording both as an accompanist, and a vocalist (often for his own Airway label).

A brief list of people who recorded with Sunnyland Slim reads like a 'Who's Who' of Chicago Blues - Little Walter, Lonnie Johnson, Robert Jr. Lockwood, Floyd Jones, J.B. Lenoir, Eddie Taylor, Walter Horton, 'Big' Bill Broonzy, Johnny Shines, Jimmy Rogers, Snooky Pryor, 'Baby Face' Leroy Foster, Howlin' Wolf, John Brim, Willie Nix, 'Homesick' James, 'Billy Boy' Arnold - and is surely a reflection of the talent of the irreplaceable Sunnyland Slim.

Joe Louis

# RECORD ROUNDUP with Joe Louis



*'I'm going down to Louisiana...'*

*Charly Records have recently issued a series of LPs, dealing with the one of the first independent record labels in the south, Goldband Records of Lake Charles, Louisiana, started in 1945 by Country musician Eddie Shuler. Goldband recorded many first class artists, in styles ranging from Country, through Cajun, Rock & Roll and Zydeco to Blues, and there appears to be a great deal of material in Goldband's vaults which has never seen the light of day – on the following LPs, all tracks (taken from mastertape) are either alternate takes or completely unissued recordings!*

## ZYDECO BIRTH – Various Artists (GFCL 103)

Accordianist Boozoo Chavis is given credit in the sleeve notes of this LP for having recorded the very first Zydeco record: 'Paper In My Shoe', issued on the Goldband subsidiary label, Folk-Star, in 1953. The song has become a Louisiana standard, but no version comes close to the rawness and individuality of this first recording, the result of a chaotic eight hour recording session. Seven of the thirteen tracks on this LP are by Chavis, recorded over two sessions; the second session was held over a year after the first, and in the interim, he had been touring heavily after the success of 'Paper In My Shoe' – the experience shows in the tighter arrangements and performances, especially when compared to earlier efforts like 'Long Black Curly Hair', which is quite hard going! As far as I know, Boozoo is still playing and recording – Red Lick Records (see their ad in this issue) can sell you a recent (wonderfully X-rated) 45 'LA Women Love Uncle Bud'/'Deacon Jones' (Also on the Ace LP 'Paper In My Shoe' CHD 214).

Clarence Garlow, who died in 1986, was a very under-rated singer and musician, best remembered for his classic 'Bon Ton Roula' ('Let The Good Times Roll') – a song he re-recorded throughout his career. Garlow started out as a guitarist, and it is perhaps a measure of the growing influence of Zydeco music in the Southern states during the early 1950s, that by 1954, he was accompanying himself on the accordion and singing songs in Creole. His two tracks on this LP, 'Za Belle' and 'Made Me Cry' are alternate takes of his first release on Folk Star, a fair-sized local hit, and have great lyrics, sung in both French and English.

Thaddeus Declouet, the other artist on this LP, is someone about whom little is known. He was an accordion player, and sings four selections here, with the instrumental 'Lake Charles Do-Do-Dia' being particularly fine.

## WHOLE LOTTA DRINKIN' ON THE BLOCK

– Various Artists (GFCL 104)

*This LP will probably be the most popular amongst downhome Blues*

*lovers, as it features the wonderful 'Left Hand' Charlie Morris. 'Left Hand Charlie' had only one song ('But You Thrill Me') released by Shuler, and this was backed up with the instrumental 'Bop Cat Stomp' by the trumpeter King Charles's band, and now we are able to hear two more great vocal tracks by him, together with a vocal (apparently) by King Charles. (Charlie Morris later recorded a great 45 for Jay Miller, 'Don't Bring No Friend'/'I'm Gonna Kill That Hen' which was released on Nasco Records under the name 'Blue Charlie'.) Reputedly from either Florida or Lafayette, Louisiana, his guitar style seems to suggest that if he didn't spend time in Mississippi, he was influenced by the area's musicians.*

*The balance of the cuts on this LP are by Clarence Garlow and Charles 'Mad Dog' Sheffield, who had been brought to the Goldband studio by Garlow. Clarence Garlow's tracks find him playing guitar on numbers more Rhythm & Blues based than those found on 'Zydeco Birth', with 'Train Came Down The Track' being obviously influenced by Lowell Fulson's then current smash hit 'Reconsider Baby'. Charles Sheffield is backed by Garlow and his band, and his two contributions, 'Ooh! Wee Baby Ooh! Wee' and 'Isabella', are good, solid fare.*

## ROCKING' JUMPIN' SHOUTIN' – Various Artists (GCL 11)

The title pretty much gives it away, doesn't it? Thirteen more selections from Goldband – the majority (seven) of the tracks are by Charles Sheffield, and are in a similar vein to the two on the above LP, again featuring Clarence Garlow and his band. 'Mad Dog', presumably his signature tune, is fun all the way, with dog howls, and lyrics which tell us that 'Mad Dog' is 'coming down your way'! It is followed by a very similar track, 'Cool Cat', which isn't quite as good, and 'Ball Game', which, while credited to Sheffield and Shuler, appears to be a version of a Gospel hit of the time, 'Ball Game' by Sister Wynona Carr, on Specialty.

Garlow has four recordings from a 1956/7 session reissued and included amongst the songs is a cover of 'Bon Ton Roula' and 'Pretty Little Dolly', sung partly in Creole. Ivory Lee Jackson

completes this LP with two tracks – in the liner notes, he is referred to as a 'rockin' blues shouter', but don't expect a Wynonie Harris or a Roy Brown – 'Got The News This Morning' is a fast New Orleans-influenced piece, and 'Don't Think I Can Make It' is a lovely slow West Coast styled Blues.

Space restrictions don't allow me to cover the other issues in this series in detail, but, if they all meet the standard of the three LPs above, they can all be fully recommended.

## Other records to watch out for:

London's Bedrock Records is a new name on the UK's Blues record scene, and they have got off to a very promising start, with their releases to date being made up of new recordings by well-known, and slightly more obscure artists. Having issued LPs by New York saxophone veteran Noble 'Thin Man' Watts and Root Boy Slim, they are now heavily promoting Louisiana's Kenny Neal, who has an LP ('Bio On The Bayou' BEDLP 6), a single ('Don't Dip In My Business'/'Change My Way Of Livin' BED 001) and a UK tour (see 'Bluesnews' for dates). Kenny is the son of harmonica player Rafal Neal, and has produced a fine debut LP, (proving again that Robert Cray isn't the last word in modern Blues!) writing or co-writing the majority of the songs. The title track has an autobiographical lyric, telling how Kenny was influenced by, amongst others, his father, Lazy Lester and Slim Harpo, and there's a fine harp solo 'like my daddy used to play'! 'Caught Your Back Door Man' is a good 'cheating' song, and 'Bootney' (?) sings well on 'Evalina', a version of a railroad work song, accompanied only by a simple drum. There are two particularly good slow Blues: 'Baby Bee' and 'Early One Morning' where Kenny plays acoustic guitar and harp. It really is a pleasure to hear a good, varied, first LP like this, and it is a credit to both Kenny Neal and Bedrock Records, who are to be praised for their high standards of presentation, promotion and professionalism.

The US label Ichiban has been releasing a number of fine records lately, concentrating on Southern Blues and Soul: they now have a UK office, and their records should be easier to find. Clarence Carter had a big, big hit in the South last year with the slightly risqué 'Strokin', and this track, along with an 'answer' disc by Gary B.B. Coleman ('Watch Where You Stroke') appears on a 12" single (catalogue number STROKE 1). Both artists have their own LPs out on the label – 'Messing With My Mind' (ICH 1001), 'Dr. C.C.' (ICH 1003) and 'Hooked On Love' (ICH 1016) are by Carter, while Coleman's LP is entitled 'If You Can Beat Me Rockin' (ICH 1018). Also released – Artie 'Blues Boy' White's 'Nothing Takes The Place Of You' (ICH 1008), and Chick (Stoop Down Baby) Willis's 'Chick Sings Chuck' (ICH 1012), which is a selection of cover versions of songs made famous by the late Chuck Willis.

Joe Louis

**"The DeLuxe Blues Band"** by the *DeLuxe Blues Band*, released on *Blue Horizon BLVH004 Brand new records*, released through *Ace Records*, c/o 48/50 Steele Road, London NW10 7AS.

Well, can white boys sing and play the blues? Certainly in terms of longevity and experience, the members of the DeLuxe Blues Band have amassed between them an astonishing total of approximately one hundred and five years corporate experience on the U.K. R'n B' scene. Messrs. Hall and Brunning have worked together for over twenty years in a variety of line ups including Fleetwood Mac, the Savoy Brown Blues Band and the legendary Brunning Sunflower Blues Band, and have also supported dozens of visiting U.S. bluesmen. Dick Heckstall-Smith and Mickey Waller have equally impressive credentials, bearing in mind Mickey's rich experience (who *hasn't* he played with?), and Dick's role as founder member of Graham Bond Experience. Finally, Danny Adler brings to the DeLuxes his sound and impressive roots in his native U.S.A. blues scene, plus a wealth of experience in bands like his own "Roogalator" and "Rocket 88" with Bob Hall.

Never-the-less, a bunch of old has-beens? Well, no, not on the strength of this, the fourth album in the band's eight year career. The combined experience of the band, coupled with Danny's impressively authentic feel for the blues music of his particular heroes – T Bone Walker, Elmore James and Chuck Berry – has led to the production by Mike Vernon (of Blue Horizon fame) of a most satisfying album. The rhythm section comprising Waller and Brunning remains rock solid and *very* non-English throughout; Dick, Danny and Bob turn in some blistering solos, and the choice of material is nicely varied, including a brace of Adler originals. Of these "Avocado Eldorado" and "Calling In The Flag" amusingly reflect Danny's obsession with American cars and trains, and "Freight House Blues" and "Steel Truckin' Man" represent a different source of inspiration.

However, on the T. Bone and Elmore inspired tracks Danny really comes into his own. Far from producing slavish copies, Danny takes the feel and style of these giants, and re-interprets the songs with a great deal of sensitivity and flair. "Cold Cold Feeling" is a particularly successful piece of work, representing the whole band getting together extremely well, befitting their eight years on the road in Europe and the U.K. "Something Inside of Me", "I Held My Baby Last Night" and "The Sun Went Down" are all solid, unhackneyed interpretations of classic Elmore material, although it may come as a surprise to listeners that Danny *doesn't* use a bottleneck or steel for his Elmore licks – the guy must have strong fingers!

Throw in some Jimmy Reed ("Mary, Mary") and the album represents quite a cross-section of styles. The DeLuxe Blues Band have been helping to carry the flag in support of the U.K. blues scene for some years now, and this album will please their many fans.

# RECORD REVIEW

by  
Pete Moody

## "THE BLUES PROJECT" EDSEL ED248 VARIOUS ARTISTS.

This Edsel album is a reissue of the Elektra album originally issued as "A Compendium Of The Very Best On The Urban Blues Scene". Rather a profound statement which must have been a little 'Tongue-in-cheek' at the time.

The album captures what the white Americans were up to in the 1964/65 period. A lot of them had emerged from the white folk scene and were cashing in on a white blues boom, that had been sparked off, not so much by the black originators, but what was coming from this side of the Atlantic.

Elektra picked probably the worst number to introduce us to the music, a diluted copy of Bukka White's "Fixin' To Die" by one Dave Ray, who said, as it says in the sleeve notes, "As far as white men playing blues, that's all who do play blues...the new Negroes are too busy (doing other things)", – he must have led a very sheltered life!

Eric Von Schmidt is closer to the music with his one number "Blow Whistle Blow", some good stuff from Spider John Koerner, excellent harp on the Danny Kalb "I'm Troubled" and some good "Jessie Fuller music" from Mark Spoelstra in "France Blues".

Both "Bad Dream Blues" and "Don't You Leave Me Here" are good renditions from Dave Van Ronk. The whole album is an acoustic one throughout.

The eight tracks on Side 2 follow similar format. Highlights on the album are Spider John, Van Ronk, Kalb and Von Schmidt, and between them, they make this album a good buy.

I can't remember the original sleeve notes on the old Elektra album. The ones on this Edsel reissue are full to the brim with information on the thirteen featured musicians and it is interesting to read the views some of these musicians give on their 'new found music'. A sensible reissue from Edsel.

## "LIVE" BLUES 'N' TROUBLE CACOPHONY. SKITE 002.

This album doesn't mess about. Breaking straight in to the self penned boogie "Clock On The Wall", continuing the same momentum with "Born In Chicago", Butterfield would be proud of this. Energetically powered with some masterful harmonica, "Cherry Peaches" slows down the pace with some tasty "Jimmy Vaughanish" guitar, then bang, back into the fast lane with Lazy Lester's "Sugar Coated Love".

The Band has a very confident approach in revitalizing "the masters" They give fresh appeal still retaining the original flavour of the numbers.

B N T Blues, a slow blues with more proficient guitarwork and some nice vocals. "What's The Matter" with some real gutsy riffing guitars makes this a real Side One finisher. Like me you might be tempted to give this one a second spin before you turn to Side Two.

"Why" has a Cowboy Boogie flavour with some Fabulous Thunderbirds feel – a real foot tapper. More countryish sounds in the Dobro flavoured Travelling Light. Both these Side two starters are Band originals and both give you the feeling that you are travelling down a Texas Highway with the local air waves on the radio.

Back into Chicago with the well covered "Driftn' Blues". This number in their hands still has fresh chances. Jangling Fender guitar helps the song into a laid back approach to start, building in to a driving finish, maybe with credit to Eric Clapton's version. After two more up-tempo boogies, "See My Baby Shake It" and Elmore's "Madison Blues" bring the final number "Lying On The Kitchen Floor" – a harmonica stomper which illustrates yet another blues style these boys can play.

Nine originals and four fine covers of blues standards make this a very well thought out album. The "recorded live" tag this album has should not put you off if you, like me, have been caught before with some duff sound. This is a superb album for recording quality. Performance was live at the Schauburg in Bremen, West Germany on 4th February 1987. You don't "notice" the audience in the music, only when expected which gives the performance the atmosphere. The music is studio clear with Blues 'N' Trouble capturing the right ingredients.

Nothing but praise lads – It's nothing but the Blues.

*A number of reviews have been held over for the next issue. These include the current Blues Bunch album, which contains a good production of this exciting jump blues band.*

*Network subscribers in the UK mainland will be eligible for a free draw with each issue. The winners of the April draw are: **Brian Jessup**, 1 Victory Avenue, Morden, Surrey SM4 6DL and **Tony Vines**, 13, Waterloo Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP1 2NY. Each will receive an album.*

**Subscribers' Network cards should be available shortly and will be mailed as soon as possible. Overseas subscription rates should be sorted out by the next issue. Apologies to all who have enquired about this.**

# BLUESNEWS

Kenny Neal, from Baton Rouge, USA, is touring here in June to promote his album, *Bio on the Bayou*, for Bedrock Records. *B B Review* is promoting his first gig, which is on June 16th, at the George and Dragon, Acton High Street, Tickets are £5 and it should be a really good night.



Other Neal gigs are: 17th, Worcester; 20th, 100 Club, London, W1; 21st, Exeter Arts Centre; 23rd, Bell Inn, Ash, Somerset; 25th, West End Centre, Aldershot; 27th, Band on the Wall, Manchester; 28th 'The Thekla' Bristol; 29th, Bridgewater Arts Centre; and 30th, Half Moon,

Putney, London.

**Screaming Jay Hawkins** is booked for July 2nd, at London's Town and Country Club. **James Cotton** will be here, too, on June 25th at the Astoria, Leeds, and on the 26th at the Glasgow International Jazz Festival.

On June 28th the Glasgow

International Jazz Festival also features **Ray Charles**, as does the Royal Festival Hall, London: 29 June.

**Otis Rush** may possibly be here for the summer, perhaps July or August whilst other possibilities for August or September are **Silas Hogan** and **Clarence Carter**. Let's hope these come off.

**Johnny Mars** is busy enough with gigs on June 17th at Hayfield Jazz Festival, Cheshire; 18th, Band on the Wall, Manchester; July 11th, City of London Festival and August 22nd - 25th at the Edinburgh Festival. Johnny also plays every Friday at Taylor's in Martello Street, Hackney, London.

**Will Killeen** has just recorded his first album for Tom Docherty's Communique Label. It's a one man show, with Will playing all instruments on each track. The album is titled *Blues Del Bandido*. Will is off to Italy for a holiday before he resumes on the 28th June at The Square Folk Blues Club in Harlow, Essex. Other gigs follow in July; 7th, Horn Of Plenty, St. Albans, Herts.; 9th, White Horse, Willesden; 10th, Green Man, Finchley; and 16th, at Windsor Art Centre.

**Shakey Vick's Blues Band** is at the 100 Club for "B B Review & Bob's Goodtime Blues", on 14th June, along with **Joe Louis** and his **Blues Kings** and the **Andrew Mitchell Blues Band**. In July (12th) the 100 Club line up is **Shakey Vick's Blues Band**, **Radical Sheiks** and **The Bluecasters**. Shakey plays Wantage's Bluenotes Club with his band on 6th July, works with Radical Sheiks on 24th June and 1st July at the Carnarvon Castle in Camden, London, and continues the fourth year of the Carnarvon residency with his own band every Sunday night.

Other 100 Club gigs are the Sunday Night Speakeasy, run by Steve Beggs. Among the acts coming up, **Dana Gillespie Blues Band**, featuring **Sammy Mitchell**, should be a good programme. Support is **Mr. "C"** and the date is June 26th. **Ricky Cool** is the D J and will also be spinning records when **The Big Town Playboys** play the gig in July (10th).

Sitting in at the 100 Club recently with Wycombe

Band **The Mafia**, and at the Carnarvon Castle with **Shakey Vick**, was **Detroit Gary Wiggins**, who works from Germany at present, having spent some time in Chicago. He and his partner, German pianist **Christian Rannenberg**, came together in Chicago and formed **The International Blues Duo** there. They came to Europe to extend their following and are worth checking out. They have an album out, on Crosscut Records, which we shall review in our next issue. Detroit Gary's bluesy tenor and Christian's piano complement each other perfectly and we are going to hear more from them.

On the subject of imported records, a new mail order outfit based in Surrey and known as **Blueberry Jam Records** is now operating, specialising in Blues and R&B records and CD's. For details, phone Bagshot (0276) 71543, or write to Blueberry Jam Records, P O Box 92, Lightwater, Surrey, GU18 5SF. Run by blues enthusiast **Paul Harper**, Blueberry Jam offers a good selection of imported material - from the greats, to lesser known, blues artists.

We have a number of other albums to review for the next issue (due out on 1st August) including two British bands with current releases - **The Norman Beaker Band** (See Pete Feenstra's Blues Overview) on JSP Records - and **Brian Knight**, on PRT Records. Brian has been around the blues scene from the beginning, with Blues by Six, Kick Out The Jams, among others. His latest project teams him up with a young guitar player named **Jon McLoughlin** - a different spelling, but with the same birthplace, Yorkshire, as the other well known guitarist. We've already got an interview with Brian, which should be in the next issue. It makes interesting listening.

Finally, talking about interviews we've got on tape and ready to be included in the August issue, **Roger Pearce**, our cartoonist/guitarist, assures me that we'll be ready to give you an exclusive interview with **Eric Clapton**. Eric talks about his early days and about his present ideas, with a possibility of a return to the roots. Should be worth the years' subscription.

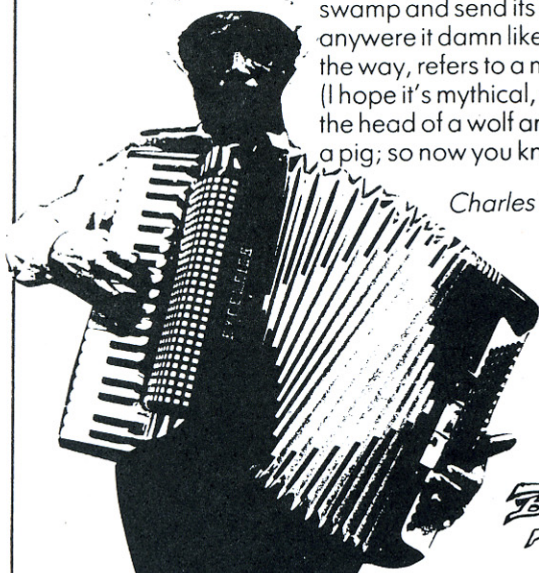
## MAJOR HANDY

WOLF COUCHON

BEDLP 7 ZYDECO (LOUISIANA)

"Attention! 'Ey amigos! Aw-rah!" Proof, if any were needed, that a traditional music can keep its roots in the swamp and send its branches anywhere it damn likes. The title, by the way, refers to a mythical beast (I hope it's mythical, anyway) with the head of a wolf and the body of a pig; so now you know. ★★★★★

Charles Shaar Murray



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# NIGEL SMARMAN, THE A&R MAN



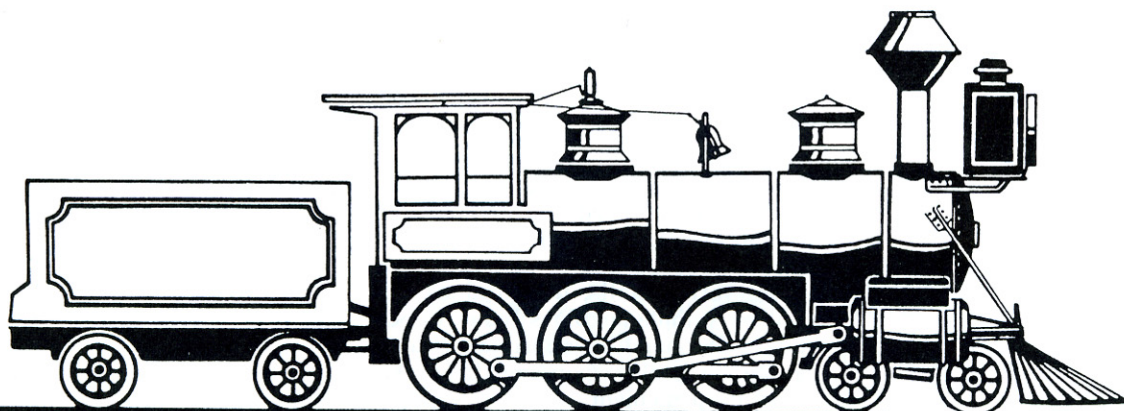
Greetings Charles. It's me you fool. Yes I know, slumped at the bar again staring into middle distance. Actually Chrissy's rather fed up with me at the moment, well I forgot one of our anniversaries, that day we went to Paris or some bloody thing. Look here Charles, I want you to be brutally frank, do you think I've overdone it with the clothes. I'm bound to say I feel a bit of a chump in this get-up. Nothing fits. I had to borrow it all from Robbo's younger brother, he wears nothing else the little swine. Apparently it's what they wear in this film called 'The Blues Brothers'. The suit's bad enough, but wait till you see the hat and the dark glasses. Hold on a minute, there. The whole rig. What do you think? Oh Jesus here's Felicity coming in, what's she going to think? Hi Flos...it's me, Nige. I know I do darling, I'm off to a bit of a function. Can I offer you a stiff one dear? She could do with it an' all Charles, look at that figure, which reminds me, two large ones Pete please, when you're ready. Yes it's all a bit of a blighter quite frankly Charles. I'm off to the opening night of this Blues club, some group called the Blues Bastards or something playing, and apparently this is the sort of thing everybody wears. I mean we'll be bump-

ing into each other all night with these ridiculous glasses on. Blimey, I wonder if Felicity would like to come along. There's a lot of interest in this blues stuff at the moment old boy. Haven't you seen those ads on telly, you must have, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Muddy Wolf, I mean it must have cost them a pretty packet so someone must be buying it I suppose. Robbo's brother lent me the records and I must say they're quite fun. They do a lot of Stones stuff, you know, boom ba boom ba boom ba boom, my mama done left me, took away my last bloody chocolate biscuit, you know the type of thing. Anyway now there are a host of young groups, some of them not so young I might add, all bashing away at the three chords, all wearing these silly bloody hats and dark glasses. Can you bloody well believe it. They don't even write their own songs, they'd rather knock out all this old stuff. Of course they won't last five minutes, but while it's on old muggins has got to show the flag. What a way to earn a living Charles, I sometimes wonder why we bother. The next thing someone will sign one of the buggers up, then all hell will break loose. Great rush for the old fountain pen, usual stampede, just like a load of bloody sheep-fanciers, and I don't want

to end up with the ugly one do I, so here I am, all set. Better get going I suppose. Goodo, Flos is still here, I'm going to ask her on the way out. Point me in the right direction will you old boy, I can't see a bloody thing in this light. Cheerio.

The next issue will be out on August 1st. Copy deadline for the August issue, is Friday 17th June. Copy should be typed with double spacing and adequate margins. Unsolicited submissions should include S.A.E. The Editor's decision is final.

Advertising space should be booked by Friday 24th June. Artwork deadline is Friday 8th July.



## STATION TAVERN

### JUNE

- 13 T Model Slim
- 16 Blue Duke
- 17 Blue Stew
- 18 Big Joe Louis and his Blues Kings
- 19 Radio 5
- 20 Phoenix Blues Band
- 23 The Slammers, with Chris Youlden
- 24 The Mean Red Spiders
- 25 Big Joe Louis and his Blues Kings
- 26 Juke Joint
- 27 Boogie Chillun'
- 29 The 3rd Station Tavern Harp Jam

### 30 The R&R Band

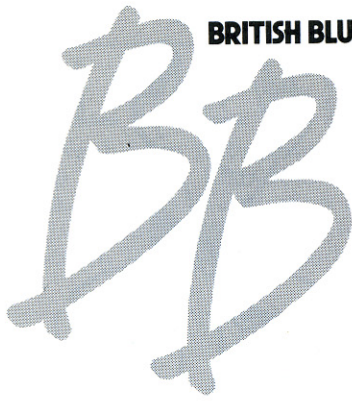
### JULY

- 1 The Hot Licks Cookies
- 2 Big Joe Louis and his Blues Kings
- 3 Kit Packham's Sudden Jump Band
- 4 Mercy Mercy
- 7 Blue Duke
- 8 Big Road Blues Band
- 9 Big Joe Louis and his Blues Kings
- 10 Pine Top's Boogie Men
- 11 Giles Hedley Blues Band
- 14 Blue Duke

### 15 The Andrew Mitchell Blues Band

- 16 Big Joe Louis and his Blues Kings
- 17 Innocent Bystanders
- 18 The Bluescasters
- 21 Blue Duke
- 22 Giles Hedley Blues Band
- 23 Big Joe Louis and his Blues Kings
- 24 The Blues Burglars
- 25 To be confirmed
- 28 Blue Duke
- 29 The Poorboys
- 30 Big Joe Louis and his Blues Kings
- 31 Kit Packham's Sudden Jump Band

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# network

As information comes in, we shall keep readers informed of blues in their area, through the Network news. Keep information coming in please.

## SOUTH WEST

The West Country has good pockets of Blues activity in Devon. Exeter has Dave Treharne broadcasting over Devonair Radio (VHF 97.0 and 96.4). His programme, "That's Why They Call It The Blues" goes on the air every Thursday at 8pm.

Promoters Dave Williams, Ian Briggs and Julian Piper, run their "Blues South West" very successfully. They have promoted a huge range of artists, including Robert Cray, Joe Louis Walker, Lefty Dizz and Carey and Lurrie Bell. Contact Ian on Budleigh Salterton 3158. When not promoting, Ian is a member of the Exeter-based blues band, The King Biscuit Show. Gorilla Promotions is another blues promoting organisation, well managed by Ben Ballin (Exeter 35302).

Further West, Plymouth doesn't have much on Radio, but there are two thriving venues with live Blues: The Breakwater in Plymouth and The Swan, Devonport.

To the East, Taunton has the renowned Bell Inn at Ash, one of the thriving live blues venues. Promotions here are organised by Colin Browning (093583 595) of Evershot, near Dorset.

Bristol, once the centre of a thriving blues scene still has pockets of activity. BBC Radio Bristol has a very popular "Roots Revival Show", broadcast every Thursday evening at 8pm, presented by John Turner and Keith Warmington, both fine musicians and authorities on the blues. Radio Bristol has widespread coverage, as far down as Bournemouth; tune in on VHF FM 95.5, 94.9, and 104.6. The live scene in Bristol is growing, with venues at The Bell, Jamaica Street, The King's Arms, Black Boy Hill and now The Albert Inn, Bedminster, which features a new club, "The Albert Hole", run by Dave Plimmer (Bristol 634151). Main band in Bristol is the Modern Jump Blues Band, fronted by Eddie Martin and Rockin' Robert. Eddie Martin also has regular gigs in a Chicago-style blues duo with Bass player Peter Moody.

Down on the South Coast airways, pick up Pete Nickols on 2CR Radio. Pete, an experienced writer for Blues magazines, Record Collector and other journals, broadcasts his show: "A Shot of Rhythm and Blues", on 97.2 every Tuesday.

Bob Pearce heads the bill for live blues down this way. Bob, who recently appeared on Paul Jones' radio show, can regularly be found performing on the Southampton circuit. Call him up on 0703 735760. You can catch The Third Degree, a band featuring guitarist John Holmes, on the Southampton - Bournemouth circuit, too. One regular venue for the band is The Nelson, at Poole. Contact John on 0452 4488.

Finally in Southampton, Skip Conway is one of the main blues promoters (0703 777424). He mainly organizes for the University. Across the estuary and into Wales, Red Dragon Radio, VHF 103.2 and 97.4, features Jeff Thomas. Catch his show on Saturday nights at 10pm. A good band in the Red Dragon area is the Blues Bunch, who can be reached through Chris Haines, 0639 830501.

Incidentally, the Welsh Jazz Society are organising a gig by Nappy Brown at the Four Bars Inn, Cardiff on 13th June. Nappy will be backed by Cardiff favourites Red Hot Pokers.

**Pete Moody**

## SCOTLAND

There is a reasonably healthy Blues scene in mid-Scotland; although many of the musicians have been playing for years, the success of Edinburgh's Blues 'n Trouble has meant that venues which previously scorned Blues are now amenable to the music. I have a very tenuous family connection with a member of The Best Dressed Blues Band, a Chicago Blues styled group that operates out of Stirling. The BDBB's harmonica player, Davey MacFarlane, told me that they have recently played gigs in Falkirk and Bannockburn, and also enjoyed a well received support spot at Edinburgh's Preservation Halls, described as "The Golden Temple for Blues Bands in Scotland". The band have also made demos and are rapidly expanding their repertoire at the moment.

There are other bands active in the area, and on a recent trip up there I was taken one Sunday afternoon up, into the hills past Perth to find a Blues band rehearsing in a studio with a large horn section. Could there be another Blues 'n Trouble on the way.

**Norman Darwen**

## NORTH EAST

Tony Burke, editor of 'Blues and Rhythm' said in his magazine a couple of years back that "The Blues is alive and well and currently living at the Jumpin' and Hot Club, Bridge Hotel, Newcastle". Ever since then, Newcastle upon Tyne has become what can only be described as a 'hot bed' for British Blues/R & B, regularly featuring both local and national artists. Apart from the J'Hot Club and, of course, the legendary Broken Doll public house in New-

castle, you can catch some sort of Blues almost every night.

Here's a short account of what you might find if you're ever fortunate enough to find yourself 'Up North'.

Sunday, Monday and Wednesday evenings and, occasionally, Saturdays, The Broken Doll holds Blues events. Just walking into The Doll is like going back in time to the good old days of the Blues clubs/pubs of the sixties. Decked out with pictures of Muddy, Elmore, Hooker and the like, Mike Barker has managed to create the sleazy atmosphere of a Blues den, not unlike the black hole of Calcutta!

The Jumpin' and Hot Club, Bridge Hotel, is held every Tuesday and attracts international as well as local artists. It's the Northeast's only cellar club and has been run - for over two years - by a couple of young blues/R&B enthusiasts. The Big Town Playboys, Howlin' Wilf and The Veejays, Big Joe Duskin, Ricky Cool and his Texas Turkeys, The Rhythmaires and even Newcastle's own Hot Licks Cookies, have played there. The Hot Licks Cookies, who play a "right mixture of Jug Band, Hot Blues and Wild Skiffle" consist of Double Bass, a Dobro/slide and harmonica/guitar, recently did a gig with Steve Phillips here in May. Others booked: "The King of Palm-wine music", S E Rogie, a local Western Swing/Rockin' Blues seven-piece called Pop Dick and Harry, and firm favourites on the Rock and Roll circuit, the bluesy Sureshots.

A little further South, in South Shields, there's a blues club run by local "nutters" Hokum Hotshots who play (You've guessed it!) Hokum and country blues, but in a madcap manner. It's at the Rose and Crown and also features local folk/jazzy/country blues artists every Wednesday.

Also on Wednesday nights, in the heart of Newcastle Bigg Market, The Duke of Wellington provides us with the blues. It's the kind of pub in which you couldn't swing a cat. On my last visit there, I witnessed that Australian songster Gypsy Dave Smith rolling some absolutely mean blues on his Dobro/slide. The manager, a dedicated blues fan, insists on providing us with red hot blues, gospel and calypso, during the interval, through the sound system.

Other Newcastle places worth mentioning are: The Jewish Restaurant, which has a late blues session most nights, The Playhouse, which features Electric blues, the Time Out Bar and The Forth in Pink Lane also feature blues from time to time.

To sum up; Newcastle is definitely "a good Neet oot" if you've got the blues, so if you're ever around these parts, obtain a copy of the free music mag: Paint It Red - a kind of Time Out of Newcastle.

**Shipcoat**

# LISTINGS

As London is well covered by mags like Capital M, Time Out, City Limits, etc. we've listed some of the out of town gigs.

- ERIC BELL AND THE SUNSETS**  
 17th June The Hermit Club, Brentwood, Essex.  
 16th July Nag's Head, London Rd, High Wycombe, Bucks.
- BLUE DUKE**  
 19th June The Fisheries, Harefield, Middx.
- BIG JOE LOUIS AND HIS BLUES KINGS**  
 19th June Nag's Head, London Rd, High Wycombe, Bucks.
- THE R&R BAND**  
 June 16th Coach and Horses, Chepstow, Mon. Wales.  
 18th The Lamb, Pontypool, Wales.  
 25th The Lamb, Trowbridge, Wilts.  
 26th Flying Machine, Gloucester.  
 July 3rd Malt & Hops, Gloucester.  
 4th New Inn, Oxford.  
 8th The George, Melksham, Wilts.
- RADIO 5**  
 June 23rd The Airman, Hanworth Rd, Feltham, Middx.
- SNATCH IT BACK**  
 Each Sun. Royal Oak, Broadway, Cardiff, Wales.  
 Each Tues. Royal Oak, Broadway, Cardiff, Wales.  
 July 1st Verdi's, Weymouth.
- MICHEGAN AVENUE**  
 June 29th New Bedford and Holloway College, Egham, Surrey.
- HOWLIN' WILF & THE VEE-JAYS.**  
 June 13th Clair College, Cambridge.  
 16th The Riverboat, Kidderminster, Worcs.  
 17th University, Eastfield Rd, Benton, Newcastle.  
 18th Moles, Bath, Avon.  
 19th Links Centre, Swindon, Wiltshire.  
 29th Poly. S.U., Brighton, Sussex.  
 July 1st The Shelley Arms, High St, Nutley, Sussex.  
 2nd Arts Centre, Colchester, Essex.
- SHAKEY VICK'S BLUES BAND**  
 July 6th Blue Notes, Swan Inn, Market Place, Wantage, Oxon
- PREVIOUS GOOD CHARACTER**  
 June 17th The Smithfield, City Centre, Manchester.  
 July 23rd The Railway, Radcliffe.  
 30th Eagle and Child, Bury.

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