

ISSUE No.10

BRITISH BLUES

OCTOBER 1989

BB *review*

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Read All
About It!

TALKIN' BLUES

When Muddy Waters fist visited Britain, so the story goes, his use of amplification caused problems for the more delicate members of the budding blues fraternity. People apparently left in disgust – just how many people and with how much disgust is not related. The story further goes that on Muddy's second visit, he'd dispensed with the amplification, by which time his potential audience was apparently ready for it and so were again disappointed. Well there have always been people ready to try to foist their ideas of how musicians should perform, upon visiting artists. They will always be with us.

Muddy Waters, amplified or not, got on with the job of showing us how his version of the blues should be played and left a lasting impression. We don't know what happened to the critics of those early days, and probably don't much care, but there is a question still to be faced. How loud does amplified blues have to be?

There is a certain point below which amplification ceases to be effective, and also a point above which it becomes ineffective due

to overkill. That leaves quite a lot of scope in between, yet the tendency has steadily been towards the loud end of the spectrum rather than the quieter end.

Increasing the volume doesn't usually improve the performance but it might well cover lack of ability. It certainly destroys any subtlety in the music. Even raucous Chicago blues has plenty of subtlety in performance without losing any power to reach the more primitive parts of the listener. Mega decibels should be left for Jumbo jets and the more mororic musicians associated with the Rock scene.

Of course, the fault doesn't always lie with the musicians. There is a certain breed – called The Sound Engineer or Mixer – some of whom appear to have a genetic inability to turn amplification in any direction except up. They are the ones who nurture musicians' megalomania. Still, with all the advances being made in genetic engineering, the particular rogue gene may be isolated quite soon. Meanwhile we'll continue with the lip-reading classes.



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Letters

Dear B B R,

Please find enclosed a cheque for a tenner, for another year's sub to the mag.

Enjoyable and informative reading. Like Malcolm X from Victoria in Australia, I would like to see more articles on John Mayall and Peter Green, plus all the other names from twenty years ago: Stan Webb, Tony McPhee, Rory Gallacher, Chris Youlden, Dick Heckstall-Smith, Kim Simmonds, Alvin Lee, Mike Vernon...I'd better stop. I feel really old. With best wishes

**Paul Sherrard,
Portrush
Co. Antrim.**

Ed: I feel really old too, Paul. I'd like a good night's sleep, but I've tried counting blues musos jumping over a style. It doesn't send me to sleep, though.

Dear B B R

Let me say 'Well Done' on a) 'surviving' the first year, which always must be the dangerous time for a new magazine and b) providing an excellent read and coverage of the British blues scene.

As a follower of the blues for the last twenty years (help - is it really that long?) I enjoy your magazine because of the balance between reviewing the current scene/acts/venues etc. and digging into the archives tracing items back into the 50s and 60s.

By the way, John Slaughter (Chris Barber's guitarist) has been playing a few gigs around here leading his own four-piece outfit. They mainly play modern Chicago Blues, plus jams like E C's Cocaine. Excellent stuff and a good night's entertainment. Keep up the good work. cheers.

R Jim Greaves

Dear B.B.R.,

Thanks for your letter reminding me that my subscription was due for renewal on 9/5/89.

May I take this opportunity in thanking you for a really good informative magazine which is not only different, but also a lot more interesting than the other blues magazines. Please keep up the good work. Could I suggest that you include a lot more record reviews, more adverts and perhaps a blues related chart of best selling albums, or perhaps include a readers chart of favourites of which I've included a few of mine:-

Tore Up	The Tail	(Wrestler
	Gators	records)
Red Hot	The	(Blues
& Rockin'	Marauders	House
		music)
The Oil	Big Jack	(Earwig)
Man	Johnson	
Sweet	Dana	(Blue
Meat	Gillespie	Horizon)
On My	U P	(Red
Way	Wilson	Lightning)

The blues scene in and around the Southampton area is flourishing with regular blues nights at the Joiners, monthly gigs at the excellent Boars Head at Wickham which recently had the likes of Luther Allison, Doctor Feelgood, The Marauders, Blues 'N' Trouble and Little Charlie & The Nightcats (absolutely brilliant), and also the Onslow (The Home of the Blues) which recently have seen acts such as Jo Ann Kelly, Dave Kelly, Carey & Lurrie Bell, Lefty Dizz and Lucky Lopez Evans. All this and many other local bands and venues in the area.

As a keen photographer I always carry a camera and now have an interesting collection of photographs (which reminds me, I must sort them out soon).

All the recent activity on the blues scene, helped of course by "British Blues Review", has inspired me to start playing the music that I love. Just recently I have taken up paying guitar in the blues style, and I am having lessons from the guitarist of an excellent Portsmouth based R & B band named Dr. Brown.

Looking forward to the next issue of "British Blues Review".

All the best,
**G P Woodman,
Southampton**

Dear Sirs,

Please renew my subscription to British Blues Review, I enclose a cheque for £10.00.

I'd love to see some articles on the late sixties guitar wizards such as Peter Green, Mick Taylor, Stan Webb, Kim Simmonds etc., as well as the lesser known axemen such as Martin Stone, Martin Pugh (Steamhammer), Mick Clarke (Killing Floor), and so on.

Thanks for a great magazine, keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully
**Kevin Foley,
Southampton**

Dear BBR

Thanks for mailing me the last issue which proved to be a stimulating read. I felt compelled to write in and tell you about Otis Lift and The Elevators, a band that will be of interest to anyone who listens to British Blues.

I ran across them at the Dew Drop Inn on a recent visit to Eastbourne! Fronted by Otis Lift's convincing vocals and authentic harp, their two sets consisted of blues standards, mainly from the golden age of Chess, spiced with interesting British selections, such as Blues and Trouble's 'Cherry Peaches'.

The two guitarists behind the harmonica played complementary roles, adding bite without overkill. Finishing with 'Riding on the L & N', the band went on to encore twice, which was a measure of how well they went down on the night. The standard of musicianship was consistently high, which belied the "low key" pub venue.

Speaking to the band afterwards, I understand they are cutting a demo at the end of August, and are seeking gigs in the London area. Anyone interested should contact Big Al on 0273-568865 days and 0273-777755 evenings.

**Peter Skinner,
West Croydon**

Dear BBR,

Just a line to let you know that the R&B show on Key 103 is moving to a new time slot from September. It will now go out from 6-8pm on Thursdays thus avoiding a clash with "the other one"!

The show is getting a lot of support locally - there are an ever increasing number of clubs and pubs putting on gigs. We have had tapes from some of the many bands springing up in the area - The Herberts, Torpedoes, Original Sin, Cabal, Hipsters, Previous Good Character - all of a consistently good quality. In June Norman Beaker came in one night and told us about some of the artists he and his band play with and how he started in the music business. We hope to do another show with him later in the year.

Our aim is to prove that the blues is very much alive and kicking and, although we play our fair share of classics, we rely on getting a regular supply of new material. I'm sorry to say, despite letters and phone calls some record companies just don't seem interested in promoting their stuff. (Shades of your editorial in issue 7). One really wonders why they actually bring the records out in the first place, there aren't that many shows in this country where they can get airplay!

However, we keep persevering and hopefully we'll pick up some new listeners with our new time.

All the best
**Pete Johnson,
Piccadilly Radio,
Key 103,
PO BOX 103,
Manchester,
M60 1QT.**

THE RECORDING SCENE

elefanztrunk – A REAL “INDIE”

When the editor of this publication told me he wanted to do a series on record companies, and wanted me to start it off with an article about the trials, tribulations, history, achievements, and future aims of my own Elefanztrunk Records, I couldn't help wondering if he was starting at the bottom and working up. Oh well here goes anyway.

Technically speaking I do not actually own a record company. I am what is known as a 'record label proprietor', not that I ever use it as a moniker though.

The name Elefanztrunk, you may have guessed, especially if you are from the deep sarf, is rhyming slang for one of my frequent conditions. But that's another story.

When I hear the likes of Virgin and (until recently) Island referred to as 'independent record labels' or to use the vernacular 'indies', I have to laugh to keep from crying. As far as I'm concerned they are 'Majors' and the sooner somebody redefines the category the better. Now Elefanztrunk IS independent, right down to its bootstraps, almost to the point of being underground. Ex-

ample; for some reason Music Week don't list Elefanztrunk releases anymore, even though they receive product, written confirmation, and Fax's. Result, nothing! Is it because we are not affiliated to a distributor anymore I wonder? Any explanation would suffice. In the meantime I have let my Music Week subscription lapse.

Although Elefanztrunk Records operates on something of a shoestring, it did start out with mega intentions, and is therefore a bona-fide label, being listed in the appropriate directories, keeps proper accounts, issues royalties, and even has its own amusing little logo, which, as I don't put it on all product, hopefully the art editor may be able to reproduce for you here. (well done Angie!) (or not, as the case may be)

The catalysts to the formation of my

own label are a bunch of faceless and chinless wonders collectively known as "A&R personnel" who at best do not consider British R&B a viable product, and at worst don't really understand what Rhythm and Blues is. So instead of hawking product around and getting depressed by constant rejections from these morons, I can now keep trying, with the comforting thought that I am selling thousands of units of 'non-viable' product at the same time. Before we leave the subject of A&R personnel, I must recount a recent experience which highlights what we are up against. Having invested a 'couple of grand' recording a version of a George Gershwin classic, which is always a barnstormer at gigs, with a view to releasing it as a single, we decided it would stand more chance on a label with a bit more clout than Elefanztrunk, so out went the rough mix demos to various record companies. Jackie, (my gorgeous assistant) upon following one up, encountered a spotty faced 'erbert of about twelve years of age, presenting himself as the A&R executive, who obviously didn't recognise the tune, proclaiming "It will never be a hit" (It's been a hit already for handfuls of artists in various styles at regular intervals over several decades!) however, he quite liked the melody, and expressed a real interest in the composer, asking "who is this George Gershwin by the way?". I believe he thought George was a member of the band! Well I could handle it if he hadn't heard of Lonnie Johnson or Big Bill Broonzy or someone of that ilk, but really! Well anyway, Jackie promised to send Mr A&R any new tunes that George Gershwin came up with!

Mind you, if he's been listening to the same crap demo's that I get dropping through my letterbox every week, then it's no wonder that he's brain dead to proper music.

Since it was established in 1985, there have been four releases on Elefanztrunk, (one vinyl album, one vinyl single, and two cassette albums) with as many more currently in the pipeline. Most of them are by a rather obscure artiste called Wolfie Witcher, but although it was formed primarily as a vehicle to promote my own band, it has always been my intention to record other artists, and indeed a 'Double Bill' cassette (side one Shakey Vick – side two Wolfie Witcher) was released in January and with hardly any promotion, and a 'market stall' approach to selling, had sold over 1000 copies in the first 6 months, a figure probably doubled by the time you read this. If those figures don't sound impressive, believe me, there are a lot of specialist labels with national distribu-



**ELEFANTZTRUNK
RECORDS**

tion that will envy them.

Elefanztrunk was at one time served by a national distributor or two, a situation set up by a former damager, oops! I mean manager of mine, but unless a distributor really gets behind your product, (which they didn't) then it really isn't worth all the paperwork compared with the slender income. So, currently Elefanztrunk is self distributed.

The aforementioned self distribution and market stall style would not suit many in this business because of its peculiar attractiveness to the poseur'. But in my time (among many other things) I have been a street corner news vendor and a second hand car dealer, so it suits me. (I feel a song coming on) "All me life I've wanted ta be a barra' boy-ah....." and besides, it has certain advantages in that it cuts out a lot of middle men, therefore, maximum profits!

Returning to the subject of recording other artists, for years now I've been wanting to do one of those compilation albums, with as many current working R&B bands on as is workable, (no less than three, no more than twelve) but those approached so far have been very lukewarm on the idea. Why will people sign anything for the A&R poseur but not trust a fellow musician? Is it because I used to be a second hand car dealer, I wonder? How different it was in New Orleans when I met soul singer Lee Bates. After a half-hour chat he was practically begging me to be his manager. I suggested that he would have to revert to an earlier style than his current one, (at the moment he sounds like a poor man's Barry White). He agreed, and there was an all too seldom - felt air of mutual trust. If I had sufficient investment capital I would love the challenge. You may see some U.S. artists on Elefanztrunk yet.

Apart from the first album, for which musicians were paid a flat fee, and was organised by the aforementioned damager, er sorry, manager, (and lost money) all subsequent releases have been profitable, both for Elefanztrunk and the dozen or so musicians involved, being paid percentages (based on income rather than profits) which have/will net them more than the flat fee. There has never been a complaint from any musician (yet) and indeed most of them haven't even bothered to sign their contracts. I like to think that is a sign of trust rather than mistrust, as technically an unsigned agreement means nothing. Even fired musicians still get their cheques every 6 months so come on you R&B bands, send me your demos, I'm fed up with listening to drum machines and synthesizers.

*I sells 'em a dozen a shillin'ah
That's 'ow I earns me livin'ah
I ought-er been a barra- boy years ago
GIT ORF ME BARR'AH!!
I ought-er been a barra- boy years ago*

Wolfie Witcher

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A RAP WITH LITTLE CHARLIE AND THE NIGHT CATS

PETER FEENSTRA

In this age of the fleeting image and million unit sales, it comes as a breath of fresh air to stumble upon an r&b blues band whose efforts have been one of the main reasons for the resurgence of both the r&b scene in the ol' US of A, and the club scene in general.

Step right up LITTLE CHARLIE AND THE NIGHTCATS, a band who put the emphasis on two letters in the alphabet, B for blues and E for entertainment. I caught up with Charlie (BATY) himself and Clarke Gable clone RICK ESTRIN for swift post-gig info on the band and the blues scene in general.

Little Charlie and the Nightcats are not a band who just emerged from some down-time in a studio with very little cred to take on the streets. On the contrary, as Rick explained, both he and Charlie go back a long way.

"I've been playing with Charlie for some twelve years now, playing pretty much the stuff we're doing now although it's only the last three years that we've been recording."

The story goes that Rick relocated from the band's California base and headed to Chicago to seek out the blues. In between frequent trips back and forth, he worked with OTIS RUSH, CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE and a host of heroes, before he hit Alligator (the band's present backers) with a tape that Executive producer Bruce Iglauer turned into the Nightcats' significant break. Charlie recalls: "We'd been working the clubs all over the place, playing around 265 dates a year, but with an album behind you it's easier to take your music to a wider audience. The last album alone received airplay in 48 states, and on over 100 commercial radio stations." He added "the other big thing for us and a lot of bands was ROBERT CRAY breaking big. He opened the door for loads of blues bands to hit the road."

Charlie and the boys are close pals with Robert and recently played on a club billing with the man in front of some 7,000 people (some club)... Rick: "There's a diverse number of places to

play ranging from just 100 people, to the gig I just mentioned. But you just approach them in pretty much the same way – just let the people hear the music." The band play an interesting mix of 40's and 50's influenced swing, r&b and a style the band like to call "Jumping blues", and as the ING suggests, this quartet set their own style and add a few historic chestnuts.

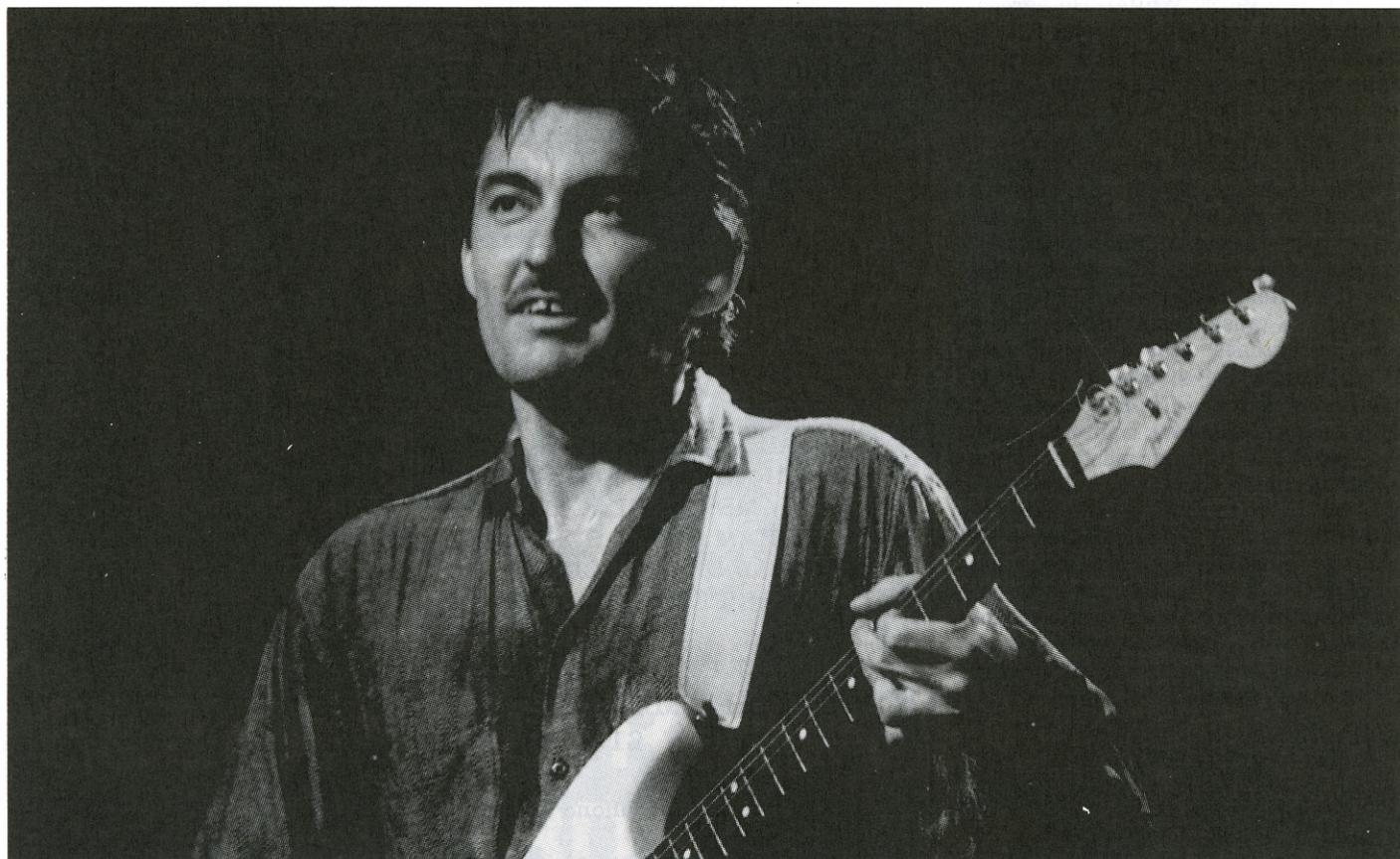
Charlie: "We love all the old players like Sonny Boy, Little Walter and Muddy, in the way we appreciate ROBERT CRAY etc, but the aim is to find our own way."

What Little Charlie and company play is a number of fairly short Rick Estrin penned efforts with a fair dose of humour and occasional glimpses of some brazen instrumentalism. Charlie's guitar style is innovative in the sense of incorporating a number of musical styles into his solos. He's no Hendrix or Vaughan, but whips up a storm that is never complete without the audience letting him know they are there.

Rick: "We've got one of THE guitarists in the band and even after twelve years of cranking it out, I'm still amazed at what he comes out with."

A very bashful Charlie cuts Rick short:

"Well we don't very often have to work with a set list, especially if the audience is behind you. You can just go wherever the vibe takes you."



Little Charlie, photo: David Cooper



Rick Estrin, photo: David Cooper

However, with numbers like the much covered "Living Hand To Mouth" to their credit, the band are rapidly establishing some stage faves that their followers demand to hear. With "All The Way Crazy" selling well on the Sonet label, this jovial South Californian bunch look set to extend their Euro visits. But as both Charlie and Rick exclaim, they are only just the first of many.

"Well, apart from Northern Cali with

KATY WEBSTER, ELVIN BISHOP, THE PALADINS, MITCH WOODS, MARK HUMMEL and ROY RODGERS, there's where we come from in the South with THE PONTIACS, THE MIGHTY FLYERS, WILLIAM CLARKE, STEVE SAMUELS and JAMES HARMAN."

Rick is moved to note; "The last five years have been great for me, its the first time I didn't have to worry about my day job".

Being the first Californian band to sign for ALLIGATOR, and now well on the way to their third album, LITTLE CHARLIE are in the vanguard of a thriving scene that augurs well for the future. With the further boost of a sponsorship deal with a major American beer company in the bag, LITTLE CHARLIE & the boys are proving that the interest in blues and r&b is on the up.

BRITISH BLUES

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at 100 CLUB

100 OXFORD STREET, LONDON W1

BLUES SESSION

Tuesday October 31st

The Shakey Vick Blues Band

8pm – midnight

Admission £4. (Concessions £3)

THE BLUES CAME DOWN FROM BIRMINGHAM

By Rowdy Yeats



Shuggie finds Bbmaj7 while Flea blows hot. Photo: Peter Harrington

Summer 1989 found me working for the Birmingham International Jazz Festival, run by impresario and blues fan Jim Simpson, the man who used to put together those American Blues Legends tours of the seventies.

Kicking off on Friday July 7th, Robert Cray and his band were onstage at the NEC Arena in front of six thousand or so appreciative fans. It's been a year or two since Young Bob could be seen in the more intimate settings of Dingwalls Dancehall and the like, and he has added another guitarist, Japanese axeman Tim Kaihatso, to his line-up, while taking along the Memphis Horns to

replicate the parts which adorn the latest Cray albums. This is all very well, but the whole seemed badly served by the NEC acoustics and the overall sound was muddy and indistinct, while the essential intimacy of the songs translated badly when echoed around the giant stadium. Robert Cray is fortunate to have scaled these lofty heights, and his fans are enthusiastically loyal – Kaihatso's few solos remaining largely ignored – but the guitarist would do well to remember his role as this generation's blues romantic.

Johnny Otis Show veteran Gene Mighty Flea Connors was a welcome Festival visitor and the singer/trombonist made a number of pub and

club dates around town, most usually backed by John Woodhead's Jersey Bounce. They proved to be an extremely sympathetic crew behind the American and Woodhead (keys), Mike Harris (acoustic bass and bass guitar) and Roy Tomlinson (drums) were always in tune with Connors' jazzy brand of R&B.

The Alexandra Theatre was host for two stupendous nights of the Brum Jazz-fest. Sunday 9th laid on the eighty-year old Cab Calloway and his own Cotton Club Orchestra – eleven men who swing like Basie. Opening the show were local heroes King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys who were blessed to see the entire Calloway band in the wings digging their exuberant set with heads nodding

and feet tapping. Finally, the young upstarts were wiggled out when the old Maestro's dressing room door, which had remained firmly closed, was flung wide open so that the King of Hi-de-ho could cop a better listen for himself!

Tuesday night at the Alex presented the mighty Blues Brothers Band (from the movie!) led from the engine room by Steve Cropper and Matt Guitar Murphy on guitars and Donald Duck Dunn on bass. The two shows had completely sold out and as soon as Dunn kicked off Green Onions the place erupted. Grown men went apeshit and pretty ladies into paroxysms of delight. Drummer Danny Gottlieb was kinda thrashy for these ears and keyboardist Leon Pendarvis served little purpose, but the vocalists, Larry Thurston, whose dress sense stopped at 1974, and – laydees and gentlemen, mister *Knock On Wood* himself – mistah Eddie Floyd, served up liberal doses of those Memphis soul classics, straight from the source. There is no doubt that Duck is, as it were, *probably*

the best bass player in the world, and to hear Cropper's biting, incisive lead guitar in the flesh, pinning down the licks so often treasured on vinyl, was a real treat. Matt Murphy earned his money, but the three-piece horn section, Tom Bones Malone, Blue Lou Marini and Alan Mister Fabulous Rubin, smacked of New York City while memories of Robert Cray's Memphis Horns were still fresh in the brain. But the crowd went ga-ga and there was much discarding of clothing as the temperature was raised to boiling point. King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys more than held their own in support and took the opportunity to cut a live album of their two sets, for release later this year, so I'm told.

The Thursday night Town Hall concert was subtitled Blues From Texas To Chicago and promised a mouthwatering bill of Clarence Gatemouth Brown with his own Gate's Express plus Buddy Guy and Junior Wells with their group. I must confess that I was looking forward

to catching Gatemouth again. I had not seen the old geezer since his Dingwall's gig of a coupla years ago, when he was joined on stage by his *third* wife (from whom he is now divorced) and their then eight-year old daughter. Like Vi Petty and Shirley Temple they wuz, and not what I'd gone to see at all. Assurances, nay *guarantees* that no member of Gatemouth's family would perform with him in Birmingham made the prospect much more appetising and I was in anticipatory mode when Buddy and Junior's agent, a European with a name like Tridier Dickhard or summat pointed out that, to his mind, an important contractual rider had not been fulfilled. This stipulated that a bottle of cognac and a bottle of gin should be in the dressing room prior to the blues duo performing. So where do you find an off-licence in Birmingham city centre at that time of night? I set off, weary and muttering, to find one.

After a fruitless search, I encountered the night's comper, BRMB radio's



Blues Brothers Cropper Dunn and Murphy. Photo: Peter Harrington

Nicky Steel, standing in the Town Hall doorway. When acquainted with my problem he flung me into his fast car and we sped to the outskirts of town, as it were, where an open liquor store was able to supply the necessary. We returned to the venue to find that Gatemouth's set was all but over. A glance at the set list revealed no early hits or classics had been included, which has been Brown's practice for some years from a 'that was then, this is now' standpoint. The veteran is well aware of the Ace reissues, but prefers to concentrate on his newer Rounder recordings.

By now Buddy Guy was onstage for the second half of the show, so I took my seat, and after a few numbers with the rhythm section, the guitarist halted proceedings to reveal that he felt truly honoured to be following a legend like Clarence Gatemouth Brown and that 'any guitar you hear from me' he admitted humbly, 'is influenced by this man. We've never ever played together'. I quit my place and relayed the news to old

Gate who immediately ordered his amp to be unpacked and miked up, while strapping back on his guitar. Learning that it was a good twenty minutes before Junior Wells was due alongside his partner, Gatemouth headed back towards the concert platform. In the corridor, he encountered the harpist, wearing the silliest outfit and suffering the benefits of the rider. 'Look at that man standing there looking ridiculous,' growled the oldster and the two faced each other in standoff, like John Wayne and Garry Cooper. Brown's arrival onstage was greeted with a howl of approval from the audience and the veteran and the younger man settled down to a momentous guitar jam. Guy and Gate swapped licks till the bluespower ran from the walls and history was made, once again, at the Birmingham Jazz Fest.

In the relaxed aftershow atmosphere, I complained to the old buzzard of his constant refusal to perform any of his old classics, most noticeably his early fifties *She Walks Right In* which was recently

revived by Britain's Big Town Playboys. Mellowed by the night's events, Gatemouth reconsidered and his band were reminded of the song's riff. I checked the dressing rooms after all had departed and the cognac bottle was empty, while the gin had remained untouched.

The following morning, due to a transportation foul-up, I was thrown a set of keys and ordered to take Gatemouth's rhythm section of bassist Harold Floyd, pianist Dan Mattrazzo and drummer Kerry Brown to their next gig at the Womad Festival in Bracknell. Brown had spent eighteen months from 74-76 as Freddie King's drummer, and kept us well entertained with a live cassette tape from that period, cut in New Orleans, with the late great King in spectacular form. After a nightmarish journey we arrived shortly before they were due to hit, so I hung around to catch the show. Gatemouth was on form and *smokin'* with the blues element well to the fore. Midway through the set tho', he invited the daughter onstage with



Buddy Guy and Junior Wells. Photo: Peter Harrington



King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys. Photo: Peter Harrington

him and she good ship lollypopped through no less than *three* numbers, one of them the ecologically sound *Save All The Waters Of The World* to an embarrassing two-beat. However, as soon as the little mite was through the wily old fox steamed into a supercharged version of *She Walks Right In*. The Womad crowd were vociferous in their appreciation, applauding fit to lift the tent and there were satisfied smiles all round. Afterwards, long-term drummer Kerry Brown confessed that Gate hadn't played the tune for an astonishing *fifteen years* which Gatemouth promised to rectify by putting the number back into the set and recutting a new version for his next album. We'll have to wait and see. Meanwhile I was back in the car and speeding Brumwards.

Late Friday night produced King Pleasure and the Biscuit Boys with their own show at the Cophthorne Hotel. Packing maximum swagger and oozing confidence after the weeks exertions, the young combo gave out with a serious

dose of vintage West Coast rhythm & blues. They were joined on stage by a sax-wielding Courtney Pine who was in town with the Pet Shop Boys. A curious Pleasure was heard to enquire, after the gig, 'Is he someone famous? Only he didn't know any of the numbers!'

Sunday dawned, the final day of the Brum Festival and there was time to get another basinful of Gene Mighty Flea Connors and Jersey Bounce over a lunchtime pint of Tennent's before batting over to Cannon Hill Park for *Blues on a Summer's Day*. Shuggie Otis and the Poor Boys plus Lazy Lester with his regular British band, Blues And Trouble, were on offer, so with temperatures in the eighties and free admission, there were long queues for the ice creams. Both stars alternated, each with two sets of an hour's duration and more than lived up to expectations. Shuggie Otis was the big surprise. Straight off the plane, he barely had time to compile an arbitrary list of blues standards before it was time to hit. The young guitarist –

he's still only thirty-five – showed that he's lost none of his skill in his time away from the spotlight and when he was joined by his old Johnny Otis Show sidekick Gene Connors, – 'I've known Shuggie a long time. In fact I collected him and his mom from the hospital when he was born!' – the pair gave out with an explosive climax to a most extraordinary day. From all over the park, fans crowded closer as Shuggie and the Flea powered the set to a finger-busting finale. There is talk of Shuggie coming to the UK again, for a proper tour, this time with his own Los Angeles rhythm section. Put my name down for a ticket, and a seat at the front.

Promoter Jim Simpson is passionately committed to incorporating great hand-fuls of good rockin, stompin blues and R&B into the annual Birmingham Jazz Festival on a regular basis. He is to be applauded and encouraged. Here's to the next time.

Rowdy Yeats

BELGIUM RHYTHM & BLUES FESTIVAL

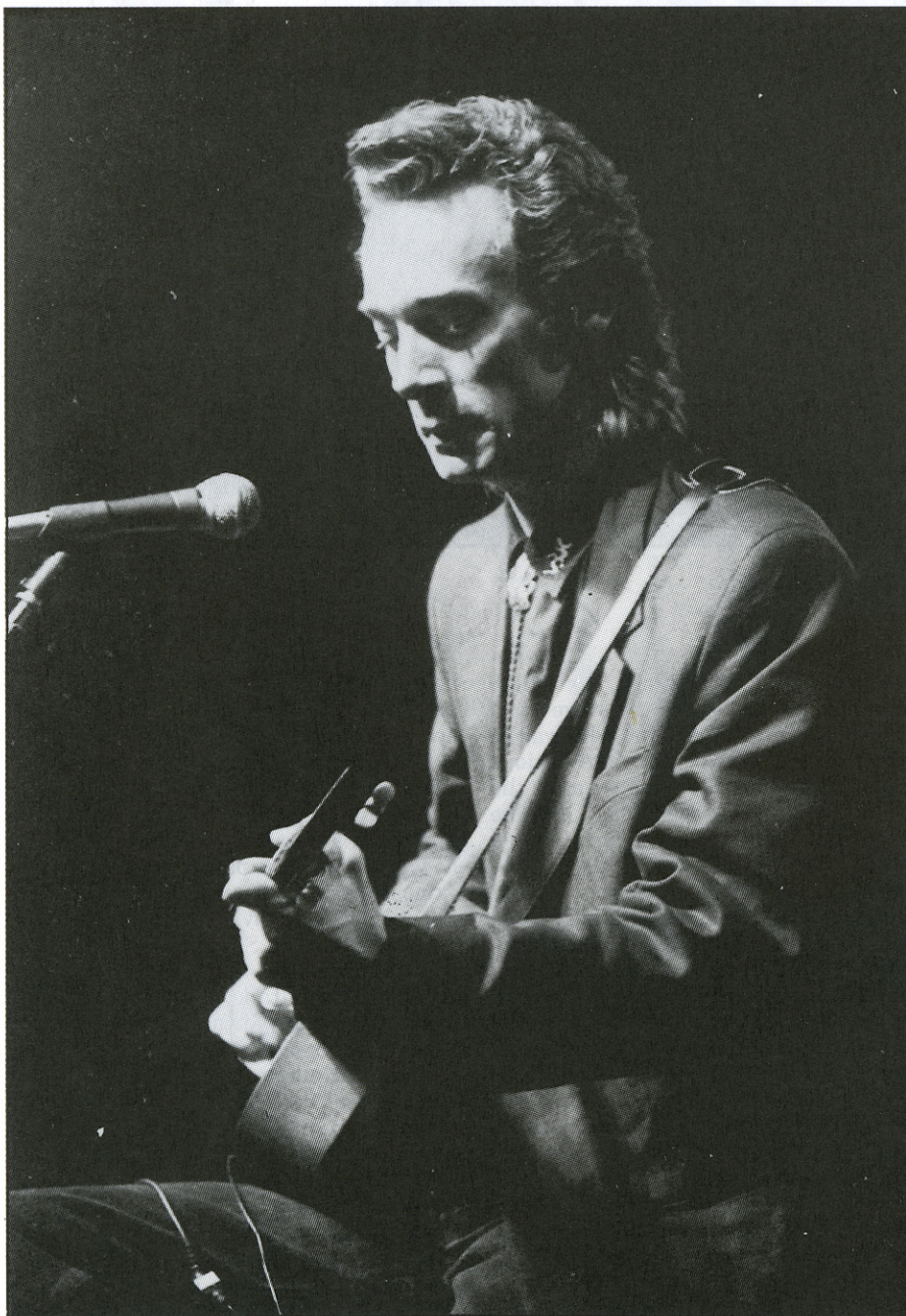
DAVID COOPER

PEER 15/16 July 1989

I said last year that Peer is Europe's premier Blues Festival. I thought later that I might have exaggerated; I checked and I hadn't. And it is only 200 miles from London.

The basic format was unchanged: 2 days: 14 bands: 24 hours of music. The price was a little higher due to the weak pound - £16.50, beer (2x100yard bars) 50p, food about £1.

To say it's held in a tent is an understatement - this is hi-tech, state of the art stuff. Euro band HIDEAWAY opened the whole show. They are about the best Belgian band I've seen. Whilst no more original than the average British band they are far less derivative than most continental bands. They choose fairly obscure covers and have some reasonable originals. Day two saw RISKY BLUES. Pleasant and listenable, but I did not feel compelled to watch them.



John Campbell. Photo: D. Cooper



B B King. Photo: D. Cooper

Next up was the Country Blues. One man and a guitar, though Day One's man was a woman - RORY BLOCK, a seemingly odd choice - another of those polite Americans we all love so well. She learnt guitar from the Stefan Grossman album - well it makes a change from Bert Weedon's book. I enjoyed her show, even though I am no fan of this genre. Day Two however saw an unexpected star of the festival in JOHN CAMPBELL. With a vintage SJ and an ancient National he took a lot of electric standards back to their roots and threw in some subliminal originals (the ones you think you've known forever). His hands were a blur - if his Flying picks had been flying pickets they'd never have got out of Yorkshire! An encore is *de rigueur* at Peer but he had two. He tours again next April - promoters please note.

To raise the energy level next came the Texas Blues. THE PALADINS, THE TAILGATORS, and a little later LITTLE CHARLIE & THE NIGHTCATS. First up were THE PALADINS. I made no notes on them and remember little of their set, though that is not to say that they weren't good. The image was right - greasy rockers, stand up bass and a blonde semi-acoustic Gibson. I certainly remember nothing bad about them. I cannot say the same of the TAILGATORS. On paper it should work, but it doesn't come over. Maybe if they replaced the inevitable Fenders with something meatier. Maybe they are only suited to small clubs. LITTLE CHARLIE & THE NIGHTCATS however were a different kettle of fish. Pure Texas sleaze even though they come from California. There was a pimp-mobile parked outside and if it weren't for the Dutch plates I'd have sworn it was theirs (maybe they rented it!). On album they are laid back so it was a surprise to see and hear the power they put across. And when Charlie played a solo, nearly all stunningly simple, he fixed the audience with an evil look that said betcha didn't think I could do that. Hell I'd even pay to go see them! My personal stars of the festival.



Dana Gillespie. Photo: D. Cooper

Next on the agenda was to be Black Blues. Champion Jack Dupree (82) and Eddy Kirkland. Unfortunately Dupree was in Hospital (routine) and was replaced at 2 weeks notice by our very own DANA GILLESPIE. I like Dana and the explicit sexuality of her lyrics – My Man Stands Out, Big 10 Inch, Horizontal Boogie et al. There was a backstage comment by a Very Important Lady that the band was unrehearsed. In all fairness, although Dave Rowberry was the only member of the band I'd seen with her before, it did not come across as unrehearsed to me. To some extent the style is loose, Good Time music, and the local press gave her reasonable reviews. EDDIE KIRKLAND next. What can I say. A consummate showman without the talent to match. Frenetic guitar playing that seemed out of tune or key. Competent Harp. Disastrous guitar synth which someone said he'd bought the day before and couldn't wait to play with. He had the nerve to name drop BB and then proceeded with an excruciating rendition of one of BB's songs. If it had

been one of my songs being mauled like that I'd have gone on stage and pulled his plug out.

He competes with, and on reflection slightly beats Otis Clay for Booby Prize. Clays music was not 'bad' it just wasn't right. On paper and apparently disc OTIS CLAY seemed like a good idea at the time. Soul orientated – but Curtis Mayfield played here two years and was good. To say there had been little good soul music in the past 10 years is a generalisation, but also largely true. Clay, for me, brought together most of the bad points of modern soul. It all goes to prove that what is Black aint necessarily Blue (Promoters please note) He just didn't belong on the bill. Pure Las Vegas.

Which to some extent can also be said of THE JOHNNY OTIS SHOW (replacing Johnny Winter who cancelled) the first day's headliner. I expected to like him, though I didn't know what to expect. The thing is virtually a festival on its own. But: it was uniforms and glitz, trying to be all

things to all people and totally failing to gel. Maybe the whole concept is outmoded. The quite prodigious talent of SHUGGIE OTIS was totally swamped. I'll admit to making my excuses and leaving after 20 minutes or so.

The headliner as I've intimated was B B King. It was the first time I'd seen him, and I had some reservations – we've all bought at least one awful album by BB. But of course he was great and displayed the magnanimity towards his band that greatness allows. His repertoire seemed to come mainly from the two albums I've kept, Cooks County and Love Me Tender, including the classic 'Nobody Loves Me But My Mother (and she could be jiving me too)'. What spoilt it a little was the element of Las Vegas creeping in. Open neck shirts and sports coats for the band, the incessantly repeated B B KING at the end, the way he took his encore without really leaving the stage. Niggly little points. He did however show virtually every other guitarist how it is possible to do a lot whilst doing extremely little.

DEVONAIR BLUES FESTIVAL

Exeter Plaza 15 July

Devonair Radio have featured a blues programme for several years and on 15th July they went one stage further by holding their first festival hosted by regular D.J. Dave Treharne at the Exeter Plaza. Unfortunately the event coincided with the hottest weekend of the year which probably had some effect on the attendance, but there was still a healthy crowd present when Cornwall's THE BACKDOORMEN opened the afternoon session. Regular performers on the local gig circuit, this four piece put on an enjoyably solid show with Chicago standards to the fore. Next on stage were The CROWMEN with their original brand of rockabilly blues. Subtle they ain't, but their hard hitting set succeeded in getting the boppers into action for the first time. Following them was TURKEY LEG JOHNSON and his

two compatriots from the Twickenham Delta with a varied and infectiously enjoyable performance including such classics as "Everyday I have the blues" and "Reconsider Baby". Particularly worth mentioning is guitarist Brian Willoughby with a fine display of both taste and technique.

Topping the afternoon bill were the ever-excellent BIG TOWN PLAYBOYS, who produced yet another fine set of West Coast R'n'B. Although the talented Mike Sanchez receives a lot of the attention, this is a band in the truest sense with no weak links. The rhythm section in particular shine on such numbers as the swinging "Going to California". An exhilarating performance which climaxed with that perennial crowd pleaser "Shake your hips". I for one am eagerly awaiting

their forthcoming album on ACE.

Kicking off the evening session, after a break in the sunshine were local stalwarts JUNKYARD ANGELS, fresh from their tour supporting Chicago's Lefty Dizz. They featured numbers from their recent album "Dirty Work at the Crossroads" – a release which is well worth investigating.

Proceedings continued with the JOHNNY MARS BLUES BAND and their rock influenced blues including original interpretations of "Rock me baby" and "Born under a bad sign". Unfortunately your reviewer found their approach to be somewhat repetitive, although I did approve of a fine version of "Crossroads", but I was obviously in the minority as they succeeded in getting a good portion of the audience on their feet.

Headliners were cult band BARRANCE WHITFIELD & THE SAVAGES from the bar-rooms of Boston U.S.A. with a dynamic and largely up tempo show which was also well received by the punters, particularly those who still had enough energy for dancing after seven hours of music.

Thanks must go to the organisers for a most enjoyable festival and I gather that they were sufficiently pleased with the day to consider further events in the future – let's hope so!

Dave Mitchell



Johnny Mars. Photo: D. Mitchell



Barrance Whitfield. Photo D. Mitchell

FETE DE LA JEUNESSE: BLUES NIGHT *Lillers, France.*

The second Festival of Youth in the North of France turned out to be something of a British affair with five of the seven billed bands coming from the UK.

After overcoming the dual problem of bad weather and the non appearance of the excellent Walter Trout Band because of visa problems, the festival organisers took the problems in their stride and gave DR. FEELGOOD the kind of media exposure they could only dream about back home. The enterprising committee did a good job because in excess of a thousand people turned out to give their support to a number of bands that were obviously new to them.

Having endured a couple of loud local bands, the crowd was quickly given a flavour of some authentic West Coast blues, albeit from the UK. Banks's National Blues competition finalists THE INNOCENT BYSTANDERS proved to be worthy of their inclusion on the festival bill with a fine set that had several punters in the crowd wondering just how they managed to have such an American sound.

Lead vocalist and harmonica player "Buzz" Brown had a confident vocal style that he interspersed with some gravelly harp playing. The set consisted of a mixture of swing boogie and Jimmy Earle sounding blues. On the night the band were boosted by some wild piano playing from the incomparable JAMES COMPTON.

Compton, last seen playing with The Darts and Billy Bremner, added a rockabilly feel that took the set up a

notch and had the crowd on their feet. Self penned material like "49 Cadillac" and "Rock My Baby" were well received, and the band left the stage with drummer PICK WITHERS to the front explaining in perfect French why they couldn't come back for a deserved encore.

Celtic funsters YOU SLOSH followed and put on a mighty show, although they had little to do with the blues. PAPA GEORGE and friends followed. With the crowd on their toes, George went for the jugular with a series of extended solos wrapped around his soulful voice. A sparkling version of Stevie Ray Vaughn's "Looking Out My Window" and Peter Green's "Oh Well" upped the temperature, and were nicely offset by George's new single "Close To You" and a beautiful slow blues entitled "Some Days". Unfortunately because of the inevitable late running Papa George had to cut his set, but had impressed enough people with his raunchy blues style. Another switch in the programme saw Lee Brilleaux and pals take the stage shortly after midnight.

The large number of Parisians who had come to see the Southend's best quickly awoke to Brilleaux's stage antics and within a couple of numbers the band was somewhere near cooking.

In truth the Dr. Feelgood of today are a strange outfit. Lee appears have kept the band within the r&b and occasional blues format and he now extends to playing both harp and guitar. However, despite a couple of impressive renderings of "Route 66" and of course "Milk & Alcohol", I got the impression

that the rest of the band were something akin to journeymen.

Brilleaux stalked the stage, rasped into his microphone, punched the air and in true Feelgood style wound everyone up. But after a while the extended guitar solos of one Steve Walwyn (?), began to grate and in truth would have been better suited to a straight rock band.

The Feelgood's finished with a flourish that sent the leather jacketed brigade home happy but left me thinking of better days. Finally around 2am THE PAUL LAMB BLUES BAND gingerly took the stage to play some real blues.

With the crowd greatly diminished, the rain pouring down on the huge marquee, and only half the house lights on, the omens were not good. Luckily it appeared that those who had stayed behind were real blues fans and responded to the band prompts. Given the situation Lamb and band played a storming set, with Mr. Lamb himself in tremendous form. With the double bass of Dave Stevens in a swinging mood the music of B.B. King, Magic Sam and Elmore James was never more colourfully interpreted.

Guitarist John Whitehill enjoyed a couple of extended workouts, whilst the stylish Johnny D has only to add a shade more power to his vocals to totally convince. Lamb himself took his turn to sing in between some more scorching harp solos, and despite the odds being stacked against them the band did enough to suggest that given a proper billing their brand of infectious swinging blues will appeal to a wide audience.

On the whole the festival was superbly organised, well attended and great value for money. Despite changes to the bill and on-stage times, both the loyal Mayor and attendant media buffs were suitably impressed to be talking about next year as a two night event.

Pete Feenstra

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RED WHITE AND BLUES

CAHORS BLUES FESTIVAL 1989
10 11 12 July 1989
Salle Valentre, Cahors

by **STEVE SHELLITO**

Having chosen Cahors in the Lot Valley, Southern Central France for our holiday, our arrival coincided with the putting up of posters announcing the imminent Blues Festival – an annual event. To an old Blues enthusiast this seemed heaven-sent. Each year this is a preamble to the Bastille Day celebrations, made more so this year as it was the Bicentennial – abundantly obvious by the colours of the tricolore wherever we went.

Prior to the Blues Festival starting, the town was treated to a free concert by a bunch of local lads called the Blues Boys (average age 17) and good they were. Their repertoire consisted mainly of Chicago Blues standards (all sung in English, to the consternation of the mainly French audience). So here we were, sitting in the evening sun drinking beer and listening to the Blues... Bliss!

Next night the Blues Festival proper started and the audience, including the children of the town, *en famille*, were eventually treated to the Blues Boys – back again to a tumultuous welcome, with their attendant entourage successfully doing their bit to bring the audience to fever pitch, helped mainly by the temperature in the hall of 90° upwards. They went through their repertoire – a carbon copy of the

previous night, and in turn led into the appearance on stage of Buddy Guy.

From the moment he appeared he had the audience where he wanted them. A superb guitarist and showman extraordinaire, he literally made his guitar talk and proceeded to play a set of Chicago standards. As is apparently the French way, the local children were again present at the front of the stage and this proved too much of a temptation to Buddy who went down, guitar in hand, and played to them to rapturous audience appreciation. By the time Buddy had finished his set he had established himself as the HIT of the Festival, already only hours old. The eventual appearance of Junior Wells was to me something of a disappointment, Buddy being a hard act to follow. With Buddy taking a backseat Junior played his usual set of harmonica standards, accompanied by Buddy on a few numbers. It was a mostly Chicago-based repertoire which pleased the eager audience, more so when the young harp player from the Blues Boys was invited to join Junior and Buddy for a seemingly impromptu jam – a moment *he* will never forget. When they eventually walked off, the audience including myself shouted and stamped for more. We were eventually rewarded when after a few minutes of this cacophony,

the pair returned and played a final number to a packed front stage of young and old fans – a truly magical experience made more so as it turned out that Buddy and Junior were last minute replacements for the Albert King Blues Band.

The next night it was the turn of Errol Dixon, Blues and Boogie pianist. He came on to a somewhat muted welcome. However, after a few boogie numbers, he had the audience eating out of his hand and feet were tapping in unison with his shoes complete with taps. Apart from the usual boogie-type numbers he included a few standards – “Michael Row the Boat Ashore” and “When the Saints Go Marching In”, presumably in an attempt to involve the mainly French audience. The heat in the hall was again oppressive, made bearable only by frequent visits to the bar at the side of the hall. This was made equally apparent by the fact that when Errol first walked on stage he was wearing a silver lamé shirt and by the time he walked off he was wearing a black lamé shirt, save for small area at the hem! He performed a competent and professional set and in turn gave way to the Phillip Walker Blues Band. Another Chicago-style band, they played a fine set of mainly Chicago and Texas Blues numbers to an enthusiastic audience. A five piece band, they consisted of Piano, Lead, Bass, Drums and Sax. A fine Sax solo ended their set and they declined to be coaxed back despite much foot stamping and at one time, slow hand clapping.

So that was it – the 1989 Fête de Blues, Cahors – all in all a remarkable experience and one I shall long remember.

Vive le Blues!...



PAUL JONES SHOW

Paul Jones' Rhythm and Blues Show returns to national Radio Two on Thursday, 5th October 1989 at 9 p.m.

Session guests for the first few weeks are as follows:

5th October: Little Charlie and the Nightcats
12th October: Lucky Lopez
19th October: Booze 'n' Blooze
26th October: The Elmores
2nd November: The Paladins
9th November: Kevin Brown Band

There won't be a programme on 16th November due to Children In Need.

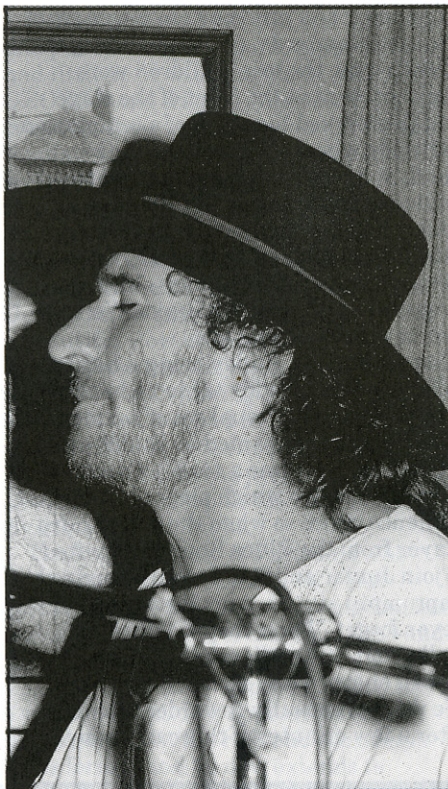
Review

JON CLEARY

*Ypres Castle Inn, Rye, East Sussex –
27 August 1989*

Jon Cleary walked into a packed venue, sat at the piano and set the mood of the evening by playing two pounding boogies. There followed a superb two-hour set of predominantly New Orleans tunes, including such classics as Professor Longhair's "Mardi Gras in New Orleans", James Booker's "Junco Partner" as well as lesser-known material from the likes of Johnny "Guitar" Watson, Dave Bartholomew, Ray Charles, Smiley Lewis and Earl King.

Numbers of particular note included "Let Them Talk" (a Little Willie John song) and a really spirited uptempo version of Memphis Slim's "Everyday I Have the Blues." When I requested Champion Jack Dupree's "Junker's Blues", Jon declined, but instead did his rendition of Smiley Lewis' "T-Nine" which was the bridge between the Dupree original and Fess's signature tune "Tipitina".



Jon's singing and playing have matured over the last couple of years, doubtless due to the fact that he has been resident in New Orleans for this time, where he gigs regularly and frequently sits in with such greats as Snooks Eaglin. Listening to his strong singing and piano playing it is hard to believe he is an Englishman and only 27 years old. He has really embraced New Orleans music and plays it as well as (if not better than!) some of that city's better-known exponents of the style. What is also amazing (or sickening to other players) is the fact that Jon is a red-hot guitarist! Whether playing piano or guitar, he always manages to inject his own style whilst staying true to the spirit of the originals.

The crowd went wild when he finished, demanding an encore which came in the form of "Mardi Gras Mambo" with them all singing and clapping along. We went off into the night to the shocking realisation we were still in a small Sussex town, having been transported to the Big Easy for the evening. Jon was flying back there the next day and it is to be hoped he'll be coming back to Blighty again soon to visit his family and play a few gigs in the area, bringing that Louisiana magic with him.

Michael Prince

THE PALADINS

**LIVE REVIEW: –
WEAVER'S ARMS, ISLINGTON**

An absurdly hot night in Islington; after wandering the streets armed with the wrong address, we eventually find the Weaver's Arms just in time to catch the beginning of The Paladins first ever set in Britain. Guitarist Dave Gonzales, his quiff already disintegrating, mumbled something about rock'n'roll and counted off a straight Chicago backbeat. Drummer Scott Campbell fell into a lazy Fred Below groove and string bassist Thomas Yearsley slapped and thumped a mid pace easy walk. Yeah, The Paladins know how it's done.

A three-piece from San Diego, this is

their first trip to Europe and I guess they were glad to be here. They played a steaming set, and this had little or nothing to do with the steaming weather ('How can you guys stand this heat?' asked the road manager. I just smiled and felt an unfamiliar glow of patriotism.) Mixing a steady rolling blues beat with frantic rockabilly shuffling and some strong, minor key Otis Rush styled slow numbers, The Paladins had the audience in the palm of their hand within a half dozen numbers. Back home they insist on travelling by road to every gig, so as to soak up all the atmosphere of the swamps, cotton-fields and mountains that surround the small towns in which they play. They take the

culture seriously, and regard themselves to some extent as curators of a disappearing America. When asked what kind of music they play they reply simply 'American'. 'I really like country, Tom really likes swing and r'n'b, and Scott's a real blues guy,' says Dave Gonzales. 'So all this stuff we try to put together.' I didn't hear too much country style but I heard a whole lot of blues and boogie. 'They kick ass', says Los Lobos guitarist Cesar Rosas, for whom The Paladins regularly open. You better believe it. Check out their albums on Alligator Records but, better still, watch out for them live. Well worth sweating for.

Adam Blake

UK BUSTERS

AT FARNHAM MALTINGS 24.8.89

Given the activities of the ubiquitous Otis Grand and his pals you could be forgiven for thinking that his was the only big band around. Step right up THE UK BUSTERS, who after impressing on the Un-American Blues Activities compilation album, appear to be taking in a few live dates to up their profile.

In front of a splendidly enthusiastic Farnham crowd, the Busters – a seven piece band on this occasion – opened up with a couple of up tempo instrumentals that immediately featured their swinging horn section.

“Night Train” was the perfect opener, with the horns led by the powerful sax of Nick Payne drawing even the most circumspect punter in from the bar.

Payne enjoyed an extended solo over the top of Andy Beer’s baritone and Stuart Blandemeer’s tenor.

The initial impact over, the Busters were steered into a number of awesome guitar-led blues and boogie by the impassioned voice and wailing guitar of Ray Minhinnet. Ray is the sort of player who happily dwells on a note if it adds to the impact of the song. His Peter Green soundalike vocals soared over the kind of raucous playing that gave Otis Rush his reputation all those years ago.

Highlights of the first set included a Rush cover, “Down, Don’t Bother Me” and two fine band compositions “Never Had The Blues Like This Before” and “Wonder”. Ray’s sporadic burst on guitar

were nicely offset by an authentic 1960’s Hammond organ sound of Chris Parren.

Influences abounded and B.B. Kings’ “When It All Comes Down” and John Mayall’s “Looking Back” were two of the more familiar numbers in a second set that proved as refreshing for its choice of material as for the way the band steamrollered through a fierce second 60 minute set.

Given the fact that the majority of the crowd probably didn’t know the band before they took the stage, the power of the music took very little time to hit the mark. As a big band the UK Busters impressed with a string of snappy arrangements, a fine on-stage mix and above all with their ability to present a finely-tuned set that was as well-paced as it was enjoyable.

With a few more dates under their belt and a long awaited debut album in the can it won’t be long before the Busters will be hitting the Euro blues trail with venom.

PETE FEENSTRA

“LES BLUES”

Hounslow’s CentreSpace venue hosted one of the most improbable but hugely enjoyable blues evenings for many a year when ALAIN GIROUX and JEAN LOUIS MAJHUN celebrated Bastille Night with some original blues, boogie and swing.

Giroux is widely regarded as a superb ragtime and blues guitarist whilst Mahjun has carved out a reputation for some virtuoso playing and eccentric on-stage behaviour.

Together, this Parisian duo played some dazzling acoustic blues and

included large smatterings of Robert Johnson and lesser known Peetie Wheatstraw material. Giroux’s rather gruff vocals acted as a nice counterpoint for his delicate guitar style. Mahjun meanwhile contented himself by playing rhythm, plucking his violin and rarely using his bow. “All My Love In Vein”, “St. James Infirmary”, and “Kansas City” followed, all delivered in totally original arrangements.

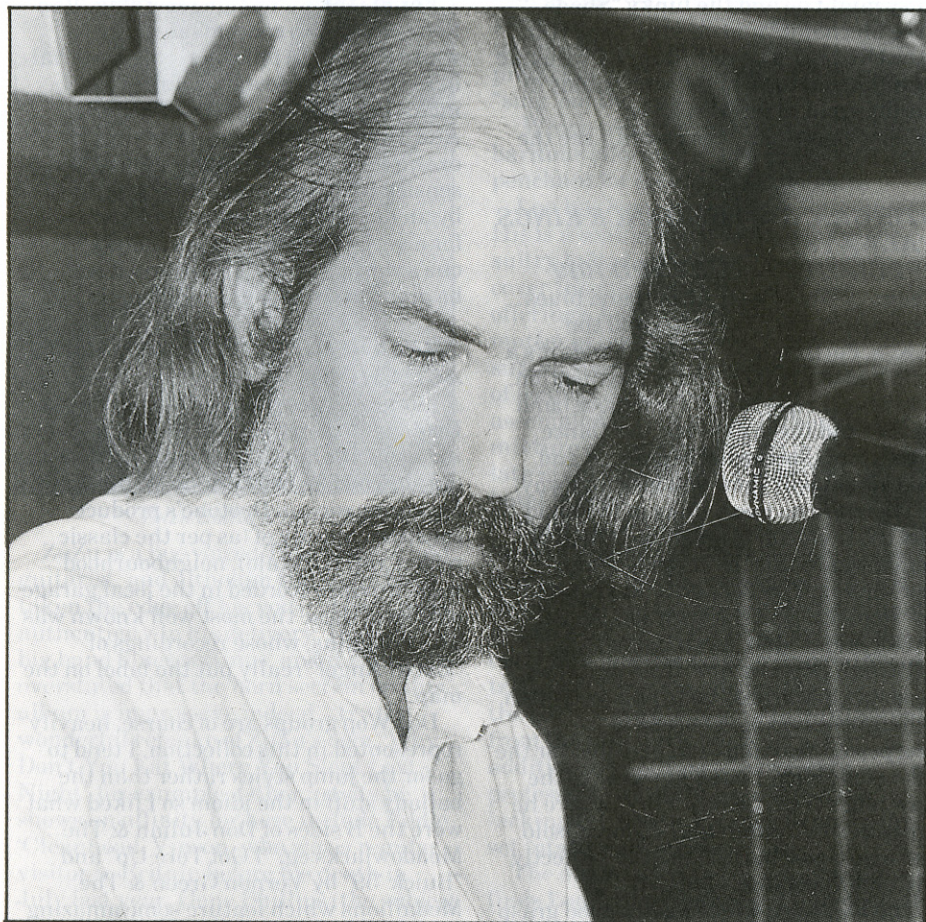
Mahjun added sufficient amounts of swing to give the set an extra dynamic before he took the opportunity to transpose a couple of 1920’s blues standards into an outrageous exploration of his instrument.

Imagine if you can a couple of violin’s played through a fuzz box and mutated through digital delay to sound like a Jimi Hendrix slow blues solo. Giroux seemed totally unperturbed by all this and he went on to play some beautiful slide guitar whilst battling gamely with the vagaries of the American deep south drawl. The blues was never so innovatory as in the hands of this duo. They gained the enthusiastic crowd’s attention and held it effortlessly. Playing together for some 20 years they know each other’s spontaneous on stage tricks well enough to superbly trade licks, swap solos and bring extended exploitations to a jaunty synchronised conclusion.

As an evening’s blues outing this duo were original and entertaining. As musicians they were simply dazzling.

Watch out for a forthcoming album, and rush out and buy it.

PETE FEENSTRA



RECORD REVIEW

with Chris Youlden

VARIOUS ARTISTS **"JUMPIN' AT THE HOT CLUB"** **SHIPCOTE RECORDS**

An interesting album this – a selection of acts recorded live at the 'Jumpin' & Hot Club', Bridge Hotel Cellar, Newcastle; a venue devoted to acoustic blues and American roots music and that's exactly what you get; seven varieties of Downhome Southern music ranging from Mississippi Blues, ragtime and jug band stomp to roots country, early rockabilly and the Memphis Sun sound.

All the music is played and sung with love, feeling, enthusiasm and not a little skill and the whole thing makes for an enjoyable listen. It's probably unfair to single out anybody in particular. As I have a minor weakness for jug bands and ragtime stuff I liked "Bed Slat And All" by the Hokum Hotshots and "Georgia Crawl" by the Hot Licks Cookies. The latter also do an unusual version of "Fever". In effect they manage to 'Backdate' it, so that an R & B standard written in the fifties is translated into a traditional lament in the vein of "St James Infirmary". Definitely an album to warm the cockles of your heart.

B.B. KING **"LUCILLE HAD A BABY"** **ACE CHD 271**

Well here we have a welcome reissue of some 'Prime cut' RPM tracks from the 1950's which of course was the period when B.B. first established himself as an important artist. It's easy these days, to take the man for granted – after all, he's been around for so long and made so many high-quality records – but this album puts it all in perspective. These recordings sound as vibrant and fresh today as when they were first made and will remind you how good B.B. King was . . . and still is.

The sessions were produced and arranged by Maxwell Davis, who took a great deal of trouble over the arrangements, and feature the playing of some of the best West Coast musicians around at the time – Bumps Myers, Plas Johnson et al. It's impossible really to single out any particular track as they're all good but I was particularly impressed by "Baby Look At You". The brass arrangement is so good on this one that B.B. misses his cue to come in and apologises to Davis, saying that he was so affected by it. "Early Every Morning" really belts along and contains a terrifically swinging guitar intro. with

echoes of Django and on "Trouble In Mind" – not a song I would immediately associate with him – King contributes a wonderful vocal and demonstrates his ability to breathe new life into an old standard.

The album is impeccably designed and packaged with the usual incredibly informative sleeve notes of Ray Topping and photographs from the vaults – oh, and you also get B.B.'s first big hit, "You Upset Me Baby" – worth the price of the record on its own.

JOE LOUIS WALKER **"ALONE"** **ACE NST 125**

A twelve inch single here featuring the talents of Joe Louis Walker. The title track takes up all of side 1 – a slow moody piece this, with the vocal declaimed over a jazzy arpeggio figure. Side 2 contains two tracks both of which those familiar with Joe's previous work may recognise. "Cold Is The Night", from the album of the same name, is an uptempo number with a major to related minor chord sequence vaguely reminiscent of something that Robert Cray might do and the funky "Shade Tree Mechanic" appeared on "The Gift", (Ace CH 241). The recording's a valuable introduction to an artist who stands in the forefront of modern blues developments. Buy the record – see the man.

OTIS GRAND 9 THE DANCE KINGS **"ALWAYS HOT"** **SPECIAL DELIVERY SPD 1019**

Yeah . . . West Coast fifties band blues lives again, thanks to Otis and the D.K.'s. Fortunately, in their hands it's a living entity rather than a fossilisation. It takes courage to put a ten piece band on the road these days but the Dance Kings have succeeded in doing it and this album will show you how and why.

There are no weak links in the band and the material is nicely weighted to demonstrate this. Everybody gets a workout eg. Tim Richards (keyboards) on "Roberta" and the horn section on "Always Hot" and "Let's Party". Although Otis is a fine, fluid guitarist, he shows admirable taste and discretion throughout and never seeks to overpower the band or to play just for the sake of playing. Listen however to the slow blues "Don't Know Why" where he turns in a stunning "tour de force" solo and also times his fills to fit in perfectly with the vocal line.

The band as a whole have a good grasp

of dynamics – thus every number is given its due. The rhythm section's tight and Lloyd Green's vocal, with a telling use of falsetto, adds the final touch. Joe Louis Walker produced, contributed a couple of songs and played a bit too so, all in all, you've got a very good album. I especially liked the above mentioned "Don't Know Why" and also "No Alibi" for the arrangement, but really, all the tracks stand up – there are no duds here.

DAVE VAN RONK **"HESITATION BLUES"** **BIG BEAT WIK 84**

Dave Van Ronk, along with Spider John Koerner, was one of the seminal figures of the "Folk-blues" movement in the early sixties so it's nice to see a reissue of some of his most important work. The tracks have been taken from the three albums he made for Prestige and the collection gives a fair indication of the man's output.

Van Ronk was capable of working in many different styles and of varying his approach to suit the diversity of his material as this compilation illustrates. "Motherless Children" from his first Prestige album "Dave Van Ronk, Folksinger" is treated in a powerfully emotive fashion – the track demands the attention of the listener. "Hesitation Blues", taken from "In The Tradition", allows Van Ronk, with the capable support of a New Orleans band, to exhibit the "Goodtime" side of his musical character while Son House's "Death Letter Blues", from the same album, is performed with an understated intensity.

For his third Prestige recording, Van Ronk decided to concentrate more on white American folksong – his material here came from several sources including his own family – and "Fair And Tender Lady" is an outstanding example of his work in this genre. The sensitivity of the vocal, supported only by an apt banjo accompaniment, makes for a very compelling track indeed. This one's worth getting hold of and it would be great to see the man work again.

THE DOOTONE STORY VOLUME 1 **ACE CHD 242**

A jumpin' fifties compilation here from Dootone Records – one of the small black independent labels that came up in that era – owned by one Dootsie Williams, a former musician. Dootone's product consisted mainly of (as per the classic rock n' roll fairytale), neighbourhood vocal groups recorded in the local garage studio; of these the most well known was The Penguins, whose recordings of "Earth Angel" really put the label on the map.

Doo Wop groups are of course, heavily represented in this collection. I tend to go for the jump styles rather than the ballady stuff in the idiom so I liked what were the B sides of Don Julian & The Meadowlarks eg. "I Got Tore Up" and "Buick '59" by Vernon Green & The Medallions which feature some amazing

vocal contortions and the spoken ending "I done run out of gas".

Dootone put out a variety of material however, so you also have on this album, two really good sides by Roy Milton, "You Got Me Reelin' & Rockin'" and "I Can't Go On", and a couple of Chuck

Higgin's things, (Chuck being a boss tenor man) the instrumental, "Wet Back Hop" and the moody "Don't You Know I Love You Baby".

If you want to know what was happening in the R & B market in L.A. circa 1955 to 1960, this is the record for

you. I can't wait for volume 2 – incidentally, the blues singer, Willie Hayden is mentioned in the sleeve notes (a Dootone artist). It would be nice if some of his work was given some exposure.

MORE RECORDS

"TEXAS BLUESMAN"

ZUZU BOLLIN

Dallas Blues Society DBS 8900

Who? Zuzu Bollin had two 78's released on the Torch label in the early fifties, and thirty years later, Britain's Crazy Kat label reissued them on its "Down In The Groovy" album. That might have been the full story, and the following year 'Blues & Rhythm' magazine published an interview with ZuZu. Things were obviously moving, and so it is hardly surprising that here is the first album; what might surprise people is just how good it is!



Zuzu Bollin. Photo Chuck Nevitt

ZuZu is a big-voiced Texas singer and guitarist, and although the years have taken the edge off his voice, it only adds authenticity to his delivery. He favours big band blues settings, and it cannot be overstated that the horn section on this album is impressive indeed – try the wonderful remake of ZuZu's own "Why Don't You Eat Where You Slept Last Night" for example. Other artists he shows an affinity for here include Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson, who was a regular visitor to Britain before his death in July last year, Gene Phillips (the subject

of recent reissue action by Ace) and the better known Percy Mayfield and Big Joe Turner. The sound is very fifties (deliberately), using Fort Worth band The Juke Jumpers for the rhythm and veteran Buster Smith to supervise the horns. Duke Robillard gave a hand with the production and trades licks with ZuZu – particularly memorable is the closing mellow instrumental "Zu's Blues".

This is prime fifties Texas R'n'B played by an artist who helped to create that sound. Recommended (and for those of you who may have bought Red Lightnin's tough U.P. Wilson album, this is the guy who taught him).

Norman Darwen

LOU RAWLS

"At Last"

Blue Note LP/CDP 7 91937 2

There's a school of thought that believes something like; the blues is a very personal form of expression and there's no definitive form to match the usually predictable lyrical content. It's a case of "sing 'em the way I feel" etc.

Which nicely brings us round to the baritone offerings of Lou Rawls and his penchant for cocktail lounge blues.

Lou has been around for a long time. His is a soulful voice, is perfect for the sultry ballad and versatile enough to cover the most commercial of soul offerings, but as to the blues? . . . It's a matter of taste of course. For here is a superb vocalist surrounded by an array of leading Blue Note players, all assembled to tackle a well-thought out mixture of numbers in a style akin to a late night session in a Central Park hotel lounge.

Rawl's soulful voice effortlessly wraps its way around this stylish set but to a degree here lies the core of the missing spark. The liner notes tell us this album marks a return to the blues style of the early 60's and to a certain degree this is true. But to my knowledge the blues in the early sixties was very little different from the blues in the late 80's. In addition to this, Lou's thoroughly professional performance is positively lacking the necessary edge to make this set totally convincing.

The album opens with a duet which finds Lou in the company of fellow label

artist DIANA REEVES. The resulting track "Two Years Of Torture" is a restrained big band blues arrangement which is followed by another duet before Lou opens his tonsils for an interesting interpretation of "Good Intention", surprisingly enough written by Lyle Lovett.

The result is a bluesy piece of jive talk that smoulders quite nicely without ever really catching fire. This number is symptomatic of the whole set. It gives the listener the impression that Lou has spent the last couple of years searching for the right kind of material to suit his sumptuous voice. The result is a qualified success, with a shade too much caution where a shot of rough-edged dynamism is needed to break the cabaret mould.

An exception to the above is "You Can't Go Home No More" on which George Benson's guitar adds an extra magical ingredient to a well-paced arrangement. Still this album is full of superb playing, melodic vocals and a gem of a track "Room With a View". Viewed as an excursion into cocktail lounge blues crooning it's a total success. For the avid blues fan it's probably a little too mellow.

THE PAUL JONES R&B SHOW: THE AMERICAN GUESTS VOL. 2 JSP CD 221

This collection of Stateside visitors to Jones's fine radio show offers a good cross section of the highlights. The album ranges from the jovial Rockin' Sidney to the heartfelt Southern Cali blues of pianist KATY WEBSTER and takes in the enchanting Carey & Lurry Bell and the promising Bill Dicey.

As a compilation album the effort falls somewhere in between the necessary continuity and the couple of stand out tracks needed to push sales up.

"The American Guests" is the kind of pleasant enough wander through a cross section of contemporary US blues styles, but lacks the necessary spark to make it a compelling purchase. Rockin' Sidney for example offers some jaunty Zydeco numbers including the highly derivative "I'm Your Man" – a generic cousin of Waters "I'm A Man". He also dabbles in a rock & roll medley on "OO OO PA DOO" without quite having the voice to carry it off. But on the whole, Zydeco is

safe in Sidney's hands and many a festival would be lost without him.

My personal favourite on the album is the dynamic Katy Webster. She's the kind of 100 per cent performer who really belts out a blues. On this set we get the graceful "Early Morning Blues" complete with a spoken biographical introduction. Her gritty voice is in good form and her piano playing as aggressive as ever. This album will have to do until her next long overdue visit to these shores.

The Bell's on the other hand have been over rather frequently lately and their almost purist rendition of some Chicago blues will please all of their fans. The material may not be very original – "19 Years Old", "I'm Ready" etc, but the playing is emotional and Carey's harp playing is as colourful as ever. It's full of the kind of melody that many of our younger harp blasters could do well to emulate.

The album closes with an understated but lively up tempo set from relative newcomer BILL DICEY. The closing track "Wheelin' And Dealing" contains some offbeat twin guitar and wailing harp behind a muffled vocal style. Like most of the album, in general Bill has enough appeal to warrant passing interest, but on the evidence of his 3 track contribution he has yet to achieve the intuitive feel for the blues so crucial to Katy Webster's performance. In short, a treat for radio fans, but a curiously indifferent production to find on a CD.
Pete Feenstra

FLEMISH BLUES
MAXWELL STREET: THE
HIGHWAY BAND Live Banana Peel
Records BPR 231 088.

If ever proof was needed that the blues remain an international language, then I recommend a short trip to the continent where the music is positively flourishing.

The days of dodgy English accents and overzealous or over-diligent solos are more or less a thing of the past as this live album proves.

Eric Carrette has long pioneered the blues in Belgium and this album is the third blues offering on his adventurous Banana Peel label.

Following in the footsteps of THE SULTANS who set some high standards last year, comes MAXWELL STREET and THE HIGHWAY BAND caught live at the label's Banana Peel Club.

First up are the more impressive band of the two, Maxwell Street. The impressive quartet open up with a confidently tackled mid tempo blues, driven on by a crisp back line of Filip, Blancke on bass and the imaginative Bart Creytens on drums.

The band's set is a well-balanced

mixture of blues punctuated by a funky rendering called "Pretty Woman" (not the Roy Orbison number) on which the twin guitars of singer Marino Noppe and Willy De Vleeschouwer shine with fine solos. Vocalist Noppe has an understated style that comes to the fore on Fenton Robinson's "Blue Monday". Unusually for the UK or US blues lover, the audience remains silent throughout, illustrating the point that the continentals are far happier actually attentively listening to the band rather than making themselves heard with tiresome whoops and hollers.

The last three numbers of an always interesting set, up the pace with both guitarists getting fully into their stride. If "Shake Your Boogie" is a trifle restrained in its interpretation then the Maxwell Street make up for this with a climactic version of Elmore James' "Let Me Ride Your Automobile". The band hits top gear here with some scintillating slide guitar which is even bettered on the closing version of "Freight Train"

Having heard Maxwell Street's contribution to the album I can't wait to see them live, and that surely pays tribute to a fine vinyl debut.

Suitably charged up by side one, the listener in truth comes across something of an anti-climax with THE HIGHWAY BAND.

Opening with a cover of the remarkably unmemorable Blues & Trouble tune "When The Lights Go Down", The Highway Band seem nervous and possibly intimidated about being recorded. Ronnie Jacket's vocal style is tough to the point of being the wrong side of a growl, and the band are not helped by a second track "That's All Right" that plods along and rarely gets out of gear.

John Mayall's "Looking Back" follows and is far too lightweight in its appeal, whilst some strangely arranged chord changes deprive the song of its much needed dynamic. "Time To Find Out" is a slow guitar-led blues on which Jacket attempts to inject some much needed steel to the proceedings, and it's only by the time of a rousing cover of Huey Lewis's "Working For A Living" that the band come near their true form.

Ultimately it's unfair to compare the two bands. After all, what we have here is a live recording of two separate gigs, but I can't help but note that the slide work of Marc Van Der Eecken on the closing number "Three Times A Loser" doesn't compare with what's on offer on side one.

Still The Highway Band clearly enjoy playing the blues, and given the excellent side one of this album, I can recommend this album as another fine slice of Flemish blues.

British bands be warned, something is stirring on the other side of the North Sea.

LITTLE CHARLIE & THE
NIGHTCATS
"Disturbing The Peace"
ALLIGATOR AL4761

SIDE ONE; That's My Girl; Nervous; My Money's Green; If This Is Love; I Ain't Lyin'; She's Talking.

SIDE TWO; My Last Meal; The Booty Song; Don't Boss Me; V-8 Ford; I Feel So Sorry; Run Me Down.

Little Charlie Baty gtr; Rick Estrin hca/voc; Jay Peterson bass; Dobie Strange drms.

Take one hard-working bar room band, add a renowned independent blues producer, throw in the requisite amount of studio time and unsurprisingly you get an uncompromising set of bar room blues.

Little Charlie And The Night Cats are obviously more happy working live, and given that fact, it's all the more strange that this album comprises some dozen numbers, few of which come anywhere near approaching the 5 minute mark.

The band's trademark is a form of humorous jumping blues. That's jump blues as distinct from jump and jive or any other jazz connections. For this band evolves around the powerhouse playing of Baty, who runs through a plethora of styles from blues, boogie and soul to rockabilly and even country picking.

It's all the more a shame therefore that the material ultimately lets the band down . . . The opening track "That's My Girl" is far too lacklustre to make the necessary impact. I suspect it's only the fans who have seen the band live that might venture further into the album. Should they do so they will find some gems lurking in between the inconsistencies.

"Nervous", sung with a stutter contains the lyric ". . . so many eyeballs staring at me, I'm n . . . n . . . n . . . n . . . n . . . nervous as I can be". It's the kind of humorous track, brought to life by some fine vocal phrasing by Rick Estrin that summarises a band who perhaps have still to comprehend their studio break onto vinyl.

"If This Is Love" is a beautiful slow blues with Estrin again emotively singing over some smoking instrumental accompaniment, whilst "She's Talking" captures the band's rockabilly vein. Ultimately however, the production needs an extra shot of dynamism, and Estrin's colourful harp playing is underused. Little Charlie and the boys display plenty of potential but as yet are too inhibited by the studio to cut loose.

Pete Feenstra

BLUESNEWS

Bank's Brewery held the final of their **Best of Blues** competition in Wolverhampton's Civic Hall on 8th July. After twenty plus heats throughout the Midlands, four bands qualified for the final: Wolverhampton's **F.B.I.**, London's **Innocent Bystanders**, Oxford's **Elmores** and Braintree's **Booze 'n' Blooze**.

There was a good crowd to hear the contenders and the event was filmed by Central TV. A documentary is scheduled this autumn. With Jools Holland compering and additional entertainment from the Boogies, there was plenty of action.

The panel of judges was headed by Tom McGuinness and they awarded the Best Guitarist prize – a Fender Stratocaster – to **Pete Boss**, lead guitarist with The Elmores.

The winners of the band competition were **Booze 'n' Blues** who were rewarded with a prize of a week in recording studios with Mike Vernon.

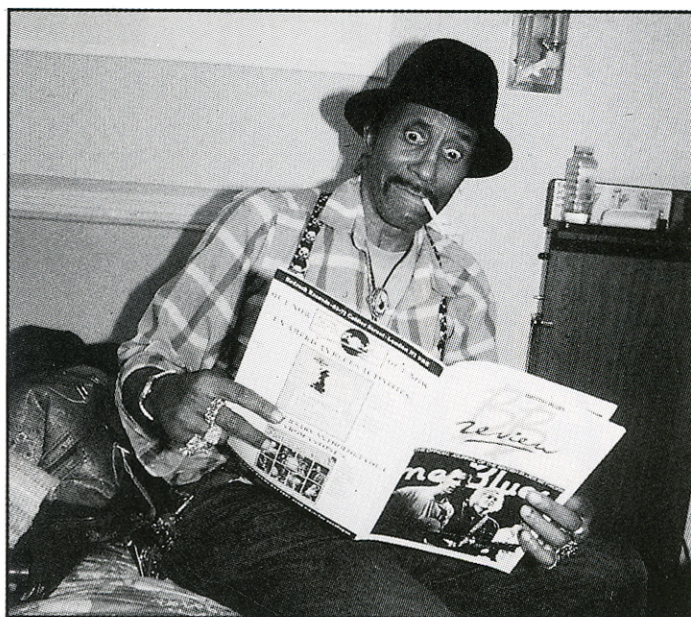
Banks's report themselves well pleased with the competition and intend to run an even bigger competition next year.

The Witchwood, Old Street, Ashton under Lyne, has been running regular blues nights on Tuesdays, with various bands and Wednesdays with resident band **The Method**. Enquiries about the venue can be made to Darren Poyzer on 045-74-6173. All gigs are apparently free – can't be bad!

John Rees, who runs the Victoria Tavern and promotes country blues on Monday nights is due to resurrect the old **Crawdaddy Club** on October 26th at the **Richmond Athletic Ground** and it will run every Thursday. This was the launch pad for **The Rolling Stones** and **The Yardbirds** back in the sixties and will no doubt attract some nostalgia. The gig will be known as **Crawdaddy Blues** and ex-Yardbirds **Jim McCarty** and **Top Topham** will open

the proceedings on 26th October and 2nd November. **The Shakey Vick Band** is booked for 9th November. Other bookings will be known by opening night.

The Kings Hotel, High Street, **Newport Gwent**, had James Brown's band, the **J.B.'s**, booked for September 26th one of only five venues selected for their British tour. The venue continues it's booking policy in October and November with **Canned Heat** on 6th Oct. **Ted Hawkins** on 13th Oct. **Angela Brown**, 21st Oct. **The Paladins**, 10th Nov. and **The Albert Lee Band** on 25th Nov. There will also be support acts and a late bar and prices are more than reasonable. Tickets can be bought in advance. Tel. 0633 842020.



Another Contented Reader. Photo Brian Smith

November sees the return of the **Farnham Blues Festival** at the Maltings, an event which is usually well received and this year should be no exception with a good

mix of British bands and **Lucky Lopez Evans** and **The Paladins** from the States. See the advert in this issue.

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- 1 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 1 June Crooner (Eve)
- 2 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 3 Paul Lamb Band
- 4 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 5 Harmonica Jam
- 6 Shout Sister Shout
- 7 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 8 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 8 Big Road Blues Band
- 9 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 10 Paul Lamb Band
- 11 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 12 Bluer Than Blue
- 13 Shout Sister Shout
- 14 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 15 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 15 D P's Blues Express (Evening)
- 16 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 17 Paul Lamb Band
- 18 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 19 The Diplomats
- 20 Shout Sister Shout
- 21 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 22 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 22 Eddie Martin Band (Evening)
- 23 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 24 Paul Lamb Band
- 25 Top Topham/Jim McCarty Band
- 26 Jumpin' Catfish
- 27 Shout Sister Shout
- 28 Big Joe Louis & his Blueskings
- 29 Shakey Vick's Sunday Joint (Noon)
- 29 The Marauders (Evening)
- 30 B B Review Blues Jam Session
- 31 Paul Lamb Band

NOVEMBER

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