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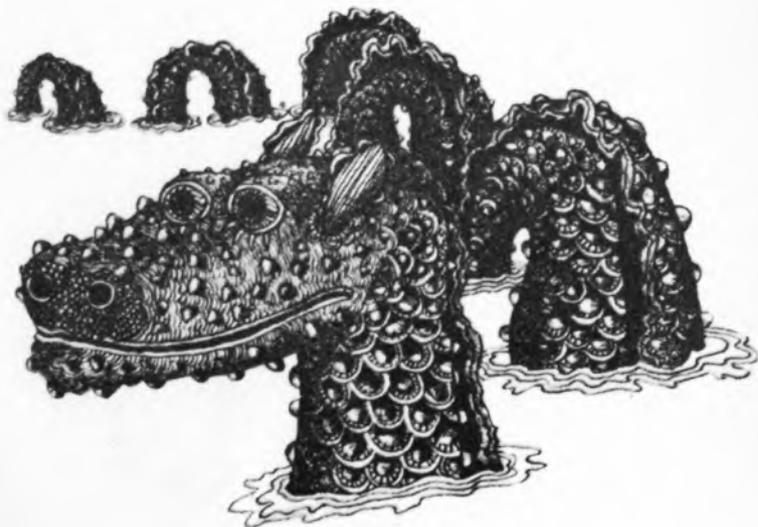
ISSUE NO. 5



25p

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# editorial

Once again we are very late out, and my first duty is to apologise to all our readers and writers. Strikes, illness, tornadoes and civil insurrection permitting, it won't happen again. In fact, from this issue we hope to work up to a monthly schedule. This will enable us to be more up-to-date with our news and reviews; it also means that we are more than ever dependant on you to help maintain our high standards. So if you've got something to say about the blues, send it to us, don't sit on it. Which reminds me, many thanks to all those who have sent in copy; if you haven't had a letter yet, please be patient and understanding — I'll get round to you as soon as I can.

Second point. We've moved to new premises to which all copy, letters, advertising and blank cheques etc. should now be sent. Ring up by all means; there's usually someone in the office.

Lastly. I have taken over the editorship from Mike and Alan; they will continue to run the publishing company retaining control of subscription and advertising matters, but content is now my responsibility. This separation of powers should enable us to give more efficient attention to each of the aspects of making Blues-Link the magazine you need to know about.

Remember, we need to hear from you.  
Chris Smith

## And now a word from.....

To help us answer your correspondence more efficiently we should appreciate it if you could enclose an SAE or IRC. It saves time and keeps our postage bill looking less like a telephone number.

The response so far for our Address Listing has been pretty poor. If it is still to be published we need you to send in your name, address, telephone number, age and special interests now, or we will be forced to cancel the project thereby disappointing

those who have already taken the effort to write to us.

Paper and printing costs continue to soar and one way you can help to keep the price of Blues-Link stable is by supporting Black Cat Records. Any money made by Black Cat Records will be used to subsidise Blues-Link and fund further bluesy publishing ventures.

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# Screamin' Jay Hawkins

by CLIFF WHITE

Screamin' Jay Hawkins is not a figure who inspires critical acclaim. During his two brief tours of England the press could only compare him to Lord Sutch; in the States he is reduced to nostalgic revival shows and a succession of short-lived contracts to eke out a living. The folly of momentary fame as Rock'n'Roll's weirdest offspring led to instant implausibility. Once he might have developed into a remarkably original songwriter, but after his success with macabre insanity nobody could take him seriously any more as he squandered his potential trying to keep the gimmick alive, and each new song became distorted with the echoes of his notorious hit.

It was of course *I Put A Spell On You* (*Okeh 7072*) that branded Jay's image; focussing attention on his melodramatic clowning with every snort and grunt of this absurd, but delightful, performance, a performance that was stronger than the song itself. Stripped of its bizarre presentation, "Spell" was a relatively straightforward sentiment...

*I put a spell on you, because you're mine,  
Stop the things you do, I ain't lyin';  
I can't stand no running around,  
I can't stand no put-me-down;  
I put a spell on you, because you're mine.*

A modest chart entry in 1955; by the mid-sixties, when it was revived by Nina Simone (with a totally different interpretation), Jay was remembered not so much for what he had written more for the way he had sung it. But during his long and misguided career he has concocted far more personal songs, displaying a wry humour feeding off a rich imagination. His talents have never been fully employed – only occasionally exercised in the seldom heard verses of his obscure recordings.

Before his emergence as a novelty act, he had been building a reputation in the north-eastern states with several exotic blues stompers, already extreme in the Hawkins way, although set in a recognisable framework, either loosely derived from the waning big band jump blues or attempting the "new" R & B formula. The stimulents for his expressive writing were common enough; it was the warped values he found in wine and women, and his penetrating sense of the ridiculous, that gave his songs a different slant. The majority of drinking songs are the maudlin sentiments of the alcoholic depressive, the agonies of regret and despair poured out in the last phases of consciousness. Jay, on the other hand, fell down chuckling with sodden glee...

*Said you got the nerve when I'm laying down,  
You got the nerve trying to put me in that cold ground,  
You want me to go, please be so kind,  
Stop by the stage door and get some wine.*

*He had wine in his coffin, put wine on his head,  
His eyes rolled back, here's the very words he said,  
"Confession for your soul, confession for mine,  
If wine's gonna kill me I don't mind dyin'."*

— *Baptize Me In Wine.*

And as for women, he didn't have a good word to say about them...

*Well, they taught me about the evil,  
About life and its mysteries;  
They didn't teach me about the women  
Who still getting fools like me.*

— *She Put The Whammie On Me.*

...choosing instead to tell it like it was, as on the most commercial of his early records, *Talk About Me* (*Wing 90055*). Set to a rocking mambo rhythm, similar to Gene and Eunice's hit *Ko Ko Mo* and Bobby Lewis's *Mumbles Blues* (which Jay claimed was pinched from him anyway), the lyric owed much to the jiving banter of Louis Jordan.

*You can talk about me, baby, but you know that you oughta be mine, (x2)  
You can get me, baby, when you stop that signifyin';  
When you stop runnin' your great big flabber-mouth,  
When you quit telling people what my business all about,  
When you stop that lyin' and cheatin' on me,  
When you come on home where you oughta be.*

*You got the nerve to talk about me going with somebody else, (x2)  
You got the nerve to say I'm wrong when you know that you're wrong yourself;  
You done talked and talked till you made front page,  
You got everybody thinking I'm the lyin' rage,  
You got people saying I'm as mean as can be,  
And it's all on account of you talk about me.*

Because the success of "Spell" was so obviously due to the manic performance, many of his other recordings for Okeh played on this side of his character. As the liner notes of his hastily compiled album, *At Home With Screamin' Jay Hawkins* (*Epic LP LN3488*) admitted, the emphasis was on his "vocal attainments". The company had him crucifying well known standards, *You Made Me Love You* and *I Love Paris*, or found him songs by other writers that seemed to fit the bill, *Frenzy* (Hill-Stevenson) and *Alligator Wine* (Leiber-Stoller). His own contributions also aimed to maintain the sudden attack of good fortune. Grotesque and zany images strung randomly together brought into the songs a little of the light-hearted madness of his stage act — notably on two forceful rockers: *Little Demon*, who...

*made the sky turn green, he made the grass turn red,  
He even put pretty hair on Grandma's bald head,  
He made the moon back up, he even pushed back time,  
Took the tutti out of frutti, had the devil drinking wine.*

and *Yellow Coat*...

*A forty gallon hat, and some polka dot shoes,  
Tomato picking onion juice to drive away my blues,  
A bright red leather suit, a trip in a motor boat,  
Had the strike-out cars on the waterfront,  
When I fill out my yellow coat.*

Such ephemeral material is not the bedrock on which lasting careers are founded. The public soon grew tired of the coffin and skull routine, the records stopped selling, and Jay was cast into the same limbo that engulfed John "Dinner With Drac" Zacherle, Boris "Monster Mash" Pickett and all the other agents of dreadful tomfoolery. His last issue on Okeh, *There's Something Wrong With You*, combined the new imagery with his old needling wit. In this ghoulish chant, a menu of gut-curdling ingenuity, Jay's taunts were pitched on the threshold of the asylum...

*Bald elephant ears smothered in spaghetti,  
Buzzard elbows and chitlins a la king,  
Steam-pot alligator foots with dumpling.*

*There's something wrong with you,  
Something missing, someplace, somewhere,  
There's something wrong with you — Bellevue, that's it,  
I mean sometimes you just ain't all there.*

*Take a look — ha ha! — at yourself,  
I'm telling you, I ain't lying, girl, you look like something else,  
I don't know... what is wrong,  
But if you keep... looking like that... I'll be gone.*

*There's something wrong with you,  
I mean, you just ain't like you was,  
Let's face it, there's something I gotta do,  
I mean to find out the cause.*

*You swore up and down, that you would love me so,  
You said pumpkins would look like pickles, before you would let me go,  
Well, I'm just tired of it all, you can stop your show,  
Don't you know you can be replaced you know.*

*Monkey toes and string beans,  
Roast baboon salad smothered with bubblegum,  
Baked barbecue gorilla ribs,  
A dish of cowfingers and mosquito pie,  
There's something wrong with you.*

Recorded too late to be included on the album, inflicted with the same arrangement as "Spell", and relegated to a 'B' side (*Okeh 7071*), this classic piece of eccentricity was largely ignored.

Looking back and being a smarty-pants, it is clear that here was the moment for the Screamer to deftly change gear and apply his talents to more generally acceptable themes. At the same time, it is understandable that he did not. Mock-horrifics had been his passport from obscurity, and unlike survivors of similar gimmicks, Dr. John for example, Jay had no years of backroom experience behind him, no roots on which to rebuild. Anyway, the excesses of his style weren't that much of an exaggeration of his own unpredictable personality. It came too easily.

So he soldiered on, securing the occasional one-off recording, dragging his vaudevillian apparatus out of theatre's limelight into the gloom of back street clubs, and finally retreating across the sea to semi-retirement in Hawaii. Although his output became erratic and had long since ceased to titillate a paying audience, within the tight limits of his own idiom he continued to pull out a few plums. He could still please his fans, even if he could not break into a wider market.

Before his brief exile in the Pacific, I Hear Voices — unrequited love seen through the distortion of advanced schizophrenia — blew a few minds...

*Man don't stand a chance, in a one-sided romance,  
Most lovers are blind, the rest just lose their minds;  
Hark! I hear voices,  
I hear the foot-tracks,  
I smell them looking,*

...and after he had been lured back to New York by tantalising rumours of European interest, The Whammy coupled with Strange (*Roulette 4579*) showed that his barbs had lost none of their sting...

*You got a big double head and one bloodshot eye,  
You have five double chins when you eat apple pie,  
Your nose looks like the knees of a nanny goat,  
You got two left legs, your lips don't close.  
There's something wrong with you, baby, I don't know what it is,  
I'm gonna leave you alone, baby, I'm gonna leave it like it is.*

Needless to say, both these issues collapsed immediately, burying even better songs in their downfall. For Enrica he had also cut Armpit No. 6 (a sales pitch for a stunning new perfume), and the Roulette sessions included his incantatory masterpiece, *Feast Of The Mau Mau*...

*Cut the fat off the back of a baboon,  
Boil it down to a pound, get a spoon,  
Scoop the eye from a fly flying backwards,  
Take the jaws and the paws off a coon;  
Take your time, I ain't lyin', for good cookin',  
'Cause the rest of this mess ain't good lookin',  
Take the fleas from the knees of a demon,  
Tell your pals the gals will come screamin'.*

*Brush your teeth with a piece of a goose toenail,  
At the death, steal the breath of a drunk in jail,  
Pull the skin off your friend with a razor blade,  
Into night, change tomorrow, and bring back yesterday.  
Shake your hip, bite your lip, and shoot your mother-in-law,  
Put on your gorilla suit, drink some elbow soup and have a ball;  
Get it straight, don't be late, it's time for mad fun,  
Feast of the Mau Mau has begun.*

*The feast with the beast of the Mau Mau,  
They make wine from the spines of their bulldogs,  
It's the test for the best who stays,  
At the feast of the beast with the Mau Mau.*

With no hits to justify their release, these, and a few other choice items (*Wake Up And Live* sounds promising) have sat mouldering on the shelf ever since, although Jay did finally perpetrate *Mau Mau* on the world with a later recording tucked away on a *Phillips* lp. *What That Is (PHS 600-319)*.

His two trips to England did little to recompense him for leaving his island sanctuary for while he was flattered to discover that his reputation had got this far, the tiring round of cheapskate gigs to which he was subjected barely offset the hotel bills. Had it not been for Nina Simone's unexpected hit, he'd probably slipped quietly back to the South Seas. But with several name groups picking up the strains of "Spell", small royalties began to trickle in and the tempting smell of showbiz got to him again. As far as can be determined, he has been drifting around the States ever since. Each time he might have been inclined to chuck in the towel once and for all, some new twist of fate has kept him on the road.

English fans made him think twice about retiring; the renewed interest in "Spell" prompted

ed him to attempt a few new songs; the dramatic flowering of multifarious styles and talents in the late sixties – among them Arthur Brown in Britain and Alice Cooper in the States – seemingly made macabre theatre a viable proposition again; and then, once the quality material had been sifted from the chaff, the establishment of regular oldie-but-goodie spectacles gave him the opportunity to play before larger audiences than he had ever experienced in his heyday.



To seduce Miss Simone into recording more of his songs he tried a new approach with *Poor Folks*, an unpretentious look at a theme that was soon to be the backbone of a new era of selfconscious social comment.

*Poor folks suffer with a pain, that's true,  
Yet they can smile like the rich folks do;  
They got the heart to look life right smack in the eye,  
And make their way until the day that they die.  
Some poor folks are wearing hand-me-down clothes,  
Fighting starvation in and out of doors,  
Dodging the landlord 'cause they ain't got a cent,  
Some are just looking for a decent place to rent.  
You know we need a better understanding,  
Man needs more, he's demanding...*

...and then Slumtown, presumably along the same lines (this one's so obscure, nobody seems to have heard it). He was disappointed. She didn't record them — so he did, and ruined his chances by encasing this change of subject in the thumping, weirdo production that had pigeon-holed him as a one-off curio in the first place. Poor Folks is an excellent record of its type, one of his best, but that is not the point. Here was a chance to learn from another artist and other producers, a chance for a fresh start. By then there was nothing to lose and a new career to aim for.

In the confusion of the psychedelic boom, when many company execs temporarily lost their sense of judgement, Jay managed to sneak back onto a major label (*Phillips*) with the lp mentioned above but he remained blithely unaffected by the upheaval going on around him — unless one can count *What That Is*, two minutes of sheer nonsense consisting solely of three unrelated statements, like the incomplete draft of a follow-up to *Mau Mau*...

*What I see, must be,  
To was or not to have been,  
Eating a wax feathered sandwich  
In the middle of nineteen hundred and yesterday.*

*Shut your mouth, what you say,  
There's a sack hanging in your head with your brains in it;  
Eating skunk chop suey, corroded biscuits, and bat meat soup  
In a gas mask.*

*What that is, what that ain't,  
Now, whether with or without feathers,  
Give me that chicken.*

On the same lp, *Thing Called Woman* started off in original vein...

*I live in a place called country,  
I caught a ride called bus,  
I got off at a place called depot,  
So now there's a square among us.*

*A pain called 'had to eat more' made me get a job,  
A want called 'need more' made me see it through,  
A touch of loneliness kept me unhappy,  
The sight of you, my dear, started something new.*

...loses its way in a string of romantic cliches, and then is redeemed with a chuckling fadeout similar to *Strange*...

*Give me a thing called woman,  
Big or short, tall, fat or round, bald, and that's all right with me,  
Let her have two left legs,  
Three sets of eyeballs  
And one swinging arm, right in the middle of her chest,  
Give me a woman.*

He was attempting to break back into a totally different world though, a much slicker era, where the standards of even the vast catalogue of nondescript flops was deceptively high. Before long he was off on his annual label-hopping search for identity, sliding into rockbottom with his latest release, *Africa Gone Funky*, a disastrous marriage of the most boring aspects of street funk and the least imaginative screaming from Jay.

This superficial glance at a dozen or so of the best of Screamin' Jay (a strictly personal choice) is, on the face of it, more an illustration of how not to run a career than a heart-warming success story. He has made his coffin, now he must lie in it. If it wasn't for these sporadic workouts of unrealised potential I would seriously doubt his chances of ever regaining credibility. But can one dismiss so completely the man who brewed such a broth of couplets as "Mau Mau", or when motivated turned his mind to the Poor Folks? Especially when on the Portrait Of A Man lp (*Hot Line HLP 10024-25*), there is frustrating evidence that he could still come up with something amazing if only he was guided in the right direction.

His revival on this lp of Willie Mabon's I Don't Know is a truly fine performance, marred only by an incongruous guitar solo, and suggesting a whole folio of possibilities. Respectfully produced, Screamin' Jay Sings The R & B Hits Of The Fifties could turn out to be the best thing he ever did – if he ever did it. An exciting fantasy, but then again, a rather suffocating bag to get put in. Better still is the title song...

*I am painting in oil, a portrait of a man  
Who has taken all the heartaches, and all the pain he can stand;  
I'm using all the colours of blue I have here on my stand,  
I am painting in oil, a portrait of a man.*

*I can tell he is dying, I see death in his eyes,  
Oh yes I know when he's crying, 'tis my tears that he cries;  
I'm sure of how he feels inside, I mix the paint with my hand,  
I am painting in oil, a portrait of a man.*

*As I paint in a wrinkled brow and hair that is turning grey,  
Oh, tell me how can I paint a smile, and eyes that keep turning away?  
I'm using all the colours of blue that I have here on my stand,  
I am painting in oils, a portrait, and I'm the man.*

Although Jay's powerful baritone is many years out of vogue, in this particular setting his sombre tones are well matched to the haunting theme. Stronger compositions of this maturity may help him to be taken seriously as a singer, and could well start a new career as a successful songwriter. If not? Well, at least nothing can rob him of the claim to a startlingly unique series of recordings that have enlivened the last twenty years.

My record collection would be a sadder assortment without the chaotic output of this amiable eccentric. Like the eyewatering peppers in a steamy gumbo they kick the unexpected into an otherwise predictable spectrum of flavours. Bald elephant ears smothered in spaghetti, indeed!

(Readers who would like to know about Jay's life in more detail are referred to Cliff's fine article in *Black Music*, issue 5)

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# Carl Martin, Billy Bird and the Poor Boys.

by Dave Moore

Six years ago in Blues World[1], Bob Groom claimed: "There is considerable similarity between the guitar playing of Papa Egg Shell, Billy Bird and Arthur McClain on certain records." He then went on to suggest that 'Billy Bird' might be a pseudonym for either McClain or Lawrence Casey ('Egg Shell's' real name). A year later a *Yazoo* liner note[2] drew attention to a similarity between the guitar work on records by Billy Bird and Carl Martin.

It is a fact that the following numbers at least all feature guitar accompaniments which are nearly identical in form:—

Billy Bird (Atlanta, 1928): All four titles — "Mill Man Blues", "Down In The Cemetery" and "Alabama Blues — Pts. 1 and 2".

Arthur McClain (New York, 1931): "My Baby Got A Yo-Yo".

Carl Martin (Chicago, 1935): "Good Morning Judge" and "Crow Jane".

On the evidence of listening to the two parts of Papa Egg Shell's "I'm Goin' Up The Country" however, there is little similarity with any of the above, although the man does have a very interesting and dynamic guitar style all his own.

The *Yazoo* liner attempts to explain some of this similarity of styles by suggesting that it may be Carl Martin who plays the guitar behind Billy Bird's vocal, and the Godrich and Dixon discography also claims Martin as the possible guitarist on McClain's "Yo-Yo". Both of these theories are however denied by Carl Martin himself[3] who recalls the first record he ever made, correctly naming the recording location and both

titles of a disc he cut in 1930, which was eventually released under the name of the Tennessee Chocolate Drops. Disillusioned by the fact that his own name was not used on the record, as promised by *Brunswick*, and by consequently being cheated out of any payment for his efforts, Martin was discouraged from recording again until after he had moved from Tennessee to Chicago in 1932. On his own evidence then, Carl Martin could not have recorded with Billy Bird in 1928, nor with Arthur McClain in New York in 1931. But what of the connections between these last two artists?

Listening to a batch of twelve recordings by the team of Evans and McClain ('The Two Poor Boys') reveals the fact that it is only on "My Baby Got A Yo-Yo" that two guitars are used. On the others, one guitar is always featured, together with mandolin on six titles, piano on three and violin and kazoo on one each. The guitar style on these eleven sides sounds remarkably consistent, but when the extra guitar is added on "Yo-Yo", it comes out quite differently, having the Bird/Martin sound already discussed. So the conclusion is that one of the Evans and McClain duo plays guitar on all the records and the other, more versatile partner alternates between mandolin, piano, violin and kazoo, and second guitar on "Yo-Yo". It is virtually certain that Joe Evans was the pianist and so may have also played the diversity of other instruments, while Arthur McClain was the regular guitarist. The interrelation between McClain's vocal and the main guitar accompaniment on "Yo-Yo" again suggests that he is being accompanied

here by his colleague Evans while providing the simpler backing part himself.

An interesting feature of this ubiquitous guitar sound under discussion is the mandolin-like trill which occurs on Billy Bird's first two recordings (and also on the two Carl Martin sides), which adds weight to the argument that the man(or men) responsible was also familiar with the mandolin. Certainly the Evans and McClain titles which feature mandolin do exhibit many trills played on this instrument. Billy Bird's four titles and Evans and McClain's "Yo-Yo" are even more closely related in that all five guitar parts include the same repetitive picking pattern at the start of the verse which is not shared by the two Carl Martin numbers cited. This type of device is often used by an accompanist, allowing the singer to come in whenever he is ready, but is not usually heard when the singer is backing himself — unless he has forgotten his words!

A further link between Billy Bird and Joe Evans is that both recorded a version of "Mill Man Blues". Lyrically these versions were almost identical, with all except one of Evans' verses being the same as Bird's, and used in the same sequence. The voices however, have quite different characteristics which rules out the possibility that 'Billy Bird' was a pseudonym for Evans. It does indeed sound, as the *Yazoo* liner proposes, that Bird is being accompanied rather than playing guitar himself, so what better candidate for this role than Joe Evans? This would certainly account for the similarity of the guitar work on Billy Bird's session and on McClain's "Yo-Yo", and such a link between Bird and Evans could also explain their near-identical versions of "Mill Man Blues". Further, comparing McClain's voice on "Yo-Yo" with Bird's reveals much similarity, so it could well be that 'Billy Bird' was a pseudonym for Arthur McClain and that the four titles recorded for *Columbia* in this guise did in fact feature Evans and McClain in between their Gennett and A.R.C. sessions.

Where does Carl Martin fit into this

picture? Well, minor differences between the guitar theme on Martin's recordings compared with the Bird/Evans versions have already been discussed. There is also a subtle shift in the timing of the Martin numbers which make it almost certain that he is accompanying himself. Martin does not however, use this theme to the exclusion of all others. It is just part of his repertoire, and on at least six other numbers quite different accompaniments are used. According to Martin himself[3]: "The way I got to play — fellows would come by and play the guitar...and you could see a mandolin occasionally...and they'd stop over at our house and I'd watch them play. I was just a little boy, and I learnt to pick up a piece or two". Is it not possible that one of these fellows who stopped by at Carl's house in Knoxville, Tennessee was Joe Evans, and that Carl learnt from him the guitar work which he later used to such good effect on his own recordings of "Good Morning Judge" and "Crow Jane"?

As for Papa Egg Shell, maybe the alleged similarity between his guitar playing and that already examined is apparent on his second *Brunswick* coupling(7095), which I have not yet been able to hear. Perhaps someone who does know the record and/or Carl Martin's first two issues on *Vocalion*(1517), as part of the Tennessee Chocolate Drops, and *Bluebird*(B5745), can shed some light on the problem.

Footnote.

(Since writing the above, I have heard Carl Martin's BB B5745 coupling, and of the two sides Kid Man Blues can be added to the list of those which use the distinctive guitar accompaniment. — Dave Moore)

References.

1. Bob Groom. *Blues World* No. 21, p. 16, October, 1968.
2. Stephen Calt. Liner notes to *Yazoo* L1016, "Guitar Wizards".
3. Pete Welding. "An Interview With Carl Martin", 78 *Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1968.

# Mercy Dee (conclusion) by Bob Groom

On February 5th, 1961 Mercy Dee made ten recordings for Arhoolie, eight of which were subsequently issued on LP (F1007, incidentally the only red vinyl Arhoolie I've seen) the remaining two songs being remade at a later session. Accompanying him were three musicians whom he had played with on occasion during the fifties, guitarist K.C. Douglas, who had come to California from Mississippi in 1945 (look out for K.C.'s three fine lp's – Cook 5002, Bluesville 1023 & 1050), harmonica player Sidney Maiden from Louisiana, and drummer Otis Cherry, who had accompanied K.C. on his 1948 Mercury Boogie hit, (the reverse of which was Sidney Maiden's equally fine Eclipse Of The Sun). They had a complete understanding of Mercy Dee's musical needs and they gave sympathetic support throughout the session.

The first title, Jack Engine, derives from Walter Davis (who recorded Big Jack Engine Blues in 1937 – Bluebird B-7375). Although the lyrics are more conventional than most of Mercy Dee's pieces, their impact is still considerable:

*Baby I think I hear, mama that Jack Engine blow (x2)*

*Lord when I leave this time, well I ain't coming back no more.*

*Now my home ain't here baby, well it's way out in the West (x2)*

*Out in those Smokey Mountains now baby, where those eagles build their nests.*

Ebony Baby is a beautiful, slightly altered recreation of the Joe Pullum classic Black Girl What Makes Your Head So Hard, first recorded for Bluebird in April, 1934. For this piece, one of the few he recorded not of his own composition, Mercy Dee adopted the cascading piano style of Rob Cooper, Pullum's accompanist on his first two sessions, and Pullum's high-pitched vocal delivery:

*Brown girl, brown baby, woman, woman what makes your head so hard?*

*Ebony baby, ebony baby, woman, woman what makes your head so hard?*

*It's just like a 2 by 4, babe, when it's laying up in some lumber yard.*

Call The Asylum is a Mercy Dee original, a grimly realistic portrayal of mental anguish, culminating in an appeal to his woman to come back to him before he loses his mind completely. The mixture of despair, anger and pleading is reminiscent of several Blind Lemon Jefferson blues:

*Oh please call the asylum, well I believe I'm going insane (x2)*

*Well my little baby have quit me, I'm standing barefooted crying on 5th and Main.*

*Well I'm so tore up in mind, well I don't even trust myself (x2)*

*Well it'll be curtains for you baby – catch you jivin' around with somebody else.*

*Oh please come back to me baby, I can't stand this pain another day (x2)*

*Well please call the asylum so they can come and take me away.*

Mercy's Party provided some light relief after the taut performance of Call The Asylum. Mercy Dee rolls out some lonesome blues on the piano, commenting "Boys, you talk about the blues...I wish some of the cats were here to help me play 'em. A rainy day like today I could really wail", there is a knock on the 'door' and Sidney Maiden 'arrives'. From then on the recording simulates a house party with K.C. Douglas 'arriving' next, singing a verse ("Put your arms around me like a circle round the sun" etc), then Sidney singing a verse and finally Otis Cherry joining in while Mercy Dee sings another verse – "bring me one more half-a-gallon" – and then the recording fades out with a good time being had by all.

Walked Down So Many Turnrows is a remake of the striking blues he recorded in 1945 as Dark Muddy Bottom. The lyrics follow the Specialty recording with only very minor differences. Sidney Maiden's harp adds emphasis to the powerful lyrics.

Eighth Wonder Of The World is an amusing uptempo item with a chorus that runs:

*What can you lose, why don't you give it a whirl,*

*If she stick with you it'll be a miracle and you'll have found the eighth wonder of the world.*

K.C. contributes some snappy guitar work in the instrumental break. The lyrics are deliberately outrageous, and certainly it would be an exceptional (ly foolish) woman who would put up with such impositions, but Mercy Dee makes it clear that this is only humorous wishful thinking.

I Been A Fool (possibly the same piece as Romp And Stomp Blues on Flair) has really superb lyrics put to Mercy Dee's familiar medium-tempo melody:

*Well I ain't gonna be a fool for you baby no more (x2)*

*Well I been a fool ever since I entered your door.*

*Got my boots laced up, wise as the old night owl (x2)*

*Like a wolf in the moonlight, baby it's my time to howl.*

*I'm gonna romp and stomp and lush till the moon grows low (x2)*

*I'm goin' take one cup of coffee and jump back and boogie some more.*

The session ends with a stomping Red Light, a bawdy number which includes such old favourites as "two old maids sitting in the bed". Piano, guitar, harmonica and drums generate an infectious rhythm throughout.



*Otis Cherry, K.C. Douglas, Mercy Dee, Sidney Maiden – photo courtesy Chris Strachwitz.*

A week later a second session was held which only produced two issued recordings (both included on F1007). The first of these is however, a country blues masterpiece of the first water. Mercy's Troubles spotlights a man alone at his piano (Otis Cherry supports unobtrusively on drums), weaving his thoughts, feelings and memories into a blues of exceptional quality and emotional power which must surely rate as one of the finest in the Arhoolie catalogue, or for that matter any post-war blues series. No time constraints were imposed and the recording runs for nearly 10 minutes and comprises eight verses. In the first four he recalls old times in Texas and includes a fascinating reference to Bud Russel. After verses 4, 6 & 7 there are powerful piano breaks. In verse seven, he recalls his disillusionment with California, but his acceptance of the realities of life and his grim determination to take things as they come close verse eight on an almost hopeful note:

*I hate to burden you with my troubles but peoples please, please lend an ear  
I have had so much bad luck and trouble and I've lived my whole sad life in fear.  
Now since my troubles started early, at the time I should have been home in bed (x2)  
I shot a man about a no good woman and she wasn't worth the salt it took to make her  
bread.*

*They sentenced me to ten years on Big Brazos, picking cotton and and corn and listen to  
the big bell tone (x2)*

*Now every time I hear a street light jingle, I start aching all in my bone.*

*Uncle Bud swore he never saw a man that he couldn't change his ways (x2)*

*When I say Uncle Bud I mean Bud Russell, the Kingpin and boss way back in red heifer  
days.*

*Peoples complain about their troubles, what if their luck had-a been like mine (x2)*

*I was raised on scrap candy and regular sandwiches, whole weeks sometime I didn't make  
a lousy dime.*

*No woman have ever really loved me, all they wanted was to keep my pockets clean (x2)*

*Says I'd give a million dollars if some pretty baby would really, really love poor me.*

*I had to freight and move to California boys I really thought things would change (x2)*

*But if I ain't cutting spinach I'm picking grapes people, when the fog rolls in I'm right  
back down on Skid Row again.*

*But I've learnt to thumb and smile at trouble, I ain't goin' to let it get me down (x2)*

*I'll be drinking Darkport and trying to make it, peoples when the deal goes down.*

Perhaps as a result of Chris Strachwitz questioning him about his early life, Mercy Dee reached into his memory to produce a song he had learnt from Bob Jackson of Marlin, Texas nearly 30 years before. The lyrics of Troublesome Mind derive from the great pool of country blues verses current in the 1920's – "Left my poor old mother in the backdoor crying...", "Don't you never drive a stranger from your door..." – with some lines repeated three times in oldtime fashion. The optimistic final verse has the flavour of a Mercy Dee original: "Well I'll find me a tan baby, well and she sure do suit me fine. Well I'll never no more be worried with a troublesome mind." There are two lengthy instrumental breaks, featuring Mercy Dee's relaxed, rolling piano and K.C.'s guitar work. (Interestingly, Bert Mays recorded a Troublesome Mind Blues for Paramount (12614) in 1927 which uses the same tune and very similar lyrics and vocal inflections. Mays was almost certainly a Texas artist.)

Of the unissued tracks from the session, You Don't Know My Mind may well be a version of the blues standard and Mercy's Boogie is presumably an instrumental. The Drunkard was remade two months later.

Exactly a month elapsed before Mercy Dee recorded again, in Stockton on March 12, 1961. The only title to be issued from this session was Birdbrain Baby, a song which I discussed earlier in this article. It includes a really offbeat verse:

*Now the more sense I try to teach her, the less I have myself,*

*More I try to teach and school her, less sense I have myself,*

*If something don't happen pretty soon, I won't have no knowledge left.*

Six of the songs were remade in April but it would be interesting to know what the unissued Fairweather Mama is about. K.C. And Mercy's Wail I assume to be an instrumental.

Mercy Dee's last session was held in Berkeley on April 16, 1961 with Maiden and Cherry (but not Douglas) in support on most titles. The first two titles were issued on an Arhoolie 45(501) and later included in Arhoolie's Mercy Dee lp (F1007). Lady Luck is characteristic of his bad luck blues in that the tale of misfortune is laced with grim humour, as in verse one:

*Lady Luck have never smiled down on me, I have never saw her wonderful face (x2)*

*If it was raining soup I'd be caught with a fork people, tired of living in this mad, mad  
atomic age.*

The second verse vividly evokes the effects of an alcoholic haze:

*I got drunk to forget my troubles, so lush the street cars looked like toys.*

He is so high that "I flagged down the heat (i.e. police) and they throwed me in the

tombs..." Verse three contains a gem of ironic humour:

*Well they tell me not to be impatient, they say every dog has its day (x2)*

*But I don't belong to the Canine family yet I'm beginning to live and look like one everyday.*

The traditional ballad Betty And Dupree has been reworked and revamped many times and sometimes turned into a new song. Mercy Dee's Betty Jean is one of the liveliest adaptations of the theme and melody. The recording has the pounding insistence of a Domino/Dupree New Orleans rock blues:

*Betty Jean, Betty Jean is my weakness well I don't care what in the world she do,*

*What makes me love Betty boys will make you love her too.*

*Well she's long, lean and lanky, clothes fit like paper on the wall,*

*When you see Betty strolling boys you're bound to fall.*

*Now if you ever, ever back in Texas, now please stop in Abilene,*

*Ask if anybody happen to see my Betty Jean.*



*Sidney Maiden, K.C. Douglas, Mercy Dee – photo courtesy Chris Stachwitz.*

Ten of the titles made at the session comprised the lp Prestige issued as PITY AND A SHAME on Bluesville BVL 1039, with notes by Chris Strachwitz. The title track is one of Mercy Dee's best efforts. In the first verse he comments on the perversity of some women in leading a man on until he is hooked and then leaving him flat:

*Now it's a pity and a shame, the tricky actions of a woman's brain (x2)*

*Soon as you find you want her and her only, right away she'll go and make a change.*

Verse two repeats this sentiment, a woman will fight to hold her man but when the competition is over, she'll leave him. Sidney Maiden contributes some really fine harp in the instrumental break. In verse three he regrets that "you can't case a woman" but advises "Be sure she's yours and yours only, when you got her layin' up in your arms". The conclusion emphasizes "It's a pity and a shame that a woman will never see the light". Shady Lane is a doomy reminder of the mortality of man:

*Well do your hear the churchbell toning and the peoples begin to sing (x2)*

*Well it's just another good man gone way down in Shady Lane.*

*You may be a wino or a gambler or have your picture in the hall of fame (x2)*

*Take your pick, one is as good as the other when they lay you way down in Shady Lane.*

*Since tomorrow ain't promised to no man, all your planning may be in vain (x2)*

*So swing today and be merry, tomorrow you may be way down in Shady Lane.*

The final verse expressed his philosophy of life, to make the most of life whatever the cost because "I don't want the world to owe me nothing, when they take me way down in Shady Lane". The stabbing piano and emotional singing suggest that he may have known that he hadn't long to live. (Walter Davis recorded a very similar blues for Bluebird, B-6996, in 1937 under the same title, although only the concluding line of verse 1 is common to both recordings).

"Ten years I worked and I can't show a dollar, and I slaved both day and night" Mercy Dee sings at the beginning of *After The Fight*. He goes on to express his resolve to have a good time regardless:

*I'm goin' stay up all night and drink and gamble, stumble home and take a nap (x2)*

*I wouldn't tell a mule to get up, people, if he was sitting down in my lap.*

(The Mule line is a favourite in Texas country blues and crops up in *Lightnin' Hopkins' Goin' Back To Florida* and many other recordings). The feeling of having given up trying is repeated in verse 3 "...I wouldn't hit a lick at a snake" and concludes in verse 4 that though he'll always love a woman and try to treat women right, "Before one of them marry me off to a job, it'll be a long, long time after the fight". (The significance of the title phrase is obscure.)

Your Friend And Woman examines the eternal triangle man-woman-friend. He cannot understand why his woman should go out of her way to get his friend "when there's plenty other mens around" but "nothing you can do short of murder will stop her, when she's made up her mind to drag him down":

*You may play Peepin' Tom, watch her closely both night and day (x2)*

*But if she's got her mind set on him, you can bet that she will find a way.*

He ends with a warning "Don't watch your friend, watch your woman, she's the one that's going to make the play". The long piano solo midway contains some unorthodox, Alex Moore-like phrases.

The Bluesville version of *One Room Country Shack* matches the Speciality original for quality of performance. Mercy Dee stretches out on piano in the instrumental break with Otis Cherry in support. Lyric variations are slight (e.g. "rest" for "sleep" in verse 2).

The lyrics of *The Drunkard* paint a grim picture of frustration and despair. Taking refuge in alcohol eases the pain but is no solution:

*Now since hard times drove me to drinking, trying to drive my blues away (x2)*

*I'm going to just keep on drinking, people, maybe I'll make the grade someday.*

The long instrumental introduction and break after verse 2 are dominated by Sidney's harp. Mercy Dee's troubles are compound — "now my house blowed down" and "all my neighbours are kicking" — and he sings in resignation:

*Well what's the use of getting sober, when you know you going to get drunk again (x2)*

*I'm all alone in this world and the bottle is my only, only friend.*

*Now bring me one more half-a-gallon-, I declare that will be alright (x2)*

*Well I'll be back after another one way late night.*

A stomping harmonica-piano exchange introduces the uptempo gambling blues *Five Card Hand*:

*Well I got a five card hand and I don't know which way to play (x2)*

*I need a Queen like you to make my hand OK.*

*Well the Kid drew aces and he stacked them back to back (x2)*

*Now I looked at my hand and not a smile did I crack.*

*When the deal went down, I'd only drawn one card (x2)*

*Now if you've ever played Poker, you know that sure is hard.*

*Well the Kid looked at his hand and then began to blush (x2)  
His face turned pale when he saw my Queen High Flush.*

Have You Ever Been Out In The Country is a superb rendition, with piano accompaniment only, of the atmospheric blues Mercy Dee had first recorded for Flair some six years earlier. The lyrics are identical.

My Little Angel is another blues associated with Walter Davis, who recorded Angel Child for Bluebird in 1937 (B-7064) and again in 1938 (B-7693):

*I've been looking for my little angel, I been looking for my little angel child (x2)  
Lord I like to look into her face, man I like to see her smile.*

Sidney's Sonny Boy Williamson-style harp playing is prominent in the instrumental accompaniment and the whole effect is reminiscent of a 1930's Bluebird session and very pleasing. Mercy Dee's only mention in Paul Oliver's Story Of The Blues is as a disciple of Leroy Carr. Personally I can detect few similarities between their music. Such influences as there are on Mercy Dee's highly original music from pre-war recordings seem to come from Walter Davis rather than Carr.

Mercy Dee's final recording was the affecting Sugar Daddy, in which he admits to being "the softest touch in town". Because "good looking womens can get my last quarter", people "call me a chump and say I'm crazy" but he repeats his intention (expressed in several songs) to "have my kicks while I can", another indication that he knew his time wasn't long. Sidney Maiden does sterling work on harmonica, as on most of the titles from this final session. The last verse is well worth quoting for the insight it gives into Mercy Dee's approach to life:

*Sometimes I get so thrilled and excited, holding some fine chick in my arms (x2)  
Then I get sad thinking about all the foolish bachelors whose money'll be spent long after he's gone.*

Mercy Dee did not live to take part in the blues revival of the sixties and since his death his records have tended to be overlooked. I hope this appreciation will help to establish Mercy Dee Walton as one of the major figures of post-war blues and will prompt both newer collectors and longtime blues lovers who do not know his music to give a listen to his Arhoolie lp and, if they enjoy it, seek out some of his recordings. The splendid Bluesville lp is long deleted but letters to Transatlantic (Lawrence Aston) might get it reissued on Xtra. Mercy Dee has gone down 'shady lane' but his recordings remain to remind us that he was truly one of the great blues artists.

#### NOTES

1. The sleeve notes to Arhoolie F1007 are apparently in error. According to Chris Strachwitz's records, Mercy Dee was born on August 30th. 1915 as given in the notes to Bluesville BVL P 1039.
2. "Blues Records 1942-66" (Leadbitter/Slaven - Hanover Books) list two takes of a Mercy Dee Blues recorded on June 3rd. 1963 by Roosevelt Sykes for Spivey but unissued. It would be interesting to know if this is, as the title suggests, a tribute to Mercy Dee Walton, who had died six months earlier.
3. Mercy Dee's big hit One Room Country Shack is available on a Specialty anthology album entitled THIS IS HOW IT ALL BEGAN VOL. 1 (U.K. Specialty SNTF 5002).

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# the blues shouters

— part 2 —

## jimmy rushing

by martin cowlyn



*Photo by Valerie Wilmer.*

Jimmy Rushing was probably the greatest of the jazz-based 'blues-singers'; he contributed directly to the development of R & B, and had a major influence on many R & B artists. Rushing, often bracketed with other 'blues-shouters' like Jimmy Witherspoon, was, in fact, much more of a singer, although he had the power to ride out over a big orchestra. His voice wasn't really that weighty — rather, it had a cutting edge and a melancholy tone that made it easily distinguishable, resembling most closely Leroy Carr — as indeed, did his technique and phrasing.

Jimmy Rushing was born into a musical family from Oklahoma City in 1903. His father wanted him to play the violin, but a slightly-dubious piano-playing uncle, Wesley Manning, had more influence. Jimmy first became professionally involved in music when he went to Los Angeles, where he worked in many after-hours spots as a pianist/singer; but things didn't work out that well, so he returned to Oklahoma to work for a spell in his father's hamburger shop. That, too didn't last long — Jimmy joined a strong Territory Band led by bassist Walter Page (The Blue Devils) with which he toured the South extensively in 1927 and 1928.

Bennie Moten took over leadership of this band (which by now included Count Basie) in 1929. Jimmy and the Count got on well together, developing a rapport and mutual understanding and admiration that was to have a strong influence

on Jimmy's career. Buster Moten tried to keep this band going after Bennie Moten's death in 1934, but he didn't have the same leadership qualities, so a demise was inevitable. As it turned out, nothing changed drastically, because Count Basie decided to form his own six-piece, and naturally included many of his Moten colleagues, Rushing amongst them.

This band astounded audiences wherever it went, taking New York by storm in 1936 — Jimmy Rushing being acclaimed as an extra sensation! This success led Basie into forming one of his strongest big-bands ever; and Rushing stayed with this until a dwindling popular interest in swing, and the ensuing shortage of money, forced Basie to disband in 1950. Many of Rushing's finest recordings were made during this period.

Out on his own for the first time for 20 years, Jimmy gave himself a holiday, before organising a small band of his own to work in New York's Savoy Ballroom. At first, this band (which lasted until 1952) was successful, and attracted men like Walter Page, Lucky Thompson, Dicky Wells, and Emmett Berry, but gradually Jimmy was forced to use lesser musicians, and so decided to quit. He then had a brief flirtation with Rock 'n Roll, but "couldn't stand it".

From 1952 onwards Jimmy concentrated on freelance appearances and recordings, appearing widely throughout the States; with Basie again at

the 1955 Newport Jazz Festival; and touring Britain with Humphrey Lyttleton in 1958. As he aged, his voice lost some of its sharpness, but Jimmy retained his joyousness and strong personality, so that he was never short of Club appearances. He died, at the age of 68, in 1972, and many top musicians attended his funeral to pay tribute to a widely-loved and appreciate man.

The records included in this survey of Jimmy's work include most of those albums released under Jimmy's name; and some of the better Basie (and other) records which include Jimmy's work — but there are many more which feature Jimmy on one or two tracks.

Record (1) includes Jimmy's first-ever recorded solo Blue Devil Blues with Walter Page's Blue Devils. Count Basie, Hot Lips Page and Jimmy are with Bennie Moten on (2); whilst (3) and (5) contain some of the finest material by the Basie Big Band — regrettably Jimmy is only on a few tracks. (4) contains some technically poor-quality airshots from New York's Savoy Ballroom, though Rushing's The You And Me — with a good solo from Lester Young, is worth having. (6) comes from the

same period (1937-1939) but is an excellent album throughout — Rushing is at his best, working with musicians like Buck, Clayton, Herschel Evans, Chu Berry, Dicky Wells and Count Basie. (7) has a mid-forties Basie line-up; (8) was made shortly after Jimmy had gone his own way, and must be regarded as varyingly successful. (9) has always been considered an excellent album, as is (10) where Jimmy has exciting company, all in good shape (Lawrence Brown, Emmett Berry, Buddy Tate, Freddie Greene, Walter Page and Jo Jones). (11), (12), (13), (14) and (15) are historically interesting in charting Jimmy's career, but (16) is another gem — a 17-piece orchestra of first-class soloists; Al Cohn's writing; and solo's (apart from Jimmy's) kept to a minimum. (17) is harder to assess. The Oliver Nelson Orchestra seems a bit inflexible at times, yet there are some outstanding soloists, and Jimmy is in fine fettle.

The most recent disc (18) reveals a slight loss of vocal control from Jimmy — but, for a man of 67, he was still working well. Good backing comes from a quintet, including either Al Cohn or Zoot Simes, Ray Nance, Milt Hinton and Mel Lewis.

## The Records

*Note: This discography is not comprehensive, but is intended as a guide to the more-readily obtainable records from Jimmy Rushing's career.*

1.	Golden Book Of Classic Swing Vol 2.	1929	German Brunswick 87.094/5/6 (3 lp set)
2.	Count Basie In Kansas City	1929	(A) RCA Victor LPV 514
3.	Count Basie Swinging At The Daisy Chain	21/1/37, 26/3/37 7/7/37, 9/8/37 New York City	Coral CP 75
4.	Count Basie — Immortal Sessions	30/6/37 Savoy Ballroom, New York City	Saga Pan 6903 Collectors Classics CC 8 Palm 30.06 Temple M.553
5.	You Can Depend On Basie	16/2/38, 5/1/39 2/2/39,	Coral CP 76
6.	Blues I Love To Sing	26/3/37, 9/8/37 13/10/37, 6/6/38 16/11/38, 2/2/39	Ace Of Hearts AH 119
7.	Count Basie Volume 3.	Mid 1940's	French. RCA Black And White 741.042
8.	Two Shades Of Blue (with Champion Jack Dupree on Side Two)	5/10/51 New York 23/9/52	Ember CJS 800 (A) Audio Lab LP 1512
9.	Going To Chicago	1/12/54 New York	Vanguard PPT 12002 Vanguard VRS 8518 (A) Vanguard VRS 8518
10.	Listen To The Blues	16/8/55 New York	Fontana FJL 405 Vanguard PPL 12016 (A) Vanguard VRS 8505

11.	Basie At Newport	1955 Newport Jazz Festival	Columbia 33SX 10110 (A) Verve 8243, 6024
12.	Ellington Jazz Party		Philips BBL 7338 (A) Columbia CL 1323
13.	If This Ain't The Blues	1957	Vanguard PPL 11008 (A) Vanguard VRS 8513
14.	Little Jimmy Rushing And The Big Brass	?	Philips BBL 7252 (A) Columbia CL 1152
15.	Rushing Lullabies	?	Philips BBL 7360 (A) Columbia CL 1401
16.	Five Feet Of Soul	22, 23/1/63, New York City	Pye Golden Guinea GGL O384 (A) Colpix LP 446
17.	Everyday I Have The Blues	1967	HMV CSD 3632 (A) Bluesway BLS 6005
18.	The You And Me That I Used To Be	1971, New York City	RCA SF 8234 (A) RCA LSP 4566

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*Count Basie and Jimmy Rushing – Photo by Valerie Wilmer.*



# Hi Tide Harris

# Ragtime

by Roger Millington



Hi Tide Harris (seen above at The Temple of Man, playing for the Black Panthers), was born in San Francisco on 26th. March, 1946, and took up the guitar at 17. He has played with Talmidge Grundy, Roger Collins, Jimmy McCracklin (see Think on *Imperial* LP 9297) and Big Mama Thornton. In 1971 he formed his own band: himself on lead guitar and vocals, Sonny Lane (rhythm guitar), Rick Estren (harmonica), Rolly Peppers (bass) and George McLullan (drums). They appeared at the 1973 San Francisco Blues Festival, but broke up the same year. Hi Tide has recently been with John Mayall, and Guido van Rijn interviewed him in Amsterdam in May. Hi Tide would love to hear from his fans, who can contact him at 143, South 16th., Richmond, California 94801, USA. An in-depth biography has recently been published in BU 108.

A long article this month, thanks to the many ragtime activities now taking place. Even a local celebration, the Merton Festival, has seen fit to include ragtime as one of the attractions displayed on its posters. First off, then, an important new book.

**RECORDED RAGTIME, 1897-1958**, David Jasen. Published by Archon Books, The Shoe String Press, Hamden, Connecticut 06514. 155 pages. \$8.50.

Don't be fooled by the name 'Shoe String Press'. This is a very handsomely produced book. Certainly the most elegant discography that this reviewer has come across.

Its aim is to list all ragtime 78's — excluding dubs and reissues. The main section is arranged by tune titles in alphabetical order with a full list of recorded performances of each tune. This is followed by a listing of composers and their works and finally an index to performers. The discography lists about two thousand recordings, including 69 Maple Leaf Rags and 124 Twelfth Street Rags. The earliest items listed are two Berliner discs by the Metropolitan Orchestra, waxed in 1897: Coontown Capers and At A Georgia Camp Meeting. Most prolific artist is Fred van Eps with thirty discs, spanning a period from 1910 to 1952. The prize for the most persistent performer goes to the English banjoist Olly Oakley who recorded eight versions of a single tune, The Colored Major, between 1903 and 1923.

Among the intriguing names that can no longer be ignored by anyone seeking a complete record collection are Liberace, Moissaye Boguslawski, The 14 Tromboniers and a 1945 band called the Ex-Dixieland Bobcats. There's an even odder offering of delights to be found in recordings made on this side of the Atlantic, ranging from a 1906 item by the Band of the Honourable Artillery Company, three by the Coldstream Guards, five by Billy Cotton, six by Reginald Dixon and one by Sidney Torch. In fact, something like a fifth or a quarter of the records

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listed are of British origin, with a small sprinkling from France, Germany, Australia and Switzerland.

As a guide to the collector, Recorded Ragtime is invaluable. Going through my own collection, I can find only a handful of records — all English — that David Jasen has overlooked. (An English Ragtime Discography is currently being revised by two British collectors). I doubt that Jasen's book is on sale anywhere in Britain so you'll have to write to the publisher. Worth the effort, though.

Formidable chap, David Jasen. Ragtime composer. Performer of both ragtime and classical piano. Teacher of music history at an American college. And author, also, of the new Reader's Guide to P.G. Wodehouse.

Now to television. Ever since buying *They All Played Ragtime* back in the '50's, I've hoped for the chance to see the 1903 Edison movie of *The Real Cakewalk*, a few frames of which are shown in Blesh & Janis's book. Success at last! BBC2 in a Saturday night arts programme screened it during a short feature on the history of ragtime. Also in the show were Joshua Rifkin and an eleven-piece orchestra (in Civil War uniforms) playing a couple of Joplin/Stark arrangements from *The Red Back Book*. A particularly successful notion was to have a very skilled male and female dancer performing a cakewalk and another period dance to the music. Probably the first time that ragtime has ever been on British TV and a first class effort.

Less praiseworthy was BBC1's *Top of the Pops* a few nights later. Here, to *The Entertainer* theme

from the movie, *The Sting*, appeared a full chorus line to dance, of all things, the Can-Can. About *The Sting*, by the way: Joplin's music fits in with the film remarkably well. And apart from the film's superb plot, there are some excellent sketches of America in the depression years.

More dancing a week or so later, this time on ITV when a team of American dancers performed *Eight Jelly Rolls* — a set of dances to the music of Jelly Roll Morton. The modern dances, while ingeniously choreographed, were not enjoyed by your reviewer. My wife, who knows something about dance, was even less impressed. The music, however, was superb: an authentic recreation of the *Red Hot Peppers* by a group of leading British musicians. The band and the dancers also gave a series of shows at *The Roundhouse* to the music of Jelly, Bix and Scott Joplin.

A noteworthy BBC2 production was a Joshua Rifkin recital of Scott Joplin pieces. Expertly interviewed by Steve Race, Joshua explained various points of Joplin's compositional techniques. Discussing the relationship between jazz and ragtime, he made the point that in one piece dated around 1913 Joplin had displayed a jazz influence in his use of blue notes. As this was several years before the appearance of jazz on records, this raises some interesting questions as to how widespread jazz was in those early years. More of this a few paragraphs further on in a review of an ODBJ reissue.

One last item about TV. For a living I write advertisements and TV commercials. For a Green Shield Stamps campaign in Scotland we've just completed a short commercial with a ragtime soundtrack. Not a classic rag, I'm afraid, but a *Tin Pan Alley* creation selected for reasons associated with copyright and performer's fees. All the same, as far as I know, it's the first ragtime commercial!

Frustration note: settling down to read *The Sunday Times* on a pleasant June evening, I discover too late that the *New Orleans Ragtime Orchestra* is playing that night at a single concert in Guildford. This is the second time in recent months that I've missed an important concert because the organisers didn't produce any advance publicity.

Historical note: the BBC Operatic Society have just given a concert at Twickenham of the works of John Lampe. In the mid eighteenth century he enjoyed a considerable London success largely due to his tendencies to send up the works of his fellow German immigrant, Handel. Does anyone know if he was an ancestor of J. Bodewalt Lampe (born in Denmark) — the composer of such favourite rags as *Creole Belles*, *Dixie Girl* and *Georgia Sunset*.

Now to three noteworthy lp's.

**JELLY ROLL MORTON; The 1923-24 Piano Solos, Fountain FJ 104.**

When I first attempted to assemble a complete set of Jelly piano solos on lp's and 78 dubbings, I soon found that some titles were extremely hard to



*"When You Hear That Dixieland Jazz Band Play"*  
The negro composer Shelton Brooks — most celebrated for 'Darktown Strutters Ball' — wrote this long-forgotten piece in 1918 as a tribute to the pioneer white Original Dixieland Jazz Band.

find. More annoying was the problem of duplication — at one time I had five different copies of one version of *The Pearls*. It seemed the logical thing to put onto vinyl a complete sequence of solos in chronological order. Well, at last someone has done it. This superb lp contains all the Gennett, Paramount and Rialto solos recorded by Jelly in 1923 and 1924. The musical quality of these recordings needs no comment from me. Whether you're a ragtime enthusiast or a blues collector, you can't call your collection complete if you haven't got them. Even if you've already got them, you'll want to get them all over again in the form of this lp simply for the extra pleasure offered by its exceptional audio quality. The lp has been produced from transfers taken by John R.T. Davies from particularly clean 78 pressings. As usual with Fountain lp's, the sleeve notes are extremely comprehensive.

#### ODJB & LOUISIANA FIVE; 1917-1919 Recordings Fountain FJ 101.

In 1917 the Original Dixieland Jazz Band burst upon an unsuspecting world with their first recording of *Tiger Rag* — launching the jazz craze and at the same time selling millions of records for Victor and HMV. Even now, they haven't been forgotten by HMV; the company's float at the last Lord Mayor's Show featured a massive photographic enlargement of this pioneering white band.

Apart from the Victor recordings and the later recordings made in England for Columbia, the ODJB produced a number of sides for Aeolian in New York in August, 1917. These have always been excessively rare. An extremely poor dubbing was issued of *Tiger Rag* and *Reisenweber Rag* by Brunswick in 1937 and was still on sale well into the late '50's. (For some reason, the record number, Brunswick 02500, is still fixed in my memory). I believe two other titles were also dubbed by Jazz Collector. Now for the first time, all the issued Aeolians are available on lp — seven titles in all. The standard of recording quality is markedly below that of the Victors; however, the Aeolians are in many ways more enjoyable as the band seems to have been allowed a greater degree of improvisation. *Reisenweber Rag* — better known as *Original Dixieland One-Step* — is particularly interesting as this employs a different third theme to that used in the earlier Victor version, the one slavishly copied by trad bands.

Before the ODJB left Chicago for New York and international fame, the band's trumpeter, Alcide Nunez, had already quit and gone his own way. In due course with Anton Lada, a New Orleans drummer, he formed the Louisiana Five and recorded a series of titles in New York in 1918 and 1919. The band was never a major influence in jazz so these rare Emersons have only been sought after by the most die-hard enthusiasts of white jazz. However, the band makes a pleasant enough sound. What is odd is that the seven tunes represented here, although very

attractive, have mostly failed to find their way into the general jazz repertoire. *Yama Yama Blues*, a Spencer and Clarence Williams composition, is a delightful tune; likewise *Orange-Blossom Rag* by J. Russel Robinson and *That Shanghai Melody* by Lada and Nunez.

The excellent sleeve notes to this lp are by Brian Rust, who emphasises the fact that until the ODJB came along, no comparable music had found its way onto record — despite the fact that a number of coloured bands had already been entertaining a vast public through their records. If, as so many purists claim, jazz had been making its way up the Mississippi for the best part of two decades, it seems astonishing that not one coloured musician had put even a few bars of this music onto wax. There's still a need for some extensive research into the extent of the jazz influence in the beginning of the twentieth century.

#### RUSTY RAGS; Ragtime, Cakewalks & Stomps Vol.4, Saydisc SDL 253.

Ragtime collectors have been waiting for the issue of this long-promised lp for some time; the vinyl shortage caused the delay. The wait was well worth it. Eighteen rarities from the collections of Brian Rust and John R.T. Davies with detailed sleeve notes by Brian Rust. No, the lp wasn't named *Rusty Rags* in his honour; it's the title of a 1901 Vess Ossman recording included in the lp.

Earliest item here is *Darkies' Patrol*, recorded by Vess Ossman in London in 1900 — probably accompanied by Landon Ronald, who in later years became an eminent concert pianist and Musical Director of HMV. Latest items are three recordings made by the Six Brown Brothers (would you believe a saxophone sextet?) in 1916 and 1917. All the pieces selected are worth having but several stand out as masterpieces. *Crazy Bone Rag*, by the United States Marine Band of 1914, is by any standards wonderful. An anonymous 1914 pressing of *Maori* — composed by the West Indian W.H. Tyers — is in no way inferior to the Duke Ellington version recorded a decade later. *Bullfrog Blues* recorded by the Six Brown Brothers in 1916 is of special interest as it has slight jazz overtones and was recorded by a white band a year before the historic ODJB sessions. I could go right through the lp; they're all good.

I only hope that there are enough ragtime enthusiasts for Saydisc to make some money out of this lp and gain encouragement to produce more in the series. If not, they should qualify for an Arts Council grant. And while pleading for State intervention, it might be a good idea for the Government to nationalise Brian Rust and make it obligatory for all companies issuing vintage recordings to employ him as a sleeve note writer.

Now I'm off to find someone with an Edison machine to play me the Olly Oakley cylinder I bought at an antiques fair last weekend.

A selection of illustrations from "Memory Lane: Ragtime, Jazz, Foxtrot and other popular music covers", published by Studio Art. A review appeared in B-L 3.

Right: "Tres Moutarde"

Written in 1911, Tres Moutarde was one of the few English ragtime compositions to achieve success on both sides of the Atlantic.

AS PLAYED BY ALL THE LEADING ORCHESTRAS

# TRES MOUTARDE.

( Too Much Mustard )

One or Two-Step  
or Tango

By  
**CECIL MACKLIN.**

COMPOSED BY CARY & CO.      PIANO ORCHESTRA Ten and Piano      10 NET 75 35

LONDON: CARY & CO.      NEW YORK: EDWARD SCHUBERTH & CO.      EAST 22<sup>ND</sup> ST.

# FIZZ WATER

Trot and One Step

by  
**J. HUBERT BLAKE**

50¢

Left: "Fizz Water"

J. Hubert Blake is better known to record collectors as Eubie Blake. Born in 1883, he is still going strong and making occasional public appearances as a fine pianist.

Right: "Shim-Me-Sha-Wobble"

A Spencer Williams composition of 1917. A particularly striking design in two colours, strongly reminiscent of the artwork of Aubrey Beardsley.

# SHIM-ME-SHA-WABBLE

BY  
**SPENCER  
WILLIAMS**



NATWICK

# Arthur Crudup 1905-1974

The death of Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup is, of course, an extremely sad event. There have been too many bluesmen departing this life in the past five years, and each new one is to be mourned. But his going has particular poignancy for me. If you read Blues-Link 2, you will have read how we in the Leicestershire Blues Appreciation Society struggled to present blues artists whenever possible. We were fortunate on one occasion to have Arthur Crudup play for us, and I was doubly lucky, and indeed privileged, to have provided him with shelter for the night. Coincidentally, in that same concert, we were hoping to also have Fred McDowell, who we had put on once before. He was too ill, apparently, to make the trip; and his subsequent death also struck me a personal blow. This article is my own view of Big Boy; it is not meant as a critical appreciation.

The name 'Big Boy', given to him many years ago, was tremendously appropriate. He was a big, giant of a man, but my over-riding memory is one of gentleness and genuine humility. He was flattered by the appreciation and applause that white youth gave him, but should they choose to put him in front of a young white group totally insensitive to his music, he would wince a little inside probably, but never outwardly show dissatisfaction.

There are many stories that bear this fact out, people have their own; but one I remember, was a night in Peterborough. In the bar of the Halcyon pub, he was placed to perform fronting a white trio, one of whom played electric guitar (and who has since enjoyed a certain amount of limelight). This young man's performance was totally out of sympathy with Arthur's; it was jarring and discordant, over-loud, and completely upstaging. Arthur was obviously unhappy with it all, but being the trouper he was, he played on. It took the audience, many of whom were getting more than a little vociferous, to get this guitarist off-stage, but not before threats to his person! Immediately, Arthur thanked us by turning in one of the most sensitive performances I ever heard from him. The number was Old And Grey, and it was so moving that it all but brought tears to my eyes. The audience's reaction was thunderous! A similar story surrounds the recording of Roebuck Man, the title of his *United Artists* album recorded under the auspices of the once-strong NBF. He was really upset by an incident in the Roebuck pub, but rather

than complain at the time, he chose instead to write a song about it.

A version of Old And Grey is also on this Roebuck Man album, and the whole lp is a very fair set of recordings of his style, and credit must be given to the NBF and McGuinness/Flint, et al, for the sensitive backing they gave him. Without attempting to re-create his prewar sides, they gave him electric backcloths that were right to the mood, and none of this Electric Mud-stuff!

His style was distinctive, even if it was repetitive. He did tend to overdo the phrases 'That's alright now Mama' and 'Rock Me Mama', but 99% of bluesmen had their own repetitions of style, and at least with Arthur you knew that what he sang came from inside.

During his night's stay in my then humble abode, he told the little group of 'us fans' some of them:— how he used to supplement his small earnings by brewing moonshine whiskey. Brewing enough in his house at the weekends, to sell at the parties he held there, making enough to keep him relatively comfortable. Although he was enjoying the tour, he said, he was looking forward to getting back to all that.

Another incident occurred during his short stay with me that showed his 'gentlemanly' character. When I put on the RCA Bluebird lp that contained two of his very early recordings, he abruptly stopped the talking he was doing, and sat transfixed, listening to himself, obviously re-living his own memories. When they were over, there were tears in his eyes, and he wrung my hand firmly, thanking me for putting them on, and giving him so much pleasure.

In retrospect, the world would have been remarkably little changed if he had not chosen to record. He didn't have the same persona of, say, Robert Johnson, Elmore James, B. B. King or Muddy Waters. That is, apart, of course, from the part he played in the rise to fame of one Elvis Aaron Presley; and the song he gave to the blues world, via many artists — Rock Me Mama.

There are many records available canvassing his work. Many are ordinary, some, though few, are bad, and some are excellent. Of the latter quality are four tracks from his prewar period. The two *Bluebird* tracks mentioned above are among his best ever: Black Pony Blues and Death Valley Blues; his first two recorded items, put down 11th. September 1941 in Chicago, with Joe McCoy



*Photo by Sylvia Pitcher.*

accompanying on imitation string bass. A further track from this same session, If I Get Lucky, is to be found on the excellent *Xtra* double, Rural Blues, together with Mean Old 'Frisco Blues from his next session, 15th. April 1942.

In his long career, he occasionally paraded under other names, and at one point in 1952, his record company dubbed him Elmer James, in a rather obviously blatant attempt to ride the Elmore bandwagon. They didn't succeed, and the two cuts are not his best, but are certainly interesting, and you can find them on Juke Blues No. 5. Apart from that, cuts worth investigation can be found in Genesis No. 2, the Roebuck Man album, and his two on Delmark. Don't whatever you do listen to his one track on Blues -- A Real Summit Meeting, and think that is the man. It is him at a sad low.

His death is a sad loss, and he will be greatly missed by those who knew him. All I can say further, is to repeat the stock phrase -- at least we've got his records to remember him by; and list some of the better ones for you to investigate:--

Bluebird Blues	RCA RD-7786
Rural Blues	Xtra 1035(double)
Harpin' On It	Polydor 2941 001 -- Juke Blues 5
Roebuck Man	United Artists UAS 29092
Look On Yonder Wall	Delmark DS-614
Crudup's Mood	Delmark DS-621
Father Of Rock And Roll	RCA RD 8224
Mean Ole Frisco	Blue Horizon 7-63855
	M. John Stretton

# Lightnin' Slim 1913-1974

Photo by Gerben Kroese.



As they say in the top musical circles, Lightnin' Slim had paid his dues; he had seen hard times, and he paid his dues to those fortunate enough to see him, by providing excellent music and entertainment. I am not here going to run through his history as a biography; it has already been well documented elsewhere. My aim here is merely to give an idea of the man.

For me, he will always have a special place. He was the only artist, in all the years of Leicester Blues Society concerts, ever to make a sizeable profit — twice! For that, if for nothing else, he is sorely missed. But his loss is more than just a mercenary matter. Such was the charm and charisma of the man that he was able to draw people in great numbers to come and see him. On his first trip over here he was, of course, well known to those with knowledge of the Excello stable, and despite his shy manner he was quick to win new friends. By the time of his last tour, in 1973, he had overcome this reticence, and his natural exuberance was no longer held in bounds. His purple suit and other way-out, colourful clothes belied his age, as did his choice of women! Seventeen year old girls would have looked silly with your average sixty year old man, but not so with Slim.

And yet, this joie-de-vivre was no corollary of inflated ego. When alone with you, he was quiet; not withdrawn within himself, but willing to speak only when spoken to. He did not push himself constantly. And again, on stage, most often backed by a white band, often of variable standards, he was always ready to allow the others to get a musical look-in, and many a white harpist has responded to his constant call to "play your harmonic, son".

I saw him perform about half a dozen times. Obviously there were numbers common to each performance (there always are with bluesmen), but somehow it never sounded as though Slim was going through the same old routine again. Each new performance was a new performance (often with the insertion of new lines), and I never tired of hearing them; one of the greatest delights was the first time he wrapped his tonsils around Chuck Berry's Too Much Monkey Business.

So Lightnin' Slim was a gentleman and a gentle man; he loved to sing; he enjoyed playing in this country; he enjoyed bringing us joy, and he did, plenty of it. I never heard him complain, no matter what hassles there were around him, and when we presented him in concert, he was always ready when his turn came. He will indeed be sorely missed.

For the record: he was born — real name Otis Hicks — near St. Louis, Missouri on March 13th., 1913, and raised in St. Francisville, Louisiana, working the usual round of farms, cotton fields, etc. He was in his mid-thirties before learning to play guitar, but he quickly drew on and built up the talent within him, to become recognised as one of the greatest swamp bluesmen. Through him Slim Harpo, Lazy Lester and Whispering Smith got to record; and it is said that he discovered Buddy Guy.

From 1954 to 1965 Lightnin' Slim cut many records, largely for the Excello label, and many of them are rightly regarded as classics. (The best can be heard on the deleted *Blue Horizon* lp Rooster Blues, S 7-63863.) He only had one hit record, in 1959, when Rooster Blues reached No. 23 in the R & B charts, and by the mid-sixties fortune seemed to have deserted him; he gave up music and moved to Pontiac, Michigan. When rediscovered in 1971 by Fred Reif, he was working as a furnace man in a foundry. The job had taken its toll, and he looked older than his years when he first toured for Jim Simpson, but he soon regained his health on the road — until this summer.

He was due to tour in September 1974, but postponed the engagement to work on business interests. In July he went into hospital in Pontiac, and died seven days later of a stomach tumour, on July 27th. His death at the age of 61 leaves an immeasurable gap in the spectrum of Louisiana blues.

M. John Stretton, with additional material from Bob Fisher.

# Johnny Young 1917-1974

*This article was first published in a local Chicago newspaper as a report on the benefit given for the family of the late Johnny Young.*

It was just over four years ago that the great blues pianist Otis Spann died.

Tuesday night, a fraternity of bluesmen gathered at the Attic, 3132 N. Broadway, to honour and raise money for the family of yet another deceased legend, Johnny Young, mandolinist, singer and jiver.

When Spann died, still in his prime, the world took a hard look at the status of the blues community. Some doubted its future: Muddy Waters had just had a serious car accident, Howlin' Wolf was hospitalized, giants of the '60's like Little Walter and J.B. Lenoir were no more.

But a man who has lived his whole life on the edge of despair and senseless physical danger doesn't quit easily, and a huge benefit at the then Five States in Logan Square proved a strong statement that the blues, as an art form and as an historically valid lifestyle was vigorous and abundant.

Tuesday Night's benefit was organized by Bob Reidy, a young, white musician who has adopted the blues form as his own, and who, in a sense, even adopted the temperamental Johnny Young during his last years. Young was unable to hold together a band, so Reidy featured him in his group.

The good sized bar was filled to the rafters with blues enthusiasts. And they weren't disappointed when people like J.B. Hutto, Mighty Joe Young, Muddy Waters and John Little John paid their respects the best, and probably the only way they know how — with their guitars.

Dressed in red fez and purple silk shirt, slide-master J.B. spoke poignantly with his instrument. Mighty Joe showed that new stars were yet to be discovered by the general public. And, of course, Muddy presided masterfully with a commanding voice and a bedrock of voodoo rhythms.

But the evening, in contrast to Spann's benefit, was best illustrated by the sight of a melancholy Lee Jackson, guitarist and long friend of Young's. He sat at the bar before the music got under way quietly drinking.

When I spoke to him, his voice quavered and he remarked that he had forgotten that the large photo of Young hanging behind the stage also had him in it.

It seemed the blues were coming home to rest, slowly but steadfastly.

Further donations for the family of Johnny Young may be sent c/o Bob Reidy, 821 W. Webster, Chicago 60614.

Ray Townley



# Concert Round-up

## AMERICAN BLUES AND FOLK LEGENDS 1974 AT THE SHAW THEATRE, 3rd. FEB.

This concert was promoted by Big Bear in association with Great Western Festivals. I never did like Westerns. Jim Simpson claims to be concentrating on solo artists this year, as a contrast to the 1973 package. This I decline to believe, for reasons which a look at the artists appearing will probably make clear.

The proceedings began with George "G. P." Jackson, aka "The Kansas City Bo Diddley". Bo should sue. Maybe George would be better with a band — he had a pre-recorded tape of drumming(!) — but on this occasion he came across as unoriginal and laboured. He introduced "Terraplane Blues" as "one of my own", which should win some sort of prize for sheer crust, but it turned out to be the best song he did. The others — borrowed from B. B. King, Little Johnny Taylor, Muddy Waters and others — were dull and mechanical.

Doctor Ross, a genuine soloist, was one of the highspots, with a set of superbly inventive harmonica soli including "My Little Machine", and storming, rocking one man band numbers like "Boogie Chillen", "Cat Squirrel" and the incredible "Chicago Breakdown". Admittedly, he didn't do many original pieces either, but the difference in sheer energy, not to mention ability, was

incalculable.

After a ten minute interval — what the hell is the blues doing in concert halls anyway? — Eddie Taylor came on. "I'm not used to playing by myself," he said, and proceeded to scowl at his amp instead of the band, as is his wont. I was more impressed by his guitar than last time I saw him, since he worked in his own style rather than Freddie King's; but without backup musicians, he wasn't able to generate much excitement. Even just a drummer would have helped!

Eddie was joined by Big John Wrencher, obviously a favourite of the audience, and the second highspot of the evening. Eddie boogied along behind him, while he danced about the stage playing the old Chicago warhorses like "Dust My Broom" and "Mean Old World". Like Doctor Ross, he makes up in gusto what he lacks in originality. He also managed, by sheer lung- and legpower, to make the lack of a band seem less of a mistake. If this harping on bands seems paranoid, it probably is, but Eddie Taylor made it plain by his expression what he thought, and I can't argue with his opinion.

Last came Cousin Joe, who made some great records in the past for Imperial, Decca and others. He was introduced as "a lovable old drunk" (true except for the lovable), and "the greatest New Orleans piano player of them all" (crap). He was

*Cousin Joe — Photo by Sylvia Pitcher.*



completely canned. At least, I hope he was, because if he was sober, it makes one very sad, both for him and the audience, who loved it. Erwin Helfer's comments in B-L 3 about double standards came unbidden to my mind as Joe clowning around, occasionally struggling to put a few bars together, doing terrible Louis Armstrong imitations, and giggling foolishly. I'm told he was pretty good at Dingwall's, so what happened? It's not particularly admirable to let your artists make idiots of themselves.

Then there was the "everybody does a big jam and shows how well they can swing together" bit. They didn't swing together particularly well. A waste of money, and a throwback to the bad old days of Harold Davison. Snap out of it, Jim!

Chris Smith

## MUDDY WATERS AT THE JUAN-LES-PINS JAZZ FESTIVAL — 24th. JULY 1974.

The band consisted of: Bob Margolin, Luther "Guitar Junior" Johnson on guitars, Calvin Jones, bass, Pinetop Perkins on piano, J. P. Gordon, harp and Willie Smith, drums.

The band without Muddy opened the concert with two instrumentals showcasing the work of Margolin and Johnson. Bob played more complex licks and his solos were sharper than those of Luther Johnson, who gave us some precise, relaxed blues guitar. Pinetop was there with rolling piano and some delicate right hand; as for the harp of J. P. Gordon, I must admit I was really impressed by his playing. On the jump numbers he swings like mad and gave us very good solos, not too long but precise, and beautifully controlled.

Then Muddy entered, still young looking. He was, as always, in good voice and he gave us some nice slide guitar (but sparse and a bit predictable) during a set composed mostly of slow blues like Rollin' Stone (in fact some of the Stones attended the concert), Long Distance Call and Hoochie Koochie Man.

A small complaint is that with Muddy the band just laid down a backing rhythm (but it's a real tight band!); the guitarists hardly took a solo, but there was plenty of harp, as always with Muddy. There were some fine interplays between Muddy and J. P. Gordon, who injected a lot of fire into the performance, also here and there nice right hand from Pinetop Perkins.

All in all, a very good Chicago blues night, and it was good to see Muddy still in such good voice, and almost jumping on the stand during the final Got My Mojo Working. After the show it was very difficult to talk to the musicians if you didn't possess a press card, but I did get to talk to the most recent newcomer to the band, J. P. Gordon, who'd been playing with Muddy for only two months. He told me he came from Chicago where,

before playing with Muddy, he was working with the late Johnny Young, Eddie Taylor (who he admires a lot as a musician) and also Paul Oscher. He had talked to Paul just a week before coming over to Europe, and reports that he is still working in Chicago. It seemed to me that the style of J. P. Gordon was somewhat reminiscent of that of Jeff Carp, who played in Sam Lay's band. I found J.P. a quiet and "ready-to-talk-to-the-people" person.

After this show there was one by Freddie King, but I had to miss it in order to catch the late train to my hotel, 30 miles away... Pity!

Guy Van Eesbeeck

## JAMES COTTON BAND AT THE MAIN POINT, PHILADELPHIA — FEB. 1974.

Cotton's two-night stand to standing room only crowds in suburban Bryn Mawr was as dynamic as usual. (Cotton's recent national TV exposure on In Concert and Midnight Special hasn't changed him or the group a bit.) The group opened with two instrumentals sans Cotton. The impeccable, jazzy picking of Matt Murphy highlighted Chicken Shack and tenor saxman Little Bo, formerly with Otis Rush, took a fine sobbing solo on the mellow Misty. Cotton then hit the stage and bounced into the B. B. King standard Everyday I Have The Blues while loosening up the audience for what was to follow. High-energy handling of standards like That's All Right, Rocket 88, Don't Start Me To Talkin', Mean Old World, Something On Your Mind, and Off The Wall got the tightly packed crowd into an uproar. Cotton and band then shifted gears and got into some infectious soul songs. One was a uniquely funky song about chicken-heads, another was the classy ballad Goodbye My Lady from his recent Capitol album. After the soul numbers, Cotton countered with Muddy's I'm Ready on which he played chromatic, hitting those low notes so reminiscent of Little Walter and then they did a rollicking version of Got My Mojo Working. For their last number, Cotton led the group in an exuberant non-stop rendering of The Creeper. The precision and drive of Cotton's playing has to be heard to be believed. The group's keen ability to handle all types of modern blues plus contemporary soul music makes them one of the most polished acts to see and enjoy. The musical intelligence and competence of such veterans as Cotton, Bo, and the oft-neglected guitar master Murphy plus the youthful energy of bass-player Chas Calmese and drummer Ken Johnson make the group tight, perceptive and highly vigorous. Most of all, there is never a dull moment when Cotton and band come to play and their wide range of appeal makes them one of the premier blues bands currently touring.

Tom Cullen

# Talkabout with Bob Groom

T-Bone Walker can be added to the long list of bluesmen with Indian blood (see my article 'Red Indian Blues' in BW 34) as in an interview included in *Reprise* K94001 (the Leiber-Stoller produced VERY RARE set) he states that his grandfather was a full-blooded Cherokee Indian.

*Fountain* FB-301 and *VJM* VLP-50 BLUE FLAME give an opportunity to compare the singing of two artists from opposite ends of the Vaudeville Blues spectrum. The *Fountain* lp, which has superb sound quality, consists of the first 16 recordings by Tennessee-born Ida Cox, whose vocals, although often supported by small jazz groups, always had a strong country flavour. [Reviewed in B-L 4 — Ed.] The *VJM* features 16 selections from Lucille Hegamin's 1920/26 sessions, with accompaniments from jazz groups (notably Bill Hegamin's Blue Flame Syncopators). I've always had a soft spot for Lucille's light and musical (but always bluesy) vocals and some of her best sides are included on this lp — Beale Street Mama, St. Louis Gal, Sam Jones Blues. A most relaxing and enjoyable set.

Don't miss *Oblivion 2*, a 45 rpm single by Johnny Woods, who used to play harp with Fred McDowell (they were featured together on *Revival* RVS 1001). Titles are Long Haired Doney and Three O'Clock In The Morning, both country blues

standards. Exciting Mississippi harmonica. The record comes in a well produced sleeve with photos and notes. \$1.25 from P.O. Box X, Roslyn Heights, New York 11577, USA.

During the course of an interview with George Edmonson of Richmond, Virginia for the local Times-Despatch newspaper, John Jackson mentioned that William Moore was once a barber in Fredericksburg, Virginia and sometimes came to visit his father, although John was then only a child and had no idea who Moore was until told by his mother in later years. Fredericksburg is not far from Tappahannock, mentioned in Old Country Rock, and also on the Rappahannock River.

Two new *Muskadines* — 103 CALIFORNIA COUNTRY BLUES (Ernest Lewis, Slim Green, Black Diamond, Little Willie...), 104 EAST COAST COUNTRY BLUES (Dan Pickett, Julius King, Boy Green, Skoodle Dum Doo and Sheffield...)

A couple of town names mentioned in the Chicago Blues Festival interviews (B-L 3) need correction. Eddie Taylor was actually born in Benoit, Mississippi, a small Delta town only a few miles from Scott, where Big Bill Broonzy was born. John Wrencher's accident occurred at Mound Bayou, on Highway 61 between Clarksdale and Cleveland. [Sorry! Eddie's birthplace we copied from "Blues Records 1943-66", the latter is a typographical error — Ed.]

A BBC2 television programme (Yesterday's Witness) told the story of Charlie Smith, who claims to be 131 years old. Although he is very obviously a centenarian, Charlie is in good health and runs a candy store in Bartow, Florida. He talks articulately about his youth and even though there is probably a little unconscious embroidery where memory fails, it is really amazing to hear him state that he was born in Liberia (on the West Coast of Africa) in 1842 and as a child taken to America on a slave ship. His vivid description of the New Orleans slave market and life on a Texas ranch 120 years ago brings home the staggering fact that here is a human being born 17 years before the outbreak of the American Civil War and still hale and hearty in the Space Age 1970's. One wonders if he encountered any blues artists on his travels!

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# «I Love The Lord» — Rev. Killens' Story by Bob Eagle

The old tradition in the Baptist church of singing the long-meter "Doctor Watts" hymns, is fast disappearing from black churches. Among the few examples of the style which come to mind are Robert Wilkins' associate, Deacon Leroy Shinault (on the Ping label), and Harrison Smith (recorded about 1964 for Savoy). But the first man I heard in the style was Rev. G. W. Killens, about whom I wrote in "Alley Music" issue 2, in 1968.

Killens' Olliet recordings were leased or sold to RPM, Imperial and Recorded In Hollywood, all labels with home offices in California, and a quick check of Californian telephone books showed that Killens was living in Oakland. My letter was not answered, but when I visited California early in 1972 I persuaded Dick Bass to call on Killens with me.

Killens' 78's revealed that he was supported by the Mount Calvary Baptist Church congregation, but he had left that church in 1956 or 1957 to organize St. Matthew's Baptist Church at 3129 San Pablo, Oakland, and we had a short interview with him at the church.

Rev. George W. Killens was born in Alto, near Monroe, La., on 9th. August, 1906. He was raised in a Christian attitude, mainly in his maternal grandmother's house. His uncle was a deacon, and Killens' brother Jimmy Ingram is now a preacher in Yankton, South Dakota. Killens himself was inspired to sing at the age of 7. He later attended Bible school in Monroe, under Dr. Sharp. He was taught theology by Dr. W. M. Hicks and church history by Dr. Gordon C. Taylor.

At the age of 22 he was called to the Baptist ministry in Monroe and had three churches there during the next 5 years.

He moved to California, and in 1945 established the Mount Calvary church at 1445 23rd. Avenue, Oakland. Killens said that the congregation's responses were not rehearsed: apparently they were a natural outgrowth of the form of the service. The Reverend did say that, over the years, he had induced many of his former Monroe parishioners to join his Oakland churches, and this would presumably have made it easier to maintain the traditional forms of service. It also goes a long way to explaining why cities like Oakland or Chicago have been settled in such a way that whole city blocks are inhabited by people from particular areas of the south, as many clergymen adopted the practice.

Killens remembered Rev. Prince C. Keel (still active there), and the late Rev. H. S. Carradine as being outstanding preachers in Monroe.

Mrs. Hattie Galloway was one of the Reverend's Monroe parishioners who made the trek to Oakland. She is Director of Music at St. Matthew's, and held the same position in the Mount Calvary church when Rev. Killens recorded. Despite the discographical evidence, Killens thought the recordings were made in about 1946 or 1947, during a service he held at the Oakland City Auditorium, near the Oakland Lake.

He did not know at the time that the recordings were being made, and says he received no payment. He was angry enough to consult a lawyer, but was advised that taking legal action might be damaging to his own reputation, and he did nothing more about it. The reissues on other labels were made in about the years 1952 to 1953.

Despite the archaic approach, Rev. Killens was quite popular and claimed membership of 4000 at Mount Calvary, and another 2000 at the newer St. Matthew.

He suffered a stroke in July 1970, and now mainly supervises proceedings at the church. In 1972, the chaplain during the church services was 33 year-old James Williams, who had been assistant music director of the church at the age of 13. Others involved in the church's musical activities were Sam Mitz, organist Jean Galloway, drummer James "Butch" Galloway Jr., pianist Joseph Garrett, and the present assistant music director, Henry Golden. Reverend Wise had taken over most of the preaching duties since Rev. Killens' stroke.

Rev. Killens was proud that he had ordained Rev. C. B. Lyons into the church. Lyons may be known to readers as the producer of a number of recordings on his Lyons and Clara labels, by such as Lee Walker, Betty Green and Eugene Blacknell.

Despite the inclusion of musical instruments, the traditional form of the service had not been completely destroyed, and it remained an exciting one in its altered form. The Reverend's two Imperial titles were reissued some time back on LP 9145, and anyone wishing to reissue his other sides should contact his Secretary, Miss Buhl, 4317 Adeline, Emeryville, California.



REV. G. W. KILLENS discography courtesy of Cedric Hayes and Bob Laughton.

Vocal, accompanied by Mount Calvary Congregation.

c. March 1952

0622-B	Same Man	RPM 335
0622-A	Father I Stretch My Arms To Thee	RPM 335
MM 2030	Eternal God	RPM 396
MM 2031	Great Jehovah	RPM 396
RIH 19600	Great God Almighty	RPM 196, HOLLYWOOD 1069
RIH 19600-1-A	I Love The Lord	RPM 196, HOLLYWOOD 1069

Vocal accompanied by piano.

c. April 1952

IM 435	Testing Faith	IMPERIAL 5191, LP9145
IM 436	Fighting For Jesus	IMPERIAL 5191, LP9145

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# Reviews

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## Blues Bookshelf

Those interested in blues literature and books on the South and its music in general are recommended to look at the catalogue of the Gale Research Company, Book Tower, Detroit, Michigan 48226, U.S.A. Folklore Associates, a division of this company, have republished a considerable number of classic folk song books, including a number from the 19th. century, as well as publishing contemporary volumes such as Harry Oster's LIVING COUNTRY BLUES. Amongst the blues books are such classics as Dorothy Scarborough's ON THE TRAIL OF NEGRO FOLK SONGS Newman Ivey White's AMERICAN NEGRO FOLK SONGS and the Odum and Johnson volumes THE NEGRO AND HIS SONGS & NEGRO WORK-ADAY SONGS, all unfortunately now out of print under this imprint. Often one does not get to hear of the republication of vintage books until the limited print is exhausted and this can be very frustrating. However, at the time of writing the following volumes on Southern Folk music are still listed as in print by Gale: FOLK CULTURE ON ST HELENA ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA by Guy B. Johnson (originally published 1930, republished 1968 at \$6), which details many aspects of the Afro-American culture of the Carolina Sea Islands and discusses Gullah dialect and vocabulary, spirituals, toasts, folktales, games etc. There is a new foreword by Dan Yoder which examines the white-to-negro (Johnson) v. negro-to-white (Herskovits & Turner) controversy. MINSTRELS OF THE MINE PATCH (1938, republished 1964 \$7.50) and COAL DUST ON THE FIDDLE (republished 1965 \$8.00) by George Korson. Songs, legends and traditions of the miners of America's coal states. FOLK SONGS OF THE SOUTH (1925 @ \$10) by John Harrington Cox, which deals with Southern mountain folk songs, mainly from West Virginia. Under the imprint, "Singing Tree Press" Gale have reprinted SINGING SOLDIERS (1927, republished 1968 @ \$6.00) by John Jacob Niles. A collection of songs and anecdotes from World

War 1 which includes a few interesting items like the Soldier Man Blues. Also published by Gale is Kenneth Goldstein's A GUIDE FOR FIELD WORKERS ON FOLKLORE (Folklore Associates, 1964 \$6.00). Sufficient letters to Gale might prompt further reprints of important volumes like the Scarborough and Newman Ivey White.

Bob Groom

Six Black Blues Guitarists: Woody Mann.  
Published by Oak Publications, N.Y. £1.75.

The latest guitar tutor from Oak is very similar in design and layout to those they've already published of Grossman, Traum etc. but this must be one of the best to date. The tablature is very accurate and the selection of tunes should please all guitarists for there are some 'easy' and others quite difficult, but each one is a 'gem'. Although the title names six musicians; Rev. Gary Davis (to whom the book is dedicated), Big Bill Broonzy, Memphis Minnie, Rev. Robert Wilkins, Blind Willie McTell and Blind Blake, there are in fact extra selections from Bo Carter, Jesse 'Baby Face' Thomas, Buddy Boy Hawkins, Scrapper Blackwell, Tampa Red and 'Little Hat' Jones.

Woody Mann has chosen these works with some care, so for someone like myself who is still struggling through the basics of blues guitar this selection will be very welcome. Such a song as Little Hat's Bye Bye Baby Blues is simple to learn yet is very beautiful and it's this simplicity that makes it so attractive; for those more advanced guitarists there is Blake's Skoodle Loo Doo which is a little more demanding! For non-guitarists this book is well worth a look, for, there are some good pictures, notes and words for the songs. The pictures of Willie McTell and Rev. Wilkins are particularly good.

Woody Mann may be a new name to many in this country but in the U.S.A. and particularly in the New York City area he is a much respected musician. He has a track on the recent Kicking Mule CONTEMPORARY RAGTIME GUITAR album and can also be heard along with John Fahey and Jo Ann Kelly on a Blue Goose release. I had the pleasure of hearing Woody play in New York

City two years ago and I was not only very impressed with his skill but also with his tremendous enthusiasm and sincerity towards the people and the music.

He was a friend and 'student' of the late Reverend Gary Davis who commented to me about Woody: "He's good and he can't learn much more from ole B. Davis!". What I like most of all about Woody's playing is his apparent ease, making it look like no effort at all! He plays in many styles including jazz and classical — all I hope is that he will get to England and show us!

But back to the book. It is of course vital that you have the songs in the book on record, which is often a set back to us in England but fortunately nearly all the songs chosen are easily available on lp. (mostly on the Yazoo label). I also find the tablature easier to follow in this tutor, there are six lines to represent each string whereas in many of the other Oak publications there are seven, the top one not being used, which is often confusing.

This is indeed a beautiful book and I hope that there will be a follow up!

Robert Tilling

## Crazy Blues!

OLIVE BROWN AND HER BLUES CHASERS  
Jim Taylor Presents JTP 103.

Aggravatin' Papa / Back Water Blues / Sweet Man / Sugar / Deed I Do / Gimme A Pigfoot / How Come You Do Me Like You Do / That Old Feeling / Empty Bed Blues / Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night.

The Wheel of Fortune spins in an odd manner sometimes. It certainly behaved in an extremely eccentric way on Tuesday August 10th. 1920 in New York City when a comparatively obscure vaudeville singer of blues, Mamie Smith entered the Okeh studios and recorded Perry Bradford's Crazy Blues, thus launching an amazing success for Bradford and the blues! It is common knowledge that through this record, which sold in its thousands, Miss Smith became the first blues singer to record a blues song. Others before her had sung blues on record, the comedian Bert Williams is one example — he recorded Unlucky Blues for American Columbia in April 1920, but although he was a great vaudeville performer and one of the finest of all the black comedians, he was certainly not a blues singer. No, it was Mamie, and Mamie alone who lighted the fire that was to burn so brightly for a decade or more. Before long of course, some idiot had coined the phrase Classic Blues — and unfortunately it stuck. From Lucille Hegamin and Edith Wilson to Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith — they were ALL Classic Blues singers, regardless. Yet when you consider the two opposites — it's quite a step along the blues path, is it not? All that Lucille and Bessie had in common was their vaudeville heritage (and in all these Classic singers, the vaudeville strain is present). Never was a term so ineptly applied. However, while it lasted, some marvellous music was produced — all the Ma Rainey Paramounts, the Bessie Smith Columbias

(now in an unforgettable 5 volume set) and the Edith Wilson-Johnny Dunn titles (shortly to appear beautifully re-mastered by John R. T. Davies on Fountain) are just a few examples. Very naturally, as the craze for Classic Blues grew, so did the quality grow worse. Any girl who could open her mouth and could sing reasonably in tune, was rushed into the studio to record — some of the results were of dubious value, to put it mildly. This was one of the reasons why after some ten years, this type of singing began to fade — there were other factors, but there is no space to deal with every angle. All that can be said is that most of these ladies sang more than blues — they sang good standards and some fine jazz songs too — in short they could turn their hand (or their voice) to anything — and prided themselves on their versatility.

The classic blues died, but there still remained some loyal and devoted fans, and quite recently, there HAS been a small revival of interest, and the companies both large and small have given us some fine reissues. Most of the original ladies have died long since, or at best are living in retirement. Thankfully both Edith Wilson and Victoria Spivey are still with us and are still very active. Victoria with her own label and singing, across the country and Edith recently recorded with Eubie Blake and later with Little Brother Montgomery and a fine little band. This latter session to be issued on Delmark in the spring it is hoped, and later on Esquire. These two gracious ladies are keeping the torch burning.

Happily there are others — the amazing white girl — the British housewife Michele — the first



British girl ever to get under the skin of the style — and in the United States, Miss Olive Brown. Little is known of this very fine black singer apart from one title on a Spivey issue, she has remained undiscovered, until Jim Taylor the man behind the New McKinney Cotton Pickers recordings, had the foresight to produce an lp of Miss Brown. 'Olive Brown & Her Blues Chasers' consists of two of the New Cotton Pickers, John Trudell (tpt. and valve tbn.), Ted Buckner (clt. alt.) and a splendid pianist, Mike Montgomery, plus Bill Bolle (bs.) and that fine swinging drummer, J.C. Heard.

Quite foolishly, I think, the Canadian critic, Patrick Scott wrote about her and tagged her the "New Empress of the Blues" — and like the Classic Blues label it seems to have stuck. Being the "Empress" she must sing a lot of the songs that Bessie Smith made famous. Now, while in most cases Miss Brown does more than justice to them — especially Back Water and Empty Bed Blues, she could be in danger of limiting herself and her very obvious talent. She more than gets away with those two songs, but when it comes to Pigfoot, she falls flat on her face. This was Bessie's song and nobody, but nobody can get away with any other version. This is really the only major failure on the disc, but it does present a warning to Miss Brown not to lean too heavily on the first and only "Empress of the Blues".

The rest is all beauty right down the line. There is a glorious version of Sugar with fine solos by the band, and that song I always associate with Miss Rhapsody, Sweet Man (sung originally by Ethel Waters) gets a fine and original treatment. Then, too, another Waters' hit, Go Back Where You Stayed Last Night comes roaring through. This was Ethel's own composition (co-written with Vaudeville's Sidney Easton). I am surprised, that this song has been forgotten for so long, but I suppose it is a song of its era and rather recalls vaudeville, which seems to have become a dirty word with so many jazz and blues fans. Astonishing when one considers how many jazzmen and singers 'paid their dues' in music halls, and the TOBA circuit. Here is a field that deserves much more research. The popular standard song (beloved of jazzmen) is represented by Deed I Do and That Old Feeling and both are sung with understanding and jazz feeling. So much for Miss Olive Brown, who deserves all the publicity she can get, but no artists can overcome a bad accompaniment — and here Olive Brown has been extremely lucky, these musicians give her all they have and the result is exciting music (especially on Sugar). I hope I am not being discourteous to the others if I pick out Mike Montgomery's piano for special praise. Throughout the session he is a constant inspiration to everyone, and is in there always with the right phrase at the right time. A remarkable performance.

I cannot recommend this lp too highly to those who love the so-called Classic Blues Singers — this is no mere recreation — but a genuine singer, singing the style she understands, even if she is a bit of an anachronism. With all the pop slanted

blues we have to suffer, it is nice to look back to another age, when most of the pop was bearable (if not exactly great music!) and real song writers were thick on the ground.

Derrick Stewart-Baxter

NOTE — the lp can be obtained direct from Jim Taylor, 12311 Gratiot Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48205, or I imagine at most of the specialist record shops in this country.

**CLARENCE "GATEMOUTH" BROWN.** San Antonio Ballbuster. Red Lightnin' 0010.

Gate's Salty Blues/It Can Never Be That Way/I've Been Mistreated/She Winked Her Eye/Win With Me Baby/She Walk Right In/Boogie Uproar/Baby Take It Easy/Just Got Lucky/Didn't Reach My Goal/You Got Money/Okie Dokie Stomp/Just Before Dawn/Dirty Work At The Crossroads/Sad Hour/Rock My Blues Away.

Much as it grieves me to have to disagree with Michael J., this album looks like being my record of the year 1974. Both Don Robey's Peacock label and 'Gate' himself have been somewhat neglected by the blues world of late, and Red Lightnin' are to be congratulated on an imaginative reissue. Is Brown getting his royalties, by the way?

The numbers on the record were all recorded in Houston between 1949 and 1959, and on them 'Gatemouth' shows himself to be basically a T-Bone Walker style guitarist and singer, but with the added bonus of a harp solo (on Salty), where he comes across very like Walter Horton at his best, and a violin instrumental (Just Before Dawn), which somehow manages to convey just that impression; this despite the fact that it's an uptempo number, far removed from the Three O'Clock In The Morning mould that one might expect. The guitar playing, Bone influenced though it is, is far from derivative; Boogie Uproar has a solo that reminds me irresistably of the later Earl Hooker's Country and Western efforts (and includes a snatch of Here Comes The Bride!), while everybody else is playing Kansas City-type stuff. Somehow it works but don't ask me why! Other standout guitar work occurs on Okie Dokie, Salty and just about any other track you care to pick out.

Not only that, but Brown is assisted by some of the most swinging bands I've heard in many a day, including such luminaries as Jimmy McCracklin, Pluma Davis, Nathan Woodward, Henry Boozier and Johnny Parker. Also Wilmer Shakesliner, of whom I've never heard, but with a name like that he deserves to be famous. All these, and a host of unknowns, display amazing creativity, both in solo and ensemble roles. A record to put alongside the 1947 BLUES OF T-BONE WALKER album on Music For Pleasure as a classic of 'electric Texas' blues. Professor Longhair also recorded She Walk Right In, but 'Gatemouth' Brown does it better, and I can't think of a stronger recommendation than that. Red Lightnin' may be losing a few sales with that silly title — imagine ordering it in W.H. Smith's — but it's the music that counts, and it's altogether top class.

Chris Smith.

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## LUTHER JONHSON "Born In Georgia"

Black & Blue 33.503

Rock Me Baby/Born In Georgia/Woman Don't Lie/Take Enough Of Him/You Told Me You Love Me/Walking Blues \*/My Daddy Told Me\*/Crawling King Snake\*/ Everyday I Have The Blues/Somebody Loan Me A Dime.

Luther Johnson — gtr, voc; Dusty Brown — hca; Sonny Thompson — pno; Emmett Sutton — bs-gtr; Bill Warren — dms; Johnny Shines — gtr on \*. Recorded November 27 1972.

One more from the French Black & Blue label which looks like becoming a major blues force in Europe. Let's hope that the PVC shortage won't cut back such a good series.

Luther Johnson is still a young bluesman (39) and is generally known for his stay with the Muddy Waters Band between 1967 and 1969 and for his two lp's on the Douglas label. This latest album proves that he is a *master* of the blues, maybe one of the greatest in the last couple of years, though this in itself poses some questions. Why do performers of a music universally recognised as the only original contribution by America to musical culture (including jazz and gospel), have to cross an ocean to get recognition and recording contracts? Of course both the bluesmen and the fans benefit from this situation for at least the music is being recorded, but, really, what a strange world when the best records by black American bluesmen are often produced in European studios!

The highlights of this album are Walking Blues, My Daddy Told Me and Crawling King Snake on which Luther sings and plays guitar accompanied by Johnny Shine's bottlenecking. It's really delightful to hear both men complementing each other so well despite the differences in their ages and backgrounds; it's hard to believe that they had never played together before. In fact these tracks are relaxed backstage performances seemingly done without their knowledge. The result is fantastic! (Some more songs from the same session are on the Black & Blue album by Johnny Shines — CHICAGO BLUES FESTIVAL, Black & Blue 33.502.)

Of the other tunes, five are Johnson originals which show him to be a gifted composer; all are enjoyable but special mention should be made of Woman Don't Lie and Somebody Loan Me A Dime on which Luther shows his ability on guitar, launching out with flashing musical phrases around the theme. Over this his muffled, raucous voice combines with his own playing, the harp of Dusty Brown and the piano of Sonny Thompson to create a fascinating tempo.

This record is a *must*, probably one of the best blues albums of its kind made in recent years. One of those rare records that can be played time and time again without saturation and boredom. Recommended!

Bo Sacre

1. Douglas 781 and 789: condensed into one lp (Muse 5008, Transatlantic TRA 188) and credited to Muddy Waters, who, although better known, isn't greatly in evidence.

2. Who produced the *first* lp's of Clarence Gate-mouth Brown, Cousin Joe and Willie Mabon?.....

Black & Blue in France; or of The Aces and Hubert Sumlin (Scout lp shared with Sunnyland Slim)?.....French Vogue! (but recorded in the States) and many others.....



## BIG BILL BROONZY Do That Guitar Rag

Yazoo L-1035

BIG BILL BROONZY: Pig Meat Strut/Down In The Basement/Big Bill Blues/Bull Cow Blues/Grandma's Farm/Guitar Rag/Mr. Conductor Man/Worrying You Off My Mind Pt.1/Skoodle Do Do/C & A Blues/JANE LUCAS: Terrible Operation/Leave My Man Alone/Pussy Cat Blues/Double Trouble Blues

Yazoo's second volume of Big Bill reissues is structured on similar lines to Dutch Riverside's Georgia Tom album, which also contained several Jane Lucas titles. At least two (Leave and Trouble) duplicate with Riverside but the Yazoo notes suggest that Terrible Operation (a classic of double-entendre) is the September, 1930 version, rather than the November recording reissued by Riverside. Pig Meat and Guitar Rag are immaculate guitar duets featuring Big Bill and Frank Brasswell. They produce some of the most exciting guitar work in the whole field of country blues. Basement is an early Big Bill slow blues which foreshadows the beautifully conceived Big Bill Blues which, along with the superb Mr. Conductor Man were included on Riversides Backwoods Blues anthology and, more recently, Milestone 2016. Broonzy and Brasswell produce more rocking guitar behind the former's vocal on Grandma's Farm. Big Bill also made an unissued version of the title for Gennett and I wonder if this might not be the mysterious Grandma Blues noted in B & GR as a possible unissued Willie Brown Paramount. Skoodle Do Do is very similar to Blind Blake's Skeedle Loo Doo Blues. Worrying employs the Sittin' On Top Of The World melody. All in all an LP full of great music, slightly marred by duplications with earlier issues.

Bob Groom

**IKE TURNER Bad Dreams**

United Artists UAS 29549

These Dreams/That's How Much I Love You/One Nite Stand/Dust My Broom/Don't Hold Your Breath/(You Can Have) The City//Flockin' With You/Take A Walk With Me/You Won't Let Me Go/Later For You Baby/Rats/I Love The Way You Love.

If you've got set ideas about Ike Turner — forget them. In the fifties he did sterling work with ace bluesmen of the time, and garnered quite a reputation for himself; since then, apart from the odd tracks with the eversensuous Tina, he has achieved little; but all of a sudden here he is, in focus, where he was blurred before.

The whole album emanates good vibes, and the opening track is but one of twelve excellent performances. It's a rocker, about dreams he has, and comes complete with simulated snores!! I'm not sure whether these are human, or from his synthesizer, but he has recently equipped himself with no mean talent on this instrument, and he uses it superbly at various times, throughout the album. It often makes refreshing noises, and is particularly prevalent, and successful, on Flockin' and Rats. This latter track is interesting also for its thoughtful musings on the identities and proliferation of rats(!?), and it is an example of one quality of the album. Ike himself doesn't forge an instantly recognizable sound, but draws from a myriad of influences. Rats is very similar (as are a couple of others) to Chuck Berry a-la Bio; Take A Walk is very like Jimmy Reed in rhythm and approach; his voice at many times is closely allied to Dr. John; etc., etc.

The lyrics throughout the tracks are well worth a serious listen, and cuts two, three and four make interesting juxtapositions. First we have the devoted lover, true to one, faithful to eternity; instantly followed by the bastard posture, unfaithful to all, true to none, the heartbreaker; repayed by just desserts, his heart broken, the tables turned, he leaving home. I wonder whose demented sense of humour chose this order?

I must admit to have been unsure of what the album would be like when I received it, and was quite prepared to be disappointed again, but the opposite has been the case. The music behind his growling voice, which sounds incredibly like a cross between a bullfrog and an electric Furry Lewis (! — if you can imagine that) is remarkably tight; with the rhythm section particularly punching out some really funky passages. The direction is definitely more back towards the blues roots than of late. You Won't Let Me Go is a superb example, and this definitely has been the large part of the success. And there are moments of protest, in The City, which also has a very attractive 'skipping' congas riff.

Altogether a most enjoyable album; one I keep re-playing; and one which at last evidences the potential that is within him. He may never manage without Tina (who could?), rather like Rod Stewart seems to need The Faces, but, like Rod, he can make good stuff on his own. This is certainly one of his finest.

Michael J.

**PIANO RED (DOCTOR FEELGOOD) All Alone With His Piano.**

Arhoolie 1064.

Ten Cent Shot/Pushing That Thing/Atlanta Boogie/Red's How Long Blues/Corrine, Corrina/You Ain't Got A Chance/My Baby Left Me/Let's Get It On/Red's Boogie/Rockin' With Red/Wrong Yo-Yo.

This session by Willie 'Piano Red' Perryman is not going to set the world on fire by any means, for he cannot be described as one of the neglected greats of blues. Nevertheless, I heartily commend this record to your attention, for it constitutes one of the pleasantest, most goodhumoured, all-round delightful sets I have heard for a long time. All but the last three tracks, which are reissues of Red's most famous recordings of the 1950s, were recorded recently in Atlanta by Chris Strachwitz.

Scholars will be interested to note that three numbers are remakes of titles made in 1936 at the famous unissued session with Blind Willie McTell; however, as I say, this is not really a record for the serious-minded. Red specialises in cheerful, bouncy numbers— even "How Long" becomes a rowdy drinking and partying song. The one exception, "My Baby Left Me", is indeed exceptional, and quite a moving performance, but the other tracks positively radiate good humour and fun.

As a pianist, Red is not strikingly original. On the up-tempo numbers he comes over as sub-Cripple Clarence, and on the slow ones as sub-Leroy Carr. His voice is gravelly and full of barely suppressed laughter, well-integrated with his piano playing, which I must emphasise, is very good.

The 1950's pieces are all classic rockers; the recent recordings are all a pleasure to listen to. Doctor Feelgood is a tonic in himself. This record won't fill any gaps in blues history, but it will give a great deal of enjoyment— to many, let us hope.

Chris Smith.

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**REV. GARY DAVIS, O, Glory, Adelphi AD 1008.**

Right Now/Sun Goin' Down/Lo, I'll Be With You Always/God Will Take Care Of You/Mornin' Train/Birmingham Special/Out On The Ocean Sailing/Soon My Work Will All Be Done/O, Glory.

I wrote in Blues-Link with great enthusiasm about the recent Rev. Davis release on the Kicking Mule label and I can only write with the same enthusiasm about the latest Rev. Davis album on the Adelphi label! The two albums in fact compliment each other in as much as they show aspects of Rev. Davis's music that are unique to his recording career.

On this latest Adelphi release Rev. Gary plays and sings with his wife Annie, the Apostolic Family in chorus, and is accompanied on four tracks by Larry Johnson playing harmonica.....and surely that is enough to tempt all Davis admirers to get this album without reading further! For me the most exciting aspects of this album are the two tracks, 'God Will Take Care Of You' and 'Out On The Ocean Sailing'. On the latter title Gary plays five-string banjo which he has not played on record previously and the instrumental is also new to me. On 'God Will Take Care Of You' we hear him

playing the piano and backed by the Apostolic Family Chorus, which is made up of John Townley, Monica Boscia, Jerry Novac and Bobby Brooks. This is a simple tune and Gary's piano playing is direct and basic but the overall impression is quite dramatic and I feel that Gary is playing and singing with great emotion. I am sure this song must have been a favourite at his Baptist Chapel.

It is good to hear both Gary and Larry Johnson together on an album for Gary regarded Larry as one of his best students and fondest friends. (It would be good to hear Gary and Larry playing guitar together!) Of the four tracks where Larry backs Gary on harmonica I feel that 'Lo, I'll Be With You Always' is the most successful with them both really working together well and helped with the odd comment from the Reverend, "Help me harmonica, come on in". I am certain that Gary would have been pleased to have this album out with Larry on it for I feel that Larry Johnson is a fine musician whose albums do not really do him justice and I hope he will soon record again and give us a tour here.

For many reasons Gary's song 'Soon My Work Will All Be Done' is among my favourites and now on this album to hear his wife Annie singing as well makes it even more exciting. Annie was a fine wife to Gary and they were married for over 30 years.

She always makes people welcome in her home and always encouraged Gary to play and sing and often when she went along with him to concert she would sit at the front and sing along with him! She is still living in New York and in good spirits and working as hard as ever for her church.

The album was recorded in 1969 and produced by John Townley who also wrote the short but sincere liner notes and this album is a must for all of Rev. Gary's admirers. It is not perhaps the best record on which to start a Rev. Davis collection but it is well worth a listen and it still shows him to be a 'giant' among musicians.

The design and layout are of the highest standards and the front cover, in particular, is beautiful by any standard. I cannot congratulate John Townley and Gene Rosenthal enough for this superb album and we should look forward to further releases from Adelphi Records with great anticipation.

Robert Tilling

## LONESOME ROAD BLUES

Yazoo L-1038

**BIG JOE WILLIAMS:** Little Leg Woman **ARTHUR PETTIS:** Good Boy Blues **SONNY BOY NELSON:** Street Walkin' **MISSISSIPPI BRACEY:** Stered Gal/Cherry Ball **SAM COLLINS:** My Road Is Rough and Rocky/Lonesome Road Blues **ROBERT PETWAY:** Catfish Blues **FREDDIE SPRUELL:** Milkcow Blues/Tom Cat Blues **SKIP JAMES:** I'm So Glad **ROBERT LOCKWOOD:** Take A Little Walk With Me **JOHNNY TEMPLE:** The Evil Devil Blues **ISAIAH NETTLES (THE MISSISSIPPI MOANER):** It's Cold In China.

Sub-titled 15 Years In The Mississippi Delta, this album includes 14 country blues recordings by Mississippi artists from the years 1926-1941 and in terms of musical quality and inclusion of rarities recaptures the halcyon days of the early Origin albums. Mississippi Bracey, for many years no more than a name in B&GR to most blues collectors, now has four sides on lp. This pair are slightly less impressive than his tremendous I'll Overcome Someday/You Scolded Me... coupling but still of great interest. Stir It Gal (mis-titled as above by Paramount) is a repetitive fast-tempo number which, as the sleeve-writers perceptively suggest, may have its origin in a ring game. Cherry Ball is one of a number of similar blues on this theme (Joe McCoy, Skip James, Johnny Temple) and has C. McCoy playing second guitar. Bracey's version, like Joe McCoy's, pre-dates Skip's. It includes the "dark goin' to catch me here" verse later used by Robert Johnson in his Crossroad Blues. The album opens with the complex rhythms of Big Joe's Little Leg Woman, from his first recording session in 1935. The French RCA EP issue of this title was from the master and virtually without surface noise but otherwise the sound quality is about the same. Good Boy features some attractive melodic variations; Pettis merits a high rating as a blues guitarist. A surprising omission from the advertised programme is Charlie Patton's masterly Circle Round The Moon (not elsewhere available on lp, excepting the very distorted dub on FSO-1). (Eds: We wonder how many people



Larry Johnson — Photo by Valerie Wilmer.

placed advanced orders for the album on the strength of this?) This has been replaced by Sonny Boy Nelson's catchy Street Walkin' Woman, which uses the same tune as Eddie Kelly's Poole County Blues. I wish some reissue company would put out the reverse of this 78, Nelson's superb Pony Blues with tremendous 2-guitar accompaniment. Sam Collins, who had almost a full Origin lp (OJL 10) devoted to his work, may have been technically limited as a guitarist (a point made in one of those 'spare-no-one's favourite' sleeve notes) but he achieved a very distinctive and compelling sound which, when heard a couple of titles at a time (as here), has considerable impact. Rough And Rocky is previously unissued and exceptionally fine. Lonesome Road, although issued, is still a rarity. It includes the "train ran of" verse that occurs in many other early blues (e.g. Peg Leg Howell's Rolling Mill Blues and Charlie Lincoln's Chain Gang Trouble). Robert Petway has the distinction of making the first recording of Catfish under that title, as late as 1941 when it was already traditional. Label-mate Tommy McClennan, who played with Petway, recorded the theme a few months later as Deep Blue Sea Blues. Both versions are powerful, rolling country blues performances. Freddie Spruell was one of the first Mississippi Blues-men to record and one of the most individualistic. Milk Cow comes from his first session in 1926 and is completely different to Way Back Home, which replaces it on some copies of OK 8422. The 'tom cat man' Spruell sings about is the 'back door man', condemned in song by many blues singers, except when they themselves engage in this activity, as in Howlin' Tom Cat Blues. I'm So Glad, lyrically slight, spotlights Skip's dazzling, ultra-fast guitar work. First reissued on OJL 8 but sound quality much better here. Robert Lockwood's 1941 slide guitar tour-de-force Little Boy Blue is well known; Take A Little Walk is another masterpiece from the same session. This piece was apparently originated by Robert Johnson but Lockwood has made it his own and has recorded several excellent versions (on Decca — with Sunnyland Slim, Candid & Delmark). Johnny Temple's Devil vocal closely follows Skip James'. The two guitar accompaniment by Johnny and Charlie McCoy, who a year earlier had recorded this piece with brother Joe, creates an eerie effect. The Mississippi Moaner's hectic reworking of Blind Lemon Jefferson's Long Lonesome Blues rounds out a top-class anthology. "Not all blues singers came from Mississippi" said Mayo Williams but it's amazing just how many of the best did.

Bob Groom.

**JOE HILL LOUIS/WILLIE NIX** Juke Blues 11 — Blues In The Morning Polydor 2383214.  
Nappy Head Woman / Cold Chills / Mistreat Me Woman / Key To The Highway / Blues In The Morning / Highway 99 / Big Legged Woman / Gotta Go Baby / Eyesight To The Blind / The Way You Treat Me / Peace Of Mind / At The Woodchopper's Ball / Love My Baby / Western Union Man / Lone some Bedroom Blues / Try Me One More Time. (Last two Nix, rest Louis)

**HOWLIN' WOLF / BOBBY BLAND / SONNY BLAIR / JUNIOR PARKER** Juke Blues 12 — Blues For Mr. Crump Polydor 2383257.  
WOLF: Passing By Blues / My Baby Stole Off / I Want Your Picture / Driving This Highway / The Sun Is Rising / Stealing My Clothes / I'm The Wolf / BLAIR: Please Send My Baby Back / BLAND: Drifting (From Town To Town) No. 2 / Good Lovin' (Love You Yes I Do) / Love My Baby / Drifting (From Town To Town) No. 1 / Dry Up Baby / Crying All Night Long / PARKER: Bad Women, Bad Whiskey / You're My Angel.

Juke Blues reaches the even dozen, but as we say goodbye to Polydor's Simon Gee, are we saying goodbye to the Juke Blues series? I hope not, because these two are in their own ways splendid additions to the series. I say "in their own way" because neither set has a great deal of appeal outside the real collector fraternity.

There is something vaguely boring about 14 consecutive cuts by a one man band, brilliant though Louis was. Like the majority of blues recorded by the postwar labels, his titles were made for 78/45 and jukebox programming, and unless you're well into Mr. Louis it might tend to tire your ears. A whole side of the man tends to merge into itself, and despite the all-pervading brilliance of his instrumental prowess I feel that such concentration of material tends to create a false impression of apprehension about his ability to stay out of one particular groove. Joe sounds much better sandwiched on Genesis or The Sun Story. Certainly a great artist of such importance who would fare

*Joe Hill Louis — Photo courtesy Polydor Records.*



better with more thoughtful programming. Highway 99, Big Legged Woman and the frantic version of Woodchopper's Ball stand out.

The two Nix's should have been placed between the Hill cuts, not at the end. They are brilliant examples of his Memphis blues, not quite in the class of his Sun items but essential nonetheless. Nix could have been in the top echelon of singers, but somehow managed to screw up all his breaks. I'd like to say that his two cuts are worth the price of the album, but it sounds so extravagant!

The Memphis blues scene is getting as much attention in '74 as New Orleans got in '73, and unissued Wolfs should be welcomed with open arms. Unless you have the Kent anthologies, all the Wolf items should be new to you. They are all quite excellent, and mesh well with the recent Genesis material to give an almost complete picture of the Wolf's formative recording years. Wild harp and his typically sandpaper vocals blend with Willie Johnson's exciting electric guitar to produce some of the most cogent band blues ever put down in West Memphis. After 23 years the Wolf can still get it on with only a slight weakening, vide the recent Backdoor Wolf set on Chess.

The little known Sonny Blair contributes a pleasant, if not brilliant, little rocker, with some stomping harmonica and help from Ike Turner's rolling piano.

*Howlin' Wolf - Photo courtesy Polydor Records.*



Bobby Bland and Junior Parker present us with their first ever recordings. Both went on to far better things when they finally nurtured their individuality, but thanks to some stunning guitar from Matt Murphy these tracks are fabulous to listen to as well as historically important. Basically, both artists are below par, and although traces of their later styles are discernible, it's no surprise that the cuts achieved little commercial popularity. Johnny Ace and B. B. King help out on several numbers, and five years later all four were amongst the biggest stars in black America. In a way it's almost a supersession. Listen to the way Bland and Parker duet on Love My Baby, and the potential that was to infuse the most famous touring show, Blues Incorporated, shines through. Bland and Parker made better tracks for Duke and Sun, but don't miss this chance to relive the birth of two veritable superstars.

Buy this along with Bland's California album and Parker's You Don't Have To Be Black To Love The Blues, and you'll enjoy yourself immensely. Polydor deserves our thanks, and the best way to show it is to buy this.

Bob Fisher

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#### Homesick James And Snooky Pryor Caroline C 1502.

Crossroads / Nothin' But Trouble / Shake Your Money Maker / Cross Town / Careless Love / After You There Won't Be Nobody Else / The Woman I Love / I Feel Alright / Drivin' Dog / She Knows How To Love Me / Homesick Blues Again.

This release on Virgin Records cheap *Caroline* label must rate as being amongst Jim Simpson of Big Bear's best productions. It was recorded at the end of the Blues Legends '73 tour during February and March last year, which, on reflection, can be regarded as being Snooky Pryor's comeback tour. His playing improved so rapidly over this period that to compare the high quality of his playing on this recording with that only a month or so earlier at the start of the tour makes for a real surprise. Snooky's stature grew in direct proportion to his increase in confidence as gradually he recaptured his instrumental techniques prior to his 'retirement' eleven years earlier.

Much of the credit for this improvement must go to Homesick James who encouraged Snooky to make this comeback. On these recordings Homesick sings and plays like a man revitalised, and the control, precision and momentum of his playing here contrasts with the sometimes indifferent timing of some of his earlier recordings. In support of Snooky's vocals both his bottleneck and bare fingered playing are in total empathy. Try, for example, the beautiful, slow "After You There Won't Be Nobody Else".

Taking alternate vocals Homesick and Snooky perform a programme which includes both remakes

of earlier recordings, "Crossroads", "Woman I Love", "Homesick Blues Again", and "Cross Town" and newer material, some of which they were playing on their tour. Of the other material I really enjoyed "Careless Love" and "After You There Won't Be Nobody Else". The second side suffers from sameness with four of the five tracks being of similar tempo and as such it doesn't come up to the high standard of side one. This is not to say that any of the tracks are bad, far from it, but possibly there could have been some improvement in the programming.

A special word of praise must be accorded to the backing group of Bob Hall, Bob Brunning, and John Hunt. Simplicity is the keynote here, and their uncluttered playing does much to keep the session moving along smoothly, without ever becoming obtrusive. Sound quality and balance is excellent throughout and this easily obtainable album is one which can be wholeheartedly recommended.

Hugh Fleming

#### JANIS JOPLIN'S GREATEST HITS

CBS 65470

Piece Of My Heart/Summertime/Try (Just A Little Bit Harder)/Cry Baby/Me And My Bobby McGee/Down On Me/Get It While You Can/Bye, Bye Baby/Move Over/Ball And Chain.

Four with Big Brother And The Holding Company, one with Kozmic Blues Band, and five with Full Tilt Boogie Band; two of them live; one by Gershwin, one by Kris Kristofferson, and the last by Big Mama Thornton. In her lifetime Janis was an enigmatic personality, and this transmits itself still in her music. It is hard, uncompromising music. She may want you to like it, but she sure isn't going to give any quarter to appease you. Consequently her audience is often split, to the two poles, violently for or equally violently against. I can't say why, but I find some strange fascination in her music and her charisma.

Her voice, strained and wasted as it so often is, oozes sensuality; but it's not the vivaciousness of an ultra-feminine, more the hint of violent love made on a hard floor. Hers was a time of hard living, loving, drinking and searching. Searching for acceptance from a public exasperatingly fickle, and a love from a man who would match all she was so anxious to give. She was a woman despairing, and it's this quality, bringing every ounce of performance out of every note, that is so much part of her attraction. The vocals are not sweet and easy to take, and often she went to excesses, (witness the pretty dire solo end to Ball And Chain), but like Bessie Smith, who she so much admired and idolised, she was a hard woman, self-determined, living life to her full. The motor bike on the sleeve pic epitomises the harsh side to her life.

I am dubious of the validity of the album title, but if you've nothing else by her, this is a good enough base to start from; but I also suggest you investigate her last album, Pearl. On this present collection, you get ten numbers, inimicable Janis

Joplin, her very broadly blues-steeped music, aided by some very good group work. The support tends to become secondary to her sheer magnetism, but most is very good, and parts like the blues guitar break in Get It are really mighty fine.

Michael J.

#### THE MEMPHIS BLUES AGAIN VOLUME 1.

Adelphi AD10095

NATHAN BEAUREGARD— Nobody's Business But My Own/Lonesome To Myself/SAM CLARK— Sunnyland Train Blues/EARL BELL AND MEMPHIS SONNY BOY— Catfish Blues/MOSE VINSON— You Ain't Too Old/Bullfrog Blues/SWEET CHARLENE PEEPLES— Tin Pan Alley/VINSON & PEEPLES— Scoop Up Be Doop Day/FURRY LEWIS— Natural Born Eastman No. 2/ New Turn Your Money Green/JOE DOBBINS— Basin Street Blues/Sweet Patricia/GUS CANNON— Mule Gallop/DEWEY CORLEY— Dewey's Walkin' Blues/Step It Up And Go.

#### THE MEMPHIS BLUES AGAIN VOLUME 2.

Adelphi AD10105

BUKKA WHITE— Fried Chicken/WILLIE MORRIS— New Stop And Listen Blues/My Good Woman Has Quit Me/Tell My Mama, Babe, On You/RICHARD 'HACKSAW' HARNEY— Hack-saw's Down South Blues/Can Can/WALTER MILLER— I Don't Care What You Do/MEMPHIS PIANO RED— Me And My Pal/SLEEPY JOHN ESTES— Drop Down Mama/VAN HUNT— Jelly Selling Woman/Lonesome Road Blues

These two volumes of today's blues in Memphis have been in catalogue for a good while now (the recordings were made in 1969 and 1970), but should certainly be better known. Many collectors are wary of albums like these, for the greats of the past are generally available with their original recordings, and previously unrecorded artists are something of a gamble.

Of the artists who were recorded in the great days, Furry Lewis has an extensive list of recent LPs to his credit; many will feel too extensive. "Eastman" on this set is— of course— "Casey Jones" about number eight. On its own merits, it's a good performance, but may be superfluous to your requirements. Gus Cannon's banjo piece is terribly fragile— only 2:01 long, and a good deal of that is speech. Better to remember him as he was, I feel. Bukka is his usual growling, humorous self, and very nice. Hacksaw Harney is "Can" of "Pet and Can" who backed Walter Rhodes and Pearl Dickson long ago, and a guitarist and pianist of remarkable ability, with a complete mastery over both his instruments and a considerable virtuosity. Sleepy John is as brilliant as ever, ably assisted by Tom Gary, a harmonica player who backed John years ago, and who sounds very like Hammie Nixon. Mrs. Van Hunt also has previous experience; she was the "unk. female" who sang with Noah Lewis's Jug Band on the great "Selling The Jelly", and her new version, at the age of around 70, is well up to the standards of the earlier one.

Nathan Bearegard, the Tutankamun of the blues, will probably be known from his Memphis Blues Festival recordings. These, his last before his

death at the age of 100 or thereabouts, are both magnificent performances—a delightful “Nobody’s Business” and a brooding, haunting slow blues. Sam Clark is a forgettable pianist. Guitarist/singer Earl Bell and harpist Memphis Sonny Boy are ok, if predictable. Mose Vinson is a singer and pianist, and a bit dull on his own, but much better as accompanist and duettist to Sweet Charlene Peeples, daughter to Van Hunt, and no mean blues gal herself. “Alley” is very fine, and “Scood Up Be Doo Day” is a hilarious delight. Joe Dobbins is another pianist, idiosyncratic, full of original ideas and now dead—a sad loss. Dewey Corley I have always found boring; his selections on this record don’t change my opinion. His backup work with the other artists is also sometimes rather poor.

Willie Morris, though, is a magnificent singer/guitarist in the tradition of such as Willie Brown. Stop and listen! You’ll hear one of the best ever versions of that standard—no kidding—and of tremendous hokum piece in “Tell My Mama”. A solo album is promised in the sleeve notes, but doesn’t seem to have materialised. This may mean that Morris is dead, but let’s hope not. He’s a good un. Miller’s track is a romping ‘jook band’ piece, done with great gusto. Piano Red’s oddly titled instrumental reveals him as a pianist of considerable ability and inventiveness.

In sum, these are two fine anthologies; volume 2 has the edge in consistency, but both records have plenty to recommend them. The packaging, liner photos and sleeve notes are among the best I have ever seen, and the contents in general live up to the wrapping. Some of the recording was done at the Peabody Hotel, and if the results aren’t invariably up to the standard that Brunswick maintained when they were in that building, they’re still pretty hot.

Chris Smith.

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#### MIKE BLOOMFIELD, JOHN HAMMOND, DR. JOHN

Triumvirate CBS S65659

Cha Dooky Doo/Last Night/I Yi Yi/Just To Be With You/Baby Let Me Kiss You//Sho’ ‘Bout To Drive Me Wild/It Hurts Me Too/Rock Me Baby/ Ground Hog Blues/Pretty Thing.

Dr. John has made his feelings on this album quite plain several times. He and Bloomfield were called in to assist on a Hammond solo set; CBS in their wisdom chose to try for another ‘super session’. All three musicians, Hammond in particular, are somewhat unhappy with it.

It would have been nice to say, as is so often the case, that the musicians are wrong about the merits of their own material but in this instance they’re damn right. In fact Dr. John always seems to be right these days after turning out two of the years best albums and helping to make what would have been an average album into a near classic. (Danny O’Keefe’s Breezy Stories) It’s not worth arguing with him.

The only real saving grace of the album is Doc’s fine keyboard work. Bloomfield’s guitar seems insipidly uninspired at even the better moments and Hammond’s voice is positively grotesque at times. Even sadder is the fact that his score for the

movie Little Big Man was quite outstanding.

The selection of material is also a little over exuberant. The version of King Floyd’s excellent hiccuppy soul hit Baby Let Me Kiss You is pathetic in comparison and the abortions perpetrated on blues standards like It Hurts Me Too, Rock Me Baby and Groundhog make you wonder just where the son of the man who worked with Bessie Smith, Joe Turner, Mahalia Jackson and Aretha Franklin has put his integrity. And how Dr. John could stomach such a banal reading of Art Neville’s Cha Dooky Doo after all his printed paeons to New Orleans is a little confusing.

It’s okay as an album if you prefer Shandy to best bitter or Scotsmac to whiskey but really all three artists have made records that render this set instantly obsolescent.

Bob Fisher.

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#### MUDDY WATERS “Can’t Get No Grindin’ ” Chess 6310 129.

Can’t Get No Grindin’ / Mother’s Bad Luck Child / Funky Butt / Sad Letter / Someday I’m Gonna Ketch You // Love Weapon / Garbage Man / After Hours / Whiskey Ain’t No Good / Muddy Waters’ Shuffle.

Before I heard this properly, I’d had trouble with my stylus, and the result was more like the Skater’s Waltz than anything else. When I could finally listen in toto, I kept listening for the jumps, but I don’t think this warped my view.

It’s a good album, in places very good indeed, and it’s certainly the best Muddy’s come up with for years. (It’s good to see, en passant, that the Electric Mud era was short lived.) But it didn’t knock me out quite as much as other reviews led me to believe.

It breaks open in fine rockin’ style, with the title track, leaps into his inimitable slide on number two, and you think this is it. His licks are new, he’s playing and singing with renewed interest and commitment, and the stereo definition is excellent, especially for the guitar, piano and harp. But after a couple more, it all tends to become a little repetitive; the tempo especially hardly varies a degree. It briefly lifts half way through side two, on the excellent After Hours, which really captures the after hours atmosphere of a near-empty club; but the taste of frustrated anticipation lingers.

The sleeve is a bit of a rip-off too, no credits for his hardworking staff; but the album is still fair for all that, and as I say, his best for years. Well worth investigating; but be careful how you ask for it, else you might receive some strange answers.

Michael J.

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#### BOB KIRKPATRICK “Feeling The Blues” Folkways FTS 31032.

Watergate Blues / I Don’t Know Why / Everyday / I Need Your Love So Bad / I Been Down So Long / I Got Love // Sweet Little Angel / Old Friend Of Mine / Big Feet / When The Sun Rose

This Morning / Stormy Monday.

Bob Kirkpatrick (36) is among a number of younger bluesmen (Phillip Walker, Son Seals, Dave Alexander etc.) who have made strong recording debuts as of late. All of them have shown that they have much to add to today's blues. Kirkpatrick himself has many influences with his belonging to a famous religious family and using a young jazz-blues band behind him. The gospel influence is very noticeable in his singing, which is Bob's strong suit. His smooth, powerful delivery can handle ballads (Everyday, Old Friend) as well as belt out a convincing blues. His guitar style may be modest but it is effective, patterned after B. B. King and thankfully the B. B. of the 50's. His band is fine (especially Ron Burton on piano) except for the 'sour' sounding bass. There are some rather ordinary modern blues but most are original, refreshing compositions. Watergate is a sophisticated statement that gets to the point unlike most other so-called 'topical' blues. Need Your Love really swings and Monday deserves inclusion as T-Bone is done complete justice. To sum up, Kirkpatrick is above all a very tasteful artist. Coming from a small specialist label like Folkways, it is doubtful that this record will get much exposure and it's too bad a man of such talent will continue to be unknown even by most blues fans.

John McCarty

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**JOE WILLIAMS** "Live" Fantasy F9441. Who She Do / Green Dolphin Street / Heritage / Sad Song / Goin' To Chicago Blues / A Beautiful Friendship / Yesterday, Today And Tomorrow / Tell Me Where To Scratch.

Although never considered one of the major blues singers, Joe Williams has had a varied and generally successful career, both with and away from the Count Basie Orchestra, and a new album from him is certainly a notable event. This is an informal session organised by Fantasy before an invited audience — a funny way of approaching things, for if atmosphere is considered important, why not make a club or concert recording? The Adderley brothers are featured soloists in the seven piece band, but this is really Joe's album.

Regrettably, it is not an unqualified success. Joe seems at his best with his own composition, the opening Who She Do, with a strong, relaxed vocal, backed with good solos from George Duke and Cannonball Adderley. Jimmy Rushing's Goin' To Chicago is also a strong one, with fine interplay between Joe and Cannonball, but is marred by an overlong introductory chat from Joe. A Beautiful Friendship is sung against bass and drums, before a lively alto solo; and Tell Me Where To Scratch, another Joe Williams composition, is a lighthearted, slow blues, gradually building up to a trumpet climax.

Less successful are Green Dolphin Street and Sad Song. Green Dolphin Street would be better handled by Jon Hendricks or Dave Lambert — Joe sounds unhappy with the technical demands of the tune, handling the wide range of notes rather awkwardly, yet managing a fair attempt at scat singing interspersing the drum breaks. Sad Song, with its heavy rock-beat, is poor material anyway, making it difficult for Joe to do more than talk his way through some unimaginative writing.

Finally, the two ballads, Ellington's Heritage and Tom McIntosh's Yesterday, Today And Tomorrow are musically interesting but vocally no more than adequate. Certainly an interesting album, but not the best that Joe can do.

Martin Cowlyn

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**BARRELHOUSE BLUES & STOMPS — VOL. 4, ESR 1205.**

LAWRENCE 'SMOKEY JOE' HENRY: Sweet Georgia Brown / Nagasaki / HENRY BROWN: Pickin' Em Out Again / JAMES CRUTCHFIELD: Levee Blues / JOHN BENTLEY WITH ROOSEVELT SYKES (vocal): Over At Hattie's Barrelhouse / JAMES 'STUMP' JOHNSON: The Snitcher's Blues / SPECKLED RED: Ain't Gonna Cry No More / Pine-top's Boogie Woogie / CYRIL BENNETT: Gin Mill Blues / DINK JOHNSON: Dink's Final Blues.

Paul Affeldt has assembled a further selection of barrelhouse blues and stomps by oldtime pianists (a notable exception being John Bentley, who is neither old nor black), several of whom are now, sadly, deceased. Speckled Red died in 1973, and Cry, a bouncy blues, and the evergreen Boogie Woogie are welcome reminders of his inimitable style. James 'Stump' Johnson recreated his prewar success The Snitcher's Blues shortly before his death. Henry Brown, still "pickin' 'em out", contributes another spritely boogie. James Crutchfield's Levee is in the best country blues traditions. Roosevelt Sykes takes the vocal on a rocking Hattie's Barrelhouse. Dink's Final Blues sadly evokes New Orleans and the ending of an era. The other tracks are lighter, Bennett's Gin Mill and Georgia, and Nagasaki pounded out with good humour by Lawrence Henry. A mixed bag containing several goodies.

Bob Groom

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**THE MISSISSIPPI SHEIKS.** Stop And Listen Blues.

Mamlish S-3804

Stop and Listen Blues No.2/Yodelling Fiddling Blues/The World Is Going Wrong/Please Baby/Unhappy Blues/She Ain't No Good/Your Good Man Caught The Train And Gone/Sitting On Top Of The World/Shake Hands And Tell Me Goodbye/Jailbird Love Song/I've Got Blood In My Eyes For You/Honey Babe Let The Deal Go Down/Mississippi Low Down/Ram Rod Blues.

The Mississippi Sheiks (Walter Vinson and Lonnie Chatmon) have been sporadically reissued on anthologies, and share an LP with Stokes & Sane on Biograph. Now, at last, we have an entire set devoted to their beautiful violin-guitar blues.

This record duplicates some of the other micro-groove material, but that shouldn't put anybody off, for the sound quality achieved here is quite remarkably good, and even so wellknown a number as "Sitting On Top Of The World" takes on a new dimension in this context.

The Sheiks were one of the most popular recording teams of the time; if you want to know why, this is the record for you. Vinson's rasping vocals, and simplified but effective guitar, and Chatmon's swinging violin with its wide tonal variety make every track a knockout. The attraction of their music, for me anyway, lies in the juxtaposition of more than usually sentimental (for the blues world) lyrics and melodies with tough, unsentimental playing and singing.

Here, then, is one of the finest string bands of all time, excellently presented, and not just musically; the sleeve notes are extremely valuable from a biographical standpoint. In the end, though, it's the music that triumphs, and that's as it should be.  
Chris Smith.

## 45s

**SCHOOLBOY CLEVE** "My Heart Is Crying" / "If It's Love You Want Come To Me" Blues Connoisseur 1002.

One time Lightnin' Slim band member Schoolboy Cleve comes up with two fine tracks featuring his excellent harp and vocal work supported by a four piece band consisting of guitar, electric bass, piano and drums. Crying is the stand-out track taken at a slow pace with beautifully subtle slide guitar and a mean moody bass. The flip side is a pleasant up tempo item, this time without the slide guitar. Very nice to hear that such simple, uncomplicated yet enjoyable music is still being recorded these days. Don Lindenau is to be congratulated for making this material available on his Blues Connoisseur label.

Frank Pizzezy

**NOLAN STRUCK** "She's The One That Hits The Spot" / "Welfare Problems" ICT 11145.

ICT (short for Inner City Trading) is part of Bill Tyson's Biscayne setup, and this 45 is a real winner, particularly for the B side. Welfare Problems is another set of tales of woe about the Welfare System, but is certainly as good as, if not better than, most of the others. One King Edwards provides some extremely good Buddy Guy cum B. B. King style guitar on this piece. The A side is an up tempo thing with some nice guitar again. It reminds me a little of some of the better Albert Washington stuff.

John Stiff

**JOHNNY (BIG MOOSE) WALKER WITH LEFTY DIAZ & HIS BLUES HOUNDS** "Tend To Your Business" / "Things I Used To Do" C.J. 657.

This C.J. release is nothing but lowdown Chicago blues. Johnny is a rockin' pianist and a hoarse voiced singer. Lefty Diaz plays some excellent modern blues guitar and saves Things from Johnny's overlong 'rap'. I don't like 'raps' but I like good guitar, and lovers of the unsophisticated Chicago sound will want this one.

John McCarty

**NORMAN THRASHER** "In The Evening" / "Five O'Clock In The Morning" Paula 394.

This release can best be described as an attempt to fuse Thrasher's 1940's style of rhythm and blues big band vocals with a funky Stax-style backing. Evening is a nice re-working of the Leroy Carr number with Thrasher's vocal ably supported by the very tight back-up band which includes organ. Five O'Clock is taken at the same slow pace as the top-side but this time the band is supplemented by a horn section.

Frank Pizzezy

**BUSTER BENTON** "Spider In My Stew" / "Dangerous Woman" Jewel 842.

Rather a one sided record to my mind — but a very good one side. Dangerous is the waster, but Spider is performed in fine Chicago style rather reminiscent of Guy/Wells collaborations. Benton is vocally similar to Wells in several respects, and there is some guitar playing that would not discredit Guy. Lyrically Spider In My Stew is Mule Kicking In My Stall, but it doesn't detract from a very good performance and a worthwhile record.

John Stiff

**RICHARD RIGGINS** "If You See My Woman" / "Dust My Broom" Blues Connoisseur 1004.

Both these tracks by Riggins are heavily influenced by Elmore James. If You See My Woman sounds not unlike It Hurts Me Too with stinging slide guitar and harp backed by heavy bass and adequate but unobtrusive drums. As a contrast Broom suffers from an over exuberance in all departments, with guitar, harp and drums all threatening to completely submerge the vocal. More bad marks to this side for an untidy fade at the end of the track.

Frank Pizzezy

*And now for something completely different —*



# Contact Section

THIS IS YOUR SECTION OF THE MAGAZINE, AND IT IS UP TO YOU TO MAKE IT WORK. Contact Ads, are FREE to subscribers as long as they are 'non-commercial'; if the ads. are commercial or if you are not a subscriber please send along 10p in stamps (UK) or 2 IRC's (overseas).

DISPLAY CLASSIFIED RATE (TRADE): 3p per word (payment in advance).

5-74:1) Offer a good number of original blues records at minimum prices, e.g. Tommy Johnson - Roots RL-330 @ DM 10, Brother John Sellars - Vanguard @ DM 8, Sleepy John Estes - Storyville SLP 172 @ DM 10. List on request, enclose an IRC. Contact;

George S. Paul, Bahnhofstrasse 28, 741 Reutlingen, West Germany.

5-74:2) Blues lp's wanted: Barrelhouse O2 Big John Wrencher, Gordy 9611 Luther Allison, Seventy Seven 20015 Fenton Robinson, Atlantic 8005 and 8023 Big Joe Turner, King LP622 Little Ester, Pzazz LP321 Louis Jordan, Smash 27046 Muscat Thomas, Heritage 1008 Buster Pickens, Heritage 1004 Maxwell Street, XXMin 718 Robert Nighthawk. Contact;

Wolfgang Behr, Scholenerstr. 15, 28 Bremen 44, Germany.

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by John Broven

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5-74:3) HELP! Anybody with any information on Blind Willie Johnson not previously published, please contact Chris Smith, c/o 52 Walsworth Road, Hitchin, Herts. SG4 9SX, U.K.

5-74:4) Wanted: Sue ILP918, Sue ILP927, Excello LP8004, Excello LP8006. Records must be in E condition or better. Contact;

Gerben Kroese, Verhulststraat 3, Elst (OB), Holland.

5-74:5) Wanted: Tommy McLennan - 10" RCA 130.274, Big Joe Williams - EP RCA 75.723, Sonny Boy Williamson - EP RCA 75.722, Julius Daniels - EP RCA RCX. 7175, Jimmy Oden - EP RCA 86.405, Big Maceo - 10" RCA 130.246 and EP RCA 86397, Tampa Red - EP RCA RCX, 7160, Jazz Gillum - 10" RCA 130.274, Crudup - 10" RCA 130.284, Jimmy Oden - EP RCA 86.398, Contact;

G.Stapleton, 10 Hamilton Road, Ealing, London W5, U.K.

5-74:6) For sale: Blues Unlimited 57,58 and 72 - 80 inc. Wanted Blues Unlimited 81 and 82. Contact; Gilbert Martin, 98 Manchester Road, Heywood, Lanes. OL10 2PN, U.K.

5-74:7) Want to trade CHICAGO BLUES ANTHOLOGY Chess 50.011 (dbl.), MAD MAN BLUES - John Lee Hooker (Chess double), WOMEN BLUES - Jack Dupree (Chant Du Monde), COUNTRY BLUES VOL. 1 - Big Bill Broonzy (Chant Du Monde), I WANNA DANCE ALL NIGHT - J.L. Hooker (America). Will trade each double lp for four singles and each single lp for 3 but depends on the records offered. Contact;

Guy Van Eesbeeck, 42 Place Eugene Keym, 1170 Bruxelles, Belgium.

## 100 Club

100 Oxford Street, London W.1.

Tues 12th. November - Link Wray and the Wraymen

Tues 26th. November - Johnny Mars

5-74:8) Urgently wanted in good condition: BU 1-72, 81, 82, CC all issues, BW all issues, R & B Monthly 1-24, Blues Research all issues. I pay good prices - needed for studies. Contact;

Klaus Arnold, 785 Lorrach, Luisenstr. 12, Germany.

5-74:9) Wanted: DEVIL GOT MY WOMAN - Skip James (Vanguard 79273), also any information concerning Skip James. Any information (including photos) of Martin guitars also required. Contact;

Alan Carpenter, 9 Singers Knoll, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1LS, U.K.

5-74:10) Wanted: Andy Boy - Bb6893, Leadbelly - Disc 5501 and both of his V-Discs, Allency & Bethnea Harris - Vi 38594, Roosevelt Scott - Vo 05137. Tapes of the last two would be equally welcome. Please state condition and price. Contact;

Tony Travers, 399 Allenby Road, Southall, Middx. UB1 2HF, U.K.

5-74:11) Two keen amateur blues guitarists in Edinburgh would like to meet someone who likes to sing

blues for jam sessions. (purely instrumentals get tedious!); Please ring Bill Greaves at 445 3644 or write; Bill Greaves, 61 Buckstone Crescent, Edinburgh, EH10 6TR, U.K.

5-74:12) Wanted: Howling Wolf – Chess LP1512, Bo Diddley – Checker LP1431. Contact;

Dave Harding, 5 St. Annes Grove, Knowle, Solihull, Warwickshire, U.K.

5-74:13) Wanted: Mercy Dee Walton – Bluesville 1039, Lloyd Glen – Score 4021, Cecil Gant – King, Meade Lux Lewis – Atlantic, Buster Pickens – Heritage 1008, Jimmy Yancey – Gannet, Clarence Lofton – Vogue, also Bobby Bland – Vocalation VA 160184, Little Johnny Taylor – Vocalation VAF 8031, Johnny Ace VA 160177. State condition and price. Contact;

Cliff Hill, 13 Wayne Close, Llanishen, nr. Chepstow, Mon.. U.K.

5-74:14) Wanted on disc or tape: Barbecue Bob – mxs.146053, 149320, 151053. Charley Lincoln – mxs.146017/8. Willie Baker – mxs.14893 + unissued sides. Curlez Weaver – mxs. 467/8. 12954, 9938, 9942 + unissued sides. John Lee Hooker – Staff 704. Lightnin' Hopkins – Mercury 70081, Chart 636, TNT 8003. Contact;

Dave Moore, 19 Worthing Road, Patchway, Bristol, BS12 5HY, U.K.

5-74:15) Have a large collection of lp's and so far unissued 45's and 78's (pre and post war). I would like to trade tapes with someone who has a good collection of 45's from 1966 up to today. Please send your lists and ask for mine. Contact; Hartmut M. Munnich, 51 Aachen, Soerser Au 12, West Germany.

5-74:16) For sale/trade: Tangerine 1510 – Percy Mayfield, Okeh 12101 – Dr. Feelgood & The Interns (E+), Muskadine 101 – J.H. Louis, Biograph 12000, 12003, 12015, 12023, 12031. Contact; David Gomez, 517 Blueberry Ln., Ft. Wayne, Ind. 46825, U.S.A.

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Jonas 'Mr. R & B' Bernholm, Helsingegatan 14A, 11323 Stockholm, Sweden.

5-74:17) ROY BROWN/ROY MILTON. Will pay reasonable prices for 78's/45's by these artists on Deluxe, King, Specialty etc. Also want issues on 'Miltone' label plus Pee Wee Crayton – Crown CLP 5175. Tape swaps can also be arranged. All letters answered. Contact;

Bill Pearson, 11 The Gables, Haddenham, Bucks., U.K.

5-74:18) Wanted all films about Blues and Jazz available in Super 8. Contact;

M. Lucien Dreyfus, 18 Avenue de la Campane, 13012 Marseille, France.

5-74:19) For sale(postfree): S.B. Williamson II – Blues Classics 9 @ £1.50, The Cajuns Vol.1 – Sonet 643 @ £1.40, Deep South Country Blues – Flyright 102 @ £1.40, B.B. King Vol.2 – New World 6005 @ £0.75, Memphis Minnie 1934-41 – Flyright 108 @ £1.50, Robert Junior Lockwood – Delmark 630 @ £1.50. Wanted: Howlin' Wolf – Chess LP 1469, J.L. Hooker – Modern 78's 897, 901, 916, 923, 931, 935, 948, 958, 978. Contact;

Nick Holt, 92a London Road, Aston Clinton, Bucks., U.K.

5-74:20) Collector with large collection of American Folk & Blues records and tapes wishes to contact others with a view to correspondence and tape exchanges. Contact;

Keith Summers, 50 Arlington Road, Southend, Essex, U.K.

5-74:21) Karl Gert zur Heide has changed his address in Bremen to 28 Bremen 1, Schwachhauser Heerstr. 49, Germany.

Hundreds of blues 78's, 45's, & LP's. Mostly mint. Includes rarities like Blue Smitty, Gilmore, Chicago Sunny Boy, Harmonica Frank etc. as well as blues for the beginning collector. Send for Free list.

Robert Javors, 2425 Kings Highway, Brooklyn, New York 11229, U.S.A.

5-74:22) For Sale: Beautiful and very rare early 1930's U.S. Gretsch f hole acoustic blues guitar. A collectors item which although not perfect (being now 40 years old) is in good playing order. Bluesy tone and low action. Will sell for £75. Most definite offer secures. View anytime. Contact;

Nigel Mentzel, 72 Marshall Street, Newlands Avenue, Hull, Yorks., U.K.

5-74:23) Will Pay Well for copies of lp's: Cook 5002 (K.C. Douglas); Herald 1012, Score 4022, Time 70004 (L. Hopkins); Kokomo 1003 (Buddy Moss); King 735, Okeh 12103 (Jack Dupree) Phillips Int. 1975 (F. Frost); Verve VPM 1 (Babe Stovall). Have some deletions for trade – send enquiries, lists to;

Cliff Warnken, 1005 N. Grove, A-8, Bowling Green, Ohio 43402, U.S.A.

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