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# BLUES - LINK

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Subscriptions £1.50 for six ( \$4 sea mail, \$8 air mail). Overseas International Money Orders only please or if by personal cheque please add an extra 50p to cover bank clearance charges.

Editorial staff: Mike Black, John Stiff, Frank Sidebottom and Alan Balfour.

Special thanks to: Dave Godby (special artwork), Bill Greensmith (photos) and all the record companies who have lent us their support.

Cover Photo: Thomas Shaw by Gerben Kroese.

© Blues-Link 1973

Welcome to *Blues-Link*, the new international blues bi-monthly, we hope you'll enjoy it. Our aim in *Blues-Link* is to fill some of the gaps in blues appreciation and research by involving you — the reader. We invite you to submit your letters, views, news, articles, photos and discographical queries for inclusion in *Blues-Link*. Especially, we'd like to hear from those of you overseas, as we shall have regular coverage of the international blues scene. Other regular features will include a gospel page, a complete listing of all Jazz and Blues records issued in the two months prior to publication, a look at obscure LP's, a readers letters page and of course in depth record reviews.

For subscribers we aim to provide a *FREE* Contact Ads service. So, if you have something to exchange, acquire etc., strictly non-commercial though — send it along to us. For fuller details see the Contact Section at the back.

Aside from the magazine itself, *Blues-Link* has other projects in the pipeline — not just pipedreams either. *Blues-Link* will publish a comprehensive address listing annually from early 1974. If you'd like to be included just send your name, address, phone, age, likes and we'll do the rest. Work will be started on a companion volume to *Blues Records*, covering all gospel recordings made between 1943 and 1973, a blues bibliography and finally *Blues-Link* limited editions of recordings that are not usually considered remotely commercial.

*Blues-Link* grew out of the attempt made by Marcel Vos to launch *Blues Friends Worldwide* contact magazine and address listing. In essence we have taken over where he left off and we understand from him that the slate is clear with regards to repayments of outstanding subscriptions to *BFW*. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Marcel and all those involved with his magazine for their continuing support.

One final word. Our address is strictly a mailing one, callers will find no one there unless they have previously arranged a meeting.

See you in October when we'll have for you, "Memphis Shakedown; the Memphis Jug Band on record", "Kokomo Arnold interview" and "The Rise and Fall of the Leicester Blues Empire" amongst other goodies.

# A Hodge Podge Of Blues

Bill Pearson

Some names we need to know more about.

There is an area of music lying somewhere between hard blues and the more blatantly commercial R & B and Soul which holds a great fascination for me — but not, it seems, for many blues collectors. If the reason for this is lack of information and recordings then there is some justification for it, but arguments against the music itself are not really justified. I am speaking of such figures as Willie Mabon, Joe Turner, Roy Hawkins, Saunders King and the other inhabitants of this musical netherworld. No doubt the jazz overtones of their work act as a deterrent to some and you can't eliminate insularity in audiences, but to ignore them almost completely is almost criminal!

Take Willie Mabon as a starter. Until his recent tours in England little was known of this man and even less of his work was available. None of the *Chess* titles he cut at the start of his career are about at present as far as I know and later work for small labels including *Federal* and *USA* is equally hard to come by. *Sue* did issue a couple of things here in the early sixties (the "Got To Have Some" saga) and these were enough to convince me that here was a musical entertainer working basically in the blues idiom. Certainly, Mabon is well aware of the musical spectrum he is part of and has stated his musical policy-visually and vocally! — at a gig at 100 Club in London recently by stating that he regarded himself as an 'entertainer' first and foremost. His approach is refreshingly professional and allied to an engaging personality it should be doing great business all over the place. After all, the blues aren't just about being down all the time!

Many of the lyrics of his songs are outstanding and long before his more recent successes Mabon had been putting out popular records with a real tongue-in-cheek deadpan feel about them. I haven't heard his very first single on *Apollo* but the next, on *Chess*,—"Worry Blues"/"I Don't Know"—was fairly straight blues. Later items have a larger brass section augmenting Willie's piano and vocals. There's the jauntingly dangerous "Poison Ivy" for instance (not the Coasters' song) which includes verses like:

*I bought me a blade, one I could afford,  
Too long to be a knife, too short to be a sword.*

or

*Last night some cat got smart with my niece,  
Now he wears (his sacks?) and rest in peace!*

All verses chorused with:

*I don't like to brag, I don't like to say what I'll do,  
But I'm like poson ivy, I'll break out all over you.*

The boastful "Seventh Son" contains the lines:

*Now I can tell your future before it come to pass,  
I can do things for you . . . make your heart feel glad,  
I can look in the sky and predict the rain,  
I can tell when a woman's got another man.*

All verses chorused with:

*I'm the one, I'm the one,  
The one they call the seventh son.*

Or there is the wryly optimistic "Knock On Wood":

*I used to look in the mirror . . . my teeth looked like carbon,  
But now I'm wearing diamond studded choppers!  
I found me a woman who does everything she should,  
Everything's in my favour and I've got to knock on wood.*

Later records settle into a less tough mould but still retain the Mabon touch. "Got To Have Her" on *Mad* seems to act as the precursor to "Got To Have Some" on *Formal* cut two years later in 1962. A similar lineup on *USA* continued the saga with "Just Got Some" in the next year and altogether six 45's were issued on that label including the possible ominous double meaning of "I'm The Fixer":

*Baby I'm the fixer . . . I am the fixer,  
I'm the fixer pretty baby. I got everything you need.  
Now when your man done failed you and you're down and out,  
I make you feel so good you'll want to jump and shout.  
I bring joy to the girls and luck to the men,  
When you think I'm gone, I'm coming back again.*

Mabon of course, was based in Chicago but the South and West seem to have been stronger areas for this type of 'jump' music with the influence of New Orleans and Texas having a noticeable effect on the sound of other figures worth mentioning. In the Middle West, Joe Turner and Clyde Bernhardt come to mind. Turner has travelled widely and now resides in California but he began as a Kansas City singer and if his style can be so labelled, it is still just that. He is at his best belting out a song with a strong background of riffing horns and tinkling piano and throughout the years he has managed to attain those requirements on many recordings. Details of Turner's life are scarce although *Living Blues* filled in a few gaps with a recent interview (No. 10 — Autumn, 1972). It's not the lyrics that count in Joe's work; more the timbre and emphasis applied to them and the support given by bands often featuring the boogie piano of Pete Johnson. This jazzy character remained in his work until the fifties when *Atlantic* revitalised things a bit with their famous sessions. These were still in the standard Turner idiom but used more topical lyrics which appealed to the younger Rock 'n Roll audiences. Subsequently Joe returned to the West Coast where he has operated for years. Recordings were made for *RPM/Kent* and an LP was issued fairly recently from that source. Don't ignore Joe Turner!

Clyde Bernhardt is a trombonist who has been experiencing something of a revival recently under the auspices of Derek Stewart-Baxter who has supplied useful biographical data in *Jazz Journal*. Born in North Carolina, Bernhardt paid his musical dues playing with many bands throughout the thirties and forties and is not a K.C. player but much more East coast orientated. Titles cut under his own name show the jazz influence and he is usually supported by a fairly large band with vocal and trombone to the fore as required. *Saydisc* have put out two albums in the UK which provide good coverage of his work. "Blowing My Top" on SDR 126 contains both old and new recordings and is perhaps the best introductory choice. Incidentally, talking of Bernhardt has brought to mind another trombonist of interest in Gene 'The Mighty Flea' Connors who is in the UK at the time of writing. He has worked on the West coast a great deal with Johnny Otis among others and plays a really fast trombone! As another player influenced by the jazz and R & B of earlier days, and now resident in Europe, he is worth a listen.

Turner worked with many figures of interest over the years including Pee Wee Crayton whose brand of music has been sadly neglected partly due to lack of available records. *Modern*, who signed him up in the late forties, put out a great deal of material and there were later sessions for *Imperial* after which followed a long period in the wilderness. Recently, blues interest resulted in an LP on the *Vanguard* label which I rate quite highly despite the adverse comments made about it by some reviewers. Pee Wee plays a mean guitar at times and this has almost always featured in his work over the

years. When supported by small brass section the result is relaxed Texas influenced blues which, while lacking the toughness of the Chicago sound, have an emotional quality of their own. I suppose Pee Wee's best known hits are "Blues After Hours" and "Texas Hop" — both instrumentals and reissued on *Kent's Archive Series* in the USA (Vol. 12 — West Coast Blues). Both titles accurately describe the music on those cuts — hot 'n relaxed in the first instance with a sharper jumpier emphasis in the second one.

The same album contains titles by three other singers I want to mention — Roy Hawkins, Saunders King, and Jimmy Nelson. All use a 'laid back' vocal style but little appears to be known (or at least written) about them. *Blues Records* has a large disco for Hawkins whose 'Strange Land' was apparently a hit in the late forties. Later on a song featured by him became a hit for B.B. King. This was "The Thrill Is Gone".

Saunders King's "S.K. Blues" is superbly sung with piano and muted trumpet encircling the singer who really draws out the lyrics. This slurred quality is even more apparent on "Something's Worryin' Me" issued on **Rhythm 302**:

*I hang around the bars all evening drinking anything I choose,  
I'm happy up until midnight 'cause that's the time I get the blues.*

and:

*I'm alright in the morning . . . at noon I'm feeling fine,  
At six o'clock I'm happy but at midnight I lose my mind.*

Good music!

Lastly, Jimmy Nelson. Again he is something of a mystery to me unfortunately apart from his "T-99" which was a hit and has been sung by many bluesmen including Otis Spann. The original *Modern* recording features a chanting chorus behind Nelson's singing about his missing honeydripper! There is a nice chunky guitar solo on the record — nothing spectacular but 'right' nonetheless.



Pee Wee Crayton photo by G. Bennet

Another of the *Kent* series contains one title by Johnny 'Guitar' Watson who was some guitar player judging by the titles he cut for *RPM* in the fifties. The track in question is the outstanding "Three Hours Past Midnight" which comes complete with great guitar break full of staccato rapidly picked notes which seem to have been something of a trademark. Later recordings for **King** are apparently quite good if somewhat under the influence of the **King** 'sound' but I'm not familiar with enough of them to comment. Nevertheless, his work definitely warrants attention.

And now from a guitarist to two pianists. Neither Lloyd Glenn or Charles Brown ever hit the blues headlines these days but they are valuable bluesmen in their own way. Glenn started recording in 1947 for *Imperial* and from then on had a series of issues on various labels including *Swingtime* and *Aladdin* up to 1962. These were always instrumentals which have great appeal and an understated quality about them, and the strong Texas roots (Glenn was born there) come through the lilting quality with boogie overtones. Titles like "Chico-Boo", "Nite-Flite", and "Blue Ivories" reflect the style and character of the recordings. Before starting out on his own Glenn worked with numerous jazz bands but ended up with the straight blues again in the early sixties playing on B.B. King sessions!

Less information is available on Charles Brown but he must have had a background with similar elements in it. Initially he worked with Johnny Moore's Three Aces and then took over the group himself with the success of various songs including the famous "Drifting Blues" and "Black Night". These are certainly individual with Brown's nasal vocal to the fore backed with tinkling piano and guitar. Very moody material which if you prefer it in a more modern setting can be heard effectively on an *ABC Bluesway LP* or another issued by *Jewel*. He hasn't lost his touch and should be more appreciated.

That then, just about rounds things off. This has not been a comprehensive survey by any means but I hope that it will serve to draw attention to some lesser known, or at least under appreciated, names. It may well be that more of their material will become available in time (will *Polydor* put out some *RPM/Modern* sides on *Juke Blues*?) but in the meantime listen to the old records if you can. Anyone with material by these artists who wishes to part with it is urged to contact the author!

## SOME RECORDS

Lloyd Glenn "Chico-Boo"	Aladdin LPM-9
Lloyd Glenn/Pete Johnson "Boogie Blues"	Polydor Int. 423244
Charles Brown "Legend"	Bluesway BLS 6039
Charles Brown "Blues'n Brown"	Jewel LPS 5006
Clyde Bernhardt "Blowing My Top"	Saydisc SDR 126
Pee Wee Crayton "Things I Used To Do"	Vanguard VSD 6566
Willie Mabon "... is back"	Blues on Blues 10004
Joe Turner "Jumpin' The Blues"	Arhoolie R2004
"Best of the blues Vol. 1" (includes Brown)	Imperial LP 9257
"Everyday I have the blues" (Brown, Glenn etc.)	Ember SPE 6601
"West Coast Blues" (Hawkins/King/Nelson/Crayton)	Kent KST 9012
"California Blues" (Johnny Watson)	Kent KST 9003
"Johnny Otis Show Live At Monterey" (Turner/Crayton/Connors)	Epic 66295



## BLIND JOHN DAVIS in Amstelveen (Holland)



photos: Gerben Kroese.

In late March, early April of 1973, the legendary pianist Blind John Davis, who accompanied so many blues artists during the thirties/forties for *Bluebird* and *Vocalion* briefly visited Europe. This is a report of his visit to Amstelveen in Holland where I went to see him in concert.

It was a cold Saturday night of April 21st that I and a considerable number of others went to pay homage to the 59 year old pianist, who, for most of us present had just been a name in other peoples discographies. As is customary on most blues tours the audience were warmed up by the popular Hoochie Coochie Band who played well known electric blues — everything from Elmore James to Slim Harpo. Although I had gone specifically to see John Davis, I resigned myself to the fact that I would have to put up with the Hoochie Coochie Band, so did my best to enjoy their set.

Blind John Davis finally came on stage at about nine-thirty for his first set, which included some nice blues and boogie pieces, and was to prove to be only one of three such sets. It was during the intervals between these that I, and others, managed to talk to him. Armed with a bottle of *Old Crow* whisky he prepared himself for the barrage of questions.

I asked him if he was working at present and he told me that he regularly plays the white night clubs in Chicago. Moving to the subject of his lack of solo recordings he amused all present by saying that he was such an articulate chap that he was just not suited to singing the blues: ". . . they only wanted the guys with the country accents". He also recollected that of all the people he had worked with Big Bill Broonzy was the most memorable for his precision. Changing the subject slightly, I asked him how he came to be booked for this tour and what future plans he had. It was with some dismay that I learnt that he would make this his only tour and that it only came about because of the insistence of Karl Gert Zur Heide and Martin van Olderen both of whom are great lovers of piano blues.



Although it wasn't a stomping evening, what Blind John Davis played I enjoyed very much and was quite overwhelmed by his technical proficiency. Seeing him had made it a worthwhile evening.

Kees van Wijngaarden.



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# Ragtime

As from next issue we will have a regular Ragtime feature and Ragtime record reviews, but as space and time were short for this issue, all I can mention is that Roger Millington is starting to organise a 'Ragtime Collectors Club' and any enquiries or offers of help for this very worthwhile project should be sent to Roger at: 25 Alexandra Road, Kingston-on-Thames, Surrey, U.K.

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Jackson 1206

Meade Lux Lewis — Self Portrait  
Jackson 1208

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## BLACK GOSPEL MUSIC ~ bob sacre

This is a brief look at a stream of black music which is somewhat neglected nowadays by white blues enthusiasts: black sacred singing.

After the blues revival of the sixties many specialised labels such as *Yazoo*, *Origin* and *Roots* issued the cream of pre-war country blues (and still do) but it wasn't until the seventies that we saw the first LP's of pre-war sacred music being compiled (see Note 1). Today there are a lot available thanks to *Roots*, *Yazoo*, *Herwin* and *Matchbox* (see Note 2) and if the trend continues we'll probably see even more reissues in the near future: a glance at Godrich-Dixon's "*Blues & Gospel Records 1902-1942*" shows that the material is abundant.

This recognition by the blues reissue companies is to be expected, for, basically what we hear is rural country blues music with religious words. Something that is still hard to find on microgroove is the 'live' church services, sermons, and the like, probably because of their remoteness to the blues idiom, but hopefully someday somewhere, someone stuck for reissue ideas will remember this stuff. By and large however, I think it fair to say that pre-war religious music *is* well established and *is* appealing to blues fans.

The neglected area must surely be post-war Gospel Music. I won't reiterate here what has already been said elsewhere (see Note 3) but suffice to say that four different styles can be distinguished:

- i) Male Quartets
- ii) Female Groups
- iii) Male and female groups
- iv) Choirs

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The Robert Patterson Singers

photo Bill Greensmith.



Mostly choirs sing solemn, polished songs inspired by the **Old Testament** (these are the Negro spirituals) as do many male quartets, whereas female groups and soloists generally display exuberant, joyful direct songs inspired by the *New Testament* (these are Gospel songs) with their frequent references to current day life. Of course as in many forms of music, classification is not only difficult but quite often of dubious value. Despite being called Gospel Music it can swing and rock like any other music. It is a collective vocal creation; any instrumental accompaniment being by piano/organ, rhythm section, guitar, drums and very occasionally horns (viz Reverend Rice or Elder Charles Beck). Blues lovers should be gospel lovers, after all, black roots, black feeling, authenticity and heartfelt expression are present in both.

Nevertheless, gospel singers still await the recognition they deserve. They still await the researchers and discographers but, with the exception of Cedric Hayes' highly valuable research which *Blues Unlimited* published short extracts from, gospel aficionados are still waiting for a work like *Blues Records 1943-66*" (see Note 4). Bibliographical and critical works, field research, promotion and magazines are also conspicuous by their absence (see Note 5).

The situation in the States is much the same. The specialised labels like *Savoy*, *Peacock*, *Songbird*, *Nashboro*, *Gospel Truth* and *Jewel* are big sellers but almost exclusively to the Negro market; the white American blues fan rejects gospel music. One can only hope that the craze for pre-war sacred music will open the way for a post-war gospel recognition and, that way, the efforts of companies like *Vogue* in France will at last be fruitful. *Vogue* in Europe, have over the past ten years issued samplers from *Peacock* archives (which helped ensure the success of the Gospel & Spiritual Festivals of 1965 and 1967) but as these records are nearly always limited editions of the 'get it while you can' variety they never stay in catalogue long. Some companies have made available 'highlights' of European tours by the Patterson Singers and the Stars of Faith (see Note 6).

I guess that sales are constant enough to allow the companies concerned to go on that way. But it is saddening when one realises that in the *Peacock* vaults alone there is enough material for several hundred LP's not to mention, *King*, *Gotham*, and *Specialty* (who incidentally have gospel material recorded by Sam Cooke and Johnnie Taylor).

However, I think that all the signs point to a gospel revival especially with the interest shown by blues critics Willie Leiser and Jacques Demetre in the pages of *Blues Unlimited*. It's interesting to note that it was Demetre and the late Marcel Chauvard who in 1959 brought to the pages of *Jazz Hot* names of then unknown Chicago singers, guitarists, harpists and piano players; J. B. Lenoir, Billy Boy Arnold, Snooky Pryor, all of whom those pioneers had met and heard live (see Note 3).

Let's hope that Jacques Demetre can once more be a prophet and that his interest in black gospel music today hails a gospel revival for tomorrow.

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## HOT BUTTERED SOUL 'HBS'

'HBS' magazine for all your Blues/Soul/R&B requirements. We specialize in detailed label listings/interviews/discographies/biographies as well as up to date reviews and news. We won't say we're good but our helpers include Mike Leadbitter of *B.U.*; Alan Balfour of *Blues-Link*; Bob Fisher of *Leics. Blues Society*; Eddie Cousins of *Blues & Gospel Research Library* as well as many other well known Blues and Soul freaks. Why not try a sample copy for 15p from Chris Savory, 36 Scrapsgate Road, Minster, Sheppey, Kent, U.K.

## NOTES

1) There have of course been some previous compilations, notably "Nearer My God To Thee" (*Roots* 304) and "In The Spirit, Vols 1 & 2" (*Origin* 12 & 13). It would be very interesting to know the commercial impact and sales of these.

2) LP's with pre-war religious material currently available are:

*Blues Classics* 17 "Sanctified Singers Pt. 1" (with two post-war tracks)

*Blues Classics* 18 "Sanctified Singers Pt. 2" (6 pre-war and 8 post-war tracks)

*Blues Classics* 19 "Singing Preachers and Their Congregations" (3 pre-war items)

(These 3 LP's are probably the best samplers around).

*Herwin* 202 "Bessie Johnson"

*Herwin* 204 "Blind Joe Taggart"

*Herwin* 203 "God Give Me Light" (anthology)

*Yazoo* 1022 "Ten Years of Black Country Religion" (anthology)

*Yazoo* 1023 "Blind Gary Davis"

*RBF* 5 "An Introduction To Gospel Music"

*RBF* 19 "Country Gospel Song" (a mixture of both white and black)

*Historical* 34 "Christ Was Born On A Christmas Morning" (anthology)

*Biograph* 12027 "This Old World Is In A Hell Of A Fix" (anthology)

*Truth* (from *Roots*) 1001 "Traditional Jazz in Rural Churches"

*Truth* 1002 "Guitar Evangelists Pt. 1"

*Truth* 1003 "Guitar Evangelists Pt. 2"

The following are available but rather more difficult to find:

*Roots* 328 "Southern Sanctified Singers"

*Roots* 338 "Rev. F.W. McGhee"

*Matchbox SDX* 207 (2 vols.) "Black Diamond Express to Hell" (Vol. 1 pre-war; Vol. 2 postwar).

Finally, the most interesting set to appear since the *Blues Classics*:

*CBS* 67234 "The Gospel Sound 1" (2 LP's)

*CBS* 67280 "The Gospel Sound 2" (2 LP's)

The above is a complete cross section of pre and post-war gospel with carefully chosen items to illustrate Tony Heilbut's book (see Note 3). Both the book and records are a must for every new comer and aficionado alike, especially if you like Arizona Dranes as I do (two more tracks here, and with 9 tracks elsewhere, we now have 11 of the 18 songs she recorded — 2 with the Texas Jubilee Singers).

One note of warning. Because of the lack of co-ordination between reissue companies, duplications are numerous on the above list of records. The best selections are those on *CBS*, *Blues Classics*, *Truth* and *Herwin*.

3) A selected bibliography:

HEILBUT, Tony: "The Gospel Sound" (Essential work—how? when?, where?, who?)

LEISER, Willie: "I'm a Roadrunner Baby" (A *Blues Unlimited* booklet with much information on singers, groups and records)

GARON, Paul: "Blues and the Church: Revolt and Resignation" (*Living Blues* Spring 1970)

LINDEMANN, Bill: "Introduction to Black Gospel Music" (*Living Blues* Autumn 1970)

DEMETRE, Jacques: "Lonnie Farris" (*Blues Unlimited* 96, November 1972)

STRACHWITZ, Chris: "The Staples Singers" A talk in the *American Folk Music Occasional* 1)

FEATHER, Leonard: "A Talk With Mahalia Jackson" (*American Folk Music*

Occasional 1)

KENT, Don: "The Early Days Of Gospel" (*American Folk Music Occasional 2*).

The following Belgian magazine has long vanished but it is worth looking out for:

*Rhythm and Blues Panorama* 44/45, 1966: "Special Gospel 1"

and any copies of *Blues Unlimited* pre issue 70 with their bits of post-war gospel discography by Cedric Hayes and regular features by Martin Humm.

4) Cedric Hayes' discography is included in:

BRUYNINCKX, Walter: "50 Years of Recorded Jazz"

a colossal work of several thousand pages being a complete discography of every jazz record made between 1917 and 1967, blues, gospel songs and even 'classic' black Rhythm and Blues artists (Fats, Chuck, Bo, etc.). Expensive if your main interest isn't jazz. Anyone interested should contact Walter at:

Lange Nieuwstraat 135,  
Mechelen, 2,  
Belgium.

5) There is one magazine that I know of *The Gospel Messenger* which is managed by black people and gives mainly religious news. Its music content is very small indeed but there are some great photos of gospel artists. A subscription for 12 issues a year is five dollars and is available from:

P.O. Box 1994, or  
Philadelphia,  
19105 USA.

Freddy Angstmann,  
I.A.P.  
P.O. Box 28,  
C.H. 8050 Zurich,  
Switzerland.

6) The Robert Patterson Singers: "Gospel Meeting Tonight"

The Stars of Faith (of Black Nativity): "Swing Low Sweet Chariot"

*Saba* 15153  
*MPS* 15256

**\*\*Bob Sacre wishes to swap tapes with other collectors whose collections include pre- and post-war gospel music in particular UNISSUED tapes. Even if you have only a few items drop Bob a line as it is possible there could be something that interests him. When writing to him send the following details, if possible: Artist/Titles/Label/Date/Whether 45,78 or album. For unissued stuff state Artist/Date/Location/Length in time of tape. Bob will reply and send his lists. Contact him at 16, Avenue de L'Observatoire, B-4000, LIEGE, BELGIUM.\*\***



←Rev. Lonnie Farris (courtesy Terry Waghorne)



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# AMERICAN BLUES LEGENDS'73

Eddie Cousins

On January 26th, at Coventry, saw the start of the ABL tour presented by Jim Simpson of *Big Bear Blues* — from here they played at different dates round Great Britain taking in also Belgium, W. Germany, Holland, Sweden to mention but some.

The first of the 'Blues Legends' to his the stage on the Liverpool date was Boogie Woogie Red, the Louisiana born pianist (18/10/'25). He is a quiet man with always a trace of a hidden smile about his weathered features, but after listening to his brand of Rollin' piano and listening to him talk later in the evening, it was quite obvious that he had known his hard times too.

One of a large family from Rayville, Monroe, La, he was brought up in Detroit where his family moved to when he was around 1½ years old.

Nicknamed 'Boogie Woogie Red' because of his light colouring he became well known round the various bars and later on started to play in Chicago and with the John Lee Hooker band. He stayed with the Hooker group for many years backing him on John's recording dates between 1950 and 1960.

As for Red's own recordings — well they are sparse to say the least!, he has a track on Paul Oliver's album "Conversation with the Blues", called "So much good feeling", here he talks and plays through in his own way but it does not fully represent his talent, (as if one track could) but up to last month this was his complete output! Now he has been recorded while on tour and we have four more tracks of Red's on record. As this album is being reviewed elsewhere in the magazine I will not harp on about the recordings, except to say just listen to "Viper Song" — perhaps someone will record him again — I think he is worthy of it.



left-right: Boogie Woogie Red, Whispering Smith, Snooky Pryor, Washboard Willie, Lightnin' Slim, Homesick James. courtesy Polydor.

The most ostentatious Bluesman of the package was without doubt Washboard Willie the Detroit based musician. He plays an assortment of percussion instruments ranging from bass-drum to blocks and sings into a 'strapped on' mike — he tends to call out the key of the blues he's going to play (whether it's right or wrong) and from there leaps into action hitting drum, washboard etc., all in perfect time. Quite amazing to watch!



## WASHBOARD WILLIE

Born William Paden Hensley in Alabama (24/7/'09) he was brought up in Columbus, Georgia, where he was moved to with his family in c1912. In the 1940's he moved to Detroit, where he has remained until this day. He has been featured on records by Eddie Burns (1952), Baby Boy Warren (1953) but to name two, and has recorded under his own name but not extensively. He has two blues credited to him on the already mentioned ABL73 album, perhaps "I feel so fine" being that more stronger than his amusing "Kansas City".

Although by some he may be labelled in the Blues 'risque' section because of his humorous asides such as — ". . . when your lips make a date, that your hips can't take — that's when you're getting old", and his painted drum that declares in big letters — "Yes, Yes, Yes, The Fantabulous Washboard Willie" it is interesting to know that in Detroit he is regarded as one of the most entertaining acts around. This was his first tour outside America.



The harmonica blues was represented by Moses 'Whispering' Smith and the legendary James 'Snooky' Pryor. Pryor was born in Lambert, Mississippi, (15/9/'21) and while young became friends with Jimmy Rogers. He left home when in his teens and started playing the clubs in the neighbouring states. In the 40's he moved to Chicago, where he still lives, but decided to quit music because of the various disillusionments he got from producers etc. After many years out of the music business this tour marks his comeback. He has a handful of recordings under his own name ranging from 1948 to c1963. Both the titles on the tour album are to his credit — maybe it will induce him to record again, and to come back to this side of the water, being his first musical trip outside the States.

January 25th, 1932, West Brookhaven, Mississippi, was the birthplace and date of Moses Smith. 25 years later he moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he still lives. His brother-in-law had taught him to blow harp around the age of ten so by the mid-fifties he was quite proficient on the instrument. It was in the 50's when Lightnin' Slim noticed him and later he got a job with Slim's band. Married with a family he was not able to move around so easily as some of the other musicians, so for a long time he went and got labouring work. Of late he has been touring extensively with Lightnin' Slim, this being his third trip to England. He started recording under his own name in 1963 for the *Excelllo* label and his lovely "Texas Flood" can be heard on the ABL album. He has the deepest voice possible I would think and his harp technique is unique as he employs a kind of hand-body jive to accompany his music.

His side-kick Lightnin' Slim I feel needs no introduction being one of the *Excelllo* label's most successful bluesmen. Born Otis Hicks in St. Louis in 1913, he was raised on a farm in Francisville, Louisiana, taking over when his father died. He did not learn to play guitar until around 1948, and then he became credited with the title — "the first



Boogie Woogie Red

photo Bill Greensmith.



Lightnin' Slim, Homesick James & Snooky Pryor

courtesy Polydor.

man to play electric guitar in Louisiana''. Like the story we hear so often about the unfair record producers and the sharks, Lightnin' in fact retired from the music scene twice, and only in 1972 did he start to get involved again — yes at his age!

He has many sides credited to him mostly on *Excello* ranging from 1954 to c.1966 with varied personnels . . . including Lazy Lester, Katie Webster and Bobby McBride. He has his home now in Detroit and has made once again the blues his livelihood. As can be heard on the ABL album, "Love Bug" and "Walking in the Park" — still have the 'lazy' Louisiana blues style that is reminiscent of the Lightnin' of yesteryear. He has now visited Great Britain four times . . . must say its nice after so long.

The last of the legends but by no means the least is Homesick James, Elmore's cousin. Born William Henderson (though known also as James Williamson) in Tennessee on 3/5/'14 he was brought up on a farm and moved to Illinois when 16 years of age, and then later found his way to the big city Chicago. Throughout his years of travelling around he met and played with many recognised bluesmen — including Bronzy and Estes.

In the early fifties he joined up with Elmore and can be heard on many of his records. Homesick has recorded quite a few sides under his own name starting for *Chance* in c1952.

Although not his first European tour it is his first major appearance at top clubs throughout the Continent and England. He is well represented on the album performing "Dust My Broom", the Elmore James hit, and "Tin Pan Alley".

For those who missed the live concerts (and those that didn't) the LP *American Blues Legends '73* (Polydor 2460186S) which features the above mentioned artists is worth every penny it costs . . . great album . . . well done *Big Bear* . . . and thanks the ABL of '73.

**SIDETRACKIN'** with Frank Sidebottom: Some by-ways of blues.

*Sometimes I will then again I think I won't (x2),*

*Sometimes I do then again I think I don't. . . . .*

“Reelin’ and Rockin’” — Chuck Berry.

A facet of Blues structure I am surveying here is the ‘Anti-Climax’; that is, when a positive statement is made in the lyric, which is almost immediately cancelled or neutralised by a negative one. This peculiar device is used not only by Blues singers on occasion, but by many wouldbe orators and politicians — have you noticed how politicians never actually reach positive conclusions in their speeches? To illustrate this further in a Blues context, here is Skip James’ “Devil Got My Woman”, from both 1931 and the 196? recordings:

*The woman I love,  
Woman that I love,  
Stoled her from my best friend;  
But he got lucky-stoled her back again,  
Then he got lucky-stoled her back again.*

*You know I could be right,  
You know I could be right,  
Then again I could be wrong. . . . .etc.*

Skip carefully uses a lengthy build-up for the introduction to bring to the listener a sense of anticipation, but the inevitable anti-climax sweeps all fantasy away—until the next verse, of course. This approach by the artist has the effect of retaining great interest in the atmosphere of the performance, even though on the face of it the meaning of such a verse on its own would appear irrelevant or totally useless. In his 1960’s version, however, Skip has had the courtesy to ‘forewarn’ his listeners by the use of the word ‘could’ — a very neutral expression which perhaps in itself creates expectation within the listener.

Here is “Ramblin’ Mind” by Muddy Waters:

*Got a mind to ramble, got a mind to go nowhere (x2),*

*You know I can't find no help over here — can't find no help over there.*

Anti-climaxes throughout this verse do have a meaning, in its reflection of deep-rooted dissatisfaction in black America. Indeed, there is no point in going anywhere if there is no progress to be made. Much has been said in Blues literature appreciating the position of blacks in America, particularly in the past generations, and Blues in this form can possibly be considered a safety-valve within a song, for the relief of the listeners’ frustrations.

Women are not far behind any man’s frustration, and Robert Johnson uses a form of anti-climax to relieve it. . . . in “Stones in my Passway”:

*I have a bird to whistle, and I have a bird to sing, (x2),*

*I got a woman that I'm lovin', boys but she don't mean a thing.*

Blues of today may tend to be less serious, but love is as good a topic as any, for Lightnin’ Slim in this case (“Love Bug”):

*You know that Love Bug'll bite you darlin', little girl if you don't watch out,*

*Yes that Love Bug'll bite you baby, little girl if you don't look out,*

*Yes sometimes he might make you happy-an' again he may knock you out.*

Women, love, money — all the ingredients of the Blues are useful to the purpose of the anti-climax formula verse. A recently recorded song by Wild Child Butler uses the anti-climax form in the chorus part of each verse to emphasise his song, in “Axe and the Wind”:

*Ain't gonna buy no more clothes ain't gonna pay no more rent,  
Goin' give my money to these women 'cos I don't need a cent,  
'Cos you can't never tell — which way the wind gonna blow,  
I may wind up rich — but then I may wind up poor.*

It is not my purpose to read too much ethnic meaning into the lyrics used in these examples, as Blues is very much an entertainment medium; and one of the best forms of entertainment is comedy (viz. aforementioned politicians!), so for the last example of anti-climax structure here, I chose the ridiculously comical situation of Tom Shaw, as he portrays himself as a “Prowling Ground Hog”:

*I'm the prowling ground hog, mama, and I walk round in my den (x2),  
Now when I come out an' see my own shadow — Lord an' I go back in. . . .*

In conclusion it must be said that the anti-climax form used in Blues does have a valid outlet; Whether or not its potential is fully realised is difficult to say. . . .



Muddy Waters photo courtesy W. LEISER.

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# The Dutch Blues Scene

This is a brief look at the blues activities which took place in Holland since the first real contact with live blues was made in 1965, when the American Folk Blues Festival visited our country for the first time. This account mainly recalls how things were for the blues collector in those eight years with regard to: the information available in

magazines, who could be seen or heard on radio and television, what was on record and naturally any visits made by the artists themselves. I have chosen the year 1965 also because I feel that a rising line (and occasionally a falling one) can be seen in the blues scene here.

### ... READ THE NEWS ABOUT THE BLUES.

Prior to 1965 there was very little to read about the blues in Dutch. There was Paul Breman's book "The Blues" in 1962 and sometimes feature articles by jazz critics on Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, Big Bill Broonzy or Leadbelly. In this way a whole new generation — or for that matter a complete older generation — of blues singers were neglected and were read by a completely different generation of fans.

The first magazine to feature blues and aim at a younger generation was *Jazz Wereld*. Most of the articles looked at the modern blues, opening up a completely new world to many fans who hadn't at the time discovered *Blues Unlimited*. One of *Jazz Wereld's* main contributors is Arend Jan Heerma van Vos who at that time wrote many excellent articles and reviews. The magazine still appears every two months but as the name suggests it contains mainly jazz.

A magazine came out in 1966 called *Kink* which had a column on R & B and blues by Harry Knipschild but it soon vanished again in 1967. In the same year another paper called *Hitweek* (which later became *Alcha*) came on the scene and from time to time had blues items. A year later some guys in the Hague put out the first Dutch blues magazine, *Mr. Blues*. It was edited by Wim Verbei and Leo Bruin who had also written for *Jazz Wereld* and *Hitweek*.

It was well produced and informative magazine but one which became less and less frequent until it disappeared in early 1970. That same year yet another bi-weekly music paper appeared called *Oor* (Ear, in English) with one page devoted to blues (an article together with a news column) and some blues record reviews. It is now in its third year, its contributors being the old *Mr. Blues* editors along with Cees van der Haar and Guido van Rijn, who with one or two others do their best to spread the word nationwide.

The only specialist magazine at the moment is *The Boogie Woogie And Blues Collector* which consists of four double-sided stencilled sheets. It is published by the 'Dutch Blues and Boogie Organisation' run by Martin van Olderen who together with Guido van Rijn writes everything. It mainly contains news and discographies. So after eight years we are still devoid of a Dutch blues magazine, but let's see what the next eight years hold for us.

## THE OTHER MEDIA

Radio and television in Holland have largely ignored the blues. It is quite easy for a blues enthusiast to recite the blues artists he has seen on the screen because there have been so few. Among those that have appeared on television at one time or another are: a few AFBF's, a film about Maxwell Street, a Monterey film featuring B.B. King and T. Bone Walker, Buddy Guy and the guitar workshop of the 1967 Newport Jazz Festival, Larry Johnson in Harley Cokliss's film *Chicago Blues*. Then there was the *Lightnin' Hopkins* film by Les Blank and a British television film of Muddy, Champion Jack and several white musicians. The 24th of July 1972 saw Muddy and his band featured in a pop programme on television from a German made film of the 1970 European tour.

The situation on the radio hasn't been any better over the past eight years. Today there is only one programme which is at all specialised called 'Jazz and Blues'. Its main drawback is that compilers divide these two music forms so unequally: 75% jazz and 25% blues. Dutch listeners can also pick up the blues programme of our Belgian neighbours called 'Losjes in de Blues' which goes out after the eleven o'clock news on Radio

Br 2 Brabant and is well worth listening to.

A few years back you could listen to four blues programmes: Mike Raven on the *BBC*, the Belgian station, the twice weekly Dutch 'Blues Power' and the 'R & B Hop' on the pirate Radio Veronica. Today most of the live shows organised by the 'Blues and Boogie Organisation' are broadcast by VPRO. You could say that this compensates for the earlier blues shows which have since disappeared. During the eight years not much happened on the two major media forms which can be so important in improving the popularity of the blues.

## I GOT THE VINYL BLUES

Over the years those round black platters which they call records have been the cause of many peoples desperation. Let me explain. Those who liked blues music had to do everything in their power to find records of their favourite obscure artist; there was a dire shortage.

The situation for the European collector was far more unfavourable than for those in the USA where most of the records were issued. In Holland the average dealer had, and still has, only a few blues records in stock. These are mostly new John Lee Hooker and Memphis Slim albums, together with a few of the less over recorded artists.

To find reissue lables like *Arhoolie*, *Yazoo*, *Testament*, *Adelphi* etc., you have to seek out the specialist shops or else import them from abroad. For years Dick M. Bakker was the only person in Holland where you could buy all these labels, together with quite a few long deleted albums which he sells from his home. In the last few months a second address where you can buy imported blues reissue labels has appeared run by Martin van Olderen. I've already stated that most record shops have little in the blues line, but there



Johnny Shines and Micky Baker

photos by Bill Greensmith.

are of course some exceptions. In the bigger cities like Rotterdam, Amsterdam and the Hague some shops have really nice collections of blues records. For example, since last year *Chess* has been available in Holland again, after disappearing about three years ago when *CBS/Artone* dropped the distribution. But now it seems to be in good hands with *Phonogram* because you can get all *Chess* releases starting with the 'Vintage' series. Other labels that were not so hard to get (i.e. could be bought or ordered at local record dealers) were *Blue Horizon*, *Blue Thumb*, *Bluesway* and *Storyville*. A few years ago French *RCA* brought out ten *Delmark* albums on the bargain priced *Goody* label, but the pressings were rather bad. Also from France, distributed by *Melodisc*, came about sixteen albums from the *Arhoolie* catalogue. During the last few months the *Atlantic* 'Blues Originals' and *Polydor* 'Juke Blues' series have found their way to the bigger stores. But, to conclude, the situation for the blues buying public has become, in my opinion, much more healthy than it was a few years ago. As we have already seen companies are distributing more and more records themselves and along with the two 'special import' addresses, who also distribute foreign blues magazines, the blues collector, even the most fanatical can't complain compared to some European countries.

## EIGHT YEARS OF LIVE BLUES

As mentioned earlier, 1965 was the first year that the Lipmann and Rau promoted *American Folk Blues Festival* visited our country: the first real contact that the blues generation of today had with 'live' blues. I shall start from there looking at the club and concert activities which took place in those eight years between 1965 and 1973.

In 1966 the *AFBF* paid us a second visit and for me this was one of the best. 1967 saw the same thing again except that this time the Lipmann and Rau tour was not the only blues to come to Holland. Buddy Guy came over with the *Newport Jazz Festival*.

In 1968 the predictable *AFBF* tour again, Eddie Boyd with John Mayall. Also Muddy Waters made his first Dutch appearance in Rotterdam with the *Newport Jazz Festival*. The following year, 1969, was a bad year for concert enthusiasts because the *AFBF* with the best line up there had ever been, passed us by. Agents and organisers were apparently afraid that they couldn't fill concert halls to capacity for this rather 'strange' music.

So, four years had passed, with us only seeing blues artists perform in cold spherelike concert halls with their red plush seats. Only the local blues talents ever appeared at clubs like the *Hoochie Coochie* and later *The Bajes*.

1970 was a bad blues year too but this time because of the lack of publicity. Johnny Shines was here that year but it was kept so quiet that most of us only got to hear of it after he had gone. We were also missed out by the *Blues and Gospel Festival*, as we were the following year.

In spite of all this 1971 was to prove to be the year live blues broke through in our little country. In early April, Memphis Slim the Paris based bluesman played at the *Bajes Club* in Amstelveen under the supervision of Martin van Olderen of the *Blues and Boogie Organisation*.

During the late fall Freddie King toured our country with Leon Russel scoring much more of a success than the star of the show. B. B. King made his second visit to Holland in December. That same month Big Joe Williams should have appeared at the *Zodiac Club* but was prevented from doing so by illness and was replaced by Jimmy 'Fast Fingers' Dawkins and Gatemouth Brown who made it a very worthwhile evening.

The *DB & BO* carried on its excellent work in 1972. In February *Excello* bluesman Lightnin' Slim was here and it was also hoped that Homesick James would come but due to illness he didn't and Juke Boy Bonner was announced to take his place. Unfortunately

he couldn't either and Mickey Baker finally stepped in. March was the month for the now traditional, yet slowly dwindling *Folk Blues Festival*. Detroit artists Baby Boy Warren and Boogie Woogie Red appeared at the *Bajes* in May. Muddy made a short tour in June, a month which also saw the one-man band Dr. Ross paying us a visit instead of John Lee Granderson. Then after a few months break, to give everybody a chance to come to themselves again after that burst of blues activity, in October the *DB & BO* brought Little Brother Montgomery to Amstelveen. In the same month B. B. King gave two concerts in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and the second *AFBF* of that year toured round too. Lightnin' Slim and Whispering Smith stayed on a little longer after the tour had left and performed in Amstelveen. As everybody was broke by now there was a compulsory break to strengthen the financial position of the blues addicts. This big blues year (by Dutch standards anyway) was brought to an end by a visit from Thomas Shaw who played at the *Bajes*.

On February 10th 1973, the *American Blues Legends* — Homesick James, Snooky Prior, Willie Mabon and Washboard Willie — opened our season of live blues. They were then followed by Big Joe Williams in March and the pianist Blind John Davis in April.

There are many other concerts planned for this year. Blues fans in Holland owe a lot to Martin van Olderen and the *Blues and Boogie Organisation* who have nurtured live blues appearances from rarity to regularity. They have been responsible for making the blues scene far more 'alive and well' than it's been in years.

Addresses: *Dutch Blues and Boogie Organisation/Boogie Woogie and Blues Collector*, c/o Martin van Olderen, Pretoriusstraat 96, Amsterdam-oost.

Dick M. Bakker, Stevinstraat 14, Alphen.



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# Big Joe Williams In Holland

Kees van Wijngaarden



photo Gerben Kroese.

On Saturday, March 24th., the *Dutch Blues and Boogie Organisation*, which does such a great job here in Holland, had organised yet another concert. It was held in the *Zodiac Club* in Amstelveen, a town near Amsterdam. About 500 people from all parts of the country had come to the hot, rather cramped youth centre to see Big Joe Williams, who was making what was probably his last European tour.

At about a quarter past eight, just as the disc jockey was poised to spin a Little Brother Montgomery record, Guido van Rijn gave him a signal to turn off the music and introduced Big Joe Williams. Big Joe was helped onto the stage and reaching for one of his two nine-string guitars launched into "Baby Please Don't Go" which gave the people from *VPRO* radio problems because they hadn't finished setting up their recording mikes. After a minute or so Big Joe broke off the song abruptly because he wanted the mike for his vocals turned up. That done, he began another song but the process was repeated, this time it was his guitar that wasn't right. Changing to a 12 string model with only 9 on it, he at last seemed satisfied and sat down to his set with no further interruptions. Most of the numbers were favourite Williams numbers like "Highway 49",

“Don’t You Leave Me Here”, “Nobody Knows Chicago”, “Rooting Ground Hog” and “Shake Your Boogie”. On many of the songs he built up to a great momentum but often broke off suddenly which was a bit disconcerting.

Highlights of the first set were his tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King and President Roosevelt along with “Think You Need A Shot”, “Bullcow Blues”, and “Army Man In Vietnam” with its marvellous line:

*When they don't stop that war in Vietnam, I'm going to drop that Atomic Bomb.*

Halfway through the set, after he had wiped the sweat off his face with his big red handkerchief, he drank a glass of milk and continued. It is really a pity that he doesn't communicate with his audience. It sometimes seems that he plays all that great music for himself; we might as well not have been there. Another striking point was his almost exclusive use of the bottleneck but this could've been due to the fact that his fingers aren't as nimble as they used to be.

After an hour of playing he took a break and rested awhile backstage drinking apple-juice. I say he took a break, but he was subjected to too much questioning during that interval, which he spent sat on a very hard bench. When asked if he wasn't uncomfortable he said that he preferred sitting on hard things. He revealed that he even found his bed at the Hotel too soft and declared that back home he sleeps on the floor “because it's good for you!”.

His interval lasted half an hour, after which he was back on stage for another very long set which saw him in the same great form as the first. Due to certain circumstances (I was rushing about the place a bit chatting to friends!) I didn't catch all of his second set but did hear great versions of “Sloppy Drunk”, “Mean Stepfather” and the requested “King Biscuit Stomp”. He finally left the stage one and a half hours later at 11.30 p.m. to the very warm applause of the audience.

In the dressing room he returned to his wooden bench and spent the following hour chatting; he seemed tireless. ‘A memorable evening’, I thought when I saw him climbing into his German tour agent's station wagon.

We will probably never see this great Mississippi bluesman tour Europe again. But let's hope he is as indistructable as he appears, so tht the first word of the predicate ‘living legend’ wont have to be struck out for a long, long time.

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If any readers have material about Big Joe Williams please contact Leo Bruin who is compiling a book on Big Joe. Contact him at Spijkerboor 12, post: Annerveenschekanaal (drente), Holland. (Sorry there are no prizes for getting the address right!).

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## **PUBLICATIONS**

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**JEFFERSON:** No. 21. This is the magazine of the Scandinavian Blues Association and is extremely well produced in A5 format, mainly in Swedish but contains some superb photos. A must for Swedish blues fans!

**THE BLUES:** No. 8. This is the magazine of the Japanese Blues Society and is mainly in Japanese. Although it is well laid out unless you happen to speak Japanese there is not much to interest English speaking readers.

**VINTAGE JAZZ MART:** May-June 1973. THE magazine for finding those records you wanted to find. The Exchange & Mart of the Jazz and Blues World; excellent value at 20p.

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Jefferson, Tegnergatan 21, S-852,49 Sundsvall, SWEDEN.

The Blues, 1-4-12, Momogaikecho, Abenoko, Osaka 545, Japan.

Vintage Jazz Mart, 4 Hillcrest Gardens, Dollis Hill, London NW2, U.K.

# Reviews

**CARL JONES "HOW BLUES BEGAN"/"HE MAY BE THE GUY"**

**C.J. RECORDS 661**

This is the first single we've had from Carl Jones since his Mercury days when he cut "Mitzy"/"Trouble In Mind". Both tunes were written by "C.J." and he is backed by Lafayette Leake on Organ, Earl Demus on Bass, Red Simms on Sax, and Merritt Hicks on Drums, who provide a very competent backing. "How Blues Began" is a medium/slow number with nice sax and organ solos but "He May Be The Guy", a bouncy number, doesn't get off the ground despite a raunchy sax solo. One for the complete Carl Jones collection only.

Mike Black.

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**MISSISSIPPI JOHN HURT "LAST SESSION"**

**VANGUARD VSD 79327**

Don't be put off by the sleeve, which is quantitatively adequate, but qualitatively a bit of a rip-off. We get a design layout which wouldn't take hours to conjure up, with two photos of Hurt, one of which is already very well known, no sleeve notes, and a layout of song titles that could give the impression that other artists are present. But this is to quibble over relatively minor matters, as the album itself is superb, as you would expect from Mississippi J; and despite sleeve inferences, it is all him.

That is, apart from Patrick Sky, who guests as 2nd guitar on two tracks, and, incidentally, produced the whole thing. Recorded in 1966, not too long before his very sad demise, it is another very fine showcase of his amazing, and highly individual talent and appeal. I've long been a devoted fan of his light voice, his peculiar phrasing, and his raggy waltz tempo, and listening to this you would never guess his age. Indeed, the cuts could all well pass as recordings thirty years earlier. The firmness is still there, and the assurance with which he sings and plays, as much as ever, and the warmth in his voice, which has the quality of soft silk.

Many stories have been told about the man, both in and out of print, and I was fortunate enough to meet a friend of his a year or two back, and hear some for myself. Many are very sad, and his eyes betray a life time of suffering, many are amusing, but all are infused with an unashamed love of the man, and his unassuming humility, his genuine honesty and humanity. This was no ego tripper, but quite simply a man of the earth. His songs too pervade this same sense, some to the degree of making the listener feel intruder; but every song he sings is a statement from within him. We can listen and appreciate if we so wish, but it is no matter to him either way. He is an artist whose giant personality simply transgresses barriers; there are no theatrics, but you cannot help but be won over by it all.

All the numbers here are in a similar vein, as all his are, (and what bluesmen aren't the same?), and whether his own or not, they are all treated to his process, which even makes a noddy tune like "Shortnin' Bread" sound good. I am not ashamed to rave about this to one and all; and what a great album to put on after a hard day! It's sheer, unadulterated pleasure.

Michael J.

Every now and then, a blues record crops up from Canada, but as usual they are no earthshakers. Hot Cottage, a blues based rock band from Alberta, has gone the route of Fleetwood Mac, Canned Heat, and other such groups to pick up a temporary black leader for a white band. Canada is mainly noted for harpist Richard Newell a.k.a. King Biscuit Boy, a decade old phenomenon with three albums on *Daffodil* (Canada). But the pubs are crawling with blues imitators, and Hot Cottage seems to have struck it rich with *Canadian London Records* (Decca in the UK), for the local issue here features Walter Horton 'assisting' on the nicely laid back tunes. This must be the first time a major bluesman has recorded in Canada, and out on the Prairies too. His harp meshes quite nicely with the band, and this is certainly not a loud record. Nancy Nash, the band's chick vocalist, wails screamingly on "Hound Dog" the only rocker here. Other material includes such harp tunes as Sonny Boy Williamson II's "Looka Here" and Howlin' Wolf's version of "Sugar Mama". The remainder can loosely be called originals, either by Horton or by the band, and there is one trick track: a 1972 remake of Horton's "Worried, Worried", a parody of the 1952 *Chess* original, right down to the clumsy *Chess* monophonic hollow sound. Horton has a better recent album with Carey Bell on *Alligator* 4702, so this one is for the complete Horton collection, and few others.

Dean Tudor.

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**ELMORE JAMES/WALTER HORTON — "Cotton Patch Hotfoots"**

**Polydor 2383200**

Elmore James: "Elmo's Shuffle"/"Make My Dreams Come True"/"Sho Nuff I Do"/"Can't Stop Lovin'"/"Strange Kinda Feeling"/"Late Hours At Midnight"/"Quarter Past Nine"/"Hawaiian Boogie".

Walter Horton: "Cotton Patch Hotfoots"/"Blues In The Morning"/"Little Boy Blue" / "Walter's Blues" / "Black Gal" / "Hard Hearted Woman" / "Jumpin' Blues"/"So Long Woman".

Another in the Juke Blues series — featuring some typically exciting James and some very good Horton. One minor point before we start, if you have *Kent* LP9010 you'll have to make sure you like the Horton stuff as all but one of the James' tracks were issued on that album.

The Elmore's are, I suppose, typical but then almost every side I've heard by him has been powerful and exciting enough to outweigh the almost obligatory nod toward "Dust My Blues". A lot of people level the "Dust My" repetition criticism towards James' material, but what would they have done in his shoes — and, hell, nobody else could really sound like this man!

Now the Hortons — well an apology is made on the sleeve for the sound quality, and it certainly is lacking in some respects but no more so than numerous issues on the blues scene that were recorded around this time. There is some really down-home stuff here — no gloss, no pretensions — just rough, raw and gutsy. It seems criminal that Horton hasn't laid down stuff like this in recent years, with modern recording techniques, stereo, etc., . . . it would blow your speakers apart — great!

As I said if you have 9010 — check out the Hortons if you're tight for money. If none of these maxims applies — grab a copy, soon.

John Stiff.

Boogie Woogie Red: “Viper Song”/“After Hours”/“Red’s Boogie”  
 Snooky Prior: “Dangerous Woman”/“Sloppy Drunk”  
 Homesick James: “Tin Pan Alley”/“Dust My Broom”  
 Washboard Willie: “I Feel So Fine”/“Kansas City”  
 B. W. Red and Whispering Smith: “Sassy”  
 Whispering Smith: “Take Me Back Baby”/“Texas Flood”  
 Lightnin’ Slim: “Love Bug”/“Walking In The Park”

For anyone who caught the Blues Legends on their recent tour this record will make the ideal souvenir, as have the *AFBF* records in previous years. The order of presentation represents a typical programme as featured on the tour, and runs to above-average playing time. All tracks are studio recordings, yet they seem to lack the coarse reckless quality that enhanced much of the Blues of the 1950’s (the era from which this music-style comes). The sound balance here is excellent, albeit a little ‘dry’; perhaps the atmosphere may have been more evocative with a ‘live’ audience, despite the difficulties associated with both the recording and the noise of the audience. This does not affect the talent of the artists, and there are many highspots to prove it. Each artist has at least one fast and one slow number to offer, but in the order as presented, and with too-frequent use of pianist Boogie Woogie Red, the record doesn’t gather much momentum until the latter part of the first side. Red’s talent as a pianist is indeed manifest, particularly on his solo numbers where he is free to improvise more than when he is part of a backing group. Snooky Prior (absent from recording for many years) demonstrates his abilities with ease, control, and confidence, and yet he seems better suited to backing, rather than singing. His own style is always to the fore, but often flashes of the Sonny Boy Williamsons (1 & 2) become apparent, both in his vocal and instrumental work.

Snooky’s accompaniment to Homesick James is a joy, and Homesick’s two tracks complement this — the beautiful reproduction of Elmore’s “Dust My Broom” should surely pave the way for more material from Homesick James, who has not featured prominently on the recording scene for some time. Washboard Willie is no less artistic but his repertoire consists of plain songs which, if it wasn’t for his visual performance, would be quite boring. A nice surprise is the piano/harmonica duet (BW R & WS) setting a funky mood for the final tracks of the second side. Whispering Smith’s rocker is followed by the almost inevitable “Texas Flood” (again?), and the band is in full swing for Lightnin’ Slim to take over the last spot. LS and WS are now favourites in Europe through performances such as those on this record. Quite out of the blue comes an unlisted finale jam, all rocking along in good-time fashion just like the tour — nice thought to include it.

The colour cover features photos of all the artists plus some useful biographical information; there are no lengthy sleeve notes as much has been written already on the ABL’s. Apart from the above small criticisms I would urge support for this record — the price is quite reasonable — its success could mean many more superb Blues Legends tours in the future.

Frank Sidebottom.



"Celeste Blues" (a)/"Mr. Freddie Blues" (b)/"Honky Tonk Train Blues" (c)/"Whistlin' Blues" (c)/"Bear Cat Crawl" (d)/"Solitude" (e)/"Melancholy" (e)/"Honky Tonk Train Blues" (f)/"Yancey Special" (g)/"19 Ways Of Playing A Chorus" (h)/"Self Portrait" (h)/"School Of Rhythm" (h)/"Feeling Tomorrow" (h).

(a) Celeste solo — Jan. 11th, 1936.

(b) Pno. solo — Jan. 11th, 1936.

(c) Pno. solo — March 7th, 1937.

(d) Pno. solo — Dec. 12th, 1938.

(e) Pno. solo — Jan. 6th, 1939.

(f) Pno. solo — Jan. 1st, 1939.

(g) Pno. solo — April 9th, 1941.

(h) Harpsichord solo — April 9th, 1941.

An old book I have in my possession called *A Guide To Popular Music* gives a lengthy definition of the boogie woogie style, however, there is one short passage in the definition which this album immediately reminded me of — "There is a great variety within the form, ranging from utmost delicacy to brute force . . . ." — for this album certainly does demonstrate the variety available within this limited style. "Honky Tonk Train Blues" and "Celeste Blues", for instance, are worlds apart in some respects yet both are definitely boogie woogie. To the album — first a warning, four of the tracks were at one time available on a *Swaggie* 7-incher ("Celeste", "Freddie", "Yancey" and the 1937 "Honky Tonk"). However, even if you have this *Swaggie*, the album should still be worth consideration as there is some very fine Lewis here outside of the four tracks mentioned.

First let me deal with the harpsichord pieces. I have a great personal liking for the instrument so I am possibly prejudiced here when I say that they hold a peculiar appeal, but despite some annoying surface noise, the music is well worth listening to apart, maybe, from "19 Ways . . ." which is quite literally what the title says and is rather dispensable.

"Celeste Blues" is a delightfully delicate piece with Lewis perfectly at ease, but, here again, I have a personal liking for what is a limited instrument, so . . . however, nobody with any feeling will dislike, I'm sure. The 1939 version of "Honky Tonk" is an air-shot (with attendant, but not bad, mushy sound) from a Benny Goodman Camel Caravan Show which roars along like an express train, but I prefer the 1937 version which, although a few miles per hour slower, evokes the required atmosphere a lot better. The delightful "Yancey Special" is beautifully played tribute to another master and that "Bear Cat" really crawls around! I am not a whistling fan, so this probably accounts for my not really liking "Whistlin'" although there is some nice playing underneath. Two odd items in the shape of "Solitude" and "Melancholy", although not strict boogie are played very nicely but, whilst "Solitude" is a very moving piece, "Melancholy" is not in the same class as a composition.

Along with Ammons, Yancey and Johnson they didn't come better than Meade and it is a pity that this style has lost its commercial appeal, or presumably so, as there is not much boogie woogie around on record these days, for it was a great style. I do not know the price of this record, but if it is at all reasonable I would suggest grab one now unless you hate harpsichord. If that is the case, look for the *Swaggie* or wait a few years. . . . Despite the sometimes moderate sound this will keep your record player warm all the year round.

John Stiff.

"Stomp Boogie"/"Who's Been Jivin' You"/"Black Man Blues"/"Poor Joe"/"Nightmare Blues"/"Late Last Night"/"Wandering Blues"/"Don't Go Baby"/"Devil's Jump"/"I'm Gonna Kill That Woman"/"Moaning Blues"/"The Numbers"/"Heart Trouble Blues"/"Slim's Stomp"/"Thinking Blues"/"Don't You Remember Me?".

"Why do I need another John Lee Hooker record?" you will ask yourself this on seeing this new issue, the ninth in Polydor's Juke Blues Series. Read on: you will not be disappointed by the sixteen tracks on this album despite the somewhat primitive sound quality. The tracks on the record were drawn from very early (1948-1950) sessions recorded under the pseudonym 'Texas Slim' and offer a variety of up-tempo rhythms which are not to be found in great abundance on Hooker's later recordings. Admittedly it is very hard to extol the virtues of an artist who is, to say the least, over-recorded; yet virtues are well pronounced to the listener of this music.

All the tracks feature Hooker solo with guitar and quite often the stomping in the background sounds as if he is training for a 'prize fight'! Some of it is taken at a frantic pace, and the mono sound of the original 78's (courtesy of Dave Sax) is retained. Polydor's new packaging is very attractive but why the new higher price? Fifty per cent of the sleeve notes merely praise the issue of this particular L.P.; some more biographical information would have been more fitting. These should not detract the prospective purchaser from what adds up to a mighty fine release. Highly recommended.

Frank Sidebottom.

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JOHNNY OTIS "Pioneers of Rock Volume 3"

Starline SRS5129

"Crazy Country Hop"/"Three Girls Named Molly Doin' The Hully Gully"/"Ring-A-Ling"/"Telephone Baby"/"Hey Baby, Don't You Know?"/"Casting My Spell"/"All I Want Is Your Love"/"Mumblin' Mosie"/"A Light Still Shines In Your Window"/"Willie And The Hand Jive"/"Let The Sun Shine In My Life"/"Bye Bye Baby".

This lot for under a £1! Otis certainly deserves the 'pioneer' tag — where would the rock 'n' roll world have been without things like "Willie" and "Country Hop"? This man, who is still so active and giving R & B a good kick in the pants as well as bringing people like Cleanhead Vinson, Joe Hunter, Roy Brown, etc., back to the public, deserves all the praise he gets.

As far as this album goes there are one or two pieces that I'm not keen on — in particular the 'ballad' style things, but the stuff like "Country Hop", "Spell", "Mosie", "Willie", and "Three Girls" are definite classics.

If you don't have the original *Capitols* and you're looking for a true rock 'n' roll album you cannot afford to miss this. Next time you're buying a record, spend another pound (just under) and get yourself an absolute treat! Good on ya, EMI! — hand me the foot cream, I've got blisters from jiving!

John Stiff.

More reviews next issue!

## OBSCURE L.P.'s by Frank Sidebottom.

(These articles will look back on some of the unusual or hard-to-find albums of recent years; it is hoped that those now becoming Blues fans will be able to catch up on items they may have missed).

### SKIP JAMES — DEVIL GOT MY WOMAN, *Vanguard 79273*.

This record was released about 1968 as a follow up to the "Today!" album, but it does not seem to have enjoyed the same publicity and distribution, particularly in Europe.

Skip performs solo in the same style as the former record, and possibly the tracks here are from the same sessions. The tracks, in order, are: "Good Road Camp Bl". (gtr); "Little Cow and Calf Bl". (pno); "Devil Got My Woman". (gtr); "Look at the People Standing at the Judgement". (gtr); "Worried Bl". (gtr); "22-20". (pno); "Mistreating Child Bl" (pno); "Sickbed Bl" (gtr); "Catfish Bl" (gtr); "Lorenzo Bl" (gtr); "Careless Love" (pno); "Illinois Bl"(gtr).

As can be seen, three titles are from Skip's pre-war recorded repertoire, and the title track especially benefits from the additional playing-time allowed, expanding lyric ideas to enhance the effect of the performance as a whole. As with Skip's other 'rediscovery' works, none of the vocal or instrumental atmosphere is lost, especially on the piano accompanied numbers such as "Little Cow" and "22-20". All the piano titles are played in the key of B flat (assuming the recording was made at concert pitch and that my record player plays at concert pitch!); the listener is led into hundreds of uncharted musical alleyways under the spell of Skip's remarkably complex, tumbling piano style.

The vocal/guitar songs do much to introduce new lyrics, even some old ones which wear very well as performed by Skip. There is "Judgement", in some ways reminiscent of Blind Willie Johnson, and the amusing "Worried Bl".

*W stands for Woman, WM stands for Worryin' Me.*

Another facet of Skip James' originality is double-timing the guitar, as shown here on "Catfish", "Sickbed" and "Illinois" — these last two being noted for their recent composition.

The cover features uncredited notes, a photo by David Gahr, and design by Fred Holz. Few would deny that Skip James was a true Blues Legend, and the legacy of his genius is on this record for anyone to claim. BUT — if obtaining this record proves difficult, drop a line to *Blues-Link*, who will forward all correspondence to *Vanguard*.



“MUSIC FROM THE WINDY CITY” G. Jackson.

### Responsorial Role of Saxes in Urban 'Chicago' Bluesbands.

In recent months, arguments have been raised in the musical press i.e. *Melody Maker* that criticised Chicago bluesbands ('Industrial') for augmenting saxophone sections (i.e. tens, bari, alt); but I contend that if the reedsmen are technically proficient and have an expressive style, their involvement in subtle instrumental interplay with other soloists is vital to create the intensity needed in Blues and Jazz.

J. T. Brown with Elmore James and Harold Ashby with Otis Rush were fine saxophonists in Chicago Bluesbands and apart from droning or riffing to accentuate key phrasing, they could act in the responsorial role effectively.



I agree that riffing reeds can be marring to the Urban Blues interpretation if the phrases are mechanical and unobtrusive but if they can converse with the keyboards and solos, they act as a responsorial voice to 'calls'. Criticisms of Earl Hooker's *Red Lightnin'* anthology "There's A Fungus Among Us" (RL 009) are unfounded for the convoluting organ is responsorial to Hooker's brilliant vocalised guitar (lead, slide) work and the tenor sax punctuates the dramatic phrasing apart from adding a certain Jazz timbre.

Urban Blues musicians have adopted a set of Jazz values, and instrumental self-expression in this Art genre is as valid as vocal, if it has the intensity and meaning — hence, saxophonists have a specialised role in the music. Other reedsmen of notability from the 'Windy City' are: Red Holloway, Boyd Atkins, Johnny Board, Chuck Smith, Eddie 'Sax' Crowder (tens and alts); Jarrett Gibson (ten) and Donald Hankins (bari).

To substantiate my view, the following classics in the genre used the reeds effectively: Elmore James phenomenal slow Blues "Bleeding Heart" with the reeds and brass improvising with the syncopated skill of traditional Jazzmen; the powerful baritone on James' "Stormy Monday Blues"; the understated baritone sax on Freddie King's superb "Someday After Awhile"; J. T. Brown's melodic responses and solos on Sun-nyland Slim and earlier Elmore James recordings; the embellishing big band sound on Otish Rush's "Gambler's Blues" classic; the beautiful droning by Harold Ashby on his "Double Trouble" — one of the best Urban blues renditions ever recorded! — and the unidentified tenorist on Earl Hooker's 1960-62 cuts for *Age Records* in Chicago (e.g. "Blue Guitar"). On all of these tracks together with the saxophonists in John Mayall's Bluesbands, the reeds play with real feeling and the sound is alive and powerful. If the sound is mechanical, the true spirit and mood of the Blues is lost.



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# Contact SECTION

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THIS IS *YOUR* SECTION OF THE MAGAZINE!; AND IT IS UP TO YOU TO HELP 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). Those of you who wish to place Auction Lists in this part of the magazine please write for further details.

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The following contact ads. (1-73:1-9) were received by Marcel Vos and although they may be out of date we hope it will not inconvenience anyone.

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1-73:1) Looking for any photos, reviews, articles, etc., on Detroit Bluesmen. — Also Lightnin' Slim, Arthur Gunter, Dr. Ross.

Fred Reif, P.O. Box 2241, Saginaw, Michigan, U.S.A.

1-73:2) Would like to write to Black Blues Lovers in Chigao, Male or Female, age group 16-22 years.

Jari Kolari, Damaskuksente 4L, 00560-Helsinki-56, Finland.

1-73:3) Wanted — Howling Wolf *Chess* LP's 1434, 1469, 1590; S.B.W.II — *Chess* 1536; Issues of *B.U.* 1-72.

Michael Gray, Foster Road, Mirboo, Victoria, Australia.

1-73:4) Wanted issues of C.C.'s, early *B.U.*'s pre 1966.

Steve Tracy, 4404 Brazeestr., Cincinnati, Ohio 45209, U.S.A.

1-73:5) Have personal New England Blues Archive, for purpose of creating commonplace Blues Index and will trade tapes to further this aim.

Peter Aceves, RFD 2, Harrison, Maine 04040, U.S.A.

1-73:6) Looking hard for following LP's:— *Kokomo* K1001, *Fontana* 682099, *Stax* 702, *DWG* D201, *Audubon* AAE, *Negro Art* 362, plus many more. Let me know what you have, condition etc.

Karl Weiss, Fernkomgasse 43,A 1100 Wein, Austria.

1-73:7) Keen to trade tapes with other collectors and have large record and tape collection — All kinds of blues. Exchange lists?

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

1-73:8) Still hunting for hundreds of records by numerous artists. — Send me your sale/trade/auction lists.

Norbert Hess, 1 Berlin 36, Zeughofstrasse 23, West Germany.

1-73:9) Wanted numerous B. B. King sides. — Send your disposals list. Also wanted: L. Jordan — *Prazz* LP321/Bo Diddley — *Checker* LP3013/Tina Britt — *Minit* LP24023.

John Stiff, 14 Foxgrove Lane, Felixstowe, Suffolk, England.

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1-73:10) Records wanted: piano boogie woogie and blues, pre and post war, on records (any speed) and tapes, post war blues bands on LP, unissued post war blues on tapes, from concerts, parties etc. Who tapes large collection of piano blues 78's? Name your prices and wants. Can also trade jazz LP's for blues LP's from huge collection. Send wants, trades, sales and auction lists.

Hans W. Ewert, P.O. Box 1126,5466 Neustadt, Germany.

1-73:11) Dulcimers — Both 3 and 6 string for sale. SAE to:

Ron Barnard, 29 Excelsior Gardens, Lewisham Road, London SE13 7PS, U.K.

1-73:12) Wanted: *BU* 1-4, 11; *BW* 1-6, 8-20, 22; *R & B Monthly* 1-4, 21-24, index; *CC* 1, 3-8, 10, 11; most issues of *Alley Music*, *Blue Flame*, *R & B Collector*, *R & B Panorama*, *R & B Scene*, *Rhythm and Blues*. Send lists to:

Les Ong, c/o Tony's Records, P.O. Box 955, Copenhagen NV2400, Denmark.

1-73:13) Leicester Blues Appreciation Society: for more details please contact:

Bob Fisher, 16 Yorkshire Road, Leicester LE4 6PJ, U.K.

1-73:14) Have you got ideas? Well why not drop *Blues-Link* a line and tell us about them. Photos, reviews, articles and letters and don't forget those Contact ads!



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