

**1969-** In January of 1969 I got called to play guitar for Otis Spann. After leaving Muddy Waters' band, Spann was coming to Boston for a 3-night engagement at The Ark on Lansdown Street. We opened for John Hammond, and after the first set Spann asked me to come back to Chicago with him to join his band. I explained to him that I had five months until I graduated High School & that come June, I'd be on the first plane west.

The day after graduation I called the Chicago phone number that Spann had given me and I found it was disconnected. After spending the next two days listening to Spann's recordings, I decided to fly to Chicago and see if he still lived at the address he had given me: 4311 South Greenwood Ave. The bus from O'hare dropped me somewhere in the Loop and I went through about half a dozen cabs before I found a driver willing to take me to the Southside address.

We pulled up to the house, and there was Otis Spann standing in front, talking to his neighbors. I got out of the taxi & Spann looked at me, turned to his neighbors and said "See, here's my guitar player now!" He turned back, "Sorr, get your things and I'll show you your room." I figured I still had the gig...






During my time in Chicago, we worked sporadically. But, every night that there was no gig, we would play in Spann's apartment. There would be a party each night and we'd often go till 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning. Those late night sessions exposed me to the incredible depth of Otis' musicianship. He could literally play **anything**. It is unfortunate that many facets of his playing were never recorded... he was a true genius.

**1999-** I had assumed for many years that the recording of Spann's last gig was destroyed. I was also under the assumption that funds raised in the 1970's had been used to purchase a headstone for Spann's grave. In fact neither assumption was true: In April of 1999, Christine Kreiser of Blues Revue Magazine invited me to a Headstone Dedication for Spann's grave. It was to be held during the 1999 Chicago Blues Festival. I learned that Otis Spann's casket had lain in an unmarked grave for almost 30 years.

A few days later I got a call from Andrew Kastner. Andrew, the guitarist who founded the soul band 'Jack Mack & The Heart Attack', told me that he 'thought he had my Otis Spann tapes!' The tapes had been in a storage space in the San Fernando Valley for years.



**The Recording:** The tapes turned out to be in remarkably good shape and were transferred to digital by archival experts at Capitol Records. Otis couldn't speak past a whisper from his illness... his piano does the singing on these tracks. The vocals were shared by Lucille Spann (Otis' wife) and Luther Georgia Boy 'Snake' Johnson. Luther was an alumnus of Muddy's band and had moved to Boston in the fall of 1969. Luther and I share the guitar work. Ted Parkins was the bassist and Richard Ponte played drums.

The hidden last track is my 1998 tribute to Spann titled 'Blues For Otis' from the CD "Wrong Side of My Life". (Mr. Cat Music, MCAT 1012)

**The Legacy:** Spann is survived by his two daughters: Brenda Spann and Violet Howard. This record is dedicated to them and to Daughter in Law Elizabeth Spann, as well as Spann's Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren. I know that Brenda & Violet share certain knowledge with me: that Otis has been watching over us and that we'll see him again someday.

**More:** We are posting more of this story and other previously unpublished Otis Spann photos on the Mr. Cat Music website:  
<http://www.mrcatmusic.com>

Otis Spann - Piano  
Lucille Spann - Vocals  
Luther 'Snake' Johnson - Vocals and Guitar  
on tracks 2,3,4, Guitar track 7  
Peter Malick - Guitar  
Ted Parkins - Bass  
Richard Ponte - Drums

Produced by Peter Malick  
Engineering: Ducky Carlisle Room 9 From Outer Space  
Live Recording Engineer: Ed Simeone  
Mastered by: Dana J. White at 9West Mastering  
Cover Photo 'The Hands of Otis Spann' by Moses Glidden  
Graphic Design: Scott Gress ([www.plgandcow.com](http://www.plgandcow.com))

Special thanks to Andrew Kastner who saved the tapes!

Special thanks to: Moses Glidden, Ted Parkins, Brenda Spann, Violet Howard,  
Richard Rosenblatt, Ducky Carlisle, Brianne Krupsaw, Jef Jaison,  
Blues Revue Magazine, Bob Margolin

1. Country Girl (Spann)
2. Get on Down to the Nitty Gritty (Johnson)
3. Long Distance Call (Morganfield)
4. I Got My Mojo Working (Morganfield)
5. Chains of Love (Ertegun/Van Wells)
6. Stomp with Spann (Spann)
7. My Baby (Sweet as an Apple) (Spann)
8. I Wonder Why (copyright control)
9. My Man (Spann)

**Bonus track:** Blues For Otis (Malick)  
From the CD "Wrong Side of My Life" MCAT 1012

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