

blues-link

INCORPORATING BLUES WORLD

JULY

20p

“I Just Love Everybody”

JOHN JACKSON INTERVIEW

I was born in Rappahannock County, Virginia, and I grew up around the mountain section. Of course we had to work very hard with a big family, fourteen of us in the family. And father had to take us out to work when we got big enough to work, thinnin' corn, and cuttin' corn, and pickin' apples. You know, just different kinds of work around the farm, and we grew up with workin' people. Of course, after we got big enough, we had to tote walnuts, hull them out, crack the kernels out; to get clothes and shoes. And the scattered apple trees, what we called the wild apple trees, we would go pick those apples up, and wash them and spread them out on a tin roof, and peel the apples and cut them up in small slips, and we would call them dried apples; sell them for half cent a pound.

And then I used to trap a lot when I growed up, like catchin' pole cats, muskrats, 'possums and moles, minks, 'coons, foxes and that kind of thing, and made fairly good money. The fur man would come around about every two weeks.

Father played guitar, mother played french harp and accordion. But when they built the road through Rappahannock County, they had prisoners on the road, and they had one named “Happy”, and he was the water boy. He used to tote water from our spring, and you know how kids is, they always have to see what grown folks want, and what they doin'.

And I was just one of those people. So I



photo: Chris Strachwitz

went down and asked him his business. And after he got through talkin' with me, he wanted to know what we do around here. So I got to tellin' him Daddy played guitar and Mama played accordion or french harp, and we pitch horse shoes and play ball, and that kind of thing. So he said, “I play guitar;” said, “if you bring it down to the spring, I'll play you some songs.” So I goes back to the house so I can call for the guitar and bring it back to the spring. He'd play me a song, then he'd be back for another bucket, and he'd play me another song, and he'd run with it. And so he really had more influence on me than anybody in music. I mean I learned a lot of olden tunes; and I learned one, I can't remember the all of, and that was the Midnight Blues that I really learned from him.

STILL PUTTING A SPELL ON – 3 + STARS OF FAITH IN CONCERT – 4 + NEWS – 5 + WALKING TO NEW ORLEANS – 6 + RAGTIME – 7 + BLUES LPS – 7 + ADS – 15 +

Blues-Link (incorporating Blues World)
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Subscription Rates:

UK — 6 issues (including postage) £1.50

12 issues (including postage) £3.00

Overseas — Payment should be in sterling by IMO or by International Giro — our account No. is 32 733 4002. US rates are \$4.00 for 6 issues surface, \$8.00 for 6 issues by air mail. Double up for 12 issue subs.

Cheques:

All cheques should be made payable to Blink Publications Ltd. and crossed ' & Co.'

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PUBLISHERS' STATEMENT

Blues-Link has over the past few issues made considerable losses due to rising postage and printing costs coupled with a decline in advertising revenue. For the magazine to continue publication it must be a strictly "break-even" concern as the publishers are unable to continue subsidising it. The publishers regret the necessity to reduce the number of pages but hope that the reduction in cover price will meet with readers' approval.

Editorial

I have little to add to the above, which tells it like it was and is, but I would like to add my apologies for the delay in publication, and hope you enjoy this issue — and future issues. We will do the best we can with what we have, both money and material. Please keep all reviews short — and expect them to get shorter in the editorial office. Thank you for your patience. Sorry about the lack of a letters page but it's that space problem again!

Chris Smith

Continued from front page.....

And that's the kind of growin' up we had. People then didn't have no kind of club or nowhere to go at all. People's neighbours and all would get together and go out in the fields and sit under the trees, and have dinner and play ball. And the ones that didn't like to play ball would like to pitch horse shoes, or sit around with guitars and play music and that kind of thing. And that's the kind of growin' up I had when I grew up. I really enjoyed that kind of growin' up. I don't know that everybody along in my time had that kind of growin' up. But that's how it was around the mountains where I was born and raised.

I didn't start playing professionally until 1965. I had quit playin' for fifteen years and when I was re'scovered. And when this song came out, Walk Right In And Let Your Hair Hang Down, my kids got so interested in it, till I was playin' it for them one day on the porch, and the mailman came down the road deliverin' mail, and he came over and got so tickled at the kids dancin' and me playin'. And he said, "How about comin' on and playin' something with me tonight? I'd like to meet you to this gas station." which was just two blocks from the house. And so I met him up all that night and we got to playin', and a man came in named Chuck Perdue. He heard us playin', and he got interested in it and wanted to know what I was playin'. So I told him I'd hit a couple of chords on the guitar, just like I tell everybody. He got interested in it, so when he kept after me I played an old song of Candy Man, which was Mississippi John Hurt's. And nothin' would do except for to come over to his house and play something for him. So when I didn't go that evening, he was at my house sittin' on the porch when I came in from work. I played real smart for him, and he said, "How about you comin' over Saturday night? I'd like to make some tapes of you, would you mind?" I said no. So along about 7:30, 8 o'clock on Saturday night, I didn't go; he calls me, wanted to know was I comin' over, and I told him I didn't know. So I didn't come over, and he come over and got me, and took me over, and made some recordings.

Still Putting A Spell On

On the next week he said, "Since you played Candy Man, how would you like to meet the man who wrote Candy Man?" And I said, "I know there ain't nobody livin' after thirty years that wrote that song." He said, "Oh, yes, there is, Mississippi John Hurt. He's in Washington playin' at Ontario Place right now." So he kept talkin' to me, and I decided I would go along the next weekend and see him. And sure enough, on a Friday night he came by and picked me up and took me to the Ontario Place.

And sure enough, when I walked in, old John Hurt sittin' on the stage just as big as life. I just couldn't believe it was him. So I got to listen to him play and meet him. And then they asked me to play a couple of songs. And on the next week, it was a man came in town name of Mance Lipscomb. He taken me back to hear him, and that's when they put me on the stage, and just about the time I played half a song, this man Chris from Arhoolie label jumped up and said, "I want to make a record 'bout that man. I want to make a record 'bout that man." And that's how it all happened. I've been playin' professionally ever since. So that was 1965 in April, between the 10th and 12th, along in there. And so, I've been doin' pretty good ever since...

I'm very happy with it. I enjoy it very much. It's so nice to meet people and get out amongst the people and see how other people perform. I mean, you get a great experience, and it is so nice to meet people. I just love everybody so much, and it really is a great experience. It's really somethin' nice to do. And I just love it. I really do.

Interview by Lois Ulrey
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Available Recordings

Blues & Country Dance Tunes From
Virginia Arhoolie F 1025
John Jackson Volume 2 Arhoolie F 1035
John Jackson In Europe Arhoolie F 1047

As a postscript to the feature in Blues-Link 5, I can report that Screamin' Jay Hawkins is alive, nearly well, and living in New York. He's recently been hospitalised for stomach operations, but hopefully, by the time you read this the treatment will be successfully completed and he'll be back on the road.

Over the last couple of years Jay has suffered two disappointing setbacks when first the album which he considers his finest (A Portrait Of A Man And His Woman, Hot Line 10024-25), and then the single which was certainly one of his most commercial (Monkberry Moon Delight, Queen Bee 101), failed to reach the public, let alone sell any copies. Both of the record companies involved disappeared with Jay's money and the records as soon as they were pressed. Although a few copies trickled over here, the rest are either stashed in warehouses somewhere or have been recycled into Osmond's 45s.

In October '74 Jay signed with RCA, and at the time of writing was waiting on his debut release — She Put The Spell On Me/ Voodoo. This time the record should be readily available everywhere, so all that remains is for you to go out and buy it. If it sells enough there are plans for an album containing remakes of some of his early songs that were never released, and choice selections from many others of similar lunacy that Jay has written over the years.

Any readers who remember Jay and Ginny from their British tours in the mid-sixties — they'd love to hear from you. Write care of the magazine and I'll be happy to forward your letters.

Cliff White

Apologies to Valerie Wilmer, whose photo of Screamin' Jay we forgot to credit in issue no. 5.

In the next issue will be an exclusive feature about Son House, a look at Otis Rush — which is a good 'un plus lots of blues and ragtime LP reviews and a look at Right On by Michael Haralambos. So don't delay — subscribe now!



photo: Bo Sacre

The Stars of Faith in concert at L'Eglise St. Denis, Liege, 11/12/74.

The Stars of Faith maintained their reputation, doing their utmost to put across their religious and/or musical message to the five hundred or so in the audience. The church vaulting rang with an unaccustomed rhythmic fire.

The audience didn't really know what it was in for, and the first half of the concert consisted of vehement attempts by the Stars to make contact with their audience. Part of the trouble lay in bad amplification, which was fairly quickly corrected, but the main problem was obviously that most of those present were expecting something quite different. A lot of polite but embarrassed smiles were in evidence. Miraculously, after four numbers the Stars overcame this reserve and completely won over the audience, which began to clap to the rhythm and applaud each number almost before it had finished. In an extremely subtle manner, the singers alternated fast and slow numbers,

even delighting us with some spirituals (without the usual piano accompaniment).

The second half of the concert was even more extraordinary; the public was by now welcoming artists whom they appreciated better, and the artists, now more at ease, gave out with a stunning display of vocal virtuosity. Kitty Parham and Matty Harper went into the audience by turns to sit next to spectators, singing into their ears and shaking hands before returning to the sanctuary. As each member of the group has the talent to take a solo, the concert was extremely varied, and the audience was shouting for encores after more than two hours. Both audience and artists were greatly disappointed that the evening had to end so soon.

Bo Sacre

(The Stars of Faith appeared on BBC-2 on 27th December 1974, in a programme made in a Birmingham West Indian church. Then, too, they were great. — Ed.)

News And Things

Blues Legends '75 tour ended prematurely; no reason known as yet... Brownie McGhee, hospitalised on UK visit, now OK... but sadly, T-Bone Walker died March 16th... and Axel Kustner reports Butch Cage and Smoky Babe dead, according to Robert Pete Williams... Atlantic selling new Blues Power albums at £2.79. Naughty... Leibl Rosenberg still needs your help with the Blues Bibliography. Write to 8 Munchen 90, Rotwandstr. 4, West Germany... GREAT new Son House LP on Blue Goose, review next time... Sonet now distributing Alligator in UK... Speaking of Sonet, Sam Charters interviewed in the Guardian on May 31st on publication of "Legacy" book. Let's hope it's better than the Robert Johnson... John Wrencher has album out on Big Bear, Billy Boy Arnold on Red Lightnin'... Living Blues 21 carries exc. features on Little Johnny Taylor, Georgia Tom. Now undoubtedly the world's best blues mag, bringin' it all back home... Hi Tide Harris to be singing voice of Leadbelly in new movie; I was hoping for Johnny Mathis... Jewel's Chicago

reissue series postponed — no vinyl (and no JOB, Age, USA, etc.)... Mercy Dee additions and corrections (see 4 & 5); guitar on Bayou 003 (Please Understand) is very like T-Bone's, who plays on the 4 matrices preceding (Bob Groom); Five Card Hand is based on Bone's You're My Best Poker Hand (Capitol 57-70023, T-1958) (M.S. Geeves)... Okay, Gatemouth Brown doesn't sound like Horton on harp, and yes, he does sound like Jazz Gillum; maybe I was drunk when I wrote the review... Tony Nielsen reports Hound Dog, F. King, Sonny & Brownie toured New Zealand recently. BB, Muddy and Dixon's All Stars also recent visitors... Beware Everest FS 289 (Ivory Joe Hunter). 10 tracks at £2.74; 4 of them are by Memphis Slim!... Nick Perls has turned up a copy of Skip James's Illinois Blues/ Yola My Blues Away in MINT condition — maybe there's still hope for those missing Willie Browns etc. ... Dave Moore working on Barbecue Bob LP for Oldie Blues, to include detailed booklet and transcripts of all his songs...

Great New Issues On



and



ADVENT 2805

Sorrow, Come Pass Me Around

As always, ADVENT has issued something special. This is one of the first comprehensive surveys of rural black religious music. Based on field recordings by noted researcher David Evans, the album includes music by a fife and drum band, unaccompanied and accompanied vocals of many styles, music on primitive instruments, etc. It is accompanied by a 12 page illustrated booklet with extensive notes and complete lyric transcripts by David Evans. An important and entertaining document.

Sorrow, Come Pass Me Around • Do Remember Me • The Ship is at the Landing
You Don't Know What the Lord has Done for Me • You Got to Give an Account
Talk About a Child That Do Love Jesus • Can't No Grave Hold My Body Down
By the Grace of My Lord, I've Come a Long Way • My Sun Don't Never Go Down
Climbing High Mountains • Glory, Glory, Hallelujah • Mother's Children
A Little Talk With Jesus Makes It Right • I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say
When the Circle be Unbroken • I Shall Not be Moved



MUSKADINE 103

ALLA BLUES

Another important issue: this album reissues some of the great country blues sides recorded in California between 1947 and 1954. The album features some of the very rarest post-war country blues recordings. It is the first in a series of albums to document the blues scene in CALIFORNIA.

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Reviews

WALKING TO NEW ORLEANS — John Broven. Published by Blues Unlimited, £2.25 (paperback), £3.75 (hardback).

This book is a labour of love, and it shows. Before mentioning a few doubts, I should say that is absolutely indispensable to anyone even remotely interested in the subject defined by the work's subtitle, the story of New Orleans Rhythm & Blues. 217 pages of closely packed text plus an excellent historical introduction by Tom Stagg, around seventy photographs, maps, charts and a list of New Orleans records successful in the Billboard charts. The photos, all black and white, include shots of significant streets and buildings, of record labels, and of many of the musicians Broven (and others) interviewed, plus rare promotional material such as a pose of Bobby Charles with a ludicrous kiss-curl. The inevitable barrier of the author's being an "outsider" is surmounted by intensive use of interviews, although several critical figures are not direct contributors — Huey Smith, Professor Longhair, Fats Domino. On the other hand,

the views of the men behind the scenes, producers and session men, are largely new to print and deserve exposure, while Mac Rebennack's lucidity earns him frequent acknowledgment. Al Reed's comparison of Guitar Slim and Jimi Hendrix is particularly thought provoking. But the most revealing insight of all, to my mind, is the reprint of an article in the New Orleans Times-Picayune, describing the Fats Domino session at which Whole Lotta Loving was recorded.

The structure of the book is not entirely satisfactory. The need to clarify individual topics in short chunks has led to bittiness: it is much easier to read individual sections than the whole book. Another compromise is the absence of any attempt to achieve a musical analysis of the "New Orleans sound" or where it came from. The distinctive rhythm and horn sections are considered biographically instead, particularly the Imperial and Instant/Minit housebands. This is typical of the deliberate emphasis on recorded material, rather than the (somewhat different) sound of the small groups live. Any other approach would, admittedly, have been impracticable; but the understandable desire to reinstate those forgotten gems results in a failure to make the necessary distinction between the native New Orleans sound, as exemplified by Big Chief, Popeye and all those Mardi Gras records, and the attempts to make the city the centre for a style selling nationally, alongside the Motown or Philadelphia sounds. The New Orleans sound appears in novelties like Mother-In-Law and Sea Cruise, which sold on the strength of the song, not of the singer. Artists like Lee Dorsey and Little Richard had to move out of New Orleans to continue their careers. Broven regards the cause of this isolation as the failure of N.O. companies to arrange nationwide distribution. This is true in individual cases, but if the rock'n'roll or soul potential had been there in quantity, the incursions of Chess, Vee-Jay, Fire and other independents would have been followed up. There is an intimacy about the music scene in the city which has led producers — even Bartholomew and

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Toussaint — to direct their sessions towards the city's own market. A classic example, along with Mississippi Delta blues and Memphis rockabilly, of an environment which creates local hits and, in time, collectors' items, but little national success.

A final note: events have already added a couple of postscripts to the book. Joe Banashek has followed Huey Smith into the bosom of the church, and is no longer interested in the record industry; tragically, the entire remaining Instant/Minit stock was recycled at the end of 1974. Alas for the unissued material by Huey Smith, Earl King and others! Secondly, the first LP of Longhair recorded at length has been announced for release on Barclay's Blue Star label; as Broven says, one good album would do him the world of good. Maybe this book will stimulate a revival of interest in him, and in his fellow musicians, whose treatment, as Johnny Otis says, is a national disgrace.

Bryan Pickup

(The above, though published belatedly, is included as being the best review we've yet seen of this book. — Ed.)

RAGTIME REVIEWS

RAGTIME ENTERTAINMENT RBF 22

This album contains transcriptions of 16 78s dating from 1902 to 1922, and recorded by a wide variety of artists and bands. Almost all are well worth having; several are so rare and so superb that each alone is worth more than the price of the LP. Ragtime Skedaddle, for instance — a piccolo solo recorded in 1902 by George Schweinfest. There must be something special about the tonal quality of the piccolo, as the audio quality of this early recording is particularly good.

Another unconventional ragtime instrument, the mandolin, takes the solo role in Toots, a 1914 recording by Dr. Clarence Penney. But collectors of the unusual will reap their richest rewards from a 1915 recording of The Georgia Grind, played on a street organ or hurdy-gurdy! This beautiful and haunting tune is the only known composition of an American negro called Ford Dabney. Blues historians who would like to hear a snatch of early "jig chorus" singing should listen out for King Of The Bungaloes, one of the few recordings of this early form of scat singing. Gene Greene's recording comes from 1917, though he also recorded it twice in 1911.

Other things worth noting: a nice xylophone solo on William Elmer Coates' 1911 version of Black & White Rag; good woodblock playing on a 1911

recording of Haunting Rag by Walter B. Rogers' Band; and a delightful chiming break by the reed section of the Rishell Dance Band in a version of Zam-A-Zam Rag from about 1918. This tune (properly titled Zamp-A-Zamp Rag) is stolen from the Zampa Overture — and this particular classic was ragged by one Wagner, believe it or not! The album is compiled by David Jasen, who also supplies good notes.

RAGTIME PIANO ORIGINALS Folkways RF 23

A companion LP to the above, and very welcome too, this represents an opportunity to hear a variety of pianists playing their own works between 1913 and 1929. Several of them have never been reissued on LP before, and will be unfamiliar, even to veteran collectors of ragtime 78s. Most break away from the straight classical rag expression; in fact, some of the items are surprisingly modern in content — a useful reminder that during the 1920s a substantial number of second rank pianists were performing quite advanced and experimental music.

Most "primitive" of the artists here is Mike Bernard, with two well known recordings, the 1913 Tantalizing Tingles and 1918 Blaze Away. Bernard, a white pianist, enjoyed huge popularity after winning a famous ragtime contest in 1900. His recordings indicate a style astonishingly like Jelly Roll Morton's, although he recorded some years earlier than Jelly. If I remember, Jelly owned to being an admirer of Bernard. Interesting...

Out of this fascinating collection of solos it is impossible to pick any as being better than the rest, although Willy White's 1924 waxing of Butter Scotch deserves special mention. Highly intriguing, too, is an untitled, undated test record by an unknown pianist!

Folkways are to be congratulated on bringing this collection together. Good liner notes, again by David Jasen.

Roger Millington

BLUES REVIEWS

K.C. DOUGLAS The Country Boy Arhoolie LP 1073

Fanny Lou/Hear Me Howling/Your Crying Won't Make Me Stay/Country Girl/Black Cat Bone/Good Looking Women/Woke Up This Morning/High Water Rising/Mercury Boogie/My Mind's Going Back To 1929/Catfish Blues

This album is divided between solo guitar (side one) and small band, both aided by the splendid downhome harp of Richard Riggins. I prefer side one, but I may be prejudiced. K.C. starts with an almost John Byrd guitar accompaniment, followed by the very popular Howling Wolf Blues of Funny Paper Smith, very much "after the manner of". Crying is a beautiful collection of traditional verses, with John Hurt's ghost on guitar. Country Girl and Black Cat are familiar formats, but with interesting lyrics and good harp/guitar interplay.

Women is a Tommy Johnson styled piece of misogyny with an irresistible swing.

Woke Up is not the Elmore song, but comes across, after a shaky start, very reminiscent of Boyd Gilmore, though less frantic. High Water is an excellently played Muddy Waters look-alike, with splendid lyrics on that frequent topic of Mississippi blues, flooding. Mercury was done definitively by K.C. and Sidney Maiden in 1948, and I see little point in issuing this inferior remake. 1929 is (on reflection) even better than anything on side one, a reflective, autobiographical number, with more Muddy Waters guitar and highly original lyrics. Catfish..... again??

Nothing tremendously original here; just good singing, good playing and (mostly) good numbers. Three out of 4 is good enough for me.

Hugh Jampton

JOHNNY FULLER Fuller's Blues Bluesmaker BM 3801

Mercy, Mercy/Bad Luck Overtook Me/1009 Blues/
Tin Pan Alley/Strange Land/You Got Me Whistling//
But Bruce/Fool's Paradise/Crying Won't Make Me
Stay/Hard Luck Blues/Miss You So/A Good Lett-
ing Go

Johnny Fuller has had a very varied career, from blues through rock and roll to soul and gospel. Here, he is back with the blues, with support from the superb Philip Walker band. So good is the music that one wonders why he has not been recorded more often as a bluesman. Comparing these sides with those recorded for Bob Geddins in the early fifties, his voice seems to have developed a greater richness, while his guitar playing has remained remarkably downhome, evidenced especially by the solo Crying Won't Make Me Stay, and 1009 Blues with just guitar and harp backing. Both numbers recapture the sound of his fine 1954 Flair sides, with that easy, relaxed West Coast/Texas style so similar in feeling to Lowell Fulson's.

Fuller turns in a remarkably varied programme with a wide variety of formats, ranging from full band, complete with horns, harp and Philip Walker's magnificent, stinging guitar work, to just harp or rhythm backing. His style runs the gamut from country bluesman on the tracks mentioned above, to urban bluesman on Bad Luck Overtook Me, to blues shouter on Hard Luck Blues. He even turns in a quite successful pop-blues effort, You Got Me Whistling. These are all performed very well, and recreations of early fifties Geddins hits such as Tin Pan Alley (Jimmy Wilson) and Roy Hawkins' Strange Land are equally successful.

This incredibly varied set not only shows a wide range and flexibility on the part of the artist, but also imagination on the part of producer Kevin Hall. Credit must also go to the Philip Walker Band for their fine, tight backing. This really is a superb album in every way.

Hugh Fleming

BIG JOE WILLIAMS Malvina My Sweet Woman Oldie Blues OL2804

Whistling Pine Blues/Mama Don't Allow No
Doggin' All Night Long/Thousand Year Blues[1] /
She's Been Shaking A Little Boogie[1] /Strange
Girl Blues[2] /Early Morning Blues[2] /Shake A
Little Boogie[3] /Early In The Morning[3] /New
Car Blues/Tailor Made Stomp//You Done Me
Wrong/Black Rat Blues/Poor Beggar/Everyday
Brings Out A Change/Baby Don't You Wanna Go/
Highway 61 Blues/Rooster Blues/Rollin' In Your
Arms/You Are My Sunshine
Vocals: Tree Top Slim[1] , Lee Williams[2] , Harp
Blowing Sam (Fowler)[3] .

Big Joe Williams has been turning out fine blues for 40 years, and these sides are no exception. Side one presents the rare 1951/52 Baul recordings, long awaited material that showcases Joe not only as a soloist but also as backup musician to several relatively unknown St. Louis artists. The second side is from a concert Joe gave in Holland in 1973.

The album starts in great style with rousing performances of 2 classic numbers which get the stomping feel of Big Joe at his best. His guitar is relentless, emphasising the beat, and perfectly complementing the fine harmonica of Sam Fowler with cutting bottleneck breaks. The rough, vibrant sound is further enhanced by J.D. Short on wash-tub bass. The Tree Top Slim (Willie Ealey) tracks are very enjoyable, with good, well played material much in the vein of early Chicago blues. Shaking sounds remarkably like Johnny B. Goode, and features Slim's honking piano and more fine Big Joe guitar. Lee Williams' sides show him to be a good vocalist, with an easy and original style, particularly well evinced on the traditional Early Morning Blues, with Joe's snapping guitar prominent, and good Sonny Boy styled harp from Fowler. Fowler's vocal solos are a little disappointing, and lacking in spark. As a backup player he is invariably good, but tends to be monotonous as a front man. Big Joe winds up side one in great fashion with the driving guitar that has become his trademark, and Ealey's piano.

The concert material on side 2 brings us old favourites together with some fairly unfamiliar tracks. Egged on by an enthusiastic audience, the "Old Pro" gets better as he goes on. He comes over pretty menacingly on Black Rat, but it's a pity that the track is marred by an out of tune and badly amplified guitar (a point that spoils several other great performances). There are nice versions of Rooster and Rollin' in Your Arms, with Joe singing strongly and pushing away on his nine string. The Baul sides alone make this a pretty important release, and well worth the price. The recording quality is not outstanding, but shouldn't deter purchasers.

Garry Bready

MARTIN BOGAN & ARMSTRONG Flying Fish 003

Let's Give A Party/Chinatown/Do You Call That
A Buddy/They Cut Down The Old Pine Tree/If

You'se A Viper/Sweetheart Of Sigma Chi//Blue Ridge Mountain Blues/Naggin' Woman/Mexicali Rag/Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out/You'll Never Find Another Kanaka Like Me.

This is not your average blues album, despite featuring three names that will be well known to country blues fans: Carl Martin, Howard (Louie Bluié) Armstrong and Ted Bogan, plus Howard's son Tom on bass. The range on this LP is extraordinarily wide, from blues and ragtime to hillbilly/bluegrass and pop. I must admit to being a nut for string bands, and this is a nice example of the genre. The lineup is guitar, mandolin, violin and bass, and it's not made clear in the notes who plays what at all times; discographers can worry, but the rest of us can sit back and enjoy it.

Things start splendidly with Let's Give A Party, which is exactly the mood of the performance. Other especial delights are the familiar Viper, with sparkling mandolin, the brief, but equally sparkling Mexicali (better known as Dill Pickles), and Kanaka, which is one of those "Hawaiian love songs" which were at one time so popular. The bouncy playing on this and other tracks is reminiscent of Bronzy and Weldon's 1935 Hokum Boys items.

The hillbilly tracks are also splendidly played in thoroughly white style; less successful are the pop songs and, surprisingly, the blues numbers. Naggin' is roughly Cousin Joe's Beggin' Woman, and like Nobody Knows You (which has great new lyrics) and Do You Call That A Buddy, is a bit too funereally paced to succeed completely. Chinatown is fun, complete with "Chinese" chorus and sobbing saxophone-toned violin, but Sigma Chi is pretty dire — a comic parody, but done too straight musically.

Altogether, not a completely successful album; but the musicianship is superlative and the range incredible. Recommended to all lovers of string bands.

Chris Smith

SUNNYLAND SLIM Legacy Of The Blues Volume II Sonet SNTF 671

Couldn't Find Me A Mule/Gonna Be My Baby/Woman I Ain't Gonna Drink No More Whiskey/Days Of Old/She Got A Thing Goin' On/She's So Mellow/Get Hip To Yourself/Bessie Mae/I Had It Hard/She Used To Love Me

Sonet's "Legacy" series draws towards its end with a slightly below par solo album from Sunnyland. Mule is an interesting piece, almost out of the worksong idiom, but marred by nonrhyming stanzas. The pace is picked up with Baby. In the preamble to Whiskey he recalls having recorded it in 1952, and indeed it is a theme he has used more than once. Old is a reflective piece, as are many of the others here, with Slim reaching back to describe rural black life over 50 years ago. Thing is a fine composition, though he has recorded it more than once before, and it really comes across better with a small band. Nevertheless it neatly illustrates Slim's views on women. Side 2

is less interesting, though Hard really rocks. I particularly disliked Mellow, which (would you believe) is about a girl called Stella! This album can only be described as average; take a listen to Slim's recent Jewel and Bluesway efforts instead.

Tony Travers

FRED McDOWELL Keep Your Lamp Trimmed And Burning Arhoolie LP 1068

I Heard Somebody Calling/Amazing Grace/Where Could I Go But To The Lord/Keep Your Lamp Trimmed And Burning/Bye And Bye/Dig My Grave With A Silver Spade//Don't Look For Me On A Sunday/Good Morning Little Schoolgirl/Little Girl, Little Girl/Levee Camp Blues

Three previously unissued recordings from Fred McDowell's first Arhoolie session (February, 1964) are included in this beautifully produced tribute album, along with material from 1965 and 1969 sessions. Fred was such a magnificent musician and such a wonderful person that it's still hard to accept that he is no longer with us. The warmth of his personality comes through on every track of this varied LP. Calling and Grace come from a Berkeley concert and are introduced by Fred. Lord and Lamp feature Annie Mae McDowell and the Hunter's Chapel Singers. Bye And Bye is the song once recorded by Blind Willie Johnson. Dig My Grave, with Mike Russo playing second guitar, ends side one on a sombre note. Sunday, which is long (nearly 7 minutes) and brilliant, Schoolgirl and Little Girl (a masterly

Johnny Fuller

**backed by
Phillip Walker And His Band**

Currently receiving high praise from collectors and critics alike is Johnny Fuller's first ever LP. The record, "Fuller's Blues" contains 12 varied tracks ranging from the driving "Mercy Mercy" to the Lightnin' Hopkins style country blues "1009 Blues".

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rendition of the I'll Overcome Someday theme) are from the February, 1964 session, and feature acoustic slide guitar. Levee Camp is a splendid example of the empathy between Fred and harmonica player Johnny Woods, whose uncanny ability to echo Fred's guitar made him the perfect foil. An LP that should be in every collection.

Bob Groom

CECIL GANT Rock Little Baby Flyright LP 4710

Screwy Boogie/Train Time Blues/Blues In Los Angeles/Cecil Boogie No. 2/Playin' Myself The Blues/What's On Your Worried Mind/Ninth Street Jive//Rock Little Baby/Boogie Blues/Sloppy Joe's/Owl Stew/I'm A Good Man, But A Poor Man/Cecil's Jam Session/I Got A Gal

Cecil Gant, despite his tremendous popularity with black audiences in the late forties, has always been very much a footnote in the standard histories of the blues. The Gant formula was to couple a strong boogie with a sentimental blues-ballad, and I suspect that the Nat "King" Cole-ishness of some of his balladry has caused the lack of response. Now the position is splendidly rectified by this release, covering virtually the whole of Gant's career.

He is revealed as one hell of a boogie man on such tracks as Screwy Boogie, with its rocksteady left hand, and Cecil Boogie, which alludes to Pinetop's and compares with the best of Pete

Johnson. Ninth Street Jive and Jam Session are from a date where the musicians were encouraged to have a good time, and they succeed completely. Rock Little Baby is possibly the outstanding track, even in this distinguished company — rock'n'roll in 1951, complete with amazing rockabilly guitarist.

There's more to the man than boogie, though. Some very fine, sensitive slow blues are included, influenced (as so often) by Leroy Carr and Big Maceo. Blues In L.A. is particularly Maceo-like, and in no way inferior to that master's creations. Train Time is similar in mood, with sensitive sidemen in attendance.

One of the biggest stars has finally been given a decent run on LP. Consider the fact that Gant apparently composed I'm A Good Man, But A Poor Man, picked up by city and country blues masters B.B. King and Skip James. On that composition alone his reputation should have been established long ago. Hopefully, the long neglected Cecil Gant, "The G.I. Sing-sation", will be a sing-sation once again — this time to the white blues audience.

Chris Smith

JOHNNY WATSON Hot Guitar Black Diamond 4503

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Johnny "Guitar" Watson is mostly known as an



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R & B artist, and that's why he was overlooked by blues lovers. However, his early work was very bluesy, and deserved to be in Blues Records 1943-66 (and will be in the new edition). John Harmer and Frank Scott here give us an opportunity to discover this side of Watson's music.

I Got Eyes was recorded in L.A. on May 29th 1953, and first issued as Federal 12143. It is a fantastic boogie number, with pianist Milt E. Bradford stealing the show, punctuating Johnny's singing with rocking piano a la Camille Howard. The four numbers around it were recorded c. 1954-56 with a small band, and issued on RPM. Too Tired is a rocking blues on which Johnny shows how he got his nickname, and Don't Touch Me is still better, a great blues. Someone Cares For Me is a slow blues with a fine virtuoso guitar solo. Oh Baby is perhaps the weakest spot, and the last number, recorded c. 1958-60 and issued on Escort 106, is more in the commercial R & B vein.

All in all, one of the best selections of early Watson work that could be made, and ample demonstration of what a great blues guitarist he was. I have less liking for his vocals, but the guitar work and some great songs make this worth hunting for.

Bob Sacre

REV. GARY DAVIS Let Us Get Together Kicking Mule 103

Oh Glory, How Happy I Am/Cocaine Blues/Death Don't Have No Mercy/Let Us Get Together/There's Destruction In The Land//Tired, My Soul Needs Restin'/Georgia Camp Meeting/Blues In A/Fox Chase/You're Goin' Quit Me Baby

There are at present 9 readily available albums by the Reverend, and although on this release we hear his usual mastery, it does not tell us anything new. It is an interesting album, with one or two songs that are no longer available elsewhere, but none of the tracks are anywhere near his best. This is good Davis, though, (was he ever bad?!), and an interesting mixture of blues, gospel, harmonica and guitar instrumentals.

Side one opens with one of his favourite songs, followed by his famous Cocaine Blues, here sung and played right through, unlike previous recordings which were only partly sung, or purely instrumental. For me one of the highlights of the album is Death Don't Have No Mercy, a beautiful rendition; the guitar break is among his best! Let Us Get Together was one of Gary's concert favourites, and he often had the audience singing along, but it does not have the same impact as a solo. It is good to hear There's Destruction In The Land, lyrically one of his most moving compositions.

The other highlight opens side 2, when the Reverend plays behind a lady singer, whose name is not given, but who I suspect is one of the Davis's friends from their chapel. Gary's fine playing well complements the strength and conviction of the lady's singing. The two guitar

instrumentals, Georgia Camp Meeting and Blues In A, are full of originality and the always impressive Davis runs, but marred a little by the recording quality. The harmonica solo Fox Chase (over 6 minutes) drives as much as ever, and no one plays harp quite like the Reverend! The final track shows us some of the Reverend's humour when he imitates crying.

All in all, a pleasant album, and very desirable for the many Davis fanatics, but not an album on which to start a collection of his work. It should be of interest to all guitar students. The sleeve notes are a conversation with the Reverend about his playing, etc., and good reading.

Robert Tilling

JIMMY WALKER AND ERWIN HELFER Blues And Boogie-Woogie Piano Duets And Solos Flying Fish 001

Dirty Dozen/Within/Sneaky Pete/J.W. Boogie/Why Don't You Hurry Home?/Rodez Stomp/Day Dreaming//Give Me 10¢ Worth Of Love/Mr. Freddie/Pinetop's Boogie/Sweet Patootie/Getting Out Of Town/Come In Here Baby/Boogie With Alvino

White pianist Erwin Helfer's style is more contemporary and more complex than Jimmy Walker's straightforward, rather heavy, but more genuinely rolling sound. For example compare Jimmy's performance of the classic Pinetop's Boogie, or Sweet Patootie, or his own Memphis Slim influenced Come In Here Baby, with the more involved performances by Helfer on Within and Rodez Stomp. I am not decrying Helfer's efforts — he is an accomplished pianist and an obvious enthusiast — but I prefer his performances as lead pianist in the duets, where Walker lays down a solid rhythmic base and Helfer elaborates over it. Particularly strong in this respect are Give Me 10¢ Worth Of Love and the improvised Boogie With Alvino (Bennett, who plays drums on side 2; Sam Lay appears on side one).

The performances are taken from live sessions at the Quiet Knight in Chicago, where the audience were obviously appreciative, and from studio sessions. The recording quality and pressing are excellent, and the album presents an interesting insight into contemporary American blues — certainly worth investigating.

Martin Cowlyn

MA RAINEY Milestone M47021

Jealous Hearted Blues/See See Rider Blues/Jelly Bean Blues/Countin' The Blues/Slave To The Blues/Chain Gang Blues/Bessemer Bound Blues/Wringin' And Twistin' Blues//Mountain Jack Blues/Trust No Man/Morning Hour Blues/Dead Drunk Blues/Blues Oh Blues/Gone Daddy Blues/Oh Papa Blues/Slow Driving Moan//Ma Rainey's Black Bottom/New Boweavil Blues/Moonshine Blues/Black Cat, Hoot Owl Blues/Hear Me Talking To You/Prove It On Me Blues/Victim Of The Blues/Deep Moanin' Blues/Sleep Talkin' Blues/Tough Luck Blues/Blame It On The Blues/Daddy,

Goodbye Blues/Sweet Rough Man/Black Eye Blues/Leavin' This Mornin'/Runaway Blues

This is one of those disappointing records which are often released by companies with legitimate rights. At 12½p a track, it is superficially a bargain; but every single track has been available on the 4 previous Milestone Rainey LPs, and the claim that Ma's finest work is included falls down because there is nothing from the first session which, for me, was the greatest of all. On the other hand conflict is tacitly avoided with the Biograph LP of the first 16 sides. Among the later sides the choice is more representative, although Weepin' Woman Blues, Yonder Come The Blues and Stack O'Lee are surprising omissions.

In spite of these drawbacks, the sheer quality of the music conquers even Paramount's pet hurricane. Ma was undoubtedly the greatest of the female country blues singers. She was also very lucky with her accompanists — Armstrong on the first 3 and Tampa Red on the last 8 are a real joy, although Coleman Hawkins' bass sax gets on my nerves. A set to approach with caution.

Bryan Pickup

ESTHER MAE SCOTT Mama Ain't Nobody's Fool Bomp 1

Gulf Coast Blues/Golden Bells/Can't Buy Me Love/Mama Ain't Nobody's Fool/I'm Walkin'/Come To Me/God Called Adam/T For Texas/Black Jesus: Alleluia

This is an amazing album by a Mississippi born Negroess who was 78 when these recordings were made. Esther Mae Scott may be an old lady, but her vocal performances have a strength and freshness which belie her years, and she displays considerable versatility in this programme of blues, spirituals, popular songs (she successfully tackles the Beatles' Can't Buy Me Love and the Fats Domino/Ricky Nelson hit I'm Walkin') and even a Jimmy Rodgers blue yodel, T For Texas, which was recorded at a Washington D.C. club. Gulf Coast is a vintage performance which reminds us that Miss Scott was a contemporary of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey and worked with them for a short period when she was with the Rabbit Foot Minstrels. For many years she has been active in religion and civil rights, and her personal affirmation of faith shines through in Golden Bells and the long and beautiful final track, which begins with the moving anti-discrimination Black Jesus and concludes with the traditional When I Lay My Burden Down, complete with supporting chorus who provide the long fadeout.

The title track is a potent blues performance which would do credit to a singer half her age. Her voice dominates despite the powerful underlay of electric guitars, bass and percussion. Come To Me features fiddle accompaniment by Vassar Clements, one of the musicians who provide the modern sounds Esther wanted on this record. (She plays acoustic guitar on Gulf Coast, and this is the sole accompaniment on T For Texas.) An LP full of pleasant surprises.

Bob Groom

THE LATE BILL WILLIAMS Blues, Rags And Ballads Blue Goose 2013

Salty Dog/Corn Liquor Blues/Listen To The Mockingbird/Make Me A Pallet On The Floor/That's The Human Thing To Do/Bubblegum//Darktown Struttin's Ball/Nobody's Business/Buckdance/Some Of These Days/Blake's Rag/Railroad Bill/When The Roses Bloom Again

Bill Williams was one of the truly great songsters, drawing his material from a wide variety of sources; blues, rags, country dance tunes, even pop standards were performed with great skill and originality.

Salty Dog is, for the most part, a hackneyed tune, but Bill injects new life into a worn theme, drawing on Blind Boy Fuller for several of the verses, and reworking the guitar part into a masterpiece of improvisation. Make Me A Pallet and Nobody's Business are in some ways similar to the John Hurt/Frank Stokes versions, and are equally enjoyable, the playing having a direct and basic quality. Of all the guitar pieces featured, Mockingbird ranks as the most outstanding. It is a fiendishly difficult adaptation of a fiddle tune, and shows off Bill's guitar prowess to the full. The sleeve notes state Bubblegum and Blake's Rag are evocations of unrecorded Blake themes, but in any case they both stand well on their own merit.

Darktown Struttin's is a catchy version of the pop standard, with more stunning guitar and some goodtime vocals. Nice versions of the evergreens Railroad Bill and Buckdance are both given a slightly more raggy feel than usual. One of my favourite tracks is the humorous prohibition ballad When The Roses Bloom Again. Unlike the majority of Bill's material, the guitar part is played down; just a basic A.P. Carter styled pick, with the emphasis on the vocal line.

All in all, this is a really fine release; the sound quality is good and the material varied. As the first of two planned memorial albums, it is a fine and fitting tribute to an outstanding artist.

Garry Bready

BLIND BLAKE That Lovin' I Crave Whoopee 101

Sweet Jivin' Mama/Keep It Home/Baby Lou Blues/Cold Love Blues/Tootie Blues/That Lovin' I Crave/Lonesome Christmas/Third Degree Blues//Diddie Wa Diddie No. 2/Hard Pushing Papa/Ice Man Blues/Chump Man Blues/What A Lowdown Place The Jailhouse Is/Ain't Gonna Do That No More/Steel Mill Blues/I Was Afraid Of That Part 2

This collection of mainly rare sides deserves the attention even of those possessing the 4 Biograph LPs. Only Sweet Jivin' Mama and Chump Man have previously been reissued (Yazoo L-1040), and with the appearance of this album there are now only 6 issued songs awaiting reissue. The mastering varies considerably at times, and on Hard Pushing Papa the sound level drops suddenly, though this could be due to the state of the original. Lonesome Christmas benefits from the piano of Tiny Parham, as does the reverse, Third

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Degree. Both are concerned with experiences in jail. Diddie Wa Diddie, as might be expected, is similar to Blake's version of the previous year. Tootie Blues is Sweet Petunia, recorded before Curley Weaver's more famous version.

The standout track is without doubt Chump Man, with fine lyrics and excellent guitar. Blake's triumph vocally is to project such a casual attitude that you know he is hiding his true feelings. Also notable lyrically is Ice Man Blues. Cold Love bears no relation to the Gabriel Brown classic, but is an interesting piece, with lovely chiming guitar. On most selections here Blake plays excellent guitar, double time passages and all. Considering the high price (£2.95) of this LP, I cannot give it a wholehearted recommendation, but the wealthy record buyer and the Blind Blake freak will be delighted by it.

Tony Travers

EDITH WILSON 1921-1922

Fountain FB 302

Nervous Blues/Vampin' Liza Jane/Old Time Blues/Frankie/I Don't Want Nobody Blues/West Texas Blues/Wicked Blues/Birmingham Blues/Mammy, I'm Thinking Of You//Take It Cause It's All Yours/He May Be Your Man/Rules And Regulations "Signed Razor Jim"/Lonesome Mama Blues/What Do You Care/Evil Blues/Pensacola Blues/Dixie Blues/He Used To Be Your Man But He's My Man Now

Edith Wilson was only 15 when she was backed by Johnny Dunn's Original Jazz Hounds on her first recording, Nervous Blues, which was sufficiently successful for Columbia to record another 17 sides in the next 12 months. All these are collected here in chronological order, enabling one to analyse the development of both Edith and the Jazz Hounds.

Nervous Blues, like many other so-called blues (including many in this collection) is really a vaudeville song, as is Vampin' Liza Jane. West Texas Blues, too, reveals itself in its opening line: Honey won't you come and listen to this ragtime melody; and Mammy, I'm Thinking, with tear-jerking violin, relates only remotely to blues

singing. Despite the material, however, Edith manages to bring a certain power and conviction to all the songs, and the more obviously blues numbers like Wicked Blues, What Do You Care and Evil Blues are excellent. Dixie, from the final session, is particularly interesting, as it includes some early use of the voice as an instrument.

Johnny Dunn was an individual, but rather dated, cornet stylist. He favoured some peculiarly stiff runs, especially in the earlier records, but can be heard taking fairly strong solos on Take It, Rules And Regulations, What Do You Care and Evil Blues — the latter one of the best tracks, with Edith, Dunn and the Jazz Hounds all superb.

The best sideman is Herb Fleming, who makes his gutsy trombone felt on Old Time Blues and Frankie; although Earl Grandstaff, a relatively unknown musician, hardly lets the side down when he deputises for Herb on Wicked Blues.

Technically, this album maintains the outstanding quality of Fountain's Ida Cox album, proving conclusively that it is possible to present vintage material to a standard acceptable to today's ears; and the comprehensive discography, notes and photographs add to one's enjoyment.

Martin Cowlyn

PEE WEE CRAYTON Running Wild Black Diamond 4504

Running Wild/I Got News For You/A Frosty Night//You Know Yeah/The Telephone Is Ringing/Eyes Full Of Tears

Pee Wee Crayton is a great guitarist, too long neglected. His output since 1947 has been considerable, but until now his work has been unreissued. Maybe his new LP on Blues Spectrum will prompt a reissue programme?

Four of these titles are from Imperial, and were recorded in New Orleans in 1954-55, probably with Dave Bartholomew's band — hence the strong N.O. R & B feel. Of these tracks, You Know Yeah and Running Wild are solid, fast, rocking numbers, while Eyes Full Of Tears shows Pee Wee in a very sentimental mood; this is more ballad than blues, but a very good guitar solo saves it. I Got News

For You is the best selection, with stunning guitar work and an unobtrusive but effective horn section.

The remaining 2 items were recorded in Chicago in 1956, and issued on Vee Jay 214. A Frosty Night is a fine instrumental, with excellent solos from the pianist and sax men as well as Pee Wee, and solid support from the rhythm section. Telephone Is Ringing is another high spot, thanks to Pee Wee's voice and guitar and great piano work from Horace Palm.

A valuable reissue, which could fill an important gap in your collection.

Bob Sacre

SONNY BOY WILLIAMSON King Biscuit Time Arhoolie LP 2020

BOISEC La Musique Creole Arhoolie LP 1070

FOLKSONGS OF THE LOUISIANA

ACADIANS VOL. 2 Arhoolie LP 5015

TRIO SAN ANTONIO Viva El West Side! Arhoolie LP 3004

These are all slightly "fringe" to us, so space regrettably does not permit track listings or detailed reviews. Nevertheless, all readers should be aware of their existence and importance.

The Williamson is his Trumpet sides, formerly on Blues Classics, now remade from masters leased from Mrs. McMurry. As a result, they sound even better. If you haven't got 'em, get 'em. How can you live without Mighty Long Time, to mention but one of the 16 masterpieces here?

Boisec Ardoin and his family and Canray Fontenot (and his family, not featured) are the leading exponents of black cajun styles (as opposed to zydeco), and La Musique Creole is an impeccably produced sample of their art. Particularly interesting are Home Sweet Home (which really is the music hall tear jerker!) and Le Boss, Morris Ardoin's funky improvisation about not getting a raise that morning. Typically excellent fiddle and accordion, and characteristically constricted vocals.

Side 2 of Folksongs (Oster recordings) was once part of Cajun Folk Music (Prestige 25015), and features Milton Molitor (accordion and vocals), Austin Pitre (fiddle and vocals) and guitarist Lurlin Lejune. Side one appears for the first time, and is devoted to fiddler Wallace "Cheese" Reed and friends. Reed is a really excellent musician in the old string band tradition. Recommended to cajun fans.

Finally, an album of Norteno (Tex-Mex) music, which combines Mexican duet singing with German accordion styles (and note the bajo sexto playing "oom-pah-pah" on Yo Me Enamore!). A fascinating and important set, beautifully played, and deserving high sales. Take a listen if your interest is in all forms of US folk music.

Chris Smith

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