

ROCK BEAT



Issue No. 49 - Summer 2024

FREE



Howlin' Wolf

Big Joe Turner

B.B. King

*Ike Turner & the
Kings of Rhythm*

POP ROCK PUNK ROCK GARAGE ROCK ROOTS ROCK SURF ROCK

NEWS BEAT

Michael Reidy

Michael Reidy, the singer and frontman for Razz died on March 5 at age 73 following a stroke.

Michael Stewart Reidy was born May 26, 1950 in Washington, DC. His father was an officer in the Air Force and, during Reidy's childhood, his family often moved around the country. At age 14, Reidy joined his first band, the Rhythm and Blues Express, while living in Omaha, Nebraska. After moving to Camp Springs, Maryland, Reidy joined the Red White & Blues Band.

While attending the University of Maryland, Reidy met the guitarist Bill Craig. After playing together in the Hot Crabs and the Sonny Boy Reed Organization, Reidy and Craig formed the first version of Razz in 1972. The band performed a wide variety of cover songs ranging from old blues numbers to songs by the Rolling Stones and the Flamin' Groovies. During the next few years, Razz went through a number of personnel changes and hiatuses.

In 1977, Razz reformed with a lineup of Reidy on vocals, Craig on guitar, Abaad Behram on guitar, Ted Nicely on bass, and Doug Tull on drums. At this



Razz, circa 1979. Left to right: Bill Craig, Doug Tull, Michael Reidy, Ted Nicely, and Tommy Keene.

point the band started to concentrate on original songs, written by Reidy and Behram. The band's played in a garage-rock style, influenced by the Rolling Stones and the Flamin' Groovies. While not really a punk act, the band's high energy and loud, aggressive guitar attack

Editor & Publisher:
Geoff Cabin

Contributing Writers:
Gary Pig Gold
Al Masciocchi
Beverly Paterson
Terry Wilson



Design & Layout:
Geoff Cabin

Contact:
PO Box 27636
Towson, MD 21285
rockbeat@starpower.net
geoffcabin.com

Cover photo: Howlin' Wolf, 1972. (Doug Fulton, PDM-owner, via Wikimedia Commons.)
Entire contents copyright © 2024 by Geoff Cabin; individual contributions copyright by their creators



Record cover and advertisements designed by Micheal Reidy.

allowed them to fit in with the burgeoning punk-rock scene.

Reidy was a dynamic and energetic front man who modeled himself after Mick Jagger. His onstage antics included crawling inside of the bass drum while continuing to sing and cavorting with an inflatable doll during the band's cover of Randy Newman's "Lucinda." Reidy also was a visual artist and graphic designer and designed striking, attention-grabbing record covers and advertisements for the band.

During the late '70s, Razz established themselves as the leading band on DC's music scene, performing at local venues such the Keg in Georgetown, the Childe Harold in Dupont Circle, the Psychedelly in Bethesda, and the Varsity Grill Back Room in College Park. They also obtained high-profile gigs opening for national touring acts like the Ramones, Devo, and the J. Geils Band.

In February 1978, the band released a single "C. Redux" b/w "Seventies Anomie" on the local O'Rourke label. In May 1978, Abaad Behram left Razz and was replaced on guitar by Tommy Keene, who had been playing with another popular local band, the Rage. On November 3, 1978 Razz opened for Rockpile at the Student Union Grand Ballroom at the University of Maryland College Park. The show was broadcast by local radio station WHFS. The following year, four songs from the show were released on an EP entitled *Airtime* on the O'Rourke label. In May 1979, the band released another single, "You Can Run" b/w "Who's Mr. Comedy" on the O'Rourke label.

While Razz received some interest from record labels and management firms, a record deal

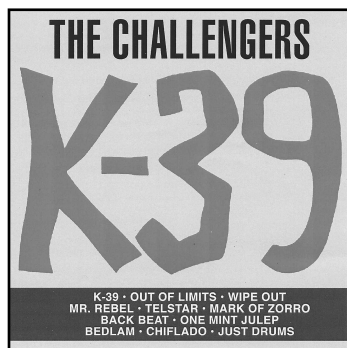
remained elusive and they broke up in late 1979. The band played its final gig on December 27, 1979 at Beacon's Backstage in Falls Church, Virginia.

Following the breakup of Razz, Reidy remained active in music, forming the band MWWW. Starting in 1991, Reidy, along with Behram, Craig, and Tull participated in a number of Razz reunion shows. In 2006, Reidy, Behram, Tull and bassist Greg Shoenborn formed a new group called the Howling Mad.

Reidy also remained active as a visual artist and graphic designer. In the late '70s and early '80s he contributed artwork to the punk-rock fanzines *The Infiltrator* and *Capitol Crisis*. From 1987 to 1986, he worked as an illustrator for the *Washington City Paper*. In addition, his artwork was featured at shows at galleries in the DC area.

Surf Beat

By Terry Wilson

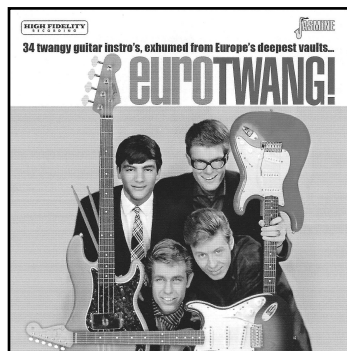


K-39 is a reissue of the fourth album by the Challengers, one of the most important and influential of the early southern California surf-guitar bands. The band was led by the drummer Richard Delvy, who previously had played in the Belairs. In addition

to Delvy, the band's lineup at the time that K-39 was recorded consisted of Art Fisher and Ed Fournier on guitar, Randy Nauert on bass, and Phil Pruden on saxophone.

The album's title track is one of the classics of surf music, featuring a catchy melody played on guitar and some growling saxophone. ("K-39" refers to a surfing spot 39 miles south of the U.S. / Mexican border.) The band turns "Telstar" into a surf-guitar number, using Dick Dale-style double picking to play the main melody on the bass strings of the guitar. "Back Beat" is a rockabilly-style number with twangy guitar, honking saxophone, and a drum solo. The band's cover of the Clovers' r&b hit, "One Mint Julep" features lots of twangy, James Burton-style guitar picking. The Challengers round out the album with their takes on the surf-guitar standards "Out of Limits," "Wipe Out," "Mr. Rebel," and "Chiflado."

K-39 features first-wave surf guitar at its best.



Eurotwang! contains 34 guitar instrumentals by European bands, mostly from 1961 and '62. For the most part, the bands have a sound that was strongly influenced by the Shadows and the Ventures.

The one track on the album that may be familiar to U.S.

listeners is Jorgen Ingmann's version of "Apache." While "Apache" was a hit for the Shadows in the U.K. and other countries, Ingmann's version is the one that became a hit in the U.S. Ingmann's version of the song

features hissing harmonics, dramatic slides, and palm-muted double picking.

The remaining tracks on the album probably are little-known to U.S. listeners and there is lots of great stuff here waiting to be discovered. Die Playboys from West Germany turn in a rocking version of "Geisterreiter (Ghost Riders in the Sky)" complete with sound effects. "Tataervise Ved Balet" by the Snapshots from Norway is a moody, atmospheric number with ghostly, wordless background vocals. The Krewkats from France rework "Tonight" from *West Side Story* into a hard-driving instrumental reminiscent of "Telstar." "Tabu" by the Shufflers from Norway features reverbed guitar and the hum of an organ over a syncopated beat. "Guitar Boogie" by Sven-Ingvars Kvartett from Sweden is a rockabilly number with lots of twangy guitar. On "Tinto," the Trefflers from Denmark set Latin-tinged guitars to a galloping beat. "The Rocket Man" by the Spotnicks from Sweden opens with the sound of a rocket blasting off followed by twangy, Duane Eddy-style guitar. The Spotnicks also turn in a cover of "Orange Blossom Special" played at a fast tempo and featuring some rapid-fire guitar picking. Other highlights of the album include "Django" by the Cliffeters from Denmark, "Theme from Leningrad" by the Adventures from Sweden, and "Black Reader (Black Rider)" by Les Sunlights from France.

Eurotwang! provides an excellent introduction to European guitar instrumentals from the early '60s.

Continued from page 16:

...catchy, energetic rockers very much in the vein of Bill Haley and His Comets. On "Old Town Hall," the band combines twangy, country-style guitar with dixieland horns. "Rockin' Is My Business" is driven by a boogie-woogie riff played at a frantic tempo and features a lightning-fast guitar solo. The band also turns in credible covers of "5-10-15 Hours," "The Hucklebuck," and "Route 66."

Rompin' Stompin' Rock 'n' Roll may not contain anything earth-shattering, but it's a chance to hear an interesting, enjoyable, and overlooked bit of rock 'n' roll history.

The History of Rock 'n' Roll: Part 11

By Geoff Cabin

Big Joe Turner

Also among Atlantic's early stars was the veteran blues shouter Big Joe Turner.

Joseph Vernon Turner was born in Kansas City on May 18, 1911.¹ Turner first sang in a church choir and also harmonized with friends on street corners.² Later, he worked as a singing bartender and formed a musical partnership with the boogie-woogie pianist Kermit "Pete" Johnson.³ Turner had a big, powerful voice and sang in the Kansas City blues shouting style. "I originated that style myself," Turner said. "Everybody was singing slow blues when I was young, and I thought I'd put a beat to it and sing it up-tempo. Pete Johnson and I got together and we worked at that for a long time, and we finally got pretty good at it."⁴

Turner and Johnson established a reputation on the music scene in Kansas City and came to the attention of Columbia Records producer and talent scout John Hammond.⁵ Hammond invited Turner and Johnson to appear at the first "Spirituals to Swing" concert at Carnegie Hall, which Hammond staged to showcase the broad range of African-American music.⁶

Turner and Johnson traveled to New York and appeared at the "Spirituals to Swing" concert on December 23, 1938.⁷ Also on the concert bill were the boogie-woogie pianists Albert Ammons and Meade Lux Lewis. After appearing at the "Spirituals to Swing" concert, the three boogie-woogie acts had an extended engagement at Cafe Society, one of the first racially integrated nightclubs in New York.⁸ The appearance of the boogie-woogie acts in New York led to a major revival in the popularity of boogie-woogie music.⁹ Boogie-woogie eventually made its way into the musical mainstream with hit records like "Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy" by the Andrews Sisters and "T.D.'s Boogie Woogie" by Tommy Dorsey.

A week after the "Spirituals to Swing" concert, Turner and Johnson went into a studio in New York and recorded the boogie-woogie classic, "Roll 'Em Pete," for Decca's Vocalion label.¹⁰ This was the first of many classic recordings that Turner made over the next decade for a variety of record labels.



Big Joe Turner, Rock 'n' Roll Revue, Apollo Theater, 1955. (Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons.)

Turner hit the national rhythm and blues charts for the first time in 1946 with "My Gal's a Jockey" on the National label.¹¹ The song was a jump blues number on which Turner was backed by saxophonist Wild Bill Moore's Lucky Seven. In 1950, Turner scored a second hit on the r&b charts with the mournful slow blues "Still in the Dark" on the Freedom label.¹²

In April 1951, Turner appeared with Count Basie's band at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, filling in for Jimmy Rushing.¹³ In the audience on opening night were Ahmet Ertegun and Herb Abramson of Atlantic Records.¹⁴ Both Ertegun and Abramson had worked with Turner in the past. Turner was a musical hero of Ertegun's and had appeared at one of the first jazz concerts that the Ertegun brothers had staged at the Turkish embassy in Washington, DC.¹⁵ Abramson had produced some of Turner's records when Abramson worked for the National label, including Turner's first hit, "My Gal's a Jockey."¹⁶ After the concert, Ertegun and Abramson approached Turner, asked if he was interested in recording for Atlantic and subsequently signed him to the label.¹⁷

The deal with Atlantic resulted in a series of classic recordings that not only made Turner a major

r&b star, but an early rock 'n' roll star as well. Several of Turner's recordings from this period crossed over to the pop charts and helped to define the sound of early rock 'n' roll.

Turner's first record for Atlantic was "Chains of Love," a song written by Ertegun and pianist and bandleader Harry Van "Piano Man" Walls.¹⁸ "Chains of Love" was a slow, melodic ballad with Turner's vocal backed by Walls' bluesy piano and a horn section. In the summer of 1951, "Chains of Love" went to number two on the national r&b charts and crossed over to number 30 on the pop charts.¹⁹

Over the next year, Turner scored more top-ten hits on the rhythm and blues charts with "The Chill Is On," "Sweet Sixteen," and "Don't You Cry."²⁰

In the fall of 1953, Turner hit number one on the r&b charts with "Honey Hush," which crossed over to number 23 on the pop charts.²¹ The song was a rocking number with a strong back beat and a call-and-response refrain of "Hi Yo Silver." "Honey Hush" was followed by another top-ten r&b hit, "T.V. Mama," which featured slide guitar by Chicago blues guitarist Elmore James.²²

On February 15, 1954, Turner recorded the song for which he is best remembered today, "Shake, Rattle, and Roll."²³ The song was written by Jesse Stone under his "Charles Calhoun" pen name. Turner's vocal was backed by Stone's rolling piano and a strong back beat emphasized by handclaps. Released in April 1954, "Shake, Rattle and Roll" went to number one on the r&b charts, crossed over to 22 on the pop charts, and remains one of the greatest classics of early rock 'n' roll.²⁴

In June, 1954, while Turner's recording of "Shake, Rattle and Roll" was at the peak of its success, Bill Haley recorded a cover version of the song with cleaned-up lyrics.²⁵ Haley's version of the song features a prominent slapped bass, a riffing saxophone, and repeated shouts of "Go!" during the instrumental break. Haley's record eclipsed Turner's, going to number 7 on the pop charts and becoming one of the first rock 'n' roll songs to break into the pop top ten.²⁶

Turner continued to score a string of top-ten hits on the rhythm and blues charts that included "Well Alright," "Flip, Flop and Fly," "Hide and Seek," "Morning, Noon and Night," "The Chicken and the Hawk (Up, Up and Away)," "Corrine, Corrina," and "Lipstick, Powder and Paint."²⁷ Turner scored his last hit on the r&b charts in the spring of 1958 with "(I'm Gonna) Jump for Joy."²⁸

As musical styles changed in the early '60s, the hits stopped coming and Turner was let go by Atlantic Records. "I made all those things before Haley and the others, but suddenly all the cats started jumping up, and I kinda got knocked down in the traffic," Turner said.²⁹ In the coming years, Turner recorded for a variety of record labels, including Coral, Pablo, LMI, and Muse, often re-recording new versions of his old hits. In spite of suffering from serious health problems, Turner continued to perform up until the time of his death from a heart attack on November 24, 1985 in Inglewood, California.³⁰

Memphis

In the early fifties, Memphis emerged as another important recording center for the new rhythm and blues music, due in large part to the efforts of Sam Phillips, who founded the Memphis Recording Service and, later, Sun Records.

Sam Phillips

Samuel Cornelius Phillips was born on a farm near Florence, Alabama on January 5, 1923.³¹ Phillips became interested in radio at an early age. While still attending high school, Phillips started working part time as an announcer on WMSD in Sheffield, Alabama, hosting the show "Hymn Time," five days a week from 5:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.³²

In 1941, Phillips took a job as a radio announcer on WLAY in Muscle Shoals, Alabama.³³ From there he went to WMSL in Decatur, Georgia for three years, to WLAC in Nashville for a few months, and, in June 1945, to WREC in Memphis.³⁴ At WREC, Phillips worked both as an announcer and an engineer.³⁵ He hosted the daily show "Songs of the West" under the stage name "Partner."³⁶ He also engineered the big band broadcast from the Skyway Ballroom on the roof of the Hotel Peabody six nights a week from 10:30 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.³⁷

In October 1949, Phillips leased a vacant storefront at 706 Union Avenue in downtown Memphis, which he converted into a recording studio.³⁸ Phillips' Memphis Recording Service opened for business in January 1950.³⁹ Anyone who wanted to record a song could come in and make a record at the rate of three dollars for one side and four dollars for two.⁴⁰ In addition, Phillips used a portable tape recorder to record events outside of the studio, such as weddings, funerals, banquets, bar mitzvahs, religious ceremonies - in short, anything that anyone wanted recorded.⁴¹ The company's motto was "We Record Anything - Anywhere - Anytime."⁴² The studio didn't contain enough room for an office, so Phillips conducted business from a table in Miss Taylor's cafe next door.⁴³

"I opened the Memphis Recording Service with the intention of recording singers and musicians from Memphis and the locality who I felt had something that people should be able to hear," Phillips said. "I'm talking about blues - both the country style and the rhythm style - and also about gospel or spiritual music and about White country music. I always felt that the people who played this type of music had not been given the opportunity to reach an audience. I feel strongly that a lot of the blues was a real true story. Unadulterated life as it was."⁴⁴

In the summer of 1950, Phillips and WHBQ DJ Dewey Phillips (no relation) made a short-lived attempt at starting a record company, which they called Phillips.⁴⁵ The company's one release was "Boogie in

the Park” by Joe Hill Louis.⁴⁶ Both Phillipses realized that they didn’t have time run a record company along with their other work commitments. (In addition to running the Memphis Recording Service, Sam Phillips still was working for WREC at this time.) Sam Phillips decided instead to concentrate on making recordings and licensing them to already-established record companies, and shortly began working with Modern Records.⁴⁷

Modern Records had been founded by Joe, Jules, and Saul Bihari in Los Angeles in March 1945.⁴⁸ Their first release was “Swingin’ the Boogie” by the pianist Hadda Brooks.⁴⁹ In the late ‘40s and early ‘50s, the label experienced considerable success on the r&b charts with “Boogie Chillen” and other records by John Lee Hooker. The Bihari brothers recently had signed a Memphis-based blues singer and guitarist named B.B. King to their RPM subsidiary and were looking for someplace in the Memphis area to record him.⁵⁰ In July, 1950 Jules Bihari got in touch with Sam Phillips and made arrangements to record B.B. King at Phillips’ studio.⁵¹

B.B. King

B.B. King was born Riley B. King between Itta Bena and Indianola, Mississippi on September 16, 1925.⁵² King first began singing in the church and his singing always retained a strong gospel quality.⁵³ As a young man, King worked as a farm hand, chopping cotton, plowing fields, and driving a tractor and a truck.⁵⁴ King also took up guitar and played in jazz-inflected, single-note style, heavily influenced by T-Bone Walker. King worked with the groups the Elkhart Singers and the St. John Gospel Singers and also played on street corners in Indianola and surrounding towns such as Itta Bena, Moorhead, and Greenville.⁵⁵

In 1946, King moved to Memphis where he played on street corners and entered the weekly amateur contest at the Palace Theater on Beale Street.⁵⁶ In 1948, King obtained a 10-minute spot on the Memphis radio station WDIA, singing ads for Pepticon, a cure-all tonic.⁵⁷ King subsequently became a disc jockey on WDIA with his own one-hour show.⁵⁸ On the radio, King earned the nicknames “the Beale Street Blues Boy” and “the Singing Black Boy,” which were later shortened to “Bee Bee” and then “B.B.”⁵⁹



Early promotional photograph of B.B. King from the Buffalo Booking Agency. (Public Domain via Wikimedia Commons.)

WDIA, 730 on the dial, had been established in 1947 as an independent, low-watt station aimed at the pop and country music markets.⁶⁰ The station, however, struggled to find an audience.⁶¹ In October 1948, the station put “Professor” Nat D. Williams, a history teacher at Booker T. Washington High School, on the air, hosting a show called “Tan Town Jamboree.”⁶² Williams was the first Black disc jockey to appear on a radio station in the deep South.⁶³ WDIA gradually added more Black-oriented programming and, by the next summer, became the first station in the country to go entirely to programming aimed at the African-American community.⁶⁴ By 1954, the station had increased to 50,000 watts and could be heard all over the mid-South, making it a significant voice of the African-American community in the region.⁶⁵ White teenagers, such as Elvis Presley, also listened to WDIA and became exposed to rhythm and blues music.

In 1949, King made his first recordings for the Nashville-based Bullet label.⁶⁶ The Bihari brothers then signed King to their RPM subsidiary and made arrangements for him to record at Sam Phillips’ studio.⁶⁷ King recorded at Phillips’ studio from mid-1950 to June 1951, and the Biharis released five singles from Phillips recordings, but none became national hits.⁶⁸ The Biharis and Phillips had a falling out after Phillips gave his recording of “Rocket 88” by Jackie Brenston and the Delta Cats to the Chess brothers in Chicago rather than to the Biharis.⁶⁹ For King’s next session, Saul Bihari came to Memphis and recorded King on a portable Magnarecord tape

recorder at the Memphis YMCA.⁷⁰ This session yielded King's first major hit, "Three O'Clock Blues," which went to number one on the national r&b charts in early 1952.⁷¹ The song was a slow, 12-bar blues, with King's gospel-style vocals framed by his jazzy guitar lines. King hit number one again in the fall of 1952 with the melodic ballad "You Know I Love You."⁷² Uncharacteristically, the record did not feature King's guitar, but had a piano-led arrangement with a saxophone solo. After scoring top ten hits with "Story from My Heart and Soul" and "Woke Up This Morning," King went to number one again in the summer of 1953 with "Please Love Me."⁷³ The song was a 12-bar blues with an upbeat shuffle rhythm and lots of loud, distorted guitar. Following the top-ten hit "When My Heart Beats Like a Hammer," King was back at number one in late 1954 with "You Upset Me Baby," a jump-blues number with stop-time verses.⁷⁴

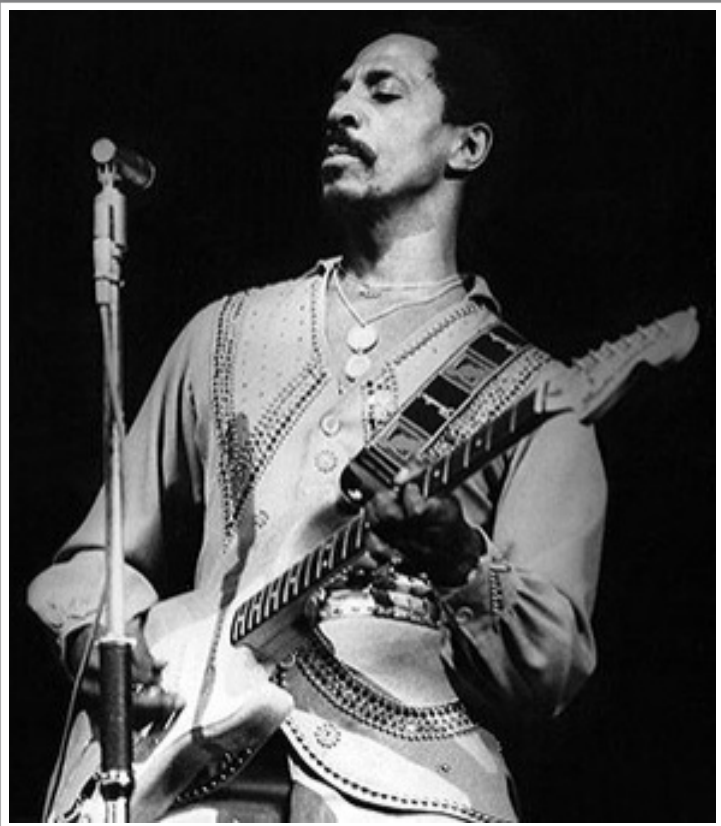
Although the popularity of blues faded during the rock 'n' roll era, King continued to score hits on the rhythm and blues charts throughout the '50s and '60s with songs like "Every Day I have the Blues," "Ten Long Years," "Bad Luck," "Sweet Sixteen," and "Don't Answer the Door."⁷⁵ In 1964, King recorded the classic live album, *Live at the Regal*, which many consider his best work. In 1969, King opened shows for the Rolling Stones on their American tour, which gave him exposure to the White rock audience and greatly increased his popularity. The following year, he scored one of the biggest hits of his career with "The Thrill Is Gone," which went to number three on the r&b charts and crossed over to number 15 on the pop charts.⁷⁶

King maintained a rigorous touring schedule throughout his career. With the death of Muddy Waters in 1983, King assumed the mantle of the most famous blues musician in the world. He continued to record and perform up until the time of his death on May 14, 2015.

Ike Turner & the Kings of Rhythm

Sam Phillips received his first big break in March, 1951, when he recorded the Kings of Rhythm, a band from Clarksdale, Mississippi that was led by a teenaged pianist named Ike Turner.

There is some uncertainty as to Turner's date of birth and his given name - he appears to have been born outside of Clarksdale, Mississippi in either 1931 or 1932 and his name was either Izear Luster (or Luther) Turner, Jr. or Ike Wister Turner.⁷⁷ Turner became interested in music and started playing piano at an early age.⁷⁸ While still in his teens, he backed up blues



Ike Turner, 1972. (Edge4life42, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons.)

musicians like Robert Nighthawk and Sonny Boy Williamson (Rice Miller) when they played in the Clarksdale area.⁷⁹ Turner also played in a jazz-oriented band called the Tophatters.⁸⁰ The Tophatters ended up splitting in two, with those members who were interested in playing jazz forming a band called the Dukes of Swing, and those interested in playing r&b forming the Kings of Rhythm.⁸¹ In addition to Turner on piano, the Kings of Rhythm included saxophonists Jackie Brenston and Raymond Hill, guitarist Willie Kizart, and drummer Willie Sims.⁸² The Kings of Rhythm established themselves as a popular band in the Clarksdale area.⁸³

After hearing the Kings of Rhythm play, B.B. King recommended them to Sam Phillips, and Phillips made arrangements for them to come to Memphis to record.⁸⁴ In early March, 1951, the band drove up Highway 61 from Clarksdale to Memphis. During the drive to Memphis, Willie Kizart's amplifier, which was lashed to the top of the car, fell off and the speaker cone was damaged.⁸⁵ There was no time to get the amplifier fixed, so Phillips stuffed paper into it, which gave it a distinctive fuzz tone.⁸⁶

The session started with two songs with Turner singing lead, but Phillips wasn't happy with Turner's vocals. "...I didn't believe we were getting

anywhere,” Phillips later recalled. “I said, ‘Ike, do you have anybody else who can sing?’ He said, ‘Oh yeah, Jackie’s got a song. It’s super great.’”⁸⁷

The song that Jackie Brenston had was “Rocket 88,” an ode General Motors’ 1950 Hydra Matic Drive V-8 Oldsmobile 88.⁸⁸ The song itself wasn’t particularly original - it was a thinly disguised rewrite of Jimmy Liggins’ “Cadillac Boogie” - but the band gave it a sensational performance.⁸⁹ Willie Kizart gave the song a propulsive rhythm by playing a boogie-woogie pattern on the bass strings of his fuzzed-out guitar with Turner’s wild piano playing overtop. Brenston turned in a confident vocal and Raymond Hill added a wailing sax solo. The result was one of the classics of early rock ‘n’ roll.

For reasons that aren’t entirely clear, rather than send the recording of “Rocket 88” to the Bihari Brothers at Modern Records, Phillips sent it to the Chess brothers at Chess Records in Chicago. According to Turner, the record was supposed to be credited to “Ike Turner and the Kings of Rhythm Featuring Jackie Brenston on Vocal.”⁹⁰ When Chess released the record, however, it was credited to “Jackie Brenston and his Delta Cats,” although no such band existed. The record became a huge hit, going to number one on the national rhythm and blues charts in the spring of 1951, and remaining there for five weeks.⁹¹

“Rocket 88” often is cited as the first rock ‘n’ roll record. That’s debatable, since there arguably were rock ‘n’ roll records before it, but it was an important step in the evolution of rock ‘n’ roll. The song was covered by Bill Haley and the Saddlemen in June 1951 and Little Richard subsequently appropriated Ike Turner’s piano part for the introduction to “Good Golly Miss Molly.”

In June 1951, following the success of “Rocket 88,” Phillips resigned from WREC to devote full time to the Memphis Recording Service.⁹² While “Rocket 88” gave Phillips his first taste of success, it also created problems for him. It caused a rift in his relationship with the Bihari brothers, who thought that they had an agreement that gave them exclusive rights to material recorded by Phillips and that Phillips had breached the agreement.⁹³ It also infuriated Ike Turner, who thought that he did not receive proper credit for “Rocket 88.”⁹⁴

Following the success of “Rocket 88,” Jackie Brenston went out on his own. His follow-up record, “My Real Gone Rocket,” was a weak imitation of “Rocket 88” and failed to go anywhere. Unable to establish himself as a solo artist, Brenston eventually ended up rejoining the Kings of Rhythm.⁹⁵ Ike Turner went to work as a talent scout and producer for Modern Records, overseeing sessions for Elmore James, Little Johnny Burton, and Lonnie “the Cat” Cation, among others.⁹⁶ He also concentrated on learning to play the guitar.⁹⁷ In the mid-fifties, Turner relocated the Kings of Rhythm to St. Louis, where they became a popular

attraction.⁹⁸ During this time, the Kings of Rhythm made a number of classic recordings for the Federal label, including the instrumental “Trail Blazer,” “She Made My Blood Run Cold” with Clayton Love on vocals, “I’m Tore Up” with Billy Gayles on vocals, and “Much Later” and “Gonna Wait My Chance” with Jackie Brenston on vocals. None of the records, however, became hits. Turner would have to wait until 1960 to achieve success, after he discovered the singer Anna Mae Bullock, rechristened her Tina Turner, and made her the star of his stage show.⁹⁹

Howlin’ Wolf

Sam Phillips next recorded another artist who would go on to have a tremendous impact on the world of music - Howlin’ Wolf.

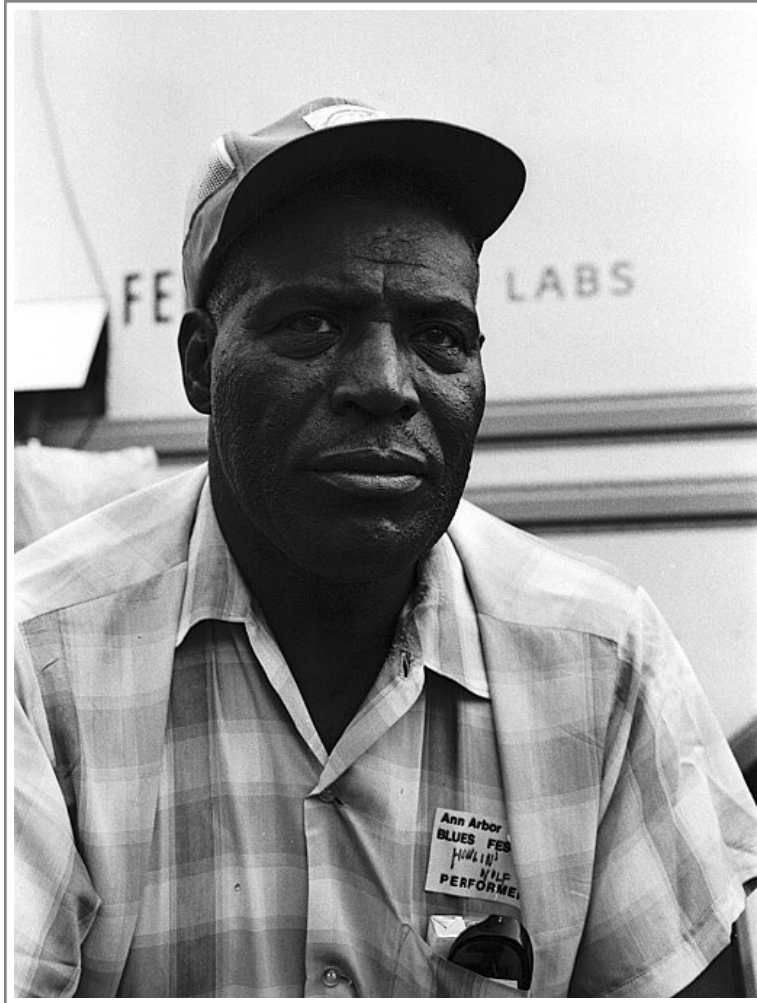
Howlin’ Wolf was born Chester Arthur Burnett on June 10, 1910 in West Point, Mississippi, in the state’s northeastern hill country.¹⁰⁰ In 1923, Wolf moved with his family to Young and Morrow’s plantation near Ruleville in the Mississippi Delta.¹⁰¹ When he was in his late teens, Wolf’s father bought him a guitar, and, around the same time, Wolf first met Charley Patton.¹⁰²

Charley Patton, one of the originators of Delta blues, lived near Ruleville on Will Dockery’s plantation, and performed at plantations in the area.¹⁰³ After hearing Patton play, Wolf began to hang around him.¹⁰⁴ Patton took a liking to Wolf and taught him some of the basics of guitar.¹⁰⁵ Patton, along with fellow Delta blues musician Tommy Johnson, would have a strong influence on Wolf’s music. Wolf also took up the harmonica, inspired by the great harmonica player Rice Miller (Sonny Boy Williamson #2), who married Wolf’s step sister Mary.¹⁰⁶

In 1941, Wolf was drafted into the army and spent most of his tour of duty stationed in Seattle, Washington.¹⁰⁷ After being discharged from the army, Wolf returned to Mississippi and farmed with his father on the Phillips plantation and then started farming for himself in Penton, Mississippi, on land that he inherited from one of his grandfathers.¹⁰⁸ On the weekends, Wolf would play the blues.¹⁰⁹

In 1948, Wolf gave up farming and left for West Memphis, Arkansas to concentrate on playing music.¹¹⁰ He formed a band, the Houserockers, with Pat Hare and M.T. “Matt” Murphy on guitar, Junior Parker on harmonica, Willie Steele on drums, and “Destruction” (aka Bill Johnson) on piano.¹¹¹ When Junior Parker and Matt Murphy left to form the Blue Flames, Willie Johnson joined the band on guitar.¹¹²

Wolf and the Houserockers played around Arkansas and Mississippi and became a popular attraction in the area.¹¹³ Wolf then obtained a spot on the West Memphis radio station, KWEM.¹¹⁴ The station sold blocks of time to blues and country musicians, preachers, and anyone else who wanted a show; they, in turn, would find sponsors for their shows and get



Howlin' Wolf at the Ann Arbor Blues Festival, August 1970. (Jeff Titon, Eatonland, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons.)

them to purchase advertisements.¹¹⁵ On the radio, Wolf performed blues, advertised corn, grain, and agricultural implements, and promoted his performances in the area.¹¹⁶

Sam Phillips first heard Wolf on one of his KWEM broadcasts. "A disc jockey from West Memphis told me about Chester Burnett's show on KWEM and I tuned him in," Phillips said. "When I heard Howlin' Wolf, I said, 'This is for me. This is where the soul of man never dies.'"¹¹⁷

Phillips made arrangements for Wolf to record at the Memphis Recording Service and Wolf first recorded there in the spring of 1951.¹¹⁸ Phillips sent the results to Chess Records in Chicago. On August 15, 1951, Chess released Wolf's first record "Moanin' at Midnight" / "How Many More Years."¹¹⁹ "Moanin' at Midnight" opened with an eerie, otherworldly moan by Wolf and featured his powerful, gravelly vocals over distorted guitar riffs by Willie Johnson and a driving beat by Willie Steele. "How Many More Years" was a

12-bar blues set to an uptempo shuffle rhythm and driven by a barrelhouse piano played by either Ike Turner or Albert Williams. The record became a two-sided hit, with both songs making the top ten on the national r&b charts in late 1951.¹²⁰

The Bihari brothers at Modern Records were infuriated that Phillips had given the recordings of Wolf to Chess Records rather than to them. The Biharis had Ike Turner record Wolf doing a new version of "Moanin' at Midnight," which they released under the title "Morning at Midnight."¹²¹

Wolf now became the subject of a dispute between the Bihari brothers and the Chess brothers, both of whom claimed the right to Wolf's recordings.¹²² The parties ended up settling the dispute in early 1952, with Chess getting the rights to recordings by Wolf, while Modern got the rights to recordings by Rosco Gordon, another r&b musician that Phillips recorded at the Memphis Recording Service.¹²³

In the fall of 1952, Wolf moved to Chicago, began recording there, and became a leading figure on the Chicago blues scene. He next hit the national r&b charts in the summer of 1955 with "Who Will Be Next," an uptempo number with a foot-stomping beat.¹²⁴ In early 1956, Wolf went top ten on the national r&b charts with "Smoke Stack Lightnin'," which was driven by the guitar riffs of Willie Johnson and Hubert Sumlin and featured Wolf's falsetto howling between lines of the song.¹²⁵ Wolf made the r&b top ten again late that year with "I Asked for Water," a

reworking of Tommy Johnson's Delta blues classic "Cool Drink of Water Blues."¹²⁶ In the early '60s, Wolf recorded a number of songs written for him by Chess Records' resident songwriter and producer, Willie Dixon. These included "Wang Dang Doodle," "Back Door Man," "Spoonful," "The Red Rooster," and "I Ain't Superstitious."

Like other blues musicians, Wolf was pushed off the charts by rock 'n' roll acts in the late '50s and early '60s. The British Invasion of the mid-'60s, however, brought renewed attention to Wolf and helped to introduce him to the White rock audience. Many British bands cited Wolf as an influence and covered his songs - the Rolling Stones covered "The Red Rooster," Cream covered "Spoonful," and Jeff Beck covered "I Ain't Superstitious." When the Rolling Stones appeared on *Shindig* in May, 1965, they had Howlin' Wolf on the show as their guest, performing "How Many More Years."

Wolf scored his last hit on the r&b charts in early 1969 with "Evil," a remake of a Willie Dixon song that Wolf had first recorded in 1954.¹²⁷

Wolf died on January 10, 1976 in Hines Veteran's Administration Hospital near Chicago and was buried in Oakridge Cemetery in Hillside, Illinois.¹²⁸

End Notes

1. Jim Dawson and Steve Propes, *What Was the First Rock 'n' Roll Record?* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1992) 128; Peter Grendysa, liner notes, *Big, Bad & Blue: The Big Joe Turner Anthology*, Big Joe Turner (Rhino Records, 1994) 9; Paul Oliver, editor, *The Blackwell Guide to Blues Records* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1989) 174; Nick Tosches, *Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: The Birth of Rock 'n' Roll in the Wild Years Before Elvis* (New York: Harmony Books, 1991) 23.
2. Grendysa 9.
3. Grendysa 9.
4. Grendysa 12.
5. Grendysa 13.
6. Dawson 128; Grendysa 15.
7. Dawson 128; Grendysa 15.
8. Grendysa 15 and 17; Arnold Shaw, *Honkers and Shouters: The Golden Age of Rhythm and Blues* (New York: Collier Books, 1978) 48.
9. Grendysa 15.
10. Grendysa 15.
11. Joel Whitburn, *Joel Whitburn's Top R&B Singles 1942 - 1988* (Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research, Inc., 1988) 419.
12. Whitburn 419.
13. Tosches 13.
14. Ahmet Ertegun, liner notes, "Recollections of Ahmet Ertegun," *Big, Bad & Blue: The Big Joe Turner Anthology*, Big Joe Turner (Rhino Records, 1994) 3.
15. Ertegun 2.
16. Ertegun 2.
17. Ertegun 2; Tosches 28.
18. Dawson 128; Charlie Gillett, *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock 'n' Roll*, revised edition (London: Souvenir Press, 1983) 128; Shaw 377.
19. Whitburn 419.
20. Whitburn 419.
21. Whitburn 419.
22. Gillett 128; Grendysa 26; Whitburn 419.
23. Dawson 128.
24. Dawson 128; Whitburn 419.
25. Colin Escott, liner notes, *Bill Rocks*, Bill Haley (Bear Family, 2006) 18.
26. Dawson 130; Grendysa 29; Nick Johnstone, *A Brief History of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Carroll & Graff, 2007) 104.
27. Whitburn 419.
28. Whitburn 419.
29. Grendysa 30.
30. Dawson 131; Grendysa 39; Tosches 29.
31. Colin Escott with Martin Hawkins, *Good Rockin' Tonight: Sun Records and the Birth of Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991) 10; Peter Guralnick, *Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2016) 6; Robert

- Palmer, *Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) 218; Nick Tosches, *Hellfire: The Jerry Lee Lewis Story* (New York: Delta Books, 1989) 99.
32. Guralnick 30; Johnstone 71 - 72.
 33. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 10; Johnstone 72; Tosches, *Hellfire*, 99.
 34. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 10; Guralnick 43 and 46.
 35. Guralnick 47 - 48.
 36. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 10; Johnstone 72.
 37. Guralnick 50.
 38. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 14; Guralnick 66; David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1994) 469.
 39. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 13.
 40. Halberstam 471; Johnstone 73; Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music* (New York: Dutton, 1990) 234.
 41. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 15; Halberstam 471; Johnstone 72 - 73.
 42. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 14.
 43. Halberstam 471.
 44. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 18.
 45. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 20; Johnstone 74.
 46. Johnstone 74.
 47. Johnstone 75.
 48. Tosches, *Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll*, 185.
 49. Tosches, *Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll*, 185; Ed Ward, *The History of Rock & Roll: Volume One: 1920 - 1963* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2017) 29 - 30.
 50. Guralnick 87.
 51. Guralnick 87.
 52. Preston Lauterbach, *The Chitlin Circuit and the Road to Rock 'n' Roll* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2007) 197; Palmer 229; Shaw 205.
 53. Oliver 177; Tom Wheeler, "B.B. King," *Blues Guitar: The Men Who Made the Music* (San Francisco: GPI Books, 1990) 113.
 54. Wheeler 113.
 55. Guralnick 91; Oliver 177; Wheeler 114.
 56. Palmer 229; Shaw 225; Oliver 177.
 57. Guralnick 89; Lawrence Hoffman, liner notes, *Mean Old World: The Blues from 1940 to 1944*, various artists (The Smithsonian Collection of Recordings, 1996) 28; Palmer 207.
 58. Hoffman 61; Wheeler 114.
 59. Escott 22; Wheeler 114.
 60. Guralnick 60; Lauterbach 197; Philip H. Ennis, *The Seventh Stream: The Emergence of Rocknroll in American Popular Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1992) 173.
 61. Guralnick 60 - 61.
 62. Guralnick 61.
 63. Guralnick 60.
 64. Ennis 173; Guralnick 60; Lauterbach 197; Palmer 219.
 65. Ennis 174.
 66. Guralnick 87; Hoffman 61; Oliver 177 - 178; Whitburn 238.
 67. Shaw 98.
 68. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 22; Hoffman 61.
 69. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 23.

70. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 23; Hoffman 61; Paul Watts, liner notes, *The R&B No. 1s of the Fifties* (Acrobat Music, 2013) 15.
71. Watts 15; Whitburn 238.
72. Watts 15; Whitburn 238.
73. Watts 15; Whitburn 238.
74. Watts 15; Whitburn 238.
75. Whitburn 238 - 240.
76. Whitburn 239.
77. Dawson 89; Palmer 220 - 221; David Whiteis, "Ike Turner," *Living Blues*, April 2008, 76.
78. Whiteis 76.
79. Palmer 217 and 220 - 221; Whiteis 76.
80. James Maycock and Barney Hoskins, "We Have Ignition...Lift Off!" *Mojo*, February 2002, 45; Palmer 220 - 221; Whiteis 76.
81. Maycock 45; Whiteis 76.
82. Maycock 45; Whiteis 76.
83. Whiteis 76.
84. Dawson 89.
85. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 24 - 25.
86. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 24.
87. Maycock 46.
88. Maycock 45.
89. Tosches, *Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll*, 141.
90. Maycock 46.
91. Whitburn 54.
92. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 21; Guralnick 113.
93. Guralnick 117; Johnstone 77.
94. Dawson 90.
95. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 29.
96. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 29; Palmer 239.
97. Escott, *Good Rockin' Tonight*, 29; Palmer 240.
98. Palmer 240.
99. Dawson 91; Tosches, *Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll*, 144.
100. Oliver 199; Rowe 135; Arnold Shaw, *The Rockin' '50s* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1987) 94.
101. Rowe 135; Shaw, *The Rockin' '50s*, 94.
102. Rowe 135;
103. Rowe 135.
104. Rowe 135.
105. Rowe 135.
106. Rowe 135 - 136.
107. Rowe 136.
108. Mark Humphrey, liner notes, *His Best*, Holin' Wolf (Chess / MCA Records, 1997) 6; Rowe 136.
109. Humphrey 5.
110. Rowe 136 - 137.
111. Humphrey 6; Palmer 230; Rowe 136 - 137.
112. Rowe 136 - 137.
113. Palmer 232.
114. Humphrey 6; Rowe 136 - 137.
115. Humphrey 6; Rowe 136 - 137.
116. Humphrey 6; Rowe 136 - 137.
117. Palmer 233.
118. Humphrey 7.
119. Guralnick 126; Humphrey 9; Rowe 134 - 135.
120. Whitburn 197.
121. Rowe 135.
122. Humphrey 9.
123. Guralnick 142.
124. Whitburn 197.
125. Whitburn 198.
126. Whitburn 198.
127. Whitburn 198.
128. Shaw, *Honkers and Shouters*, 306.



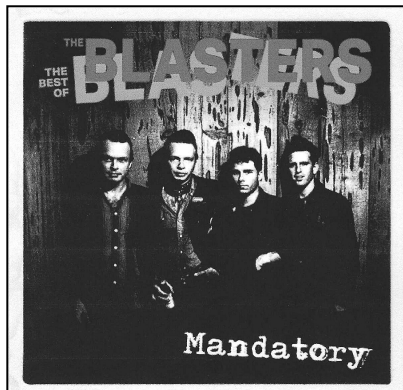
Introducing a New Website for the Oceanic Park Mystery Series, Rock Beat International, and More!

We are pleased to announce the launch of a new website for the Oceanic Park mystery series and *Rock Beat International* at geoffcabin.com.

In addition to finding information about books in the Oceanic Park mystery series, you will be able to download issues of *Rock Beat International* for free.

If you are interested and have a bit of time, please check it out.

REVIEWS



Mandatory: The Best of The Blasters
(Liberation Hall)

by Gary Pig Gold

When I first moved to Los Angeles in 1980, California dreaming of starting my very own rock 'n' roll band (which I *did*, btw!) I instantly found myself smack-dabbed into a supremely creative cauldron of off-radar activity. Luckily, just as had already exploded in, most notably, New York, London, and even my home and native Toronto. New and spectacular waves of performance/art, film and photography, college radio and, yep, "small press" – as in fanzine publishing (which I also did!!) ...all providing desperately needed relief from the dreaded cultural mainstream.

It was, to say the very least, a *perfect* time and place to run away from one's plodding past-times and dive head-long in search of fresh, crazy ambitions and adventures.

Now, the music scene, or should I say *scenes* which I encountered in SoCal as the Eighties dawned were as altogether varied as they were intriguing: On one hand, on the Sunset Strip in particular roamed the remnants of their semi-glam



The Blasters. Left to right: John Bazz, Gene Taylor, Bill Bateman, Phil Alvin, and Dave Alvin. (Courtesy Slash Records.)

movement of the mid-Seventies (for example, Joan Jett was busy plotting a post-Runaway career). Then over in whatever lofts and severely alt. pool parties about town could be found the genuinely Germs-inspired (RIP, Darby) nascent hardcore movement, fully arming themselves for future battle.

Meanwhile, even sonic temples of the Strip like the Whisky a Go Go were suddenly booking acts such as The Cramps, Romantics, 20/20 and XTC ...and no longer just on Monday and Tuesday nights either. However, what was intriguing *me* most, and drawing my ears to their earliest shows and whatever demo cassettes fell my way, was this fascinating musical subculture busy brewing beneath even the sandy L.A. underground. Yes, many of these Cali's had roots firmly planted in the 1960s (i.e.: Go-Go's and Bangs, soon to become Bangles). Yet just as many others leaned more towards pre-Beatle pop and roll, via those

recent Mink DeVille and Robert Gordon platters I'd reckon. There was, of course, the expert Carl Perkins on, um, steroids guitar of Billy Zoom powering the great, great band of X: a band which would have blown serious gaskets even *if* Ray Manzarek hadn't managed to push them onto Elektra Records.

But my by far, above-all fave rave neo-billy combo at the time – until Rank and File came along, that is – was, and remains, Downey's one and only Blasters. Headed by the Everlys-by-way-of-Davies brothers Phil and Dave Alvin, to most they were cruelly under-appreciated at the time beneath the glare of the Stray Cats' MTV-sanctioned cartoon rock. But one encounter with *Mandatory's* exemplary hour-long retrospective will either (a) remind you of just how extraordinary these guys were, or (b) remind you to kick yourself for missing them first time around.

We blast straight off with, naturally, "American Music," which

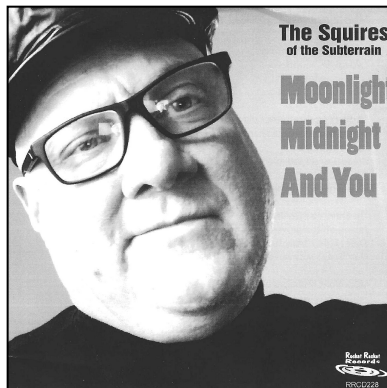
thoroughly encapsulates the Blasters' entire M.O. to a "t" ...or should I say E-chord. Next stop? "Real Rock Drive." I ask you: Who else had the unmitigated cojones to so adeptly tip hats towards Bill Haley's Comets with such respect and utter finesse? Then we'll meet "Marie Marie," who's worthy even of the Blasters' overseas brethren Rockpile, while Little Willie John's "I'm Shakin'" actually earned our heroes a spot on none other than Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* (bop immediately right over to YouTube, one and all).

Elsewhere, no less than The Jordanares – talk about pedigree! – join in on "Trouble Bound" and "Help You Dream," while "Little Honey," a co-write with the aforementioned John Doe of X, is the most sweetly sublime sip of pure country cooler you, or I, will have today. And just why "Dark Night" was never covered by, or better still duet'd along with John Fogerty I'll never know.

Caveat emptor: It could be claimed, I suppose, that *any* studio recording will fall short of completely capturing the fine fire and fury of a typical Blasters live show ...though the cover herein of Leiber and Stoller's "One Bad Stud," not to mention the concluding two minutes of "Kathleen," come damn close (paying special attention to that post-Garth Hudson master of the 88's Gene Taylor, also sadly RIP and without doubt the band's musical secret weapon). What must be realized, and remembered however is that the true "star" of this material will always be the fully cinematic – novelistic, even – songwriting of Dave Alvin, with its lyrical attention to detail on a par with even that of Chuck Berry (e.g.: "Jubilee Train").

Add to this the r 'n' r-solid beat of, just to keep everything L.A. "in the family," Go-Go Belinda's fondest ex Bill "Buster" Bateman, future Los Lobo, among so many things, Steve Berlin on sax, and even a colorful two-panel inner splash of vintage Blasters flyers and posters which more than illustrate my circa-1981 musical world spoken of up above, and you hold in your hands a superb, all-encompassing package which, just

like it says, should be considered for *every* collection... what's that word again? Yes indeed: Mandatory.



**"Moonlight, Midnight and You":
The Squires of the Subterrain
(Rocket Racket)**



**Electro Space Cocktail: The
Squires of the Subterrain
(Rocket Racket)**

By Geoff Cabin

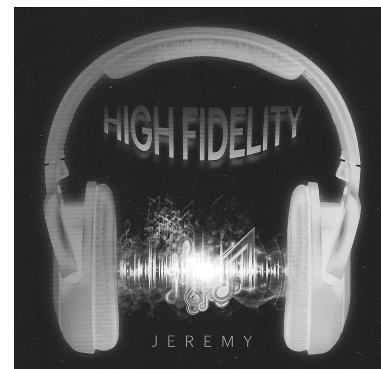
These two new releases explore different musical sides of the Squires of the Subterrain. (The Squires are actually Chris Zajkowski acting as a one-man-band with an occasional contribution from other musicians.)

The single, "Midnight Moonlight and You," is a gorgeous ballad worthy of Henry Mancini. On the record, Zajkowski's vocal is backed by layers of reverbed and fuzzed-out guitars and the shimmering whirl of an organ, creating a romantic, late-night atmosphere. The song also is presented in an "after hours

alternative mix." This version features Zajkowski's vocal front and center over a relaxed, jazzy groove provided by organ, bass, and drums and augmented by bluesy guitar fills by Steve Grills. This alternative arrangement works beautifully as well.

The five-song EP *Electro Space Cocktail* contains instrumentals that combine spacey lounge jazz with propulsive dance grooves. "Landing" features a distorted organ riffing over a bass-heavy dance rhythm. On "Jungle Jazz," a bluesy saxophone is set to a pulsating rhythm track, augmented by vibraphone and "jungle"-style percussion. "Cosmic Jade" has space-age-organ sounds over booming bass and drums. "Space Strut" combines an irresistibly catchy tune with a galloping rhythm.

As always, the Squires of the Subterrain deliver sounds that are both musically adventurous and highly enjoyable. (squiresofthesubterrain.com)



**High Fidelity: Jeremy
(JAM)**

By Geoff Cabin

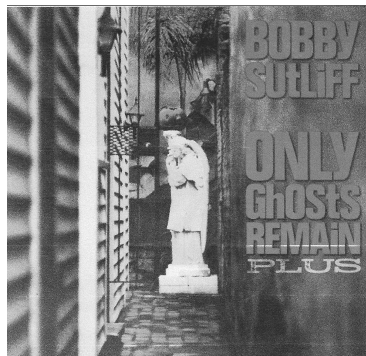
High Fidelity is the latest album by Jeremy Morris in collaboration with producer and multi-instrumentalist Ken Stringfellow. The album delivers more of the reliably excellent guitar pop that we've come to expect from the duo. As always, they draw on the classic guitar-pop sounds of the '60s and '70s to craft recordings that sound both contemporary and timeless.

The album kicks off with the title track, which features a

catchy pop tune backed by chiming guitars before segueing into to a psychedelized finale. Jeremy mines similar territory on "Walking with You" with equal success. "I Am with You Always" combines a strong melody with jangling and twanging guitars and vocal harmonies in a manner reminiscent of the Byrds. On the ultra-catchy "Still In Love with You," Jeremy adds a soaring guitar solo to the pop sound. The moody, atmospheric "Searching for the Son" features echo-laden vocals backed by fuzzed-out guitar, while "Turning Upside Down" is a heavy-duty rocker with fuzzed-out guitar. The closing track, "A Smile and a Tear," sets an anthemic melody to a lush arrangement that culminates in a psychedelic outro.

Jeremy Morris and Ken Stringfellow once again demonstrates that classic guitar pop is alive and well and in capable hands.

(jamrecordings.com)



Only Ghosts Remain PLUS:
Bobby Sutliff
(Jem Records)

By Beverly Paterson

Singer, songwriter and guitarist Bobby Sutliff initially made his mark as co-founder of The Windbreakers. Formed in 1981, the Jackson, Mississippi-based outfit mainly operated as a duo that also featured Tim Lee. Specializing in smartly-structured guitar pop, The Windbreakers gleaned a good deal of praise on the alternative circuit.

Produced by Mitch Easter - who fronted his own excellent band Let's Active and twirled the

knobs for groups such as REM, the dBs, Game Theory, The Loud Family and Velvet Crush - *Only Ghosts Remain* was originally released in 1987 and clocked in as Bobby's first full-length solo album. The disc has recently been reissued and duly re-christened *Only Ghosts Remain PLUS*, as several selections from Bobby's subsequent solo efforts (*Bitter Fruit*, *Perfect Dream*, and *On A Ladder*) pad the package.

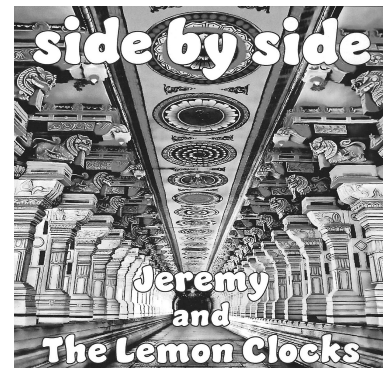
Riding high on waves of ringing guitars and solid hooks, *Only Ghosts Remain PLUS* radiates with masterclass pop-rock craftsmanship. Navigated by Bobby's warm and breezy vocals, these bright and tasty treasures tend to be contrasted by yearning prose broadcasting heartache and rejection.

A bouncy shuffle routes "You Could've Told Me," where "Same Way Tomorrow" ripples with movement and melody to the spirited rhythms of robust drumming and snappy six-string pickings. The bubbly spark of "Won't Be Feeling Blue" is a hit single that never was, while the same can easily be said of both the harmonious chime of "Warning Bells" and "One Way Ticket" that romps to a punchy semi-countrified beat.

Listeners will instantly take note of Bobby's creative and inspiring guitar work, which often incorporates improvisational flourishes into the jingly jangly mix. Splashes of psychedelia further appear on the collection, specifically the droning "Different World" and "Griffin Bay" that sweeps and shimmers with bracing riffage. The final bow on "Only Ghosts Remains PLUS" is "Lonely Beach," a stirring instrumental shaped of swaying guitar patterns and gorgeous contours.

This nicely-conceived offering stands as a fitting reminder of how talented Bobby was, who sadly passed on from cancer August 29, 2022. Prior to exiting the earthly realm, he recorded *Bobby Sings and Plays*, which is worth purchasing as well. There's no denying Bobby's catchy contributions to the independent music scene were always welcome. Enjoyable on every

level, *Only Ghosts Remain PLUS* is guaranteed to please old and new fans alike.



Side by Side: Jeremy and the Lemon Clocks
(Fruits de Mer)

By Geoff Cabin

This 19-track, two-CD set features Jeremy covering psychedelic pop and rock songs from the late '60s and early '70s, both solo and as a member of the Lemon Clocks. It contains an interesting and wide-ranging selection of songs, and Jeremy demonstrates encyclopedic knowledge of the genre and mastery of the style.

The album kicks off with an epic, 18-minute version of the Lemon Pipers "Green Tambourine." The song goes through a variety of different sections ranging from the psychedelic pop sounds of the original record to spacey interludes to wild guitar freakouts, before culminating in an atmospheric, echo-laden finale. Jeremy gives a similar extended treatment to Tommy James and the Shondells "Crimson and Clover" and Norman Greenbaum's "Spirit in the Sky." The extended format gives Jeremy room to stretch out on guitar, and the album is filled with lots of great guitar playing. Other highlights include a hard-rocking version of Status Quo's "Pictures of Matchstick Men"; A propulsive cover of the Move's "Do Ya"; the Byrds' country-tinged "The River Flows," backed by jangly guitar; and Henry Mancini's "Peter Gunn," with a fuzz guitar taking the saxophone part. Jeremy also

includes one original, “Revolution #7,” a musical collage that juxtaposes disparate musical sections with each other.

Side by Side is a highly enjoyable exploration of psychedelic pop and rock sounds. (jamrecordings.com)



Pushbutton Romance: Rich Arithmetic
(Optional Art / Kool Kat Musik)

By Al Masciocchi

Rich and I go way back. In a way. I bought his first album, *Sleep In A Wigwam*, when it came out in 1994. Ouch! Time has a way of...making you feel old. I can't say why I even bought it; I think it was with a batch of pop stuff I bought when first discovering Not Lane and feeling like that was a goldmine back in those pre-Internet days.

Then a few years ago when his follow-up, *Shiftingears*, finally came out I decided to get it. Not Lane > Kool Kat, seemed the thing to do. Not to mention the punning title.

And you know what? Neither of those albums did much for me. Nothing particularly wrong with them but, then, nothing to set them apart either. That pop/power-pop genre is a tough one. I think there are a higher percentage of good albums within that genre than other genres but fewer great or better albums. Even Marshall Crenshaw, for all the really good stuff he has put out, hasn't come

close to that first album which is the gold standard for me.

So, imagine my surprise, but I guess third time's the charm for Arithmetic as *Pushbutton Romance* is a good deal better than good.

Arithmetic handles almost all of the vocals here and the lion's share of the instrumental work. The latter can lead to a less than organic feel at times. Stylistically he ranges far and wide but it all fits together – from the church processional feel of the opening instrumental to the Duane Eddy surf-twang of “Saving Sunset” to the chiming McGuinn guitars of “Bend The Arc” to the twisted Paul McCartney/Ray Davies British dance hall tune of “Battered & Broke,” which despite the jauntiness of the music is married to near-suicidal lyrics.

Sometimes the titles themselves gives you a reference point. The title of “Carry You (Redux)” is an aural echo of The Hollies “Carrie-Anne” which further echoes in the ringing acoustic guitar. And the three-part centerpiece of the album, “A Teenage Hymn”, couldn't be more obvious in its reference to Brian Wilson's teenage symphonies to God even if part 1, “Tan All Over” doesn't quite evoke the religious lyrically so much as Fountain Of Wayne's “Stacy's Mom”.

These reference points I note might suggest a lack of originality but that is not the case. The songs are fresh and inventive.

In sum, I am very glad I gave Rich Arithmetic another chance.

(richarithmetic.com / richarithmetic.bandcamp.com)



Rompin' Stompin' Rock 'n' Roll: Freddie Bell and the Bell Boys
(Jasmine)

By Geoff Cabin

Freddie Bell and the Bell Boys are something of a footnote in rock 'n' roll history, best known for a tangential connection with Elvis Presley. In April, 1956, Elvis was performing a two-week engagement at the Frontier Hotel in Las Vegas. During his spare time, Elvis stopped by the Sands Hotel to catch a show by Freddie Bell and the Bell Boys. During the course of their show, the band performed a rocked-up version of the Big Mama Thornton hit, “Hound Dog,” which they had recorded for Teen Records the previous year. Hearing the band's version of “Hound Dog” gave Elvis the idea for his next record.

Rompin' Stompin' Rock 'n' Roll gives those who are curious a chance to hear Freddie Bell and the Bell Boys version of “Hound Dog” as well as more of the band's output. The band had a sound similar to Bill Haley and His Comets featuring boogie-woogie piano, a riffing horn section, and sax solos.

The band's version of “Hound Dog” is different from both Big Mama Thornton's version and Elvis' version of the song. Bell sings over a strong beat emphasized by handclaps and repeats “hound dog” a second time in the refrain, with a honking sax solo between verses. There are other enjoyable tracks here as well. “Rompin' and Stompin' and “Teach You to Rock” are both...

Continued on page 4.