

Easy Reading

FROM HOHNER, INC.

SPRING/SUMMER 2003



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In Search of Little Walter

Pioneer of Chicago Blues Harmonica

BY DAVID MASSEY

Little Walter remains a mystery. Perhaps you own every immortal Chess/Checker track the harmonica genius recorded, as well as the fascinating alternative tracks. Maybe you've studied liner notes discussing his Hohner Marine Band mastery and tragic "gone-too-soon" life story. If so, you've probably also rattled your brain working out the riffs to such classics as *Juke* and *Roller Coaster*.

Nonetheless, no full-scale biography of arguably the most inventive, creative and lyrical blues harmonica player of all time, Marion Walter Jacobs, had ever been written. This is surprising, as the oft-overlooked pioneer single-handedly wrote the definitive textbook on Chicago-style blues harmonica. He died tragically in 1968 — only 37 years old.

But all will be revealed in a new Little Walter biography.

Three Little Walter fanatics embarked on the daunting task of piecing together the complex troubled life and groundbreaking music of Little Walter — the first complete and exhaustive biography.

The result is *Blues with a Feeling: The Little Walter Story* (Routledge Press; 368 pages) which also includes the most complete Walter discography ever published, plus never-before-seen photos and promo ads, according to the authors.

This triumvirate of co-authors (all blues harp players) pooled their respective research talents and writing

skills and spent the last five years diligently working on this massive project. Along the way, each author would help motivate the others to keep the challenging and time-consuming research and writing moving along.

Chicago-based writer/musician Scott Dirks, Tony Glover (of Koerner, Ray and Glover fame,

and author of a harp instruction book in 1965) and writer/musician Ward Gaines scoured census records, police files, studio log sheets, genealogical data. They also studied hours of rare out-takes and interviewed more than 60 of Walter's cohorts and contemporaries — from Marshall Chess to Billy Boy Arnold.

"We thought the task of writing this book would be too daunting individually," says Gaines. "But writing the book together with Scott and Tony was a lot of fun."

The writers were all somewhat surprised at the lack of written material on Walter — and had to overcome many research roadblocks and obstacles. The challenges included several Walter contemporaries and some family members who were hesitant to share their knowledge. In addition, at times names and dates did not jibe, research leads and tips fizzled out, etc. In fact, the authors had to roll up their sleeves and do a lot of old-fashioned detective work.

"The project was real archeology," says Gaines. "Our research was like forensics, finding a bone here and a shard there, and building up from that. The book was similar to fitting together a mosaic or one big jigsaw puzzle."

The authors learned that Walter essentially had been overlooked by history. They believe their biography will help to give Walter his due as one of the true geniuses of blues and modern music.



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Highway Living Room

Catching Up With Mickey Raphael

BY CATHI NORTON

Mickey Raphael has been playing harmonica in the same country band for almost 30 years. Sure, it's Willie Nelson's band, but still, Mickey's been playing Crazy since Mariah Carey was two and the war in Vietnam plagued us! From all I've learned, this band's survival comes down to fierce loyalty, musical skill and the ability to grow together through challenges.

For Raphael, this means he's always on the lookout for ways to stay fresh and stimulate his musical muse. Born in Dallas, Texas, in 1952 and gifted with a guitar at a young age, he quickly abandoned it. "I was terrible," he laughed. Before long, however, the teenager was playing gigs in a Dallas folk club and working with folk singer B.W. Stephenson.

One day a Dallas football coach and fan invited him to a post-game party. Willie Nelson was there. "He told me to come jam if I heard they were playing around, so I did!"

Though Willie works the band hard from February to November (last year they did 130 cities), Mickey takes on session work whenever he can. He got his start as a session artist when Rodney Crowell interested Brian Ahearn (Emmylou Harris' producer) in him. He soon moved from his home in Austin and remained in the Los Angeles area for 18 years before moving to Nashville, TN (all the while touring with Willie). He's recorded with a huge list of stars: Emmylou Harris, Elton John, Rodney Crowell, Guy Clark, U2, etc. "Every now and then I need a curve ball," he smiled.

A recent project with Paula Cole and another with jazz saxophone player Bill Evans (who Raphael saw play with Miles Davis as a kid) really pumped him up. "Jazz was hard," laughed Mickey, "but the music really fit the harp." He even tried producing. "I produced a track for Mark Seliger — a fledgling

musician most famous as the album cover photographer for the Rolling Stones. Lenny Kravitz actually produced the album and enlisted friends to help on different tracks. "Lenny did a couple; Gillian Welch; the Wallflowers; and Willie and I produced one."

When not engaged in outside projects, Raphael experiments with his stage work, adding echo and bass harp to develop different ambient sounds. Yet he sticks with his basic playing philosophy — advice he first heard from Paul

Butterfield, "It's easy to play riffs all night; it's much harder to play the melody.' If I play licks it's for a solo. I'm not a fast player either; I'd rather hear one person play two wonderful notes with great tone than machine-gun fire."

Thirty years of working with Willie Nelson has given Mickey a wealth of amazing experiences, worldwide travel and incredible musical adventures. Though band members share tight quarters ("luxurious but close," grins Mickey), they have clearly developed a touring lifestyle that works. Nelson's antics are legendary and his popularity and music continue to charm audiences everywhere. Mickey Raphael is grateful and not blind to the rarity of his 30-year gig. "Willie's a pretty loyal guy to work for!"

EZR: The Willie-gig amazes me Mickey, yet I know you're doing a lot of session work.

Mickey Raphael: Yes. I really love studio work because it's such a challenge and I love the way I sound in the studio! Maybe I'm jaded, but I'd much rather do something great on record because studio work is how you're judged. At least that's how I judge myself.

I know Willie's got a zillion records out. What's the latest?

The Great Divide, with Matt Serletic. Matt produces Matchbox 20 and did the last big Santana hit.

Refresh me on your rig Mickey. I remember you use a Beyer mic?

Yes, an M88, through a pre-amp on stage into the PA. It goes through an amp too. I have a compressor and a pre-amp on stage with a volume control so when I play quieter harp I can boost the level a little.



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Pete Pedersen

The Man Behind The Music

BY JAINE RODACK

It's funny how things appear serendipitously. Recently I was asked to write an article for *EasyReeding* about my far better half, Pete Pedersen.

Pete passed away in May of 2002. Since then, I've spent a good bit of time sifting through old photographs and souvenirs: a lifetime of achievements and memories. There was so much to say about him. So many things I wanted to write that I didn't know where to start.

I spent days writing and rewriting the 1500 words allotted to me. I wanted every one to be perfect — to give those who didn't know him an idea of who he was and what he had accomplished. At the same time, I wanted to give those who had known him something more. Something they had not known before.

But the words would not come. Then, last night, I came across a copy of a letter Pete had written introducing himself and his new CD in April 1996. It was just after the completion of *Groovin' High*, long before he took ill or his good friend Jerry Murad had passed away. In the letter Pete encapsulated his life's work, lacing it with his own special brand of humor. Here was his story as no one but Pete could tell it. I decided to put aside my own recollections and let Pete do the talking.

I will admit to adding a few final thoughts of my own: the "something more" I mentioned earlier. For in his letter Pete had said nothing of his character, the man behind the music.

And so we begin with Pete's story, in his own words, just as he wrote it on that April day in 1996.



"I've been playing the harmonica since age 5. I grew up in Chicago, and some of my early mentors ... who even let the kid hang with them a little ... were Stuff Smith, J.C. Higginbotham, Red Alan and Fletcher Henderson.

My best friend, even to this day, is Jerry Murad. Together with two guys we met in the Parks, Al and Bob, we formed a Harmonica band called the Harmonica Madcaps. Shortly after that, Jerry and I got an invitation to join the world famous Borrah Minevitch Harmonica Rascals: the harmonica band that featured

the 'little guy' in feature movies as well as a countless number of 'shorts.' I stayed with the 'Rascals' for about 8 years.

On my own after Minevitch, I worked for a while in a group called The Don Henry Trio, a show group. We had a semi-hit on the Regent label in Sabre Dance, as well as some standards that are now collector's items among harmonica players. Next step was to become a duo: the Harmonic-Aires ... I hope you love all these names ... another show act, but now, with the credential of eight appearances on the Ed Sullivan Show. We even toured with him for Lincoln Mercury Concerts.

Eventually I became a one-man show, kind of a poor-man's Victor Borge with a harmonica.

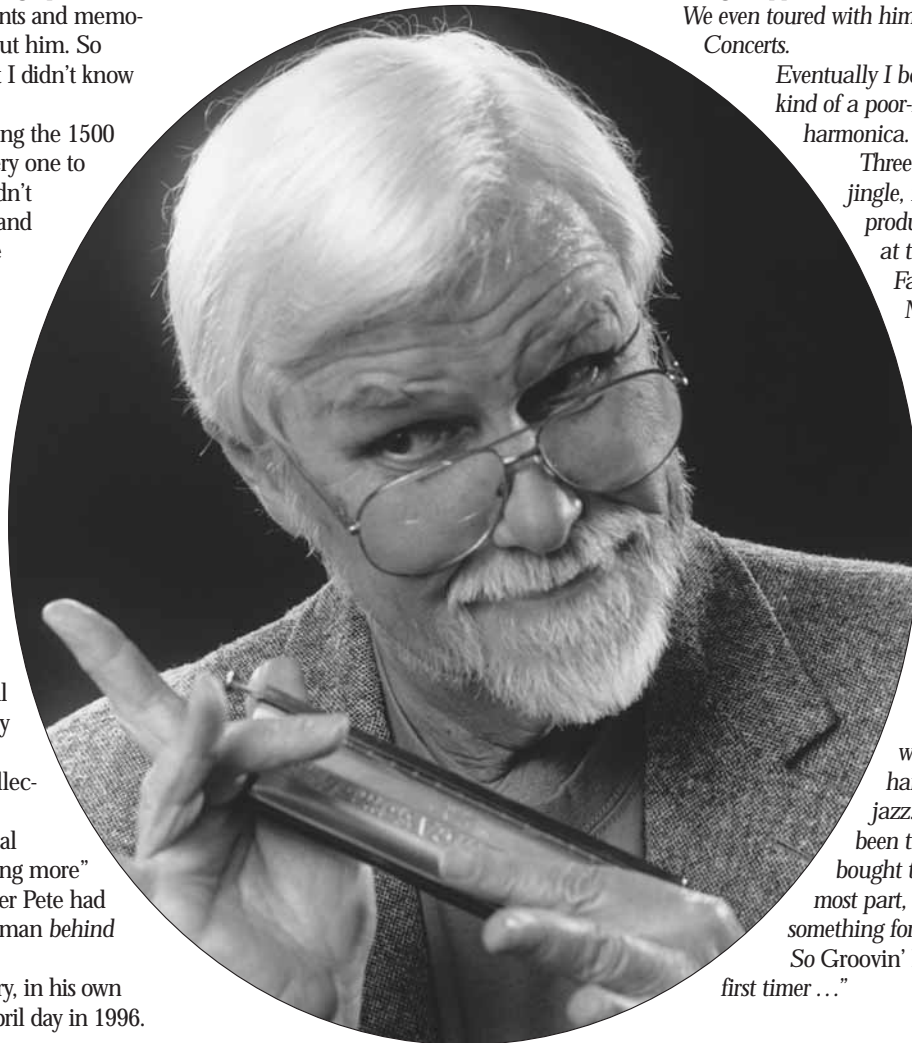
Three kids later I became a jingle, industrial film and production music library writer at the worlds' largest 'Music Factory,' located in Memphis, Tennessee.

We're not over yet! 'Cause ten years later I'm producing Disco hits in Toronto, Canada, for a group called Three Hat's Productions.

The day the disco died I moved back to Memphis and started writing jingles again, only this time I owned the company.

The thing that ties this whole story together is the harmonica and my love of jazz. As the saying goes, I've been there and back (even bought their T-shirt). But for the most part, what I did was what I do: something for someone else.

So *Groovin' High* is the life work of a first timer ..."



continued on next page

“... for the most part, what I did was what I do: something for someone else.”

To me, that statement says it all. Although Pete didn't mean it in a personal way, I never met anyone who spent so much of his time doing things for others. It was also very much like Pete to think of himself as a poor man's version of someone he admired. He just couldn't see himself as an original, despite the fact that there was no one else quite like him.

The first time I saw him, he was standing on the porch of one of a dozen clapboard bungalows that housed the musicians of Diana Street. The place he referred to as “the world's largest music factory.”

The year was 1969, and he had just made the move from Dallas to Memphis, to write singing commercials for what was then known as Pepper Sound Studios.

In the thirty-plus years that followed, our relationship would evolve from co-worker to friend to long-time companion. I was a lyricist — the words to his music. Pete would explain it this way: “First we wrote together. Then we played together.”

He was the love of my life: quick of wit and warm of heart.

Back in the 1980s, just about the time we were writing our own disco album for Three Hats, a lyric line in a Broadway musical called *They're Playing Our Song* caught my attention. It was written about a musician so tied to his music, you couldn't tell where one ended and the other began who asks, “Does the man make the music, or does the music make this man?”

When it came to Pete, I never could decide. Pete and music were one and the same, as much a part of the other than if he had been born with a harmonica in his mouth.

Pete used his music and natural wit to make people feel good. Seldom did he turn down a

request to play or write something for lack of money. The joy of performing was always enough for Pete. My grandmother would have said that he was a “mench,” a gentle man who never took a cheap shot and always took the high road.

Through the years I watched as people sought him out and coveted his advice. He was a great listener, extremely patient and extraordinarily fair. I can't tell you how many times someone would say “I'll never forget when you said such and such...” a statement that always gave him pause. He was

of his life, a sturdy soul: strong and tall and ‘able to leap tall buildings with a single bound.’ He could walk for miles, rise early and turn in late. Write all night and work all day. I was nearly twenty years his junior and never could keep up with him.

These past few years were not easy for Pete. The trials he faced would have broken the spirit of even the strongest among us. And yet he met every challenge with tremendous grace. Even when he could not help himself, he continued to help others. He was the most courageous, inspiring, and decent person I have ever known. And I miss him terribly.

If you have never heard his music, it's not too late. Pete's recordings, arrangements and performances are still available for all to see and hear. His last work, *When Spring Comes to Town*, was written just weeks before his passing, and stands as an enduring tribute to his genius.

I remember years ago, he wrote a short piece he entitled *Jaine Rodack's Doorbell*. It was a marvelous mix of train whistles, bells, trombones, and chirping birds, a Spike-Jones-like affair, that made you laugh without saying a word. It was pure Pete.

And so were his more serious pieces. Among my personal favorites: his awe-inspiring take on *An American In Paris*, the test pieces and an amazing arrangement of *I've Got Rhythm* that he

wrote for a hundred-plus Tattoo (encompassing everything from a Navy Steel band to a gospel choir, swan trumpets to a pop orchestra, an African ensemble and toy xylophone contingency). It was incredible. But then, so was he.

The passion he put into every note — his signature and singular talent for weaving songs throughout his arrangements, all of these things continue to warm the heart and fill the soul.

Certainly no one ever loved the harmonica more or asked for less. He was my hero. %



Vintage Pete (clockwise from top): in the studio writing for films, with the Harmonica Rascals (far right) and posing for a Hohner promotional shot.

Photos courtesy of Jaine Rodack & Hohner file



genuinely amazed that something he said could have that kind of impact.

Since his passing, so many people have remarked, “I don't know anyone who knew Pete, who didn't like him.” Me neither. I think it was because we knew we could trust him to keep our confidences, feel our pain, and cheer our triumphs.

Of good Norwegian stock, Pete was, for most

Pete Pedersen's music can be heard on three CDs: *Music & Memories*, *Groovin' High* and *Some Of These Days & Some of Those Days*. Selected sheet music is also available. For more information visit PETE-PEDERSEN.com or via e-mail at PETESCD@aol.com.

European News

Harmonica Events Abound

BY STEVE BAKER

HarpOnline Gipfel

This year has seen a number of interesting European harmonica events. Last summer Michael Timler (owner of the online harmonica shop HarpOnline) and Klaus Rohwer organized the HarpOnline Gipfel (summit) 2002 featuring overblow master Howard Levy and classical chromonica virtuoso Franz Chmel in Ulm, Germany. The two-day event consisted of workshops and concerts by both artists and was conceived to bring together the very best of modern diatonic and chromatic har-



monica. It was attended by harmonica fans from Belgium and Holland as well as from all over Germany and went a long way toward establishing common ground between players of both types of instrument. Howard and Franz had never met in person and both were deeply



Howard Levy

impressed with the other's performance. Congratulations to the organizers on successfully building bridges between what can still sometimes be antagonistic factions in the harmonica community.

First Trossingen Blues Factory Festival

At the beginning of September, the former site of the Hohner production facilities hosted the First Trossingen Blues Factory Festival. Set around the fully renovated works power station, this three-day festival showcased a number of acts featuring Hohner harmonica endorsers. Headlining on Friday night were B.B. & the

Blues Shacks, one of the top European blues bands, with the excellent Michael Arlt on harp and vocals. Saturday saw the German debut of an interesting Polish band, Beata Kossowska and Le Blue. Beata fronts the band and plays very accomplished folk-jazz harmonica. The music isn't really blues at all, more like jazz rock with a distinct Slavic touch. There are some fine musicians emerging from the former Eastern bloc and it's great to see them making names for themselves. I was booked to play after Beata with my partner Abi Wallenstein but the heavens opened while the band was conducting their soundcheck on the open air stage and everyone got very wet. The phone rang asking if we could come over and play inside while the band rescued their equipment, so we played first. The festival ended on Sunday with a blues brunch and session on the (now dry) outdoor stage. Photos of the Blues Factory and also of the HarpOnline Gipfel can be viewed at www.harponline.de/Kunstler/Beata_Kossowska/Hohner/hohner.html



Beata Kossowska

Harmo'Liege 2002

Another annual harmonica event is the Harmo'Liege in the French speaking Belgian city of Liege. Run by the amiable Emile Gregoire and his delightful family, this is a small festival created by true enthusiasts who always manage to put a quality program together. This year they invited Celtic harp specialist Brendan Power and his partner Geoff Castle, French diatonic jazz expert Michel Herblin and Belgian virtuoso Thierry Crommen (both accompanied by their respective trios), traditional blues artists Elmore D. & Big Dave, one man band Philippe Menard and the well-known Dutch harmonica trio Fata Morgana. That's quite a program for a private non-profit organization and ensured three

days of excellent harmonica music. Brendan Power was most impressed by the high standard of the French players. People are starting to combine their own musical heritages with the African-American harmonica tradition and new styles are emerging as a result.

Harmonica Masters Workshops 2003

In cooperation with the Trossingen Cultural Office, I am planning a four-day educational event September 3 - 7, 2003, to coincide with the 2nd Trossingen Blues Factory Festival. This will consist of seminars, sessions and concerts featuring some of the finest players on the scene today. In contrast to the World Harmonica Festivals held at the same location every four years, there will be no competitions. The plan is to present four parallel courses taught by myself, Joe Filisko, Carlos Del Junco and Brendan Power, plus a couple of larger seminars for all participants on topics of general interest. The four instructors will then perform full length concerts for the Blues Factory Festival. All the above players have agreed to participate, so this promises to be an exciting event and is certainly the first of its kind in Europe. The Cultural Office will be taking care of registration and accommodations, details are available on their website, www.kultur-trossingen.de.



Joe Filisko

Blues Harmonica Playalongs Volume 2

I'm in the middle of writing the sequel to the CD/book package *Blues Harmonica Playalongs Vol. 1*, available in the US from Mel Bay Publications. For this project, I recorded 12 instrumental titles in a wide range of styles

continued next page

including bluegrass, country blues, Chicago blues, rockabilly, rock and funk. Each will be found in two versions on the CD, with and without harmonica. Half of the titles feature acoustic accompaniment, the other half are electric. Fortunately I was able to persuade my old friend and musical partner Dick Bird to play guitar (Dick will be known to anyone who has attended one of the Trossingen harmonica festivals as the guitarist in the backing band). His concise and tasteful picking on acoustic and electric guitar made it possible to cover such diverse material. The book will contain transcriptions and step-by-step explanations of the harp themes as well as useful practicing tips. In response to numerous requests from readers of the first volume, we have included transcriptions of many of the harp solos, so students can check exactly what went down.



Abi Wallenstein CD

Despite his extremely busy touring schedule, Abi found time last summer to record a new CD in Hamburg. This is possibly his best recording ever and convincingly demonstrates why he occupies such a unique position among European blues artists. It combines a rawness seldom heard today with some top-line playing and showcases Abi's deeply personal interpretations of a mix of originals and obscure covers. I had the pleasure of playing on more than half the titles and all of them feature Martin Röttger on cajon (Peruvian drum box). We are doing quite a number of trio gigs in this line-up, as it fits Abi's music perfectly. The CD will probably be entitled *Step In Time* and will be released on 040 Records. ☞



New *BEST BLUES* Compilations from Raw Records

BY MICHAEL COBB (PRESIDENT, RAW RECORDS)



San Francisco Bay's *BEST BLUES*

Back to my roots, the San Francisco Bay Area music scene is still the heart and soul of all that is good about music. It was a thrill collecting the tracks for this compilation. Credit for recruitment of most of the artists on this collection goes to one of my musical heroes, John Lee Sanders. It is also poetic that my all-time favorite guitar player & the best teacher I've ever had, Garth Webber, would put a track on this CD. This is truly a compilation of masters of their craft. My deepest gratitude goes out to all the artists on this CD — you are the spice of my life.

Vancouver, B.C.'s *BEST BLUES*

Vancouver may be on the edge of the world, but it's definitely on top of the Blues. Each and every submission we received was excellent and deserved a track on one of our *BEST BLUES* compilations. It's great having too much good material. As always, our aim was to give regional artists the credit and exposure they deserve while giving a wider cross-section of the public a chance to enjoy the local masters performing a broad spectrum of styles of this pure North American art form. *Vancouver, B.C.'s BEST BLUES* has a first — we have a number of nationally and internationally known acts that stepped up and agreed to contribute. Our humblest thanks go to them as well as the rest of the artists.



Seattle's *BEST BLUES, Vol. 2*

Two years ago I did my first blues compilation, *Seattle's BEST BLUES, Volume 1*. I'm now on my fifth and I'm happy to report it's anything but routine. Musicians are an entirely unique breed — typically working graveyard hours and possessing a distinctive view of the world and the people who fill it. Not necessarily judgmental, just colored by a life experience unlike the one most of us are presented with. So what? So that's what makes working in this middle ground, between the creative (and sometimes twisted) perspective of the artist and the often logic-based (and sometimes pedantic) world of business, so much fun. It's not news that artists are severely underpaid — the good news is, they get rewards most of us can only dream of. Getting to reach deep down inside and create music and an environment that stirs audiences in ways that can't be measured has got to be one of the greatest experiences there is. The artists who provided the tracks for this compilation have great material to share. ☞



Look through the complete song lists at www.rawrecords.com, pick your favorites and order these excellent anthology CDs.

An Exciting Harmonica Experience

SPAH Convention 2002

BY JAMES DAY

What an experience! Here I was, hunkered down for five days in a hotel with a harmonica convention happening downstairs. All over the hotel, there were plenty of accessible professional and amateur harmonica players from all over the world! This was the one event to meet harmonica manufacturers, take workshops, view antique harmonica collections, attend nightly showcases, learn to repair your harps, talk to other “harmaniacs,” participate in jam sessions, buy harps and rare recordings, plus hear the harmonica played in every musical style imaginable.

This was the 2002 SPAH Convention!

The annual convention of the Society for the Preservation and Advancement of the Harmonica, (SPAH) was held in Columbus, Ohio, from August 13 to 17, 2002, in cooperation with the Buckeye Harmonica Club. Founded in 1963 and now nearly four decades old, SPAH’s mission has always been to unite the harmonica world. SPAH is a crystallization of everything harmonica in the North American English-speaking countries. Membership is more than 3,000. Convention attendees in 2002 came from as far away as a harmonica trio from Malaysia, to a young Frenchman who was a huge Sonny Terry fan.

The musicianship is tops and the artistic stylings are many. A large part of the SPAH membership is composed of harmonica band music — which is usually performed by a trio with bass and chord harmonicas supplying the rhythm and the chromatic as part of the melody. At one time these trios, and even entire harmonica orchestras, were the rage. They reached their zenith in the early ‘50s. Several trios played the

nightly SPAH showcases. The Dan McKelvy Trio gave a spirited performance with a great rendition of the *Orange Blossom Special*, the Bliss Harmonica Gang traveled from Germany to treat the SPAH crowd to one of the great performances that has been satisfying the European public for 50 years. The Harmonica Classics, who individually are proficient in jazz and diatonic playing, performed a tight set with just the right touch of comedy.

Bill Barrett and Damien Masterson, both astoundingly versatile players, represented the jazz contingent. Barrett has been active in the avant-garde jazz scene, developing new techniques for the chromatic by creating “bizarre sounds and sonic events.” Masterson played with so much Latin-inspired soul that it was a delight to hear him perform, not only on the chromatic, but vocally and on tenor sax as well.

SPAH President Douglas Tate performed chromatic classical music and also presented a seminar about utilizing your PC for fun and performance. Later, the versatile Susan Rosenberg lent her expressive harmonica voice to many classical and



SPAH highlights include (clockwise from top): The Harmonica Classics with guest, Hohner’s Rick Epping & Hohner’s Sissi Jones.

Photos by Everet “Griff” Griffin



continued next page

classic selections, ably accompanied by Carolbeth True on piano.

At the Saturday dinner showcase, Frederic Yonnet played his eclectic diatonic harmonica combining jazz, fusion, country, reggae, gospel, hip-hop and classical styles.

Joe Filisko played in the pre-war acoustic style and did a nice DeFord Bailey tune, followed by a droning *Amazing Grace* that sounded like several bagpipes. Dennis Gruenling rounded out the diatonic performance by accompanying vocalist Gina Fox on several jump blues tunes that had the fat tone of a honking baritone saxophone.

Those who wanted to advance their harmonica know-how in a short time could attend 2-hour-long "teach-ins" organized on three convention days by master customizer Joe Filisko. Where else could one learn from so much concentrated talent and expertise at one time? There were consistently about eight round tables full of players and technicians. Participants could slide into Jimmy Gordon's session about tweaking your harmonica, then pop-in and learn tongue switching and fiddle phrasing on your "Mouth Box" in the Irish style from James Conway, or pop into Winslow Yerxa's theory chalk talk.

Still want more?

Ok, then ask Hohner's Rick Epping or Sissi Jones some chromatic questions, learn some modern jazz from Allen Radcliffe-Holmes and finish up with Nashville session man, Kirk "Jellyroll" Johnson.

The vibe of SPAH is friendly and one is able to learn and speak with professional players. Walking down the hotel's hallways there are harmonica riffs wafting from every other room. Impromptu jam sessions are at every turn, raffles, collectors' displays and vendors abound — truly a harmonica happening!

Buzz Krantz hosted the late night blues jams where players could try their improvisational skills with a cobbled together blues band that shuffled you into the wee small hours. Jazz jams with Michael Polesky were held in the hotel's foyer, and many trios and groups performed daily concerts at the open mic in the lobby.

Many of the performers also led seminars to showcase their particular virtuosity. These were held throughout the day, affording the many sleep-deprived attendees the opportunity to further advance their harmonica skills. Seminars ran the gamut from Alan "Blackie" Schackner's

'master' chromatic class to rootsy gospel player Buddy Greene, who displayed his Nashville influence. In addition, an informative workshop about reading music was offered by the Hotshots of Simpson/Smith.

SPAH is an event that every player should experience at least once during his or her harmonica journey. It is a crystallization of all things harmonica, where musicians check in with each other and learn about the versatility of the instrument. §

SPAH's 40th Anniversary Convention will be hosted by HOOT (Harmonica Organization of Texas) August 19-23, 2003 in Irving, Texas. For more information, visit www.SPAH.org or www.hoottexas.com.

James Day fronts the Fish Fry Swingers in Philadelphia.



Which Hohner bluesmen won?

Find out in *News from the USA* on page 19



Vintage Hohner
Chrometta Assembly,
Hohner Germany
circa 1954

Taking Bending to the Extreme

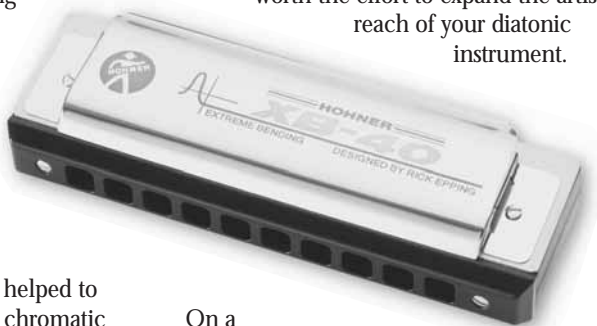
Notes From Rick's Bench

BY RICK EPPING

It has long been the dream of blues harp players to bend every note. However, the limitations of the standard diatonic harmonica restrict that instrument's note-bending capability to the extent that only eight of the 20 notes on a 10-hole diatonic can be bent a semitone or more. For as long as harp players have been bending notes they have had to accept this limitation, avoiding or working around musical passages containing chromatic notes or slurs not available on their chosen instrument and passing on lines that guitarists or horn players manage with ease.



back of your tongue is raised up against the palate in the same way you change the mouth's vowel shape to make the sounds from *AHH* to *EEE*, without actually vocalizing. The tongue is then slid backward or forward to a position that will pull down the pitch of the unbent note being played. High-pitched notes are bent with the back of your tongue placed toward the front of the mouth and lower notes are bent with your tongue farther back. The bending technique may take some time to master, but is worth the effort to expand the artistic reach of your diatonic instrument.



On a regular 10-hole diatonic harmonica, the standard blues note-bending method involves an interaction between two reeds, one blow and one draw. With this type of harmonica, only the higher pitched of the two notes from any given reed cell can be bent and then only to a point

somewhat above that of the lower pitched reed.

For example, the 4-blow C reed on a regular key of C harmonica, being two semitones below the 4-draw D reed, enables the D draw note to be bent down a little more than a semitone. The 5-draw F note, however, cannot be bent a complete semitone, because the 5-blow E reed is only one semitone lower than the 5-draw F reed. Furthermore, the notes of the lower pitched reeds in any reed cell, that is, 1 through 6 blow and 7 through 10 draw, are prevented by the higher pitched reeds in their cells from significantly bending at all. Thus, on a standard diatonic harmonica, only certain notes may be played through bending [see CHART 1].

The chart below shows that, even with the help of note bending, playing a complete chromatic scale is impossible within the standard diatonic harmonica's range.

The XB-40 overcomes this limitation by incorporating an additional set of reeds, tuned so that all twenty of the harmonica's notes can be bent using the standard blues harp bending technique. Using a system of patented valve chambers, these auxiliary reeds come into play only during note-bending. In addition to controlling the operation of the auxiliary reeds, the valve chambers serve as tone chambers, which amplify the fundamental frequency of the reeds to create a warm, rich tone.

The overblowing technique has helped to overcome the diatonic harmonica's chromatic limitations but is found by many players to be somewhat problematic and difficult to master. Partially valving the reedplates can extend diatonic bending capabilities, but it affects the tone on the valved reeds and can likewise be difficult to control.

This situation changed this year when Hohner introduced the **XB-40 Extreme Bending Harp**, a revolutionary new model that offers the player total bending freedom — every note, blow and draw, can be bent using the same standard, diatonic bending technique.

What is note-bending, why is it limited on the standard diatonic harmonica and how does the XB-40 overcome this limitation? Note-bending, as popularized by blues harp players, is a technique heard today in many styles of diatonic harmonica playing. As well as adding to the number of notes you can play on the diatonic harmonica, bending improves the instrument's expressive capability by making possible the use of slurs and glissandi.

Bending is accomplished by partially isolating the air in your mouth cavity from the rest of the vocal tract and adjusting its resonant frequency to that of the desired bent note. The

CHART 1: Standard diatonic harmonica, Key of C

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Blow bend										a#3
Blow bend								d#3	f#3	b3
Blow note	c1	e1	g1	c2	e2	g2	c3	e3	g3	c4
Draw note	d1	g1	b1	d2	f2	a2	b2	d3	f3	a3
Draw bend	c#1	f#1	a#1	c#2		g#2				
Draw bend		f1	a1							
Draw bend			g#1							

continued next page

The valve chambers also produce an even playing response throughout the instrument.

The XB-40 is tuned so that every note can be bent a whole tone, with an additional semi-tone bend on the 3-draw to complete the chromatic scale in the first octave [see CHART 2].

The XB-40's design not only creates a

complete chromatic scale, it offers you multiple ways to play most notes. The player can, for instance, play a g2 note in the standard manner, with the 6-blow unbent, include a sliding bend up to it from f2, or play a g2 as a bent note on the 6-draw, adding a sliding bend down to it from the unbent a2. Similarly, a d#2 note

can be produced with a half-bend on the 5-blow or with a full-bend on the 5-draw. This feature significantly increases the expressive capability of the XB-40 in a way never before possible on any other harmonica.

The result of more than 10 years of development, Hohner's XB-40 offers the player a harmonica that is uniquely rich in tone and consistent in response, with the capability to perform with unlimited freedom of expression through total bending power. The blanks in the scale are now filled to the extreme. %

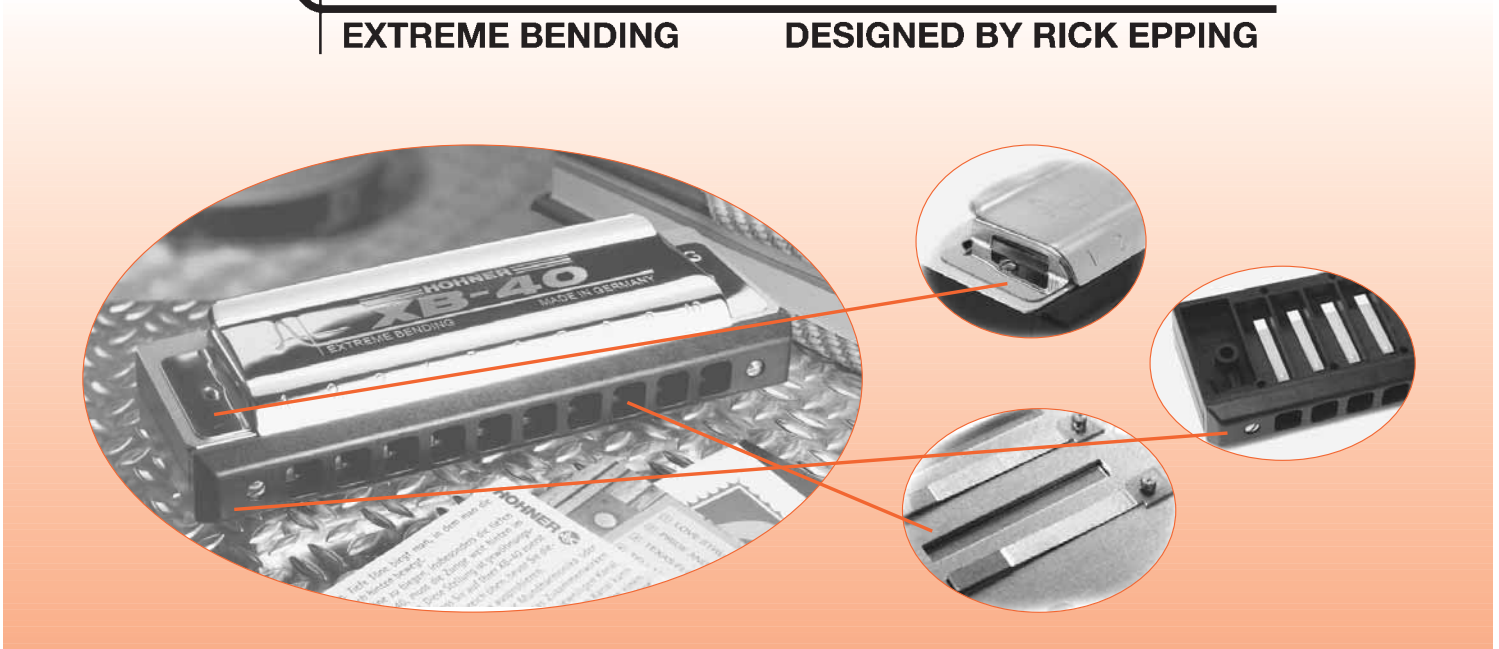
CHART 2: XB-40 harmonica, Key of C

HOLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Blow bend	a#	d1	f1	a#1	d2	f2	a#2	d3	f3	a#3
Blow bend	b	d#1	f#1	b1	d#2	f#2	b2	d#3	f#3	b3
Blow Note	c1	e1	g1	c2	e2	g2	c3	e3	g3	c4
Draw Note	d1	g1	b1	d2	f2	a2	b2	d3	f3	a3
Draw bend	c#1	f#1	a#1	c#2	e2	g#2	a#2	c#3	e3	G#3
Draw bend	c1	f1	a1	c2	d#2	g2	a2	c3	d#3	g3
Draw bend			g#1							

Rick Epping

Editor's Note: Hohner's new XB-40 model will soon be available in all keys from a harmonica dealer near you. Designed by Hohner's own Rick Epping, this instrument will astound you with its revolutionary playing capabilities!

HOHNER
XB-40
 EXTREME BENDING DESIGNED BY RICK EPPING



Double Da

BY CATHI NORTON

Everything about Paul deLay seems larger than life: his history, his challenges, his size, musical creativity and, maybe best of all, his attitude. Born the last day of January 1952 in Portland, Oregon, deLay grew up in a musically inclined family. "My dad plays the best musical saw in the world and my mom played piano and guitar. They had a lot of crazy, drunken piano players that would come by in the middle of the night." Harmonica became a staple thanks to gasoline Green Stamps. "I used to play a harmonica with one hand while I rode my bike."

It wasn't until deLay hit high school that he began to jam around in bands. "I had a great jug band that did a very operatic version of *Thunder Road* that had the cops there in no time — without any amplification whatsoever!" he laughed. A friend suggested he listen to some Chess recordings and the blues knocked him out. While learning about Sonny Boy Williamson and Little Walter, deLay also heard Paul Butterfield. "There were a couple of cuts on *Folksong '65* that I used to come home from school and play with my head stuck into the speakers as far as I could go."

In the late '60s, he joined Brown Sugar, a local blues band that remained popular for nearly 10 years. Between Brown Sugar and performing with his own band, deLay toured with Sunnyland Slim. He still chuckles at that memory: "They didn't like my playing well enough to even complain about it for a couple of weeks, but then they were kind enough to straighten me out in several areas about how Chicago blues are played."

With his old band's guitarist, Jim Mesi, Paul soon formed his new "authentic blues" band. Now in existence nearly 13 years, his current group features Peter Dammann on guitar, Dan Fincher on sax, Louis Pain on keyboards/bass and drummer Kelly Dunn. Over the course of an evening they do about 80 percent originals and lean toward an "uptown" sound. "We do it all really — it's blues, but there's quite a bit of gospel, R&B and jazz influence in it. Then I also like to throw down with a complete sense of immediacy and just blow nice Chicago style blues."

deLay has survived several of life's major challenges, one

of which was a "livin' large" drug era, for which he paid heavily with a 41-month prison camp sentence in the '90s. "I highly endorse the clean and sober thing. That whole drug thing is a tremendous shortcut to the small time." There's little doubt, however, that the experience catapulted Paul into a new creative age of heartfelt songwriting and style.

Plunging into frenetic writing and recording, he released two albums (*The Other One*, 1990, and *Paulzilla*, 1992; both on his own Criminal record label), and then spent his sentence perfecting his writing style. "I had the time to avoid a lot of predictable rhymes and got out of that habit, thank God," he smiled. "I think I'll probably be using material I wrote in that camp for the rest of my life."

In 1996, he burst forth with two more impressive recordings — *Oceans of Tears*, 1996 and *Nice and Strong*, 1998 — both on the Evidence label with whom he still works today. A side-trip to Chicago in 1999 initiated *deLay Does Chicago* (Evidence) which also featured Rockin' Johnny Burgin, Jimmy Dawkins and Zora Young.

Health problems were the next major challenge for Paul. Struggling with a pituitary tumor, depression, and a leg infection, he was seriously slowed down which drove his weight up. Just this year he feels his strength returning. "I think the trick is to do as much as you consciously can and then kick your brain out of trying to force things. Like reading a book — give it a chance to digest and then things come jumping out all in one piece sometimes." It seems he's right, for his 2001 Evidence release, *Heavy Rotation*, was hovering persistently on the charts, right on the heels of two nominations in '99 for W.C. Handy Awards ("Best Song" and "Best Harmonica").

Daring to dream big, deLay brings new textures to harmonica blues and a personal, unabashed writing style that reflects both struggle and compassion.



arin' deLay



As Peter "Madcat" Ruth commented: "Of all the harp players out there, he's one of my favorites. He has such a fresh approach and does things his own way ... it's beautiful."

EZR: *Paul, tell me a little about your harmonica tone.*

Paul deLay: Well, I think one good thing is I don't smother my mic completely, but operate from more of a semi-backed-off position which is brighter. Then if I add more bass I can really get on it, or back off for a whole lot of bright, treble sounds as well. I try not to get bogged down on the low end of the harp. For a blues guy I tend to use more blow notes and I really don't like playing cliché blues harp. One of the sounds I'm trying to get is a Dixieland or jazz trumpet sound. I'm not exactly sure how, but people have said that I am one of the more lyrical and melodic players.

Did you teach yourself?

Yes, but I don't recommend that approach. *(laughs)* I usually tell people starting out to chord around a lot rather than trying to get your bearings by playing single notes. I used to just play four holes and block two in the middle to play chords. I think the riffs I've ended up with used to be chord patterns that eliminated the bottom note. Gradually, I've pieced it together. Perhaps I'd be farther along if I'd learned by the book and played scales, but a passionate delivery counts too. *(laughs)* I guess it's the gene pool whether or not you have what it takes to knock a solo off the top of your head.

Do you give lessons?



I love doing lessons. I'm hoping I can figure out a way to do them over the Internet with video hookups. Lately I've been occasionally playing late '30s, early '40s country blues with a world-beater keyboard player, Janice Scroggins, and my drummer Kelly. I would love to work on things that involve 'call and response' too, rather than just soloing like crazy.

So you're experimenting! Do you play more chromatic than diatonic?

About half and half. I tend to play diatonic about half in second position and a whole lot of third position because I think there's so much territory there that hasn't been abused. I'm still refining my sound. I also enjoy effects like chorus and the octave sounds you get through a harmonizer. It's fun to mix it up!

Well, I gotta ask about harps of course. I know you're a Hohner endorser.

Yeah. I might as well have a Hohner tattoo! I've never liked any others nearly so well. I munch them right out of the box and whole-heartedly endorse the Big River line. They are big, loud, durable, and *CHEAP!* I'm very grateful for that! *(laughs)* Other than the Big River diatonics, I use the 280s and very much like the new CX12 chromatic. Also for a four-octave one I used the Super 64. I really dig that CX12. I wish they made a four-octave chromatic the way they make that son of a gun, because, God, it's so bright, flexible and comfortable to play.

Got any advice for players in general?

Capitalize on your own strengths; develop your own style. The world needs another harp player doing Little Walter licks as much as it needs another Elvis impersonator! %

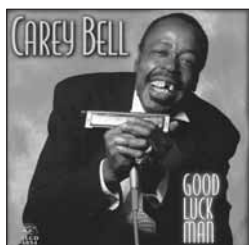
For more information on deLay, visit www.pauldelay.com



New Releases



COMPILED BY CAROL ANNE HERREN



Carey Bell
GOOD LUCK MAN
Alligator Records
14 TRACKS

To every song, original and cover tune alike, Carey brings his decades of experience, his taste, humor and subtlety, and the kind of roots that can't be learned sitting at home studying records. He learned from the masters, and has become one himself. — BRUCE IGLAUER

CONTACT: www.alligator.com



Norton Buffalo & Roy Rogers
ROOTS OF OUR NATURE
Blind Pig Records
13 TRACKS

In Buffalo's harp-cupping, wah-wahing hands and mouth, there are single note runs, improvisational opportunities and plenty of chances to run rings around the expressive power of every other instrument on the album.

CONTACT: www.blindpigrecords.com



Clayton Miller Blues Band
GOTTA HAVE LOVE
Independent Recording
10 TRACKS

To find this much passion, presence and powerful skill in one family is a rare gem. The bond of blood between Clayton, Cole, [9-year-old Hohner endorser] L.D. and their dad Larry Miller transforms raw musical talent into a tight melting pot of blues

— NAO

CONTACT:
www.claytonmillerbluesband.com



Buddy Greene
"RUFUS"
Rufus Music Company
12 TRACKS

On his latest CD, Greene revisits his formative years, weaving bluegrass, blues and the Beatles into a celebration of acoustic music. Joined by Jerry Douglas, Sam Bush, Ron Block, Kenny Malone, Byron House and Ashley Cleveland, among others.

CONTACT: www.buddygreene.com



The Brothers Figaro Orchestra
OLD TIME CHRISTMAS
PBR Records
11 TRACKS

Inspired by Big Band recordings by Tommy Dorsey from 1939 — with a very young crooner named Frank Sinatra — this collection of Christmas favorites has a haunting, nostalgic flavor that will surely infuse your holiday season with sacred mystery.

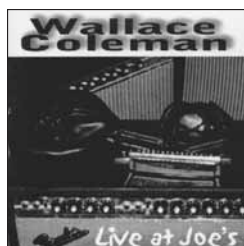
CONTACT: www.brosfig.com



William Clarke
NOW THAT YOU'RE GONE
Watch Dog Records
12 TRACKS

Clarke blows the doors off straight-ahead Chicago blues on this collection of 1981-83 studio recordings. Compiled posthumously by his wife Jeanette, Now That You're Gone showcases the amazing talent of this award-winning bluesman and features five previously unreleased songs.

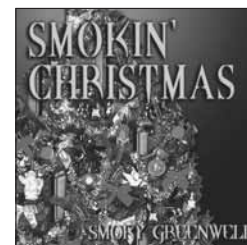
CONTACT: jlodovici@aol.com



Wallace Coleman
LIVE AT JOE'S
Pinto Blue Music
12 TRACKS

Capturing the '50s style and feel of Chicago's electric blues, Live At Joe's provides the listener with an audio snapshot of Coleman's presence onstage. Real blues done right!

CONTACT: www.wallacecoleman.com



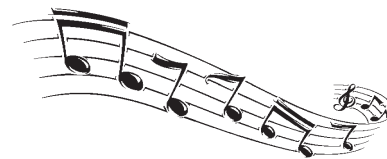
Smoky Greenwell
SMOKIN' CHRISTMAS
Greenwell Records
11 TRACKS

Greenwell's fifth album has great spirit and will definitely put you in the holiday mood! Christmas blues, overlaid with jazz, seasoned with Louisiana hot sauce and shot straight from the hip and from the heart.

CONTACT: www.smokygreenwell.com



New Releases



Paul Harrington

HARMONICA SOUL SERENADE
Seduction Records
14 TRACKS

Harrington's latest — mostly instrumental and covering R&B, jazz, blues and swing classics as well as a few originals — simply smokes. Harrington employs his full arsenal of harmonicas, sometimes even overdubbing them to ear-pleasing effect. — PETER HUND

CONTACT: www.harpwizard.com



T.J. Klay

RIGHT ON TARGET
Sporting Klay's Music
9 TRACKS

TJ Klay offers harmonica at its finest on his latest release of instrumentals. Ranging in tone from whimsical to melancholy, from TV theme songs to spirituals, he speaks to the heart and soul of each listener.

CONTACT: www.tjklay.com



Mississippi Heat

FOOTPRINTS ON THE CEILING
CrossCut Records
14 TRACKS

Footprints on the Ceiling encompasses a huge body of very diverse work indeed, drawing from a wide and deep range of influences within that great musical family of the Blues. — MICHAEL FREEMAN

CONTACT: www.mississippiheat.net



Rod Piazza

MODERN MASTER — THE BEST OF ROD PIAZZA 1968-2003
Tone-Cool Records
2 DISKS, 29 TRACKS TOTAL

Harmonica ace and vocalist Piazza has perfected his craft over the last 35 years. This career retrospective paints a portrait of Piazza's legacy that approaches legendary status and highlights the artistry and dedication required to be a 'Modern Master.'

CONTACT: www.rodpiazza.com

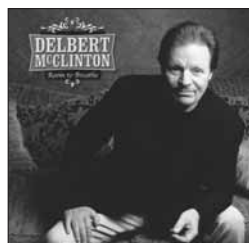


Mark Hummel

GOLDEN STATE BLUES
Electro-Fi Records
12 TRACKS

'Golden State Blues' continues the legacy of the thriving Oakland blues scene of the late '60s and early '70s. A mix of originals and cover tunes range from slow-burning to jumping, all with the mark of Hummel's distinct harp style.

CONTACT: www.markhummel.com



Delbert McClinton

ROOM TO BREATHE
New West Records
12 TRACKS

Witty lyrics laced with Detroit blues and Texas honky-tonk rhythms are sure to make McClinton's latest an American classic. Showcasing strong musicianship and uncluttered arrangements, the variety of song styles ensures this album has something for every ear!

CONTACT: www.delbert.com



Paul Orta

OBJECTIF LUNE (DESTINATION THE MOON)
Blues International Records
11 TRACKS

Every lover of good-rockin'-Texas-Blues will want to have a copy of this recording for their collection. Orta is assisted by the finest of blues musicians: Little Ray Ybarra, Uncle John Turner, Pierre Pelegrin, Alberto Storo, Jessica Buchheit, Keven Gassert, Roger Ward, Lazy Lester and the late Ervin Charles.

CONTACT: www.great-recording.com



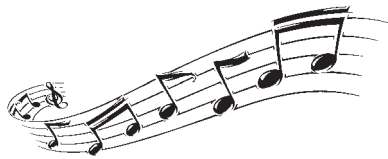
Jerry Portnoy

DOWN IN THE MOOD ROOM
TinyTown Records
13 TRACKS

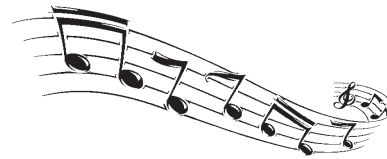
Like all masters, Jerry has his own distinct style ... an economical approach to note selection, brilliance of sound, richness of tone, huge vibrato and the rare ability to speak directly through the instrument. — TOM ELLIS III

CONTACT: www.harpmaster.com





New Releases



Gary Primich
DOG HOUSE MUSIC
Antone's Records
10 TRACKS

Primich's signature style is marked by versatile musicality and colorful and potent harp playing. His latest melds the sweaty feel of an inspired nightclub set with the sharp sonic atmosphere of the studio.

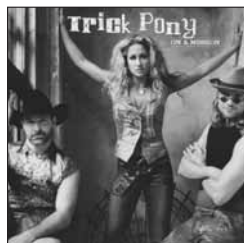
CONTACT: www.garyprimich.com



Gary "Alaska" Sloan
DOWN SOUTH
Independent Recording
17 TRACKS

Sloan's latest release is not focused on jamming but on the songs themselves, each one different from another. His band, together for three years, plays very well off each other with his wife and sons pitching in on both songwriting and performing duties.

CONTACT: alaska@diamondcity.net



Trick Pony
ON A MISSION
Warner Brothers Records
12 TRACKS

For those who thought this contemporary country trio would be just a one-Trick Pony following its self-titled 2001 debut, think again. Their playful tone gives an upbeat vibe to even the more somber songs. — RALPH NOVAK

CONTACT: www.trickpony.com



Mark Wenner
MAMA TRIED
Right On Rhythm
11 TRACKS

Those looking for polished perfection certainly won't find it here ... blues fans are forewarned that there's as much country in Mark's rollicking, roadhouse-ready sound as there is blues. But it's real, and heartfelt, and the harp work is absolutely killer.

— JOHN TAYLOR

CONTACT: www.blackdogweb.com



Snooky Pryor
SNOOKY PRYOR & HIS MISSISSIPPI WRECKING CREW
Electro-Fi Records
10 TRACKS

The impetus behind this album is a musical celebration of the 80th birthday of [Snooky Pryor,] one of the founding fathers of modern blues harmonica. The wit, wisdom and collective mojo of [these] gentlemen transform the blues into a living, breathing thing of immeasurable beauty.

— ANDREW GALLOWAY

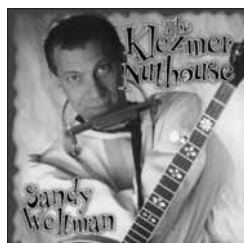
CONTACT: www.electrofi.com



Toots Thielemans
TOOTS THIELEMANS & KENNY WERNER
Verve Records
13 TRACKS

Thielemans specializes in wringing joy and nostalgia from the most personal of instruments. He's joined by pianist Werner, who's attuned to Thielemans' every nuance and impulse. They explore a moving collection of melodies that ranges from Bach's 'Sicilienne' to medleys of songs associated with Sinatra, Michel Legrand, and Disney. — STUART BROOMER

CONTACT: www.tootsthielemans.com



Sandy Weltman
THE KLEZMER NUTHOUSE
Wildstone Audio
14 TRACKS

Weltman has again stretched his musical boundaries with this foray into Klezmer music. Klezmer is described as Jewish Gypsy Jazz and originated in Eastern Europe. The use of the banjo and harmonica as lead instruments results in a beautifully unique tapestry of music.

CONTACT: www.sandyweltman.com



Various Artists
INSPIRATION: 22 GREAT HARMONICA PERFORMANCES
Universal Music
22 TRACKS

A harmonica listener's dream come true! Milteau compiled this collection of 22 classic harmonica performances to illustrate the ingenuity and vision captured by these imaginative harp players. Artists include DeFord Bailey, Jimmy Riddle, Big Walter Horton, Toots Thielemans and Stevie Wonder to name a few.

CONTACT: www.planetharmonica.com

News from the USA

BY JOHNNA COSSABOON

♪ Longtime harmonica player, teacher, author and book publisher, **JON GINDICK** is now investing his talents, time, energy, knowledge and money in new lessons, new music and new technology on his website at www.gindick.com. The site offers free lessons, many examples, MIDI files, original songs, plus two downloadable lessons on bending and chugging.



Jon's revised *Rock 'n' Blues Harmonica Trilogy* along with other instructional materials plus Hohner Harmonicas are available on his website. In addition, Gindick performs, teaches, writes and records in the Los Angeles area.

♪ **HARMONICAS ACROSS AMERICA** is a non-profit organization started last year by **PATRICK STEWART** of St. Louis. He has been teaching harmonica in elementary schools in Missouri, Texas and other areas. The organization's goal is to get children over age eight involved in making music by using the harmonica, particularly kids who would not normally have an opportunity to learn any musical instrument.

♪ The Metropolitan Washington, DC, area blues community exploded with talent and energy, during *Harmonicathon 2* held in a small smoky blues room called the Bangkok Blues last summer.

BRIAN MCGREGOR, **BROOKS TEGLAR** and **PETE KANARAS** were the house band. **WARD GAINS** (who released a book on Little Walter) and **CHARLEY SALES** were talking while **ROGER EDNAL**, **DAVE SHERMAN** and Kanaras were setting up. The room was full of people ready for a show. Headliner **DOUG JAY** came in after a direct flight from Germany and he was ready to play!



HUGH FEELEY

Gains opened the show with some full deep-toned classics. **HUGH FEELEY** was next with his energetic, original, audience moving, cool shoes blues thing. Edsal came on next, bringing Sherman and **KEVIN WHISMAN** up to the bandstand for a killer set of tight rockin' blues.

After **TONY FASIO** and **DOUG KELLY** showed up, a BUZZ suddenly went through the room ... **STEVE JACOBS** then walked in with **CAREY BELL**, who was in town!

♪ **MARK HUMMEL'S BLUES HARMONICA BLOWOUT 2003** was held seven evenings last January at various California venues. The Blowouts are always special, featuring different harmonica heroes each year. The 2003 shows starred **HUEY LEWIS & JOHN CLIFTON**, **JAMES COTTON**, **PAUL DELAY**, **JAMES HARMAN**, **MARK HUMMEL & THE BLUES SURVIVORS** and **DAVE BARRETT**.



Mark also released *Golden State Blues*, his first CD with ElectroFi Records (see New Releases).

♪ **HOWARD LEVY** had a very active 2002. He premiered in *On The Other Side...* for harmonica, clarinet, accordion and orchestra by Adriana Hoelsky with the Bavarian State Radio Orchestra in Munich and toured England and Ireland with Rabih Abou Khalil. Howard also played concerts with Bass Clarinetist Michael Riessler in Germany, and several solo concerts there as well. He played concerts with the great Jewish Cantor Alberto Mizrahi in New York, Chicago, and California, and performed his Harmonica Concerto with several symphonies across the country.



He also performed with Trio Globo, The Howard Levy Quartet, Anthony Molinaro and others. In addition, Howard will release two

CDs in 2003. The first is a duo recording with pianist Anthony Molinaro that features originals as well as very unusual interpretations of standard tunes. The second CD is with the Latin/Jazz band Chévere, in which Howard has played for more than 20 years. Finally, the music beloved by Chicago audiences for decades will be available to global listeners. Howard composed and arranged most of the music and plays both piano and harmonica with Chévere.

For Howard's complete touring schedule go to www.levyland.com.

♪ **DAMIEN MASTERSON** recently graced Raw Record's compilation, *San Francisco Bay's BEST BLUES*. Among the other Hohner artists featured on this CD are **MARK HUMMEL** and **MICHAEL PELOQUIN**.



The cut featured is *Joe's Fried Chicken* from Damien's first recording, *Intercambio* (1996). For more information about this and other exciting blues compilations by Raw Records, go to www.rawrecords.com.

♪ **PAUL ORTA** is now living and playing in France. He has recently performed in Holland, Spain, England, Ireland, Italy, Switzerland, Denmark, Germany and Austria — playing festivals, concerts and clubs. He's also been conducting harmonica seminars as well and released two new CDs, *Objectif Lune* (see New Releases) and *Shuffling with Lazy Lester*.



♪ Piano/guitar duo **LIZ PENNOCK** and Dr. Blues released a new CD, *Live from St. Pete*. It was recorded at Caspy's Waterside Restaurant in St. Petersburg, Florida, last November with a standing-room-only audience.

News from the USA (continued from page 17)

The CD features 14 original songs and 4 covers. About half have a Florida theme, and include an original song about blues singer Diamond Teeth Mary *Queen of Diamonds*, their boogie woogie arrangement of *Swanee River*, two songs from the late harmonica player Rock Bottom, *Gator Tail* and *St. Pete Boogie*, and one penned by Roy Bookbinder *Goin' Back to Tampa*. Liz plays rack harmonica on some tracks along with her piano.



This is Liz & Doc's fifth album on Upright Records and their first live release. This month they celebrate their 20th Anniversary. Go to www.lizpenneck.com or write to Upright Records, P.O. Box 60667, St. Petersburg, FL 33784.

♪ **JASON RICCI** has concluded his touring with Big Al and the Heavyweights and is now working and recording with his band Jason Ricci and New Blood. Their CD, *Feel Good Funk* was released early this year. The songs are an eclectic blend of North Mississippi (Kimbrough/ Burnside) influenced grooves, as well as some jazzy funk vamps and some straight Chicago blues thrown in for good measure. Harp lovers will be pleased that the harmonica remains front and center throughout the disc. For more information about Jason, visit www.jasonricci.com.

♪ **ROB STONE** and the C Notes have signed to Earwig Music and will release their new CD on July 22. Though solidly rooted in post-war Chicago tradition, spiced with a tendency toward swing, Rob and his band are exploring new directions. The CD also features guests Sam Lay and Dave Myers. For touring and CD information, visit www.robstone.com. ☼



Harpin' Help 2003

HARPIN' HELP 2003 was held in South Belmar, New Jersey, on April 27 at Bar Anticipation. This charity event just keeps growing, as East Coast harmonica players share their talents to benefit the food bank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties. The event was presented by the Jersey Shore Jazz and Blues Foundation and co-sponsored by Hohner Harmonicas.

SANDY MACK organized and hosted the day long event and gathered a stellar group of musicians. In addition to his emcee duties, Mack got the chance to sit in with his old bandmates — the Tonemasters.

This charitable event began when Hohner endorser **DENNIS GRUENLING** gave a benefit for **WILLIAM CLARKE'S** family. He said, "The first event went so well, I decided to make it an annual harp event that benefits the community. It really gathered steam and this year's event is probably the seventh one."

Jersey Shore Jazz and Blues Foundation President Nicky Coppola said, "We are learning as we go to make Harpin' Help a top-shelf event. This year we moved back the event date to capitalize on spring weather and added a second stage. Also, two harmonica workshops with **TOM FORAN** and **JASON RICCI** were scheduled."

On the outdoor stage Terraplane Blues appeared in a stripped down trio. Blowing some delta style harp licks was **PHIL PROCTOR**. This band was a finalist in the 2000 Blues Foundation International Blues Competition. **ROXY PERRY** "New York Blues Queen" also gave an energetic performance. She went from a song with a soft vocal caress to belting out the blues! Another jewel in her crown is her expressive harp playing.

At dusk, the electric vibe turned up a notch with the stylings of Ron Sunshine and Full Swing. These guys laid down a slick NYC swing that was an amped version of '40s jump swing. At times, it was hard to tell the harp from the horns as Ron mixed in and out of the groove.

A favorite of the evening was **HAZMAT MODINE**. Fronted by two harp players, **WADE SCHUMAN** on diatonic and vocals, and **RANDY WEINSTEIN** on chromatic, this band is the history of the harmonica condensed into a solid hour of American music from the '20s through the early '60s. Hazmat Modine blended elements of pre-war blues, Hokum and Jug Band, Swing, Klezmer, New Orleans R& B, and Jamaican rock steady.

Later, Wade and Randy initiated a chrome and diatonic duet that split off in a "call and response" style. Randy played a Sheng, an Asian reed instrument that is the precursor to the modern harmonica. I don't think I ever heard so many sounds come out of a harmonica. It was truly an eclectic feast!

As the crowd thinned out, Sandy Mack capped off the evening in good fashion with a blues jam. At last, Hohner Endorser Jason Ricci got his turn and it was worth the wait. Jason sang a driving version of I-55, an original tune from his new CD, *Feel Good Funk*. He showered his set with his unique brand of runs and overblows from his Golden Melodies. His jazz and country influences and vast amounts of varied harp runs are a refreshing change to the typical blues styled harmonica chops one hears so often. It is easy to see why Ricci won the Mars Music National Harmonica Contest beating over three thousand entrants.

Due to space constraints, it was impossible to include the entire line-up of top-notch performances at Harpin' Help 2003. Suffice it to say that it was a great event for a great cause. Look for the date for the 2004 show at www.jsjbf.com. ☼

— JAMES DAY

Do you have news to contribute to EasyReeding's News from the US? If so, please e-mail it to Editor Johnna Cossaboon for the next issue at jcossaboon@hohnerusa.com

The Year of the Blues — 2003

This year has been designated **THE YEAR OF THE BLUES** by the non-profit Blues Foundation headquartered in Memphis, TN. You may know the Blues Foundation for its annual W.C. Handy Awards for blues excellence, but the foundation actually works all year long to promote the blues genre. Of course, the classic harmonica sound is a huge part of the blues tradition, so Hohner helps support many of the foundation's efforts.

As part of the Handy Awards celebration, blues artists visit children at nearby **ST. JUDE'S HOSPITAL**. Each year Hohner donates harmonicas for the children, and various endorsers accompany the Blues Foundation representatives to see the children.

The Blues Foundation also hosts a **CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL** in conjunction with the Handy Awards. Hohner helped to provide Beginner Harmonica Packages for the younger tots and 10-hole harps for the older kids.



Above, pictured from left: *Kim Wilson, Jody Williams, Bobby Rush and Larry Fulcher play for the children at St. Jude's. The visit is part of the community outreach that takes place during Handy weekend. Every child received a harmonica courtesy of Hohner.*

At right: *A boy at the Handy Children's Festival really loved his Hohner!*

Photos by Crissy Smith



Congratulations to the Hohner Harmonica players who were nominated and/or won **2003 HANDY AWARDS!** Here's the complete list of winners:

BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR: Shemekia Copeland, *Talking to Strangers*

BLUES ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR: B.B. King

BLUES BAND OF THE YEAR: Magic Slim and The Teardrops

BEST NEW ARTIST DEBUT: Robert Randolph, *Live at the Wetlands*

CONTEMPORARY MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR: Charlie Musselwhite

CONTEMPORARY FEMALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR: Shemekia Copeland

SOUL MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR: Solomon Burke

SOUL FEMALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR: Etta James

TRADITIONAL MALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR: R.L. Burnside

TRADITIONAL FEMALE ARTIST OF THE YEAR: Koko Taylor

ACOUSTIC BLUES ARTIST OF THE YEAR: John Hammond

BLUES INSTRUMENTALIST - GUITAR: Duke Robillard

BLUES INSTRUMENTALIST - KEYBOARDS: Pinetop Perkins

BLUES INSTRUMENTALIST - HARMONICA: Charlie Musselwhite

BLUES INSTRUMENTALIST - BASS: Willie Kent

BLUES INSTRUMENTALIST - DRUMS: Willie "Big Eyes" Smith

BLUES INSTRUMENTALIST - OTHER: Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown (Fiddle)

BLUES INSTRUMENTALIST - HORNS: Roomful of Blues Horns

SOUL BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR: Solomon Burke, *Don't Give Up on Me*

TRADITIONAL BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR: James Cotton, *35th Anniversary Jam*

CONTEMPORARY BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR: Shemekia Copeland, *Talking to Strangers*

ACOUSTIC BLUES ALBUM: Big Jack Johnson with Kim Wilson, *Memphis Bar-B-Que Sessions*

COMEBACK BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR: Jody Williams, *Return of a Legend*

HISTORICAL BLUES ALBUM OF THE YEAR: Albert King, *Born Under a Bad Sign*

BLUES SONG OF THE YEAR: "Let It Rain" by W.C. Clark, Bobby Boyd & John Gray Gregson (from W.C. Clark's *From Austin With Soul*)



The Harmonica Educator

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A quarterly publication, The Harmonica Educator contains transcriptions for harmonica, tips and interesting articles.

The Trumpet Call

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The AHN is a leading print source for monthly harmonica information, featuring interviews with top players, instructional columns, record reviews and more.

For Further Harp Reading

If you enjoy *EasyReading*, perhaps you'll want to check out the following websites and harmonica publications:

Harmonica Fantasy Camp

Blues Week 2002

BY ANDY GARRIGUE

Perhaps you've heard of Dream Camps or Fantasy Camps for adults? These allow grown-ups the experience of going away for a week or two to study something they love and to meet some of those who do it best. Blues Week at Davis & Elkins College in West Virginia offers precisely that to harmonica players of all ages — a week to get away and concentrate on their passion — harmonica playing.

As an EasyReeding reporter, harmonica player Andy Garrigue attended camp last summer. Here is his first-person account of the experience.

The first stage of the transformational quality of Blues Week, which happened long before I got there, was feeling family and work responsibilities and urban sprawl melt away as I drove deeper and deeper into farmland and majestic mountains during my four hours heading west. Eventually, I found my way to the right building on the Davis & Elkins campus.

Blues Week is an offering of the Augusta Heritage Center, which presents instructional theme weeks throughout the summer. Sharing the campus with Blues Week last summer was Swing Week and a host of crafts. I dropped my things in my dorm room and took a deep breath. I hadn't been to summer camp since I was a kid, and now here I was, in rural West Virginia, arriving to study harmonica for a week.

After a cafeteria dinner and an orientation meeting, I found my way back to Halliehurst, the turn of the century mansion that serves as the Blues Week hub. Halliehurst houses a full complement of daytime classes and hosts jams outside on its wraparound porches that go well into the night. My ears perked up when I heard John Cephas' unmistakable voice from around one of the corners.

I went over and eased into a chair a few feet away from Cephas and Rich Del Grosso, who was hunched over a mandolin. *Sweet Bitter Blues* was followed by *One Black Rat* and then *Good Morning Little Schoolgirl*. A crowd started to form,

comprised of observers, other guitar players and harp players. I took a deep breath and joined in, quietly at first, feeling my way. Solos then got passed around with John or Rich nodding to whomever should go next and the songs ran their course in a homespun ramshackle way. By the end of the hour I looked around, and there were 12 guitarists, six harp players, a double bass, a washboard, a couple of fiddles and an electric piano. Later, I heard a strong, bright, well-articulated harmonica behind me. It stood out, so I turned around to see who this sharpshooter was.



It turned out to be Phil Wiggins. At first I was excited, then nervous, as I realized he was right behind me and could hear every note I played. I decided to give in to the moment and relish the fact that I was in a jam circle with one of my harmonica idols. I had already gotten my money's worth and Blues Week hadn't even officially started!

Classes began the next morning and I started with Joe Filisko's advanced class. Across the hall, Gary Primich taught the intermediate class, and down the hall Phil Wiggins led the beginners. I had never met Joe before, although I'd heard his name uttered by many with reverence. Joe, in jeans and tie-dyed t-shirt, had his blonde hair pulled back in a long ponytail. He glanced around

the room, found a familiar face and handed him a microphone. In turn, each student played for a couple minutes, jamming to a slow blues in E, while Joe listened and provided a few comments to each after they finished. This exercise immediately got each of us to play in front of the class which helped quell any performance anxiety. It also served to display the various abilities and styles that were present.

Some of my fellow players were Little Walter devotees, others were jazzy or chromatic and some preferred acoustic early country blues.

Joe was thoughtful and positive from the start, but honest too, and clearly not easily impressed.

He zoned in on each player, closely listened to what they were playing, and then offered careful and precise comments.

Some points he shared with the class, while others were kept private, based on an individual's playing. For those he knew, he quickly sized up how hard they'd worked since he last saw them.

The class began with a discussion of tremolo versus vibrato. He demonstrated the difference, then had students show their chops, referring to CDs to illustrate how some of the masters used these techniques. Throughout the week, Joe kept his CD binders at his fingertips, casually flipping through several hundred alphabetized recordings to find just the right solo to exhibit his point. Along the way, memorable statements emerged, such as "Using a variety of tones is like getting away from a black and white television and using all the colors. Why wouldn't you use all the colors?"

The students then practiced second-hole-draw vibratos, which sounded like a menacing bee swarm. Joe worked his way around the room, listening to each person's version, then advising them and moving on. There was some Dylan chiding — as in "Dylan doesn't do this." I realized that I was now in the sanctum of serious harmonica.

Throughout the week, Joe had some tough

continued next page

moments. When the class's attention seemed to fade — or we just weren't getting it — then he had to be *The Boss* for a moment. This was fine and the change regained our attention. For the most part though, our instructor was serene and ultra-focused, like some sort of slim harmonica Buddha.

In the afternoons, I attended Gary Primich's advanced class, and noted with pleasure that Gary had a different style. Joe, who kept his CDs in perfect order and neatly coiled his mike cord, was very orderly overall. Gary's kit bag was a mess — his harps piled randomly on top of one another, some with loose coverplates hanging. He dug through the box, often finding a harp "out of service," then moved on in search of one that worked. Along the way, he tossed the bad ones back into the box haphazardly. By the end of the week, he was down to a single harp.

It brought me a strange joy to see Gary's banged up disorderly kit bag, knowing the state of my own. I respect Primich as a world class player, and a real technician in terms of his playing and tone — not to mention a very strong songwriter — so I was thrilled to be part of his closed door session every day for the rest of the week. Despite his casual appearance, when it comes to harp playing, Gary is deadly serious about it. He's also serious about *teaching* harp.

Gary's first point was about keeping time. "Some of you have pretty good time, some have good time," he began. "Some need to work on your time. Let me introduce you to Mr. Metronome." He fished one out of his kit bag. "These are cheap, maybe ten bucks. You can set it to 83 and practice your quarter notes. I want you to get that good sense of time drilled into your head, because playing in time is so important."

Gary introduced other areas, such as first and third positions and phrasing. He demonstrated, accepted comments and questions, then asked for volunteers to play back the most recent lesson. He

was happy to oblige requests, such as how a certain phrase on one of his songs was executed, or how one of the masters did it on some long ago recording. While Primich didn't have a CD binder, it was clear that he had these things in mind and could reference and duplicate them quite easily. Like Filisko, concrete advice emerges in snippets from Gary: "Think about how you phrase things. Let the music breathe — don't make it one long phrase."

He also pointed out similarities between cross harp and third position — where they overlap and what you can do. When Gary demonstrated these things it was a priceless lesson to help us understand his point as well as its practicality. Later, he gave some reasons for

want to avoid high-key harps — if they're busted (like his own) or if you just don't like the high keys."

He elaborated to point out examples of third position harp, citing Junior Wells, Little Walter, and some of James Cotton's work with Muddy Waters. The harp devotees nod as they hear in their heads the solos Gary's discussing, even before he demonstrates them.

Down the hall, Piedmont master Phil Wiggins worked with the beginners, from teenagers to retirees. Phil has taught at Augusta since the very beginning (20 years ago) so he's a big part of the soul of the place, as is his partner John Cephas whom he recruited a short while later to teach blues guitar. I didn't take the beginner's class, but I could hear them whenever there was a lull in my class. Upstairs at Halliehurst, where all these

classes were held, there were people working away in their offices. I can only imagine trying to concentrate with three harmonica classes going on simultaneously one floor below you!

Phil has done this long enough to know how he wants to teach and he came prepared. He handed out a packet of coursework to each student, including songs, riffs, notes and written instructions. At the end of the course, Phil performed all the songs and riffs they worked on all week, both in real time and more slowly, so the students could record them. That way, they could tape all the course material together and Phil could concentrate all week on teaching, when he does not allow recording. Phil feels the week sets students on

the right track. "They go away with enough stuff to build on, and have fun with it — playing five songs and the 12-bar and 8-bar blues." Not bad for a week, especially for those who just blew their first notes on Monday.

Outside the classes, there were ample opportunities to play and learn — whether you



Blues Week 2002 was a harmonica player's dream come true! Opposite page: Attendees practice what they've learned. At left (clockwise from top): Primich conducts his advanced workshop, Filisko demonstrates technique & Wiggins teaches the basics to the next generation of blues harp players.

Photos by Gordon Blackley

using third position, and in typical Primich fashion was simple and direct. "Reason number one — it sounds good. Reason number two — it offers variety with cross harp. Reason number three — it's a new mode so it gives a different texture to the music ... it's coming from a different place. Reason number four — you can use lower harps in third position if you

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Little Walter Jacobs

(continued from page 2)

“As far as the Chicago blues scene during its heyday, there is this general feeling that it was Muddy, Wolf and Sonny Boy — with Walter often somewhat viewed as a secondary figure,” says Dirks. “I started looking deeper and found that Walter had number one hits on the charts, which none of those other guys had. He, in fact, ended up having more songs on the charts than his former employer, Muddy Waters,” he continues, “So in a way, during that time, he eclipsed those guys. But historically, he had kind of been ignored and his story was not investigated very deeply.”

In addition to the countless research hurdles, Dirks, Gaines and Glover were racing against time to interview as many of Walter’s aging contemporaries as possible.

“We unfortunately didn’t get to Jimmy Rogers in time. Dave Meyers was initially very resistant but opened up to Scott at the very end of his life,” says Gaines. “We also had some beautiful interviews, such as with one of Walter’s lifetime friends, suffering from Parkinson’s disease. I was able to interview him just before he died, which was a real windfall.”

Blues with a Feeling offers fresh insights into Walter’s life, exploring his ever-changing musical playing styles — which kept every other harp blower struggling to catch up to him. The book also explores his mercurial and often self-destructive personality.

One look at the close-up cover photo of Walter on the *Hate to See You Go* album indicates he had more than his fair share of violent mix-ups. But the authors discovered another facet to Walter’s personality.

“Many views on Walter over the years have given the impression that he was kind of a violent thug who happened to have this brilliant, creative talent — there is some truth to that,” says Dirks. “However, I think we were able to expose another side of Walter — a much gentler human side that previously had never been revealed.”

Glover tells the story about how bluesman Carey Bell was living in Chicago during a freezing winter with no coat. Walter took him to a store and bought him 50 dollars worth of clothes. “Walter could be a complete jerk and a complete nice guy to some people,” says Glover. “Complex and contradictory would be a good way to describe Walter’s character.”

According to Gaines, “Walter’s personality has seemed essentially one-dimensional to most people — he was feisty, mean-spirited, jealous. True, he could be all those things, but he was also extremely generous to his friends. Just as easily, he made and lost many friends in his lifetime. Walter was a good time guy who really didn’t respect his talents enough.”

Perhaps most importantly, the book intriguingly explores Walter’s phenomenal harmonica prowess and dazzling style. He was a musician constantly reinventing himself to stay a step-ahead of the competition, always experimenting with soaring harp riffs, jazzy lead runs and often saxophone-like tones.

“Walter invented many of the harmonica styles that some people tend to take for granted nowadays — he was one hell of an innovator,” says Glover.

According to the book, Walter essentially transformed the harmonica from a rhythm style accompaniment instrument into more of a lead instrument, first with the Muddy Waters band then with his own band.

“Before Little Walter, harp was played as a rhythm instrument, for the most part. It was played in a way that all the phrases were one bar or two bars long,” says Dirks. “And those phrases would be based on the downbeat. That’s just how the harmonica was approached, as John Lee Williamson would play.”

According to Glover, “Before Walter, harmonica was played in more of a ‘call and response’ style. But Walter started playing counter melodies and playing behind the singer. He’d use the power of dynamics to get a real fat and round tone.”

Dirks says, “Walter’s band could be swinging, and he would kind of dance and dart and swoop around what everyone else was doing, rather than playing in unison with the rhythm section. That’s the thing I think that really sets him apart.”

Gaines comments that “Little Walter’s music is always creative, inventive and lyrical. His solos and instrumentals are works of art.”

Dirks had the opportunity to listen to unsold Little Walter recordings and out-takes at Universal Music in Los Angeles, allowing the author to gain new insights into Walter’s recording style and his studio interaction with other musicians and producers.

After spending hours listening to these rare session tapes, Dirks left with one major realization: “This musician was the most creative improviser, probably in the history of blues

music, across the board. Each take contains large chunks of completely new, original music, that, after that take were left behind. It boggles the mind!” says Dirks. “There is enough music in his out-takes to keep today’s harp players learning for the rest of their lives.”

So where did Walter’s improvisation genius and seemingly endless creativity come from?

“Walter was exposed to music very early and realized he could make a living playing music at a young age. He was out on his own at age 11 or 12. He had the same thing that was inside of Charlie Parker, Jimi Hendrix and Andre Segovia and all the other really great, cornerstone artists,” says Dirks. “In terms of his innovations, it was a conscious thing for him to create something new, and then move on immediately to something else that was also new. By the time anyone had caught up, he had already moved on to the next new style.”

Walter was listening to musicians like Lester Young and Johnny Hodges who were improvising horn leads over blues changes, according to Dirks. “Walter applied that approach to the harmonica in a small blues band setting. It seems like what he had done was absorb an approach to the music, and then invented his own licks.”

To this day, Walter is clearly the most influential blues harmonica player who ever lived. “His influence is so pervasive that there is an effort, or movement, to try not to play like him,” says Dirks. “But it’s almost impossible to do.” ✂

David Massey is a Boston-based blues musician and freelance writer. He can be reached via e-mail at David_720@hotmail.com

Mickey Raphael

(continued from page 3)

And you’re a Hohner endorser. What do you think about their harps?

Oh, I love the Marine Bands. I started on the Special 20s, but I still LOVE the Marine Bands you know? I’m kind of brutal with them because we play so much, but I can put replacement reed plates on them when they blow out. I’m not a wizard repairman (I flunked wood shop!), but I can do stuff like that. When I need something special tuned, Rick (Epping, product manager for harmonicas and accordions at Hohner) is good about that. He’s great. I can call him up and whine. (laughs)

continued next page

And he designed a new harp that I can't wait for! It's like a Marine Band but on a bigger body.

Rick's been involved with developing a lot of harps. What's the new harp called?

Yes, it's great to have a musician in that seat. I don't know what it's called; I just call it the "Frankenstein Harp" because it's big and clunky. (laughter)

Editor's note: Hohner's new harmonica designed by Rick Epping is called the XB-40 and debuted in January 2003. Read more about it on page 10.

I was going to ask if there was any improvement you'd like to see.

Well, I usually can't think of any other than some way to keep them from going out of tune. If I had to pick one harp it would be the Marine Band, but I do like the Big Rivers too — they hold up really well. I recommend the Marine Bands, and the Special 20s — and the Big River is an affordable harp that lasts.

What learning advice would you give beginners?

Listen to records: Butterfield, Kim Wilson, Jimmy Reed, Slim Harpo — all the old guys. And play *ALL THE TIME*. Bug your parents; keep one in the car; play *ALL THE TIME!* You have to develop an ear to know where the notes are.

Do you have any advice for those who want to be professional?

(laughter) Learn a trade! §

Cathi Norton is a music journalist, singer/songwriter and playwright who can be reached via e-mail at cathi@bloomington.in.us.

Blues Week 2002

(continued from page 3)

chose Band Camp, jams or song circles. Band Camp was an afternoon class that matched groups of students on various instruments and then the groups had to perform three songs as a band later that week. Jams started in late afternoon and stretched until the last Blues Warrior hung it up. Jams ran from blues and gospel standards to pre-war country blues to Texas swing, rag-

time, and jugband material. Some jams had twenty or more people, others just two or three tucked away around a corner somewhere. Inside the Ice House bar, next to Halliehurst, nightly jams were held around an old upright piano, which often included boisterous ensemble singing from vocal students and faculty.

By the end of the week an incredible amount of harmonica info was exchanged, and only a true harmonica devotee could appreciate the depth and dedication to which some of the students go in the pursuit of their passion. Any true harmonica lover would appreciate the extent of the teachers' knowledge — in this instance Joe Filisko and Gary Primich. It was an intensive week of work, with five hours of classes or more a day, plus several hours more of concerts and jamming daily if your energy held out.

In the end, our deep, sincere delving into an art form that many don't even consider art validates everyone in the program. For the students — whatever their abilities and wherever they were on their harmonica journeys — musical doors were revealed throughout the week. Some were easily opened while others only beckoned if you were ready to knock. Some were big and basic and some small and intricate. All these doors allowed passage for the students, to new possibilities where their journey would continue.

In the end, I left focused more on what further work remained and not on what I had learned in a few days of earnest and often brain exhausting effort. While my course now seemed longer and more difficult than I'd ever imagined, it seemed like a more worthwhile journey to take. As I drove out of Elkins, cradling some fries and nursing a hangover, I felt exhausted but transformed. To study blues harmonica for a full week in the mountains of West Virginia seemed an unusual road to have taken. On further reflection, I viewed the Augusta experience in the manner of Robert Frost: The road to Augusta is indeed one less traveled. But for my harmonica playing and the place it holds in my life, it made all the difference. §

For more information about Blues Week 2003 (July 13 through 18), visit www.augustaheritage.com or call (304) 637-1350.



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Easy Reeding

FROM HOHNER, INC. SPRING/SUMMER 2003



Pete Pedersen:
The Man Behind The Music

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