

## Catbone Records Blues Compilations

Indie Label To Release Obscure Blues CDs

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Catbone Records, an independent record label based in Clermont, Florida is planning on making a slew of rare and obscure blues recordings available to the hardcore fan. On October 11, 2011 Catbone will release five compilation albums that feature a wealth of recordings from some of the giants of the blues and blues-rock world. As with all things concerning blues music, the provenance of many of these performances is somewhat suspect as artists in the 1950s and '60s often sold the "rights" to their studio recordings and live performances to anybody standing at their door with a handful of cash.



Catbone Records' Saturday Night In Shankletown

Photo courtesy Catbone Records

[John Lee Hooker](#) was infamous for doing this, recording under a multitude of names and for dozens of labels, creating a maddening discography of literally hundreds of singles and albums under a myriad of artist names. Catbone has taken great care to re-master

the original recordings used on their compilations to achieve the best sound quality possible, and while the mix of material on some of these titles is a bit odd, there are nonetheless a lot of hard-to-find performances to be found strewn across these five albums. While I don't believe that there's anything previously unreleased here – European blues labels have been mining gold from these scraps for decades with fly-by-night compilations – each of the Catbone titles has something of merit for the diehard fan.

### Saturday Night In Shankletown

Probably the best among the Catbone compilations is *Saturday Night In Shankletown*, a collection of "raunchy American blues" (so says the press release) that nevertheless contains a cut from British guitarist Peter Frampton ("Loving Cup"), possibly a live cover of a [Rolling Stones](#) tune culled from a dubious 1999 compilation. Among the stuff here that will thrill blues fans, though, are two Billy Boy Arnold cuts, the harp master cutting loose on "I Wish You Would" and "El Dorado" (i.e. "Eldorado Cadillac"), both seemingly sourced from a long out-of-print collection of Arnold's 1977 London sessions.

*Saturday Night In Shankletown* also includes four obscure [James Cotton](#) tracks, including "You Know It Ain't Right"; [Muddy Waters](#)' "Forty Days and Forty Nights," which may or may not be the early Chess track; Howlin' Wolf's "Goin' Down Slow," which could be any one of a number of versions; and [Michael Bloomfield](#)'s "Cherry Red," a cover of a Big Joe Turner song from the guitarist's obscure early 1980s album *American Hero*. The compilation also includes unlikely choices of songs from Dr. Hook guitarist George Cummings, jazz artist Jack Millman, R&B group the Commodores (?), and even Catbone label owner Ken Hatley, grabbing a publishing credit with his performance on the title track.

### Mean Street

Catbone's *Mean Street* also looks interesting, the label stating that the collection "reflects the hard times, prison time, survival and expressions of the mean side of the blues." Among the artists included on *Mean Street* are Muddy Waters ("Standin' Around Crying," an old, often-anthologized Chess recording); [Howlin' Wolf](#) ("Before I Commit A Crime," an obscurity that was possibly recorded under a different title); [Etta James](#) (the rarity "It Brings A Tear"); and one of many versions of [Elmore James](#)' "Dust My Broom."

There are a couple of out-of-place, out-of-era tracks on *Mean Street*, including Southern rocker Barry Darnell's "Deacon Stomp," taken from his 2008 album *Return of Mobile Slim*, and "Love Taker," the title track from Canadian R&B singer Nanette Workman's 1999 album with guitarist Peter Frampton. Michael Bloomfield's "Don't Lie To Me" (a/k/a "Don't You Lie To Me"), is an undocumented track from the guitarist, possibly from the 1980s, that has often shown up on various sketchy anthology albums. [Little Richard](#), James Cotton, Jimmy Reed, and John Lee Hooker are all also represented on *Mean Street*.

### Catbone Records' Jukin'

Other albums in the Catbone series include *Jukin'*, which features multiple tracks from James Cotton ("Feeling Good," "Turn Your Love Light On," others), Jimmy Reed ("Shame, Shame, Shame"), Little Richard, Howlin' Wolf, and Billy Boy Arnold. *Belly Full of Blues* features more James Cotton, Muddy Waters, and Howlin' Wolf as well as one-off tracks from John Lee Hooker ("Sally Mae"), Tina Turner ("Loving Him Was Easier"), and Barry Darnell's "My Mississippi" (nee "My Mississippi Queen").

*Belly Full of Blues* also includes a version of Peter Frampton's "There's A Man," sung by Nanette Workman from her 1999 album with the guitarist. The last among the five albums is *Bar-B-Cue 'n Bikes & Blues*, which features tracks from Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Little Richard, Mike Bloomfield, and another tune from the Workman/Frampton collaboration. All five of the compilations run around an hour in length, feature the aforementioned

re-mastered sound, and sport a \$15.95 retail price tag which, given the nature of the licensing involved, may or may not be a couple of bucks higher than it should be.

Still, you can find any of these titles for around \$12 if you look hard enough, and each album is a collectible, if non-essential addition to a well-rounded blues collection. While a newcomer to the blues would be better served in buying a compilation dedicated to any one of these deserving artists, the hardcore faithful follower of artists like Waters, Wolf, or Cotton might want to check out any of these Catbone titles for each artist's obscurities. If decades of blues music history since the 1950s have taught us anything, it's that compilations like this don't stick around for long!

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