



Johnny 'Guitar' Watson, *Town & Country*, June 1987. Photo: Phil Weedon.

Me To Do' and ten minutes passes so easily. We get terrific versions of his own classic 'Gangster Of Love' and album cuts 'Ain't That A Bitch', 'Superman Lover' and 'I Need It'. On the latter Johnny introduces the band and gives them chance to show their skills and thankfully a very short drum solo with backing. He finishes off the track with a virtuoso stunning guitar break where he pulls out all the stops including chicken scratch, wah-wah, blues and funk.

This is no average 'bluesman'. He stayed with the times and was a complete master of all musical trades. Nobody wants to leave this mortal coil early but to die on stage in May 1996 as a working artist, dressed to kill and at the top of his game. A lot of us would seriously consider signing up for that. Immaculate German engineering and production ensures you can guarantee the sound quality is the best that can be achieved in a live environment. No scratchy tape recorder stuff here. I wonder if they have any Albert King hidden away in the archives? Thoroughly recommended for all whether it is blues, soul or funk that grabs you. A must for all Johnny Guitar Watson fans and that includes the reviewer.

Keith Scoffham

BIG JOE WILLIAMS: Southside Blues

Rock Beat ROC-3383 (45:00)

Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out/ Baby Please Don't Go/ Sinking Blues/ Put On Your Nitecap Baby/ Bye Bye Baby Blues/ Don't Want No Big Fat Woman/ Ride In My New Car With Me Blues/ Going Away Won't Be Back Till Fall/ Sloppy Drunk Blues/ Sugar Mama/ 44 Blues/ Terraplane Blues

I first became aware of Delta blues legend Big Joe Williams' gravitas-laden singing and individualistic nine-string guitar work as a suburban high school student in the early '60s listening to Roy Trumbull's informative 'Folk Music And Beyond' show broadcast on a nascent, San Francisco-based, public FM radio station.

Upon matriculating to UC Berkeley in the mid-'60s my grades suffered precipitously as I spent many a weekend at the area's coffeehouses, blues clubs and folk/blues festivals catching, along with the always mesmerizing Williams, the equally charismatic Lightnin' Hopkins, Mance Lipscomb, Clifton Chenier, Barbara Dane, Charles Brown, and a couple of local legends, Johnny Fuller and L.C. Good Rockin' Robinson, among many others.

The dozen titles collected here and, near as I can tell, previously unreleased were taped live by Norman Dayron (result: great sound) at Chicago's fabled Fickle Pickle night club in June of 1963. According to the back cover, Williams is accompanied (very occasionally to these ears) by his good pal, guitarist Mike Bloomfield, pianist Sunnyland Slim, bassist Horace 'Ace' Cathcart and rub board wizard Washboard Sam.

The titles are an animated, heady mix of Williams favourites and originals - from a lead-off 'Nobody Knows You When You're Down And Out', with his loud, declamatory vocal inspiring some characteristic stream-of-consciousness guitar work through to a hard-charging, foot-stomping rendition of Robert Johnson's debut 78 (the salacious 'Terraplane Blues') with room along the way for a great 'Sloppy Drunk Blues', a gravel-galloping 'Put On Your Nitecap Baby', the thoroughly rambunctious 'Don't Want No Big Fat Woman' and the intimately downbeat 'Going Away Won't Be Back Till Fall' among other full-tilters. Genius at work!



Larry Williams. From the B&R Archive.

LARRY WILLIAMS: The Complete Releases 1957-61
Acrobat ACMCD 4394 (70:52)

Just Because/ Let Me Tell You Baby/ High School Dance/ Short Fat Fannie/ Bony Moronie/ You Bug Me Baby/ Dizzy Miss Lizzy/ Slow Down/ Hootchy Koo/ The Dummy/ I Was A Fool/ Peaches And Cream/ She Said Yeah/ Bad Boy/ Steal A Little Kiss/ I Can't Stop Loving You/ Give Me Love/ Teardrops/ Ting A Ling/ Little Schoolgirl/ Make A Little Love/ Lawdy Miss Clawdy/ My Baby's Got Soul/ Every Day I Wonder/ Get Ready/ Baby, Baby/ I Wanna Know/ Like A Gentle Man/ Oh, Baby/ I Hear My Baby/ Lawdy Mama/ Fresh Out Of Tears

Often regarded as a poor man's Little Richard, Larry Williams nevertheless carved out his own career, producing a bunch of well-regarded rock'n'roll classics and gaining a number of fans in the process. Numbers like 'Bony Moronie', 'Dizzy Miss Lizzie', 'Short Fat Fannie', and 'Slow Down' being much-covered favourites in the rock'n'roll era and were often covered by artists and groups that followed: Any bands performing in the late 1950s and early 1960s were sure to feature at least a couple of these in their repertoire.

Rather a limited vocalist, Larry's Specialty recordings were nevertheless carried along by the pure commerciality of the songs, along with great production values from Bumps Blackwell and Art Rupe and superb accompaniment from the cream of L.A. session men including Plas Johnson, Jewell Grant, Willard McDaniel, Irving Ashby, Ted Brinson, and Earl Palmer.

Of course Specialty would throw everything they had into pushing Williams, with their main rocker up to then, Little Richard, forsaking the devil's music for gospel, they saw Williams as his natural successor. Williams didn't have Richard's chops though, which is more apparent on the slower numbers such as 'I Was A Fool' and 'Teardrops' where he often struggles to hold the tune. Little wonder then that Specialty would focus on the rockers.

Perhaps this release should have been more correctly titled 'The Complete Original Releases' or something, as there are quite a few that have seen the light of day since, but which didn't make it out at the time for various reasons. Amongst these are several alternate takes,



B&R Archive.

- **BLUES & RHYTHM (U.K.) Gary von Tersch**
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