

ROCK in REEL

ROOTS, ROCK, BLUES AND BEYOND

VARIOUS

★★★★★

Chris Barber Presents ...

Lost & Found The
Blues Legacy Vol. 1

★★★★★

Vol. 2

★★★★★

Vol. 3

(CLASSIC STUDIO IT) www.chrisbarber.net



Great googly moogly: that wonderfully satisfying sound you hear on Volume 2 of this invaluable archive series is the sound of an almost universally-believed myth being shattered. Every young blues fan, almost before they can utter the words “twelve bar blues”, learns how, when Muddy Waters first toured Britain in 1958, with pianist Otis Spann, the uptight Brits were appalled by the volume and violence of his electric guitar playing, many walking out in horror.

But what do we find on actually listening to a recording made in Manchester Free Trade Hall on that tour? Well, we find that Muddy, while playing with huge intensity and emotive power, does so at a volume that would have modern audiences screaming furiously at the soundman to turn the guitar up louder. And the audience, many perhaps hearing live blues for the first time, respond rapturously to songs like ‘Hoochie Coochie Man’ and ‘I Can’t Be Satisfied’, sounding totally blown away by Muddy’s playing and mighty singing.

Volume One includes ten 1957 Sister Rosetta Tharpe tracks and thirteen 1958 Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee tracks, also recorded in Manchester. The power and glory of Tharpe’s singing are irresistible on ‘Down By The Riverside’ and others. Sonny and Brownie’s musical interplay is remarkable and there is a freshness to their performances of ‘Midnight Special’ *et al* that they maybe later lost.

Volume Two, in addition to Muddy, contains five 1958 Sonny and Brownie tracks recorded for radio, three 1959 Champion Jack Dupree radio tracks, with Dupree relishing the sexist humour of ‘Mother-In-Law Blues’, and a 1962 Louis Jordan track. Playing with Jordan, reminisces Barber on one of the brief spoken word interludes, was “like being dragged along by a wild horse”.

Volume Three features eleven 1964 Free Trade Hall tracks by Sonny Boy Williamson, whose often anguished-sounding harmonica playing is hugely expressive and whose singing on ‘Your Funeral, My Trial’ is suitably menacing; three 1964 live and five 1980 radio tracks by Jimmy Witherspoon, who sings with riveting presence and swing; and four hair-raising 1964 tracks by Howlin’ Wolf with guitarist Hubert Sumlin providing some serious weirdness.

The Barber band impressively accompany every performer on at least some of their tracks, with singer Otilie Patterson captivatingly duetting with most of them.

Trevor Hodgett