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Chris Barber Presents Lost & Found, Vol. 3 (2008)

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As outlined by intros to reviews of [volume one](#) and [volume two](#) of Chris Barber's *Lost & Found* CD series, Barber has been one of towering figures of the British blues and jazz worlds since the early 1950s. As a concert promoter, Barber brought dozens of American blues artists to the U.K. and Europe to perform during the 1950s and '60s. The shows that Barber promoted helped bring blues music to Britain, influencing a generation of British musicians like Eric Clapton, Peter Green, Jimmy Page, and many others.

Chris Barber Presents Lost & Found, Vol. 3

Volume three of *Lost & Found* features powerful performances by harp master Sonny Boy Williamson II, Chicago blues giant Howlin' Wolf, extraordinary blues guitarist Hubert Sumlin, and the talented vocalist Jimmy Witherspoon. England was not a new experience for Sonny Boy, the larger-than-life bluesman traveling over the pond in 1963 as part of the American Folk Blues Festival.

Staying over in the U.K. after the tour's conclusion, Williamson found a ready audience in the country's young blues-rock musicians, performing and recording with the Yardbirds and the Animals. Williamson returned in 1964 to tour with The Chris Barber Band. *Lost & Found, Vol. 3* offers a May 1964 performance from the Manchester Free Trade Hall.

Sonny Boy Williamson with The Chris Barber Band

Williamson's opening number, a blending together of "Union Blues" and "Help Me," starts off slow and somewhat quietly before exploding in a flurry of notes flying from the harp and Sonny Boy's rising voice. The instrumental "C-Jam Blues" displays not only the blues harpist's dexterity and ability, but also the common bond between the blues and jazz as The Chris Barber Band provides spry backing accompaniment. Williamson and Barber's band run through nine songs here, including "So Sad To Be Lonesome," "Take A Walk With Me," and "Bye Bye Bird."

A couple of Williamson's performances stand out - the country-blues dirge "Your Funeral, My Trial" and "Pontiac Blues" really hitting the audience. The former is a solo performance by Williamson on a haunting Delta-style blues with wailing vocals and stunning harpwork by the master. The latter is an upbeat Chicago blues-flavored barn-burner, with Williamson's red-hot harmonica and throaty vocals backed by the band's bouncing rhythms and blastin' horns. Vocalist Otilie Patterson joins Williamson and the band for a romp through the gospel gem "This Little Light Of Mine," the bluesman's spirited vocals playing off of Patterson's verses, his joyous harp rising above the horns in triumph.

Jimmy Witherspoon with The Chris Barber Band

The phenomenal voice that was Jimmy Witherspoon was equally adept at shouting the blues as it was at crooning jazz tunes. Witherspoon's August 1964 performance with The Chris Barber Band at The National Jazz & Blues Festival in Richmond, England yielded three songs for *Lost & Found, Vol. 3*. Performing at the same festival as the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds, it's a safe bet that Witherspoon tutored the young musicians in the way to sing the blues.

Accompanied by jazz trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton and saxophonist Ronnie Scott, Witherspoon soars through "Times Getting Tougher Than Tough." A raucous blues number that is as relevant today as it was 40-something years ago, Witherspoon's swinging vocals are matched by an enormous wall-of-rhythm.



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Photo courtesy MVD Audio & The Blues Legacy

"Have You Ever Loved A Woman?" is a R&B weeper with jazzy flourishes, Witherspoon slowing down the pace and showing his terrific vocal range with a passionate reading of the song. "Roll 'Em Pete" is a fine barrelhouse blues with Witherspoon belting out the lyrics against a horn-driven backdrop.

Tacked onto the end of *Lost & Found, Vol. 3* are a handful of more recent Witherspoon performances from a live 1980 Dutch radio broadcast. These five tracks rock the house, the veteran blues singer bringing everything he had to a jazzy arrangement of "Everyday I Have The Blues" and an urbane reading of "T'ain't Nobody's Business." The horns add a lot of texture to the down-in-the-mouth blues of "When I've Been Drinkin'," Witherspoon's soulful voice delivering a staggering performance.

Howlin' Wolf with Hubert Sumlin

For Howlin' Wolf's historic U.K. appearances with The Chris Barber Band, the blues legend was accompanied by the fixture of his Chicago band, the incredible guitarist Hubert Sumlin. *Lost & Found, Vol. 3* preserves four unreleased recordings by the Wolf and Sumlin, taken from a live November 1964 radio broadcast. Blowing everybody away from the very beginning, Wolf tears through "Howlin' For My Baby," the band falling in perfectly behind his growling vocals with a Chicago blues-styled beat as Sumlin's guitar rings clearly above the roar.

Sumlin gets his chance to shine behind Wolf on the classic "Dust My Broom," the guitarist nearly upstaging the big man's powerful vocals with his relentless, inspired fretwork and a scorching solo. Wolf adds a little harp to the affair, holding his own above the band's strong rhythmic soundtrack, playing the song out alongside Sumlin's guitar. This is the only place that you'll find the Wolf howlin' on the obscure "May I Have A Talk With You," his menacing vocals threatening to melt your speakers as the band tries to keep up, Sumlin's guitar piercing through the din.

"If you don't have the blues today, you gotta have 'em tomorrow," explains Howlin' Wolf in his introduction to "Take A Walk With Me." An upbeat rocking blues tune with steady horn-driven rhythms, Wolf's big-throated vocals and jackhammer harpwork make for a rare blues experience, leaving the listener wishing that there were more songs from this electrifying 1964 performance.

The Reverend's Bottom Line

Lost & Found, Vol. 3 matches the quality of performances featured on its predecessors. Capturing legends like Sonny Boy, the Wolf, Hubert Sumlin, and Jimmy Witherspoon on tape, the album provides the listener with some damn fine blues music. The sound quality varies wildly, from the hollow echo of the Howlin' Wolf tracks to the relatively-clean tones of Witherspoon's 1980 performance. It doesn't matter, though...music this powerful, this timeless, and this historic deserves to be heard, and the lack of sonic quality does nothing to demean the remarkable performances captured by Chris Barber.

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