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REVIEW

Music Review: Various artists - *Chris Barber Presents...The Blues Legacy Series: Lost & Found*



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"Lost" recordings are almost always appealing. Were they "lost" for a reason or is there still some great music to be unearthed in the far reaches of the galaxy? In the case of *Chris Barber Presents...The Blues Legacy Series: Lost and Found*, it's probably a combination of the two.

This three-disc collection of previously unissued recordings boasts live sessions of Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Louis Jordan, Jimmy Witherspoon, and Champion Jack Dupree, all backed by Barber's band. Barber introduces each set with some nice insight on the background of the performances.

Most of the recordings were taken from the period in between 1957 and 1964 as the blues were beginning to sweep Europe. The audiences on these recordings reflect an eagerness that comes with witnessing something special, perhaps for the first time. Riotous clapping and laughter is often heard in the background as these great performers do their thing.

The collection begins on a relative high note, as the incredible Sister Rosetta Tharpe takes to the stage at the Manchester Free Trade Hall and belts out her brand of old-time spirituals. The best numbers from Tharpe come when she's singing solo and Barber's often-overpowering backup band fade away. Still, stirring numbers like "Up Above My Head" and "Old Time Religion" are thrilling treats.

The duo of Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee are up next and their brand of harmony and call-and-response gives the music an intimate quality. Barber's band is only featured on two tracks with Terry and McGhee, giving plenty of time to the trouble-free plucking of McGhee's guitar and Terry's harmonica. This is deep down roots music, with songs like "Cornbread, Peas and Black Molasses" and "Hooray, Hooray, This Woman is Killing Me" giving a real sense of the times.

The 1958 session from Terry and McGhee carries over on to the second disc of the collection with a few broadcast recordings, but eventually one of Muddy Waters' earliest live recordings takes over from his first tour of England. Unfortunately the mix leaves a lot to be desired and Muddy's normally immaculate guitar gets drowned out by Graham Burbridge's drums and Otis Spann's piano in most of the tracks. The rest of Barber's band joins Muddy and Otis for "Walkin' Thru the Park," a messy mishap that ends the set on a rather elaborate summit.

Champion Jack Dupree is given three tracks from a live recording for radio at the London Jazz Club in December of 1959. Barber's introduction describes the impulsiveness of Dupree and the three songs reflect

The second disc in the set finishes with Louis Jordan's "Ain't Nobody's Business," a slick duet with Otilie Patterson. The interaction between Jordan and Patterson is precious and the song's lyrics are fantastic. The vocals take centre stage and Barber's backing band isn't too strident, making the ideal mix.

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