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## Chris Barber Presents Lost & Found, Vol. 1 (2008)

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By [Reverend Keith A. Gordon](#), About.com

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In a nutshell, here's the amazing story behind the *Lost & Found* CD series. Since the early 1950s, Chris Barber has been one of the movers and shakers in the British blues and jazz worlds. The Chris Barber Jazz and Blues Band has performed over 10,000 shows during the past 50 years, and the band has made thousands of recordings. Barber also played a significant role as a concert promoter. During the 1950s and '60s, Barber brought dozens of American blues artists to the U.K. and Europe to perform on the continent for the first time, often backed by his band.

### Chris Barber Presents Lost & Found, Vol. 1

Many of Barber's shows were recorded for posterity, but the tapes were lost during the 1970s and remained undiscovered until recently. Barber had decided to restore one of the vintage American cars that he owns, and while digging through his storage warehouse, he found the long-lost original tapes for some of these unique shows. Remastered to achieve the best sound possible from the old tapes, these previously unreleased classic performances are documented by Barber's *Lost & Found* series. This first volume features Sister Rosetta Tharpe and folk-blues duo Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee.



Chris Barber Presents Lost & Found, Vol. 1  
Photo courtesy MVD Audio & The Blues Legacy

One of the best-known of the Sanctified gospel singers, Sister Rosetta Tharpe's popularity during the 1930s and '40s equaled that of many of the era's secular stars. Tharpe often performed and recorded with jazz bands, appearing with legends like Benny Goodman and Cab Calloway. Acclaimed as a powerful singer and innovative guitarist that mixed gospel with blues and pop, Tharpe's showmanship was second to none, and musicians like Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Aretha Franklin have cited Sister Rosetta as a major influence on their work. Brought to England by Barber for a full-fledged tour, her performance here is from a December 1957 show at The Free Trade Hall in Manchester.

### Sister Rosetta Tharpe with The Chris Barber Band

Tharpe's "Every Time I Feel The Spirit" is a wonderful example of old-school gospel-blues, Tharpe's joyous vocals soaring above the Chris Barber Band's jazzy, raucous instrumentation. If anything, "Feed Me Jesus" is even more powerful, Tharpe's unaccompanied vocals rising and falling as the spirit moves her, creating an incredibly mesmerizing effect. Another solo performance, "Didn't It Rain," shows Tharpe's incredible range and phrasing, her jazzy vocals be-bopping across the lyrics, creating their own rhythm. Barber's band wraps its instrumental soundtrack behind Tharpe's vocals on "Peace In The Valley," horns jumping in counterpoint to the singer's transcendent highs.

The temperature in the Manchester Trade Hall certainly rose a few degrees with the upbeat "Down By The Riverside," which brings a tent revival fervor to the performance. With her guitar in the lead, Tharpe delivers an engaging reading of the gospel standard "Old Time Religion," Barber's horns blowing mightily behind her finely-tuned vocals. Singer Otilie Patterson joins Tharpe for the jazzy, New Orleans-flavored "When The Saints Go Marching In," the two women swapping equally impressive vocal performances. To the crowd's approval, the two singers break into a reprise of "Old Time Religion" as the band plays them offstage. During her performance, Tharpe introduces nearly every song, and her interaction with the audience is both intimate and endearing, the crowd obviously responding to her humor and warmth.

### Piedmont Bluesmen Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee

Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee are two of the more interesting of the early Piedmont bluesmen. Blind since his teen years, Terry learned the harmonica from his father, and turned to blues music to make his living. Through the years, Terry performed with Blind

Boy Fuller, recorded with folk legends like Woody Guthrie, and forged a significant acting career that saw him perform on both television and the Broadway stage. McGhee overcame childhood polio to become a respected blues singer and guitarist, and also enjoyed success as an actor on Broadway and in films, and built a significant body of work as a solo artist as well. The two first performed together in 1941, their musical relationship extending over 30 years. The duo's *Lost & Found* performance was recorded in April 1958 in Manchester.

Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee begin their performance with the Leadbelly classic "Midnight Special," Terry blowin' the harp, McGhee on guitar, and both of them singing in unison to great effect. "Climbin' On Top Of The Hill" is an old blues music standard, a re-working of "Sittin' On Top Of The World" with a similar melody, but featuring McGhee's unique picking style, punctuated by blasts of Terry's harmonica. "Fox Chase" is an antiquated chestnut passed around by harp players, Terry rolling out scampering notes in between whoops and hollers as McGhee adds running commentary.

The two run through a number of traditional folk and blues music standards. "John Henry" has the two trading verses, singing together on the choruses, throwing in short, sharp shocks of harmonica and guitar. "Worried Life Blues" is a textbook example of country blues, McGhee strumming the guitar and singing in a rural drawl as Terry scatters notes across the song like seeds in a freshly-tilled field. Perhaps their best-known song, the love song "Betty And Dupree" is also Terry and McGhee's defining moment, the bluesmen knocking the listener down with strong vocals, low-key but elegant fretwork, and perfectly matched harp playing. They finish their set with a pair of gospel songs, the Chris Barber Band joining Terry and McGhee and providing excellent accompaniment.

### The Reverend's Bottom Line

For listeners expecting loud, compressed, lifeless digital-quality sound, you're not going to find it here. Sourced from 50-year-old tapes literally rescued from obscurity, *Lost & Found* is mixed a little lower than what modern audiences expect, with a bit of theater-hall echo, and definitely hot highs and resounding lows.

What you *will* find, however, is altogether inspiring, transcendent performances from Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Otilie Patterson, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee and, of course, the Chris Barber Band. An invaluable historical document, *Lost & Found, Vol. 1* presents these classic gospel and blues artists in their prime, preserving these wonderful performances for generations to come. (MVD Audio/The Blues Legacy)

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