



CHARLOTTE Edition

Chris Barber Presents the Blues Legacy: Lost and Found

CD Review: Various Artists

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The Deal: Late '50s, early '60s three-CD set of live blues treasures from over the pond with Muddy, the Wolf, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Brownie and Sonny.

The Good: Wolf's '64 set begins with "Howling For My Baby" with Hubert Sumlin's impeccable accompaniment. It's on "Dust my Broom" that the duo really shines – Wolf is electric, screamin' like a demon on the Elmore James classic with Sumlin dogging his heels. "May I Have Talk With You," according to British bandleader Chris Barber, who recorded the artists on tours with him in the '50s and '60s, is the only recording of Wolf doing that song – a great performance that should have been blasting from every jukebox in America. Rosetta Tharpe sounds overwhelmed with Barber's band playing Dixieland behind her on "Everytime I Feel the Spirit," but her vocal on "Feed Me Jesus" with just an acoustic guitar whispering in the background is chilling. Her scat singing on "Didn't It Rain" with just acoustic guitar backing is on par with Ella Fitzgerald. Brownie and Sonny's '58 set is one of their best live recordings with every nuance of their rough and tumble vocal harmonies captured. They also did four studio cuts with Barber's band that are just as crisp. Muddy is paired with Otis Spann for this '58 outing and his vocals are great. Unfortunately, none of his guitar playing is audible except on "Rolling Stone," where it's just him and his guitar and it's as down and dirty as only Muddy can make it.

The Bad: Barber prattles a bit too much in a virtually incomprehensible British accent. The only downside to Waters' set is "Walking Thorough the Park," which would be better without Barber's Dixieland jangling in the background.

The Verdict: Jump over Barber's babbling and you've got a great treat that just keeps getting better with age.