

this up, and newcomers will understand what all the excitement is about as the trio marches through a sizzling set with the intensity of the Hill Country artists who inspired them.

— Hal Horowitz

Willie King: Down in the Woods

Visible World Films

Two Dutch filmmakers ventured deep into the American South looking to make a documentary about the region's quaint African-American culture. Instead they found Willie King, who's defiantly black but not at all content to be sepia-toned into a dying era. His hometown of Old Memphis, Alabama, is a pet project of sorts for him, a cultural community King tends the way a farmer tills the soil.

Those familiar with King's electric juke-joint style will rejoice at the 40 minutes of incendiary live footage that accompanies the hourlong documentary on his life; for novices, peers including T-Model Ford and music geeks like author Peter Guralnick are trotted out to explain King's place in the world. The film chronicles a scene many don't realize still exists, and therein lies its real worth: It's one thing to celebrate a segment of society that'll never be seen on *American Idol*, and quite another to show how much this music really means to its constituents, not just as a method of release or as a connection to their past, but as a unifying social, sexual, and political force.

— Robert Fontenot

Born in the Honey: The Pinetop Perkins Story

Sagebrush Productions

This past summer, when couples were becoming newlyweds on "lucky" 7-7-07, Pinetop Perkins celebrated his 94th birthday. No doubt he had an excellent time. That's been the story of his life, as documented in this film whose title refers to Honey Island Plantation in Belzoni, Mississippi, where Perkins was born. The video does a commendable job of squeezing nine-plus decades into 60 minutes; filmmaker Peter Carlson shot footage of Perkins performing at festivals and clubs, and put a microphone in front of more than a dozen of the bluesman's musician friends, all of whom tell insightful stories. Ike Turner talks about learning piano from Perkins; Paul Oscher and Willie "Big Eyes" Smith reminisce about working with him



in Muddy Waters' Band; and Marcia Ball and Ann Rabson discuss his keyboard skill. It's a lovefest that also manages to provide an overview of Perkins' 1940s scuffling days with Robert Nighthawk and Sonny Boy Williamson II.

An accompanying CD offers a live performance recorded back when Perkins was a mere 88 years old. With Smith on drums, Bob Stroger on bass, and Frank Krakowski on guitar, Perkins whips through songs such as "Chicken Shack," "How Long Blues," "Down in Mississippi," and "Grinder Man Blues" plus a bonus 1997 performance of "Rather Quit Her Than Hit Her." Many of the same selections appear on his other live albums but they're rarely played the same way twice, and they legitimately fit into the "timeless" category — as does Perkins. (Full disclosure: Sagebrush Productions has a distribution relationship with Visionation, *Blues Revue's* parent company.)

— Bill Wasserzieher

Maggie Bell & Midnight Flyer Live Montreux, July 1981

Angel Air

Maggie Bell is best known as the big-voiced singer for the Scottish blues-soul-rock band Stone the Crows. With the Sensational Alex Harvey's brother Leslie on lead guitar, STC built a fan base in the U.K. before Harvey died in an electrical accident onstage in 1972. The band tried to regroup, first with Peter Green and then Jimmy McCulloch on guitar, but the group dissolved in 1973. Bell later formed Midnight Flyer, and the group toured for a year — often with Led Zeppelin and Bad Company, with whom they shared a manager — but folded after one album.

Is a 26-year-old performance by an obscure band of interest? Certainly Midnight Flyer was a seasoned group, with Tony Stevens of Foghat on bass, proto-punk Ant Glynne on guitar, and future Whitesnake member Dave Dowley on drums, but guest performances by Taj Mahal and Albert Collins are the disc's true selling points. Taj, looking as though he'd just jetted to chilly Switzerland from sun-splashed Hawaii, shares vocals with Bell on two Sam Cooke classics. Watching them rip through "Bring It On Home to Me" and "Chain Gang" is as life-affirming as live performances can be, and that's before Collins saunters onstage to launch a loose-limbed jam that lets Bell's band — especially young guitarist Glynne — face off against the Master of the Telecaster. Collins and Bell deliver a sweat-soaked "Stormy Monday Blues" to thunderous applause, wrapping up the 70-minute set. The DVD includes a recent interview with Bell in which she looks back on Midnight Flyer. The group might not have made it big, she says, but they had a good time. And that, of course, is the point.

— Bill Wasserzieher

