

New UP Releases

Ragtime and Detroit Blues Classics

Ron Harwood

1967

Now you can hear what guitar playing sounded like when Eddie Lang was big back in the Twenties. If you play another cut you can hear what Pete Johnson and Joe Turner sounded like back in the Thirties. You can hear a little Blind Boy Fuller, Pink Anderson, Teddy Bunn, Mance Lipscomb, and John Hurt too. But most of all you can hear what Mitch Greenhill sounds like TODAY, if you get his album SHEPHERD OF THE HIGHWAYS on Prestige/Folklore.

Mitch is from Cambridge and is one of the best Ragtime guitar players ever. He really knocked me out with this album, because he played all kinds of tunes on it. Anyone who had seen him do his act, would remember that he stuck almost strictly to Rags and fast blues—the album is everything.

Mitch doesn't do it by himself on this album though. When he does it he has Geoff Muldaur, Fritz Richmond, and Jeff Gutcheon do it with him. Nobody could have done a better job on rhythm guitar than Geoff Muldaur. He can knock out a classic jazz rhythm and you could swear that you were listening to some cat from back in the Twenties. Or, the Mole will chonk out an R & B beat with equal dexterity. But don't get me wrong, Geoff still sounds like Geoff when he plays—he always signs his work with an extra note or rhythm change.

Even if there were a lot of washtub bass players around, Fritz Richmond would still come out on top. You could almost swear that he had frets on that contraption. He doesn't miss a note. And he's gotten to the point where there's a lot of advantages in being able to bend the notes the way he can. It sounds different and it's great.

I didn't know Jeff Gutcheon, never heard him do any thing else, but I sure would like to. Here is a man that doesn't fit into any category. He plays piano and sometimes he sounds like J. Marion Cook cutting a roll around 1917 and then he sounds like Pete Johnson around the Forties or before, and then he sounds like Meade Lux and, then he sounds like Spann and I would imagine that he could do anybody on up to Van Clyburn.

The Mamas and the Papas know Mitch. He's in "Creeque Alley" someplace. They're a pretty good group. I hope the next album has more original stuff on it, that makes a big difference. But recording someone else's tunes is not as bad as putting out a "best of" album like the Spoonful did. It'd really be great if they could get around to the studio to do an album—but it's really only a sign of success when you can't get to the studio because you're too busy doing one-nighters.

Donovan better watch that he doesn't fall asleep on his next album.

Billie C. and the Sunshine are the best blues band in the city when they play blues. They're a group to look out for. Billie has a lot of good thoughts, and if he can pump them into his band, he'll have a good chance to make it.

There's a good reason on the Blues Classics label (Blues Classics 12). It's the "Detroit Blues/Early 1950's." It has fifteen cuts featuring ten different artists, including John Lee Hooker, Dr. Ross, and Baby Boy Warren. The album includes great back-up men like Sonny Boy Williamson and Washboard Willie. If any of you have an interest in what kind of music was being played on Hastings Street back in the Fifties, buy this album.

Relax your mind.

fifth Estate

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