

Mixed Mead-Ear

anon.

1968

This particular piece is written to serve two purposes:

(1) For those who know and like British Blues so that they may learn something of its history and composition.

(2) For those lemmings of this society who treat blues as a science text book; in that what counts is sticking to the rules laid down by the innovators of that form; so that they MAY (and pigs may fly) treat the next piece of blues they hear as a musical section of someone's soul, being contained therein exactly the emotions that said person is/was feeling at that time.—

As England never had any “Uncle Toms” or “Harriet Tubmans,” most of her own traditional music stems from civil disorders, famines, etc., rather than racial problems and is publicly known as “folk” music. Consequently—although certain sections of the community have had “the blues” through the centuries, it was not until 1962 that musicians fitted these troubles and feelings to the now internationally known “12 bar” blues.

Earlier renditions of this music bled slowly through via jazz forms, and the “boogie blues”, style even swept the country as “rock and roll” but the first people who really dug American blues style were the few hip youngsters of 1962.

With there being a drastic absence of English blues forms, the Englishmen took from the Americans the best of their form and began to play American blues in England.

Alexis Korner formed his band in London in early 1962. Alexis was the first person to form a blues group of that nature in England and in the course of time such people joined as: John Mayall, Rod Stewart, and Cyril Davies. Many of his featured guests are now the “Gods” of British blues such as-Eric Burdon, Stevie Winwood, Zoot Money, Georgie Fame and Long John Baldry.

I am saddened to note at this point that Cyril Davies—the second greatest harmonica or “harp” player that I have ever heard—was, a short time after joining the group, killed in a motor accident.

At almost the same time the “Graham Bond Organization” was being formed featuring Peter Baker on drums. By this time these, and Other small groups, began to write their own blues or to adapt the tunes they had borrowed to their own styles, for example, many leads, riffs, beats, and rhythms played by Eric Clapton are thefts- from Albert and B.B. King, and it is these performers who have given British Bluesmen the reputation of being copiers.

So the snowball gathered speed. Mayall left to form his own band featuring Davy Graham as his first lead guitar player. (Davy would later become one of the country's finest writers of acoustic guitar music. Listen to “Angie” from the Simon and Garfunkle “Sounds of Silence” album for example.)

Rod Stewart left to sing with Long John Baldry and Julie Driscoll who, with the Brian Auger Trinity, formed the Steam Packet. Eric Burdon, Zoot Money, Georgie Fame, and Stevie Winwood also formed their own highly successful groups. Peter Baker left Graham Bond, changed his first name to Ginger and eventually joined the Cream.

John Mayall found a rough, amateurish guitarist called Eric Clapton—fresh from the dizzy heights of stardom with the Yardbirds—took him under his wing and trained him to the blues.

When Clapton left Mayall to form Cream with another “pop” player, Jack Bruce, he took with him as fine a knowledge of blues styles as was possible. Thus when Cream was first formed it was the hardest, most incredible blues group anywhere.

Before long the leprositic rot of high finance set in and Cream started to die.

And what of Mayall? Well, he simply took Peter Green into his band and carried on business as usual.

Graham Bond took Jon Aiseman as a replacement for Ginger Baker.

Alexis Korner just carried on—never spectacular but always the originator.

So then Peter Green just stumbled across Jeremy Spencer, a small, compact, powerhouse of musical ability and a great artist when it came to feeling the blues. Peter had gone, by this time, as far as John Mayall could take him, so he took Jeremy and Mayall’s long standing bass player—John McVie and formed Fleetwood Mac with Mick Fleetwood, who was stolen from a group called “The Artwoods.”

As this activity continued, Long John Baldry became sick of destitution, cut a ballad record and had a hit. Rod Stewart joined Jeff Beck to form a soul/ blues band and Alexis Korner just carried on.

Mayall added horns and Mick Taylor on the lead guitar, cut another album just as one of his old drummers formed the Ainsley Dunbar Retaliation.

Still not finding the sound he was truly looking for, John Mayall made “The Blues Alone” through the miracle of engineering—released two albums recorded live—dropped some horns and added Jon Hiseman on drums and a violinist and a trumpet player and made “Bare Wires.”

And very recently—so recently that I do not know who his personnel is now, he has slashed his blues-breakers down to four people including himself.

To return to the era of the original Alexis Korner’ Band, his original lineup fell apart a little more when two of his vocalists and a drummer left. Mick and Charlie formed the Rolling Stones and Paul Jones formed Manfred Mann. Then, Viv Prince and Ray Sone appeared out of nowhere to form the “Pretty Things” and the “Downliners Sect” respectively.

Manfred Mann at this time was made up of: Paul Jones, vocal/harp; Mike Vickers, guitar/sax/flute/ clarinet/ vocals; Mike Hugg, drums/vibes; Tom McGuinness, bass and rhythm guitar and Manfred Mann, vocals and keyboard instruments.

Having played a “jazzy blues” sound for some eighteen months: Paul Jones left to pursue a solid career as a singer/actor; Mike Vickers became musical director to the British Symphonia Orchestra and later became the leader of his own orchestra.

Manfred Mann then turned to pop. The Pretty Things lived on as “blues people” up till last year when they cut “Emotions,” still blues based but somewhat more psychedelic in its approach. The Steam Packet disbanded leaving Julie and Brian to do their own thing. Cream have now broken up, the Stones are together but are no longer a “blues band.”

The Yardbirds are now Jimmy Page and the Yardbirds and Graham Bond—I fear—has finally disbanded as did Zoot Money’s; Big Roll Band—leaving Zoot to join Eric Burdon’s Animals as organist.

So really, the only good blues bands left to play British blues—are Mayan’s „Bluesbreakers, Green’s Fleetwood Mac and Ainsley Dunbar’s Retaliation. Of course, all the names mentioned here can still play but they feel they do their own music better and I personally wish them all possible good fortune.

So that’s British Blues! Formerly a copy but now so well developed as to be stylistically original. The only disadvantage is that record companies are tending to release very old tapes of famous artists in the days before they had attained the ability to give their own rendition of this old yet new form, e.g. Raw Blues and Anthology of British Blues.

For those of you who may wish to hear some (Or all) of the artists mentioned here I have drawn up a list of available releases showing approximate personnel and recording dates.

John Mayall

“Live at Klooks Kleek”

Uncertain personnel, recorded mid-1963.

Mayall with Clapton

Recorded June 1966

"Hard Road"

Mayall With Peter Green,

recorded mid-1967.

"Crusade"

Mayall with Mick Taylor

recorded late 1967.

"Diary of a Band," Volumes 1 and 2

Mayall with Mick Taylor

recorded early 1968.

"Blues Alone"

Mayall alone

recorded late 1967.

"Bare Wires"

Mayall with Jon Hiseman/drums; Mick Taylor/guitar

recorded mid-1968.

"Cream"

John Mayall, Eric Clapton, Peter Green, Otis Spann, Champion Jack Dupree, Steve Anglo (Stevie Win-wood).

"Anthology of British Blues" (two volumes)

Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, Jeremy Spencer, Tony McPhee, John Mayall, Savoy Brown Blues Band.

No recording date—probably early 1966.

Graham Bond

Graham Bond and Ginger Baker

recorded late 1966

"There's a Bond Between Us"

"What's Shaking"

Loving Spoonful

Paul Butterfield Blues Band Powerhouse: Eric Clapton, John Maya, Stevie Win-wood, Ainsley Dunbar, John
McVie.

"Open"

Brian Auger Trinity With Tulle Driscoll

recorded mid 1967.

Manfred Mann

"Five Faces"

Full personnel, recorded early 1966

"Mann Made"

Full personnel with the exception of Paul Jones, recorded mid 1967.

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