

The Boxer

David Gaynes

1970

Here are four records you might want to have:

1. Otis Spann: Sweet Giant of the Blues, Bluestime BTS-9006.
2. Harmonica Slim: The Return of Harmonica Slim, Bluestime BTS9005.
3. T-Bone Walker/Joe Turner/Otis Spann: Super Black Blues, Bluestime BTS-9003.
4. Earl Hooker: Don't Have to Worry, Bluesway BLS 6032.

ANY ATTEMPT TO UNDERSTAND AMERICAN MUSIC MUST UNDERSTAND THE MUSIC CALLED BLUES, THAT BLACK MEN HAVE MADE IN THEIR OPPRESSION.

Otis Spann was a boxer with forty-eight professional fights. Harmonica Slim had one recorded hit in 1956. None since.

Joe Turner was heard "screaming over the crashing rhythm sections and blaring brass sections that were so characteristic of the Southwestern bands" (Leroi Jones) over thirty years ago.

T-Bone Walker was "probably the first blues guitarist to use amplification..." Etc.

Who is Earl Hooker? Anyway?

The Black, Blues, Man, is saying, This is my life—my world. It is wrong that I must live this way. It is not wrong just because it hurts—life is a process of pain. It is wrong because I AM A MAN.

Blues is coming from a time and place where the singer couldn't t.c.b. with the BUSINESS-man. mR. cHARLIE. So sometimes his woman got hurt, sometimes his dog. His best friend ("... at least I thought he was my friend.") And like the song says "Darling, this hurts me too."

Because that is the nature of oppression, when men and women cannot take up the gun against it. The violence of oppression when unresolved, moves in on the oppressed community.

The violence is internalized, misdirected. This is the apogee of amerikkka's torture. It works inside the victims and must ultimately be dealt with as the oppressor's attempt to commit psychic genocide on a whole people.

The men who blow on these four albums have been around for a long time. They were paying their dues long before we had chords to cut. Or cut our chords.

But all of them were playing when the albums were cut. No mere inertia rolling quietly into twilight studios, but still the surge up the mountain. By any means possible.

Some people, having cut their teeth on an age of revolutionary rhetoric and the beginning of violence directed towards liberation, would call these men slaves.

But let us look at their "masters". Who cannot sing or dance. Who cannot even change. They can only die.

fifth Estate

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