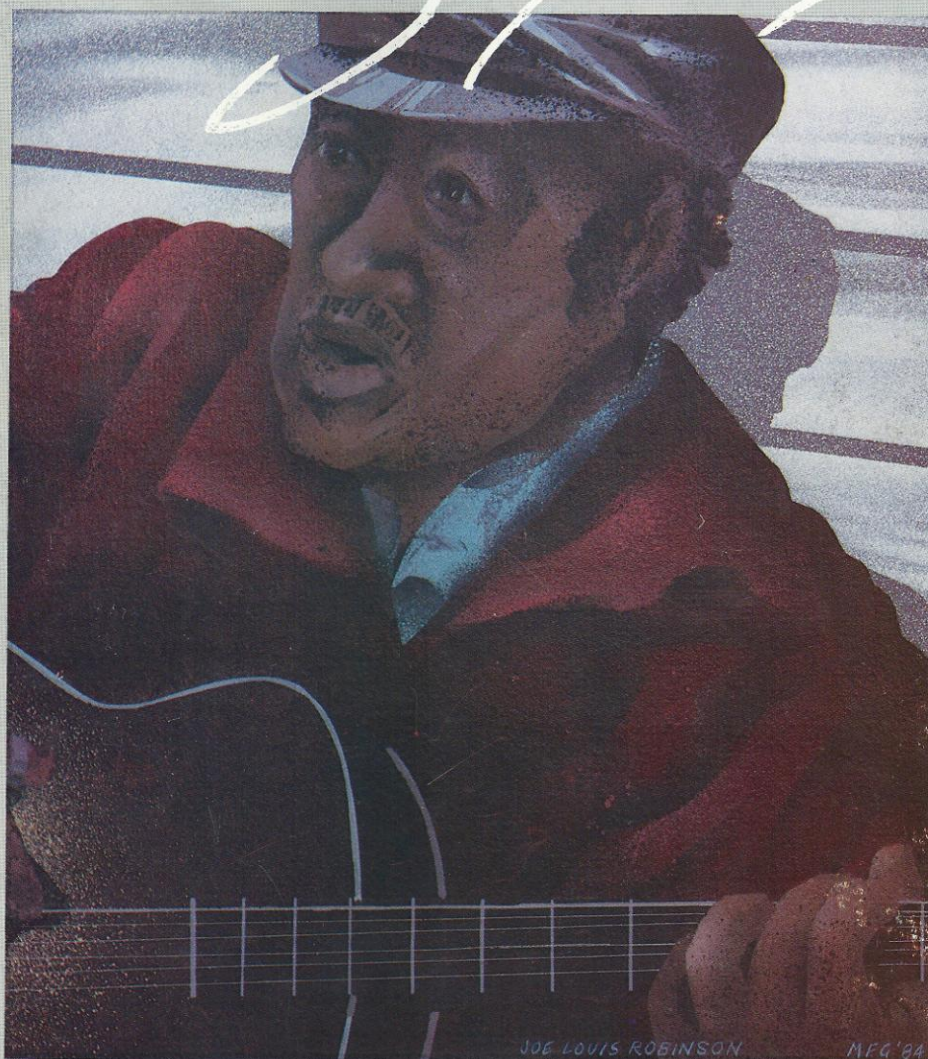


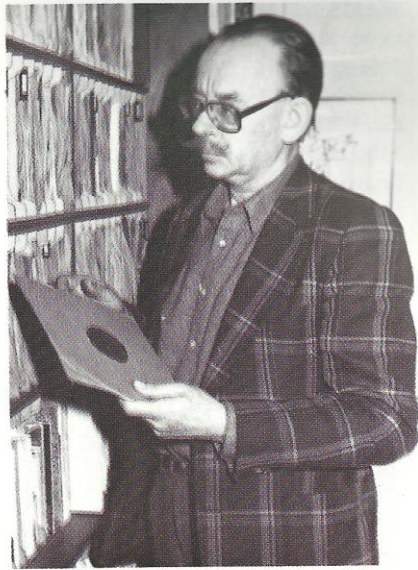
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Living Blues



Record Review Issue



Yannick Bruynoghe, Brussels, 1983 (*R. Sacre, Liege*)

YANNICK BRUYNOGHE

He was born under a good sign in 1924, at a time when Louis Armstrong, in Chicago, was emerging as the most important jazz creator of all times, ready for the Hot Five. Coleman Hawkins was still an obscure, if ambitious, saxophone player in Fletcher Henderson's big band, and Big Bill Broonzy had three more years to wait before entering a recording studio and starting his prolific career. All of them, and countless other musicians, were bound to meet and to work together, but nobody in Leuven, Belgium, imagined that Yannick Bruynoghe would dedicate a good part of his life to jazz and blues and the women and men who created and performed the music of black Americans. Had he been told, Yannick's father, a distinguished medical doctor and professor at the University of Leuven, would have shrugged his shoulders with contempt. Nevertheless, that's what happened.

In 1947, at 23, Yannick was in New York visiting Harlem and as many jazz clubs in the Big Apple as he could, including those ones where a new music was coming into life. Yannick lived "in situ" the birth of Be-Bop with Dizzy, Parker, Miles, Monk, and Roach. He had a strong interest in American black music before the trip; he was a definite addict from then on.

His mind was open to the arts, to literature, to music; first, he had studied to be a lawyer. Then, with a curiosity for

everything as large as the world, he started, in 1954, a fruitful career with R.T.B., the Belgian broadcasting and television system in Brussels where he quickly became the head of a movie department—"Le Cine Club de Minuit" (Midnight Movie Club) in 1956. He managed to become an authority in art movies, painting, music, and literature; he was himself a painter and a collector of and specialist in surrealist art.

In the late '40s and '50s and later, jazzmen and bluesmen by the dozens visited him at his home. They knew that they were welcome, with soul food, easy talking and good fun, thanks to Yannick and his wife, Margo. Through his stay in England during the war and through the friends he had made there, Bruynoghe also discovered the prewar blues; by the early '50s, he already had a nice collection of prewar blues records. He was fascinated both by the music and by the surrealist content of some of the lyrics that he studied eagerly. At the same time, Big Bill Broonzy came to Europe. He and Yannick had to meet, and they started a lifelong friendship that resulted in a book, **Big Bill Blues** (Editions des Artistes, 1955), a recording session (Vogue and Black And Blue, France), a movie short of Bill in a club, and plenty of pictures.

In 1957-58, Yannick and Margo made the trip to Chicago to see Bill at home. He was recovering from a surgical operation and had little time left to live, but he introduced the Bruynoghes to the "who's who" of the Chicago blues scene. The story has been told in *Living Blues* #55 with great and rare pictures (see also *Soul Bag* magazine, No. 95, June '83).

In the '60s and '70s, Bruynoghe's house, in a nice, wooded section of Brussels, remained an important stopover for most of the jazz and blues musicians touring Europe. During this time, Yannick also directed some important jazz movies dedicated to Roosevelt Sykes, Buck Clayton, Coleman Hawkins, and others. Later, illness hampered Yannick's musical activities in the field, in the concert halls, and at the festivals, but not his love for and interest in the music itself and the performers; he always stayed deeply concerned.

He died in Uccle, Brussels, on March 30, 1984, of a heart attack resulting from the heavy and tiring medical treatment he was enduring for a cancer. His untimely

death occurred just at a time when he had agreed to lease his nice collection of tapes (with unissued concerts and private performances) to a small, independent record company, and he had many plans for the future.

He was a clever, smart man, ironically wearing a defiant British mustache, with a cold eye on a tough and trivial world. He was a little distant and unconcerned about daily problems or life difficulties; he was brave and rarely complained, and he had a big, deep heart full of care and love for his friends and family.

We'll miss him, even if we know he's now painting as much as he wants, directing art movies, talking with all the friends he rejoined, and listening to the music of Satchmo, Parker, and Big Bill in the green pastures of Heaven.

Have a good time over there, Yannick; you are remembered over here.

—Robert Sacre