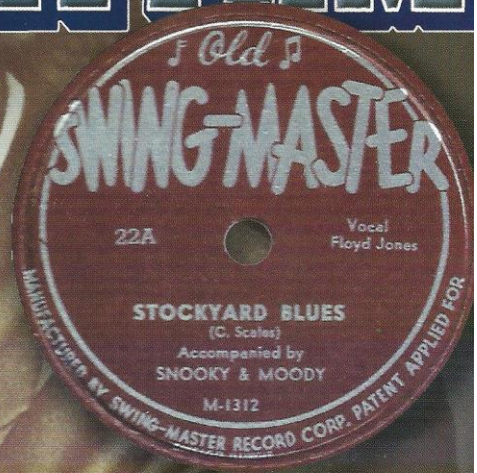


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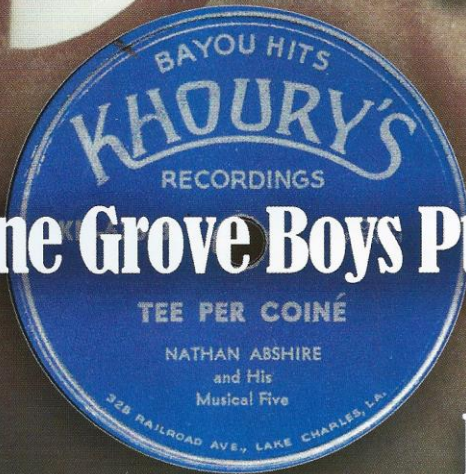
SEPT 2013

THE GOSPEL TRUTH £4.50

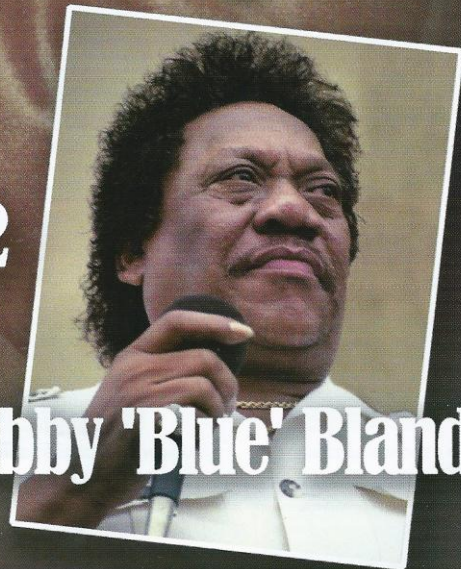
BLUES & RHYTHM



Snooky Pryor



Pine Grove Boys Pt. 2



Bobby 'Blue' Bland



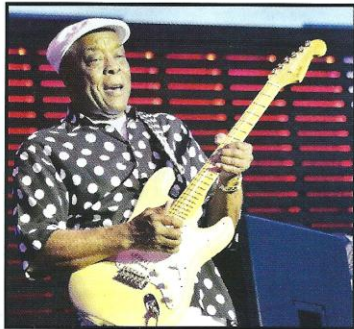
Demetria Taylor. Photo: Mike Stephenson.

As per usual, the Chicago blues clubs put on their own blues festival events, as did Delmark Records at the Jazz Record Mart for a Sunday Brunch.

Mike Stephenson

BLUES ON THE FOX 2013 Aurora, Illinois 14th-17th June

The River Edge Park provided a new site for the seventeenth 'Blues On The Fox' Festival this year. It was located on North Broadway Street in downtown Aurora but still on the banks of the Fox River. The Festival started rocking on the first night with a set by Alligator artists J.J. Grey and Mofro who delivered their own blend of southern rock, reggae, blues, country and soul – performing sides from their new album 'This River'. Smiling and relaxed, Grey played original songs influenced by Otis Redding, Tony Joe White, Sly Stone and Toots and The Maytals. With six albums and a decade long career the band is now appreciated for its honest, down-home story telling and shows that compel folks to dance one minute and cry the next.



Buddy Guy, Blues On The Fox, June, 2013. Photo: Robert Sacré.

They were followed by Dr. John who has more than a half-century in the business. The six time Grammy winner performed a unique blend of voodoo mysticism, funk, blues, r&b, zydeco, rock and Creole flavour with a small band led by a female trombone player. He played songs from his 'Locked Down' set, which won a 2013 Grammy for 'Best Blues Album'. Both he and Grey won standing ovations.

The Saturday kicked off with the foot-stompin' Bay Area blues-rock band The Stone Foxes bringing a distinct country, rock, blues style to the Fox River. They were followed by the turbo charged Tommy Castro & The Pain Killers. I doubt they are useful for headaches and other pains but as a blues band they demonstrated a taste of Chicago, electric and west coast blues and soul that had the audience begging for more.

Robert Randolph played a great show. Robert started his career in gospel music as pedal-steel guitarist in the Keith Dominion Church with teachers like the legendary Calvin Cooke. The Blue Note Records recording artist leads a family band of brothers and friends, including his sister as lead singer and he has a wide appeal performing a feel-good



Robert Randolph, Blues On The Fox, June, 2013. Photo: Robert Sacré.

show that left everybody inspired. His Family Band have a wide range of musical influences ranging from 1970s funk bands such as Sly and The Family Stone to gospel and blues-rock à la Stevie Ray Vaughan.

Closing the festival was the one and only Buddy Guy who took to the stage for a show that was, as expected, amazing and exhilarating. The crowd loved his stage choreography, his wry face, the tricks with his guitar and most of all his virtuosity as a guitarist and his vocal fluency.

All in all, a festival that was well organised, well attended, with great scheduling – hats off to Jay Kelly and all his team.

Robert Sacré

28th CHICAGO GOSPEL MUSIC FESTIVAL 20th-22nd June

The festival opened on 20th June at Millennium Park with a Gospel Choir showcase on the Jay Pritker Pavilion Stage. The four choirs vied with each other – all featuring talented soloists and choir members. The Chicago Cultural Centre also hosted groups, small choirs and soloists performing across three sites. The top performers for me were Just Friends, a male-female group and The James (an all female group) for their professionalism and most of all, Leanne Faine, a soloist with a long career behind her.

She has a powerful voice and favours the traditional gospel style of the 'Golden Age of Gospel'.

The best was still to come when the Claudia Cassidy Theatre screened the film 'The Sweet Sisters of Zion – Delois Barrett Campbell and the Barrett Sisters', which got a warm reception from the public. The screening was followed by a



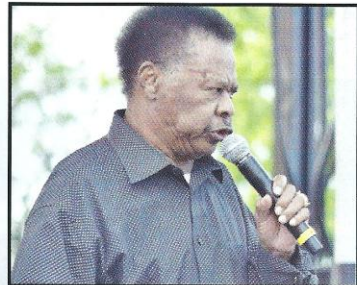
Reverend Tim White - 'The whirling dervish of gospel'. Photo: Robert Sacré.

discussion with the two surviving Barrett Sisters (Rodessa and Billie), Tina Brown (who replaced Delois Barrett in the trio when Delois lost her voice) and the producer/director of the film Regina Rene Davis. Rodessa was impressive with some great stories and anecdotes about her life and also the making of the film.

The Bronzeville neighbourhood, the birthplace of black Gospel music in Chicago, served as the festival's main home during the weekend. Groups and soloists followed one another on the Day Stage – a large array of moving up talent eager to catch the attention of promoters and to please their audience. They largely succeeded. My own favorites were G.A.3 for their dynamism and their elaborate and energetic choreography and the Turner Sisters, a very spirited group who combined traditional and modern gospel music.

The Main Stage lineup featured contemporary gospel icons that are hugely appreciated by black audiences today but too far away from the traditional gospel for my tastes. On 22nd June the Day Stage presented some big stars such as Dr. Charles G. Hayes and the Chicago Mass Choir, but my favourite was the Reverend Tim White, nicknamed the 'whirling dervish of gospel'. He is a terrific singer, preaching, wailing and screaming and the crowd loved him.

Joe Ligon and The Mighty Clouds of Joy headlined the Main Stage. They have been performing



for more than half a century and Ligon has changed the standard gospel line-up from a vocal quartet backed by a sole electric guitar to a full fledged, r&b-influenced group, complete with bass, drums and keyboards. They gave a demonstration of traditional, hard gospel – always on the fringes of hysteria.

Joe Ligon of the Mighty Clouds Of Joy. Photo: Robert Sacré.

Ligon left the stage and went into the audience, shaking hands and sharing songs with the crowd while the group on stage maintained hypnotic rhythms and harmonies. They made my day even if some of the other groups were outstanding in their own right.

Robert Sacré