

# TONY GLOVER ABOUT 2000 WORDS

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**I**ncreasing numbers of people are turning their backs on cities that have grown unlivable, and on society with its increasing complexity, plastic technology and dehumanization—and doing just that, moving to farms and communes. And where they go, music goes too—but many have found that 100,000 watts don't seem quite right in the middle of a cornfield . . . so more and more are swinging back to acoustic music. "These people did this study and found that music by groups like Led Zeppelin actually stunted growth of plants," one guitar player said. "Plants have good sense—maybe they're trying to tell us something."

Questions of musical taste aside, it's a fact that noise pollution is a growing factor in city-psychosis—and music that echoes chaos contributes more of the same. So people are finding roots again, meaningful values in both life and music styles. And music that one person can make, all by himself, without electri-

city, seems to be one answer in the search for organic unity.

Blues is a little different story. The first of the recorded "country" bluesmen were travellers, who wandered the south singing in camps and at Saturday night dances—to them records were mostly a way to earn a lot of money (relatively speak-

ing of course) in a short time. Later as the blues moved to the industrial North the music became an escape for the audience ("Sing me back home" isn't just a lyric) and a real livelihood for the musicians. Tho many still worked in bars and got incredibly little bread, records were a way of expanding their audience. And now of course, for many musicians of all types, records may be one of the prime considerations, with tours done more as an afterthought—or to promote the release of a new album.

Even more than country or mountain folk music, blues audiences have gone thru a major upheaval in the past twenty years. In the 50's, the Chicago-styled blues of men like Muddy Waters and Howling Wolf were mostly scorned by younger blacks, who with a growing sense of identity, didn't want any association with what they called "slave music". But in the 70's, black people are more aware of the richness and

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Play Harmonica Through a Hose





beauty of their musical heritage, and people like B.B. King are regular performers in black concerts and TV shows. The music has remained mostly the same, the audience has grown towards it—appreciating the strength, skill and beauty of it with pride instead of prejudice.

At the same time, in the late 50's, many young white people were looking around for deeper values. They turned their backs on the teen-age schlock which rock and roll had become as big business took it over, and found folk-blues of men like Sonny Terry and Leadbelly, or the Chicago styled R&B of groups like Muddy Waters. Some of those who got into folk-blues and delta blues tried to learn to play it, and recreate a dying form. As the audience grew so did the interest, and many of the older bluesmen were found to be still alive and performing, and in time they began to tour the festival and coffee house circuit regularly. People like Skip James, Son House, Mississippi John Hurt and Big Joe Williams all found an enthusiastic young audience who appreciated the value of what they could do. There have always been mutterings about ex-

Position of Harmonica When Placing in Mouth



ploitation and rip-offs, but most of these bluesmen fared far better on the folk circuit than they ever had before. And several, like Skip James and Reverend Robert Wilkins who had their songs recorded by successful rock groups (Cream and the Rolling Stones, respectively) got fairly substantial royalties.



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Of course many white groups have appropriated songs and styles of bluesmen as their own and never given credit or money to the people they copped from—but hustlers come in all sizes, costumes, and hair styles. Don't matter how hip you look theft is still theft. (Specifically, and one example only, Led Zeppelin stole "Bring It On Home", from Sonny Boy Williamson.)



Just as crooks come in all sizes and colors, so does the blues itself. A while back James Baldwin and Margaret Mead did a book together called "A Rap on Race". Talking about it, Baldwin pointed out that as young people began to get into freedom riding, voter registration and anti-war demonstrations they began to find out what it was like to be "niggers" too. And now from a group of merely political activists, the scorn of the American power structure has turned to anybody young with long hair who isn't too interested in accepting their version of reality. You don't have to be black to get thrown out of restaurants, beaten by mobs (and/or police) and even killed.

"Blues is a feeling" ... oh yeah, and now a whole lot of people are hip to what it's like to have the blues. A lonesome feeling sure, but with a togetherness in the music, a shared understanding that's implicit there. But not defeat, no, never—because singing the blues is surmounting the hassles—if you can sing about it, you're on top of it.

Nope, blues ain't dead—but most of the men who made it best are—and their kind of blues will pass when they do. But like folk styles, blues styles are also being assimilated. And tho' the old styles won't exist (except on record) blues will exist in a new framework, in styles dictated by the needs and feelings of those who play them.

Speaking of books and records, there's a few new ones and some older ones worth checking into if you're into blues, country and folk. (If you're not, why the hell are you reading this?)

**BLUES RECORDS 1943-66** by Mike Leadbitter & Neil Slaven (Oak Publications \$15) is a massive discographical work. It lists practically every blues record made in those years with session dates and personnel listings. It's great if you want to find out who sang vocal chorus on Bo Diddley's "Diddley Daddy". (It was the Moonglows, Bo's real name is Ellas McDaniel and he was born in McComb, Mississippi, December 30, 1928 ... and Jerome Green played maracas.) The book is full of stuff like that.

**COUNTRY MUSIC: WHITE MAN'S BLUES** by John Grissim (Paperback Library \$1.25) is a survey of modern country music done by a former sports editor of Rolling Stone (don't hold it against him) in a breezy style that makes it fun to read. He profiles and backgrounds people like Johnny Cash, Waylon Jennings, Buck Owens, Merle Haggard, Kris Kristofferson, Jerry Lee Lewis ... and gives an insight into the Nashville studio scene as well. There's even a section on country groupies—informative and interesting too. If like me, you used to dig blues and hate country music, this is a good place to get into an important part of the American music scene.

## HOW TO PLAY WHILE DANCING



**BOSSMEN: BILL MONROE & MUDDY WATERS** by James Rooney (Dial Press \$5.95). This is a double biography of two men who have in common the fact that they're both fathers of a style of music: Monroe, Bluegrass, and Waters, Chicago Blues. Both came from the rural south, both grew to success in the North, and both have sustained their popularity on the folk circuits without changing their performing musical styles. There are extensive quotes from interviews with both men and their friends, and lots of pictures. Interesting and worth reading.

## HOW TO PLAY UNDER A GLASS



And then there are several books by English blues historian Paul Oliver, you might start with *The Meaning Of The Blues* (Collier Books \$9.95). This book is a sociological and contextual study of blues lyrics and meanings, others are conversations with bluesmen. Also check out the various books by Sam Charters published by Oak Publications. (Try *The Bluesmen* first it's a study of delta and other blues singers.)

Of course there are many other books on blues worth reading, these are just a few of the standouts.

As far as records go, the blues tradition has been pretty well documented on both commercial and re-issue recordings. Since people in some parts of the country have trouble finding certain labels at their local head shop, here's a list of some of the main blues labels.

**CHESS RECORDS**  
1301 Avenue of the Americas



N.Y. 10019

Many fine Chicago styled albums by people like Muddy Waters, Howling Wolf and Sonny Boy Williamson. Also had a "Vintage Series" with several albums featuring old and un-released singles by people like Albert King, Otis Rush, Elmore James, etc. Avoid the psychedelized Wolf & Muddy albums.

#### BLUES CLASSICS

Box 9195

Berkeley, Calif. 94719

25c brings a catalogue of their many re-issues of old blues and folk on ARHOLIE label as well. People like both Sonny Boy Williamsons, Mance Lipscomb, Lightning Hopkins, Lowell Fulson, etc.

#### TESTAMENT RECORDS

577 Levering Avenue

Los Angeles, California 90024

Testament does re-issue records like Muddy Waters 1941 Library of Congress sides cut in Mississippi as well as new albums by people like Johnny Shines and J.B. Hutto.

#### DELMARK RECORDS

Seven West Grand

Chicago, Ill. 60610

They have a folk and blues as well as jazz catalogue—blues people like Big Joe Williams, Junior Wells, Carey Bell, Sleepy John Estes, Magic Sam, etc.

There are also many re-issue labels which have done collections by various delta bluesmen, gospel singers, jug bands, etc. Try *Origin of Jazz Library*, 38 Remsen Street (1 E), Brooklyn Heights, N.Y.

Let's see, what else? *Vanguard* label has a few blues worth noting, Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, and the Chicago Blues sets. *Columbia* has Robert Johnson on two lp's (which comprises his entire recorded legacy)—these are absolute *musts* for any blues fan—and re-issues by Leadbelly, Lightning Hopkins, Bukka White, etc. *Atlantic* label concentrates more on soul and jazz, but they do have a few blues albums in their files. The way things are almost any company may have one or two albums in their catalogue worth hearing, your best

## HOW TO SECURE A BEAUTIFUL TONE



Study the illustration to the left carefully. Place a glass tumbler over the right end of the Harmonica and against the cheek. By moving the glass in a very slow shaking movement the tone is enhanced to a great degree.

bet is to check out record shops periodically. And don't always judge 'em by the cover. (Remember what Bo Diddley said.)

Since I wrote that book about Blues harp playing I've been getting a lot of letters—I try to answer most of them when I can ... but I can't always, so I'm gonna use this opportunity to cover a few things that seem to come up fairly often.

*Breaking harps in:* the only way I know of to really get the low key ones broken in right is to just start out blowing easy, and bending notes gently. Gradually increase volume and force over a period of time. (If you play like ten minutes a day, a week oughta be safe to start playing with more energy.) But all that varies with the harp and the individual. Rule of thumb is just be cool at first, until it loosens up.

*Single notes:* this seems to be a lot of people's biggest problem. I don't know why, since most people seem to be able to handle infinitely tiny roaches okay—it's much the same principle. It's just something you have to work at—if you really want to play it's worth however long it takes—which might even be measured in years. Everything worth having costs you something in some way—it's up to you to decide wheth-

er the time and effort you put in are worth what you can get out of it.

There seem to be more and more harp players everywhere; in blues bands, in rock bands, playing country, playing folk, playing commercials. One of the draggiest tendencies is for people to get hung up in riffs and phrases and using these stock lines over and over again, whether they fit the song or not. It's okay as a starting point, but no matter how great your technique may be, if you're only running riffs, you're not really *making* music, you're just reproducing it. It's a necessary beginning—but work to get beyond it.

*Favorite harp player:* still Sonny Boy Williamson II (Rice Miller). In fact as time goes by, I like him more and more. Nobody yet has ever managed to combine his technique, vocal style and songwriting ability all in one body. Maybe somewhere somebody's working on it—but I won't believe it till I hear it.

And the last questions are about Koerner Ray & Glover. Where are they, what's happening, etc? Well we played our last gig with all three of us together in Minneapolis a couple of years back, as a warm-up act for The Who—it was weird, but a groove. Since then Koerner has been working mostly solo, around the East and Midwest. Along with a few other people he put together an hour long film called "The Secret of Sleep"—which he stars in. Look for it in your town—but you'll have to look hard—

## PLAY UP AND DOWN



it's being distributed by hand. And right about now (as I write this) he should be settling down with his wife



and kid in Denmark, her native country—where John plans to stay for several months.

Dave Ray is currently in Minneapolis, working solo in bars around the area, and putting together a record label, to record his own and friends music with as little financial hassle as possible, and the best in artistic and other feelings.

Me, I had an "underground" radio show in Minneapolis for a year and a quarter, all night long, six nights a week. It was interesting, but got to be a bit weird, especially never seeing the sunlight, so when I went to New York on vacation last summer, I never seemed to get back. Since then I've been mostly writing articles and interviews for various magazines—mostly about music. Might cut an album one of these days, if it makes sense to do it and the music is right.

A last note: there's a cat in the midwest who is putting together an album of old KR&G live concerts, recorded in the midwest in 1964 or

so. The quality of the tapes I've heard isn't the greatest, but the music has an enthusiasm and spirit that we never could reach in a studio. (Especially me—I'm not satisfied with more than two of the tracks I recorded.) He's planning to put these out in a limited edition sometime soon—so for you diehards who want more, the best may be yet to come—



David Gahr

it's my favorite KR&G album—hope you get a chance to hear it.

This seems to be the end, so I'll just stop.

Rock on!



TONY GLOVER is a musician turned writer; from 1963-66 he recorded and gigged with Dave Ray and John Koerner as part of Koerner, Ray & Glover. Gigs included Philadelphia and Newport Folk Festivals as well as various folk clubs and concerts hither and yon. The group has 5 albums on Elektra; Dave Ray has a solo one as well and one with his one-time band *Bamboo*. Koerner recorded a beautiful but almost un-noticed album with Willie Murphy called "Running, Jumping, Standing Still". Since the group drifted apart, Glover has been a radio announcer, and now makes a non-living writing about music for publications ranging from *Senior Scholastic* to *Rolling Stone*. He plays occasional jam sessions but mostly makes music just for his own enjoyment.

Mr. Glover now resides with his pet manta ray in a tree in Central Park, and can often be seen howling at the moon. For awhile he was the leader of a pack of itinerant amoebas, but has recently become a semi-vegetarian, specializing in Rorschach tests. He still hasn't found nirvana, tho' he once passed thru Urbana, Illinois. When queried, all he would say was "That ain't quite what I meant, babe."

And you know what? It wasn't.

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