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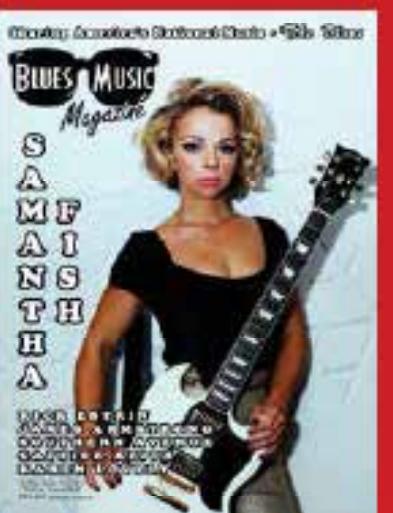
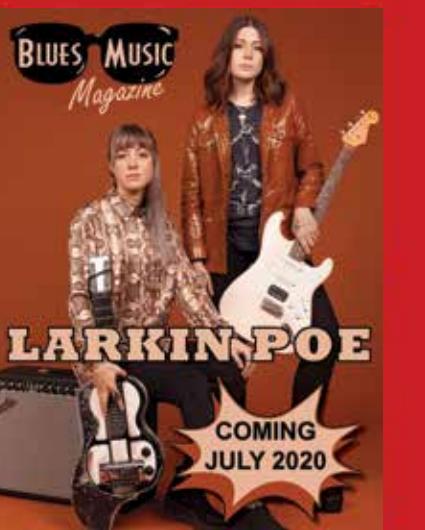
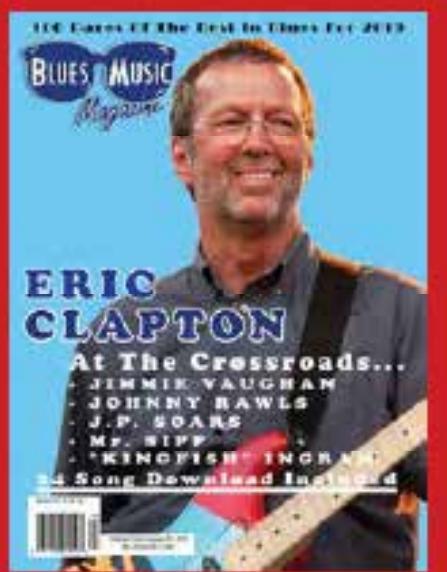
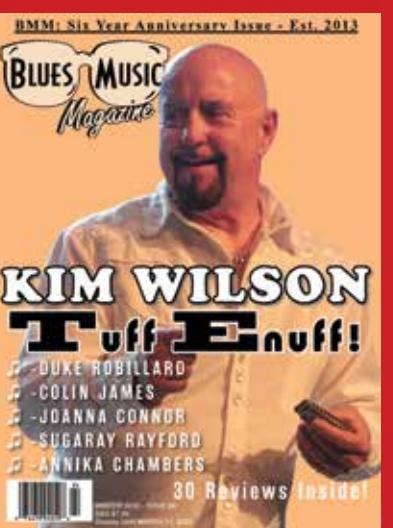
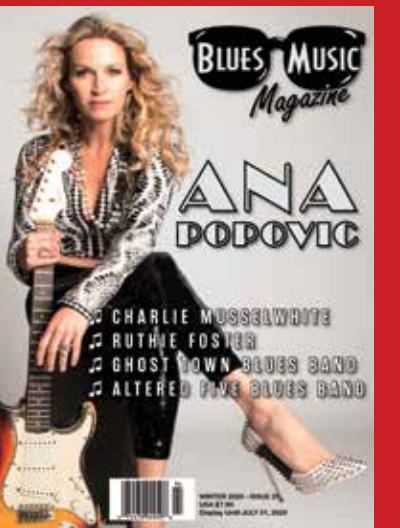
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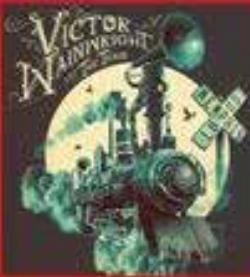
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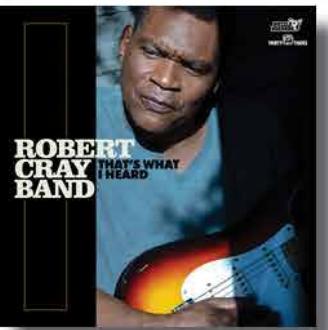
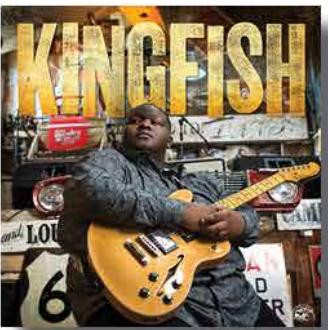
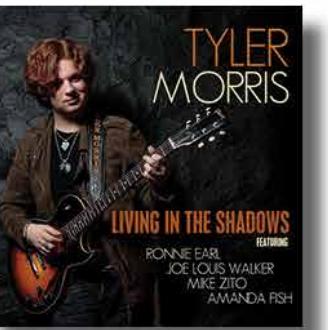
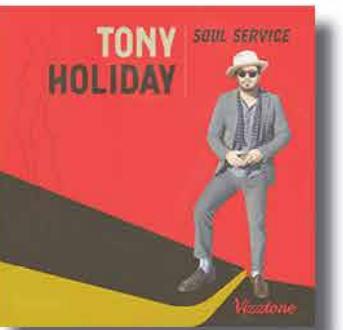
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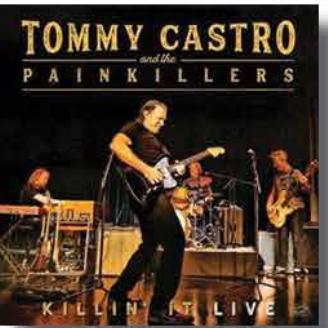
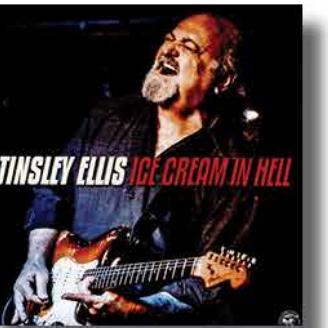
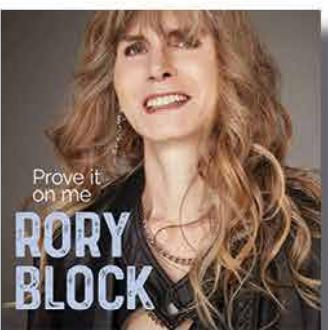
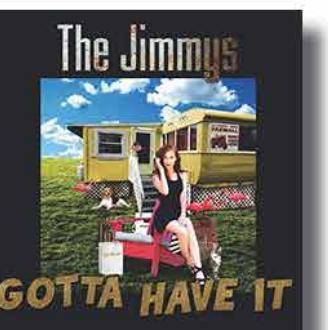
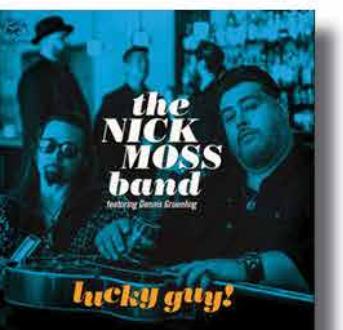
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# LITTLE RICHARD ALWAYS Pay Attention!

By Derrick D'Mar Martin

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PHOTOGRAPHY © DERRICK D'MAR MARTIN

Today, most blues fans know Derrick D'Mar Martin as the acrobatic drummer with Rick Estrin and the Nightcats. Others may remember him jumpin' the kit with the Anthony Paule Soul Orchestra, and a handful might be familiar with his work with Chris Gill in the Mississippi duo D'Mar and Gill. But I'm sure very, very few know that D'Mar was Little Richard's drummer for 17 years beginning in 1995! Everyone who saw Richard's high-powered, double drummer band in those years would have also seen D'Mar leapin' and jivin' with Richard. Here is how this college junior came into that role.

## DERRICK D'MAR MARTIN

Here is my story of how I became a member of Little Richard's band.



It was 1995 and I was in my junior year at Jackson State University majoring in music education. I had sat out for a time after my sophomore year because all I really wanted to do was play music, make records, and become rich and famous, you know the drill.

I was a member of a really hot band called Infinity which was comprised of myself, Darryl Pete, Tommie "S'VON" Ringo, Gary Scott, Ezra Brown, and Robert Lampkin. This unit was amazing! We played around town and were cutting out teeth as songwriters and producers. The biggest gig in the city, at the time, was the Jubilee Jamn, and man we wanted to get booked on that stage. Linda Jacobs worked for the festival and helped bring big named acts to the festival, one of which was Little

Richard.

Linda and I were extended family members, and she really believed in me and our band. She offered to help us get gigs and offer advice and guidance. After Little Richard played the festival, she developed a great relationship with Little Richard, and they stayed in touch. One day they were having a conversation about his band and Richard was saying that he wanted go back to having two drummers like he did in years past and asked Linda if she knew of a young black drummer that could fill the seat. Well, wouldn't you know it, she recommended me!

So I'm home one morning, and I get a call from Linda telling me that Little Richard was looking for a drummer, and she gave me a number to call to inquire about the audition. So I called the number expecting to be speaking to a manager or some kind of representative, but low and behold, it was Little Richard himself! He seemed really nice and asked if I had his Specialty Records Greatest Hits record. I told him I didn't but I could run to the record store to pick it up. He said OK go get it then call me back after you've listened to it.

I bought the record, listened, and called him back. He asked if I could play this music and, of course, I said, "Yes sir!". He said, "OK, I'll call you back this afternoon." This was on a Monday or Tuesday I think. Later that evening he called back and told me that he had booked me a ticket to fly to Los Angeles on Thursday. It was all set. I was excited and a bit afraid because I didn't know what to expect,

but Linda Jacobs never wavered, she was so supportive and encouraging that it helped ease my nerves a bit. The next day I went to school to discuss this opportunity with my professors. Now keep in mind that leaving school for a gig was the cardinal sin, but I felt like this was something I had to do. I trusted my teachers, and I wanted to hear their input. Once I told them who it was, they all said, "You have to GO! You can't miss out on this opportunity, but just make sure you have a round trip ticket in case something goes wrong." So with that I was on my way.

On Thursday I arrived at LAX and Richard's son Danny met me at baggage claim and escorted me outside to a stretch limo with Richard sitting inside. Man you should have seen my face! This was my first official limo ride! Upon first meeting him, I was taken aback by the enormity of his presence and personality, he was a STAR in every sense of the word. He held court on the ride to the hotel and told me about himself and his humble beginnings in Macon, Georgia. We arrived at the Hyatt on Sunset in West Hollywood, and I checked in. This is where he lived! Yes, he lived in a hotel full time! He had the three corner rooms at the end of the third floor.

Once we checked in, he took me out for dinner and asked about my family, my life, and so forth. He was sizing me up I guess. I stayed for almost a week, but we never talked about music or when I was to audition. He took me to a few shows at The House Of Blues, I attended church with him, and ran errands. After about a week



PHOTOGRAPHY © DERRICK D'MAR MARTIN

of this, he said that we were going to go the SIR rehearsal studios for my audition. But in what I would come to know as classic Little Richard fashion, we arrived to late to SIR and missed our time and had to reschedule.

Legendary Upsetters guitarist, Roy Gaines, met us there and, since we missed our slot, we went to his club on Crenshaw. We went inside and there was a small stage with a honky tonk piano, guitar amps, and an old, old drum set, I mean barely it was standing.

So Richard and Roy began to tell stories and reminisce. During this time we were all sitting at our instruments, and we just started to jam as they would tell stories about the good old days.

Oh yeah, Charles Glenn was also there too. He was Richard's bass player, and he had played with Ozone, Billy Preston, Sammy Davis Jr. and Debarge, just to name a few. So we were just jamming on tunes, playing nothing but the blues.

Now I'm not realizing that THIS is my actual audition. I'm super relaxed, cracking jokes with them and just being my crazy self, I mean wide open.

After about an hour or so, Richard said, "OK, I'm getting hungry, let's go." He looked at me and said, "Baby, that's great! We open for The Temptations next week in Cerritos." Of course, I'm baffled. I asked him what just happened and Charles shakes my hand and says, "Welcome to the band!" I stop Richard, and I'm like, "But we didn't play any of your music." He then turns to me and says, "Baby, you know how to play the blues, you have a good foot, a strong back beat, and you love your momma. I'll teach you the rest." I was blown away! He later explained to me that no one could come to his gig knowing what he wanted. He would always have to teach people what he wanted them to do. My true audition began the moment I stepped into the limo. He interacted with me for a week to be sure I was "teachable." And this was just the beginning of a 17-year ride that taught me so much about everything.

One key lesson I learned from Richard was to never make excuses. When onstage, it sometimes seemed as if he was picking on me. I mean, whenever anybody make a mistake or missed something, it was always my fault. Now let's understand that the band was amazing and never really "MISSED", anything, but Richard was always thinking a million miles a second, and he may change an arrangement on the spot, and it was always MY responsibility to catch

everything.

He told me that I had to ALWAYS pay attention and be as focused as a laser while on stage. If he ever looked around and didn't make eye contact with me, well let's just say that the conversation after the show was not a fun one. Don't get me wrong, it was always in love, or so I grew to understand it later. Richard helped me develop a thick skin and focus that I would never forget. I even developed a motto about playing with him, "He may not always be right, but he is never wrong." LOL. It was my job the have his back no matter what. My job was to support him and drive this huge Rock & Roll machine without second guessing a thing. And trust me, it took me a while to really own it and be confident enough to trust myself as he trusted me. But that's just it, he trusted me, and that was and still is one of the biggest votes of confidence ever! I mean this man is an icon, and he took time to invest in ME. And for that I will forever be grateful and I will continue to build on all I've learned from him.

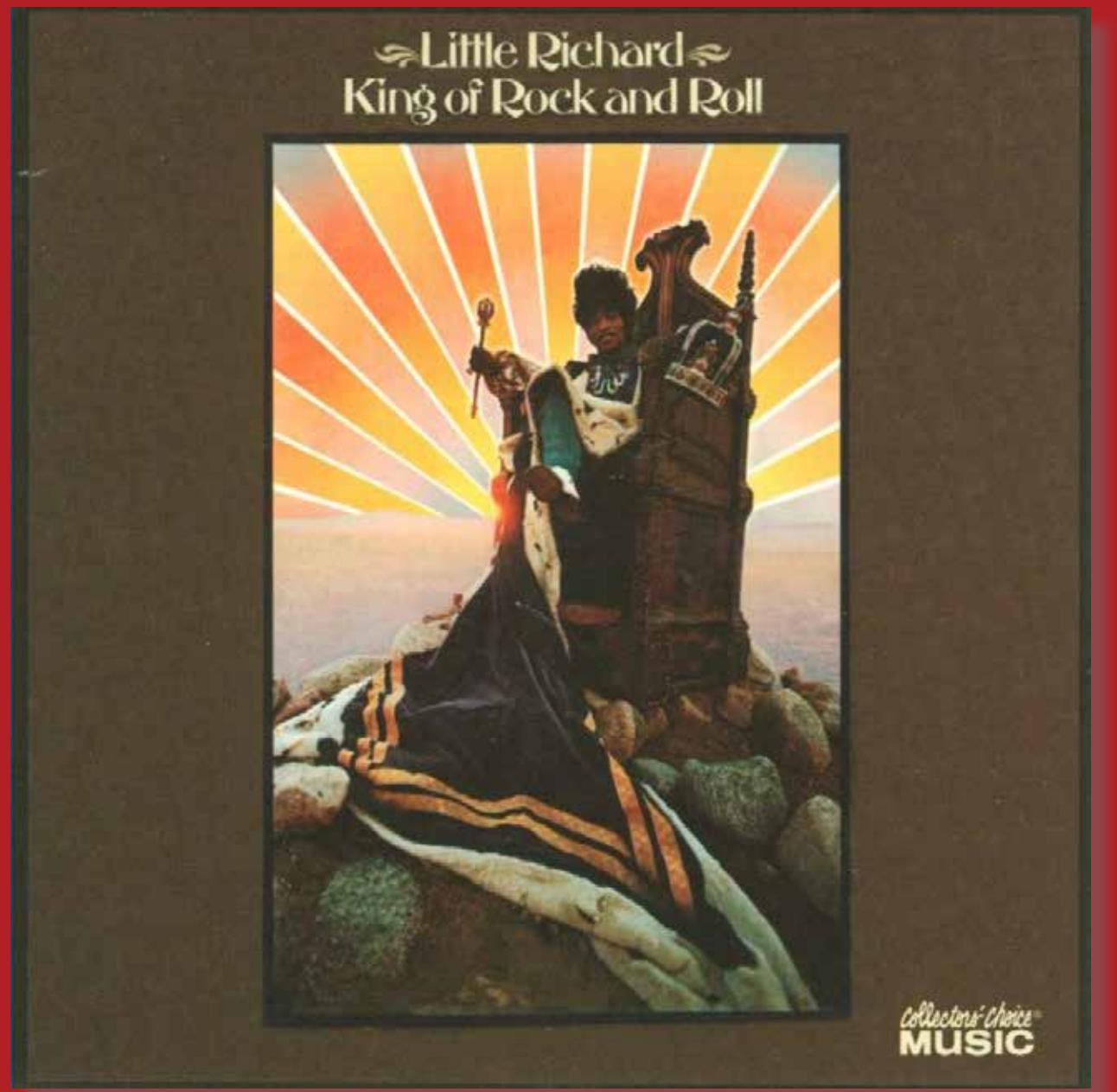
I became a man and a better musician under Richard's watch but not just him, Wayne Chaney, Chalmers Davis, Jesse Boyce, John Helms, Kelvin Holly, Kenny Walker, Harvey Thompson, Charles Glenn, Mark Doyle, Mark Holland, Kenny Ford, Andre Swift, Big Jaye, and Guy Higginbotham made up this amazing band, and they all were selfless when it came to teaching and helping me grow. This is the story of how I joined the Little Richard Band. May he Rest in Love & Peace. - BMO



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# LITTLE RICHARD

## A Bridge Over Troubled Waters

By Don Wilcock

**W**hile today's obituaries laud Little Richard for his being the bridge between rhythm and blues and rock and roll, he was a bridge over troubled waters breaking out in 1955, an even more troubled time in race relations than now. Inevitably, in quoting him, journalists fail to get beyond his frustration over not being properly credited for his contribution. I interviewed him twice in 1986 and 1994. I got to hear a very different side of Little Richard.

"One of the greatest entertainers I ever met, black, white, brown, or yellow is Elvis Presley," Little Richard told me in 1994. "He's one of the most electrifying entertainers I've ever seen, black, white, red, brown, or yellow and a great person, a sweet person. One of the most lovable people I ever met in my life is Elvis Presley."

"But Elvis Presley is not the founder of rock and roll. Rock and roll is black. Rhythm and blues is black music."

Little Richard knew exactly who HE was, and he was as bodacious about telling the world about it as he was in his performances. He was the architect of rock and roll. Like B. B. King who once reprimanded me for calling him The King of the Blues – "I never said that!" – Little Richard denied his crown.

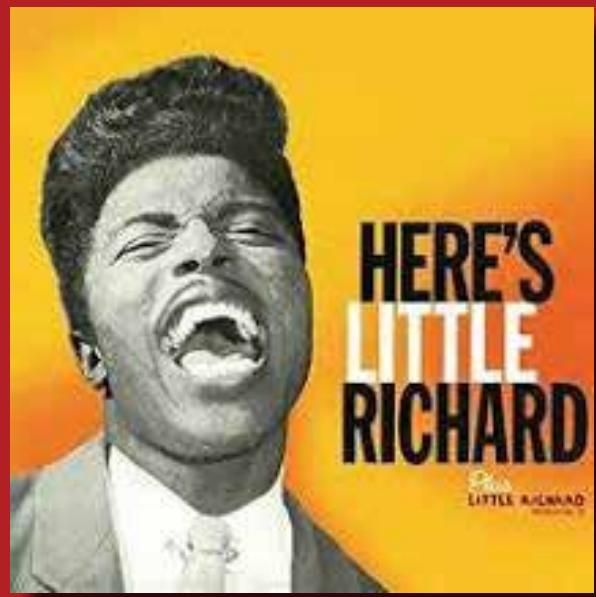
Never mind that Reprise put out a Little Richard record in 1971 called *King of Rock and Roll* with a photo of him sitting on a throne poised atop a pile of boulders. The songs on the album included such disparate

numbers as The Stones' "Brown Sugar" and Hank Williams' "I'm So Lonesome I Could Die," "Joy to the World," and a song by the album's producer titled "King of Rock and Roll."

In a 1955 postwar world of crew cuts and white t-shirts, Little Richard colored way, way outside the box, but he was fully aware of his racial heritage. "Sonny Boy Williamson, Muddy Waters, Guitar Slim, Fats Domino, and John Lee Hooker were playing blues at the time. I am the one who took rhythm and blues and made it into rock, but I'm not the founder of rhythm and blues. Rhythm and blues is the foundation of rock and roll, you understand me? I'm the innovator. I am the emancipator. I am the originator and the architect of rock and roll. I didn't say nuthn' about no king and all that. The architect!! You understand me?"

He broke on the scene with "Tutti Frutti," already five years into a recording career that had him on labels as disparate as RCA and Peacock Records, but he had made hardly a ripple with any of his recordings. He signed with Specialty Records in 1955. This independent label was releasing records by artists as disparate as Guitar Slim, The Soul Stirrers featuring Sam Cooke, John Lee Hooker, and Clifton Chenier. They saw Little Richard as their answer to B.B. King.

Until he sat down at the piano! "They wanted me to sound like B. B. King and Muddy Waters, those people which are fantastic artists, the originals, but being young,



I was trying to record the pulse of my time which 'Tutti Frutti' had that pulse. When I was playing piano, I was playing 'Tuti Frutti.' They said, 'Man, that's what you should have done,' but I thought it wasn't good enough. You understand? I'd never heard anything like that. It was different, and I said, 'Well, they're gonna hate this, you know?' I didn't think they would go for that at all."

But Specialty Records jumped on it. "They said, 'Well, this is what you should have recorded,' because they didn't even know I played piano. I hadn't told nobody. I was recording blues."

And it wasn't like he'd been encouraged to cut loose at home. "Oh, when I first started recording, my daddy put me out because wild music

and the wild style of playing, and the high hair and the makeup, my dad didn't go for that back in that period.

"My dad liked ballads like 'Pennies from Heaven,' and 'Swing and Sway with Sammy Kaye.' He was not into blues, and rock and roll was really rhythm and blues up-tempo. He was not in that type of music in that form of art at all. My dad was a very respectful kind of person, and I was kind of breaking that up because with the wildness and the wild dressing and the high pompadour with the hair was against everything he stood for."

Little Richard started recording in 1951 for RCA. He corrected me: "Yes, but when you was black, it was called Camden." He recorded now forgotten originals like "Every Hour," "Taxi Blues," "Going to Get Rich

Quick," and "Thinking about My Mother." Then he recorded for Peacock Records who sold him to Specialty where he finally broke into the charts.

The liner notes on his first album for Specialty, *Here's Little Richard*, described his background like this: "He began to invest the pennies he earned from street entertaining in piano lessons taught by the piano player of the local church choir. Soon LITTLE RICHARD was in the choir and singing the difficult lead parts.

"By the time LITTLE RICHARD was 14 he took a job with a traveling medicine show – singing, dancing, and playing the piano to attract and entertain the crowds. Then, he would pass among people and sell the herb tonic. For this, he made two dollars per night!"

The liner notes don't talk about his growing up in Macon, Georgia, one of 12 children. "My dad was selling moonshine whiskey, and the police would come into our house before day in the morning and just pull the covers off us and everything."

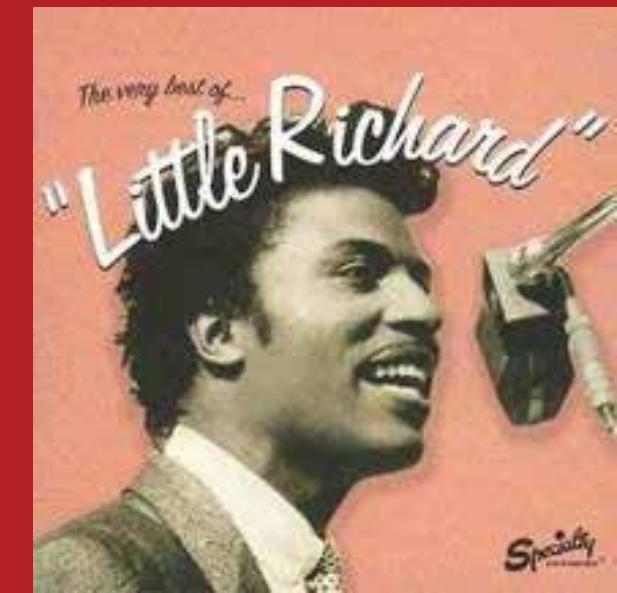
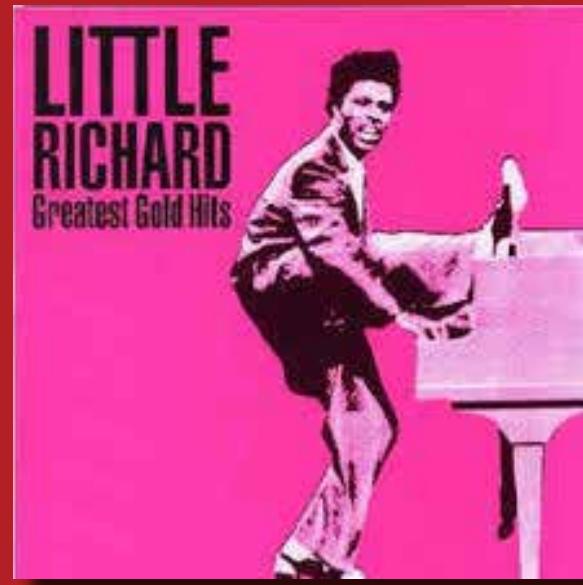
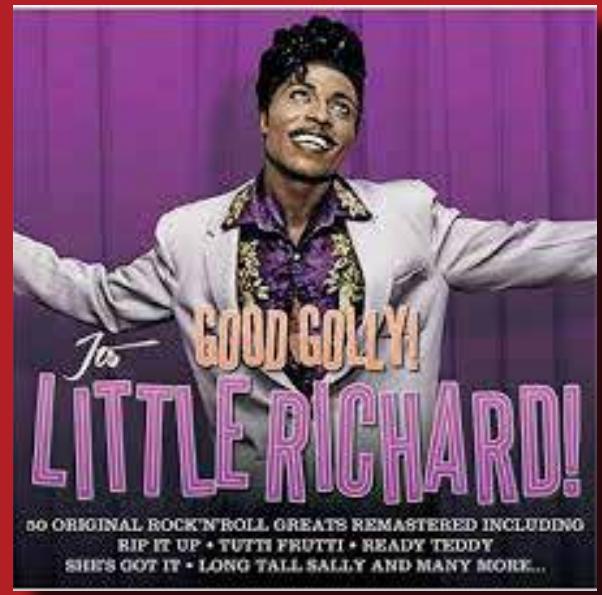
He recalls having a concert stopped by the police in Augusta, Georgia. "I was interrupted and taken to jail. My former manager accused me that I owed him because I left and went and got famous because he wasn't doing anything for me. As soon as I made it and got a hit record, he claimed it. You know how people do. They don't help you when you're trying to make it. When you were struggling, they didn't call you at all. As soon as they think you've made two pennies

, they call you up and say, 'One of these pennies are mine.'"

When I interviewed him in 1986, Little Richard was promoting the film *Down and Out in Beverly Hills*. It starred Nick Nolte, Bette Midler, and Richard Dreyfuss. Little Richard plays Orvis Goodnight, a former '50s rock star who was now a successful music producer. Roger Ebert gave a four-star review to the film which reintroduced Little Richard to a mass audience singing "Great Gosh a Mighty." Released by Touchstone Films, a film label of The Walt Disney Studios, *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* had the dubious distinction of being the first film released by Disney to receive an R-rating.

"I was shocked, really shocked (that I got the role). In fact, when they called me to come, they had a lot of other black guys there. These big macho guys, 6 ft. 3 inches and all like that, and they had these deep voices. I thought, 'Lord, I'm not going to get this.' I just knew they didn't want nobody with no little voice like this. When they called me and said, 'We want you,' I was shocked. I was dumbfounded. And (director) Paul Mazursky said, 'We want you, Little Richard.'"

In reality, the role was perfect typecasting. "Orvis Goodnight is outspoken. He's flamboyant and I am, too. It reminds me somewhat of myself in certain ways. And in certain ways he's a little more to the point than I was. He just comes on out and says it right away."



He don't beat around the bush."

And Little Richard does? "No, I don't beat around the bush. No, I'm right on it. I'm outspoken, but Orvis is a little different, somewhat like me but a little different. I think being Orvis Goodnight in a picture with Richard Dreyfus and Bette Midler and Nick Nolte is an honor. They're such fantastic actors, you know. I couldn't be with a better team. That's a good team to be with."

Unfortunately, Little Richard never got to go to the film opening. "I was in a car accident," he told me the week the film opened. "My tongue was bitten off. My lip was torn off. My ribs were crushed. My bladder was punctured, and I have 36 pins in my right leg. I have a steel plate

up my thigh. I haven't walked in four months. I feel much better now, (but) it's hard for me to talk like I want to talk because my tongue is shorter than it used to be because when I bit it off, they had to take some of it.

"It won't affect my singing because I sing from my diaphragm. It won't bother that at all. If I sing like James Brown sings, it would bother me because he sings from his throat more or less, but mine is from my diaphragm. So, it's a different thing."

I asked him if he were going to be all right. "Yes, I'll be all right since I'm in the ministry. It'll be all right for me."

That's another story for a different time. Suffice it to say, Little Richard, like Jerry Lee Lewis, spent

much of his life in conflict over his musical direction. One of several gospel records he released called *King of The Gospel Singers* for Mercury Records featured liner notes by Mahalia Jackson who wrote, "I've been told he *was* (italics mine) quite a rock and roll singer. I wouldn't know about that. I do know that there is soul in his singing today. He sings gospel the way it should be sung – with feeling and belief."

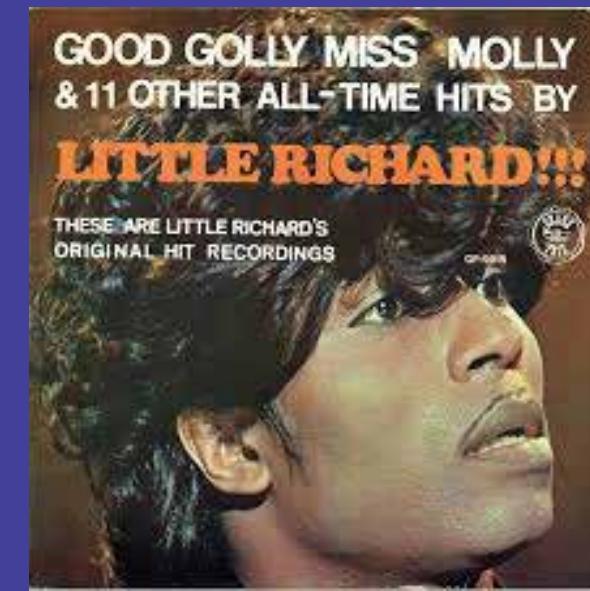
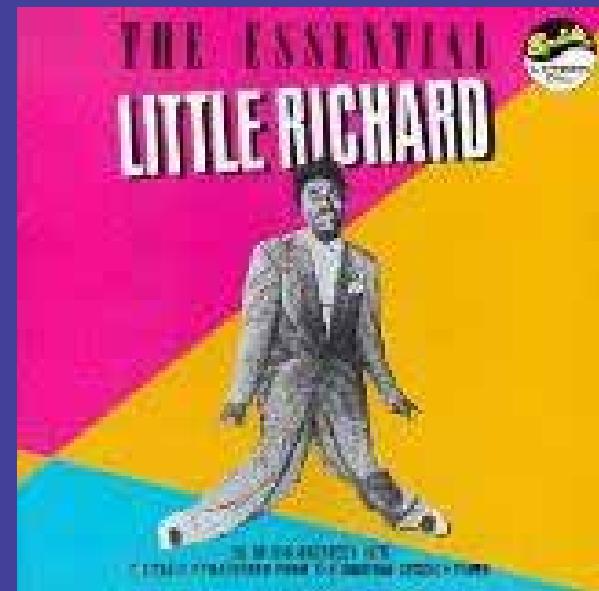
In 1994 he told me: "I love God, and I'm just grateful to God. I know without him we can't do nuthin.' I learned and now I understand that religion is my personal belief in God and my personal faith in God, and I learned rock and roll music is my living. This is my craft. This is my form

of art I present to the world, and this is how I make my living, and so its two different things altogether.

"I figure that God has been very kind to me in spite of everything, and he's been very long suffering with me in spite of everything. And I'm just grateful and thankful to him for longevity. I been here for a very long time, and that's the reason I want to travel around the world and let people see history alive and well."

Little Richard lived for another 25 years and toured for almost half of those years.

Little Richard, dead at 87. What a mark he made! - **BMO**



## Writers' Remember Little Richard

**L**ittle Richard was always in the air when I was growing up in Philly and because of that he is in my musical DNA. I first heard Little Richard as a boy. His tunes were still being played at local dances well into 1967 when I stopped going to dances and ten years after his hit making days. My teenage garage band the Iron Gate had several Little Richard tunes in our repertoire. Our favorite was "Rip It Up." Great tune that required a

talented drummer which we had; few, if any, other area bands performed it preferring "Long Tall Sally" (which we also covered), "Lucille" or "Slippin' and Slidin'." I am honored to say I sang the tunes of one of rock's architects, an artist whose music I've loved my whole life.

— Thomas J. Cullen III

I saw Richard open for Chuck Berry, Aug. 20, 2003 in Atlanta. Richard, who was about 70, absolutely tore it up. I think he had two drummers and two bass players. He was hot, the band was rehearsed and on fire and it was truly a stunning performance that exceeded any expectation I had for an "oldies" show.

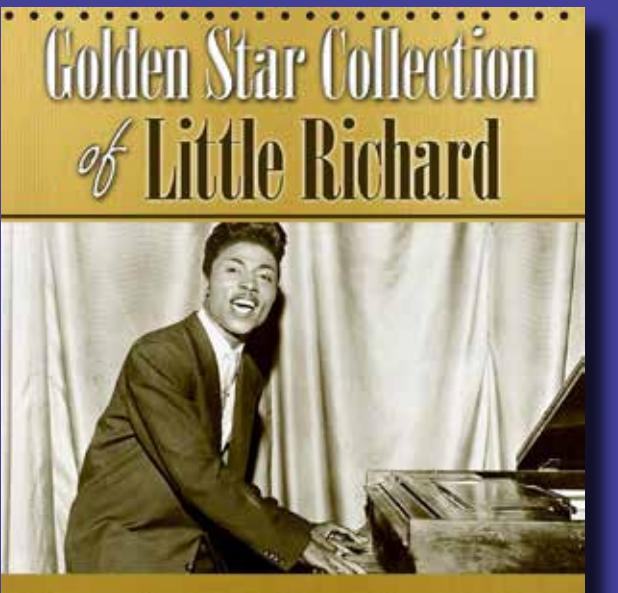
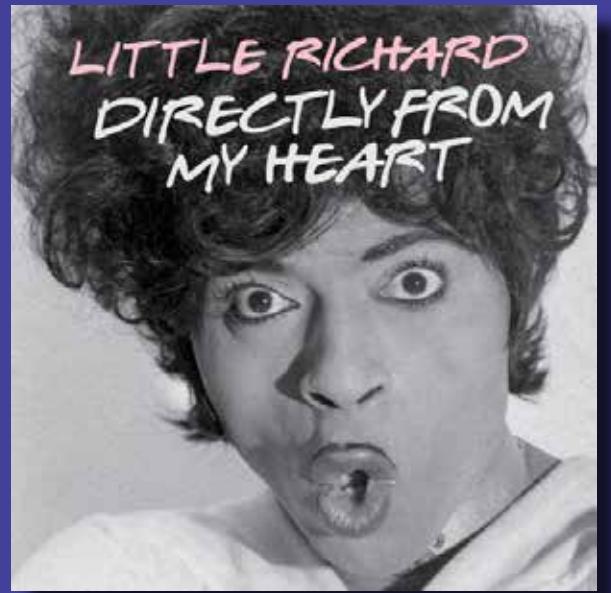
Then headliner Berry got on, phoned in a set that was sloppy and tired with a lousy local band backing him, and left. It was sad and depressing.

The dichotomy between these two veterans couldn't have been more defined. Berry was cashing a check, Richard was inspired, even inspirational.

— Hal Horowitz

The Spectrum in Philadelphia Friday February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1971  
Oh boy! Four bucks got me in to see the Chambers Brothers, The Allman Brothers (Duane was still alive) with Little Richard as the headliner. I had seen the Allmans with Duane before but *really* wanted to see Little Richard's set as he was supposed to be incredibly flamboyant.

The Chambers Brothers did a set of their best hits and the Allman Brothers were tight and were in the middle of a jam when Little Richard paraded out on the stage in a tight white leather outfit with fringe about a foot long, waved his arms around and said to the audience, "Y'all came to see ME, right?" Duane looked at his brother and didn't miss a lick and



kept playing. There was no discernible response from the Philly crowd so he turned on his heels and went backstage. The Allmans continued playing as if nothing had happened.

A few songs later, in the middle of yet another extended jam, Little Richard pranced out again waving his arms to accentuate the fabulous fringed white leather outfit shouting, "Y'all came to see ME, right?!" Well, in a town that is famous for booing Santa Claus at an Eagles football game, this time there was no reticence on the part of the crowd, and they roared their displeasure as the Allmans were very popular in Philly. Duane, once again, looked at his brother, smiled heartily and kept playing. Little Richard waved his arms again and said,

"Well, f##k you, I'm not playing then!" He harrumphed and walked off the stage. I was really disappointed because the reality just set in that I was not going to be able to see him perform.

I had to wait 37 years, but I did get to see Little Richard in 2007 at the Long Beach Blues Festival and he was WONDERFUL! He could sing, make that piano roar, and was totally captivating. Who knows, maybe it was the lack of wearing such a tight leather white suit that improved his demeanor!

**- Pete Sardon**

In 1996, I found myself asked the same question by two astonishingly different people. Both Prince Andrew of Great Britain, a.k.a. the Duke of York, and Richard Penniman, a.k.a. Little Richard, wanted to know, "How do I look?" Prince Andrew had just tried on a leather bomber jacket given him by an aerospace company that employed me at the time as a PR flack. Literalist that I am, I blurted, "It seems a bit big in the shoulders and tight in waist," rather than the expected "Magnificent, your Royal Highness."

Three months later, when I was backstage with Little Richard doing an interview for an L.A. weekly, he wanted to know what I thought of his stage costume. This time, instead of blurting that the layers of pancake makeup and tiara-like headband didn't seem age-and gender-appropriate, I got it right by responding, "*You look beau-ti-ful, Little Richard.*" In my heart of hearts I guess I knew that it's better to blow it with a noble prince than fail a rock 'n' roll noble.

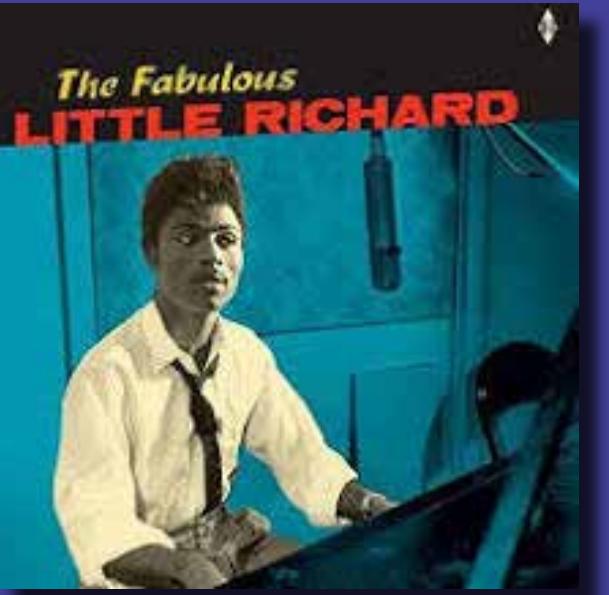
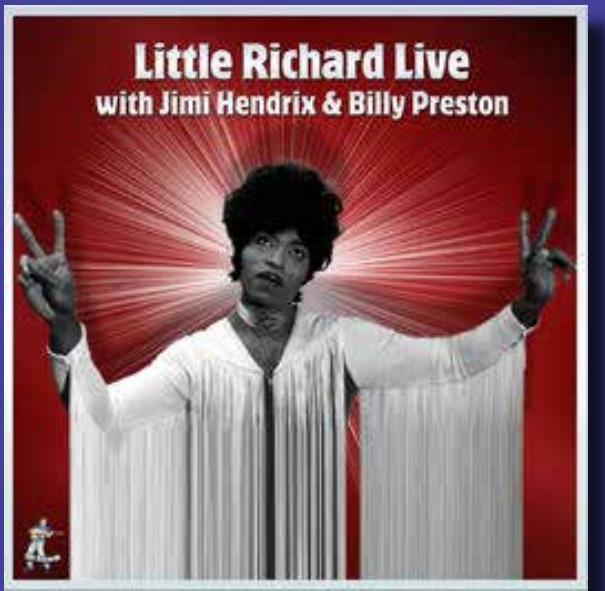
Two years later I was down in Macon, Georgia, on an Allman Bros. story, and I asked the middle-aged black lady at the hotel desk about things to see. She told me there was an Otis Redding memorial bridge nearby and another bridge named for James Brown in town. I asked her if there was one for Little Richard and, quick as a lightning flash, she said, "Not until that boy learns to behave!"

**- Bill Wasserzieher**

Hearing Little Richard for the first time as a very young (single-digit) child was like having the earth's atmosphere suddenly change, like the air pressure had somehow become altered, making it either hard to breathe, or I'd become giddy with the over-oxygenation of near-manic discovery. His was an energizing, soul-touching sound that suddenly made my dad's music – Italian light opera and string laden Jackie Gleason records ordered through TV offers – redundant.

My sister was nearly a decade older than I, and it was she who possessed those magic Richard and Jerry Lee and Eddie Cochran and early Elvis records that she bought or traded and allowed me to listen to. A few years later – probably like every other white kid whose auditory and emotional response was akin to revelation where none had before existed – there were the silly solo mirror sessions that took place whenever the folks went out and I could control the "hi-fi." I'd stack a bunch of Richard's 45s on the spindle of the big console and, hair brush "mic" in my left hand, lip-sync my heart out to "Rip It Up," or "Tutti Frutti," or "Send Me Some Loving" – probably in tune with other white working class kids similarly developing a nascent taste for R&B and classic gospel and blues, thanks to these gifted magicians of sound.

I realized this morning what a touchstone Richard in particular represented, not only to a golden childhood of musical discovery, but



also to the sense and sensibilities of other kids from different backgrounds and cultures with whom I shared a secret love for that madman from Georgia who defined the better part of a century of great American "vernacular" music and did it with courage and flair and a frightening amount of talent. I'm missing Mister Penniman again today, as I know I most likely will from now on. Thank you, Richard, for a music and a sensibility that I will always cherish.

**– Michael Cala**

**W**hen Little Richard Came to Town  
On the first weekend in August 2007, Little Richard came to town. After a too long absence, the King of Rock & Roll was finally returning. The occasion was the inaugural concert series of the Paetec Jazz Festival and Mayor Sheila Dixon launched the festival from the dignified offices of City Hall. Richard's last visit to the city was in 1993 to record an award-winning promo for the successful Baltimore Orioles baseball team.

The location of the event was at the rejuvenated Baltimore's Inner Harbor, the showcase of the city's downtown renovation efforts.

The gem of the municipal project is the Pier Six Concert Pavilion, a tent covered outdoor waterfront amphitheater that opened in 1981. Over the years the venue had hosted many top-notch entertainers.

The star-studded evening in addition to Rock & Roll Pioneer Little Richard, included soul-singer extraordinaire Al Green and the long reigning "King of the Blues," B.B. King.

On the evening of the long-awaited concert, the excited, sold out crowd of over 3,000 arrived and was treated to a pleasant, soft evening breeze and lower temperatures after a scorching late summer heat wave. The lull waiting for the arrival on stage of Little Richard seemed longer than it actually was. The concession lines moved briskly as patrons quickly returned to their seats in anticipation of the fabled entertainer. Little Richard's last performance in Baltimore in popular memory was so long ago that he was more of a phantom legend than a real-life performer.

In 2007, Little Richard, born Richard Wayne Penniman, was 74 years old and hailed as "The Architect of Rock & Roll." His professional career had spanned the modern musical life of the country and his carefully created stage persona was encased in the collective cultural memory.

Finally, the much-anticipated time arrived. Little Richard entered the stage with the assistance of an aide and using crutches. He was dressed in a vintage Little Richard shimmering

silver and purple iridescent suit and shiny gold colored low-heeled boots. After the assistant helped him to the piano that was stationed strategically in the middle and close to the front edge of the stage, he broke into an extended monologue that was nostalgic Little Richard style. He shared helpful hints on hair care, diet, manicure and pedicure suggestions, and relationship management.

Once the Georgia-born artist launched into his music set however, he was once again the legendary Rock & Roll avatar. He became one with his piano and banged out his genre-creating hits including, "Lucille," "Tutti Frutti," "Good Golly Miss Molly," and "Bama Lama Bama Loo." Richard's connection with the audience was evident. Few performers could engage and enthrall concertgoers like Richard. One of the many highlights of the memorable evening was his invitation to more than 25 enthusiastic men and women in the audience to join him on stage to dance while his excellent ten-piece band, featuring two drummers, exploded with the standard, "Old Time Rock & Roll."

There have been many great concerts at Pier Six Concert Pavilion over the last 13 years, but few like the evening when Little Richard came to town.

**– Bradley Alston**

## RORY GALLAGHER

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Wasn't 2019's superb three-disc batch of previously unreleased Rory Gallagher enough for you? No? Then dig in to this double disc for another two hours of Gallagher and band tearing it up on his 1977 *Calling Card* tour.

This was the last live go-round with keyboardist Lou Martin – Gallagher would return to a Taste-styled power trio for subsequent road work – and the band is on fire. These 20 tracks, all professionally recorded by Jethro Tull's mobile unit, are culled from four dates in January and February 1977 and not surprisingly feature a good deal of material from his *Calling Card* release. Since that studio set is a highlight in Gallagher's bulging catalog, we get a heaping helping of his gutsy blues-rocking in six live takes of songs from that album that made it such an enduring classic. All of them are hotter though with a clearly wired audience cheering him on.

This band had been incinerating stages for years, yielding a taut professionalism obvious in these fiery versions. Gallagher, who was 29 at the time, is arguably at the height of his playing, whipping off clean, quicksilver licks in the jazzy, walking bass riff of "Calling Card," and pounding through gems like "I Walk On Hot Coals" with the kind of sweat soaked enthusiasm that even technically better guitarists like Clapton have never mustered.

As fans already know, Gallagher was as convincing a solo acoustic artist as he was a plugged-in flame throwing lead guitarist. The country blues of Leadbelly's "Out On The Western Plain," "Pistol Slapper Blues," "Barley And Grape Rag," the stomping "Going To My Hometown," and the show-stopping attack on J.B. Hutto's "Too Much Alcohol" all get spirited, even aggressive performances in a nimble and propulsive mid-set shift from the tough boogie rock that dominates the bulk of this package.

Not surprisingly, there aren't any ballads here as Gallagher slashes and burns, especially through the last quarter of the set. And no matter how many times he has pummeled through his high octane version of "Bullfrog Blues," a song he had been playing from back in the Taste years nearly a decade earlier, this ten minute, slide guitar driven version of it – complete with bass and drum solos – is breathtaking proof that he never phoned it in.

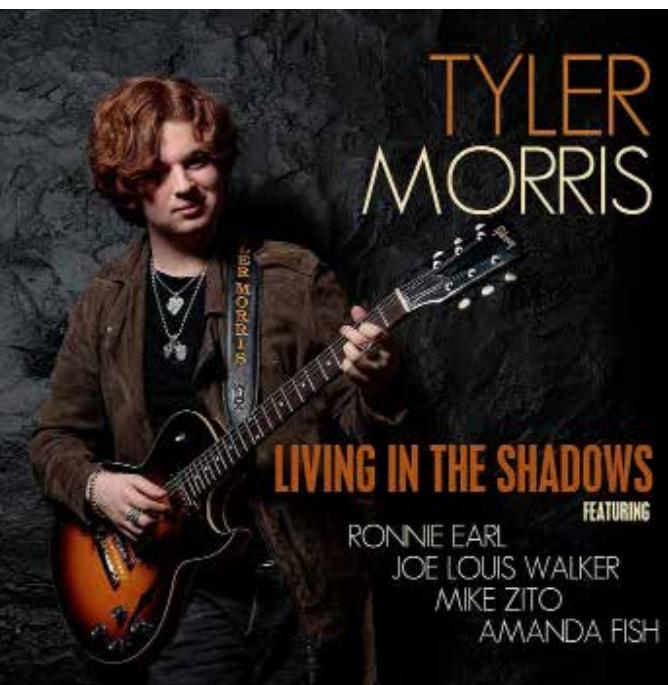
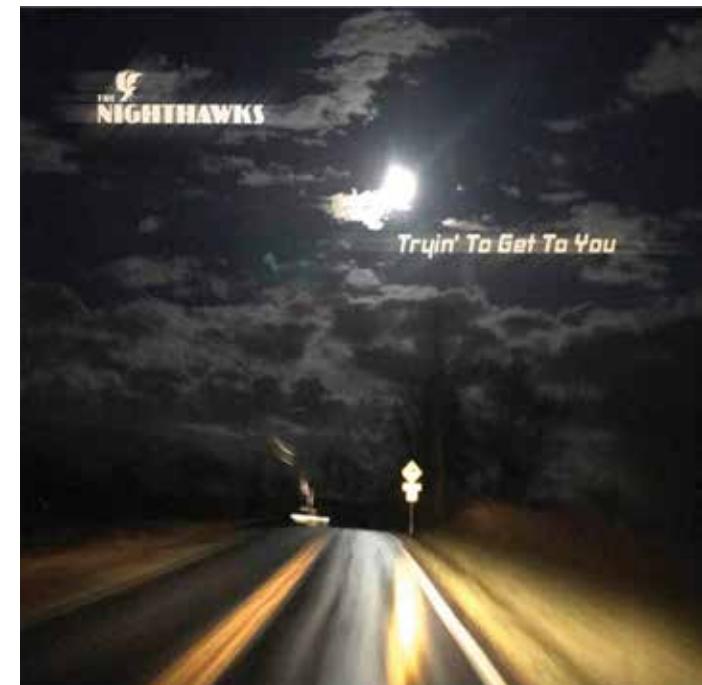
There are plenty of examples of Gallagher's live onstage skills out there both on CD and DVD (the two disc *Live At Montreux* and 3 disc *Live At Rockpalast* DVDs are highly recommended). And the expanded *Irish Tour '74* box which delivers over six whopping hours of roaring Rory is required listening. Many include some of the tunes he slams out here. Whether you need *more* Gallagher concert recordings is a personal choice. But this rip-snorting collection with its crisp audio is perfect for those who haven't experienced the other releases or established fans wanting more prime-era Rory Gallagher music from one of the greatest blues rocking guitarists in history.

– Hal Horowitz

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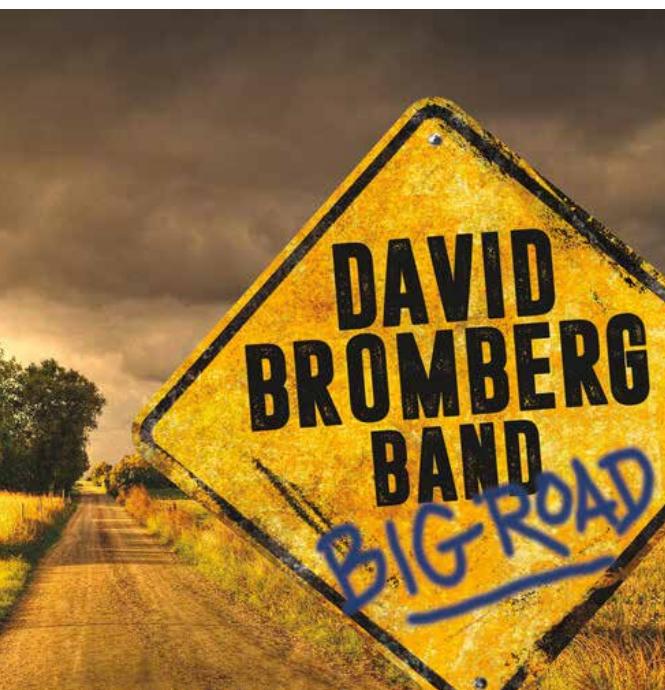
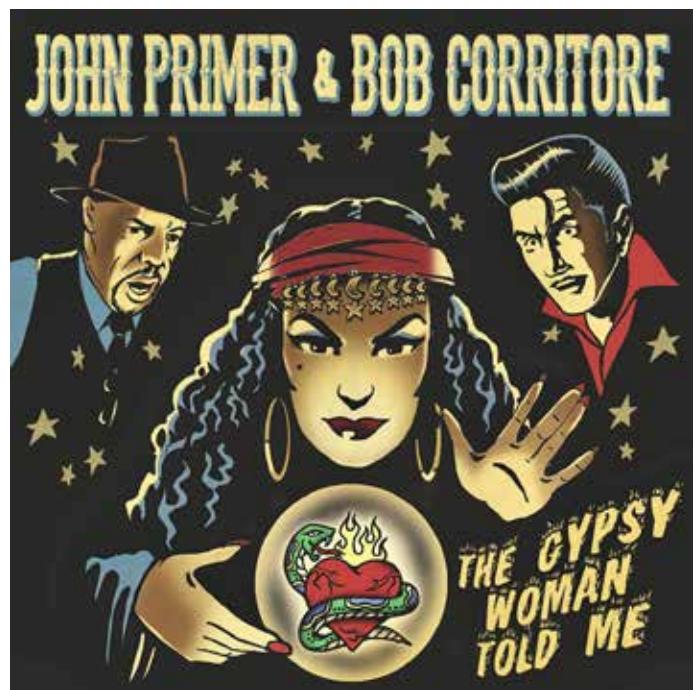
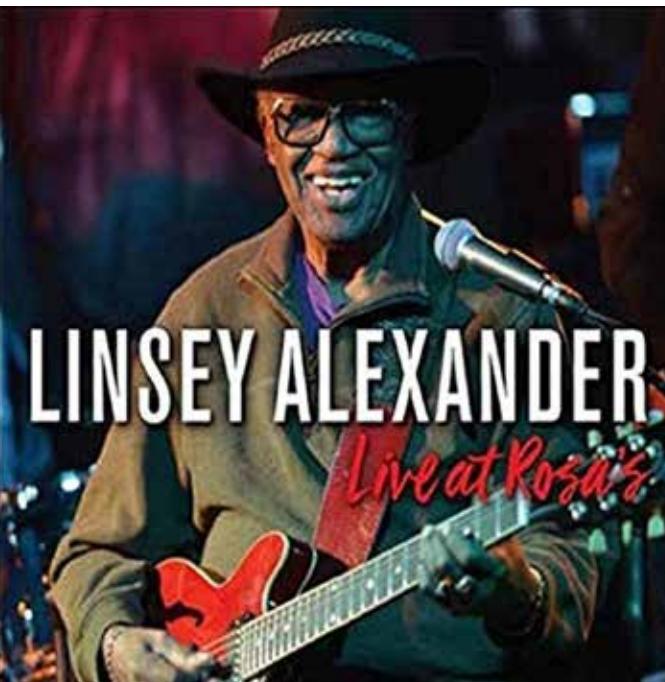
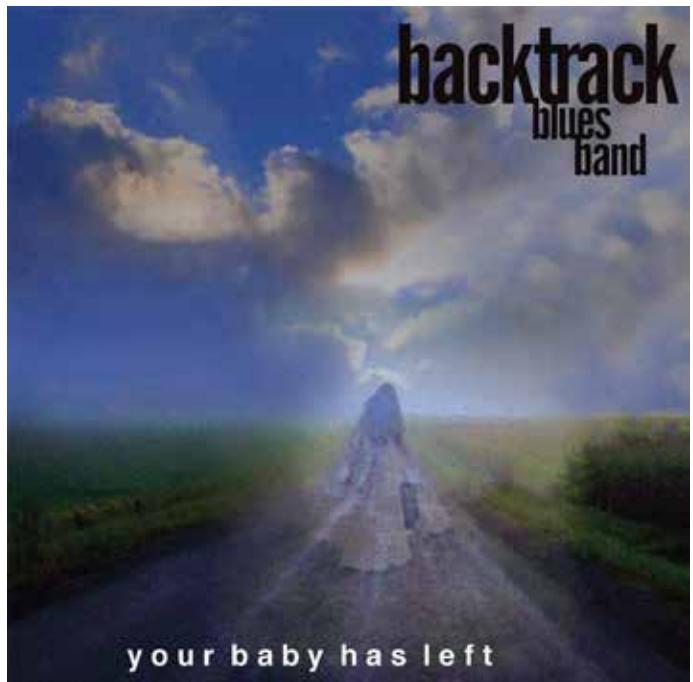
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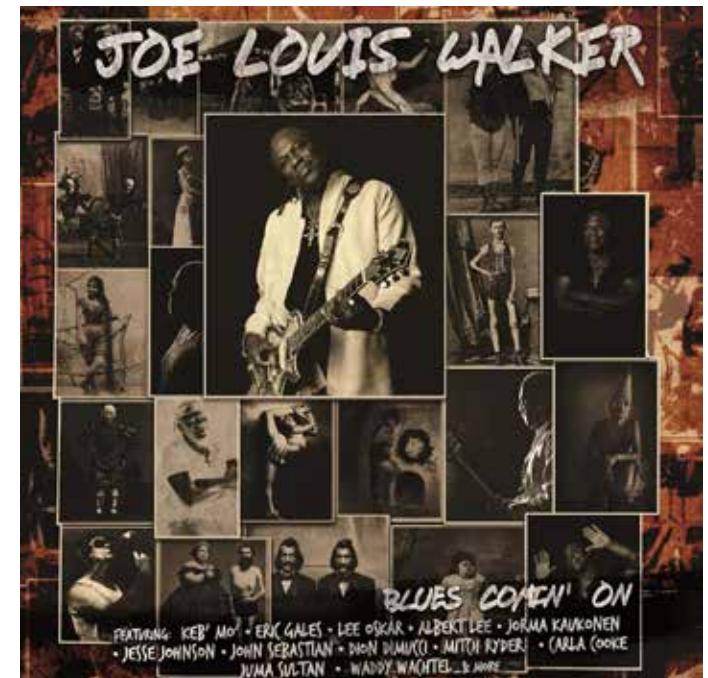
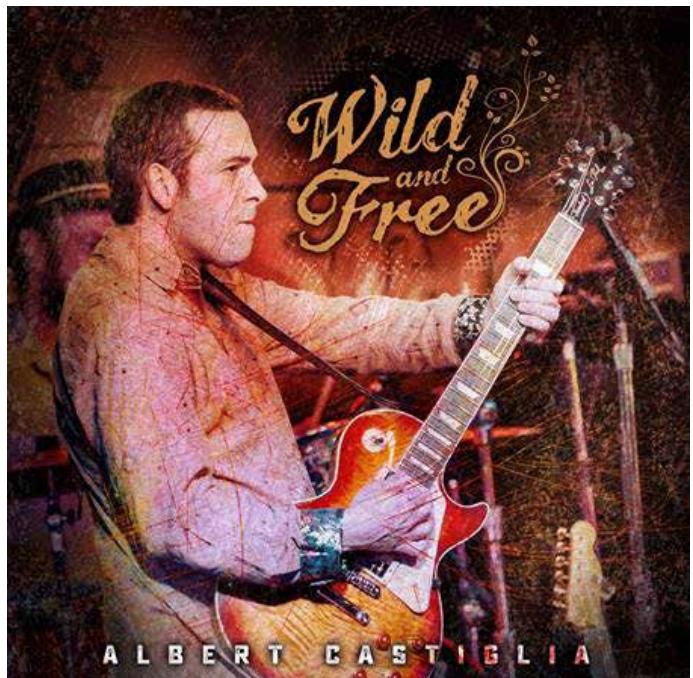
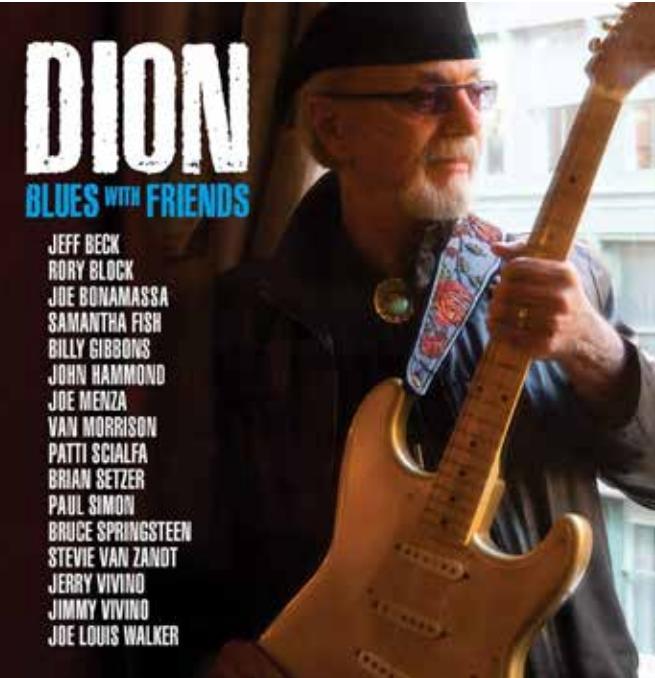
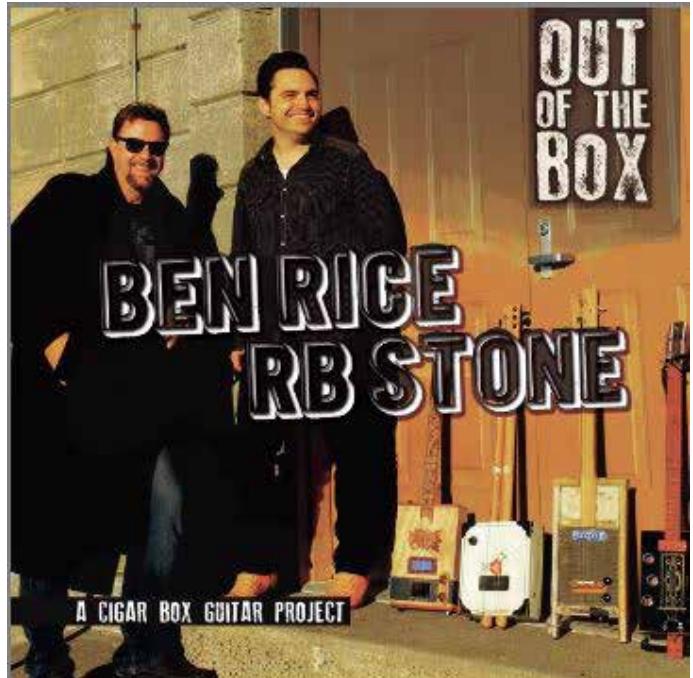
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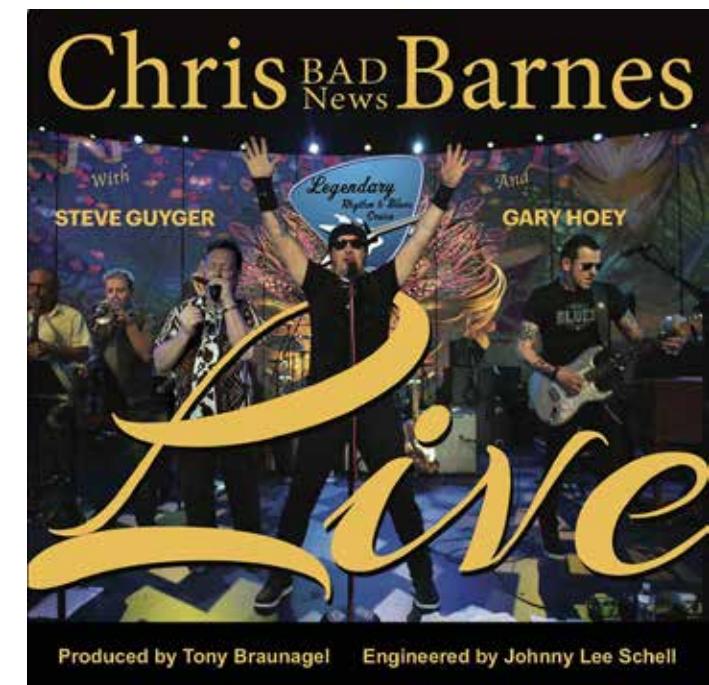
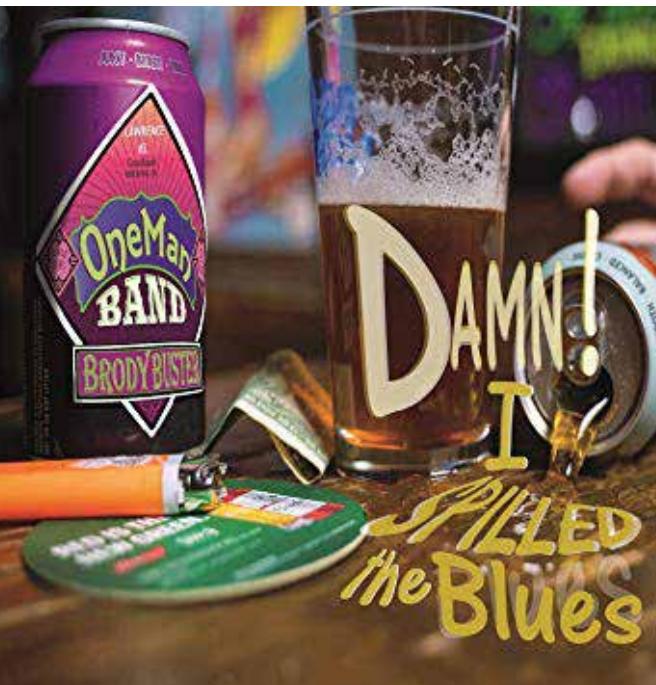
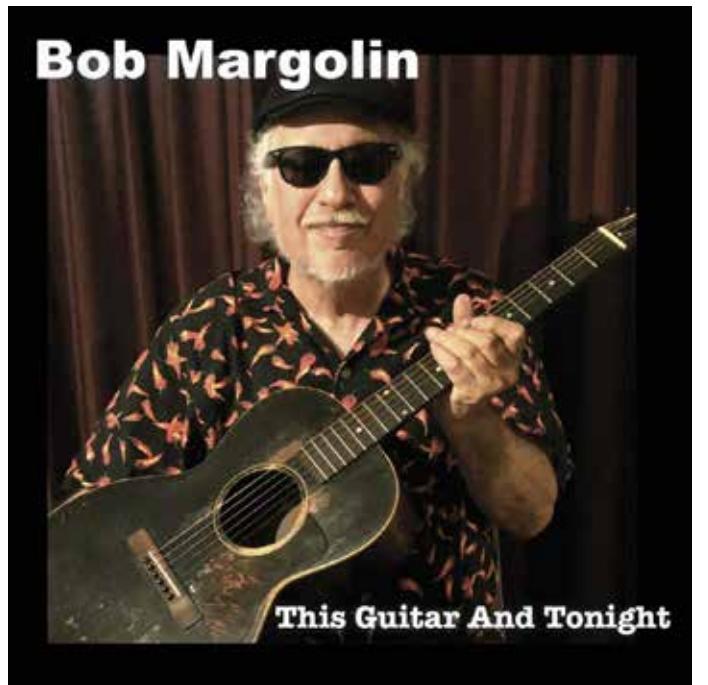
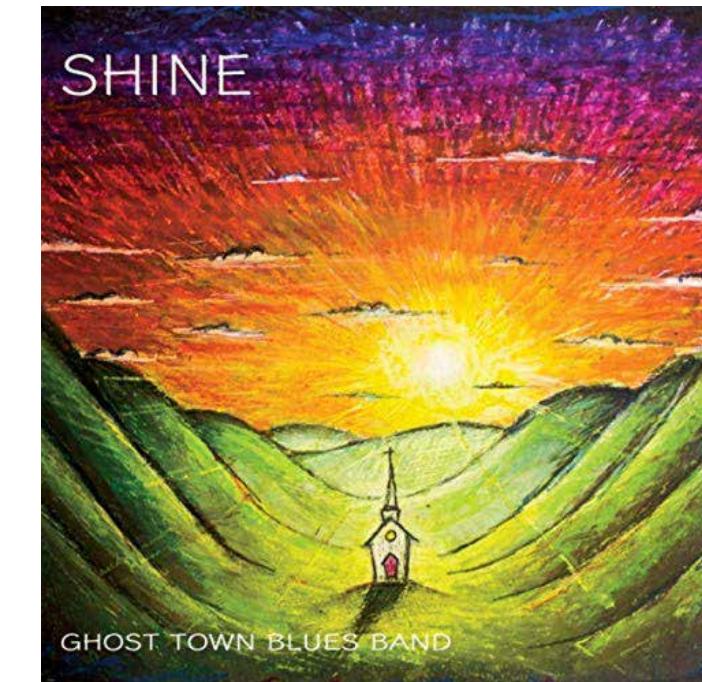
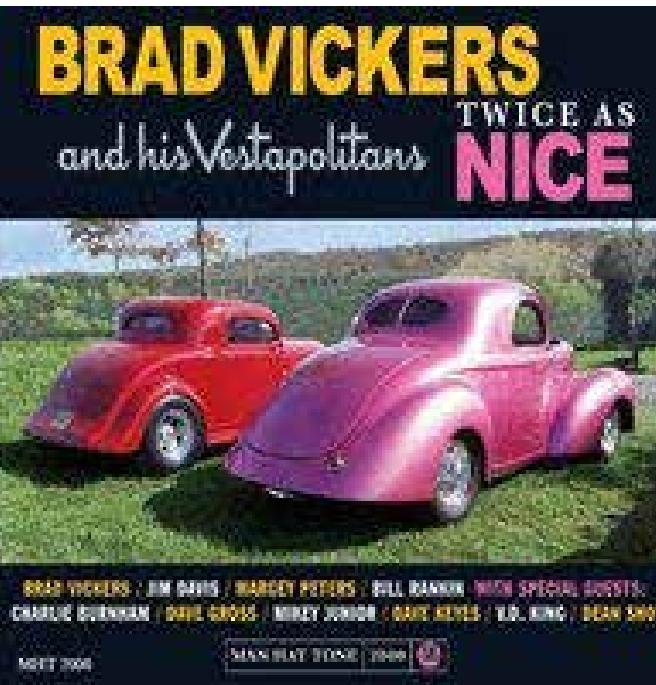
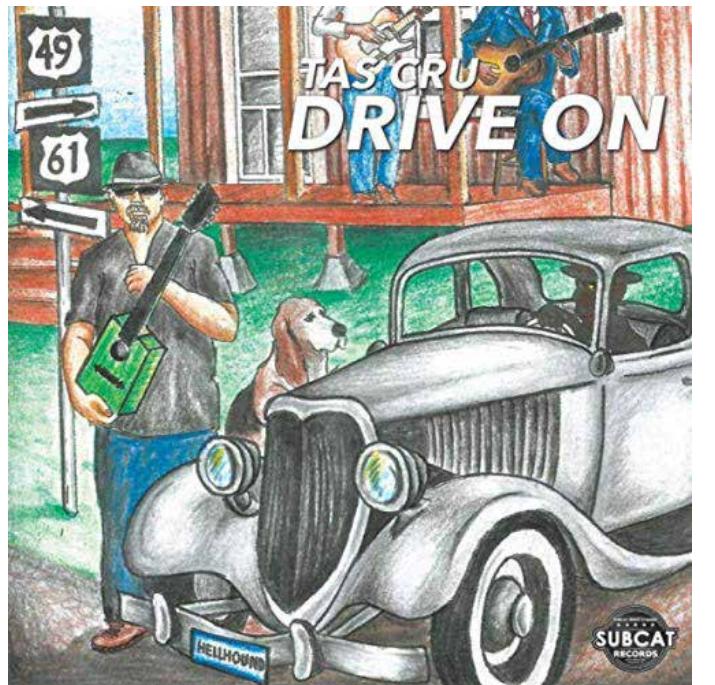
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