

blues southside chicago

SIDE ONE

1. SHAKEY HORTON Can't Help Myself (Horton)
2. JOHNNY YOUNG One More Time (Young)
3. SUNNYLAND SLIM Every Time I Get To Drinking (Luandrew)
4. POOR BOB I Won't Be Happy (Poor Bob)
5. EDDIE BOYD Where You Belong (Boyd)
6. ROBERT NIGHTHAWK Merry Christmas (Nighthawk)
7. HOMESICK JAMES Crutch And Cane (James)

SIDE TWO

1. JOHNNY YOUNG Little Girl (Young)
2. POOR BOB The Sun Is Rising (Poor Bob)
3. HOMESICK JAMES Got To Move (James)
4. SUNNYLAND SLIM I Got To Get To My Baby (Luandrew)
5. RONDA MITCHELL & Mrs. LOVELL J.F. Kennedy's Reservation (Crumbley)
6. ROBERT NIGHTHAWK Lula Mae (Nighthawk)
7. EDDIE BOYD Losing Hand (Boyd)

Homesick James (guitar) is accompanied by Henry Gray (piano), Joe Young (guitar), Willie Dixon (boss) and Clifton James (drums).

Poor Bob is accompanied by Buddy Guy and Joe Young(guitars), Gray, Dixon and Clifton James.

Robert Nighthawk (guitar), Shakey Horton (harmonica) and Johnny Young (guitar) are accompanied by Willie Mabon (piano), Andrew Stevenson (bass,) and Clifton James.

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To the blues lover of the 'sixties the description "Chicago-Southside" has an extremely romantic quality, conjuring up in the mind visions of dark, smoky little clubs, full of heavily amplified music and jiving couples on "postage stamp" dance floors.

On the tiny stages one can imagine artists whose very names are as romantic as their home; Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Magic Sam, Hound Dog Taylor, Little Walter and so on, down what seems a never ending line of first class bluesmen and musicians.

Many of these once mythical names are now almost "household" words thanks to the tremendous upsurge of interest in this exciting, essentially Negro music, which still struggles hard to avoid adulteration.

Just what is this legendary Southside, this tiny corner of the world that at times seems to house all of America's blues talent?

And where are the clubs at which they can be heard? Well, basically what is known as the Southside is all that part which lies South of the central business area, known as the Loop. It is a strip about two miles wide by ten miles long, which is bordered on its East by Lake Michigan and on its West by Wentworth Avenue. Packed into this rough oblong is a population in the hundred thousands, the Chicago Stockyards, the Railroad, Washington Park, and to the South, the steel mills! Although the lines of brown, stone houses in the older parts are quite attractive, in general the Southside is depressing, dirty and low with a few higher-rise brick tenements here and there. The population is predominantly Negro and it is the Negroes who pack the scores of small clubs and bars in the older, Northern section. Though these clubs, like the local record labels, change their names or their faces from year to year many have become established and their names have reached across the Atlantic! Starting furthest North at 12th St., (West Roosevelt), the main club area reaches as far down as 49th St. Perhaps the best known from this area are Smitty's on 31st St.,

Pepper's on 47th St. and Sylvio's which is Just North West of 12th St. on West Lake.

From this place of gloom comes that very distinctive sound known to all as "Chicago Blues". Though the artists in Chicago are extremely individual in their approach to the blues, that certain sound, based upon a driving rhythm section with emphasis on the drumming to set off the style of the "name" artist, is always there. Though the Piano blues seems to be a dying art these days, Judging by the hundreds of guitarists and harmonica blowers, we have included two pianists here, and a mandolinist, as well as guitarists and a harp man so as to try and provide a good cross-section of what can be heard in the clubs today, played by the men who rely on their club reputations, rather than record sales, to provide their income. All the sides are new and this is their first airing, representing in all probability the best work by these artists so far to have been put on wax.

Listen to the two top exponents of the Mississippi "bottleneck" style of guitar playing included here and see what I mean! Unlike Homesick James Williamson, who has lived most of his life in Chicago, Robert Nighthawk (Robert McCullum) has always lived the life of the itinerant musician, spending most of his time on the road in the South, only making sporadic trips to Chicago to fill dates, and if possible to record. His voice is full of brooding intensity and his guitar work has a sharp, bitter note to it. On his two tracks on this album his own guitar sound is in better evidence than ever before and both are complete performances. Homesick from Somerville, Tenn. (near the Mississippi border) relies on the simpler, and very familiar, guitar runs employed by his life-long friend and cousin Elmore James, to punctuate his vocal lines, filling in between with a heavy bass rhythm. Like Elmore's his voice is full of charged emotion, though his overall sound is cleaner, and less complicated. Homesick is not copying Elmore, rather he is carrying on the memory of him in his music and this is his personal aim. Neither of these artists have been heavily recorded, and until this LP, their records have only been available to the serious and knowledgeable collector.

The same can be said for records by Johnny Young, and Poor Bob has never recorded under his own name before! This is his debut and it had to take place on an English label! Young is gradually achieving some recognition as he is one of the few remaining exponents of blues on the mandolin. Hailing from Vicksburg, Miss. he learnt mandolin and guitar while still a youth. Since 1940 he has lived in Chicago and has had to bypass his mandolin and play his electric guitar to secure jobs. On "Little Girl" he shows that he can play his mandolin as well as ever and on "One More Time" he leaves the music to the combo, singing a very modern blues in his usual "tough" manner. Poor Bob Woodfork is his exact opposite, for he developed his style in the cities; working as a sideman for the Blues Stars. In his time he has been with Little Walter, Otis Rush, Howlin' Wolf and Jimmy Rogers amongst others. Though he was born in the South at Lake Village in Arkansas, his music is of the North-fast and with a strong beat. His strong, bluesy voice and very effective guitar style prove that he is a welcome newcomer to the blues-scene. He should go a long way after this superb start. '

Thanks to the 1964-1965 Folk Blues Festivals, the names of Shakey Horton, Sunnyland Slim and Eddie Boyd are all well known to the European collector and their fine brands of blues need no introduction. The very introverted Shakey Walter Horton demonstrates his superiority as a purely blues singer on "Can't Help Myself", For this album he has adjusted his style to fit in with the artists he also has to back. He plays in a higher register producing a more acrid sound than he is generally known for. Eddie Boyd and Sunnyland Slim both repeat some of their big hits, but thanks to the excellent little combo and the fact that they were in fine form, all numbers appear new and fresh. Eddie Boyd shows blues at their most sophisticated, singing in a light voice and leaving the rest mainly to the group, while Slim, as usual, belts out his blues to a really percussive piano which drives home the lyrics to the listener. Both are extremely popular in Chicago and Europe, though their styles are different, and when you hear their music you know why!

To finish our cross-section we have included a blues cum gospel song devoted to the late President Kennedy. The effect that Kennedy's death had upon the American Negro is shown by the sheer number of blues and gospel songs which are devoted to it. This example by a female duo from Chicago is perhaps one of the best examples on record.

This album was recorded in Chicago's Southside by Willie Dixon with one aim in mind-to provide the English enthusiast with blues played as they are played in the clubs, without gimmicks and without interfering A & R men. This album is not intended to be commercial in any way and by using top artists and top session men an LP has been produced that doesn't sound as cold as studio recordings usually do. Here

are the real, modern blues. Loud, powerful and beautiful, whether you want a beat to dance to, or Just a
lowdown mood for after hours drinking! **MIKE LEADBITTER**
(Acknowledgements to Paul Oliver and Mick Vernon. Thank you both!)

recorded in CHICAGO by Willie Dixon

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compilation of this album would not have been possible.