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BLUES MUSIC ONLINE

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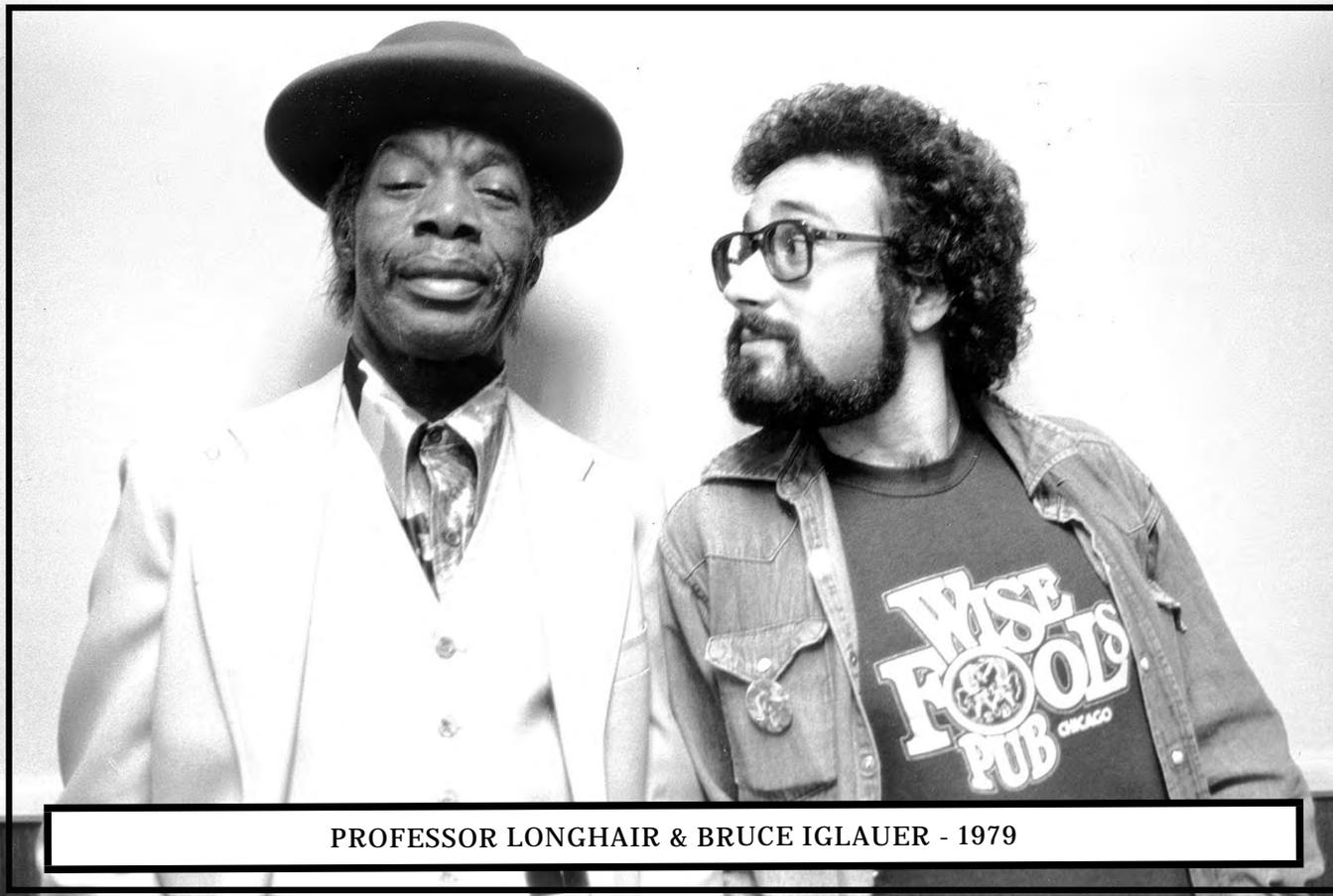
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*Bruce Iglauer & Alligator Records
Happy 50th Anniversary*

Interview by Art Tipaldi

In the past two or three years, the pop media culture has been celebrating an enormous amount of 50-year anniversaries. The 50th year since Sgt Pepper, since a man walked on the Moon, since half a million camped out at Woodstock, since the '69 Miracle Mets, since Jimi and Janis died, and since I graduated high school.

Well pop your champagne and toast the latest Golden Anniversary, the 1971 founding of Alligator Records by Bruce Iglauer. I came late to the label as my first Alligator purchase was due to the name recognition of Robert Cray on 1985's *Showdown!*. After that, I knew that any music with an open-mouthed gator was THE SHIT!!

The story of Alligator Record's rise as an independent label featuring blues artists is also the story of one man's mission to share the music that captivated him with the world. In the beginning, Bruce Iglauer was the most illogical label head. Guided by his heart and fascination with the Chicago blues that existed in Chicago's back alleys, Iglauer seemingly came into the business at the right time, made some important decisions based on his intuition, and has become a major spokesperson for the state of the blues and the recording industry.

Some of the story is well-known: Iglauer gives up his dreams of teaching, works part-time at Koester's store, sits in the studio for the recording of *Southside Blues Jam*, asks Koester to record Hound Dog Taylor, scrapes together enough to record Taylor himself, puts records in the trunk of his car, and travels from city to city promoting his record.

To commemorate this special achievement, Iglauer complied and released a gorgeous present to every fan who has supported the dedicated mission of this

music. With either three CDs or two LPs, the package includes 58 tunes by a diverse group of the label's artists.

To honor this monumental achievement, we were able to ask Bruce a number of questions covering everything from the early days of the label to how recording has changed over the years to advice to young musicians looking to make a career in the blues to the label's recent partnership with Exceleration.

Blues Music Magazine: Over 350 titles, with maybe an average of 12 songs per release that equals well over 4200 songs and with the other Alligator anniversary releases, what went into selecting 58 songs to epitomize/reflect/capture Alligator's distinction as a blues label?

Bruce Iglauer: My first goal was to make both the CD and LP sequences entertaining and enjoyable. I wasn't trying to document every album in order of release or be "educational." The two LPs are roughly divided into legacy tracks on one album and tracks by our current artists on the other. The three CDs are very loosely divided, with the first disc being tracks from the first two decades, the third disc being primarily tracks from our current roster, and the second disc being tracks from the 1990s and early 2000s, including tracks that I thought were "hidden gems" or songs that resonated with me personally.

Of course, I needed to include classic tracks from all the early artists, like Hound Dog Taylor, Son Seals, Koko Taylor, Fenton Robinson, Big Walter Horton, Albert Collins, Lonnie Brooks and Professor Longhair.



KOKO TAYLOR & BRUCE IGLAUER - PHOTOGRAPHY © MARC NORBERG

I had to include tracks from other high-visibility artists and albums, which included Johnny Winter, Roy Buchanan and *Showdown!* And I wanted to include our entire current roster, Marcia Ball, Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials, Roomful Of Blues, Toronzo Cannon, Billy Branch & The Sons Of Blues, Shemekia Copeland, Curtis Salgado, Elvin Bishop (with Charlie Musselwhite, who is not technically signed to Alligator but is a close friend of the family), Tommy Castro, Selwyn Birchwood, The Nick Moss Band with Dennis Gruenling, The Cash Box Kings, Coco Montoya, Tinsley Ellis, Rick Estrin & The Nightcats, JJ Grey & Mofro, Chris Cain, and of course Christone "Kingfish" Ingram.

I knew I couldn't include every artist who recorded for Alligator, so the remaining choices were tougher. I tried to include every artist who cut multiple albums for us. There were artists whose music I loved but hadn't had a lot of commercial success with, like Michael Hill's Blues Mob, The Paladins, C.J. Chenier, and Dave Hole.

There were artists who died before they reached the popularity they deserved, like Michael "Iron Man" Burks, Smokin' Joe Kubek, and Katie Webster. And I wanted to include some artists who were with Alligator for a period of time and moved on to other labels, like Corey Harris, Joe Louis Walker, Steady Rollin' Bob Margolin, and Mavis Staples. In each case, I tried to pick a track that showed the artist from his or her area of greatest strength, a track that was so distinctive that a knowledgeable blues listener could identify the artist in the first few seconds.

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And I chose tracks that reflect Alligator's slogan, "Genuine Houserockin' Music." It's *Genuine* because it's all rooted in the blues tradition and created by musicians who honed their music in front of live audiences. It's *House* because, at its core, it's intimate, personal music, not arena-rocking or stadium rocking. And it's *Rocking*, but not just to rock your body... we also release music that we hope will rock your soul with that "healing feeling" that is so unique to the blues.

Blues Music Magazine: What was the biggest obstacle Alligator faced during the first decade?

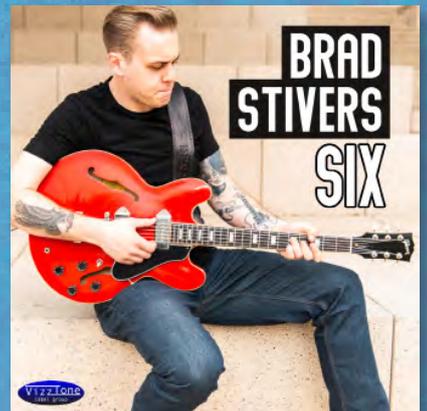
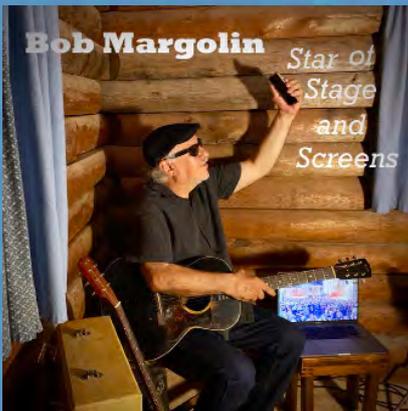
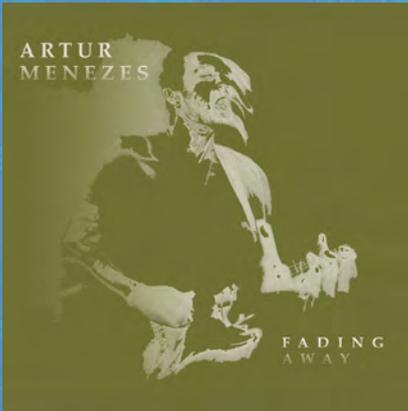
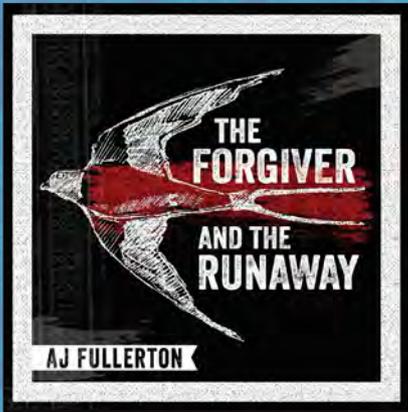
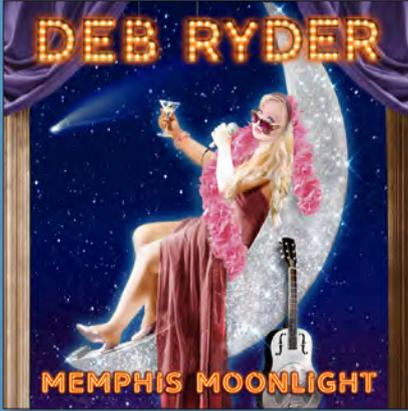
Bruce Iglauer: Just plain survival. I started the label with just enough money to record my favorite band, Hound Dog Taylor & The HouseRockers' debut album (mixing as we went; I couldn't afford to record multi-track and mix later; it was recorded directly to two track). And the rest of my tiny bankroll was spent packaging and manufacturing 1000 LPs, and paying the band an advance. After that, the only way that the label could continue was for me to sell enough of those 1000 copies to afford to press more.

I had to get radio airplay, press coverage, make gig sales (I became the band's booking agent because there was no one else), and find reliable distribution in every city and in some countries outside the USA. I wasn't about to hire a full-time employee for

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about five years; I was doing it all myself, with some volunteer help from some friends and girlfriends.

Luckily, the raw and rocking “glorious racket” of Hound Dog and his band communicated with thousands of people who heard that first album, and I sold enough to be able to record Big Walter Horton with Carey Bell. About a year later, I could afford to record the totally unknown Son Seals. Every penny that came in went to pay bills, and each record had to pay for the next.

In 1974 there was an oil shortage and the pressing plants couldn’t get vinyl for LPs. That almost killed the label. Then Hound Dog Taylor, my friend and my best-selling artist, died in 1975. Son Seals was just getting established and our first Koko Taylor record, *I Got What It Takes*, didn’t do all that well. But we survived on Hound Dog’s sales until Koko’s second record, *The Earthshaker* and Albert Collins’ Alligator debut, *Ice Pickin’*, were, by blues standards, “hits.”

Still, for the first 14 years, the label lived where I lived, first in a one-room apartment, then in a slightly larger apartment, then in a dilapidated house where we warehoused in the basement and the kitchen. So, the growth of Alligator was never in giant leaps; it was always putting one brick on top of another. It took about ten years before I felt confident that the label would survive at all.

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Blues Music Magazine: What was the biggest recent obstacle Alligator faced?

Bruce Iglauer: In the last few years, streaming services like Spotify, Apple Music, and Amazon Music Unlimited have become extremely popular, and the general wisdom is that they may ultimately replace owning any physical form of music, either CD or LP (and they pay very little per stream, which has been well publicized). The streaming services have, for the most part, been oriented toward pop hits and not toward adult genres of music, so not only blues, but also jazz, folk, world music, classical, bluegrass, and Americana are almost afterthoughts to them. This leads to playlists that don't get updated and some really strange choices of music on their 'radio stations' because most (not all) of their playlist 'curators' don't know much about blues.

This is slowly beginning to change for the better. Apple Music has posted a large number of playlists, which were brilliantly curated by me, and Spotify has put up a slew of new blues playlists, some of which are well programmed. BUT (in capital letters), the great thing about the streaming services is that they have huge selections of music, including a whole lot of blues...you just have to query an artist you like.

Of course, the whole Alligator catalog is on Apple Music, Spotify, Amazon Music Unlimited, and a whole bunch of other streaming services. This means that people around the world can hear our music, including in countries like China and India where we've

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Still, the growth of streaming services has not made up for the huge decrease in CD sales over the last two decades (which started with thousands of record stores going out of business when illegal downloading began in 1999). The reduction in sales of CDs (and now downloads are a shrinking format) really hit us hard in the wallet. Our production budgets for new albums have had to be reduced. But down the road, as much of the world discovers the blues, I'm confident the millions of streams from China, India, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the former Soviet Union will make up for the loss of the tens of thousands of CD sales.

The second obstacle we've had to deal with is the same one the whole world is dealing with – the pandemic. In the last 20 years, Alligator has concentrated on making each artist's gig a success. We do press releases, email blasts to fans in the area, set up press and online interviews, and if there's a friendly radio station in the area, we try to get the artist on the air or get the station involved with promoting the show. And we do this whether the artist has a new release or not. (Most labels only promote new releases).

We have two full-time radio promo people on staff and two full-time publicists, one of whom is dedicated to tour publicity. Of course, all of our artists sell CDs at their gigs, and that's a significant source of income for both them and Alligator. For the last year, when everyone has been off the road, both the artists and the label have missed out on a lot of income from gig sales. Artists are getting back on the road, but I'm not sure what the future of gig sales is. With new computers and new cars having no CD players, and streaming services having all our artists' music available, there's less and less incentive for fans to buy a CD from an artist, even with an autograph. We've had some luck with the burst of interest in LPs, but they're very expensive to create (especially in modest quantities) and they're a pain for artists to carry on the road.

Blues Music Magazine: Looking back at your career, what were the highlights that stand out?

Bruce Iglauer: There are hundreds of them. The first ones that come into my head are:

Being in the studio producing my first record with Hound Dog and realizing that the raw magic I heard at Florence's Lounge could be captured on tape to share with the world

Driving down to Koko Taylor's home and hearing her sing "I'm A Woman" for the very first time and seeing the pride she took in having written what we both know would become a blues anthem

Creating the situation (along with my co-producer Dick Shurman) where Albert Collins could finally achieve his full potential in the studio, with the great band we assembled, songs that let Albert become much more confident as a singer, allowing him to control his own guitar sound (and incredibly loud volume) so he could record an album as good as his live shows, that was *Ice Pickin'*.

Watching Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials record (without rehearsal) 30 songs in

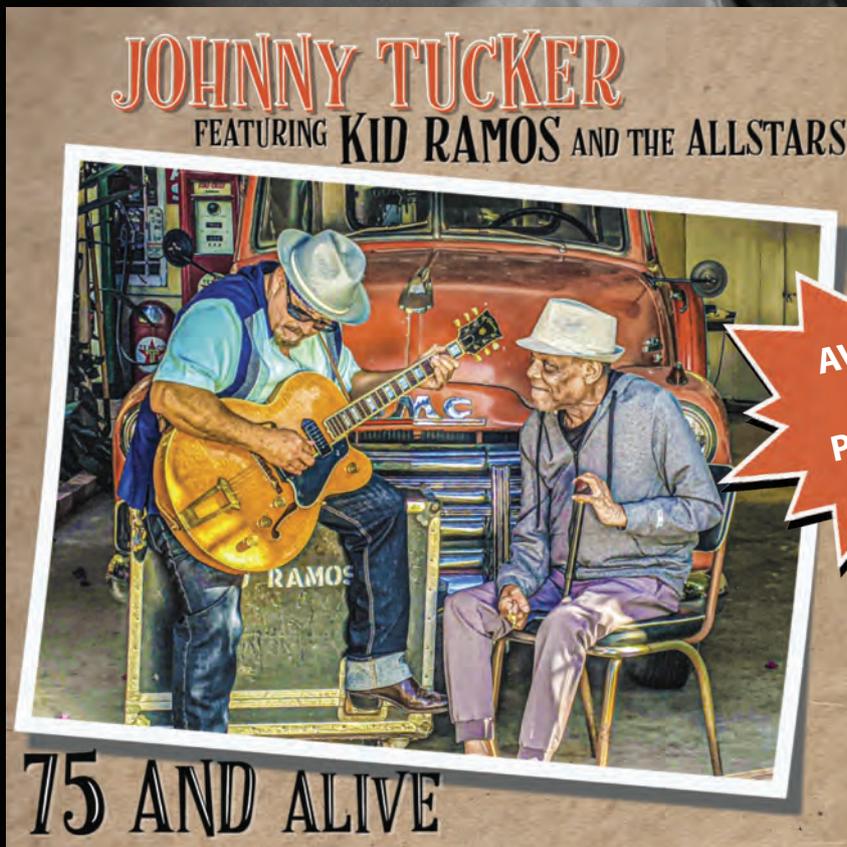
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three hours for a session where they were supposed to record two songs for an anthology. One of the most exciting nights in the studio and all I said was, “Would you like to cut a few more?” That best of those songs became *Roughhousin’*, and Ed has been a member of the Alligator family ever since.

The whole 3 ½ days in the studio cutting *Showdown!* with Albert Collins, young Robert Cray, and Johnny Copeland. Johnny and Albert were close friends ever since their playing together in Houston in the 1950s. Robert had been inspired to become a bluesman by seeing Albert play at his high school. They came together prepared to make each other sound good and at the same time, try to “cut each other’s heads” musically. After they cut “Black Cat Bone,” the very first song, I knew this was going to be a classic, must-own blues recording. The capper was when all three of them won a Grammy.

The first Chicago Blues Festival in 1984. I had been involved in planning the Festival from day one, and chaired the talent committee. The three nights included an all-star Muddy Waters tribute, Koko Taylor, Johnny Winter, Bobby Bland, John Lee Hooker, Buckwheat Zydeco, Bobby Rush, Albert Collins, Gatemouth Brown, Jimmy Johnson, Magic Slim, and many, many more. Chicago was finally celebrating its blues heritage after decades of virtually ignoring the blues.

Watching Shemekia Copeland, barely 18 years old, deliver a sensational performance on one of the smaller stages at the Chicago Blues Festival in 1998. Her Alligator debut album, *Turn The Heat Up*, had just been released, and no one in Chicago knew who she was. The word spread through the festival that something special was going on, and fans came from other stages to see her.

Some of the highlights aren’t moments or events, but seeing artists’ promise being fulfilled. There are a lot of artists I’ve put my faith in, seeing their potential to become world-class bluesmen and women. I’ve done my best to nurture them, encourage them, and critique them. Sometimes it’s encouraging fresher, more original songwriting. Sometimes it’s finding just the right song for an artist’s personality and voice. Sometimes it’s helping an artist to communicate better in live performance, and to improve their showmanship. Sometimes it’s helping an artist take a song idea for the studio and honing it into a memorable recorded performance.

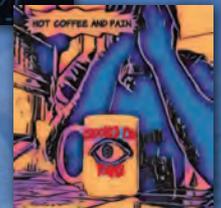
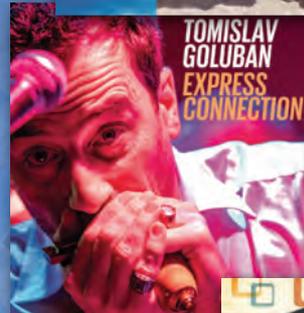
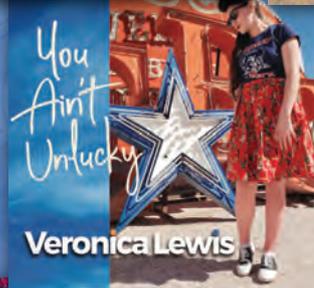
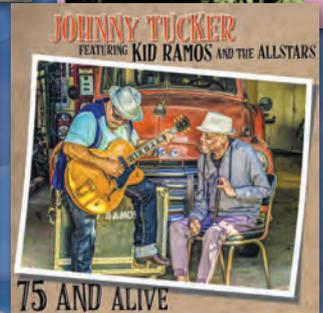
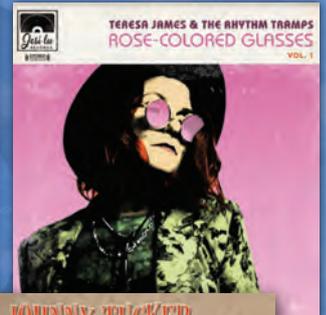
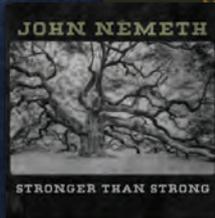
In general, it’s helping an artist to find his or her greatest strengths, what makes them special. This is particularly hard in a genre of music where artists often get the biggest round of applause performing very familiar songs in familiar ways. And sometimes the artist achieves all of these things without any help from me other than being the bridge to bring their music to the world. When I think about artists whom I think fulfilled the potential I saw in them, I think of musicians like Son Seals, Tinsley Ellis, Lil’ Ed, Shemekia Copeland, C.J. Chenier, Michael Burks, and Toronzo Cannon.

Blues Music Magazine: What were the most important lessons that were passed on to you?

Bruce Iglauer: Bob Koester, my boss at Delmark Records, taught me (by example)



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to trust my gut and record artists I believed in, even if their commercial prospects were not great. I followed Bob's example by signing artists like Son Seals, Lil' Ed, Little Charlie & The Nightcats, Tinsley Ellis, The Kinsey Report, Shemekia Copeland, Selwyn Birchwood, and Eric Lindell. Some of them had local or regional popularity, and some were virtually unknown, but my gut told me that they were capable of becoming blues headliners.

I learned (by watching other labels started by blues fans fail) that recording great music is not enough. You have to get the public's attention, through the media, through motivating people to get into clubs to see an artist new to them, and through working constantly to build bigger audiences for your artists. Making the record is the fun part; creating or nurturing the artist's career and figuring out how to make enough money from the music so the label can continue is the hard part.

I learned from my mother that being ethical was essential in life, even if no one was watching. When I came to Chicago, I constantly heard stories about artists being cheated by record labels. (Were they true? I'll never know). But I know that Alligator has always accounted properly to its artists, paid royalties on time, and honored not only the letter, but also the spirit of our contracts. I expect 100% from our artists, and they should expect 100% from me and the whole Alligator staff, including honesty and fair dealing in all matters. I know that after I gave Hound Dog Taylor his first royalties (in cash; he didn't have a bank account), within days every blues musician in Chicago knew that "the hippie" paid royalties!

Blues Music Magazine: What was the moment in the early years of the label when you knew this was the right path to take?

Bruce Iglauer: I was determined to make Alligator viable right from the start. But it was when Hound Dog's album began to get significant play on what were called either "Progressive Rock" or "Free Form" stations across the country that I knew my vision of reaching an audience of people my own age was going to work. I figured that if the guys I went to college with liked John Mayall or Paul Butterfield or the Stones doing blues, they'd love real, raw Chicago blues if they only heard it. And it was true! Hound Dog Taylor went from playing for 70 people in Florence's Lounge on the South Side to playing Philharmonic Hall on a show with Muddy Waters, and touring Australia and New Zealand with Freddie King. That was far beyond my wildest dreams when I started the label.

Blues Music Magazine: Amid all your successful releases, what were the recordings that got away?

Bruce Iglauer: There are a number of Alligator releases that I feel deserved more media attention and more popularity than they received. Among those that come to mind are our three albums by the New York band Michael Hill's Blues Mob (perhaps too exploratory

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for their time); *Lone Star Shootout*, the glorious summit meeting of Lonnie Brooks, Long John Hunter, and Phillip Walker; our three Kinsey Report releases that melded blues, funk, and rock, and Carey Bell's two Alligator albums, which may be the best of his career.

It also seems that the consistently excellent albums by Lil' Ed & The Blues Imperials are somewhat overlooked by the blues-buying public. Ed and his crack band (who have been together for over 30 years) can range from the happiest boogies to the most serious of slow blues, and are truly "real deal." Maybe it's because Ed has so much fun on stage that people don't take him seriously, and miss the depth of his music.

Blues Music Magazine: What is your process to find and develop new talent for the label?

Bruce Iglauer: I'm constantly listening to potential artists. I still (eventually) listen to every demo that comes to me. Mostly I listen for songs, but I keep an ear out for artists too. Little Charlie & The Nightcats were the most notable act that came to me originally in the form of a demo that caused me to fly to Sacramento to see them live.

I have friends whose opinions I take very seriously. For example, as the result of a friend's recommendation, I went to my first Shemekia Copeland gig. Dick Shurman pulled my coat about William Clarke and a number of other artists. Producer Bob Greenlee made me first pay attention to Kenny Neal. My friend Ben Sandmel opened my ears to Lonnie Mack.

I still go to a lot of gigs, and there's nothing like a live performance to get me excited about an artist. I signed Michael Burks after a steaming-hot set at one of the smaller stages at the Chicago Blues Festival. It was a performance by Toronzo Cannon at Kingston Mines that made me realize how much potential he had. Even if I've heard an artist on a previous record or on a demo, it's the live show that usually nails me. I listen for originality, passion, a unique musical vision, and ability to move and excite the audience.

I try to always attend the IBC in Memphis. I've seen a lot of artists there for the first time, and an IBC performance led me directly to signing Selwyn Birchwood, one of the most visionary younger blues artists.

Blues Music Magazine: What makes recording easier today? What makes recording harder today?

Bruce Iglauer: Digital recording has revolutionized my world. I think the first album Alligator recorded on ProTools was about 15 years ago. Reels of 2-inch recording tape (for 24 tracks) cost about \$150-\$2000 each, and we would typically use 6-12 of them for an album. Each reel records 15 minutes of music, but they often contained takes of songs that we ended up not using because we got a better performance. ProTools allows an unlimited number of takes, and has as many tracks as you want, not just 24.



ALBERT COLLINS & BRUCE IGLAUER - PHOTOGRAPHY © COURTESY ALLIGATOR

You can store many entire albums (all the raw tracks and mixes) on a small hard drive. With ProTools and various additional digital gear, the cost of setting up a studio is way, way less than when you needed a huge recording console and tape machines. So, cities that used to have a few good studios now have many. Of course, it's also led to some really bad sounding records as you can buy the software and a few mics and declare yourself to be a recording engineer!

But the result is that I can record and mix an album with a good engineer for \$600-\$800 a day. In 1978, I was paying \$1000-\$1500 a day, plus tape.

The good and bad results of cheaper recording are these. Good – artists can afford to record full albums they can issue themselves. Plus, with digital distribution on iTunes and streaming services, they can use a middleman company to deliver the music at a low cost, so a local band's music can be available around the world. The old wisdom was "you can't make a record without a label to bankroll it; it's too expensive." That's no longer the case. Money is not a barrier to entry for an aspiring artist.

Bad – Of course this means that every musician in the world, good or bad, is recording and distributing his or her music. So, the marketplace is flooded with blues records by "weekend warriors," which they usually press up and sell at their gigs. In many cases, the music they record is fine, but not world class. In the old days, the record labels were quality filters; they had to believe in the artists they recorded because the expense was so great.



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So, if a label recorded an artist, you knew they had to believe the artist was worthy of your listening time and your money. Now it's very hard for a consumer to figure out what is worthy of listening time and what to buy. And because of digital distribution, the "just ok" recordings are side by side with the world-class recordings.

Blues Music Magazine: How has the blues genre changed since you founded the label?

Bruce Iglauer: When I came to Chicago in 1970, all the blues clubs were in the ghetto, on the South or West sides. Styles I heard ranged from 1950s Muddy/Wolf through B.B./Albert King and many of the bands played some funky stuff in the James Brown mold or in the style of Tyrone Davis that is part of what we now call Southern Soul.

As blues clubs opened on the North Side (for white fans primarily), some of the older musicians whose styles were more traditional found audiences there. Johnny Young, Sunnyland Slim, Big Walter Horton, and others began playing regularly, sometimes with bands like Bob Reidy's and sometimes with their own groups. At the same time, more contemporary artists (by which I mean a lot of string-squeezing guitarists) also found an audience on the North Side. The guitar players found that the white audiences liked long solos, whereas the black audiences tended to respond more to the singing, the words and the groove than to guitar extravaganzas. Artists like Otis Rush, Mighty Joe Young, Son

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Seals, and Fenton Robinson were very well received on the North Side. Basically, they were doing the same sets as on the West or South sides, but more straight blues and less James Brown or Tyrone Davis style, and with longer guitar solos.

In a sense, this is what was going on across the country, as white audiences discovered the blues and older, mostly Southern-born black fans came to clubs less. Black oriented radio wasn't playing much blues, and younger black listeners often said that blues was "grandpa's music." Meanwhile, as rock radio moved from AM Top 40 singles to FM album tracks, many stations oriented toward young adult white listeners (often called "progressive rock" stations) were including blues or blues-based music in their music mixes. So even if they didn't play Otis Rush or Muddy Waters, they played Cream, Zepp, and bands like Canned Heat and The Paul Butterfield Band. Blues became a part of the vocabulary of rock music and as a result, blues-rock guitar heroes reigned.

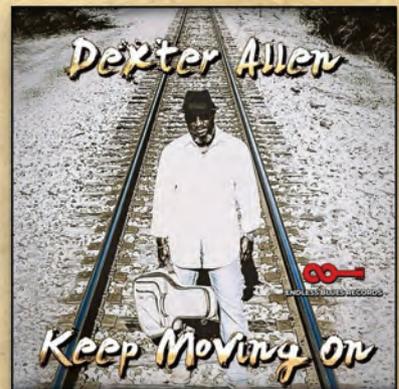
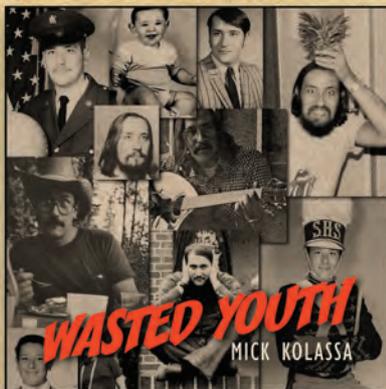
Over the years, the definition of blues has expanded to include elements of Americana, African music (of course blues is derived from African music, but I'm thinking more of experiments with American blues musicians and African musicians and instruments), reggae, earlier Black music forms (I'm thinking of the Carolina Chocolate Drops, for example), and, of course, rock. The fusion I keep waiting for, and hear very little of, is blues and hip-hop/rap. This seems like such a natural partnership, but yet it doesn't seem to be happening.

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Blues is now sung in foreign languages. Blues festivals have taken place in countries as far away as India, and Billy Branch and Bobby Rush have performed in China. That's a long way from Mississippi juke joints and Chicago ghetto bars!

One other development, though not common, is the increasing amount of social commentary in blues. On Alligator alone, our artists like Selwyn Birchwood, Shemekia Copeland, and Toronzo Cannon are recording songs about racism, police brutality, homelessness, gun control, health insurance, and homophobia, along with the timeless subjects of love and less, no-good men and evil women.

Blues Music Magazine: How has it remained the same?

Bruce Iglauer: A lot of familiar blues structures (12 bars, 3 chords) and grooves (shuffles, slow blues, 2/4 "cut time") have continued to be staples of blues songs. Blues songs are almost always in the first person. They rarely use extended metaphors. The stories are almost always about real life, and they often include elements of tension and release (thus, the wonderful "healing feeling" that blues can give you).

Blues Music Magazine: How do you see the role of music in today's complicated world?



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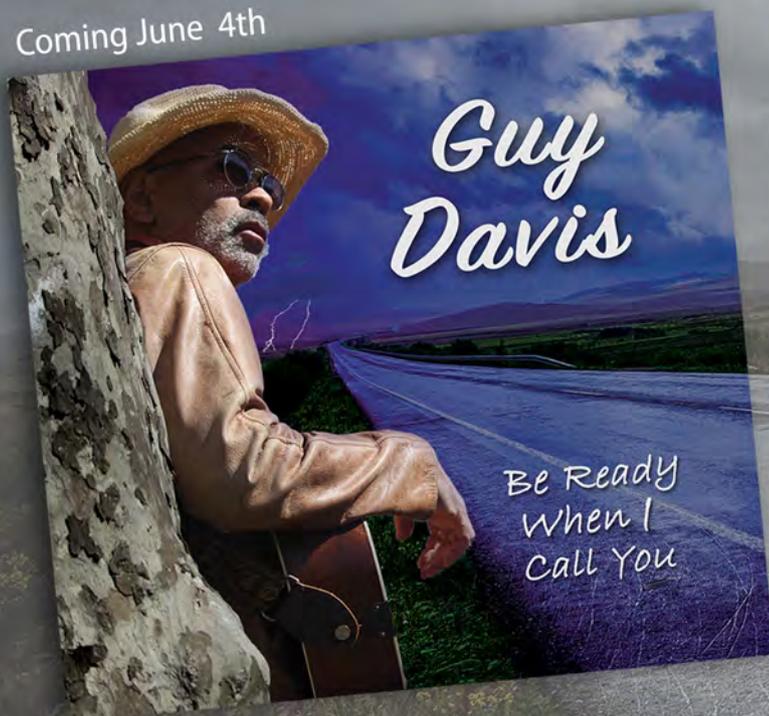
Bruce Iglauer: Pretty hard to answer. Music reaches a primal place in us. Humans were probably making vocal music even before they spoke, and of course there are music sounds in nature. Music, both melody and rhythm, seem to be an intrinsic part of the human psyche. Imagine a world without music. It would be awful!

Blues Music Magazine: How does Alligator deal with the double-edged sword of music to entertain vs. music as an agent of social commentary?

Bruce Iglauer: My feeling is that it should be the artists, not the label, who decide on the subjects that want to sing about. Blues was created by African-Americans as a release valve and expression of community, culture, and solidarity in the horribly oppressive conditions under which they lived, first in the South and then in urban ghettos. But not a lot of blues has been overt social or political commentary. Some of our artists, including Shemekia Copeland, Toronzo Cannon, Selwyn Birchwood, Nick Moss, The Cash Box Kings, and, in the past, Michael Hill, Corey Harris, Luther Allison, and the Kinsey Report, have chosen to record songs that have strong social statements. I've never censored an artist who wanted to sing about a controversial subject, though I have sometimes warned them that they may lose fans by recording a particular song.

Of course, I'm aware that the name of the label is on the recording as well as the name

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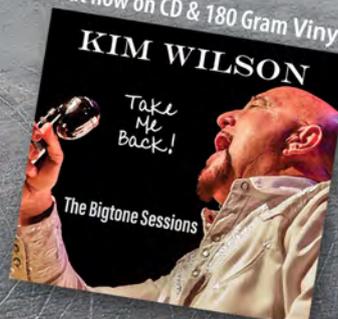
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of the artist. Luckily, no Alligator artist has brought a song that supported police brutality, the storming of the Capitol, or limiting voting rights. I suppose that if the artist felt strongly that he or she wanted a song like that on an upcoming album, I would tell the artist that I wasn't going to put Alligator's name on their statement, so they were free to record the song for another label.

One of the implicit messages of Alligator is, "If you hear this music that was created by African-Americans, and the music moves you or soothes you, how can you respect and love the music without respecting its creators?" For the most part, I've found that blues fans are very aware of the continuing oppression of Black Americans and are strong opponents of all forms of racism. But there are exceptions – the "shut up and play your guitar" fans. If they are bothered by the artists' social statements, then they have the option of not buying the records and not attending the live shows. And if they choose to boycott the label because of what an artist says, so be it.

Blues Music Magazine: In your book, you talked about going into teaching after college. In what ways has running Alligator fulfilled your initial career dream of being a teacher?

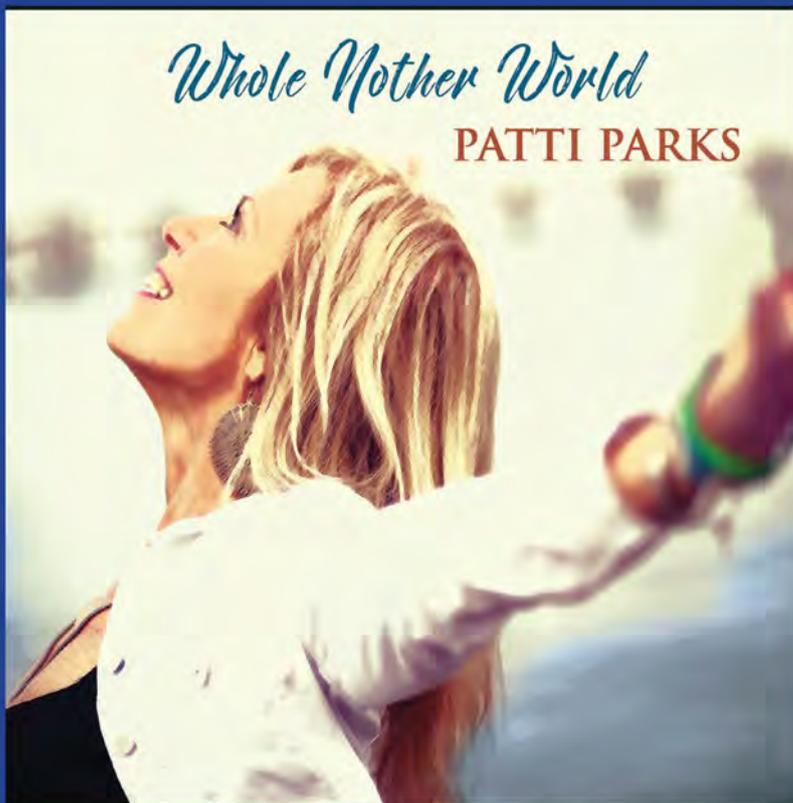
Bruce Iglauer: My dream wasn't to be any kind of teacher. I was a theatre major in college (but not a good actor), and I wanted to study and teach theatre history. I was especially

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interested in the way that theatre (more in the past than now) influenced the society around it and reflected the society around it. These days you might say I wanted to study and teach theatre as popular culture.

I loved theatre because it was first and foremost a live experience that could be different every night, even if it stuck to the same script (kind of like a blues artist can follow the same set list every night and yet each performance feels different from the night before). So, you could really say that my desire was to be in the world of performing arts. And I've had a career in the world of performing arts.

Blues Music Magazine: In what ways has running Alligator made you the student again?

Bruce Iglauer: I'm constantly learning and relearning the music business as it changes. I've had to deal with changes in recorded mediums, from vinyl to cassette to CD to digital download to digital stream, and of course the return of LPs.

I've also continued to learn about music. I never studied music, so real musicians are teaching me musical structures, guitar chord voicings, and playing techniques. Also, I hear in a much more sophisticated way than I used to and understand much better how musicians interact.

I've learned a lot about business from various mentors and friends. I never took a



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business course, and I've had to learn by asking and watching.

A great deal of what I've learned has been the wisdom of people who have had very little formal education. Both my parents had Master's degrees, and I grew up in a house full of books. But I learned a whole lot about ethics, fortitude, human nature, and dealing with people from artists like Koko Taylor, who dropped out of school after third grade to work on her family's sharecropping farm.

Blues Music Magazine: You have always encouraged original songs by your artists. What advice can you offer to aspiring artists about crafting their songs?

Bruce Iglauer: My biggest piece of advice is simple, don't write new blues songs that sound like a rehash of old blues songs! Even if you're writing a traditional lump-de-lump 12-bar, make it lyrically interesting and contemporary. No songs about mules or picking cotton! No mojos (working or not). Write about the world today. My standard line is, "You should write, 'Woke up this morning and my hard drive crashed.'" Even better, surprise the audience with a chord change that they don't expect or a groove they don't associate with blues.

When B.B. was performing shuffles in 1954, that's because his contemporaries were dancing to shuffles. Blues was always dance music for Black people. They danced



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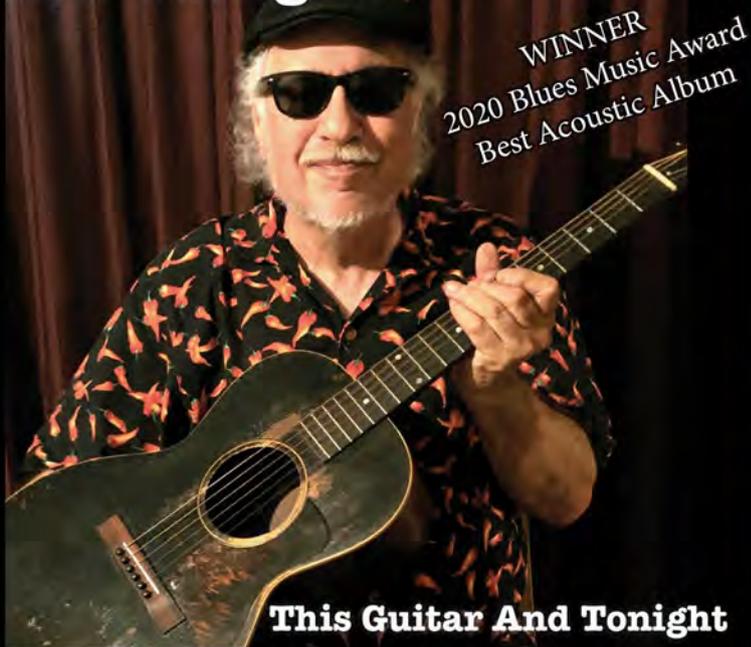
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to Charley Patton! So incorporate grooves that people dance to *now*. And not 70-year-old people, but 19-year-olds. And remember that when blues was created down South, those musicians didn't follow the rules on how many bars a verse had to be, when the chord changes were supposed to happen, and what the chord changes were supposed to be. Twelve-bar blues arose partly so musicians who didn't play together all the time could play together without rehearsal. So don't be afraid to break out of standard blues forms. Surprise me! Surprise your audience!

Blues Music Magazine: What is the advice you can offer to young musicians looking to make a career in the blues?

Bruce Iglauer: First, making a career as a professional musician is really hard. A career as a professional blues musician is even harder, because blues musicians don't make much money. And blues sidemen make even less. You have to be 100% driven to play the blues professionally. And then of course you have to not only put on a great live show, but remember that you're not only the artist, you're (at least in the beginning) you're the artist's manager. So, manage yourself! Do your own booking and issue contracts rather than make verbal agreements. Show up for gigs on time (or early). Bring a well-rehearsed band. Have your equipment together and functioning.

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Remember that it's not just music. It's also show business, so your audience communication and your look are really important, not just the music. Be prepared to work (at least in the beginning) for a percentage of the door with little or no guarantee. Remember to perform your original songs (after all, I might be in the audience checking you out!).

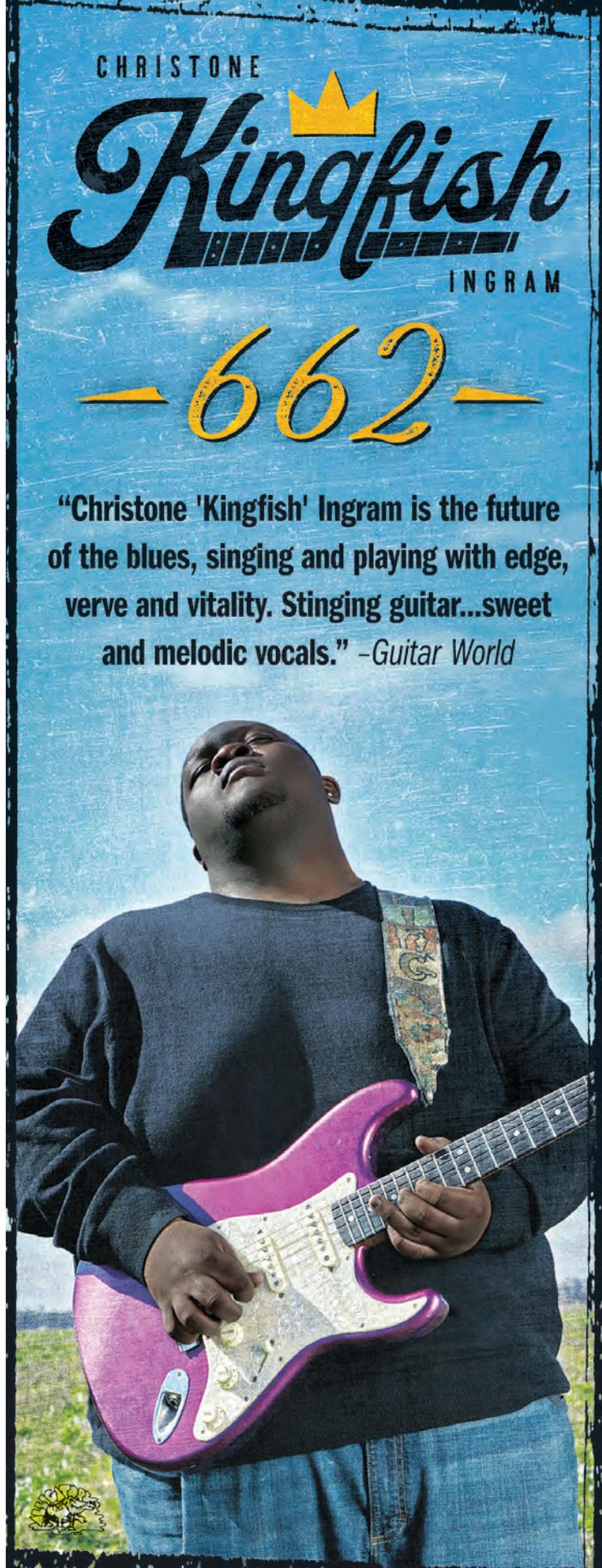
Many musicians I know are much happier playing on the weekends for fun and having a real, secure job with benefits rather than the insecure life of being a professional musician.

Blues Music Magazine: Of all the different styles of blues that make up the genre and that you have recorded, what style is your favorite?

Bruce Iglauer: That varies from day to day. Obviously, I started the label with traditional Chicago style, and I still love the rough-and-ready electric sound. I'm also a sucker for slide players (My love of blues started at a performance by Mississippi Fred McDowell). I love deep blues singing. Other times, I'm energized by a powerful harp solo or wild, rocked-out guitar playing (as long as it's not just flash for flash's sake).

Blues Music Magazine: What are your five, non-Alligator desert island recordings?

Bruce Iglauer: I was asked to make a Desert Island Discs list a few years ago (that could include Alligator tracks).



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and *Something Inside Me* by Elmore James

I'll Cry Tomorrow and *If You Ever Change Your Mind* by J.B. Hutto & The Hawks

It's Raining by Irma Thomas

How Blue Can You Get? by BB King

A couple Albert Kings, maybe *I'll Play The Blues For You* and *Blues Power*

And a couple Freddie's maybe *Have You Ever Loved A Woman* and *The Stumble*

Now That I'm Down and *Don't Pick Me For Your Fool* by Son Seals (Alligator)

Strollin' With Bones by T-Bone Walker

Gate Walks To Board by Gatemouth Brown

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If I had to pick my favorite singers, they would be Elmore James, Johnny Shines, Tommy Johnson, J.B. Hutto, and Otis Rush.

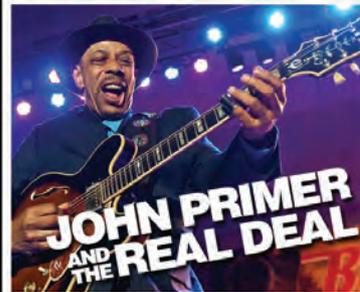
Blues Music Magazine: Looking at the veteran staff you have assembled, what are some of the valuable contributions your staff has made to the success of Alligator?

Bruce Iglauer: The Alligator staff has been crucial to the survival and success of Alligator, and they get almost no credit. Many have been with me for over 25 years, and my senior employee joined the staff in 1983, when I was still operating Alligator out of my little house and warehousing in the basement and kitchen. The staff includes a sales and advertising manager who deals regularly with our worldwide network of distributors, two full time publicists, two full time radio promoters, a graphic designer, a financial controller, an online publicist, a mail order specialist, an office manager, a production coordinator who deals with the CD and LP manufacturing plants and the packaging printers and makes sure we have the right amount of inventory, and two full time warehouse workers.

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about Alligator artists on Facebook or Twitter or Instagram or see our music on display or on sale at a record store (including online stores) or get an email about upcoming tour dates, that's the Alligator staff at work. With our policy of promoting and publicizing every live performance by every artist, they never have a spare minute.

Blues Music Magazine: In what ways have those contributions been essential to the label's direction in the new millennium?

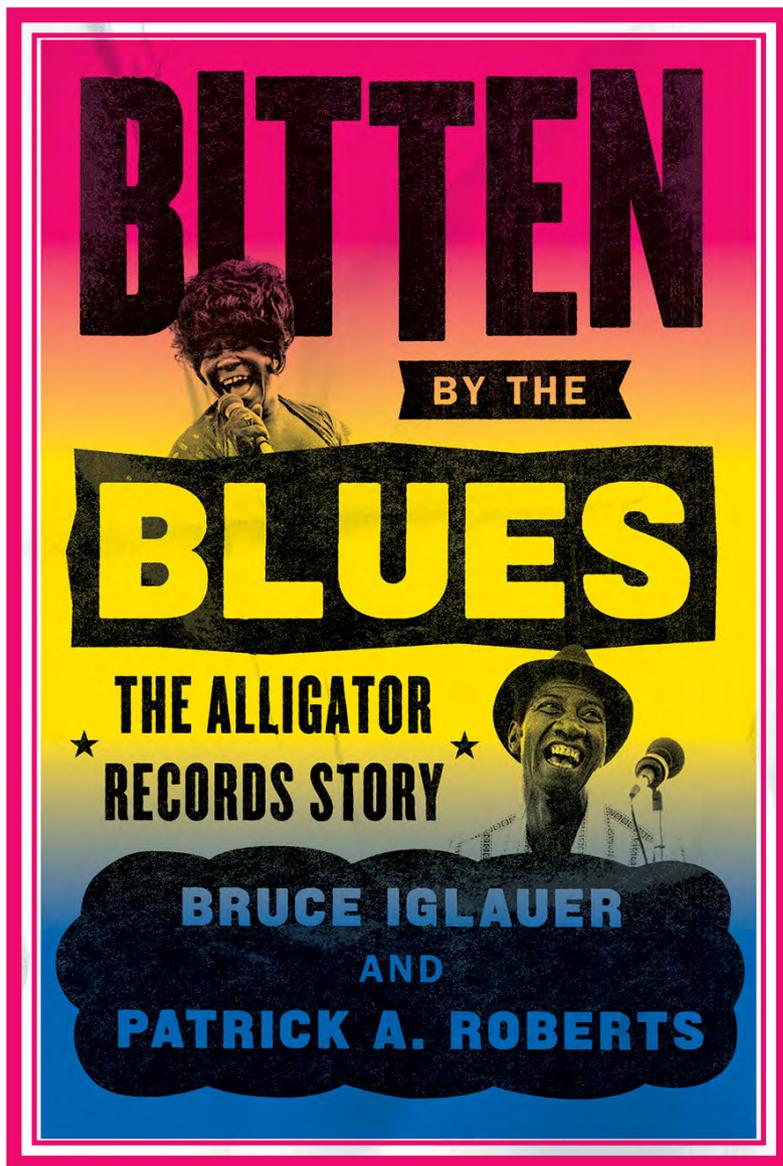
Bruce Iglauer: Besides their other jobs, Alligator staffers keep us aware of new technological developments, new marketing opportunities, new media, and new performance venues. And the staff are constantly looking out for artists who would be good additions to the Alligator family. Over the years, staff members have championed our signing artists like Dave Hole, Guitar Shorty, Mavis Staples, Eric Lindell, and JJ Grey & Mofro. So, when I'm considering a new artist signing, I'm always discussing it with key staff members. All the signing decisions are mine, but their input is very important to me.

Blues Music Magazine: Earlier this year, you joined forces with Exceleation Music. What prompted this partnership and what are the advantages in the future of that partnership for the label?

Bruce Iglauer: I've known three key members of the Exceleation group, Glen Barros, Charles Caldas, and Dave Hansen, for many years. They're very smart guys who are extremely well respected, and I know them personally and know they are honest, ethical straight shooters. Plus, they have deep industry knowledge and connections. Because they've run larger companies and organizations than Alligator, they can reach higher-up decision makers that I could never reach (like the folks who run the big streaming services that are so essential to the future of all labels). And I've learned a huge amount from these guys that will help Alligator grow.

They're going to be taking over our physical manufacturing and warehousing and our royalties accounting, which are tasks that take a whole lot of my time and energy, as well as the staff's. So, I'm going to be able to focus much more on music, and on finding and nurturing the artists who will carry the blues into the future, while the staff continues to make our artists better known and more visible, and to further expand our distribution.

Exceleation also have access to significant funding if I need it for a special promotion or project. And their involvement and backing will help assure the Alligator musical legacy going forward. Too often I've seen label owners retire (which I don't plan to do) or sell their companies and have their labels become catalogs rather than active labels continuing to put out new releases. With my partnership with Exceleation, I know that in the future (if I'm not around) all our existing music will still be available, all our royalties will be paid, and Alligator will continue to release new blues recordings that carry on the Genuine Houserockin' Music tradition. - **BMO**



No book written today has told a more complete story of contemporary Chicago blues and its multitude of musicians as thoroughly as *Bitten By The Blues*. This is essential reading for any lover and collector of blues.

Here are two excerpts that tells of Bruce Iglauer's recording session with Hound Dog Taylor and subsequent marketing of that record 50 years ago.

Excerpts from *Bitten By The Blues: The Alligator Records Story* By Bruce Iglauer and Patrick A. Roberts published by University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Excerpt One:

As it became apparent that Bob wasn't going to take an interest in Hound Dog, I began thinking about producing the record on my own. Not only did I love the band, but I also wanted to show my mentor and father figure that I was ready to follow in his footsteps.

As the year rolled on, I imagined starting my own label and financing a Hound Dog record using \$2,500 I had inherited from my grandfather. By this time, Wesley Race had become Hound Dog's close friend and number one fan. When I revealed to Wesley that I was thinking about creating a label to record Hound Dog, he said he wanted to be involved and would contribute \$1,000 toward the costs and become my junior partner in the new company. I was happy to say yes. Besides his financial investment, I thought his presence in the studio would be invaluable because Hound Dog loved and trusted him. Wesley and I shook hands on a partnership.

In early 1971, I stood with Hound Dog on the steps outside Pepper's Blues in the Loop and told him I wanted to record him. He knew me as a loyal fan because I had been to so many of his gigs. "I'd like to make an album with you," I said. "I'm wit' you, baby, I'm wit' you," he replied, without asking about any particulars like money or a contract. I'm sure he had received nothing for the two 45s he had cut for local labels. His only reward had been hearing his music on the jukebox. Now that he was being courted by a white "hippie," he must have thought that at least this record might lead to some gigs for a new audience of young white fans. Plus, with no other recording opportunities, what did he have to lose? I think he was shocked when I told him that I would pay him to record.

Although he didn't ask about money, he did ask, "Who's going to play bass?" "You don't need a bass player," I told him. "You've got a special sound with the two guitars and drums." "Everybody has a bass player," Hound Dog said. I knew perfectly well I wasn't going to record him with a bass player, but to placate him I arranged a rehearsal at Pepper's with Elbee Huggins, a solid bassman who sometimes played with Howlin' Wolf. As I expected, it was a musical disaster. Brewer Phillips had no idea what to do. Normally, the presence of a bassist would have freed him up to play chord-based rhythm guitar, but Brewer wasn't a chords man. His brilliance was playing driving, ever-varying bass patterns on a regular guitar. He struggled to find his way. "It's not the same with a bass player," I said to Hound Dog after the rehearsal. "You know it and I know it. Let's just record what you guys do every night." He didn't argue.

Just before we were ready to record, Wesley came to me and told me he had to back out of our deal; he had a family emergency and needed the money. Although he didn't join in my business, he more than earned his credit as coproducer. Over the weeks before the sessions, he made a list of virtually every song the band played. He and I put together a list of songs to be recorded. We knew that this was not a band that needed rehearsing. Through their many nights of performing together, each musician could feel the direction of a song and play what fit it best.

Following Bob Koester's example, I booked time at Sound Studios with engineer Stu Black, a former engineer for Chess Records who was Bob's first choice for Delmark sessions. Stu, whose catchphrase was, "I've done it all, from Howlin' Wolf to Steppenwolf," had recorded dozens of blues sessions. Hound Dog and I signed the first Alligator recording contract at the studio on Tuesday, May 25, 1971, just before the first session. The second session followed on June 2. I paid Hound Dog \$480, plus royalties to come. I paid Brewer and Ted \$240 apiece as sidemen (\$120 per three-hour session; our sessions went longer than three hours but nobody complained). That was the studio-scale payment set by the musicians' union as Bob Koester had taught it to me. As was the norm, there were to be no royalties for Brewer and Ted since they were considered sidemen.

We set up the band members in the studio just as they normally arranged themselves in a club—Hound Dog on the left, Ted Harvey in the middle, and Brewer Phillips on the right. They used their own equipment. Hound Dog played his Kingston Japanese guitar through his Sears Roebuck Silvertone amplifier. Although the amp was manufactured by Danelectro, a company famous for its inexpensive fiberglass guitars, it had six Lansing speakers, a good brand. Two of the speakers, however, were cracked, which created distortion that the cheap guitar only added to. Ted had his trusty Slingerland drum set. Brewer plugged his beat-up Fender Telecaster into a relatively new Fender Concert amplifier that he had recently bought.

We recorded simply, with one microphone on each guitar amp, one vocal microphone for Hound Dog, and four microphones for the drums (one on the bass drum, one on the snare drum, and a stereo pair overhead). Stu asked me if I wanted any reverb (the slight echo effect heard on most commercial recordings), but I thought it would sound too slick and "studio-ish." I told Stu, "No. Just make it sound like their instruments sound. Don't do anything fancy." My goal was to get a recording that captured as much as possible the spirit

and feel of the band's performances at Florence's. I wanted to remove any possible barriers to making this happen in the studio.

Delmark sessions had taught me that musicians usually wore headphones in the studio so that they could clearly hear one another. I suggested to Stu that instead of using headphones, we point some smaller speakers toward the band, so it would seem much Phillips always played standing up and dancing around and I didn't want to keep that from happening. I wanted them to feel as relaxed and loose as they did in Florence's.

I was excited and scared and worried that, without the enthusiasm of an audience to feed their energy, it would be hard to capture the spirit of their live performances. Hound Dog felt the same way. After the first couple takes, he said, "Send that boy [meaning Wes] in here," From then on, Wes stayed in the studio with the band while I sat in the control room with the engineer. That gave the band an enthusiastic one- man audience to play for. It took a little while for them to get loose, but once the alcohol was flowing and they realized they could just do what they knew how to do, they lost any studio jitters and began having fun making music together. As the sessions went on, Brewer and Ted even began to holler encouragement to Hound Dog during the performances, just as they did in the clubs.

Wes and I were determined to keep things moving along so that the band didn't grow bored. We worked from the song list we had put together. When Hound Dog said, "Hey, baby, what do you want to hear?" we could say, "How about '44 Blues'?" "I'm wit' you, baby, I'm wit' you," he would answer, and launch into the song. "Give Me Back My Wig," "Held My Baby Last Night," "Wild about You, Baby," "It Hurts Me Too," and "It's Alright" were all songs we had heard the band do live and included on our essentials list. Brewer Phillips was featured on a searing slow blues called "Phillips' Theme." Hound Dog also came up with a few surprises, like "55th Street Boogie," "I Just Can't Make It," and "She's Gone," all songs we had never heard him play before.

In the course of two evenings, we recorded twenty- five songs, with no more than four takes of any of them, and in many cases, one take only. To keep the budget down, we recorded directly to two- track, mixing as we went, which meant there would be no way to repair anything later. I knew when we left the studio that we had the record we had dreamed of. It was everything I wanted it to be, an album that captured the electric energy and exuberance I had first heard in Florence's. It was stripped down, emotionally honest, more natural to musicians who weren't used to being in a recording studio. I also thought this would make them feel less inhibited because they wouldn't be chained down by headphone cables. Brewer and true to the spirit of the band. After Wes and I chose the sequence of songs, the studio cut the master lacquers used for manufacturing LPs. The total bill was nine hundred and seventy dollars. That's pretty good for a record that went on to sell close to a hundred thousand copies in the United States alone.

There are musicians who can play all of Hound Dog's notes and who understand his technique. But they can't play with Hound Dog's attitude, rhythm, and drive. They can play his licks, but they can't play his music, because they haven't lived the life that created it. They haven't driven a tractor in Mississippi or seen a cross burning in their front yard or slept in a drainage ditch. I suppose most other musicians also can't play while drinking Canadian Club from morning to night.

There is a magic in doing something incredibly simple better than anybody else can do it. When a musician has the ability to stir the deepest, most elemental place inside the listener, that magic is even more powerful. In all my years listening to blues, I've rarely heard any electric blues that's simpler and more direct than that of Hound Dog Taylor & The HouseRockers. And I mean that as high praise.

Excerpt Two:

As my plans to record Hound Dog and launch Alligator came together in spring of 1971, I began putting together a target list of stations. Having done a blues show on my hundred-watt university radio station, I had assumed that virtually every college station would consider airing a blues record. Now, with *Walrus* as a guide, I could also find progressive rock stations that might be open to a blues record like Hound Dog's. I knew that most of the DJs working these stations were within a year or two of my age. Most had heard the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, John Mayall, and Eric Clapton and maybe even Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf. I thought that I could relate to some of these DJs. Augie Blume had shown me how important relationship building was to the business of getting airplay. A little blues was part of the programming of most progressive rock stations, but I knew they were not getting releases from labels like Delmark and Arhoolie.

Radio airplay was necessary for publicizing the record and building demand, but it couldn't get the record into stores. For that I would need powerful distributors who could convince the major record stores and chains to stock my lone album. Most of Delmark's distributors were small companies that specialized in folk, jazz, and blues. But in Chicago, Delmark was distributed by Summit Distributors, an independent company that distributed fifty or sixty different labels, including big pop labels like A&M, Buddah, and United Artists. Delmark was a tiny part of their business. Whenever Summit put in an order for Delmark, I loaded LPs into my old Rambler and drove to the Summit office in Skokie, a Chicago suburb. Seymour Greenspan and Jack White ran Summit and were well respected among independent distributors. Seymour took a liking to me. I told him about my plans and asked for the names of distributors like Summit in other markets. He gave me a list of companies across the country that he thought I should approach and the names of his friends who ran them. By the time I finished Hound Dog's album, I had a list of target radio stations and a list of target distributors.

My simple plan was to visit a city, convince the progressive rock and college stations to play my record, and then visit the targeted distributor in the area. I would tell them that I had airplay on local stations and ask them to take on distribution of my one-record label. I already had friends at Chicago's larger progressive rock stations, WGLD and WLS-FM. Both stations began to play Hound Dog's record as soon as it was released, especially "Give Me Back My Wig." Hearing Hound Dog on the radio was an indescribable thrill. Of course I played it myself on my Triad show.

I took a leave of absence from Delmark, delivered a hundred LPs to Summit for local distribution, put the remaining nine hundred copies in the back of my newly purchased Chevy Vega station wagon, and hit the road with my girlfriend, Bea. For three weeks I

drove from city to city, station to station, distributor to distributor, trying to create a market for *Hound Dog Taylor and the HouseRockers*.

The first day established the model for the whole trip. After visiting a couple of college stations along the way, we arrived in Ann Arbor, Michigan. There I talked WNRZ into some airplay. Later that night, we stopped at WABX in Detroit, where I met a DJ named Jim Dulzo. "I made a record of my favorite blues band," I explained earnestly. "I'd love it if you would play it." Instead of saying, "I have to consult my music director" or asking, "What other stations are playing it?" he said something like, "Far out, man." He brought me into the studio and played "Give Me Back My Wig" and "Taylor's Rock," then put me on the air to talk about Hound Dog. After visiting WABX we drove a few miles to WRIF. I pitched the DJ about to go on the air, gave a copy of the record to him, and then drove back to WABX to meet the DJ who came on after Jim Dulzo. I slept for a few hours in my car, then went back to catch the morning host at WRIF. I drove back and forth between these stations, meeting every DJ. Each one played Hound Dog at least once. Finally, I went to my targeted distributor, Record Distributing Corp., and met the owner, Armen Boladian. "I'm getting airplay on WNRZ, WABX, and WRIF," I told him. "Summit in Chicago is distributing this record. Would you be interested in distributing it in the Detroit area?" The radio airplay and the deal with Summit gave me instant credibility. Boladian agreed to distribute the record and took a hundred copies from the back of my car.

From there we went on to Cleveland, Buffalo, Albany, Hartford, and Boston, repeating this tactic in each city. We slept in my car or at cheap motels. In Boston, I visited WBCN and stayed around the clock to meet each DJ going on the air. As a result of WBCN airplay, Boston became a major market for Hound Dog, who played there regularly over the next four years. From Boston I headed down the East Coast, visiting New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. Everywhere I went the DJs were receptive (although New York was especially tough; the stations there were worried about higher ratings as they were trying to attract national advertisers).

As I traveled, I built credibility with broadcasters by naming stations in other cities that were already playing the record. The DJs loved Hound Dog's music, with its complete lack of slickness. The album cover, showing him grinning and playing his ultra-cheap guitar, was a funky image that helped reinforce the story. Before we could make it to Washington, I ran out of records for the distributors. Having talked the Cleveland distributor into advancing a little money to me, I phoned Musical Products and placed an order for a thousand more copies. By blues standards, I had a hit.

Besides targeting progressive rock radio, I tried to make an impact with a new kind of publication. As progressive rock radio was emerging, dozens of rock magazines and local entertainment newspapers sprang up. All these publications included record reviews, and all were directed at the same demographic as progressive rock radio. I had assembled lists of them, typed labels on my manual typewriter, and mailed out a copy of Hound Dog's album to each one before leaving on my East Coast promotional trip. As soon as I returned, I followed up on the phone, getting to know the music journalists personally. My persistence led to heaps of glowing reviews. The biggest early print media triumph came when *Rolling Stone* devoted a full-page article to Hound Dog. - **BMO**

ALBUM REVIEW

ALLIGATOR RECORDS

50 Years Of Genuine Houserockin' Music

Alligator



It is the ultimate highlight reel, the perfect argument for the invention of the shuffle mode. Think of shufflin' through three CDs or two LPs with 57 songs by the genre's most influential artists, past and present, collected by the genre's premier label, Alligator Records. So sit back, hit shuffle, and board the Alligator Records' jukin' time machine.

It's only fitting that the collection leads off with Hound Dog Taylor's iconic "Give Me Back My Wig" from his 1971 recording debut because coincidentally that was the recording that launched Bruce Iglauer's Alligator Records. In fact, it was these same hypnotic grooves that Taylor and his HouseRockers played during Iglauer's late 1960s nightly journeys in South side haunts like Florence's Lounge that made recording Taylor a necessity. The next four tunes also honor the next group of artists Iglauer recorded, Koko Taylor, Big Walter Horton with Carey Bell, Fenton Robinson, and Son Seals. Through these songs, every listener can experience that

same, underground blues bubbling in Chicago's South and West side nightspots that Iglauer searched out to record as he grew the label. Other artists from those days, Albert Collins and Lonnie Brooks, are represented with songs from their later products.

As the reputation of Alligator Records spread through Iglauer's grass roots marketing, his labor of love continued the label's steady ascent throughout the 1980s. That growth was spearheaded by the 1985 release of *Showdown!*, the label's first Grammy winner featuring Robert Cray, Albert Collins, and Johnny Copeland. "The Dream" comes from that record. Other artists from the 1980s featured here include Johnny Winter, Roy Buchanan, Katie Webster, the Kinsey Report, Little Charlie and the Nightcats, Brooks and Collins, who became Alligator's biggest star in the 1980s.

In all, 19 of the 57 songs here represent those first 20 years, the remaining 38 songs, which encompass the next 30 years, offer ample proof of Alligator's substantial growth. That expansion allowed Iglauer and the label to begin to increase yearly releases and spend time and money to find and develop new talent, something the label continues to advocate.

Highlights from those decades include William Clarke's "Pawnshop Bound." Clarke grew to become a monster West Coast harmonica player and songwriter. Chicago harmonica ace Carey Bell's "I Got A Rich Man's Woman," along with his earlier teacher/student cut with Big Walter, offer a hearty dose of Chicago-styled harp. Other dives into that harmonica approach are offered in Billy Boy Arnold's 1995 "Man Of Considerable Taste," James Cotton with Junior Wells and Billy Branch from Alligator's *Harp Attack*, and Charlie Musselwhite's 2020 beautiful acoustic pairing with Elvin Bishop.

If those harmonica Masters are the roots, then later recordings here by Billy Branch, Rick Estrin, Curtis Salgado, Phil Wiggins, Corky Siegel, Dennis Gruenling, and Joe Nones (Cash Box Kings) are the harmonica fruits. Pretty awesome picks for a label often categorized as a guitar heavy company.

There are inspiring cuts by world class musicians here like Bob Margolin, Janiva Magness, Joe Louis Walker, Marcia Ball, Lil' Ed, Kenny Neal, Guitar Shorty, Roomful of Blues, the Holmes Brothers, Katie Webster, Saffire, Corey Harris and Henry Butler, and Chris Cain who have all recorded albums for a variety of labels, but are fortunate to be showcased on the 'Gator.

In addition, there are musicians like the Paladins, Eric Lindell, and JJ Grey & Mofro, who stretch the definition of blues and were able to reach a broader audience. And there are poignant selections by Luther Allison and Michael Burks who left this world too soon.

But Iglauer also gives the listener a reading of the exciting contemporary directions the blues took in the new millennium. With tunes by established Alligator artists like Shemekia Copeland, Tommy Castro, Estrin and the Nightcats, Coco Montoya, Tinsley Ellis, Selwyn Birchwood, Nick Moss, and Toronzo Cannon leading the way, Disc Three offers abundant proof that Iglauer and the staff at Alligator understands the importance of mixing traditional aspects with contemporary visions in artist development. Most notable is the signing of blues' newest star, Christone "Kingfish" Ingram. Hailing from Clarksdale, Mississippi, Kingfish's debut Alligator album, recorded when he was only 18, won an unprecedented five Blues Music Awards in 2020 and was also nominated for a 2020 Grammy. Proof that at 50 years young, Iglauer and Alligator have no plans to join AARP.

Best part of this celebrated release? It has gotten me to go through my cache of Alligator CDs to re-listen to the full albums of these seminal records.

– Art Tiplaldi



APRIL 2021

Download the 12 songs at:

<https://bluesmusicstore.com/download29/>

Thanks to all the artist who contributed their music to this Song Sampler. All the songs are available for download at the [BluesMusicStore.com](https://bluesmusicstore.com).

- 1) Steve Cropper – “Fire It Up” from the album *Fire It Up* on Provogue Records
- 2) Ghalia Volt – “Meet Me In My Dreams” from the album *One Woman Band* on Ruf Records
- 3) Clarence Spady – “Surrender” from the album *Surrender* on Nola Blue Records
- 4) New Moon Jelly Roll Freedom Rockers – “Blues For Yesterday” from the album *Volume 2* on Stony Plain Records
- 5) The WildRoots – “Move Along Part 2” on the album *Wildroots Sessions Vol. 1* on WildRoots Records
- 6) Maria Muldaur with Tuba Skinny – “Let’s Get Happy Together” from the album *Let’s Get Happy Together* on Stony Plain Records
- 7) Quinn Sullivan – “How Many More Tears” from the album *Wide Awake* on Provogue Records
- 8) Chickenbone Slim – “Vampire Baby” from the album *Sleeper* on Self-released
- 9) Billy Jones & Delta Blues Outlaws– “My Love Is Real” from the *Self-titled* album on Delta Blues Records
- 10) Ryan Perry, Whitney Shay, and Jeremiah Johnson – “Ain’t Afraid To Eat Alone” from the album *Blues Caravan 2020* on Ruf Records
- 11) Ally Venable - “Heart Of Fire” from the album *Heart Of Fire* on Ruf Records
- 12) Early Times & The High Rollers!– “Return Of The Queen” from album *The Corner* on VizzTone Label Group

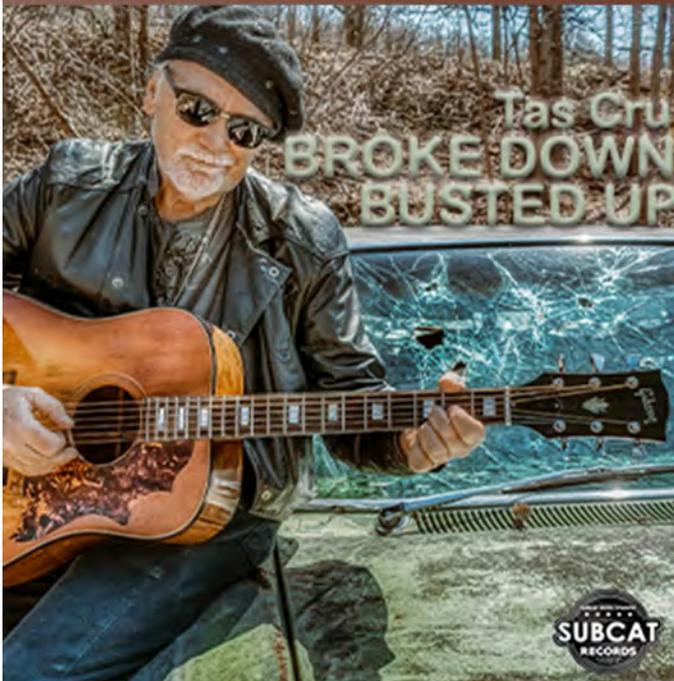
All the CDs listed above are available in the [BluesMusicStore.com](https://bluesmusicstore.com). Your purchase directly benefits blues musicians and we thank you for your support!



Next up from one of the most unique of bluesmen plying his trade today . . .

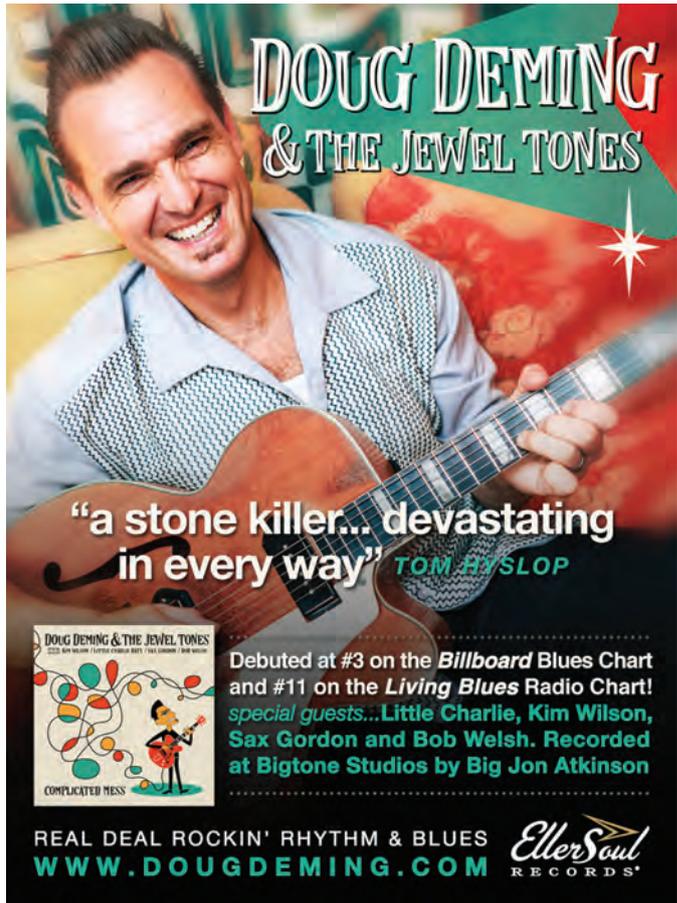
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