

the hard blues of 'She Put The Whammy On Me' and the hard driving instrumental, 'Driving Sideways'. I am informed that the tracks were lifted because it was realised at the last minute that they were 1963 releases and therefore beyond the pre-'62 public domain time-scale, but this doesn't explain why several of the alternative takes that were only released post '62 are included. It should also be noted that there are five previously issued alternative takes missing from the collection. However, as the strap line on the slipcover refers to 'selected sides' I guess this is acceptable, if a little disappointing to us complete and chronological folks.

If I might nit-pick for a little while longer, King's first name is spelled 'Freddie' throughout this release, even in the discography, which is a little odd in that all of the Federal records that make up this collection use the 'Freddy' spelling. Stranger still, the official Freddie King website uses 'Freddie' throughout but states his given name was 'Freddy' while Wikipedia states his birth name was Fred King. Does anyone have his birth certificate to clarify?

Anyway, to this point I've said very little about the actual music which, if you don't already know (and there can't be many reading this magazine are there?), is some of the most exciting and influential guitar blues this side of the Pecos. And that's not all because not only was Freddie a red-hot guitar picker, his vocals were superbly emotive and heart-rending, using a high-pitched wail similar to his name-sake B.B. King on many recordings. The 26th August 1960 was a real red-letter day, being Freddie's first session for King/Federal, which was sen-sa-shun-al to put it mildly, and is presented here for the first time in its entirety. Six tracks were cut including King's best two vocal blues, 'You've Got To Love Her With A Feeling' and 'Have You Ever Loved A Woman' and his best instrumental, 'Hide Away'. The two vocal sides were placed back to back on Federal 12384, a truly monumental blues single. 'Hide Away', the quintessential blues boogie, is up there in the 'Honky Tonk', 'Juke' and 'Green Onions' ranking being one of the most influential and copied instrumentals of the era. King was ably assisted on this session and all the subsequent Federal dates by bandleader and pianist Sonny Thompson, who also wrote or co-wrote many of Freddie's songs.

While nothing quite matched the quality of the first session, almost everything on these two discs exudes quality and class as in the tough slow blues, 'It's Too Bad (Things Are Going So Tough)', and the more up-tempo but equally compelling 'I'm Tore Down', another much copied song. Speaking of which, listeners to Paul Jones' BBC Radio 2 show will immediately recognise 'The Stumble' as played by Peter Green with John Mayall's band, but here, of course, in its wonderful originality. Freddie's playing is forever inventive and innovative, not only on class instrumentals like 'Sen-Sa Shun' and 'San-Ho-Zay' but also on lesser-known songs. Take for instance 'Let Me Be (Stay Away From Me)', a rather routine song, which is lifted up several notches by a perfectly conceived guitar solo. The last six cuts on disc two are duets with Lula Reed, vocalist with Sonny Thomson's band, and include the very nice ballad, '(Let Your Love) Watch Over Me', and the swaying 'It's Easy Child'. Freddie's guitar isn't as prominent but these are still good tracks.

This is a release that will be snapped up by Freddie completists but it is also a pretty decent mid-priced release for anyone just getting into King's music. However, because of the missing tracks as noted above, it is something of a flawed gem.

Fred Rothwell

LARRY LAMPKIN: The Blues Is Real

Kaint Kwit Records 088503 (41:37)

The Blues Is Real/ Got To Get Away/ Let Me In/ Maintenance Man/ World Blues/ Crown Royal/ She's Good To Me/ The Way She Makes It/ Sad Eyes/ Working Man

Young Fort Worth, Texas born and raised singer and guitarist Larry Lampkin has come out with a cracker here. It's the follow up to his first CD titled 'When I Get Home' from 2011. Larry has a musical history of supporting other blues and soul/blues acts over recent years, in particular being band leader and guitarist for Vernon Garrett, playing with Andrew Jr. Boy Jones and he was tutored in his early years by U.P. Wilson, and all that experience shows in his music. He is a superb fleet-fingered and subtle modern blues guitarist and his music blends blues and soulful sounds to perfection; it does make you wonder why we have not heard more of this prodigiously talented individual.

This disc features all-original material from Larry who is supported by a seven-piece band including backing vocalists. To show how good this artist is, he at times reminds me of the late and great Larry Davis and at other times, on his more laid back outings, Fenton Robinson. From the outset, on the opening rocking twelve-bar title number, you are made aware you are listening to a classy guitarist and singer and the quality does not let up throughout the duration of this ten-track outing. 'Got To Get Away' is a searing intense blues with hints of soul and Larry's



Larry Lampkin. Courtesy Larry Lampkin.

guitar playing and piercing tone will have your immediate attention on a tale of his pill popping and crazy drinking women giving him trouble. That is followed by an intense, slow and very soulful blues of first class order, 'Let Me In', where Larry shows off his great soul-inflected vocal style as well as more of his beautiful subtle guitar sounds. 'World Blues' has a lump-de-lump rhythm adding to the number's charm and once again his rapid-fire guitar lines are a marvel. 'She's So Good To Me' is another slow soulful outing with some hints of jazz in its makeup and 'Sad Eyes' is a gorgeous sweeping soulful ballad. Lastly 'Working Man' is a slow burn blues that rounds off this excellent set of modern blues with soulful leanings.

We should by rights be hearing more from this highly talented musician with the help of this release that will hopefully enable him to break out of his Texas stronghold. He could hold his own against the best in the blues world for sure, if this disc is an indication of his talent and music.

Mike Stephenson

EDDIE 'BLUE' LESTER & THE STORMS: Funky Basement Blues

JSP Records 8853 (64:00)

My Thang/ The Blues Is Old News/ Sweet Home Chicago/ Funky Basement/ Stormy Monday Blues/ The Thrill Is Gone/ Will It Go Round In Circles/ Hey Baby/ Bright Lights Big City/ Dirty Man/ All By Myself

This was recorded in 2013, but with a sound that's a bit of a throwback – not to the 1940s and '50s glory days of r&b, so much as to the funky productions of twenty to thirty years ago. Driven along by big bass lines and prominent electric keyboards, Texas-born tenorman Eddie Lester offers a set of blues and jazzy r&b that seems primarily designed for entertainment and a good night out, rather than striving for anything profound. This is certainly the most unusual version of 'Sweet Home Chicago' I've ever heard – you can't deny that its swaggering funky rhythms and its cheeky lyrics do make you sit up and take notice, even if they might seem sacrilegious to those who worship at the dark altar of its originator.

There's nothing to object to, though, in Lester's laidback tenor soloing, and in fact his playing acts as a kind of cool, calm centre from track to track, as the band kick up their rhythms and riffs. 'The Thrill Is Gone' seems surprisingly jaunty given its subject matter, as if the song (what there is of it) is there more to provide the basis for working out rather than to tell any kind of story. In fact, lyrics generally don't seem especially