

Blues fans are in for a treat when Johnny "Moose" Walker tours New Zealand with the Willie Dayson Band this month. Walker — known variously as Big Moose, Moose John and J. W. Walker — has been a mainstay of the Chicago blues scene for years.

Although best known as a sideman, the pianist/organist is also an able performer in his own right. With the Dayson band in support, he can be expected to provide an evening of rousing — and entertaining — blues in a style dating back to the 40s when he started working the juke joints of the American South.

A colourful figure, Walker was born June 27 in either 1927 or 1929 at either Stoneville or Greenville, Mississippi (depending on your source). Walker's best available recordings are on Volume 2 of the Alligator series *Living Chicago Blues*. His four tracks here, with fellow Chicago stalwart Louis Myers on guitar, promise much for Walker's visit, the first in these parts for far too long a time.

For a person who has appeared in the company of such blues greats as Lowell Fulson, Elmore James, Earl Hooker, Junior Wells and Otis Rush, relatively little is known of Moose Walker. The fullest biography is contained in Jim O'Neal's notes to the Alligator album, from which much of this derives.

Other Walker recordings worth

Moose Tour



checking are his work as an accompanist to Otis Rush on the traumatic *Cold Day In Hell* album on Delmark, with Junior Wells on *On Tap* (Delmark) and on Son Seals' first Alligator album. As Earl Hooker's pianist he backed Earl on *Don't Have To Worry*. He also contributes a couple of vocals, notably on the bizarrely titled 'Is You Ever Seen A One-Eyed Woman Cry?'

Indian blood and long, flowing hair ran in Walker's family. He acquired the nickname Moose as a youngster hanging around his local pool hall. "I wore my hair so long maybe I looked like a moose," says Walker.

He made his first music on a church organ, later played guitar in the cottonfields (yes, Virginia,

that really happened), took tuba (!) lessons, and once had visions of becoming a famous blues vibes player (now that is a wide open field).

During the 50s he became known as a pianist and bass player as he roamed through the Mississippi Delta and beyond. He joined Ike Turner's King of Rhythm in Clarksdale and sat in with the fabled King Biscuit Boys in Helena, Arkansas. He worked juke joints across Mississippi with Elmore James and Sonny Boy Williamson. He switched to guitar for gigs with Boyd Gilmore and Eddie Snow and lived with bandleader Tuff Green in Memphis and with pianist Pinetop Perkins in East St Louis.

He played with Lowell Fulson, as well as driving the Fulson band on the road. He travelled even more extensively with the master of the slide guitar, Earl Hooker.

At a drunken party in St Louis, Moose won a \$50 bet — with Ike Turner by jumping off the third floor of a building — it was just enough to cover the hospital bill. Clearly a man who covered a lot of ground, Moose also joined the army and went to Korea.

In the 50s — he recorded with Elmore James and Sonny Boy Williamson for the Jackson, Mississippi, Trumpet label. In 1955 drinking buddy Ike Turner taped Moose in a Greenville (or Stoneville) club. Years later two of the songs appeared on Kent credited to J. W. Walker. The same year he recorded his first 45, as Moose John, for Johnny Otis in Los Angeles.

Brought to Chicago by fellow pianist Sunnyland Slim, Walker recorded with Earl Hooker and others, then went to New Orleans to record with Elmore James.

As a front man, he recorded several singles, but did not make a big impression on the buying market (plenty of good artists fit the same bill).

A close partner to the late Earl Hooker, Walker has, since Hooker's death in 1970, played with several other Chicago bands, including those of Jimmy Dawkins, Mighty Joe Young, Eddie Shaw and Louis Myers. When he plays solo, Moose usually works with just a drummer.

Watch for The Moose. As one of his compositions attests, 'Moose is on the loose.' Ken Williams

WDBB: Rogues & Fools



Brian Glamuzina and Willy Dayson

Willy Dayson Blues Band, are about to release their second album, *Rogues and Fools*, a studio set recorded at Harlequin. To coincide with the release, the band is undertaking a national tour with Chicago bluesman Johnny "Big Moose" Walker. *RIU* interviewed Willy Dayson (guitarist) and Brian Glamuzina (vocals/harmonica).

What expectations have you for the tour?

"Hopefully it will attract a lot of people," says Dayson. "Personally I'm looking forward to playing with a black musician."

Glamuzina sees history being made.

"This will be the first time that an NZ band has played with a black musician, especially a musician like him. He's heard our tapes so he knows how good ... or bad we are. According to the telexes he's a pretty bubbly, crazy sort of a guy. When he parties, he parties. He's prepared to play two sets of 45 minutes. He will feature in one and we will do the other."

Who do you regard as your major blues influences?

"Mine tend to be white musicians," says Dayson. "Pete

Haycock of Climax Chicago, Ry Cooder, Tommy Bolin.

"I like to play the blues but I derive the blues from other sources than the blues. Blues to me is a feeling — just a pure, basic, animal feeling. To be a blues musician you don't necessarily have to be black just as long as you have the inner feeling to play the blues."

Glamuzina agrees.

"I listen to a lot of guitar players to get harp licks. You've got to search around and listen for sounds. There's no point in listening to Little Walter in say 1956 and then copy it — because that's not a feeling. Rather it has to be me, in 1982."

Are NZ record buyers hearing the best of the contemporary blues?

"No way," says Glamuzina. "They haven't heard any contemporary blues for the last 20 or so years."

Who is the best act around?

"Albert Collins," says Dayson. "He's got the 80s ah ..."

"Sussed," contributes Glamuzina.

"Yeah. What can you say about the 80s? It's a pretty rough time. He's got such momentum about his guitar playing."

How relevant is a white man writing blues lyrics in the 80s? Or black musicians writing about being down and out?

Dayson: "Maybe they got trapped into the down and out theme. The original players such as Bukka White were really down and out — so they wrote about it. Why should B.B. King write about being down and out when he's not?"

"I reckon I'm more down and out than he is," quips Glamuzina.

Any white blues artists you respect?

"Duster Bennet, he had great feeling," says Glamuzina.

George Thorogood?

"Terrible player, poor voice, good dancer," says Dayson. "Got a lot of energy but I wouldn't really consider him to be a good blues player."

"He's primitive — good on E," adds Glamuzina. "He's got every variation of E down to a fine art. But he's done nothing new for the blues. Elmore James was an innovator, now he's old hat and George is old hat."

What have you achieved with *Rogues and Fools* that you didn't achieve with your live debut album?

"We got more into debt with this one," Dayson explains. "We had to go into the studio to prove that not only were we a live band but that we could be a studio band. It's a tidier album, better produced. The equipment in the studio had a lot more knobs than the one at the Globe so it must be better."

"From a song point of view, it's more varied. Seventy percent of the album is original," adds Glamuzina who writes most of the songs.

The title is *Rogues and Fools*. Why?

Glamuzina explains:

"My old man had a saying: There are only two people in life, a rogue and a fool. I thought it was a harsh saying but I've seen so much backstabbing that I believe it."

Any possibility of overseas release?

"We're getting Australian release through Festival," says Glamuzina. "Alligator records in Chicago were blown out by how much we had improved from our first album." Pat Evers

mail blues

For anyone remotely interested in contemporary blues the situation in this country is a rather hopeless one. While just about every other form of music is blessed with a healthy supply of imports, blues lovers are being continually served a diet of records which have long been cut-out overseas (excepting, of course, the recent import of material from the excellent Alligator label). Viewing the dismal selection available in city shops one could think that 'da bluez' has long since died. Nothing could be further from the truth, thanks to the many small American, British, French and (amazingly enough) Japanese labels.

To overcome this shortage of blues recordings it is surprisingly easy to import records for one's

own use. The first thing to do is to obtain a Visa card. With this amazing device it is possible to charge all your purchases to the Visa number. For this to work all you provide is the number, signature and expiry date. This method is convenient and legal. Write to the following mail-order company:

Down Home Music Inc.,
10341 San Pablo Avenue,
El Cerrito, California 94530

Down Home stock over 320 different record labels — over 3000 records. They are fast and reliable. Write to them and request their 65-page catalogue airmail. Three weeks later you are in business. One word of caution, however. When ordering records do not order in quantities of greater than three or four, otherwise you might be lumped with Customs Duty. Pat Evers

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