

Musical Examples Week 7

1. Sam and Dave-*I Thank You*-Perhaps no act epitomized soul music as the secularization of gospel more than Sam & Dave. The original pairing of Sam Moore and Dave Prater met in Florida in 1961, and they recorded unsuccessfully for several years before being signed to Atlantic Records in 1965. Atlantic persuaded their Memphis affiliate Stax Records to produce them, and in December that year the writing and production team of Isaac Hayes and David Porter delivered the crisply soulful "You Don't Know Like I Know." Hayes and Porter became the *éminence grises* behind Sam & Dave, much as Holland-Dozier-Holland pulled the strings behind the Supremes. They wrote, they produced — and the result was a string of hits, including "Soul Man," "Hold On! I'm Comin'," and "I Thank You," songs that survive as the very epitome of Southern soul. Certainly, Sam & Dave's hits are among the most soulful ever to crack the Hot 100. Their albums often bore the hallmarks of hasty execution, though. The dissolution of the partnership between Stax and Atlantic virtually sealed the fate of Sam & Dave; there were a few more hits (and, later, a revival of interest thanks to the Blues Brothers), but the glory days were over.

From: *I Thank You* Rhino

2. Jimi Hendrix-*Voodoo Child (Slight Return)*-With *Electric Ladyland*, Hendrix took psychedelic experimentation as far as he could within the original Experience trio format. That meant pushing the barriers of late-'60s studio technology as far as they could bend, particularly with regard to multi-tracking and effects that could only be achieved through certain treatments and manipulation of the tape itself. It also meant greater freedom and looseness in the playing and the songwriting, which could be both a plus and a drawback, as the compositions became both less constricted and less concise. Not all of the material here is top-of-the-line, but certainly much of this is Hendrix at his best: the dreamy wah-wah guitars of "Rainy Day, Dream Away" were only matched by the dreaminess of the lyrics, and "Have You Ever Been (To Electric Ladyland)" and "Gypsy Eyes" were also standouts. "1983...(A Merman I Should Turn to Be)" and "Voodoo Chile" were lengthy cuts dominated by jam-like instrumental passages; "Crosstown Traffic" and a cover of Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower," by contrast, were two of his catchiest and most pop-friendly tunes. "Voodoo Chile," "Voodoo Child (Slight Return)," and a cover of Earl King's "Come On" are three of his most determined forays into the blues, albeit the blues as fed through a nearly avant-garde filter. Originally released as a double album, the CD reissue fits the entire recording onto one 75-minute disc.

From: *Electric Ladyland* MCA

3-4. Jimi Hendrix-*Machine Gun, Changes*- *Band of Gypsies* was the only live recording authorized by Jimi Hendrix before his death. It was recorded and released in order to get Hendrix out from under a contractual obligation that had been hanging over his head for a couple years. Helping him out were longtime friends Billy Cox on bass and Buddy Miles on the drums because the Experience had broken up in June of 1969, following a show in Denver.

These new surroundings pushed Hendrix to new creative heights. Along with this new rhythm section, Hendrix took these shows as an opportunity to showcase much of the new material he had been working on. The music was a seamless melding of rock, funk, and R&B, and tunes like "Message to Love" and "Power to Love" showed a new lyrical direction as well. His absolute mastery of his guitar and effects is even more amazing considering that this was the first time he used the Fuzz Face, wah-wah pedal, Univibe, and Octavia pedals on stage together. The guitar tones he gets on "Who Knows" and "Power to Love" are powerful and intense, but nowhere is his absolute control more evident than on "Machine Gun," where Hendrix conjures bombs, guns, and other sounds of war from his guitar, all within the context of a coherent musical statement. Two Buddy Miles compositions are also included, but the show belongs to Jimi all the way. *Band of Gypsies* is not only an important part of the Hendrix legacy, but one

of the greatest live albums ever.

From: *Band of Gypsies* MCA

5-6. Johnnie Taylor-*Who's Making Love, It's Cheaper to Keep Her*-Young gospel phenom, gritty Stax/Volt soulster, lady-killing balladeer, chart-topping disco king, Southern soul-blues stalwart — Johnnie Taylor somehow always managed to adapt to the times, and he parlayed that versatility into a recording career that lasted nearly four decades. Nicknamed the "Philosopher of Soul" during his Stax days, that version of Taylor is best remembered for his 1968 R&B chart-topping smash "Who's Making Love," but far and away his biggest success was 1976's across-the-board number one "Disco Lady," the first single ever certified platinum (which at the time meant sales of over two-million copies). When the national hits dried up, Taylor wound up as one of the most prolific artists on the Malaco label, a refuge for many Southern soul and blues veterans whose styles had fallen out of popular favor by the '80s. Taylor called Malaco home for over 15 years, and kept on recording and performing right up to his passing in 2000.

Johnnie Harrison Taylor was born in Crawfordsville, AK, on May 5, 1934 (though he usually gave his birth year as 1938); he grew up mostly in nearby West Memphis. He began singing in church as a young child, and later moved to Kansas City, where he performed with a gospel group called the Melody Kings; it was through this outfit that he initially met and befriended Soul Stirrers frontman Sam Cooke. In 1953, Taylor left home and moved to Chicago, where he joined the doo wop group the Five Echoes; shortly thereafter, he began performing concurrently with the gospel group the Highway QCs, which had once been home to Sam Cooke. In 1957, Taylor would replace Cooke in the hugely influential Soul Stirrers, after Cooke departed for a career in secular music.

After four years with the Soul Stirrers, Taylor escaped gospel music's waning popularity and followed Cooke into the world of secular soul, becoming the first artist to sign with Cooke's label, Sar, in 1961. Taylor released a few singles on Sar and another Cooke label, Derby, over the next few years, including the minor R&B hit "Rome (Wasn't Built in a Day)." Unfortunately, Cooke was murdered in late 1964, and his labels folded, leaving Taylor without a record deal. He returned to the Memphis area and signed with the enormously popular Stax label in 1965, debuting early the following year with "I Had a Dream." Taylor scored a few minor R&B hits over the next few years, including "I Got to Love Somebody's Baby," "Somebody's Sleeping in My Bed," and "Next Time." He hit it big in late 1968 with the gritty, funky "Who's Making Love," his first number one R&B hit, which also made the pop Top Five. Taylor was able to land some decent-sized follow-up hits in the years to come, among them "Take Care of Your Homework," "Jody's Got Your Girl and Gone," "Steal Away," and "I Am Somebody." By the early '70s, Taylor's bread and butter had become smooth, elegant crooning, as typified by his 1973 album *Taylored in Silk* and his two attendant ballad smashes, "I Believe in You (You Believe in Me)" and "Cheaper to Keep Her."

From: *Chronicle The 20 Greatest Hits* Stax

7. Albert Collins-*Ice Pickin*-Albert Collins, "The Master of the Telecaster," "The Iceman," and "The Razor Blade" was robbed of his best years as a blues performer by a bout with liver cancer that ended with his premature death on November 24, 1993. He was just 61 years old. The highly influential, totally original Collins, like the late John Campbell, was on the cusp of a much wider worldwide following via his deal with Virgin Records' Pointblank subsidiary. However, unlike Campbell, Collins had performed for many more years, in obscurity, before finally finding a following in the mid-'80s.

Collins was born October 1, 1932, in Leona, TX. His family moved to Houston when he was seven. Growing up in the city's Third Ward area with the likes of Johnny "Guitar" Watson and Johnny "Clyde" Copeland, Collins started out taking keyboard lessons. His idol when he was a teen was Hammond B-3

organist Jimmy McGriff. But by the time he was 18 years old, he switched to guitar, and hung out and heard his heroes, Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, John Lee Hooker, T-Bone Walker and Lightnin' Hopkins (his cousin) in Houston-area nightclubs. Collins began performing in these same clubs, going after his own style, characterized by his use of minor tunings and a capo, by the mid-'50s. It was also at this point that he began his "guitar walks" through the audience, which made him wildly popular with the younger White audiences he played for years later in the 1980s. He led a ten-piece band, the Rhythm Rockers, and cut his first single in 1958 for the Houston-based Kangaroo label, "The Freeze." The single was followed by a slew of other instrumental singles with catchy titles, including "Sno-Cone," "Icy Blue" and "Don't Lose Your Cool." All of these singles brought Collins a regional following. After recording "De-Frost" b/w "Albert's Alley" for Hall-Way Records of Beaumont, TX, he hit it big in 1962 with "Frosty," a million-selling single. Teenagers Janis Joplin and Johnny Winter, both raised in Beaumont, were in the studio when he recorded the song. According to Collins, Joplin correctly predicted that the single would become a hit. The tune quickly became part of his ongoing repertoire, and was still part of his live shows more than 30 years later, in the mid-'80s. Collins's percussive, ringing guitar style became his trademark, as he would use his right hand to pluck the strings. Blues-rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix cited Collins as an influence in any number of interviews he gave.

Through the rest of the 1960s, Collins continued to work day jobs while pursuing his music with short regional tours and on weekends. He recorded for a other small Texas labels, including Great Scott, Brylen and TFC. In 1968, Bob "The Bear" Hite from the blues-rock group Canned Heat took an interest in the guitarist's music, traveling to Houston to hear him live. Hite took Collins to California, where he was immediately signed to Imperial Records. By later 1968 and 1969, the '60s blues revival was still going on, and Collins got wider exposure opening for groups like the Allman Brothers at the Fillmore West in San Francisco. Collins based his operations for many years in Los Angeles before moving to Las Vegas in the late '80s.

He recorded three albums for the Imperial label before jumping to Tumbleweed Records. There, several singles were produced by Joe Walsh, since the label was owned by Eagles' producer Bill Szymczyk. The label folded in 1973. Despite the fact that he didn't record much through the 1970s and into the early '80s, he had gotten sufficient airplay around the U.S. with his singles to be able to continue touring, and so he did, piloting his own bus from gig to gig until at least 1988, when he and his backing band were finally able to use a driver. Collins's big break came about in 1977, when he was signed to the Chicago-based Alligator Records, and he released his brilliant debut for the label in 1978, *Ice Pickin'*. Collins recorded six more albums for the label, culminating in 1986's *Cold Snap*, on which organist Jimmy McGriff performs. It was at Alligator Records that Collins began to realize that he could sing adequately, and working with his wife Gwen, he co-wrote many of his classic songs, including items like "Mastercharge," and "Conversation with Collins."

From: *Ice Pickin'* Alligator

8. Albert Collins-*I Got That Feelin'*- *Frozen Alive!* demonstrates the exuberant power of Albert Collins in concert and contains enough first-rate solos to make it a worthwhile listen for fans of his icy style.

From: *Frozen Alive* Alligator

9-10 Muddy Waters-*I Can't Be Satisfied*, *Crosseyed Cat*- After a string of mediocre albums throughout most of the 1970s, Muddy Waters hooked up with Johnny Winter for 1977's *Hard Again*, a startling comeback and a gritty demonstration of the master's powers. Fronting a band that includes such luminaries as James Cotton and "Pine Top" Perkins, Waters is not only at the top of his game, but is having the time of his life while he's at it. The bits of studio chatter that close "Mannish Boy" and open "Bus Driver" show him to be relaxed and obviously excited about the proceedings. Part of this has to be because the record sounds so good. Winter has gone for an extremely bare production style, clearly

aiming to capture Waters in conversation with a band in what sounds like a single studio room. This means that sometimes the songs threaten to explode in chaos as two or three musicians begin soloing simultaneously. Such messiness is actually perfect in keeping with the raw nature of this music; you simply couldn't have it any other way. There is something so incredibly gratifying about hearing Waters shout out for different soloists, about the band missing hits or messing with the tempos. Hey this isn't pop music, it's the blues, and a little dirt never hurt anybody. The unsung star of this session is drummer Willie "Big Eyes" Smith, whose deep grooves make this record come alive. The five-minute, one-chord "Mannish Boy" wouldn't be nearly as compelling as it is if it weren't for Smith's colossal pocket. Great blues from one of the dominant voices of the genre.

From: *Hard Again* Blue Sky

11. James Cotton-*No Cuttin' Loose*- At his high-energy 1970s peak as a bandleader, James Cotton was a bouncing, sweaty, whirling dervish of a bluesman, roaring his vocals and all but sucking the reeds right out of his defenseless little harmonicas with his prodigious lungpower. Due to throat problems, Cotton's vocals are no longer what they used to be, but he remains a masterful instrumentalist.

Cotton had some gargantuan shoes to fill when he stepped into Little Walter's slot as Muddy Waters's harp ace in 1954, but for the next dozen years, the young Mississippian filled the integral role beside Chicago's blues king with power and precision. Of course, Cotton prepared for such a career move for a long time, having learned how to wail on harp from none other than Sonny Boy Williamson himself.

Cotton was only a child when he first heard Williamson's fabled radio broadcasts for *King Biscuit Time* over KFFA out of Helena, AR. So sure was Cotton of his future that he ended up moving into Williamson's home at age nine, soaking up the intricacies of blues harpdom from one of its reigning masters. Six years later, Cotton was ready to unleash a sound of his own.

Gigging with area notables Joe Willie Wilkins and Willie Nix, Cotton built a sterling reputation around West Memphis, following in his mentor's footsteps by landing his own radio show in 1952 over KWEM. Sam Phillips, whose Sun label was still a fledgling operation, invited Cotton to record for him, and two singles commenced: "Straighten Up Baby" in 1953 and "Cotton Crop Blues" the next year. Legend has it Cotton played drums instead of harp on the first platter.

When Waters rolled through Memphis minus his latest harpist (Junior Wells), Cotton hired on with the legend and came to Chicago. Unfortunately for the youngster, Chess Records insisted on using Little Walter on the great majority of Waters's waxings until 1958, when Cotton blew behind Waters on "She's Nineteen Years Old" and "Close to You." At Cotton's instigation, Waters had added an Ann Cole tune called "Got My Mojo Working" to his repertoire. Walter played on Muddy Waters's first studio crack at it, but that's Cotton wailing on the definitive 1960 reading (cut live at the Newport Jazz Festival).

By 1966, Cotton was primed to make it on his own. Waxings for Vanguard, Prestige, and Loma preceded his official full-length album debut for Verve Records in 1967. His own unit then included fleet-fingered guitarist Luther Tucker and hard-hitting drummer Sam Lay. Throwing a touch of soul into his eponymous debut set, Cotton ventured into the burgeoning blues-rock field as he remained with Verve through the end of the decade.

In 1974, Cotton signed with Buddah and released *100% Cotton*, one of his most relentless LPs, with Matt "Guitar" Murphy sizzingly backing him up. A decade later, Alligator issued another standout Cotton LP, *High Compression*, that was split evenly between traditional-style Chicago blues and funkier, horn-driven material. *Harp Attack!*, a 1990 summit meeting on Alligator, paired Cotton with three exalted peers: Wells, Carey Bell, and comparative newcomer Billy Branch. Antone's Records was

responsible for a pair of gems: a live 1988 set reuniting the harpist with Murphy and Tucker and a stellar 1991 studio project, *Mighty Long Time*.

Cotton still commands a huge following, even though serious throat problems (he sometimes sounds as though he's been gargling Drano) have tragically robbed him of his once-ferocious roar. That malady ruined parts of his Grammy-nominated album for Verve, *Living the Blues*; only when he stuck to playing harp was the customary Cotton energy still evident.

From: *High Compression* Alligator

12. Little Milton-*The Blues Is All Right*- He may not be a household name, but die-hard blues fans know Little Milton as a superb all-around electric bluesman — a soulful singer, an evocative guitarist, an accomplished songwriter, and a skillful bandleader. He's often compared to the legendary B.B. King — as well as Bobby "Blue" Bland — for the way his signature style combines soul, blues, and R&B, a mixture that helped make him one of the biggest-selling bluesmen of the '60s (even if he's not as well-remembered as King). As time progressed, his music grew more and more orchestrated, with strings and horns galore. He maintained a steadily active recording career all the way from his 1953 debut on Sam Phillips' legendary Sun label, with his stunning longevity including notable stints at Chess (where he found his greatest commercial success), Stax, and Malaco.

From: *Playing For Keeps* Malaco

13-14. Stevie Ray Vaughan-*Texas Flood, Pride and Joy*- With his astonishingly accomplished guitar playing, Stevie Ray Vaughan ignited the blues revival of the '80s. Vaughan drew equally from bluesmen like Albert King, Otis Rush, and Muddy Waters and rock & roll players like Jimi Hendrix and [Lonnie Mack](#), as well as the stray jazz guitarist like Kenny Burrell, developing a uniquely eclectic and fiery style that sounded like no other guitarist, regardless of genre. Vaughan bridged the gap between blues and rock like no other artist had since the late '60s. For the next seven years, Stevie Ray was the leading light in American blues, consistently selling out concerts while his albums regularly went gold. His tragic death in 1990 only emphasized his influence in blues and American rock & roll.

From: *Texas Flood* Epic/Legacy

15-16 Z.Z. Hill-*Down Home Blues, Somebody Else Is Steppin' In*- Texas-born singer Z.Z. Hill managed to resuscitate both his own semi-flagging career and the entire genre at large when he signed on at Jackson, Mississippi's Malaco Records in 1980 and began growling his way through some of the most uncompromising blues to be unleashed on black radio stations in many a moon.

His impressive 1982 Malaco album *Down Home Blues* remained on Billboard's soul album charts for nearly two years, an extraordinary run for such a blatantly bluesy LP. His songs "Down Home Blues" and "Somebody Else Is Steppin' In" have graduated into the ranks of legitimate blues standards (and there haven't been many of those come along over the last couple of decades).

From: *Down Home Blues* Malaco

17. The Kinsey Report-*Corner of the Blanket*- This family band consists of Donald Kinsey (b.May 12, 1953, Gary, IN), (vocal, guitar); Ralph "Woody" Kinsey, (drums); Kenneth Kinsey, (bass); Ronald Prince, (guitar). Solidly based in the blues as a result of lifelong training in The Big Daddy Kinsey household, The Kinsey scions are also versed in a broad range of music. The older brothers Donald and Ralph had an early blues-rock trio (White Lightnin') in the mid-'70s, long before they regrouped as The Kinsey Report in 1984 and began to launch new excursions into rock. Donald also recorded and toured with Albert King and with Bob Marley, and the influence of those giants (as well as that of Big Daddy Kinsey, naturally) show through in the music of The Kinsey Report. The band expertly covers all the bases from Chicago blues through reggae, rock, funk, and soul, and their recordings are also

distinguished by the songwriting talents and self-contained production approach of The Kinseys.

From: *The New Bluebloods* Alligator

18. Chris Thomas King-*Da Real Blues*- Initially known for his audacious fusion of blues and hip-hop, Chris Thomas King reached a whole new audience with the Coen Brothers film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, not only appearing on the award-winning soundtrack but playing a prominent supporting character as well. Despite the much-celebrated, down-to-earth rootsiness of *O Brother's* music, King had previously been a determined progressive, hoping to reinvigorate the blues as a living African American art with a more contemporary approach and adamantly refusing to treat it as a museum piece whose "authentic" forms needed careful preservation. King eventually modified that approach to a certain degree, attempting to create a more explicit link between blues tradition and the general musical present.

From: *Dirty South Hip-Hop Blues* 21st Century Blues