

Catching Up With The Lee Boys

Living Blues

Issue #261
Vol. 50, #3

LUCKY PETERSON

Still Paving The Way

WAYNE "BLUE" BURNS

LARRY GRIFFITH

THE STONE GAS BAND

SON HOUSE

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page 90

LIVING BLUES

Issue #261



The Stone Gas Band32

A Tribute to Johnnie Billington and Arthneice "Gas Man" Jones

By Margo Cooper

The Stone Gas Band was a legendary blues band in the Mississippi Delta in the late 1980s through the mid-1990s. After over 20 years apart, the group has reformed and has recorded their first CD as a tribute to founder Arthneice "Gas Man" Jones and musical teacher Johnnie Billington.

Let It Roll38

Son House, Willie Brown, Fiddlin' Joe Martin, and Leroy Williams

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On September 3, 1941, Alan Lomax set up his Presto Model Y portable recorder in Lake Cormorant, Mississippi, and proceeded to record some of the most quintessential field recordings in blues history.

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Still Paving the Way

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Multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Lucky Peterson recorded his first album 50 years ago. Still only in his mid-50s, Peterson is at the peak of his prowess in the blues world.

Wayne "Blue" Burns`20

I'm Playing What I Came Up With

By Gene Tomko

Louisiana native Wayne "Blue" Burns spent most of his career as one of the preeminent bass players in the zydeco scene and did long stints with Clifton Chenier, Fernest Arceneaux, and C.J. Chenier. But these days Burns has stepped out front and is making his own music, this time playing guitar.

Larry Griffith26

Telling His Own Story

By Christopher King

As a teenager in Cincinnati, Ohio, Larry Griffith worked as a practice session drummer for the local King, Fraternity, QCA, and Jewel record labels. Moving to the Atlanta area in the 1990s, Griffith followed his musical path as a drummer, as well as a guitarist and songwriter.

Cover photo by Florian Duboé
Lucky Peterson, May 2019.

Contents photo by Gene Tomko
Lucky Peterson performing at the
Chicago Blues Festival, June 12, 2005.

As *Living Blues* inches towards our 50th anniversary I am reminded of some of our past celebrations. For our 25th anniversary we produced a special section called "40 Under 40" that highlighted a wave of young musicians on the scene at that time. This issue's cover artist, Lucky Peterson, was one of them and was certainly the most experienced of the artists included. At 31 he already had 25 years of performing under his belt. Twenty-five years later, the Houston-based, multi-instrumentalist is one of the most experienced bluesmen of his generation on the scene today.

Other features in this issue include zydeco bassist-turned-guitarist Wayne "Blue" Burns, Georgia drummer/guitarist/songwriter Larry Griffith, and Mississippi's Stone Gas Band.

Wayne "Blue" Burns spent decades as a preeminent bassist in the zydeco scene, playing stints with Clifton and C.J. Chenier, and Fernest Arceneaux. Now Burns is living out his dream as a frontman, leading his own band and playing guitar.

Larry Griffith started in music as a teenager, working as a practice session drummer for the King, Federal, QCA, and Jewel labels in Cincinnati, Ohio. He moved to the Atlanta area nearly 30 years ago and has since established himself as a leader in the local scene as a drummer, guitarist, and songwriter.

Arthneice "Gas Man" Jones founded the Stone Gas Band in the Mississippi Delta in the late 1980s. The popular band broke up in the 1990s having never recorded a CD. Over 20 years later the surviving member have reformed and have a new album, a tribute to Jones and musical mentor Johnnie Billington, coming out this summer.

Perhaps the most rewarding part of compiling *LB* is shining a light on exciting new blues talent. In this issue we cover releases from two impressive young players—Jontavious Willis and Christone "Kingfish" Ingram. Willis' new CD is our lead review and Kingfish is our "*LB* Talks To" artist. Both in their early 20s, these young men are talented, creative, and deeply schooled in the history of the music—artists who give us the chance to smile and feel good about the future of the blues.

This issue's edition of our new "Let It Roll" column (heralded by Dick Waterman as "a landmark addition . . . Not a word is wasted.") looks at Alan Lomax's Library of Congress field recordings from September 3, 1941, in Lake Cormorant, Mississippi, that captured Son House, Willie Brown, Fiddlin' Joe Martin, and Leroy Williams. These recordings, made just days after Lomax's first recordings of Muddy Waters at Stovall, capture one of the greatest artists the blues has to offer in his most natural recording setting. As a footnote, the Association for Cultural Equity, the American Folklife Center, and Delta State University will have 39 hours of the Lomaxes' 1933–42 Mississippi recordings streaming online later this year.

As many of you may have heard, *LB* #259 featured artist, Cash McCall, succumbed to lung cancer on April 20, 2019. An obituary will come in a following issue.

Make sure to vote in the 2019 *Living Blues* Awards! It is quick and easy and voting is open to everyone. Go to page 90 to see the ballot and go to www.livingblues.com to vote online.

Brett J. Bonner
Editor

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editor Brett J. Bonner

art director Susan Bauer Lee

publication manager Melanie Young

associate editor Robin C. Dietrick

editorial assistant Keerthi Chandrashekar

circulation manager Zaire Love

contributing editors Jim McGrath, Jim O'Neal

founding editors

Jim O'Neal and Amy van Singel

contributing writers

Scott Barretta, Scott M Bock, Henry Carrigan, Robert H. Cataliotti, Steve Cheseborough, Mark Coltrain, Margo Cooper, Jim DeKoster, Dan Erlewine, Michael Erlewine, Rod Evans, Deitra Farr, Robert Feuer, Jeff Forlenza, Herman Fuselier, Paul Garon, Roger Gatchet, Tim Ghianni, Wayne Goins, Jeff Hannusch, Lee Hildebrand, Mark Humphrey, Michael Hurt, Maureen Jung, Stephen A. King, Jon Kleinman, Bill Kopp, Peter Lowry, Robert Marovich, Frank Matheis, Larry Nager, Justin O'Brien, Jim O'Neal, Jas Obrecht, Barry Lee Pearson, Steven Sharp, Mike Stephenson, Robert Stone, Michael Tisserand, Gene Tomko, Elijah Wald, David Whiteis, Roger Wood, Melanie Young, Lee Zimmerman

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magazine consultant Samir Husni PhD

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director Ted Ownby

blues archive J.D. Williams Library

blues archivist Greg Johnson

contact information

Living Blues

South Oxford Center • PO Box 1848
University, MS 38677

info@livingblues.com; fax: 662.915.5814

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The multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Lucky Peterson recorded his first album 50 years ago. Since then his name has graced over 30 subsequent album covers as well as venue marquees and festival programs all over the world. How many other still-active African American blues artists possess such impressive credentials? Only a few, indeed. But of those, how many are currently in their mid-50s? Perhaps only one, and he's Lucky, for sure.

Born on December 13, 1964, Peterson auspiciously launched his professional career at the tender age of five. That debut recording, produced by the iconic Willie Dixon, led to the child's guest appearances on a variety of nationally televised programs, ranging from *The Tonight Show* to *Sesame Street*.

Peterson's blues education began when he was a precocious toddler. After all, the family residence was conveniently located on the second floor above his father's nightclub—a venue frequented by the likes of Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Jimmy Reed, Koko Taylor, Bill Doggett, Buddy Guy, and other legendary figures. The wide-eyed youngster listened, observed, and started banging on the drums and playing the organ there before he could read and write.

As a high school student Peterson further honed his musical skills with formal training at a prestigious academy. Not long after that, he embarked on more than five years of roadwork as the hotshot keyboardist in Little Milton's band, followed by four years of backing another blues superstar, Bobby Bland.

By the time he'd turned 30 Peterson was established as a dynamic singer who toured widely with his own band, recorded often (as featured artist or session musician), and played keyboards and guitar with equal aplomb.

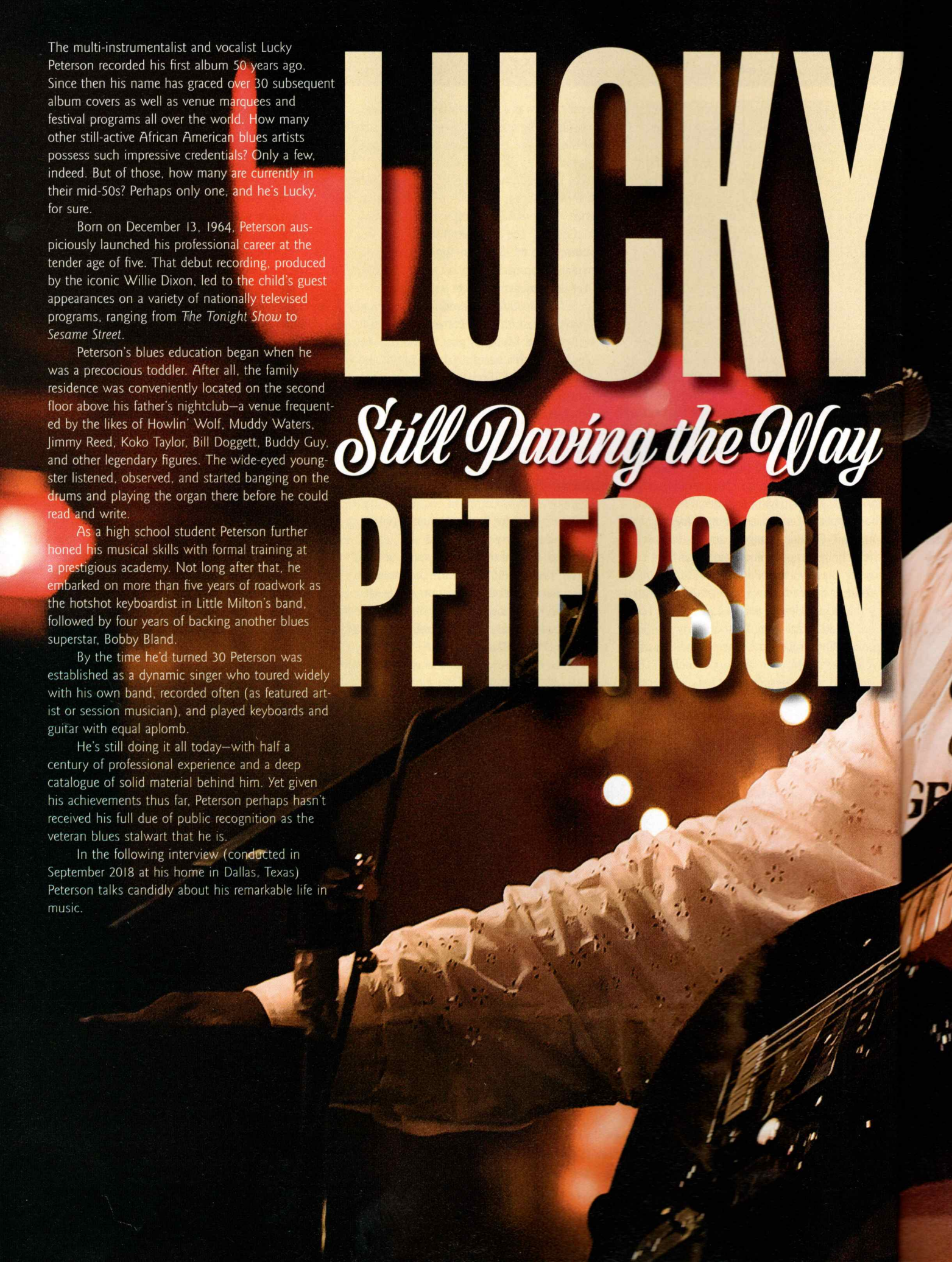
He's still doing it all today—with half a century of professional experience and a deep catalogue of solid material behind him. Yet given his achievements thus far, Peterson perhaps hasn't received his full due of public recognition as the veteran blues stalwart that he is.

In the following interview (conducted in September 2018 at his home in Dallas, Texas) Peterson talks candidly about his remarkable life in music.

LUCKY

Still Paving the Way

PETERSON



Lucky Peterson at Chan's in Woonsocket,
Rhode Island, December 9, 2006.

MICHAEL KURGANZKY

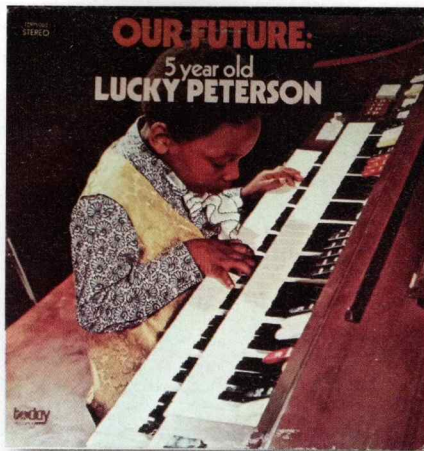


by Roger Wood

"When I was born, I was named Judge Kenneth Peterson. Come to find out, I'm the fourth generation of males in our family named Judge. Momma was real sweet. Her name was Jarnell Peterson. Her maiden name was Tate. She was originally from Gary, Indiana. . . . My daddy, James Peterson, was originally from Alabama. I had two sisters, and the older one passed. And I had a brother, and he lived to be only 35. . . . The only sibling I've got now is my baby sister, and her name is LaShawn Nicole Peterson.

"I got the name Lucky, I've been told, because my grandmother was holding me in her arms—no baby car seat—while riding in the car, and there was an accident. This other car hit us hard from the back, and I got thrown. But I was okay. My uncles and other family members, they all say, 'Man, that little boy is lucky!' And that nickname just stuck with me.

"I was born in Buffalo, New York, where my daddy had the first Governor's



Inn [nightclub]. Then later we moved to St. Petersburg, Florida, because my father was a southerner, and he got tired of that cold.

"Well, we moved south twice actually. We first moved there around '75. . . . and my father opened a club in Florida called Club 31. . . . But around 1978 we moved back to

Buffalo and opened another Governor's Inn, the second one, and we stayed there until the early '80s or so. After that, my father moved to Tampa and had the After Dark Club.

"Now my daddy was a blues singer, but I heard gospel music ever since I was born. My daddy took me to church every Sunday. And oh man, my dad could sing some gospel! Now my momma didn't sing, didn't do anything with the music, but my daddy was a tremendous gospel singer.

"When I was little, I always wanted to be a cowboy. Other than that, it never occurred to me to be anything but a musician. I've been making music my entire life.

"I started off on the drums, you know—the house drum set at the original Governor's Inn. . . . I liked it because drums made a loud noise, and I understood how to hit them. Nobody showed me nothing when I started. It was just me watching people play and getting that rhythm. And I was able to really play drums. I was just a little child then. Sometimes I'd play on stage with my father but mainly I just fooled around on the drum set whenever I could.

"The second instrument I began to play was bass. But I didn't stay with it. I just picked it up and went boom, boom, boom—kind of figuring it out.

"But the next instrument that I seriously got into was the organ. . . . I was just about three years old, and my daddy hired Bill Doggett [R&B organist] to play at the Governor's Inn. Of course he had a B-3 [Hammond organ] and a song called Honky Tonk that I just loved. And when that

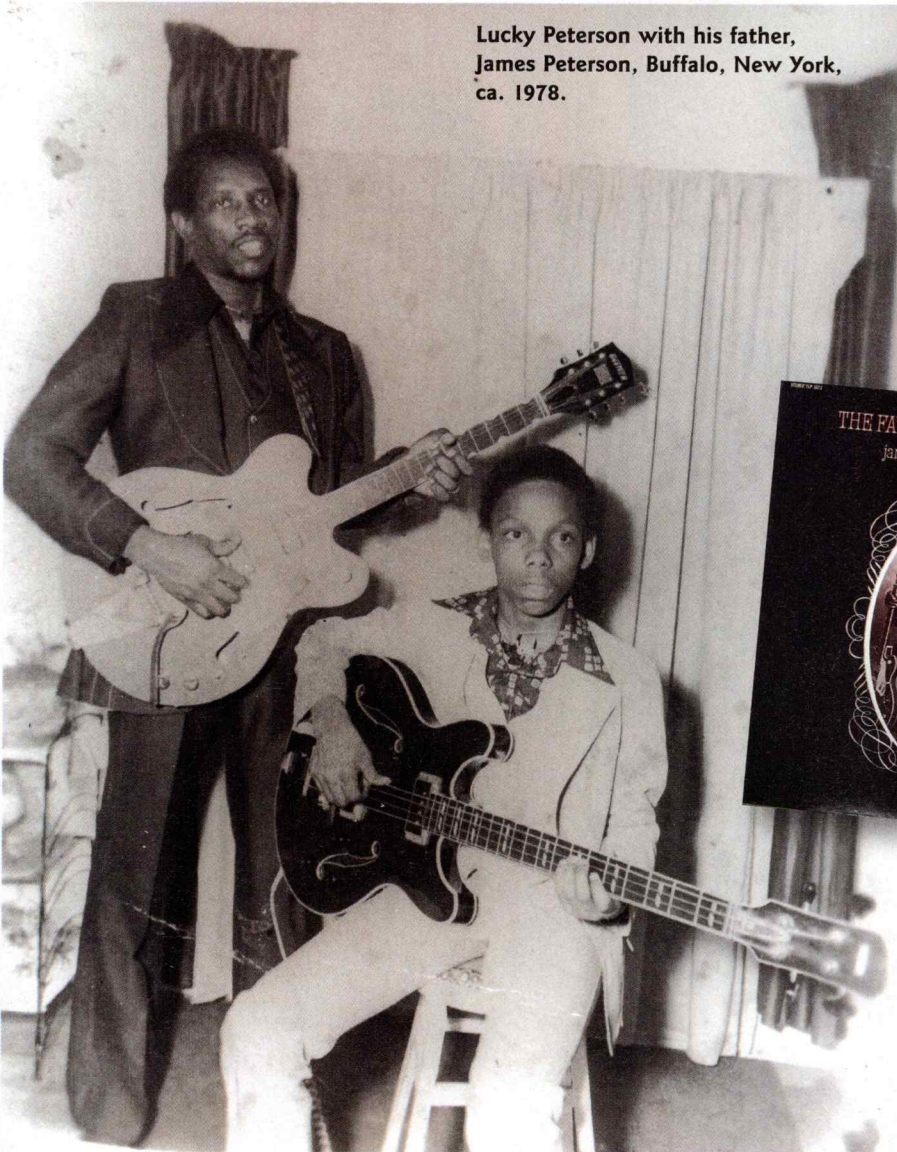
organ came through the door, my eyes got as big as light bulbs. And I was trying to check it out—and they'd say, 'Get away from that!' But I was fascinated and wanted to learn to play that organ.

"That same

night, after the club closed at three o'clock in the morning—and our home was up above the club, the second floor—my parents say that I tripped the burglar alarm because I sneaked down there just to play that organ. My daddy heard the alarm and came down there with his gun. And he saw me trying to get to that B-3 organ. I was just attracted to that thing!

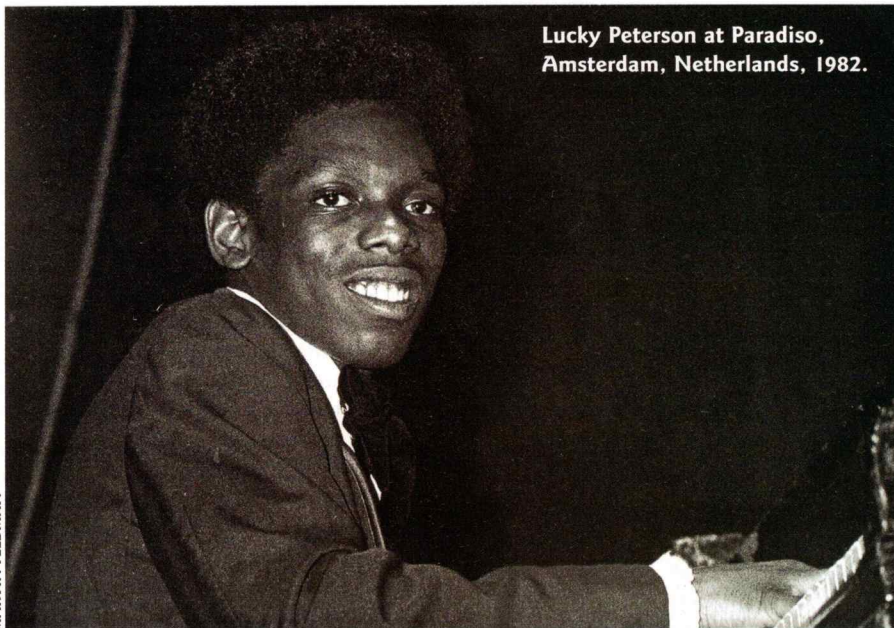
"Well, my daddy, he knew a little bit.

Lucky Peterson with his father, James Peterson, Buffalo, New York, ca. 1978.



COURTESY LUCKY PETERSON

Lucky Peterson at Paradiso, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 1982.



MARTIN FELDMAN

So he turned that organ on, and we sat there, the two of us. And he showed me my first lesson. He put some brown cigarette butts on the 1 chord, and the white cigarette butts on the 4 chord, and marked with black tape the 5 chord. He knew the 1-4-5 [chord progression], you know. And he told me to play the 1. He showed me one time, and I did it exactly

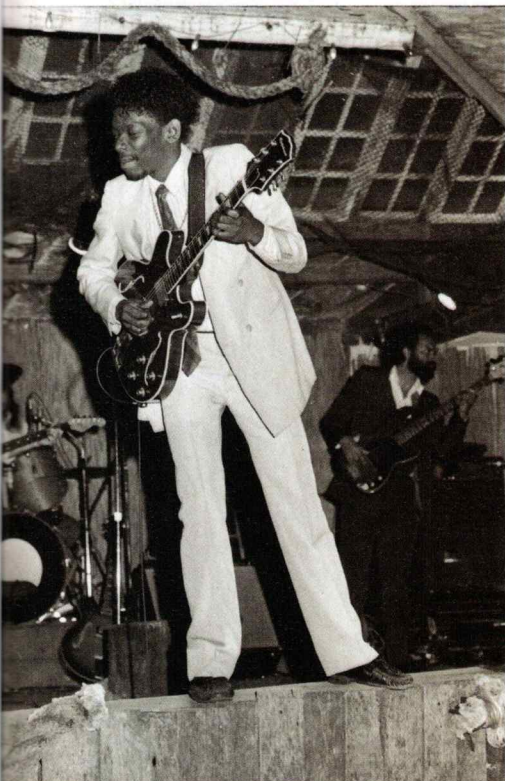
right. And then he showed me how to go from the 1 to the 4, then back to the 1, then to the 5. He said I did it with no problem, like I already somehow knew. He said he didn't have to do anything to correct me. I just somehow got it, like it was natural, and was doing it automatically.

"And then Dr. Lonnie Smith [jazz organist] used to play at my father's club. And he told him, 'I think my son can play organ.' And Lonnie Smith said, 'Man, that little boy can't play no organ, can't hardly touch the keys.' So my daddy put me at the keyboard, and I did the same thing. Then Lonnie Smith taught me some stuff, and I was just a child, three or four years old.

"I made my first record when I was only five, playing organ and singing. It was called 1-2-3-4, with *Good Old Candy* on the flip side, produced by Willie Dixon. That was the single, on Today Records, from my first album [*Our Future: 5-Year-Old Lucky Peterson*, 1969].

"When I was five years old I was on national television on *The Tonight Show* . . . I played the organ and sang 1-2-3-4 with the house band. Then I did the interview at the desk, right there with Johnny Carson and Ed McMahon. I was also on *What's My Line*, *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *To Tell the Truth*, and *Soul Train*. Hey, and I was on *Sesame Street*, which really meant something to me as a kid. I got to hang out with Big Bird, which was totally cool.

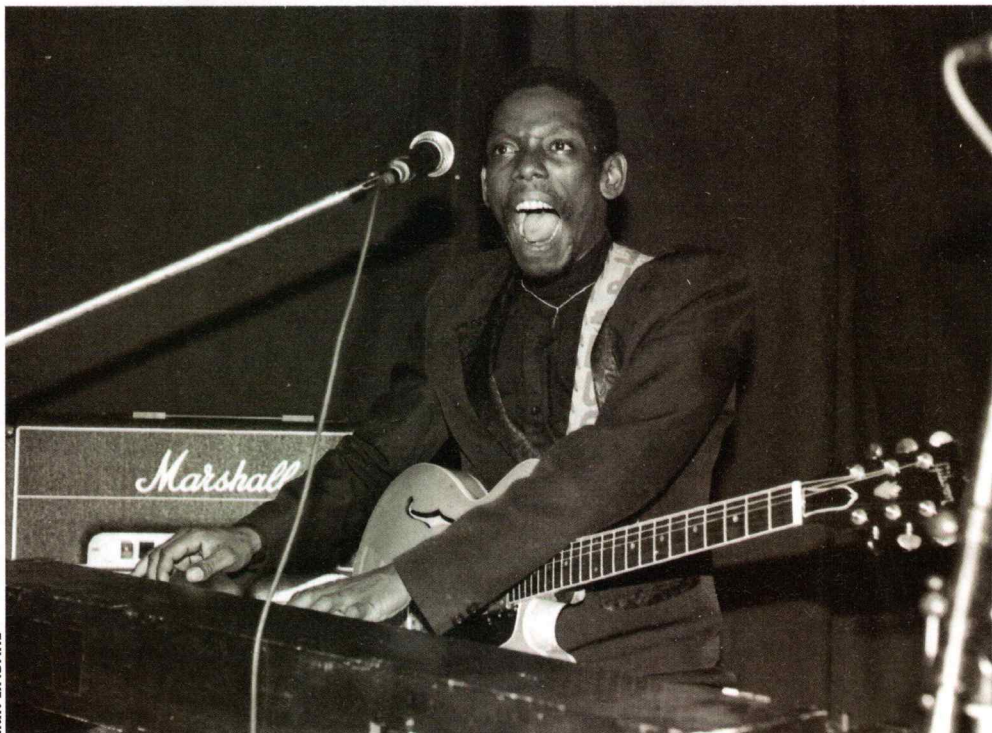
"I got into the guitar around age eight or nine. I was playing a little guitar by then, practicing with my daddy. But I must have sounded pretty bad because one night . . . he snatched me out of the chair and took the guitar off me and said, 'Don't you ever play the guitar again.' . . . I think I must have sounded really bad for him to snatch the guitar out of my hands in the middle of the song and send me off the stage. I was up there with his whole band. I remember that as clear as day. Now my daddy, he played guitar. So maybe it was a psychological thing. But what I did, every time he'd leave the house, I'd take the B.B. King records and the Little Milton records. They were 45 [r.p.m. discs], you know. And I'd put one on the turntable and slow it down to 33 to play, and I'd figure out the guitar part. . . . But when I'd hear my daddy's car pull up, I'd cut that record player off and put up that guitar before he could catch me.



ERIK LINDAHL

Lucky Peterson performing in St. Petersburg, Florida, March 1988.

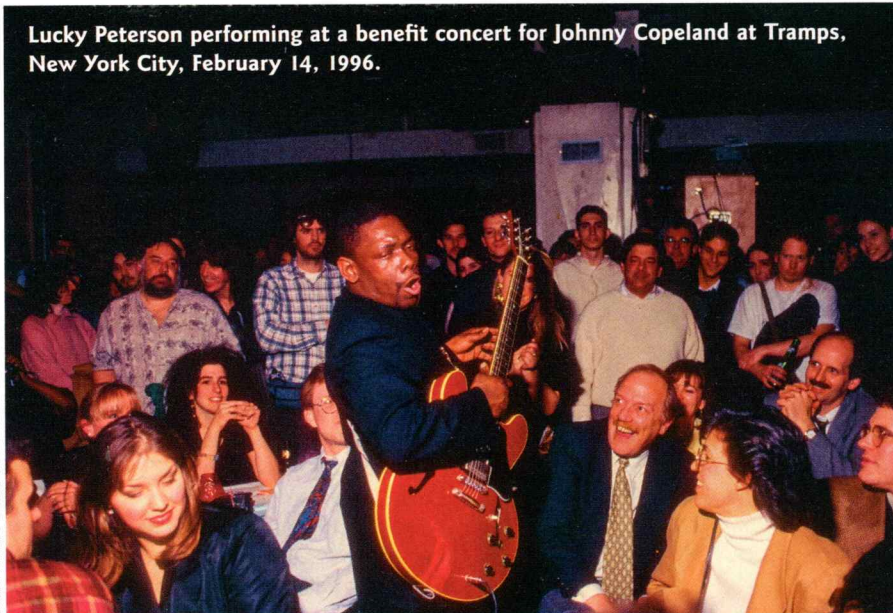
(right) Lucky Peterson at Landala Torg, Gothenburg, Sweden, 1989.



ERIK LINDAHL

Lucky Peterson performing at a benefit concert for Johnny Copeland at Tramps, New York City, February 14, 1996.

JACK VARTOOGIAN/FRONTROWPHOTOS



When he had told me never to touch another guitar, he just made me want to do it.

"Once I got with Little Milton's band, I started really studying on the guitar. Now I was the keyboard player, but I was studying him, learning Little Milton's guitar licks. Professionally I only played keyboards in those days, first for Little Milton and then later for Bobby Bland. . . . But out on the road, I was also learning more and more about how to play guitar.

"I played French horn in the orchestra back in high school [at the Buffalo Academy for Visual and Performing Arts]. But even though I was good at it, I left the French horn behind. . . . I also was in the choir. . . . That high school was a very positive experience to me. I got introduced to a much wider spectrum of music—classical and other stuff. Since I had already started working professionally as a child, I was usually around older folks when I played music. But being with people my same age and seeing what they could do as musicians, that was all good for me. . . . But I didn't take it as seriously as I should have. You know, I was already a professional, traveling and making music, so I didn't apply myself as much as I should have in school. But if I could do it all over, I'd learn as much as I possibly could. All the teachers, they couldn't play nothing without me figuring it out pretty quick because my ear was so good. I wasn't reading music, just playing by ear. And of course they wanted me to read. I started learning to read music, but once I'd heard how it was supposed to go, I could just play by ear. . . . I'd show off by how quickly I could figure it out. [laughs] But now I really wish I had developed sight-reading skills like they tried to teach me.

"From high school I went down to St.

Petersburg, Florida. And not too long after that, I went on the road with Little Milton. . . . Little Milton needed a band for a local gig . . . because his people had got snowed in up in Memphis. So I did the gig with my band the first night. By the second night, Little Milton's band had arrived, but the keyboard player didn't make it to Florida. So he still needed one, and I played with his regular band. . . . Well, that same night, I got a standing ovation, and Little Milton asked me if I wanted to go on the road with him. I was ecstatic! I was still a teenager, you know, so I was excited just to get away from home, my parents, and make my own money. I probably should have stayed home a little bit longer and finished growing up, but it was too late. I was on the road making music, and I worked with Little

Milton for the next five and a half years. . . . We were playing every kind of place—from juke joints to festivals to nice auditoriums—night after night, with plenty of traveling in between. My first show on the road with him was in Fort Lauderdale, and the next night we were in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. And then the next night we were in Houston, Texas. . . . And the first time I went to Europe was with Little Milton.

"Little Milton, we called him "Hitler" sometimes. He was tough. He just wanted his stuff a certain way, and he demanded that everybody act a certain way. It was his business, you know. I can appreciate it now, but back then, he seemed pretty demanding to me and the other guys. Little Milton was a businessman as much as he was an entertainer. And he was a professional. He demanded everybody carried themselves a certain way, and speak a certain way—and you did what you had to do, no matter what. . . . We kind of got on bad terms after Little Milton's bus got broken into. I wanted a certain keyboard [to replace the one that had been stolen]. He resisted, and it kind of got weird. . . . I remember my last words to him were, 'I'd rather be up in the trees with the monkeys eating bananas than to be at another Little Milton meeting.' [laughs] Every month we had a mandatory meeting, you know. And I couldn't hardly stand it. I was the youngest guy in the band, and I just didn't understand some things back then.

"So I put feelers out with Bobby Bland when I heard he needed a keyboard player, and eventually that gave me a way out. . . . I was really good friends with the keyboard player Eugene Carrier [of B.B. King's band], and he kept me in the know. So it was



Lucky Peterson performing with Dale Horton (bass), Bell Eaton (sax), and James Exum (trombone), Colne, England, 2002.

Eugene who told me that Bobby was looking for a keyboard player, and I jumped at the opportunity to be part of that group. . . . Eugene was my best friend while I was working with Milton—and especially every time we did shows with B.B. . . . Yes, he helped me a lot. And then later when I got with Bobby, Eugene and I were really tight—you know, because Bobby and B.B., they were doing a lot of stuff together back then.

"I enjoyed touring with Wayne Bennett [guitarist] too. In fact, I was Wayne's roommate on the road. Some of the other guys that I remember fondly are Tony Coleman [drummer], and another great guitar player, Mel Brown. By me playing with Milton, they all already knew me. And it meant something to me that they were happy to have me in their band.

"But after I started working with Bobby

Bland I also started venturing off a little bit. You see, there's good parts and bad parts. When I was with Bobby I got more into the drug scene. I'm just telling it like it is. . . . With Little Milton, there wasn't no drugs involved. . . . I mean, you could sneak off and smoke a joint, and as long as he didn't smell it or see it, it was cool. He was a big drinker but definitely not into the drug culture that was going on. I wasn't a big drinker, but I didn't get with Bobby Bland because of drugs. I got with him for the music—and to get away from Milton. But you know, you leave one bus and go to the next bus, and you're suddenly in a different kind of situation. You've got new roommates, new associates, a whole new scene—and I'm trying to fit in, you know. I didn't know, back then, that I could say no and still fit in. So I developed some bad habits.

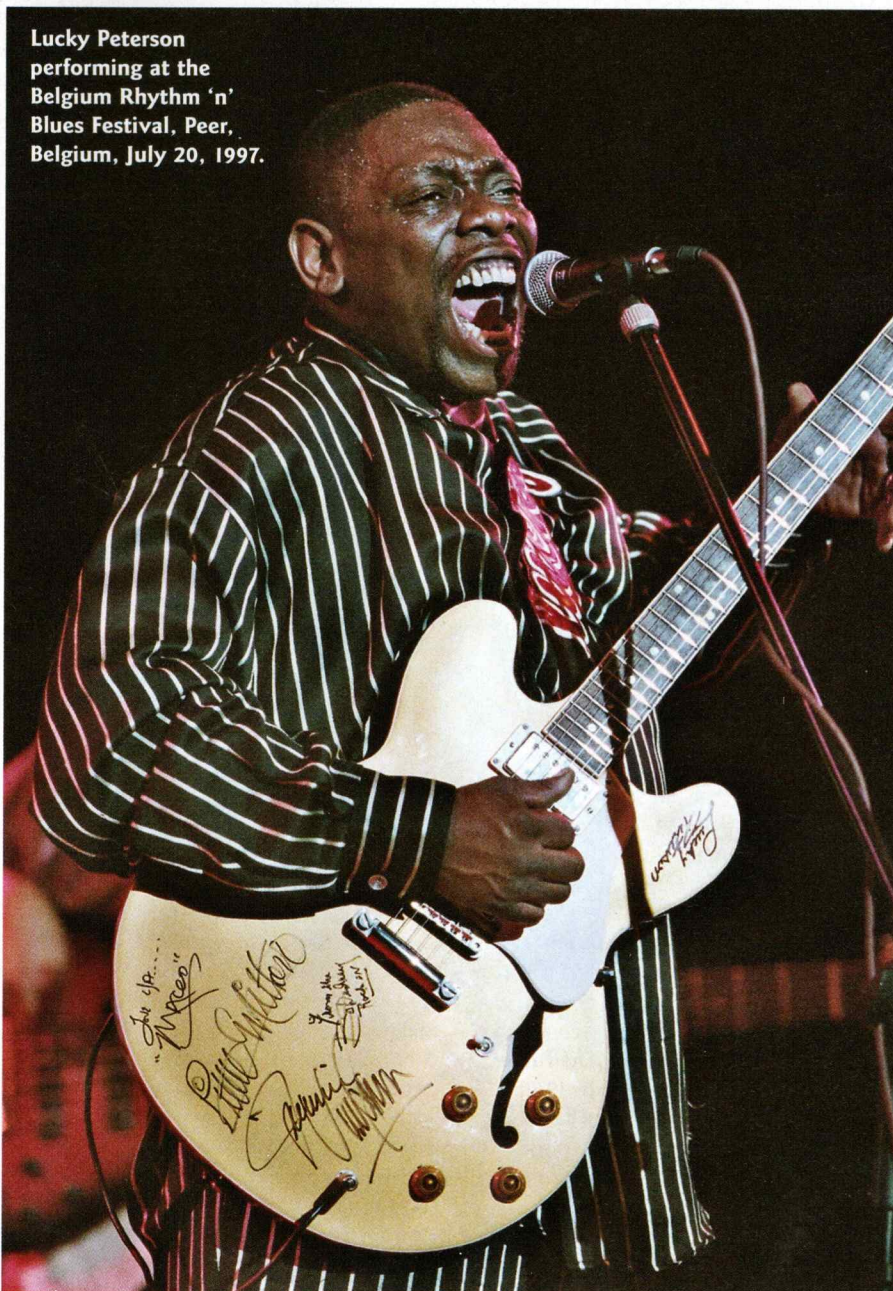
"I was with Bobby for about four years. And then I went on my own in 1988. You know, after touring with Little Milton, and then Bobby, and opening for Etta James and B.B. King and such, I figured I was pretty good. So I said, 'I can do this shit.' But, you know, blues ain't really all I wanted to do at the time. I mean, it was in my blood and I could dig it, for sure. But I was also thinking, at the time, that I could go for the Top 40 market. But that changed. This gentleman at King Snake Records, Bob Greenlee, hired me to do a record with Kenny Neal. . . . So during the sessions I started playing this Top 40 kind of sound that I was working on, and Bob eventually asked me to play this blues song he had picked. He said, 'If you don't like it, you don't have to use it, but let's just try it.' And when I did it, everybody loved it, and I thought, 'Okay, this is it for me.'

"So, first I did that Kenny Neal record on the King Snake Records label [**Bio on the Bayou**, 1987; reissued by Alligator as **Big News from Baton Rouge!**, 1988]. Then there was my **Lucky Strikes** album . . . also made through King Snake and Bob Greenlee and then released on Alligator [1989]. Then we did another one that was released straight to Alligator called **Triple Play** [1990]. My band also worked some with Etta James around then, particularly over in Europe. We opened up shows for her. And I played on her album called **The Right Time** [1992] for Jerry Wexler [producer], down at FAME Studio in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. I played both guitar and keyboards on that one. Then I did a five-record deal with Verve. That included **I'm Ready** first [1992], and then there was **Beyond Cool** [1993], . . . the one called **Lifetime** [1995], and one called **Move** [1997].

"Plus, there was that gospel collaboration I did with Mavis Staples for Verve [**Spirituals & Gospel**, 1996]. That happened because of Jay Newland [sound engineer] and John Snyder [producer]. They put the project together—flew me down to Lafayette, Louisiana, and Mavis too. We did it at Dockside Studios with just me playing the organ and Mavis singing. When we first got there Mavis and I went in the studio and started playing together and laughing. And before we knew it, we'd done cut three songs! Just jamming, you know. She'd say, I remember this old song—and start to sing it—and I'd recognize it and play the organ along with her, and it was just happening. It was great. [laughs] Hey, I still get royalties from that record!

"Verve was good for me really in breaking me out there, you know, beyond where I'd already been—especially for people knowing who I am over in Europe. It led to me opening up for James Brown. . . . The Gitanes [Jazz Productions] and Verve connection has been

Lucky Peterson performing at the Belgium Rhythm 'n' Blues Festival, Peer, Belgium, July 20, 1997.



BRIAN SMITH



Lucky Peterson at the Skegness Rock and Blues Festival, United Kingdom, January 2018.

good, especially in France. Since then I've done other stuff for labels in France too. . . . I guess the French folks love what we do.

"After Verve there was the **Lucky Peterson** record on Blue Thumb [1999]. Then we did the one called **Double Dealin'** [also on Blue Thumb, 2001], and that was a real good one. But it didn't get what it should have got, you know, in terms of attention. But musically, oh man, yeah, that is one of my favorites from those early records I did. John Porter was the producer. I had John Cleary on piano, and he's great.

"On the Dreyfus label from France I first did **Black Midnight Sun** [2003]. . . . But the other one from Dreyfus is **You Can Always Turn Around** [2010]. . . . That song *I'm New Here* [from which the album title comes] is a good one, written by Billy Callahan. That song corresponds to when I was trying to do my change—personally, you know—get my life together in a better way than the direction I'd been going. And the change on that album was musical too—more acoustic and some different types of songs. I did some old-time blues by Robert Johnson and one by Blind

Willie McTell, but I also did songs written by Curtis Mayfield and Ray LaMontagne and Lucinda Williams. . . . On that one song [*Trampled Rose*] by Tom Waits I'm singing like the Arabic—you know, that Middle Eastern vocal sound. I'd just got back from Turkey, and I'd heard it there. I kind of imitate that sound. . . . I didn't want to do those songs at first. It was the producer [Doug Yoel] that brought all that material together for me. But it's a good album, and I'm thinking about putting some of that material back in my stage show. It's music at a different pace, more relaxed, more contemplative—music without the strain.

"I think I've now done maybe ten records with JSP. The first one, called **If You Can't Fix It** [2004], was a reunion with my daddy. Now I had previously done an album with my daddy, way back when [**The Father, the Son, the Blues**, Today Records, 1972]. . . . I was a kid and don't really recall a lot about making that record. But the later one, the one we did for JSP before my daddy passed, I really enjoyed making that one.

"There was also one with Andy Aledort [**Tête à Tête**, 2007]. That came to be because

Bruce Feiner in Hartford, Connecticut, saw me play a gig and asked if I wanted to do a record with this guy. . . . He just matched us together because Andy did a lot of Stevie Ray Vaughan stuff, and they figured we'd click. And we did. . . . There's a track on that album called *Tribute to Albert Collins*. I came up with that because I love Albert Collins. I play guitar on it, but I also play keyboards on the whole record. Albert was something else, a good person, but his stage presence and his guitar sound, guitar picking—out of this world!

"I've done some other albums on JSP [including **Heart of Pain**, 2010; **Every Second a Fool Is Born**, 2011; **Travelin' Man**, 2012; **Long Nights**, 2016; **What Have I Done Wrong: The Best of the JSP Studio Sessions**, 2017]. In fact, I'm doing one now. I haven't finished it, but I'm doing a soul record—all soul and R&B. It's something I ain't done before, ever, for a whole album.

"JSP also did several projects with my wife—including the first time that Tamara and I ever made an album together. That was called **Darling Forever** [2009]. But it was really more of a Tam record. Then there was **Whatever**

You Say [2013], with my band backing Tam. After that, Tam started using her first and middle name [Tamara Tramell] instead of 'Peterson' on her records . . . starting with **Driving Me Wild** [EP, 2014]. We changed the name to try to call more attention to her as an individual artist, not just my wife. . . . Her most recent one is **The Best Night of My Life** [2016].

"My latest album, we did that one in France with the same people that previously did my album **Son of a Blues Man** [Jazz Village, 2014]. It's called **Tribute to Jimmy Smith** [Jazz Village, 2017]. I play the organ and sing. But it's mainly instrumentals—that Jimmy Smith-style organ. We had Herlin Riley, a great drummer, on there, plus Kelyn Crapp on guitar and Archie Shepp on sax. . . . I'd been thinking about making that record all my life. You know, I studied with Jimmy Smith. . . . He was a guy I first met when I was on tour with Milton. I went to see him play whenever I could. . . . The first time at his club, I wanted to play the B-3, and Jimmy came up and played with me. . . . His music inspired me early on.

"I'm working a lot in the studio these

days with Steve Washington [producer and songwriter], right here in Dallas. His father was the great Fats Washington; I never met him, but they say that he wrote a lot of great songs for a lot of people—B.B. King, Lowell Fulson, Bobby Bland. . . . I met Steve Washington years ago through a singer I worked with . . . [and] we became such good friends that Steve served as best man for my wedding. . . . Steve was also a recovering addict, so it was a good fit for me. He writes a lot of my songs.

"I've now been living in Dallas for about 25 years. It's my wife Tamara's hometown. . . . As for living in Texas, I don't like the heat, but being here has its advantages. And I've been here so long I know all the advantages and disadvantages. And those disadvantages include alcohol and drugs—stuff that I'm trying to handle. But every now and then, we human beings have a tendency to slip up and—you know what I'm saying. . . . Tam is my backbone. And excuse me for saying it this way, but I still fuck up. It takes a man to be able to say that, to admit that he's made mistakes, that he's been weak. I know that.

"The only reason why I started doing dope was because I called myself 'having fun,' you know. When you leave home at the age of 16, and get out on the road, you think, 'I'm a man.' You get the chance to experience a lot of things, but you never know how strong you are until you mess up. . . . My biggest problem was with drugs—cocaine—yeah. I'm not a big alcoholic or problem drinker. I can smoke weed, no problem. But I got introduced to the cocaine, and that led to problems for me. . . . Crack makes you suddenly feel like a new man, and you want to keep feeling like a new man, so you smoke it more and more and more. But it's not worth it. You know, I've experienced all of that. . . . I still have to fight the monkey and fight everything else that tempts me. . . . I battle all the time. I mean, I'm doing better. I stay strong, but every now and then I might mess up. You know what I'm saying? I'm putting this out there.

"Sometimes I get pissed off. . . . I just feel like I'm not recognized like I should be in the United States. . . . Over in Europe they all come to see me, people from eight to 80, and it's always a packed house. Here in the States, you know, I sometimes feel like I'm taken for granted. . . . I know that some people hold certain incidents from my past against me. . . . And you've got the politics within the industry. People know by now that I'm a good entertainer, a good musician. I've been doing this for 50 years! . . . And I've changed, but some people are still stuck on something from my past.

"When I travel, I try to make sure I can bring Tam with me—to keep my support system together, you know. It works. I don't want to disappoint my wife. . . . And Tam sings with me too, some lead and some backup vocals. Sometimes we do duets.

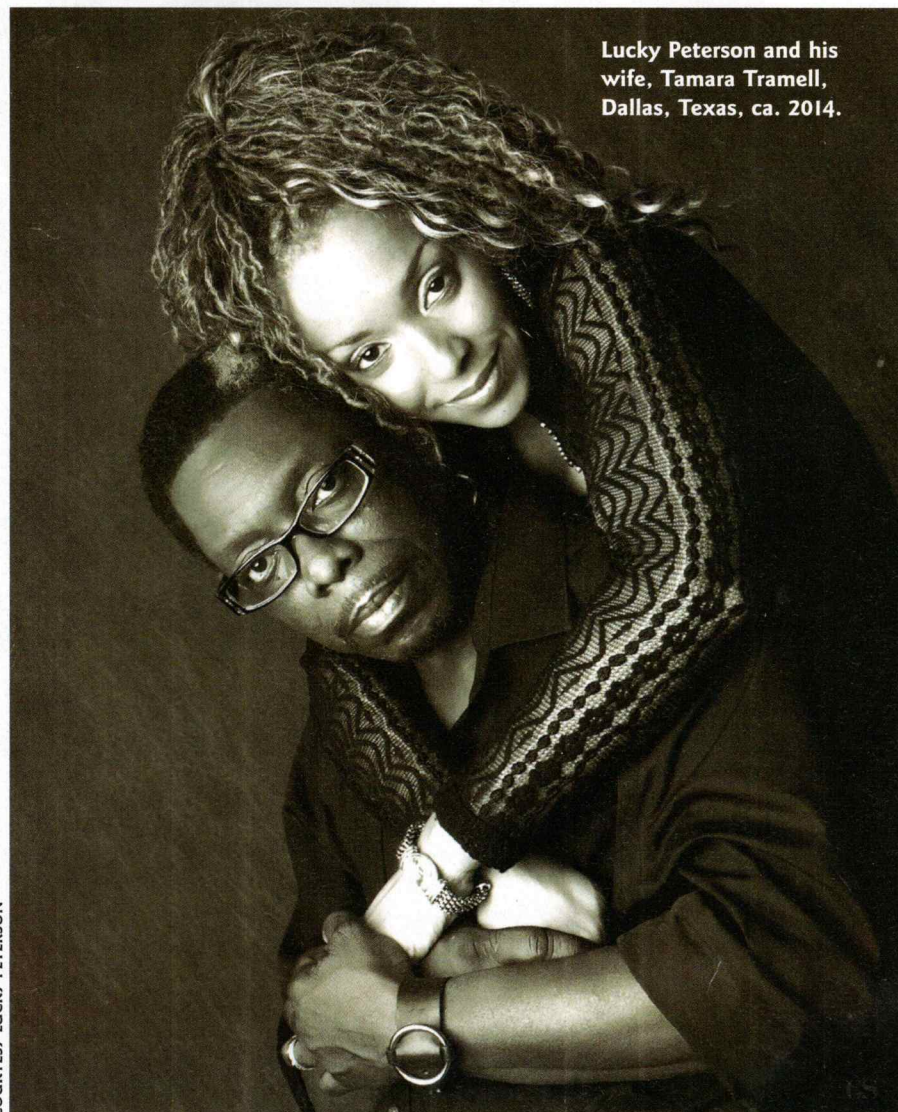
"A Lucky Peterson show these days is basically a little bit of everything. . . . It's very spontaneous. I mean it always comes back to the blues, but it's not restricted to some narrow definition of the music. There's soul and gospel and a variety of styles in what I do.

"I play both keyboards and guitar on most of my gigs, about half and half. . . . I play some piano, but on my keyboards I'm more of an organ man. . . . I used to travel with a big old B-3 organ, but I don't do that no more.

"But I've been a trooper about what I do. I travel all over the world, and I play blues. I love what I do, and I will continue to do it. Can't nobody stop me from doing it but God. And I've been blessed.

"The bottom line is that I'm one of the few ones still paving the way for people of color in the contemporary blues world—and I've been doing it since I was five years old." **LB**

Lucky Peterson has just finished a new album that will be released on September 27, 2019, on PIAS Recordings.



Lucky Peterson and his wife, Tamara Tramell, Dallas, Texas, ca. 2014.

COURTESY LUCKY PETERSON