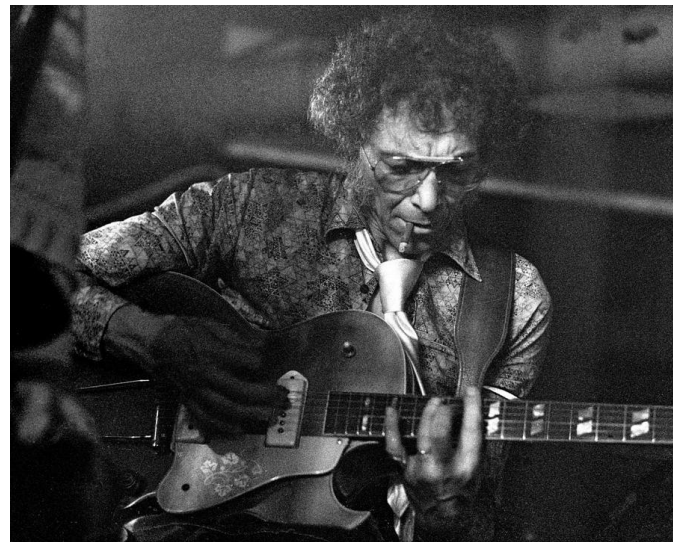


BLUES INCORPORATED (ALEXIS KORNER)



<i>Recording years</i>	<i>Main genre</i>	<i>Music sample</i>
<i>1962-1984</i>	<i>Classic rhythm & blues</i>	<i>Herbie's Tune (1964)</i>

Only Solitaire

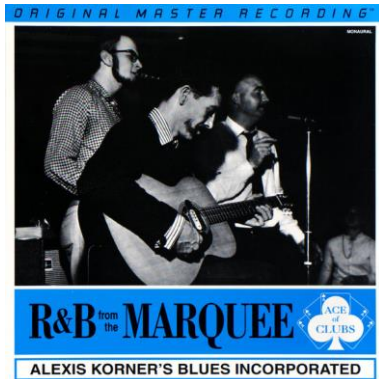
Artist: *Blues Incorporated / Alexis Korner*

Years: *1962-1965*

George Starostin's Reviews

Page contents:

- [R&B From The Marquee](#) (1962) 
- [Red Hot From Alex](#) (1964)
- [At The Cavern](#) (1964) 
- [Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated](#) (1965)



R&B FROM THE MARQUEE

Album released:
Nov. 16, 1962

V
A
L
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2
3
3
1
2

More info:



Tracks: 1) Gotta Move; 2) Rain Is Such A Lonesome Sound; 3) I Got My Brand On You; 4) Spooky But Nice; 5) Keep Your Hands Off; 6) I Wanna Put A Tiger In Your Tank; 7) I Got My Mojo Working; 8) Finkle's Cafe; 9) Hoochie Coochie; 10) Down Town; 11) How Long, How Long Blues; 12) I Thought I Heard That Train Whistle Blow.

REVIEW

First things first: the main, if not only, reason why I bother writing about «Alexis Korner's Blues Incorporated» is in the sphere of music history. Nobody except for close friends and relatives would probably dare describe Mr. Alexis Korner as an artistic visionary or even as a particularly gifted musician; yet it so happened that Alexis Korner and nobody else became, essentially, no less than the Godfather of British R&B — and, accordingly, **R&B From The Marquee**, recorded in June 1962, may be considered the first proper R&B album to appear in UK territory. And even if it was not — diligent research, which I do not have time to conduct, always shows that there was always a bunch of no-names before the first big name, and a bunch of less-than-no-names before the first significant no-name — even if it was not, it was certainly the first influential record of its kind, symbolically opening the floodgates for the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, the Animals, and all of their younger brethren.



Actually, «Blues Incorporated» was not even a proper band — indeed, it was more like a flexible «corporation» of the blues, with people attracted to (and then usually repulsed from) its only permanent member, guitar player Alexis Korner, in free-flow mode. (A similar model, albeit with a larger amount of discipline and stricter demands for quality, would later be adopted by John Mayall's Bluesbreakers). Occasional members of the conglomeration in its early, «classic» days included just about every future member of the classic Stones line-up, as well as Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker, Paul Jones, Rod Stewart, Jimmy Page... — Alexis had a fairly good eye for talent, in recompense for a relative lack of his own.

Unfortunately, at the time when the ensemble finally got a chance to put its sound on record (the title, by the way, is somewhat misleading — the sound did indeed stem «from the Marquee», where B.I. functioned on a regular basis, but the actual recordings were produced in one of London's Decca studios), most of the future big stars were unavailable. The only «grand name» given credit here is sax player Dick Heckstall-Smith, one of Britain's finest horn blowers of all time, who would later go on to play with the Graham Bond Organization, the Bluesbreakers, and Colosseum; bass, drums, and keyboards are credited to relatively little known individuals (Teddy Wadmore, Graham Burbidge, and Keith Scott, respectively; some of them at least were also parallel members of Chris Barber's Jazz Band).

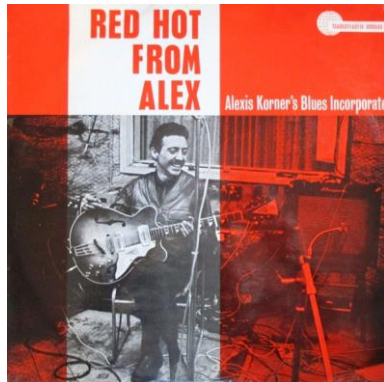
Korner's major partner at the time was singer and harmonica player Cyril Davies, another important figure in the British R&B movement, but by mid-1962, the two were already drifting apart, and this would be the first and last B.I. record featuring Cyril's vocal talent (not particularly impressive anyway) — alternating, on a few tracks, with the throatier, croakier delivery of Long John Baldry (Davies would later go on to form the «Cyril Davies All-Stars» and then die just two years later from either endocarditis or leukemia).

The setlist, as can easily be seen from the song titles, largely consists of Chicago blues numbers, mainly Muddy Waters, spiced up with a little Jimmy Witherspoon and Leroy Carr; about half of the songs, though, are «originals», i. e. variations on the same Chicago styles and patterns, credited to Korner, Davies, or (in one case) Long John Baldry. The band had a «purist» attitude at the time, focusing exclusively on slow 12-bar blues or mid-tempo jump blues, not even any Chuck Berry or Bo Diddley allowed (one may amusingly remember how Mick Jagger, in the earliest days of the Stones, was appalled and abhorred at the prospect of the Stones being called a «rock'n'roll band»); this attitude would eventually pass, but not before driving a wedge between the more conservative Davies and the more easily adaptable Korner — and, fortunately for them, not before they released this LP, for all the world to marvel at their trans-Atlantic interpretations of 'I Got My Mojo Working' and 'Hoochie Coochie Man'.

Frankly speaking, there is very little to marvel at. The lack of proper amplification (Korner confines himself to acoustic guitar) may be a minus, but not as big a minus as the very fact that this whole thing is, at best, merely «competent» — everybody does his best to imitate the respective player in Muddy's band, but that is just what it is: a faithful imitation, bound to pale against the original when the players intentionally withdraw from offering anything of their own. Even Dick Heckstall-Smith, who would go on to much higher heights, is perfectly content here with the status of a bit player — his sax leads on 'Spooky But Nice', 'Down Town', and other instrumentals are fun, but do not stand any serious competition against America's «monster tradition». Seriously, most of these instrumentals sound no better and no worse than your average professional blues band inobtrusively entertaining you at your local bar'n'grill.

If anything, it is quite instructive to take one listen to this stuff, if only to see how much of a jump forward the British R&B movement went through in two years' time, and gain an additional appreciation for something like the Rolling Stones' debut — everything is always better understood, and sometimes stronger liked, in its context. Nevertheless, in its defense, even with all of its blandness, **R&B From The Marquee** never feels «fake»: all of these people were clearly united by a genuine love for this sort of music, a basic understanding of how it works, and an honest desire to share this love with the listeners. In a way, it is not their fault that the impact of this album had been reduced to naught within a couple of years — every giant leap is naturally preceded by a small step, and this might just have been the small step without which there would be no giant leap. Without Blues Incorporated, there might truly have been no Rolling Stones — and that, to me, is already reason enough for a perfectly rational, if not altogether «emotional», endorsement.





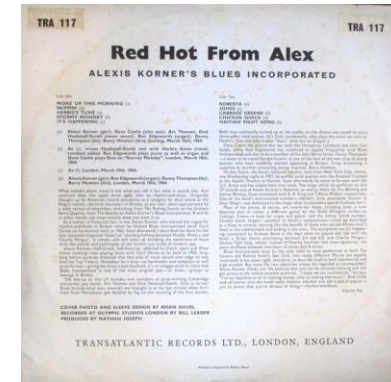
RED HOT FROM ALEX

Album released:

June 1964

V A L U E
3 3 3 1 2

More info:



Tracks: 1) Woke Up This Morning; 2) Skipping; 3) Herbie's Tune; 4) Stormy Monday; 5) It's Happening; 6) Roberta; 7) Jones; 8) Cabbage Greens; 9) Chicken Shack; 10) Haitian Fight Song.

REVIEW

This studio album was recorded at Olympic Studios in London over three days in March 1964, almost one month after Blues Incorporated's show at The Cavern in Liverpool which would go on to become the band's second live LP; however, **Red Hot From Alex** got an earlier release date, which is why we shall briefly deal with it first (not that any of these details ever mattered, since no record put out by Alexis Korner had ever gained any commercial or critical prominence). With the band being a constant revolving door, the lineup gathered here in March '64 is not only completely different from the 1962 lineup, but is even *almost* completely different from the lineup responsible for the Cavern show in February '64: besides Korner himself on electric guitar, the players are Barry Howten on drums (know nothing about this guy otherwise), Danny Thompson on bass (one of the UK's most famous folk bass players, later a member of The Pentangle), Ron Edgeworth on keyboards (later a husband of Judith Durham from The Seekers), Dave Castle, Art Themen, and Dick Heckstall-Smith on saxes, and American blues and gospel singer Herbie Goins on vocals — added to this gentlemanly UK team for an extra touch of African-American authenticity, I suppose, though this is by no means knocking the man's professionalism and dedication.



Unfortunately, professionalism seems to be the key goal of this relatively tepid studio release, which has neither the energy nor the risky exuberance of Korner's live shows. This attitude was, of course, consistent with the then-current practice of putting on a polite and gallant face in the studio while leaving all the stop-pulling business for the live environment — putting tightness, discipline, and cleanliness of sound at the forefront, all of which seems quite logical to observe when a good studio actually allows you to practice all these values, unlike the live setting.

That said, a tight, clean, and well-disciplined Blues Incorporated at best comes across as a respectable backing band for some high profile jump blues artist like, say, Louis Jordan. In particular, check 'Skipping', a tightly played piece of fast-paced R&B in which Ron Edgeworth's organ, Korner's electric guitar, and the three sax players form five near-ideal pieces of the puzzle, yet fail to complete the experience with the secret special ingredient — because not one of the players is ever ready to let his basic instincts take over, as if feeling afraid that something will fatally fall out of place. At one time during the groove, Korner takes the lead, but plays it feebly and falteringly, without any signs of imaginativeness or wildness, and it looks as if he does not even try, being subconsciously terrified of ending up looking stupid or something. It is precisely this aspect, I think, that separates Alexis from the likes of Keith Richards, even if some of the allegedly «red hot» licks he plays here are formally reminiscent of Keith's «anglicized» Chuck Berry style.

Likewise, the short version of the instrumental 'Herbie's Tune' (ironically titled, since it is one of the few numbers on which Herbie does *not* sing) is all «academic», slow, and stiff compared to what they did to the composition on stage — where the saxophones would screech and whine like an agonizing pig under the knife, while here the pig in question is more prone to lazily grunting and snorting in the comfort of the trough. This lack of excitement essentially nullifies the fact that the sound mix is unquestionably better, with all the different instrumental parts well defined and working as clearly individual parts of a collective whole, and that Edgeworth's organ does add one more layer of depth that was lacking at The Cavern; none of that matters, because on the whole, the tune just creeps and crawls on, slowly and painfully, on the formalistic strength of its metronomically rising and falling groove, without any involving dynamics.

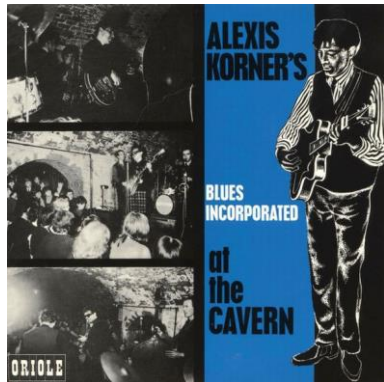
Stylistically, the album is mostly divided between 12-bar blues (T-Bone Walker's classic 'Stormy Monday', a major favorite of all UK blues-based bands; Korner delivers a shrill, echoey, stinging guitar solo, fairly decent and expressive for the pre-Clapton era) and, in a relatively surprising new twist, classic jazz (covers of Duke Ellington's 'Jones' and of 'Chicken Shack' credited to Johnny Smith — can't really identify the original; the Graham Bond original 'It's Happening'). The latter artistic decision seems rather unfortunate to me, because this particular incarnation of Korner's band is simply too heavy-footed to

get a proper jazz groove going on — listen to Duke's band performing 'Jones' on any of his live or studio records, almost literally flying above the ground; Blues Incorporated, in comparison, tread upon the ground heavily, with the rhythm section almost jackhammering the tune under the soil. The only time they succeed with their jazz ambitions is with the cover of Mingus' classic 'Haitian Fight Song' (from **The Clown**), given that it is a dark and menacing groove which needs to be trampled underfoot, and Korner's little band of sax players forms a convincing cutthroat outfit with the rhythm section. Everything else here needed to be delivered with smiles on faces and helium in the lungs, when in reality we get morose seriousness and a solid dose of lead poisoning.

Apparently, Korner had also become seriously infatuated with the sound of Booker T. & The MG's, ripping off 'Green Onions' on his poorly masked 'Cabbage Greens' — formally, he gets the groove right, but then he goes on to transpose it to a different tonality which completely removes the foreboding, devilish menace of the original (*precisely* the element that made it so unforgettable and popular) and basically just relieves it of any emotional impact. Just compare the organ riff from the original and whatever Edgeworth is doing here — the former makes you hug the sidewalk and dive into a side alley, while the latter might make a nice relaxing soundtrack for a tanning session at the beach.

Still, even if **Red Hot From Alex** should rather read **Stone Cold From Alex**, I admit that there may well be people to whom this academically sterile take on rhythm & blues will be far more palatable than dirty, sloppy, emotionally charged garage rock. On an objective scale, the album does have the distinction of being the first well-produced, clear-sounding record to come out of Alexis Korner's camp (London's Olympic Studios did deliver easily *the* best produced pop music of the time), sort of like Manfred Mann without the irritating nursery pop ditties — a serious, but fully accessible mix of blues, jazz, and dance music whose only fault was in that nobody in the whole wide world really needed *this* kind of music from Britain at the time, not even Britain itself. Even if he wanted to (which he allegedly did not), Alexis Korner could never become part of the «British Invasion» — his entire schtick was strictly for internal consumption, and even then, only as long as the US import market still remained relatively underdeveloped. Only in a long-term retro perspective is it possible to see that the artist was honestly trying to reinterpret his influences rather than simply copycat them — unfortunately, his talent was simply not enough to make this effort work.





AT THE CAVERN

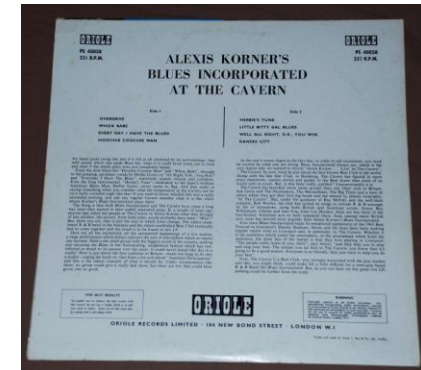
Album released:

V A L U E

October 1964

3 3 3 1 2

More info:



Tracks: 1) Overdrive; 2) Whoa Babe; 3) Every Day I Have The Blues; 4) Hoochie Coochie Man; 5) Herbie's Tune; 6) Little Bitty Gal Blues; 7) Well All Right, OK You Win; 8) Kansas City.

REVIEW

With Beatlemania already in full swing and the British rhythm'n'blues scene already being populated by newcoming scruffy young ruffians, this record already has less historical significance than **R&B At The Marquee** — yet it is also a genuinely superior recording. First, unlike the «Marquee» sessions, this one was actually recorded live (February 23, 1964, at The Cavern in Liverpool, a place already made famous throughout the country by the magic of the Beatles' touch): consequently, it catches Korner's backing band in a more adventurous state of mind, as their purpose is no longer limited to just introducing their influences, but also includes — at least, to some degree — the desire to *transform* those influences.

Second, with several years of experience behind their backs, Blues Incorporated were almost beginning to develop some sort of personal identity — very important in an era of swiftly increasing competition, even though it was still never enough to make Korner into a superstar (not that he ever entertained any such ambitions). Clearly, they were listening not only to «mass appeal» records from the Chicago blues scene, but to various strains of jazz as well, trying to mix both types of



influences in their live act (before this mix reached a culmination of sorts in the studio, with **Red Hot From Alex**, though Korner would never demonstrate the same kind of energy in the studio).

This particular line-up, other than Korner himself, included Dave Castle (replacing Dick Heckstall-Smith) on saxophone; Malcom Saul on organ; Vernon Bown on bass; Mike Scott on drums; and Herbie Goins on vocals, although Alexis himself takes the lead on the first few tracks (allegedly, he abhorred his own singing voice and only sang out of necessity — which is understandable, since he has a raspy croak which, at best, comes across as «funny»; that said, mood-wise Korner's vocals agree well enough with the band's arrangements, and I would still take them over, say, Jimmy Reed at least, to name at least one example of an even less impressive singer from across the Atlantic).

Of all these people, Dave Castle is the loudest, and his sax frequently tends to shout out the vocalist ('Everyday I Have The Blues' is a particularly illustrative example: no sooner does Alexis introduce Herbie Goins to the Cavern audiences as «someone who can sing» than the frenetic blasts from Dave's instrument threaten to prevent *us*, the listeners — let alone the actual audience at the club — from assessing that statement). Some find this a problem, but not me: the noisy ambience generated by Dave's ruckus is intermittently irritating... and *curious* — certainly B. B. King and his band would never have dreamed of performing the song *that way*.

The lengthy instrumental 'Herbie's Tune', ironically named after the band's only member who does not perform on it, is quite solid here and a major improvement on the shorter and more tepid studio recording. Here, it is still a carefully constructed workout in 12/4, but with both Castle and Saul taking their time to improvise and Mike Scott turning in the obligatory drum solo, probably making this the earliest «jazz-style rock instrumental» in the history of British rhythm & blues, and a pretty good one. Everything gels, even if the main theme, with its rather monotonous rise-and-fall pattern, is hardly on par with Charles Mingus, whose influence is very sharply felt here.

Alexis throws in a few of his own compositions, introducing 'Whoa Babe' as a «John Lee Hooker type blues» — although, let's face it, John Lee Hooker would probably not care about such show-off-ey saxophone exuberance on his records, and the song's rhythm, mood, and stinging slide guitar leads are more suggestive of Muddy Waters anyway. (Maybe «John Lee Hooker» just has a better onstage ring to it than «Muddy Waters», I wouldn't know.) The other one is given the ambitious title of 'Overdrive' — although, frankly, the only performer to remain in overdrive during the song, and throughout the entire album as well, is Dave Castle, to the extent that they should have honestly credited the LP to «Dave Castle's Blues Incorporated». Castle even manages to dominate on 'Hoochie Coochie Man', despite Alexis' trying at one point to revert

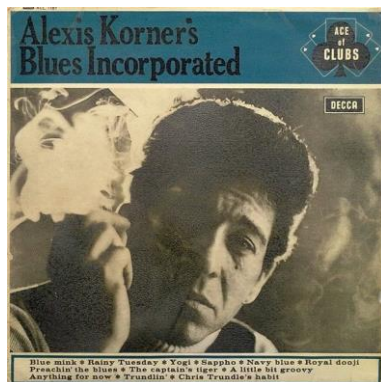
attention to himself by playing a stinging slide guitar solo (for about a couple of bars, that is, before the organ and sax drown it out once and for all).

Sometimes it hurts, sometimes it helps, but in the end, it is the brass component which gives **At The Cavern** its distinct flavor, if we so desperately need to extract it. The UK already had its fair share of competent sax blowers by 1964, yet, for the most part, they were either bit players of relatively little significance (e. g. Mike Vickers of Manfred Mann) or played within a strict pop configuration (Mike Smith of the Dave Clark 5). The major exception was Dick Heckstall-Smith, a jazz player open to different formats; but if you ask me, Dave Castle does just fine a job in his steps (on **Red Hot From Alex**, they would be working in tandem). As for Herbie Goins, Korner certainly does not lie with the "somebody who can sing" introduction, but I am afraid that is pretty much all that could be said about Herbie Goins — The Man Who Could Sing (When Nobody Else Could).

One minor complaint which simply *has* to be voiced, though, concerns Korner's style of stage banter: he does these «dark», «theatrical» announcements from stage, drawing out and rolling around his syllables as if channeling some traditional vaudeville show, and it comes across as a strained and comical mannerism rather than a serious premonition. "At which juncture we'd like to carry on with a John Lee Hooker type blu-u-u-u-ues..." "...this one's an old Joe Turner number called... Littl-l-l-le Bitt-e-e-e-e Ga-a-a-al Blu-u-ues..." and so on. Maybe the idea is that this style of presentation is somehow «authentic», but I would rather take the natural, un-affected, and even slightly scared stage announcements from **Five Live Yardbirds** than this kind of pseudo-professionalism. It is, after all, not an absolute requirement that the Godfather of British R&B should be addressing people from stage with a Godfather accent.

For the sake of trivia, there exists an expanded reissue of the album (on Castle Records, from 2006) which includes an additional six tracks recorded live for the BBC that same year — including covers of 'Turn On Your Lovelight' and 'Please, Please, Please', demonstrating that Korner was quite heavily getting into soul-based R&B at that time, adding to and transcending his passion for Chicago blues and Mingusian jazz. Although, to be fair, it is probably not a big sin if you go to your grave without that knowledge.





ALEXIS KORNER'S BLUES INCORPORATED

Album released:

June 1965

V A L U E
2 3 2 3 1

More info:



Tracks: 1) Blue Mink; 2) Rainy Tuesday; 3) Yogi; 4) Sappho; 5) Navy Blue; 6) Royal Dooji; 7) Preachin' The Blues; 8) Captain's Tiger; 9) Little Bit Groovy; 10) Anything For Now; 11) Chris Trundle's Habit; 12) Trundlin'.

REVIEW

The release date for this album is wildly deceptive. Since it is completely instrumental, and since all of the tunes are more «jazz» than «blues», the easiest thing in the world would be to surmise — as I originally did, before remembering to at least consult the liner notes — that the recordings reflect the eventual «maturation» of Korner's sound, as he and his sidemen, spurred on by the rapidly evolving musical scene around them, steadily recede from their role of «blues influencers» and try on ever more daring and experimental ways of advancing and expanding musical patterns. Actually, the first paragraph of those liner notes, written by Charles Fox, would be consistent with this scenario — he talks about the various stereotypes about jazz and blues music, then goes on to admire Korner for generating an innovative synthesis of the two.



At this point, however, the notes mention that all of the recordings were made as early as in the summer of 1963 (May, to be more precise), meaning even *before* the Herbie Goins era rather than *after* it. Why Decca's sub-label, Ace Of Clubs, charged with the distribution of Blues Incorporated, would not release this material in 1963 may be understood; why it suddenly decided to make it public two years later is not nearly as clear — but I could not exclude that, perhaps, somebody out there thought that the time has truly come to unleash that sound. After all, The Graham Bond Organisation, featuring several of

Alexis' old alumni, had just made a name (if not a fortune) for themselves with **The Sound Of '65**, on which they experimented with a fusion of jazz and blues not unlike the one offered here. (Incidentally, the CD edition of the album throws on, as a bonus track, a rudimentary instrumental rendition of 'Early In The Morning', which would later become one of the major highlights on **The Sound Of '65**).

In any case, all of the music on this album was indeed recorded in mid-'63 and, for that period of time, was in general far more adventurous than the average live set of Blues Incorporated, with all of its 'Hoochie Coochie Men' and 'Stormy Monday Blues'. Featuring Korner on guitar, Heckstall-Smith and Art Themen on saxophones, Johnny Parker on piano, Mike Scott on bass (*not* drums, for which he is credited on the **At The Cavern** record!), and Phil Seamen on drums (one of the most prolific UK jazz drummers of the 1950s and 1960s), the record is perhaps best described as a «jazz album with a blues underbelly»... hmm, or should that be the other way around? Anyway, I've got some good news and some bad news here. The good news is that the recording session does not sound *anything* like a stereotypical «British rhythm'n'blues» get-together — if, like myself, you have grown up with the faint historical knowledge of Blues Incorporated as the forefather platform for the Rolling Stones, this half hour-long document will blow your mind on that count. The bad news, unfortunately, is that this album... kind of blows, *period*.

Almost from the opening, slowly and cautiously descending chords of 'Blue Mink' (written by Korner himself, I assume, as are most of the tracks on the record), it is clear that these guys are looking for ways to push music forward — yet doing this in such a self-conscious, «academic» manner that they are simultaneously *losing* ways to make that music exciting. I am fairly sure that 'Blue Mink' is supposed to be a pun on Thelonious Monk' 'Blue Monk' (what else could it be?), even if the two compositions have little else in common. But the genius of Thelonious was not in challenging established conventions on how to play the jazz piano; it was in convincing us that it was actually the most natural and fun thing in the world to do to challenge them. These guys, on the contrary, seem to lay down each single note with the hard-working earnestness of a beginning ballet dancer who comes to classes equipped with measuring tape and a divider compass.

It is a curious composition, by all means, primarily because it defies genre classification, veering between blues, jazz, and R&B chords, tempos, and instrumentation. But almost everybody involved «veers» with learned, practiced caution, slowly and patiently, as if inviting all of us to form a dance line and exploit it in the same cautious, dignified, one-two-three one-two-three fashion. I think that Heckstall-Smith is the only person involved here to allow himself some genuinely wild spontaneity, and since I've never been the greatest admirer of his musical personality, this isn't a particularly exciting

revelation. As you can easily predict, 'Blue Mink' sets the tone for the entire record — most of the other tracks continue in the same genre-blurring, intellectual, experimental, and basically boring manner.

The «hard bop» of people like Monk, (early) Coltrane, Art Blakey, and others does seem to be the defining influence here, particularly seeing as how «hard bop» is often defined by its openness to the musical ideas of other genres, including blues and R&B. In accordance with the pattern, Korner's compositions usually feature a main theme (typically horn-driven, though occasionally the guitar or the piano may come in as lead instruments), followed by a minute or two of improvisation and then resolving back to the main theme. Most of the improvisation feels stilted and devoid of inspiration; the main themes can sometimes be fun (like the fast-tempo brass riff of 'Sappho') and sometimes utterly generic ('Anything For Now'), but not a single one delivers a suspenseful thrill like, say, Coltrane's 'Blue Train' or Art Blakey's 'Moanin', to name just a few possible sources of inspiration for these guys.

One number that is instantly recognizable is 'Royal Dooji', merely a different name for what we have already heard on two other Korner records as 'Herbie's Tune'. (For those not in the know, *dooji* — also spelled as *duji*, *doogie*, etc. — is the original African-American slang for heroin, and was first immortalized as such by Duke Ellington with his 'Old King Dooji' in 1938, back when nobody at Brunswick cared enough to ask him what that actually means). Unfortunately, it is not an inch more exciting than the studio version on **Red Hot From Alex** (if you want to experience at least a little bit of passion from these guys, go back to the extended live performance on **At The Cavern**), even if, strangely enough, it feels a little more polished in terms of production.

Actually, the only number on here that makes my curiosity genuinely perk up is the repetitive two-minute mantra of 'Preachin' The Blues', on which the boys really try to churn up the atmosphere of a tribal ritual. Seamen rolls out the tomtoms, Korner joins him on country-blues slide guitar, and then the two sax players take up their positions on the left and the right and start playing the same melody, but ever so slightly dissonantly, intentionally fuckin' up tempos and tonalities so that the whole thing might feel cacophonous and ugly one second, then tight and harmonious the next, much the same way, I guess, as it might happen at a real African ceremony. It's the closest that the band gets to genuinely «wild» on here, exchanging their strict Apollonian discipline for something a bit more Dionysian — but it's just two minutes out of thirty, and feels more like a cautious tease than an invitation to a different dimension. The very next number, 'Captain's Tiger', brings us back to controlled sanity with its strictly mannered «dark waltz» attitude that, once again, feels like the soundtrack to a lesson in modern dance.

Doubtlessly, there is some historical importance to these sessions — if the live shows of Blues Incorporated pointed the way to the genesis of the British rhythm'n'blues scene, then *these* particular exercises ultimately laid down the foundation for the almost equally rich (though far less popular) British movement of jazz-rock, fusion, and avantgarde. Distant echoes of everything from Cream to the Soft Machine and Colosseum can be found here if you *really* put your ear down to the ground and all that; and it does throw in yet another layer of respect for Alexis Korner, the man who truly loved both traditional and modern music despite being unable to put his own stamp on it. But even that influence is very indirect — it is not so much the recorded music itself that provides the influence, more the very *fact* that people in the UK were trying to make this kind of sound as early as 1963. And, other than brushing up on your history, there is really little other reason to listen to it today if you can just go straight ahead to all those hard bop masterpieces instead.

The 2006 CD edition of the album on Castle Music does a nice job by throwing on a bunch of *vocal* tracks, recorded around the same time — including a rather lengthy cover of 'Night Time Is The Right Time', replete with a maniacal sax solo and some additional verses you don't get to hear on regular Ray Charles versions; and a mildly interesting «bluesier» arrangement of 'Taboo Man', a poorly known 1962 single from a poorly remembered R&B singer, Eugene Church ([the original version](#) is quite a bit more «poppy» than the Blues Incorporated rendition). On the other hand, 'Rockin' is more like 'Jump-Bluesing', 'See See Rider' is a mess of brass, and 'Blues A La King' never specifies *which* particular King it is going after — Albert, Freddie, or B. B.? — making things complicated for us because the instrumental does not really sound much like any of the three. Well, there's lotsa brass on it, so probably B. B. Whatever.

