

Original folk-blues at the Riverboat

Sonny Terry



Sonny Terry wailing away on harp.

time, he has depended on the honesty of other people for him to make money from his music.

Terry's harmonica style is unequalled in blues today. One might think Paul Butterfield or Stevie Wonder are better, but they are products of the new sounds in music and rely on strong amplification to gain the effects they want. Terry has been playing his style for forty years and needs nothing except two hands and a mouth to produce the most intricate and exciting effects.

Just as distinctively, Brownie McGee comes on as a blues musician who has forgotten more about blues than most people will ever know. Like Sonny Terry, 54-year-old Brownie had his hardships, as a child he was struck with polio. He still walks with a distinct limp. He met Sonny Terry in New York in 1939 and the two of them travelled in the company of Pete Seeger, Woddie Guthrie, Leadbelly and Josh White when they all tramped the streets singing for nickels and dimes.

Again like Sonny, Brownie's guitar work is unique. Because there are just the two voices and instruments, Brownie must play rhythm and lead at the same time. The guitar becomes a new instrument when one watches Brownie McGee. There is never

any repetition, no boring chord structure behind Sonny's wailing harp. Instead there is an intricate balance of the two instruments.

Even with all this virtuosity, their music belts out with a kind of simplicity that has been almost lost in today's music. Perhaps it is their honesty. They are not pressured by commercialism because they are totally non-commercial musically and personally. They are like antiques: they may be old and battered but they become more valuable with age.

For Sonny Terry and Brownie McGee, the blues has made their suffering more endurable. The pain and the loneliness is there but always in relationship to a pride, a self-respect, and a humour about themselves. They are two very dignified old men who have a vitality and zest for life and music that is missing in most of today's musicians half their age.

Iron Butterfly

by Patrick Kutney

The music of the Iron Butterfly can best be described as psychedelic trivia. Their performance was amateurish and repetitive; but, if anything, the Butterfly were amusing. They went through a variety of contortions and writhings in an effort to act like they were involved in their music. The high point of their performance was when the bass player slipped and fell on his ass.

Despite their lack of talent, the Butterfly drew the largest crowds ever at the Rock Pile. It is a sad reflection on the taste of pop fans in Toronto that they will come in droves to see and listen to a talentless band like the Iron Butterfly while they shun the musically talented Ars Nova like the plague.

What really bugs me is the fact that a band of the Iron Butterfly's calibre can command a fee of \$5,000 for a night's work while creative, proficient Toronto bands like Transfusion, the McKenna Mendelsson Mainline and the Raja dwell in relative obscurity.

The Iron Butterfly is nothing more than a typical west coast acid group (which isn't saying much). Contrary to popular belief, there is very little that has come out of California that has been of much worth.



photos by Jerry Shiner

Organist Doug Ingle and Bassist Lee Dornan

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