

# SKRATCHIN' BLUES

**LITTLE MILTON:**  
**"Raise a Little Sand"**  
 (Red Lightnin' Records)

**"Movin' to the Country"**  
 (Malaco)

Some people have claimed that good blues recordings ended in the '50's. I would have some doubts about that (ie: Otis Rush, Magic Sam, Son Thomas), though things have definitely changed direction in terms of style. Little Milton's latest release, *Moving to the Country*, is an example of the different view placed on the blues, when contrasted with his collection of early singles on *Raise a Little Sand*.

Milton Campbell has been a professional musician since the late 1940's. He cut his first acetates for Sun Records in 1953, and has had a long journey to his present home at Malaco. His musical start was in a church choir - a natural beginning for many blues singers (even John Lee Hooker!).

*Raise a Little Sand* reveals an artist whose voice was maturing every year, from rough and hard with aspirations to B.B. King and Bobby Bland, to a soulful sureness of a veteran of ten years. The first seven songs are from Memphis, featuring good horn charts, solid guitar work, and that famous Memphis sound. Among the backing band are C.W. Tate on tenor sax and Ike Turner on piano. These are all good songs in the early urban style.

The other nine songs were recorded for either Meteor or Bobbin' Records, and have the more urbane sound of 'jump blues'. They are very successful tunes partly because of Milton's great guitar picking and the star-studded backing bands featuring Oliver Sam, James Carr, and Fontella Baas; they also reveal how Milton's voice has greatly improved since Sun Records. As a whole the record is super, except for sound level problems on a couple of cuts.

Then there is Little Milton's latest album *Movin' to the Country*. The title suggests a traditional sound, but the cover portrays a swinging, hip, 'dude' with big rings, and chains. I will push on though, remembering Bo Diddley's famous words "You can't judge a book by its cover". This first song has a funk-laden blues

record sounds like, with a couple of sad points cropping up. Offsetting the great vocals and nice horns is Milton's contemporary, smoooooth guitar. The blues is supposed to have some bite, but this guitar could be used as the ultimate wax for a vengeful janitor. As well, Milton has discovered that string arrangements can be put on records whether "At this Moment" (remember the song

beat, a girl back-up group, and some good horns. What strikes me most though is Milton's voice. It is great, soulful, deep and gritty.

This is what most of the made famous on Family Ties a couple of years ago?). What next, a ballad with Whitney Houston or Lionel Richie?

I guess that as the years have rolled by, the approach to the blues has changed to

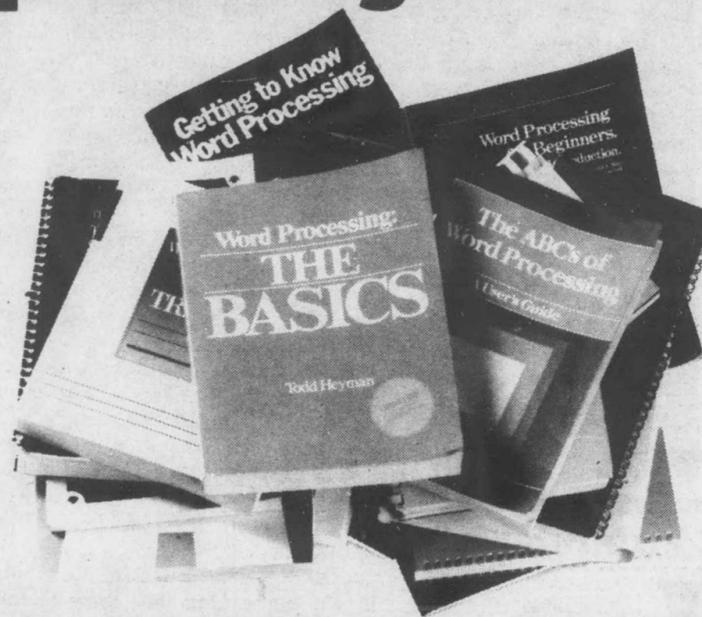
suit the needs of it's followers. Why then do I wish that Hound dog Taybr's guitar was the normal sounding axe that Howling Wolf was still crawling on nightclub tables moaning at women; that a nice soft sound was Lightnin' Hopkins; that dance records were still made by Joe Turner???? Buy *Raise a Little Sand* if you want what is expected of the blues; buy *Movin' to the Country* if you

prefer a more glossy style.

Special thanks to Backstreet Records for providing *Raising a Little Sand* for review, and airplay on my show at CHSR-FM 97.9. Tune in Wednesdays, 7:30 - 9:00 pm (live) and Tuesdays 1:30 - 3:00 pm (taped) for the best blues, and other related 'black' music styles.

By SCOTT DUNHAM

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