

BLUES

Spotlight on living blues: Johnny Shines, Robert Lowery, Terry Garland and more

Robert Johnson, dead for more than half a century, remains the most influential and best selling blues artist in modern music. His *The Complete Recordings*, (Columbia), the most belated gold album in history, has triggered an avalanche of archival recordings. Most are commendable but all turn attention away from living blues masters who are deserving in the here and now. Vocalist **Johnny Shines'** connections to the Johnson legacy are as strong as those of anyone living and his own music demands to be heard. Shines, who was both Johnson's musical associate and best friend, has two new releases out. On *Back to the Country* (Blind Pig) he teams with former partner, harmonica man **Snooky Pryor**. With **Johnny Nicholas** supplying licks on National steel standard guitar, Shines and Pryor romp through obligatory tributes to Johnson and an impressive batch of new material by both leaders, highlighted by Shines' "Blues Comes to Texas." Shines also has a self-titled archival recording of originals from HighTone Records. Performed with a quintet featuring guitarist **Phillip Walker**, the disc captures his early '70s sound to good effect.

If anyone doubts the existence of credible modern purveyors of Johnson-influenced music, they haven't heard longtime West Coast bluesman **Robert Lowery**. His *Earthquake Blues* (Orleans) combines Johnson classics, originals and a bit of **Lightnin' Hopkins** in a satisfying excursion into real blues. Recorded on a front porch in Santa Cruz, Calif., Lowery's ragged but righteous delivery brings the music up close. Most of the tracks are preceded by Lowery monologues in the tradition of talking blues storytelling.

Tennessee native **Terry Garland** is from a younger generation but his *Trouble in Mind* (First Warning) illustrates his affinity for classic acoustic blues. With help from harpist **Mark Wenner**, best known as leader of the Nighthawks, Garland powers his way through everything from **Blind Willie McTell's** "Ain't Long Afore Day" to **Johnny Winter's** "Bad Luck and Trouble." Garland treats the tunes with respect but is also aware there's no sense in reprising them if something of

his own musical personality isn't added. Garland pumps new life into both es-



Terry Garland

oteric gems like **Jimmy Reed's** "Upside Your Head" and established favorites like "Wang Dang Doodle."

Dave Specter and **Barkin' Bill Smith** are an unlikely duo, combining a young white guitarist and a veteran black singer, but their chemistry is right on key. Both have spent time on the Chicago scene and their *Bluebird Blues* (Delmark) release perfectly encapsulates the best past and present aspects of *Windy City blues*. Smith's boisterous baritone is equally comfortable with jazz-inflected tunes or basic blues boogies, and the music bends to his force of will. Specter, who has worked with **Son Seals**, **Hubert Sumlin** and the **Legendary Blues Band**, is a stylish Stratocaster star with a death-grip on classic blues guitar sensibilities. **Ronnie Earl's** guest guitar provides sizzling slide on the title track, and the horn-powered band, which includes keyboardist **Ken Saydak**, **Mighty Joe Young** and **Johnny Winter**, is first class. **T-Bone Walker's** "Railroad Station Blues" and the flavored instrumental "Wind Chill" are prime cuts.

-Michael Point

Stories in this supplement were excerpted from the September edition of Tower Records' *Pulse!*, available at all Tower Records stores on October 25.

TOWER RECORDS
CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF
ALLIGATOR'S
GENUINE HOUSE ROCKIN' MUSIC



ALLIGATOR, THE NATION'S PREMIER BLUES AND ROOTS ROCK LABEL, PRESENTS 35 SHADES OF BLUE ON 2 CDs OR 2 CASSETTES AT A TWO-FOR-ONE BUDGET PRICE!

COMPACT DISCS 2 CD **11.99**
CASSETTES 2 CS **7.99**

EVERY ALLIGATOR CD AND CASSETTE IS ON SALE NOW!

OVER 100 TITLES TO CHOOSE FROM!

<p>CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE Signature</p>	<p>COMPACT DISCS 11.99 REG. 13.99 & 14.99 CASSETTES 7.99 REG. 9.44 & 10.44</p>	<p>COTTON, WELLS, BELL, BRANCH Harp Attack!</p>
<p>SAFFIRE UPPITY BLUES WOMEN Hot Flash!</p>	<p>OTIS RUSH Lost In The Blues</p>	<p>SONNY BOY WILLIAMSON Keep It To Ourselves</p>

- Albert Collins, Robert Cray, Johnny Copeland-Showdown!
- Lonnie Brooks-Satisfaction Guaranteed
- Son Seals-Living In The Danger Zone
- Elvin Bishop-Don't Let The Bossman Get You Down!
- KoKo Taylor-Jump For Joy
- Buddy Guy-Stone Crazy! • Johnny Winter-3rd Degree
- Hound Dog Taylor-And The Houserockers
- Professor Longhair-Crawfish Fiesta
- Clifton Chenier-I'm Here
- Delbert McClinton-Live From Austin
- Little Charlie & The Nightcats-Captured Live
- Lonnie Mack-Live! Attack Of The Killer V
- Katie Webster-Two-Fisted Mama!

OPEN 9AM TO MIDNIGHT • 365 DAYS A YEAR

SALE ENDS NOVEMBER 12, 1991

TOWER RECORDS | VIDEO