

# THIRD EDITION OF THE BLUES DISCOGRAPHY

*By Phil Wight*

**I**t's fifty years since the publication of 'Blues Records 1943-1966', by Mike Leadbitter and Neil Slaven (published by Hanover Books in the U.K.). I bought a copy when it was published (I can't recall where from) and it's still on my shelves after all these years, having survived house moves and living in my slightly damp garage for several years when lack of space became a problem. It has a lot of pencilled-in annotations but it's still in remarkably good nick.

This new third edition of the 'Blues Discography' continues the tradition of the two earlier editions, filling in gaps and revising details. The artist roster has been increased and album headings have been added, resulting in about seven times the content of the original 'BR'. Around 1300 artists are now covered, from Marion Abernathy to Bobby Zilmus. The Discography is laid out in the accepted manner, alphabetically by artist and chronologically by session master or matrix numbers. Personnel details, dates and locations where known, unissued titles and original release details are included. A fully cross-referenced accompanying musician's index follows the discography.

The first edition (2006) had 628 pages, the second edition (2012) had 731, and this third edition (including the index) has 765 pages, so an addition of just over thirty pages. However, the running headers have been removed from the top of the pages to squeeze more info into the page (the headers serve no real purpose anyway, so removing them is no real loss). The type size has also been reduced very slightly (the same sans serif font has been retained) but is still easily readable. The same large format – 215 mm x 280 mm (8.5" x 11") – has continued. A minor criticism, with the book open in front of you is that the text is a little difficult to read on the inside columns (i.e. towards the spine) and it would be fairly easy to break the spine if you handle the book roughly. Maybe increasing the gutters (techie print speak here!) by several millimetres would have solved this, however it's a minor issue and should not be a problem if you handle the book carefully.

Since the last edition the compilers have continued to try and fill in, as much as is feasible, any gaps in recording details. The internet (like it or love it) has no doubt been a valuable resource for information, particularly on less well-known artists. Online forums like the 'Real Blues Forum' are invaluable research tools, where information is exchanged freely.

LP and CD issues have been handily identified, for example on page 391 in the Lightnin' Slim listing, the alt take of 'My Starter Won't Work', issued on Ace CD 616, is identified as Ace CD 616: 'Nothin' But The Devil', and on page 561, in the Jimmy Rushing listing, take one of 'Hey Miss Bessie' on Crazy Kat KK 614 is identified as Crazy Kat LP 814 'Big Band Blues'. And so on ...

As one would expect, many entries have been extensively revised, these include B.B. King, Slim Harpo, Chuck Berry, the Sun and Cobra sessions. Also, the chronology of many New Orleans recordings has been revised. There are over thirty new artist entries, mostly R&B associated, many of them can be classed as 'obscure'.

Major reissue programmes like the U.K. Ace label's 'Bayou' series (currently standing at twenty volumes with more to follow I hope) have of course thrown up a lot of previously unissued material. This is reflected in several new entries from (among others) the Baton Rouge Boys, Elizabeth (a really excellent vocalist who deserved a better shot, and maybe she got it under a different guise, I hope she did) and the equally enigmatic Flo. The same comments regarding Ace issues apply to the B.B. King section. Column wise there is not much to choose from between his entry in the second edition and this one, but the slight reduction in type size no doubt accounts for this, if the same type size had been used in this edition no doubt B.B. King's entry would also have been longer.

It's a book I regularly turn to when penning reviews, and yes, in the past I have noticed discrepancies in what is in print and what you actually hear (information lifted from the standard discographies seems on occasion to be reprinted as accepted fact, without actually checking that what is in the CD booklet actually tallies with what you are listening to). However, I am not talking about major mistakes here, more often the addition (or exclusion) of an instrument listed in the discographical details. I appreciate the impossibility of listening to every track and double checking that what you hear tallies with what is in print. That is why the publisher urges readers to email any new information, or updates to Les Fancourt at [thefancourts@btinternet.com](mailto:thefancourts@btinternet.com) – updates will be published in B&R.

Having in a small way contributed to the body of discographical literature ('The Complete Muddy Waters Discography', co-authored with Fred Rothwell and published by Blues & Rhythm), I can appreciate the sheer effort that goes into producing a work of this size and scope.

Les Fancourt and Bob McGrath (and every contributor) deserve a big vote of thanks from everyone who ever listened to a 78, 45, LP or CD and wondered 'who is that harp/pianist/backing vocalist', or wondered if anything else of interest was ever issued by a particularly obscure label. If you have anything like a passing interest, and you are still hoarding your birthday present money, then do yourself a favour and order a copy of this magnificent publication, you will surely find that it will enhance your enjoyment of this music that we all love.

**Phil Wight was reviewing: *The Blues Discography, 1943-1970 – The Classic Years (Third Edition)*, by Les Fancourt and Bob McGrath. Eyeball Productions, Inc.; ISBN 978-1-9995488-0-3; softback; 765 pages; \$99 plus shipping. Copies can be ordered at [www.eyeballproductions.com](http://www.eyeballproductions.com). Label shots from the B&R Archive.**

