

Detroit Blues Masters Vol.2: Robert Richard - Walter Mitchell

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 22 November 2015 16:57 -

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01. *Stop messing around* 02. *Pet milk blues* 03. *Broke and hungry* Walter Mitchell – vocals, harmonica Robert Richard – harmonica Boogie Woogie Red – piano Little George – bass Detroit, Mi. 1948
04. *Watercoast blues* 05. *Low down dirty shame* 06. *Shady land blues* Walter Mitchell – vocals, harmonica + band Detroit, Mi. 1954
07. *Rambling around blues* Sam Kelly – vocals, harmonica Robert Richard – harmonica L.C. Green – guitar Detroit, Mi. 1953
08. *Cadillac woman* 09. *Wig wearing woman* 10. *Wigwam woman* 11. *New York Central* 12. *Root hog* 13. *Baby please don't go* Robert Richard – vocals, harmonica Walter Mitchell - harmonica Boogie Woogie Red – piano Little George – bass Detroit, Mi. 1948
14. *Drunk driver's coming* 15. *Stolen property* Robert Richard – vocals, guitar Howard Richard - vocals, guitar Detroit, Mi. 1959

Robert Richard (born in Cartersville, Ga. on octobere 4th, 1924) learned the guitar and the harmonica with his uncle, a quite famous bootlegger who had troubles with the Chicago Mafia! Robert, like a lot of other southerners, came to work in the automobile industry in 1942. With his brother Howard (himself a good singer and guitarist), Robert is quite quickly a steady member of the blues fraternity who play in the numerous Hastings Street clubs. Robert acquires a strong reputation with his powerful harmonica style largely derived from John lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson's. He records with Walter Mitchell and pianist Boogie Woogie Red in 1948, then is featured as a sideman on many Detroit recording sessions, particularly with Bobo Jenkins (whose band he is a permanent member). He waxes some sides under his name for Chess in Chicago but those titles unfortunately are still unissued! After the blues becomes outfashioned among the young black public in the 60's and the once thriving Hastings Street bluescene disappears completely, Robert Richard gives up the music. But he is rediscovered by George Paulus who records him in 1975 and 1977 for an excellent all acoustic LP. But this album sells very poorly and Richard drifts in obscurity. We don't even know the date and place of his probable death.

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Walter Mitchell (born in Pickens, Ark on march 19th, 1919) comes to Detroit with his mother in 1926 already playing the harmonica! He hoboed everywhere in the Southern States during the 1930's, playing and singing the blues under the name Little Walter according to his diminutive stature (before Walter Jacobs). Drafted in 1942, Walter is badly wounded in the leg on the Pacific front and discharged in 1944, he settles permanently in Detroit, making a living from his music, frequently in company of his cousin, the singer and guitariste L.C. Green. Although he has been quite often in the Detroit studios as a sideman, Walter made only two sessions under his name, first in 1948 with Robert Richard and another in 1954. He relocates in Toledo during the 60's where he is interviewed by some British researchers for the Blues Unlimited magazine. That allows him to make some great appearances in Toledo. He dies there on january 10th 1990.

Last but not least, harp player and singer Sam Kelly waxed only one title, the stupendous Rambling around blues. Sam is a complete unknown but it has been strongly suggested that Sam Kelly was in fact a nom de disque for none other than Walter Mitchell. --- Gérard Herzhaft, jukegh.blogspot.com

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