

over BB King's guitar, but further tracks lay in the Chess vaults for many years. When Muddy's band played the Newport Folk Festival in 1960, Otis sang 'Goodbye Newport Blues' which appeared on the subsequent live album. This sparked Otis's debut solo album for Candid Records, 'Otis Spann is the Blues!' and the follow up, 'Walking The Blues'. These sessions featured Robert Jr. Lockwood and Lightnin' Hopkins on guitar, with some vocal help from 'St. Louis Jimmy' Oden. Touring and recording with Muddy, Otis was in London in 1964 where he cut an album as front-man for Mike Vernon's Blue Horizon label, with contributions from Muddy and the young Eric Clapton.

Back in The States, Otis shared the album 'The Blues Never Die!' with harp player James Cotton. Sessions with Lonnie Johnson, T-Bone Walker, Buddy Guy and Junior Wells, as well as working in the Chess house-band and touring with Muddy meant that Otis was very busy. He decided to go solo in 1969, and his place in Muddy's band was taken by Pinetop Perkins. This new freedom meant that Otis was able to record a huge repertoire of Chicago classics in his own style, and he contributed many of his own songs too. A highlight was 'The Biggest Thing Since Colossus', an album he recorded in 1969 with members of Fleetwood Mac after they had taken part in the live 'Blues Jam at Chess' sessions.



Walking the Blues is arguably the finest record Otis Spann ever cut, boasting 11 cuts of astounding blues piano. On several numbers, Spann is supported by guitarist Robert Jr. Lockwood and their interaction is sympathetic, warm, and utterly inviting. Spann relies on originals here, from "Half Ain't Been Told" to "Walking the Blues," but he also throws in a few standards ("Goin' Down Slow," "My Home Is in the Delta") that help draw a fuller portrait of his musicianship. Most importantly, however, is the fact that Walking the Blues simply sounds great – it's some of the finest blues piano you'll ever hear.

Otis Spann is renowned as Muddy Waters' pianist throughout his Classic period of electric Chicago Blues, and a member of the Chess house-band that backed a roster of their big selling artists. He did rather more than that, as he showed off his great Blues voice on a series of fine albums in a solo career that was cut short by his untimely death.

In 1930 Otis was born in Jackson MS, into a musical family, as his father was a minister who played piano and his mother played guitar. It is sometimes said that Otis and Muddy Waters were half-brothers, and if that is so, Frank Houston Spann was doing more than missionary work in the farmlands up near Rolling Fork, north of Jackson! Otis

learned piano from listening to Big Maceo records and the playing of local man Friday Ford, and soon he was sitting in with local bands. Some sources say Otis joined the Army when he was 16, and others say he moved to Chicago when his mother died in 1947, but what is certain is that when he arrived on the South-side scene he got in touch with Big Maceo Merriweather. The piano star had suffered a stroke and was not performing much, but he took Otis under his wing, tutoring him in barrel-house and boogie styles, and introducing him around the club scene. Otis teamed up with guitarist Morris Pejoe for a while until he joined Muddy Waters' band in 1952. This was the start of a long and mutually beneficial partnership that saw Muddy's blockbusting performances backed by Otis's steady rolling piano figures and sympathetic solos.

Drag-out barrelhouse piano and lovely slurred vocals as Otis tells you 'Ain't Nobody's Business';

Otis was the longest serving member of Muddy's band and Chess Records' policy of using a house-band meant that he was often heard with Willie Dixon, Jimmy Rogers and Fred Below backing Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, Bo Diddley and a host of others. In 1954, Otis released a single, 'It Must Have been the Devil', where he took the vocal lead



Jimmy Witherspoon Sings The Blues At The Renaissance

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- 1 Time's Gettin' Tougher Than Tough 3:20
- 2 How Long 3:10
- 3 Corina-Corina 3:05
- 4 C.C. Rider 4:15
- 5 Outskirts Of Town 2:58
- 6 Kansas City 3:15
- 7 Trouble In Mind 3:15
- 8 St. Louis Blues 3:35

Vocals – Jimmy Witherspoon Baritone Saxophone – Gerry Mulligan

Bass – Leroy Vinnegar Drums – Mel Lewis

Piano – Jimmy Rowles Tenor Saxophone – Ben Webster

Released 1960 by the Hifi Jazz Label

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