

Junior Wells – Blues Hit Big Town (1977)

Written by bluesever

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1. Hoodoo Man [play](#) 2. Cut That Out 3. Junior's Wail 4. Tomorrow Night 5. Ways Like An Angel 6. Eagle Rock 7. Please Throw This Poor Dog A Bone 8. Blues Hit Big Town

[play](#)

9. Lord Lord 10. 'Bout The Break Of Day 11. So All Alone 12. Can't Find My Baby 13. Please Throw This Poor Dog A Bone (Alternate) 14. Junior's Wail (Alternate) 15. Eagle Rock (Alternate) 16. Lord Lord (Alternate) 17. Blues Hit Big Town (Alternate)

Junior Wells (vocals, harmonica); Otis Spann (guitar, piano); Elmore James, Louis Myers, Muddy Waters (guitar); Johnny Jones (piano); Dave Myers (bass guitar); Fred Below, Odie Payne, Jr. (drums).

This 1998 CD reissue of Wells' debut recordings for the States label adds four previously unheard tracks along with the original 13-track vinyl lineup. Wells' legacy begins with these landmark sides, featuring Elmore James, Muddy Waters, Johnnie Jones, Otis Spann, Willie Dixon, and the Aces in the lineup at various points. Whether it's a slow one like his original take on "Hoodoo Man" or a jump number like "Cut That Out," the grooves are classic Chicago and a mile deep. Most telling are the acoustic duets with Louis Myers recorded between the 1953 and 1954 studio sessions and the fine instrumentals like "Junior's Wail" and "Eagle Rock." Although at the start of a long career, it's obvious that Junior Wells was already a young man with a style all his own, ready to make blues history. File under essential. ---Cub Koda

The long-overdue release of this seminal collection on CD is cause for celebration; not only that, but Delmark Records added four previously unreleased tracks, making this CD all the more essential for harp fans in general and Junior Wells fans in particular (and what harp fan could not like Wells?). The tracks on Blues Hit Big Town were recorded in 1953-54 and are thus of

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historical interest as well; these are Wells's first recordings, done shortly after he joined the Muddy Waters Band. From the slow, smoking "Hoodoo Man" and the title track, to the tight, high-powered "Cut That Out" and "Tomorrow Night," everything here is first-rate, and the added bonus tracks make this re-release a special treat. ---Genevieve Williams, allmusic.com

Originally released in 1977, this album brings together Junior Wells' earliest singles, recorded in 1953 and 1954 when he was just a teenager (he turned 20 in December, 1954). This 1998 CD reissue adds six bonus tracks, five of which are alternate takes, and while the liner notes are somewhat sparse, the music is top-notch.

Junior Wells' first LP came out more than ten years later, in 1965, but these tough early singles, taped when Junior was Muddy Waters' harmonica player, are at least as seminal. Junior's sublime first reading of "Hoodoo Man" is here, alongside a rollicking "Cut That Out", a lean, mean "Please Throw This Poor Dog A Bone", the swinging "Tomorrow Night", and the blazing instrumentals "Eagle Rock" and "Junior's Wail". Junior's rendition of John Lee "Sonny Boy" Williamson's "'Bout The Break Of Day" is every bit as powerful as "Hoodoo Man" (another Williamson-number) and he sounds thoroughly menacing on the grinding title track.

As well as playing with Muddy Waters, Junior Wells was the lead singer of the Aces for a while, a group which consisted of brothers Louis and Dave Myers on guitar and bass respectively, and drummer extraordinaire Fred Below. They back him on most of these recordings, and Johnnie Jones lends his considerable talents on piano on the 1953 sides. And the great Elmore James appears as well, wielding his smouldering bottleneck on the master take of "Hoodoo Man". Piano player Otis Spann from the Muddy Waters band is rolling the 88s on the 1954 recordings, and Waters himself shows up as well, backing Wells on guitar.

These early recordings are some of Junior Wells' finest and grittiest, and while his blistering harmonica playing was often more or less absent on his 60s and 70s waxings, it takes centre stage on these superb 50s singles. A must have. ---Docendo Discimus

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