

Victoria Spivey

Blues

Is My Business

One of the happiest months of my life! I have had many Bands and Shows, but I'm telling you, few have measured up to the wonderful people I have had the honor of working with in the German Folk - Blues Festival which played 31 days from Oct. 23 thru Nov. 22, 1963 through 8 countries and 22 cities. Everybody, the bosses, the managers, the producers, the blues stars, all were just great!

First blues star was Big Joe Williams, a sweetheart, spoiled and funny as hell, but a star through and through. He was the 'father' of the blues in this show.

Second was Big Willie Dixon who was a 'bad' man not only with that bass but when he sang his 'Nervous Man' which about knocked everybody out. Personally, he's a sweet good natured soul with a heart as big as he.

Third, there was Lonnie Johnson who is so sad looking at times that you just can't help loving him - and when he starts singing and wailing that guitar, watch out!! He's a champ.

Fourth, there's the dynamic Sonny Boy Williamson, I'm speaking of the original Sonny Boy, who looks like an aristocrat with his English derby, suit and umbrella, but my! my! when he grabs those 25 harps and starts making them fairly talk, you flip - and when he starts singing with that whispering voice, all you can do is stay in your chair and hold on.

Fifth, comes Otis Spann who is a perfect little gentleman, but don't let that fool you. That cat can play more piano with his eyes shut than the average person with both eyes open.

Sixth is Matt Guitar Murphy who today is the 'mostest' guitar player I have heard, and baby! I have been listening for '100 years' (smiles).

Seventh - Billy Stepney who needs no introduction. That kid can really swing his drums. I like him so much, I call him my son.

Eighth, is the remarkable Muddy Waters. Here's an artist from his heart, a true trouper. What a voice!! When he does 'Hoochie Koochie' you might as well relax for awhile because he just sews the show up.

Ninth, there's Memphis Slim, who's the Blues evangelist here in Europe. He's opened up so many places for us to sing in with his missionary work in the blues that his value is enormous. It was a wonderful pleasure to be associated with him.

Well, all the boys called me their Queen and I addressed them as my Knights - and they really treated me like a Queen.

Horst Lippmann, our employer was a wonderful fellow. Boy! did he take care of us! The best hotels, best jets, best trains, someone to look after our luggage, dressing rooms, looking after our money needs and so much more. He made us really feel at home in Europe.

There was Joe Berendt who was associated with Horst who was so sweet to me, took me to a swell restaurant in the Black Forest in Germany. It was Joe who suggested me for the tour and I still thank him.

There was Fritz Rau, Horst's partner, who became one of my good friends.

Then, there was poor little Lennie Kunststadt who worked so hard for me to make my stay happy. I'm mighty temperamental at times but Lennie calmed me down, and led me straight.

I met so many wonderful people that it would take many more pages just to tell you about them. A few were Gunter & Lore Boas, Johnny and Liza Simmens, Hugues Panassie and Madame Gautier, Yannick Bruynoghe and Mrs., Paul & Valerie Oliver, Robert Noss, Hartmut Joepchen, Derek Stewart-Baxter, Chris Barber, Derek Coller, George Adins, Stephanie Wiesand (sweet girl who took the photo), Mae Mercer, Mr. & Mrs. Jack Dupree, Mike Scheller, Curtis Jones, Vivian Snow, Karl Knudsen, Max Jones, Valerie Wilmer, Pam Bavin, Cyril Davies, Doug Dobell, Bill Tatum, Herb Koleczek and so many others. If I left some of you out, please forgive me. There will be other writeups of this wonderful festival.

When the boys and I parted on our return jet flight to New York I cried like a child and some of them had tears in their eyes too. It was really wonderful that so many stars could work so well together and understand each other so well.



Left to Right: MEMPHIS SLIM, MUDDY WATERS, BIG JOE WILLIAMS, SONNY BOY WILLIAMSON, LONNIE JOHNSON and VICTORIA SPIVEY AT BADEN BADEN GERMANY on the first leg of their Blues tour. Photo by Stephanie Wiesand