

Johnny Drummer

The Southside Saturday Night Pianoman

By Michael Frank

Johnny Drummer was born Thessex Johns on March 1, 1938 in Alligator, Mississippi, a small town 12 miles south of Clarksdale in the heart of the Delta. There he saw musicians like Little Milton and Ike Turner every weekend, and listened to his three brothers play hollow-box guitars on long summer nights, learning all the blues, R&B and soul songs of the time. Soon he began singing, and at age seven joined the Kelly Brothers Band in Alligator.

His career as a musician expanded when he joined the Army and learned to play drums. In his three-year army career, he sat in on drums with bands that came around, honing his skills as a musician. Upon leaving the military in 1959, he moved to Chicago, where he began sitting in with Lovie Lee, Big Walter Horton, and Carey Bell at a bar on the corner near his house. He soon began playing drums in Lovie's band, and later moved on to play with guitarist Eddie King.

In 1962 he cut a record for Wonderful Records, which featured Eddie Kings, Willie Black, Roy Johnson, Willie "Big Eyes" Smith and Otis Spann. In 1965 he got the chance to play with BB King at a club when BB's drummer failed to show up for the gig. In 1966 he went to see Muddy Waters, and was asked to sit in on bass. He was later asked to tour with Muddy, but declined his offer, uneasy at the prospect of life

"Drummer's suave vocal, front and center, are rich and full of character..." - Blues Revue

on the road. He started his band and gained local notoriety in the late 1960s as the leader of a band hired by touring soul blues acts passing through Chicago. In the 1960s he taught himself to play the electronic key-board and now makes this his primary instrument.

In recent years Johnny has released three albums for the Earwig Music label. He performs regularly at Chicago venues, in addition to performing internationally at festivals and blues clubs, including acclaimed performances at the Chicago Blues Festival, Pocono Blues Festival, University of Illinois Blues Festival, and several others in the US, Canada, and Europe.

www.johnnydrummermusic.com Johnny Drummer 773-881-8888

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Partial Discography

It's So Nice, Unleaded Blues, and Rockin' in the Juke Joint - Earwig Music Company

What is the Soul of a Man?

I think the soul of a man is someone that works hard and puts his feeling heart and soul into his work music or what ever craft that he loves.

"Drummer has managed a distinctive sound in a sound-alike idiom..." - Living Blues

Best Soul singer ever?

Jackie Wilson; he had the most powerful voice, he could dance, he always puts on a good show.

Best Soul Singer alive today?

James Brown; I think his record speaks for it self.

Best place to hear Soul Music live?

Lee's Unleaded Blues Chicago, people come from all parts of the world, good blues, no cover charge.

Soul Queen? Why?

Aretha Franklin, she can sing and plays nice piano.

Best soul Song ever written or recorded?

Charles Brown's "Merry Christmas." Why? It has been around a long time and they is still playing it.

Best Soul Food?

Catfish or barbeque, collard greens, sweet candy yams, with spaghetti.



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