

Some of the new blues bands have it easy, playing college bars and fake juke joints. **Texas Bluesmen** came up in a tougher school.



**Robert Ealey** was born in Texarkana. He sang there, mostly in church. A move to Dallas put him in touch with hardball blues by Li'l Son Jackson and Frankie Lee Sims, and a local song and dance legend Finny Mo (Leslie Finney II). He relocated to Fort Worth and played drums with Lightnin' Hopkins and later with U.P. Wilson, but it was his bullmoose voice that got him his regional renown. With the dreaded Five Careless Lovers, he reigned as resident blues shouter at Ft. Worth's fabled Bluebird Club. Going there to hear him was a rite of passage (although truth be told, it wasn't as dangerous as certain celebs would have you believe).

Joe Nick Patoski, author of the Stevie Ray Vaughan bio *Caught In The Crossfire* (Little/Brown, 1993) was a Bluebird habitué and wrote some of his first published work in praise of Ealey. A passionate and often witty performer, Ealey comes armed with a passel of cover songs and a few million of his own, the latter wry and observant. He's heard here with some serious guitarists! Note how the Fort Worth style of Sumter Bruton differs from that of the young Dallasites, Jim Suhler and Mike Morgan. Note also the deft acoustic work of Tone Sommer (pictured above) a member of Ealey's working band. Ealey's recent sets on foreign tours were critically lauded. **Texas Bluesmen** permits yet more fans to access a treasure Fort Worth's known about for years.



**Curly "Barefoot" Miller** crops up in a revealing reminiscence by Leslie "Finny Mo" Finney II, once with the Two Hepcats.

"We had lots of competition!" he wrote. "Teams like Mack and Ace, The Two Zephyrs, Kit and Kat, Butterbeans and Suzie, Curly "Barefoot" Miller, Moke 'n' Poke, Porkchop and Kidney Stew, Redd Foxx, and many more acts which were tough!"

Man, those are names to conjure by! Foxx got famous but most of the others passed from sight as did their idiom - African American vaudeville (one of the most under-researched of all entertainment forms). Born in New Orleans, he started out as a circus performer, and then strode right into American folklore as a hooper on the medicine show circuit. He'd dazzle the marks with song and dance and then step aside

as the quacks sold a "cure-all" that in reality cured nothing but sobriety. He had a stint touting Hadacol (the same elixir B.B. King peddled in the '50's). When he finally settled in Dallas, he met every hustler, hipster, and R&B musician in town. Some years ago he started doing guest shots with Cold Blue Steel. They'd beat hell out of a place with their Texafied blend of rock, blues and R&B, and then bring up "Barefoot", who'd conquer all with salty stories and blues singing tinged with the phrasings of jazz. At 91, Curly, Dallas' Oldest Teenager, lives on, a senior member of the great Southwestern showbusiness community. North Texas nightlifers can go hear him live, these days, with various local Dallas blues bands. That his exuberant music may now be sampled by larger audiences, is welcome indeed.



**Joe Jonas** is a big man with a big voice, who blows a mean harmonica to boot. Born in Beaumont, Texas, he was just a kid when he first took to the road with Zydeco legend Clifton Chenier, who billed him as "Little Jimmy Reed Junior". In 1955 he moved to Dallas and played such venues as the Green Parrot, the Ascot, and the Zanzibar (all loom large in Texas blues lore). In '69 he went to California, where he had a stint at Tiki Jack's near Berkeley University. Knee and back surgery sidelined him a while, but after some shape-up gigs at the Sho-Nuff Barbecue back home in Dallas, he was ready again for the front lines. These days he's one busy bluesman, who slayed 'em three days running at the Eureka Springs

bluesfest in Arkansas in '93. He's heard here with some major caliber players including guitarist "Mighty" Paul Young, who first came to the fore in The Cricket Taylor Band. You can always rely on "Mighty" Paul for staying power and pure-dee great blues guitar! He and Joe are forceful additions to the distinguished roster of talented Lone Star bluesmasters.



"Mighty" Paul Young

*These days, many people have no time. No time for mall rock, jazz lite, or grunge band of the month. They want real music. That's just what you get from **Texas Bluesmen**.*

