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MUDDY WATER



MUDDY WATER BAND

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By EARL CALLOWAY

One couldn't help but think that the music he was listening to as Muddy Waters performed at Mister Kelly's became a wonderful kaleidoscope of black emotional experiences.

People responded because they thought Muddy's presentation was alright. Others didn't or couldn't understand the songs beyond the words.

Within the body of those spirit-ed songs, the slow and easy lilting melody filled with sadness, is the emotional outburst of a lonely soul searching for happiness.

It is remarkable that these facets of Afro-American culture is preserved in individuals like Muddy Waters. It is significant that Waters follows a long line of blues singers that dates back into the 19th century.

The blues are different from spirituals. Spirituals expressed hope, faith and anticipation of rebirth in the hereafter. Blues were the result of a sad disappointing experiences. Their lyrics and the textures of their harmony and melodies were filled with grief and unrequited love. The old folks and Christians called them "reels."

These songs of the people were all over. They were heard in the Carolinas and Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, Alabama, Tennessee, Kansas, Oklahoma and Missouri.

Its roots are buried deep in the black man's struggle in this country and found its greatest development and expression after the Civil War.

Until W. C. Handy, a great musician and composer took the musical elements of he found in the sentimental expression of grief

and hard luck and harnessed within the framework of a particular musical style, they were merely a folk idiom.

This great musician who became known as the father of the blues imitated the grunts, sounds and slurs he hear in notation and thereby created a new and different American art song.

In essence, the blues are, as it eventually, came from the pen of W. C. Handy, as comparable to the art songs of Germany, France, Italy or Russia.

From one generation these songs passed and were retained and learned by the younger children.

Earlier singers of the blues were such individuals as Blind Lemon Jefferson, (1897-1930), Blind Willie Johnson, (1899-1949). Huddie "Ladbelly" Ledbetter (1888-1949) and a host of others we don't even know.

Ma Rainey was recognized as the "Mother of the Blues," but Mamie Smith is credited for having record "Crazy Blues" making her the first black to record the blues on the Okeh label.

Later Bessie Smith became known as the Empress of the Blues and was among the first entertainers to become internationally famous.

Other blues singers included Ida Cox, Ethel Waters, Clara Smith, Peg Leg Howell and Rev. J. C. Burnet.

Ma Rainey fronted her own Wildcat Jazz Band.

A gifted blues singer was Sippie Wallace, Barbecue Bob, John Hurt, Furry Lewis, Sleepy John Estes and the Memphis Jug Band and Gus Cannon's Jug Stompers.