

OKIE DOKIE BLUES

When *Juke Blues* reader Robert Hutt went to Tulsa, Oklahoma on a year's teacher exchange programme, he did not expect to find much in the way of blues. He was pleasantly surprised to find a growing local scene including a hot juke joint!

He writes: 'It was by coincidence that I came across the Tulsa Blues Club. We had been out for the day and on the car radio to keep me alert. There was a blues programme on and they gave the phone number of the TBC — members. There is about 10–12 hours of blues per week on the radio in the Tulsa area (compared with 40 in London apparently). As well as local stations, KWGS-FM 89 (national public radio) is broadcasting blues on Saturday 'BluesStage', recorded in clubs throughout the US and presented by Ruth Brown. TBC have a blues jam at a club on the first Monday of every month. Some artists I saw there were Little Sonny Hill on harp, Flash Terry and Jimmy Ellis, all of whom are resident in this area.'

One of the area's most popular spots is the Down Home Blues Club, run by D.C. and Selby Minner. D.C. Minner, Flash Terry and Jimmy Ellis were all born within a year of each other and typify the blues styles that developed out of rural Oklahoma. D.C. Minner was born in Rentiesville in 1935. Some of his earliest memories are of a black guitarist named Al Freeman who played 'pocket knife slide guitar' at local house parties. D.C. has toured extensively throughout the United States, starting out on bass with the likes of Freddie King, O.V. Wright, Little Johnny Taylor, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Lowell Fulson. He now performs as a singer/guitarist with his wife Selby on bass. Their band, Blues On The Move, played across the country with an extended stay in California. The Down Home Blues Club is

open 15 March through 1 January; in their break early in the year, they go back on the road, but it is now the club for which they are best known. 'Chicago Kerry' wrote the following: 'I can't quite describe the wonderful feelings I had as I sat in this modern day juke house out in the country except this is how the blues began and what it's all about. This isolated house with blues creeping out the windows and it seemed to instill a closeness to the music and a realness that I've never experienced before.' We are proud to feature an article on the next page from the *Tulsa World* of 19 November 1989, which gives an account of the Down Home Blues Club.



Selby & D.C. Minner

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Blues

D.C. & Selby Minner

interviewed by
Jacques Depoorter



Lowell Fulson, Jay McShann, Claude Williams, Jimmy Nolen, Jimmy Rushing, Joe & Jimmy Liggins and Roy Milton do all have one thing in common they were all born in the state of Oklahoma and they all started their musical careers there. In search for greater fame, all of them moved to cities in other states such as Kansas City and Los Angeles. That may be the main reason why Oklahoma does not have the same magic among blueslovers as Mississippi, Texas or Louisiana. Undeservedly so, because up to the present day, Oklahoma has a blues tradition that is kept alive by younger players as well as by veteran musicians. One such veteran is guitarist/singer D.C. Minner. Playing mostly locally during the fifties, he was the bass-guitarist in the road bands of some of the greatest names in blues, rhythm & blues and black rock & roll during the sixties. In the early seventies he switched to the guitar. With his wife Selby, who is also the bass-guitarist and a featured singer in his band "Blues On The Move", he is living in his birthplace Rentiesville (Population : 75). Since 1988 D.C. & Selby are running there "The Down Home Blues Club", an authentic juke joint. In 1991 they started the annual "Dusk 'til Dawn Blues Festival" featuring some of the best national and local acts. D.C. & Selby also travel the state of Oklahoma performing in schools to teach the students. In the Winter of 1994 they were touring Europe. Their temporary home during this tour was in Ostend, Belgium where I could interview D.C. & Selby at length about their own fascinating careers and the blues scene in Oklahoma.

Oklahoma

The Blues Life Journal Ausland, Norway

Selby Minner

Living Blues

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Oklahoma Down Home Blues

DC and Selby Minner are Blues on the Move. DC was raised in an Oklahoma whiskey joint known as the Cozy Corner, which was run by his grandmother during the '40s, '50s, and '60s. After serving in the army, he traveled as a sideman with Lowell Fulson, Chuck Berry, Freddy King, Bo Diddley, and Eddie Floyd, before starting his own group with his wife and bassist Selby, who has played with Albert Collins, Hubert Sumlin, and Little Johnny Taylor, among others. In 1988, the Minners returned to DC's home, the all-black town of Rentiesville, Oklahoma, which was founded in 1904. The Minners operate the Down Home Blues Club and produce the Dusk 'til Dawn Blues Festival, now in its eighth year, on the land where DC was born. The Minners have released two CDs on their Texas Road Recordings label, Blues on the Move's Love Lost & Found and Guitar Showdown at the Dusk 'Til Dawn Blues Festival, which showcases seven Oklahoma-born guitarists. DC and Selby are also active in blues in the schools programs, serving as Artists in Residence for the State Arts Council of Oklahoma. Recently, DC was interviewed at the Down Home Blues Club for the Oprah Winfrey Show, as part of an "Oprah Book Club" feature on Toni Morrison's novel Paradise, which takes place in a rural black town in Oklahoma. In the interview, DC talked about growing up in one of Oklahoma's 28 original African-American towns and performed a song with Blues on the Move. The program aired on March 6.



DC Minner: DC stands for D only, C only. I come from a poor family and they couldn't afford very much. No long names. I was born an only child in Rentiesville, Oklahoma, on January 28, 1935. There was a lot of mixed marriages, a lot of black people around there was married to Indians. My great-great-grandfather came here when he was little, before statehood or anything happened. [The family] came from Alabama in a covered wagon, four Cherokee sisters with four black husbands

and their families followed the Trail of Tears and they stopped in Creek County because the Creek Indians was the ones who accepted interracial marriages, mostly, but they wanted to be close to the Cherokees, too. Tahlequah was right over the hill, so they had the best of both worlds. So they stopped there. My father and mother were Clarence and Helen Minner. He was born and raised in Mangum, Oklahoma [Mangum is in the cotton-growing, southwestern part of Oklahoma].

My mother and my aunties all sang. My grandmother and her three daughters had a singing group in church. They sung at all the churches in the community. There were five or six churches in Rentiesville. None of my folks ever played professionally. I went to grade school and high school in Rentiesville. The only kind of music we had in the school was chorus, no bands. I sang in the chorus and wound up marrying the chorus teacher, Doris Hayes.

My first memories of music [outside of church] was live music at house parties.

There was a black guy and one white one who teamed up to play those parties. The white guy's name was Slim and the black guy was Al Freeman, who played slide guitar with a pocket knife. He was a frail, little old black man that smoked his cigarette in an ivory cigarette holder. He had a terrible cough and he wore a stocking cap on his head. He'd take a woman's stocking, cut it off and tie a knot in it, and put grease on his hands and slick his hair down and leave the stocking on there. Most people when they come out they'd take the stocking off, but Al, when he was coming to our place he didn't think he was out yet. [Laughs] He'd just leave it on up under his hat. And the white guy named Slim was a very tall, tall fellow... nice man, mild mannered man, who I really believe, looking back, was a student of music. He was studying Al's



D.C. Minner's mother, Helen Minner, and grandmother, Lura Pearson Drennan, in the grocery store adjacent to the Cozy Corner, Rentiesville, Okla., circa 1960s.

COURTESY DC MINNER

Learning from the best



Staff photos by Kirk Kramer

Selby Minner works with Jessie Fausett, 14, of Muskogee during guitar lessons Thursday at the Muskogee Public Library. Minner teaches a weekly course for beginners at the Muskogee library. Minner teaches an advanced class at the Jim Lucas Checotah Public Library.

Musician shares talent and experience with others



In Each Issue
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A REVIEW OF OUR FESTIVAL:

Society Spotlight

*Dusk-til-Dawn Festival presented by the Down Home Blues Club,
affiliated organization of The Blues Foundation*

BY HAROLD SHARP - BLUES FOUNDATION MEMBER

For the benefit of those who have never heard of this festival, it is held every year on Labor Day weekend in the little (and I mean LITTLE) town of Rentiesville, Oklahoma. This is about 5 miles north of Checotah on Lake Eufala in the east central part of the state.

Every year it is hot as far as the weather is concerned, and this year was no exception. New records for heat were set on Friday and Saturday with 115° being recorded both days. The Blues were just as HOT.

The festival is organized in this fashion: There is a small stage at one end of an old cotton field for the first part of the night. There are 6 or 7 acts that play the stage and afterwards, those acts, as well as others, go into the juke joint at the other end of the field and play until dawn.

Suffice it to say "all night party" is a pretty apt description with food, soft drinks and beer being consumed in great quantities along with some fine down home Blues. Here are some of the highlights.

Friday's lineup was the North Mississippi All-Stars, the Steve Pryor Band, Wes Reynolds, Flash Terry and Lurrie Bell. Of course, it should go without saying that Down Home Blues Club founders Selby and D.C. Minner played all three nights. This is easily justifiable because it is their party, on their land and at their juke joint.

Saturday night was full of excitement and quality, the lineup including The Danny White Saloon Band, Chris Cameron, Big Mike Griffin, Michael Burks, and the legendary

Jimmy Johnson. Two other bands also played, Clarence Guitar Sims and Shortt Dogg with Dycie Funches.

Chris Cameron won the Albert King Award for the most promising guitarist and 1st place at The Blues Foundation's International Blues Talent Competition in 1997. As a result of the IBTC victory, Cameron opened the show at this year's W.C. Handy Blues Awards back in May. The 19-year-old also won a national award as best acoustic guitarist in 1997. Chris played acoustic guitar at those competitions, but at this festival, he played

stratacasters. Hailing from Fort Smith, Arkansas, Cameron is a real treat to see. He's not flashy, and did mostly covers, but with a little experience and age, he will be one to remember.

The Michael Burks Blues Band is nothing

new to anyone in the Arkansas area. Michael is a friend (something I am proud to say) and he is one killer Bluesman. I don't throw that term around loosely, having been chastised by much more knowledgeable people in this music. Michael won the 1994 Albert King Award for most promising guitarist at the International Blues Talent Competition in Memphis and has been noted by Living Blues and other publications as a true Blues artist to keep an eye on. Take my word for it, if you have a chance to catch Michael Burks, do it. It won't be long before he will be in so much demand that his schedule will put him three and four years out for those who want to book him.

After Michael's set, D.C. and Selby came

"Suffice it to say 'all night party' is a pretty apt description..."

BLUES At the FOUNDATION, Memphis TN
Newsletter of the International Blues Foundation

FROM BLACK TOWN TO BLUES FESTIVALS

D.C. Minner's Life and Music in Rentiesville Oklahoma
Exhibit World Premier -- Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame
Frisco Depot, Muskogee, Jan 29 - February 6, 2011



D.C. MINNER, SELBY AND BLAIR IN THE MOVIE



DUSK 'TIL DAWN
Blues Festival
Stars & Guitars
Rentiesville
Labor Day Weekend
F-S-S 5pm-1am 473-2411
deminnerblues.com



Grand Opening Party
Saturday Jan 29, 7 - 11 pm



Recreating the Rentiesville
Juke Joint Experience at the DMHDF \$15 incl. BBQ
dinner & 5 BANDS incl 7 OK Blues Hall of Famers



THE PERFORMERS WE PRESENT

The PEOPLE WHO MAKE THIS HAPPEN

