

John Littlejohn - Chicago Blues Stars (1968)

Written by bluesever (Bogdan Marszałkowski)

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A1 What In The World You Goin' To Do 3:53 A2 Treat Me Wrong 3:30 A3 Catfish Blues 3:30 A4 Kiddeo 3:45 A5 Slidin' Home 3:56 B1 Dream 5:15 B2 Reelin' And Rockin' 2:25 B3 Been Around The World 5:20 B4 Shake Your Money Maker 4:19 Bass – Alvin Nichols
Drums – Booker Sidgrave Rhythm Guitar – Monroe Jones, Jr. Tenor Saxophone – Robert Pulliam, Willie Young Vocals, Guitar – John Littlejohn

This November 14, 1968, session was recorded in Chicago, co-produced by Chris Strachwitz of Arhoolie Records and Willie Dixon. It's decent, though journeyman, '60s electric Chicago blues augmented by a couple of tenor saxes. Littlejohn has a pleasant voice and is a skilled guitarist, but does not have the fire or individuality that leaps from some of the musicians to whom one might compare him. Those might include figures like Buddy Guy, say, or Elmore James' more fully produced sides, or on something like "Catfish Blues," the Muddy Waters approach. Littlejohn did write most of the dozen tunes, interspersed with covers of songs by James, Dixon, Brook Benton (a refreshingly unusual choice for a mainstream '60s Chicago bluesman), and J.B. Lenoir. ---Richie Unterberger, AllMusic Review

It's hard to figure why John Littlejohn (Funchess) never became as popular as other Chicago bluesmen of his generation, artists such as Magic Sam, James Cotton and Buddy Guy.

Regardless, Littlejohn has the kind of instantly accessible yet authentically blues sound that propelled his better-known contemporaries to fame.

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On this 1968 set, Littlejohn covers both his own material as well as more familiar covers with equal aplomb. He's a strong singer and an even better guitarist, with a clean sound that draws attention where it belongs – on his imaginative playing.

The five-man combo backing Littlejohn (including two tenor saxes) is as unknown as he, and plays every bit as well. All in all, this is a fine bit of Chicago blues, even if the artist is virtually unknown. --Jim Trageser, trageser.com

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