

Alexis Korner - Red Hot From Alex (1964)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Woke Up This Morning* 2 *Skippin'* 3 *Herbie's Tune* 4 *Stormy Monday* 5 *It's Happening*
6 *Roberta* 7 *Jones* 8 *Cabbage Greens* 9 *Chicken Shack* 10 *Haitian Fight Song* Alto
Saxophone – Dave Castle Bass [String Bass] – Danny Thompson Drums – Barry Howton
Flute – Dave Castle (tracks: 4) Organ – Ron Edgeworth Piano – Ron Edgeworth (tracks: 1, 4
to 7, 10) Tenor Saxophone – Art Themen, Dick Heckstall-Smith (tracks: 2, 3, 9) Vocals,
Electric Guitar – Alexis Korner Vocals, Instruments [Tumbas] – Herbie Goins (tracks: 4, 6, 10)

One of Alexis Korner's better and more obscure albums, *Red Hot From Alex*, features the 1964 version of Blues Incorporated, supported by alumnus Dick Heckstall-Smith on tenor sax on a handful of tracks, recreating their live sound in the studio. The results are reasonably successful, the group at times achieving a fairly intense, swinging ensemble sound that, at its best, carries an infectious level of excitement. This band's sound is a lot slicker throughout than that of the version of Blues Incorporated that played the Marquee Club in 1962 and 1963 and left behind the album *R&B From The Marquee*. The opener, "Woke Up This Morning," has a convincingly funky sound, driven by Herbie Goins' vocals, and a fairly together rhythm section, though Dave Castle's alto sax seems a little too lightweight to pull off the authenticity. The group leaps back to somewhat purer blues on "Skippin'," featuring Heckstall-Smith's tenor, Korner playing some suitably animated rhythm guitar, and Ron Edgeworth aggressively attacking his organ. The first minute of "Herbie's Tune" offers a great showcase for Korner's guitar, soon joined by Heckstall-Smith's sax, and Edgeworth's organ, while "Stormy Monday" throws a flute into an otherwise similar mix -- one can easily imagine Brian Jones dueting with Korner on those cuts. The only real flaw in the album, apart from an over-reliance on jazz at the expense of blues, is the lack of any real charismatic presence within the band, vocally or instrumentally -- "Stormy Monday" shows off the group to best advantage, with Korner in the spotlight playing some of the flashiest and most compelling blues licks of his career, and if the album could have had a few more tracks like that, it just might have found an audience not far from the listenership that John Mayall and Graham Bond were cultivating; a little too much of what surrounds the blues here, however, is significantly less exciting jazz, played well enough, but otherwise not really terribly diverting -- "Roberta," "It's Happening," and "Jones" probably went

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over big at the group's club dates, but just don't make for great moments on record, and Korner's own "Cabbage Greens," showcasing his low-wattage guitar pyrotechnics (which just might prove refreshing to those weary of, or only versed in, the Jimi Hendrix/Jimmy Page school of blues guitar) and Edgeworth's organ playing, isn't much more interesting. "Chicken Shack" is the track that best captures the group's sound at its most engaging, and the album is a welcome document of their work, but it's more of a historic curio than an essential acquisition, on a musical par with, say, John Mayall Plays John Mayall. ---Bruce Eder, allmusic.com

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