

Hubert Sumlin's Blues Party (1987)

Written by bluesever

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01. *Hidden Charms* 02. *West Side Soul* 03. *A Soul That's Been Abused* 04. *Letter to My Girlfriend* 05. *How Can You Leave Me, Little Girl?* 06. *Can't Call You No More* 07. *Blue Guitar* 08. *Down in the Bottom* 09. *Poor Me, Pour Me* 10. *Living the Blues* Musicians: Hubert Sumlin – guitar, vocals Michael Ward – bass David Maxwell - piano Jerry Portnoy – harmonica Bob Enos – trumpet Greg Piccolo – tenor sax, vocals Doug James – baritone sax John Rossi – drums + Ronnie Earl – guitar, slide guitar Mudcat Ward – bass Mighty Sam McClain – vocals Ron Levy – organ, piano, vocals

Hubert Sumlin was Howlin' Wolf's guitar player for 23 years, and his jagged, desperate, and angular guitar playing was a big part of Wolf's rough-and-tumble sound. This album was recorded in October 1986 at Newbury Sound in Boston, 11 years after Wolf's death, and although Sumlin had headlined some European albums, it was to be his debut solo album in the U.S. The sessions were initiated and put together by guitarist Ronnie Earl, who arranged for the presence of an all-star band, and brought in Mighty Sam McClain to handle most of the vocals, since Sumlin was notoriously reticent about occupying center stage. The result was really more of a jam session than anything else, and Sumlin doesn't really assert himself on any of these tracks, although his hesitant, soft, and fragile vocal on "How Can You Leave Me, Little Girl?" gives the song a real poignancy that manages to overcome the banal lyrics. There was nothing shy about McClain's singing, however, and he grabs the vocal microphone on four of the songs, including the strong opening track, a version of Willie Dixon's "Hidden Charms." Originally released on LP in 1987 by Black Top Records, Hubert Sumlin's Blues Party has a loose, fairly generic sound, and a case could be made that Sumlin wasn't quite ready yet for a solo career. Still, the album has its charms. ---Steve Leggett, Rovi

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