

Billy Boy Arnold – Sinner's Prayer (1976)

Written by bluesever

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*A1 I Was Fooled A2 Hi Heel Sneakers A3 Back Door Friend A4 Tomorrow Night
A5 Annie Lee B1 Ooh Wee B2 Blues In A Natural B3 I'm Gonna Move B4 Sinner's
Prayer* Billy Boy Arnold – harmonica, vocals Louis Myers – lead guitar (tracks: A1 to A5, B1
to B3) Sammy Lawhorn – lead guitar (B4), wah wah guitar (A1 to A4, B2, B3), Rhythm Guitar
(A5, B1) John "Big Moose" Walker – piano Odell Campbell – bass Chris Moss - drums

Billy Boy Arnold firmly established himself as one of the foremost practitioners of classic Chicago blues. His wailing harmonica playing and soulful vocals are a perfect match for his streetwise songwriting. The combination of Delta- influenced blues with a more urban sophistication not only defines Arnold's sound, but was also a significant contribution in the early, formative days of rock and roll. His early work with Bo Diddley and his highly influential singles in the late 1950s, brought him some local attention, but he never received the recognition he rightly deserved.

There are many harmonica players to come out the Chicago blues scene. Many, like Little Walter, Big Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson, Jr. Wells and James Cotton, have made blues history. Billy Boy Arnold was also there during this great movement.

Born in Chicago in 1935, Arnold grew up in an environment teeming with blues legends from Muddy Waters to Howlin' Wolf. Actually upon hearing the records of John Lee Williamson, Arnold decided to pursue the harmonica and by age 17 he was performing with Big Bill Broonzy, Memphis Minnie and the great Johnny Temple. It was also at the age of 17 that he recorded his first record. Chicago, in the early '50s, was a time when a blues band couldn't get work unless it featured a harmonica player. Arnold, who got his nickname "Billy Boy" from a record executive commenting on his youth, met Bo Diddley performing on a Chicago street corner in 1953 and soon teamed up with the great guitarist. Arnold's unique beat helped develop the Diddley sound

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and in 1955 they recorded a huge hit for Chess Records, "Bo Diddley" b/w "I'm A Man."

Chess was quite taken with Arnold but a mis-communication forced Arnold to sign with Vee Jay, where he cut the hit record, "I Wish You Would." Arnold was very popular at this time, and was a main feature in such clubs as Sylvio's, Ricky's, the 708 Club and Kid Riviera's. Arnold shared billings with such notables as Elmore James, Robert Nighthawk, Jr. Wells, and Howlin' Wolf. His Vee Jay release "I Wish You Would" was covered by the Yardbirds, who turned it into a hit in the 1960s.

His Vee Jay recordings have since been re-issued on CD and he has released over a dozen albums, among them acclaimed releases on Alligator Records as: "Back Where I Belong," ('93) and "El Dorado Cadillac," from '95. In 2001 he released "Boogie 'n' Shuffle," on Stony Plain. He did "Consolidated Mojo," in 2005, "Dirty Mother," (2007) and "Billy Boy Sings Sonny Boy," in 2008, quite a busy man of lately.

Rolling Stone Magazine recently lauded the Chicago harp legend for his "meaty, undiminished attack." Billy Boy Arnold is among the very last of the Chicago blues harmonica kings. --- James Nadal, musicians.allaboutjazz.com

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