

On the Road Again (Canned Heat)

Written by bluesever
Sunday, 09 October 2016 20:29 -

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Canned Heat's debut hit single, "**On the Road Again**" is one of the finest examples of updating ancient Delta blues into the psychedelic era of Top 40 radio. Based on a basic E-G-A blues chord pattern, Al Wilson built on the basics by adding a droning 'tambur' to give the arrangement a contemporary feel and flavor. Underneath and above this is Wilson utilizing his best Skip James-inspired falsetto vocal, as well as guitar and blues harp. The single was a huge hit, but it was live where the piece really took flight, extending -- according to legend -- by up to an hour during their concerts, allowing all of the band's fine musicians a chance to solo at will.

On the Road Again

Canned Heat was rare among the American blues-loving bands of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As one critic noted, the musicians were more popularizers than purists. Record-collecting blues fanatics Alan Wilson and Bob Hite (nicknamed "Bear" because of his 300-pound frame) changed the group's focus to electric boogie. After appearances at Monterey and Woodstock, at the end of the '60s the band had acquired worldwide notoriety with a lineup consisting of Bob Hite, vocals, Alan 'Blind Owl' Wilson guitar, harmonica and vocals, Henry Vestine or Harvey Mandel on lead guitar, Larry Taylor on bass, and Adolfo de la Parra on drums.



Canned Heat

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The music and attitude of Canned Heat were appreciated by a large public which made them one of the popular acts of the hippie era. They were able to deliver on stage electrifying performances either of blues standards or of their own material and occasionally to indulge into lengthier 'psychedelic' solos. Two of their songs "Going up the Country" and "On the Road Again" became international hits and indeed both were re-workings of obscure blues. At the time all their albums were released for worldwide distribution.



Canned Heat, Woodstock 1969

Their second released album, 'Boogie With Canned Heat,' included the worldwide hit "On The Road Again," an updated version 1953 composition by Floyd Jones. It was a remake of his successful 1951 song "Dark Road". Both songs are based on Mississippi Delta bluesman Tommy Johnson's 1928 song "Big Road Blues".



Boogie With Canned Heat, album

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It's essentially a cover of Jones' tune based on Tommy Johnson's song except that Canned Heat uses guitar harmonics and an Eastern string instrument called the tambur to get a unique droning psychedelic sound. Wilson was the singer, guitarist, harmonica player, and musical mastermind, and he sings lead on "On the Road Again". The song is famous for its harmonica solo, which has a note played in it that is very mysterious as it is not playable without an overblow. Alan Wilson retuned his harmonica's six hole up a half step.



Bob Hite

Wilson's recording career lasted just three years, as he died of a drug overdose in September 1970. The songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and all-around blues scholar was 27 years old—just like Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, who followed him into rock 'n' roll heaven two and four weeks later, respectively. Canned Heat continued on, but according to Taylor, it was never the same without the Blind Owl.



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Alan Wilson

Born in Arkansas, **Floyd Jones** (1917 – 1989) spent much of his formative years in the Mississippi Delta. He became very active in the post-war Chicago blues music scene, especially in it's early period (the late 1940's). With his cousin Moody, and other musicians such as Baby Face Leroy, Little Walter, Jimmy Rogers, Sunnyland Slim, Johnny Young, and Snooky Pryor, Floyd made some now-classic early post-war Chicago blues recordings and also performed in the Chicago area (especially on the famous Maxwell Street), helping to set the stage for more popular post-war stylings from artists such as Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf.



Floyd Jones

The 1950's saw only a few (but great) recording sessions for JOB, Chess and Vee-Jay but all of his early 1950's recordings stand as great examples of early post-war Chicago blues. Later in his career, the electric bass replaced the guitar as his main instrument, but he continued to remain active on the scene for many years.

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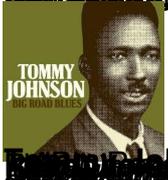
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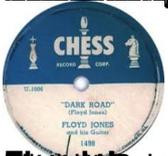
On the Road Again 1953, the song was written by Newell E. Jones, with



recorded in 1927, the song is based on the old saying that the farmer,



Big Road Blues 1927, the song was written by Tommy Johnson and



Dark Road 1958, the song is based on the old saying that the farmer,



On the Road Again 1968, the song was written by Newell E. Jones, with



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On The Road Again