The Aces – Kings Of Chicago Blues Vol. 1 (1971)



A1 The Aces Shuffle 3:21 A2 That's Allright 4:54 A3 Baby Please Don't Go 1:49 A4 Money Marbles And Chalk 3:30 A5 You Are So Fine 2:28 A6 You Upset Me Baby 2:37 B1 Dust My Broom 2:22 B2 I'll Take Three 3:08 B3 Blues With A Feeling 4:29 B4 It's All Your Fault 4:06 B5 L M Blues 4:42 Bass – Dave Meyers Drums – Fred Below Guitar [Second] – Eddie Taylor Lead Guitar – Louis Meyers (tracks: A4, A6), Sammy Lawhorn (tracks: A1 to A3, B1 to B5) Vocals, Harmonica – Louis Meyers

Brothers Louis and Dave Myers and their longtime friend Fred Below (pronounced BEE-low) formed the Three Aces, one of Chicago's premier blues combos, in the early 1950s. Also known as the Three Dukes, the Four Aces (when they hooked up with Junior Wells), the Jukes (when they teamed with Little Walter), or more often just the Aces, the band was in demand to play behind various singers, but also could deliver top-notch blues with Louis Myers taking a lead role.

The Myers brothers and their older harmonica-player sibling Bob were born into a musical family in the country near Byhalia, Mississippi—Louis on September 18, 1929, and Dave on October 30, 1927. They moved to Chicago 1941. Louis had started playing guitar in Mississippi and took it up again in Chicago, followed by Dave, who later switched to electric bass. They played with other blues artists on the South Side and on their own, without a drummer until Below joined. Below, who was born in Chicago on September 6, 1926, brought experience from playing in high school and U.S. Army bands and studying at a percussion school. Trained in jazz, he found the blues difficult at first but before long he had developed his own backbeat style, which set the standard for generations of blues drummers to come.

The group first recorded in 1952, backing Little Walter on "Mean Old World" and other numbers for Checker, a subsidiary of Chess Records in Chicago. Other sessions, club dates, and tours

with Walter followed. The foursome toured widely as one of the country's most popular and energetic young blues acts. Although Louis and Dave played with Junior Wells before Walter, they recorded with Wells only in 1953. Louis and Below also recorded with him 1954. All three Aces later backed Wells on a live recording in Boston.

As a unit the Aces were not a constant presence on the blues scene, although the individual members stayed busy in town or on the road. In testament to their prowess as an all-purpose band, the Aces backed Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Muddy Waters, T-Bone Walker, Koko Taylor, Lightnin' Slim, Jimmy Dawkins, and others at the 1972 Montreux Jazz Festival, in addition to doing their own set, and all the proceedings were recorded, resulting in several albums. They also recorded behind Jimmy Reed, Roosevelt Sykes, Billy Boy Arnold, Louis Jordan, Jimmy Rogers, Robert Lockwood Jr., Eddie Taylor, and numerous others in the U.S., Europe, or Japan. As the Aces, they recorded albums of their own for three French labels and a few tracks on various compilations. Louis Myers, heralded primarily for his skills on guitar, also possessed a potent harmonica attack and was featured on an instrumental single for the Abco label in Chicago in 1956. He later recorded albums on Advent, JSP, and Earwig. Both Louis and Dave also recorded a few songs for the Wolf label, and Dave concluded his recording career with a CD for Black Top in 1996.

Below was a prolific session drummer, providing the beat for dozens of other Chicago blues artists from 1952 through 1979, including Sonny Boy Williamson, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters, Otis Rush, and Koko Taylor. Louis and Dave, together or individually, added further session credits to the collective discography, recording with John Lee Hooker, Earl Hooker, Arthur "Big Boy" Crudup, and others. Below, also a photographer, had one number he liked to sing, "Route 66," introduced by "a one, a two, a you know what to do," and his renditions were recorded as a bonus on various sessions.

The Aces' Blues Hall of Fame induction would have been welcomed by the genial Below and likely viewed as a vindication by the Myers brothers, who were known to many for voicing conspiracy theories about the lack of respect and opportunities offered them. Below died on August 13, 1988, followed by Louis on September 4, 1994, and Dave on September 3, 2001.
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