





## JOHN LITTLEJOHN Slidin' Home

The Chicago Blues came from Mississippi. To play the guitar with a bottleneck or slide was a required skill in many of the northern parts of the state. Some feared that this eery sound would pass with the late Elmore James, (who was thought to have carried the style to its zenith), except perhaps at the hands of young white imitators. These doubters were apparently not aware of the power of the Mississippi blues tradition.

John Littlejohn Funchess comes from this blues tradition, born on a farm near Jackson, Miss. on April 16, 1931. He recalls first hearing the blues at a fish fry out in the country where Henry Martin, a friend of John's father, was playing guitar and supplying the music. Although only eleven or twelve at

the time, John never forgot the sounds he heard that night and the blues haunted and inspired him from that day on.

In those days John was making 40¢ a day hauling water for the field hands on a nursery farm where his parents were also working in the peach and pecan orchards. But at that time, he says, 40¢ would buy as much as \$10 will today!

John's father was a gambler and one night he won a guitar in a card game. The instrument was left laying around the house so John would sneak it out from time to time and give it a try. In 1946 John left home and went to Jackson with his brother to work on an ice truck making \$1.25 a day. He didn't hear much blues on the radio at that time but would listen outside the jook joints where they delivered the ice. In 1949 John and a friend went over to Arkansas to chop cotton.

There they met a man who was rounding up workers to pick cherries in New York state. Since the man earned \$25 for each worker he recruited, he made the job sound so good that John and his friend went along only to discover that cherry picking wasn't their thing! Most good cherry pickers could pick between 200 and 300 pails a day but John could barely gather 200! So, on they went to Rochester, N.Y. where John landed a good job driving a bulldozer for a construction firm. When the company finished the project it was ready to move on to Florida but John refused to go along, even though they offered him \$200 a week, since he did not want to return to the South. Instead he caught a Greyhound bus to Gary, Ind. where he had heard that one could easily find good jobs in the steel mills. Unfortunately

this wasn't true and John ended up working for six months in a service station for only \$45 a week.

Things didn't look good and although John hadn't touched a guitar since he left Jackson, he scraped together enough money to buy one, an amplifier, and a mike. The year was 1951 and the post-war boom period was just getting into full swing. Most of the factory workers had come from the farms of Mississippi, just like John, and they were longing for the music they had heard back home. This new urban environment created new frustrations and, like the old days, it was the blues that gave the new immigrants their consolation. Most were making more money than they had ever seen before and they were willing to spend it in the beer joints, dancing to the old blues played with amplifiers and a heavy beat.

After six months of practicing John got a group together and they were soon playing music seven nights a week. People liked the band and their popularity soon found them a steady job at the Club 99 in Joliet, working only on week-ends, but for much more money! Using Tommy Moses, Jr. on harmonica, John's group stayed at the Club 99 for the next three years.

This CD establishes John Littlejohn as one of the best blues men in Chicago. His strong blues voice and piercing guitar style driven by a powerful rhythm section make for some of the best blues I have had the pleasure of recording. Not only is John a master of the slide guitar style but he picks in his own fashion and is a prolific songwriter. (John Littlejohn died on Feb. 1, 1994 in Chicago, IL.)

Chris Strachwitz – 1968

**John Littlejohn** – vocals and guitar  
**Monroe Jones Jr.** – rhythm guitar  
**Alvin Nichols** – bass  
**Robert Pulliam** – tenor  
**Willie Young** – tenor  
**Booker Sidgrave** – drums

**Recorded at** Universal Studios – Chicago. IL November 14, 1968.  
**Produced by** Chris Strachwitz and Willie Dixon.  
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**Back photo** © Chris Strachwitz.  
**Notes edited by** Dix Bruce

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1. **WHAT IN THE WORLD YOU GOIN' TO DO**  
(Willie Dixon)
2. **TREAT ME WRONG** (John Funchess)
3. **CATFISH BLUES** (John Funchess)
4. **KIDDEO** (Brook Benton)
5. **SLIDIN' HOME** (John Funchess)
6. **DREAM** (John Funchess)
7. **REELIN' AND ROCKIN'** (John Funchess)
8. **BEEN AROUND THE WORLD** (John Funchess)
9. **HOW MUCH MORE LONG** (J. B. Lenoir)
10. **SHAKE YOUR MONEY MAKER** (Elmore James)
11. **I'M TIRED** (John Funchess)
12. **NOWHERE TO LAY MY HEAD** (John Funchess)

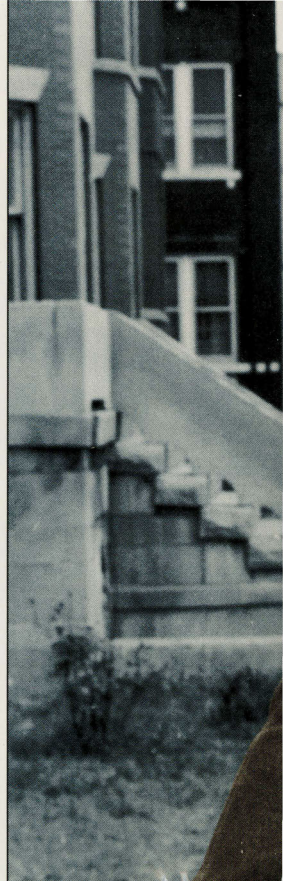
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**CD 9019**





# JOHN LITTLEJOHN

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Back in 1968, I told Buddy Guy, who was playing in a Berkeley club, that I was interested in recording his favorite neglected giants of Chicago Blues. I had met Buddy in Europe while touring with the American Folk Blues Festival and found him to be a tasteful and exciting player (and one of the nicest people I ever met). Buddy's prompt response was: Earl Hooker and John Littlejohn! So, with the help of co-producer Willie Dixon, here is John's best session! – Chris Strachwitz

**John Littlejohn** – vocals and guitar  
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