

Mp3 Little Joe Washington With The New Jack Hippies - Earthwire Blue



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It was a cool day in a warm Houston, Texas winter when Michael Farber and Kingfish Keith hosted Texas wildman guitarslinger Little Joe Washington. Guy Schwartz The New Jack Hippies were there to try to keep up with Little Joe. The results were magic. 9 MP3 Songs BLUES: Electric Blues, BLUES: Blues Vocals Details: So, you're interested in my friend Little Joe Washington? My name is guy Schwartz, and I've got a lot more than this CD for you! There's a new 23-minute LITTLE JOE WASHINGTON video! I've just finished an episode of my 'Hippies.TV' about Little Joe, and you can view it or download it for free! This one (we have smaller) is a big file at 122megs - you'll need a broadband connection. The video can found at... [guyschwartz.com/HippiesTV0512LITTLE JOE700.wmv](http://guyschwartz.com/HippiesTV0512LITTLEJOE700.wmv) PLUS - there are two shorter live video pieces (which a dial-up connection can handle) at hippies.tv You can also find more about Little Joe (and another CD) at Sonny James' site - raggedyass.com This 'earthwire blue' CD was recorded live at earthwire.net, Houston, Texas' groundbreaking internet radio station and performance space (2000-2002), where my New Jack Hippies band backed up Little Joe for Mike 'the big MF' Farber and Kingfish Keith on their 'Hour of Truth Texas Music' program. That said - please buy this CD. Then, come back to read this essay I wrote (about my relationship with Little Joe Washington) while you're listening to it. See you where the live music is! ----- RIDIN' WITH LITTLE JOE by Guy Schwartz ----- I was asked by a Polish music writer to answer some questions about Little Joe Washington for an upcoming article he was doing for a European blues magazine. As I began to write back, I realized that I was writing my own essay about Little Joe. Writing about Little Joe is hard. Joe is a very multi-faceted man, and, I could see that the impressions the writer already had contained incorrect assumptions or claims. I don't see Little Joe in any of the ways he is usually portrayed in print. I don't see him as the crazy wildman we

see on stage. I see Little Joe as a fellow musician, as a genius musician, and as a man who has made a lot of decisions to avoid many of the responsibilities that most of us feel obliged to take on. When I'm with Joe, his only weirdness is his desire to keep moving. He doesn't like sitting around in one place for a long time. Even at a gig that he books, if there is more than one set - he's ready to leave at breaktime. If there's only one set, Little Joe wants to cut it short. He will listen to reason at those moments, but only if one is strong enough to stand up to him and insist. The hardest thing about working with Little Joe is that he can disappear and will be back in contact on his own time. He's never missed an agreed appointment, session or gig with me, but I can't always find him when I want. He finds me. I've gotta be honest with you - I always enjoy reading articles about my friends (and about me). It helps to keep one's perspective to see that they always get it part right and part wrong. I'll probably get this one part wrong. The writer's choice of sources sounded good. In his query to me, the blues writer from Poland said that he had already corresponded with several people, and included brief descriptions of a couple of them. He said, "Things with the article are looking so good. I'm in contact with many of Joe's friends: Eddie Stout - he released Joe's first CD, Sonny James - his band-mate; Reg Burns and Roger Wood." In my humble opinion, Sonny James is an excellent musician and vocalist in his own right, and should be considered one of Little Joe's contemporaries and collaborators. He's also a great friend of Joe's (they are fishing buddies), and a great supporter. I love Sonny James - the man and his talent! When Sonny, Teri Greene, Richard Cholakian and I played together in the late 1990's, it may have been the best band I was ever in. And, he's a good man. Sonny James isn't really one of Little Joe's bandmates, although they've performed together many times. Little Joe doesn't really have bandmates. He's a one-man tornado who blows into the room, and onto the stage, and blows back out. Even if they've played with Little Joe a hundred times before, any musician onstage for that moment is an innocent bystander - as affected by each twist and turn of Joe's little body or guitar as those seeing Joe for the very first time. I don't know Eddie Stout. We've briefly met twice (while I was working - once onstage with Gloria Edwards, and once behind a camera filming Little Joe) but haven't really spoken. I do know that Eddie Stout is doing a wonderful job of getting many of Texas' less recorded blues artists to the international market place. But to say he recorded Little Joe's first CD would be incorrect. None of the Dialtone CDs that I know of are the first by any of those artists. Before the Dialtone CD, Joe has two live CDs that I know of, and maybe more. Find the first at Sonny's site, raggedyass.com, and the writer found me when he found the one The

New Jack Hippies did with Little Joe at CDBaby.com. Reg Burns and Roger Wood are equally good sources for the Little Joe Washington story as well. They know him, and have spent quality time with him, too. It's funny to me that Little Joe has patrons and supporters who are as broke as he is. Sonny James and I are both artists who needs occasional help and support of our own, and we have a small network of friends, fans and supporters who step up as needed. But we are amongst those in Little Joe's support network. Stevie Wilson used to be Little Joe's go-to guy, and he wasn't too healthy or wealthy, either! His friend Mary is another unsung hero for those of us who care for Little Joe. Mary always has a place where Joe can crash after a night of cruising the city on his bike. There are a lot of us who love and admire Little Joe. My guess is that it's more than the music. I believe that through all of our ups and downs, we all hope and pray that we will ultimately have his kind of resilience and musicality, even if our lives crash hard like his. The way he keeps going is something to respect and be amazed by. Some of us see more than Joe's imagery, and truly hope we can grow up to be like Little Joe. The request for an interview about Little Joe Washington came to me with a few sample questions and queries; 1. Tell me about his difficult character, his health and love for liquor and stuff, 2. his habit of coming into clubs with his hat and getting tips, etc. 3. How did you met him and got to recording CD with him? 4. Is it difficult to be Joe's band-mate? Etc. etc. 5. And maybe there is something not included in my questions (a funny story, a sad story) that you would like to tell me about? I have no idea where or when I first met Little Joe. I have an old picture in which we both have shorter, funnier haircuts, but neither of us can remember where or when we met in the '70s or '80s. I've probably spent parts of something like 100 days with Little Joe over the past 20-30 years. On several dozen of those nights, we ran around town doing Joe's unique brand of busking. Instead of playing on a street-corner or outside of a museum with an open guitar case for donations, Little Joe Washington has found a way to sing-for-his-supper onstage at other people's gigs. It's an amazing thing that many could not get away with if they tried. More about that later. On a couple dozen more occasions, Little Joe called me to play bass at gigs he had lined up at restaurants or bars. He's never missed one of these gigs. If we can't find him, he shows up on his bicycle. He's been at my studio for a jam on another 15-20 occasions, and we've met up at KPFT-FM radio studios for another dozen impromptu sessions, live on the radio. Joe has come to perform with my band, GUY SCHWARTZ THE NEW JACK HIPPIES, for several of our big events, too. A few times, we've just met for lunch, and talked about stuff. I guess Joe is just one of those guys who doesn't want to deal with any of the pain of

unexpected hardship and loss anymore, so he insulates himself in a few familiar hardships of his own choosing. "If you ain't got nothing, you've got nothing to lose" Little Joe has lost a lot of people and a lot of stuff in his time, and he's very careful not to put himself in a position to lose more, even if it means being broke and homeless. I've seen the crazy wild bluesman that everyone knows, too. He plays it well - on stage and off, but that's only a small part of the Little Joe Washington I know. The Little Joe I know can be holding an intelligent conversation as we walk from the car to the venue, only to see him swagger and stumble incoherently for the folks the moment we walk through the door. Funny example - At the internet radio session where we recorded the live album with Joe and The New Jack Hippies, we were also running videotape. Marlo, my girlfriend and partner, has a piece of film where Little Joe sits down on the earthwire studio stage with a guitar in one hand and a drink in the other. He would sip on this same drink for the next two hours - but that's another story. He puts the drink down beside him. He looks at the camera, smiles at Marlo, and then looks back at the drink. His eyes start moving - marking the stage off in his mind. Then, he leans over and grabs the glass, but - Instead of taking another sip, he moves the glass to another position further from his chair. His eyes and hands then clearly measure the area between the chair and the drink, again... 20 minutes later - in the middle of a song, Little Joe falls off the chair in a drunken manner, totally missing the drink and hitting his mark. When I ran into Little Joe in the early 1990s, he had a couple small weekly weeknight gigs in Houston, and on the other nights he'd often call me to see if I was free to pick him up and "go play". This was Joe's way of asking if I wanted to take him to do his unique brand of panhandling. He didn't actually need me to play bass, but I had a good ear and a car. He was always happy to 'go play' by himself, but a friend with a car made it warmer in the winter, and increased his reach in this widely spread-out city. If I was free and into it, I'd pick him up and we'd go hit a few familiar bars where friendly bands played. As we entered, Joe would always go to the bar first, where most of the bartenders would treat him to a drink. Once again, this would be the only drink he had in that bar, but he'd be sipping on it slowly until we left. From his barstool, he'd scope the place out and ask questions to the few who came up to greet him. "When did the band start this set? When is their next break? Can you give me ten dollars? Wanna buy a CD?" I don't drink, and would usually take this time to say hello to whatever fellow musicians were in attendance, including those on stage. Seeing that Little Joe was in attendance, many would quickly offer to let him play. If they didn't invite him, and breaktime was soon, Little Joe would talk them into it at breaktime. If breaktime was going to be too long in coming,

Joe would be restless, and we'd head out for another venue. When given the chance, Joe and I would take the stage with whatever drummer was available, and Joe would hit a quick jump shuffle with screamin' guitar for a couple minutes - and then suddenly stop! Quickly hollering the key and counting off, we'd start a slow blues, usually containing a section of call and answer between Little Joe's voice and guitar. This was finally followed by another shuffle wherein Joe would play with his teeth, his hair, his pants or anything! Then Joe would drop his guitar (usually the poor house guitar player's guitar), and he'd sing out - "I'm gonna pass my hat around, 'cos I ain't got no mmo-neyyyy!" I'd signal to the drummer, and we'd continue playing. Taking off his hat and exposing his overly natty dreadlocks, Little Joe Washington would then run into the crowd and sell - sell - sell! We could come out of that bar with \$30 or \$100 for 20 minutes of work. We could do this 4-5 times a night and make as much as \$400 back then. Once I could make cassettes, and later burn our own CDs from live recordings, Little Joe could sell recorded music to the people, too, instead of just asking for money. Joe can't do this just anywhere now. He's dropped too many guitars that didn't belong to him. Some musicians won't let Joe onstage without his own guitar. Some musicians get pissed off that Little Joe comes into their gig for 20 minutes and makes more than they are being paid for a full night - and they are still stuck at the gig 'til 2:00am. The way I see it - Little Joe Washington has found a way to make his musical living on his own terms. He doesn't need booking or management or a gig, and he's self-sufficient. It's his version of the American dream. He's just doing it his way - without the responsibilities of planned engagements.... Without the responsibility of rent.... Without the responsibility of a band.... I've never found Little Joe to have a difficult character. When I make plans to do something specific with Little Joe, they always happen like clockwork. It's different if we leave things up in the air with a, "Call me tomorrow...". Tomorrow can turn into a few days, or a few weeks. His music is really genius, though. On many gigs or sessions, I'll think that Joe is just playing fast make that doesn't especially go anywhere or say anything. Then I get home and listen to the recordings or videos, and realize that he's introduced new musical themes from all over creation, and blended several of them with gonzo-style, melodic witchery, or just plain humor - all faster than my well-trained ear could figure out with his notes blazing through them in realtime. When Joe comes over, I'll usually put a mic on the piano inside the house, because I know he'll start playing on his way back from the bathroom. There's a CD we should release someday - "LITTLE JOE WASHINGTON: The Piano On The Way Back From Guy's Bathroom" He's even got a small beat-up electronic keyboard that he messes around with,

creating really cool industrial noise that some noiseheads would flip over! He's an amazingly musical person.

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