

Mp3 Johnny Nicholas - Broke Again



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Texas Blues and Swing at its very best, performed by the "cream of the crop" Texas Blues musicians. 11 MP3 Songs BLUES: Texas Style, BLUES: Blues Vocals Details: The long awaited CD release of the legendary album, "Broke Again"... previously only available on LP and cassette with all original tunes by John "Johnny" Nicholas. Since the mid-Sixties, Johnny Nicholas has been playing the blues from both coasts, as well as points in between. During that time he has enjoyed apprenticeships with some of the music's most revered names, and he has taken a decade-long hiatus to raise a family and build up his Hill Top Caf in the Central Texas Hill Country. With the Summer 2000 release of *Rockin My Blues to Sleep: Texas/Louisiana Blues and Dance Hall Favorites*, he and his band the Texas All-Stars staked their claim to the music of the region he has called home for more than two decades. From legendary tenor saxman Rocky Morales to the rock-solid rhythm section of bassist Jack Barber and drummer Ernie Durawa, the album features some of the finest musicians in the Austin-San Antonio area backing Nicholas on vocals and lead guitar. Its sensuous grooves, sympathetic ensemble playing and crackerjack solos leave no doubt that Nicholas is back to stay. Born in 1948, Nicholas grew up in Rhode Island, where an older brother hipped him to African-American blues and rhythm and blues. His first band (The Vikings, 1963-4) covered the r&b hits of the day while adding a smattering of Rolling Stones but shunning the Beatles and the other Merseybeat groups that were starting to dominate American pop. "At least the Stones were dirty," Nicholas recalls, "but I already had all the records they were stealing from. I'd go down to Roberts Record Store on Canal Street in New London, Connecticut, where all the sailors hung out, and just look for records by the guys with funny names: Howlin Wolf, Sonny Boy Williamson, Muddy Waters." He was inspired to play acoustic guitar after discovering the revered 1961 Robert Johnson reissue *King of the Delta Blues Singers*. In 1966, he went to New York City for the evening to see a Howlin Wolf show and

wound up hanging out with Wolfs band for the next two weeks. Returning to Rhode Island fired up by the experience, he formed the Black Cat Blues Band with, among others, Duke Robillard (later of Roomful of Blues), Fran Christina (who went on to Roomful and then the Fabulous Thunderbirds) and Steve Nardella. By 1970, he and Nardella were working together as the Boogie Brothers. After attending the Ann Arbor Blues Festival that year, they made the Michigan college town their home until 1972, when they accepted an invitation to the San Francisco Bay Area from Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen. But after six months there, Johnny relocated to the blues center of Chicago, where he played with Big Walter Horton for a couple years; in addition to recording with Walter, Boogie Woogie Red and Robert Jr. Lockwood, he cut his own Too Many Bad Habits for Blind Pig Records in 1974. Back east in Providence, he formed the Rhythm Rockers, which included Kaz Kazanoff on sax, Terry Bingham on drums, Sarah Brown on bass and Ronnie Earle on guitar; that group was especially popular in Europe, where a bootleg CD of their demos has been selling steadily since the early-Nineties. In 1978, Nicholas moved to Austin to join his old Bay Area friends Asleep at the Wheel; when the western swing revivalists werent working, hed be over in Louisiana playing with Cajun great Nathan Abshire. After leaving the Wheel, he fronted Johnny Nicholas and the Ethnic Lovers. But in 1981, Nicholas grew disillusioned with the blues scene. "The whole thing got so reversed it became a parody of blues," he says, and so he and his new bride Brenda Schlaudt moved out to the Hill Country. They bought an abandoned gas station on the Mason Highway just north of Fredericksburg and dubbed it the Hill Top Caf, serving Greek, Cajun and Texas comfort foods; it has grown into one of the Hill Countrys finest and most popular restaurants. And they raised three sons: Rio (now 19), Willie (17) and Alex (15). Though he quit playing entirely for some time, Nicholas began entertaining solo at the Hill Top piano as the mood struck him. In 1991, Johnny went public again, producing and playing guitar on Back to the Country, with Johnny Shines (another of his mentors) and Snooky Pryor, and joining them for two weeks of European touring. Johnnys own Thrill on the Hill followed in 1994; since then, hes returned to Europe, where his popularity never tapered off, every two years, while playing selected dates in Texas and at blues festivals around the rest of the country. He and the Texas All-Stars play about 100 nights yearly, offering the same kind of rootsy regional music that appears on their CD (which was recently picked up for national distribution). "This is regular, downhome music that has a good beat. Its music for working people, but anybody can appreciate it," he concludes. "Theres that word dance hall in the title, and really, thats what its all about."

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