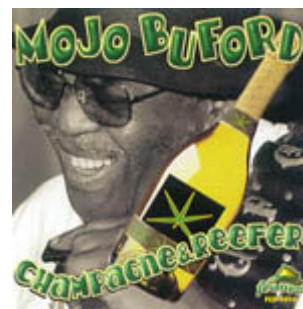




*Rhythm
Room
Blues*
(Hightone
Records)

Potbellied and threadbare, this

work combines anonymous images of women. The blues is about contrast between rich and poor. Suffering from a bad case of studio jitters, this live finally stretches out a string of blues classics. Mojo Buford mixes the chords producing really striking moments with much competent guitar and piano. "If the Budweiser lasts I think we'll make it," R.L. Burnside tells the audience before launching into a haunting version of 'Rollin' and Tumblin', the first of his four tracks on the disc. The wisdom flows from the vocalist/guitarist who was born on November 23, 1926 in Oxford, Mississippi and makes his home in Holly Springs in the hill country above the Delta. He knows the blues where Burnside's unique blues trip is haunting and masterful combination of sparse leads, rhythm and soulful vocals. This disc celebrated the 10th anniversary of Phoenix's blues and roots club, The Rhythm Room Blues - founded by blues harp apostle Bob Corritore who made the site one of the established spots on the national live blues circuit. *Rhythm and Blues* features an array of blues greats including Henry Gray, Sam Lay, Nappy Brown, Mojo Buford and Sonny Rhondes performing live at the club. Especially of note is Gray's contribution, he's among the Chicago blues piano elite from Louisiana and was session man to Jimmy Reed, Little Walter and Bo Diddley. Overall, I think blues fans would be tickled this collection of under-heard classics like 'Sinners Prayer', 'Nightmare Blues' and 'In my younger days.' How'd these guys learn to shake it like this? Advertisements and pornographic magazines with soulful patterns and expressionistic rattle.



Mojo Buford's Champagne & Reefer was recorded live at Arizona's Rhythm Room in 1998 and finds this ex-Muddy Waters harp master in electrifying form. Adding to the excitement is guitarist Bob Margolin also an alumni of Muddy's band and obviously happy to be reunited with his old bandmate. Not surprisingly the two mesh seamlessly and are aided by drummer Chico Chism who's resume includes stints with Howling Wolf and Eddie Shaw. Not only does Mojo blow a mean harp but he's also a powerhouse singer. He leads the band through a set of mostly covers including a number of tunes from his ex-boss including a great version of the title cut, "Blow Wind Blow" and "Honey Bee" with some outstanding slide by Margolin. Margolin is positively inspired throughout sounding eerily like his old boss as the band comes close to recreating the old magic of the Muddy Waters band.

With these two releases and a slew of fine recordings under their belt Fedora is becoming a blues label to reckon with. Let's hope there's more in store for the year 2000. Reviewed By: (Jeff Harris)

