

# Albert still 'King' as blues drive on

By Jeff Taebel



Photos by Bob Pearson

There were blues to drive the blues away last Friday night as Luther Allison and Albert King each played hard-edged sets for an enthusiastic crowd at the annual Great Plains Blues Festival. The event, which was sponsored by the Union Program Council, featured two artists with highly contrasting styles, which made for an interesting evening of music.

Luther Allison opened the show by allowing his four-piece backup unit, The Strokes, to play two songs before he took the stage. Allison's band featured guitar, bass, drums and organ and they did an excellent job of warming the audience up for Allison's appearance. When Allison joined the band onstage, he immediately captivated the crowd with his swaggering movements, emotional vocals and sharp, metallic lead guitar work.

During the course of his set, Allison allowed the players around him to solo frequently, which not only punctuated his own playing, but showed what a versatile band he has. The group was able to maintain a high level of intensity throughout the show, both on the upbeat numbers and on the slow, wrenching blues tunes.

Highlights of the set included a churning rendition of "Sweet Home Chicago," on which Allison sang beautifully and exhibited some of the fiery playing that is his trademark. Also outstanding was his reading of Howlin' Wolf's "The Red Rooster." Allison began the song with some low-key Delta style guitar work to support his deep, throaty vocals. The band joined him in mid song and turned this slow blues into an explosive, double-time *tour de force*, finally finishing with some strains of "The Star Spangled Banner" and some good natured humor to end the set.

Many artists would have had trouble following Allison's high-voltage performance, but any notions about Albert King having such problems were quickly dispelled when King's band took the stage. The four-piece group which had the same instrumentation as Allison's band began their portion of the show with a high energy disco number that featured some flashy playing from all the band members. King joined the ensemble on their second song, making a grand entrance, smoking his famous pipe.

After settling into the groove of the song, it was obvious that King was totally in control of the music and the crowd and enjoying himself immensely. King's presence was something to behold as the 6'4" 250-pound bluesman lurked menacingly on the edge of the stage, his Gibson "Flying V" guitar looking like a toy in his hands.

King played a different style of blues than Allison, his relying more on traditional rhythmic accompaniments and embellishments, yet his guitar work was so overpowering that it was hard to notice these differences at first.

Unlike Allison, King utilized a brash, buzzy tone with a great deal of distortion and sustain. His playing was not so much fast or flashy as it was solid and impeccably phrased, so as to extract every possible amount of emotion from each lick.

King played without a pick, using a left-handed guitar, strung upside down. He also used a variety of tunings, all of which would make his distinctive style extremely



hard to imitate, yet listening to him play for two hours is like taking a mini-course on the history of modern blues guitar. It's easy to see where Clapton, Page and Hendrix get their blues inspirations after listening to King take a solo.

Unfortunately, there were some equipment difficulties in the middle of the set that left King's vocals inaudible at times, which was a shame, because, despite the fact that he is more celebrated for his playing, he is also an excellent blues vocalist. While his singing doesn't have the abrasiveness of Howlin' Wolf, or the thick-voiced splendor of Muddy Waters, King's vocals are delivered with an air of honesty and intensity that few others can match.

One notable absence from King's set was his classic, "Born Under A Bad Sign," the title song from the album which catapulted him onto the forefront of the urban electric blues scene in the mid-sixties. However, his performance did include several of his better-known early songs, such as "Cross-Cut Saw" and "As The Years Go Passing By."

Aside from his equipment difficulties, King seemed to be having a good time throughout the show and chatted with the audience between and during some of the songs.

His playing was accentuated by some excellent staccato lines from his rhythm guitarist as well as some very tight bass and drum work, which kept all the songs moving right along. Near the end of the show, the band indulged in some spontaneous choreography that was indicative of the enthusiasm with which they played.

After twenty years of recording, playing on the road, achieving the status of being a living legend and accomplishing most of his musical goals, one could forgive a performer for tending to rest on his laurels and take it easy during shows in smaller towns and on college campuses, yet Albert King played like a young artist still struggling to make a name for himself. After watching him put his all into a performance, it's easy to see how he got to the top. Long live "The King."

**daytime**

THURS THRU WED

- MORNING**
- 6:00 (1) NOT FOR WOMEN ONLY
  - (2) PTL PROGRAM
  - (3) VARIOUS PROGRAMMING
  - (4) FARM REPORT (FRI.) Answer: Is Love (WED.)
  - (5) CBS NEWS
  - 6:15 (6) UNO SCENE (WED.)
  - 6:30 (7) COUNTRY DAY
  - (8) SUNRISE SEMESTER
  - (9) VARIOUS PROGRAMMING
  - (10) BOZO
  - 6:40 (11) NEWS
  - 7:00 (12) CARTOONS (THUR., FRI.) Children's Programming (MON., TUE., WED.)
  - (13) TODAY
  - (14) GOOD MORNING AMERICA

- (15) CBS NEWS
- (16) MORNING SHOW
- (17) SESAME STREET
- (18) EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING (UNTIL 11:30)
- 7:30 (19) ARCHIES
- (20) CARTOON CAPERS (THUR., FRI.) McHale's Navy (MON., TUE., WED.)
- 8:00 (21) FLINTSTONES
- (22) FLINTSTONES
- (23) CAPTAIN KANGAROO
- (24) EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING (UNTIL 12:00)
- (25) POPEYE
- 8:30 (26) BLINKY'S FUN CLUB
- (27) OUR GANG
- 9:00 (28) NEW ZOO REVUE
- (29) CONVERSATIONS
- (30) ALL MY CHILDREN
- (31) CARD SHARKS
- (32) ALL IN THE FAMILY
- (33) PHIL DONAHUE SHOW
- (34) ROMPER ROOM
- (35) EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING (UNTIL 11:30)
- 9:30 (36) 700 CLUB
- (37) BEWITCHED (THUR., FRI.) Not For Women Only (MON., TUE., WED.)
- (38) HOLLYWOOD SQUARES
- (39) PRICE IS RIGHT
- 10:00 (40) NOT FOR WOMEN ONLY (THUR., FRI.) Denver Now (MON., TUE., WED.)
- (41) HIGH ROLLERS
- (42) HAPPY DAYS
- (43) HAPPY DAYS (EXC. FRI.)

- Martha's Kitchen (FRI.)
  - (44) EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING (UNTIL 12:00)
  - 10:30 (45) LOVE AMERICAN STYLE (THUR., FRI.) Movie 'Guilt Is My Shadow' (MON.)
  - (46) Murder Without Crime (TUE.)
  - (47) Miracles For Sale (WED.)
  - (48) WHEEL OF FORTUNE
  - (49) FAMILY FEUD
  - (50) LOVE OF LIFE
  - (51) RELIGIOUS PROGRAMMING
  - 11:00 (52) FATHER KNOWS BEST (THUR., FRI.)
  - (53) AMERICA ALIVE
  - (54) \$20,000 PYRAMID
  - (55) YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS
  - (56) MARCUS WELBY
  - 11:30 (57) HIGH HOPES (THUR., FRI.)
  - (58) RYAN'S HOPE
  - (59) SEARCH FOR TOMORROW
  - (60) SESAME STREET
- AFTERNOON**
- 12:00 (61) F.B.I. (THUR.) Ironside (FRI.) Father Knows Best (MON., TUE., WED.)
  - (62) NEWS
  - (63) NOON SHOW
  - (64) ALL MY CHILDREN
  - (65) SESAME STREET

- (66) ANDY GRIFFITH SHOW
- 12:15 (67) FARM ACTION
- 12:30 (68) MAYBERRY R.F.D. (MON., TUE., WED.)
- (69) DAYS OF OUR LIVES
- (70) CROSS WITS
- (71) AS THE WORLD TURNS
- (72) EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING (UNTIL 3:30)
- 1:00 (73) DICK VAN DYKE SHOW
- (74) MIKE DOUGLAS
- (75) ONE LIFE TO LIVE
- (76) EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING (UNTIL 3:30)
- 1:30 (77) LUCY SHOW
- (78) DOCTORS
- (79) GUIDING LIGHT
- (80) BEVERLY HILLBILLIES
- 2:00 (81) ANOTHER WORLD
- (82) GENERAL HOSPITAL
- (83) EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING (UNTIL 3:30)
- 2:30 (84) PLEASE DON'T EAT THE DAISIES
- (85) DENVER NOW (THUR., FRI.) High Hopes (MON., TUE., WED.)
- (86) M.A.S.H.
- (87) GOMER PYLE
- 3:00 (88) FLINTSTONES
- (89) FOR RICHER, FOR POORER
- (90) EDGE OF NIGHT
- (91) MATCH GAME
- 3:30 (92) MICKEY MOUSE CLUB
- (93) GILLIGAN'S ISLAND
- (94) FLINTSTONES
- (95) ALL IN THE FAMILY
- (96) PHIL DONAHUE SHOW

- (97) I LOVE LUCY
- (98) MERV GRIFIN
- (99) KALAMITY KATE'S CARTOONS
- (100) ELECTRIC COMPANY
- (101) TOM AND JERRY
- 4:00 (102) MY FAVORITE MARTIAN (THUR., FRI.) Family Affair (MON., TUE., WED.)
- (103) BEWITCHED
- (104) I DREAM OF JEANNIE (EXC. WED.) ABC Afterschool Special (WED.)
- (105) DINAH
- (106) MIKE DOUGLAS
- (107) MISTER ROGERS
- (108) WOODY WOODPECKER
- 4:30 (109) FAMILY AFFAIR (THUR., FRI.) The Girl (MON., TUE., WED.)
- (110) MY THREE SONS
- (111) BRADY BUNCH (EXC. WED.)
- (112) BIG VALLEY
- (113) SESAME STREET
- (114) GILLIGAN'S ISLAND
- 5:00 (115) I LOVE LUCY
- (116) NEWS
- (117) ABC NEWS
- (118) BATTLE OF THE PLANETS
- 5:30 (119) MAYBERRY R.F.D. (THUR., FRI.) Andy Griffith Show (MON., TUE., WED.)
- (120) NBC NEWS
- (121) BEWITCHED (EXC. WED.) News (WED.)
- (122) CBS NEWS
- (123) NEWS
- (124) OVER EASY
- (125) ROOKIES

**MOVIE RATINGS**

- \*\*\*\* Excellent (don't miss this one)
- \*\*\* Good (worth watching)
- \*\* Fair (has its moments)
- \* Poor (disaster)