

arts/entertainment

Waters and King span rural-urban blues base

By Casey McCabe

Muddy Waters/*King Bee*/Blue Sky

Muddy is still doing the same thing he's done for over 40 years. Perhaps it's just the sheer power of experience that keeps his music pumping through your system like some staunch old locomotive chuggin' through the backwoods of the Mississippi Delta.

Muddy Waters is still the king of the rural blues. *King Bee* is the assertion that he is content pursuing his legacy for the bottom-line basics. Let these new kids get wild with their interpretations, because Muddy will always be there if somebody needs to be reminded of the foundation blues is laid upon.

album review

Since there is nothing particularly surprising about Waters' approach to a genre he has commanded for years, the highlight of each new album is the fine production, again under the guiding hand of Johnny Winter. Much of the delta blues connoisseur's library contains recordings that are as primitive as they are authentic.

To hear delta blues pioneer Robert Johnson's depression-era recordings give the music a sense of brutal reality. But in 1981 it's still good to hear a well-mixed, audiophile-quality record by a man like Muddy Waters who knows tradition doesn't have to be a compromising word.

Back together on *King Bee* is his most stable crew of studio musicians in recent years, including Bob Margolin on guitar, Willie "Big Eyes" Smith on drums, and the classic sound of "Pine Top" Perkins on piano. Making a brief appearance on "My



B.B. King and Muddy Waters continue to be the most influential figures in blues music with the release of new albums.

Eyes) Keep Me In Trouble" is old sideman James Cotton on harmonica. Elsewhere, Jerry Portnoy is capable with the slower, more deliberate, style of gut-bucket harp that this particular batch of Muddy (McKinley Morganfield) Waters' songs call for.

Happy singin' the blues

Muddy's slide guitar work is mixed fairly low in the recording as the younger guys handle the more difficult chops. But



Water's voice is as dominant as ever, grinding, growling and unmistakable. Stand outs on *King Bee* are the title track, "Mean Old Frisco Blues," "Champagne and Reefer" and his fitting conclusion "No Escape From The Blues."

Muddy appears on the cover seated at a throne, and on the inner sleeve posed with his smiling family. An influential man who still loves his music, Muddy Waters apparently wants us to see that one can indeed be happy while singing the blues.

B.B. King/*There Must Be A Better World Somewhere*/MCA

Like Muddy Waters, B.B. King is a product of the Mississippi Delta. But King's approach leans to the more svelte sound of the urban blues.

There Must Be A Better World Somewhere is the latest of God-knows-how-many albums by the ever prolific King. Now in his mid-fifties, B.B. can still pick an incredibly crisp blues guitar, and his vocals are both smooth and emotive. The only factor not to King's credit is the actual songwriting chores, to which he contributes nothing. This time the composition was put in the hands of Doc Pomus and Dr. John.

Urban soul

The good doctors let B.B. weave his transcendental riffs through a merger of styles that never let him stray too far from a blues base. On "Life Ain't Nothing But A Party" they show a fondness for the post-World War II "ballroom band" horn-section, to which King occasionally interrupts and lets his guitar do the talking.

"Born Again Human" takes a few steps into jazz, while "You're Going With Me" does the same for King's soul tendencies. The only other composer on the album, rhythm guitarist Hugh McCracken, offers "More, More, More," a driving gospel-influenced piece that would be absolutely stunning carried off live by King, who always seems to respond best in front of an audience.

Never one to ignore his strong suit, King lays into the doctors' highly dynamic "The Victim" with all the embellishment of the blues master that he is. King's approach is more spiritual than the earthy feel of other blues contemporaries. There will be no complaints as long as the spirit moves him and he keeps Lucille in tune.

Local writers read works at Zoo Bar tonight

By Michael Zangari

Along 'bout 11 p.m. on any given drinking night, everyone seems to be a poet at the Zoo Bar. Between the graffiti and the lubricated conversation, many space-age gems have passed through the smoke and etched themselves indelibly on someone or something. Ask the saintly bartenders. The news then, that four established area writers will be reading from the *stage* instead of the *floor* tonight seems to be a logical extension of something that Zoo dwellers have known all along.

The writers, Warren Fine, Ted Kooser, Sally Herrin and Judith Sornberger, along with musical interludes by John Walker, will be reading from their works in an informal

setting starting at 9 p.m.

Fine and Kooser, of course, are nationally respected writers. Of Fine's four novels, (one in the mail), the last two have been nominated for National Book Awards. He has a play running in an experimental theater in Chicago, has held fellowships in the National Endowments for the Arts twice, and is working on a volume of poetry called *Catulus in America*. Kooser also has held a fellowship in the National Endowments for the Arts, and is the editor and publisher of the *Blue Hotel*, a literary magazine. He has four volumes of poetry out, three smaller volumes and several chap books. He also owns and operates the Windflower press.

The two women, both former Vreeland Award

winners, also have many credits. Both are represented in the upcoming collection *40 Nebraska Poets*, and Sornberger has upcoming poems in *Kaylx* and *The Kansas Quarterly*. Herrin's work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner* and she currently is working on several novels, *The Queen of the Blue Bar*, the one most often heard about.

The four writers work in widely diverse styles and will read a variety of material. Fine is co-producing the reading with Larry Boehmer, owner of the Zoo Bar. Boehmer says he has been open to the arts, and is anxious to see the response.

"Besides," he said, "Warren, Sally and Judith are residents of the Zoo, and I know Ted—it'll be interesting to see them reading in a small, funky bar."

The atmosphere doesn't seem to be an issue. Fine indicates that it won't exactly "be a reading in the coffee lounge of the English department," and is making suitable adjustments, thinking about reading some comic prose and maybe some poetry.

Sornberger said the Zoo might be the best atmosphere for the reading because "there will be no sense of false reverence about the reading." Both Kooser and Herrin agree that it will be somewhere between interesting and fun.

The Zoo itself won't go through any radical changes for the reading. There will be a \$1 cover to help pay Walker and various costs, but other than that it will be business as usual. The Zoo is at 136 N. 14th St.

Ensemble to feature keyboard selections

The UNL Collegium Musicum, an ensemble devoted to performing music written before 1650, will present a free concert at 8 p.m. Sunday at the Wesley House, 640 N. 16th St.

The music to be performed is entirely from France, and will feature the Notre Dame Mass by Guillaume de Machaut, perhaps the greatest composer of the 14th century, according to

Quentin Faulkner, an associate professor of organ. Other works to be per-

formed are taken from the publications of Pierrri Attaignant, a French music publisher active during the first half of the 16th century. These works include keyboard pieces for organ, harpsichord and clavichord, songs arranged for various combinations of singers and instruments and lute pieces.

Also featured will be two sets of dances, performed by students from the UNL dance department, dressed in costumes of the period.

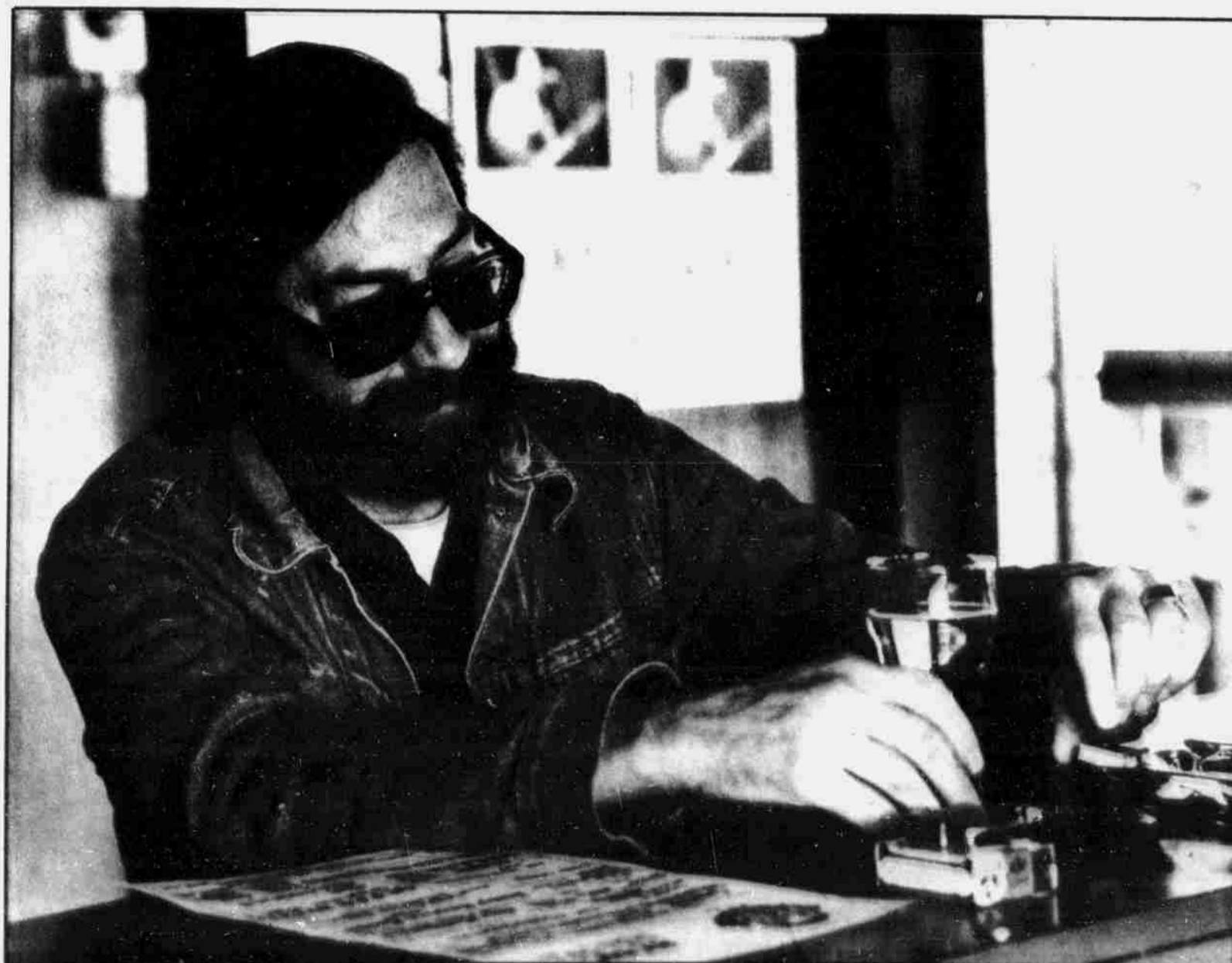


Photo by Mark Billingsley

UNL English professor Warren Fine is co-producing tonight's poetry reading at the Zoo Bar.