

Willie Dixon Interview.

By telephone. September 18 1982. c.5pm.

Can you tell me about your blues foundation?

Oh, yes. Yes, I can tell you a little bit about it. The blues Children's Foundation is a foundation that's being made to promote the blues more than ever before, because the blues have never been promoted before. Also to protect the blues artists and the blues writers and the bluesingers, because they have been deprived of so much in blues, and most of them really haven't had a chance, you know? So this is what we are doing - protecting the blues artists and the blues and trying to get more blues promoted throughout the world, the blues and all of the blues heritages, that we can have a much better understanding with blues and the blues music. Now you see we know that there's a lot of the underprivileged people that get involved in the blues, these people don't have no protection, so me knowing quite a bit about the blues, and being involved in the blues, why I feel like it's necessary for the blues artists to be protected, and also the underprivileged. And as we make this non-profit organisation, it will also promote education for the underprivileged by giving scholarships to various artists, and a matter of time we'll build a place called blues heaven especially for all the underprivileged people and the people that's not qualified to get proper education and all these kind of things, you know? So that's what the blues Heaven Organisation is all about.

Is it established now?

Oh, it's just about established. We're waiting for the proof of our non-profit organisation from the government. The government has just about have agreed, but we haven't got our number yet from the government. But officials have agreed to give us a non-profit organisation agreement.

Are these music scholarships?

Well, not only music, but scholarships in various colleges throughout the country for the people to learn more about the blues music.

And who would be awarded the scholarships?

Well you see, for these scholarships we'll get the people from various colleges throughout the country.

And what would a student have to do to win one?

Well, it all depends on what qualifications they come to from the various colleges, you know, lots of times you get a student that's not able to take care of a scholarship, and they want to go to college, and they're brilliant students. They don't have to be especially qualified in music, they just can be brilliant students but not able. But we will be giving scholarships to various people, regardless of who they are, if they are qualified to be extremely over-average students.

That's a very good idea.

Yeah, because you know, there have been so many blues musicians that have went down and have created many songs, and many things, and a feel of music, and never get the credit, because the majority of music that people do get the credit from is

made from the blues anyway. And the blues artists themselves, and the creators of these blues and blues songs, they never get no recognition at all. And the companies and things that makes millions of dollars off of these blues artists, and a lot of them never get enough out of it, because - a cup of coffee for his art.

You write yourself.

Oh, yeah. I wrote many songs.

I'm glad to see, when you do a show you have many new songs.

Oh yes, I have many new songs. I have one that I sent to the president: 'It don't make sense, You can't make peace.' I didn't do it last night, I don't think, but I always have new songs, you know? And it's all pertaining to the facts of life, you know, the things that's going on as of now. And you know, the Blues features the past, the present and the future, and so this is why I have the various types of songs, being all the time to bring the public to the attention of where the blues have come from, and where the blues are going, what the blues are doing.

I'm always glad to see someone write a new blues song, because the music has to develop if it's going to live.

Thank you. And I think the blues have a foundation, and just what the blues artists and especially the musicians need, all over the world, to give them the recognition and the respect for the blues, because nobody has no respect for the average blues artist, they think the average blues artist is just somebody that go around drinking and getting lonesome because he's drinking and getting drunk, and be ridiculed by other people. And the blues have always been involved with most of the underprivileged people. Excuse me, I got Scott on the other line right now, I didn't know he was on the other line. So call back later. Will you?

Yes, of course.*/ The other thing I wanted to ask you was about the European circuit, which I understand you started with Memphis Slim.

Oh well, we started some years ago to kinda promote the blues and make them strong there, and we decided we'd go various places trying, and we went down to Israel and worked in Israel, and we came back to France and other places trying to promote the blues, just doing concerts, the two of us. We were working at Tramier (?), going from Tramier in France to different places throughout the territory over there, all the Scandinavian countries doing concerts, the two of us, looking for somebody to help us promote the blues, when we ran into Lipmann, and we got them to help sponsor blues shows over there. So that's what started the American Folk-Blues festival. Then Memphis Slim decided he was going to stay there, and I would be over here sending artists to Europe, and he would be over there, getting them and going off with the shows and working with Lipmann. And that's the way it was.

Were you on your own when you started this?

Oh, I was over there on several different occasions, I was all over. In fact we made the whole tour. I made all the Scandinavian countries, England, I made just about all the countries over there, with Memphis Slim together, along with the show, and then at different times he would go, and I would go, at different times by myself, but we would always be on the show, one or the other of us, not just doing the show,

but promoting and helping keep the other artists, so when Lipmann would come to America to start to promote artists, I would help him to get in touch with them, and then a lot of them I'd promote myself, you know, before he got here.

The first time you went over, did you have a contact there? No, we didn't have no contact. The only contact we had was the Hot Club de France. We had been talking with them and like that, you know. Hot Club de France. But we had been working in Israel, in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, lot of different placss, you know, and we were just trying to promote the blues.

What was the first year you went over?

We went over in '60, because when we was on our way over, the year turned from 1959 into 1960 while we was on the aeroplane on our way over from New York to Europe.

I see.

Well listen, I appreciate it very much, but my manager tells me that a lot of the people that's writing the books and things like that want the information pertaining to our organisation of the Blues Heaven. But the other information, you'll have to get permission from him. So if he give you permission, then I can go further.

I see. My problem is that I'll shortly be leaving Chicago. Well, I can understand that. But anyway, we'll be here. But if you can phone him, I'm sure, if you be leaving anyway soon... I told him I got talking to him, but he had no (-)? and he wasn't even out of town.