



enterprising German promoters and blues fanatics, Horst Lippman and Fritz Rau. His arrival on the blues-hungry UK scene could not have been better timed, predating the whirlwind that was Jimi Hendrix by more than a year. Buddy's incendiary performances in amphetamine-fuelled clubs like Kloooks Kleek and the Marquee, backed by aspirant UK blues bands like the Soul Agents and even Chris Barber's Jazz Band, have become the stuff of legend. The British blues mafia was ecstatic; Rod Stewart acted as Buddy's valet, and upon first hearing him play Eric Clapton famously broke down in tears.

'I was just overjoyed,' says Guy with a grin. 'I knew Muddy had been over there but I never thought that it would happen to me. It was also the first time that I got to see T-Bone Walker because he was on the same show. Now I know Eric and Jeff

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Beck as my best friends, but at the time they both told me that they slept in a van just to see me play. Back then I didn't know who they were - I hardly knew who I was! Jeff Beck told me that before he heard me play he didn't know that blues could be played on a Strat; he thought that it was just for country and western.

'Of course, I had a lot more energy back then than I have now. I was playing the guitar with my feet and throwing it up in the air... crazy stuff. But although I was getting to play overseas, back home I still didn't have a record. I thought that maybe it was because I played too loud and with too much feedback... then the next thing I know, Clapton and Hendrix are out there using the same tricks and selling millions of albums.'

Even after all these years it's obviously a topic that still rankles the phlegmatic Mr Guy, and with some justification. Long after BB King, Albert King and Freddie King had become household names within the blues fraternity, Buddy was bizarrely still without a record contract. Apart from occasional European tours alongside his old sparring partner Junior Wells, he was usually to be found tearing

up the floorboards in Chicago clubs like the Checkerboard.

'They was playing exactly the same thing that we was, but because we were doing the Folk Blues tours, they wouldn't let us turn it up like all the British bands,' Guy points out. 'The audiences wanted it to be right back in that old deep blues feel like Little Walter, Muddy and Sonny Boy Williamson.'

Apart from a brief flirtation with Guild guitars in the '60s (Buddy received his first ever endorsement from the company) these days his polka dot Stratocaster is as much a part of his act as his customary audience walkabout. His relationship with Leo Fender's creation goes back a long way, and the guitar he played at the Marquee club in 1965 was a battered but much cherished '58 sunburst Strat, with which he recorded the legendary *Folk Festival Of The Blues* album.

'It used to be that you could go down to the store and buy an original Stratocaster with the case for \$179. If I had known then what I know now I would have bought a whole warehouse full and just kept them,' he laughs.

Whadda Guy!

'Buddy Guy's *Folk Festival Of The Blues* is my favourite album in the whole world. That's the wildest Stratocaster I've ever heard'

- Jimmie Vaughan

'He was for me what Elvis was for most other people. My course was set, and he was my pilot'

- Eric Clapton