

Photos: Steve Gilllett / Live



The roll call of the blues giants who've passed onto that great jam session in the sky - Stevie Ray Vaughan, Albert King, Albert Collins, Luther Allison, Jimmie Rogers are just a few that come immediately to mind - has meant that there's even more reason to honour the few first division guitar legends like Buddy Guy. But with blues becoming increasingly marginalised by FM radio, what are the hopes for its survival?

'Well, you can't win,' he sighs. 'But that's how it's always been with the blues - there are still some great blues players around but you never hear their records on the radio anymore. I wish we could go back to the old AM radio where everyone's records got a chance to be played, keeping the music alive. You take anyone 16 years old, and they don't know what it is. But I've just finished a new album that we recorded in Nashville last November,' he adds, 'and I think it's pretty special. Eric's on a track, plus Susan Tedeschi and Derek Trucks, and apart from a song by Jimmy Reed and

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one by Sonny Boy Williamson, I wrote all the songs - for the first time. I'm also co-producing, and there's some really good blues on there. Who knows? We might get lucky, make someone listen.'

Buddy and Stevie Ray Vaughan met when Buddy played at Antone's club in Austin, and forged a friendship that lasted until that last fateful gig in Alpine Valley. Since that time there have been numerous pretenders to the white blues crown - Jonny Lang, Chris Duarte, Kenny Wayne Shepherd - but none have gone the distance.

'I think that the blues scene has suffered since Stevie passed. But I believe that if they only get a chance to hear it, the kids will still like the music,' declares Buddy. 'There's still hope, too. A little

while back they brought this eight-year-old out to sing with me and he was so amazing that I've got him on my new album. At this stage in my life I think that if I can only get a few young people to get up and play, then people will start to think that there's more to this blues music than they thought. And that's one reason that I like playing outdoor venues, at least I get a chance to play for 12 or 13-year old kids as well as their parents. They say: 'Man - I read what Eric Clapton said about you, and I like what you did!'

Buddy Guy will be touring the UK in June: London on the 24th, Manchester on the 25th, Birmingham on the 27th. For tickets call 0870 735 5000, or go to www.bookingsdirect.com

AND ANOTHER THING Buddy Guy's influences: BB King's single-string work, Muddy Waters for slide, T-Bone Walker for his chords and John Lee Hooker for the boogie