

Little Hatch

Blues Musician
1921-2003

by David Conrads

Born in the Mississippi Delta—the birth place of the blues itself—Little Hatch was known for his versatile harmonica playing and emotive singing. He was a mainstay of the blues scene in Kansas City for nearly 50 years and responsible for much of its vitality.

Provine Hatch Jr. was born in Sledge, Mississippi, the oldest of nine sons born to sharecropper parents, and grew up in Helena, Arkansas. As a child he was given a harmonica by a family friend and taught himself to play. By the time he was in his teens, Hatch was playing at house parties in Helena and later at night clubs. He was drafted into the Navy in 1943 and served for three years in World War II. It was during a bus trip home to Arkansas after his discharge that he stopped over in Kansas City for a few weeks. During that brief visit he met Modie Lee Hill, his future wife. The two settled in Kansas City in 1946.

Hatch teamed up with guitarist and fellow-Mississippian George Jackson, who became something of a mentor to Hatch and gave him the nickname of “Hatchet.” A small, lean man with a surprisingly big voice, “Little Hatch” soon became a staple of the Kansas City blues scene. As a bandleader, he worked with numerous musicians, known first as the Little Hatchet Band and later as the Houserockers. He faded from public view for a time in the mid-1970s, but reemerged in 1988 as leader of the house band at the popular blues club the Grand Emporium, a job that lasted for 10 years.

Hatch’s reputation was largely confined to the Kansas City area, as he toured and recorded little. He released two live recordings, *The Little Hatchet Band* (1974) and *Well, All Right* (1992). In 1998 he came out of semi-retirement to make *Goin’ Back*, his first studio recording. *Rock with Me Baby* followed a few years later.

Sources

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