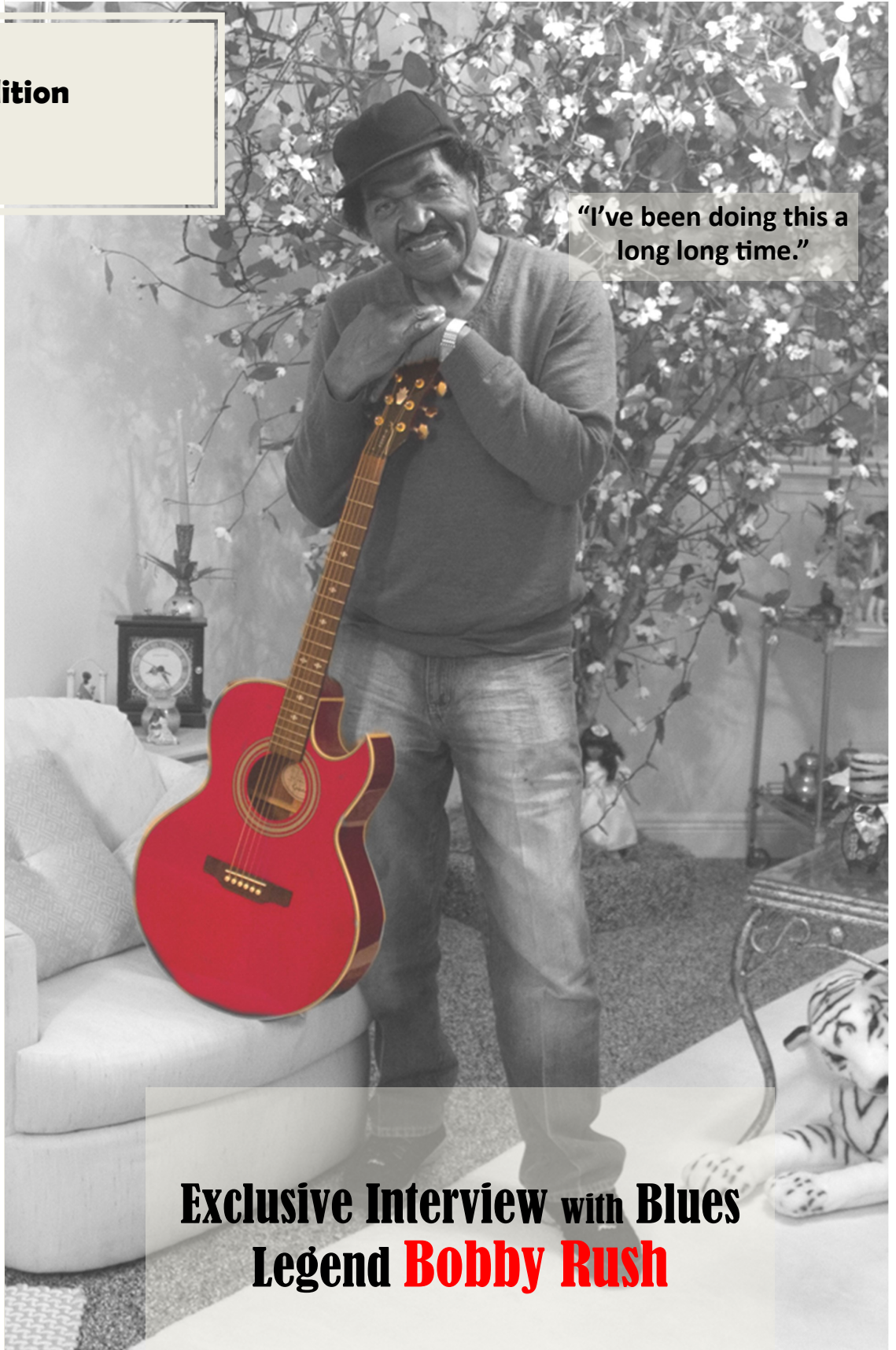


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"I've been doing this a long long time."

**Exclusive Interview with Blues
Legend Bobby Rush**

Living Legend: Bobby Rush— King of the Chitlin' Circuit

By LaTonya Miller



Meeting a legend is a rare thing; the opportunity to sit and have a conversation with one even rarer. So needless to say I was ecstatic when I got the chance to do just that. Between show dates legendary bluesman Bobby Rush was kind enough to squeeze in an interview for etudelife.com. His firsthand account of encounters with other legends including Muddy Waters, Gamble and Huff and Quincy Jones; the Chitlin' Circuit; and even the Capone family is intriguing to say the least.

The interview casually drifts from conversation to

narrative to unplugged performance and back again as Rush drops an exclusive first listen to new music he is working on. At one point I don't know whether to feel horror or honor when the legend gently chides me, dismissing my excuses for wanting to operate behind the scenes in entertainment media rather than in the limelight. "Why can't you be this person to do these great things for and with other artists; why you fattening frogs for snakes?" he asks. To drive his point home, Rush goes on to recount a couple of opportunities he wish he'd handled differently.

Bobby Rush: I've been doing this a long long time;



New CD + DVD *Decisions* released April 15, 2014

since 1951. I made the mistake of not doing some recording things with Martin Luther King because I thought he'd be here forever. I made the mistake when I was 20 years old, I remember I went to a party with [Muddy Waters], his birthday party, I sneaked out the party.

LaTonya Miller: Did you?

BR: Because the ladies with him were too old. They were like 35 years old. I sneaked off and left him. Look how small minded I was; sneaking off out of Muddy Waters' party because the lady was too old. Didn't know that was the place to be.

B.B. King just did his last show in Mississippi he said. I was there, you found the two of us together [and there was just a little media coverage]. They took it for granted.

LM: You released a cd last month right?

BR: Yes.

LM: *Decisions* [is the title]?

BR: Let me tell you how that came about. *Decisions* was a situation where it came after the fact. I was in the studio, there's a guy, his name is Carl Gustafson, and Carl is a great writer, great vocalist, he has this band called Blinndog Smokin'. And he said I got this song I've written, it's "Another Murder in New Orleans."

ans." And I said to myself, I don't really want to write about another murder in New Orleans Cause I'm from Louisiana and I thought he was putting the town down when I heard that, you know. But then when I listen to [the song] I kind of got it. I said ok I understand, let's do that. So he wanted me to do it because he like the way I do it and I said I'm going to just do a good demo of it and it came out so well. Then Dr. John heard about me being [in the studio] in New Orleans. He inquired where I was and came by and said 'I like this song.' [Gustafson asked him] - 'You want to do something on this song?' 'Yeah I'd be glad to do something with Bobby Rush' [Dr. John says]. We're both from Louisiana. We've known each other 50 years and why not? Let's do something. We kicked around, went to lunch, came back, got in the studio and did the song in one take. No rehearsal, no nothing.

LM: One take?

BR: No rehearsal no nothing. And that song happened. Then Crimestoppers [Greater New Orleans] heard it, picked it up and put a lot of money behind it. We decided we'll do a video so Crimestoppers put the money up to do the video; a big production video.

LM: Whose idea was the animation in the video?

BR: Animation came maybe because I'm ugly and old...

[Everybody laughs]



Screenshot from music video "Another Murder in New Orleans."

LM: No.

BR: I think it's real fitting because we've both been in the business a long time, and when you do a video, what can you do different, good and different. Everybody good but everybody ain't different. Well the concept of this cartoonish kind of a thing was different [and] it was good. And coming from Dr. John and I both being in the business a long time we're both at an age where it was funny, you know comical it came out real good.

Then the meaning of the song [and Crimestopper's involvement] was good. I was glad to do it because it's time for adults like myself and others to, when we see a child, not turn our back and say, ah I don't care it's not my child, it's not my business. It is your business. If it's not your biological child it's your child because it's someone that you know. Could be your neighbor or what have you. It's your business. So it's time to stop turning our heads and keeping our mouths closed; won't tell who we saw, who do it and what have you. Now I know sometimes that can get dangerous, people want to hurt you because you're tattling or being someone who's snitching. But it's time for us to stop shutting our mouth about things that we see; things that we know and we're not doing anything about it. So Crimestoppers was the perfect example of getting this done because they have a lot of ways of letting people know what's happening without giving your name up and putting you on the line.

LM: That's the concept for that song, what about the theme for the album in general?

BR: As joke-y as I am, as comical as I am, that's a

serious side of me.

[Rush speaks some of the lyrics to the title track, 'Decisions']

Cause see making a decision sometimes sure can be hard. Making a decision for yourself is different when you got kids involved or other people involved. Making a decision about a old woman cry is different when your own momma cry. Making a decision about a old man cry is different from a child because kisses and candy and 'hush don't cry' don't make a grown man smile. And I went on to say Lord help us make the right decision.

LM: Actually today was the first time that I heard [Decisions] and I liked it.

Now do your fans ever ask for any of your older stuff or are they just as content with the new stuff?

BR: Well they are kind of content with [whatever] I do because I do things so meaningful. The only problem I have is they want to hear it

all. And I can't do it all when you're doing a 45 minute show with 300 plus songs. You can't do them all. So you have to go between and get the ones that they like and the ones that are meaningful to most of the people, not one or two people. And that's what you got to go through.

LM: Having so many songs, what is rehearsal like? Do you still plan out a show?

BR: No.

LM: It's on the spot?

BR: I believe I worked probably 20 years before I had a rehearsal. And my dad as a preacher one time he said 'what you been doing junior? I know you haven't been rehearsing because you don't need the

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I'm the king of the Chitlin' Circuit and proud of it. I still live in the Chitlin' Circuit.
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rehearsal.' I hadn't thought about it. At the time he was talking to me, I hadn't been to rehearsal in 20 years. I write all the songs that I do, I give them to the band and they'll rehearse them. I wrote all the songs so I know them. I wrote them, I play them.

LM: Really? Just tired?

BR: Every night I say I don't know if I can do this anymore, that's been happening for 50 years. And the next day or the next night when a new crowd come they say hey Bobby Rush we



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I grew into something and people accept me for what I do and what I am.
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You know. By the time I write them and play them I'm tired of the song, so I give them to somebody else and say y'all do them. Y'all get tired of them for a while.

LM: So you have regular band members that are still with you? Who has been with you the longest?

BR: I have a guitar player called Mickey with me often. He's been with me 41 years, and a drummer who's been with me 36 years. My keyboard player has been with me 25 years, a couple other guys with me 15 to 20 years. The newest guy has been with me about 5 years, a guitar player. Most of the guys have been with me 15 years or better. They're good guys and the ladies are good ladies. We have a lot of fun together. It's like a family. I work a lot of times when I don't want to work because these guys got to make a living, they're depending on me to make a living. Their families eat because I work.

LM: Have you ever wanted to quit?

BR: Yes, every night, every night.

love your music; well shoot that's another 20 years. I grew into something and people accept me for what I do and what I am. I have this [fan base]—50% white, 50% black, that sometimes I got 99% white audience and sometimes I got 99% black audience. There are a few times I got probably 50/50. I'm one of the few guys in that position and I'm a blessed man to have that. And you know what? I didn't really change what I was doing to do that. It just happened. I had a talk with so many guys who say I'm going to record like this because I think this is what white people like; I'm going to record like this because I think this is what black people like. I record what I feel from my heart and I hope everyone like it. It's not a black and white issue with me.

So here I am doing what I do, love what I'm doing and finally I'm making a couple dollars out here. I thought I would never make any money doing what I'm doing. Somebody told me after 20 years 'Bobby 'Rush, you're going to be rich man. You're going to be popular, you'll make a lot of money playing this.' I

say you mean to tell me I'm going to make money playing what I play, [something] that I would do for free? Cause I do it for the love of it not for the money. The money is good, you know, but that's not why I'm doing it. I started doing it for the love of it. So here I am still doing what I do. Want to get paid for it, but that wasn't my first thing to do.

LM: You said sometimes you get sick of it, is that what led you to...

BR: I think sometimes when you go up to a promoter who don't want to pay you for what you've done, who didn't advertise like they should, the crowd isn't as great as you think it should be...they funny with the money, don't want to pay you, then you get [to a point where you say] what the hell. But then the next morning you wake up, it's a new day, a new gig a new promoter- sometimes the same promoter- telling you sometimes I'm sorry man, let's try it again. Then you forgive them. You go ahead on

this guy who managed myself, who did all these things for myself. But I didn't start off intentionally to do this. How I started in this business, I was gone write for myself until I found me a good writer. I was going to promote myself until I found a good agent. I was going to produce myself until I found a producer. I was going to do all these things until I found someone to do it for me. Forty years later B.B. King come to me and say 'Bobby Rush, man you a good producer, I want you to record a record on me.' Then it dawned on me, I'm this guy that I've been looking for all these years.

I'll never forget Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff who had the Pointer Sisters at the time, Teddy Pendergrass, The O'Jays, all these big artist in 1975. I went to Philadelphia; I say I'm going to move to Philadelphia with Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff and all these guys; Quincy Jones and all them. Move with the big boys so I can learn what I need to do. They respected me so highly [and told me they were glad to have

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*Then it dawned on me,
I'm this guy that I've
been looking for all
these years.*

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and do what you do.

LM: You see more of that since you started your own label in 2003?

BR: More of what?

LM: More face to face with the promoters.

BR: Oh yes but I always did because I've always been

me]. 'We heard about what you've been doing. We've been listening to your records; we've been listening to your production' [They told me]. I say they listening to my production? They say 'come on in we got this song, man called "Rush Hour," we just got the title but we know you can finish it man. Here's the title of the song, and here's the studio, that's the engineer, whatever you want him to do tell him. You

got the studio. We going to have lunch, we'll be back.' They left me like *I* was the genius. Now I'm sitting up in the studio because I wanted to pick their heads and find out what they do, how they think, how they write, how they produce. Now they want to find out what I'm made of and I didn't know they wanted to pick my head. I come there to pick their heads. They just left me in the studio. I stayed there two or three days and I left and I didn't come back. Not because I disrespect them but because I wanted to learn from these big boys. And they wanted to learn from me. They wanted me to go in and just cut what I want to cut. Just gave me the studio. Can you imagine Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff, Quincy Jones saying Bobby Rush we like what you do, do what you do. So I don't know what to do now. I was living in Chicago and I said I'm going to Mississippi where ain't nobody down there but me. I said if I'm going to do this let me do it on my own, get around all the things that influence me and let me get back. And I came to [Mississippi]. I was working on a song called "Dingaling," Chuck Berry had this so I said you can have it, I'm going to rewrite this song. The title of the song was "Dingaling," 'I'm a puppet by a string, got me dingaling.' I rewrote it and called it "Sue" and it was a big record, a gold record.

Anthony Miller (videographer/photographer): Don't you call your dancers Sue?

BR: Yeah I call them Sue on stage. This song came about because my daddy told me when I was about fifteen or sixteen, if I was that old; there was this girl who was fifteen. Most of the times when a girl is fifteen she's got a head level of somebody 22 or 23, much older, much smarter than or more advanced [than the guy who is fifteen]. Her name was Emma Jean Rankin, I never will forget. I said daddy I'm going out with Emma Jean tonight. He said 'boy let me tell you something. I know that girl. She's fifteen years old but you don't need to be with her.' That's

my daddy being a preacher now. He said 'because she'll do anything.' Now that part he shouldn't have ever told me. When he said she'll do anything, that's the kind of girl I was looking for. One that [will do anything].

And that's where the song came from and I changed her name to Sue. Her father was a preacher, my dad was a preacher. Apparently he'd seen this girl with somebody older than I or doing some things and he was trying to help me. 'You don't need to be with this girl because she's dating older men, grown men, boy she'll hurt your heart because she'll do anything.' And that's what got me—the anything.



Dr. John and Bobby Rush publicity photo on musicnewsnashville.com

[During the conversation someone says something that reminds Rush of an incident with Chess Records]

In 1951 I left [Chess] with all [my] masters. I'm the only one ever— in 1951 to leave [Chess] with [my] masters. The union —1008 and 10— were merging. You had one union representing black people, and one representing white people and it was the same union. But inside of the union they had a white representation and a black representation. They [didn't] represent the same matters [in] the same [way]. [They held a meeting and] Bo Diddley was [there], Little Walter, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and John Lee Hooker was there. And when I walked in, John Lee Hooker say 'there our blood come,' I say how you doing sir? Leonard [Chess] say 'well Bobby

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*Jesus was just a carpenter.
So I'm just a blues singer.
That's who I am.*

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Rush, How you doing?' He say 'I'm having a meeting here. Y'all mind if Bobby Rush [sits] in the meeting?' Bo Diddley say 'I don't mind.' [I saw] a card on the table that said the union is merging so I say damn fellas this is good. Phil [Chess] say 'What's good?' I say "that" and I gave [the card] to Leonard. Leonard say 'where you get this from boy.' And I say I got it off your desk. He say 'what did it say?' [I told him] I know it said something about the union. He say 'well tell me what it says.' I didn't know he wanted to know whether I could read or write. I said that it says the unions 208 and 10 are merging. So Leonard turned to Phil and he said 'we can't hire that nigger, he can read.' So I didn't get a contract. I left with my masters because my real name is Emmitt Ellis and they knew I had a contract with Emmitt Ellis. But they didn't know that Emmitt Ellis and Bobby Rush is the same man. I was working downtown for the Capones; I wasn't working for Al Capone I was working for Caesar Capone, he's Al Capone's brother. So [Chess] didn't mess with me because they knew I was working for the Capones. So I got away.

[I did a little web surfing but I was not able to locate a Caesar Capone. However Alphonse .a.k.a. Al, had a brother named Albert Capone living in Chicago who was known to use aliases and avoid the spotlight.

This is possibly the brother Rush worked for. Our conversation takes a few more twists and turns and we talk a little more about his latest project.]

LM: Now you have a song on the new CD called, "Bobby Rush's Bus."

BR: Carl Gustafson, I gave him my bus. He put a lot of money into this bus reviving it to make it be what he wanted it to be. Because of the relationship he and I had, we're the best of friends and he wanted to get this bus and make it traditional because he knew me and he fixed this bus up... I don't know what happened to the bus but anyway that's what that song was on. And then he wrote this song about the funky old man, I don't know whether he talking about me or himself. There are so many things that I like about Carl Gustafson, his writing ability; I just fell in love with the kind of things he do, the things he stood for and the friendship that we built with each other.

LM: You did an interview with USA Today and you mention Dr. John as a dream come true to work with and a highlight of your career.

BR: That's one of the highlights. He don't know, I don't think he knows, how long I've been waiting for the opportunity just to come knock on my door so I can do something with Dr. John. We've know each

other for 48 years since we were 20 something years old.

LM: What took you guys so long to work together?

BR: I don't know, it just wasn't in the plan, there was nothing I had against him, he had nothing against me, he was on the other side of the fence, I was on one

with me to be free and to keep myself free and yet maintain the status because people still take me for granted and chump me up, chump my intelligence up because I'm so low keyed. But as a biblical study Jesus was just a carpenter. So I'm just a blues singer. That's who I am.

LM: Wow, speechless... So there's no promotional

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...he was on one side of the river, I was on the other side of the river, but headed in the same direction.
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side of the fence and finally I crossed on the side of the fence with him with a white audience then people relate to me on that side and also still relate to me on the side where black people still come and see me. Like I said I'm a blessed man how many guys live and have both sides of the fence working for them?

LM: Do you think you'll work on another song together?

BR: I think we'll be working on stage a lot together behind this record. I would love to see this happened again. I don't know whether politically it can happen because of the red tape with his management, with the company. I happen to be a free man; I can call the shots on Bobby Rush, but ain't many guys can have that opportunity to live and have 300 and something records and call the shots. And it's been hard

tour scheduled yet?

BR: No, the record is brand new and hoping that it will link into something that's going to be greater than we can all expect or foresee it to be. I know it will lead into something else, I'm just hoping it will lead to some kind of tour or some kind of relationship that we gain out of this will give us a chance to do another record like this or either get on the stage together and do something. I'd love to see him on the stage with his keyboard, and me on my guitar with the harp, doing some solo stuff, that one on one kind of a thing. We all old men, at least I am, he's a young man, he'll love for me to say that [laughter]. But it's a great thing. I'm here in Mississippi now and he used to live in the same state and we are both from [Louisiana]. We've been through high waters

and low waters, the valleys and hills together and sometimes we were on different paths; he was on one side of the river, I was on the other side of the river, but headed in the same direction.

LM: And met up now on this album.

BR: Yes.

LM: Do you know what the next release will be off the album and can we expect another video?

BR: I'm hoping there will be another video, but it's too far off to tell what it's going to be, it all depends on what kind of airplay we get, what kind of hits we get about this. Do we gel in a way to where we can work a few shows together so we can tell what we should do together. And I think that's going to determine what we should do about how people perceive us to be. Deep down inside I think it's going to be good. I may do something that's a little bit different next time around but I think it'll be great.

I'm working on something now that I don't know everything about. I've read and heard somewhere down the lines that in Chicago there was a big barn like where they milk cows and what have you, and the cow knocked over the lantern and burned the town down. But what people don't talk about is a similar thing happened in Natchez Mississippi.

LM: I didn't know that.

BR: Many many years ago, I believe that Louis Jordan was one of the people who worked at this place. Blind Lemon and a few other guys even Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters as younger men worked at this place. I don't even know the name of it but I was too young to understand because I was working at 16 years old. I got hired to work the Rabbit Foot in port Gibson, Mississippi. And I wish I would have been old enough to play in this place that got burned down because I heard it was a great place. It got burned down because they were decorating a place for the

black men and women to come and have a party on Christmas Night and someone lit a tree [that caught fire]. If you check the record it was burned almost down because of the fire on Christmas Eve night.

LM: I've never heard that one.

BR: Well since you never heard of it let me tell you a little something about it. It goes something like this [playing guitar and singing]

Did you hear 'bout the burning, happened way down in that Mississippi town. Did y'all hear 'bout the burning happened way down in Natchez Mississippi town. They was decorating a night club one night, tell me they burned the whole town down yeah. Muddy Waters was there, B.B. King played there too. Tell me Jimmy Reed played there, whoa I wish it

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I sold 9 million records with that record.
”

hadda been me and you. They was decorating a night club one night. Tell me they burnt the whole town down. Howlin' Wolf played there Jimmy Reed played there too, Fats Domino played there y'all, tell me they played there, playing the blues all night long. They was decorating a night club one night, tell me they burnt the whole damn place down..

[Applause.]

LM: That's good..

BR: I remember in...1968 I had a song called "Chicken Head" which was my first gold record. I sold about 9 million records with the record. And I was talking to a guy named Calvin Carter in Chicago he had Vee-Jay Records. Calvin Carter was brother to Vivian Carter, understand Vivian and Vee, Jay is

for Jimmy. She got married to Jimmy in 1954.

When Vivian got married to Jimmy they named it Vee-Jay Records but before that time it was C.J. Records; for Calvin and Vivian. There was Chess Records in Chicago- that was Chess and Checker Records. And Vee-Jay was the biggest thing around then later on came Motown. After that came Philadelphia- Philly International Records. Those were the big record companies.

So Calvin Carter and Vivian Carter went bankrupt and there was only one black record company and that was Motown. Chess was still there. After they went bankrupt Calvin Carter came to me, say 'Bobby Rush we need to do something to bring us a big record

south. He say 'yeah they eat chicken heads down south.' Talking about the black guys eat chicken heads. He said 'yeah yeah we can do that song.'

So now Calvin Carter say 'do you have a second record?' I say yeah I got another record, he say 'what's the name?' I say "Mary Jane," he say 'oh yeah, had a girl did me wrong her name Mary Jane.' I wasn't talking about a girl at all. So I say [to myself] I got me two guys who don't even know what the hell I'm talking about so I kind of pushed it over their heads. And [Calvin] said 'Bobby Rush this record you have, you told me "Chick Head" but now you say "Chicken Head." Do you mean "Chicken Head?" I say yeah I mean Chicken Head. He said 'sing a little of it.' So I picked my guitar up, I start to playing and I say-

[Rush starts to play guitar and sing.]

My daddy told me on his dying bed gave up your heart but don't lose your head, You came along girl what did I do lost my heart and my head too.

[Stops.]

Which had nothing to do with a chicken. So I said I got me some suckers here they don't know what the hell I'm talking about. [Calvin] say 'now what's the other song?' I say "Mary Jane." He say 'ok let's do it.' Well I went on to do the record [but] they didn't really believe in the record and the record was gold. I had the number one record in town that year. Had the number one record; James Brown had the number two record, Bill Withers had the number three record. Beating out James Brown and Bill Withers with "Ain't No Sunshine"? "Chicken Head" was number one.

LM: You were a nominee for Best Blues Album at this year's Grammys for *Down in Louisiana* and before that in 2000 for *Hoochie Man*.

BR: Never won a Grammy but I've been [nominated] so it's good to be up. I have won five [other awards



back,' I say I got the record. Calvin had a business partner, he was Jehovah's Witness preacher, he said 'yeah Bobby Rush we might not be able to cut one of your records because you be talking nasty.' That's what this preacher was saying. I said what you mean by talking nasty? He say 'you talk about all the fat girls and little girls and all like that.' So he said 'what's the name of your record?' Well I didn't think about him being a preacher, I said "Chick Head." He say "Chick Head"? We can't do a record like "Chick Head." Then I said I mean "Chicken Head." He said 'oh well, where you from?' I say I'm from down

for] Best Record of the Year.

LM: But you've been a nominee. That's going to always be attached to your name, Grammy nominee.

BR: Oh God, I'm a nominee. Yes I'm glad.

LM: What can we expect as far as your next album?

BR: I'm working on some stuff, I'm working on...

LM: You just don't stop do you? This one just came out last month and you're already working on new material?

BR: It just came out. I'm working on something-

[Rush plays guitar and sings.]

Let me tell you a story about a farmer raised hogs chicken, cows and a lotta corn. One day his rooster got sick couldn't crow for day then the hen got sick and it couldn't even lay , couludn't lay. One day the dog got sick couldn't bark and couldn't bury bone, then the frost came on early one day and kill old man's corn then I heard him got on his knees and he began to pray and this is what he say. Come by here Lord. Lordy won't you please come by here. I want you to come on by here, whoa Lordy won't you please come by my home. He said all my cows are dead. Whoa stop by here, if you don't stay long. I heard him say I need you Lord stop by here. I heard him say I need you stop by here oh I heard him say please won't you stop by my home. He said everything I have around my house is dead, stop by here if you don't stay long.

I'm sick and tired of people writing about the Chitlin' Circuit and misquoting what [it] really is.



[Applause.]

AM: You are the King of the Chitlin' Circuit. What was the circuit like?



I crossed over but I didn't cross out...

BR: A few weeks ago I was at Rose College I told something about the Chitlin' Circuit that may never have been told. I've seen many books, many writers who wrote at the Chitlin' Circuit; I say wrote *at* the Chitlin' circuit. The Chitlin' circuit is just funky joints, mostly the black clubs. Some of them still exist but most of them are gone. But the Chitlin' Circuit is just what it says. Until 1948 or 1949 you couldn't buy a chitlin'. I'm old enough to know this.

You go to a slaughter house and they would give you the chitlin's- the guts of the hog or the pigs. They would take those and clean them and they would feed them to black people, especially black bands for their work to play at the Chitlin Circuits. It was called the Chitlin' Circuit because they was serving you chitlins' for your wage to play. You play free and for something to eat. I had to- in 1950 or 51- play for \$3 a night.

For me and the band that's a dollar a piece but we ate all the chitlin's we wanted free. I got so good that I made them give me two chitlin' plates and two hot dogs and two hamburgers. I would sell the two hotdogs and one of the hamburger, eat one hamburger and the chitlin's. Then I got so good he would fix me eight hamburgers a night. I would sell seven of

them and eat the one. For 20 cent a piece. That was my salary; that was my money. That's the Chitlin Circuit.

And people write that it was the juke joint because it was these black clubs. Not necessarily. It's almost like playing the blues. They had the wrong concept about it, because the blues ain't something sad. The blues[is like] the same thing that makes you laugh is the same thing that makes you cry. Because when we got out of the field [from]picking cotton or whatever we were doing, on the weekend we were glad to go to the juke joint. That was happy time. The only sad thing about the juke joint is Sunday night about 8 o'clock when you've got to go to bed to go to the field the next morning. That was the sad part about the juke joint, about the Chitlin' Circuit. Because you could eat all the chitlins' free. That's the Chitlin' Circuit, you got paid Chitlins' because the man who owned the club didn't have to buy it until 1948 or 49. There were no Chitlin's in the world sold. It was given away. You got the chicken feet and chitlins- the inside of a hog; they gave that to you. And then the Chitlin' Circuit came in.

A few guys know this. B.B. King would know this. But just a few black guys my age understand it and know about that. That's why they call Bobby Rush

the King of the Chitlin' circuit. I'm one of the few guys who talks about it. I'm one of the few guys free to talk about some things that I can talk about. Most of the guys in my position can't talk about what I talk about. Because they have the record company, they got the manager, they got this they got that telling them when and what not to talk about. But nobody tells me [what I can and can't] talk about. I talk about what I want to talk about. And I'm telling you the Chitlin' Circuit is something you play for free; for your meals.

And there weren't any hotels. You had to stay at somebody's house. [You got] room and board for \$1.50 or \$2 and your meals for free. That's the Chitlin' Circuit. I'm sick and tired of people writing about the Chitlin' Circuit and misquoting what [it] really is. There are a few [writers] who call me up and ask me what I think about the Chitlin' Circuit because I'm the King of the Chitlin' Circuit. That's what everybody says- Bobby Rush is the King of the Chitlin' Circuit because I'm one of the few guys left and still working places like 200 or 300 people seaters, [even] 50 seaters. Then turn around and play for 2,000 or 200,000 people. I'm the only man who's left that works like that. I'm the only man who work where I go to Memphis, TN on Beale Street and I have 98% white people at one club and the next night I go cross

*“ I say to the world
that my plan is to do all I
can while I can. I know
there will come a time
where I cannot do that. I
won't regret what I did
not do.”*



the railroad tracks where the black are and have 99% black people. I'm the only one that does this; the only one that's left. And I'm still this grounded man who crossed the river but I didn't burn the bridge down that brought me cross. I crossed over but I didn't cross out [my black audience]. I'm the king of the Chitlin' Circuit and proud of it. I still live in the Chitlin' Circuit.

AM: They were making a killing off of you all.

BR: They paid Elmore James (a white artist), \$51 a week- that's seven days. And I was making \$2.50 a day; I only made \$7.50 for the weekend.

AM: How do you feel about some of these younger [blues] guys coming up?

BR: I feel good about them to an extent. They just don't know.

AM: You know if they'll be able to take the helm? I don't know if they'll be able to take it where you took it; you and B.B. King and all those guys.

BR: I don't know because people like yourself and like your wife who can tell the story of where it is and where it's going but you have to learn, you have to know that.

LM: Where can fans catch your next live performance?

BM: Friday that's June 13th and 14th I'll be in Atlanta, Georgia; on the 15th I'll be going to Saginaw, Michigan; on the 17th and 18th I'm finishing up with a movie that I'm doing called *Take Me To the River* with myself, Al Greene and Snoop Dogg so you'll be hearing that in the next few weeks. I'm working every other weekend somewhere and I do about 220 or 230 shows a year. I feel pretty good, I'm just enthused. I'm steady playing and steady learning. What I'm leaning is what gets put in front of me to learn about. What I'm praying about is being enthused.

You know a man can live a long time without water or food but you can't live long without hope. So I'm still enthused. I have hope [that] God can keep me enthused, keep me built up, keep my hope up. It's like when I was a kid I always remember [the story] that there was a mule or horse with an ear of corn on the bridle in front of him. The mule walked at it for 20 years thinking he's going to get to it in a minute. So I'm enthused [like I have] this ear of corn that I think I'm going to get in a minute. Hoping I can walk for



another 20 years. If I get it fine; if I don't I'm hoping to get to it. That's my hope and I say to the world that my plan is to do all I can while I can. I know there will come a time where I cannot do that. I won't regret what I did not do.



When you are being schooled by a legend there can never be too many hours in a day. We run out of time but before we part ways we agree that we have to do this again.

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