



# UNRATED

M A G A Z I N E

## [Sweet Home Chicago!](#)

by [Tamara Jenkins](#) on Jun.24, 2010, under [Film](#)

By Wendy Simmons

The musical genre known as the Blues, was originated, cultivated and integrated in Chicago. We find out more about the integration process in “White, Black and Blues”, a documentary directed by John Anderson.

A screening of the documentary was held at Columbia College and was host to Blues legends and Blues lovers alike. We were in the company of Barry Goldberg, Corky Siegel, Harvey Mandel, Sam Lay, and Nick Gravenites, who are featured in the documentary. There was a question and answer portion, after the screening, where we learned more about what the men had been up to over the years.

Presented as a rough cut with more to come, the documentary did a brilliant job relaying the personal experiences of men that helped give birth to an American institution.

The basis of the documentary was to tell the story of young white men from the North side of Chicago, who ventured out to the South and West side of the city to learn, listen and appreciate the Blues in its raw form. While doing that, they honed their skills and showcased them to a crowd of people that were unfamiliar to them. In most of the clubs they frequented they were thought to be police officers. According to the interview with Blues legend Buddy Guy, the white boys weren't harassed in African American clubs because they were always thought to be cops. Whites didn't frequent dives like *Big Johns*, *The Blue Flame* or *Peppers* to hear the great sounds of the harmonica, or the drums, so when whites came, eyebrows were raised.

Other African American Blues legends like B.B. King and Sam Lay were also interviewed about the transition of Blues from a small bar in Chicago to the mainstream media. We also got a chance to hear from Marshall Chess. Chess owned a Chicago based music company that was just made famous to my generation by the movie “Cadillac Records”, which depicted the company and its artists. In the documentary, Chess said the Blues would not be where it is today without the white boys from Chicago. Charlie Musselwhite, Paul Butterfield, Michael Bloomfield and others made the Blues a household name.

The Blues was seen as an underground black thing, but with the help of the young white men, it was transformed into something that was loved as far away as Europe. It also inspired many rock musicians to incorporate the sound into their music.

This documentary made me appreciate Chicago, the city I call home, even more. With the interviews and snippets of live performances, “White, Black and Blues” is informative, personal, raw and very entertaining. Although it seems like a finished product to me, I look forward to seeing what director John Anderson has in store to make it complete.

Photo by Dan Locke