

MORNIN' AIN'T COME YET

A LOOK INTO THE MUSIC AND LANDSCAPE OF THE DEEP SOUTH



ADAM SMITH

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This book is dedicated to my mother, Bonnie Smith Hearn
and to my late father Cathey Alexander Smith.

ADAM SMITH DOESN'T JUST HEAR MUSIC, HE SEES IT

Over the past decade or so, he's immersed himself in carefully curated live music experiences, from concrete-block juke joints to the sweat-soaked 40 Watt in Athens to the storied Ryman Theatre in Nashville. Yet, Adam's not a reporter. He's a storyteller whose expressions are every bit as evocative as the songs he drinks in from the artists he most reveres.

While attending the University of Mississippi in Oxford in the 90s, I think Adam spent more time off campus than on, trolling the countryside to hang out and listen to artists like R.L. Burnside, Paul Wine Jones and Junior Kimbrough, whom Memphis legend Charlie Feathers called "the beginning and the end of all music."

The North Mississippi Hill Country scene, with its matchboxed-sized clubs, backyard BBQ's and total lack of pretentiousness, was the beginning of all music for Adam. He may have born in Macon, Georgia, a city of less than 100,000 that launched the careers of Little Richard, Otis Redding and the Allman Brothers Band, but it was the Delta blues that opened up his creative portal.

Robert Palmer wrote that "the musical language of the blues expresses, in a way that words cannot, something profoundly important about the depth, vitality, and continuity of African American culture." Similarly, Adam's early photos expressed what words couldn't about the sounds, people and places he encountered. His often stark images of abandoned railroad cars, intersecting dirt roads and piercing eyes set in creviced and leathered skin can be interpreted as portraying despair. But put those images in context with his accompanying portraits of a pool hall's patrons lounging on a Sunday night, little corn-rowed girls unabashedly dancing and the musicians...especially the musicians... smiling as they do the thing we need them most to do. When I look at these photographs side by side like that, I see expressions of hope, that in a tough, poor and fading world, the blues can be joy, escape, acceptance and beauty.

Adam's attraction to the gritty, raw rock of bands like Drive-By Truckers, Lucero and North Mississippi All-Stars comes from the same guttural place as his love of the blues. He craves authenticity, and couldn't be happier standing pinned up to the stage while the band gets loose, loud and wound up. He feeds off the interaction created between artist and audience, and somehow he manages to weave in and out of the rowdiest and drunkest of crowds to get the shots that encapsulate the energy. It's that unobtrusive style and deep respect for musicians and their space that has also afforded him the necessary access and trust to capture unadorned moments in the daily lives of working musicians.

Adam is imposing, 6'2 in his scruffy boots, with a distinct double-sandpaper rasp and a perpetually unkempt look. But in the words of Precious Bryant, the blues pioneer from Buena Vista, Georgia, whom Adam so adores, "I like the truth, yeah, I like the truth." And the truth is, underneath that night-crawler exterior, Adam Smith is a gentle soul who misses his late father, loves his dog and has the capacity to translate what he hears into enduring images that celebrate the music of the South.

Lisa Love, *Director of The Georgia Music Hall of Fame*



R.L. Burnside, Chulahoma, Mississippi.



Precious Bryant.



Precious Bryant. Buena Vista, Georgia



Lucero. Memphis, Tennessee.



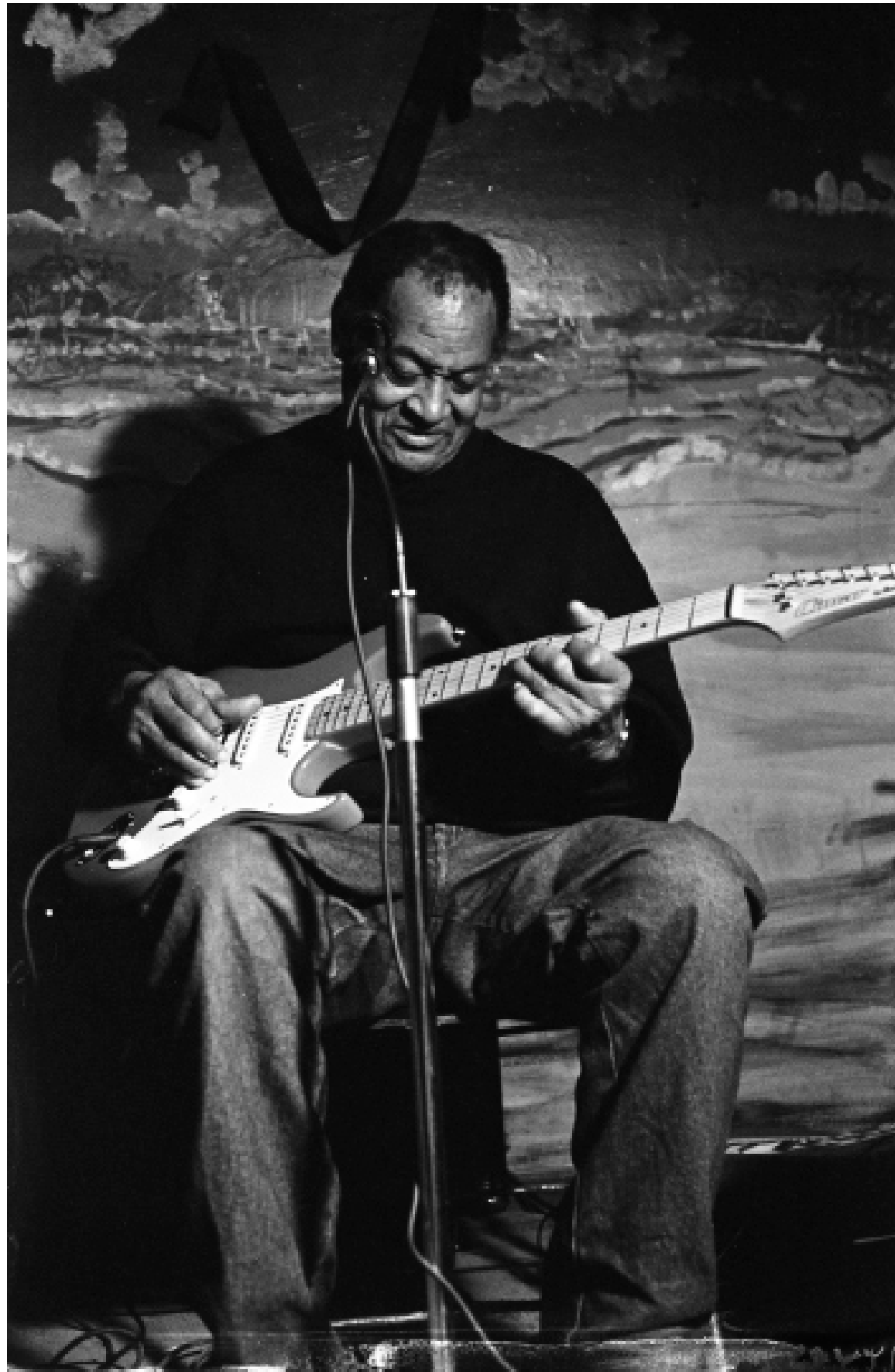
Po Monkey Lounge, Merigold, Mississippi.



Tutwiler, Mississippi



Junior Kimbrough. Chulahoma, Mississippi.



Junior Kimbrough. Junior Kimbrough's Juke Joint. Chulahoma, Mississippi.

YOU GET INTO A ROOM WITH JUNIOR KIMBROUGH AT A BAR IN OXFORD

maybe Ireland's or City Grocery or Proud Larry's a place that's halfway dark where the floor is covered with scuffed wood and old cigarette burns, and it's a comfortable half gloom you like because you wouldn't want to be listening to this out in the sunshine. You know he's going to start singing about hurting and a woman gone wrong and trouble and hard times, and the dark wears all that like a glove. You want to feel all that pain, and roll in the music. He pulls it up out of the body of the guitar, fingers and hands and voice and mind all working together with his soul as it floats from the strings into the smoky air where people have tables pushed together and barmaids are hurrying with drinks and more people are trying to get in the door, lining up out on the sidewalk, all of us here for the magic in the dark. The music drifts out over the room and mingles with the talk and laughter and rises up into the ceiling and hangs there in a cloud, like a solid force you can feel in the atmosphere, like something with a life of its own pushing outward against the walls. You start to move because you can't help it, there's no fighting it, and who wants to anyway?

You wonder where it comes from, this power. And you figure North Mississippi and rivers full of catfish, a hoe in your hand all day in some cotton patch for four dollars, dead dogs in the road and summertime roasting the land, pictures of it by Eggleston, words of it by Faulkner, the hard mornings of frost when hogs are butchered and children scream with laughter, little enclaves of music and dim lights and cold bottles of beer and electric stokes of guitarist choking down the necks with fingers greased by skill, the rolling miles of highway ribboned with tar, the little pens of wood beside the fields, the beer joints and bent or shotgunned road signs and buzzards sailing languidly over the land, smashed possums and petrified rabbits and crushed snakes, an alligator snapper walking across the road seeking water, hard work and the taste of a drink of whiskey in the evening, a small plot of tomatoes and okra and beans and peas, the warm flat back of your woman pressed against you in your sleep.

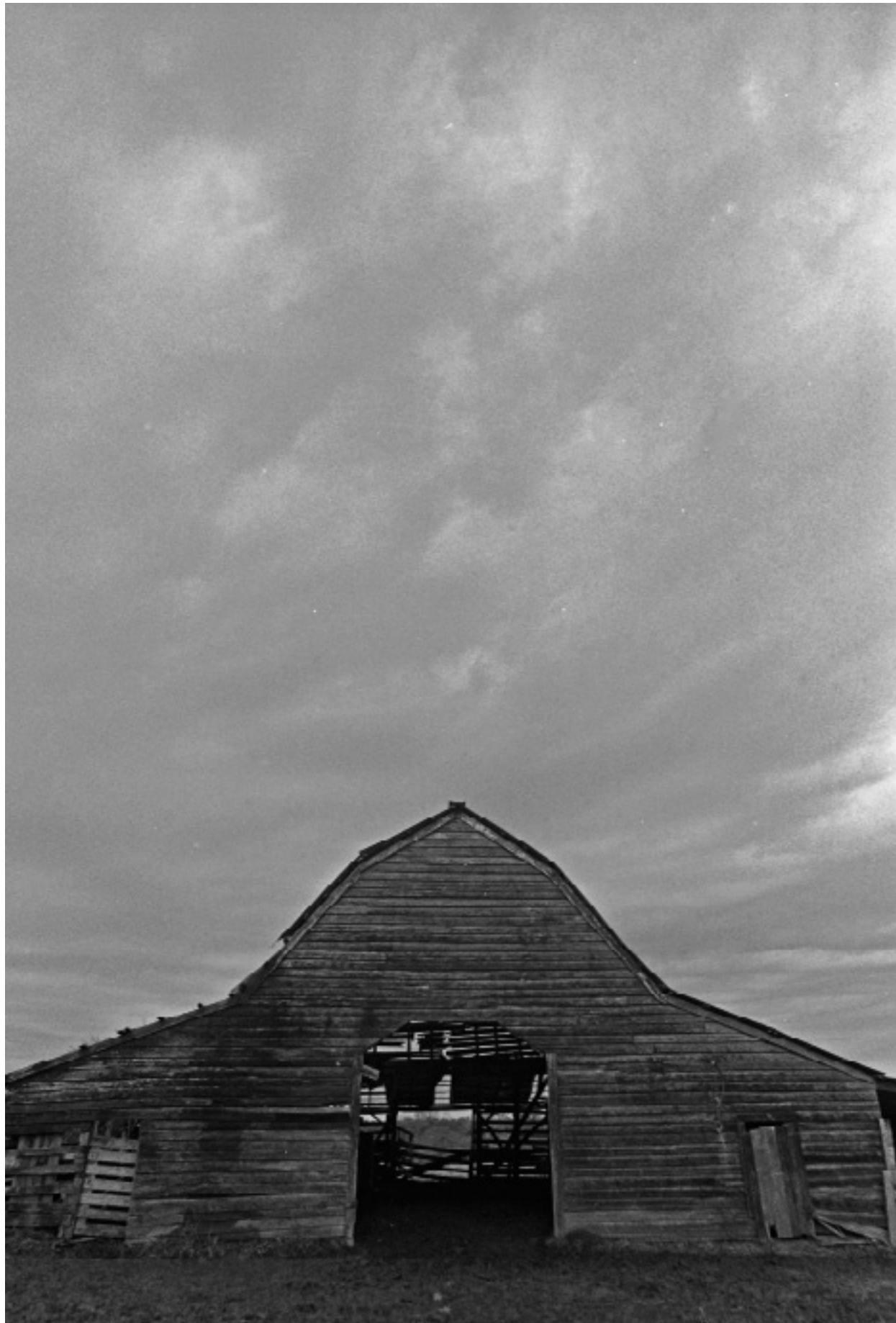
Junior's place in Marshall County sits about 20 feet off highway 4, a little patch of gravel fronting a long old building, a dirt porch with wooden walls, two swinging doors that block away the world when they drop a 2x4 into the notches inside. There's a concrete floor and a single pool table and some things like wooden caves lining the walls where some abstractionist carpenter has been hard at work with his frenzied hammering. Couches sit inside the little caves and there are a couple of tables and some chairs. They flung glitter all over the walls while the paint was still wet. It looks more like a shrine than anything else, and for the people for the people that go there all the time, that's probably what it is: a shrine to Junior's music. Those old walls rock with sound and diminish the semis grinding past and flattening the roadside grasses and floating papers and trash with there passing. This place vibrates with guitars while the rest of the world rolls by. You probably wouldn't pay any attention to it driving by, looking at it from the outside. But this is the home of the music. This is where it's born.

The people are moving together on the floor now, legs and hips and feet and hands moving and no two of them alike, everybody doing what the music makes them feel. A Big packed herd. The music grows and grows and becomes more intricate and gains power and weight until it's screaming to be let out of the room and onto the sidewalk and up the street. It's gathering centrifugal force. In the dark any trouble you have can fade while you just listen to the music and move your feet, knowing it'll take the hurt away, cure whatever ails you. Tomorrow ain't come yet.

Larry Brown, Author of *DirtyWork*, *Joe*, *Big Bad Love*, *Facing the Music* and *On Fire*



Off Old Highway 61. Clarksdale, Mississippi.



Mississippi storm.



Taylor Grocery. Taylor, Mississippi.



Luther Dickinson and Cedric Burnside. Junior Kimbrough's Juke Joint. Chulahoma, Mississippi.



God Knows I Tried - Junior Kimbrough. Junior Kimbrough's Juke Joint. Chulahoma, Mississippi.



Saturday Night at Junior Kimbrough's.



R.L. Burnside. Chulahoma, Mississippi.



The Break - Junior Kimbrough's Juke Joint.



Sunday night at Junior Kimbrough's Juke Joint.



Sunday night at Junior Kimbrough's Juke Joint.

CHARRED IN CHULAHOMA

A SPRING SUNSET GLOWED AT

at Junior's juke joint this past Sunday on the first weekend in memory when no music played. Where once stood the ramshackle shrine, now only blackened rubble was visible off the side of the road, just this side of Chulahoma on Highway 4. A church pew guarded the wreckage, the words, "No Trespassing," spray-painted on its back.

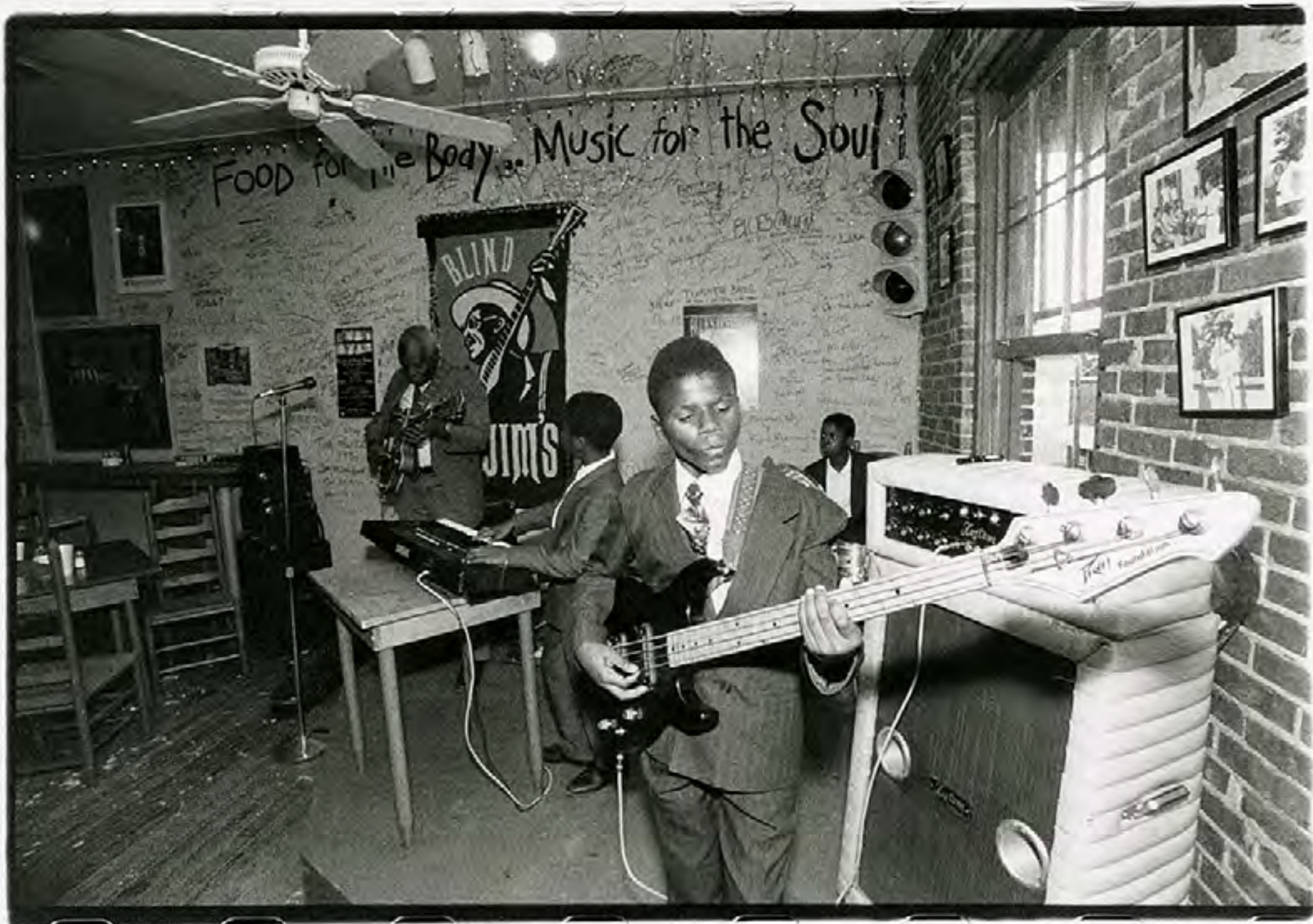
The great Mississippi writer, Larry Brown, had a term for the vibe at Junior's: "magic in the dark." The fire that destroyed Junior's place reminds us just how fleeting magic can be. One man's attitude summed it up for me. He too visited the site last Sunday. He was an old black man with white whiskers and wearing a white suit, drinking whiskey. Tears were running down his face.

"I just felt like dancing tonight," he said. "I just came to dance."

Jim Dees



Junior Kimbrough's Juke Joint after the fire.



John Billington & The Midnighters. Oxford, Mississippi.

I'VE ALWAYS HATED THE TYPICAL PHOTOGRAPHS

of some old blues guy sitting on the front porch holding his guitar, watching the evening sun going down. At Fat Possum we always tried to avoid images like that. Adam's photographs have always been different. He somehow transcends the ordinary image and manages to capture the essence of the artist creating music in their environment, which was basically our approach to making records. I think we even used a couple of his photographs without permission over the years and he was cool about it. Sorry about that Adam.

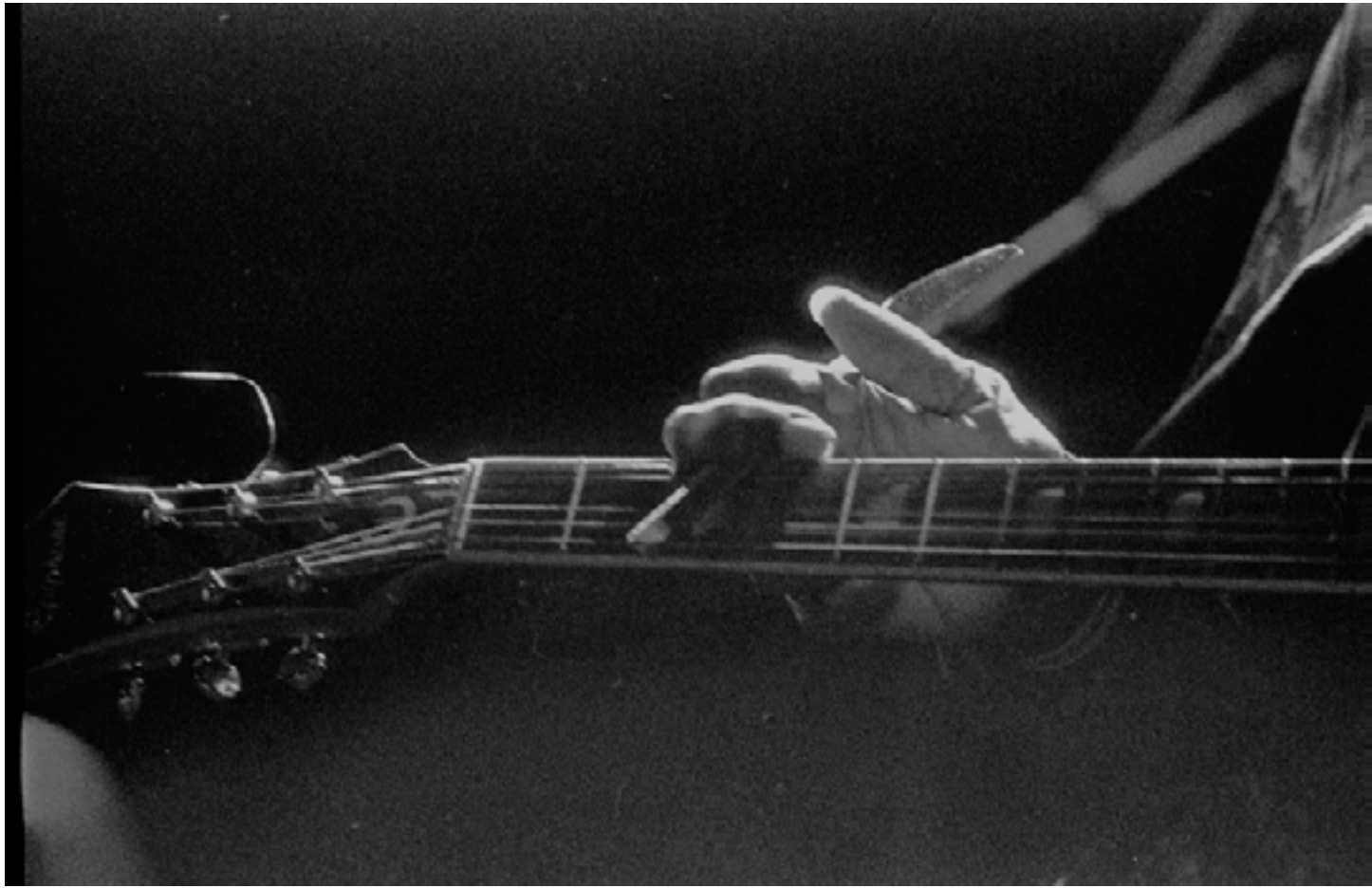
Bruce Watson
Fat Possum Records



Cedric Burnside, R.L. Burnside & Kenny Brown. Chulahoma, Mississippi.



Duck Holmes. Bentonia, Mississippi.



Ceddell Davis.



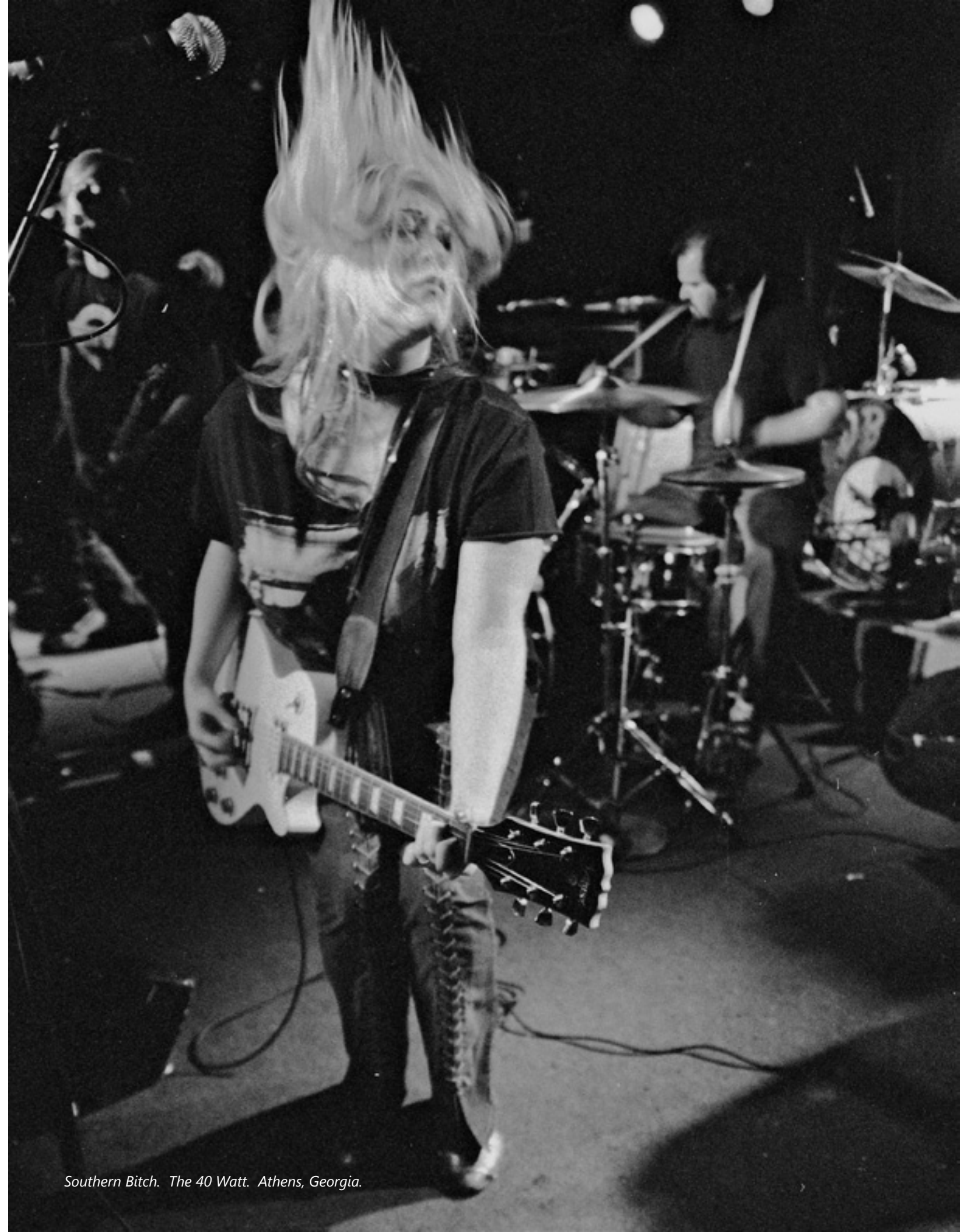
Jessie Mae Hemphill. Como, Mississippi.



Cedric Burnside.



Alvin Youngblood Hart. Polaroid Transfer. Memphis, Tennessee.



Southern Bitch. The 40 Watt. Athens, Georgia.



Drive-By Truckers.

ADAM SMITH IS A LIGHTNING CAPTURER

Sure he has the technical skills needed to do whatever needs to be done in turning a moment into a piece of art, but he also seems to have the uncanny knack of clicking the camera at that exact moment the thunder strikes, the moment the magic occurs, when just one millisecond later would produce a fine picture but not the moment of alchemy that separates the great from the mundane.

Some call that luck, but I'm not a big believer of luck.

I love Adam's "blues" photographs and I love his live photography.

His "star burst" photo of us from The Dirty South Tour (our 20th Anniversary Show at The Tabernacle) is my favorite photo of us from that period.

He aimed, lightning flashed, magic occurred.

Hail Hail Rock and Roll!

Patterson Hood

March 29, 2010 (Back of bus on the way to NYC)



Drive-By Truckers. The Tabernacle. Atlanta, Georgia.



Drive-By Truckers. The 40 Watt. Athens, Georgia.



Mike Cooley of Drive-By Truckers. The 40 Watt. Athens, Georgia.



Parker Gispert of The Whigs.



Justin Townes Earl.

I MET ADAM ABOUT 9 YEARS AGO MY BAND LUCERO WAS TRAVELING BACK

towards Memphis after a run through the northeast opening for the North Mississippi All stars, and we had a gig in Atlanta on the way back home. A mutual friend of both mine and Adam's called me as we were pulling into town and relayed to me that Adam wanted to offer us a place to stay and have a cookout for us before the show. Upon pulling into the drive way we were greeted by Hatfield, the most instantly personable yellow lab I'd ever met. The grill was already fired up and there were several people on the front porch, so my next thought was "I wonder which one of these honkeys is Adam Smith?" Before I could even finish the thought of wonderment, Adam came bounding off the porch. He simultaneously shook hands, made introductions and passed out beers all the while making us all feel as if we've known this total stranger for years not just a matter of minutes.

At some point in the evening I ventured into the house. I was immediately visually struck by the huge black and white prints hanging in series throughout the house. Landscapes of Mississippi crossroads, portraits of R.L.Burnside, and Jr Kimbrough, I was convinced at first that I was looking at lost Walker Evans prints from the series of photographs for the farm security administration for the library of congress, circa 1935-38. As I looked closer I noticed even more contrast in the black,chrome,greys, and deep cepiatones, almost lending a 3-d effect to the images, they where literally jumpin out of the paper, or was I jumping into it? When I found out it was Adams work I was slightly shocked. How could this young kid have such a unique perspective of composition and complete understanding of the development process to manipulate them both to create his own world?

Over the years Adam has allowed us into this world that he is still building. With every click of the shutter and every handshake his world grows. Through his photographs and his unbridaled passion for music, especially music from the south, Adam has introduced me to a world of truth. Adam has been documenting the New South for sometime now, and in some ways this is the world I speak of that he has helped build. Some people might say that it has been there all along, but through Adam's dillagence and tireless enthusiasm he has brought us all together, into his world of deep contrast and unique composition, moments in time captured for eternity. It is a legitement place, a real world that I can say I am proud to be a part of .

John C. Stubblefield
Lucero



John C. Stubblefield of Lucero.



Lucero.



Lucero. Atlanta, Georgia.



Lucero. Memphis, Tennessee.



"Beulah Land." Beulah, Mississippi.



Kenny Brown. Potts Camp, Mississippi.

ADAM SMITH HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE KIND OF

photographer who follows his own instincts and interests, chasing his favorite musical beats and rhythms, showing us the essentials to any good picture. He hears and sees the music in a scene with a dog in Beulah, Mississippi or in his portrait with blues guitarist Kenny Brown. "I got myself a hound dog," Hound Dog Taylor sang, "To be my only friend. She's faithful and she's loyal, she won't run for other men."

Adam's work is raw and lean, always in sync with the world around him. What's so clear is that he's in love with what he photographs, choosing to affirm what draws him rather than using the photograph to critique. He moves freely and naturally with and around his subjects. He feels what they feel. And, then, we feel it all over again.

The reverence he delivers with his portraits of R.L. Junior, Porter, Cedell, the list goes on, comes through the light he sees in these men and women, how real and close we feel. Beginning with the music, Adam Smith takes us to the life, honoring the "last of their kind" and embracing those that continue to carry on, calling for encore after encore. And we're with him all the way.

Tom Rankin
Director of Documentary Studies Duke University



"I fell down on my knees." Off Old Highway 61. Clarksdale, Mississippi.



Delta Dogs.



Tutwiler, Mississippi.



Porter Wagoner. Grand Ole Opry. Nashville, Tennessee.



Maryt Stuart and Porter Wagoner. The "Wagonmaster" Sessions.



Porter Wagoner.



Precious Bryant.



R.L. Burnside.



Otha Turner's Picnic. Como, Mississippi.



Po Monkey Lounge. Merigold, Mississippi.

COUNTRY BLUES LOUNGE



Willie Seaberry. Po Monkey Lounge. Merigold, Mississippi.



Drive-By Truckers.



Parker Gispert of the Whigs.



Don Chamber's boots.



Patterson Hood of the Drive by Truckers.



Theodis Taylor.



Theodis Taylor.



Glossary. Star Bar. Atlanta, Georgia.



Drive by Truckers.



Greg Allman. Macon, Georgia.



Po Monkey Lounge. Merigold, Mississippi.



Marty Stuart. "Ghost Train" sessions.



Kathy Mattea and Marty Stuart. Nashville, Tennessee.



Marty Stuart and Ralph Mooney. "Ghost Train" Sessions. Nashville, Tennessee.

ADAM SMITH IS

ONE OF MY ALL TIME FAVORITE PHOTOGRAPHERS

He shoots lean, neat and to the point. He understands the dance between music and photography and knows how to capture it. He eases up on a musical situation in the form of a ghost and his results are always timeless.

Marty Stuart



Marty Stuart.



Marty Stuart's "Ghost Train" Sessions.



Marty Stuart.



Marty Stuart. and the Fabulous Superlatives. The Ryman Theater, Nashville, Tennessee.



Porter Wagoner.



Marty Stuart. "The Ghost Train" Sessions, RCA Victor Studio B. Nashville, Tennessee.



Luther Dickinson.

ADAM SMITH CAPTURES THE ESSENCE OF THE MODERN DAY SOUTH

in all its extension cord run out the bedroom window, Peavey powered back yard house party, midnight mosquito ridden fluorescent light glory. From the pool tables of back road juke joints to the sleeping bag on the floor of a punk rock touring van, Adam Smith's photographs make you hold your nose, yearn for earplugs and a semi-working window unit air conditioner. They don't call it the Dirty South for nothin!

Luther Dickinson
North Mississippi Allstars & Black Crowes



Kathy Mattea and Marty Stuart.



North Mississippi All-Stars.



Benton, Mississippi.



North Mississippi All-Stars.



Merigold, Mississippi.



Robert Lockwood, Jr.



Othar Turner's fife and drum picnic. Como, Mississippi.



Patterson Hood.

BETWEEN MIDNIGHT AND DAY

WHEN SATURDAY NIGHT MORPHS INTO SUNDAY MORNING

It's when the blues was born and the spawning of the soul of rock and roll followed. It made music as kinetic energy, ebbing and flowing, pushing and pulling. Robust passion thrust into your eardrums, heart and ass. (Not always in that order.)

Capturing that mystic energy is no easy feat. The spirit of a live performance occupies a unique space in time. It's a combination of specific souls and sounds, sweat and sway—a conflagration that burns brightly and briefly. When it's over, it's gone.

Audio recordings and photo documents are no match for the memory of feeling. Yet occasionally, a document reveals even more about that flashpoint than can be conceived at the time it happened. The music thrives in the balance of dark and light, the sinister and the righteous. The shades go both ways. It's angry and its sad and its joyful and its carefree. It's everything in between but its best when each end of the spectrum is balanced in just the right way for just the right time. Photography can catch that specific balance in a specific moment, a moment that may have been but a sliver of the experience yet speaks beyond its whole.

The weathered smiling face of RL Burnside, the sweat flinging from Patterson Hood's hair as he lunges forth with his guitar, the formality and gaiety of a Marty Stuart get-up, the contemplative concern of Ben Nichols' vocal delivery. These moments carry more weight when the balance of dark and light is right there in front of you and sometimes you only see it after the fact. Hell, taken over by the music you'd be excused if you had your eyes closed when these guys are coaxing forth their music from their guitars and their souls. You may feel that balance but not see the expression of it. It was there inside of you but had no form and no point of reference.

A chance reflection, an unexpected grimace, a sly smile. Missed at the time but preserved forever. There's beauty in pain and lightness in dark and the space in between, that's where the moment lives. It's the moment of cathartic release, of ecstatic liberation, when the darkness and the light dance together harmoniously to fully form a complete picture, a balanced picture. Movement made immortal. That's what music photography does.

The best of it takes you back to that place, that moment. It's a time machine that can recreate those moments of joy and pain. The best of it gives you insight into lyrics that you only thought you understood. It's a deeper truth that speaks to the perfect balance. It's easy to take this gateway and all of its time-traveling capabilities for granted, but as the music and musician balances the light and dark so does the time machine and its architect. It's made between midnight and day and it balances the light and the dark. It's the perfect portal into the magic moments of music.

Tom Speed



Lucero.



Glossary.



Jason Isbell.



Cary Hudson of Blue Mountain.



Joe Cole. Bobo, Mississippi.



Joe Cole. Bobo, Mississippi.



Sherard, Mississippi.



Ben Nichols of Lucero.



Robert Coleman. Macon, Georgia.



Brian Venable of Lucero.



Frank Edwards. Atlanta, Georgia.



Ben Nichols. of Lucero.

AMOS HARVEY

THE TOUR MANAGER

for the North Mississippi Allstars at the time, told us to give this guy Adam Smith a call when we got to Atlanta. He said he'd known Adam in Oxford and that Adam would let us sleep on his floor. Lucero was nearing the end of a long two month U.S. tour and now we were back in the South and we were almost home. I think we had a show at Smith's Old Bar that night.

We'd never met Adam before but the offer of a place to stay was one we greatly appreciated. We weren't making much money and traveling was expensive. We pulled up in our Dodge van to a little wooden house Adam was renting. He and a bunch of his friends were on the front porch grilling burgers. We met Adam's dog and everybody else and dug in to the food. It felt like we were home already.

I fell asleep on the couch after I looked around the house a bit. There were these really great prints all over; leaning against walls, shoved behind furniture, stacked in the back room. I recognized some of the faces in the pictures. Other photographs looked like they were taken a hundred years ago. That was the first time I'd seen Adam's work and I was immediately impressed. That was the first time I realized how important music was to him. That was when I realized I was going to get along with Adam just fine. Then I passed out on the couch until it was time to go to soundcheck.

And that's how Lucero met Adam Smith. He got us to the bar on time and took some photos at the show that night. That was almost ten years ago. Over the years we've seen Adam's work get better and better. Over the years he's always given us his opinion on our music, whether we wanted to hear it or not. Over the years we've both come a long way and worked together numerous times. Congrats on the book, brother. Looking forward to seeing where this road takes us.

Ben Nichols
Lucero

I REMEMBER FEELING REAL JOY

WHEN I LEARNED THAT ADAM HAD A BOOK IN THE WORKS

as if something very good and worthwhile had happened that moment. That a natural justice had been served, maybe, or some sense of cosmic proportion realized. I do not feel that moments like this happen every day. You can search, with no guarantee of success, to feel such revitalizing satisfaction for quite some time. I've spent many nights in many bars begging such questions and agreeing with and disregarding observations on just that subject. What are we looking for? Something that makes us feel real and alive. There is always cliché, but only a cynic is cooled and contented with that sort of sophomoric self-satisfaction. Art, by some definitions, has to be an act of optimism. I, oftentimes, feel that we want to express and be understood simply because we feel an apartness from people, or that we do not want to feel in a suspended and untreatable solitary confinement ourselves. And when something so honest comes across your to you as in a real work of human art, it dissolves that thin film that separates your life from someone else's. You feel connected. Some would say that many people spend their entire lives waiting for moments like that. They have called that feeling many things. Is the catharsis of creation part of the process which realigns us, possibly, to some common origin or sameness. The Latin root of the word religion mean something very close to realignment, that perfection once existed and presupposes that there is a voyage back to that amorphous sense of place. Good art can make you feel that way for free and without guilt, that we simply are not alone in this world.

And I also think it is fair to say that many men long to celebrate themselves in the way the insomniac Whitman howled about at night, troubled yet amazed and cured by his own gifts. I sometimes see Adam being captivated by the ability to capture others, artist mostly, on a lifelong mystical journey of the self. And all of them creating something that attempts to explain where they are in that stage of spiritual wanderlust. Other times, I see a man using his lens to come to terms with the strangeness of being alive, of becoming a man in the shadow of the loss of his own father, the frustration of being financially stressed while possibly performing at the top of his own craft, which is a question only he could answer. Art simply is not a sport no more than life a meritocracy.

Sometime I feel sure that the best work of Adam Smith's life is ahead of him yet a most comforting and revisiting feeling that I often get from some of my favorite pieces of Adam's is the same feeling that was captured by Adam's portraits of Willie Seaberry and the scenes of Willie's working shot house in Marigold, Mississippi. I was with Adam when those photos were taken, with my band at the time, Hank Vegas, moving around the south with my friend John C. Stubblefield's band Lucero from Memphis. Adam and I had some down time and he took my guys down a few dusty trails to the Po' Monkey Lounge. I recall all of us full of respect and careful of the lines of exploitation that intrusion can bring to another's life. Those photos from the delta show a very clear reverence and respect for persons and a people near the end of their path, and whose deep eyes look at a world that has changed them so much in a Mississippi that probably no longer exists. Knowing where you come from, and I don't mean a place on a map, can make you feel less alone. Why else would anyone ever want to hear the blues if not for the shared experience of whatever it is we're all trying to do hear together, peacefully, though often as loud as we can? We, in fact, are not alone. Good art makes that thought a very certain and inspiring part of many of our lives. Thanks, Adam. It is an honor to be a part of this collection.

Chad Evans
Hank Vegas



Chad Evans of Hank Vegas.



"The things you are." Clarksdale, Mississippi.



The Whigs.



Vulture Whale.



Willie Seaberry. Po Monkey Lounge.



Po Monkey Lounge. Marigold, Mississippi.



Po Monkey Lounge. Macon, Georgia.



Robert Coleman.



Dead Confederate.



Will Johnson of Centromatic.



The Dexateens.

EVERY TIME THAT ADAM HAS PHOTOGRAPHED OUR BAND

I have noticed that just behind the camera, are beads of sweat, propagated from someone whose blood is boiling. Adam works with a frantic sense of urgency as if he is looking through a window of opportunity, that is about to close forever, but not before he seizes the moment. .

That confrontational approach has a lot of direct parallels with making passionate music. I think this is what makes Adam's work effective.

Adam understands that the essence of rock n roll has a layer of dirt and sediment sitting on top. You let that dirt sit there too long and someone might clean it off, or the wind might take it away, but that precious dirt is the flavor that separates the real rock and rollers from the posers. I have always respected the fact that he strives to capture the dirt. I think he and I have a lot in common in that respect.

Elliott McPherson
Dexateens

Joe Cole. Bobo, Mississippi.



Glossary.



The Dexateens.



Shonna Tucker of Drive by Truckers.



"The Dirt Underneath." Patterson Hood.



Will Johnson of Centro-matic.

FOR A LONG TIME RUNNING ADAM SMITH HAS MASTERFULLY COALESCED THE

forces of photography and music into something that is entirely his own. The results are serene and hypnotic at times, fully amplified at others, and his care for his craft speaks for itself. It is a thrill to continue to watch Smith's legacy unfold. He is a true historian, one of my very favorites, and one of our generation's great cultural ambassadors.

Will Johnson
Centro-matic

IT'S BEEN DOWN IN THE DITCHES WHERE I'VE MOST FOUND LIFE

And hardly ever from a Mountain top. I was raised in the church, in the south. And was taught that when times are good.....well.....those are the times when the devil can creep up on you. Those are the times when pianos are flying right above your head waiting to fall on you. For Robert Johnson it was the crossroads, where it all came crashing down. I wonder if he'd have ever drunk that Strychnine had he never stopped there, had he never learned how to play that guitar, had the women not ever been throwing their hips at his tapping feet. I worry about that a lot, the poison that comes with success. When I think about the blues, and the raw honesty of rock and roll, or when I think about the rural south for that matter, I think about that hesitation. The fear and anxiety that can drive art through the smallest lense possible so when it comes out the other side, it's screaming. Inevitably it's loud, and often times, it's soul changing. Adam Smith has been fortunate enough to capture some of these moments. As a friend of his, and someone who's worked with Adam for damn near a decade now, I know that Adam longs for that same peace many a Southern artist has tried to get a toe around. It's not until he picks up a camera that some of ya'll get to see what it is he's looking for.

Brad Evans



Donnie McCormick. Atlanta, Georgia.



Blue Front Cafe. Bentonia, Mississippi.



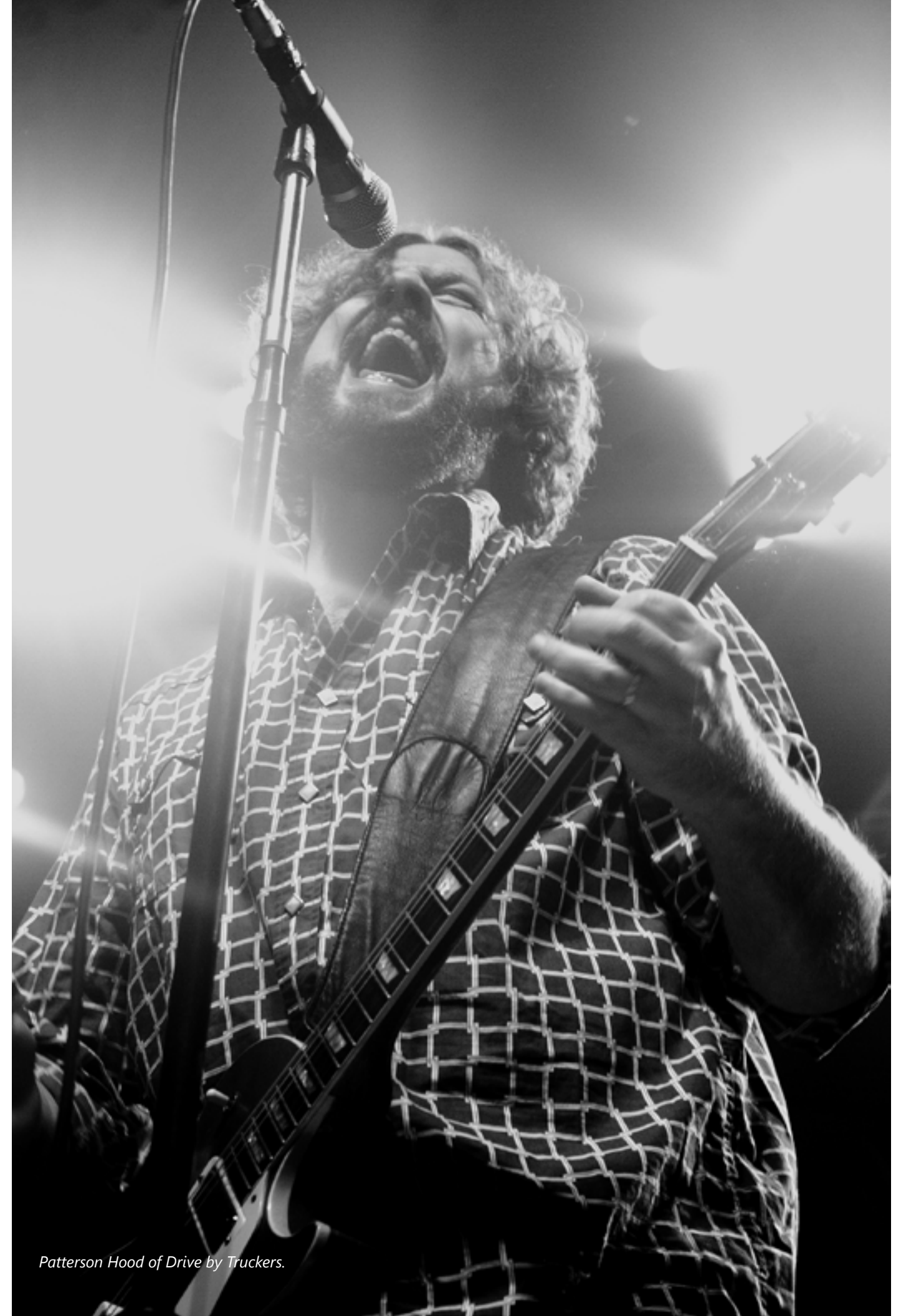
Oliver Baptist Church.



Reverend.



Patterson Hood of Drive by Trickers.



Patterson Hood of Drive by Trickers.



Lucero.



Willie Seaberry. Po Monkey Lounge. Merigold, Mississippi.



"Sleep On." Unknown, Mississippi.



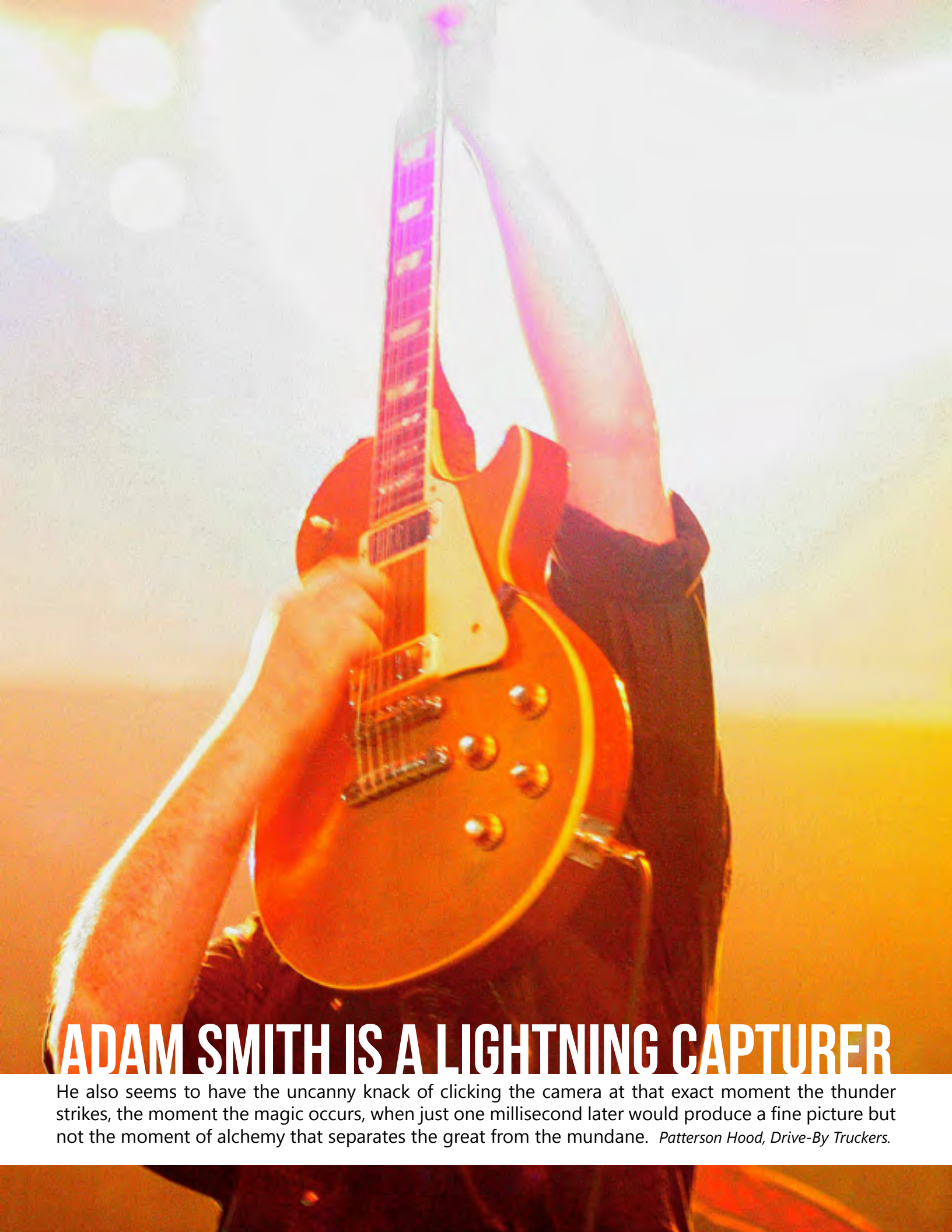
Danny Hutchens of Bloodkin.

REWIND THE PROCESS

ALL THE SONGS WE FOUND BACKSTAGE

all the songs we found beneath the backseat of the van,
mixed with fast food wrappers and empty PBR bottles.
all the songs written latenight then forgotten the next morning.
all the songs heard in dreams.
all the songs translated from long dead languages.
all the songs splattered with blood and come.
all the songs echoing forever,
already catalogued on Heaven's own record label.
we write our songs by copying from the supernatural text
directly. we steal our songwater straight from the haunted well.
we play the songs fast and loose
like Fast Eddie Felson in The Hustler,
cranked and juiced, carelessly slamming shots the 2 ball
in the corner pocket or whatever, just staggering drunk
but joyful around that table and nailing those money shots effortless.
we play the songs dizzy like a junkie ghost
materializing at his dealer's bedside right around midnight,
the room inevitably starts humming and shuddering, the kick drum
breaks bones and the slide guitar drives the getaway car,
rolls us back to our hotel rooms and another long night of
cracked confessions, jazzy improved arguments and stories
and dirty jokes, splashed back and forth at each other
long into the morning, long past checkout time,
til someone in charge shows up pounding on the door
and throwing us out.
but that's okay
because there are always more hotel rooms
waiting a few miles down the highway. more grimy rock clubs
and more shows to be played and more overnight frenzies.
and every time we choke down
an iceblue hybrid nightcap at 5 AM
it's really just a piece of well-rehearsed theatre,
and with each performance we strip off one more layer of skin,
we dub one more note atop this snaking sultry Southern soundtrack,
we paste one more chapter into this fragmented jigsaw novel...
and now and then along the road one of the songs blossoms
and bears medicinal fruit which calms our fever
and illuminates our nightmare so we can see
to pick the meat off its bones
til it's not so terrifying...
and that's when our music mends us,
and that's when our life's work
pays off
a quiet
little
fortune.

Daniel Hutchens
Bloodkin



ADAM SMITH IS A LIGHTNING CAPTURER

He also seems to have the uncanny knack of clicking the camera at that exact moment the thunder strikes, the moment the magic occurs, when just one millisecond later would produce a fine picture but not the moment of alchemy that separates the great from the mundane. *Patterson Hood, Drive-By Truckers.*