

Miami Steve's loyalty pays off for Jukes

Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes hail from the area around Asbury Park, N.J., a part of the country celebrated in song by 1975's big hype, Bruce Springsteen.

The reason that singer/harmonica player John Lyons and his crew were signed to Epic, and have just released their debut album for the label, has to do not only with the loyalty of the Asbury Park music community but also with the loyalty of the Jukes' former guitar player and only songwriter, Miami Steve Van Zandt.

Miami Steve was snatched last year by Springsteen to play guitar in his E Street Band. However, he didn't leave his old band in the lurch but continued to donate his necessary talents to it.

Miami Steve produced Jukes' album, on which three of his songs appear. The group also solicited two old songs from Big Boss Bruce, "The Fever" and "You Mean So Much to Me," which he personally had never gotten around to using on an album.

The remainder of the album is what Southside Johnny and his Jukes have built their reputation on, playing three nights a week at the Stone Pony Club across from the Asbury Park boardwalk. That's rhythm and blues from the '50s. "Southside" refers to the south side of Chicago where Johnny has never been.

Although Johnny confesses to having

written numerous originals which "We haven't gotten around to working up yet," he adds, "I'll always do those old songs. Why should you do only your own stuff when there are so many great songs that very few people have heard?"

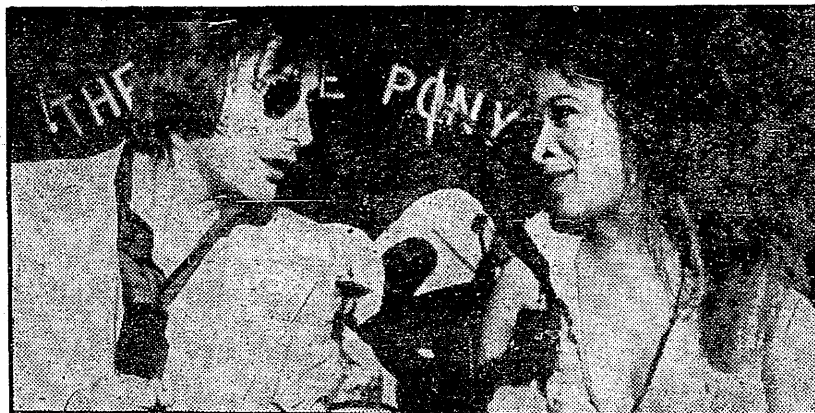
That stuff includes tunes from the Clovers, Sam and Dave, Sam Cook, Junior Wells and Little Walter, among others. Johnny acquired a taste for the music as a child when he heard it around the house. It was the music his parents were into; it gave him a slightly different background than that of many of his contemporaries.

"About 1963," Johnny continued, "the Beach Boys and the Beatles and all that happened. Everyone split into two groups, the collegiates who listened to the Beatles and kids who were still into R&B — soul.

"Back in the '50s everything was called 'rock 'n' roll,'" radio stations would play a little of everything side by side. Now it's all split up. You can tell what a person's like by the radio station he has his car radio tuned to.

"I never felt anything for the Beatles and Beach Boys. It's not that I don't like that kind of music. I just never wanted to play it. I don't know if we've won anyone over from that side. I think a lot of people have always been into R&B."

Among those people were many musicians from Asbury Park and the sur-



Southside Johnny Lyon harmonizes with Ronnie Spector

rounding area (Johnny was born in Neptune; Springsteen is from neighboring Freehold) with whom Johnny formed endless, short-lived bands over a period of a decade until settling with the Jukes. Most of the Jukes are Jerseyites too. "There's a great music community here," Johnny observes. "It's very tight-knit."

It's tight-knit enough to have insured that most of the members of the E Street Band, including Bruce himself, showed up on stage during Southside Johnny's and the Jukes' recent live radio broadcast from the Stone Pony. The first set of the evening was broadcast remote on eight radio stations, including Cleveland's

WMMS-FM.

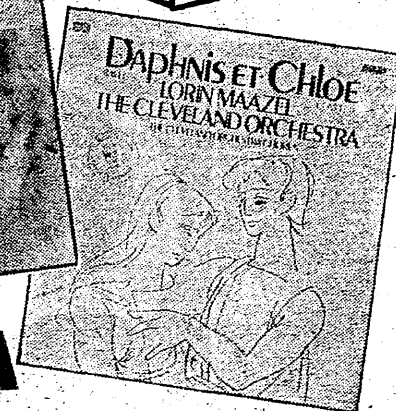
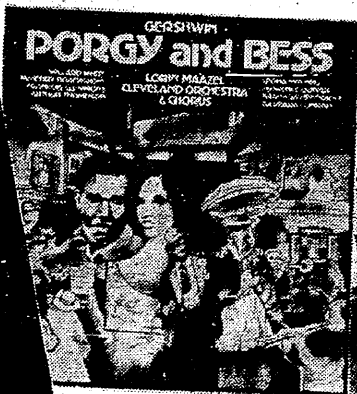
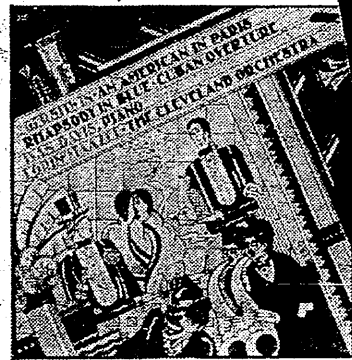
The hour-long broadcast, intended to promote the Jukes' new album, featured most of the music from the album. Ronnie Spector, ex-Ronette, and Lee Dorsey, singer of the '66 hit "Workin' in a Coal Mine," both showed up to sing the songs they helped out with on the album.

The show was done in front of an audience so large, the club really couldn't contain it — kids from as far away in Jersey as Newark.

"I suppose we'll have to play other places now," said Johnny, "but I like it here. I have no complaints."



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