

## FENDER PLAYERS CLUB ROBERT CRAY

Robert Cray was born in 1953 in Columbus, Georgia; a "service brat," he moved around with his family a lot, including two years in Germany from 1961 to 1963.

Cray formed his first band, One Way Street, while still at school, but it wasn't until 1973 that he joined Albert Collins' touring band, after meeting Richard Cousins, Collins' bass player. In 1975 Cray and Cousins left to form the Robert Cray Band, bringing in Peter Boe on keyboards and David Olson on drums. They recorded their debut *Who's Been Talkin'* (1978) in between tours, although it wasn't released for two years.

In 1983, after almost a decade of touring, they recorded *Bad Influence*, which showed Collins' influence on Cray's use of the D-minor tuning. *False Accusations* (1985) won the Best Blues Album Award from the National Association of Independent Record Distributors. It nodded at the great soul albums of 1960s and the lean, lyrical lines that had been used to such good effect by economic guitar players like Steve Cropper [Booker T. & the MG's, Blues Brothers].

As if to emphasize his commitment to the blues, Cray collaborated with Collins and Johnny Copeland on *Showdown* for the Alligator label, winning a Grammy in the process. *Strong Persuader* (1987) was full of rustic charm; eschewing the desire to replicate the urban blues style of the late 1940s, it drew freely from recent memory. "Right Next Door," for example, was more reminiscent of Eric Clapton and Duane Allman on Aretha Franklin's *Lady Soul* (1968) and *Queen of Soul* (1968), [respectively], than anything Muddy Waters or Hubert Sumlin attempted.

The circle was completed by *Midnight Stroll* (1990), the pugnacious Memphis Horns trading chops with Cray in a way that only Cropper had previously managed on early Otis Redding songs; that it worked was due more to the way that perceptions of the blues had altered. Cray has steadfastly resisted the temptation to become hidebound by a putative role as B.B. King's or Muddy Waters' successor, and his playing combines elements of the greatest traditions of black American music, which is constantly redefining itself.

-- Hugh Gregory,



This commentary from:  
***1000 Great Guitarists*** (GPI Books)  
by Hugh Gregory  
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The CD includes tracks from each of the twelve guitarists featured on the color spreads, providing an unforgettable example of each player's unique style and technique.

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