

It's been said...

**David Fricke, *Rolling Stone*,
April 2004**

It wasn't all steel-mill Stooges action in 1970s Ohio. While Pere Ubu and Devo were in the early stages of mutation, 15.60.75 - a.k.a. the Numbers Band - terrorized local saloons with a future blues of Sun Ra-style sax honk, raga-guitar spinout and funky "Sister Ray" surge: Bonnaroo in a bottle, way ahead of schedule.

**Brian Turner, *New York Times*,
August 8 2004**

The band offers an off-kilter take on the blues somewhere between the styles of Captain Beefheart and Fred McDowell.

**George Smith, *Village Voice*,
July 6 2004**

The blues have me by the throat, and the fingers are a man's who lives in a cemetery. The band is tight, turns on a dime. The Numbers, one gathers, were the very definition of unpopular but committed.

**Greil Marcus, *Salon.com*,
July 7 2000**

Cat-Iron was a blues singer from Natchez, Miss. "Jimmy Bell" was the Numbers' wipeout piece, as much Bobby Darin's "Mack the Knife" as Cat-Iron's cryptic crusader. Picking up on the bare syncopation in the Cat-Iron version, the Numbers press the rhythm right away, the bass

slithering over the beat like a snake, then rhythm guitar, then Kidney's thin voice, insisting on that greenback suit until you can see it walking down the street as his lead guitar picks up the bass's theme and flails it like a whip. Across nearly 11 minutes, the performance is all play and menace, all here and now, all origins erased, a reach beyond the story to the willfulness in which it begins, a willfulness only a long, mean solo will turn up. By the time Kidney returns to words Jimmy Bell has come and gone and come back again, and you're on the next train out. "Up the road I'm going," Jimmy Bell tells his wife. "She said," Kidney shouts

for her in terror, "She said, 'What road?'"

Joe Cushley, *Mojo*

15-60-75 are one of the few outfits to have stamped generic R&B with an original seal. At moments one catches strains of Santana and The Doors in their polyrhythmic blues effusions - but there is also a deeper, more esoteric imagination at work. Kidney is a Van Vliet on the distaff side, or a less hung up David Byrne. His heady, poetic, lyrical marinades are spiced with harmonica from Southside heaven - and horns which can't quite decide whether they're playing a Stax revue or a free jazz freak-out. You will not be disappointed.

The Inward City (Hearpen Records HR143) is the latest album from 15-60-75 (aka The Numbers Band), a group that can claim among its enthralled fans musicians as diverse as Frank Black, Chrissie Hynde, Pere Ubu, The Black Keys, Bob Mould, Devo, and anglo-progressive legend Chris Cutler.

"The Numbers Band is the greatest band I've ever seen, will ever see, and can ever conceive of seeing,"

wrote Pere Ubu's David Thomas. "You have, of course, no reason to believe me." So he offered a money back guarantee of satisfaction for anyone buying 15-60-75's first album, Jimmy Bell's Still In Town (Hearpen HR112). In 6 years there have been no takers for his refund offer. When he brought the band to London in 1998 as part of a 3-day festival he curated at the Royal Festival Hall, women were weeping in the aisles at the end of their set.

For 40 years, in a small town 40 miles south of Cleveland, Ohio, The Numbers have kept the blues alive. Where the guardians of the form starved it of innovation, 15-60-75 nurtured abstract evolution. Where the priests of Budweiser Blues droned old catechisms by rote, 15-60-75 aspired to vision. They

play blues reimbued with meaning, purged and purified by flame, shorn of every superfluous moment, sound or word. Because their songs are compiled across a series of markers - words, sounds, phrases and pauses - they don't count measures and can't outline the structure of their own songs to an outsider. For the

blues, a form routinely approached as a compendium of formulas, this is startling, and it means that any change of personnel necessitates months of not just re-learning but rewriting every song. It is a methodology from another planet - Don Van Vliet and Sun Ra come to mind. It is form dedicated to vision.





The line-up of 15-60-75 consists of **Robert Kidney** (guitar, vocals), **Jack Kidney** (harp, sax, vocals), **Terry Hynde** (sax), **Bill Watson** (bass) and **Frank Casamento** (drums).

(Pictured left to right: Frank Casamento, Terry Hynde, Jack Kidney, Robert Kidney and Bill Watson)

Produced by Pere Ubu's David Thomas, **The Inward City** is available as a download from iTunes and **www.hearpen.com** and on cd from **Hearpen Records**.

The Inward City Track Listing

Battery B (4:12)

Yonders Wall (5:51)

Thunderhead (5:41)

Nobody's John (4:10)

Heavy Rain (6:33)

From Me To You (5:47)

Matchbox Defined (5:35)

The TellsusourVision (5:55)

Coal Tattoo (4:43)

References

Photos for press use: <http://ubuprojex.net/numberspix.html>

The Inward City: <http://www.ubuprojex.net/hearpen/inwardcity.html>

Jimmy Bell's Still In Town: <http://www.ubuprojex.net/hearpen/jbell.html>

Numbers website: <http://www.numbersband.com>

Biography

Robert Kidney (guitar, vocals) formed the band in 1969 in Kent, Ohio, a small college town between Cleveland and Akron. Two founder members of the band, brother Jack Kidney (harp, sax, vocals) and Terry Hynde (sax, flute), remain in the line-up to this day. The band established a residency at a blues club in Kent and soon gathered a large and fanatical following, among them nearly every musician who would form the nucleus of the extraordinary Cleveland / Akron underground scene of the 70s.

In 1975 they recorded the live record, *Jimmy Bell's Still In Town*. Dogged by unnatural bad luck and

mishap every time they tried to play out of town the band soon gave up bothering and was not to leave the Northeast Ohio area for decades, settling into residencies in the blues clubs of Cleveland, Akron, and Kent. A speakeasy in Youngstown is still the scene of many of their greatest nights.

In the 80s Robert became a regular in Anton Fier's Golden Palominos band projects, recording and touring along side Michael Stipe, Richard Thompson, Syd Straw, T-Bone Burnett, and finally John Lydon and Jack Bruce.

Robert and Jack's side project, a duo called The Kidney Brothers, toured twice in the UK and twice in Holland between 1997 and 2000.



In the late 90s and early 00s Robert and Jack Kidney featured in David Thomas' theatrical production, "Mirror Man," which toured in the UK and had premiere performances at London's Royal Festival Hall and Los Angeles' Royce Hall. Soon thereafter Jack Kidney recorded on Frank Black's "Rider Man" album and performed with him on the Conan O'Brian Show.

Robert Kidney was the subject of a feature article on the cover of the Wall Street Journal (January 20 1999) in one of their series of portraits.

Recently Terry Hynde's sister, Chrissie, recorded one of Robert's songs, "Rosalee," for the Pretenders' "Break Up The Concrete" album.