

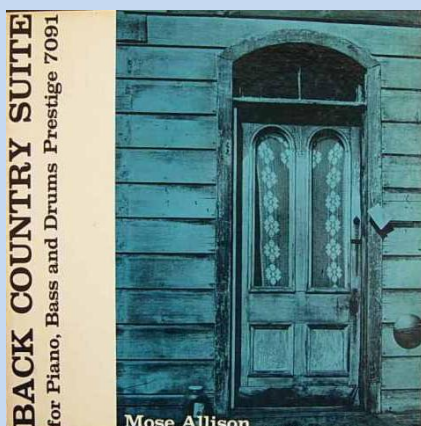
## Mose John Allison Jr.

With hundreds of artists loitering in our library often it is hard to choose one to feature in our 'Different shades of Blue slot' – Clicking through, I found the classic, *Your Mind Is on Vacation*, it's nearly Christmas, so perhaps Santa will bring me the vinyl version, after all, at only £82, but for now, as I write I can play the mp3 cheap and nasty one.

Mose Allison has suffered from a categorisation problem, given his equally brilliant career. Although his boogie-woogie and bebop-laden piano style is innovative and fresh sounding when it comes to blues and jazz, it is as a songwriter that Allison really shines. His songs have been recorded by the Who *Young Man Blues*, Leon Russell *I'm Smashed*, and Bonnie Raitt, *Everybody's crying' Mercy*. Other admirers include Tom Waits, John Mayall, Georgie Fame, the Rolling Stones, and Van Morrison. But because he's always played both blues and jazz, and one not to the exclusion of the other, his career has suffered. As he himself has said, he has a category problem, what am I? – Blues, R&B, folk, jazz. Despite the lingering confusion, he remains one of the finest songwriters in blues of the 20th and 21st centuries.



Born in Tippo, MS, on November 11, 1927, Mose's first exposure to blues on record was through Louis Jordan recordings, including *Outskirts of Town* and



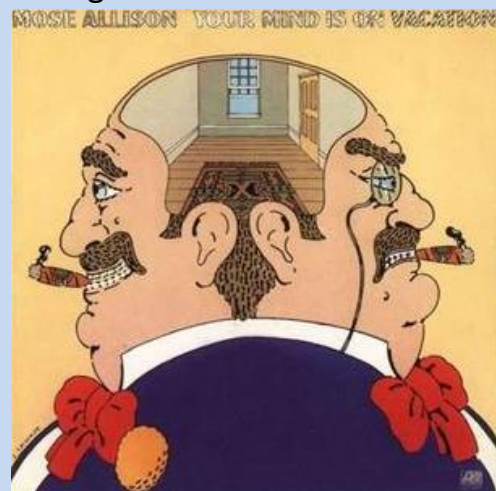
*Pinetop Blues*. Mose quotes Louis Jordan as being a major influence on him, together with Nat King Cole, Louis Armstrong, and Fats Waller

Mose began his recording career with the Prestige label in 1956, shortly after moving to New York City. He recorded an album with Al Cohn and Bobby Brookmeyer, and then in 1957 got his own record contract. A big break was the opportunity to play with Cohn and Zoot. After leaving Prestige

Records, where he recorded the now classic album, *Back Country Suite* (1957 he moved to Columbia for two years before meeting up with Nesuhi Ertegun of Atlantic Records. He recalled that he signed his contract with Atlantic after about ten minutes in Nesuhi's office.

Allison's discography is a lengthy one, and there are gems to be found on all of his albums, many of which can still be found in shops or online. His output since 1957 averaged at least one album a year until 1976, when he finished up at Atlantic with the classic *Your Mind Is on Vacation*.

Mose married his wife, Audre; in 1949 Audre Allison said that when she first met Mose, I could tell that he was someone who generated his own joy. She also said, Mose has always paid attention to what is happening in the world, and has always read voraciously both past and present histories. Mose died November 15, 2016, four days after his 89th birthday.



David R Howard

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