

Hill Country Picnic 2010

Document_type [log]

Date 25 June 2010

Audio file [kimbrough_robert.wav]

[0:00:28] Robert describes the difference between country blues and city blues, saying that they are on “two different levels.” He says that he has always played his father’s “style” of music and that he was born into this “style.”

[0:02:40] Robert explains how his father stayed in Mississippi his entire life and that Robert, himself, never wants to leave. He is fine with traveling to play his music, but he always wants to live in Mississippi. He thinks his brothers and his family enjoy living in Mississippi and will never leave (again, he says that they may tour).

[0:04:15] Robert says that he can’t “explain” his father’s music beyond the fact that it is something that Robert and his brothers (Kinney and David) “grew up on.” Robert says that there are many styles of music that he likes, but that his father’s style is his favorite.

[0:05:07] Robert explains how his father was not initially famous. He says that some people living in Oxford heard his father and “grabbed him [presumably to sign him to Fat Possum Records].” Robert goes on to say that his father had always been playing the blues at his home. Robert explains that his father was old when he became famous. Robert explains that his father’s music didn’t catch on earlier, because there weren’t people around to “hook him up.” Robert explains that once his father “got started,” it wasn’t long before Junior got sick and passed away.

[0:06:15] Robert explains how his father didn’t care about the racial makeup of an audience. Robert says that for his father, “race was not an issue.” Nor is it an issue for Robert, himself. Robert says that he is “here to have fun with everybody.” Yet, Robert does think that there are more white blues fans than black blues fans. He emphatically states that “younger white people love the blues.” He asserts one more time that he is “down with all the crowds [regardless of race]. Let’s just dance and do it.”

[0:07:27] Robert says that while he has not listened much to the Black Keys (a white blues-rock group which draws a lot upon his father’s sound and released an EP of Junior Kimbrough covers), he did hear their cover of his father’s song “All Night Long” through one of his brothers. Referring to either the Black Keys or to their cover of his father’s song he remarks, “it’s cool...I don’t see anything wrong with it.” Yet, Robert goes on to say, “It would be good if they could pay their respects, maybe come around and say ‘how you doing’ [to the family]... It excites me to see everybody playing my dad’s music. It’s just really cool... So, I mean I don’t have a gripe about it.”

[0:08:31] Robert confesses that he doesn’t know much about his father’s relationship with Fat Possum Records and that his brothers know more details about the topic. But, he thinks that Junior’s relationship with the label was “pretty good.” Robert recalls when he went on a Fat Possum-sponsored tour with his father to Chattanooga and that his father seemed to be happy with the label. Yet, despite the fact that “everybody loved his music,” Robert feels that his father was making less than he deserved.

[0:09:40] Robert recalls how his father's group would come over to the house to play. Robert remembers how his father would never want his kids to interrupt these sessions. His father would leave the instruments in the living room and would never want his children to touch the instruments for fear of "break[ing]... strings or bust[ing]... drums." Yet, his father still wanted his children to learn how to play the blues, so every time that Junior would leave he would tell his children, "Don't go in there and mess with those instruments." Thus, the instruments became irresistible to his children and they learned how to play. Robert explains how he and his brothers were playing music by banging on boxes even before they broke his father's rules by going into the room and "breaking strings and banging on drums."

[0:10:37] Robert says that his father never sat his children down and taught them how to play. Instead, Junior wanted his children to learn the instruments themselves. He also wanted them to learn how to sing and dance by themselves.

[0:11:27] Robert explains how music-oriented families like the Kimbroughs, the Burnsidess, and later the Dickinsons "grew up around each other" and "stayed together." They all played the blues, "kickin' it" and "enjoying it." He calls these family relationships "a big connection."

[0:12:20] Robert asserts that continuing to have these strong inter-family connections moving forward "means a lot." He says that if his father could see how the families continue to work and play together, "[he] would be really happy." He specifically cites how he would be happy with the "boys carrying on...connecting with the Turners, the [North Mississippi] Allstars, Cody [Dickinson]... and the Burnsidess...The only way we going to keep it going, we got to stick together... And that we gonna do.

[0:12:55] Interview ends.