

## Introducing...

## ★ DANNY BRYANT

Being a blueser doesn't have to mean playing only dog-eared 'standards' and wailing 'Woke up this mornin'. Meet a British guitarist pulling his own strings.

WORDS: HUGH FIELDER

Establishing yourself as a blues guitarist when you're under the age of 30 is some feat. Doing it on the back of your own songs rather than tried and trusted blues standards makes it even sweeter.

"We'll slip in the odd Dylan song but I find it a lot more exciting to play my own songs," says 28-year-old Danny Bryant, enjoying a rare couple of days off at his Royston, Hertfordshire home, from a gigging schedule that hasn't stopped growing for a decade. "Of course people like to hear some of the standard stuff, but I try to give it to them in a different way," he explains. "So I'll slip the notes of *Hildonway* into another song."

Blues wasn't exactly fashionable when Bryant was given his first guitar when he was 15. "The stuff I picked up on was the music my parents had - Hendrix, Rory Gallagher, Clapton, that sort of thing". After that time-honoured guitarist 'schooling' of shutting himself in his bedroom for a couple of years and practising, he was ready to start a band. "There was a kid up the road who I'd hear practising drums so I asked him. And my dad, who played guitar, picked up the bass. We started out playing pubs and stuff and that built quickly; in our second year we played 290 gigs."

Danny Bryant's RedEyeBand is a family affair - dad still plays

bass, mum is the manager and his wife is the guitar tech. "She was always on the road, so I thought I'd train her up," he says. "I guess it wouldn't work for a lot of people but it does for us. On tour it's not really a family thing, it's business, but at home we're a family."

Bryant released four albums on the small label Blues Matters before signing to Rounder in 2006. "I was playing a European festival, and this guy from the label started talking to me. I had a live album ready to go so I gave them that, and that led to my new studio album, *Black And White*."

His songwriting is definitely coming together on that album, and there's a distinctive British edge that marks him out from the overseas bluesmen currently doing the rounds.

These days he's playing in Europe as much as in Britain, and he's noticed that the audiences there are younger: "Over here things are a bit pigeonholed. If I play a festival, then it's a blues festival, but in Europe it's all mixed up: I'm doing a festival in July with Buddy Guy, Santana, Crowded House, Mick Hucknall, ZZ Top and Neil Young. You don't get those kind of line-ups over here."

• *Black And White* is out now on Rounder Records.

"I picked up on Hendrix, Rory Gallagher, Clapton..."

Danny Bryant:  
next gen blues.



#### CAUGHT A TROUT

Walter Trout (pictured) is a big influence on Bryant, ever since he found Trout's *Prisoner Of Love* album in his parents' collection.

"They took me to see him at the Cambridge Junction and I loved it," Bryant recalls. "I even wrote him a letter afterwards, and a little while later he rang up out of the blue. He's given me guitar lessons, and I've opened some shows for him. I even got him to play on one of my albums. He's been very good for me. He was always telling me not to do drugs, which is common sense, but if he'd still been doing them when I met him I would probably have thought that was cool."

Trout is convinced Bryant has what it takes. "What sets him apart is his passion and feeling," the blues veteran says. "He's not out to impress you with his scales and techniques, he's out to move you. There are too many guitar players out there who are engaged in strict exercises, devoid of emotion. Danny's playing grabs you with its intensity and urgency."