

# PATH TO GLORY

Sitting in his bedroom learning the same old blues riffs was not for young British blues prodigy Oli Brown. This kid has benefitted from some of the best tuition available...

Words: Joey Setano

Oli Brown is fast establishing himself as one of the best blues players on the UK circuit. The tall, slender 19 year old, dressed in a pinstripe suit, straps on a guitar and with fingers that seem extraordinarily long for the fingerboard, graces the stage with bassist Fred Hollis and drummer Simon Dring to cut a fine blues set, with a sprinkling of jazz and funk thrown in. "I've always had a passion for the guitar and the blues, even from an early age, it was a hobby and a dream. I had connections with the American band, Blind Dog Smokin' and couldn't believe it when they asked me to go over there and hangout, I was still only 15, but these guys could see I was deadly serious about it all. Those guys worked hard to help me develop as a player, and I'm taking that to the next step as a mark of respect. As soon as I got home, I started looking for musicians. I teamed up with Simon Dring who I'd admired as a drummer and he recommended Fred Hollis who is an outstanding bassist, and by March 07 we were on the road. We've been back to the USA as The Oli Brown Band, playing festivals and opening for many giants of the blues, including Buddy Guy and Taj Mahal,

who both told me to keep my head straight and not touch drugs, women or alcohol!" He laughs.

The blues has a strong tradition of producing talented young artists but Oli is wary of being labelled as some kind of 'next big thing' before he is ready.

"I feel my age is a necessary evil at the moment, but people are realising I'm not trying to come across as a novelty, but present the music and this band in a mature way. I also want us to look like we are a smart band about to perform, I wear the pin stripped suits and the crocodile shoes, in a mark of respect to older blues guys who always dressed up to play. I enjoy what I do and I'm not going to say that I'm holding the blues torch, because I respect the blues and older players too much, I'm just having so much fun playing this music in various forms. It's great that people respect this music and want to come and see it. The blues isn't commercially exposed, you won't hear it on Radio one, it doesn't really get a chance, but along with the die hards, we seem to be seeing more and more young people in our audiences now...how cool is that?"

Oli's new album Open Road album was recorded

in just ten days, with minimal overdubs, with Oli using virtually an identical setup as his live rig.

"I'm an analogue man, so my equipment is pretty basic; just a 60w Fender Supersonic combo which has a great natural overdrive and enough clean headroom, plus an original Ibanez TS9 for boost and a Boss OC3 octave pedal, for when we get funky. I'm using my own signature Vanquish guitar. I have several guitars, but this one just plays and sounds wonderful, I asked for some hotter P.90 pickups, and a bleed control, so it cleans up when you back off the volume. I'm also a fan of semi acoustics, and I've tried several vintage models, including various old Gibson 335s costing tens of thousands but I was so disappointed, they just didn't feel or sound right. To me, all they have is history. The Vanquish has a smart appearance, and that's me, right down to my custom guitar strap."

There are hundreds of young guitarists out there, but what the UK needs is a new guitar hero, Oli Brown has the potential, the talent and the drive that make him a sure fire contender for the number one slot. **PM**

See more of Oli Brown:

[www.oliselectricblues.co.uk](http://www.oliselectricblues.co.uk)

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