

**RON THOMPSON WITH MITCH MOUGHAN**

**MCGRATH'S PUB**

**March 17, 2006**



And speaking of McGrath's, we popped on down to the local to catch some of Ron Thompson with Mitch Moughan tickling the ivories. We cannot extoll the extent of talent and experience in Ron Thompson, so you must get on over to [RTblues.com](http://RTblues.com) to see what you have been missing.

Ron Thompson has been around for years and watching him perform solo or in stripped-down setting as on Saturday night is watching a rhythmic hot fusion

converting base matter into energy. The man lives and breathes pure music and every performance is electrifying.

Ron has performed with and recorded for legends like Big Mama Thornton, Sonny Rhodes, Luther Tucker, Jimmy McCracklin, Pee Wee Crayton, Carla Thomas, School Boy Cleve, Percy Mayfield, Etta James, B.B. King, and Jimmy Reed. Then there is Fleetwood Mac, Chris Isaak, Carlos Santana, Bonnie Raitt, Elvin Bishop, Bill Medley, Huey Lewis, Dr. John, songwriter Bobby Womak, The Fabulous Thunderbirds, Robert Cray Band, Z.Z. Top, John Lee Hooker, and many others.

Ron Thompson is a legendary blues guitarist and master keyboardist whose career began in the rough and tumble world of East Bay nightclubs and bars in the early '70s. After touring coast-to-coast for seven years with John Lee Hooker as band leader, Hooker was quoted as saying, "Ron Thompson, he's my main man!"

Saturday, Ron started out with his beat once-beige Fender, deftly filling in finger flourishes while keeping that series of rolls stylists employ when there is no bass or drum kick to fill the backbeat. He wears a metal thumbpick and a clear-plastic fingerpick on the forefinger.

Ron ran through some old school early-Chicago stuff energetically, barely speaking more than two or three words between songs, letting the music build dramatically with each piece. He tuned his guitar "on the fly" fast enough that no one missed the absence of stage patter. When going to an open tuning he pretended to be searching for his glass slide and those few seconds were

enough. The vocals were clear and crisp and devoid of the unintelligible slurring that has plagued past performances.

We had an opportunity to chat with Mitch Moughan, who as a long-time jazz/improv musician was just the man to punch in a barrelhouse style on cue for this entirely improvised set-list. Moughan is a musician with day-job feller, but has put in his dues from the early seventies with all kinds of local people in the heyday when the blues first began taking off with white audiences. He said Ron performs constantly, with a band in Southern California and another in Northern California, plus these solo gigs in small venues.

Ron finished up his first set with a cooking version of "Shake Your MoneyMaker" that worked energetically all up the entire fretboard, with repeated changes occurring rapidly at times some five to six frets apart.

That's the sort of playing that turns beginners into quivering vegetables and makes the Blues-Hound drool.

His second set began with an all metal resonator mandolin -- something not seen very often. He then moved to lapsteel for some Muddy Waters, including a rollicking "Rolling and Tumblin'", and then back to his beige Fender to recap versions of originals on his latest CD. Consummate artistry done with the greatest humility, never forgetting to lean back and invite Moughan to comp for a bit on his dime. Ron playing stripped down is definitely worth the price of any admission, for this setting really highlights what the man can do. The Resistors are fine, but give us Ron uncomplicated any day.