

# Austin360 On The Record: Cobras

Peter Blackstock – June 4<sup>th</sup> 2021



**Austin360 on the Record** is a weekly roundup of new, recent and upcoming releases by local and Austin-associated recording artists.

## Archival releases

**Cobras, “Caught Live at the Continental Club” (Jungle).** By the time the Cobras recorded this performance at the historic South Congress Club in January 1981, founding singer Paul Ray and hotshot guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan had moved on to other things. But the members who remained, and who’d been added, assured that the talent level of this Austin rhythm & blues band remained impressive.

Foremost among them was guitarist Denny Freeman, an original member who'd become an anchor of the local blues community across town at Antone's.

New to the mix was "Junior" Medlow Williams, a powerhouse vocalist with a magnetic stage presence who'd come to Austin from West Texas. Saxophonists Joe Sublett and Luke McNamee had helped to flesh out the band's sound, with bassist Leland Parks and drummer Rodney Craig anchoring the low end.



"Live at the Continental" serves up original material such as "Tomcat" alongside blues classics including Freddie King's "See See Baby." Williams' soulful vocals and the horn section's sultry swing blend seamlessly on "Harlem Shuffle," while Freeman's guitar blazes on the instrumental theme to the circa-1960s TV show "Peter Gunn."

Freeman also contributes no-nonsense, informative liner notes to the 16-song set.

"Many players came and went over the years," he writes, "but everybody learned something he could take with him because the band covered many aspects of R&B, from Bobby 'Blue' Bland to the Crusaders, and from Ray Charles to Johnny 'Guitar' Watson." He notes, too, that this disc is the second set of live material to surface long after the band's heyday, following the 2011 CD release of an album recorded at Armadillo World Headquarters in 1979.

"Live at the Continental" arrived earlier this year, just before Freeman died of cancer in April.

