

Champ Hood – Bio

Deschamp "Champ" Hood was born on August 16th, 1952 in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He passed on in Austin, Texas on November 3rd, 2001. When he was eleven, his buddy Rob Hicklin offered to give Champ guitar lessons for fifty cent. He advised Champ, who had small hands, that a ukulele would be the best instrument to learn on. For the sum of \$13 Champ purchased a uke from Walter Hyatt, who also lived in the Duncan Park area of Spartanburg. A couple of years later Champ formed his first group, the folk influenced The Townships, with his cousin George Blackford, and a local gal, Marshall Chapman. For a time Champ and George flirted with rock and roll bands. There were The Mods and later Washington Subway, which disbanded when most of the band members went off to college. Champ, the youngest, was still attending high school. The album that James Taylor made for Apple Records rekindled Champ's interest in acoustic music and before long he began working with Walter Hyatt. Champ also began to be inspired by the bluegrass music he heard during this period. Numerous local players passed through The Walter Hyatt Consort, and eventually it was renamed Uncle Walt's Band. Their music was a seamless marriage of swing, country, jazz and folk influences. Walter and Champ each played guitar while David Ball was on bass and, initially, Kathy Hyatt was on drums. There was plenty of healthy, individual competition between Walter, Champ and David and an ever-improving stream of original songs was the result. In 1972 the band moved to Nashville where they met Willis Alan Ramsey who subsequently invited them to Austin to record an album. The trio ended up helping Willis construct his legendary studio, Hound Sound, and although the trio did record with Ramsey the material has never been issued commercially. Returning to Spartanburg in 1974, the threesome recorded an album "**Blame It On The Bossa Nova**" aka "**Uncle Walt's Band**" at Arthur Smith's Studio in Charlotte, NC. Based on the latter recording and at the instigation of Eddie Wilson, proprietor of the Armadillo World Headquarters in Austin, the band were almost signed by Warner Brothers Records. The band made Austin its operating base once more, but broke up in 1975. Champ went off to Nashville, David Ball moved back to South Carolina, while Walter stayed on in Austin. During his first Nashville sojourn Hood had met Tommy Goldsmith and Steve Runkle from Raleigh, NC who performed as The Pritchard Avenue Band. Enlisting drummer Jimbeau Walsh, Hood, Goldsmith, Runkel and Hyatt went on to form The Contenders. An electric/acoustic quintet, The Contenders made one album for Moonlight Records and then disbanded. Uncle Walt's Band subsequently got back together and once more made Austin its base. By this stage Champ was also an accomplished fiddle player. Three more Walt recordings were made, but only two were issued before the trio broke up again in 1983. "**6-26-79**" was a posthumous, cassette only release. Staying on in Austin, Hood endured lean times initially, and eventually went to work for Rusty Weir. He performed with David Halley as the "The Champ and Dave Show," accompanied Christine Albert and played solo gigs where he could score them. Gruene Hall became a favourite venue and Jerry Jeff Walker's "**Live At Gruene Hall**" [1989] featured Champ's lead guitar licks. He accompanied Jimmie Dale Gilmore at the weekly Wednesday evening *Supper Sessions* at Threadgill's Restaurant on North Lamar through the late eighties. In 1991 Champ took over and the *Sessions* and they continued into the late nineties. Two recordings resulted from Champ's Threadgill years. Champ also toured with Gilmore. In 1988 Uncle Walt's Band backed Lyle Lovett on "Once Is Enough" the closing cut on his "**Large Band**" album. Hood was a member of Lyle's road band 1993/94. Hood contributed to both of Walter Hyatt's solo albums [*]. He worked and recorded with countless musicians, including Willis Alan Ramsey, David Ball, Kelly Willis and from 1992 till 2001 was a regular member of Toni Price's band particularly her Tuesday night *hippie hour* at Austin's, Continental Club. In 1991 Sugar Hill reissued all of the Uncle Walt Band recordings as 2 for 1 packages. Champ took top honours 1995 through 1997 and in 1999 in the String category of the Austin Music Awards. He was inducted into the Texas Music Hall of Fame in 1996. Diagnosed as suffering from lung cancer in the spring of 2001, Hood had begun work on his debut solo album. Selfless by nature he was much loved by his peers, and for over a quarter of a century was one of the finest and most loyal sidemen that the Austin musical community possessed. Hood passed on in early November 2001. Speaking for Austin's diverse community of musicians, Jimmie Dale Gimole stated that Hood's passing was as great a loss to Texas music as that of Doug Sahm and Townes Van Zandt. Hood's debut solo album "**Bon Haven**" was released in January 2002.

[P.S. A later mutation of the Contenders went on to work with David Olney].

[*] Hyatt perished in the Valujet plane crash in the Florida Everglades on 11th May 1996.

Discography :

with Uncle Walt's Band : "**Uncle Walt's Band**" [1975] ; "**An American In Texas**" [1980] ; "**Uncle Walt's Band Recorded Live**" [1982] ; "**6-26-79**" [1988] ; "**An American In Texas Revisited**" [1991] ; "**The Girl On The Sunny Shore**" [1991].

with The Contenders : "**The Contenders**" [1978] ; "Light From Carolina Vol. I" [2000].

with Texas Troubadours : "**Threadgill Supper Session**" [1991] ; "**Second Helping**" [1996].

Solo : "**Bon Haven**" [2002].

Arthur Wood.

Kerrville Kronikles 06/02

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